

## Social Science Meets Literature: Using Sawako Ariyoshi's *The Twilight Years* in Sociology and Psychology Courses

### Some Statistics: Aging in Japan

- From 1990 to 2000, the population of people aged over 65 rose 20.5% to 22.01 million, or 17.3% of the total population, whereas the population of children under 15 totaled 18.47 million. This is the first time the over-65 population has eclipsed the under-15 population in Japan. (“Japan’s Population at 126.92 Million in 2000: Census, People’s Daily Online ([http://english.people.com.cn/english/200110/31/eng20011031\\_83560.html](http://english.people.com.cn/english/200110/31/eng20011031_83560.html))
- The older population is growing with the life span — the average Japanese man can expect to live 77 years, the average woman, 84. This increase in the life span creates greater needs for medical care, assisted housing, and other support services, as well as larger nest eggs to help pay for these services. Japan is graying faster than any other industrialized country. In 2006, people 65 and older are expected to account for 17.2 percent of Japan’s population of 126.9 million. By 2020, they will account for 26.9 percent of a population that will have shrunk to 124 million. (“Population Implosion, Graying of the Population, Population Reduction, and Negative Population Growth” (<http://www.overpopulation.org/older.html>))

**Table 1: Primary Care Taker for the Elderly in Japan**

<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Spouse	36.9
Child	26.9
(Male child)	(6.6)
(Female child)	(20.3)
Child’s spouse	23.6
(Male)	(0.6)
(Female)	(22.9)
Other	3.4
Family not living together	2.4
Helper	3.0
Housekeeper	0.6
No care taker	3.2

From “Survey on home-visit nursing care,” Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1995.

**Table 2: The Elderly Population in Japan by Sex and Sex Ratio (2003)**

		Total population	Elderly population (65 years and over)	65-74 years	75 years and over
Number (ten thousands)	Total	12,769	2,431	1,378	1,053
	Male	6,234	1,026	641	384
	Female	6,534	1,405	736	669
Percent of the total population	Total	100.0	19.0	10.8	8.2
	Male	100.0	16.5	10.3	6.2
	Female	100.0	21.5	11.3	10.2
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)		95.4	73.0	87.1	57.4

Source: Statistics Bureau "Population Estimates." (<http://www.jarc.net/aging/03oct/index.shtml>)

**Table 3: Proportions of the Elderly Population in Japan**

Proportions of the Elderly Population: 1920-2003				
	Total population (ten thousands)	Percent of the elderly		
		65 years and over	65-74 years	
			75 years and over	
1920	5,596	5.3	4.0	1.3
1930	6,445	4.8	3.4	1.4
1940 *	7,193	4.8	3.6	1.3
1950	8,320	4.9	3.7	1.3
1960	9,342	5.7	4.0	1.7
1970	10,372	7.1	4.9	2.1
1980	11,706	9.1	6.0	3.1
1990	12,361	12.1	7.2	4.8
2000	12,693	17.4	10.3	7.1
2003	12,769	19.0	10.8	8.2

Source: Statistics Bureau (<http://www.jarc.net/aging/03oct/index.shtml>)

**Table 4: Life Expectancies in Japan: 1960-2002**

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	Average life expectancies (years)		
	Male	Female	Sex difference
1960	65.32	70.19	4.87
1970	69.31	74.66	5.35
1980	73.35	78.76	5.41
1990	75.92	81.90	5.98
2000	77.72	84.60	6.88
2001	78.07	84.93	6.86
2002	78.32	85.23	6.91

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Source: Aging in Japan (<http://www.jarc.net/aging/03oct/page2.shtml>)