

STATISTICS

IT Penetration: Japan Just Fair to Middling

We all know Japan is a high-tech heaven, but when it comes to IT penetration, its numbers are, well, middling. That's the word from the Japan Center for Economic Research, which found that the nation ranked a middling 14th out of 31 countries surveyed for IT penetration. The survey was based on per capita penetration rates of fixed-line phones, mobile phones, Internet usage and personal computers amongst other things. The figures were originally compiled by the International Telecommunication Union.

The center warns that Japan's ranking could get worse if the government and corporations don't make a concerted effort to increase penetration. Among Asian countries, Japan lags behind Singapore (5th) and Hong Kong (10th). Taiwan (15th) and South Korea (19th) are still behind Japan in the overall ranking, but Taiwan comes in first in mobile phone penetration and Korea is No.4 for Internet users. These countries have been moving up the ranks quickly over the past six years, while Japan's ranking has stayed unchanged at 14 since 1999.

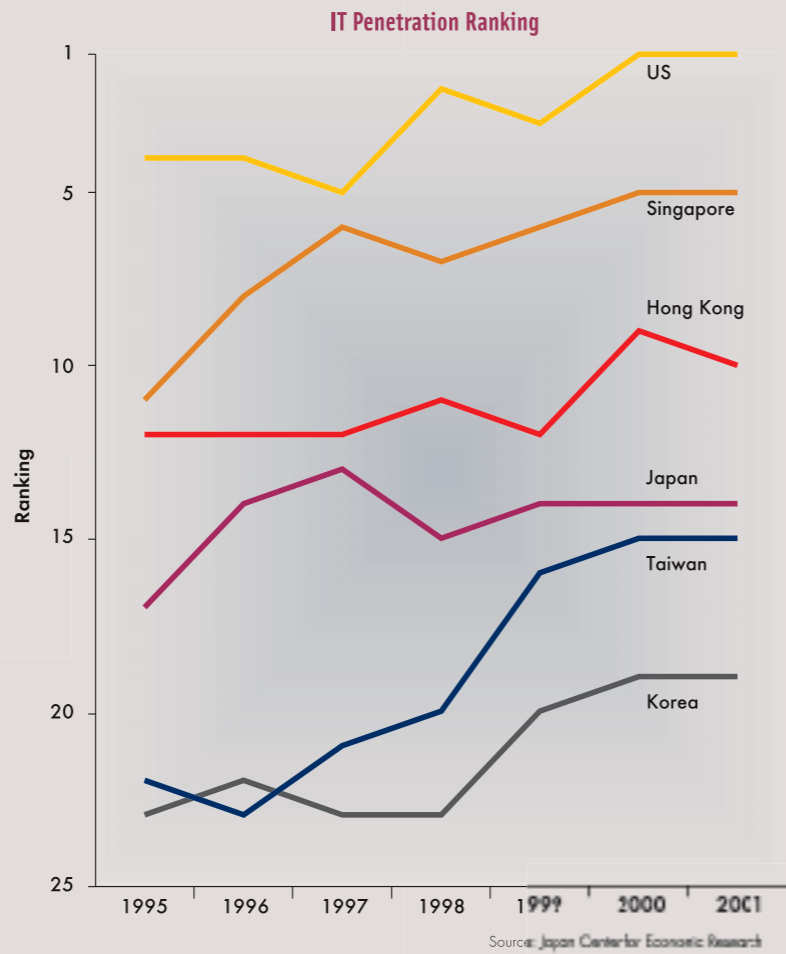
"Japan is still leading Asian nations in manufacturing, but it no longer has the same kind of leading position in the IT industry," says Nariyasu Yamasawa, a leading researcher at the center.

Japan does have its strengths. Internet penetration is growing rapidly and the country is known for its mobile phone technologies. But other countries seem to be getting stronger faster. The US secured the top position for the 2001 survey even though its mobile phone ranking (24th) wasn't that impressive. The US makes up for that with high rankings in the number of ISPs (1st) and PCs (2nd).

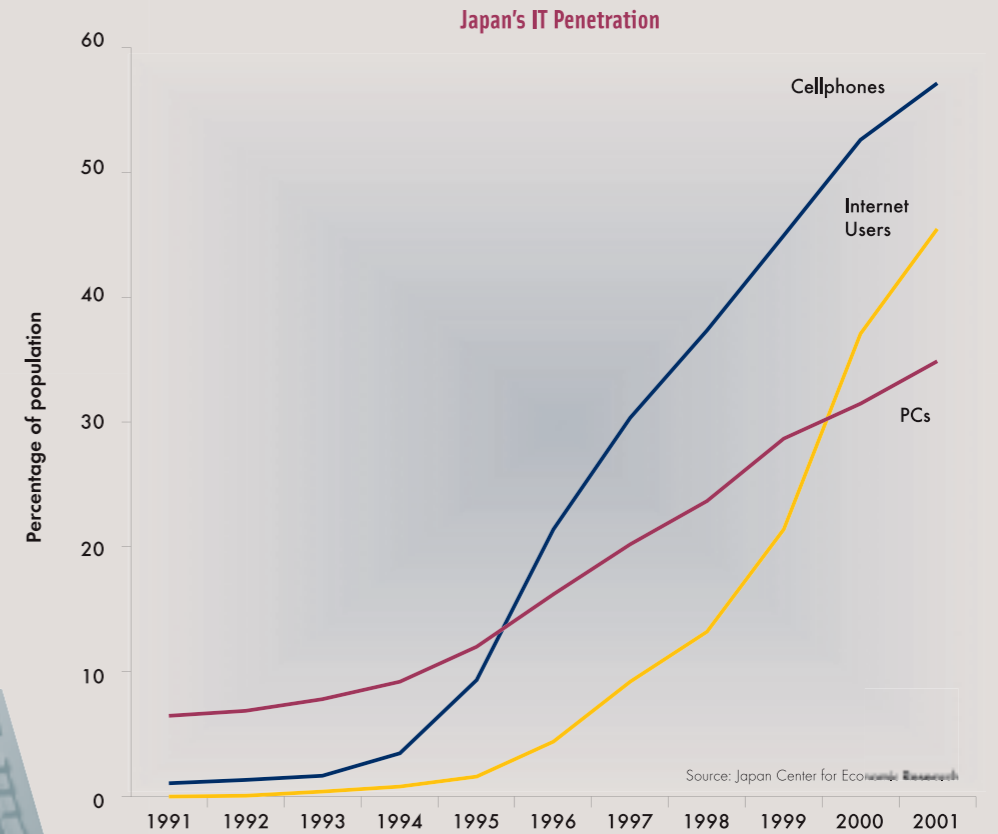
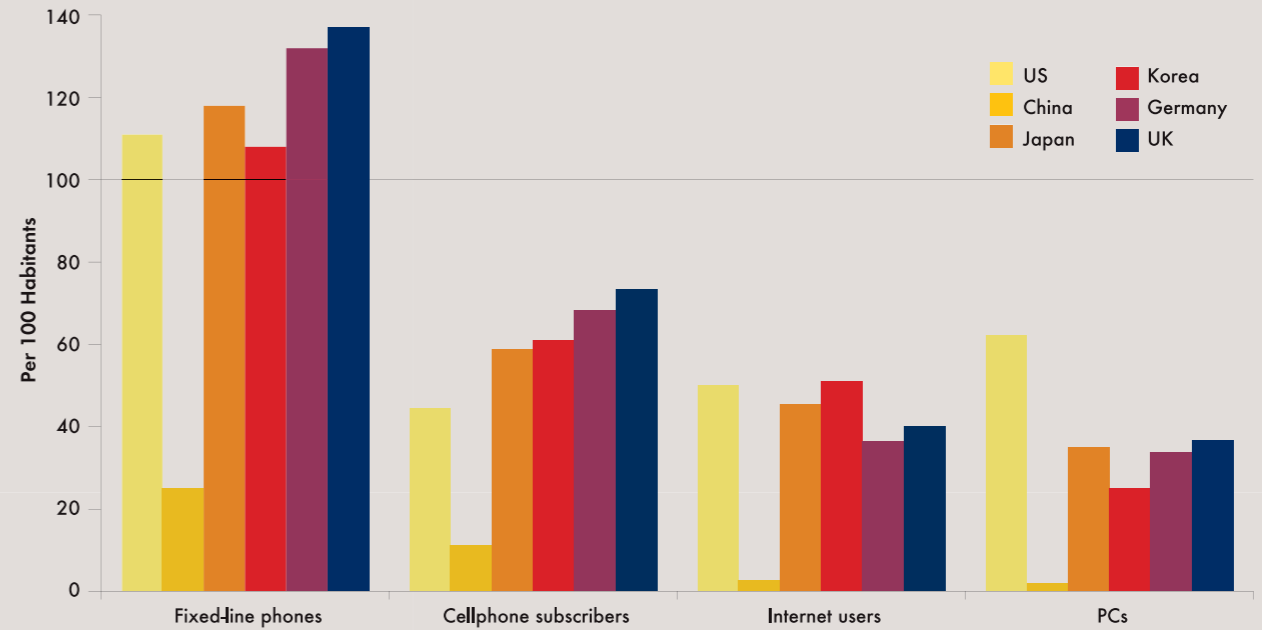
China may be a kitten in terms of per capita figures, but it is becoming a lion as far as real numbers are concerned. In absolute terms the numbers of mobile phone users and PCs are rising. China is already close to Germany (which ranks 16th in the per capita survey) and had 3.62 million mobile phone users to Germany's 3.7 million, and 25 million PCs to Germany's 27 million last year. ©

Ranking	Country	Change since 1995
1	US	▲ 3
2	Iceland	—
3	Norway	—
4	Sweden	▲ 1
5	Singapore	▲ 6
...
14	Japan	▼ 3

Source: Japan Center for Economic Research



Per Capita Penetration in 2001



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Note: All statistics apply to Japan unless otherwise noted.