

No Longer a Safe Country

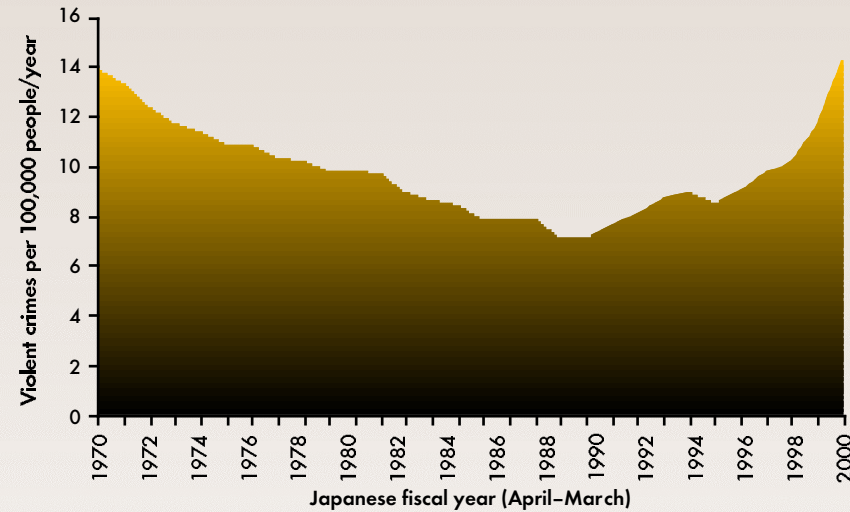
Japan used to be exceptionally safe, but times are changing fast. According to the National Police Agency, the ratio of violent crimes to total population has been rising sharply since 1998, while more and more crime-doers are getting away with it. In FY 2000, there were 14.4 violent crimes per 100,000 people, reaching the highest rate since 1971.

During the first half of 2001, only 54.4 percent of reported violent crimes led to arrests, down 10.6 percentage points from a year before. More than half of sexual assault cases went unsolved.

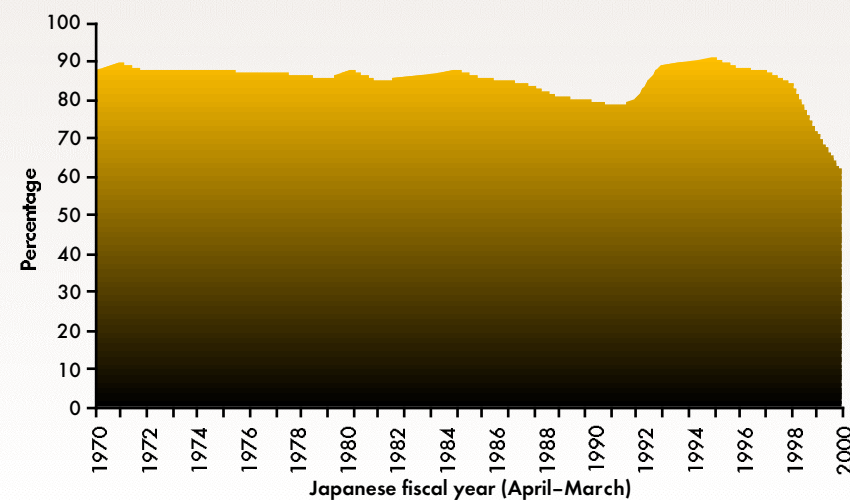
By way of comparison, the crime rate in the US declined in 2000. According to the Justice Department's National Crime Victimization Survey, the rate was the lowest since the survey began in 1973.

Source: National Police Agency

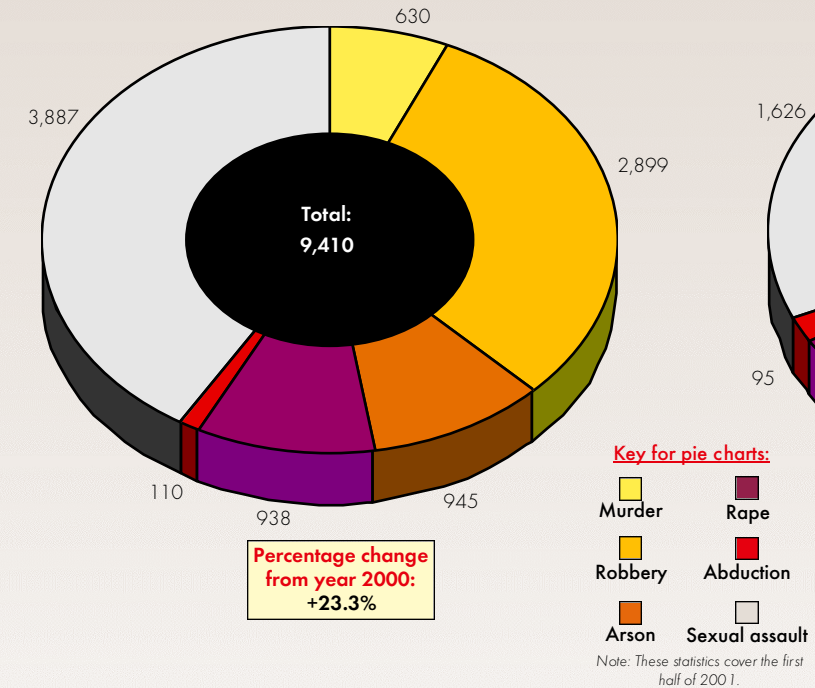
Violent Crimes Reported in Japan



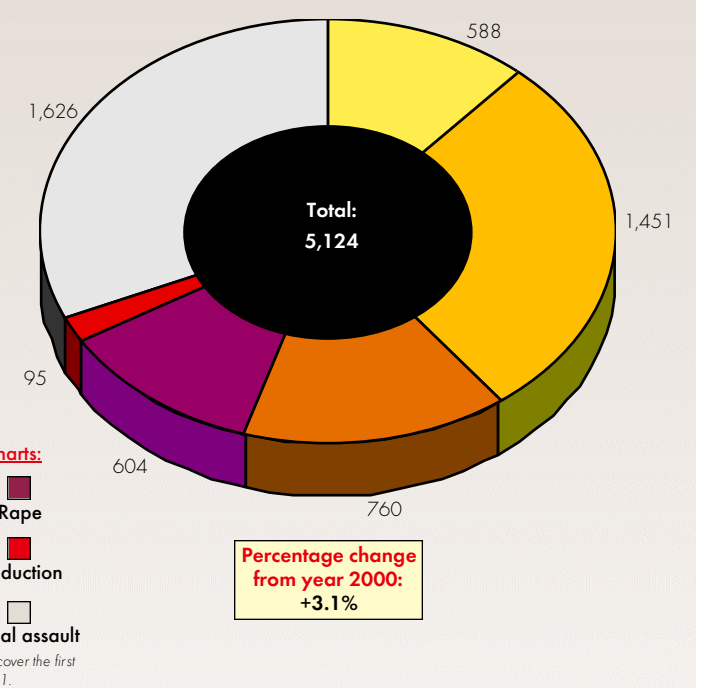
Violent Crimes That Led to Arrests



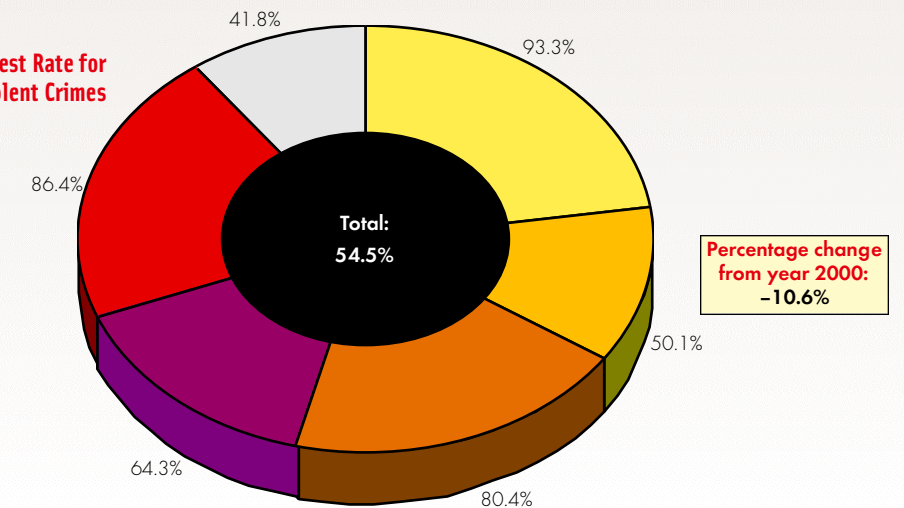
Breakdown of Types of Violent Crimes Reported



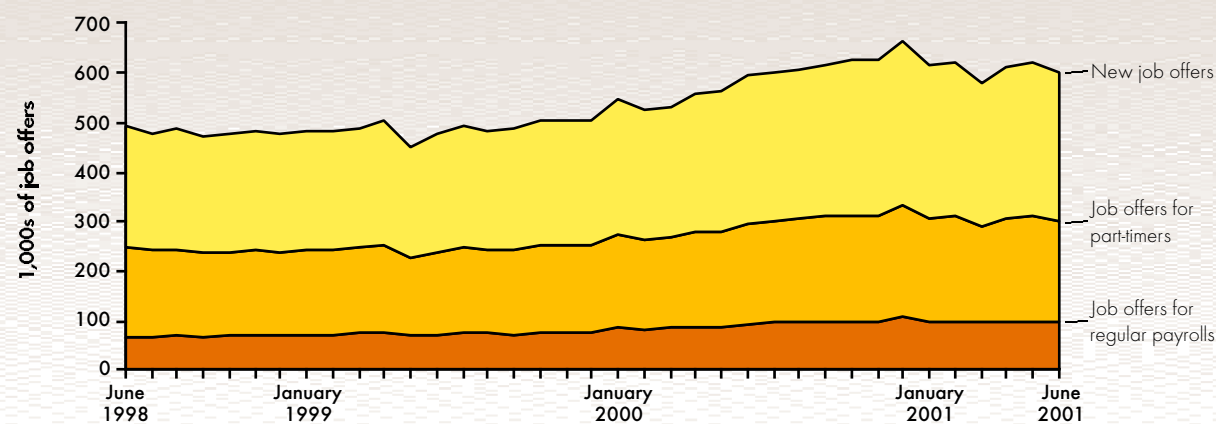
Breakdown of Violent Crimes That Led to Arrest



Comparative Arrest Rate for Violent Crimes



Number of New Job Offers



Harder Time for Part-Timers?

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has repeatedly said that despite a severe employment situation, there are 7 million job offers at the Public Employment Service Agency each year. He says that is on a level with figures during the bubble economy years. Does this mean Japan is not as bad as it looks? His statement has been criticized harshly as a temporary analysis of the situation, as the ratio of jobseekers to jobs offered continues to hover below 0.6 (six jobs for every 10 jobseekers). Some argue that Koizumi is only looking at the new jobs being offered each month, an incremental figure, rather than the overall picture.

The validity of the argument aside, there is an interesting change happening in the labor market. While the number of job offers for regular payroll jobs has remained relatively steady since its peak in early 2001 (see chart at left),

overall new job offers and offers for part-timers have been in decline. Junichi Makino, an analyst at the Daiwa Institute of Research, says this is a typical employment adjustment accompanying an economic downturn; i.e. a reduction in overtime hours being followed by a cutback in part-time workers.

Now that the government is considering forcing companies to give part-timers pension plans similar to those of regular workers, in a desperate effort to increase pension money, part-timers may face harder times in the near future.

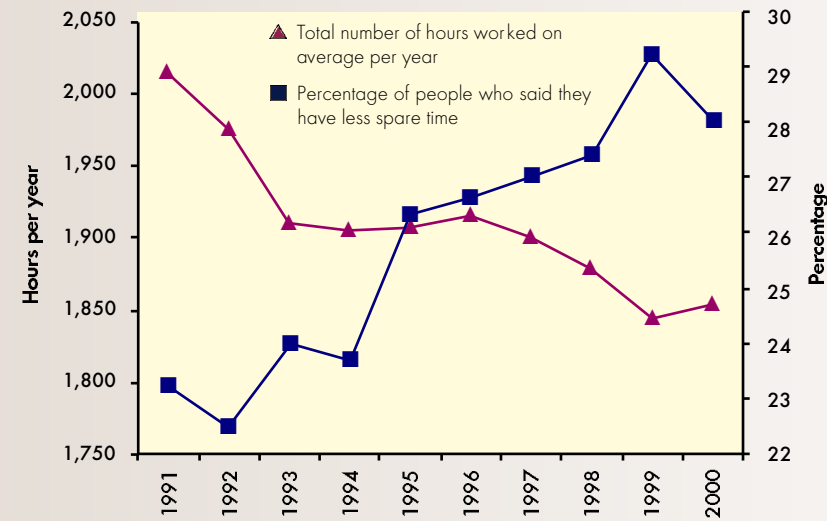
Editor's note: Koizumi's general policy speech: www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2001/0927syosin_e.html (September 27, 2001)

Sources: Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare; Daiwa Institute of Research

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Note: All statistics apply to Japan unless otherwise noted.

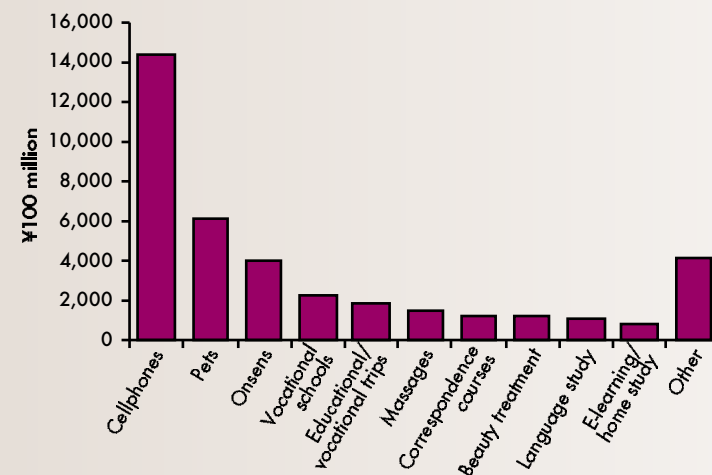
Working Hours and Perception of Leisure Time



Not Enough Spare Time to Go Around

Do you sometimes feel like you need a break after a long weekend? You are not the only one. According to the *White Paper on Leisure 2001*, published by the Institute for Free Time Design, an affiliated body of the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI), despite the fact that the working hours of Japanese have been in decline for the past 10 years, more folks feel they have less spare time. This sentiment peaked in 1999, when the number of working hours actually hit its lowest point. Working hours increased slightly in the year 2000, but the number of people feeling the strain fell to 28 percent. Go figure. The sample garnered 2,421 responses out of 3,000 samples.

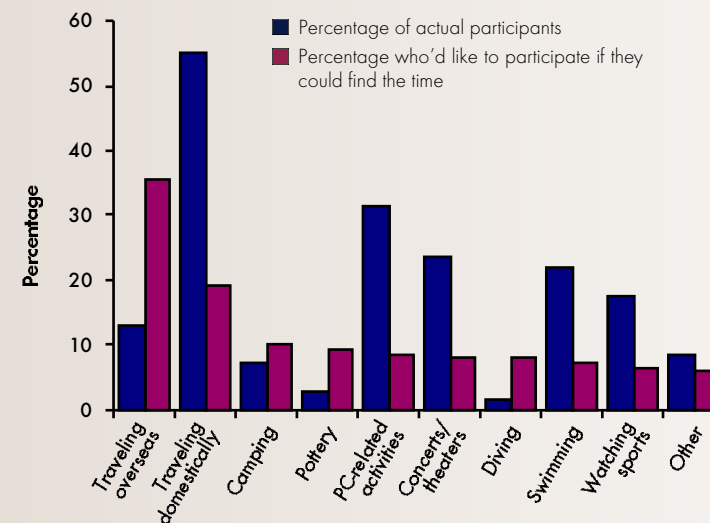
New Leisure Activities and Expenditures on Each



The Institute for Free Time Design, which has been researching Japanese leisure activities for 20 years, added 25 new categories of leisure to its 2000 survey — such as cellular phones, gardening, pets, and digital pets — to reflect social changes. The Japanese spent ¥400 million on these new categories of activities, which amounts to 4 to 5 percent of actual leisure spending.

The graph at left shows the top 10 new leisure activities in terms of volume of consumer spending in 2000. Japanese spent ¥1.4 trillion per year on cellular phones, ¥614 billion on pets, and ¥397 billion on onsen (hot spring) trips in 2001. Even though more folks complain about having less spare time, they spent ¥233 billion on vocational classes, and another ¥6 billion on language classes.

Potential Demand for Leisure Activities



What would the Japanese do if they had more spare time? The bottom graph compares the percentage of people who participate in various leisure activities to the percentage of people who want to participate in each activity but haven't got around to doing it yet. Traveling domestically and fiddling with computers are the two favorite activities. Traveling overseas is high on the wish list; only 13 percent of the sample went overseas during the year 2000, while 35 percent of the sample said they'd like to go, but didn't have a chance.

Source: Institute for Free Time Design <http://www.yoka.or.jp>