

Number of centenarians hits new high in Japan

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The number of people aged 100 or older in rapidly greying Japan has hit a record high for the 41st consecutive year, the government said Tuesday.

The [health ministry](#) said 37 out of every 100,000 people in the country are now in triple figures -- a total of more than 47,700, with 87 percent of them women.

The figure is up more than 3,300 on last year.

Centenarians include Jirouemon Kimura, a 114-year-old recognised as the world's oldest man by the Guinness World Records. The oldest woman in Japan is also 114.

A ministry official said the survey was compiled more carefully this year after it was discovered the [relatives](#) of some elderly people had kept their deaths a secret, sometimes for decades, but still received pension payments.

However, the official added that the latest number could include [centenarians](#) who are still unaccounted for after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, where the bulk of those who died were elderly.

More than 20 percent of Japan's [population](#) of 128 million are aged 65 or over, one of the highest proportions in the world.

As well as having famously long-living people, Japan also has one of the planet's lowest birthrates, with many young people putting off starting a family because of the burden on their finances, lifestyles and careers.

The two issues combine to create a headache for policy planners, with fewer working age people having to provide for an increasing number of elderly.

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