

CITY PLANNING IN TOKYO

Tokyo, including its surrounding seven suburban governmental regions called prefectures, is home to more than 38 million people. At Shibuya's famous street crossing in downtown Tokyo, there are over one thousand people that cross the street per minute. Public transportation services, restaurants, and department stores are crowded during rush hours and holidays.

Despite this, Tokyo remains one of the safest cities in the world. Public transportation is highly reliable and punctual. Tokyo boasts that there are enough restaurants, hotels, and apartments to feed and house its citizens and any visitors.

How does Tokyo manage and plan for its massive population?

City officials point to a safe and reliable public transportation system as one of the most important aspects of managing a large population. Greater Tokyo has 136 separate rail lines. Shinjuku Station alone sees over 1 million commuters daily. Transportation employees work to ensure that trains and buses arrive and leave on time. In central Tokyo, there are trains that arrive and depart stations every three to four minutes. Train "pushers" help commuters get on crowded trains so that the doors safely close behind them.

Since 2012, many buildings have been built upwards, with multiple stories or floors, rather than with a wide layout. Tall buildings with many stories less floor space to maximize the use of land. Engineers must also be concerned with the potential for earthquakes in the region, seeing to it that buildings can withstand shaking. Tokyo Skytree, a tower that houses a television and radio broadcasting corporation, has a total of 35 floors, with three of the floors underground.

Because of limited land availability and its expense, hotels and apartments in Tokyo are very small. Houses are built very close to each other to save space. It is normal for an apartment in Tokyo to consist of just one room.

City planners have also begun the concept of *machizukuri*. This Japanese word means "town-planning," and it involves the empowerment of local neighborhoods and smaller villages in the outlying prefectures to create green community spaces, plant trees, and preserve natural resources. Restaurants, medical clinics, grocery stores, libraries, community activity centers, and post offices are being planned and built so that neighborhood residents can walk to these services from their homes.

While Tokyo has made progress in managing many population-related issues, concerns continue. Air pollution and waste management are current issues. Some progress has been made in reducing auto emissions, but factory emissions remain at higher levels.

The Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2021 have placed increased attention and focus on these environmental concerns. Tokyo officials are trying to address air quality and heat-related issues for the Summer Games. Stricter indoor and outdoor smoking bans are examples of one way to improve air quality.

Tokyo is a megacity that continues to address and plan for the many effects a large and dense population has on the health and welfare of its citizens, its infrastructure, and the environment.

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