

The Vital Functions

of Japan's Remote

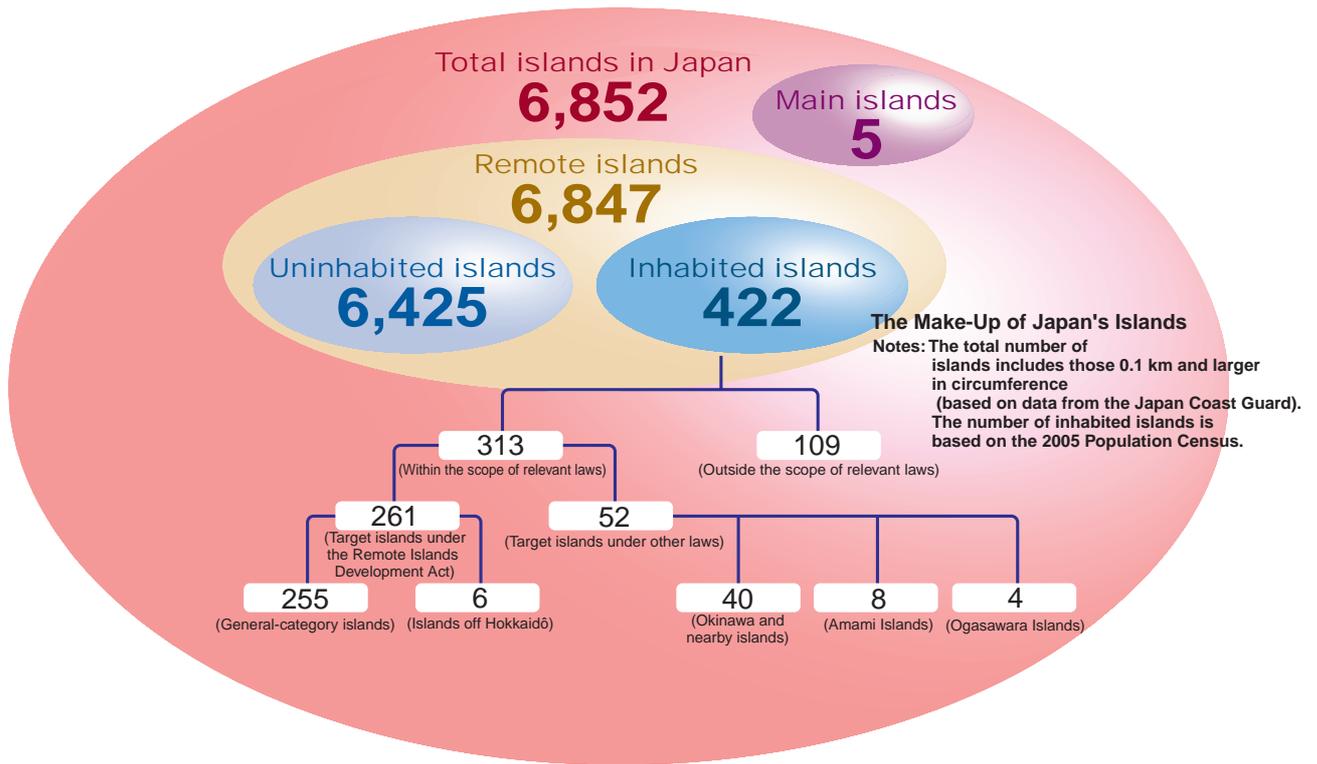
Islands





Spotlight on Japanese Islands

Japan is made up of 6,852 islands of varying sizes. Five of these are the so-called main islands of Hokkaidô, Honshû, Shikoku, Kyûshû, and the main island of Okinawa in the Okinawa Islands. Of the country's 6,847 outlying or "remote" islands, 422 are home to human populations, while the remaining 6,425 are uninhabited.



The Importance of Japan's Remote Islands

Even for individuals living on Japan's main islands, the role played by outlying islands is a critical one. In guaranteeing the country an exclusive economic zone in waters within a 200-nautical mile radius from them and by virtue of their underwater continental shelves, smaller islands surrounded by open sea fill the vital role of demarcating Japan's sovereign territory. Other significant uses for the islands include conserving and using marine resources, ensuring the safety of travel by sea, safeguarding maritime law and order, procuring food supplies, and surveying climatic and oceanic phenomena. Remote islands are heir to a wealth of precious cultural, traditional, and historical legacies and are replete with natural surroundings. Moreover, on outlying islands time passes languidly in a way that city dwellers seem to have forgotten.

Revitalizing Japan's Remote Islands

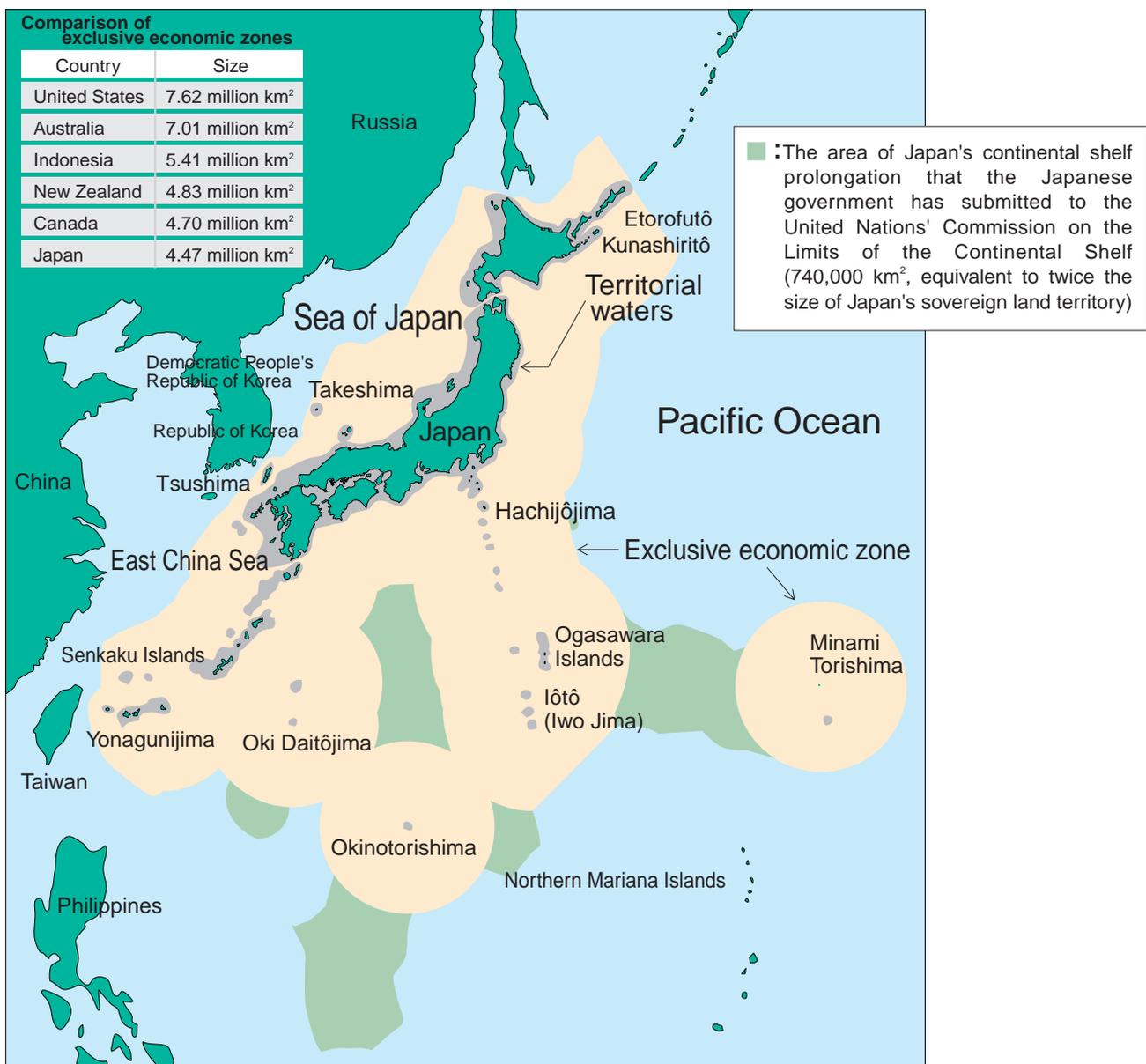
Based on the Remote Islands Development Act and other laws specifically targeting outlying islands, Japan is actively working to improve such key areas of local infrastructure as roads, ports, sewage and drainage systems, and high-speed communications in order to improve quality of life for residents. A unique support system has been established to ensure more convenient modes of transportation, promote local industries, guarantee medical care, provide better care for the elderly, advance education and culture, and promote tourism and exchange. Various efforts are being undertaken to promote the islands' interests, including revitalization, public relations surveys, and the holding of events. These measures require the continued support and understanding of the public.

Islands: Cornerstones of a Maritime Nation

Japan is one of the world's foremost island countries. Islands secure roughly 50 percent of Japan's exclusive economic zone, and also serve as contact points between Japan and other countries, such as the Republic of Korea, China, and Russia. Small, outlying islands also provide a base from which to monitor poaching and conduct maritime rescue operations, and serve as ports of call for ships in distress.

These geographic characteristics allow islands to perform the following main functions.

■ Defining the extent of national borders, sovereign land territory and waters, exclusive economic zones, and continental shelves (securing land territory and territorial waters)



Note: The "exclusive economic zone" refers to territorial waters within 200 nautical miles (roughly 370 km) of the baseline of Japan's territorial waters. Japan is recognized to have exclusive rights to explore and develop marine, mineral, and other resources within this zone. Japan also has jurisdiction over matters relating to scientific surveys and environmental conservation in these waters.

Monitoring poaching, illegal entry, and smuggling (upholding maritime law and order)

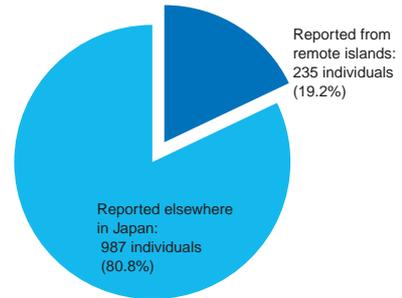


Residents of islands at the borders of Japan's sovereign territory help protect Japanese resources from poaching by foreign ships (waters off Tsushima, Nagasaki Prefecture)

A station from which island residents maintain watch against illegal entry (Oronoshima, Fukuoka Prefecture)



Oronoshima Illegal Entry Monitoring Station
Japan Maritime Rescue Oronoshima Station
Known cases of groups of individuals illegally entering Japan



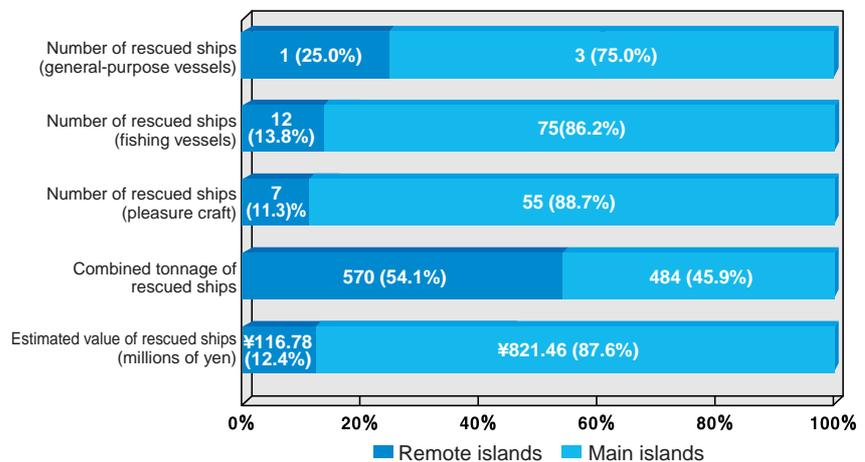
Source: "Immigration Control 1998," Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice, October 1998.

Conducting rescue operations, serving as emergency ports of call, etc. (ensuring maritime safety)



Remote islands serve as stations for watching over ships at sea (Ôshima, Wakayama Prefecture)

Maritime rescue operations conducted from remote islands



Notes: Figures for islands are limited to those islands specified in the Remote Islands Development Act, the Act on Special Measures for the Promotion and Development of the Ogasawara Islands, the Act on Special Measures for the Promotion and Development of the Amami Islands, and the Act on Special Measures for the Promotion and Development of Okinawa. They represent the share of vessels (number of vessels, tonnage, monetary value) aided by rescue stations, fishing boats, etc. Figures are from January 1 to December 31, 2006.

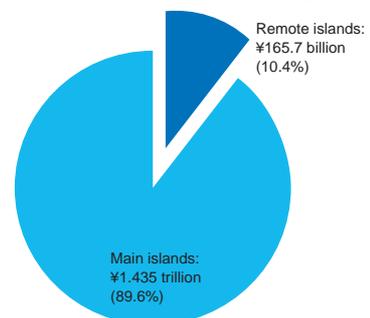
Source: Marine Rescue Japan data.

Bases for procuring fish and other food supplies (procuring and complementing food supplies)



The ocean underpins the Japanese way of life, and remote islands are located on its frontier (Okushiritô, Hokkaidô)

Value of marine products shipments



Note: Figures for remote islands represent only those islands specified in the four laws relating to remote islands development.
Sources: "Annual Statistics on Remote Islands 2007," National Institute for Japanese Islands; "Statistics on Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries," Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, 2005.

Islands: Lands of Life

Against a backdrop of severe environmental conditions, remote islands have retained their bountiful nature owing to an appropriate level of ongoing care from humans. And since they are bounded on all sides by the sea, the islands have come to nurture a wide range of unique plant and animal life; therefore, in a larger sense they also work to protect the global environment and ecology. Outlying islands also serve as an important setting for recreational and health-related activities.

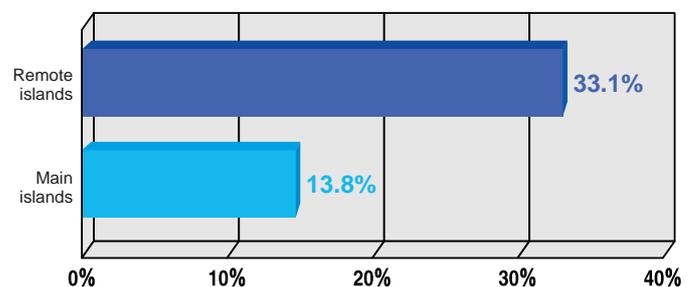
These environmental characteristics allow islands to perform the following main functions.

Protecting the habitats of various plants and animals (preserving species and ecosystems)



Islands are home to a wide range of animal species (Rishiri, Hokkaidō)

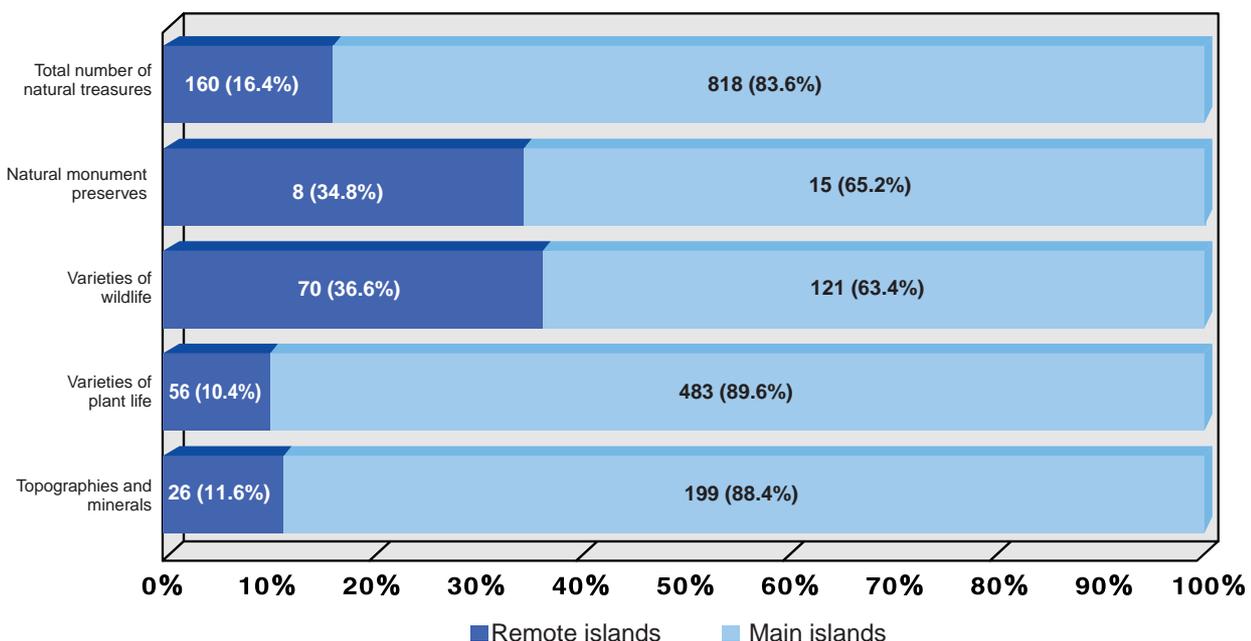
Total proportion of land occupied by nature parks



Note: Figures for remote islands represent only those islands specified in the four laws relating to remote islands development.

Sources: "Annual Statistics on Remote Islands 2007," National Institute for Japanese Islands; "Data on the Protection of the Natural Environment," Ministry of the Environment, March 2006.

Comparison of the number of Japan's designated natural treasures



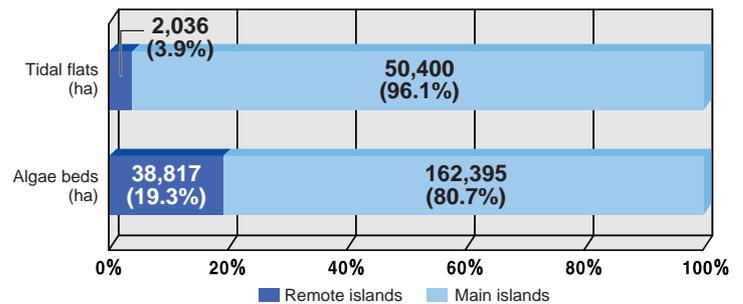
Sources: *Nihon no shima gaido: Shimadas* (Shimadas: Guide to Japan's Islands), National Institute for Japanese Islands, 2004; materials from other sources including the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Algae beds, tidal flats, forests, and farmland keep air and water clean (environmental purification and preservation)



Harmonious lifestyles have helped preserve islands' abundant natural surroundings (Nakanoshima, Kagoshima Prefecture)

Combined area of tidal flats and algae beds



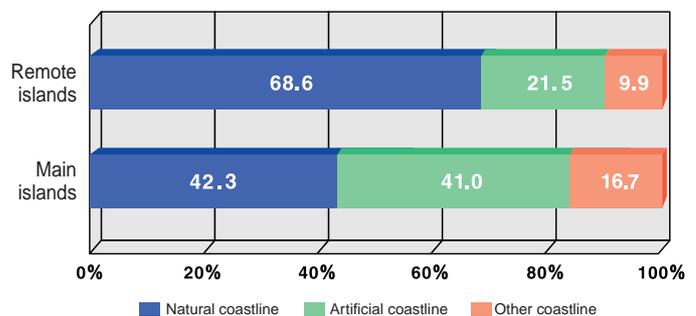
Source: "The Report of the Marine Biotic Environment Survey in the 4th National Survey on the Natural Environment," Vol. 1 (Tidal Flats) and Vol. 2 (Algal and Sea-Grass Beds), Nature Conservation Bureau, Environment Agency and Marine Parks Center of Japan, July 1997.

Remote islands are resources for marine recreation and sightseeing, restoration of health, and environmental education (provision of amenities)



Enjoying and learning from nature (Iriomotejima, Okinawa Prefecture)

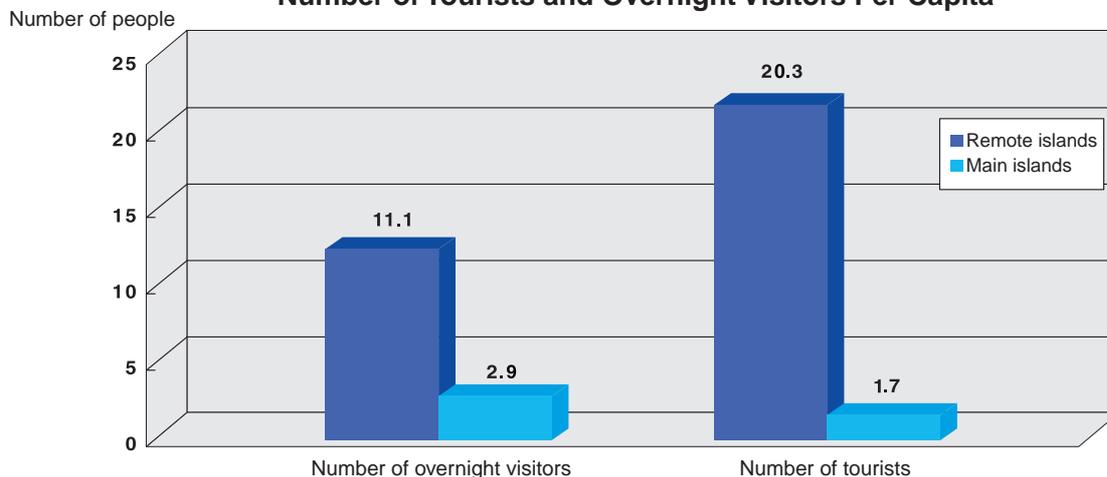
Percentage of natural coastline



Notes: Here the main island of Okinawa is included in the remote islands category. Natural coastlines are those defined as having no man-made structures. Semi-natural coastlines are partly occupied by man-made structures but retain the natural state of their tidal zone, or have man-made structures in their waters but not on shore.

Source: "The Report of the Shoreline Survey in the 5th National Survey on the Natural Environment," Environment Agency, March 1998. (Excludes data for Hyogo Prefecture.)

Number of Tourists and Overnight Visitors Per Capita



Note: Figures for remote islands represent only those islands specified in the four laws relating to remote islands development.
Sources: "Annual Statistics on Remote Islands 2007," National Institute for Japanese Islands; "White Paper on Tourism in Japan, 2006," Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism.

Islands: Repositories of Culture

Japan's outlying islands have a historical background as seafaring outposts and bases for exchange with foreign countries, coupled with an independence bred by seclusion, among various other attributes. For centuries these islands have sustained a deeply distinct lifestyle, and they are a source of depth and diversity for Japanese culture.

Their cultural characteristics allow remote islands to perform the following main functions.

■ **Employing local culture in hands-on learning, serving as sites for mutual exchange (venues for education, exchange)**



Much can be learned from islanders' ways of life (lobster fishing in waters off Fukuejima, Nagasaki Prefecture)

■ **Societies living in harmony with the ocean and other aspects of the natural world foster various ways of life (sustaining local communities)**

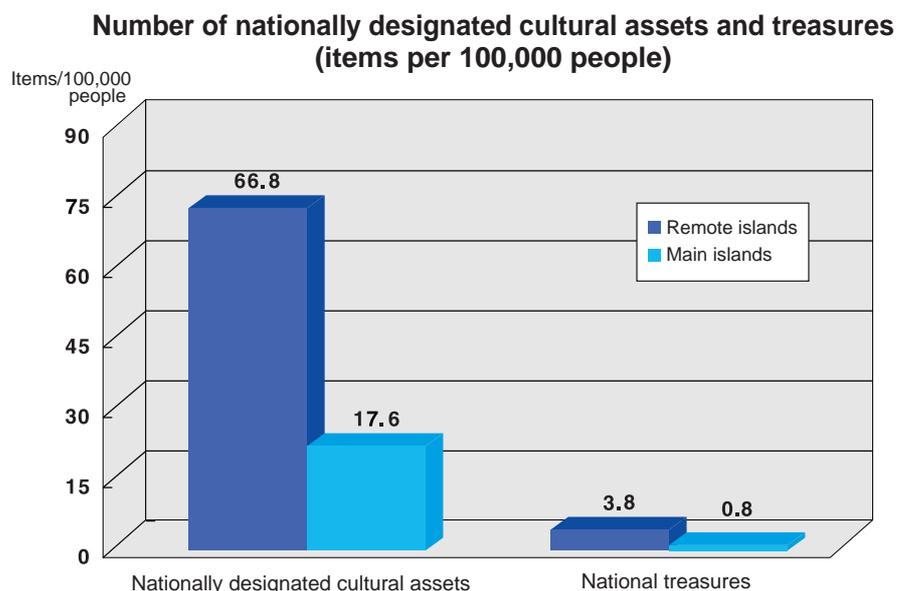


Using nature's bounty is a part of islanders' wisdom (*wappani*, a traditional style of cooking in Awashima, Niigata Prefecture)

■ **Protecting unique scenery and aspects of traditional culture such as festivals, cultural assets, and craftsmanship (preserving traditional culture)**

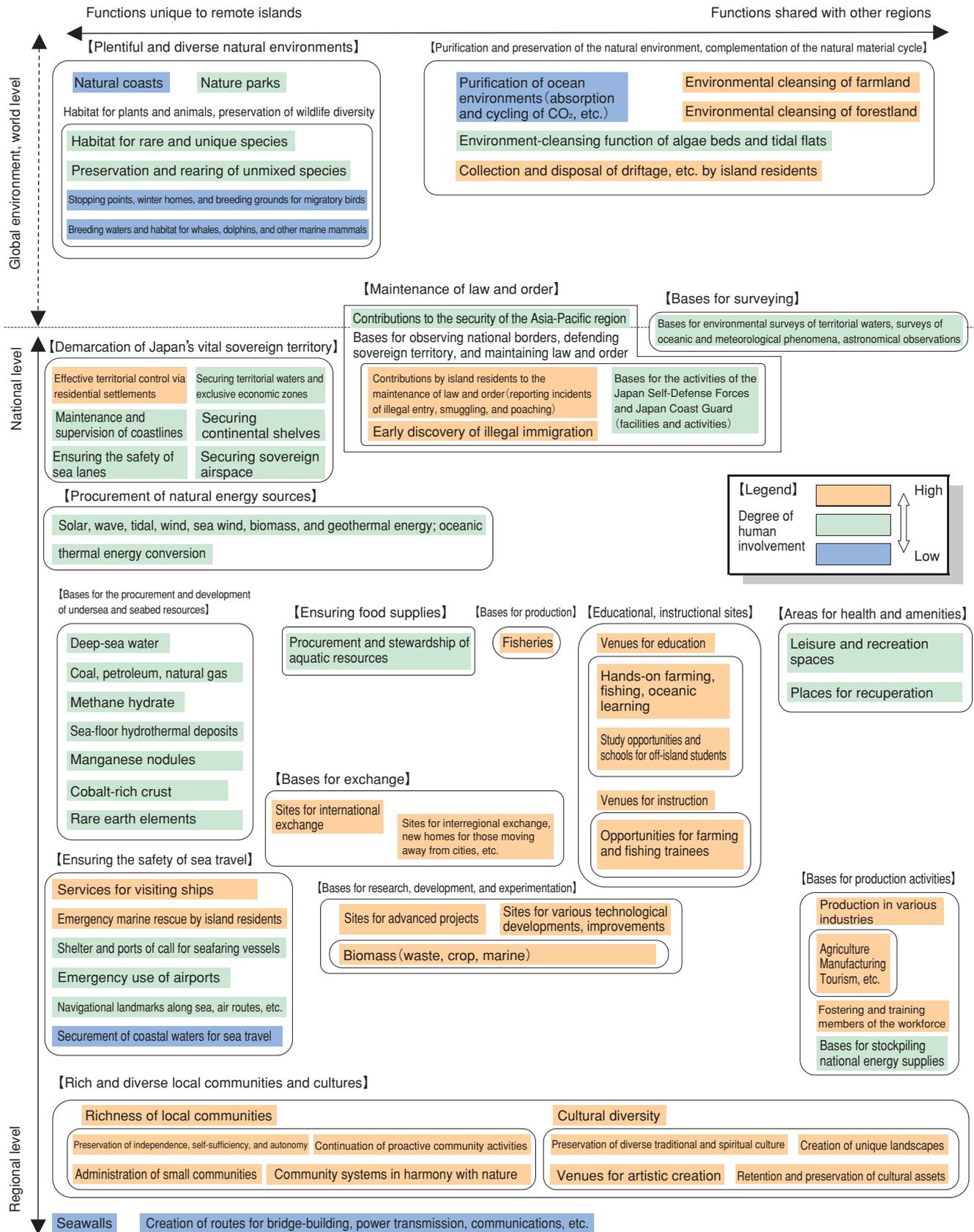


Remote islands provide a wealth of cultural legacies (a *boze* festival god from Akusekijima, Kagoshima Prefecture)



Sources: *Nihon no shima gaido: Shimadas* and "Annual Statistics on Remote Islands 2007," National Institute for Japanese Islands; materials from other sources including the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Functions of Remote Islands in Line with Japan's National Interests

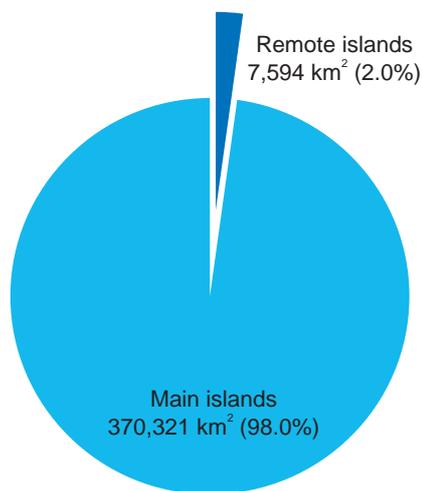


Note: Created based on the "Study on Remote Islands' Diverse Functions, Including the Preservation of Sovereign Territory and the Environment for Fiscal 2000," National Institute for Japanese Islands, March 2001. (Commissioned by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism.)

Key Data

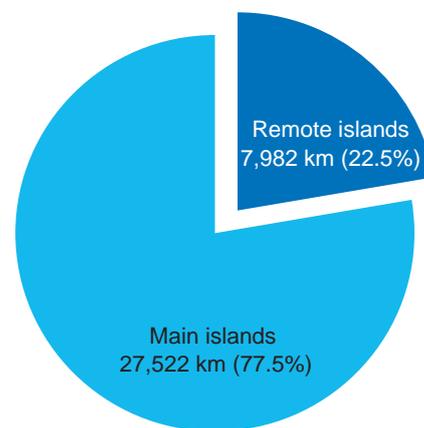
Combined area of Japan's remote islands

Japan's outlying islands account for no more than 2% of the total size of Japan's sovereign territory. Altogether they correspond to an area larger than either Shizuoka (7,329 km²) or Kôchi Prefecture (7,105 km²).



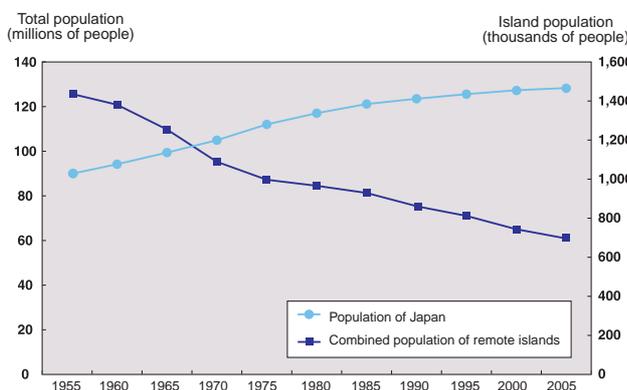
Remote islands' coastline length

Japan's outlying islands account for more than a fifth of the country's total coastline. This is greater than the coastline of either Italy (7,600 km) or Brazil (7,491 km).



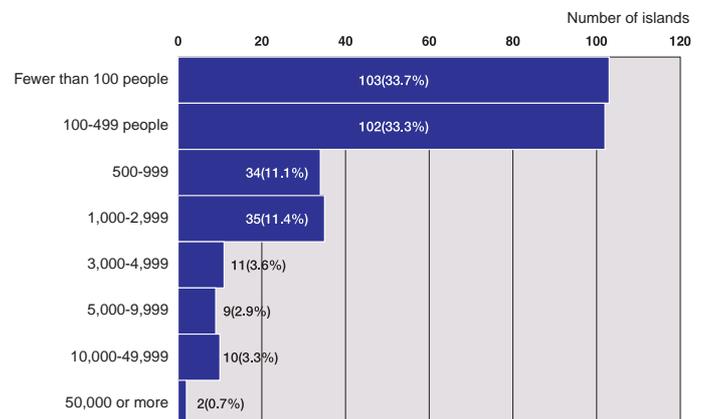
Remote islands' populations

If the combined population of Japan's remote islands were set at 100 in 1955, that number would have shrunk to 52 by 2005. Their population was roughly equivalent to the population of Shimane Prefecture (approximately 742,000) in 2005.



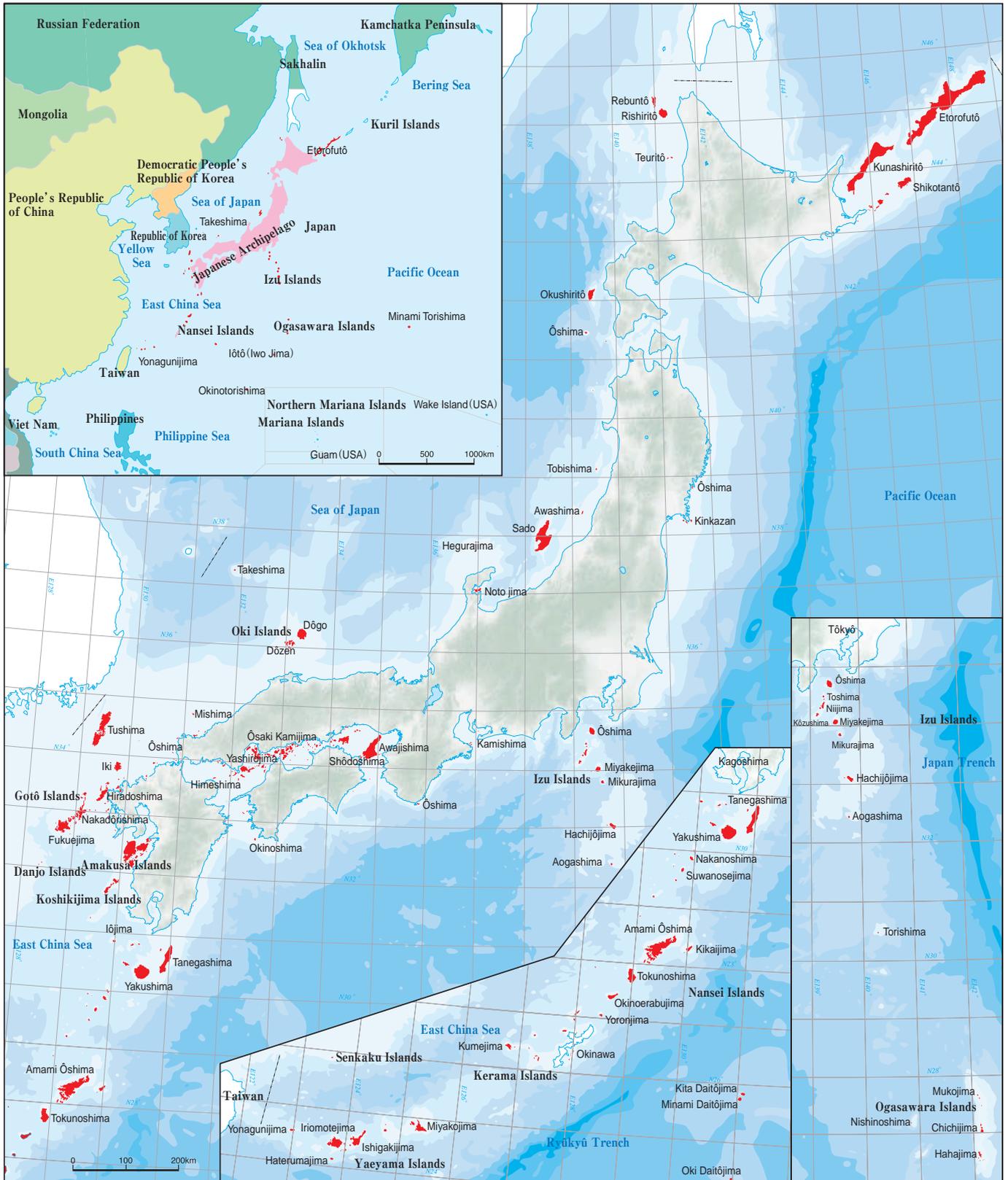
Number of remote islands by size of population

Grouping remote islands according to population shows that over half are inhabited by fewer than 500 individuals.



Note: Figures for remote islands represent only those islands specified in the four laws relating to remote islands development. Sources: "Annual Statistics on Remote Islands 2007," National Institute for Japanese Islands; Population Census, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; "Fiscal 2005 Coastal Statistics," Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism; *Databukku: Nihon no kaiyô riyô* (Databook: Japan's Use of Oceanic Resources), National Land Planning Research Committee.

Japan, One of the World's Foremost Island Nations



Note: Japan's remote islands are shaded in red.



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