

# The COVID-19 Pandemic and Net Migration in the Tokyo Area

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After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, net migration to the Tokyo Area declined sharply. Since Tokyo's unipolar population concentration has long had various adverse effects on Japanese society, a seemingly new trend of reverse migration has attracted attention. However, excessive focus on the impact of the pandemic may lead us to overlook other factors in population movement that occurred around the year 2020. To place the recent decline in net migration in the context of longer-term population change in the Tokyo Area, this paper examines the trend in net migration after the 2010s and its relationship to demographic/socioeconomic factors. The analysis reveals the following points.

First, the analysis of the time-lagged correlation between in-migration and out-migration indicates that the level of out-migration corresponds well to the level of in-migration four years earlier. As for the volume of out-migration in 2020, the estimate based on the level of in-migration in 2016 is close to the actual volume of out-migration in 2020. Out-migration in 2020 could have reached a high level even if the COVID-19 pandemic had not occurred. Second, according to demographic shift-share analysis, approximately twenty percent of the 2019-2021 in-migration decline is explained by population decline. This population decline includes the decline caused by Japan's low fertility, which began long before the pandemic. Third, the data on employment opportunities and annual income indicate that regional disparities in economic factors were shifting in the direction of suppressing net migration growth in the late 2010s. This implies that the increased net migration in the late 2010s (a benchmark used by many researchers to evaluate the effects of the pandemic) was somewhat temporary, likely due to period specific events such as the infrastructure and commercial development for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. These findings suggest that while the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the sharp decline in net migration, pre-pandemic conditions were already in place to bring about a certain level of decline after 2020.

keywords: Tokyo Area, net migration, COVID-19 pandemic, late 2010s