The Quality of Life in Japan

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Abstract   This study is part of a collaborative project examining the quality of life in Confucian societies in Asia. Our major findings suggest that, when our sixteen specific life domains are grouped into three life spheres, namely, material, post-material, and public, the Japanese people tend to be most satisfied with the post-material sphere of life and least satisfied with the public sphere of life such as the condition of environment and welfare system. In searching the direct, independent effects of demographics, lifestyles, value priorities, and domain assessments on the quality of life, none of the public life domain assessments shows a significant impact on the quality of life, while friendships and spiritual life in the post-material sphere of life are an important determinant. Equally notable is the finding that neither educational attainment nor household income contributes significantly to the experience of subjective well-being. Leading a global lifestyle also affects positively the quality of life. Finally, being married and satisfaction with marital life appear to be powerful and prevalent influence on the quality of life in Japan.

For decades, Japan has been the leading economic powerhouse in East Asia. It is the world's second largest economy, behind only the United States, despite having recently experienced a decade of economic downturn due to overinvestment in stock and real estate markets. Prolonged deflation in general prices and a declining household income now threaten to bring another economic slowdown. Japan also faces the problems of a rapidly aging population and a widening economic gap between rural and urban areas. Given these circumstances, the quality of life has become a subject of increasing and widespread concern in policy circles and the scholarly community.

This study offers a comprehensive account of the quality of life experienced by the Japanese people. This analysis is based on the 2006 AsiaBarometer Survey (ABS). The

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study begins with a brief discussion of recent changes in the objective conditions of life, and then the second section highlights the demographic profiles of the respondents to the ABS. The third section on lifestyles examines the various ways in which ordinary Japanese live their lives on a daily basis. The fourth section on value priorities looks at the types of resources and activities people value most in their lives. The fifth section on the general quality of life compares the extent to which people in different groups experience feelings of happiness, enjoyment, achievement, and overall quality of life. The sixth section on the assessments of life domains compares the extent to which people feel satisfied or dissatisfied with sixteen specific life domains, and identifies the particular domains with which they find most and least satisfying. The seventh section on sources of life quality estimates and compares the direct, independent effects of demographics, lifestyles, value priorities, and domain assessments on living a life of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement. The last section highlights major findings and discusses their implications from the perspective of policymaking.

1 Japan as a Place to Live

Japan is an island chain located east of the Korean Peninsula and between the North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan. It consists of more than 6,000 islands, the largest of which are Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. Together these four islands account for about 97% of total land area, which is slightly smaller than the size of the state of California in the United States. The weather consists of four seasons, and the rainy season continues from June to early July.

The population of Japan is estimated at 127 million for 2007 with a growth rate of −0.09%. Japanese account for 99% of its total population with very small minority groups, including Koreans, Chinese, and Ainu. People under the age of 14 account for 14% of the population, people between the ages of 15 and 64 for 66%, and people over 65 years old for 20%. The life expectancy estimate for those born in 2007 is 82.0 years old, with males averaging 78.7 years old and females averaging 85.6 years old. The literacy rate is 99%. More than 99% of children are enrolled in elementary school, and 94% of all lower-school graduates are enrolled in high school. Concerning religion, 84% of the Japanese people observe both Shinto and Buddhist practices, and 16% observe other religions, including Christianity (0.7%). According to 2005 statistics, 17.7 million Japanese travel abroad, while 6.7 million foreigners visit Japan annually.[1]

Japanese society is rapidly aging with fewer children, and this problem is much more serious in rural areas. According to an opinion poll conducted by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan (MLIT) (2007), people in rural areas worry most about the future of their communities in the wake of the rapidly aging and declining population in 2006. More than 30% of respondents in local municipalities worry about a population decrease, while approximately 10% of the survey respondents in larger cities worry about the same problem.

Japan is the largest and most advanced economy in Asia. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Japan achieved rapid and sustained economic growth under the leadership of the Liberal Democratic Party and as a result, became a first-rank economic power. After a severe and protracted slowdown in economic growth during the 1990s, the Japanese economy has been gradually reviving since 2003. The real GDP per capita is estimated at $38,500 in

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[1] The currency exchange rate at a 104 yen to the dollar as of the end of 2004 was used.

2006, with the growth rate at 2%. According to the survey done by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, however, the average household income in 2005 was the lowest it had been since 1989, at around $51,254 (*Kyodo News*, May 30, 2007).[2] The percentage of the surveyed households who said "struggling with making a living" was 56%, which is the highest figure since 1989 (*Kyodo News*, May 30, 2007). Labor force participation for men was 69% while that for women was 46% in January 2008 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Labor Force Survey 2008). The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.8% in February 2008 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Labor Force Survey 2008). The number of average working hours per week in 2007 was 41.2 h, which is lower than the 42.5 h reported in 1997 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Labor Force Survey 2007). Average daily sleeping hours were 7.7 h in 2006 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Basic Survey on Social Life 2006).

Legally, Japan is a society of equal opportunity and fair justice. Women in Japan are supposed to be treated equally, but they face widespread discrimination in employment. According to *The Times* (October 15, 2005), "Only one in eight lawyers is a woman, as is one in ten company managers, one in thirty ambassadors and one in seventy senior civil servants." The parliamentary elections in September 2005 proved to be a major step forward for women in Japanese politics; 43 women were elected to the 480-member lower house, the highest number ever.

According to the 2008 Index of Economic Freedom published by the Heritage Foundation (2008), the economy of Japan is assessed 73% free, which is ranked seventeenth among 157 nations and fifth out of 30 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Although Japan ranks very high in eight areas, business freedom, trade freedom, fiscal freedom, monetary freedom, investment freedom, property rights, freedom from corruption, and labor freedom, it is relatively low in the two other areas of government size and financial freedom. In this regard, the Heritage Foundation points out that public spending amounts to more than one-third of the GDP and the financial sector is subject to strict government control. The balance of Japanese government debt in 2008 is estimated to be 182% of GDP (Ministry of Finance Japan 2007).

Politically, Japan represents the oldest liberal democracy in Asia. In the *Freedom in the World 2007* sss survey conducted by Freedom House (2007), Japan received the best score of 1 with respect to political rights and the second best score of 2 with respect to civil liberties. It was, therefore, rated as a "free" country. On a scale of 1 to 7, Freedom House measures the extent to which individuals in the country experience political freedom in terms of the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and functioning of government. Similarly, it measures civil liberties in terms of freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. According to the Global Peace Index 2008 developed by Vision of Humanity (2008), Japan is one of the most peaceful countries in the world. On this index, which ranked 121 nations according to their relative peacefulness, Japan ranked fifth.

On the quality of governance, Japan is rated relatively well. The World Bank's Governance Indicators (WGI) project reports a set of aggregate indicators that measure the quality of governance for 212 countries and territories between 1996 and 2007 (Kaufmann et al. 2008). For each society, the project measures six dimensions of governance: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. Taking into account inherent error in measuring governance, the most recent Japanese percentile ranks are estimated to

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[2] We use the exchange rate at 110 yen to the dollar.

be 75–90% on the five dimensions: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and control of corruption. For the rule of law and control of corruption, the percentile is estimated to be between 90 and 100% (The World Bank 2008). According to the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (2007), which ranked 180 countries in terms of how corrupt public officials and politicians are perceived to be, Japan ranked seventeenth least corrupt. This rating partly reflects the former Prime Minister Koizumi's reform effort to break down the corruption between the government and big business.

Japan is one of the most digitalized societies in the world. The International Tele-communication Union follows the same methodology as the Human Development Index (HDI) and develops the Digital Opportunity Index (DOI) to measure the opportunity ordinary citizens have to access a variety of digital information affordably and equitably. On this index, Japan ranks second among 181 countries, behind only South Korea (International Telecommunication Union 2006). On the International Communication and Technology (OCT) index, which measures each country's ICT networks, skills, and use, Japan ranks nineteenth among 139 countries (International Telecommunication Union 2006). Broadband subscribers in Japan pay 0.07 US$ per 100 kilobytes per second per month in 2006, the cheapest price in 166 countries where broadband is commercially available (the average is 0.42 US$) (International Telecommunication Union 2006). Japan ranks fourteenth on the national broadband penetration rate at 22.1 per 100 population in 2007 (International Telecommunication Union 2007). 86% of households have mobile phones in 2006 and 71% of households own personal computers in 2007, and the penetration rate of the Internet for households increased from 34% in 2000 to 79% in 2006 (Cabinet office, The White Paper on the Japanese People's lifestyle in 2007). The number of Internet users totals 87 million, which is about 70% of the population (Cabinet office, The White Paper on the Japanese People's lifestyle in 2007).

Japan is widely known as a country where people experience a good quality of life. According to UNDPs (2008) Human Development Report 2007/2008, Japan ranks ninth among 177 countries with a score of 0.953 on its human development index. The opinion polls conducted recently by the Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government (Cabinet office, The White Paper on the Japanese People's lifestyle in 2007), however, shows that the percentage of the Japanese people who are satisfied with the overall aspects of their life has decreased, while the percentage of those who are dissatisfied has increased over the past three decades. In 2005, the percentage of those who are satisfied, 36%, registered the lowest since 1978. The percentage of the dissatisfied nearly doubled from 16% in 1978 to 28% in 2005. Moreover, those who are searching for spiritual richness now outnumber those seeking material wealth by a large margin of more than 2 to 1 (63% vs. 30%). The same survey also revealed significant decreases in the interpersonal contact between parents and children. As one-person activities, such as Internet use, have become more prevalent, families have had less time to spend together. Obviously, Japan is a society undergoing a variety of profound changes, and these changes are affecting how they live and what they experience and value in the private and public spheres of their lives.

2 Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

Nippon Research Center in Tokyo conducted the ABS in Japan, using the methods of multi-stage stratified sampling and face-to-face interviews from July 21 to August 13,

2006.[3] The sample size is 1,003 and includes those between 20 and 69 years old, with 502 male and 501 female respondents. The age breakdown of these respondents is 19% between 20 and 29 years, 22% between 30 and 39 years, 18% between 40 and 49 years old, 22% between 50 and 59 years, and 19% between 60 and 69 years. Regionally, 12% came from Hokkaido and Tohoku, 33% from Kanto, 18% from Chubu (Hokuriku, Tosan, and Tokai), 17% from Kinki, 9% from Chugoku and Shikoku, and 11% Kyushu. In terms of community type, 24% came from large metropolitan areas known as the government designated cities, 38% from cities with populations over 100,000, 18% from cities with populations less than 100,000, and 20% from towns and rural areas.[4] In terms of educational attainment, more than two-fifths of the respondents (44%) had their high school diploma, less than one tenth (8%) had a primary or junior high school education, 14% had a technical school education, 12% had a college education, and more than one-fifth (22%) had a postgraduate degree. Regarding the income level of the respondents, 6% of the respondents had a family income of less than 2 million yen, 60% of the respondents had a household income between 2 million and 10 million yen, and 9% had a family income of more than 10 million yen. This distribution is skewed to the right with 2% of the respondents having household incomes of 20 million yen or more. Concerning marital status, a majority (73%) was married, less than one-fifth (19%) was single, and 8% were bereaved of their marital partner, separated or have divorced themselves.

In terms of the aforementioned demographic characteristics, the ABS sample does not deviate much from what was reported in the national population census in 2000 and 2005 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Population Census 2000 and 2005). Appendix A compares the national census data with the ABS sample. According to the census, for example, 49.9% were male and 50.1% were female. Regarding age, 18% were aged 20 to 29, 22% were aged 30 to 39, 19% were aged 40 to 49, 22% were aged 50 to 59, and 19% were aged 60 to 69. These percentages of gender and age match those of the ABS sample.

In terms of household income, region, and community type, the ABS sample also resembles the population censuses. According to the 2005 census, 50% of households have a family income of less than 5 million yen, 33% of them have a family income between 5 million yen and 8 million yen, and 17% have a family income of more than 8 million yen. Regarding household income, we look at a survey about nationwide consumption in 2004 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Nationwide Consumption Survey 2004). Twelve percent live in Hokkaido or Tohoku, 34% live in Kanto, 18% live in Chubu,

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[3] The sampling was carried out in four stages. First, all municipalities in Japan were classified into 10 regions, namely, Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kanto, Hokuriku, Tosan, Tokai, Kinki, Chugoku, Shikoku, and Kyushu. Then, in each region, the municipalities were stratified into 4 categories corresponding to their population sizes as follows: (1) Government designated cities, (2) Cities with over 100,000 people, (3) Cities with less than 100,000 people, and (4) Towns and rural areas. 100 primary sampling units were allocated to each block (region by population size) through the proportionate allocation based on the population size of age 20–69 in the national census. Second, within each block, 100 primary sampling units (census tracts) were randomly chosen through the probability proportionate to size (PPS) sampling. Third, within each primary sampling unit, 50 households were systematically chosen from the database, by every third household. Interviewers first visited the 50 designated households. If they could not complete their quota after visiting the designated households more than twice, they contacted households next to the first ones. Finally, to choose the respondents to interview, quota age group (by 10 years old) and gender was set in proportionate to the population. In addition, for women aged 30–59, quota by employment was set to avoid over-sampling homemakers.

[4] Government-designated cities must have the population over 700,000 as the current requirement. All the cities have the population over 800,000 except one city.

17% live in Kinki, 9% live in Chugoku, and 11% live in Kyushu. As to the types of residential community, 25% of census respondents live in government-designated cities, 43% in cities with populations exceeding 100,000, 20% in cities with populations less than 100,000, and 13% in towns and rural areas.

On educational attainment, Appendix A shows that the ABS sample differs significantly from the census data. The significantly lower percentage of respondents with a primary education and the significantly higher percentage of respondents with a college education in the ABS are due to the fact that people aged 70 and older were excluded from the survey. As to marital status, the ABS sample slightly differs from the census data. 27% of the census respondents have never married, 64% have never married, and 8% were bereaved of their marital partner or have divorced themselves.

In the following sections, the six demographic characteristics, namely, gender, age, marital status, education level, household income level, and community type, will be used to break apart the sample in an effort to find any differences that may exist in lifestyles, value priorities, and the quality of life across the various population groups.

3 Lifestyles

Our analysis of lifestyles begins with the family structure of the respondents and the type of dwelling in which they reside. In the wake of steady migration from rural areas to urban areas in the 1950s and 1960s, the family size became smaller while the number of nuclear families increased. In urban areas, various forms of residential units were built. There has also been a growing tendency to marry later in life or even stay unmarried, and so the number of single-person households has increased. At the same time, the number of young people living together with their parents has also gone up, likely because of the increasingly tighter job market young people face. Results of the ABS are consistent with these trends.

One-half of the respondents (51%) live in a two-generation household with an unmarried child or children. The next most popular arrangement is a one-generation household with a married couple only (16%), followed by a three-generation household with grandparent(s) (14%), a single-person household (11%), and a two-generation household with a married child or children (5%). In terms of the number of people in households, the average is 4.3 with a large majority of households (78%) having fewer than four members. Four-person households account for the highest proportion of 26%. They are followed by those with three persons (22%), two persons (20%), five persons (12%), six persons (6%), and seven persons (4%).

In terms of homeownership, about two-thirds (64%) reside in owner-occupied detached or semi-detached (duplex) houses, and 23% live in rented terraced house or in an apartment. While 7% own the owner-occupied terraced house or unit in an apartment, 6% dwell in the rented detached or semi-detached (duplex) house. Lastly, 1% of the Japanese respondents live in other types of residences such as a relative's home. Fifty-one percent of low-income people live in the owner-occupied detached or semi-detached (duplex) house, and 34% live in the rented terraced house or unit in an apartment.[5] The corresponding figures are 65% and 22% for the middle-income group and 84% and 6% for the

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[5] Less than 5 million yen is categorized as low. Between 5 million and 8 million yen is categorized as middle. Over 8 million yen is categorized as high.

high-income group. The higher the household income respondents have, the more likely they are to live in their own house and the less likely they are to live in an apartment.

Rapid economic growth and migration from rural areas have affected not only what type of housing Japanese people have, but also their patterns of eating. The Japanese people have come to eat more simple and quick foods such as convenience foods, retorted foods, and frozen foods. The 2006 ABS asked respondents about their preference for several types of foods and their dining habits. The most popular food is sushi (87%), which is followed by curry (63%), sandwiches (47%), pizza (39%), hamburgers (31%), kimchi (29%), instant noodles (26%) and dim sum (20%). The least favorite food is pho (5%), tom-yum-goong (5%), and Beijing duck (8%). The survey also asked respondents about how they prepare and eat their meals. An overwhelming majority (96%) at least sometimes ate meals cooked at home, while 30% at least sometimes ate out in restaurants.[6] Fifteen percent buy ready meals, and 5% eat instant food at home. Only 2% eat out in food stalls. Younger respondents are more likely to eat out than to eat cooked meals at home. The opposite is true for older respondents.

To examine the extent to which the Japanese people lead a modern life, the ABS asked about their access to the following utilities: public water supply, electricity, liquefied petroleum gas, landline phone service, mobile phone service, facsimile, and cable TV. The rates of access to these utilities are 98% for running water, 100% for electricity, 96% for gas, 94% for landline phone, 92% for mobile phone, 62% for fax, and 29% for cable TV. The penetration rates for such durable goods as TV sets, laundry machines, refrigerators, air conditioners, and cars have increased because people once coveted them as symbolic goods of affluent status, especially in the 1950s and 60s. A high penetration rate of TV, in turn, has affected consumption patterns through advertisement.

We construct three levels of modern life by combining the number of available utilities: low with less than 3, middle with 3 and 4, and high with five or more of the seven utilities. According to Table 1, a vast majority (90%) lives a highly modern life. Table 1 shows that the higher the level of educational attainment and household income respondents have, the more likely they are to live a modern life.[7] Community type also has a positive affect on the level of modern life.

Many Japanese people practice a traditional spiritual activity, such as visiting a shrine or praying. Japan has several religious groups, including Buddhism or Shinto. The ABS asked the respondents about their religious affiliation and spiritual activity as measured by praying and meditating. Sixty percent of the Japanese respondents do not belong to any particular religion. Of those who reported a religious affiliation, Buddhists (32%) constitute the largest group. In terms of praying or mediating, about two-thirds (68%) never do either or do so only on special occasions, while 23% pray or mediate everyday. To estimate the extent to which ordinary Japanese people lead a religious life, we constructed a 3-point index by counting affirmative responses to the two questions. The higher the value, the more the respondents are involved in religious activities. As shown in Table 1, about half of the respondents (52%) live low levels of religious life, while the percentages of respondents who live medium levels and high levels of religious life are 26 and 22%, respectively.

Table 1 shows the relationship between the levels of religious life and the six demo-graphic characteristics. Females are more religious than males. Old people as compared to

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[6] These percentages add up more than 100% because the respondents choose two multiple answers.

[7] Primary school and Junior high school are categorized as low. High school is categorized as middle. Technical school, college, university and graduate school are categorized as high.

Table 1 Lifestyles by demographic variables

	Modern life			Religious life			Digital life			Global life			Political life			Social life		
	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
Total	0.3	10.3	89.4	52.1	25.5	22.4	29.1	29.1	41.8	65.0	26.9	8.1	11.0	9.0	80.0	41.2	32.4	26.4
Gender																		
Male	0.2	10.0	89.8	53.3	27.6	19.1	26.4	25.8	47.8	65.0	26.2	8.8	11.3	9.3	79.4	42.6	33.7	23.7
Female	0.4	10.6	89.0	50.8	23.4	25.8	31.8	32.4	35.8	65.1	27.5	7.4	10.6	8.7	80.7	39.9	31.1	29.1
Age																		
20–29	0.5	14.9	84.6	72.1	21.2	6.7	8.0	35.6	56.4	65.4	25.0	9.6	29.1	14.9	56.0	44.9	28.7	26.3
30–39	0.5	5.9	93.6	63.6	23.4	13.1	10.1	35.8	54.1	66.2	26.9	6.8	12.8	12.8	74.3	46.5	29.5	24.0
40–49	0.0	5.4	94.6	50.8	28.2	21.0	22.1	30.4	47.5	62.0	27.7	10.3	8.7	9.3	82.0	42.8	31.9	25.3
50–59	0.0	8.4	91.6	44.6	24.3	31.1	41.4	26.1	32.4	65.0	28.3	6.7	4.9	5.8	89.3	36.4	36.9	26.7
60–69	0.5	17.6	81.8	29.7	30.8	39.5	65.2	16.8	17.9	66.3	26.2	7.5	1.1	2.7	96.2	36.0	34.3	29.7
Marital status																		
Not married	1.1	16.9	82.0	56.8	24.6	18.6	28.6	26.4	45.0	68.8	24.6	6.6	21.1	13.0	65.9	44.0	32.8	23.2
Married	0.0	7.8	92.2	50.3	25.8	23.8	29.3	30.1	40.6	63.6	27.7	8.6	7.3	7.6	85.1	40.2	32.2	27.6
Education																		
Low	0.0	20.7	79.3	31.6	30.4	38.0	60.8	25.3	13.9	80.2	17.3	2.5	9.8	12.2	78.0	59.7	31.2	9.1
Mid	0.5	12.2	87.3	50.0	24.3	25.7	36.8	32.4	30.8	73.1	23.3	3.6	11.7	8.7	79.6	43.2	30.5	26.3
High	0.2	6.6	93.2	57.3	25.9	16.8	16.9	26.8	56.2	55.1	31.6	13.3	10.6	8.9	80.5	36.3	34.9	28.7
Household income																		
Low	0.5	18.1	81.4	51.0	22.3	26.7	38.6	32.1	29.3	72.4	24.1	3.5	15.0	12.8	72.2	45.7	30.3	24.0
Mid	0.0	4.5	95.5	50.7	28.3	21.0	19.5	26.4	54.1	63.1	25.7	11.3	8.2	5.9	85.9	40.6	32.9	26.6
High	0.0	4.4	95.6	50.6	28.8	20.6	22.6	25.8	51.6	54.1	30.8	15.1	4.4	3.8	91.8	30.3	37.9	31.7
Community type																		
Over 700,000	0.8	9.2	90.0	58.5	23.3	18.2	24.1	32.9	43.0	61.3	27.5	11.3	14.9	14.0	71.1	39.8	33.5	26.7
Over 100,000	0.3	7.9	91.8	54.2	23.6	22.3	26.3	29.5	44.1	63.9	28.5	7.7	12.0	7.5	80.5	39.5	31.5	29.1

Table 1 continued

	Modern life			Religious life			Digital life			Global life			Political life			Social life		
	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
Less than 100,000	0.0	14.8	85.2	47.2	27.2	25.6	32.8	25.6	41.7	65.9	26.4	7.7	7.3	7.8	84.9	40.1	32.3	27.5
Towns and rurals	0.0	11.9	88.1	44.8	30.2	25.0	37.0	27.0	36.0	71.0	23.5	5.5	7.6	7.1	85.4	47.1	32.8	20.1

young people are also more likely to be religious; Less than one-tenth of those aged 20 to 29 (7%) are highly religious, while 40% of those between the ages of 60 and 69 are. Marital status also seems to affect the Japanese people's level of religious life. The married as compared to the unmarried are more religious (24% vs. 19%). Residents of smaller cities or rural areas also tend to lead more religious lives than those of large cities. Those with less education also tend to be more religious than those with more education. In short, it is clear that exposure to socioeconomic modernization discourages Japanese people from engaging in religious life.

To examine the extent to which the Japanese use digital technology, the ABS asked respondents how often they view Internet Web pages by computers, read or write emails by computers, and read or write messages by mobile phones. Most respondents reported using mobile phones more frequently than computers. While about one-third (33%) of them uses computers for email almost everyday or several times a week, twice as many (65%) read or write messages by mobile phones that often.

We constructed a 3-point index by counting the number of "almost everyday" or "several times a week" responses to the three digital use questions to estimate the extent to which the Japanese respondents live a digital life. Table 1 shows that about two-fifths (42%) lead lives with a high level of digitalization, while 29% lead lives with either a low or medium level of digitalization. Table 1 also shows that males lead more digitalized lives than do females, and younger people lead more digitalized lives than do older people. More than half of those aged 20 to 29 (56%) and those aged 30 to 39 (54%) lead highly digitalized lives, while about two-thirds of those aged 60 to 69 (65%) lead lives with a low level of digitalization. Educational attainment levels and digital life levels are also positively correlated. More than half of the respondents (56%) with the highest level of educational attainment lead a high level of digital life, while about two-thirds (61%) of those who have the lowest educational attainment lead a low level of digital life.[8] Lastly, there seems to be little relationship between the population size of the cities in which respondents live and their levels of digital life.

To examine the extent to which the Japanese people live a global life, the ABS asked about fluency in English, the frequency of foreign travel, and viewing foreign TV programs. According to the ABS, more than half (55%) of respondents speak English very little, 33% can't speak English at all, 12% can speak it well enough to get by in daily life, and 1% can speak it fluently. When the two positive responses are combined, it appears that only one out of eight Japanese (13%) is capable of speaking English. About one-fourth (23%) often watch foreign-produced programs on TV, and less than one-tenth have traveled abroad at least three times in the past 3 years. To construct a 3-point index of global life, we first counted positive responses to the three questions and then collapsed the two top values of 2 and 3 into a high level. Nearly two-thirds (65%) engage in a low level of global life, and less than one-tenth (8%) lives a high level of global life.

Table 1 shows that higher educational attainment leads to a high level of global life. It also shows that residents of large metropolitan areas are far more likely to live such a highly global life than those of other communities. For example, over one-tenth (11%) of those who live in the government-designated cities with populations greater than 700,000 lead a high level of global life, while 6% of those who live in towns and rural areas lead the same level of global life.

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[8] Primary school and Junior high school are categorized as low. High school is categorized as middle. Technical school, college, university and graduate school are categorized as high.

Political participation is another factor to characterize the lifestyles of the Japanese people. The ABS asked respondents how often they vote at national and local elections. More than 58% of respondents vote both at national elections and local elections, and more than 88% of respondents vote at least more often than sometimes at both elections. We use this variable to estimate the extent to which the Japanese people live a political life. According to Table 1, age, marital status, household income, and the size of residential community significantly affect respondents' levels of political life. Specifically, growing age, being married, more education, and greater income are associated with significantly higher political activism. Living in large urban centers, on the other hand, is associated with significantly lower political activism.

The ABS also examined how well the Japanese are connected with other people. Social connectedness refers behaviorally to participation in civic associations and psychologically to interpersonal trust. To measure social connectedness psychologically, the ABS asked three questions that measure respondents' levels of interpersonal trust. The first question asked respondents if they can trust most people or if they can't be too careful in dealing with them. The second question asked if they think that people generally try to be helpful or that people mostly look out for themselves. The third question asked if they would stop to help if they saw somebody on the street looking lost. In response to these three questions, less than one-half (46%) replied that most people can be trusted, about one-third (35%) replied that people generally try to be helpful, and a bare majority (53%) said that they would always stop to help if they saw somebody on the street looking lost.

To estimate the extent to which the Japanese people live a socially connected life, we constructed a 3-point index by combining and collapsing positive responses to the three questions into three levels. We combined the bottom two categories together into a low level, and a plurality (41%) belong to this low level. Those who score 2 on this index and live a highly religious life constitute only one-quarter (26%). Table 1 shows that gender, marital status, education level, and household income level are correlated with respondents' levels of social connectedness. Females are more socially connected than males. Likewise, those married are more connected than their unmarried counterparts. Higher levels of education and family income are accompanied by higher levels of social connectedness. For example, 9% with low educational attainment, 26% with medium educational attainment, and 29% with high educational attainment lead a high level of socially connected life. In terms of household income, 32% of high-income people are highly connected with other people, as compared to 24% of low-income people.

The last aspect of lifestyles to be examined is how the Japanese people feel about their standard of living. Over two-thirds of the ABS respondents (70%) rated their standard of living as average, 13% and 11% rated it as relatively low and relatively high, respectively. Only 4% and 2% rated it as low and high, respectively. Assessments of living standards have a great deal to do with the amounts of education and family income at the respondents' disposal. The higher the levels of these resources respondents command, the more positively they rate their standard of living. Those married also rate their standard of living more positively than do singletons, likely because married people earn a higher family income.

4 Value Priorities

There are many ways people prioritize values, and scholars have proposed a number of concepts for studying this prioritization. Inglehart (1981), for example, formulated materialism and postmaterialism to ascertain shifts in value priorities. Following the earlier

works of Eric Allard and Angus Campbell, Park (2007) classified value priorities into three categories: the need for having, the need for relating, and the need for being. His analysis of the ABS Korea survey revealed that the Korean people value the need for having most and the need for being least. This article follows the same methodology that Park applied to the study of value priorities professed by the Korean population.

The ABS asked respondents to choose from a list of 25 life concerns the five that were most important to them. The 25 life concerns are: (1) having enough to eat, (2) having a comfortable home, (3) being healthy, (4) having access to good medical care if required, (5) being able to live without fear of crime, (6) having a job, (7) having access to higher education, (8) owning lots of nice things, (9) earning a high income, (10) spending time with your family, (11) being on good terms with others, (12) being successful at work, (13) being famous, (14) enjoying a pastime, (15) appreciating art and culture, (16) dressing up, (17) winning over others, (18) expressing personality or using talent, (19) contributing to local community or to society, (20) being devout, (21) raising children, (22) freedom of expression and association, (23) living in a country with a good government, (24) pleasant community to live, and (25) safe and clean environment.

Table 2 lists, in descending order, the percentages of the Japanese who chose each of the 25 life concerns as one of their five most important. Health is at the top of the list with a large majority of 80%. It is followed by having enough to eat (42%) and spending time with family members (42%). A good relationship with other people (37%), good housing (36%), and job (34%) are among what more than one-third of the respondents considered important. Among the least prioritized values of the Japanese are freedom of expression and association (3%), higher education (3%), being famous (1%), winning over others (1%), and owning lots of nice things (2%).

In Table 3, we examine whether the types of the most important values vary across different demographic groups. In every group, health was chosen as the most important life concern, but the other highly prioritized life concerns and their rankings differ from one demographic group to another. First, males chose having enough to eat as the second most important concern, and having a job and spending time with family members as the third and the fourth most important concerns, respectively. Among female respondents, on the other hand, spending time with family members is the second most important concern, which is followed by being on good terms with others and having enough to eat. Both male and female respondents chose having a comfortable home as the fifth most important life concern.

Second, those aged 20 to 49 chose having a job as one of the five most important life concerns, while those in other age groups do not include it. Similarly, having access to good medical care was chosen only by people aged 50 to 69. Spending time with family members is a top priority for those aged up to 59, but it is not valued as highly by those aged 60 to 69. On the other hand, enjoying a pastime is chosen by this oldest age cohort only. Having enough to eat was chosen by all of the age groups, and being on good terms with others was chosen only by those aged 20 to 29 and those aged 40 to 49. In short, the younger generation values having a job and spending time with family members more than other life concerns. In contrast, the older generation values good medical care and enjoying a pastime.

Third, married respondents value their family life and housing as two of their top five most important concerns, while those unmarried chose having a job and enjoying a pastime instead.[9] Having enough to eat and being on good terms with others, on the other hand, were chosen by both types of respondents.

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[9] "Not married" respondents includes those who were single, divorced, separated and widowed.

Table 2 Important lifestyle aspects or life circumstances

	Percent	Rank
Being healthy	80.1	1
Having enough to eat	42.0	2
Spending time with your family	42.1	3
Being on good terms with others	36.8	4
Having a comfortable home	36.4	5
Having a job	33.5	6
Having access to good medical care	28.4	7
Enjoying a pastime	28.4	8
Living without fear of crime	28.0	9
Pleasant community to live	23.1	10
Raising children	18.6	11
Safe and clean environment	15.2	12
Express personality/use talents	8.0	13
Contributing to community/society	8.0	14
Earning a high income	7.9	15
Being successful at work	5.9	16
Appreciating art and culture	5.4	17
A good government	4.3	18
Being devout	3.9	19
Dressing up	3.8	20
Having access to higher education	3.0	21
Freedom of expression and association	2.7	22
Owning lots of nice things	1.6	23
Winning over others	0.8	24
Being famous	0.6	25
None of the above	0.1	26

Fourth, there is a minor difference in value priorities across three groups of educational attainment. All three groups are alike in choosing having enough to eat, having a comfortable home, and being on good terms with others. Only the group with low educational attainment chose having a job as one of their top five concerns. Fifth, low- and middle-income groups chose spending time with family members and having a job as two of their top five concerns, but the high-income group did not choose either of them. Instead, this group values being on good terms with others and having access to good medical care. Having a comfortable home and having enough to eat are one of the top concerns for all three groups.

Lastly, all four community-size groups chose having enough to eat and spending time with their family members as top concerns. Those living in larger cities with populations exceeding 100,000 and in government-designated cities chose having a comfortable home as the fourth most important value, which reflects a high price level of housing in large metropolitan areas. Residents of the smaller communities value instead being on good terms with others.

On the whole, being healthy and having enough to eat are priorities cherished by all 21 of the demographic groups listed in Table 3. Spending time with family members is a top

Table 3 Top five important lifestyle aspects by demographic characteristics

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Gender					
Male	Health (78)	Enough food (44)	Job (41)	Family (39)	Housing (37)
Female	Health (82)	Family (45)	Interpersonal relations (44)	Enough food (41)	Housing (36)
Age					
20–29	Health (77)	Enough food (44)	Interpersonal relations (43)	Family (43)	Job (37)
30–39	Health (79)	Family (54)	Enough food (43)	Housing (40)	Job (38)
40–49	Health (83)	Enough food (44)	Family (43)	Job (39)	Interpersonal relations (38)
50–59	Health (85)	Family (37)	Enough food (36)	Housing (36)	Medical care (36)
60–69	Health (77)	Enough food (45)	Housing (41)	Medical care (37)	Pastime (34)
Marriage					
Not married	Health (70)	Enough food (43)	Interpersonal relations (40)	Job (40)	Pastime (38)
Married	Health (83)	Family (48)	Enough food (41)	Housing (37)	Interpersonal relations (35)
Education					
Low	Health (85)	Enough food (49)	Family (40)	Job (35)	Housing/interpersonal relations (33)
Mid	Health (79)	Family (43)	Enough food (42)	Interpersonal relations (36)	Housing (35)
High	Health (81)	Family (42)	Enough food (41)	Housing (39)	Interpersonal relations (38)
Household income					
Low	Health (78)	Family (43)	Enough food (42)	Housing (36)	Job (34)
Mid	Health (82)	Family (45)	Job (40)	Enough food (39)	Housing (38)
High	Health (89)	Enough food (43)	Interpersonal relations (39)	Housing (36)	Medical care (36)
Community type					
Over 700,000	Health (84)	Enough food (47)	Family (42)	Housing (38)	Job (34)
Over 100,000	Health (79)	Enough food (41)	Family (41)	Housing (39)	Interpersonal relations (38)

Table 3 continued

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Less than 100,000	Health (77)	Enough food (41)	Family (41)	Interpersonal relations (39)	Living safely (32)
Towns and rurals	Health (81)	Family (46)	Enough food (40)	Interpersonal relations (38)	Job (36)

Note. Percentages are in parentheses

4th and 5th for high income level are tied

2nd and 3rd for the population over 100,000 are tied

2nd and 3rd for the population less than 100,000 are tied

value for sixteen of the segments, having a comfortable home is a top value for fourteen, and being on good terms with others, for 12. Understandably, younger Japanese are concerned with finding a job, while older Japanese are concerned with good medical care. From Table 3, we can also see that the young and the middle-aged are concerned highly with their families, while those in the older group are concerned with a pastime. Married people value communications with their families and housing, while singletons prioritize having a job and pastime. High-income people value good relationships with others and good medical care, while low- and middle-income people value communications with their families and having a job. Residents of large cities value housing highly, but do not value good relations with others as much as those of other communities do.

As mentioned earlier, Park (2007) constructs the indexes to estimate the extent to which the Korean people prioritize the three categories of needs by selecting five items from 25 life concerns and counting the number of the five. The first category, called "need for having," consists of (1) having enough to eat, (2) having a comfortable home, (3) being healthy, (4) having a job, and (5) earning a high income. The second category, called "need for relating," consists of (1) spending time with family, (2) raising children, (3) being on good terms with others, (4) contributing to local community or to society, and (5) pleasant community to live. The third category, called "need for being," consists of (1) enjoying a pastime, (2) appreciating art and culture, (3) expressing personality or using talent, (4) freedom of expression and association, and (5) having a safe and clean environment.

Table 4 shows how the Japanese people prioritize each of these three categories of life concerns. About one-third (30%) included three or more life concerns associated with the need for having in their list of top five concerns, and a majority (69%) chose more than two (69%), while only a very small minority (4%) chose none of them. On the "need for relating" category, less than one-tenth (8%) chose three or more life conditions associated with it, while about two-fifths chose none of them (19%). Lastly, more than half (53%) chose none of the life conditions associated with the need for being, while a very small minority (2%) chose three or more. As in Korea, ordinary people in Japan most value the resources they need to meet physical needs and least value those they need to fulfill their own personal growth.

Table 4 also shows the relationships between demographic groups and the priorities the Japanese attach to each category of needs. First, between the two genders, a greater proportion of males uphold the need for having, while a greater proportion of females uphold the need for relating. For example, 74% of males chose more than two life concerns associated with the need for having as one of their top five, while only 63% of female respondents do the same. On the other hand, 45% of females chose more than two conditions associated with the need for relating, while only 33% of males did so.

Second, age differences are most pronounced between the oldest and middle-age groups. Those in the oldest group, i.e., those aged 60 to 69, value the need for having the least. They also value the need for relating the least. Those between the ages of 30 and 49, in contrast, tend to uphold the needs for having and relating more than their younger and older peers.

Third, married Japanese are more concerned with the need for relating than those who are single, separated, divorced, or widowed. Forty-three percent of the former chose more than two life concerns associated with the need for relating, while 30% of those unmarried did the same. In addition, the married are also less likely to uphold the need for being than the unmarried. While more than one in two (56%) married Japanese do not value any of the life concerns associated with the need for being, a little over two out of five (45%) singletons do.

Table 4 Three types of needs by demographic characteristics

	Need for having				Need for relating				Need for being			
	0	1	2	3+	0	1	2	3+	0	1	2	3+
Total	4.0	27.5	38.4	30.1	19.3	41.4	31.0	8.3	53.0	36.3	8.8	1.9
Gender												
Male	3.4	22.7	40.4	33.5	21.5	45.2	26.7	6.6	51.8	36.3	9.6	2.4
Female	4.6	32.3	36.3	26.7	17.2	37.5	35.3	10.0	54.3	36.3	8.0	1.4
Age												
20–29	3.2	29.3	36.7	30.9	17.6	41.0	34.0	7.4	48.9	36.2	12.2	2.7
30–39	3.2	24.2	37.0	35.6	14.2	37.0	35.6	13.2	60.7	34.7	3.7	0.9
40–49	2.2	27.2	41.3	29.3	16.8	38.0	35.3	9.8	58.7	31.5	7.1	2.7
50–59	4.4	26.2	42.7	26.7	23.1	44.4	28.0	4.4	47.1	43.1	8.4	1.3
60–69	7.0	31.6	33.7	27.8	25.1	46.5	21.9	6.4	49.7	34.8	13.4	2.1
Marital status												
Not married	7.4	23.0	39.3	30.4	25.6	44.8	25.9	3.7	44.8	38.1	13.7	3.3
Married	2.7	29.3	38.2	29.8	17.1	39.9	33.0	10.0	56.1	35.6	7.0	1.4
Education												
Low	2.4	23.2	36.6	37.8	25.6	43.9	25.6	4.9	62.2	32.9	4.9	0.0
Mid	4.1	29.0	38.2	28.7	17.9	44.1	31.7	6.3	52.0	37.1	9.5	1.4
High	4.2	27.1	38.5	30.2	19.5	38.7	31.3	10.6	52.4	35.9	8.9	2.7
Household income												
Low	4.9	26.2	38.1	30.8	20.3	42.7	29.5	7.6	51.6	37.0	9.5	1.9
Mid	2.7	24.8	42.3	30.2	16.7	40.1	36.0	7.2	55.9	34.2	7.7	2.3
High	2.5	24.4	41.3	31.9	16.3	49.4	27.5	6.9	54.4	35.0	8.8	1.9
Community size												
Over 700,000	2.5	21.3	42.1	34.2	24.6	41.7	26.3	7.5	55.0	32.1	11.3	1.7
Over 100,000	4.2	29.2	36.3	30.3	17.6	40.5	33.2	8.7	51.8	38.4	7.9	1.8
Less than 100,000	6.0	30.8	36.3	26.9	17.0	44.5	31.9	6.6	50.5	37.9	8.2	3.3
Towns and rurals	3.5	28.9	39.8	27.9	18.4	39.8	31.8	10.0	55.2	35.8	8.0	1.0

Fourth, educational attainment matters significantly in prioritizing the types of human needs. Those highly educated tend to value the needs for relating and being more highly than their less educated counterparts. However, across the three income groups there is little difference in the priority of the three types of needs.

Lastly, there is also an interesting difference in the extent to which residents from differently sized communities value the three types of needs. Those who live in large urban areas tend to value the need for having more highly than those who live in smaller urban communities and rural areas.

In summary, between the two genders, males are more oriented toward the need for having, while females are more oriented toward the need for relating. The oldest are more concerned with the need for having than the other age cohorts. The middle-age cohorts, on the other hand, uphold the need for relating more than all of the other four age groups. Those married are more oriented toward the need for relating, while those who are single, separated, divorced, or widowed are more oriented toward the need for being. Those highly educated uphold the need for relating and the need for being more than the other groups.

Lastly, those who live in large cities are more oriented toward the need for having than the other groups.

5 Global Assessment of Life Quality

We now attempt to assess the quality of life that the Japanese people experience in their daily lives. We will first examine the percentages expressing feelings of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement, and identify the demographic groups the most and least likely to experience these feelings. We will then analyze these three feelings jointly by combining the positive numeric ratings of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement into a 7-point summary index of overall life quality.[10] The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of this index is 0.69.

Figure 1 shows that a majority of three-fifths (60%) of the Japanese survey respondents feel that they are "very happy" or "quite happy." Only a tiny minority (6%) are "not too happy" or "very unhappy." A larger majority of four-fifths (79%) enjoys their lives "often" or "sometimes," while one-fifth (20%) "rarely" or "never" enjoys their lives. A substantial majority of two-thirds (66%) also feels that they have accomplished "a great deal" or "some" of what they want out of their lives, while one-third (33%) feels they are accomplishing "very little" or "none."

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the ABS respondents across values of the 7-point index measuring overall quality of life. The score of 6 indicates the highest level of overall quality of life and the score of 0 the lowest. On this index, the Japanese averaged 3.3, a score higher than its midpoint. Nearly half (49%) of the respondents scored 4 or higher, while the other half (51%) scored 3 or lower on this index. This indicates that Japan is far from being a nation of wellbeing.

Table 5 examines the bivariate relationships between these three global measures of life quality and the six demographic characteristics. First, females feel happier about their lives than males (64% vs. 55%). Those married are happier than the unmarried (61% vs. 41%). Second, members of the oldest group are most likely to feel happy, while those aged 50 to 59 are the least likely to feel happy. 65% of those aged 60 to 69 describe their life as "very happy" or "quite happy," and 3% of them as "not too happy" or "very unhappy." On the other hand, 44% of those aged 50 to 59 are "very happy" or "quite happy," and 9% of them are "not too happy" or "very unhappy."

Thirdly, the higher the educational attainment respondents have, the higher their likelihood to feel happy. Sixty-five percent of those who have a high educational attainment feel "very happy" or "quite happy" and 4% of them feel "not too happy" or "very unhappy." Fifty-seven percent of those who have a medium level of educational attainment described themselves as "very happy" or "quite happy," and 8% of them as "not too happy" or "very unhappy." Only 44% of those who have low educational attainment feel "very happy" or "quite happy," and 7% of them are "not too happy" or "very unhappy." In other words, people with a high school education or more are nearly one and a half times more likely to live a happy life than those with less than a junior high school education. Like educational attainment, household income level influences positively the feelings of

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[10] We coded "very happy" and "quite happy" as 2, "neither happy nor unhappy" as 1 and "not too happy" and "very unhappy" as 0 for Q4. We coded "often" as 2, "sometimes" as 1 and "rarely" and "never" as 0 for Q5. We coded "a great deal" as 2, "some" as 1 and "very little" and "none" as 0 for Q6. These numeric values are summed into the index proxy for the overall life quality.
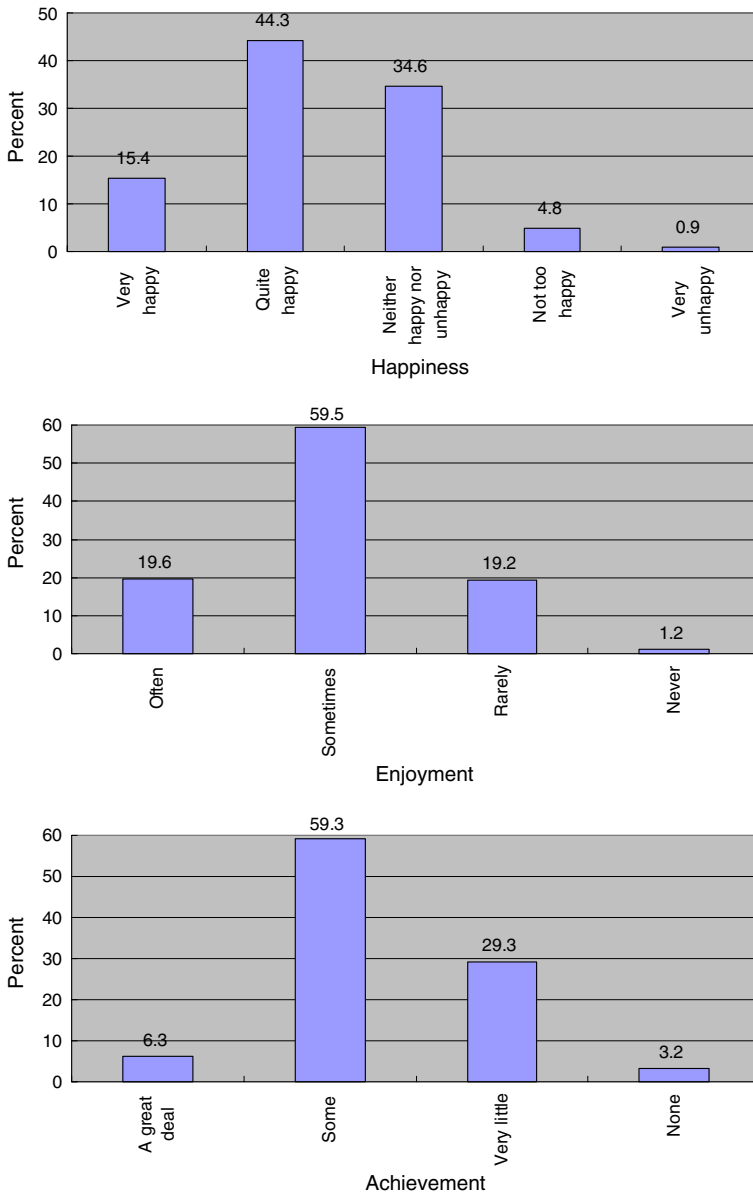
Fig. 1 Global assessment of life quality

happiness. Sixty-eight percent of high-income people described their life as "very happy" or "quite happy" and 1% of them are "not too happy" or "very unhappy." Sixty percent of those who have a medium level of household income are "very happy" or "quite happy," and 5% of them are "not too happy" or "very unhappy." Fifty-four percent of those who have a low household income feel "very happy" or "quite happy," and 9% of them feel "not too happy" or "very unhappy."
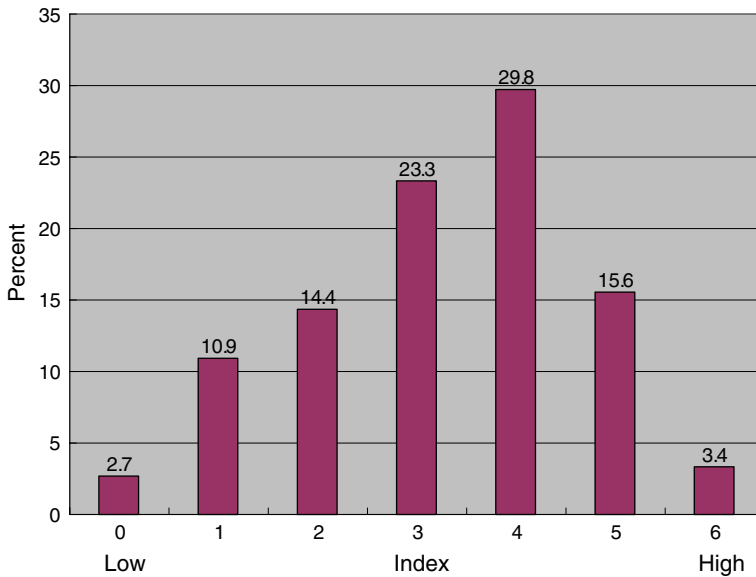
Fig. 2 Global assessment of overall life quality

Once again, females and married people enjoy their lives more than their male and unmarried counterparts. Eighty-three percent of females as compared to 75% of males and 83% of the married as compared to 70% of the unmarried "often" or "sometimes" enjoy their life. Interestingly, of the five age groups, the oldest age group, those between the ages of 60 and 69, reported the highest level of enjoyment with 86% of them reporting experiencing enjoyment "often" or "sometimes," while the second oldest group, those between the ages of 50 and 50, had the lowest level of enjoyment with 73% experiencing enjoyment "often" or "sometimes." Educational attainment and household income have positive impacts on feelings of enjoyment. With a higher level of education and/or income, there is a corresponding increase in the percentage of those who "often" or "sometimes" enjoy their lives.

Concerning feelings of accomplishment, five of the six demographic characteristics matter significantly. Between the two genders, 12% more females than males reported they have accomplished what they want to have accomplished during their lives (72% vs. 60%). Similarly, those married outnumber the unmarried in achieving their life goals by 23 percentage points (72% vs. 49%). In addition, it is notable that age, educational attainment, and household income are correlated positively with feelings of accomplishment. The older the Japanese, the greater chance they have of feeling they have accomplished "a great deal" or "some" and the smaller chance they have of feeling they have accomplished "very little" and "none." Table 5 shows similar patterns of positive relationship in terms of educational attainment level and household income level.

In short, the experience of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement among the Japanese people has a lot to do with the socioeconomic resources they command. The more resources they have, the more likely they experience those three qualities of life. Like the socioeconomically better-off, females, those married, and older people also describe their life as happy, enjoyable, and fulfilling more often than their male, unmarried, and younger counterparts. This demographic similarity in the patterns of experiencing happiness,

Table 5 Global assessment of life quality

	Happiness (Q4)						Enjoyment (Q5)					Accomplishment (Q6)				
	Very happy	Quite happy	Neither happy/ unhappy	Not too happy	Very unhappy	Don't know	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know	A great deal	Some	Very little	None	Don't Know
Total	15.4	44.3	34.6	4.8	0.9	0.1	19.6	59.5	19.2	1.2	0.4	6.3	59.3	29.3	3.2	1.9
Gender																
Male	14.7	40.4	37.6	5.8	1.2	0.2	16.3	58.8	23.1	1.2	0.6	5.6	54.0	34.7	3.6	2.2
Female	16	48.1	31.5	3.8	0.6	0	23	60.3	15.4	1.2	0.2	7.0	64.7	24.0	2.8	1.6
Age																
20–29	16.5	43.1	34	5.9	0	0.5	19.1	62.8	15.4	1.6	1.1	2.7	50.0	38.8	6.9	1.6
30–39	18.3	43.4	34.2	3.7	0.5	0	18.3	59.8	21.5	0	0.5	4.6	58.0	33.3	2.7	1.4
40–49	15.8	43.5	34.2	4.3	2.2	0	21.7	56.0	20.7	1.6	0	4.3	64.1	27.2	3.3	1.1
50–59	10.2	43.6	37.3	7.6	1.3	0	16.4	56.9	24.4	1.8	0.4	8.9	61.8	26.2	1.8	1.3
60–69	16.6	48.1	32.6	2.1	0.5	0	23.5	62.6	12.8	1.1	0	10.7	62.6	20.9	1.6	4.3
Marital status																
Not married	9.3	31.5	48.5	9.3	1.0	0	12.6	57.0	26.3	3.3	0.7	3.3	45.9	41.5	6.7	2.6
Married	17.6	49.0	29.5	3.1	0.7	0	22.3	60.5	16.6	0.4	0.3	7.4	64.3	24.8	1.9	1.6
Education																
Low	13.4	30.5	48.8	7.3	0	0	20.7	42.7	35.4	1.2	0	4.9	51.2	34.1	4.9	4.9
Mid	14.5	42.5	35.3	6.1	1.4	0.2	18.6	59.5	20.1	1.1	0.7	6.1	58.1	29.4	4.1	2.3
High	16.1	48.4	31.7	3.2	0.6	0	20.3	62.4	15.9	1.3	0.2	6.8	61.5	28.5	2.1	1.1
Household income																
Low	14.3	39.7	36.5	7.8	1.6	0.0	19.5	54.9	22.7	2.4	0.5	2.4	56.8	33.5	4.9	2.4
Mid	13.5	46.8	34.7	4.1	0.5	0.5	17.6	60.4	21.2	0.5	0.5	7.2	63.1	26.1	2.3	1.4
High	18.1	50.0	30.6	1.3	0.0	0.0	25.6	62.5	11.9	0	0	10.6	64.4	23.1	0.6	1.3
Community size																
Over 700,000	12.9	44.6	36.3	6.3	0	0	19.2	58.3	21.3	0.8	0.4	6.7	55.4	30.8	5.0	2.1

Table 5 continued

|	Happiness (Q4)						Enjoyment (Q5)					Accomplishment (Q6)				
	Very happy	Quite happy	Neither happy/ unhappy	Not too happy	Very unhappy	Don't know	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know	A great deal	Some	Very little	None	Don't Know
Over 100,000	13.7	50.3	31.3	3.9	0.5	0	20.0	60.8	17.4	1.1	0.8	7.9	62.6	26.6	1.6	1.3
Less than 100,000	15.4	37.9	37.4	5.5	3.8	0	17.6	60.4	19.2	2.7	0	2.7	61.5	29.1	3.8	2.7
Towns and rurals	21.4	38.3	36.3	4	0	0	21.4	57.7	20.4	0.5	0	6.0	55.7	32.8	3.5	2.0

enjoyment, and achievement appears to reflect the fact that those three components of life quality are correlated with each other. The correlation between happiness and enjoyment is $r = 0.59$. The correlation between happiness and achievement is $r = 0.33$. The correlation between enjoyment and achievement is $r = 0.35$.

Table 6 shows the relationships between the 7-point index of overall life quality and demographic characteristics. For easy interpretation and comparison, we combined percentages placed in the top three scores (4, 5, and 6) of this index and in the bottom three scores (0, 1, and 2) and calculated the proportion experiencing high and low levels of overall life quality, which features happiness, enjoyment, and accomplishment. Fifty-three percent of the female respondents belong to the high level, and 23% of them belong to the low level, while 45% of male respondents belong to the former, and 33% of them belong to the latter. As to age, the percentage of those aged 60 to 69 who placed in the high level is 57%, which is the highest among the five age groups, while the percentage of those aged 60 to 69 who placed in the low level is 18%, which is the lowest percentage among the five age groups. Fifty-five percent of married respondents experience a high level of overall life

Table 6 Global assessment of overall life quality

	Summative index							Mean	SD
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Total	2.7	10.9	14.4	23.3	29.8	15.6	3.4	3.27	1.41
Gender									
Male	4.1	12.9	16.0	22.3	30.1	11.9	2.9	3.08	1.44
Female	1.2	8.9	12.8	24.4	29.5	19.3	3.9	3.45	1.34
Age									
20–29	2.7	10.9	16.8	23.9	31.0	14.1	0.5	3.13	1.33
30–39	2.8	11.2	15.3	21.9	31.6	15.3	1.9	3.22	1.38
40–49	4.9	9.9	11.5	23.6	31.9	14.3	3.8	3.26	1.46
50–59	2.3	13.6	17.6	23.1	23.1	16.3	4.1	3.16	1.47
60–69	0.6	8.4	9.5	24.6	32.4	17.9	6.7	3.60	1.33
Marital status									
Not married	6.1	18.8	19.9	23.8	20.7	9.2	1.5	2.67	1.46
Married	1.3	8.1	12.4	23.3	33.0	18.0	4.0	3.49	1.32
Education									
Low	2.6	23.1	21.8	16.7	15.4	16.7	3.8	2.85	1.60
Mid	3.7	11.4	14.5	23.3	29.1	14.9	3.0	3.20	1.44
High	1.7	8.5	13.0	24.8	32.5	15.8	3.6	3.40	1.33
Household income									
Low	4.2	15.6	16.4	19.2	28.1	15.6	0.8	3.02	1.47
Mid	3.2	9.1	12.8	25.1	31.5	14.2	4.1	3.32	1.39
High	0.6	3.8	13.9	24.1	31.0	20.9	5.7	3.66	1.25
Community size									
Over 700,000	3.4	12.0	14.1	27.4	24.4	15.4	3.4	3.17	1.44
Over 100,000	1.6	9.1	13.9	22.5	31.6	17.4	4.0	3.41	1.36
Less than 100,000	4.0	13.0	15.8	21.5	31.6	11.3	2.8	3.09	1.44
Towns and rurals	2.6	11.2	14.3	21.9	31.1	16.3	2.6	3.26	1.40
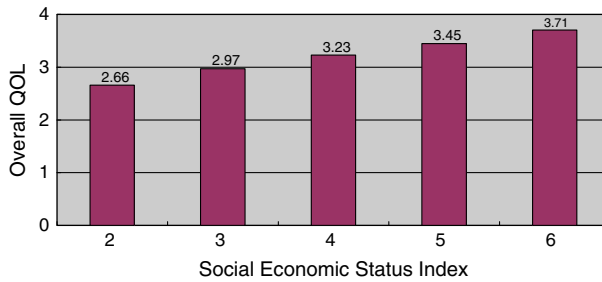
Fig. 3 Means of overall quality of life scores by social economic resources. *Note.* This figure shows the relationship between the aforementioned summative index of overall quality of life and the social economic status index, which was constructed by summing two variables, level of educational attainment and level of household income. Somers' d between overall quality of life and social economic resources is 0.14 with Z score of 4.71

quality, and 22% experience a low level, compared with 31% and 45% of those unmarried who experience these levels, respectively. Similarly, the higher the level of education and the larger the household income, the more likely Japanese people are to belong to the high level and the less likely they are to belong to the low level of overall life quality.

Of the six demographic characteristics, five are significantly associated with the percentages experiencing a high overall quality of life. In Japan, those who are most likely to experience all three of the desired qualities of life are females, the married, the oldest, and those with high income and/or education. Of these five demographic characteristics, income and education appear to shape the experience of those qualities most consistently and powerfully. Figure 3 shows that higher levels of education and income are always accompanied by greater overall quality of life.

6 Specific Assessments of Life Quality

The quality of life needs to be evaluated from the perspective of its specific components or domains. What domains of life in Japan are the most satisfying? What domains are in need of improvement? What domains affect the overall quality of life most powerfully? To address these questions, we analyze assessments of sixteen life domains: (1) housing, (2) friendships, (3) marriage, (4) standard of living, (5) household income, (6) health, (7) education, (8) job, (9) neighbors, (10) public safety, (11) the condition of the environment, (12) social welfare system, (13) the democratic system, (14) family life, (15) leisure, and (16) spiritual life. The ABS asked respondents to express the extent of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each of these domains on a 5-point verbal and numeric scale that ranges from being "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied."

We attempted to find common characteristics under these sixteen specific life domains by the method of factor analysis. Table 7 shows that these sixteen life domains are classified into three groups. The first group consists of housing, standard of living, household income, education, and job. We call this factor the "material life sphere" because these domains deal with socioeconomic resources. The second group consists of health, friendships, marriage, family life, leisure, and spiritual life. This factor is called the "post-material life sphere" because these domains deal mostly with social and spiritual concerns. The third group consists of neighbors, public safety, environment, the welfare

Table 7 Distinguishing life spheres of domain assessments

	Factors			Uniqueness
	Material	Post-material	Public	
Housing	0.42			0.74
Standard of living	0.77			0.32
Household income	0.80			0.31
Education	0.40		(0.32)	0.67
Work	0.49			0.63
Health	(0.33)	0.33		0.72
Friendships		0.47		0.70
Marriage		0.60		0.57
Family life		0.67		0.50
Leisure		0.53		0.63
Spiritual life		0.66		0.45
Neighbors		(0.32)	0.38	0.71
Public safety			0.63	0.56
Condition of environment			0.64	0.53
Welfare system			0.66	0.51
Democratic system			0.71	0.45

Note. The reported loadings were from a principal factors solution with orthogonal varimax rotation. Loadings of greater than 0.30 were reported

system, and the democratic system. This factor is called the "public life sphere" because these domains are related to the community in which people live and its conditions.

The original index scores of 1 to 5 are converted into a −2 to +2 scale on which negative and positive values indicate, respectively, the experience of dissatisfaction and satisfaction. For each domain, Table 8 reports the mean on the rescaled 5-point index and the percentage differential index (PDI), the difference between the percentages of the satisfied and dissatisfied. In all sixteen domains, Japanese people report more satisfaction than dissatisfaction. The extent of their satisfaction, however, varies a great deal across the domains. According to the PDI scores, marriage (79%) is the domain the Japanese find most satisfying. It is followed closely by friendship (78%) and family life (73%). The lowest level of satisfaction is with the social welfare system (0.1%). The democratic system (13%) and household income (20%) also register a low level of satisfaction. The rest of the domains register scores of 30–60% on the PDI.

Of the three life spheres identified above, Table 8 indicates that the Japanese are most satisfied in the post-material life sphere and least satisfied in the public life sphere. Life domain PDI scores range from 50% to 79% in the post-material sphere; from 20 to 54% in the material sphere; and from 0.1 to 55% in the public sphere.

Besides calculating the percentages satisfied and dissatisfied with each domain and its mean on the new 5-point scale, we also count the numbers of domains which respondents rated as satisfying and dissatisfying, and compare them across demographic groups. The results are shown in Table 9. On average, the Japanese as a whole are satisfied with ten life domains and dissatisfied with about 1.8 domains. Between the two genders, females find satisfaction in a slightly larger number of life domains (10.2 vs. 9.8) and dissatisfaction in a smaller number of domains (1.6 vs. 2.0).Those with higher educational attainment and higher family income are also satisfied with more life domains and dissatisfied with fewer

Table 8 Life domain satisfaction

	Scale points						Mean	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	PDI
	−2	−1	0	1	2	Don't know		(A)	(B)	(A − B)
Material domains										
Housing	2.4	12.6	15.6	49.9	19.5	0.1	0.72	69.4	15.0	54.4
Standard of living	2.3	11.9	27.6	48.7	9.3	0.3	0.51	58.0	14.2	43.8
Household income	4.7	20.5	28.7	38.8	6.2	1.1	0.21	45.0	25.2	19.8
Education	1.0	7.5	35.9	43.4	9.8	2.5	0.55	53.2	8.5	44.7
Job	1.8	10.9	29.4	42.2	8.7	7.1	0.48	50.9	12.7	38.2
Post-material domains										
Health	1.8	9.9	16.9	49.4	21.9	0.1	0.80	71.3	11.7	59.6
Friendships	0.5	2.4	15.6	54.3	27.0	0.2	1.05	81.3	2.9	78.4
Marriage	0.5	2.2	14.6	55.3	26.5	0.8	1.06	81.8	2.7	79.1
Family life	0.5	2.9	18.9	56.8	19.6	1.2	0.93	76.4	3.4	73.0
Leisure	2.2	12.0	21.3	51.5	12.7	0.3	0.61	64.2	14.2	50.0
Spiritual life	0.7	8.4	29.4	48.4	1.9	1.3	0.63	60.3	9.1	51.2
Public domains										
Neighbors	0.7	5.2	36.4	45.1	10.7	2.0	0.61	55.8	5.9	49.9
Public safety	2.2	14.2	29.0	41.9	12.3	0.5	0.48	54.2	16.4	37.8
Condition of environment	0.6	10.4	22.8	50.7	15.0	0.5	0.69	65.7	11.0	54.7
Social welfare system	5.9	21.0	43.0	23.7	3.3	3.1	−0.03	27.0	26.9	0.1
Democratic system	3.7	14.2	46.9	26.7	4.5	4.1	0.15	31.2	17.9	13.3
Average	2.0	10.4	27.0	45.4	13.7					

life domains than their counterparts. The mean number of satisfying domains increases steadily from 9.3 for low educational attainment through 9.6 for middle educational attainment to 10.5 for high educational attainment. Similarly, the mean number of satisfying domains increases from 9.2 for the low-income group to 10.1 for the middle-income group to 11.3 for the high-income group.

Table 9 shows demographic differences in the domains rated as the most and least satisfying. Although the Japanese people as a whole are most satisfied with marriage and least satisfied with the social welfare system, the most and least positively rated domains vary notably across groups defined by gender, education, and the residents' community size. Males are most satisfied with marriage and most dissatisfied with household income, while females are most satisfied with friendships and least satisfied with the social welfare system. People with a low level of education chose friendships as the most satisfying life domain and household income as the least satisfying domain. Those with a middle level of education are most satisfied with marriage and least satisfied with household income. The highly educated are most satisfied with friendships and least satisfied with the social welfare system. All three income groups are alike in rating marriage as the most satisfying. Yet low-income people rate income as the least satisfying while middle- and high-income people gave the social welfare system this distinction. Like low-income people, residents of small towns and rural areas rate household income most negatively, while residents of other communities rate the social welfare system most negatively.

Table 9 Patterns of satisfaction with life domains by demographic characteristics

	Specific domains		Number of domains[a]	
	Most satisfied	Most dissatisfied	Mean satisfied	Mean dissatisfied
Total	Marriage	Social welfare system	10.0	1.8
Gender				
Male	Marriage	Household income	9.8	2.0
Female	Friendships	Social welfare system	10.2	1.6
Age				
20–29	Marriage	Social welfare system	10.0	1.8
30–39	Marriage	Household income	9.7	1.9
40–49	Marriage	Social welfare system	9.8	2.0
50–59	Marriage	Social welfare system	10.1	1.7
60–69	Friendships	Social welfare system	10.4	1.8
Marriage				
Not married	–	–	–	–
Married	Family life	Social welfare system	10.0	1.8
Education				
Low	Friendships	Household income	9.3	1.9
Mid	Marriage	Household income	9.6	2.0
High	Friendships	Social welfare system	10.5	1.7
Household income				
Low	Marriage	Household income	9.2	2.2
Mid	Marriage	Social welfare system	10.1	1.9
High	Marriage	Social welfare system	11.3	1.4
Community type				
Over 700,000	Marriage	Social welfare system	9.9	1.9
Over 100,000	Friendships	Social welfare system	9.9	1.7
Less than 100,000	Marriage	Social welfare system	10.1	1.9
Towns and rurals	Friendships	Household income	10.3	1.9

Note. * The number of domains are counted using only married respondents

7 Determinants of Global Quality of Life

This section attempts to determine the forces influencing the perceptions of life quality by examining demographic characteristics, lifestyles, value priorities, and assessments of life domains. Of these four sets of variables, which one contributes most to the perceptions of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement? Which particular variable in these sets contributes most to those perceptions? To answer these questions, we chose ordered logit regression technique and regressed happiness, enjoyment, achievement, and the index of overall quality of life on demographic characteristics, lifestyles, value priorities, and specific life domains. The dependent variables, happiness, enjoyment, achievement, and overall quality of life were coded from low to high, from 0 to 4, from 0 to 3, from 0 to 3, and from 0 to 6, respectively. The descriptive statistics for the variables used in this regression analysis are displayed in Appendix B.

Table 10 shows the results using the entire sample of the respondents, while Table 11 shows the results using the married respondents only as they alone could assess the marriage domain. According to the estimated coefficients reported in Table 10, being married is the only demographic characteristic that has a significant impact on all four measures of life quality, and its impact on all four is positive; respondents who are married are more likely than those who are not to experience feelings of happiness, enjoyment, accomplishment, and a high level of overall life quality. Age is another demographic characteristic with a significant impact on perceived life quality. However, unlike marriage, it affects respondents' sense of achievement only. The older the respondents, the more likely they are to experience feelings of achievement. Although educational attainment and household income displayed a positive effect on overall life quality and its three components in the test of their bivariate relationships, these variables do not show any significantly independent effects in the multivariate analysis. Of the six sets of variables referring to different lifestyles, only the two tapping a global life and social life contribute to happiness and better overall life quality. Of the three categories of value priorities, none shows any significant effect on any of the four dependent variables.

Lastly and most interestingly, none of the public life domain assessments shows a significant impact on any of the four dependent variables. In contrast, some domains in the material and post-material spheres of life show significant impact on one, two, or three dependent variables. In the material life sphere, for example, positive assessments of living standard, education, and work contribute significantly to either the experience of happiness or achievement. In the post-material life sphere, positive assessments of friendships, family life, and spiritual life contribute significantly to that of happiness and/or enjoyment. Friendships, family life, and spiritual life also contribute significantly to the overall life quality.

Table 11 shows the variables that contribute significantly to the perceptions of life quality only among the married. The patterns of significant relationships reported in this table are very similar to those reported in Table 10. This suggests that, regardless of Japanese people's marital status, similar factors shape their quality of life. The notable differences from those reported in Table 10 concern gender, age, and assessments of family life. Among the entire sample, gender and age have no significant effect on any measure of life quality. Among the married, however, these two variables affect feelings of achievement. Older married people or female married people experience a greater sense of achievement than their counterparts. Among the married Japanese, it is the positive assessments of marital life, not family life in general, that enable them to live a life of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement, and thus have a higher overall quality of life. On the basis of the findings reported in Tables 10 and 11, we can conclude that getting married and living a satisfying marital life appear to be the two most powerful forces shaping the quality of life among the Japanese.

8 Summary and Conclusion

Japan is a society facing a number of serious problems. Its economy is, once again, at the risk of downturn. Its population is rapidly aging with a steady decline in the average birthrate. There is also a widening gap between the household incomes of urban centers and rural regions. How are these and other problems affecting the way in which Japanese citizens live their lives and the extent to which they experience a sense of wellbeing? To

Table 10 Ordered logit regression analysis (entire sample)

Dependent variable	Happiness (0–4)		Enjoyment (0–3)		Achievement (0–3)		Overall quality of life (0–6)	
Independent variables	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score
Demographic								
Male	0.06	0.32	−0.26	−1.37	−0.32	−1.66	−0.25	−1.52
Age	−0.01	−0.92	−0.01	−1.52	0.03	(3.45)**	0.01	1.03
Marriage	1.39	(5.73)**	1.10	(4.32)**	0.94	(3.85)**	1.38	(6.27)**
Educational attainment	−0.01	−0.14	−0.09	−1.12	0.05	0.67	−0.03	−0.39
Household income	−0.04	−1.5	−0.05	−1.55	0.02	0.5	−0.03	−1.08
Community type	0.01	0.07	0.03	0.3	−0.12	−1.39	−0.02	−0.32
Lifestyles								
Modern life	−0.07	−0.25	0.14	0.49	0.34	1.18	0.30	1.17
Religious life	−0.08	−0.73	0.13	1.07	0.05	0.37	0.11	1.04
Digital life	0.07	0.6	0.04	0.3	0.15	1.12	0.14	1.18
Global life	0.18	1.35	0.55	(3.65)**	0.16	1.09	0.44	(3.42)**
Political life	0.05	0.37	0.20	1.28	−0.05	−0.36	0.03	0.19
Social life	0.15	1.37	0.29	(2.40)*	0.07	0.55	0.25	(2.41)*
Value priorities								
Need for having	0.04	0.29	0.05	0.4	0.03	0.25	0.09	0.78
Need for relating	0.02	0.15	−0.15	−1.18	0.00	0	0.05	0.43
Need for being	−0.01	−0.09	0.24	1.59	0.14	0.99	0.19	1.47
Life domains								
Material domains								
Housing	0.01	0.11	0.04	0.35	0.18	1.69	0.05	0.52
Standard of living	0.53	3.5	−0.01	−0.07	0.35	(2.31)*	0.42	(3.03)**
Household income	−0.10	−0.74	0.25	1.76	0.08	0.57	0.10	0.81
Education	0.36	(2.78)**	0.02	0.14	0.15	1.13	0.22	1.84
Work	0.22	1.8	0.19	1.47	0.36	(2.82)**	0.26	(2.33)*
Post material domains								
Health	0.00	−0.04	0.23	1.95	0.03	0.27	0.14	1.35
Friendships	0.24	1.81	0.61	(4.30)**	0.02	0.14	0.34	(2.83)**
Family life	0.51	(3.52)**	0.32	(2.06)*	−0.02	−0.12	0.38	(2.87)**
Leisure	−0.09	−0.79	−0.06	−0.45	−0.03	−0.29	−0.09	−0.85
Spiritual life	0.79	(5.49)**	0.89	(5.69)**	0.27	1.88	0.82	(6.13)**
Public domains								
Neighbors	0.04	0.29	−0.25	−1.75	0.12	0.83	−0.08	−0.69
Public safety	−0.05	−0.4	−0.06	−0.48	0.20	1.61	0.08	0.78
Condition of environment	−0.01	−0.1	0.10	0.71	−0.05	−0.35	−0.01	−0.06
Welfare system	−0.07	−0.58	0.08	0.61	0.11	0.81	0.02	0.19

Table 10 continued

Dependent variable	Happiness (0–4)		Enjoyment (0–3)		Achievement (0–3)		Overall quality of life (0–6)	
Independent variables	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score
Democratic system	−0.12	−0.9	−0.07	−0.49	−0.14	−0.97	−0.09	−0.73
Cut 1	2.95		3.55		5.00		7.43	
Cut 2	5.32		7.65		8.19		9.63	
Cut 3	8.68		11.67		12.49		11.03	
Cut 4	11.49						12.49	
Cut 5							14.58	
Cut 6							17.10	
N	592		592		586		586	
R squared	0.202		0.238		0.173		0.197	

Note. * 5% significance level

** 1% significance level

explore these questions systematically, we analyzed the 2006 ABS from a variety of perspectives. We first examined the extent to which the Japanese people are exposed to various lifestyles and how they prioritize numerous life concerns, evaluate life domains, and experience happiness, enjoyment, and satisfaction. We also examined how lifestyles, value priorities, domain assessments, and such feelings of wellbeing vary across the various segments of the Japanese population. Finally, we examined the sources of subjective wellbeing in terms of demographic characteristics, lifestyles, value priorities, and domain assessments.

To analyze lifestyles, we examined the extent to which the lives of the ordinary Japanese are modernized, secularized, digitalized, globalized, politically active, and socially connected. The results of these analyses revealed that the Japanese tend to live highly modernized, secularized, digitalized, and politically active lives, but they are not strongly connected to other members of their communities. The results also showed that demographic characteristics affect significantly the extent to which Japanese people are exposed to each of the aforementioned lifestyles. Of the six characteristics, age, education, and income affect all or most of the lifestyles significantly.

To determine how Japanese people prioritize their values, the ABS asked about the importance of 25 life concerns. Among these concerns, health was the only one rated by a large majority (80%) as one of the five most important concerns. In all demographic groups, moreover, health is rated as the most important life concern. Besides health, however, there is considerable disagreement on what are the most important life concerns. For example, younger Japanese are highly concerned with their jobs, while older Japanese are with good medical care. Those married highly value family life and housing, while those unmarried give more weight to their jobs and pastimes. While the rich value good relationships with others and good medical care, the poor value having enough to eat.

Classifying all of the valued life concerns into three types of needs reveals that the Japanese tend to value the need for having to the greatest extent, the need for relating less,

Table 11 Ordered logit regression analysis (only married respondents)

Dependent variable	Happiness (0–4)		Enjoyment (0–3)		Achievement (0–3)		Overall quality of life (0–6)	
Independent variables	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score
Demographic								
Male	−0.17	−0.80	−0.44	−1.90	−0.48	(−2.08)*	−0.43	(−2.26)*
Age	−0.01	−1.18	−0.002	−0.17	0.04	(3.29)**	0.01	1.12
Educational attainment	0.00	0.02	−0.06	−0.63	0.14	1.48	−0.0002	0
Household income	−0.05	−1.69	−0.05	−1.35	0.03	0.88	−0.03	−0.83
Community type	0.12	1.30	0.04	0.40	−0.19	−1.76	0.03	0.38
Lifestyles								
Modern life	0.45	1.11	0.87	(2.07)*	0.24	0.59	0.72	(1.97)*
Religious life	−0.21	−1.70	0.13	0.93	−0.08	−0.55	0.004	0.04
Digital life	−0.01	−0.06	−0.03	−0.20	0.14	0.88	0.08	0.62
Global life	0.32	(2.03)*	0.63	(3.62)**	0.16	0.94	0.54	(3.66)**
Political life	0.15	0.80	0.29	1.39	−0.06	−0.31	0.12	0.72
Social life	0.05	0.42	0.21	1.46	0.08	0.55	0.20	1.64
Value priorities								
Need for having	0.11	0.73	0.19	1.17	0.10	0.63	0.15	1.08
Need for relating	−0.17	−1.31	−0.13	−0.92	−0.02	−0.16	−0.03	−0.23
Need for being	0.10	0.60	0.22	1.22	0.23	1.27	0.27	1.75
Life domains								
Material domains								
Housing	−0.02	−0.16	0.03	0.22	0.20	1.57	0.10	0.93
Standard of living	0.47	(2.48)*	−0.27	−1.37	0.42	(2.14)*	0.30	1.79
Household income	−0.05	−0.30	0.24	1.34	0.02	0.14	0.04	0.3
Education	0.41	(2.69)**	0.09	0.57	0.17	1.06	0.27	1.95
Work	0.23	1.60	0.22	1.40	0.35	(2.27)*	0.26	1.93
Post-material domains								
Health	0.13	0.98	0.33	(2.22)*	0.08	0.54	0.28	(2.23)*
Friendships	0.02	0.12	0.80	(4.53)**	0.07	0.41	0.32	(2.19)*
Marriage	0.88	(4.95)**	0.66	(3.44)**	0.38	(2.02)*	0.76	(4.65)**
Family life	0.33	1.69	0.12	0.58	−0.38	−1.80	0.13	0.72
Leisure	−0.16	−1.19	−0.13	−0.88	−0.11	−0.74	−0.16	−1.28
Spiritual life	0.62	(3.53)**	0.94	(4.93)**	0.24	1.33	0.71	(4.41)**
Public domains								
Neighbors	0.03	0.21	−0.23	−1.38	0.08	0.50	−0.07	−0.52
Public safety	−0.02	−0.15	−0.09	−0.62	0.19	1.28	0.04	0.33
Condition of environment	−0.02	−0.12	0.09	0.54	−0.03	−0.16	0.02	0.16
Welfare system	0.004	0.03	0.11	0.73	0.17	1.06	0.17	1.27
Democratic system	−0.24	−1.47	−0.12	−0.70	−0.10	−0.60	−0.19	−1.32
Cut 1	4.57		6.14		4.62		8.78	
Cut 2	6.54		11.68		7.75		11.45	

Table 11 continued

Dependent variable	Happiness (0–4)		Enjoyment (0–3)		Achievement (0–3)		Overall quality of life (0–6)	
Independent variables	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score	Coefficient	Z score
Cut 3	10.15		15.83		12.17		12.90	
Cut 4	13.22						14.46	
Cut 5							16.65	
Cut 6							19.21	
N	454		454		449		449	
R squared	0.203		0.255		0.159		0.193	

Note. * 5% significance level

** 1% significance level

and the need for being the least. Males are more oriented toward the need for having, while females toward the need for relating. Married people uphold the need for relating, while singletons appreciate the need for being. Those highly educated are more likely to uphold the need for relating and the need for being than those less educated. The priorities the Japanese place on their values vary considerably according to the circumstances in which they live and the particular stage of their lifecycle.

Our comparative analysis of life domain assessments revealed that the Japanese people as a whole are most satisfied with marriage and least satisfied with the social welfare system. But the numbers and patterns of their domain satisfactions differ significantly across most of the demographic categories. Being female, having a higher education, and having a higher household income are correlated positively with the number of satisfying domains and correlated negatively with the number of dissatisfying domains. Males are most satisfied with their marriages and most dissatisfied with their household incomes, while females are most satisfied with friendships and least satisfied with the social welfare system. Highly educated people are most satisfied with friendships and least satisfied with the social welfare system, while the other groups report differently. Finally, when the sixteen specific life domains are grouped into three life spheres, namely, material, post-material, and public, it reveals that the Japanese people tend to be most satisfied with the post-material sphere, which includes such concerns as health or friendships, and least satisfied with the public sphere, which includes the social welfare system.

We appraised the quality of life as a whole in terms of the extent to which the Japanese people experience the feelings of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement, and the combined index of the three components. A majority evaluated their life experiences as a whole more positively than negatively, but some groups evaluated their overall life experience more positively than others. Being female, being married, having a higher education, and having a larger household income are associated with higher levels of quality of life. The older respondents tend to experience the feelings of achievement in the largest proportion.

Multivariate analyses of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement revealed that a variety of demographic characteristics, lifestyles, and domain assessments significantly affect the perceptions of life quality. Surprisingly, however, neither educational attainment nor

household income is included in this list of powerful factors. Of the factors, being married and satisfied with marital life stand out as the most powerful and prevalent influence on the quality of life the Japanese experience. Equally notable is the finding that neither educational attainment nor household income contributes significantly to the experience of happiness, enjoyment, and achievement.

Among the aforementioned findings from this study, three hold implications for policymaking. First, a large majority of Japanese people considers health as the most important life concern, and most of them remain dissatisfied with the social welfare system. This clearly indicates that the Japanese people desire significant improvements in the management of the corruption-ridden Social Insurance Agency and other government agencies that handle a variety of public welfare programs, including social security and medical assistance for the population as a whole. The low level of satisfaction toward the social welfare system also reflects feelings of uncertainty and worry among the rapidly aging population and indicates the need to formulate a program that can alleviate these feelings.

Concern is highest in rural areas where demographic change has occurred more rapidly than in the rest of the country. Income inequality between urban and rural areas is widening at a faster rate than ever before. Historically, fiscal inequality was mitigated by the income redistribution from rich cities to poor cities. Fiscal reform to alleviate these problems has been virtually stalled until the former Prime Minister Koizumi initiated the reform in 2001. Current and future leaders must overcome political stalemate and set into motion policies that can quickly reverse negative population growth and the growing fiscal deficits, which have already reached about 160% of GDP in 2004.

The second point is related to the first point in that it may offer a way out of the problems mentioned above. We found that being married and satisfied with marital life are the two forces most able to produce a high quality of life in Japan. Therefore, public policy to encourage marriage and increase birthrate through financial assistance for bearing and raising children and maternity leave will have double-positive effects on the quality of life. This will directly motivate people to get married, which will contribute to building a nation of greater wellbeing. Through increasing the birthrate, it will also enhance the financial stability of social security and healthcare insurance systems, which, in turn, will provide better services for the improvement of health among the people as a whole. Increases in the population will also secure the future of the social security system, which will safeguard the standard of living especially among the aging population. These changes are indirectly but positively correlated with a high quality of life because in Japan, being satisfied with one's standard of living and health have positive impacts on quality of life.

Finally, we found that those who live global and socially connected lives tend to experience greater quality of life. As noted, Japan is a highly digitalized society as evidenced by high rates of broadband and computer penetration, but the society is becoming weaker in terms of interpersonal relations, according to opinion surveys recently conducted by the Japanese government. These surveys have shown that both interpersonal relations in families and in work places have weakened. Thus more comprehensive policies aimed at improving family life, such as those establishing childcare centers and reducing working hours, are necessary to improve the quality of life in Japan.

Appendix A

Comparison between Census and ABS Sample (See Table 12)

Table 12 Comparison between census and ABS sample

		Census	ABS
Gender	Male	49.9	50.0
	Female	50.1	50.0
Age	20–29	18.4	18.7
	30–39	21.8	21.8
	40–49	18.6	18.3
	50–59	22.4	22.4
	60–69	18.8	18.6
Education	Primary	22.0	8.2
	Secondary	41.6	44.1
	High	24.6	47.2
Marital status	Never married	26.8	19.1
	Married	64.0	72.9
	Widowed	2.9	3.5
	Divorced	4.9	4.3
Household income	Less than 5 million yen	50.3	49.2
	5–8 million yen	33.2	29.5
	More than 8 million yen	16.5	21.3
Region	Hokkaido/Tohoku	11.6	12.0
	Kanto	33.9	32.9
	Chubu	18.2	18.1
	Kinki	16.5	16.9
	Chugoku/Shikoku	8.8	9.0
	Kyushu	19.8	18.1
Community type	Government-designated cities	24.9	23.9
	Population 100,000 or more	42.4	37.9
	Population less than 100,000	19.8	18.1
	Towns and rurals	13.0	20.0

Note. For education, we use the census data in 2000 for those aged over 15. The percentage of those attending schools is 8.2% of the census. For household income, we use a survey data in 2004. Otherwise, we use the census data for the population aged between 20 and 69 in 2005

Appendix B

Descriptive statistics for regression analysis (See Table 13)

Table 13 Descriptive statistics for regression analysis

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent variables					
Happiness	1,002	2.68	0.82	0	4
Enjoyment	999	1.98	0.66	0	3
Achievement	984	1.70	0.64	0	3
Overall quality of life	982	3.27	1.41	0	6
Independent variables					
Demographic					
Male	1,003	0.50	0.50	0	1
Age	1,003	44.71	14.17	20	69
Married	1,003	0.73	0.44	0	1
Educational attainment	997	2.95	1.33	1	5
Household income	752	5.35	3.62	1	20
Community type	1,003	2.66	1.05	1	4
Life styles					
Modern life	1,003	1.89	0.32	0	2
Religious life	981	0.70	0.81	0	2
Digital life	993	1.13	0.83	0	2
Global life	1,001	0.43	0.64	0	2
Political life	986	1.69	0.66	0	2
Social life	914	0.85	0.81	0	2
Value priorities					
Need of having	1,003	1.95	0.86	0	3
Need of relating	1,003	1.28	0.87	0	3
Need of begin	1,003	0.60	0.73	0	3
Life domains					
Housing	1,002	3.72	1.00	1	5
Standard of living	1,000	3.51	0.90	1	5
Household income	992	3.21	1.00	1	5
Education	978	3.55	0.81	1	5
Job	932	3.48	0.89	1	5
Health	1,002	3.80	0.95	1	5
Friendships	1,001	4.05	0.75	1	5
Marriage	725	4.06	0.74	1	5
Family life	991	3.93	0.74	1	5
Leisure	1,000	3.61	0.93	1	5
Spiritual life	990	3.63	0.83	1	5
Neighbors	983	3.61	0.78	1	5
Public safety	998	3.48	0.96	1	5
Condition of environment	998	3.69	0.87	1	5
Welfare system	972	2.97	0.92	1	5
Democratic system	962	3.15	0.86	1	5

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