

## Gender, Age and Mountain Tourism in Japan

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## Characteristics of Japanese Mountain Tourism

Intersectionality: women, age. Women forbidden before 1872.

Based in history of pilgrimages to sacred sites-Buddhist temples, sacred mountains and Shinto shrines- Junrei Tozan (Pilgrimage Mountaineering).

Demography-long life expectancy (86 years for women and 79 for men), physical fitness, leisure time and adequate income. Number of full-time housewives peaked in 1975. By 1980s most new mountaineers were middle-aged women.

Mountain tourism based on books on Fukada's 100 Famous Mountains (1964) and on woman playwright Tanaka Sumie's 100 Mountains Famous for their Wild Flowers (1980). Hierarchy based on difficulty of ascent with local 100 mountains identified in 1990s.

## Mass Media

- In 1994 the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), a non-commercial and semi-government corporation whose networks cover the country, broadcast programmes on Fukada's 100 mountains on its educational channel. A year later came a series on Tanaka's Wild Flower mountains. All programmes were broadcast during the afternoon. This led to a sudden increase in mountain tourism among middle-aged women.
- In 2003 there were 65 registered mountain tour operators. Numbers of participants on these mountain tours annually is about 500,000. Some involve 2-3 days hiking over 40 kms and several thousand meters of altitude.

## Age and Gender of Mountain Hikers in Japan

Age Group	Male (N=828)	Female (264)
Under 30 years old	4	6
30-39 years	11	17
40-49 years	23	17
50-59 years	34	46
60-69 years	23	13
70-79 years	5	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: adapted from *Gakujin*, October 2003

## Current Situation

- Number of mountain hikers aged over 40 years, increased from 1.32 million (36.4%) in 1976, to 2.03 million (53.8%) in 1988 to 3.06 million (64.4%) in 2000.
- Interest in conservation, nature and cheap domestic tourism among urban housewives.
- Improvements in road networks, building of mountain huts and contiguity of high population density and 83 of the 100 mountains of special touristic interest, in Honshu encourages growth.

## Accidents among Mountain Hikers in Japan

	1999	2003	2008
Number of accidents	1195	1358	1631
Total number injured	1444	1666	1933
Middle aged injured (50-70yrs)	<b>1158</b>	<b>1298</b>	<b>1567</b>
Percentage	(80%)	(78%)	(81%)
<b>Total dead or missing</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>281</b>
Middle aged dead or missing (50-70yrs)	235	213	256
Percentage	(87%)	(93%)	(91%)

Source: Japanese Police Agency, 2009

## Social Crisis

The increasing number of accidents among older climbers is causing a social crisis.

In 2009 around 2000 were hurt in mountain accidents of whom 60 per cent were over 55 years of age. On July 13-14<sup>th</sup> 2009, 10 people aged 50 to 69 (8 female and 2 male) froze to death in the central highlands of Hokkaido.

Now more women are climbing with their husbands and with increased female employment fewer have the leisure for mountain hiking.

