

## Statistics: Fibre Consumption for Technical Textiles in Japan, 2010 edition

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Man-made fibre output in Japan fell in 2009 for the ninth consecutive year. Furthermore, the decline, at 22.0%, was more than twice as fast as any previous fall during the nine-year period. Output of filament yarn plunged by 29.9% while that of staple fibres decreased by a substantial 15.1%. The fall in filament yarn output reflected double digit declines in all the main fibre types. In the case of staple fibres, output of all the main synthetic fibre types fell at double digit rates but the drop in cellulosic staple fibres was confined to 4.3%.

Japan's man-made fibre plants are being poorly utilised. In synthetics, capacity utilisation plunged to less than 50% in 2009 as output declined by as much as 24.3%. In cellulose, capacity utilisation was a more sustainable 75.6%. Nonetheless, this was its lowest rate since 2000—due to a 10.1% drop in output.

Mill consumption levels have also been deteriorating in recent years. Although usage rose slightly in 2006/07 and 2007/08, it declined by 14.3% to a new low in 2008/09. Fibre consumption for industrial uses fell by 12.4% to its lowest level since 2001/02 although 84.2% of the amount consumed was still produced domestically. Fibre usage for tyre reinforcement, meanwhile, fell by a sharp 25.0% in 2009 to its lowest level in over 15 years. Furthermore, although a large proportion of the drop consisted of steel fibres, there were also declines in polyamide, polyester and rayon.

In technical textiles, nonwoven fabric production dropped in 2009 to its lowest level in over ten years, despite reaching a peak in 2007. There was also a decline in output of industrial textile goods—to a level which was barely half of that witnessed ten years earlier. Meanwhile, spunbonded fabric output deteriorated for the third time in four years to reach its lowest level since 1999.

Technical textile production is unlikely to increase significantly in the near future as the industry faces growing competition from low cost producers in Asian countries—notably China. Moreover, these problems are expected to become increasingly acute as vehicle and automotive component production increases in China. However, the declines in 2009 are likely to have been exacerbated by the global recession and production may stabilise in 2010.

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