

The Only One in Town: The Number of Industrial Subcategories with a Single Establishment Is Almost Independent of Municipality Size

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Abstract

For 1,889 Japanese municipalities, I counted how many of 433 industrial subcategories have **exactly one** establishment recorded in the municipality.

That number is almost independent of the size of the municipality. The median is 46 in municipalities under 5,000 residents and 41 in those above 300,000.

The correlation with population is $r = +0.056$, essentially none.

The **share** of present subcategories that have only one establishment, by contrast, rises sharply as population falls: a median of **56.8%** under 5,000 residents and **11.6%** above 300,000, with a correlation of $r = -0.937$.

By subcategory, those most often reduced to a single establishment are public bodies — public health centres (450 of the 491 municipalities where present, 91.6%), judicial agencies (87.3%), welfare offices (85.3%) — together with converted paper manufacturing (70.3%) and cinemas (67.3%).

Least often: municipal agencies (0.1%), civil engineering work (0.9%), other food and beverage retailing (1.2%), beauty salons (2.3%).

In the Kushiro Subprefecture the share is **59.2%** in Tsurui and **15.5%** in Kushiro City.

"Only one" means that **if that one establishment goes, the subcategory disappears from the municipality.** In small municipalities, more than half of the trades present are in that state.

1. Introduction

R001 addressed the number of industrial subcategories present in a municipality; R002 addressed at which population each subcategory appears.

This paper steps from **whether** a trade is present to **how many** of it there are.

How many subcategories have only one establishment in the municipality?

If there is only one, then when that one goes, the subcategory leaves the municipality.

2. Data and scope

Establishments	Statistics Bureau of Japan and METI, 2021 Economic Census for Business Activity (1 June 2021). Establishment counts are used
Population	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Basic Resident Register population, 1 January 2026

Municipalities number **1,889** after excluding aggregate rows. Of the 526 subcategories, the 93 head-office subcategories were excluded, leaving **433** (as in R002).

3. Results

3-1 The count is flat; the share is not

Population band	Municipalities	Subcategories present	With only one	Share
under 5,000	307	83	46	56.8%
5,000–10,000	243	131	58	44.6%
10,000–30,000	448	182	62	34.0%
30,000–100,000	498	250	59	23.7%
100,000–300,000	328	304	50	16.6%
300,000 and over	65	348	41	11.6%

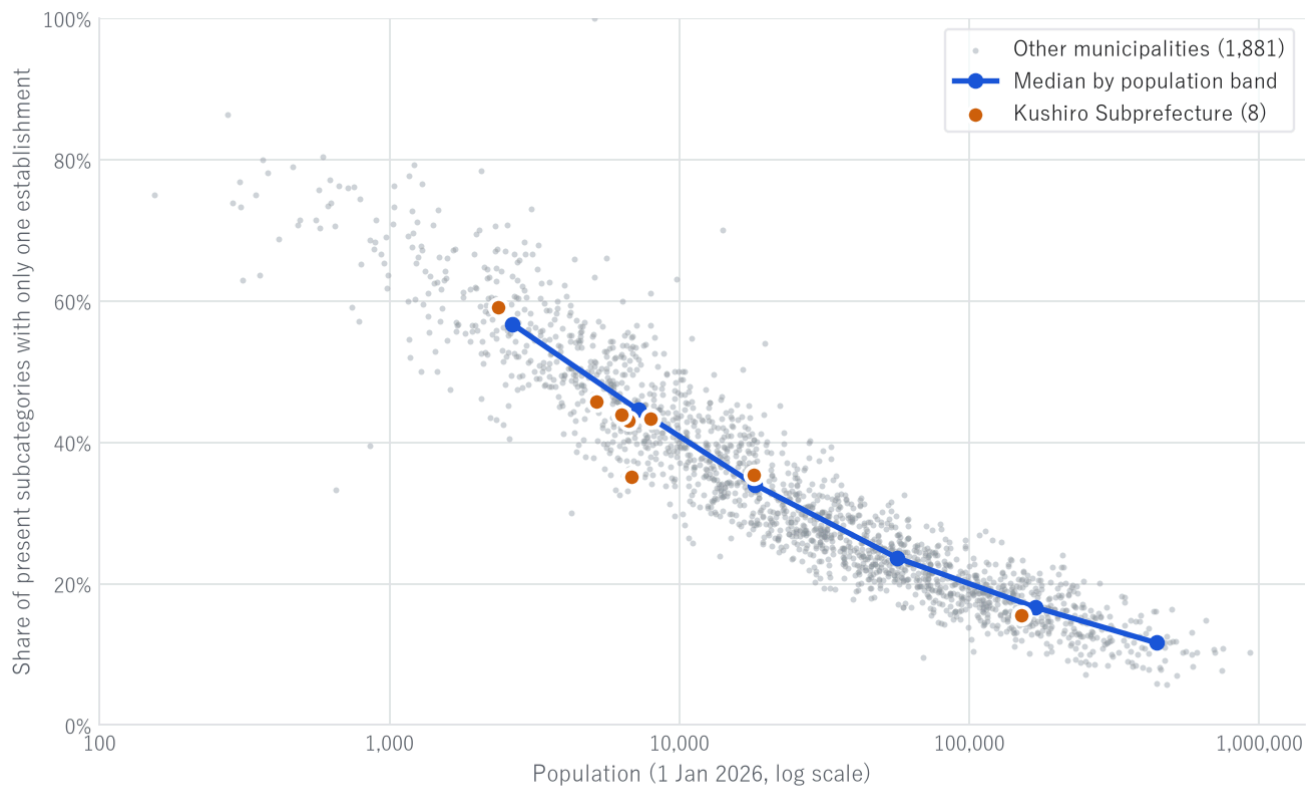
All figures are medians.

- Correlation of population with the **number** of single-establishment subcategories: **$r = +0.056$**
- Correlation of population with the **share**: **$r = -0.937$**

Across a more than sixtyfold difference in population, the count barely moves (46 versus 41).

What changes is the denominator — the number of subcategories present (83 versus 348).

The smaller the town, the more trades have only one establishment



Sources: Economic Census 2021; Basic Resident Register, 1 Jan 2026. n = 1,889 municipalities.

Figure 1. Population and the share of subcategories with a single establishment (1,889 municipalities).

Grey points are the other municipalities, the blue line is the median by population band, and the orange points are the eight municipalities of the Kushiro Subprefecture.

3-2 Which subcategories are reduced to one

Among the 355 subcategories present in at least 300 municipalities, the share of those municipalities where only one establishment exists.

Share	Subcategory	Present in	Only one
91.6%	Public health centres	491	450
87.3%	Judicial agencies	434	379
85.3%	Welfare offices	510	435
70.3%	Converted paper manufacturing	357	251
69.0%	Other rubber products	390	269
67.7%	Cable broadcasting	498	337
67.3%	Cinemas	339	228
66.9%	Inland water aquaculture	435	291

Share	Subcategory	Present in	Only one
4.7%	Specialty restaurants	1,821	85
3.0%	Barbers	1,862	55
2.3%	Beauty salons	1,857	42
2.3%	Welfare and care for the elderly	1,865	42
1.2%	Other food and beverage retailing	1,876	22
0.9%	Civil engineering work	1,879	17
0.1%	Municipal agencies	1,888	1

At the top are things of which **one per municipality suffices** (health centres, judicial agencies, welfare offices) and things that **require large facilities and few of them** (converted paper, rubber, cinemas).

At the bottom are things that **scale with the number of people** (barbers, beauty salons, food, elderly care).

3-3 The Kushiro Subprefecture

Municipality	Population	Present	Only one	Share
Kushiro City	151,566	310	48	15.5%
Kushiro Town	18,021	178	63	35.4%
Akkeshi	7,976	159	69	43.4%
Hamanaka	5,172	105	48	45.7%
Shibechea	6,698	130	56	43.1%
Teshikaga	6,327	139	61	43.9%
Tsurui	2,368	71	42	59.2%
Shiranuka	6,840	131	46	35.1%

In Tsurui, 42 of the 71 subcategories present (59.2%) have a single establishment; in Kushiro City, 48 of 310 (15.5%).

The counts, 42 and 48, are nearly the same.

4. Discussion

4-1 The count is constant; the denominator moves

As population grows, new subcategories appear (R002) and existing ones gain further establishments. The result is that **every municipality, of whatever size, carries some 40 to 60 subcategories with a**

single establishment, while only the share falls.

The abundance of "only one" in small municipalities is not a local peculiarity; it follows from **the small denominator**.

4-2 When the one goes, the subcategory goes

"Only one" describes a state in which the closure or relocation of a single establishment removes the subcategory from the municipality.

In municipalities under 5,000 residents, **more than half of the trades present (median 56.8%) are in that state**.

This paper does not call that good or bad. But when considering business succession or the maintenance of local trades,

counting only presence and absence, without looking at how many, hides this state entirely.

4-3 What can and cannot be said

Having only one establishment does **not** by itself mean that the trade will not continue. Continuation depends on the owner's age, successors and profitability, none of which is examined here.

Nor can cases where suppression or non-response makes a subcategory appear to have one establishment be distinguished.

5. Limitations

- Establishments are as of 1 June 2021 and population as of 1 January 2026: a **five-year gap**
- **"Only one" means exactly one establishment is recorded.** Cases arising from suppression or non-response cannot be distinguished here
- Industrial subcategories are an administrative classification and do **not** map one-to-one onto trades as practised
- The 93 head-office subcategories are excluded

- Section 3-2 is restricted to the 355 subcategories present in at least 300 municipalities; nothing is claimed about the rest
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6. Reproduction

1. Obtain establishments by industrial subcategory and municipality (2021 Economic Census) from e-Stat
2. Obtain Basic Resident Register population by municipality as of 1 January 2026
3. Exclude aggregate rows and the head-office subcategories
4. For each municipality, count the subcategories with exactly one establishment
5. Divide by the number of subcategories with at least one

All values are the output of a single script (`kensan_186`). No intermediate value was transcribed by hand.

References and data sources

1. Statistics Bureau of Japan and METI, 2021 Economic Census for Business Activity.
2. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Population Based on the Basic Resident Register, 1 January 2026.
3. Y. Yamagishi, "Population and the Number of Industrial Subcategories Present in Japanese Municipalities" (R001). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22872218>
4. Y. Yamagishi, "At What Population Does a Trade Appear?" (R002). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22872356>

Items 1 and 2 are published on e-Stat and on the ministries' websites.

Version history

Version	Date	Change
1	2026-09-21	First release