

Solar cell shipments in Japan hit record high in April-June

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Demand for solar cells has been growing rapidly in Japan with a record generating capacity of 83,260 kilowatts shipped to the domestic market between April and June, up 82.5 percent from the same quarter last year, a private-sector survey showed Sunday.

The survey by the Japan Photovoltaic Energy Association said over 90 percent of the [solar cells](#) shipped during the quarter were for individual household use, indicating that approximately 20,000 households installed [solar power generation](#) systems over the period.

The rapid increase came amid growing public awareness of global warming and government efforts to promote the introduction of solar cells, including the resumption in January of subsidies for consumers planning to install solar power generation systems. The subsidies had been suspended in fiscal 2006.

The Democratic Party of Japan, which will take over government in mid-September, plans to initiate a system to enable power companies to buy electricity produced by households, raising hopes that the new program will serve as an incentive for solar cell purchases.

Solar cell equipment for newly built homes with a power generation capacity of around 3.5 kilowatts costs about 2 million yen on average, but the cost could be slashed by a third using subsidies from state and local governments, according to association officials.

The survey covered 24 solar cell suppliers, including major electronics makers such as Sanyo Electric Co., [Sharp Corp.](#) and Mitsubishi Electric Corp.

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