

# Introduction – Toward a Human-Centered Society

The global economic growth in past decades has made society more prosperous than ever before. Healthcare advances have increased people's overall lifespan, while the abundance of consumer appliances and gadgets have improved convenience. That said, rapid economic development has brought some of the direst challenges society faces today, such as the aging population, global warming, concentration of wealth, and increasing inequalities in society. Achieving economic development while solving social issues has always proven difficult. Attaining inclusive and sustainable growth by leveraging technological advances is the idea behind the initial concept of smart cities and the more recent thinking regarding Society 5.0.

Society 5.0 is a concept that strives to utilize innovative technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), and big data across all industries and social activities to achieve economic development and solve social problems. As this concept advances further, it can significantly impact the future of society.

## Key points

As a feeling of stagnation sets in many developed countries worldwide, Society 5.0 strives to better people's lives through the optimal use of information and communication technologies (ICT). The new value to be created is anticipated to reduce regional, age, gender, and language gaps, while enabling the supply of tailored products and services. Thus, creating a **“human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space.”\***

AI, big data, and robotics are expected to have a major impact on people's lives by bridging the gap between people, machines, and space. They are poised to free people from tedious tasks and support the enhancement of human activities or the creation of more comfortable living conditions. Thus, a new value would emerge, fashioning a society centered on individual well-being. It is this human-centered approach, which intends to take every member of society ahead, that is set to differentiate Society 5.0 from earlier versions of technology- or infrastructure-led developments.

*\*Source: Cabinet Office, Government of Japan*