OECD Reviews of Public Health: JAPAN
A healthier tomorrow
Francesca Colombo, Tokyo
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Japan: a long-lived, healthy population...
The longest-lived population in the OECD

Life expectancy at birth, 1970 and 2015 (or nearest year)

Apparently low rates of risky behaviour...

- Average smoking rate is below the OECD average
- Alcohol consumption is well below the OECD average
- Japan’s obesity rate is the lowest in the OECD
- Average life expectancy is the longest in the OECD
... but a closer look reveals important health risks

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<tr>
<th>Icon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🚭</td>
<td>Average smoking rate is below the OECD average... but male smoking is very high</td>
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<td>🍷</td>
<td>Alcohol consumption is well below the OECD average... but increasing, e.g. rise in excess drinking of women (+20g/day)</td>
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<td>📈</td>
<td>Japan’s obesity rate is the lowest in the OECD... but adjusted BMI shows 30.% obesity for men</td>
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<td>🕒</td>
<td>Average life expectancy is the longest in the OECD... by 2050 36.4% of Japan’s population will be over 65 and 15.0% over 80</td>
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The Public Health System can be further strengthened.
OECD Public Health Reviews: Japan

Chapter 1. Japan’s Public Health System

Chapter 2. Primary Prevention and Health Japan 21

Chapter 3. Health Check-Ups

Chapter 4. Responding to Public Health Emergencies
4 main areas of action

- Strengthen Japan’s Public Health System
- More targeted health checks and screening
- Reinforce and refine the primary prevention strategy
- Ensure a robust response to public health emergencies
Robust public health system focused on local response

Government, employers, civil society are engaged with promoting health lives

Japan’s decentralised system presents challenges – better coordination is needed

Leverage data to ensure good performance across the system
Encourage collaboration between stakeholders

Focus on involving all Ministries in key strategies, e.g. HJ21 and emergency preparedness

Encourage joined-up government at the local level – support sectors working together: education, health, employment, environment...
Focus on strengthening local capacity

Minimum standards or expectations for local governments and employers

Share successful practices, e.g. annual conference for local government on public health

Use user-friendly data to benchmark local performance in public health
Finland: benchmark local performance

Finland’s TEAviisari — Benchmarking system of health promotion capacity building

Health promotion capacity building: Whole country 2018

Physical activity: Whole country

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<th>Whole country</th>
<th>Helsinki</th>
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<td>Primary health care</td>
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2. Reinforcing HJ21 and population-level primary prevention
Health Japan 21 (HJ21) – a comprehensive programme aimed at improving healthy lifestyles

increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, and exercise, reducing smoking and alcohol consumption, to improving mental wellbeing and reducing stress

broad strategy – 53 targets – implemented at the local level
Broad set of policies to tackle unhealthy behaviors and promote healthy life

Some population-level policies are in place, e.g. tobacco reduction

Current focus could be *too* diffuse – many different targets

Population-level policies could be strengthened, for tobacco, food and alcohol
Strengthening HJ21

- Smaller number of priorities, e.g. smoking and salt reduction
- Recommend evidence-based programmes
- Guidelines and positive/negative incentives to assure effectiveness of interventions
Population-level primary prevention

Focus on main risk factors: smoking, diet, alcohol

Stronger tobacco policy in line with WHO Framework:
• Expand indoor smoking ban
• More marketing restrictions
• Visual warnings on packaging
Population-level primary prevention

Focus on main risk factors: smoking, diet, alcohol

Promote healthy food choices:
• Move to front-of-pack food labelling
• Restrictions on advertising to children
• Eliminate trans-fat from industrial production

Population-level alcohol policies
• Regulation of the marketing of alcohol products e.g. restricting sponsorship by alcohol producers
• Package warning labels
• Some restrictions on the availability of alcohol e.g. in petrol stations
3. Health check-ups and cancer screening
Health check-ups and cancer screening

Japan takes secondary prevention very serious with extensive screening

Cancer mortality is low and survival rates are good

An unusually high number of check-ups – some or many might be ineffective

No national cancer screening programme
An unusually high number of health check-ups

More health check-ups than other OECD countries

Delivered by schools, works, municipalities...
Focus on a streamlined health check-up offer

- Undertake a comprehensive review of the full health check-up field

Economic evaluation – weed out check-ups that are bad value

Targeted coverage of a streamlined set of check-ups
Building a national cancer screening programme

Cancer screening is lower than OECD average

No nationwide cancer screening programme

NEXT STEPS: a standardised, national approach

NEXT STEPS: strengthen the health information system and develop cancer registries
4. Preparing for public health emergencies
A country vulnerable to natural hazards

- Earthquakes and tsunamis
- Typhoons, extreme temperatures
- Floods, landslides
- Pandemics and infectious diseases
A country vulnerable to hazards and threats... with public health impacts.
Generally well-prepared for public health emergencies

- Sophisticated legal framework for national emergencies and public health consequences
- All ministries concerned involved in emergency preparedness and response
- Comprehensive risk assessments, modelling and awareness
- Robust infrastructure and dedicated capabilities, e.g. staff, supplies
Strengthen capacity to respond to public health emergencies

- MHLW should establish a permanent Emergency Operation Centre
- Strengthen monitoring, information sharing mechanisms, and collaboration
- Better-use exercises and drills to prepare and improve
- Better-train health professionals on public health emergency preparedness
KEY PRIORITIES FOR JAPAN

• Focus on a streamlined prevention package

• With a narrower set of clear expectations for all stakeholders

• Backed up by stronger population-level policies