

JAPAN

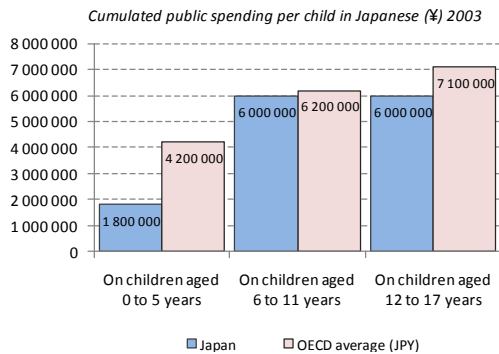
Country Highlights



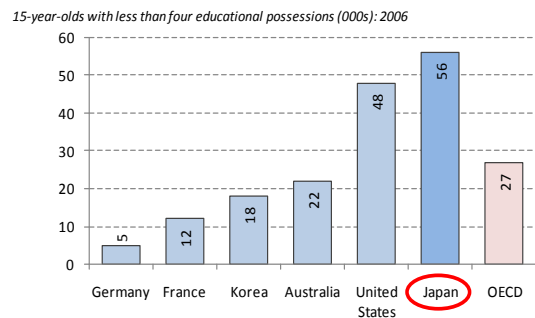
OECD (2009), *Doing Better for Children*

Japan spends less than the OECD average on children at each stage of childhood, according to the OECD's first ever report on children. The Japanese spending shortfall is especially pronounced for children under age 6, being less than one third of the spending committed to children between the ages of 6 and 17 years.

Child spending in Japan in the early years is less than a third of that spent in later stages



Japanese children are more likely to be deprived of basic educational items



Japan is in the top third of the OECD in terms of levels of average family income, but not all children benefit. Child poverty in Japan, at 13.7%, is slightly higher than the OECD average of 12.4%. What is especially surprising for a country with high family incomes is the relatively high proportion of Japanese children – about one in twenty – that lack a key set of educational possessions such as a quiet study space, a computer, or textbooks. Japan is the fourth worst performer on this indicator across the OECD, better only than Greece, Turkey and Mexico.

One third of all Japanese children grow up in households disturbed by noise pollution. This is high compared to the OECD average of one in four children.

Japanese children have a very safe entry into life, which continues into adulthood. So although Japan has the second highest rate of low birth weight in the OECD, infant mortality rates are very low, with fewer than 3 deaths per 1000 live births. This extends to children aged 1 to 19 for whom Japan reports the third lowest mortality rates in the OECD.

Japan, along with Korea, reports one of the lowest rates of teenage motherhood among OECD countries. At 3.7 births per 1000 girls aged 15-19, Japan has the lowest rate of teenage fertility in the OECD area, where the average of 15.5 births is four times higher.

Based on international evidence, the OECD concludes that Japan should spend considerably more on younger children to ensure all get a good start in life. Equally, the Japanese government should ensure that current higher rates of spending on older children are more effective in meeting the needs of the disadvantaged among them.