Preventing Harmful Alcohol Use

Alcohol can be a source of enjoyment and is an important part of the economy in many countries. Yet harmful alcohol use is a leading risk factor for premature death, injuries and many non-communicable diseases. Harmful alcohol use can also affect others, for example in the case of violence and foetal alcohol syndrome. These diseases and injuries, in turn, have an impact on healthcare budgets and the productivity of the labour force.

**Japan** has a relatively low level of alcohol consumption – **8 litres of pure alcohol** per capita per year, roughly equivalent to 1.6 bottles of wine or 3.1 litres of beer per week per person aged 15 and over. In addition, in Japan, some population groups are at higher risk than others; specifically:

- **23% of adults engage in binge drinking** at least once a month. This corresponds to drinking more than 80% of a bottle of wine or 1.5 litres of beer per occasion.
- **1.1% of adults are dependent on alcohol**

Men consume **12.3 litres** of pure alcohol per capita per year while women consume **3.9 litres** per capita per year.

Life expectancy is **0.7 years lower** over the next 30 years due to diseases and injuries caused by drinking more than 1 drink per day for women and 1½ drinks per day for men reduce, on average in the whole population, according to OECD simulations.

Based on current consumption patterns in Japan, OECD simulations estimate that diseases and injuries caused by drinking above the 1-1½ drinks per day lead to treatment costs equal to **1.1% of health expenditure** and a reduction in the workforce productivity. Consequently, Japan's GDP is estimated to be **1% lower** on average between now and 2050, excluding any impact on the alcohol industry. Due to a lower GDP, and to maintain a constant public debt-to-GDP ratio, Japan has to raise additional revenues equivalent to an increase in tax of **JPY 11 452** per person per year.
OECD analysis of WHO data reflects the implementation status across policy areas within the WHO’s Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol.

Japan performs well in certain policy areas, but there are opportunities for further action. Policy priorities could include:

- Strengthening regulation of advertising on social media and new media, which are frequently used by young people;
- Strengthening pricing policies targeting cheap alcohol to protect heavy drinkers and young people;
- Strengthening restriction on availability of alcohol to vulnerable and high-risk groups, for instance by time or place;
- Upscaling action to tackle drink-driving for example by enforcing sobriety checkpoints;

In Japan, investing JPY 250 per person per year in the enhanced policy package to tackle harmful alcohol use will:

- prevent 4.2 million non-communicable diseases and injuries by 2050;
- save JPY 85 billion per year in health costs;
- increase employment and productivity by the equivalent of 62 thousand full-time workers per year.

For every JPY 1 invested in the policy package, JPY 16 are returned in benefits, not considering any impact on the alcohol industry.

Discover the OECD SPheP-NCD data explorer and the model’s documentation at [http://oecdpublichealthexplorer.org/](http://oecdpublichealthexplorer.org/)

Find the full OECD report Preventing Harmful Alcohol Use at [oe.cd/alcohol2021](http://oe.cd/alcohol2021)