

Japan performs well in several areas of well-being, and ranks closely to the OECD average and in several dimensions ranks above average. Key highlights include the following:

- Money is an important means to achieving higher living standards. In 2008, the average Japanese household earned around 23,000 USD, close to the OECD average, and had a net financial wealth of 65,000 USD, which is almost double of the OECD average.
- In terms of employment, nearly 70 per cent of people aged 15 to 64 have a paid job, while the OECD average is 65 per cent. People in Japan work 1,733 hours a year, which is close to the OECD average, but almost 7 per cent is working fewer hours than actually wished, double than the OECD average. Japanese workers have lengthy commutes with almost 50 minutes per day spent travelling to and from work. When compared to other OECD countries, the Japanese also spend the least amount of time on leisure and personal care with a combined total of 14 hours per day . Looking at gender disparities, a higher number of men are employed (80 per cent compared to 70 per cent), even though more women (60 per cent) than men (52 per cent) have an upper-secondary degree. Girls tend to perform better than boys in PISA reading skills (with a 40 point difference, almost the equivalent of one year of schooling). 66 per cent of mothers with children have a paid job, same as the OECD average.
- Housing conditions are generally good with 77 per cent of people satisfied with their housing conditions. Although this percentage is high, it is still below the OECD average of 87 per cent.
- Having a good education is an important requisite to finding a good job. In Japan, 44 per cent of adults aged 25 to 64 have earned the equivalent of a University degree, one of the highest percentage among OECD countries. In terms of the quality of its educational system, the average student scored 520 out of 600 in their reading ability according to the latest data from the OECD *Programme for International Student Assessment*. This is among the highest in OECD countries. Students tend to perform well regardless of their own background or the school they attended.
- In terms of health, life expectancy at birth in Japan is 83 years, the highest rate in OECD countries, and Japan has one of the lowest infant mortality rates (around 2 deaths per 100,000 live births) in OECD countries. Moreover, only 4 per cent of Japanese people are obese, compared to 17 per cent on average in OECD countries. However, only 33 percent of the adult population reports being in good health. This may be partly explained by poor environmental conditions in urban centres: the level of concentration of atmospheric PM10 (tiny air pollutant particles small enough to enter and damage the lungs) is 27 micrograms per cubic meter of inhaled air, which is higher than levels found in most OECD countries.
- Concerning the public sphere, the Japanese report a strong sense of community but moderate levels of civic participation: 90 per cent of people believe that they know someone they could rely on in a time of need, this is close to the OECD average, while voter turnover, a measure of citizens' participation in the political process, was 67 per cent during recent elections, lower than the OECD average of 72 per cent. This can be partially explained by a low percentage (27 per cent) of Japanese reporting confidence in the National government, compared to 43 per cent on average in OECD countries.

- With regards to crime, Japan is among the lowest in terms of personal insecurity as compared to other OECD countries with only 1 per cent of people reporting being assaulted over the previous twelve months and only about 1 reported homicide per 100,000 inhabitants.
- When asked, people in Japan said that, on average, they were satisfied with their life by a rating of 6 points in a scale from 0 to 10; this level is lower than in many other OECD countries with a comparable level of income per capita, and below the OECD country average of 7, even if 87 percent of Japanese report more positive than negative emotions, with women tending to have both higher average levels.