

Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI) Non-communicable Disease (NCD) Control Promotion
Project: Urgent Recommendations for the Fourth UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health
Japan's Role in Exercising Political Leadership to Advance NCD Control
by Promoting SSB Taxation

Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI)

Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSB) as a Health Risk Factor

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) are globally recognized as a major public health concern and one of the key risk factors for non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Numerous prospective cohort studies and meta-analyses have demonstrated a strong link between SSB consumption and chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and metabolic syndrome. Specifically, regular consumption of SSBs has been reported to increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by approximately 20–29%, obesity by 17–18%, heart disease by 15%, and hypertension by 10–12%¹. Furthermore, each additional 250 mL of SSB intake per day is associated with a 4% increase in all-cause mortality². According to the Global Burden of Disease study, deaths attributable to SSB consumption rose from approximately 180,000 in 2010 to about 240,000 in 2019, with particularly significant impact among middle-income countries, younger populations, and men³. These trends highlight the substantial burden that SSB consumption places on public health.

Global Movement Toward SSB Taxation

Against this backdrop, taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) is being considered and evaluated as an effective policy intervention. In July 2025, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a major new initiative called “3by35,” aimed at curbing NCDs and securing public funding⁴. The initiative urges countries to increase the market price of tobacco, alcohol, and SSBs by at least 50% through health taxes by 2035. At present, 136 countries have introduced SSB taxes, making it a growing international trend. By region, Africa has the

¹ Santos, Leonardo Pozza et al. “Sugar sweetened beverages intake and risk of obesity and cardiometabolic diseases in longitudinal studies: A systematic review and meta-analysis with 1.5 million individuals.” *Clinical nutrition ESPEN* vol. 51 (2022): 128-142. doi: 10.1016/j.clnesp.2022.08.021

² Qin, Pei et al. “Sugar and artificially sweetened beverages and risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and all-cause mortality: a dose-response meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies.” *European journal of epidemiology* vol. 35,7 (2020): 655-671. doi:10.1007/s10654-020-00655-y

³ Sun, Hongyu et al. “Global disease burden attributed to high sugar-sweetened beverages in 204 countries and territories from 1990 to 2019.” *Preventive medicine* vol. 175 (2023): 107690. doi: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2023.107690

⁴ World Health Organization. “WHO Launches Bold Push to Raise Health Taxes and Save Millions of Lives.” WHO, 2 July 2025, www.who.int/news/item/02-07-2025-who-launches-bold-push-to-raise-health-taxes-and-save-millions-of-lives?

highest adoption rate (78.7%), followed by the Americas (60%), Eastern Mediterranean (50%), Southeast Asia (45.5%), Western Pacific (44.4%), and Europe (35.8%)⁵.

Taxing SSBs not only helps reduce the prevalence of NCDs and promote individual health, but also alleviates the burden on healthcare professionals and helps contain medical and pharmaceutical costs, thereby contributing to the sustainability of health insurance systems. In Mexico, for example, following the implementation of an SSB tax, consumption of sugary beverages decreased by about 7% among medium- to high-level consumers⁶. Moreover, allocating tax revenue from SSBs to health promotion and medical services contributes to strengthening healthcare systems. In the Philippines, part of the sugar tax revenue funds the national health insurance system⁷. While in the UK, it supports school meals and sports activities. In the current global health environment, characterized by fiscal austerity, reduced development aid, and increasing demand for medical services, taxation of health-harming products represents an urgent issue for the international community⁸.

Recommendation: International leadership should be initiated and maintained in the Political Declaration of the 4th United Nations High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health, and support should be encouraged for taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs).

At the 4th United Nations High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health, Japan is expected to demonstrate international leadership by encouraging national governments to strengthen their commitment and accountability regarding the effective policy of taxing SSB as a preventive measure. Incorporating provisions on SSB taxation in the meeting's political declaration would help establish a shared international understanding that such taxes are beneficial to public health.

Japan has long played a key role in strengthening health systems, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, through its advanced healthcare system and public health infrastructure. It has actively promoted the importance of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and primary health care. At this meeting as well, Japan is expected to

⁵ World Health Organization. Global Report on the Use of Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Taxes, 2023. WHO, 5 Dec. 2023, www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240084995?

⁶ Sánchez-Romero, Luz María et al. "Association between tax on sugar sweetened beverages and soft drink consumption in adults in Mexico: open cohort longitudinal analysis of Health Workers Cohort Study." *BMJ (Clinical research ed.)* vol. 369 m1311. 6 May. 2020, doi:10.1136/bmj.m1311

⁷ NCD Alliance. *Health Taxes in the Philippines: Proving That UHC Is Within Reach of All Countries*. Global Week for Action on NCDs, 2023, actonncds.org/stories/case-studies/health-taxes-philippines-proving-uhc-within-reach-all-countries.

⁸ "Budget 2016: George Osborne Announces Sugar Tax on Soft Drinks Companies." *The Independent*, 16 Mar. 2016, www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/budget-2016-george-osborne-announces-sugar-tax-a6934206.html.

contribute as a global health leader, especially considering the relatively low rate of SSB taxation adoption in the Asia-Pacific region compared to other regions.

Furthermore, adopting the political declaration at the meeting can serve as a driving force to support domestic policy implementation. In Japan, it is anticipated that the declaration will provide momentum not only for the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, which oversees health-related policies, but also for cross-ministerial and cross-sectoral efforts to implement necessary policies, such as institutional development. Advancing the international trend of SSB taxation is essential for Japan to maintain and strengthen its leadership role in global health, particularly in areas like UHC and healthcare system reform that it has championed thus far.

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