

## 1. Summary

The Health and Global Policy Institute has been undertaking regular surveys of public opinion on healthcare issues since 2006 in order to gain a better understanding of public perceptions and a better awareness of the health services and health care policies that the public desires. Continuing on from previous surveys, the 2017 survey included questions on the level of satisfaction that the public feels with the current healthcare system. The survey inquired also about the public's perception of annual upward trends in medical costs, and how they are reacting to this. Moreover, the survey included questions on issues that have been garnering attention recently, such as measures to prevent passive smoking, the self-medication tax deduction system, dementia, end-of-life expectations, and degrees of trust in various sources of medical information.

### (1) Survey highlights

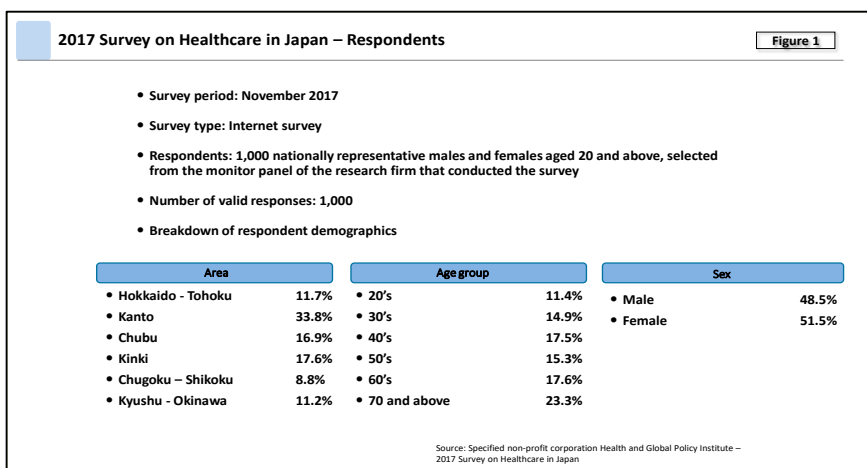
- ◆ Respondents were divided on their overall degree of satisfaction with the healthcare system.
- ◆ In particular, there was low satisfaction with the degree of public participation in shaping the healthcare system, and the fairness of the decision-making processes in the system.
- ◆ Regarding passive smoking, about half of respondents backed a full ban on smoking in eating and drinking establishments, irrespective of the establishment's floor space.
- ◆ 66% of respondents believed that e-cigarettes should be targeted as soon as possible in preventive measures against passive smoking.
- ◆ About 90% of respondents were unaware of the self-medication tax deduction system.
- ◆ Over 50% of respondents approve of remote doctor oversight for death pronouncements.

### (2) Healthcare policy based on survey results (future discussion points)

- ◆ Although efforts have been made to promote participation among the public in medical institution decision making, further measures to encourage more active participation and improved process transparency could be future issues.
- ◆ Measures against passive smoking affect human life as public health policies. The realization of highly effective passive smoking countermeasures may also be a future issue.

## Overview of survey

- ✓ An internet-based public opinion survey was administered to 1,000 males and females over 20 years of age throughout Japan, during November 2017. The breakdown of respondent demographics is shown in Figure 1. The survey was only administered to those who gave informed consent after having read an explanation of the survey's objectives. The questionnaires were self-administered, and a serial number was given to each respondent to ensure anonymity.
- ✓ The conduction of a survey on the internet introduces a fixed sampling bias in that it selects only for respondents who can use the internet, and hence have a certain level of education, as internet literacy is generally correlated with education level.<sup>1</sup> It is important to take this limitation into account when interpreting the results of this survey.

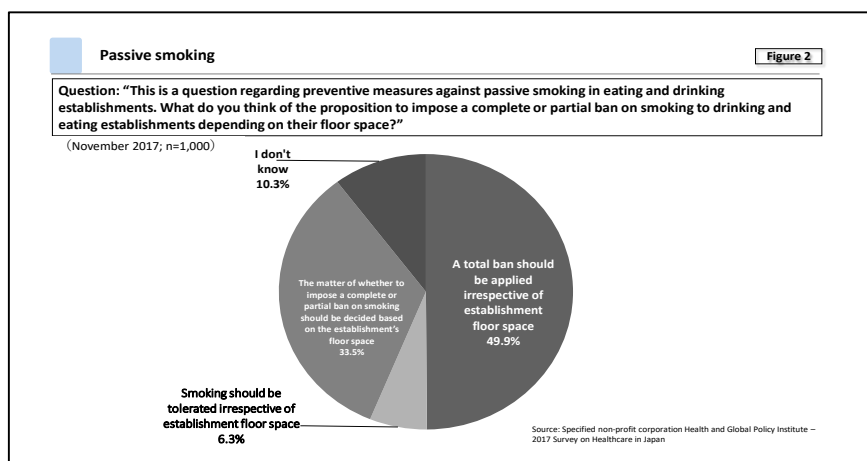


## Survey results

### 1. Passive smoking

About half of respondents support a total ban on smoking in eating and drinking establishments, irrespective of the establishment's floor space.

- ✓ On the question of whether a complete or partial ban on smoking should be introduced for drinking and eating establishments depending on their floor space, 49.9% of respondents selected the answer, "a total ban should be applied irrespective of establishment floor space." 6.3% chose "smoking should be tolerated, irrespective of establishment floor space," and 33.5% that "the matter of whether to impose a complete or partial ban on smoking should be decided based on the establishment's floor space" (Figure 2).



### Commentary

Currently in Japan, there is much debate on using floor space to apply complete or partial bans on smoking in eating and drinking establishments. However, about half of the respondents of this survey appear to agree with a complete ban on smoking in such establishments, irrespective of floor space.

1) Smith MA, Leigh B. Virtual subjects: using the Internet as an alternative source of subjects and research environment. Behav Res Meth Instrum Comput. 1997;29:496–505.

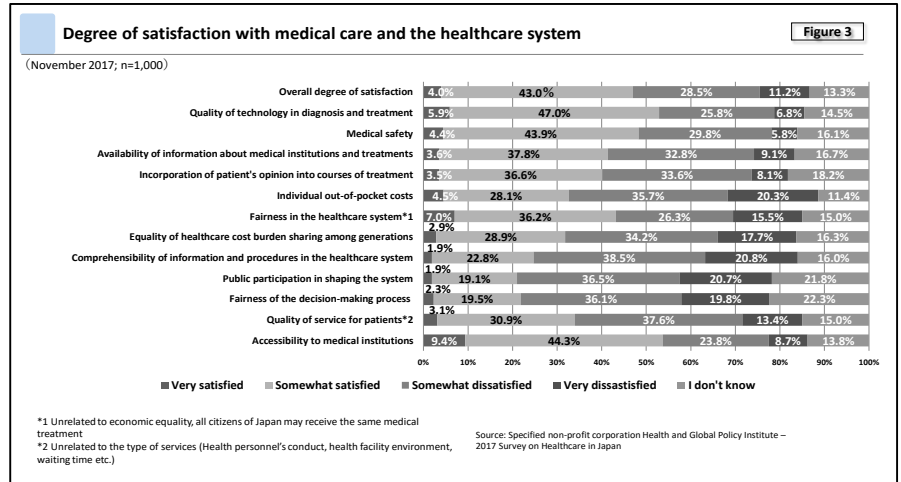
## 2. Degree of satisfaction with medical care and the healthcare system

### Respondents were divided on “Overall degree of satisfaction with the healthcare system”

- ✓ Less than half (47.0%) of respondents were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied overall with the healthcare system.
- ✓ Comparatively higher levels of satisfaction (including “somehow satisfied”) were seen related to “accessibility to medical institutions” (53.7%), the “quality of technology in diagnosis and treatment” (52.9%), and “medical safety” (48.3%) (Figure 3).
- ✓ The lowest levels of satisfaction were seen for “public participation in shaping the system (whether the voices of the citizens are accounted for)” (21.0%) and “fairness of the decision-making process (transparency of the system-building process)” (21.8%) (Figure 3).

### Commentary

- Free access to healthcare facilities, a characteristic feature of medical treatment in Japan, received the highest level of satisfaction.
- On the other hand, remarkably low levels of satisfaction with the “public participation in shaping the system” and the “fairness of the decision-making process” suggest that citizen opportunities to participate in the policy decision-making process are insufficient, and a substantial number are dissatisfied with the transparency of the system.
- Henceforward, it is important to further involve the public in the decision-making process and improve transparency.



## 3. Self-medication tax deduction system

### About 90% were unaware of the self-medication tax deduction system

- ✓ 11.1% of respondents were knowledgeable about the details of the self-medication tax deduction system, while 33.7% were aware of the term but not its exact meaning, and 55.2% were unaware (Figure 4).
- ✓ 62.5% of respondents either “Want to actively make use of it (the system)” or “Want to make use of it to an extent” (Figure 5).

### Commentary

- The self-medication tax deduction system has been in place since January 2017. Yet, the results of this survey suggest that the number of people who are familiar with the details of it is still small.
- However, after respondents were given an explanation of the system and questioned on whether they would make use of it, over 60% said they would.
- Incidentally, a similar proportion of over 60% wanted to make use of the system across all age groups. In light of this, it is necessary that more effort be made to raise awareness about the existence of this system

