

The Japanese government has recently been increasingly focused on women in the workforce as a key component of the national growth strategy. Industry is following suit through the implementation of various initiatives, including female recruitment action plans to increase the number of women in leadership positions and numerical goals to assess government and industry efforts. However, while the momentum surrounding women in the workforce continues to grow, there has thus far been a significant lack of attention to key health aspects that are essential to supporting women’s entrance into and sustained participation in the workforce. Government-led strategies must include policies that recognize the vital importance of women’s health if empowerment of working women is truly the goal. As stakeholders consider the various policy options, discussions should include the social and economic impact that will accompany women-centered health promotion.

To support this dialogue, Health and Global Policy Institute (HGPI) in collaboration with Dr. Ataru Igarashi, Assistant Professor at The University of Tokyo’s Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, conducted research on the potential socio-economic impact of increased promotion of women’s health. This research describes women’s health and highlights current women’s health issues in Japan through international comparisons of policies related to women in the workforce and women’s health.

Study Design

1 A view of the impact of women’s health promotion on society from a socio-economic viewpoint

Using analyzed data retrieved from regularly employed women between 20-60 years of age (gathered through an online survey conducted by a survey company)

2 Understanding current situation and issues in Japan through international comparison of women’s health promotion policies

Survey based on review of literature, open data, and expert interviews. Information regarding visits to gynecologist and gynecological screenings based on questions answered by participants of Research Target Group 1.

Summary of Selected Results

- ◆ It is estimated that costs related to certain diseases specific to women have led to annual medical expenses and financial losses of at least 6.37 trillion JPY.
- ◆ There is a significant relationship between quality of life (QOL), lost working time, and decreased productivity and the presence of women’s health related health issues.
- ◆ According to study results, 20% of survey respondents visit a gynecologist regularly. More than 50% of respondents who reported not visiting a gynecologist regularly listed as their reason for not going to see a gynecologist as, “I am healthy, so there is no need to visit a gynecologist.”
- ◆ Compared to other countries, women in Japan tend to engage in gynecological cancer screening less frequently. Countries with a high rate of gynecological cancer screening offer various support services including, financial support, general practitioners who encourage patients to engage in regular medical care, and call-recall systems.

Policy Proposals Based on Research Findings

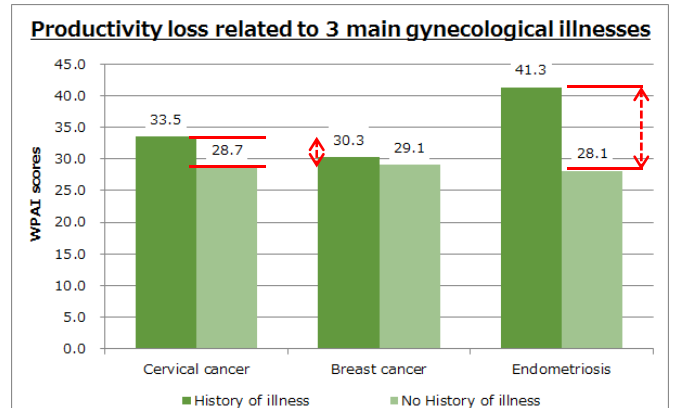
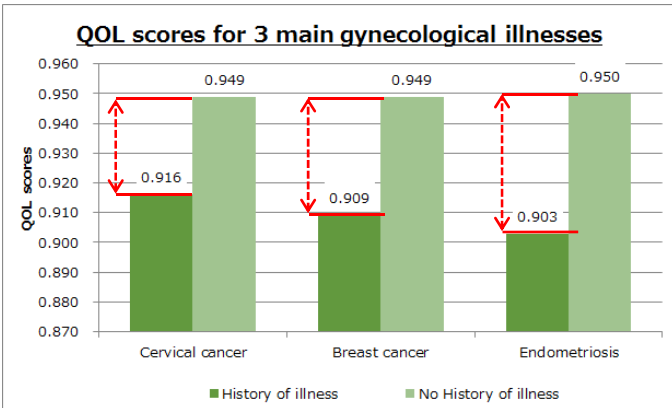
	Improve rates of visits to gynecologist and screening	Enhance education and advocacy efforts	Promote Healthy Companies
Government (National and Local Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Add gynecological cancer screening to requirements of regular health checkups ▶ Provide training programs about women’s health to occupational health professionals ▶ Incentive physicians to provide additional consultations on women’s health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide educational programs on the human body, disease prevention and treatment, and career planning with consideration to women’s and maternal health issues ▶ Provide appropriate information on screening and the importance of gynecological care; provide accurate information about available options to treat menstruation-related symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Add women’s health to the list of evaluation factors within the Healthy Company Index (In Japanese, this METI organized initiative is referred to as “Kenko-Keiei Ranking.”) ▶ Research the financial impact of women’s health on companies and survey model cases of healthy companies that prioritize women’s health
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Encourage and support employees to get regular health checkups, including gynecological screenings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide learning opportunities for both women and men about influence of hormones, women’s health issues, women’s health matters that require special consideration, the female body’s unique characteristics, and the prevention and treatment of health issues women face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Incorporate women’s health into efforts to achieve healthy companies

*Productivity loss refers to loss related to both absenteeism and presenteeism.

Selected Results from Study 1: The impact of women's health promotion on society from a socio-economic viewpoint

Women with no history of illness related to women's health show increased QOL

Women who have experienced cervical cancer or endometriosis show increased productivity loss



Measuring total financial loss

Number of working women

Prevalence rate of illness related to women's health

Cost at individual level

24.74 million women

(Labor Force Survey)

×

17.1%

(Nohara2011)

×

Medical expenses
335,000 JPY
Productivity loss
1.17 million JPY

= Total

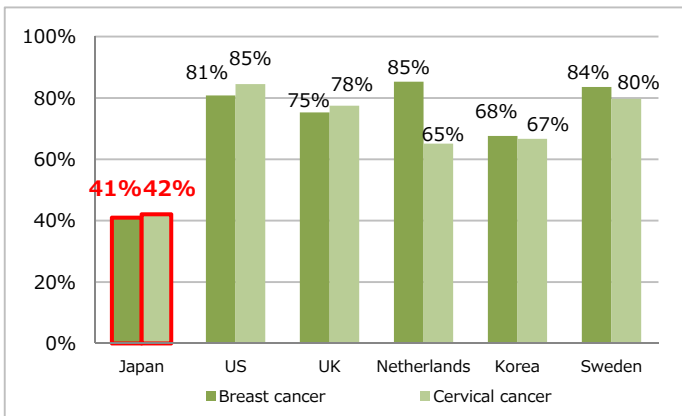
6.37 trillion JPY

Medical expenses 1.42 trillion JPY
Productivity loss 4.95 trillion JPY

Selected Results from Study 2: International comparison of women's health promotion policies (Gynecological cancer screening)

Gynecological cancer screening rates in Japan are significantly low

Efforts by country to improve visitation rate

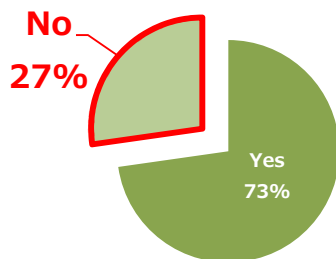


- USA:**
 - Special support for uninsured people with low incomes
 - Breast cancer screening is covered by health insurance
- UK:**
 - General practitioners encourage patients to visit gynecologists
- France:**
 - Publicly provided financial support for screenings
 - General practitioners encourage patients to visit gynecologists
- South Korea:**
 - Publicly provided financial support for screenings
 - Individual encouragement of gynecologist visitation by utilizing national population database
- Sweden:**
 - Government utilizes cancer registration data to issue cancer screening notices
 - Government set a screening rate goal of 50% in its "Plan to Promote Cancer Countermeasures"
 - Various policies, including distribution of coupons for free visits and encouragement to visit gynecologists at the individual level

Nearly 30% of survey respondents have never been screened for gynecological cancer

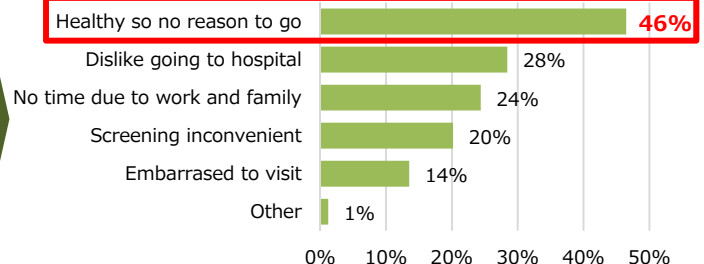
(E.g., screening for cervical cancer, endometrial cancer, or breast cancer)

November 2015; n=2,091



Nearly 50% of respondents who reported not being screened for gynecological cancer cited feeling healthy as the reason to not be screened.

November 2015; n=570; Multiple answers allowed.



The full report can be accessed on the Health and Global Policy Institute website. <http://www.hgpi.org/>

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