

2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

(Updated version)

Health and Global Policy Institute

February 2018

I. 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.

II. 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.¹ It is important to take this limitation into account when interpreting the results of this survey.

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.

- Survey period: November 2017
- Survey type: Internet survey
- Respondents: 1,000 nationally representative males and females aged 20 and above, selected from the monitor panel of the research firm that conducted the survey
- Number of valid responses: 1,000
- Breakdown of respondent demographics

Area		Age group		Sex	
• Hokkaido - Tohoku	11.7%	• 20's	11.4%	• Male	48.5%
• Kanto	33.8%	• 30's	14.9%	• Female	51.5%
• Chubu	16.9%	• 40's	17.5%		
• Kinki	17.6%	• 50's	15.3%		
• Chugoku – Shikoku	8.8%	• 60's	17.6%		
• Kyushu - Okinawa	11.2%	• 70 and above	23.3%		

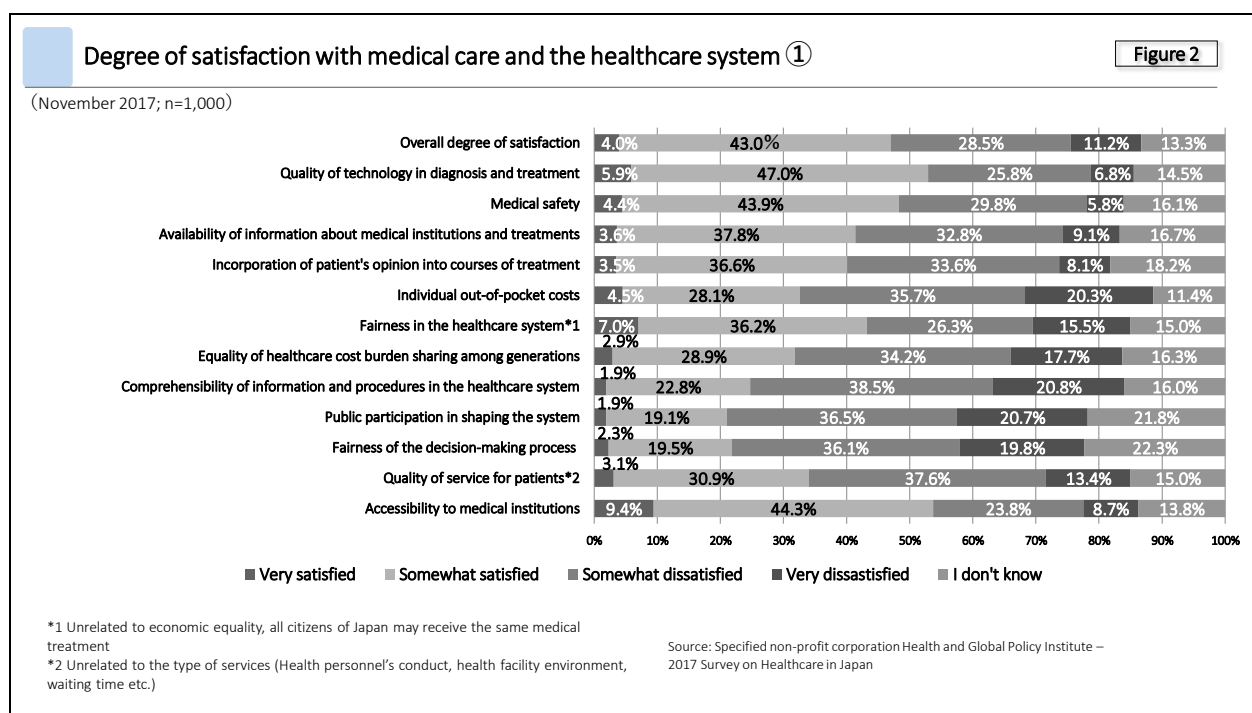
Source: Specified non-profit corporation Health and Global Policy Institute –
2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

III. Survey results

(1) 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 2).
- ✓ 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 2).

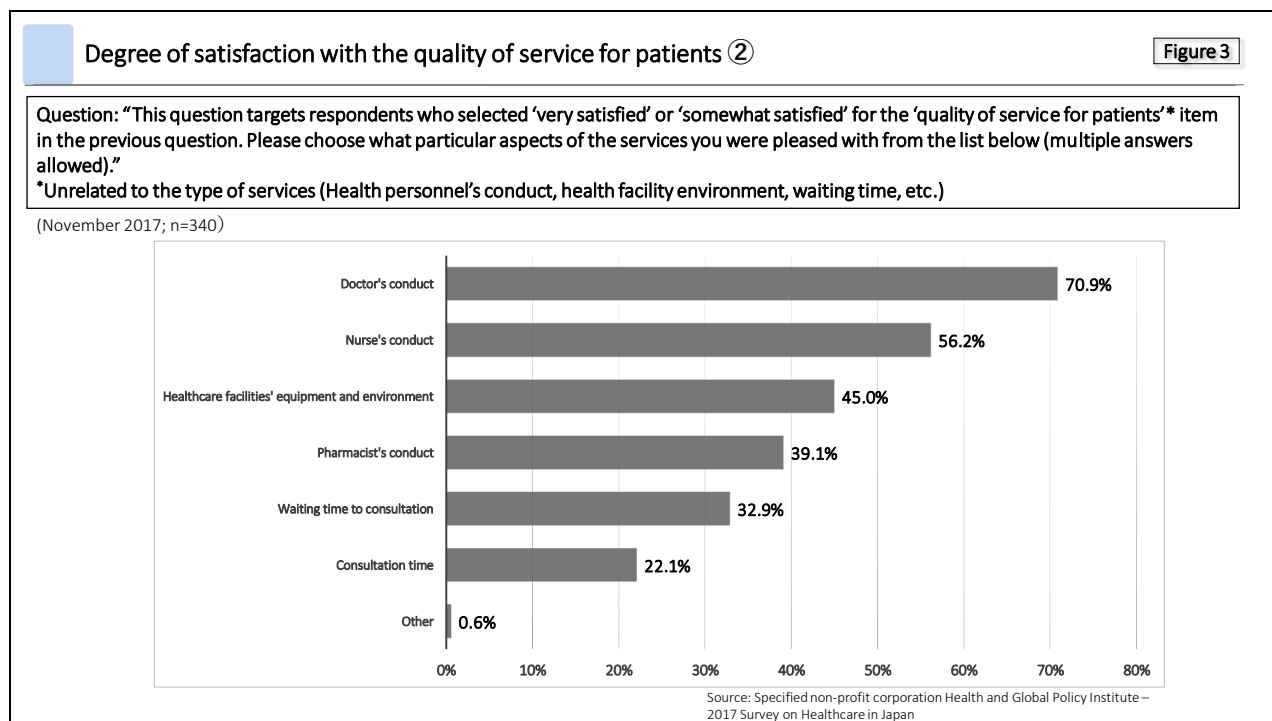


Commentary

- ✓ 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.

■ Highest satisfaction reported for doctors in terms of the “degree of satisfaction with the quality of service for patients”

- ✓ Respondents who selected either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” related to “quality of service for patients” were asked what particular aspects of the services they were pleased with, allowing for multiple answers. 70.9% of respondents selected “doctor’s conduct,” 56.2% answered “nurse’s conduct,” 45.0% chose “healthcare facilities’ equipment and environment,” and 39.1% picked “pharmacist’s conduct.” The numbers thus indicate that medical personnel rank highest as reasons for some of the respondents’ satisfaction with patient services (Figure 3).



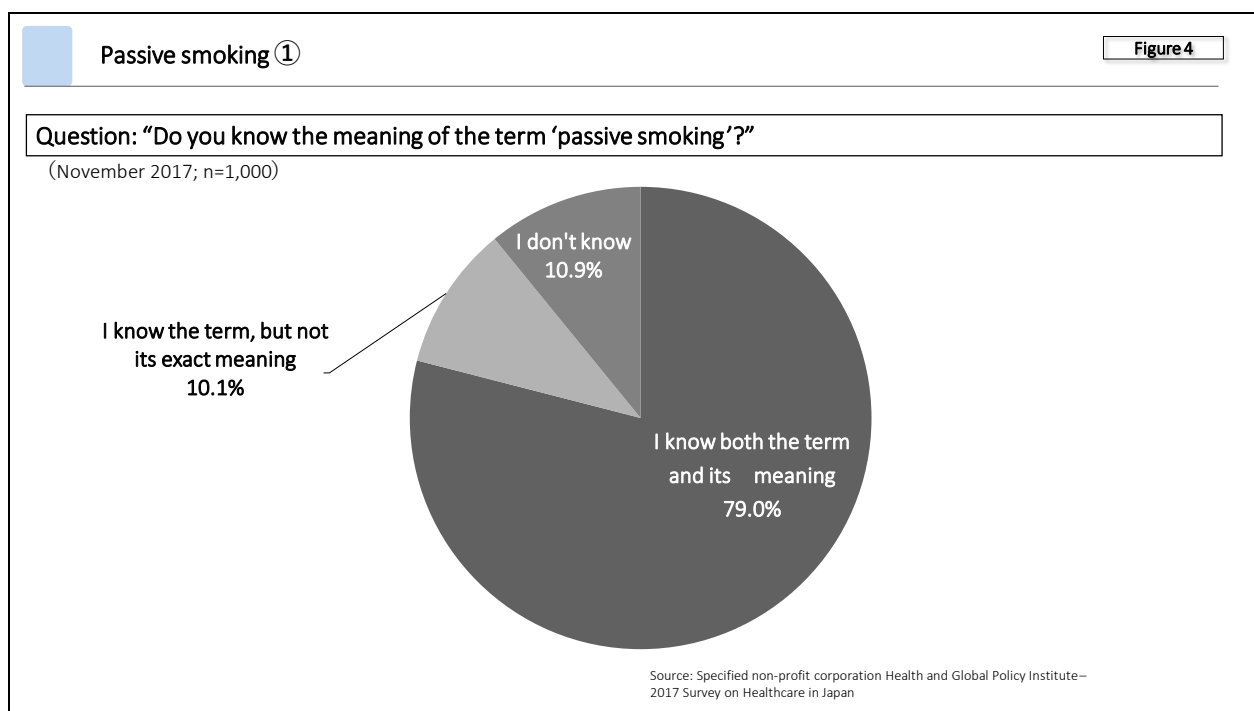
Commentary

- ✓ The Family Pharmacist system in Japan started in April 2016 with the purpose of expanding the role of pharmacists. However, the respondents’ degree of satisfaction with pharmacists was low compared to other medical professionals.

(2) Passive smoking

■ Slightly over 20% do not know the meaning of the term “passive smoking”

- ✓ When asked if they knew the term “passive smoking,” 10.9% of respondents answered “I don’t know”, and 10.1% selected “I know the term, but not its exact meaning” (Figure 4).

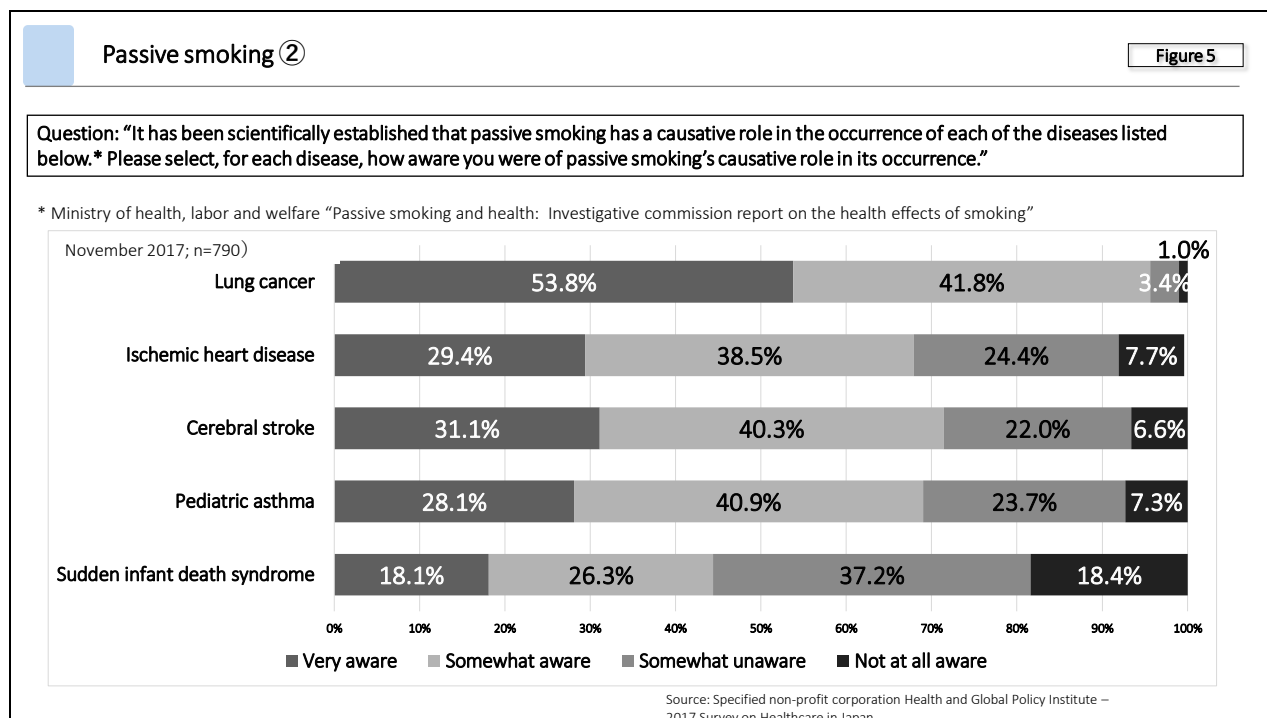


Commentary

- ✓ A large number of respondents are aware of the term “passive smoking” and understand its meaning. Although it is a serious health topic, about 20% of respondents either knew the term but not its meaning or were completely ignorant of it.
- ✓ The proportion of respondents who knew the term “passive smoking” and understood its meaning was above 70% across all age groups. Yet the fact that about 30% of respondents in their 20s and 30s either knew the term but not its meaning or were completely unaware of the term suggests that further awareness-raising efforts are necessary (Reference Figure 4).

■ Lack of awareness about the effects of passive smoking on children

- ✓ Respondents who knew the term “passive smoking” and understood its actual meaning were asked whether they were aware of passive smoking’s role in causing lung cancer, ischemic heart disease, cerebral stroke, pediatric asthma, and sudden infant death syndrome. Less than half, 44.4%, were aware of its role in causing sudden infant death syndrome, compared to 95.6% for lung cancer, 67.9% for ischemic heart disease, 71.4% for cerebral stroke, and 69.0% for pediatric asthma (Figure 5).

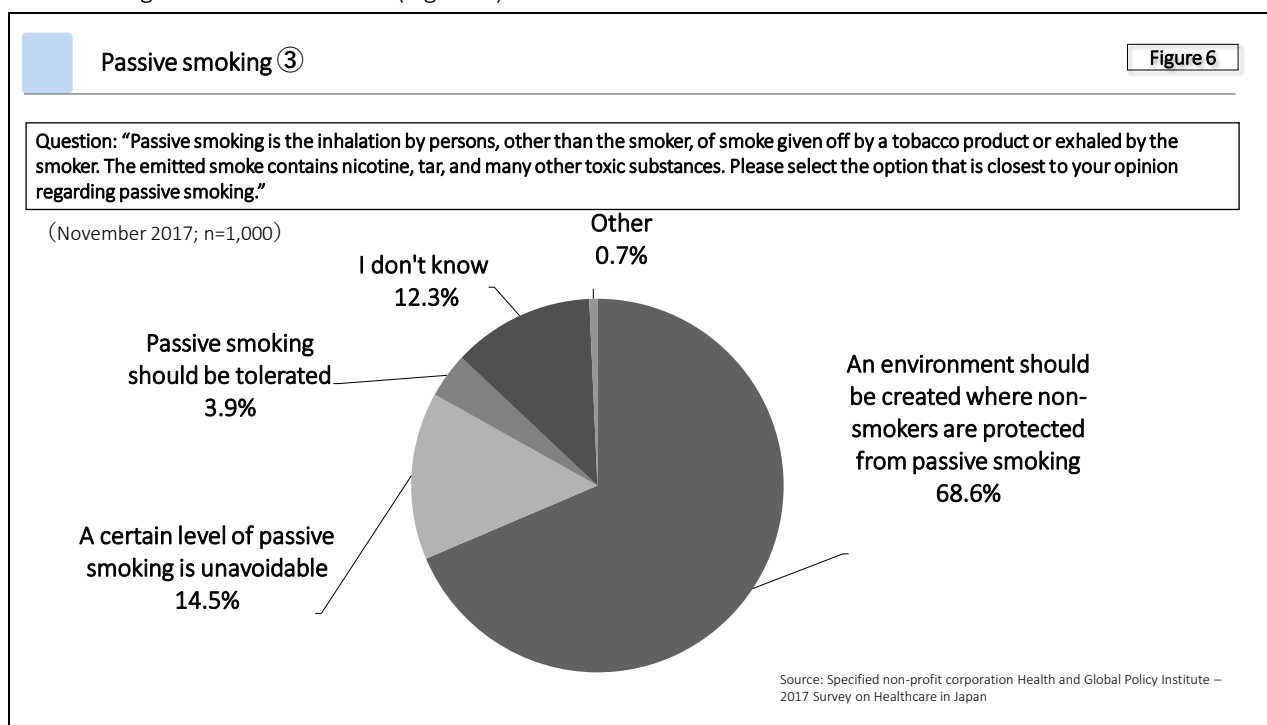


Commentary

- ✓ The results reveal that the respondents’ appreciation of passive smoking’s role in provoking diseases detrimental to child health, such as pediatric asthma and sudden infant death syndrome, is low. To protect children from the effects of passive smoking, it is necessary that parents and guardians properly understand its effects. Thorough awareness raising efforts are needed to bring about understanding on this issue.

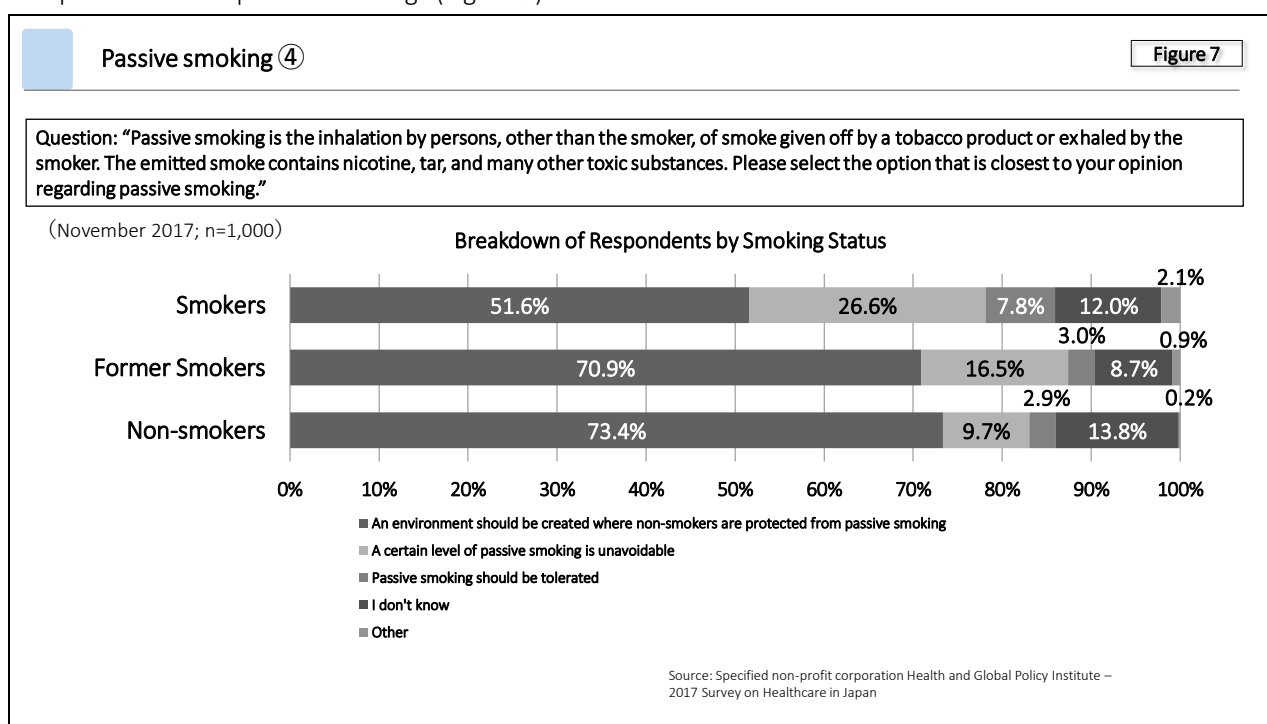
■ Prevention of passive smoking- 70% believe measures should be strengthened

- ✓ When asked to “please select the option that is closest to your opinion regarding passive smoking,” most (68.6%) answered “an environment should be created where non-smokers are protected from passive smoking.” Furthermore, 14.5% answered that “a certain level of passive smoking is unavoidable”, and 3.9% stated that “passive smoking should be tolerated” (Figure 6).



■ About half of current smokers believe that measures should be taken against passive smoking

- ✓ Breaking down the respondents to the former question by smoking status*, 73.4% of non-smokers and a notable 51.6% of smokers were found to have selected “an environment should be created where non-smokers are protected from passive smoking” (Figure 7).



*Below are the definitions used for each category of smoking status in this survey.

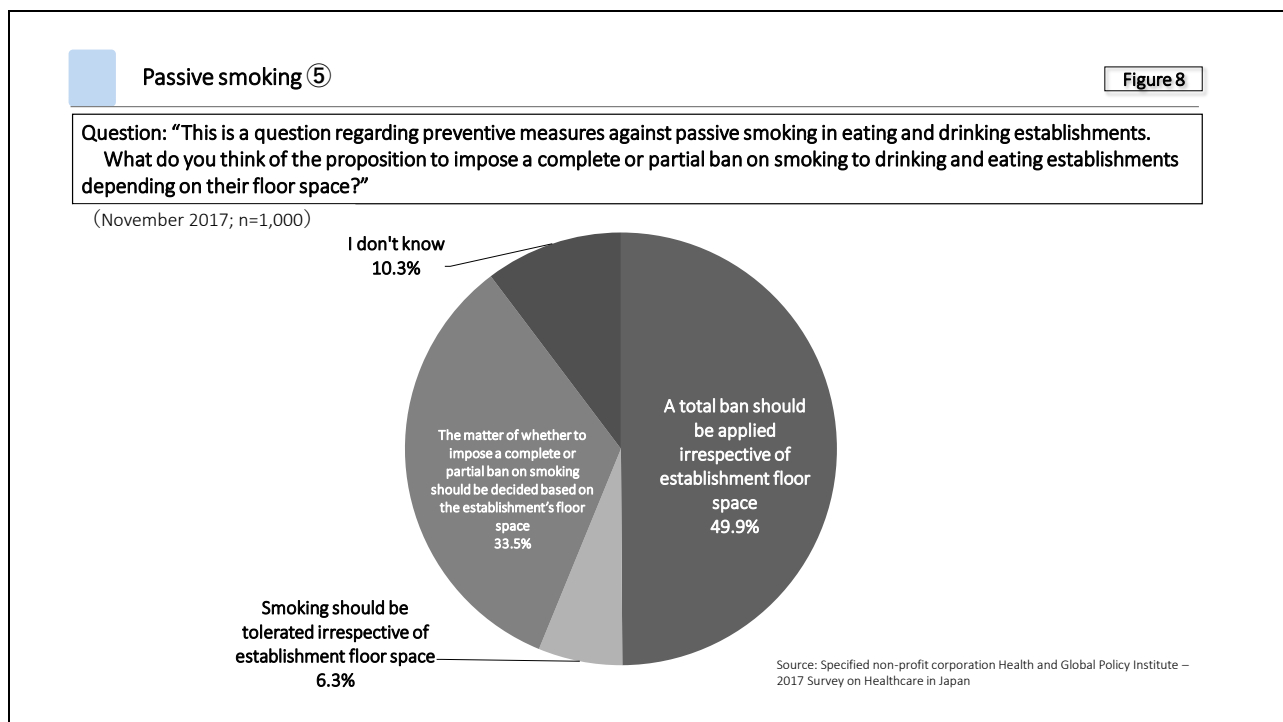
Current smokers: Daily and occasional smokers, **Former smokers:** Current non-smokers who smoked in the past, **Non-smokers:** Respondents who never in their lifetime smoked.

Commentary

- ✓ About 70% of all respondents and about half of the smokers among them expressed the opinion that environments should be created to protect people from passive smoking. It is necessary that more be done at once to promote measures against 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 8).

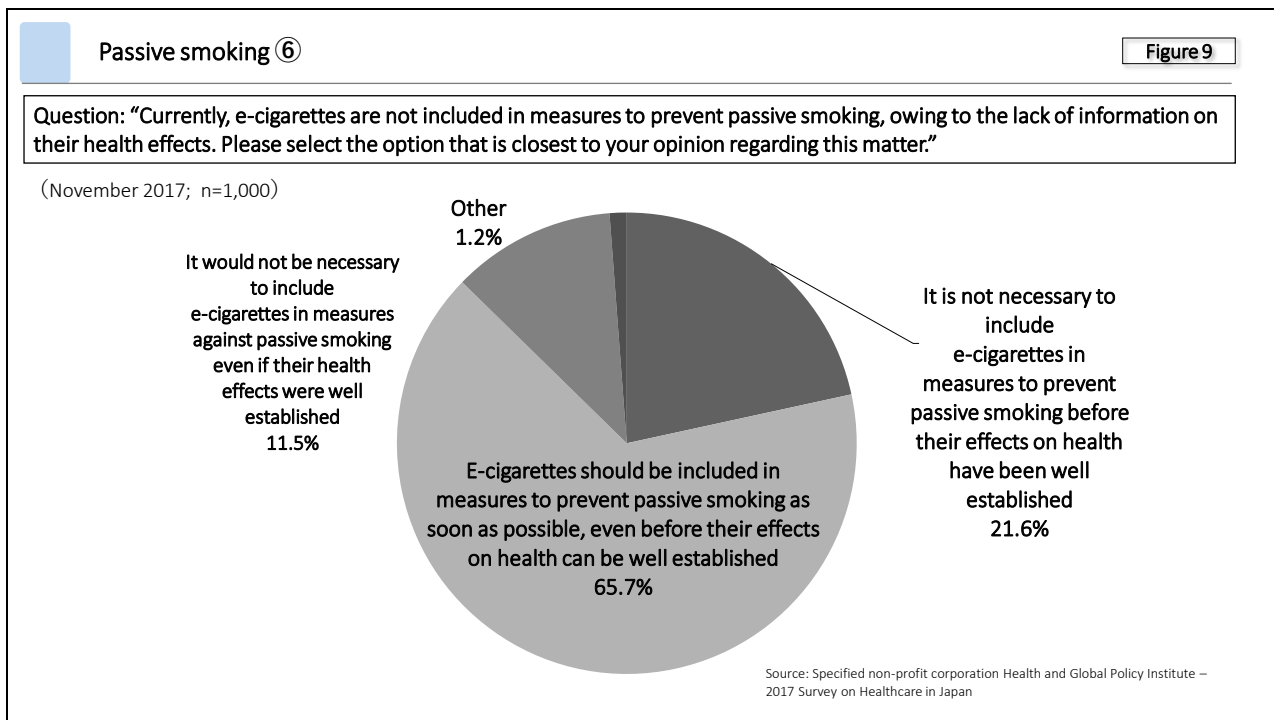


Commentary

- ✓ 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.

■ **E-cigarettes- 66% believe e-cigarettes should be included in measures against passive smoking as soon as possible**

- ✓ At the time of this survey, e-cigarettes* were not yet included in measures to prevent passive smoking owing to the lack of information on their health effects. Accordingly, respondents were asked to select an answer from a set of options that was closest to their opinion about that state of affairs.
- ✓ The majority of respondents (65.7%) answered “E-cigarettes should be included in measures to prevent passive smoking as soon as possible, even before their effects on health can be well established”. 21.6% answered “It is not necessary to include e-cigarettes in measures to prevent passive smoking before their effects on health have been well established”, and 11.5% chose “It would not be necessary to include e-cigarettes in measures against passive smoking even if their health effects were well established” (Figure 9).



*Electronic devices that electrically heat tobacco without burning it. The user inhales the vapor generated by this process. Despite containing nicotine, the toxic components emitted through this process are said to be less harmful than those let out by paper cigarettes. Examples of such products include IQOS and Glo.

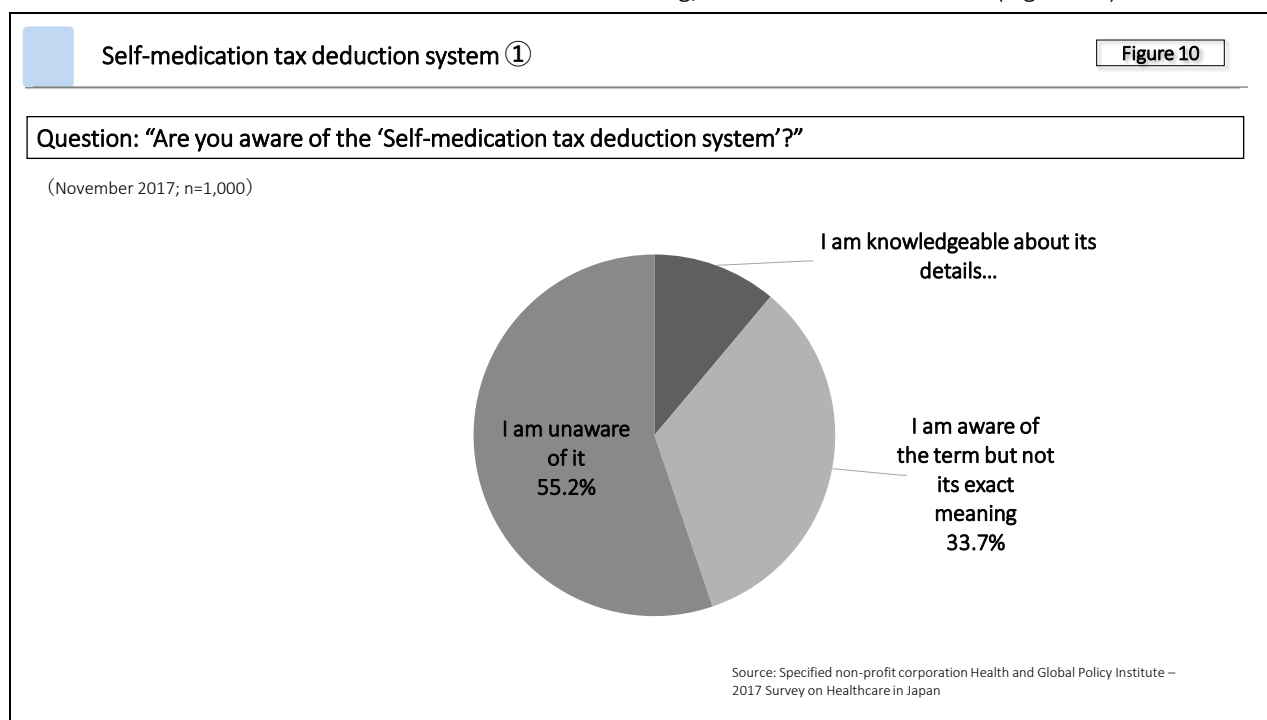
Commentary

- ✓ Almost 66% of respondents are of the opinion that e-cigarettes be included in measures to prevent passive smoking despite current uncertainties on their potential effects on health. It is therefore urgent that policies that cover e-cigarettes be formulated, including laws and regulations.

(3) Self-medication tax deduction system

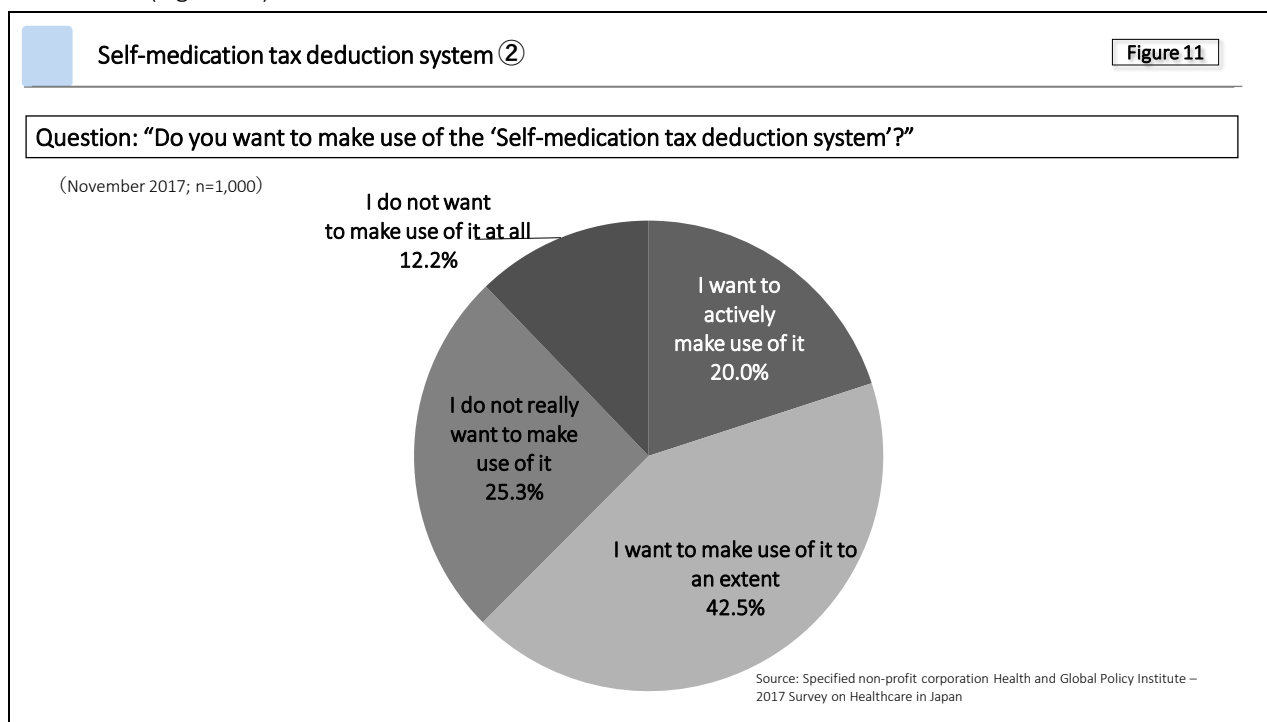
■ About 90% were unaware of the self-medication tax deduction system

- ✓ 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 10).



■ Over 60% want to make use of the self-medication tax deduction system

- ✓ 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 11).



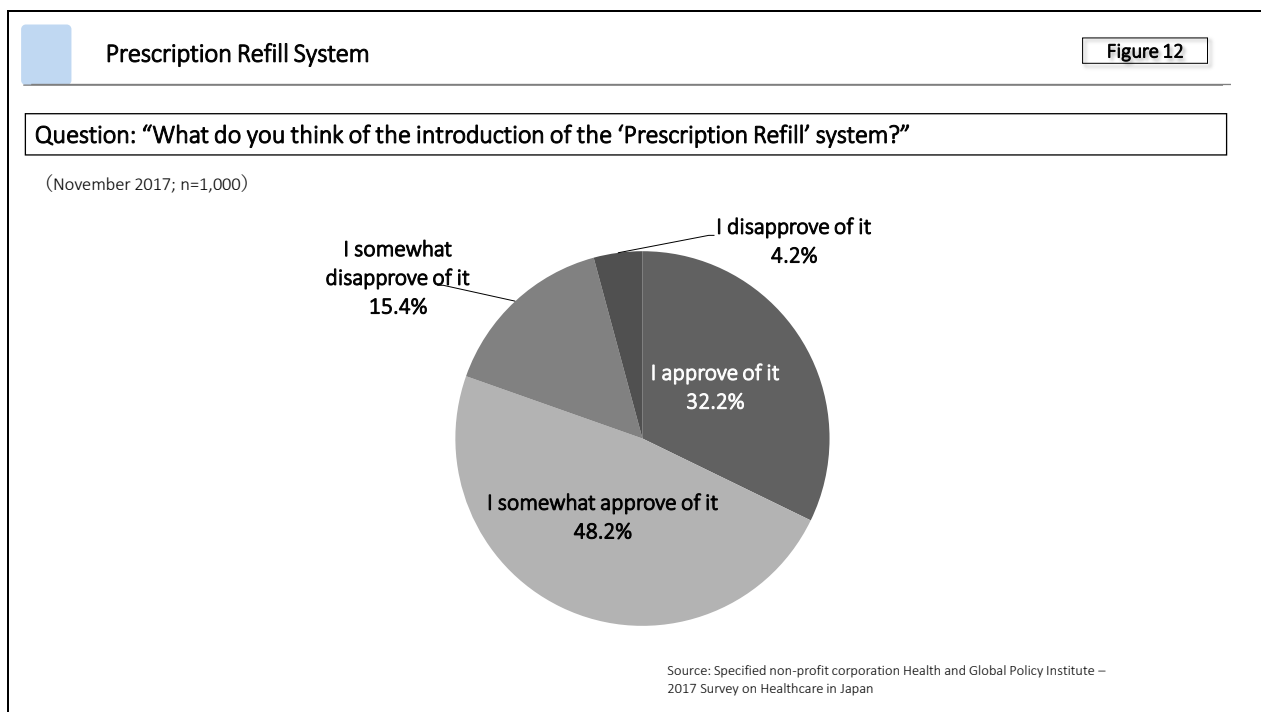
Commentary

- ✓ 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 (Reference Figure 9).

(4) Prescription Refills

■ About 80% approve of the prescription refill system

- ✓ When asked whether they approved of the introduction of the prescription refill system, 80.4% of respondents answered they either “approve” or “somewhat approve.” The remaining 19.6% replied they “disapprove” or “somewhat disapprove”. When calculated for each age group, the approval rate was over 70% in every group, and increased with age (Figure 12 & Reference Figure 10).



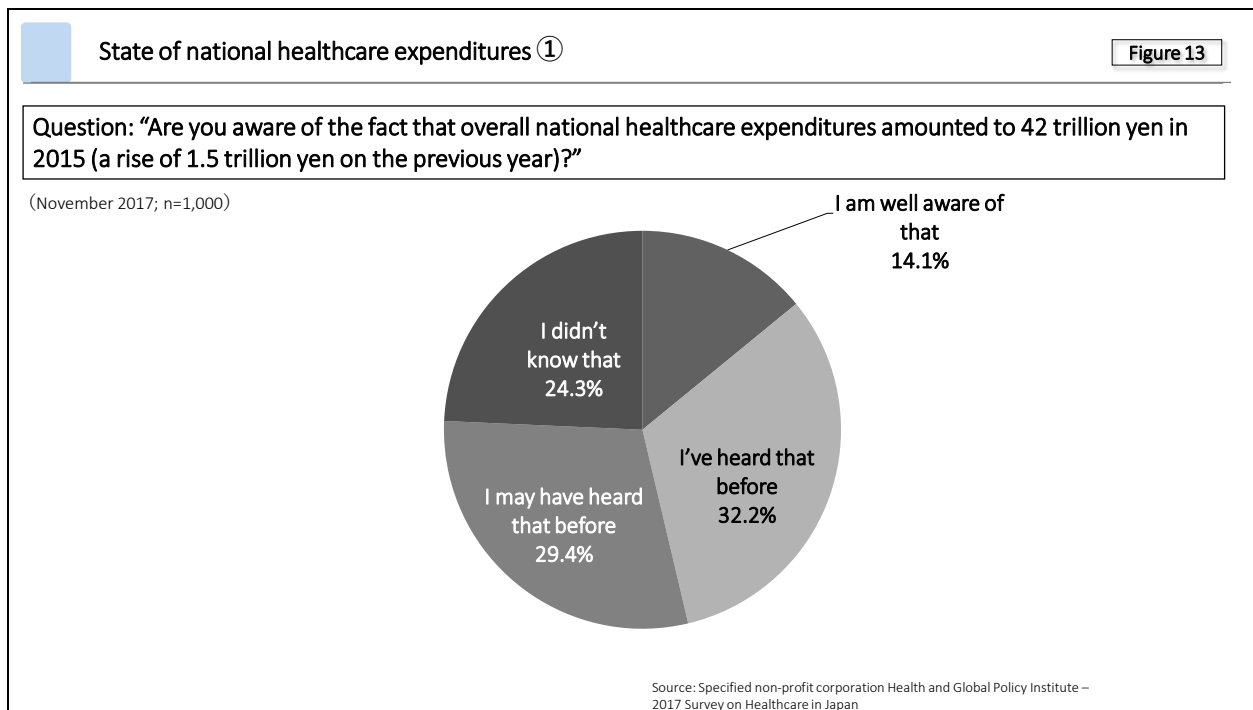
Commentary

- ✓ The government is currently examining the implementation of the prescription refill system. This survey revealed that about 80% of the public are in favor of this system. Against this backdrop of strong approval, it is likely the system can be quickly implemented if issues can be worked out related to safeguards for patients and the role of the pharmacists.

(5) Health insurance financing

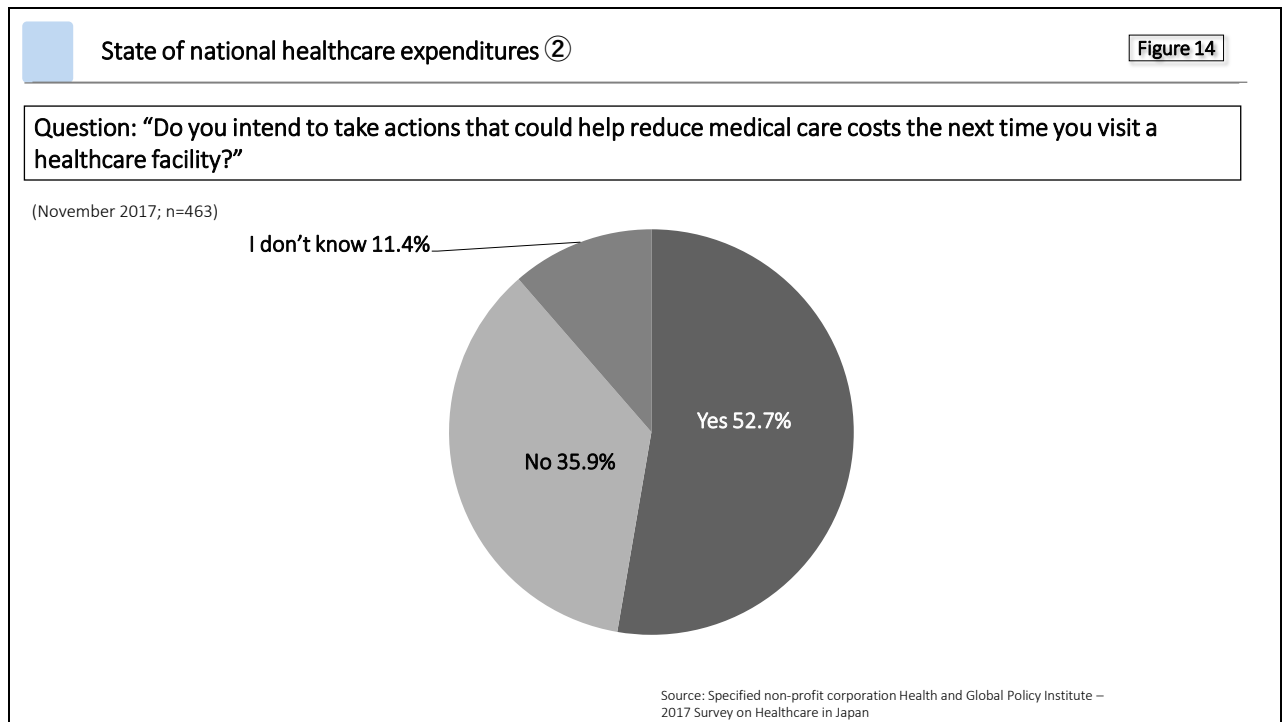
■ Over 50% were unaware of the state of national healthcare expenditures

- ✓ In 2015, overall national healthcare expenditures amounted to 42 trillion yen, a rise of 1.5 trillion yen on the previous year. Respondents were asked whether they were aware of this matter. 46.3% answered either that they “were well aware” or that they had “heard that before”, while 53.7% answered either they “didn’t know” or that they might “have heard that before” (Figure 13).



■ **Acting on the awareness about high national healthcare expenditures – Many said they would “use generic drugs” or “use the services of a primary care doctor”**

- ✓ Respondents who were aware of the current state of national healthcare expenditures were asked whether, based on that knowledge, they intended to take actions which could contribute to reducing medical care costs when visiting a healthcare facility. Out of the 463 respondents who were aware, 52.7% answered that they would (Figure 14).
- ✓ Those who said they would act were then asked to write what specific actions they would take. Notable answers included the use of generic drugs, the use of the services of primary care doctors, and taking health precautions so as to minimize the chances of having to go to health facilities.



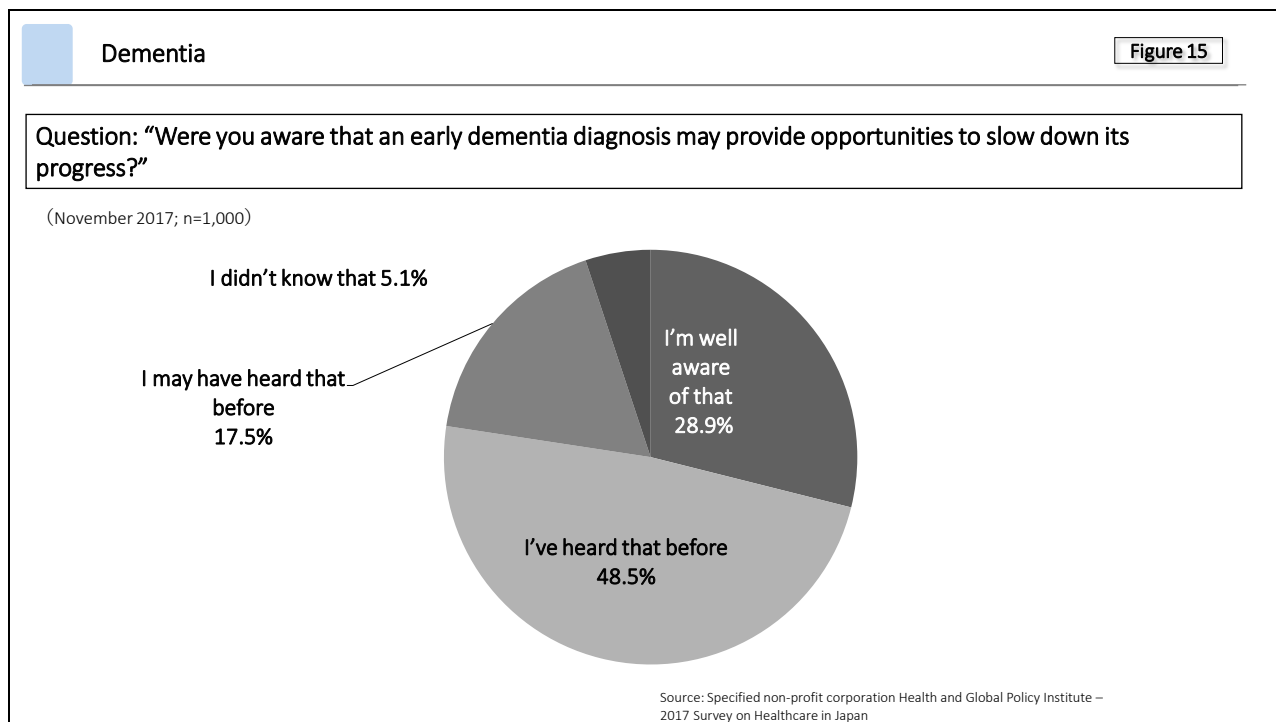
Commentary

- ✓ Over 50% of respondents were unaware of the current state of healthcare expenditure. However, of those who were aware of this issue, the majority stated that they did intend to take action to contribute to reducing healthcare costs.

(6) Dementia

■ About 80% are aware that the early detection of dementia can slow its progress

- ✓ When asked if they were aware that the early detection of dementia provides opportunities to slow down its progress, 77.4% of respondents answered either that they were “well aware” or that they had “heard that before”, while the remaining 22.6% answered they “didn’t know” or that they might “have heard that before” (Figure 15).



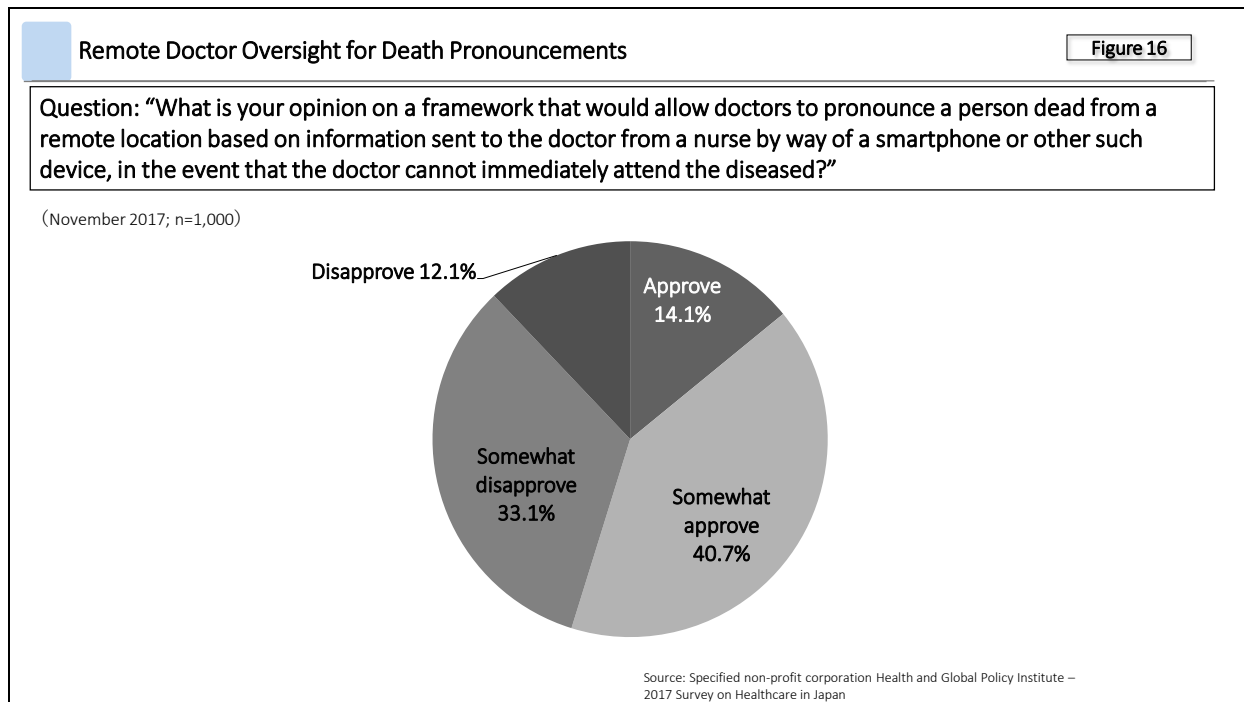
Commentary

- ✓ About 80% of respondents were aware that the early detection of dementia provides opportunities to slow down the disease’s progress. Given current trends towards improved access to healthcare to enable early diagnoses and interventions for outpatients suffering memory impairments, it is anticipated that many patients will receive even earlier diagnoses and interventions in the future.

(7) Remote Doctor Oversight for Death Pronouncements

■ Over 50% approve of “remote doctor oversight for death pronouncements”

- ✓ Respondents were asked what they thought of a framework by which a doctor could pronounce a person dead from a remote location based on information sent to the doctor by a nurse via a smartphone or other such device, in the event that the doctor could not promptly attend the deceased. 54.8% of respondents answered that they either “approve” or “somewhat approve” of this framework, and 45.2% answered that they either “disapprove” or “somewhat disapprove” (Figure 16).



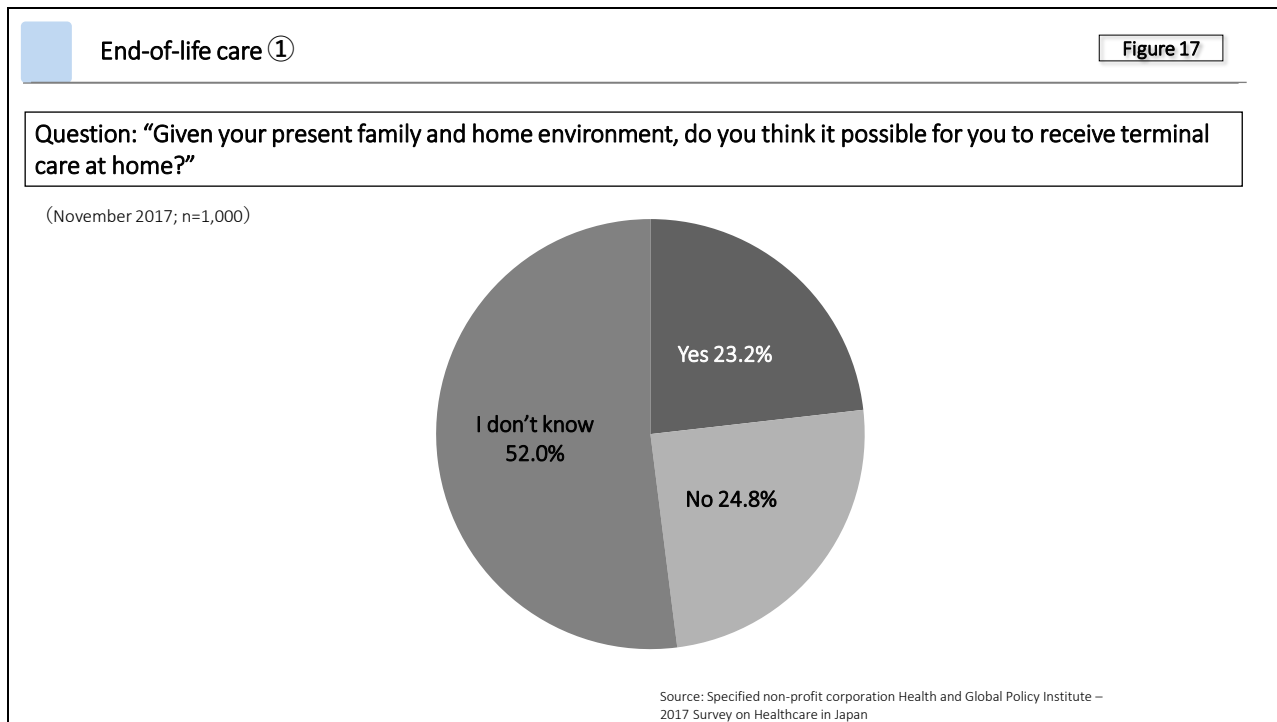
Commentary

- ✓ Over 50% of respondents approve of remote doctor oversight for death pronouncements. The concrete modalities for implementing this procedure are currently being deliberated.
- ✓ It is important to note, however, that this survey was undertaken on the internet, and is therefore likely biased towards respondents who have high internet literacy. This factor should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

(8) End-of-life care

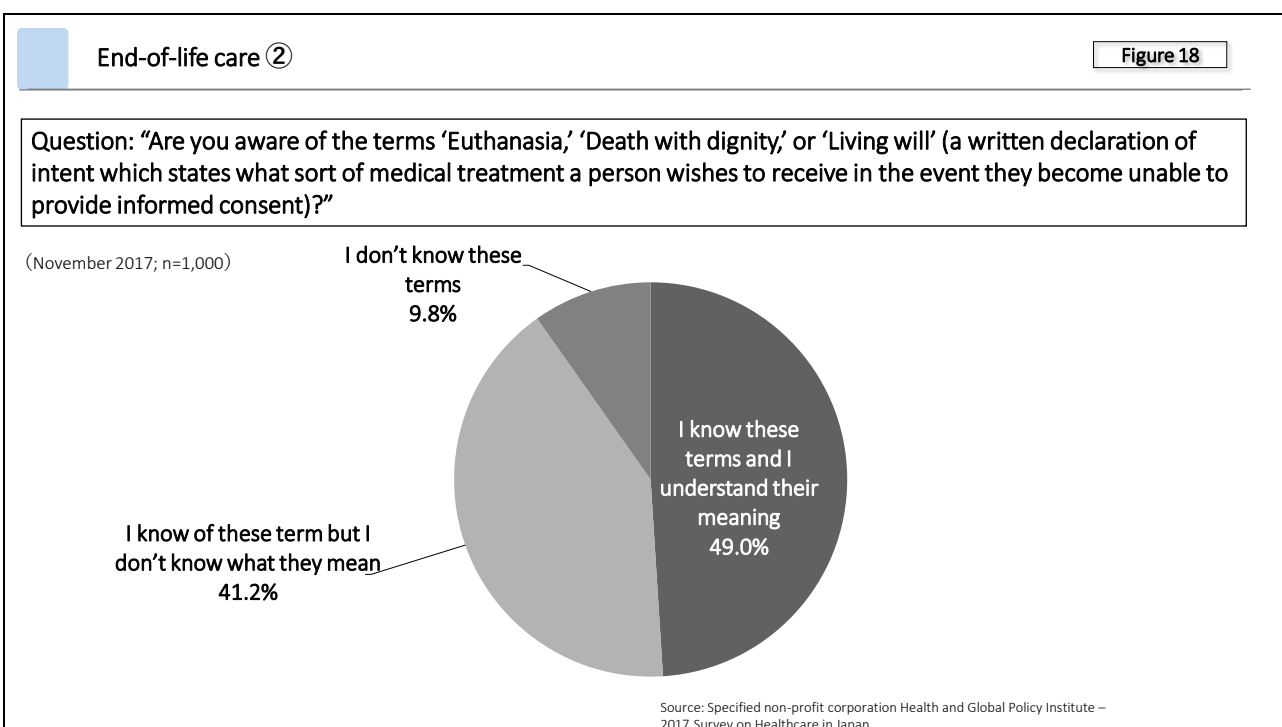
■ About 50% were unsure whether they could receive terminal care in their homes

- ✓ Respondents were asked to consider whether it would be possible for them to receive terminal care at home, given the current state of their family and their domiciles. 23.2% answered “yes”, 24.8% answered “no”, and 52.0% replied “I don’t know” (Figure 17).



■ 90% were aware of at least one of the following terms: “euthanasia,” “death with dignity,” and “living will”

- ✓ Respondents were asked if they were aware of terms such as “euthanasia”, “death with dignity”, and “living will (a written declaration of intent which states what sort of medical treatment a person wishes to receive in the event they become unable to provide informed consent).” 49.0% of respondents knew these terms and understood their meaning, 41.2% knew them but didn’t know the meanings, and 9.8% didn’t know any of the terms (Figure 18).

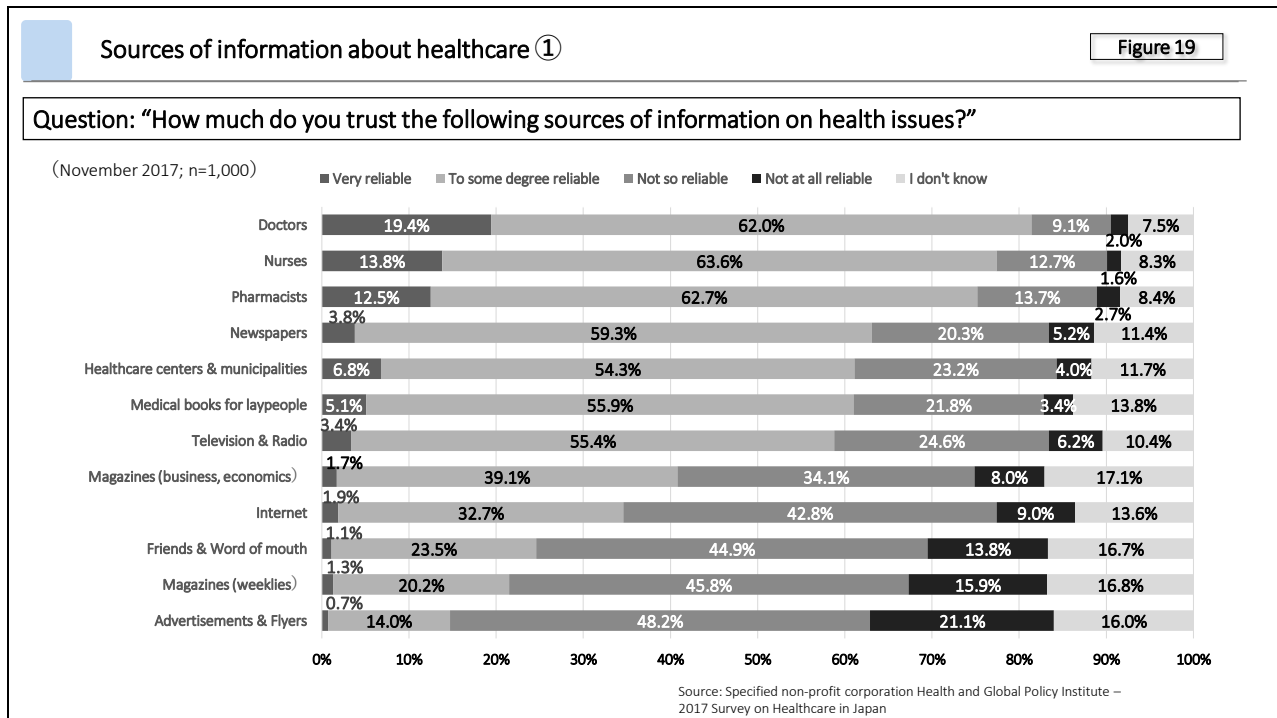


Commentary

- ✓ About 50% and more of respondents across all age groups were not sure whether they could receive terminal care at home when dying (Reference Figure 12). Recently, a trend to shift medical and nursing care away from healthcare facilities and towards homes has been taking shape. Further research is needed on how the public feels about this trend.
- ✓ About 90% of respondents were aware of terms relating to terminal care, which is a large number, although many did not know the exact meanings of the terms. Moving forward, it is necessary to undertake further awareness raising activities to help the public understand these concepts.

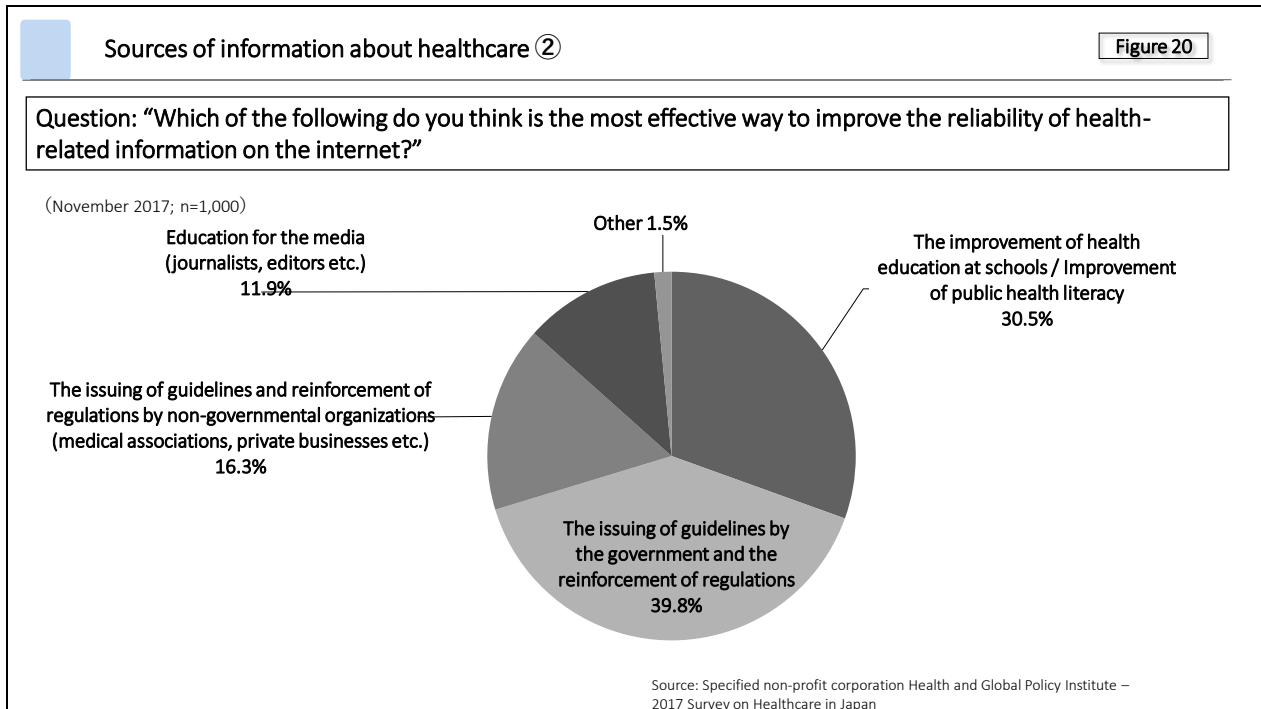
(9) Sources of information about healthcare

- The most trusted sources of information are doctors, followed by nurses and pharmacists respectively.
- Among the media, newspapers and television/radio received high levels of trust.
- ✓ When asked how much they trusted a pre-set list of sources of information about healthcare, 81.4% answered that doctors are either “very reliable” or “to some degree reliable.” 77.4% and 75.2% answered the same about nurses and pharmacists respectively (Figure 19).
- ✓ About media, 63.1% answered newspapers are either “very reliable” or “to some degree reliable” and 58.8% answered the same for television and radio (Figure 19).



■ Reliability of information from the internet

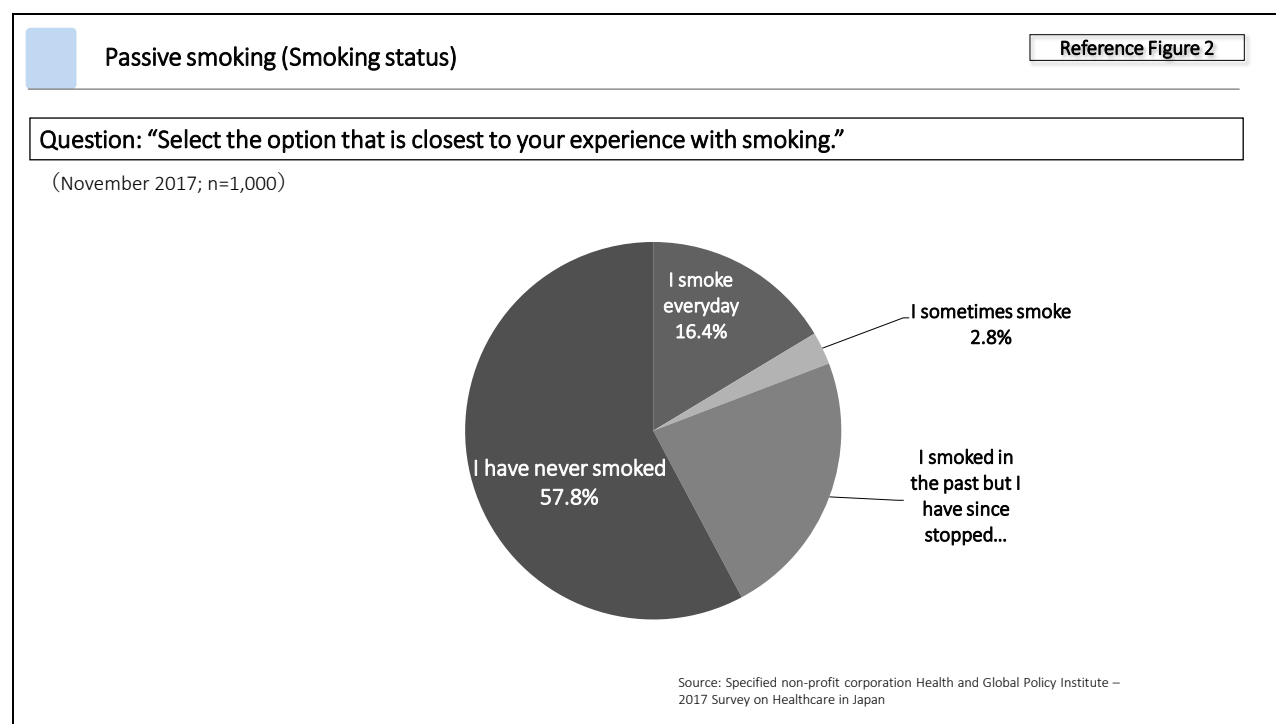
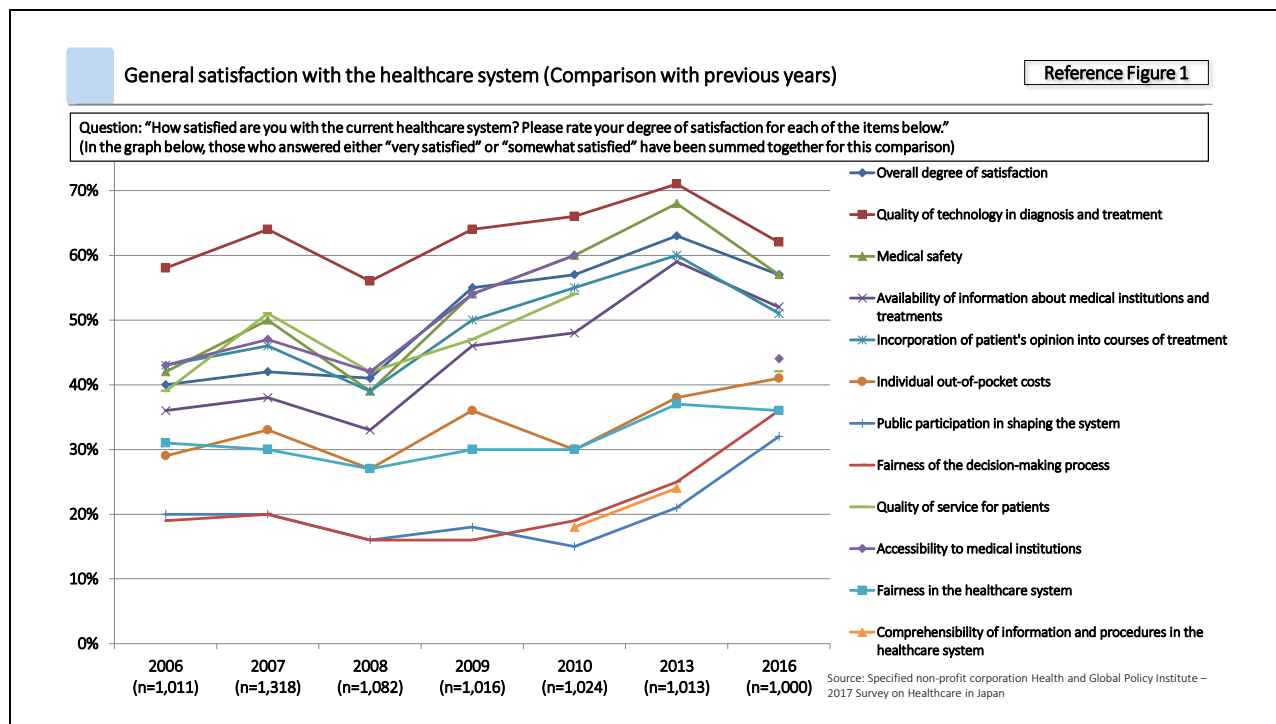
- ✓ On the topic of how to improve the reliability of health-related information on the internet, 39.8% preferred the “issuing of guidelines by the government and the reinforcement of regulations”, 30.5% preferred the “improvement of health education at schools / improvement of public health literacy”, 16.3% preferred the “issuing of guidelines and reinforcement of regulations by non-governmental organizations (medical associations, private businesses etc.)”, and 11.9% preferred “education for the media (journalists, editors etc.)” (Figure 20).



Commentary

- ✓ Doctors enjoy the highest degree of trust amongst the public. There are high hopes that doctors will continue to communicate accurate and easier to understand information to the public.
- ✓ Over 50% of respondents do not trust information coming from the internet. Given that, and the expectation that even more information on health will be posted on the internet in the future, it is necessary for the government to create guidelines and reinforce regulations to ensure a certain standard of information quality.

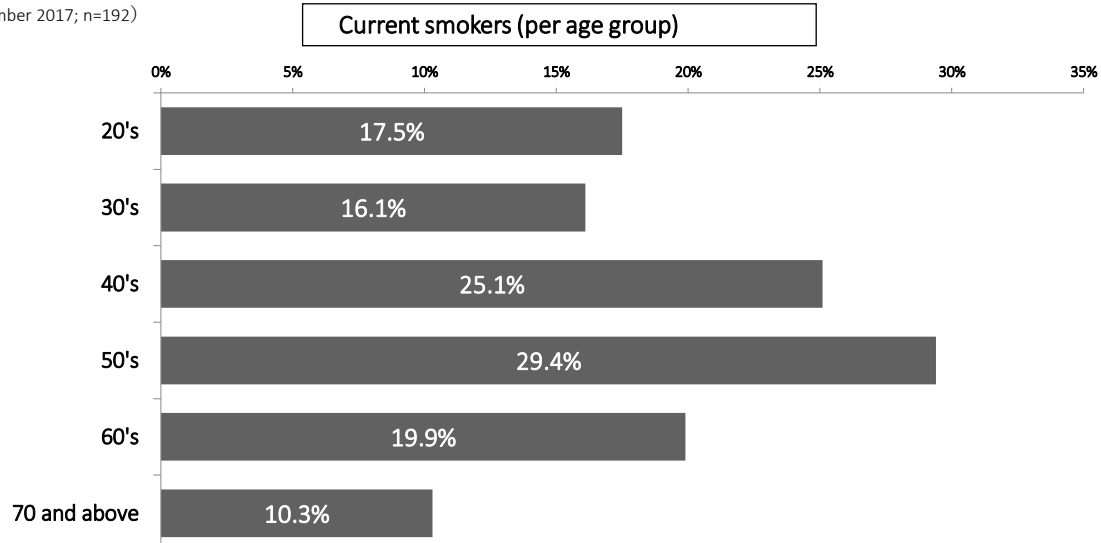
IV. Appendix



Passive smoking (Current smokers)

Reference Figure 3

(November 2017; n=192)



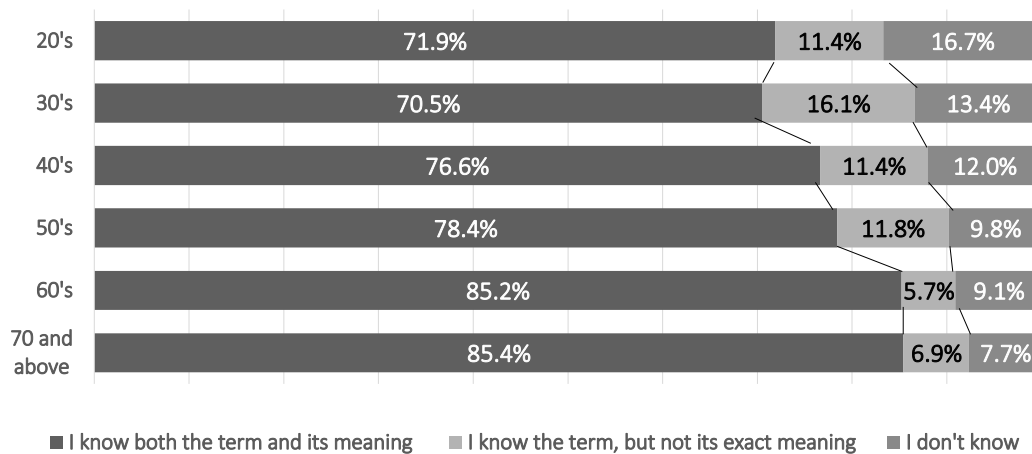
Source: Specified non-profit corporation Health and Global Policy Institute – 2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

Passive smoking ① (Per age group)

Reference Figure 4

Question: "Do you know the meaning of the term 'passive smoking'?"

(November 2017; n=1,000)



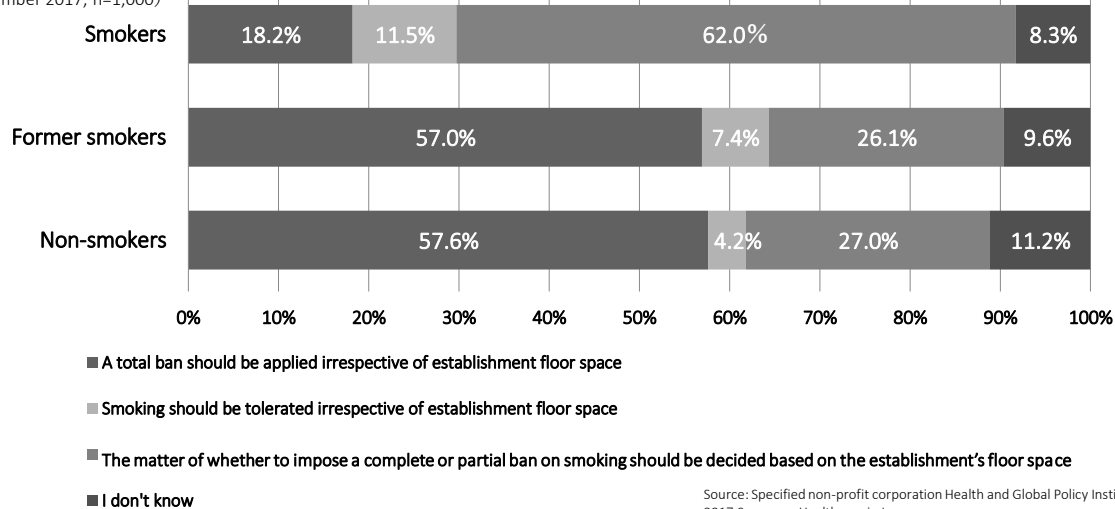
Source: Specified non-profit corporation Health and Global Policy Institute – 2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

Passive smoking ⑤ (Per smoking status)

Reference Figure 5

Question: "This is a question regarding preventive measures against passive smoking in eating and drinking establishments.
What do you think of the proposition to impose a complete or partial ban on smoking to drinking and eating establishments depending on their floor space?"

(November 2017; n=1,000)

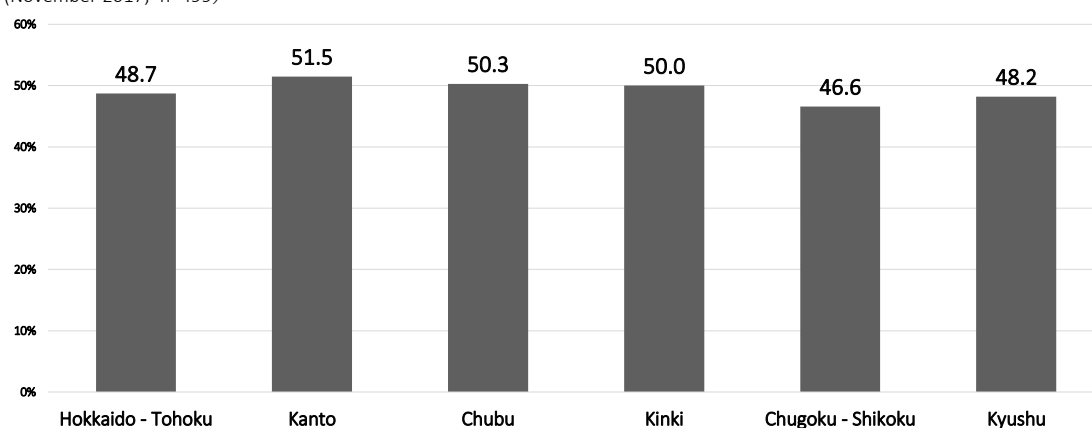


Passive smoking ⑤ (Per region)

Reference Figure 6

The proportion of respondents per region who answered "A total ban should be applied irrespective of establishment floor space"

(November 2017; n=499)

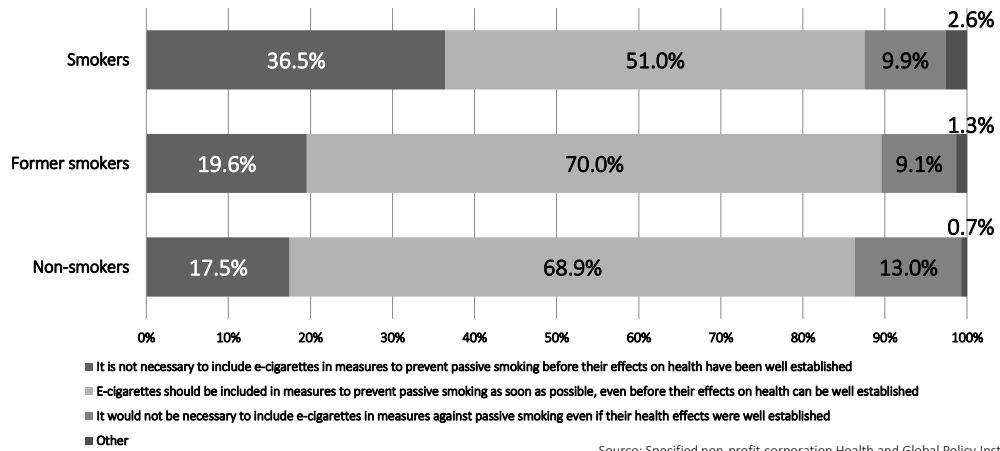


Passive smoking ⑥ (Per smoking status)

Reference Figure 7

Question: "Currently, e-cigarettes are not included in measures to prevent passive smoking, owing to the lack of information on their health effects. Please select the option that is closest to your opinion regarding this matter."

(November 2017; n=1,000)



Source: Specified non-profit corporation Health and Global Policy Institute – 2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

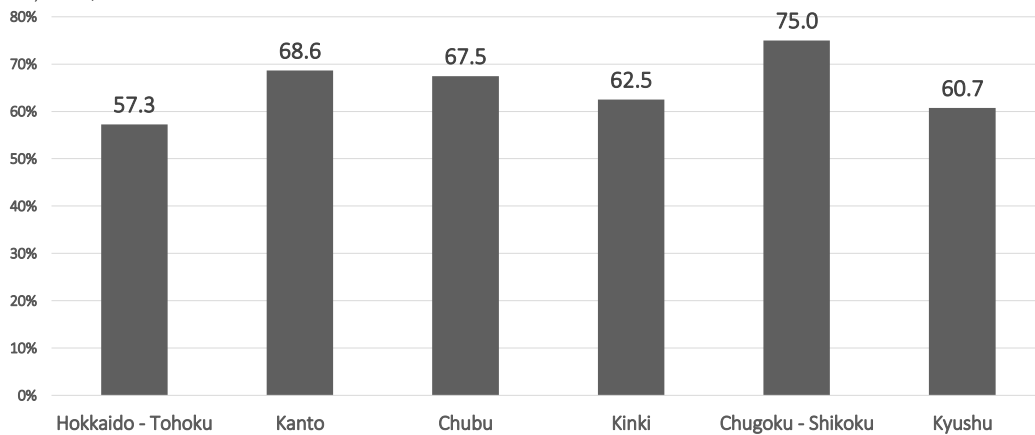
Passive smoking ⑥ (per region)

Reference Figure 8

Regarding e-cigarettes

Proportion of respondents per region who answered "E-cigarettes should be included in measures to prevent passive smoking as soon as possible, even before their effects on health can be well established"

(November 2017; n=657)



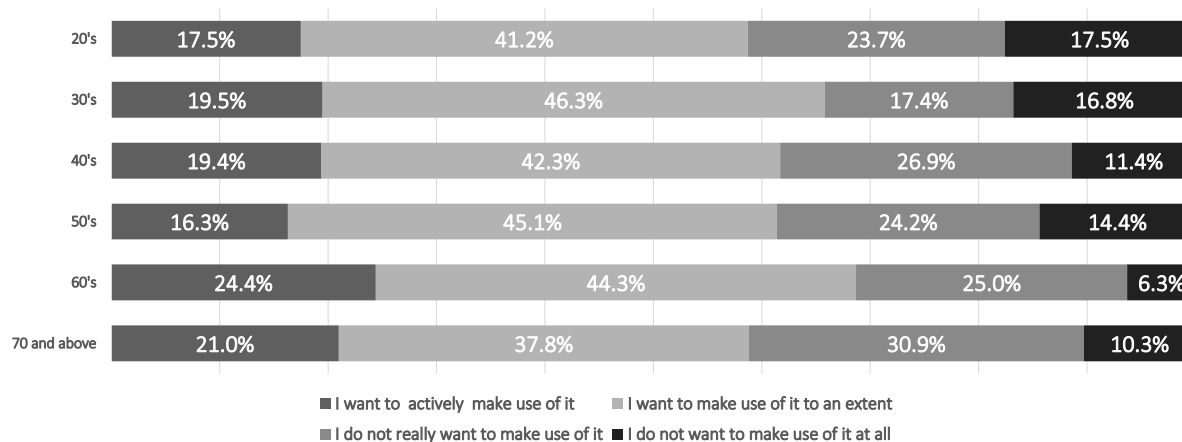
Source: Specified non-profit corporation Health and Global Policy Institute – 2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

Self-medication tax deduction system ② (Per age group)

Reference Figure 9

Question: "Do you want to make use of the 'Self-medication tax deduction system'?"

(November 2017; n=1,000)



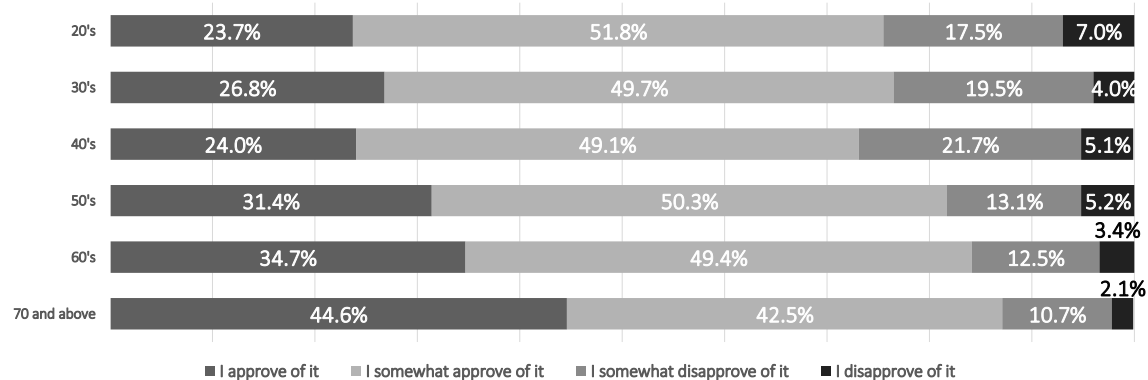
Source: Specified non-profit corporation Health and Global Policy Institute – 2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

Prescription Refill System (per age group)

Reference Figure 10

Question: "What do you think of the introduction of the 'Prescription Refill' system?"

(November 2017; n=1,000)



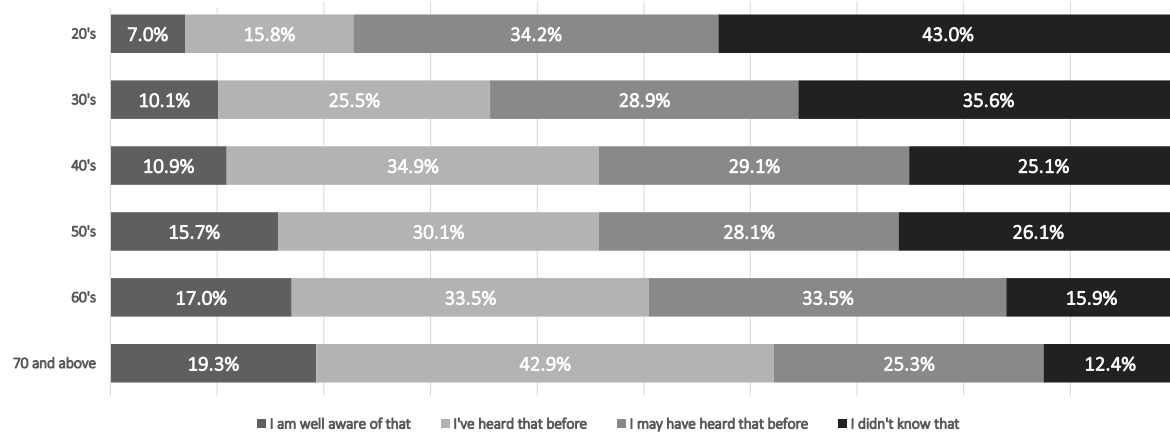
Source: Specified non-profit corporation Health and Global Policy Institute – 2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

State of national healthcare expenditures ① (per age group)

Reference Figure 11

Question: "Are you aware of the fact that overall national healthcare expenditures amounted to 42 trillion yen in 2015 (a rise of 1.5 trillion yen on the previous year)?"

(November 2017; n=1,000)



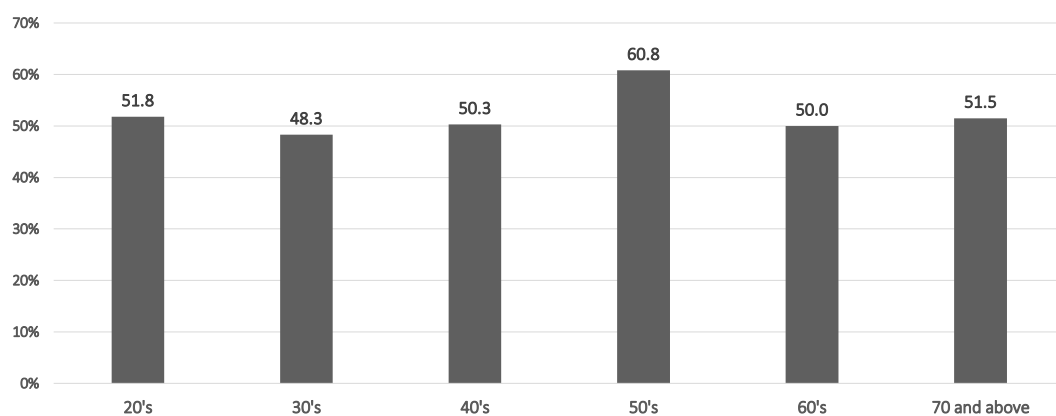
Source: Specified non-profit corporation Health and Global Policy Institute – 2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

End-of-life care ①

Reference Figure 12

The proportion of people who answered that they were unsure whether they could receive end-of-life care at their home as it is currently, by age group.

(November 2017; n=520)



Source: Specified non-profit corporation Health and Global Policy Institute – 2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan

V. "2017 Survey on Healthcare in Japan" - Survey team

(Titles omitted)

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