



Japan

*Reina Ichii
Diane Elson
Rhonda Sharp
Sanjugta Vas Dev*

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Contents

<i>1</i>	<i>Background</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Gender-responsive budgeting</i>	<i>3</i>
	<i>References</i>	<i>4</i>

(This country profile is available online at www.unisa.edu.au/genderbudgets)

1 Background

Socio-economic indicators	
Population in 2008	127.7 million
Projected population change 2008–50	-25%
GDP per capita (PPP \$US) 2005	\$31,267
Proportion (percent) of population below the poverty line (\$1 PPP a day) 2005	Not available
Gender equality indicators	
Seats in parliament held by women (% of total) 2007	9.4%
Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births) 2005	6
Adult literacy rate, female (aged 15 and older) 2005	Not available
Adult literacy rate, male (aged 15 and older) 2005	Not available
Gross secondary enrolment: Ratio of female rate to male rate 2005	1
Gross secondary enrolment: Female ratio (% of the female secondary school age population) 2005	102%
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (% of total employment in the sector) 2005	41.3%
Budgetary indicators	
General Government public expenditure on education (% of GDP) 2002–05	3.6%
General Government public expenditure on education (% of total expenditure) 2002-05	9.8%
General Government public expenditure on health (% of GDP) 2004	6.3%
General Government public expenditure on health (% of total government expenditure) 2005	17.7%
Central Government military expenditure (% of GDP) 2006	1%
Central Government Public expenditure on defence (% of total outlays) 2004	Not available
Open Budget Index: Overall Score	Not available

Sources: UNDP (2007) *Human Development Report 2007/08*; Population Reference Bureau, (2008) *World Population Data Sheet*. World Economic Forum (2007) *The Global Gender Gap Report*; UN Statistics Division (2008); United Nations Population Division (2008) *World Population Prospects*; UNESCAP (2008) *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific*; IMF (2007) *Government Finance Statistics*; Open Budget Initiative (2008). (See Explanatory Notes for details).

The island country of Japan consists of four principal islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. It also includes more than 3,000 adjacent islands and islets and more than 200 other smaller islands. The national territory also includes the small Bonin Islands (called Ogasawara by the Japanese), Iwo Jima, and the Volcano Islands (Kazan Retto), stretching some 1,100 kilometres from the main islands (*Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 1994*). Japan has a population of 127.7 million of which 99.4 % are Japanese with small numbers of Korean and Chinese. Ainu and hisabetsu buraku are native Japanese minority groups (*Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 1994*).

Japan is a constitutional monarchy with an emperor as the nominal head of state and a Prime Minister as head of the government. Japan has an elected bicameral legislature called the National Diet, consisting of the House of Councillors (upper house) and the House of Representatives (lower house). Japan was governed by a coalition led by the Liberal Democrat government from 1955 till 2009, except for a brief period from 1993-94. In August 2009 a Democratic Party of Japan government was elected and Yukio Hatoyama became Prime Minister.

2 Japan

As the second-largest economy in the world Japan has a GDP per capita (2005) of USD\$31,267 (see Table). The post World War II Japanese economy experienced rapid growth, expanding ten-fold from 1955 to 1990. Since then, however, Japan's economy has experienced serious economic stagnation combined with an increasing political crisis (*Economist Briefing* 3 September 2009).

Japan is ranked 8th out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index and 13th out of 157 countries on the Gender Development Index. Its Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) ranking of 54th out of 93 indicates continued low levels of female representation in government with only 9.4% seats in the lower house being held by women in 2007. However, on other indicators Japan fares better with a gross secondary educational enrolment rate for women of 102% (as a percentage of the female secondary school age population) and the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (2005) standing at 41.3%.

2 Gender-responsive budgeting in Japan

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) has not yet been introduced by the government in Japan. The government has undertaken some gender equality activities relevant to how it raises and spends money but these fall short of GRB. However, some NGOs have raised the issue of GRB and undertaken some analysis of budgets from a gender perspective.

A Basic Law for a Gender-Equal society was passed in 1999. On this foundation a Basic Plan for Gender Equality was formulated in 2000 and a second Plan was introduced in 2005 covering the period to 2010. In 2001 a Council for Gender Equality (comprising 12 cabinet ministers and 12 academics, chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary) and a Gender Equality Bureau, were established and located within the Cabinet Office. The Council for Gender Equality monitors the implementation of the Basic Plan for Gender Equality and assesses the effects of government policy on gender equality. It also is able to set up specialist committees to investigate specific issues and make recommendations (Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan 2009)

The Council for Gender Equality together with the Gender Equality Bureau currently undertakes a gender impact analysis of a selected policy issue each year (Ichii & Muramatsu, 2009). An early example is an analysis on tax, social security and employment, published in April 2002. This analysis recommended curtailment or abolition of income tax allowances for dependent spouses, reform of the public pension system, and curtailment or abolition of family allowances in the pay structures of private corporations (Osawa 2005: 171) One of the pension reforms has been accepted: divorced women are now entitled to a share of the pension of their former husband. More recent studies have focused on elder care (2008), lifelong learning and capacity building and appointments to local and regional government (Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan 2009).

The Gender Equality Bureau annually publishes a White Paper on Gender Equality (Cabinet Office, 2008a) that reviews progress in fulfilling the Plan for Gender Equality and sets out current and future gender equality programs being undertaken across government. An appendix lists these programs under the 12 priority fields set out in the Plan, together with the expenditure allocated to them in the previous budget and the amount proposed in the current budget (Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan Cabinet 2008b). In 2008, the total amount of expenditure for these gender equality programs was approximately \$USD450 billion (approximately 1% of the total government budget). The expenditure reported by each ministry is highly aggregated and the detailed information on the expenditure on each program is not provided in the Appendix. The rationale for the way expenditures are listed in relation to the twelve priority areas is not always clear; nor the reasons for the inclusion of some expenditure. For instance, around 60% of the expenditure included in the White Paper

Appendix in 2007 comprised payments of state pensions. This was questioned by a women's organisation. The Gender Equality Bureau replied that that it had included these payments because a large number of recipients of state pensions are women (Pekin 2006).

Several NGOs and women's organisations have examined government budgets (Ichii & Muramatsu 2009). For example, a women's organisation, the Fusae Ichikawa Memorial Association, organises an annual public hearing on policies and budgets relating to gender equality. Policy makers in several ministries are invited to the hearing and to speak about proposed policy and budgets in the coming financial year. The Japan Women's Watch (JAWW), an NGO comprising feminist scholars and former parliamentarians, has recently published a report that includes some analysis of government budgets at the national and local levels (Japanese Women's Watch 2008). It found that the expenditure earmarked at both national and local levels for gender equality programs has declined. The report also covers taxation and social security, and puts forward recommendations to make these more equitable. The JAWW presented their findings at a NGO forum in the 52nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2008.

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