

Executive summary

H *Health at a Glance: Asia-Pacific 2016* presents key indicators on health status, determinants of health, health care resources and utilisation, health expenditure and financing, and quality of care for 27 Asia-Pacific countries and economies. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region are diverse, and their health issues and health systems often differ. However, these indicators provide a concise overview of the progress of countries towards achieving universal health coverage for their population.

Life expectancy has continued to increase, while maternal mortality is still very high

- Life expectancy at birth across Asian countries reached 73.7 years in 2015, a gain of about 4.6 years since 2000. OECD countries gained, on average, 3.4 years over the same period.
- The infant mortality rate has fallen dramatically across the region since 2000, with many countries experiencing declines of greater than 50%. At an average of 21.5 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2015, infant mortality is still five times the OECD rate.
- Maternal mortality averages around seven deaths per 100 000 live births in OECD countries, while in Asian countries it is almost 13 times greater. Between 2000 and 2015, the average maternal mortality rate across Asian countries was cut by more than half.
- The share of the population aged over 65 years in Asia is expected to nearly quadruple in the next four decades to reach 26% in 2050, surpassing the projected OECD average.

Improving sanitation in rural areas is still problematic

- In the Asian countries, although safe water access for rural dwellers has improved steadily since 1990 and reached 80% of rural populations in 2015 compared to 93.3% in urban dwellings, improving sanitation in rural areas is more problematic. In the region, on average, only less than two third of rural dwellers had access to adequate sanitation in 2015 compared to 81.1% in urban dwellings, and the coverage was very low at less than one third in Cambodia and India.

Low supply of doctors and nurses persists

- The supply of doctors and nurses in the region, at around 1.3 and 3.2 per 1 000 population respectively, is well below the OECD average of 3.3 and 9.1.
- The number of hospital beds per capita is 3.3 per 1 000 population on average across Asia, lower than the OECD average of 4.7, but varies considerably. It is highest in Japan with over 13 beds per 1 000 population, and lowest in the Philippines with 0.5 per 1 000 population.
- Around 85% of pregnant women in the Asia-Pacific region receive at least one antenatal visit, and the proportion of births assisted by medical professionals increased in the last decade, reaching 80% in 2012.

Less financial burden on households out-of-pocket spending, but only half of the health spending is from public sources

- Asian economies spend just over USD 930 per person per year on health, against USD 3 618 in OECD countries. This amounts to over 4.7% of gross domestic product, on average, in the Asian region, compared to over 9.3% in OECD countries in 2014.
- The share of public spending in total health spending is much lower in Asia compared to OECD countries: 50.5% vs 72.7% respectively.
- On average, between 2010 and 2014, the growth rate in per capita health spending in real terms was 4.4% per year in Asia, higher than the 4.0% observed for gross domestic product.
- Spending on pharmaceuticals accounted for almost one third of all health expenditure on average across Asian countries in 2014.

Despite the scarcity of national statistics on quality of care, numerous policy initiatives to evaluate and improve quality of care have been undertaken

- In most Asia-Pacific countries, more than 90% of children aged around one year receive measles, diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis childhood vaccination – on a par with global best practice. Myanmar, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea still fall short of this figure.
- Japan has the lowest case-fatality rates for stroke, with 3% of patients dying within 30 days after ischemic stroke. However, 12.2% of Japanese patients die within 30 days of having a heart attack, compared to 6.6% in New Zealand and 4.5% in Australia.
- Although death rates from cancer are decreased, little is known about the quality of cancer care in the Asia-Pacific region. Cervical cancer mortality varies from 1.4 per 100 000 females in New Zealand to 21.7 in Papua New Guinea, suggesting scope to improve prevention, early detection through screening and fast access to effective treatment.
- The results of a survey carried out in 2013 (WHO and OECD, 2015) show increasing commitment to quality of care in the region.



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