

Social Backgrounds behind the Increase in the Number of Deaths in Japan since 2020:

Infection and Prevention, Medical Delivery System and Consultations, and Physical Fitness and Health of the Elderly

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Since 2020, the number of deaths in Japan has exceeded levels predicted by previous mortality trends and population aging. This study examined the factors contributing to this phenomenon from a social background perspective. We examined the infection and prevention measures for COVID-19 and influenza, the medical delivery system and consultations, and the physical fitness and health of the elderly.

The increase in COVID-19 deaths in 2022 and 2023 can be attributed to rising infection cases, following the widespread rollout of vaccines, a decline in the case fatality rate, and the easing of behavioral restrictions. From 2022 onward, there was an increase in emergency transport, along with a rise in transfers due to treatment difficulties or hospital capacity constraints and longer transport times. However, no significant decline in patient visits was observed. The physical fitness of older adults declined slightly in 2021. The unhealthy period in life expectancy at age 65 in 2022 had shortened for both men and women. This suggests that the negative effects of these social changes may have been greater for more vulnerable groups.

Keywords : the number of deaths, COVID-19, case fatality rate, emergency transport, healthy life expectancy