

Adult smoking rate off for 14th year

Kyodo News

The percentage of smokers among adults has fallen 0.8 point from a year earlier to 24.9 percent, hitting a record low for the 14th straight year, an annual survey conducted in May by Japan Tobacco Inc. showed Friday.

"Multiple factors appear to have caused the decline, such as increased health awareness and tightening of regulations on smoking," said Japan's sole tobacco producer.

The smoking rate for men fell for the 18th consecutive year to 38.9 percent, down 0.6 point from the previous year, while the rate for women stood at 11.9 percent, down 1.0 point, following a 0.2 point rise the previous year.

Based on its latest survey, the total number of smokers was estimated at 26.01 million, down 790,000 from the previous year, JT said.

In addition to increasing restrictions on smoking in public places, the government's introduction of the Taspo smart cards has apparently discouraged smoking, JT said.

The smart cards, which are only issued to people aged 20 or older and enable holders to buy cigarettes at vending machines, were introduced last July as a way to prevent underage smoking.

By region, Hokkaido had the highest smoking rates for both men and women, at 45.7 percent and 20.0 percent, respectively.

By age, smoking rates were highest among people in their 30s — 46.9 percent for men and 16.8 percent

for women.

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