

Nutrition and Diseases in the Low-Income Households in Tokyo in 1930

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This paper contains the result of our analysis of a household survey of low-income working-class households conducted in Tokyo in 1930.

We investigated both the levels of nutritional attainment and the relationship between calorie intake and health outcomes within those households. We found that the daily calorie intake per equivalent adult was 1,906.3 kcal; 2,117.9 kcal for a man and 1,694.6 kcal for a woman. This level of energy satisfied the energy requirement for moderate physical activity and thus, we conclude that low-income urban working-class households at that time are likely to have escaped from hunger.

Our estimates show that those households tended to consume meat or fish in response to the increase in per capita income at the expense of the consumption of other types of food. However, we do not find any significant correlation between improvements in the daily calorie intake per capita and the health status of the family members. Although less than conclusive, this finding contributes to the debate about the contribution of improvements in nutrition during the historical decline in the mortality rate, using Japan as a case study