

JAPAN

Capital: **Tokyo** | Population: **126 million**

Lead body for sport development: **Japan Sports Agency**



Government Support B

Elite Sport Rank 8

Elite Sport Rank Per Capita 41

Youth Sport Participation Grade B-

Japan has a unique sports culture, shaped by historical ties to the martial arts and activities like sumo. But baseball and other Western sports are also popular. Like in the U.S., school-based sports are popular, with programs starting around fifth grade and continuing through high school.

Established in 2015, the [Japan Sports Agency \(JSA\)](#), housed within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, is the agency responsible for sport policy. The JSA exists as an administrative arm of the government and has a budget of ¥180 billion (or \$1.24 billion USD). The JSA aims to create a Japanese “society in which people are healthy in body and mind and lead a cultural lifestyle [of sport] throughout their lives.” Japan’s first national sports policy, the [Basic Act on Sport](#), was created in 1999 and revolutionized sport in the country by developing sport as an industry, as one of three priority areas to revitalize the economy.

Japan is a sports powerhouse, winning 27 gold medals in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, just behind China and the United States. Its funding system on sports development has been increasingly dual track since the 2000s. Although overall public sports spending surged by 68% amidst intensive preparation for the Olympic Games to ¥974 billion (\$6.7 billion USD) during 2013-2019, public funds represented just one-fifth (18%) of total income of 70-plus National Sport Associations in 2020, with the rest coming from business income (63%) and self-generated revenue (17%). Sports in Japan represent nearly 2% of the overall GDP.

The [Japanese Olympic Committee \(JOC\)](#) is a key partner in the sport system. The JOC, in coordination with the Japan Sport Association (JPSO), oversee the 40 National Sport Associations (NSAs). The NSAs in coordination with JPSO and other local clubs, federations, schools, and

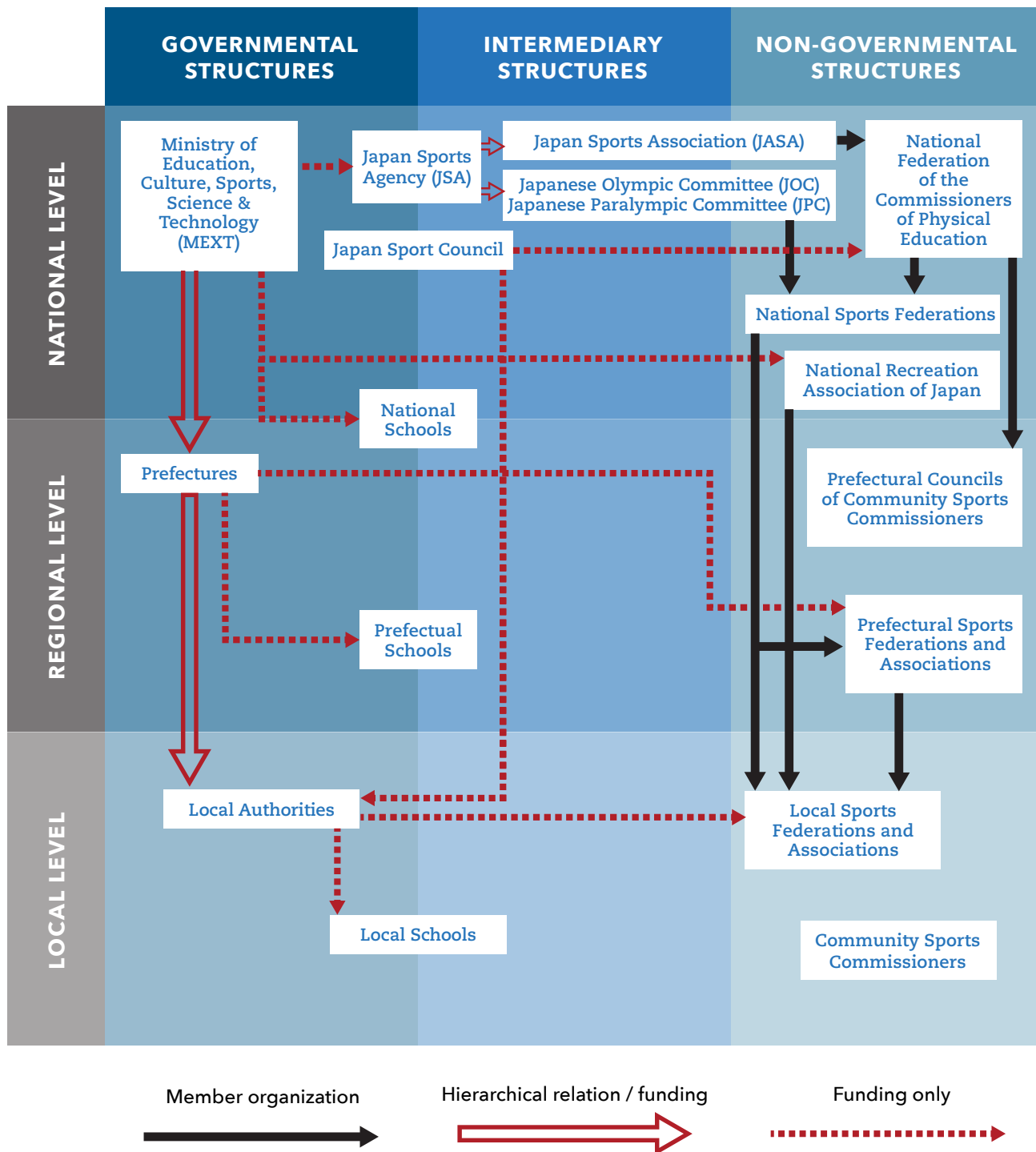
amateur sport associations are responsible for the mass sport movement in Japan.

The JSA and other sport bodies supported the creation of a UNICEF Japan resource in 2018, the [Children’s Rights in Sports Principles](#) which articulates expectations for sport organizations, schools and coaches. The resource calls for the development of a governance system to protect children against risks. Despite a [major fallout in 2021 with child protection](#) issues in sport, it does not appear that Japan has created an established mechanism within its sport system for reporting abuse.

WHAT WE LIKE

As part of the Basic Act on Sport, National Sport Associations (NSAs) were tasked with developing business plans to generate new sponsorships and commercial opportunities. The government also offered **benefits for the private sector to invest**: matching grants to NSAs, tax deductions to donors, incentives for corporate-owned sports clubs, and newly dedicated lottery funds for local sports. Three-quarters of the profits from lottery sales are designated for subsidizing a range of sports projects. Community sports are largely funded by the Sports Promotion Lottery, which in 2022 generated approximately ¥14.8 billion (\$101.8 million USD) in support.

Sport Governance in Japan



Most grades in Youth Sport Participation and Government Support categories are drawn from a 2022 report prepared by the [Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance](#), a not-for-profit comprised of researchers, health professionals and stakeholders who work together to advance physical activity in children and adolescents around the world. Report cards for the 57 countries evaluated are based on a harmonized framework and standardized grading rubric, as reflected in the [Global Matrix 4.0](#). A grade of C, for instance, means a country is "succeeding with about half (47-53%) of children." The Government Support grade is given by experts in that country based on "evidence of leadership and commitment" by government "in providing physical activity opportunities or participation of children and adolescents through policy, legislation or regulation." No grades were offered in the Global Matrix report for Government Support for Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom and the U.S., so the Aspen Institute consulted experts in each of those country to offer one, using the same criteria. In the U.S., the "D" grade was the weighted grade offered by 90 experts engaged with Project Play, including youth sport industry leaders at the NextUp Conference hosted by LeagueApps.

The Elite Sport Rank and Elite Sport Rank Per Capita categories are drawn from [Greatest Sporting Nation](#), a website that analyzes elite international competition results in Olympic and other sports, not including those that involve animals or cars. The first category is a measure of the total number of athletes and teams in 2022 who performed well in competition, while the latter calculates results relative to a nation's total population.