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More Japanese diners put price at the center of lunch choices, survey finds

MS&Consulting said 57.2% cited cost as a main criterion for lunch, up 5.1 percentage points

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Price is becoming a more important factor for Japanese consumers when they choose where to eat out, according to a survey released on Tuesday, Nov. 10, by research firm MS&Consulting.

The online survey, which covered 1,071 people in Japan ages 20 to 59, found that 57.2% of respondents listed price levels as one of their main criteria when choosing a place for lunch. That was up from 52.1% in 2025, an increase of 5.1 percentage points.

The same pattern appeared in dinners that include alcohol. In that setting, 42.6% of respondents cited price as one of their main selection criteria, up from 38.6% in 2025, a gain of four percentage points.

The results suggest that cost is weighing more heavily on decisions in two common restaurant occasions, even as other factors remain important. For dinners with alcohol, food and menu choices still ranked ahead of price, at 53.1%.

MS&Consulting said the survey was conducted from July 27 to Aug. 19 through the internet. Respondents were allowed to choose up to two criteria, which means the figures reflect the share of people who selected each item rather than a ranking based on a single answer. The company also said the results are not spending data and do not measure how often people actually visited restaurants.

That distinction matters in reading the findings. The survey points to a shift in what consumers say they consider when choosing a restaurant, but it does not show how much they spent, whether they traded down to cheaper venues, or how restaurant traffic changed.

The research also included a measure that points to some customer retention after price increases, though the company itself warned against reading too much into it. According to the survey, 83.7% of respondents said there is at least one restaurant they still continue to visit after a price increase.

MS&Consulting said that figure includes people who may still go to the same restaurant but do so less often than before. Because of that, the company said the result should not be treated as evidence that restaurants avoid losing customers or consumption after raising prices.

The survey was released through PR TIMES, with the underlying analysis attributed to MS&Consulting. The company presented the results as evidence of rising price sensitivity in Japan’s dining-out market, particularly for lunch and for evening meals that involve alcohol.

The lunch result stands out because it puts price near the center of the decision for a majority of respondents. With 57.2% naming it as one of their top criteria, the share was higher than in the previous year and showed that pricing has become a stronger part of the lunchtime calculation for many consumers.

The increase in the dinner-with-alcohol category was smaller in absolute terms, but it still showed movement in the same direction. Even in an occasion where menu content remained the leading factor, more respondents said they were paying attention to what a meal would cost.

Taken together, the figures indicate that Japanese consumers in the survey are giving more weight to affordability when deciding where to eat outside the home. At the same time, the study stops short of showing how that stated preference is translating into restaurant sales, visit frequency or average spending per customer.