

**Annual Report
on the Ageing Society
[Summary] FY2021**

July 2021

Cabinet Office

Japan

This Report concerns the state of ageing and statements on the implementation of measures adopted by the government for the ageing society and documents clarifying measures and policies to take in view of the state of societal ageing provided for under Article 8 of the Basic Law on Measures for the Ageing Society (Act No.129, 1995).

Annual Report on the Ageing Society

The government submits this Report annually to the National Diet (Legal white paper) in accordance with the Basic Law on Measures for the Ageing Society. This edition is the 26th.

Basic Law on Measures for the Ageing Society

Article 8.1. The government shall submit a report annually to the National Diet concerning the state of the ageing society and the implementation of measures for the ageing society adopted by the government.

Article 8.2. The government shall prepare and submit to the National Diet annually a document which clearly describes the measures that will be adopted to take account of the state of the ageing society as described in the report of the preceding paragraph.

Chapter 1 Situation of the Ageing Population

Section 1 Situation of the Ageing Population (Trends in Ageing population and Projection for the Future)

Section 2 Trends of Living of the Elderly (Trends in Employment Rate by Age Group, Trends in Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth and Life Expectancy at Birth, Number of Fatal Accidents Caused by Drivers Aged 75 and Over, etc., Internet Usage Internet Usage Rate by Age Group)

Section 3 <Special Feature> Characteristics of the Lives and Attitudes of the Elderly in Japan Seen through an International Comparison Study

<Topics>

1. Actual examples of telecommuting during the COVID-19 crisis, including the elderly
—Initiatives by Nikken Sekkei Research Institute—
2. Impact on health aspects of the elderly due to the prolongment of self-restraint lifestyle
—In order to prevent secondary damage to the health of elderly people in the COVID-19 crisis(“COVID frailty”)—
3. Linking people and community “even” online
—Challenge taken by the Hidaka City Social Welfare Council in Saitama Prefecture, a city where 32% of residents are the elderly and the total population is 55,000—
4. Watching over the elderly living on their own in response to the spread of COVID-19
—Initiatives in collaboration with restaurant owners and others in Iwate Prefecture’s Rikuzentakata City—
5. Taking care to maintain family bonds amid the COVID-19 crisis
—Initiative to utilize avatar robots in facilities such as intensive care homes for the elderly—

Chapter 2 Situation Regarding Implementation of the FY 2020 Measures for the Ageing Society

Section 1 Fundamental Framework of Measures for the Ageing Society

Section 2 Implementation Status of Measures in each Field (Measures implemented by each government ministry during FY 2020)

1. Employment and Income
2. Health and Welfare
3. Learning and Social Participation
4. Living Environment
5. Research Development and Contribution to the World
6. Promote Success of All Generations

Chapter 3 Measures for the Ageing Society in FY 2020

Section 1 Basic Approach to Measures for the Ageing Society in FY 2021

Section 2 Measures for the Ageing Society in each Field (Measures implemented by each government ministry during FY 2021)

1. Employment and Income
2. Health and Welfare
3. Learning and Social Participation
4. Living Environment
5. Research Development and Contribution to the World
6. Promote Success of All Generations

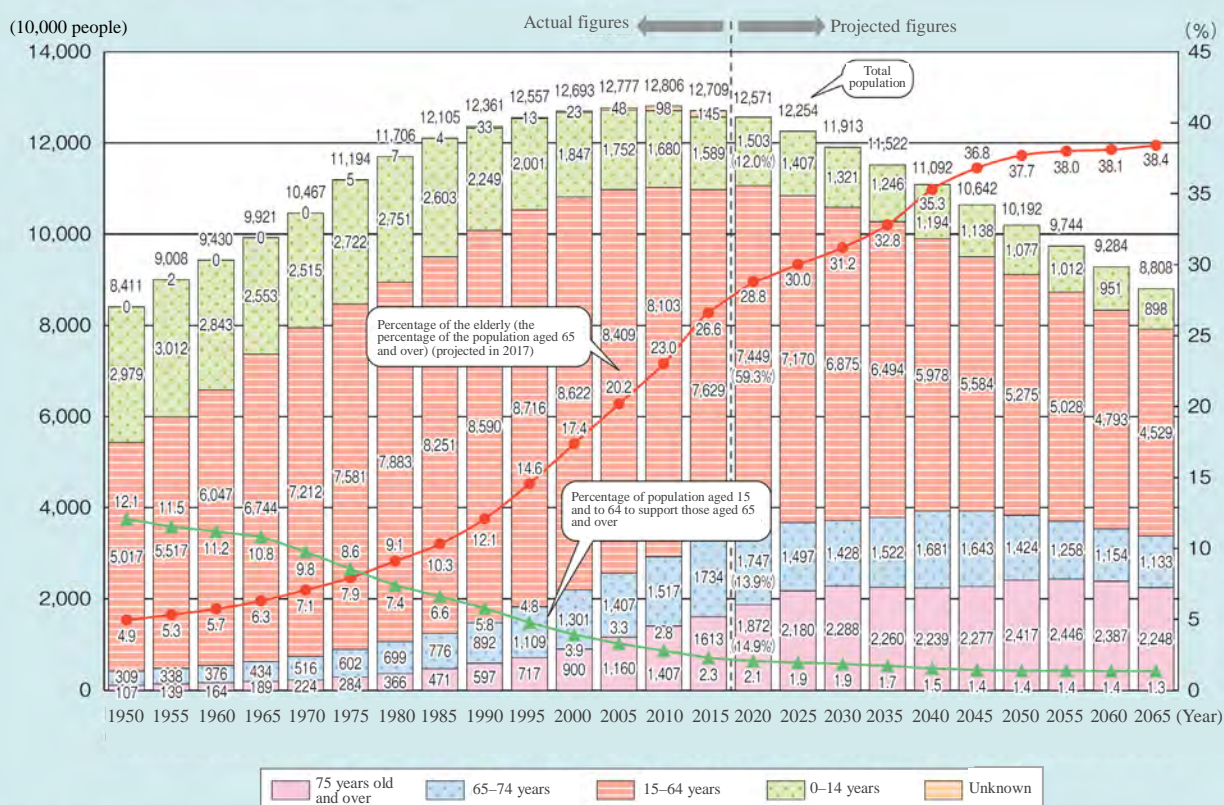
Chapter 1 Situation of the Ageing Population

Section 1 Situation of the Ageing Population

○ **The percentage of the elderly rises to 28.8%**

- The total population of Japan is 125.71 million people as of October 1, 2020.
- The number of the population aged 65 and over is 36.19 million. The percentage of the population aged 65 and over (percentage of the elderly) is 28.8%.
- The population aged between 65 and 74 years is 17.47 million, accounting for 13.9% of the total population of Japan. The population aged 75 years and over is 18.72 million, accounting for 14.9% of the total population, and has overtaken the population aged 65-74 years in size.
- By 2065, one in 2.6 people will be 65 years old and over, and one in 3.9 will be 75 years old and over.

Chart 1-1-1 Trends in Ageing population and Projection for the Future



Source: With regard to the ageing rate shown in the bar graph and solid line, the figures are taken up until 2015 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) Population Census, from MIC's Population Estimates for the year 2020 (as of October 1, 2020 (estimated according to the 2015 Population Census)), and from 2025 onwards from the projection based on the medium fertility variants with a medium-mortality assumption in the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research's Population Projections for Japan (2017).

(Note 1) The population by age group after 2020 is based on the Statistical Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications "Population census of the census age and nationality uncertainty (reference table)" of 2015. Since it is calculated based on the population who were categorized as the "age unknown", age unknown does not exist. In calculating the rates of ageing from 1950 to 2015, the "age unknown" is excluded from the denominator. However, in calculating the rates for 1950 and 1955, the part of the Okinawa Prefecture population shown in (Note 2) is not included in the "age unknown."

(Note 2) 136 foreigners (55 males and 81 females) aged 70 and over in Okinawa Prefecture in 1950 and 23,328 people (8,090 males and 15,238 females) aged 70 and over in 1955 are excluded from the population aged 65 - 74 or aged 75 and over, and included in the "age unknown."

(Note 3) Population projections represent the future trends of population based on the demographic data obtained before the base year. Deviation between the projection and actual result is likely to occur due to structural changes and other reasons occurring after the base year, and the population projections are regularly revised based on such results.

(Note 4) Totals do not necessarily add up to 100% due to rounding off.

Who are the elderly?

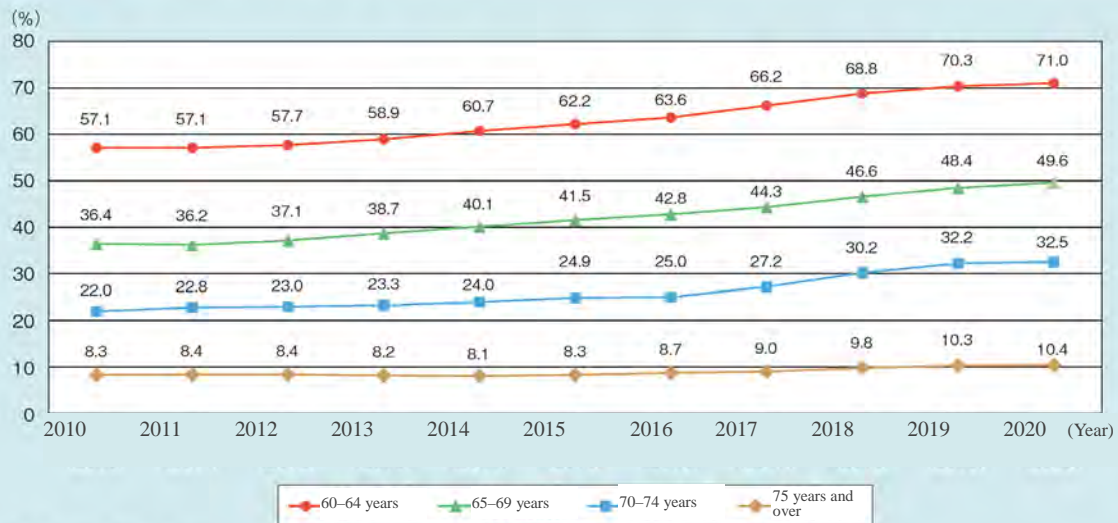
The term "the elderly" is applied to different subjects depending on context and systems, and there is no uniform definition. The Guideline of Measures for Ageing Society (decided by the Cabinet in February 2018) uses as a generally accepted term "the elderly" for the sake of convenience. In this white paper too, the term is used in its generally accepted sense except in cases in which the definitions in various statistics or systems are followed. For the classification and the definitions of the elderly, the "Working Group Report on the Definition of the Elderly" (March 2017) from the Joint Committee of Japan Gerontological Society and the Japan Geriatrics Society proposes to newly define people aged 75 and over as the elderly. The Guideline of Measures for Ageing Society also states that the general tendency to uniformly regard people aged 65 and over as "the elderly" is no longer realistic in light of the current situation.

Section 2 Trends of Living of the Elderly

○ Trends in employment rate by age group

- As for employment rates by age group, rates in 2020 for age 60–64, 65–69, and 70–74 have increased to 13.9 points, 13.2 points, 10.5 points respectively, compared to that of 2010, ten years ago.

Chart 1-2-1 Trends in Employment Rate by Age group



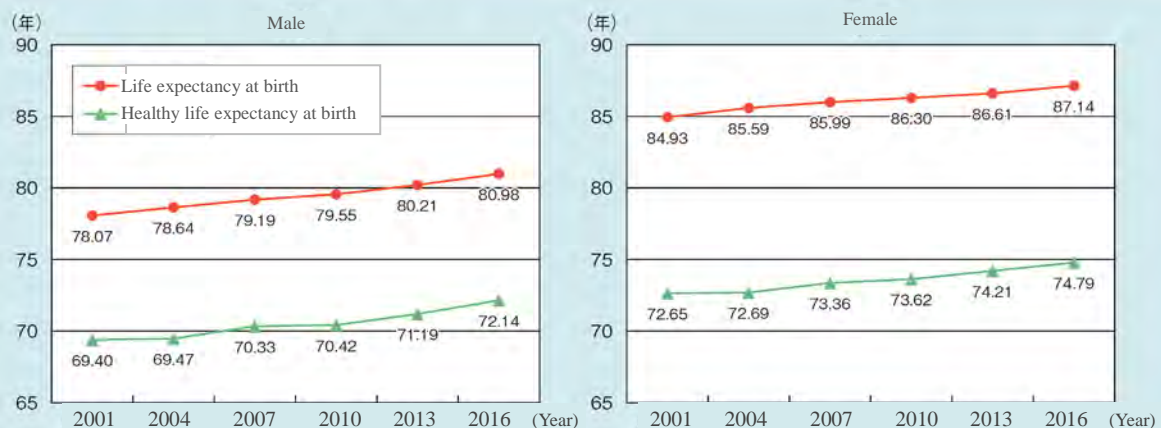
(Note 1) The "Employment Rate by Age Group" represents a percentage of employed persons in the population of each age group.

(Note 2) In 2011, the implementation of the survey became temporarily difficult in Iwate Prefecture, Miyagi Prefecture and Fukushima Prefecture, so complementarily estimated values have been used.

○ Healthy life expectancy at birth is increasing more than the increase of life expectancy at birth

- Average period of time spent without limitation in daily activities (healthy life expectancy at birth) was 72.14 years for males and 74.79 years for females as of 2016. Compared to 2010, both became longer (2010 to 2016: males 1.72 years, females 1.17 years). The increase of healthy life expectancy at birth is larger than that of life expectancy at birth (2010 to 2016: males 1.43 years, females 0.84 years).

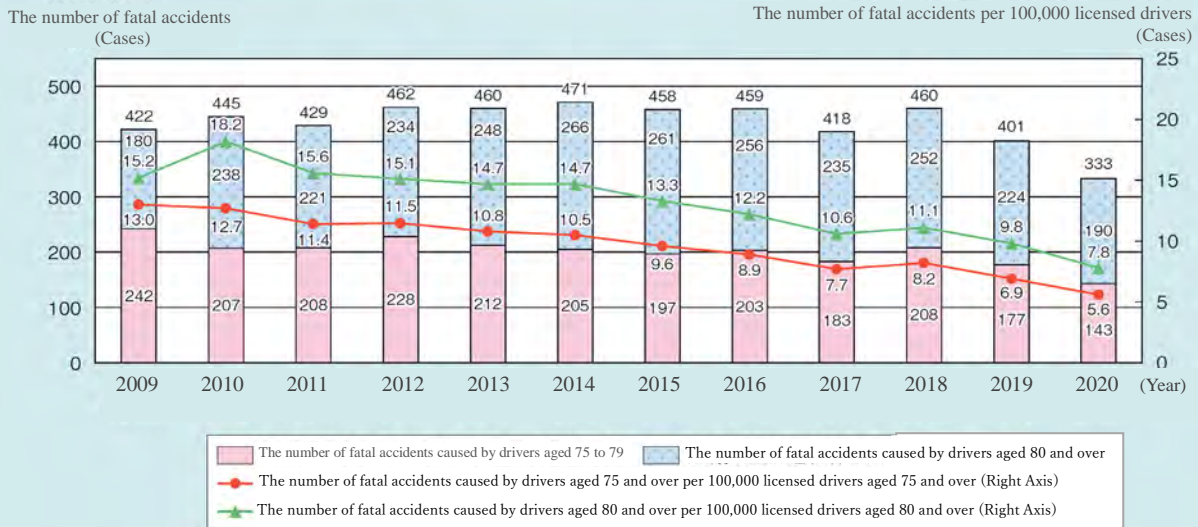
Chart 1-2-2 Trends in Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth and Life Expectancy at Birth



Sources: Life expectancy at birth: "Abridged Life Table," Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare for 2001, 2004, 2007, 2013 and 2016 and "Complete Life Table," Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, for 2010
 Healthy life expectancy at birth: "Reference Document for the 11th Promotion Specialized Committee of Healthy Japan 21 (the second term)," Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

- **The number of fatal accidents per 100,000 licensed drivers aged 75 and over is decreasing**
 - The number of fatal accidents per 100,000 licensed drivers aged 75 and over is decreasing. In 2020, the number of fatal accidents per 100,000 licensed drivers aged 75 and over was 5.6, and per 100,000 licensed drivers aged 80 and over was 7.8, both of which are smaller than those of the previous year.

Chart 1-2-3 Number of Fatal Accidents Caused by Drivers Aged 75 and Over and Number of Fatal Accidents Caused by Drivers per 100,000 Licensed Drivers aged 75 and Over



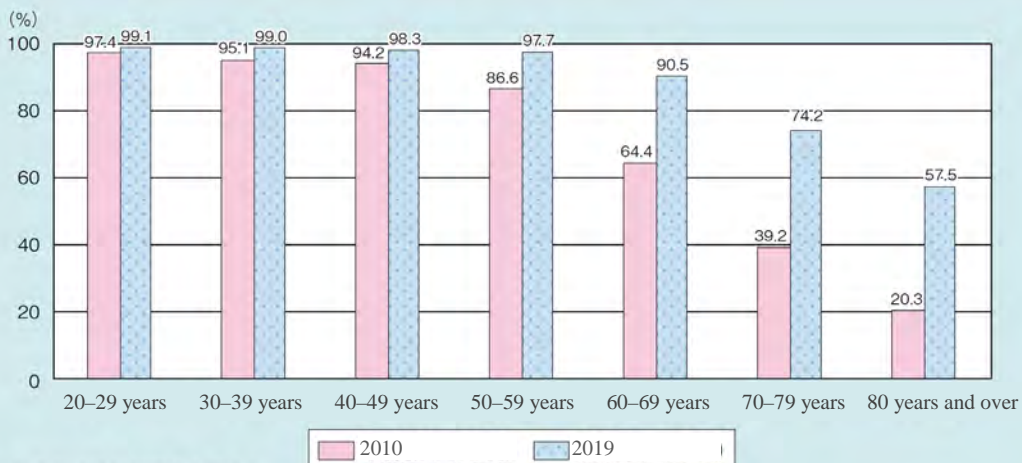
The number of licensed drivers aged 75 and over (10,000 people)

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	324	351	375	403	425	447	478	513	540	564	583	590
Among them, aged 80 and over	119	131	141	155	169	180	196	209	221	227	229	243

Source: National Police Agency Statistics
 (Note 1) The number of driver's license holders for each year is as of the end of December.
 (Note 2) The total number of fatal traffic accidents in which the person with main responsibility for the accident was driving a moped 1st class or larger vehicle.

- **The number of the elderly who use the Internet is increasing**
 - With regard to whether they had used the Internet within the past year, if the increase rate of each age group is compared to the rate nine years ago the largest rise (37.2 points) was among those aged 80 and over, followed by the 70 to 79 age group (35.0 points), showing that there was a significant rising trend among those aged 60 and over using the Internet.

Chart 1-2-4 Internet Usage Rate by Age Group



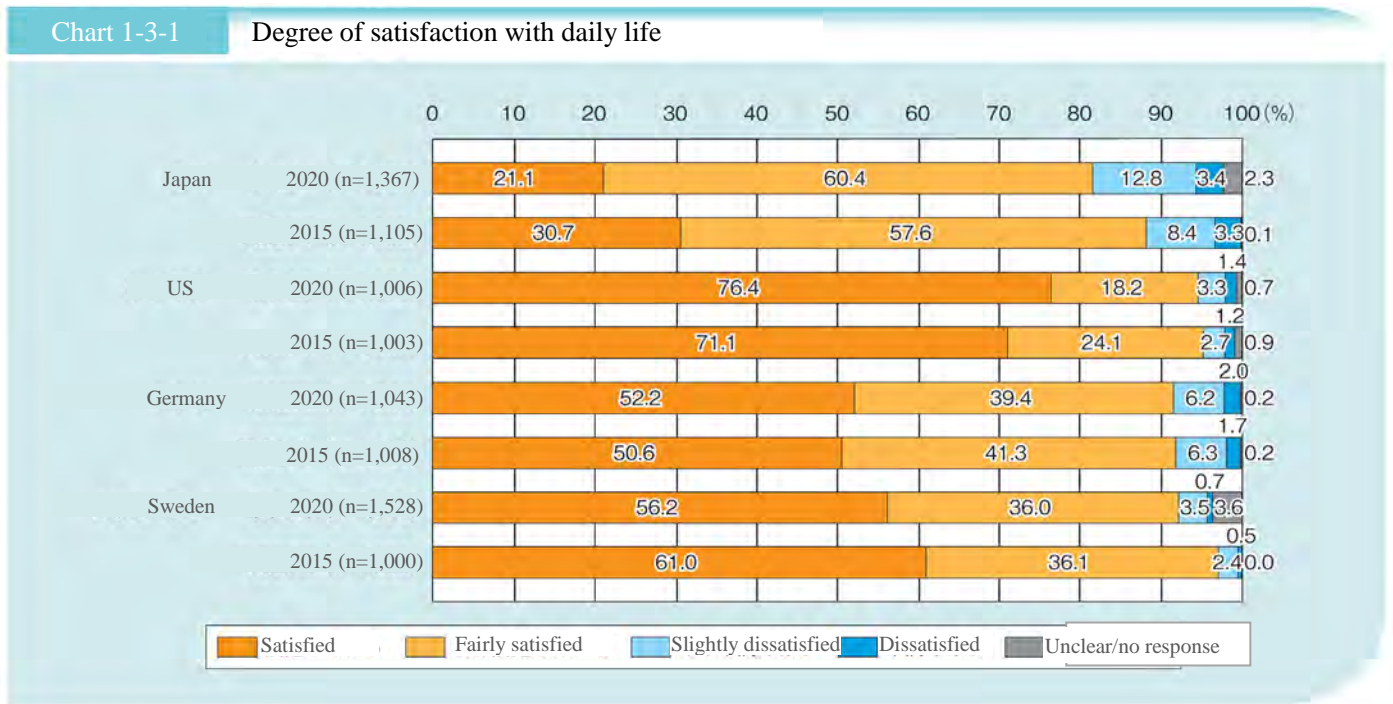
Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications "Communication Usage Trend Survey"
 (Note 1) Excluding no response
 (Note 2) As the design of the questionnaire for the 2019 survey was different to previous years care is required when comparing results from previous years.

Section 3 <Special Feature> Characteristics of the Lives and Attitudes of the Elderly in Japan Seen through an International Comparison Study (outline)

The following is a partial introduction to the results of the FY2020 International Comparison Study on Life and Attitude of the Elderly, conducted between December 2020 and January 2021 and responded to by 1,367 people in Japan, 1,006 in the US, 1,043 in Germany, and 1,528 in Sweden.

It should be noted that this study has been conducted every five years since FY1980, but the FY2020 study also included an investigation into the impact of the spread of COVID-19 on daily lives amid the worldwide proliferation of the disease.

- **Over 80% of people aged 60 and over in each country are satisfied with their current daily lives**
 - Amid the proliferation of COVID-19 into a worldwide pandemic, although a downward trend is observable a total of over 80% of those aged 60 or older in each country continued to respond that they were either “satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with their daily lives, compared to the previous study in 2015.



- **Although the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has had some impact upon employment, the elderly in Japan continue to be eager to work, and it is essential that further promotion is provided for telecommuting in order to enable continued employment.**

Looking at the state of employment, around 30% of those in Japan, the US and Germany, and 10% of those in Sweden aged 60 and over and in paid employment responded that “The number of days and hours I work has declined” due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the midst of this state of affairs, as was the case in the 2015 study, the percentage of those responding “I want to do (or continue) a paid job” was highest in Japan among all countries (40.2%), illustrating that despite the COVID-19 situation the volition to work of the elderly in Japan remains high. While it is expected that the ageing of Japanese society will continue, there is a requirement to provide employment opportunities addressing a wide range of needs among the elderly in Japan, and for initiatives enabling continuous employment while proceeding with COVID-19 prevention measures such as the further promotion of telecommuting.

Chart 1-3-2 Percentage of those in paid employment responding that “The number of days and hours I work has decreased” due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic

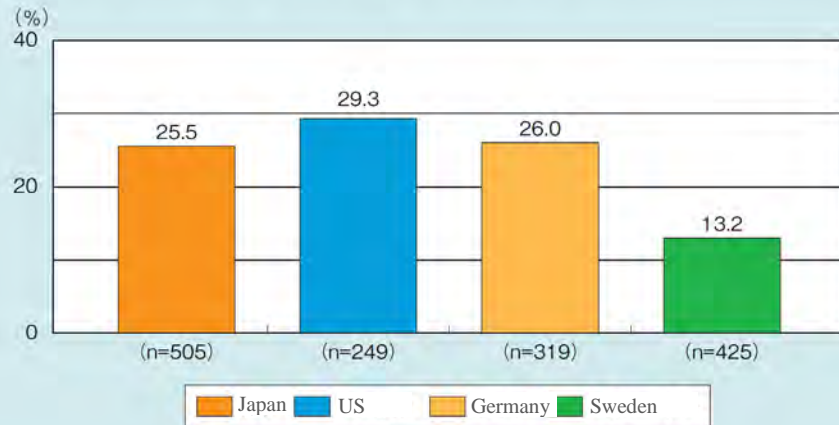
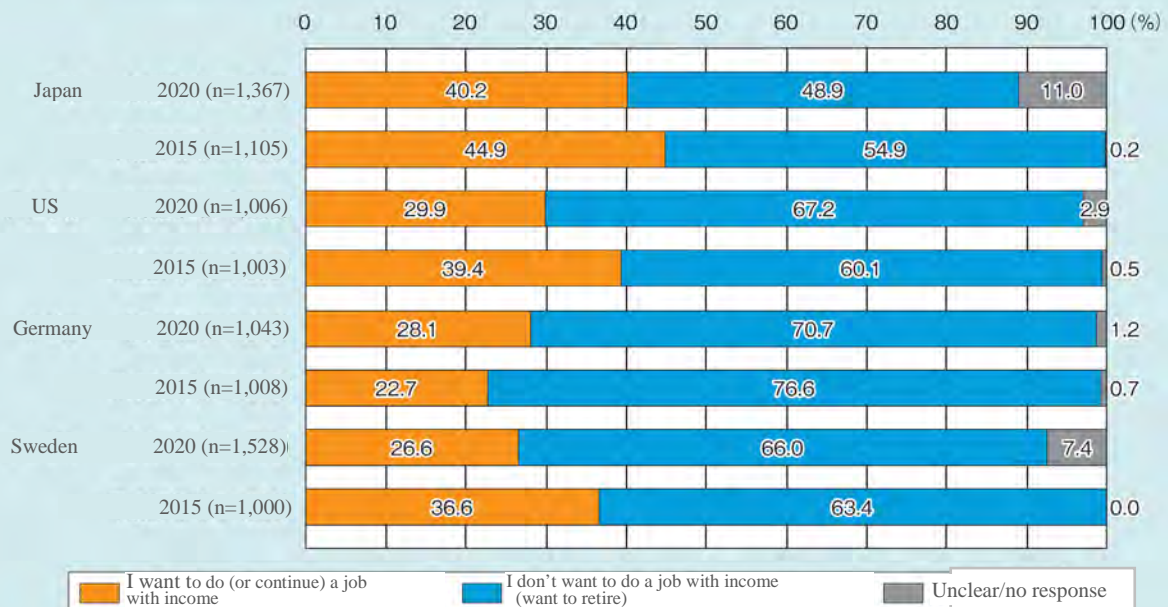


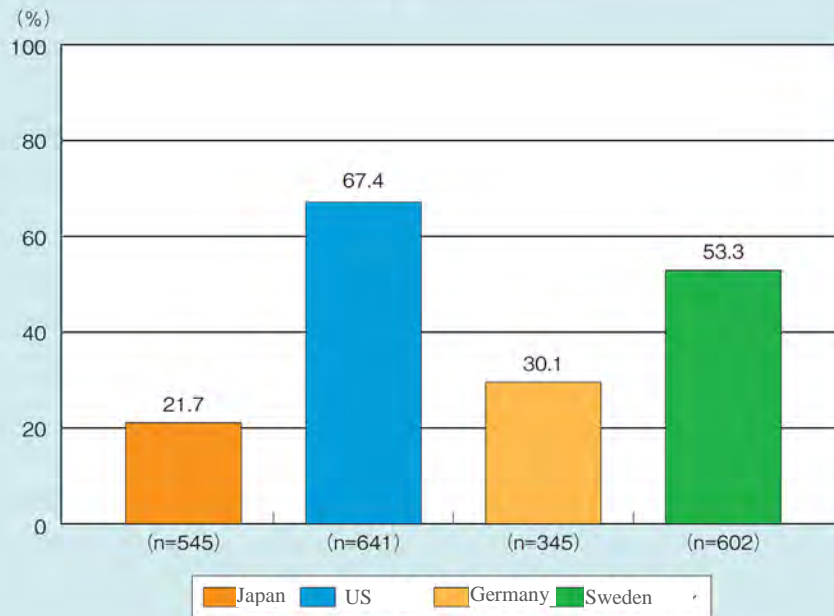
Chart 1-3-3 Wish to work in the future



○ **Participation in volunteer activities has declined due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic**

Among those participating in volunteer activities in each country and aged 60 and over, around 70% in the US, 50% in Sweden, 30% in Germany and 20% in Japan responded that “I have given up volunteer activities (or the activities have been cancelled)” or “the number of days and hours spent on volunteer activities has declined” due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

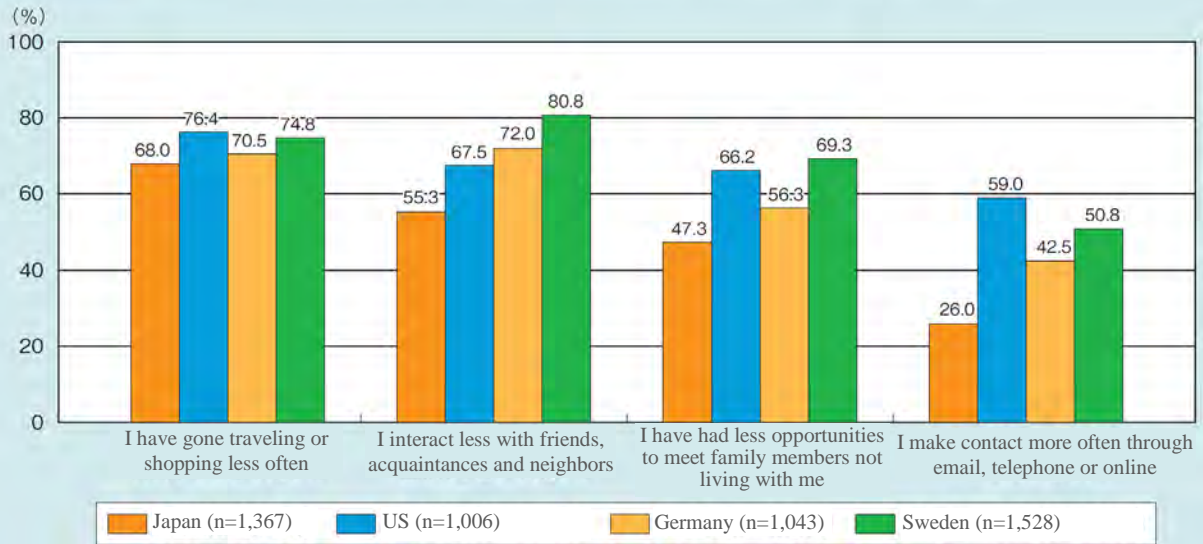
Chart 1-3-4 Percentage responding “I have given up volunteer activities (or the activities have been cancelled)” or “the number of days and hours spent on volunteer activities has declined” due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (multiple responses)



○ **While going out and interacting with other people have decreased due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, online and other forms of contact have increased**

In each country, similarly to Japan, there was a high proportion of responses citing that due to the COVID-19 pandemic “I have gone traveling or shopping less often,” “I interact less with friends, acquaintances and neighbors,” “I have had less opportunities to meet family members not living with me,” and “I make contact more often through email, telephone or online.” It is becoming apparent that as a result of staying at home in order to prevent infection while direct connections between the elderly in Japan and society, family and others have declined, there has been an increase in contact through email, telephone and online.

Chart 1-3-5 Impact of the spreading COVID-19 pandemic on going out (multiple responses)



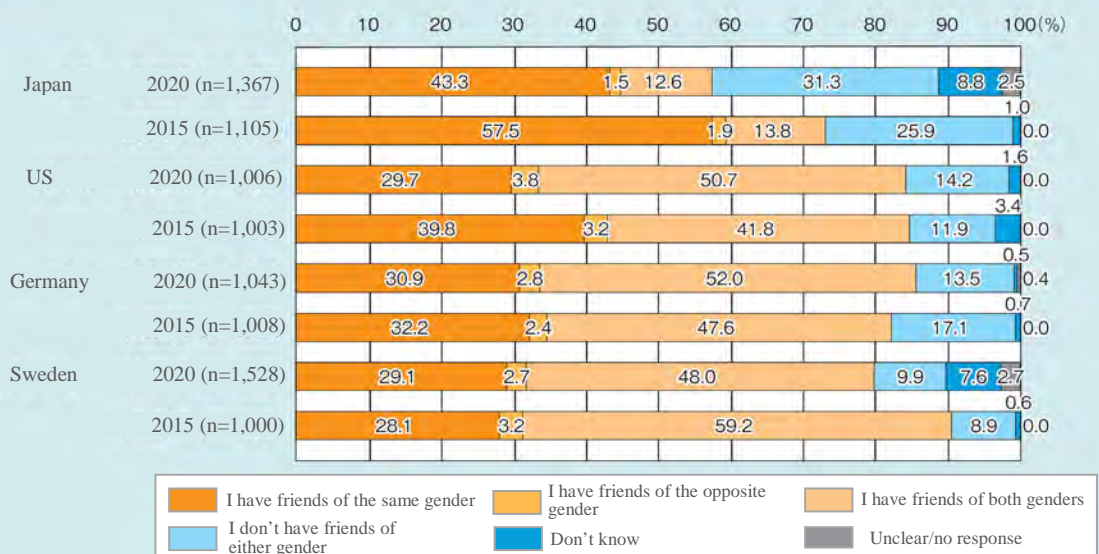
○ **The percentage of the elderly consulting with each other or helping each other out during illness is low in Japan**

With regard to interaction with neighbors, the percentages responding “When I have something to discuss I consult with or am consulted by others,” and “We help each other when people are ill,” were at a lower level in Japan than any other country. Japan also recorded the lowest level of people lacking close friends other than family members with whom to discuss matters or help each other out.

Chart 1-3-6 Nature of interaction with neighbors (multiple responses)

	Japan	US	Germany	Sweden
Upper tier: 2020 (overall)	(n=1,367)	(n=1,006)	(n=1,043)	(n=1,528)
Lower tier: 2015 (overall)	(n=1,105)	(n=1,003)	(n=1,008)	(n=1,000)
We have tea or meals together	14.2 24.2	27.4 24.9	46.3 50.1	25.4 35.9
We share hobbies	11.2 15.6	19.6 13.5	16.1 16.3	6.0 9.2
When I have something to discuss I consult with or am consulted by others	20.0 18.6	42.1 28.3	45.1 48.3	26.3 31.2
I perform or am helped in menial household chores	5.5 5.2	19.1 15.2	6.4 7.3	1.8 3.2
We help each other when people are ill	5.0 5.9	38.9 27.0	30.1 31.9	8.9 16.9
We give and receive things from each other	48.7 41.9	28.6 18.4	17.9 14.3	14.9 24.3
We just have stand-up chats outside	64.7 67.3	39.7 45.9	45.3 38.7	88.5 89.7
Others	10.6 9.7	5.8 6.1	2.7 1.3	6.5 8.4
Unclear/no response	1.9 0.6	0.9 -	0.6 1.2	1.8 -

Chart 1-3-7 Presence or absence of close friends outside family



- **There is a need for initiatives to encourage the elderly to participate in social activities and support efforts to watch over them in order to prevent them from falling into loneliness and isolation**

While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic drags on, the government established the Office for Loneliness and Isolation Countermeasures within the Cabinet Secretariat in February 2021, and worked together to prepare a system for tackling loneliness and isolation countermeasures. However, there is a need for initiatives to encourage the elderly to participate in social activities and support efforts to watch over them to prevent the elderly from falling into the state of loneliness and isolation that they fear, and prevent them from becoming isolated from the local community, while paying due consideration to infection prevention activities such as the promotion of the use of ICT.

Topics

Actual examples of telecommuting during the COVID-19 crisis, including the elderly

—Initiatives by Nikken Sekkei Research Institute—

Nikken Sekkei Research Institute, which introduced a telecommuting system centering on working at home as result of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, has in addition to infection prevention measures against COVID-19, abolished its ceiling on the number of days worked at home and eagerly introduced Zoom and Google Meet in anticipation of the with-COVID and post-COVID eras. As a result of promoting telecommuting among personnel including the elderly, the rate of personnel attending their offices was kept down to 30% during the state of emergency, and 40% at other times. According to the Institute, many of the senior members of their personnel were able to complete their work alone, and the merits of telecommuting are considerable.



(Photo: During an online meeting at Nikken Sekkei Research Institute)

Topics

Linking people and community “even” online

—Challenge taken by the Hidaka City Social Welfare Council in Saitama Prefecture, a city where 32% of residents are the elderly and the total population is 55,000—

In order that the groups and volunteer organizations whose activities had to be reluctantly cancelled could maintain their bonds online, Hidaka City Social Welfare Council in Saitama Prefecture provided encouragement through the Community Welfare Forum in October 2020 and smartphone instruction course in December 2020. After these events were held the elderly spread by word of mouth comments such as “You can do all these things by using Zoom!”, and a movement towards taking on the challenge of maintaining links “even” online is starting to gradually widen.



(Photo: During the Community Welfare Forum organized by Hidaka City Social Welfare Council)

Topics

Watching over the elderly living on their own in response to the spread of COVID-19

—Initiatives in collaboration with restaurant owners and others in Iwate Prefecture's Rikuzentakata City—

From June to September 2020, Rikuzentakata City, as an SDGs Future City, is aiming for the realization of a sustainable society in which “not a single person is left behind,” implemented a project to watch over the elderly to prevent the elderly living alone from becoming isolated during the period of staying at home due to COVID-19, and also to support the restaurant owners and car rental companies hit by the pandemic's economic impacts. Under this project the City bore part of the expenses, and lunch boxes prepared by the restaurants in the city were delivered to the homes of elderly people living alone by car rental companies. From April 2021 the project was expanded to include all households in the city, and there is the additional hope that it will link in with the creation of a vibrant community.



(Photo: The watching over project conducted by Iwate Prefecture's Rikuzentakata City)