

Priority Plan to Facilitate the Promotion of the Policies Regarding Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation

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Headquarters for Advancement of Measures to Address Loneliness
and Isolation

This plan is stipulated as the priority plan to facilitate the promotion of the policies regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation, based on Article 8-1 of the Act on the Advancement of Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation (Law 45, 2023).

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Introduction

The Priority Plan to Facilitate the Promotion of the Policies Regarding Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation (hereinafter referred to as “the Priority Plan”), based on Article 8 of the Act on the Advancement of Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation (Law 45, 2023, referred to hereinafter as “the Act on Advancement”), stipulates the fundamental plan of action concerning the policies regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation, and the policies that should be comprehensively and systematically implemented by the government in relation to measures to address loneliness and isolation.

Based on the understanding that any person can potentially be in a state of loneliness and isolation¹ at any point in life, it is important to advance measures to address loneliness and isolation across all societal sectors.

Amid a situation in which changes in the social structures are being said to be weakening the bonds between people in families, communities and workplaces etc., the prolongation of the decline in opportunities for people to meet with each other due to the COVID-19 crisis and the increased prominence and severity of the loneliness and isolation problem provided an impetus for the government to join in solidarity and promote measures with the Minister in charge of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation – a post newly created in February 2021 – acting as the control tower.

Furthermore, the Act on Advancement was established in May 2023, which stipulates the fundamental principles regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation and the matters that form the basis of the government’s responsibilities and policies, and is the first law in the world that comprehensively regulates measures to address loneliness and isolation covering all citizens.

Following the promulgation of the Act on Advancement on April 1, 2024, measures to address loneliness and isolation are at the stage in which comprehensive initiatives will be strengthened and deepened with the Headquarters for Advancement of Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation at the center, under the leadership of the Minister of State for Measures for Loneliness and Isolation.

The government will continue to aim for “a society where not a single person suffering from loneliness and isolation is left behind” and “a society where individuals support and connect with each other” and steadily promote the measures to address loneliness and isolation stipulated in the Priority Plan.

¹ The Act on Advancement defines the state of loneliness and isolation as “suffering mental or physical harm due to experiencing loneliness in their daily lives or lives in society or isolation from society in a situation exacerbated by societal changes that have weakened interpersonal and societal connections.”

I. Regarding the Priority Plan

1. Relationship between the provisions of the Act on Advancement and the Priority Plan

Article 8-1 of the Act on Advancement stipulates that “the Headquarters for Advancement of Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation must create a priority plan to facilitate the promotion of the policies regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation.”

Firstly, after confirming the matters stipulated in the Priority Plan under the Act on Advancement, an idea of the structure of the Priority Plan is presented, bearing in mind the correspondence with the provisions of the Act on Advancement.

(1) Matters stipulated in the Priority Plan

Article 8-2 of the Act on Advancement stipulates that the Priority Plan must provide for the following matters:

- (i) the fundamental plan of action concerning the policies regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation;
- (ii) the policies that should be comprehensively and systematically implemented by the government in relation to measures to address loneliness and isolation;
- (iii) in addition to (i) and (ii) above, other matters as are necessary to comprehensively and systematically promote the policies regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation.

Furthermore, Article 8-3 stipulates that “As a general rule, the policies provided for in the Priority Plan on measures to address loneliness and isolation must be accompanied by specific objectives to be attained by those policies and the time frame for their attainment.”

(2) Structure of the Priority Plan

The Priority Plan will first of all, as the “II. Basic Views, etc. on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation,” having sorted the situation concerning loneliness and isolation in Japan, make arrangements in line with the provisions pertaining to the fundamental principles of the Act on Advancement with regard to the “fundamental principles of measures to address loneliness and isolation” that should be prerequisites for the matters stipulated in the Priority Plan as cited in (1) above.²

Having done so, with regard to the “fundamental plan of action” in (1) (i) above, the Priority Plan specifically stipulates the content in (1) to (4) of “3. Fundamental plan of action regarding loneliness and isolation measures” as described below.

Then with regard to (1) (ii) above, “the policies that should be comprehensively and systematically implemented by the government,” it mentions these in each of the fundamental plan of action items and also cites them as specific policies in “III. Specific Policies.”

In addition, with regard to the “specific objectives to be attained by those policies and the time frame for their attainment,” stipulated as a general rule in Article 8-3 of the Act on Advancement, the Priority Plan details each of the policies cited in “III. Specific Policies.”

[For reference] Relation to the Priority Plan prior to the promulgation of the Act on Advancement

In the period of time leading up to the promulgation of the Act on Advancement, in order for the government to unite in promoting measures to address loneliness and isolation the

² Sorted as “matters as are necessary to comprehensively and systematically promote the policies regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation” in (1) (iii) above.

Council for the Promotion of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation³ established a Priority Plan on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation (hereinafter “the Pre-Act Priority Plan”). With regard to the Pre-Act Priority Plan, while reflecting the opinions etc. of the Forum on Loneliness and Isolation⁴ and the Expert Panel on the Priority Plan on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation⁵ formulation of and amendments to measures were conducted. The Pre-Act Priority Plan also promoted measures stipulating fundamental principles and fundamental plan of action, and the Priority Plan based on the Act of Advancement is a plan that follows the same basic views.

In this way, a perspective attempting continuity and consistency with the measures approached from 2021 until the promulgation of the Act on Advancement is also important. The Priority Plan essentially takes up the framework of the fundamental principles and fundamental plan of action stipulated in the Pre-Act Priority Plan.⁶

2. Matters to be prioritized

The Priority Plan seeks to address the loneliness and isolation problem from a long-term perspective responding to change in the social environment, while at the same time compiling specific policies on measures against loneliness and isolation to be addressed in the future on a priority basis. It is essential that the relevant ministries and agencies steadily proceed with initiatives towards attaining the targets for each policy cited in “III Specific Policies.”

In the process of promoting measures to address loneliness and isolation, it is above all important that the relevant ministries and agencies, local governments and NPOs, etc. organically collaborate in line with the fundamental principles and fundamental plan of action of the Priority Plan, and comprehensively implement wide-ranging and specific initiatives. It is also essential that through these initiatives there is utter thoroughness in incorporating perspectives on measures to address loneliness and isolation in every sphere of society.

In addition, based on the width and diversity of measures to address loneliness and isolation, it has been pointed out that in the course of creating a collaborative system between all the stakeholders it is important to specify and share a blueprint of these measures.⁷

When working on measures to address loneliness and isolation there is a considerable importance in initiatives that are in line with the three perspectives of (i) developing an environment in which it is easy for people to ask for support and consult, (ii) encouraging cross-sectoral coordination to improve the synergetic effect of policies for generating bonds between people, and (iii) developing a public-private coordination platform (foundation). It is vital to promote measures while sharing among all stakeholders a blueprint (refer to Annex 1) about the initiatives in this sort of platform.

In addition, as “matters to be prioritized,” upon the opportunity afforded by the promulgation of the Act on Advancement, the following (1) to (3) may be cited. Through initiatives towards these issues the Priority Plan will aim to further strengthen and deepen measures.

³ Established according to “Regarding the Convening of the Council for the Promotion of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation” decided upon by the Prime Minister on March 12, 2021. It is chaired by the Minister in charge of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation and consists of the deputy-minister of all ministries and agencies.

⁴ Refer to Annex 2 “Major loneliness and isolation measure initiatives by the government to date,” “2. Organizing forums on loneliness and isolation.”

⁵ “Regarding the Convening of the Expert Panel on the Priority Plan on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation, established by the decision of the Chief Cabinet Secretary on March 14, 2021.

⁶ “The Opinion of the Expert Panel on the Priority Plan on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation Regarding Matters that should be Incorporated in the Newly Formulated Priority Plan” states that “The newly formulated Priority Plan too should follow ‘2. Fundamental Principles on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation’ in the current plan in order to ensure continuity and consistency with the Act.”

⁷ Pointed out at a hearing held in Saitama Prefecture by the 1st Meeting of the Council for the Promotion of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation on May 14, 2024.

(1) Support for local governments and NPOs, etc.

- The government will provide support to local governments at the stage of their establishment of local Public-Private Coordination Platforms for Loneliness and Isolation Measures, which serve as the foundation for the coordination among public, private and private-NPO sectors (Article 11 of the Act Advancement), and Local Councils for Loneliness and Isolation Measures (Article 15 of the Act on Advancement) by offering them accompaniment and support and introducing cases in which diverse members are involved.
- Concerning support for the activities of NPOs, etc. that work on measures to address loneliness and isolation, for the time being continuous support will be provided each year, while the scale and content of the emergency support measures⁸ implemented in March 2021 will be examined for their enhancement and expansion according to new needs.
- The government will implement support for local governments and NPOs, etc. (including intermediary support organizations that aid NPOs) using the Grants for Loneliness and Isolation Measure Promotion established in the initial budget for FY2024. In addition, it will be borne in mind that there are organizations that operate across wide geographical areas, and support for measures to address loneliness and isolation corresponding to local circumstances will be provided by increasing awareness of and laterally expanding the examples of the establishment of the local Public-Private Coordination Platforms for Loneliness and Isolation Measures, and the examples of the activities of NPOs and other intermediary support organizations conducting wide-area activities (including cases of coordination with basic municipalities).

(2) Strengthening of initiatives aimed at preventing states of loneliness and isolation

- Loneliness and isolation are not matters that should be left to those suffering to help themselves out of, they are problems that society as a whole must respond to. Furthermore, it is important for a perspective of preventing states of loneliness and isolation before the anxieties and troubles of people become severe and complex.
- Looked at from this perspective, towards the realization of “a society where it is easy for people to ask for support and be approached, and demand help even when they fall in to loneliness and isolation” and in order to attempt to permeate and create an understanding and momentum throughout society regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation, educational activities will be promoted regarding the problem of loneliness and isolation such as concentrated publicity and awareness initiatives including making the May of each year “Loneliness and Isolation Prevention Month.”
- It is of extreme importance from the prevention perspective too that with regard to the loneliness and isolation problem the general public are equipped with knowledge (for example, the fact that changes to the social structure is making our society one of ‘weak bonds’ in which it is becoming easier to fall into loneliness and isolation, that changes in the living and working environments etc. mean anyone can become affected by loneliness and isolation, and that falling into loneliness and isolation is not a matter of individual responsibility), that they take an interest in those around them, and that they support troubled people where possible. Therefore, attempts will be made to encourage and spread the fostering of “Tsunagari Supporters,” which will be implemented in earnest from FY2024.

(3) Promotion of initiatives through evidence-based evaluation and verification of policies stipulated in the Priority Plan

- In line with Article 8-3 of the Act on Advancement, with regard to the policies stipulated in the Priority Plan they shall in principle stipulate specific objectives to be attained by those policies and the time frame for their attainment. In order to do so, with regard to each of the

⁸ Decided upon at the Ministerial Meeting on Emergency Response Measures for Non-Regular Workers and Others Affected by the Novel Coronavirus (March 16, 2021).

policies stated in “III. Specific Policies” these policies will to the greatest possible extent stipulate specific objectives and the time frame for their attainment from a perspective of measures to address loneliness and isolation.

- In the course of setting these objectives, it is important that they are accompanied by narratives⁹ illustrating in what way each policy will aim to contribute to the relief of loneliness and isolation, that attainment objectives for initiatives are set with easily understood outputs, and that an evaluation perspective for assessing inter-policy collaboration is maintained. Furthermore, since it is vital that there is continuity in measures to address loneliness and isolation, rather than just measuring necessity for policy based on numbers of users it is essential that attention is paid to using these numbers in considerations of ways to improve the nature of policy.
- The government will continue through evidence-based evaluations and verifications of the state of each policy to seek the promotion of initiatives. In addition, the government will continue with examinations regarding the collection of evidence and evaluation and verification indicators for these evaluations and verifications. Furthermore, the government will strive to collect evidence and provide information regarding effective support methods and effective measurements as measures to address loneliness and isolation.

⁹ This means to explain in an easy-to-understand manner in a story format what changes are expected as a result of the initiatives.

II. Basic Views, etc. on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation

1. The state regarding loneliness and isolation in Japan

As globalization spreads, in Japan the previously long-established Japanese-type employment practices of lifelong employment, the seniority wage system and mass recruitment of new graduates are changing, and the employment environment has vastly transformed with an increase in non-regular employment workers such as part-time, fixed-term employment and dispatch workers.

In addition, due to the rapid progress of the infotech society accompanying the diffusion of the internet etc., the living environment of Japanese citizens has also rapidly changed.

Furthermore, dramatic changes in the social environment such as the further decline in Japan's population, the declining birthrate and aging population, growth of the nuclear family, people remaining unmarried or marrying later in life and the growing number of single households and single elderly households arising against this backdrop have advanced. Interpersonal relations and bonds supporting local society such as local ties and blood relationships have continued to become weaker and weaker.

These changes in the employment and living environment, families and local society have, against a background of diversified types of employment and a growing income gap, led to a decline in the opportunities for people to share problems and mutually support each other through interaction in the workplace, at home and in the community. In the midst of a situation in which society is becoming a place where it is difficult to create bonds and interpersonal relationships with each other, it is thought that our society has turned into one that engenders in people a sense of difficulty in living and loneliness and isolation.

This situation is, according for example to the United Nations World Happiness Report, reflected in the fact that in recent years Japan has been placed in the lowest group of G7 nations in terms of indicators relating to social capital such as "social support (If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?)"

Furthermore, it is considered that the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic that transformed Japanese society made the latent loneliness and isolation problem even more tangible, or served to further worsen it, in a society that was already prone to loneliness and isolation due to the hitherto changes in the social environment.¹⁰

Even after the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has now finished, it can hardly be said that the loneliness and isolation problem has gone away. In fact, a nationwide survey to grasp the actual situation of loneliness and isolation conducted in 2023 found that although the degree varies around 80% of people feel a sense of loneliness, and this trend is not much different from the results of the same survey in 2021 and 2022.¹¹

¹⁰ The fact that people spent more time at home with their families due to the voluntary restraint on going out brought families closer together, but at the same time it is also expected that family relationships deteriorated for those who had not been on good terms with each other, and that not a few people felt suffocated. This might be one of the reasons for the following figures: (i) the number of suicides increased for the first time in 11 years, reaching 21,081 in 2020, up 912 from the previous year (of which 7,026 were female, up 935 from the previous year, and 499 were elementary, lower/upper secondary school students, up 100 from the previous year, the highest number ever recorded); (ii) the number of consultations at Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centers reached a record high (129,491) in FY2020; (iii) the number of child abuse cases handled by Child Guidance Centers totaled 205,044 in FY2020 (up 11,264 from the previous year), (iv) The number of children who were truant from school among long-term absentees from elementary and lower secondary schools totaled 196,127 in FY2020 (up 14,855 from 181,272 in the previous year).

¹¹ In the nationwide survey to ascertain the actual state of loneliness and isolation actual situation, the answers to the question "To what extent do you feel lonely?"

2021: 4.5% "Often or always", 14.5% "Sometimes", 17.4% "Occasionally", 38.9% "Rarely", 23.7% "Never".

2022: 4.9% "Often or always", 15.8% "Sometimes", 19.6% "Occasionally", 40.6% "Rarely", 18.4% "Never".

2023: 4.8% "Often or always", 14.8% "Sometimes", 19.7% "Occasionally", 41.4% "Rarely", 17.9% "Never".

While it is expected that in the future there will be an increase in the number of single households and single elderly people households in Japan, there is grave concern about the worsening of the loneliness and isolation problem.

It is essential that the government continues to ceaselessly examine the requisite policies and appropriately respond to the loneliness and isolation problem latent in Japanese society.

Moreover, with regard to social issues that have recently drawn interest, this background of the loneliness and isolation problem has been pointed out. For example, abuse (“overdoses”) of OTC medicines¹² is becoming a problem particularly among young people, and according to conclusions of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare’s Review Meeting on the Medicine Sales System (January 12, 2024 Review Meeting on the Medicine Sales System) “It has been pointed out social instability is behind the abuse of OTC medicines by young people, and the prevention of medicine abuse could contribute to measures against suicide and social isolation.”

In addition, the number of single households and single elderly person households is increasing with the progression of the aging society and nuclear family. The daily life issue of support for the decision-making of single elderly person households has been pointed out, and it is important that the relevant ministries and agencies coordinate and examine initiatives.

It is imperative that the government, in addition to steadily promoting measures to address loneliness and isolation, also ceaselessly examines and implements the requisite measures in close collaboration with the relevant ministries and agencies regarding these new issues relating to the loneliness and isolation problem.

¹² OTC stands for “Over The Counter,” and in the “Summary of the Review Meeting on the Sales System of Pharmaceuticals,” it is stated that “OTC medicines (pharmaceuticals requiring guidance and non-prescription pharmaceuticals) are intended to be used at the consumer’s choice based on information provided by pharmacists, etc.

2. Fundamental principles on measures to address loneliness and isolation

The following states the fundamental principles that should be placed as prerequisites in the course of stipulating the fundamental plan of action for measures to address loneliness and isolation.

Article 2 of the Act on Advancement stipulates the following three fundamental principles as the basic views on the duties¹³ to be performed by the national government and local governments as per Article 3 and Article 4 of the Act.

- (i) It is important to advance measures to address loneliness and isolation across all societal sectors, recognizing that the issues faced by persons experiencing loneliness and isolation are a problem for society as a whole, based on the understanding that any person can potentially be in such a state at any point in life and the issues faced by persons experiencing that state due to changes in society are severe; (Article 2-1)
- (ii) In light of the diverse cause and manifestation of loneliness and isolation, it is essential to provide continuous support tailored to the unique circumstances of persons experiencing such states, including their family members (referred to below as "concerned parties"); (Article 2-2)
- (iii) It is essential to provide necessary support to the concerned parties with the objective of enabling them to escape their loneliness and isolation and lead a smoother daily and social life, by fostering their interactions with society and others in accordance with their preferences (Article 2-3).

In line with these fundamental principles of the Act on Advancement, in order to promote the various policies based on the fundamental plan of action stipulated in the Priority Plan, the following fundamental principles will be specifically followed.

(1) Responding to loneliness and isolation throughout the society (related to Article 2-1)

Any person can potentially be in a state of loneliness and isolation at any point in life, and speaking up and asking for help or relying on others is necessary for people in order to protect themselves, and should not be criticized.

Furthermore, loneliness and isolation are not the personal problems¹⁴ of those experiencing them. It is the changes in the social environment that have led to them being forced to feel a sense of loneliness and isolation. Loneliness and isolation are not problems that should be left up to the concerned parties to help themselves, and since in fact there are instances in which they cannot discuss their problems with family members, etc.,¹⁵ loneliness and isolation are problems that need to be addressed by society as a whole.

¹³ The provisions of the Act on Advancement pertaining to the responsibilities of the national government and local governments are as follows:

(Responsibility of the National Government)

Article 3 The national government is responsible for establishing and implementing policies regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation, pursuant to the fundamental principles specified in the preceding Article (referred to as "fundamental principles" in the following Article and Article 6).

(Responsibility of Local Governments)

Article 4 Each local government is responsible for establishing and implementing policies regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation which reflect the circumstances of the concerned parties, within their jurisdiction in coordination with the national government and other local governments, pursuant to the fundamental principles.

¹⁴ The following groups of people are currently considered to have loneliness and isolation problems or to be vulnerable to loneliness and isolation to some extent: persons in need, "hikikomori" (persons who are withdrawn), persons with mental health problems, pregnant and childbearing women, parents during child-rearing period, single parents, persons with various difficulties and concerns such as unwanted retirement or loss of income, victims of domestic violence, children and young people, students, pupils/students of truancy, lower secondary school graduates and upper secondary school dropouts who are not working, elderly persons who live alone, job seekers, middle-aged and older persons, persons who were in social care, wrongdoers and ex-convicts, persons with drug addiction, persons abusing non-prescription pharmaceuticals, crime victims, disaster victims, persons with physical or mental disabilities, persons with hearing loss, patients with intractable diseases, foreign nationals, Japanese nationals living abroad, caregivers, LGBTQ persons, etc. However, since any person can potentially be in a state of loneliness and isolation, the target population of measures to address loneliness and isolation is all citizens.

¹⁵ "Family members, etc." includes, for example, friends and acquaintances of the person suffering from loneliness and isolation.

In addition, the state of loneliness and isolation arising from relationships with society, which can be described as “relational poverty,” is accompanied by pain and suffering, and with fears about its serious impact¹⁶ upon mental and physical health as well as financial poverty, there a need to be aware that loneliness and isolation are problems that can affect life itself.

In general, “loneliness” is a subjective concept that describes a mental state of feeling all alone, and the word is used in a way that includes feelings of sadness.¹⁷ On the other hand, isolation is an objective concept describing a state of little or no bonds with society or help.

Regarding the conceptually different but mutually related problem of loneliness and isolation it is considered that:

- There are cases in which people have few social connections and are “isolated” while also suffering from instability, anxiety and sadness, and are “lonely”
- There are cases in which people have a certain amount of social connections and are not “isolated” but suffer from instability, anxiety and sadness, and are “lonely”
- There are cases in which people have few social connections and are “isolated” but do not suffer from any instability, anxiety and sadness and are thus not “lonely,” (though it should be noted that even in such cases it is conceivable that their families or the people around them are struggling with various difficulties.)

The situations in which those parties concerned with loneliness and isolation find themselves placed vary considerably, as do the ways in which different people feel or perceive loneliness and isolation.

It is thus that with regard to the varied forms of the loneliness and isolation problem, instead of approaching them through a given structure according to a blanket definition there is a need to perceive both loneliness and isolation as an integral matter and make responses through diverse approaches and methods corresponding to the particular circumstances of the concerned parties. Based on this discussion, the Act on Advancement defines the “state of loneliness and isolation” In Article 1 as a state “faced by individuals suffering mental or physical harm due to experiencing loneliness in their daily lives or lives in society or isolation from society in a situation exacerbated by societal changes that have weakened interpersonal and societal connections.”

Furthermore, there is also a requirement to promote initiatives from the perspective of breaking the negative chain reaction of self-neglect and social exclusion arising from isolation.

Elsewhere, with regard to responding to the problem of loneliness relating to subjectivity and emotions, there is a quite naturally a requirement for the necessary responses in line with the circumstances of problems and while bearing in mind the question of individuals’ inner thoughts.

In measures to address loneliness and isolation all of the foregoing will be borne in mind and with those in states of “unwanted loneliness”¹⁸ and “isolation” as the targeted parties concerned, policies will be organically connected and combined according to the state of their circumstances and the needs of the parties concerned, and initiatives promoted while continuously improving synergy. In doing so, in addition to promoting support for counselling and awareness-raising activities aimed at relieving the loneliness and isolation problem, it is important that loneliness and isolation perspectives are incorporated into the existing policies used in the daily lives and various life stages of concerned parties, and while proceeding with

¹⁶ In the U.K., studies have shown that loneliness has health hazards such as increased risk of obesity, dementia, and hypertension; weakening social connections have adverse health effects comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day; and social isolation affects health disparities.

¹⁷ In the U.K. “loneliness” has been defined as: “a subjective and unwelcome feeling which results from a mismatch in the quality and quantity of social relationships we have and those that we desire”

¹⁸ When the Priority Plan refers to “loneliness”, it refers to “unwanted loneliness.” It should be noted that the determination of “unwanted” or not must be made with caution.

the resolution of the various specific issues in each policy a structure is secured for the elimination of the loneliness and isolation problem.

Furthermore, with regard to measures to address loneliness and isolation, the perspective of “prevention,” ensuring that the loneliness and isolation problem and further problems that could emerge as extensions of it do not do so, in other words of how to create a society where loneliness and isolation do not occur is very important. It is similarly important that initiatives are pursued in order that even if people fall into states of loneliness and isolation they can return to the state that they want to as soon as possible, and it is essential that attempts are made to permeate this principle. Furthermore, in order from the perspective of “prevention” to create a society where it is easy for the concerned parties to voice support, it is essential that a society that understands social welfare and public assistance and encompasses diversity is developed.

The above will be borne in mind in measures to address loneliness and isolation, and along with initiatives to ensure the creation of “a society where not a single person suffering from loneliness and isolation is left behind,” “a society where everybody feels their self-existence and self-worthiness,” and “a society where individuals support and connect with each other,” the government will promote policies from a preventive perspective based on the results of nationwide surveys to ascertain the actual state of loneliness and isolation.

(2) Promoting policies from the standpoint of concerned parties (related to Article 2-2)

The problem of loneliness and isolation, which can affect any person at any point in life, is diverse, depending on the point in life where it occurs, and the attributes and living environments of persons experiencing such states.

The needs of the concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation and the actual circumstances, etc. of the community in which they are living are also diverse. In addition, there are some cases where some special consideration should be given when providing support, such as when it is preferable to be dealt with by the same generation or the same gender.¹⁹ There are also cases where concerned parties have various difficulties.

In order to address loneliness and isolation, the above should be taken into consideration, and policies will be promoted from the perspective and standpoint of the concerned parties. In doing so, it is necessary to understand individual life stages of persons experiencing loneliness and isolation, their attributes and living environments, and the diverse needs and circumstances, etc. to be considered, including difficult issues that are complex and intertwined with factors that cause loneliness and isolation. In addition, policies are to be promoted in a seamless, long-lasting, and detailed manner from the perspective and standpoint of the concerned parties at each point in time.

Furthermore, policies from the view of providing support, including concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation will be promoted.

(3) Promoting policies to enable people to experience interactions with society and connections between people (related to Article 2-3)

Not only the COVID-19 pandemic that restricted people's activities, but also the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, the Kumamoto Earthquake in 2016, the Noto Peninsula Earthquake in 2024 and other natural disasters that have occurred throughout Japan have reaffirmed the importance of bonds between people. They also reaffirmed the necessity and importance of initiatives and activities at the on-site level by not only relevant administrative organizations (especially local governments) but also

¹⁹ For example, there are cases where it is desirable for a person of the same generation to respond to a consultation from young people, or for a woman to respond to a consultation from a woman.

private bodies such as NPOs, etc. to rebuild the connections between people that have been lost in the community.

In addition, while the current social security system is mainly carried out through cash benefits and benefits in kind, it is also important to enhance mental support for concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation.

Considering the above, in implementing loneliness and isolation measures, it is not appropriate to formally connect or refer concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation to places where they may feel alienated. It is important for them to be able to feel a sense of connection with others in the form of being connected to "someone they can consult with" or "someone they can trust" on an equal footing. Policies will be promoted based on the idea that such a sense of "bonds" will not only solve the loneliness and isolation issues, but will also contribute to the improvement of wellbeing and the enhancement of social capital.

In addition, by including the perspective of measures to address loneliness and isolation in each and every area of society, including the community where people live in daily life, the creation of a social environment will be aimed for where a wide variety of members in society, for the benefit of all people, can build bonds between people in a gradual manner under their own choices.

Furthermore, "preventive" responses before loneliness and isolation issues become apparent²⁰, responses to issues in a wide range of related fields and causal relationships, and responses to those who do not proactively access administrative policies and initiatives may be difficult or appropriate only through policy responses by the government. Therefore, it is essential that loneliness and isolation be addressed in cooperation between government and private sectors. From the perspective of "prevention" of loneliness and isolation, it is also necessary to facilitate access to programs, including social welfare and public assistance.

While social resources differ from community to community, the organic coordination and enhancement of various policies and initiatives of the government and private sectors (public support policies and related governmental plans, and private sector initiatives to supplement the government) will be promoted to support concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation. In doing so, the results of nationwide surveys to ascertain the actual situation of loneliness and isolation should be utilized. It is effective to promote loneliness and isolation measures based on the understanding that such measures are comprehensive efforts spanning various government areas.

In addition, supporting relevant administrative organizations, especially basic municipalities, need to break down silos to establish a system that enables to promote cross-functional loneliness and isolation measures, while utilizing existing initiatives (e.g., the program to develop a multilayered support system). On top of that, they are also expected to develop and implement stable and continuous policies through mutual close coordination and collaboration with private corporations such as NPOs, Councils of Social Welfare established in all prefectures and municipalities, as well as regional organizations such as Region Management Organizations (RMO).

²⁰ For example, various "preventive" responses are envisioned for different life stages such as infancy and school age.

3. Fundamental plan of action regarding loneliness and isolation measures (fundamental plan and measures to be taken comprehensively and systematically by government)

Based on the above "2. Fundamental principles of measures to address loneliness and isolation," relevant ministries and agencies will promote loneliness and isolation measures comprehensively and systematically based on the following four fundamental plans of action.

- (1) Create a society where it is easy for people to ask for support in the event of loneliness and isolation
- (2) Connect to seamless support for counselling tailored to the situation
- (3) Create a community where people can feel bonds with each other by securing places and opportunities to care and interact with each other
- (4) Provide meticulous support for NPOs, etc. working on loneliness and isolation measures, and strengthen coordination between the public, private and NPO sectors

(1) Creating a society where it is easy for people to ask for support

Because some people do not receive support due to feelings of "hesitation" or "shame" even when experiencing loneliness and isolation, it is important to create an environment where concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation can easily ask for support, or where people around them can recognize and cope with the situation.

From this perspective, the following initiatives will be made.

(i) Ascertainment of the actual situation of loneliness and isolation

Ascertaining the actual situation of loneliness and isolation will be promoted in order to help the effective implementation of policies concerning loneliness and isolation measures; evaluation and verification of the implementation status of the policies; consideration of the ideal form of policies; and information sharing with the stakeholders which is necessary for the implementation of them. At the same time, the accumulation and development of data, international comparisons, and academic research related to loneliness and isolation will be promoted. Furthermore, consideration will be continued to ascertain the actual situation of deaths in loneliness and isolation.

The results of nationwide surveys to ascertain the actual situation of loneliness and isolation will be used to analyze the factors leading to loneliness and isolation (e.g., the age and attributes of those who have a high percentage of "often or always feel a sense of loneliness" against the background of changes in the social environment, events they experienced before experiencing loneliness) and policies will also be promoted from the perspective of "prevention" of loneliness and isolation and further issues that may arise from them.

(ii) Establishment of a portal site that offers comprehensive support information and timely information provision

In order to provide concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation with comprehensive and necessary support information on loneliness and isolation in a timely manner, access to such information will be improved. Specifically, efforts will be made for continuous and integrated information provision via portal sites and SNS; development of a 24-hour consultation system; development of a one-stop consultation point system (telephone, SNS, etc.) to connect to various support policies and a system to smoothly connect to appropriate local support; push-type information provision; and provision in various languages, etc.

(iii) Environmental development in which it is easy for people to ask for support and be approached

Any person can potentially experience loneliness and isolation at any point in life. In reality, however, there are people with loneliness and isolation who do not receive support due to feelings of "hesitation" or "shame" – they are "not wanting to rely on others or the system,"

"not wanting to be a burden to others," or "not wanting others to know the situation." In addition, there are also people who do not receive support under the current "application-based" system, saying "I do not know about the support system. I didn't think I was eligible to receive support." In addition, there are cases where concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation have other difficulties.

Therefore, it is necessary to create an environment where concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation can easily ask for support, or where people around them can recognize and cope with the situation (i.e., where people can easily listen to and pick up their voices and speak to them).

Asking for support, relying on others, and consulting someone as soon as possible are natural actions in this age; they are good and necessary for one's own protection as well as for the good of society and community. With these factors in mind, especially at the stage of full-fledged implementation of loneliness and isolation measures, it is important to foster and raise the understanding, awareness and momentum of each and every citizen in society as a whole and to make it easier for concerned parties and others to voice their needs for support, as well as to make the support system widely known. In order to achieve them, the following initiatives should be promoted: further information provision; intensive publicity and activities to raise people's awareness during "Loneliness and Isolation Prevention Month" in May every year; verification of the system; education to foster "the ability to live together" from childhood²¹; and cultivation of a culture where people can easily consult someone if problems arise through education and awareness-raising activities in schools, communities, and workplaces from childhood or young age; creation of rich human relationships²²; and environmental development to enable people around them to recognize and cope with concerned parties.

In addition, approach outreach-type support and other approaches to parties concerned, and "accompanying-type" support will be promoted. Concrete initiatives will be implemented in line with the results of the study by Subcommittee 1 of the Public-Private Coordination Platform for Loneliness and Isolation Measures (October 7, 2022), while also utilizing the results of nationwide surveys to ascertain the actual state of loneliness and isolation²³.

(2) Connecting to seamless support for counselling tailored to the situation

The problem of loneliness and isolation is diverse, depending on the point in life where it occurs, the attributes and living environments of persons experiencing such states. With this in mind, and while understanding their diverse needs and circumstances, etc. to be considered, it is important to promote policies in a seamless, long-lasting, and detailed manner from the perspective and standpoint of the concerned parties.

From this perspective, the following initiatives will be made.

(i) Improvement of support system for counselling (promotion of 24-hour consultation by telephone and SNS, etc.)

²¹ Education that fosters "the ability to live together" means to provide opportunities in school education, social education, as well as in collaborative settings between school education and social education to understand how to engage with diverse people and communities and recognize diverse ways of life, to develop communication skills to respect oneself and others, to learn about social security including how to use it, and to learn about local society welfare, etc.

²² Refers to the building of relationships through school education, social education, family education and connections in the local community.

²³ In the Public-Private Coordination Platform for Loneliness and Isolation Measures, subcommittees have been established for each topic to address loneliness and isolation-related issues, share the current situation and issues, and discuss measures. Subcommittee 1 discusses the ideal manner of initiatives aimed at a "society in which it is easy for people to ask for support and be approached".

In order to ensure that concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation receive seamless, long-lasting, and meticulous support for counselling in accordance with their diverse needs and circumstances, etc., the development of inclusive support systems in Japan and abroad through the organic coordination of various counseling support systems and equal coordination of various consultation support organizations will be further promoted. In addition, the development of a multidimensional support system for counselling, including 24-hour support for counselling based on the features of telephones and SNS. The development of an advanced support system for counselling in which various people surrounding concerned parties are involved and professionals also play to their strengths will also be promoted.

Furthermore, efforts will be made for environmental development for full-fledged implementation of an integrated support system for counselling, such as a one-stop consultation point, etc., and a system that connects consultation to appropriate support for counselling in each region.

The results of the nationwide survey to ascertain the actual situation of loneliness and isolation showed that respondents who answered that the degree of loneliness they feel is relatively high tend to answer "I can put up with it," "I don't know how to receive support," and "The procedures to receive support are a nuisance." Based on these results, it is necessary for each consultation point to examine publicity and support structures to eliminate barriers to access systems and consultation organizations and to consider initiatives to reduce the burden of procedures by simplifying applications for support, making them online, introducing automated tools, etc., and making constant efforts to improve their operation.

(ii) Support for human resource development, etc.

In order to provide full support for counselling to concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation in accordance with their various situations, while taking into consideration the psychological burden of each individual counselling, relevant organizations will promote to secure (including improvement of working environment) the training and improvement of the quality of human resources who provide support for counselling on loneliness and isolation. In doing so, it is also necessary to devise ways to enable them to acquire knowledge on loneliness and isolation and expertise in multiple fields, such as welfare, healthcare and education (including acquisition of qualifications in multiple fields).

In addition, in order to reduce the psychological burden on human resources providing support for counselling and to help prevent such human resources from causing stigma²⁴ support for them will also be promoted.

Furthermore, the results of the nationwide survey to ascertain the actual state of loneliness and isolation showed that groups with a high sense of loneliness, such as young people, were more likely to respond positively to proactively providing care help to people in need around them, and that it is necessary to respond to those who feel hurdles in taking consultation at a consultation point. Based on these results, it is also important for the national government to promote and disseminate activities to train the general public around concerned parties as "Tsunagari Supporters" at the local government level, as an activity to increase the number of people who can understand the problem of loneliness and isolation.

(3) Creating communities where people can feel connected to each other by securing

²⁴ In this context, "stigma" means a condition in which the idea of being in a state of loneliness and isolation is entrenched as shameful, and to avoiding facing one's own loneliness and isolation problems and the pain it causes.

places opportunities to care and interact with each other

As changes in social structures have led to a weakening of connections between people in the family, community and workplace, etc., it is important for concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation to be able to feel a sense of connection with others in the form of being connected to someone they can consult with or someone they can trust on an equal footing.

From this perspective, the following initiatives will be made.

(i) Secure places where people can feel bonds with others

Places where diverse bonds will be created for the purpose of human interaction in daily living environments will provide opportunities for concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation depending on their stage of life and attributes to connect with others in their immediate community and have their own roles, as well as to casually talk and consult with one another and lead to early responses, thereby contributing to the formation and maintenance of the local community. While focusing on the perspective of "prevention," the creation of various types of such places that can help build loose bonds in various fields of daily life, visualization of these places, initiatives to increase the number of human resources to achieve them, as well as independent and volunteer activities by citizens will be promoted.²⁵ At the same time, ways of support that are easy for NPOs, etc. to use will also be considered.

In addition, in implementing loneliness and isolation measures, the creation of these various kinds of places for bonding itself and initiatives to connect such places with administrative counseling offices will be evaluated as policies, their effective operation will be promoted, and the necessary measures for these will be examined.

(ii) Establishment of an outreach-type support system

An outreach-type support system that takes into consideration the intentions and circumstances, etc. of concerned parties suffering from loneliness and isolation who are unable to voice support will be promoted to ensure that support is provided to them. At the same time, ways of support that are easy for NPOs, etc. to use will also be considered.

(iii) Promotion of cross-sectoral coordination to enhance the synergetic effect of policies and create bonds between people

In promoting measures to address loneliness and isolation, which can occur to any person at any point in life, it is a prerequisite that the various policies to create bonds between people developed by relevant ministries and agencies be implemented in a coordinated manner. However, due to silos of administrative organizations, it is difficult to coordinate various policies in each region. Therefore, recognizing that measures to address loneliness and isolation can serve as a catalyst or nodal point for coordinating policies in each region, and that a synergetic effect of policies through measures to address loneliness and isolation is possible, an environment will be developed where policies to create social connections between people in the region will be smoothly delivered to concerned parties who need them. Specifically, efforts will be made for the promotion of the use of so-called "social prescriptions"; cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary coordination in healthcare, medical care, nursing care, welfare, education, etc.; promotion of involvement of diverse members to enhance comprehensive programs for care prevention and daily life support; coordination across generations and fields to realize a regionally cohesive society; and the use of urban parks and natural parks as well as social education facilities such as museums, community

²⁵ Suggestions from the national Public-Private Coordination Platform for Loneliness and Isolation Measures during the interview session held on May 14, 2024 at the first meeting of the Council for the Promotion of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation

centers, and libraries as “places for bonds” to address social and local society issues. In doing so, the implementation of measures by private enterprises will be promoted to address loneliness and isolation through their business activities, thereby engaging in coordination.

(iv) Promotion of inclusive support system in the region

Various support systems will be promoted for concerned parties suffering from the problems of loneliness and isolation, or who are prone to loneliness and isolation, including continuous and emergency support by local professionals; support for connecting them to local communities where persons with loneliness and isolation can make their own choices and find their own roles (general counselling, case conferences, employment support, support for those released from prison, etc.); support for moving between communities such as workplaces and households (job change support, vocational training, support for victims of domestic violence, support for young women, etc.).

In addition, with the coordination and cooperation of local stakeholders²⁶ an inclusive support system that places the concerned parties at the center will be promoted by organically coordinating initiatives in each field, such as coordination between welfare, healthcare and education (for example, a system to identify problems early on using the child's school as a starting point or base and connect them to the community-wide support), and coordination between welfare and healthcare, medical care, employment and work, child-rearing and housing. At the same time, the initiatives for the housing safety net will be strengthened under such coordination. In addition, considerations will be made of the creation of a mechanism to coordinate information and data on education, healthcare, welfare, etc. in a cross-sectoral manner to ascertain children and families who potentially need support and offer push-type and outreach-type support.

Furthermore, in order to build an inclusive support system for concerned parties in the community, the multilayered support system development programs will be utilized to promote community development where people can feel connected with each other at the level of elementary school districts, community associations, etc., according to the actual circumstances of the community. At the same time, environmental development will be promoted to deepen the understanding of loneliness and isolation among local stakeholders, as well as community development that enables people to feel bonds with each other through social education.

With the expected increase in the number of elderly persons living alone, the number of businesses that provide services such as fidelity guarantees, daily life support, and postmortem affairs based on contracts ("lifetime support businesses for elderly persons") is increasing. Since these businesses are characterized by the fact that they include postmortem services and that the contract terms are long, there is a high need for protecting users and ensuring appropriate operations by the businesses. Therefore, the "Guidelines for Lifetime Support Businesses for Elderly Persons" were established through coordination by relevant ministries and agencies. Going forward, the guidelines will be disseminated, and necessary revisions of related systems will be considered to support decision-making, etc. for elderly persons who have no relatives.

(4) Provision of meticulous support for NPOs, etc. working on measures to address loneliness and isolation, and strengthen coordination between the public, private and

²⁶ Refers to specialized organizations and professionals in healthcare, medical care, welfare, etc., social welfare corporations, social welfare councils, corporations for offender rehabilitation, schools and education-related persons, NPOs, community organizations, commissioned welfare volunteers/child welfare volunteers, volunteer probation officers, administrative counselors, community social workers, life-support coordinators, gatekeepers (people who recognize those in distress, talk to them, listen to them, connects them to necessary support, and watches over them), other volunteers, etc.

NPO sectors

It is important that measures to address loneliness and isolation be promoted not only by the national government, but also by local governments, NPOs, etc. that support concerned parties, and local residents surrounding them, while mutually seeking coordination or collaboration with each other.

From this perspective, the following initiatives will be made.

(i) Meticulous support for NPOs, etc. working on measures to address loneliness and isolation

In promoting measures to address loneliness and isolation, NPOs, etc. that provide support to concerned parties experiencing such states are important and indispensable. Therefore, meticulous support to NPOs, etc. working on measures to address loneliness and isolation (including human resource development) will be provided in a stable and continuous manner. Support will also be provided so that local stakeholders can work in coordination and cooperation with each other. In addition, insights gained from pioneering initiatives to create places where people can feel bonds, etc. identified through the national government's model survey on measures to address loneliness and isolation, etc. will also be proactively provided to NPOs, etc.

(ii) Promotion of dialogue with NPOs, etc.

In order to make measures to address loneliness and isolation more effective in line with the needs of concerned parties, the public and private sectors will work together to promote measures to address loneliness and isolation through dialogue with NPOs, etc. (information sharing on the actual situation in the field, etc., and reflecting their recommendations in policies).

In addition, when it is necessary for NPOs, etc. to promote support for concerned parties, information will be shared with NPOs, etc. and local governments on prior cases concerning the handling of personal information (e.g., sharing of personal information of those supported by NPOs, etc. between administrative organizations and NPOs, etc. based on the consent of the persons concerned.), while also taking into consideration the intentions of concerned parties.

(iii) Formation of a platform as a foundation of coordination

It is difficult for support organizations such as NPOs, etc. to deal with the problem of loneliness and isolation on their own. In light of this, from the perspective of strengthening coordination among private-sector initiatives as well as among initiatives among public, private and NPO sectors, the public and private sectors will work together to address loneliness and isolation by promoting the activities of a nationwide platform that will serve as a foundation of coordination for various counseling support organizations and NPOs, etc., while creating a community where people can feel connected with each other and building a momentum in society as a whole.

In addition, pursuant to Article 11 of the Act on Advancement, local governments are also expected to make efforts to form a platform that will serve as a foundation for public-private coordination. The establishment of this platform will make it possible to share and clarify the problem of loneliness and isolation in the region among stakeholders, and to connect supporters in coordination with each other to consider and promote measures to address loneliness and isolation in the region. Platforms can be established in a variety of ways in line with the actual circumstances of the region. For example, a wide-area platform could be set up in a prefecture, involving municipalities within the prefecture, or an existing conference body could be used to set up the platform. In all of these platforms, the goal is to achieve "horizontal coordination" in which stakeholders within the platform are mutually connected on an equal basis. In addition, the national government will support these

initiatives of local governments by disseminating and laterally expanding good practices in which diverse members are involved in the platforms established by local governments.²⁷

As a support for establishing the Local Councils for Loneliness and Isolation Measures pursuant to Article 15 of the Act on Advancement, examples of local governments that have responded promptly after the implementation of the Act will be compiled and disseminated (the use of existing conference bodies and the inclusion of support members outside the welfare sector as constituent organizations, etc.) so that they can be laterally expanded.

In forming a public-private coordination foundation, it should be noted that not only broadening of the scope of public and private initiatives but also diversification of the private sector members engaging in the coordination are important. In addition, private enterprises should be encouraged to engage in coordination in the form of addressing measures to address loneliness and isolation through their business activities.²⁸

The ideal operation of the local Public-Private Coordination Platforms for Loneliness and Isolation Measures and Local Councils for Loneliness and Isolation measures will continue to be considered while listening to the opinions of those in the field and others.

(iv) Development of a system to promote measures to address loneliness and isolation in administrative organizations.

From the perspective of facilitating measures to address loneliness and isolation and coordination among the public, private and NPO sectors, local governments (especially basic municipalities) should promote the development of a system to promote measures to address loneliness and isolation (a system that enables cross-functional measures, etc., by breaking down silos), while utilizing existing initiatives in the local governments.

In addition, in order to support the development of support systems in local governments, including coordination and cooperation between prefectures and municipalities, and the development and improvement of policies according to the actual circumstances of each region, the national government will provide and share information on policies related to measures to address loneliness and isolation, precedents/good practices, as well as points to note that contribute to the promotion of measures in local governments, including the use of existing initiatives. In laterally expanding such cases, it is important to present the unique background and key points of the initiatives so that other local governments can refer to them with an understanding of why the cases have been effective.

²⁷ Suggestions from Ichihara City during the interview session held on May 14, 2024 at the first meeting of the Council for the Promotion of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation.

²⁸ For example, private enterprises could participate in public-private coordination while sharing necessary information at support meetings in the Multi-layered Support System Development Program (Article 106-6 of the Social Welfare Law (Law No. 45 of 1951)) and at the Local Council for Ensuring the Safety of Consumers (Article 11-3 of the Consumer Safety Act (Law No. 50 of 2009)), and private enterprises that cooperate in watching over local residents through their daily business activities could participate in public-private coordination conducted by local governments.

4. Promotion system, etc. for policies on measures to address loneliness and isolation

(1) Promotion system, etc. of the national government

Pursuant to Article 20 of the Act on Advancement, the Headquarters for Advancement of Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation was established in the Cabinet Office as a special organization. The Headquarters serves as a system to promote measures to address loneliness and isolation and is headed by the Prime Minister and consists of ministers responsible for policies of relevant ministries and agencies. The Headquarters is to function as a control tower and formulate Priority Plans on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation.

In promoting measures to address loneliness and isolation, the relevant ministries and agencies will take into account the nationwide survey results to ascertain the actual state of loneliness and isolation, new findings and opinions of stakeholders, and the status of the enforcement of the Act on Advancement. They will incorporate the perspective of measures to address loneliness and isolation as indicated in the fundamental principles and fundamental plan of action of the Priority Plan in the measures under their respective jurisdictions to improve the ease of use of their programs. Further consideration will also be given to the development of programs, policy coordination and the roles of prefectures and municipalities. In addition, in order to realize "a society where not a single person suffering from loneliness and isolation is left behind" by addressing measures against loneliness and isolation, and from the perspective of "prevention" of loneliness and isolation, further consideration will be given to the constant review of various systems.

With regard to the problem of loneliness and isolation, which the government has been working on since February 2021, not only an understanding of the actual situation and exchange of opinions with NPOs, etc., but also academic research related to loneliness and isolation are expected to make progress in the future. The national government will continue to analyze the problem of loneliness and isolation based on the results of the nationwide surveys to ascertain the actual situation of loneliness and isolation, promote data analysis related to loneliness and isolation while considering the establishment of a system to collect and utilize data from the field, accumulate and organize data, and make use of international comparison and academic research findings to constantly examine measures to address loneliness and isolation.

Based on the results of nationwide surveys to ascertain the actual situation of loneliness and isolation, and also by making use of data, international comparison and academic research findings related to loneliness and isolation, the government will evaluate and verify the policies including the Priority Plan to further promote them.

To continue to further promote measures to address loneliness and isolation, the government will also enhance coordination among relevant ministries and agencies as well as global coordination.

(2) Promotion system, etc. in the community

The coming into force of the Act on Advancement has clarified the role of local governments by establishing their responsibilities to address measures for loneliness and isolation. The specific situations of concerned parties vary widely, and the ways in which people feel and perceive loneliness and isolation vary from person to person. Therefore, in measures to address loneliness and isolation, local governments, which are closer to the residents, are expected to take actions according to the actual circumstances of each community.

In promoting measures to address loneliness and isolation by local governments, the promotion of coordination among various members in the region is expected, especially through the establishment of a coordination foundation by building the local Public-Private Coordination Platforms for Loneliness and Isolation Measures (Article 11 of the Act on

Advancement). In addition, in order to enhance coordination and collaboration necessary to promote measures to address loneliness and isolation, local governments are required to establish Local Councils for Address Loneliness and Isolation Measures (Article 15 of the Act on Advancement) in each community. It is expected that constituent organizations of the Council will share information and provide support information to concerned parties under appropriate coordination.

(3) Review of Priority plan

While continuing to listen to the opinions of local governments, Local Councils for Loneliness and Isolation Measures, and other related bodies, the Priority Plan as a whole will be reviewed as necessary. When conducting these reviews, experts will be consulted. With regard to "III. Specific Policies," evaluations and verifications based on evidence of the implementation status of each policy will be conducted every fiscal year in principle, and will be revised with additions and modifications according to the efforts of relevant ministries and agencies.

III. Specific Policies (policies specified in the Priority Plan)

This section lists individual policies of relevant ministries and agencies that are strongly related to the fundamental plan of action and should be prioritized.

On the other hand, from the perspective of "incorporating loneliness and isolation perspectives in every sphere of society" each and every policy may be incorporated in measures to address loneliness and isolation, and measures to address loneliness and isolation are not limited to those listed below.

Relevant ministries and agencies will continue to work on improving operations and developing new policies by incorporating loneliness and isolation perspectives in each and every policy, not limited to those listed below.

Translations of individual policies of relevant ministries and agencies are omitted.

(Annex 1) Initiatives for Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation (i)

Initiatives for Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation (i)
Development of an environment in which it is easy for people to ask for support and consult

- It is important in measures to address loneliness and isolation that the stigma surrounding relying on other people and systems – the perception that it is not good, the embarrassment or excessive sense of troubling other people - is removed, and the concerned parties are enabled to receive support such as consultation.
- Aiming for “a society where not a single person suffering from loneliness and isolation is left behind,” initiatives will be pursued in order to deliver the requisite support to people struggling with loneliness and isolation.

○ Concentrated publicity during Loneliness and Isolation Prevention Month (May)

○ Education through website notifications

○ Initiatives to lower the psychological hurdles of consulting (making online anonymous consulting possible, making people aware that using systems is their right)

○ One-stop consultation point system, etc. and other integrated consultation support structures

○ Making applications to use system easier and introduction of Mynaportal coordination and introduction of automatic tools etc.

○ Multilingual responses

There are supports for you.

Integrated implementation of support for counselling and community building programs

○ In order that various support bodies and centers can smoothly provide support surpassing their attributes with regard to governmental fiscal support the integrated execution will be conducted regarding the projects related to systems for the elderly, disabled, children and those living in poverty.

Current mechanisms

- Consultation and community building in the area of the elderly
- Consultation and community building in life with disability
- Consultation and community building in the area of children
- Consultation and community building in life with mental illness and living in poverty

Multi-level support structure

Implementation system for consulting and community building beyond attributes and age group

Development and publicizing of consultation support structures

Development of an environment in which it is easy to consult

Maybe I don't have to go as far as consulting or gaining support. I don't know who to consult anyway. Consultation procedures are a nuisance.

"Perhaps it's my own fault I feel lonely." I don't want others to know I'm isolated.

Any person can potentially be in a state of loneliness and isolation at any point in life

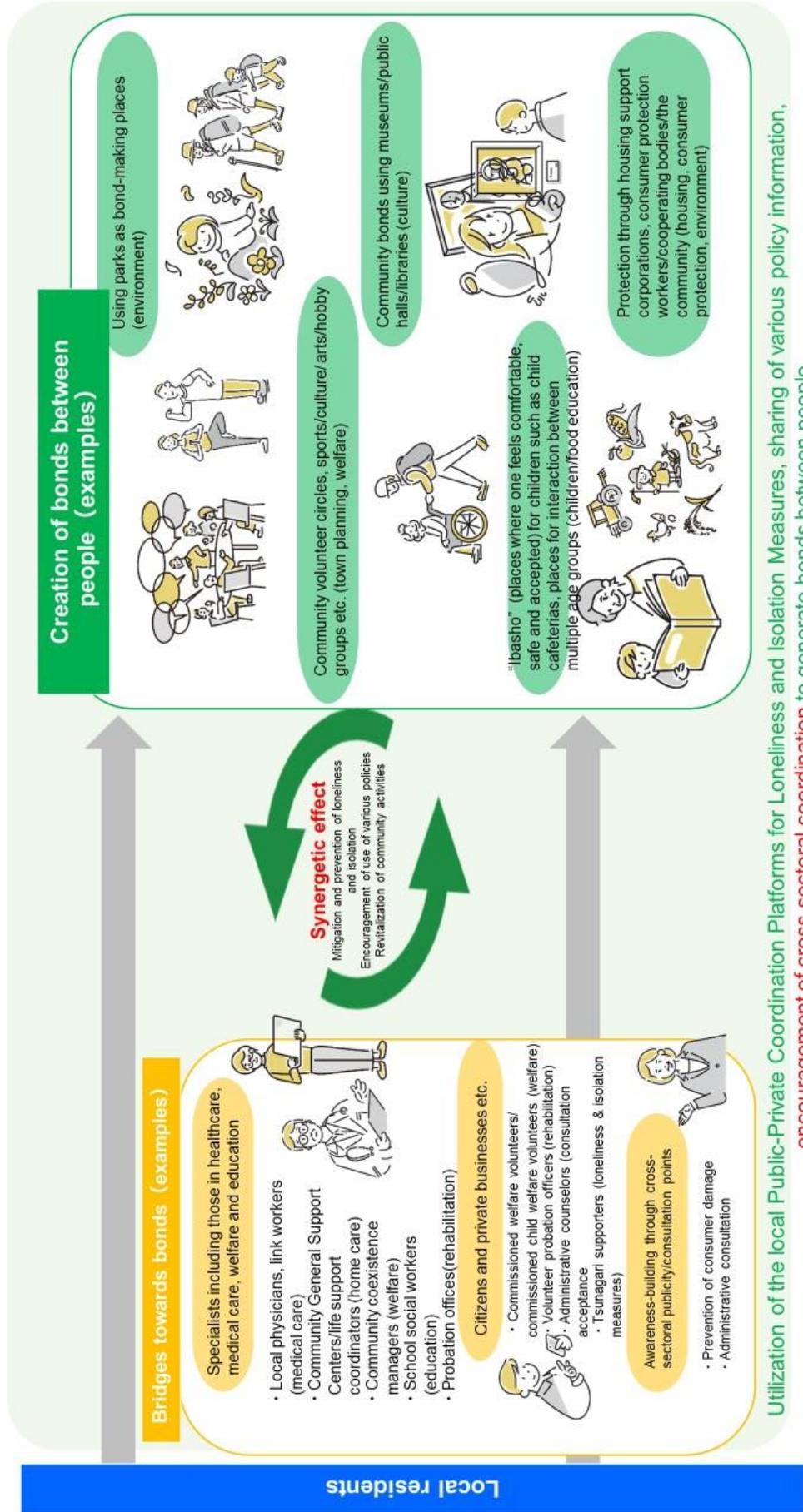
Creating a social awareness that this is an immediate issue

Development of environment in which it is easy for people to ask for support and be approached

Initiatives for Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation (ii)

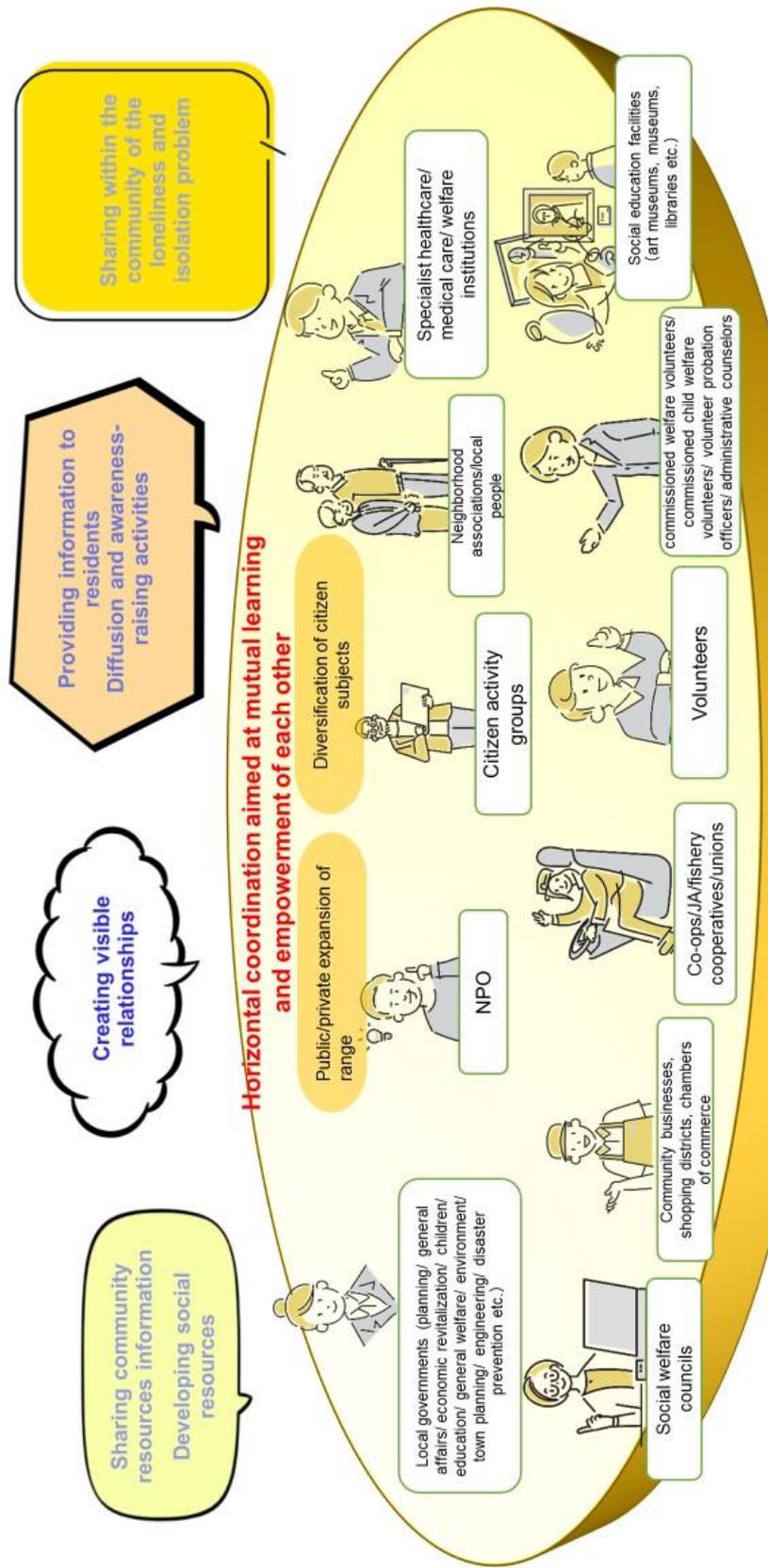
Promotion of cross-sectoral coordination to improve the synergistic effect of policies to generate bonds between people

- In promoting measures to address loneliness and isolation, which can occur to any person at any point in life, it is a prerequisite that the various policies to create bonds between people developed by relevant ministries and agencies be implemented in a coordinated manner.
- While recognizing that measures to address loneliness and isolation can serve as a catalyst or nodal point for coordinating policies in each region, and that a synergistic effect of policies through measures to address loneliness and isolation is possible, an environment will be developed where policies to create social connections between people in the region will be smoothly delivered to concerned parties who need them.



Initiatives for Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation (iii) Development of a public-private coordination platform

- In response to the fact that there are circumstances in which it is difficult for loneliness and isolation problems to be dealt with only by the government and support organizations working on their own, there is a need to strengthen coordination among private-sector initiatives as well as among initiatives among public, private and NPO sectors. In order to do so, in addition to the nationwide platform activities the establishment of public-private coordination platforms to serve as places for encouraging coordination and collaboration among public, private and NPO stakeholders will be encouraged at local governments, too.
- Since it is essential to achieve a situation in which voluntary cooperative relationships are built among the various organizations as forums for tackling social issues regardless of whether they are public or private, a "horizontal coordination" will be aimed for in which all parties are on an equal footing.



The local Public-Private Coordination Platforms for Loneliness and Isolation Measures

(Annex 2) Major loneliness and isolation measure initiatives by the government to date

1. Promotion of various policies using related budgets

- In March 2021, in coordination with related ministries and agencies, the government compiled emergency support measures for various NPOs, etc. working on measures to address loneliness and isolation. The content includes (i) livelihood support, etc. and suicide prevention measures, (ii) food bank support and aid in providing foodstuffs to children's cafeterias, etc., (iii) creating "ibasho" (places where one feels comfortable, safe and accepted) for children, (iv) close counselling support for women, and (v) assistance for NPOs, etc. working on housing support.

In March of the same year, the government announced its response to "period poverty" by utilizing the counselling support for women and the "ibasho" creation program, both of which were included in the emergency support measures.

- In the FY2022 budget and the FY2021 supplementary budget the government decided to provide stable and continuous support to NPOs, etc. working on measures to address loneliness and isolation, while expanding and strengthening the parties who are subject to support and the scope of schemes.
- In April 2022, based on the Comprehensive Emergency Measures to Counter Soaring Crude Oil and Other Prices, the government decided to expand support for NPOs, etc. working on measures to address loneliness and isolation to help people in need facing soaring prices, etc. amid the COVID-19 crisis.

The government also decided to promote the local Public-Private Coordination Platforms for Loneliness and Isolation Measures, promote a consultation point system (Loneliness and Isolation Consultation Call Center) for 24-hour consultation in a unified manner through coordination by related bodies, and enhance and strengthen the Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation website.

- In October 2022, based on the Comprehensive Economic Measures for Overcoming Price Increases and Revitalizing the Economy, the government decided to provide support to NPOs, etc. working on measures to address loneliness and isolation, build a model for measures to address loneliness and isolation in communities, implement the trial provision of the Loneliness and Isolation Consultation Call Center service, and strengthen publicity to realize a society where it is easy for people to ask for support.
- In the FY2023 budget and the FY2022 supplementary budget the government continued to provide support to NPOs, etc. working on measures to address loneliness and isolation, and newly built a support model, etc. for NPOs, etc. working on measures to address loneliness and isolation.
- In November 2023, based on the Comprehensive Economic Measures to Completely Break Free from Deflation, the government decided to disseminate initiatives to train the general public in becoming "Tsunagari Supporters," and strengthen awareness-raising activities during the "Loneliness and Isolation Prevention Month."
- In the FY2024 budget, the government newly established "Grants for Loneliness and Isolation Measure Promotion" and, together with the FY2023 supplementary budget, it will provide support for the establishment of public-private coordination systems in local areas and for the improvement of the operational capability of NPOs, etc.

2. Organizing forums on loneliness and isolation

- In February 2021, the Prime Minister hosted the "Emergency Forum for Preventing

Loneliness and Isolation, Understanding Anxiety and Creating Connections," which was attended by 10 participants from NPOs, etc. The forum communicated the importance of developing bonding activities in a manner that takes into consideration the prevention of COVID-19 transmission, as well as the fact that there are a variety of support measures available for people suffering from loneliness and isolation, and that it is hoped they will voice their anxieties.

- From June to November 2021, the government held a total of ten "Forums on Loneliness and Isolation" (three of them were held in regional areas) with the aim to listen directly to the voices of NPOs and so on that are actually engaged in support activities regarding loneliness and isolation, and to utilize their opinions in policy making.

3. Promotion of the Public-Private Coordination Platform for Loneliness and Isolation Measures

- In September 2021, a total of 15 intermediary support organizations that provide support to NPOs, etc. nationwide and national organizations in each field gathered to hold the first preparatory meeting to begin discussions on the platform. Subsequently, two preparatory meetings were held to discuss the structure of the platform, including a draft charter, and in February 2022, the Public-Private Coordination Platform for Loneliness and Isolation Measures was established.
- Subcommittees for each topic regarding loneliness and isolation and participants have been established within the Platform, and participants are sharing the current situation and issues, and discussing measures. Currently Subcommittees 1 to 3 have been established to discuss (i) the ideal manner of initiatives aimed at a "society in which it is easy for people to ask for support and be approached," (ii) the roles of the national/local governments, private sector, and NPOs, etc. in providing meticulous/ inclusive support in regions, and (iii) the practical mutual coordination for counselling support.

The results of the study by Subcommittee 1 and the points of interim reports by Subcommittees 2 and 3 are as follows:

(i) Results of the study by Subcommittee 1 (October 7, 2022)

Based on the results of the nationwide survey to ascertain the actual situation of loneliness and isolation conducted in 2021, issues and measures were examined from three perspectives.

(The group that does not know about the system)

- There is a need to ensure that the necessary information reaches concerned parties, and to increase the opportunities for them to access systems and information.
- Provide information in a "push-type" and "outreach" manner to strengthen preventive involvement (e.g., providing information at the time of moving in/out, or at the time of issuance of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook, etc.). Establish Loneliness and Isolation Prevention Months/Weeks, etc.

(The group that knows about the system but is unable to seek counseling)

- Lower the hurdles to seeking counseling by making the procedures for receiving support for counselling easier to understand. Create a social environment where people can consult with each other by eliminating their hesitance and self-restraint.
- Decrease the burden of the procedures by simplifying application systems and making them online. Spread awareness that the use of the system is a right. Promote coordination between administrative organizations and private bodies, etc.

(The group that is the potential recipients of consultation)

- Eliminate obstacles for those who are hesitant to increase social understanding and interest or create opportunities to get involved, or become recipients of consultation.

- Introduce cases of close practitioners. With reference to the "Dementia Supporter Caravan" program, establish a system similar to the same training courses as activities to increase the number of people who understand loneliness and isolation well. Promote existing initiatives to further train and support gatekeepers. etc.

(Other)

Accumulate good cases using the local Public-Private Coordination Platforms for Loneliness and Isolation Measures and disseminate them throughout the country, etc.

(ii) Interim report of Subcommittee 2 (November 9, 2022)

- Building a safety net measures to address loneliness and isolation means balancing efforts between "problem-solving support" and "staying connected." Regarding the situations in which such a safety net functions, not only "emergency responses" but also "responses in daily living environments" are important from the perspective of prevention and early response in measures to address loneliness and isolation. The promotion of initiatives that widely cover this area will also lead to strengthen the foundation for other areas and policies, particularly in "emergency responses".
- As a form of "responses in daily living environments," promoting "rich community development" is important in order to enable a wide variety of members, including those suffering loneliness and isolation to be involved in measures to address loneliness and isolation, foster bonds and trust, and form a community-wide safety.

(iii) Interim report of Subcommittee 3 (March 16, 2023)

- Taking into consideration the fact that concerns related to loneliness and isolation are increasingly complicated and diversified, promote the development of a consultation point system and a system for connecting counseling with support. Strengthen coordination with related bodies to ensure that various support measures steadily reach those who are suffering from such concerns.
- Develop a "one-stop" consultation point and other integrated consultation support systems that accept all kinds of problems in an integrated manner by unifying contact points with easy-to-understand numbering methods.
- It is necessary to develop the environment for full-fledged implementation based on the results of the trial program (trial program using #9999 as the unified call number) and issues (public awareness, strengthening of the consultation system, human resource development and securing, and a response to young people, etc.). In doing so, it is important to further analyze consultation data and content, and to develop the system based on the image of recipients of consultation.
- In the medium- to long-term, while taking into account the state of coordination among support organizations and the progress of consultation points in the local areas, it is desirable to consider a system where consultation calls (#9999) are connected to local consultation points and where the national government mainly focuses on consultation in specialized fields, etc. during specific periods when it is difficult for local consultation points to respond, or at times of day when consultation calls are concentrated.

4. Promotion of the local Public-Private Coordination Platforms for Loneliness and Isolation Measures

- In order to respond to the increasing support needs due to the prolonged COVID-19 crisis and soaring prices, the government will support the development of a platform in several regions with different actual circumstances, thereby swiftly strengthening coordination. At the same time, it will develop a model for effective coordination according to actual circumstances in each region and promote the nationwide spread of the coordination platform.

In FY2022, a total of 29 organizations (12 prefectures and government-designated cities and 17 municipalities excluding government-designated cities), and in FY2023, a total of 15 organizations (five prefectures and government-designated cities and 10 municipalities excluding government-designated cities) worked on the promotion of the local Public-Private Coordination Platforms for Loneliness and Isolation Measures.

5. Trial implementation of Loneliness and Isolation Consultation Call Center

- In order to facilitate access to consultation points and to ensure prompt response to consultation needs, NPOs and other related bodies are coordinating to implement on a trial basis the "Loneliness and Isolation Consultation Call Center," a unified 24-hour consultation point system, and projects to strengthen coordination between consultation and support with the cooperation of relevant ministries and agencies, telecommunications businesses, local governments, police, and independence support organizations.

In this initiative, those with a problem call "#9999," select a field of concern through voice guidance, and are connected to an appropriate consultation point, and if necessary, are contacted by local support organizations. So far, the system has been implemented on a trial basis from July 7 to 14, 2022, August 30 to September 6, December 1, December 28 to January 4, 2023, December 15 to January 4, 2024, and May 2 to 7, 2024. In May 2024, e-mail-based consultations and consultations in the metaverse were also conducted on a trial basis.

6. Enriching the provision of information

- The "You are not Alone" information provision website that is aimed at people suffering from loneliness and isolation and integrates the various systems regarding loneliness and isolation and places for consultation has been established, and through a chatbot (automatic response system) provides information on the appropriate support systems and consultation available for people wishing to discuss their problems. A preliminary website aimed at those aged 18 or younger was launched first in August 2021 and a site for general users in November 2021.
- From February to June 2022 the "You are not alone – let's speak up, let's talk" campaign was implemented. In order to spread the idea that "any person can potentially be in a state of loneliness and isolation, and it's fine to talk about it," and in order to create a mature social awareness based on an environment in which it is easy for people to ask for support and people around those struggling with loneliness and isolation can speak to them and accept them, a variety of events have been held such as the "You are not Alone Café" (an online video sharing site program in which the Minister in charge of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation invites guests to speak about their experiences).
- With regard to the "You are not Alone" website, it has since March 2023 been made available in ten languages, and since May 2023 through a coordination with the Mynportal application's "Pittari Service" users are connected to the information on procedures for support systems in the municipalities where they reside based on chatbot use results. Furthermore, in collaboration with mobile phone carriers the "You are not Alone" service is introduced to people who are behind with their mobile phone payments, and a push-type information provision initiative has been launched.
- The "Don't worry! You are not Alone" campaign was implemented from mid-August 2023. Messages and videos were transmitted with the objective of nurturing an appreciation in society that any person can potentially be in a state of loneliness and isolation and that they are problems close to all citizens; the videos also featured an informal talk between the Minister in charge of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation and the persons in charge

at private enterprises conducting initiative that contribute to measures to address loneliness and isolation.

- In May 2024 the first “Loneliness and Isolation Prevention Month” was implemented based on the results of the study by Subcommittee 1 of the Public-Private Coordination Platform for Loneliness and Isolation Measures. With the objective of improving understanding and awareness about the loneliness and isolation problem across the whole of society, a variety of initiatives were conducted in coordination with the nationwide local governments and related bodies such as awareness-building activities using publicity posters etc. In addition, a special Loneliness and Isolation Prevention Month backup website and “Plat-verse” metaverse space were opened, information about loneliness and isolation problems and the initiatives of involved bodies were summarized on the webpages, and various events containing content contributing to education about the problems and promotion of measures were hosted on the metaverse. Furthermore, since May is a period in which it is common for people to become anxious due to new lifestyles and the extended Golden Week holiday, during part of the time from May 2 to May 7 a consultation point was experimentally set up in a metaverse for those struggling with worries.

7. Initiatives towards the nurturing of Tsunagari Supporters

- Based on the results of the considerations of Subcommittee 1 of the Public-Private Coordination Platform for Loneliness and Isolation Measures: “The ideal manner of initiatives aimed at a society where it is easy for people to ask for support and be approached,” initiatives are being promoted towards the nurturing of “Tsunagari Supporters,” human resources who will be equipped with knowledge about loneliness and isolation problems, take an interest in those around them, and be able to support troubled people as far as they can in order to improve appreciation, awareness and momentum regarding loneliness and isolation across society as a whole.

In FY2023 considerations were made of the requisite curriculum for nurturing Tsunagari Supporters, and the trial implementation of Tsunagari Supporter Training Courses was implemented at five locations including local governments, private enterprises and vocational schools. In addition, same courses were also conducted during the Loneliness and Isolation Prevention Month in May 2024 on “Plat-verse.” a special metaverse space.

8. Overseas coordination and promotion of international understanding

- Initiatives to share information overseas regarding measures to address loneliness and isolation and promote international understanding have been conducted, including the June 2021 meeting and joint message of the UK and Japanese ministers for loneliness and isolation, the July 2021 meeting and joint statement of the Japanese Minister in charge of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation and the Vice-President for Democracy and Demography of the European Commission, and the hosting of the June 2022 Meeting with Ambassadors to Japan on Loneliness and Isolation.
- In June 2023 a meeting about loneliness and isolation was held with the German Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, and the Japan-Germany Joint Statement on Loneliness and Social Isolation was released. In line with the joint statement, the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the Japanese Cabinet Secretariat’s Office for Policy on Loneliness and Isolation and the Japanese-German Center in Berlin jointly hosted an online symposium entitled “Policies and Practices against Loneliness and Social Isolation – the German and Japanese Perspective,” at which the measures, initiatives and research results of both nations were shared.

- In 2024 the World Health Organization (WHO) launched its Commission on Social Connection, a three-year initiative that positions loneliness and social isolation as a major public health issue and will commit the required resources to expand the scale of measures to solve the issue. The Japanese Minister in charge of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation are participating as one of the founding members of this high-level commission.

9. Ascertaining the actual state of loneliness and isolation

- As a nationwide survey to ascertain the actual state of loneliness and isolation from December 2021 the Basic Survey Regarding Bonds Between People was conducted. The latest in this series of surveys was conducted in December 2023, and the results published in March 2024.

- According to the latest survey results, in answer to a direct question although the percentage responding that they “often or always feel a sense of loneliness” was 4.8% the percentage responding that they “never feel a sense of loneliness” was 17.9%, with the remaining approximately 80% stating that they felt some degree of loneliness although there was a variance in the degree they felt so. Moreover, with regard to the indirect question (a question based on the UCLA loneliness scale for numerically measuring through indirect questions the subjective emotion of isolation,) the isolation score (in which the lowest point is 3 and the highest 12) the percentage of those scoring from 10 to 12 was 6.9% and those scoring 3 points was 13.7. Looked at by age group those responding that they “often or always feel a sense of loneliness” and whose sense of loneliness score was 10 to 12 was mainly those in their twenties to fifties.

With regard to the state of isolation, the situation was ascertained from the circumstances of social interaction (with family and friends etc.), social participation (PTA activities, volunteer activities, participation in activities involving interaction with others such as sports and hobbies), and social support (the presence or absence of dependable people and people to discuss matters with). For example, with regard to social interaction, 9.6% of people responded that “I do not talk at all with family members who I do not live with or friends,” and 51.8% responded that with regard to social participation “I don’t particularly participate in anything.”

- The main content of the observations made by experts with regard to the findings of the 2021 and 2022 nationwide surveys to ascertain the actual state of loneliness and isolation are as follows.
 - There is a trend in which the number of those replying that with regard to the degree of loneliness and isolation they “often or always feel a sense of loneliness” is high among younger age groups, and those who have nobody to discuss matters with is high among the middle-aged, men, and those who are unmarried, have experience separation, have a weak educational record, low income or are not working (seeking employment).
 - There is a trend in which the number of those replying that with regard to the degree of loneliness and isolation they “often or always feel a sense of loneliness” is high among those responding that they have experienced major physical or mental problems (illness and injury etc.), major human relationship troubles (bullying, harassment etc.), major financial troubles, major work (occupational) troubles, and major family troubles (including divided homes, domestic violence and abuse).
 - A large number of responses indicate that those with nobody to consult with feel a comparatively high degree of loneliness and isolation, and there is a trend in which the higher the degree to which they feel a sense of loneliness and isolation the more they tend to reply “I can put up with it,” “I don’t know how to receive support,” and “the procedures for applying for support are a nuisance.”

- It was observed that with regard to reasons for not receiving support those responding “I need support but can put up without it” tend to be older people with low incomes, and that the younger age groups do not see any significance in consulting.
 - The respondents that expressed enthusiasm towards speaking to and assisting those around them in trouble tended to be women or younger generation people who have people to discuss matters with and high incomes.
- In addition, there are other surveys in which questions regarding sense of loneliness were set such as the 2022 Survey on Children and Young People’s Attitudes and Lifestyles, and the 2023 Basic Research on Foreign Residents in Japan.²⁹

10. Act on the Advancement of Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation

With the objective of preparing a stable and continuous promotion system for measures to address loneliness and isolation, in May 2023 the Expert Council on the Priority Plan for Measures on Loneliness and Isolation held discussions regarding the bill to become the foundation for the promotion of policies concerning comprehensive measures to address loneliness and isolation. Subsequently, the bill on the Advancement of Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation was submitted to the 211th Ordinary Session of the Diet. After deliberation by the Diet the Act was established on May 31, 2023, promulgated on June 7, 2023, and came into force on April 1 2024.

11. The Priority Plan on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation

- In December 2021 The Priority Plan on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation was formulated, and contained the fundamental principles, fundamental plan of action and specific policies on measures to address loneliness and isolation (“the Pre-Act Priority Plan”). The Pre-Act Priority Plan was formulated after listening to the opinions of the Expert Panel on the Priority Plan on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation, and agreed upon later that month by the Council for the Promotion of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation.
- From October 2022 onwards the Expert Panel on the Priority Plan on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation held discussions and interviews with regional bodies were held with the view to amend the previous Priority Plan, and in December 2022 the previous Priority Plan was amended following the discussions of the Council for the Promotion of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation.
- From October 2023 to January 2024 the Expert Panel on the Priority Plan on Measures to Address Loneliness and Isolation discusses the matters that should be incorporated in the present Priority Plan in line with the Act on Advancement. In February 2024 the Council for the Promotion of Measures for Loneliness and Isolation, having shared opinions with the constituent members of the Expert Council, decided to make preparations for the formulation of a Priority Plan that was based on the Act on Advancement.

²⁹ •The FY 2022 Survey on the Attitudes and Lives of Children and Young People measured children's and young people's sense of loneliness by asking direct and indirect questions. In direct question of the survey of 10- to 14-year-olds, 2.9% said they "often or always" feel lonely, 5.9% "sometimes," 14.7% "occasionally," 31.3% "rarely," and 44.2% "never.;" in the indirect question, 3.2% said they "always" feel lonely, 19.4% "sometimes", 36.8% "rarely," and 40.2% "never."

•The FY2023 Basic Survey on Foreign Residents measured the sense of loneliness among foreign residents by direct questioning. The result showed that 7.9% of respondents said they "often or always" feel a sense of loneliness, 22.7% "sometimes," 25.8% "occasionally," 21.2% "rarely," and 22.4% "never."