

Policies on Loneliness and Isolation in Japan

Seiko Noda
Minister for Loneliness and Isolation
Government of Japan

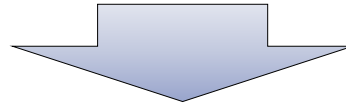
Present Status of Issues Related to Loneliness and Isolation

- Amidst weakening social connections, the COVID-19 pandemic reduced opportunities to connect people.
- As the pandemic continues, issues related to loneliness and isolation became increasingly evident and serious.

Numbers in 2019-2020

Suicides Total: increased by 5%
 Women: increased by 15%
 Children : increased by 25%

DV consultations: increased by 60%
Child abuse consultations: Increased 6%
Fully unemployed: 1.92 million
(Upward trend lasted for over a year)



- In addition to a variety of supports offered by various ministries, the Office for Policy on Loneliness and Isolation, Cabinet Secretariat plays a control tower role to enable the government to work together as one to deliver comprehensive support targeted to those in need.

Liaison and Coordination Meetings on Loneliness and Isolation(1/2)

Liaison and Coordination Meetings on Loneliness and Isolation have been held to support people with social anxiety and promote comprehensive and effective measures to address the increasingly serious social isolation and loneliness issues across the government as a whole.

Meeting Members

Chair Minister for Loneliness and Isolation

Members State Minister of Cabinet Office in charge of assisting the Minister for Loneliness and Isolation
State Minister of Cabinet Office in charge of assisting the Minister of State for Financial Services
State Minister of Cabinet Office in charge of assisting the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety
State Minister for Reconstruction
State Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications
State Minister of Justice
State Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Minister of Finance
State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
State Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare
State Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry
State Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism
State Minister of the Environment
State Minister of Defense
Deputy Commissioner General of the National Police Agency

Liaison and Coordination Meetings on Loneliness and Isolation(2/2)

Past Meetings

First (12 Mar 2021)	Established 3 task forces and requested consideration of measures
Second (23 Apr 2021)	Instructed to provide child care during the major holidays
Third (31 May 2021)	Requested consideration of support for socially reclusive people
Fourth (8 Jul 2021)	Requested creation of budget related to loneliness and isolation issue
Fifth (8 Sep 2021)	Related ministries explained the FY2022 budget request
Sixth (9 Nov 2021)	Related ministries explained the priority plan for tackling loneliness and isolation, support for socially reclusive people, providing child care

Support for NPOs Tackling Loneliness and Isolation

- **Emergency assistance of ¥6B (£40M) to NPOs** tackling loneliness and isolation was announced in the Ministerial Conference on Emergency Measures to support non-regular Workers and Others affected by the pandemic (March 16, 2021)

Measures for livelihood support and suicide prevention

¥1.7B (£11M)

Provision of foodstuff and support to food banks and children's cafeteria

¥0.8B (£5.2M)

Providing inclusive community to vulnerable children

¥1.5B (£9.7M)

Consultation for women

¥1.35B (£8.8M)

Housing assistance

¥0.5B (£3.2M)

Basic Policies on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2021(1/2)

(Extract/tentative translation)

Chapter 2 A New Source of Growth to Lead the Next Age

- Four growth drivers and platform building -

5. Building a platform to support the four drivers

(4) Enhancement of the safety net and policies on loneliness and isolation

Policies on Loneliness and Isolation

- Promotion of policies including
 - around-the-clock support and consultation services via phone and social networking services,
 - support for human resource development,
 - building outreach support systems
 - creation of a portal site offering comprehensive support information
 - timely information dissemination
 - introduction of so-called “social prescribing”*
 - education and awareness-raising on ways to seek support
 - nationwide survey to gain an overall picture of loneliness and isolation
 - implementation of the PDCA cycle.

*Social prescribing is when health professionals (such as primary care doctors) refer patients in need of social support to local community services.

Basic Policies on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2021(2/2)

Policies on Loneliness and Isolation

- The priority plan will be drafted by the end of 2021 to provide stable and continuous support, taking note of cooperation with related fields and measures.
- In particular, it is recommended to provide detailed assistance to NPO activities tackling loneliness and isolation issues and to invite them for dialogue on the policymaking.
- To strengthen partnerships among public, private and non-profit sectors, the government will support the formation of a platform for collaboration among various consultation/support institutions, NPOs. This will bring together public and private players and promote the initiative to build local communities and society as a whole where people can feel connected.

FY2022 Budget Request:

Main Measures for Tackling Loneliness and Isolation(1/2)

The basic principle for tackling loneliness and isolation is to identify sufferers and connect them to appropriate consultation and support suited to their needs.

Measures should be developed based on these 4 pillars:

- (1) Create a society where people who are lonely and isolated people have fewer barriers to help seeking
- (2) Provide seamless consultation and support depending on the situation
- (3) Promote the creation of a community where people can feel “connected” to others by ensuring places to watch over and interact with each other and to live.
- (4) Provide detailed support for the activities of NPOs and other organizations working on tackling loneliness and isolation and to strengthen cooperation among the public, private, and NPO sectors

FY2022 Budget Request:

Main Measures for Tackling Loneliness and Isolation(2/2)

Pillar1: Create a society where people who are lonely and isolated people have fewer barriers to help seeking

- OImprovement of the consultaion system (promotion of 24 hour consultation by telephone and SNS, etc)**
- OSupport for human resource development, etc.**

Pillar2: Provide seamless consultation and support depending on the situation

- OGrasping the actual situation of loneliness and isolation**
- OEstablishment of a portal site with comprehensive support information with timely dissemination**
- OEfforts to destigmatize loneliness**

Pillar3: Promote the creation of a community where people can feel “connected” to each other by ensuring places to watch over and interact with each other and live

- OSecuring a place that people can belong to and building an outreach support system**
- OUtilization of “social prescriptions”**
- OPromotion of comprehensive support system in a community**

Pillar4: Provide detailed support for the activities of NPOs and other organizations working on tackling loneliness and isolation and to strengthen cooperation among the public, private, and NPO sectors

- Odetailed support for the NPO activities working on tackling loneliness and isolation**
- OPromotion of dialogue with NPOs and support of the formation of platforms that serve as the basis for cooperation with NPOs**

Forums to Hear Varied Voices of Support

Past Meetings

○25 February 2021, held the Emergency Forum for Preventing Loneliness and Isolation, Understanding Anxiety and Creating Connections”.

○Jun– November 2021, held 10 Forums on loneliness and isolation with 65 participants:

24 Jun	Childrearing
1 Jul	Poverty with a focus on food and community inclusion
6 Jul	Children and youth
13 Jul	Women
19 Aug	Held in a local area: Kobe
2 Sep	Held in a local area: Kitakyusyu
28 Sep	Responding to a variety of issues
15 Oct	Middle and old age
8 Nov	Held in a local area: Fukushima
16 Nov	Consultation support



Preparatory Meeting for a Collaboration Platform for Tackling Loneliness and Isolation (Tentative name)

- As the pandemic continues, issues regarding loneliness and isolation have become increasingly evident and serious. That makes it difficult for support organizations to handle all consultations.
- The preparatory meeting was held to discuss the establishment of a platform for intermediary support groups that provide support to NPOs and other organizations nationwide as well as national groups in each field. The platform will be a place to share information on the use of subsidies, develop human resources as professionals, and make policy proposals from the perspective of the field.

Next Steps

- Deepen discussions with participating organizations and consider the role of the platform at the preparatory meeting, aiming to establish the platform by the end of this fiscal year.
- The Office for Loneliness and Isolation will serve as the secretariat for the time being.



The Prime Minister, Chief Cabinet Secretary, The Minister for Loneliness and Isolation at that time attended.

Grasping the Actual Situation of Loneliness and Isolation.

○ A nationwide survey was launched on 1 December 2021 in order to grasp the actual situation of loneliness and isolation in Japan and to develop effective measures.

Research Plan

1. Subject : Individuals over 16 years old
 2. Methods : Send the survey to about 20,000 individuals selected by statistical method.
Response by mail or web form.
 3. Main survey topics :
 - Loneliness:** Feelings of loneliness, events/incidents that led to feelings of loneliness, and coping strategies
 - Isolation:** Status of social isolation, social support, and social participation
 - Other related items: Presence or absence of physical or mental problems, awareness of support measures, intention to use support measures, use of information and communication devices, SNS, etc.
 - Attribute information: Age, gender, marital status, family structure, educational and employment status, type of residence (house, apartment, whether it is owner-occupied or not, etc.), annual household income
 4. Survey period : December 2021-January 2022
 5. Aggregate items : The results necessary to gain a general understanding of the reality of loneliness and isolation, including the attributes and trends (age, gender, education, employment status, etc.) of people with high sense of loneliness or high degree of isolation, trends in physical and mental health, and the relationship between loneliness/isolation and life events experienced in the past.
 6. Publication : Around March 2022
- In addition, a questionnaire survey of people who are currently in a state of loneliness and isolation through NPOs and other organizations.



Analyze the factors that lead to loneliness and isolation, and contribute to the effective implementation of measures

Website on Tackling Loneliness and Isolation

Summary

Centralize and disseminate information of various support systems and consultation services related to tackling loneliness and isolation. The contents of the website were discussed with the planning committee consisting of NPOs, social media companies, etc.

Main functions

1. Chatbot (automatic response system)
 - Automatic response guides people seeking help to the appropriate support system or place for consultation
 - Offers assistance in finding support systems and consultation services
 - The guide includes about 150 support systems of related ministries and consultation services.
2. A page dedicated to children
 - Guiding to child consultation services for children
3. Videos
 - Message from the Minister for Loneliness and Isolation, etc.



Start of Operation

2 November (The page for children was prior released in July)

※Number of viewers: About 880,000

(○8/17~11/1 (77days) Approx. 430,000
○11/2~12/2 (32days) Approx. 450,000)



Develop the priority plan for tackling loneliness and isolation, including specific measures

Consider what needs to be further strengthened from the past measures, taking into account opinions of NPOs and other stakeholders and formulate the priority plan by the end of this year.

Draft of items of the plan

- 1 Present status of issues regarding loneliness and isolation
- 2 Basic principles for tackling loneliness and isolation
- 3 Basic Policy on of tackling loneliness and isolation
 - (1) Create a society where lonely and isolated people have fewer barriers to help seeking
 - (2) Provide seamless consultation and support depending on the situation
 - (3) Promote the creation of a community where people can feel “connected” to others by ensuring places to watch over and interact with each other and live
 - (4) Provide detailed support for the activities of NPOs and other organizations working on tackling loneliness and isolation and to strengthen cooperation among the public, private, and NPO sectors
- 4 Specific measures
 - ※With presentation of present status, challenges and measures for them, and specific goals for each measure.



Aim to create a society where no one who suffer from loneliness and isolation is left behind

Thank you for listening