Public Awareness and Social Impact of Novel Coronavirus in Japan
-COVID-19 (Beat! Coronavirus) Project Research Report

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summary

The novel coronaviruses have had a significant impact on Japanese society. Because the novel coronaviruses can be infected even from asymptomatic infected people, a different approach from that used in the conventional strategies in infectious diseases is needed. Thus, enhancing people's attention to individual risks is not enough to reduce the number of infected people in a society. Given the unique characteristic of the novel coronavirus, this study attempts to examine factors reducing the spread of novel coronaviruses. To this end, we conducted a nationwide survey of adult males and females (aged 18-79 years) in June 2020 to assess people's countermeasure behaviors against novel coronaviruses (N=1000). The questionnaire covered items such as problems with telecommuting, including perceptions of personal and social risks, self-restraint during the declaration of a state of emergency, media use, and online meetings.

Keywords: novel coronavirus, state of emergency declaration, Japan, countermeasure action, social risks, media use, telecommuting, online meetings

Public Awareness of Novel Coronavirus and Social Impact in Japan

1. Background

The first case of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) was reported in Wuhan, China, in November 2019, while the first cases were reported in Japan in January 2020, followed by an increase in the number of cases worldwide. Due to the expansion of the epidemic in Japan in February, the government called for large-scale events and rallies, as well as the temporary closure of elementary and junior high schools across the country. As of August 27, 10,460 people have been infected (with a cumulative total of 65,765) with 1,240 deaths. Travel and outings have been greatly reduced in order to avoid infections, and foreign visitors have been unable to come to Japan, which has had a significant impact on the tourism, hotels, restaurants, and department store industries. In Japan, there were no mandatory city lockdowns; rather, people basically followed voluntary "self-restraint" to control the spread of the disease. For example, bars and taverns that "refrain" from operating were paid compensation, but they were not forcibly banned from operating their stores (as of August 2020).

In order to reduce the number of people infected in these situations, human contact should be reduced as much as possible (Ishii, 2020a). In order to achieve this goal, research from a behavioral science perspective is needed to understand how people's behavior can be changed. However, although there are some studies on behavioral responses to infectious diseases such as H1N1 influenza and SARS (Nakataniuchi 2009; Oikawa and Oikawa 2010; Guo, Zhang, and Shen 2006), these infections and the novel coronaviruses have quite different transmission patterns; in the case of SARS and MERS, asymptomatic or mildly infected people were not likely to move around and spread the disease unlike the case of the novel coronavirus (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, April 17, 2020). On the other hand, in the case of novel coronavirus, asymptomatic or mildly infected people who account for about 80% of all cases can infect other people (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, April 17, 2020).

As reported, few young people in Japan are seriously ill, which means that the personal risk of contracting the novel coronavirus is low for young people. However, if the infection spreads even among people with a low risk

of infection, the epidemic will spread through secondary infections and will cause the negative impact on society as a whole, including the economy and medical system. In other words, unlike conventional infectious diseases and disasters, the risks of novel coronaviruses are not parallel for individuals and for society. This is a situation of what is known in social psychology as the "social dilemma" (Yamagishi 1990). In other words, the individual's personal optimal behavior does not necessarily lead to the optimal situation for the society. Many of the measures emphasized in conventional disaster actions (e.g., earthquakes and fires) have been to make people accurately aware of their individual risks, but awareness of individual risks is not enough to control a pandemic of a novel coronavirus.

To answer these problems, this report will analyze how people are taking countermeasure actions based on survey data. Assessing people’s behavioral patterns against the novel coronavirus on people's lives will be important in order to take steps about how to deal with the second wave that may come in the future.

2. Research Objectives

Based on these issues, the following research objectives were set for this study.

1. Who take (or don't take) countermeasure actions? What factors account for taking countermeasure actions?
2. How does the novel coronavirus affect people's lives?
3. What are the problems with telecommuting? How were online conferencing systems used in telecommuting under the declared state of emergency in April?

To achieve these research objectives, an online survey of 1,000 people was conducted.

3. Method

1,000 online monitors were requested to respond to the survey using Rakuten Insight Corporation's Internet survey system. The survey was conducted on June 12-14, 2020, and targeted men and women between the ages of 18 and 80. The entire country was divided into 13 blocks (Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kita-Kanto, Tokyo metropolitan area, Koshinetsu, Hokuriku, Tokai,

Kinki, Keihanshin, Chugoku, Shikoku, Kyushu, and Okinawa), and the number of respondents was allocated proportional to the population distribution of age and gender in the teenage increments in each block. Thus, the results of the survey are, to some extent, representative of the general Japanese population.

The respondents were 499 males (49.9%) and 501 females (50.1%), with a mean age of 48.95 years (standard deviation 16.83), 63.7% married and 58.4% with children. The median household income was 5.01 million yen. With regard to occupation, 40.8% were full-time workers, 13.0% were part-time workers, 13.0% were part-time workers, 16.7% were housewives (husbands), 12.2% were unemployed, and 6.0% were students.

The questionnaire consisted of the following questions: Q1 asked about lifestyle, Q2 asked about awareness of various discourses and information about novel coronaviruses, including rumors, Q3 asked about awareness of novel coronaviruses, Q4 asked about various countermeasure actions, Q5 asked about the need to prevent the spread of the virus Q6-10 asked about working under a declared state of emergency, including telecommuting, Q11 asked about media use behavior, Q12 asked about intention to participate in future infection prevention, and Q13 asked about economic awareness of the current situation. Questions such as Q6 to Q10 were translated and adapted from "Coronavirus Survey for WIP Partners April 14, 2020" (USC Annenberg Center for the Digital Future (CDF) and Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) ,2020a).

4. results

Frequency tables (distribution of responses) are included in the appendix. In this section, we will briefly introduce the results for each item.

4.1 People's perception of the novel coronavirus

The novel coronavirus is a new infectious disease, and various information or misinformation was circulated in the media that may or may not necessarily be correct; Q2 asked about the perception of correctness of several statements about the novel coronavirus.

The results show that more than 70% of people believed that they were correct: "You can get infected even if you wear a normal mask," "You should wash your hands to prevent infection," "You should provide good ventilation

where there is a chance of infection," "Some people get infected asymptomatically" "From elevator buttons and stair rails, you can get infected. On the other hand, only less than 20% are likely to believe other items such as "Japanese people are less likely to be infected," "Children under 15 years of age do not become seriously ill," "Natto (fermented soybeans) is effective in preventing infection," "The susceptibility to infection differs according to blood type," and "People who are habitual cigarette smokers are less likely to be infected", although these have been pointed out by the media as having a scientific basis.

4.2 Awareness of the novel coronavirus

These items (Q3) asked about perceptions of personal and social risks posed by the novel coronaviruses, attitudes toward the problem, and future behavioral intentions. Of these, more than 80% (the ratio of respondents who answered "strongly agree" and "agree") agreed with “an outbreak of a novel coronavirus would worsen the Japanese economy”, “another increase in the number of infected people would worsen the Japanese economy”, and “the Japanese people should unite to help prevent infection”; these three items are most likely to be affected by the social and social risks of the novel coronavirus. The items show the respondents' perception of the risk of infection. This was followed by "I watch the news about the novel coronavirus with great interest," "Reducing the number of infected people is important for Japan today," and "I always think about the correctness of various information," with more than 70% of agreement. Among the remaining items, those with an agreement rate of less than 50% were: "I believe that human power is powerless in the face of the threat of the virus" (49.8%), "The novel coronavirus is not a dangerous disease if it is managed properly" (34.1%), "I am worried about the novel coronavirus because it is unlikely to cause serious illnesses even if you are exposed to it. Not yet" (10.5%). The last two items were asked about individual risk, which means that many people were actually aware of the individual risk. In other words, it can be said that both the social and individual risks of the novel coronaviruses were very well recognized.

4.3 Countermeasure actions against the novel coronavirus

The status of implementation of countermeasures against the novel coronavirus was investigated by choosing activities that could be taken

personally against the novel coronavirus (Q4). The most common countermeasures were: "Wear a mask when going out" (85.9%), "Wash hands well" (82.8%), "Avoid going to crowded places" (82.1%), "Disinfect hands with disinfectant" (69.1%), and "Keep a safe distance from other customers when standing in line in a store" (68.1%), "stop meeting for meals and other meetings" (64.7%), "don't take the train or bus" (61.0%), and "try not to meet with friends" (56.5%), which had an action rate of over 50%.

4.4 Implementation rate of self-restraint behavior

As for the declaration of a state of emergency by the government in 2020 April, respondents were requested to refrain from going out to reduce interpersonal contacts; Q5 asked how much and how often they had reduced the frequency of some specific outgoing behaviors. Here, we gave hypothetical values of 0% for "not reduced at all," 10% for "slightly reduced," 30% for "reduced to some extent," 50% for "significantly reduced," and 100% for "stopped altogether," and asked for the percentage of people who refrained from these behaviors, excluding those who "never did in the first place," to determine the percentage of these behaviors that were refrained from.

As shown in Table 1, the most common form of self-restraint was "drinking at a bar" (84.6%). This is followed by "eating at a restaurant or cafeteria," "going out," "seeing friends," "riding the train or bus" , and “refraining from drinking alcohol.” with more than 60% of responses On the other hand, going to work (24.2%) and going to the store to do some shopping (34.4%) did not decrease significantly.

Table 1: Percentage of "self-restraint

	Self-restraint rate (%)
1.Take a train or bus.	61.3
2. meet with friends	68.1
3. go play.	69.8
4. go to work.	24.2

5. eating at a restaurant or diner	70.4
6. drinking with others in a bar	84.6
7. go to the store and shop.	34.4

4.5 Work patterns during the declaration of a state of emergency

Working from home or working shorter hours was recommended during the declaration of a state of emergency. In order to determine the extent to which this request was realized, Q7 asked about work patterns during the declaration of the state of emergency. The results for those who were working during the declaration of a state of emergency show that the most common response was "Working at the office during the usual hours" (50.7%). Looking at the other responses, shortened hours at work (11.7%), working from home (7.6%), partially working from home (21.8%), and completely working from home (8.0%).

Of those who worked from home, 53.1% used online meetings (video or audio conferencing). However, those who used online meetings at home during the declaration of a state of emergency were more likely to have used online meetings before. Specifically, of the 93 people who used online conferencing during the declaration of the emergency, 57 (61.2%) had used it before the declaration of the emergency and only 36 (38.7%) were new to online conferencing at the time of the declaration of the emergency.

Table 2: Use of online meetings while working from home (number of people)

		During the declaration of a state of emergency.		
		I used.	I have not used.	Total number of responses
Before the declaration of a state of emergency	Experience	57	5	62
	No experience	36	77	113
	Total number of people	93	82	175

The efficiency of telecommuting was not rated very high. 26.9% of users rated their work as more efficient than their normal work, while 51.4% of respondents said it was not as efficient as their normal work.

Many telecommuting users chose the following as problems with telecommuting: "Difficulty in separating private life and work while working from home" (64%), "Sometimes difficult to communicate with each other due to work-related interactions" (60%), "Distractions (taking care of family and pets, housework, noise, etc.)" (53.7%), "Difficulty with home and The distinction between work and work is blurred" (52.5%) and "online meetings are tiring" (44%). Compared to these, relatively few respondents said “they could not protect their privacy (36.5%)” and ” they had to take care of their children while working (21.1%)”.

4.6 Intention to use countermeasure actions

An app (COCOA) is now being offered to allow people to conduct antibody tests and check their contact with infected people. The respondents were asked about their willingness to use the tools for countermeasures, such as vaccines and various tests, if they were provided by the government (Q12). When the total of "would use for a fee," "would use for a fee," and "would use for free," was calculated as a positive response for each tool, items with intention rate over 70%were "vaccination to prevent the novel coronavirus" (85.0%), "antibody test for the novel coronavirus" (80.8%), and "PCR testing for novel coronaviruses" (77.2%). In contrast, a slightly lower percentage (65.6%) of respondents had intention to use a smartphone app that allowed them to check contact with infected persons (at the time of the survey, the app was not yet available).

4.7 Current economic situation

Finally, respondents were asked about their current financial situation. The results were as follows: "very comfortable" (5.9%), "comfortable" (30.2%), " getting away with it " (49.8%), " find life difficult " (8.9%), and " find life very difficult " (5.2%).

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Appendix: frequency tables

Q1. What do you think about the following statements? Please choose one for each of the following. Please choose one that applies to each of the following. (N=1000)

	Very much so.	I think so.	I can't say either.	I don't think so.	I don't think so at all.
1. I am satisfied with my current life	8.9	47.5	20.4	17.2	6.0
2. I think I am happy	15.4	51.3	21.6	8.2	3.5
3. Most people can be trusted.	1.3	14.5	44.8	29.8	9.6
4. Most people, when a person trusts them, trust them in the same way	4.9	39.9	37.2	13.9	4.1
5. We should pay more attention to the country and society	15.8	55.3	23.2	4.2	1.5
6. I have always wanted to do something useful for society as a member of society.	7.2	42.1	36.2	10.5	4.0
7. I don't want to live outside of Japan, considering the safety of the country.	26.3	34.5	25.9	10.8	2.5

	Very much so.	I think so.	I can't say either.	I don't think so.	I don't think so at all.
8. Japan is the best country in the world	12.1	28.3	40.1	14.2	5.3
9. I like Japan as a country.	24.7	50.4	20.3	3.1	1.5
10. Japan has much to learn from other countries	14.3	52.4	28.4	3.6	1.3
11. The Japanese are one of the most outstanding people in the world	9.9	33.5	40.4	11.8	4.4
12. The Japanese people should value the interests of the nation as a whole more than the interests of individuals.	7.1	26.4	53.8	10.0	2.7

Q2. Do you think the following things are true about the new coronavirus? Please choose as many as you think are correct. (Any number of things)

	%.
Total	100.0
You can get infected even if you're wearing a regular mask.	71.7
You should wash your hands to prevent infection.	92.3
Where there is a possibility of infection, ventilation should be good	87.4
Some people get infected and don't develop the disease.	86.4
The Japanese are less likely to be infected.	7.5
Children under the age of 15 are not seriously ill.	12.7
People with a smoking habit are less likely to be infected.	2.0
Natto is effective in preventing infection.	4.6
Different blood types are more susceptible to infection.	7.8
You can get it from elevator buttons and stairway handrails.	76.4
There's nothing right above	2.7

Q3. What do you think about "new coronaviruses"? Please choose one for each statement. Please choose one that applies to each of these questions. (N=1000)

	Very much so.	I think so.	I can't say either.	I don't think so.	I don't think so at all.
1. Fear of being infected with a new type of coronavirus	15.8	48.8	21.6	12.0	1.8
2. The new coronavirus is not a dangerous disease if properly managed.	5.7	28.4	35.1	23.0	7.8
3. the new coronavirus is a danger to me.	15.7	43.3	29.0	10.1	1.9
4. I'm not worried about catching the new coronavirus because it's rarely a serious illness.	1.3	9.2	26.0	38.2	25.3
5. If the second wave comes in the future, the damage to Japan will be even greater.	20.6	41.4	30.8	6.1	1.1
6. New coronavirus outbreak worsens Japan's economy	53.7	33.0	11.4	1.2	0.7
7. Watching news about the new coronavirus with interest	28.2	49.1	17.9	3.6	1.2
8. I am always thinking about what's right for various information	20.1	53.2	23.7	2.3	0.7

	Very much so.	I think so.	I can't say either.	I don't think so.	I don't think so at all.
9. I have been thinking a lot about my own response to the new coronavirus.	15.4	52.2	26.8	4.8	0.8
10.I believe that human power is powerless in the face of the threat of a virus	16.8	33.0	32.3	15.1	2.8
11. Another outbreak could lead to the collapse of Japanese medical system	24.7	44.0	25.4	4.9	1.0
12. If the number of infected people increases again, the Japanese economy will suffer.	47.1	38.8	12.3	1.4	0.4
13. I'm always checking the news for the status of infected people across the country.	17.8	47.1	23.5	8.7	2.9
14. I always check the news for the status of infected people in the county where I currently live.	22.0	45.6	22.2	7.2	3.0
15. I'm not going to travel for a while now.	26.9	38.5	25.2	7.1	2.3

	Very much so.	I think so.	I can't say either.	I don't think so.	I don't think so at all.	
16.I'm not going to a crowded place for a while now.	21.4	45.5	24.5	6.4	2.2	
17. Reducing the number of infected people is the most important thing for Japan today	33.9	42.0	18.9	3.8	1.4	
18. Japanese people should unite to help prevent infection	37.6	45.0	14.1	2.4	0.9	

Q4. During the period when the government declared a "state of emergency*" as a countermeasure against the new coronavirus, did you do the following? (*Choose as many as you like.) (*The period and areas covered by the declaration of a state of emergency) From April 7 to 15: Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Osaka, Hyogo, and Fukuoka prefectures April 16 to May 13: 47 prefectures nationwide From May 14 to May 20: Hokkaido, Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Kyoto, Osaka, and Hyogo prefectures May 21 to May 25: Hokkaido, Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo and Kanagawa prefectures. (N=1000)

	%.
To buy more drinking water and food than usual	24.3
To order online instead of going to the store you usually go to.	18.5
I'm not going to a crowded place.	82.1
I don't take trains or buses.	61.0
I'll avoid seeing my friends.	56.5
To make sure you get enough sleep.	40.2
To wash one's hands well	82.8
To disinfect your hands with disinfectant.	69.1
To wear a mask when you go out.	85.9
To work from home (e.g., telework)	20.9
To stop meeting, such as a dinner party.	64.7
Meeting with friends online.	16.5
To try to keep your distance from other customers, such as when standing in line in the store.	68.6
I did nothing above.	3.0

Q5. To what extent did you reduce the following activities during the period when the government declared a state of emergency* as a countermeasure against the novel coronavirus? Please select the appropriate answer for each of the following. *Please answer in the horizontal direction (→) for each of these questions.

	I haven't reduced it at all.	I've cut back a bit.	I've cut back some.	I've cut back a lot.	I stopped altogether.
1.To take a train or bus.	4.6	4.1	7.3	20.6	24.7
2. To meet with friends	1.7	4.1	11.2	28.1	40.5
3. To hang out	1.4	3.5	8.6	34.7	44.1
4. To go to work.	30.5	8.9	11.1	12.7	6.2
5. eating at a restaurant or diner	2.1	5.0	10.0	27.3	47.7
6. drinking with others in a bar	1.1	2.0	3.5	10.1	51.0
7. To go to the store and shop.	9.2	19.6	29.3	34.2	5.9

Q6. During the period when the government declared a state of emergency* as a countermeasure against a new type of coronavirus, to what extent did you take the following actions in a typical day? Please select appropriate items for each of the following. Please answer in the horizontal direction (→) for each of these questions.

	Less than 10 minutes	10 minutes to less than 30 minutes	More than 10 minutes to less than 1 hour	More than 30 minutes to less than 2 hours	More than 1 hour to less than 3 hours	More than 2 hours to less than 5 hours	More than 3 hours to less than 5 hours	More than 5 hours.	I didn't do that activity.
1. Using a computer	7.1	4.5	9.8	15.0	12.1	14.5	18.3		18.7
2. using a tablet	9.5	3.8	7.4	7.8	5.1	2.7	2.3		61.4
3. Use your smartphone	3.2	7.1	14.5	18.7	17.2	13.7	12.5		13.1
4. Using a home video game console	8.8	2.7	5.1	4.8	1.7	1.9	0.8		74.2
5. take care of the children and watch them study	6.2	2.9	5.1	5.9	3.1	3.2	5.3		68.3
6. take a walk or play a sport	10.3	16.4	22.6	13.2	3.3	1.2	0.2		32.8
7.Watching TV	2.3	4.5	12.5	24.0	22.1	16.9	11.4		6.3
8.Watching videos on the Internet	7.0	12.0	15.9	19.6	11.6	6.5	4.5		22.9
9.Watching videos on Blu-ray, DVD, etc.	7.2	5.0	9.1	13.3	7.3	2.4	1.7		54.0

Q7. Which of the following applies to you during the period when a state of emergency* was declared by the government as a countermeasure against the novel coronavirus? (N=1000)

	%.
Total	100.0
Working full-time outside of the home	29.8
Working full-time outside of the home short time officially	6.9
Working at home as usual	4.5
Working partially at home remotely because of the coronavirus	12.8
Working completely at home remotely because of the coronavirus	4.7
Staying at home, temporarily laid off from work because of the virus' impact	6.7
Staying at home, having lost job because of the virus' impact	0.8
Was already unemployed before the coronavirus outbreak	31.6
Others:.	2.2

Q8. Prior to the outbreak of the new coronavirus, had you ever used online or audio conferencing when working from home? (N=175)

	n	%.
Total	175	100.0
Yes	93	53.1
No	82	46.9

Q9. Did you use online meetings (videoconferencing or audio conferencing) when you worked from home during the period when the government declared a state of emergency* as a countermeasure against the new coronavirus? (N=175)

What do you think about the efficiency of telecommuting?

	n	%.
Total	175	100.0
To be more efficient in your work	47	26.9
To be less efficient in your work	90	51.4
To be so effective in your work	38	21.7

Q10. How much of the following is true for you in terms of working from home? Please choose an answer for each question. Please choose one that applies to each of the following.

	Exactly.	If anything, yes.	Not so much, if anything.	Not at all.
1. it is difficult to separate your personal and professional life while working from home	21.1	42.9	23.4	12.6
2. Lack of privacy	4.6	32.0	37.1	26.3
3. Distractions (such as children, pets, phone calls, or noisy neighbors)	10.3	43.4	27.4	18.9
4. I am tired of online phone calls and conferences	10.3	33.7	30.9	25.1
5. Concerns about supervision of my children while I am working	6.9	14.3	15.4	63.4
6. Erosion of the boundary between work and home	10.9	41.7	20.0	27.4
7. It is sometimes difficult to understand each other in business interactions.	17.1	42.9	23.4	16.6

Q12. If the government were to provide the people with the following, would you use it? Please choose one for each of the following. Please choose one that applies to each of the following. (N=1000)

	Use it for a fee.	It depends on the price, but I think I'll	If it's free, I'll use it.	I'm not going to use it.	I don't know.
1. PCR test for new coronaviruses	6.4	23.9	46.9	11.3	11.5
2. Antibody test for new coronavirus	6.3	24.4	50.1	8.1	11.1
3. smartphone apps that allow you to check your contact with infected people	4.6	11.3	49.7	19.0	15.4
4. Vaccination to prevent new coronavirus	22.1	33.2	29.7	5.8	9.2

Q13. How often do you use the following media? Please choose one for each category. Please choose one that applies to each of the following.

	At least five times a day.	Three to four times a day.	Twice a day.	Once a day.	Every two to three days.	Every four to five days.	Once a week.	Less than once a week	I don't use it at all.
1. Watching the news on TV	16.0	27.2	28.2	18.3	3.4	0.8	0.5	1.1	4.5
2. Watching TV dramas	3.1	5.8	14.5	23.2	10.8	5.3	7.4	8.0	21.9
3. Reading the newspaper.	2.6	3.1	10.1	31.8	3.4	1.4	2.3	5.0	40.3
4. Reading magazines	0.7	0.8	3.9	7.1	5.7	3.6	9.0	19.0	50.2
5. Searching and browsing the website	21.1	18.6	15.5	17.2	6.6	2.8	2.8	4.3	11.1
6. Reading the news online.	21.7	24.1	20.2	21.5	3.5	1.8	1.5	1.1	4.6
7. Using LINE. (a messaging app)	27.1	16.8	10.3	13.8	4.9	1.9	2.0	3.5	19.7
8. Using Twitter.	10.7	5.0	5.8	8.3	3.1	1.4	1.3	2.3	62.1
9. Using Facebook	3.0	3.5	3.6	8.9	3.8	2.3	2.8	4.0	68.1
10. Using Instagram.	10.8	5.9	4.1	7.0	2.9	1.0	1.3	2.8	64.2
11.Watching YouTube	13.3	9.3	10.5	17.1	9.7	4.1	4.0	9.2	22.8
12.Using a pay-per-view video streaming service	3.6	3.4	3.1	6.2	2.5	2.2	1.8	3.1	74.1

Q14. Please select one of the following as your current financial situation.

	n	%.
Total	1000	100.0
You have a very comfortable life	59	5.9
You have a comfortable life	302	30.2
You're getting away with it.	498	49.8
You find life difficult	89	8.9
You find life very difficult	52	5.2