

Loneliness has a strong impact on suicidal ideation among Japanese during the COVID-19 pandemic

May 24 2023



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

During the COVID-19 pandemic period, mental health of the human population remarkably deteriorated worldwide. With the spread of the infection, the number of suicides in Japan began to increase in 2020, for the first time in 11 years, and has shown no signs of decrease to date.

This increasing suicide rate is due to the fear of infection, economic problems such as unemployment, and worsening social isolation, including loneliness, due to quarantine and social distance. However, there is a lack of consensus regarding these factors which affect the desire to live (suicidal ideation) and how they affect this ideation.

In this study, published in *BMJ Open*, we analyzed the impact of social isolation, loneliness, and depression on suicidal ideation using data from a large-scale [national survey](#) by the Japan Assessment of Social and Health Inequalities due to the COVID-19 Study (JACSIS study). The survey included data of 26,000 people that was collected in February 2021. The data for men and women were analyzed separately, and prevalence rates were calculated after adjusting for age and economic status.

The results showed that 15% of men and 16% of women had suicidal ideation, with 23% of men and 20% of women having suicidal ideation only after the pandemic period. Loneliness was found to strongly affect [suicidal ideation](#) both directly and indirectly through depression compared to economic hardship or [social isolation](#). This indicates that psychological support should be provided as a measure against isolation and loneliness and also as a measure against suicide to those who feel lonely.

More information: Hirokazu Tachikawa et al, Impact of loneliness on suicidal ideation during the COVID-19 pandemic: findings from a cross-sectional online survey in Japan, *BMJ Open* (2023). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2022-063363](#)

Provided by University of Tsukuba

Citation: Loneliness has a strong impact on suicidal ideation among Japanese during the COVID-19 pandemic (2023, May 24) retrieved 22 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-05-loneliness-strong-impact-suicidal-ideation.html>

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