

# ‘Social Solidarity’ in the New Global Agenda and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Japan: What can Social Work Education Do?

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# Background of social work in Japan

- Developed by integrating Western SW to Japanese unique culture and institutions
- Experienced remarkable economic development and scientific technology
- Demographic change: rapid population aging with low birth rate
- Increasing social isolation and inequalities
- Frequent disasters and environmental destructions

# Japanese Amplification of the Global Definition of the Social Work Profession (2016)

*Social work in Japan has developed by integrating Western derived social work to unique cultures and institutions. While contemporary Japanese society has a hold of high scientific technology and has achieved remarkable economic development, on the other hand it is experiencing low-birth rate combined with population aging ahead of the world and struggling with a variety of issues ranging from the individual and the family to politics and economy. Although people living in Japan traditionally have been aspiring for harmony with the natural environment, it is necessary to further respond to frequent natural disasters and environmental destruction.*

*In view of the above, social work in Japan emphasizes the following endeavors.*

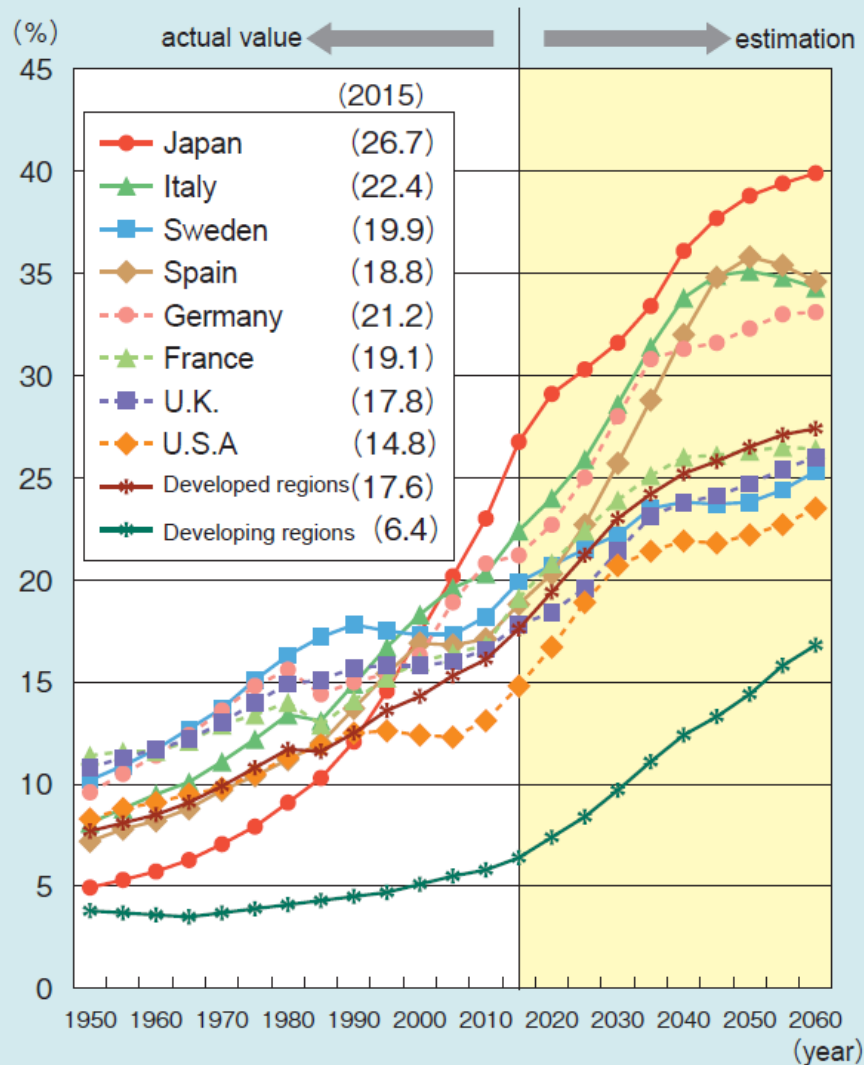
- *Social work engages people, their environment, and points where these interact with each other, realizes the right of all people who live in Japan to maintain the decent and cultured living, and promotes wellbeing.*
- *Social work, recognizing discriminatory and oppressive histories, engages in practice that respect diverse cultures and strives for peace.*
- *Social work respects human rights and works together with related people and organizations towards the realization of social change and social inclusion where people with life problems can experience connectedness regardless of age, sexuality, disability, religion, nationality etc.*
- *Social work advocates for the right of all people to be able to live a life based on self-determination and builds systems that allow seamless usage of needed support, including preventive responses.*

*This Japanese Amplification is in the spirit of the Global Definition and the Asia Pacific Amplification and is a summary of those points that should particularly be emphasized in Japan.*

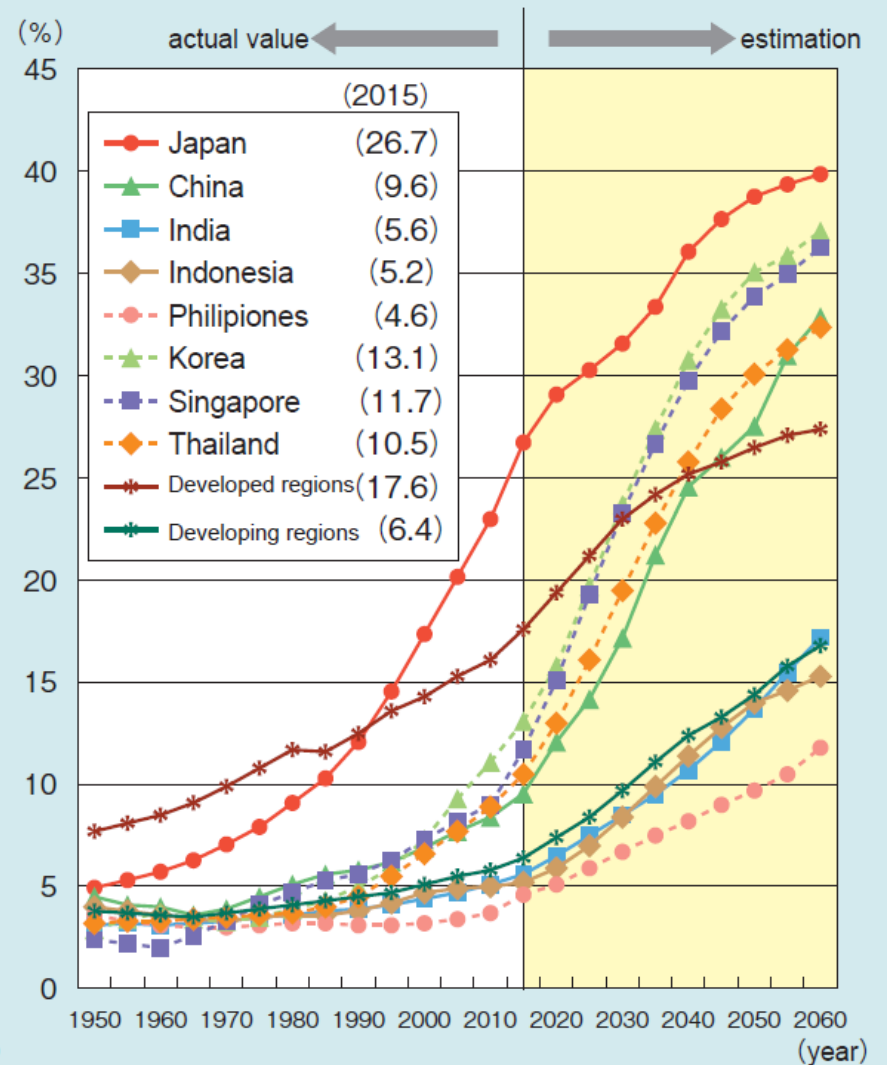


# Demographic changes: Trends in population aging

## 1. Europe and America



## 2. Asia



Source: UN World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision.

Annual White Paper on Aging Society, Cabinet Office of Japan, 2018, p.8.

# Isolation and loneliness of elderly people who live alone

■ Is there anyone who can ask for a little errand?

(%)

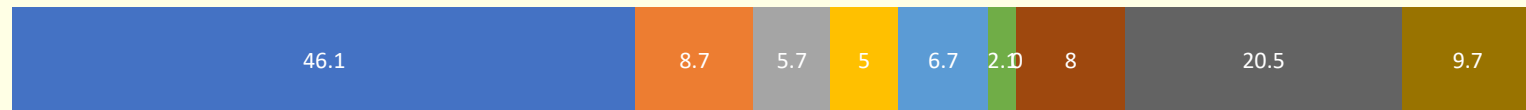
MEN WHO HAVE CHILDREN



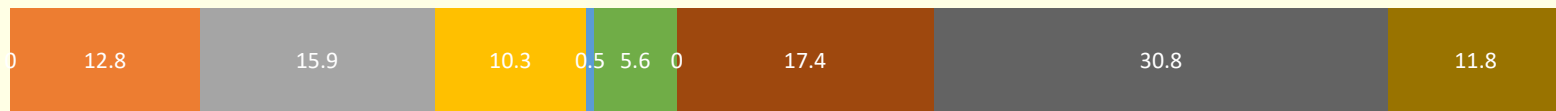
MEN WHO HAVE NO CHILDREN



WOMEN WHO HAVE CHILDREN



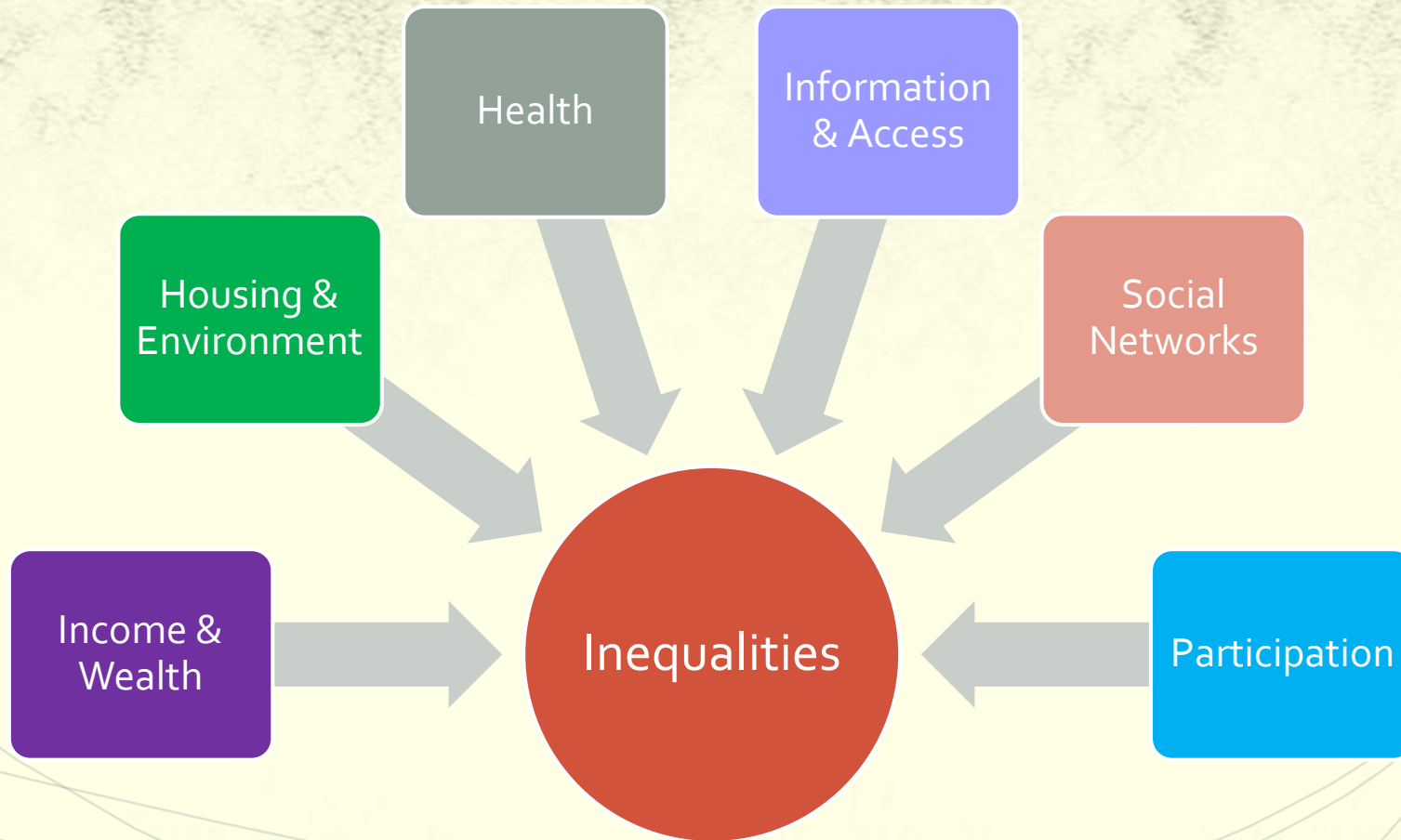
WOMEN WHO HAVE NO CHILDREN



- CHILD(Son/Daughter)
- Relatives
- Friends
- Home helpers
- Spouse of the Child
- Neighbors
- Parents
- Others
- Do not want to ask for help
- Nobody to ask



# Widening of social inequalities: Interlocking disadvantages



# How 'Social Solidarity' is defined in Japan?

- 'Social solidarity' is used in the context of social policy and social security. 'Social ties' may be more often used in social work and social welfare.
- 'Social solidarity' was used as one of the governmental propaganda when the national Long-Term Care Insurance system was introduced in 2000:
  - 1) From family care to social care
  - 2) Privatization (quasi-market) of care
  - 3) Social solidarity
  - 4) Promotion of community (home) care
  - 5) Self-determination of users

'Social solidarity' can be easily fostered when the risk is universal (such as old-age), and mutuality is visible and ensured.





# ***Proposal: Support for People with Weak Social Ties - From the Perspective of Social Welfare Studies (2018)***

- It is a proposal made by the Social Welfare Subcommittee of the Science Council of Japan.
- It points out the negative effects of the vertical division of welfare laws and services for elderly people, people living with disabilities, children, and other target groups, and calls for a shift to supporting the “whole person” to deal with “social isolation” and “systemic gaps”.





# Contents of the proposal (2018)

## (1) Short-term tasks

### 1) Establishment of a comprehensive consultation and support system

- a. Deployment of community (outreach) social workers in municipalities (10,000 workers nationwide)
- b. Organizational restructuring to promote information sharing and institutional cooperation
- c. Enabling municipalities to flexibly reorganize budgets for responding to the total needs of people with weak social ties
- d. Providing training programs to improve the expertise of community social workers

### 2) Rebuilding social ties

- a. Promotion of lifelong welfare education for better understanding of the importance of social ties
- b. Mandatory formulation of cross-sectoral community welfare plans with full participation of all stakeholders in the community

## (2) Mid-term tasks

### 1) Establishment of a comprehensive consultation and support system

- a. Merging information from various public service providers about risks facing socially isolated people
- b. Reorganizing some of the functions of existing municipal social welfare offices and public health centers, and creating an integrated system that can provide specialized emergency support at one place

### 2) Rebuilding social ties

- a. Developing school and community education programs for social inclusion and improvement of help-seeking abilities of those isolated
- b. Expand the scope of reasonable accommodation to promote social participation of people who are vulnerable to discrimination including people living with disabilities
- c. Shift from a social welfare legal system based on needs instead of attributes

# What are the obstacles to Social Solidarity in Japan?

- Population aging, urbanization, and changing family structures that led to individualism and social isolation
- Increased social risks such as divorce, long-term unemployment, and unstable employment
- Widening inequalities among people
- Globalization and increase in the number of immigrant workers
- New normal life with social distancing due to COVID-19

# Negative effects of COVID-19

- Bankruptcy and unemployment
- Increased domestic violence and abuse
- Functional deterioration due to self-restraint of social activities and care services
- Social isolation
- Increased suicide, especially among women and children
- Discrimination / prejudice against infected persons and their families as well as health professionals
- Insufficient infection protection for key workers including care workers at welfare institutions
- Increased burden of family care



# What are the roles of social work educators to foster Social Solidarity?

Building Integrated Community Care Systems (ICCS)  
& Communities of Harmonious Coexistence by coordinating and developing various service systems and providers including citizens

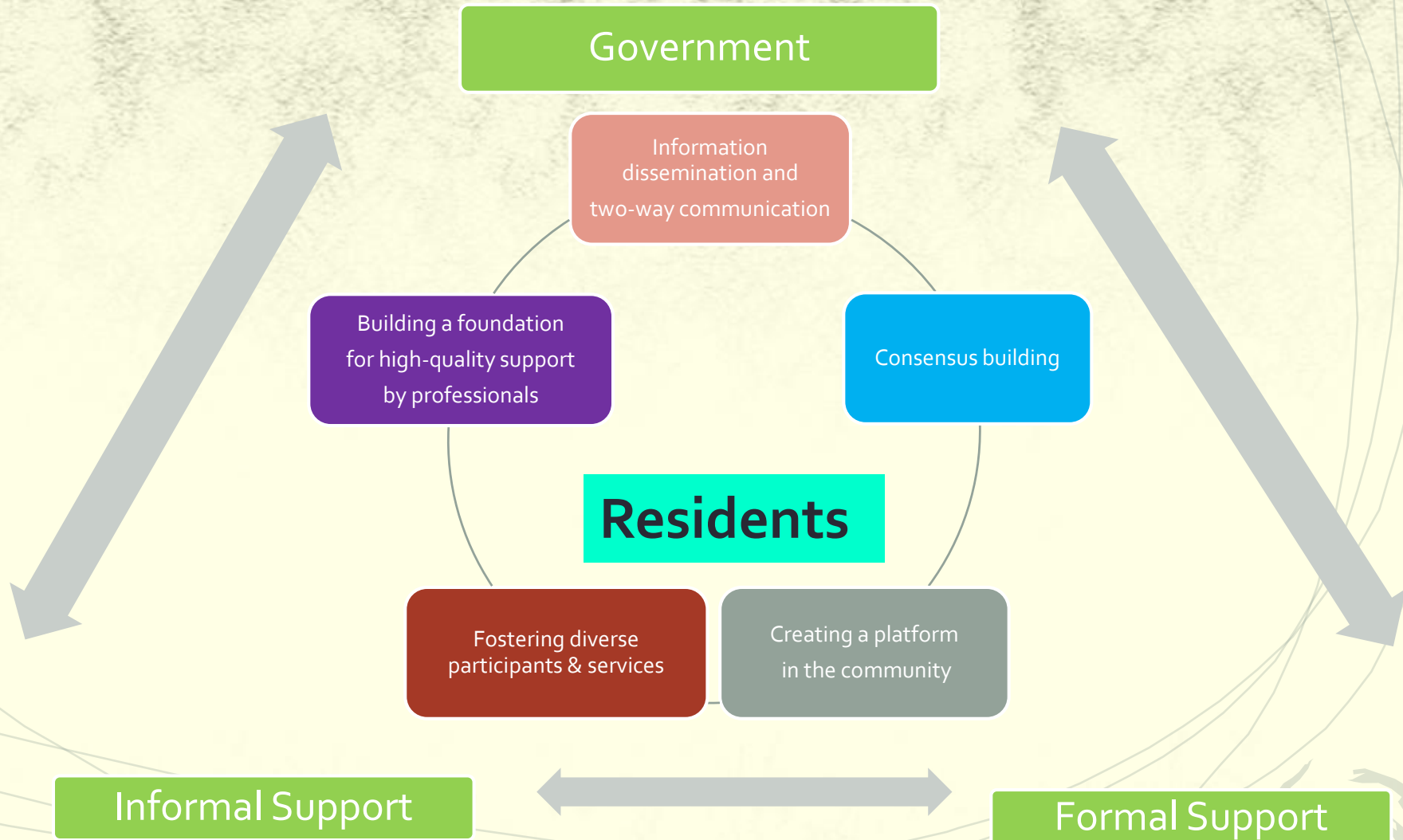
## *Integrated Community Care System*

To live in community in a pleasant and familiar environment

**Livelihood support/preventive long-term care**



# Requirements for creating ICCS



# Amendment of the Social Welfare Act (2020)

- Establishing a comprehensive support system for realizing **Communities of Harmonious Coexistence**
- Multi-layered support system maintenance project that provides comprehensive grants to local governments

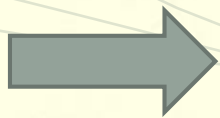
## <Three features>

- 1) Consultation without refusing
- 2) Building social ties and participation
- 3) Community development



# Various measures taken by the government during the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Employment adjustment subsidy
- Leave support fund
- Sustainable benefits for small businesses
- Extraordinary special benefits for single-parent households
- Emergency small-lot funds / comprehensive support funds
- Housing security benefits
- Support for higher education enrollment



However, due to the complex of the application procedures, many of these services seem to be underused.

# Necessary additional measures and social work responses

- Human rights protection and advocacy
- Prevention of social isolation and functional deterioration by utilizing ICT & alternative measures
- Outreach to people at the low end of the information gap
- Comprehensive support for people with complex needs
- Advocacy for vulnerable populations to make their voices heard in the society, and networking these people for solidarity
- Promoting and enforcing social solidarity by welfare (human rights) education in the society

# Revised Proposal for the “Children and Youth Development Support Promotion Charter”

1. Strengthening response to “loneliness / isolation” due to COVID-19
2. Considering suicide as the “most important issue”
3. Promoting support for “young carers” who provide family care
4. Enriching real-life experiences and activities in balance with the promotion of digitalization
5. Clarified measures against slander by SNS

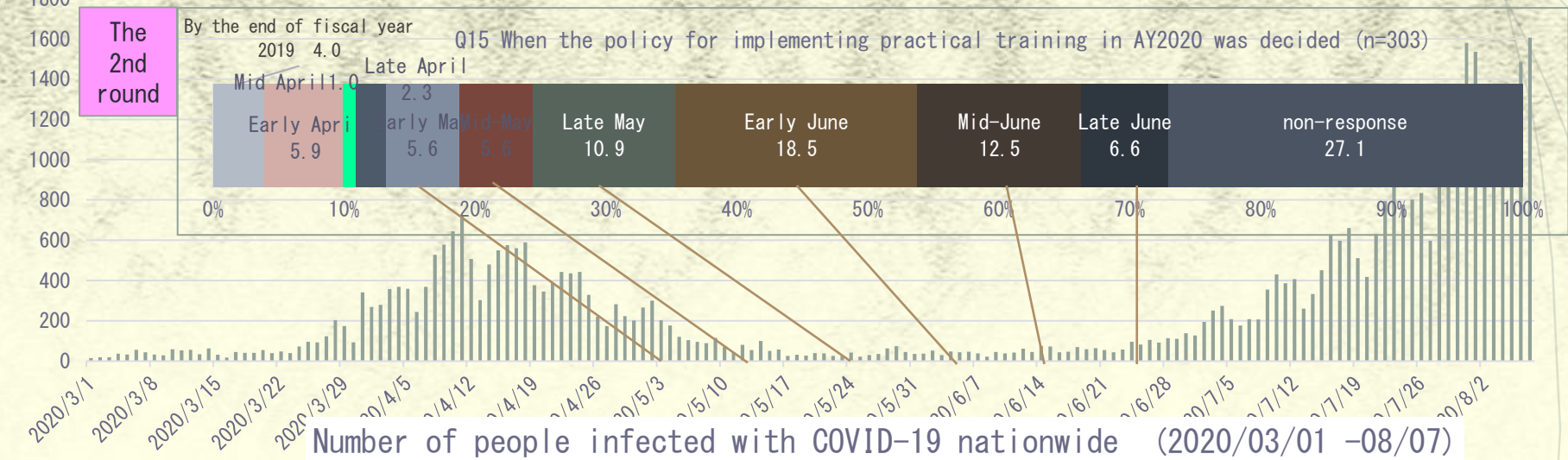
★ The Prime Minister has appointed a minister in charge of dealing with loneliness in Feb, 2021. At the first meeting of the committee, 1) utilization of social media, 2) finding the evidence, and 3) networking and supporting NPOs were agreed.



# Revision of Certified Social Worker training curriculum (2021)

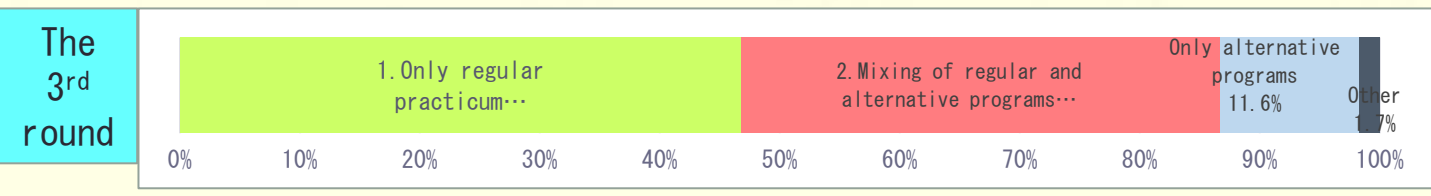
- Promoting community-based welfare with comprehensive support systems by emphasizing further integration of micro-mezzo-macro social work
- Increase in compulsory subjects to acquire a wide range of knowledge necessary for comprehensive support
- Clarification of common and specialized subjects for Certified Social Worker & Mental Health Social Worker training
- Increased practicum hours at two or more service settings so that students can develop wider perspectives and better coordination skills in different systems

### Contents of the practicum implementation policy (2nd round only)



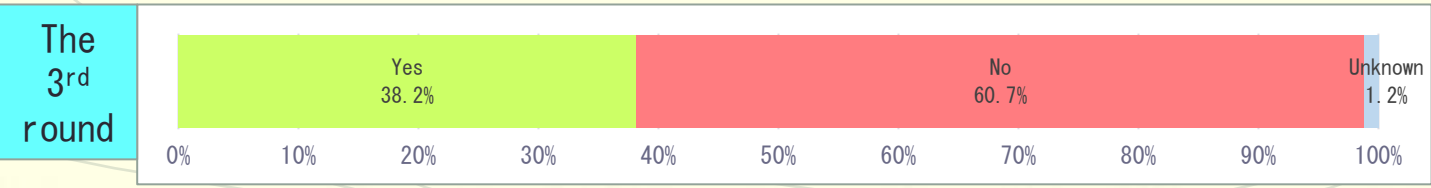
Number of people infected with COVID-19 nationwide (2020/03/01 -08/07)

### Q11: Current policy (including plans) for implementing practical training courses in AY2020



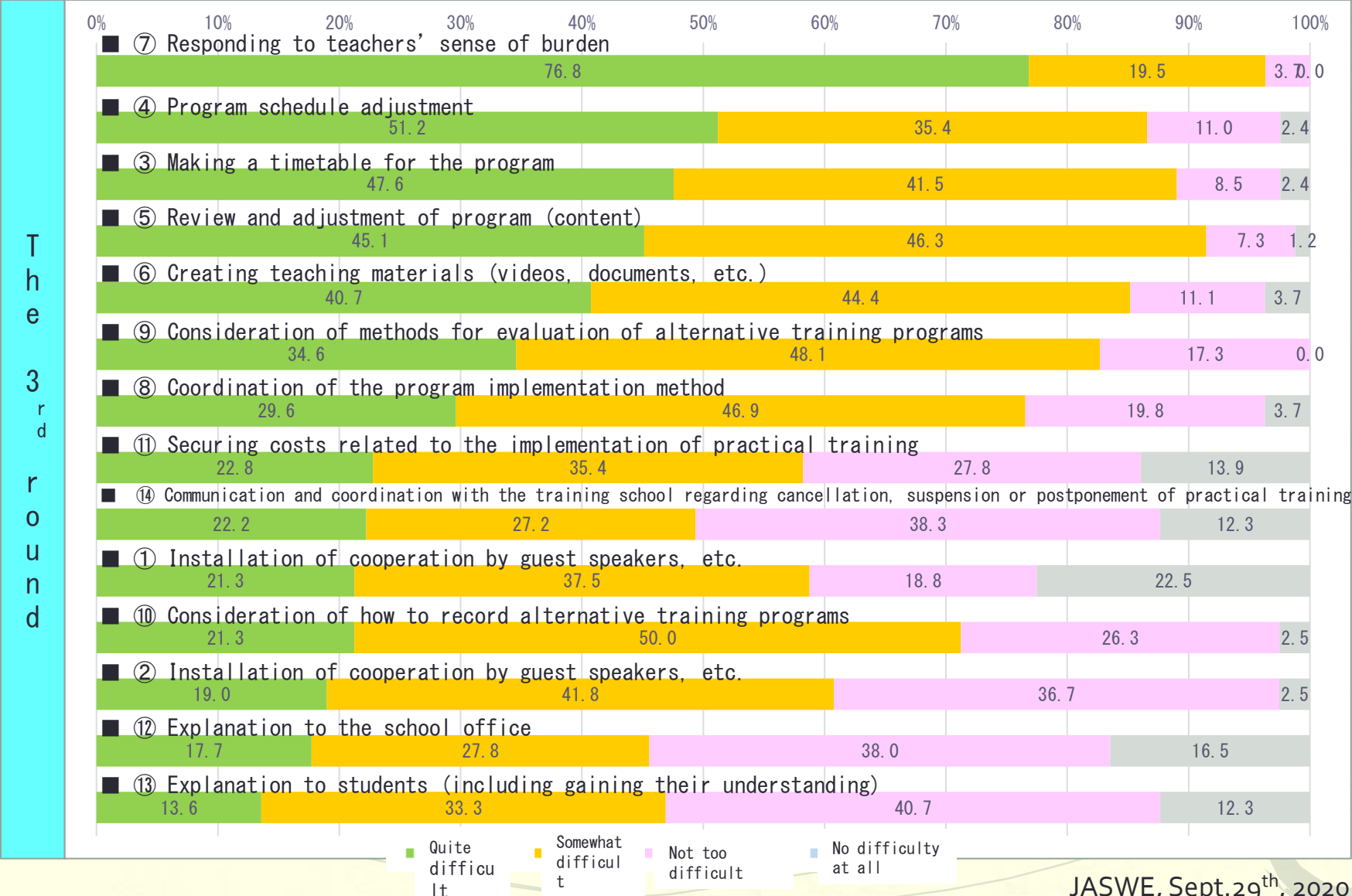
	N	%
Only regular practicum	81	46.8%
Mixing of regular and alternative programs	69	39.9%
Only alternative programs	20	11.6%
Other	3	1.7%
Total	173	100.0%

### Q13: Changes from the previous practice implementation policy since July



	N	%
Yes	66	38.2%
No	105	60.7%
Unknown	2	1.2%
Total	173	100.0%

Q17 : Difficulties in preparing for or creating an alternative training program





# How can social work education teach and foster Social Solidarity during the pandemic?

- Explore the meaning and necessity of social solidarity in social work, both academically and personally
- Provide opportunities to share anxiety in crisis situations and to learn how to cope with it personally, and also as a profession with solidarity
- Utilize and evaluate various digital tools in social work practice and teaching
- Learn intervening methods for crisis and risk management
- Analyze the needs of vulnerable people in the pandemic and come up with necessary social work measures
- Welfare and human rights education in the community
- Provide appropriate infection control education for clients, families, as well as social & care workers
- Analyze the interrelationship between the local and the global, and emphasize glocal social work practice