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## Overview

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### Title:

Consumer lifestyle changes and sources of information during the COVID-19 pandemic

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### ● Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a major impact on consumers' lives and consumer behavior. In order to curb panic behavior and prevent trouble to consumers during emergencies, appropriate provision of information that takes into account actual changes in consumers' lifestyles is required. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore how to ensure appropriate information provision to avoid confusion during an emergency by identifying differences in consumer attributes and characteristics based on their most important information sources, in addition to changes in consumer lifestyles under state of emergency declarations and the factors that influenced these changes.

For the analysis, we used data from a web-based survey conducted by the Consumer Affairs Agency in March 2021 covering people in their 20s to 70s nationwide. The survey was conducted during the pandemic, with a second state of emergency having been declared in the four prefectures of Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa.

Over the one-year period since the initial outbreak of COVID-19, consumers' lifestyles underwent changes compared to before the pandemic. There was a particular decrease in the amount of time spent interacting with friends and acquaintances, a change that was observed nationwide, regardless of whether the area in question was subject to a state of emergency declaration. Psychologically, there was rather a tendency for slightly greater anxiety in areas not subject to emergency declarations. The difference between areas subject to emergency declarations and those that were not was also limited with regard to moves back to previous lifestyles over time.

Factors that influence changes in lifestyle include "type of employment" (part-time, temporary employment, self-employment, etc.) with respect to decreased income, and "women" with respect to decreased frequency of shopping and time spent with friends and acquaintances. Despite that, it was suggested that regardless of times of emergency, changing the frequency of shopping may be difficult.

There was also a tendency for the information sources seen as most important by consumers to differ particularly by age group. Information provided by the government tended to be more important for the older age groups and those with more years of education.

The above results confirm that it is important to ensure information provision that takes into account the significant impact on consumers' lives and psychology, regardless of whether an area

is subject to a state of emergency declaration. It is clear that, particularly in times of emergency when confusion can easily cause, there is a need to provide reliable information from the government in a way that is accessible and easy to understand for young consumers and consumers with fewer years of education.