



Overview of Consultations Regarding Consumer Affairs during the COVID-19 Crisis

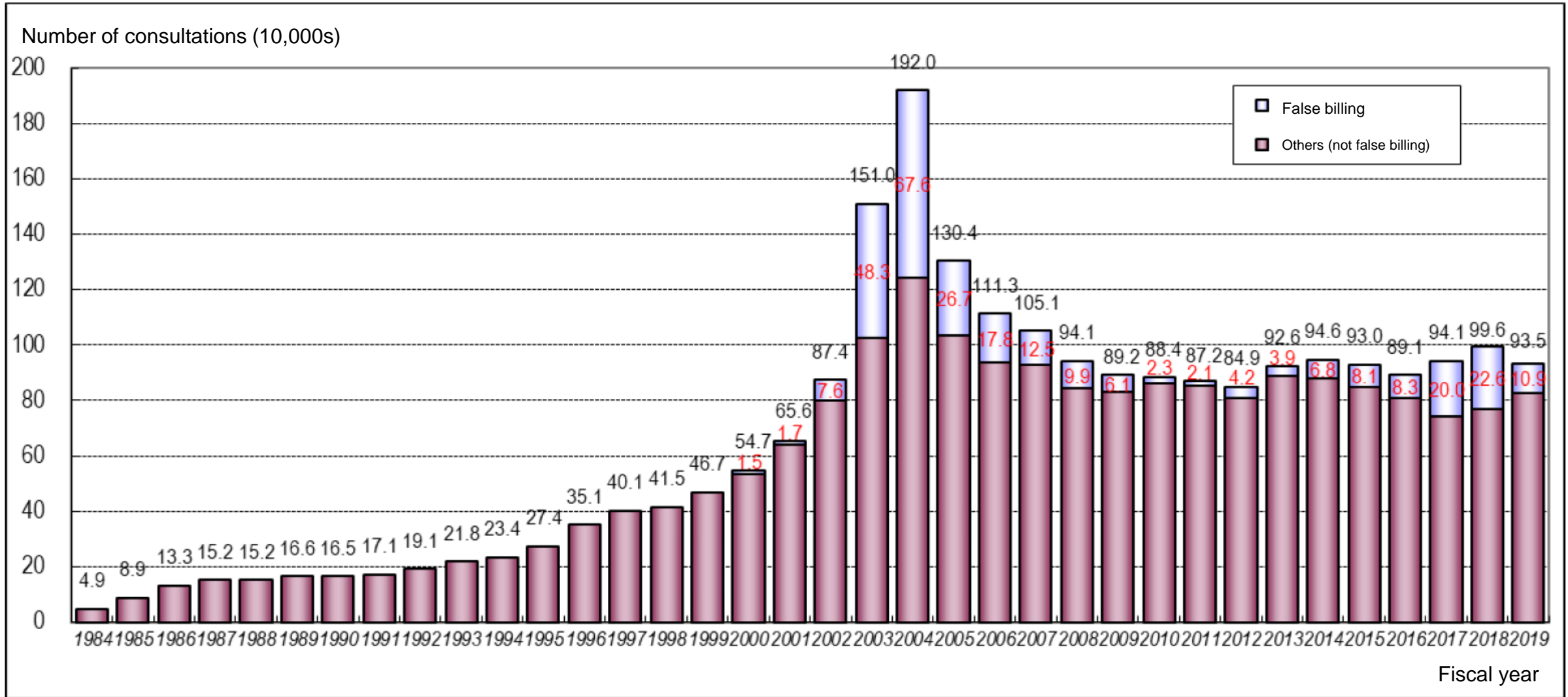
- Changes in the total number of consultation cases regarding consumer affairs by fiscal year
- Consultations on problems associated with “consumer affairs under the new normal”
- Overview of consultations regarding consumer affairs relating to COVID-19

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National Consumer Affairs Center of Japan

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Changes in the total number of consultation cases regarding consumer affairs by fiscal year



(The number of false billings has been counted since FY 2000.)

(Note 1) The data in this document is based on the "Consumer Affairs Consultations from PIO-NET Nationwide Data" in the "Annual Report on Consumer Affairs 2020" published on October 7, 2020. PIO-NET (Practical Living Information Online Network System) is a database that connects the National Consumer Affairs Center and local consumer affairs centers across the country via an online network and stores information regarding consultations pertaining to consumer affairs. Referred consultations from consumer affairs centers, etc. are not included.

Consultations regarding problems with online shopping are on the rise!



Main topics of consultations

(1) “Trial” subscriptions

(Health foods, cosmetics, beverages)

- Advertised as “free samples” but requires multiple purchases
- Significant number of problems among minors

(2) Personal items

(Men’s and women’s clothing, bags, shoes, furniture)

- Problems with fraudulent mail order sites
“I didn’t receive the product I ordered,”
“I received inferior or counterfeit products,” etc.

(3) Masks, thermometers, disinfectant supplies

- Products to prevent Covid-19 infection (from February 2020 onwards)
“They’re sold at high prices,” “Product hasn’t arrived,”
“I received an inferior product,” etc.

(4) Contractual problems with services

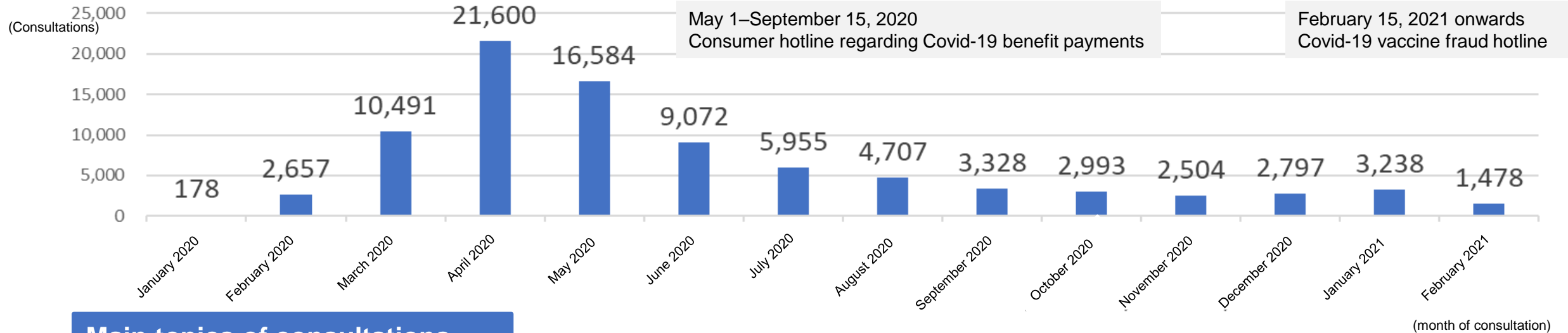
- Digital content such as movie streaming services
- Online games on smartphones and game consoles

(Note 2) The data in this document represents consultations registered to PIO-NET before February 28, 2021.

(Note 3) The “Main topics of consultations” are based on the National Consumer Affairs Center’s report, “An increase of consultations due to the “consumer affairs under the new normal? Be wary of online shopping problems!” (September 17, 2020)

Number of consultations relating to COVID-19

About 87,000 (January 2020–February 2021)



Main topics of consultations

(1) Masks

- Shortages, high prices (until April 2020)
- Negative option marketing (April–May 2020), online shopping (April 2020 onwards)

(2) Travel and accommodation related, gyms, yoga classes, wedding venues, etc.

- Cancellations, cancellation fees

(3) Toilet paper, disinfectant, thermometers

- Shortages
- Online shopping (March–May 2020)
- Downward trend since June 2020
- Sharp increase in consultations about pulse oximeters since January 2021

(4) Malicious business practices taking advantage of COVID-19

- Theft of personal information, cash cards, bank account numbers, etc. (April to May 2020)

- * Schemes that took advantage of the special benefit payments (April 2020 onwards)
- * Schemes proposing fraudulent receipt of business subsidies (July 2020 onwards)

(5) Consultations regarding COVID-19 Vaccines

- Suspicious phone calls about vaccinations
- Offers of investment in vaccine development, etc.

(Note 4) The data in this document represents consultations registered to PIO-NET before February 28, 2021. The "COVID-19 related" category covers consumer affairs consultations where COVID-19 is thought to be a factor behind the consultation.

(Note 5) "Main topics of consultations" is based on the National Consumer Affairs Center's "Summary of Consumer Affairs Consultations Related to COVID-19 (January – April 2020)" (May 19, 2020) and "Summary of Consumer Affairs Consultations Related to COVID-19 (up to August 2020)," (September 17, 2020) with recent consultation trends added.