

Poll finds misconceptions about suicide

Kyodo News

Half of the public mistakenly believes that individuals who refer to the possibility of committing suicide rarely take their own lives, according to a Cabinet Office survey.

The poll also found that 46 percent of the respondents hold the erroneous notion that people who kill themselves do so suddenly, without exhibiting any warning signs.

"Many show signs before committing suicide" despite the prevailing misconception, said a Cabinet Office official in charge of countering suicide. "It is necessary to organize a public information campaign to help people to develop correct notions."

Elderly people were more likely to believe people kill themselves without any warning, with 57.9 percent of the respondents in their 70s or older giving this answer, compared with 39.6 percent of the respondents in their 20s.

Slightly more than 66 percent of all respondents were aware that more than 30,000 Japanese have committed suicide each year since 1998, and that the number is four to five times higher than that of people killed in road accidents.

Among employers who took the survey, 45.8 percent said they monitor their workers' conditions at periodic health checkups as a countermeasure against suicide, and 19.4 percent said their workplaces provide counseling services.

The poll, conducted in May, received valid responses from 1,728 people aged 20 or older.

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