

To all members of the press



National Center for Global Health and Medicine  
Bureau of International Health Cooperation

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## Challenges in Vaccination, Testing, and Impoverishment Faced by Foreign Nationals

“A Survey on the Impact of COVID-19” among 1,000 Vietnamese people living in Japan  
Survey Results

### Major challenges to testing and vaccination are revealed

- Main reason for not getting tested is "concerns about the cost"
- Vaccination rates vary by status of residence
- Growing impoverishment: 1 in 4 "cannot afford rent"

The Bureau of International Health Cooperation of the National Center for Global Health and Medicine (NCGM) aims to help foreign residents in Japan access necessary information, receive support, and reach institutions. The organization also conducts various activities through Migrants' Neighbor Network & Action (MINNA), together with Our SDGs Task Force for Foreigners, Services for the Health in Asian and African Regions (SHARE), and the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO).

MINNA has conducted a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on the Vietnamese community via the “TAIHEN” Facebook page, which has high access by hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese people living in Japan. 929 responses were collected and upon analysis, challenges related to information dissemination and the needs for support were identified.

The summary of the results is described in the following.

### Survey outline

**Survey title:** Challenges in Vaccination, Testing, and Impoverishment Faced by Foreign Nationals

“A Survey of the Impact of COVID-19” on Approximately 1,000 Vietnamese Residents in Japan”

**Participants:** 929 Vietnamese people living in Japan

**Period:** January 17 – 30, 2022

**Method:** Anonymous survey via “TAIHEN,” a Facebook group for Vietnamese people living in Japan.

**Respondents Characteristics:** **[Gender]** 47% women, 53% men; **[Age]** 80% are 20s, 17% are in 30s

**[Resident status]** Technical interns (32%), international students (29%), technicians (13%), specified skilled workers (9%)

## **The main reason for not getting tested is their "concerns about the cost"**

### **3 out of 10 symptomatic patients could not get tested**

Twenty-seven percent of Vietnamese people said they had not been tested for COVID-19 even though they had symptoms. The two most common reasons given were, "it would cost too much" (58%), and "did not know where they could get tested" (45%) (multiple choice). 64% of untested symptomatic people said that they "do not have a place or person they can immediately go to when they get sick."

These results indicate that the Vietnamese community in Japan has not been able to reach appropriate information sources, such as the national and local governments. There is lack of supporting environment in which they can seek advice. Failure to get tested can be a public health problem due to its inability for proper isolation.

## **Vaccination coverage varies by the status of residence**

### **Only 21% of those with an expired status of residence were vaccinated**

The vaccination rate of the COVID-19 vaccine among the respondents to this survey was high at 91%. However, differences were found in vaccination rates by the status of residence; 93% of international students and 96% of technical interns were vaccinated, compared to 40% for persons under provisional release, and 21% for those whose status of residence had expired. Reasons for not getting vaccinated included are "fear of adverse reactions" (38%), "wanting to be vaccinated but not having time" (31%), "not knowing if they were eligible" (23%), and concern about "trouble with the status of residence" (19%) (multiple choice).

Since vaccination coupons are only mailed to those who are listed in the Basic Resident Registry, some people may not receive them depending on their status of residence. Without a vaccination coupon, people wishing to get vaccinated will need to inquire the local government on their own and this is a major barrier for foreigners who do not speak Japanese. In addition, the local government may not be able to adequately handle this kind of cases as issuing vaccination coupons may differ depending on the status of residence.

## **Worsening impoverishment**

### **1 in 4 people "cannot afford rent"**

In this survey, 52% of respondents indicated that they are "having issues with housing". Furthermore, when asked about other difficulties, respondents said they "could not afford rent" (24% of all respondents), "could not afford tuition" (65% of international students), and "had less money to spend on food" (87% of all respondents)(multiple choice). Thus, we found that many Vietnamese people are becoming impoverished. Forty-six percent of all respondents answered that "they have no one they can consult immediately" if they become physically ill. A place where people can consult regarding any daily life difficulties, including mental and physical health issues, is necessary.

## **Future implications seen from this survey**

This survey revealed the reality that many Vietnamese people in Japan are in distress from the effects of COVID-19. The possible reasons include the inability to receive necessary information about COVID-19, barriers in accessing tests and vaccines, and there is an inadequate system in which people can seek advice on daily life problems. With the further relaxation of border control measures for COVID-19, it will become even more necessary to provide foreigners with proper information and support systems. Regarding the vaccination, foreigners is reportedly having a lower rate than that of Japanese people. WHO states that "the principle is to guarantee all migrants and refugees access to the COVID-19 vaccine regardless of their status of residence"\* . The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health crisis and as emphasized by multiple international organizations, "No one is

safe until everyone is safe". To end the pandemic and to keep everyone safe, measures against COVID-19 must be promoted to ensure that no one, including foreigners, is left behind.

\* World Health Organization. (2021) . COVID-19 immunization in refugees and migrants: principles and key considerations: interim guidance, 31 August 2021. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/344793>

## About Migrants Information Network & Action

The Migrants' Neighbor Network & Action (MINNA) aims to help foreigners living in Japan access the information, support, and systems they need. The organization is run by four organizations: 1. Our SDGs Task Force for Foreigners, 2. Services for the Health in Asian and African Regions (SHARE), 3. Bureau of International Health Cooperation, National Center for Global Health and Medicine, and 4. Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO).



Website of MINNA Health Project

## About the Bureau of International Health Cooperation, NCGM

The Bureau of International Health Cooperation, NCGM is Japan's leading international health cooperation organization in the field of healthcare. We provide assistance to improve medical care and health in low- and middle-income countries in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the World Health Organization (WHO), and others. Additionally, we are utilizing our experience in low and middle-income countries to conduct various activities, such as supporting foreign residents in Japan, dispatching human resources to local governments, and providing healthcare support during disasters.

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