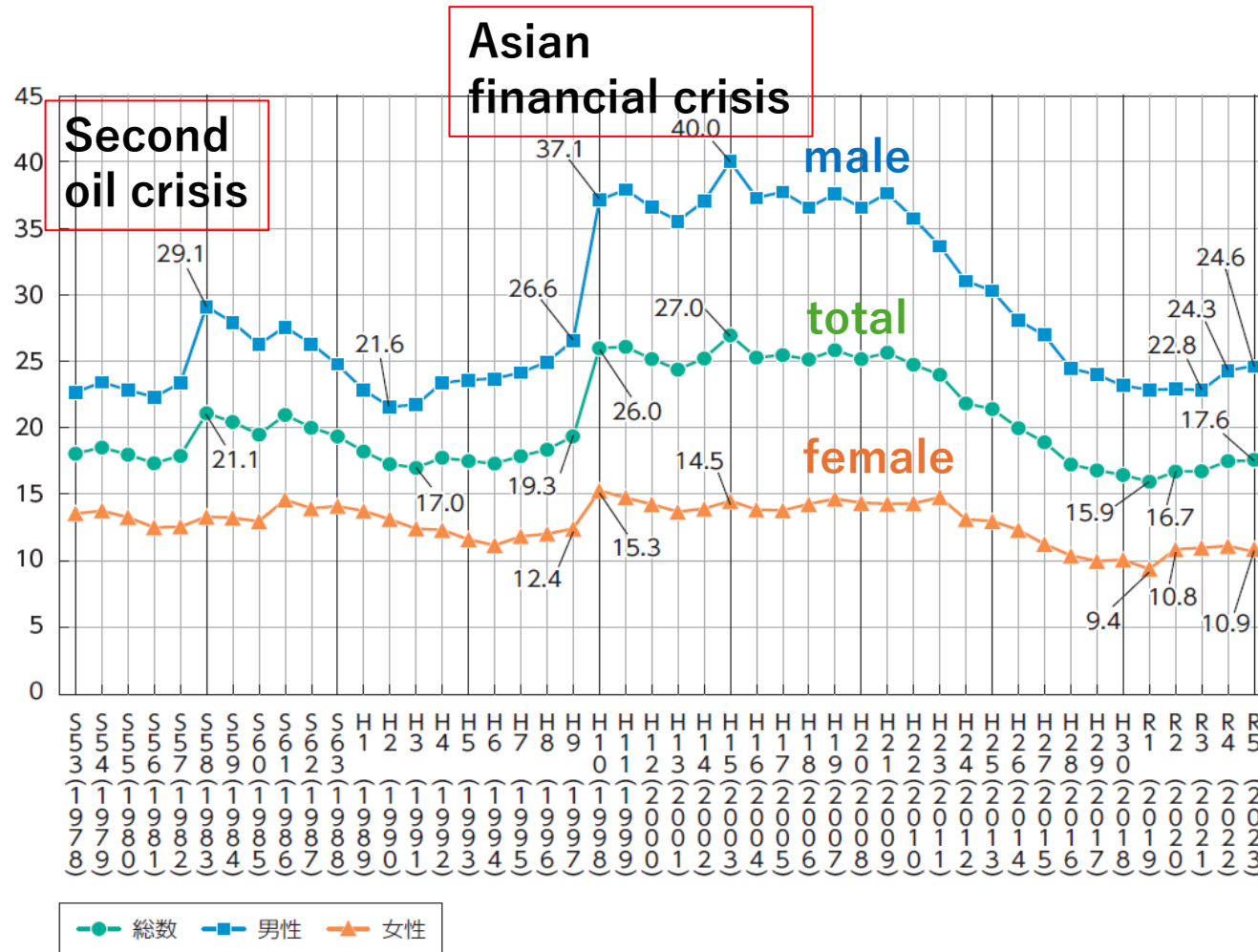


Suicide and Prevention Measures for Young People

Kenji Kawano

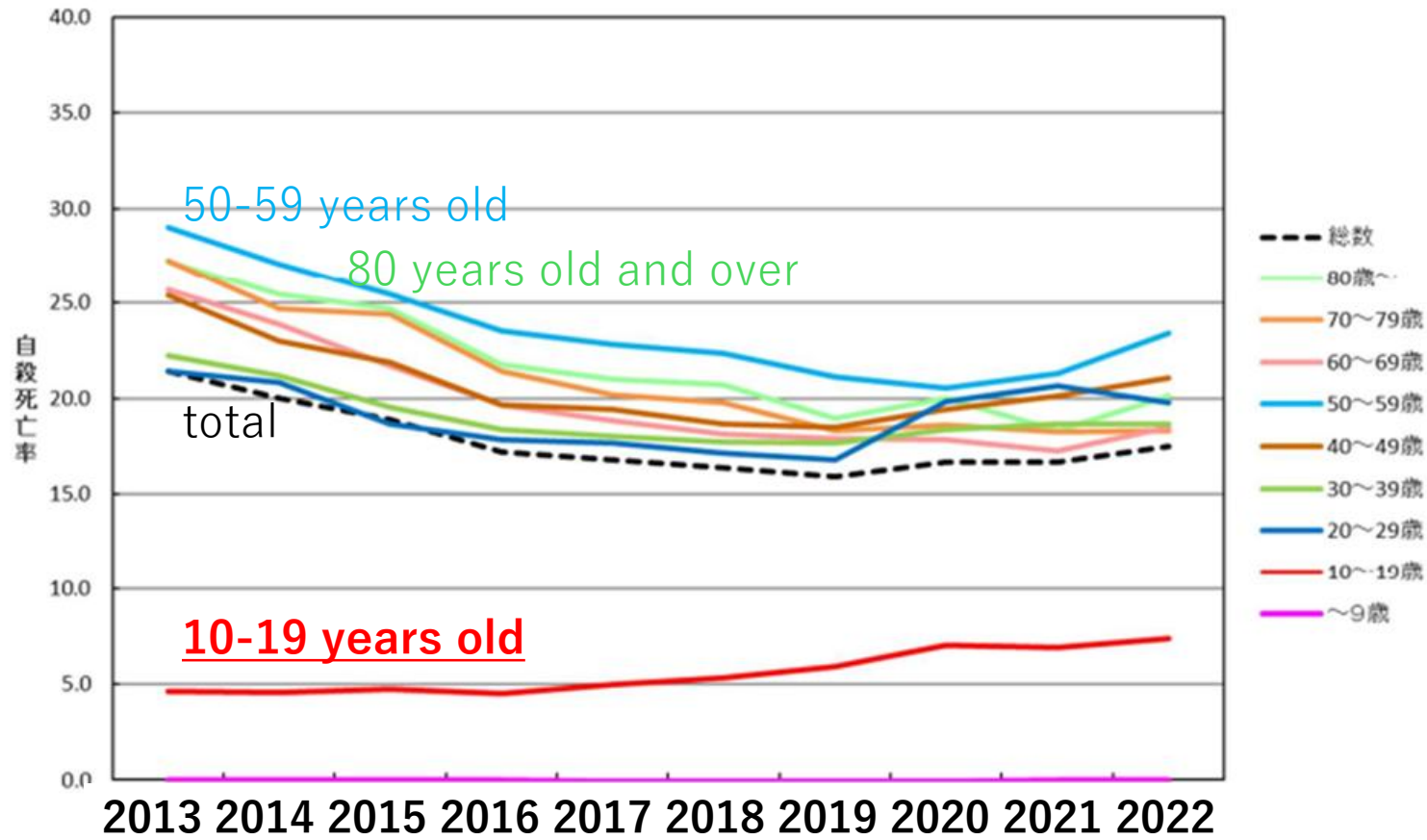
College of Comprehensive Psychology, Ritsumeikan University

Suicide in Japan



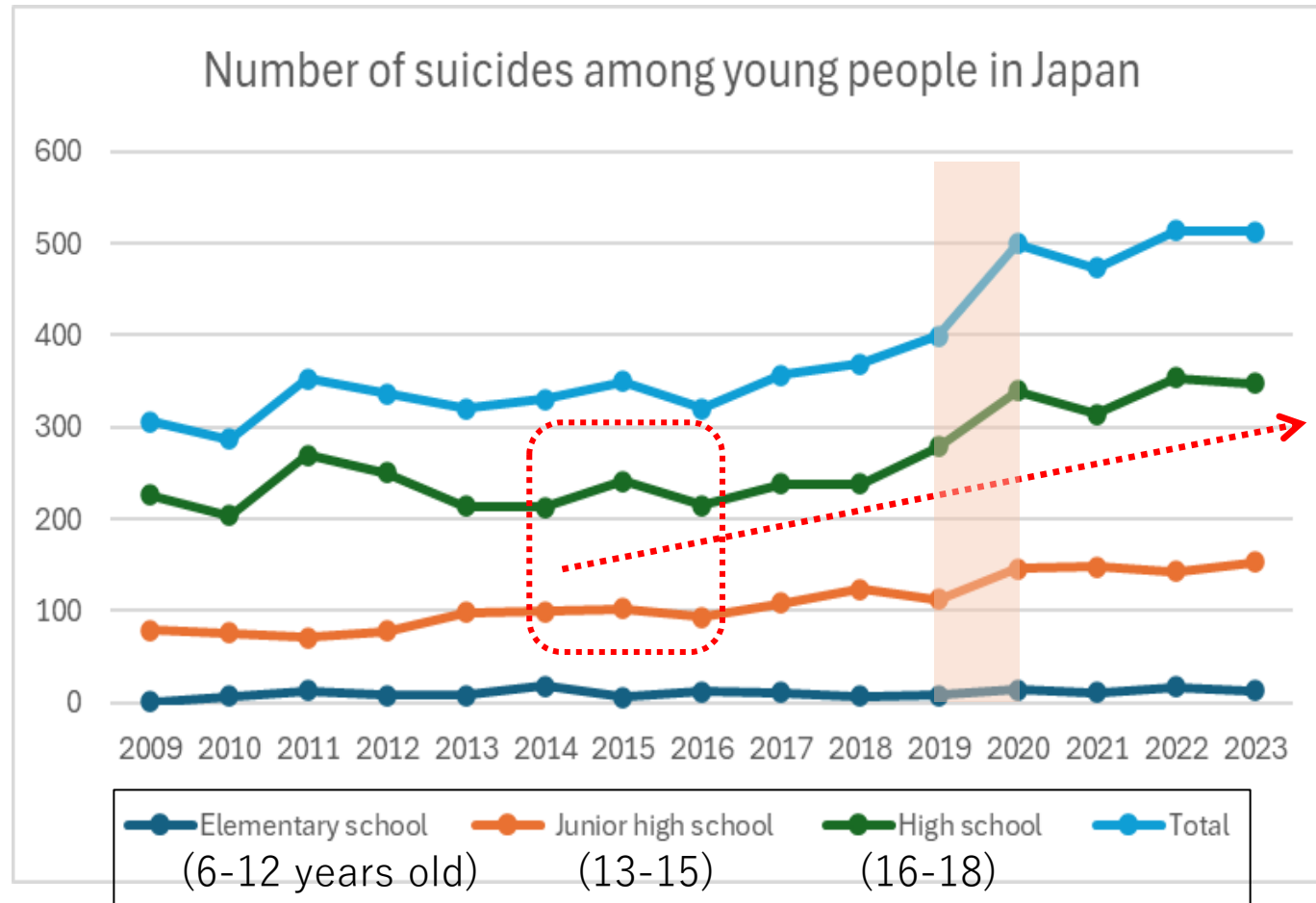
- The number of suicides in Japan and the suicide mortality rate are closely linked to economic indicators.
- The peaks in Japan's suicide mortality rate correspond to two economic deteriorations: the second oil shock and the Asian financial crisis.

Suicide in Japan



- The suicide mortality rate among middle-aged and older people is high, and many measures have been taken for this age group.
- Most age groups have shown a decrease in suicide rates since 2013.
- The younger age group (teens) has shown a different pattern.

Changes in the number of suicides among Japanese schoolchildren and hypotheses about this

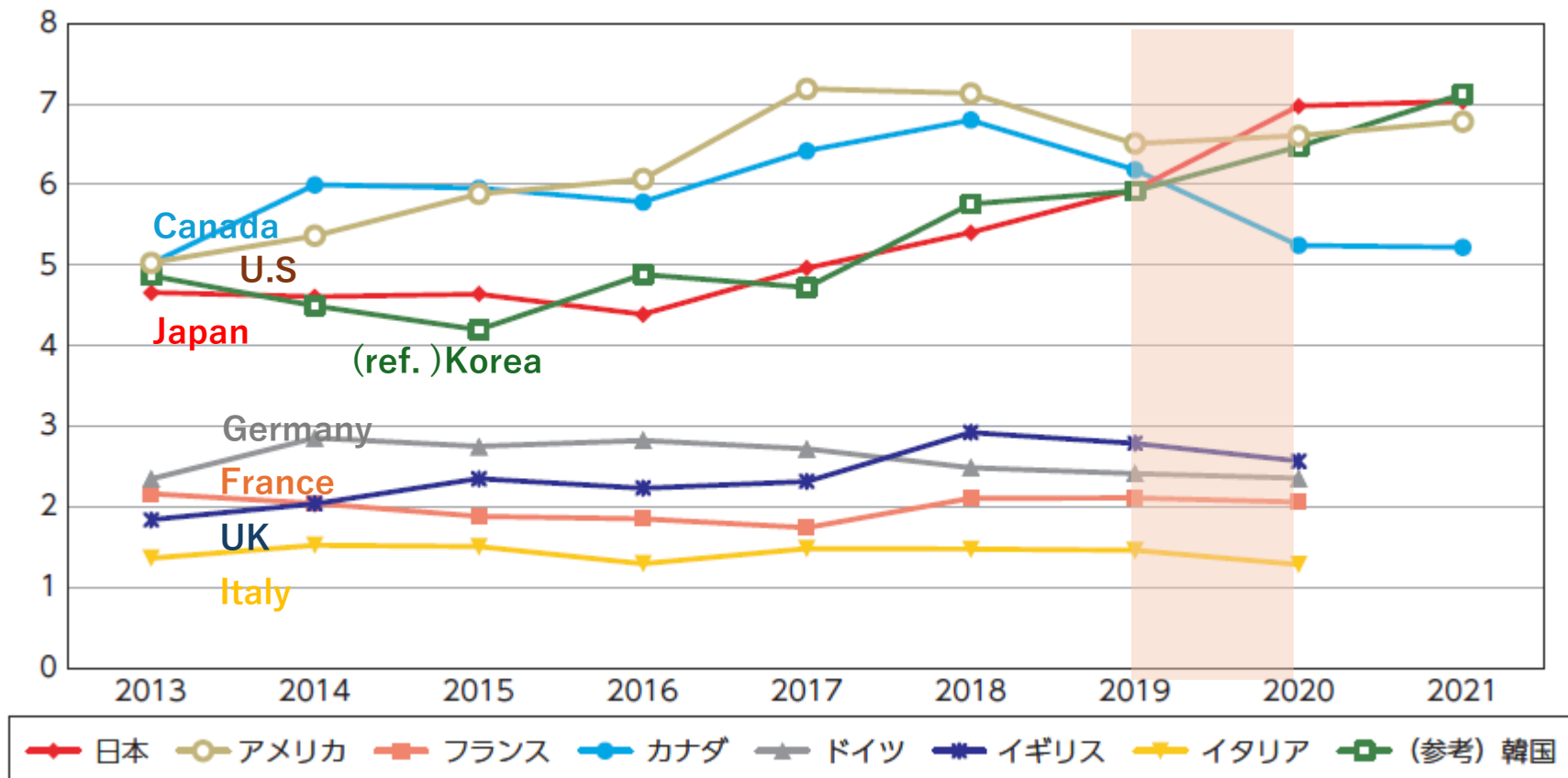


White Paper on Suicide Prevention 2024

1. The number of suicides among schoolchildren increased between 2019 and 2020
 - Impact of the pandemic(2020)
2. The number of suicides among junior high school and high school students increased from around 2014 to 2016
 - Impact of the new Pharmaceutical Affairs Law(2014)
3. The number of suicides among schoolchildren does not show a decreasing trend like other age groups
 - Impact of changes in students' social relationships

1. Impact of the pandemic (2020)

Trends in suicide mortality rates among teenagers



- Among the G7 countries, only Japan has seen the pandemic impact suicide rates among young people.

Impact of the pandemic on student suicides- changes in school environment

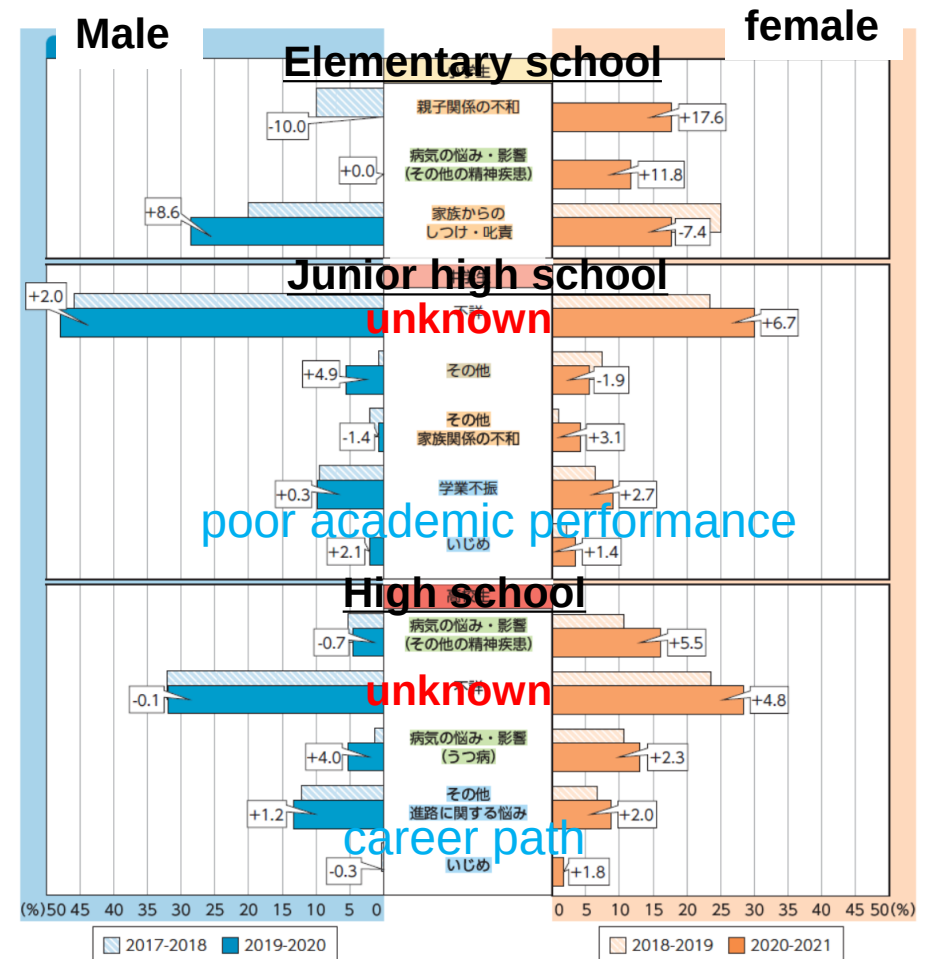
- During the first five months of the pandemic (Feb-Jun 2020), when there were generous government subsidies and reduced working hours, the monthly suicide rate for the total population decreased by 14%, but in contrast, the monthly suicide rate in the second wave (Jul to Oct 2020) rose by 16%, with a particularly large increase in the suicide rates for women (37%) and children and adolescents (49%) (Tanaka & Okamoto, 2021)
- Adachi (2023) pointed out that the pandemic made it difficult to manage the school environment and daily life, and that this had a significant impact on children with developmental disabilities.

Causes and motives for suicide changed before and after the pandemic

- Among junior high school students, the number with **unknown** or **poor academic performance** increased.
- Among high school students, the number of **unknown** also increased, and the worries about illness and **career paths** also increased.

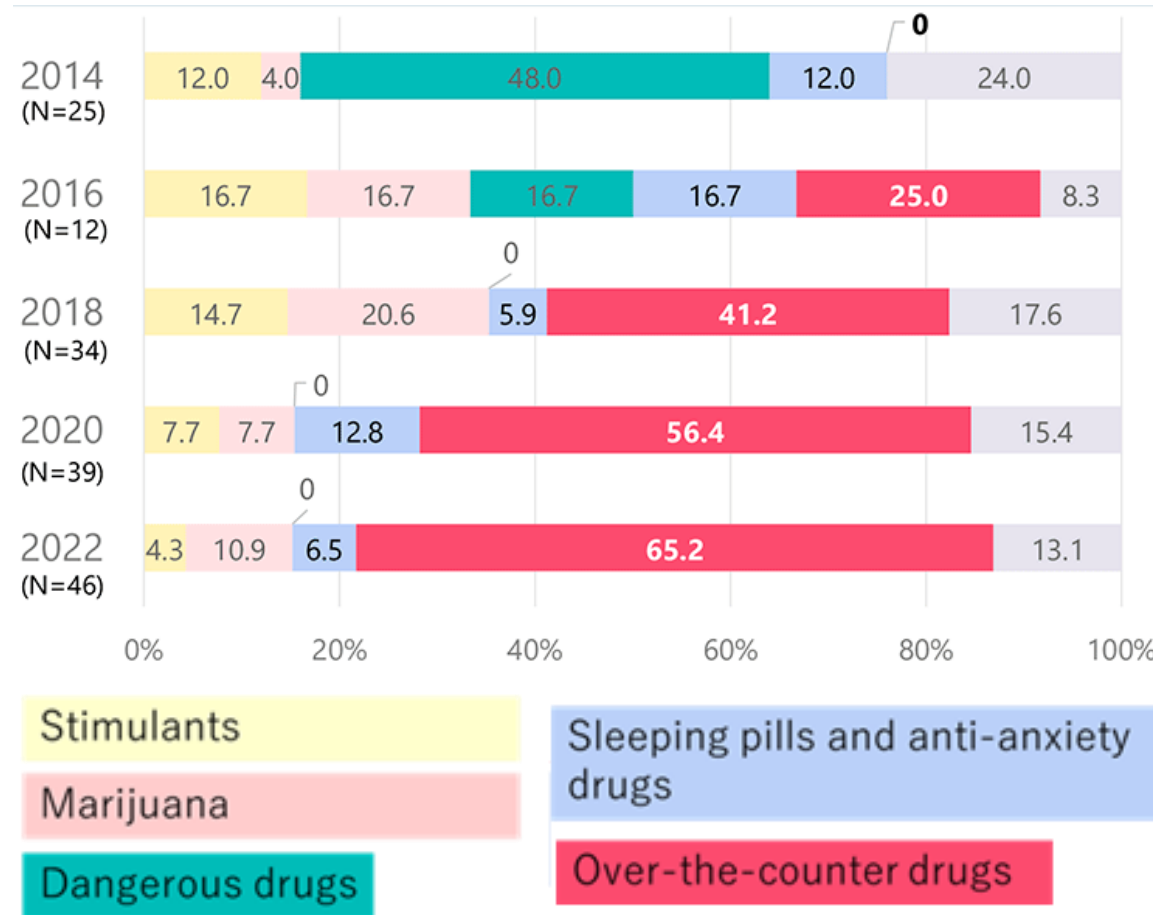
★Data on the impact of the pandemic on youth suicide are limited.

Causes and motives for suicide



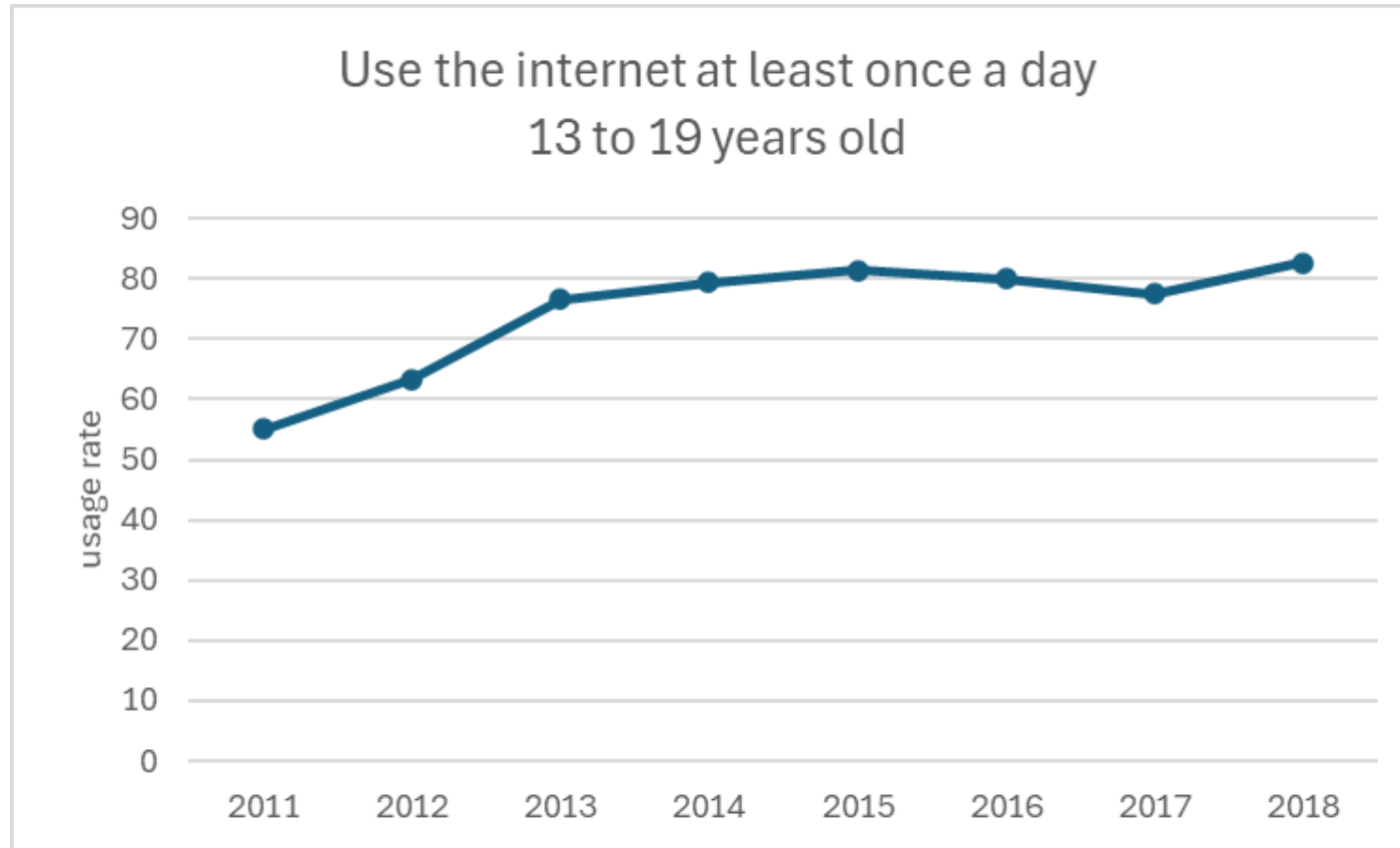
2.Impact of the new Pharmaceutical Affairs Law (2014)

Changes in **the “primary drug” of teenage patients** who received treatment for drug dependence (NCNP Japan)



- The new Pharmaceutical Affairs Law (2014) made it possible to purchase over-the-counter drugs online.
- The chart shows a survey of drug-related mental disorders at psychiatric facilities nationwide
- The proportion of over-the-counter drugs is increasing (NCNP Japan).
- Eto (2022) pointed out from his clinical experience that abuse of over-the-counter drugs by teenagers in their teens may have contributed to the increase in suicides in 2020.

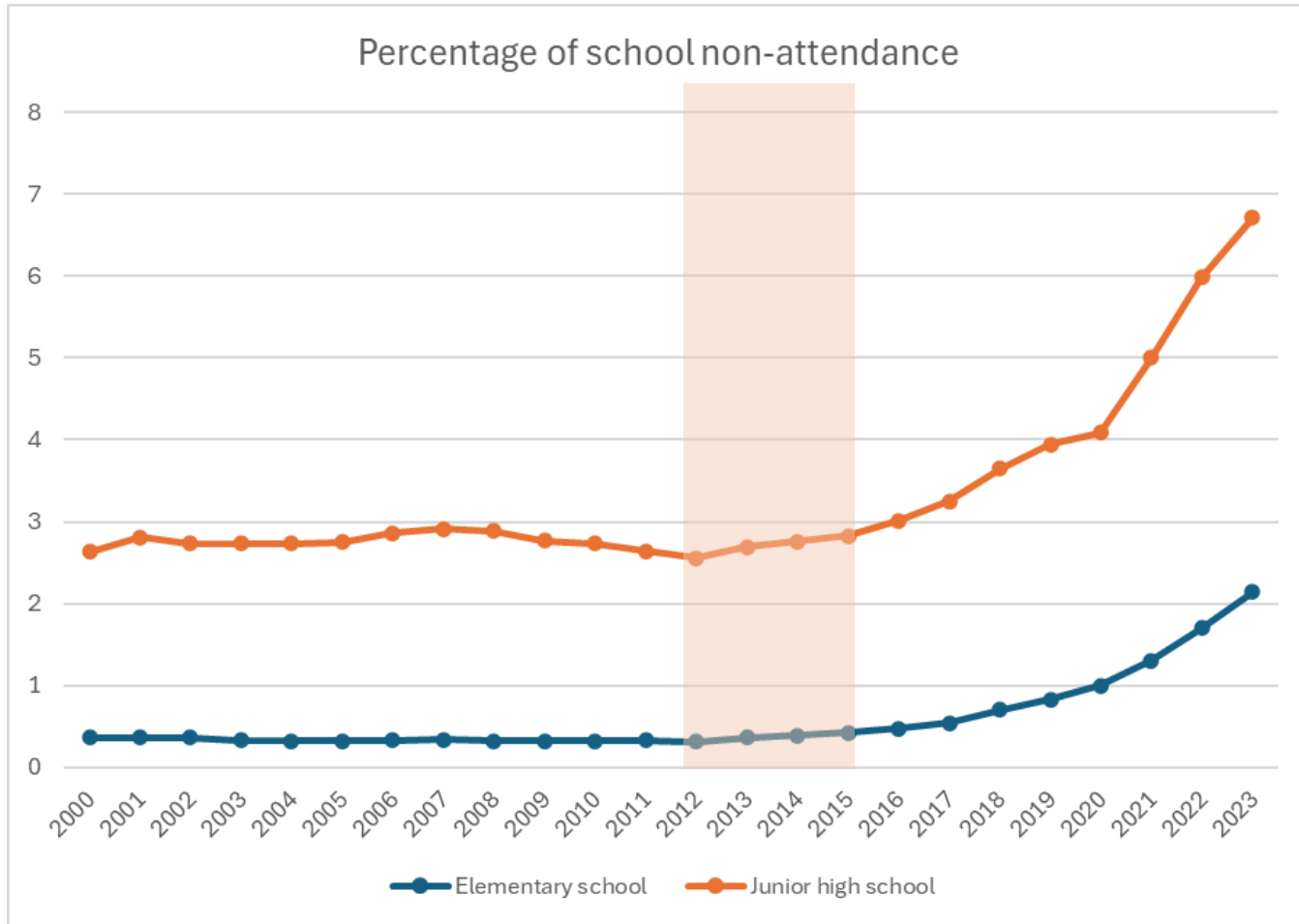
3. Impact of changes in students' social relationships



Communications Usage Trend Survey
(Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2024)

- At the same time as the new Pharmaceutical Affairs Law (2014), the internet usage rate among teenagers reached 80%.
- The spread of the internet was a background factor that made it easier to buy over-the-counter drugs.

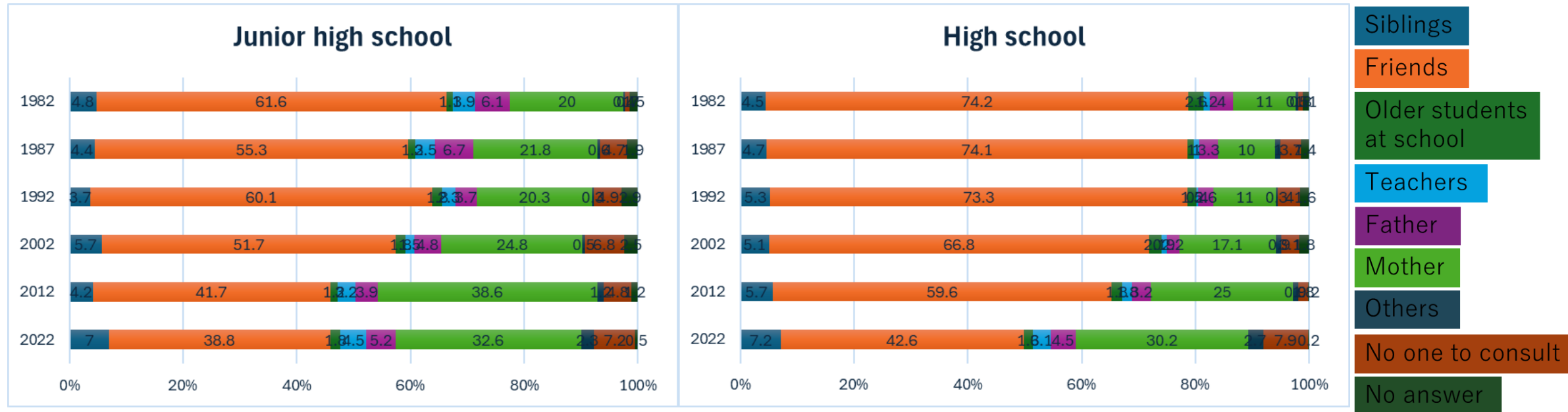
Impact of changes in students' social relationships



- At the same time, the number of elementary and junior high school students not attending school began to increase.
- In other words, the number of students for whom school is no longer a safe place to be has increased.

Impact of changes in students' social relationships

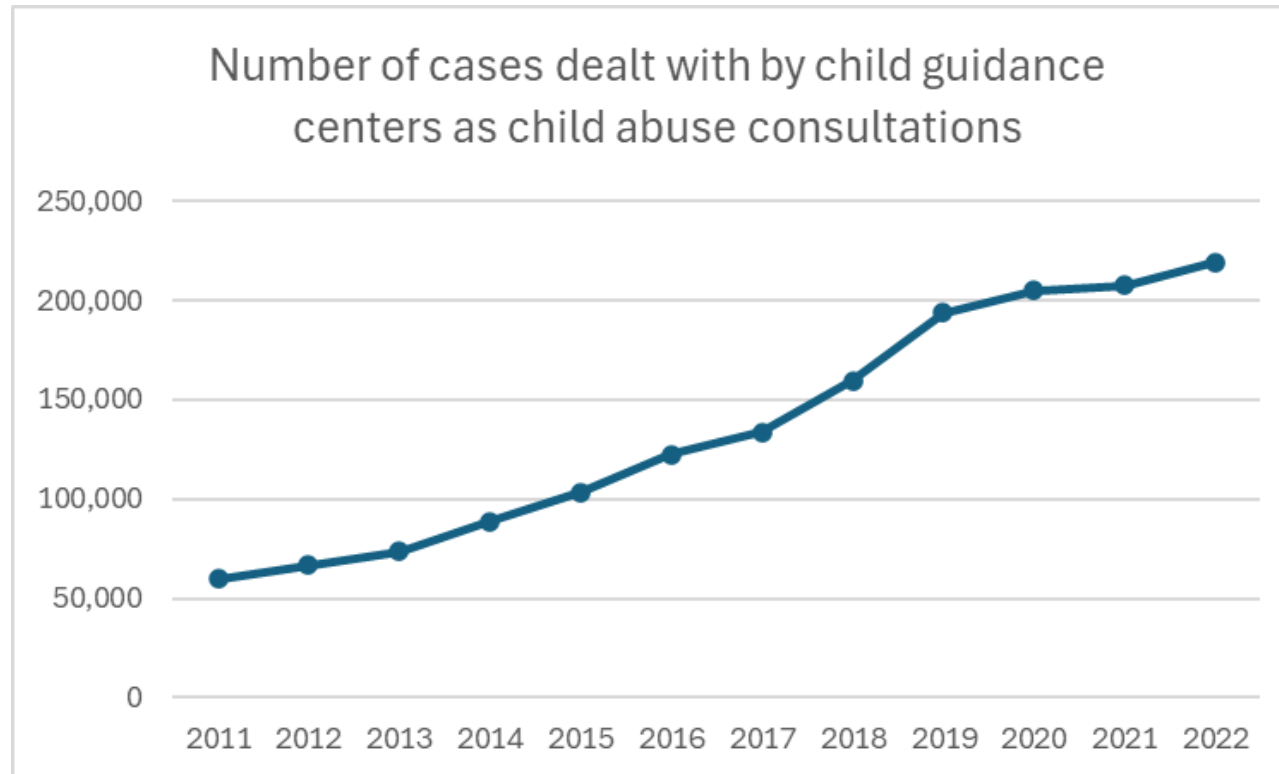
Main people to talk to about worries and concerns



NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute (2023)

- In 1982, the main people junior high and high school students consulted about worries and concerns were their friends, but this has gradually decreased, and instead, the number of students consulting their mothers has increased.

Impact of changes in students' social relationships



- Child abuse is increasing every year, and for some children, even the security of their home is being lost.

★ Alongside the shrinkage of students' two social environments, school and home, the world of the internet is expanding.

https://www.cfa.go.jp/assets/contents/node/basic_page/field_ref_resources/a176de99-390e-4065-a7fb-fe569ab2450c/12d7a89f/20230401_policies_jidouguyakutai_19.pdf

- If we assume that students' social relationships are shrinking and that the world of the internet is their new place to be, there are two approaches that can be taken with students who are at high risk of suicide:
- give them support available online
- help them to redesign their social relationships.

Government Emergency Strengthening Plan for Measures to Prevent Child Suicide

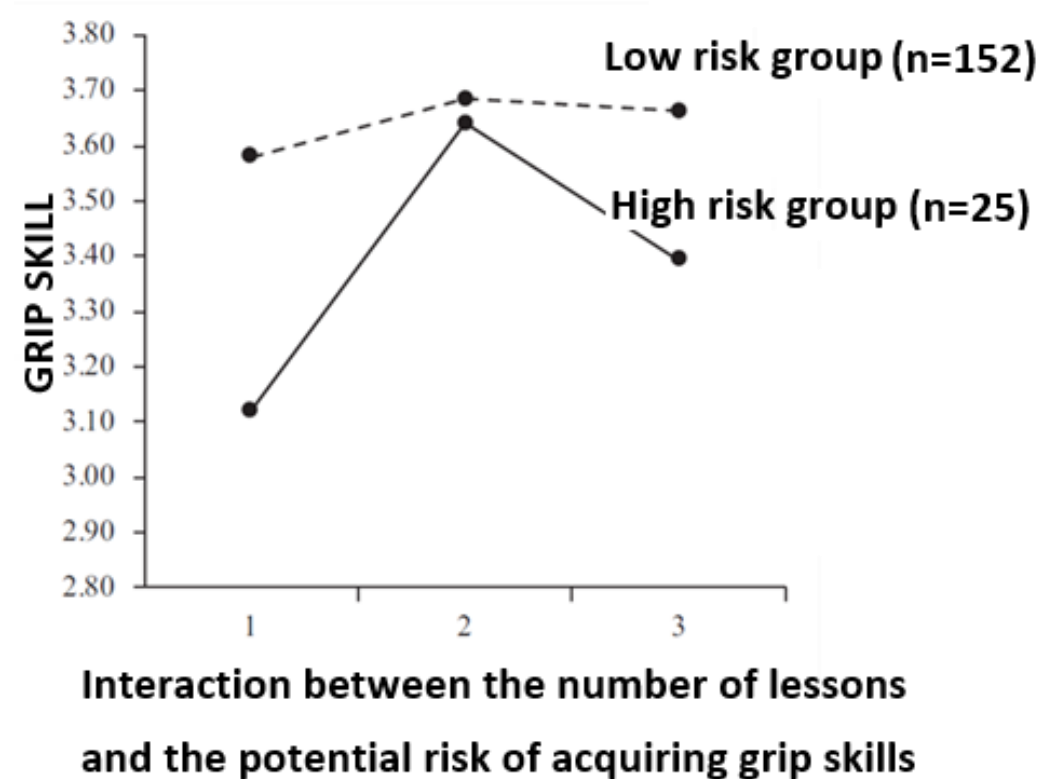
1. Analysis of factors contributing to child suicide
 - In addition to various statistics, implementation of child death reviews
2. **Education and awareness-raising activities that contribute to suicide prevention**
3. **Early detection of suicide risk**
 - **Standardization of a system for identifying suicide risk using tablets distributed to each student**
4. Development of a consultation system using telephone, **SNS**, etc.
5. Crisis response for suicide prevention
 - Model project for “Child and Youth Suicide Crisis Response Team”
6. Support for bereaved children
7. Cooperation between relevant government ministries regarding measures for child suicide

- Students learn the four steps of finding words to express their feelings, using coping behaviours, telling others about themselves, and interacting with others through worksheets, card games, watching videos, and group discussions(kawano et al., 2018)
- The important thing is to work on this program together with classmates and teachers.
- Through this experience, you can find someone you can talk to with confidence when you really need it.



Implementation for junior high school students in the latent risk group

- We have taken the behavioral inhibition system as a vulnerability factor for suicide in this program(Harada et al.,2019).
- It has been reported that a combination of high behavioural inhibition (BIS) and low behavioural approach (BAS) increases the risk of suicide (Rasmussen et al., 2012).
- The GRIP program has confirmed that even such a potential risk group for suicide can acquire the ability to seek help.



A survey of the actual situation is desired

- School as a factor that has a significant impact on teenage suicide in Japan
- Necessary to consider the possibility that vulnerability factors
- The social relationships provided by schools and even families is shrinking. This makes it difficult for support to reach them, and that it also makes it easier for them to access drugs.
- The potential of online support and suicide prevention education
- However, this report is merely a hypothesis based on available observational data. A survey of the actual situation, including psychological autopsies, is desired.