

## Column 3 Promoting support for digital usage by the elderly

### 1. Current state of digital divide among the elderly

The “Priority Policy Program toward the Realization of a Digital Society” that was decided by the Cabinet on December 24, 2021, states that Japan aims to realize a digital society that “leaves no one behind.” However, the

opinion poll of the Cabinet Office released in January 2021 shows that 25.7% of people in their 60s and 57.8% of people in their 70s are unable to use ICT equipment including smartphones; the ratio rises as age rises.<sup>47</sup>

### 2. “Project on Digital Utilization Support for Users”

MIC is working on a “Project on Digital Utilization Support for Users” (“project” hereafter) to help every person to live a better life actively by using digital technologies. Under the project, workshops on use of smartphones for online administrative procedures are held across the country to help the elderly and other people who have worries about use of digital technologies. The project has been implemented since June 2021 in collaboration with private enterprises and local governments.

The workshops are provided by lecturers who completed the training designated by MIC. There is no age limit or fee for participation and anyone can participate any number of times. Two types of groups hold the workshops: nationwide groups, typically mobile phone shops, and; community-based groups cooperating with the local government, which include local ICT enterprises, councils of social welfare, and Silver Human Re-

source Centers. In fiscal 2021, 2,143 nationwide groups and 198 community-based groups were adopted. The numbers are far greater than MIC’s expectation and show nationwide keen interest in this project. The workshop menus that can be implemented vary depending on the type. The community-based type can implement: the “basic course” including smartphone operations such as how to turn on power and use the internet, and the more in-depth “applied course” including application for individual number card and online administrative procedures. On the other hand, nationwide type can implement only the “applied course.” The portal site of the project provides teaching materials and videos that can be used for participants to review what they have learned at the workshop. MIC hopes to help participants to establish smartphone use through repeated operations taking the opportunity of the workshop.

### 3. Future prospects of “Project on Digital Utilization Support for Users”

MIC plans to intensively implement this project for five years from fiscal 2021 to 2025, but thinks it is necessary to develop the initiatives of the project based on the needs by expanding both its quantity and quality in order to bridge the digital divide that continues to widen.

To this end, MIC plans to greatly increase the workshop locations to about 3,000 in fiscal 2022. Considering that 750 municipalities do not have any mobile phone shops<sup>48</sup>, MIC plans to start a new initiative to dispatch lecturers to support people in these areas.

<sup>47</sup> <https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/hutai/tindex-r02.html>

<sup>48</sup> Tabulated on November 10, 2021.