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TOPIC

Outline of the 2024 White Paper on Information and Communications in Japan

1. About the 2024 White Paper on Information and Communications in Japan

In July 2024, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) publicized the 2024 White Paper on Information and Communications in Japan.
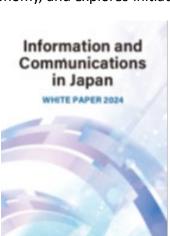
The White Paper is the 52nd edition since its predecessor was first published in 1973. The White Paper provides an overview of market trends in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) field and the current state of digital utilization, and summarizes the current status, issues, and future direction of information and communications policy. It also highlights two special features and related topics.

2. Key points of the special features in the White Paper

In response to the Noto Peninsula Earthquake on January 1, the White Paper features the following topics: "The Status of Information and Communications related to the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake" and "Living in Harmony with Evolving Digital Technologies."

Special feature 1, "The Status of Information and Communications related to the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake," summarizes the damage to the communications and broadcasting infrastructure following the earthquake, recovery efforts, the role of information and communications, issues encountered, and future initiatives.

Special feature 2, "Living in Harmony with Evolving Digital Technologies," covers the new opportunities and risks that AI and other latest technologies will bring to society and the economy, and explores initiatives for their sound utilization.

Information and Communications in Japan
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URL:https://www.soumu.go.jp/johotsusintokei/whitepaper/eng/WP2024/2024-index.html

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3. Special feature 1: The Status of Information and Communications related to the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake

(1) Chapter 1: The Status of Information and Communications related to the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake

The Noto Peninsula Earthquake on January 1, 2024 had a significant impact on the information and communications infrastructure, a vital lifeline for people's lives. For example, communication lines were severed and power outages occurred, primarily in the Hokuriku region, disrupting communication services as well as television and radio broadcasting. In response, private operators, local governments, and government agencies collaborated to implement initiatives for the early restoration of communications and broadcasting.

(2) Chapter 2: The Roles which the Information and Communications Took and Challenges

In the aftermath of the earthquake, TV broadcasting remained a primary means of information gathering, compared to the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Meanwhile, the use of social media grew, especially among the younger generation. Unfortunately, social media also spread uncertain or unverified information, leading to confusion.

To address issues highlighted by the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake, Japanese government will promote initiatives to strengthen mobile phone base stations and optical fiber and broadcasting networks. Regarding the distribution and spread of dis-/mis-information on the Internet, Japanese government is also considering comprehensive measures, including for institutional aspects.

4. Special feature 2: Living in Harmony with Evolving Digital Technologies

(1) Chapter 3: History of Digital Technologies

From its inception to the present, AI has evolved through cycles of booms and winters. The development of deep learning has contributed to the development of the metaverse, robotics, autonomous driving technology and other technological fields. The emergence of generative AI has also had a significant impact on industrial structure. These advances in digital technology are expected to help address social and economic challenges.

(2) Chapter 4: Issues and Current Responses to Digital Technologies

Evolving AI brings convenience to our lives, but it also poses a variety of risks. To address this, businesses, industry associations, and governments are considering countermeasures. Additionally, the rapid spread of AI has raised ethical and social issues, necessitating concerted efforts both domestically and internationally.

(3) Chapter 5: Penetration of Digital Technologies

The utilization of generative AI and other latest technologies in Japan is still low, compared to European countries and the U.S.. However, around 70% of people take a positive attitude toward its use, indicating a strong potential demand for these technologies.

(4) Chapter 6: Toward Living Further in Harmony with Digital Technologies

When the opportunities and risks of generative AI and other digital technologies are receiving more attention than ever before, the White Paper has summarized necessary initiatives to " live in harmony " with digital technologies. Coexisting with these technologies involves promoting their development and utilization while addressing challenges and risks, to benefit society as a whole.