

## **Citizens' concerns about the privacy of personal information held by government: a comparative study, Japan and New Zealand**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper reports an investigation of the concepts of information privacy and trust in government in Japan, and compares the findings with an earlier study in New Zealand which used a similar instrument. Cultural and other factors are sought which might explain differences in attitudes shown in the two studies. The responses of Japanese citizens interviewed indicated that they had major concerns about information privacy, knew little about any protection offered in law, and had considerably less trust in government than New Zealand respondents showed. Cultural factors that might contribute to these differences, such as the difference between a collectivist versus a more individualistic culture were reflected in some of the respondents' explanations of their views.*

### **1. Introduction**

Concepts such as privacy, attitudes to personal information and trust in government are inevitably influenced by personal experience and cultural factors, which will differ from country to country. Following an investigation of New Zealand citizens' concerns about information privacy, and the impact of this on their trust in government in 2005[1], an opportunity arose to explore the same issues with Japanese citizens, in order to identify any differences in perceptions, concerns, and the role of cultural factors in determining these. While Japan has a highly developed telecommunications infrastructure, an extensive broadband network, and high internet usage rates (67.2% of the population in 2005)[2], other aspects of Japanese culture suggest that overall lack of trust in government[3] and concerns about internet

security may impact on the confidence that citizens may have in the way that government agencies handle their personal information, especially in the online environment.

The initial study, based on a larger research project reported on the New Zealand e-government web site[4] discussed in some detail the concept of information privacy, using Westin's definition, "the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine for themselves when, how and to what extent information about them is communicated to others"[5], as well as the concepts of trust, and trust in government, and risks encountered by individual citizens in submitting personal information to government, citing in particular the work of Raab and Bennet [6,7]. The study investigated New Zealand citizen's concerns about the privacy of their personal information provided to government, and the impact of breaches of privacy on their trust in government, using a preliminary questionnaire and focus group discussions based around a set of scenarios of possible breaches of privacy. Respondents were invited to define their concept of information privacy, and many indicated that they believed privacy is related to being able to control "who knows what" about things related to their private lives. A number defined privacy in terms of types of information that they feel should be kept private and confidential (e.g., information related to health, finances, etc.). The study found that most respondents preferred face to face communication with government; had low levels of confidence in the privacy of online communication but made use of it for convenience sake; had greater confidence in government than in commercial organizations but made distinctions between individual agencies, and were largely unaware of their existing protections; Breaches of privacy were

shown to have a negative impact on trust in government.

In the study reported here, the focus is on the Japanese context, the responses of Japanese citizens, and on cultural differences that may be observed in comparing responses of Japanese citizens with those of New Zealanders. The research questions posed in this study were:

1. What are Japanese citizens' concerns about their information privacy?
2. To what extent are people aware of the existing protections of their right to privacy?
3. How trustworthy do Japanese people believe government organizations are in relation to information privacy?
4. When an individual believes an organization has violated their privacy, does this impact on that individual's trust in that organization?
5. If one government organization breaches an individual's privacy, does this affect the individual's perception of the trustworthiness of other government organizations as well?
6. When individuals need to provide personal information to government organizations, in which channel do they have the most confidence that their privacy will be protected?

An additional set of questions investigating any cultural variations observable were also posed:

7. What differences exist between the responses of Japanese and New Zealand participants in the study?
8. What explanations might be found, in other studies of Japanese attitudes to privacy, and in the explanations given by participants in this study that might account for these differences?

## **2. Concepts of information privacy in Japanese culture**

There is a small but emerging literature in English on Japanese concepts of privacy that complements the largely Western-based literature on cultural dimensions of information privacy. In most Asian cultures, privacy is seen as a 'western' concept that co-exists along with traditional values based on the communal nature of family or community

life, close living quarters, hierarchical (feudal) social systems and collectivist social values, and the Confucian, Buddhist, and in the case of Japan, Shinto religions.[8] An additional cultural dimension that may impact on privacy concerns, and trust in government is encompassed by Hofstede's concept of Power Distance, which indexes the degree to which a society tolerates greater or lesser levels of inequality in power between individuals.[9]

Bellman et al [10] identified differences in information related privacy concerns among respondents from 38 countries, based on differences in cultural values, and differences in Internet experience. They found that participants from cultures considered to be high on Power Distance indicators [10], and low on individualism indicators had concerns about inaccurate information held about them, and the secondary use of information. This is in contrast to the findings of the more widely recognised work of Milberg et al. which their study draws on, which suggests that High Power Distance cultures, which tolerate greater levels of inequality in power, have greater mistrust of powerful groups, such as companies, while groups with low individualism (collectivist societies) have a greater tolerance of intrusion on the private life of the individual[11].

Focusing specifically on the concept of privacy in Japan, and the common perception, both within and outside Japan, that privacy is a foreign concept to the Japanese, Mizutani, Dorsey and Moor discuss the introduction of the 'loanword' *puraibashii*, meaning privacy, into Japanese[12]. They argue that the concept of privacy was not and is not foreign to the Japanese mindset, that there are related concepts of 'secret', and 'forbidden' matters in the Japanese language, but that the concept of privacy itself is different in the Japanese tradition. In particular they note the strong influence of Buddhism which advocates the effacement of the self, and the sublimation of the self to the group. In addition, they link concept of privacy to the traditional Japanese lifestyle, where close proximity to family and neighbours has meant that things observed or overheard inadvertently are not to be repeated or acknowledged in any way. (This is sometimes likened to the iconic monkeys of Nikko: see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.) Thus privacy conventions in Japan, the authors

argue, are based on the important role of the group within Japanese culture, and the need for self-imposed restraint in relation to the privacy of others. Although privacy may be a less individualistic concept in Japan than in western, and especially US culture, privacy conventions are no less developed, and firmly rooted in Japanese culture, the authors suggest. In fact, the traditions of group culture, and privacy within it may, in fact, be so strong, they argue, that regulations that would extend the concepts to the world of ICTs and the Internet have not been seen as sufficiently urgent.

Nakada and Tamura explain what they perceive as different concepts of privacy in Japan by means of a plurality in the Japanese worldview that leads to "apparently contradictory attitudes towards privacy and individualism"[13]. This plurality they identify as a dichotomy between *Seiken* (the aspect of the world that consist of traditional and indigenous ways of thinking and feeling), and *Shakai* (modernized ways of thinking influenced by thoughts and systems imported from "Western' countries.). A third element, *Ikai*, represents the aspect of the world from which evils, disasters, crimes and impurity, along with freedom and spiritual energy emerge. In traditional Japanese culture, they explain, harmony and trusted human relations are set against privacy and individualism. In addition, Japanese concepts of the 'public' and 'private' domains contain an inherent dichotomy between the open, impartial public domain (*Ohyake*), and the partial, secret, selfish domain (*Watakusi*). Thus, Nakada and Tamura explain, when the word privacy (*puraihashii*) was introduced to Japan, it was often compared with its ostensible opposite *Ohyake*, linking the dichotomy of public/private, as used in Western thinking, with the Japanese concepts of *Ohyake/Watakusi*. Further, they note, since the tendency of the media to link the use of ICTs to the concept of '*puraihashii*' the term has come to include "expectations of data privacy," although not, as the authors explain, in the wider democratic sense in which it is used in western discourse.[14]

## 2.2 Japanese privacy legislation

Despite a preference by the Japanese government for self-regulation in relation to

information and data privacy, the government responded to heightened citizen concern amidst media reports of privacy violations by government and businesses, and passed the Personal Information Protection Act, and related Acts amid considerable public discussion, on 30 May 2003[15]. The Act came into effect on 1 April 2005[16]. It establishes mandatory guidelines for central, local and regional government agencies, and assigns individual ministries to develop equivalent guidelines for business and other institutions in their specific sector. The Act protects only living individuals, and is confined to information about an individual that distinguishes him from other individuals, such as name, date of birth, postal and email addresses, job title, photograph, employment information, etc. The provisions of the Act are focused on the responsible management of information held in databases, rather than privacy protection covering more sensitive personal information, such as health or financial information, as in comparable legislation in other jurisdictions. The right to control one's personal data is also included as an important part of the right to privacy that is guaranteed under Article 13 of the Japanese Constitution.

## 3. Method

Individuals willing to be interviewed on the subject in English, and a smaller number interviewed in Japanese were identified through personal contact. Each individual was asked to complete a preliminary questionnaire, and then asked to comment and reflect on each of five scenarios raising a privacy concern, or breach of privacy by a government agency. (Focus groups were avoided because of the need to supervise the completion of the preliminary questionnaire, and ensure each individuals' views were accurately captured, due to the difficulties of interviewing participants with English as a second language.) In an effort to avoid uncertainty inherent in phrases such as "how concerned are you about your privacy in dealing with the government?," the questionnaire used more specific statements such as "I feel confident that my personal information will be handled properly and be adequately protected by government agencies I deal with," with responses available on a 5-point Likert scale. The interview that followed included a

discussion of five general questions and five scenarios for discussion, which were designed to present individuals with a situation involving an improper flow of personal information to get as realistic a view as possible of their responses to breaches of privacy, and its impact on their trust in government. By operationalizing the concepts of trust and privacy in this way, the research sought to minimize the possibility of participants giving generalized answers to the questions.

The scenarios were based on those used in the earlier New Zealand study, with some changes to make them appropriate to the Japanese context. The fifth scenario used in New Zealand was replaced with a reference to the introduction of the Residential Residents Register, known as Juki Net. Juki Net is a national identification system that links all municipalities and prefectures through the Local Government WAN, so that central and local governments can share four basic pieces of information about residents: name, address, sex and date of birth, attached to their personal ID number (issued to all citizens). Citizens can obtain a photo ID card to be used to facilitate transactions such as registering a change of address, or a vehicle, and also register an electronic signature to be used when tendering services to local government. The introduction of the system generated considerable controversy (some prefectures not adopting the system initially), and cases brought by citizens concerned about the privacy of their personal information are still being dealt with by Japanese courts.

#### 4. Findings

##### 4.1. Questionnaire data

A total of 34 people were interviewed by the research team, 28 in English and 6 in Japanese, forming a convenience sample.<sup>1</sup> Demographic data obtained from the preliminary questionnaire showed a relatively even balance of 19 males and 15 females, and a spread in age range from 20-24 through to over 70 years of age.

**Table 1. Age of participants**

Age	Number
20-24	1
25-29	4
30-34	6
35-39	5
40-44	2
45-49	0
50-54	4
55-59	5
60-64	2
65-69	2
70+	3

Occupations included: Retired,4; Housewife,5; Student,6; Academic,6; Non-professional worker (retail or office), 2; Scientific research, 3; Engineering and IT, 4; Teacher, 4.

All but one of the participants (97.1%, n=33) used the Internet, 12 (35.3%) of all participants, used Internet banking, and 27 (79.4%) used online stores or trading sites. There was a significant difference between males and females using online banking. (Chi sq value = 2.79, df=1), but not between males and females using online shopping.. No clear patterns related to age were detectable in relation to use of online banking or shopping, although usage was higher in the 20-44 age range than in the 45-70+ range.

Asked to what extent they agreed with the statement “I am concerned about the privacy of my personal information when it is exchanged online via the Internet” 24 (72.7%) of respondents either agreed (n=14) or strongly agreed (n=10). This concern is echoed in the responses to the next two questions. None of the respondents expressed strong agreement with the statement “I feel confident that my personal information will be handled properly and be adequately protected by the private businesses (eg: stores, banks, etc) I deal with”, or with the comparable statement related to government agencies. However, there was less confidence in government overall. Table 2 reflects the range of responses to these two questions.

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Miss Tsumugi Ehara in conducting and translating interviews in Japanese.

**Table 2. Number of respondents strongly agreeing (SA), agreeing (A), disagreeing (D), or strongly disagreeing (SD) that their personal information would be handled properly and adequately protected by business and government<sup>2</sup>**

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Business	0	12	13	8	0
Government	0	9	15	7	2

Two follow-up questions also elicited somewhat negative responses. Only 9 respondents agreed that they trusted government employees with their personal information, (again, no strongly agree responses), the remainder were either neutral (n=10) or disagreed with the statement (n=14). Just over half of the respondents (n=17) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am generally concerned about the amount of information that various government organizations hold about me”, although 5 were neutral, and 11 disagreed or strongly disagreed. These concerns did not lead to respondents developing habits of checking the privacy and security of sites they used. Only 12 indicated that they checked for assurances concerning privacy and security on government web sites, compared with 20 who checked for such statement on business web sites. Less than one third (n=9) strongly agreed or agreed that the rules governing the way in which government organizations collect and exchange information about people are adequate (only 2 strongly agreed), the remainder were neutral (n=17) or disagreed. However, more than half the respondents agreed (n=15) or strongly agreed (n=4) that they sometimes refuse to provide information to a government organization if they felt the agency concerned did not have an adequate reason to ask for such information. Age and gender has little impact on these responses.

The preferred medium for exchanging information with an agency was in person. Twenty two respondents (64.7%) selected this as their first choice, followed by 19 (29.4) who selected the postal system. The telephone was not nominated a a first choice by any respondent, and only 2 (5.9%) selected the Internet.

<sup>2</sup> One respondent did not answer this or several following questions.

Fifteen out of the 34 respondents indicated that they made distinctions between government agencies in the level of trust they accorded them. Specific agencies which were mentioned as well trusted were limited to the Ministry of Justice, and the judiciary. Agencies mentioned as less trusted included the ministry in charge of pensions, the police, and the newly created Ministry of Defense (although this appeared to be more related to its recent change in status from a department, a matter of public concern in view of Japan's traditional post World War II non-militarism policy, than the activities of agency itself). Concerns were expressed by some respondents about the trustworthiness of local government agencies, but local government and “City hall” were specifically mentioned by 5 respondents as most trusted, in contrast to others who named ‘central government agencies’ as more trusted than local agencies.

#### **4.2 Concepts of privacy and privacy protection**

Asked to define privacy in their own terms, the majority of respondents listed concerns and issues that would like to keep private, or as some put it, have control over the disclosure of. These commonly included: personal details such as their name and address, age, date and place of birth; their income and the value of their assets and savings (and other business affairs); family matters (ages of their children, if any, and other family concerns), health data concerning themselves and their family, and details of their education and career. (Some of these concerns related to fears expressed about the rising crime rate, and recent abductions. Such people felt any information disclosure made them vulnerable.) However, some went further, and added personal habits, thoughts, religious ideas, political convictions, and philosophies to this. Some respondents indicated that they had their employer in mind when defining what they wanted kept private, and some commented that practices within the workplace could be sharpened up in regards to privacy, explaining that as employees were moved in and out of the HR units at their workplace, the pool of people who had access to their personal, income and health data increased every year. The concept of ‘shutting out the world’ to keep one's information secure was memorably expressed by one respondent

who talked about keeping personal information safe within 'my castle'. He then explored that concept further, and commented on the difference in protections offered by Japanese law and privacy laws in other countries by describing his Japanese castle as being made of wood, not stone.

A number of respondents explained how, in their view, privacy was a 'western' concept that had been introduced into Japan with modernization, and in particular with the post-War Constitution. The concept, they explained, was not well understood in Japan, and differed from the way it was perceived in other countries. As one respondent put it, "many people in Japan do not understand privacy, so they do not care about it. It is difficult to define - it's a foreign concept, like identity." By contrast, another stated "in Japan we consider privacy is very very important, but we do not understand what it is." This theme, privacy as a foreign concept, was picked up later, in discussions of the last scenario. For a small minority of participants, privacy was not a concern - both older and younger participants stated that they had 'nothing to hide', and therefore no concerns.

How personal privacy is protected in Japan was certainly not well understood by most participants. Exactly half of the respondents indicated that they knew of some law or regulation that protected privacy, but few could name the recently implemented Personal Information Protection Act, although some were aware that this act worked in conjunction with the Constitution to ensure privacy in relation to government held information, and that private and commercial companies needed to take responsibility for their own measures to ensure the protection of personal information. In the view of some, maintaining privacy was a personal responsibility, possibly leading to the high rates of withholding personal information requested by government.

#### 4.3 Discussion of scenarios

Scenario 1 outlined circumstances in which a letter from an agency which contained personal financial information was sent to another person in error, however, the intended recipient was notified by phone and an apology offered. (This is one of the most common breaches of privacy in Japan. Much

mail delivery from government agencies is outsourced.)[17] As one respondents noted "this frequently happens, so there is no point in getting upset. I consider that protecting my privacy is up to me. . . . so I limit what I tell them." However, this scenario raised concern in most participants; as one person noted "formerly in Japanese society, a low income was shameful, so many people hid this information." Fifteen people stated that they would be angry and upset at this breach, and although most agreed they would accept an apology; seven stated that they would seek an explanation, and changes in procedure. For at least 12 respondents such an incident would reduce their trust in government, although some noted that their trust was already so low that the incident would have little impact. Two commented that an apology was unlikely. Eight confirmed that this sort of mistake could happen; by and large it was put down to incompetence.

Scenario 2 outlined an incident in the offices of the local prefecture where papers containing information about a neighbor's property tax affairs, and a heated dispute about this matter, were left lying around and were seen by the participant. This scenario caused considerable distress (16 participants indicating degrees of upset), many people stating that this was out of concern for their neighbor, and a number stating that they would attempt to put the information 'out of their mind', 'draw down the veil' not wanting to know negative things about others. Eighteen specifically stated that such incidents lower their trust in government. Many of these (n=8) suggested this kind of incident was due to a poor attitude among government employees although a smaller number identified the breach as a process issue about process. For an equally small number, this incident was less upsetting because their own privacy was not breached.

Scenario 3 involved a breach of privacy concerning personal health data in a hospital. While some people asserted that this could not happen, others reported personal experience of such breaches. Most were in agreement with the idea that health information is particularly sensitive (25 saying so explicitly), and a number expressing the view that mental health is even more sensitive, noting the degree of prejudice they observed in Japan against those known to suffer from mental illness. The few

who claimed to have no concerns tended to deny knowledge of any such breaches. Those who reported experiencing breaches were very firm in their views that health information should be held secure and available only to the patient and those treating the patient. Views varied as to how widely the information might be shared in the patient's family. Some participants observed that the Japanese healthcare system, and teaching hospitals especially, were not privacy conscious and that systems could be better developed to support privacy. There is no category for 'sensitive' information such as health information under Japanese privacy law.

Scenario 4 involved the prosecution of a government employee who had sold tax information to a debt recovery firm. Again, some respondents denied that this could happen, while others had read of such cases in the media. The impact on trust was about the same in relation to this scenario as with scenario 2, (17 respondents (50%) reporting a diminution of trust), although many blamed the individual rather than the government. There was strong view, expressed by 14 individuals, that the quality of staff employed by government agencies had deteriorated in recent years and that 'morals' and attitudes were declining. A number of people expressed the view that the system could and should be made more robust to prevent such incidents. As one respondent stated "citizens must trust the government, so the government must accept its responsibility, and have good procedures, so the few bad people are caught."

Scenario 5 referred to the introduction in 2002 of the online database for registering residents, Juki Net. Ten respondents stated that they had a Juki card (although 5 of these had either lost it, did not use it, or did not know how they could use it). Nineteen (55%) did not have a card and were mostly strongly opposed to having one; a further 5 respondents had mixed feelings about it, but did not state whether or not they had one. Of those without a card, some stated that while their initial concerns about the system had abated they still had not felt motivated to get one, even though they could see that for people without other forms of photo ID it could be useful and convenient. Others were adamant that the system was flawed, that their privacy was at risk, and that

they were opposed to the system. More knowledgeable respondents were able to point to weaknesses in the network, and problems related to staff access. A small group (both with and without the card) stated that they did not know anything about the system. The active user group, (numbering 7, one a more recent convert who had initially been opposed), were very positive about its convenience and did not have concerns about privacy in relation to the card, although they were aware that many people did.

When asked if they felt that attitudes to privacy had changed in Japan in recent years, most agreed there was greater concern, prompted by three factors, breaches of privacy by government agencies or individuals reported in the media, the public discussion that took place at the time the Personal Information Protection Act was passed, and concerns about the security of credit card information in the media. Although older respondents were inclined to the view that young people were less concerned about privacy, there were some very concerned respondents in the younger age groups, many of whom had personal experience of privacy violations. A number of older respondents (50 years of age and over) spoke of traditional Japanese society, in both rural and urban areas (including the suburbs of Tokyo prior to and immediately after World War II) that was more community minded, and in which neighbors knew of and took an interest in each others' business. Along with the developing concepts of individuality and privacy in Japan, they perceived a loss of the sense of community and mutual caring which characterized traditional Japanese society, while recognizing the intrusions of the communities of the past. In such an environment, people were expected to exercise personal restraint, ('hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil'), a concept echoed by those who referred in some way to 'drawing down the veil' if they heard something untoward about a neighbor.

## 5. Comparisons with New Zealand data

Tables 3 and 4 compare key responses of Japanese and New Zealand respondents to identical questions in the initial questionnaire.

**Table 3. Percentage of respondents engaged in online activity in the two studies**

Online Activity	Japanese participants	New Zealand participants
Online banking	35.3%	50.0%
Online trading or shopping	79.4%	36.2%

**Table 4. Reported attitudes in Japanese and New Zealand respondents (Strongly Agree, and Agree responses, reported in percentages)**

Statement	Japan	Japan	Japan	NZ	NZ	NZ
	SA	A	Total agree	SA	A	Total Agree
S6. I am concerned about the privacy of my personal information when it is exchanged online via the Internet.	29.4	41.2	<b>72.7</b>	53.4	32.7	<b>86.1</b>
S7. I feel confident that my personal information will be handled properly and be adequately protected by the <i>private businesses</i> (e.g., stores, banks, etc.) I deal with.	0.00	35.2	<b>35.2</b>	18.9	37.9	<b>56.8</b>
S8. I feel confident that my personal information will be handled properly and adequately protected by the <i>government organizations</i> I deal with.	0.0	26.5	<b>26.5</b>	22.4	37.9	<b>60.1</b>
S9. I trust government employees to treat my personal information with appropriate respect for my privacy.	0.0	26.5	<b>26.5</b>	25.9	32.7	<b>58.6</b>
S10. I am generally concerned about the amount of information that various <i>government organizations</i> hold about me.	20.6	29.4	<b>51.5</b>	25.9	25.9	<b>51.8</b>
S11. I usually seek or check statements about the way in which my personal information will be protected before I supply information to <i>government organizations</i> .	14.7	20.6	<b>36.4</b>	31.0	32.7	<b>63.7</b>
S12. I usually seek or check statements about the way in which my personal information will be protected before I supply information to a <i>business</i> that I deal with.	32.4	26.5	<b>60.6</b>	34.4	43.1	<b>77.5</b>
S13. I think the rules governing the way in which government organizations collect and exchange information about me are adequate.	5.9	20.6	<b>27.3</b>	5.1	43.1	<b>48.2</b>
S14. I sometimes refuse to provide information to a government organization if I feel they do not have an adequate reason to ask for such information.	11.8	44.1	<b>57.6</b>	18.9	51.7	<b>70.6</b>

In Table 4, responses from the 34 Japanese respondents show far lower levels of trust in government agencies, and in the ability of government servants to treat their personal information with respect than among the 58 New Zealand respondents, particularly in

responses to statements S8, S9, and S13. Although trust in the ability of business to handle their personal information adequately is higher in the Japanese responses than the (35.3% agreeing with the statement) compared with those who believe that government will

do so (26.5% agreeing), this compares with the New Zealand responses, where business is trusted slightly less than government. Greater confidence in business is also shown in the higher rates of shopping online, and lower rates of concern about the exchange of information in the online environment. However, despite the overall extremely low levels of trust, Japanese respondents seem to be less active in assuring themselves, to the extent they can, of privacy protection - that is, they are less likely to agree than NZ respondents that they will seek statements about security of information provided, or withhold personal information (S11, S14).

## 6. Conclusions

The last point is perhaps an interesting one to consider in identifying characteristics of Japanese culture that may impact on information privacy concerns and trust in government. Given the strong belief among many respondents that problems concerning information privacy in Japan lie more with individual government employees and their attitudes than with system, it may not be surprising that fewer people show interest in routine privacy statements on web sites. However, the noticeably low levels of trust in the government's ability to adequately protect their information, as shown in questionnaire responses of the majority of respondents, are reinforced by comments made in their reflective responses to the scenarios, which attributed many privacy breaches to poor attitudes of staff and declining standards.

The individual comments made in response to the scenarios reflect many of the aspects of Japanese attitudes to privacy identified by Mizutani, Dorsey and Moor,[18] and Nakada and Tamura[19]. In particular, those respondents who felt a sense of affront on behalf of their neighbour in response to scenario 2, and those who reflected on traditional community values (not always older respondents) used language that fits well within the philosophical framework described by Mizutani, Dorsey and Moor. In addition, the point made by these authors that traditional group-based concepts of privacy are so strong that regulations have failed to provide protection in the new world of the Internet may be reflected in overall lower rates of concern about the online environment itself among

Japanese respondents. Their concerns are more personal than this.

Similarly, the metaphysical plurality of concepts inherent in contemporary Japanese notions of privacy outlined in the Nakada and Tamura essay is reflected in the respondents' statements about traditional values compared with the more individualistic values of the modern world. There may also be elements of *Ikai* in the belief of many that breaches of privacy were due to a growth in self-centered individualism, and alienation from the more caring society of the past, even these characteristics were seen by many as essential to Japan's advancement.. Certainly Nakada and Tamura's assertion that privacy legislation in Japan is less concerned with 'democratic' values than that of many other nations appears to be borne out in this study, and the evident gap between respondents perceptions of what matters to them in terms of privacy and the protection they receive in law.

This comparative study, despite the small numbers participating that is a major limitation, nevertheless reveals some meaningful differences in attitudes towards information privacy and trust in government in two very different cultures. Whether this is correlated with factors such as Power Distance, and individualist or collectivist social models pertaining to each country would require a larger more empirical study to determine. Other factors may also influence these findings. The venal behavior of some politicians, and government officials widely reported in the Japanese media, and Japan's ranking at 17th on the International Corruption Perceptions Index, (Japan's score is 7.6, while New Zealand shares the highest score of 9.6 with Finland and Iceland.[20]) will surely have significant impacts on citizens' trust in government. Some of the distrust expressed by Japanese participants in this study clearly originates as much in overall distrust of government as in breaches of privacy, although these were frequently mentioned. Although this study has limited generalisability because of the nature of the sample, and its small size, participants' responses and comments concerning the management and protection of their personal information by government agencies, show a very high level of dissatisfaction, and a clear need for a change in the culture and privacy

practices of Japanese government agencies at both local and national level. While Japan has still to find ways of reconciling its traditional social values with its modernizing goals, the concerns expressed so eloquently and fervently by Japanese citizens in this study surely need addressing.

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