

# Public Baths: Bare All or Towel Up?

日本の生活文化のひとつに銭湯があります。昔から「裸の付き合い」と言われますが、最近の調査では多くの方がタオルで体を隠していることがわかりました。こうしたふるまいには地域や世代ごとの考え方が表れ、人々の価値観の変化も見えてきます。銭湯文化を講師に紹介しながら、なぜ今こうした意識の変化が起きているのか一緒に考えてみましょう。



## 1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

In a sento (public bath), should you use a towel to cover yourself? And if you do, how much of what should you cover? There are no rules — it's entirely up to each person. Without guidance, many beginners can't help but glance around to see what everyone else is doing.

A survey by the online community Kikkake's Cow Brand Soap Club, operated by The Sankei Shimbun, sheds light on this. Published on August 25, it found that about 70% of respondents prefer to cover their bodies with towels after undressing in a sento, exceeding the proportion who go all naked.

The main reason for covering was "I don't want to be seen naked" or feeling embarrassed. Unsurprisingly, the survey also revealed notable gender differences in which parts of the body people choose to cover.

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Source: Public Baths: Bare All or Towel Up?

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# 1. Article

The survey, conducted from June 12 to 30, included 579 respondents (202 men, 376 women, and 1 other). When asked in a four-choice question whether they cover their bodies with towels after undressing in a public bath:

About two-thirds of men said they cover only the lower body, with the rest split between not covering at all and other options.

About half of women said they cover both upper and lower body, followed by not covering at all and covering only the lower body.

Among those who cover themselves:

- 50.2% said "I don't want to be seen naked"
- 30.2% said "because it's proper etiquette"
- 19.0% said "because it's a habit"

Among those who do not cover themselves:

- 50.9% said "I don't mind being seen naked"
- 36.1% said "there's no need to cover"
- 7.7% said "because it's a habit"

Some respondents offered extra reasons. Among men, these included confidence in their physique or finding covering too bothersome. Some women felt embarrassed about covering themselves, likely because they didn't want to appear self-conscious. Others cited surgical scars, or simply following what others around them were doing.

Sankei consulted Professor Kensuke Sugawara, a social psychologist at University of the Sacred Heart and author of "Where Did Our Sense of Shame Go?". He explained, "The emotion of embarrassment serves as a warning to ourselves that our actions may violate social norms and undermine social trust."

He noted that the parts people choose to cover in the bath are often the same ones they hide in daily life. "Private zones from everyday life carry over into the public bath, triggering embarrassment when exposed." However, if a sento becomes a familiar, everyday space, people tend to feel secure enough to be fully naked.

Regarding gender differences, he suggested that "men may be more comfortable exposing the upper body due to experiences in festivals or sports."

## 2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. **prefer** ～を好む、～を選ぶ

Toshie **prefers** green tea over coffee.

2. **undress** 服を脱ぐ

You may **undress** in this room before entering the bath.

3. **etiquette** 礼儀作法、マナー

You should learn the correct **etiquette** for using chopsticks.

4. **habit** 習慣、癖

Kyle has a **habit** of laughing when he is nervous.

5. **bothersome** 面倒な、わずらわしい

It is **bothersome** to have to sign in to my email account every day.

## 3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What did the survey show about people's feelings of being naked in a public bath (*sentō*)?
2. How were opinions different between men and women?
3. Why does psychologist Kensuke Sugawara think that men are more comfortable not wearing clothes on the top half of their body?
4. How do you feel about bathing naked at a public bath?
5. The sense of embarrassment was much less common in the recent past. Why do you think people's feelings about body image and going without clothes are changing?

## 4. 銭湯で全身をタオルで隠さない「堂々派」は29% 上だけ？下だけ？ 隠し方にも流儀あり

裸の付き合いの場でもある銭湯で、服を脱いだ後にタオルなどで体を「隠す」派は約7割を占め、「隠さない」派を上回ることが8月25日、産経新聞社が運営するオンラインコミュニティ「きっかけ」の銭湯に関するアンケートで明らかになった。体を隠す理由のトップは「見られたくない（恥ずかしい）から」で、他の利用客の視線を気にしている様子がうかがえた。体のどの部分を隠すかについては、性別によって大きな違いがみられた。

アンケートは6月12～30日に、「きっかけ」の「牛乳石鹸 お風呂部」を通じて実施。計579人（男性202人、女性376人、その他1人）が回答した。

銭湯で服を脱いだ後、タオルなどで体を隠すかどうかについて4択で尋ねたところ、男性のおよそ3人に2人は「下半身だけ隠す」を選び、「隠さない」と二極化した。一方で、女性は約半数が「上半身と下半身の両方を隠す」を選択し、「隠さない」「下半身だけ隠す」と続いた。

体を隠すと答えた人のほぼ半数の50・2%が、理由として「見られたくない（恥ずかしい）から」を選び、「マナーだから」（30・2%）、「習慣だから」（19・0%）と続いた。

これに対して、体を隠さない理由で最も多かったのは「見られてもかまわない（恥ずかしくない）から」で50・9%。次いで「隠す必要がないから」（36・1%）、「習慣だから」（7・7%）の順だった。

隠さない理由として記述で、体格に自信がある（男性）▽隠すのも何となく恥ずかしい（女性）▽隠すのが面倒（男性）一を挙げた人もいた。また、隠す理由について、手術のあと（痕）がある（女性）▽周りがそうしていたから（女性）一と答えた人もいた。





「羞恥心はどこへ消えた？」などの著書がある聖心女子大の菅原健介教授（社会心理学）は「恥ずかしいという感情は、ルールや規範を逸脱することで社会的信頼を失うことへの警告」と説明。隠すと回答した部分は日常生活においても隠す部分であり、「日常生活のプライベートゾーンが銭湯に持ち込まれ、体をさらすことに対して恥ずかしさがあると考えられる。銭湯が日常空間として成立すれば、安心感を持って裸になれるだろう」と分析した。

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また、性別によって隠す部位が異なった結果について「男性は祭りやスポーツで上半身をさらすこともあり、（見られても）大きな抵抗がないのだろう」との見方を示した。

				
	Don't cover	Cover upper body only	Cover lower body only	Cover both upper & lower body
Men	34.7%	0.5%	63.9%	1.0%
Women	26.1%	4.6%	17.5%	51.8%
Overall	29.2%	3.1%	33.5%	34.2%

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