

Section 2

Supporting Japanese Nationals Overseas

1 Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals Overseas

(1) Incidents and Accidents in 2019 and Countermeasures

19 million Japanese nationals traveled abroad in 2018¹, and 1.39 million Japanese nationals live abroad as of October 2018. Hence, protecting the lives and health of Japanese nationals traveling and residing abroad, as well as promoting their interests, is one of the most important missions of MOFA.

In 2019, one Japanese national was killed in the simultaneous terrorist bombings in Sri Lanka (April) and the shooting incident in Afghanistan (December) respectively. Other incidents also occurred throughout the year, including the hotel attack in Nairobi, Kenya (January), the terrorist shooting at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand (March), the suicide bombing in Tunis, Tunisia (June), consecutive bombings in Bangkok, Thailand (August), explosions in central Cairo, Egypt (October), the attack at the Jerash Ruins, Jordan (November), and the knife attack on London Bridge, the UK (November).

The recent trend of terrorist attacks includes terrorism happening not only in the Middle East and Africa but also in Europe, the U.S. and Asia where many Japanese travel and reside. Both

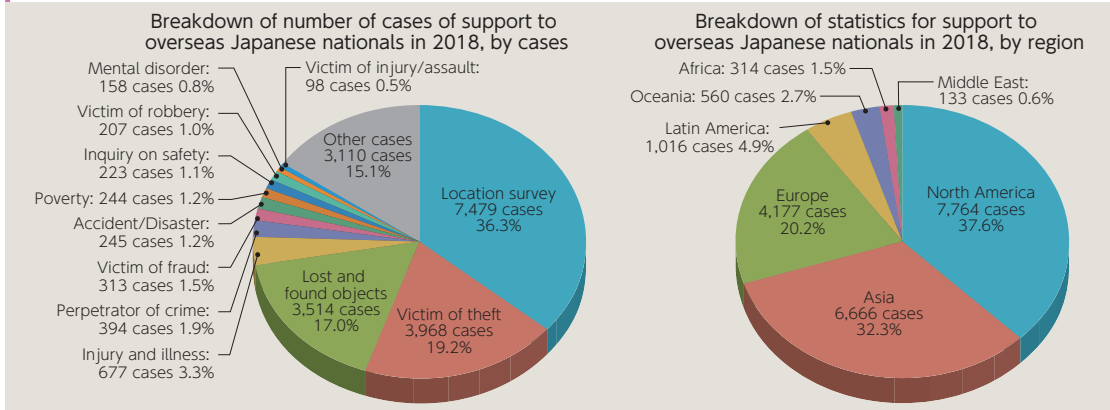
homegrown terrorism perpetrated by people born in Western countries and indoctrinated through websites or other means by foreign Islamic extremists, and lone-wolf terrorism perpetrated by people acting solely with little organizational background are found in tremendous numbers. Additionally, terrorist attacks aimed at soft targets where large numbers of the general public gather every day are on the rise.

This trend has not changed despite the fact that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which has been urging terror attacks outside its region, is losing its territory in Syria and Iraq. In addition, foreign fighters of ISIL are now returning to their home countries or moving to third countries. These factors make it more difficult to predict and prevent terror attacks.

Other major incidents and accidents involving the death of Japanese nationals overseas included gun killings in North America and Latin America, and killings with lethal weapons in Southeast Asia. There was also an incident of death by drowning in the Pacific region, as well as accidents in North America, South America, and Southwest Asia, such as falling and slipping when sightseeing or trekking. Deaths caused by accidents such as traffic accidents also occurred in various parts of the world.

¹ Source: Ministry of Justice, "Statistics on Legal Migrants"

Breakdown of number of cases of support to Japanese nationals, by cases and regions (2018)



Top 20 foreign diplomatic missions with a large number of support cases

Rank	Diplomatic mission	Number of cases	Rank	Diplomatic mission	Number of cases
1	Embassy of Japan in Thailand	1,457	11	Consulate-General of Japan in Barcelona	447
2	Embassy of Japan in the Philippines	906	12	Consulate-General of Japan in Shanghai	443
3	Consulate-General of Japan in Los Angeles	809	13	Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle	378
4	Embassy of Japan in the UK	797	14	Consulate-General of Japan in Atlanta	377
5	Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu	669	15	Consulate-General of Japan in Hagatna	362
6	Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong	667	16	Consulate-General of Japan in Houston	350
7	Embassy of Japan in France	646	17	Consular Office of Japan in Portland	344
8	Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco	607	18	Embassy of Japan in Italy	341
9	Consulate-General of Japan in New York	587	19	Consulate-General of Japan in Boston	335
10	Embassy of Japan in Korea	503	20	Consulate-General of Japan in Nashville	326

(Figures for support cases in 2018 are shown for the 20 diplomatic missions with the largest number of support cases, including embassies, consulate-generals, and consular offices.)

Many natural disasters also occurred around the world and caused great damage. These include cyclones “Idai” (March) and “Fani” (May), hurricane “Dorian” (August), and the volcanic eruption on White Island, New Zealand (December).

In 2019, large-scale protests were held successively in Hong Kong and other parts of the world, resulting in MOFA’s call on Japanese nationals through its Overseas Safety Website and other channels to avoid going near demonstrations and protests. Corresponding to the regional situation, MOFA also published overseas travel safety information especially when special caution was required in traveling and residing overseas. In 2019, the risk level of Venezuela, Sudan, Hong Kong, and Bolivia, was raised, among others.

As was the case in the previous year, there were continued reports of people falling ill during a trip

abroad and dying at the hotels or other accommodations they were staying at. In some of these accidents and illnesses, victims faced difficulties in dealing with higher medical and transportation costs, and receiving insufficient medical services compared to those in Japan.

MOFA issues “Overseas Travel Safety Information” on infectious diseases and air pollution in countries and regions where health and medical caution is required, to inform Japanese nationals overseas of the current outbreak situation and prevention measures, and highlight the matters they need to pay attention to when travelling and staying in the affected regions.

Since 2019, the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak that began in China has been raging across the world (see the boxed article on page 338). As for other infectious diseases,

Response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak

Ensuring the safety of Japanese nationals residing and travelling overseas is one of the most important responsibilities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since the end of 2019, MOFA has been responding to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak that began in China by disseminating information such as Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases and Spot Safety Information to Japanese nationals abroad and raising their awareness in a timely and appropriate manner through MOFA's website and e-mails.

In Hubei Province, particularly Wuhan City where tight restrictions on movement were imposed due to the large number of infections, MOFA coordinated with the respective parties to assist the early departure of all Japanese nationals who wished to return to Japan but could not due to the movement restrictions. To that end, 10 embassy staff, including a medical officer and Chinese-speaking staff, travelled by road for 17 hours across 1,200 km to Wuhan City, while 19 MOFA officials from Japan also flew to the city to implement the evacuation operation. Their work, along with the support of the Government of China, led to five chartered flights operating from Wuhan Airport to Haneda Airport from the end of January to mid-February, bringing back all Japanese nationals and their families residing in Hubei Province, as well as those residing outside Wuhan City, who wished to return to Japan.

With regard to overseas travel from Japan, MOFA called for caution by issuing Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases*¹ as things developed. On January 21, MOFA issued a Level 1 Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases ("Exercise caution") for the whole of China. This was raised to Level 2 ("Avoid non-essential travel") for Wuhan City on January 23, and Level 3 ("Avoid all travel") for Hubei Province including Wuhan City on January 24. Taking into consideration the changes in the situation thereafter, MOFA raised the level where necessary and expanded the countries/regions covered. By April 1, it had issued a Level 3 Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases for 73 countries and regions including China and Europe, and Level 2 for all other countries and regions.

Apart from this, MOFA also issued Level 2 general Travel Advice and Warning*² worldwide on March 25, with the aim of preventing Japanese nationals from encountering difficulties in leaving other countries due to flight suspensions and measures such as the closing of national borders and curfews imposed by other countries in response to the increase of infections.

At the same time, the Government of Japan is flexibly implementing measures toward strengthening border control measures in cooperation with the relevant ministries and agencies. Corresponding to the Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases levels issued for each country and region, the suspension of the validity of single-entry and multiple-entry visas and suspension of visa exemptions were implemented for Level 2 countries and regions, and Japanese as well as foreign nationals entering Japan from such countries and regions were requested to undergo a voluntary 14-day self-isolation. For Level 3 countries and regions, PCR tests were conducted for Japanese nationals returning to Japan from these countries and regions as well as members of their families of other nationalities. In addition, based on the provisions of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, measures were also taken to deny entry of foreign nationals who had stayed in these regions in the past 14 days.

In light of the importance of international collaboration and cooperation in responding to the outbreak of infectious diseases, Japan announced on March 10 that it will contribute approximately 15 billion yen to international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and provide emergency assistance to Iran and surrounding developing countries.

*1, 2 The Overseas Travel Safety Information issued by MOFA to inform people of the risk level in countries and regions, is categorized as "Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases" or "Travel Advice and Warning."

"Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases" is issued for countries and regions that are deemed to require particular caution for travelers and residents, in respect to highly dangerous infectious diseases including the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), while "Travel Advice and Warning" is issued as a guideline for safety measures, based on a comprehensive assessment of the country's political and social situation, such as internal disturbances and terrorism.

Both categories of information are presented based on the following four categories.

Level 1: Exercise caution

Level 2: Avoid non-essential travel

Level 3: Avoid all travel

Level 4: Evacuate and avoid all travel

cases of Ebola were reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, and measles was prevalent in various parts of the world. In addition, cases of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) continue to be reported in the Middle East. Mosquito-borne diseases, including the Zika virus, yellow fever, Dengue fever and malaria, also continued to spread throughout the world.

<Tips for Traveling and Living Abroad>

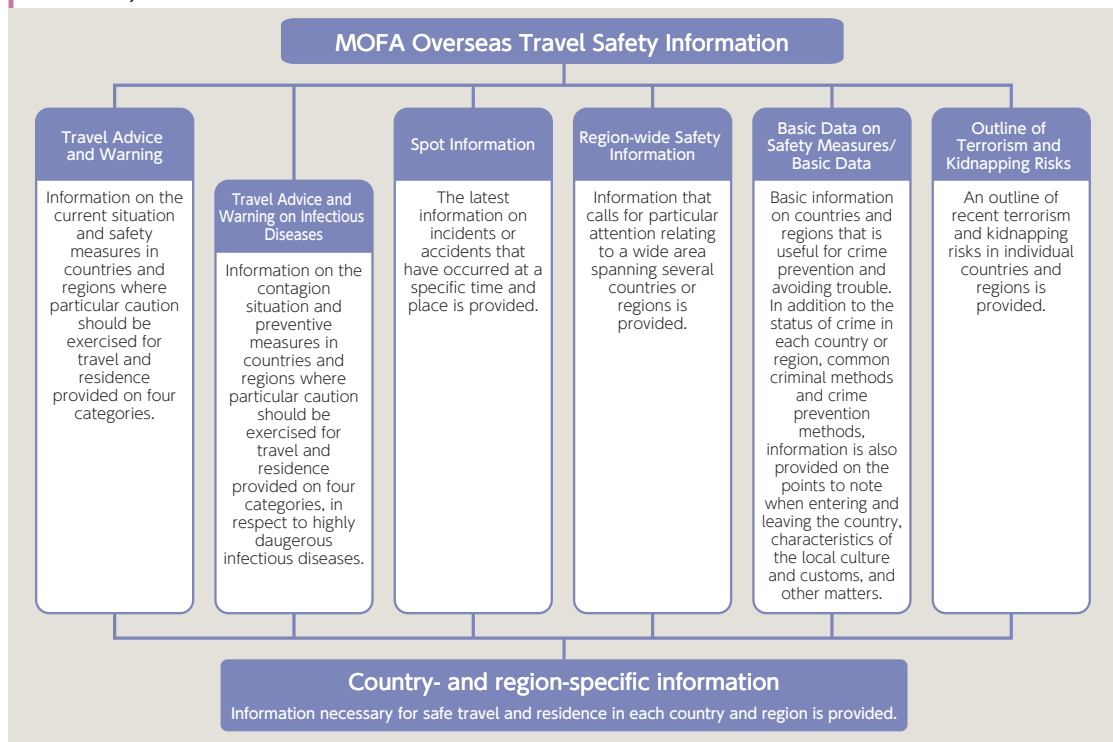
As described above, incidents which threaten the safety of Japanese nationals have constantly occurred all around the world. In addition to registering with the Overseas Travel Registration (Tabi-Regi) or submission of Overseas Residential Registration, important measures for Japanese nationals traveling and living abroad include: (1) thoroughly checking security and other

information through the Overseas Safety Website, media reports and other sources beforehand; (2) taking adequate safety measures during their stay to avoid risks; and (3) contacting the nearest Japanese diplomatic missions overseas and family in Japan in case of emergency. MOFA also conveys the importance of taking out travel insurance with a sufficient coverage when traveling abroad since the lack of travel insurance will make it difficult to pay medical expenses or to receive proper medical care in case of diseases and accident injuries.

(2) Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Overseas

The number incidents of Japanese nationals receiving support or protection from Japanese diplomatic missions overseas and the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association has stayed at a high level.

Main Overseas Safety Information posted on MOFA's Overseas Safety Website (structure and overview)



In 2018, there were 22,349 by number of persons and 20,630 by number of cases.²

In order to avoid accidents and troubles overseas, it is important to collect information beforehand. As such, MOFA works to enhance the safety awareness of Japanese nationals and promote its safety measures by disseminating information widely to the general public.

MOFA issues the latest safety information for each country and region on the Overseas Safety Website, and emails the latest safety information of travel destinations and places of residence to Japanese nationals staying overseas with Overseas Residential Registrations and short-term travelers who have registered with the Tabi-Regi. Tabi-Regi is also available to those without travel plans through simple registration. The distributed safety information is widely utilized by Japanese business persons in charge of foreign operations. Since Tabi-Regi was launched in July 2014, MOFA has improved its user-friendliness and sponsored many activities to increase the number of registrants. Currently, the cumulative total registration is more than 6.5 million.

MOFA strives to enhance the knowledge and capability of the Japanese people concerning overseas safety measures and crisis management through seminars and trainings. MOFA has hosted participatory safety measure seminars in and out of Japan, and dispatched lecturers from the Consular Affairs Bureau to deliver lectures on safety measures at seminars nationwide, organized by other organizations and associations (around 80 times in 2019). MOFA also hosted the Public-Private Joint Practical Training for Counter-Terrorism and Anti-Kidnapping Measures with participation from private companies. These efforts are beneficial not only for taking preventive measures against dangers like crime and terrorism, but also for enhancing response capabilities in case of

emergency.

In addition, overseas, the public and private sectors are also cooperating to advance safety measures. The diplomatic missions in each country host regular meetings of Security Consultation and Liaison Committees with local Japanese nationals to share information, exchange opinions and bolster collaboration in preparation for emergencies.

After the terrorist attack in Dhaka in July 2016, MOFA has worked to enhance the safety measure seminars and strengthen awareness particularly among international cooperation personnel, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), students studying abroad, short-term travelers and others who have limited access to information on safety.

First, MOFA launched the Small and Medium Enterprise Overseas Safety Measures Network, with the participation of 29 organizations and agencies related to the overseas expansion of Japanese businesses in September 2016, in order to support SMEs, which account for the vast majority of Japanese companies, in their overseas corporate activities in the area of safety measures. At the meeting of the Network in August 2019, a new organization was added, expanding the number of member organizations in the Network to 30. The collaboration among members in this Network has strengthened the safety measures of those companies, such as raising awareness on safety measures overseas through seminars and newsletters in and outside Japan, establishing horizontal relationships among participating companies, and seeking to provide better support services for business. Furthermore, in March 2017, MOFA released Golgo 13's Security Guidelines for Japanese SMEs Abroad, which explains the minimal and basic safety measures for companies in an easy-to-understand manner through manga

² The Statistics on Assistance for Japanese Involved in Accidents and Other Incidents, first published in 1986, is an annual report on the number of cases/people where the diplomatic missions overseas and the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association provided assistance to Japanese nationals involved in any kind of troubles overseas, such as incidents/accidents, acts of committing crimes and falling victim to crime or disaster.



MOFA Overseas Travel Registration (Tabi-Regi)
(only in the Japanese language)
<https://www.ezairyu.mofa.go.jp/tabireg/index.html>



MOFA Overseas Safety App/Overseas safety website "About the Overseas Safety App Services" can be downloaded from (https://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/c_info/oshirase_kaian_app.html) (only in the Japanese language)



(comics). After its release, about 120,000 copies per volume have been distributed and the dedicated webpage on MOFA's website has received about 1.7 million views, indicating that the Guidelines have been used by Japanese businesses widely and contributed to raising awareness on overseas safety measures.

As for Japanese students studying overseas, MOFA is working to enhance their awareness of safety measures and aid in the establishment of crisis management systems at schools by sending lecturers to universities and other educational institutions, many of which have insufficient knowhow or experience on safety measures and emergency responses. MOFA is going forward with efforts to connect government agencies with

educational institutions, overseas study agencies and students by such means as beginning automatic registration to the Tabi-Regi with some overseas study institutions.

As for safety measures for short-term travelers, MOFA is engaged in PR activities mainly focused on promoting registration to the Tabi-Regi by gaining the cooperation of Japanese airlines to make in-flight announcements.

MOFA also took various opportunities to convey the importance of working on safety measures and to call for traveler's cooperation, such as taking out advertisements in various media outlets, and hosting a booth at Tourism EXPO Japan in 2019, held for the first time in Osaka.

2 Consular Service and Assistance for Japanese Living Overseas

(1) Improving Consular Service

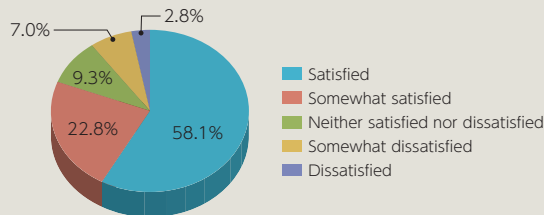
With the aim of providing quality consular services to Japanese nationals overseas, MOFA conducts a questionnaire survey every year on services such as consular staffs' attitudes in over-the-counter and telephone responses as well as work implementation status at diplomatic missions overseas. While the survey conducted in February 2020, on 140 diplomatic missions overseas and which received 39,579 effective responses, concluded that the overall level of consular services provided by the diplomatic missions overseas was almost satisfactory, opinions calling for improvement on the manners and service attitude of consular staff were also raised. MOFA takes users' feedback seriously, and will continue its efforts to enhance services and make improvements so as to provide high quality consular services in line with users' perspective.

(2) Issuance of Passports and Prevention of Illicit Acquisition of Passports

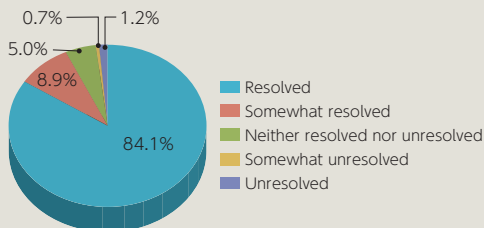
Approximately 4.49 million ordinary passports were issued in 2019. As of the end of December 2019, approximately 30.23 million ordinary

Results of questionnaire survey on users of consular services (2019: 140 diplomatic missions)

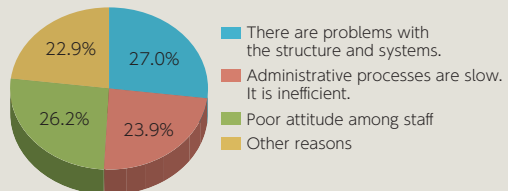
How satisfied are you with the consular services that you have used?



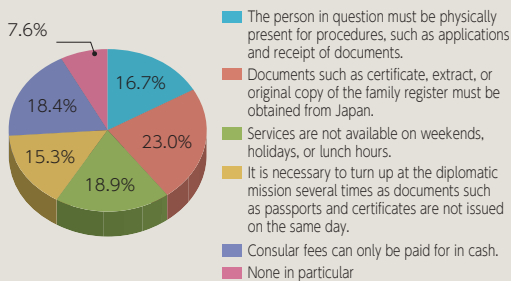
After using the services provided by this diplomatic mission, was your problem (application, notification, consultation, etc.) resolved?



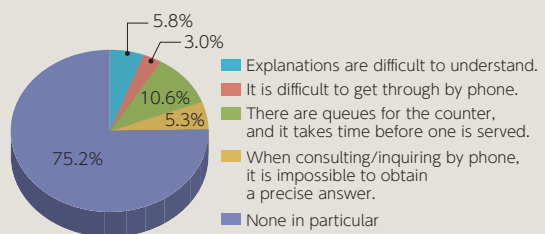
Reasons why you are somewhat dissatisfied



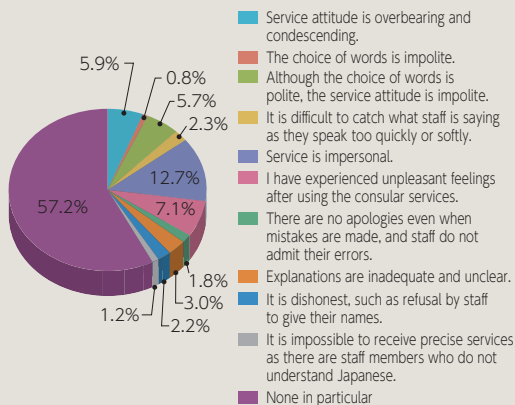
Please select from the following any inconveniences you experienced when using the existing consular services. (Multiple answers)



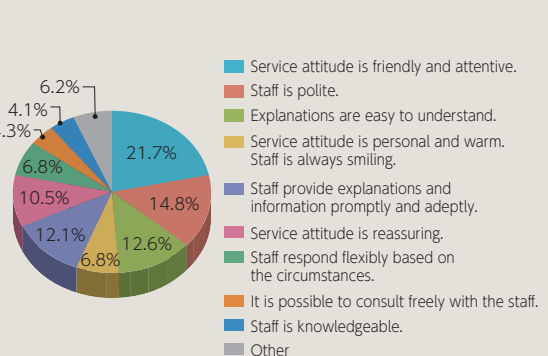
Please select from the following all the applicable items pertaining to the current status of services at this diplomatic mission. (Multiple answers)



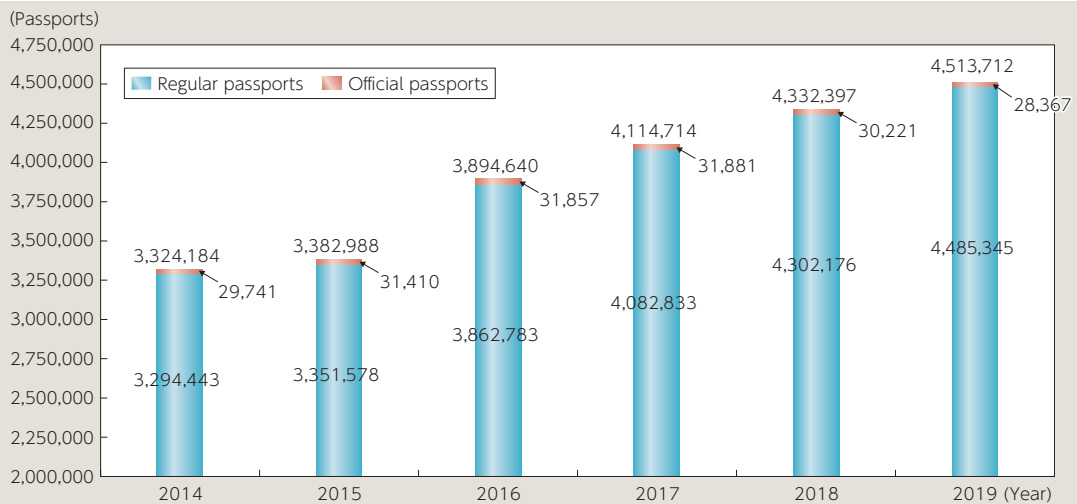
Please select from the following all the applicable items pertaining to the current status of services at this diplomatic mission. (Multiple answers)



Please select from the following the positive aspects of in-person or phone service provided by staff of this diplomatic mission. (Multiple answers)



Changes in the number of passports issued



Note: Official passports include diplomatic passports.

Source: Prepared based on passport statistics for 2019 (MOFA's Passport Division)

passports were valid, and all of these were ePassports.³

The issuance of ePassports is effective for deterring the illicit use of passports such as forged or altered passports. However, there continue to be cases of illicit acquisition of passports by means of impersonation.⁴ There are still some cases where Japanese nationals or illegal foreign residents leave and enter Japan using passports acquired illegally under the name of another person. There are also reports of passports being used for borrowing money from financial institutions, opening bank accounts for the purpose of selling them to those who plot to commit other crimes, and subscribing to mobile phone services out of the passport holder's control. In order to prevent illicit acquisition of passports that may nurture these secondary or tertiary crimes, MOFA has been requesting prefectural governments to enhance strict identity examination when issuing passports at their passport centers, for example, by such means as designating a period of tightened inspections against the illicit acquisition of passports through identity theft at passport offices

located in each prefecture. Furthermore, restrictions are placed on the issuance of passports to persons who are undergoing criminal prosecution, persons who have a suspended sentence, and persons who have violated the Passport Act, etc. Upon a report from the relevant institutions, the Minister for Foreign Affairs orders the surrender of passports to persons against whom an arrest warrant has been issued.

While the integrated circuit (IC) chips in Japanese passports record facial images and other information identifying the passport holders, ePassports with improved security against counterfeiting through the use of biometric information such as fingerprints have become widespread in other countries, and possibilities for more effective use of IC functions are also under consideration at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). In addition, starting October 1, 2018, the 'downloadable applications' launched on January 4, 2016 at diplomatic missions overseas have now been adopted in Japan as well, improving convenience for applicants.

³ An ePassport is a passport embedded with an integrated circuit (IC) chip which contains a digitized facial image (biometric information) of the passport holder to prevent forgery of passport and its illicit use by a third party. It was first issued in 2006.

⁴ The number of illegal acquisitions of passports discovered: 31 in 2015, 22 in 2016, 21 in 2017, 35 in 2018, and 42 in 2019.

Reconsignment of passport-related works such as accepting and delivering passport, from the prefectural governments to municipal governments, has been permitted since 2006. As of December 2019, 897 cities and towns had launched passport services, which make up more than 50% of all the cities and towns in Japan.

(3) Overseas Voting

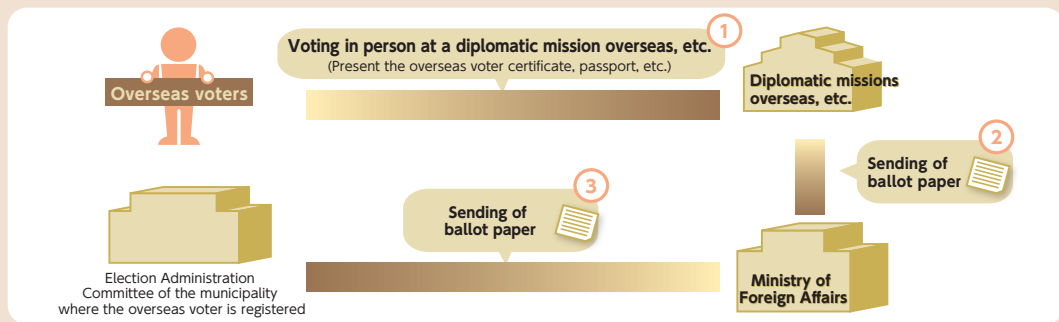
The overseas voting system allows Japanese voters living overseas to vote in national

elections. In order to vote through the overseas voting system, it is necessary to be registered in advance on the overseas voter directory managed by the election board of the city or town government and to obtain overseas voter identification. Starting in June 2018, in addition to the conventional method of applying through a diplomatic mission overseas after moving there, Japanese nationals can now apply at their municipality service counter at the same time as filing their notice of moving overseas. As a result, there is no longer

Voting in elections for overseas voters

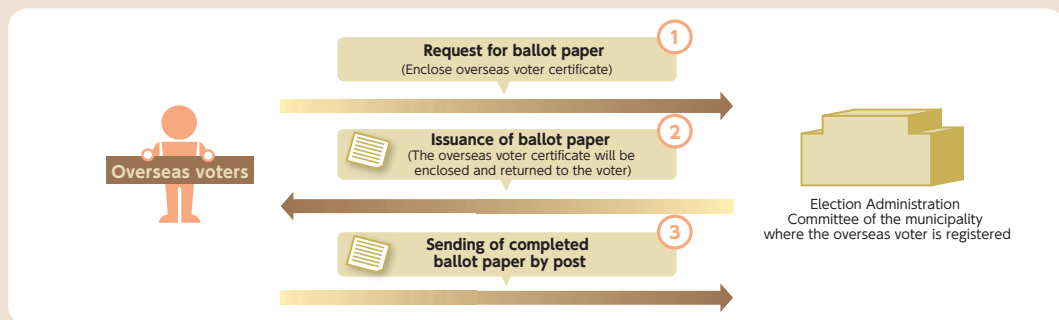
a. Voting at a foreign diplomatic mission

Voters who are registered on the overseas electoral roll may vote by presenting their overseas voter certificates, passports and other necessary documents to a diplomatic mission overseas set up as a polling station. (The period and time of voting differs depending on the diplomatic mission.)



b. Postal voting

Send the overseas voter certificate and request form for ballot paper to the chairperson of the Election Administration Committee of the municipality that you are registered with to request for a ballot paper. Complete and return the ballot paper to the chairperson of the Election Administration Committee of the municipality, ensuring that the ballot paper reaches the polling station by the time the voting ends on the date of the election in Japan (8:00 p.m. Japan time). (Voting is carried out from the day after the date of public notice.)



c. Voting in Japan

In the case where the overseas voter returns temporarily to Japan at the time of the elections, or where the overseas voter is not yet registered on the electoral roll in Japan after returning to Japan, he or she may vote through the same voting methods as voters in Japan (early voting, absentee voting, voting on election day).

a need to appear in person at a diplomatic mission overseas after moving outside Japan, which simplifies procedures. Voters can vote by choosing one of the three methods of voting, a) voting at diplomatic missions overseas, b) voting by mail, or c) voting in Japan.

The diplomatic missions overseas have been making efforts to spread the overseas voting system and to increase the number of registered voters by publicizing the overseas voting system to the territories under their jurisdiction and carrying out a visiting service for the registration of Japanese nationals living in remote areas. Also, whenever an election is held, diplomatic missions overseas are responsible for voting administration, including PR prior to elections.

(4) Assistance for Japanese Nationals Living and Engaging in Activities Overseas

A Japanese Schools and Supplementary Education Schools

Education for children is one of the major concerns for Japanese nationals living abroad. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, MOFA provides assistance to the Japanese Schools (partial assistance for school building rental fees, remuneration for locally hired teachers, and safety measures expenses) so that the overseas school children at the age of compulsory education in Japan can receive a level of education equivalent to that in Japan. MOFA also provides the same assistance for Japanese Schools to Supplementary Education Schools (educational institutions established to maintain children's academic ability, such as Japanese language proficiency) mainly in areas where Japanese Schools are not located. In particular, MOFA is further strengthening and expanding assistance related to safety measures in light of the recent changes in the international terrorism situation. MOFA will continue providing these forms of support in the future.

B Medical/Health Measures

MOFA gathers information on infectious diseases being spread overseas and provides this information to a broad audience through the overseas safety website, websites of diplomatic missions overseas, emails, and other means. Furthermore, in order to provide health advice through consultations to Japanese nationals residing in countries where the medical situation is poor, MOFA dispatches medical teams with the cooperation of domestic medical institutions (to one country, seven cities in FY2019). MOFA also dispatches medical specialists to regions where infectious diseases or air pollution are becoming serious issues, and organizes health and safety lectures (seven countries, eight cities in FY2019).

C Responses to Other Needs

In order to eliminate the complexity of various procedures for Japanese nationals living overseas (such as converting Japanese driving licenses, obtaining residence/work permits) and to make living abroad more comfortable, MOFA continues to engage with the authorities in such countries where Japanese nationals reside.

For example, when converting driving licenses issued in foreign countries to Japanese driving licenses, all persons with driving licenses issued in a foreign country are exempted from taking certain sections of the Japanese driving test (theory/practical), when it has been confirmed that they have no problems with operating vehicles. On the other hand, as it is mandatory for Japanese nationals to take driving tests when converting Japanese licenses to local licenses in some countries and states, MOFA is calling for those countries to simplify the procedures for license conversion to the same degree as in Japan.

MOFA also supports victims of atomic bomb attacks living overseas in applying for the authorization of Atomic Bomb Diseases and for the issuance of Health Check Certificates, via diplomatic and consular missions.

3 Cooperation with Emigrants and Japanese Descendants (Nikkei)

The migration of Japanese nationals overseas has a history of 151 years, as of 2019. There are an estimated 3.8 million overseas Japanese and Japanese descendants (Nikkei) around the world, with especially large numbers residing in North, Central and South America. They make significant contribution to the development of the countries in various fields, including politics, economy, academics and culture, and at the same time, they act as a bridge between Japan and these countries in developing close relations.

Together with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), MOFA provides cooperation in Central and South America, where an estimated 2.24 million Nikkei live. Various forms of assistance are offered, including welfare support for aging emigrants, training in Japan for Nikkei people, and dispatch of volunteers to the local Nikkei communities. Also, in May 2017, based on the report submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs from the Panel of Experts on Collaborating with Nikkei Communities in Latin America and the Caribbean, MOFA is working to further strengthen relationships with Nikkei communities.

To date, invitation programs to Japan for Nikkei leaders in various fields, and from various countries and regions, have been carried out in North, Central and South America. Also, efforts are underway to strengthen relations with Nikkei

people in these regions through close cooperation between the diplomatic missions in each country with Nikkei communities, including actively creating opportunities for senior officials from Japan to meet with Nikkei persons during their visits to these countries.

The 60th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad was held in October 2019. Foreign Minister Motegi hosted the welcome reception, and held informal talks with Nikkei people of various backgrounds and generations. In addition to providing support to Japanese abroad and Nikkei people, MOFA will promote cooperation with the younger generation and strengthen their bonds with Japan.

4 The Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the Hague Convention) and its Implementation

The Hague Convention is designed as an international mechanism for addressing disputes arising from the wrongful removal or retention of children across borders in the belief that the interests of children are of paramount importance. It requires cooperation between Contracting States to the Convention for returning children to their state of habitual residence and establishing opportunities for transboundary parent-child access.

This Convention came into force in Japan on April 1, 2014. As of December 31, 2019, 101 countries including Japan are parties to the Convention.

The Convention is implemented through mutual cooperation among the governmental agencies designated as the Central Authority in Contracting States to the Convention. In Japan, MOFA as the Central Authority avails itself of experts in various fields and communicates/cooperates with foreign Central Authorities, and provides assistance to the parties such as locating the whereabouts of the child and arranging mediation services aimed at amicable resolutions.

In the five years and nine months between the



The welcome reception hosted by the Foreign Minister at the 60th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad

entry into force of the Convention and the end of December 2019, MOFA received a total number of 378 applications: 235 applications seeking the return of the child and 143 applications seeking access to the child. Of the cases seeking the return of the child from Japan to another country, children were returned in 40 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 35 cases. Of the cases requesting the return of the child from another country to Japan, children were returned in 39 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 24 cases.

In February 2019, MOFA invited a U.S. lawyer with in-depth knowledge of court proceedings for Hague cases in the U.S. so that persons involved in Japan's implementation of the Hague Convention can learn from his expertise, and lecture meetings and other events were organized for that purpose. The Symposium Commemorating the Fifth Anniversary of Japan's entry into the 1980 Hague Convention was held at the University of Tokyo in June, during which participants engaged in in-depth discussions about the implementation

status of the Hague Convention in Japan and future issues (see the Special Feature on page 348).

In addition to this, MOFA works with diplomatic missions overseas to actively hold seminars to raise awareness among Japanese nationals living overseas. Also, efforts are put into PR activities, including holding seminars in Japan for local governments, relevant institutions such as bar associations, and diplomatic corps in Tokyo.

In February, a PR video on the Hague Convention was released as a part of efforts to raise public awareness of the Convention among a wider range of people.

Number of Applications for Assistance Received by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Based on the Implementation Act of the Hague Convention (as of end - December 2019)

	Applications for support for return of children	Application for assistance on face-to-face meeting
Applications related to children located in Japan	128	111
Applications related to children located overseas	107	32

Fifth Anniversary of Japan's Entry into the 1980 Hague Convention

With the rise in the movement of people and international marriages around the world, the international community has increasingly been facing issues since the 1970s, such as child removal by one parent. In response, the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Hague Convention) was concluded in 1980. With a surge in the number of international marriages between Japanese nationals and foreign nationals in the latter half of the 1980s, from about 5,000 per year in 1970 to about 21,000 in 2017, the Hague Convention entered into force on April 1, 2014 after various discussions held in Japan.

As 2019 marks five years since the Hague Convention came into effect in Japan, MOFA held a symposium commemorating the fifth anniversary of Japan's entry into the 1980 Hague Convention "The 1980 HAGUE CONVENTION AND JAPAN - Toward a Child-Centered International Family Dispute Settlement" at the University of Tokyo on June 10, 2019. Here, family dispute settlement refers to procedures to resolve disputes within families.

This symposium was convened for three purposes: (1) To equip more people with correct knowledge on the Hague Convention and the issue of child abduction; (2) To facilitate better understanding of the implementation status of the Convention in Japan over the past five years; (3) To provide an opportunity for deepening national debates on the approach to family dispute settlement relating to children.

This symposium drew more than 190 audience members, including those who are involved in the implementation of the Hague Convention such as lawyers and court officers, diplomatic corps in Tokyo, researchers, and students. During two sessions, the participants engaged in lively discussions on the approach to family dispute settlement relating to children.

(1) First Session: Japan's Five-year Experience in Implementing the 1980 Hague Convention and its New Challenges

In the keynote lectures, representatives from MOFA, the Supreme Court of Japan, and the U.S. Department of State presented information about Japan's five-year experience in implementing the Hague Convention, court proceedings for Hague cases in Japan, and U.S.-Japan Hague cases from the U.S. perspective, respectively. Following that, experts and attorneys with a wealth of experience in cases on the order for the return of a child based on the Hague Convention joined in the panel discussion. The panelists discussed the difficulties that Japan has faced to date in implementing the Convention countermeasures, and deepened discussions on the future challenges that Japan needs to address, such as efforts to speed up the procedures based on the Convention and mechanisms for enhancing the effectiveness of compulsory execution procedures for the return of a child.

(2) Second Session: The Way Forward

In the keynote lectures, a professor from the UK who specializes in international family laws spoke about the long-term effects of abduction on children and the importance of care for children after reunification with their parents. Following that, an American attorney and mediator with experience in conducting training for Japanese domestic relations conciliation commissioners, spoke about the merits of using international family mediation in international family dispute cases involving parties of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds. In the panel discussion after that, attorneys and experts joined in-depth discussions on the importance of prioritizing the interests of children and listening to the children in family dispute settlement.

This symposium helped to deepen understanding among a diverse group of participants on matters such as the framework of the Hague Convention and court proceedings in Japan. It also offered participants the opportunity to provide feedback and various views on the implementation status of the Hague Convention in Japan to date, as well as other related topics. Japan will continue to put effort into the steady implementation of the Hague Convention.



Participants engaging in discussion in the panel discussion (June 10, Tokyo)



Video introducing the Hague Convention "Let's study the Hague Child Abduction Convention Whiteboard animation" (https://www.mofa.go.jp/ca/ha/page25e_000146.html)

