

## Section 2

# Supporting Japanese Nationals Overseas

### 1 Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals Overseas

#### (1) Incidents and Accidents in 2020 and Countermeasures

As of 2019, approximately 20 million Japanese nationals<sup>1</sup> travelled overseas over the course of the year, and approximately 1.41 million Japanese nationals live abroad (as of October 2019). 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.

No Japanese nationals were the victims of terrorism incidents in 2020, but a large number of terrorist attacks continued to occur in various regions. The main terrorism incidents included a fatal knife attack in a suburb of Paris, France (January), a knife attack in South London, UK (February), a suicide bombing near the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, Tunisia (March), a fatal knife attack in Romans-sur-Isere, France (April), an attack on police officers in a Paris suburb (April), car crash incidents on an expressway in Berlin, Germany (August), a knife attack in front of the former head office of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris (September), the murder of a teacher in a Paris suburb (October), a fatal knife attack in Nice,

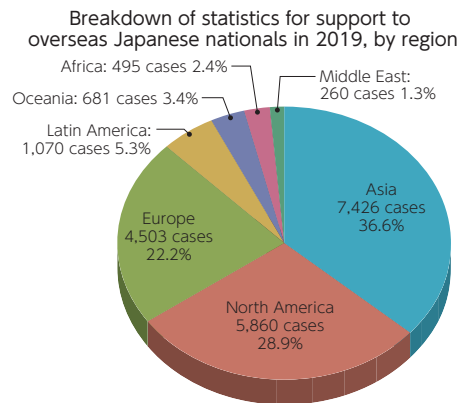
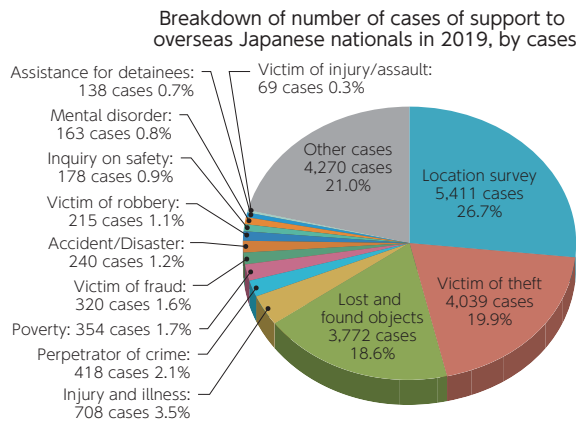
France (October), a shooting in Vienna, Austria (November), and a bombing at a ceremony venue in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (November).

Regions where terrorist attacks have occurred in recent years are not limited to the Middle East and Africa alone – they are widening to Europe, the U.S. and Asia, regions where many Japanese travel and reside. Homegrown terrorism perpetrated by those born in Western countries and indoctrinated through websites or other means by foreign Islamic extremists, and lone-wolf terrorism perpetrated by those acting on their own with little organizational background are occurring in large numbers, but terrorist attacks believed to be backed by organizations such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have also been occurring, such as the shooting incident in Vienna in November. Additionally, there continues to be a large number of terrorist attacks occurring that are aimed at “soft targets” – locations where unspecified numbers of the general public gather every day.

In 2020, the impact of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) meant the number of people traveling overseas fell substantially. The number of incidents in which Japanese nationals fell victim to crimes consequently also declined compared to normal years. Nevertheless, incidents

<sup>1</sup> Source: Ministry of Justice. “Statistics on Legal Migrants”

Breakdown of number of cases of support to Japanese nationals, by cases and regions (2019)



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

Rank	Diplomatic mission	Number of cases
1	Embassy of Japan in Thailand	1,521
2	Embassy of Japan in the Philippines	1,187
3	Embassy of Japan in the UK	981
4	Embassy of Japan in Korea	775
5	Embassy of Japan in France	750
6	Consulate-General of Japan in Los Angeles	626
7	Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu	615
8	Consulate-General of Japan in Shanghai	595
9	Consulate-General of Japan in Barcelona	591
10	Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco	559

Rank	Diplomatic mission	Number of cases
11	Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong	449
12	Consulate-General of Japan in New York	445
13	Consulate-General of Japan in Cebu	368
14	Embassy of Japan in Italy	356
15	Consulate-General of Japan in Denpasar	282
16	Consulate-General of Japan in Hagatna	277
17	Consulate-General of Japan in Atlanta	268
18	Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle	265
19	Consulate-General of Japan in Houston	233
20	Consular Office of Japan in Portland	231

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

involving Japanese being killed in robberies have been occurring worldwide.

Furthermore, accompanying the spread of COVID-19 from China to the rest of the world, anti-Asian sentiment has been witnessed in a number of countries, and in some instances Japanese nationals have suffered attacks.

Many natural disasters also occurred around the world and caused great damage. These included a volcanic eruption on Luzon in the Philippines in January, cyclone “Linfa” in May, the Aegean Sea earthquake in October, and hurricane “Eta” in November.

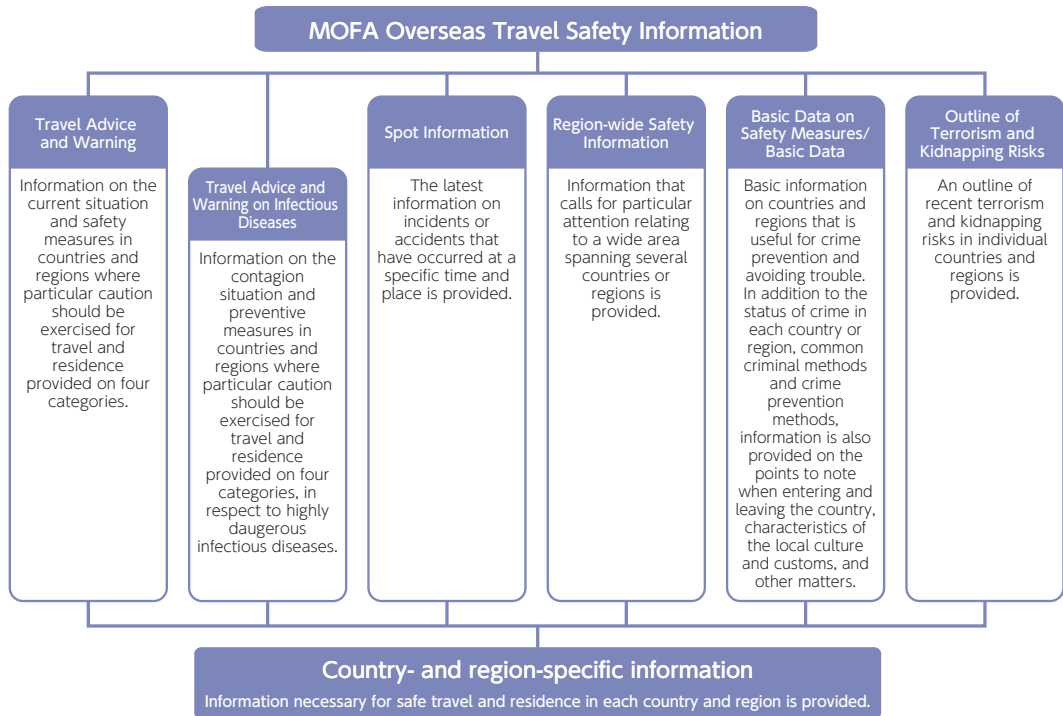
Additionally, in 2020, large-scale protests were held successively in Hong Kong, the U.S. and other parts of the world, resulting in MOFA utilizing its Overseas Safety website and other channels to call on Japanese nationals to avoid going near demonstrations and protests. Depending on the

regional circumstances, and as occasion demanded, MOFA also published overseas travel safety information concerning countries and regions where particular caution was conceivably needed when traveling and residing. In 2020, MOFA raised the risk levels for Ethiopia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Cote d’Ivoire, 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.

Whenever necessary, MOFA issues overseas travel safety information on infectious diseases, air pollution and other risks in countries and regions where health and medical caution is required, in

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



order to communicate the current outbreak situation and prevention measures, and highlight matters worth paying attention to when travelling and staying in the affected regions.

Since the end of 2019, the COVID-19 outbreak that began in China has raged across the world. In response, MOFA has been disseminating information such as Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases and Spot Safety Information to Japanese nationals residing or traveling abroad and raising their awareness in a timely and appropriate manner, via its website and e-mails. In addition, MOFA used government charter flights to repatriate Japanese nationals and others who had been residing in Hubei Province, China. MOFA had also succeeded in bringing back a total of over 12,000 Japanese nationals from 101 countries with the support of Japanese Embassies and Consulates-General there by the end of November (see the Opening Special Feature on page 2)

As for other infectious diseases, 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.

### (2) Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Overseas

The number of incidents of Japanese nationals receiving support or protection from Japanese diplomatic missions overseas and the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association fell marginally in 2019, to 20,295 cases involving a total of 21,175 people.

However, threats to the safety of Japanese nationals occur constantly in various regions throughout the world. Since the beginning of 2020 in particular, Japanese nationals traveling abroad are being required to respond appropriately to complex risks such as infectious diseases and terrorism, amid entry and movement restrictions

imposed on the travelers of various countries and various constraints such as reduced flights that have accompanied the spread of COVID-19. In addition, because it is becoming more difficult than ever before to respond in cases where such travelers are unfortunate enough to encounter a terrorist attack or other incident or accident while overseas, the need for every possible effort to be expended on overseas safety measures is increasing all the more.

Based on this perspective, MOFA works to enhance the safety awareness of Japanese nationals and promote its safety measures by disseminating information widely to the general public.

Specifically, MOFA issues the latest safety information for each country and region on the Overseas Safety website, and emails the latest safety information on travel destinations and places of residence to Japanese nationals who are staying overseas and have Overseas Residential Registrations, and short-term travelers who have registered with Tabi-Regi, MOFA's overseas travel registration system.

MOFA strives to enhance the knowledge and capability of the Japanese people concerning overseas safety measures and crisis management through seminars and trainings. In 2020, in order to address the need for safety measures under the global spread of COVID-19, MOFA hosted safety measure seminars inside and outside Japan, and also dispatched lecturers from the Consular Affairs Bureau to deliver lectures on safety measures at seminars held throughout Japan by domestic organizations, associations and other groups (ten times overseas and seven times within Japan).

In addition, even overseas, the public and private sectors are cooperating to advance safety measures, and the diplomatic missions in each country host regular meetings of Security Consultation and Liaison Committees. Even amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the diplomatic missions overseas are continuing to share information, exchange opinions and bolster collaboration in preparation for emergencies with local Japanese



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



MOFA Overseas Safety App  
 Overseas safety website "About the Overseas Safety App"  
 Can be downloaded from: ([https://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/c\\_info/oshirase\\_kaian\\_app.html](https://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/c_info/oshirase_kaian_app.html))  
 (only in the Japanese language)



nationals in their respective countries, including by hosting such events online.

The terrorist attack in Dhaka in July 2016 brought renewed recognition for rising awareness among international cooperation personnel, as well as small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), students studying abroad and short-term travelers, who have limited access to information on safety. In light of that, where SMEs were concerned, MOFA promoted awareness through Golgo 13's Security Guidelines for Japanese SMEs Abroad, which uses manga (comics) to explain basic safety measures for companies in an easy-to-understand manner.

Furthermore, with regard to Japanese students studying overseas, MOFA personnel are holding lectures at universities and other educational

institutions, on the grounds that many such institutions have not accumulated sufficient expertise or experience on safety measures and dealing with emergency situations. Requests for lectures from educational institutions declined in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19, but MOFA nevertheless continues to strive to help those institutions to raise awareness of safety measures among their students and build in-house crisis management structures, including by holding online lectures on safety measures. MOFA is moving ahead with efforts to connect government agencies with educational institutions, overseas study agencies and students studying abroad, by beginning automatic Tabi-Regi registration system 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 above-mentioned Tabi-Regi, including by distributing information cards and the *Kaigai Anzen Tora no Maki* (handbook for overseas travelers).

As of November 2020, the number of travelers who had registered on Tabi-Regi since its launch in July 2014 exceeded 6.67 million, reflecting initiatives for enhancing the system's convenience and activities which aim at promoting registration.

## 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 staff's attitudes in over-the-counter and telephone responses as well as work implementation status at diplomatic missions overseas. The survey conducted in January 2021 covered 145 diplomatic missions overseas and received valid responses from 18,349 people. The survey results suggested that respondents were for the most part satisfied with the level of consular services provided by diplomatic missions

overseas. Nevertheless, some respondents also submitted views calling for improvements in consular staff's attitude to users, including that staff seem to adopt matter-of-fact attitudes and terms of speech. MOFA takes user feedback such as this seriously, and will continue its efforts to enhance services and make improvements so as to provide better consular services that are oriented to the perspective of its users.

### (2) Passports: Maintaining trustworthiness, enhancing convenience and making administrative tasks more efficient

From February 2020, MOFA began issuing new passports that adopt Katsushika Hokusai's "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji" series on all the visa pages (see the Special Feature on page 347).

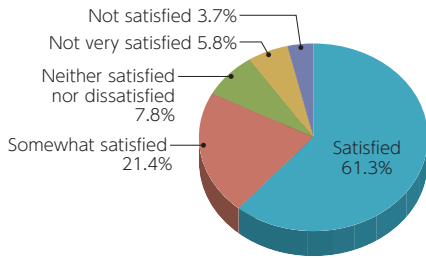
1.34 million passports were issued in 2020, falling by 70.3% compared to 2019 and reflecting the significant drop in the number of people heading overseas amid the global spread of COVID-19. As of the end of December, there were approximately 27.71 million valid passports in circulation.

Realizing a digital society is becoming a pressing issue, which is also the case where passport issuance applications are concerned. On the basis of the "Digital Government Execution Plan" that was amended in December, from FY2022, it will become possible to apply for passports online. In designing that system, MOFA is striving to utilize existing infrastructure, including the My Number Portal (a government-run online service concerning administrative procedures and other processes), reduce the number of times necessary for applicants to appear before the counters in person, and digitalize administrative operations, while simultaneously maintaining the trustworthiness of Japanese passports.

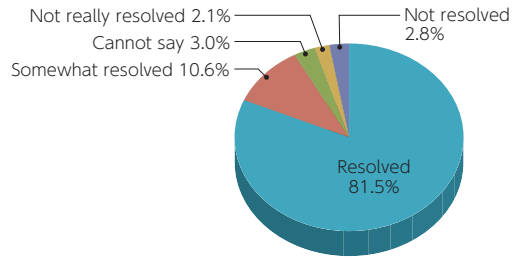
With regard to the indication of former surnames on passports, up to now this had been permitted under extremely strict conditions, but MOFA decided to ease those conditions for applications filed from April 2021, and also to change the way names are recorded on passports. More

Results of a survey of consular service users (FY2020: 145 diplomatic missions)

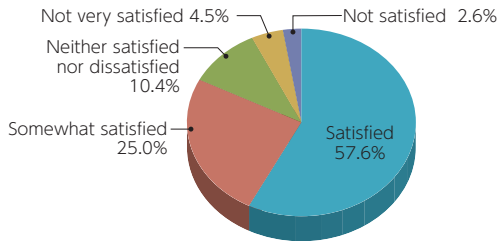
Overall, how satisfied are you with the consular services you have received?



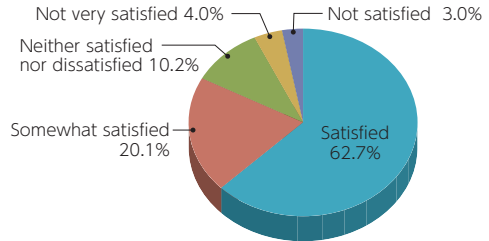
Has your problem (application, notification, consultations, etc.) been resolved through the use of consular services?



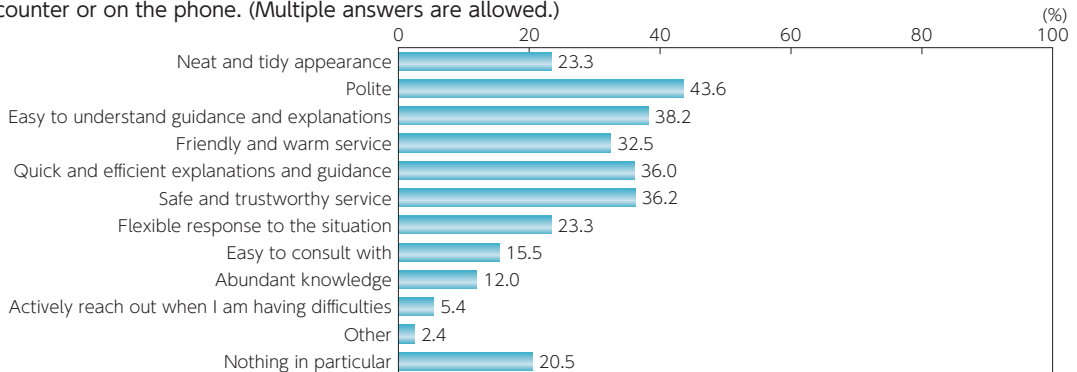
How satisfied are you with the knowledge of duties and processing speed of the consular services?



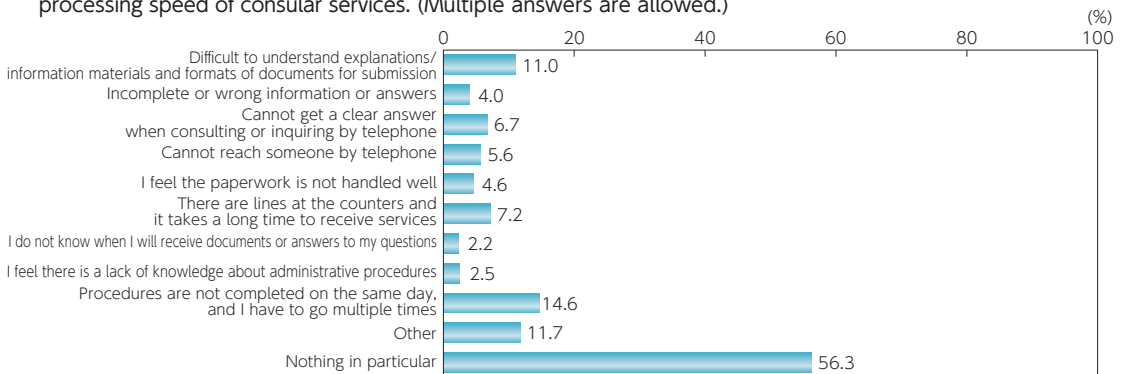
How satisfied were you with the customer service manners of staff while receiving consular services?



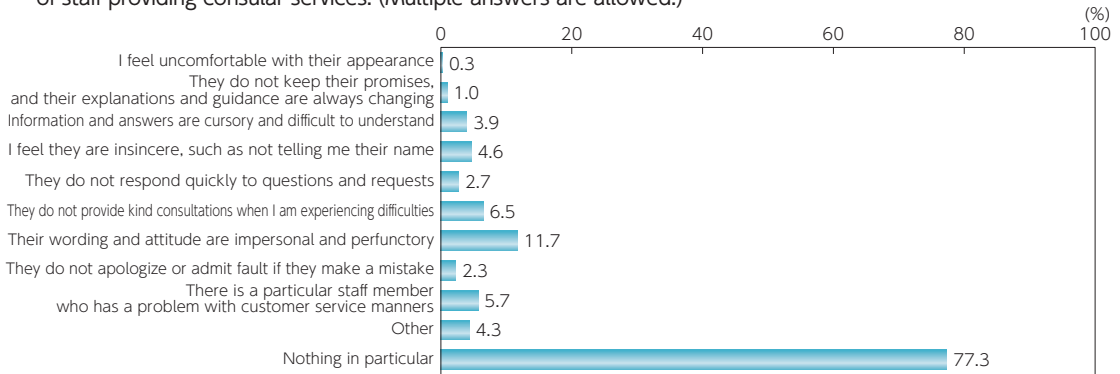
Please select any of the following items that you found to be "good" about the staff at the consular service counter or on the phone. (Multiple answers are allowed.)



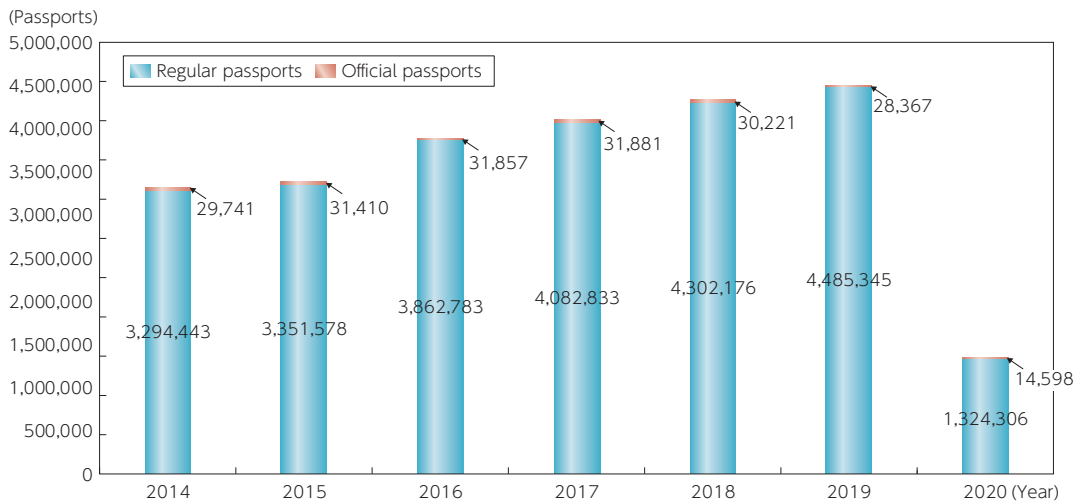
Please select all that apply if you feel that improvement needs to be made for the knowledge of duties and processing speed of consular services. (Multiple answers are allowed.)



Please select all that apply if you feel that improvement needs to be made for the customer service manners of staff providing consular services. (Multiple answers are allowed.)



### Changes in the number of passports issued



Note: Official passports include diplomatic passports.

Source: Prepared based on passport statistics for 2020 (MOFA's Passport Division)

specifically, when applicants want to have their former surname jointly recorded on their passports, they will be permitted to do so provided it is possible to confirm their former surname from either an official copy of their family register, an official copy of their resident registration, or an Individual Number Card (My Number Card) that displays their former surname. MOFA also decided to add the explanation “former surname” in English to the identification page of such passports to make it clearer to foreign immigration officials that the indicated name is the passport holder’s former surname.

In 2020, there were 15 confirmed cases of illicit acquisitions of passports by impersonation

or other means. Ten cases of illegal passport use overseas were also confirmed.

Following the introduction of ePassports in 2006, new security technologies are being proactively adopted. Measures have also been taken with the new 2020 passports to prevent forgery, including by bolstering the capacity for preventing personal information from being stolen from passports’ IC chips, and using different design patterns on all the visa pages.

Based on a study by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which sets out the international standards for passports, some countries in Europe, Asia and elsewhere are moving to introduce new technologies such as laser printing



on thermoplastic material. Following these countries, Japan is aiming to introduce next-generation passports that incorporate these advanced technologies in FY2024.

In a passport index based on trustworthiness and other factors that was announced by a private-sector UK company in January 2021, Japanese passports ranked first out of 110 countries. In any event, MOFA will continue to engage in maintaining the trustworthiness of Japanese passports while enhancing convenience for applicants and making passport administrative operation more efficient.

### (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 municipal service counter at the same time as filing their notice of moving overseas. As a result, there is no longer 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. In addition, 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



Special  
FeatureIssuance of the New 2020 Passport:  
Preventing Counterfeiting while Promoting Japanese Culture through the “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji”

Issuance of new passports commenced from applications received on February 4.

Passports incorporating new technologies have previously been developed, including machine-readable passports in 1992 and ePassports in 2006. For the passport that is currently in use, first issued in 2013, anti-counterfeiting measures have also been adopted through sophisticated technologies, such as black-and-white watermarks, holograms and special printing. This has brought the incidence of passport forgery or alteration to an extremely low level. Now, a new passport incorporating new technologies has been introduced for the further prevention of passport counterfeiting.

The integrated circuit (IC) chips in the new passport have reinforced functions to prevent the illicit reading and copying of personal information. Changes have also been made to the design on the visa pages with the introduction of the “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji\*1” by the artist Katsushika Hokusai, as a way of preventing passport forgery or alteration. While every visa page in the passport has had the same design before this, printing a different picture on each page has made it even more difficult to forge or alter.

The decision to use beautiful Japanese designs for the visa pages was made from the viewpoint of preventing counterfeiting, and also for the purpose of contributing to the promotion of Japanese culture. In the selection of the basic design, the “Preparatory Conference for the Selection of the Next Passport Design” was convened by five expert members with specialized knowledge in the areas of design, travel, journalism and sports. The final decision was made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs based on their discussions about the multiple candidates under consideration.

Various designs were proposed, including designs based on the motif of unique Japanese scenes such as New Year’s Day and the Doll’s Festival (*Hinamatsuri*), the crane in association with traveling through the air, and plants that represent the seasons in Japan such as the cherry blossom. Based on factors such as Japanese character, dignity and familiarity, “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji” was selected as the final design. This is a masterpiece that is representative of the genre of Japanese art known as *ukiyo-e*. Widely known around the world, the work is based on Mount Fuji, also a World Heritage Site.

The passport with ten years of validity has 48 visa pages, and one print is used for every two-page spread. Hence, 24 prints are used in total (18 prints in the 36-page passport with five years of validity). In considering which of the “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji” to be used in this passport, consideration was given to the balance of the design and the objectivity of the selection method. In the end, it was decided that the first 24 prints would be used, based on the titles of the prints in the order of the Japanese syllabary.

Since the start of the issuance of the new passport in February, the impact of the global spread of the novel coronavirus disease has resulted in a significant drop in the number of passports issued in Japan. However, those who did receive the new passport have spoken favorably about the new design that uses the “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji” artwork.



“Under the Wave off Kanagawa” from “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji” used in the design of the 2020 passport \*2

\*1 “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji” is a series of *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints based on the theme of Mount Fuji created by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), a master of *ukiyo-e* in the mid- and late Edo era. Renowned prints from this series include “South Wind, Clear Sky,” “Under the Wave off Kanagawa,” and “Rainstorm Beneath the Summit.” The series comprised 36 prints at the time of their publication, but due to their popularity, 10 prints were added to make a total of 46 prints.

\*2 Visit the link below to see the other prints from the “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji” used in the 2020 passport.  
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000432933.pdf>



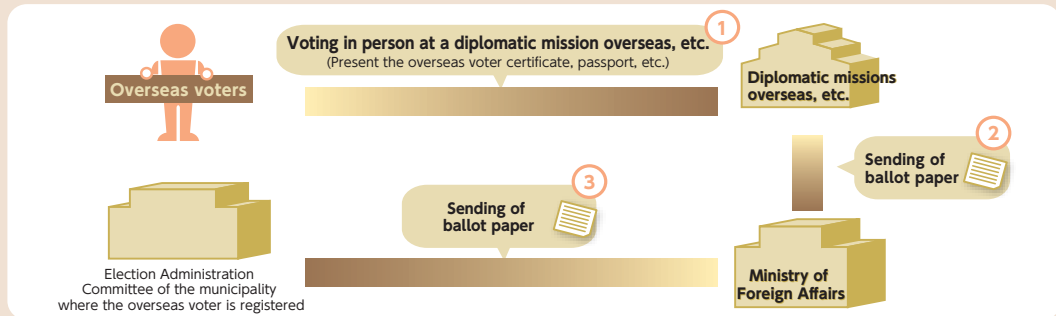
Poster announcing the issuance of the 2020 passport



## Voting in elections for overseas voters

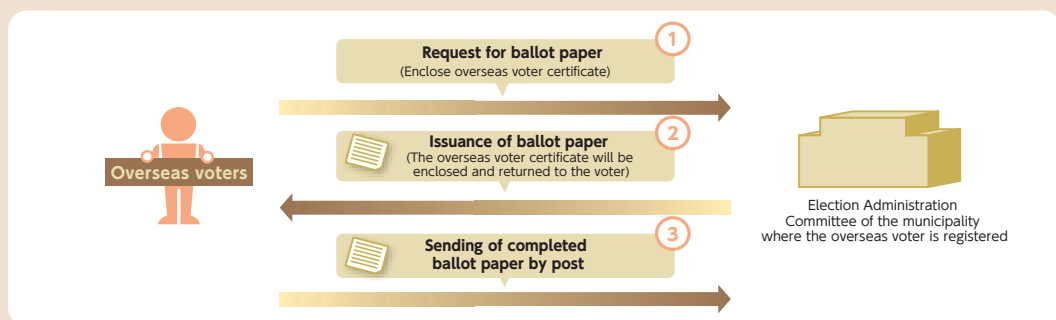
### a. Voting at a foreign diplomatic mission

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).

dispatches medical teams with the cooperation of domestic medical institutions (not implemented in FY2020 due to the impact of COVID-19). MOFA also dispatches medical specialists to regions where infectious diseases or air pollution are becoming serious issues, and organizes health and safety lectures (not implemented in FY2020 due to the impact of COVID-19).

### C Support for Japanese Nationals Living Overseas and Japanese Descendants (Nikkei)

Between March and December 2021, in order to support Japanese nationals living overseas and Japanese descendants (Nikkei) whose lifestyles are being disrupted by the spread of COVID-19, MOFA carried out the Program to Strengthen Livelihood and Business Foundations for Japanese Nationals Overseas and People of Japanese Descent (Nikkei) through support for projects that are being implemented by Japan societies,

Japanese chambers of commerce and industry and Nikkei groups overseas for the purposes of halting the spread of infections in communities of Japanese living overseas and Nikkei communities, and nurturing their business environments.

#### **▣ Responses to Other Needs**

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

For example, when converting driver's licenses issued in foreign countries to Japanese driver's licenses, all persons with driver's licenses issued in a foreign country are exempted from taking certain sections of the Japanese driver's license examination (theory/practical), when it has been confirmed that they have no problems with driving vehicles. On the other hand, as it is mandatory for Japanese nationals to take driving tests when converting Japanese driver's 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 bombings 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 152 years, as of 2020. 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 a significant contribution to the development of the countries in various fields, including politics, the

economy, education 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. MOFA is also working to further strengthen relationships with Nikkei communities 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 in May 2017.

Thus far, 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. In addition, 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 Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad, which is held every year in October, was cancelled in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. Accompanying that, the welcome reception hosted by the Foreign Minister was also cancelled, but an online forum was held to deepen ties with Nikkei communities and cultivate the groundwork for next year's convention. A video message from Foreign Minister Motegi was played at the forum. Going forward also, along with 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, 2020, 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, 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 six years and nine months between the entry into force of the Convention and the end of December 2020, MOFA received a total number of 425 applications: 271 applications seeking the return of the child and 154 applications seeking access to the child. Of the cases seeking the return of the child from Japan to another country,

children were returned in 47 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 42 cases. Of the cases requesting the return of the child from another country to Japan, children were returned in 47 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 28 cases.

As a part of outreach activities to non-Contracting States to the Convention, at an online seminar for Viet Nam's supreme court and judiciary held in December 2020, Japan introduced its experience up to joining the Convention, and its initiatives concerning matters such as its domestic implementation structure after becoming a Contracting State to the Convention.

In addition to this, in the interest of making the Hague Convention known to a wider bracket of citizens, MOFA publishes information concerning the convention and in information magazines for Japanese nationals living overseas and on their web sites, and holds online seminars to raise awareness among Japanese nationals living overseas. MOFA also puts efforts into PR activities by holding seminars in Japan for local governments, and relevant institutions such as bar associations.

#### 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 2020)

	Applications for support for return of children	Application for assistance on face-to-face meeting
Applications related to children located in Japan	150	120
Applications related to children located overseas	121	34