

Section 2 Supporting Japanese Nationals Overseas

1 Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals Overseas

(1) Incidents and Accidents in 2025 and Responses to Them

As of 2025, approximately 14.73 million⁽¹⁾ Japanese nationals traveled overseas over the course of the year, and as of October that year approximately 1.30 million Japanese nationals live abroad. Protecting the lives of Japanese nationals traveling and residing abroad is one of the most important missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

Against the backdrop of the recovery in the number of Japanese nationals departing overseas and the increasing fluidity of the global situation, and given the heightened possibility of Japanese nationals encountering various risks abroad, MOFA reorganized the structure of the Consular Affairs Bureau in August 2025 and newly established the Japanese Nationals Emergency Response Division and the Japanese Nationals Safety Support Division, in order to be able to respond flexibly to all forms of protection of Japanese nationals overseas. The Japanese Nationals Emergency Response Division is responsible for emergency response including terrorism and for issuing Travel Advice and Warnings for individual countries and regions, while the Japanese Nationals Safety Support Division is responsible for general assistance to individual Japanese nationals and for the public relations and awareness-raising activities related to overseas safety measures.

There had been no Japanese victims of terrorism incidents since 2020; however, in April 2024 one Japanese national was injured in a terrorist attack in Karachi, Pakistan. 2025 was another year in which a large number of terrorist attacks occurred in various regions. The main terrorism incidents in Western countries and other regions included a vehicle-ramming attack in

New Orleans, the United States (U.S.) (January); stabbing attacks in Berlin, Germany, Mulhouse, France, and Villach, Austria (February); a shooting attack in Pahalgam, India (April); a stabbing attack in Bielefeld, Germany (May); and a church attack in Manchester, the United Kingdom (UK) (October). Moreover, terrorism incidents occurred frequently in the Middle East, particularly in Iran, Syria, and Afghanistan, as well as in Pakistan and India in Southwest Asia, and in Africa, such as in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and Mozambique.

In recent years, Islamic extremists have expanded their scope of activities around the globe, meaning that terrorist attacks have also been occurring in Western countries and Asia, where many Japanese nationals travel and reside. Terrorist attacks persist, characterized by a high incidence of attacks perpetrated by: home-grown terrorists radicalized online or through other means; lone offenders with limited or no discernible organizational links; and attacks targeting soft targets, i.e., locations with large numbers of civilians. In Western countries, violent acts by far-left and far-right radicals, such as hate crimes motivated by animosity toward a particular race or ethnic group, have also been intensifying in frequency.

Incidents in which Japanese nationals fell victim to crimes, traffic accidents, mountain-climbing accidents, and other accidents continued to occur in many locations around the world in 2025, to which MOFA provided support.

Natural disasters also occurred around the world, causing great damage in cases such as earthquakes, typhoons, hurricanes, heavy rains, and wildfires. The large earthquake in central Myanmar (March) resulted

(1) Source: Immigration Services Agency of Japan

in a large number of casualties, including one Japanese national, and MOFA provided support to the bereaved family.

In the Middle East, following the intensification of exchanges of attacks between Israel and Iran, the Government of Japan raised the Travel Advice and Warning levels for both countries and assisted the departure of Japanese nationals from Israel and Iran using government-arranged buses (June). This was the first-ever simultaneous overland evacuation operation covering two countries, and a total of 128 persons, primarily Japanese nationals, completed their evacuation.

When such emergencies arise, MOFA dispatches an “Emergency Response Team” (ERT) to put in place the initial response structures at the local diplomatic mission and promptly engage in activities to assist Japanese nationals. The ERT was established following the terrorist attack against Japanese nationals in Algeria in January 2013, and is dispatched when emergencies arise in which Japanese nationals have been or are feared to be involved in terrorist attacks, large-scale accidents, natural disasters, or similar events. In 2025, ERT members were dispatched in response to the large earthquake in central Myanmar (March) and the intensification of hostilities between Israel and Iran (June), among other situations.

In addition, whenever necessary depending on the regional situation, MOFA issued overseas travel safety information related to countries and regions where particular caution is considered necessary for traveling and residing.

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

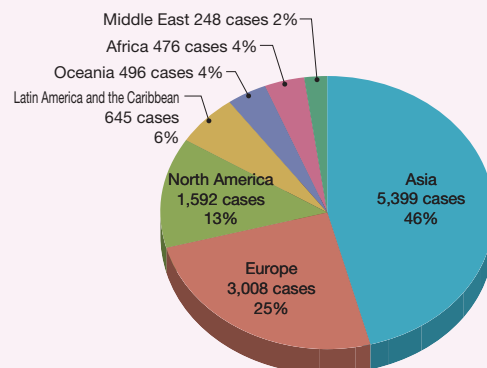
In 2025, new cases of Ebola hemorrhagic fever were reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, measles spread in various parts of the world, and cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) were reported in the Middle East. In addition, mosquito-borne infectious diseases such as dengue fever, chikungunya fever, and Zika virus infection spread mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa.

(2) Safety Measures for Japanese Nationals Overseas

The number of Japanese nationals receiving support or protection in 2024 from Japanese diplomatic missions overseas and the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association was a total of 10,287, and the number of cases of support or protection was 11,864. Under these circumstances, Japanese embassies and consulates general worldwide provided attentive assistance in many ways as well as disseminating information about entry/exit limitations and public safety.

Specifically, MOFA issues the latest safety information for each country and region on its Overseas Safety website. Furthermore, MOFA sends emails and LINE messages on the latest safety information of travel destinations to those Japanese nationals residing abroad who have submitted Overseas Residential Registration or short-term travelers who have registered on the overseas travel registration service (Tabi-Regi).

■ Breakdown of statistics for support to overseas Japanese nationals in 2024 by region



Source: 2024 Statistics on Assistance Provided by MOFA to Japanese Nationals Overseas



The actors ISHIDA Hikari and MORITAKA Ai introduce Tabi-Regi (for Japanese nationals traveling overseas for less than three months) and Overseas Residential Registration (for Japanese nationals living overseas for three months or more)

Special Feature

Preparing for Emergencies Abroad! — MOFA's Efforts to Protect Japanese Nationals and Cooperation with Other Countries —

Protecting the lives and physical safety of Japanese nationals residing or traveling abroad is one of the most important missions of the Government of Japan. In particular, supporting the evacuation of Japanese nationals who are in danger to safe locations is a task that carries great responsibility for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and preparations are carried out on a constant basis. In addition, in recent years, MOFA has been working to strengthen cooperation with other countries in the evacuation of their own nationals.

A recent example of evacuation support operations was the response to the intensification of exchanges of fire between Israel and Iran in June. The Government of Japan simultaneously carried out two overland evacuation support operations to neighboring countries for Japanese nationals, their family members, etc. — 25 from Israel and 103 from Iran. Many expressions of gratitude were received from those who were evacuated, such as: “I am truly grateful for the swift and attentive response.”

In the event of a serious emergency overseas, MOFA dispatches Emergency Response Team (ERT) personnel to the affected location, thereby reinforcing the capacity of Embassies and Consulates General. MOFA has over 100 ERT personnel who, while normally stationed at MOFA headquarters or diplomatic missions overseas around the world, are registered on a voluntary basis to serve as experts in consular affairs, languages, medicine, and press at short notice during emergencies. Driven by a strong desire to help those in difficulty, these personnel work to protect Japanese nationals on the grueling front lines under severe stress.

MOFA conducts training and exercises for ERT personnel and others together with the Ministry of Defense, the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), and Embassies. It also conducts joint exercises with other countries overseas, thereby enhancing its capacity to respond to emergencies.

Furthermore, since 2024, Japan has been strengthening its cooperative relationships for the protection of Japanese nationals through the conclusion of Memoranda of Cooperation regarding the protection of nationals overseas with the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Australia. These efforts aim to facilitate further cooperation in emergencies by building on Japan-ROK cooperation in the evacuation of nationals from Sudan, Israel, and other locations, as well as the experience of Japanese nationals evacuating aboard Australian aircraft during the May 2024 evacuation from French New Caledonia.

In today's world, where international relations are complexly intertwined, international cooperation in the protection of nationals is becoming ever more important. If countries can cooperate in a spirit of mutual assistance in times of need, it becomes possible to respond more swiftly and effectively to emergencies that arise far from one's own shores. MOFA will continue to adapt to changes in the international situation, further strengthen its cooperative relationships with various countries, and spare no effort to protect Japanese nationals residing and traveling abroad.



Scene of evacuation from Israel (photographed by a staff member of the Embassy of Japan in Jordan)



Foreign Minister Iwata and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia Penny Wong signing the Memorandum of Cooperation (September 5, Tokyo)

MOFA is actively engaged in PR activities in order to promote registration on Tabi-Regi and submission of Overseas Residential Registration. For instance, MOFA carries out activities using social media including the official MOFA YouTube channel, and promotional tools at airports, as well as distributing information materials to passport centers and municipal counters. MOFA provides a Tabi-Regi linkage interface to businesses including overseas travel agencies, allowing them to batch register their passengers traveling abroad, and encourages its use. In September, MOFA set up a booth at Tourism Expo Japan (Nagoya), providing information and raising awareness about the safety of Japanese nationals traveling or residing abroad. As of October 2025, the number of travelers who had registered on Tabi-Regi since its launch in July 2014 exceeded 12.10 million, reflecting initiatives for enhancing the system's convenience and activities that aim at promoting registration.

MOFA strives to enhance the knowledge and capabilities of the Japanese people concerning overseas safety measures and crisis management through seminars and training. In 2025, MOFA held virtual and in-person seminars on safety measures (11 times at diplomatic missions overseas and 7 times within Japan). Furthermore, Consular Affairs Bureau staff delivered lectures at seminars held throughout Japan by domestic organizations, associations, and other groups. In addition, MOFA also provided regular overseas safety information through the voice platform “Voicy.”

Furthermore, MOFA held “Public-Private Joint Practical Training for Counter-Terrorism and Anti-Kidnapping Measures,” both within Japan and abroad (held in Indonesia for the overseas component), with the participation of Japanese businesses and organizations. These initiatives are useful in preventing harm from regular crimes and terrorism, but also in improving response capabilities in the event of encountering such an incident. Furthermore, the public and private sectors are cooperating to advance safety measures even overseas, and the diplomatic missions in each country host regular meetings of Security Consultation and Liaison Committees. Diplomatic missions overseas are continuing to share information, exchange opinions, and bolster collaboration with local Japanese nationals in preparation for emergencies in their respective countries.

In addition, following the terrorist attack in Dhaka in July 2016, MOFA distributed to companies expanding overseas and passport centers nationwide “Golgo 13's Security Guidelines for Japanese small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) Abroad,” which was developed with the aim of raising the awareness of SMEs, etc. who have limited access to information on safety. Moreover, MOFA has continued to use the LINE messaging platform, through “Messages from Duke Togo” by the medium of Golgo 13, to distribute educational messages about security measures.

MOFA has also newly created a leaflet titled “Overseas Travel Safety Measures” for Japanese nationals traveling abroad, compiling precautions to reduce the risk of encountering incidents, safety information provided by MOFA, responses in case of involvement, and emergency contact information. The leaflet was published on the Overseas Safety website and distributed to company representatives and others.

With regard to Japanese students heading abroad to study, in 2025, MOFA held in-person and online seminars on safety measures for educational institutions (twice within Japan). In addition, MOFA officials



Overseas safety measures flyer (front)



Overseas safety measures flyer (back)

have been delivering in-person and online safety measures courses at universities and other institutions. MOFA also conducted PR for Overseas Residential Registration and Tabi-Regi through magazines and events targeted at students studying abroad. MOFA will continue to strive to help raise students' awareness of overseas safety measures and support the building of crisis management structures at educational institutions. MOFA is advancing initiatives to strengthen connections among government agencies, educational institutions, overseas study placement organizations, and students studying abroad, by launching an automatic Tabi-Regi registration system with some overseas study institutions.

With regard to private companies and organizations operating abroad, MOFA held the plenary meeting and steering committee of "The Council for Public-Private Cooperation for Overseas Safety" as well as the plenary meeting of "The Small and Medium Enterprise Overseas Safety Measures Network" with the aim of advancing mutual information and opinion exchanges

between the public and private sectors and creating a safer environment for the activities of Japanese nationals overseas. The Government of Japan intends to further strengthen coordination with organizations and relevant ministries and agencies, and will continue to strive to disseminate overseas safety information and implement support measures from the perspective of SMEs.

In addition, ahead of periods of increased overseas travel, MOFA holds a Travel Agency Liaison Meeting three times a year, bringing together travel industry representatives and Consular Affairs Bureau officials. Based on the latest situation in each country, the meetings share matters that should be noted when traveling and cases that have actually occurred, aiming to exchange information and align awareness among the parties concerned. MOFA will continue to work together with the private sector to develop an environment for safe and secure overseas travel, with a view to further ensuring the safety of Japanese nationals traveling abroad.

2 Consular Service and Assistance for Japanese Living Overseas

(1) Improving Consular Service and Promoting Digitalization

A Improving Consular Service

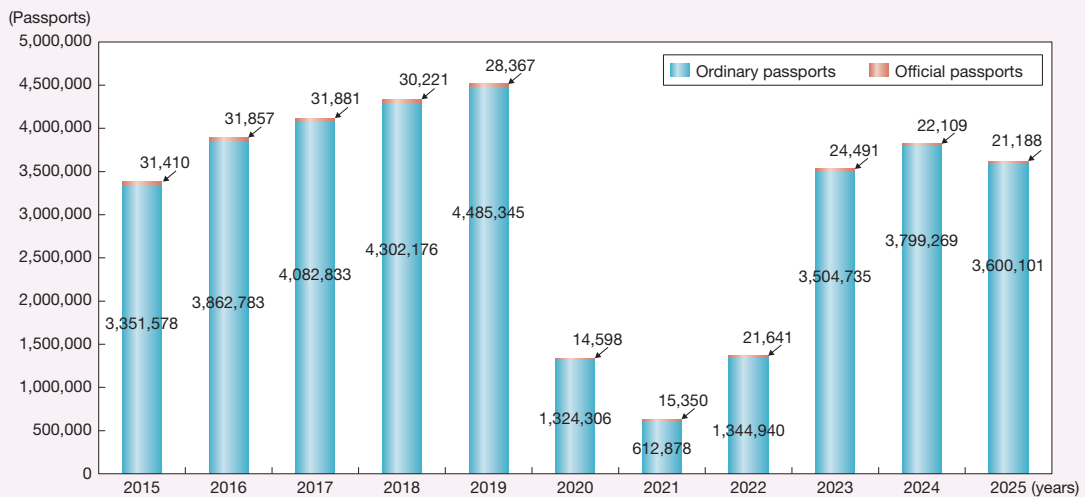
With the aim of providing quality consular services to Japanese nationals overseas, MOFA conducts a questionnaire survey on services such as consular staff's attitudes in over-the-counter and telephone responses, as well as work implementation status at diplomatic missions overseas. The survey conducted in January 2025 covered 151 diplomatic missions overseas. MOFA takes such user feedback received via surveys 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.

B Promoting Digitalization

In order to improve user convenience and streamline consular work processes, MOFA has been working to digitalize consular procedures such as expanding online application for consular services and online payment for consular fees. MOFA has been expanding the scope

of digitalization, and visible results include a reduced number of counter visits. Building on this, from March 24, 2025, by utilizing the identification code for provision of the family register electronic certificates, applicants are in principle no longer required to attach a copy of their family register — which they previously had to obtain from the local government office of their registered legal domicile — when applying online for a new passport or when applying for certification of personal information at diplomatic missions overseas, both domestically and abroad, thereby further improving convenience. MOFA intends to strengthen the consular policy implementation structure by creating an environment in which consular officers can focus on work in which human response is critical, such as protecting Japanese nationals, by means of digitalizing consular work.

Changes in the number of passports issued



Note: Official passports include diplomatic passports.

Source: Prepared based on 2025 passport statistics (MOFA's Passport Division)

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

The number of passports issued in 2025 was approximately 3.62 million, a decrease of approximately 5% compared to 2024. While the number of passport applications has been on a recovery trend in line with the increase in the number of Japanese nationals traveling overseas following the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels (in 2019, before the pandemic, around 4.49 million passports were issued).⁽²⁾

In terms of passport issuance, from March 24, 2025, online application and payment via Mynportal have been available for both first-time and renewal applications. At the same time, system linkage for family register information was launched, removing the need of submitting a hard copy of the original certified copy of the family register, thereby significantly improving convenience for applicants. Online passport application is also available abroad through the Overseas Residential Registration online application system (ORR net). As a result of this expansion in the scope of online applications, the proportion of online applications relative to the total number of applications from March 24

through the end of that year increased significantly to approximately 44%.

In addition, from March 24, centralized production began at the National Printing Bureau for applications accepted from that date onward. In the “2025 Passport,” the face photo page is made of polycarbonate, with photos and text laser-engraved, making the passport significantly more resistant to counterfeiting and alteration.

Unauthorized obtaining of passports by impersonating others continues to occur,⁽³⁾ so MOFA has been working on further upgrading measures to prevent unauthorized obtaining of passports such as confirming a person's identity through in-person delivery or photographic comparison by facial verification technology.

MOFA will continue to engage in maintaining the trust of Japanese passports while enhancing convenience for applicants and making passport administration more efficient, based on international standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

(3) Overseas Voting

The overseas voting system allows Japanese voters living overseas to vote in national elections. In order to

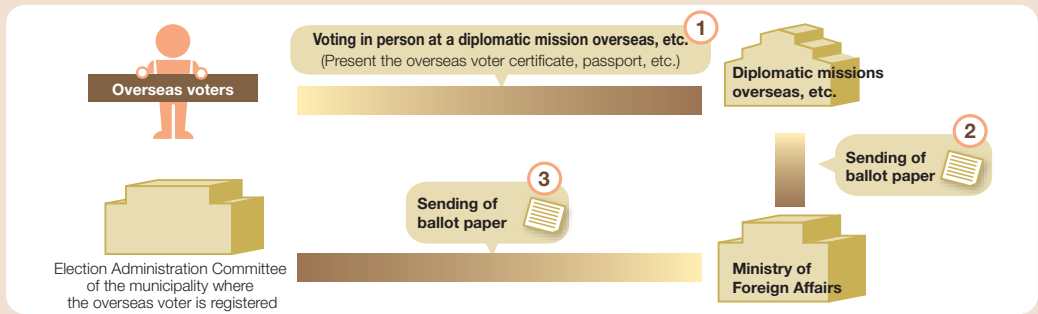
(2) Source: Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)

(3) Known cases of unauthorized obtaining of passports by impersonation were as follows: three in 2020, three in 2021, three in 2022, five in 2023, two in 2024, and three in 2025.

Voting in elections for overseas voters

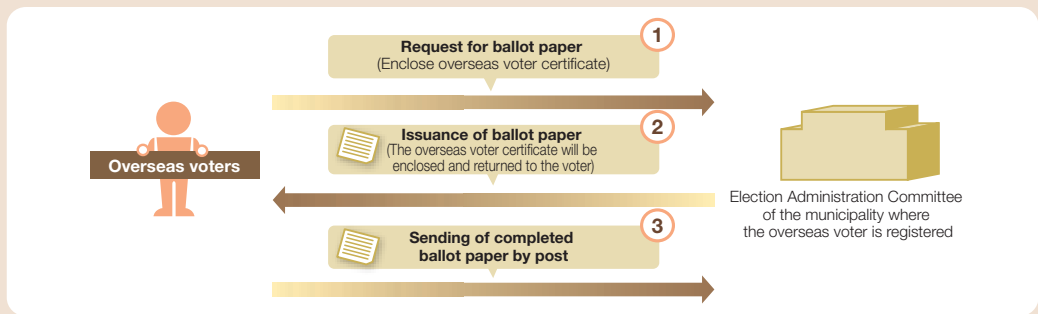
a. Voting at a diplomatic mission overseas

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 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)

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, the procedures were simplified by enabling application for registration on the overseas voter directory at the counter for the election board of the city or town government at the same time as filing a notice of moving overseas. Since July 2024, an initiative has begun to directly transmit application data between Japanese diplomatic missions overseas and election boards of the city or town governments,

significantly accelerating the procedures for issuance of overseas voter identification.

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. When elections are held, diplomatic missions overseas also handle overseas voting procedures, including advance PR activities. In July, for the 27th regular election of the Senate voting at diplomatic missions

overseas was conducted for the 18th time involving 232 diplomatic missions and offices. In 2026, MOFA will continue its PR and other activities to increase the number of registered voters and promote voting at diplomatic missions overseas.

(4) Application and Issuance of Individual Number Cards for People Moving Overseas

In order to promote the spread and usage of Individual Number Cards in accordance with the advance of digitalization, from May 27, 2024, the Cards can continue to be used while overseas by carrying out procedures at city or town government offices when moving overseas. In addition, if Japanese nationals move overseas without carrying out the procedures, the Cards can now be received at diplomatic missions overseas by applying by post to the city or town governments or diplomatic missions overseas. MOFA will work in collaboration with related ministries and agencies and continue to consider measures toward further promoting usage of the Cards.

(5) 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. Based on the Act Concerning the Promotion of Education at Overseas Japanese Educational Facilities, which was approved and took effect in 2022, as well as the spirit of the Constitution of Japan, MOFA cooperates with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), etc. to provide assistance to Japanese Schools (assistance for school building rental fees, remuneration for locally-hired teachers and instructors, safety measures expenses, etc.) 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 level of 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 overseas Japanese educational facilities are not located.

B Medical and Health Measures

MOFA gathers information on outbreaks of infectious diseases overseas and provides information to a broad audience through the Overseas Safety website, websites of diplomatic missions overseas, consular emails, and other means. In addition, the websites of diplomatic missions overseas provide information about local medical institutions where patients can communicate in Japanese, and information gathered on the ground by medical officers working at diplomatic missions is listed on the MOFA website under "Global Medical Information." 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.

Furthermore, with regard to measures against loneliness and social isolation among Japanese nationals overseas, MOFA continues to liaise with NPOs in Japan to provide attentive assistance for individual cases abroad. In some countries, MOFA has also established a system that enables victims of domestic violence (DV) overseas to consult in Japanese with local DV victim support organizations. In addition, at the second "Meeting with Ambassadors on the issue of Loneliness and Isolation" hosted by the Cabinet Office in June 2025, State Minister for Foreign Affairs MIYAJI Takuma attended online from his business trip destination using an avatar robot "OriHime,"⁽⁴⁾ and delivered remarks on the commitment to promoting better understanding both domestically and internationally toward realizing a society that leaves no one struggling with loneliness and social isolation behind.

C 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/

(4) A remotely operated robot developed to enable social participation for people who have difficulty going out. At the meeting, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Miyaji introduced the avatar robot "OriHime" and noted that the advancement of such technologies represents a significant new approach to addressing loneliness and social isolation.

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, MOFA is calling for the simplification of procedures in countries, states or provinces where

it is mandatory for Japanese nationals to take a test to obtain a local driver's license.

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 began with the first voyage to Hawaii in 1868. There are approximately five 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 their countries of residence in various fields, including politics, economy, education, and culture, and at the same time, they act as a bridge between Japan and those countries in developing close relations.

Together with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), MOFA provides cooperation in Central and South America, where approximately 3.1 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. In such ways, MOFA is working to further strengthen connections with Nikkei communities.

In addition, invitation programs to Japan for current Nikkei leaders and young Nikkei who will be future leaders in various fields, and from various countries and regions, have been carried out in North, Central, and South America. Furthermore, efforts are underway to strengthen relations with Nikkei people by actively creating opportunities for the Nikkei communities in each country to maintain and strengthen their connections with Japan, such as arranging opportunities for meetings with local Nikkei persons during visits by Japanese dignitaries.

In September 2025, the 65th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad was held in person in Japan. Foreign Minister Iwaya hosted the welcome reception, engaging with the Nikkei attendees of many generations. MOFA intends to further strengthen collaboration with Nikkei communities in the future.

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

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 for returning children to their state of habitual residence and establishing opportunities for transboundary parent-child access.

This Convention entered into force for Japan on April 1, 2014. 103 countries, including Japan, are parties to the Convention as of the end of December 2025.

The Convention is implemented through mutual cooperation among the governmental agencies designated as the Central Authority in Contracting States.

In Japan, MOFA as the Central Authority avails itself of experts in various fields and provides assistance to both the parent whose child was removed and the parent who removed the child for the resolution of their cases, in communication and cooperation with foreign Central Authorities.

In the eleven years and nine months from the entry into force of the Convention until the end of December 2025, MOFA received a total of 673 applications for assistance: 461 applications seeking the return of a child and 212 applications seeking access to a child. Of the cases seeking the return of a child removed to Japan, children were returned in 85 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 62 cases.

Of the cases seeking the return of a child removed to another country, children were returned in 85 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 49 cases.

In order to build awareness of the Hague Convention among a broad public, MOFA holds seminars targeting Japanese nationals overseas and also runs seminars in Japan for local governments and relevant institutions such as bar associations, putting efforts into PR and awareness-raising activities.

In addition, in October 2025, MOFA held a seminar in London for UK legal professionals, entitled “Japan and the 1980 Hague Convention: The Reality of Implementation and Civil Code Amendments,” as

part of its efforts to raise awareness among overseas stakeholders that Japan is steadily implementing the Hague Convention.⁽⁵⁾

■ **Number of applications for assistance received by MOFA based on the Implementation Act of the Hague Convention (as of the end of December 2025)**

	Application for assistance in child's return	Application for assistance in contact with a child
Application related to a child located in Japan	239	159
Application related to a child located overseas	222	53

⁽⁵⁾ See the MOFA website concerning the 1980 Hague Convention and Japan's efforts, to learn the details of assistance provided under the Convention and PR activities both in Japan and overseas: https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/hr_ha/page22e_000249.html



Column

The Hague Convention: Convention Implementation Centered on the Needs of Parents and Children

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Hague Convention Division, serving as Japan's "Central Authority" under the Hague Convention, provides support to enable both parents to resolve issues on their own when, due to unavoidable circumstances of various kinds, a parent and child are separated from one another across borders. A key priority in this process is giving foremost consideration to the best interests of the child, who is most directly affected by the relationship between the parents.

From the perspective of the child's welfare, it is important for both parents to discuss issues relating to the removal of a child or access to a child and to seek as amicable a resolution as possible in order to reach a settlement. To this end, the Hague Convention Division acts as an intermediary in communications between the parties, introduces alternative dispute resolution (ADR) institutions that provide mediation services, and covers the associated costs. Mediation services refer to a system in which mediators — impartial and neutral third parties such as attorneys and/or clinical psychologists — listen to both parents, confirm their respective positions, dispel any misunderstandings that may exist, and work toward an amicable settlement.

In addition, in order to facilitate contact between a parent and child who are living apart, the Hague Convention Division introduces private Child Contact Support Organizations and covers the associated costs, provided that both parents agree to use their services. On the day of the contact session, a support organization staff member collects the child from one parent, brings the child to meet the other parent and then accompanies the contact session in person. This helps alleviate the anxiety of both the parent and the child and facilitate smooth contact, even for parents and children who have not seen each other for some time. Furthermore, when a parent living abroad and a child residing in Japan wish to engage in contact online, a service called "Online *Mimamori* Contact (Supervised Online Contact)" is also available, in which a staff member of the support organization is present online during the session. In such cases, the staff member observes the child's expressions and behavior and provides support to ensure that the child can take part with peace of mind.

Among the cases handled by the Hague Convention Division, there are instances in which the support described above was utilized and an agreement was reached for the child to return to the country where the child had previously resided. There are also instances in which contact between a parent living abroad and a child residing in Japan continued over a lengthy period. In one case, the parents first engaged in multiple discussions through an ADR institution, facilitated by mediators using an interpreter. As a result, the parents reached an agreement to "use a Child Contact Support Organization to facilitate contact between the child and the parent living apart." Thereafter, with the cooperation of the support organization, contact was carried out between the parent living abroad and the child residing in Japan. As the parent and child had not seen each other for a long time, communication was difficult due to language barriers, but with the help of the staff, a warm exchange took place, including conversations about shared hobbies. There were also indications that contact would continue into the future, including discussions about plans for the child to travel to the country where the parent lives.

The above is an example of a case in which contact between a parent and child was realized through the support of the Hague Convention Division, including its attentive intermediation services. Family matters are complex, and support does not lead to positive outcomes in every case. However, the Hague Convention Division has on its staff specialists in areas such as child psychology and support for victims of domestic violence (DV), and the Division strives to provide support that is tailored to the needs of the parent and child in each individual case.

