

Japan

Current postal regulatory landscape

National legislation

- Name of the act/law/rule: Postal Act
 - Year of enactment: 1947
 - Year of last amendment: 2023
 - Website link to the text of the act/law/rule: laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/322AC0000000165
- Name of the act/law/rule: Act on New Year's Postcards, etc. with Lottery
 - Year of enactment: 1949
 - Year of last amendment: 2012
 - Website link to the text of the act/law/rule: laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/324AC0000000224
- Name of the act/law/rule: Act on Control of Imitation, etc. of Postal Stamps, etc.
 - Year of enactment: 1972
 - Year of last amendment: 2022
 - Website link to the text of the act/law/rule: laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/347AC0000000050
- Name of the act/law/rule: Act on Shops for Postal Stamps, etc.
 - Year of enactment: 1949
 - Year of last amendment: 2012
 - Website link to the text of the act/law/rule: laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/324AC0000000091
- Name of the act/law/rule: Post Office Branch Act
 - Year of enactment: 1949
 - Year of last amendment: 2024
 - Website link to the text of the act/law/rule: laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/324AC0000000213
- Name of the act/law/rule: Act on Japan Post Holdings Co., Ltd.
 - Year of enactment: 2005
 - Year of last amendment: 2022
 - Website link to the text of the act/law/rule: laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/417AC0000000098
- Name of the act/law/rule: Act on Japan Post Co., Ltd.
 - Year of enactment: 2005
 - Year of last amendment: 2022
 - Website link to the text of the act/law/rule: laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/417AC0000000100
- Name of the act/law/rule: Act on Consignment of Mail Shipping
 - Year of enactment: 1949
 - Year of last amendment: 2022
 - Website link to the text of the act/law/rule: laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/324AC0000000284
- All the postal legislation in place (Conventions/Rules/Regulations, etc.): Postal Act
 - Act on New Year's Postcards, etc. with Lottery
 - Act on Control of Imitation, etc. of Postal Stamps, etc.
 - Act on Shops for Postal Stamps, etc.

- Post Office Branch Act
- Act on Japan Post Holdings Co., Ltd.
- Act on Japan Post Co., Ltd.
- Act on Consignment of Mail Shipping

Coordinating body for postal policies

- Name of the coordinating body/ministry/committee/agency: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC)
- Level (Ministry or other): ministry
- Website: www.soumu.go.jp/english/index.html

Regulatory authority

- Name of the coordinating regulator: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC)
- Covered areas:
 - Functions relating to postal operations
 - Specifically, the MIC supervises Japan Post Co., Ltd. based on legislation, including the Postal Act, the purpose of which is to promote public welfare by providing postal services at costs that are as low as practicable on a universal and impartial basis.

Licensing body

- Is there an agency/authority that issues licences/registration to postal service operators: Yes
- Name of the coordinating body/ministry/committee/agency:
 - Licensing body: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC)
 - Advisory body: Information and Communications and Posts Administrative Council

It is provided by law that Japan Post Co., Ltd. shall provide postal services. There is no licensing or registration system for engaging in postal services (article 2 of the Postal Act).

On the other hand, there is a licensing system for the correspondence delivery business of private business operators. It is provided by law that any person who intends to conduct correspondence delivery business (excluding Japan Post Co., Ltd.) shall obtain a licence from the MIC (Act on Correspondence Delivery by Private Business Operators).

The process of applying for licences/registration

A licence is granted following the examination of application documents, including the business plan and statement of prospective income and expenditure, and consultation with the council.

Approval is required for the conditions governing the provision of correspondence delivery services and for correspondence delivery administrative regulations (regarding the method of administration of the correspondence delivery business for the purpose of protecting the privacy of correspondence items).

Universal service obligations

- Products and services covered by universal service obligation: Yes
Japan Post Holdings Co., Ltd. and Japan Post Co., Ltd. assume duties to ensure that postal services, services for easy deposits, remittances, the settlement of claims and obligations, and life insurance services are made available in a user-oriented manner at post offices integrally and universally on a nationwide basis.

- Prescribed number of post offices:
Japan Post Co., Ltd. must establish at least one post office in each municipality, according to the following standards:
 - i post offices are established so that they can meet demand from local residents appropriately;
 - ii post offices are established at locations where local residents can easily use them in consideration of traffic, geographical and other conditions;
 - iii in underpopulated areas, post offices are established with a view to maintaining the level of the post office network that existed at the time when the Act Partially Amending the Postal Service Privatization Act came into effect (October 2012).
- Prescribed number of letter boxes:
Mailboxes are installed with a view to maintaining the number of mailboxes that were installed nationwide as of April 2003, when the public corporation was established for postal services, and in accordance with the following standards:
 - i install mailboxes evenly across each municipality and each special ward;
 - ii install mailboxes on public roads, at places facing public roads, and at other places accessible at any time, or at places clearly visible to the public in facilities that are easily accessible to the public, such as stations and retail stores.
- Exceptions to universal service obligations: When it is necessary in the interest of protecting the handling of important postal items following a natural disaster or due to other unavoidable grounds, Japan Post Co., Ltd. may restrict the utilization of postal services or suspend part of the provision thereof.
- Name of the universal service provider providing USO: Japan Post Co., Ltd.
- Status of the universal service provider providing USO: Private company

Any other relevant information

Delivery of parcels is not included in the scope of “postal services” provided in Japan.

Financing of universal service obligations

Is there a well-defined procedure for financing the universal service provider: No

Quality requirements

In accordance with Japan’s postal service administrative regulations, Japan Post Co., Ltd. must ensure that:

- Mailboxes are installed in a manner that postal items can be posted easily at any time;
- Postal items are delivered five days or more per week (from Monday to Friday) and once or more per day;
- Postal items are delivered within four days from their posting date (except for remote islands);
- Postal items are delivered to the places to which they are addressed, except for those addressed to areas to which postal items cannot be delivered by an ordinary method).

Frequency of collection/delivery of postal services

- Frequency of collection of postal services: No
- Frequency of delivery of postal services: Postal items are to be delivered five days per week (from Monday to Friday, except on national holidays and 2 January) and once or more per day.

*Grievance redressal**Name of the body/organization designated for grievance redressal*

No. As the postal service provider Japan Post Co., Ltd. is a private company, it addresses complaints about its services.

Reserved areas/Exclusive privilege

No.

Price regulations

- Is there a body that regulates the price of postal products and services in the country: Yes
- Name of the body: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC)
- Scope of such price regulations:
 - i Japan Post Co. Ltd. must notify the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of the postage fees (excluding 2 and 3). The postage fees must meet the following requirements:
 - The fees must be sufficient sums to compensate for reasonable costs for the efficient management of postal services and to further secure reasonable profit;
 - The fees for first and second class postal items must not vary by destination;
 - The fees for first class postal items that are standard-sized postal items (postal items that meet the requirements concerning shape and size as specified by enforcement order and that weigh up to a maximum of 25 g) must not exceed 110 JPY;
 - The fees for postal letters and ordinary postcards must be less than the lowest postage fees for standard-sized postal items;
 - The fees for international postal services must conform to the provisions of postal conventions;
 - The fees must be clearly determined based on a flat rate or fixed discount system;
 - The fees must not be intended to treat any particular person in an unfair or discriminatory manner (article 67, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Postal Act).
 - ii Japan Post Co. Ltd. must obtain approval from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications for the postage fees for third and fourth class postal items. The postage fees must meet the following requirements:
 - The fees must not vary by destination;
 - The fees must be less than those of first class postal items of the same weight;
 - The fees must be clearly determined based on a flat rate or fixed discount system;
 - The fees must not be intended to treat any particular person in an unfair or discriminatory manner (article 67, paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Postal Act).
 - iii Japan Post Co. Ltd. must notify the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of the postage fees for special handling (fees that have minor influence on the income from postal services as specified by enforcement order), in advance or without delay after adopting them. The postage fees must meet the following requirements:
 - The fees for international postal services must conform to the provisions of postal conventions;
 - The fees must be clearly determined based on a flat rate or fixed discount system;
 - The fees must not be intended to treat any particular person in an unfair or discriminatory manner (article 67, paragraphs 5 and 6 of the Postal Act).

Taxation

- Are postal products and services liable for taxation: Yes
Consumption tax is imposed on fees for postal products and services, except for the sale of postage stamps at postage stamp shops, etc.
- Are there any exceptions to this taxation structure: No

Cross-border regulations

- Are there clear regulations regarding the import and export of items through the postal channel: No
- List the authorities that are stakeholders in cross-border postal exchanges:
 - Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC)
 - Ministry of Finance