

# Japan

Japan is an island nation of 126 million inhabitants, located in the Pacific Ocean, east of China. It is a constitutional parliamentary monarchy and a major economic power.

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
			<u>Some concerns about political or media freedoms, not specific to the non-religious</u>
<u>The state is secular, with separation of religious and political authorities, not discriminating against any religion or belief</u>	<u>No formal discrimination in education</u>	<u>No religious tribunals of concern, secular groups operate freely, individuals are not persecuted by the state</u>	

Legend

## Constitution and government

Japan's secular constitution provides strong protections of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as well as a clear separation of religion and state:

*Article 19: Freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated.*

*Article 20: Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity....*

*Article 89: No public money or other property shall be expended or appropriated for the use, benefit or maintenance of any religious institution or association ...*

[japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html)

Freedom of thought and expression are respected and protected in law and practice. Internet access is not restricted.

## Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

While freedom of expression generally has been upheld and the media is usually considered free across Japan, there have been serious concerns in recent years about new "state secrecy" legislation.

Passed in late 2013 and coming into force on 10 December, 2014, critics complain that Japan's new State Secrecy Law targets whistleblowers leaking broadly defined "state secrets" and that journalists publishing leaked information will face up to 10 years in prison, even if publication of such classified information would be justified, e.g. to expose human rights violations or corruption.

Prior to its enactment, Reporters Without Borders said that, in effect, the law “is making investigative journalism illegal” and the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* said the law “almost limitlessly widens the range of what can be considered confidential.”

<[hrw.org/news/2013/11/25/japan-amend-special-secrets-bill-protect-public-interest](http://hrw.org/news/2013/11/25/japan-amend-special-secrets-bill-protect-public-interest)>

<[theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/05/whistleblowers-japan-crackdown-state-secrets](http://theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/05/whistleblowers-japan-crackdown-state-secrets)>

<[ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201312070057](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201312070057)>

During its first 12 months of operation, government agencies were quick to declare numerous “state secrets”, with concerns persisting, despite government assurances, that oversight was weak and there was little to prevent government from declaring inconvenient truths as “secret”. Japan cancelled a visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression planned for December 2015.

<[japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/12/27/national/politics-diplomacy/government-entities-designate-400-state-secrets-under-new-law/](http://japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/12/27/national/politics-diplomacy/government-entities-designate-400-state-secrets-under-new-law/)>

<[japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/04/04/editorials/oversight-secrets-weak/](http://japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/04/04/editorials/oversight-secrets-weak/)>

<[indexonensorship.org/2015/12/71961/](http://indexonensorship.org/2015/12/71961/)>