

Japan

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1. Types of tax

1.1 Inheritance tax

The Japanese Inheritance Tax Law (*sozoku zei ho*) covers inheritance tax (*sozoku zei*) and gift tax (*zoyo zei*). Inheritance tax is imposed on an individual who acquires property by inheritance or bequest upon the death of the decedent. Gift tax is imposed on an individual who acquires properties by gift (or economic benefit by deemed gift). Gift tax is supplementary to inheritance tax. Both taxes are national taxes and no local tax is assessed on the transfer of property due to death or a gift.

Computation of inheritance tax

The individual heirs are taxed, not the estate. Inheritance tax is imposed on the aggregate value of all properties acquired by inheritance or bequest. Inheritance tax is calculated separately for each statutory heir and legatee, regardless of how and to whom the property is to be distributed. Then, the total amount of tax calculated is allocated between those who will actually receive the decedent's properties in accordance with his or her will or as agreed upon by the heirs. The tax is calculated based on the statutory heirs and legatees, whereas the tax liability is attributed to those who actually acquire the properties.



Computation

The computation is based on the following steps:

- ▶ Aggregate the amount of taxable properties acquired by all heirs and legatees (net of the liabilities succeeded).
- ▶ Deduct the basic exemption of ¥30 million plus ¥6 million multiplied by the number of statutory heirs from the above "aggregated taxable estate value."
- ▶ Allocate the aggregated taxable estate value to each statutory heir according to their statutory share.
- ▶ Calculate the inheritance tax separately for each statutory heir's portion allocated above, by the application of the following progressive tax rates:

Up to ¥10 million	10%
Above ¥10 million up to ¥30 million	15%
Above ¥30 million up to ¥50 million	20%
Above ¥50 million up to ¥100 million	30%
Above ¥100 million up to ¥200 million	40%
Above ¥200 million up to ¥300 million	45%
Above ¥300 million up to ¥600 million	50%
Above ¥600 million	55%

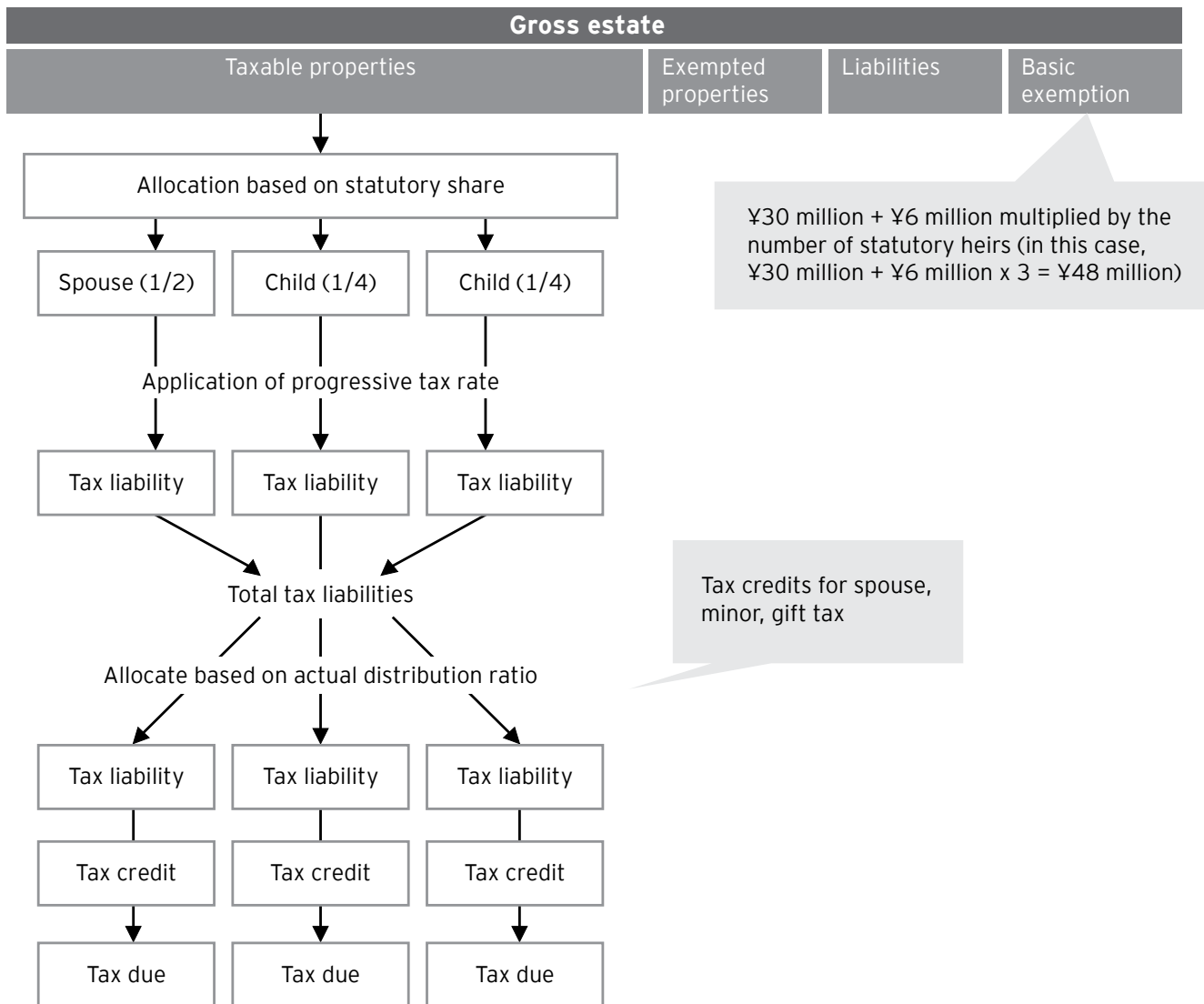
- ▶ Aggregate the inheritance tax calculated above, "aggregated inheritance tax."
- ▶ Allocate the aggregated inheritance tax to each of the heirs and legatees based on the ratio of the value of the taxable properties actually acquired by him or her against the aggregated taxable estate value.
- ▶ A 20% surtax is imposed on heirs or legatees of anyone who is not the decedent's spouse, the decedent's parents or the decedent's children. Where the decedent's grandchild became the decedent's adopted child, he or she is also subject to a 20% surtax.
- ▶ Deduct applicable tax credits for each heir (see Section 4).

The property acquired by a gift from the deceased within three years of the death of the deceased is regarded as estate property. Any gift tax imposed on the acquisition of such property is creditable against the inheritance tax liability.



Japan

Sample case where the heirs consist of a spouse and two children:



1.2 Gift tax

Gift tax is imposed on individuals who acquire property by gift during the lifetime of the donee. Gift tax is also imposed on economic benefits received by deemed gift.



Computation of gift tax

The taxable base of gift tax is determined as the value of properties obtained by a gift (or by a deemed gift) during each calendar year, after an annual basic exemption of ¥1.1 million. The applicable tax rates are as follows:

Not more than ¥2 million	10%
Above ¥2 million up to ¥3 million	15%
Above ¥3 million up to ¥4 million	20%
Above ¥4 million up to ¥6 million	30%
Above ¥6 million up to ¥10 million	40%
Above ¥10 million up to ¥15 million	45%
Above ¥15 million up to ¥30 million	50%
Above ¥30 million	55%

1.3 Real estate transfer tax

Registration and license tax

The registration of the transfer of ownership of real property by inheritance or bequest is subject to registration and license tax at the rate of 0.4% of assessed value of the land and building. The registration of the transfer of ownership by gift or sales is generally subject to registration and license tax at a standard rate of 2%.

Real estate acquisition tax

The acquisition of real property by gift or sale is generally subject to real estate acquisition tax at 4%. Temporarily, the acquisition of land and residential buildings until 31 March 2018 is subject to real estate acquisition tax at 3%. However, the acquisition of real property by inheritance or bequest is exempt from real estate acquisition tax.

1.4 Endowment tax

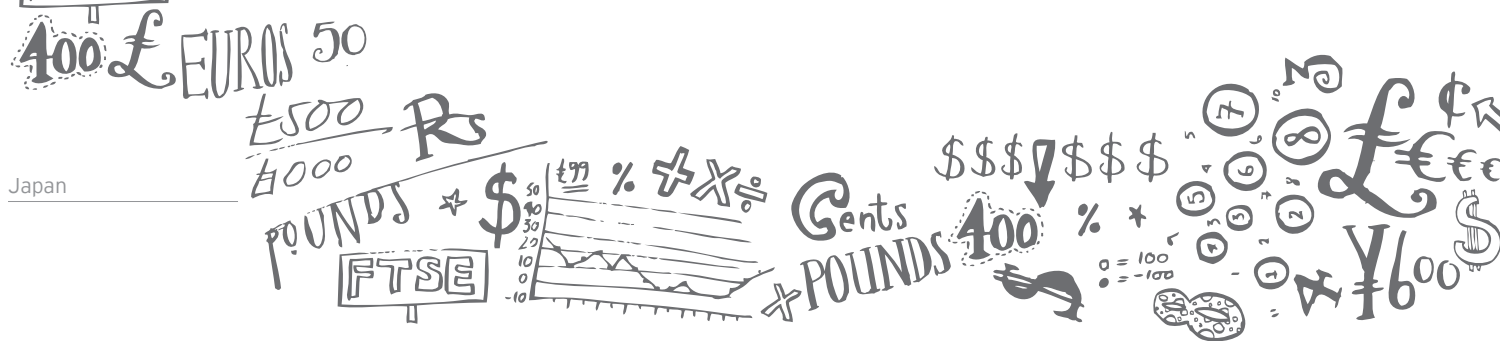
There is no endowment tax in Japan. As described in Section 4, if the heir makes donations of property to certain specified nonprofit organizations or foundations of the Japanese Government or a local public organization by the filing due date of the inheritance tax, the property is exempt from the inheritance tax.

1.5 Transfer duty

There is no transfer duty other than real estate transfer taxes (see Section 1.3).

1.6 Net wealth tax

There is no tax imposed on net wealth in Japan.



2. Who is liable?

Nationality and domicile

Unlimited liability taxpayers are subject to inheritance tax or gift tax on all of the properties acquired regardless of whether the properties are located in or outside Japan.

For the purposes of inheritance tax and gift tax, a “domicile” is defined as the principal base of living, which is determined based on facts and circumstances. The following individuals (as heirs or donees) will be treated as being domiciled in Japan, though they are actually located outside Japan:

2.2 Limited liability

Whether the property is situated in Japan or not is determined based on the following location rules:



Kind of property	Location
Shares in a company or bond and debentures issued by a company	Place where the issuing company has the head office or its principal office
Interests in collective investment trusts or taxable trusts	Location of the trustee's office
Patents, trademarks, etc.	Place where they are registered
Copyrights or publishing rights	Location of the publisher's office
Trade receivables, goodwill and other rights related to business operation	Place of business to which they are related
Japanese government bonds	Japan
Foreign government bonds	Country of issue
Others	The domicile of the deceased or the donor

3. Rates

This is not applicable in Japan.

4. Exemptions and reliefs

Exemptions and tax credits

There are several asset or purpose-related exemptions and personal exemptions and tax credits.

Main items of exemptions

- ▶ Donations of properties to certain specified nonprofit organizations or foundations of the Japanese government or a local public organization if the heir makes the donation by the filing due date of the inheritance tax.
- ▶ ¥5 million per statutory heir of life insurance proceeds (as deemed estate property).
- ▶ ¥5 million per statutory heir of retirement allowance (as deemed estate property).
- ▶ Only a certain portion (e.g., 20%) of the acquisition of small-scale business or residential land is subject to inheritance tax. A maximum of 330 sq. meters of land used as a residence and a maximum of 400 sq. meters of land used for a business qualifies for this treatment.

Main items of tax credits

- ▶ As for inheritance tax to be paid by a spouse, the portion of tax due attributed to the spouse pursuant to the statutory share (the greater amount of the spouse's statutory share or ¥160 million) is creditable against the spouse's inheritance tax due.
- ▶ For minor heirs under 20 years old, ¥100,000 x (20 - heir's age)
- ▶ For handicapped heirs, ¥100,000 (¥200,000 in the case of special disabilities) x (85 - heir's age)
- ▶ If a decedent has paid inheritance tax for the acquisition of property within ten years immediately preceding death, a portion of the heir's inheritance tax will be creditable according to a certain formula.
- ▶ A foreign tax credit is available in order to avoid double taxation on the inheritance.



Example

Assuming that (i) the heirs are the spouse and a child (in this case, the portion of statutory share is 50% for each), (ii) the aggregated taxable estate value is ¥1 billion and the aggregated inheritance tax due is ¥395 million, respectively, and (iii) the spouse inherits the properties in the amount of ¥500 million, no inheritance tax is payable by the spouse, since tax due attributed to the spouse is based on the statutory share (i.e., ¥197.5 million; ¥395 million x ¥500 million/¥1,000 million) and is creditable. The child will have a tax liability of ¥197.5 million (i.e., ¥395 million x ¥500 million/¥1,000 million).

Gift tax exemptions

The following are exempt from gift tax:

- ▶ Gifts from a corporation, which is subject to income tax.
- ▶ Gifts to dependents for living expenses and education.
- ▶ Gifts of education funds up to ¥15 million to dependents, made from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2019, subject to a certain conditions.
- ▶ Gifts of child raising and marriage funds up to ¥10 million to dependents, made from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2019, subject to certain conditions.
- ▶ Gifts to a person engaged in activities for religious, charitable, scientific, educational or social welfare purposes, to be used for such activities.
- ▶ Gifts of money or goods from a specified public interest trust to students or pupils to support their educational costs.
- ▶ Providing a right to receive a subsidy from a local public organization to a handicapped person.
- ▶ Qualified donations to a candidate for a public election campaign, which are duly reported.
- ▶ Obtaining trust beneficiary rights up to ¥60 million by a special handicapped person according to a special support arrangement.
- ▶ One-time exemption of up to ¥20 million of the value of a residential property transferred from a spouse where the period of marriage is 20 years or more and where the donee uses the property for residential purposes.
- ▶ Exemption of up to ¥10 million (per donee) during 2015 for gifts made in cash by parents to their adult children to acquire a residential home.

5. Filing procedures

Filing procedures

The inheritance tax return must be filed within 10 months of the time that the taxpayers become aware of the opening of the succession, with the relevant tax office located at the domicile of the deceased. Where two or more taxpayers are domiciled in Japan, a joint tax return will be filed. If the deceased is not domiciled in Japan at the time of death, each heir domiciled in Japan files the tax return with the tax office at his or her domicile. If neither the decedent nor heir are domiciled in Japan, the heir may elect any tax office to be filed.



Tax payment

In principle, the inheritance tax must be paid in one lump sum in cash by the filing due date. A deferral of the tax payment may be allowed up to 15 years. Furthermore, if a lump-sum cash payment is not possible, inherited property for payment in kind is allowed. The advantage of the property for payment in kind is to avoid income taxation on capital gains, if any, from the transfer of the property as the payment.

Gift tax settlement at time of inheritance tax

The rates for the gift tax are generally higher than those for inheritance tax. This is intended to prevent the avoidance of inheritance tax. On the other hand, there is an exception to the general method (i.e., calendar year taxation), a special taxation system for settlement at the time of inheritance, by election, which was introduced in 2003 in order to promote smooth passage of gifts from living parents to their children. When a parent or grandparent who is 60 years of age or older makes a gift to an adult child or grandchild, the following can be elected:

- ▶ If the total amount of the donated properties is ¥25 million or less, no gift tax is payable.
- ▶ If the total amount of the donated properties exceeds ¥25 million, a fixed tax rate of 20% is applied to the excess portion to calculate the gift tax due.

At the time of the parent's or grandparent's death, the above properties will be added to the taxable estate assets and will be subject to inheritance tax. The adult child or grandchild who elected the special taxation system will credit the gift tax already paid against their inheritance tax due. If the paid gift tax exceeds the inheritance tax liability, the excess portion will be refunded.

Filing procedures of gift tax

A gift-tax return must be filed and gift tax must be paid by 15 March of the year following the gift.

6. Assessments and valuations

Valuation of the property

Introduction

The taxable base of properties for inheritance-tax and gift-tax purposes is the fair market value at the time of the transfer.

However, the Japanese tax authorities-issued Basic Property Valuation Circular introduced deals with a specific method of valuation for various properties, including land, buildings, tangible and intangible assets, shares in companies, bonds and debentures.

Land

The value of land is generally determined based on the assessed value¹ that the tax authorities annually publish.

Shares

The value of listed shares and shares traded over the counter is generally calculated based on the share price on the valuation date. However, the lowest of the monthly average prices for the month including the valuation date and the two preceding months, may be used. The value of unlisted shares is calculated based on the size of the company depending on the number of employees, gross assets and annual sales.

¹Roadside value per square meter of land or *rosenka*.



► Large company – comparative value of similar company

The value of unlisted shares in a large company is calculated based on the share price of comparable listed companies. The formula is as follows:

$$A \times \left[\frac{\frac{b}{B} + \frac{c}{C} \times 3 + \frac{d}{D}}{5} \right] \times 0.7$$

- A. The average value of the share price of listed comparable companies, published by tax authorities
- b. Dividend of the company per share
- c. Earnings of the company per share
- d. Net asset value, based on book value, of the company per share
- B. Average dividend of comparable companies per share, published by tax authorities
- C. Earnings of comparable companies per share, published by tax authorities
- D. Net asset value, based on book value, of comparable companies per share, published by tax authorities

► Small company – net asset value method

The value of unlisted shares in a small company is calculated based on the net asset revalued for inheritance tax purposes.

► Medium company

The value of unlisted shares in a medium company is calculated based on the combination of the comparative value of similar company and net asset value methods.

However, unlisted shares acquired by a certain minority shareholder are calculated based on a dividend discount method.

7. Trusts, foundations and private purpose funds

Trusts

For Japanese tax purposes, a trust is treated as either transparent, not transparent and not a taxable entity, or a corporation, depending on its legal character. When an individual acquires trust beneficiary interests due to a death or without arm's-length consideration (i.e., by a deemed gift), inheritance tax or gift tax will be assessed on such individual.

Under a 2007 revision of the Japanese Trust Law, new types of trusts have become available:

- Trusts substituting testaments
- Trusts under which the subsequent beneficiaries can be designated in advance

By settling the latter type of trust, for example, the settlor of the trust designates his or her spouse as the beneficiary after his or her death and also designates his or her child as the beneficiary after the spouse's death. This newly introduced arrangement of designating subsequent beneficiaries cannot be done by testament. For inheritance tax purposes, the new beneficiary is regarded as obtaining a beneficiary interest from the preceding beneficiary.

Foundations and private purpose funds

A noncorporate charitable organization, including foundations and private purpose funds, is subject to inheritance or gift tax, but an exemption may be available if the properties transferred to the charitable organization are to be used only for authorized charity under Japanese laws. A corporate charitable organization is not subject to inheritance or gift tax, but is subject to corporate income tax on gains by the gift. However, if this is an authorized nonprofit organization and the income is derived from nonprofit business (i.e., charity), the income is exempt from corporate income tax.



8. Grants

9. Life insurance

10. Civil law on succession

10.2 Japanese civil law on succession

According to the Japanese Civil Code, all rights and obligations of the deceased transfer to heirs automatically and comprehensively at the time of decedent's death. For example, at the time of the deceased's death, all heirs jointly own the estate properties, which are then distributed amongst the heirs as previously agreed upon. If an heir wants to waive the inheritance or accept the inheritance to the extent of the positive assets, notification to a family court has to be made within three months from the date the heir is informed of his or her inheritance.

According to Article 36 of the Act on General Rules of Application Laws, the law of the deceased's home country (nationality) governs succession.

There are no regional rules on succession law (Civil Code) in Japan.

Statutory heirs (*houtei sozokunin*)

An individual who waives an inheritance is not regarded as an heir upon waiver.

The actual allocation of estate properties is made based on agreement among the heirs. The above statutory share is applicable in the case where an agreement is not reached among the heirs.



10.3 Forced heirship (*iryubun*)

The Japanese Civil Code provides forced heirship rules enabling certain persons to claim a share of an estate if they are excluded from succession by the decedent's last will. Though the deceased determines the allocation of his or her estate property by testament, the spouse, lineal ascendants and lineal descendants as the heirs have a right to receive the following share, as a total, of the estate under the forced heirship rules:

- ▶ When the heirs do not include the spouse and only lineal ascendants: one-third of the estate property.
- ▶ Other cases: one-half of the estate

Brothers and sisters are not entitled to claim forced heirship

Priority groups of statutory heirs and forced heirship

Order	Statutory heirs	Statutory shares	Forced heirship
1	Son(s) and daughter(s) of the deceased (if the sons and daughters are already deceased, lineal descendants of these sons and daughters)	Spouse: one-half Children: one-half in total (equally for each)	Spouse and children: one-half in total Children only: one-half in total
2	Lineal ascendants of the deceased (i.e., father, mother, grandfather, grandmother)	Spouse: two-thirds Lineal ascendants: one-third in total (equally for each)	Spouse and lineal ascendants: one-half in total Lineal ascendants only: one-third in total
3	Brother(s) and sister(s) of the deceased (if the brothers and sisters are already deceased, their sons and daughters)	Spouse: three-quarters Brother(s) and sister(s): one-quarter in total (equally for each)	Spouse, brother(s) and sister(s): one-half for spouse only; no forced heirship for brother(s) and sister(s)

10.4 Matrimonial regimes and civil partnerships

In Japan, the matrimonial property regime of strict separation is applied, under which each spouse holds his or her property independently in separate ownership.



10.5 Intestacy

A will is a legal document that regulates an individual's estate after death. Wills are not as commonly used in Japan as in other countries. As Japan has ratified the 1964 Convention on the Conflicts of Laws Relating to the Form of Testamentary Dispositions, the validity of a foreign form will may be admitted.

If there is no will, the estate properties will be allocated among the statutory heirs pursuant to their agreement on the allocation. Until such agreement is reached, the estate properties are treated as being jointly owned by the heirs. Income earned from the properties during such period is subject to income tax and allocated among the statutory heirs pursuant to the statutory shares.

10.6 Probate

There is no probate system in Japan. All properties are comprehensively transferred to the heirs at the death.

11. Estate tax treaties

11.1 Unilateral rules

This is not applicable in Japan.

11.2 Double-taxation treaties

Japan has concluded only one estate tax treaty with the US as agreed in 1955. This tax treaty is not based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) inheritance tax model.