Japan raises residency fees and tightens rules

LEVEL B2


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I. WARM-UP

1. What factors might attract you to live long term in another country?
2. How do higher fees change people's plans to move or stay?
3. What language skills should governments ask new residents to show?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

residency
Permission to live in a country for a long period or permanently.

immigration
Movement of people into a country to live or work.

requirement
Something that a rule says you must have or do.

proficiency
A good level of skill in a subject or language.

shortage
A situation where there is not enough of something needed.

hardship
Serious difficulty, especially because of money or life conditions.

enrolment
The act of signing up to join a course or school.

bureau
A government office that provides a public service.

III. READING

Japan has raised the fee for foreigners applying for permanent residency by 20 times, to 200,000 yen. The move is part of wider immigration policy under Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi to manage a rapidly growing foreign population.

Earlier this week, long lines formed at Tokyo's main immigration bureau, with waits of over seven hours. In July, Japan made a five-fold rise in visa fees, the first in 50 years, to reflect inflation and exchange rate changes.

From 1 October, ordinary residency procedures also cost more: previously 6,000 yen, they now range from 10,000 yen for three months or less to 75,000 yen for five years or more. Discounts apply for applicants facing financial hardship or for refugees.

New requirements include income at or above the Japanese average, basic Japanese-language proficiency from April next year, and pension expectations similar to 30 years in the employee system, with assets considered if needed. Foreign residents reached 4.12 million at the end of 2025, up 9.5% in a year.

Although immigration is sensitive, an ageing Japan relies on foreign workers to plug a labour shortage. Language school enrolments and sign-ups for the JLPT have surged.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Japan raises permanent residency fee by 20 times". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the new fee for a permanent residency application?
2. Which leader is linked to the immigration policy changes?
3. When were visa fees last raised before this year's increase?
4. From when will basic language proficiency be required?
5. How many foreign residents did Japan have at the end of 2025?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Are higher immigration fees a fair way to manage demand? Why?
2. Which new requirement seems most reasonable or hardest to meet?
3. How might these changes affect Japan's labour shortage?
4. What support should governments give new long-term residents?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Future perfect continuous

Use will have been + verb-ing to show how long an action continues up to a future time. Form: will have been + verb-ing. Time cues: by + future point; since + start point; for + length of time.

"By April next year, language schools **will have been enrolling** *new students for months."*

"By the afternoon, applicants **will have been queueing** *for hours."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the future perfect continuous form.

1. Next spring, many residents (live) ___ in Japan for ten years. _____
2. By the time they apply, families (save) ___ money for months. _____
3. In late 2027, people (pay) ___ the higher fees for over a year. _____
4. By the deadline, staff (process) ___ applications for days. _____
5. When the rules start, tutors (run) ___ extra classes for weeks. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach residency, requirement, proficiency, hardship, and key numbers (200,000 yen; 4.12 million; 50 years). Highlight British spelling such as enrolment.
- Run a skim for the main change, then scan for dates and figures (July rise, 1 October fees, April language rule). Sensitivity: immigration and social change can be personal; start discussion in pairs and allow answers about public policy rather than personal status.
- Differentiate: stronger students compare old vs new fees for different stay lengths; others match figures to facts. Offer a brief JLPT explainer or mini timeline (July visa rise; 1 Oct fee change; April language rule).

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. If answers are brief, ask students to name one benefit and one risk of higher fees.
2. Elicit concrete examples: income proof, language test, pension records; ask for reasons.
3. Prompt both short and long-term effects; pair students to list two for each.
4. Have students propose one support measure and explain cost, benefit, and who provides it.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In two teams, argue for or against the new residency fee rise; each side prepares 5 points and delivers a 2-minute summary.

Writing: Write a 120-word advice note for a friend planning to apply for residency after 1 October, explaining the new rules.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Future perfect continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the new fee for a permanent residency application?
   200,000 yen.
2. Which leader is linked to the immigration policy changes?
   Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.
3. When were visa fees last raised before this year's increase?
   Fifty years ago.
4. From when will basic language proficiency be required?
   From April next year.
5. How many foreign residents did Japan have at the end of 2025?
   4.12 million.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the future perfect continuous form.

1. Next spring, many residents ___ in Japan for ten years. **will have been living**
2. By the time they apply, families ___ money for months. **will have been saving**
3. In late 2027, people ___ the higher fees for over a year. **will have been paying**
4. By the deadline, staff ___ applications for days. **will have been processing**
5. When the rules start, tutors ___ extra classes for weeks. **will have been running**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use will have been + verb-ing to show how long an action continues up to a future time. Form: will have been + verb-ing. Time cues: by + future point; since + start point; for + length of time. (Examples constructed.)

"By April next year, language schools **will have been enrolling** *new students for months."*

"By the afternoon, applicants **will have been queueing** *for hours."*