

1,904,239 Licensed Food Businesses, 1,125,567 Visited in a Year [I022]

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Abstract

From Table 1-1 (old Food Sanitation Act) and Table 3-1 (amended Act) of the Report on Public Health Administration (FY2024) I counted licensed food businesses by type of business, together with new licences, closures, sanctions, criminal referrals and premises visited for inspection and guidance.

There are 1,904,239 licensed food businesses: 676,718 under the old Act and 1,227,521 under the amended Act, the latter being 64.5%. **The June 2021 amendment changed the licence categories, and old-Act licences remain valid until expiry, so neither table alone gives the total.**

Adding the 865,122 businesses requiring notification (I011) gives 2,769,361.

1,125,567 premises were visited for inspection and guidance during the year — 59.1% of licensed premises.

Sanctions numbered 1,175 (0.0617% of licensed premises, one per 1,621): 531 suspension orders, 159 prohibition orders, 443 other, 23 disposal orders and 19 improvement orders. **Licence revocations: zero.** Criminal referrals amounted to 3, all for unlicensed operation.

The old Act's closure rate of 29.2% is 5.1 times the amended Act's 5.7%. New licences under the old Act numbered 2 for the year against 359,762 under the amended Act: **the transition is essentially complete.**

Of the amended Act's 32 business types, food irradiation has zero premises and special milk collection and processing has three. Restaurant businesses alone (946,451) are 77.1% of amended-Act

licences, and the top three types 88.8%.

1. Introduction

This paper has **a corrective purpose**.

I005, I011, I018 and I020 all wrote "2,299,735 food businesses (licensed plus notified)". But that 2,299,735 was **restaurant licences of 1,434,613 (488,162 old plus 946,451 amended) plus 865,122 notifications** — it did not include licences for all other business types.

Summing licences across all types gives 1,904,239; adding notifications gives 2,769,361. The texts of I018, I020 and I021 have been corrected to these figures.

That done, this paper counts what appears only in Tables 1-1 and 3-1: **premises visited, sanctions, criminal referrals, and the breakdown by type of business.**

How many licensed food businesses are there, and how many are visited in a year?

2. Data

Old-Act licences	MHLW, Report on Public Health Administration, FY2024, Table 1-1 (Food Sanitation). By type of business. Premises as at end of FY2024; the rest during the year
Amended-Act licences	Same source, Table 3-1
Businesses requiring notification	Same source, Table 6-1 (counted in I011)

The 31 old-Act and 32 amended-Act business types both sum exactly to their totals (676,718 and 1,227,521; differences zero).

The old-Act table's regrouped row "(regrouped) vending machines" (18,589) is excluded from the sum.

The notes to Table 1-1 require three cautions.

- **Nara Prefecture's restaurant premises are not included in this table**, for reasons of its management system (Nara City, a core city, is included; note 1)
 - **The old Act's "closures" exclude premises that took out an amended-Act licence instead** (note 2)
 - **Premises visited exclude Nara Prefecture and Morioka City** (notes 3 and 4)
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3. Results

3-1 1,904,239 licensed food businesses

	Premises
Old Food Sanitation Act	676,718
Amended Food Sanitation Act	1,227,521
Together	1,904,239 (amended 64.5%)
Requiring notification (I011)	865,122
Licensed + notified	2,769,361

The June 2021 amendment changed the licence categories. Old-Act licences remain valid until expiry, so the count is split across two tables. Neither alone gives the total.

3-2 The transition is essentially complete

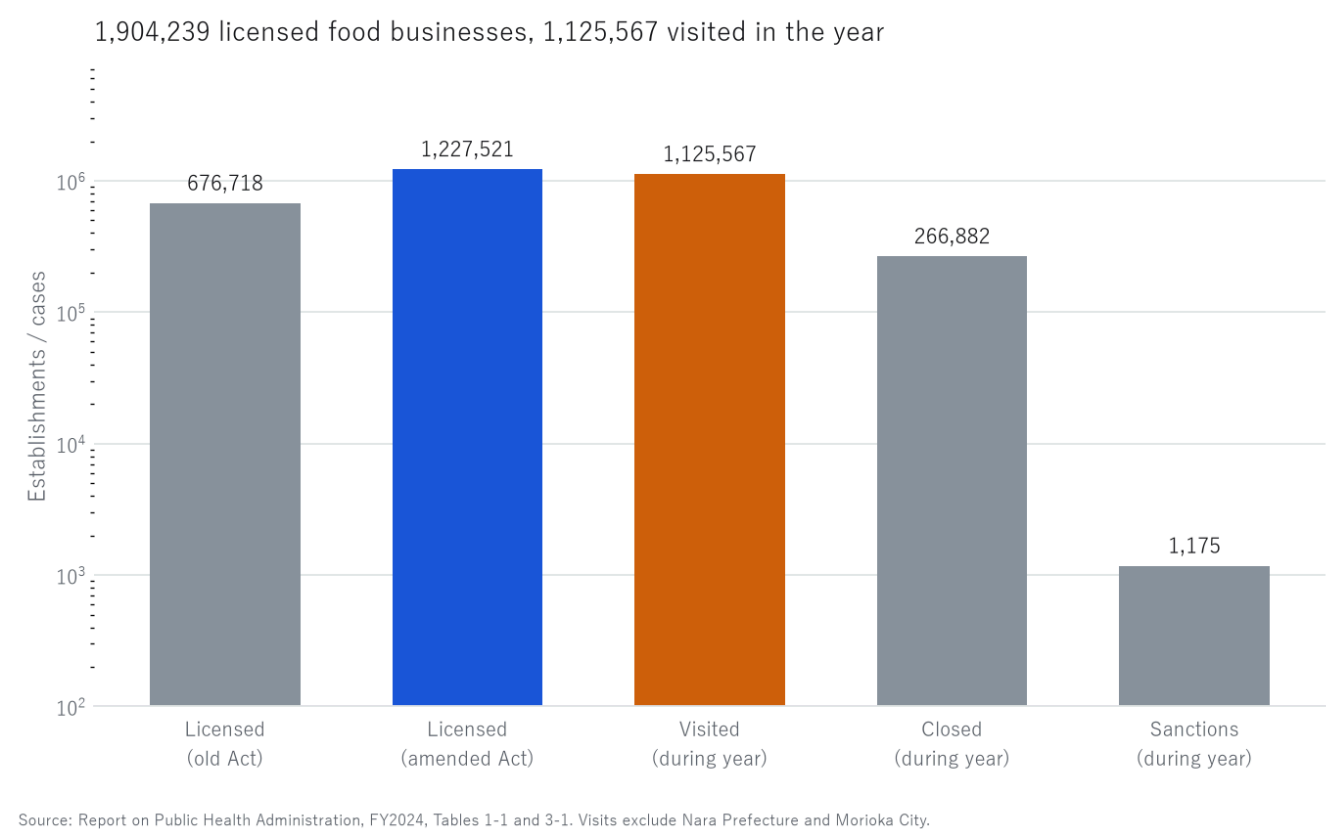


Figure 1. 1,904,239 licensed food businesses and the 1,125,567 visited in the year (FY2024).

The vertical axis is logarithmic. Premises visited exclude Nara Prefecture and Morioka City.

During the year	Old Act	Amended Act
Premises (at year end)	676,718	1,227,521
Licences (continued)	0	35
Licences (new)	2	359,762
Closures	197,277	69,605
Closure rate	29.2%	5.7%

New licences under the old Act numbered 2 nationwide. No more will be issued.

The old Act's closure rate of 29.2% is 5.1 times the amended Act's 5.7%. Old-Act licences disappear as they expire.

But those "closures" exclude premises that took out an amended-Act licence instead (note 2). The 29.2% are premises that stopped, not ones that switched.

Closures were 197,277 old plus 69,605 amended — **266,882 premises together.**

3-3 1,125,567 premises visited in the year

Premises visited for inspection and guidance (during the year)	Premises
Old Act	401,598
Amended Act	723,969
Together	1,125,567

Denominator	Share
Against 1,904,239 licensed premises	59.1%
Against 2,769,361 licensed plus notified	40.6%

59.1% of licensed premises are visited at least once a year.

This excludes Nara Prefecture and Morioka City, so the real figure is higher.

3-4 1,175 sanctions, zero licence revocations

Sanctions (during the year)	Old Act	Amended Act	Together
Licence revocation	0	0	0
Prohibition order	57	102	159
Suspension order	189	342	531
Improvement order	4	15	19
Disposal order	9	14	23
Other	60	383	443
Together	319	856	1,175
Referral (unlicensed operation)	0	3	3
Referral (other)	0	0	0

1,175 sanctions against 1,904,239 licensed premises	0.0617% (one per 1,621)
Against 1,125,567 premises visited	0.1044%
Most common sanction	suspension order, 531 (45.2% of sanctions)

Licence revocations numbered zero nationwide.

3-5 Restaurants alone are 77.1%

Amended Act (most premises first)	Premises	New	Sanctions
Restaurant business	946,451	285,784	616
Confectionery manufacture	101,806	26,769	41
Prepared-dish manufacture	41,872	10,264	35
Fish and shellfish retail	29,202	7,102	44
Meat retail	24,335	6,005	7
Pickle manufacture	16,318	6,397	16
Marine product manufacture	13,199	3,481	23
Cooking vending machines	7,500	2,607	3
Sealed-package food manufacture	6,831	2,042	4
Noodle manufacture	6,077	1,316	3

Restaurant business alone (946,451) is 77.1% of amended-Act licences; the top three types are 88.8%.

3-6 Categories that exist in law but barely in fact

Amended Act (fewest premises first)	Premises
Food irradiation	0
Special milk collection and processing	3
Milk collection	35
Liquid egg manufacture	226
Natto manufacture	226
Composite frozen food manufacture	278
Milk processing	359
Ice manufacture	449

Of the 32 types, food irradiation has zero premises nationwide. Three types have fewer than 100.

Special milk collection and processing has three premises. I016 found special milk processed in exactly three prefectures (Fukuoka 31, Kanagawa 13, Hokkaido 8 kilolitres), so **the number of premises matches the number of prefectures.**

4. Discussion

4-1 Neither table alone gives the total

This is the paper's most practical conclusion.

To answer "how many licensed food premises does Japan have?" from this source, you must read both Table 1-1 and Table 3-1. One alone gives 676,718 or 1,227,521. The answer is 1,904,239.

And until writing this paper, I had it wrong myself. I005, I011, I018 and I020 wrote "licensed plus notified, 2,299,735", but that 1,434,613 was **restaurant licences only**. The texts of I018, I020 and I021 have been corrected.

During a legislative transition, the statistic splits in two. Three and a half years after the June 2021 amendment, 676,718 premises were still operating on old-Act licences at the end of FY2024.

4-2 That 59.1% are visited each year

1,125,567 premises were visited — 59.1% of licensed premises.

The "324 premises per inspector" computed in I018 was only a ratio. Here is the count of premises actually visited.

If 8,558 food sanitation inspectors (1,372 full time; I018) visited 1,125,567 premises, that is **132 premises each a year**, or 820 for the full-time staff alone.

This is not a story of nobody looking. Nearly six in ten are visited at least once a year. But it is **a count of premises, not of visits**, so how many times any one premises was entered is unknown.

I020 found 95,546 samples taken, one per 29.0 premises against the 2,769,361 licensed plus notified.

Visiting and sampling are different acts: six in ten are visited, one in 29 is sampled.

4-3 1,125,567 visits, 1,175 sanctions

Against 1,125,567 premises visited, 1,175 sanctions — **0.1044%, one per 958 premises**.

Set beside the earlier papers:

	Denominator	Sanctions etc.	Rate
Food businesses (this paper)	1,125,567 premises visited	1,175 sanctions	0.1044%
Medical Service Act inspections (I021)	25,678	3 sanctions	0.0117%
Medicines retail (I014)	2,633 dispositions	6 revocations/suspensions	0.063%
Barbershops and beauty salons (I015)	385,747 premises	0 closure orders	0%
Entertainment venues (I019)	4,826 premises	0 sanctions	0%

Food has the most sanctions of any of these. Even so, it is one per thousand premises.

Licence revocations numbered zero. As with I015's zero closure orders and I019's zero sanctions, **the heaviest sanction is not used.**

Criminal referrals amounted to three, all for unlicensed operation. **Being referred for selling food without a licence happens three times a year nationwide.**

4-4 "Exists in law, barely in fact" keeps recurring

Food irradiation at zero premises; special milk collection and processing at three.

The same shape has appeared repeatedly.

Food irradiation (this paper)	0 premises
Special milk collection and processing (this paper)	3 premises
Unpasteurised special milk (I016)	8 kilolitres, Hokkaido only
Prefectures with no traditional bathhouse (I009)	Yamagata
Prefectures with no midwifery clinic attending births (I021)	6
Itinerant food trade (I011)	2,187 of 10,408 in Miyazaki

Japan's licensing regimes contain a number of categories that are legally available nationwide but used by only a handful of premises.

This is not a defect. **Where there is no demand, no premises are built. But that a category exists and that a trade in it is viable are different things** — a distinction with practical value for a small business.

4-5 What it means that restaurants are 77.1%

Of 1,227,521 amended-Act licences, 946,451 (77.1%) are restaurant businesses; the top three types (restaurants, confectionery, prepared dishes) are 88.8%.

Food licensing is, in practice, a regime for restaurants.

X001 found a median of 14.77 workers per establishment across the 526 subcategories. I015 found 1.80 for barbershops and 2.12 for beauty salons. **Restaurants too are a small trade.**

I018 found 8,558 food sanitation inspectors (1,372 full time) watching them. **946,451 restaurants against 1,372 full-time inspectors.**

Restaurant businesses received 616 sanctions — 0.065% of 946,451 premises.

5. Limitations

- The June 2021 amendment changed the licence categories. **Old-Act licences remain valid until expiry, so neither table alone gives the total**
 - The old Act's "closures" **exclude premises that took out an amended-Act licence instead** (Table 1-1, note 2), though some authorities' systems include them
 - **Premises visited exclude Nara Prefecture and Morioka City** (notes 3 and 4). The real figure is higher
 - **Nara Prefecture's restaurant premises are not included in this table** for reasons of its management system (Nara City, a core city, is included; note 1)
 - "Premises visited" counts **premises, not visits**. How many times any one was entered is unknown
 - The old-Act table's **"(regrouped) vending machines" (18,589) is excluded from the sum**
 - **Businesses requiring notification (I011) need no licence**. The combined figure is an indicator of the total, not a single register
 - Few sanctions does not necessarily mean **few problems**
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6. How to reproduce

1. Download Table 1-1 (old Act) and Table 3-1 (amended Act) of the FY2024 Report on Public Health Administration from e-Stat (CP932)
2. From each, take the "total" row and the business-type rows. **Exclude the old-Act table's "(regrouped) vending machines" and its sub-rows**
3. Sum premises for the licence total. **Neither table alone gives it**
4. Set new licences, closures, sanctions, referrals and premises visited side by side for the two Acts
5. Divide closures by premises for the closure rate and compare the two Acts
6. **Read notes 1 to 4**. Nara Prefecture and Morioka City are missing from some columns

Every figure in this paper is output by a single script (`kensan_213`). No intermediate value was copied by hand.

Scope of this paper

No new theory is claimed. **Tables 1-1 and 3-1 of the Report on Public Health Administration are counted by type of business.** It shows 1,904,239 licensed food businesses (676,718 old plus 1,227,521 amended), 2,769,361 with notifications added, 1,125,567 premises (59.1%) visited during the year, 1,175 sanctions with zero licence revocations, an old-Act closure rate 5.1 times the amended Act's, and zero premises in food irradiation among the amended Act's 32 types. **It also corrects the figure of "2,299,735" used in I005, I011, I018 and I020, which was restaurant licences plus notifications, and the affected texts have been revised.** Premises visited is a count of premises, not of visits. Few sanctions does not necessarily mean few problems.

References and data sources

1. Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Report on Public Health Administration, FY2024, Tables 1-1, 3-1 and 6-1 (Food Sanitation)
2. Yuuki Yamagishi, "Restaurant Licences Are 2.9 Times the Establishments — and 'Coffee Shop' Licences 0.47 Times" (I005)
3. Yuuki Yamagishi, "Of 23,668 'Public Bathhouses', 2,730 Are Sento" (I009)
4. Yuuki Yamagishi, "865,122 Food Businesses Require Notification" (I011)
5. Yuuki Yamagishi, "11,910 Shops Sell Medicines Online (12.8%)" (I014)
6. Yuuki Yamagishi, "107,995 Barbershops and 277,752 Beauty Salons" (I015). Zenodo.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22878037>
7. Yuuki Yamagishi, "Milk Processed Differs 20,444-fold Top to Bottom" (I016). Zenodo.
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8. Yuuki Yamagishi, "27,227 on the Watching Side, of Whom 2,349 Are Full-Time" (I018). Zenodo.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22879207>
9. Yuuki Yamagishi, "1,468 Cinema Premises, and None at All in 82.1% of Municipalities" (I019). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22879269>

10. Yuuki Yamagishi, "95,546 Food Samples, 431 Failures (0.45%)" (I020). Zenodo.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22879317>

11. Yuuki Yamagishi, "25,678 Inspections, 3 Sanctions" (I021). Zenodo.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22879344>

12. Yuuki Yamagishi, "How Many People Does a Trade Run On?" (X001)

Version history

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How to cite

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