

Japan invents new word for days of 40°C heat

20th April 2026



Climate change is having an unforeseen consequence on language – the creation of new words. The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) has introduced a new item of vocabulary into the Japanese lexicon. The neologism is the word "kokushobi," which literally means "cruelly hot day" or "harshly hot day". The JMA will use it when describing or forecasting days when temperatures are 40°C or above. The JMA conducted an online poll of weather-based terminology. The questionnaire was prompted by the scorching weather experienced in Japan in recent years. Website visitors selected their most preferred word. There were 478,000 responses. The word kokushobi garnered nearly 203,000 votes.

There has been record-breaking heat in Japan in the past decade. The JMA reported days of 40°C or above every year since 2018. In August 2025, the town of Isesaki, Gunma Prefecture, recorded the highest temperature ever observed in Japan. The mercury rose to 41.8°C. There were a further nine days when temperatures were 40°C. More records were broken in 2025. This was the hottest year since records began in 1898. Temperatures were 2.36°C above average. The Mainichi newspaper wrote: "Tokyo recorded 25 days over 35°C, compared with an annual average of just 4.5 days. Kyoto logged 52 days above that temperature, compared with an average of 18.5 days."

Sources: [japantimes.co.jp](https://www.japantimes.co.jp) / [mainichi.jp](https://www.mainichi.jp) / [jma.go.jp](https://www.jma.go.jp)

Writing

The climate will pose an existential threat to humanity. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

climate change / language / vocabulary / temperature / online poll / scorching / vote / record breaking / heat / the past decade / 41.8°C / mercury / newspaper / 2025

True / False

- 1) The article says it's clear that climate change will create new words. T / F
- 2) The agency overseeing Japanese language introduced a new word. T / F
- 3) The new Japanese word is "hardly hot day". T / F
- 4) The new word got more than 200,000 votes in an online poll. T / F
- 5) Japan's hottest-ever temperature was recorded in 2023. T / F
- 6) Japan's hottest-ever temperature was over 41°C. T / F
- 7) Japan started recording temperatures in 1898. T / F
- 8) In 2025, the city of Kyoto recorded more than 50 days above 35°C. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| 1. unforeseen | a. survey |
| 2. lexicon | b. archives |
| 3. neologism | c. ten years |
| 4. poll | d. new word |
| 5. garnered | e. the norm |
| 6. decade | f. unexpected |
| 7. rose | g. gathered |
| 8. records | h. registered |
| 9. logged | i. dictionary |
| 10. average | j. increased |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Has your country experienced record-breaking temperatures?
- c) What are the good things about extremely hot days?
- d) Do you prefer scorching hot days or freezing cold days?
- e) What can we do about climate change?
- f) What do you think the climate will be like in 50 years?
- g) What do you think of today's weather?
- h) What questions would you like to ask meteorologists?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. having an unforeseen | a. rose to 41.8°C |
| 2. the Japanese | b. weather |
| 3. The JMA conducted | c. nearly 203,000 votes |
| 4. scorching | d. of just 4.5 days |
| 5. The word <i>kokushobi</i> garnered | e. observed in Japan |
| 6. There has been record- | f. consequence on language |
| 7. the highest temperature ever | g. above average |
| 8. The mercury | h. an online poll |
| 9. Temperatures were 2.36°C | i. breaking heat in Japan |
| 10. compared with an annual average | j. lexicon |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of climate change?
- What consequences of climate change do you know of?
- What new words has climate change brought about?
- Does your language have words to describe extreme heat?
- What do you think of 'cruelly hot days'?
- What weather is perfect for you?
- What new words have entered your language?
- What advice do you have to deal with extreme heat?

Spelling

- having an unforeseen unnecseqoce
- the Japanese eincxol
- The nmoegoisl is the word "kokushobi"
- rlylceu hot day
- describing or fsrgnotaeci days
- weather-based gieotoynrml
- in the past cededa
- the highest ttmeareuper ever
- The ryerucm rose to 41.8°C
- redevsob in Japan
- compared with an uananl
- 2.36°C above grevaea

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. i	3. d	4. a	5. g
6. c	7. j	8. b	9. h	10. e

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What does the article say climate change has had a consequence on?
2.	What organization introduced a new word into the Japanese lexicon?
3.	When will the new word be used?
4.	What was there an online poll of?
5.	How many people voted for the word <i>kokushobi</i> ?
6.	Since when have there been annual temperatures of 40°C in Japan?
7.	What is Japan's highest ever temperature?
8.	When did Japan start recording temperatures?
9.	What was the yearly average of days over 35°C in Tokyo before 2025?
10.	How many days over 35°C did Kyoto have in 2025?

Speaking – Hot Weather

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| • Taking a nap | • Visiting a beach |
| • Making smoothies | • Having a picnic |
| • Shopping | • Swimming |
| • Reading a book | • Watching a movie |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	F	4	T	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	T
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.