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Japan invents new word for days of 40°C heat – 20th April 2026

Level 4

Climate change is creating new words. Japan's Meteorological Agency (JMA) has created a new Japanese word. The word is "kokushobi". It means "cruelly hot day" or "harshly hot day". It will be used when describing days of 40°C temperatures. There was an online poll to choose the new word. Website visitors selected their preferred word. There were 478,000 responses. The word kokushobi got nearly 203,000 votes.

Japan has had record-breaking weather, with days of 40°C or above every year since 2018. In August 2025, a northern town recorded Japan's highest ever temperature. The mercury rose to 41.8°C. There were nine more days of 40°C temperatures. The year 2025 was Japan's hottest since records began in 1898. The Mainichi newspaper said that Kyoto recorded 52 days over 35°C, compared with an annual average of 18.5 days.

Level 5

Climate change is having consequences on language – the creation of new words. Japan's Meteorological Agency (JMA) has introduced a new word into the Japanese dictionary. The word is "kokushobi," which literally means "cruelly hot day" or "harshly hot day". It will be used when describing or forecasting days when temperatures are 40°C or above. There was an online poll of weather-based terminology. The questionnaire was because of the recent scorching weather. Website visitors selected their preferred word. There were 478,000 responses. The word kokushobi got nearly 203,000 votes.

There has been record-breaking heat in Japan. There have been days of 40°C or above every year since 2018. In August 2025, a town in Gunma Prefecture recorded the highest temperature ever in Japan. The mercury rose to 41.8°C. There were nine more days of 40°C temperatures. More records were broken in 2025. This was the hottest year since records began in 1898. 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, compared with an average of 18.5 days."

Level 6

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."