

ABOUT US

Offices

Kinshicho and Sagamihara

Telephone

03 5637 8809

Web

www.tomtom-english.com

Email

kinshicho@tomtom-english.com



@tomtomenglish

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With the majority of foreigners on extended stays in Japan being male, and more Japanese women having a strong interest in languages and cultures other than their own, it's natural that such international pairings are on the rise.

Why are some Japanese women not interested in Japanese men?

Poll by Nico Video

No chivalry	48%
Don't show affection	43%
Don't take initiative	24.7%
Don't say nice things about their girlfriend in front of others	7.6%
Don't have a good body	4.5%

Every society has its attractive and unattractive aspects, which Japanese women revealed in a recent poll by sharing both the things about their foreign boyfriends that thrilled them, as well as the less pleasant parts of the package deal of a romantic partner. The poll produced some interesting reasons why some Japanese women weren't interested in Japanese men. (see left).

NUMBERS

Number of international marriages in Japan in 2012

30,000

Japanese who think marriage is pointless

33%

Foreign residents in Japan

2,134,451

continued overleaf

It wasn't all bad news for Japanese men, though. There's a lot to be said for the comfort and unspoken understanding that can come from a common background, as one woman explained.

"When I get married, I want to quit my job and be a housewife. I think women who have those kinds of domestic ambitions should choose a Japanese guy"

She wasn't the only one to cite the advantages of home life with a Japanese husband: "they don't have much to say about how to decorate the house, so most of the time the woman gets to make the decisions. The man usually picks up the tab for the decorating, too."

Foreign men have a lot going against them, too, with the most obvious being the language barrier.

"I'm not a native English speaker like my boyfriend, and it's frustrating when I can't put the right nuance on what I'm trying to say."

An international relationship can mean more bickering and extra time needed to settle your differences, as sometimes you have to spend the beginning of a discussion just feeling each other out as to what you both think about the issue.

"My younger sister's husband is South American, and they often squabble over cultural differences, and really have

to make an effort to understand each other."

Even when you're both willing to compromise, meeting in the middle is a complicated process. And things only get tougher if you and your spouse metamorphose into your stubborn, grumpy grandparents.

"As time goes by, my foreign husband and I argue more over food. When we were young, we were both happy to eat anything, but as we've aged our tastes have started reverting back to what we ate as kids. I think this is a big reason why some international marriages eventually break down."

So with these strikes against them, how do foreign guys manage to snag a Japanese girl? For starters, in contrast to the hands-off approach to the home many Japanese men have, Japanese women are often appreciative of the way their foreign huddies pitch in around the house.

"My Canadian husband says it's only natural to help with the housework."

"I don't know if he's really diligent, or I'm just lazy, but I'm always impressed by how much my British husband does....When we have guests over for dinner, he vacuums, straightens up the house, and even puts out fresh flowers."

But by far the most common compliment

Japanese women paid to their foreign guys was how impressed they were by their romantic streak. In a culture where direct shows of passion are rare for many couples, this often crops up at surprising times.

"My boyfriend is from America, and whenever we talk on the phone, he says 'I love you' before he hangs up. It makes me blush."

"My Spanish boyfriend begins every email he sends me with, 'To the most beautiful woman in the world' I love it"

"On my days off, my French boyfriend makes breakfast for me, and wakes me up with a kiss, saying 'I couldn't wait to see your beautiful eyes'"

Of course, at the end of the day, the important thing to remember is that you're dating a person, not their nationality. The best course is to try to adopt all of the good points above, Japanese or foreign.

Discussion Questions

1. Are Japanese men and Western men are so different? Why? Why not
2. Have you ever had a relationship with a foreigner? Did you have any difficulties?
3. Is it true that Japanese men don't help at home?
4. Why do you think the number of international marriages is increasing?