

# Japan\*\*



## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

CAPITAL: Tokyo

POPULATION: 127,078,679

ETHNIC GROUPS: Japanese (98.5%), Koreans (0.5%), Chinese (0.4%), other (0.6%),

LOCATION: Eastern Asia, island chain between the North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan; east of the Korean peninsula

CLIMATE: Varies from tropical in south to temperate in north

RELIGIONS: Shintoism (83.9%), Buddhism (71.4%), Christianity (2%), other (7.8%). Note: total adherent exceeds 100% because many people belong to both Shintoism and Buddhism

LANGUAGES: Japanese

## EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

TEACHING STYLES – At the elementary school level, a child-centered teaching style is common. Then, starting in middle school, lecture is dominant. English is taught in schools. Teaching was traditionally heavily weighted on the Grammar Translation method, and it is moving toward a communicative approach in recent years.

LEARNING STYLES – Class participation by asking questions or expressing opinions is considered as challenging the educator's authority, disrespect, or showing off. Students would rather ask each other even while the class is in session. Because student work extremely hard on passing a university entrance exam during junior high and high school, being at a university is viewed as a break or vacation before entering the workforce for some students. Therefore, students do not always attend the large lecture classes on a regular basis.

INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING – In elementary school, middle school, and high school, students stay in the same classroom throughout the day. Thus, there is a special bond between classmates. On the other hand,



the educators are more or less visitors, because they arrive in the room merely to teach.

**DISCIPLINE AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT-** Educators receive great respect. Depending on the teacher, various disciplinary measures are used such as shaking their heads, ignoring students, making the students stand or kneel on the floor for a long period of time, or sending a student to the principal's office. Shame and humiliation are often used to get students to conform to group rules.

**EDUCATOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP** – Being a friend, counselor, and disciplinarian are part of a teachers' roles. Japanese teachers believe that "If the student hasn't learned, the teacher hasn't taught".

**STUDENT-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS** – Students have strong bonds amongst themselves by learning and working together. Group bonds are also developed through competitions and sports events. School club activities help students to develop junior-senior relationships, which introduce students to the vertical society.

**POLITE/IMPOLITE TOPICS & BEHAVIORS** – Questions regarding religious beliefs and giving advice to others are often avoided, unless they are close acquaintances or family members. Japanese don't correct or criticize others, because it is considered immature. Japanese often use apology to express their wish to cooperate with others.

\*\*Information from the "CIA World Factbook" and "Understanding Your International Students: An Educational, Cultural, and Linguistic Guide" (October, 2010)