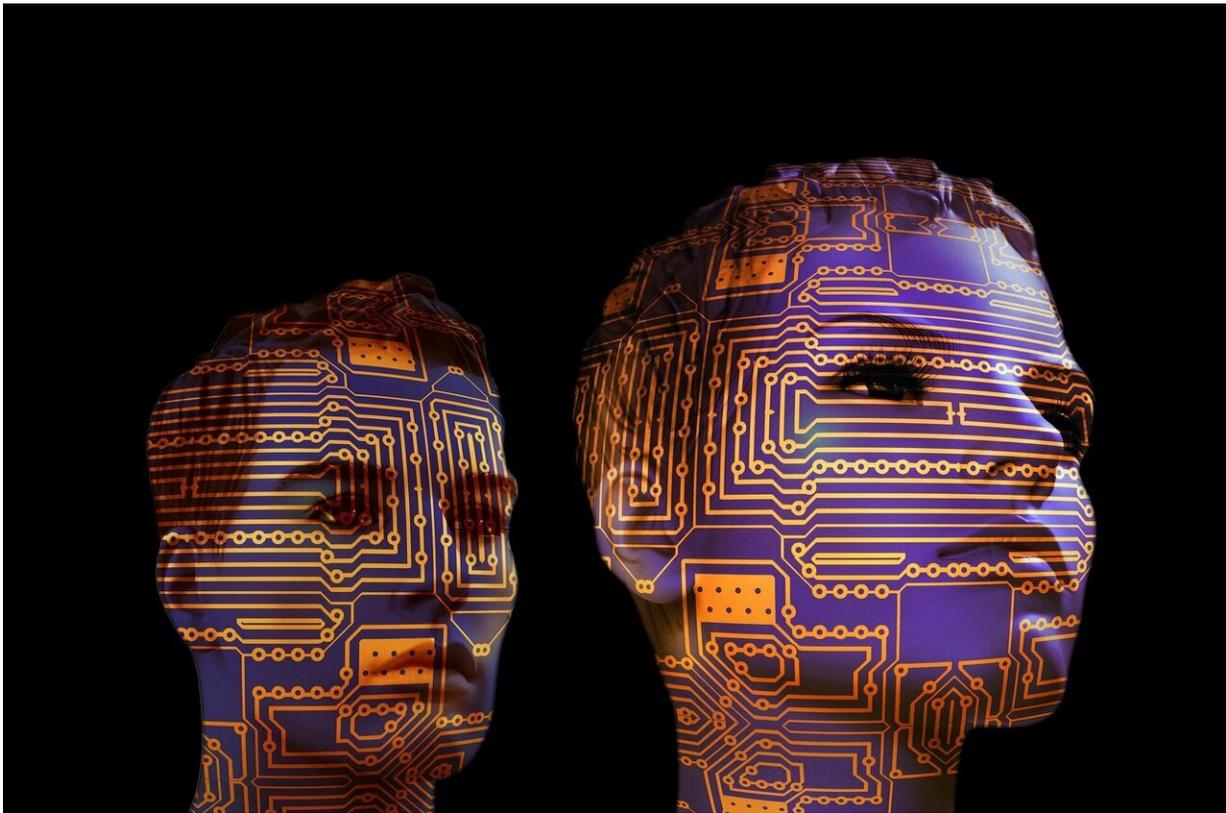


Japan boosts AI funding to match lonely hearts

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Japan is seeking to boost its flagging birthrate by funding the use of artificial intelligence to help match lonely hearts, an official said Monday.

Although it might not conjure thoughts of romance, AI tech can match a wider and smarter range of potential suitors, the cabinet official told AFP.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's government plans to allocate two billion yen (\$19 million) in the next fiscal year to back [local authorities](#) that run schemes to help their residents find love, he said.

Around half of the nation's 47 prefectures offer matchmaking services and some of them have already introduced AI systems, according to the cabinet office.

The human-run matchmaking services often use standardised forms to list people's interests and hobbies, and AI systems can perform more advanced analysis of this data.

"We are especially planning to offer subsidies to [local governments](#) operating or starting up matchmaking projects that use AI," the official said.

"We hope this support will help reverse the decline in the nation's birthrate."

Japan's [fertility rate](#)—the number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime—was 1.36 last year, one of the world's lowest and far below the rate needed to maintain a population.

Its rapidly ageing population, also a result of long life expectancy, poses a major headache for Japanese policymakers trying to ensure a shrinking workforce can pay for the ballooning cost of welfare.

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