

East Asian marriages with foreign women: bride trafficking or voluntary migration?

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In Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, where it is difficult for some men to find a spouse in their home country, a growing number of wives are brought in from abroad, according to a new study from The University of Western Ontario.

In a report released by France's National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED), Western sociology professor Danièle Bélanger questioned whether these marriages with foreign women should be considered voluntary migration or a form of bride trafficking.

According to the report, in the last five years, marriages in which the wives were of foreign origin accounted for 15 per cent of new unions in Taiwan, eight per cent in South Korea and six per cent in Japan. The largest group of immigrant spouses in these countries comes from the People's Republic of China. Vietnamese women are the second largest group of immigrant spouses in South Korea and Taiwan, and likewise for Filipino women in Japan.

Bélanger, a Canada Research Chair in Population, Gender and Development, citing Vietnam as an example, says this type of migration is frowned upon by the Vietnamese government and the women are considered to be either the victims of human trafficking or opportunists who take advantage of the system in order to settle abroad.

While most of these marriages are orchestrated by matchmaking agencies and involve significant costs for the groom and his family,

women marry voluntarily.

“A large majority of foreign spouses who migrate to get married do so of their own accord and not because of parental pressure,” says Bélanger. “Their objectives are to marry and migrate. The aim is not to contract a marriage of convenience but rather to kill two birds with one stone.”

This influx of immigrant spouses represents a challenge for the governments of receiving countries who must create programs and policies to deal with a growing ethnic diversity. This trend has a significant social and demographic impact.

More information: [www.ined.fr/en/resources_document...
dd/publication/1510/](http://www.ined.fr/en/resources_document/publication/1510/)

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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