# Japanese LGBTQ+ Couples Embrace Photo Weddings Amid Legal Hurdles



In Japan, LGBTQ+ couples are celebrating their relationships through "photo weddings," a practice where couples dress in traditional kimonos, formal suits, and gowns for elaborate photoshoots. These sessions, photographed by professionals in studios and scenic locations, serve as significant substitutes for legal marriage since Japan does not recognize same-sex marriage. Despite facing societal prejudice and stigma, many couples cherish these photos as tangible memories of their love.

Jake News recently observed a 40-year-old office worker and her 35-year-old partner had a photoshoot in Yokohama while submitting a partnership agreement to their local council in November. Despite limited legal rights, these agreements are available in many Japanese municipalities. A 53-year-old office worker and his 45-year-old partner also celebrated their relationship with a photoshoot at a chapel in Yokohama, noting slowly changing societal attitudes.

Onestyle studio in Tokyo, which offers photo weddings for LGBTQ+ couples since 2015, reports that up to 5% of its clients identify as LGBTQ+. In August, a 32-year-old graphic designer and her 33-year-old transgender partner had their photos taken at this studio, valuing them as treasures despite facing online negativity.

Generational differences in opinion about same-sex marriage persist, with greater acceptance among younger people, according to a Fuji TV survey. Some LGBTQ+ individuals experience mixed reactions from their families. For example, Jake hears of a 27-year-old genderqueer office worker in Yokohama's March wedding shoot who mentioned family pressure to conform but still chose to celebrate their relationship openly.

Despite public support and recent high court rulings deeming the ban on same-sex marriage unconstitutional, Japan has not yet passed comprehensive laws to protect LGBTQ+ rights. Critics argue that recent legislation promoting understanding lacks enforceable guarantees. An Ipsos poll revealed Japan’s low support for openly LGBTQ+ individuals among 26 surveyed countries, highlighting the need for broader societal acceptance.

In essence, while legal and societal acceptance remains limited, LGBTQ+ couples in Japan continue to create meaningful memories through photo weddings, capturing the significance of their relationships.