



By: TA | AP Brief

Japan remains the only G7 member that does not recognize same-sex marriage



A court found Japan's refusal to legalize same-sex marriage was constitutional in the last of six cases that are expected to be brought to the Supreme Court for a final and definitive ruling, possibly next year.

The Tokyo High Court said marriage under the law is largely expected to be a union between men and women in a decision that reversed a lower court ruling last year and was the first loss at high courts in the six cases brought by those seeking **equal marriage rights**.

Judge Ayumi Higashi said a legal definition of a family as a unit between a couple and their children is rational and that exclusion of same-sex marriage is valid. The court also dismissed damages of 1 million yen (\$6,400) each sought by eight sexual minorities seeking equal marital rights.

Plaintiffs and their lawyers said the decision was unjust but they were determined to keep fighting through the Supreme Court.

"I'm so disappointed," plaintiff Hiromi Hatogai told reporters outside the court. "Rather than sorrow, I'm outraged and appalled by the decision. Were the judges listening to us?"

"We only want to be able to marry and be happy, just like anyone else," said another plaintiff, Rie Fukuda. "I believe the society is changing. We won't give up."

With all six high court cases done, the Supreme Court is expected to handle all appeals and make a decision.

Though discrimination still exists at school, work and elsewhere, public backing for legalizing same-sex marriage and support in the business community have rapidly increased in recent years.

The Constitutional right to equality and freedom of marriage

Japan is the only member of the Group of

Seven industrialized countries that does not recognize same-sex marriage or provide any other form of legally binding protection for LGBTQ+ couples.

Prime Minister **Sanae Takaichi** 's conservative ruling Liberal Democratic Party is the main opponent of same-sex marital rights in Japan.

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The **government** has argued that marriage under civil law does not cover same-sex couples and places importance on natural reproduction.

More than 30 plaintiffs have joined the lawsuits on marriage equality filed across Japan since 2019.

They argue that civil law provisions barring same-sex marriage violate the Constitutional right to equality and freedom of marriage.

Friday's ruling was only the second that found the current government policy constitutional after the 2022 Osaka District Court decision.