

# QUEER LIFE IN KUMAMOTO



## WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING LGBTQ+ IN JAPAN?

Queer people and communities exist and thrive throughout Japan. However, they may require more effort to find than those in the U.S. and Europe, for example. The persistence of heteronormative views on family and marriage with resulting social pressure to conform discourages many people living in Japan from being "out and proud", especially in non-urban areas (like Kumamoto). There are also no legal protections for sexual and gender minorities in the workplace, and same-sex marriage is not yet federally legal. Nevertheless, public attitude towards LGBTQ+ rights and visibility is slowly progressing towards understanding and acceptance.

## DO I HAVE TO COME OUT (AGAIN)?

The short answer: it's totally up to you. You are in no way required to reveal anything to your coworkers or employers. Many people, foreign and Japanese, choose not to discuss their sexuality or gender identity at work. In general, your Japanese coworkers will not care about your life outside work so long as it doesn't affect your performance. Feel free to share as little or as much as you like, at your own pace, and on your own terms.

## WHERE CAN I FIND COMMUNITY?

### **In Person:**

*Bars* - One important thing to note about "gay bars" in Japan is that many are separated by gender, i.e., a lot of gay bars only allow entry to men. There are very few "mixed" bars; we aren't aware of any that exist in Kumamoto Prefecture. If you find one, let us know!

*Kyushu Rainbow Pride* - Held annually in Fukuoka City, this is the largest pride celebration in Kyushu. It was held online for the past two years due to COVID, but they plan to hold it in person this year on November 6th! There should be a live stream available as well for those who can't attend in person.

### **Online:**

*Stonewall Japan* <https://stonewalljapan.org/> - Probably the most useful website for finding resources, information, events, etc.

*Stonewall Japan Facebook Page*

*Stonewall Kyushu Facebook Page*

# RESOURCES - HEALTH

## PHYSICAL & SEXUAL

- **Kumamoto City Public Health Center** (Kumamoto-shi Hokenjo/熊本市保健所)
  - Cost: Free; English: No
  - Open weekdays from 9am-12pm and 1pm-5pm
  - No appointment is necessary if you arrive at least an hour before closing
  - Tests Available: HIV, chlamydia, syphilis
  - Tel: 096-364-3189
  - Address: 5-1-1 Oe Chuo-ku, Kumamoto (熊本市中央区大江5丁目1番1号)
- **Suizenji Hifuka Iin** (水前寺皮ふ科医院)
  - Cost: ¥ 5000-6000 (using health insurance); English: Yes
  - Hours: Mon-Sat 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (This is the only center open on Saturdays); Mon/Tue/Thur/Fri 2-6 p.m.
  - Testing: HIV, chlamydia, syphilis, herpes, gonorrhea, genital warts, crabs
  - Tel: 096-382-4551
  - Address: 5 Chome-15-8 Suizenji, Chuo Ward, Kumamoto (熊本県熊本市中央区水前寺5-15-8)
- For trans folks, Stonewall Japan has a very thorough, well written guide on their website. <https://stonewalljapan.org/resources/transgender-life/>
- For more information, please visit <https://www.kumamotojet.com/reiwa/living-in-kumamoto/health/sexual-health/> or contact your local area leader.

## MENTAL

- **JET Online Counselling and Toll-free Phone Service**
  - Web Mail or Skype; Available twice a month; No reservation needed
- **JET Mental Health Counselling Assistance Programme**
  - CLAIR Subsidized Counseling; 50%, up to ¥30,000 per year
  - Mental health professionals either in Japan or abroad
- **AJET Peer Support Group (PGS)**
  - A volunteer organization run by and for JETS that provides confidential, anonymous, and supportive listening services and resources
  - (050) 5534-5566; Skype:AJETPSG
  - Call Times Available every day from 8:00pm-7:00 am
- **TELL Japan**
  - Offers in person and distance psychotherapy counseling services known for being openly LGBT friendly. TELL Japan services are not covered by the Japanese National Health Insurance.
    - <https://telljp.com/counseling/>
  - TELL Lifeline: free, confidential phoneline with English support
    - 03-5774-0992
    - Mon – Thu 9am – 11pm, Fri – Sun 9am – 2am