

# Japanese MP calls LGBT community 'unproductive'

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## **Latest controversial statement by Mio Sugita, an ally of PM Shinzō Abe, sparks furore**

Japan's governing party has belatedly distanced itself from an MP who described members of the LGBT community as "unproductive" because they cannot have children.

Mio Sugita, a lower house member of the Liberal Democratic party (LDP), sparked widespread criticism after she challenged the use of taxpayers' money to support same-sex marriages in a magazine article published last month.

Sugita wrote that same-sex couples "don't produce children. In other words, they lack productivity and, therefore, do not contribute to the prosperity of the nation."

Senior LDP officials initially refused to condemn Sugita, saying they had no plans to discuss the article with the MP, a controversial rightwinger who has claimed that the [use of sex slaves by Japanese soldiers](#) before and during the second world war was a Korean fabrication.

Sugita, an ally of the prime minister, Shinzō Abe has not apologised for the comments, but her office said she "took the matter seriously", according to the Kyodo news agency.

In a statement this week, the LDP said it did not share Sugita's views on same-sex marriages. The article, it said, "shows her lack of understanding of (LGBT) issues and consideration for the feelings of the people involved". The party said it was committed to supporting the rights of sexual minorities.

Abe told reporters it was "only natural to aim to create a society where human rights are respected and diversity is cherished".

Earlier this week, the party's attitude towards [LGBT rights](#) drew further criticism after a second MP suggested homosexuality was "a matter of taste".

Tomu Tanigawa told an internet TV programme that while he did not oppose same-sex relationships, he opposed laws legalising same-sex marriages.

"A man and a woman get married and have children. That is how a traditional family is formed," he said. "Humans have been doing so from antiquity to prevent nations from falling into decline and ruin."

Several local governments in [Japan](#) have [recognised same-sex partnerships](#) in recent years, but same-sex marriages have yet to gain legal recognition.

In a letter to the Asahi newspaper, Tanigawa said he "did not intend to discriminate against LGBT

people, nor do I deny diversity”.

His comments contradict a new LDP pamphlet intended to raise awareness of sexual minorities among party members. It says: “There is widespread misunderstanding that being a member of a sexual minority is a matter of individual will, taste or preference.”

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## **Justin McCurry**

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## **P.S.**

The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/03/japanese-mp-mio-sugita-calls-lgbt-community-unproductive>