

Economic Framing and Local Politicians' Support for Same-Sex Partnership Recognition in Japan

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Abstract

Policies concerning same-sex couples remain highly contested worldwide, and in many countries, including Japan, change often emerges at the local rather than national level. Some Japanese municipalities have pioneered partnership recognition, yet little is known about what shapes local politicians' support. This study examines whether economic framing—appeals from firms seeking to invest and create local jobs—influences attitudes toward same-sex partnership recognition. We conducted a survey experiment of over 2,500 city council members in 400 municipalities across Japan, randomly assigning municipalities to one of three conditions: control, demands from a domestic firm, or demands from a foreign firm. Economic appeals significantly increased support for treating same-sex couples as de facto married couples on resident registration forms, but not for issuing municipal partnership certificates or permitting married couples to keep separate surnames. Foreign firm appeals were somewhat more effective, especially among initially opposed politicians. These findings show that economic framing can shift elite attitudes on LGBTQ policies, but its reach is limited.

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1 Introduction

Marital rights affect individuals not only in defining their status under family law but in their ability to fully realize their economic and social agency (Htun et al. 2019). Yet equal marriage and marital rights remain out of reach for many underrepresented and minority groups around the world. What stands in the way of marriage equality and what arguments can lead to legislative reform?

This paper focuses on the issue of gay marriage, where the variation in the extension of marriage equality across contexts presents a puzzle given the recent sea change in public opinion in many contexts (Brewer 2014). Japan is one such country where public opinion has shifted in support of gay marriage in the last ten years. In a 2026 poll of 1,827 people in Japan, 39.7% indicated that they either agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement “Same-sex marriage should be recognized by law,” while only 28.3% disagreed or somewhat disagreed (Taniguchi 2023). As Figure 1 demonstrates, the Japanese public has been becoming more supportive of gay marriage, although there was a noticeable decrease in support between 2023 and 2026.¹

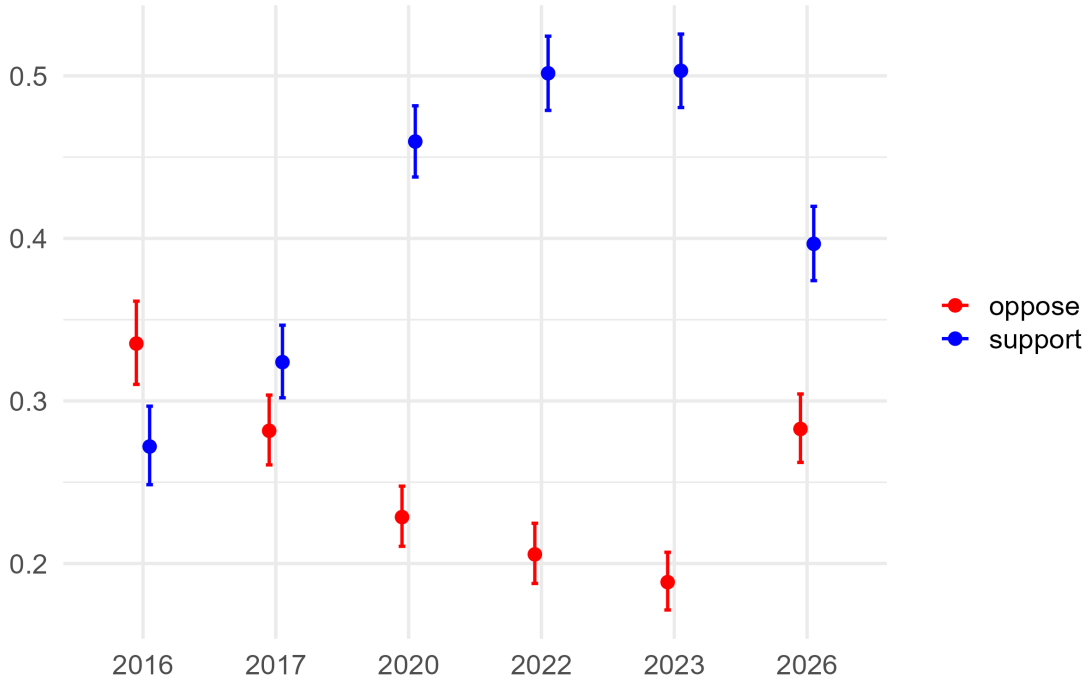


Figure 1: Japanese Public Opinion on Gay Marriage

Generated by authors with data from from Taniguchi (2016-2026).

In order to investigate the determinants of policy change, this paper examines the actual decision-makers of such legislation: local government officials. In Japan, policy change on same-sex marriage has originated at the local level rather than through national legislation.

¹This question has been asked in the UTokyo-Asahi Survey, joint surveys of the Japanese public and candidates for national public office that coincide with national elections in Japan, since 2016.

While the Japanese Supreme Court has not yet ruled on same sex marriage, Lower Courts have increasingly held that prohibitions on sex marriage violate the constitution. In March of 2025, the Osaka District Court—the one District Court that had ruled that prohibitions on same-sex marriage do *not* violate the constitution—was overruled by the Osaka High Court, which held that “Our country’s marital system should protect relationship that embrace natural romantic love,” while the District Court had spoken of protecting the relationships of childbirth and childrearing (Hanano and Otaki 2025). In 2015, the municipal government of Shibuya, one of Tokyo’s 23 wards, established same-sex domestic partnership certificates (Takao 2017).

However, the Japanese government has not yet taken steps to legalize gay marriage. At the national level, gay marriage is not legal, and there are no policies to compel municipalities to permit arrangements short of marriage such as domestic partnership benefits or legally recognized common law marriages. However, despite these conditions, 27.6% of Japan’s municipalities have followed Shibuya in establishing legally recognized same-sex domestic partnership arrangements, and 14 municipalities (which is less than 1% the municipalities in Japan) have adopted common law marriage arrangements for same-sex domestic partnerships.

What might cause some municipal elected officials to promote policies that support LGBTQ partnerships while others do not? In this project, we examine one potential cause of support for domestic partnerships – economic considerations. Economic arguments have shown to change local elected officials’ attitudes about potentially contentious social issues in other contexts, such as the removal of confederate monuments in the American South (Grose and Peterson 2020), but they are also especially salient for many Japanese municipalities, where rural populations face declining and aging populations with limited economic prospects.

In this project, we examine how framing the same-sex partnership issue in economic terms—specifically, demands from businesses seeking to establish new operations and create local employment—shapes local politicians’ attitudes toward same-sex partnership recognition. We conducted a survey experiment of city council members in 400 municipalities across Japan, in which municipalities (rather than individual respondents) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: control, demands from a domestic firm, or demands from a foreign firm.

The results reveal that economic demands increase support for same sex common law marriages, an arrangement that is fairly uncommon in Japanese municipalities. Both domestic and foreign firm treatments significantly raised support compared to the control group. Furthermore, we find that the effects are limited to the measures that the business interests asked for, and did not extend to related policy issues of same sex domestic partnerships (distinct from common law marriages) or allowing for couples to adopt different surnames (a touchstone progressive issue in the marriage law debate in Japan). We find suggestive evidence in exploratory analyses that demands from foreign firms were particularly persuasive compared to domestic firm demands.

2 Framing, Gaiatsu, and Context

While Japan formally does not recognize same-sex marriages performed domestically or overseas, the Ministry of Justice has implemented specific instructions regarding visa eligibility for same-sex couples since 2013 (Ministry of Justice (Japan) 2013). The partner of a foreigner resident in Japan is eligible for a ‘designated activities’ visa if the following three conditions are met: same-sex marriage is legally recognized in by both partners’ countries of origin, the sponsoring partner holds a legal immigration status in Japan, and that the marriage is genuine (*bona fide*) and is based on a stable relationship (Susaki 2022, 68). Since Japan does not recognize same-sex marriage, the first condition can not be met if one partner is Japanese.

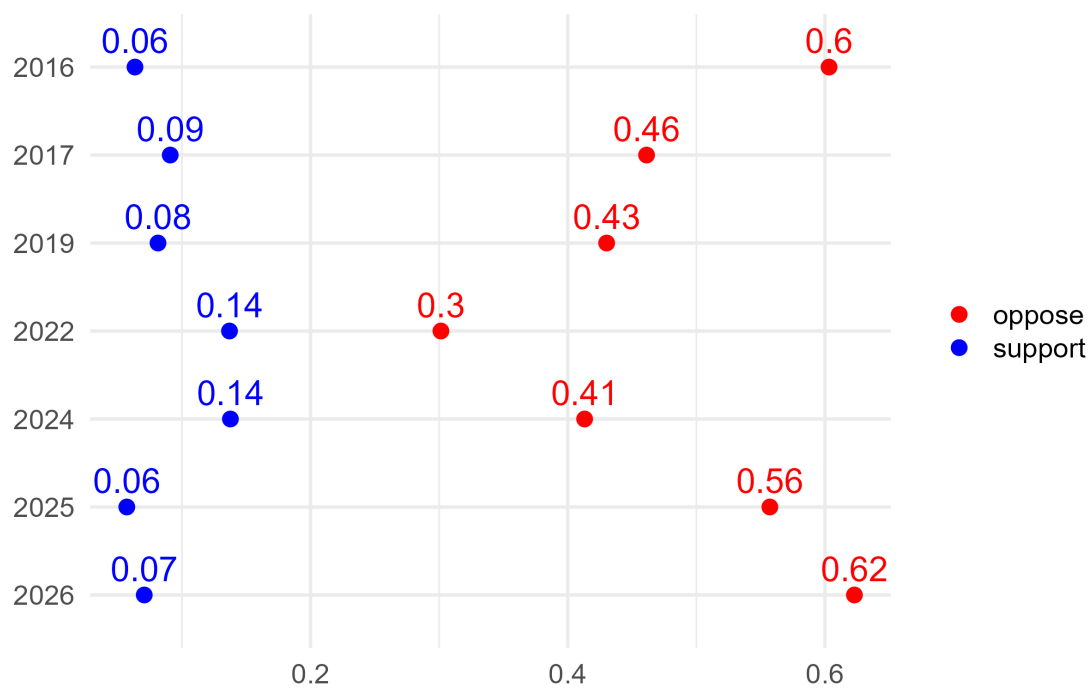
The formal practice of not recognizing same-sex marriages where one partner is Japanese has been upheld despite several legal challenges. In 2019, the Tokyo Regional Court recognized the right of a Taiwanese man in a decades-long relationship with a Japanese partner to an immigration status in Japan. However, he was given the exceptional status of resident (*teijusha*)² and not a spousal visa (Toyko Bar Association 2022). Ruling on the case of an American married to a Japanese spouse, the Tokyo Regional Court declared in 2022 that denying the ‘designated activities’ visa to foreigners married to Japanese citizens while permitting them for foreigners married to non-Japanese citizens was “illegal” and “against the principle of equality in the Japanese Constitution” (Toyko Bar Association 2022). While foreigners married to non-Japanese citizens have since been granted ‘designated activities’ visas, this is on a case-by-case basis and not enshrined in policy.

While the ‘designated activities’ visa allows same sex spouses to join their partners in Japan, their rights and privileges are limited compared to spousal visas. Spousal visas for heterosexual partners of permanent residents or Japanese citizens do not have any restrictions on employment, while holders of the ‘designated activities’ visa are initially not permitted to work. Instead, they must petition the Immigration Services Agency of the Ministry of Justice for “permission to engage in activities outside the status of residence” (*shikakugai katsudo*), which, even if granted, permits only up to 28 hours per week of part-time work. Furthermore, holders of spousal visas are able to sponsor dependent children (such as from a previous relationship) while ‘designated activities’ visa holders cannot.

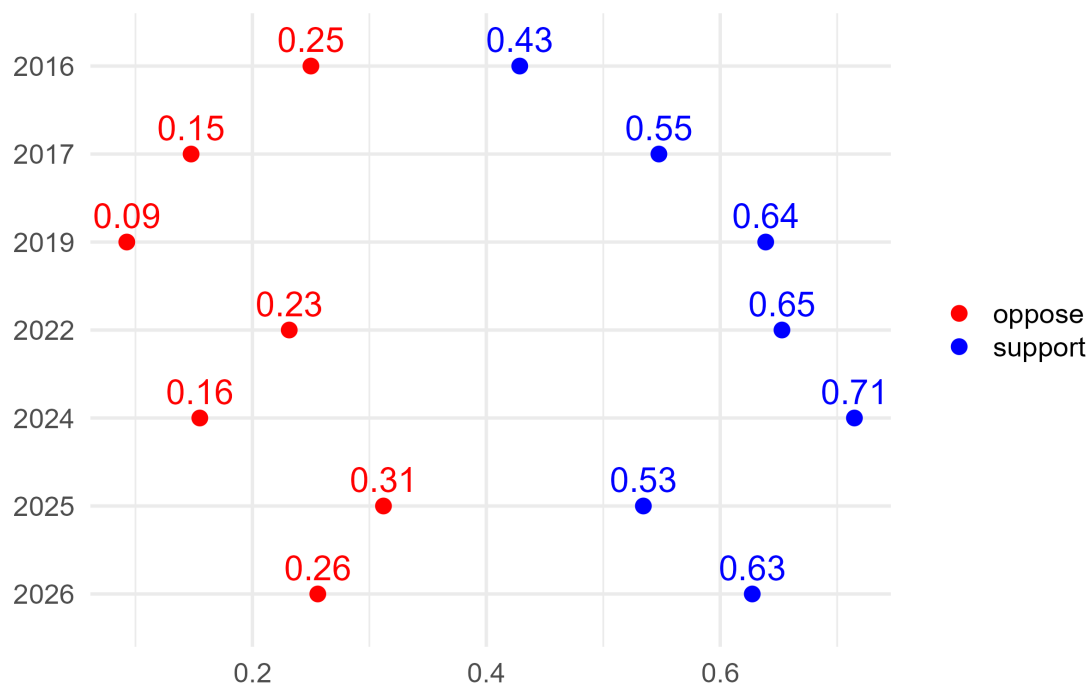
Although Figure 1 demonstrates that Japanese public has become more supportive of gay marriage in recent years, this support does not seem to have changed the opinions of national-level politicians. This is particularly true among politicians from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the center right party that has governed Japan, with only a few short breaks, since its formation in 1955. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the LDP Diet candidates have remained strongly opposed to gay marriage, although most other parties have not.

During the 2026 House of Representatives election, when almost 40% of the public supported same sex marriage, only 7% of LDP candidates indicated support for same sex marriage, while 62% opposed. This is important context for local elected officials in Japan, because support from the national level LDP makes it much easier for local politicians to move into more powerful and lucrative national seats.

²This visa status is typically granted to only individuals of specific backgrounds, such as refugees, adoptees, and co-ethnics.



(a) LDP Candidates



(b) Non-LDP candidates

Figure 2: Proportion of Diet Candidates Supporting or Opposing Gay Marriage

Generated by authors with data from from Taniguchi (2016-2026).

So, in other words, local politicians find themselves caught between a public and judicial system that are both supportive of gay marriage and a national government controlled by a party that strongly opposes gay marriage. Moreover, politicians might also have their own moral beliefs about building inclusive institutions, on one hand, and traditional family structures, on the other. How might they navigate these challenges?

It is particularly important to study local politicians because, despite the lack of recognition for same-sex relationships at the national level, municipal-level recognition has significant effects beyond the substantial benefits to quality of life and well-being for newly recognized couples (Dale 2020). Studies from the US context have shown that legalization at the local level has a legitimizing effect on public opinion greater than backlash effects, indicating that public attitudes and acceptance towards same-sex couples increases after legalization, especially amongst those previously with accepting or neutral positions (Flores and Barclay 2016; Ofori et al. 2019). Thus, it is plausible that as recognition expands at the municipal-level, public attitudes will continue to shift towards greater support for national-level recognition, although a retrenched minority may continue in committed opposition.

2.1 Framing effects

Druckman (2004, p. 672) defines issue framing effects as “situations where, by emphasizing a subset of potentially relevant considerations, a speaker leads individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions” (Druckman 2004, p. 672). Framing effects have been shown to have a significant impact on how individuals’ expressed positions on various issues. The quality of frames has been demonstrated to change opinions more than frequency of dissemination (Chong and Druckman 2007). However, framing effects are sensitive to counter-framing and can be easily disrupted through contentious public discourse. Druckman (2004, p. 683) goes on to note that, “[e]lite competition and heterogeneous discussions limit and often eliminate framing effects”. This is consistent with later research showing that relative susceptibility to framing effects, as well as which types of frames, depends on both individual factors such as prior-held beliefs and level of educational attainment (Hiscox 2006) as well as contextual factors regarding the given issue. Individuals tend to reinforce their existing stances for issues of high political salience or polarizing, decreasing framing effects (Bechtel et al. 2015; Druckman et al. 2013).

Framing effects have typically been studied within the political communication literature with the assumption that frames are being applied to the public. Political elites, perhaps due to their greater and more constant engagement with political discourses and contention (Edwards III and Wood 1999; Baumgartner and Jones 2009), have generally been assumed to be the shapers and propagators of frames rather than to be susceptible to them. However, recent studies have shown both in American (Grose and Peterson 2020) and comparative (Sheffer et al. 2018) contexts that political elites such as local officials and elected MPs have demonstrated significant susceptibility to framing effects in the context of vignette experiments.

Grose and Peterson (2020) found that elected officials in the American South reacted favorably to proposals for removing racially-charged symbols such as the Confederate flag from public display when it was framed as a business-friendly decision. This is notable as it suggests the susceptibility of issue framing effects on local officials even regarding issues

of high political salience. This framing differs greatly to typical framings by LGBT rights activists in Japan. Supporters of LGBT rights in Japan often use rights-based arguments based on equality and related legal arguments based on unfair discrimination under the Japanese Constitution's right to equal treatment, while opponents often reference threats to Japanese national identity, tradition, and threats to the family institution (Tamagawa 2016).

As has been widely reported on and analyzed, Japan is facing intense and related economic and demographic challenges of a rapidly aging and declining population. Local politicians often see revitalization of their municipalities' economies as one of their key missions. We hypothesize that they will thus be influenced by appeals that emphasize the possibility of drawing new employment opportunities to their municipality.

Experimental research from the US context has shown that when the medium of the frame is in written form, rational arguments in support of same-sex marriage rights are stronger than emotional ones (Harrison and Michelson 2017). Accordingly, we propose that a written frame that justifies support for recognizing same-sex partnerships at the municipal level based on economic justifications will be effective:

H1a: When the policy of treating same-sex couples as de facto married couples on resident registration forms is framed as beneficial to the municipality's economic interests, local politicians exhibit greater support for this policy

H1b: When the policy of treating same-sex couples as de facto married couples on resident registration forms is framed as beneficial to the municipality's economic interests, local politicians exhibit greater support for issuing certificates to same-sex couples as proof of their relationship.

2.2 Gaiatsu and Domestic Politics in Japan

Drawing upon studies of Japanese international relations, we also propose that pressure framed in the context of accommodating a foreign company will have more increased efficacy than pressure that references a Japanese company. We draw on two distinct bodies of literature to support this hypothesis. First, scholars of human rights in Japan have noted that *gaiatsu*, or "international pressure", is often effective in pressuring the Japanese state into adopting human rights norms and conventions. In issues such as indigenous recognition (Tsutsui and Shin 2008), formal protections against gender discrimination (Flowers 2016; Chan-Tiberghien 2004), the rights of non-citizen residents (Horowitz 2008; Flowers 2008), and refugee admission (Strausz 2012), norm adoption and subsequent commitments to amending its domestic laws and policies are understood as motivated by a desire for international acceptance and recognition, although domestic actors are necessary for ensuring compliance and accessing newly granted rights.

Second, the efficacy of *gaiatsu* in Japanese policymaking has been studied in the context of US-Japanese bilateral trade relations, stemming largely from Kent Calder's coinage of Japan as the archetypical "reactive state" (Calder 1988). Similar to the conclusions reached by scholars of Japanese norm adoption, Schoppa (1993) formalizes the *gaiatsu* approach as a two-level and recognizes the role of domestic (or local) advocates and pressure as mediating

the policy outcome. Feminist scholars have applied the *gaiatsu* framework to gender equity issues, coining concepts such as “*kansetsu gaiatsu*” (indirect foreign pressure; Gelb 2003) and “gender *gaiatsu*” (Hasunuma 2015) to refer to international pressure on Japan on women’s rights and participation through both indirect fora such as international organizations such as various organs of the United Nations as well as directly over the course of bilateral state-level exchanges.

Although no studies have been conducted on *gaiatsu* effects towards issues of LGBT rights, recent observers have observed examples of both direct and indirect “LGBT *gaiatsu*” in recent years. For example, Boon (2025, pp. 28-32) notes that foreign embassies are sponsors of and active participants in Pride events across Japan, while the Biden administration’s Ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, made repeated statements in explicit support of the 2023 LGBT Understanding Promotion Act, provoking backlash from both right-wing and left-leaning domestic commentators. With the 2019 legalization of same-sex marriage in neighboring Taiwan, activists and scholars are increasingly able to make claims based on comparisons with a neighbor with which Japan shares close ties and high mutual affinity (Tang et al. 2020). As economic ties with Taiwan deepen, particularly with the increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) from Taiwan to Japan such as with the 2024 establishment of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC)’s Japan subsidiary, Japan Advanced Semiconductor Manufacturing (JASM) in Kumamoto Prefecture (Momoko 2022), it is increasingly plausible that “LGBT *gaiatsu*” may be applied by not only Western but also regional partners. Accordingly, we also propose that the framing effect is magnified when written framing justifying support for recognizing same-sex partnerships at the municipal level based on an economic justification includes a *gaiatsu* component by referring to a leading international rather than domestic company:

H2a: Local politicians exhibit greater support for registering same-sex couples as de facto married couples on resident registration forms when the municipality’s economic interests are framed as stemming from foreign rather than domestic investment.

H2b: Local politicians exhibit greater support for issuing certificates to same-sex couples as proof of their relationship when the municipality’s economic interests are framed as stemming from foreign rather than domestic investment.

2.3 Gay Marriage in Context

Support or opposition for recognizing same-sex partnerships is not a discrete issue but rather deeply entwined with broader contention regarding gender relations, the institution of the family, and the preservation of traditional Japanese identity. Recognition is contentious precisely because of broader implications for its consequences for kinship institutions regarded by many as tied to cultural and national identity (Tang et al. 2020; Eto 2016). In the case of Japan, the notion of the family, legally embodied in the *koseki* family register, is the nexus of contention over LGBT rights and gender equality issues. The *koseki*, which identifies the members of a legal family unit, remains a pillar of Japanese citizenship despite the postwar introduction of ‘parallel’ forms of individual registration and identification such as the *jūminhyō* (residency registration) in 1952. The *koseki* has been identified as perpetuating

heteronormative and patriarchal values and reifying them as part of traditional Japanese cultural identity (despite the fact its contemporary form is a product of Westernizing ‘reforms’ during the Meiji restoration (Shi 2023)) as it is typically organized around a male householder, whose surname must be shared by all members of the family, with women typically being removed from their birth *koseki* and joining the *koseki* of the groom during marriage (White 2014; Krogness 2014). Conservative opposition to amending or abolishing the *koseki* institution, such as to allow for married couples to legally maintain separate surnames (*fūfu bessei*), is thus organized around the same organizations and alliances that oppose recognizing same-sex relationships, namely the *Nippon Kaigi* and associated *Jinja Honchō* (Association of Shinto Shrines), and for the same stated motivation: the defense of the traditional Japanese family (Yamaguchi 2014, p. 558; Taniguchi and Kaufman 2020).

With the *koseki* institution as nexus, we are also interested in whether the issue framing effects will spillover to related issues such as support for recognizing separate surnames for married spouses. Within the context of LGBT and gender politics, Engel finds that, in the United States in 2003, media discussions about the legalization of homosexual sex decreased support for homosexual sex. This was not, according to Engel, because the coverage was negative (it wasn’t), but rather because the media often linked coverage of the legalization of homosexual sex to the legalization of gay marriage, which, as of 2003, American public opinion did not support. In other words, a neutral frame on one issue of rights (the right to private sexual relations between consenting adults) led to less support for that right because of the way in which that frame invoked another right that was less popular (the right of homosexuals to marry in the same way that heterosexuals are able to). In the Japanese context, scholars have observed that acceptance and support for greater public LGBT visibility may not necessarily translate into acceptance or support within one’s own private family sphere (Tamagawa 2016).

However, the above studies deal with public opinion, and we hypothesize that the positions of local elected officials will function differently. We hypothesize that, because we are asking local elected officials to consider what is best for their municipality economically, they might consider that question more broadly, and think that a company that wants gay couples to be able to register common law marriages might also support policies to permit married couples to have separate surnames, and might thus support this policy for economic reasons. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H3: The effect of framing the policy of treating same-sex couples as de facto married couples on resident registration forms as beneficial to the municipality’s economic interests extends to local politicians’ attitudes toward other family issues unrelated to same-sex couples, including policies requiring married couples to share the same family name.

3 Research Design

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a pre-registered survey experiment with city council members in Japan. Although the decision to treat same-sex couples as de-facto married couples on resident registration forms formally falls under the mayor’s executive authority,

Japan’s local governments operate under a dual representation system in which both mayors and council members are directly elected by voters. In this system, council members play a crucial role in scrutinizing and constraining mayoral initiatives. Understanding how council members form their views—and what factors shape their attitudes—is therefore essential. Unlike mayors, who are single executives, municipal councils are collective bodies composed of several dozen members, with their size determined by population thresholds specified in the Local Autonomy Act. In the 400 municipalities included in this study, the average council contained about 20 members.

The survey was fielded in March 2025 and targeted council members in 400 cities and special wards, drawn from the universe of 792 municipalities (excluding towns and villages). To construct the sample, we proportionally stratified municipalities by population size (special wards, designated cities, and cities with populations over 200,000, 100,000–200,000, and under 100,000) and by region (Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kanto, Chubu, Kinki, Chugoku, Shikoku, Kyushu). Special wards and designated cities were treated as distinct strata. From this stratified frame, 400 municipalities were randomly selected. 8 of the municipalities that we sampled had legal common law marriage arrangements by April 1, 2025, so we filtered respondents from those municipalities out of our analysis (since we were asking them about their willingness to adopt a policy that their municipality had already adopted).

Three experimental conditions were implemented: a control condition, a domestic firm condition, and a foreign firm condition. Treatments were assigned at the municipality (council) level using multivariate blocking based on latitude, longitude, population size, share of residents aged 65 or older, share of residents in densely inhabited districts, share of secondary and tertiary industry employment, proportion of female council members, and council size. According to membership rolls as of December 2023, the 400 municipalities contained a total of 9,139 council members. Municipalities that had declined to cooperate or failed to return questionnaires in our prior surveys were excluded at the sampling stage.³

Survey instruments were distributed by postal mail, with respondents given the option of completing either a paper questionnaire or an online version via Qualtrics accessed through a QR code. Of the 9,139 council members contacted, 2,513 returned valid responses, yielding a response rate of 23.6%. To reduce the possibility that colleagues might discuss the survey instrument, which could introduce spillovers, social desirability pressures, or demand effects, treatments were assigned at the municipality level rather than the individual level. Respondents were also assured complete anonymity to mitigate any remaining concerns about social desirability bias.

In the control condition, participants were asked to indicate their attitudes toward three policies: (1) treating same-sex couples as de facto married couples on resident registration forms, (2) issuing municipal partnership certificates, and (3) permitting married couples to retain separate surnames. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from strongly support to strongly oppose, with a “don’t know” option. In the domestic firm condition, prior to answering the same set of questions, participants were presented with a vignette describing a hypothetical scenario in which a Japanese company planned to estab-

³See Appendix A for a discussion of balance between our control group and our two treatment groups. While our two treatment groups are somewhat more conservative than our control group, we address this by focusing most of our analysis on regression models that include conservatism as a predictor.

lish a new branch office in the municipality. The vignette stated that the company would withdraw its investment unless the municipality recognized same-sex couples as de facto married couples on resident registration forms. In the foreign firm condition, the vignette was identical except that the company was described as a leading international firm. Below is the precise wording of the vignette:

Imagine there is a large [**Japanese/Foreign**] firm that is planning to open a new regional branch office in your municipality. There are projections that this branch office will create many new job opportunities in your municipality. However, this firm is concerned about how their LGBT employees will be treated in your municipality. If your municipality will not permit same sex common law marriages, the firm announced that it would have no choice but to repeal its plans to open the branch office.

For the analyses, the outcome variables were recoded so that higher values indicate greater support for the policy in question. “Don’t know” responses were treated as missing and excluded from the analyses.⁴

The scenario in our vignette is hypothetical, but it has real-world parallels in the recent experience of Japanese municipalities that have attracted large new investment. The arrival of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC)’s Japan subsidiary in Kumamoto Prefecture is an illustrative example. The plant, the world’s largest chip factory, employed roughly 2,400 people as of 2025 (Miyasaka 2025), and about 60% of semiconductor-industry workers live in nearby Kumamoto City (Kumamoto City 2025). The investment also brought a sharp rise in foreign residents: the number of Taiwanese nationals moving to Kumamoto City each year rose from fewer than 200 between 2018 and 2022 to 863 in 2023 and 999 in 2024 (Kumamoto City 2025). City policy has followed. In its fiscal 2026 requests to the national government, Kumamoto City sought funding not only for transport and semiconductor-related industrial support, but also for consultation services, language education, and employment support for foreign residents (Kumamoto City 2025).

The influx also raised questions about LGBTQ newcomers. Fukuoka City and Kumamoto City had introduced partnership oath systems for same-sex couples in April 2018 and April 2019, respectively, well before JASM was established in December 2021, and Fukuoka Prefecture followed in April 2022 (Musashino City 2019; Fukuoka Prefecture 2022). These systems, however, carry no legal force comparable to marriage, and local media drew attention to the gap. Kumamoto Kenmin Television (KKT), for example, reported on a Taiwanese same-sex couple, legally married in Taiwan, who found on moving to Japan that they had reverted to being legal “strangers” to one another (*tanin ni gyakumodori*) (KKT Kumamoto Kenmin Terebi 2024).

In November 2024, Suzuki Ken, a professor of law at Meiji University and a specialist in Chinese and Taiwanese law, gave a public lecture in Kumamoto City arguing that Taiwan’s legalization of same-sex marriage should be understood against the backdrop of China’s presence (Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun 2024). Speaking to KKT, he described respect for diversity as central to a Taiwanese identity defined in contrast to the People’s Republic of China, and he turned the point toward Japan: “We need to look at what is happening in Taiwan. If Japan becomes a ‘country that is not chosen’ because people feel they cannot live

⁴Descriptive statistics for key variables are in the Appendix A.

here with peace of mind, it will mean a loss of talent and, economically, a loss of national interest” (KKT Kumamoto Kenmin Terebi 2024).⁵ The case shows how a single large foreign investor can loom large in a local economy, and how attracting and retaining talent becomes a pressing concern as a result. Given that a growing number of Japanese municipalities face population aging and economic decline, it is plausible that local officials would see a firm’s decision to invest, and its conditions for doing so, as a high-stakes matter. In these settings, making municipalities more welcoming to new firms and the residents they bring, including through initiatives for LGBTQ employees, can be seen as part of a broader strategy for economic revitalization. This is the logic our vignette is designed to capture.

4 Results and Analysis

4.1 Common Law Outcome

We began by fitting several ordinary least squares regressions that use politicians’ views on permitting same sex common law marriage (the specific issue that was mentioned in our vignettes) as the dependent variable. Because treatments were randomized at the municipal level, we clustered standard errors at the municipal level and we introduced fixed effects for blocking strata. With both the clustering of standard errors and the blocking strata fixed effects we treated those for whom we lacked municipal data as a single cluster.

Details of these regressions can be found in Table 1. This table demonstrates that both of our treatments are significant in all of our models.

Figure 3 contains the coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for Model 5. The age group of people in their 60s was the referent for the age variables (because that was the mode), and people in their 30s and 40s were significantly more likely to support common law marriages for gay people than were people in their 60s. People in their 20s were also more likely, but the differences between people in their 20s and people in their 60s was not statistically significant, likely because there are relatively few local politicians in their 20s. Women were more likely to support gay common law marriages than were men, conservatives were less likely, and the domestic and international treatment were both significant, when compared with the control group. This is consistent with our **Hypothesis 1a**. On average, exposure to the Japanese treatment increased support for gay common law marriage by 0.0921 on a 5-point scale, and exposure to the international treatment increased support for gay common law marriage by 0.124.

One thing that really stands out for Figure 3 is the legal status variable. On average, an increase of 1 point on the pretreatment variable measuring support for legal status for gay couples is associated with a 0.783 point increase in support for same sex common law marriage. This is not surprising, as people that were already predisposed to support improved legal status for LGBT relationships were also probably going to support gay common law marriage regardless of the treatment.

A glance at Figure 4 suggests that this legal status variable varies in a way that might

⁵Original: 「台湾で何が起きているかを見る必要がある。このまま日本が安心して暮らせない、と人々に“選ばれない国”となれば人材の損失となり、経済的にも国益を失うことにつながるだろう」(KKT Kumamoto Kenmin Terebi 2024).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Jpn treatment	0.110*	0.115*	0.109*	0.142***	0.092**
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.041)	(0.029)
Int'l treatment	0.135**	0.141**	0.132**	0.178***	0.124***
	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.049)	(0.042)	(0.027)
partnership policy		0.111*	0.109*	0.096*	0.083**
		(0.053)	(0.051)	(0.044)	(0.030)
20s			-0.024	-0.030	0.127
			(0.486)	(0.522)	(0.198)
30s			-0.406***	-0.251**	0.138*
			(0.108)	(0.092)	(0.061)
40s			-0.055	-0.013	0.117**
			(0.070)	(0.063)	(0.041)
50s			-0.073	0.014	0.065
			(0.058)	(0.054)	(0.036)
70s			-0.278***	-0.309***	-0.046
			(0.066)	(0.055)	(0.040)
80+			-0.171	-0.228	0.250
			(0.223)	(0.183)	(0.168)
female			0.919***	0.537***	0.136***
			(0.048)	(0.045)	(0.031)
conservatism				-0.481***	-0.067***
				(0.016)	(0.012)
legal status					0.783***
					(0.013)
N	3283	3283	3184	3131	3096
R2	0.06	0.06	0.14	0.32	0.72
Adj. R2	0.01	0.02	0.10	0.29	0.71

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 1: Determinants of support for same sex common law marriage

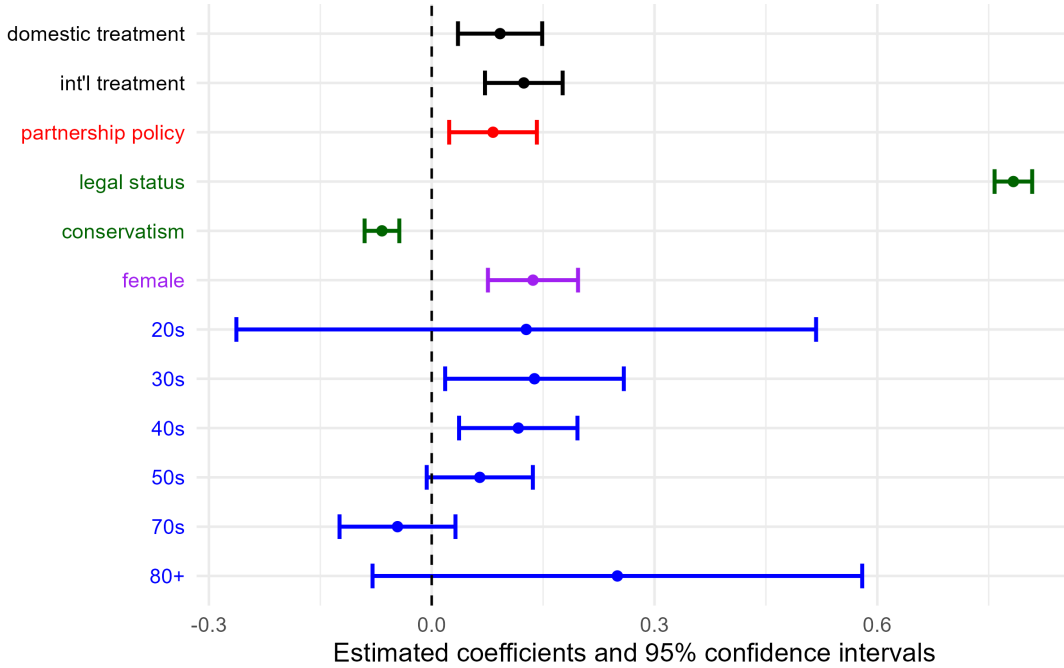


Figure 3: Coefficients for Common Law Model 5

impact the regressions that we find in Table 1. Those that already support granting legal status to same sex partnerships were much more likely to support gay common law marriage overall. The standard errors are also much lower on the estimates for the pretreatment agree/somewhat agree groups, both because the standard deviations of those groups are lower and because there are more people in those groups than there are people who were neutral or disagree about the pretreatment variable.⁶ We return to this in Section 4.4.

To test **Hypothesis 2b**, that the international treatment will be more effective in convincing local politicians to support same sex common law marriage than will the domestic treatment, we compare the international and domestic effects for all five regression models. You can find the relevant coefficients in Figure 5.

In short, there is little evidence in support of this hypothesis. Although in all five of our models the international treatment's effect is larger than the domestic treatment, the error bars in Figure 5 overlap, which tells us that the differences between those treatments are not statistically significant.

4.2 Partnership Outcome

Hypothesis 2b predicts that politicians who were presented with a (Japanese or international) firm that requested that a municipality adopt same sex common law marriage will support same sex domestic partnership (an arrangement that offers fewer rights to couples than does common law marriage). To test this hypothesis, we conducted five regressions with

⁶The standard error on the outcome variable for those that “disagree” with the pretreatment variable is 0.0435, which is more than 2.5 times the magnitude of the standard error of those that “agree” with the pretreatment variable, which is 0.0169

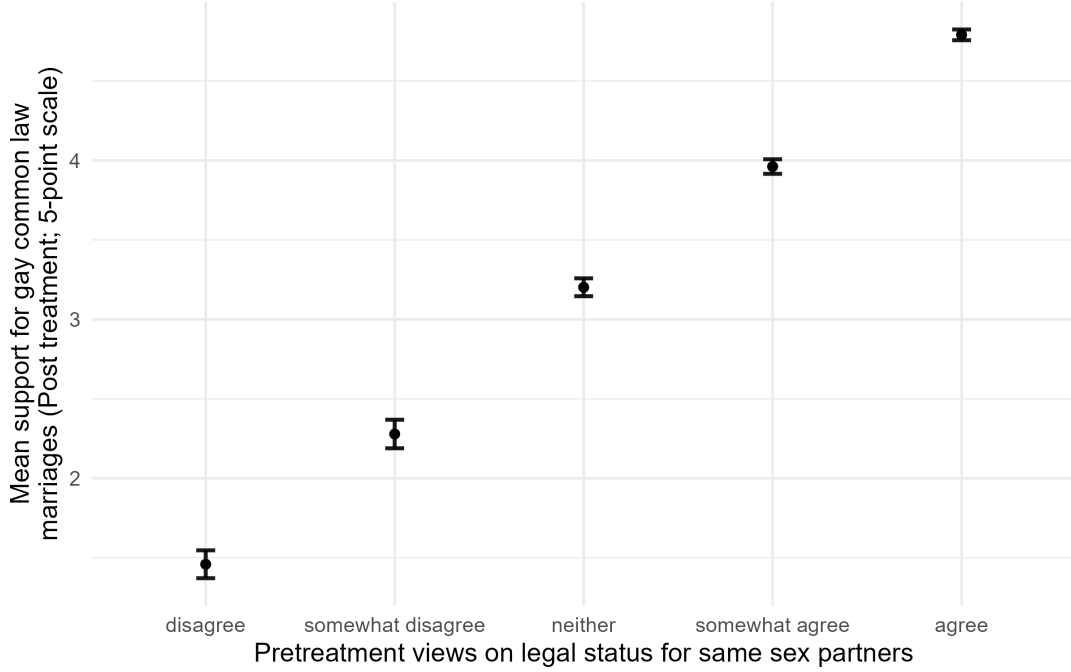


Figure 4: Pretreatment gay partnership views and posttreatment common law marriage variable

the most of the same predictors and specifications as the regressions that we discussed in Section 4.1 and with our same sex domestic partnership outcome variable as the dependent variable. We excluded politicians from municipalities that already had domestic partnership benefits or the more generous common law marriage benefits, and thus we excluded the partnership policy variable from the analysis. You can find the results in Table 2.

The international treatment is significant in all five of the models in Table 2, and the domestic treatment is significant in all but Model 4. This suggests that some local politicians might be sensitive to the concerns of foreign firms to a point, and, might be willing to give their employees some legal recognition for same sex relationships without giving the firms all of what they are asking for (common law marriage). **Hypothesis 2b** predicts that the international treatment will be more effective in convincing politicians to support same sex domestic partnerships than will the domestic treatment. To test this hypothesis, we reproduced Figure 5 but with the partnership measure as the outcome variable. The results of this analysis are in Figure 6.

In short, the evidence does not support Hypothesis 2b. In none of our five models are the differences between our international and domestic treatments statistically significant.

4.3 Surnames Outcome

Next, we discuss **Hypothesis 3**, that both our international and domestic treatment would persuade politicians to change their positions on other issues, such as permitting married couples to have different surnames. To test this hypothesis, we conducted five regressions with the same predictors and specifications as the regressions that we discussed in Sections

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Jpn treatment	0.200* (0.089)	0.212* (0.089)	0.171* (0.087)	0.207** (0.074)	0.057 (0.053)
Int'l treatment	0.191* (0.091)	0.220* (0.090)	0.184* (0.088)	0.270*** (0.077)	0.111* (0.055)
20s		0.241 (0.254)	0.065 (0.221)	-0.182 (0.317)	0.380 (0.226)
30s		-0.163 (0.142)	-0.118 (0.139)	-0.049 (0.130)	0.167 (0.117)
40s		0.115 (0.097)	0.090 (0.096)	0.104 (0.093)	0.158* (0.079)
50s		-0.065 (0.081)	-0.045 (0.082)	0.009 (0.073)	0.037 (0.057)
70s		-0.268** (0.083)	-0.212** (0.080)	-0.282*** (0.072)	-0.163** (0.056)
80+		-0.453 (0.313)	-0.409 (0.286)	-0.457 (0.280)	-0.217 (0.242)
female			0.696*** (0.061)	0.416*** (0.057)	0.125** (0.045)
conservatism				-0.391*** (0.024)	-0.095*** (0.022)
legal status					0.572*** (0.024)
N	1583	1557	1545	1525	1502
R2	0.08	0.09	0.13	0.28	0.53
Adj. R2	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.22	0.49

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 2: Determinants of support for domestic partnership

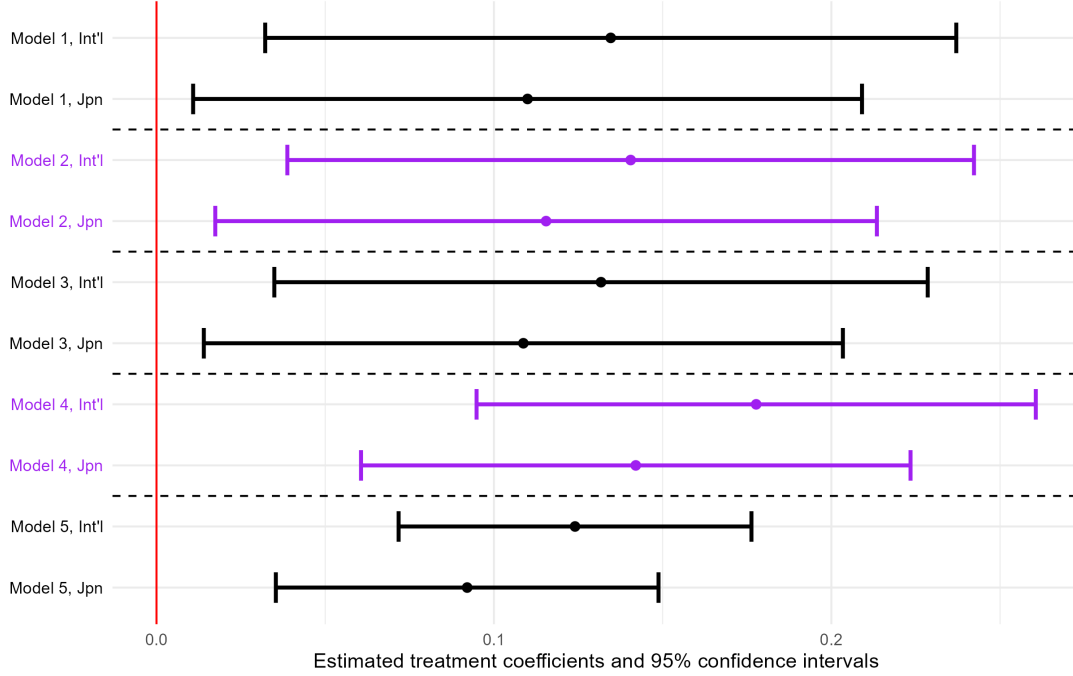


Figure 5: Treatment coefficients for all Common Law Models

4.1 and 4.2, and with our different surnames variable as the dependent variable. We did not filter out politicians from any municipalities, as the surnames issue is decided at the national level in Japan. You can find the results in Table 3. With one exception (the international treatment in model 4), the two treatments in our five models are not statistically significant. In short, there is little evidence that politicians will change their positions on a related issue to lure a firm that has requested same sex common law marriages in a municipality.

4.4 Focusing on the Unsure and Opponents

As we note in Section 4.1, the politicians that already supported legal status for same sex relationships pretreatment also seem to have supported same sex common law marriage posttreatment. This is not surprising, but we thought that the including these politicians that already supported legal status for gay relationships might be causing us to underestimate the potential of our treatment for changing minds. After all, there is no need to persuade those already persuaded.

We want to be clear that we did not preregister the hypotheses underlying the following analyses, so the findings in this section should be considered preliminary and suggestive rather than definitive proof of our hypotheses. But given what we noted in Figure 4, that those that support legal status for same sex couples pretreatment also support such status posttreatment, we decided to repeat our main regression analyses while only focusing on those who did not support legal status pretreatment.

You can find the results of this analysis in Appendix B. When excluding pretreatment supporters of legal status for same sex relationships, Table 6 shows that the international treatment is significant in predicting support for common law marriage in all five models,

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Jpn treatment	−0.042 (0.068)	−0.048 (0.068)	−0.045 (0.066)	−0.004 (0.058)	−0.030 (0.053)
Int'l treatment	0.062 (0.068)	0.060 (0.069)	0.057 (0.066)	0.123* (0.057)	0.086 (0.053)
20s		0.088 (0.420)	0.150 (0.405)	0.063 (0.343)	0.223 (0.266)
30s		−0.735*** (0.118)	−0.700*** (0.115)	−0.547*** (0.098)	−0.228** (0.086)
40s		−0.181* (0.087)	−0.195* (0.083)	−0.155* (0.073)	−0.051 (0.063)
50s		−0.155* (0.064)	−0.132* (0.063)	−0.065 (0.057)	−0.020 (0.049)
70s		−0.247** (0.077)	−0.163* (0.075)	−0.209*** (0.059)	0.004 (0.052)
80+		−0.499 (0.272)	−0.363 (0.272)	−0.432* (0.218)	−0.096 (0.185)
female			0.932*** (0.053)	0.489*** (0.049)	0.182*** (0.043)
conservatism				−0.563*** (0.018)	−0.232*** (0.020)
legal status					0.618*** (0.021)
N	3407	3346	3305	3249	3201
R2	0.06	0.07	0.14	0.34	0.54
Adj. R2	0.02	0.03	0.10	0.31	0.52

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3: Determinants of support for married couples with different surnames

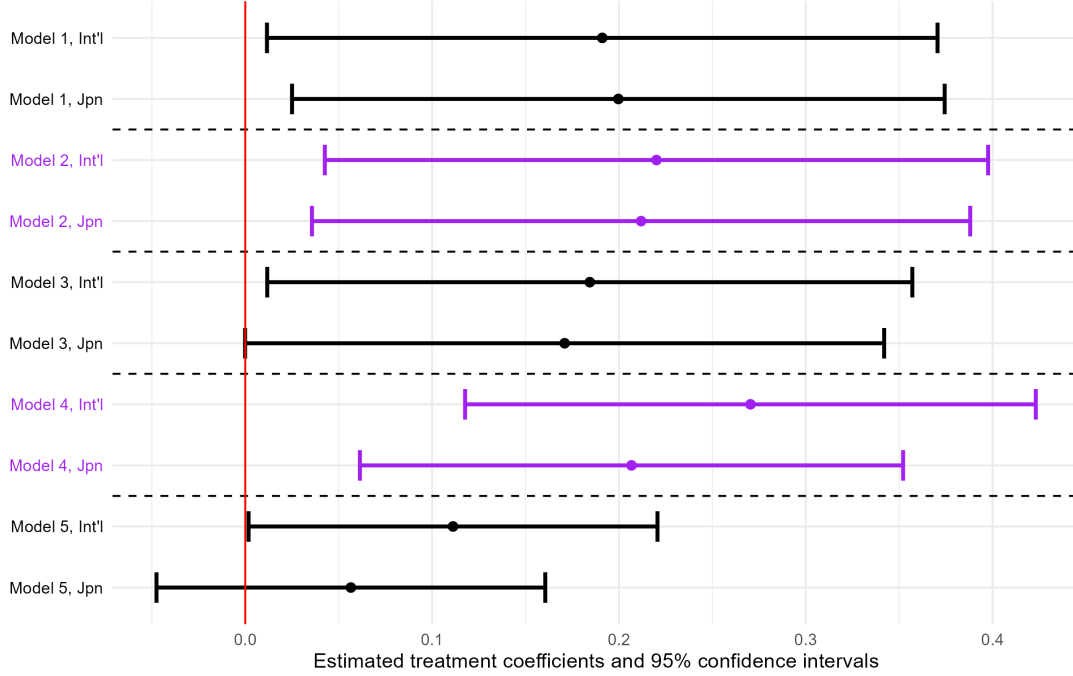


Figure 6: Treatment coefficients for all Partnership Models

and the Japan treatment is significant in four of the five models. There are similar effects with respect to the domestic partnership outcome variable. Table 7 shows that, while the domestic treatment is less effective in explaining support for domestic partnership benefits, the international treatment remains significant in all five models when we exclude those who did not previously support legal status for same sex couples. That suggests that those unsure or opposed to legal status for gay couples might be persuaded to change their minds with the promise of a firm moving to their municipality, perhaps particularly if it is an international firm.

This suggests that, for those who don't already support legal status for same sex relationships, the idea of pressure from a foreign firm is persuasive and palatable in a way that pressure from a Japanese firm is not. This could be because it changes from a foreign firm could be written off with the explanation that this is just something that this locality has to do to please this unusual foreign businesses. However, acceding to request from a Japanese firm might suggest that the politician is signing off on changes to Japanese culture and practice in a way that those not supportive of legal status for same sex partnerships might not be comfortable with. It could also be the case that local politicians who got the international treatment are imagining a major international firm coming to their town and making national headlines like TSMC's arrival in Kumamoto did.

5 Conclusion

In their 2020 article in *Political Research Quarterly*, Grose and Peterson find that local elected officials in the American South were more likely to support the removal of confederate

monuments when such removal was framed as in the economic interest of the areas that they were governing.

Similarly, this paper suggests that, in Japan, economic pressure has the potential to convince local elected officials to support same sex common law marriages, a legal arrangement that is fairly uncommon in Japanese municipalities. However, our research does not suggest that economic pressure has the potential to impact related issues that the pressuring firms don't ask for. For example, we did not find much evidence that pressure to adopt same sex common law marriages made politicians more likely to support same sex domestic partnerships and/or married couples to adopt different surnames.

Interestingly, although this final finding was more suggestive than definitive, we also found some evidence that pressure from foreign firms might be more effective in getting people to change their minds than pressure from Japanese firms. This intriguing suggestion is certainly worthy of future study.

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A Descriptive statistics and balance checks

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of key variables

attribute	n	proportion	variable	mean	scale
20s	15	0.004	conservatism	0.377	-2 to 2
30s	199	0.058	support legal status	0.518	-2 to 2
40s	484	0.141	common law outcome	3.570	1 to 5
50s	782	0.227	partnership outcome	3.918	1 to 5
60s	1238	0.360	surnames outcome	3.512	1 to 5
70s	687	0.200			
80+	34	0.010			
male	2711	0.793			
female	709	0.207			
control	1229	0.338			
Jpn treatment	1123	0.309			
Intl treatment	1280	0.352			

Table 4 outlines descriptive statistics for our key variables. The modal respondent is in their 60s (36% of our sample is in their 60s), and our sample is 79% male. Our sample is on the conservative side, with a mean of 0.377 on a conservatism scale that goes from -2 to 2, but we have no reason to suspect that that number differs from the population. Our sample is also somewhat likely to support legal status for same sex partners pretreatment, with a mean score of 0.518 on a support scale ranging from -2 to 2. On average, our sample was also somewhat inclined to support all three of our outcome variables, with relative support strongest for the outcome about same sex domestic partnership (with a mean of 3.918 on a five point scale).

Table 5: Means of treatment and control groups for key variables

	scale	control	Jpn treatment	Intl treatment
legal status	-2 to 2	0.519	0.545	0.491
conservatism	-2 to 2	0.311	0.412	0.410
female	binary	0.220	0.209	0.193
age	1 (20s) to 7 (80+)	4.552	4.475	4.528

Table 5 displays means of the legal status, conservatism, female, and age variable for each of our control groups. None of these differences are statistically significant, but the differences between the control and two treatments for our conservatism variable are close to significant. The Japan treatment group is .101 more conservative than the control, and that has a p-value of .054, and the international treatment group is .99 more conservative than the control (with a p-value of .055).

We address the fact that the treatment groups are somewhat more conservative than the control group in the paper by focusing our analysis on the regression in which conservatism is included as a predictor.

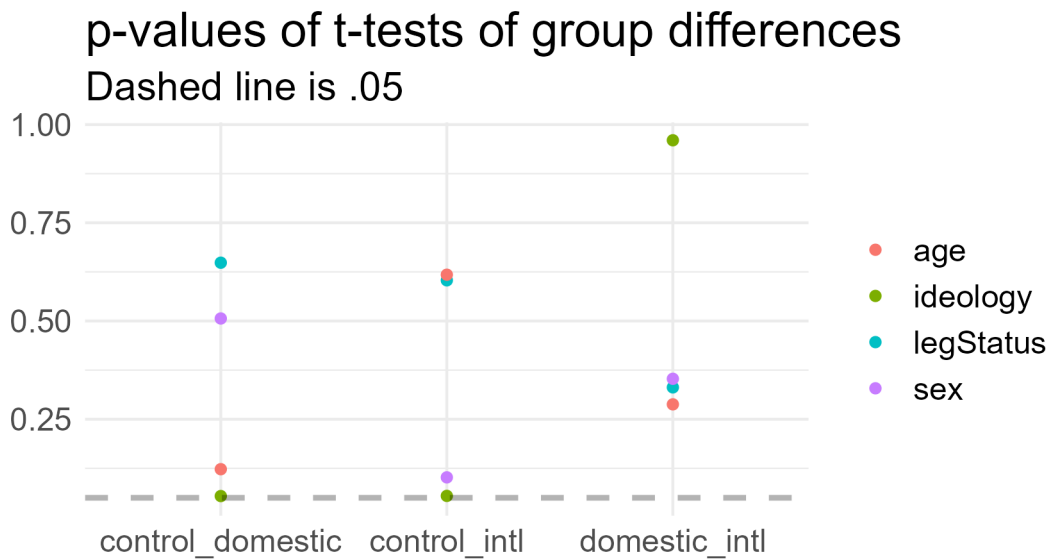


Figure 7: Balance checks for key variables

See figure 7 for a visualization of the p-values associated with the t-tests for all of the relationships displayed in table 5.

B Regressions excluding pretreatment supporters of legal status

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Jpn treatment	0.114 (0.064)	0.114 (0.064)	0.096 (0.064)	0.107 (0.061)	0.175*** (0.053)
Int'l treatment	0.260*** (0.061)	0.260*** (0.061)	0.241*** (0.061)	0.248*** (0.059)	0.197*** (0.048)
partnership policy		0.007 (0.064)	0.001 (0.066)	-0.002 (0.064)	0.039 (0.056)
20s			-0.646 (0.558)	-0.800 (0.495)	-0.327 (0.336)
30s			-0.287* (0.129)	-0.270* (0.124)	0.095 (0.108)
40s			-0.110 (0.106)	-0.083 (0.106)	0.176* (0.082)
50s			0.021 (0.081)	0.003 (0.079)	0.092 (0.062)
70s			-0.233** (0.075)	-0.253*** (0.074)	-0.110 (0.059)
80+			0.253 (0.258)	0.134 (0.249)	0.369 (0.242)
female			0.293** (0.110)	0.200 (0.110)	0.057 (0.085)
conservatism				-0.267*** (0.032)	-0.079** (0.028)
legal status					0.864*** (0.028)
N	1408	1408	1375	1363	1363
R2	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.17	0.50
Adj. R2	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.08	0.44

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 6: Determinants of support for same sex common law marriage, excluding pretreatment supporters

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Jpn treatment	0.225* (0.113)	0.213 (0.114)	0.204 (0.115)	0.176 (0.105)	0.158 (0.099)
Int'l treatment	0.275* (0.108)	0.293** (0.110)	0.274* (0.112)	0.292** (0.108)	0.221* (0.095)
20s		0.586* (0.288)	0.488 (0.268)	0.174 (0.255)	0.557 (0.443)
30s		0.088 (0.214)	0.086 (0.215)	0.114 (0.211)	0.298 (0.199)
40s		0.058 (0.157)	0.032 (0.158)	0.082 (0.162)	0.328* (0.153)
50s		0.095 (0.129)	0.097 (0.129)	0.065 (0.120)	0.089 (0.110)
70s		-0.286** (0.105)	-0.281** (0.104)	-0.291** (0.101)	-0.246* (0.096)
80+		0.070 (0.469)	0.053 (0.451)	-0.142 (0.450)	-0.243 (0.397)
female			0.283 (0.161)	0.166 (0.162)	0.157 (0.139)
conservatism				-0.274*** (0.046)	-0.144** (0.047)
legal status					0.662*** (0.051)
N	723	711	707	706	706
R2	0.15	0.17	0.17	0.21	0.38
Adj. R2	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.26

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 7: Determinants of support for domestic partnership, excluding pretreatment supporters

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Jpn treatment	−0.060 (0.105)	−0.061 (0.106)	−0.071 (0.105)	−0.061 (0.101)	−0.009 (0.094)
Int'l treatment	0.196 (0.102)	0.199 (0.105)	0.180 (0.105)	0.201* (0.102)	0.181 (0.097)
20s		0.067 (1.028)	−0.013 (0.942)	−0.232 (0.598)	0.100 (0.488)
30s		−0.384* (0.154)	−0.411** (0.157)	−0.412** (0.151)	−0.145 (0.139)
40s		−0.168 (0.127)	−0.193 (0.125)	−0.162 (0.123)	0.042 (0.114)
50s		0.126 (0.108)	0.105 (0.107)	0.060 (0.102)	0.130 (0.097)
70s		0.077 (0.100)	0.098 (0.099)	0.076 (0.095)	0.187* (0.086)
80+		−0.011 (0.344)	−0.037 (0.333)	−0.211 (0.326)	−0.076 (0.305)
female			0.542*** (0.143)	0.421** (0.139)	0.314* (0.125)
conservatism				−0.387*** (0.042)	−0.246*** (0.042)
legal status					0.611*** (0.043)
N	1462	1437	1430	1416	1416
R2	0.11	0.13	0.14	0.20	0.32
Adj. R2	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.11	0.24

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 8: Determinants of support for married couples with different surnames, excluding pretreatment LGBT relationship status supporters