Building Families in Tokyo, One Stage at a Time

TOKYO, JAPAN, September 22, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For years, Tokyo has grappled with late marriage, declining births and the high cost of raising children. Now the latest figures suggest an encouraging, though still tentative, shift. Births among Japanese residents in Tokyo rose by 1.0 percent in 2025, the first increase in a decade, while marriages increased by 4.0 percent, marking a second consecutive year of growth.

The changes are modest, and it is too early to draw firm conclusions. Yet they raise an important question: what helps people build the lives and families they hope for?

In response, Tokyo has sought to support people at every stage of that journey, from meeting a potential partner to marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing. Whether these initiatives are influencing demographic trends remains uncertain. What is clear, however, is that Tokyo has adopted a comprehensive approach aimed at helping residents navigate each step of family life.



Mayor Watanabe of Higashi-Murayama City and newlyweds pose for a celebratory photo.

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A speaker addresses attendees at the wedding support event

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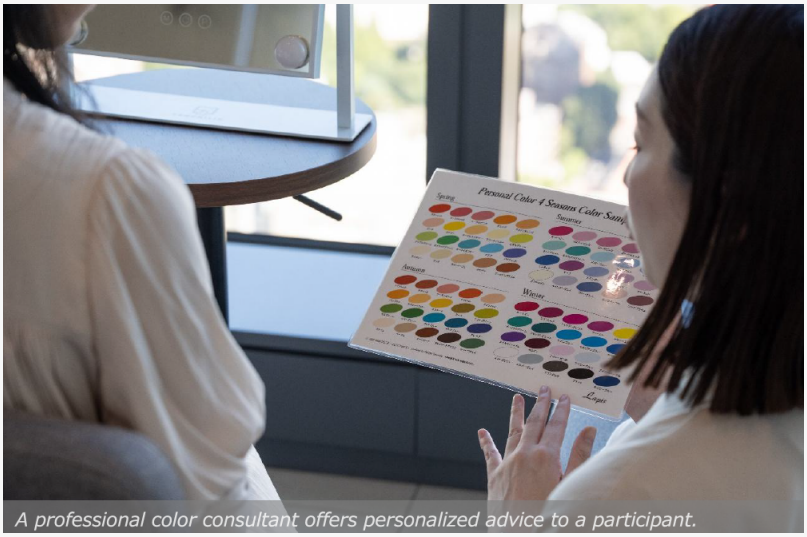
[Helping More People Tie the Knot]

One distinctive feature of Tokyo's approach is its support for those who wish to marry. According to a 2025 survey by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, more than 75% of respondents said they intended to marry. Yet, the share of those who never marry has continued to rise in Japan. In 2020, it reached 23.8% for men, up from 20.1% in 2010, and 17.8 % for women, compared with 10.6% a decade earlier.



A professional color consultant offers personalized advice to a participant.

Given that most children in Japan are born to married parents, marriage trends serve as a useful indicator of future birth trends. This naturally raises the question of why many people who hope to marry remain unmarried.



Participants explore wedding attire options.

A 2021 survey by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) found that nearly 70 percent of unmarried people who hoped to marry were not taking any action to find a partner. The findings suggested that many people wanted to marry but lacked opportunities to meet potential partners. They also highlighted concerns that prevent many people from taking the first step.

[From Matchmaking to Marriage and Beyond]
Building on its broader family-support policies, Tokyo has designated 2026 as a special year to encourage marriage. The timing is intentional: 2026 corresponds to Reiwa 8 in the Japanese era calendar, and the number eight is widely regarded as auspicious in Japan.

One of the flagship events took place on August 8, 2026, the symbolic "8/8/8" date in Reiwa 8, attracting 55,000 visitors.

At the opening ceremony, Governor Koike remarked that the shape of the number eight resembles the infinity symbol and expressed her hope that "the encounters, experiences, and

connections made today will become a new step toward the future."

The date proved popular among couples. On that day alone, 7,650 couples filed marriage registrations in Tokyo, exceeding the total number of marriage registrations recorded during the entire month of August the previous year.



Kanaun (top) and Sasaun are TMG mascots designed to promote its family-support initiatives and communicate the message, "We want to support your aspirations," in a friendly and approachable way.

[Taking the First Step Toward Marriage]
Tokyo also introduced the AI-powered matchmaking service TOKYO Enmusubi, which is open to single adults aged 18 and older who live, work or study in Tokyo. Since its launch in September 2024, the service has attracted around 16,000 registered users. As of August 2026, 816 couples had entered serious relationships through the service, and 302 of those had gone on to marry.

The AI-powered matchmaking service uses a proprietary assessment to introduce users to potential partners with whom they are more likely to build a successful relationship. To ensure a safe and trustworthy experience, all applicants are required to submit identity verification documents and proof of single status and participate in an online interview before joining.

"We are encouraged by the growing number of applicants, which suggests that more people are taking the first step toward marriage. We are also delighted that, as a result, the number of couples who have married through the program has exceeded 300," said an official involved in the initiative.

[Real Stories Behind the Numbers]
Statistics tell part of the story. Behind the figures are individuals who found partners and built new lives through the service.
After years of shuttling between work and home, a man in his 50s had all but given up on marriage. Through the AI-powered matchmaking service, however, he met a woman of the same generation and they are now engaged.

One woman in her 40s married a man in his 30s within a year of their match. “We were different in age, profession, and hometown. We had almost nothing in common on paper. But thanks to AI, we met. We are so grateful that the service brought us together.”

[Making Child-Rearing More Affordable]
The challenges do not end with marriage. For many couples, the cost of raising children is another major consideration. Recent surveys, however, suggest that some of those financial anxieties may be easing. The share of parents who cited child-rearing and education costs as a major concern fell to 35.5 percent this year, according to provisional figures, down from 36.0 percent in 2025 and about 48 percent in each of the previous two years.

Among the flagship initiatives is the 018 Support program, which provides financial support to all Tokyo residents from birth through age 18, regardless of household income.
TMG has also expanded tuition-free childcare, helped with school meal costs, and has been at the forefront of efforts to make high school tuition effectively free regardless of family income.

[Transforming Workplace Culture]
Financial support alone cannot address every factor influencing decisions about marriage and parenthood. Work-life balance remains a major concern for many residents.

In 2022, TMG coined the term ikugyo, a play on the Japanese term used for parental leave, to emphasize that caring for children is not a break from work but important work in its own right.

Just as teamwork is essential in the workplace, raising children requires support from family, colleagues, and the wider community. This approach is also grounded in the belief that parental leave depends on the understanding and cooperation of the workplace. In this sense, parental leave is a form of ikugyo, in which everyone plays a part.

Over the years, growing public awareness and workplace efforts have helped drive a steady increase in the number of fathers taking parental leave in Tokyo.

[More Than Demographics]
The recent rise in births and marriages offers a measure of encouragement. Whether the trend will continue remains to be seen. Yet Tokyo’s experience points to a simple idea: when practical barriers are reduced and support is available throughout life’s major transitions, more people may be able to pursue the futures they envision for themselves and their families.

Nearly 90 percent of parents raising children in Tokyo say that their local area is a good place to raise a family.

“The results suggest that our efforts to address concerns and anxieties surrounding marriage and child-rearing appear to be steadily taking root among Tokyo residents,” said an official in charge.

For people curious about the data, please click here.

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