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Long- and Short-term Influences on Voting Behaviour in Tokyo: A Comparative Analysis of 2005-2021 Lower House Elections

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要旨

本研究では、東京都の有権者がどのように政治に参加するか、および、その政治参加に関して日本全国の有権者とはどのような違いがあるかを検討した。とくに、政治参加の最も一般的な一例である投票に焦点が当てて、2005 年から 2021 年までの衆議院議員総選挙における政治意識世論調査の結果に基づいて、日本全国の有権者と東京都の有権者の投票行動を分析した。全国の有権者に関しては、明るい選挙推進協会の政治意識世論調査を主要な出典にしたのに対し、東京都のケースの分析においては東京都選挙管理委員会の世論調査を使用した。

投票行動の分析を行うために、それに影響を及ぼす要因を、長期的要因と短期的要因に区別した。長期的要因としては、年齢、職種、居住地、学歴、社会的ネットワークといった社会的要因を取り上げた。短期的要因の中では、選挙における政策、政党と候補者の印象、マスコミ（テレビ・新聞）、インターネット等に注目した。

本研究の結論では、主に３つの傾向を指摘した。１）投票率、選挙と政治への関心度、政党支持率といった政治的変数からすると、歴史的により高いと思われた日本全国の政治参加率が下がっており、最近の選挙では東京都と同じような結果が見られる。２）長期的要因の中では、上記で述べた政治的変数と最も強い相関関係を示したのは年齢である。職種、学歴等よりも、若年層と高齢層の間にかなりの差があり、ほとんどの政治的変数では年齢との正比例的な関係を指摘できる。３）選挙情報を得るための手段としては、インターネットの使用率はまだ低い。若年層ではより頻繁に利用している人が比較的に多いが、「選択に役立った」という意見が少ないことと、選挙に伴う使用率の増加が限られていることから、政治的な手段としてのインターネットの効果は相対的に低いと思われる。

Abstract

The objective of this research is to identify unique features in citizens' voting behaviour in Tokyo and to put it in comparison to the whole country, by focusing on the past six House of Representative elections (2005-2021). In order to do so, factors of influence on voting choices and political preferences, both in the long and short term, were analysed, first at a national level in chapter 3, and subsequently narrowing down the focus to Tokyo Metropolitan Area (23 main districts and surrounding rural area) in chapter 4.

*Long-term influences comprise sociological factors such as occupational category, education, age group, dwelling area and social network effects, intended as influence of local organizations and communities on individuals. Short-term influences include voters' attitude towards political issues, party/candidate's image, and mass media, especially television, newspapers and Internet platforms. For the national level, surveys conducted by the Association for Promoting Clean Elections (*Akarui senkyo suishin kyōkai*) served as the main source of data. In analysing Tokyo's case, large use will be made of surveys conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Election Administration Commission (*Tōkyō-to senkyo kanri iinkai*).*

Results of this research can be summarized in three main findings: 1) political attitude parameters such as turnout rate, interest in politics and party support, which were historically higher at the national level, have been progressively decreasing to Tokyo levels in recent elections, 2) Age proved to be a determinant factor in political behaviour, as the largest discrepancies in the above-mentioned parameters were observed across different age groups rather than, for instance, other sociological factors such as occupation. 3) The adoption of Internet for political purposes has been rather slow, and online political platforms such as party or candidates' social media have not proven very useful in raising people's interest towards elections.

Keywords: *political participation, voting behaviour, long-term influences, short-term influences, House of Representative elections, Tokyo*

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1. Introduction

1.1 An overview of political participation

Citizens' participation to political activity represents a key measure for the state of health of a democracy. When citizens vote, find interest in political matters or take part to political rallies or other campaigning activities it is usually a sign of a functioning democracy, where people trust, to some extent, the current government (or the opposition) and believe in the possibility of having an impact on policymaking. On the other hand, a country where citizens show little interest towards politics and tend not to take part in political activities of any sort generally presents signs of a dysfunctional democracy such as widespread corruption and government's inefficiency.[1] These lead people to generally see politics in a bad light and to question the utility of political participation, thus causing voter turnouts to plummet and dissatisfaction towards the government to spread among the population. To use Dalton's words,

> In many ways, decreasing support for democratic politics seems to conflict with the performance of the government. […] If people distrust the government, then this becomes a reality that shapes individual behaviour and ultimately the workings of the political process. […] the decreasing involvement as a consequence of distrust can harm the democratic process[2]

Furthermore, according to Kabashima and Sakaiya[3], political participation also works as a fuel for the State, thanks to the input of information and energy that citizens pour into the political system. Trust in the government is often associated with well-functioning policy-making, more efficient redistribution effects of welfare measures and better crisis-management. (Lukner e Sakaki 2016)

It comes as no surprise, then, that a vicious cycle could easily emerge in the conditions described above. A malfunctioning and corrupted government that does not meet its citizens' needs and demand steers dissatisfaction, which in turn generates low levels of trust and participation to political activities. Without these elements, a government will be confronted with a shortage of feedback and information – in other words, a lack of *input* – citizens would normally provide, which constitutes a hindrance to a healthy management of the State. This will force governments to recur to unhealthy practices in order to preserve power – such as political favours and the above-

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[1] [蒲島 , 境家 2020]

[2] (Dalton, Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies 2004, 9-11)

[3] [蒲島 , 境家 2020]

mentioned corruption – which generate a negative *output*, causing citizens' dissatisfaction and thus bringing us back to the starting point of this cycle (Figure 1).

Post-war Japan is, under many aspects, a representative example of this potentially vicious cycle, with citizens' dissatisfaction and political detachment on one hand, and lack of efficiency and corruptions scandals afflicting administrations through the years on the other.

One key indicator of the Japanese citizens' political detachment is the continuous decline in turnout rates at both national and local elections (Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4). Although the causes of this decline can hardly be boiled down to just one element, dissatisfaction with the ruling party – i.e., with the Liberal Democratic Party –, political scandals and corruption surely cannot be left out of the picture.

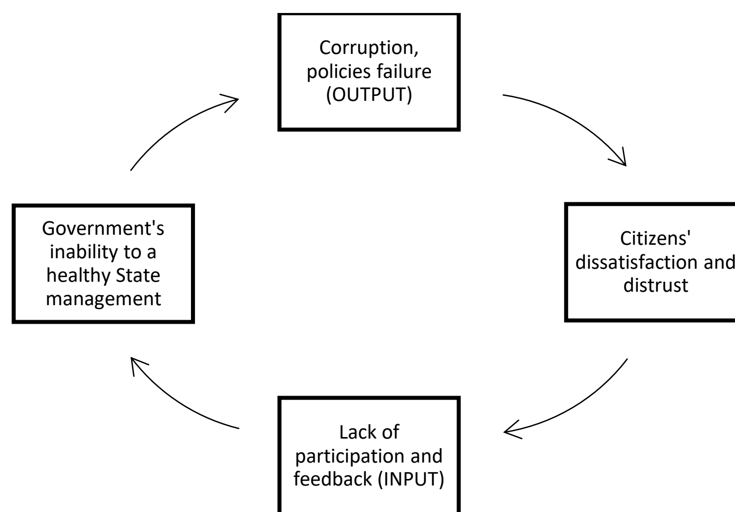

Figure 1 Political participation and State management negative feedback (Easton 1957)

The late 60s and early 70s saw a general decline in LDP's popularity among the electorate, which had at its roots both external (e.g. negotiations for restoring Okinawa under Japanese control and the 1973 Oil Crisis) and internal (such as the LDP's handling of student demonstrations and labour issues) factors[4]. This came side-by-side with major episodes of political corruption being exposed to the public. At the time, the close ties between the political elite (LDP in particular) and the business world were nothing unheard of. The former largely depended on the latter for the financing of electoral campaigns and other political activities, and, conversely, large companies would greatly benefit from diet members' role as mediators between them and the Cabinet. These

[4] [中北 2017] and (G. L. Curtis 1988), for instance, offer an in-depth account on the reasons for decline in political dissatisfaction in the 60s and 70s, the former with a particular focus on LDP's internal dynamics, and the latter with a broader approach.

ties where in fact so complex and intricate that an entire category of hyper-specialized diet members was created to better serve this purpose, the so called *zoku-giin* (pork-barrel politicians)[5]. However, the increasing dissatisfaction and the unfavourable internal and external conditions made the population less tolerant towards episodes of bribery, in an era, the early-to-mid 70s, where this phenomenon was perhaps reaching its peak of diffusion. Particularly famous is the 1976 Lockheed Scandal, when the American aerospace company bribed the then Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei and other prominent politicians in order to conclude a deal that included the purchase of several of its aircrafts[6]. The following two decades saw an increase in frequency of corruption episodes and scandals, such as the Recruit scandal in 1988 and the Sagawa Kyubin scandal in 1992 (Table 1).

Table 1 Number of politicians linked to major corruption scandals *(Carlson and Reed 2018, 47)*

SCANDAL	LOWER HOUSE	UPPER HOUSE
BLACK MIST (1966)	17	1
LOCKHEED (1976)	8	0
KDD (1979)	12	6
RECRUIT (1988)	52	8
PACHINKO (1989)	67	17
SAGAWA KYUUBIN (1992)	12	3

The conjunction of negative events striking Japan's political landscape from the late-60s and early-70s could be a plausible, although incomplete, explanation to Figures 2, 3 and 4 below, if we consider the negative cycle presented in Figure 1. However, it is also clear that corruption scandals and the subsequent political dissatisfaction alone cannot account for the whole picture.

The three figures show turnout rates at Lower House, Upper House and Unified Local elections from the post war period to present days. Comparing them, some features immediately stand out. National elections generally appear to be much more volatile, with considerable oscillations spanning over several decades and becoming more and more intense from the early 70s onwards. In particular, the Upper House elections saw major drops in turnout rates both in 1983 and in the early to mid-90s, stabilizing at a fairly low level in subsequent elections. This is a first difference with Lower House elections, which saw two major peaks in 2005 and 2009 and a steep decrease afterwards.

[5] (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011)
[6] (Carlson and Reed 2018, 1)

The general trend in local elections is different under at least two aspects. (1) Oscillations are almost completely absent, and the decline in turnout rates has been extremely linear since the late 50s. (2) While national elections never reached the 80% threshold in post-war elections –1958 Lower House elections saw the highest turnout rate at national elections with 76,9% - 80% was quite a common result in local elections during the 50s and 60s, with Unified Local Assembly Elections in 1951 that reached a remarkable 91%.

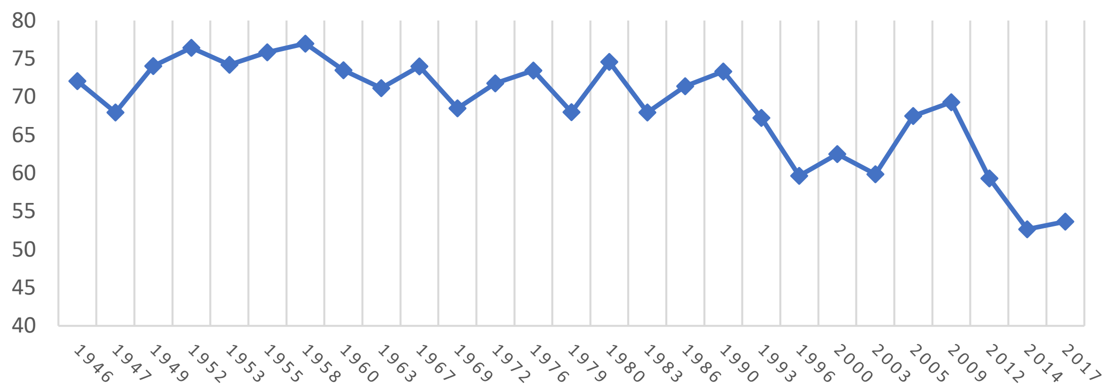

Figure 2 Turnout rate at House of Representative Elections 1946-2017 [総務省 1955-2021]

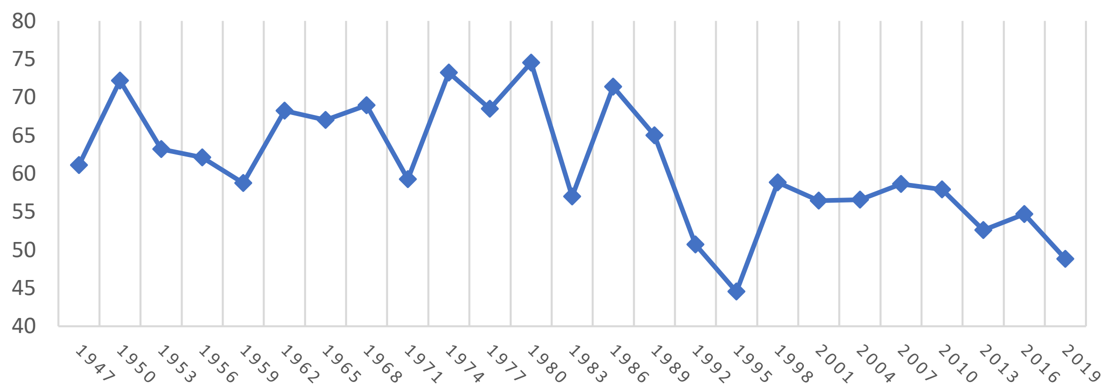

Figure 3 Turnout rate at House of Councillors elections 1947-2019 (総務省 1956-2019)

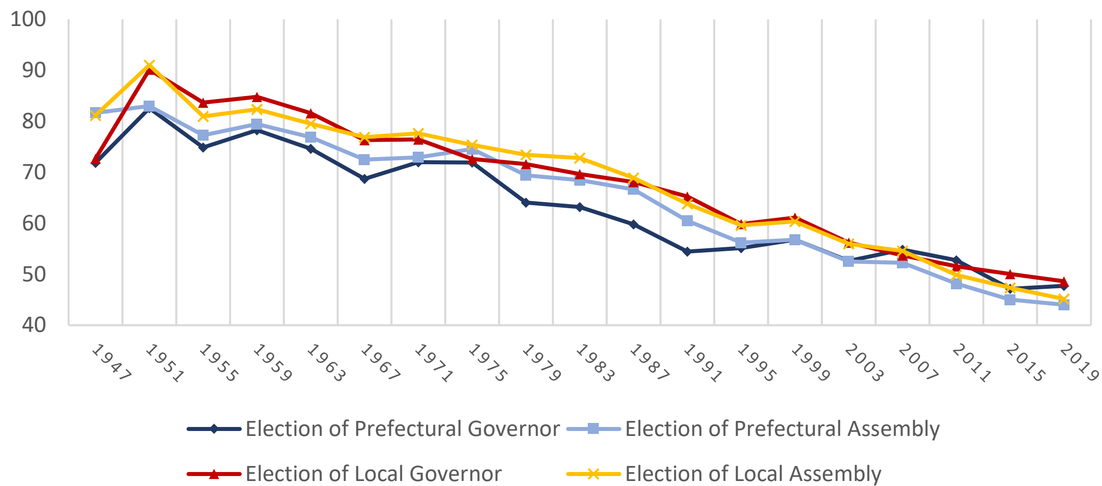

Figure 4 Turnout rates at local elections 1947-2019 [明るい選挙推進協会 2019]

Looking at these data, it might seem that national elections appear to be much more sensitive to events or issues specific to that particular historical moment. The 2005 Lower House elections, for instance, are quite representative in this sense. In that occasion, after the Japan Post privatization bill (*yusei mineika hoan*) got voted down, then-Prime Minister Koizumi's decision to call for anticipated elections drew widespread public attention,[7] ultimately resulting in an extremely high turnout rate (67,5%) and a landslide victory for the LDP (Figure 5).

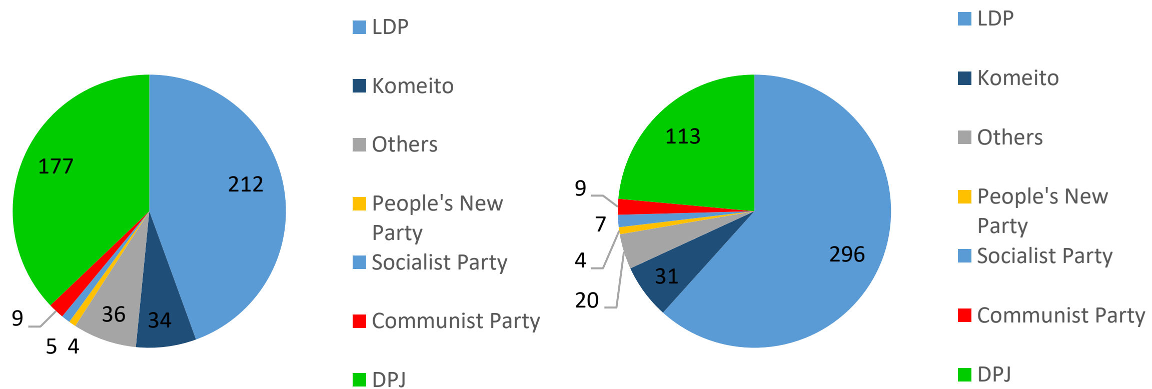

Figure 5 Total seats before (left) and after (right) the 2005 elections [朝日新聞 2005]

Thus, it is safe to say that political participation and voting behaviour are influenced to a fairly high degree by 'particularistic' elements, such as a specific policy, an important bill or the urge for an

[7] [朝日新聞 2005], [朝日新聞 2005] [朝日新聞 2005]

immediate solution to an emergency situation (such as, say, the COVID-19 epidemic). These are probably cases in which citizens' sense of civil duty grows stronger and voting abstention is seen as negligence towards society.

This considered, there are still elements that both the political scandal and the particularistic explanations explored above do not account for. One of them is the overall stability of the LDP's share of votes since its formation in 1955. As the ruling party for more than 60 years (with only two brief interruptions), the LDP was at the centre of most political scandals in Japan's post-war history, including those mentioned above, yet only lost the Lower House majority on two occasions, and never for more than one mandate. Similarly, even significant oscillations in turnout rates (possibly caused, at least in part, by specific historical situations) did not affect its share of votes as much as one might expect.

Thus, both these hypotheses fail to explain why the LDP's percentage of votes remained pretty much unaltered through the decades up until today, with only the 1993 and 2009 Lower House Elections being exceptions. Figure 6 shows LDP's share of seats and relative share of votes[8] in the Lower House elections (left axis) and overall turnout rate (left axis) from 1958 to 2021.

At a first glance, LDP's stability appears to not have been affected as much as one might expect by falling turnout rates. Although some suggestions have been made that the LDP generally benefits from a higher turnout rate,[9] the last three decades have been particularly consistent in proving this proposition wrong. In fact, the crushing defeat the LDP suffered in 2009 also saw the highest turnout rate (69,28%) since the 1990 elections (73,31%). Conversely, the 2012, 2014 and 2017 elections, in all of which the LDP performed handsomely in terms of total seats obtained (all of them were above 60%), were characterised by extremely low turnout rates, with an historical low in 2014 (52,66%).

[8] i.e., a Party's share of votes in relation to the number of people who voted, as opposed to absolute percentage of votes, which indicates a Party's share of votes in relation to the total number of eligible voters (including, thus, those who abstained from voting).

[9] (Abe, Shindo and Kawato 1994, 160), (G. L. Curtis 1988, 194-195)

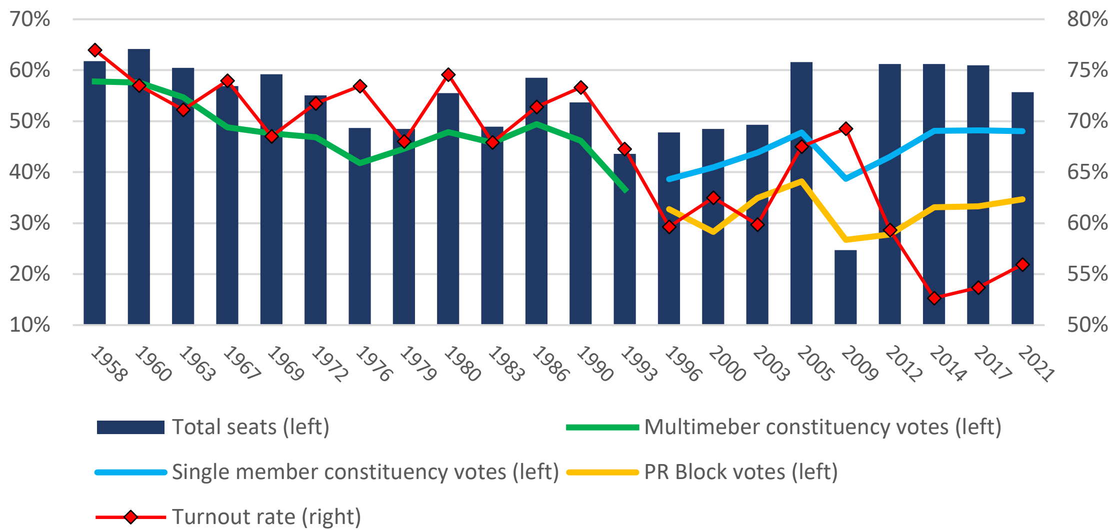

Figure 6 LDP results at Lower House elections 1958-2021 [中北 2017]

For the House of Councillors, a slightly different pattern can be observed (Figure 7). Firstly, an extended period of poor performances both at the national and constituency levels stretches over almost two decades, from 1989, year in which the Economic Bubble ultimately burst, up until 2013, immediately after the end of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration started in 2009. The 1992 and 2001 elections are the only two interruptions in this trend, where the LDP's share of votes reached the same high levels that characterized the 60s and 70s. With the 2013, 2016 and 2019 elections, however, the LDP regained the majority of seats at the Upper House, although with slightly lower percentages compared to its past performances (42%, 39% and 39% of the votes at the national level). Turnout rates follow a similar pattern to those for the Lower House elections until the 90s, with a sudden drop in the early 80s. However, they remained much more consistent for almost two decades. It is interesting to note that in all the elections post-2012, in a similar fashion to the House of Representatives, to fairly high performances of the LDP corresponded plummeting voting rates (52,6%, 54,7% and 48,8% respectively), only surpassed by the negative peak of 1995 (44,7%). A possible interpretation is that there might be a correlation between the three years of the DPJ administration and a mutated political attitude of citizens. For instance, the generally negative perception of the DPJ's achievements in the 2009-2012 could have made voters less politically engaged and more sceptical towards any possible alternative to the LDP, thus driving turnout rates down and LDP performances up.

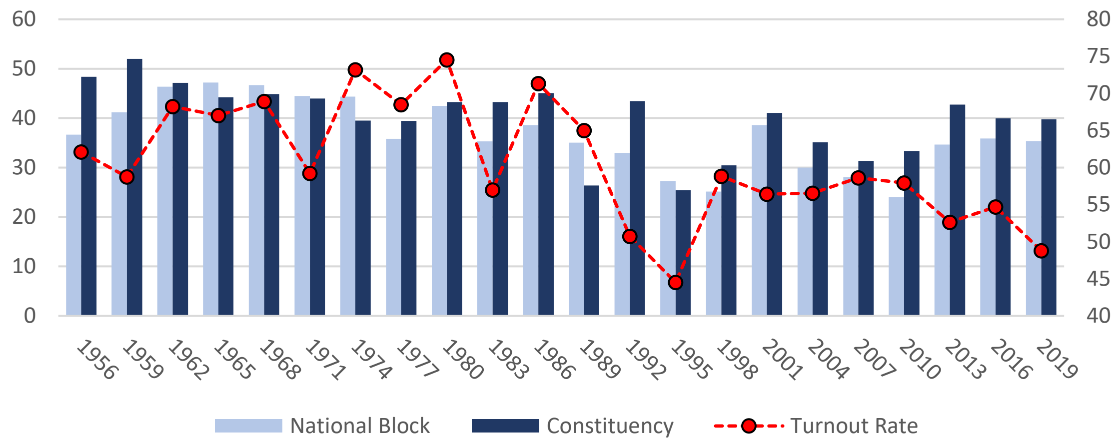

Figure 7 House of Councillors results 1956-2019 (総務省 1956-2019)

At this stage, data seem to suggest pretty clearly that Japanese citizens' attitude towards political participation, and especially voting, is influenced by a vast array of factors, not all of which present a straightforward relation with party performance and popularity. Some of these factors can be extremely specific to a certain historical moment, or even a single election, and return opposite results once analysed in different contexts, such as policies to address a particular issue during election campaign. Others can undergo a slow but gradual change that might reflect some trends in social and cultural phenomena. It is also worth pointing out that elections in the past two decades have been following slightly more unpredictable patterns, and although an overall trend of turnout rates decrease is still observed, sudden rises are not completely absent, especially at national elections.

I intend to use this observation as a starting point to explore voters' behaviour in 2005-onwards elections, under the initial assumption that factors influencing this behaviour are undergoing changes and that it might be necessary to review some established patterns in voters' behaviour analysis. In particular, I will focus on House of Representative elections, starting from 2005. In chapter 2, previous research and methods that I intend to draw from will be introduced and discussed. In chapter 3, data on elections at the national level will be analysed, drawing from the Association for Promoting Clean Elections surveys on Lower House elections from 2005 to 2021. In chapter 4, I will use data from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Election Administration Commission's surveys, to apply the methods and categories introduced in chapter 2 to voters' attitudes and preferences in Tokyo. Before diving into this analysis, however, a second section of this chapter will mention some of the reasons for choosing Tokyo as the main object of this research.

1.2. Political participation in Tokyo: guiding hypotheses

As the capital of Japan and one of the largest cities in the World, Tokyo surely occupies a special place in research on Japan. Political research is not an exception, and it could be expected that Tokyo unique features might show to a certain degree in its citizens' voting behaviour. This work, in trying to assess what is unique about Tokyo citizens' voting preferences, stems from a series of observations over unique features of the city.

1) Tokyo's geographical and demographic structure. With 44,3 million people living in the Greater Tokyo Area and 13,8 in its metropolitan area alone,[10] Tokyo is currently the largest urban area in the World.[11] To put its size into national perspective, the Greater Tokyo Area is home to about 35% of Japan's total population, while only accounting for less than 4% of its area.[12] Based on this piece of information, chances are that Tokyo's unique demographic conformation might translate in an equally unique political landscape. After all, policymaking in a specific area is, at least in part, a direct reflection of its inhabitants. People living in such a large urban area are likely to have different needs, different ways of getting in touch with their neighbors, and different advantages and limitations in their political participation, compared to someone who lives, say, in the countryside or even a medium-sized city.

2) Tokyo's socio-economic landscape. One can also assume that citizens' socio-economic conditions in Tokyo are not the same as in rural areas, and that might affect, for instance, what candidate to vote for or what political issue to prioritize. In fact, the social approach to voting behaviour is one of the longest-established methods, particularly amongst western authors.[13] Income, household composition, education are some representative examples of this difference, and their relationship with voting preferences will be explored in depth in later chapters. Looking at an example provided above, the 2005 Japan Post Privatization Bill is likely to have had a different weight for a Tokyo white-collar worker living alone and, say, a larger household. Figure 8 shows, for instance, how

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[10] [国土交通省 2021]

[11] As per the OECD definition of urban area, which comprises both the metropolitan area and the so-called 'commuting zone'. In the case of Tokyo, this definition includes portions of the Kanagawa, Chiba, Ibaraki, and Tochigi prefectures (Dijkstra, Poelman and Veneri 2019)

[12] [国土交通省 2021]

[13] (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), introduced, for instance, the concept of "social cleavage" as a key determiner for voters' choice, a method still widely used in political science and sociology, although with some more recent revisions. This concept will occupy a significant portion of Chapter 2 of this work.

single-person households have occupied a much larger share of total households in Tokyo than Japan's average.

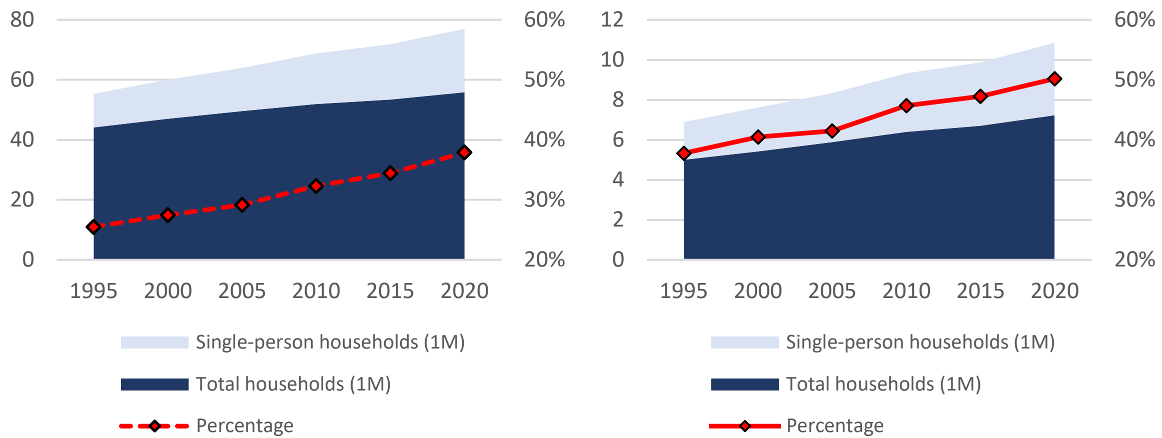

Figure 8 Number of total households and single-person households in Japan (left) and Tokyo (right) [e-stat 2021]

3) Additionally, if we look at Tokyo from a politician's perspective, we can assume that their campaigning activities are quite different for Tokyo candidates when compared to smaller cities or rural areas. Tokyo's unique geographical, social and economic landscape entail a series of opportunities and challenges a local politician, or a Diet candidate might have face in their electoral campaigning and, more generally, in all of those activities in which connecting with the local population is required. As analysed later in this chapter, of all the studies that have been conducted about Japanese politicians' (both at a national and local level) activities inside and outside the electoral campaigning period, very few of them focused on Tokyo.

4) Political participation through the Internet and social media is most certainly another factor to be considered in a comprehensive analysis of voters' behaviour. The role of the internet as a medium for the spread of information and political opinions has been largely disregarded until the late '00s and confined within the broader category of media influence on political opinion.[14] However, activities such as expressing political preferences or supporting a candidate have become extremely cheap and effective thanks to the Internet and social media, and many authors have been treating it as a powerful enough tool to be included in an analysis of factors influencing political

[14] [蒲島 , 境家 2020, 10]

behaviour as an independent category.[15] However, Internet access presents several limitations, and it is not equally spread across all social categories. Elements such as age, income, dwelling area determine what share of the population is able not only to gain internet access, but also to afford smartphones or other devices that make that access quicker and easier. Given Tokyo's demographic and socio-economic features, differences in internet penetration rate and usage of social media (with or without a political purpose), is definitely a hypothesis not to be overlooked.

5) One final observation about Tokyo's political landscape, which is in part connected to point number 3, is how the 1994 Electoral Reform affected its political 'weight'. Previous to the reform, when national candidates were elected in multi-member constituencies, the number of votes required to be elected in a Tokyo district was 3 times higher than that of a rural district.[16] This ratio dropped to 2:1 in the immediate aftermath of the electoral reform, but it was not long before it rose once again to even higher levels, with many newspapers reporting ratios as high as 5:1 in recent years.[17] The effects of this disparity in the weight of rural and urban votes are worth being analysed. On the voters' side, this might mean a higher political disengagement of urban dwellers, who see their vote counting much less than that of a small village inhabitant and might be brought to think of voting as a useless activity. On the politician's side, this disparity might once again generate differences in the way candidates form connections with citizens in their district, as mentioned in point 3. A candidate in a rural constituency, for instance, might choose to strengthen personal connections with a smaller number of people, but still large enough to secure the necessary share of votes for their election. In cities, this practice might not be as feasible, and politicians might be forced to resort to more 'impersonal' campaigning strategies. This, in turn, would lead to a significant difference in the perception of politics between a Tokyo voter, for instance, and a rural voter. The concept of local networks and politicians' electoral campaigning strategies will be discussed more in detail in chapter 2 as well.

Observations and assumptions made above are meant to guide this research and the structure of each chapter. They are based on what could be considered Tokyo's most noticeable and unique socio-economic and demographic features. The goal of this paper is that of breaking down these observations and either substantiate them or refuting them through the use data from a number of sources. As mentioned before, the main source for this breakdown will be the post-

[15] Ibid.
[16] (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011, 17)
[17] See, for instance, (The Asahi Shimbun 2021) (The New York Times 2021), (The Japan Times 2014)

election surveys conducted by the Association for the Promotion of Clean Elections and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Election Administration Commission, regarding the six Lower House elections that were held between 2005 and 2021. Their analysis will be carried out in detail in chapter 3 and 4.

2. Political participation and voting preferences in Japan

As mentioned in the introduction, in this chapter I will attempt to analyse what factors have been influencing historically Japanese citizens' political attitude and voting preferences at the national level. While drawing from previous research on voting behaviour and political participation, such as Flanagan's "the Japanese Voter",[18] this and the next chapter are meant as a feature analysis of Japan's political landscape, as observed from the electorate's perspective.

The purposes of this chapter are many. First, it introduces previous research on political participation and voting behaviour in Japan, so to clarify the objectives of this research and to substantiate the methods that will be made use of. One more purpose is that of contextualizing Japan's unique political situation. If Tokyo's case could be considered peculiar within Japan's political landscape, the same can be stated about Japan in relation to the rest of the world and Western democracies in particular. Thus, an overview of how Japanese politics, and Japanese citizens' political behaviour especially, have developed historically might be needed for a reader who is not familiar with that reality. Last but not least, this chapter, together with chapter 3, will serve as a comparison between the national dimension and Tokyo, which is essential in order to determine if Tokyo political evolution has been following a different path from the rest of the country, or if this evolution is just a faster (or slower) version of the changes that have been occurring all over Japan.

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 are closely tied together. The former expands the concept of political participation, of which voting is one instance, analysing the ways in which Japanese citizens have been engaged in various political activities. Thus, it will answer the *how* of political participation. The latter will dig into the influencing causes, examining *why* Japanese voters decide (not) to vote, to vote for a candidate rather than another, and to participate in certain political activities. Chapter 3 will be further divided into three parts. The first two analyses long term influences in political participation and attitudes. The first is dedicated to sociological factors such as occupation, age and residential area, while the second will take into consideration social network patterns in Japan communities (intended as personal connections within citizens' everyday environment). The third part will focus on short term causes such as political issues, media influence and the rising role of the Internet.

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[18] (Flanagan, et al. 1991)

2.1. Types of political participation: how do Japanese participate in politics?

Defining political participation is an essential first step to determine which activities fall under this definition. Nuances in its definition could bring to the inclusion or exclusion of some activities and thus significantly alter the study of such. Huntington and Nelson define it as “a voluntary activity common citizens engage in in order to influence the government’s decision-making process”. [19] Another, slightly different definition comes from Verba, Nie and Kim: “all those legal activities undertaken by common citizens that, more or less directly, are intended to influence the election of government members’ and their actions”.[20] Despite presenting several points in common, this second definition adds two important shades of meaning to the word. First, by “legal activities”, the author draws a clear line on what should be excluded from the definition. One example could be political demonstrations in which one or more participants cause damage to objects or people. In addition, “more or less directly” suggests that even those activities where a citizen is not directly or actively engaged in can be considered political participation. These might include, for example, exposure to mass media or being influenced by more politically engaged people in one’s everyday environment, such as family members or neighbours. More recently, Kabashima (2020) claimed that this second definition in limited in some respects. First, it fails to include some psychological attitudes such as interest towards politics and belief in its efficacy, which are both elements affecting one’s political engagement. Also, by specifically mentioning “common citizens” as the subject of political participation, it does not take into account the role of “non common” citizens, such as bureaucrats, politicians and lobbyists, and their efforts to influence voters’ opinions and orientations. Lastly, the “legal” aspect of the definition has some implications for the debate of whether or not to include activities such as protests, that often represent a borderline political activity. Regardless of their lawfulness, protests have in fact a rather strong political impact and present most of the defining parameters of any other form of political participation shown in Table 2.

As for what can be considered political participation – in other words, concrete categories of political participation – the Association for Promoting Fair Elections offers a useful insight into Japan’s case:

[19] (Huntington and Nelson 1976)
[20] (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978)

Other than voting at elections, it is also common to help the candidate you support in their campaign or to join their *kōenkai*.[21] Furthermore, participating in local civic or neighbourhood activities, or directly contacting a Diet member to resolve a local issue represent other forms of political participation.[22]

Kabashima,[23] and Dalton[24] identify similar categories of political participation in recent research: voting, campaign activity, direct contacting, communal activity, protest and online activity. Although this categorization first appeared on a study conducted by Verba, Nie and Kim[25], protest and online activity categories are two more recent adjustments to the model. The addition of protest is the result of a more recent re-evaluation of this action as a form of political participation by several authors, such as Inglehart, Barnes and Kaase and Kabashima himself.[26] Online activity is, more simply, the result of a natural evolution of factors in political participation, as in the late 70s – early 80s, the use of Internet for political purposes was hardly conceivable.

both proceed to define them in terms of initiative required, skills and resources required (both in financial and organizational terms) and degree of cooperation with others (Table 2).

Table 2 Modes of political participation and their characteristics [蒲島 , 境家 2020] and (Dalton 2017)

Mode	Initiative required	Skills/Resources required	Cooperation with others	Pressure on Politicians	Informativity
Voting	Little	Modest	Little	Strong	Low
Campaign activity	Some	Substantial	Some/much	Strong	Various
Direct contacting	Much	Great	Little	Weak	High
Communal activity	Some/much	Great	Some/much	Various	High
Protest	Some/much	Some/much	Some/much	?	?
Online activism	Varies	Varies	Little/some	?	?

[21] *Kōenkai* are a form of personal support organization of candidates. They usually require paying a membership fee every year in exchange for a series of personal favours by the politician. More on the *kōenkai* will follow in the next section of chapter 2, when discussing the influence of social networks on voting behaviour.

[22] [明るい選挙推進協会 2006, 52]

[23] [蒲島 , 境家 2020]

[24] (Dalton, The Participation Gap: Social Status and Political Inequality 2017). In Dalton's case the categorization refers to the US political landscape.

[25] (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978)

[26] (Inglehart 1977), (Barnes 1979), [蒲島 , 境家 2020]

2.2. Voting

Voting is probably the first activity that comes to mind when thinking about political participation, and the one citizen not only in Japan but from the majority of countries around the world engage in the most. As seen in the two graphs below, the percentage of people who voted at their country's latest national elections is close to double that of any other activity in most countries. In some cases, such as in the United States or Switzerland, the percentage of people who made donations to a party or a candidate are much closer to that country's turnout rates. As a general trend, however, it is apparent that voting is the most diffused form of political participation.

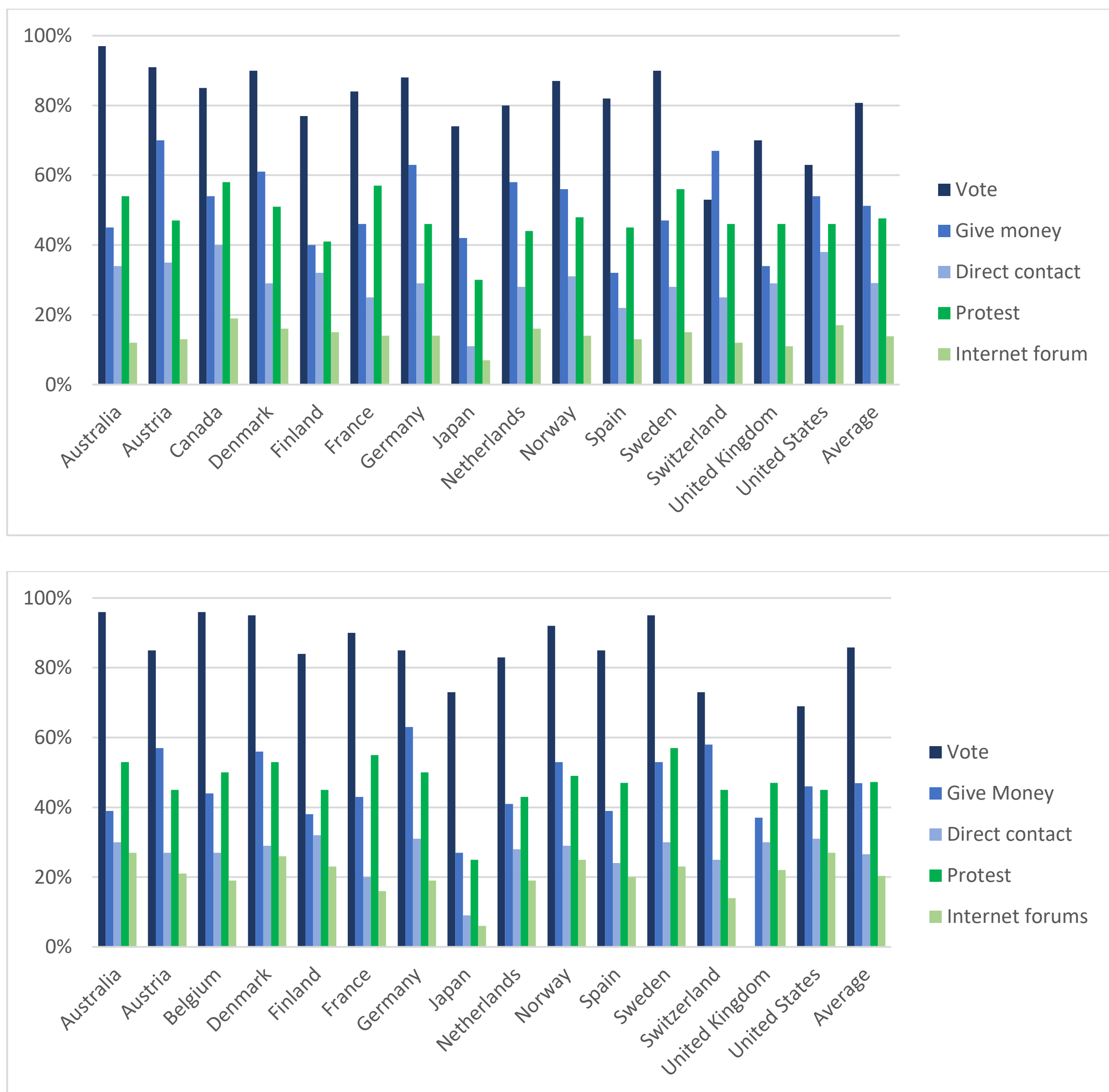

Figure 9 Different forms of political participation in various countries in 2004 (top) and 2014 (bottom) (made by the author based on (Comparative Study of Electoral Systems 2004-2014) data)

Without considering countries where voting is compulsory, such as Australia, Austria and Belgium, there is a number of reasons why this is the case. First, in terms of initiative and effort required, voting is a rather undemanding activity, and the degree of cooperation with other citizens that is needed is very low. Voting also does not require either a particularly high level of education or political consciousness, nor exceptional financial means. Anyone, regardless of their social status or their education, can vote without many barriers. In addition, according to the parameters presented in Table 2, voting has the advantage of exerting a high level of pressure on politicians, as they must gain voters' trust in order to be elected an maintain their position. As a downside, voting does not convey much information to policy makers in terms of what citizens really want, thus its level of informativity is generally considered to be low.[27]. Voters are not given the freedom to express their desires and what they would like to obtain from politicians. Rather, they are given two or more options to choose from, without really having a say in it.

2.3. Campaign activity

Contrary to voting, campaign activity requires a much higher level of effort and, in certain cases, financial resources. Asking family members and friends to vote for a particular candidate, helping a candidate during their electoral campaign and taking part to meetings and public speeches held by the candidate are some of the activities that do not require a considerable financial participation. According to the Association for Promoting Fair Elections 2006 report, 16.3% of the respondents declared to have taken part in a candidate's speech meeting (*enzetsukai*) or other forms of gatherings in the period leading to the elections.[28] Among the campaign activities that present a higher financial hurdle are money donations and joining personal support organizations such as *kōenkai*. Members of *kōenkai* usually (but not always) pay a membership fee and are then allowed to take part in club activities and events organised by the politician.

Kōenkai were struck hard by the electoral reform in 1994, which, among other things, aimed at weaking personalistic electoral campaigns typical of the multi-member districts system and switching to a more party-oriented election system.[29] As Figure 10 shows, respondents who declared to have joined a *kōenkai* constantly abated since the 70s, with a significant and sudden

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[27] (Dalton 2017), [蒲島 , 境家 2020]

[28] [明るい選挙推進協会 2006] In later reports from the Association, the section dedicated to other forms of political participation (*tohyo igai no seijisanka*) does not appear. Therefore, I was forced to choose the latest data available on the topic

[29] [明るい選挙推進協会 2006], (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011), [中北 2017]

drop from the early 00s. However, some authors believe *kōenkai* to still be a powerful instrument for candidates during their electoral campaign.[30]

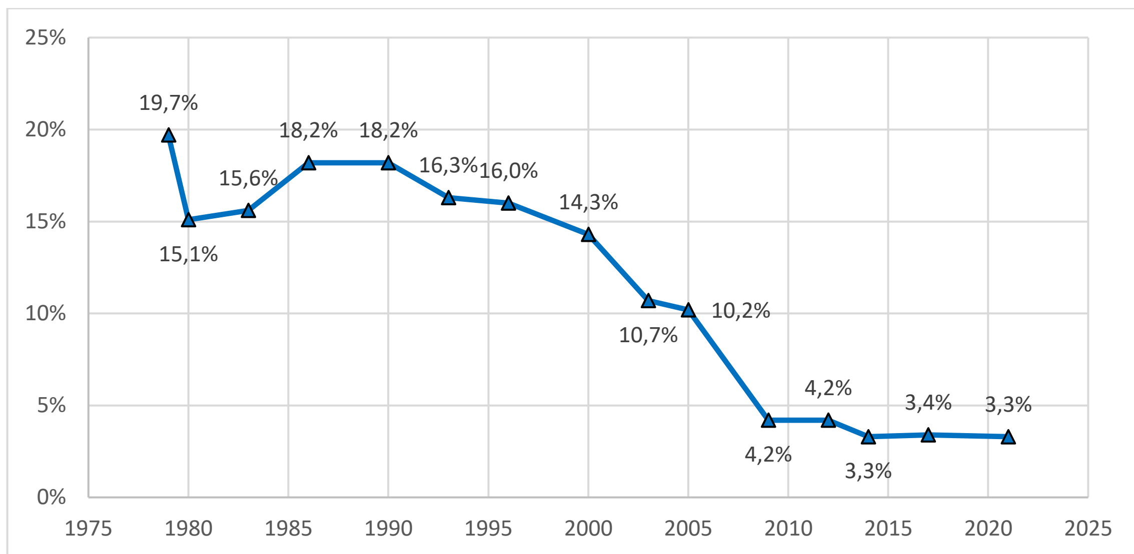

Figure 10 Kōenkai membership among respondents (made by the author based on [明るい選挙推進協会] data)

Donations have undergone progressive limitations as well. The Political Funds Control Law (*seiji shikin kiseiho*) was officially proclaimed in 1948 and underwent a series of changes along the years. It was last modified in June 2022, [31] and currently limits donations made by private citizens at twenty million yen to party or candidate's fund organizations, and ten million yen to other types of organizations such as personal support groups (*kōenkai*) or research associations (*kenkyukai*).[32] To provide an order of magnitude to donations of this nature, in 2021 ex-Prime Ministers Abe Shinzo (Shinwakai) and Suga Yoshihide's (Yokohama Seikei Konwakai) raised respectively 9,2 million and 3,1 million yen, while current PM Fumio Kishida's Shinseijikeizai Kenkyukai raised 4,05 million yen.[33]

In terms of cooperation with others, campaign activity usually requires a much higher level of interaction and personal initiative.[34]

[30] (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011)
[31] [e-gov.go.jp]
[32] [明るい選挙推進協会 2018, 12-13]
[33] [総務省 2021]
[34] [蒲島 , 境家 2020]

2.4. Direct contacting

Contacting a politician or a local officer to ask for personal favours has been a well-established practice in post-war Japan. Between 1969 and 1971, Curtis[35] conducted a famous study in Oita prefecture, where he followed a politician in Beppu climb the political ladder from local assemblies to the National Diet. Among the activities reported by the author, the politician had to hold almost daily face-to-face meetings with locals who were asking for some sort of mediation to get their son into a prestigious school or to solve a neighbourhood dispute.[36] Similar episodes are described in more recent studies from Krauss and Park.[37] Usually, citizens getting in touch with local or national politicians are also members of one or more of their personal support associations.[38] In 2005, the Association for Promoting Fair Elections reported that 4.3% of the respondents had contacted local or national politicians directly.

It is worth mentioning that, while this kind of activity conveys is a high amount of information – as the citizen communicates clearly and directly what their needs are – the fact that the request is usually particular, and it only benefits a small group of people makes it level of pressure on the politician relatively low. Even the failure to meet the petitioner's demand would not result in a considerable loss in terms of electoral performance.

2.5. Communal activity

Kabashima provides an array of activities that could fall under the communal activity (*chiiki katsudo*) umbrella. Sending petitions to local politicians, participating in local movements, attending neighbour (*chonaikai*) or local assemblies (*jichikai*) and, more in general, cooperating with neighbours and locals to solve problems that are specific to that community.[39] It is in fact quite a broad definition under which many activities could be traced back to, and the range of people it might benefit can go from a single household to an entire local community.

Table 3 shows the percentage of respondents who declared to have joined a local assembly in occasion of the House of Representatives elections. If we exclude the 2021 data, which includes the members of neighbourhood associations (*chonaikai*), the overall trend appears to show a decline in total members.

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[35] (G. J. Curtis 1971)
[36] (G. J. Curtis 1971)
[37] See, for instance, (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011), (Park 1998)
[38] Ibid.
[39] [蒲島 , 境家 2020, 8]

*Table 3 Percentage of members of local assemblies (*jichikai*) (the 2021 data include members of neighbourhood assemblies -* chonaikai*) (made by the author based on [明るい選挙推進協会] data)*

Elections	Percentage
2005	46,1%
2009	34,5%
2012	24,7%
2014	24,7%
2017	24,8%
2021	22,7%

Requirements and effects of communal activity usually vary. In terms of pressure on the politician, it might be high depending on the size of the movement, the petition or the association. The level of initiative required is also relatively hight compared to, say, voting, but in this case too the scope and the size of the activity may vary. Finally, as local movements are pretty specific in terms of what citizens are requesting, their informativity can be considered high.

2.6. Protest

Protests as a form of political participation are a quite recent introduction in political studies. Until the late 60s-early 70s, protests had been mostly analysed as *unconventional* and *uninstitutionalized* forms of political participation, as they had been historically seen as acts outside of the law perpetrated by people who were left out of any other form of political participation, and who, thus, aimed at overthrowing the current government and establishing a new one. Thus, it was often left out from political analyses of conventional modes of political participation. [40] However, with student demonstrations and environmental activism surging in various countries around the world during the 60s, protests began to gain larger interest in the academic community. Exactly like any other form of political participation, they did not cross over the boundaries of the law and did not aim at overthrowing governments, but rather at *improving* it. As a consequence, the study of protests as conventional and institutionalized mode of political participation slowly began to spread among political scientists.[41]

[40] (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978)
[41] See, for instance, (Barnes 1979), (Inglehart 1977)

In this sense, Japan is certainly not an exception. Among the first protests of this kind were the so-called Anpo protests in 1959 and 1960. These were against the United States-Japan Security Treaty and resulted in a large crowd first surrounding and finally breaking into the National Diet soil on June 15, 1960. In that occasion, a Tokyo University student, Michiko Kamba, was killed.[42] Another wave of student demonstrations took place between 1968 and 1969, once again stemming from the dissatisfaction with the US-Japan Security Treaties and also with poor university conditions.[43]

The US military base in Okinawa has been another major motive for a series of protests that took place in the Island across more than half a century. As 25'000 American troops are still present in the area, locals' discontent with a number of US military related incidents and the general poor treatment of the population by US soldiers was at the root of most of these protests. For instance, in 1959, when an F-100 on a test flight from the U.S. Kadena Air Base crashed into Miyamori Elementary School, resulting in the killing of 17 people.[44] Another significant episode was in 1995, when three American soldiers kidnapped, beat and raped a 12-year-old girl, stirring up a protest of more than 80'000 across the Okinawa prefecture.[45] Eventually, the three soldiers were sentenced by the Nara District Court, and talks for the relocation of the Futenma military base began.[46] However, even with the relocation of the base in Henoko, a less populated village, dissatisfaction among the Okinawa people did not abate, as they wanted the base entirely removed from the island.

Unlike the Anpo protests or the 1968-1969 student demonstration, more recent activity of this kind has been relatively more pacific, never escalating in the use of violence on either the protestors or the police's side, and usually resolving naturally.[47] Table 4 provides an overview of the main demonstrations occurred in the past ten years. Between 2011 and 2012, Japan saw an outburst of anti-nuclear protests around the country. According to the National Police Agency, on March 11th, 2012, in occasion of the one-year anniversary of the Fukushima disaster, about 16'000 people flooded the streets in several regions advocating for the closure of all nuclear plants on Japan's soil. On the same day, in Tokyo, 14'000 demonstrators gathered at Hibiya Park and another 10'000 people surrounded the National Diet Building in sign of protest.[48]

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[42] (Kapur 2018)
[43] (Kapur 2018)
[44] (The Japan Times 2009)
[45] (AP News 2016)
[46] (The New York Times 1995)
[47] [警察庁] According to the National Police Office report, the number of arrests and criminal acts in occasion of the protests that will be described in the following pages was extremely low.
[48] [警察庁 2012]

The following year, in reaction to the promulgation of the Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets on December 12th 2013, protestors flooded the streets of Tokyo and 10'000 people surrounded the National Diet Building.[49] A similar number of people gathered on July 30th 2014 around the Building to manifest against the alleged unconstitutionality of the right of collective self-defense in relation to Article 9.[50] In 2015, two large scale demonstrations took place. The first one, in Okinawa, was against the relocation of the Futenma base. In that occasion, 70'000 people gathered in Naha. The second one, on August 30th, saw more than 100'000 people gathering once again around the National Diet Building to protest against Japan's military legislation (*heiwa anzen hosei*).

Table 4 A map of recent protests in Japan (made by the author combining various sources)

Year	Purpose	Location	Scale
2011-2012	Anti-nuclear protests	Whole country	16'000 (around the country), 24'000 (Tokyo) (March 3rd, 2012)
2013	Protests against the promulgation of the Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets	Whole country	10'000 (Tokyo, National Diet Building)
2014	Protest concerning the right to collective self-defense	Whole country	10'000 (Tokyo, National Diet Building)
2015	Protest for the removal of the US military base in Futenma	Naha (Okinawa)	70'000 people
2015	Protest against Japan's military legislation	Mainly Tokyo	120'000 (National Diet Building)
2017	Protests against constitutional amendment	Mainly Tokyo	55'000 18'000

[49] [警察庁]

[50] Ibid.

2018	Abe's administration scandals and economic conditions of poor areas	Whole country	50'000 (Tokyo)
2019	Against sexual discrimination in workplace and for reforms in anti-rape laws	Tokyo, Sapporo, Fukuoka, Osaka	?
2019	Support of Hong Kong civil unrest	Tokyo, Sapporo, Fukuoka, Osaka	?

Other similar demonstrations in recent years comprise those against the amendment of the constitution (in particular Article 9) in 2017,[51] against Abe's administration in 2018 as a consequence of a series of scandals and economic grievances of poor areas in the country, and in 2019 against sex discrimination in the workplace and anti-rape laws (as part of the worldwide #MeToo movement), as well as in support of the Hong Kong situation.[52]

Despite the fact that Japanese citizens overall participation to protests appears to have diminished in the decade from 2004 to 2014, as shown by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems *(Figure 9)*, the number of protests itself did not drop as significantly. Rather, the nature of political manifestations even seems to have grown more diverse. In other words, demonstrations have been stirred by an increasingly various range of motives, and they are addressing a wider range of social and political issues than before. Whether this tendency can be seen as part of a global trend of more frequent and proactive participation to protests by the citizens, or as a consequence of changing socio-economic conditions in Japan, could be an interesting starting point for future research. For the sake of this research, I included just some of the main features of this type of political activity.

In general, people who participate in political protests are required a fairly high level of personal initiative (whether they are the organizers or not), and a fair degree of cooperation with other participants. Financial resources and education required are not necessarily high, and virtually anybody can take part in them.[53] Finally, in terms of information conveyed to the policy makers, demonstration can be said to be highly informative, as their intent is usually straightforward and communicates clearly what citizens are asking from the government.

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[51] [警察庁]

[52] (Monitor Tracking Civic Space 2019)

[53] (Dalton 2004)

2.7. Online activism

Online activism is a relatively recent form of political participation. In developed countries, the diffusion of the Internet began in the 1990s, and only recently has been attracting more attention as a political participation mode.[54] Especially young people have been making and increasingly large use of digital platforms, and especially social media, to express one's political opinion, gather information on elections and other political matters, or even to meet people sharing similar interests and political beliefs.[55]

What is fundamentally different from other forms of political participation, however, is the intended receiver of online activities of this kind. When citizens vote, participate to local associations, contact a politician directly, or even when they join a demonstration, the person (or people) to whom the political message is being addressed to is clear and definite. It can be a single politician, a group of neighbours, the local community or the government. However, in the case of online activity, it is impossible to predict who will be reached by one's message, and what use will be made of any content that has been shared. Of course, even social media and other platforms have ways to direct one's activity and opinions to a limited audience. However, due to the extreme speed and close-to-zero costs of spreading information on the Internet, chances are that any content posted online will reach a much broader audience than the one originally intended, be it due to a leak of information or the progressive share among different groups (Figure 11).

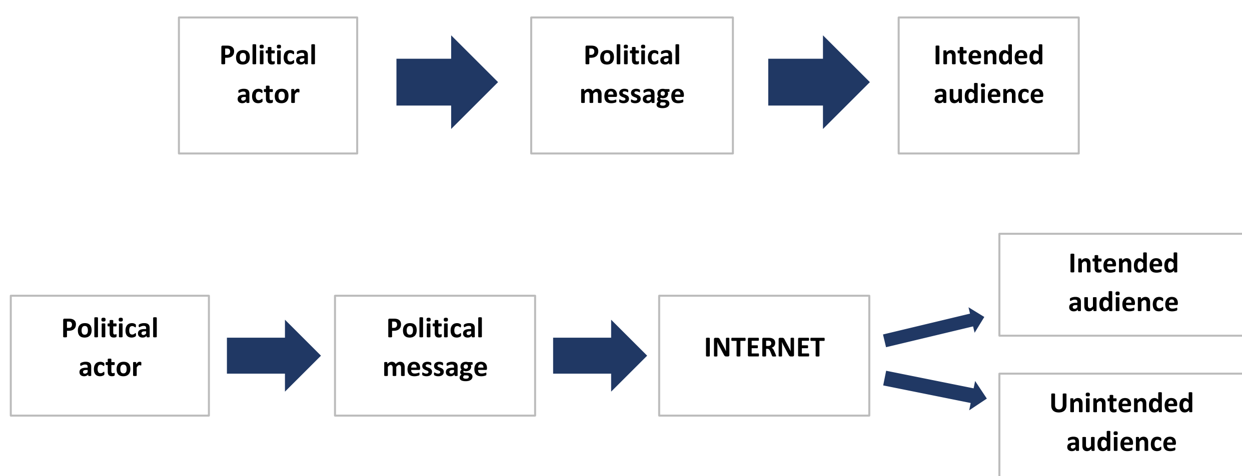

Figure 11 Conveying a political message in conventional political particpation modes (top) and in online political activity (bottom) (author)

[54] See, for example, (Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2012)

[55] [蒲島 , 境家 2020, 10]

This fundamental difference in the way political communication functions presents a number of implications.

1) On the political actor's side, posting on digital platforms without having to directly face a definite interlocutor or audience potentially allows less restraint in what and how is being said (i.e., the political message). Online anonymity further adds to this increased looseness in political expression.
2) As the audience is not as definite as in conventional forms of political participation and oftentimes is composed by total strangers, the language and the contents of the political message are likely to be broader and address more general themes. A tweet by a politician, for instance, will not be formulated in the same way a speech at a *kōenkai* gathering would be.
3) On the receiver's end, there is a possibility of lower trust in political messages and information gathered online. Not being able to see the interlocutor face-to-face, and oftentimes not even knowing their name, could have a strong impact on the way citizens participate, listen, elaborate and are influenced by online political contents.

The online world has also the potential to influence and alter conventional modes of political participation. In this regard, Theocharis provides an interesting perspective:

> Digital media have added inexhaustive, creative and non-political ways to engage in social and political life that not only often appear to form the basis of political participation, but, in a plethora of everyday contexts, seem to become embedded into what eventually evolves to become a politically meaningful act.[56]

Social media, and the Internet more in general, have laid the foundation for the development of an extremely large number of modes in political participation. Theocharis provides a number of examples, such as online voting – which has already been successfully implemented in Estonia, for example, since the general elections in 2005 [57] –, online funding for electoral campaigns – former US president Barack Obama utilized this strategy in both 2008 and 2012 –, or the use of social media by politicians, which is nowadays a common practice in most democratic countries.

[56] (Theocharis 2015)
[57] (BBC News 2005)

In Japan, the use of digital media by both citizens and politicians, even outside election period, is on the rise. In 2018, according to the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, 2,5% of the interviewed declared that in the last five years they had expressed their political opinion on a social platform (Facebook, Twitter etc.) where the comment could be visible by anybody.[58] In addition, 2,0% had made comments of political nature on social media with a restricted audience, such as LINE or Facebook groups. The use of the Internet as a source of political information is also spreading rapidly (Figure 12). From 2005 to 2021, people who declared to have used the Internet (including blogs and social media) to gather information on the incoming elections went from 1,4% to 16%. In addition to that, the number of respondents who used social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to follow a candidate increased from 2,1% in 2012 to more than 8% in 2021.

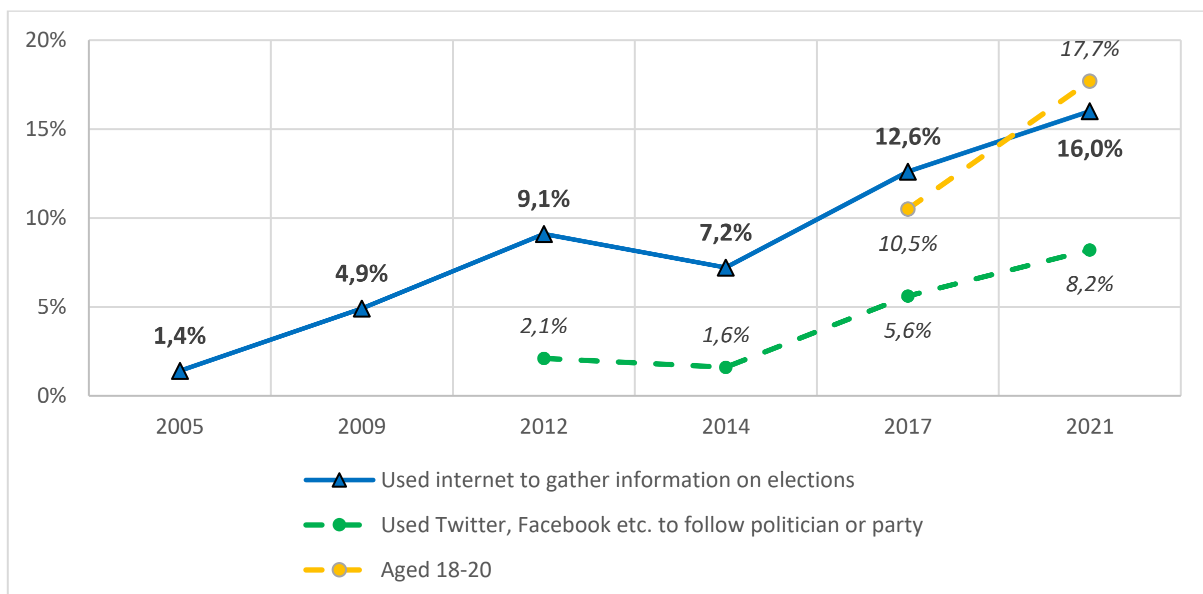

Figure 12 Use of Internet and social media as a source of information during 2005-2021 Lower House elections(made by the author based on [明るい選挙推進協会 2021] data)

The way in which statistics change among younger voters is another interesting aspect I would like to consider. Since voting age was lowered to 18 only in June 2016, there is not much data yet on that age group. However, an increase of more than 7%, from 2017 to 2021, in the number of people aged 18-20 who used social media for political purposes previous to the elections can be observed. In further research, it would be interesting to continue this observation and search for patterns in the mid-to-long term. In general, it is reasonable to assume that the use of Internet and social media in politics and elections will be more widespread amongst the younger population. As

[58] (Comparative Study of Electoral Systems 2018)

Figure 12 shows, the percentage of people using internet for political purposes, compared to that of Internet users in the same time frame, is much higher among the younger age groups (41,9% of the respondents in the 18-29 group and 31% for the 30-49 group).

One final aspect to consider is that the Internet is not only a form of political participation. It has also the potential to recreate and alter other such forms within the virtual world. The above-mentioned electronic elections held in Estonia, or Obama's electoral campaign online fundraising are to instances in which Internet was used to replace – or better, *innovate* – traditional modes of political participation. An interesting example could be No Youth No Japan, an association that promotes, through digital channels such as Instagram and personal blogs, social and political education among the Japanese youth. It also encourages young people to participate not only to elections, but also to political debates and other forms of gatherings.[59] It currently has more than 100'000 followers on Instagram and 12'000 on Twitter. In a certain way, this kind of activity can be seen as a substitute of more traditional neighbourhoods or local meetings. It takes advantage of platforms (Instagram and Twitter) where many young people usually gather and uses it as a leverage to convey political messages and attract more people to participate to political life.

One aspect that remains to be assessed in online political participation – and could be used as a starting point in future research – is whether digital platforms actually encourage more people to participate or instead it just provides new ways to participate to those people who are already engaged in politics.

2.8. Political participation: a focus on voting

As we have seen from Figure 9 Japanese citizens' political participation takes mostly the form of voting, with participation to other activities such as neighbourhood associations – which are not necessarily to be considered as strictly political activities, although a certain degree of political information is being conveyed – still relatively common but facing a steep decline (Table 3). From an international perspective too, participants to other political activities such as protests are fewer in relation to the number of those who vote, who in turn represent a small number when compared to other countries.

[59] [No Youth No Japan Association 2022]

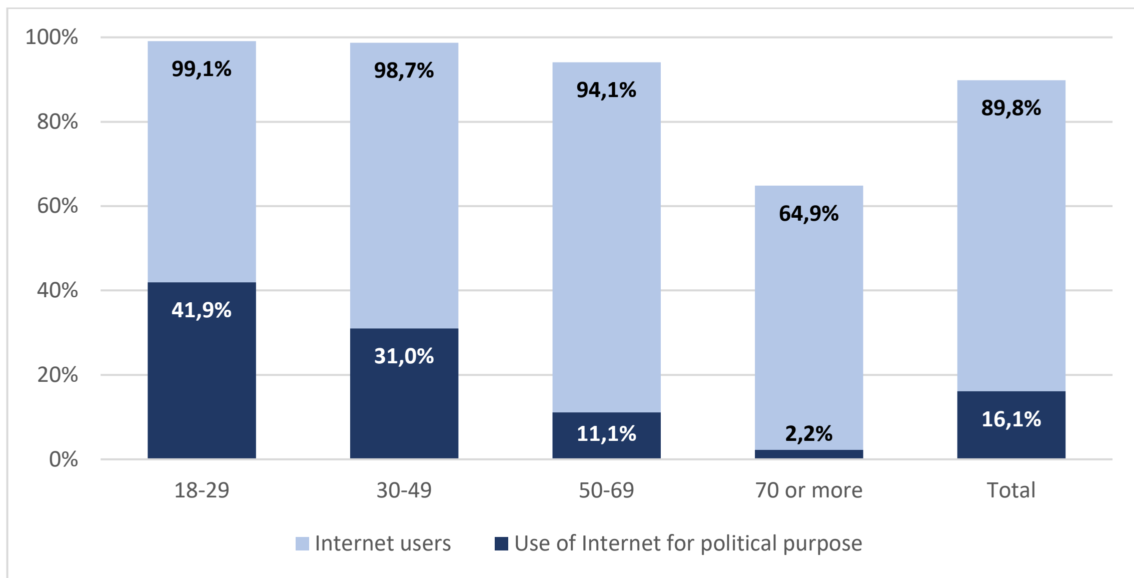

Figure 13 Number of people who used Internet to political purposes in relation to total number of Internet users (made by the author based on [総務省] and [明るい選挙推進協会] data)

This comes as no surprise at all, considering that voting is the least demanding activity in regard to every parameter mentioned in Table 2. Its requirements in terms of time and effort, money resources, specific skill and cooperation with others are close to zero. All other activities, on the other hand, are more demanding for at least one of these criteria. In addition, voting also exerts quite a high level of pressure on the politician, making it overall an effective way of politically engaging. In this picture, the internet occupies a peculiar place. On one hand, it is a very undemanding activity under all aspects mentioned above. Some might argue that political knowledge is required in order to be politically active on online platforms. Although it might be true that those who post political contents on these platforms generally possess a certain degree of political awareness, in principle, anybody with an internet connection could post such comments. Thus, at least in principle, online political activity can be considered an undemanding and accessible form of participation. Despite its accessibility, however, online participation still lacks the straightforward efficacy of voting. Even when directed to a more or less large audience, the effect the message has on this audience is not as easily determined and predictable as casting a vote at ballots. Whether, in future, Japan's government and citizens will make a more intensive use of the internet for political purposes – such as online voting, opinion polls etc. – or not remains to be established.

For the time being, it can be said that, in Japan, voting is the most diffused, accessible and straightforward way to have a say in the policymaking process. As such, it will receive special

attention in chapter 3, when analysing factors of influence in political preferences and choices. Although this is not meant as a generalization of all those elements that influence Japanese citizens' participation to all kind of activities, it is an attempt to show general tendencies and patterns on why voters choose to engage – or not to – into political activities. This attempt also works on the assumption that a reasonable majority of those who take part to other forms of political activities also vote. Under this assumption, understanding why people vote could also provide us with a glimpse on why they participate to politics in other ways.

3. Influences in voting behaviour 2005-2021: long- and short-term factors

This chapter will provide a broader perspective of what were the main influencing factors of Japanese citizens' political participation and political preferences in the last two decades. In the 1991 book "the Japanese Voter", [60] a collection of studies on Japanese's voting behaviour and its influences, an initial hypothesis is that the way Japanese citizens' political conscience is formed, and how they influence each other in their political preferences, is in many ways dissimilar to that of American and European citizens. In accordance, research and analysis methods must be altered and adapted to Japan's political landscape. Two examples of this differences are the social cleavage and the local network factors. In regard to the first one, Richardson argues that cleavages such as religion or social class are not as strong determiners of voters' choices in Japan as they are in the West.[61] As for local networks, the peculiar structure of social groups that form within local communities in Japan possess characteristics and dynamics of influence that can hardly find an equivalent in western democracies. In fact, the role of these networks is so preponderant that four chapters of the book address them in several perspectives.[62]

We have seen in the previous section, however, that the role of social networks (in the non-digital sense of the word) appears not to be as strong in recent elections. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 10, the number of respondents who declared to have taken part in *kōenkai* gatherings or local assemblies have been constantly declining since the beginning of the century. Furthermore, the book was published in the immediate aftermath of the Economic bubble burst in 1989, and it refers to a socio-economic structure that might not reflect the changes that Japan has undergone since. *Figure 14* shows how Japan's Gini coefficient[63] relative to household income has been constantly growing since 1990, and an ever-increasing redistribution effort has been needed in order to level up the disparity.[64] In addition, the 2018-2019 protests against Abe's government and how its economic policies affected some of Japan's poor areas might be another indicator of increasing disparity amongst the population and of changing dynamics in the role of socio-economic factors to citizens' political behaviour.

[60] (Flanagan, et al. 1991)
[61] (Flanagan, et al. 1991, ch.1)
[62] Ibid.
[63] A coefficient that measures the level of equality in the distribution of wealth within a nation. 0 represents perfect distribution amongst all citizens, 1 represents the maximum concentration of wealth in the hands of only one individual.
[64] "Redistributed income" usually refers to income after some redistribution mechanisms such as taxation and social welfare are applied.

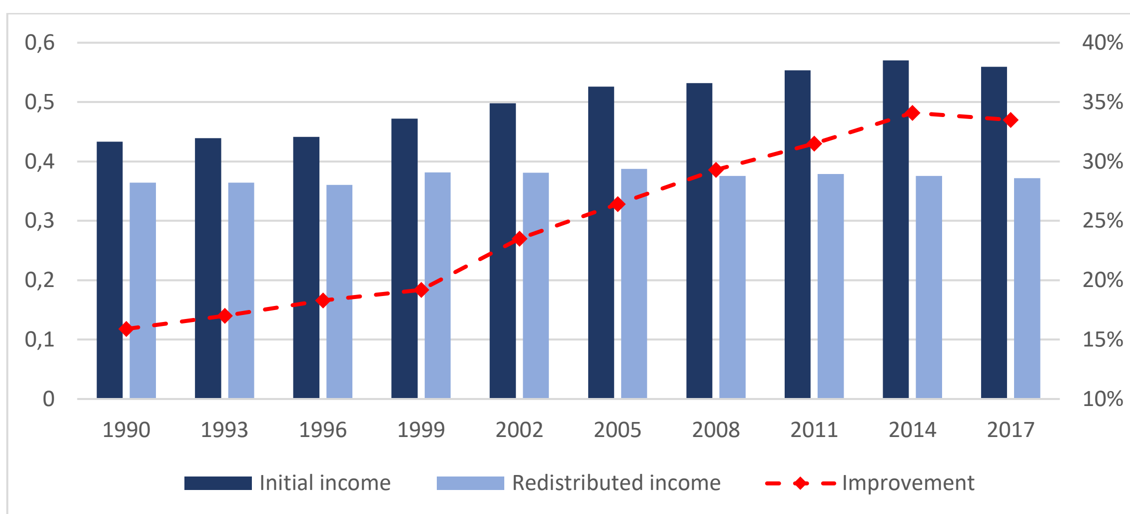

Figure 14 Gini coefficient of initial income and redistributed income (left axis), and percentage improvement after redistribution (right axis) (made by the author based on Ministry of Labour statistics, 2018)

In this section, I would like to partially adopt the categorization used in "The Japanese Voter", as introduced in chapter 1 and 2 of the book, of the various types of influencing factors. This includes an initial distinction between long-term and short-term factors and, among these two categories, a further subdivision between political and social influences. Political factors include partisanship in the long-term and issue attitudes and media effects in the short-term. Sociological factors, on the other hand, comprise the above-mentioned social cleavages, contextual effects[65] and local (social) network in the long-term, and local networks again in the short-term (*Table 5*). However, I do believe that minor modifications to this structure would better serve the purpose of my research. I considered that, rather than a distinction between political and sociological factors, a downstream influencing process where social factors occupy the upper hand and political attitudes (such as partisanship and interest to politics) the lower, would be a more accurate representation of the data I will later analyse in chapter 4. In this interpretation, political factors become a direct influence on citizens' political attitudes and are in turn influenced by social structures and other contextual factors, which thus become a secondary, or indirect, cause (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

[65] Such as residential or occupational environment, work transfer to another location etc.

Table 5 Long- and Short-term influences on voting behaviour (Flanagan, et al. 1991, 38)

	Long-term	Short-term
Political	Partisanship	Issue attitudes Media effects
Non-political	Social cleavages Contextual effects Social networks	Social networks

Table 6 Influence dynamics between social and political factors and political participation in the long-term (source: author)

For the short-term influence, I believe that this distinction is not necessary, since the cause-effect relationship between political factors (political issues, media politics etc.) and social factors (networks) comes as less straightforward. While they are not two watertight separated elements, they maintain a certain degree of independence. If anything, it could be argued that long-term political factors exert an influence on their short-term counterpart (a citizen's partisanship and level of interest in politics are likely to influence the way they see an issue, a candidate or mass media information during an election).

This section will be helpful to analyse how Japan's political and social landscape have changed in the past twenty years, so to lay the groundworks for a comparative analysis of Tokyo data.

3.1. Long-term influences: Sociological factors

The socio-economic approach to political behaviour analysis has its theoretical roots in both Marxist theories of class struggle and the development of a modern party-system in European democracies at the end of the 19th century, where differences in social stratus, religion and ethnicity were major factors in citizens' political alignment.[66] The use of this approach is still largely used, especially in

[66] (Flanagan, et al. 1991, 10)

studies about western democracies,[67] although it underwent some modifications from the 50s and 60s as the social psychological approach was developed and incorporated into political analysis.[68] This approach identifies psychological factors, such as partisanship or attitude towards issues and candidates, as the main drivers of citizens' political behaviour.

In the case of Japan, historically, the purely socio-economic approach has not been as successful as in western countries in predicting political outcomes. In fact, many studies have pointed out that in post-war Japan religious, ethnic, and social class cleavages were almost absent, or at least not effective enough to be used as leverage for political mobilization.[69] In analysing the outcomes of 1983, 1986 and 1989 elections Flanagan concludes that elements as religion, class or social status can hardly predict voting outcomes in Japan, and that a more complex matrix of contextual factors such as dwelling and working environments are much more effective to this purpose.[70] Kabashima points out that one of Japan's uniqueness is its almost total absence of a relation between socio-economic conditions and political participation. In other words, wealth, religion or ethnicity exert close to no influence on the extent to which the individual will participate to politics.[71] However, elements such as occupation, age, gender, education, and dwelling area (i.e., urban versus rural) although they cannot be considered social cleavages, present recurring patterns in the influence that they exert on, say, political participation and voting choices. The following section will analyse each of these factors and how they affected turnout rates, LDP's share of vote in and party support in occasion of each election from 2005 to 2021. For party support, only "LDP" and "No party" answers will be included.

Sociological factors in 2005-2021 elections

Figure 15 shows that in the past twenty years there has been a slow but gradual change in the absolute and relative number of regular and irregular employees. While the former has not significantly reduced in absolute quantity, its share of total workforce has been constantly declining in favour of part-time and temporary workers. As regular employees have been historically pointed out as one of the least prone to vote for the LDP and most likely to abstain from voting,[72] this might have major implications in both future LDP electoral strategies and in Japanese citizens' overall

[67] See (Dalton 2004), (Dalton 2017)
[68] (Campbell, et al. 1960)
[69] (Watanuki 1967), (Flanagan and McDonald 1977)
[70] (Flanagan, et al. 1991, 435)
[71] [蒲島 , 境家 2020]
[72] (Flanagan, et al. 1991)

political participation. In addition, with the increase in total number and percentage of irregular employment stemming from market deregulation, the balance in political pressure exerted on politicians by each working category might undergo progressive change.

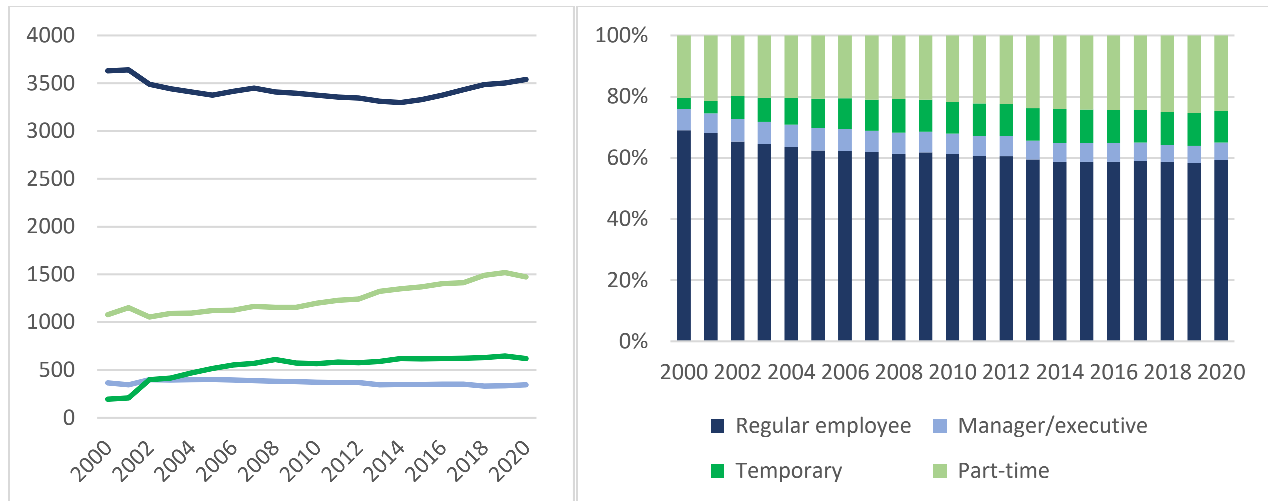

Figure 15 Absolute number and percentage in employment type 2000-2020 (made by the author based on data from [労働政策研究・研修機構 2020])

Education has been another defining factor for political participation in Japan. Early studies[73] point out that educated citizens, especially those living in large cities, tend to vote opposition parties such as the Communist Party (JCP) or the Socialist Party (JSP) or, more recently, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). At 2009 elections, which saw DPJ dethroning LDP and becoming the ruling party, 54,7% of those with a university degree or higher voted for DPJ at the electoral districts and only 21,9 % voted for LDP. Among those who had a junior high school diploma or lower, DPJ and LDP obtained almost the same share of votes – 34,7% and 34,0% respectively. In Kabashima's words, one of Japan's peculiarities is that, unlike western democracies, citizen with low levels of education tend to participate to political activities much more and more frequently than citizens who possess higher education degrees.[74]

The area in which voters live has also been said by several authors to have an impact on voting choices and political attitudes.[75] Curtis, for instance, claims that large cities lack traditional bonds between neighbours or citizens that characterize villages or small to medium-sized cities and

[73] (Flanagan and McDonald 1977)
[74] [蒲島 , 境家 2020]
[75] See, for instance (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011), (G. J. Curtis 1971), (Park 1998)

that help shape their political dynamics.[76] This will have an impact on both the politicians and the electorate's side. For candidates, using neighbourhood networks and social ties between the local population is a much less effective strategy in large urban areas than it is in small villages, and the use of personal connections as a means of gathering votes is generally much harder.[77] Furthermore, as it has been mentioned in the introduction, the weight of rural areas votes is much higher. Thus, while it will be easier for a rural district candidate to secure the minimum number of votes necessary to be elected through personal ties, for an urban area candidate, solely relying on this so-called hard vote will probably not be enough. On the voter's side, being politically influenced by one's surroundings will be much harder, as traditional social ties have been progressively disappearing and inhabitants who take part in neighbourhood activities (political or non-) are fewer than in rural areas.

Effects of social factors on voting behaviour

Table 7 Sociological factors and turnout rate at Lower House elections 2005-2021 (made by the author based on [明るい選挙推進協会] data)

Category		2005	2009	2012	2014	2017	2021
Job type	*Manager/executive*	97,6	95,7	84,8	77,4	84,3	83,4
	Regular employee		84,6	69,3	65	64,6	71,2
	Temporary employee		82,7	55,6	57,1	55,2	68
	Part-time		82,7	72,5	62,7	67,2	78,8
	Self-employed	84,4	80,8	78,5	71,3	75,6	90
	Student	86,4	75	39,4	59,5	59,5	71,4
	Housewife	85,7	88	74,9	72,8	76	80,8
	Unemployed	82,1	90	81,3	76,9	78,2	81
Age group	*18-19*					55,9	62,8
	20-29	55,6	61,6	44,9	47,2	54,6	62,8
	30-39	78,5	83,1	59,3	54,7	61	66
	40-49	85	86,8	69,8	65,3	61,4	70,9
	50-59	90,6	90,1	83,8	73,3	74	77,3
	60-69	88,3	93,8	85,2	78,2	84,6	83,9
	70-79	88,7	92,1	91,6	85,8	86,5	88,3
	80+	69,5	87,9	76,2	74,3	74,1	81,8
Sex	*male*	**84,3**	**89,2**	**77,3**	**74,5**	**75,2**	**77,2**
	female	82,2	85,4	72,2	65,1	69,2	72,4
Highest diploma	*junior high school*		81,9	71,5	69,6	70,7	78,8
	high school		87,2	71,5	69,6	70,7	78,8
	vocational school		84,6	65,7	65,6	69,2	73,2
	university or higher		92,1	80,7	74	76,1	79,1

[76] (G. J. Curtis 1971)
[77] (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011)

Table 8 Sociological factors and LDP's share of votes in single-member districts and proportional representation 2005-2021 (made by the author base on [明るい選挙推進協会] data)

Category		Single-member district						Proportional vote					
		2005	**2009**	**2012**	**2014**	**2017**	**2021**	**2005**	**2009**	**2012**	**2014**	**2017**	**2021**
Job type	*Manager/executive*		39,1	51,9	54,2	52,4	53,4		30,4	42,3	47,3	42,9	37,9
	Regular employee		20,4	49	45,7	47,5	43,8		16,8	42,3	38,3	40,1	36,4
	Temporary employee		22,6	40	33,3	33,3	41,2		16,6	41,3	33,3	46,7	35,3
	Part-time		22,6	40,6	42,3	46,3	40,2		16,6	32,6	34,9	41,4	29,4
	Self-employed		33,2	45,5	51,7	65,5	52,4		27,9	31,8	48,4	58,1	38,9
	Student		35	30,8	45,5	45,5	52		35	7,7	50	45,5	44
	Housewife		24,4	49,2	50,8	44,9	46,4		19,8	45,3	38,2	33,7	38,1
	Unemployed		24,4	48,7	49,8	45,4	46,6		22,5	41,4	38,8	37,8	38,9
Age group	*18-19*					47,4	44,7					42,1	39,5
	20-29	22,6	19,9	44,1	46,2	52	44,7	21,9	17,9	35,9	37,4	54	39,5
	30-39	36,8	16,5	37,2	49	48,9	34,6	30,3	13,7	32,7	40	43,1	28
	40-49	34,8	18,7	46,4	49,8	44,6	41	34,8	12,6	38,7	40,6	36,8	34,2
	50-49	46,5	23	54,2	46,6	44,1	39,7	40,2	18,4	45,2	39,5	35,9	33,2
	60-69	42,5	30,3	47	48,2	46,1	50,2	36,9	24,9	41,4	37,5	37,4	30,6
	70-79	51	31,8	53,8	49,4	46,4	50,9	47,9	28,5	44,6	40,9	37,2	40,2
	80+	33,9	36,4	51,3	56	54,5	49,2	30,5	37,9	51,3	53,3	46,6	49,2
Sex	*male*	**41,2**	**24,9**	**51,1**	**47,6**	**48,1**	**45,8**	**36,6**	**20,9**	**42,6**	**41,3**	**39,7**	**33,9**
	female	40	24,3	45,3	49,8	46,1	45,5	36,3	20	39,7	38,9	39,6	38,1
Highest diploma	*junior high school*	41,5	34	50,5	49	51,4	51	36,1	29,8	41,8	42,7	40,7	39,6
	high school	40,6	25,3	50,4	49,2	48,8	46,8	36,4	20,5	44,3	39,5	40,7	37,7
	vocational school	41,7	18,7	45,3	48,6	44,4	47,2	37,6	15,1	36,9	37,2	37,6	38,1
	university or higher	38,7	21,9	45,2	47,6	45,1	42,2	35,9	18,5	38,1	41,6	39,2	32,5
Dwelling area	*metropolis*	36,4	21,6	44,8	41,8	41,3	40,8	34,5	18,1	40,6	39,3	37,2	33,2
	population > 200'000	39,8	22,9	48,7	46,1	45,2	46,9	35,2	20,7	39,8	34,9	35,1	37,3
	> 100'000	39,8	26,2	50,4	53,9	50,8	43,7	35,2	19,8	43,8	44,1	39,9	39,5
	< 100'000	42	25,2	52,5	53,8	55,2	49,1	38,4	20,3	42,3	44,1	48,5	35,5
	rural area	44,8	31,3	42,5	51,1	42,7	51,3	38,6	26,2	39,9	39,6	38,3	37,2

Table 9 Sociological factors and party support at 2005-2021 Lower House elections (made by the author based on [明るい選挙推進協会] data)

Category		LDP support						No Party support					
		2005	2009	2012	2014	2017	2021	2005	2009	2012	2014	2017	2021
Job type	*Manager/executive*	35,7	30,4	42,7	49,6	46	41,8	26,2	30,4	24,7	27,3	27	26,8
	Regular employee		25,9	28,6	33,5	34,1	28,5		32,6	42,1	37,2	43,1	40,1
	Temporary employee		30	16,7	14,3	31	40		29	44,4	42,9	44,8	36
	Part-time		30	27,7	32,6	33,3	32,2		29	40,6	34,5	39,9	34,1
	Self-employed	44,4	42,4	34,5	42,2	39	43,5	32,2	21	31	20	36,6	21,8
	Student	22,7	25	12,1	37,8	24,3	31,4	50	50	60,6	45,9	47,3	51,4
	Housewife	39,1	32,6	34,3	37,6	37,4	34,9	35,4	26	31,6	31,3	27,8	32,4
	Unemployed	45,6	36,7	40,1	43,7	41,1	40,6	26	16,7	23,5	18,1	20,3	22,4
Age group	*18-19*					26,5	19,4					41,2	52,4
	20-29	21,9	19,9	24	30,3	32,4	19,4	57,4	45	50	42,9	46,5	52,4
	30-39	25	21,7	20,7	28,6	29	20,7	54,8	36,5	47,3	45,9	48,3	49,4
	40-49	33,5	24,2	27,4	32,4	32,7	26	41,6	33,9	42,5	37	43,8	41,9
	50-49	42,9	31,2	38	40,3	33,9	33,9	33,5	28	34,9	31	39,7	36,8
	60-69	43	41	37,4	42,6	40,1	40,8	22,3	18,4	27,3	24,9	26,9	25,7
	70-79	54,5	41,5	48,8	46,8	42	45	20,2	10,8	13	13,3	15,6	16,6
	80+	49,2	53	43,6	53,5	54,2	47,7	33,9	13,6	13,9	15,8	9	14,8
Sex	*male*	**41,5**	**32,9**	**35,7**	**39,8**	**40**	38,4	29,7	25	32,9	28,7	31	26,3
	female	37,1	31,8	31,7	37	34,2	32,8	**40,4**	**27,5**	**34,7**	**32,5**	**36**	**36,1**
Highest diploma	*junior high school*	49,7	47,2	40,8	44,6	43,4	45,4	24,1	15,1	17,3	15,4	16,8	16,9
	high school	37,8	34,7	37,6	36,9	38	35,2	37,5	23,7	27,8	27,8	31,1	27
	vocational school	39,7	24,3	29,1	36,7	32,3	33,4	40,7	32,9	42,4	36,2	42,7	38,8
	university or higher	30,7	24	26,8	38,6	35,9	33	37,3	34,3	46,8	38,8	39,2	38,5
Dwelling area	*metropolis*	30	25,9	32,2	31,4	35,7	32,4	41,9	29,6	34,8	34,2	35,5	35,7
	population > 200'000	40,1	35,7	32,9	32,1	31,7	34,8	32,4	26,9	36	36,2	35,8	29,9
	> 100'000	40,1	32,6	33,1	34,3	36,5	35,2	32,4	27,9	33,1	33	33,6	32,6
	< 100'000	39,9	34,5	35,8	39,3	46,1	36,8	35,2	22,7	32,6	31,3	30,2	29,1
	rural area	45,8	33,8	35,3	35,5	35,8	39,6	35,4	23,6	28,4	29,4	30,1	28,8

The three tables above were constructed using data from the Association for the Promotion of Clean Elections 2005 to 2021 reports. Data on turnout rates, party voted, and party support were divided into five categories: job type, age group, sex, highest diploma obtained and dwelling area. For each category, cells belonging to the same year have been filled using a colour scale that goes from bright red (lower value) to bright green (higher value). For instance, if we look at the turnout rate for job

category in 2021 elections, we see that the self-employed have the lowest value (68%, bright red) and managers/executives the highest (90%, bright green). For party support, a comparison between LDP party supporters and no-party supporters has been made. The decision to only include the LDP was made with the intent of tracing a comparison between the share of supporters of what has historically been Japan's largest party in terms of electorate base and that of people who do not support any party. Results will show that even Japan's largest party has struggled – and still struggles – to win over more voters than those who plead to be non-partisans, offering an important insight on Japanese voters' political attitudes (see Table 6 for reference).

The relation between voting trends and job type shows a few recurring patterns. Managers and executives consistently maintain the highest percentages in turnout rates and LDP vote, while also scoring pretty high in percentage of LDP supporters and among the lowest in the 'no party supported' category. Temporary workers (*haken shain* in Japanese), conversely, occupy the lowest positions both in turnout rate, LDP vote and LDP support, while having a relatively high share of "no party support". Interestingly enough, students seem to be the most volatile category in term of voting outcomes: in 2009 and 2014, for instance, they were the category with most LDP votes at the proportional ballot (35% and 50% respectively), while in 2012 the percentage dropped to an historically low 7,7%. They also consistently maintained the lowest levels of LDP support and the highest levels of non-partisanship. The unemployed present the lowest percentage of "no party support" respondents. This is in part explained by the fact that the category includes retirement pension receiver, who are likely used to more traditional political dynamics of party affiliation. This hypothesis is consistent with data on age groups. Respondents aged 70 or older have the highest score in terms of LDP support and the lowest in terms of no party support. Even in occasion of 2009 elections, when the LDP lost its majority in favour of the DPJ, levels of LDP support among the over 70s remained almost unaltered, and the LDP share of votes among respondents over 80 years old was actually higher than in 2005. The trend for the youngest age groups (20-29 until 2014 and 18-29 from 2017) is almost symmetrically opposite. Turnout rate and LDP support have been the lowest from 2005 to 2021, while non-partisanship has remained high at consistent levels. Observing subsequent age groups (30-39, 40-49 etc.) a similar, but less emphasized, pattern emerges. For turnout rates and LDP support a progressively lighter red is noticeable, while an increasingly lighter green characterizes the no party support values. Overall, age seems to have a strong correlation with political parameters described above. Looking at one more statistic derived from the Association for Promoting Clean Elections surveys data, this correlation appears even more evident.

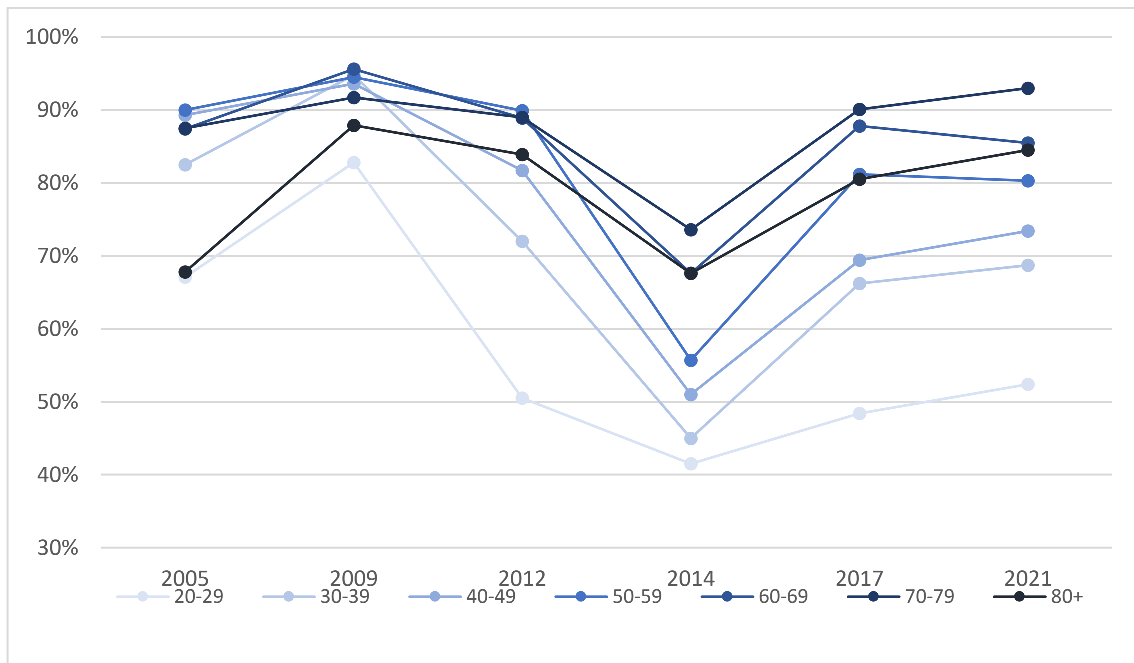

Figure 16 Interest in elections by age group at Lower House elections 2005-2021 (made by the author based on Association for Promoting Clean Elections surveys 2005-2021)

Figure 16 displays interest in elections by age group. Once again, younger generations show low and decreasing levels of interest, with a negative peak of 41,5% in 2014. With the only exception of 80-year-olds or higher, interest follows a distribution that is directly proportional to age. In all elections, 50-59, 60-69 and 70-79 respondents were far more interested in elections than younger voters, with percentages often exceeding 90%.

Differences in voting behaviour between genders are also observed, although they do not present significant differences with previous studies. Men have a slightly higher turnout rate, share of LDP voters and LDP supporters. While these are generally small variations, no-party support is the only value that is significantly higher for women. As Flanagan points out, being the LDP's support base stronger in rural areas where traditional, patriarchal family ties are more rooted, its popularity amongst men has been historically higher.[78]

In terms of education, one of the most immediately obvious features is the consistently high level of LDP support and the low levels of no party support among those with only a junior high school diploma. Once again, this seems to be consistent with the fact that older age groups are more rarely non-partisans and often support the LDP. As the percentage of younger generations with less than a high school diploma is close to zero, it is reasonable to assume that there might be a considerable overlapping between the junior high school or lower category and the older age groups category. Some interesting observations for those with a university degree or higher can be made.

[78] (Flanagan and McDonald 1977)

First, they have had the highest turnout rate in all elections from 2005 to 2021. Although this does not necessarily say much about the characteristics of this category of voters, since those with a university degree or higher occupy a fair percentage in almost each age group up to 50 and 60 (Figure 17), this partly goes against what Kabashima described to be the general trend in political participation in post-war Japan – up to the 1994 reform. In other words, it shows that the statement "people with lower levels of education participate in politics more than those with higher education diplomas" is not as true as it was for pre-1994 Japan.

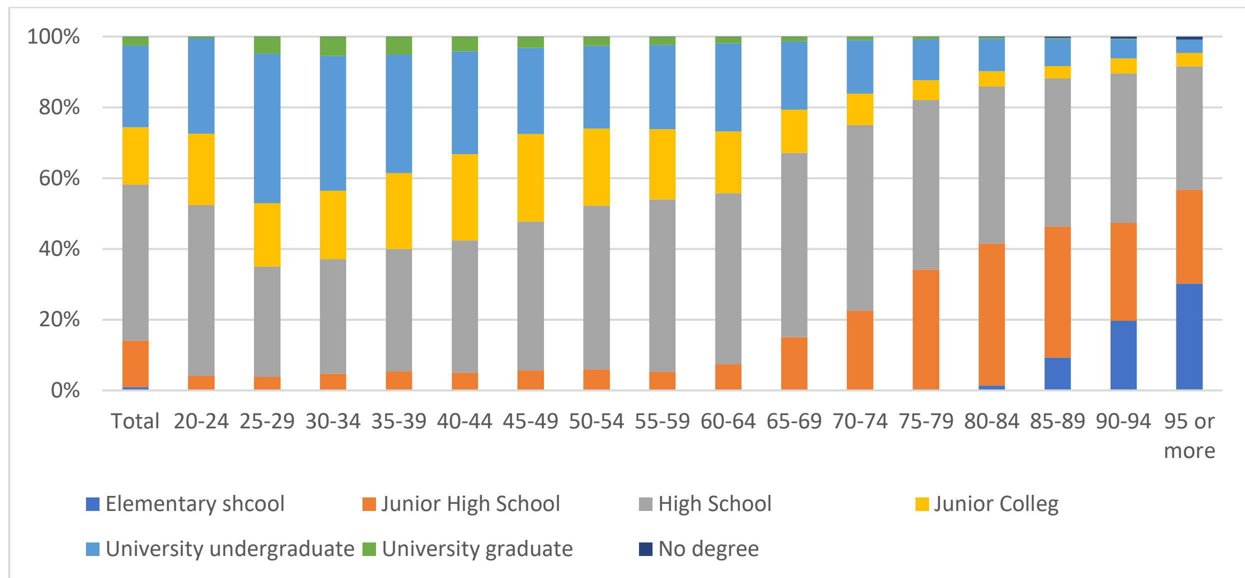

Figure 17 Highest diploma by age group in 2020 (made by the author based on [国勢調査] data)

Finally, voting trends and political preferences seem to be quite consistent in their relationship with voters' dwelling area. Metropolis with more than 1 million inhabitants[79] present higher levels of non-partisanship as well as lower levels of LDP support and voting. This seems consistent with what will be discussed in the social network section below, which is that traditional ties among politicians and locals, on which LDP candidates built their electoral strategies in the 1955 system, are weaker in local cities and do not guarantee enough votes to secure election as in more rural areas.

Overall, trends described above seem to be generally consistent with past research on sociological factors and political behaviour. Based on data showed above, managerial positions or pension receiver status, advanced age, lower education and rural area/small village dwelling are all characteristics that would make for an ideal LDP voter and supporter. On the contrary, regular employees and students with higher education diplomas, mostly young and living in large cities are more likely not to vote or to vote and support other parties other than the LDP. Age appears to be

[79] As per the categorization adopted by the Association for Promoting Clean Elections: Tokyo (23 districts), Yokohama, Osaka, Nagoya, Sapporo, Fukuoka, Kanagawa, Kobe, Kyoto, Saitama, Hiroshima and Sendai.

an especially influential factor, as job type, level of education, and dwelling are at least in part associated with specific age groups.

3.2. Long-term influences: Social Networks

Although the social network approach has been mostly disregarded in favour of other approaches in western political analysis,[80] it found a wider adoption in research on Japan. According to ..., the nature of Japanese social networks – intended as interpersonal ties and associations of various level of formality at the local level – has no equivalent in western democracies, and its political implications can hardly be described through traditional structures applied in American or European political sciences.

The social network approach highlights the importance of formal and informal groups or organisations, at various degrees of localness, in conveying political messages in the form of political opinions, specifications on who to vote for or political information in general.[81] Just like the levels of formality of such groups can vary, the contents of their gatherings and messages exchanged between members can also be more or less political. More explicitly politically oriented groups include politicians' *kōenkai*, labour unions or citizen movements. These groups tend to have direct or indirect links with a specific party or candidate, and thus they usually present a well definite political orientation.[82] Among less politically engaged groups can be clubs for people with shared interests (*dokokai*), parent-teacher associations, and alumni associations (*dosokai*). In this case, although their political attitudes are not influenced directly, by becoming part of a specific environment, members will tend to assimilate ideas that emerge within it and develop views that align with its other members. Flanagan refers to this phenomenon as *reference group effect*.[83]

In Japan, social networks have been pointed out by many researchers to be a key element in shaping citizens' political views.[84] According to Flanagan, this might be due several factors, including:

1) Limitations on the use of media and other electoral campaigning means by the candidate. This makes the use of personal support groups or local assemblies in an outside the election period as an effective way to bypass these regulations.

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[80] (Flanagan, et al. 1991, 144)
[81] Ibid., 146
[82] (Weatherford 1982)
[83] (Flanagan, et al. 1991)
[84] Watanuki 1986 electoral mobilization in Kansai and California, Flanagan

2) Especially in the pre-electoral reform period, candidates' campaigns heavily stressed on personal ties with the locals. In addition, party loyalty was generally low among the electorate.
3) In Japan, this kind of small groups tend to make heavier demands on their members and require a higher level of conformity than in western countries. Thus, it is more likely that ideas circulating within a specific group will reach, to a certain extent, all of its members.

When describing the *kōenkai* of a Diet candidate in Beppu (Oita prefecture), Curtis explains how this kind of organization is intended to make up for strict limitations in electoral campaigning (including the use of media) and insufficient resources provided by LDP local branches. In addition, under the pre-1994 multi-member district system, gathering even a low percentage of 'hard vote' was usually enough to secure success at national elections.[85]

In more recent research, however, it has been suggested that electoral reform, severe limitations imposed on personal donations to politicians and traditional ties among locals growing weaker, the role of *kōenkai* and other networks is bound to become less relevant, and candidate will have to rely more on party local branches and non-personal contact with the electorate.[86]

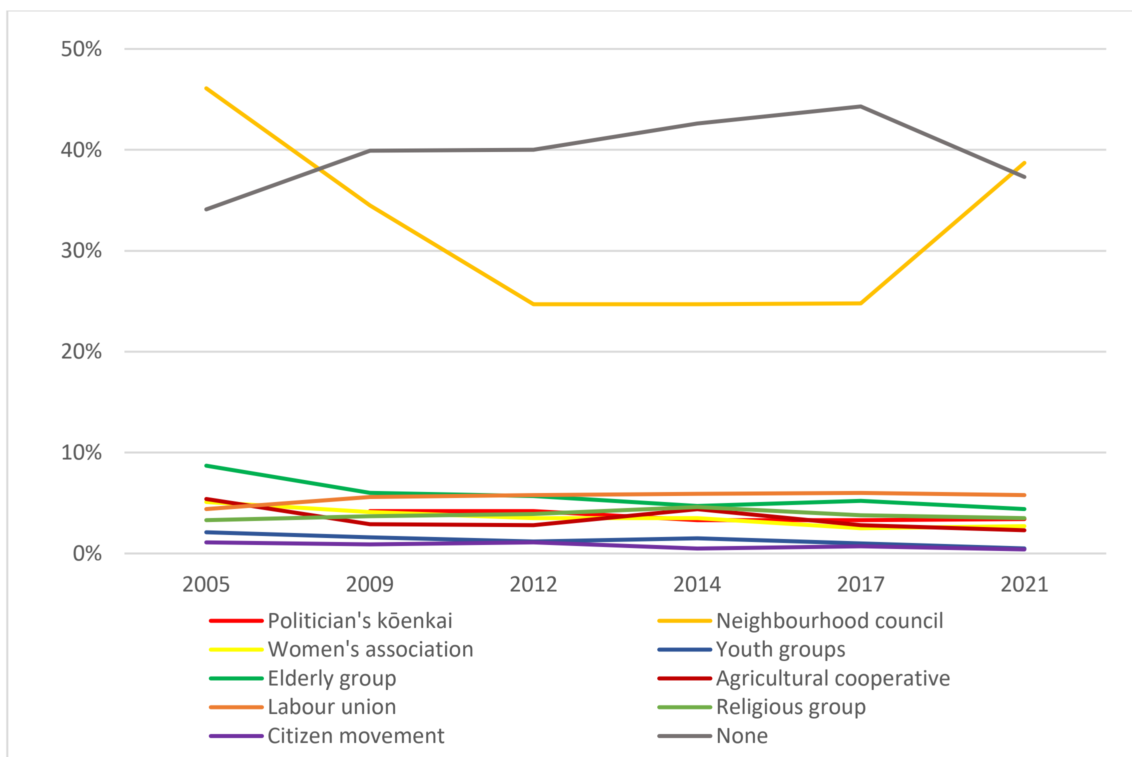

Figure 18 Membership for each group（made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協会 surveys data, 2005-2017）

[85] (G. J. Curtis 1971)
[86] (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011), (Abe, Shindo and Kawato 1994)

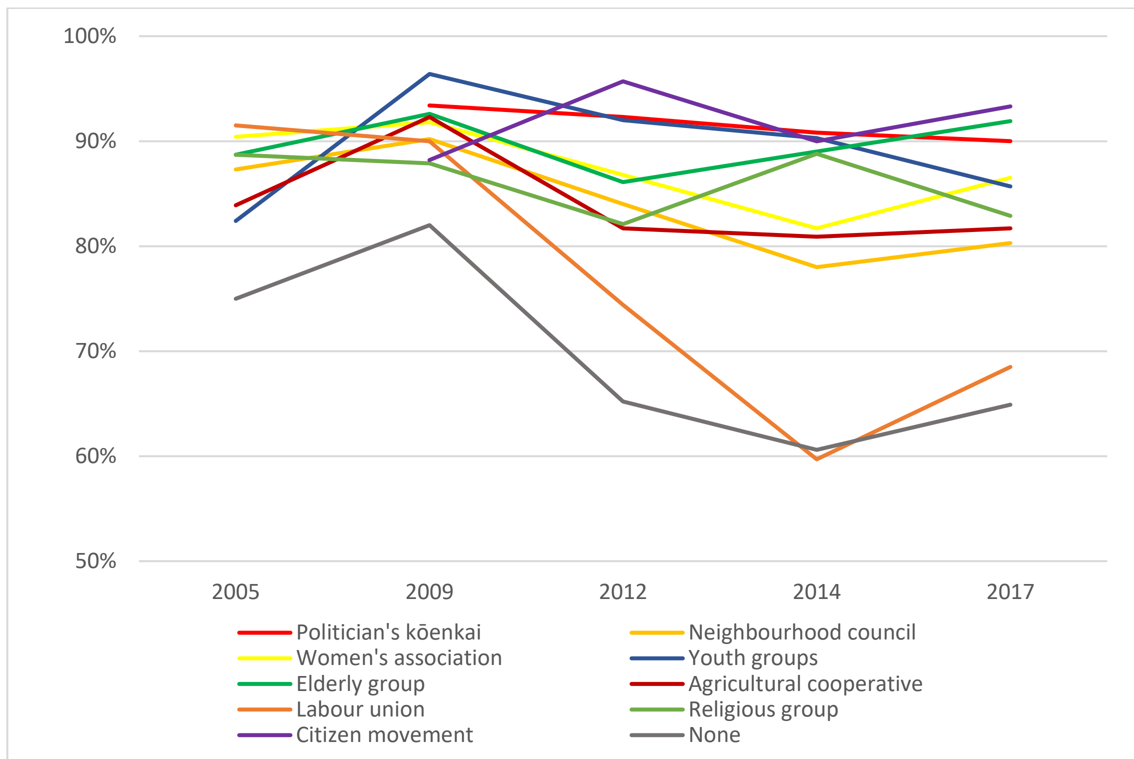

Figure 19 Turnout rate among members of each group （made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協会 surveys data, 2005-2017）

Figure 18 and Figure 19 show the percentage of members of each network group among respondents and the turnout rate among members of each group respectively. By far, neighbourhood councils seem to be the group with the highest number of members, although Figure 19 shows that turnout rate among their members has been decreasing considerably since 2009. It must also be considered that, while entering a neighbour association is not mandatory, it usually grants benefit to members, and can sometimes be problematic for non-members. In certain case, to rent an apartment or to make use of certain public facilities, a proof of *jichikai* membership might be – unlawfully – required. For instance, a recent episode saw a couple in Kobe being refused the use of a public garbage dump place for not paying the annual membership fee.[87] This considered, being a member of neighbourhood associations entails a higher level of social pressure than other groups, so the data above do not fully reflect citizens' willingness to take part in them. Overall, other social groups remain well below 10% and, despite not there being a sudden drop in the number of members, the trend seems to suggest a slow and progressive decrease in the long term. Nevertheless, data also show that social networks membership still comes hand in hand with high turnout rates. With the exception of labour unions, whose share of members who voted at elections has sharply decreased since 2009, all groups maintain relatively high percentages that rarely go

[87] [産経新聞 2022]

below the 80% threshold. Age does not seem to have a strong impact on this tendency either, as both elderly groups and youth groups have very similar performances in term of turnout rates amongst their members (91% and 86% respectively at 2021 elections). The vast majority of respondents, however, belongs to the non-affiliated. This category surpassed local neighbourhoods in 2009 and remained the largest group until 2021, when the latter saw a sudden increased from 25% to 39%.

3.3. Short-term influences

3.3.1. Political issues in 2005-2021 elections

In pre-reform Japan, issues are said to have been playing a minor role in shaping political behaviour.[88] In his analysis of the major twelve issues at the time, divided into four major categories (money politics issues, economic issues, cultural politics issues and foreign relations with communist countries issues), Flanagan concludes that only cultural politics issues present a relevant correlation with voting behaviour.[89] However, this is also due to the fact that cultural politics issues are long-standing issues around which parties have shaped, and thus are probably more indicative of party support rather than citizens' interest on specific issues. In addition, the pre-reform multi-member district system saw candidates from the same party compete against each other in most districts, thus making the stress on specific issues a less effective electoral strategy in comparison to other forms of personal appeal. However, adds Flanagan, political issues do present a certain degree of effectiveness in reinforcing pre-existing party preferences – or weakening them in case of poor policy formulation by the party – and mobilizing voters during elections, as in the case of the Japan Post privatization bill in 2005 elections.

Past elections showed a significant increase in the importance given by voters to issues discussed both at the party and candidate level. Policies discussed at the party level saw a peak of 64,7% of relevance in 2012. Being it the first House of Representative elections after DPJ's three-year long administration, it is reasonable to think that voters were particularly careful with policies presented by each party. The three DPJ administrations were indeed quite unsuccessful in several fields, including public finance and welfare policies.[90] Equally, candidate policies influence increased significantly in 2012 a remained on similar levels until 2021. Candidate image, on the other hand,

[88] (Flanagan, et al. 1991, 296)
[89] Ibid. 269
[90] [持田 2019]

has seen an overall, yet slight, decrease from 2005 to 2021. While in 2005 it had approximately the same level of influence on voters' choice as party and candidate policies, while the latter two kept growing in subsequent elections, candidate image has not gained in relevance, maintaining itself on slightly lower levels than the pre-2009 period.

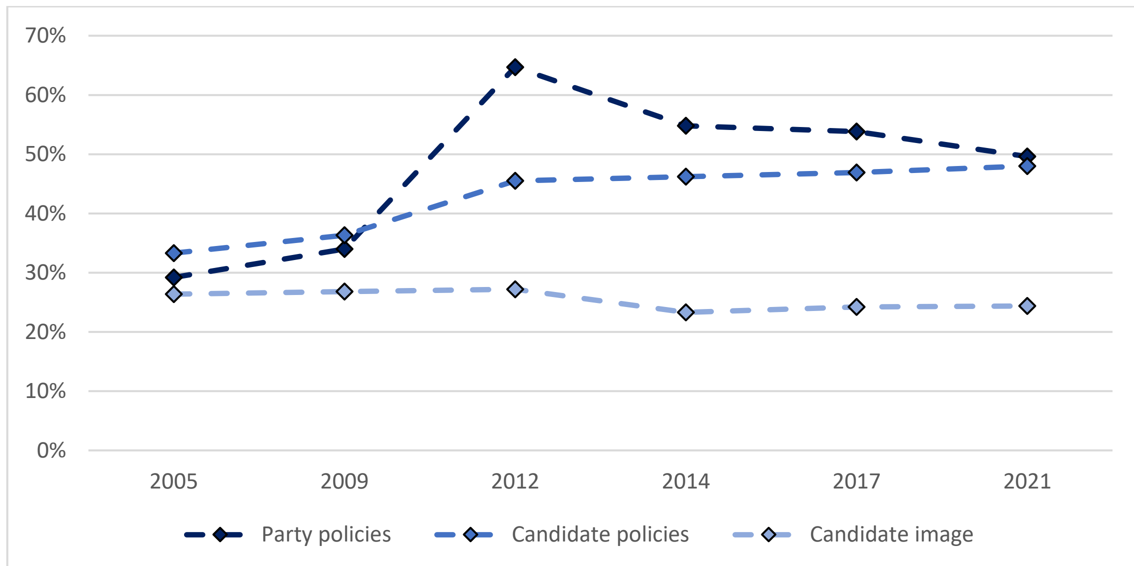

Figure 20 "What did you take into consideration when choosing a candidate?" (Made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協 data, 2005-2021)

Table 10 digs more in detail into the main policies taken into consideration by voters at 2005-2021 Lower House elections, sorted by category. It can be observed that policy types have remained almost unaltered from Flanagan's categorization. Welfare policies include healthcare and elderly caregiving, childcare and education, and invalidity and retirement pensions. According to the surveys, they all had a considerable impact on voting choices, especially in later elections. Both healthcare and childcare have increased, with the latter having more than doubled in its influence (16,6% to 35,5%). On the other hand, the pension issue has decreased over the years, from 58,6% in 2005 to 39,1% in 2021. Economic policies significantly attract voters' focus at elections too. Revitalization of the economy and consumption tax, in particular, were indicated as policies voters have considered before elections in at least 30% of the cases since 2005. In 2009, the former reached a record 64,9%. This is hardly surprising, as economic revitalization and introduction – and subsequent raising – of consumption tax have been at the centre of politicians' electoral campaign for almost three decades.[91]

[91] [持田 2019]

	Policy	2005	2009	2012	2014	2017	2021
Welfare	**Healthcare/caregiving**	46,4%	59,1%	41,3%	48,4%	51,1%	52,5%
	Childcare/education	16,6%	31,1%	26,7%	29,0%	34,7%	35,3%
	Pensions	58,6%	64,1%	43,2%	48,6%	45,1%	39,1%
Economy	**Economy revitalization**	32,8%	64,3%	62,0%	55,9%	46,2%	52,2%
	Employment measures			29,7%	24,1%	20,7%	23,6%
	Consumption tax	35,2%	36,5%	38,8%	38,0%	30,4%	19,3%
	Public finance	16,2%	25,3%		18,8%	17,5%	20,8%
Cultural	**Nuclear energy**	8,7%	25,4%	32,3%	23,6%	16,7%	14,9%
	Gender equality					2,6%	5,6%
	Constitution amendment	8,2%	7,8%	11,1%	13,7%	22,3%	11,9%
Foreign relations	**Diplomacy/Defence**	8,2%	12,6%	27,4%	17,4%	21,9%	18,0%
	TPP	8,2%	12,2%	17,4%	7,0%	3,1%	

Table 10 "What policy did you consider in these elections?" (made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協会 data, 2005-2021）

Although not as important as economic and welfare policies, the use of nuclear plants as energy resource, the amendment of the constitution – and especially of article 9 – and diplomacy/defence related issues have been taken into consideration by a fairly high percentage of respondents. Gender equality was included in the survey from 2017, and while it remains considerably lower than other issues in terms of interest, its growth in importance in future elections cannot be excluded.[92] In 2021, most of the above-mentioned issues appear to have diminished in importance. This is in part due to the much more urgent COVID-19 pandemic crisis, that shifted the attention from other, less pressing policies. On the 2021 survey, 40,1% of the respondents declared to have taken COVID-19 measures into consideration. This is hypothesis also seems to be in accordance with the fact that both healthcare and economic revitalization measures – both closely related to the pandemic emergency – were the only two major policies that actually saw a significant increase in their attention by voters (they rose to 52,2% and 52,5% respectively).

3.3.2. Media influences in 2005-2021 elections

Mass media can influence citizens' political attitudes both in the short- and long-term. In the short-term, they can turn the support of the electorate towards a certain candidate or party by portraying them either in a positive or negative light. In the long-term, they can shape citizens' political values

[92] [NHK 選挙 WEB 2021]

and views on parties, candidates or socio-economic issues.[93] In Japan, the role of media in the pre-1994 electoral system was considered to be quite limited.[94] In contrast with the US, for example, Japanese electoral districts are smaller and guarantee a closer contact with candidates which, in most cases, overrules the influence of media. In addition, social networks and local ties among citizens already provide an extensive amount of information on elections and candidates, thus making the role of media superfluous in many cases. Kim also observes that Japanese media are often ambiguous in their stance on political issues and avoid any kind of partisanship, thus significantly weakening their efficacy in influencing political attitudes.[95] One last reason, mentioned in the previous section as well, is that the use of media by politician is severely restricted, and the way in which candidates' electoral speeches are aired on television could not be "more poorly designed for influencing voting decisions".[96]

Following the diffusion of the Internet, however, some of the limitations to the political efficacy of media seem to be less valid. First, traditional social networks and neighbourhood links that once served as the primary source of political information are no longer as strong, as seen in the section dedicated to social networks above. Especially in large cities, where this dissolution of traditional bonds is even more advanced, the replacement of local ties with online networks of people with shared views on politics could be a possible outcome. Second, restrictions on the use of blogs or social media by politicians are much looser than those for traditional media.[97] Most politician now have social media accounts where they can post politically dense contents (tweets, Instagram posts etc.) without as many limitations, and considered the virtually infinite potential of spreading online contents, this is likely to have a deep impact on a considerably large share of the population, especially the young.

[93] (Flanagan, et al. 1991)
[94] Ibid.
[95] (Kim 1981)
[96] (Flanagan, et al. 1991)
[97] [総務省 2022]

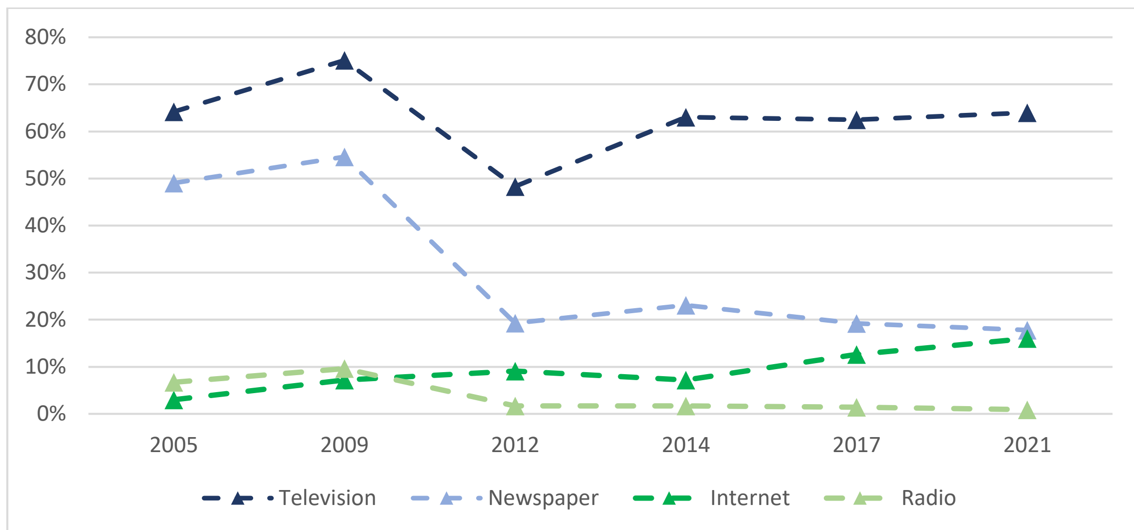

Figure 21 "What media did you use for these elections?" 2005-2021 （made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協会 data）

An increasing number of respondents have declared to have used some kind of Internet platform to gather information on elections, from 3,0% in 2005 to 16% in 2021 (Figure 21). In addition, starting from 2012, an entirely new section of the survey dedicated to the various uses of the Internet was introduced (Figure 22). Although the most common method remains looking up for news and information on elections through websites, the use of party and candidate's blog and social media have risen both in 2017 (9%, 5%) and 2021 (10%, 8%). The use of platforms for video sharing such as YouTube seems to have grown more popular as well, going from 2% to 7% in the last three elections. Although very few respondents declared to have posted political comments on social media (such as support or critique to a party or a candidate), this number is slightly rising. Flanagan made similar observations in chapter 4 on social networks, stating that Japanese tend not to express their political opinion as freely as in western democracies, but rather to refer to a group leader, who is usually somebody with more solid views and knowledge on political matters.[98] In respect to the perception of the utility of each form of online political activity, an increase can be observed both in 2017 and 2021.

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[98] (Flanagan, et al. 1991)

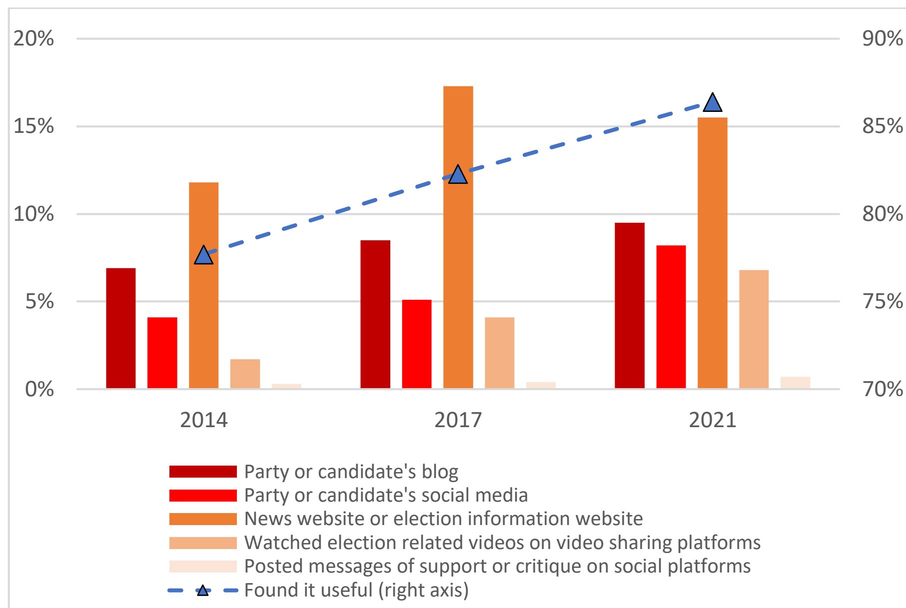


Figure 22 Uses of Internet for electoral purposes and perception of their usefulness in 2014, 2017 and 2021 (made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協会 data, 2014-2017)

The use of the Internet is also very unequally distributed across age groups. Despite the fact that people aged 18-29 tend to participate less to politics (Tables 6, 7 and 8), they use online platforms to obtain political information at almost double the rates of any other generation. From 2017 to 2021, the number of people aged 18 to 29 who used the Internet this way almost doubled in size (14% to 27%). Nonetheless, this percentage is increasing across all age groups, with the only exception being, quite predictably, the older categories. As the use of the Internet for political purposes is showing extremely fast increase rates, monitoring election surveys of the next few years might bring to light very interesting trends.

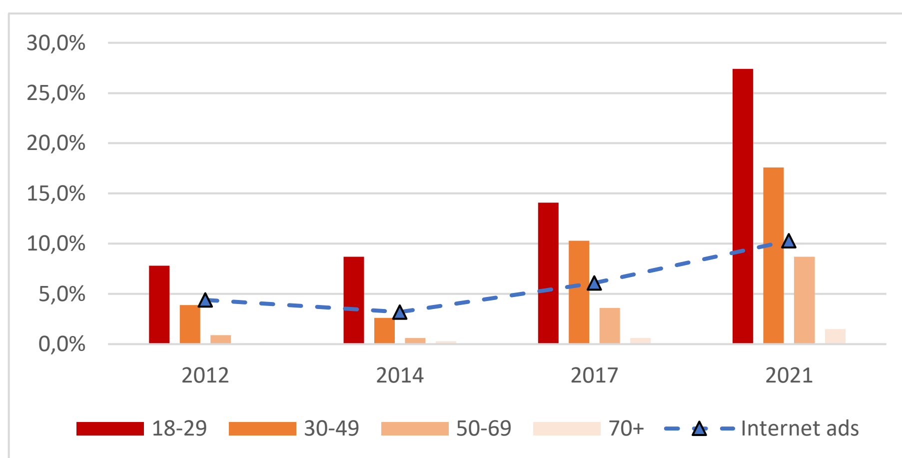


Figure 23 Use of Internet for electoral purposes across age groups (made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協会 data, 2012-2021）

TV and newspaper are following different patterns. Neither a sudden drop nor a sharp increase are observable in the various uses that are made during elections of these two more traditional media. For newspapers, the last two elections have seen a decrease in the number of those who read both candidate and party advertising on newspapers (34% to 26% and 31% to 22% respectively) (Figure 24). However, until 2014, the percentage had been actually rising at a similar rate, making it so that 2005 and 2021 present very similar statistics.

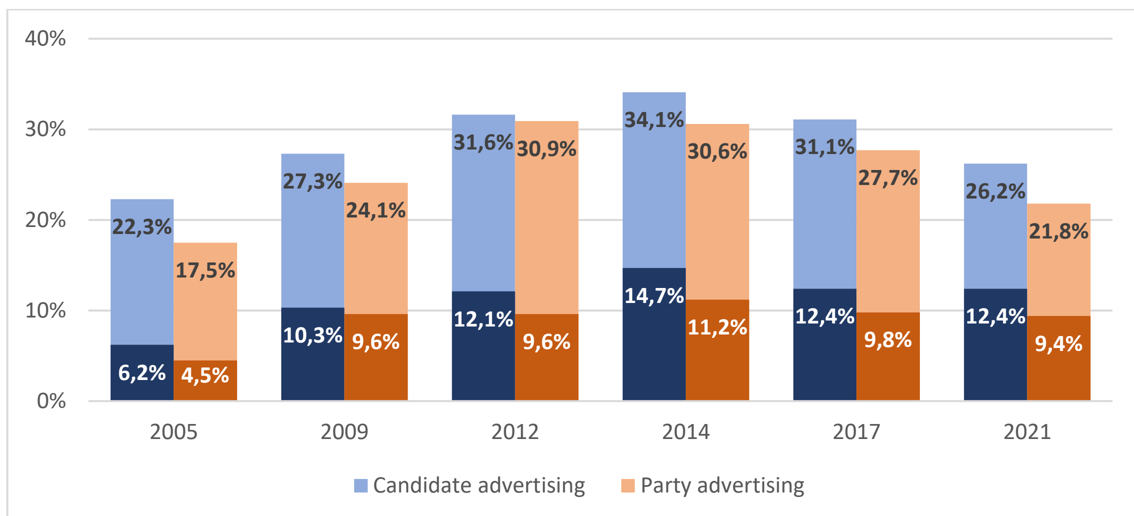


Figure 24 Fruition of newspaper political advertising and perception of their usefulness (made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協会 data, 2005-2021)

Similarly, trends for TV use for political purposes are not headed to a definite direction. Overall, watchers of Party political broadcasts, a TV program where parties hold a public presentation of their key policies for the incoming elections, have slightly diminished (52,4% in 2009 to 38,5% in 2021). On the other hand, candidate's broadcasts, where candidates present their policies individually, have seen a slight and steady increase, from 37,8% in 2005 to 43% in 2021.

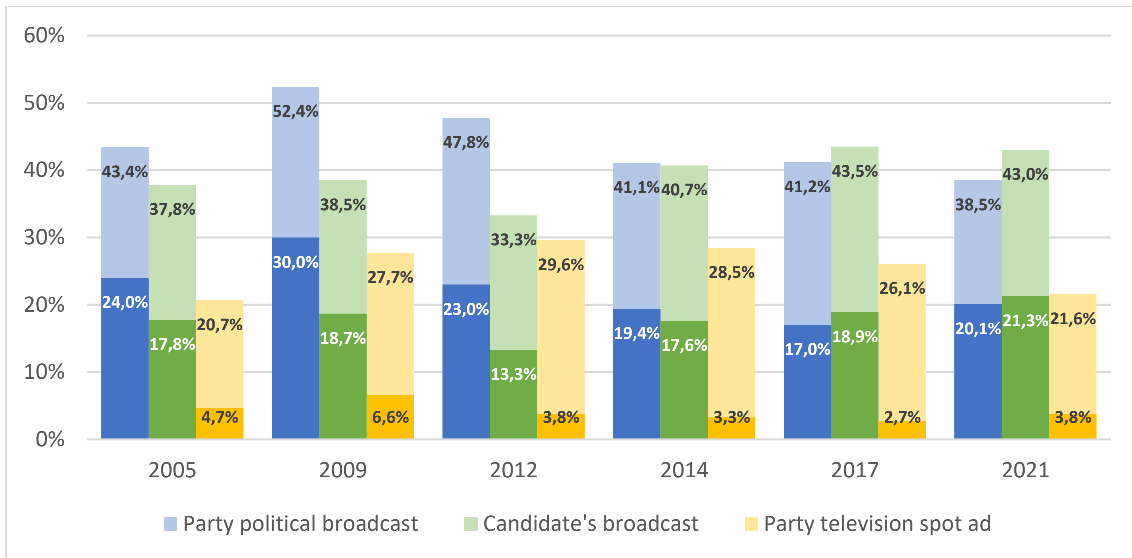


Figure 25 Fruition of TV political advertising and perception of their utility (made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協会 data, 2005-2021)

Party TV advertisement has been fluctuating from low levels in 2005 (20,7%), to a maximum of 29,6% in 2012 and to another negative peak in 2021, with only 21,6% of the respondents watching them and only 3,8% finding them useful as a means of political information.

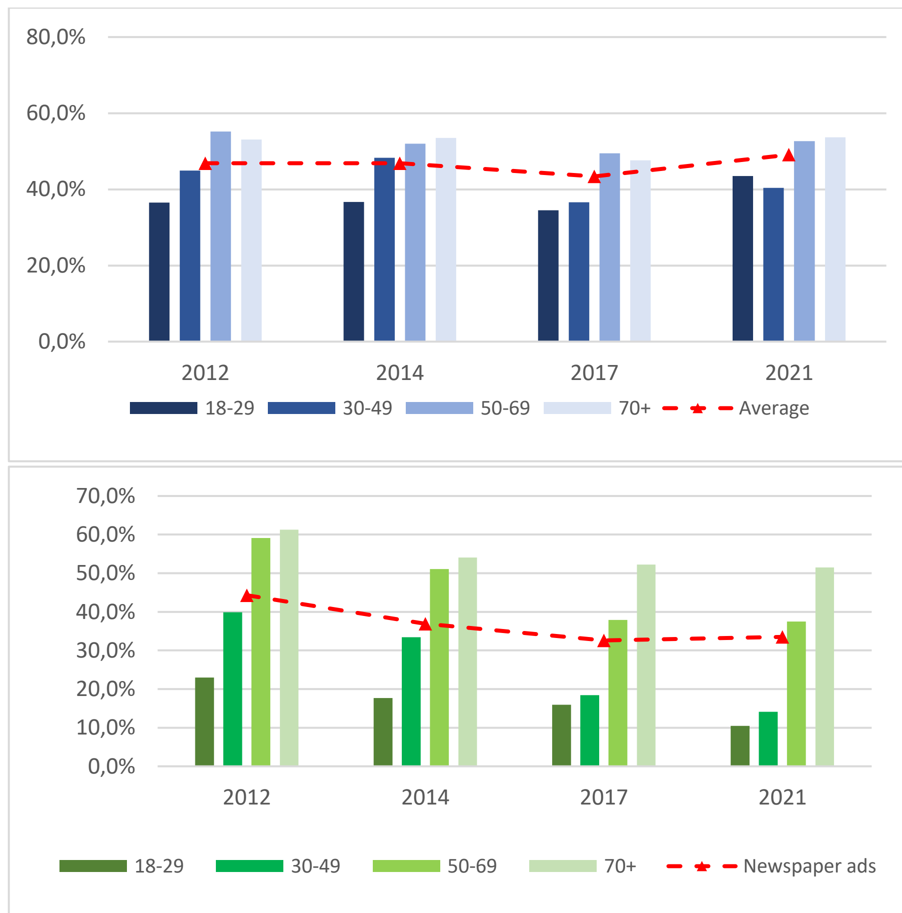


Figure 26 Use of TV (top) and newspapers (bottom) as means of information before elections 2012-2021 (made by the author based on 明るい選挙推進協会 data, 2005-2021)

In general, the use of media for political purposes seems to be, at least in part, an age-related phenomenon. Newspapers and TV, longer-established media, are more widespread amongst older generations. In particular, the use of newspapers is becoming less frequent among young generations at a much faster pace, and even among people over 70, whose percentage of newspaper users is relatively higher and steadier, trends seem to suggest a slow decline in the use of this form of political media. On the other hand, online political activities are following an opposite trend. They are reaching a widespread diffusion among younger generations, and their use is increasing at a faster rate. However, despite being still quite an underutilized media, use amongst older generations is increasing at slower but steady rates (Figure 23).

4. Influences on voting preferences in Tokyo

4.1. An overview of socio-economic features in Tokyo and analysis methods

As mentioned in the introduction, unique features in Tokyo socio-economic environment leave space for reasonable expectations about differences in its citizens' political behaviour. The "initial assumptions" section of the introductory chapter included sociological and demographic factors as reasonable starting point to assume that Tokyo political landscape could present some degree of uniqueness. Chapter 3 has shown that the two elements have indeed influenced Japanese citizens' participation, voting choices and party support in Lower House elections since 2005. Age, education, occupational category and dwelling area all had a more or less strong correlation with citizens' political attitudes. In particular, age was pointed out as a strong influence that reflects on other sociological factors as well. In chapter 3 it was shown that education and occupation type can be to some extent associated with age, as older citizens tend to be less educated and most of them fall under the "unemployed" category of occupation (Figure 17). As Figure 27 and Figure 28 show, Japan and Tokyo population structure is quite different. In Tokyo, both the youngest and the oldest age groups occupy a much smaller percentage in Tokyo's case, with people aged 30 to 60 accounting for the largest group both for men and women. The fact that this interval corresponds to a citizen's usual working age suggests that, in Tokyo, people whose hometown is not Tokyo and move there for employment reasons might still represent a significant demographic phenomenon as Flanagan had previously suggested.[99] As for dwelling area, we have seen that large metropolis tend to have the largest number of non-partisans and the lowest share of LDP supporters. This tendency is reversed for small villages. If we suppose that Tokyo behaves accordingly to this tendency, it is reasonable to expect a more politically detached electorate, with high levels of non-partisanship and low turnout rates.

Chapter 4 will be divided into four sections, each one presenting and analysing data from Tokyo Metropolitan Government Election Administration Commission's surveys on House of Representative elections 2005-2021. The first one will look at sociological factors such as age, occupation and dwelling area (23 central districts or rural area) and their correlation with turnout rate, interest in elections and preferences for candidates or parties. Subsequently, influence of social networks – divided into three categories of family and friends, *koenkai* and other types of organization – on citizens' voting choices will be taken into consideration. The third and fourth

[99] (Flanagan, et al. 1991)

sections will focus on media effects, with the former that will look at more 'traditional' media such as TV and newspapers, while the latter will explore the case of Internet and its use to gather political information.

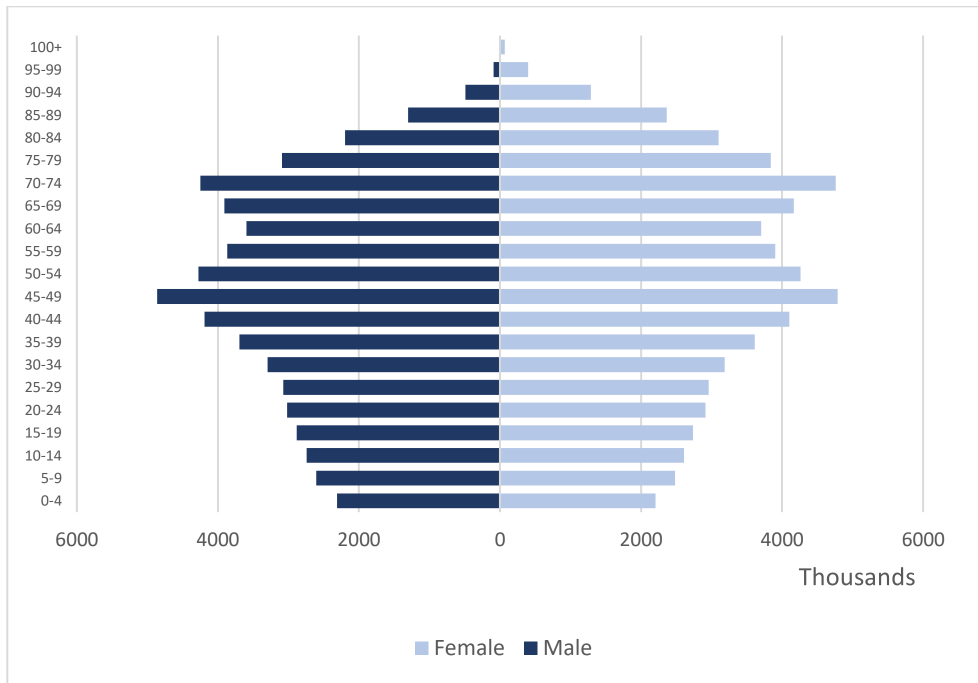


Figure 27 Japan's population pyramid (made by the author based on e-stat 2020 data)

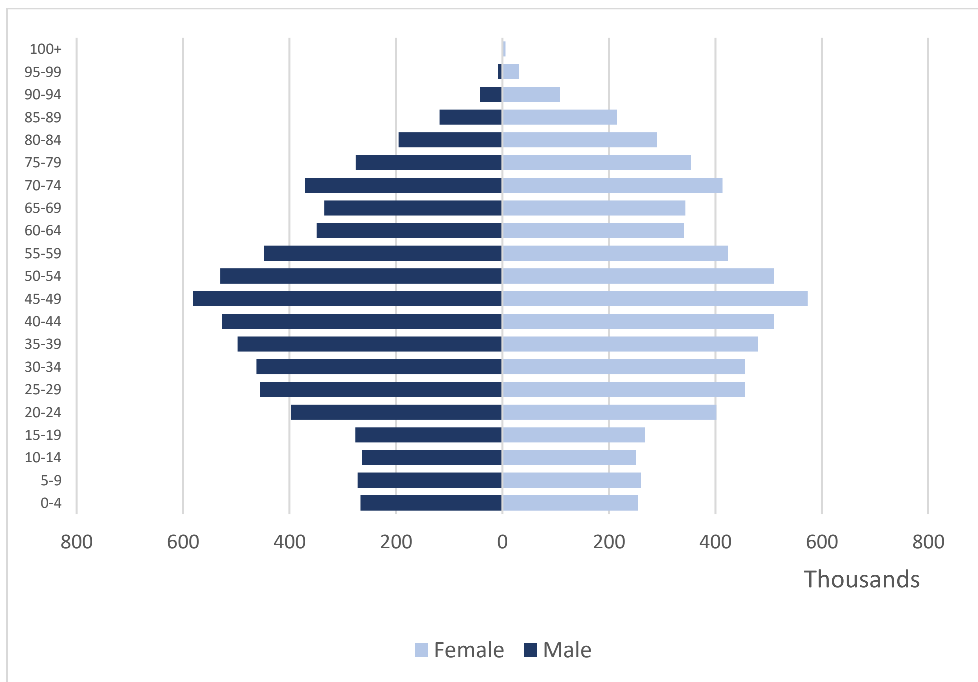


Figure 28 Tokyo's population pyramid (made by the author based on e-stat 2020 data)

In some surveys, other sociological elements such as type of dwelling (house owner or rent), length of dwelling and type of household appear, but not in a consistent manner that would allow for a

thorough chronological analysis. Thus, they will not be included in the following analysis. Contrary to the Association for Promoting Clean Election surveys, Tokyo Government Committee for Election Administration surveys present a stronger focus on social features such as age, occupation and dwelling area. These become the term of comparison for all factors of influence such as media use, issues and candidate preferences and internet use for political purposes. In this way of representing voters' attitudes and preferences, social factors become a key metric through which to measure all the elements that helped shape citizens' choice at specific elections. In other words, sociological factors, intended as long-term influences in voting behaviour, are placed on an overriding position compared to short-term influences. This view is not necessarily at odds with the approach adopted in chapter 3. In chapter 3, short-term influences – specifically policy issues, candidate image, political media and internet – were treated in a mostly independent manner from long-term ones. Tokyo Government Committee's data add another layer of correlation between the two. In chapter 2 it was mentioned that short-term influences could be influenced by long-standing political views or attitudes such as party support. Here, long-term sociological factors acquire a similar role, as they become a filter through which voters perceive policy issues and candidates and seek access to various sources of political information. In this chapter, the relationship with sociological factors will be analysed for both political attitudes (voting choice, interest in elections and preferences for candidates or party) and for data on social networks. As for the use of traditional media and internet for political purposes, data will be divided only by age groups, so to assess how the use of these media varies across generations in Tokyo and to create a consistent comparison with findings in chapter 3.

Social networks also receive a different treatment in these surveys compared to those of the Association for Promoting Clean Elections. Contacts with organizations, kōenkai, and pattern of influence on voting choice among friends and family are mentioned, but they are presented as other short-term parameters in a similar way to media influences. In this case, *affiliation* or *membership* are not mentioned, and the focus shifts to contacts with one of these groups in time of elections. This approach resembles more closely chapter 6 of Flanagan's "The Japanese Voter", which considers social network elements in a short-term perspective. In other words, kōenkai and other organizations are treated as if they were mechanisms 'activated' in time of elections to approach voters and influence their choice. Despite the different approach, gathering data on the frequency of social network contacts (including family and friends) still provides us with a glimpse of how these political mechanisms of influence are changing overtime. Thus, although long-term metrics such as

membership are not directly mentioned, some long-term observations on the effect of social networks on voting behaviour can still be made indirectly.

4.2. Sociological factors and political attitudes

In chapter 3, it was argued that, among an array of sociological factors including age, education and occupation, age was seen as a major determinant in political attitudes such as turnout rate, voting choices, and party support. Even when recurring patterns were observed between other sociological factors and political preferences, a further correlation between such factors and age could be observed, as it is the case for occupation, where most of the older group account for the "unemployed" category, and higher degree obtained, since most of those with lower levels of education belong to higher age groups.

The first parameter to be analysed is turnout rate. As Table 11 shows, since the post-war period, turnout rate was consistently higher in Japan, with differences of more than 10-point percentage not being uncommon. Some of the highest difference peaks were seen in 1952 (14,2%) and 1979 (14,8%). 2012 elections saw Tokyo surpassing Japan's average for the first time since World War II ended, with a 2,9% difference in favour of the capital. This result repeated itself in both 2014 and 2021.

Year	Tokyo	Japan	Variation (Tokyo)	Variation (Japan)	Highest	Difference
1946	66,5%	72,1%			Japan	5,6%
1947	60,4%	68,0%	-9,1%	-5,7%	Japan	7,6%
1949	61,6%	74,0%	2,1%	9,0%	Japan	12,4%
1952	62,2%	76,4%	1,0%	3,2%	Japan	14,2%
1953	61,9%	74,2%	-0,5%	-2,9%	Japan	12,3%
1955	66,4%	75,8%	7,2%	2,2%	Japan	9,5%
1958	69,7%	77,0%	5,1%	1,5%	Japan	7,2%
1960	63,4%	73,5%	-9,1%	-4,5%	Japan	10,1%
1963	60,1%	71,1%	-5,3%	-3,2%	Japan	11,1%
1967	64,2%	74,0%	6,9%	4,0%	Japan	9,8%
1969	56,4%	68,5%	-12,3%	-7,4%	Japan	12,2%
1972	62,2%	71,8%	10,4%	4,7%	Japan	9,5%
1976	64,6%	73,5%	3,7%	2,4%	Japan	8,9%
1979	53,2%	68,0%	-17,6%	-7,4%	Japan	14,8%
1980	67,5%	74,6%	26,9%	9,6%	Japan	7,1%
1983	59,0%	67,9%	-12,6%	-8,9%	Japan	8,9%
1986	61,1%	71,4%	3,6%	5,1%	Japan	10,3%
1990	65,6%	73,3%	7,3%	2,7%	Japan	7,8%
1993	60,2%	67,3%	-8,1%	-8,3%	Japan	7,1%
1996	56,5%	59,7%	-6,1%	-11,3%	Japan	3,1%
2000	60,5%	62,5%	6,9%	4,8%	Japan	2,0%

2003	58,4%	59,9%	-3,5%	-4,2%	Japan	1,5%
2005	65,6%	67,5%	12,4%	12,8%	Japan	1,9%
2009	66,4%	69,3%	1,2%	2,6%	Japan	2,9%
2012	**62,2%**	**59,3%**	**-6,3%**	**-14,4%**	**Tokyo**	**2,9%**
2014	**54,4%**	**52,7%**	**-12,6%**	**-11,2%**	**Tokyo**	**1,7%**
2017	53,6%	53,7%	-1,3%	1,9%	Japan	0,0%
2021	**57,2%**	**55,9%**	**6,7%**	**4,2%**	**Tokyo**	**1,3%**

Table 11 Turnout rate at House of Representative elections in Tokyo and Japan, variation from previous elections and difference between the two (made by the author based on data from Ministry of Internal Affairs and Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee)

What can be derived from Table 11 is that turnout rate in Tokyo underwent a much slighter change. In Japan's capital, turnout rate never surpassed the 70% threshold and saw an overall smaller variation between post-war levels and recent elections. On the other hand, Japan's average saw way higher peaks up to the 70s, and declined at a much more consistent rate since then, reaching levels similar to Tokyo in the last two decades. Since 1996, difference in turnout rate had never been lower than 7%. In that year elections, it dropped to 3,1% and never went higher than 3% in subsequent elections. Although many hypotheses could be made in regard to this phenomenon, and a more comprehensive study of socio-economic changes across Japan, data from the last two decades seem to suggest that the whole country is slowly catching up to Tokyo's trends when it comes to political participation. Whether turnout rates are destined to drop at even lower levels, or they are reaching a negative plateau, it remains to be assessed.

Figures 30 and 31 represent how turnout rate changed across different sociological dimensions at 2005-2021 elections. Once again, age shows significant gaps between younger and older groups. Turnout rate in the 20-29 group (18-29 from 2017) is the lowest for all elections, maintaining an about 20% difference with groups with the highest turnout rates. 2014 saw a negative peak in Tokyo too, with only 52,3% of the respondents aged 20-29 declaring to have voted. Turnout rates tend to grow in a direct proportional way with age. It is observable that the 60-69 and 70 or older categories always occupy the top position, always remains well above 80%.

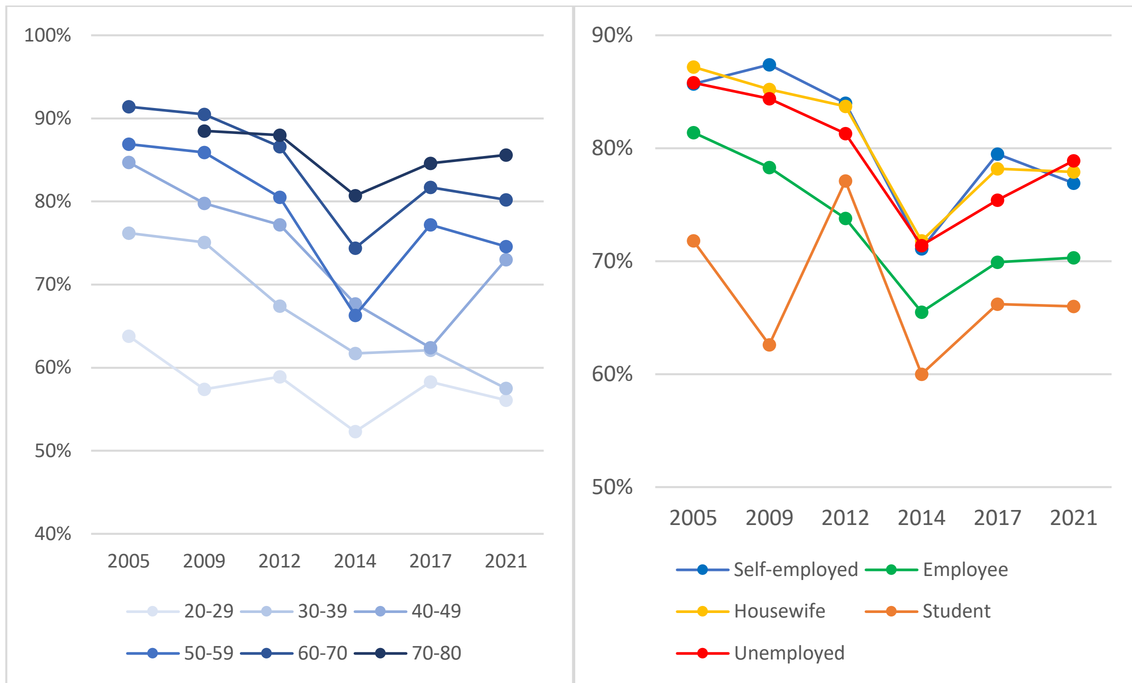


Figure 29 Turnout rate and age groups (left) and occupation (right) (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

Figure 30 Turnout rate and dwelling area (left), turnout rate and marriage status (right. Data were not available for 2005 elections) (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

Occupation shows a less clear pattern of correlation to turnout rate. Students are once again the lowest category in each election by a pretty large margin – it fluctuated from 10% to 15% lower than the highest categories – but other categories appear to be more interchangeable across elections. In particular, self-employed, housewife and unemployed are all characterized by similar turnout

rates among respondents. The employee category stands in a middle position between these three and student, dropping below the latter only in 2012 (73,8% against 77,1% for student).

The two other categories presented by the Election Administration Committee are dwelling area and marriage status. While dwelling area does not show consistent or significant variations between voters living in the 23 districts and voters living in Tama rural area – 2021 was the only expection, with 23 districts outnumbering rural area by more than 10% (77,5% against 66,7%) – marriage status lends itself to clearer interpretation. Married respondents have, in fact, participated at elections 20% more on average than unmarried people. Although surveys conducted by the Association for Promoting Clean Elections at the national level do not take marriage status into consideration, it shows a pretty stark contrast between the two categories which is, I believe, worth including in this paper. On the causes of this remarkable disparity, Nagao suggests that it might be in part related to the nature of neighbourhood associations such as *jichikai* and *chonaikai*, which tend to be formed by by married citizens, especially those who also have kids. This causes unmarried, divorced or bereaved citizens to find themselves somewhat excluded to these forms of 'collective' political participation, and thus less politically engaged.[100]

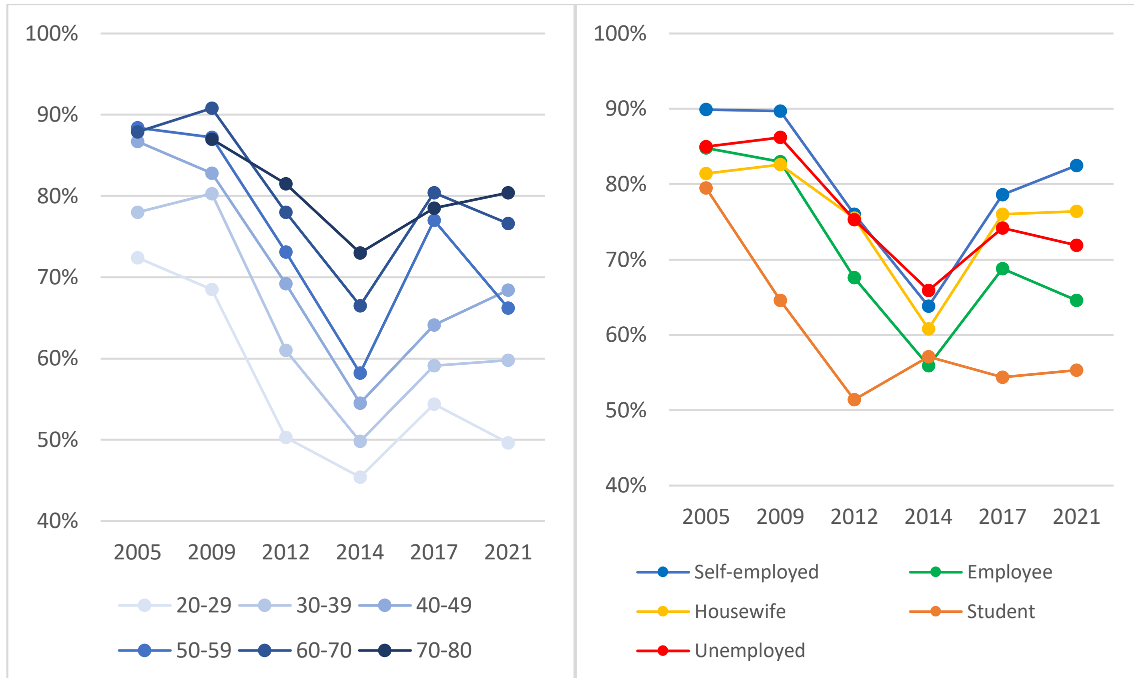


Figure 31 Age (left), occupation (right) and interest in current elections 2005-2021 (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

[100] [長尾 2015]

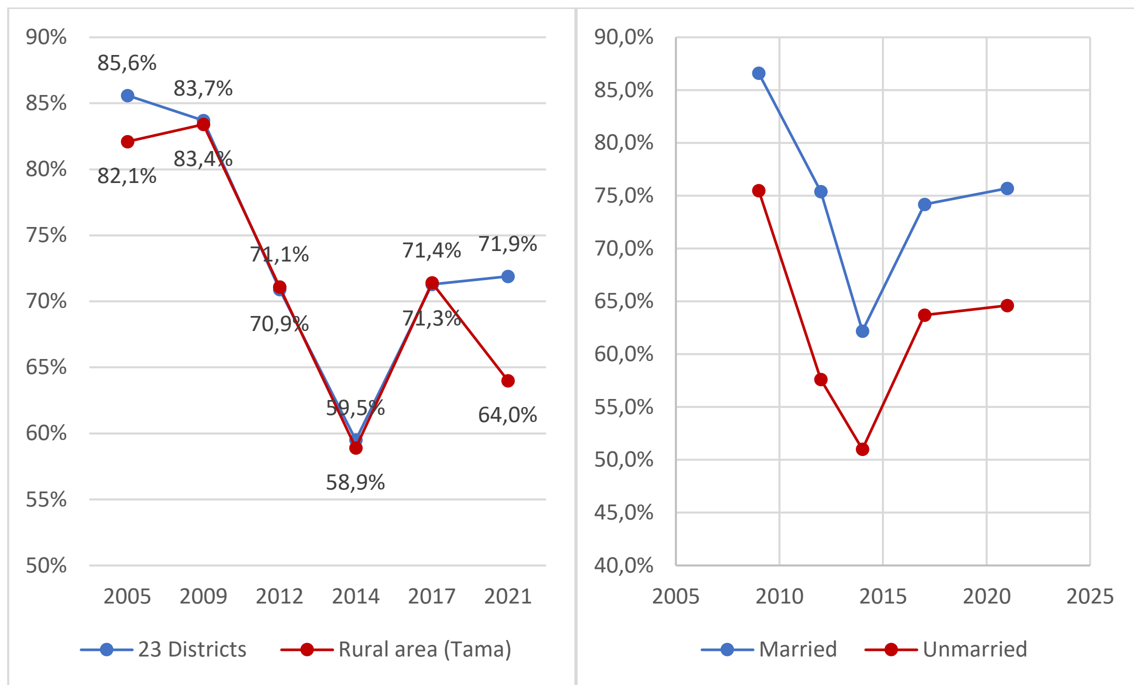


Figure 32 Dwelling area (right), marriage status (left) and turnout rate at House of Representative elections 2005-2021 (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

Interest in current elections, as shown in Figure 31 and Figure 32, does not present significant differences from turnout rate trends. Age is once again directly proportional to interest levels, as younger categories account for the lowest values in all elections and 15 to 20 points percentage below categories most interested in politics, namely 60-69 and 70 or older ones. Turnout and occupation show little change too. Self-employed, unemployed and housewife categories all have a high rate of 'interested' respondents, with employees occupying a middle position and students coming last once more. In 2014, students were slightly more interested than employees (57,1%), who reached a negative peak in that occasion (55,9%). No significant differences can be observed in relation to dwelling area, with 2021 elections being the only instance of Tokyo 23 districts outperforming Tokyo rural area by 15%. Finally, interest in elections and marriage status present similar patterns to turnout rate. Married respondents are higher in all elections, and both categories follow a similar decline from 2009 to 2014 (the 2014 negative peal stands at 62,2% and 51,0% respectively), then proceed to slightly recover in 2017 and 2021.

The last parameter that will be analysed in this section will be the preference between party or candidate. As indicated by many authors, the 55 system was characterized by candidate-focused electoral campaign strategies and vote-gathering activities.[101] With the multi-member district

[101] See, for instance (G. J. Curtis 1971) or (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011)

system and scarce funding provided by parties' local branches, individualism and personalistic practices were indeed very common until at least the mid-90s.[102] The 1994 electoral reform was also meant at mitigating this focus on individual candidates and shift the attention to parties as a whole, in order to get rid of clientelism and corruption practices among other things. Data on recent elections are rather consistent with this transformation, as respondents claiming to having considered candidates' character to make a choice are significantly fewer than those declaring to have looked at the party as a whole (Figure 33).

Overall party support seems to be less closely related to age. In fact, the only time the 20-29 age group ranked lowest in this category was in 2005. In all other elections, younger groups fared relatively well and even ranked highest at 2014 elections. Conversely, older age groups are not necessarily more supportive of parties as a whole. Respondents aged 50 or older ranked in mid-to-low positions at multiple elections – the 50-59 category was last in 2012 with only 51,2% of respondents claiming to have valued the party. On the other hand, respondents answering to have prioritized candidates individually follow a much clearer pattern.

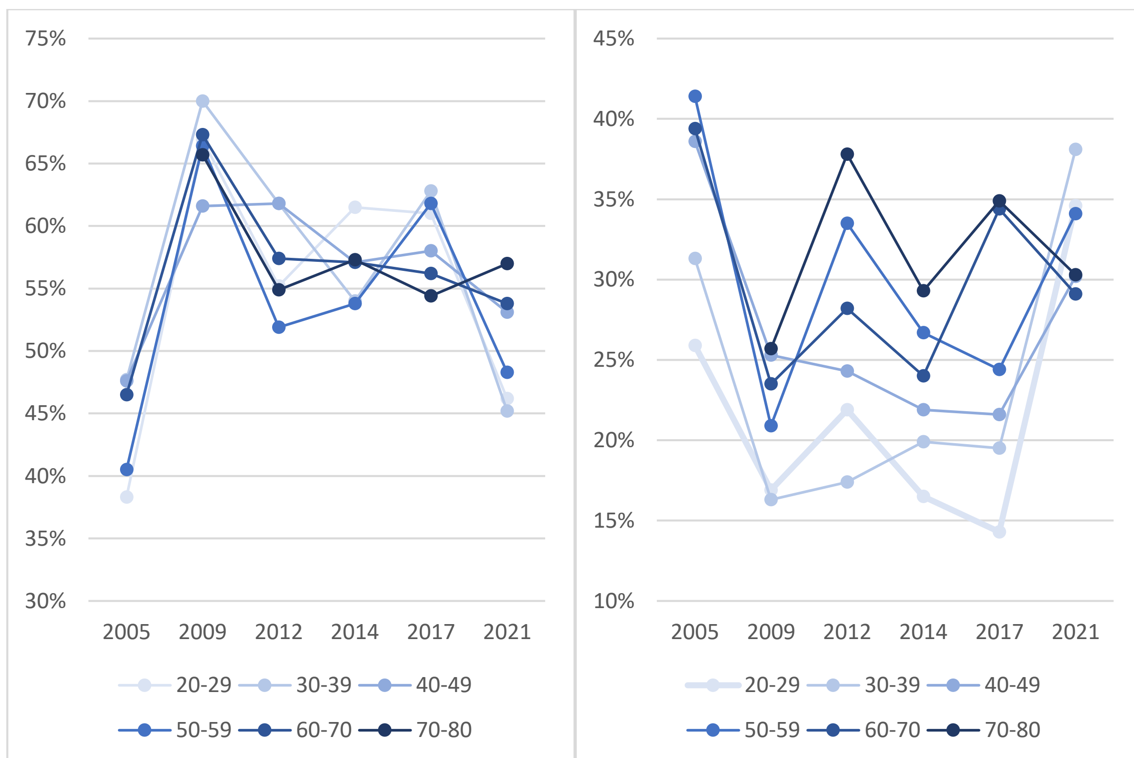


Figure 33 "Valued party" (left) and "Valued candidate" (right) when choosing who to vote for and age group at 2005-2021 Lower House Elections (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

[102] Ibid.

20-29 and 30-39 groups were always the least interested in individual candidates, with the former reaching a negative peak of 14,3% in 2017. The only exception is represented by 2021 elections, where the 30-39 category actually had the largest number of respondents valuing individual candidates (38,1%) and 20-29 coming second with 34,6%. With 2021 being the only exception, in all other elections older age groups are pretty much consistent in occupying the highest spots in terms of valuing individual candidates in their electoral choice. As a general trend, both the importance given to parties and that given to individual candidates are following a more or less consistent curve, with minor oscillations from election to election. Although candidates have been significantly lower in percentage, coming close to "whole party" only in 2005 (Figure 34), it is hard to define a clear trend of increase or decrease in voters' attitudes towards parties and candidates. Rather, data seem to suggest that their criteria to make a voting choice might not be changing significantly if at all.

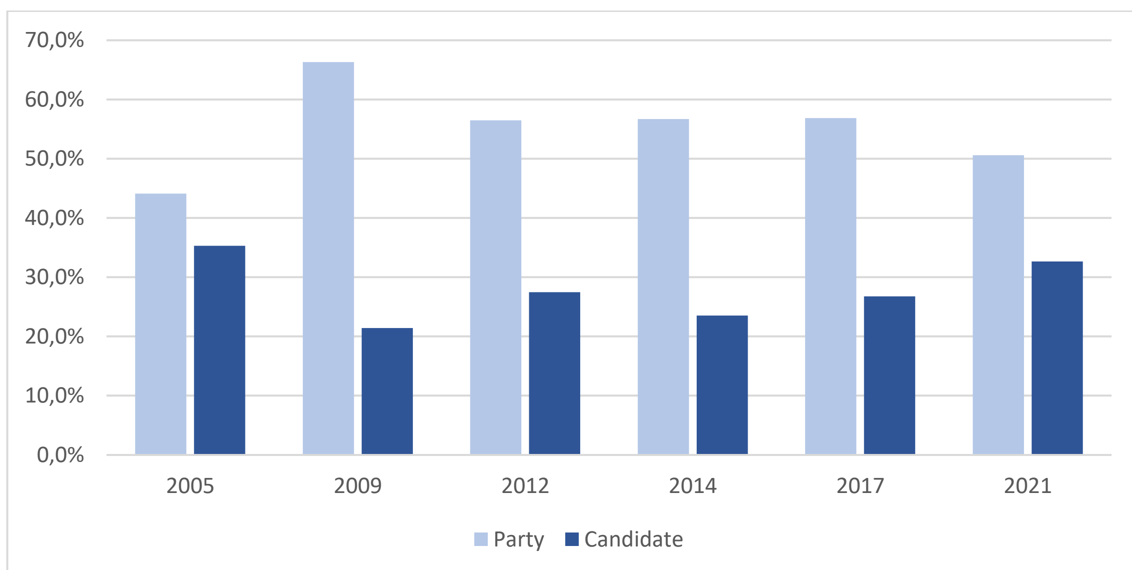


Figure 34 "Valued party" (left) and "Valued candidate" (right) when choosing who to vote for (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

4.3. Social networks

In his work "The Enduring Campaign Networks in Tokyo's Shitamachi District", Park argues that, although significantly weakened by the 1994 electoral reform and by parties' attempts to shift voters' attention towards the party itself, candidates' personal networks – which include but are not limited to kōenkai – are still playing a significant role in some of Tokyo's central districts. One of the reasons hinted at in the work is that, as citizens grow less interested in politics and the population of 'fluctuating voters' increases, appeal to party's policies and values is not enough to entice this category of voters and to secure their votes.

		2005			2009			2012		
		Family/Friends	Group/ Organization	Kōenkai	Family/ Friends	Group/ Organization	Kōenkai	Family/Friends	Group/ Organization	Kōenkai
Age	20-29	12,3%		1,2%	14,5%	0,8%	3,2%	14,6%		
	30-39	6,3%	3,1%	0,8%	10,6%	2,7%	3,0%	7,9%	1,7%	1,7%
	40-49	7,8%	3,6%	2,4%	7,1%	1,0%	3,4%	7,2%	3,2%	2,0%
	50-59	5,2%	1,7%	3,4%	8,2%	1,1%	4,5%	5,4%	4,6%	5,0%
	60-70	5,5%	1,3%	3,2%	6,0%	2,2%	4,4%	7,9%	2,1%	4,8%
	70-80				5,3%	1,3%	8,7%	8,4%	2,1%	8,4%
Occupation	Self-employed	4,2%	4,2%	3,5%		2,1%	8,0%	4,2%	5,4%	7,1%
	Employee	4,8%	2,0%	1,5%	7,5%	1,7%	4,0%	7,3%	2,4%	2,9%
	Housewife	10,5%	0,8%	4,2%	9,8%	1,5%	4,9%	11,2%	1,4%	3,6%
	Student	21,4%			20,0%	3,3%	3,3%	11,1%		
	Unemployed	3,7%	1,8%	2,8%	7,0%	1,0%	4,9%	9,0%	2,3%	8,0%
Dwelling area	23 districts	6,6%	1,9%	2,4%	8,5%	1,5%	5,0%	8,8%	2,2%	5,0%
	Rural area (Tama)	6,5%	2,0%	3,1%	6,8%	1,7%	4,2%	6,9%	3,1%	3,9%
	TOT	**7,9%**	**2,2%**	**2,6%**	**9,3%**	**1,7%**	**4,7%**	**8,5%**	**2,8%**	**4,8%**

		2014			2017			2021		
		Family/Friends	Group/ Organization	Kōenkai	Family/ Friends	Group/ Organization	Kōenkai	Family/Friends	Group/ Organization	Kōenkai
Age	18-19	11,0%	1,1%	4,4%	17,6%			18,2%		
	20-29	8,7%	0,6%	2,5%	15,2%	2,9%		12,8%		5,1%
	30-39	8,1%	1,6%	2,4%	6,1%		1,8%	4,0%	1,6%	4,0%
	40-49	12,8%	2,1%	7,7%	5,2%	1,3%	4,8%	4,7%	0,5%	6,3%
	50-59	6,4%	2,1%	9,4%	6,5%	1,1%	5,5%	8,6%	3,0%	6,9%
	60-70	7,9%	1,7%	9,2%	6,6%	3,8%	6,0%	9,4%	1,8%	9,9%
	70>	6,3%	1,3%	7,5%	6,9%	3,5%	10,1%	11,5%	4,5%	17,2%
Occupation	Self-employed	9,3%	2,8%	11,1%	4,9%	4,4%	10,4%	10,0%	3,6%	16,4%
	Employee	8,2%	1,5%	5,6%	5,2%	2,2%	5,0%	7,2%	1,4%	6,5%
	Housewife	12,6%	2,3%	6,3%	12,0%	1,7%	4,6%	9,9%	1,9%	11,1%
	Student	14,3%		4,8%	15,6%	2,2%		12,9%	3,2%	6,5%
	Unemployed	5,7%	1,1%	6,4%	8,3%	2,2%	7,6%	9,6%	4,0%	12,4%
Dwelling area	23 districts	8,8%	1,6%	6,1%	6,6%	2,2%	5,8%	7,8%	2,0%	9,9%
	Rural area (Tama)	8,3%	1,7%	6,9%	8,4%	2,8%	6,1%	10,6%	3,2%	9,0%
	Total	**9,2%**	**1,7%**	**6,5%**	**8,9%**	**2,5%**	**6,2%**	**9,8%**	**2,6%**	**9,3%**

Table 12 "What influenced your choice at elections?" responses for 'Family and Friends', 'Group/organization of which I am a member' and 'Politician's kōenkai' 2005-2021 (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

Thus, maintaining a focus on personal appeal and strengthening ties within the local community still proves effective to reach even those citizens who are not engaged in politics enough to have their vote 'captured' by party politics. Table 12 shows the relationship between influence of three different kinds of social networks – namely, family and friends, group/organisations and politicians' kōenkai – on voting choice and three social categories: age, occupation and dwelling area. Like in Tables 7, 8 and 9 of chapter 3, brightest green cells highlight the highest response in that column, will bright red ones the lowest.

What stands out at first glance, is that younger age groups seem to be much more heavily influenced by family and friends when making electoral choice than other groups. The 20-29 category, 18-29 from 2017, is the only one that exceeded 10% in all elections since 2005, and in 2017 and 2021 it reached peaks of 17,6% and 18,2% respectively, much higher than any other form of social network influence present in the chart. The fact that this number reached the peak in 2017 and 2021, when voting age was lowered down to 18, further points at a correlation between age and voting influence by family members or friends. Similarly, students have the highest response rate in the 'family and friends' recommendation' parameter for occupational categories. As mentioned in chapter 3, it is reasonable to expect that the two categories 'people in their twenties' and 'students' will behave in very similar ways, as they overlap for the most part. In short, the young seem to rely more on recommendations by people who are close and familiar to them, rather than politicians or other more 'formal' figures. This hypothesis is also in line with the fact that influences of various organizations and kōenkai on younger generations is almost completely absent – its values remain the lowest across elections, and respondents are even completely absent in the 18-20 category in 2017 and 2021. Among occupational categories, employees are the least influenced by communication with family and friends. This might have in part to do with a relation between amount of time spent with close ones and level to which one is influenced by their political views. Such time is likely to be lower for employees than for other categories such as students and younger age groups.

This pattern does not entirely invert direction with older generations. Although kōenkai and other organizations' influence on voting choice is far more common especially in categories over 50 years old, the two do not always follow a directly proportional relationship. In most instances, the over 70 category was the most highly influenced by politicians' kōenkai (2009, 2012, 2017 and 2021), but the 50-59 groups always closely followed, having the highest response rate in 2014. People aged 60-69 were in fact relatively less likely to be influenced by kōenkai than those aged 50-59.

By looking at the correlation with occupational categories, once again it is not clear whom kōenkai have the most influence on. Generally speaking, self-employed and unemployed are the most influenced. Both the former and the latter reached its peak in 2021 with 16,4% and 12,4% respectively. Quite unsurprisingly, kōenkai influence on students is much lower, and in more occasions no respondent belonging to this category stated to have been influenced by a kōenkai in their choice. Employees, in a similar way, were the lowest in terms of influence in almost all elections, proving to be the least 'approachable' category for politicians. Other organizations – which, in the definition of the Election Administration Committee, also include religious groups, labour unions, agricultural cooperatives and neighbourhood associations – appear to have the lowest level of influence across all categories and in all elections. If we compare to the findings in chapter 3, there seems to be an element of contrast, as it had been shown how members of neighbourhood associations and city councils were rather numerous. A reverse trend is observed for *kōenkai*. While a steep decline in membership and influence of these organizations at the national level has been found in chapter 3, the tables above and Figure 35 show that there has actually been a constant increase in their overall influence on voters (from only 2,6% in 2005 to 9,3% in 2021). Election Administration Committee's surveys, however, do not specifically mention membership, but only influence on voting choice.

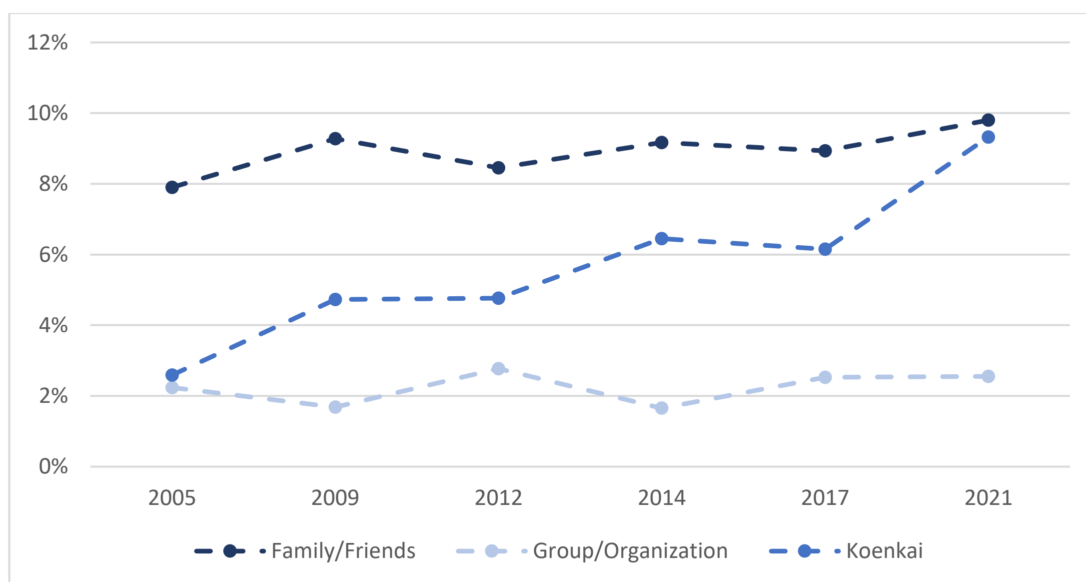


Figure 35 Influence of family and friends, kōenkai and other groups/organizations on voting choice at 2005-2021 Lower House elections (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

4.4. Influence of traditional media: TV and Newspaper

As shown in chapter 3, TV and newspapers are the two most common forms of 'traditional' media – meaning media that do not rely on online platforms. Radio, at the national level, scored very low and even- decreasing levels of utilization (under 2%), thus I deemed unnecessary to include it in the Tokyo analysis. As for TV and newspapers, it had been observed that, while the former still enjoys rather high utilization across all ages at levels that are not necessarily decreasing, the same cannot be said for the latter. While the use of newspapers as means of political information remains widespread among older generations, it saw an overall drop in 2012 from 54,6% to 19,4% and never recovered from those levels up until 2021 (Figure 21).

In this section, two uses of TV and newspaper will be analysed. The first one is more specifically focused on political advertising. For television, party and candidate's political TV broadcast will be considered. For newspapers, the survey refers to the reading of columns dedicated to party or candidate's political ads. This form of advertising comes directly from the party or a specific candidate, thus it is specifically intended to influence voters' choice in their favour. A second form of political information will be political news on both TV and newspapers. In this case, as they are not created and published by candidates or people affiliated with a particular party, they can be presumed to be – at least in principle – more objective in their representations, and not designed to influence voters' choice, but rather to enlighten them on the latest developments. Each of the graphs below represents a positive answer to the question "*was this media useful in deciding what candidate to vote for*?".

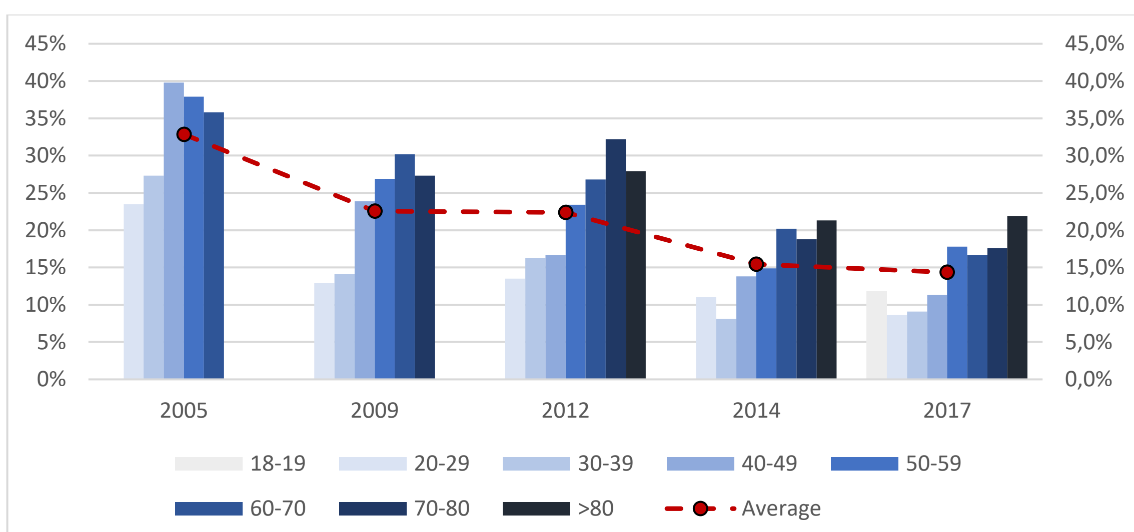


Figure 36 "Was TV political broadcast useful?" response by age group at 2005-2017 Lower House elections (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2017)

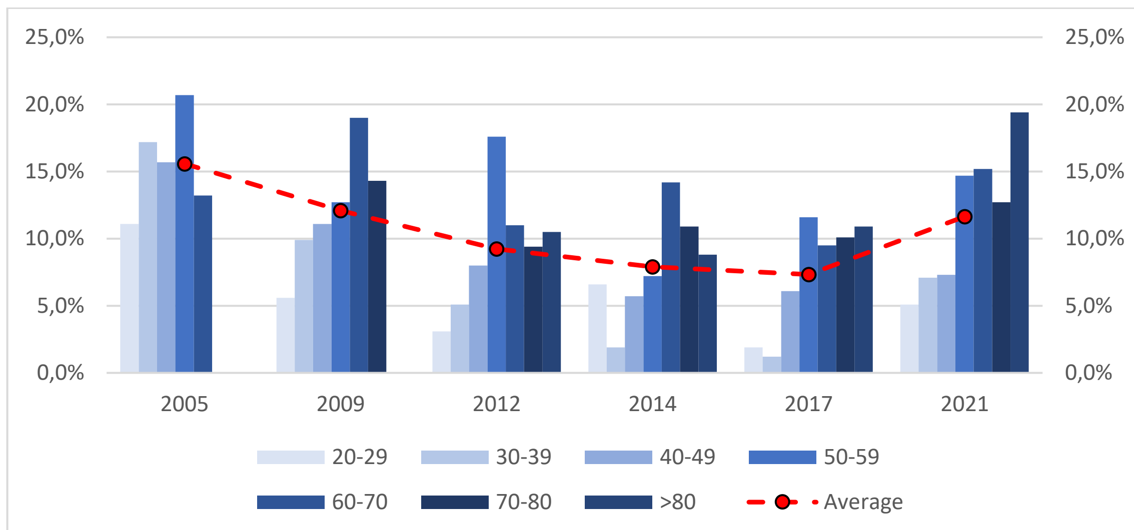


Figure 37 "Was party/candidate's ad on newspapers useful?" response by age group at 2005-2021 Lower House elections (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

Figure 36 suggests that, overall, the efficacy of party and candidates' TV broadcast has been decreasing over the past 6 elections. 2005 saw the highest percentages in positive response across all age groups, with the 40-49 one being the highest at 39,8%. The 20-29 group, the lowest, was still relatively high 23,5% nonetheless. This is in stark contrast to more recent elections, such as the 2017 and 2021 ones, when the highest percentage was at 21,3% and 21,9% respectively – both belonged to the over 80 category. Younger age groups decreased significantly as well. The 20-29 group reached a negative peak of 8,6% in 2021, while the 30-39 category stood at 8,1% in 2017 and slightly increased to 9,1% the following elections. At the national level, party political broadcast fared much better in the last couple of elections. In 2017, among 43,5% of the respondents who watched candidates' political broadcasts on TV, 18,9% found them useful in making a decision when voting. In 2021, on 43,6% of total viewers, this percentage even rose to 21,3%.

Newspaper ads from candidates or party, although substantially lower in absolute terms compared to political broadcast viewers, have undergone less significant decreases. 2014 and 2017 elections saw the lowest numbers across all age groups. The 30-39 group, the lowest among all respondents, amounted to only 1,9% in 2014 and 1,2% in 2017. The 20-29 group was equally low in 2017, with only 1,9% of positive responses, but in 2014 this percentage amounted to 6,6%, the highest since 2005 (11,2%). With the only exception of the over 80 years old category (introduced in the surveys as a separate group from 2012), that has seen a peak of 19,4% of positive responses in 2021, all other age groups have overall decreased in elections up to 2017. 2021 was in fact quite a peculiar year, since the overall percentage increased (11,2%) for the first time since 2005 and

almost reached 2009 levels. In general, while younger age groups have quite understandably lower rates of positive response across elections, once past the 50 years old threshold, percentages become extremely similar, with no particular increases deriving from an increase in age. In other words, party and candidates' ads on newspaper seem to be equally popular across all categories over 50 years old. Compared to data from the Association's national-level surveys, the average percentages are slightly inferior in the case of Tokyo, with 2 to 3 points-percentage of difference on average (Figure 24).

Figure 38 and Figure 39 show two more uses of TV and newspapers made by the electorate. As for the national level, TV news coverage remains by far the most common method of gathering information on incoming elections, and the ones that influences voters the most (see Figure 25 in chapter 3 for comparison). 2005 was quite an unusual year, as positive responses across all age categories were extremely low compared to all subsequent elections. The highest value is found in the 40-49 group with 34,9%, and the lowest among the over 60s (18,1%). Whether this result is due to an actual lack of interest in elections or to a change in the way data are collected and organised is unclear. However, since 2005 Lower House Elections were accompanied by the privatization of Japan Post debate, it is hard to think that voters could be uninterested in elections to that point. It is sufficient to look at Figure 31 above to understand that this is probably not the case. It is rather more likely that measurements or samplings were carried out in a different manner than other surveys.

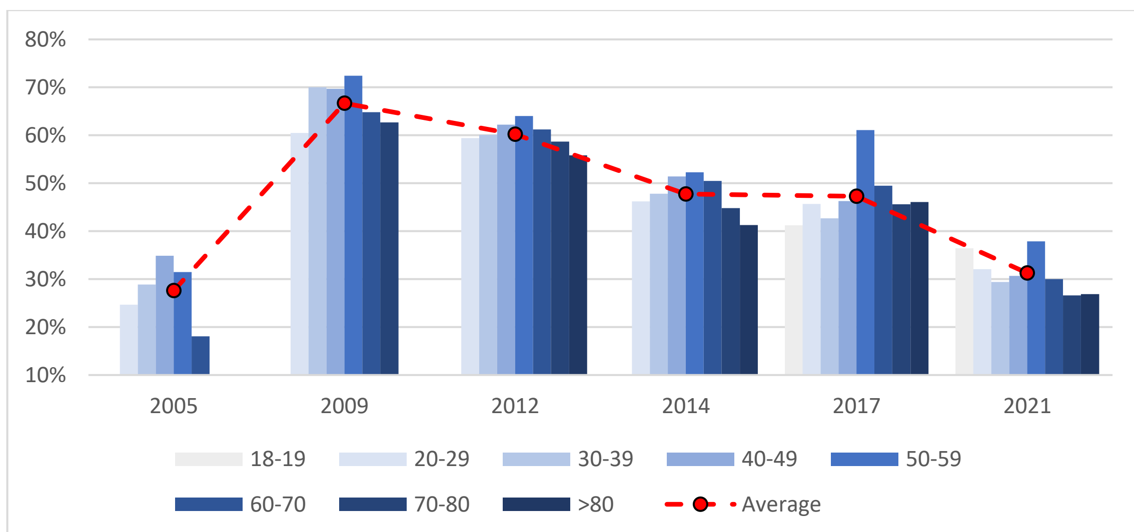


Figure 38 "Were TV news on elections useful?" response by age group at 2005-2021 Lower House elections (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

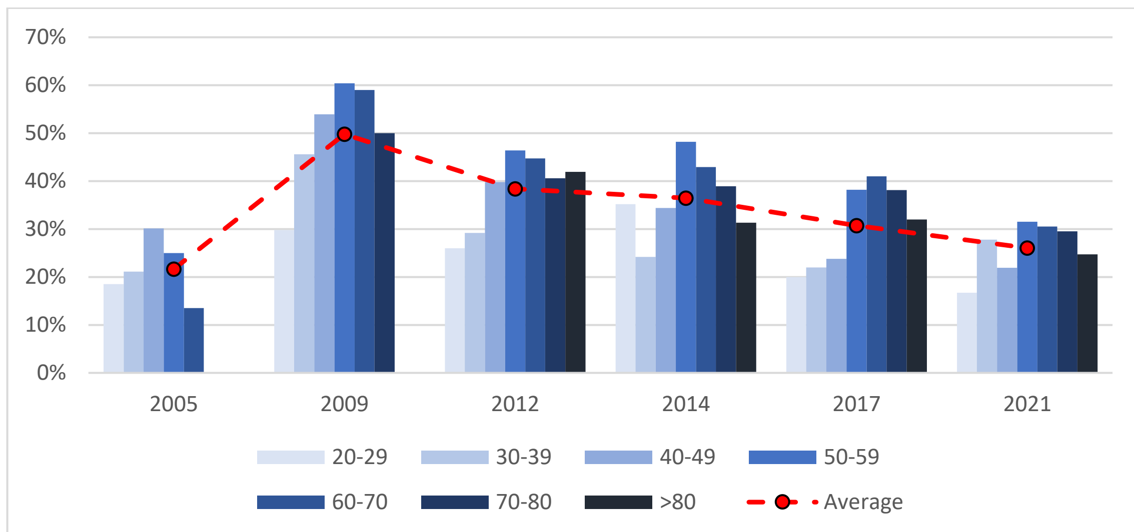


Figure 39 "Were newspaper news on elections useful?" responses across age group at 2005-2021 Lower House Elections (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee, 2005-2021)

In 2009, TV news were at their most ‘popular’, with all groups from 30 to 60 surpassing the 70% threshold and the average response rate standing at 66,7%. In that occasion, the 20-29 group was the lowest with ‘only’ 60,5% of positive responses. Since 2009, however, positive responses continued to decline both on average and in every age group. 2021 elections saw TV news efficacy in shaping voters’ choice fall to levels very similar to those in 2005, with an average percentage of 31,9% and the 40-49 group being the highest at 37,9%. Viewers among younger age groups are generally fewer compared to other categories. The 20-29 group totalled a percentage of political news viewers of 46,2% in 2014, 45,7% in 2017 and 32,1% in 2021. 18- and 19-year-olds scored slightly lower in 2017 (42,1%) but reached a higher percentage than the 20-29 group in 2021 (36,4%). 2021 is also the only occasion in which the two youngest age groups had the highest response rates among all categories. Unlike newspapers, however, TV news do not present substantial differences across age categories.

Newspaper news, in all elections, are characterized by a peak in correspondence of middle groups such as 50- and 60-year-olds. The highest percentage was reached by the 50-59 group in 2009 (60,4%), with 60-69 following at 59.0%. In subsequent elections, the 50-59 group remained the highest with the only exception of 2017, where the 60-69 group was slightly higher (41,0% versus 38,2%). 2021 had the lowest average since 2005, with a peak in correspondence, once again, of the 50-59 group at 32,1%. Unsurprisingly, newspaper readers among younger generations are fewer than in mid- and older age groups. With the only exception of 2014, when they surpassed the 30-39 group with 35,2% of positive responses, they remained stable at the bottom of the list, always falling

behind of 15 to 20 point-percentage compared to 50-59 and 60-69 groups, who were the highest. Overall, the percentage of positive responses were slightly higher on average compared to the national level (cfr. Figure 24), but in more recent elections, especially in 2017 and 2021, the have grown much closer. In 2021, for instance, the use of newspapers amounted to 26,2%, surpassing for the first time Tokyo's 26,1%.

4.5. Use of Internet before elections in Tokyo

In chapter 3, it emerged that internet use for political purposes has been slowly but constantly increasing since 2005. The main sources remain online news platforms and party or candidates' blog, with social media still lagging in their adoption for political purposes rate. Figure 23 shows that Internet use has especially increased in the last two elections, while in 2012 and 2014 it still accounted for a limited number of respondents and did not increase significantly between elections. A first glance at Figure 40 highlights similar trends in Tokyo. The percentage of positive responses is lower – 4,6% on average in 2021 – but it could also be due to factors such as differences in the phrasing of the question or categories included under "Internet information". However, both at the national level and in Tokyo, sign of progressive increase, although slow, are observable across all age groups. In the 20-29 group, respondents finding Internet an influential media in terms of vote choice grew from 5,5% to 7,4% up to 12,7% from 2014 to 2021, remaining the highest scoring group by almost double the amount of any other group. In the 30 to 50 age groups, percentages of positive responses saw similar results in 2014 and 2017, with the 30-39 being higher in 2021 – 8,1% against 6,4%.

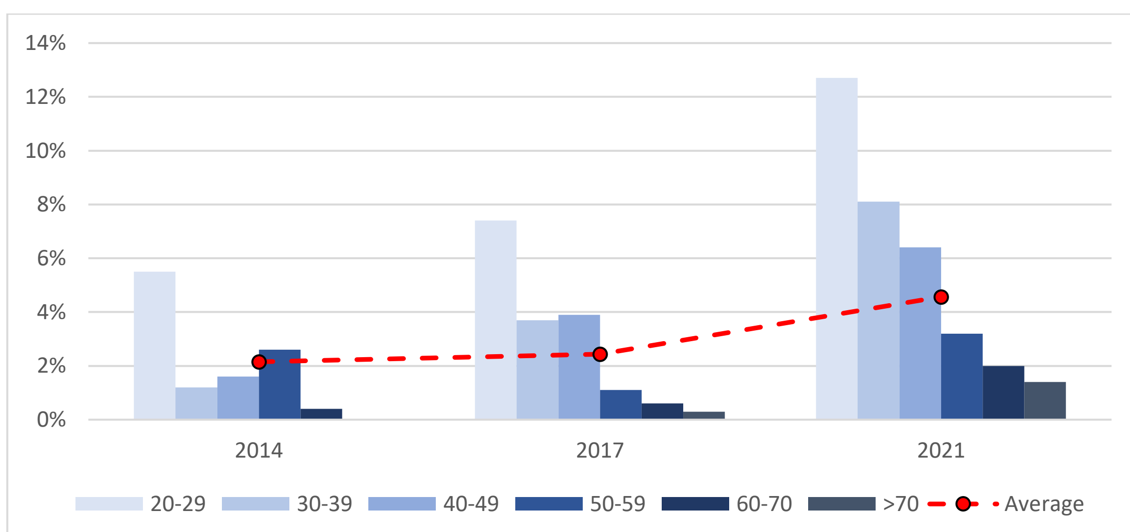
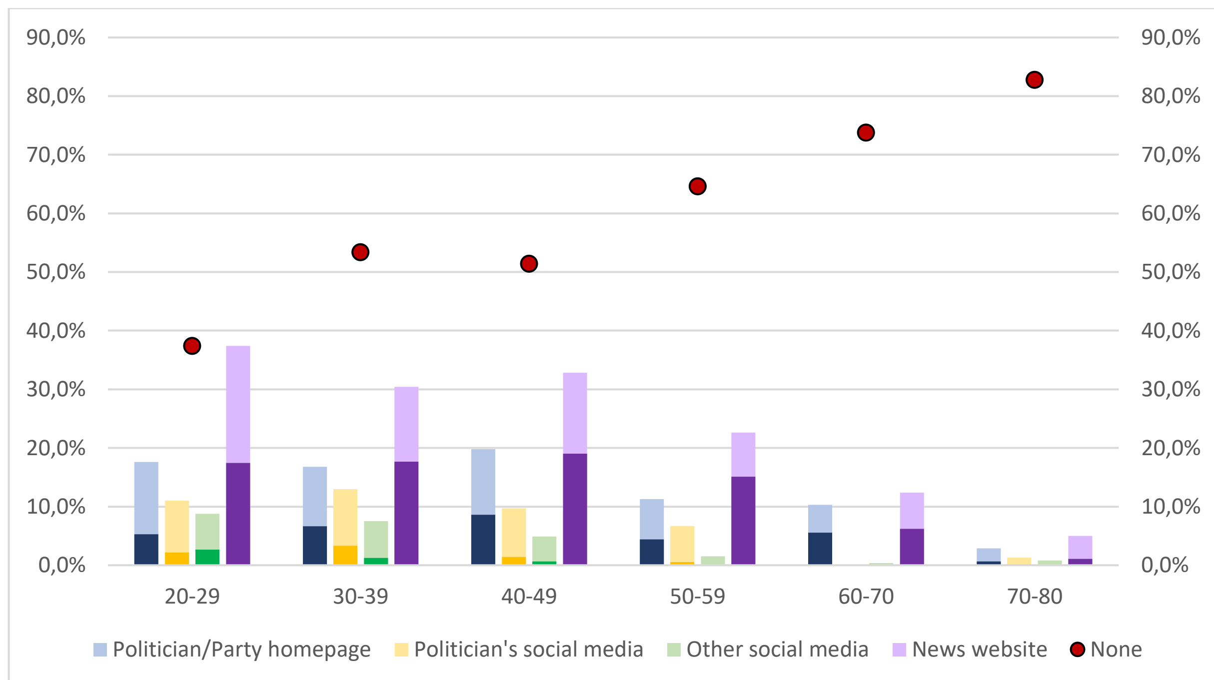


Figure 40 "Was Internet useful to decide who to vote for?" responses across age groups at 2014-2021 Lower House Elections (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee data, 2014-2021)

Use of Internet sources among older categories is still far behind compared to other age groups. In 2014 and 2017 almost no respondents among the 70+ category claimed to have used Internet for electoral purposes, while in 2021 this percentage rose to 1,4%.

Looking at specific uses of Internet for political purposes, it can be observed that a slight increase in the overall level of online political activity took place between 2014 and 2021 (Figure 41). News websites, in a similar fashion to the national level, are the most used platform. In 2014, the 20-29 age group had the highest response rate, 37,4%, and was the only group where the use of at least one internet platform was as common as the use of none at all. For all other categories in 2014, respondents declaring to not have used any online platform for elections was by far the most numerous – from a 53,4% in the 30-39 category to 82,8% among 70 or more. Party and candidates' homepages were the second most viewed platform. This time, the 40-49 group was the one using them the most (19,8%), followed by the 20-29 and the 30-39 groups. Social media were still relatively underused, with politicians' account being viewed by 11,0% of the under 30s, 13,0% of the under 40s and 9,7% in the 40-49 group. For categories over 60, this use of social media was close to 0. Even less popular among respondents was the use of social media other than the politicians' ones. These include newspaper social media accounts and other forms of spreading of political information through these platforms. The 20-29 age group, the highest in 2014, saw only 8,8% of respondents declaring to have used such tools.



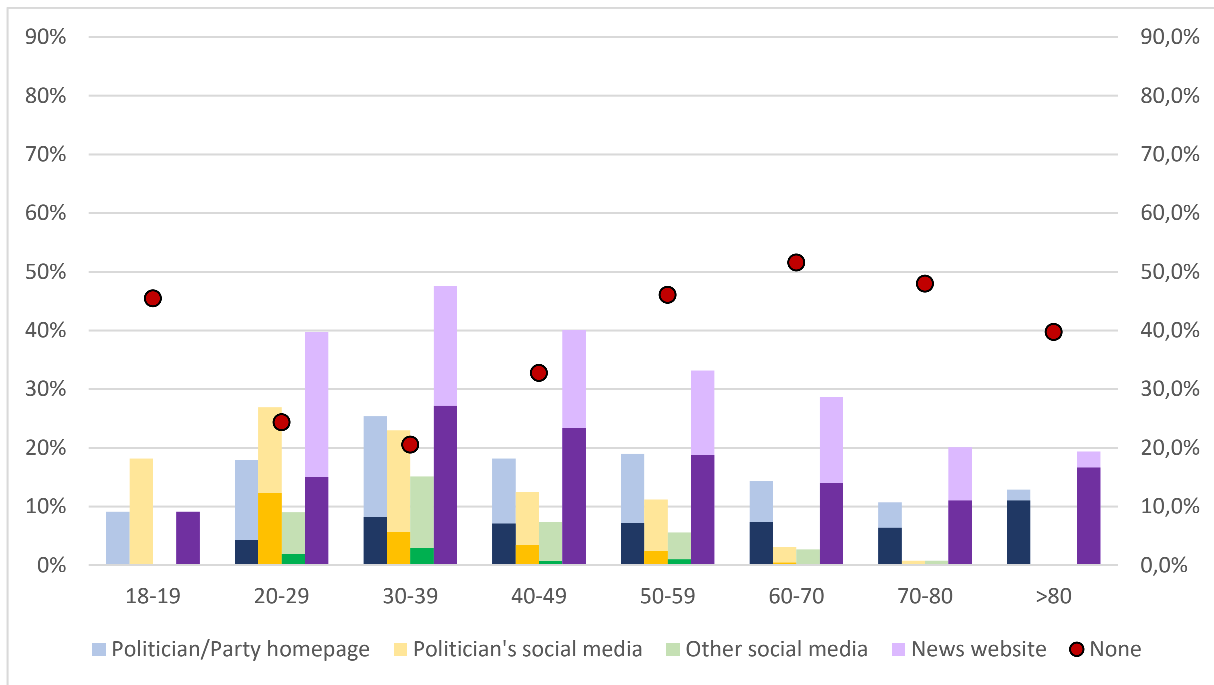


Figure 41 "What online platform did you see before elections?" and "What online platform did you find useful?" responses by age group in 2014 (top) and 2021 (bottom) (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee data, 2014 and 2021)

2021 saw an overall increase in the use of each one of these online media, but not as consistent as it might be expected. The percentage of respondents who did not use online tools at all dropped quite significantly, remaining higher than any other response only among over 50 categories – the 60-70 group was the highest, with a total of 51,6% of non-users compared to 73,8% in 2014, showing an overall significant increase in the use of Internet for political purposes. Interestingly enough, the newly-added 18-19 category, however, reached a 45,6% rate of non-internet-users – for political purposes – coming very close to over 50 categories. This might be in part related to the lack of interest in elections, which according to the surveys was the lowest among all age groups (48% in 2017 and 40% in 2021). And even though 18,2% of the 18- and 19-year-old respondents declared to have viewed politicians' social media pages before elections, perception of their usefulness scored close to 0%, thus further pointing at a lack of interest in elections.

While news websites remain the most used platform – 39,7% and 47,6% among 20-29 and 30-39 groups respectively – their increase has been much less significant than politicians' – and non-politician – social media. For the 20-29 and 30-39 groups, it reached a highest 26.9% and 23,0% respectively. This represents an increase of 15% for the former and 10% for the latter. The use of social media also 'appeared' in the 60-70 category (3,1%), while it is still completely absent among 70 or older respondents.

In general, platforms the use of which is still relatively new when it comes to politics – in other words, social media – are growing in popularity at a faster pace than more 'traditional' internet tools such as online newspapers, which were already quite diffused in 2014. Relative levels in perception of their usefulness, however, are not growing at the same rate. For most platforms, less than 50% of respondents across all age groups using them found them useful in making an electoral choice. In addition, since surveys from the Election Administration Committee introduced this distinction among various online platforms only in the past three elections, it is still early to draw conclusions on their trends. For now, the increase between 2014 and 2021 still does not leave space for much speculation about future growth. The increase in social media use is evident and it is likely to continue in future elections. However, the case of the 18-19 group, who made a very limited use of all the above-mentioned internet tools, also suggests that their use for political purposes might me more dependent on users' interest in politics/elections rather than the level of diffusion of these platforms in non-political contexts.

Another observation can be made concerning the difference in utilization across age groups for Internet sources compared to more traditional media. For TV, variation across age groups is very limited, with the highest value/lowest value ratio never exceeding 1,5. Phrased differently, the category watching election news on TV the most watches it only 1,5 times more than the one watching it the least. For newspapers, the ratio is hardly different – 1.8, 2.1 and 1.9 in the last three elections respectively. Such low ratios signal a relative evenness in the diffusion of these media across generations, which is a more understandable result for traditional, long-established sources of information. Internet, on the other hand, is a relatively new tool when it comes to political activity, and its uneven distribution across age groups is more understandable. The highest value to lowest value ratio was 24.7 in 2017 and 9.1 in 2021. As in 2017 there were no respondents in the 70+ age group, the ratio was not calculated for that year.

In conclusion, data seem to suggest that the evenness in diffusion of political media is somehow related to the length of its establishment as means of information. This is also understandable at an intuitive level, if we consider that new technologies are not usually adopted equally across generations, and older age groups tend to lag in this adoption or not adopt it at all.

	TV			Newspaper			Internet		
	Highest	Lowest	Ratio	Highest	Lowest	Ratio	Highest	Lowest	Ratio
2014	52,3%	41,3%	**1,3x**	42,9%	24,2%	**1,8x**	5,5%	0,0%	/
2017	61,1%	41,2%	**1,5x**	41,0%	20,0%	**2,1x**	7,4%	0,3%	**24,7x**
2021	31,3%	26,9%	**1,2x**	31,5%	16,7%	**1,9x**	12,7%	1,4%	**9,1x**

Table 13 Highest and lowest percentage among age groups in use of TV, Newspapers and Internet and ratio between the two (made by the author based on Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee data, 2014-2021)

5. Comparison and Conclusions

This work aimed at analysing Japan and Tokyo citizens' political behaviour and attitudes through a categorization that draws from previous works on the topic.[103] This categorization, particularly in the way Flanagan intended it, consists in two-fold subdivision between sociological and psychological factors in terms of type of influence, and between long-term and short-term factors according to whether they are present all through voters' life or just in time of elections. As assessed in chapter 2, voting is the most common form of political activity, and given the amount of surveyed data available on voters' attitudes and preference, chapter 3 and chapter 4 focused on this particular form of political participation.

More specifically, chapter 3 was further divided into three main area of observation, namely:

- Sociological factors as long-term influences, which included elements such as age, occupation, education and dwelling area
- Social networks as long-term influences, with a focus on the changes in voters' membership to a number of organisations.
- Short-term influences, further divided into candidate or party preferences and media influences (including Internet)

In chapter 4, influences in voting behaviour and preferences in Tokyo were analysed across four main categories:

- sociological factors: age, occupation, dwelling area and marriage status
- social networks: family and friends, *kōenkai*, other groups or organizations
- 'traditional' media: television and newspapers
- online political information: internet news and social media

Although some elements of divergence between the two chapters, mostly due to the availability of relative data in either set of surveys, the overall structure allows for meaningful comparison following the categorization initially intended. Below follows a point-for-point comparison of each of the above-mentioned categories, which will attempt to highlight both point in common and of divergence.

[103] Among others, (Flanagan, et al. 1991)

5.1. Differences between Japan and Tokyo

The comparison brought to light that, despite overall pattern of similarity in turnout rates and attitudes across different age groups, Tokyo and the whole country present a number of diverging points in how their citizens participate to voting. Amongst an array of factors taken into consideration, age shows the strongest correlation with voting behaviour as analysed in this paper. This hypothesis is grounded in the observation that differences in other social categories, such as occupation or education level, can be reduced to some extent to a different distribution of age groups within those categories. Below follows an overall comparison of each category that was analysed in chapter 3 and 4.

Sociological factors

Amongst the sociological factors examined in this work, age showed the closest correlation with turnout rate, political interest and party support in both cases. At the national level, turnout rate is the highest in the 60-69 and 70-79 groups, and it always remained in the 85-90% range in all elections. Despite at slightly lower percentage, an equal result is observed in Tokyo, with all categories over 60 years old remaining over the 80% threshold. Similarly, interest in elections for Tokyo and LDP party support at the national level are directly proportional to age. On the other end of the spectrum, turnout rates among younger generations are the lowest at both the national level and in Tokyo. In Tokyo, 2014 saw the lowest result at 45,4%, while in Japan as a whole 2012 saw a 44,7% turnout rate among the 20-29 category. Interest is equally low across all elections, while non-partisanship at the national level is the highest, oftentimes exceeding 50% of the respondents. Overall, age seems to have a quite straightforward relationship with most political indicators that have been taken into consideration in this work, with no significant differences between the national level and Tokyo.

In chapter 3, it was suggested that the relationship between occupation and voting attitudes is more to be interpreted as a relationship with age, as those categories which present the clearest patterns are also the most 'definite' in terms of age groups belonging to them. In other words, the unemployed – who include elderly, pension receivers – and students – who are for the large part citizens in the younger age groups – are the two occupational categories with the starkest features. At the national level, unemployed have indeed the highest turnout rates, LDP support levels and the lowest percentage of non-partisans. On the other hand, students are the least prone to voting and scored highest in terms of non-partisanship. For other categories, while self-employed showed

similar results to the unemployed – high turnout rate, LDP support and low non-partisanship –, employees and housewives' results were more mixed, greatly varying across elections. In Tokyo, however, this relationship between 'older' and 'younger' occupations is less straightforward. Turnout rates and interest in elections are in fact higher for the self-employed category, with the unemployed often being second or even third, and remaining anyway within average. This seems to suggest a stronger correlation between belonging to certain occupational categories and having certain political attitudes. Students, on the other hand, have by far the lowest turnout rate and interest in elections, making this category very similar to the national level.

Finally, the third parameter taken into consideration in both surveys is dwelling area. For the national level, four categories were identified in large metropolis (more than 1'000'000 inhabitants), large cities (>100'000 inhabitants), small cities and rural areas/villages. For Tokyo, a simpler subdivision between the 23 central districts and the surrounding rural area (Tama) was made. The overall trend in Japan is that of higher levels of LDP support and partisanship in rural areas, with the percentage of these supporters progressively decreasing in larger cities and reaching it lowest in metropolises. In Tokyo, this clear distinction can hardly be made. In all elections, turnout rate and interest in elections were almost equal for 23 districts and rural area, with only 2021 elections showing much higher levels in both values for the 23 districts. Results seem to suggest that, while significant differences between large cities and rural areas are withstanding at the country level, a clear distinction between city and rural area within the same regional delimitation is harder to make.

Level of education and marriage status are two more social factors that have been included at the national and Tokyo level respectively, but as they were not present in both surveys it is hard to trace a meaningful comparison between the two dimensions. For education, we saw that turnout rates were higher for voters with university degree or higher in all elections, showing a significant inversion of trend from what Kabashima had defined as Japan's electoral peculiarity: people with lower levels of education tend to participate more in politics.[104] Although turnout rates for voters with high school diploma or lower are not that much lower, overall results seem nonetheless to suggest an increased participation among those with higher diplomas. It is also important to consider, however, that citizens with university degree or higher are nowadays spread across age group, despite a higher concentration in younger generations (Figure 17). Thus, inferences for whether the relationship between education and voting attitudes can be boiled down to a relationship between age and voting attitudes can hardly be made.

[104] [蒲島 , 境家 2020]

Marriage status showed quite a clear correlation pattern for elections in Tokyo, as married voters showed significantly higher turnout rates and levels of interest in elections.

Social network

Influences of social networks on voting preferences were analysed on two different levels for chapter 3 and 4, in accordance to what data from the two surveys included in the results. At the national level the focus was on membership, thus emphasizing the long-term relationship between voters and various kinds of organization, such as labour unions, neighbourhood associations or politicians' *kōenkai*. For Tokyo, surveys stressed on the influences that these organizations have *in time of elections*, thus affecting voters' decision to participate or vote choice. These two approaches, despite focusing on the long-time and short-time dimensions respectively, still allowed for meaningful comparisons in order to understand how these groups affect voters' behaviour. Across Japan, membership for every group has been significantly decreasing in the past six elections, with percentages of respondents declaring to be member to any of these remaining well below 10% and in most cases below 5%. The only exception is represented by neighbourhood associations, whose membership rose from 24,8% to 38,7% in 2021. The majority of respondents, however, claimed not to be a member of any of these groups, with values as high as 40% in all elections. Further data also pointed out that turnout rate is significantly higher among members of at least one of these groups, and non-members are the least likely to vote at elections.

In Tokyo, the influence that social networks exert on voters by age, occupation and dwelling area was assessed. In particular, three groups were identified: family and friends, politicians' *kōenkai* and other types of organisations, which include, among others, labour unions, religious groups, neighbourhood associations and youth groups.[105] One first, interesting finding was that both young age group and students – who in most cases overlap – strongly rely on their closest relatives or friends to make a voting decision. In all elections, respondents in these categories saying that they decided to vote and who to vote for based on family or friends' advice were the most numerous, ranging from 10% to 17% through the last six elections. On the other hand, they were also the least likely to be influenced by *kōenkai* or other organizations. Once again, older categories follow an exact opposite pattern, as they are much less likely to be influenced by family members, but they responded to have been influenced by *kōenkai* and other groups much more frequently. Among occupational categories, the self-employed were the most influenced by these last two types

[105] As for Tokyo Government Election Administration Committee's definition

of social media, while data for unemployed, employees and housewives show fewer clear patterns of correlation with social network influence.

One last observation was made in regard to *kōenkai*. On average, the percentage of respondents declaring to have been influenced by this type of organization has been steadily increasing in the past six elections, despite literature on the topic generally agreeing on their loss of efficacy in recent years. One possible explanation could be that, despite the new electoral system eliminating intra-party competition and shifting the focus on party politics rather than candidate politics, the increase in number of 'floating' voters could bring about the necessity of these organizations. As more voters become volatile in their choice of which party to vote for – in other words, as the number of non-partisans increases – reaching up to them through personal organization in order to secure their votes could still represent an effective strategy for some candidates, as Krauss and Pekkanen also suggested.[106]

Party/candidate preferences

In recent elections, attention to party has considerably exceeded attention on candidates' profiles both at the national and Tokyo levels. This is understandable when considering that one of the purposes of the 1994 reform was that of weakening candidate-politics in favour of party-politics. 2005 is the only case were voters valuing candidates were on similar levels to those prioritizing party. Starting from 2009, the two curves rapidly headed towards opposite directions, with parties acquiring much more importance in people's voting choice than single candidates. Analysis according to age groups in Tokyo surveys also shows that attention to candidates is more widespread amongst older generations, with younger ones more focused on party politics. This fact could be a further hint that the electorate's political attitudes are undergoing a gradual change, with older generations remaining more attached to a pre-reform attitude of candidate-focused election campaigning.

Media: TV and Newspapers

The influence of media on electoral choices focused on two main forms of 'traditional' media: television and newspapers. Compared to other long-established media such as radio news or advertising, TV and newspapers are still widespread means of gathering information on elections or politics and to this day exert considerable influence on voters' choice. At the national level, it was assessed that, while television still enjoys a widespread use across generations, use of newspapers

[106] (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011)

for electoral purposes is characterized by a strong imbalance between younger and older age groups. In 2021, for instance, 43,5% of respondents aged 18-29 watched TV political news, while respondents aged 70 or more were 53,7%. In the same elections, for newspapers, the former stood at 10,5% while the latter reached a 51,5%.

In Tokyo, on the other hand, an overall decline of both TV and newspaper political coverage. In 2021, TV party broadcast and TV news reached an average of 14,4% and 31,3% respectively, which represents the lowest result since 2005. Newspaper news and party/candidate's ads on newspaper amounted to 26,1% and 7,3% respectively. Compared to the national level, there is a smaller difference among age groups for both TV and newspapers, although the latter is generally more used by older groups.

Internet

In broad terms, the use of Internet to gather information on elections is growing both at the national level and in Tokyo. Main sources of information remain news websites and party or candidate's website page. Social media, despite having grown to levels above 10% in recent elections, especially amongst younger age groups, are still a quite underused online means in time of elections. In addition, despite younger generations making a larger use of these platforms, such use does not necessarily translate in an equally frequent use for political purposes. For instance, in 2021, only 18,2% of 18- and 19-year-olds declared to have browsed politicians' social media accounts – fewer than the 20-29 and 30-39 groups – and none of them found them useful in making a choice on who to vote for. Still a relatively recent means of political information, the use of Internet for electoral purposes does not always reflect how much a certain category actually uses it outside of the political sphere.

5.2. Political participation in Tokyo and Japan

In this work, trends in citizens' political participation in Japan and Tokyo were analysed by taking voting behaviour and preferences as a representative case. In doing so, two main patterns were discovered. First, political participation is unequally distributed across age groups, with mid- to old-age groups showing far higher turnout rates, interest in elections and party support. Furthermore, this disparity has shown signs of increase in latest elections. A second observation concerns citizens' fruition of media sources in time of elections. Being TV and newspapers well-established media that have been used for many decades, it was reasonable to expect that their diffusion would be more

equally distributed across generations. Results showed that this is the case for television, the use of which involves each age group to some extent. Newspapers, on the other hand, enjoyed a larger fruition amongst older age groups. In a separate section, the use of Internet was analysed as the most recent source of political information. Since it is a relatively new tool in elections – questions about its fruition were introduced in national surveys only in 2012 and in 2009 for Tokyo – a larger use was identified – quite unsurprisingly – among younger citizens. However, both the overall slow growth in its adoption and the low perception of its utility as means of political information leave very little space for speculating on its large-scale adoption in future elections. It also suggests that its efficacy in making younger generations more engaged in elections is not as high.

Combining the two observations above, it appears that while overall turnout rates and interest in elections did not decrease dramatically from 2005 and 2021 – and even enjoyed a slight increase in 2017 and 2021 –, a lack of active participation among the young is nonetheless becoming more apparent and, should this trend continue, it could become a phenomenon spread across generations in the next few decades. In the introduction, Figure 1 illustrated the vicious cycle that might come to life once political inefficiency and corruption meet a lack of interest on citizens' part. In present days Japan, signs of this vicious cycle emerged from data analysed in chapter 3 and 4, although not necessarily caused by political corruption as hypothesized in the introduction. Rather, data suggested that a diagram like the one presented in Figure 42 below might better represent Japan and Tokyo current situation.

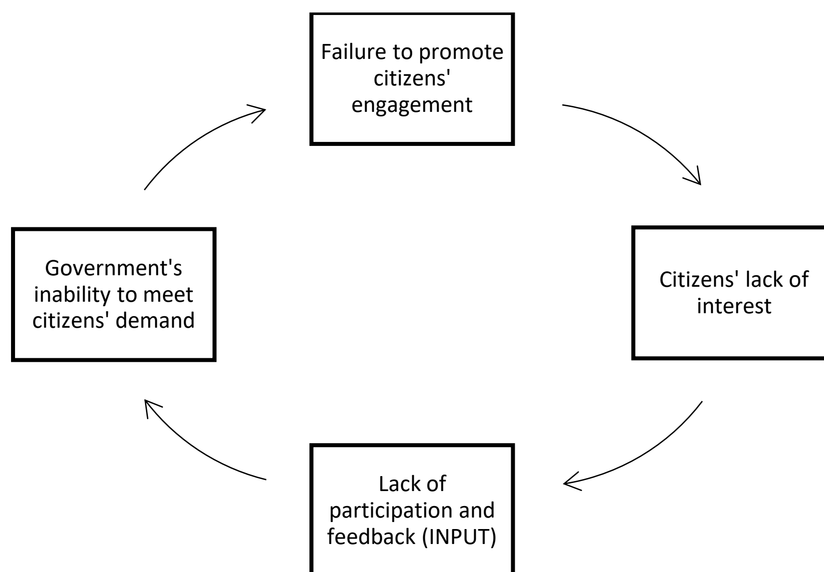


Figure 42 Negative cycle of influence between citizens and government

The figure shows that a lack of political input on citizens' side. In practical terms it means that voters' low interest and engagement in politics are depriving policymakers of the necessary flow of

information that usually determines a ‘healthy democracy’. As a consequence, governments cannot collect the necessary feedback from its citizens as to how best implement what policies in order to meet their approval. This might be, in part, at the root of unsatisfactory or even counterproductive measures taken by the government, which in turn, causes dissatisfaction and distrust towards politics, thus further discouraging citizens’ political participation.

In terms of measures to tackle this vicious cycle issue, new forms of political participation and information involving Internet or other new technologies – such as experimenting with online vote or making larger use of online polls – could be a viable solution. However, data collected in this work also suggest that these new forms of political engagement alone might not be enough, and that the decrease in political interest and participation to political activities, especially among younger generations, might have deeper roots to be investigated first.

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