

# Transition to Broader-Based Politics: The Role of Suffrage Extension in Early 20th Century Japan

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## Abstract

Does suffrage institution alter intra-elite political power structure? This paper addresses the question from a political selection perspective, focusing on the House of Representatives in the context of early 20th century Japan. Exploiting de facto suffrage extension induced by the wartime tax increase that enfranchised only 1% of population but doubled the electorate size, I quantitatively document a transformation of the occupational composition and how this relates to the electorate enlargement. My analysis employs the before-after design and the difference-in-differences framework with a cross-sectional variation in the electorate size change. For politicians' background, I digitalise the member roster of the House and match it to the electoral data. My empirical result shows a substantial drop in the share of farmers and landlords, originally a dominant occupational group in the House, between before and after the extension; and this decrease is attributable to the electorate enlargement. On the other hand, no other major occupational groups exhibit a compensational increase in their shares. Interpreting my result in the historical context suggests that a small suffrage extension possibly contributed to the diversification of the House politics from the landlord-centred.

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