East Asia Disability Studies Forum 2023
4th Session: People with developmental disabilities and alternative access to information (including easy read)

The Current State of Access to Easy-to-Understand Election Information: Considering Cases of People with Developmental or Intellectual Disabilities

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Who can vote in Japan?

- Japanese citizens over 18 years old.

Who loses the right to vote? (overview)

- A person who has been sentenced to imprisonment or severer punishment and whose execution has not yet been completed.
- A person who has been sentenced to imprisonment for an election-related crime and is serving a suspended sentence.
- A person whose right to vote or be elected has been suspended due to a crime stipulated in the Political Funds Control Law.

Voter turnout among persons with disabilities

Voter turnout (overall): **50.7**
People with disabilities: **46.9**
(Komae City Council election in 2023)

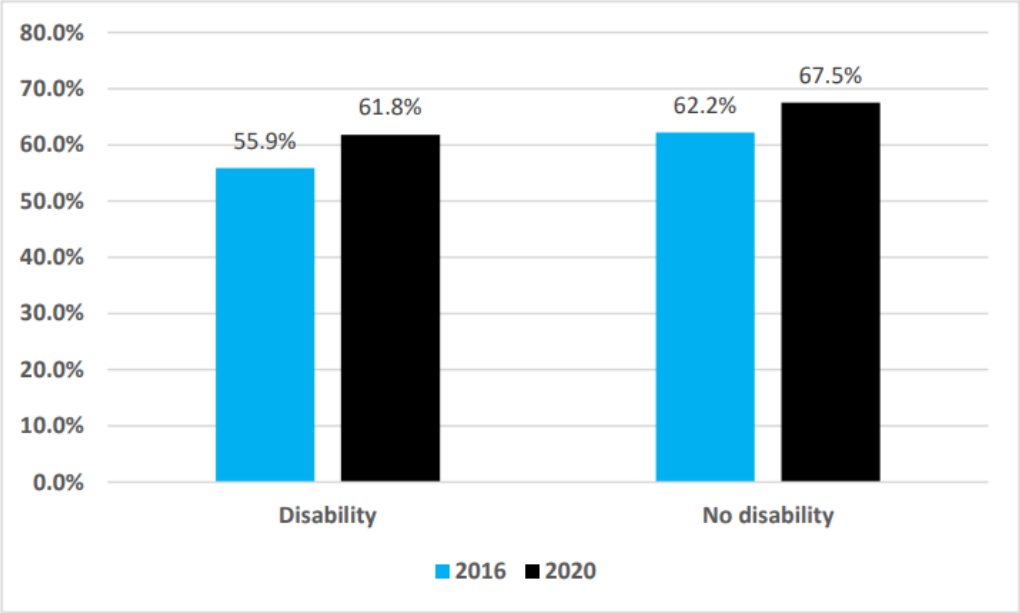
- People with mental disabilities: **50.4**
- People with physical disabilities: **47.5**
- People with intellectual disabilities: **37.7**

The results showed a trend of lower voter turnout with more severe disabilities.

(NHK news report 2023.7.31)

Disability and voter turnout in 2016 and 2020

(General elections in U.S.)



	2016	2020
People without disabilities	62.2%	67.5%
People with disabilities	55.9%	61.8%
Disability turnout gap	-6.3%	-5.7%
Hearing impairment	62.7%	68.5%
Visual impairment	53.7%	59.2%
Mental or cognitive impairment	43.5%	50.7%
Difficulty walking or climbing stairs	55.8%	60.4%
Difficulty dressing or bathing	44.5%	49.4%
Difficulty going outside alone	44.7%	51.6%

(L. Schur & D. Kruse, 2021)

What the persons with intellectual disability feel

・“I would like information about policies, candidates' personalities and achievements to be more easily understood.”

・“I would like to have more information about them”.

(Yajima, 1993)

・“I can’t understand manifestos of political parties because they don’t place reading aids for Chinese characters and many difficult things are written.”

・“The letter about the election was so detailed that I could not locate the polling place.”(Tateoka & Hashimoto, 2011)

Practical Examples to provide easy-to-read information

- Laws and treaties related to persons with disabilities
- Procedural documents to receive welfare and other services
- Information about disaster prevention and evacuation plan
- Practical advises about cooking, working, going to a hospital and so on
- Daily news

Easy-to-read info related to elections is still very limited.

Legal basis for support in elections

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 29 Participation in political and public life

States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities **political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others**, and shall undertake:
(a) To ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including **the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote** and be elected, inter alia, by:
(i) Ensuring that **voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use**;

Act to Promote Measures for Information Accessibility and Communication for Persons with Disabilities (adopted in 2022)

Supplementary resolution by the Lower House

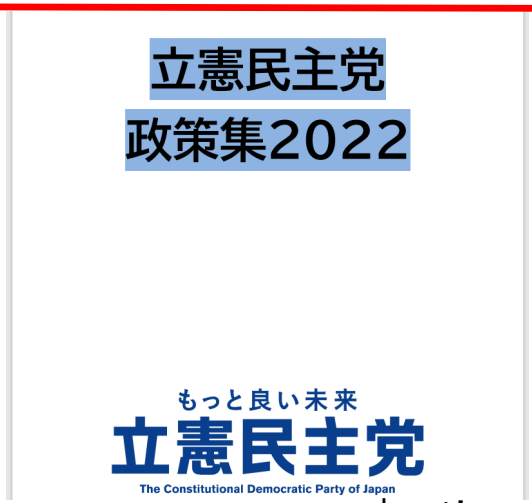
The Government of Japan should take appropriate measures for the following matters in implementing this act.
(iv)
Necessary consideration, including financial measures, should be given to further promoting information communication accessibility, such as barrier-free documents to be submitted to administrative agencies, information support in times of disaster, **improvement of information accessibility in elections**, and barrier-free qualification examinations and other various examinations.

What information can we get in elections in Japan?

【参院選2022】自民党 政見放送

campaign broadcast

official gazette for election



election pledge

media report

Support for persons with disabilities in elections

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) published examples of local governments' initiatives in 2023.

- communication board
- voting support card, "help card"
- easy-to-understand explanation about proxy voting
- letter about election with QR code for voice reading
- explanation video about voting process and support which persons with disabilities can receive.

Advanced case in Komae city, Tokyo

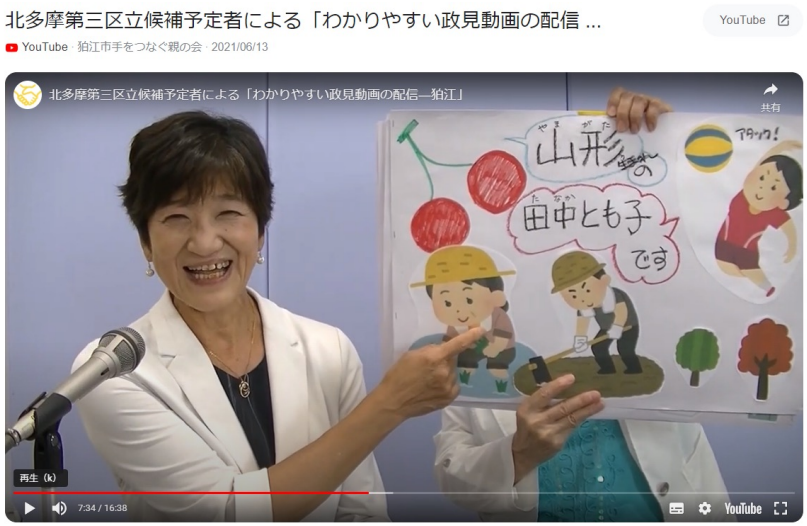
Keyword

“Barrier-free of voting and election information”

They provide opportunities
for voting practice.

1. Easy-to-understand candidates’ speech meeting
2. Easy-to-understand candidates’ policy booklet
3. Easy-to-understand candidates’ policy short video

Easy-to-understand candidates' speech meeting



Easy-to-understand candidates' policy short video

Easy-to-understand candidates' policy booklet

Points to note

- Neutrality of the organizer is emphasized so as not to influence the viewer's or reader's thoughts inappropriately.
- The organizer doesn’t alter the content submitted by the candidates.
- The organizer provides candidates with reference information on how to make the content easier in advance.
- Voting practice is important for persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities to avoid nervousness in the actual voting process.

Overseas Cases

Uganda

Easy-to-Read Election Guide

Updated: February 2021

ELECTION GUIDE

EASY-TO-READ VERSION
JANUARY 2021

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United Kingdom

Easy Read Political Party Manifestos

Updated: May 2016

The **Green Party** would work for:-

- Friendly public services
- Action to stop the climate and weather from getting worse
- Fairness for everyone
- Helping local people and local businesses

We need to find new ways to create electricity and to power our transport that does not harm the planet.

Issues to be considered

- How do we know exactly what kind of assistance people with developmental and intellectual disabilities are seeking during the election process?
- How do we measure the effectiveness of voting assistance?
- How do we think about the discussion on the necessity of the ability to make a judgement on political themes for voting in the context of right to vote for persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities?

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