Japanese Journal of Political Science 6 (3) 345–373 Printed in the United Kingdom © Cambridge University Press 2005
doi:10.1017/S1468109905001945

External Constraints on Female Political Participation

YUKIO MAEDA
Assistant Professor of Political Science, Tokyo Metropolitan University
ymaeda@comp.metro-u.ac.jp

Abstract

This article examines the gender gap in political participation in Japan. Although previous studies indicate that women may face several external constraints on political participation, this idea has not been tested systematically. Using the Japanese component of the Asia-Europe Survey, the article demonstrates that work experience and age have very different impacts on participation across the sexes. It argues that men and women encounter very different working conditions and family circumstances at certain stages of their lives, which create a gender gap in political participation.

According to the 2000 census, 51 per cent of the Japanese population is female.[1] This population parity between men and women does not translate into equal participation in various social domains. For example, there exist significant gender differences in terms of enrollment for higher education and participation in the labor force. Male college enrollment exceeds 40 per cent, but the figure for women is about 34 per cent. While over 95 per cent of men in their thirties and forties participate in the labor force, this figure is only around 60 to 70 per cent for women. The realm of politics is not an exception. Among political elites, as of 2003, only 34 women (7.1 per cent) sit in the House of Representatives and 38 (15.4 per cent) in the House of Councillors.[2]

Ordinary Japanese men and women also participate in politics in different ways. With the exception of voting, women tend to participate in politics less than men do. Female voter turnout is slightly higher than men's. However, women take part in more time-consuming political activities, such as persuading others to vote for a particular candidate, or working on community problems, less frequently than men

[1] The same figure for eligible voters is 51.6 per cent due to the fact that women tend to live longer than men.

[2] For all these figures, see Naikakuhu, *Heisei 15 Nenban Danjo Kyodo Sankaku Hakusho* (Tokyo: Zaimusho Insatsukyoku, 2003).

do.[3] Although the male–female difference does not seem large, even a difference of a few per cent in samples of academic opinion polls translates into a difference of several million in practice. Disparities of such a magnitude may have a significant impact on the perceptions and priorities of public officials. The fact that women do not have equal voice can lead to unresponsiveness among the political elites toward women's interests, in both policy making and implementation.[4] Thus, the gender gap in political participation merits serious investigation. While the study of the gender gap in political attitudes and behavior has made progress in recent years,[5] the difference between the political participation of men and women has not been analyzed systematically.

Literature review

Historically, the voter turnout of women in Japan has been lower than that of men. Women here won the right to vote only in 1947 – it was granted by the new Constitution. However, older women who grew up under the previous Constitution considered politics the realm of men; therefore, some of them did not come out to cast their vote. As women grew accustomed to new expectations, however, their turnout began to increase gradually. According to government statistics, the turnout of women has been slightly higher than that of men since the 1969 general election.[6] Previous studies have suggested that the turnout of women is now as high as that of men because, despite lacking an active psychological involvement in politics, women take the concept of voting as a citizen's duty more seriously than men. For example, Soma – who was probably the first Japanese political scientist to pay serious attention to the gender gap – insists that women are psychologically less involved in politics partially because men dominate the political realm and political affairs are considered to be the business of men.[7] The 1974 ASSK survey posed three questions to respondents to determine their knowledge with regard to the House of Councillors.[8] According to

[3] Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, and Jae-on Kim, *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), chapter 12; Kabashima Ikuo, *Seiji Sanka* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1988).

[4] Nancy Burns, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba, *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), chapter 1.

[5] See, for example, Dennis Patterson and Misa Nishikawa, 'Political Interest or Interest in Politics? Gender and Party Support in Postwar Japan', *Women and Politics*, 24 (2) (2002); Gill Steel, 'Gender and Voting Preferences in Japanese Lower House Elections', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 4 (1) (2003); Gill Steel, 'Gender and Political Behaviour in Japan', *Social Science Japan Journal*, 7 (2) (2004); Sherry L. Martin, 'Alienated, Independent and Female: Lessons from the Japanese Electorate', *Social Science Japan Journal*, 7 (1) (2004).

[6] See the following internet sources for the recent figures: http://www.akaruisenkyo.or.jp/various/02/index.html.

[7] Soma Masao, 'Nihon Ni Okeru Fujin No Tohyo Kodo', *Hosei-Kenkyu*, 41 (3) (1975).

[8] ASSK is an abbreviation for Akarui Senkyo Suishin Kyokai, whose official name in English is the Association for Promoting Fair Elections. The ASSK usually conducts post-election surveys to examine the reasons of voter abstention. The ASSK is funded by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Please see http://www.akaruisenkyo.or.jp.

Soma, while 35 per cent of the male respondents answered the three questions correctly, only 11 per cent of the female respondents could do so. Women are also less interested in policy issues than men, except with regard to the price of consumer goods, and when asked about the political party they endorse, women tend to be non-partisan. Soma emphasizes that women are, however, more responsive to campaigns conducted to raise the turnout through community networks organized by local governments. The motivation to cast their vote comes not only from within but also from external mobilization by their social networks.[9] This clearly implies that women refrain from exercising their own judgment, while making a voting decision but are sensitive to the opinions of others and to personal requests, especially from family members.

However, a series of surveys demonstrate that the rate of participation of women in political activities other than voting is lower than that of men.[10] It has been suggested that this is because women are less interested in politics; their turnout is as high as that of men because voting is an easy act that does not require strong psychological commitments. Other political activities, such as working for election campaigns and participating in community affairs, prove to be rather difficult for women in terms of time and energy. Both Kabashima and Watanuki indicate that lower levels of psychological engagement in women are partially responsible for the lower levels of political participation in activities other than voting.

Another explanation for the male–female difference in political participation lies in the external restrictions that discourage women from participating in politics. Women may refrain from political participation even when motivated to participate. External restrictions can work through two ways. The first one is a psychological or normative one. For example, even if women are interested in politics, they are discouraged from taking action because the dominant normative value in society designates politics as the realm of men. This cultural inhibition works either through the woman's self-restraint or through social pressure. The second restriction is more structural. Women cannot take action even if they wish to because they lack the time and opportunity to do so. For example, the unfair share of housekeeping and child-rearing responsibilities taxes a woman's time and energy that could otherwise have been used for political activities.

In their comparative study based on data from the 1960s, Verba, Nie, and Kim examine the hypothesis of external restrictions and find partial support for it. Their study concludes that women are less interested in politics because they have lower levels of education and that the inequality of psychological involvement in politics leads to the gap in political participation. However, women are less politically active than men at the same levels of political interest, which implies that women cannot convert their psychological involvement into political activity to the same extent as men because they are inhibited by certain external forces. However, since the data set lacks

[9] Verba, Nie, and Kim, *Participation and Political Equality*;Watanuki Joji, 'Yukensha Toshite No Nihon Josei', *Leviathan*, 8 (1991).

[10] Kabashima, *Seiji Sanka*; Watanuki, 'Yukensha Toshite No Nihon Josei'.

relevant measures, exactly what constitutes these inhibitions has been left unexamined. Watanuki briefly pursues this idea using the 1976 JABISS survey and the 1987 ASSK survey. The study finds that political interest and the participation of women increased between the 1970s and the 1980s and that the gender disparity in voter turnout largely diminished, especially among those who had experienced higher education. However, the study stops short of closely investigating whether there remains a gender gap in political activity other than voting after controlling for political interest, although it appears to be affirmative on this point.

Unfortunately, the hypothesis of external constraints has not been tested systematically, partly because standard election surveys lack questions regarding 'external constraints'. Verba, Nie, and Kim infer that the gender gap in political participation that remains after controlling for socioeconomic resources and psychological involvement is caused by external constraints. Watanuki largely follows the same reasoning in his paper. Although systematic investigation of this hypothesis is difficult since the question of what constitutes 'external constraints' is debatable, limited tests that use information regarding family and the other demographic variables may be feasible.

Thus, it is of considerable interest to investigate whether external constraints imposed on women are partially responsible for the lower levels of female political participation. Socioeconomic changes in the past 40 years have definitely increased the educational achievement of women and changed their status and roles in Japanese society; they should also have enhanced the psychological involvement of women in politics. However, if these changes in political attitudes have not wiped away the gender gap in political participation, it is necessary to closely examine the causes of the remaining gap. This paper focuses on this important empirical question.

Data

The data set for this inquiry is the Japanese component of the Asia-Europe Survey (ASES), which was conducted in nine Asian and nine European countries in 2000. The ASES contains a set of questions that tap people's psychological and behavioral involvement in politics, and is suitable for the purpose of this paper. For the sake of international comparison, the designated population is those over 18 years old. However, in Japan those below 20 are ineligible to vote, and 24 observations under 20 have been removed for the purposes of this analysis. The numbers in this paper may therefore differ from those used in other research which draws on ASES Japan. The 2000 general election took place in June, and the interview fieldwork for the ASES started in October. Those who were 20 years old or older would mostly have had the opportunity to vote.[11]

[11] Since the ASES is not an election survey, it does not ask questions regarding contacts from political parties and other mobilization efforts.

Table 1a. *Participation in national elections in past*

	Ratio of those who voted in almost all of them		
	Obs	Ratio	Std. Err.
Male	522	0.74	0.0192
Female	583	0.64	0.0199
Difference		0.10	0.0277
D. of freedom	1,103		
t =	3.5375		
P > t =	0.0002		

Table 1b. *Participation in local elections in past*

	Ratio of those who voted in almost all of them		
	Obs	Ratio	Std. Err.
Male	522	0.74	0.0193
Female	583	0.68	0.0193
Difference		0.05	0.0275
D. of freedom	1,103		
t =	2.0558		
P > t =	0.0200		

Descriptive differences

Women and men still differ significantly in their political involvement. Tables 1(a)–(f) display male–female comparisons using several questions.[12] For example, the ratio of those who vote regularly in national elections is 0.74 for men, while it is 0.64 for women (Table 1(a)). The difference of 0.10 is statistically and substantively significant. The ratio for local elections is 0.74 for men and 0.68 for women (Table 1(b)), which is a narrower gap than that exists in the case of national elections.[13]

With regard to political participation other than voting, the additive index of political activities is constructed from a comparison of answers from eight questions.[14]

[12] Please consult Appendix for the wording of the questions utilized in this paper.

[13] This result is puzzling in light of the aggregate statistics reported by the government, which show that female turnout has been higher than male turnout since the 1969 general election (see footnote 6). The exact wording of the question that taps voter turnout in national elections is: 'In talking to people about elections we find that they are sometimes not able to vote for one reason or another. Think about the national elections since you were old enough to vote. Have you voted in all of them, in some of them, rarely voted in them or have you never voted in a national election?' This wording and the timing of the interview – nearly half a year after the last election – may be a potential explanation for this apparent contradiction. However, male turnout is also higher nine times out of ten in the ASSK surveys from 1972 to 2000. If the wording is not the cause, another possible answer is a bias introduced at the data collection stage. The over-representation of older men might have upwardly biased the calculation of male turnout. This discrepancy is an important problem that requires separate methodological examination.

[14] The interviewers ask 11 questions about political participation (Q405). Three of these questions relate to the frequency with which interviewees participate in conversations about politics. I have removed them

Table 1c. *Experiences in political participation other than voting*

	Mean score of additive index constructed from eight Qs		
	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.
Male	522	1.52	0.0807
Female	583	0.91	0.0530
Difference		0.60	0.0947
D. of freedom	1,103		
t =	6.3857		
P > t =	0.0000		

With the index varying from zero to eight, the male score is 0.60 higher than the female score (Table 1(c)). The gender gap which exists with regard to participation in time-consuming political activities is nearly universal,[15] and is therefore unlikely to be a methodological artifact.[16] So why do women participate less? Women may hesitate to take part in politics if they consider it to be dominated by men, but this explanation should apply only for overt political activity. If this is the case, there should be no difference between the participation of men and women in non-overt political activity. However, the comparative disengagement of women from politics is also true for non-overt activity. For example, conversation is not a demanding or expensive activity. People can talk as long as they have a conversation partner. Yet, examining the extent to which people discuss politics, using the index constructed from three questions,[17] men are more willing to (or have more chances to) talk about politics than women, as shown in Table 1(d).

Women also follow political affairs less than men do. There is a difference in the use of both national and local mass media in following political affairs. The number of

from this index. The remaining eight activities which feature in the questions are: signing a petition, contributing money, contacting a politician in connection with a personal or community problem, joining a demonstration, contacting a politician in connection with a national problem, helping with an election campaign, holding a community meeting, and becoming a member of a political party.

Factor analysis of 13 questions (eight on political activities, three on political conversation, and two on voter turnout) clearly demonstrates that these eight political acts constitute a dimension different from those of political conversations and voter turnout. Calculating the coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) using these eight questions with original four-point scales yields 0.82, which is clearly acceptable. See Edward G. Carmines and Richard A. Zeller, *Reliability and Validity Assessment* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979).

[15] Verba, Nie, and Kim, *Participation and Political Equality*, chapter 12.

[16] LeBlanc argues that women refrain from participating in mainstream political activities and instead concentrate on alternative types of social activities because politics is a dirty 'corrupt' realm. See, Robin M. LeBlanc, *Bicycle Citizens: The Political World of the Japanese Housewife* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Her argument implies that the standard survey questions that tap political participation utterly fail to measure the activism of Japanese women. Although I am unsure about the correctness of her argument, it might be worthwhile to develop new survey questions to capture previously neglected women's activities.

[17] The three questions ask whether respondents talk about national problems, about worldwide problems, and about politics and politicians, respectively.

Table 1d. *Conversations on politics*

	Mean score of additive index constructed from three Qs		
	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.
Male	522	1.42	0.0583
Female	583	1.08	0.0535
Difference		0.34	0.0790
D. of freedom	1,103		
t =	4.2947		
P > t =	0.0000		

Table 1e. *The use of national media to follow political affairs*

	Ratio of those who use national media regularly		
	Obs	Ratio	Std. Err.
Male	522	0.67	0.0207
Female	583	0.52	0.0207
Difference		0.15	0.0293
D. of freedom	1,103		
t =	4.9499		
P > t =	0.0000		

Table 1f. *The use of local media to follow political affairs*

	Ratio of those who use local media regularly		
	Obs	Ratio	Std. Err.
Male	522	0.57	0.0217
Female	583	0.38	0.0201
Difference		0.19	0.0295
D. of freedom	1,103		
t =	6.4873		
P > t =	0.0000		

Note: All comparisons are one tailed-test with the assumption of equal variance.
Source: The Asia-Europe Survey.

women using national media regularly is 0.15 lower than that for men (Table 1(e)), and the figure is 0.19 with regard to the use of local media (Table 1(f)). If following public affairs is an important criterion signifying responsible citizenship, more women fail to satisfy that criterion than men.

Male–female difference and socioeconomic resource level

The six behavioral measures examined so far consistently reveal differences in male–female political participation. The tables in the following sections help us to explore the cause of this gender gap. Rather than exploring all six of the measures

Table 2a. *Gender, education, and voting in national elections*

	Junior high school	High school	Vocational school	University	Total
Male	0.81	0.70	0.67	0.77	0.74
	129	215	52	126	522
Female	0.69	0.63	0.65	0.61	0.64
	113	266	155	49	583
Total	0.76	0.66	0.65	0.73	0.69
	242	481	207	175	1,105

Table 2b. *Gender, household income, and voting in national elections*

Gender	Less then ¥3 million	Less than ¥5 million	Less than ¥7 million	Less than ¥10 million	Beyond ¥10 million	Total
Male	0.72	0.69	0.79	0.79	0.78	0.75
	82	144	101	86	79	492
Female	0.57	0.67	0.64	0.70	0.70	0.65
	121	130	120	103	67	541
Total	0.63	0.68	0.71	0.74	0.75	0.70
	203	274	221	189	146	1,033

examined above, attention here is limited to voting in national elections and the index of political participation, in order to make analysis and presentation manageable. The reason why these two are selected is their political significance. Political participation is usually considered as an act intended to influence public officials.[18] Public officials are also likely to hear those with loud voices more clearly. Thus, merely following public affairs and talking about politics does not satisfy a narrow definition of political participation.

The demographic variables to be examined are education and household income, both of which consist of the index of the socioeconomic resource level in Verba, Nie, and Kim's *Participation and Political Equality*. Table 2(a) and Table 2(b) show the ratios of both men and women who vote regularly in national elections, at each level of educational achievement and household income. Although there are minor variations, it is apparent that the difference between men and women persists for most comparisons. In terms of education, men tend to vote more regularly than women do, regardless of educational achievement. The difference becomes negligible for those who finished vocational school or two-year college, and somewhat narrow for those who completed high school. Somewhat surprisingly, the largest difference is found among

[18] For example, Kay Lehman Schlozman, 'Citizen Participation in America: What Do We Know? Why Do We Care?', in Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner (eds), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).

Table 2c. *Gender, education, and political participation*

	Junior high school	High school	Vocational school	University	Total
Male	1.34	1.51	1.71	1.63	1.52
	129	215	52	126	522
Female	0.61	0.96	1.01	1.04	0.91
	113	266	155	49	583
Total	1.00	1.21	1.19	1.47	1.20
	242	481	207	175	1,105

Table 2d. *Gender, household income, and political participation*

Gender	Less then ¥3 million	Less than ¥5 million	Less than ¥7 million	Less than ¥10 million	Beyond ¥10 million	Total
Male	1.29	1.21	1.80	1.62	2.11	1.56
	82	144	101	86	79	492
Female	0.75	0.89	0.97	0.96	1.25	0.94
	121	130	120	103	67	541
Total	0.97	1.06	1.35	1.26	1.72	1.23
	203	274	221	189	146	1,033

Source: The Asia-Europe Survey.

college graduates.[19] The gender gap in voter turnout generally persists across the levels of household income, although the difference is unclear for the category of income less than 5 million yen.

The same tabular analysis is applied to the index of political participation (Tables 2(c)–(d)). As is the case with voting, men participate in time-consuming political activity more than women across education and household income. In the education category, male–female difference is clear-cut and does not change whichever level of education one chooses to compare. This is also the case with income: men are more politically active than women at each level of the household income category.

The impact of political interest on participation

Previous studies largely attributed the gender gap in political participation to the gap in political interest; this appears to be true even today.[20] First, as in the previous section, the rate of regular voting and the mean score for the index of political participation is calculated separately for men and women at each level of political interest. This simple procedure demonstrates that difference between men and women

[19] This finding contradicts the general finding that the gender gap is nearly absent among college graduates. See, Lester W. Milbrath and M. L. Goel, *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics?* 2nd edn (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1977), pp. 116–18.

[20] Soma, 'Nihon Ni Okeru Fujin No Tohyo Kodo'; Kabashima, *Seiji Sanka*; Watanuki, 'Yukensha Toshite No Nihon Josei'.

Table 3a. *Gender, political interest, and voting in national elections*

	Not at all*	Not so interested	Fairly interested	Very interested	Total
Male	0.30	0.58	0.80	0.89	0.74
	23	133	242	124	522
Female	0.32	0.54	0.79	0.87	0.64
	44	271	215	53	583
Total	0.31	0.55	0.79	0.88	0.69
	67	404	457	177	1,105

Table 3b. *Gender, political interest, and political participation*

	Not at all*	Not so interested	Fairly interested	Very interested	Total
Male	0.61	0.70	1.55	2.50	1.52
	23	133	242	124	522
Female	0.30	0.54	1.26	1.96	0.91
	44	271	215	53	583
Total	0.40	0.59	1.41	2.34	1.20
	67	404	457	177	1,105

Note:* "not at all" includes DK/NA.
Source: The Asia-Europe Survey.

literally disappears for each level of political interest (Table 3(a)), which implies that the gender gap in voting is not caused by socioeconomic differences between men and women, but is caused by the fact that men and women differ in their levels of political interest. There is a gap in voter turnout between men and women across the entire sample, because men are more interested in politics, as is clearly seen in the number of observations in each cell. However, when men and women are compared at the same level of political interest, both are equally likely to vote.

With respect to political participation other than voting (Table 3(b)), the male–female difference does not vanish simply as a result of the introduction of political interest. Rather, the difference in political participation persists at every level of political interest. Close examination of each component variable for the index also reveals that men and women differ in each mode of political action. Political interest strongly shapes one's participation in elections but it is not strong enough to explain away the male–female gap in political participation other than voting.

Considering external constraints

If political interest does not explain away the gender gap in political participation, what accounts for the existing difference? The hypothesis of external constraints is suggested as the potential explanation for the lower rate of female political activity.[21]

[21] Verba, Nie, and Kim, *Participation and Political Equality*; Watanuki, 'Yukensha Toshite No Nihon Josei'.

Table 4a. *Gender, occupation, and voting for national elections*

	Working full time	Working part time	Un-employed	Retired	Student	House keeping	Other	Total
Male	0.70	0.77	0.71	0.88	0.70	0.75	0.79	0.74
	357	26	14	97	10	4	14	522
Female	0.60	0.60	0.64	0.77	0.33	0.71	0.48	0.64
	183	120	14	48	6	191	21	583
Total	0.67	0.63	0.68	0.84	0.56	0.71	0.6	0.69
	540	146	28	145	16	195	35	1,105

Verba, Nie, and Kim and Watanuki infer that external constraints inhibit the political participation of women because women are less politically active than men at each level of psychological involvement in politics. However, this idea has not been examined systematically. More recent studies on political participation in the United States suggest the importance of work experience and family circumstances as factors that facilitate or inhibit political action.[22] The managerial skills and technical expertise that people acquire through their jobs are emphasized as resources that can be effectively applied to political activity. These skills and expertise provide men an advantage over women with regard to political participation because more men hold managerial and professional positions than women. Women tend to hold clerical positions, which do not provide much expertise or skill.

Unfortunately, work-related experience receives little attention in the study of political participation in Japan, partly because *Participation and Political Equality*, which has had a large influence on later works, relies mainly on the composite index of education and income (socioeconomic resource levels) as an explanatory variable. Although the ASES is not an ideal data set to examine the impact of work experience on participation, a limited investigation is feasible. Since the ASES data set and other major election surveys conducted in Japan lack detailed information regarding people's job characteristics, I have used the employment status to determine the influence of work experience on political participation.[23]

Table 4(a) shows the ratios of the regular voter turnout for men and for women separately in each employment status. A few status categories have been combined to eliminate cells with very few observations. Since most men are employed in full-time jobs, while women's occupations are divided into outside work and housekeeping, the study compared full-time male workers, full-time female workers, and female homemakers. The ratio for full-time male workers (0.70) and female homemakers

[22] Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridg, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), Burns, Schlozman, and Verba, *The Private Roots of Public Action.*

[23] Unfortunately, it is impossible to know which industry the respondents work for or what positions they hold.

Table 4b. *Gender, occupation, and political participation*

	Working full time	Working part time	Un-employed	Retired	Student	House keeping	Other	Total
Male	1.59	1.19	1.86	1.57	0.50	0.75	0.64	1.52
	357	26	14	97	10	4	14	522
Female	1.01	0.95	0.93	1.38	1.00	0.71	0.71	0.91
	183	120	14	48	6	191	21	583
Total	1.39	0.99	1.39	1.5	0.69	0.71	0.69	1.2
	540	146	28	145	16	195	35	1,105

Source: The Asia-Europe Survey.

(0.71) is practically the same. Thus, the lack of a job by itself does not work against the voter turnout of women. However, when women are employed full time, their turnout (0.60) is lower than that of men and homemakers. Having a job seems to tax the time and energy of only women, perhaps due to an unequal share of household chores.

A similar table was created for the index of political participation (Table 4(b)). The score for full-time male workers is 1.59, while that for female homemakers is 0.71. The score for full-time female workers is 1.01.[24] Considering the different distributions of employment status for men and women, it appears that the large number of female homemakers is responsible for the large gender gap in political participation. In this sense, being at home has a negative impact on political participation. On the other hand, full-time female workers take more political action than homemakers. Although the limited information only allows conjectures regarding the causal mechanisms, job experience appears to enhance women's political activities, presumably through acquisition of politically relevant skills or expertise or connection to social networks that channel their activities toward politics. However, the impact of employment is not constant across the sexes since the gender gap remains between those working full time. The cause of this gap may be delineated if detailed information regarding occupational characteristics becomes available.

For women, family circumstance is another potential external constraint on political participation. Marriage and child-rearing affect men and women differently. Since most women still carry far more than an equal share of the housekeeping burden in marital life, it is to be expected that family circumstances discourage women from actively participating in politics. If this reasoning is correct, married women with children would participate less frequently than others do.

In order to examine the relationship between family circumstances and political participation, a three-way table with gender, marital status (whether one lives with

[24] This finding disagrees with the American case in which working women participate as much as working men do. See, Kristi Andersen, 'Working Women and Political Participation, 1952–1972', *American Journal of Political Science*, 19 (3) (1975). Different types of gender discrimination/segregation in the workplace/occupation might be responsible for the discrepancy between the US and Japan.

Table 5a. *Gender, marital status, having a child and voting for national elections*

	Living without spouse/partner				Living with spouse/partner		
Children	No	Yes	Total		No	Yes	Total
Male	0.53	0.76	0.56	Male	0.85	0.75	0.79
	100	17	117		167	238	405
Female	0.44	0.66	0.51	Female	0.75	0.67	0.70
	114	61	175		146	262	408
Total	0.48	0.68	0.53	Total	0.80	0.71	0.75
	214	78	292		313	500	813

Table 5b. *Gender, marital status, having a child and political participation*

	Living without spouse/partner				Living with spouse/partner		
Children	No	Yes	Total		No	Yes	Total
Male	0.80	2.18	1.00	Male	1.74	1.62	1.67
	100	17	117		167	238	405
Female	0.64	1.03	0.78	Female	1.05	0.93	0.97
	114	61	175		146	262	408
Total	0.71	1.28	0.87	Total	1.42	1.26	1.32
	214	78	292		313	500	813

Source: The Asia-Europe Survey.

a spouse/partner), and whether the respondent lives with his/her child/children was created. The ratio of the regular voter turnout was calculated (Table 5(a)). The same procedure was applied to the index of political participation (Table 5(b)). As repeatedly confirmed, men were found to be more politically active than women in all the eight comparisons. Reading the table horizontally, it appears that the magnitude of impact from having a child at home is roughly the same for women and men, except for those living without a spouse. In such cases, the impact of living with a child for men (1.38 = 2.18–0.80) is far greater than that for women (0.39 = 1.03–0.64). Since men and women are equally affected, family circumstances do not appear to be a promising explanation for the gender gap in political participation.

Although the discussion regarding this table is slightly tangential to the topic of this paper, it is worth some digression. Interestingly, the relationship between having a child at home and political participation is reversed between those with a partner and those without. All four comparisons for those with a child at home and living without a partner show enhanced political participation. In contrast, all four comparisons for those with a child at home and living with a partner show a hindrance in political participation. This demonstrates that being a parent is an external constraint only for married men and women. Unfortunately, I cannot separate those who never married and are without a partner and those who are divorced or widowed and are without a

partner. However, simply creating the same table leaving out those in their twenties, who are presumably single if living without a spouse, keeps the relationships among the variables essentially intact. This procedure almost eliminates the possibility that age is a hidden factor in explaining this reversed relationship. In the case of those living with a partner, it can be easily assumed that having a child at home taxes a woman's time and energy so much that, despite a desire to be politically active, she is unable to do so. In this sense, certainly family circumstances work as a constraint on the political participation of women. In the case of those without a partner (divorced or widowed), living with a child may be seen as social pressure to be a good citizen. It could also provide them a route to the wider social networks that are unavailable to those living alone. However, it must be clarified that the negative impact of living with a child is more than adequately compensated for by the positive impact of marriage.

Thus far, work and family circumstances provide only a modest explanation for political participation. Before concluding rather labor-intensive tabular analyses of the data, the relationship between age and political participation will be considered in the context of the external constraints hypothesis. Although age has been emphasized in the explanation for voter turnout,[25] it has been assumed that it affects women and men in the same fashion. However, age affects the course of life of men and women in very different ways.[26]

In this paper, the utility of the external constraints hypothesis is limited, partly because very few measures in the standard election surveys tap 'external constraints'. Adding the dimension of age to the analysis does not alter the situation. However, if age affects men and women in different ways, it may indicate the impact of external forces inhibiting the participation of women because age is related to several structural variables such as family circumstances, work experience, social networks, and so on. In particular, if age works differently for men and women, it may suggest that different social forces are responsible for the different levels of political activity of men and women.

Table 6(a) shows the ratio of voter turnout for six age groups for men and women. Male–female difference exists in all age groups, but the rates of turnout for the youngest group are roughly equal. The familiar curvilinear relationship between age and turnout is clear across the sexes. Age has a stronger impact on turnout than gender: the difference

[25] Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), Norman R. Luttbeg and Michael M. Gant, *American Electoral Behavior 1952–1992* (Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1995).

[26] Further, a series of legislations after the mid 1980s that enhance women's entry into the labor market and the continuation of their careers may have had a large impact on the course of life of women. Previously, women were systematically excluded from career-track positions in several industries. Therefore, there may be a large difference between women who graduated from high school or college before the 1970s and those who graduated after the 1990s. There is another age-related difference: in contrast to men, considerably more women quit their jobs upon marriage or after childbirth. Now, it is a legal requirement for employers to guarantee maternity and child-rearing leave to both men and women.

Table 6a. *Gender, age, and voting in national elections*

Gender	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	70–79	Total
Male	0.40	0.59	0.68	0.86	0.92	0.84	0.74
	63	86	81	115	108	69	522
Female	0.38	0.55	0.64	0.72	0.81	0.75	0.64
	85	107	112	102	110	67	583
Total	0.39	0.57	0.66	0.79	0.86	0.79	0.69
	148	193	193	217	218	136	1,105

Table 6b. *Gender, age, and political participation*

Gender	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	70–79	Total
Male	0.68	0.70	2.00	2.10	1.69	1.49	1.52
	63	86	81	115	108	69	522
Female	0.55	0.86	0.89	1.17	1.14	0.75	0.91
	85	107	112	102	110	67	583
Total	0.61	0.79	1.36	1.66	1.41	1.13	1.20
	148	193	193	217	218	136	1,105

Source: The Asia-Europe Survey.

across men and women is 0.15, while the largest difference across age groups is 0.52 (0.92–0.40) for men and 0.43 (0.81–0.38) for women.

With respect to the index of political participation (Table 6(b)), the magnitude of the difference varies across the age groups. Beyond the age of 40, the difference between men and women is clear; however, the picture is ambiguous for those in their twenties and thirties. Indeed, women in their thirties appear to participate in politics more than their male counterparts. However, it is noteworthy that the impact of age is very different across the two sexes: the largest difference between the age groups is 1.42 (2.10–0.68) for men, but 0.62 (1.17–0.55) for women. On an average, the gap between men and women is 0.62 (1.52–0.91). This result clearly suggests that the mechanisms affecting the course of life of men and women are extremely different. In the next section, I will attempt to examine whether these dissimilar relationships of age and political participation across women and men persist after controlling for other relevant variables.

Regression analysis

The preceding sections employed a tabular approach to show how each variable is related to voting in national elections and to other modes of political participation, without paying much attention to sampling variability. Though such a simple procedure is an essential step to understand political behavior through survey data, it is insufficient to assess the relative influence of each variable. In this section, multiple

regression analysis is employed to gauge each variable's relative contribution to political participation, while controlling for the other variables.

(1) Voting in national elections

To examine the impact on regular voting in national elections, the dependent variables is 1 if one votes regularly in national elections, and the other responses are coded as 0 (for the exact wording, please see Appendix). This coding decision is made because roughly 70 per cent of respondents choose the option of 'voted in almost all of them', and using an ordered scale does not seem worthwhile. To analyze dichotomous dependent variables, a probit regression model is used. Each coefficient of a probit regression stands for the impact of the independent variable measured as a z-score (normal density). To make interpretation easier, all independent variables are recoded in such a way that the minimum is zero and the maximum is one.[27] Thus, resulting coefficients can be interpreted as the impact of each independent variable expressed as a z-score, when it changes from its minimum to maximum score.

Table 7 presents a series of estimates using a probit regression model. The first column shows the results when only demographic variables are used as independent variables. The square term of age is included in order to capture the curvilinear influence of age on voting and participation often found in previous studies.[28] As for education, rather than treating it as continuous, two dummy variables are created. One is for junior high school and another is for college degree (or more). The baseline of comparison is with the category of those who finish high school or vocational school.

The estimated coefficients in the first column confirm the results in the tabular analyses. While controlling for age and education, gender has a statistically significant impact on voter turnout. Since the impact of each variable is linear in z-score but not in probability, it is necessary to calculate the impact of sex while the other variables are held constant. When a respondent is a man at age 30 who finished college, his probability of voting regularly in national elections is 0.62. However, if the respondent is a woman, the probability of her voting goes down to 0.53. When respondents' other characteristics are constrained, being a female at the age of 45 with a high school diploma, rather than a male, reduces the likelihood of voter turnout from 0.74 to 0.66.

The second column shows the estimates when respondents' political interest is considered. Rather than treating the four-point scale of political interest as continuous,

[27] This recommendation is made, for example, by Christopher H. Achen, *Interpreting and Using Regression* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 73–77.

[28] The square term is created by subtracting the sample mean from the respondent's age, multiplying it by itself, attaching a minus sign, and changing it to a 0–1 interval. This complicated procedure has two virtues. First, by subtracting the mean score and then multiplying it, a high correlation between age and the age squared is avoided. Second, attaching a minus sign makes the shape of the age square convex, which is close to the actual relation between age and political participation. As a good example of demonstrating the curvilinear relationship between age and voter turnout, please see Luttbeg and Gant, *American Electoral Behavior 1952–1992*, pp. 113–14.

Table 7. *Probit regression model for voting turnout*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
gender	−0.221	−0.053	−0.032	−0.023	−0.036
	(0.086)**	(0.091)	(0.092)	(0.092)	(0.108)
age	1.736	1.399	1.288	1.219	1.259
	(0.179)**	(0.188)**	(0.191)**	(0.197)**	(0.219)**
age squared	0.435	0.431	0.428	0.284	0.364
	(0.156)**	(0.160)**	(0.162)**	(0.180)	(0.195)
junior high school	−0.164	−0.047	−0.039	−0.014	−0.018
	(0.117)	(0.122)	(0.124)	(0.125)	(0.126)
college	0.294	0.177	0.146	0.166	0.127
	(0.123)**	(0.126)	(0.127)	(0.127)	(0.130)
not at all		−0.483	−0.437	−0.426	−0.414
		(0.179)**	(0.180)**	(0.179)**	(0.180)*
fairly interested		0.616	0.535	0.528	0.521
		(0.097)**	(0.101)**	(0.102)**	(0.102)**
very interested		0.817	0.718	0.710	0.699
		(0.146)**	(0.154)**	(0.155)**	(0.156)**
have partisanship			0.276	0.270	0.267
			(0.090)**	(0.090)**	(0.090)**
ideology is important			0.206	0.211	0.201
			(0.153)	(0.153)	(0.153)
living with spouse/partner				0.202	0.193
				(0.110)*	(0.113)*
living with child/children				0.041	0.039
				(0.098)	(0.099)
working full time					−0.074
					(0.145)
working part time					−0.130
					(0.158)
unemployed					0.049
					(0.305)
retired					−0.051
					(0.185)
student					0.386
					(0.385)
other					−0.360
					(0.259)
Constant	−0.531	−0.780	−0.903	−0.940	−0.922
	(0.145)**	(0.159)**	(0.164)**	(0.166)**	(0.220)**
Observations	1,105	1,105	1,105	1,105	1,105
LR-χ^2(df)	145.55 (5)	222.05 (8)	235.06 (10)	239.47 (12)	243.42 (18)
Pseudo-R^2	0.11	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.18

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1% for one-tailed test.

three dummy variables are created, while the second lowest category, 'not so interested', is set as a baseline for comparison. Noteworthy changes appear for gender and education. The impact of gender literally disappears, as is the case with the tabular analyses. Furthermore, the impact of higher education (college) is no longer statistically significant. On the other hand, the three dummy variables for political interest have large coefficients with small standard errors. Comparing coefficients indicates that age (1.399) and political interest (0.817 + 0.483 = 1.30) have similar impacts on voter turnout.

The other psychological variables are added in regression to ensure that the impact of political interest is not spurious due to the exclusion of the other aspects of psychological engagement in politics. The third column shows the estimated coefficients when one's partisanship (whether one has a partisanship or not) and the importance of ideological thinking are considered. Adding the left–right scale further does not substantively change results and a simpler result is presented. The coefficients of both age and political interest are somewhat reduced, but they clearly stand out in this analysis. It seems that one's partisanship has some effect, but the importance of ideology does not have a statistically significant impact on voter turnout.

The fourth column shows the estimates when respondents' family circumstances are considered. Whether one lives with one's spouse and whether one lives with one's child are added, respectively, as dichotomous independent variables. At first glance, living with one's partner boosts the probability of voter turnout, but the impact of living with a child is statistically indiscernible. The coefficient for age squared is reduced to two-thirds and is no longer statistically significant, which implies that the familiar curvilinear shape is, to some extent, produced by family circumstances. The impact of marriage is roughly four-fifths of possessing a feeling of partisanship, which is a non-trivial difference if the importance of political parties in modern democracies is taken into consideration.

Finally, the employment status is inserted into the regression as a series of dummy variables. The baseline of the comparison is that of a full-time homemaker. The categories for comparison are as follows: full-time employment, part-time employment, seeking a job while unemployed, retired, student, and miscellaneous. The result in the fifth column shows that employment status has no meaningful impact on voter turnout. Thus, it appears that age and political interest are more or less sufficient factors in explaining voter turnout.

To demonstrate the impact of age and political interest in an intuitive fashion, predicted probabilities based on the estimates in the fifth column are calculated while manipulating age and political interest. The other variables are set at: female, finished college, not partisan, with the left–right ideology only a little important, married, living with child/children, employed full time. In Figure 1, the horizontal axis is age, and the four lines represent four levels of political interest respectively. There is no clear difference between 'very interested' and 'fairly interested', but the differences between the three levels of political interest are clear-cut. These differences are nearly constant

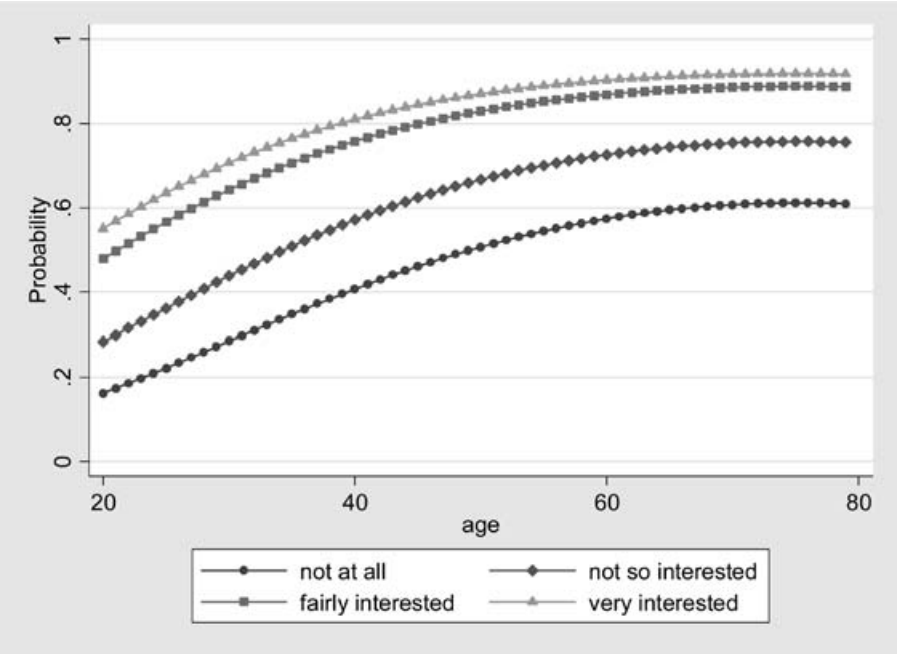

Figure 1 Probability of voting by age and political interest

across people's life stages. Despite the inclusion of the square term and the non-linear nature of the probit model, the expected curvilinear impact of age is modest at best.

(2) Political participation other than voting

The same procedure is applied to the index of political participation as a dependent variable. Since the index varies from zero to eight, linear regression (OLS) is employed to assess the impact of each independent variable on political participation (mean = 1.2; s.d. = 1.6). As before, independent variables are rescaled in such a way that the minimum is zero and the maximum is one. Dummy variables automatically satisfy this condition. Thus, the regression coefficient stands for a change in the index when each independent variable moves from the minimum to the maximum score.

The first column in Table 8 shows the result when the index of political participation is regressed against the set of demographic variables. As before, gender has a statistically significant impact on participation. Being a woman depresses the score by 0.56. All the variables except possession of a college degree achieve statistical significance according to conventional criteria. The impact of age is also pronounced, as is the case for voter turnout.

The second column shows the result when political interest is introduced. As expected, political interest has a large impact on political participation. Compared with being 'not so interested', being 'very interested' in politics boosts the participation

Table 8. *OLS Linear regression predicting political participation*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
gender	−0.561	−0.303	−0.261	−0.269	−0.107
	(0.095)**	(0.092)**	(0.092)**	(0.093)**	(0.108)
age	1.265	0.669	0.488	0.520	0.742
	(0.190)**	(0.188)**	(0.190)**	(0.196)**	(0.219)**
age squared	0.733	0.740	0.759	0.737	0.559
	(0.171)**	(0.162)**	(0.161)**	(0.178)**	(0.192)**
junior high school	−0.544	−0.380	−0.343	−0.344	−0.331
	(0.126)**	(0.120)**	(0.120)**	(0.120)**	(0.120)**
college	0.192	0.076	0.034	0.030	0.010
	(0.133)	(0.127)	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.128)
not at all		−0.063	−0.003	−0.009	0.018
		(0.191)	(0.190)	(0.190)	(0.190)
fairly interested		0.680	0.532	0.535	0.539
		(0.101)**	(0.105)**	(0.106)**	(0.106)**
very interested		1.513	1.297	1.304	1.286
		(0.138)**	(0.145)**	(0.145)**	(0.146)**
have partisanship			0.274	0.275	0.276
			(0.093)**	(0.094)**	(0.093)**
ideology is important			0.508	0.512	0.497
			(0.151)**	(0.151)**	(0.151)**
living with spouse/partner				−0.065	−0.010
				(0.113)	(0.115)
living with child/children				0.084	0.109
				(0.096)	(0.096)
working full time					0.465
					(0.147)**
working part time					0.279
					(0.161)*
unemployed					0.532
					(0.300)*
retire					0.234
					(0.175)
student					0.399
					(0.410)
other					−0.069
					(0.268)
Constant	0.427	0.048	−0.132	−0.129	−0.559
	(0.167)**	(0.168)	(0.170)	(0.172)	(0.227)**
Observations	1,105	1,105	1,105	1,105	1,105
Adjusted R^2	0.10	0.19	0.21	0.21	0.21
Standard error of regression	1.521	1.439	1.425	1.426	1.421

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1% for one-tailed test.

score by 1.51. The coefficients of gender, the linear term of age, and junior high school are largely attenuated, while retaining their statistical significance. The third column shows the result when partisanship and the importance of ideology are introduced to the analysis. In contrast to the case of voter turnout, both partisanship and ideological commitment make a difference. The age and gender coefficients are further reduced, although they are still important.

The fourth column shows the results when marriage (living with one's spouse) and child rearing (living with one's child) are introduced into the analysis. Adding these variables leaves the other coefficients unchanged. Unlike the case of voter turnout, family circumstances do not have any impact on the costly mode of political participation.

Finally, in the fifth column, a set of dummy variables is introduced into the analysis to assess the impact of employment status. Unlike the analysis of voter turnout, the inclusion of employment status alters the estimates in a subtle but interesting manner. While the effects of psychological variables are left intact, the impact of gender vanishes, and the sizes of the coefficients for the linear term of age and that for the square term are exchanged. This change implies that gender, age, and employment status are interrelated in an important way. It is also noteworthy that the impact of full-time employment is substantial. The difference between a full-time worker and a homemaker is more than that between the partisan and the independent – an observation that is important. Thus, the difference in employment status and work experience is partially responsible for the gender gap in political participation. Just for the sake of comparison with voter turnout, the impact of age, employment status, and political interest is visually displayed in Figure 2 where a respondent is female, has a college degree, lives with her spouse and child, supports a political party, and thinks that ideology is only slightly important. Clearly, age has a non-linear impact on the mode of political participation that demands more from people.

Analyzing men and women separately

The preceding analyses pool men and women in a single sample and use a dummy variable to examine differences between the sexes. The implicit assumption in that procedure is that the causal mechanisms are exactly the same for both men and women, but that men and women simply differ in their levels of participation. Ordinarily, one then adds interaction terms between gender and some theoretically important variables to examine if the impact of these variables is constant or changeable between men and women. In this paper, I divide the sample into men and women, and analyze them separately.[29] Dividing the sample relaxes the assumption that the causal mechanisms for men and women are similar, and lets the estimated coefficients of the same variables vary freely between the two samples. Intuitively speaking, this means that gender interacts with everything else. This is not a recommended procedure, unless one has a strong

[29] I adopt this analytical strategy from Burns, Schlozman, and Verba, *The Private Roots of Public Action.*

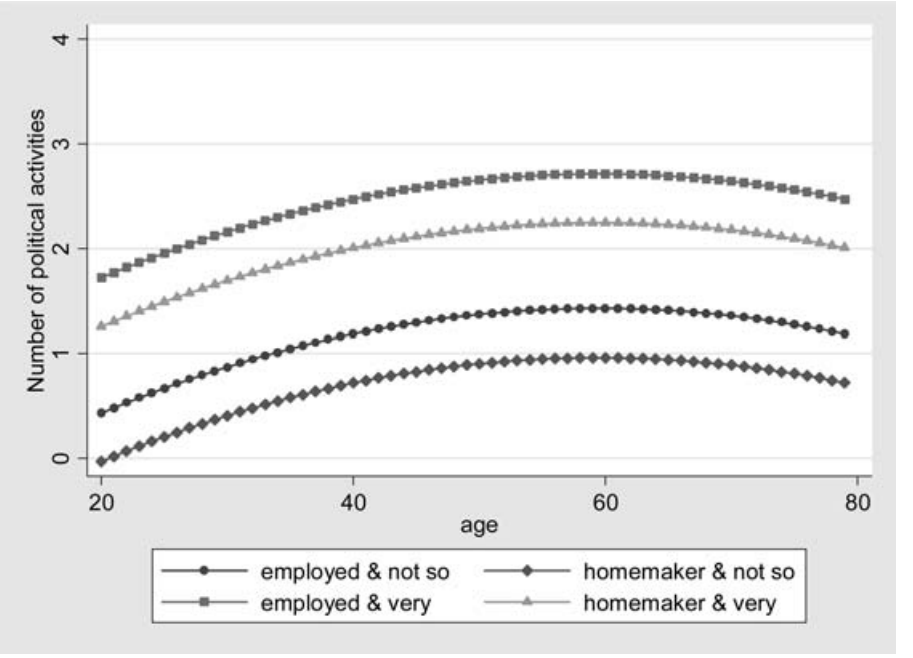

Figure 2 Political participation by age, employment, and political interest

reason to believe that the causal mechanisms could be very different across different segments of the population. However, the impact of socioeconomic conditions and family circumstances may have very different implications for men and women, since most men and women continue to follow very different life trajectories. In fact, the results in Table 8 suggest that gender, age, and employment status are interrelated in an important way. Here, it appears appropriate to split the sample by sex, rather than to add several interaction terms, which increases multicollinearity and complicates interpretation.

The first two columns in Table 9 show the results of a probit regression, with regular voting in national elections as a dependent variable. A minor difference in model specification from the previous models should be noted. Since the number of male homemakers is very small, they have been classified under the miscellaneous category, while 'homemaker' remains an independent category for women. Thus, the baseline of the comparison based on employment status is the miscellaneous category for men and the homemaker category for women. At first glance, there seem to be some marked differences between men and women. The impact of the square term of age appears significant for men but negligible for women. Partisanship and ideology influence male voter turnout but not female. The impact of employment status is negligible, except in the following cases: the positive impact of being a student for men and the negative impact of being classified under the miscellaneous category for women.

Table 9. *Comparing men and women for voting turnout and participation*

	Voting turnout		Political Participation	
	(1) men	(2) women	(3) men	(4) women
Age	1.555	1.185	1.663	0.214
	(0.404)**	(0.283)**	(0.429)**	(0.237)
age squared	0.692	0.136	0.640	0.406
	(0.336)*	(0.255)	(0.347)*	(0.213)*
junior high school	0.133	−0.110	−0.274	−0.343
	(0.191)	(0.174)	(0.197)	(0.142)**
college	0.195	0.054	0.065	−0.087
	(0.167)	(0.218)	(0.185)	(0.187)
not at all	−0.556	−0.389	0.215	−0.086
	(0.325)*	(0.220)*	(0.383)	(0.192)
fairly interested	0.475	0.611	0.599	0.547
	(0.160)**	(0.139)**	(0.189)**	(0.117)**
very interested	0.568	0.838	1.354	1.104
	(0.205)**	(0.257)**	(0.227)**	(0.193)**
have partisanship	0.448	0.129	0.249	0.295
	(0.139)**	(0.122)	(0.162)	(0.104)**
Ideology is important	0.492	0.001	0.613	0.436
	(0.230)*	(0.214)	(0.249)**	(0.177)**
living with spouse/partner	0.079	0.216	−0.126	−0.056
	(0.202)	(0.144)	(0.225)	(0.122)
living with child/children	−0.040	0.126	0.085	0.094
	(0.164)	(0.129)	(0.169)	(0.107)
working full time	0.041	−0.001	1.042	0.322
	(0.403)	(0.160)	(0.429)**	(0.134)**
working part time	0.123	−0.133	0.476	0.253
	(0.502)	(0.169)	(0.519)	(0.144)*
unemployed	0.166	0.076	1.272	0.190
	(0.565)	(0.403)	(0.614)*	(0.326)
retired	0.036	−0.114	0.413	0.358
	(0.412)	(0.242)	(0.435)	(0.193)*
student	1.140	−0.262	0.939	0.586
	(0.641)*	(0.616)	(0.727)	(0.519)
other		−0.601		0.069
		(0.314)*		(0.270)
Constant	−1.513	−0.729	−1.573	−0.180
	(0.465)**	(0.230)**	(0.506)**	(0.198)
Observations	522	583	522	583
LR-χ^2 (df)	138.85 (16)	110.93 (17)		
Pseudo R^2	0.23	0.15		
Adjusted R^2			0.19	0.19
Standard error of regression			1.664	1.156

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1% for one tailed test.

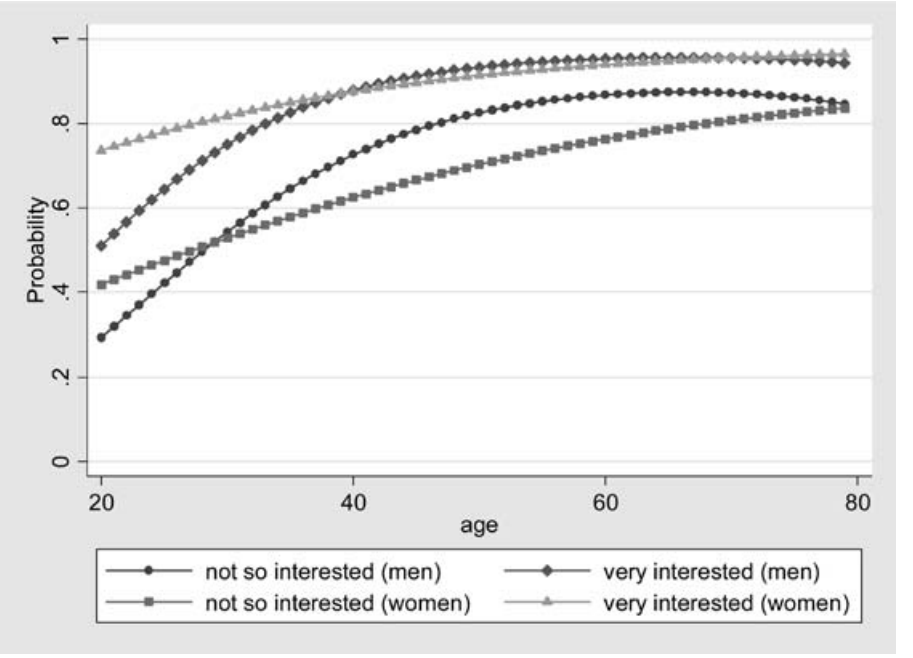

Figure 3 Voting turnout by sex, age, and political interest

However, technically speaking, unless the disturbance variance is constant across men and women, one cannot compare the size of probit regression coefficients for different samples.[30] Thus, comparison here mainly relies on the calculation of predicted values, and graphic presentation.

Figure 3 displays predicted probabilities for men and women, while manipulating age and political interest. The other variables are fixed in such a way that the respondent is a full-time employee with a college degree who lives with spouse and children, and s/he is partisan, while ideology is only slightly important. In the figure, political interest leads to an average difference of 0.13 for men and 0.22 for women. It is interesting to note that the shape of predicted probabilities is very different. That is, the male rate of regular voting is curvilinear with respect to age, while the shape of predicted probabilities for women exhibits much weaker curvature. The existing literature does not consider the interactive effect of age and sex on participation, and as a result this important gender difference goes largely unnoticed.

The third and fourth columns show the results for the index of political participation separately for men and women. Since OLS regression is employed, the coefficients are directly comparable. The impact of psychological variables on men and

[30] Paul D. Allison, 'Comparing Logit and Probit Coefficients across Groups', *Sociological Methods and Research*, 28 (20) (1999).

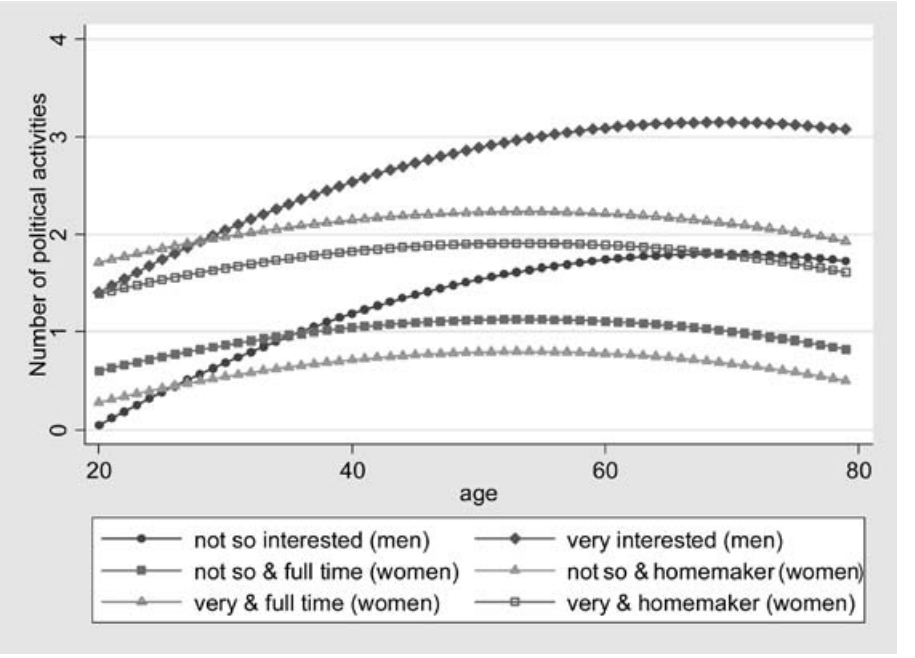

Figure 4 Political participation by sex, age, and political interest

women appears to be approximately equal. Yet, there are a few noteworthy differences between men and women. Being employed full time engenders participation in an additional one political activity for men but it only adds 0.32 for women. The large impact of unemployed men appears to indicate that those seeking a job are as politically active as those employed full time. The impact of part-time employment is interesting – its impact on women is 0.25 and statistically significant. Although its coefficient is larger for men, it is statistically insignificant here, perhaps due to the small number of male part timers. In any case, even part-time experience in employment gives women an advantage in political participation when compared with those who spend most of their time at home. Further, the significant coefficient of retired women suggests a carryover effect from past employment, which is statistically indiscernible for men. The impacts of female full-time employment, part-time employment, and retirement are approximately comparable with that of possessing a sense of partisanship, which must be taken seriously.

Finally, there is also a very large difference regarding the age coefficient. The coefficient for men is roughly eight times as large as that for women, which is statistically indiscernible from zero. The square terms are statistically significant for both sexes, and the coefficient for men is roughly 1.5 times as large as that for women. For the sake of comparison, the number of political activities based on employment status and age are displayed in Figure 4. It clearly shows that female political participation is much

less affected by age than male participation. This result underscores the importance of social conditions and family circumstances that change through one's life course. As repeatedly suggested, the largely different social and familial circumstances of men and women in their life course may be responsible for the gender difference demonstrated in the figure. Women may experience larger external obstacles than men in making their voice heard; however, this remains a speculation.

Discussion

This paper has explored the gender difference in political participation among the Japanese electorate. Despite differences in the overall rates of voter turnout between men and women, the gender gap vanishes when comparisons are made at the same levels of political interest. Considering the slightly higher rate of female voter turnout recorded in government statistics, no meaningful gender disparity appears to be left unexplained.

However, this is not the case with political participation other than voting. Men and women differ in the mode of participation that demands more from them even when compared at the same level of political interest. This paper attempts to address this unexplained gap and pursues the external constraints hypothesis that has been suggested, but not systematically scrutinized, by previous studies. As has been demonstrated, work experience has a modest impact on political participation and its influence seems to vary between men and women. In the case of age, which is known to be a strong predictor for political participation, it was found that its impact is interactive with gender.

This naturally raises a question as to why the impact of age diverges between men and women. Presumably this difference reflects the different social structures in which men and women are embedded. Age is important not as an indicator of length of time since one's birth, but as an indicator of social, occupational, and family circumstances. Experiencing different employment opportunities and family circumstances, men and women acquire very different job-related skills and are exposed to very different information environments. This paper argues that these age-related differences enhance the political activities of men, while inhibiting those of women.

For example, pregnancy and related temporary withdrawal from employment mostly occur between the ages of 20 and 40. As demonstrated repeatedly by economists and sociologists, the participation of the female labor force in Japan is M-shaped when age is set as the horizontal axis.[31] Women participate in the labor force at the same level as men when they graduate from schools and colleges; however, many women temporarily withdraw from the labor market due to marriage, childbirth, or

[31] See, for example, Mary C. Brinton, *Women and the Economic Miracle: Gender and Work in Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), chapter 2.

child rearing. Men rarely leave their jobs for these reasons. Thus, as long as working environment or work experience are among the key elements in the stimulation of political activities, women are disadvantaged as their career is hampered midway due to family circumstances.

It is also the case that men and women differ not only in their levels of participation in the labor force, but also in the types of jobs which they do. Women tend to hold clerical rather than administrative positions. To the extent that job-related skills can be related to levels of political participation, different job assignments and different career trajectories influence the types of political activity that men and women engage in. For example, people learn bargaining skills while negotiating at work, and these skills can be effectively used in community affairs. Work-related activities also provide citizens with a network of acquaintances at government offices or in the business community. As a worker becomes deeply involved in the local business community, he/she knows how to access information or contacts. The weak social relationships formed through work-related contacts tend to connect a worker to different social and industrial domains,[32] which can be politically significant.

Furthermore, the difference between typical male and female working environments also creates different political stimuli and opportunities for men and women. If one desires to persuade others, they should be available as a target of persuasion; it is easier to persuade people at the same level or at a subordinate level to vote for a particular party or candidate than to convince the boss. Thus, a person's structural position in society influences at least his/her opportunity to take some type of political action. This works to the advantage of men since they hold more high-ranking positions than women.

Unfortunately, I cannot go further to investigate whether working experience and family conditions are related to political participation differently for men and women. Standard political science surveys understandably have only a few variables on occupation and family situation. In order to pursue this line of inquiry, it might be productive to employ sociological surveys such as the JGSS (Japanese General Social Survey), since they usually contain a series of questions regarding work experience and family. Yet, as general attitude surveys lack questions pertaining to elections and campaigning, it is desirable for political scientists to pay serious attention to the important aspects of social life. Except in the case of voting, which is clearly a socially isolated action, most other political activities take place in the community, workplace, hobby circles or certain other social settings.[33] Thus, if the social context is to be taken seriously, the location of people in a larger social structure must be studied. Without knowledge of how people's lives are structured, one cannot understand

[32] Mark Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (6) (1973).
[33] Robert Huckfeldt, *Politics in Context: Assimilation and Conflict in Urban Neighborhoods* (New York: Agathon Press, 1986).

how people take action, come together, or interact with each other for political purposes.

If the explanation for the gender gap in political participation is structural, and related to inequalities in the economic and social domains, then political equality between men and women can only be achieved after battles have been won in these domains. Further examination of the available data set, and new studies which focus on the gender gap in political participation are necessary, to help us to understand the reasons for the gap, and to develop policies that enhance equality between men and women.

Appendix. Question Wording

Q402 How interested would you say you personally are in politics?
Very interested/Fairly interested/Not so interested/Not at all interested

Q404 And can you tell me how important this idea of left and right is for you personally?
Extremely important/Somewhat important/Only a little important/Not important at all/Don' know

Q405 Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political activity that people can become involved in, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it. (One answer for each statement)
Have often done/Have done once or twice/Might do/Would never do/Don't know
a) Sign a petition
b) Contribute money to the campaign of a party or candidate in an election
c) Talk about the problems facing Japan with family and friends
d) Talk about international or world problems with family and friends
e) Contact an elected politician about a personal or local problem
f) Attend a protest, march or demonstration
g) Talk about Japanese party politics or party leaders with family and friends
h) Contact an elected politician about a national issue or problem
i) Actively help a political party or candidate at election time
j) Get together informally with others in your community or local area to deal with some community issue or problem
k) Join a political party

Q406 In talking to people about elections we find that they are sometimes not able to vote for one reason or another. Think about the national elections since you were old enough to vote. Have you voted in all of them, in some of them, rarely voted in them or have you never voted in a national election?
Voted in almost all of them/Voted in some of them/Rarely voted in them/Never voted in a national election/I am not qualified to vote

Q407 Now, thinking about the local elections that have been held since you were old enough to vote. Have you voted in all of them, in some of them, rarely voted in them or have you never voted in a local election.
(Same as Q406)

Q409 Which political party do you feel closest to?
Liberal Democratic Party/Democratic Party/Komeito/Japan Communist Party/Liberal Party/Conservative Party/Social Democratic Party/Kaikaku Kurabu/Mushozoku no Kai/Seito Jiyu Rengo/Others/None of them/Don't know/Refused

Q501 How often do you follow accounts of political or governmental affairs in the following media? (One answer for each statement)
Regularly/From time to time/Never
a) Local newspaper, magazine, radio, or television
b) National newspaper, magazine, radio, or television
c) Foreign or international newspaper, magazine, radio, or television

Q508 Who are you currently living with? Exclude family members who live away from home. Record alll that apply)
I live alone/Spouse or partner/Child(ren)/Your father and (or) mother/Your brothers and (or) sisters/Your grandfather and (or) grandmother/Your grandchild(ren)/Spouse's or partner's father and (or) mother/Spouse's or partner's brothers and (or) sisters/Spouse's or partner's grandfather and (or) grandmother/Others

Q509 What is the highest educational level you have attained? (Circle one answer)
Elementary school/Junior high school/High school/Vocational school/college (2 years)/University or higher

Q511 Which of the following best describes your present situation with regard to employment? (Circle one answer)
Presently working full time (35+ hours a week)/Presently working part time (15–34 hours a week)/Presently working part time (less than 15 hours a week)/Used to work but now unemployed and looking for work/Used to work but now retired/Student/Never worked because permanently sick or disabled/Looking after the home full time/Not working for other reasons