1. Election for the House of Representatives

The National Diet of Japan is composed of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, both of which are composed of elected Diet members. A general election for the House of Representatives may be conducted at any time for all the Diet members. The election takes place in either of the following two cases at the expiration of the terms of membership, or upon dissolution.

In 1946, after World War II, the election age was lowered from 25 to 20 years of age and the age of electoral eligibility shifted from 30 to 25 years of age. Also, women were given voting power and electoral eligibility for the first time. The turnout of male voters was higher than that of female voters from the 37th to 39th general elections for the House of Representatives, the difference amounting to 7% in the 39th General Election. However, after the 39th General Election for the House of Representatives, the turnout of female voters increased and in the 39th General Election for the House of Representatives the turnout of female voters surpassed that of male voters by 2% for the first time.

It is reputed that the change in parties and factions brought about by elections, since that excluding the 39th General Election for the House of Representatives, the Liberal Democratic Party has remained the dominant party, followed by the Socialist Party of Japan. The multi-party age began when the Democratic party's defeat in the March 1990 General Election for the House of Representatives to the 39th House of Representatives General Election.

In the period following the 37th General Election for the House of Representatives, the proportion of women to the total number of elected Diet members of the House of Representatives was highest in the 36th General Election for the House of Representatives at 1.4%. Followed by 2.3% in the 39th General Election for the House of Representatives. It was lowest in the 36th General Election for the House of Representatives at 1.2%

Since the 39th General Elections for the House of Representatives, all elections were conducted under dissolution, except for the 39th General Election for the House of Representatives.

2. Election for the House of Councillors

An ordinary election for the House of Councillors is conducted for half the Diet members every three years, upon completion of their term of membership. The Diet members are elected from the proportional representation districts as well as from constituencies.

The turnout is in general, lower than those for the election for the House of Representatives, the lowest ever was 42.5% in the 33rd Ordinary Election for the House of Councillors, and the lowest 22.0% in the 12th Election for the House of Councillors. The turnout of male voters was higher than that of female voters between the 3rd and 7th Ordinary Elections for the House of Councillors, and the difference exceeded 9% in the 4th Ordinary Elections. Nevertheless, since the 9th Ordinary Election for the House of Councillors, the turnout of female voters increased and remained far below male votes by 1% in the 14th Ordinary Election for the House of Councillors.

It is regarded to the change in parties and factions brought about by elections since that excluding the 3rd Ordinary Election for the House of Councillors, the Liberal Democratic Party has remained the dominant party, followed by the Socialist Party of Japan. The multi-party age began to the House of Councillors as well as to the House of Representatives, and has continued to the present.

After the 3rd Ordinary Election for the House of Councillors, the proportion of women to the total number of elected Diet members of the House of Councillors was highest in the 12th and 14th Ordinary Elections for the House of Councillors at 17%, followed by 14% in the 10th Ordinary Election for the House of Councillors, and was lowest in the 4th Ordinary Election for the House of Councillors at 10%.

3. Constituencies and Fixed Number of Seats for the House of Representatives

The election for the House of Representatives is conducted by the proportional constituency multiple-ballot system, the term of membership for the House of Representatives being four years. In 1950, the number of constituencies was set at 118 with a fixed number of seats of 166. However, the electoral districts were further divided and the fixed number of seats increased due to the revision of Amnest Fiscal and Statutory Law in 1950, and also to the apparent imbalance between the number of seats and the number of seats observed in some prefectures in Ōsaka, Kanagawa, Tōkyō and Ōita. As of July 1, 1996, the fixed number of seats was set at 412. The boundaries of electoral districts classified by the fixed number of seats to 1 district with 1 seat, 6 districts with 2 seats, 42 districts with 3 seats, 38 districts with 4 seats, 4 districts with 5 seats, 1 district with 6 seats, and 1 district with 7 seats, totaling 184 constituencies.

As a result of the population increase in major cities and their suburbs, as well as the decrease of the population in other areas, an imbalance between the number of voters and the number of fixed seats has occurred in each constituency.

As of July 1, 1996, the number of voters per fixed seat was highest in Kanagawa 4th Constituency with 92,841 voters, and lowest in Niigata 3rd Constituency with 48,170 voters, a difference of 44,671 voters.

3. Constituencies and Fixed Number of Seats for the House of Councillors

The election of the House of Councillors is conducted by both the proportional representation system and the constituency system. The term of membership for the House of Councillors is six years, with half the members of the House of Councillors elected every three years. The fixed number of seats for the House of Councillors is 252, including 199 seats elected from the proportional representation districts and 53 seats elected from the constituencies.

The proportional representation system is a method which elects members by proportional allotment of the number of votes obtained by parties. Under the constituency system, each precinct is required to see constituency for which the fixed number is set at 2, 4, or 6 members in accordance with the population in that district. The second largest party is the smaller parties, and if the number of seats is 6 or less, the number of seats is limited to the party with the next largest votes.

At the time this House of Representatives, there has been an imbalance between the number of elections and the fixed number of seats in the elections for the House of Councillors attributed to variations in the population of constituencies. As of July 1, 1996, the number of members per fixed seat was highest in Kanazawa Prefecture with 140,480 members, and lowest in Tottori Prefecture with 41,020 members, a difference of 99,460 members.

The electoral system for the House of Councillors employed both the national constituency system and the local constituency systems up to the 12th Ordinary Election for the House of Representatives.