

Demography Meets Psephology: The Impact of Changing Age Structure on Democratic Systems

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Population ageing is a well-known feature of many Asian territories. The political consequences of this change have been widely explored: a challenge to intergenerational justice and the functioning of a 'low fertility trap' where resources are systematically diverted away from the young.

Evidence from other parts of the world shows that there is often an age gradient to political participation; namely the propensity to vote. This behavioural differential could serve to exaggerate the impact of structural change of the ageing of the population.

In this paper, we use the Asia Barometer Survey to identify the extent to which an age gradient exists for five Asian territories, and then produce a projection scenario to 2050 based upon an assumption of recent trends of voter participation continuing into the future. We find sharp differences between Asian territories and explore the policy implications.