

# Party politics, elections and (mis-)trust in Japan

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**Abstract:** Trust matters profoundly for many dimensions of political life. In this article we focus on *political trust*: how the trust or mistrust citizens have toward the political process, politicians and government affects politics. Prior research has shown that political trust influences such crucial dimensions of politics as the basic legitimacy of government, political participation, voting behavior, compliance with government, and reform orientation. In this article, we seek to answer three major questions. First, is political trust declining in Japan? Second, we are interested in exploring the determinants of trust and distrust in politics: why do people lose trust in politics? What kinds of voters lose political trust? Third, we explore the consequences: what happens when people lose trust in government and politics.

**Keywords:** trust, political parties, LDP, DPJ

## Introduction

The cynic will observe that ‘trust’ and ‘politics’ do not share much common ground, but trust matters profoundly for many dimensions of political life. In a deft overview for this special issue, Lukner and Sakaki (2016) cover many of these dimensions. We agree that social trust can have profound implications for politics and political and civic life (cf. Ljungkvist 2015).

Trust is a crucial element in the building of social capital, which in turn supports effective governance (Putnam 1993). In this article we focus not on social trust’s undergirding for politics, but on political trust. As Lukner and Sakaki argue in this introduction, political trust has four components or dimensions: perceived performance of political institutions and leaders; evaluative orientation to the performance of the political system; normative expectations; and political legitimacy. We focus on the first two components in this analysis, and expand Lukner and Sakaki’s definition of political institutions and leaders to explicitly include political parties. In this article, we ask how the trust or mistrust citizens

have toward the political process, politicians and government affects politics in Japan. Our findings indicate that political trust matters, particularly in the context of political party competition. For example, we find distrust of a particular political party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), connects to a broader distrust of politics and government in general. Moreover, distrust also facilitated third party formation and thus contributed to the kaleidoscopic splintering and recombination of parties that characterized Japanese party politics in the 2010s – and to the opposition fragmentation that handed the LDP victories at the polls in 2012 and 2014 – which in turn has significant implications for Japanese politics, policy, and international relations (Pekkanen *et al.* 2013, 2015).

One problem with the data on political trust in Japan is that the data often fail to distinguish between political trust based on belief in the honesty or sincerity of politicians, i.e. their apparent character and political conduct, on the one hand, and the politicians' knowledge and ability to compose and implement successful and good policies, i.e. their policy performance, on the other. Unfortunately, because the survey data available do not distinguish clearly between these, we must also accept a level of ambiguity in this article on that point.

### **The concept of political trust**

Political trust influences such crucial dimensions of politics as the basic legitimacy of government, political participation, voting behavior, compliance with government, and reform orientation (Levi and Stoker 2000). However, extensive research shows that the relationship between political trust and politics can also be affected by a number of intervening variables; for example, the effects of political trust can vary by political affiliation, perceptions of parties and policies, ideology, institutional settings and types of media coverage (Kaase, 1999, Mishler and Rose, 2001, Mutz and Reeves, 2005, Rudolph and Evans, 2005, Catterberg and Moreno 2006).

An important contribution to refining our understanding of the relationship between trust and politics comes through the work of Marc Hetherington (1998, 1999), who demonstrates the impact of political trust on citizens' approval of institutions and voting behavior. For example, Hetherington (1998) shows that trust in the government can fluctuate depending on the government's policy performance. Economic performance, improved perceptions of government effectiveness, and a high degree of approval of political institutions positively affect the levels of trust voters have in politics, which in turn are translated into warmer feelings for elected officials and political institutions. Hetherington (1999) also shows that those who have low trust in the government are more inclined to choose the challenger over the incumbent in elections, extending our understanding of the connection between trust and voting behavior. For example, Hetherington demonstrates that when the US presidential race is three-way

competition, these disaffected low-trust voters tend to vote for the third party, at the expense of both of the two major parties.

After years of complaints about low levels of political trustworthiness and significant party system fluctuation in Japan, the implications of these analyses are worth investigating further. Is political trust declining in Japan now? If so, what systematic factors explain the declining level of Japanese voters' political trust? Is political trust somehow at the heart of Japan's massive political party volatility of the past two decades? These are the specific questions of political trust in Japan that we address in this article.

After reviewing the literature on trust in Japan in order to situate our research questions, we will describe our research methods and present data on the level of political trust in Japan, using surveys from the Japanese Election Study (JES). Then we will delve into the determinants of political trust and distrust, and the consequence (dis)trust has for Japanese politics, paying particular attention to the relationship between political trust and support for parties and voting behavior.<sup>1</sup>

## Trust in Japan

There has been extensive interest in social trust in Japan (see Lukner and Sakaki (2016), this issue). Researchers have also connected social trust with political outcomes. For example, Pekkanen *et al.* (2014) show how social trust mediates the way in which neighborhood associations contribute to (local) governance. However, our concern here is with political trust itself and its relationship to politics rather than with the broader 'social trust'.

Political trust – both in terms of trust in specific political institutions and general political legitimacy – has emerged as a major theme in its own right. For instance, Tanaka (1992) shows that although non-partisans in Japan are dissatisfied with the government's policy performance and the way democracy works in the country, they don't necessarily feel distrust in politics. Elsewhere, Tanaka (2002) finds that there is no statistically significant relationship between political trust and government performance.

Scholars also look at the relationship between scandals and political trust, especially after the scandal-ridden 1990s (Pharr 2000). Scandals involving elected officials and bureaucrats have occupied the headlines frequently in the last few decades. The end of the one-party dominant regime was triggered by a series of large-scale corruption scandals, the Recruit Scandal in 1988 and the Sagawa Kyūbin Scandal in 1992, both of which involved political donations. Some groups of the perennial ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), defected from the party, demanding political and electoral reform (Reed 1996). Moreover, the bureaucracy, the Ministry of Finance in particular, was heavily criticized for its mismanagement of the bursting of the bubble economy, the financial crisis and its inappropriate, corrupt relationship with debt-ridden commercial banks (Laurence 2001, Amyx 2004).

The purveyors of those headlines themselves, however, have not been immune from scandals that have called into question whether citizens can trust their messages. Recently, scandals involving statements by the President of NHK (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*, Japan Broadcasting Corporation), Japan's massive and previously very trusted public service broadcasting network, and about the reliability of the *Asahi Shimbun*, Japan's second largest newspaper and the 'newspaper of record' have tarnished trust in these institutions in ways previously inconceivable (Pekkanen and Pekkanen 2015).

The consequences of the Great East Japan earthquake and the resulting tsunami and nuclear disaster raised questions of whether the entire government apparatus and nuclear industry merited citizens' trust at all (see Aldrich (2016), and also Reiher (2016), this issue). On the one hand, some research shows that the crisis situation of the earthquake and tsunami strengthened the interpersonal relationship of mutual trust through social capital (Hommerich 2012, Veszteg *et al.* 2015). On the other, however, after observing how the government handled the crisis, Japanese citizens saw their trust in politics rapidly erode. A study found that, in September 2011, as many as 73.0 per cent of the survey respondents did not trust governmental institutions. In particular, those directly affected by the disaster had less confidence in the government (Hommerich 2012). This confirms the general view that Japan's political leadership was ineffective in dealing with the disaster (Krauss 2013, Kushida and Lipsky 2013, Samuels 2013, Kushida, 2014). It seems clear that the perceived poor performance of the Japanese government in responding to the triple disaster was a key reason for declining political trust levels in general, highlighting the 'evaluative orientation' encapsulated in the notion of political trust, as pointed out by Lukner and Sakaki (2016).

## Research questions

Previous research on political trust suggests that cynicism and disinterest in politics may not be the only factors causing increased levels of distrust in the government (Hetherington 1998, 1999, Kaase 1999, Mishler and Rose 2001, Rudolph and Evans 2005, Mutz and Reeves 2005, Catterberg and Moreno 2006). Rather, there seems to be a possible virtuous cycle in which the government can generate political trust with good policy performance, which in turn helps the incumbent to retain office. On the other hand, a poor performing government can generate a negative spiral leading to declining levels of trust and further to vote switching to a challenger or even a non-established third-force party. In line with Hetherington's (1998, 1999) arguments about trust, policy performance, and voting behavior in the US, we will concentrate on one dimension of political trust: the question of the public's (loss of) trust in political parties. We are particularly interested in whether the loss of political trust in the established parties, or the LDP and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), may be related to the rising number of 'floating voters', i.e. those voters who espouse no political party

identification or consistent support, and whether this connection in turn has fueled the volatility of recent elections and the instability of the party system.

Thus, we seek to answer three major questions in this article. First, is political trust declining in Japan? Is it the case that Japanese people in general are losing trust in politics over time because of the scandals involving politicians and bureaucrats, and the mass media as well as due to the handling of natural disasters? Are there any fluctuations in the levels of political trust among Japanese citizens? If so, can such fluctuations be captured by systematic factors such as partisanship, age, and education, rather than by *ad hoc* or temporary variables such as dissatisfaction with the government's policy performance?

Second, we are interested in exploring the determinants of trust and distrust in politics. Why do people lose trust in politics? What kinds of voters lose political trust? Do voters lose trust in politics more or less deterministically because of the increasing level of their cynical political attitudes? Or can governments, parties, and politicians control citizens' trust in politics by offering better policy performance?

Third, we are also interested in the consequences of lost trust in politics: what happens when people lose trust in government and politics? Does declining trust increase the volatility of elections? What happens to the stability of the party system?

## Data and methods

In answering these questions, we utilize a series of surveys from Japanese Election Study (JES). Launched in the 1980s, JES covers national elections held in Japan up to the 2010 elections for the House of Councillors.<sup>2</sup> These surveys provide ideal data for our study, because they ask Japanese citizens such questions as how much they trust national politics and political parties, how they evaluate the government's overall performance and the state of the economy, and how they behaved in the voting booth. Specifically for this paper, in capturing citizens' political trust levels, we will use the following questions:

1. To what extent do you feel you can trust national politics?
2. How much trust do you place on political parties and politicians?<sup>3</sup>

In answering these questions, survey respondents are given a choice of four options: 'I trust it very much', 'I trust it somewhat', 'I don't trust it much' and 'I don't trust it at all'. We will use answers to these questions to examine the general trends over time and conduct statistical analyses on what happens when people lose trust in government and politics, how declining trust increases the volatility of elections, and what happens to the stability of the party system, as described below.

## General trends

Figure 1 shows temporal fluctuations of trust in national politics over time from 1986 to 2010. From the mid-1990s to the 2010s, the level of trust in national politics or national government was not very high. On average, less than a majority (40.3 per cent) of Japanese citizens trusted politics ‘Very Much’ and ‘Somewhat’. Other developed democracies show similar levels of political trust. For instance in 2009, on average, 35.6 per cent of the EU (European Union) member country citizens trusted their national governments (EuroBarometer 2009). Luxemburg (77 per cent), Denmark (61 per cent), Austria (58 per cent) and Sweden (57 per cent) showed the very high levels of political trust, compared with Japan’s 40.3 per cent in 1986 to 2010. Meanwhile, former communist countries tended to have low levels of trust. The exceptions here are Estonia and Slovakia, where 38 per cent of the citizens trusted their national governments in 2009. However, citizens in Bulgaria (17 per cent), Hungary (14 per cent), and Latvia (10 per cent) reported very low levels of political trust.

However, it is not the case that trust in politics has been constantly declining since the 1980s in Japan. Rather, Figure 1 shows some temporal fluctuations. Except for the 2005 election, in which 54.6 per cent of the citizens expressed trust in politics, a majority of Japanese citizens do not trust politics. In 1995, Japanese voters showed the highest level of distrust with 64.8 per cent of respondents stating they did not trust politics very much or at all. This overlaps with the bureaucratic scandals of the mid-1990s as described above. On the other hand, during the Koizumi period – the 2003, 2004, and 2005 elections – the degree of trust in politics was high: 41.6 per cent, 43.2 per cent, and 54.6 per cent of the

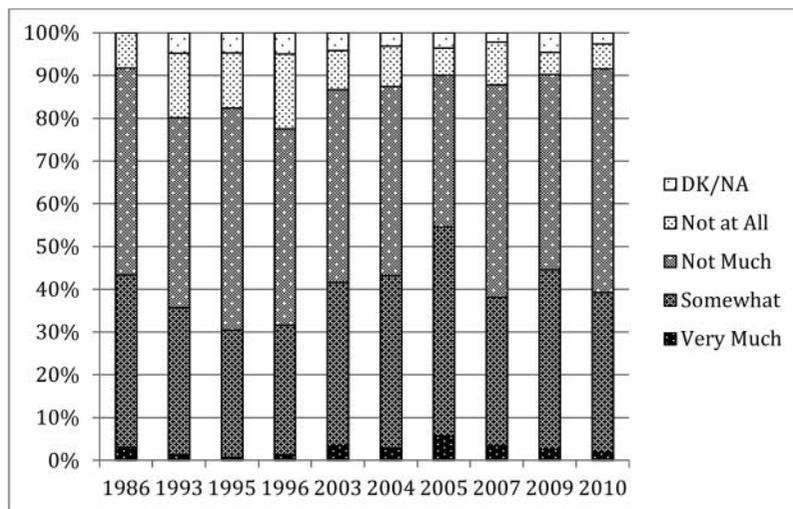


Figure 1 Trust in national politics over time.<sup>4</sup>

respondents trusted national politics ‘very much’ or ‘somewhat’ in 2003, 2004, and 2005, respectively. This suggests that trust might be correlated with the government’s popularity and performance. In the second year of the DPJ administration (2010), trust dropped to 39.3 per cent and distrust increased to 58.1 per cent, suggesting that the unpopular government could harm trust levels. So we hypothesize that the levels of trust and distrust should be determined by both long-term and short-term factors. Long-term factors include cynicism and political attitudes, or political efficacy (Almond and Verba 1963). Short-term factors include dissatisfaction with the government’s policy performance and economic management.

## Determinants of trust

Given that trust levels might be correlated with the government’s popularity and performance, in this section we investigate the determinants of trust by using multivariate analyses. Here, we focus on the 2009 and 2010 elections, the most recent elections currently available in JES. Our dependent variable is *political trust*, as measured by a citizen’s level of trust in political parties in general.<sup>5</sup> As it has clear rank ordering of four different values, we will use ordered logit models.<sup>6</sup>

In estimating the levels of trust, we use a battery of variables measuring such factors as citizens’ political cynicism and attitudes, and their perceptions about the government’s policy performance. We selected to focus on these variables because political scientists in prior research have found them to be among the most important correlates of political trust. These variables include:

- Voters’ feelings of cynicism and powerlessness and political attitudes (Parties ignore people; Elections ignore people; Diet ignores people; My vote matters; I have some impact on the government; and Left–right Ideology). Many political science studies, including the ground-breaking Almond and Verba’s (1963) *The Civic Culture*, have explored how feelings of political efficacy and cynicism may have profound effects on attitudes toward politics (for example, Hetherington 1998, 1999, Kaase 1999, Mishler and Rose 2001, Rudolph and Evans 2005; Mutz and Reeves 2005, Catterberg and Moreno 2006).
- Voters’ perceptions about the government’s policy performance and the economy (Economy is bad now; Evaluation about economic policy, diplomatic policy, and overall policy performance; and Approval of the current administration). The degree to which government policy and performance itself has also been a major focus of studies on the extent to which people have political trust (e.g., Christensen and LaeGreid 2005).
- Exposure to the mass media, the type of mass media and the bias of the media information people receive have been the subject of comparative analysis (e.g. Ceron and Memoli 2015). In Japan, we have data on exposures to

and trust in the mass media (I often watch NHK news; I often watch private TV news; I often watch ‘wide-shows’; Trust in TV; Trust in newspaper). For many years in the postwar period, NHK, Japan’s huge public service broadcaster was the most trusted institution in Japanese society and primarily broadcast political news about the government bureaucracy’s involvement in policy; but after the 1980s a more cynical commercial news program began to rival NHK in viewership and to focus more on critical views of individual politicians and of political parties. It has been argued that this change may have led to a greater cynicism about and less trust in government (Krauss 2000). Thus, where people get their information about public affairs can influence their attitudes toward government, parties, and politicians.

- Social status (Female; Urban–rural; Age; and Economic class). These are the standard socio-economic variables that intervene between the individual and their attitudes.

Therefore, our selected variables encompass some of the most basic and crucial variables that political scientists have used in research on political trust and other attitudes and values. The exact definitions and coding are available in the appendix.

Given that political trust’s temporal fluctuations seem to be correlated with the government’s policy performance and approval, we expect that even controlling for voters’ cynical attitudes, the levels of political trust should be determined by the variables capturing voters’ views about the government, such as evaluations about different policy issues.

The full estimation results are shown in the appendix. Here, we choose to show our results graphically in [Figure 2](#). This figure shows how the different explanatory variables affect the likelihood of a voter having distrust in political parties when the other variables are set at the mean value. To be specific, we look at what will happen to the probability that the dependent variable (or *political trust*) take a value of 4 (or ‘I don’t trust it at all’) when a given explanatory variable moves from the minimum to maximum value. We conducted 1000 simulations of these first differences based on the results.

First of all, cynicism matters significantly. If a voter does not think political institutions – i.e. parties and the Diet – listen to his or her voice, then his/her political distrust increases significantly by 17.6 per cent and 15.9 per cent respectively. If a voter believes he/she can have some impact on the government, then the level of distrust shrinks by 7.3 per cent. Overall, these feelings of political powerlessness partially determine the levels of distrust. This could be a worrisome message to politicians, if these political attitudes are innate characteristics of voters.

Second, social trust, as captured by people’s trust in the media and tendency to trust ordinary people, also affects political trust. As the key intermediary today between government and citizens, media can strongly influence perceptions of

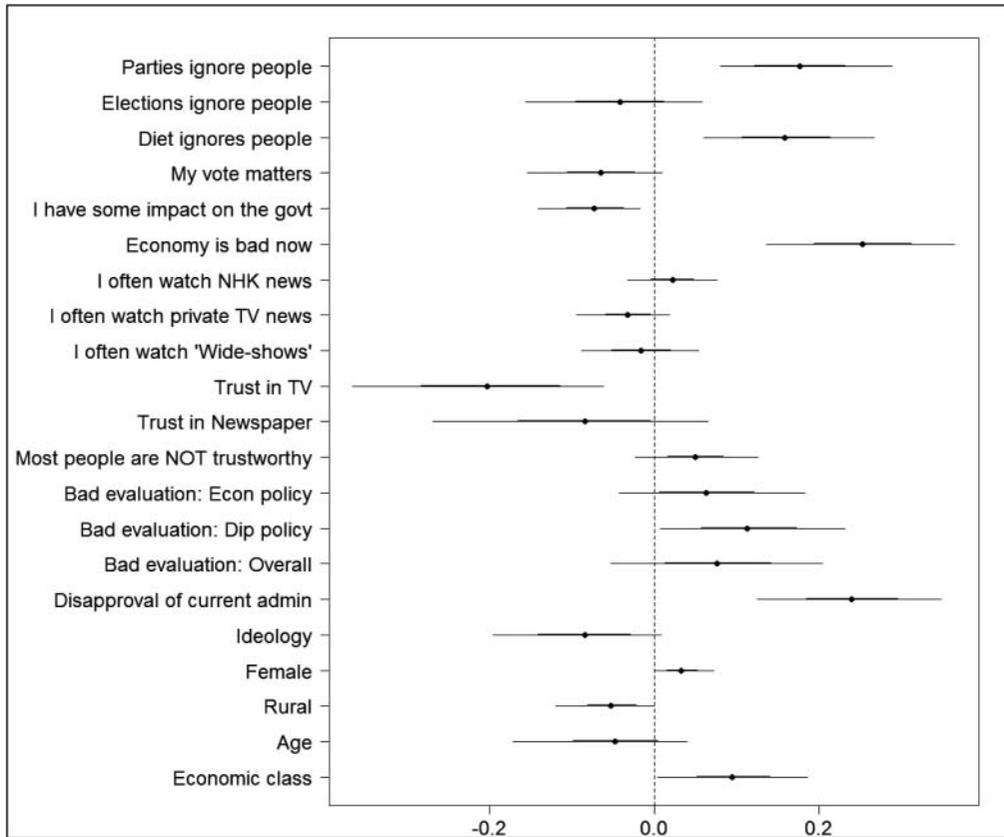


Figure 2 Determinants of distrust in political parties.

Note: The first differences in the probabilities that the dependent variable (or *political trust*) takes a value of 4 (or 'I don't trust it at all') when explanatory variables move from the minimum to maximum value. The markers, the thick lines, and the thin lines in the figure indicate the means, the 68 per cent confidence intervals, and the 95 per cent confidence intervals, respectively.

public affairs. For example, a study of twenty-seven European countries found that the political slant of the media can reinforce positive and negative attitudes toward government (Ceron and Memoli 2015). In our analysis as well, if voters' trust in TV changes from the lowest to the highest level, their political distrust decreases by 20.3 per cent. Given that the major public broadcaster in Japan, NHK, tends to avoid interpretive and critically slanted news about the government (Krauss 2000), we might possibly observe a reinforcement of NHK viewers' more positive attitudes toward government. Although not statistically significant at the 95 per cent level, voters believing most people are trustworthy also tend to trust politics more. These data imply that the way the media portray politics and convey it to voters can significantly influence the functioning of Japan's democracy.

Third and most importantly, the government's performance can significantly improve or hurt voters' trust in politics. If a voter's perception of the economic status changes from 'Doing well' to 'Doing badly,' he or she is by 25.2 per cent likely to show the highest level of distrust in politics. Similarly, a voter's bad evaluation about the government's diplomatic policy and disapproval of the administration are translated to an increase in the likelihood of distrust in politics by 11.2 per cent and 23.9 per cent, respectively. Therefore, the government can create distrust through bad performance, while it can also earn trust, by improving its performance especially in the economic realm.

Overall, the analysis reveals that feelings of political powerlessness, trust in the media, and voters' views about the government's performance significantly determine the levels of political trust. In particular, our data confirm that the government can have some control over citizens' trust in politics by improving its performance. This is also consistent with the general trends suggesting that political trust tended to be the highest during the era of the Prime Minister Jun'ichirō Koizumi, one of the most popular Prime Ministers after the 1990s.

### **Consequences of political trust**

Given the findings about the determinants of political trust, we will further analyze what happens if citizens show only low levels of political trust. In this section, we use *political trust* as our primary explanatory variable to explore a range of voters' behavior in the 2010 election. We focus on the 2010 election because the period between the 2009 HOR and 2010 HOC elections should be expected to show change in political attitudes towards parties and government. Specifically, we are interested in how non-partisan voters' declining trust in the DPJ administration's performance in the first year was translated into their voting behavior in 2010.

As we are interested in the issues of floating voters, the volatility of recent elections, and the instability of the party system, we use four dependent variables:

- *Vote Switching*: Whether a voter changed from one party to another in voting.
- *Non-partisan*: Whether a voter said there was no party to support.
- *Voting DPJ*: Whether a voter voted DPJ in 2010.
- *Voting LDP*: Whether a voter voted LDP in 2010.

As these dependent variables are dichotomous, we use logit models in estimating them. In the models we include the same variables that we used to estimate the levels of trust, to avoid the omitted variables bias. For more information, please refer to the appendix, which shows the full estimation results.

Figure 3 shows how the different levels of political trust affect the four dependent variables. Specifically, using 1000 simulations based on the results, we

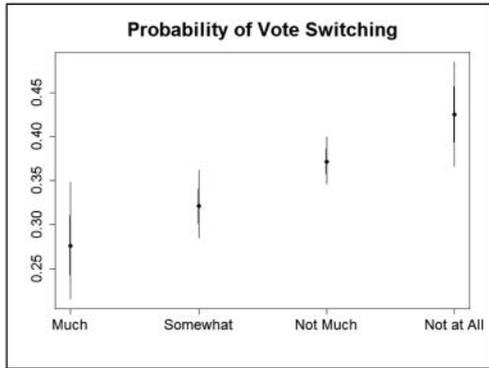
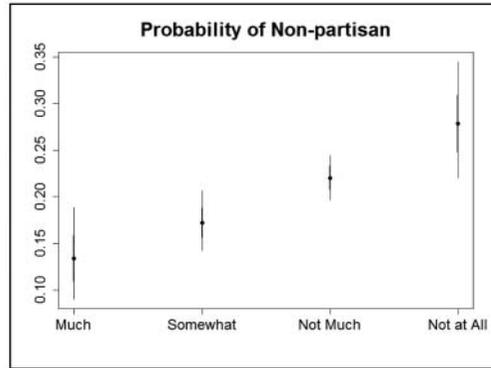
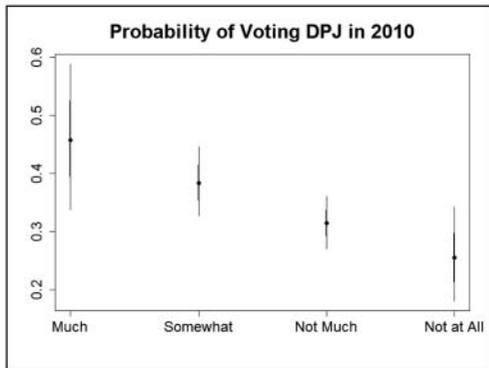
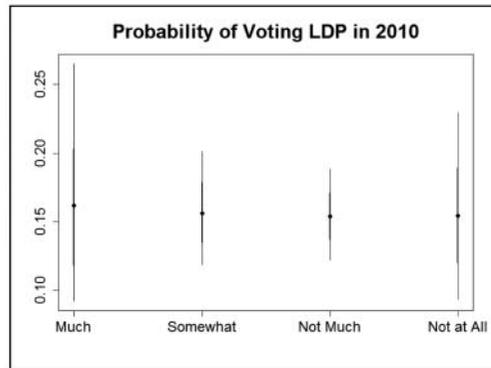
a) *Vote Switching*b) *Non-partisan*c) *Voting DPJ*d) *Voting LDP*

Figure 3 Consequences of political trust.

Note: The probabilities that the dependent variables take a value of 1 when *political trust* moves from ‘Much’ to ‘Not at All’. The markers, the thick lines, and the thin lines in the figure indicate the means, the 68 per cent confidence intervals, and the 95 per cent confidence intervals, respectively.

calculated four different probabilities when we change the levels of *political trust* from ‘Much’ to ‘Not at all’ while the other variables are set at the mean values. The four different probabilities correspond to our four dependent variables: a voter switches votes from one party to another, a voter is non-partisan, a voter votes for the DPJ, and a voter votes for the LDP.

First of all, distrust has significant political implications in terms of voting behavior. The panels (a) and (b) demonstrate that voters distrusting parties and politicians tend to switch votes erratically and become non-partisan. This confirms our expectation that a decline in political trust can increase the number of floating voters, electoral volatility, and the instability of the party system.

Second, such disaffected voters seem to choose neither the DPJ nor the LDP in the voting booth. Those who were disappointed with the DPJ administration’s

performance ended their support for the DPJ in the July 2010 elections for the House of Councillors. However, they seem to not have switched to the other major party, the LDP, because panel (d) suggests that *political trust* did not have significant impact on voting in favor of the LDP. Instead, they chose third-force parties, such as the Your Party, which increased its seats from one to ten.<sup>7</sup>

Due to the unavailability of the data, we cannot conduct further empirical analyses to test our claim with data from the 2012 or 2014 elections. But we expect that the triple disasters of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear plants further eroded citizens' trust in the DPJ administration's capacity and leadership in dealing with the problems (Hommerich 2012, Krauss 2013, Samuels 2013). This declining political trust, in turn, should have led to more non-partisan voters and the unpredictable and erratic swing against the DPJ in the 2012 turnover to the LDP.

### **Trust and its effects: some tentative projections and the 2014 election**

As we have seen, political trust has never been terribly high in Japan. Japanese citizens have not been very inclined to trust their government or politicians, at least since the bursting of the economic bubble, the frequent scandals and the massive political realignment of the 1990s. However, as predicted, we do see evidence that political performance itself can affect these general trends: former Prime Minister Koizumi was able to briefly generate interest and excitement in his goals of reform in the mid-2000s and political trust levels rose. After this, however, we observe a brief flurry again with the DPJ's rise to power for the first time, but then a serious decline after its three years in government, a period in which the DPJ's performance both before and subsequent to the triple disaster was widely perceived as a political fiasco.

A major finding of our analysis is that the diminishment of political trust abets voter support of third and new parties. Such a development undermines the consolidation of a two party system, and has so far fragmented the opposition vote to the benefit of the LDP. Indirectly, then, it is distrust in the DPJ administration that has led to the two recent landslide victories for the LDP (2012, 2014). Yet, as we cannot be definitive without a further analysis of data from the 2012 and 2014 elections, our claim remains at the level of very plausible speculation for now.

However, we see the level of political trust as critically important for two reasons. First, the DPJ lost trust during its administration, but voters have not yet restored their trust in the DPJ as a potential governing party as demonstrated by the DPJ's anemic polling numbers and weak electoral results. Second, given the population of generally more distrusting voters, third and new parties are more likely to be successful in elections. This contributes to the fragmentation of the opposition – a key factor in the LDP's recent electoral victories (for election

analyses see Pekkanen *et al.* 2013, 2015). In other words, it is not the voters' trust in the LDP or current Prime Minister Abe Shinzō's policies that drives the LDP's massive electoral victories, but distrust specifically in the DPJ and distrust in politics in general (which fuels third parties). Consider that 2014 alone saw parties as significant as the Japan Innovation Party (third in seats in 2014) created and as significant as Your Party (fifth in seats in 2012) destroyed – not to mention the creation *and* effective demise of parties led by political stalwarts Ichirō Ozawa and Shintarō Ishihara – and that by 2016 there has already been serious talk of further significant political realignment. The implication of our analysis is that such transformations will continue until voters find a government that they can trust.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes

1. We focus here on policy and performance variables rather than on individual leaders because although a leader's popularity can temporarily affect the public's perceptions of and trust in politics, the former is far more important for longer-term and more fundamental political trust and is also what our data source concentrates upon.
2. As of this writing in September 2015, the JES V project (2012–2016) is currently under way and data on the 2012, 2013, and 2014 elections will not be available for a while, unfortunately. The JES IV data, used in this article, are available at <http://www.res.kutc.kansai-u.ac.jp/JES/en/index.html>. We thank Ryota Natori and other JES team members for providing the data to us. Please consult the website for the sampling, polling and data collecting methods.
3. In analyzing the general trends over time we choose to use the first question about trust in national politics, because the JES asked this question in the same format from 1986 to 2010. But they asked the second question about trust in political parties and politicians only once before 2009. When they did in 2003, they asked respondents to position their trust in a different format (a 10-point scale).
4. Note that this graph only covers the election years because the JES surveys voters before and after the elections. DK/NA means “Don't Know” or “No Answer.”
5. We use trust in political parties instead of trust in national government because in JES's research design the question about the latter takes place after the elections. This can entail an endogeneity problem: voters might distrust politics if their favored parties do not perform well. This is problematic as we would like to estimate the consequences of trust, such as voting behavior. See also Note 3.
6. On ordered logit models and other models for categorical dependent variables, see Long (1997).
7. Your Party maintained the momentum until 2013. In the 2012 Lower House elections, it further increased its seats from eight to eighteen and became the third largest opposition party following the DPJ and the Japan Restoration Party (*Ishin*). In 2013, it won eight seats to become the second largest opposition party in the Upper House of the Diet with eighteen seats in total. But an intraparty fission in the leadership resulted in a defection of a group of members in November 2013. The party lost its momentum rapidly afterwards, with some additional

members defecting, while the party leader Yoshihiko Nishida stepped down from the leadership due to a political funding scandal in March 2014. In November 2014, the party finally decided to disband. See Pekkanen and Pekkanen (2015) and Pekkanen, Reed, Scheiner, eds. (2015).

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## Appendix

### Variables used in the analysis.

- *Political trust.*

‘To what extent do you feel you can trust national politics?’ for the general trends.  
 ‘How much trust do you place on political parties?’ for the multivariate regression analyses.  
 Ranging from 1 to 4: 1 = ‘I trust it very much’; 4 = ‘I don’t trust it at all’.

- Parties ignore people.

‘Do you agree or disagree with the statement, “Voters’ voices are translated into politics because of parties”?’  
 Ranging from 1 to 4: 1 = Agree; 4 = Disagree.

- Elections ignore people.

‘Do you agree or disagree with the statement, “Voters’ voices are translated into politics because of elections”?’  
 Ranging from 1 to 4: 1 = Agree; 4 = Disagree.

- Diet ignores people.

‘Do you agree or disagree with the statement, “Voters’ voices are translated into politics because of the Diet”?’  
 Ranging from 1 to 4: 1 = Agree; 4 = Disagree.

- My vote matters.

‘Do you agree or disagree with the statement, “My vote does not matter because so many people vote in the elections”?’  
 Ranging from 1 to 5: 1 = Agree; 5 = Disagree.

- I have some impact on the government.

‘Do you agree or disagree with the statement, “I don’t have the power to influence what the government does”?’  
 Ranging from 1 to 5: 1 = Agree; 5 = Disagree.

- Economy is bad now.

‘How do you assess the current Japanese economy?’  
 Ranging from 1 to 4: 1 = Doing well; 4 = Doing badly.

- I often watch NHK news.

Ranging from 0 to 1: Coded 1 if a respondent watches regularly both of the TV news programs (morning news and the evening news) by NHK. Coded 0.5 if either of the two. Coded 0 if neither of them.

- I often watch private TV news.

Ranging from 0 to 1: Coded 1 if a respondent watches regularly all of the TV news programs by the five major networks (NNN, ANN, JNN, TXN, and FNN); coded 0 if none of the TV news programs.

- I often watch 'Wide-shows'.

Ranging from 0 to 1: Coded 1 if a respondent watches regularly all of the wide-shows (soft infotainment TV programs that cover fashion, celebrity news, social problems and politics); coded 0 if none.

- Trust in TV.

Ranging from 0 to 10: A respondent was asked to place his/her trust in TV stations (NHK and private stations) from 0 (no trust) to 10 (very high trust). We take the average of the two.

- Trust in newspaper.

Ranging from 0 to 10: A respondent was asked to place his/her trust in the five nationwide newspapers (Yomiuri, Asahi, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei) from 0 (no trust) to 10 (very high trust). We take the average of the five.

- Most people are NOT trustworthy.

'Do you agree or disagree with the statement, "Most people are trustworthy"?'  
Ranging from 1 to 5: 1 = Agree; 5 = Disagree.

- Bad evaluation: Economic policy.

'How do you assess the current administration's economic policy?'  
Ranging from 1 to 5: 1 = Very good; 5 = Very bad.

- Bad evaluation: Diplomatic policy

'How do you assess the current administration's diplomatic policy?'  
Ranging from 1 to 5: 1 = Very good; 5 = Very bad.

- Bad evaluation: Overall policy performance

'How do you assess the current administration's overall policy performance?'  
Ranging from 1 to 5: 1 = Very good; 5 = Very bad.

- Disapproval of the current administration.

'Do you approve the current administration?'  
Ranging from 1 to 5: 1 = Very good; 4 = Very bad.

- Ideology. 'Oftentimes people talk about "conservative" and "progressive". How do you evaluate your own political position between 0 and 10?'

Ranging from 0 to 10: 0 = the most progressive; 10 = the most conservative.

- Female.

Ranging from 0 to 1: 0 = Male; 1 = Female.

- Rural

Ranging from 1 to 5: 1 = Urban; 5 = Rural.

- Age

Ranging from 20 to 96.

- Economic class

‘If you divide the Japanese society into five groups, to which class do you think you belong?’  
Ranging from 1 to 5: 1 = Upper class; 5 = Lower class.

- *Vote switching.*

Whether a voter changed from a party to another in voting on the list tier.  
Dichotomous: 0 = if a voter voted on the same party in the 2009 and 2010 elections; 1 = otherwise.

- *Non-partisan.*

Whether a voter said there was no party to support.  
Dichotomous: 0 = if a voter supported any of the parties; 1 = otherwise.

- *Voting DPJ.*

Whether a voter voted the DPJ in 2010.  
Dichotomous: 0 = if a voter did not vote the DPJ in 2010; 1 = otherwise.

- *Voting LDP.*

Whether a voter voted the DPJ in 2010.  
Dichotomous: 0 = if a voter did not vote the LDP in 2010; 1 = otherwise.

Table A1 Determinants of political trust.

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Parties ignore people	0.324*** (0.074)
Elections ignore people	-0.064 (0.084)
Diet ignores people	0.285*** (0.079)
My vote matters	-0.084* (0.051)
I have some impact on the government	-0.089*** (0.033)
Economy is bad now	0.297*** (0.062)
I often watch NHK news	0.108 (0.130)
I often watch private TV news	-0.165 (0.137)
I often watch 'Wide-shows'	-0.081 (0.178)
Trust in TV	-0.108*** (0.033)
Trust in newspaper	-0.040 (0.040)
Most people are NOT trustworthy	0.065 (0.047)
Bad evaluation: Econ policy	0.079 (0.069)
Bad evaluation: Dip policy	0.138** (0.067)
Bad evaluation: Overall	0.095 (0.078)
Disapproval of current admin	0.396*** (0.070)
Ideology	-0.042* (0.025)
Female	0.166* (0.090)
Rural	-0.064* (0.033)
Age	-0.003 (0.003)
Economic class	0.123** (0.058)
Year 2010	0.064 (0.099)
Observations	2,94

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Note: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

Table A2 Consequences of political trust.

	Dependent variable:			
	Vote switching	Non-partisan	Voting DPJ	Voting LDP
<i>Political trust</i>	0.227** (0.092)	0.314*** (0.108)	-0.306** (0.149)	-0.022 (0.180)
Parties ignore people	0.197** (0.091)	0.307*** (0.103)	0.159 (0.150)	-0.287 (0.192)
Elections ignore people	0.081 (0.105)	-0.186 (0.122)	0.101 (0.171)	0.209 (0.208)
Diet ignores people	-0.136 (0.099)	0.011 (0.113)	0.017 (0.158)	-0.151 (0.195)
My vote matters	-0.161** (0.065)	-0.105 (0.073)	0.063 (0.110)	-0.044 (0.121)
I have some impact on the government	0.001 (0.041)	-0.101** (0.049)	-0.031 (0.068)	-0.094 (0.080)
Economy is bad now	0.110 (0.077)	-0.033 (0.091)	0.142 (0.112)	-0.231* (0.136)
I often watch NHK news	0.001 (0.172)	-0.232 (0.199)	0.198 (0.264)	-0.431 (0.314)
I often watch private TV news	0.025 (0.216)	-0.282 (0.259)	-0.085 (0.347)	-0.423 (0.439)
I often watch 'Wide-shows'	0.030 (0.158)	0.235 (0.187)	0.160 (0.252)	-0.360 (0.306)
Trust in TV	-0.026 (0.040)	0.001 (0.047)	-0.068 (0.067)	0.194** (0.081)
Trust in newspaper	0.160*** (0.050)	0.039 (0.058)	0.019 (0.080)	-0.085 (0.099)
Most people are NOT trustworthy	-0.076 (0.058)	-0.018 (0.067)	0.131 (0.093)	-0.003 (0.109)
Bad evaluation: Econ policy	0.123 (0.083)	-0.185* (0.098)	-0.489*** (0.162)	0.388** (0.187)
Bad evaluation: Dip policy	-0.044 (0.082)	0.072 (0.095)	0.271* (0.155)	-0.267 (0.181)
Bad evaluation: Overall	0.019 (0.097)	0.210* (0.115)	-0.139 (0.158)	0.109 (0.186)
Disapproval of current admin	0.153* (0.086)	0.197** (0.101)	-1.195*** (0.155)	1.018*** (0.163)
Ideology	0.057* (0.030)	-0.074** (0.035)	-0.030 (0.054)	0.269*** (0.063)
Female	0.227** (0.111)	0.248* (0.130)	-0.045 (0.179)	-0.249 (0.213)
Rural	-0.052 (0.041)	-0.019 (0.048)	0.016 (0.065)	0.308*** (0.078)
Age	-0.012*** (0.004)	-0.028*** (0.005)	0.015** (0.007)	0.003 (0.008)
Economic class	0.089 (0.072)	-0.001 (0.085)	-0.025 (0.122)	-0.172 (0.143)
Year 2010	0.047 (0.125)	0.353** (0.147)		
Constant	-2.332*** (0.773)	-0.778 (0.893)	2.005 (1.232)	-4.904*** (1.427)
Observations	1586	1586	762	762

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