

A STUDY ON THE VOTING BEHAVIOR OF KOREAN WOMEN AFTER INDEPENDENCE*

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INTRODUCTION

It was after July 17, 1948, when the Constitution provided for the universal suffrage for men and women, that Korean women were first granted the political rights to vote and run for election. Article 24 of the Constitution provides for the right to elect civil servants and Article 25 provides for the right to run for public office. As of 2001, the age requirement for the eligibility to be elected for public office in Korea is 40 years or older for the president, 25 years or older for National Assemblymen, local government chiefs, and local Assemblymen, and the voting right is given to men and women of 20 years of age or older.¹⁾

The primary purpose of this study is to analyze the voting behavior of male and female voters through comparing the male and female voting rates in the 15 presidential elections, 16 National Assembly elections, 8 national referenda, and 6 local elections.

VOTING BEHAVIOR OF FEMALE VOTERS

A. Presidential Election

There have been the total of 15 presidential elections since gaining independence until August 2001. As for the election methods, there have been 8 elections by direct voting (2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 13th, 14th, 15th), 6 elections by indirect voting (1st, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th) by the National Assembly, National Congress for Unification, and presidential election group, and one election by indirect voting by the National Assembly under the cabinet system. The presidential terms varied from serving three 4-year terms, 6-year terms the Yushin system, a single 7-year term, and a single 5-year term. Since the 13th President, the current term of the president is a single 5-year term. There were two women candidates who ran for presidential elections; Sookja

* This is a summarized version of Chapter 4 Voting Rates and Voting Behavior of Women Voters of 2001 Research Report 210-4 *Korean Women's Political Participation after Independence and Future Tasks* (Researcher: Wonhong Kim, Hyeyoung Kim, and Eunkyung Kim).

1) Central Election Management Committee (2000), *Rules on Public Posts Elections and Prevention of Unfair Election Practices*, pp.20 ~ 22.

Hong for the 13th presidential election held in 1987,²⁾ and Oksun Kim³⁾ who ran for the 14th presidential election held in 1992.

In presidential elections by direct voting, the voting rates were roughly more than 80% except the 97% in the 4th presidential election which later became nullified due to the extreme corrupt election practices of the Liberal Party. The highest voting rate was shown during the 3rd presidential election. Sungman Rhee was elected with the 94.4% voting rate and about 70% of the valid votes, which was 5.3% lower than 75.2% effective voting rate for the 2nd presidential election. In the 3rd National Assembly in 1954, a door was open for Sungman Rhee to be able to remain in power for life through the "Rounding Off to the Nearest Whole Number Constitutional Amendment." The Democratic Party was formed in November 1954 as an opposition power against this. The Democratic Party candidates for the 3rd presidential and vice-presidential elections in 1956 were Ikhee Shin and Jang Myon respectively. However, as the candidate Ikhee Shin who enjoyed enormous popularity during the election died suddenly, Sungman Rhee was elected. But the fact that the Democratic candidate Jang Myon was elected defeating the Liberal candidate Kibung Lee showed that voters were turning their backs against the Liberal Party and that the Democratic Party started emerging at the political scene.

The next presidential election that showed a high voting rate was the 13th presidential election where indirect voting was changed into direct voting. It seems that the voters showed a high voting rate of 89.2% as it was the return of the direct election system for the president after 16 years putting an end to the dark age of authoritarian politics.

When looking at the number of voters and the voting rate by gender during the previous presidential elections, as can be seen in <Table 1>, the distribution proportion of women voters is more or less higher than that of men voters. However, men showed higher voting rates than women did. In fact, during the 5th, 6th, 7th, 13th, 14th, and 15th presidential elections where it was possible to collect the statistics of the male and female voting rates, in the case of the 5th presidential election, the male voting rate was 88.9%, which was 7.6% higher than the female voting rate of 81.3%. In the 6th, the male voting rate was 84.9%, and female voting rate 81.3%, where male was higher by 2.6 percentage points. In the 7th, the male voting rate was 81.4% and the female voting rate was 78.3% with the male voting rate being higher by 3.1 percentage points. In the 13th, male voting rate was 89.8% which was 1.3% higher than the female voting rate of 88.5%. In the 14th, the male voting rate was 82.6% and the female voting rate was 80.9%, where the male voting rate was higher by 1.7 percentage points.⁴⁾

In the 15th, the male voting rate was 81.3%, which was higher than the female voting rate of 80.1% by 1.2 percentage points. The male and female voting rates in the presidential elections are showing positive tendency when looking at the decreasing gap in the male and female voting rates. In Korea, there has not yet been a gender gap analysis in presidential elections; however,

2) Sookja Hong was the first woman diplomat who served as vice consul of Korean Consulate in New York in 1970, professor of Dongguk University in 1979, and President of the International Council of Women in 1987. Her candidacy was cancelled at that time due to the invalid registration.

3) Oksun Kim had the experience of having served as National Assembly person for the 7th, 9th, and 12th National Assembly and Vice Chief of the New Democracy Party. See Central Election Management Committee (1996), *Presidential Elections (1st ~14th)*, pp.217 ~ 243.

4) Central Election Management Committee (1983), *Analysis of Statistics including Various elections and National Referendum, etc.(1975 ~1981)*. pp.11 ~ 20.

when considering the fact that in the U. S. during the 1997 presidential election, the Democratic candidate Bill Clinton won against the Republican Bob Dole thanks to women votes, the gender gap analysis is likely to emerge as an important issue in the future.

<Table 1> The Number of Eligible Voters and Actual Voters during the Previous Presidential Elections

Election	Year	The number of eligible voters						The number of actual voters (%)					
		Total	Ratio (%)	Female	Ratio (%)	Male	Ratio (%)	Total	Ratio (%)	Female	Ratio (%)	Male	Ratio (%)
2nd	1952	8,259,428	100					7,275,883	88.1				
3rd	1956	9,606,870	100					9,067,063	94.4				
4th (nullified)	1960	11,196,490	100					10,862,272	97.0				
5th	1963	12,985,015	100	6,624,795	51.2	6,360,220	48.8	11,036,175	85.0		81.3		88.9
6th	1967	13,935,093	100	7,044,887	50.5	6,890,206	49.5	11,645,215	83.6	5,795,898	82.3	5,849,317	84.9
7th	1971	15,552,236	100	7,810,633	50.2	7,741,598	49.8	12,417,824	79.8	6,113,773	78.3	6,304,051	81.4
13th	1987	25,873,624	100	13,099,891	50.6	12,773,733	49.4	23,066,419	89.2	11,593,808	88.5	11,472,811	89.8
14th	1992	29,422,658	100	14,923,300	50.7	14,499,358	49.3	24,095,170	81.9	12,094,530	81.0 (80.9)	12,000,631	82.8 (82.6)
15th	1997	32,290,416	100	16,418,262	50.8	15,872,154	49.2	26,042,633	80.7		80.1		81.3

Source: Central Election Management Committee (1996), *Election and National Referendum Statistics*, pp.36 ~ 39.
Central Election Management Committee (1998), *The 15th Presidential Election Voting Rate Analysis*, p.9.

B. Vice Presidential Election

The vice-presidential election started as an indirect election in the Constitutional Assembly on July 20, 1948 and ended on March 15, 1960 with the 5th corrupt election without much historical significance. Among the previous vice-presidential elections, the 1st and the 2nd elections were indirect elections by Assemblymen, and the 3rd, 4th, and 5th vice-presidential elections held since 1952 were direct elections by a popular vote. As the first Vice President resigned and the 2nd Vice President was elected during the term of the first President, there was a gap between the numbers of the presidents and the vice presidents until the vice-president system disappeared after the 2nd Republic. The vice-president system in Korea is different from the American vice presidency as the running mate of the president, as a separate election system was used using a separate ballot. Therefore, during the presidential and vice-presidential election of 1952, the Liberal presidential candidate Sungman Rhee did not support Bumsuk Lee of the same party but supported the independent candidate Taeyong Hwan. Also in the presidential and vice presidential elections held in 1956, a separate ballot was used for the presidential election and the vice-presidential election. The result was that the Liberal candidate, Sungman Rhee, was elected as the President and the Democratic candidate, Jang Myon, was elected as the vice president. The political parties of the president and the vice president were different.⁵⁾

The people's interests were high even in the case of the vice presidential election using the direct election method as in the presidential election. This seems to be due to the fact that the

5) http://election.go.kr/history/history/rl/1952_8.html
http://election.go.kr/history/history/rl/1956_5.html.

election was held at the same time as the presidential election. Among the previous vice presidential elections of the 3rd, 4th, 5th direct presidential elections excluding the direct elections by Congressmen during the 1st and the 2nd. The one with the highest voting rate was the 3.15 Corrupt Election of 1960, where the voting rate was 97%. Among the elections where the vice president was actually elected, the election with the highest voting rate was the 4th vice presidential election where the voting rate was 94.4%. The Liberal Party candidate Sungman Rhee was elected as the President, and the Democratic Party candidate Jang Myon was elected as the Vice President with 46.4% of the valid votes. The next was the 3rd election where the voting rate was 88%. There is no statistical record of voting rates by gender.

C. National Assembly Elections

There have been a total of 16 National Assembly elections from the Constitutional Assembly of May 10, 1948 to the 16th general election held on April 13, 2000. The right to run for election is given to those of 25 years of age or older from the Constitutional Assembly to the present 16th National Assembly. The voting right was given to those over 21 years of age or older until the 4th general election and to those of 20 years or older beginning with the 5th general election. The highest voting rate of 95.5% was shown for the Constitutional National Assembly. Since then, the voters continue to show interest in elections, recording the voting rate of more than 90% until the 4th, after which the voting rates continued to fall to 70%. However, a high voting rate of 84.6% was recorded for the 12th National Assembly election held on February 12, 1985 <Table 2>. The voting rates decreased during the 5th National Assembly election held on July 29, 1960, because the people's interest in politics had decreased as a reaction to the corrupt election of March 15 presidential election in 1960. The reason that the voting rates decreased to 72.1% in 1963 appeared to be due to the extremely low political interest of the people because of political instability caused by the May 16 military coup d'état in 1961. The voting rates remained at the level of 70% from the 6th to the 11th but increased to 84.6% high in the 12th general election held on February 12, 1985. It is because opposition leaders were made free and the voters took interest in the confrontation among democrats and anti-democrats. The voting rates went down to 70% from the 13th, decreased further down to 60% in the 15th and further down to 57.2% in the 16th general election. There has been a gradual tendency toward political apathy among the people. When looking at the previous general elections, the number of women voters was a little more than the number of males. However, the male voting rates appear to be more or less higher than the female voting rates. There was a gap of 3.3% ~ 4.8% between the 6th ~ 11th, but it was decreased to 1.3% ~ 3.3% after the 12th.

<Table 2> The number of eligible voters and actual voters in National Assembly elections

Election	Year	The number of eligible voters					
		Total	Ratio (%)	Female	Ratio (%)	Male	Ratio (%)
1st	1948	7,840,871	100				
2nd	1950	8,434,737	100				
3rd	1954	8,446,509	100				
4th	1958	10,164,428	100				
5th	1960	11,593,432	100				
6th	1963	13,344,149	100	6,839,790	51.3	6,504,359	48.7
7th	1967	14,717,354	100	7,525,743	51.1	7,191,612	48.9
8th	1971	15,610,258	100	7,928,851	50.8	7,681,407	49.2
9th	1973	15,690,130	100	7,925,052	49.2	7,765,078	49.5
10th	1978	19,489,490	100	9,891,492	50.8	9,597,998	49.2
11th	1981	21,094,468	100	10,586,527	50.2	10,322,593	48.9
12th	1985	23,987,830	100	12,139,759	50.6	11,848,071	49.4
13th	1988	26,198,205	100	13,271,724	50.7	12,926,481	49.3
14th	1992	29,003,828	100	14,296,473	49.3	14,707,355	50.7
15th	1996	31,488,294	100	15,998,015	50.8	15,490,279	49.2
16th	2000	33,482,387	100	17,045,456	50.9	16,436,931	49.1

Election	Year	The number of actual voters (voting rate %)					
		Total	Voting rate(%)	Female	Voting rate(%)	Male	Voting rate(%)
1st	1948	7,487,649	95.5				
2nd	1950	7,752,076	91.9				
3rd	1954	7,698,390	91.1				
4th	1958	8,923,905	90.7				
5th	1960	9,778,921	84.3				
6th	1963	9,622,183	72.1	4,822,860	70.5	4,799,323	73.8
7th	1967	11,202,317	76.1	5,551,672	73.8	5,650,645	78.6
8th	1971	11,430,202	73.2	5,656,684	71.3	5,773,518	75.2
9th	1973	11,196,484	73.0	5,564,416	70.2	5,632,068	72.3
10th	1978	15,023,370	77.1	7,437,083	75.2	7,586,287	79.0
11th	1981	16,397,845	78.4	8,081,374	76.3	8,316,471	80.6
12th	1985	20,286,672	84.6	10,172,829	83.8	10,113,843	85.4
13th	1988	19,850,815	75.8	9,918,234	74.7	9,932,581	76.8
14th	1992	20,843,482	71.9		70.9		72.2
15th	1996	20,122,799	63.9		62.0		65.3
16th	2000	19,156,515	57.2		56.5		58.7

Source: Central Election Management Committee (1996), *Election and National Referendum Statistics*, pp.112 ~ 121 (Statistics from the 6th ~ 14th), Central Election Management Committee (1996), *The 15th National Assembly Election Voting Rates Analysis*, p.9. Central Election Management Committee (2000), *The 16th National Assembly Election Voting Rates Analysis*, p.9.

In fact, when looking at the voting rates of male and female voters after the 6th general election among the previous elections where it was possible to collect the statistics, the male voting rate was 73.8% and the female voting rate was 70.5%, where the male voting rate was higher by 3.3 percentage points. In the case of the 7th, the male voting rate was 78.6%, and the female voting rate was 73.8%, where the male voting rate was higher by 4.8 percentage points. In the case of the 8th, the male voting rate was 75.2% which was higher than the female voting rate of 71.3%, higher by 3.9 percentage points. In the case of the 9th, the male voting rate was 72.3% which was higher than the female voting rate of 75.2%, higher by 3.8 percentage points. In the case of the 11th, the male voting rate was 80.6% which was higher than the female voting rate of 76.3%, higher by 4.3 percentage points. In the 13th, the male voting rate was 76.8%, and the female voting rate 74.7% where the male was higher by 2.1%. In the case of the 14th, the male voting rate 72.2%, and the female voting rate 70.9%, where it was 1.3% higher. In the case of the 15th, the male voting rate was 65.3%, the female voting rate 56.5%, 2.2 percentage points higher. The male voting rates were higher than the female's overall. Also, the number of male voters was higher than the number of female voters except in the 6th and the 12th general elections.

As is shown in <Table 3>, when looking at the number of the voters in the previous elections by age, between the 6th ~ 13th where it was possible to collect the data, the voters under 30 years of age constituted the majority as was in the case of the presidential election, and the next were: 31 ~ 40, 41 ~ 50, 51 ~ 60, and 61 years or older. From the 14th National Assembly election, there is no relevant data, and the voting rates by gender is unknown, but it appears to be similar to the previous trend.

<Table 3> The number of voters by age and distribution of voters

Election	Total			Under 30 years of age			31 ~ 40 years of age		
	Eligible voters	Votes	%	Eligible voters	Votes	%	Eligible voters	Votes	%
6th	13,441,149	9,622,183	72.1	4,432,139	3,179,561	71.7	3,245,131	2,396,806	73.8
7th	14,717,354	11,202,317	76.1	4,666,513	3,439,135	73.7	3,718,824	2,078,984	77.4
8th	15,610,258	11,430,202	73.2	4,880,730	3,505,570	71.8	3,949,465	2,976,153	75.3
9th	15,348,049	11,196,484	73.0	4,512,193	3,281,732	72.7	3,993,109	2,916,903	73.0
10th	19,489,490	15,023,370	77.0	6,590,374	4,881,002	74.1	4,481,848	3,451,951	77.0
11th	20,909,120	16,397,845	78.4	7,262,619	5,351,957	73.7	4,807,432	3,825,827	79.6
12th	23,987,830	20,286,672	84.6	8,547,744	6,862,500	80.3	5,355,303	4,620,871	86.3
13th	26,198,205	19,850,815	75.8	9,088,748	6,179,367	68.0	6,213,366	4,800,222	77.3

Election	41 ~ 50 years			51 ~ 60 years			61 years and over		
	Eligible voters	Votes	%	Eligible voters	Votes	%	Eligible voters	Votes	%
6th	2,500,954	1,845,711	73.8	1,849,699	1,293,879	70.0	1,316,226	906,226	68.8
7th	2,708,250	2,139,635	79.0	2,016,477	1,579,520	78.3	1,607,290	1,165,043	72.5
8th	2,929,796	2,249,479	76.7	2,134,518	1,590,072	74.5	1,715,749	1,108,928	64.6
9th	3,053,901	2,234,952	73.7	2,297,004	1,609,217	70.1	1,833,923	1,153,680	62.9
10th	3,685,794	2,987,444	81.1	2,503,052	2,010,505	80.3	2,226,422	1,692,468	75.9
11th	3,933,949	3,284,641	83.5	2,583,474	2,146,751	83.1	2,321,646	1,788,669	77.0
12th	4,496,074	3,989,975	88.7	2,923,690	2,591,362	88.6	2,665,019	2,221,964	83.4
13th	4,609,202	3,811,093	82.7	3,286,430	2,746,062	83.6	3,000,459	2,314,071	77.1

Source: Central Election Management Committee (1996), *Election and National Referendum Statistics*, pp.96 ~ 111.
 Central Election Management Committee (1983), *Analysis of Statistics including Various elections and National Referendum, etc.*, pp.140 ~ 143.

D. Local Elections

The first election was scheduled in 1950 according to the law commissioned by the Constitution. However, when the Korean War broke out, Si, Do Assembly and Si, Up, Myon Assembly elections were held on April 25, 1952 and May 10, 1952. The reason for the local government chief elections not being included in the local election held in 1952 was because at that time the broad district local government chief (the mayor of the City of Seoul and the governor) was to be appointed by the president and the chiefs of Si, Up, and Myon were supposed to be indirectly elected at local assemblies. With the revision of the "Local Government Act" in February 1956, the chief of Si, Up, and Myon among the local government chiefs were supposed to be elected by direct elections. The provision was again revised in February 1958. The mayor was to be appointed by the president through the Minister of Domestic Affairs at the recommendation of the chief of Si, Do. The "Local Government Act" was revised after the April 19 revolution in 1960 in which the citizens elected directly the basic unit chiefs of Si, Up, Myon and the broad district chiefs of Si's and Do's. However, the local government system was discontinued due to the May 16 military coup d'état in 1961. In connection with a series of democratization measures in 1987, Si, Do and Si, Gun, Gu were defined as local governments in 1988, and a local election was held for the first time in 30 years in 1991. The local elections were revived with the Si, Gun, Gu basic unit assembly election on March 26, 1991 as the beginning, followed by the first national simultaneous local elections on June 27, 1995, and the 2nd national simultaneous local elections on June 4, 1998 when the four elections were held simultaneously to

elect Basic Unit Assemblymen, the chiefs of local governments, broad district Assemblymen and the chief of local governments. The terms were all 4 years except in the case of the first national simultaneous local election held on June 27, 1995 which provided for 3 year term so that an election could be held in between the National Assembly elections that are held every 4 years.

As for the voting rates at local elections, after reaching the height of 80% in 1952, when elections were held for Si, Up, Myon Assembly and Do Assembly, voting rates decreased gradually in the case of Si, Up, Myon Assembly, City of Seoul and Do Assemblymen election, and the chiefs of Si, Up, and Myon held in 1956 and 1960 to 60 ~ 70%, recording only 38.8% during the mayor for the City of Seoul and governor elections in 1960. The fact that the voting rates of the voters were relatively high in the local elections held for the first time in Korea seems to be the result of high expectations for local elections. The reasons for the decrease in the voting rates in the 1960s can be found in the facts that first of all, the election was held in late December and also that the voters became indifferent while going through the complex four stages in 1960 election and that the weather was cold with snowing and that local citizens took little interest in the local elections.⁶⁾ When the local election was held again in 1991 for the first time in 30 years, the citizens did not show much interest and showed a low voter turnout.

In fact, the reason why the voting rates went up to more than 68.8% from the first simultaneous local election in 1995 seems to be that the election drew the attention of the voters because the local election was to be held only once simultaneously and in addition, the mass media, public organizations and the election management committee effectively publicized that local politics closely affect daily lives of the local citizens. The voting rates became lower in the 2nd national simultaneous local election, the average voting rate of male and female was 52.7% which was the lowest voter participation except 38.8% of the Seoul mayor and governor elections held on December 29, 1960. It was after the first simultaneous election of 1995 that the statistics on male and female voters and voting rates were collected.

In the first national simultaneous local election held on June 27, 1995, there were 15,769,734 female voters which accounted for 50.8% which was more than 15,278,832 male voters by 490,902 persons. At that time, the male and female average voting rate was 68.4%, which was lower than 71.9% for the 14th general election in 1992 and 81.9% of the 14th Presidential election in 1992, but it was higher than 55% for the basic unit assembly election in 1991 and 58.9% of the broad district assembly election voting rates.⁷⁾ The female voting rate for the mayor and the governor was 68.2%, while the male voting rate of 69.3% was higher by 1.1 percentage points.

In the 2nd simultaneous local election in 1998, there were 16,539,484 female voters, accounting for 50.8%, more than the male voters of 15,998,331 persons by 541,153 persons. The voting rates for Gu, Si, Gun chiefs was 52.7%, Si, Do Assembly 52.3%, and Gu, Si, Gun Assembly 53.2%.⁸⁾ When looking at the voting rates by gender and age, males over 60 years of age was the highest of 80.2%, and females in the early 20's was the lowest with 27.0%. <Table 4> shows the number of voters and voting rates in the local elections in Korea.

6) Central Election Management Committee (1968), *Analysis of Previous Local Election Results*, pp.589 ~ 642.

7) Central Election Management Committee (1995), *The First National Simultaneous Local Election*, p.180, p.192.

8) Central Election Management Committee (1998), *The Second National Simultaneous Local Election*, p.258, p.269.

<Table 4> The number of voters and voting rates in local assembly elections

Election	Date	The number of eligible voters						Actual votes			
		Total	%	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%	Female	Male
City Assembly	52. 4.25	1,111,849					891,728	80.2			
	56. 8. 8	1,578,678	100				1,256,048	79.6			
	60.12.19	1,995,994					1,249,254	62.6			
Up Assembly	52. 4.25	734,538					649,544	88.4			
	56. 8. 8		100				766,696	77.5			
	60.12.19	989,574									
Myon Assembly	52. 4.25	5,689,917					5,295,226	93.1			
	56. 8. 8		100				5,968,736	83.7			
	60.12.19	7,128,216									
Do Assembly Seoul City Do Assembly	52. 5.10	6,358,383					5,165,226	81.2			
	56. 8.13	8,421,772	100				7,223,605	85.8			
	60.12.12	11,263,445					7,595,752	67.4			
Mayor	56. 8. 8	209,815	100				181,863	86.7			
	60.12.26	2,035,429					1,110,943	54.6			
Up Chief	56. 8. 8 60.12.26	1,021,388	100				742,897	72.7			
Myon Chief	56. 8. 8 60.12.26	7,228,937	100				5,898,365	81.5			
Seoul City Mayor Governor	60.12.29	11,343,336	100				4,399,420	38.8			
Gu, Si, Gun Assembly	91. 3.26	28,301,580	100	13,962,631	49.3	14,338,949	50.7	13,237,093	55.0		
Si, Do Assembly	91. 6.20	28,416,241	100	14,009,314	49.3	14,406,927	50.7	16,533,934	58.9		
The first National Simultaneous Local Election	Si, Do Chief							21,227,449	68.4	68.2	69.3
	Gu, Si, Gun Chief							21,227,449	68.4		
	Si, Do Assembly	95. 6.27	31,048,566	100	51,769,734	49.2	15,278,832	50.8	20,233,444	65.2	
	Gu, Si, Gun Assembly							20,001,522	64.4		
The second National Simultaneous Local Election	Si, Do Chief							17,155,577	52.7	52.1	54.3
	Gu, Si, Gun Chief								52.7		
	Si, Do Assembly	98. 6. 4	32,537,815	100	16,539,484	49.2	15,998,331	50.8		52.3	
	Gu, Si, Gun Assembly								53.2		

Source: Central Election Management Committee (1996), *Election and National Referendum Statistics*, pp.210 ~ 228. Central Election Management Committee (1998), *Analysis of Voting Rates- The 2nd National Simultaneous Local Election* (June 4, 1998), National Assembly Re-election (July 21, 1998), p.13.

RECENT VOTING TRENDS BY VARIOUS PUBLIC ELECTIONS, GENDER AND AGE

When looking at the number of male and female voters in the previous public elections, there were more females than males. In fact, in the case of the 16th National Assembly election held on April 13, 2000, female voters were 17,045,456 persons or 50.9% of all the voters, which was 1.8 percentage points higher than the male voters of 16,436,931 (49.1%) persons. At the Second National Simultaneous Local Election held on June 4, 1998, women voters were 16,539,484 persons or 50.8%, which was higher by 1.6 percentage points than the males of 15,998,331 persons (49.2%). In the 15th presidential election held in 1997, female voters were 16,418,262 persons or 50.8% of all the voters, which was higher by 1.6% than the males of 15,872,154 persons (49.2%). In the 15th National Assembly election held in 1996, women voters were 15,988,015 persons or 50.8% which is higher than the male voters of 15,490,279 by 1.6 percentage points.

However, on the contrary, in the voting rates of the male and female voters, the male's was a little higher than the female's. In fact, according to the result of a survey held immediately after various recent public elections, the average male and female voting rate was 57.2% for the 16th National Assembly election held on April 13, 2000, of which the male voting rate was 58.7%, which was higher than the female's of 56.5% by 2.2 percentage points. At the Second Simultaneous local election held in 1998, the male voting rate was 54.3%, which was higher than the female's of 52.1% by 2.2 percentage points. In the case of the 15th presidential election, the male voting rate was 65.3%, which was higher by 3.3 percentage points than the female's of 62.0%. In the case of the 14th presidential election, the male voting rate was 82.6% which was higher than the female's of 80.9% by 1.7 percentage points. In the 14th National Assembly election, the male voting rate was 72.7%, which was higher than the female's of 70.9% by 1.8 percentage points <Table 5>.⁹⁾

<Table 5> Voting Rates by Election, Region, and Gender

unit: %

9) Central Election Management Committee (2000), *The Analysis of The 16th National Assembly Voting Rates*, p.9.

Classification		National	Seoul	Broad district cities	Do			
					Total	Small and medium cities	Up	Myon
16th National Assembly(4/13/00)	Male	58.7	57.0	55.4	60.5	57.3	62.8	68.2
	Female	56.5	53.3	53.7	58.6	54.7	61.1	67.
2nd National Simultaneous Local (6/4/98)	Male	54.3	49.0	48.0	59.6	55.1	62.7	71.9
	Female	52.1	45.9	46.6	57.7	53.0	60.0	70.9
15th Presidential (12/18/97)	Male	81.3	81.4	80.8	81.5	81.5	81.0	81.6
	Female	80.1	80.3	82.2	79.9	80.2	79.1	79.6
15th National Assembly(4/11/96)	Male	65.3	63.6	62.7	67.3	64.6	66.1	72.5
	Female	62.0	59.6	59.7	64.2	60.9	63.6	70.2
1st National Simultaneous Local (6/27/95)	Male	69.2	66.6	65.1	71.8	68.8	73.2	78.2
	Female	68.2	65.7	64.7	70.6	67.7	71.0	77.2
14th Presidential (12/18/92)	Male	82.2	82.7	82.4	82.7	83.1	79.8	83.4
	Female	80.9	80.1	81.4	81.0	81.0	78.4	82.4
14th National Assembly	Male	72.2	70.7	67.8	74.6	72.7	73.7	78.8
	Female	70.9	67.9	68.2	73.3	71.5	72.5	77.5

Source: Central Election Management Committee(2000), *The Analysis of the 16th National Assembly Voting Rates*, p.5.

As such, in various public elections held recently, the male voting rates were higher than the female's. As to the voting rates by gender and age, the voting rates of the women in their early 20's appear to be lowest. In fact, in the case of the 16th general election, in terms of the voting rates by gender and age, the male over 60 years of age was the highest with 83.1%, and the females in their early 20's was the lowest with 30.6%. It is lower than the 49.1% voting rates of the males in their early 20's by 18.5 percentage points. In the case of the 2nd National Simultaneous Election held in 1998, the voting rates of the males over 60 years of age was the highest at 80.2%, in terms of voting rates by age and gender, and the females in their early 20's was the lowest with 61.2%. In the 15th National Assembly election, the group with the highest voting rate was the males in their 50's (83.9%), and the lowest was the females in their early 20's (25.2%). This was lower than the 42.1% voting rate of males in their early 20's by 16.9 percentage points.¹⁰⁾ However, the result of the 16th general election shows that the voting rates of female voters in the late 20's and 30's were higher than those of males. In fact, the female voting rate in the 16th general election was 35.8%, which was higher than the male voting rate of 32.6% by 3.2%, and among those between 30 ~ 34 years of age, the female voting rate was 47.4% which was higher than the male voting rate of 42.9% by 4.5 percentage points. Among those between 35 ~ 39 years of age, the female voting rate was 57.7% which was higher than the male voting rate of 55.3% by 2.4 percentage points. The reason for the female voting rates being high for those in their late 20's and 30's seems to be because this is when women are actively involved in social participation and they tend to take interest in politics related to their activities

10) Central Election Management Committee (1996), *The Analysis of the 15th National Assembly Election Voting Rates*, pp.9 ~ 10. Central Election Management Committee (1998), *Analysis of Voting Rates - The 2nd National Simultaneous Local Election (June 4, 1998), National Assembly Reelection (July 21, 1998)*, p.15. Central Election Management Committee(1998), *The Analysis of the 15th Presidential Election Voting Rates(December 18, 1997)*, pp.11 ~ 12.

s.¹¹⁾

As to the voting rates by the types of elections and areas, there was no big gap in the voting rates of Seoul, broad district cities and Do's in presidential elections. However, in National Assembly and Local elections which elect local representatives, Do which can be called rural areas showed a little higher voting rate in comparison with the City of Seoul or broad district cities. There has been a similar pattern since the first National Assembly election that elected Constitutional National Assemblymen in 1948, and there is the same tendency in recent elections. However, there are no remarkable gender gaps by election and regions in various public elections, except that the voting rates of the females in late the 20's and 30's were high. Also, male and female voters have taken interest in voting in the order of presidential election, general election and local election, and the male voting rates were a little higher than the female's.

In conclusion, there was little political participation based on active political awareness even in the case of the passive form of political participation such as the exercise of voting rights. Under such situation, the task to be solved in Korean women's political participation is to raise the consciousness of women voters and their interest in politics. Political awareness should be promoted so that women could appropriately understand and evaluate politics. For this, women should be aware of their rights and the fact that active political participation is helpful in solving problems of their interests.¹²⁾

There is a need for education which promotes the citizenship attitude of believing in the sovereignty of the people and the awareness of gender equality so that the political participation rights could be properly exercised.¹³⁾

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In this study, we reviewed the male and female voting rates, voting patterns and the attitudes toward women's political participation. We found that male and female voting rates were high in the order of presidential elections, vice presidential elections, National Assembly elections, and local elections. Also, the voting rates in general were decreasing gradually. As for the male and female voting rates by age, the male and female voters in the '50 ~ '60s showed a high voting rate, and especially the female voters in the early '20s appeared to be the lowest. However, the female voters in the late '20s and '30s showed a voting rate between 40 ~ 50%. The reason seems to be that the women in the age bracket carry out active social participation and take interest in politics that are related to activities of their interests. In the future, political education for young women should be more actively carried out in relation to the reform of political awareness of women voters.

In conclusion, in order to improve such negative political culture as being Korean where voters

11) Central Election Management Committee(2000), op.cit., p.11.

12) Myongsoon Shin (1985), "Korean Women's Political Participation," *Democracy and Korean Politics* (Seoul: Bup Mun Sa), p.311.

13) Byungkil Lee, "Voting Tendency of Korean Women," *Election Management*, 1973, No.2, p.7.

display political apathy, elections cost too much, candidates put down each other, and vocalism is prevalent, the role of the voters who constitute a half of the population is more important than anything else. We would like to make the following few suggestions for the political consciousness reform of women voters.

First, the Central Election Management Committee counts the number of voters by gender and region after an election, but there is no collection of statistics on voters by gender and regions. Now the gender gaps in various public elections should be closely analyzed, showing the political will of male and female voters by gender and regions.

Second, there is a lack of studies on women voters. Studies on women voters should be carried out. There have been sporadic studies even in the 1980s on Korean voters, but there have been very few studies on women voters. Among the existing research and studies on voters, there is almost no study that analyzes female voters as an important variable. Since the 1990s, there have been partial studies and research on women voters' political attitudes and voting behavior, but since such study and research on voters require a huge budget, few scholars and women's organizations have carried out such research, and the existing studies are insufficient. In the future, Korean Women's Development Institute can be in charge of the research on various elections in the future, or the Central Election Management Committee can generate a report on the results of surveys conducted after elections in cooperation with the KWDI.

Third, female voters tend to show a lower voting rate than the male voters and tend not to be self-reliant in voting. In particular, it should be pointed out that the voting rates of women in their early '20s is very low. The Ministry of Gender Equality should assist more actively to promote the political awareness of female voters so that systematic education for promoting women's political awareness is carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Educational Human Resource, Central Election Management Committee, local organizations, social educational institutions and women's organizations. At present, those among the citizen organizations that provide democratic political education are: YMCA, YWCA, Girl Scout, Youth League, and the League of Women Voters. Especially the awareness campaigns for women voters provided by women's organizations are usually for one time only and such programs are not specialized. There is a need for specialization of the democratic political education in citizen organizations. In order to overcome the low political status of Korean women and to expand democratic political awareness, women's organizations should specialize in women voter awareness training and the Ministry of Gender Equality should provide active support for continued operation of such programs.

Fourth, the government should adopt the "Democratic Political Education Act" to promote political awareness of male and female voters and to promote democratic awareness. During the 15th National Assembly session, the "Act to Promote Citizen Education" was submitted so that the government could provide assistance to democratic citizen education to promote citizenship of the people, but it has been dismissed at the present time at the start of the 16th National Assembly. The bill should be submitted again during the 16th National Assembly for adoption and democratic citizenship education should be promoted at the national level.

Fifth, the role of the mass media is important for expansion of democratic citizenship and gender equality awareness. Currently in the information-intensive and information-based society of

the 21st century, the mass media should take the lead with the sense of mission to improve the democratic citizenship of the people. The citizen organizations should carry out the movement of the audience so that the mass media can function properly.

Sixth, women voters should actively support women politicians. The previous studies show that women voters tend to support women politicians more than male voters, but a considerable number of women voters still tend not to support women politicians. However, it should be recognized that, when looking at the past experience, women politicians tend to carry out their duties with sincerity, making efforts to promote women's rights and to solve women's problems. Women voters should actively support congresswomen. Women voters should make efforts to expand women's political participation through participating more actively in citizen organization activities, fair election monitoring activities and activities to monitor assembly politics.

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