The question of how to include the disabled, who are often excluded from participating in politics, in political activities has been gathering attention in recent years (Schur, Kruse, and Blanck, 2013; Savery, 2015; Ryan, Henderson, and Bonython, 2016). Research up until now has shown that although many of the disabled possess the necessary faculties and mental capacity to vote, they lack the necessary knowledge and information, as well as support, to do so and as a result, cannot vote (Inoue, 1993; Schriner, Ochs, and Shields, 1997; Schriner and Ochs, 2000; Scotch, 1988, 2001; Kjellberg 2002; Argan and Hughes, 2013; Argan, MacLean, and Kitchen, 2016; Bell and Horsler, 2003; Femec, Kis-Glavas, and Masic, 2017). However, in this paper, we will be focusing on the right to vote—the most basic aspect of political participation.

Voting rights are an essential component of a democracy. Nevertheless, there are mental disabilities and mental disorders in many democratic nations, so reduced mental capacity may limit one’s ability to exercise the right to vote. Limitations on voting rights typically present as limitations on voting rights concerning people who are under the care of a conservator and people whose legal capacity has been limited by a court (Beckman, 2012, pp.167-171; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2010, p.15). Specifically, according to the results of a study from the 1990s about the voting laws in sixty-three countries assessed to be sufficiently democratic, it was found that only four countries did not limit the voting rights of those with mental disorders and mental disabilities (Massicotte, Blais, and Yoshinaka, 2003, pp.17-27). In recent years, however, voting right restrictions based on lowered legal capacity due to an impairment are being reconsidered. In the latter half of the 2000s, the number of countries that do not restrict voting rights based on this logic grew to eleven, including Japan. The details of which will be discussed at a later point.