

# **Electoral Timing and Local User Charges: Evidence from Sewerage Tariffs in Japan**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines whether mayoral elections shape the timing of sewerage tariff revisions in Japan. Using panel data for 1,167 municipal sewerage providers from 2014 to 2023, we estimate an event-study model that exploits staggered election timing across municipalities. The results reveal a clear electoral cycle. Tariff revisions are less likely before elections and more likely after elections. This pattern is driven mainly by modest tariff increases whose immediate effects on overall tariff levels remain limited. Political incentives thus appear to operate less through large changes in tariff levels than through the highly visible act of revising tariffs itself.

**Keywords.** Political business cycles; Sewerage tariffs; Local elections

**JEL classification.** D72; H54; H71