

Polarizing residential preference between the metropolis and outer suburbs in Tokyo  
after the experience of COVID-19

Ch. Makoto Yokohari (Professor, Department of Urban Engineering,  
Graduate School of Engineering, The University of Tokyo)

Mem. Keisuke Sakamoto (Assistant Professor, Department of Urban Engineering,  
Graduate School of Engineering, The University of Tokyo)

[SYNOPSIS]

Although megacities in developed countries have recently been experiencing a trend towards population increases or a “back-to-the-city-centre movement,” the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically deprived urban residents of the freedom to aggregate and travel, and there appears to be a revaluation of the natural attractions of the outer suburbs motivated by an increasing tolerance towards working from home. Residential preference in megacities after the pandemic have perhaps been polarized in a tug-of-war between the centre of metropolitan areas and their outer suburbs. This study uses Tokyo as an example to verify a trend of polarizing residential preference and location by analysing how residential preference varies according to socio-geographic factors. To identify preferences for residential location in a post-COVID-19 pandemic city, an online questionnaire survey was administered in 13 cities in the Tokyo metropolitan area. 3,439 respondents’ residential preferences were related to their socio-geographical circumstances using a multilevel logistic model. The results support the idea that residential preference between the metropolis and outer suburbs are being increasingly polarised. The implications for the future retrofit and planning of inner suburbs is discussed, where the possibility of a post-COVID-19 pandemic population decline exists.