

Japan: Political Developments and Data in 2024

New PM Ishiba Forms Minority Government following Electoral Defeat

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Abstract

Following several years of opinion polling decline, Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) sought to draw a line under successive scandals with the election of a new leader, Shigeru Ishiba. However, the LDP-led coalition went on to lose its majority in the lower house for the first time since 2012 in the snap election that Ishiba immediately called, leaving him at the head of a minority government. The ruling party also faced internal divisions over his decision to exclude members implicated in scandals from candidate lists in the election. The Democratic Party for the People, formerly a rump party left over following mergers among mainstream opposition groupings, surged in this election, gaining significant attention for party leader Yuichiro Tamaki, while new far-right parties also made minor gains in the lower house for the first time.

Introduction

Following years of declining approval ratings both for his government and for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stepped down in August 2024, announcing that he would not be running for re-election in the party's internal leadership contest the following month. Nine candidates secured nominations for the leadership race, a record high, with veteran lawmaker Shigeru Ishiba eventually beating right-wing favourite Sanae Takaichi by a narrow margin. Ishiba almost immediately called a snap election, which was held on 27 October, and sought to assuage voter anger over the LDP's recent financial scandals by withdrawing party nominations and electoral support from lawmakers implicated in the scandals. Despite this, the LDP recorded the second-worst electoral performance in the party's history (after its collapse in 2009, when it lost power entirely), and the LDP/*Kōmeitō* ruling coalition lost its lower house majority. Deeply divided opposition benches, however – further fragmented by the success of the Democratic Party for the People (DPFP), which surged from seven to 28 seats, and by the election of small numbers of lawmakers from far-right fringe parties *Sanseitō* and the Japanese Conservative Party – virtually meant that no alternative coalition was possible, allowing Ishiba to continue as Prime Minister with his government ruling as a minority. This was the first minority government in Japan in 30 years since 1995.

Election report

A general election for the lower house of the National Diet was held on 27 October 2024 (extensively covered by national media; see Asahi Shimbun Online Newspaper Database 2024, Mainichi Shimbun Online Newspaper Database 2024, Yomiuri Shimbun Online Newspaper Database 2024). Prior to this election, on 28 April, four by-elections were held in districts whose representatives had resigned or passed away in the prior months – Tokyo 15th district, Nagasaki 3rd district, Shimane 1st district (all lower house) and the Iwate at-large district (upper house). These by-elections were widely framed as a bellwether for the lower house election that was expected to be called before the end of the year. All four of the seats – including three that LDP lawmakers had formerly held – were won by the mainstream opposition Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP), confirming the LDP's polling slide while quelling speculation that the CDP had lost its momentum to other opposition groups such as the Japan Innovation Party (JIP).

In the 27 October general election, the LDP lost 56 seats, leaving it with 191 seats in the lower house – far short of the 233 required for a single-party majority (Table 1). Its junior coalition partner, the Clean Government Party (*Kōmeitō*), also lost eight seats, leaving the coalition without a majority. Twelve former LDP lawmakers were also forced to run without the party's nomination after support was withdrawn due to their complicity in financial scandals; eight of them lost their seats, while the remaining four were re-elected as independents. The biggest winner from the election, on paper, was the CDP, which won 50 seats to bring its total to 148 – the best result in its history and the highest seat count for an opposition party since the 2009 electoral victory of its predecessor, the Democratic Party of Japan. Far more attention, however, was focused on the success of the DPFP, which massively increased its seats from seven pre-election to 28 post-election – granting the party significant leverage over policymaking in the subsequent Diet session in return for supporting the LDP and *Kōmeitō*'s minority administration (see Hino & Ogawa 2019, for the birth of the DPFP). Please see the Issues in National Politics section below for the involvement of the DPFP in policy-making within the minority government.

Two further elections held in 2024 merit mentioning, although they were regional rather than national contests. The Tokyo Gubernatorial Election was held on 7 July and saw incumbent governor Yuriko Koike returned for a third term by a large margin. However, the main opposition candidate, veteran Tokyo lawmaker and former Democratic Party leader Renhō, was pushed into third place by independent candidate Shinji Ishimaru, who based his campaign largely on his extensive social media presence. On 17 November, Hyogo prefecture held a gubernatorial election to replace Motohiko Saitō, who was removed from office following a unanimous vote of no confidence in the prefectural assembly following allegations of workplace bullying resulting in the suicide of a staff member. Saitō ran for re-election, campaigning extensively through social media and making conspiratorial claims that the bullying allegations had been invented by the media and shady 'elites' who opposed his reform agenda into a central plank of his messaging. He was re-elected in a landslide victory, winning more votes than he had when he was originally elected for office. Following this election, many media outlets and political figures voiced concerns about the spread of online misinformation around political campaigns. The growing concerns about new styles of election campaigns have led the government to discuss reforming the Public Office Election

Table 1. Elections to the lower house of Parliament (House of Representatives/*Shūgin*) in Japan in 2024

Date of election	27 October 2024		31 October 2021		Total seats	Previous election		Total seats	465									
	Electorate	103,880,749	103,880,749	465		Electorate	103,880,749		103,880,749	465								
Local constituencies	Proportional representation																	
	Total seats	289																
	Total votes cast	55,934,455																
	Turnout	53.8%																
	Valid votes cast	54,261,878																
Share of valid vote	97.0%																	
Party	Local constituencies					Proportional representation					Overall							
	N	%	Δ%	N	%	N	%	Δ%	N	%	Δ%	N	%	Δ%				
Liberal Democratic Party	20,867,762	38.5%	-9.6%	132	45.7%	-55	-19.0%	14,582,690	26.7%	-7.9%	59	33.5%	-13	-7.4%	191	41.1%	-68	-14.6%
The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan	15,740,860	29.0%	-1.0%	104	36.0%	47	16.3%	11,565,123	21.2%	1.2%	44	25.0%	5	2.8%	148	31.8%	52	11.2%
Japan Innovation Party	6,048,104	11.2%	2.8%	23	8.0%	7	2.4%	5,105,127	9.4%	-4.7%	15	8.5%	-10	-5.7%	38	8.2%	-3	-0.6%
Clean Government Party	730,401	1.4%	-0.2%	4	1.4%	-5	-1.7%	5,964,415	10.9%	-1.5%	20	11.4%	-3	-1.7%	24	5.2%	-8	-1.7%
Japanese Communist Party	3,695,807	6.8%	2.2%	1	0.3%	0	0.0%	3,362,966	6.2%	-1.1%	7	4.0%	-2	-1.1%	8	1.7%	-2	-0.4%
Democratic Party for the People	2,349,584	4.3%	2.2%	11	3.8%	5	1.7%	6,171,533	11.3%	6.8%	17	9.7%	12	6.8%	28	6.0%	17	3.7%
Reiwa Shinsengumi Social Democratic Party of Japan	425,445	0.8%	0.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3,805,060	7.0%	3.1%	9	5.1%	6	3.4%	9	1.9%	6	1.3%
Party of Do It Yourself	283,287	0.5%	0.0%	1	0.3%	0	0.0%	934,598	1.7%	-0.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
The Collaborative Party	1,357,189	2.5%	2.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1,870,347	3.4%	3.4%	3	1.7%	3	1.7%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%
Consideration the Euthanasia System of Japan	29,275	0.1%	-0.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	23,784	0.0%	-1.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other Independent	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18,455	0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	199,592	0.4%	0.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1,145,622	2.1%	2.1%	2	1.1%	2	1.1%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%
	2,534,571	4.7%	0.7%	12	4.2%	0	0.0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	2.6%	0	0.0%

Notes:

The Conservative Party of Japan (*Nippon Hoshuūtō*) listed here refers to the party led by Naoki Hyakuta, formally established on 17 October 2023. It should not be confused with an earlier and unrelated party of the same name founded in 2021.
 Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2024).

Law, including regulating the use of publicly subsidised election poster bulletin boards, which was highly problematised in the Tokyo gubernatorial election, and regulating social media for disinformation, which turned out to be a major issue in the Hyogo prefectural gubernatorial election.

Cabinet report

On 1 October, Shigeru Ishiba announced the composition of his first Cabinet as Prime Minister. The most notable feature of his Cabinet choices was the conspicuous absence of any members of the former Abe faction, which had been disbanded due to its complicity in the previous year's financial scandals. It was reported that Ishiba, perhaps mindful of the risks of further deepening rifts in the party by excluding Abe faction members from all key roles, had offered a party executive position to defeated leadership candidate Sanae Takaichi, a former Abe faction member, but she declined the offer.

Aside from the omission of Abe faction-affiliated members, Ishiba's first Cabinet largely seemed to aim at striking a balance between experienced ministers and newcomers. Seven members of the Cabinet were veteran ministers, including several of the most senior roles – such as five-times Cabinet minister Yoshimasa Hayashi as Chief Cabinet Secretary, former Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Katsunobu Katō as Minister of Finance, the return of former Minister of Defense Gen Nakatani to the Defense Ministry and the appointment of another former Minister of Defense, Takeshi Iwaya, as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The remaining 13 positions were filled by new appointees. Only two members of the new Cabinet were women; Toshiko Abe was appointed as Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, while Junko Mihara took on a number of concurrent ministerial roles related to policies around children, declining birthrate and gender equality.

The first Ishiba Cabinet lasted for only 41 days before a reshuffle prompted by seat losses in the 27 October election. Minister of Justice Hideki Makihara lost his seat in the election and was replaced by Cabinet newcomer Keisuke Suzuki (LDP); Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Yasuhiro Ozato also lost his seat and was replaced by Taku Etō (LDP), who had previously held the same ministry from 2019 to 2020. The Cabinet's sole member from the junior coalition partner *Kōmeitō*, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Tetsuo Saitō also left his position in this reshuffle; he was chosen to lead the party after former leader Keiichi Ishii lost his seat in the election and passed the Cabinet role to newcomer Hiromasa Nakano. With none of the newly appointed ministers being former Abe faction members, 2024 concluded without any lawmaker affiliated with the faction being a member of the Cabinet since December 2023.

Cabinet changes and composition in the outgoing Kishida II and the Ishiba I and II are shown in Tables 2, 3 and 4, respectively.

Parliament report

In the ordinary session that ran from 26 January to 23 June, 61 of the 62 government-sponsored bills submitted to the Diet passed; the final bill, related to the development of maritime renewable energy resources, was carried forward to the extraordinary session

Table 2. Cabinet composition of Kishida II in Japan in 2024

Duration of Cabinet Period covered by table Type of Cabinet	Inception From	10 November 2021 1 January 2024	Dissolution Until	1 October 2024		1 October 2024		
				Oversized coalition		1 October 2024		
A.	Party/gender composition on 1 January 2024	Seats in Cabinet	Seats held by women	Seats in Parliament	N	%	N	%
	Liberal Democratic Party	(LDP)	19	95.0%	5	26.3%	261	56.1%
	Clean Government Party	(CGP)	1	5.0%	0	0.0%	32	6.9%
	Totals		20	100.0%	5	25.0%	293	63.0%
B.	Composition of Kishida II Cabinet on 1 January 2024 See previous editions of the Political Data Yearbook for Japan or http://politicaldatayearbook.com							
C.	Changes in composition of Kishida II Cabinet during 2024	Outgoing minister	Outgoing date	Incoming minister	Comments			
	Ministerial title							
	NONE							
D.	Party/gender composition on 1 October 2024	Seats in Cabinet	Seats held by women	Seats in Parliament	N	%	N	%
	Liberal Democratic Party	(LDP)	19	95.0%	5	26.3%	258	55.5%
	Clean Government Party	(CGP)	1	5.0%	0	0.0%	32	6.9%
	Totals		20	100.0%	5	25.0%	290	62.4%

Source: Prime Minister of Japan (2024).

Table 3. Cabinet composition of Ishiba I in Japan in 2024

Duration of Cabinet Period covered by table Type of Cabinet	Inception From Oversized coalition	1 October 2024		Dissolution Until	11 November 2024		
		1 October 2024	1 October 2024		11 November 2024	11 November 2024	
A.	Party/gender composition on 1 October 2024	Seats in Cabinet		Seats held by women		Seats in Parliament	
		N	%	N	% of party	N	N%
	Liberal Democratic Party	19	95.0%	2	10.5%	261	56.1%
	Clean Government Party	1	5.0%	0	0.0%	32	6.9%
	Totals	20	100.0%	2	10.0%	293	63.0%
B.	Composition of Ishiba I Cabinet on 1 October 2024	Minister					
	Ministerial title						
	Prime Minister	Shigeru Seitchiro	Ishiba Murakami	1957 1952	Male Male	LDP LDP	
	Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications	Hideki Takeshi Katsunobu	Makihara Iwaya Kato	1971 1957 1955	Male Male Male	LDP LDP LDP	
	Minister of Justice						
	Minister for Foreign Affairs						
	Minister of Finance; Minister of State for Financial Services; Minister in charge of Overcoming Deflation						
	Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology		Abe	1959	Female	LDP	
	Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare		Fukuoka	1973	Male	LDP	

Table 3. (Continued)

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	Yasuhiro	Ozato	1958	Male	LDP
Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry; Minister in charge of the Response to the Economic Impact Caused by the Nuclear Accident; Minister for Green Transformation; Minister in charge of Industrial Competitiveness; Minister of State for the Nuclear Damage Compensation and Decommissioning Facilitation Corporation	Yoji	Muto	1955	Male	LDP
Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism; Minister in charge of Water Cycle Policy; Minister in charge of the World Horticultural Exhibition Yokohama 2027	Tetsuo	Saito	1952	Male	CGP
Minister of the Environment; Minister of State for Nuclear Emergency Preparedness	Keiichiro	Asao	1964	Male	LDP
Minister of Defense	Gen	Nakatani	1957	Male	LDP
Chief Cabinet Secretary; Minister in charge of Mitigating the Impact of U.S. Forces in Okinawa; Minister in charge of the Abduction Issue	Yoshimasa	Hayashi	1961	Male	LDP

Table 3. (Continued)

	Masaaki	Taira	1967	Male	LDP
Minister for Digital Transformation; Minister in charge of Administrative Reform; Minister in charge of the National Civil Service System; Minister in charge of Cybersecurity; Minister of State for Regulatory Reform					
Minister for Reconstruction; Minister in charge of Comprehensive Policy Coordination for Revival from the Nuclear Accident at Fukushima	Tadahiko	Ito	1964	Male	LDP
Chairperson of the National Public Safety Commission; Minister in charge of Building National Resilience; Minister in charge of Territorial Issues; Minister of State for Disaster Management; Minister of State for Ocean Policy	Manabu	Sakai	1965	Male	LDP
Minister of State for Policies Related to Children, Measures for Declining Birthrate, Youth Empowerment, and Gender Equality; Minister of State for Promoting Cohesive and Mutual Assistance Society; Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment; Minister in charge of Cohesive Society	Junko	Mihara	1964	Female	LDP

Table 3. (Continued)

Minister in charge of Economic Revitalization; Minister in charge of New Capitalism; Minister in charge of Wage Increase; Minister in charge of Startups; Minister in charge of Social Security Reform; Minister in charge of Infectious Disease Crisis Management; Minister in charge of the Preparation of Establishing the Disaster Management Agency; Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy	Ryosei	Akazawa	1960	Male	LDP
Minister in charge of Economic Security; Minister of State for 'Cool Japan' Strategy; Minister of State for Intellectual Property Strategy; Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy; Minister of State for Space Policy; Minister of State for Economic Security	Minoru	Kiuchi	1965	Male	LDP

Table 3. (Continued)

	Yoshitaka	Ito	1948	Male	LDP
Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs; Minister of State for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety; Minister of State for Regional Revitalization; Minister of State for Ainu-Related Policies; Minister in charge of the Creation of New Regional Economies and Living Environments; Minister in charge of the World Expo 2025					
C. Changes in composition of Ishiba I Cabinet during 2024	Outgoing minister	Outgoing date	Incoming minister	Comments	
Ministerial title					
NONE					
D. Party/gender composition on 11 November 2024	Seats in Cabinet	Seats held by women	Seats in Parliament		
Liberal Democratic Party	N	%	N	N	%
Clean Government Party	19	95.0%	2	196	42.2%
Totals	1	5.0%	0	24	5.2%
	20	100.0%	2	220	47.3%

Source: Prime Minister of Japan (2024).

Table 4. Cabinet composition of Ishiba II in Japan in 2024

Duration of Cabinet Period covered by table Type of Cabinet	Inception From Minority coalition	11 November 2024		Dissolution Until	Still in office at the end of the year 31 December 2024	
		Seats in Cabinet N	%		Seats held by women N	%
A.	Party/gender composition on 11 November 2024					
	Liberal Democratic Party	19	95.0%	2	10.5%	261
	Clean Government Party	1	5.0%	0	0.0%	32
	Totals	20	100.0%	2	10.0%	293
B.	Composition of Ishiba II Cabinet on 11 November 2024					
	Ministerial title	Minister				
	Prime Minister	Shigeru		1957	Male	LDP
	Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications	Seichiro		1952	Male	LDP
	Minister of Justice	Keisuke		1977	Male	LDP
	Minister for Foreign Affairs	Takeshi		1957	Male	LDP
	Minister of Finance; Minister of State for Financial Services; Minister in charge of Overcoming Deflation	Katsumobu		1955	Male	LDP
	Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	Toshiko		1959	Female	LDP

Table 4. (Continued)

Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare	Takamaro	Fukuoka	1973	Male	LDP
Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	Taku	Eto	1960	Male	LDP
Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry; Minister in charge of the Response to the Economic Impact Caused by the Nuclear Accident; Minister for Green Transformation; Minister in charge of Industrial Competitiveness; Minister of State for the Nuclear Damage Compensation and Decommissioning Facilitation Corporation	Yoji	Muto	1955	Male	LDP
Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism; Minister in charge of Water Cycle Policy; Minister in charge of the World Horticultural Exhibition Yokohama 2027	Hiomasa	Nakano	1978	Male	CGP
Minister of the Environment; Minister of State for Nuclear Emergency Preparedness	Keiichiro	Asao	1964	Male	LDP
Minister of Defense	Gen	Nakatani	1957	Male	LDP
Chief Cabinet Secretary; Minister in charge of Mitigating the Impact of U.S. Forces in Okinawa; Minister in charge of the Abduction Issue	Yoshimasa	Hayashi	1961	Male	LDP

Table 4. (Continued)

	Masaaki	Taira	1967	Male	LDP
Minister for Digital Transformation; Minister in charge of Digital Administrative and Fiscal Reform; Minister in charge of Administrative Reform; Minister in charge of the National Civil Service System; Minister in charge of Cybersecurity; Minister of State for Regulatory Reform					
Minister for Reconstruction; Minister in charge of Comprehensive Policy Coordination for Revival from the Nuclear Accident at Fukushima Chairperson of the National Public Safety Commission; Minister in charge of Building National Resilience; Minister in charge of Territorial Issues; Minister of State for Disaster Management; Minister of State for Ocean Policy	Tadahiko	Ito	1964	Male	LDP
Minister of State for Policies Related to Children, Measures for Declining Birthrate, Youth Empowerment, and Gender Equality; Minister of State for Promoting Cohesive and Mutual Assistance Society; Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment; Minister in charge of Cohesive Society	Manabu	Sakai	1965	Male	LDP
	Junko	Mihara	1964	Female	LDP

Table 4. (Continued)

	Ryosei	Akazawa	1960	Male	LDP
Minister in charge of Economic Revitalization; Minister in charge of New Capitalism; Minister in charge of Wage Increase; Minister in charge of Startups; Minister in charge of Social Security Reform; Minister in charge of Infectious Disease Crisis Management; Minister in charge of the Preparation of Establishing the Disaster Management Agency; Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy					
Minister in charge of Economic Security; Minister of State for "Cool Japan" Strategy; Minister of State for Intellectual Property Strategy; Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy; Minister of State for Space Policy; Minister of State for Economic Security	Minoru	Kiuchi	1965	Male	LDP
Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs; Minister of State for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety; Minister of State for Regional Revitalization; Minister of State for Ainu-Related Policies; Minister in charge of the Creation of New Regional Economies and Living Environments; Minister in charge of the World Expo 2025	Yoshitaka	Ito	1948	Male	LDP

Table 4. (Continued)

C.	Changes in composition of Ishiba II Cabinet during 2024	Outgoing minister	Outgoing date	Incoming minister		Comments	
				N	%		
	Ministerial title						
	NONE						
D.	Party/gender composition on 31 December 2024	Seats in Cabinet		Seats held by women		Seats in Parliament	
		N	%	N	% of party	N	%
	Liberal Democratic Party	19	95.0%	2	10.5%	196	42.2%
	Clean Government Party	1	5.0%	0	0.0%	24	5.2%
	Totals	20	100.0%	2	10.0%	220	47.3%

Source: Prime Minister of Japan (2024).

later in the year and ultimately rejected (Cabinet Legislation Bureau 2024). Sixty-eight bills were passed in total, including seven legislator-sponsored bills. Among the bills passed were several related to renewable energy and environmental concerns, as well as some amendments to bills on immigration and refugees, with the latter being in part a response to concerns that had been raised over the treatment of foreign labourers who entered Japan under the technical internship program. One of the final bills passed in the ordinary session was the Smartphone Competition Promotion Law, which addressed concerns about monopolistic behaviour by smartphone platform holders by forbidding them from giving preferential treatment to their own software and requiring transparency about fees and commissions.

Three motions of no confidence were submitted by members of the CDP – one against Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Masahito Moriyama on 19 February and one against Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki on 1 March, as well as one against the Kishida Cabinet on 20 June – with all being defeated. During this session, the Diet also adopted a cross-party resolution calling for an improvement to humanitarian conditions in Gaza and a rapid ceasefire in the Israel–Palestine conflict. The budget for fiscal 2024 was passed on 29 March and came in at 112.5 trillion yen, down slightly from the prior year but still the second-highest annual budget on record. This was added to by a 13.9 trillion yen supplemental budget, which passed in November, containing spending earmarked to support wage growth. This was further increased by a 13.2 trillion yen supplemental budget passed in November, most of which was earmarked for measures related to economic growth and tackling rising consumer prices.

A brief extraordinary session of the Diet ran from 1 to 9 October, confirming Shigeru Ishiba as the new Prime Minister before being dissolved for the lower house election. No legislation was passed in this session. Another brief extraordinary session ran from 11 to 14 November to reappoint Ishiba and his reshuffled Cabinet, before a more lengthy extraordinary session was convened from 28 November to 21 December. In this session, nine out of nine government-sponsored bills were passed, along with seven lawmaker-submitted bills (mostly dealing with the regulation of political funds and expenditures in the wake of the LDP's financial scandals), for a total of 16 bills passed in total. With the LDP--*Kōmeitō* coalition governing as a minority, bills in this session required agreement from opposition parties to pass, and the session was largely characterised by negotiations among parties to this end – including a revision to the supplementary budget to take into account concerns from the CDP, marking the first time since the 1990s that the LDP revised its budget proposals in response to opposition feedback. Marking this cooperative mood, the opposition parties forewent the tradition of submitting a motion of no confidence against the Cabinet at the end of the session.

Tables 5 and 6 show the composition of both houses of Parliament in 2024.

Political party report

Changes in political parties are shown in Table 7.

Both the LDP and CDP changed their leadership in 2024. The CDP elected a new leader on 23 September, with the party opting for former Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda

Table 5. Party and gender composition of the lower house of Parliament (House of Representatives/*Shūgiin*) in Japan in 2024

Party	1 January 2024			11 November 2024			31 December 2024						
	Elections			Elections			Elections						
	All	Women	All	Women	All	Women	All	Women					
<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%				
Liberal Democratic Party	(LDP)	261	56.1%	21	8.0%	196	42.2%	19	9.7%	196	42.2%	19	9.7%
The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and the Independent	(CDP)	96	20.6%	13	13.5%	148	31.8%	30	20.3%	148	31.8%	30	20.3%
Japan Innovation Party	(JIP)	41	8.8%	5	12.2%	38	8.2%	4	10.5%	38	8.2%	4	10.5%
Clean Government Party	(CGP)	32	6.9%	4	12.5%	24	5.2%	4	16.7%	24	5.2%	4	16.7%
Japanese Communist Party	(JCP)	10	2.2%	2	20.0%	8	1.7%	3	37.5%	8	1.7%	3	37.5%

Table 5. (Continued)

Party	1 January 2024			11 November 2024			31 December 2024						
				Elections									
	All	Women	All	All	Women	All	All	Women	All				
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Democratic Party for the People 1	(DPPF)	7	1.5%	1	14.3%	28	6.0%	6	21.4%	28	6.0%	6	21.4%
Yushi no Kai	(YK)	4	0.9%	0	0.0%	4	0.9%	0	0.0%	4	0.9%	0	0.0%
Free Education for All	(FEFA)	4	0.9%	0	0.0%								
Reiwa Shinsengumi	(RS)	3	0.6%	2	66.7%	9	1.9%	4	44.4%	9	1.9%	4	44.4%
SANSEIYO	(SAN)					3	0.6%	2	66.7%	3	0.6%	2	66.7%
Conservative Party of Japan	(CPI)					3	0.6%	1	33.3%	3	0.6%	1	33.3%
Independents		6	1.3%	0	0.0%	4	0.9%	0	0.0%	4	0.9%	0	0.0%
Vacancy		1	0.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Totals		465	100.0%	48	10.3%	465	100.0%	73	15.7%	465	100.0%	73	15.7%

Note:

The DPPF includes members of the Club of Independents.

Sources: House of Representatives (2024); National Diet Library (2024).

Table 6. Party and gender composition of the upper house of Parliament (House of Councillors/Sangiin) in Japan in 2024

Party	1 January 2024				31 December 2024			
	All		Women		All		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Liberal Democratic Party	117	47.2%	24	20.5%	113	45.6%	22	19.5%
The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and Social Democratic Party	40	16.1%	20	50.0%				
The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and Social Democratic Party and the Independent 1					42	16.9%	19	45.2%
Clean Government Party	27	10.9%	4	14.8%	27	10.9%	3	11.1%
Japan Innovation Party	20	8.1%	4	20.0%	18	7.3%	5	27.8%
Democratic Party for the People and The Shin-Ryokufukai	12	4.8%	3	25.0%	12	4.8%	4	33.3%
Japanese Communist Party	11	4.4%	5	45.5%	11	4.4%	4	36.4%
REIWA SHINSENGUMI	5	2.0%	1	20.0%	5	2.0%	1	20.0%
Okinawa Whirlwind	2	0.8%	0	0.0%	2	0.8%	0	0.0%
NHK Party	2	0.8%	0	0.0%	2	0.8%	0	0.0%
Independents	11	4.4%	5	45.5%	8	3.2%	3	37.5%
Vacancy	1	0.4%			8	3.2%		0.0%
Totals	248	100.0%	66	26.6%	248	100.0%	61	24.6%

Notes:

The CDP changed the name as in-house groups (add 'Independent') on 26 September.

Sources: House of Councillors (2024); National Diet Library (2024).

Table 7. Changes in political parties in Japan in 2024

		Party leadership changes in 2024										
Liberal Democratic Party	LDP	President	Fumio Kishida	1957	Male	After the leadership election	On 27 September	Replaced by Shigeru Shigeru	Ishiba	1957	Male	LDP
The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan	CDP	President	Kenta Izumi	1974	Male	After the leadership election	On 23 September	Replaced by Yoshihiko Yoshihiko	Noda	1957	Male	CDP
Japan Innovation Party	JIP	President	Nobuyuki Baba	1965	Male	After the merger with Free Education for All	On 3 October	Co-led by Seiji Maehara	Maehara	1962	Male	FEFA
Japan Innovation Party	JIP	President	Nobuyuki Baba	1965	Male	After the leadership election	On 1 December	Replaced by Hirofumi Hirofumi	Yoshimura	1975	Male	JIP
Clean Government Party	CGP	President	Natsuo Yamaguchi	1952	Male	Stepped down as party leader	On 28 September	Replaced by Keiichi Keiichi	Ishii	1958	Male	CGP
Clean Government Party	CGP	President	Keiichi Ishii	1958	Male	Resigned over the party's losses	On 31 October	Replaced by Tetsuo Tetsuo	Saito	1952	Male	CGP
Japanese Communist Party	JCP	Chairperson	Kazuo Shii	1954	Male	Stepped down as Chairperson and became Chair of the Central Committee	On 18 January	Replaced by Tomoko Tomoko	Tamura	1965	Female	JCP

Source: The Asahi Shimbun Online Newspaper Database (2024).

(2011–2012) to replace the incumbent Kenta Izumi. Although Izumi ran for re-election, there was widespread dissatisfaction within the party at his seeming inability to capitalise upon the LDP's collapsing poll numbers. Noda defeated Izumi and two other challengers – former party leader Yukio Edano and relative newcomer Harumi Yoshida – to win the leadership. A few days later, on 27 September, the LDP voted to replace outgoing leader Fumio Kishida – who did not run for re-election – with veteran lawmaker Shigeru Ishiba. The fragmentation of the LDP in the wake of the dissolution of most of the party's major factions was apparent in this election; nine candidates stood for the leadership, and former faction leaders seemed to struggle to whip votes for their preferred candidates. Ishiba ultimately defeated right-wing lawmaker Sanae Takaichi in a close run-off race to become the country's next Prime Minister.

Other changes to political parties also occurred within smaller parties. Free Education for All, the breakaway party of former DFPF lawmakers formed by Seiji Maehara in 2023, merged into the JIP ahead of the October general election, with Maehara becoming co-leader of JIP two months later. Meanwhile, the ongoing dispute over the leadership of The Collaborative Party (*Mintsuku*), formerly known as Party to Protect the People from NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), a right-wing populist party (see Hino & Ogawa 2020), was seemingly resolved by former leader Takashi Tachibana opting to create a new party using the original name (Party to Protect the People from NHK), leaving Mintsuku under the leadership of Ayaka Otsu.

Issues in national politics

The LDP-led coalition government was dogged by low levels of public support in opinion polls throughout the year, a continuation of the decline in popularity that had been fuelled by successive scandals throughout 2022 and 2023 (see Hino et al. 2023, 2024). By August, Prime Minister Kishida had decided not to stand for a second term as party leader; the LDP's subsequent election of Shigeru Ishiba, who had been something of an outsider within the party due to his vocal opposition to the policies and ideologies of Shinzo Abe's administration (2012–2020), can largely be seen as an attempt to present the public with a 'clean pair of hands' who could successfully break away from the scandals that had dogged the Kishida administration. Ishiba's instalment as leader and his subsequent decision to withhold party nominations and support from lawmakers implicated in financial scandals were not enough to save the LDP's majority, however, and Cabinet support levels continued to be low in most polls until the end of the year (albeit higher than they had been by the end of Kishida's tenure).

Despite the desire of some LDP lawmakers to draw a line under the scandals, political funding and corruption remained a key issue during the extraordinary session of the Diet in November and December, with the LDP and opposition parties negotiating over a series of reforms aimed at improving the transparency of political funding and expenditures. While the CDP and others pushed for a complete ban on political donations from corporations and other groups, there was no consensus on this issue on the opposition benches (not least since the DFPF, in particular, is supported by trade unions whose donations would be

banned under such a rule), and the LDP was able to negotiate the removal of this aspect of the legislation.

Although consumer price inflation cooled slightly in 2024 – dropping to 2.74 per cent from the record high of 3.1 per cent set in the previous year – this remained well above the average inflation for most of the past few decades, with the impact on consumer prices being compounded by the yen continuing to weaken against the US dollar, even briefly rising above 160 yen to the US dollar in June – marking the weakest that the currency has been since the 1980s. Consequently, economic anxieties dominated many citizens' priorities. The DPFP capitalised upon these concerns in its election campaign, focusing on pocketbook issues for households and low-income earners, as well as more controversially suggesting that the country's social insurance systems are set up to benefit elderly groups at the expense of younger cohorts. The party's signature policy was to demand a change in the so-called '1.03m Yen Wall', a step change point in the taxation system, which, it claimed, discouraged many low-income earners from working more hours or seeking better pay. With the LDP in minority government following the election, the DPFP made an increase to this income tax threshold into a condition of its support for legislation and was able to secure a commitment to change the tax code to this effect.

Japan's security environment continued to be an ongoing background concern throughout 2024, with tensions rising with both China and Russia. A record number of Chinese government vessels entered the contiguous zone around the Japan-administered (albeit disputed) Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands during the year, with a Chinese reconnaissance plane also entering Japanese airspace near southern Japan in August; in the north, meanwhile, Russian military aircraft made incursions into Japanese airspace three times in September, with Japanese fighter jets being launched to intercept them. A new defence budget was approved in December, rising 9.4 per cent to a record 8.7 trillion yen, although some analysts noted that the weakening of the yen against the US dollar would lessen the impact of the budget by making US weapons purchases more expensive.

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