

JAPAN

Dates of Elections: 7 October 1979
22 June 1980

Purpose of Elections

7 October 1979: Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives after its dissolution on 7 September 1979. Previous elections had taken place on 10 December 1976 and the normal expiry date of the House was 9 December 1980.

22 June 1980: Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives following premature dissolution of this body on 19 May 1980. General elections had previously been held on 7 October 1979.

Elections were simultaneously held for half (126) the members of the House of Councillors on the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Japan, the Diet, consists of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors.

The House of Representatives is composed of 511 members elected for 4 years.

The House of Councillors comprises 252 members, elected for 6 years, half of whom are renewed every 3 years.

Electoral System

All Japanese citizens who are at least 20 years old are entitled to vote if their domicile has been recorded in a constituency for at least three months and unless they have been adjudged incompetent or have yet to complete or start execution of a sentence of confinement or more severe punishment. Any person who has been sentenced to punishment for electoral offences has neither voting rights nor electoral eligibility for a period fixed in accordance with the punishment.

Electoral registers are revised annually. Voting is not compulsory. Proxy voting is allowed for illiterate or physically incapacitated electors.

Qualified electors who are 25 years of age or over are eligible for the House of Representatives; the age qualification for the House of Councillors is 30. A member of the Diet cannot concurrently hold any official post in the Government or in any local public entity, or any post of officer or member of the staff of a public corporation. However, a member may, during his term of office, be appointed as a member of a commission, advisor, counsellor or other functionary of similar nature in any executive branch of the Cabinet, on a concurrent decision of both Houses. The office of member of the Diet is

compatible with the post of Prime Minister, State Minister, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, Deputy Director General of the Prime Minister's Office, Parliamentary Vice-Minister or where otherwise provided by law.

A candidate for the House of Representatives must make a monetary deposit of 1,000,000 yen (approximately US\$ 4,500), which is forfeited if he does not obtain at least one-fifth of the number resulting from division of the total of valid ballots by the fixed number of members in the constituency concerned.

For election of Representatives, Japan is divided into 130 districts. The number of members to be elected in each varies from three to five, with the exception of one single-member district.

Each elector votes for only one of the candidates in his district. Depending on the number of seats to be filled, those candidates are declared elected who have obtained the most votes, provided that this total is equivalent to at least one-fourth of the number resulting from division of the total of valid votes cast in the constituency by the number of seats to be filled.

Of the 252 members of the House of Councillors, 152 members are elected from prefectural constituencies, each of which is entitled to from two to eight seats, according to the same system as that established for the election of Representatives, with the difference that, to be elected, the leading candidates must receive a number of votes equal to or greater than one-sixth of the total of valid ballots cast, divided by the number of seats to be filled from the constituency.

The remaining 100 Councillors are elected by the nation at large, the territory of the entire country forming one single constituency and the minimum number of votes required for a candidate to be elected being, in this case, one-eighth of the electoral quotient.

A Diet seat which falls vacant within three months of an election is filled by the "next-in-line" candidate of the same party, provided that he obtained the statutory number of votes. A by-election is held in other cases or if several seats become vacant in the same constituency.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

7 October 1979

The House of Representatives was dissolved on 7 September 1979 on the initiative of the Prime Minister, Mr. Masayoshi Ohira. At that time the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) led by the Prime Minister, which had been in power for more than 20 years, had 249 members in the House, supported by several independents, out of a total of 511 members. As he had said in public statements, Mr. Ohira considered that this majority was too narrow and that he needed at least 271 seats. The results of regional and local elections held shortly before, particularly in Tokyo and Okinawa, appeared to indicate that the LDP was in good position to secure such a majority. Furthermore, unemployment and inflation figures revealed a more stable economic situation than at the time of the general

elections in 1976. However, the country's budgetary deficit was considerable and Mr. Ohira announced at the beginning of September that he intended to introduce a VAT-style sales tax to counteract it and also to reduce oil consumption.

During the election campaign it became clear that the voters as a whole were not in favour of the sales tax and that the Party itself was far from endorsing it unanimously. It was announced that introduction of the tax would be postponed but the effect of the proposal was not completely eliminated. Practices such as those revealed in the Lockheed bribes affair, administrative reforms and the energy crisis were also widely discussed.

On polling day, the Liberal-Democratic Party received almost 3% more of the votes than in 1976, but as it was not concentrated, this increase did not result in more seats. In the days after the election, independent MPs rallied to the LDP which thus had 257 members on 31 October 1979. Among other political parties, the Communist Party, with a share of the votes similar to 1976, more than doubled its number of seats (19 in 1976; 41 on 31 October 1979), after focusing its efforts on those constituencies where it had the best chances.

Briefly, the Liberal-Democratic Party retained its dominant position, but did not obtain the absolute majority on which it had appeared to be counting before the elections. Mr. Ohira publicly conceded that his Party had suffered a setback. His own position in the LDP, despite its gains in the elections, was somewhat impaired. On 6 November 1979 he was re-elected Prime Minister in the House of Representatives by 138 votes to 121 votes for Mr. Fukuda. The elections did not particularly clarify the conditions of Government activity in its relations with Parliament.

22 June 1980

On 16 May, Prime Minister M. Ohira of the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) decided to dissolve the House of Representatives after having been defeated in a parliamentary vote of no confidence. The dissolution of this House was thus the second in less than a year, Representatives having been elected seven months earlier, on 7 October 1979.

The crucial motion expressed a lack of confidence in the Ohira administration because of certain political corruption scandals and inflation. Some 70 LDP legislators from anti-Ohira factions headed, among others, by former Prime Ministers T. Fukuda and T. Miki, abstained in the vote.

In the midst of the three-week campaign, participated in by 835 candidates, Mr. Ohira suddenly died. Important issues debated included those on national defence spending and nuclear energy.

The unprecedented simultaneous polling for both Houses of the Diet was considered a factor in provoking a strong turnout. On polling day, the conservative LDP made convincing advances, gaining 36 more Representatives' seats than in October 1979 and increasing its overall Councillors' total to 135—absolute majorities in both Houses. At the other end of the scale, *Komeito* (Clean Government Party) and the Communist Party of Japan incurred significant losses in the House of Representatives.

Mr. Ohira's death necessitated the designation of a new LDP leader, who turned out to be Mr. Zenko Suzuki. His Cabinet was sworn in on 17 July.

Statistics

7 October 1979

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the House of Representatives

Number of registered electors.	80,169,924
Voters.	54,518,515 (68%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	508,394
Valid votes.	54,010,121

Political Group	Number of Candi- dates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats obtained**	Number of Seats held at Dis- solution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
Liberal-Democratic Party.	322	24,084,140	44.59	248 (257)	249	249
Japan Socialist Party . . .	157	10,643,450	19.71	107(106)	117	123
Japan Communist Party . .	128	5,625,527	10.42	39(41)	19	17
<i>Komeito</i>	64	5,282,682	9.78	57 (58)	56	55
Democratic Socialist Party	53	3,663,691	6.78	35 (36)	28	29
New Liberal Club	31	1,631,811	3.02	4(4)	13	17
Social Democratic Federa- tion	7	368,660	0.68	2(2)	3	-
Other groups	8	69,100	0.13	-(-)	-	-
Independents	96	2,641,064	4.89	19(7)	7	21
				511	492*	511

* 19 seats were vacant at dissolution.

** Figures in brackets indicate the distribution of seats among the parties on 31 October 1979: 14 independent members have gained party affiliation since the elections; the Speaker and Vice-Speaker became independents.

*2. Distribution of Representatives according
to Professional Category*

Officials of political parties	172
Directors of associations or organizations	144
Members of executive boards of corporations	67
Ministers and Parliamentary Vice-Ministers, etc.	30
Lawyers.	29
Farmers.	17
Teachers.	10
Writers.	10
Doctors.	7
Others.	25
	511

3. Distribution of Representatives according to Sex

Men	500
Women	11
	511

4. Distribution of Representatives according to Age Group

25-29 years.	1
30-34.	5
35-39.	21
40-44.	39
45-49.	66
50-54.	117
55-59.	78
60-64.	81
65-69.	63
70 and over.	40
	11

22 June 1980

5. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the House of Representatives

Number of registered electors.	80,925,034
Voters.	60,338,440 (74.56%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	1,309,603
Valid votes.	59,028,837

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution
Liberal-Democratic Party	310	28,262,441	47.9	284	258
Japan Socialist Party	149	11,400,747	19.3	107	107
<i>Komeito</i>	64	5,329,942	9.0	33	58
Democratic Socialist Party	50	3,896,728	6.6	32	36
Communist Party of Japan	129	5,803,613	9.8	29	41
New Liberal Club	25	1,766,396	3.0	12	4
Social Democratic Federation	5	402,832	0.7	3	2
Others	42	109,168	0.1		
Independents	61	2,056,967	3.5	11	4
				511	510*

* Plus one vacancy.

6. Distribution of Seats in the House of Councillors

Political Group	Number of Seats won at 1980 Elections	Total Number of Seats
Liberal-Democratic Party.	69	135
Japan Socialist Party.	22	47
<i>Komeito</i>	13	26
Communist Party of Japan	7	12
Democratic Socialist Party.	5	12
New Liberal Club	-	2
Social Democratic Federation	1	1
Others.	9	16
	126	251"

* Plus one vacancy.

*7. Distribution of Members of the Diet according
to Professional Category*

	Representatives	Councillors
Directors of associations or organizations	181	83
Officials of political parties	151	56
Members of executive boards of corporations	63	17
Lawyers,	30	7
Ministers and Parliamentary Vice-Ministers, public officers, etc.	21	51
Agriculture and Forestry.	15	7
Teachers.	12	13
Writers	12	-
Doctors	6	4
Others	20	13
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	511	251"

8. Distribution of Members of the Diet according to Sex

	Representatives	Councillors
Men	502	234
Women	9	17
	511	251"

9. Distribution of Members of the Diet according to Age Group

	Representatives	Councillors
25-29 years.	1	
30-34.	6	
35-39.	29	5
40-44	40	
45-49	56	34
50-54	112	I 96
55-59	85	
60-64	76	J 84
65-69	61	
70 and over	45	32
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	511	251*

* Plus one vacancy.