**Yoshihide Suga**

**Early life**

Yoshihide Suga is a Japanese politician who was born on June 08 1948 to a strawberry-farming family. "My parents were hard workers. They returned home from fields around the time I got up. People in the countryside are all like that," he said.

In the winter, he lived in a boardinghouse near his high school due to the snow. But after the harsh season, spring would always come, melting the snow and exposing the bare roads.

"This feeling can be understood only by people who live in snowy regions in rural areas. My patience was fostered by the countryside before I realized it," Suga said.

**Education**

After graduating from high school, he came to Tokyo, thinking that something would change.

He worked in a small factory, only to quit after two years. Suga said he thought that if the situation remained unchanged, his life would be "a painfully lonely one."

Suga then entered Hosei University. He worked part-time days and nights to pay for school expenses.

After four years of college life, he thought of returning to Akita but chose to try working at a private company.

**Start of his Political Career**

It was during those days that he began formulating the idea of going into politics.

"I began to think that it was politics that was moving this world," he said.

With no personal connections to rely on, he went to Hosei University's career center.

"Can you introduce me to politicians who have graduated from this school?" he asked.

The center introduced Suga to the head of the alumni association secretariat.

That introduction worked, and the 26-year-old Suga landed a job as secretary to Hikosaburo Okonogi, a House of Representatives member elected from Yokohama. It was 1975.

"In retrospect, I think I did well," Suga said nostalgically of the time when he faced the first important turning point of his life.

Suga pays respects at his mentor Seiroku Kajiyama's grave in Ibaraki Prefecture in 2017.   © Kyodo

Few students wishing to join the political world think of enlisting their colleges for help getting a foot in the door. But Suga figured that since he was looking for work, visiting the career center would be just like any other student looking for an ordinary job.

As such, Suga had already developed a sense of what is "ordinary" or "right" when he took his first step into the political world.

**Municipal Assembly Member**

For Suga, the next important turning point came when he ran for the Yokohama municipal assembly at the age of 38. He was born in Akita and had no network of relatives or friends to speak of in Yokohama.

Suga came under attack from rival candidates who claimed that he would simply pack up and return to Akita if he lost. Undaunted, he wrote upfront in his profile that he was born in Akita.

The gambit paid off. He won the election as he garnered support among many people who had also come to Yokohama from rural areas.

"At that time, I had the most difficult time as I lacked name recognition and ran in the election while having three children aged 6, 3 and 1," Suga said.

**Representative**

He served two four-year terms as a Yokohama Municipal Assembly member before being elected in 1996 to the House of Representatives, the Diet's more powerful lower house.

Suga's name became widely known in Tokyo's Nagatacho district -- Japan's political nerve center, where the Diet building and the prime minister's office are located -- during the 1998 leadership race of the Liberal Democratic Party.

Suga belonged to an LDP faction headed by future Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. But instead of supporting Obuchi, Suga backed veteran Seiroku Kajiyama, also of the same faction. Suga and Kajiyama left the faction together after the latter lost.

It was a "rebellion" unthinkable for a new legislator. But Suga said: "It was strange that everyone worried about me so much, even as I just did the right thing."

The 1998 LDP leadership election came at a time when financial instability gripped the nation.

Kajiyama said that "there are too many big banks -- only two or three are enough" and advocated a "hard landing" policy. Suga completely agreed. "Supporting a person who I want to make prime minister is the right thing, isn't it?" he said.

**Chief Cabinet Secretary**

Like his mentor Kajiyama, Suga ended up becoming chief cabinet secretary. He has held the job since December 2012.

Since assuming the post of chief cabinet secretary, Suga has stuck to his routine almost every day and never stayed overnight at his home in the Kanagawa Prefecture city of Yokohama, near Tokyo.

As Chief Cabinet Secretary, Suga served as an aide and advisor to Abe, and took an active managerial role in the government. He had a key role in the government's initiatives to attract tourists and foreign workers and reduce mobile telephone rates

Suga gained domestic and international fame when he announced the name of the new imperial era, [Reiwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reiwa), on 1 April 2019, earning him the nickname "Uncle Reiwa" (Reiwa Ojisan).[[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoshihide_Suga#cite_note-23)

**Prime Minister**

Suga was elected to the presidency of the [Liberal Democratic Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_Democratic_Party_(Japan)) on 14 September 2020, with 377 votes out of a total of 534.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoshihide_Suga#cite_note-29)[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoshihide_Suga#cite_note-30) Upon his election, Suga outlined a policy agenda that included tackling the ongoing [COVID-19 pandemic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_in_Japan) and implementing further [deregulation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deregulation) to revitalize the economy. He reiterated his past interest in consolidating regional banks and lowering mobile phone charges in Japan.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoshihide_Suga#cite_note-31)[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoshihide_Suga#cite_note-32) Suga vowed to continue the economic policies of his predecessor, known as [Abenomics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abenomics), and to continue the path of Shinzo Abe in terms of foreign policy, making his "top priority" the issue of [Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korean_abductions_of_Japanese_citizens).[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoshihide_Suga#cite_note-33)[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoshihide_Suga#cite_note-34) He and his cabinet were sworn in on 16 September 2020.[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoshihide_Suga#cite_note-kyodocabinet-35)