

'Bear' Chosen as Kanji of the Year for 2025 After Surge in Attacks

2025年も、年末の恒例行事として定着している「今年の漢字」が注目を集めています。一文字に込められた意味や背景を知ること、この一年を振り返るきっかけにもなりますよね。選考の過程には多くの人の関心や思いが反映されており、日本社会の空気感が表れているとも言えそうです。では、多くの人が参加する投票によって選ばれた漢字は、本当に2025年の「世相」をうまく表していると言えるのでしょうか。あなたはどのように考えますか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Selected from more than 189,000 public votes, the kanji was officially unveiled during a calligraphy ceremony at Kiyomizu-dera Temple in Kyoto.

The Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation announced on December 12 that the kanji chosen to represent the mood of 2025 is "熊" (bear). This marks the first time the character has been selected.

Record Bear Encounters

Bears were spotted in many parts of Japan this year, and the number of human injuries reached a record high. The issue drew national attention after legal revisions allowed municipalities to decide whether to capture or cull bears through so-called "emergency gun hunts."

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Japan Forward

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1. Article

The return of pandas from Adventure World in Shirahama, Wakayama Prefecture, to China was also cited as a factor in the kanji's selection.

At around 2 PM on December 12, Chief Priest Mori Seihan of Kiyomizu-dera Temple in Kyoto brushed the character "熊" on a large sheet of washi paper. The paper measured about 1.5 meters high (59 inches) and 1.3 meters wide.

The "Kanji of the Year" [initiative](#) began in 1995 and marks its 30th anniversary this year. Votes were collected via the foundation's website and by postcard, and the character receiving the most votes was selected.

Voting Results

A total of 189,122 votes were cast, with "bear" receiving 23,346. A close second was "米" (rice) with 23,166 votes, reflecting rising rice prices and the release of government stockpiles.

Third was "高" (high), with 18,300 votes. The character was linked to rising prices and soaring stock markets, as well as to Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, whose surname includes the character. She became Japan's first female prime minister in [constitutional](#) history in October.

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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. revision 改正

After one revision, the report was much clearer.

2. municipality 自治体

The municipality repaired the road after the storm.

3. cull 間引く

The park plans to cull some animals to keep people safe.

4. initiative 取組

Our company started an initiative to reduce overtime.

5. constitutional 憲法の

Freedom of speech is a constitutional right.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. Which kanji was chosen as the Kanji of the Year for 2025? How many public votes were cast in total?
2. Where was the kanji officially unveiled in the ceremony?
3. What other kanji were also popular choices? Why?
4. If you could choose one kanji or one word to represent 2025, what would you choose and why?
5. Do you think a public vote can represent the “mood of the year”? Why or why not?

4. 今年の漢字に「熊」選ばれる 各地で出沒、人身被害 市町村判断で緊急銃猟も

日本漢字能力検定協会は12月12日、令和7年の世相を1文字で表す「今年の漢字」が「熊」に決まったと発表した。「熊」が選ばれるのは初めて。

今年は各地でクマが出沒し人身被害が過去最多となった。法改正により市町村の判断で捕獲・殺処分が可能になった「緊急銃猟」の実施などでも注目された。和歌山県白浜町のアドベンチャーワールドのパンダが中国に返還されたことも理由にあげられた。

この日は午後2時ごろから京都市の清水寺で、森清範貫主が熊の字を縦約1・5メートル、横約1・3メートルの和紙に揮毫（きごう）した。平成7年に始まった今年の漢字は今回で30周年。協会のウェブサイトやはがきで応募を受け付け、最多得票の漢字を選んだ。

応募総数は18万9122票で、「熊」が2万3346票。2位は米価の高騰や備蓄米の放出などがあった「米」の2万3166票で僅差となった。3位は1万8300票の「高」。10月に憲政史上初の女性首相となる高市早苗首相が就任したことや物価高、株高などが理由にあがった。