

FRANCE

Dates of Elections: March 4 and 11, 1973

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held to renew all the members of the National Assembly on the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Parliament of France is bicameral, made up of the National Assembly and the Senate.

The National Assembly consists of 490 Deputies, 473 * of whom represent the Departments of Metropolitan France, 10 the Overseas Departments and 7 the Overseas Territories. All Deputies are elected by direct ballot for 5 years.

The Senate comprises 283 members. Of these, 264 Senators represent the Departments of Metropolitan France, elected in each case by an electoral college composed of the members of the National Assembly, delegates from the Councils of the Departments and delegates from the Municipal Councils; 7 Senators, elected likewise, represent the 4 Overseas Departments; 6 Senators, elected likewise, represent the 6 Overseas Territories; and 6 Senators, co-opted by the Senate on submission of candidatures by the Higher Council for French Citizens Living Abroad, represent French citizens living outside France.

Senators are elected for a term of 9 years, a third of whom are renewed every 3 years.

Electoral System

All French citizens of either sex who are 21 years of age, are registered on the electoral lists, enjoy full civil and political rights and are domiciliaries of, or have resided continuously for a period of 6 months in, a particular community are entitled to vote for Deputies. Certain categories of people — those having been decorated, the military and persons living abroad or having itinerant professions — have the possibility of benefiting from the liberalization of the age or residence requirements. Certain persons under sentence of imprisonment, those convicted for crime, adults under guardianship, undischarged bankrupts, and those convicted *in absentia*, cannot be registered.

* This total was reached as a result of a Law of June 29, 1972, after the creation of 3 new constituencies in the Rhone area.

Electoral lists for the National Assembly are revised each year, and for the Senate before each election. Voting is not compulsory for Deputies but is for Senators.

Voters over 23 years of age who have satisfied their military obligation are eligible for election to the National Assembly (the age requirement is 35 for the Senate). Naturalized citizens and women who have acquired French nationality by marriage are only eligible upon expiry of a period of 10 years from the date of their naturalization. Ineligible are certain public officials or those having certain important functions in the constituency; persons under guardianship; and those deprived of their eligibility by court decree.

While it is impossible to be a Senator and Deputy at the same time, the following offices are incompatible with that of parliamentarian: membership in the Constitutional Council and Economic and Social Council; certain public functions; directorship of a State enterprise or institution; membership in certain private enterprises closely linked with the State; and attorney engaged in certain defined cases.

Candidatures to the National Assembly must be presented at least 21 days prior to election day, along with a deposit of 1000 francs, reimbursable if the candidate obtains 5 % of the votes cast in either of the 2 ballots. For the second ballot, candidatures may be presented up to the Tuesday following the first ballot.

Depending on the constituency, candidates to the Senate may run either individually or as part of a list of candidates. These candidatures must be presented at least 8 days prior to election day and be accompanied by a deposit of 200 francs. This deposit is reimbursable to an individual candidate if he obtains 10 % of the votes cast in the particular constituency in either of the 2 ballots, or to the several candidates comprising a list if they together obtain 5 % of the votes cast.

Elections for Deputies are held in 489 single-member constituencies, according to a majority system in 2 ballots. A candidate is elected in the first ballot if he obtains an absolute majority of the valid votes cast, provided this amount is equal to a quarter of the number of registered voters in the particular constituency. In order to be eligible for the second ballot, candidates must have obtained a number of votes equal to at least 10 % of the total number of registered voters. However, if only one candidate fulfills this condition, then the person who polls the second largest number of votes in the first ballot may also participate in the run-off, at which, to be elected, a simple plurality suffices.

The Comores Territories, which employ a majority-fist system and elect 2 Deputies, are the one exception to this general method of voting.

In Departments represented by 4 Senators or less, the latter are elected on

a majority basis in 2 ballots, as in the case of Deputies. Departments entitled to 5 or more Senators elect the latter according to the proportional representation system of highest average, without preferential vote or vote-splitting; within each list, seats are allotted to candidates on the basis of their order of appearance within that list. In the Overseas Territories, Senators are elected via absolute majority.

Substitutes elected at the same time as titular members of Parliament fill parliamentary vacancies which arise when these titular members accept Government office or appointment to the Constitutional Council, become members of a Government mission lasting more than 6 months, or have died. When vacancies arise for any other reason — such as resignation — by-elections are resorted to within 3 months, except in the last year prior to the end of the legislature's term.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The official electoral campaign, in conformity with the Electoral Code, was to open 20 days before election day. It thus opened on February 12, with declarations of candidatures obligatory between February 5 and 11.

Among the political groups vying for seats in the National Assembly the largest was the *Union des républicains de progrès pour le soutien au Président de la République* (URP), a coalition of the 3 parties of the parliamentary majority — the *Union des démocrates pour la République* (UDR), the *Fédération nationale des républicains indépendants* (Independent Republicans) and the *Centre démocrate et progrès* (CDP) — that was announced in December 1972, and which planned to contest 405 constituencies of metropolitan France, principally by UDR candidates. Prime Minister Pierre Messmer, in discussing the UDR platform, focused on the achievements of President Pompidou's regime and future policy objectives; he stressed economic development (6 % annual rate of growth of gross national product, since 1969), housing and public services (expanding housing and motorway construction), prices and wages (reduction of the rate of increases to within the limits established by the Council of Ministers of the European Communities), welfare and social security (extended allowances) and education (existing enrollment). The Independent Republicans, regarding themselves as the "reformists of the majority", called for a more precise definition of the division of responsibility between the President and the Prime Minister and a readaptation of Parliament's control function over the Government. The CDP, in turn, re-emphasized the UDR programme and advocated a more "human" approach to national administration.

The centre parties, grouped in the *Mouvement réformateur*, and led by Mr. Lecanuet, president of the *Centre démocrate*, and Mr. Servan-Schreiber,

president of the Radical Party, urged the need to " protect the citizen against the dangers of the industrial society "; they encouraged effective economic competition and proposed a guaranteed minimum old-age pension equivalent to the level of the minimum wage. They furthermore proposed schemes, *inter alia*, in the fields of local government (regional assemblies) and public resources (fiscal reform).

The *Union de la gauche socialiste et dlmocrate* (UGSD) — comprising the Socialist Party and the Radical Socialists — and the Communist Party pursued separate electoral campaigns but adopted a joint programme and decided to show their unity by presenting only the best-placed left-wing candidate in the second ballot. The *Parti socialiste unifU* (PSU) favoured the aims of this leftist alliance though it did not entirely support its joint programme.

By February 3140 candidates — 875 more than in 1968 — had presented themselves in metropolitan France. Of these, URP, Socialist and Communist candidates were running in nearly all the constituencies; the Reformers' Movement contested 433 seats and the PSU 250. During the first ballot 60 candidates were elected, with 424 metropolitan and 6 overseas seats left to be filled. The URP and the *Union de la gauche* had obtained, at this point, approximately the same number of votes.

Following this first ballot, Mr. Lecanuet declared that candidates of the Reformers' Movement would withdraw where it was foreseeable that the Socialist-Communist coalition might win — thus avoiding a split of the centre-right vote — and that the Movement would side with Socialists if there were an assurance that the Socialist-Communist coalition would not obtain a majority in the National Assembly. In a television address, Mr. Pompidou, for his part, urged the electorate to choose against " totalitarianism and the suppression of individual liberty ".

A total of 944 candidates contested metropolitan seats in the second ballot. Although the UDR lost its overall majority in the Assembly, the parties allied within the URP, together with other elements of the majority, exceeded the total strength of all other parties and groups (276 seats to 214). These latter, nevertheless, all increased their representation.

Mr. Messmer, reappointed Prime Minister on April 2, announced his Cabinet on April 5 and 12.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the National Assembly*

	First ballot	Second ballot
Number of registered voters.	29,865,345	27,207,471
Voters.	24,262,822 (81.2 %)	22,214,820 (81.6 %)
Blank or void ballot papers	541,877	743,319
Valid votes.	23,720,945	21,471,501

France

Political Group	Number of Seats in the National Assembly	Number of Seats held prior to Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
URP			
— UDR.	185	273	293
— Independent Republicans	54	61	61
— CDP.	23	26	33
<i>Mouvement riformateur.</i>	32	15	
Communist Party.	73	34	34
UGSD			
— Socialist Party.	90	41	57
— Radical Socialists	11	8	
PSU and extreme Left	3	1	
Various Majority.	14		
Various Left	3		
Others.	2	24	
	490*	483**	487

* 3 seats added since last elections.

** Plus 4 vacancies.

2. *Distribution of Deputies according to Professional Category*

Teachers.	78
Business managers.	59
State officials.	51
Physicians and surgeons.	45
Lawyers.	36
Farmers.	32
Labourers.	27
Engineers.	19
Journalists.	14
Clerks.	14
Pharmacists.	13
Employees of high grade.	11
Tradesmen.	11
Other liberal professions.	11
Veterinarians.	8
Officials of Ministries.	7
Railway employees.	6
Members of the armed forces.	3
Craftsmen.	3
Magistrates.	2
Dentists.	2
Maritime professions.	1
Others.	37
	490

3. *Distribution of Deputies according to Sex*

Men	483
Women.	7
	490

4. *Distribution of Deputies according to Age Group*

23-30.	2
31-40	49
41-50.	126
51-60.	180
61-70.	114
Over 70.	19
	490

5. *Average Age: 53 years and 8 months*