

FRANCE

Dates of Elections: 5 and 12 June 1988

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in the National Assembly following premature dissolution of this body on 14 May 1988. General elections had previously been held in March 1986.

Characteristics of Parliament

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

Senate

The Senate comprises 320 members*; they are indirectly elected for 9 years, one-third of the seats being renewed every 3 years. The Senate cannot be dissolved.

Of this total, 296 Senators represent the 95 departments of metropolitan France, being elected in each case by an electoral college composed of the members of the National Assembly, general councillors, and delegates of the municipal councils; 8 Senators, elected likewise, represent the five overseas departments; 3 Senators, elected likewise, represent the five overseas territories; 2 Senators represent the 2 "collectivites territoriales"; and 10 Senators, indirectly elected by proportional representation** by the *Conseil superieur des Francois de l'etranger*, represent French citizens living outside France.

National Assembly

The National Assembly has 577 members (555 for metropolitan France, 15 for overseas departments, 2 for overseas "collectivites territoriales" and 5 for overseas territories). All Deputies are directly elected for 5 years.

Electoral System

All French citizens who are at least 18 years of age, in full possession of their civil rights and registered as electors are entitled to vote for Deputies (the Senate electorate is mentioned above). Disqualified are persons convicted of criminal or other offences, undischarged bankrupts and the mentally deficient.

* The number of seats is, theoretically, still 320 but the actual total is 319 since the seat of the former French territory of the Afars and the Issas remained unfilled after the territory became independent as Djibouti.

** See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 9.

As regards elections for the National Assembly, electoral lists are compiled on the municipal level and revised annually. Voting for Deputies, unlike for Senators, is not compulsory. Special registration and proxy voting procedures apply to citizens living abroad, career military personnel and persons having itinerant professions.

Qualified electors who are at least 23 years of age and 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 becoming French. Ineligible are persons under guardianship and those deprived of their eligibility by court decree.

Career members of the armed forces, the Economic and Social Council and department committees; judges; holders of certain functions bestowed by foreign States and officials of international organizations; executives of State enterprises, State-assisted companies, savings and credit organizations, companies holding government contracts and real-estate companies, and members of the Constitutional Council are all deemed to hold offices or positions which are incompatible with the parliamentary mandate. No Deputy may simultaneously hold more than one of certain other elected posts or elective functions.

Candidatures for the National Assembly must be submitted at least 21 days prior to election day, along with a deposit of 1,000 FF, reimbursable if the party list concerned obtains at least 5% of the votes cast.

Depending on the constituency, candidates for the Senate may run either individually or as members of a list. These candidatures must be accompanied by a deposit of 200 FF. This deposit is reimbursable to an individual candidate if he obtains 10% of the votes cast in the particular constituency in either of the two ballots, or to the several candidates composing a list if they together obtain 5% of the votes cast.

Elections for Deputies are held in 577 single-member constituencies, according to a majority system in two 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 12.5% of the total number of registered voters. However, if only one candidate fulfills this condition, the person who polls the second largest number of votes in the first ballot may also participate in the second at which, to be elected, a simple plurality suffices.

In departments represented by four Senators or less, the latter are elected on a majority basis in two ballots, as in the case of Deputies. Departments entitled to five 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 by absolute majority.

Vacancies in both the Senate (majority seats) and National Assembly are filled by substitutes elected at the same time as titular members, except in certain cases (such as resignation) when by-elections are resorted to within three months (except in the last year of the legislature's term). Vacancies of proportional representation Senate seats are filled by the "next-in-line" candidate of the party list concerned.

Background and Outcome of the Elections

The National Assembly elections followed polling for President of the Republic on 24 April and 8 May 1988, won by the incumbent, Mr. Francois Mitterrand (Socialist Party - PS), over his conservative rival, outgoing Prime Minister Jacques Chirac (Rally for the Republic - **RPR**). In this context, Mr. Mitterrand sought a "clear and stable" majority in the Assembly, where the conservative opposition held a slight edge. As in the presidential campaign, he also called for an "opening" (*ouverture*), whereby the political parties would co-operate with each other instead of pursuing a left-right power duel. President Mitterrand and his Prime Minister, Mr. Michel Rocard, a moderate, pledged to open the Government to include non-Socialists, especially centrists, even if the PS emerged victorious.

Some 2900 candidates contested the elections. The two rounds of legislative voting were marked by relatively high abstention rates. Of the 577 Assembly seats, 455 remained in contention in the run-off ballot. The Gaullist **RPR** concluded an alliance with the centre-right Union for French Democracy (UDF); they fielded joint candidates in many constituencies, under the Union for the Rally and the Centre (URC) banner. Between the two rounds, a controversial pact was made in the Marseilles region between local conservatives and the ultra-right National Front (FN) of Mr. Jean-Marie Le Pen, who had done surprisingly well in the presidential contest.

Final results failed to give any party an overall Assembly majority, as a virtual deadlock emerged between the Socialist and right-wing blocs. At the same time, the UDF passed the RPR for the first time in total number of seats.

Prime Minister Rocard announced the composition of his Cabinet on 28 June.

Statistics

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

	<i>First Round</i> <i>(5 June)</i>		<i>Second Round</i> <i>(12 June)</i>	
Number of registered electors	37,945,582		30,023,087	
Voters	24,944,792	(65.74%)	21,003,066	(69.95%)
Blank or void ballot papers	512,697		699,052	
Valid votes	24,432,095		20,304,014	

Political Group	<i>First Round</i>		<i>Second Round</i>		Total Number of Seats		
	Votes obtained	Number of Seats	Votes obtained	%			
Extreme Left	89,065	0.36	—	—			
Communist Party (PC)	2,765,761	11.32	1	695,569	3.42	26	27
Socialist Party (PS)	8,493,702	34.76	37	9,881,685	48.66	225	262
Left Radicals (MRG)	272,316	1.11	2			7	9
Various Left	403,690	1.65	1			5	6
Ecologists	86,312	0.35	—				
Regionalists	18,498	0.07	—				
Rally for the Republic (RPR)*	4,687,047	19.18	38	9,510,056	46.83	90	128
Union for French Demo- cracy (UDF)*	4,519,459	18.49	38			92	130
Various Right	697,272	2.85	3			9	12
National Front (FN)	2,359,528	9.65	—	216,704	1.06	1	1
Extreme Right	32,445	0.13	—				
			120			455	575*

• Kielded joint candidates in many constituencies under Union for the Rally and the Centre (URC) label.
** Excluding two Deputies from Polynesia.

In light of the above results, the numerical strength of the various National Assembly groups, including attached and associated members, became the following:

Political Group	Number of Seats
Socialist	275
RPR	130
UDF	90
Union of the Centre	40
Communist	25
Unattached	Jl
	577

2. *Distribution of Senators according to Profession*

Agricultural professions. . . . .	.17%
Medical professions. . . . .	.16%
Salaried employees. . . . .	.15%
Commerce and industry. . . . .	.14%
Liberal professions. . . . .	.14%
Teachers. . . . .	.12%
Civil servants. . . . .	.10%
Without declared profession.	2%
	100%

3. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Sex*

	Senate	National Assembly
Men	310	544
Women	– 9	21
	319	577

4. *Distribution of Deputies according to Age*

30 years.	1
31-35 years. . . . .	.16
36-40 » . . . . .	.60
41-45 » . . . . .	.137
46-50 » . . . . .	.108
51-55 » . . . . .	.86
56-60 » . . . . .	.67
61-65 » . . . . .	.54
66-70 » . . . . .	.36
Over 70 years. . . . .	.12
	577

Average Age: 50 years and 11 months

5. Distribution of Senators according to Age

35-40 years	4
41-50 »	28
51-60 »	80
61-70 »	151
71-80 »	51
Over 81 years	_ 5
	319

Average Age: 63 years