

## FRANCE

Dates of Elections: September 25, 1977 (Senate)  
March 12 and 19, 1978 (National Assembly)

### Purpose of Elections

#### *Senate*

Elections were held to renew one-third (113) of the Senate seats, of which 107 in metropolitan France, 2 seats each in the overseas departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe, one in the overseas department of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and one in the "territorial collectivity" of Mayotte. Two other Senators, representing French citizens living abroad, had previously been designated on June 28 by the *Conseil supérieur des Français de l'étranger*.

#### *National Assembly*

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

### Characteristics of Parliament

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

#### *Senate*

As from the 1977 elections\*, the Senate comprises 295 members. They are indirectly elected for 9 years, one-third of the seats being renewed every 3 years.

Of this total, 277 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; 7 Senators, elected likewise, represent the five overseas departments; 6 Senators, elected likewise, represent the five overseas territories; and 5 Senators, co-opted by the Senate on submission of candidatures by the *Conseil supérieur des Français de l'étranger*, represent French citizens living outside France.

#### *National Assembly*

The National Assembly has 491 members \* (474 for metropolitan France, 10 for overseas departments and 7 for overseas territories). All deputies are directly elected for 5 years.

\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 25.

## 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.

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 Departmental 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.

Candidatures to the National Assembly must be submitted at least 21 days prior to election day, along with a deposit of 1,000 francs, reimbursable if the candidate obtains at least 5% of the votes cast in either of the two ballots.

Depending on the constituency, candidates to the Senate may run either individually or as part of a list of candidates. These candidatures must 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 two ballots, or to the several candidates comprising a list if they together obtain 5% of the votes cast.

Elections for deputies are held in 491 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, then 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.

In absolute-majority departments, 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 six months, or have died; in proportional representation departments, "next-the Senate did not undergo much change in its composition. Despite increases in seats held and percentage of votes obtained, the left-wing opposition remained clearly in the minority. Among the new Senators, one should nevertheless note a younger average age.

## General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

### *Senate*

The stability of the electorate is one of the principal characteristics of the senatorial elections.

The 1977 elections were held in the wake of a break in negotiations among left-wing parties regarding the Common Programme of a potential left-wing government.

Although the municipal elections of March 1977 showed a swing to the Left, the Senate did not undergo much change in make-up. Despite increases in seats held and percentage of votes obtained, the left-wing opposition remained clearly in the minority. Among the new Senators, one should nevertheless note a younger average age.

### *National Assembly*

The outcome of the 1978 Assembly elections had been highly unpredictable. Since 1973, the minimum voting age had been lowered from 21 to 18 and the political inclinations of these young people were as yet unknown. Furthermore, the left-wing parties that were parties to a Common Programme for governing had achieved success in the most recent municipal elections and made some progress in the senatorial elections, and opinion polls placed them in a good position for gaining seats in the Assembly.

During the three-week campaign, which focused mainly on economic issues, the majority parties supporting the policies of President of the Republic Giscard d'Estaing were united under the banner of the Union for French Democracy (*Union pour la démocratie française* - UDF), while the parties of the Union of the Left (*Union de la gauche*), led by the Socialists and Communists, became opponents following disagreement in September 1977 regarding their Common Programme for governing.

In metropolitan France, candidates numbered 4,184 (of which 680 were women) at the first ballot and 830 (including 33 women) at the second. The totals for overseas were, respectively, 82 (4 women) and 10 (no women).

Votes for the outgoing majority and the Opposition were fairly well divided after the first ballot on March 12. At the second — which, like the first, was marked by an extremely strong turnout of voters — the majority groups obtained a clear victory despite the fact that the left-wing parties had concluded an election pact on March 13.

Final figures gave the centre-right governing coalition parties 289 seats — 43 more than majority in the Assembly. Despite a number of losses, the largest single party in the Assembly, with 150 seats, remained the Gaullist *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR), led by the Mayor of Paris, Mr. Jacques Chirac. The Socialists and Communists, led, respectively, by Messrs. Mitterand and Marchais, both increased their representation but not enough to gain the majority in the Assembly.

Outgoing Prime Minister Raymond Barre remained as the Head of Government and named a new Cabinet on April 5.

France

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats  
in the Senate

Number of registered electors. . . . . 41,280

Political Party	Number of Seats won in 1977 elections
Socialists. . . . .	22
<i>Centre des dimocrates sociaux.</i> . . . .	22
Communists. . . . .	18
<i>Rassemblement pour la Ripublique (RPR)</i> . . . .	15
Republican Party. . . . .	11
Left Radicals. . . . .	6
Radical Party. . . . .	3
<i>Centre national des indipendants et paysans.</i>	3
Democratic Socialist Movement of France . . . .	1
Various Left . . . . .	1
Various pro-Government . . . . .	11
	113

Political Group	Total Number of Seats	Total Number of Seats held prior to 1977 Elections
Socialists. . . . .	62	52
Centrist Union . . . . .	41	57
Union of Republicans and Independents . . . . .	52	66
Democratic Left . . . . .	40	40
<i>Rassemblement pour la Ripubli- que (RPR).</i> . . . . .	33	32
Communists. . . . .	23	20
Independent Republics of Social Action . . . . .	15	16
Unattached. . . . .	9	10
	295*	281**

• 12 seats added since last elections.

•\* Excluding two vacancies.

## 2. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the National Assembly

	First ballot	Second ballot*
Number of registered electors	35,204,152	30,956,076
Voters . . . . .	29,141,979 (82.78%)	26,206,710 (84.65%)
Blank or void ballot papers . . . . .	6,062,173	4,749,366
Valid votes . . . . .	28,560,243	25,475,802

\* Figures apply to 423 constituencies in which runoffs took place.

Political Group	Number of Seats won in		Total number of Seats
	First ballot	Second ballot	
<i>Rassemblement pour la République (RPR)</i> . . . . .	31	119	150 (—23)
<i>Union pour la démocratie française (UDF)</i> . . . . .			
— <i>Parti républicain (PR)</i> . . . . .	16	55	71 (+10)
— <i>Centre des démocrates sociaux (CDS)</i> . . . . .	6	29	35 (+7)
— <i>Majorité présidentielle</i> . . . . .	6	10	16 (—1)
— <i>Radicaux</i> . . . . .	3	4	7 (=)
— <i>Mouvement démocratique socialiste de France (MDSF)</i> . . . . .	—	1	1 (—5)
<i>Centre national des indépendants et paysans (CNIP)</i> . . . . .	1	8	9 (+1)
<i>Parti socialiste</i> . . . . .	1	103	104 (+9)
<i>Parti communiste</i> . . . . .	4	82	86 (+12)
<i>Radicaux de gauche</i> . . . . .	—	10	10 (—3)
Various opposition . . . . .	—	1	1 (—1)
<i>Parti socialiste démocrate (PSD)</i> . . . . .	—	1	1 (—3)
Others . . . . .	—	—	—(—3)
	68	423	491

## 3. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Professional Category

	Senate	National Assembly
Agricultural professions . . . . .	80	20
Commercial and industrial professions. . . . .	41	44
— Business executives . . . . .	38	4
— Tradesmen, merchants . . . . .	7	1
— Craftsmen . . . . .	1	1
Salaried employees . . . . .	77	75
— Engineers . . . . .	5	15
— Various professional staff . . . . .	11	33
— Salaried clerks . . . . .	1	10
— Manual workers . . . . .	7	17
Medical professions . . . . .	30	53
— Doctors, surgeons . . . . .	15	38
— Pharmacists . . . . .	9	8
— Dentists . . . . .	3	1
— Veterinarians . . . . .	3	6
Legal and liberal professions . . . . .	56	51
— Lawyers . . . . .	27	29
— Ministry officials . . . . .	4	—
— Other liberal professions . . . . .	15	5
— Journalists, artists . . . . .	10	17
Educators . . . . .	27	100
Civil servants and public officials (active or retired). . . . .	112	118
Without profession and others . . . . .	6	30
	295	491

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

	Somite	National Assembly
Men . . . . .	290	473
Women. . . . .	5	18
	295	491

5. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according  
to Age Group*

	Senate	National Assembly
23-29 years	—	4
30-39 i	—	74
40-49 I	52	113
50-59 »	103	196
60-69 »	100	90
70-79 »	39	13
Over 80 »	1	1
	<hr/> 295	<hr/> 491