

## FRANCE

**Dates of Elections:** 28 September 1980 (Senate)  
14 and 21 June 1981 (National Assembly)

### **Purpose of Elections**

#### *Senate*

Elections were held to renew one-third (98) of the Senate seats, of which 95 in metropolitan France, one in the overseas department of French Guiana, and 2 in the overseas territories of French Polynesia and the Wallis and Futuna Islands. Two other Senators, representing French citizens living abroad, had previously been designated on 24 June by the *Conseil superieur des Francois de l'etranger*.

#### *National Assembly*

Elections were held for all the members of the National Assembly following premature dissolution of this body on 22 May 1981. Previous general elections had been held in March 1978.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

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

#### *Senate*

The Senate comprises 305 members\*. They are indirectly elected for 9 years, one-third of the seats being renewed every 3 years.

Of this total, 286 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: 5 Senators, elected likewise, represent the five overseas territories; and 6 Senators, co-opted by the Senate on submission of candidatures by the *Conseil superieur des Francois de l'etranger*, represent French citizens living outside France\*\*.

#### *National Assembly*

The National Assembly has 491 members (474 for metropolitan France, 11 for overseas departments and 6 for overseas territories). All Deputies are directly elected for 5 years.

\*See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 12.

\*\* The number of seats is, theoretically, still 305 but the actual total is 304 since the seat of the former French territory of the Afars and the Issas remained unfilled after the territory became independent as Djibouti.

## **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 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.

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 for 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.

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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-in-line" candidates of the same party list fill any vacancy. When vacancies arise for any other reason—such as resignation—by-elections are resorted to within three months, except in the last year prior to the end of the legislature's term.

### General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

#### *Senate*

Participants in the Senate poll numbered 41,720 members of 41 departmental electoral colleges. Contested by 392 candidates, the elections resulted in the then opposition Socialist Party (PS) consolidating its position as the largest single group in the Senate; the *Rassemblement pour la Republique (RPR)* also made progress. The parties participating in the Government retained an overall Senate majority. A total of 51 incumbent Senators were returned.

On 2 October, Mr. Alain Poher (Centrist Union) was re-elected President of the Senate.

#### *National Assembly*

Elected President of the Republic on 10 May 1981, the leader of the Socialist Party (PS), Mr. Francois Mitterrand, formed a Government and then called for the dissolution of the National Assembly on 22 May 1981, general legislative elections being set for the following month. The moderately-leftist PS was in the minority in the outgoing legislature, ranking third behind the centre-right *Rassemblement pour la Republique (RPR)* and *Union pour la democratie francaise (UDF)*.

The considerable change that came about with the presidential elections had repercussions on the election campaign (which opened on 1 June), its conduct and results. The main issue was whether the new majority emerging from the legislative elections would be consistent with the majority in the presidential elections or whether, on the contrary, there would be opposition between the National Assembly and the President of the Republic. The question of the Communist Party's possible participation in the Government was also an important issue during the campaign.

Voter turnout was lower in the legislative elections than in the presidential ones. Rates of abstention were, respectively, 18.90% and 14.14% on 26 April and 10 May, and 29.6% and 25.5% on 14 and 21 June 1981.

The number of candidates in the first round of voting totalled 2,719, of whom 2,648 (including 353 women) were in metropolitan France and 71 in the overseas constituencies.

The 335 constituencies in which a second round proved necessary were contested by 684 candidates.

The results of the first round (which took place on 14 June) revealed a strong showing by candidates of the Socialist Party at the expense of candidates of all other parties, including those of the outgoing majority and of the Communist Party. In the second round (held on 21 June), the Socialist Party's overall success was considerable since the number of its elected

members exceeded the absolute majority of the National Assembly. With the addition of the other left-wing candidates elected, the new majority has 334 of the 491 seats.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Pierre Mauroy, was confirmed in his post on 22 June 1981. His Cabinet includes four Communist Party members, all the other Ministers being Socialist.

## Statistics

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

Number of registered electors. . . . .	41,720
Political Party	Number of Seats won in 1980 Elections
Socialist Party (PS). . . . .	30
<i>Rassemblement pour la Republique (RPR)</i> . . . . .	12
Republican Party (PR). . . . .	12
<i>Centre des democratres sociaux (CDS)</i> . . . . .	11
Radical Party. . . . .	8
<i>Union pour la democratic francaise (UDF)</i> . . . . .	6
<i>Centre national des independants et paysans</i> (CNIP). . . . .	6
Left Radicals. . . . .	5
Various "majority" parties. . . . .	5
Various opposition parties. . . . .	2
Communist Party. . . . .	1
	98

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

Political Group	Total Number of Seats
Socialist Party. . . . .	69
Centrist Union*. . . . .	67
Union of Republicans and Independents. . . . .	52
<i>Rassemblement pour la Republique</i> . . . . .	41
Democratic Left**. . . . .	39
Communist Party. . . . .	23
Unattached ( <i>non-inscrits</i> ) . . . . .	13
	304

\* Comprising the *Centre des democratres sociaux* (CDS), the *Union pour la democratic francaise* (UDF) and other centrist Senators.

\*\*Including 13 Left Radicals.

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

Political Group	Votes obtained in First Round	Number of Seats		Total Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections	
		First Round	Second Round				
Number of registered electors . . .		36,257,433			25,757,374		
Voters . . . . .		25,508,800 (70.35%)			19,177,706 (74.45%)		
Blank or void ballot papers . . . .		367,610			512,678		
Valid votes . . . . .		25,141,190			18,665,028		
Socialist Party (PS) (including affiliated members) . . . . .	9,432,362	37.52	47	222	269	107	104
Left Radicals (MRG)				13	14	10	10
Various Left . . . . .	789,372	3.14		6	7	1	2
Communist Party (PC)	4,065,540	16.17		37	44	86	86
<i>Rassemblement pour la Republique</i> (RPR) . . . . .	5,231,269	20.81	50	35	<b>85</b>	153	150
<i>Union pour la democratie francaise</i> (UDF). . . . .	4,827,437	19.20	43	18	61	116	130
Various Right . . . . .	795,210	3.16	7	4	11	18	9
					491	491	491

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

	Senate	National Assembly
Agricultural professions . . . . .	48	12
Commercial and industrial professions . . . . .	41	11
— Business executives . . . . .		
— Tradesmen . . . . .		
Salaried employees . . . . .	58	86
— Engineers . . . . .		16
— Various professional staff . . . . .		46
— Salaried clerks . . . . .		4
— Manual workers . . . . .		20
Medical Professions . . . . .	31	46
— Doctors, surgeons . . . . .		32
— Pharmacists . . . . .		2
— Dentists . . . . .		1
— Veterinarians . . . . .		6
— Other social professions . . . . .		5
Legal and liberal professions. . . . . I . . .	30	59
— Judges . . . . .		2
— Lawyers . . . . .		23
— Ministry officials . . . . .		1
— Other liberal professions . . . . .		19
— Journalists, artists . . . . .		14
Educators . . . . .	40	166
Civil servants and public officials (active or retired) . . . . .	30	92
Without profession and others . . . . .	6	19
	304	491

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

	Senate	National Assembly
Men . . . . .	297	465
Women . . . . .	7	26
	304	491

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

	Senate	National Assembly
27-30 years . . . . .		
31-35. . . . .		»
35/36-40. . . . .	8	72
41-45. . . . . \	44	85
46-50. . . . . /		64
51-55. . . . . \	114	64
56-60. . . . . ↓		77
61-65. . . . . \	100	45
66-70. . . . . /		29
Over 70 . . . . .	38	12
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