

ICELAND

Date of Elections: June 13, 1971

Reason for Elections

The citizens of Iceland were required to renew all the members of their Parliament who, elected in 1967, had completed their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Icelandic Parliament, known as the *Althing*, is a bicameral assembly of a special kind. The *Althing* is composed of 60 members elected for 4 years on an equal footing but, at the beginning of the legislature, these 60 members elect 20 from their numbers to form an upper House. The 40 remaining members (two-thirds of the Parliament under the terms of the Constitution) compose the lower House.

Nominations to the upper House are conducted in such a manner as to ensure that proportionally, the representation of the political forces is the same in the 2 Houses.

Electoral System

Citizens of both sexes, no less than 20 years of age, of sound mind and resident on the island for no less than 5 years before the election, have the right to vote.

Electoral rolls are drawn up by the municipal councils at the latest two months before the opening of the polls. Voting is not compulsory.

Every elector may be a candidate to the *Althing* with the exception of Supreme Court judges. Civil servants do not require governmental authority to stand for election. However, once elected, they must ensure that, throughout their term of office, their duties are carried out in a satisfactory manner and at no additional cost to the Administration.

Some private corporations, namely banks, have deemed the parliamentary mandate to be incompatible with the professional obligations of certain classes of personnel.

Generally speaking, there are no fixed rules concerning incompatibility; in each case, the new parliamentarian will tend to come to an agreement with his previous employer.

The 60 seats in the *Althing* are filled in two stages:

— 49 parliamentarians and an equal number of substitutes are elected in the 8 constituencies by party list system with proportional distribution of the seats (5 constituencies elect 5 representatives each, 2 elect 6 each and Reykjavik, the capital, elects 12).

— The remaining 11 seats are allotted by proportional distribution on a national basis among the parties who have obtained at least one constituency seat.

In the case of a vacancy during a legislature, the seat is filled by the first substitute appearing on the list from which its holder was elected.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Six major political parties and 514 candidates in all took part in the electoral campaign. On the one hand, there were the 2 parties composing the governing coalition for the past 12 years: the Social Democratic Party and the Independence Party, both headed by the retiring Prime Minister, Mr. Johann Hafstein.

The opposition was represented by the Progressive Party (center), by the People's Alliance and by the Union of Liberal and Left Voters (dissident communists) created in 1970 and headed by Mr. Hannibal Valdimarsson. Lastly, the Candidate Party proposed lists in only 2 constituencies.

Foreign policy did not play an important role in the electoral campaign which centered mainly on economic and financial problems. The main topic of the pre-electoral debate centered around the problems posed by inflation: rising prices and price-fixing, falling fish prices and production, territorial water limits reserved for fishing which all the parties hoped to extend to 50 miles in 1972.

The two governmental parties who only had a majority of 2 votes in the retiring *Althing*, were overtaken by the opposition parties' coalition which has a majority of 2 seats in the new legislature.

On 13th July 1971 a new coalition government was created under the presidency of Mr. Olafur Johannesson, Head of the Progressive Party.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the *Althing*

Number of registered voters . . . . .	.119,917
Voters . . . . .	.106,970 (88.7 %)
Blank or void ballot papers . . . . .	.1,575
Valid votes . . . . .	.105,395

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	$\frac{v}{o}$	Number of Seats in the <i>Althing</i>
Independence Party	98	38,170	36.22	22 (- 1)
Progressive Party .	98	26,645	25.28	17 (- 1)
People's Alliance . .	KS	18,055	17.13	10(=)
Social Democratic Party.	98	11,020	10.46	6 (- 3)
Union of Liberal and Left Voters	SS	9,395	8.91	5 (+5)
Candidate Party . . .	34	2,110	2	- (=)
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2. Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Professional Category

Commerce and industry.	13
Teaching profession.	9
Politicians.	9
Farmers.	8
Judges and jurists.	6
Writers and journalists.	5
Trade union leaders.	2
Workers.	2
Other.	6
	60

3. Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Sex

Men	57
Women.	3
	60

4. *Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Age group*

30-35.	. . . . .	4
35-40.	. . . . .	5
40-45.	. . . . .	8
45-50.	. . . . .	12
50-55.	. . . . .	6
55-60.	. . . . .	11
60-65.	. . . . .	11
65-70.	. . . . .	3
		60

5. *Average Age: 50 years*