

ICELAND

Date of Elections: 23 April 1983

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament following the premature dissolution of this body on 15 March 1983. General elections had previously been held in December 1979.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Parliament of Iceland, the *Althing*, is divided into two Houses: the *Efri deild*, or Upper House, and the *Nedri deild*, or Lower House. When, as often happens, both Houses work together, Parliament is known as the United *Althing*.

The Upper House consists of one-third of the members whom the *Althing* chooses from amongst the newly-elected representatives, the remaining two-thirds forming the Lower House. Each House and the United *Althing* elects its own Speaker.

The *Althing* comprises 60 members, all elected for a 4-year term.

Electoral System

All Icelandic subjects who are at least 20 years of age and have been domiciled in the country for no less than five years prior to the elections have the right to vote. Electors must furthermore be of unblemished character and financially responsible.

Electoral registers are drawn up by municipal councils at the latest two months before the election date. Voting is not compulsory.

Every citizen qualified to vote is eligible for the *Althing*, with the exception of judges who do not hold administrative office. Civil servants do not require governmental permission 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 Treasury.

Candidates for Parliament appear on party or non-party lists in all constituencies. Each list generally contains twice the number of members to be elected in the constituency.

Of the 60 popularly-elected members of the *Althing*, 25 are elected according to the d'Hondt method of proportional representation in five constituencies of five members each; 12 are elected in two constituencies of six members each; 12 are elected in the city of Reykjavik; and 11 supplementary members—deemed nationally elected—are chosen for equalization between those parties which have obtained at least one constituency seat, so that each of them is represented in Parliament as nearly as possible in proportion to the number of votes obtained in the general election.

Deputy members elected at the same time as fully-fledged members fill parliamentary seats which become vacant between general elections, in the order of their appearance on the list concerned.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

It will be recalled that formation of a Government following the December 1979 general elections involved lengthy negotiations, with three parties - the conservative Independence Party, the rural, centre Progressive Party and the left-wing People's Alliance - ultimately agreeing to rule jointly. In November 1982, this coalition - which no longer commanded a parliamentary majority since August - narrowly survived a vote of no confidence initiated by the Social Democratic Party. On 15 March 1983, the *Althing* was prematurely dissolved.

Economic issues (inflation, weak currency, problems in the fishing industry) predominated the 1983 election campaign. On polling day, the ruling coalition suffered a setback and no single party gained an overall *Althing* majority. The Independence Party, the main opposition group, reinforced its position as largest single party. The Women's Party, a new feminist organization which picked up three seats, was represented in Parliament for the first time.

After several attempts by the leading parties to form a new Government, Mr. Steingrímur Hermannson, leader of the Progressive Party, succeeded in concluding a coalition with the Independence Party; the composition of the Cabinet was announced on 26 **May**.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors	147,200 (approx.)
Voters	129,962 (88.3%)

Political Group	% of Votes obtained	Number of Seats
Independence Party		
(Conservatives)	38.7	23 (+2)
Progressive Party	19.0	14 (-3)
People's Alliance	17.3	10 (-1)
Social Democratic Party	11.7	6 (-4)
Social Democratic Alliance	7.3	4 (+4)
Women's Party.	5.5	3 (+3)
Others	0.5	< -1