

## IRELAND

**Dates of Elections:** 17 February 1987 (*Dail Eireann*)  
17 April 1987 (*Seanad Eireann*)

### Purpose of Elections

Elections were held to renew all the seats of the House of Representatives (*Dail Eireann*) following the premature dissolution of this body on 21 January 1987. Dail elections were previously held in November 1982.

#### *Seanad Eireann*

Under Article 18(8) of the Constitution, a general election for the Senate (*Seanad*) must take place not later than 90 days after a dissolution of the *Dail*. Following the *Dail* dissolution of January 1987, the *Seanad* general election took place on 17 April 1987.

### Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Ireland, the *Oireachtas*, is composed of a House of Representatives (*Dail Eireann*) and a Senate (*Seanad Eireann*).

The House of Representatives has 166 members elected for a maximum of 5 years.

The Senate is composed of 60 members, of whom:

- (a) 11 are nominated by the *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister);
- (b) 3 are elected by the National University of Ireland;
- (c) 3 are elected by the University of Dublin;
- (d) 43 are elected from five panels of candidates, consisting of persons having knowledge of and practical experience in, respectively, culture and education, agriculture, labour, industry and commerce, public administration and social services.

Not more than 11 and not less than 5 members of the Senate are elected from any one panel.

### Electoral System

Every citizen who is not disqualified by law and who has reached the age of 18 has the right to vote in elections to the *Dail* in the constituency in which he ordinarily resides.

Registers of electors are revised annually at the county or county borough level. Voting is not compulsory. Members of the armed and police forces are authorized to vote by post.

As regards elections for the Senate, the following persons may vote:

- (a) For the 3 representatives of the National University of Ireland, every citizen over 18 years of age who has received a degree from the University;

- (b) For the 3 representatives of the University of Dublin, every citizen over 18 years of age who has received either a degree or a foundation scholarship from the University or, if a woman, has obtained a non-foundation scholarship;
- (c) For the 43 other Senators, members of the new *Dail*, the outgoing Senate and every council of a county or county borough.

Electoral rolls for Senate elections are revised before each election.

Citizens who fulfil the conditions required of electors to the *Dail* are entitled to stand for election to this House, with the exception of the insane, undischarged bankrupts, persons undergoing imprisonment with hard labour for at least six months or penal servitude for any term imposed by a court of competent jurisdiction, and persons convicted of corrupt electoral practices. Members of the armed and police forces, civil servants (unless excepted), the President of the Republic, the Comptroller and Auditor General and all judges are excluded from membership while holding these posts.

For election to the *Dail*, a person may nominate himself or may, with his consent, be nominated by another person (who is registered as a *Dail* elector in the same constituency), as proposer. Nominations must be made within nine days after the issue of the writ for election and be accompanied by a deposit of £100, which is reimbursed if the candidate is elected or gains at least one-third of the electoral quota.

Candidates for the Senate must be eligible to become members of the *Dail* and, in addition:

- (a) Be nominated by 10 registered electors of the University concerned, if they are standing for a University seat;
- (b) Be nominated by either 4 members of Parliament or a registered nominating body, if they are standing as panel members.

Members of the *Dail* are elected in a ratio of 3, 4 or 5 to each of the 41 electoral constituencies, by proportional representation under the single transferable vote system.

According to this system, each voter receives a ballot paper containing the names of all the candidates in his constituency. He votes for one of these by writing the figure 1 opposite the name of his choice; he is then at liberty to indicate an order of preference for the other candidates by adding the figures 2, 3, 4, etc., against their names.

At the opening of the count, the ballot papers are sorted according to the first preferences recorded. The total number of valid papers is then computed, and from that figure the electoral quota is calculated through division by the number of seats to be filled, plus one. Candidates who obtain a number of first preferences equal to, or greater than this quota on the first count are immediately declared elected. If, however, no candidate has reached the quota, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes is eliminated and his votes are transferred to the candidate for whom a second preference is recorded. If a candidate receives more than the quota required for election, his remaining votes are transferred to the remaining candidates in accordance with the subsequent preferences expressed by the electors. When the number of remaining candidates neither elected nor eliminated equals the number of vacancies to be filled, those candidates are declared elected, although they may not have reached the quota.

Voting for the Senate, which is by secret postal ballot, is also conducted according to the single transferable vote system.

Vacancies which occur between general elections are filled through by-elections, except that the Prime Minister nominates a person to fill a vacant seat formerly held by a nominated Senator.

### General Considerations **and** Conduct of the Elections

On 20 January 1987, the four-year-old coalition Government of Prime Minister Garret Fitzgerald (*Fine Gael*) collapsed when the Labour Party members of the coalition refused to support his budget plans. New elections were then called some 10 months before the end of Parliament's term.

The Prime Minister had proposed to tackle the country's budget deficit through spending cuts, especially in health and social welfare programmes. The socialist Labour Party did not concur with *Fine Gaels* fiscal conservatism and free-market economic orientation. Mr. Charles Haughey, leader of the main opposition *Fianna Fail* party, vowed to reduce taxation, create more jobs (the unemployment rate stood at 19%, despite high emigration) and make the economy grow. A call for new leadership was made by Mr. Desmond O'Malley, head of the recently-formed Progressive Democrats (PD) party. The campaign lasted four weeks.

On a polling day marked by high voter turnout, *Fianna Fail* retained its position as largest *Dail* party with 81 seats but fell short of an absolute majority while liberal *Fine Gael* incurred heavy losses. On this basis, Mr. Haughey, who had alternated with Mr. Fitzgerald as Prime Minister since 1979, was on 10 March once again elected to this post, this time by a one-vote margin. He then announced the composition of his minority Government.

## Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats  
in the Dail Eireann*

Number of registered electors. . . . .	2,500,000	(approx.)
Voters. . . . .	76.2%	(approx.)
Valid votes. . . . .	1,777,242	

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Number of Members	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
<i>Fianna Fail.</i> . . . . .	784,606	44.15	81	70	<b>75</b>
<i>Fine Gael.</i> . . . . .	481,137	27.07	51	68	<b>70</b>
Progressive Democrats . . . . .	210,587	11.85	14	5	*
Labour Party. . . . .	114,553	6.45	12	14	<u>16</u>
Workers' Party. . . . .	67,263	3.78	4	2	2
Others. . . . .	119,096	6.70	4	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>
			166	165*	166

\* There was one vacancy at the time of dissolution.

\*\* Formed in 1985.

2. *Distribution of Seats in the Seanad Eireann  
following the April 1987 Renewal*

Political Group	Number of Seats
<i>Fianna Fail.</i>	<b>30</b>
<i>Fine Gael</i>	<b>16</b>
Labour Party	<b>3</b>
Independents	<u><b>11</b></u>
	<b>60</b>

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

	<i>Dail</i>	<i>Seanad</i>
Men	152	55
Women	14	5
	166	60