

ITALY

Dates of Elections: 3 and 4 June 1979

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament following premature dissolution of this body on 2 April 1979. Previous general elections had taken place in June 1976.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Italy consists of a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate.

The Chamber of Deputies comprises 630 members elected for 5 years.

The Senate is composed of 315 members elected for 5 years, 5 members appointed by the President of the Republic chosen from among persons who have brought honour to the nation in the fields of literature, art, science and social science, and, as *ex-officio* members, former Presidents of the Republic (presently 2). Persons belonging to the last two categories are members of the Senate for life.

Electoral System

All citizens at least 18 years of age and residing in Italy can vote for Deputies if they have not been convicted of crime or found morally unworthy under a legal provision; the minimum age of electors for the Senate is 25.

Electoral registers are compiled at the constituency level and revised annually between December and March. Voting is considered a civic duty; failure to vote without a justifiable reason is noted for five years in the public record.

Qualified electors at least 25 years old are eligible to be candidates for the Chamber of Deputies; the minimum age for the Senate is 40 years. Membership of Parliament is incompatible with a number of public posts (including judge of the Constitutional Court and the *Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura* and member of the National Council of Economy and Labour), as well as with the post of executive of a State enterprise or State-assisted company.

Candidates for the Chamber of Deputies appear on lists of political parties, which must be supported by 350 to 700 electors, depending on the size of the constituency. Senate candidates are nominated as individuals but group with other candidates of the same region for purposes of distribution of seats.

Deputies are elected in 31 constituencies by a party-list system of proportional representation. In accordance with the Constitution, division of seats among the constituencies is based on population. Within each constituency, seats are distributed among the parties on the basis of an electoral quota determined by dividing the total number of votes by the number of seats to be filled, plus two. (Remaining seats are distributed on the national

level according to the method of the greatest remainder, taking into account only those party-lists which have won at least one seat and 300,000 valid votes cast.) Within each list, candidates are elected on the basis of preferential votes; each elector can express three preferences in a constituency with less than 16 seats, four in a constituency with 16 or more seats.

The Senate is elected on a regional basis. Each of the country's 20 regions is allotted a number of Senators proportionate to its population, and is divided into as many single-member districts as there are seats. Each elector votes for a single candidate of a party in his district. A 65% majority of votes cast is required for a candidate to win the district seat. If this qualified majority is not attained, the seats concerned are distributed on the regional level according to the d'Hondt method of proportional representation.

The Aosta Valley, which elects a single Deputy and Senator by simple majority vote, is the one constituency having an electoral system differing from the ones described above.

If a seat becomes vacant in the Chamber of Deputies between general elections, it is filled by the individual who is "next-in-line" on the list of the party which formerly held the seat. Senate vacancies are filled by the "next-in-line" regional candidates of the party which formerly held the seat.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In January 1979, the Communist Party (PCI), led by Mr. Enrico Berlinguer, withdrew its support from the minority Christian Democratic Government of Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, which subsequently resigned. No political leader was thereafter able to successfully form a new Government, and President of the Republic Alessandro Pertini dissolved Parliament on 2 April 1979. Elections were then called two years ahead of schedule.

The electoral campaign which opened on 29 April was dominated by domestic issues. On polling day, the Communist Party lost ground on the national level for the first time since the end of World War II. The Christian Democratic Party failed to profit from this situation, although it easily retained its position as the country's leading party. The main gainers turned out to be the smaller centre groups and the civil-rights conscious Radical Party. The Socialist Party, the country's third largest, improved its standing in both Chambers.

This election outcome did not facilitate the formation of a new Government. Mr. Francesco Cossiga (Christian Democrat) became Prime Minister and announced his Council of Ministers on 4 August. A week later, this Government (which includes, besides the Christian Democrats, some Social Democrats and Liberals) received a vote of confidence from the Parliament.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the Chamber of Deputies

Number of registered electors.	42,000,000 (approx.)
Voters	37,758,000(89.9%)
	(approx.)
Valid votes.	36,566,585

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Political Group	obtained	%	of Sea(s)
Christian Democratic Party (EXT).	14,007,594	38.3	262 (-1)
Communist Party (PCI).	11,107,883	30.4	201 (-26)
Socialist Party (PSI).	3,586,256	9.8	62 (+5)
Italian Social Movement - National Right (MSI-DN)	2,152,591	5.9	30 (-5)
Democratic Socialist Party (PSDI).	1,403,873	3.8	20(+5)
Radical Party (PR).	1,259,362	3.4	18 (+14)
Republican Party (PRI).	1,106,766	3.0	16(+2)
Liberal Party (PLI).	708,022	1.9	9(+4)
Proletarian Unity Party (PDUP).	501,431	1.4	6(=)
New United Left	293,443	0.8	- (=)
South Tyrol People's Party (SVP).	206,264	0.6	4(+1)
Others.	233,100	0.7	2(+1)
			630

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

Number of registered electors.	36,000,000 (approx.)
Voters.	32,544,000(90.4%) (approx.)
Valid votes.	31,093,677

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats
Christian Democratic Party (DC).	12,001,969	38.6	138 (+ 3)
Communist Party (PCI).	9,851,437	31.7	109(-7)
Socialist Party (PSI).	3,251,678	10.4	32 (+ 3)
Italian Social Movement - National Right (MSI-DN)	1,781,341	5.7	13 (-2)
Democratic Socialist Party (PSDI).	1,320,351	4.2	9 (+ 3)
Republican Party (PRI).	1,051,699	3.4	6(=)
Radical Party (PR).	779,299	2.5	2 (+ 2)
Liberal Party (PLI).	691,514	2.2	2(=)
South Tyrol People's Party (SVP).	172,522	0.5	3(=)
Others.	191,867	0.6	1 (-2)
			315*

* There are moreover seven Senators for life.