

GHANA

Date of Elections: 18 June 1979

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament foreseen under the 1979 Constitution*.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Ghana consists of 140 members elected for 5 years.

Electoral System

All Ghanaian citizens who are at least 21 years of age are entitled to vote, unless they are insane or have been convicted of an electoral offence.

Electoral registers are compiled on the constituency level, revised annually and replaced by new registers at intervals of not more than 10 years. Voting is not compulsory.

Every qualified elector who is able to speak and, unless incapacitated by blindness or other physical causes, to read the English language with a degree of proficiency sufficient to enable him to take an active part in the proceedings of Parliament, is qualified to be a member of Parliament. He must moreover be a native of, resident in, or registered voter from the constituency where standing as candidate, or have previously resided there for an aggregate of at least five years.

Disqualified from membership of Parliament are persons owing allegiance to a foreign State, undischarged bankrupts, those convicted of certain offences, those under sentence of death or imprisonment, persons whose property has been confiscated as the result of the findings of a commission of inquiry, and persons found incompetent to hold public office or guilty of improper acts while holding such office.

The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with the holding of an election-connected office, being a party to or partner in a firm which is a Government contractor, and membership of the armed and police forces and certain other public services.

Each candidate's nomination must be supported by 12 qualified electors of the same constituency and be accompanied by a deposit of 2,500 *cedis* (approximately US\$ 900), which is forfeited unless the candidate obtains at least one-eighth of the total number of votes polled by all the candidates of the constituency.

Parliamentarians are elected by simple majority in 140 single-member constituencies. The country's nine regions return anywhere from 10 to 22 members.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, pp. 14-15.

By-elections are held to fill parliamentary vacancies which occur between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

It will be recalled that the 140-member National Assembly elected in August 1969 was dissolved in January 1972*, following the army coup d'Etat. A National Redemption Council and, later, a Supreme Military Council governed the country, assuming all legislative and administrative functions. In 1977, following student and labour unrest particularly over the economic situation, the Government announced a programme for return to civilian rule by July 1979, including a new Constitution and general elections.

The parliamentary elections were held simultaneously with those for President of the Republic. Primary contenders in both polls were the moderately liberal Popular Front (PFP) and United National Convention parties, and the left-wing People's National Party (PNP), the last of which had been formed by followers of late President Kwame Nkrumah. Each group proposed measures to restore the country's economy.

Two weeks before election day—whose date had been announced on 6 March 1979—a coup d'Etat led by Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings toppled the regime headed by General Frederick Akuffo. An Armed Forces Revolutionary Council was then formed, but the election date was maintained as scheduled.

Official results announced on 25 June gave the overall parliamentary majority to the People's National Party, with 71 seats. Mr. Hilla Limann (PNP) won the presidential race after a runoff contest against Mr. Victor Owusu of PFP. The transition from military to civilian rule was due to take place on 24 September 1979.

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections VI* (1971-1972), p. 6.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	5,022,092
Valid votes.	1,770,379

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	< °	Number of Seats
People's National Party. . . . .	.140	645,080	36.44	71
Popular Front Party. . . . .	.139	541,659	30.60	42
United National Convention. . . . .	.140	310,062	17.51	13
Action Congress Party. . . . .	.131	156,484	8.84	10
Social Democratic Front. . . . .	.113	69,052	3.90	3
Third Force Party. . . . .	.125	31,887	1.80	1
Independents. . . . .	.11	16,165	0.91	1
				140

2. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Professional Category

Teachers and lecturers.	34
Workers.	34
Lawyers.	26
Professionals.	25
Farmers.	12
Civil servants.	9
	140

3. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Sex

Men.	136
Women.	4
	140

4. Average Age of Members of Parliament: 40 years