THE ESSENTIALS
WELCOME TO THE SENATE
You are in the Luxembourg Palace, the seat of the Senate. The Senate is one of the two chambers of the French Parliament.

This building, whose foundations were laid by Marie de Medicis in 1615, was first a royal residence, then a revolutionary prison. Following the French Revolution, it was briefly the seat of the executive branch and has been home to the Senate of the Republic since 1879.

We hope you will enjoy your visit.

Access the Senate website by scanning the QR code or by following this link: https://www.senat.fr/lng/en
# Summary

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The Luxembourg Palace

LUXEMBOURG GARDEN

LUXEMBOURG GARDEN

MAIN COURTYARD

MEETING COURTYARD

RUE DE VAUGIRARD
What is the role of the Senate?

Senators review bills that are submitted by the Government or by a member of Parliament.

Senators also scrutinize the action of the Government and ensure that enacted laws are implemented accordingly. Senators also can create temporary ad hoc information and consultation bodies (a fact-finding mission, a commission of inquiry…) to study a particular issue and to propose reforms.

The Senate is a guarantee of institutional stability: unlike the National Assembly, it cannot be dissolved. Additionally, the President, or Speaker, of the Senate takes over as Acting President of the Republic in the event of vacancy or incapacity.
348 senators sit in the Senate

Under Article 24 paragraph 6 of the Constitution, the Senate « shall ensure the representation of the territorial communities of the Republic ».
The Senate represents the authorities of mainland France and its overseas territories as well as French citizens living abroad.

The 348 Senators are elected through indirect and universal suffrage by 162,000 officials, among which municipal, departmental and regional delegates. A Senator is elected for a term of 6 years.

The number of Senators elected for each constituency is in proportion to the population: for example, 1 Senator for the département of Lozère, 5 for the département of Bas-Rhin and 12 for Paris.

Every three years, half the seats are submitted to election. Therefore, the seats are divided into two series. 170 seats in series 1 were renewed in elections of September 2023. The 178 seats in series 2 should be renewed in September 2026.

Voting method
Depending on the number of seats to be filled, Senators are elected by a two-round first-past-the-post system (constituencies designating 1 or 2 Senators) or by proportional representation lists (constituencies designating no fewer than 3 Senators or more).

24 The minimum age to run in Senatorial elections is 24

6 Senators are elected for a term of office of 6 years. Half of the Senate is renewed every 3 years.
Authorities, overseas départements and New Caledonia

Number of Senators per constituency

- **Serie 1**: 170 seats
- **Serie 2**: 178 seats

French citizens living abroad

Constituency map
Who are the Senators?

PROPORTION OF SENATORS BY:
SEX AND SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY
(AS OF OCTOBER 2, 2023)

Women 36 %
Men 64 %

59
Average age of Senators

29
Age of the youngest woman Senator

Employees 25,3 %

Civil servants (excl. teachers) 13,5%

Legal and liberal professions 20,4 %
Teachers 9.5%

Agricultural occupations 4.6%

Other sectors 5.5%

No occupation declared 9.8%

Trade and industry 6.6%

Medical professions 4.9%

Teachers 9.5%

Agricultural occupations 4.6%

Other sectors 5.5%

No occupation declared 9.8%

Trade and industry 6.6%

Medical professions 4.9%
What are their means of action?

Means of action

Each Senator has an office in the premises of the Luxembourg Palace or nearby. Almost 1,200 civil servants and contracted employees assist the Senators to carry out their office.

Senators may hire up to 5 staff, whose combined gross monthly salaries cannot exceed €8,827.40 (as of July 1st, 2023).

Whether elected in mainland France, overseas or representing French citizens living abroad, Senators using public transportation have their travel expenses covered for trips between Paris and their department. They indeed have a constituency office in their electoral district.

In order to properly perform their duties, Senators are provided with different means of action.

Cost of the Senate per year and per French citizen

5€
Financial holdback

Since October 1st, 2015, a financial deduction has been applied towards Senators who fall below the attendance time thresholds introduced by the Standing Orders of the Senate (article 23 bis).

Allowances

As of 1st January 2023, a Senator receives a gross monthly Parliamentary allowance of €5,907.34 and a residential allowance of €177.22*. He also receives a service allowance of €1,521.14.

The total amount of parliamentary allowances and other elective offices allowances cannot exceed once a half the amount of the basic parliamentary allowance.

Since January 1st, 2018**, the payment of senators’ expenses has been based on a dual system that distinguishes between direct expenses (transport costs, postage, Paris cabs, telephony) and expenses covered by advances paid to senators (€5,900 per month for the general advance). All expenses must be justified and reconciled with the amount of the advances paid. The balance is repaid to the Senate. This reconciliation and repayment takes place at the end of each year.

* Under the amended finance law for 1992, the basic parliamentary allowance and the residential allowance are subject to personal income tax.

** Under the Law n°2017-1339 of September 15th, 2017, Senators must justify their mandate fees.
He chairs two key bodies: **the Bureau of the Senate (the Board)** and **the Chairperson’s Conference**. He has important constitutional prerogatives. He is entitled to appoint members of the Constitutional Council and may refer to it if provisions of enacted laws or treaties appear to be contrary to the Constitution.

He can temporarily exercise the functions of President of the Republic in the event of vacancy or incapacity of office. Thus, the Presidency of the Senate is considered as the second highest office of the Republic.
Gérard Larcher, Senator for Yvelines, was re-elected President of the French Senate in October 2023.
Senators decide on the guidelines of the bill and then examine it in detail, article by article. They modify it by tabling amendments.* Ministers must answer the questions asked by Senators during specific sessions.

Breakdown of political groups in the chamber
(by number of seats - October 2023)

- The Republicans (133 seats)
- Socialist, Ecologist & Republican Group (64 seats)
- Centrist Union Group (56 seats)
- Gathering of Democrats, Progressives and Independents (22 seats)
- Communist, Republican, Citizen and Ecologist Group - Kanaky (18 seats)
- The Independents – Republic and Territories Group (18 seats)
- Ecologist – Solidarity & Territories (17 seats)
- Democratic, Social and European Rally Group (16 seats)
- Senators not appearing on the list of any group (4 seats)

* See glossary page 28
Averages over Parliamentary year 2022 - 2023

44 bills passed (not including international conventions)

93% of bills passed upon agreement through both chambers

22 189 amendments tabled

3 648 amendments adopted in committee and in session
A plenary sitting in the Chamber

The President of the session
The Speaker of the Senate, or one of the 8 Deputy Speakers, leads the debates.

The Government
Is represented by the Minister in charge for the matter.
The orator talks from the rostrum. He may also use the microphones in the rows.

The Senators are placed in the Chamber by political group.

The Committee
A Rapporteur, appointed among its members, is tasked with defending the Committee’s position to his or her colleagues.
Before the plenary sitting, bills are first considered by the relevant Committee on the subject.

Members of the Committee appoint a Rapporteur for the bill, who analyzes the draft and proposes amendments: for example, delete, add or modify an article.

The Committees regularly hold hearings of Ministers, public officials, ambassadors, foreign ministers, European Commissioners and representatives of civil society or of the private sector.

In addition, the European Affairs Committee is in charge of informing the members about EU issues and checking the activities of the European Union.
THE 8 COMMITTEES
(including 7 standing Committees)

- Economic Affairs
- Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Force
- Social Affairs
- Constitutional Laws, Legislation, Universal Suffrage, Standing Orders and General Administration
- Culture, Education and Communication
- Country Planning and Sustainable Development
- Finance
- European Affairs
Introducing legislation
bills (tabled by the Government
or by Parliament)

1st reading

Senate

National Assembly

If disagreement

2nd reading

Senate

National Assembly

Agreement

Accelerated procedure
A bill is considered several times by Members of Parliament before becoming law: find out about the legislative process.

In the event of disagreement following the Joint Committee, the Government can ask the National Assembly to vote on the bill (final reading after a new reading in each chamber).

Joint Committee
7 Senators
7 Députés (members of the National Assembly)

Senate

National Assembly

Promulgation of the law
The Senate examines the work of the Government through debates in plenary sessions and, permanently, through the work of Committees and delegations. The principal methods are questioning ministers, Committees of investigation, fact-finding missions, hearings and debates.

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Averages over Parliamentary year 2022 - 2023

- **141** information or inquiry reports
- **187** hours dedicated to oversight during sessions
Supervisory tools

Government question time
The Senate’s agenda includes, once a week (on Wednesday), questions to the Government related to current events. Each Senator speaking is allotted a speaking time set by the Presidents’ Conference, which includes any potential reply to the Government.

Oral questions
Regular oral question times take place in plenary sitting on Tuesday mornings, usually once a month.

Written questions
A Senator may address such questions to ministers whose answers must be made within two months.

Committees of inquiry and joint fact-finding missions
Specific subjects are scrutinized and considered in depth, providing reforms proposals.

Budgetary control
Members of the Finance Committee and the Social Affairs Committee can travel in order to carry out document-based, on-the-spot checks. This prerogative may be granted to other Senators by decision of the Senate.

Delegations and duty
6 delegations oversees the activity of a specific area: regional authorities; women’s rights; companies; overseas; prospective; intelligence. The bicameral Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Options (OPECST), provides expertise and information.

4,957 written questions tabled
34 Government Question Time sessions
The Senate through History

1795 / 1799
The Council of Ancients
of the Constitution of 1795

1799/1814
The Senate
of the Consulate
and the Empire

1814/1830
The Chamber
of Peers
of the Restauration

1830/1848
The Chamber of Peers
of the July Monarchy

1848
The Second Republic
is unicameral

1836/1841
Construction of the
current Chamber

1852/1870
The Senate
of the Second
Empire
The Senate of the Republic

1946/1958
The Council of the Republic

1959
The first elections of the Senate of the Fifth Republic

1969
The failure of a referendum intending to reform the Senate

Since 1958
The Senate of the Republic

2003
Senators’ term of office is reduced to six years

The Senate in Versailles

1875

1875/1940
The Senate of the Third Republic

1875
The Senate in Versailles

1879 - The Senate returns to Paris

Paris City Council sits at the Luxembourg Palace

1879

1859 - A fire in the Chamber

1859

1870
The Senate of the Second Empire

1940
The Senate is adjourned to Vichy

1948
The councillors of the Republic take back the title of «Senators»

1946
The failure of the referendum on the draft Constitution of 19 April 1946 proposing a unicameral regime

1944/1945
The Provisional Consultative Assembly

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Amendment
Modification of a bill.

Bicameralism
Organization of Parliament in two separate chambers.

Bureau of the Senate (Board)
It heads the Senate and includes the Speaker, the 8 Deputy Speakers who conduct the debates, the 3 Questeurs who manage the finances and the 14 Secretaries who ensure fairness in voting.

Chairpersons’ Conference
Composed of the Speaker, the Deputy Speakers, the chairpersons of the political groups, the Presidents of the committees and the 2 General Rapporteurs. This conference, attended by the Minister of Relations with Parliament, sets the agenda of plenary sessions.

Ethics Committee
Advisory body placed under the aegis of the Bureau of the Senate (executive committee) and the President of the Senate, the Ethics Committee is qualified to provide advice on ethical issues regarding the conditions governing the exercise of the parliamentary mandate of the Senators and the functioning of the Senate. The Ethics Committee may be sent the declarations of activities and interests as well as the interest arising from the acceptance of gifts, donations, services, advantages and other favours.

Formal Ballot
When voting on a bill, the Conference of Presidents may decide to organize a solemn public ballot in the Conference Room.

General Rapporteur
The General Rapporteurs of the Finance Committee and of the Social Affairs Committee have extensive powers to control the Government and public administrations.

Joint Committee (CMP)
Composed of 7 Senators and 7 Députés (Members of the National Assembly), its mission is to reach agreement of both assemblies on a bill.
Political groups
Senators are divided by political affinities into groups which must include at least 10 members. A Senator may be a member of a group, be related to it, or simply be attached to it administratively.

Parliamentary immunity
To protect their independence, Senators have parliamentary immunity allowing them to express themselves with complete freedom in the course of the performance of their official duties and shall not be subjected to arrest or any other privative or restrictive measures without the prior approval of the Bureau of the Senate.

Parliamentary shuttle
This is the process through which each government or parliamentary bill is examined successively by the National Assembly and the Senate in order to reach an agreement on each article (article 45-1 of the Constitution).

Questeurs
The 3 Questeurs are the Senators in charge of the administration and finances of the Senate.
Attend sessions in the Chamber

Senate debates, which are usually held from Tuesday to Thursday, are open to the public.

Anyone wishing to attend must obtain an invitation from a Senator (www.senat.fr/elus.html). With this invitation ticket and an identity card, they must then go to the Senate reception desk at 15, rue de Vaugirard in Paris. Access to the session is subject to availability.

Visit the Luxembourg Palace

At the request of Senators, group tours of the Luxembourg Palace may be organised for groups of up to forty people. Tours are conducted free of charge by staff from the Reception and Security Department.
You can also visit us during the European Heritage Days.