

Islamic Parliament of Iran; 8th Term

Preface

Like the 7th parliament, the 8th parliament remained principalist-dominated and reformists failed to win majority of seats. This time, MPs refrained from unhelpful political brawls. A review of pieces of legislation adopted by this parliament shows that the legislators paid attention to low-income classes.

Ambiance in 8th Election

Number of Registered Hopefuls: 4755

Number of Hopefuls in Tehran: 871

Number of Hopefuls in Other Cities: 3884

Date of Election: March 14, 2008

Number of Eligible Voters: 461,235,000

Number of Participant Voters: 223,502,540

Voter Turnout: 60%

Number of First-Round Electees: 209

Number of Second-Round Electees: 76

Date of Rundoff: August 25, 2008

Date of Mid-Term Election: June 12, 2009 (6 MPs Elected) (Khajeh Sarvi, 2013:135)

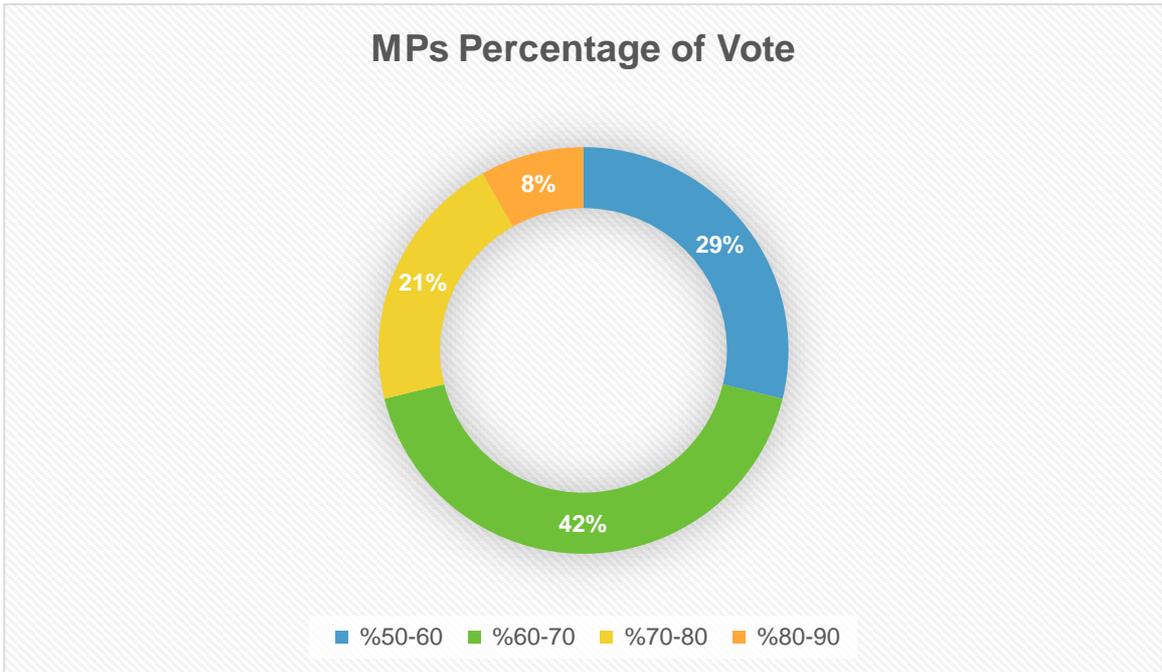
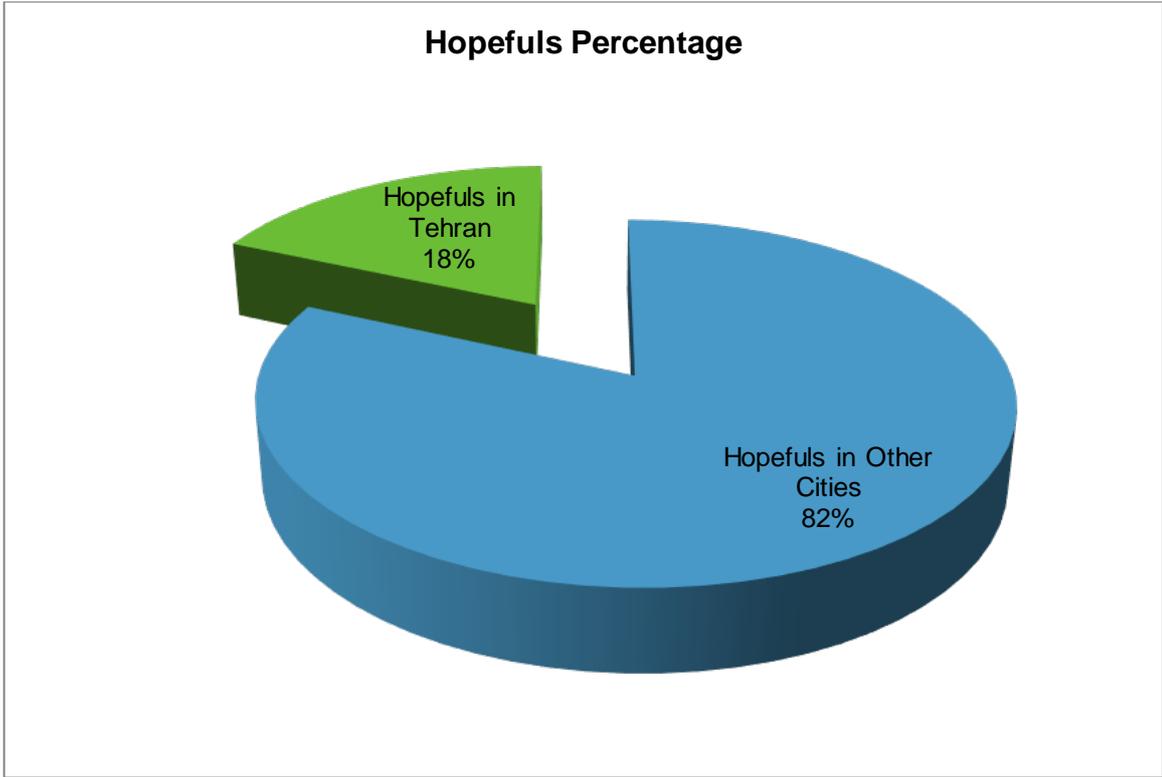
Representative of Armenian Christians in Northern Iran: Georg Vartan

Representative of Armenian Christians in southern Iran: Robert Beglarian

Representative of Assyrians: Yonathan Bet Kolia

Representative of Jews: Siamak Mereh Sedgh

Representative of Zoroastrians: Esfandiar Ekhtiyari Kasnaviyeh Yazd



Dominant Political Atmosphere

In the first round of election, 29 reformists (14%), 153 principalists (74.5%) including United Front of Principalists, and General Alliance of Principalists, and 23 independents (11.5%) were elected.

The eighth parliament comprised three factions as follows:

- Faction of Principalists (majority)
- Khordad 2 Front Faction (minority)

- Independent Faction (Movasaq, 2013:160)

Presiding Board

1. Speaker

- Ali Ardeshir Larijani

2. Vice Speakers

- Mohammad Reza Bahonar
- Mohammad Hassan Abutorabifard
- Shahabuddin Sadr

8th Islamic Parliament in a Glance

- Total MPs: 291
- First Session Held on: May 28, 2007
- Number of Women: 8¹
- Number of Sessions Held: 430
- Number of Impeached Ministers: 16²
- Deceased MPs: 1³ (Sharei, 2017:140)

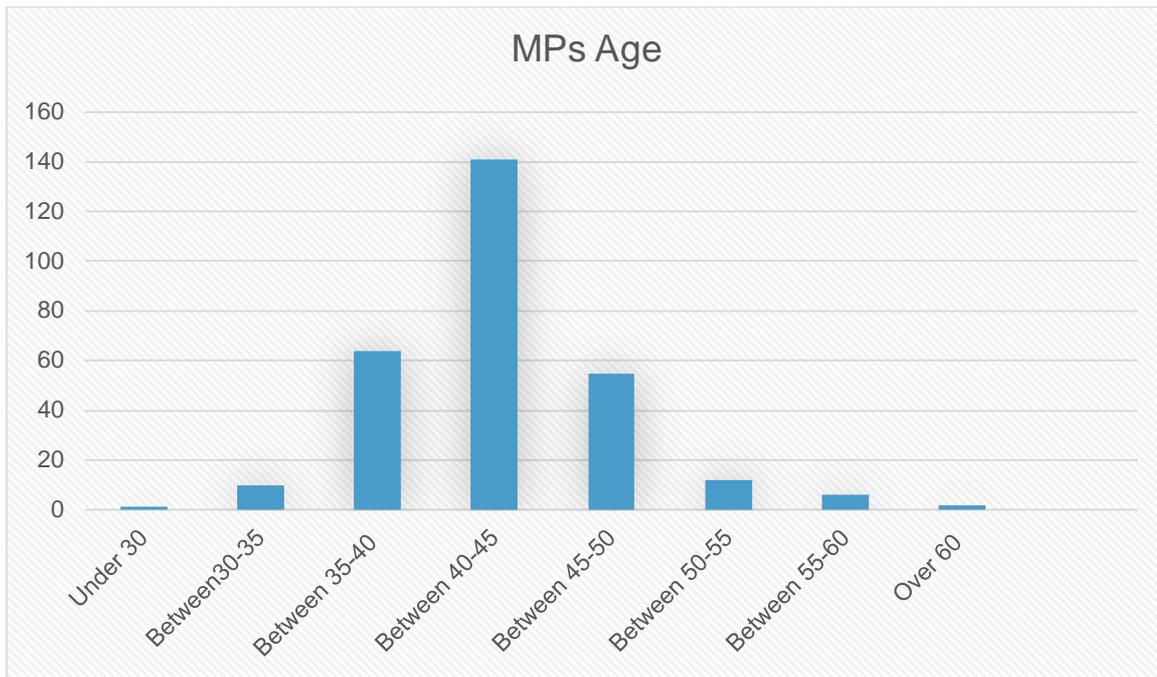
MPs Age

- Aged Under 30: 1 MP
- Aged 30-35: 10 MPs
- Aged 35-40: 64 MPs
- Aged 40-45: 141 MPs
- Aged 45-50: 55 MPs
- Aged 50-55: 12 MPs
- Aged 55-60: 6 MPs
- Aged Over 60: 2 MPs (Khajeh Sarvi, 2013:150)

¹ Fatemeh Alia, Laleh Eftekhari, Zohreh Elahian, Fatemeh Rahbar, Tayebeh Safaei, Fatemeh Ajorloo, Nayereh Akhavan, and Effat Shariati

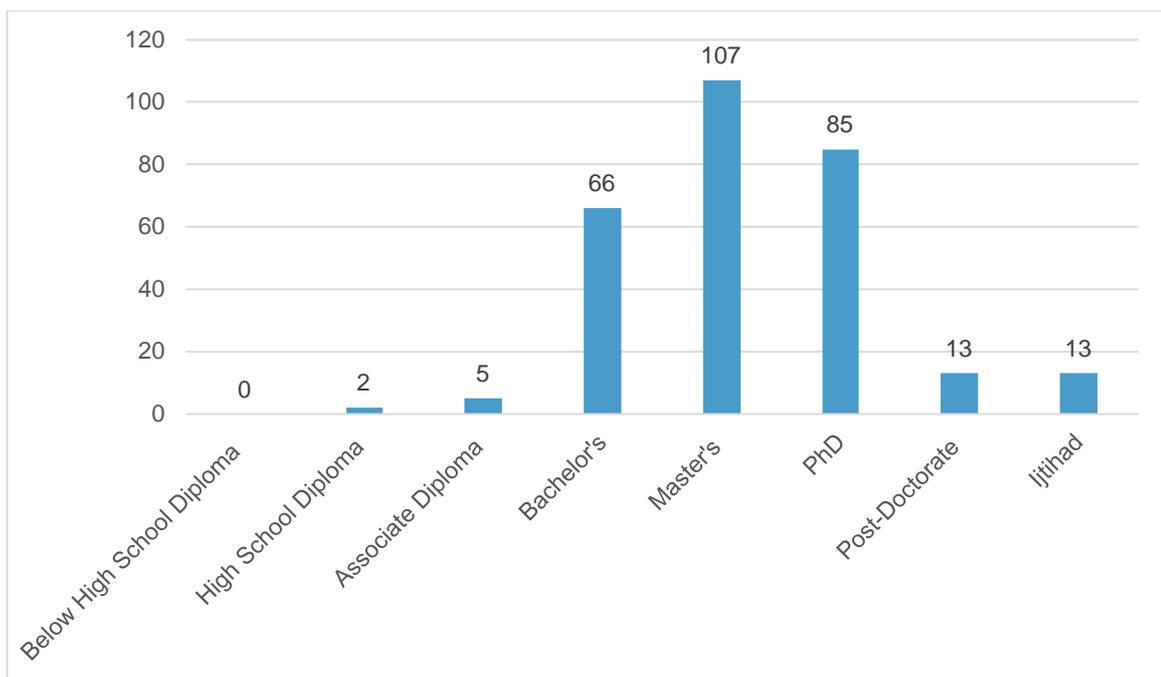
² Only four censure motions were put to vote and 12 censure motions did not reach the final stage. Two of the four censure motions led to impeachment of minister.

³ Mr Mohammad Hossein Heydarian



MPs Education

There was no MP with education below high school diploma, 2 were high school graduates, 5 held associate diploma, 66 bachelor's, 107 master's, 85 PhD, 13 post-doctorate, and 13 were High-Level Degree in Islamic Jurisprudence (Ijtihad), (Azimi Dowlatabadi, 2008:169). Some lawmakers held multiple university degrees.



Marking Events

*Anti-Poverty Legislation

The 8th parliament paid due attention to the elimination of poverty. The important pieces of legislation on fighting poverty were as follows:

1. The 5th Five-Year Economic Development Plan, which was a reference law, highlighted the needs of rural and underprivileged areas⁴.
2. Another law pertained to the implementation of Article 44 of the Constitution. Following policies instructed by the Supreme Leader, this law incorporated a special chapter on the distribution of justice share options to engage masses (particularly underprivileged and oppressed groups) in economic projects in the country.
3. Another piece of legislation for reducing poverty was the subsidy reform law⁵.
4. The law on supporting household jobs⁶ was also adopted in the eighth parliament. It was aimed at government support for household businesses and aiding the economy of underprivileged areas.
5. In the 8th parliament, several acts were adopted for the establishment of free zones and special economic zones, which helped reduce poverty in many areas of the country.
6. For the purpose of equality in education and dealing with the conditions of teachers in underprivileged areas, two acts were adopted in the 8th parliament⁷.
7. Zakat Law: The 8th parliament adopted Zakat Law to allocate bigger shares of zakat to the poor. (Mansour, 2012:197)

*Structural Reforms in Parliament

The rules of procedure of the Islamic Parliament of Iran was adopted on December 16, 2008, making some amendments to the rules adopted in 2000, to cause some changes in the management and structure of the legislative body⁸. (Khajeh Sarvi, 2013:149)

⁴ Article 194 of this law required the government to take action with regard to policymaking, planning, steering, supervision, coordination between executive bodies, upgrading revenue and quality of life of villagers and farmers and narrowing gap between rural and urban population with a view to improve the conditions of villages.

⁵ Article 7 of this law authorizes the government to spend up to 50% of revenue generated from the implementation of this law in the following sectors:

- a) Payment of subsidy, either cash or non-cash, to the head of household and in proportion with the family income
- b) Implementing social security regime for the society, including social and health security, social health and medication supply for special and intractable diseases, contributing to housing, retrofitting of housing, job creation, empowerment and implementation of social support schemes

⁶ Household job or business means activities handled by a member or members of family in a residential space without causing nuisance to neighbors while leading to generation of service or supply of products on the market.

⁷ The law on education equality for admission of students at different post-graduate levels and law on hourly paid teachers and literacy trainers at the Ministry of Education

***Multiple Laws on Women**

The 8th parliament was very active in family and women affairs. Since it took office in May 2008 to May 2011, the legislators voted 40 pieces of legislation, an unprecedented figure in history. The most important pieces of legislation on this issue were as follows: Law on increasing insurance coverage for rehabilitation, supporting the disabled and female breadwinners, law on unemployment insurance for women, law on making amendments to Civil Code in order to increase wife's share of inheritance, law on supporting women's household job, enshrined in Article 39 of the 5th Five-Year Economic Development Plan, empowerment of social security for widows and disabled enshrined in Article 230 of the 5th Development Plan, law on requiring the government to draw up and endorse 11 comprehensive plans for the developing of women and family affairs, law on payment of insurance in car accidents and equal blood money for men, women and religious minorities, reforming family planning law, law on security cooperation between Iran and Bosnia Herzegovina (preventing trafficking of human beings, particularly children, preventing criminal acts against women and children) (Mansour, 2012:177)

***IRIB Administration Law**

After the Constitution revision in 1989, regulations on the administration of state radio and television (IRIB) were no longer in force and in effect and state broadcaster was administered under no law. The 8th parliament sought to fill this void by adopting a law for the administration of IRIB. (Khajeh Sarvi, 2013:159)

***Quranic Activities**

Under the 8th parliament, budget allocation for Quranic activities grew 400-fold over four years. Furthermore, five percent of the country's annual budget was earmarked for the materialization of the objectives of Charter of Quranic Culture Development. In the 5th Five-Year Economic Development Plan, the government was required to draw up strategies to promote the culture of Quran. (Mansour, 2012:195)

Student Problems Resolved

MPs in the 8th parliament intervened in the case of students who had hit snags at higher education centers. In June 2010, when student tuition fees in private universities increased, students were infuriated. Lawmakers established a working group to hear views of students

⁸ Three offices of the deputy speaker were established in the management structure of the Islamic parliament. Executive and logistic affairs of the legislature were assigned to the Office of Deputy Speaker for Legislation. The Office of Deputy Speaker was established for the first time to empower the parliament's regulatory task. And the third one was the Office of Deputy Speaker for Executive Affairs dealing with executive, administrative, and logistic affairs of parliament.

and higher education centers. In the end, a reasonable and mutually satisfactory solution was offered. Furthermore, in September 2008, the results of the university entrance exam were not recognized by some candidates. The MPs summoned the then minister of higher education to find a solution. (Movasaq, 2013:179)

Islamic Studies Center in Qom

An important decision that was signed into law by the 8th parliament was the establishment of the Center for Islamic Studies in the holy city of Qom, chaired by the speaker of parliament. The center was established to benefit from the potentialities of seminary in Qom and views of grand ayatollahs and theologians for legislation based on Islamic principles. (Aqabakhshi, 2013:144)

***Occasional Statements**

On different occasions, the MPs issued statements, the most important of which were as follows:

- Statement by 180 MPs in support of Omid Satellite launch, February 10, 2009
- Statement by 239 MPs in support of Iranian nuclear scientists and domestic uranium enrichment, September 29, 2009
- Statement by 195 MPs in support of minister of science, research and technology for hiring model students as faculty members, October 5, 2010
- Statement by 155 MPs in support of quantitative and qualitative development of Payam-e Noor University, August 17, 2011
- Statement by 173 MPs in support of minister of science, research and technology for Islamization of universities and modifying syllabuses of humanities to comply with Islamic values, September 28, 2011 (Azimi Dowlatabadi, 2008:169)

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