

Introduction

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 envisages a federal parliamentary form of government with autonomy for the four provinces, Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Balochistan. Each province has its own elected legislative body, Provincial Assembly, which sit in the provincial capitals: Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta. Federalist systems with legislative power shared between the central and regional governments are generally more suitable for large, ethnically diverse countries, such as Pakistan, because local governments can be more responsive to the particular needs of citizens than a centralized government would.

Composition

The number of seats in each Provincial Assembly is based on the population of the respective province and enshrined in the Constitution¹. In addition to the general seats, there are reserved seats for women and non-Muslims.

Figure 1: Seat Allocation by Province and Seat Type

	Punjab Assembly (Lahore)	Sindh Assembly (Karachi)	KPK Assembly (Peshawar)	Balochistan Assembly (Quetta)
General Seats	297	130	99	51
Women	66	29	22	11
Non-Muslims	8	9	3	3
Total	371	168	124	65

Electoral System

The electoral system for Provincial Assemblies’ general seats is based on single-member constituencies in which members are elected by direct vote through a first-past-the-post or simple majority system. Seats reserved for women and non-Muslims are filled through a proportional representation party list system. As with elections to the National Assembly, reserved seats are distributed to political parties based on the total number of general seats won.

Mandate

According to the Constitution, the Provincial Assemblies are responsible for the following:

- Electing the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and the Chief Minister;
- Acting as the electoral college for election of the President of Pakistan and Senators of the respective province;
- Passing provincial legislation under the powers spelled out in the Constitution; and
- Legislating spending, including passing the annual and supplementary budgets of the provinces.

¹ Article 106, Constitution of Pakistan

The 18th Amendment to the Constitution granted more power and autonomy to the provinces. Provinces are now required to establish local government systems and transfer political, administrative and financial responsibility and authority to elected representatives. The 18th Amendment also increased administrative and financial autonomy of the provinces.

Provincial Assemblies' Leadership

During the first meeting of the Provincial Assemblies following a General Election, members elect a Speaker and Deputy Speaker from among their ranks. The Speaker, and in his/her absence the Deputy Speaker, presides over the sessions of the respective assembly. Both the Government and the Opposition also have leaders in the Provincial Assembly. The Leader of the House is the Chief Minister. The opposition parties elect the Leader of the Opposition.

Dissolution of Assemblies

Like the National Assembly, the term of Provincial Assemblies is five years from the date of their first meetings. Since the first sessions of each assembly generally start on different days, the terms of the Assemblies will not expire at the same time, nor will their expirations necessarily coincide with the expiration of the National Assembly. To facilitate simultaneous elections, the Provincial Assemblies may be dissolved early. Ahead of the 2013 General Elections, the Balochistan Assembly was dissolved on 18 March 2013, KPK and Sindh on 19 March, and Punjab on 20 March.

The Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister can dissolve the Provincial Assembly earlier. The Governors may also dissolve the Assemblies at their own discretion if a motion of no confidence is passed against the incumbent Chief Minister and no other member of the Assembly commands the confidence of majority of members.

By-Elections

When a seat in a Provincial Assembly becomes vacant due to death, resignation or disqualification of a member, the seat is filled through a by-election in the affected constituency within 60 days. However, if a seat becomes vacant within 120 days prior to the expiration of the term of that Assembly no by-election will be held. When a seat reserved for women or non-Muslims in the Provincial Assemblies falls vacant, it is filled by the next person in order of preference from the list of the candidates submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan for the most recent General Election by the party whose member vacated the seat. The by-elections held since General Elections 2008 for the Provincial Assemblies are listed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Number of By-Elections for Provincial Assembly Seats

Assembly Name	Number of by-elections since 2008
Punjab Assembly	41
Sindh Assembly	20
KPK Assembly	15
Balochistan Assembly	9
Total	85

Party Position

The party positions in the Provincial Assemblies before their early dissolutions in March 2013 are detailed in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Party Position in Provincial Assemblies

Political Party	Punjab Assembly	Sindh Assembly	KPK Assembly	Baluchistan Assembly
ANP - Awami National Party	-	2 (G)	47 (G)	3 (G)
BNP(A) - Balochistan National Party (Awami)	-	-	-	7 (G)
Independents	8 (G)	-	7 (O), 2 (G)	6 (G), 2 (O)
JUI - Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Ideological)	-	-	-	1 (G)
JUI(F) - Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman)	-	-	-	10 (G)
JUI(S) - Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Maulana Sami-ul Haq)	-	-	-	-
Like Minded Group	-	-	-	13 (G)
MMA - Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal	2 (G)	-	15 (O)	-
MQM - Muttahida Quami Movement	-	50 (G)	-	-
NP - National Party	-	-	-	1 (G)
NPP - National Peoples Party	-	3 (O)	-	-
PML(F) - Pakistan Muslim League Functional	-	8 (O)	-	-
PML(N) - Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz	171(G)	-	9 (O)	1 (G)
PML(Q) - Pakistan Muslim League	78 (O)	11 (O)	7 (O)	1 (O), 5 (G)
PML(Z) - Pakistan Muslim League (Zia)	1 (G)	-	-	-
PPP(S) - Pakistan People's Party (Sherpao)	-	-	6 (O)	-
PPPP - Pakistan Peoples' Party Parliamentary	94 (O)	91 (G)	30 (G)	15 (G)
Vacant Seats	17	3	1	-
Total	371	168	124	65

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