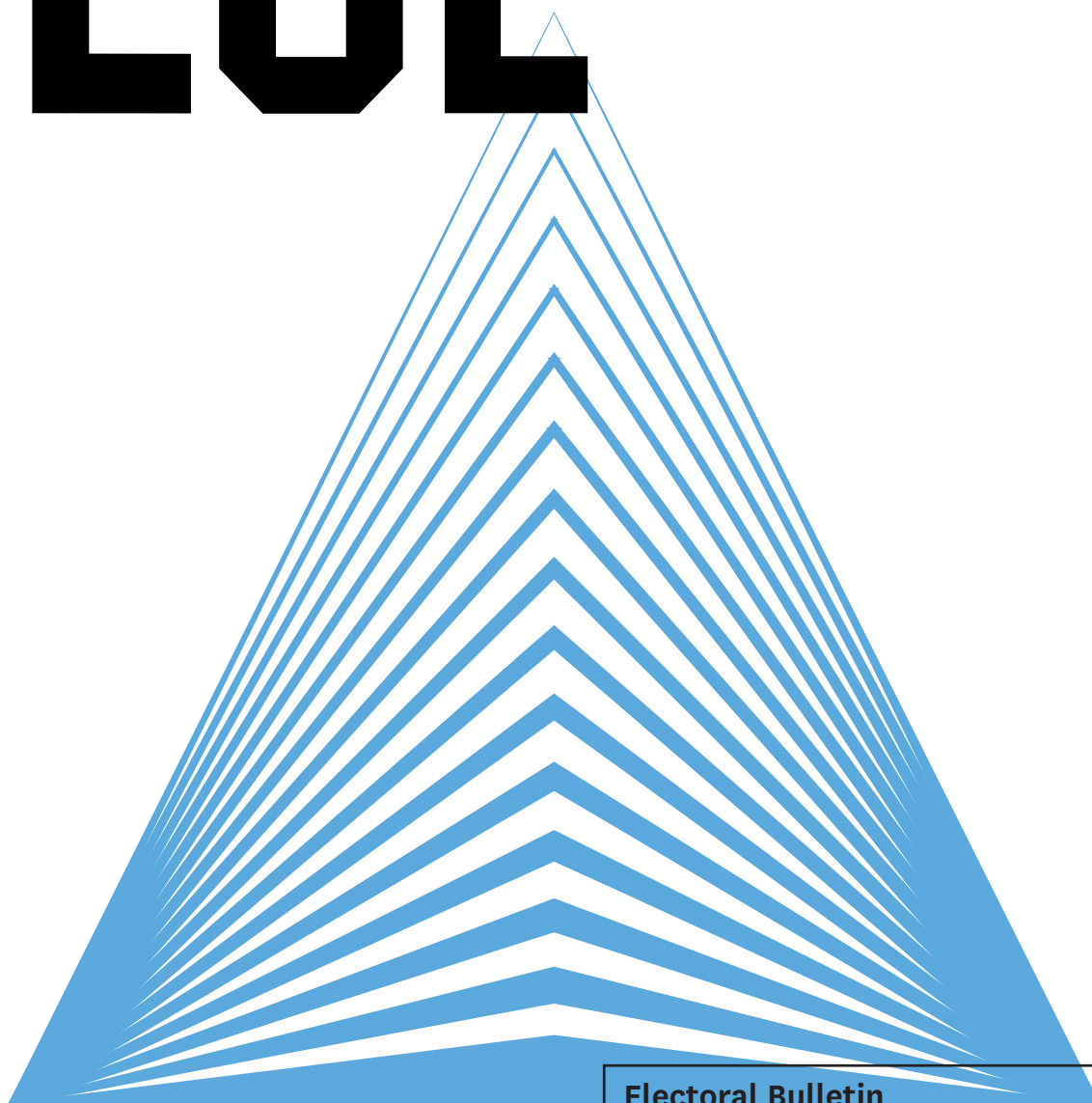


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March 2022

Elections in Europe :
June 2021 –
November 2021

BLUE



Electoral Bulletin
of the European Union

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How to report about elections in a Europe at war?

Until a few months ago, this question would have seemed to be of mostly historical relevance. Yet, as we write these lines, one European state is waging a war of aggression on another European state. Civilians are paying a high toll in a conflict they wished would never happen, a conflict which started when the legitimacy of Ukraine's democratically elected government was put into question by one of its neighbors, in manifest disregard of its right to self-determination.

The ongoing crisis reveals the deeply integrated character of the European and global political order at all levels of government. In the age of instant communication and information wars, Europe, and to some extent the world, is already a unified communicational space. Despite linguistic, cultural and ideological cleavages that were once claimed to be unbridgeable, local, regional and national political discussions are dominated by the almost tragic reality of Europe's common destiny.

While war, rather than the "pursuit of politics by other means," is the most brutal and unjust form of politics, voting and deliberation are its civilized forms. As we study European electoral dynamics, we are constantly reminded that the means of peaceful cohabitation exist; we learn how this cohabitation can be organized in practice, and where its stakes and fault lines lie; we learn about the instruments of peace and the evolution of present-day societies.

The war in Ukraine also reminds us that "democracy in one country" is, at best, illusory. State authoritarianism, especially its interventionist kind, poses a permanent threat to individual and collective autonomy. The lack of effective supranational checks and balances makes external aggression possible, while a state's control over its own population drastically restricts citizens' ability to shape their own destiny. As traditional international organizations seem disarmed, the spectacular emergence of the European Union, a legal and political community of states and citizens, as a global geopolitical player may be a sign of the times.

But let there be no mistake: despite deep interdependence between the different parts of the continent, including Russia, awareness of this interdependence is still largely underdeveloped. Mediating between levels of government and regions, fostering a shared public space, building bridges between populations and political cultures, defending democracy against authoritarianism is not only possible, but more than ever necessary in the face of international violence, democratic imbalances and their gravest consequence: war. The task is immense, but peace demands that it be addressed.

As war rages in Europe, this is how we, at BLUE, understand the need to report on electoral dynamics. In this issue, you will find an unprecedented coverage of the French regional elections of June 2021, a series of analyses concerning the German "super electoral year" 2021, as well as a dozen other analyses of the main national, regional and local ballots of the past six months. Together, these analyses make for better understanding of the political conflicts that affect the daily life of Europeans, and help us identify the means of their peaceful resolution.

3	Editorial François Hublet	62	Regional election in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, 20-27 June 2021 Christine Pina, Gilles Ivaldi
6	The Continental Review by BLUE's editorial team	68	Territorial election in Corsica, 20-27 June 2021 André Fazi
15	The state of European political forces on December 1, 2021	73	Regional election in Guadeloupe, 20-27 June 2021 Fred Reno
18	The Continental Map		
ELECTIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION			
21	Regional election in Saxony-Anhalt, 6 June 2021 Christian Stecker	77	Territorial election in French Guiana, 20-27 June 2021 Edenz Maurice
28	Regional election in Île-de-France, 20-27 June 2021 Antoine Jardin	82	Regional election in Réunion, 20-27 June 2021 Christine Rafidinarivo
33	Regional election in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, 20-27 June 2021 Dominique Andolfatto	87	French regional elections, 20-27 June 2021: short analyses par la rédaction de BLUE
40	Regional election in Hauts-de-France, 20-27 June 2021 Tristan Haute, Marie Neihouser	96	Parliamentary election in Bulgaria, 11 July 2021 Dragomir Stoyanov, Milen Lyubenov
46	Regional election in Pays-de-la-Loire, 20-27 June 2021 Christophe Batardy	102	Regional election in Calabria, 3 October 2021 Francesco Truglia
52	Regional election in Occitania, 20-27 June 2021 Julien Audemard	111	Regional election in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 26 September 2021 Erik Baltz, Sophie Suda, Maximilian Andorff-Woller
56	Regional election in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, 20-27 June 2021 Florent Gougou	117	Regional election in Berlin, 26 September 2021 François Hublet

124 **Parliamentary election in Germany, 26 September 2021**
Andrea Römmele

129 **Regional election in Upper Austria, 26 September 2021**
Harald Stöger

136 **Parliamentary election in the Czech Republic, 9 October 2021**
Tomáš Weiss

141 **Regional election in Denmark, 16 November 2021**
Ulrik Kjær

ELECTIONS IN CANDIDATE AND EFTA COUNTRIES

146 **Parliamentary election in Norway, 13 September 2021**
Stine Hesstvedt

152 **Parliamentary election in Iceland, 13 September 2021**
Eva Heiða Önnudóttir

ELECTIONS IN THE M15

158 **Italian municipal elections (Rome and Milan), October 2021**
Sofia Marini

163 SHORT ANALYSES

The Continental Review

A comparative analysis
of elections in Europe

01

The Continental Review

Introduction

The past electoral semester has been rich in new political developments both quantitatively, by the number of elections that have taken place, and qualitatively. In this issue, we will review these dynamics from a European perspective, whilst paying special attention to local and regional specificities.

Following this Continental Review prepared for you by BLUE's editors, you will find analyses of all individual elections of the past period, written by experts of the various local, regional and national arenas.

At the municipal level, two major Italian cities, Rome and Milan, have experienced a power shift towards Social Democracy. These two elections will be analysed by Sofia Marini, a researcher at the University of Vienna and a member of BLUE's editorial team.

Various regional elections were held during the past semester. In France, the left-right cleavage remains dominant at the regional level despite both the far-right and President Macron's attempts to overcome it. The June 2021 regional elections will be commented on and put into perspective in the most comprehensive series of analyses of French regional elections ever published, combining contributions by researchers from all over the country with short analyses by members of BLUE's editorial team.

In Germany, a number of regional elections have prepared the ground for the federal election held in September. In the Saxony-Anhalt Landtag election, the outgoing Minister-President was able to capitalize on local issues to confirm the position of Christian democracy in this East German state. Christian Stecker from the Technical University of Darmstadt will analyse this election.

The elections to the Landtag of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and the Chamber of Deputies in Berlin strengthened the position of the centre-left parties and the liberals as the result of both local and federal dynamics.

These results will be presented by Erik Baltz, Sophie Suda and Maximilian Andorff-Woller from the University of Greifswald on the one hand and François Hublet, BLUE's editor-in-chief, on the other.

In Upper Austria, in the wake of the Ibiza Gate scandal, the far right lost ground to a new protest party opposing measures against the Covid-19 pandemic, while the other parties consolidated their positions. Harald Stöger of the University of Linz will analyze the outcome of the vote.

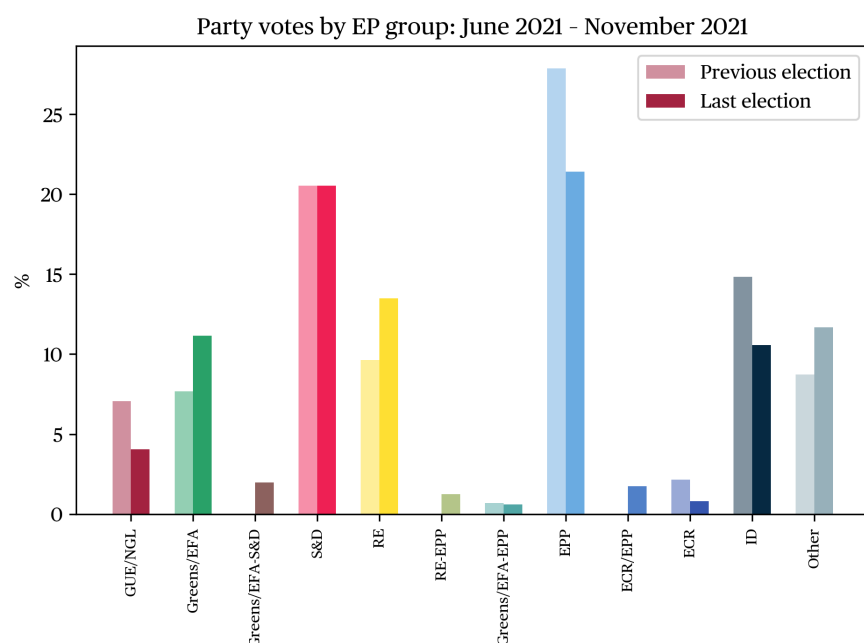
In Calabria, the governing center-right coalition was strengthened, while the centre-left coalition lost ground to an unexpected outsider, the mayor of Naples. Francesco Truglia, from the University of Rome, will analyse the consequences of this three-way competition.

This semester ended with the Danish regional elections. In Danish regions, the conservatives made very substantial gains at the expense of the Social Democrats, who govern at the national level. Ulrik Kjær, from the University of Southern Denmark, will discuss the results of this election.

At the national level, Bulgarians were called to vote for their parliament for the second and third time in a year, confirming the weakening of the dominant center-right party in favour of new citizen movements. You can learn more about the renewal of the country's political spectrum in a piece by Dragomir Stoyanov, from the University of Sussex, and in a short analysis by BLUE's editorial team.

In Germany, Angela Merkel's former vice-chancellor, Olaf Scholz, led his governing Social Democrats to victory in the September 2021 federal election, despite the party's low approval rates during the last four years. Scholz capitalized on the success of the Greens and Liberals to end a political era dominated by Christian democracy. The ballot will be presented by Andrea Römmele from the Hertie School of Governance.

The Czech Republic has entered a new political era after oligarch Babis lost his grip on national politics. Tomáš



The EPP's center-right and traditional right-wing parties lost an average 7 pp. This is due to strong gains in Saxony-Anhalt and Denmark (+7 and +8 pp), offset by strong losses in Bulgaria, Germany (Bundestag) and Milan, mixed success in the French regional elections, and a generally stable or declining position in other elections. In the Czech Republic, some of the EPP's votes went to the SPOLU alliance with the ECR (+2 pp at aggregate level).

The centrist RE group and related parties, which suffered the largest losses in the previous six months, is now clearly on the rise, with a positive balance of 4 pp. This is mainly due to its

entry into French regional council and the emergence of new political formations in Bulgaria².

The Greens/EFA recorded an average gain of 3 pp this semester, confirming their positive momentum. The evolution of Green and regionalist scores is almost unanimously positive (except in two French regions and one Danish region), although they do not always reach the expected scores, especially in Germany. In addition, there was a gain of about 2 pp for S&D-Green alliances in the French regional elections.

The Social Democrats in the S&D group are stable (0 pp). Major victories in Rome (+24 pp) and Milan (+11 pp) and good results in the German federal elections (+5 pp) as well as in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (+9 pp) are counterbalanced by a stable or declining trend in all other territories surveyed.

The radical left-wing GUE/NGL group continues its decline, with -3 pp on average. The only significant gains (+3 pp) were recorded in the Danish regional elections.

Non-inscrit parties gained 3 pp this semester, with significant losses in Bulgaria (-8 pp), Milan (-10 pp) and Rome (-39.1 pp), offset by gains in Calabria, Iceland, Berlin and Upper Austria.

Parties entering and exiting regional and national parliaments

The regional and national elections of the second half of 2021 were characterized by the eviction of some parties and the emergence of new ones. During the French regional elections, no major political upheaval took place, except for the unprecedented low turnout (around 34%). La République en Marche (LREM, RE) and its allies entered the regional councils of Burgundy Franche-Comté, Brittany, Centre-Val de Loire, Île-de-France, Normandy

Weiss from Charles University in Prague will discuss the political recomposition in the country.

Finally, two important partners of the European Union and EFTA countries, Norway and Iceland, have held general elections, the outcome of which will be presented by Stine Hesstvedt from the Oslo Institute for Social Research and Eva Heiða Önnudóttir from the University of Iceland.

But first, in order to better understand the continental implications of these analyses, we have prepared a short summary of last semester's developments

Evolution of the results of European groups

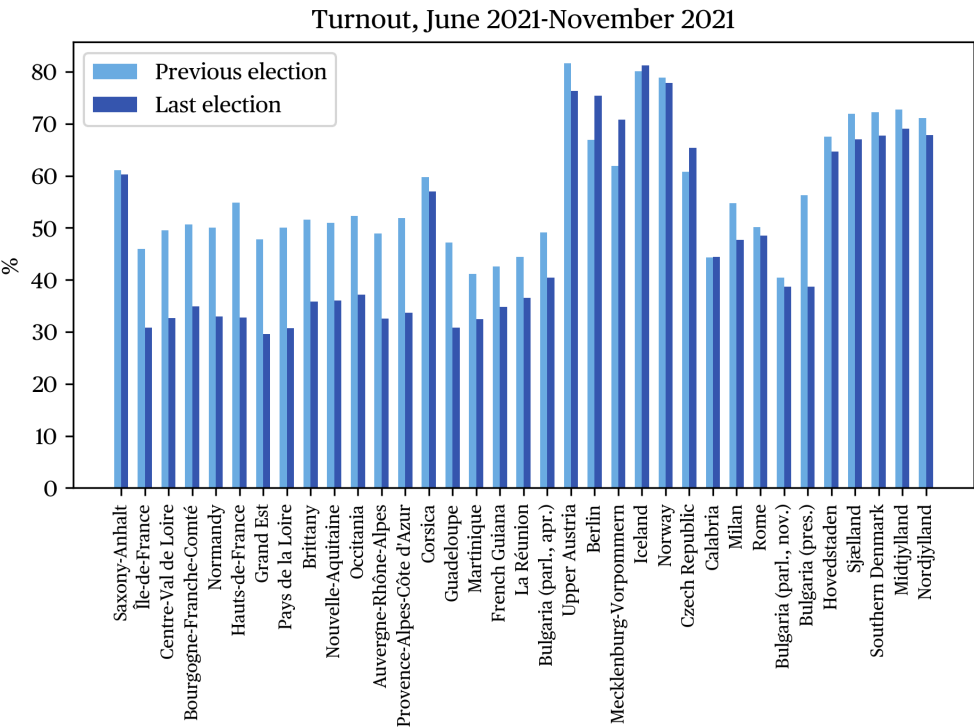
This biannual review of European elections provides an ideal opportunity to study the overall electoral performance of European party families. Following the methodology established in the previous issue of BLUE, political parties are grouped according to their membership in a political group in the European parliament, or, if they do not formally belong to any group, according to the political group to which they appear to be closest¹.

The parties of the far-right ID group were the biggest losers of this electoral semester, with an average decline of 4 percentage points [pp]. Only in Rome did ID see its vote share increase significantly (+4 pp), while everywhere else the group suffered losses which even approached 15 pp in several French regional elections.

The conservative and Eurosceptic ECR group is stable at -1 pp on average, while EPP/ECR alliances are gaining 2 pp. The ECR made significant gains in the Italian municipal elections and were involved in the victory of the SPOLU coalition in the Czech Republic, an alliance of EPP and ECR parties. Elsewhere, ECR's positions are stable or slightly declining.

1. This section relies on aggregated and turnout-weighted data for parliamentary elections in the European Union and EFTA States. For elections with several rounds, only the first round is considered.

2. In view of its political positioning, we see the new party We Continue the Change (PP) as close to the RE group.



and Pays de la Loire. However, beyond obtaining regional parliamentary representation, President Macron's party had only limited electoral success, failing to win a single regional presidency. In addition, the party lost its representation in the Corsican Assembly, as its former candidate, Jean-Charles Orsucci, who had not even sought the nomination of LREM in this election, did not reach the qualification threshold for the second round.

After having to withdraw their list between the two rounds of voting in 2015 to prevent the victory of the Front National (ID), the Hauts-de-France left managed to get back into the regional council, forming a coalition led by the Ecologists and involving the Socialist Party (PS, S&D), Unbowed France (GUE/NGL) and Génération.s (S&D).

In Occitania, Unbowed France lost its representation in the regional council by failing to qualify for the second round, with only 5% of the vote in the first round.

Finally, in Corsica, the region where the turnout was the highest (at 58%), a new pro-independence party has entered parliament, while LREM lost its parliamentary representation. In the same time, the historical pro-independence party of Corsican nationalists, Corsica Libera, led by the incumbent president of the Corsican assembly, has nearly disappeared. The party was eliminated after the first round of voting, and the merger of part of his list with the rival pro-autonomy party of the outgoing president of the regional government, Gilles Simeoni, obtained only one seat, compared with 14 in the previous term. The pro-independence party Core in Fronte, which adopts a more radical stance vis-à-vis the French state, won six seats.

In Germany, the federal elections of September 26, 2021, saw the Danish minority party of Schleswig-Hols-

tein win one seat in the Bundestag. On the same day, the Landtag of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern elected its regional parliament, allowing both the Greens (Greens/EFA) and the liberal FDP (RE) to gain representation with 5 seats each, mostly at the expense of the CDU (EPP) and the far-right AfD (ID), which both lost 4 seats. In June 2021, the Landtag elections in Saxony-Anhalt also saw the liberal FDP enter the regional parliament with 7 seats.

In Austria, the regional parliament in Upper Austria was also up for re-election on September 26. The anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown party Movement for Fundamental Rights (MFG, NI) won 3 seats in the regional parliament. The classical liberal NEOS (RE) also entered parliament with 2 seats.

The Czech Republic's parliamentary elections in October 2021 saw the Social Democratic Party (S&D) and the Communist Party (GUE/NGL) leave the national parliament. Both parties lost the 15 seats they won in the last elections in 2017.

In Calabria, the early regional elections in October 2021 allowed the 5-Star Movement (M5S, NI) to win two seats, allowing it to obtain parliamentary representation. The "Democracy and Autonomy" coalition led by Luigi de Magistris, an alternative center-left candidate, also won 2 seats, giving it a seat in the regional parliament.

In Denmark, the November 2021 regional elections in the country's five regions were characterized by the loss of representation at the regional level by the center-left Alternative party (Å, GUE/NGL) and the entry of the far-right Eurosceptic New Right party (D, NI).

Bulgaria's third early elections in November 2021 saw the Europhile, anti-corruption party "We Continue the Change" (PP, NI) enter parliament with 67 seats, at the expense of the "Stand Up BG" (NI) party, which lost its

13 seats and left parliament after being blamed for the failure to form a government. The Eurosceptic "Revival" (NI) party entered parliament with 13 seats.

Outside the Union, the Norwegian parliamentary elections of September 2021 allowed the Patient Focus party (NI) to win a seat. This small party is supporting the expansion of the Alta hospital in Finnmark county, in the North of Norway.

The September 2021 parliamentary elections in Iceland did not result in any new parties entering or exiting the national parliament.

Turnout

In the regional elections in metropolitan France, abstention reached record lows. In all regions, drops by over 15% were recorded. In Hauts-de-France, turnout fell from 54.8% – the highest rate in the last elections in 2015 – to 32.8%, a drop of 22%. Turnout was lowest in Grand Est, where less than a third, or 29.6%, of registered voters cast a ballot.

In Corsica, however, turnout remained stable, dropping by 2.7% (59.7% in 2015; 57% in 2021). This can be partly explained by a strong nationalist mobilisation.

In the overseas departments, collectivities and regions, participation was significantly lower than in mainland France and Corsica in 2017, with 41.1% of the population participating in Martinique and 47.2% in Guadeloupe. The decline was proportionally less dramatic than in the metropolitan regions – between -8.7% in Martinique and -7.9% in Reunion. The turnout in 2021 was therefore similar in the overseas regions and collectivities and in mainland France.

The tumultuous election year in Bulgaria saw sharp falls in turnout. The first parliamentary elections were held in April 2021 (see BLUE #1). After failing to form a government, the national assembly was dissolved, and new elections were held in July 2021. In this election, turnout dropped by 8.7%. This was due to several factors: voter discontent, efforts by the interim government to curb illegal voting practices, July holidays, and, finally, the introduction of a new electronic voting system that may have deterred some older voters.

However, the July 2021 election did not produce a winner either, so new parliamentary elections were held in November 2021. It coincided with the presidential election. This double election day did not produce a clear winner either. A second round was necessary to re-elect President Rumen Radev. Turnout in the first round and in the parliamentary election was 38.7%, the lowest in 30 years. In the second round of the presidential election, a new record low was recorded, with only 33.65% of the population turning out to vote.

In Germany, the effect of the "super election year" was clearly reflected in the turnout in the Berlin Senate elections (+8.5 pp, at 75.4%) and in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (+8.9 pp, at 70.8%), where a regional election was held on the same day as the Bundestag elections.

In Saxony-Anhalt, the elections happened on 6 June. Turnout was down by only 0.8%: in 2017 it was 61.1% and in 2021 60.3%.

Two EFTA countries, Norway and Iceland, held parliamentary elections in September 2021. In Norway, turnout decreased by 1.1 pp to 77.8%, while in Iceland turnout increased by 1.1 pp, with 81.2% of the population voting.

In Upper Austria, the 2016 Landtag elections were marked by a strong polarisation around the migration issue, and the turnout was correspondingly high: 81.6% of the electorate turned out to vote. In September 2021, it was the Covid crisis and the issue of compulsory vaccination that mobilized the electorate, however a drop by 5.3 pp was still recorded: 76.3% of Upper Austrians voted.

In Calabria, the turnout in the early election was stable, increasing by 0.1% compared to the last election in 2020. In 2014, the turnout rate was similar. In Milan, where the election had been postponed to October 2021 due to a peak in infections in the spring, turnout fell by 7% – in 2016, 54.7% of voters had cast their ballots, in 2021, 47.7%. In Rome, turnout fell slightly, by 1.6%, to below 50% at 48.5%.

In the Czech Republic, turnout increased by 4.6%. In 2017, 60.8% of the electorate voted, in October 2021 the figure was around 65.4%.

On 16 November 2021, members of 95 municipalities and 5 regional councils were elected in Denmark. Turnout decreased in all five regions, ranging from -2.8 pp to -4.5 pp, reaching a turnout of between 64.7% and 72.7%.

Germany's major election year

Germany's "super election year" (*Superwahljahr*) ended on September 26, 2021, when elections were held for the German Bundestag and two Länder, Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Thuringia was also due to elect a new Landtag on the same day, but there was no (two-thirds) majority to dissolve parliament, as this would have required the votes of the AfD (ID).

The federal elections brought an end to the "Grand Coalition" of Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU, EPP) and Social Democrats (SPD, S&D). Despite major gains, it was not the Greens but Olaf Scholz's SPD that came out on top in the 2021 federal elections: with 25.7%, the Social Democrats overtook the Christian Democrats (24.1%) after a long neck-and-neck race between the two parties during the election campaign. The Greens saw their number of votes increase by 5.8 pp and came third with 14.8%, missing their goal of making their candidate, Annalena Baerbock, Angela Merkel's successor.

The growing influence of the Greens, which this time was not sufficient to win against the Social Democrats, is a trend that could also be observed in the regional elections:

In Berlin, affordable housing was the dominant issue in the election campaign after the previous government's rent control law ("*Mietpreisbremse*") was declared unconstitutional by the federal constitutional court. Neverthe-

d • Results of the statistical model at NUTS 3 level

Group	Positive effect	Negative effect	R²
GUE/NGL	Pop. density***	GDP growth***	0,92
Greens/EFA	Pop. density*** GDP growth***	GDP/capita PPP***	0,93
S&D			0,47
RE	Net migr.***	Univ. degree.** Unemp. * Median age*	0,82
PPE		Net migr.*	0,64
CRE		Net migr.***	0,92
ID	GDP/capita PPP*	Pop. density*** Birth rate* GDP growth***	0,94

*** statistically significant, p < 0,01 ** p < 0,05 * p < 0,1
Controls: member states, source : Eurostat, last available year
Parties considered close to a group have been counted together with this group.
205 NUTS 3 regions: 5 AT, 28 BG, 14 CZ, 23 DE, 11 DK, 100 FR, 1 IS, 1 IT, 18 NO
Notes:
a) The data for the Bundestag elections have not yet been published at the district level and could therefore not be included in the calculation.
b) Lists mixing several EP groups were ignored.

less, the citizens of Berlin confirmed their confidence in the previous red-red-green government: the Social Democrats lost slightly, but still managed to take first place with 21.4%, while the Greens even increased their results to 18.9%. SPD's Franziska Giffey also managed to be elected mayor of Berlin.

In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the SPD and its candidate Manuela Schwesig are the big winners in this year's elections: With 39.6%, the Social Democrats increased their score by 9 pp – mostly at the expense of the Christian Democrats, who could only win 13.3%. For the first time since 2011, the Greens managed to break the 5%

barrier and entered the Landtag with 6.3%.

Urban-rural divide

BLUE constructed an indicator to measure the polarization of the vote between urban and rural areas. Given the aggregate score u_p, \dots, u_p of the parties in the urban electorate and the aggregate scores r_p, \dots, r_p of these same parties in the rural electorate (in percent), we consider

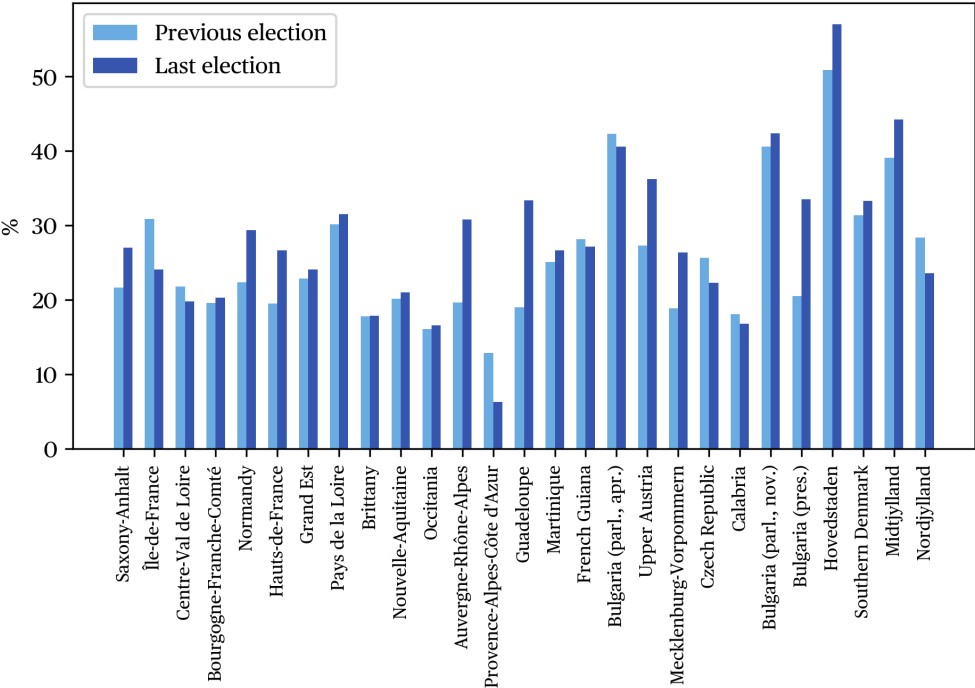
$$1/2 (|r_1 - u_1| + \dots + |r_p - u_p|).$$

The result is a percentage that varies between 0% and 100%, where 0% means that the shares of the different parties in the urban and rural electorates are identical, and 100% means that the urban electorate votes for entirely different parties than the rural electorate.

In the majority of elections, the rural/urban divide has widened. Hovestaden, the Danish region where Copenhagen is located, had already experienced the largest divide in previous elections; the divide increased by a further 6.1 pp in the 2021 election to well over 50 per cent: more than half of the urban population votes differently from those living in rural areas. The divide has also widened, albeit less dramatically, in two other Danish regions, Midtjylland and Southern Denmark, in contrast to Nordjylland where the gap has narrowed.

In France, the gap has widened in most regions, except in Île-de-France, Guyana, Centre-Val-de-Loire and Provence-Alpes-Côte-D'azur. This last region contains large cities and agglomerations, notably Marseille. It is by far the region where the divide is the narrowest. This divide has even decreased by 6.6 pp between the last regional election in 2016 and the one in June 2021. This can be explained in part by the increased presence of the Rassemblement national in major cities – a rather atypical

Urban-rural divide indicator, June 2021-November 2021



c • Urban-rural divide indicator in elections from June 2021 to November 2021 and in previous elections

situation in the French context. The largest increases of our indicator were recorded in Guadeloupe (+14.4 pp) and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (+11.1 pp).

In Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the cleavage increased by 5.3 pp and 7.5 pp respectively. The increase was even more pronounced in Upper Austria, where the indicator rose by 8.9 pp.

In the July parliamentary election in Bulgaria, the urban-rural divide indicator fell by 1.7 pp, but in November it rose again by 1.8 pp. The contrast was much more striking in the presidential election, where the divide widened by 13 pp to over 30 percent.

In the parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic, the divide narrowed by 3.4 pp. In Calabria, it also decreased slightly, by 1.3 pp.

Socio-economic determinants of the vote

Table d presents the results of a least squares model estimating the effect of eight socio-economic factors on the electoral shares of the different European political groups, aggregated at the NUTS 3 level.

All else being equal, the parties of the left-wing GUE/NGL group and the Greens/EFA group performed better in densely populated areas, while the parties of the nationalist ID group performed worse in these areas. High GDP growth in the region is associated with a positive effect on the vote share of the Green/EFA parties, and a negative effect on the GUE/NGL and ID parties. With the other parameters fixed, however, an already existing high GDP per capita was associated with a higher vote for ID, and a lower vote for the Green/EFA parties.

The rate of net migration in the region has a significant effect on the scores of several parties. RE's liberals perform better in regions with high immigration, while conservative parties (REC and EPP) enjoy less support in these regions. On the other hand, liberal parties performed less well in regions with a high level of education.

Autonomy — independence

The Corsican regional elections in June 2021 saw a consolidation of Gilles Simeoni's power. Simeoni, the leader of the autonomist Femu a Corsica (FaC, Greens/EFA), had previously chaired the Corsican Executive Council thanks to an autonomist-nationalist coalition. He ran on its own party list in 2021, this time winning an absolute majority of seats in the Corsican Assembly.

Overall, nationalist and autonomist parties are increasingly dominant in Corsican politics. Among the unionist movements, only a right-wing coalition participated in the second round of the regional election, winning 32 per cent of the vote and 17 of the 64 seats. All other seats are now held by nationalists, who sat on both the government and opposition benches. Autonomist and nationalist politics are increasingly dominant, but the differences between the different currents of the movement are more visible than before.

While Corsica has a strong tradition of regionalist politics, in Norway the representation of regional interests in the national parliament is more marginal. However, in 2021, the Pasientfokus movement (PF, NI), which advocates for the expansion of the hospital in the town of Alta, in the northern Finnmark region, won a seat in the Storting. The party received more than 40 per cent of the vote in Alta, and won a seat despite having only 0.2 per cent of the vote nationally. PF is not the first regional party in Norwegian history: in 2013, a party called "Hospital for Alta" had campaigned in the elections without winning any seats. In the Norwegian context, the defense of regional interests in the North focuses on social service provision in remote areas, rather than on political autonomy.

In the German parliamentary elections, the Federation of South Schleswig Voters (SSW, Greens/EFA) won a seat in the Bundestag for the first time since 1949. Representing the interests of the Danish minority, the party won one of the seats in the northern state of Schleswig-Holstein. The party's campaign platform included calls for infrastructure funding for the region and lower electricity prices. Thus, Germany presents an example of regionalist voting based on economic interests, complemented by the promotion of minority interests.

Anti-corruption movements

In 2021, many elections in Central and Eastern Europe have triggered majority change following citizens' dissatisfaction with the level of government corruption. This has led new political movements, often recombining with the old opposition, to take the lead in change. While this may not seem important for countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and France, for places such as the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Moldova this may be the decisive aspect leading to the willingness to change government. When anti-corruption movements manage to rise to the top and a broad unity of political forces is achieved, dramatic changes can occur. In the three countries we have mentioned, the political scene has been reshaped accordingly.

Andrej Babiš, one of the richest tycoons in the Czech Republic, and the now former Czech prime minister, came to power in 2017 with his ANO (ALDE) party, whose name literally means 'yes' in Czech. After his electoral victory, Babiš's catch-all party gained a strong foothold and began facing levels of dissatisfaction similar to previous governments, especially as it allied itself on an ad-hoc basis with the otherwise isolated ČSSD (S&D). Dissatisfaction with the overwhelming figure of Babiš, a wealthy man perceived by opponents as the natural ferment of corruption, combined with his mismanagement of the pandemic, made for a powerful mobilization of the opposition. The classic centre-right party, often perceived as dull by public opinion, reinvented itself as SPOLU ("Together", ECR/EPP), while the Mayors and Independents (EPP) and Pirates (Greens/EFA) formed a second opposition coalition on a more alternative and centrist platform. Despite ANO

coming out on top, runner-up SPOLU eventually obtained the post of prime minister after forming a coalition with the Mayors and Pirates.

"We Continue the Change" (PP, NI), the centrist party of Kiril Perkov and Asen Vasilev, the ministers of economy and finance in Bulgaria's interim government, defeated GERB (EPP), which had been in power for almost a decade and a half. The two previous parliaments, elected in April and July, failed to agree on a government and were dissolved after a few weeks. During the election campaign there were many attempts to trade votes, with over 500 preliminary investigations and 2,000 official warnings reported, which mostly involved GERB and the DPS (RE). Petkov and Vasilev, who between May and August helped expose numerous embezzlements and corrupt behaviours of former Prime Minister Boyko Borisov's government, founded their party in September. Their main slogan became the fight against corruption and judicial reform.

In Moldova, President Maia Sandu and her Action and Solidarity Party (PAS, -EPP) seek to rebuild the country on the basis of anti-corruption, moral revolution and pro-Europeanism. In the July parliamentary elections, PAS won an independent majority in parliament. The party dominated the center and the pro-Western part of the political scene. The Democratic Party (-S&D), which was in power and co-governed from 2009 to 2021, the formations calling for reunification with Romania and the Dignity and Truth Party (-EPP), which has recently cooperated with PAS, did not enter parliament. Moreover, the elections gave a very weak result for the pro-Russian forces. The weakness of the opposition and the strong popular support currently give PAS significant political leeway.

This confirms a trend already observed in BLUE's first issue: across Eastern Europe, new political formations are being created with a focus on pro-Europeanism and more effective governance, but with less emphasis on the classic left-right divide.

Role of the diaspora

While the diasporas of the Balkan countries have traditionally played an important role in domestic politics, their influence has significantly increased in recent years. In the Bulgarian elections of July 2021, for the first time, the overseas vote proved decisive, depriving GERB of the much-desired top spot. A record number of overseas polling stations, 750, were set up for this election. Although the Bulgarian community abroad has been voting for 30 years in other countries, this right is still controversial. For the first time, there were more polling stations in Britain than in Turkey. While, in Bulgaria, the vote of the diaspora has long been a way for the DPS (RE), the traditional party of the Turkish minority, to increase their vote shares generational change makes this strategy less powerful. Instead, vote from abroad is often a way for the young and frustrated to express their disappointment following a decade of GERB government. 2021 redefined the political role of Bulgarian emigrants, placing this demographic group at the heart of the country's policy in the future.

Similarly, Moldova is following a trend of reaching out to the diaspora living in EU countries, perhaps in the hope that they will become a driving force in the adhesion process alongside the country's much-desired transformation. While there are more polling stations abroad than ever before, the influence of the diaspora is not as pronounced as in Bulgaria.

In other European countries which recently held elections, the influence of the diaspora is mostly negligible, often due to procedural limitations on voting (e.g. in the Czech Republic) It remains to be seen whether diasporas can provide an influx of qualified cadres for the new governments, which often emerge from mobilization and lack established personnel.

Methodological note

BLUE offers systematic monitoring of the following elections in the 27 EU Member States:

- Elections to the European Parliament;
- Direct national elections (parliamentary, presidential, referenda);
- Direct regional elections at NUTS 1 and NUTS 2 level, i.e. : Austrian *Bundesländer*, Belgian *régions* and provinces, Danish *regioner*, French *régions*, German *Bundesländer*, Greek *periferies*, Italian *regioni* and autonomous provinces, Dutch *provincies*, Polish *województwa*, Spanish *comunidades autónomas*;
- Municipal elections in the 15 European cities with more than one million inhabitants (‘M15’), which are,

in decreasing order of population, Berlin, Madrid, Rome, Paris, Vienna, Hamburg, Bucharest, Warsaw, Budapest, Barcelona, Munich, Milan, Prague, Sofia and Cologne.

These analyses are conducted at the polling level and are accompanied by comprehensive election data at the municipal level.

Where possible, BLUE will also publish analyses or summaries of the main national elections in the EU accession states and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member states.

On a case-by-case basis, BLUE may also offer analyses of other relevant elections in the EU’s immediate environment in its ‘special’ section.

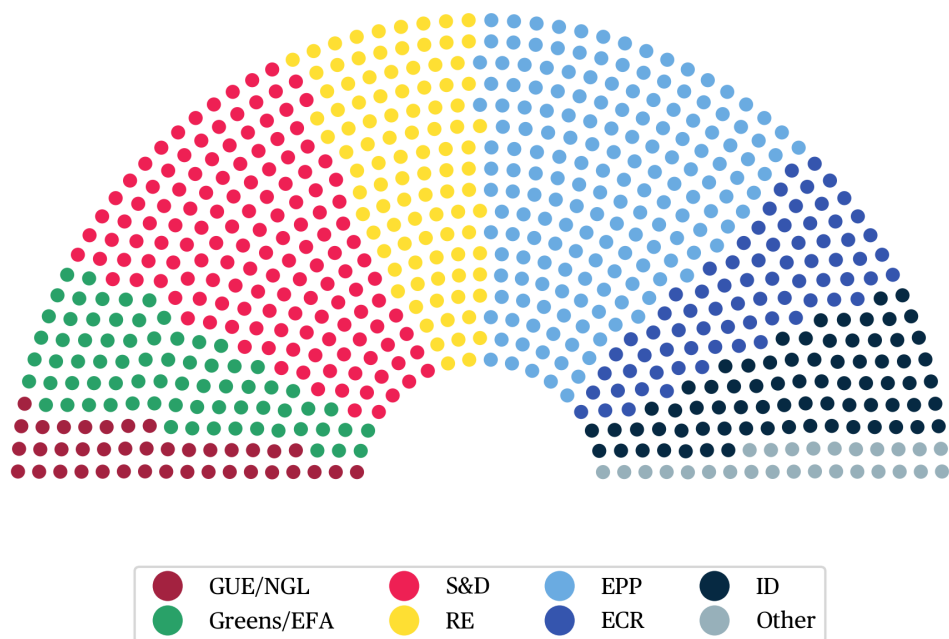
Seats shares of political groups

Group	European Parliament	European Council	European Commission	Member states' Parliaments (lower house)	Regional Parliaments (first level)	M15
GUE/NGL	39 (6%)	-	-	389 (6%) -45	552 (6%) +43	72 (6%) -4
Greens/EFA	73 (10%)	-	1 (4%)-	355 (5%) +34	699 (7%) +59	212 (18%) +4
S&D	145 (21%)	7 (26%)	9 (33%)	1262 (19%) +22	1826 (21%) -72	336 (28%) +5
RE	97 (14%)	6 (22%)	5 (19%)	1091 (17%) +10	898 (10%) -43	104 (9%) =
EPP	175 (25%)	8 (30%)	10 (37%)	1684 (26%) -17	2345 (26%) -56	304 (26%) -7
ECR	74 (11%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)	557 (9%) +9	565 (6%) -11	47 (4%) +5
ID	74 (11%)	-	-	393 (6%) -13	808 (9%) -166	58 (5%) +4
Others/NI	27 (4%)	4 (15%)	1 (4%)	764 (12%) +26	1167 (13%) +261	44 (4%) -8

Except for the three European institutions (current figures), the above count is based on the results of the last elections in each region. Current party membership may differ slightly. Countries that are assimilated to a group based on ideological proximity are not counted with this group.

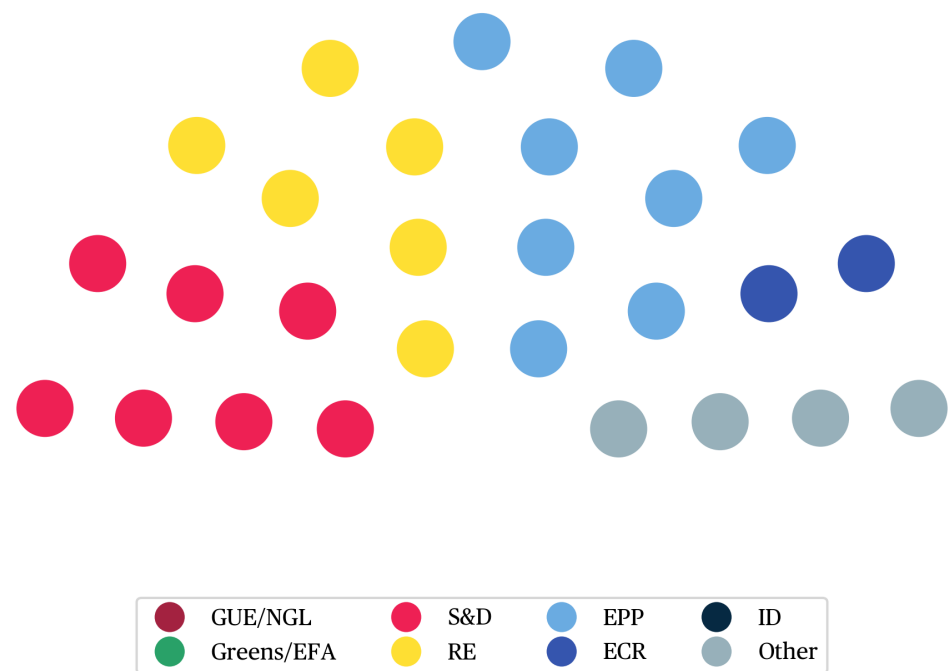
Seat shares of European political families, Dec 2021

The European Parliament



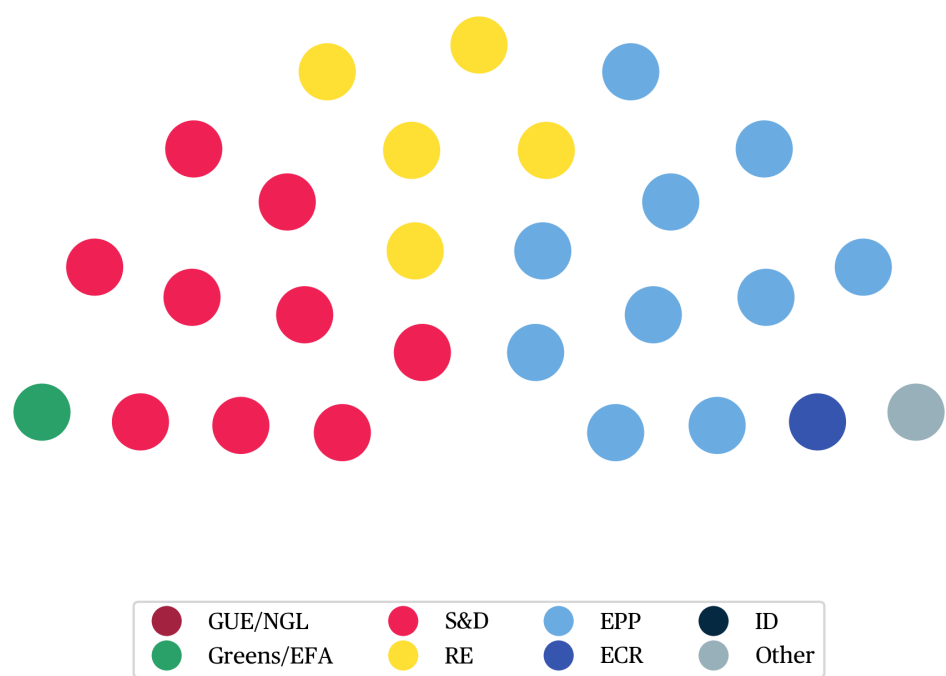
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The European Council



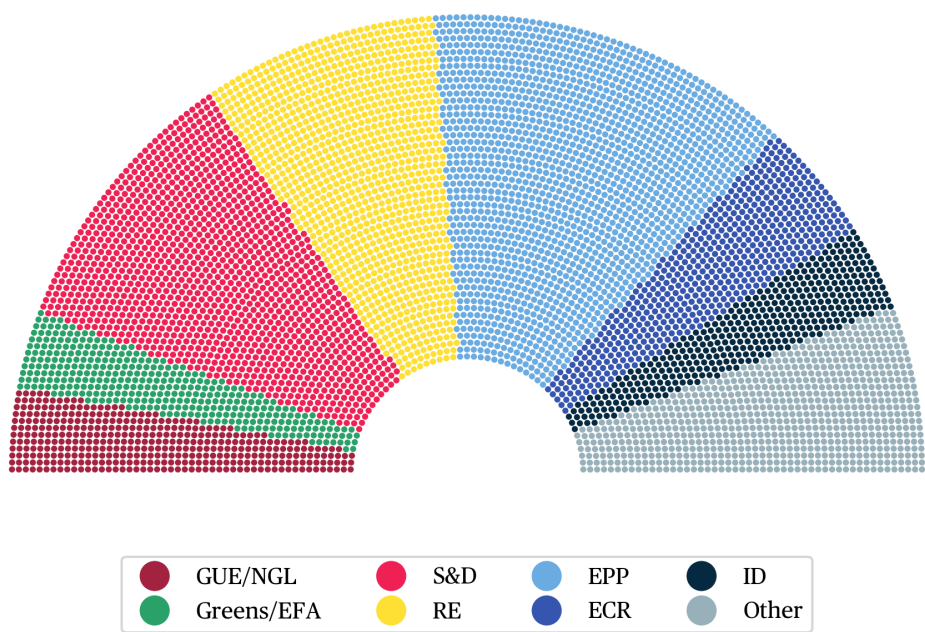
Seat shares of European political families, Dec 2021

The Commission



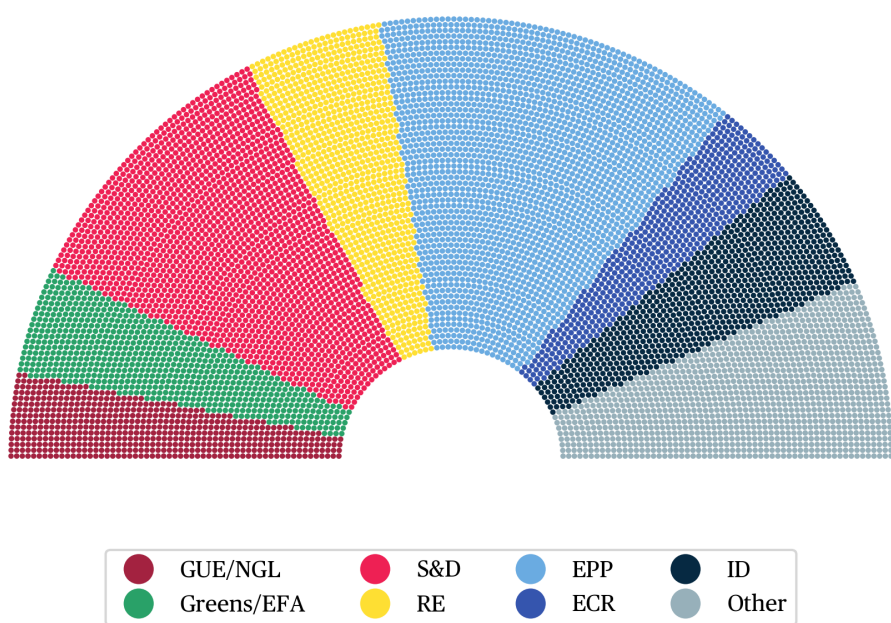
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Member states' parliaments

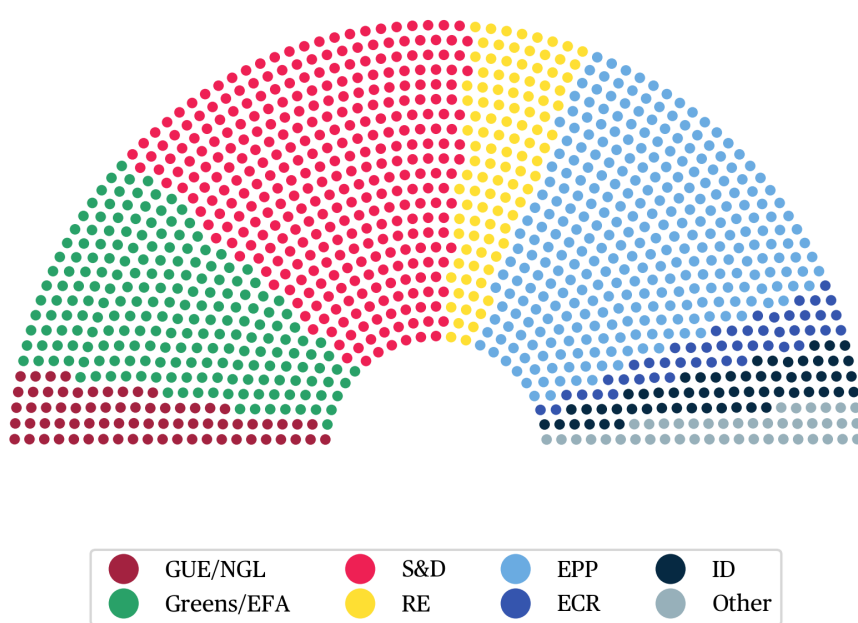


Seat shares of European political families, Dec 2021

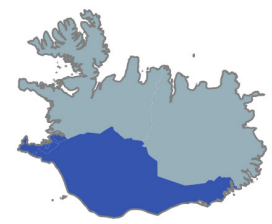
Regional parliaments



City councils of the EU's 15 cities with over one million inhabitants (“



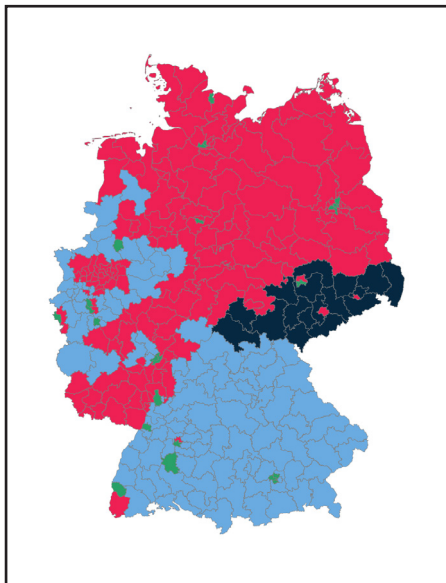
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June 2021 – November 2021



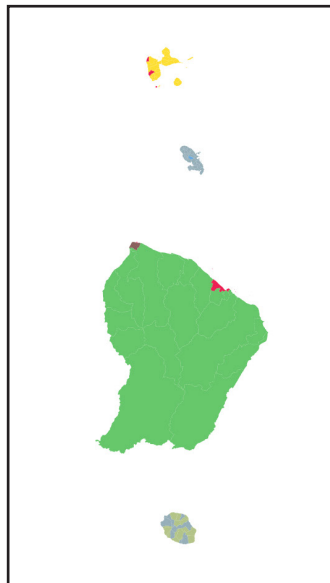
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Group of winning party, by municipality

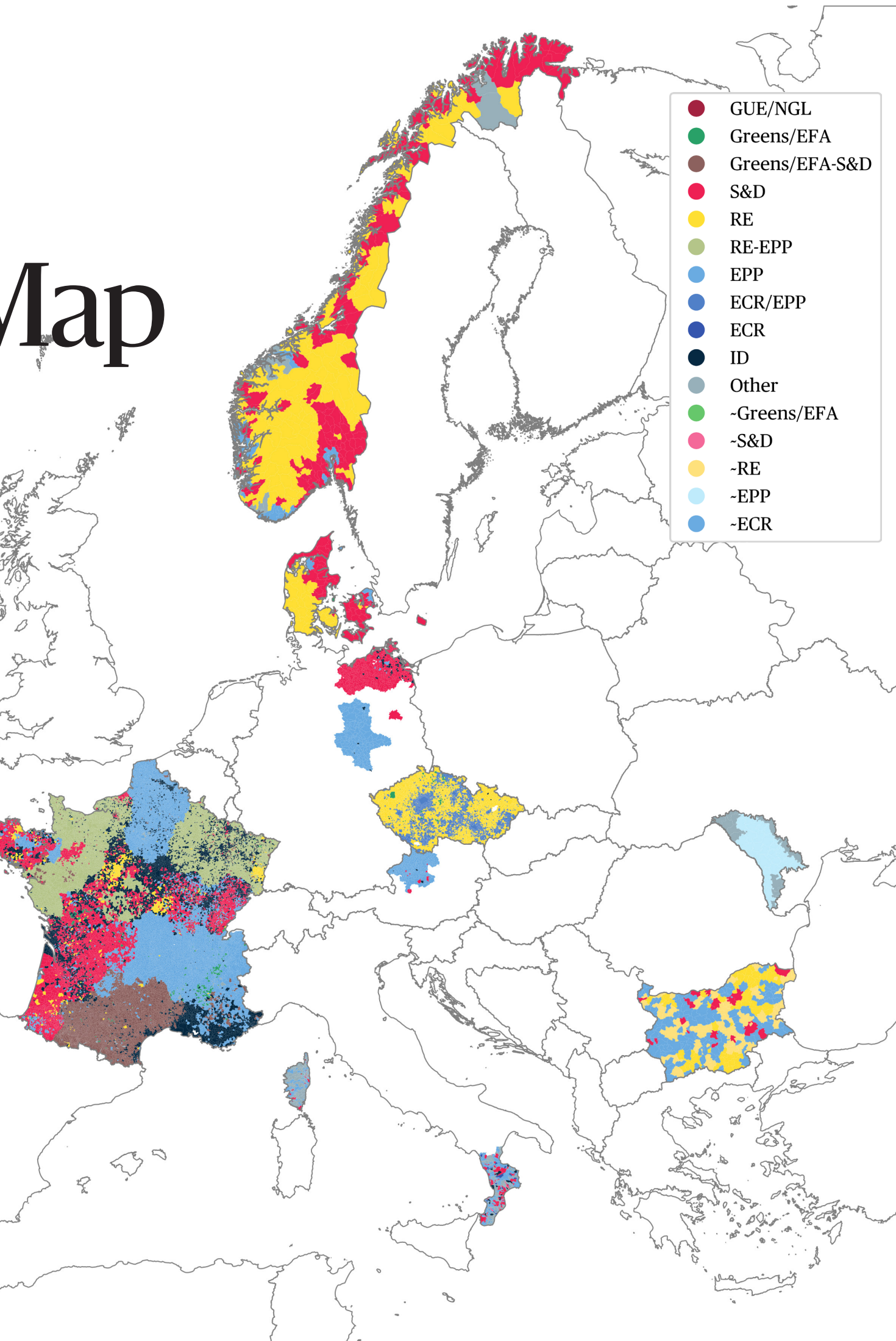
Legislative (electoral districts)



Overseas France



Map



Elections in the European Union

Regional, national and
European elections,
elections in the largest
European cities

02



Regional election in Saxony-Anhalt, 6 June 2021

Introduction

State elections are often interpreted as “mood tests” for the federal government, especially when they take place in the year of a federal election. In fact, many state elections turn out to be infused with federal politics (Burkhart 2005; Völkl 2009). This pattern could hardly have been more clearly contradicted by the Saxony-Anhalt state elections of June 6, 2021, the last ballot at the state level before the federal election date. The elections underscored the growing inherent logic of political competition in the German states, which is increasingly characterized by popular prime ministers, distinct party systems and issues, and – in the eastern part of Germany – the confrontation with the AfD (Alternative for Germany, ID). These factors will be examined in more detail below and combined with an analysis of other aspects of the election results. Numerous empirical insights are based on survey results from infratest dimap (2021) and the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen (2021).

On the surface, the state elections were overshadowed by the approaching federal election, which would take place just under 10 weeks later, on September 26. The SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany, S&D), led by its chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz, was languishing in the polls at 15 percent at the beginning of June 2021 and hoped to gain momentum. The Greens (Greens/EFA) believed that their popularity ratings would finally materialize in vote gains in an election in the east. For the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union, EPP), Saxony-Anhalt was also seen as a mood test for their newly elected candidate for chancellor, Armin Laschet. The then CDU chairman and North Rhine-Westphalian premier had only won out over the CSU chairman, Markus Söder, in a tough power struggle at the end of April 2021. Laschet's candidacy remained controversial, partly because Söder could not only count on greater popular sup-

port for himself, but was also backed by relevant sections of the CDU, especially in the east. Haseloff himself had clearly placed himself in Söder's favor. A resounding defeat for the CDU/CSU, some political observers expected, would once again put on the agenda the issue of the chancellor candidate.

Taking off the federal political glasses, state political factors quickly stand out that would have later proved decisive. On the one hand, the great popularity of the Minister President, Reiner Haseloff. Haseloff, a CDU member since GDR times, first joined the state government in 2002 under Minister President Wolfgang Böhmer (CDU) as state secretary. He led the CDU as the top candidate in the 2011 state election campaign and achieved a result that was well above the national trend. In April 2011, he was elected as the new minister president of a grand coalition of CDU and SPD. The fact that (mathematically) 10 coalition deputies refused to follow him at the investiture was to play a role again 10 years later. When the grand coalition lost its majority in the 2016 elections (Holtmann and Völkl 2016), Haseloff dared a political experiment: He forged the first so-called Kenya coalition in Germany – a combination of CDU, SPD and Greens. This is particularly remarkable because in Saxony-Anhalt a decidedly conservative CDU state association meets a pronouncedly progressive state association of the Greens. Disputes within the coalition were therefore inevitable. Saxony-Anhalt's farmers, who are particularly influential in the state CDU, suddenly had to tolerate a Green environment and agriculture minister, and the Greens had to live with a CDU hardliner, Holger Stahlknecht, in the interior ministry. The German weekly newspaper SPIEGEL wrote about Germany's largest alliance of disputes, and they often went dangerously close to breaking off the coalition prematurely. As a result, Magdeburg's state parliament was repeatedly the focus of attention nationwide. The coalition dispute, which almost escalated six months before the state election over the

issue of broadcasting fees, was joined by the omnipresent question of how exactly the CDU would deal with the AfD (Höhne 2020). Parts of the CDU did not seem averse to cooperating with the AfD, which, despite the particularly radical profile of its Saxony-Anhalt section, had swept into the state parliament in 2016 with 24.3 percent.

The Kenya coalition achieved only average satisfaction ratings. About half of the population was satisfied with its work, according to surveys. Haseloff's own approval rating – and this is an important explanation of the subsequent election result – far outstripped that of his coalition. In pre-electoral polls, 70 percent of voters saw him as a “good” prime minister. Haseloff shares this positive image with other popular prime ministers such as Bodo Ramelow (The Left, GUE/NGL) from Thuringia or Michael Kretschmer (CDU) from Saxony, and he was only just outstripped by Winfried Kretschmann (Greens) from Baden-Württemberg (75 percent approval). No popularity ratings are available for the other top candidates in Saxony-Anhalt, especially Katja Pähle of the SPD – notably because they were so little known that no such ratings could be derived. The high popularity and name recognition ratings made it extremely difficult for Haseloff's challengers to set a point of attack.

In addition to Haseloff's person, the question – particularly important in East Germany – of how to deal with the AfD was to play a decisive role in the outcome of the election. The days leading up to the election were largely dominated by the media's coverage of a neck-and-neck race between the CDU and the AfD. An INSA poll published in the BILD newspaper two days before the state election saw the AfD at 26 percent and the CDU at 27 percent. Saxony-Anhalt thus threatened to become the first state in which the AfD could become the strongest force in a state parliament. Haseloff's challengers from the SPD – The Left and the Greens – also framed the state election as a democracy issue, insinuating that the CDU/CSU in the state was not a credible bulwark against the AfD and that citizens could well awake to a black-blue coalition after Election Day. A large majority of the population and also of CDU supporters were against any cooperation between the CDU and the AfD.

Nevertheless, the challengers' framing of the election in terms of democratic quality was probably a strategic mistake. Not only did it draw even more attention to the horse race between the AfD and the CDU. Haseloff himself had also answered the Gretchen question so clearly and convincingly that hardly any voter doubted that cooperation with the AfD was out of the question for Haseloff. Haseloff and the state chairman Sven Schulze had clearly ruled out any cooperation with the AfD. Moreover, Haseloff had fired his Interior Minister Holger Stahlknecht only six months before the election, when the latter hinted that a CDU minority government could also be tolerated by the AfD after the upcoming election. In the final spurt of the election campaign, Haseloff styled himself as the personified firewall against the AfD, calling his state CDU

the “guarantor of this democracy here in Saxony-Anhalt.” Even if this cannot be clearly proven empirically, it can be assumed that a relevant number of voters who would rather have voted Green, SPD or The Left gave their vote to the CDU in order to prevent the AfD from becoming the strongest force.

These two important background conditions of the election were by no means typical only for Saxony-Anhalt. The increasing personalization around the person of the minister presidents could also be observed in the same year in the state elections in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate. The horse-race effect is again primarily an East German phenomenon. Bodo Ramelow's success in the Thuringian state elections in 2019, for example, can also be better understood in this light.

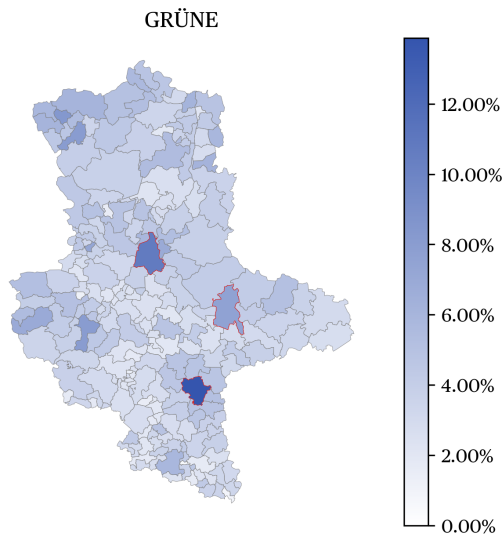
Results and changes in election results

Saxony-Anhalt mirrors in important parts the personalized proportional representation system practiced at the federal level (Massicotte 2003). Voters cast two votes. The first vote is awarded to a direct candidate in the total of 41 constituencies. Analogous to the first-past-the-post system, the mandate is won by the candidate who receives most votes in the constituency. The second vote is used to elect a closed party list. All parties that win at least 5 percent of the electoral votes nationwide participate in the distribution of mandates. A party's share of the second vote is decisive in calculating the total number of seats it is entitled to, in order to ensure the greatest possible proportionality. The electoral system in Saxony-Anhalt is therefore a compensatory mixed electoral system (Shugart and Wattenberg 2003).

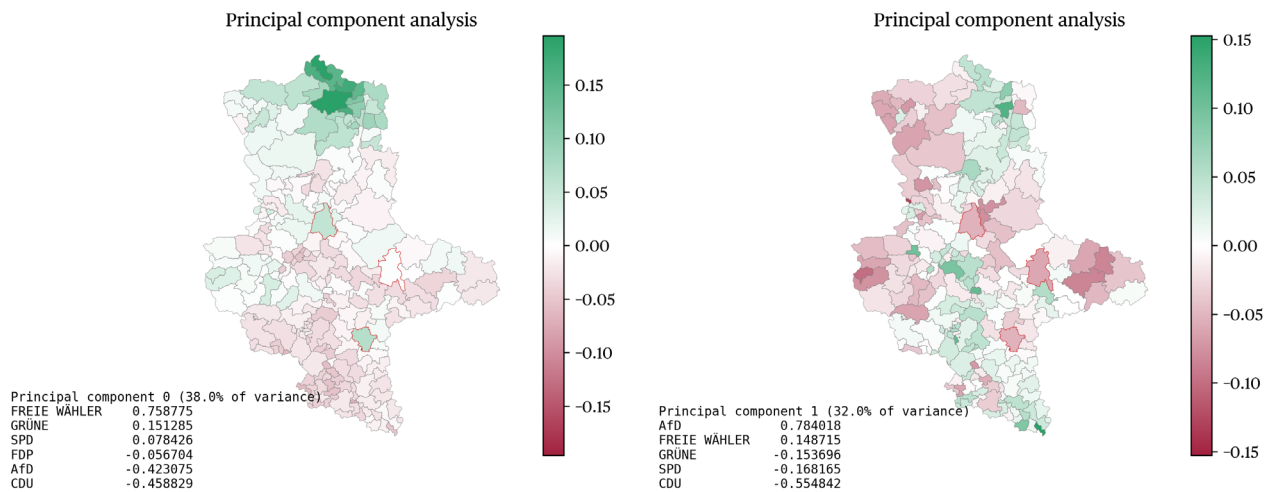
The results of the state elections were a big surprise. With an increase of 7.4 percentage points compared to 2016, the CDU was seen in the media reception as a radiant election winner. With 20.8 percent, the AfD was clearly distanced. The Left suffered heavy losses, falling to 11.0 percent. With 8.4 percent of the second votes, the SPD lost 2.2 percentage points compared to the state election of 2016. The long-term losses of both parties are dramatic – in 1998, the SPD had still brought in 36 percent and The Left's predecessor PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) 20 percent. Despite slight gains of 0.8 percent, the state Greens' 5.9 percent was a bitter disappointment. At the same time, the federal Greens ranked at around 22 percent in the polls. The FDP (Free Democratic Party, RE) returned to the Magdeburg state parliament for the first time since 2011 with 6.4 percent of the vote. The Free Voters (FW, RE), recruited mainly from disappointed former CDU politicians, fell well short of the 5 percent hurdle with 3.1 percent. Voter turnout was 60 percent, roughly the same level as in 2016.

The map of the constituency winners was almost entirely black. The CDU won 40 direct mandates, conceding only one to the AfD in Zeitz, which borders Saxony. In 2016, the AfD had won 15 direct mandates.

a • Score of the Greens at municipality level. Urban municipalities are outlined in red.



b • Principal component analysis of the results (first two principal components)



Media coverage of the election results focused primarily on the election winner Reiner Haseloff. In a photo montage, the left-liberal newspaper taz placed Haseloff's head on the body of Baywatch star David Hasselhoff in a lifeguard outfit and ran the headline "Der Retter der CDU" (The Savior of the CDU). This title was also a reverence to the many journalists and politicians (mostly of West German provenance) who pronounced the Wittenberger's surname harshly and incorrectly like the U.S. actor's last name. The role of the demoscopes was critically discussed; after all, in retrospect, the INSA poll seemed to have staged a horse race that had little to do with reality.

Which key issues determined the vote decision?

It is an insight of political science that not only persons and positions play an important role in elections. The importance of specific topics is also significant (Bräuninger et al. 2020; Meguid 2008). Parties can benefit from this if they are seen as competent on the issues that are particu-

larly important to citizens. Admittedly, the issue agenda can only be manipulated by parties to a limited extent and is often subject to external influences (e.g., Coronavirus).

Since reunification, state elections in the eastern German states have been characterized by a conflict over the perceived disadvantage of the east. Objective and subjective indicators suggest that the disadvantage consists, among other things, of still lower pensions and wages, but also of the low representation of East Germans in leadership positions (Vogel 2020). Indeed, 74 percent of voters agreed with the statement that "East Germans are still second-class citizens in many places." Thus, it added to Haseloff's approval rates that he was also perceived by 65 percent of citizens as a self-confident advocate of East German interests.

A look at the issue priorities in vote decisions makes it clear that the political framework conditions in the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt are completely different from those in the west - and this peculiarity was to work primarily to the disadvantage of the Greens. The

issues of social security, economy and education were decisive for over 70 percent of respondents, while the environment and climate only came in fourth place with 8 percent. In the state elections in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate in March of the same year, more than twice as many respondents saw the environmental issue in the lead. Admittedly, the issue shaping the voting decision differed between supporters of different parties. Unsurprisingly, the environmental issue dominated for Green voters, while for AfD voters migration and integration were the main deciding factors.

The state Greens failed to raise the issue of climate change to the extent that it had contributed to their polling high at the federal level. A debate initiated by the federal Greens about raising the price of gasoline came at an inopportune time, since an above-average number of people in Saxony-Anhalt commute longer distances to work by car. Ironically, the long-standing official advertising slogan for the state, "Wir stehen früher auf" ("We get up earlier"), was based on a survey that pinpointed the commute-related early bedtime habits of Saxony-Anhalt residents.

Interestingly, the handling of Covid-19 played a decisive role for only six percent of citizens. The state elections took place during a period of relative relaxation of the Covid-19 incidence, and numerous restrictions had since been lifted. This probably also provides a partial explanation for the poor result for the AfD, which tried to distinguish itself primarily by criticizing the Corona measures of the state and federal governments.

In terms of perceived party competence (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2021), the CDU was clearly in the lead on all relevant issues. Only in climate policy were the Greens ahead of the CDU/CSU with 30 versus 19 percent, which for the reasons mentioned above was not reflected in the vote shares. In foreign policy, too, 27 percent attributed the greatest competence to the CDU/CSU and only 19 percent to the AfD. This may also have contributed to the AfD's limited success with its decidedly nativist agenda

(Pesthy, Mader, and Schoen 2021). However, it should be noted that attributions of competence are highly correlated with party identification and voting intention, suggesting that citizens have only limited ability to assess the competence of parties in specific areas of political competition.

Geographic trends

Compared with western German states such as Baden-Württemberg or Hesse, Saxony-Anhalt's sociodemographic variance is significantly lower. Nevertheless, a spatial analysis of the election results reveals various trends that are familiar in the field of electoral research. For example, the CDU and, by some margin, the AfD were particularly successful in rural areas, which characterize a large part of the state. In the urban centers, the Greens were able to achieve well above-average results. In Halle, the most important city in the state, the Greens won almost 14 percent of the second votes and fell short of obtaining a direct mandate in one constituency there. Unfortunately for the Greens, however, only about 20 percent of Saxony-Anhalt residents live in urban centers.

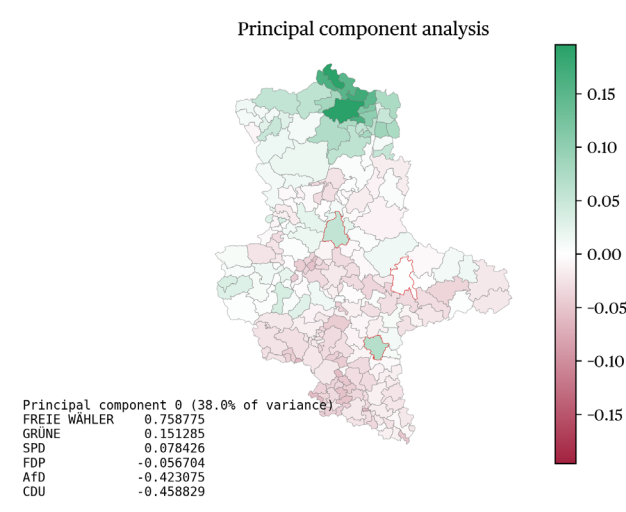
A principal component analysis of voting behavior shows that, alongside the Greens, the SPD, the left-wing party and the FDP also enjoyed above-average success in urban areas. Specifically, the principal component analysis quantifies that 14 percent of the vote differences between municipalities can be explained primarily by the support for these parties in cities.

Government and coalition formation

As the clear winner of the election, Haseloff's role was to form the next state government of Saxony-Anhalt. The distribution of seats suggested an obvious solution (coalition) - theoretically: CDU and SPD together controlled exactly an absolute majority of 49 votes in the Magdeburg state parliament and could have formed a minimum-win coalition accordingly. Minimal-win coalitions, i.e., coalitions in which no party is involved that would not be necessary for an absolute majority (Müller and Strøm 2006), are the standard model in Germany at the federal and state levels (Bräuninger et al. 2019). Minority governments (Klecha 2010) or supermajority coalitions are an absolute rarity. Governing even with razor-thin majorities is not uncommon and could be observed at the same time, for example, in the black-yellow coalition led by Armin Laschet in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany's most populous state. In practice, however, this one-vote majority seemed too shaky to Haseloff.

Haseloff could not be sure of the absolute unity of his CDU faction for various reasons. There were at least three deputies in the new parliamentary group who could have had at least one reason for refusing to follow him. For example, two members of the state parliament, Ulrich Thomas and Lars-Jörn Zimmer, were demoted from faction

b (cont'd) • Principal component analysis : 3rd component



vice presidents to ordinary deputies after the election, in part because they had on different occasions shown a closeness to the AfD. Haseloff's shamed crown prince, Holger Stahlknecht, had returned to the Magdeburg state parliament with a very good constituency result. In addition, there was an indeterminable number of CDU deputies who only grudgingly supported the course of demarcation from the AfD.

Haseloff's main concern was the election of the state premier. This election takes place by secret ballot – which raises various issues in terms of democratic theory (Decker 2020) and most recently caused a scandal in Thuringia with the election of a short-term prime minister from the FDP with votes from the AfD (Debes 2021). In secret ballots, dissenters are not identifiable and, freed from transparency, could pursue different aims in casting their votes. After the election, it would be easier to establish a closed parliamentary group. In everyday parliamentary life, votes are cast visibly (by a show of hands or standing up or staying seated) (Stecker 2015), and any MP who did not remain loyal to the “savior of the CDU” would have had to present very convincing arguments for this.

Presumably for these reasons, Haseloff sought a larger parliamentary majority for his new government. The CDU explored other possible constellations with the SPD, FDP and Greens. The choice included a continuation of the Kenya coalition with the SPD and the Greens with a majority of six votes. However, this was hardly acceptable to the conservative sections of the CDU in particular, and Kenya was also one of the most unpopular constellations among the population. The same picture applied to a theoretically possible Jamaica coalition of the CDU, FDP and Greens. The Greens themselves also ruled out joining a coalition as a mathematically unnecessary partner.

Thus, Saxony-Anhalt once again provided the stage for a new coalition – a combination of CDU, SPD and FDP, which was also referred to in the media as the “Germany coalition”. The unusual feature of this coalition is that the FDP is not actually necessary to achieve an absolute majority, resulting in an outsized coalition. This had last occurred at the state level in the 1950s.

On September 16, 2021, the state parliament proceeded to elect the prime minister. The first ballot would have confirmed Haseloff's fears. He fell short of the necessary majority, with only 48 deputies voting for him, although the coalition overall assembled 56 deputies. In the second ballot, however, Haseloff was re-elected to the office of prime minister with 53 votes. Along with the prime minister, the new black-red-yellow government consists of six ministers from the CDU, two from the SPD and one from the FDP.

On the surface, the state election had some implications for the federal level. Armin Laschet's candidacy for chancellor appeared stabilized by Haseloff's brilliant election victory, and the CDU at that point looked poised to win the federal election. Barely three months later, the federal election virtually reversed the voting patterns in

Saxony-Anhalt. With 25.4 percent of the vote, the SPD relegated the CDU (21 percent) and the AfD (19.6 percent) to second and third place in Saxony-Anhalt. From this perspective, the state elections of June 6, 2021 in Saxony-Anhalt may be considered clearly dominated by regional state politics.

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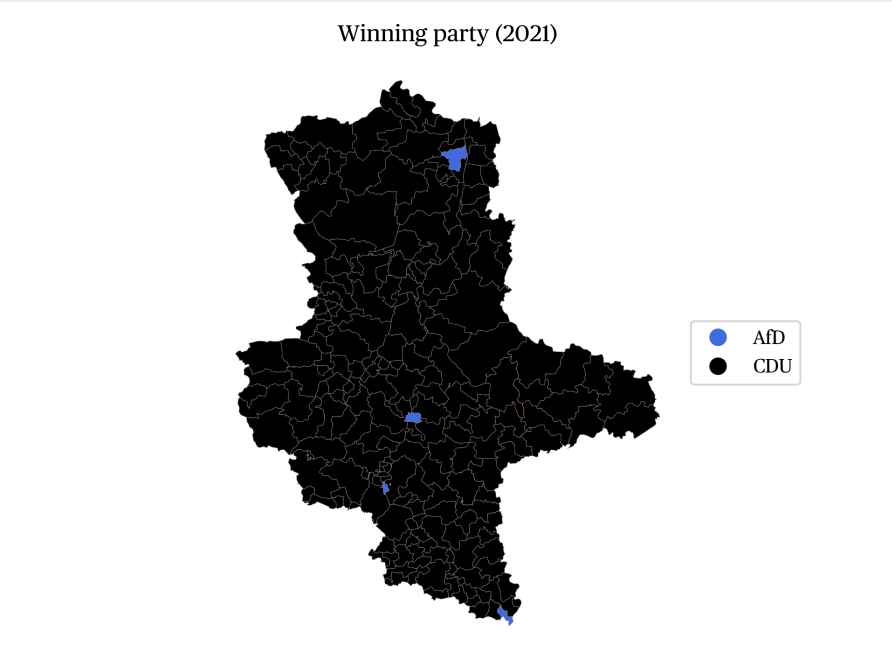
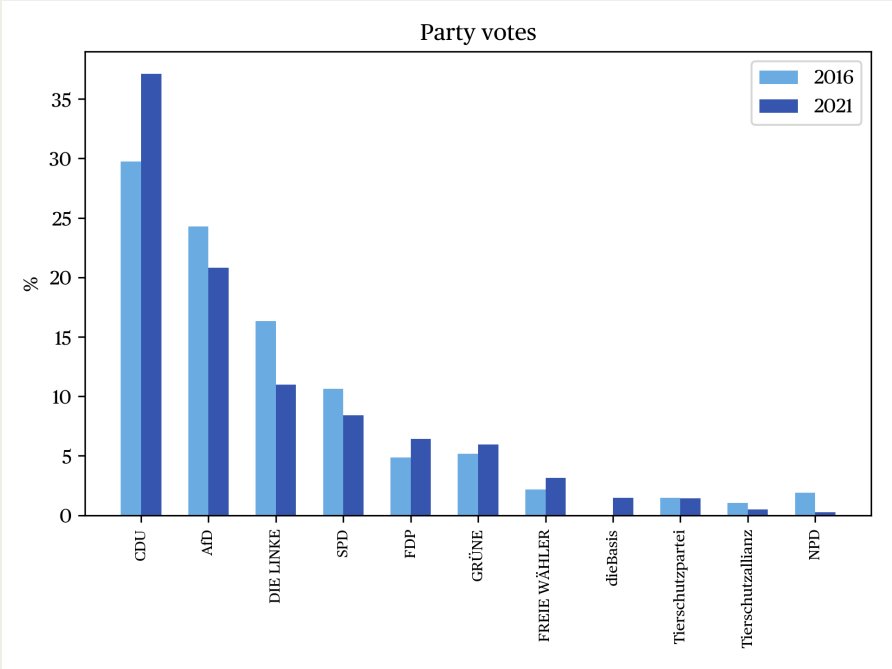
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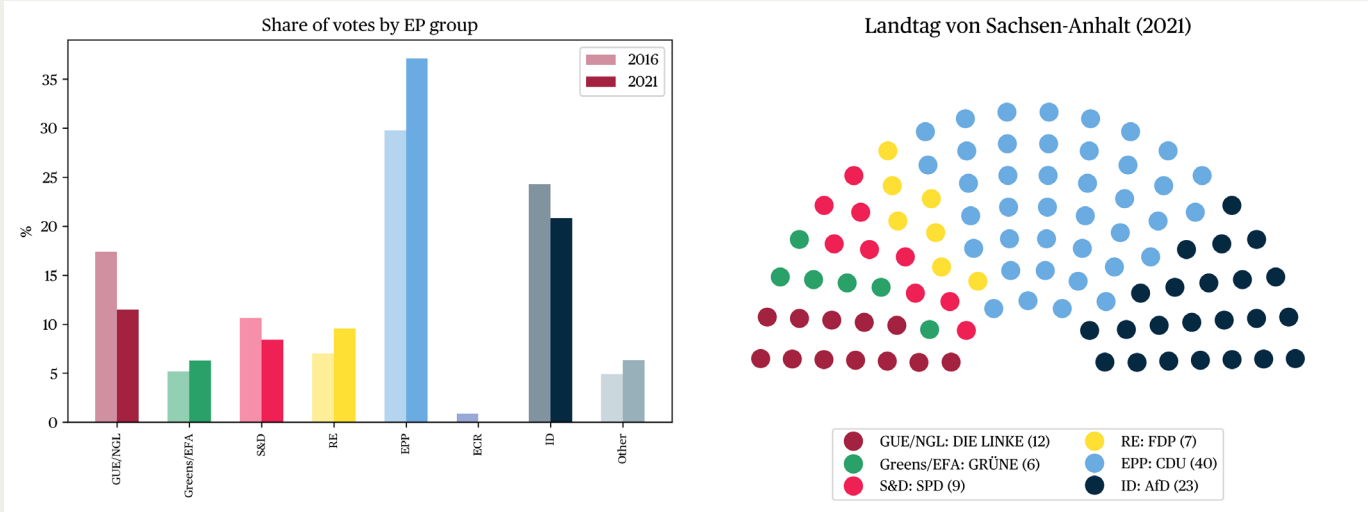
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European indicators





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Regional election in Île-de-France, 20-27 June 2021

28

In recent years, French regional elections have often been regarded as “mid-term elections” in which the President of the Republic and his party were put to the test. In 2021, this dimension of a ballot revealing the balance of political power is all the more clear as the French party system is confronted with a profound destabilization that could lead to a lasting reconfiguration. With its ongoing shift in political cleavages and rapidly evolving party system, France has entered a phase of so-called “electoral realignment”: the political balance is shifting to a new stable configuration, going through a phase of crisis as the old equilibria are being called in question.

A record abstention with significant consequences

The 2021 elections were marked by a record drop in voter turnout, in the context of a long-lasting health crisis marked by several episodes of lockdown and strong economic and social uncertainties. While the 2020 municipal elections had taken place amid fears of contamination, in a country weakened by a shortage of masks and the absence of vaccines – eventually leading to the postponement of the second round –, turnout dropped further one year later despite significant improvements in the health situation. Nationwide, which had been 44.6% in the 2020 municipal elections, reached a record low of 33.3% in the 2021 regional elections, even though departmental and regional elections were held on the same day. While voter turnout at departmental elections had long been in decline, this had so far not been the case for regional elections. In Île-de-France, turnout was 65.3% in 2004, 47.1% in 2010 and 45.9% in 2015, and a significant drop in turnout was experienced in 2021 compared to previous ballots. Given such heterogeneous levels of mobilization, abstention levels need to be analyzed carefully in order to account for the dynamics of electoral change.

Media commentators typically tend to interpret changes in vote shares and majorities as resulting from changes in the political opinions and attitudes of the electorate. However, this assertion must be treated with great caution, since the differential mobilization of the various parties’ electorates can influence the outcome of elections even when political values do not experience such a profound and rapid shift.

The data from opinion and attitude surveys show that values are relatively stable over time, evolving according to long-term trends under the effect of social and demographic transformations such as generational change. The choice of candidates or parties made by voters on the basis of the same set of preferences and opinions, on the other hand, can vary rapidly according to the context and political offer. Therefore, the evolution of the projection of voters’ preferences onto the available political offer plays a more central role in explaining electoral change than the evolution of political attitudes.

FN/RN vote as a standard benchmark of mobilization cycles

The dynamics of mobilization and demobilization are most easily identified by considering the scores of those political parties that are the most stable in terms of both popular support and public discourse. The FN/RN vote is a privileged indicator here, since, as of 2022, it is seen as an old party alongside traditional left-wing organizations (PCF and PS), contrasting with both newer political movements (LREM, LFI) and parties that are being regularly reconfigured (RPR-UDF, UMP, LR-UDI). In this regard, the case of Île-de-France is paradoxical. Despite very high levels of victimization, particularly in terms of physical aggression, theft, and vehicle damage, Île-de-France is one of the regions where the FN vote is lowest. An additional paradox is that, within Île-de-France, the areas least af-

affected by objectively detectable insecurity in specialized surveys are the ones with the most far-right voters. Île-de-France's specific dynamics can be traced back to two distinct, simultaneous trends. First, the share of highly educated individuals among the electorate is particularly high, a fact which many surveys have shown to negatively correlate with support for the far-right. In addition, immigrants or descendants of migrants, often with origins in former French colonies, are overrepresented among working-class, precarious and less-educated citizens; this reduces the FN's vote share, even though these populations experience high levels of victimization and intense fears in their neighborhoods.

At the regional level, the FN/RN went from almost 449,000 votes in 2004 (12.2% of votes cast) to 268,000 votes in 2010 (9.29% of votes cast), then 580,000 votes in 2015 (18.4% of votes cast) before reaching 285,115 votes in 2021 for 13.14% of votes cast. While RN leader Jordan Bardella achieves one of the worst historical scores of the FN in absolute terms (and as a percentage of registered voters), he obtains the second best vote share in his party's history. Caution is required in order not to interpret these evolutions only in terms of relative levels. The relatively good score of the RN in the 2021 Île-de-France election results from the overall demobilization of the general electorate and its competitors, coupled with a certain retention of its own electoral base.

Points of comparison outside the regional ballot

It is often tempting to interpret each type of elections as having its own logic. This is particularly true for local or regional elections, where the territorial roots and personality of the candidates can have a major impact on voters. This also applies to movements and parties whose national leaders are much more influent than their regional candidates. In this area, the FN/RN and LFI votes are excellent examples.

To identify transversal patterns, comparing the 2017 presidential election, then 2019 European election and the 2021 regional elections can prove particularly informative. In this electoral sequence, involving the three most different types of elections of the French democracy, we notice clear common trends.

The far-right vote appears to have clearly fallen back, despite the circumstances of the yellow vest crisis and then the health crisis. Marine Le Pen gathers 708,000 votes in the first round of the 2017 presidential election and exceeds 1,033,000 votes in the second round. The RN list suffers a strong demobilization in the European election with 499,000 votes in 2019 and then declines to 285,000 votes in 2021. These short-term fluctuations show that there is indeed a large FN electorate that can be mobilized throughout the region, even if this mobilization has experienced a sharp decline, being divided by more than three within 4 years.

The scores of LFI have undergone similar changes.

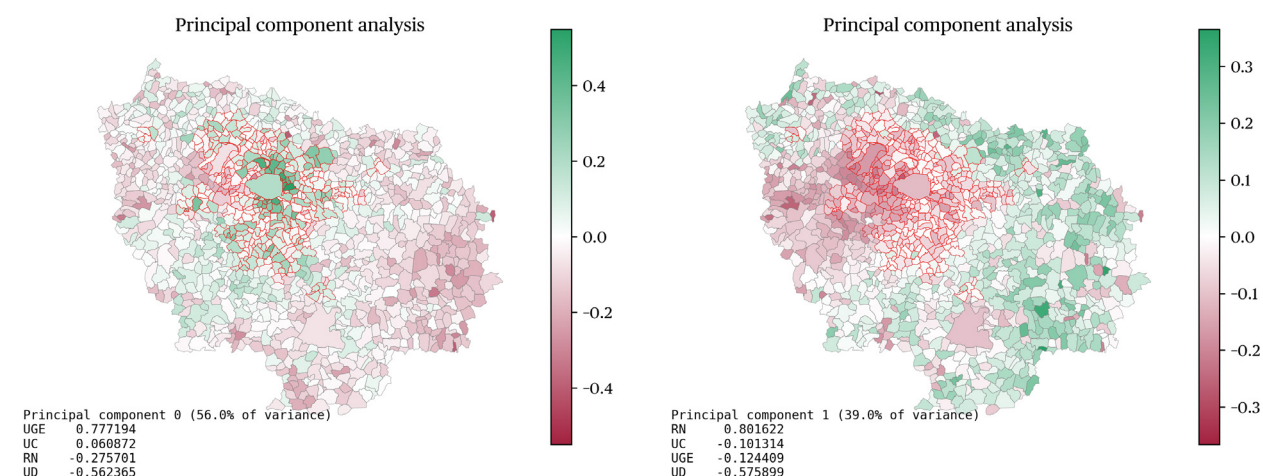
Jean-Luc Mélenchon obtained 1,224,978 votes in 2017 in the first round (i.e., regionally more than Marine Le Pen in the second round) but Unbowed France declined sharply with 218,578 votes in the European election, i.e., a sixfold division of its electoral base due to increased competition from EELV (561,000 votes and 15.9% of votes cast). Clémentine Autain, the leader of the LFI list, received 222,456 votes or 10.25% of the votes cast.

While the electorates and party bases of LFI and the RN occupy opposite positions in the political spectrum and build on very different social and local presence, the two parties experience similar difficulties in intermediate elections. Their strength depends largely on their leader, who is also a well-known and easily identified front-runner. While the FN benefits from a long-standing partisan affiliation and a lasting presence in the French political arena, LFI faces competition from variable opponents on the left, which contributed to its good performance in the presidential election but also to its relative fragility in other elections.

It would thus be very risky to draw lessons for 2022 from the electoral results of 2019 and 2021, as the dynamics of mobilization and demobilization and the evolution of the number of candidates influence the results in the first round of voting. LFI will face competition from far-left (LO, NPA) as well as center-left parties (EELV, PS, PRG with Christiane Taubira). Marine Le Pen, who for a long time had been the sole heiress of her electoral segment, having inherited the party from her father, is today facing vigorous competition from Eric Zemmour. Zemmour has managed to capture specific components of the nationalist, right and far-right middle-upper classes, while the RN's electorate remains largely peri-urban, working-class, with few university graduates and many precarious workers.

Political dynamics of center parties

French political life is characterized by two main dynamics. The first is the long-standing and sustained rise of the far right, whose roller-coaster scores reach ever higher peaks in presidential elections. Although Marine Le Pen is perceived as having been severely defeated in the second round of 2017, she nonetheless achieved the best score in her party's history and attracted no less than 22 per cent of registered voters (33.9 per cent of those who voted). Whilst this progression exerts an increasing pressure on other political forces, the RN vote remains highly controversial in French society. The far right is thus in a position of veto player, controlling the electoral threshold for access to the second round of elections while still being perceived as an unacceptable choice by a majority of voters. Moreover, the RN's electoral pressure is exerted differently in elections with single-member constituencies such as the presidential election versus proportional (European) or list-based elections. By advancing to second rounds involving three or sometimes four parties, the



main party of the extreme right exerts considerable pressure on the choices of voters who reject it. It is therefore not possible to understand the overall evolution of the French political system without taking into account the decisive and structuring weight of the RN vote. The second main dynamic, first observed in 2015, is the likely durable weakening of the PS and the cyclical weakening of LR. This has paved the way for LREM's emergence by opening up a space at the center of the political spectrum, which also features several other parties (MODEM, Agir and now Horizon, the new party of former Prime Minister Edouard Philippe).

At the regional level, the LR vote is more structural. Jean-Paul Huchon's left-wing list won in 2004 in a second round involving three parties, and managed to keep his seat in 2010. In 2015, Valérie Pécresse won, also in a three-way contest, against Claude Bartolone (PS) with a 100,000-vote lead. This electoral history underlines the importance of the pressure of the RN mentioned above in the context of second rounds involving three parties. In 2021 it was in a rare four-way tie that Valérie Pécresse was largely re-elected, gathering 300,000 votes more than the United Left list led by EELV candidate Julien Bayou. In the first round of voting, she had obtained 500,000 votes more than her closest direct competitor, the RN's Jordan Bardella. This is in contrast to the fact that, in contexts of strong mobilization, the Ile-de-France region is not markedly right-leaning: in 2017, the centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron came out on top with 1.4 million votes ahead of François Fillon, and in 2012, François Hollande defeated Nicolas Sarkozy in the region. The gap between LREM and LR was maintained in the 2019 European elections, with Macron's party achieving 3 times the score of the parliamentary right-wing opposition (27.2% against 9.28% of votes cast).

The score of the socialist left, on the other hand, is experiencing a lasting dilution. Half of their supporters, especially among the upper classes and highly educated, have rallied to the LREM vote, while competition from EELV and new fragmented candidacies on the left (who themselves struggle to build a stable voter base) are reducing their regional influence. The left's loss of the re-

gion in the 2015 elections, combined with the profound failure of Benoît Hamon's presidential candidacy in 2017, concluded a series of unprecedented local defeats. The social and territorial basis of these political forces have eroded, leading to increased electoral fragmentation.

Socio-spatial distribution of the vote

When compared to other regions of France, voting behavior in the Ile-de-France region is highly specific. The intensity of social polarization is higher than in other regions, while at the same time the share of immigrant population and descendants of migrants is higher than in the rest of metropolitan France. To analyze the spatial distribution of electoral results, we use a multivariate descriptive method called PCA. This method makes it possible to reveal the main oppositions and similarities between the variables and the territories. Several axes are described. They are all orthogonal to each other and account for a decreasing part of the global inertia of the initial data. The first axis is the most structuring, preserving 56% of the initial inertia of the second round results.

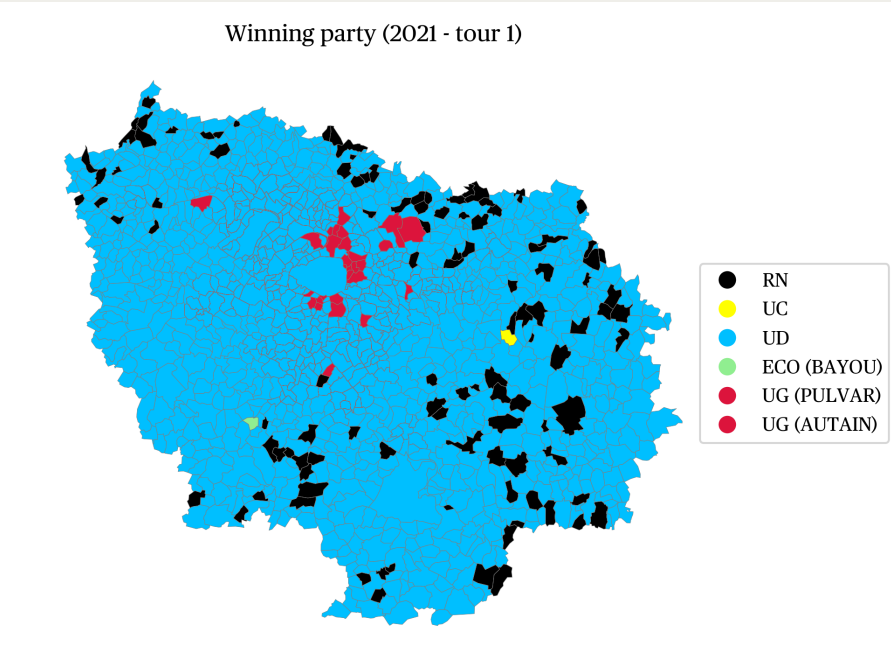
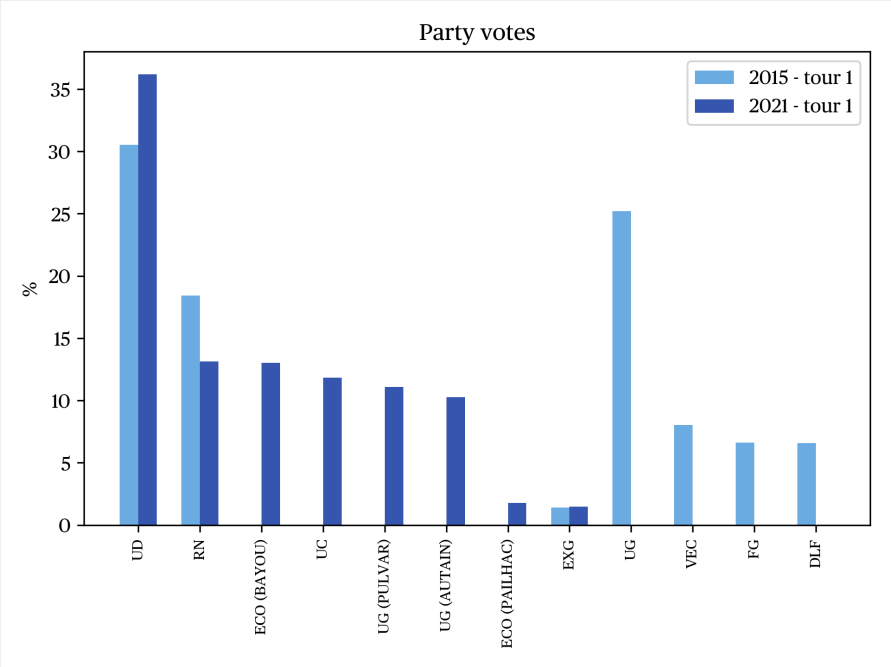
The green areas correspond to municipalities where the left-wing vote - represented in the second round of the 2021 election by a coalition led by the Ecologists - is strongest. The red areas, on the other hand, are characterized by stronger support for center-right parties and an over-representation of the RN vote. The spatial distribution of left-leaning and right-leaning municipalities only partially reflects the center/periphery cleavage, and would therefore require a more specific analysis. Paris's internal heterogeneity, which is not shown on the maps, reproduces the dynamics at hand in the near suburbs. The analysis of the red areas is relatively complex: while they are all characterized by a low level of left-wing votes, significant internal heterogeneity exists. In the green areas, on the other hand, the levels of support for the various left-wing parties (apparent in the first round of voting) are largely correlated.

The second axis, which accounts for 39% of the variance (or 95% of the total variance on two axes) captures the opposition between the distribution of the cen-

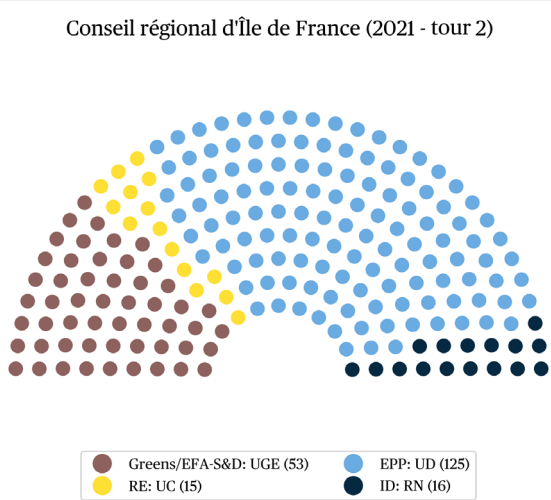
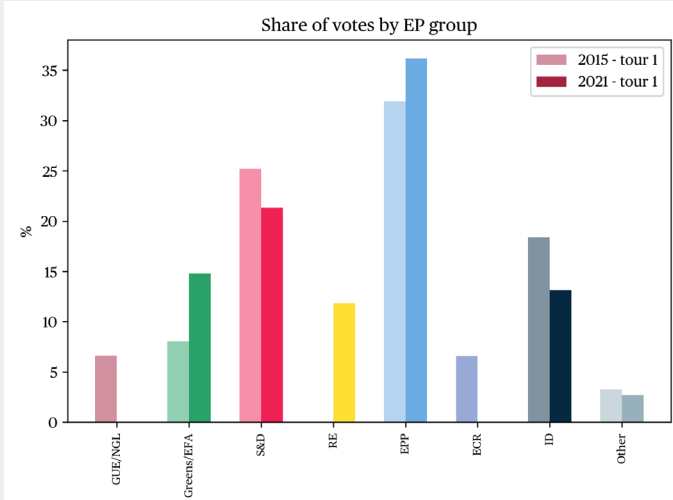
ter-right and RN votes. This opposition does not operate along a center/periphery gradient but along an east/west gradient. To the west of Paris, we find areas characterized by a higher prevalence of the right-wing vote (V. Pécresse), while the northern and southern confines of the region and its eastern third (corresponding to the department of Seine et Marne) show a clear overrepresentation of the FN vote. It is not these peripheries that stand out from the rest of the region, but rather the Paris metropolis, whose

social and political structure strongly diverge from the national average. We also note that distance from the urban center is only a fragile approximation for more complex spatial structures.

On the whole, the Ile-de-France region stands out because of its atypical character: low levels of support for the far right, a high level of education, and strong social segregation lead to a dominance of parties located at the center of the political spectrum.



European indicators





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Regional election in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, 20-27 June 2021

On June 20 and 27, 2021, the seventh regional elections since the decentralization laws of 1982 and 1985 were held in France. These laws made the regions – which result from successive regroupings of the departments over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries – territorial authorities administered by regional councils elected by direct universal suffrage.¹

The most recent law, the "NOTRe" law of 2015 (an acronym standing for "Law on the New Territorial Organization of the Republic") re-divided continental France into 12 regions, merging the former regions of Burgundy and Franche-Comté.²

What analysis can be made of these elections in this region of central-eastern France, where they were held for the second time? Three main points – supported by electoral data and maps – are addressed: the electoral offer and campaign; the surge in abstention; electoral audiences and their evolution.

Seven running lists and a bland campaign

Seven party lists were competing for these elections in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté (BFC), compared to ten in 2015. We briefly review these lists, from the left to the right of the political spectrum.

The first two lists came from the far left. The first list represented LO (Working-class Struggle) and was led by Claire Rocher, a nurse at the University Hospital of Dijon and a long-time party activist, who already headed the list of the same party in the 2015 elections. The second list was led by Bastien Faudot, a city councilor of Belfort. It involved various political associations including LFI (Unbowed France) and GRS (Republican and Socialist Left),

a micro-party composed of former members of the left wing of the PS (Socialist Party) and the MRC (Citizen and Republican Movement, which for many years was led by its founder Jean-Pierre Chevènement, a former minister and a significant regional figure).³ Faudot himself was a member of the GRS (Tenoux, 2021). Due to their lack of support in the first round (see Table 1), these two lists were unable to advance to the second round, and were not either allowed to merge with other lists.⁴

The third list was led by the outgoing president of the regional council, Marie-Guite Dufay (PS), a retired employment center executive. Dufay became President of the Franche Comté region by succeeding Raymond Forni (PS) in 2008 (at that time, she also served as deputy mayor of Besançon), and became the first President of BFC in 2015. In 2021, she logically headed a traditional "Union of the Left" list, comprising socialists, communists and left-wing radicals. In the second round, this list also included some candidates from EELV (Europe Ecology - The Greens) – the fourth list in the region – which had obtained 10% of the vote in the first round but opted for a tactical merger with the other left-wing list in the second round. This list was led by Stéphanie Modde, a former regional councillor of Burgundy (2004-2015) and municipal councilor of Dijon (2008-2020). The autonomous Green lists that Modde had led in the past – in 2015 (at the regional level) and 2020 (in Dijon) – had not reached 5% of the votes cast, which did not allow them to qualify for the second round. This also explains why the region previously did not have any outgoing Green councilors. In

1. The author thanks Claude Patriat and Dominique Labbé for the exchanges concerning the analysis of these elections, and reviewing the article. He also thanks the BLUE team for the data they made available for the article.

2. On the territorial division in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, see Chapuis (2019).

3. A Belfort native, he was the Mayor from 1983 to 1997, and from 2001 to 2007. Between 1973 and 2014, he also was an MP and a Senator for the Belfort area between 1973 and 2014. Moreover, before decentralisation, he was briefly the President of the Franche-Comté regional council in 1981-82.

4. Regional elections take place in two rounds. To participate in the second round, a list must receive at least 10% of the vote in the first round. Lists may also merge with other lists in the second round if they have reached at least 5% of the vote in the first round.

a • Lists competing in the 2021 regional election and their scores (percentage of votes cast)

	1 ^{er} tour	2 ^{ème} tour
C. Rocher (LO)	2,7	–
B. Faudot (DVG)	4,5	–
M.-G. Dufay (PS, PRG, PCF)	26,5	42,2
D. Thuriot (LREM)	11,7	9,8
S. Modde (EELV)	10,3	–
G. Platret (LR, DVD)	21,0	24,2
J. Odoul (RN)	23,2	23,8

2021, the hurdles that had led to this double defeat were eventually overcome by the Greens.

The fifth list was that of The Republic in Motion (LREM), the “presidential majority”. It was led by lawyer and former PS member Denis Thuriot, who has served as the mayor of Nevers (33,000 inhabitants) since 2014, when he defeated the socialist incumbent with the support of center-right and center parties. Since 2016, he has got closer to Emmanuel Macron and LREM. Having garnered 11.7% of the votes cast in the first round, his list qualified for the second round.

The sixth list was that of Gilles Platret, the mayor of Chalon-sur-Saône (45,000 inhabitants) since 2014. A former member of the RPR, Platret now ran for the Republicans (LR), whose list he led in 2021 regional election. His list was also supported by the UDI (Union of Democrats and Independents) and DLF (France Arise), a party that presented its own list in 2015.

The seventh and final list was that of the RN (National Rally, formerly the National Front, FN). It was led by Julien Odoul who, after having been a member of the PS, the New Centre and later the UDI, joined the FN in 2015. He was elected regional councillor of Burgundy-Franche-Comté that same year. The regional list of the FN was then led by Sophie Montel who broke with the FN in 2017 to briefly join Florian Philippot’s “Patriots” party. In 2021, Odoul himself took over the leadership of the RN for the regional election. In the days following the election, he was appointed national spokesperson of the RN.

In a context dominated by the COVID-19 epidemic, the campaign for the regional elections, with its specific stakes, hardly aroused voters’ interest: in an Ifop poll conducted in June 2021, only 24% of voters expressed interest for the election (compared to 41% during the 2020 municipal election or 72% during the 2017 presidential election) (Coulange and Manternach, 2021). In the late Spring of 2021, months of health crisis and restrictions on public liberties, which were only partially lifted as of May 2021 (Patriat, 2021), had durably distracted citizens’ attention from regional issues.

In the French context, allowing genuinely regional political dynamics to emerge has always been a challenge... especially since the election is organized at departmental level. Evidence of limited regionalization can be found

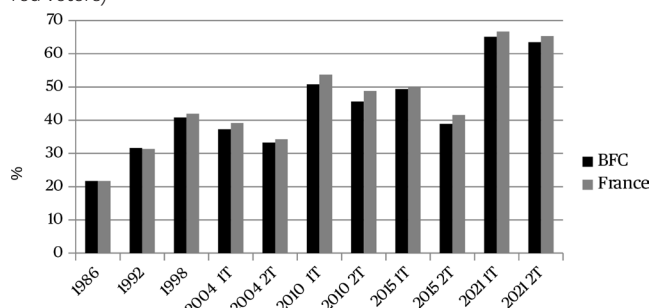
e.g. in a study of the 2010 regional election in the region of Lorraine, which shows that territorial factors, when they exist, are dominated by the nationalization of electoral behavior (Andolfatto, 2011). As the identities of the region – whose map was redrawn in 2015 – as well as their institutional leverage remain weak, an autonomous regional political scene hardly exists, and elected officials – in this case from Burgundy and Franche-Comté (the absence of a common name is in itself revealing) – have not really tried to create one since 2015. Rather, the creation of “greater regions” has given rise to a surge in parochialism in those regions that disappeared in the merger, feeding sterile competition and undermining the affirmation of the new regions. This situation has had an especially strong impact on the BFC region, due in particular to the competition between the two former regional capitals, Besançon and Dijon. As a result, the new “greater region” has not really found popular legitimacy. More structurally, the place of the regions in the French administrative organization – like their share of public spending – remains limited, even if it tends to increase. In 2020, total regional spending accounted for less than 18 per cent of local government spending (and less than 9 per cent of total state spending).

That said, during the health crisis, the president of the BFC regional council did stand out of the crowd – and, by so doing, also made herself known to the general public, who to a large extent did not know her before – by ordering face masks that were requisitioned upon their arrival at Basel-Mulhouse airport (de Lavergne, 2020; Tenoux and Rof, 2020) by the authorities of the neighboring Grand-Est region. This resulted in tensions with the Grand-Est regional prefect and regional health agency, reflecting the unpreparedness and confusion that prevailed at the beginning of the health crisis. It also reveals the tensions that existed – and even persist – between a state administration marked by Jacobinism, on the one hand, and territorial administrations and local elected officials, on the other.

A few weeks before the regional elections, the president of the regional council of BFC also spoke out in various national media on the issue of euthanasia, following the death (by assisted suicide in Switzerland) of a former political figure from Franche-Comté with whom she was very close, Paulette Guinchard-Kunster. Guinchard-Kunster had served as a member of the National Assembly for the department of Doubs and had been a secretary of state in the Jospin government. Marie-Guite Dufay called for “changing a law [which] is not sufficient to honor the wishes of those who are lucid, suffer and know they cannot be cured” (Dufay, 2021).

In spite of these positions or acts – however important or symbolic they may be – it seems very difficult to speak of the existence of a regional political scene in Burgundy-Franche-Comté. The campaign has been dominated by speculation over the relative strength of the various political forces (and of the RN in particular), as well as over real or alleged negotiations between organizations – would

b • Abstention in regional elections (1986-2021) (percentage of registered voters)



the ecologists join the Dufay list in the second round? would the LREM list advance to the second round? – much more than by regional of public policy issues. This context, both structural and conjunctural, partially explains the record levels of abstention in the 2021 election.

A surge in abstention

The 2021 regional elections saw record levels of abstention, both at the national level (66,7% of registered voters in the first round) and in Burgundy-Franche-Comté specifically (65,1%). Only one in three voters went to the polls. Abstention levels have been rising steadily since regional councils have first been elected by direct universal suffrage (see Figure a), reaching a record high in 2010 before declining slightly in 2015. The 2015 regional elections were – at least partially – perceived as intermediary elections in which voters could express dissatisfaction with the political coalition in power (and, in this case, with François Hollande’s policies). Moreover, in the context of great political confusion that followed the Islamist attacks of 2015, it was feared that the National Front could take over regional governments – especially in BFC, where a FN victory was announced. This had boosted participation, particularly in the second round (61.1% in BFC).⁵ Between the 2015 and 2021 elections, abstention thus increased sharply, by 26 percentage points (in BFC), corresponding to a 67% increase vis-à-vis 2015. More fundamental and conjunctural reasons explain this change.

The analysis of the causes of abstention in regional elections proposed by Pierre Bréchon ten years ago could be reconfirmed in full: “On the one hand, most regions lack a strong sense of identity. Regional elected officials still have rather limited competences and, as France is still very Jacobin [centralized], their action is poorly known (...). On the other hand, there has been a trend towards increased abstention in almost all elections since the late 1980s” (Bréchon, 2011, p. 44).

In addition to this lack of institutional recognition and democratic crisis, turnout was also affected by conjunctural effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its management by public authorities, not to mention the fear it generated – a fear which, to some extent, tended to be fueled by public authorities themselves. The abstention rate was already very high during the 2020 municipal elections. In addition, in BFC, the mortality rate due to the

5. BFC was one of the four regions where FN came first in the first round (see Fourquet & Manternach 2016, p. 28-32).

COVID-19 epidemic was higher than the national average (see Figure b). Despite this fact, abstention in the BFC regional election was only slightly lower than average. Levels of abstention, however, varied widely between departments (see Table in the appendix). Haute-Saône and, secondarily, Côte d’Or are the departments with the highest turnout. This can hardly be explained by the tendency of lower levels of urbanization to induce stronger social control over electoral behavior: in fact, this trend can also be observed in other departments, and Haute-Saône and Côte d’Or also include significant urban areas. Conversely, Saône-et-Loire and Territoire-de-Belfort display the highest proportion of non-voters. Again, explaining these differences is difficult: undoubtedly, the feeling of belonging to the greater BFC region is weaker in the latter two departments than in the former (Haute-Saône and Côte d’Or). The Territoire-de-Belfort also appears to be more oriented towards Alsace, while a large part of Saône-et-Loire is (at least economically) connected to the Lyon region.

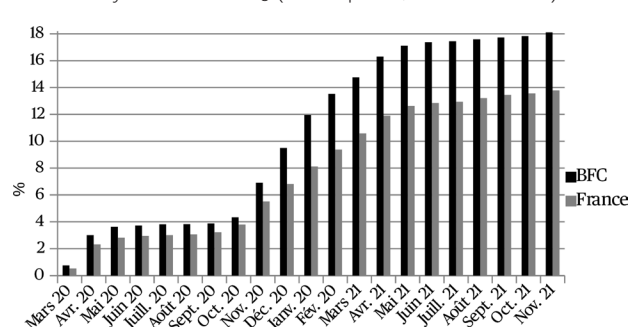
Figure c presents mortality due to COVID-19 per 10,000 inhabitants in France and in the BFC region. This data does not include COVID-related mortality in institutions other than hospitals and retirement homes, for which no regional data is available. Taking into account out-of-hospital deaths in national aggregates results in an increase in the level of mortality due to COVID-19 by 23% as of November 30, 2021.

Analysis of the results: A tri-polar political system

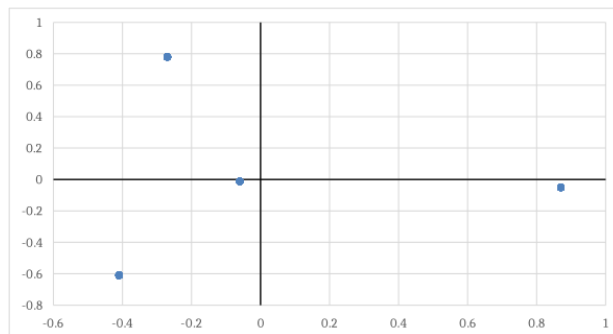
Figure d presents the results of a principal component analysis (PCA) based, for each list, on the scores obtained in each municipality. The coordinates of the points correspond to the respective average positions of each list on the first two axes of the PCA. This graph accounts for more than two-thirds of the variance of the complete table of all the scores (68%). It therefore summarizes the main contrasts at work during this election.

The first dimension (horizontal axis; 37% of variance) opposes the LR list to all the others, but particularly to the Dufay list. The second dimension (vertical axis; 31% of variance), which is almost as important as the first one, opposes the RN list to all the others, and especially

c • Mortality due to COVID-19 (deaths per 10,000 inhabitants)



d • Principal component analysis: main oppositions in the first round of the 2021 regional election in BFC (scores of lists by municipality)



to the Dufay list. In other words, there are three main electorates (far right, liberal right, left), not aligned on the classic right-left scale, but arranged like the three vertices of an equilateral triangle, i.e. equidistant from each other. Curiously, the Ecologists are at the orthocenter of this same triangle, i.e. at almost equal distance from the other three electorates.⁶

To understand this singular arrangement, a more in-depth investigation would be necessary, as did A. Siegfried (2010)⁷ by analyzing the sociological characteristics and political traditions of each of the spaces dominated by these four electorates. It is also important to measure the respective dynamics of these electorates.

Decline in voter support

Due to the sharp increase in abstention, support for all party lists but the Ecologists' declined – or even collapsed – in absolute terms (in 2015, Ecologists ran on two different lists). Note that that these changes are measured in relation to registered voters, which reflects the actual share of the various parties in the electorate. The choice of this measure of audiences in relation to registered voters is all the more important given that abstention was very high in both rounds of voting.⁸ Ignoring it in the analysis of political support (sticking instead to votes cast alone) would be misleading, because the latter percentages only correspond to a third of the electorate.

Compared to 2015, the Dufay list (PS and allies) loses one fifth of its support in the first round. The Platret list (LR and allies) loses 40% of its support compared to 2015. In the 2015 election, the center-right list was led by François Sauvadet, the former president of the Côte d'Or general council and a minister under Nicolas Sarkozy. The RN lost half of its votes, failing to maintain the status of a key player it had gained in 2015. This also explains why

the LREM list decided to compete in the second round: forming a “Republican front” (the French equivalent of the “cordon sanitaire”) to prevent the FN to get to power was no longer deemed necessary.

Department-level results reveal a partial correlation between party (or list) support and local ties of individual party leaders. Marie-Guite Dufay clearly dominates in the departments of her region of origin (the former Franche-Comté), in this case in the Haute-Saône, Doubs and Jura départements (but not in the Territoire-de-Belfort). The “Presidential majority” candidate Denis Thuriot (LREM) more than doubled his regional score in Nièvre, where he obviously succeeded in exploiting criticism towards the Dijon-Besançon duopoly. Gilles Platret (LR) obtained his best scores in Saône-et-Loire, Stéphanie Modde (EELV) in Côte d'Or, Bastien Faudot (LFI and allies) in Territoire-de-Belfort. Only Julien Odoul is an exception to this rule. His best departmental score is achieved in Haute-Saône and, unlike all the other list leaders who perform well above their regional average in their home town, his audience in Sens is slightly lower than the regional average.⁹ The personal attacks Odoul suffered during the campaign, which targeted his personal life and background as a professional model, probably caused him to lose votes.

Compared to national averages, the left (including EELV and LFI) is resisting better in BFC despite high abstention rates. The left has lost a third of its positions nationally (11.2% of registered voters in 2021 compared to 17.2% in 2015), while regionally it has lost under 10% (14.6% of registered voters compared to 15.9%). It is also doing better at the regional level than at the national level (which was not the case in 2015). Paradoxically, given the level of abstention, it has consolidated its positions. But this situation is mainly due to the passivity of voters and therefore remains precarious.

The FN, which collapses both nationally and regionally, seems to take no advantage of the various crises that have plagued Emmanuel Macron's five-year term. However, it still does a little better in BFC than in the rest of France. It lost half of its votes regionally while, nationally, it declined by 55%. Similarly, BFC retains a FN/RN audience higher than the national average: 7.7% in BFC against 6% nationally. This confirms that the BFC region remains a bulwark of the FN, characterized by a significant popular vote in favor of the latter, to be linked in particular to deindustrialization and the social disruption that it has caused (Le Bras and Todd, 2013, pp. 274 and 291).

Center-right parties suffered the most significant setback. They lost half of their regional audience (compared with 40% nationally) and remain weak in the region (with 7.0% of registered voters compared with 9.4% nationally). This confirms a long-term trend that saw both former regions of Burgundy and Franche-Comté swing to the left in

6. However, when a point is closer to the centre of the figure, it is considered that the PCA does not necessarily correctly reflect the data represented by that point.

7. See references for footnote 8..

8. This choice of data is also placed in the tradition of classical electoral sociology. See the new edition of André Siegfried's "Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République (Editions de l'ULB, Bruxelles, 2010), with a foreword by the geographer Christian Vandermotten. See also Michel Bussi, Christophe Le Digol, Christophe Voilliot, ed., Le tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest d'André Siegfried – 100 ans après, héritages et postérités, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016.

9. By contrast, Denis Thuriot and Gilles Platret obtained good results compared to other lists in the cities where they are mayors (Nevers and Chalons). However, the abstention rate was above 70% in these two cities!

e • The presidency of the regional councils of Burgundy, Franche-Comté and BFC and the successive regional majorities (1986-2021)

Bourgogne	1986-89	Marcel Lucotte, UDF [droite]
	1989-92	Raymond Janot, UDR-UDF [droite]
	1992-93	Jean-Pierre Soisson, UDF [droite]
	1993-98	Jean-François Bazin, RPR [droite]
	1998-2004	Jean-Pierre Soisson, DL-UMP [droite]
	2004-15	François Patriat, PS [gauche]
Franche-Comté	1986-88	Edgar Faure, UDF [droite]
	1988-98	Pierre Chantelat, UDF [droite]
	1998-2004	Jean-François Humbert, UDF puis UMP [droite]
	2004-08	Raymond Forni, PS [gauche]
	2008-15	Marie-Guite Dufay, PS [gauche]
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	2015-...	Marie-Guite Dufay, PS [gauche]

2004 (see the list of regional council presidents and regional majorities in Figure e). The 2004 election was marked by the logic of intermediate elections (censuring the coalition in power two years after Jacques Chirac's re-election in the presidential election against Jean-Marie Le Pen and the elimination of the socialist candidate, Lionel Jospin). Since then, despite the ups and downs of political life, and taking into account both the incumbent bonus and the progressive affirmation of regional powers – even if these are still weak, as we have said – the strength of left-wing parties in Burgundy and Franche-Comté, and later BFC, has always been confirmed. A study has shown that the merger with Franche-Comté prevented a victory of center-right parties in the region, mostly because the leader of the Burgundian conservatives in 2015 – François Sauvadet – was unable to overcome the reluctance of his Franche-Comtain colleagues (Fourquet & Manternach, 2016, pp. 32-34). In 2021, Gilles Platret could not challenge this situation. Quite the contrary, because of his seemingly clear-cut positions, Platret was the target of criticism from center-right Côte d'Or politicians, while in Nièvre, Denis Thuriot's candidacy deprived him of centrist votes he desperately needed. As elsewhere, many of the region's conservatives were tempted by a rapprochement with LREM, which explains in particular the weakness of Platret's list in Nièvre. All these elements could not but benefit the Dufay list.

In the second round of voting in 2021, which was contested by four parties, Marie-Guite Dufay easily obtained a plurality of votes (with 42.2% of the votes cast, see Figure f). Dufay's list still lost more than a quarter of its support compared to the second round of voting in 2015, due to a very high abstention rate. She was elected by only one out of seven inhabitants of Burgundy and Franche-Comté (compared to one out of five in 2015). For their part, the audiences of the classical right and the RN collapsed in the same proportions: both lost more than half of their votes in 2015. Finally, Thuriot's list (LREM) maintained its scores fairly high in the second round.

In percentages of the votes cast (note, however, that this is not a very accurate measurement from the point of view of electoral sociology given the high level of abstention, and also difficult to compare with the results of

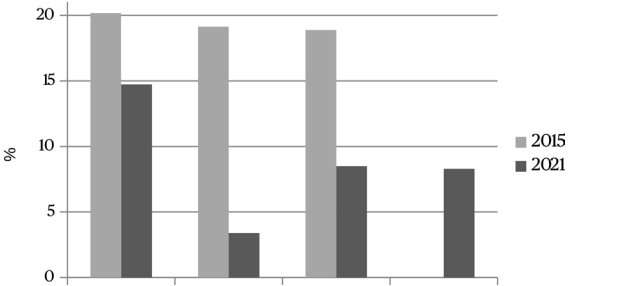
2015, given this same surge in abstention), the classical right accounts for 24.2% of the vote, the RN for 23.8%, and LREM for 8.8%. The ranks of parties are unchanged compared to 2015 (except that LREM was then absent from the election) but the Dufay list gained nearly 8 points while its two main competitors lost roughly the same percentage. In a context of very high abstention, the latter saved some face by benefiting – as was already mentioned – from an incumbent and notoriety bonus that allowed a stronger mobilization of its voters, especially in the former Franche-Comté, but also in Côte d'Or. The PS list could retain the support of three quarters of its 2015 voters, while LR and RN's binding rates hardly exceeded 40% (see the attached table). It is in Nièvre – home to the leader of the LREM list – that the PS list is declining most sharply. In this same department, however, the demobilization of the LR electorate is even stronger. The PS lost a third of its former electorate, while LR lost three quarters of it. On the other hand, the RN resists best in the departments where LR is declining the most, in this case Nièvre and Côte d'Or. This confirms the fundamental oppositions between these different electoral behaviors.

Epilogue

As elsewhere in France, the 2021 regional elections in BFC have led to the – relatively easy – re-election of the team that has administered the region since 2015 (and even since 2004 if we take into account the political majorities in Burgundy and Franche-Comté since that date). However, given the very high abstention rate – the election saw nearly two thirds of voters turn away from the polls, leading most parties to lose support in absolute terms – the incumbents' victory is only apparent. Moreover, the context of the election was not particularly favorable to left-wing parties, as the PS had almost disappeared from the national scene. This should not have favored Dufay, who could hardly rely on anything other than her record and local presence. In the end, it was mostly the deeply rooted left-wing culture of parts of Nièvre and former Franche-Comté that provided for a victory of the left.

Following the election, the Dufay list won a clear majority of seats in the regional council (this majority was much narrower following the 2015 elections). In 2021, Dufay's list obtains 57 out of 100 seats in the Regional

f • Party support in the 2nd round of voting in the 2015 and 2021 regional elections (as percent of registered voters)



Council, against 51 in 2015. This results from the majority bonus enjoyed by the leading list in this type of election (with 42.2% of votes, the Dufay list obtains 57% of seats). However, somewhat paradoxically, the regional majority is now divided into three political groups: the PS and its allies, communists, and Ecologists. This complexifies the “management” of the regional majority, which formed a single political group after the elections of 2015. Naturally, the gains in seats for Dufay’s list have impacted the results of all other parties. The decline of the other parties is much more pronounced, and is reflected in a significant loss of seats. Of course, this new distribution of seats has not reduced the democratic crisis. On the contrary, with the surge in abstention, the crisis has worsened, and political reference points – and attitudes – have become even more blurred.

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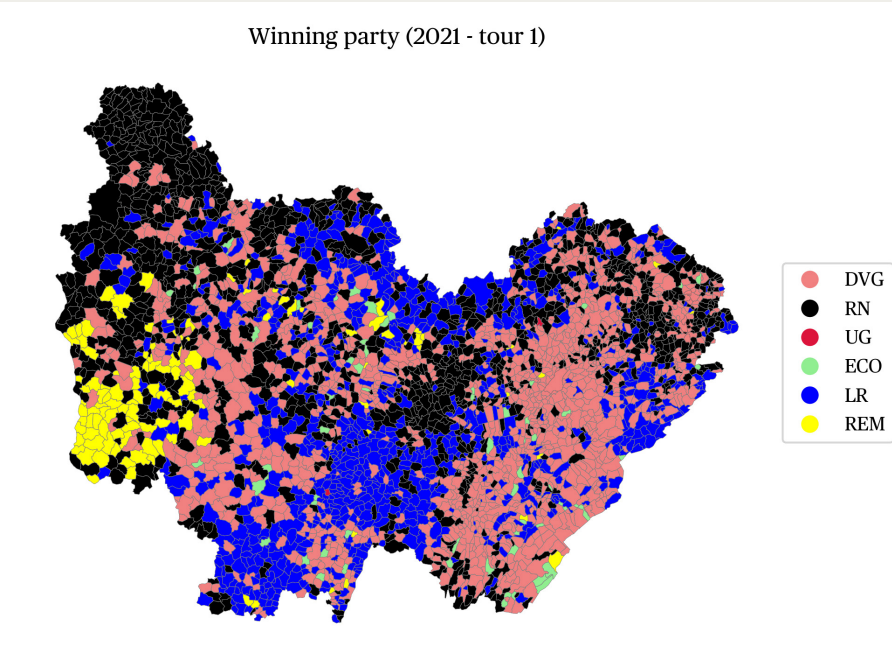
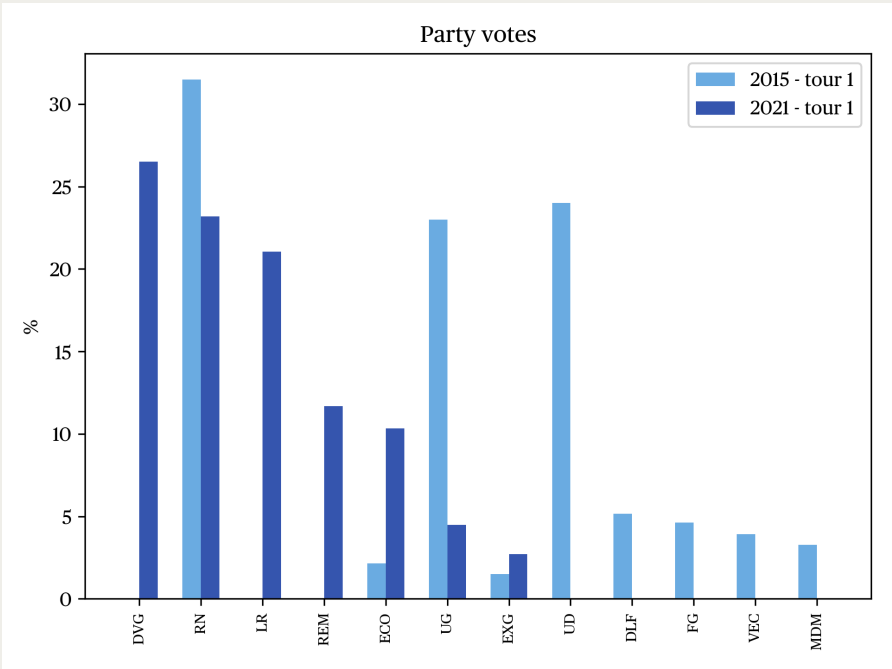
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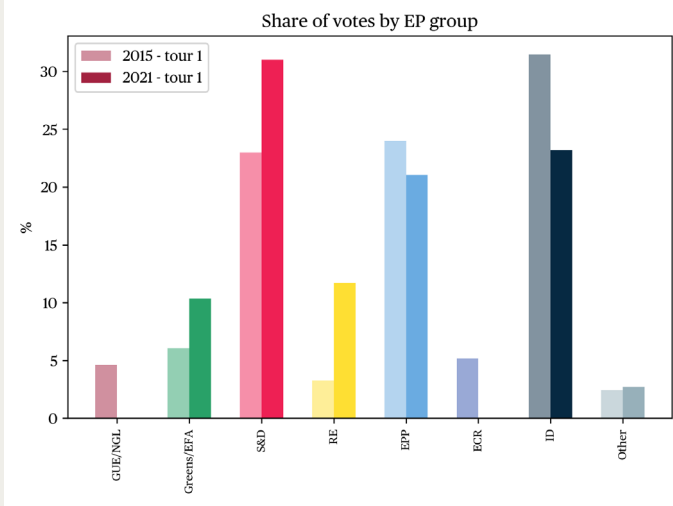
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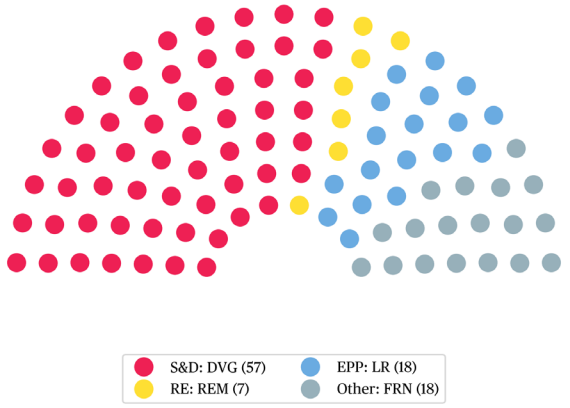
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European indicators



Conseil régional de Bourgogne-Franche-Comté (2021 - tour 2)





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Regional election in Hauts-de-France, 20-27 June 2021

40

On June 20 and 27, 2021, the citizens of Hauts-de-France were called to the polls of the regional election.¹ This election was marked by very low turnout: 32.84% in the first round and 33.18% in the second round compared to 54.81% and 61.24% respectively in the previous election in December 2015.

While the election was held amid the Covid-19 crisis, the voter demobilization, also observed in the rest of the country but even more pronounced in Hauts-de-France, was nevertheless not directly related to the epidemic risk. In June 2021, unlike in the 2020 municipal election (Haute *et al.* 2021), demobilization was not greater among the most at-risk elderly, unvaccinated people or antivaccinationists than in the general population (Haute 2021). While the vaccine uptake was associated with higher voter turnout (Jaffré 2021), this stands also true for the municipal election (Ward *et al.* 2020). Voter turnout in this regional election was in fact dependent on the same social and political logic as in the previous 2015 election (Gougou 2017a: 52-53), with a much more massive demobilization of young people, the working classes, and voters least interested in politics (Haute 2021; Jaffré 2021), three categories who traditionally participate less than the average voter.

A political landscape marked by the decline of the left and the success of the far right

The Hauts-de-France region (6 million inhabitants), which was formed in the 2015 merger of the former Nord-Pas-de-Calais (4 million inhabitants) and Picardie (2 million) regions, is a place of historical left-wing dominance, particularly in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais departments.

However, the Socialist Party (PS, S&D) and the French Communist Party (PCF, GUE/NGL), which had many strongholds in the region, have seen their electoral results decline sharply in recent decades. In 2015, the left lost control of the region and 4 of the 5 departments, retaining only a thin majority in Pas-de-Calais. At the same time, the National Front (FN), which has become the National Rally (RN, ID), has obtained results above its national average in the region since the 1980s. From the end of the 2000s, the FN developed its local presence in the former mining basin, but also in more rural areas in the east of the region. Between 2014 and 2020, the FN won 3 municipalities, 13 cantons and 5 legislative districts in the region. In the first round of the 2017 presidential election, Marine Le Pen, who was both the candidate and leader of the FN, scored nearly 10 percentage points higher in the region than its national average (31% against 21.30% of votes cast).

In 2015, as the new region was only weakly identified between the populace – in fact, it did not even have a name –, the main issue at stake in the regional election was the possible victory of the Le Pen list (FN), which gave rise to a highly nationalized campaign (Lefebvre 2016) and generated greater electoral mobilization than at the national level. The FN list gathered a plurality of votes in the first round (40.64%) (see Figure a) but failed in the second round (42.23%) against the united right and center parties led by Xavier Bertrand (57.77%) (see "the data"). The latter, taking advantage of the demobilization of voters favourable to the left, particularly among the working classes (Gougou 2017a: 50-51), in the logic of "intermediate elections" (Parodi 1983), came second in the first round with 24.97% of the vote. The left, divided between three lists, was then forced to withdraw from the second round in favor of Xavier Bertrand to block the extreme right from seizing control of the regional executive (Dolez & Laurent 2016).

In 2021, the situation had changed little. The RN, led

1. This article does not address the departmental elections, which were also held on June 20 and 27, 2021. For an analysis of these elections in Nord and Pas-de-Calais, the two main departments of Hauts-de-France (4 out of 6 million inhabitants), see Eliazord and Haute (2021).

a • Results of the 2021 regional elections in Hauts-de-France

Tête de liste	Listes	Premier tour		Second tour		Sièges (/170)	+/-
		Voix	%	Voix	%		
Xavier Bertrand	LR-UDI-MoDem diss. - LC-LMR-MR	551068	41,42 %	708518	52,37 %	110	-6
Sébastien Chenu	RN-LDP-PL-CNIP-LAF	324260	24,37 %	346918	25,64 %	32	-22
Karima Delli	EELV-LFI-PS-PCF-G-s-GE-PP-PRG-LRDG	252404	18,97 %	297395	21,98 %	28	+28
Laurent Pietraszewski	LREM-MoDem-EC-TdP-Agir-MEI	121466	9,13 %			O	Nv.
Eric Pecqueur	LO	47325	3,56 %			O	=
José Evrard	DLF	27205	2,04 %			O	=
Audric Alexandre	PACE-AE-NC-Volt	6700	0,50 %			O	Nv.
Suffrages exprimés		1330428	95,85 %	1352831	96,45		
Votes blancs		34895	2,51 %	27904	1,99 %		
Votes nuls		22770	1,64 %	21948	1,56 %		
Total		1388093	100	1402683	100	170	=
Abstentions		2838834	67,16	2824849	66,82		
Inscrits/Participation		4226927	32,84	4227532	33,18		

by deputy Sébastien Chenu, was counting on winning the region, especially since the polls prior to the first round showed it neck and neck with incumbent Bertrand (32% against 33% on June 16, 2021) (OpinionWay 2021). The latter, making his re-election at the regional elections a prerequisite for his presidential ambitions for 2022, had managed to set up a list of the united right and center parties under his own leadership despite having himself left his former party, the Republicans (LR, EPP). President Macron's La République en Marche (LREM, Renew) presented a list led by Secretary of State Laurent Pietraszewski, in charge of an unpopular pension reform, on which 4 other members of the government were also running. Finally, the left, having drawn conclusions from their 2015 defeat, presented a list in the first round led by ecologist MEP Karima Delli and including members from Europe-Ecology-The-Greens (EELV, Greens/EFA), Unbowed France (LFI, GUE/NGL), the PCF and the PS.

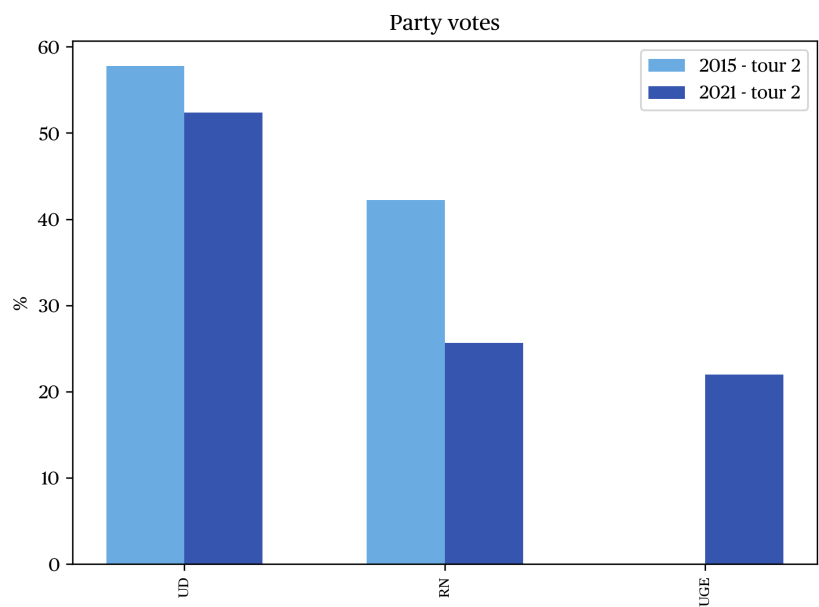
The campaign was of very low intensity due to the health context. The main issue addressed was insecurity, even though the region's competencies in this area are limited. A second issue, which was more local but not solely related to the region, was related to the establishment of wind farms in certain rural areas of Hauts-de-France, which was strongly criticized by both far-right and right-wing parties (Patinaux 2022). Bertrand's declared presidential ambition and the massive presence of ministers on the LREM list, including Justice Minister Éric Dupont-Moretti and Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, further contributed to nationalizing the campaign. However, unlike in 2015, the risk of the RN winning the region appeared much lower (OpinionWay 2021), which did not help mobilize voters.

Unexpected outcomes

In the evening of the first round of voting in 2021, Bertrand (LR) came out on top by a wide margin (41.42%), clearly ahead of Chenu (RN, 24.37%), Delli (United left and Ecologists, 18.97%) and Pietraszewski (LREM, 9.13%) (see "thre data"). In the second round, Bertrand was overwhelmingly re-elected with 52.37% of the votes cast, while the RN and the left improve their scores only marginally with 25.64% and 21.98% respectively (see Figure b).

The presidential majority list, eliminated from the second round as in many regions, was a victim of the unpopularity of the government. The LREM list had to face fierce competition from the Bertrand list within its own electoral base. Indeed, the latter enjoyed a high profile and cultivated a certain localism despite his presidential ambitions. This is evidenced by his ability to bring together on his list the different currents of the right and center as well as representatives of "civil society," particularly from the business world. On the left, while the score of the united list in the first round allowed it to advance to the second round and regain seats in the regional assembly (see Figure b), it was nevertheless much lower than the total votes of the three left-wing lists in 2015 (-9.30 points), which testifies to the inability of the United left and Ecologists' list to stem the demobilization of traditionally supportive social groups (Gougou, 2017a). At the same time, as in other regions, the RN was also impacted by a massive electoral demobilization, which seems unusual (Gougou 2017a). Many voters from the working classes often facing precariousness who had turned to the FN in 2015 (Mayer 2017) have stayed away from ballot boxes in 2021. Moreover, Bertrand was able to benefit

b • Results of the second round in 2015 and 2021



from both a much better notoriety than his other competitors and a more mobilized electoral base: right-wing voters are most represented among older, more educated, and higher-income groups (Sauger 2017: 64-65), which had the highest turnout rates in June 2021. This combination of high visibility and lower demobilization of their electoral bases explains why, at the national level, all outgoing presidents, both right-wing and socialist, have been largely re-elected. Indeed, it should be remembered that one of the rare distinctive features of PS voters compared to those of other left-wing parties is their older age (Gougou 2017b: 58), an important difference at a time when the ballot box is becoming increasingly grey (Haute & Tiberj 2022).

Persistent electoral contrasts

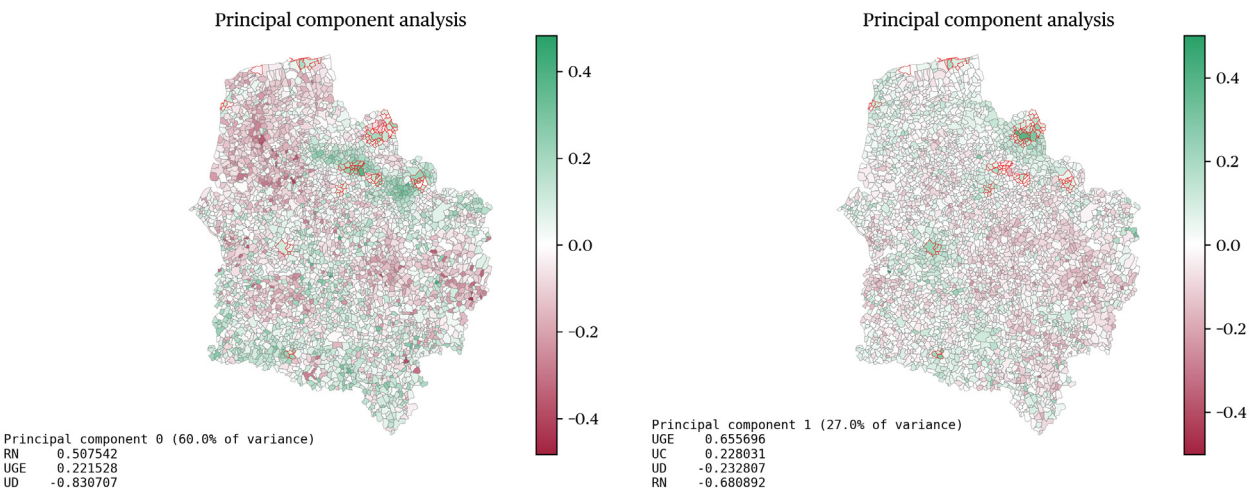
The Hauts-de-France region is marked by electoral contrasts that reflect not only political legacy – as evidenced by the RN’s strength in the former mining basin or

the PCF’s in the Valenciennes region – but above all demographic, economic and social inequalities (Rivière *et al.* 2012). Indeed, while the region has a younger, more working-class, and a somewhat less educated population than the rest of the country, it remains nonetheless very heterogeneous.

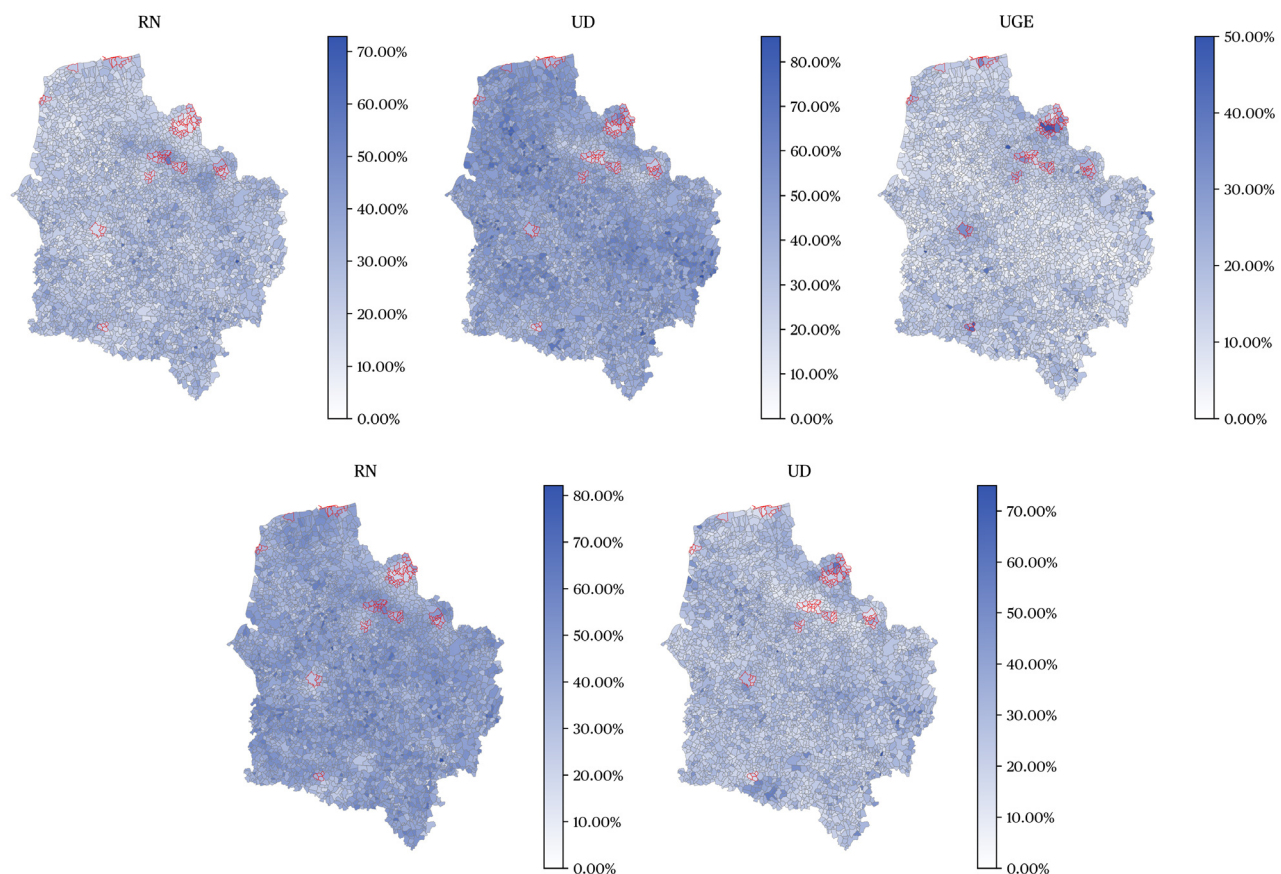
In 2021, two main socio-spatial cleavages appear to structure voting choices. The first one opposes the communes of the former mining basin to the region’s numerous rural communes. While the former suffered from deindustrialization and mass unemployment, leading to the RN and the left obtaining results higher than their regional averages (Wadlow 2021), the latter are home to an older population less confronted with job insecurity, allowing right-wing parties to obtain results higher than their regional average (see Figure c, left). A second one cleavage opposes urban areas – around Lille and Amiens in particular – which, although very heterogeneous (Rivière *et al.* 2012), concentrate a more educated population that votes more for the center or the left, with peripheral territories where the working classes are relegated, particularly the east of the region, where the results of the right wing and the RN are higher than their regional averages (see Figure c, right).

Despite the evolution of the results of the different parties between 2015 and 2021, the electoral geography has changed little, showing that it depends less on the presence of specific candidates than on long-term social and political logic. This is the case for the Bertrand vote (Figure d, center). For the RN, the two maps are very similar (Figure d, left); the party manages to limit its decline in the two communes of the mining basin that it controls (Hénin-Beaumont since 2014 and Bruay-la-Bussière since

c • Principal component analysis of the first round results in 2021



d • Results of the main lists in 2021 (above) and 2015 (below)



2020) (Wadlow 2021), but not in the other constituencies or cantons gained in 2015 and 2017. The electoral impact of its local presence in these territories, while not negligible, remains therefore limited. Finally, the United left and Ecologists' list (Figure d, right) obtained results higher than its regional average in Lille (52.4% of the vote) and its periphery, in the few other large cities of the region (Amiens, Dunkirk, Boulogne-Sur-Mer) as well as in the mining basin. While similar trends could already be observed in 2015 for the PS and EELV lists, the case of the PCF was different. In 2015, the PCF had especially mobilized in their popular strongholds of Valenciennes and the mining basin, two areas in which the left-wing vote was not always above average in 2021. The United left and Ecologists' list therefore seems to have had great difficulty in mobilizing former PCF voters.

Conclusion and perspectives

While some parties and candidates saw the regional elections in the Hauts-de-France as a "launching pad" for the 2022 presidential election, it must be said that the results of the election fell short of their expectations. The inability of the United left and Ecologists to stimulate a mobilization dynamic only confirmed how divided the left was. Similarly, the failure of the RN, who proved unable to conquer the region and to remobilize voters who had turned to them in 2015, has weakened the candidacy of Le Pen, who is now competing with fellow far-right candidate Éric Zemmour (Reconquest). Finally, despite winning the

election by a large margin, Bertrand did not set in motion a national dynamic that would have allowed the right's potential electoral base, who has been shrinking socially and politically since 2017, to expand again (Desplaces *et al.* 2021). These thwarted prospects are linked to the very low turnout recorded during this election. This low participation in turn reflects the difficulty of parties and candidates to mobilize citizens who are the most distant from politics, or at least partisan politics. This election highlights the political imbalances that result from massive electoral demobilization, which benefits the parties and candidates (in this case Bertrand), whose potential voters are keen to participate.

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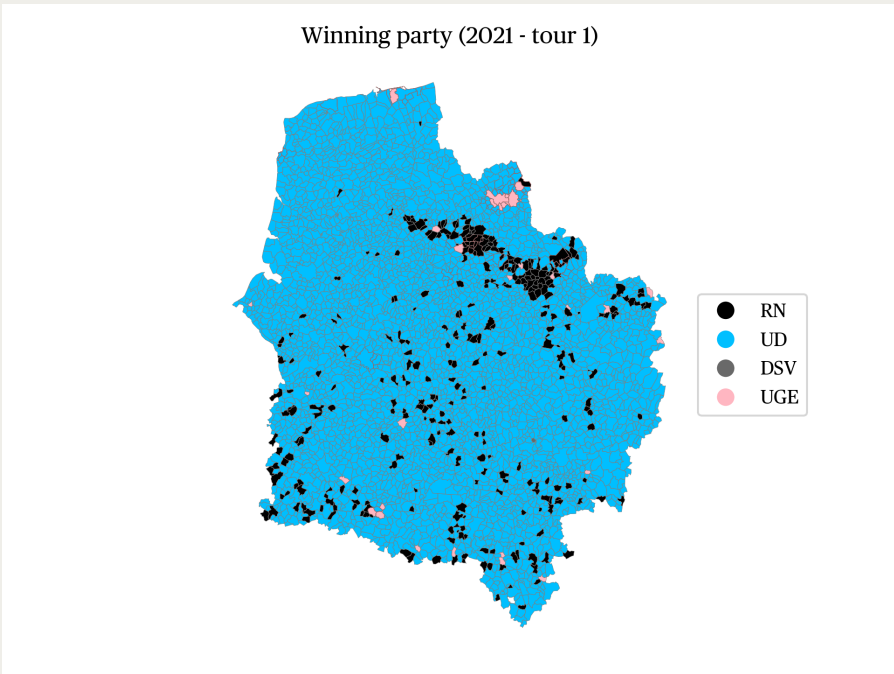
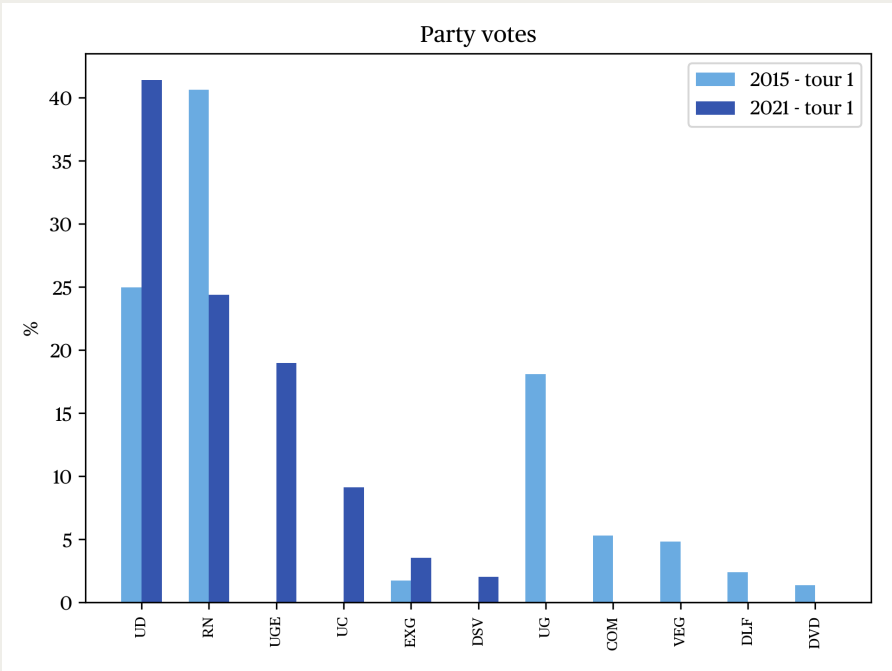
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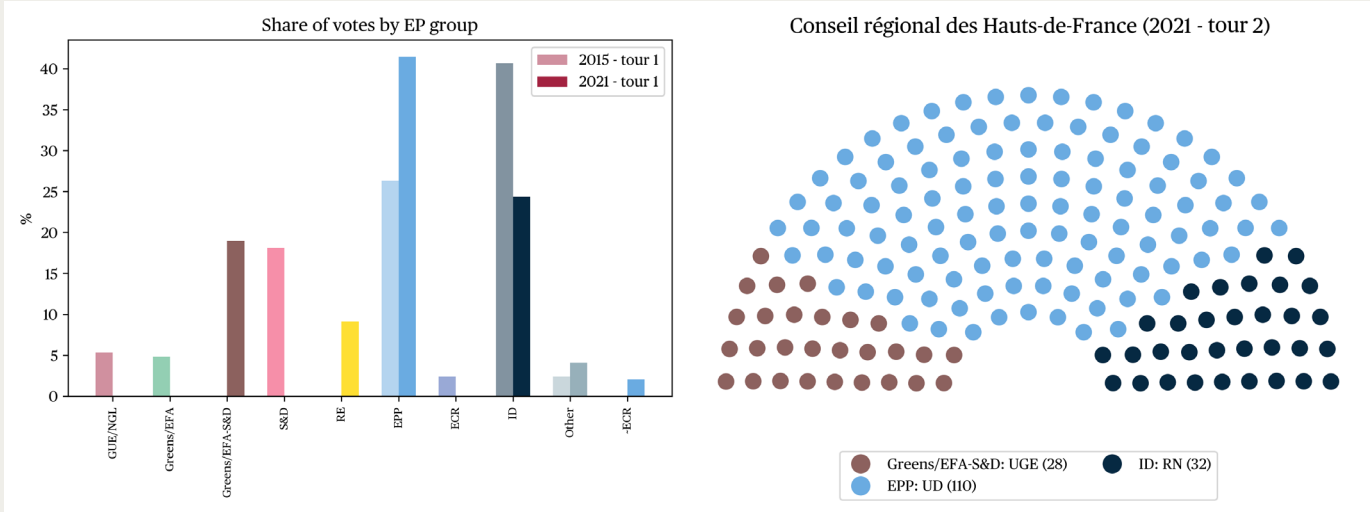
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European indicators





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Regional election in Pays-de-la-Loire, 20-27 June 2021

46

A regional election was held in Pays de la Loire on June 20 and 27, 2021. Originally planned to take place in March, the vote was postponed due to the health crisis. Unlike in other European countries (such as, e.g., Germany), French regional council elections are organized on the same day in all regions. Voters in the departments of Loire Atlantique, Maine-et-Loire, Sarthe, Vendée, and Mayenne were called upon to elect the same number of regional councillors as in 2015, i.e. 93. Since 2004, a two-round proportional list system with a bonus for the majority list has been in use.

The novelty of the electoral context should be emphasized. In 2021, regional elections were held the same day as departmental elections, which had not been the case in 2015, when departmental elections took place in March and regional elections in December. During the election campaign, the media attention given to the regional elections overshadowed the departmental elections, even though the departments' responsibilities in social and educational matters are essential. In some polling places, assessors were told to inform voters that they had to go to the polling station next door for the election of the territorial councillors after having voted for the regional election. The results of the departmental elections were hardly commented on election night.

A high abstention rate

The vote took place in an unusual social context, in the second year of the health crisis. The first round of voting was marked, as everywhere in France, by a very high abstention rate of nearly 70%. The second round did not see a significant increase in mobilization with abstention only falling to 68%. None of the lists present in the second round particularly benefited from this slight increase in participation (no statistical correlation at the municipal level).

The observed abstention is much higher than in 2015 (50%). It is even more important if compared with that of 2004 – 38% – a year that saw the victory of the left, led by Socialist candidate Jacques Auxiette, for the first time in the region's history.

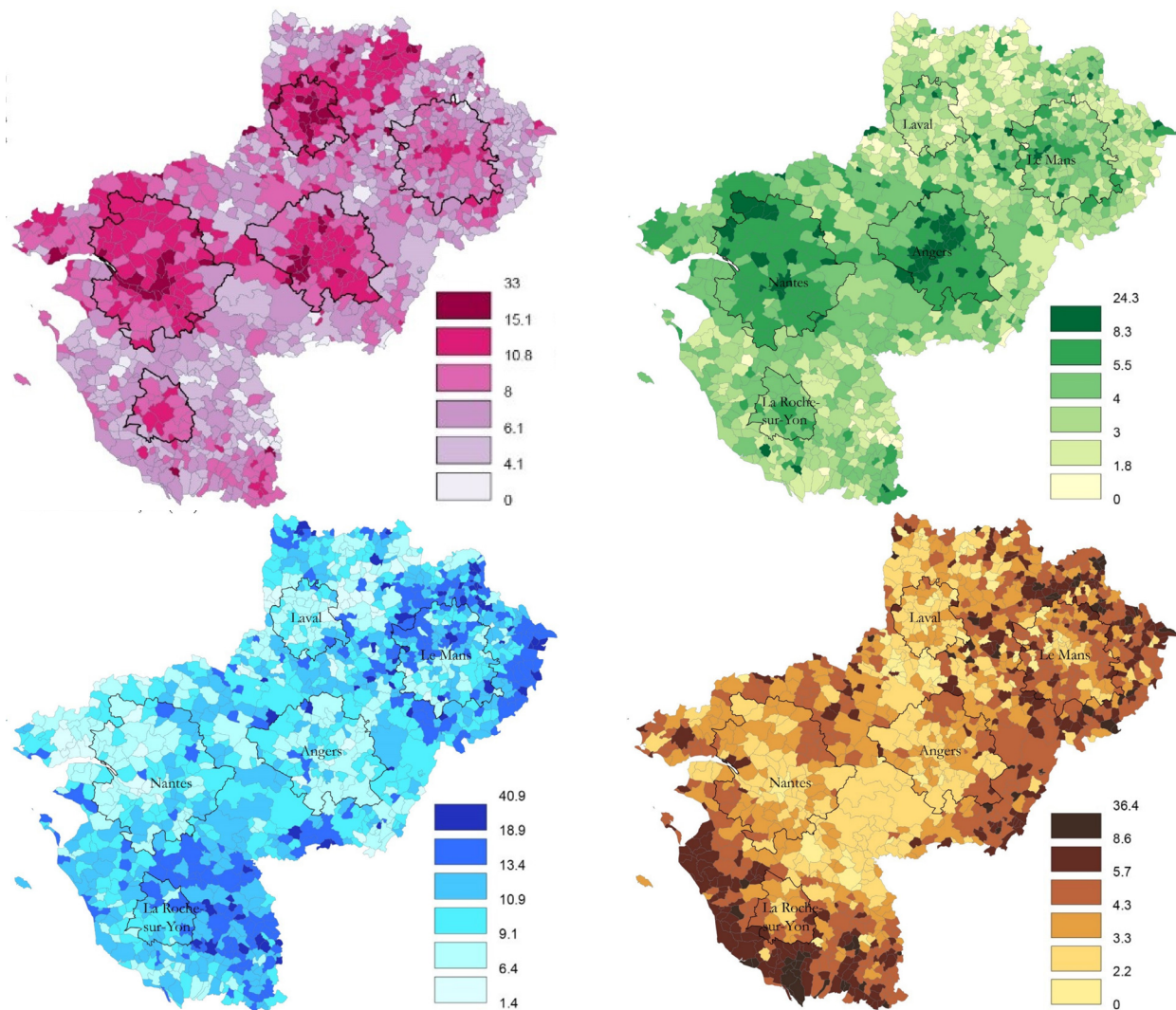
It is striking to observe that while the west of France had been mostly spared from high abstention rates for several years compared to other French regions, in 2021, the Pays de la Loire region has experienced an abstention rate higher than the national average (65% on average in the second round in France compared to 68% in Pays de la Loire).

Results by list

In the first round of voting, Pays de la Loire voters could choose between 8 lists. The geographical patterns of municipality-level results reveal quite pronounced contrasts between territories and/or departments. While mapping these results can help identify and visualize local trends, the explanatory power of geography should not be overestimated. In fact, causal mechanisms can only be precisely explained at the level of polling stations, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, via a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between voters' behavior and socio-economic variables (gender, age, social class, etc.).

The "List of the regional majority, Union of the Right, Center and civil society" led by outgoing President Christelle Morançais (LR, The Republicans) won a plurality of votes in the first round with 34% of the votes cast (10% of registered voters). Christelle Morançais and her fellow candidates focused their campaign on security issues, even though these did not fall within the competence domain of regional councils. In their program, they announced that they would oppose other candidates who support "the illegal occupation of sites by ultra-violent

a • Scores of the four main lists in the first round as percentage of registered voters: "Spring of Pays de la Loire" (Guillaume Garrot, PS), "Ecology Together: Citizens and Solidarity" (Mathieu Orphelin, EELV), "List of the Regional Majority: Union of the Right, Center and Civil Society" (Christelle Morançais, LR), "National Rally" (Hervé Juvin, RN) (maps: Christophe Batardy)



protesters”.¹ While emphasizing environmental concerns, Morançais opposed what she described as a “punitive and de-growth ecology”.

The highest scores of the list are obtained in the east of Vendée and in Sarthe. Voters in urban municipalities were less likely to vote in favor of this list, except in the La Roche-sur-Yon area.

The list led by Ecologist candidate Mathieu Orphelin (EELV), “Ecology Together: Citizens and Solidarity” brought together EELV (Europe Ecology – The Greens) and Unbowed France (FI). This alliance was one of the only ones of its kind in France. Ecology was a key aspect of their program, with the list committing for instance to 50% organic food in high schools. Security issues were also discussed; Orphelin advocated more human presence in schools, whereas Christelle Morançais’s list asked for the development of “safe” schools with surveillance cameras and security gates.

Orphelin’s list came in second place with 18.7% of the votes cast (5.7% of registered voters). It obtained its best scores in Loire Atlantique and Maine et Loire, in the communes of the urban area of Nantes and Angers.

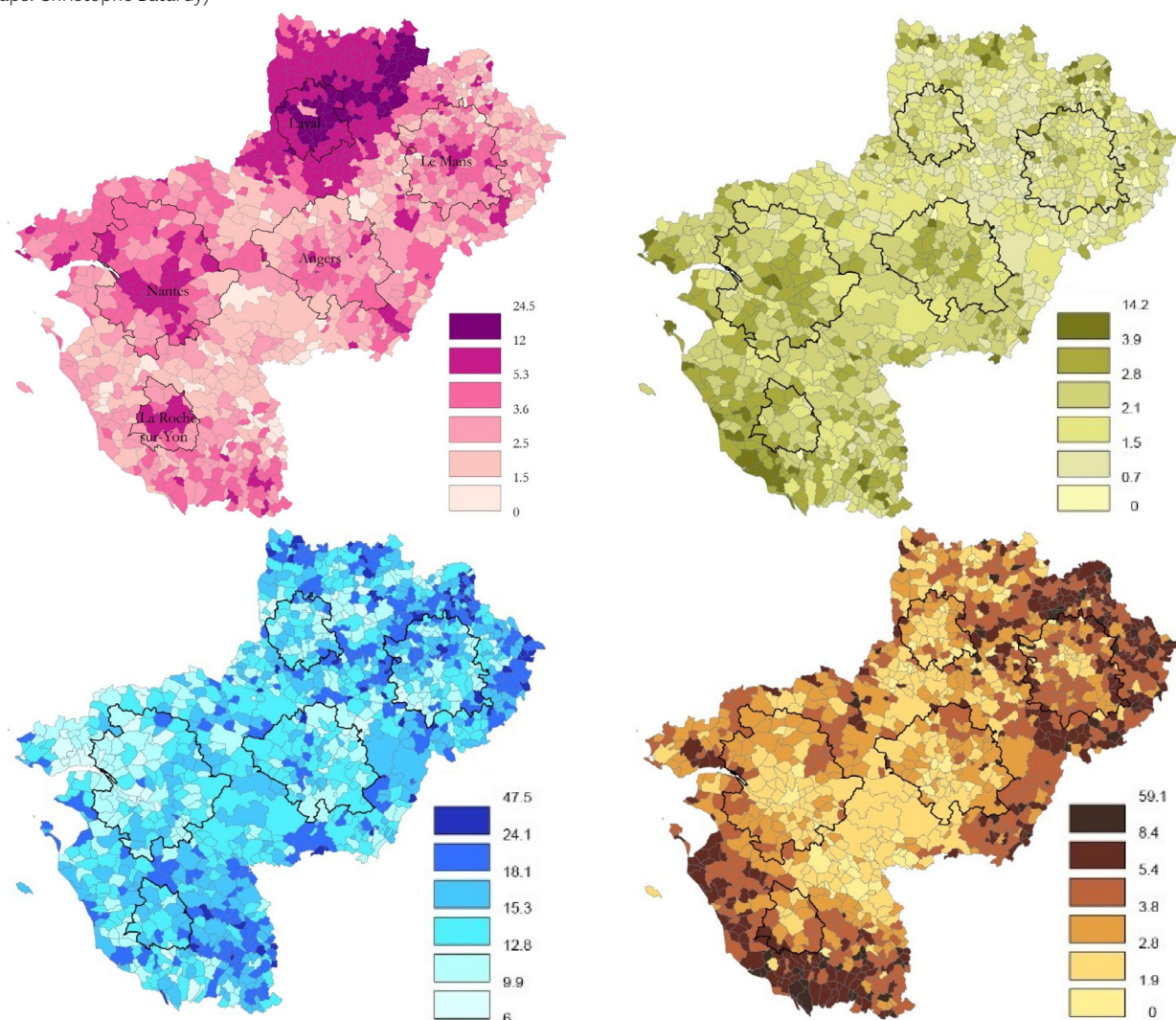
The left-wing list “The Spring of Pays de la Loire”, led

by Socialist Guillaume Garrot and supported by the Socialist (PS) and Communist Party (PCF), came in third with 16% of the votes cast (4.8% of registered voters). During the campaign, Garrot did not discuss security as a central theme. Among the first twelve measures he had pledged to take if elected, improving public transportation and fighting school dropouts in high schools played a key role. Guillaume Garrot is mayor of Laval and a member of the National Assembly for Mayenne’s first constituency. Quite unsurprisingly, his score was highest in his home department.

The far-right list of the National Rally (RN) led by MEP Hervé Juvin came in fourth with 3.7% of registered voters (12.5% of those who voted). The candidate announced his support for associations opposed to the development of wind power and offered to help communities in the fight against insecurity – a competence which the region does not possess. However, his result in the first round of voting was much weaker than the one obtained in 2015, were the National Front gathered 21.3% of the votes cast. Maps of the RN vote at the communal level show that the RN obtains its best scores in Sarthe – in the same communes as the centre-right lists in the South-West of Maine-et-Loire and in the communes of the Vendée coastline.

1. See the manifesto of the list led by Christelle Morançais.

b • Scores of the four main lists in the second tour: Left and the Ecologists, Union of the Center, Union of the Right and Center, National Rally (maps: Christophe Batardy)



On the other hand, few voters from urban areas voted for this list.

Second round

Christelle Morançais' list won the second round with 46% of votes cast. The outgoing President of the regional council obtained a score (in percentage of votes cast) higher than her predecessor and former right-wing frontrunner Bruno Retailleau. Even if her list did not gain a majority of the popular vote, the bonus granted to the winning list ensured the centre-right a comfortable majority of 57 seats.

Between the two rounds, the list led by Socialist Guillaume Garot merged with that of Matthieu Orphelin. The PS and PCF joined EELV and FI. With a score of 34% of the votes cast in the second round, this merged list of the United left and Ecologists essentially obtained the sum score of the two lists in the first round. The merger did not trigger an electoral dynamic in their favor. Taking into consideration the broad political spectrum that the list represents, this result is rather disappointing.

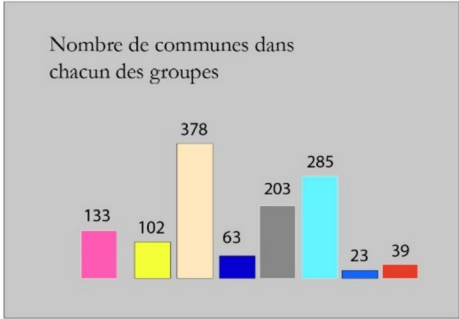
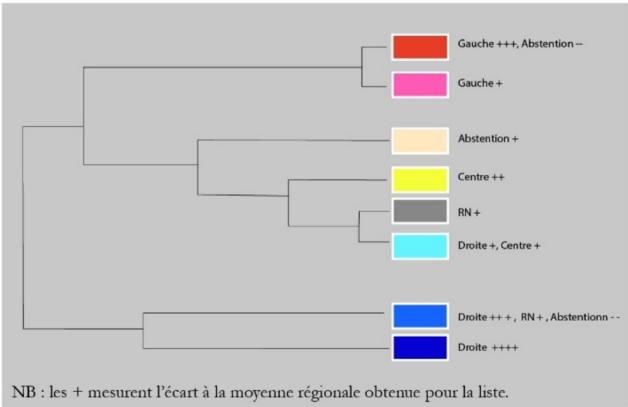
Although François de Rugy's "List of the presidential majority" supported by LREM advanced to the second round, their score in the first round (12% of the votes cast)

was already a disappointment. But in the second round of voting, the list gathered only 8%, making for an even bitterer result. The list's forerunner, a member of the National Assembly and former Ecology Minister, did not manage to anchor the party of Macron's presidential majority in the regional electoral space, and was relegated to the role of an opponent. In Pays de la Loire, LREM failed to impose the middle way or centrist alternative they have built at the national level.

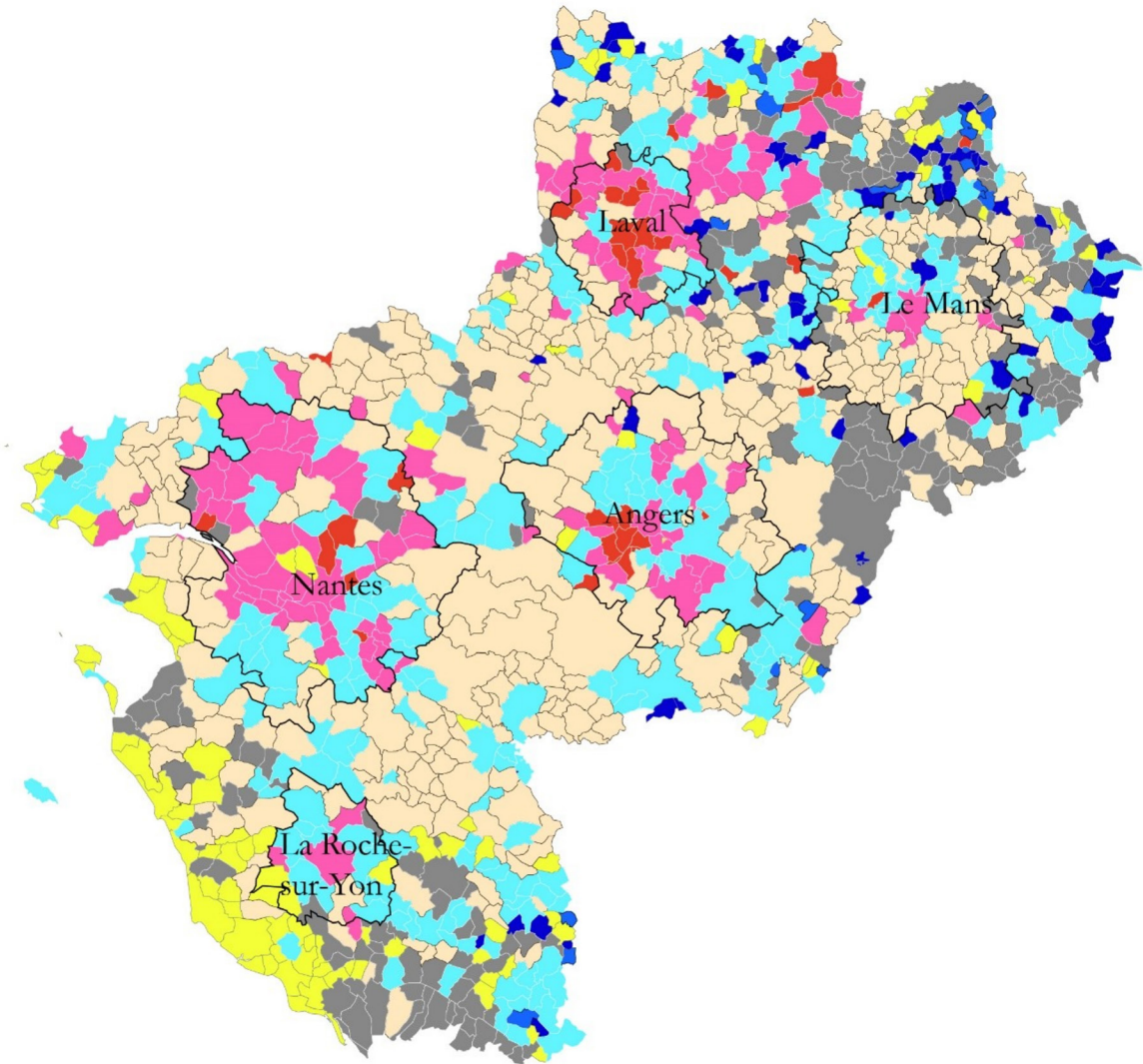
At the municipal level, the opposition between the Union of the Right and Center² and the RN on the one hand, and the Left and the Ecologists on the other, structures the electoral landscape.³ Mapping the scores of the center-right and far-right lists, we see that similar geographical strengths and weaknesses emerge.⁴ On the contrary, the left-wing list obtains its best scores in urban areas. However, it may be worth asking ourselves if this scale of analysis is appropriate. Other oppositions could have been uncovered if the analysis had been conducted at the polling station level. For example, while Nantes at

2. See the campaign website of the list. The opposition can be seen in the results of the principal component analysis.
3. 1st axis (34 % of the variance) : opposition between the right (RN) vs left 2nd axis (25 % of the variance) : Union of the center vs other lists.
4. Correlation coefficient between the results of the two lists: $R=0.94$.

Profils -Types électoraux des communes des Pays-de-la-Loire
au second tour des élections régionales (juin 2021)



L'analyse réalisée est une Classification ascendante hiérarchique (CAH)
Elle prend en compte l'abstention et les voix obtenus par les 4 listes au second tour (en % des inscrits)
Cette classification en 8 groupes «résume» 60 % des disparités entre communes.



Source : Ministère de l'Intérieur

Cartographie : Christophe Batardy, janvier 2022

first appears to be an all left-wing municipality, important counterpositions could be observed between polling stations during the 2017 presidential election (Batardy 2018).

Conclusion

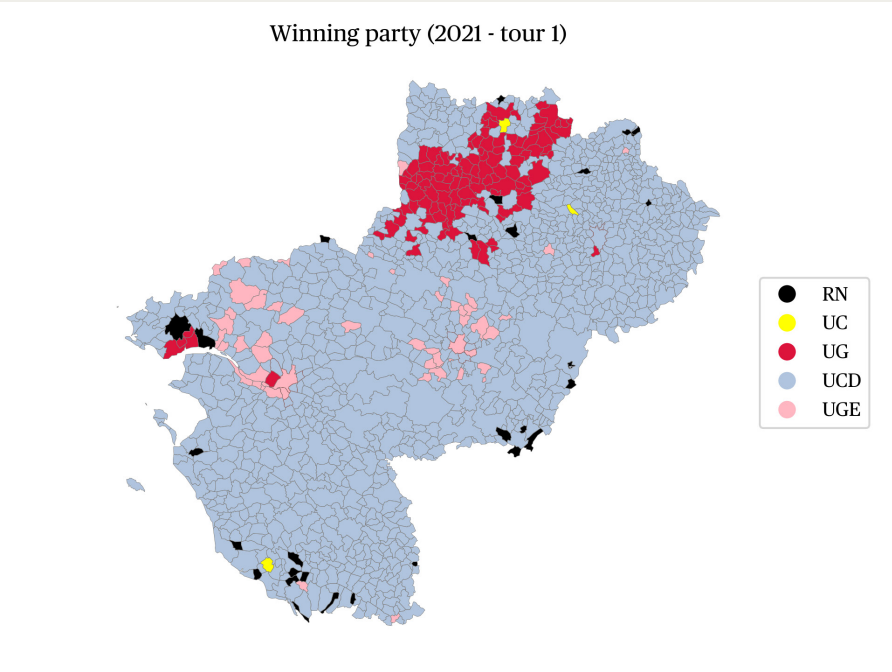
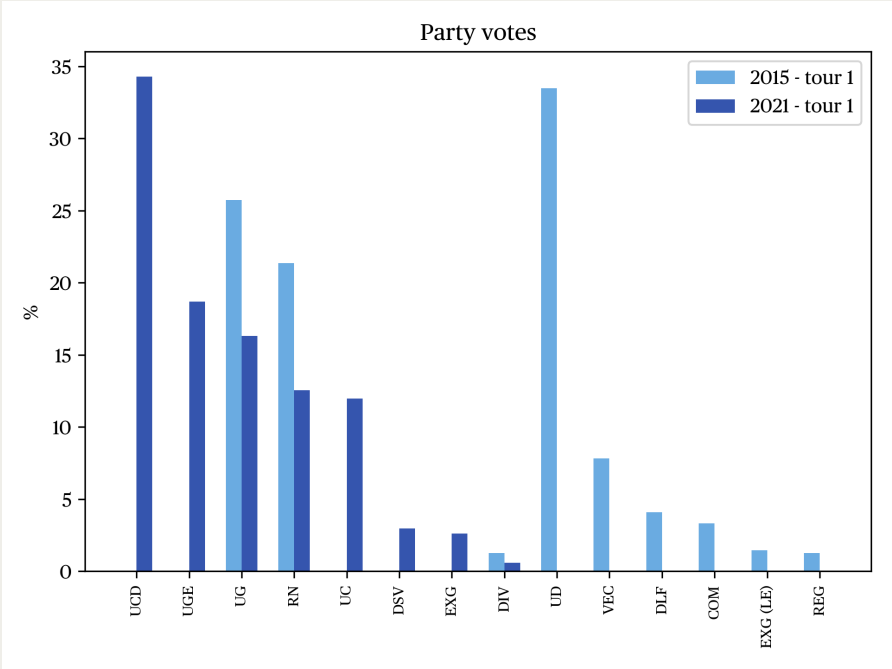
The outgoing right-wing regional executive has been re-elected. The failure of LREM, for its first regional election, and that of the RN are a disavowal for these two political organizations. This election is also a disappointment for the Ecologists, who had hoped to win the region. The duality of right-wing vs. left-wing and environmentalist parties remains the major cleavage that structures the electoral landscape of Pays de la Loire at the municipal level. On the left of the political spectrum, the PS is no longer hegemonic. Another important fact is the mas-

sive abstention rate that hit Pays de la Loire as well as most other French regions. Registered voters' refusal to vote - combined with non-registration on electoral lists - is the most important political phenomenon of this election. Encouraging the return of citizens to the ballot box is a challenge to be taken up by the whole of society. Otherwise, our democratic institutions will be at risk.

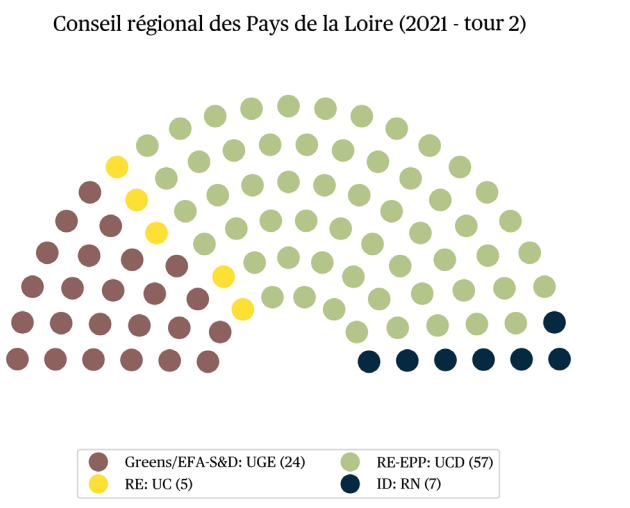
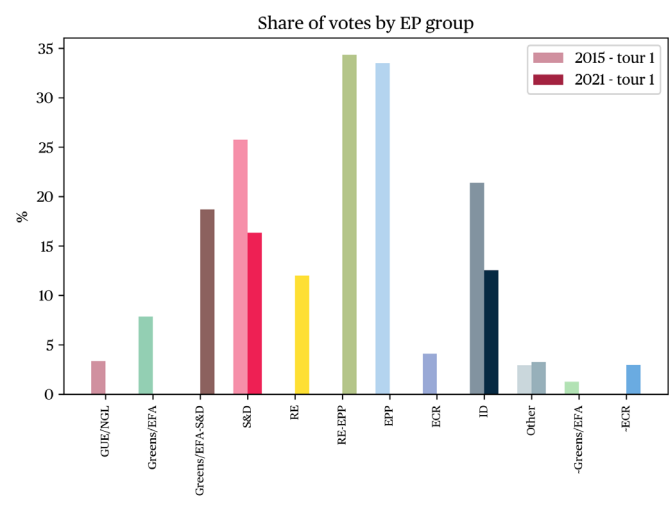
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European indicators



Regional election in Occitania, 20-27 June 2021

52

The regional elections of June 20 and 27, 2021 are the first since the merger of the former French regions in 2015. The Occitanie region, born of the merger of the former Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées regions in 2015, now represents 13% of the French metropolitan territory, with its six million inhabitants spread over 13 departments, 4,454 municipalities, and 162 inter-municipalities, including the two metropolitan areas of Toulouse and Montpellier.

Against the backdrop of the pandemic, the abstention rate reached record levels (66.7% in the first round, 65.3% in the second). These elections were also marked by a status quo in the political balance: no region of metropolitan France swung from one camp to the other. The June 2021 elections thus confirm the territorial hegemony of two major traditional government parties, the Socialist Party (PS/S&D) and the Republicans (LR/EPP), whose dominant position at the national and municipal levels has been largely challenged for several years by the emergence of new forces – La République En Marche (LREM/Renew Europe) – or the assertion of opposition forces – La France Insoumise (LFI/The Left), Europe Écologie Les Verts (EELV/Greens/EFA) and the National Rally (RN/ID).

The voting in Occitania was no exception. Abstention was very high - 62.8% for the first round, 62.2% for the second - and very high compared to the previous elections in 2015 (+15 points and +17.7 points). In this context, the premium on outgoing candidates was, more than ever, relevant. The PS list led by the outgoing President of the region, Carole Delga, came out on top in the first round of the regional elections with 39.6% of the votes cast, ahead of the RN list, which finished far from the scores promised by the pre-election polls (22.6%), and the LR list (12.2%). The EELV (8.8%), LREM (8.8%) and LFI (5.1%) lists did not manage to cross the 10% threshold necessary to remain in the second round. At the end of the second round, the PS list won with a large majority (57.8%) against the RN list,

whose score did not increase (24%) and the LR list (18.2%).

The left-wing majority now holds 109 seats, compared to 87 in the last legislature. Within this majority, the elected members of the Socialist group have seen their position strengthened, with 69 seats compared to 50 previously. EELV, whose list this time did not merge with the PS list in the second round, loses the 8 seats acquired in 2015 to the benefit of the communist elected representatives, who increase from 6 to 14 seats. In the opposition, while the LR and related candidates managed to hold on to their positions, the RN appeared to be the big loser in the regional elections. The LREM and their allies (3 seats in 2015) and the elected members of the far left minority (6 seats in 2015) disappeared from the Toulouse assembly landscape.

The Socialist Party, a party with reinforced hegemony

Despite a comfortable position, with a solid regional majority acquired in 2015¹, the control of all the departmental executives of Occitania except Aveyron and Tarn-et-Garonne and the return of Montpellier² to the socialist fold, the traditional moderate left could have some concerns about the outcome of these new local elections for at least two reasons.

The first is related to its inability to situate itself with respect to contemporary forms of protest, whether socio-territorial, with the Yellow Vests, or socio-environmental, with the mobilizations on the theme of climate change. What was for a long time the essence of the left and, in particular in one of the poorest regions of France, the mark of its territorial hegemony, seemed to escape it.

1. For an analysis of the 2015 departmental and regional elections in Occitania, see Négrier, Volle & Coursière (2016).

2. For an analysis of the 2020 municipal elections, see Négrier (2021).

The second reason is related to its own internal problems: at the end of 2017, the union built between the two rounds of December 2015 between the PS and its allies and the group «A new world in common» which itself came from an alliance between ecologists, LFI, French Communist Party (PCF) and regionalists, broke up with the separation between LFI and the other components, the latter remaining allied with the socialist majority led by Carole Delga. The PS list approached the regional elections of 2021 by being competed, on its left, by LFI and by EELV, strong of its recent successes in the European elections of 2019 and municipal elections of 2020 for the latter.

The result of the regional elections of June 20 and 27, 2021, may therefore appear surprising. The first reason for this is undoubtedly the divisions among the left-wing opponents of the PS. Some of the ecologist forces called to vote for Carle Delga, particularly in Montpellier. The second reason is the massive abstention of the Occitan electorate. If we find, behind this large demobilization, the differences in participation traditionally observed between social categories and backgrounds (Braconnier, Coulmont & Dormagen, 2017), we note that it is very largely structured by an urban/rural divide (Tarrow, 1971).

Thus, in the first round of the regional elections, there were significant differences between Haute-Garonne (36.7%) and Hérault (33.3%), the two most populous departments in the region, and Lozère (48.4%), the least populous department, and other rural departments such as Gers (44.7%) and Lot (43.8%). More mobilized, the rural departments are also those where abstention increases the least compared to the first round of 2015. There is also an inverse relationship between the size of the municipalities and the rate of participation in the first round of these regional elections: 51.8% for municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants, 43.6% for municipalities with 500 to 1000 inhabitants, 38.9% for municipalities with 1000 to 5000 inhabitants, 35% for municipalities with 5000 to 40,000 inhabitants and 30.2% for the 13 municipalities with more than 40,000 inhabitants in the region.

The political forces of the left, such as LFI or EELV, could only note the failure of their solitary undertakings, and the weakness of their territorial roots, which is all the more prohibitive in this context of weak mobilization of urban areas. On the other hand, the outgoing majority was able to rely on its roots to clearly amplify all the polling forecasts. The Delga vote is relatively homogeneous throughout the territory, with new areas of strength, quite unusual, formerly uncontested bastions of the right (Lozère). Only a specific area and very little mobilized, the vast Languedoc coastline, remains one of its main areas of weakness.

On the right, the RN, a loser's hegemony

Convinced of its dominant position on the right in the last European elections, the RN had at least the hope of repeating the feat in these regional elections, in a region

where, with its allies, it had succeeded in retaining the cities of Beaucaire and Béziers, acquired in 2014, and had won, in addition to Moissac, its first French municipality of more than 100,000 inhabitants with Perpignan. Without it being possible to speak of a real anchoring, the party could therefore rely on these victories, as well as on a contingent of 36 regional elected officials spread across all departments.

The regional elections in Occitania have allowed, as elsewhere, to highlight the structural weaknesses of the RN. In decline compared to 2015 in all departments, its areas of strength are even more concentrated on the Mediterranean coast, where the fall in its scores is more contained than elsewhere. The situation of the RN in these regional elections once again calls into question the old idea of a positive link between the scores of the far right party and abstention. It is not absurd to think that the RN suffers, in a context of very low mobilization, from the characteristics of its electorate - urban and peri-urban, from the working classes and the small middle class. Thus, with rare exceptions, the RN's scores in the first round are systematically down compared to 2015 in municipalities with more than 1000 inhabitants. While it retains a hegemonic position on the right where it is ahead of the LR list everywhere except in three departments (Aveyron, Lot and Lozère), it does not even ensure that it maintains the positions acquired in 2015: the RN thus sees the number of its regional elected representatives fall to 28.

The low number of RN elected officials in communal and departmental executives may also explain the party's inability to mobilize a larger share of its electoral base. Conversely, the anchoring of the LR list guarantees that it will initially remain in the second round of the election and then achieve a score fairly close to that of 2015, allowing it to retain 21 seats in the regional assembly.

Allied with the Mouvement Démocrate (MoDem) in the 2015 election, LR had only been able to obtain 21.3% of the votes in the second round, far behind the 33.9% of the Front National (FN), now the leading force on the right in the region. Prior to the 2021 election, the alliance between the right and the center had nevertheless won Toulouse in the 2014 municipal elections, and then retained it in 2020. However, unlike in 2015, the right and the governmental center this time made separate lists, LR allied with the Union of Democrats and Independents (UDI) and LREM with MoDem.

If the LR list shows a significant decline in 2021 compared to the first round of 2015 in all the departments of the region, and in particular in the departments where the left-wing vote is best established (Ariège, Haute-Garonne, Hautes-Pyrénées and Tarn), it is clearly progressing in the Lot, where its score in 2021 (34.8%) is 58% higher than in 2015 (22%), undoubtedly due to a «local friendship effect» (Audemard & Gouard, 2020) beneficial to the head of the regional list Aurélien Pradié, «the child of the country». Unsurprisingly, the absence of an alliance proved to be a failure for the presidential party, which does not bene-

fit from such an anchoring. The list led by Vincent Terrail-Novès could not make it to the second round.

Parties and territories: a deceptive consecration

Presented as modern forms of organization on the way to supplanting the traditional parties and their rigid, territorialized structure, the movements have had an even harder time of it in this electoral sequence than their territorial establishment has been rehabilitated. Like Europe Écologie Les Verts, La République En Marche counted neither directly (elimination in the first round) nor indirectly (absence of alliance) at the regional level. As for France Insoumise, it also suffered a defeat due to an underestimation, on its part, of the inter-partisan constraints of the political game. In its case, however, another constraint, a sociological one, has affected it in the same way as the Rassemblement National: the demobilization of its popular electorate. Instead of this resistible rise of movements against the territories, it is indeed the latter that have played a strong role.

However, it would be inappropriate to see these results as a consecration. The disaffection of a large majority of the electorate for the ballot box has once again been confirmed. The democratic impasse facing the parties remains – more than ever – on their programmatic and strategic agenda. The reason for this is that, with the

control of the outgoing executives, they were the least weakened by the massive abstention movement, accentuated by the pandemic context, from which these local elections did not escape.

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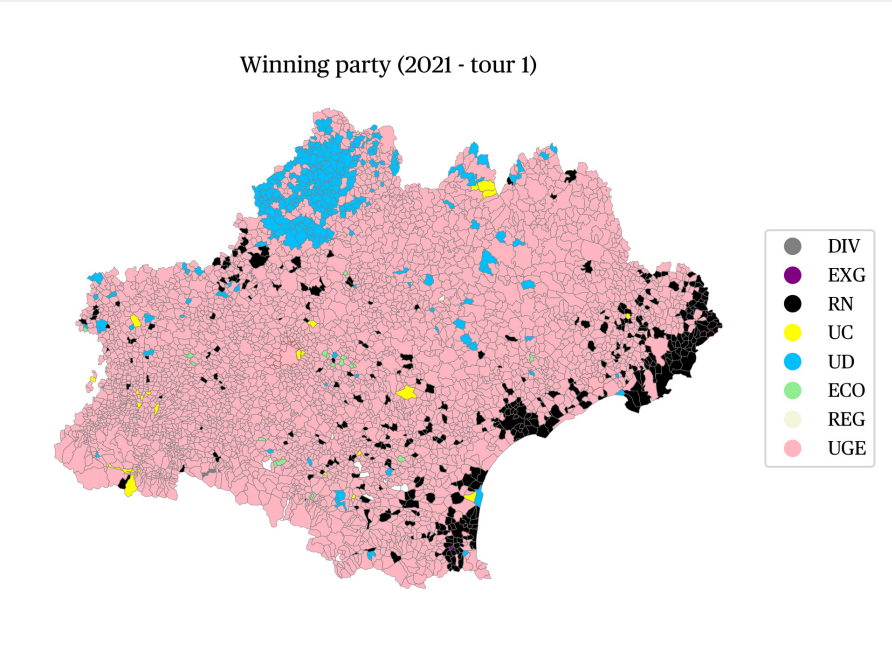
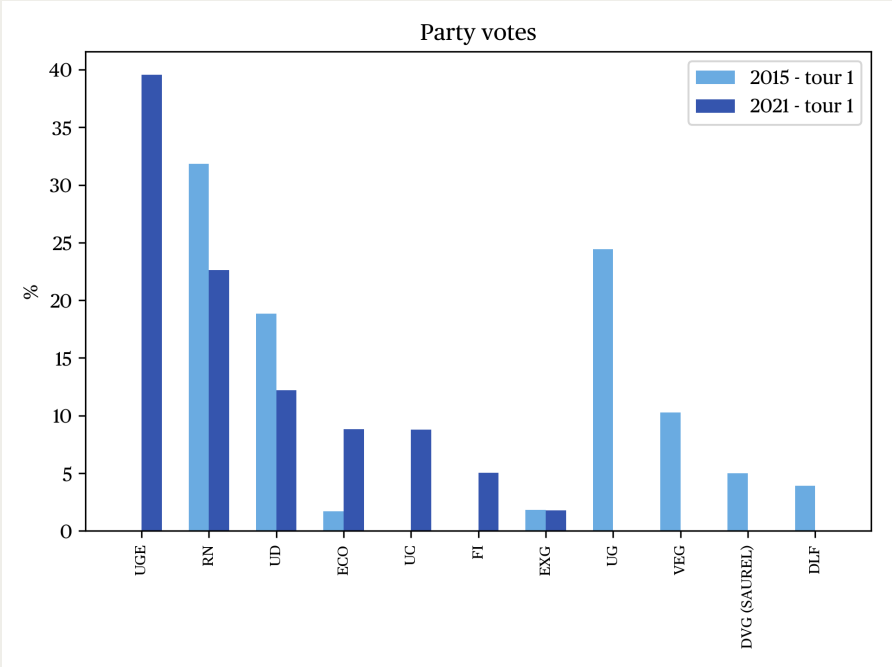
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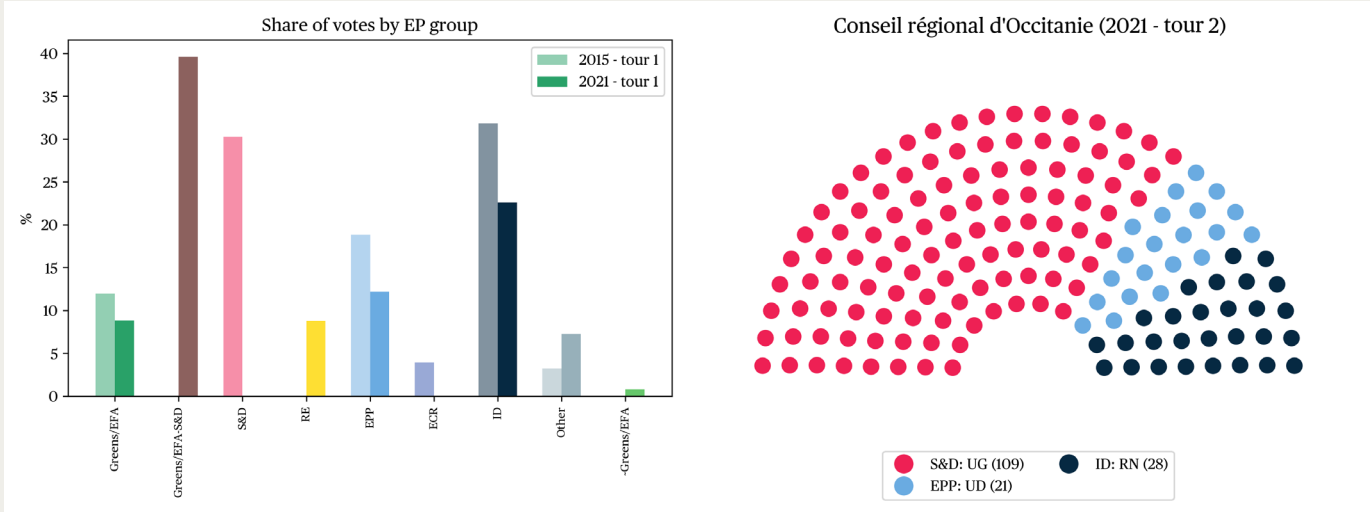
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European indicators





Regional elections in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, 20-27 june 2021

56

The June 2021 regional election in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (Aura) concerned the renewal of the 204 seats in the assembly of the new region.¹ It corresponded to the regular end of the mandate of the regional councillors of all the regions of France,² but also to the end of the mandate of all departmental councillors.³ Thus, for the first time since 2004, the regional elections were held on the same day as another election.⁴ This element of the electoral calendar was not insignificant, given the potential knock-on effects of one election on the other.

This timing had been a major issue in the run-up to the elections, with the opposition accusing the government of trying to avoid a setback by hiding behind the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, the elections had been postponed to June in the hope of slowing down the contagion, whereas they had initially been scheduled for March. On the other hand, nothing had changed with regard to the re-synchronisation of the regional and departmental elections: it had been planned by the socialist government in 2015 and was therefore not the result of a strategic calculation by the current government.

However, the re-synchronisation could have had two consequences on the electoral balance of power: (1) counteracting the trend of declining turnout by minimising the effects of electoral fatigue; (2) lessening the impact of intermediate elections on national power dynamics by

limiting the number of moments that could give rise to a sanction vote against the government. This second effect was not negligible insofar as the two previous presidential mandates had been punctuated by a succession of heavy local electoral defeats sanctioning very unpopular executives.⁵ The 2021 elections allowed researchers to reopen the question of the link between local elections: their decoupling had initially been decided by center-right parties under the Sarkozy presidency to limit the contagion effects of a vote-sanction in the regional elections at cantonal (and departmental) level, the latter being deemed less subject to national contagion.

In Aura, more than 5 million voters were simultaneously called to elect their regional councillors and their departmental councillors in the 13 departments making up the greater region,⁶ according to two different voting methods. For the regional elections, a mixed two-round voting system⁷ was used, combining proportional representation for 75% of the seats and a majority bonus of 25% of the seats for the list that came out on top in the decisive round. For the departmental elections, a first-past-the-post system was used, with candidates forming

1. A redrawing of the regions took place in 2014 as part of a third phase of French decentralization. Implemented by President François Hollande (PS), the new territorial organization of the Republic reduced the number of regions from 22 to 13. Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes was formed through the merger of the former regions Auvergne and Rhône-Alpes.
2. The previous regional elections were held on December 6 and 13, 2015, for 5 1/2 year terms.
3. The previous departmental elections were held on March 22 and 29, 2015, for 6-year terms. This was the first time “departmental” elections were organized (these had in the past been called “cantonal”).
4. The regional elections were organized simultaneously with the legislative elections in 1986, then with the cantonal elections from 1992 to 2004.

5. During the Sarkozy presidency (2007-2012), the governing right-wing UMP-UDI lost in the 2008 municipal, 2010 regional and 2011 cantonal elections. During the presidency of François Hollande (2012-2014), the PS lost in the 2014 municipal elections, the March 2015 departmental elections and the December 2015 regional elections.
6. The inhabitants of the communes of the Lyon metropolis were only concerned by the regional elections. On its territory, the metropolis of Lyon has exercised the powers of a department since the adoption of the Maptam law and the metropolitan elections in Lyon were held simultaneously with the municipal elections in 2020.
7. In the first round, a list wins the election if it obtains more than 50% of the votes cast; if no list reaches this threshold, a second round is organized where obtaining a plurality is sufficient to win. In the event of a second round, the lists that have reached 10% of the votes cast in the first round may decide whether or not to advance to the second round. List mergers are possible between the two rounds for all lists having reached 5% in the first round, but the merger is only possible if at least one of the lists involved has exceeded 10% in the first round.

a • The results of the 2021 regional elections in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region

	Premier tour		Deuxième tour		Sièges	
	Suffrages	%	Suffrages	%	Total	Évolution
Inscrits	5 403 344		5 405 165			
Votants	1 761 218	32,6	1 802 507	33,3		
Exprimés	1 713 647	31,7	1 740 613	32,2		
C. Gomez (LO)	26 742	1,6				
C. Cukierman (PCF-FI)	95 434	5,6	(Grébert)			
N. Valaud-Belkacem (PS-PRG)	195 727	11,4	(Grébert)			
F. Grébert (EELV-G.s)	248 017	14,5	585 039	33,6	51	- 6
B. Bonnell (LREM-MoDem)	168 292	9,8				
S. Gill (Divers)	11 198	0,7				
F. Omeir (UDMF)	5 684	0,3				
L. Wauquiez (LR-UDI)	751 375	43,8	960 785	55,2	136	+ 23
A. Kotarac (RN)	211 178	12,3	194 789	11,2	17	- 17

NB. Results are in percentage of registered voters and votes cast, in percentage of votes cast for list results.

gender-balanced tickets composed of a main candidate and its deputy.⁸

The national and regional context

As elsewhere in Europe at the same time, these elections were marked by the Covid-19 pandemic. Two dimensions were particularly affected by the epidemic context: the themes considered as priorities by the voters on the one hand, and the material conditions of the campaign on the other.

As regards priority themes, the survey carried out by Ifop at the beginning of June 2021⁹ revealed that 77% of those questioned considered that the theme of health would be a priority in Aura in the coming months, with 63% considering the theme of the fight against the Covid-19 epidemic to be the same. Other issues at the top of the agenda included the fight against crime, which was considered a top priority by 71% of respondents, education by 68% and the fight against terrorism by 66%. These proportions were similar in the other regions, indicating that the agenda was dominated by health issues and major sovereignty issues rather than by themes related to regional competences. Rather than social and societal concerns, the fight against precariousness was considered a top priority in Aura by 57% of respondents, and environmental protection by 52%.

As for the material conditions of the campaign, the restrictions linked to the organisation of very large gathe-

rings and the fears of the population largely constrained the traditional means of communication of the candidates, notably public meetings. These elements were very favourable to the outgoing regional president, Laurent Wauquiez (LR, EPP), who had made security his main campaign theme and could take advantage of the notoriety linked to his position. At the end of his first mandate, the most favourable moment in his personal electoral cycle, and belonging to a party in opposition at national level, nothing seemed to threaten him.

The electoral offer

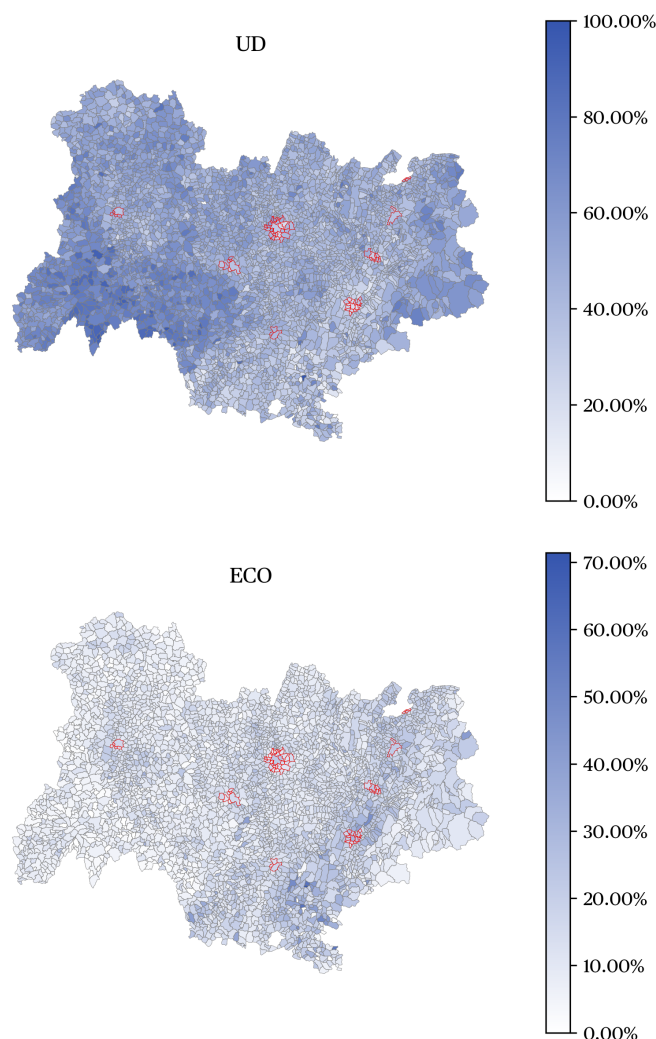
As in the 2015 regional elections, 9 lists were present in the first round, a total almost identical to the national average (8.8 lists per region). The stability of the number of lists resulted from a form of continuity in the structuring of the regional electoral offer, despite the reconfigurations of the national political landscape at work since the 2017 presidential and legislative elections, in particular the collapse of the two former orderly structures, the PS and LR, and the emergence of a new government party in a central position around Emmanuel Macron.

On the left, we found the same 4 lists as in 2015: a list for Lutte Ouvrière (LO) led by Chantal Gomez, a list for the Communist Party (PCF) led by Cécile Cukierman, a list for the Socialist Party (PS) led by Najat Vallaud-Belkacem and a list for Europe Écologie Les Verts (EELV) led by Fabienne Grébert. The only change came from the alliance chosen by Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s supporters: the Left Party (PG) was allied with EELV in 2015, while France insoumise (FI) joined the PCF in 2021.¹⁰ Part of the preparation of the campaign had been driven by the project of a single left-wing list, but the union had stalled on the issue of the composition of the list, EELV wishing to base itself on the

8. In the first round, a ticket wins the election if it obtains more than 50% of the votes cast and 25% of the registered voters; if no ticket reaches these thresholds, a second round is organized where a plurality is sufficient to win. In the event of a second round, the two tickets that came out on top in the first round and all pairs that have reached 12.5% of the registered voters can continue to run.

9. This survey was self-administered online from May 31 to June 4 to a sample of 992 people registered on the electoral rolls. This sample is itself drawn from a sample of 1100 people representative of the population over 18 years old living in the Aura region (according to the quota method on age, gender and occupation of the person interviewed).

10. However, the entire PCF federation of the Allier refused to support the Cukierman list and rallied to the Vallaud-Belkacem list on the basis of a local PS-PCF agreement in the departmental elections and hostility to the FI.



The results of the first round

As in all the other regions, the results of the first round were marked by a collapse in turnout: with only 32.6% of voters, the rate of participation fell by more than 16 points compared to 2015 (Figure c), setting a record low for regional elections.

The abrupt nature of this drop in participation has led observers to insist on cyclical factors, and in particular on the weight of the epidemic context. However, this explanatory model seems insufficient once the trends in turnout are put into historical perspective. Since the beginning of the 1980s, France has experienced a long-term trend of declining turnout in all elections, with the exception of the presidential election. The succession of turnout rates in the first round of regional elections bears witness to this: 77.9% in 1986; 68.6% in 1992; 57.7% in 1998; 60.8% in 2004; 46.3% in 2010; 49.9% in 2015. Three short-term elements may have temporarily slowed down this strong trend: a very unpopular government (2004, 2015), the fact that it was the first intermediate election in the national electoral cycle (2004), a dramatic political situation (2015, after the attacks in Paris). None of these factors were present in the 2021 regional elections. In contrast, the previous regionals in 2015 combined two of these factors, so that the return of the long-term dynamic to declining turnout had a particularly impressive boomerang effect.

This fall in participation does not affect all the departments in the region in the same way: it reaches its maximum in the Loire (-19.2) and its minimum in the Cantal (-8.6).¹² Behind these different trends between departments, an opposition emerges between rural areas, which are mainly made up of older people with a strong sense of civic duty, and urban areas, which are mainly made up of younger generations, more individualised and more detached from the institutions of social life. This opposition is reflected in the absolute levels of participation: 41.9% of voters in the Cantal and 40.5% in the Haute-Loire, against 30% in the Loire and 30.5% in the Rhône.

In this context, the list of the outgoing majority came out on top in the first round. With 43.8% of the votes cast (+12.1 points compared to 2015) and a lead of more than 29 points over the Grébert list, which came second, Laurent Wauquiez's list achieved an exceptional performance: in the history of regional elections in France, the largest gap between the first two lists was 22 points for Martin Malvy's PS list in the Midi-Pyrénées in 2004.

The geography of the results of the LR-UDI list reveals non-negligible differences between the former Auvergne in the west and the former Rhône-Alpes in the east (graph

results of the 2019 European elections, the PS on the 2015 regional elections¹¹.

In the centre was the list of the presidential majority led by Bruno Bonnell, which benefited from the investiture of all the governmental forces, starting with La République en Marche (LREM) and the Democratic Movement (MoDem). The MoDem thus confirmed its break of alliance with the outgoing President Laurent Wauquiez, which occurred in March 2019. This list of the presidential majority covered part of the space that had been occupied in 2015 by the diverse right-wing list led by Éric Lafond, a former MoDem member.

In the end, the main variations came from the right of the partisan spectrum, where the offer was reduced to the list of the outgoing majority of Laurent Wauquiez and the list of the National Rally (RN) led by Andréa Kotarac, a former elected member of the FI, while two lists of the sovereignist right were present in 2015. Two unclassifiable lists, led by Shella Gill (Union essentielle, close to the Gilets Jaunes) and Farid Omeir (Union des Démocrates Musulmans Français), completed the 2021 cast.

11. The situation was very different in the departmental elections, where the main left-wing parties had managed to run on common tickets in more than half of the departments (Ain, Allier, Drôme, Isère, Loire, Puy-de-Dôme, Rhône).

12. This rural/urban opposition between departments is also found within departments. In Isère, for example, turnout fell by 18.9 points in the canton of Bourgoin-Jallieu and 17.7 points in the canton of Echirolles, compared to "only" 9.5 points in the canton of Matheysine-Trièves.

	P2012		E2014	R2015		P2017		E2019	R2021	
Votants	82,6	82,3	43,6	48,9	57,7	79,3	76,5	51,8	32,6	33,3
Exprimés	81,0	77,4	41,9	47,2	55,7	77,3	67,5	49,7	31,7	32,2
EXG	1,6		1,1	1,3		1,6		0,7	1,6	
PG/FI	11,5		PCF	EELV		19,2		5,8	PCF	
PCF	PG		6,1	5,4	PS	FI		2,5	5,6	EELV
PS	26,5	49,7	13,7	23,9	36,8	6,1		6,0	11,4	EELV
EELV	2,7		10,1	6,9	PS	PS		15,0	14,5	33,6
DVG			3,7					3,1		
Écologistes			2,4					3,9		
Autres	0,3		0,6			1,5		1,0	1,0	
LREM						24,5	67,1	22,7	9,8	
MoDem	10,0		UDI	LR		LREM		LREM	LREM	
UDI	LR		9,9	LR		LR		2,6	LR	
UMP/LR	27,4	50,3	21,8	31,7	40,6	20,2		10,4	43,8	55,2
DVD			6,7	5,3		6,1		4,7		
FN/RN	18,1		23,8	25,5	22,5	20,7	32,9	21,0	12,3	11,2
EXD								0,7		
Gauche	42,3	49,7	34,7	37,5	36,8	27,0		33,0	33,0	33,6
Droite	47,5	50,3	62,3	62,5	63,2	47,1	32,9	39,4	56,2	66,4
Autres	10,2		3,0			26,0	67,1	27,6	10,8	

1). In the western part of the new region, the Wauquiez list recorded its best departmental results (Haute-Loire 67.7%; Cantal 66.1%) and its strongest increases (Cantal +21.8; Allier +21.1; Puy-de-Dôme +17), taking advantage of the personal establishment of the President of the region¹³. Conversely, in the eastern part of the new region, it achieved its lowest scores (Isère 34.9%; Drôme 38.6%) and its lowest increases (Isère +8.7; Haute-Savoie +9.3).

Compared to the results in the other French regions, this dynamic of the Wauquiez list is part of a more general movement that favours all the outgoing right-wing presidents: in the 7 regions concerned, the lists of the outgoing right-wing majorities come out on top with results above 30% and strong increases over 2015, benefiting from the support of part of the electorate of the presidential majority, the weaker presence of the various right-wing lists and a very clear decline of the RN. These movements are particularly clear in relation to the 2019 European elections (Figure b, top). On the radical right, the Kotarac list lost half of its surface area in the 2015 regions (from 25.5% to 12.3%), and almost the same as the RN list in 2019 (21.2%), even though it managed to exceed the 10% mark and reach the second round. On the presidential majority side, the Bonnell list fails to qualify for the second round (9.8%), far from the level of the LREM-UDI list in 2019 (22.7%).

13. Laurent Wauquiez was a member of the National Assembly for the Haute-Loire and mayor of Puy-en-Velay, the department's capital, before becoming president of the region.

In this context of weak opposition, the Grébert list (EELV) is the only one to have some grounds for satisfaction. With 14.5% of the votes cast (+7.6 points compared to 2015), it leads the left, ahead of the Vallaud-Belkacem list (11.4%, down 12.5 points on the PS list of 2015) and the Cukierman list (5.6%, +0.2 on 2015). This strong environmentalist dynamic is in line with the results of the 2019 European elections, where the Jadot list (EELV) obtained 15% in Aura. It is also found elsewhere in France, in equivalent configurations: everywhere where the right is outgoing, the left-wing primaries in the first round turn in favour of EELV (Ile-de-France, Pays-de-la-Loire). The Greens' areas of strength are essentially in the former Rhône-Alpes region (Figure b, bottom), with scores of 18.3% in Haute-Savoie and 17.7% in Isère, compared with 7% in Cantal and 8.1% in Allier.

The results of the second round

The campaign between the two rounds was brief and essentially punctuated by the merger between the three left-wing lists behind Françoise Grébert. Eliminated in the first round, Bruno Bonnell refused to give voting instructions on behalf of the presidential majority. In a triangular race against the left-wing union list and the RN, the victory of Laurent Wauquiez seemed to be a foregone conclusion.

As a result, despite calls for a citizen's awakening in all regions, turnout did not improve: 33.3% of voters, 24

points lower than in 2015. In France, two configurations are conducive to an increase in turnout between the two rounds of an election: (1) the fear of a victory for the RN; (2) a competition that looks close. Neither of these factors was present in the 2021 Aura region. In only one region was there a fear of the RN: it was in Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur and participation rose by 3 points between the two rounds.

Laurent Wauquiez's victory was very clear with 55.2% of the vote (+14.6 compared to the second round in 2015). Compared to the first round (+11.4 points), he benefited from the elimination of the Bonnell list but also from a further decline of the RN, with the Kotarac list falling from 12.3% to 11.2%. This victory translates into a large majority for Laurent Wauquiez in the new regional council: 136 seats, 23 more than in 2015. Most of this progress was achieved at the expense of the RN, which suffered a drain on its pool of local elected representatives: it now has only 17 seats, half as many as in 2015. For Marine Le Pen's party, this is a setback in its strategy of local establishment.

The locomotive Wauquiez also pulled the right in the departmental elections. On the eve of the election, the LR-UDI right held 9 of the 11 departmental presidencies in the region; at the end of the election, it managed to topple the Ardèche and the Puy-de-Dôme, so that it now controls all the departmental executives. It is in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes that the impact of the regional elections on the departmental elections was most visible, confirming the extent of the Wauquiez dynamic.

Theoretical perspectives

For three decades, the second-order election model (Reif, Schmitt, 1980; Parodi, 2004) has been the main model for analysing regional elections in France and in Europe. This model suggests that regional election results are characterised by three dynamics compared to the national benchmark elections: (1) a decline in turnout; (2) a decline of major parties in favour of peripheral parties; (3) a decline of parties in government at the national level. This model does not take into account the main dynamics of the 2021 regional elections in Aura, and in particular the growth of the LR list of the outgoing President Laurent Wauquiez.

From this point of view, the model of candidate-centred politics seems to have a greater explanatory capacity. This model developed in the United States is based on a combination of five main elements: (1) a decline in the influence of partisan proximity on voting; (2) a decline in turnout; (3) an increase in split-ticket voting; (4) a high level of incumbent re-election; (5) a high level of divided government. None of the empirical evidence provided in this article challenges this model. However, systematic research is still needed to assess its explanatory capacity for the major recent electoral developments in France.

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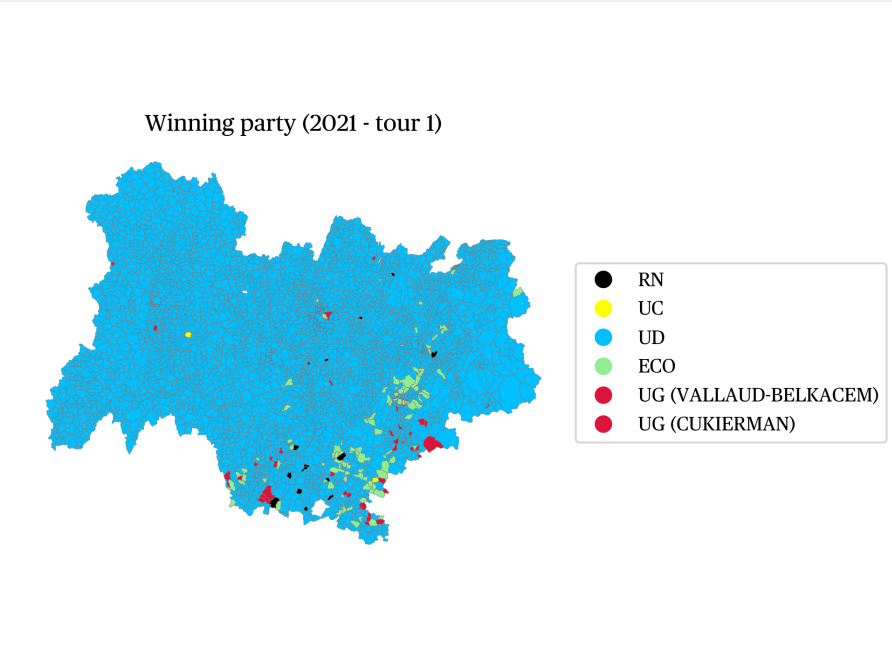
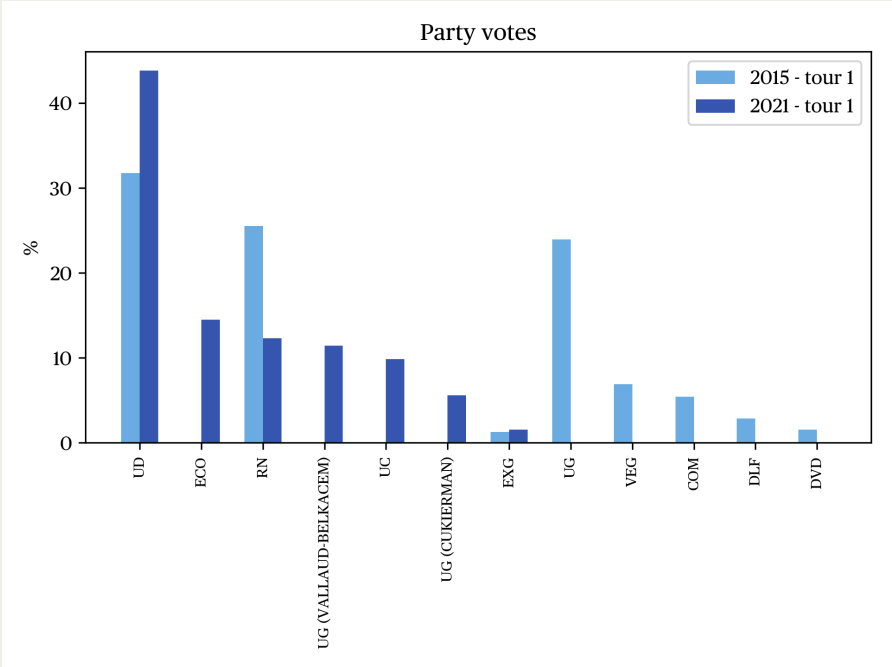
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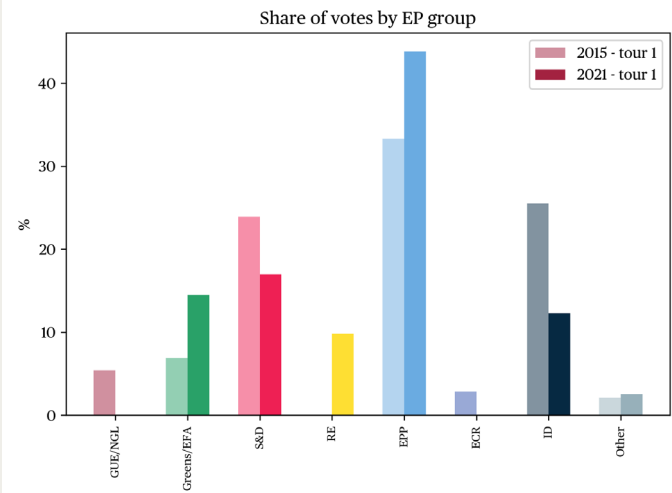
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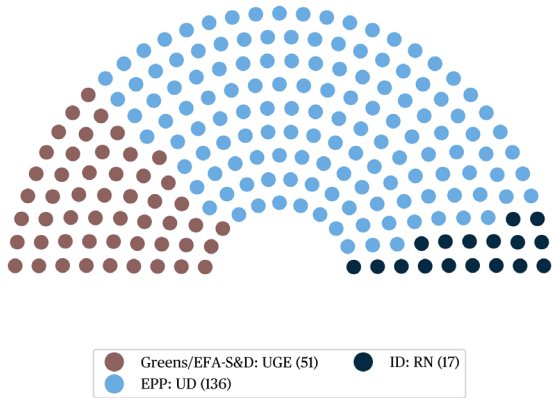
I sincerely thank the anonymous reviewer and my colleague Pierre Martin for their comments and suggestions on the first draft of this text. They allowed me to clarify certain sections and to strengthen the theoretical argumentation. The remaining interpretations and errors in this paper remain my sole responsibility.



European indicators



Conseil régional d'Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (2021 - tour 2)





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Regional elections in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, 20-27 June 2021

62

Far from resulting in an upheaval of the political equilibrium, the 2021 regional election in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA, Région Sud/South) has nevertheless nuanced and reflected the progression of some trends observable since the 1990s-2000s.

A Much-followed Regional Election

In the PACA region, the regional election could have gone unnoticed as at first glance it seemed to be over before it even took place. A few weeks before the June 2021 deadline, a likely RN-LR duel in the second round was taking shape, a self-fulfilment of pre-electoral polls. The eight polls published in June before the first round were giving the Thierry Mariani list (RN, ex-UMP) an average of 42% of the vote, against 33% for the list of the outgoing president, Renaud Muselier, and barely 15.5% for the left-wing unity list led by the environmentalist Jean-Laurent Félizia (EELV).

This specific framing echoed by the media before the election may give us an impression of a déjà vu as far the national French political discourse goes. In addition to the fact that it gives pride of place to comments on a PACA region as an easy prey for the National Front/National Rally, it also reflects the early strong position of the far right in the South-East since the 1990s, whether in municipal, departmental or regional bodies, even though the legislative election of 2017 found a noticeable decline of the Lepenist movement in the South.

However, there are some important differences as far as 2021 election is concerned: first of all, the outgoing president, Renaud Muselier, has been leading the region since the elected president Christian Estrosi had quit in 2017. It is therefore the first time that Muselier is heading an electoral list. Secondly, the PACA election is an opportunity for revenge for the left, deprived of regional representation since its defeat and withdrawal before the

2nd round in 2015; it would not want to withdraw in case of a second round in favour of the extreme right again. The calls for unity and mobilization of voters reflect the double challenge of these regional elections: to avoid a victory for the RN and to weigh again in the assemblies. Even though in Marseille, for example, the municipal election has reignited hope in activists and elected officials on the left. Finally, and perhaps the most significantly, while in 2015 the polls gave the advantage to the classical centre-right, in 2021 it is the Thierry Mariani list (RN, ex-UMP) who in early May 2021 appeared as the likely winner of the election.

Far from the announced repetition of 2015, the election of 2021 has highlighted noteworthy changes. First of all, the regional election did not take place in partisan silence. By announcing on 2 May in *Le Journal du dimanche* the withdrawal of the LREM list in favour of the Muselier list Jean Castex, then Prime Minister, showed how essential the PACA election was for the Macron's movement in the perspective of the upcoming presidential election, and perhaps revealing the right-wing positioning of LREM. Christian Estrosi, the mayor of Nice, and Hubert Falco, the mayor of Toulon, who were in favour of this "political realignment" (in the words of the Prime Minister) took the opportunity to leave the Republicans, denouncing the Parisian apparatus of the LR and the deafness of the party as it faced the open risk of a far-right victory.

For their part, Les Républicains were split into two camps: those in favour of negotiations on a case-by-case basis with the presidential party, and those elected representatives and activists who considered any alliance with LREM as a ruse or even a betrayal. The latter ones were represented by Éric Ciotti (MP for the Alpes-Maritimes) and Bruno Retailleau.

Another major change had been the recomposition of the left in the region. In 2015 Christophe Castaner (PS) led the regional list of the left while EELV stood alone, led by

a • Results of the first round

Liste conduite par	Tendance dominante	% Insc.	% Exp.	Diff. 2015
M. Thierry MARIANI	RN	11,75	36,4	-4,1
M. Renaud MUSELIER	LR	10,3	31,9	+5,45
M. Jean-Laurent FELIZIA	EELV-PS	5,45	16,9	-6,2
M. J.-Marc GOVERNATORI	Cap Écologie	1,7	5,3	+1,25
Mme Isabelle BONNET	Lutte Ouvrière	0,9	2,7	+1,2
M. Noël CHUISANO	Debout La France !	0,9	2,7	+0,75
M. Hervé GUERRERA	Régionaliste	0,7	2,2	
Mme Valérie LAUPIES	Zou ! (extrême-droite)	0,5	1,7	
M. Mikael VINCENZI	Fédération citoyenne	0,1	0,2	

b • Results of the second round

Liste conduite par	% Exprimés	Diff. 2015	Nombre de sièges	Diff. 2015
Renaud Muselier	57,3	+2,5	84	+3
Thierry Mariani	42,7	-2,5	39	-3

c • Results of the 2021 regional elections in PACA by department

	1 ^{er} tour				2 nd tour			
	Félicia	Governatori	Mariani	Muselier	Mariani	Diff.	Muselier	Diff.
Alpes-de-Haute-Provence	21,83	5,62	28,18	31,73	38,23	10,1	61,77	30,0
Hautes-Alpes	22,34	5,57	24,19	37,78	32,65	8,5	67,35	29,6
Alpes-Maritimes	12,54	5,92	37,88	34,86	42,65	4,8	57,35	22,5
Bouches-du-Rhône	20,69	5,04	34,13	30,48	40,65	6,5	59,35	28,9
Var	12,28	4,84	40,26	33,51	46,02	5,8	53,98	20,5
Vaucluse	17,96	5,45	40,47	26,12	47,44	7,0	52,56	26,4

Sophie Camard. In 2021 it is the ecologist Jean-Laurent Félicia (EELV) who leads this entire political family by managing to rally the PS, the PC and Génération.s on the same list. Beyond the ecologist offensive at the ballot box since the 2010s, this development illustrates the fragility of a partisan left (PS and PC) pushed around in local elections by EELV, who were in search of a leader after the defections to LREM in 2017 and forced to accommodate the supporting forces in order not to disappear from the assemblies.

In the end, 9 lists would go on to compete in the PACA region in the first round. In addition to the three covered above, we must mention, inter alia, the list led by Jean-Marc Governatori (Cap Écologie), newly elected to the municipal council of Nice, and the list led by Isabelle Bonnet for Lutte Ouvrière.

A Falling Turnout, and the RN and the Left at the Bottom

The participation rates, as in many French regions, fell very sharply compared to 2015: in the region as a whole the abstention rate increased by 18.2 points and reached 66.3%. If in 2015, the people who did not vote formed the majority only in Bouches-du-Rhône, in 2021 it is the case in all departments.

Abstention seems to have affected the different political camps in an unequal way. In terms of percentages of registered voters, the two forces that declined the most were the National Rally and the left-wing list. The National Rally generally seems to have mobilised its voter base less than the moderate right: Renaud Muselier lost only three points compared to Christian Estrosi's score in 2015; for the National Rally, it was almost nine points, and for the

left more than six.

In the second round, the abstentionist trend was confirmed, even if the participation mildly raised. Abstentionism is anything but new: apart from the fact that it follows on from the records already observed during the 2020 municipal elections, it testifies to the low level of enthusiasm among voters. In a context still marked by the uncertainties of the pandemic the voters, in PACA as elsewhere, turned to the parties in place at the regional level.

On the evening of the first round, three lists could claim to be in the running: Thierry Mariani's list, which came out on top with 36.4% of the vote, Renaud Muselier's list, which was close behind with 32%, and the left-wing union list (see Figure a). The results underline the extreme weakness of the latter: with 17% of the vote, the left has fallen significantly compared to 2015¹ (24%) against the right-RN duopoly. The list led by Jean-Laurent Félicia had to choose, just like in 2015, between two options: to withdraw in order not to jeopardise a victory for the centre-right, or stay in the game and hope to be in the council again. Finally, after 24 hours of negotiations and consultations, the leader of the "Social and Environmental Rally" announced the withdrawal of his list, leaving the centre-right and the far-right to face each other alone in the second round.

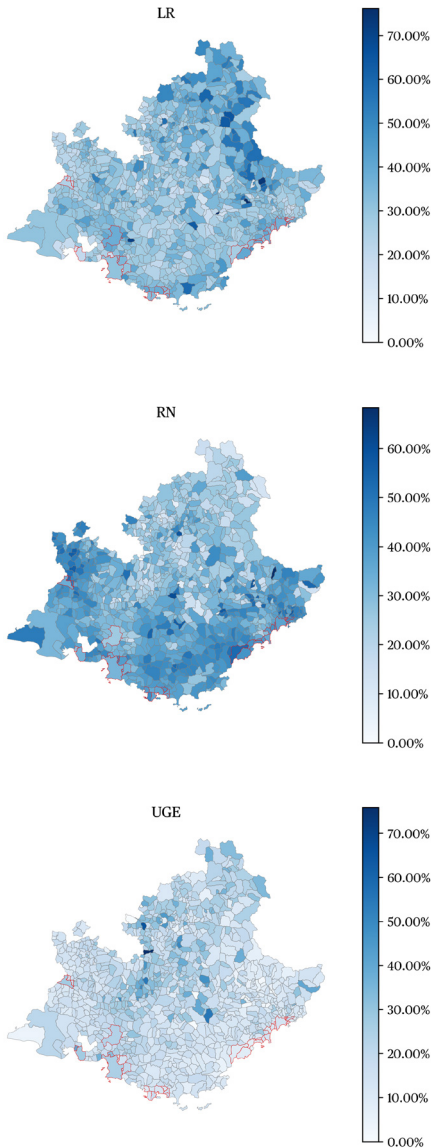
For the Renaud Muselier's list to finally have won on the 27th of June with 57.3% of the votes, the explanation cannot be only the renunciation of the left. It is due to the reversal of positions within the Republicans (Éric Ciotti ended up supporting the Muselier list), but also to the declining results of the National Rally in the region.

1. For the comparison with 2015, we added the scores of the lists led by Ch. Castaner (PS) and S. Camard (EELV).

Whether the first or the second round is concerned, the party is losing votes (except in the Alpes-Maritimes where it gained ground), especially in the Bouches-du-Rhône but also in the Vaucluse where Marion Maréchal-Le Pen's list had a majority in the second round of the 2015 regional elections.

In 2021, if Thierry Mariani's list came out on top in 4 of the 6 departments of the region in the evening of the 1st round (except for Alpes-de-Haute-Provence and Hautes-Alpes) (see Figure c), the 2nd round sealed the effects of a republican front built as an emergency response but not without contrition (Figure b). In the end, the results attest to the relative failure of the NR's strategy of "de-demonisation" through the choice of entrusting the head of the list to the ex-UMP Thierry Mariani, who has since failed to win the region.

d • Results of the three main lists in the first round by municipality



With 84 seats, Renaud Muselier's list solidified its domination of the Regional Council and had to deal once again with an opposition made up solely of NR members.

Spatial Dynamics: a Plural Region

In the departments that make up the region, we observe quite different dynamics linked to specific political identities (see Figure c and d). The Félizia list obtained its best scores in the two Alpine departments, the Hautes-Alpes and the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, which have long been marked by the influence of the left and trade unionism, as well as in the Bouches-du-Rhône, which is traditionally more left-wing.

The Mariani list came out on top in four of the six departments - with the exception of the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence and the Hautes-Alpes – whereas it achieved its best scores in Var and Vaucluse, two traditional bastions of the far-right in the region.

In the Alpes-Maritimes, the results of the first round confirm the rebalancing to the right that has taken place in the department in favour of Marine Le Pen's party since the previous regional elections of 2015. Contrary to the other coastal departments, the results of the Muselier list in 2021 are weaker than those of the Estrosi list six years earlier, in a context marked by deep tensions within LR between supporters of an alliance with LREM, such as Christian Estrosi (Nice's mayor), and those such as Eric Ciotti who are fiercely opposed to it.

In the second round, the Muselier list came out on top in all the departments of the region, benefiting everywhere, at least in part, from the Republican front supported in particular by Félizia and Governatori.

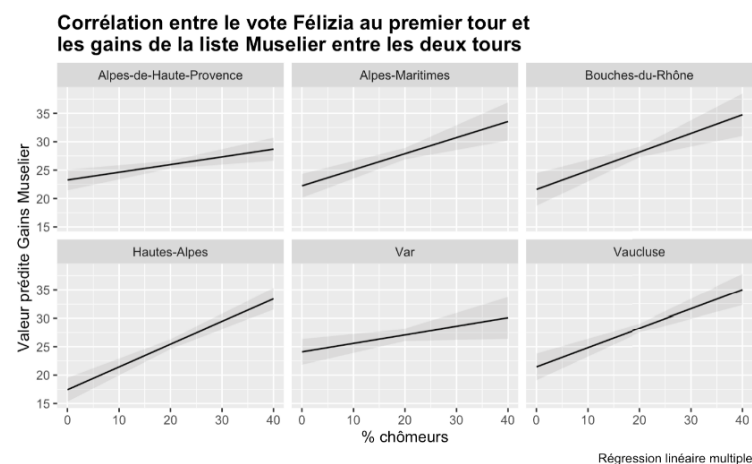
The incumbent president of the regional council achieved his best results notably in the three departments where the left obtained its best results in the first round, namely the two Alpine departments and the Bouches-du-Rhône. It is also there that he recorded his strongest progress between the two rounds, testifying to a stronger mobilisation of the moderate electorate in these two areas. The NR list achieved its best performances in its traditional strongholds of the Var and the Vaucluse, as well as in the Alpes-Maritimes.

The analysis at the level of the municipality of the correlations between the gains of R. Muselier between the two rounds and the level of the different lists in the first round confirms that the progression of the classic right was stronger on average where the scores in favour of the left and the Governatori list were higher.² On the other hand, there was no significant correlation between the level of the two finalists, abstention or the increase in participation in the second round.

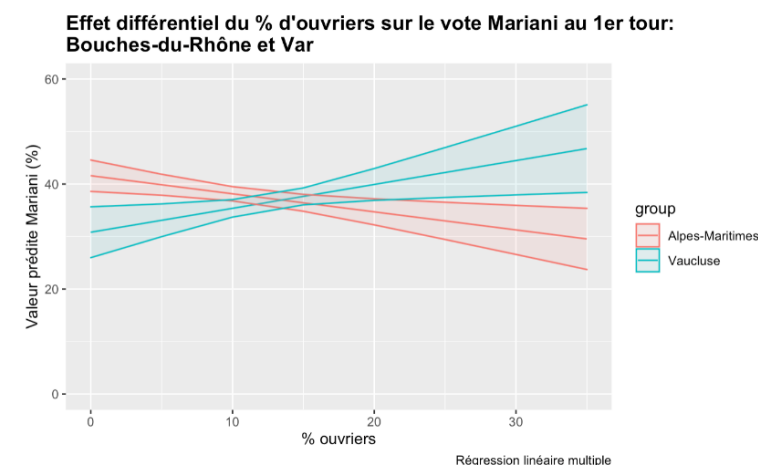
On the left, the strongest correlations are visible in the Hautes-Alpes, Alpes-Maritimes, Vaucluse and Bouches-du-Rhône: the gains of the list led by the outgoing president of the Regional Council are all the higher as the left was

2. It is of course not possible to infer from this the individual behaviour of voters.

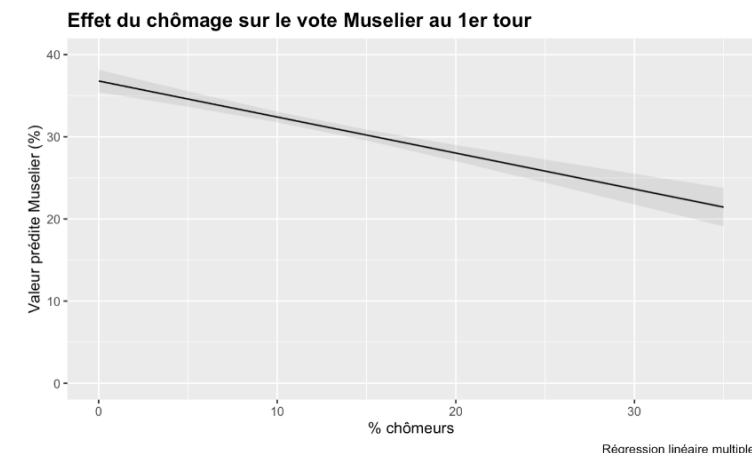
e • Correlation between the Félizia vote in the first round and the gains recorded by the Muselier list between the two rounds



f • Mariani (RN) vote in the first round and working-class presence : Bouches du Rhône



g • Muselier vote in the first round and unemployment rate in the commune



strong in the municipality in the first round (see Figure e). In the Var or the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, on the other hand, the correlations appear much weaker and the transfers from the left to the Muselier list seem to have been less systematic.

Socio-Demographic Determinants: Unemployment and the Vote of Working-Class Communes

Behind the performances of the main lists we can also see the main socio-demographic cleavages that generally structure the vote in PACA. First of all, the importance

of the NR vote in the region's major cities: in the first round, the Mariani list gathered 37.1% of the votes cast in Nice, 36.5% in Toulon, 31.9% in Marseille and 34% in Avignon. This more urban presence of the far-right in PACA contrasts with its weakness in most large French cities: in the first round, Marine Le Pen's party barely received 7.9% of the votes in Paris, 10.1% in Lyon and 11.2% in Toulouse, for example.

The popular dimension of the vote in favour of the NR can also be found in PACA, but with different effects depending on the context. As illustrated in Figure f, the working class presence has a positive and significant effect on the Mariani vote in the poorest departments of the region, in particular the Vaucluse. In richer areas, such as the Alpes-Maritimes, the RN vote is negatively correlated with the percentage of workers in the active population.³

Conversely, the Muselier vote in the first round appears to be more concentrated in the richer communes. We observe a significant negative correlation according to the unemployment rate in the communes (see Figure g): the candidate of the right and the centre obtains his best results in the communes where unemployment is low; his scores are much weaker in contrast where unemployment is higher and this effect is relatively comparable in all the departments of the region.

Finally, with regard to the vote in favour of the left-wing list, we note a positive correlation with the unemployment rate in the commune, with, here again, differential effects according to the departments. The impact of unemployment on the Félizia vote is particularly notable in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence where the candidate seems to have mobilised the more rural areas. Conversely, the vote in favour of the left is much weaker in the communes of the Vaucluse where the unemployment rate is higher and which, as

we have emphasised, turned mainly towards the RN list led by Mariani (see Figure h).

These cleavages are blurred in the second round due to the nature of the Republican, united front against the RN list, even though the vote in its favour remains higher on average in the more working-class communes and those most affected by unemployment, such as the communes of the Vaucluse.

3. These probabilities are calculated in a multiple linear regression at the level of the 946 communes of PACA, controlling for the effect of population density, the unemployment rate in the commune and the percentage of workers resident.

Conclusion

The regional elections of 2021 in the PACA/South Region have finally delivered a result quite similar to the major trends observed at the national level: despite promising polls, the RN has failed once again to take a region that seemed guaranteed to it. This failure in the PACA, echoed by the RN's disappointments in several other major regions that were thought to be within its reach, shows the limits of the strategy of normalization of the party pursued by Marine Le Pen and deprives her of the great electoral foothold she had hoped for in the perspective of the 2022 presidential election.

As in 2015, the left is to face its very own brand new long march at the regional level towards regaining importance. Absent from the council for six years, its power in the region has fallen even further in 2021 and finds itself at rock bottom.

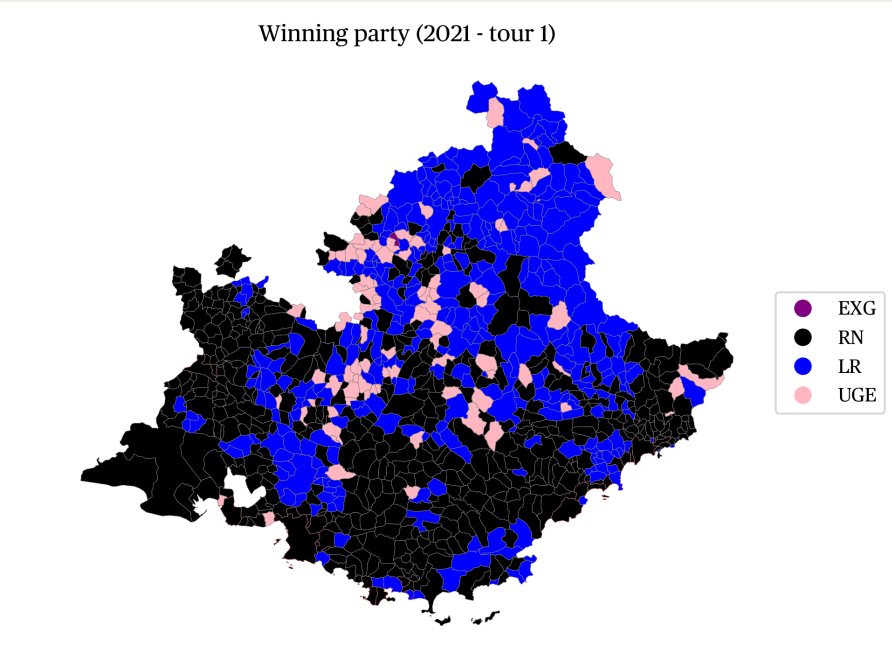
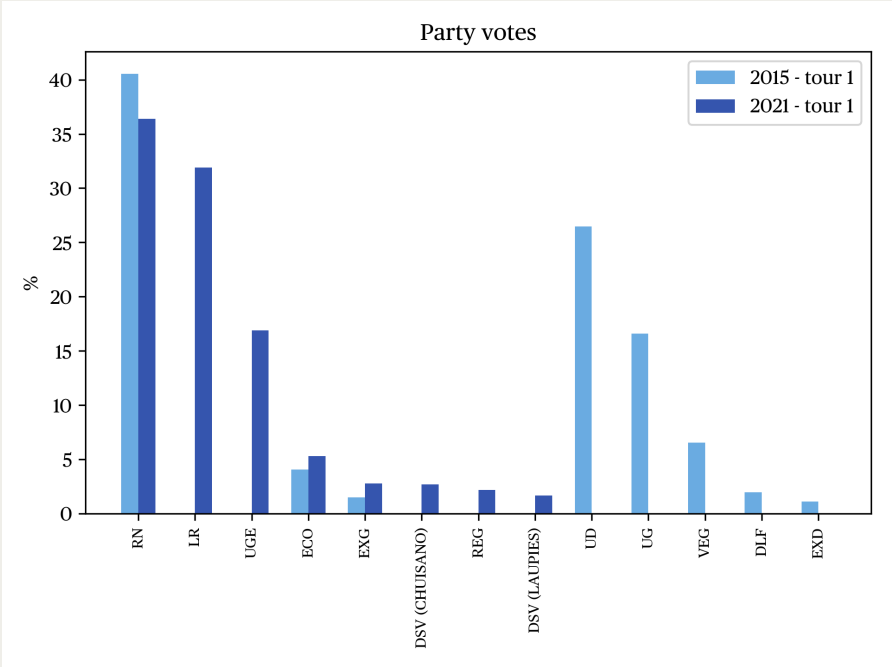
In the PACA, as in many other regions, the regional

election has highlighted the organizational weaknesses of LREM and the lack of local presence of the presidential party, forced to forge an alliance with the classic right, a crucial keep-in-mind of a very likely (albeit not yet officialized) candidacy of Emmanuel Macron for a second term.

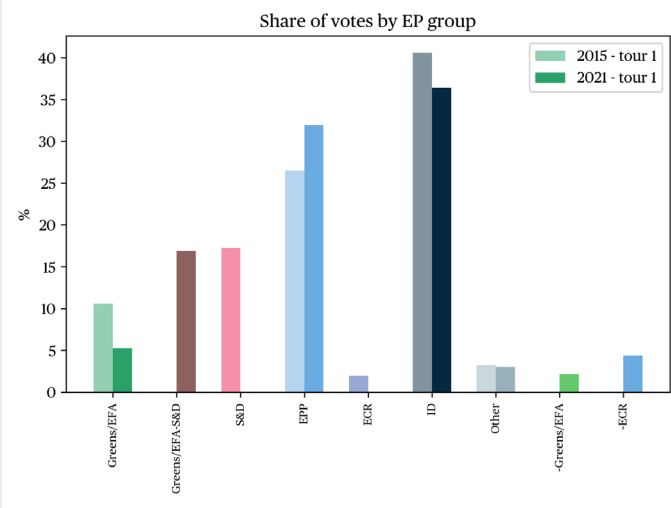
On the right, finally, the psychodrama that was played out around the constitution of the Muselier list testifies to the difficulties of LR to position itself today in a political space between LREM and the RN. The ability of the Republicans to solve this strategic equation will, without a doubt, be one of the keys to the presidential election and, as far as PACA is concerned, to the legislative elections.

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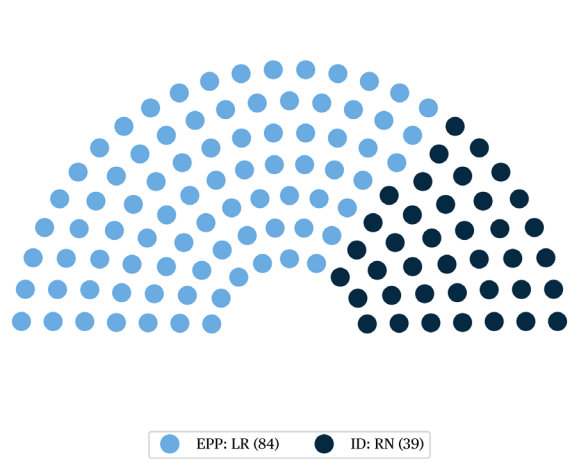
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European indicators



Conseil régional de Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (2021 - tour 2)





André Fazi • Università di Corsica

Territorial elections in Corsica, 20-27 June 2021

68

Gathering 67.98% of the votes in the second round of the 2021 territorial elections, Corsican nationalism reached a level of support unique in Europe for such a movement. Among the non-nationalist or unionist lists, only the moderate right-wing list made it to the second round, while remaining far from its ambitions of victory. It is thus a new level that was reached in the nationalist progression and in the territorialisation of the Corsican political system.

In 1982, the creation of a region with a special status initiated a process of legal and political differentiation on the island. This process has accelerated since 2015, with the accession to regional power of the nationalists, i.e. a political movement that fundamentally questions the place of Corsica within the French Republic, and part of which has long used or supported clandestine violence.

Moreover, this electoral progression did not have the expected effects since the French government rejected all the nationalist demands, which generally implied a constitutional revision². This resistance encouraged the development of tensions between nationalists. Moreover, the nationalist majority was accused of reproducing the atavisms of its predecessors – such as clientelism – which it vehemently denounced, and of being incapable of dealing effectively with concrete issues such as waste management. In short, these were very important elections on at least four levels: the assessment of the nationalist majority's action, the internal relations within the nationalist movement, the capacity of the unionist players to bounce back, and the future of relations between the institutions of Corsica and those of the Republic. I will deal with this by successively addressing the renewal of the political offer, the victory of Gilles Simeoni and his party, and the new political landscape resulting from this election.

A renewed political offer

Since 1982, the establishment of an Assembly of Corsica elected by proportional representation has led to an incessant movement of political fragmentation and re-composition, which has affected all camps. The territorial elections saw up to 19 lists competing in 2004. However, in 2017, when Corsican voters were to elect for the first time an assembly with considerably enlarged powers, the product of the merger between the regional authority and the two departmental councils, the political spectrum was poorer than ever. The absence of the non-communist left was particularly relevant, especially as the left-wing radicals had dominated politics in the north of the island since the second post-war period.

With ten lists present, the 2021 elections are on the average observed since 1982, but there is a new (dis)balance. Among the national parties, only the French Communist Party was running; the Socialists and Radicals were absent again. This certainly pushed President Macron's first supporter on the island, Jean-Charles Orsucci, a former member of the Socialist Party, to position himself on the left, excluding any claim to belong to the presidential party. Still, on the left, this election also saw the comeback – for the first time since 1998 – of an ecologist list. It was led by Agnès Simonpietri, who was in charge of the environment in the first nationalist executive council (2015-2017).

On the opposite side of the spectrum, the Rassemblement National [RN] has found a new leader but also a new competitor. The Corsica Fiera [Proud Corsica] list was led by a former RN member, and combined the classic themes of the radical right – opposition to immigration, the European Union and liberal globalisation – with a project of broad autonomy for Corsica, described as 'shared sovereignty.'

However, the major points were elsewhere. On the moderate right, where, for the first time since 1982, only one

a • The evolution of nationalist parties in territorial elections, 2015-2021

	2015 1 ^{er} tour	2015 2 nd tour	2017 1t	2017 2t	2021 1t	2021 2t
<i>Inseme per a Corsica / FaC</i>	17,62%	35,34%	45,36%	56,46%	29,19%	40,64%
PNC					13,22%	15,07%
CL	7,73%				6,90%	
<i>Rinnovu Naziunale / CIF</i>	2,58%	-	6,69%	-	8,39%	12,26%

b • Results of the 2021 territorial elections in Corsica

Liste (conduite par)	Sensibilité	Premier tour		Second tour		
		Voix	% Exprimés	Voix	% Exprimés	Sièges
<i>Fà populu inseme</i> (Gilles Simeoni)	Autonomiste	39 247	29,19	55548	40,64	32
<i>Un soffiu novu</i> (Laurent Marcangeli)	Divers droite	33 432	24,86	43769	32,02	17
<i>Avanzemu</i> (Jean-Christophe Angelini)	Autonomiste	17 772	13,22	20604	15,07	8
<i>Core in fronte</i> (Paul-Félix Benedetti)	Indépendantiste	11 282	8,39	16762	12,26	6
<i>Corsica Libera</i> (Jean-Guy Talamoni)	Indépendantiste	9 280	6,90			
<i>Corse, terre de progrès</i> (Jean-Charles Orsucci)	Divers gauche	7 957	5,92			
<i>Les nôtres avant les autres</i> (François Filoni)	Rassemblement national	5 378	4,00			
<i>Ecologia sulidaria</i> (Agnès Simonpietri)	Gauche écologiste	5 039	3,75			
<i>Campà megliu in Corsica</i> (Michel Stefani)	Communiste	4 279	3,18			
<i>Corsica fiera</i> (Jean-Antoine Giacomi)	Divers extrême-droite	791	0,59			

list ran in the first round, behind the mayor and president of the Ajaccio agglomeration community, Laurent Marcangeli. Among the nationalists, where the party of the outgoing president of the executive council, Gilles Simeoni, which has become Femu a Corsica [We make Corsica – FaC], chose to form a list without the two partners with whom it had shared power since 2015. The party’s secretary-general said that internal tensions and criticism within the coalition had been a key factor in the decision. The conditions officially set for a new alliance were broad enough to rule out any concrete possibility.

Unlike the 2020 municipal elections, the two minority partners preferred to run separately. The Partitu di a Nazione Corsa [Party of the Corsican Nation – PNC] adopted a strategy similar to that of FaC: to show its convening capacity by integrating some known personalities, coming from the left as well as from the right. Conversely, Corsica Libera [Free Corsica – CL] preferred to reaffirm its pro-independence message. It was all the more predictable that Core in Fronte [Heart forward – CiF], a pro-independence party very critical of the policies carried out by the outgoing majority, seemed able to reach the second round for the first time.

Of course, since 1982, the nationalist division is not the exception but the rule. However, the controversial break-up of the 2015 and 2017 winning alliance was an event that increased the uncertainty of the outcome of the ballot box.

Gilles Simeoni’s successful gamble

While in 2017 the turnout had collapsed – 52.10 and 52.55% in the first and second rounds – the competition

between nationalists and the presence of a more representative challenger on the right suggested a revival in 2021. This was the case, with 57.08 and 58.91% of participation, whereas in France as a whole only 33.28 and 34.69% of citizens turned out. That being said, mobilisation for the territorial elections has declined sharply since 2010, when there was still a 69% turnout in the second round.

In terms of the balance of power, with almost 68% of the vote in the second round of 2021, the nationalists have apparently increased their dominance. Nevertheless, this new triumph presents a very diverse configuration. In 2015, it was thanks to a coalition formed for the second round that they won for the first time, and it was only a relative majority of 24 councillors out of 51. The Per a Corsica [for Corsica] coalition united the then autonomist alliance Femu a Corsica – composed of Inseme per a Corsica [together for Corsica] and the PNC – and the pro-independence party CL. Another pro-independence party – Rinnovu Naziunale [National Renewal] – failed to reach the second round.

In 2017, Rinnovu Naziunale, now CiF, has risen and failed near the threshold of accession to the second round (7%), but above all, the Per a Corsica coalition was renewed in the first round and crushed the competition with more than 56% of the votes in the second round. Never since 1982 had a list achieved such results. However, tensions between the partners grew throughout the mandate, marked by the government’s rejection of all nationalist demands. They were concretised during the municipal elections of 2020, where the nationalist offer showed a confounding heterogeneity, and then for the territorial elections of 2021. .

However, this division did not cause a global weak-

ning of nationalism. Faced with it, only the right-wing opposition managed to maintain itself within the Corsican Assembly. The left, or at least the unionist left, disappeared. The ecologists were unable to achieve their hopes. Finally, the radical right is very far from what it represented during the 2017 presidential elections, when Marine Le Pen had gathered 48.52% of the votes in the second round.

Many observers note the concomitance between the rise of the RN vote in the presidential elections and that of the nationalist vote in the regional elections. But if there is no doubt that Corsican voters vote nationalist in the territorial elections and RN in the presidential elections, there is not enough evidence to suggest a widespread phenomenon. During the previous elections, the town level analysis showed the no correlation between the two votes⁶. More strikingly, the Le Pen vote in the second round of the 2017 presidential elections had a significant negative effect on the level of the Simeoni vote in the second round of the 2021 territorial elections, while there was no clear correlation with the vote for the other nationalist lists.

On the other hand, since 2017, Gilles Simeoni had rallied a part of the former electorate of the non-communist

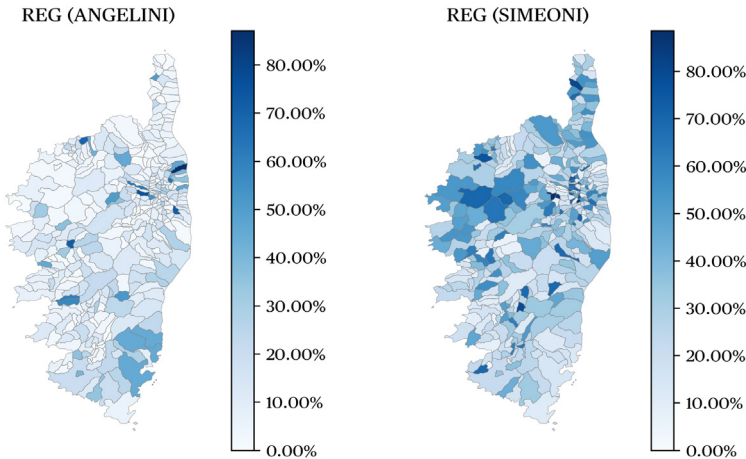
left, affected by the judicial fall of its leader, the former president Paul Giacobbi. In 2021,¹ he also achieved excellent results in several communes traditionally very much on the right, sometimes with the official support of the mayors. In general, it performs significantly better in the small communes, with less than 300 registered voters, which were previously the most loyal to the unionist parties. The fact that he now holds power probably explains some of the political moves among these communes, which are particularly dependent on regional aid and subsidies.

However, Gilles Simeoni has above all managed, despite the challenge of power, to preserve his excellent image, with 71% of positive opinions according to the only poll carried out before the election. In a system where interpersonal relations and local interests still have a powerful impact on electoral choices, his results show a special regularity. Gilles Simeoni succeeded in seducing elected representatives and voters from different leanings, without breaking with his nationalist base. He is the one who benefits from the electoral heritage of the Per a Corsica coalition. Conversely, there is no correlation between the vote for the other autonomist list, the PNC, and the results of 2015 and 2017.

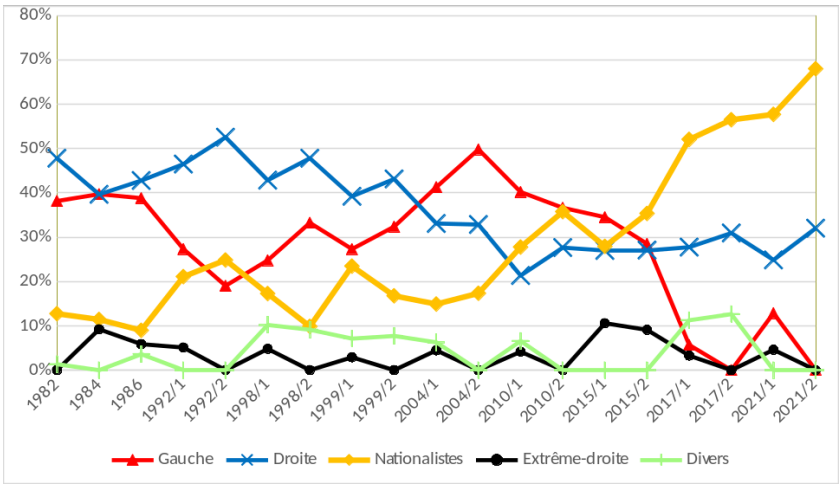
The other big winner is CiF, which has managed to embody a nationalist alternative to the outgoing majority, with a much more radical discourse from both a social and environmental point of view, and a repertoire of protest action that is popular among supporters. On the contrary, on the right, the union from the first round did not convince all the actors. The president of the Les Républicains federation of Haute-Corse, absent from the list, did not hide his criticism⁹. In the end, the list led by Laurent Marcangeli, unanimously considered as the best candidate of his political family, performed less well than the sum of the two lists present in 2017 in the first round, and barely better in the second.

Among the other losers, we find Gilles Simeoni's former partners. The CL list, led by the outgoing president of the Corsican Assembly, Jean-Guy Talamoni, failed to reach the threshold of accession to the second round by a handful of votes, and the integration of only four CL candidates – without Jean-Guy Talamoni – on the PNC list was far from bearing the expected fruit. The PNC list gained less than 3000 votes between

c • Spatial variation in the FaC and PNC vote. Second round of the 2021 territorial elections



d • Regional and territorial elections in Corsica: 1982-2021



1. The coefficient is -0.24 and the t-statistic is -3.38.

the two rounds, whereas it could theoretically have hoped for more than 9000. Finally, if the failures of the ecologists, the communists and the radical right were not surprising, the collapse of Jean-Charles Orsucci – whose list exceeded 11% in the first round of 2017 – is more relevant and probably confirms that President Macron is not very popular in Corsica, the region where he had achieved his worst result in 2017.

New phase, new uncertainties

If there was little doubt that Gilles Simeoni would be in the lead of the nationalists, the essential question was that of his alliance strategy. Faced with an opposition considered more serious, an alliance with other nationalists, before or after the second round, could not be ruled out. However, thanks to its lead and its campaign dynamics, Gilles Simeoni's list presented itself alone in the second round. It won the absolute majority in seats by a very small margin (less than 300 votes), and unsurprisingly chose to run the Corsican collectivity alone.

Thus, the first major lesson of these territorial elections is the strengthening of the personification of the Corsican political system. On the one hand, the break-up of the coalition of 2015-2021 was interpreted, probably too simplistically, as the product of individual discord. On the other hand, the strong variations recorded in the different communes suggest that personal attachments played a more important role in the results of the nationalist parties, particularly for the PNC.

Finally, Gilles Simeoni's personal stature is further enhanced. The communal data show that since the first victory in 2015, his personality has been decisive in the nationalist progression, seducing voters from all horizons.

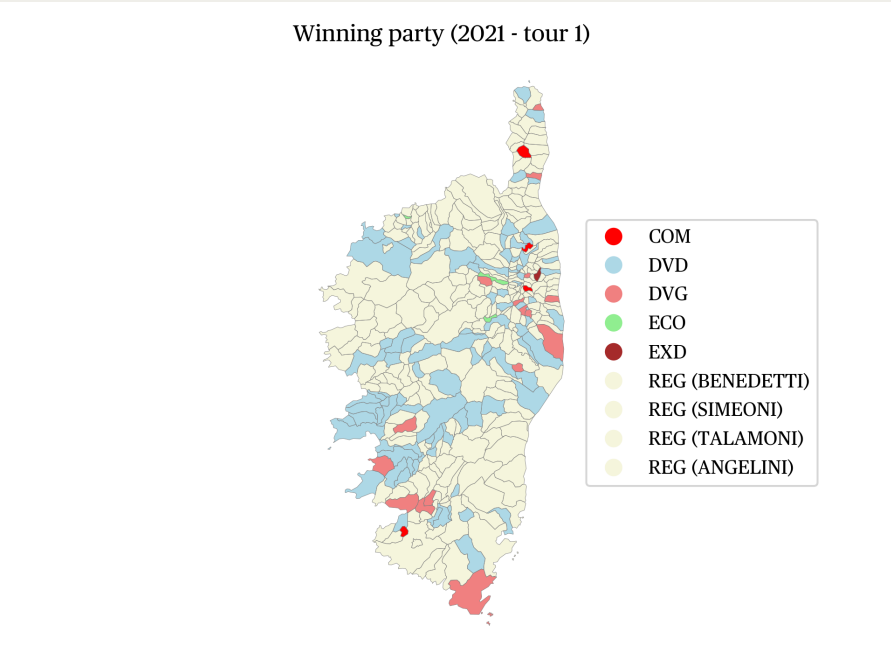
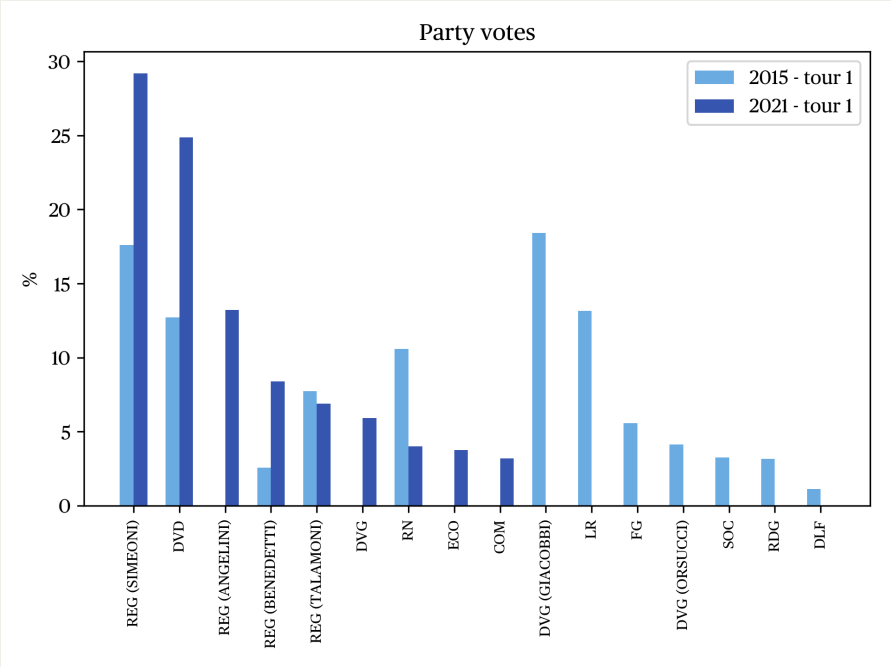
The second major lesson is therefore the increased normalisation, or mainstreamisation, of the Corsican nationalist vote and especially the Simeoni vote. In the 1980s, the nationalist vote was an anti-system vote. In 2021, the Simeoni vote is the balanced choice, between independentist inclinations which are often considered unviable and unionist parties whose influence and attractiveness are constantly decreasing, especially on the left. This raises the question of pluralism in the Corsican Assembly. Of course, the Corsican nationalists do not all

have the same economic, social and environmental sensibilities conceptions. However, the absence of several important political families is a priori detrimental to the debate.

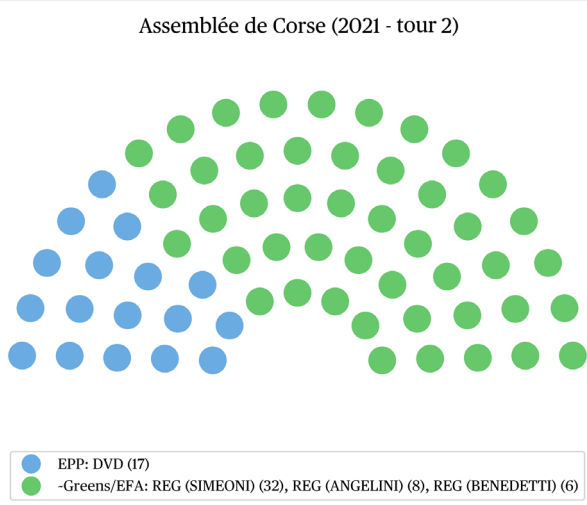
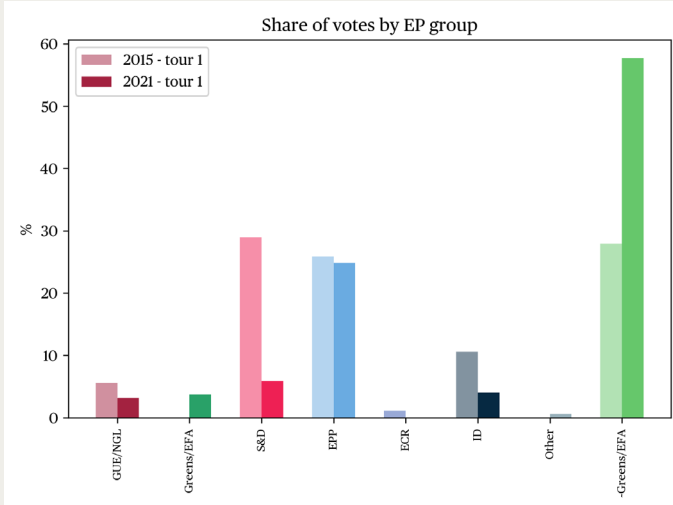
In terms of perspectives, the recomposition of the nationalist field, combined with the threat by clandestine organisations of a resurgence of violent actions, opens a new phase. Gilles Simeoni, who now needs no one to pass his deliberations and his budget, will have to demonstrate more clearly the quality of his policies. However, he will also have to address the other nationalists if he wants to be able to deal effectively with the state. Without a broad regional consensus, it is unlikely that the central government will revise the constitution and respond favourably – at least in part – to nationalist demands. The task will certainly be complicated.

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European indicators





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Regional election in Guadeloupe, 20-27 June 2021

Unlike Martinique and Guyana, Guadeloupe is both a department and a region. The two authorities overlap and share the same territory, forming a DROM (overseas department/region) whose name has no juridical correspondence. In the light of the law and the constitution, only the department and the region exist.

In 2021 the “dromatised” voters were called upon, on the same day, to vote to designate separately, but in the same offices, departmental councilors elected by a two-round majority system in the cantons and regional councilors designated by a two-round majority list vote throughout the country.

This complexity of the electoral game did not have a major impact on the conduct of the elections, nor on the expected results.

However, compared to the 2015 regional election, the 2021 election is marked by notable differences, the first of which is the quasi plebiscite of the outgoing president. Indeed, Ary Chalus of the “Continuons d'avancer/Keep forward” list was re-elected in the second round with a very high score.

In 2015, he was elected with 57.49% of the votes, obtaining 28 of the 41 seats and defeating Victorin Lurel (42.51% and 13 seats), former minister and secretary general of the local Socialist federation.

In 2021, missing his re-election in the first round by 600 votes, Chalus won 72.43% of the votes in the second round and 33 seats. He beat Ms. Borel Lincertain of the Socialist Party federation at the head of the “péyi-gwadeloup” list and outgoing president of the general council. Chasing two hares at the same time, she recorded a double failure. She was defeated in the regional elections (22.57% and 8 seats), and also in her canton, which shut her out of the departmental council that she used to chair.

Other differences were the high rate of abstention and the increase in the number of concurrent lists. In 2021, 12 lists competed harshly, but the number did not prevent

a record abstention rate of 64% of registered voters. In 2015, there were 10 lists and an abstention of 43%. Ary Chalus' plebiscite election is therefore accompanied by a low voter turnout.

Compared to other French Caribbean territories, Guadeloupe has the highest abstention rate. In 2021, Martinique had an abstention rate of 56% and Guyana 54%. This difference is all the more surprising given that during the last regional elections in 2015, the Guadeloupean archipelago had the highest turnout. The abstention rate was 42.68% in Guadeloupe, 53.35% in Guyana and 47.66% in Martinique.

It is highly likely that the increase in the abstention rate in 2021 is associated with the health situation and the dramatic consequences of the spread of COVID 19 in the West Indies and particularly in Guadeloupe. Voters whose mobilization is low or erratic in normal times have certainly avoided taking risks by voting.

But in parallel to this hypothesis, we must take into account a new and young political offer, particularly in Guadeloupe, which probably limited abstention despite its high score. It is not in Guadeloupe that the political offer is the most developed. If there are 4 lists in Guiana, in Martinique there are 14.

The four Guyanese lists have the characteristic of being coalitions and of giving an important place to civil society, which has reduced the profusion of lists. The Guyanese lists tend to bring together several parties, whereas the main Martinique lists present at the last election imploded, thus favoring a multiplication of lists.

In Guadeloupe, we are also witnessing the emergence of ‘civil society’ through several lists that claim to be “citizen lists”. In particular, there are personalities who express their discontent on social networks, have used the regional election to oppose vaccination and the health pass and promoted an individualistic representation of

freedom.

The almost inevitable consequence of these choices is a populist discourse mixing refusal of speed cameras, conspiracy arguments on new vaccines or the right to decide on one's own body.

The electoral results of these lists are very low, ranging from 0.58% to 2.88%. Most commentators interpret the participation of these "citizen lists" as a renewed interest in politics. The argument is objectively true even if the results are low, but one must add to the explanation the growing mistrust and dissatisfaction with a political class that does not meet the expectations of the population.

This is probably one of the explanations for the NOU surprise in this regional election. The NOU list is not a "citizen" list, it proclaims itself nationalist. It is made up of young candidates with an unprecedented sociological profile (several company directors are on the list), modern and effective communication methods and an astonishing capacity for mobilization. It did not win any seats but became the third political force in the territory with 9.39% of the votes in the first round. The last time a political organization claiming to be nationalist participated was in 2004. It obtained 3.94% of the votes.

The electoral failure of this list is perceived by its "captain" as a political victory because of the growing interest of its discourse and the number of members that the group would register since the regional elections.

L'ampleur de la victoire d'Ary Chalus, associée à celle de The scale of Ary Chalus' victory, combined with that of his political partner: Guadeloupe Unie Solidaire et Responsable/Guadeloupe united, supportive and responsible (GUSR) chaired by Guy Losbar, could lead to a reshuffle of the political landscape. The first victim of this ongoing recomposition is the local federation of the Socialist Party, which has been greatly weakened in the regional council and deprived of the presidency of the departmental council. The mayor of Lamentin, one of its main elected representatives, is participating in the foundation of a new movement whose acronym is evocative: Gwadeloup Plurielle et Solidaire/Plural and supportive Guadeloupe (GPS).

This reorganization is based on a more or less explicit slogan, the localization of power, which was one of the themes of the regional campaign. Everyone adheres to it in different ways.

Beyond the differences in interpretation, the feeling of belonging to a territory, to a cultural identity is making its way. The Creole language is spoken with no difficulty in all areas and by all. Even the former prefect of Guadeloupe, who became the chief of staff of the Minister for Overseas France, did not hesitate to say a few words in Creole to conclude interviews. The flag of the pro-independence party Union Populaire pour la Libération de la Guadeloupe/Popular Union for the liberation of Guadeloupe (UPLG) has become, for the growing number of people who wear it, a "national" emblem without being

associated with independence. These are all signs of a renewed Guadeloupean identity that is gaining in identity affirmation while losing in protest vitality. In other words, the affirmation of identity does not mean that voters are ready to leave a dependence that, in their eyes, provides resources (Reno 2001 ; Reno 2021). In this area, few lists take the risk of proposing an adjustment of this dependence by openly asking the question of autonomy. They agree on food autonomy and energy autonomy without understanding that these would probably be the possible dimensions of a credible formulation of political autonomy. The global context, the discourse of state representatives and the local demands argue in favour of this autonomy.

The contract of joint governance, signed after the regional and departmental elections between Ary Chalus, candidate for the presidency of the region, and Guy Losbar, candidate for the presidency of the department, is interesting from this point of view. The aim is to bring the two assemblies closer together in order to develop and implement more effective local public policies.

This contract would avoid the entanglements generated by the DROM, thus improving local decision-making.

The preamble to the document states this objective:

"We, the undersigned, candidates in the regional and departmental elections of 20 and 27 June 2021, affirm by our signature our desire to establish a Concerted Governance Contract to serve the effectiveness of our public policies and the development of GUADELOUPE. The sense of the country requires consultation and coherence between regional and departmental action." (Contrat 2021 : 2)

We could even see it as a prelude to a change in status. The approach is explicit: *"It is in this sense that we must Think Guadeloupe and Act Guadeloupe, to keep the course of a deep development of the organization of our institutions, while managing first of all the urgency of a more coherent and effective functioning of the departmental and regional actions"* one can read in this document (Contrat 2021 : 2).

Various degrees of autonomy can be considered.

"Our reflection could therefore usefully focus on a reorganization of the institutional structure, a new distribution of competences, or even a real local normative power in certain fields of competence." (Contrat 2013 : 3)

In reality, these prospects are not guaranteed by the convergence of the two executives.

The sacrosanct theory of blocks of competences is invoked, which may mean that the current institutional architecture could remain. However, it is sufficient to read one of the latest reports of the National Assembly on the assessment of decentralization (Questel & Schellenberg 2019) to understand that, at the local level, public policies are necessarily intersectoral and therefore far from being watertight, as this belief in the distribution of power in blocks of competences might suggest. The conclusion

of this report is without appeal: the theory of blocks of competences is a dead end. The contract of concerted governance born before the local elections could also be a dead end if it ends up consolidating the DROM.

Beyond these novelties, two lists out of the twelve in competition have publicly and for the first time used the notions of ethnicity for one (Socialist Party), of Indo-Guadeloupeans and Afro-Guadeloupeans for the other (National Rally) to indicate the representativeness of their list in a territory where these notions are rarely used.

In both cases, the aim of the approach is not to protect a threatened community but to present society as a group of communities that have been brought together. The communities that are not explicitly identified or selected are united by a multicolored logo and thus a multicultural list, like the "péyi Gwadeloup" represented by a mosaic. As anthropologists have shown with regard to the indigenous peoples of America, ethnicity can be a tool for transcending local identities and building broader solidarities, which is perhaps the objective of this list, whose characteristic is to bring together unknown ethnic groups whose only signs of recognition are the phenotypes of the people who make them up.

During the regional election, Europe is not very present in the electoral campaign. It becomes a political issue when the question of political change in the territory arises. The question generally boils down to whether or not it is in the interest of the community to remain in the European space and what status it should have: RUP (*Région ultrapériphérique*, Outermost Region) or PTOM (*Pays*

et Territoire d'Outre-Mer, Overseas Country and Territory)? In 2003 and 2010, when the choice between the legal regimes offered by the constitution had to be answered, the debate was lively.

Those in favor of a legislative autonomy (Article 73) were convinced that this was the only option for maintaining the RUP status. The new wording of the constitution after the revision of March 2003 and the case of Saint Martin show that the state's statutory offer and the territory's European status depend above all on the political will of the elected representatives and the consent of the population.

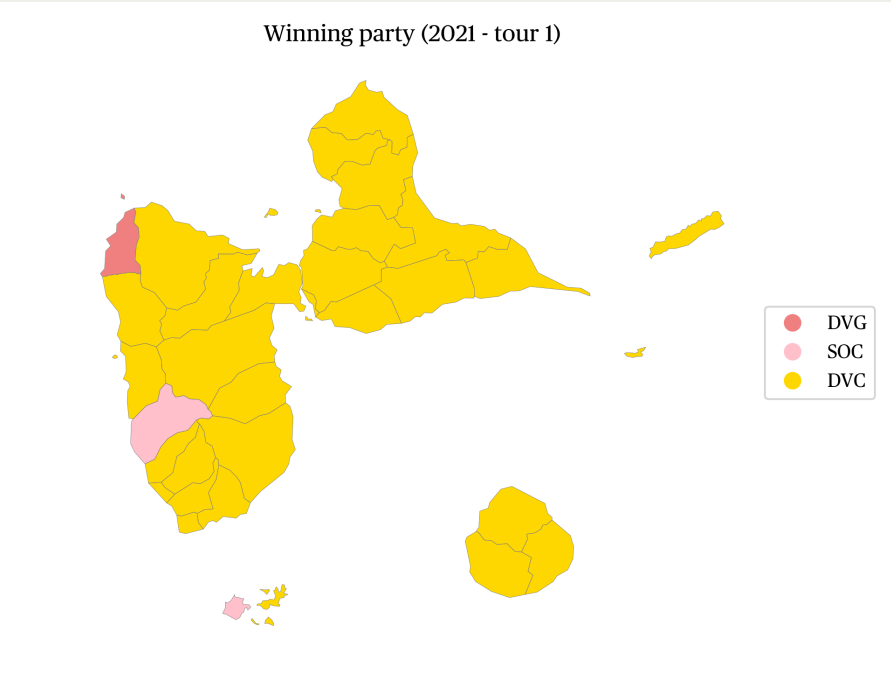
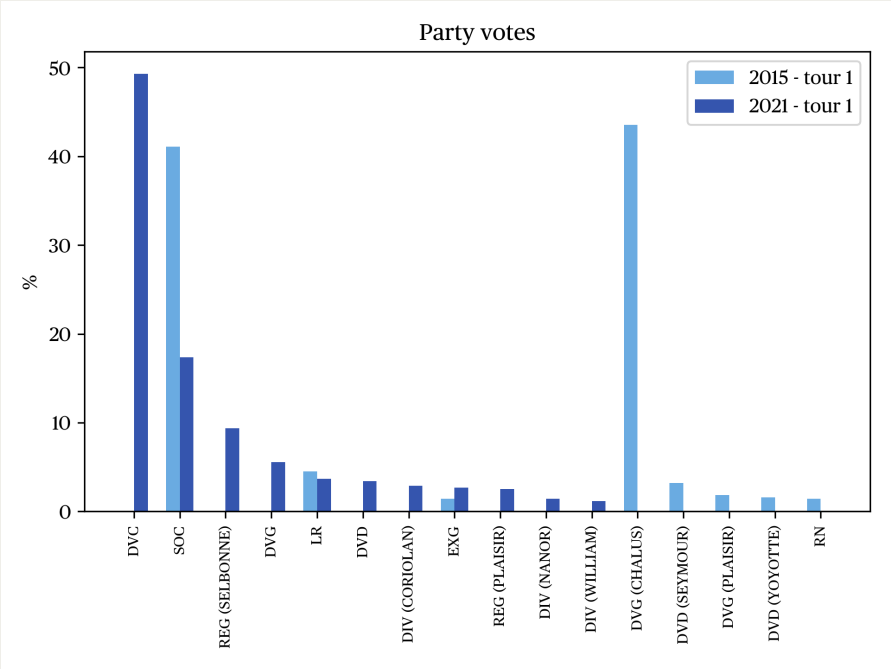
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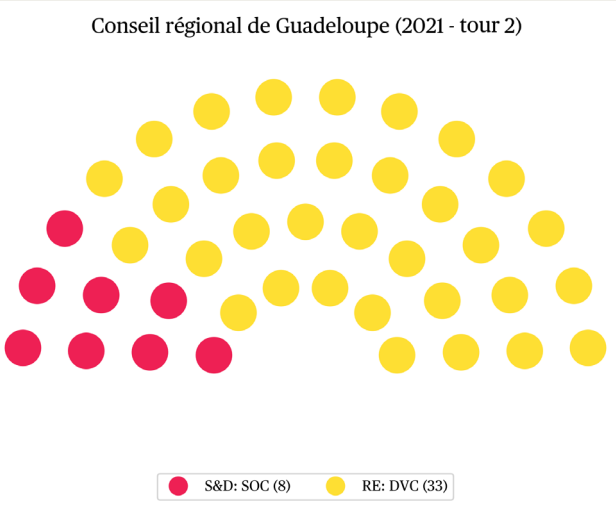
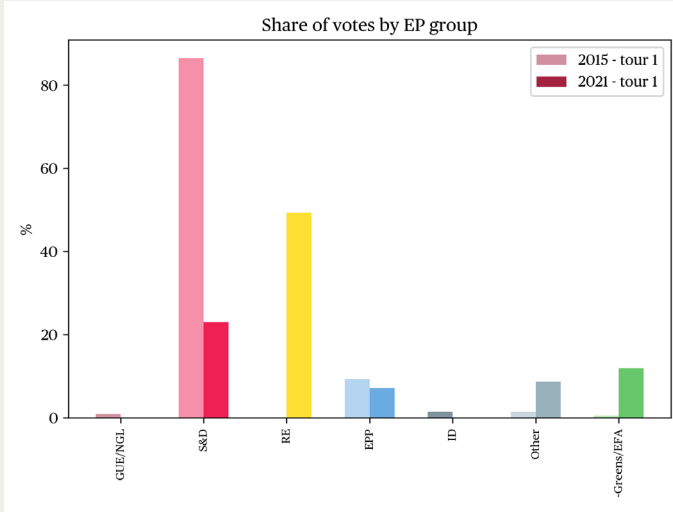
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European indicators





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Territorial election in French Guiana, 20-27 June 2021

“There will not have been the feared thunderclap. No region was tipped over to the Rassemblement National (National Rally, RN) in the evening of the second round of regional elections on Sunday 27 June, marked by a high abstention.” This was the first lesson that *Le Monde* drew at 8 pm from this election. (de Royer 2021). The next day, most of the French media said the same thing. “The leaders of the right are strengthened, the left retains its five regions and the RN is in retreat,” summarized for example Franceinfo (Franceinfo 2021). However, as we (re) discovered that the electoral consultation was spread over several time zones, the established observation proved to be wrong. By switching to the left, French Guiana, with a population of nearly 280,000 inhabitants on 1 January 2018, offered one of the most unexpected outcomes in the French overseas territories.

The first renewal of the Territorial Collectivity of French Guiana (CTG)

On 20 and 27 June, more than 100,000 voters were called to renew the assembly of the young CTG, which came into operation on 1 January 2016, for the first time. Due to vigorous population growth – since 2013, French Guiana has grown by 6,400 inhabitants each year – 55 seats, instead of 51, were at stake. Five of the eight electoral sections benefited from this gain of four seats, while the Savanes section, centered on the space city of Kourou, lost one. The section of Upper-Maroni, which includes isolated communes in the west, thus gained two additional territorial councillors. The section of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and those of the Petite and Grande Couronne, in other words the agglomerations around Cayenne, the capital of the CTG, each gained one seat.

The outgoing president, Rodolphe Alexandre, was confident and unbeaten since his defeat in the 1993 legislative elections and was re-elected in the first round.

Ten candidates supported by or affiliated with his party Guyane Rassemblement (Guiana Rally, GR) had won the last municipal elections, and many local elected officials made up his list called “United and Committed to our Territory”. Alexandre, who is a close associate of Emmanuel Macron, could also proudly claim the unofficial support of La République en Marche (LREM, Renew Europe) and, more unexpectedly, the public support of the Guyanese federation of the Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste, PS, PES). The campaign of the strong man of a political game unfamiliar to a French observer thus highlighted the success of the establishment of the CTG and invited to make “the choice of competence,” because “to direct the CTG, to preside over the destiny of Guiana, that cannot be improvised!”¹

There were three lists against him, compared to eight in the December 2015 election. Unable to lead a union of the left, the MP Gabriel Serville, member of the Communist group Gauche Démocratique et Républicaine (Democratic Republican Left) in the National Assembly, took the gamble to lead his own list. The list, entitled “*Guyane Kontré pour avancer*” (Guiana united to move forward), included personalities from his party Peyi Guyane, the Génération.s (Generation.s) movement and Guyane insoumise (Unbowed Guiana), the local branch of La France insoumise (Unbowed France, LFI – Maintenant le peuple, Now the people). But the most important highlight consisted of the rallying of major figures from the intense social mobilization of March-April 2017. This embodied the declared desire to give voice to citizens.

Only the “Guiana” list could, however, claim to present to voters a renewed version of the plural left. Labelled as Liste d'union de la gauche et écologie (union list of left-wing ideology and ecology, LUGE), it brought together, among others, the Guyanese Socialist Party (Parti socia-

1. See Rodolphe Alexandre's program.

a • Distribution of territorial council seats by section

8 Sections	22 Communes	Habitants au 1 ^{er} janvier 2018 (en milliers)	4 intercommunalités	Habitants au 1 ^{er} janvier 2018 (en milliers)	55 sièges à la CTG
Cayenne	Cayenne	63 652	Communauté d'agglomération du Centre littoral	144 501	12
Petite Couronne	Matoury et Rémire-Montjoly	59 086 (32 943 + 26 143)			11
Grande Couronne	Macouria, Montsinéry-Tonnégrande et Roura	21 764 (15 602 + 2 772 + 3 390)			4
Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni	Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni	45 576	Communauté des communes de l'Ouest guyanais	94 677	9
Haut-Maroni	Apatou, Grand-Santi, Maripasoula, Papaïchton et Saül	36 437 (9 381+ 8 698 + 11 994 + 6 212 + 152)			7
Basse-Mana	Awala-Yalimapo et Mana	12 664 (1 430 + 11 234)			3
Savanes	Iracoubo, Kourou, Saint-Elie et Sinnamary	29 843 (1 773 + 24 959 + 216 + 2 895)	Communauté des communes des Savanes	29 843	6
Oyapock	Camopi, Régina, Ouanary et Saint-Georges de l'Oyapock	7 107 (1 834 + 865 + 220 + 4 188)	Communauté des communes de l'Est guyanais	7 107	3

Source : Insee Flash.
Guyane-Antilles, #131,
December 2020.

liste guyanais, PSG), for a long time the dominant party on the political scene, the independentists of the Movement of Decolonization and Social Emancipation (Mouvement de décolonisation et d'émancipation sociale), the ecologists, and Walwari, the formation founded in 1992 by Christiane Taubira, former Minister of Justice under the presidency of François Hollande. In addition, there were personalities of the civil society known for their opposition to the "Montagne d'Or" (Golden Mountain) project, namely the mining of a gold concession in western Guiana, which was at the heart of the public debate in 2018. Mayor of Awala-Yalimapo, symbolic capital of the indigenous Amerindian movement, Jean-Paul Fereira was called to head this list that emphasized the autonomy of Guiana, the founding leitmotiv of the Guyanese left.

Without any party, Jessi Américain, a young Maroon² from a working-class district of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and graduate of Sciences Po, finally led the list "Change of air" (*Changer d'air*), whose name was inspired by a poem by Leon-Gontran Damas, one of the three proponents of the negritude.³ Elected in March 2020 as a member of the opposition in the city council of his hometown, this newcomer intended, according to his campaign slogan, to "kill the game" by putting an end to the dominance of the

current political class. As an indication of this positioning, only his list had as many women as men at list leaders in the various electoral sections.

In the first round, a deceptive continuity

After the consternation of a massive abstention (65.21%), continuity seemed to prevail in the evening of the first round.

As in 2015, Alexander came largely in the lead with 43.7% of the votes cast. His list dominated seven of the eight sections and received the majority of votes in four of them. The prize went to the Oyapock area. The outgoing president reached 77.76% and was ahead of Fereira by more than 1,000 votes. In Camopi, for example, the Teko and Wayãpi Amerindians even voted 80% in his favor. The same was true of the Maroons, the majority of whom were in Upper-Maroni.

However, if we look closely, Alexandre obtained his best results in isolated rural areas, with low population densities, where, moreover, the voters were the most mobilized. For example, abstention in Oyapock was only 53.03%. Another reason for concern is that while Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni unequivocally renewed its confidence in the incumbent (54.4%), the second largest city of the Guyanese urban framework recorded the lowest turnout of the eight sections (26.68%). In addition, in the Communauté d'agglomération du Centre littoral (Agglomeration Community of the Coastal Center, CACL), the most

2. Descendants of slaves who escaped from the plantations of Suriname and who, starting in the 18th century, built highly hierarchical free societies and contracted their relationship with the French authorities.
3. "Grand comme un besoin de changer d'air", published in Léon-Gontran Damas, Négralgies, Paris, Présence africaine, 1964.

populous among the Guyanese intercommunities, the same that Alexandre had chaired from 2001 to 2014 and which weighs nearly half of the seats to be filled, the results were disappointing. In Cayenne, ahead of Serville by more than two points, Alexandre obtained only 34.3% of the votes. The MP was also in the lead in Macouria. In Rémire-Montjoly, an upscale suburb of the capital, in Matoury, the third largest city in terms of population, and in Kourou, he even overcame the predictions by closely following Alexandre's list. Finally, by gathering on his name 15,020 votes, almost the number of votes collected in the first round of 2015 (15,298), Alexandre had mobilized his electorate.

The arithmetic of the second round appeared more favorable for Serville who, with 27.68% against 23.34% for Ferreira, had won the match on the left. The two competing left-wing lists accumulated 17,530 votes. Ferreira offered strong reserves in the three western sections where the MP had his worst results. Similarly, in the section of Lower-Mana, LUGE obtained 31.84% of the votes. With a score of 5.27% authorizing him to merge, Jessi Américain reinforced the hopes for an unpredictable victory. It was indeed in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and in the Maroon communes of the Upper-Maroni that the greatest number of his voters were counted.

A landslide victory for the left

With the slogan "all against Alexandre," Serville concluded on his name the union of the left in the night between 21 and 22 June. He also rallied Jessi Américain to constitute his list of the second round, renamed "Guyane Kontré pour avancer sans limites" (Guiana united to advance without limits). However, the PSG was slow to announce its support. Christiane Taubira refused to give voting indication, as her party Walwari had borne the brunt of the said union.

The strategy nevertheless paid off. With 54.83% of the votes, or 25,432 votes, Serville was ahead of Alexandre's unchanged list by nearly ten points. "It is a tidal wave in favor of change, in favor of Gabriel Serville," reported incredulous and delighted Jean-Luc Le West, former vice-president of the Guyanese federation of the Mouvement des Entreprises de France (Movement of French Companies, MEDEF) elected in Cayenne (Guitteau 2021). De fait, à l'exception de Saint-Laurent-du Maroni, Serville conquérirait tous les pôles urbains du territoire. In fact, with the exception of Saint-Laurent-du Maroni, Serville conquered all the urban centers of the territory. In Cayenne, he reached 64.4% placing Alexandre nearly thirty points behind. The Petite and Grande Couronne offered him a twenty-point lead.

"We lose in the CACL, that I set up," reacted, stunned, the defeated candidate. "We win everywhere else, from Upper-Maroni to Lower-Mana, from Oyapock to Régina, up to Cacao. There, people have confidence in me. They know what I have done thanks to the EAFRD (European

Agricultural Fund for Rural Development)", Alexandre added (Guitteau 2021). It is true that his electorate had once again mobilized to allow him to clearly retain four sections (Lower-Mana, Upper-Maroni, Oyapock and Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni).

The fact remains that the turnout experienced an increase of more than ten points everywhere in Guiana. Between the two rounds, it went from 34.79% to 46.78%. It was in the Savanes section that abstention fell the most: 68.36% in the first round; 44.7% in the second. This increased participation overturned Alexandre, who had been in the lead a week earlier (43.6%). Serville took Sinnamary, which had voted 64% for his opponent the previous Sunday. The MP also won Kourou with a twenty-point lead. In total, the Savanes gave him the victory with 57%. In the end, the majority of the cities expressed their desire to turn the page on Alexandre.

A territory in good democratic health

In contrast to the French mainland, the surge in civic participation in the second round is neither unprecedented nor specific to French Guiana. "Since 2004, turnout in the second round of voting in overseas France has been systematically higher than in the rest of the country," says Martial Foucault, holder of the recently established Overseas Chair at Sciences Po. He believes that this is a sign of a constant interest in the "role of politics" (Foucault 2021).

This election also reveals the strength of the left in overseas France. In addition to Serville's victory, Huguette Bello, president of the Communist-based party Pour La Réunion (For La Réunion), and Serge Letchimy, leader of the Parti progressiste martiniquais (Martinique Progressive Party) founded in 1958 by Aimé Césaire, won. Their accession to power also allowed for the election of the first socialist woman, Carole Delga, PS president of the Occitanie region, at the head of the association of elected officials, Régions de France (Regions of France), for the first three years of the mandate.

In Cayenne, the vitality of the left is all the more evident since neither LR, which is rebuilding, nor the RN, which is entangled in business, had committed themselves to the campaign. Autonomist, defiant of the State and attached to the European Union's policy of socio-territorial cohesion, this Guyanese left is not structured around national political formations. Almost all of the leading actors in these elections were members of the PSG, which was founded in 1956 in the name of "the incompatibility of defending Guyanese interests in a party of French essence"⁴ and was the main initiator of a bipolarization of local politics based on the national model (Maurice 2014). However, the Guyanese left is now composed of small political structures with a vague ideological agenda, in that they are primarily aimed at ensuring the election of their most prominent political figure.

4. See Debout Guyane, 13 October 1962.

Moreover, Alexandre saw in his defeat a desire to “dechouk” him, a dubious reappropriation of the Haitian word “dechoukage,” or the murderous intoxication that overtook the population following the fall of the dictatorial regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier (1986). In truth, the defeat is to be blamed on the wear and tear on the power of a man at the head of the regional executive for eleven years, an elected official discredited during the social revolt of March-April 2017. The desire for political alternation that was expressed at the ballot box illustrates, all in all, the good democratic health of the Guyanese space, located in a South American environment often tempted by authoritarian solutions.

The appointment of an Amerindian, the Kali’na J.-P. Ferreira, to run for the most important local political office is a further reason for satisfaction. It follows the success in the 2017 legislative elections of Lénaïck Adam (LREM), the first Maroon elected as MP from Guyana. Both testify to the new demographic and symbolic weight of indigenous societies long confined to the category of primitive populations. They consolidate the much-praised historical narrative of the three founding “races” of Guyana (Amerindian, Creole and Maroon), a local reappropriation of the myth of Brazilian racial democracy forged in the 1930s by sociologist Gilberto Freyre to create a sense of national unity.

The migratory pressure on French Guiana, where one third of the inhabitants are of foreign nationality, has led to an increasing number of xenophobic demonstrations and, as in France, to strong anti-immigration stances, with politicians accusing migration of producing insecurity and threatening the cohesion of society.

These particularly dynamic developments suggest that the potential for political innovation in overseas territories should not be underestimated – neither in French Guiana nor elsewhere.

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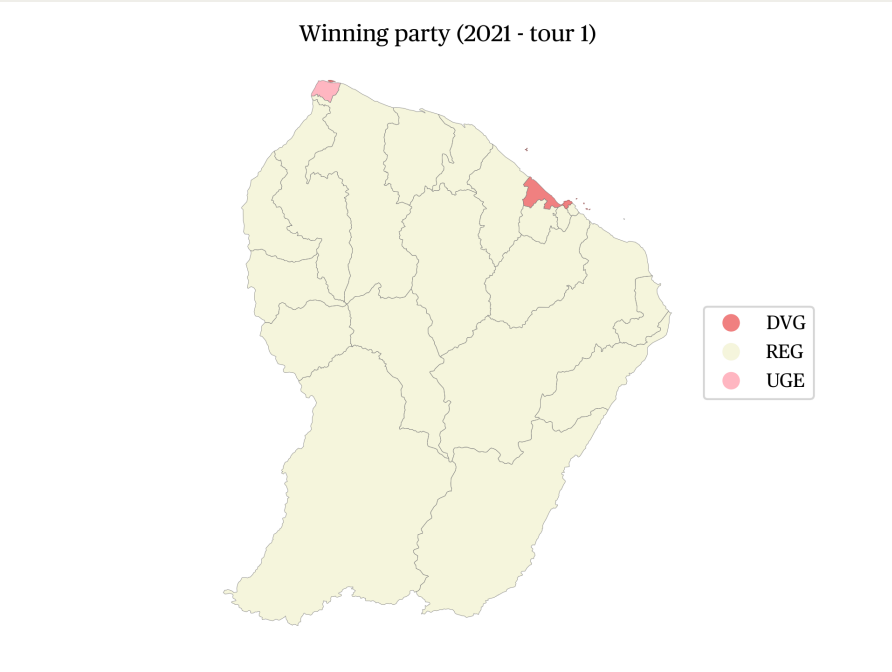
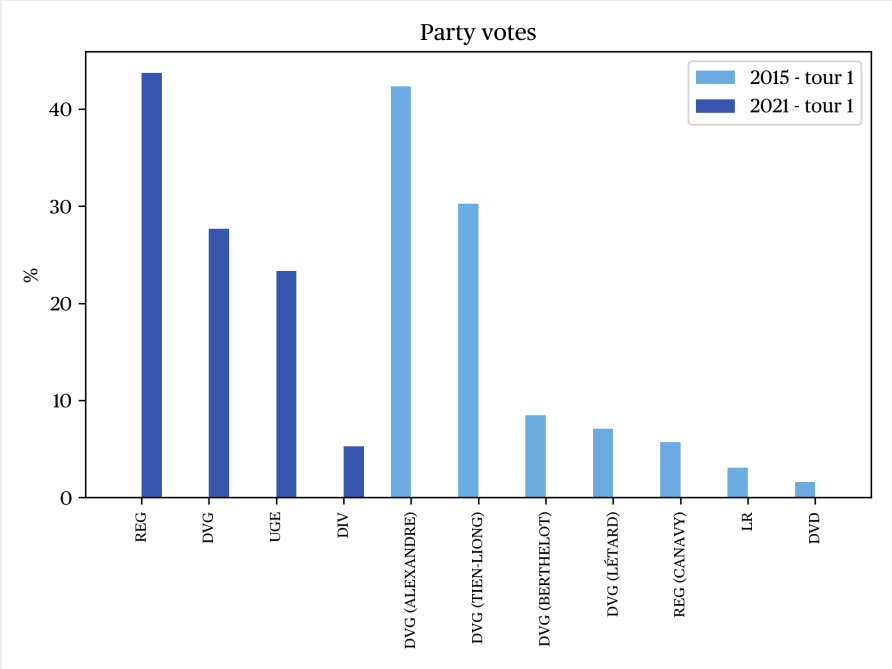
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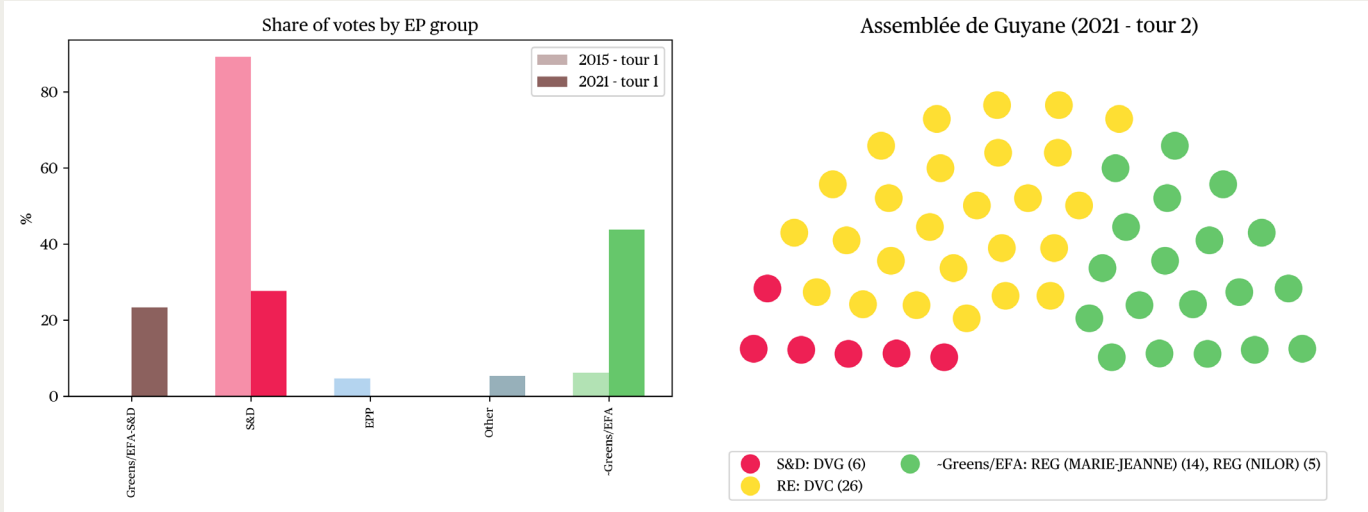
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European indicators





Christiane Rafidinarivo • CEVIPOF, Paris

Regional election in Réunion, 20-27 June 2021

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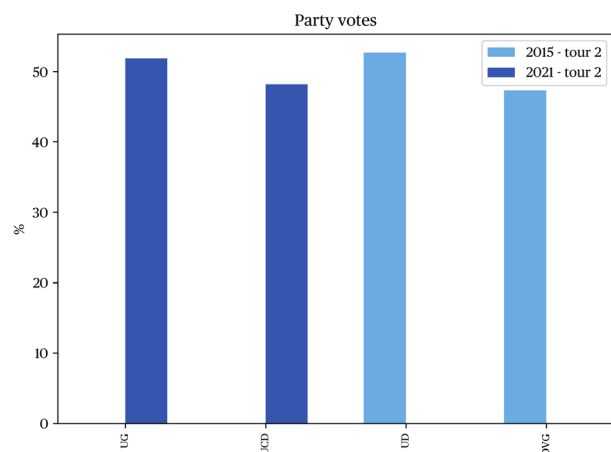
Réunion, located in the Indian Ocean, is a French Overseas Department and Region (DROM), as well an Ultra Peripheral Region (UPR) of the European Union. As the regional council of Réunion is in charge of allocating local, national and European funding to regional projects, regional elections are closely followed by the island's electorate. The Region is also commonly viewed as responsible for protecting the purchasing power of the Réunionese and the local economy. It is the main actor of territorial development, owing to its key role in building and managing infrastructure such as roads, hospitals and high schools. As an outermost region of the EU, Réunion benefits from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), as well as INTERREG funding in the context of regional cooperation. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is also of paramount importance, as it provides essential financial support to the sugarcane industry, the largest employer in Réunion. Most of the political parties in Réunion are therefore pro-European, with controversies mainly revolving around the allocation of funds. Party competition is organized along a left-right cleavage, and characterized by idiosyncratic interactions between national and regional electoral dynamics.

Following the Yellow Vests movement of 2018, strong democratic demands have emerged in the region – in terms of the evaluation of regional policies, transparency or citizen participation – that have been intensely discussed during the 2021 campaign. The differentiation of the political offer in response to these demands gave political meaning to the electoral competition, boosting electoral mobilization especially of the second round. What does this mobilization reveal about the interaction between local and national political dynamics?

The key role of mobilization between the two rounds of voting

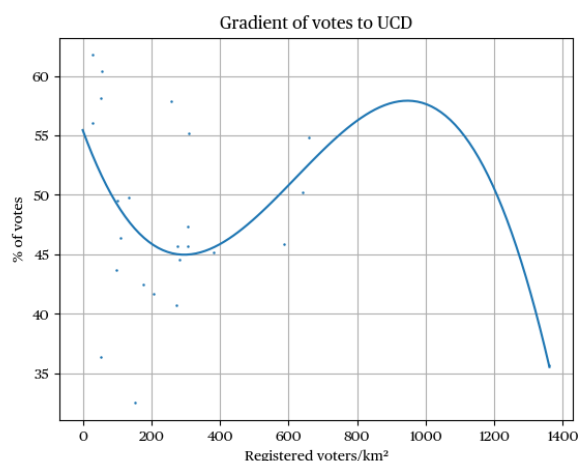
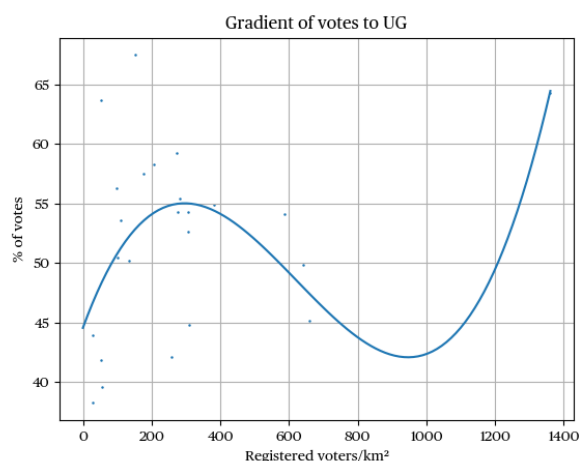
Huguette Bello, the leader of the “United Left” list and a former member of the Communist Party of Réunion (PCR), was elected president of the Regional Council following the 2021 regional elections. Bello's list won the second round of voting with 51.85% of the vote; Didier Robert's center-right coalition, who had been in the lead in the first round, obtained only 48.15% (Figure a). Robert had been leading the Regional Council for two consecutive terms since its victory in the 2010 election, when – while he was still a member of the National Assembly for Réunion – he defeated PCR incumbent Paul Vergès. Bello succeeded in reversing the trend in the second round of voting through stronger mobilization of her electorate.

Abstention was 63.40% in the first round and 53.50% in the second. This decrease of 10 percentage points reflects a significant re-mobilization of the electorate between the two rounds. Martial Foucault¹ has hypothesized that such re-mobilizations could be triggered by “election closeness”: the closer the result in the first



a • Scores of the lists in the second round of voting in 2015 and 2021

b • Scores of the United left (UG) and United right and center UCD) lists as a function of population density in the second round of the 2021 election (municipality-level data)



round, the higher the participation in the second. In the specific regional context of Réunion, however, an alternative analysis can be suggested, which relates higher turnout to higher stakes in the second round of voting. The rate of voter turnout in the second round of the 2021 regional election is close to the one observed in the 2019 municipal election.

A close and uncertain contest

The 2021 campaign was a close contest with an uncertain outcome. Center-right incumbent Didier Robert could rely on three key assets that helped him win the first round. First, Robert succeeded in uniting center-right parties – most importantly the right-wing *Républicains* (LR) and the center-right Union of Democrats and Independents (UDI) – around him, after years of divisions caused by internal rivalries and the national political re-composition taking place since 2017. Robert had built up popular support in Saint-Denis, which had become apparent in 2019 when he ran for the municipal elections in the stronghold of Ericka Bareigts (Socialist Party), a former Minister for Overseas France. During the campaign, Robert emphasized the achievements of his two terms of office while arguing against Bello’s flagship “tram train” project, which the Communists had put forward as a solution to mobility issues, and portraying her as a far-left extremist. On the other hand, Robert was weakened by the non-completion of his flagship infrastructure project, the New Coastal Road (*Nouvelle Route du Littoral*), which lacked a realistic future timeline; he had also been convicted for receiving undue remuneration from a regional public museum, a decision he had appealed.¹ finally, his electorate was deemed volatile. In the end, Robert did not gather sufficient support to win the second round.

Huguette Bello’s list obtained the most votes of all left-leaning lists in the first round, and subsequently succeeded in uniting the left around her candidacy. Bello has served as an opposition Regional Councillor since 2010.

She gave up her mandate as a member of the National Assembly in 2020 – a role in which she had earned recognition well beyond her own party –, to devote herself fully to Réunionese politics. In 2019, she regained Saint-Paul, the largest municipality on the Island. Since the left the PCR in 2014, Bello has been backed by the micro-party she helped create. However, in order for her to win the regional presidency in 2021, an alliance with like-minded patries was indispensable. Between the two rounds of voting, her list therefore merged with those led by Ericka Bareigts (PS mayor of Saint-Denis, allied with the PCR) and Patrick Lebreton (mayor of Saint-Joseph). She also benefitted from external support by Olivier Hoareau (ecologist mayor of Le Port) and the Unbowed France list; the division of the left was thus effectively overcome. In the second round, Huguette Bello’s list eventually obtained a majority of 29 seats out of 45 in the Regional Council.

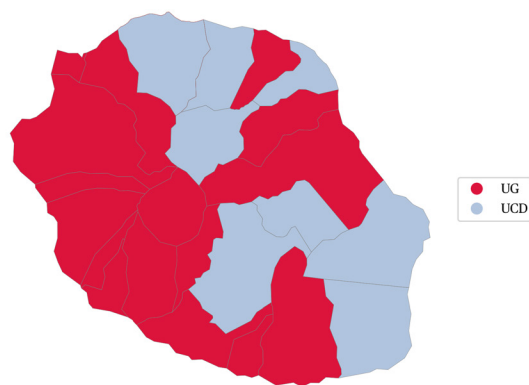
Still, the “Union of the Left” was not complete. Vanessa Miranville (the ecologist mayor of La Possession), who ran for the first time in a regional election, did not give any voting advice between the two rounds. She put emphasis on the specificities of her own approach, which she described as “civic”, as well as her electorate. With 9.91% of the vote in the first round, Miranville attempted to position herself as a kingmaker.

A vote structured by a dynamic left-right cleavage

Since its creation in 1986, the French regional institutional framework has been well accepted by Réunion’s political parties. There is no significant independence movement in Réunion. While, historically, it was mostly the PCR that called for further regional autonomy, autonomism has no longer been a core issue in Réunionese politics since the end of Paul Vergès’s presidency (1998-2010). Meanwhile, the PCR has become a party of regional governance. The left-right divide in Réunion is structured by the opposition between a “social” and a “liberal” school of thought which favor distinct approaches to governance. Schematically, “socialists” tend to seek closeness to the government in order to achieve their objectives, while

1. Didier Robert declared on October 26, 2021 that he would retire from political life. His lawyer announced on December 17, 2021, that he would not appeal his suspended sentence of fifteen months in prison and three years of ineligibility.

Winning party (2021 - tour 2)



“liberals” assert themselves more strongly vis-à-vis the state and want it to exert specific competencies. Both the right and the left are historically divided in Réunion, a trend that was further exacerbated by the recomposition of the French party landscape in the aftermath of the 2017 presidential election, leading to the emergence of a number of micro-parties. Since then, Réunionese parties have had to dedicate considerable effort to (re)shaping viable electoral alliances.

The left-right divide revealed by the results of the 2021 regional election is strongly territorialized. Sectoral issues are also important, and the capacity of civil society (e.g. user associations) to mobilize the electorate has proved to be significant, especially on issues such as construction, transport or the environment. The left won in the most populous municipalities of the island's coastline, with a strong breakthrough in Saint-Pierre, once a stronghold of the right-wing Republicans; these are the areas that concentrate economic activity, and also the most impacted by mobility issues (Rafidinarivo 2020); however, as Bello herself underlines, the left was also strong in more rural parts of the coastline. On the other side, (center-) right parties won Saint-Denis, a former PS bastion. Didier Robert's campaign strategy in the Saint-Denis municipal election seems to have born fruit at the regional level as well. Although its effect was too localized to prevent the loss of the center-right majority in the Regional Council, Robert's campaign has successfully undermined the left's “bastion-building” strategy. Robert's score in the second round also confirms the existence of a strong electoral base on which his political family – and possibly himself – will be able to rely in the national (i.e. presidential and legislative) elections of 2022.

Regional dynamics

Since 2017, Réunionese electorates have been reshuffled. Two categories of elections stand out: elections with a national scope and local elections. In the first round of the presidential election, Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Unbowed France) led with 24.53% of the vote, a score boosted by his popularity among young voters. In the second round, the Réunionese voted overwhelmingly for Emmanuel

Macron (En Marche!) with 60.25%. In the 2019 European elections, the “Take Power” list supported by Marine Le Pen (Rassemblement National) dominated in all the municipalities of the island with 31.24% of the vote island-wide. Since then, however, none of Mélenchon's, Macron's and Le Pen's party has been able to establish a strong local presence in Réunion. The dynamics observed among the electorate do not, therefore, necessarily reflect those of the local party establishment. Moreover, political equilibria are strongly affected by differential mobilization of the various electorates. Insufficient mobilization negatively affected the far right in the presidential election, but had a positive impact on their score in the 2019 European elections, when 69.31% of the electorate abstained.

Was this a consequence of the strong mobilization of the Yellow Vests in Reunion in 2018? The movement had been very critical of elected officials of all political parties, and particularly of the regional political establishment. But the impact of these movements on Réunionese electoral behavior in the following European election is difficult to establish. In the 2017 election, the National Front had already achieved a breakthrough in Overseas France, ranking first in these territories (Rafidinarivo 2017). Can this be linked to the trend, now observed for several terms, of a shift of part of the left vote towards the National Front (Perrineau 2017)? Answering this question would require a more thorough analysis of the Réunionese vote.

In the 2020 municipal election, local leaders fought for their own political survival by building on proximity, micro-parties and local funding. Didier Robert, the outgoing regional president, was elected municipal councillor in Saint-Denis thanks to his social agenda rather than his defense of mega-projects. The left achieved a breakthrough, and Huguette Bello was re-elected mayor of Saint-Paul. The results of the subsequent elections of inter-municipal bodies provided important signals to analyze the balance of power and the potential compatibility between the various political platforms, especially on issues such as land use planning and social justice. But rivalries remain strong in each political family. In the 2021 regional election, coalitions were needed to win: the “Union of the Centre and the Right” ran as a single list in the first round, while the list of the “Union of the Left” was constituted between the two rounds of voting – and eventually won.

Consequences at the national level

“This victory undoubtedly has a national impact,” said Huguette Bello in her victory speech on election day. While Bello did not consider running for President of France as did Île-de-France incumbent Valérie Pécresse and Hauts-de-France President Xavier Bertrand, she valued the outcome of the election as a strong sign that a united left is capable to win, even when a common platform emerges only late in time. The Réunionese vote, Bello said, shows that when parties are willing to imple-

ment an alliance (by merging their lists or building a coalition) in the second round, victory is possible. In fact, (center-)right parties have done exactly this in Réunion in 2021 – and lost. The losing strategy of the right in the first round was transformed in a winning one by the left in the second. In the end, it was not so much the capacities of candidates to achieve consensus around them which decided the outcome, but rather the mobilization of their respective electorates.

The President of the Réunion Region, Huguette Bello, supports Jean-Luc Mélenchon's candidacy in the 2022 presidential election. She describes this support as an alliance between progressives based on shared preferences and values, as she argued at length at a public gathering of Unbowed France¹. The President of the Département of Réunion, Cyrille Melchior (Les Républicains), who was re-elected in the 2021 Departmental elections, has announced that he would endorse Emmanuel Macron's candidacy despite his having supported Valerie Pécresse during the nomination process of LR's presidential candidate. He justifies his support for Emmanuel Macron by his "appreciation" of the central government's decision to take over the payment of unemployment benefits since 2021. This recentralization, he argued, had created significant financial leeway for the Département. The presidential election is used by local political actors, opinion leaders and, in this case, by local authorities, to affect the

local balance of power. At the national level, the current electoral recomposition is characterized by a division of the far-right electorate between Marine Le Pen and Eric Zemmour. As the official list of candidates is being finalized, left-wing candidates have not united behind a single candidate. The competition seems to be very tight to reach the second round except for Emmanuel Macron, who announced his candidacy in a "Letter to the French", on March 3 online and on March 4 in the French regional press. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, all polls have been predicting that he would be the winner of the April 2022 presidential election. France holds the Presidency of the European Union until June 2022.

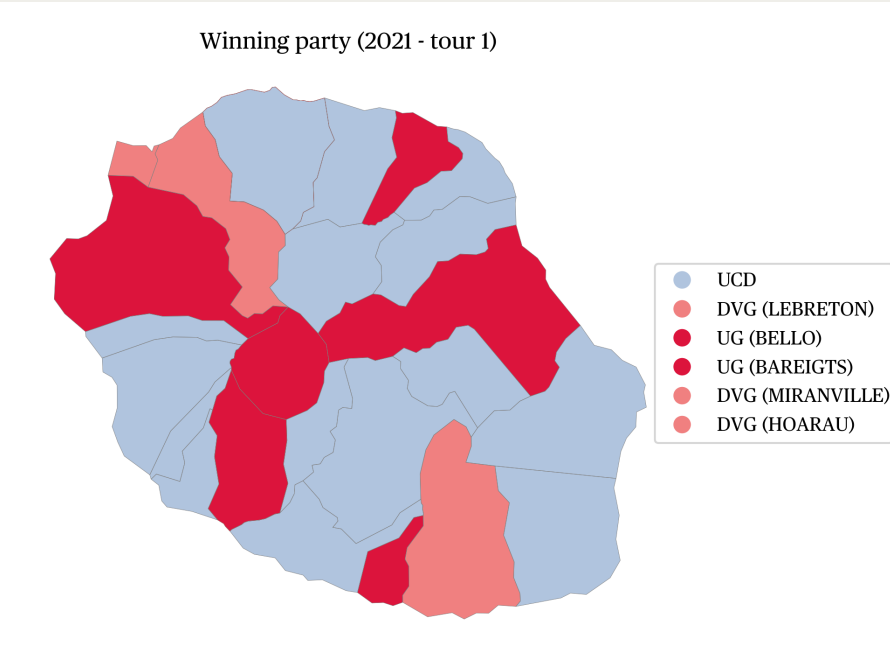
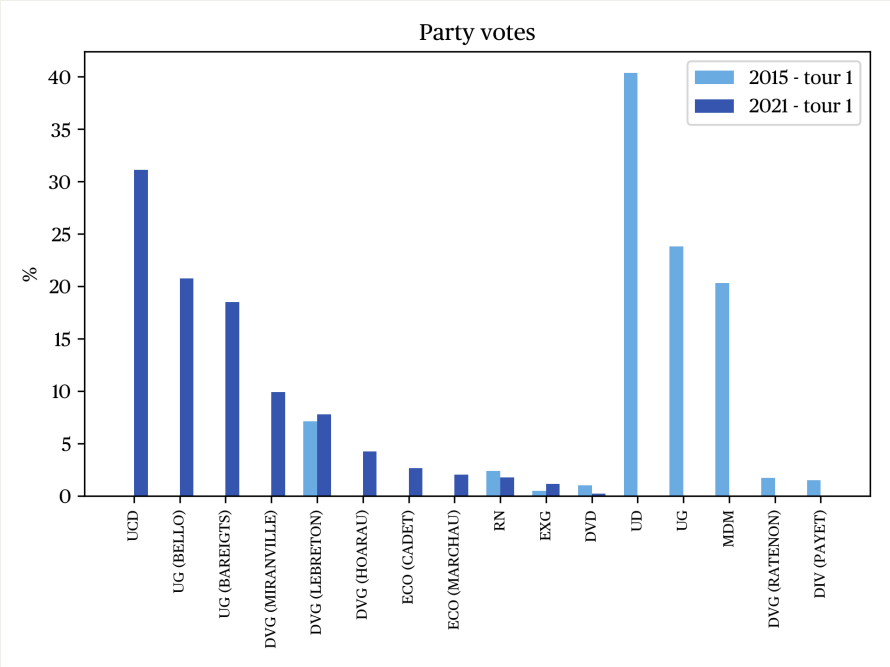
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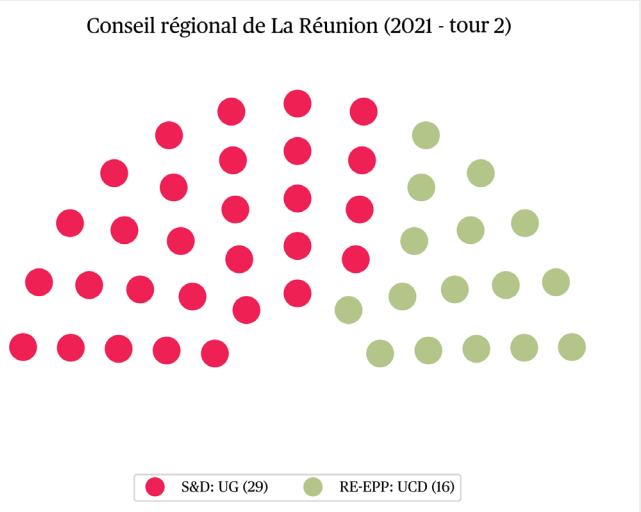
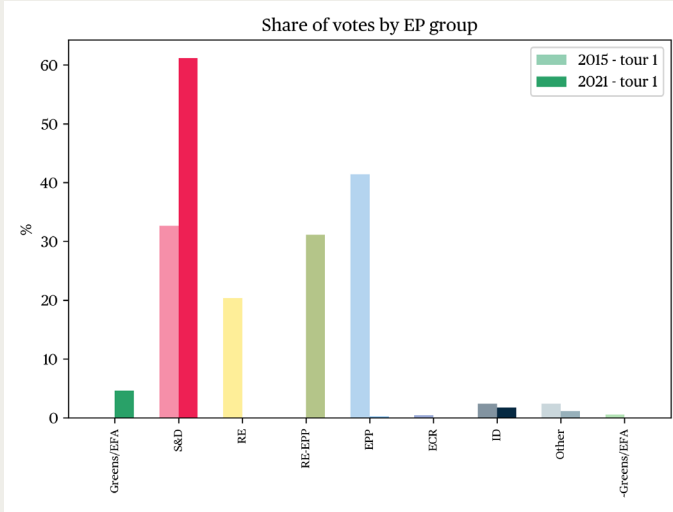
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European indicators



French regional elections: short analyses

Centre-Val de Loire

In 2015, the election to the Regional Council of Centre-Val de Loire had seen the National Front (FN, ID) win the first round with 30.49% of the vote, far ahead of the joint list of the center and the right (26.25%) and the list led by the Socialist Party (PS, S&D; 24.31%). The second round, however, reshuffled the deck: with an increase in turnout of nearly ten points, the left-wing and Ecologist list led by François Bonneau (PS, S&D) finally overtook both the center-right list (34.58%) and the FN (30.00%), which lost 0.5 percentage points despite an absolute gain of more than 45,000 votes. Thanks to the 25% majority bonus granted to the leading list, François Bonneau's list finally obtained a majority of the seats and the leadership of the regional executive.

In 2021, the growing weakness of the left, whose vote share was around 20% in pre-election polls, but also the prospect of a high abstention rate, had revived fears of a victory for the National Rally (RN, formerly FN). In the pre-election polls, the RN was given 28% in the second round and 30% in the second round. In addition, there was the prospect of four lists being maintained in the second round: in addition to those of the United left, the United right and center, and the RN, the joint MoDem/LREM list (RE) could hope for an easy qualification. This presence of four parties in the second round could have favoured the dispersion of centrist votes, and thus facilitated a victory for the extreme right.

However, the electoral results disproved these expectations. The United left list of outgoing president François Bonneau won in the first round with 24.81% (-0.5 pp), followed by those of the RN (22.24%, -7.8 pp), the right and center (18.82%, -7.4 pp), the MoDem/LREM (16.65%, nv.) and Europe Écologie les Verts (EÉLV, Greens/ALE; 10.85%, +4.3 pp). A second Ecologist list (4.07%, nv.) and that of the Trotskyists of Lutte Ouvrière (LO, 2.56%, +0.9 pp) did not exceed the threshold necessary to remain in the second round. The very low turnout (32.74%, -16.8 pp) seems, as in most French regions, to have benefited the outgoing presidents. As in 2015, the lists of the left and the Ecologists merged between the two rounds of voting. Unlike in 2015, however, the United left and Ecologists won the second round with a very large lead, gathering 39.15% of the votes and 42 seats out of 77, compared to 22.61% and 13 seats for the right-wing and center list, 22.24% and 13 seats for the RN list and 16.00% and 9 seats for the MoDem/LREM list. François Bonnaud won the election and was re-elected as President of the Regional Council.

François Hublet

Normandy

Normans were called upon to vote on June 20 and 27, 2021, as in all other French regions, to renew the 102 seats of the Regional Council. After his victory over incumbent Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol (PS, S&D) by a narrow margin of only 5,000 votes in December 2015, Hervé Morin, the then leader of the UDI (RE) list, was campaigning for re-election as president of the Normandy Region. Seven lists were on the ballot in the first round: the list of the outgoing center-right majority led by Hervé Morin (The Centrists, EPP), a National Rally list (RN, ID) led by Nicolas Bay, a Terre de progrès/LREM list (presidential majority, RE) led by Laurent Bonnaterre, a dissident LREM list led by Stéphanie Kerbarh, a PS/EELV list led by Mélanie Boulanger, a PCF/LFI list (GUE/NGL) and a far-left list supported by Lutte Ouvrière.

In the first round, the party The Centrists, which resulted from a split from Hervé Morin's UDI, won with 36.85% of the vote, ahead of the National Rally and the Socialist candidate Mélanie Boulanger (S&D), who obtained 18.37% of the vote. The second round went smoothly for the outgoing president, who won with 44.26% of the vote against 26.18% for the Socialist candidate. The Rassemblement National finished third with 19.52% of the vote and lost 3,000 voters between the two rounds. With the exception of the list of the PCF and LFI, all parties previously represented in the Regional Council obtained seats in the new legislature. Turnout in the first round was 32.99%, down 17 percentage points from 2015, and the second round mobilized fewer voters than the first with only 32.91% participation, down 26.2 percentage points.

There are three main facts to take away from this election. The first fact is that Normandy was no exception the massive drop in turnout observed in all French regions. Lists of all parties lost voters between 2015 and 2021. Neither the outgoing majority, nor the socialists, nor the far right succeeded in strengthening their positions on the evening of the first round. The second fact is the loss of 3,000 votes for the far-right candidate Nicolas Bay between the two rounds, which may indicate a certain demobilization of his electorate, as in other regions. The third and last fact to remember is the confirmation of the lack of local presence of the Emmanuel Macron's party. With only 10.04% of the vote in the second round and a loss of nearly 10,000 voters between the first and second rounds, Terre de progrès candidate Laurent Bonnaterre was unable to impose himself in this campaign, winning only 7 seats.

Jean-Toussaint Battestini

Grand Est

Voters in the Grand Est, a region of about 5.5 million inhabitants and 10 departments, were called upon to vote on June 20 and 27. In 2015, following a three-way run-off against National Front (FN, ID) candidate Florian Philippot (36.08%) and Socialist (S&D) candidate Jean-Pierre Masseret (15.51%), the list of Philippe Richert (LR, EPP) won the election with 48.4% of the vote; the polls for the 2021 election placed the list of Jean Rottner (LR), president of the region since the resignation of Philippe Richert in 2017, slightly behind the far right, which considered the region to be “winnable.”

In the first round, on June 20, 2017, the “Stronger Together” list led by Rottner came out on top with 31.15% of the vote, followed by the list of National Rally (RN, ID) candidate Laurent Jacobelli, which received 21.12% of the vote. The République en Marche (LREM, RE) list led by Brigitte Klinkert, Deputy Minister for Integration attached to the Minister of Labour, Employment and Integration, obtained 12.17% of the votes and came in fourth place, behind the United left list – bringing together EELV (Greens/EFA), the PS and the PCF (GUE/NGL) – which obtained 14.60%. The “New Call for Grand Est” list led by Aurélie Filippetti, member of Génération-s (S&D), obtained 8.64% of the vote, a little less than two points more than that of Florian Philippot, the RN's former vice-president, who finished in sixth place with 6.95%.

In the second round, this trend was confirmed. While the order of the four leading lists was unchanged, Jean Rottner obtained 40.3% of the votes, or 94 seats out of 169, against 26.3% for the National Rally list, which obtained 33 seats. The lists “For ecology and social justice” (EELV, PS, PCF) and “The strength of our territories” (LREM) won 27 and 15 seats respectively. In the context of the health crisis, the winning “Stronger Together” list had focused its campaign on three pillars: the youth, the hospital system and security. In their program, they called for a reinforcement of the municipal police, deployment of video surveillance in those municipalities that wished to do so, as well as investments in the region's hospitals (55 million euros), including the training of 2,000 additional nurses, 2,000 orderlies and 2,000 life assistants each year.

It is also important to note that the region has the highest abstention rate in France. Up sharply from the 2015 elections, abstention rises from 48.91% in 2015 to 69.75% in 2021 in the second round.

Lucie Coatleven

Brittany

Bretons were called upon to vote on June 20 and 27, 2021 to elect their new Regional Council. After being led by the current Minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian, the region had to elect a new president. Unlike some other regions where the far right was on the rise, the regional election in Brittany was structured by a traditional left-right cleavage, with Loïc Chesnais-Girard (PS, S&D) and Isabelle Le Callenec (LR, EPP) leading two major lists. While in other French regions the far right was in second or even third place, the National Rally list led by Gilles Pennelle was only in fifth place (14.2% of the votes in the first round; 13.2% of the votes in the second round).

As in other regions, however, there has been a general collapse of absolute party votes; parties, even when they were in the lead, are losing seats and votes. On the left side of the spectrum, despite their victory, the Socialists lost thirteen seats; on the right side, the fall was less brutal, and the Republicans lost a single seat. The collapse of the vote is largely due to the historically low turnout, with absentions rates reaching 64% in the first round in Brittany. The advent of a list of the center led by Thierry Burlot (LREM-UDI) has also taken precious votes from the Republicans in the first and second rounds.

The estimates given by the polling institutes between June 3 and 7 were largely contradicted on the day of the election. In particular, Ipsos had predicted Gilles Pennelle (RN) to be the winner with 20% of the vote in the first round, while Odoxa had foreseen Thierry Burlot (LREM-UDI) with 18%. The lists of the Socialist Party and the Republicans were underestimated by both institutes. Estimates for the second round were equally problematic: the RN and the LREM-UDI list would be given as winners with up to 13 points more than their actual score, and the defeated PS would be overestimated by almost 10 points.

The announced confrontation with the far right did not happen. Breton voters brought the list of Loïc Chesnais-Girard (PS) in first place with 21.0% of the vote (-14 pp), then the list of Isabelle Le Callenec (LR) in second place with 16.3% (-7.2 pp), followed by those of Claire Desmares-Poirrier (EELV, Greens/EFA) with 14.8% (+1.4 pp), Thierry Burlot with 15.5% (Nv.) and Gilles Pennelle (RN) with 14.3% (-3.9 pp). The lists of Daniel Cueff (ECO) and Pierre-Yves Cadalen (LFI, GUE/NGL) did not obtain the score necessary to qualify. As in 2015, the Socialist Party won – albeit less triumphantly – in the region with 29.84% of the vote (-22.09 pp) while losing 13 seats in the regional parliament. It is followed by the Republicans who lose 4 seats, EELV which gains 12, the LREM-UDI list which takes 9, and the RN which loses 4. Loïc Chesnais-Girard won the election and was elected President of the Regional Council.

Mattéo Lanoë

Nouvelle-Aquitaine

While in 2015 New Aquitaine experienced a traditional left-right contest between Alain Rousset (PS, S&D) and Virginie Calmels (LR, EPP), this time the second-placed list in the June 2021 elections was Edwige Diaz's (RN, ID) far-right list. The score of the LR list collapsed between, plunging from a relatively high score in 2015 (27.19% of the votes in the first round, 34.6% in the second) to the third place in 2021 (12.48% in the first round, 14.19% in the second), with only a small lead over the fourth-placed Ecologists. The Republicans lose 377,000 votes in the first round and 583,280 in the second round compared to 2015.

This electoral collapse, which hit the right especially strongly (with a loss of 48 seats), can be explained by several factors. The first is the competition from a centrist list led by Geneviève Darrieussecq (MoDem-LREM-Agir-TdP-UDI-MR). The centrists, which still ran together with the Republicans in 2015, gathered about 13% of the vote in each round on their own platform, depriving the right of valuable support. In practice, however, not only right-wing parties were affected by plummeting electoral support, which was caused partly by the historically low turnout that plagued the election (64.09% in Nouvelle-Aquitaine), as well as by the dispersion of votes among the five lists that advanced to the second round.

The neck-and-neck race announced by polling institutes between the list led by Alain Rousset (PS-PCF) and Edwige Diaz (RN) did not materialize. Polls conducted between May 1 and June 7 would always predict a difference of 1 to 2 percentage points between the two lists; the outcome of the vote therefore appeared uncertain, even if, for the second round, most institutes predicted that Alain Rousset would win.

The actual outcome of the vote was quite different. The score of the far right was largely overestimated by pollsters, who gave them 5 to 7 pp more than their actual score in the first round (18.20%). The same was true in the second round, with estimates of around 25 to 28% versus an actual vote share of 19.11%. This overestimation is part of a widespread belief in a "shift to the right" of French public opinion. Alain Rousset (PS-PCF) came out on top in the first round with 28.83% (-1.56 pp), followed by the RN list (18.20%, -5.03 pp), the center (13.71%, Nv), the right (12.48%, -14.71 pp) and the Ecologists, whose scores went up sharply (12.09%, +6.49 pp). The lists led by Eddie Puyjalon (LMR-RES-MDC-UPF-RPF), Clémence Guetté (LFI-NPA-PCF), and Guillaume Perchet (LO) did not obtain the score needed to advance to the second round. As in 2015, the list led by Alain Rousset won by a wide margin in the second round with 39.51% of the vote (-4.76 pp) and won 101 seats in the new legislature. He is followed by the National Rally and the Republicans who lose respectively 3 and 28 seats, the ecologists who gain 1, and the center which gains 18. Alain Rousset won the election and was re-elected as head of the Regional Council.

Mattéo Lanoë

Martinique

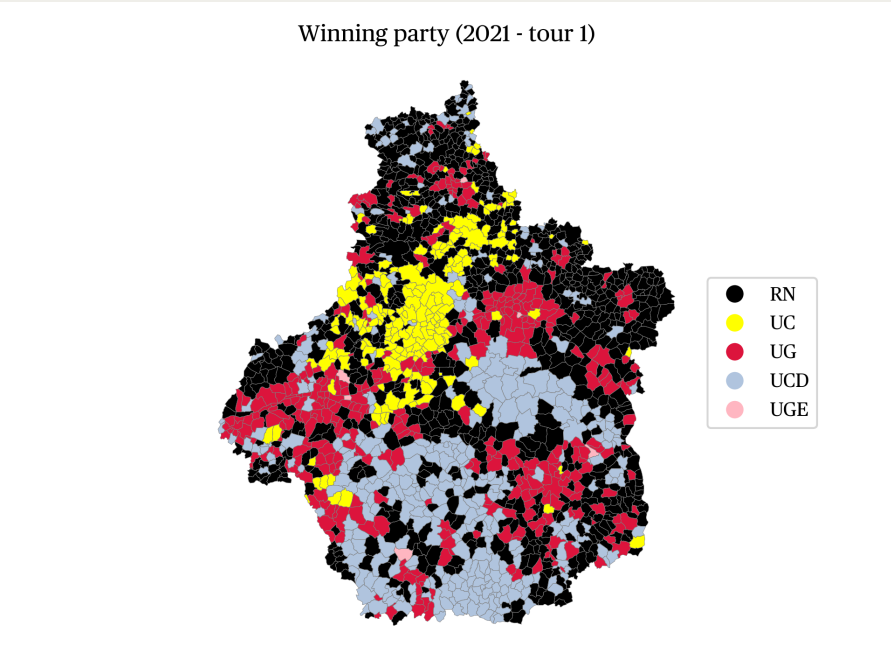
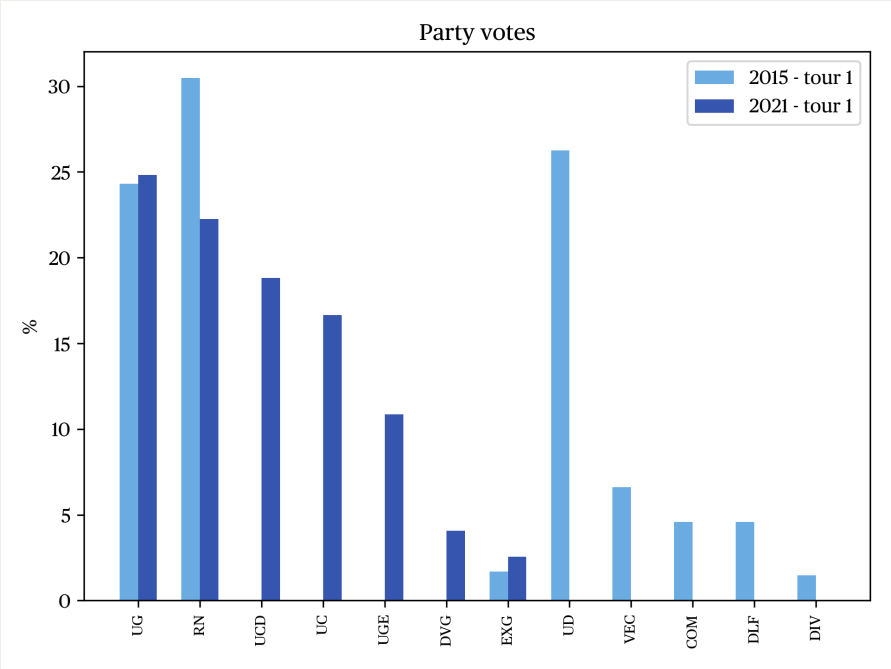
The Assembly of Martinique is the unicameral parliament of the Collectivity of Martinique. Based on a similar institutional set-up as in Corsica, the Assembly elects an Executive Council (regional government) composed of nine members. Its president – who is not the president of the Assembly – is the most important figure in the regional executive.

Martinique present a unique political configuration among French overseas territories, which saw the same two list leaders competing against each other in every regional election since 2010. Serge Letchimy, leading the list of the Parti progressiste martiniquais (PPM, autonomist left) and its allies, was running for the third time against incumbent Alfred Marie-Jeanne, the President and founder of the Mouvement indépendantiste martiniquais (MIM, nationalist left). The latter, born in 1936, has led the list of the MIM and its allies without interruption since 1983. Marie-Jeanne had been elected president of the Regional Council and then of the Executive Council three times (1998, 2004, 2015). His terms were interrupted by six years (2010-2015) during which Letchimy had led the Regional Council. The 2015 election saw the MIM and its left-wing and far-left pro-independence allies (RDM, Palima, communists) form a strategic alliance between the two elections with the center-right (Les Républicains, MoDem, FMP) to successfully defeat the PPM and its socialist and autonomist allies.

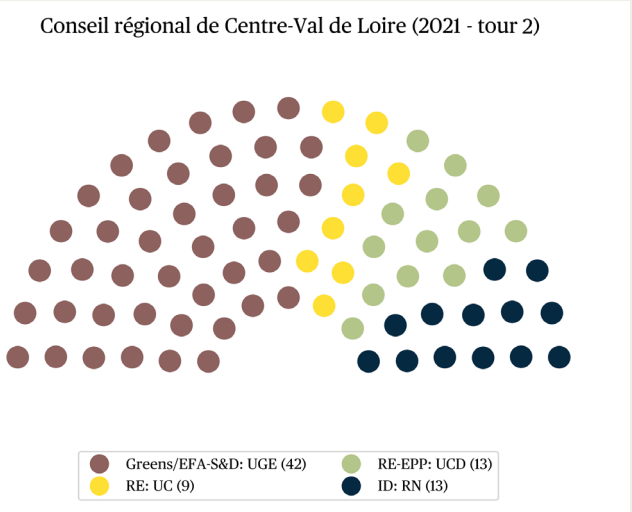
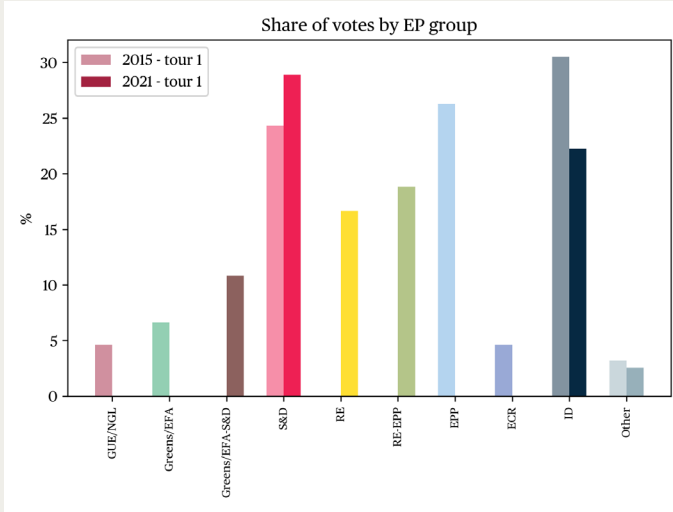
The outcome of the 2021 election paved the way for Serge Letchimy's return to executive power. The PPM list won the first round with 31.66%, against 25.80% for the MIM, 10.63% for the list of the dissident Catherine Conconne and 12.01% for the list led by Jean-Philippe Nilor (Péyi-A, pro-independence left-wing), which included members of the former majority. The Republicans (LR, EPP) and the MoDem (RE), who were both members of the previous government coalition, obtained only 4.68% and 1.09% of the votes respectively, while seven other lists shared the rest of the votes. Turnout was low, at 32.45 per cent (-8.7 pp). In the second round, the PPM list won with 37.72%, narrowly beating the MIM list, which, with 35.27%, recorded a gain of nearly 13 points, corresponding to a near doubling of their absolute number of votes obtained. The Conconne and Nilor lists obtained 14.47% and 12.54% of the votes respectively. The participation is clearly on the rise, reaching 44.83%.

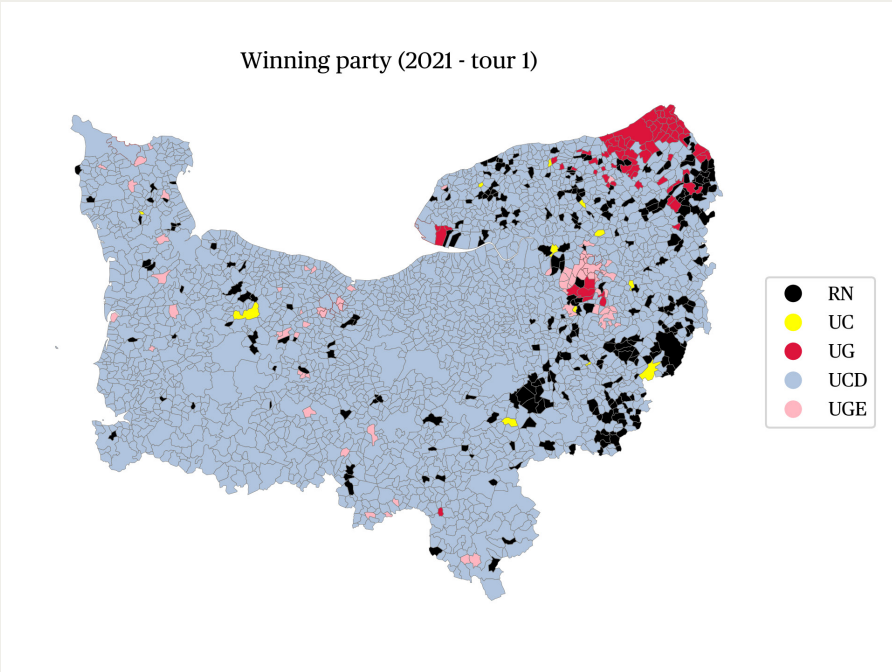
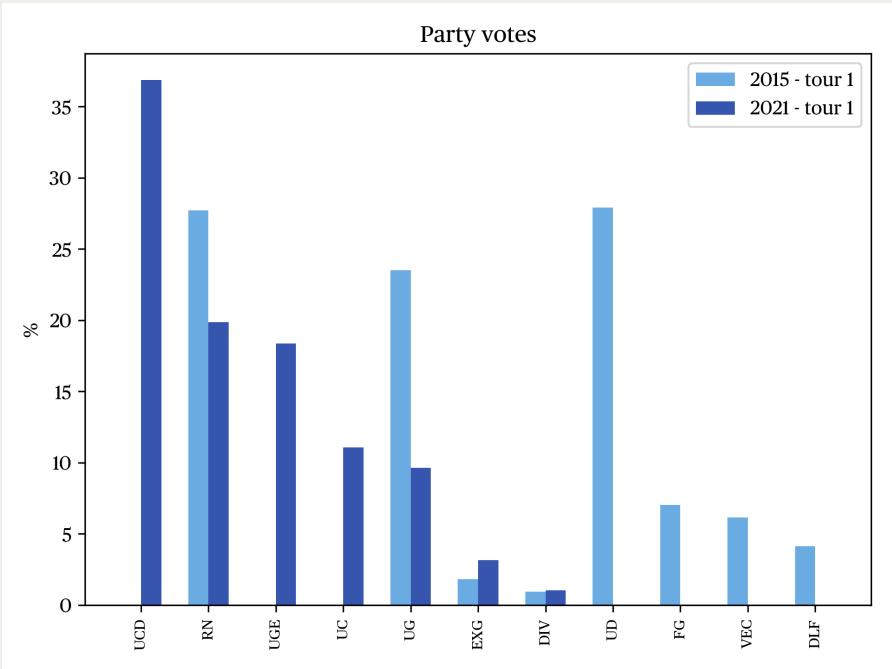
While the remobilization of the electorate between the two rounds and the transfer of votes seemed to have benefited the outgoing president, Martinique – like Réunion and French Guiana, but unlike other French regions – experienced a change of majority, in a period marked by very strong social tensions in the French overseas territories. Letchimy was elected to the presidency of the Executive Council, while Lucien Saliber, who is deemed close to the PPM, took over the Assembly's presidency.

François Hublet

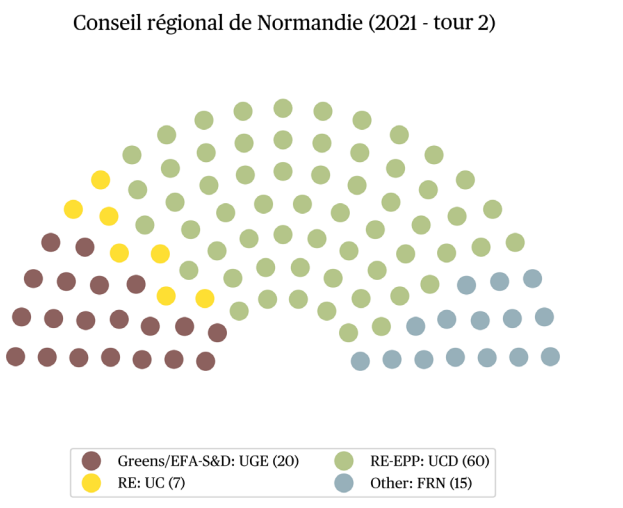
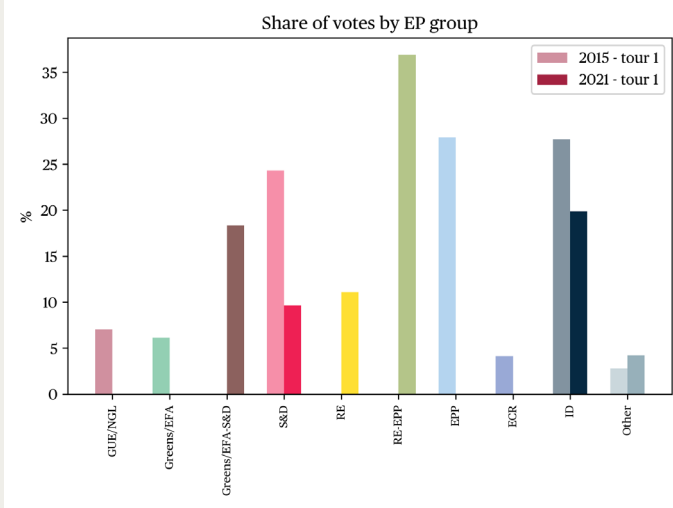


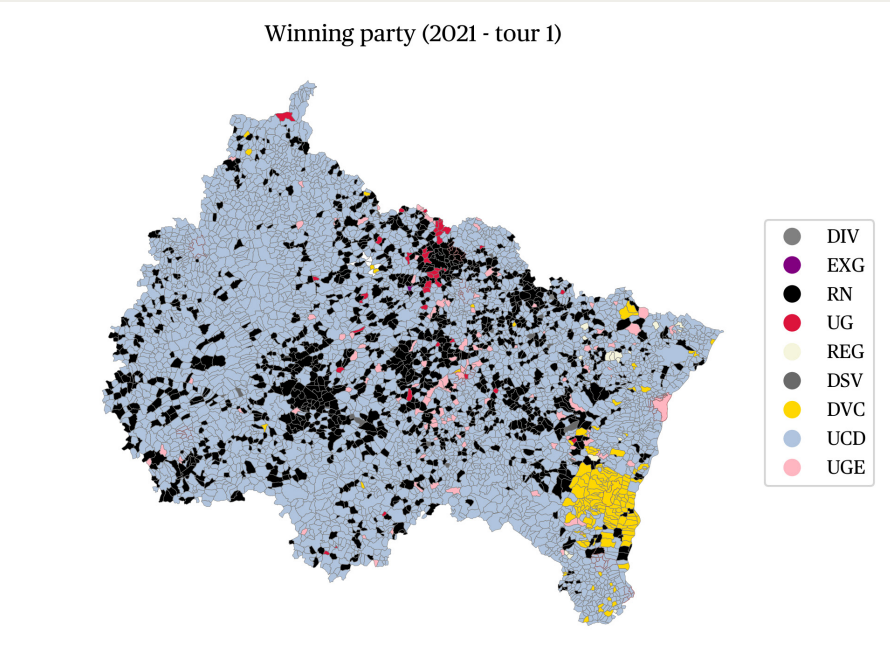
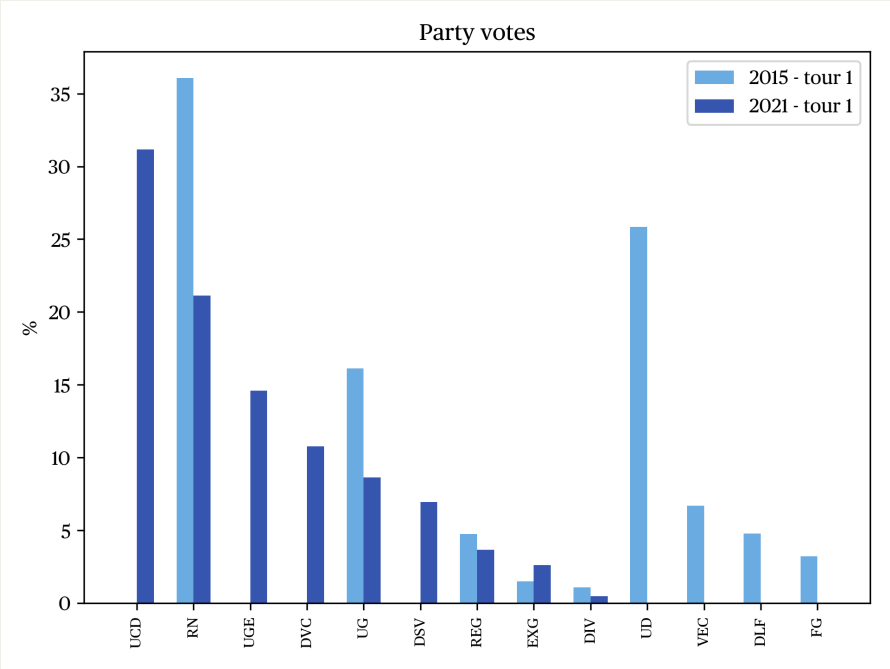
European indicators



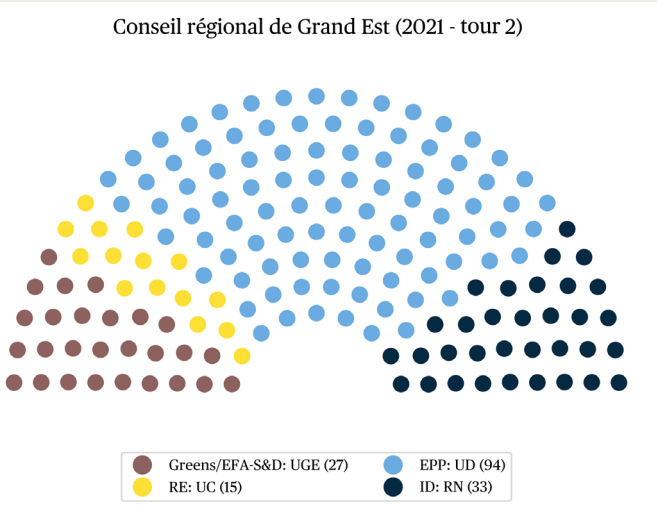
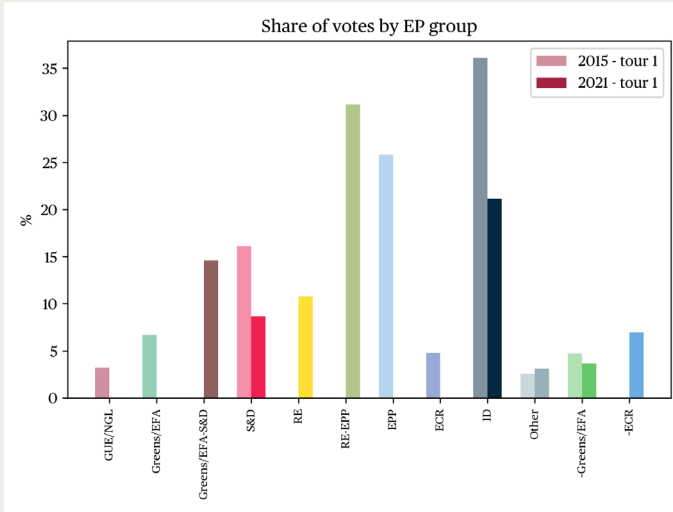


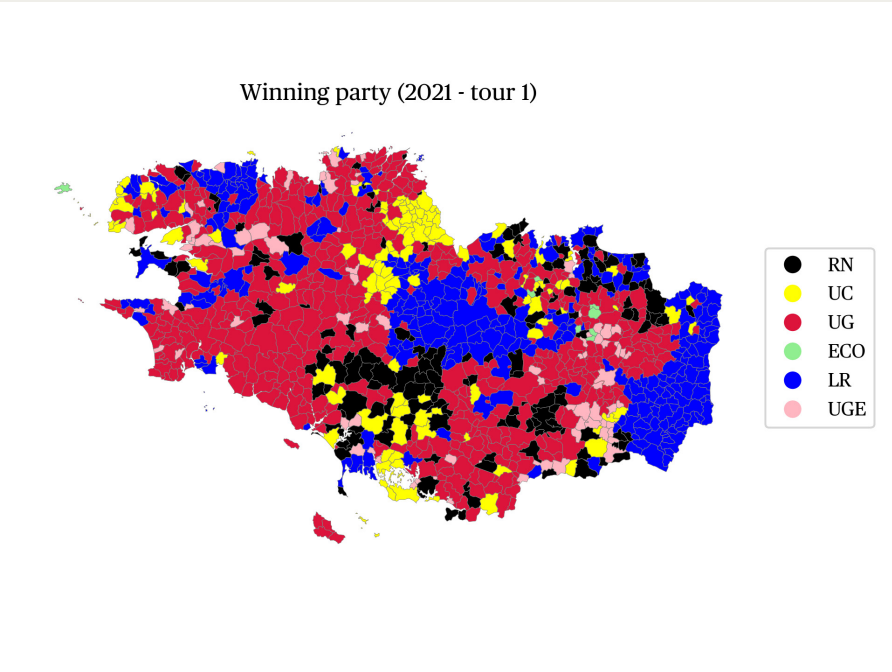
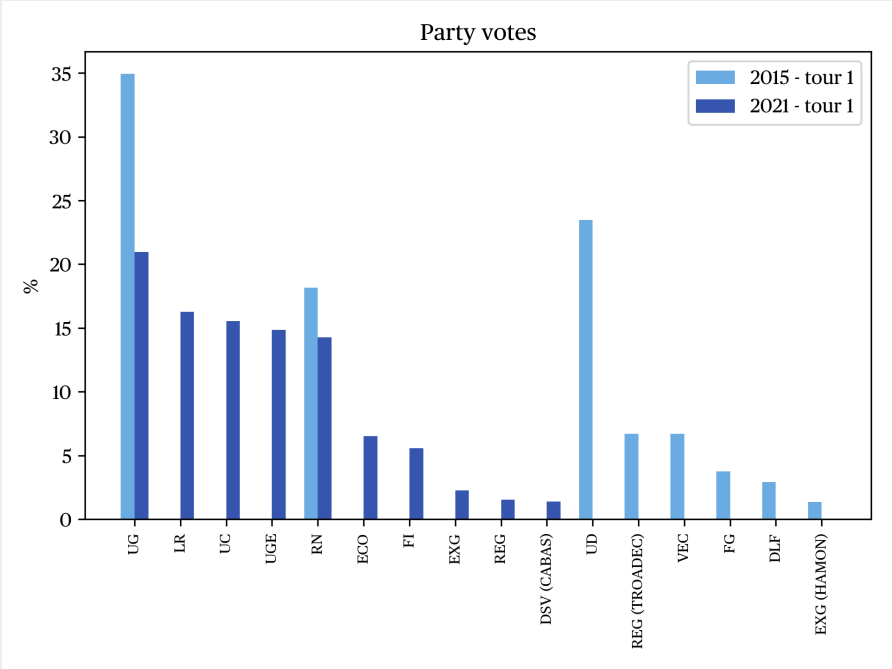
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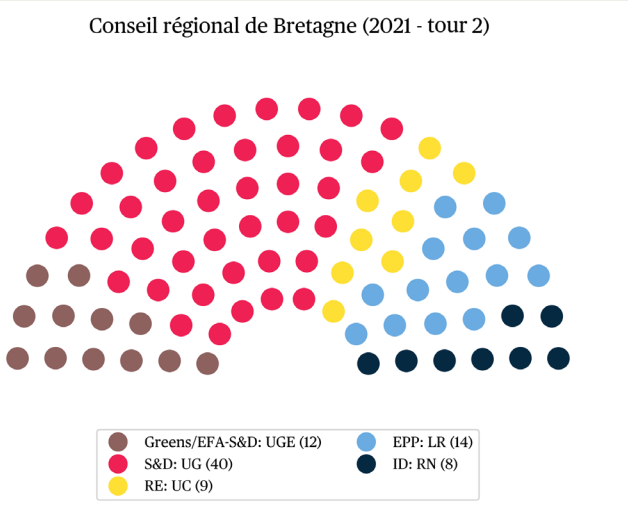
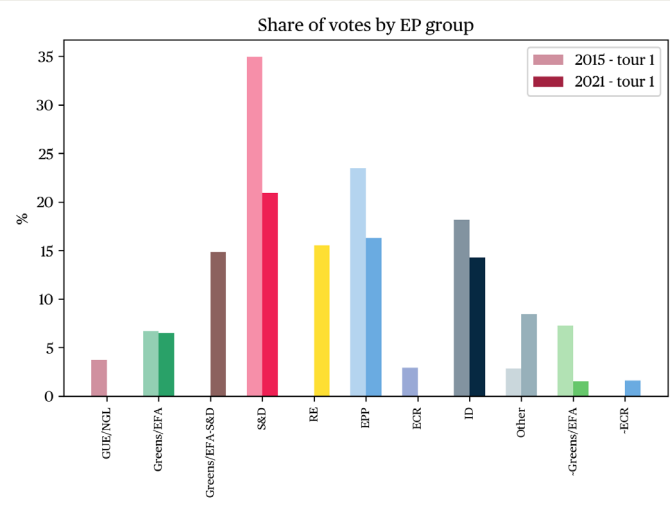


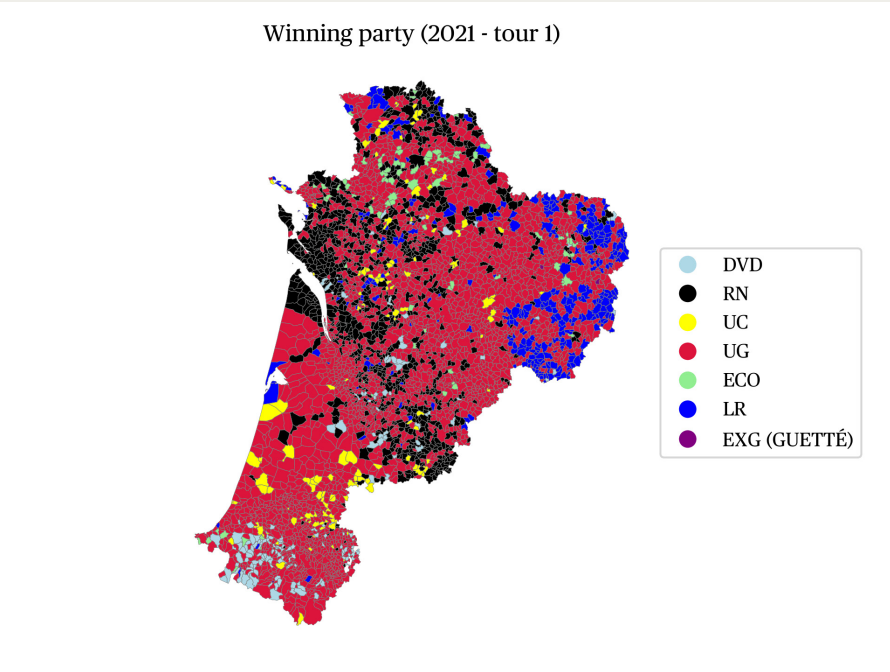
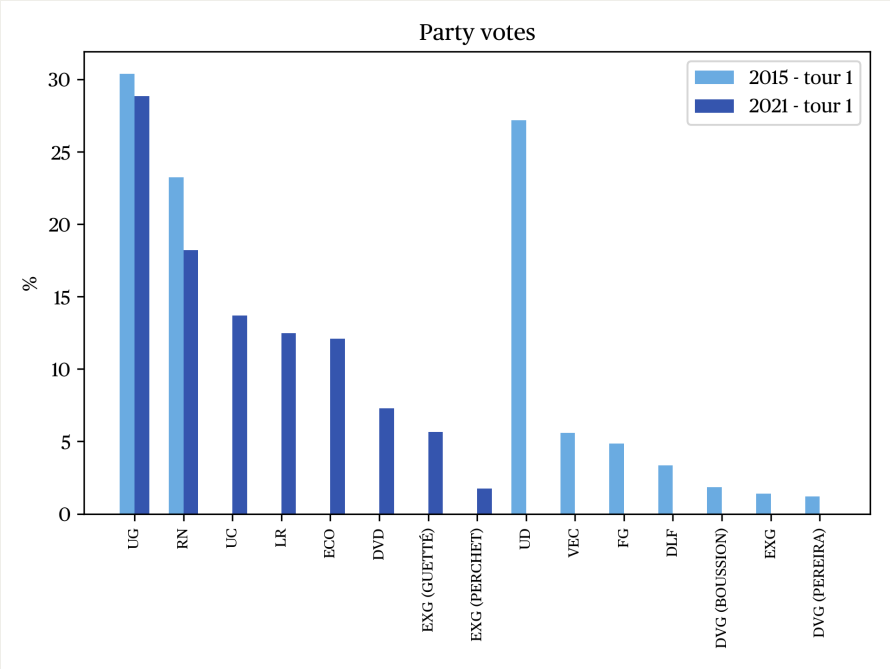
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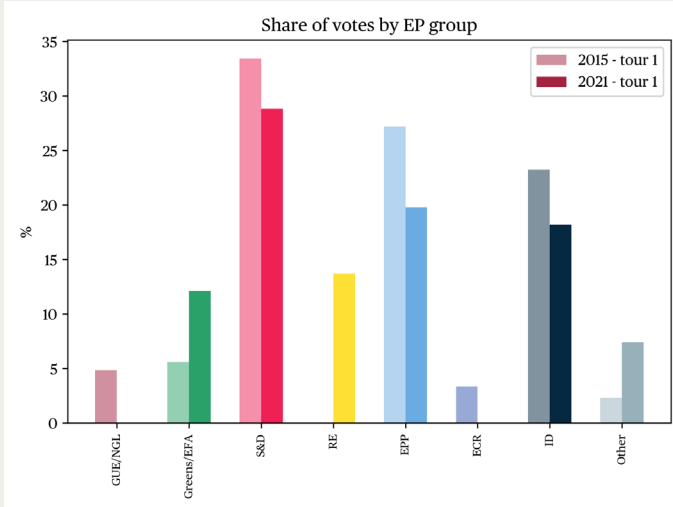


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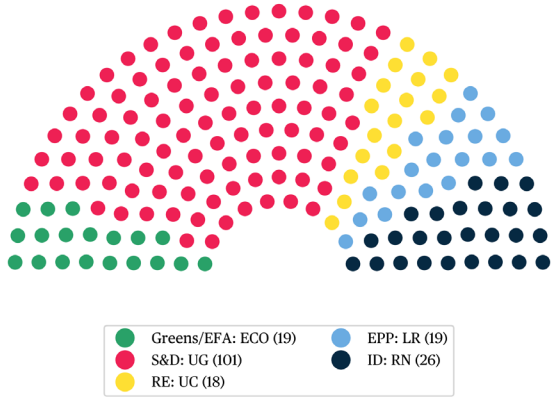


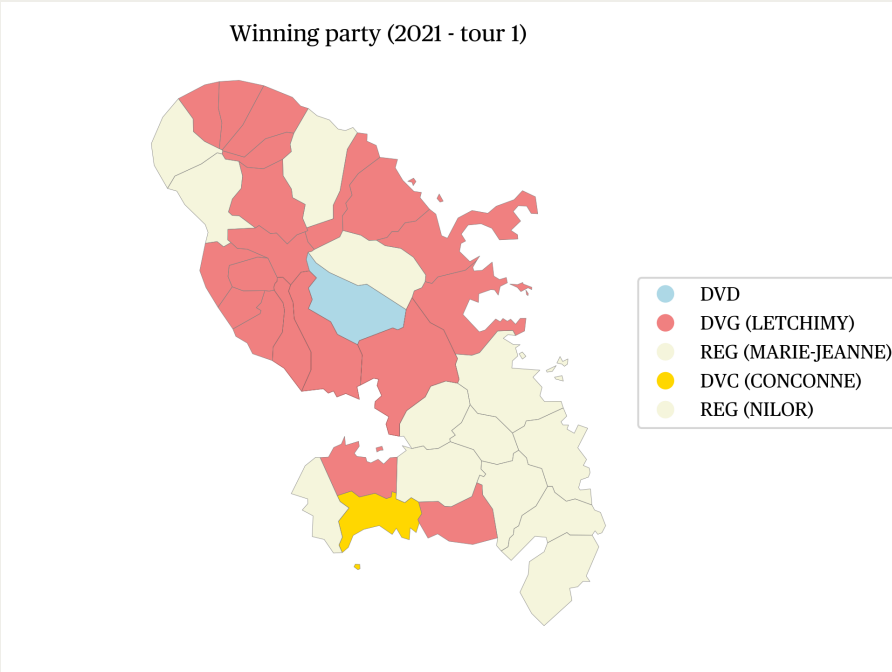
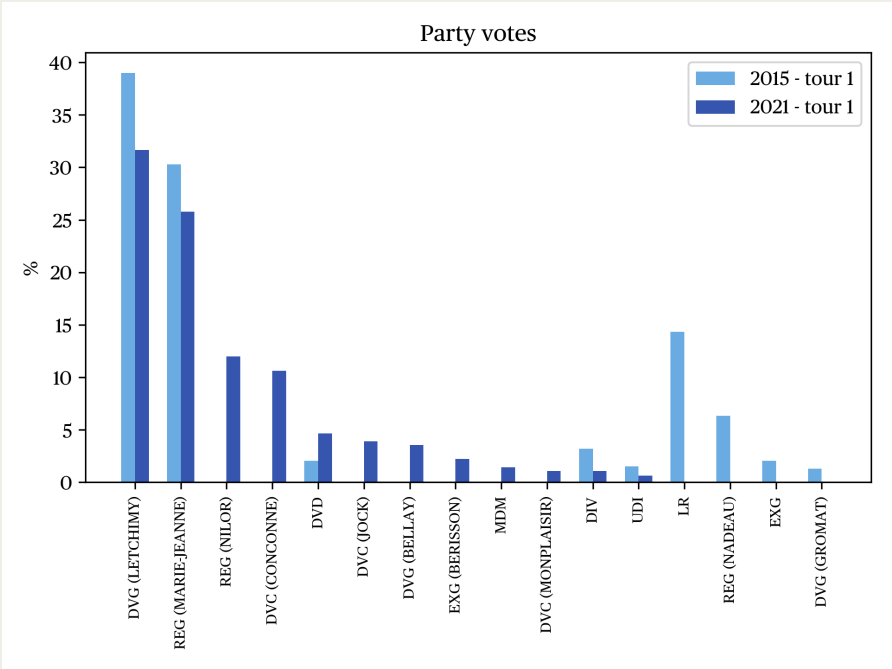


European indicators

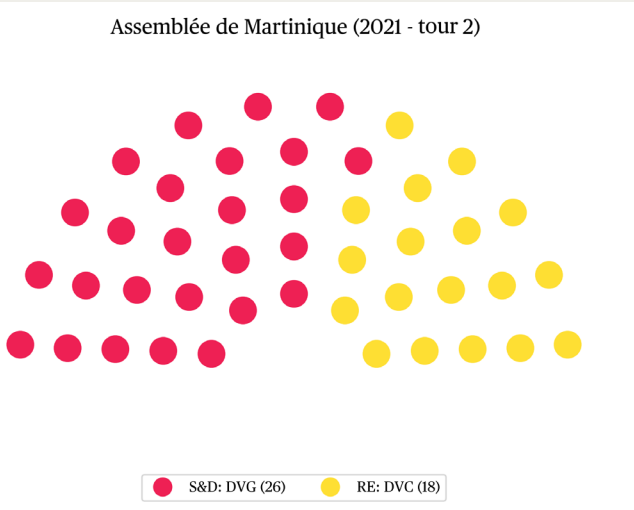
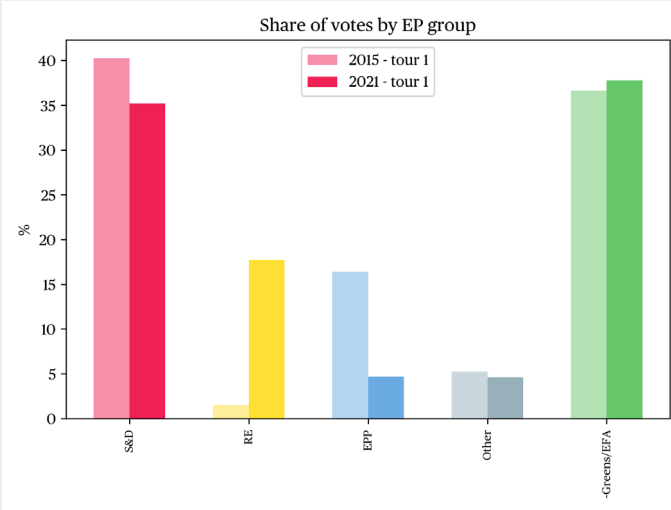


Conseil régional de Nouvelle Aquitaine (2021 - tour 2)





European indicators





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Parliamentary elections in Bulgaria, 11 July 2021

96

The snap parliamentary election on July 11th came after the 45th National Assembly failed to provide for a regular government, and subsequently the president Rumen Radev dissolved the National Assembly and appointed a caretaker cabinet. The reasons behind the parties' failure to form a regular government were twofold: from one side the level of political fragmentation in the newly elected Parliament was significant (4 party coalitions and 2 single parties), from the other the level of political polarization in the institution was very high. The electoral campaign of the so-called parties of the change (There is Such a People - ITN, the coalition Democratic Bulgaria - DB and coalition Stand Up! Thugs Out! - ISMV) was based on a severe criticism of the ruling party GERB and the abundance of corruption scandals during its governing periods (2009-2013 and 2014-2021). As a result, despite being a winner of the April 2021 election, GERB turned out to be politically isolated and regarded as a "toxic" and unacceptable political partner.

But the parties of the change had another hard to swallow potential partner as well, this was the party of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS). Although formally not in power, the DPS party officials profited significantly from the governing period of GERB. The party was perceived by the other parties as a "behind the scenes" coalition partner of GERB, and the newcomers in the parliament excluded cooperation with it. Thus, Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) turned out to be the only party of the status quo that could serve as a coalition partner, but ITN and DB opposed the coalition with the post-communist party. In the end, the three attempts to form a government in the 45th Parliament failed, and early elections were called.

The Context of the Snap Elections

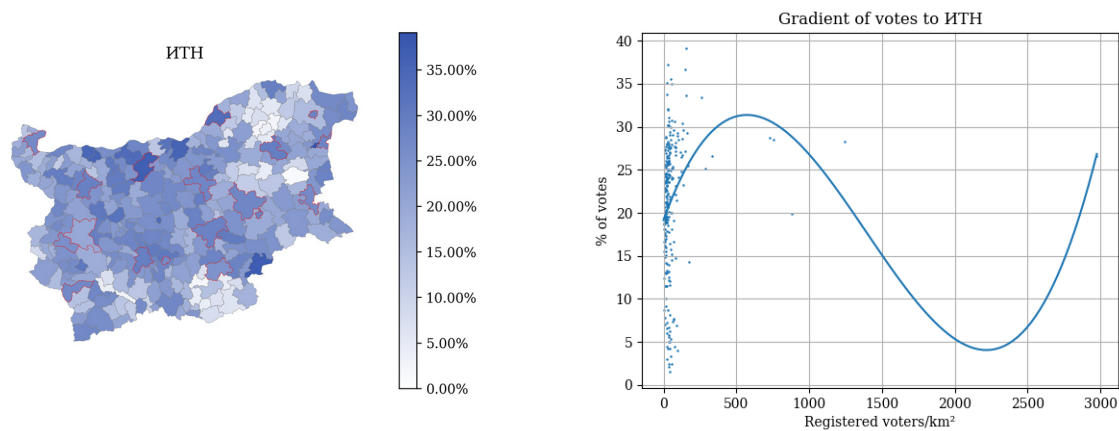
The caretaker government appointed by the President

started a process of "revision" of the 11 year-long GERB's governing period by exposing the numerous violations committed by the previous government. Some of the violations included abuses of public procurement, distribution of loans worth hundreds of millions of Bulgarian leva to oligarchs close to the government by the Bulgarian Development Bank. For the GERB and DPS there were troubles coming from abroad as well, on June 2nd the US Treasury Department declared sanctions against Bulgarian oligarchs close to GERB and DPS under the Global Magnitski Act. These oligarchs were accused by the State Department of significant corruption, an accusation that added to the image of graft of the two parties. At the same time, the interior minister of the caretaker government disclosed data on the illegal wiretapping of hundreds of people during last year's protests - among them opposition politicians, journalists, and representatives of the non-governmental sector. These scandalous revelations affected the election campaign and for the first time since its creation in 2006, GERB lost the parliamentary elections.

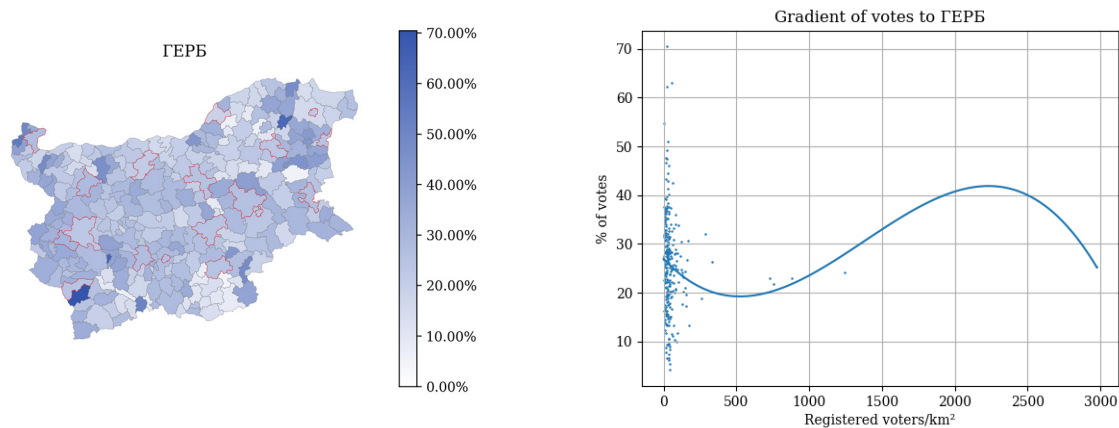
Turnout

The turnout of the July snap election was remarkably low at 42.19%. There were several reasons for this low turnout: first, some of the voters were disappointed with the outcome of the April elections and decided not to participate again. Second reason has to do with the caretaker government's own efforts to curb vote buying, corporate voting and other illegal voting practices. According to some media reports, these efforts had some effect on the voting activity in several country districts. Third, timing of the elections in July, when many people prefer to go on holiday at the seaside instead of queuing in front of the ballot box. The final reason has to do with the ballot boxes themselves. For the first time in Bulgarian electoral history

a • ITN vote and gradient with respect to population density in July 2021, by municipality



b • GERB vote and gradient with respect to population density in July 2021, by municipality



machine voting was used, in most poll stations. Despite the government’s and some parties’ campaign to popularize the machine voting, many retired and less educated people were afraid that the machine voting is too complicated for them. On the election day these voters preferred not to vote. The combination of political polarization and the record low turnout did not help the legitimacy of the newly elected parliament.

Party results

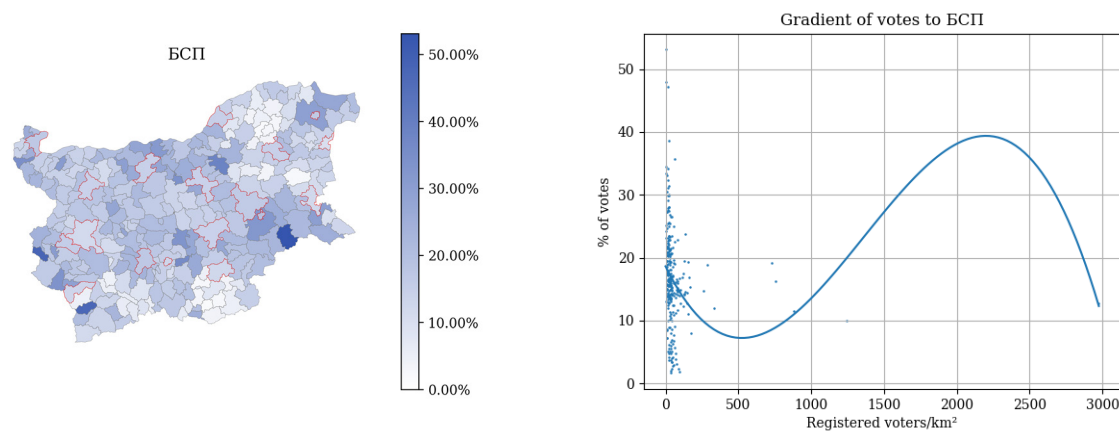
The results of the parties were not surprising, and the sociological polls before the elections correctly indicated the outcome of the elections. GERB lost a national election for the first time in 11 years. GERB’s results in the vote within Bulgaria confirmed its leading role in the country, but Bulgarians living abroad massively supported the populist ITN and thus changed the overall result. BSP was in the third place as in the previous elections and its electoral support continued to decline. The other parties and coalitions that entered the 46th parliament were DB, DPS, and IMV.

ITN

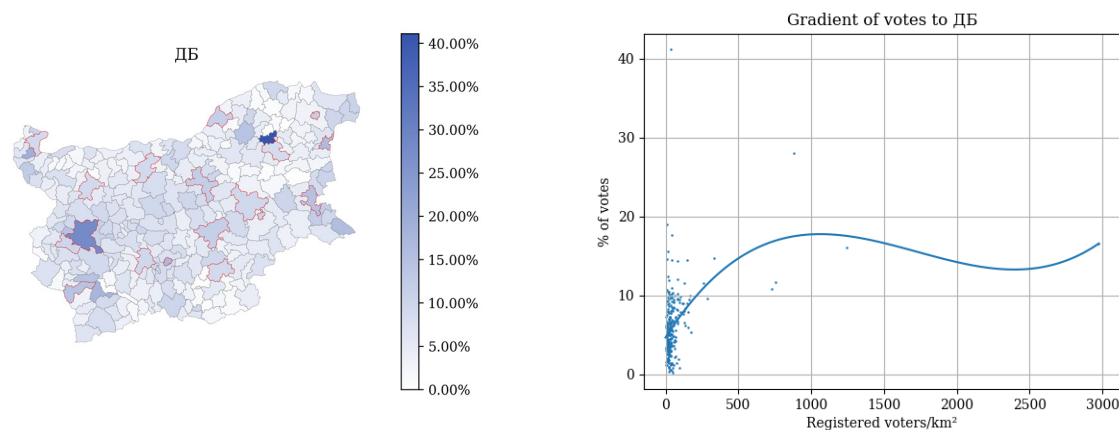
The party that succeeded in interrupting the long record of GERB victories is ITN, founded by popular show-

man Slavi Trifonov in 2019. With the slogan “It’s time for something else” the populist ITN received 657 829 votes or 24.08%, an increase of almost 100 thousand votes and about 7 points compared to the regular elections in April (Kanev 2021: 61-65). This result secured the first place for the formation and 65 seats in the 240 MPs parliament. While impressive, this result falls far short from the 121 seats needed for parliamentary majority. This also meant that ITN needed strong support of other parliamentary parties to form a cabinet. Garnering this support turned out to be a very difficult task for the party. With the approach “take it or leave it” the party proposed two cabinets that failed to secure the support of the other parties. During the electoral campaign the party relied heavily on the popularity of its leader and tried to attract people who are not interested in politics or those with anti-establishment and anti-system views. The party campaign relied heavily on Trifonov’s Channel “7/8” and different social networks. The politicians from the party refused to participate in TV debates and their positions regarding the Bulgarian economic and social development are still not clear. The party received significant support not only in the country but abroad and it was the votes of Bulgarians living abroad which secured the party the first position. The support of the party is coming mostly from young (18-30 years old) people with university or secondary education, including both those who are working or unem-

c • BSP vote and gradient with respect to population density in July 2021, by municipality



d • DB vote and gradient with respect to population density in July 2021, by municipality



played. The party succeeded to broaden its geographical presence and finds support in big cities as well as towns (Figure a).

GERB-SDS

The coalition of GERB with the marginal Union of Democratic Forces (SDS) was second after ITN. 642,165 voters (almost 200 thousand voters less than in April) or 23.5% of the voters voted for the former ruling party and its coalition partner (see “data” panel). GERB-SDS lost by a small margin, and this is due to votes from Bulgarians abroad, where ITN won convincingly, and GERB-SDS remained in 4th place with only 9% of the vote. Thus, GERB-SDS got 63 seats in parliament.

During its stay in power the party GERB developed some characteristics of a clientelist party, and due to this increased its membership. By 2019 the membership reached over 90,000 members, making it the largest party in the country. This is the main reason for the party to keep leading positions after these parliamentary elections, despite the severe reputational damages it has suffered during its governing mandate, the citizens protests in 2020, and the harsh criticism from the other political parties.

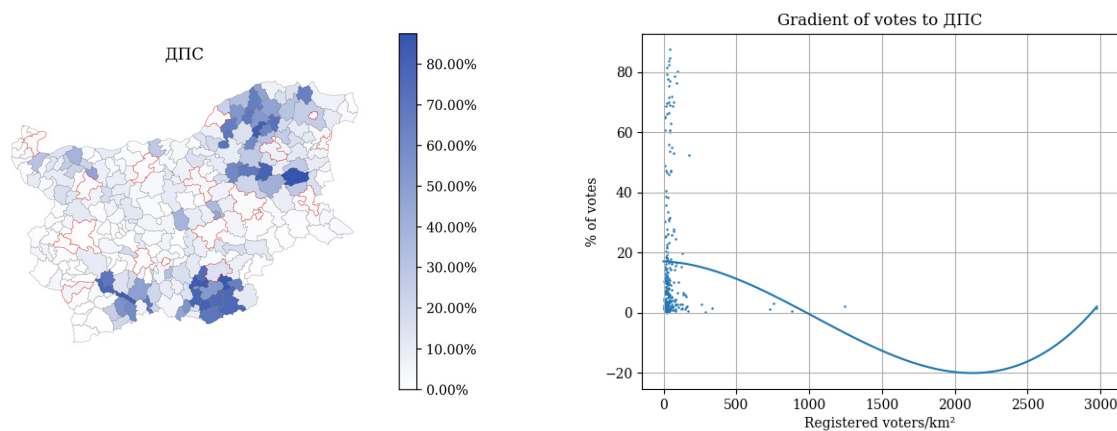
The structure of the vote for GERB didn't change from

April 4th. This structure is close to the demographic structure of the country and the coalition was supported equally by both men and women, by those educated at the university and primary level. The main electoral core of the party are public sector employees, the state administration, as well as the clientele of companies close to the government. GERB also relies on its strong influence and representation in local governments - especially in the biggest cities of the country (Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas - see Figure b, left). The party is well represented in smaller towns and villages as well.

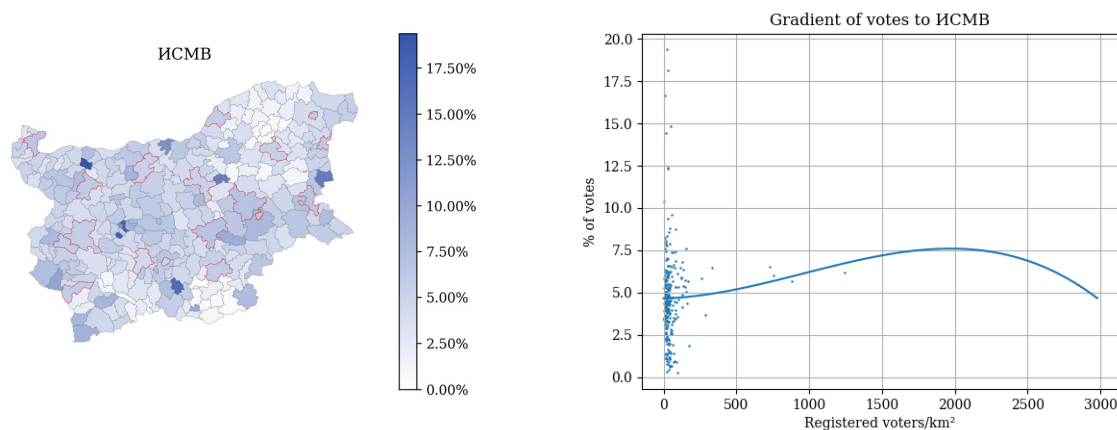
BSP

In these elections, BSP and its marginal coalition partners reached a historic low result with 365,695 or 13.4% of the vote (see “data” panel). That's a drop of nearly 115,000 votes compared to the April 4th election. The party won 36 seats in the National Assembly, and for the first time registered less than 40MPs in the 240 MPs Parliament. The main reason for this result was the ongoing internal party clashes between the various wings in the party. The leadership blamed its poor result on the machine voting, was difficult for the older voters who form the core of BSP supporters. As in previous elections, mainly elderly people with lower education, and those living in smaller towns and villages voted for BSP. The at-

e • DPS vote and gradient with respect to population density in July 2021, by municipality



f • ISMV vote and gradient with respect to population density in July 2021, by municipality



tempts of the party to mobilize younger voters failed one more time. The BSP continues to be the party that attracts the smallest number of young voters between the age of 18 and 30, and this is a major problem for the party's future. One reason for this can be found in the contradictory messages that the party has been sending for the last 4 years under the leadership of Korneliya Ninova. During the electoral campaign the party seemed disoriented, and with a lack of clear and well-articulated positions. And that repelled many moderate and centrist voters. Thus, young professionals living in big cities are mainly represented by parties in the right part of the spectrum.

DB

A coalition that significantly improved its electoral result in July 2021 was DB. The formation received the votes of 345 331 (compared to 302 380 in April) people but because of low turnout gained 12.64% (9.45% in April). This allowed the coalition of liberal (Yes, Bulgaria), green (Green Movement), and conservative (Democrats for Strong Bulgaria) parties to send 34 MPs (27 MPs in April) to the parliament, and to have a more important role during the government negotiations. As in the previous elections it won most of its votes in Sofia, and confirmed that GERB is no more the most influential political actor in the capital (see "data" panel). DB received significant support

not only in the largest city but in Plovdiv and Varna as well (Figure d). The demographic profile of the coalition shows that it is supported by employed young (18-30) and middle aged (31-60) people with university education. The ideological profile of DB is economically and socially liberal. It is a strong supporter of the Bulgarian EU membership, and advocates for a deeper integration of the country in EU structures. Following its reformist agenda, the coalition made an electoral campaign based on anti-corruption, aggressively criticising the corruption practices during the GERB governing period and insisting on a deep reform on Bulgarian judiciary system. The coalition's priorities have the support of socially influential part of the Bulgarian society but are still not easily recognised as priorities by significant part of the population. Thus, if DB wants to increase further its electoral result needs to broaden its reformist agenda.

DPS

A little over 290,000 voters or 10.7% of the voters voted for DPS. That's 45,000 fewer votes than in the previous election three months earlier. Thus, DPS has been represented by 29 MPs in the 46th National Assembly. DPS, which is backed up by ethnic Turks in Bulgaria, has been the third largest party in the country for many years. Gradually the party became an organization behind the

interests of the country's biggest oligarchs, managing political influence over key institutions in the judiciary such as the prosecutor's office. Despite the opening of 121 polling stations in Turkey, the DPS received 26,000 votes after the restriction of no more than 35 non-community polling stations was lifted. That's 4,000 votes more than the election on April 4, when the sections were only 35. However, the general trend is towards decreasing the votes for DPS from Turkey. The main reason is that in Turkey grows a second generation of citizens of emigrants from Bulgaria in the late 80s of the twentieth century, who no longer feel the need to connect with Bulgaria and with the DPS. The vote for the DPS also decreased on the territory of Bulgaria after the country's membership in the EU. After that, many Bulgarian citizens went to work abroad, especially from the poor areas in Northeastern and Southeastern Bulgaria, where most ethnic Turks live.

ISMV

The result of the coalition ISMV decreased slightly but the group of left and centrist parties succeeded, one more time, to pass the electoral threshold of 4%. ISMV received the support of 136 885 (compared to 150 940 in April) voters and with 5.01% (4.72% in April) send 13 MPs (14 MPs in April) to the new Assembly. The structure of the coalitions voters shows that this formation is supported predominantly by people with university education at the age 31-60 living in Sofia and other big cities (Figure f). After entering the Parliament this electoral coalition showed the level of cohesiveness is not very high, there were some in-coalition conflicts, and this is perturbing for the future of this formation. It was very active during the government negotiations but didn't succeed to convince ITN and DB to form a government with the support of BSP.

Conclusion – Red-lines and new elections

Political parties elected after the July 11th elections entered the new parliament with a lot of red-lines issues

among themselves. GERB and DPS were still regarded as unacceptable political partners and remained in isolation. BSP was one more time ready to compromise but DB and ITN were reluctant to cooperate with it. The attempts of ITN to form a minority government without the support of other "parties of the change" provoked significant tensions in the parliament and raised questions about the party's capacity to lead a government. GERB-SDS mandate to form a cabinet failed, after the refusal of all other parties to negotiate with them. The last attempt to form a government by BSP failed as well. Thus, for the second time in this year the parliament was dissolved, and the president Rumen Radev appointed a new caretaker government. New parliamentary elections are scheduled for 14th of November, and this time they will coincide with regular Bulgarian Presidential elections. This two-in-one election suggests an interesting electoral campaign, and the expectations are for a higher turnout. If this happens, the new parliament will gain more legitimacy, and some of the red-lines may fade away. The big challenge for Bulgarian politics will come in the days after the election - to form a viable coalition to govern the country.

Literature

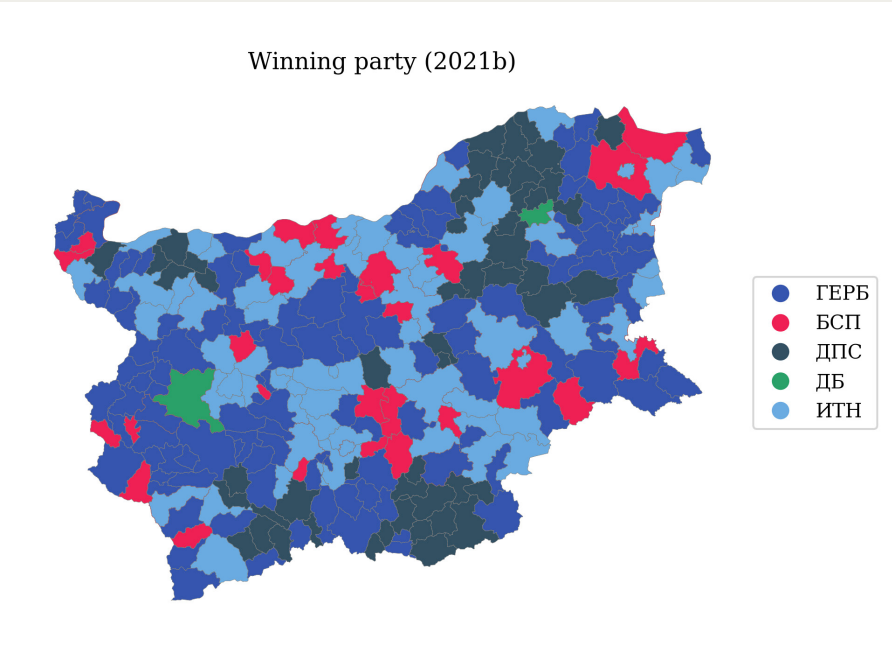
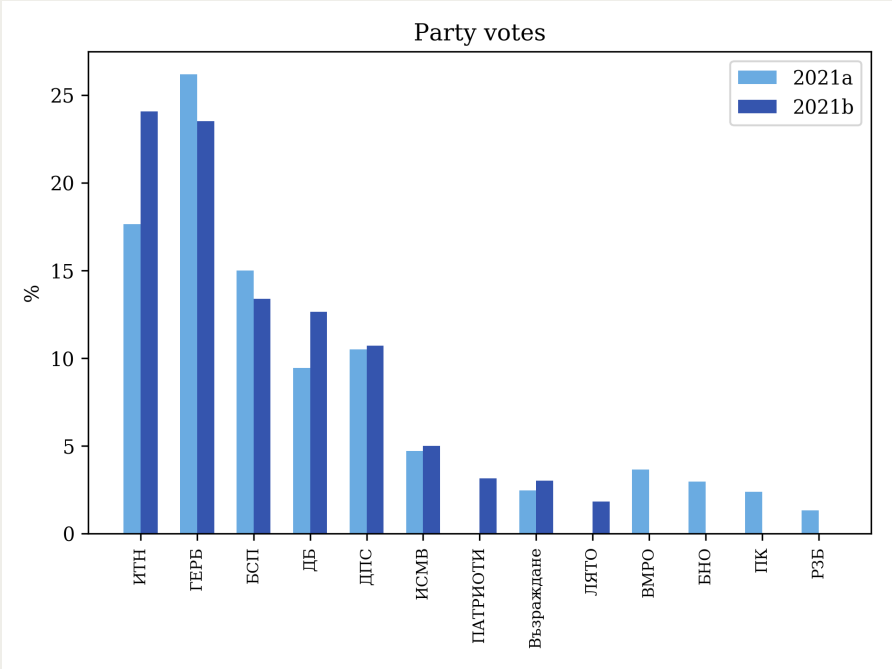
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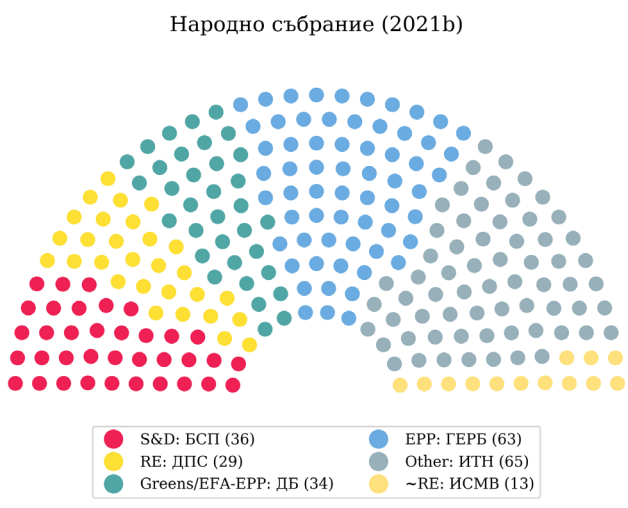
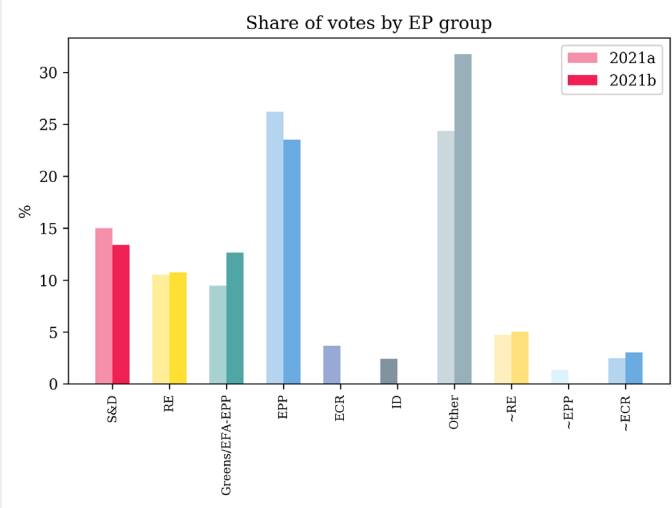
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European indicators





Francesco Truglia • ISTAT

Regional elections in Calabria, 3-4 October 2021

102

Introduction

In Mete (2020), referring to the regional elections of January 2020, but the same considerations can probably be extended to those of October 2021, speaks of the ‘political and media abandonment’ of Calabria, attributing this lack of interest not only to the ‘economic, political and demographic marginality’ of the region, but also to the predictability of the outcome of the elections, which, as another specialist in Calabrian facts, Roberto De Luca, points out, ‘are won before they take place’.

The predictability of the Calabrian people’s choices seems to respond, at least since the regional elections of 2000, to a kind of electoral determinism that decrees the defeat of the outgoing president.

It is still too early to say whether the reconfirmation of the centre-right at the head of the region in the October elections marks the beginning of the end of this rule, given the proximity in time of the previous elections and the circumstances that led to these new elections.

The mechanisms that trigger this change in power at the head of the region are not so much to be found in the dialectics that characterise party systems in democratic societies but, as a vast specialised literature now proves, in the proven capacity to move ‘packets’ of votes that are in the hands of a few ‘notables’¹ who, from one election to the next, can change sides according to their particular interests (De Luca 2015, Emanuele et Marino 2016).

This change in power without alternative in the management of public affairs, certified by economic, social and cultural indicators, blocks or, at best, hinders the development of the region and prevents the formation of a ruling class with solid political-administrative experience. No less serious, on the other hand, are the repercussions, in terms of disappointment and frustration, on the Calabrian

population, which sees the commitments made by its own administrators at each electoral session evaporate (Mete 2020 : 30-31).

The change in power in the leadership of the region, and the instability and uncertainty of governmental action that ensues, are therefore not only attributable to the normal party dialectic, but also to the inability or unwillingness of the ruling class, both Calabrian and national, to cure a political-electoral system infected by the virus of the ‘*notabilato*.’ This is a system of domination and submission of public affairs to private interests, which is widespread throughout southern Italy, but which in Calabria seems to be particularly deep-rooted and effective, and which can be linked to the phenomenon, widely studied by sociology, of ‘*familismo amorale*’ (Cartocci 1985).

From a political point of view, the Calabrian issue seems to be fully in line with the cases of deinstitutionalisation of public life which, in this region, is not so much attributable to the birth-death of political parties (Sartori 1976, Casal Bértoa 2014), but rather to the temporary nature of the political position of the ‘notables’, whose weight in the electoral arena is also increased by the preference mechanism. In the case of Calabria, the consequences of deinstitutionalisation are therefore also aggravated by the effects of the mechanisms of the ‘candidate-based system’ (Fabrizio et Feltrin 2007).

These considerations and the literature cited therefore form the theoretical framework and provide an interpretative key for the analyses presented below, which are inserted in a medium-long term perspective (local elections 2010-2021) and highlight geo-electoral aspects using, for this purpose, some tools of Statistical Spatial Analysis.

Voter demographics and abstentionism

On 3 and 4 October, after being postponed for a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, early elections were held –

1. According to Prezzia (2020), in the 2020 elections, the movement of five ‘notables’ from the center-left to the center-right won Santelli over 26,000 votes.

a • Voters, valid votes and abstentions in the four rounds of voting

	Électeurs	Votants	Valides	Abstention %
2010	1.887.078	1.118.429	1.029.265	40,7
2014	1.880.317	836.531	777.567	55,5
2020	1.895.990	840.563	778.602	55,7
2021	1.890.732	840.563	792.950	55,5

b • Correlation between abstention rates in the four rounds of elections

	AST10	AST14	AST20	AST21
AST10	1,000			
AST14	0,749	1,000		
AST20	0,790	0,827	1,000	
AST21	0,604	0,647	0,768	1,000
CS10	-0,122			
CD10	0,102			
CS14		0,008		
CD14		0,035		
CS20			-0,026	
CD20			-0,089	
CS21				0,015
CD21				-0,109

c • Correlation between coalition and party votes in the four rounds of elections

	CS10	CD10	Callipo 10	CS14	CD14	D'Ascola 14	M5S14	CS20	CD20	Tansi 20	CS21	CD21
CS10	1,000											
CD10	-0,901	1,000										
Callipo 10	-0,104	-0,338	1,000									
CS14	0,272	-0,237	-0,046	1,000								
CD14	-0,301	0,294	-0,022	-0,734	1,000							
D'Ascola 14	-0,046	0,027	0,038	-0,470	-0,172	1,000						
M5S14	0,042	-0,119	0,183	-0,047	-0,116	-0,109	1,000					
CS20	0,307	-0,403	0,256	0,208	-0,158	-0,163	0,178	1,000				
CD20	-0,347	0,449	-0,276	-0,240	0,221	0,189	-0,348	-0,830	1,000			
Tansi 20	0,118	-0,180	0,156	-0,012	-0,025	-0,083	0,365	-0,009	-0,321	1,000		
CS21	0,242	-0,235	0,013	0,208	-0,160	-0,146	0,131	0,483	-0,460	-0,061	1,000	
CD21	-0,342	0,400	-0,174	-0,187	0,247	0,081	-0,340	-0,524	0,609	-0,175	-0,678	1,000
De Magistris 21	0,166	-0,243	0,197	0,020	-0,160	0,060	0,312	0,088	-0,259	0,349	-0,265	-0,488

following the untimely death of President Jole Santelli – for the renewal of the Council and the President of the Region.

Since 2010, this is the fourth time (a record that Calabria shares with Lazio) that Calabrians have gone to the polls to elect the region's highest political-administrative institutions. In three of the four elections, the president of the region has been an expression of the centre-right and only in one, in 2014, of the centre-left. At least in the last decade, the orientation of the voters has favoured the CD. However, in order to assess the political significance of this result, some data on abstentionism, which is now an endemic phenomenon in Calabria (Truglia 2011), must be taken into account.

In the four elections under consideration, the number of Calabrians eligible to vote fluctuated around 1.88 million (Figure a), of which, in 2010, about 2 out of 5 did not go to the polls; this proportion increased considerably in the following elections until it exceeded half of the voters.

In relation to the demographic size of the municipalities, abstention is by far the highest in municipalities with less than 1,000 inhabitants. However, since 2014 there has been a general increase in this behaviour, with levels above 55% even in municipalities with at least 15,000 inhabitants, a sign that abstention is beginning to take root even in the most urbanised areas.

This phenomenon can be attributed to both demographic and political-electoral factors. With regard to the former, two aspects should certainly be highlighted. Firstly. Between 2010 and 2021, the Calabrian population decreased by more than 150 thousand people (-7.5%), but the most constant reduction (-116 thousand units) was recorded from 2014 and now amounts to -5.9%. The importance of these figures indicates that depopulation

concerns both small and large municipalities (Natale, Santacroce et Truglia 2016). Furthermore, it must be taken into account that those who leave Calabria are mainly young people who, out of necessity or choice, decide to emigrate to other regions or abroad (ISTAT 2021: 156-157) and therefore often do not return to vote (Mete 2020: 32). The second aspect, linked to what has just been said, concerns the ageing of the population, which in Calabria between 2010 and 2021 increases from 42 to 45 years,² while the old age index increases from 130.2 to 169.5.

It is clear, however, that when abstentionists exceed 40%, it is no longer possible to attribute this behaviour to 'laziness' alone (Guelmini 2013, Tuorto 2006, Corbetta 1994), but it is also linked to political-cultural causes. These include, first of all, the inability of the political class to put an adequate and credible electoral offer on the table. In this case, the choice not to vote is motivated more by a specific political-electoral choice than by laziness (Truglia 2013). Moreover, if, as in the case of Calabria, there is also a temporal persistence of this behaviour, then it is possible to assume that it is a structured phenomenon (Truglia 2011), as is also evident from the results presented below.

The correlation index between abstention rates for the four electoral years (Figure b) is always positive and with values between 0.604 (years 2021/2010) and 0.827 (years 2020/2014). The temporal persistence of this phenomenon therefore seems to confirm that it is not just a question of Calabrians losing interest in the ballot box. In this sense, if we look at the correlations between the rates of abstentionism and consensus for the two coalitions, we can see how the values of this statistic are very low (only

2. Formula: (population > 64 years) / (population < 15 years) * 100.

d • Distribution of municipalities by province and electoral outcome

	CS 2010	CD 2010	CS 2014	CD 2014	CS2020	CD 2021	CS 2021	CD2020
Cosenza	66	84	149	1	18	137	13	132
Catanzaro	5	75	79	1	8	71	9	72
Regio Calabria	4	93	92	5	1	93	4	96
Crotone	3	24	26	1	13	26	1	14
Vibo Valentia	13	37	48	2	8	45	5	42
Région	91	313	394	10	48	372	32	356

e • Electoral consensus for the CD and CS in the provinces of Calabria

	CS 2010	CD 2010	CS 2014	CD 2014	CS 2020	CD 2020	CS 2021	CD 2021
Cosenza	42,1	49,4	62,3	21,8	29,7	52,3	26,3	52,7
Catanzaro	32,9	60,4	58,1	26,1	30,9	55,2	32,7	54,4
Regio Calabria	27,5	67,0	63,0	23,4	24,4	66,6	24,6	60,8
Crotone	31,8	59,3	69,0	19,9	33,0	46,6	29,0	57,5
Vibo Valentia	35,8	52,6	55,7	28,4	36,0	56,3	28,2	54,3
Région	34,8	57,6	61,7	23,5	29,2	56,7	27,4	55,7

in 2010 and for the CD in 2021 it is slightly higher than 0.10), a sign that the political offer is not able to untie and channel into the electoral competition a substantial part of the Calabrian electorate. In all likelihood, therefore, what feeds this re-feeling, among a quota of Calabrian abstainers, could also be the distrust of a political class considered incapable of resolving or indicating a strategy to remedy problems that have been dragging on for decades and that are certified by the main socio-economic and cultural indicators. In this respect, it is interesting to note that during the decade under consideration, Calabria’s GDP per capita has remained almost stationary at around €28,000, the unemployment rate is 20.1% (+8.2% compared to 2010) and the female unemployment rate is 22.6% (+8.7% compared to 2010), while the number of young graduates (aged 30-34) is 20.7%. This figure places the region second to last, ahead of Puglia (19.8%) and Sicily (18.6%). In these two regions, young graduates have increased by 4% and 4.4% respectively compared to 2010, while in Calabria they have increased by only 1.6%.

Coalitions, parties and leaders

In the last elections, 424,666 voters voted for the CD, representing 55.7% of the total number of voters. Compared to 2010 and 2020, when this coalition won the regional elections, the CD lost about 1.8 and 1.4 percentage points. However, these two very similar percentages do not have the same meaning when translated into absolute values. In fact, in the first case, the CD loses about 20,000 voters and in the second 167,000 (about the entire population of the city of Reggio di Calabria).

The CS in 2020 stops at 27.4% of the vote, or a little over 200,000 voters, -1.8 percentage points compared to the previous year and well -7.4 points compared to 2010. But the real flight from the CS consensus, a real electoral landslide, occurs compared to 2014 with a drop of 34.7% or 273,808 voters.

As for the ‘third poles’, with the sole exception of the group led by De Magistris, which exceeded 15% of the votes, in all other elections these formations do not exceed 9% of the votes. This percentage, if considered solely from an algebraic point of view, cannot make up for the difference in votes between the winning coalition and

the other; a difference that was 22% higher in 2010, 38% higher in 2014 and 27% higher in the last two elections (Figure e).

The presence of the ‘third pole’ undoubtedly has a political significance that goes beyond arithmetic, and can be understood both as an indicator of the ability of the national and local ruling class to mediate between different interests and demands, and as a sign of the activism of civil society, which thus continues to seek ways that are deemed more in line with regional needs than those proposed by traditional political forces.

Figure c shows the values of the correlation index for coalitions that obtained at least 3% of the vote; the ‘third poles’ are indicated, with the exception of the M5S, with the names of the candidates for the presidency of the region. A first consideration arises from the comparison between the different electoral years for the CD (in light blue) and the CS (in pink) and the low value recorded by this index between the 2010-2014, 2014-2020 and 2020-2021 votes, which for the CS oscillates between 0.242 and 0.307 and for the CD, a little higher, between 0.294 and 0.449. It would therefore seem that the latter electoral group is better able to ‘keep’ its electorate.

In 2021, the correlation between the votes for De Magistris and those for the CS and the CD is -0.265 and -0.488 respectively, so that in the municipalities where De Magistris is elected, support for the CS and, to a greater extent, the CD decreases. The values of the medium-high intensity correlation index indicate an increase in the level of competition between the coalition led by De Magistris and the other two coalitions, and in particular with the CS electorate, over which it most probably exerts a certain political-ideological attraction. Finally, it should be noted that the impact of De Magistris on the Calabrian electorate is evidenced by his personal success in obtaining 16.2% of the vote, i.e. + 1% more than the total votes obtained by the lists that supported him.

Among the various elements that differentiate the two camps, also in terms of evolution over time, we can certainly highlight the type of presidential candidate and the role played by the national parties within the two coalitions.

With regard to the first aspect, it seems that the evolution of this relationship between the two camps is diffe-

rent compared to 2010: in the last two rounds of elections, the CS seems to have relied more on the ‘personality’ of the presidential candidate, while the CD is stronger in terms of list votes. This consideration is also confirmed by the different ‘nature’ of the presidential candidates, who for the CS come from ‘politics’ (Scopelliti from the AN, Ferro, Santelli and Occhiuto from the PdL or the FI). For the CS, only Loiero and Oliverio are ‘party men,’ while in the last two elections Callipo and Bruni belonged to the so-called ‘civil society.’

Focusing on the electoral weight of the main political forces makes it possible to assess, in a way, the regional ‘vocation’ of these actors and therefore their propensity to take on specific problems and to find resources and solutions that do not always concern the region alone.

In the 2010-2021 electoral rounds, the Partito Democratico (PD) maintained a central position within the formation structured around this political topic. In contrast, the position of the Popolo della Libertà (PdL) and Forza Italia (FI) within the CD seems less stable, and is, at least, threatened by the legitimate ambitions of the leaders of the Lega and Fratelli di Italia (FdI) to lead the CD at national level. One of the effects of the electoral dynamism of Salvini and Meloni is certainly the shift of the coalition’s centre of gravity to the right.

In the last elections, the PD led a coalition of seven parties and won more than 13% of the vote on its own, down 2 percentage points from 2020 and 10.6 points from 2014. However, despite this drop, the DP’s incidence in the CS remains very high, ranging from 38.4% in 2010 to 51.9% in 2020.

In 2020, Santelli leads a coalition of six parties, three of which are national in scope. In these elections, FI is joined by the League, which after Salvini’s ‘nationalist’ turn is no longer a party of the North (Passarelli et Tuorto 2018, Truglia 2018) and conquers 12.3% of the Calabrian electorate. The third party in the coalition is the FdI, which collects just over 10% of the vote.

The southward flight of the League and FdI suffered a setback in the last elections, not only because of the decline of FdI (-2.1%) and the League (-3.5%) and the simultaneous growth of FI (+5%), but also because the new president Occhiuto comes from the ranks of FI, a party of which he was the leader in the Chamber of Deputies, thus reaffirming its centrality within the CD.

Territorialisation of the electoral consensus

In the four electoral rounds, the number of municipalities won by one of the two coalitions has always exceeded 300. In 2014, the CS won the majority of votes in 394 of the 404 municipalities that make up the Calabrian territory (Figure d). This dynamic seems to be transversal both in relation to the provinces and to the demographic size of the municipalities. Suffice it to say that the 18 municipalities with a population of at least 15,000 seem to be united in favour or against a certain political formation.

It is now a question of taking a further step and trying to identify geo-electoral groups composed of municipalities that are similar in terms of consensus and contiguous in terms of geography.

This analytical approach has been widely used in various disciplinary fields and in studies where it is fundamental to assess contamination or spillover between units of analysis. In the field of electoral analysis, just to mention those concerning Italy, it is certainly worth mentioning the work of Agnew, some of which is mentioned in the bibliography.

From a statistical point of view, the indices referred to are those of spatial autocorrelation and, as far as this paper is concerned, the G_i^* statistics of Getis and Ord (1992). Staying in the context of the Italian elections, this statistic is also used by Ignazi and Wellhofer in their study on the ‘Catholic vote’ (2017).

$$G_i^* = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^n (x_j - M_x) w_{ij}}{S_x \sqrt{\frac{n \sum_{j=1}^n w_{ij}^2 - (\sum_{j=1}^n w_{ij})^2}{n-1}}}; \forall i \neq j$$

Before proceeding with the illustration of the results, it is worth giving some information about this statistic, which can be formalised as follows:

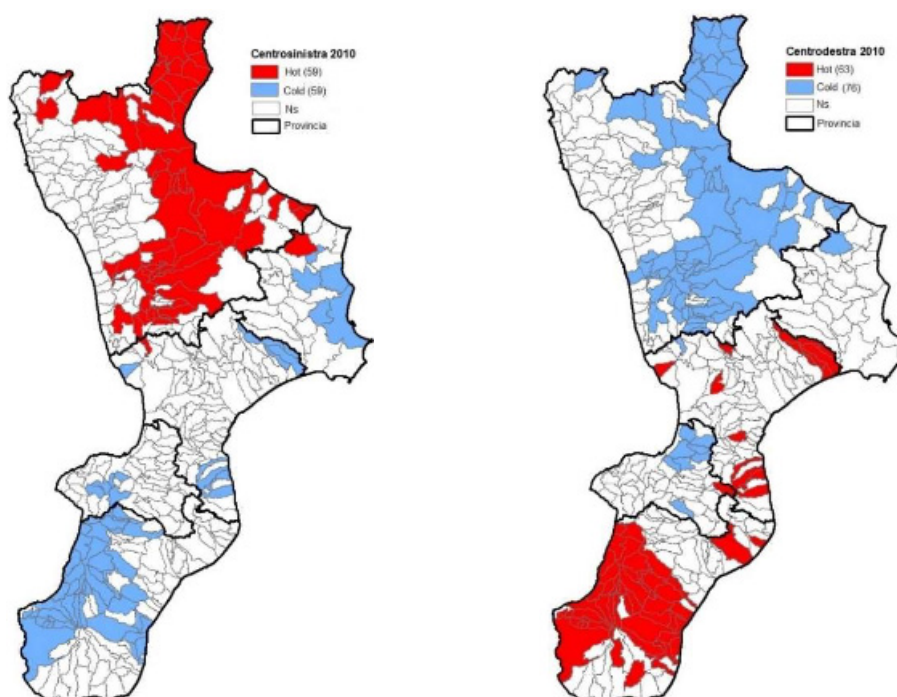
where :

- x_j is the percentage of consensus of a political force in the j -th municipality;
- M_x and S_x are respectively the mean and the standard deviation of the variable x_j ;
- w_{ij} are the elements of an adjacency matrix W that are equal to 1 or 0 depending on whether two municipalities share a border section.³

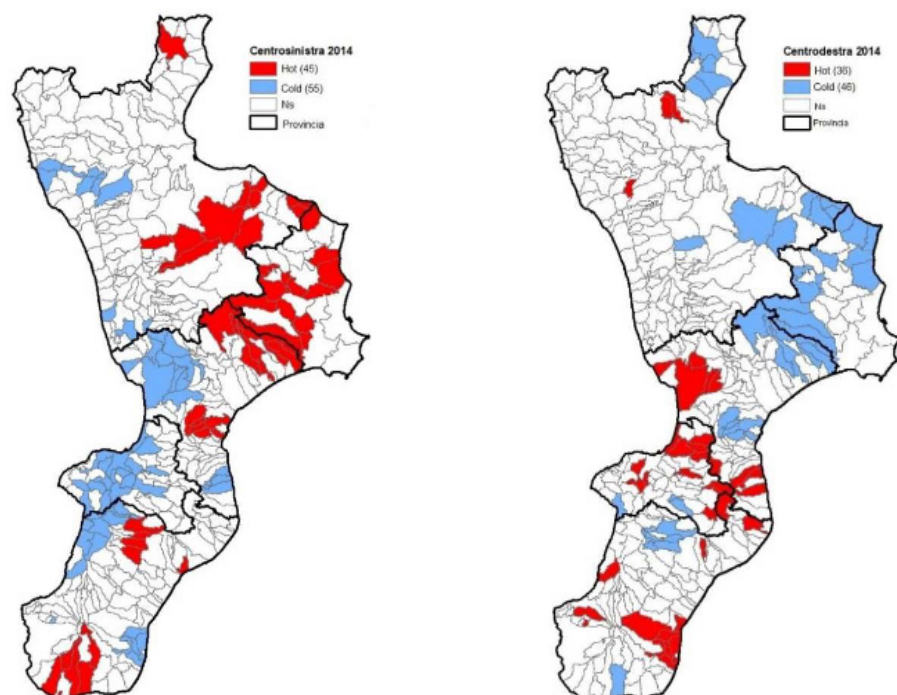
The scores of this index, suitably standardised, allow us to assess the statistical significance (p-value <0.05) of the distance between x_i and M_x and to identify specific geo-electoral partitions, which are labelled as follows: Hotà high consensus municipalities contiguous to high consensus municipalities ; Coldà low consensus municipalities contiguous to low consensus municipalities; Nsà municipalities with insignificant differences from the regional average. The territorial configuration of the Calabrian electorate in the 2010 local elections, which in this work serves as a geo-electoral reference, is characterised by the presence of two large clusters of high electoral consensus which are located, for the CD, in the south and centre, and for the CS in the centre-north part of the region (Figure f).

The high intensity CD cluster is composed of 63 (16%) municipalities, most of them in the province of Reggio Calabria and, to a lesser extent, in the province of Catanzaro. More extensive, but with a lower number of municipalities (53), is the high consensus CS cluster that extends along the central-eastern part of the province of Cosenza.

3. Spatial adjacency can be operationalized in different ways: distance between barycenters, k nearest neighbors etc. In this article, we will consider adjacency between communes.



g • Hot-Cold Electoral cluster CS and CD, 2014



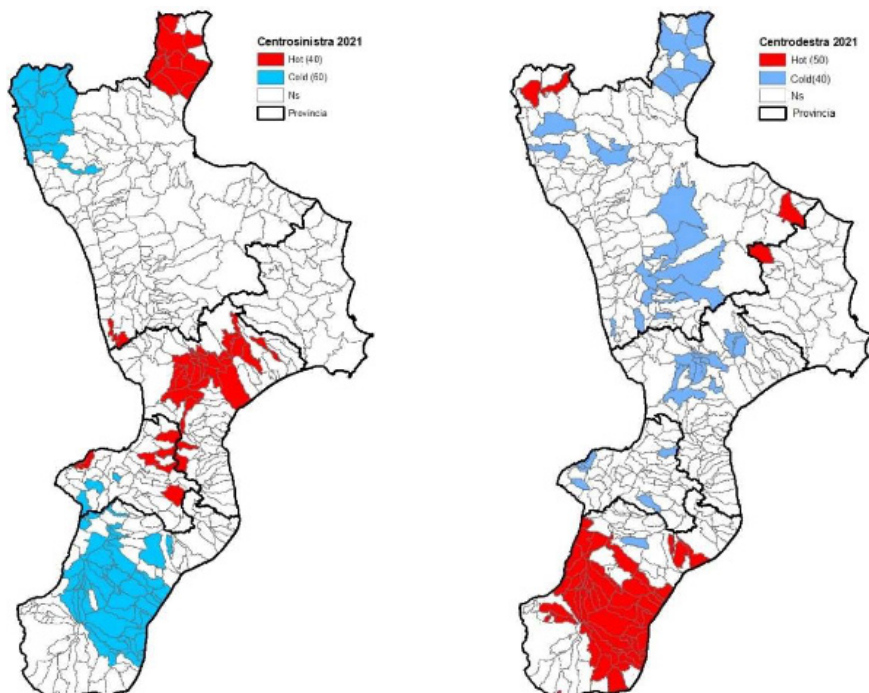
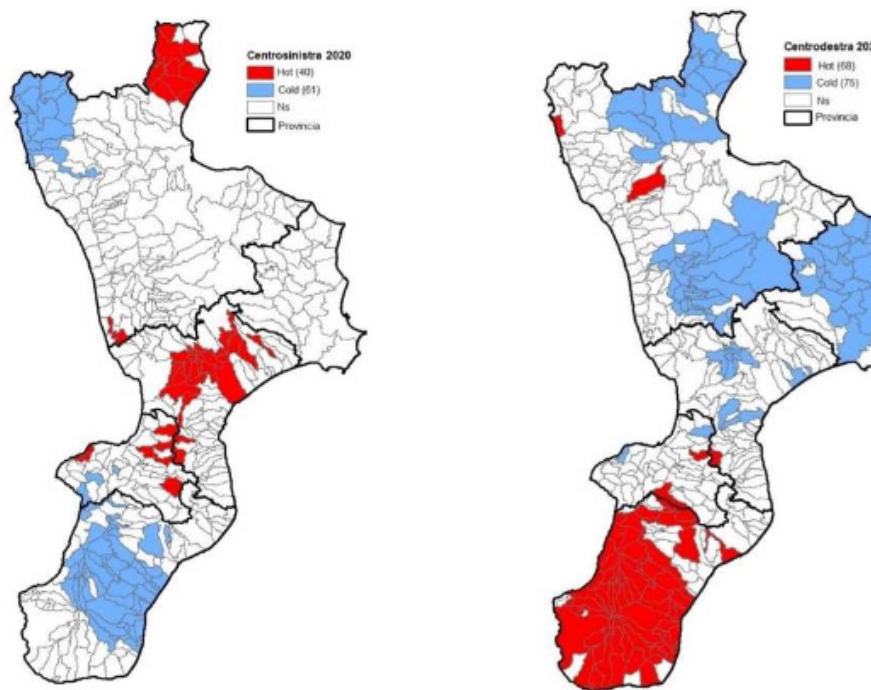
About $\frac{1}{4}$ of the support for CD and slightly less for CS comes from voters in these two clusters, which also include the cities of Reggio di Calabria (CD) and Cosenza (CS).

The most obvious fact in the 2014 electoral geography is the strong reduction – more important for CD, which dropped from 63 to 36 municipalities – of the two coalitions' hot clusters and the consequent territorial fragmentation of their respective geo-electoral basins (Figure g).

The regaining of the leadership of the region by the CD in 2020 has two geo-electoral effects. The first is the formation of the high consensus cluster composed of 68 municipalities, of which only 5 are located outside the province of Reggio Calabria (Figure h). Compared to

2010, the cluster with low support for the CD has changed considerably, no longer extending only to municipalities in the province of Cosenza, but encompassing a large part of the Crotonese region (Figure i). The second effect is the strong reshuffle and shift of the CS Hot cluster from the province of Cosenza to that of Catanzaro. In fact, the area of high CS consensus in the Cosenza area is reduced to a group of municipalities around Pollino. At the same time, in the province of Catanzaro, a new hot spot was created, comprising the same chief town and a group of municipalities extending along the hinterland of the Serre to the southern border of Vibo Valentia.

The electoral geography drawn by the ballot box in



2021 roughly confirms the spatial configuration of the hot zones of the two coalitions and, for the CS, also of the cold zones.

The most important changes with respect to 2020 are: i) the exit from the high consensus group of the city of Reggio di Calabria; ii) the reduction of the territorial coverage of this group from 68 to 50 municipalities; iii) the significant reduction of the low consensus group

Conclusion

Three political and electoral factors seem to have guided the choice of the Calabrian people between 2010

and 2021. The first is undoubtedly the greater capacity of the CD to present a unified candidacy capable of bringing together the different souls in this political space. The second, which is in some way linked to the first, concerns the personality of the candidate for the presidency of the Region, who, in the case of the CD, always comes from 'politics' rather than 'civil society' and is perhaps perceived, at least by those who go to the polls, as being more 'equipped' in political-administrative terms to lead the Region and more closely linked to national parties. The third element is the role of Berlusconi's party which, despite the seats of Salvini and Meloni, remains fundamental both in terms of votes and geo-election. This role is confirmed

by the fact that two of the three presidents of the CD come from the ranks of the FI.

The electoral geography of the years under consideration shows a constant spatial and temporal stability in the distribution of votes, which contrasts with the discontinuity of the majorities that have succeeded one another in leading the region. This contradiction is only apparent because these two aspects are two sides of the same coin. The fact that it is the votes that, in specific areas of the region, migrate between the two electoral poles that decide electoral victory or defeat confirms, on the one hand, the ability of the 'lords of preferences' (cf. Emanuele & Marini 2015) to shift the consensus and, on the other, confirms the effectiveness of their control of the territory.

Moreover, in the four electoral rounds considered, it emerges that the voters voted massively for one coalition or another; it would therefore seem that the Calabrians know no 'half measures.' This behaviour is certainly not attributable to an anthropological peculiarity of this population, but rather it is a further confirmation of the political «misguidance» of the voters; a consequence, also but not only, of the fragmentation of the electoral offer and the weakness of civil society which struggles to find its own cultural dimension, before that of politics, and which often takes refuge, at least to some extent, in abstentionism.

If we consider the difference in consensus between the two coalitions and the number of municipalities that passed from one to the other, we get the impression that the regional elections in Calabria resembled a zero-sum game where the winner takes everything and the loser loses everything. This result, however, does not seem to be due to the presence of a strongly radicalised political force that 'cannibalises' the consensus, as happens in some regions, nor, as happens in others, to the arrival on the scene of a particularly charismatic candidate. In the case of Calabria, this game seems to be fuelled by the absence or lack of incisive actions to win the loyalty of its voters, who in this sense seem to be 'nobody's voters' (Mete 2020). In many cases, this weak sense of non-membership is probably also fuelled by the experience and memory of electoral programmes that were never realised, leading Calabrian citizens to believe that the two coalitions are interchangeable with each other in a kind of self-perpetuating process, to quote Deleuze, of *differences and repetitions*. However, it should be noted that of the two terms, it is the second that gives substance to an electoral dynamic that always seems to result in a political-institutional stationarity that allows the electoral result and the political fate of the regional government to be known in advance.

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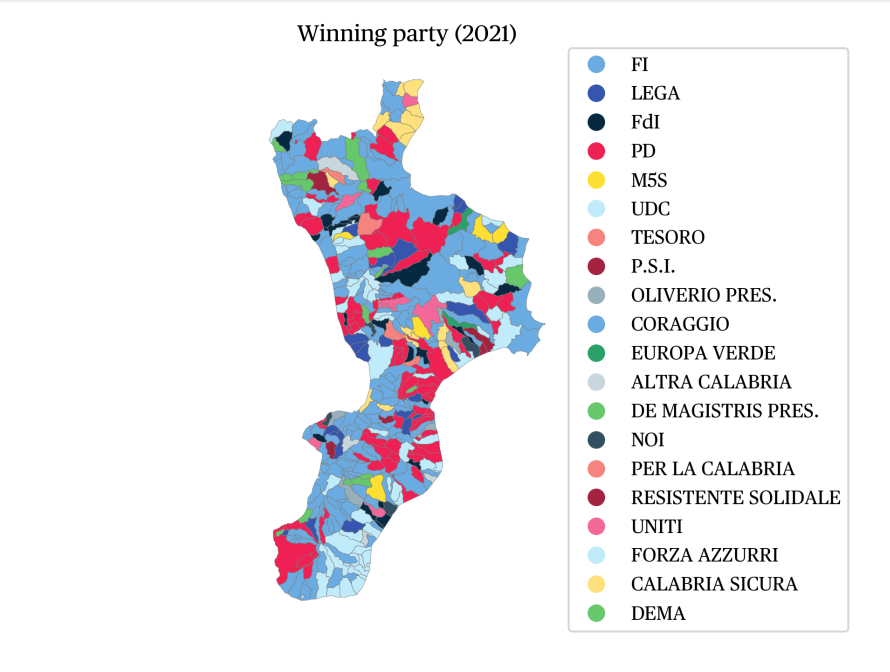
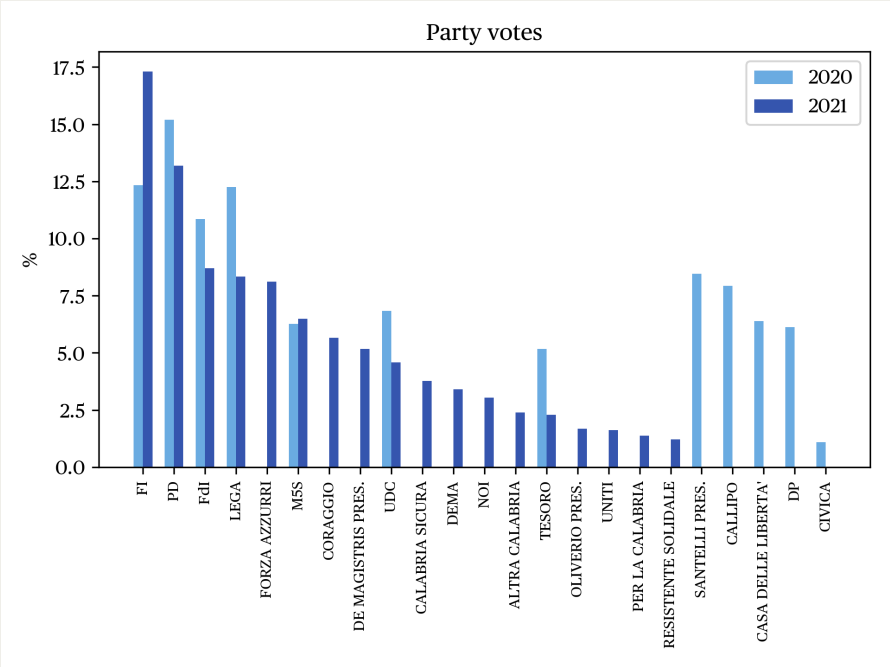
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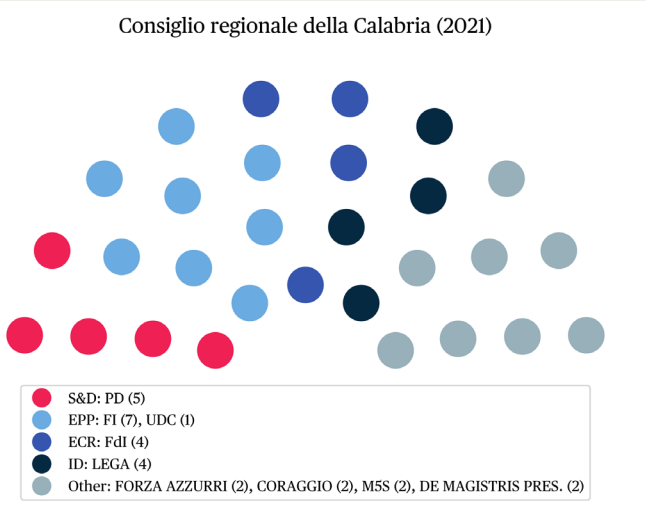
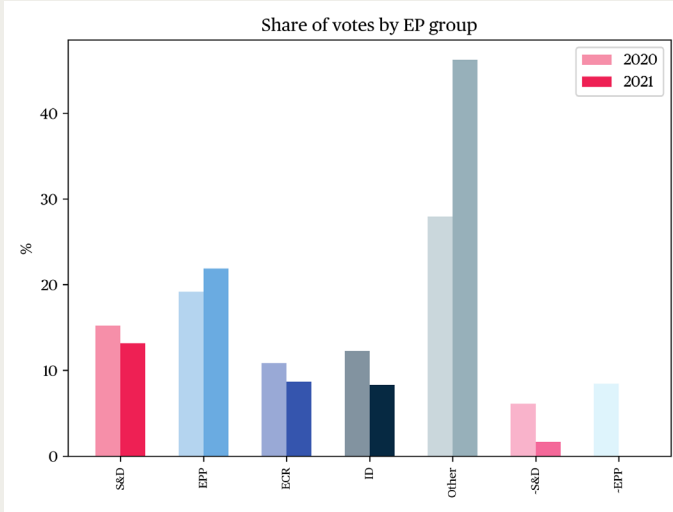
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European indicators





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Regional election in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 26 September 2021

Situation before the election

The election for the 8th state parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern took place on 26 September 2021, at the same time as the Bundestag election and the election for the Chamber of Deputies in Berlin. In contrast to the other two elections of the election year 2021, however, this Landtag election was held under clear auspices. From the beginning, the favourite for the office of Minister-President was the incumbent Manuela Schwesig (SPD, S&D). She was elected in 2017 after her predecessor Erwin Sellering (SPD, S&D) resigned for reasons of health. Since Schwesig came into office without a mandate of her own, her leadership now had to be legitimised electorally. Her previous government was based on a red-black majority in the state parliament consisting of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD, S&D) and the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU, EPP). In terms of substance, her coalition partner could only accomplish very little, so the SPD set the tone in government with a strong focus on Schwesig. This was also reflected in the polls, in which government satisfaction among SPD supporters was almost 20 percentage points higher than among CDU supporters (Infratest dimap 2021).

Nevertheless, in the election campaign the SPD focused less on content and more on top candidate Schwesig – for example, campaign material such as the "Manu Magazin" was distributed to households. The other parties had little to counter this strongly personalised strategy. The CDU with its top candidate Michael Sack (CDU, EPP) was hardly convincing. Sack had taken over the leadership of the party in 2020 after Philipp Amthor (CDU, EPP) – who was originally intended for the party chair – had disqualified himself for this post following allegations of corruption. Moreover, the SPD seemed to have little to attack on the substantive level, as the CDU had always supported the government's actions, and Sack was also

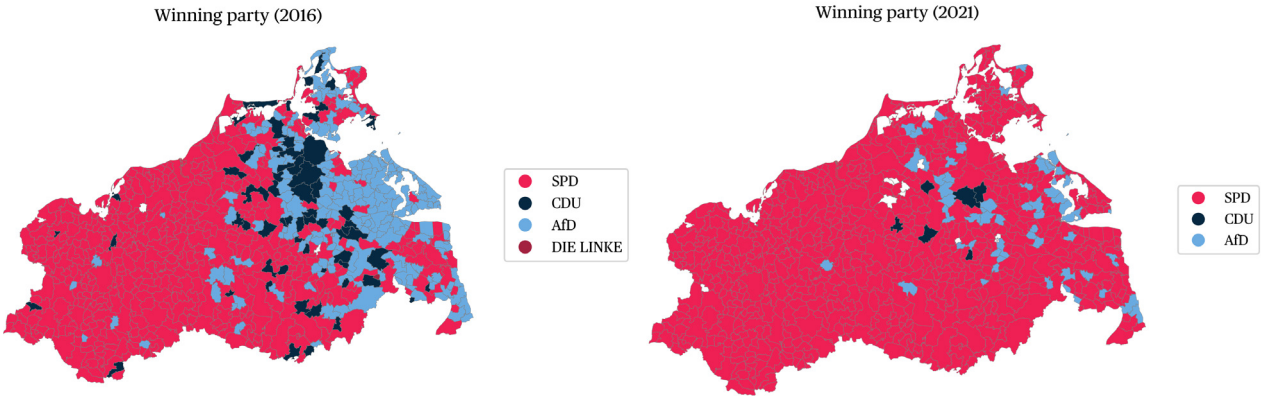
unable to match Schwesig's sympathy ratings on the personal level (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2021).

The largest opposition party Alternative for Germany (AfD, ID) was hardly visible in the election campaign, which was also due to the fact that their top candidate Nikolaus Kramer (AfD, ID) had to spend a long time in hospital for medical reasons (ibid.). Moreover, Schwesig's policies were well received in the country. With the abolition of contributions for road construction and fees for day-care facilities, Schwesig had won over many voters, and her rigorous, statesmanlike behaviour during the Coronavirus pandemic had also had a positive effect on her approval ratings. With her temporary representation of the SPD chair at the federal level – together with Malu Dreyer (SPD, S&D) and Thorsten Schäfer-Gümbel (SPD, S&D) – she also showed that Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is led by a politician who is well connected and competent in federal politics. At the same time, the SPD's upswing in polls at the federal level provided a strong tailwind for the state SPD, with state polls also predicting a clear victory for the Social Democrats.

Results of the election

The evening of the election produced the expected victory for the SPD. With just under 40% of the second votes, the SPD increased its share of the vote by almost a third, while all other parties represented in the parliament suffered losses (see chart). The AfD – once more the second largest party – lost 4.1 percentage points, while the CDU even received 5.7 percentage points less of the vote. Party leader Sack then resigned from the party chair, creating a power vacuum within the party. As a result, a leading contact person was missing in the subsequent exploratory talks with the SPD, which can be seen as a determinant for the failure of the continuation of the coalition. The share of the vote of the fourth parliamentary party,

a • Party with the most (second) votes by municipality in 2016 (left) and 2021 (right)



Die Linke (The Left, GUE/NGL), also fell by 3.3 percentage points. At the same time, the parties Bündnis90/Die Grünen (Greens, G-EFA) and Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP, RE) succeeded in entering parliament - both had still failed to clear the 5% threshold in 2016. The newly formed parliament is thus programmatically more diverse and characterised by a plurality of interests that has long been the status quo at the federal level and in some state parliaments.

The election results in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern reflect the nationwide trend with clear victories for the SPD, Greens and FDP and significant losses for the CDU, AfD and Left. The great success of the SPD was also reflected in the results at constituency level. Whereas in 2016 a clear east-west divide could be observed in the state, whereby the SPD clearly dominated the western and central parts of the state, but in the east had to cede many constituencies to the CDU and AfD, in 2021 the SPD dominated in almost all parts of the state (see chart).

CDU and AfD did continue to win in some constituencies, but the victories were fewer and less concentrated. The constituencies won by AfD are almost exclusively located in the eastern part of the state. Smaller parties, for their part, did not create surprises. The Animal Protection Party got 1.7% of the vote, well below the 5% threshold for entering the parliament. The Querdenker movement, which emerged during the COVID pandemic as a civil

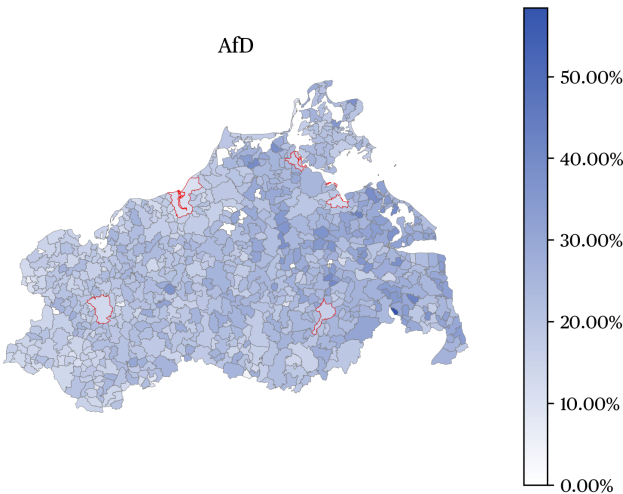
society counterweight to the state machinery, ran in the elections under the name of Grassroots Democratic Party of Germany (dieBasis), but only obtained 1.7% of the vote as well. The National Democratic Party (NPD) also declined from the 2016 state election, and only won 0.8% of the vote.

Turnout increased by 9 percentage points, from 61.7% to 70.8%, which represented the third-highest turnout in the history of the state. An important reason for this success may be the public satisfaction with the government's work. While in 2016, discontent was particularly strong in the eastern parts of the state, in 2021 the government paid particular attention to these constituencies. In this light, it is hardly surprising that satisfaction with the government evolved almost in parallel with SPD's electoral success. Despite the increasing satisfaction with the government, CDU, a partner in the outgoing coalition, did not manage to increase its share of the vote.

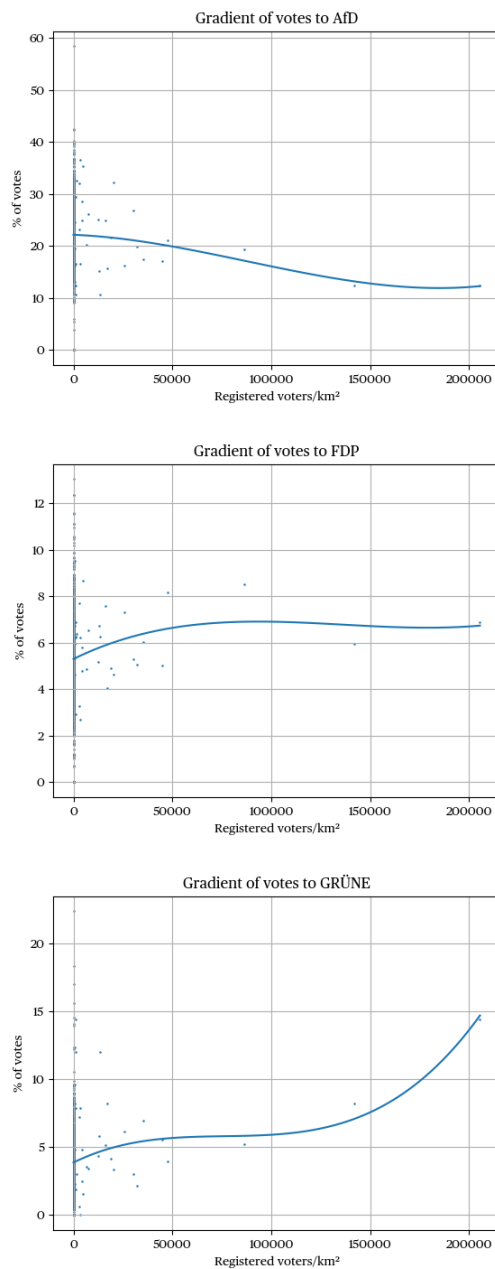
Transnational political trends

The results of the votes of the SPD, AfD and Linke in the state elections in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania were significantly higher than in the federal elections which took place at the same time. In the case of the AfD and the Left, this difference can be attributed, among other things, to differences between the "new" East German and the "old" West German federal states. Parties that are assumed to be close to the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Russia continue to perform better in the eastern German states than in western German states (Arzheimer 2021). The AfD also managed to win a particularly large number of votes in the eastern constituencies near the Polish border (see chat b).

The above-average result of the SPD in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania is also striking, both in comparison to other state elections and the election to the European Parliament. The SPD's share of the vote in the state election is among the highest in the parliaments of the German states and is, as it were, significantly higher than the share of the vote for the Progressive Alliance of Social Democrats in the election to the European Parliament (S&D) and is also among the highest in the parliaments of the German states. Whether the state result



b • AfD's score by municipality



can be explained by the strengthening of the SPD at the federal level, or whether the success at the federal level was favoured by the strong state SPD, is unclear. In terms of the second-order election theory, the influence of the federal level on the state level is stronger than vice versa (Müller & Debus 2012). In this case, however, possible synergy effects through the stronger integration of the state party into federal politics - for example, in the figure of Schwesig - also seem plausible.

Socio-demographic trends

The state's ageing population and low population density make it more difficult for some parties to establish themselves. With 69 inhabitants per square kilometre, the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is the most sparsely populated state in Germany and has lost a considerable amount of population since reunification (Destatis Daten-

report 2021). Even though the birth low from the 1990s and early 2000s has been overcome by now and immigration figures have exceeded emigration figures since 2017 (Statistisches Amt MV), the population continues to decline due to the ageing of the state's population and currently stands at 1.6 million. In 2019, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern was last in terms of average gross earnings and third last in terms of disposable income of private households. In September 2020, the unemployment rate was only 6.9%, but a west-east divide can be seen in the state, with the west of the state at 5% and the east at almost 10% (Destatis Datenreport 2021).

The Greens in particular, and to a lesser extent the FDP, are primarily elected in the larger cities (see chart c). In addition, however, the core electorate of both parties is hardly represented in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The Greens, who are mainly elected by citizens in big cities with above-average incomes, find it difficult to represent their ideas for environmental policies in rural areas. The FDP relies mainly on the self-employed, who are also difficult to find in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the state with the third lowest number of businesses (MV Statista Dossier 2021). Both the Greens and the FDP represent different progressive directions and are therefore supported particularly by young people. This can also lead to both parties competing for these small voter potentials, which further explains their poor performance in comparison to the federal level. Both parties were not represented in the previous state parliament and, with 6.3 and 5.8 percent respectively, form the two smallest parliamentary factions in the coming legislative period with only five seats each.

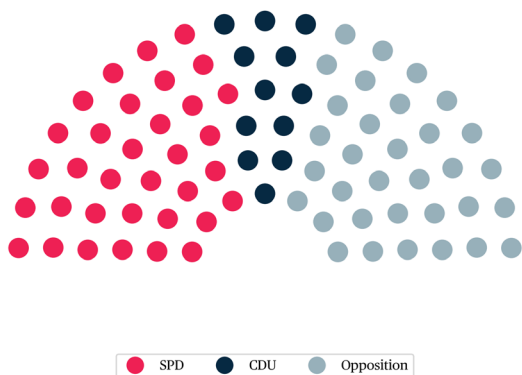
One party that benefits from the demographic trends is the AfD, which often achieves strong results in sparsely populated, economically underdeveloped regions with a high average age (Franz et al. 2018). This does not necessarily mean that the oldest population group votes for this party; rather, it is due to the often perceived lack of prospects and the feeling of being forgotten and abandoned by established parties, that people in such areas become susceptible to populist and nationalist opinions and parties (Dellenbaugh-Losse et al. 2021). As can be seen in the illustration above, the AfD's main voter groups are located in sparsely populated areas, which supports this theory.

It is also interesting that the AfD scores most strongly in the 30-45 age group, i.e., a group that was born in the GDR but only lived through it for a few more years. This means that although this group no longer grew up socialised by a dictatorship, they actively experienced the rural exodus and the social and economic problems of the 1990s and are therefore potentially susceptible to positions that contradict established policies.

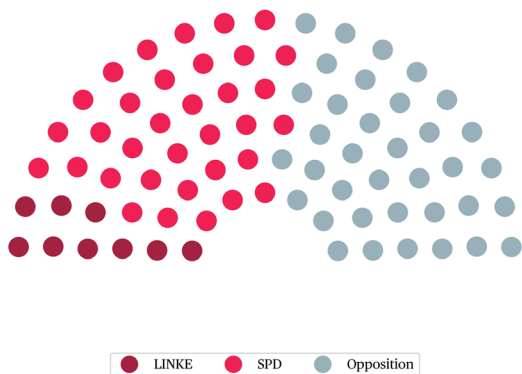
Geographic differences and dynamics

Especially in the 2016 state election, clear differences between the west of the state, dominated by the SPD, and the east, from which the AfD emerged as the election win-

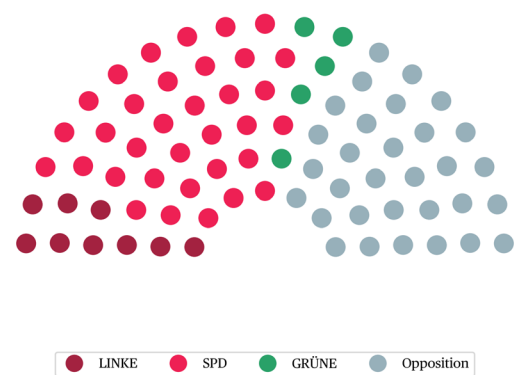
Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2021): Große Koalition



Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2021): Rot-rote Koalition



Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2021): Rot-rot-grüne Koalition



ner, can be seen. In 2021, the AfD's strongholds continue to be in the east, but their number has declined sharply and been cut by the SPD. How did this happen?

In the fields of economic development, average income, unemployment rate and infrastructure, strong differences between the western and eastern parts of the state can be seen, with the east always occupying the weaker position. The direct border with Poland in the east of the state may also have a positive influence on the AfD's vote. Jäckle et al. (2018) explain this by arguing that right-wing populist and xenophobic attitudes can easily become entrenched due to an atmosphere of economic competition and cross-border crime, which may lead to a general strengthening of the AfD in German border areas. However, a single-cause explanation does not suffice. Other

reasons for the AfD's decline could be the declining national trend, internal disputes in the state party or a lack of interest in the issue of refugees among the population. However, it should not be ignored that after its own poor performance in 2016, the state government and especially the SPD actively tried to win back voters in the east of the state and to involve Vorpommern more in state politics. As Franz et al. (2018) suggest, greater attention should be paid to economically underdeveloped regions. The state government did this primarily through the Vorpommern Strategy, according to which a Parliamentary State Secretary for the Vorpommern part of the state (Patrick Dahle- mann, SPD, S&D) was appointed, who had the power to invest almost 3 million euros annually in regional projects and schemes from a development fund opened specifically for this purpose. In addition, the newly created office was to give the people in the region the feeling that they could transport their concerns more directly and easily to the state capital of Schwerin. Whether the money, the direct contact or federal political trends had a direct influence is debatable; in any event, it can be observed that the AfD suffered considerable losses in almost all consti- tuencies and especially in the eastern part of the state.

Coalitions

After the state elections, the SPD and the Left Party agreed to start coalition negotiations. In the run-up to the election, three different coalitions were considered mathematically possible and politically feasible: a conti- nuation of the " Grand Coalition" between the SPD and the CDU, an alliance between the SPD and the Left and a " Traffic Light Coalition" consisting of the SPD, the FDP and the Greens. The SPD held exploratory talks with all parties represented in the state parliament, with the exception of the AfD. However, a tripartite alliance between SPD, FDP and Greens was assessed as unlikely, as the two potential junior partners are new to the state parliament and the state parties have little parliamentary and government expe- rience. Two weeks after the election, Manuela Schwesig announced that the SPD would negotiate a coalition with the Left Party. The reason given for starting coalition talks was the large substantive overlap between the parties, for example in education policy, state development and social infrastructure. Some of the central points in the coalition negotiations are the creation of new teaching positions, the introduction of free after-school care, the lowering of the voting age in state elections to 16 and the promotion of an increase in the minimum wage to twelve euros. This will be the first time since 2006 that the CDU is not part of the government in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. The Left Party, on the other hand, will be able to form a coalition with the SPD again after 15 years in the oppo- sition. Between 1998 and 2006, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the precursor of the Left, had already formed a coalition with the SPD. This red-red coalition under Minister-President Harald Ringstorff (SPD) was the

first coalition between the two parties on the state level in Germany. The renewed alliance between the two parties can be interpreted as a "shift to the left" in state politics. A coalition between the SPD and the Left would have a comfortable majority in the 79-member parliament with 43 seats (see chart d). Regardless of the outcome of the coalition talks, a future coalition partner of the SPD will certainly have to shift its focus from the prime minister to its own substantive priorities.

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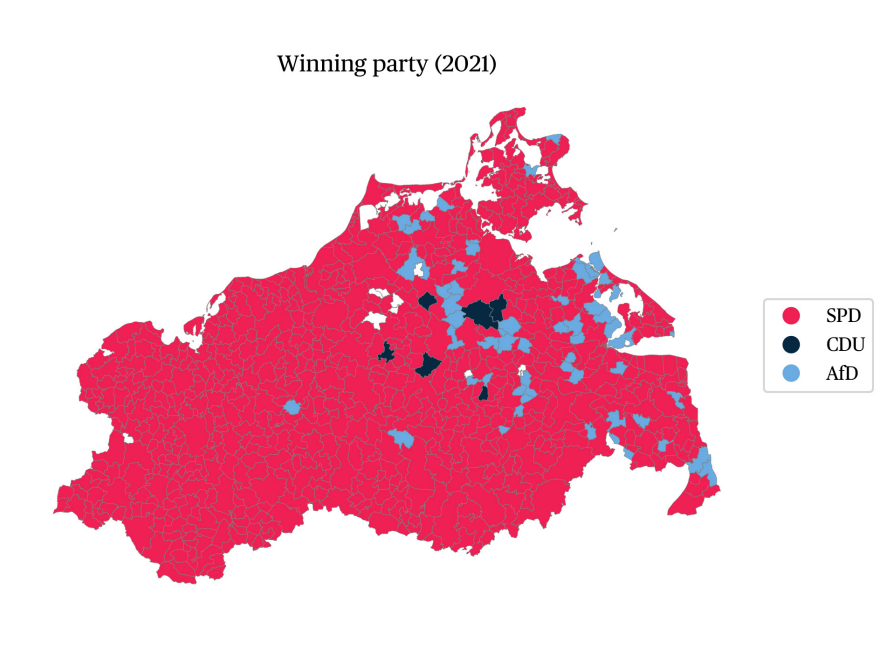
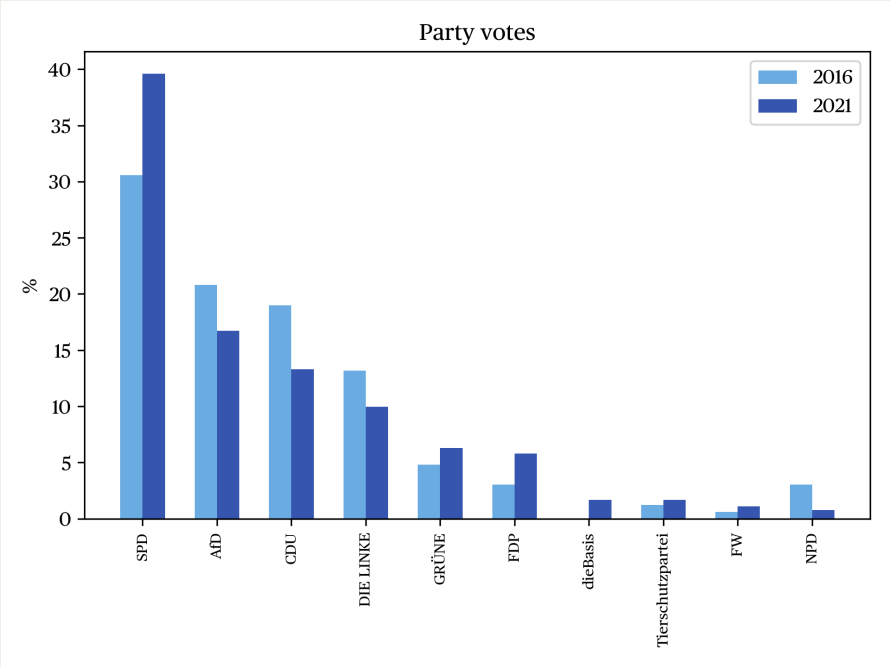
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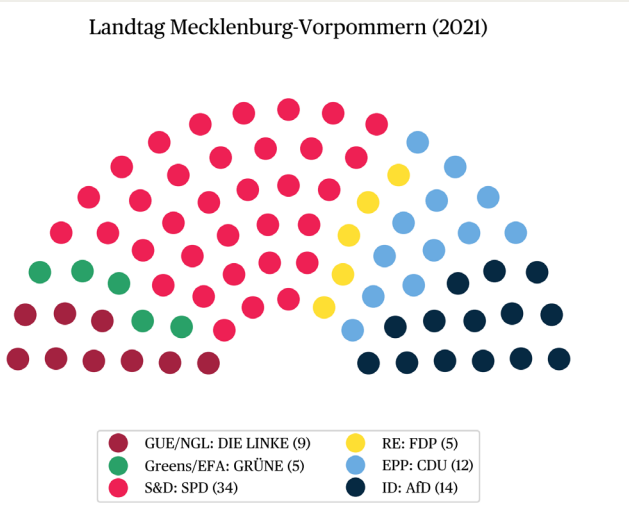
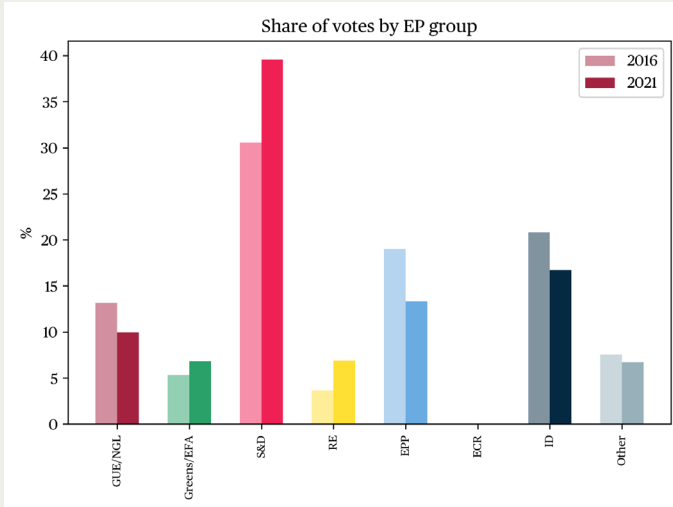
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European indicators





Regional election in Berlin, 26 September 2021

The 2016 election to the Berlin House of Representatives gave rise to new political equilibria in the German federal capital. The ruling 'Große Koalition' had experienced a period in office marked by crises: its management of the refugee crisis, corruption scandals and the delay in the opening of the BER airport had led to much criticism of the state government. At the ballot box, the coalition lost massively: together, the two 'people's parties' got only 39.2% of the vote; the CDU (EPP) reached an all-time low nationwide, while the SPD (S&D) got the narrowest government mandate of the post-war period with 21.6% of the second votes. For its part, the fledgling AfD (ID) entered the House of Representatives for the first time (Niedermayer 2017). A red-red-green government coalition emerged – the second of its kind at state level, and the first under SPD leadership. In December 2016, Michael Müller (SPD) was re-elected as Governing Mayor of Berlin (Niedermayer 2017); he had taken over the office from party colleague Klaus Wowereit in 2014. Thus, despite considerable losses, the Berlin SPD continued to lead the state government. It has been part of the government without interruption since 1989.

Political context, election campaign and the vote

Berliners were critical of the work of the Red-Red-Green Senate, as the Berlin government is known, throughout the 2016-2021 legislative period. In the year of his re-election, Müller's satisfaction ratings dropped from over 50% to just under 30% (Fahrer 2021). Afterwards, the survey values recovered slightly, but Müller was permanently among the most unpopular minister presidents in Germany (WDR 2019). Satisfaction with the Senate's coronavirus crisis management was particularly low: in 2020, Berlin ranked third-last among German states in surveys (Kühne et al. 2020 : 7); in spring 2021, the state government's satisfaction ratings deteriorated even fur-

ther (Fahrer 2021).

At the beginning of 2020, Müller announced that he would use the next Berlin election as an opportunity to switch from state to federal politics (Schütze 2020). In his place, the then Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and former District Mayor of Neukölln Franziska Giffey and Member of the House of Representatives Raed Saleh were elected as co-chairs of the SPD state association of Berlin (Kiesel 2020). Finally, in April 2021, Giffey was named the SPD's top candidate for the upcoming elections to the House of Representatives (FAZ 2011).

The fact that Giffey was at the centre of accusations of plagiarism caused widespread criticism. When it became apparent in mid-May 2021 that an investigation initiated at the end of 2020 would result in the revocation of her doctorate (FU Berlin 2021), Giffey resigned her ministerial post (Spiegel 2021). Supported by her party, she nevertheless decided to enter the Berlin election campaign.

Giffey's popularity was rated significantly lower than that of her predecessor in the run-up to the election. Only 36% of respondents supported her in a (virtual) direct election for mayor, against 53% in 2016 for Müller. However, her main opponents Kai Wegner (CDU) and Bettina Jarasch (Greens) were still significantly less popular than her, with 17% and 12% respectively (Infratest dimap 2021b).

Parallel to the elections to the House of Representatives, the elections to the German Bundestag, elections to Berlin's district councils and the (non-binding) petition for a referendum "Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co." took place on 26 September 2021. The initiative calls for the expropriation of large housing companies and the socialisation of their flats in order to counteract the rise in rents. However, there are doubts about the constitutionality of the plan; the "rent cap" passed by the Senate in 2020 already failed in 2021 due to a ruling by the Federal

a • Electoral mobility. The first table represents net flows between parties, the second represents gross flows between all party pairs. Example readings: the SPD gained 7,000 voters at the expense of the CDU between 2016 and 2021 (first table, -7); 63% of SPD voters in 2016 voted for the SPD in 2021 (second table, 63%).

Nettowanderung (Tsd.) Flux électoraux (milliers) Voter mobility (thousands)	SPD	CDU	Linke	Grüne	AfD	FDP	Sonstige Autres Others	Nichtw. Abst. Non-v.	N/V*	Z/W**
SPD		-7	-13	17	-8	4	3	-45	11	-4
CDU			-9	3	-24	0	0	-30	17	-6
Linke				9	-7	1	3	-24	4	-5
Grüne					-2	-2	3	-26	-11	-30
AfD						3	16	-6	16	16
FDP							2	-10	-1	-3
Sonstige Autres Others								-37	-7	1
Nichtwähler Abstention Non-voters									6	36

*N/V = Neuwähler/Verstorbene | Néo-votants/Décès | New voters/Deceased
**Z/W = Zu-/Wegzug | Arrivées/Départs | Arrived/Left

Wählerwanderung Flux électoraux bruts Crude voter mobility	SPD	CDU	Linke	Grüne	AfD	FDP	Sonstige Autres Others	Nichtw. Abst. Non-v.	Verst. Décès Decsd.	Wegzug Départs Left	SPD +Linke +Grüne	CDU +FDP	Total (k)
SPD	53%	7%	4%	11%	0%	3%	3%	3%	8%	9%	68%	10%	351
CDU	11%	56%	1%	4%	2%	6%	3%	2%	8%	8%	15%	62%	288
Linke	10%	4%	25%	34%	0%	1%	6%	2%	8%	9%	69%	5%	256
Grüne	8%	3%	32%	31%	0%	1%	7%	2%	4%	11%	71%	4%	248
AfD	4%	13%	3%	1%	49%	3%	8%	2%	8%	8%	9%	16%	232
FDP	5%	15%	2%	4%	5%	45%	6%	2%	8%	8%	11%	60%	110
Sonstige Autres Others	4%	5%	9%	9%	2%	3%	47%	4%	4%	13%	22%	9%	152
Nichtwähler Abstention Non-voters	6%	4%	3%	4%	1%	1%	5%	57%	6%	11%	13%	6%	849
Neuwähler Néo-votants New voters	13%	5%	12%	16%	1%	7%	10%	36%	0%	0%	41%	13%	135
Zuzug Arrivées Arrived	15%	12%	12%	24%	1%	5%	8%	24%	0%	0%	50%	17%	245
SPD+Linke+Grüne	27%	5%	18%	24%	0%	2%	5%	2%	7%	10%	69%	7%	855
CDU+FDP	9%	45%	1%	4%	3%	17%	4%	2%	8%	8%	14%	61%	398

Constitutional Court (BVerfG 2021). The Left, (GUE/NGL), the Greens (Greens/EFA) and Young Socialists supported the proposal; the SPD, CDU and FDP rejected it. The issue of housing shortage, which has long been the focus of Berlin state politics anyway, thus came even more to the fore.

However, housing was not the only issue of the election campaign. In election day polls, the issues of environment and climate (20%), social security (17%) and economy and labour (16%) were even mentioned more often than housing (15%) as the most important issue of the election (Infratest dimap 2021b).

With regards to climate policy, the SPD advertised a “social-green deal” and aimed for complete climate neutrality by 2050. The Left Party and the CDU named 2040, the Greens 2035 as the time horizon. The Greens were the only party to propose making the inner city a zero-emissions zone by 2030. The centre-right parties and the AfD, for their part, mainly favoured more green spaces and better renovated buildings.

In the areas of economy and social affairs, the SPD demanded an increase of the state minimum wage to 13€, the CDU a reduction of the trade tax, and the FDP bureaucracy reduction as well as easing the legal burden for business founders. The Left Party, on the other hand, proposed the establishment of a public industrial holding company. The SPD sought a further development of the pilot project “Solidarity Basic Income” for the long-term unemployed, the Greens a new pilot project for an unconditional basic income. The AfD campaigned for a “welfare state brake,” bureaucracy reduction and more public investment.¹

1. For the election programmes see SPD (2021), Greens (2021), CDU (2021), Die

As of 2018, the Greens in particular were dominant in the polls. Only with the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic did the CDU experience a surge in popularity, which, however, subsided again in 2021. The Greens became the strongest force again until the SPD overtook them mid-2021. This dynamic coincided with a similar development at the federal level, which was favoured in particular by the high popularity of the SPD’s federal top candidate, Olaf Scholz (Schmitt-Beck 2021).

An unusually high number of irregularities were reported on election day. The state election director reported “delays in sending absentee ballots”, “wrong or missing ballots”, “interruption of the voting process”, long waiting times and late closures affecting 9% of Berlin polling stations (RND 2021). The state election administration, the federal election administrator as well as about 30 private persons filed objections (Merkur 2021). At the beginning of February, the Berlin Constitutional Court sent out the relevant letters of objection to 740 parties involved. They have until the end of March 2022 to submit their comments (Berlin 2022).

Analysis of the results

On 26 September 2021, the incumbent red-red-green coalition was confirmed in office. Its overall vote share increased slightly compared to 2016, from 52% to 53% of the second votes; the SPD remained the strongest force in the House of Representatives. Unlike at the federal level, however, there can hardly be any talk of a social democratic election victory. Within the centre-left camp,

Linke (2021), AfD (2021), FDP (2021).

	SPD	CDU	Linke	Grüne	AfD	FDP
18-24	11%	8%	19%	24%	5%	11%
25-34	12%	9%	18%	28%	5%	8%
35-44	15%	12%	15%	26%	10%	6%
45-59	20%	19%	11%	20%	10%	8%
60-69	26%	25%	13%	13%	9%	6%
70+	38%	28%	12%	8%	5%	6%
Arbeiter Ouvrier Workers	20%	13%	10%	12%	17%	8%
Angestellte Employés Employees	16%	15%	14%	25%	8%	7%
Selbstständige Indép. Self-employed	15%	20%	10%	24%	5%	12%
Rentner Retraités Pensioners	36%	27%	13%	7%	8%	5%
Einfache Bild. Éduc. élém. Basic ed.	34%	17%	14%	4%	15%	7%
Hohe Bild. Éduc. avancée Higher ed.	19%	16%	16%	26%	5%	8%
Männer Hommes Men	21%	19%	14%	18%	9%	8%
Frauen Femmes Women	23%	17%	14%	21%	6%	6%

there was a clear shift in favour of the Greens. While the Greens achieved their best result ever (18.9%, +3.7 percentage points [pp]), the SPD suffered a slight (21.4%, -0.2 pp) and the Left Party a moderate (14.0%, -1.6 pp) decline in its share of the vote. The Greens celebrated a symbolic victory in addition to the arithmetic one, overtaking both the CDU and the Left Party to become Berlin's second strongest force. With 21.4%, the SPD recorded the worst result for a state election winner in the history of the Federal Republic.

The centre-right camp had been at a historically low level in 2016 (CDU: 17.6%, FDP: 6.7%). In 2021 it made only modest gains: the CDU won 18.1% of the vote (+0.5 pp), the FDP 7.2% (+0.5 pp).

The AfD was the only major party to lose massively, losing almost 40% of its electorate and coming in at just 8.0% (-6.2 pp) – a development common to all state elections of the year, but most pronounced in Berlin. None of the other parties that stood in the election were able to clear the five-percent hurdle. More than one percent of the second votes went to the Tierschutzpartei (2.2%, +0.3 pp), the PARTEI (1.8%, -0.1 pp), the “Querdenker” party dieBasis (1.3%, new), the Euro-federalist Volt (Greens/EFA, 1.1%, new), and Team Todenhöfer (1.0%, new). The effective number of parties (Laakso & Taagepera 1979), which quantifies the fragmentation of the party system, was 6.81 (2016: 6.63); this only moderate increase is mainly due to the low electoral shares of new parties.

At 75.7% (+8.8 pp), voter turnout reached its highest level since 1995. The fact that the Berlin election was held at the same time as the Bundestag election for the first time since 1990 probably contributed significantly to this unusually high turnout. This effect was also clearly evident in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, where elections were held on the same day.

Finally, the referendum “Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen and Co.” was passed with 59.1% of the vote (turnout: 73.5%). According to polls, however, only a minority of Berliners (35%) demand that expropriation be implemented as called for by the initiative committee, while a larger group (48%) would like to see other measures. It seems likely that many voters supported the initiative primarily because of its signal effect (Infratest Dimap 2021b).

Voter mobility

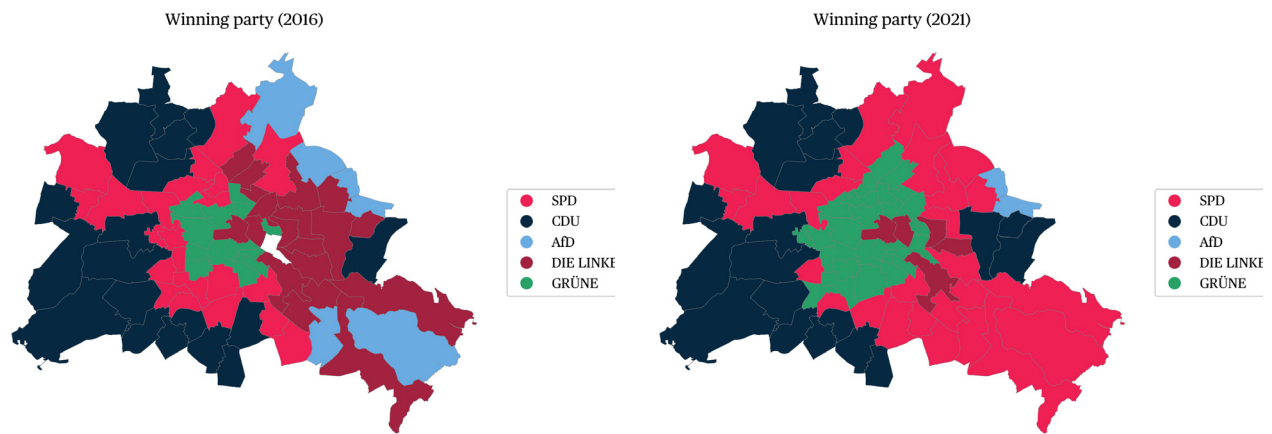
The analysis of voter mobility² allows deeper insights into Berlin's electoral dynamics. We will explain four major trends, namely a) the high volatility within the centre-left electorate, b) the particular success of the Greens among first-time voters and those who moved to Berlin, c) the major influence of the voting behaviour of former non-voters on the final result, and d) the migration of many AfD voters to the centre-right camp, but also to new protest parties.

a) Berlin's centre-left voters who neither died nor moved away since 2016 remained 83% loyal to the coalition. Their binding rate is thus clearly higher than that of the centre-right parties (73%) and the AfD (58%). However, this stability vis-à-vis non-coalition parties was accompanied by strong instability within the coalition. Only 64% of former SPD voters supported the same party in 2021, against 37% and 30% of Greens and Left voters, respectively. A remarkable “voter exchange” took place between the Left and the Greens: more Left (42%) and Green (38%) voters switched to the other party than there were voters who re-elected “their” party. The Greens were the main beneficiaries of this internal realignment, while the Left Party lost most of its votes to its coalition partners.

b) The reason for the Greens' success can also be found outside the coalition. Of all the parties, they had the most success among first-time voters and newcomers to Berlin. Among new voters they got 25% of the votes (SPD: 20%, Left: 18%), among newcomers even 31% (SPD: 19%, CDU: 16%). Since the latter group is three times as large as the former, its net contribution is significantly higher: the Greens gained 30,000 voters through internal migration, but only about 11,000 through generational change (deaths and first time voters). This corresponds to about 1.6% and 0.6% of the votes cast, respectively.

c) The sudden increase in voter turnout mainly benefited the SPD and CDU. Of the 700,000 former non-voters who cast their ballots, 26% voted for the SPD, 16% for the CDU, 14% for the Greens and 13% for the Left. A high proportion (20%, about 43,000 people) supported other par-

2. We use the estimates of Infratest dimap (2021b)..



ties. The offer of the unconventional party dieBasis and the Freie Wähler, which is particularly aimed at “people who are disillusioned with politics” (*Politikverdrossene*, see Arzheimer 2013) and critics of the Coronavirus measures, could explain part of this tendency.

d) Over 50% of the voters who voted for the AfD in 2016 voted differently or not at all in 2021. About 8% of them have died, another 8% have moved away. About one in five AfD voters still living in Berlin switched to the centre-right camp, one in ten to the other parties; only 2% did not vote. The AfD's decline is thus not a sign of demobilisation of the AfD electorate in the sense of an increased tendency to abstain; rather, it results from the combined effect of demographic change (-32000 net votes), voter migration to the centre-right parties (-27000) and the success of other (protest) parties (-16000).

Socio-demographic analysis

As in all other German elections in 2021, there was a clear correlation between the voting ratio and generational affiliation. With the over-sixties the SPD and CDU dominated, while younger generations voted above average for the Green Party. A specific feature of Berlin is the popularity of the Left Party among younger voters. In 2021, the Left Party was even able to improve its results in younger age groups.

Generational patterns provide a partial explanation for the “voter exchange” between the Left Party and the Greens described above, which should, however, be confirmed by further data. The migration from Green to Red could be mainly due to younger voters who were looking for a left-wing alternative to the Greens in this election, while at the same time many older Left voters switched to the Greens.

Clear patterns also emerge with regard to occupational groups and education levels. For example, the AfD is the second strongest force among workers with 17% (self-employed: 5%). The Green electorate consists almost exclusively of people with higher education (proportion with “basic education”: 4%), while people with “basic education” vote disproportionately for the SPD (34%) and AfD (15%).

The relationship between gender and party choice is much more balanced. Only for the AfD (men: 9%, women: 6%) and the FDP (men: 8%, women: 6%) does the difference between the parties' percentage vote shares among female and male voters exceed 25% of their total vote share. While women were still significantly overrepresented among the Green electorate in 2016 (difference: 4 pp, i.e. 25% of a total of 15.2%), in 2021 the difference has almost halved (difference: 3 pp, i.e. 16% of a total of 18.9%).

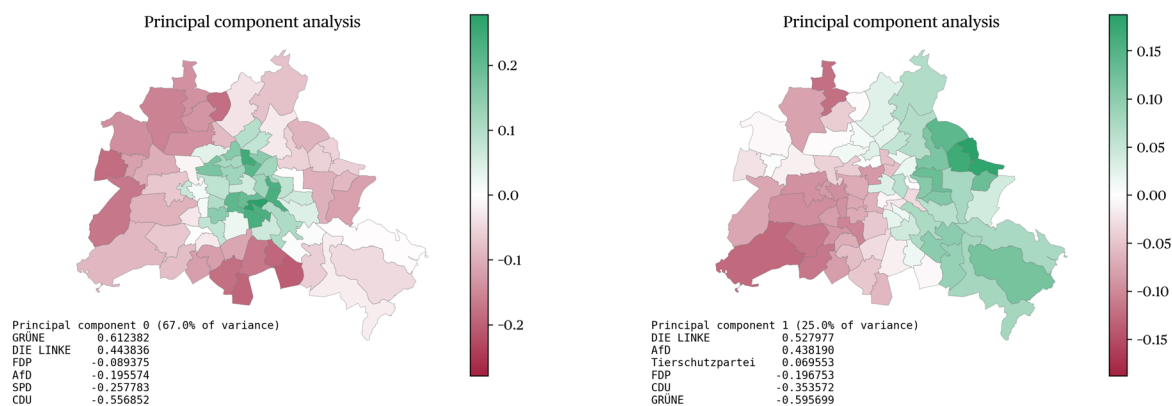
Geographical analysis

Of the 78 direct mandates in Berlin, the SPD won 26, the Greens 23, the CDU 21, the Left Party 6 and the AfD 2. Clear geographical patterns can be discerned: the Greens won most of their direct mandates in Berlin's inner city, the Left Party east of the inner city, and the AfD in eastern Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The CDU's strongholds are on the western, northern and north-eastern periphery, while the SPD dominates in a ring between the centre and periphery and in the south-east. In 2016, the majority ratios were still different: The Greens won significantly fewer constituencies, while most constituencies in the eastern part of the city were dominated by the Left Party or the AfD.

A principal component analysis of the results reveals two different trends. On the one hand, there is disproportionate green and left-wing voting in the inner city. This is mainly at the expense of the CDU, but also the SPD, the AfD and the FDP. On the other hand, there is still a East-West division, which in many places still corresponds to the former course of the Wall: in the East, the Left and AfD are represented above average; in the West, it is the Greens, CDU and FDP. The exception in this respect are four centrally located constituencies (in Mitte, Friedrichshain and Prenzlauer Berg), which despite their “eastern” location show a clearly “western” voting behaviour.

A cluster analysis confirms the three-way division of political Berlin into a western, an eastern and a central part. In the western cluster, the CDU dominates with 28%, followed by the SPD with 25%. In the eastern cluster, the SPD is in the lead with 21%, second is the Left Party with

d • Principal component analysis: first component (left, Greens + Left against CDU + SPD + AfD + FDP); second component (right, Left + AfD against Greens + CDU + FDP)



18%. In the central cluster, consisting of most constituencies in the inner city and some neighbouring areas, the Greens dominate with 28%, followed by the Left with 20% and the SPD with 18%. The Berlin government has an absolute majority mainly in the inner city and in parts of Treptow-Köpenick. Thus it can be said without exaggeration that in Berlin the centre rules over the periphery.

Aftermath

After about ten days of exploratory talks, Giffey declared on 14 October her wish to continue the previous red-red-green coalition (Spiegel 2021b). The coalition agreement was presented on 29 November 2021 (Coalition Agreement 2021), adopted by all three parties in December, and on 21 December Giffey was elected and sworn in as Governing Mayor of Berlin in the plenum (Zeit 2021). In addition to Giffey, the new senate includes 4 SPD, three Green and three Left senators, including mayors Bettina Jarasch (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and Klaus Lederer (Die Linke). The balance between the parties thus remains unchanged compared to the outgoing Müller II senate.

Behind this supposed stability lies a profound structural change in Berlin politics. The strong momentum of the Greens, who have been able to further expand their electoral share and benefit greatly from demographic change, is evident. This is typical of large Western European cities, as shown, for example, by the French municipal elections in 2020. The FDP and especially the Left Party also do particularly well among younger voters. The former dominance of the SPD, on the other hand, is visibly eroding: in 2021, the SPD was able to save its first place mainly thanks to the votes of older generations, higher voter turnout and other positive contamination effects from the federal level.

In view of the weakness of the centre-right camp and its concentration in peripheral districts, only left-of-centre coalitions (possibly including the FDP) remain conceivable in Berlin. In a highly fragmented party landscape, where party affiliation follows clear geographic and socio-demographic patterns, this development brings new democratic challenges.

On 26 September, the attention of the German and European public was primarily focused on the Bundestag elections. Standing in its shadow, the House of Representatives election had little impact on the political mood beyond Berlin. For the time being. As the decision of the Berlin Constitutional Court in the ongoing election review proceedings is still pending.

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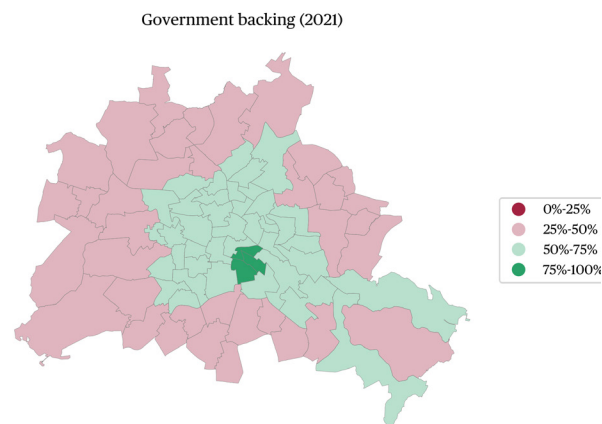
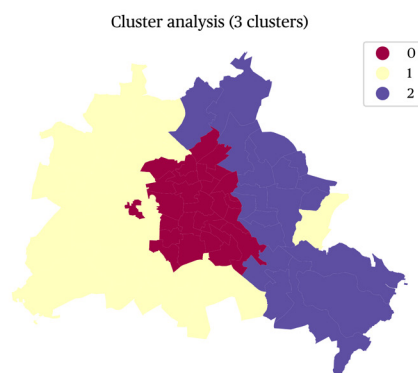
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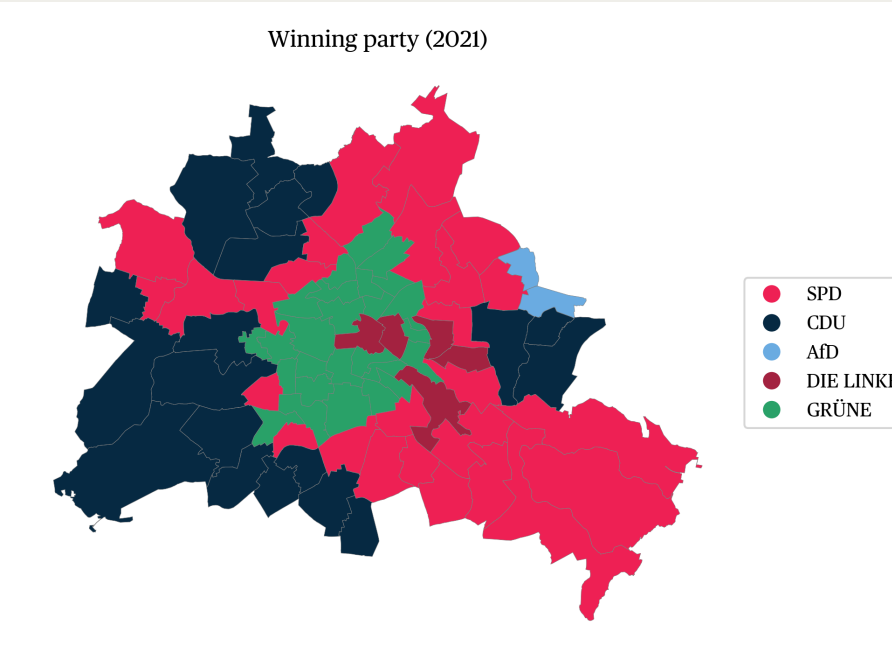
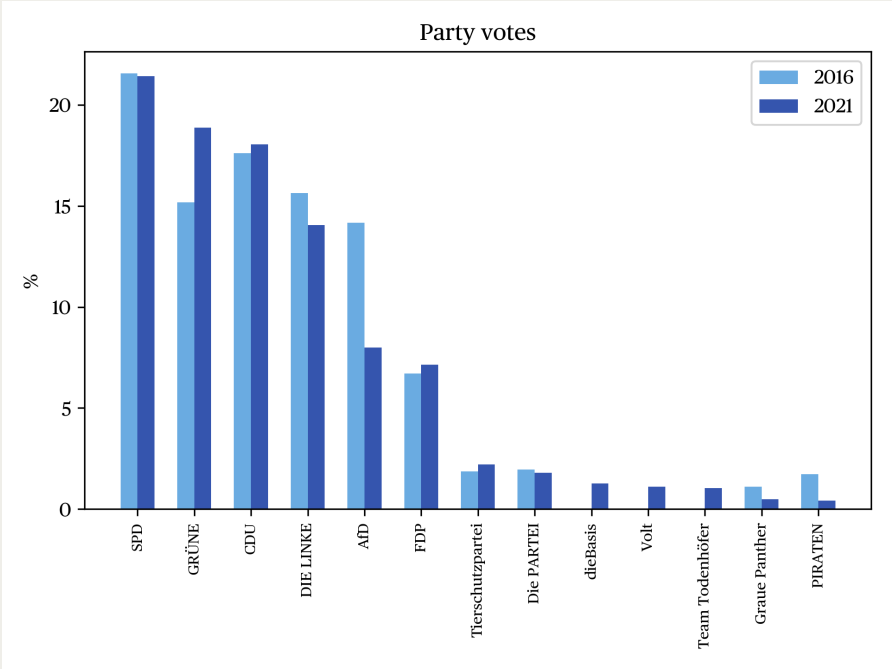
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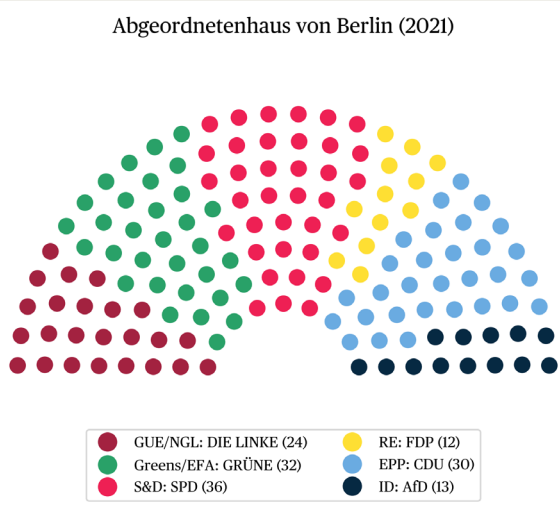
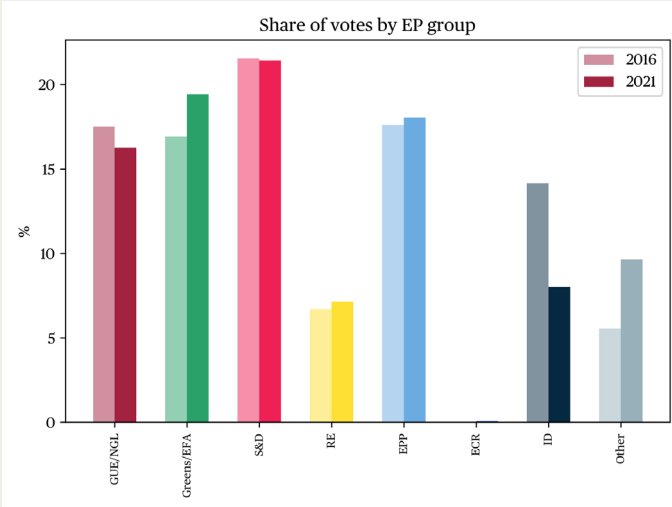
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European indicators





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Parliamentary election in Germany, 26 September 2021

124

Initial situation

The 2021 super-election year was special with regards to several aspects. For the first time in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, the incumbent did not stand for re-election, i.e. there was no candidate who entered the election campaign with a chancellor's bonus. For the first time, there were also three top candidates instead of the usual two; due to the persistent good poll ratings, the German Green Party Bündnis 90/Die Grünen also decided to enter the race with a female top candidate. Three state elections were also held in the 2021 super election year, which were also seen as a mood test for the 2021 federal elections: Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate in March 2021 and Saxony-Anhalt in June.

The following article is divided into three parts. First, the federal elections will be discussed as a "turning point in Germany's electoral history" (Schmitt-Beck 2021: 10). What changes in citizens' voting behavior can be identified? We then take a look at the election campaign strategies and dramaturgies of the individual parties. Lastly, the analysis concludes with possible coalition options. The article provides an overview of the chronology of the most important events and structures them on the basis of the academic literature and the author's assessments.

Fluctuating approval ratings — changes in electoral behavior in the run-up to the election

In electoral sociology, three factors are assumed to determine voting preference: party loyalty (long-term factor), campaign issues, and candidates (both short-term factors) (Schmitt-Beck 2021: 10). Party identification develops during adolescence and early adulthood and is strongly influenced by education, parental home and peer groups. This party attachment is long-term and hardly changes over the course of a lifetime. The bond may

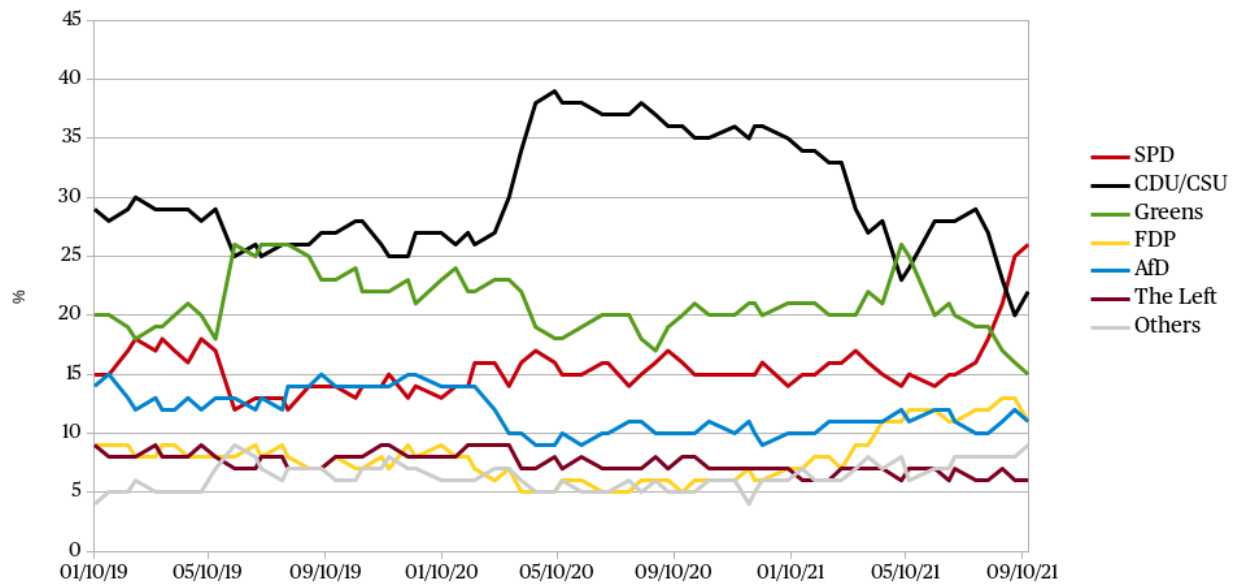
weaken, but rarely turns to the other extreme. Short-term factors, on the other hand, are the elements that change from election to election, namely campaign issues and candidates (Schmitt-Beck 2021: 11). In practice, however, this looks different in many cases – we have been observing a significant decline in party loyalty and a concomitant increase in the volatility of voting behavior for a long time (cf. Arzheimer 2017). In addition, there is a creeping but continuous decline of the mainstream parties and an increasing fragmentation of the party system. This is not a uniquely German phenomenon, but a development that we can observe throughout Europe (cf. Ford & Jennings 2020).

Even though these developments are not new, they correlate with two other important phenomena in Germany. First, the distinctive strength of the Green Party, which even sent a top candidate into the run-up to the Bundestag elections and was considered the most dangerous rival to the Christian Democrats CDU/CSU for an extended period of time (cf. Lees 2021). Second, the nationalist Alternative for Germany (AfD) has established itself in federal politics as a party that no other party would consider as a possible coalition partner. This significantly shifts the overall dynamics of the political system toward a six-party system, in which two parties will rarely be sufficient to form a governing coalition. Thus, finding coalitions is likely to become much more difficult in the future (see Dostal 2021).

With the decline in party ties as a long-term factor, the short-term factors in an election campaign, namely candidates and campaign issues, have become all the more important. Since these usually differ from election to election, their communication, i.e. a party's respective campaign, also becomes more important. Therefore, as we have witnessed repeatedly in the recent past: campaigns do matter! We saw this in the 2016 U.S. election campaign, in the 2017 Brexit referendum, and in the 2021 German

„Sonntagsfrage“ – Party preferences 2019-2021

Source: Infratest dimap



125

election campaign (see, for example, Römmele & Gibson 2020). This is also reflected in the increased role of social media as an important campaign element. This medium is used by both parties and individual candidates to communicate political content and establish personal proximity relationships (cf. Haßler, Kümpel & Keller 2021).

It has been often emphasized that voting behavior has changed significantly due to greater volatility in elections and the perceived complexity of political issues and increasing uncertainties (cf. Schmitt-Beck 2021). This long-term development poses a particular challenge to parties and candidates in election campaigns. The graph below showing a comparison of the Sunday polls from January 2019 to September 2021 illustrates just how unstable voter's opinions have been. Despite supposedly constant support for the individual parties, unusually rapid jumps within the poll results are apparent.

In this context, we saw the CDU/CSU on a constant course below 30 percent in 2019 – the signs of wear and tear after 15 years in government, a weak party leader (Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer) who could not unite the party behind her and a party that was facing massive competition from the AfD, especially in eastern Germany, are visible (cf. Pesthy, Mader & Schoen 2021). Similar swings, albeit in a positive direction, could be seen among the Greens in 2019. The two party leaders, Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck, succeeded in uniting the party and putting it back on course for the government. The increasingly pressing climate policy challenges put the Greens' core issue at the top of the political agenda – tailwind in polling heaven. A party that garnered just 8.6% of the vote in the 2017 federal election is starting to dream of the chancellorship (see also Lees 2021). In contrast, there were fewer swings in 2019 for the other parties. The Social Democrats (SPD) were trailing behind,

sometimes slightly above the 15% mark, sometimes slightly below. The left-wing party leaders, Saskia Esken and Norbert Walter-Borjans, managed to bring the party into calmer waters, but this did not yield an increase in the poll ratings. The FDP and the Left Party were also relatively constant at around 10% and the AfD was holding steady between 14-15% in 2019.

The pandemic changed the picture quite radically: under Angela Merkel's crisis-tested leadership in the first and second Covid waves (until mid-March 2021), the CDU/CSU experienced a poll high of nearly 40%. Crises are the watchword of the executive, but the executive must also deliver. And that is what Angela Merkel and her team were doing in the first as well as second pandemic waves. People trusted her, she struck the right note as a natural scientist and enjoyed great popularity in her 16th year as chancellor. The Greens fell back again and settled around 20%. Almost silently, the SPD elected its candidate for chancellor, Olaf Scholz, vice chancellor and finance minister of the grand coalition, in August 2020, the first pandemic summer. This was hardly newsworthy; some observers even feared that the SPD could fall below the 10% mark.

While everything was running smoothly (unusually for the SPD), however, rifts were breaking open in the CDU/CSU. With the resignation of party chairwoman Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, the battle for the party leadership and thus also for the chancellor candidacy in the CDU/CSU had begun. Three candidates stood for election. In a runoff election, Armin Laschet, then Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia, won against Friedrich Merz. While Laschet, in winning the party chairmanship, assumed that he had first dibs on the chancellor's candidacy, in Munich, CSU Chairman and Bavarian Prime Minister Markus Söder prepared to take over. He was a good and

strict Covid crisis manager, always campaigned for sharp and consistent measures together with the chancellor and thus also earned the position of *primus-inter-pares* in the ministerial presidency. Söder suddenly enjoyed a high level of popularity, far beyond Bavaria, and challenged Armin Laschet. The tug-of-war over the chancellor candidacy in the CDU/CSU dragged on for 3-4 weeks in the spring of 2022 and brought the worst conceivable start for the CDU/CSU in the super election year. Laschet was elected by the party executive in a brute cloak-and-dagger action, against Söder's high approval rating in the party. Söder thus lost out as the "candidate of the heart" and made Armin Laschet feel this during the election campaign.

Campaign strategy

But let's look at the parties' election campaign strategies. The SPD proclaimed its candidate for chancellor, Olaf Scholz, early on and rallied the entire party behind him. No divisions, no discord. The ones responsible, Lars Klingbeil and Wolfgang Schmidt, relied on the vice chancellor's experience and government expertise and skillfully presented Olaf Scholz as Merkel's natural successor. He was the real incumbent in this Bundestag election campaign. Scholz radiated confidence, took part in the crisis management in the first and second Covid waves, and was thus able to score, with his past experience and successes, as a quasi-incumbent. For the CDU this made him difficult to attack (see Schmitt-Beck 2021). As for the SPD, this was the strategic masterstroke of their campaign.

The CDU got off to a false start to the election campaign with their personnel quarrels and also relied on the wrong strategy. The CDU election campaign was focused on Armin Laschet as the incumbent, a candidate who has government experience as minister president of Germany's most populous state. The opponent was to be Annalena Baerbock, the young Green Party chairwoman, who also openly admitted that she lacked precisely this experience but had the fresh new look that was needed. Only in recent months has it become clear that the decisive opponent was not Annalena Baerbock, but Olaf Scholz. And in this duel, Laschet was the challenger, a role that he did not slip into and that did not suit him. This became more than clear, especially in the TV debates. In addition to this strategic misjudgment and misplanning, the chancellor candidate also made a crucial mistake: due to the flood disaster in the Ahr Valley in western Germany (the Ahr Valley is located in Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia), Armin Laschet was forced to engage in crisis management in his own "Bundesland". This was actually an opportunity for the candidate chancellor – as part of the executive, you can always score points in crises (see also Dostal 2021). However, he made a momentous mistake: during a speech by the Federal President in the Ahr Valley, Armin Laschet could be seen in the background joking and laughing with his team. This insensitivity and unprofessionalism stuck with him and,

in retrospect, was a turning point in the CDU/CSU election campaign.

The Christian Democrats also lacked support from within their own party. Some state associations would have preferred Markus Söder to be their candidate for chancellor and nearly refused to follow Armin Laschet. The chancellor election machine, which used to function so well, had come to a standstill. Even Angela Merkel's half-hearted support two weeks before the election date arrived too late.

The Greens also struggled during the election campaign. While Annalena Baerbock's election as the first female candidate for chancellor was still a magnificent staging of the party and briefly led the Greens at a polling high (see Lees 2021), the chancellor candidate's own mistakes – unnecessarily embellished resume, plagiarism in a book published during the campaign – quickly brought the Greens back well below the 20% mark in the polls. The female candidate could not get rid of this stigma during her entire election campaign. Although the core issue of the Greens, climate change and environmental protection, was more dominant than ever, it was also overshadowed by the flood disaster in the Ahr Valley and the ongoing Covid crisis (cf. Venghaus, Henseleit & Belka 2022).

To understand the election campaign and the very good result of the Liberal Party (FDP), one has to take a closer look at its role in the last two years. First, the FDP has played a very visible constructive opposition role in the Corona crisis. They have repeatedly raised the issue of civil liberties in times of lockdown and thus also revived the brand essence of the liberal party. In doing so, they were no longer perceived merely as an economically liberal party, but also as a civil rights party. Second, the FDP had already put digitization on the political agenda as a key issue in the 2017 election campaign, and the pandemic made this even more urgent (see Merten 2021).

The AfD had several problems in their election campaign: as a party that vehemently opposed the admission of refugees in 2017, it had simply lost their core campaign issue in 2021. Furthermore, there were and still are internal party disputes that hurt the party. Moreover, being the party of anti-vaccinationists did not do themselves any favor during the pandemic either. Nevertheless, they still have their supporters and strength in eastern Germany, where they are a strong regional party (see Pesthy, Mader & Schoen 2021)

Election result

In the weeks leading up to the election, a neck-and-neck race between the SPD and the CDU/CSU emerged – which the SPD won with a 1.6% lead. The CDU/CSU achieved their worst result, falling at 24.1%. The Greens were both pleased and disappointed. Although they gained 5.8 percentage points and ended up in third place with 14.8%, they fell well short of their goal of the "chancellorship". Once again, the Greens experienced that polls are not

votes. The FDP made slight gains, AfD and the Left lost significantly – but without question: the loser of the election night was the Christian Democrats. Several reasons can be cited for this: (1) The top candidate was a burden in the election campaign and was at no time uncontroversial. (2) The Christian Democrats failed to retain the votes that elected Angela Merkel (and not CDU) in 2017. (3) The CDU/CSU realized too late that the SPD's strategy of taking the incumbency bonus with Olaf Scholz would be most dangerous to the CDU.

The Greens and FDP scored particularly well with first-time voters. In each case, 23% of first-time voters chose either the FDP or the Greens.

Coalition options

With the huge weakening of the mainstream parties SPD and CDU/CSU, it had been clear for some time that, with a certain degree of probability, a three-party alliance would form the next government – the traffic light (SPD, FDP, Greens) was discussed, as was a possible Jamaica coalition. The latter was, after all, already negotiated unsuccessfully in 2017 between the CDU/CSU, FDP and the Greens, however it failed after tough exploratory talks with the FDP. In the weeks before the election, rumors were already circulating in Berlin's political environment that the FDP and the Greens would meet to discuss who among them would become chancellor. After all, it was clear that there would hardly be a government without these two parties, even if a renewed "Grand Coalition" would have been mathematically possible.

This was exactly what was confirmed in the days after the election: after the historic loss of the CDU/CSU, it quickly became clear that a coalition with the big election loser would not be possible. Moreover, the CDU virtually imploded: the candidate for chancellor, Armin Laschet, resigned from the party chairmanship, the search for a new party leader began, and it soon became evident that the CDU was not fit to govern in this state. Therefore the SPD, FDP and the Greens promptly began exploratory and then coalition negotiations. As early as December 8, 2021, Olaf Scholz was elected as the fourth Social Democratic Chancellor after Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt and Gerhard Schröder.

The new coalition now presents itself as a progressive government that wants to launch far-reaching and forward-looking projects and transformations. The tasks are enormous. But because of the greatly altered balance

of power between the parties, the government's work will be characterized by a three-party alliance in which each party wants to set its own priorities. These are in part very different. This complication was already evident during coalition negotiations, in which the FDP in particular, despite being the smallest partner, was able to achieve several concessions. The Greens in particular could possibly have much to lose here.

This analysis of the federal election has also been published in German in the l'IDS-Jahrbuch 2021 of the Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache.

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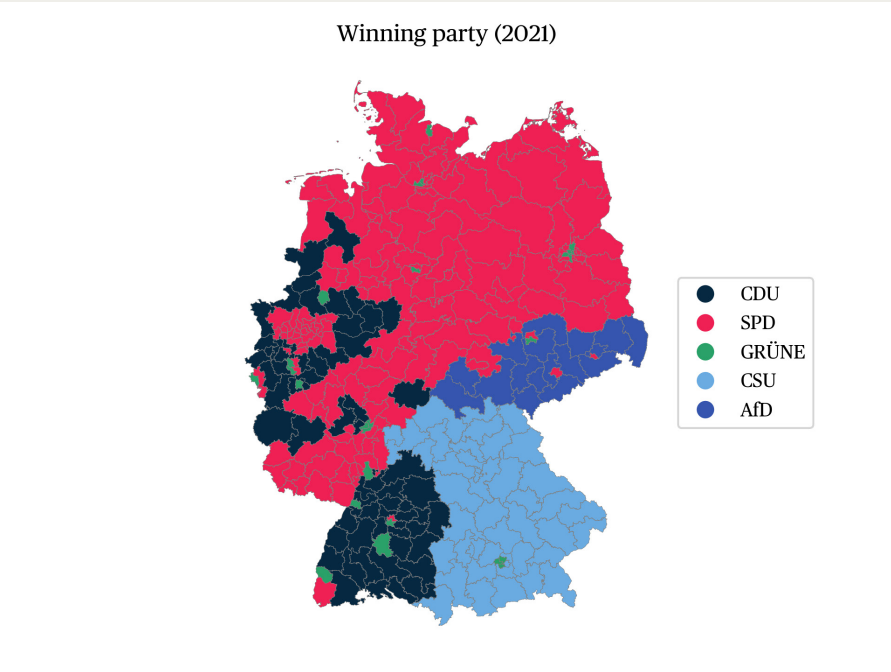
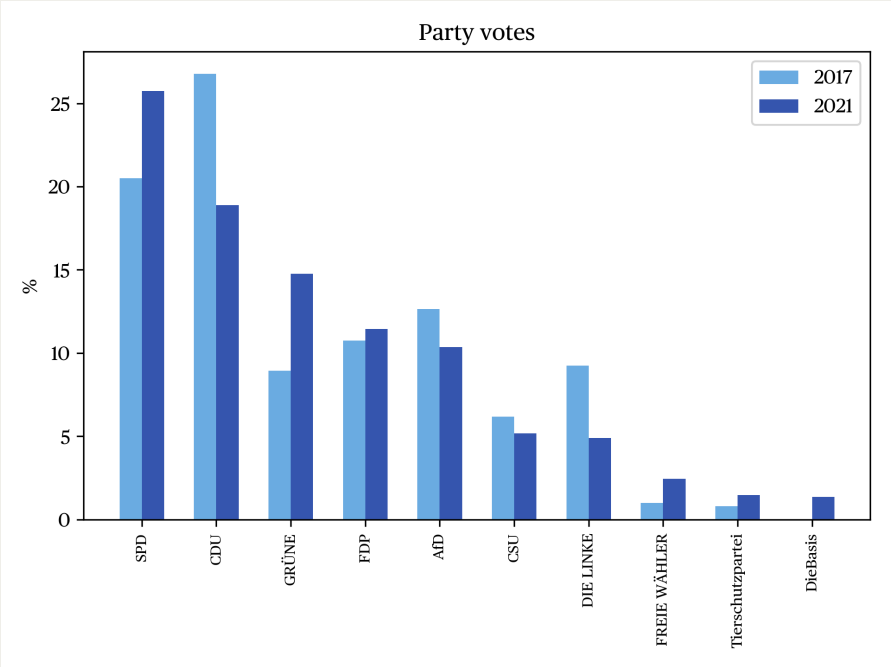
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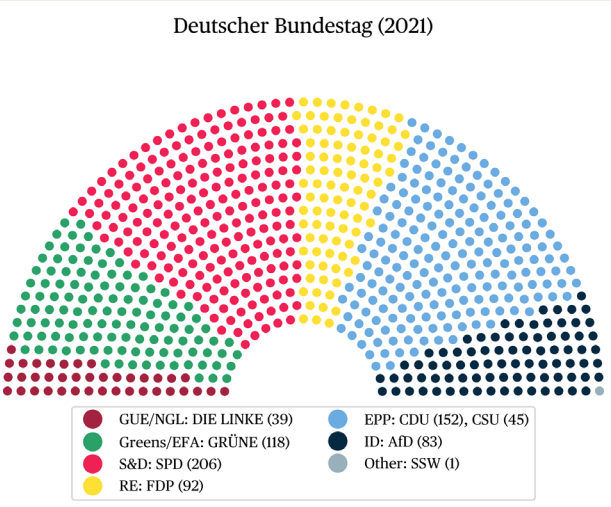
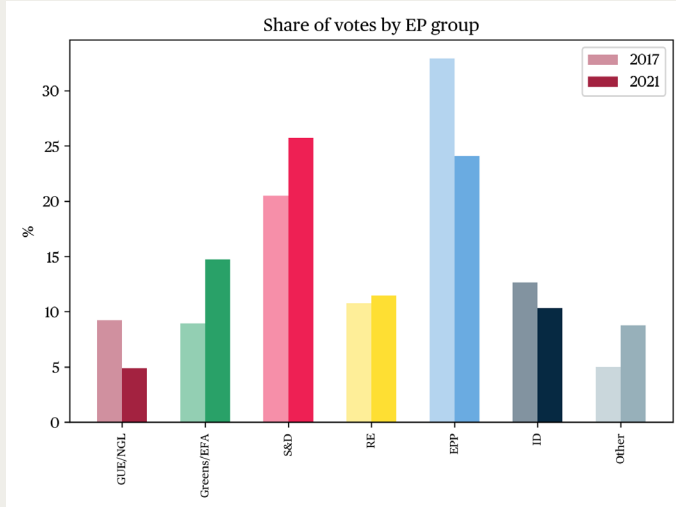
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European indicators





Regional election in Upper Austria, 26 September 2021

The context of the state election

The last two state elections in Upper Austria in 2015 and 2021 took place under very different contextual conditions. While the 2015 Landtag election happened during the large refugee movement, the Covid-19 pandemic marked the 2021 election, which impacted the election campaign. Parties' and their candidates traditional ("analogue") campaign events could only be held with significant restrictions and with limited attendance. The pandemic, especially the question of how to deal with non-vaccinated people, led to a certain polarisation in the Upper Austrian society, as according to a survey 22% of citizens show no interest in Covid vaccination (ORF 2021). Especially younger, less formally educated people as well as women reject vaccination for various reasons. At the time of the state election, Upper Austria was at the bottom of the list among the Austrian regions with a vaccination rate of 59% of the total (vaccine-eligible) population.¹

Federal political trends also played a certain role. In Vienna, a federal government consisting of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Greens under Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP) had taken office at the beginning of 2020. After initial support, the federal government's measures to combat Covid-19 met with increasingly fierce criticism from the parliamentary opposition formed by the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) and the New Austria Party (NEOS). Moreover, as the pandemic went on, the acceptance of these measures declined steadily in the Austrian population (Research Affairs 2021). Around two weeks before the state election, the federal government decided on gradual tightening measures in view of rising Covid-19 infections, and ten days before the election, the Federal Minister of Health (Greens) imposed temporary

exit controls for the Upper Austrian district of Braunau, justified by high local incidences. It could not be clearly predicted how these restrictive measures by the federal government would affect voting behaviour in Upper Austria. Voters could express their displeasure with the new restrictions imposed by the federal government or, on the contrary, their acceptance of them in the elections.

The Upper Austrian electoral and governmental system marks another important parameter for the Landtag election (Dachs 2006 : 1012 *sqq.*). In principle, proportional representation applies, with a 4 %² clause that favours larger parties and makes it more difficult for small parties to enter the parliament. There is no direct election of the regional governor (Landeshauptmann), who is elected by the state parliament with an absolute majority for a six-year term. Upper Austria is one of the last Bundesländer in Austria to have a proportional representation government, in which the larger parties are represented according to their share of the vote in the elections.³ Within this proportional representation government with four parties, two parties form a coalition and agree on a government programme for the six-year legislative period.

Since 1945, Upper Austria has been dominated by the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), which has also appointed the governor without interruption. The long-time Governor, Dr. Josef Pühringer, had handed over his office to Thomas Stelzer during the recent legislative period in order to enable his successor to build up a trust bonus. Governor Stelzer, who has been in office since April 2017, was able to inspire confidence in his work through his calm and objective demeanour. Satisfaction with the work of the regional government (79 %, January 2021) and with the activities of Governor Stelzer (80 %, January 2021) was

1. Official data of the state of Upper-Austria, 26 September 2021.

2. Oberösterreichische Landesverfassung, art. 17(2), Oberösterreichische Landeswahlordnung, § 65.

3. Oberösterreichische Landesverfassung, art. 43(2).

at a relatively high level. According to a Spectra survey of July 2021, 73 % of the Upper Austrians surveyed had a 'good opinion' of the governor. (Nachrichten 2021). Thus, Stelzer would have won a fictitious direct election of the state governor with a respectable lead of up to 37 % points over the runner-up.

The ÖVP dominates the regional parliament and government, thus overshadowing the other parties. For decades, the SPÖ was the 'eternal runner-up' however, since losing votes in the 2015 state elections, it has become the third-strongest political force. The Greens have been represented in parliament without interruption since 1997 and have many years of experience in government in Upper Austria, as they formed a coalition with the ÖVP between 2003 and 2015. The FPÖ achieved its best result in history in the 2015 state election in the wake of the refugee wave, replacing the SPÖ as the second strongest party and providing the ÖVP's junior partner in a joint government for the past six years. During this phase, the leaders of the Upper Austrian FPÖ mostly acted in a statesmanlike manner and refrained from pointed right-wing populist rhetoric. However, there was a risk that the Upper Austrian FPÖ would fall into the downward trend in the state elections that had gripped the federal party and some FPÖ regional parties since 2019 (including in the Vienna state and municipal elections in 2020). In addition to the 'Ibiza video', the expenses affair of former FPÖ federal party leader H.C. Strache had also contributed to a loss in voter favour.

The election campaign

In the 2021 state election, a total of 11 parties ran, including six small parties (Liegl 2006 : 402 *sqq.*), not all of which ran in all four constituencies of the state.

The election campaign of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) was strongly personalised and focused primarily on the governor and top candidate, and only secondarily on the issues of migration/asylum, integration and securing the business location (Wiener Zeitung 2021). The SPÖ with top candidate Birgit Gerstorfer concentrated on core social policy issues, such as long-term care, secure pensions, the preservation of jobs or education. The party endeavoured to distinguish itself from the other parties in terms of content (ORF 2021b). The FPÖ with top candidate Dr. Manfred Haimbuchner presented itself as the party of 'order' and 'security' and took restrictive positions on asylum and integration. For tactical reasons, the FPÖ held back on attacks on its coalition partner at the state level, the ÖVP. The FPÖ gave a positive assessment of its own activities in the state government, especially in housing policy (ORF 2021c). The Greens, who ran for the first time with Stefan Kaineder as top candidate, profiled themselves - unsurprisingly - in environmental and climate issues and called for a committed climate policy by the state to achieve "climate neutrality" by 2040. The NEOS, with Felix Eypeltauer as top candidate, on the

other hand, focused on political transparency, control and the abolition of the proportional representation system in order to achieve an explicit separation of government responsibility and opposition role (ORF 2021d). Alongside the FPÖ, a new electoral party has established itself, the MFG ("Menschen-Freiheit-Grundrechte"), which positioned itself more radically on the pro/contra Covid-19 measures dimension. The MFG, for which Joachim Aigner was the top candidate, strongly rejected a Covid-19 vaccination obligation and restrictions (including a lockdown) for non-vaccinated people as an encroachment on fundamental rights and freedoms. The other small parties were not able to make much of a name for themselves in the election campaign, which was due to the lack of resources and the lack of media presence on the public broadcaster ORF (Wiener Zeitung 2021).

A general vaccination obligation or stricter rules for non-vaccinated people were rejected by the parties for tactical electoral considerations. The risk of losing votes to the MFG, whose trenchant and high-profile election campaign explicitly focused on the opponents and sceptics of vaccination, seemed too great (Kleine Zeitung 2021). Only the NEOS, when asked, pleaded for a group-specific compulsory vaccination of nursing and teaching staff, but rejected deductibles for non-vaccinated persons in the statutory health insurance (ORF 2021e).

For voters, the pandemic was the dominant issue of the election campaign. According to the ORF/ISA/SORA election day survey, 46% of respondents said that 'Corona' was the most discussed issue during the election campaign. Other issues, such as 'costs of everyday life' (30 %) 'health care and long-term care' (29 %) or 'jobs and working conditions' (29 %) followed at a respectable distance. 'Environmental and climate protection' (22 %) played only a peripheral role in the debates among the population. The Corona issue was also the most important topic of conversation for the voters of the individual parties, apart from the Greens, whose voters most frequently discussed environmental and climate protection. The pandemic also pushed the question of who the ideal state governor for Upper Austria would be (*Landeshauptmannfrage* or 'state governor question'), which had often been a topic in previous elections, into the background (ORF 2021f).

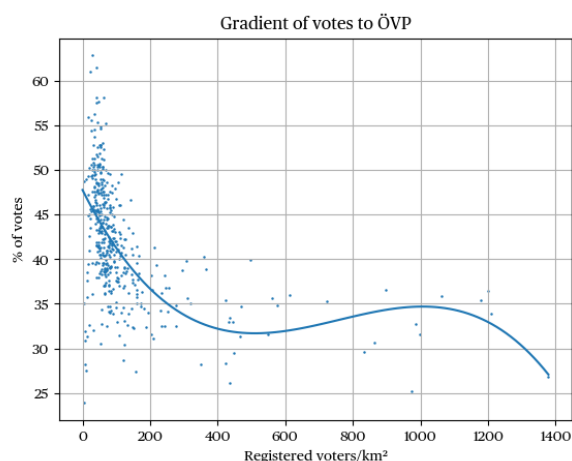
The result and its interpretation

In the state election of 2021, 76.3% of the approximately 1.1 million eligible voters took part. The turnout was thus about 5% lower than in 2015, which can be interpreted as an effect of the Covid-19 pandemic.

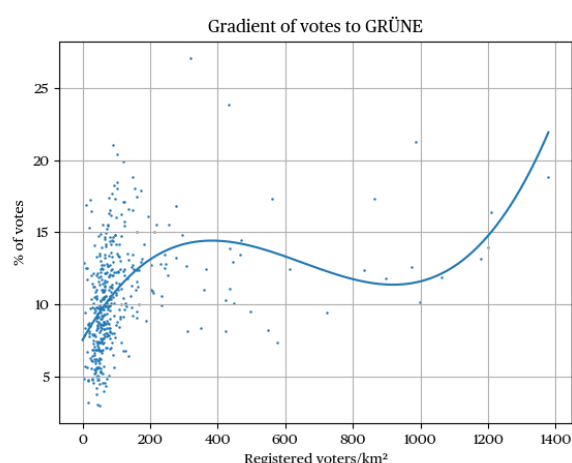
The state election resulted in the following shifts in votes and power between the individual parties (see "the data").

As expected, the ÖVP was the clear winner of the state election, gaining 37.6 % of the votes (and 22 seats in the Landtag). However, the gain compared to the historically worst election result of 2015 was only 1.2 % and was lower

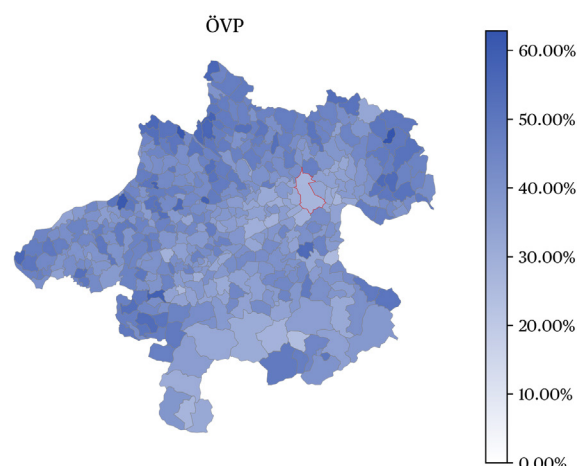
a • Score of the ÖVP at municipal level (ordinate) as a function of population density (abscissa)



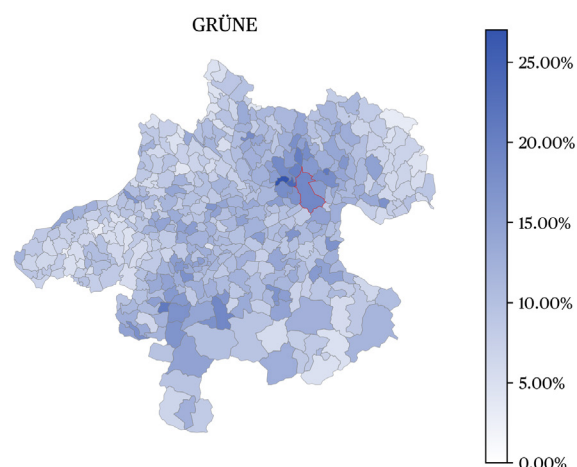
c • Score of the Greens at municipal level (ordinate) as a function of population density (abscissa)



b • Score of the ÖVP at municipal level



d • Score of the Greens at municipal level



than predicted in serious pre-election polls.

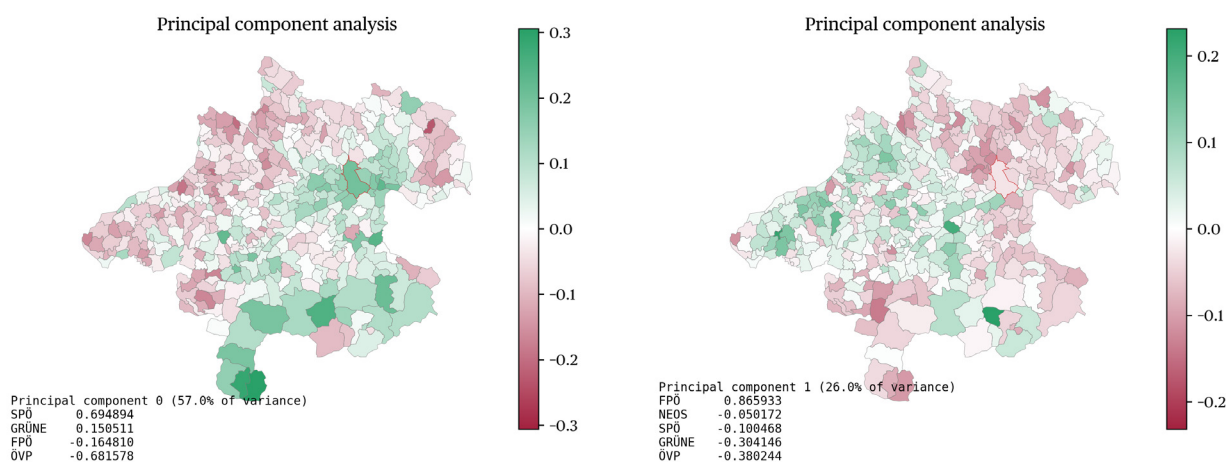
The FPÖ plummeted to 19.7% (11 seats), losing about a third of its 2015 vote, but managed to maintain second place just ahead of the SPÖ. The SPÖ marginally improved on its 2015 result, gaining 11 seats, but fell short of its own election target of at least 20%. The Greens achieved the best result in their history in Upper Austria with 12.3% (7 seats), but the gains remained small.

The NEOS achieved 4.2 % (2 seats) and thus passed the 4 % entry barrier required to enter the state parliament in their second attempt after 2015. The real surprise of the Landtag election, however, was MFG, which won 6.2 % of the electoral votes (3 seats) in its first candidacy. None of the other small parties won enough votes to be represented in the Landtag.

The lower turnout hurt the FPÖ in particular, as nearly 36,000 of its 2015 voters refrained from voting and the party also lost almost 47,000 voters to the ÖVP. The FPÖ also lost about 14,000 voters to the MFG, which also mobilised former ÖVP voters to a significant extent. The Greens were able to improve their result of 2015, in particular by winning former ÖVP and NEOS voters. The NEOS, on the other hand, mainly appealed to voters who had still opted for the ÖVP and SPÖ in 2015. The SPÖ lost to the group of non-voters and was able to win comparatively few voters from the other parties (Greens, ÖVP, NEOS) (OÖ 2021).

An analysis of voting motives underlines again the strong relevance of Covid-19 in the decision for or against a certain party. For FPÖ and MFG voters, the rejection of the current Covid-19 policy and of compulsory vaccination, but also concerns about fundamental rights and freedoms played a prominent role in their voting decision. For SPÖ voters, on the other hand, social policy issues were decisive, and Green supporters named the climate and environmental issue as the most important voting motive (Profil 2021). The Corona issue also clearly eclipsed the importance of the top candidate. Only among ÖVP voters was the top candidate the most important election motive, which speaks for the considerable office bonus of Governor Stelzer and possibly saved the ÖVP from losses. For the voters of the SPÖ, FPÖ, NEOS and the Greens, on the other hand, the respective leading candidate was far less important. For these parties, content-related aspects, i.e. the party and election programmes, came first. It is remarkable that the ÖVP won the election even though it focused its election campaign on issues that corresponded only to a small extent with the central election issues among the population. This speaks for the thesis of personalisation, according to which the personality of the leading candidate was central for ÖVP voters.

In the next step, following a micro-sociological approach, important social characteristics of the voters of



the individual parties will be briefly discussed (Kritzinger 2014 : 192-196). The winner of the election, the ÖVP, was the strongest party among women, the self-employed and pensioners (over 65), while the Greens were most successful among younger voters (under 29) and, surprisingly, among public servants – an occupational group traditionally close to the ÖVP in Upper Austria. The FPÖ prevailed in the group of blue-collar workers, while the SPÖ won only 21% of blue-collar voters. The Greens and NEOS are significantly underrepresented in this group of voters (ORF 2021f).

Geographical trends in voting behaviour

If one analyses the election results of the parties according to geographical criteria, some characteristic patterns emerge (Eberl *et al.* 2020 : 1358): the victorious ÖVP again tended to do better in rural municipalities than in urban areas (Figure a). The ÖVP achieved its best results in rural regions in the north and south-west of Upper Austria and received lower voter support in the state capital Linz and in the south (Figure b). The FPÖ, on the other hand, had its voter strongholds in rural municipalities in the west near the Bavarian border. A principal component analysis shows that 26% of the deviations from the average result of the state election can be attributed to the better performance of the FPÖ in the west and the comparatively weaker performance of the other parties in this part of the state (Figure e, on the right). Unlike the ÖVP and the FPÖ, the Greens (and also the NEOS) registered a higher voter popularity in urban areas than in rural areas (Figure c). A closer look at the municipal results shows that the Greens had strongholds not only in urban areas (especially in Linz and its environs), but also in individual rural municipalities in the north and south (Figure d). The votes for the SPÖ were concentrated – as in the 2015 state election – mainly in Linz and its surroundings as well as in individual municipalities in the south. The good performance of the SPÖ (and the Greens) in these areas corresponds with comparatively weaker results for the other parties (Figure e, on the left). In the south and in the industrially structured central area, the SPÖ has core vo-

ters from the traditional, unionised working-class milieus, but – as in 2015 – was not able to mobilise more strongly away from these traditional SPÖ power centres. The MFG appealed to voters in different parts of the country and was strongest in those municipalities where the Covid-19 vaccination rate of the population is low, i.e. below the Upper Austrian national average (ORF 2021g).

Government formation

During the election campaign, the ÖVP avoided concrete statements on coalitions and left all options open. A possible government with the FPÖ was made conditional on the state FPÖ consistently distancing itself from the right-wing populist line of its federal party (Die Presse 2021). The FPÖ openly campaigned for a continuation of the coalition with the ÖVP, and the Greens also expressed interest in a government with the ÖVP. The SPÖ, on the other hand, did not comment on a possible government participation. Upper Austrian voters did not show a clear preference for a particular government coalition, and ÖVP voters were also split on the coalition question.⁴

Due to the election results, four parties (ÖVP, FPÖ, SPÖ, Greens) are represented in the next state government, while NEOS and MFG, despite their successful entry into the state parliament, did not have enough for a government seat. In accordance with political practice, party talks on a future coalition government began after the official final results of the state elections were available.

As a decisive player in the party system, the Upper Austrian ÖVP had several options for forming coalitions (Müller 2006 : 362). In view of the results of the state elections, coalition governments of the ÖVP with the FPÖ, the SPÖ or the Greens were possible, each of which had different-sized majorities in the state parliament. Two combinations seemed unlikely from the outset. The Greens and the ÖVP have such different ideological positions on important issues such as climate protection, transport, asylum and security policy that a long-term government

4. According to a poll conducted by GMK Meinungsforschung in early September (n=500, variation +/- 5 %), about 35 % preferred an ÖVP-FPÖ coalition, 23 % a government of ÖVP and Greens and 16 % a grand coalition. About the same number of ÖVP voters prefer a government with the FPÖ or with the Greens.

cooperation would be fraught with conflict. Although an ÖVP-SPÖ coalition was supported in principle by the regional Chamber of Commerce and Labour, the SPÖ did not see itself in the role of junior partner (“majority procurer”) of a strong ÖVP.

After brief and non-binding exploratory talks with all parties represented in the state parliament, the party executive of the ÖVP unanimously decided shortly after the state election to start coalition negotiations with the FPÖ, which were finalised after 26 days so that the division of portfolios and the government programme could be presented. (ORF 2021h). The ÖVP-FPÖ government means the prolongation of a functioning partnership and, with 33 of 56 mandates, has a broad majority in the state parliament. On important issues such as asylum, integration, economic and location policy, the ideological distance between the two parties is small, so that compromises between the coalition partners are easier to realise. Another argument in favour of the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition was that the parliamentary election campaign between these two parties was conducted relatively fairly over long stretches. In the future joint government, the power imbalance between the ÖVP as the election winner and the FPÖ as the election loser is more pronounced, which from the ÖVP's point of view spoke in favour of a new edition of this coalition variant. From the perspective of coalition theory (Buzogány & Kropp 2013 : 261-266), the ÖVP-FPÖ government is a minimum-win coalition, characterised by a pronounced asymmetry of power and little ideological distance between the parties involved.

Consequences of the state election

The Landtag election result has no consequences for the next National Council election, as the legislative period will not end until 2024. More important is the effect on the balance of power in the Bundesrat, the second chamber of the Austrian parliament delegated by the Länder. The composition of the Bundesrat depends on the results of the state elections. The losses of the FPÖ in Upper Austria mean that one mandate in the Federal Council changes from the FPÖ to the ÖVP. As a result, the opposition, which consists of the FPÖ, SPÖ and NEOS in the federal government, loses its Bundesrat majority of 31 MPs. It can therefore no longer veto legislation passed by the governing parties, the ÖVP and the Greens, in the National Council. This veto delays the legislative process by a maximum of eight weeks and in the past contributed to a better integration of the opposition parties in parliamentary work. Thus, the election result in Upper Austria also implies a sensitive loss of power for the opposition at the federal level.

Despite their regional character, state elections are also a test of mood for the incumbent federal government and a seismograph for the overall “political atmosphere” in a country (Schakel & Romanova 2018, Schakel & Jeffery 2013). The Upper Austrian election result certainly

did not mean a political tailwind for the federal government of the ÖVP and the Greens. The unexpectedly high gains of the MFG are an expression of the dissatisfaction of parts of the electorate with the Covid-19 measures at federal and state level. To a certain extent, the Upper Austrian state election can thus be interpreted as a - moderate - protest election against the federal and state governments. Against this background, it cannot be ruled out that the outcome of the state election will have an impact on future Covid-19 measures and influence the handling of the sensitive issue of Covid vaccination. The MFG's performance also reflects the loss of trust in politics and its ability to solve complex problems, which has been growing for years (OGM 2021). It would be interesting to observe whether MFG remains an Upper Austrian phenomenon or whether it also runs successfully in local and state elections in other states. The question of the MFG's longer-term political prospects after the end of the Covid 19 pandemic remains of interest.

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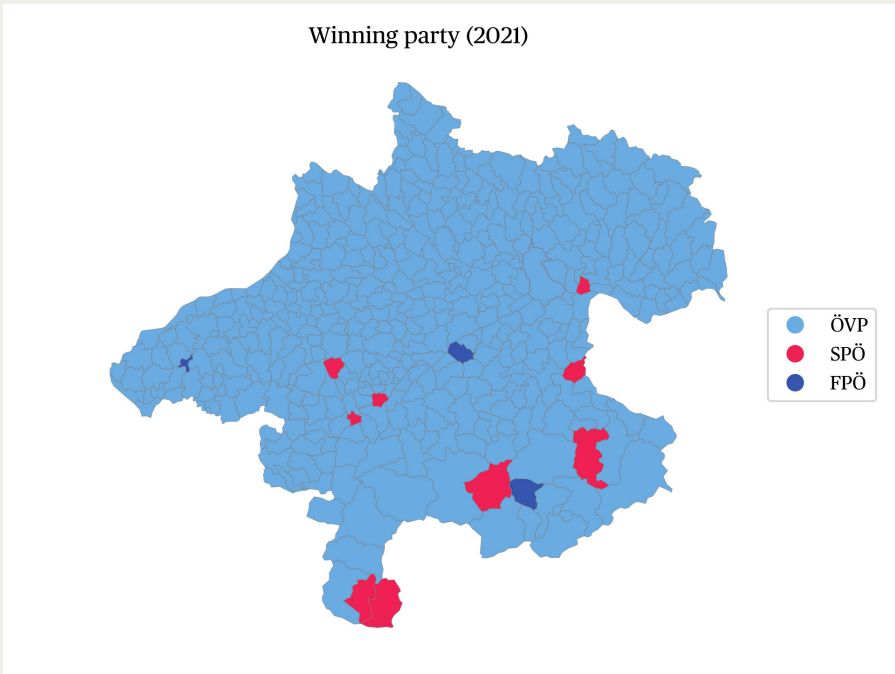
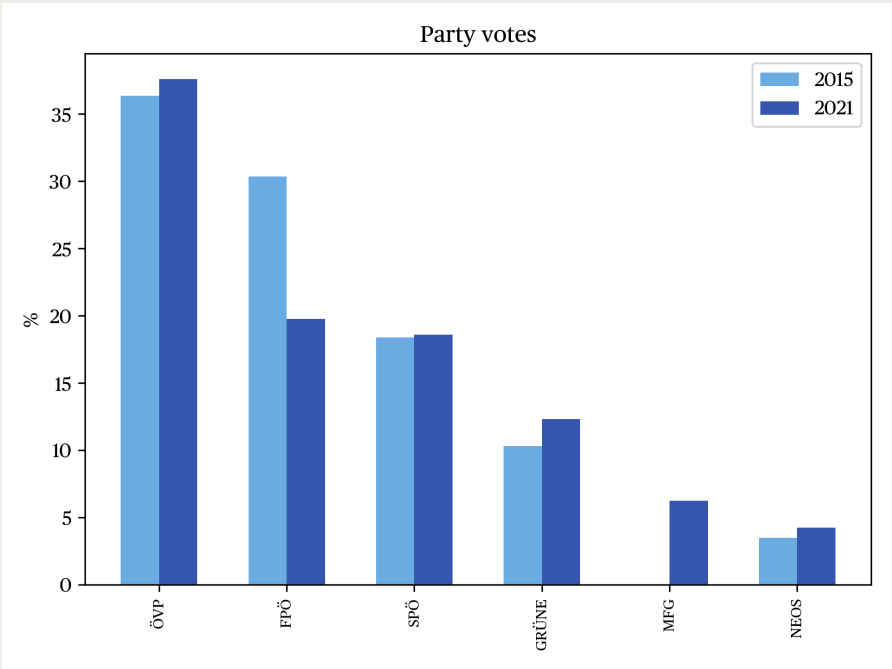
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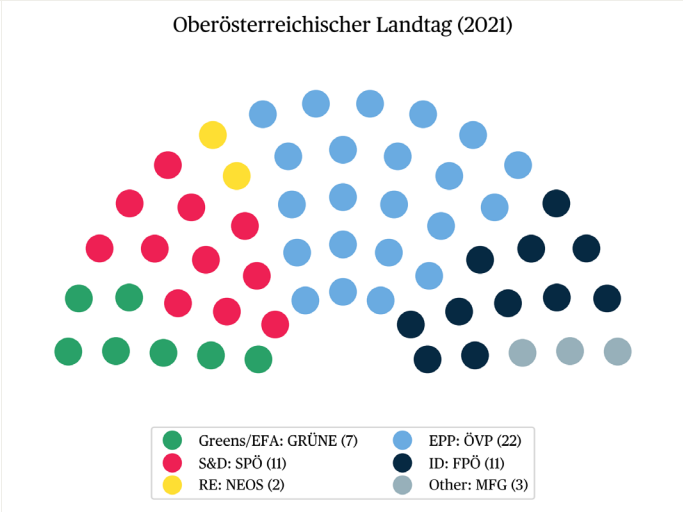
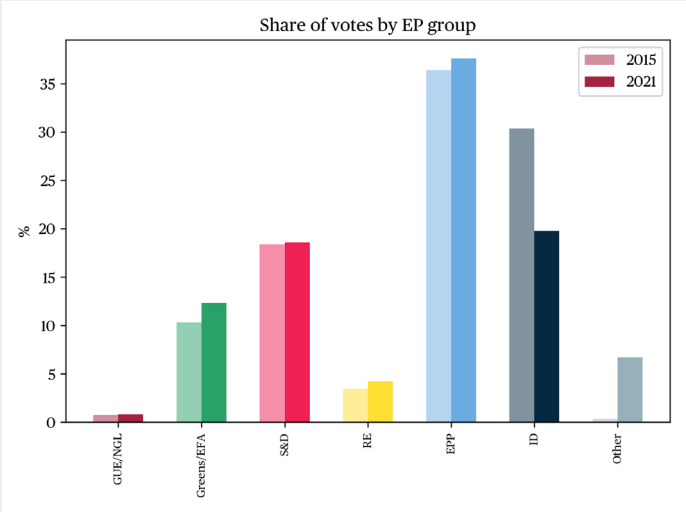
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European indicators





Tomáš Weiss • Univerzita Karlova

Parliamentary election in the Czech Republic, 8-9 October 2021

136

The legislative elections in Czechia on 8-9 October 2021 resulted in a significant political change. ANO (officially ANO 2011; the name derived from Alliance of), the party of the PM Andrej Babiš, came a close second in terms of the popular vote, and even though it won the most mandates, it could not form a majority in the parliament. As a result, a two-coalition, or five-party government under the leadership of Petr Fiala (ODS) took office on 17 December with a comfortable majority of 108 mandates in the 200-seat lower chamber of the Czech parliament. The turnout level of 65.43 per cent was almost 5 percentage points higher than in 2017.

The legislative elections, or the elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech parliament, are the most important elections in the Czech system determining the composition of the national government. The electoral system is proportionate with 14 party lists representing each of the country's 14 regions corresponding to the NUTS3 level. A new election law adopted in 2021 introduced a two-stage allocation process employing the Imperiali and Hagenbach-Bischoff quotas.¹ There is a 5 per cent threshold that parties need to reach nation-wide in order to enter the parliament, which increases to 8 per cent for two-party coalitions and 11 per cent for three- and more party coalitions respectively. The system allows for four preferential votes within the party list with candidates that receive preferential votes of at least 5 per cent of the total votes for the party in the region jumping to the top of the list.

The elections were significant for a couple of reasons that will have short-term and long-term implications for Czech politics. Firstly, several established parties did not surpass the electoral threshold and will not be represented in the lower chamber. Secondly, the number of wasted votes was the highest since 1993, impacting the

political environment. Thirdly, the unification of the liberal opposition into two coalitions has brought about unexpected results.

This short text will address the three points mentioned above and discuss their implications. Next, I will discuss the potential impact of the elections on Czech domestic politics. Finally, I will address the relevance of the election results for the Czech position in the European Union..

The disappearance of the traditional left

Despite its original liberal and business-oriented ethos in 2013 (at the EU level, the party is member of the Renew Europe group), ANO has failed to attract a stable support among young and educated voters and gradually moved to the left. It became the party of the first choice among the older generations to which it had appealed by some of its policy choices and rhetoric. Almost half of the 65+ age group voted for ANO in 2021 (Prokop et al. 2021). The result is the testimony of ANO's good marketing strategy because several of the party's policies, notably the tax reform adopted in late 2020, were adopted with the support of the conservative opposition despite protests of the social democrats, ANO's coalition partners. ANO has not become a standard left-wing party but attracted enough of the left-wing vote, which had significant impact on the overall results and on the fate of several established parties.

From the longer perspective, the main takeaway will be the fact that the communist party (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia; Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy; KSČM) did not manage to gain a single mandate. As a result, one of the last, if not the last unreformed communist party in Central Europe disappeared from national politics. KSČM had relied on older voters and failed to attract the younger generations. Some have argued, therefore, that its demise from national politics was a

1. The former system was proclaimed in violation of the constitution by the Constitutional Court in February 2021 (cf. Antoš and Horák 2021).

matter of time. The ANO's marketing strategy seems to have contributed to the result, however, and sped up the KSČM's decline. Yet, it must have been very disappointing for the party and its representatives. In the previous legislative period, KSČM had found itself closest to power since 1989 because the minority ANO-ČSSD government relied on their support. We can expect KSČM to decline further and not return to national politics even though they will linger at the local level for the years to come.

Social democrats (Czech Social Democratic Party; Česká strana sociálně demokratická; ČSSD) were the second traditional left-wing party that was voted out from the Chamber of Deputies in these elections. Once a major force in Czech politics, the party paid the price for participation in ANO's government. A large part of its electorate left for ANO, and a significant part abstained, having not understood the party's cooperation with the prosecuted oligarch.

In effect, the ANO's success in attracting voters from its potential allies cost Andrej Babiš a government. While ANO lost only very slightly despite having had the governmental responsibility during the pandemic, it did so at the expense of the smaller partners. In the end, ANO managed to maintain the highest number of mandates but squeezed potential allies from the parliament and remained unable to build a majority.

Wasted votes

Czechia has suffered from a very low trust in public institutions, particularly in the government and the parliament (CVVM 2021). The 2021 elections have aggravated the problem because more than 1 million votes, representing almost 20 per cent of all votes, got wasted. Such a high number, unprecedented in recent Czech history, resulted from two parties remaining just under the 5 per cent threshold and a couple of others trailing not far behind.

The high number of wasted votes enabled the two-block coalition to achieve a majority in the parliament and effectively remove Mr Babiš from power. But it also means that the government, despite the solid majority of 108 mandates, received only about 2.3 million of the 5.2 million votes cast. The governmental parties need to attract more voters to win any subsequent elections because keeping the current support may not be enough. *e pas suffire*.

Pre-election coalitions

The 2021 campaign was specific due to the emergence of two larger opposition blocks. The Czech electoral law had provided an advantage to larger political parties since 2001 (Kopecký 2006: 126). Therefore, the opposition composed of many smaller parties spent the 2017-2021 period negotiating the creation of alliances that would compete with ANO in the number of votes and the number of man-

dates derived from the electoral support. The result was the creation of a conservative block Spolu (Together), composed of ODS (Civic Democratic Party; Občanská demokratická strana), TOP 09 (name derived from Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity; Tradice, odpovědnost, prosperita) and KDU-ČSL (Christian and Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party; Křesťanská a demokratická unie - Československá strana lidová) on the one hand and a centrist coalition Piráti a STAN that brought together the Pirate Party (Pirátská strana; Piráti) and the Mayors and Independents (Starostové a nezávislí; STAN) on the other. Although the Constitutional Court repealed the clauses giving edge to bigger parties in February 2021, the two blocks had already invested too much into integration and maintained the cooperation until the elections in October.

While the creation of the two blocks has been a success from the opposition's perspective, it also brought about unexpected problems. The combination of the ANO's negative campaign against the Pirates, who seemed to be the more prominent of the two contestants in early 2021, and the solid regional support of the Mayors and Independents resulted in many of the STAN candidates jumping up on the party lists at the expense of the Pirates due to the preferential votes cast. In the end, only four Pirates were elected – a significant drop from the 22 mandates in the 2017-2021 period – and 33 Mayors (an increase by 27 seats). Having invested twice as much money and effort in the campaign and the election programme, the Pirate Party undertook a vivid internal discussion about the election result and the next steps. One of the key points was that the party would become a liberal outlier in the largely conservative government without the remaining parties being dependent on the Pirates' support in the parliament. Even though the party decided to join the government in the end, nominating three ministers, the result has cast doubt on the long-term cohesion of the two blocks.

Implications for domestic politics

The incoming government of Petr Fiala (ODS), which won the confidence vote on 13 January 2022, four months after the elections, will operate in a slightly different domestic political environment than the government of Mr Babiš (ANO). Firstly, the government has got a comfortable majority in the lower chamber and the Senate at its disposal. Unlike Mr Babiš, who had to negotiate case by case support for his minority government, Mr Fiala will be able to implement his programme relatively quickly as long as he maintains the coalition's cohesion.

The first test for the emerging coalition proved to be negotiation with President Miloš Zeman. Czech presidents occupy a vital role in the Czech constitutional system, which was further strengthened by the introduction of a direct election in 2013 (Novotný 2020). Despite Mr Zeman's pre-election public claims that he would re-appoint Mr Babiš as the prime minister, the cohesion of the five

parties and their conclusion of a coalition agreement just one month after the election day left the president little room for manoeuvre. In the end, the delay in the new government's appointment was caused by Mr Zeman's health issues rather than the need to negotiate for his support.

Maintaining the government's cohesion may prove difficult, however. The current five-party government comprises the highest number of political parties in Czech history. While the effort to oust Mr Babiš from power may have been enough to bring the five parties together, it is by no means a guarantee that they will manage to last the entire four years. The government can be labelled centre-right (Lopatka 2022), but there are significant differences between the parties. The cleavages have been visible between the two blocks and among individual parties within the blocks. A prominent difference concerns social policy where Spolu with the Christian democrats from KDU-ČSL is the more conservative entity, and the Piráti a STAN's commitment to introduce gay marriage may cause significant clashes. Upcoming elections will bring additional pressure on the parties to position themselves before the next parliamentary elections in 2025. In 2022, Czechs will vote in Senate (1/3 of seats) and local elections, in 2023 in presidential elections and the following year in Senate (1/3 of seats), European Parliament and regional elections.

The European dimension

European policy may prove to be one of the major stumbling blocks for the incoming government. While TOP 09, KDU-ČSL and STAN are members of the EPP group in the European Parliament, the Pirates aligned themselves with the Greens-EFA and ODS with the ECR. It is the position of ODS that stands out from the group. Scholars have consistently labelled the party as soft (or even hard) Eurosceptic (cf. Havlík 2011; Kovář 2020). Having nominated the leader of the Spolu block and later the prime minister, however, its reluctance for more integration has already shaped first the programme of Spolu and later of the government. One example may be the question of Eurozone membership, which has featured in the Czech political debate for a long time (Hodulák and Sychra 2021). Despite the support for setting a date for the Eurozone accession and fulfilling all necessary criteria as included in the Piráti a STAN's programme, the government committed to meeting the Maastricht criteria but remained silent about adopting the common currency (Government of the Czech Republic 2022: 5).

Despite the potential disputes, we can expect a significant improvement in the relations between the Czech government and the European institutions, particularly the European Commission and the European Parliament. The departure of Mr Babiš with his conflict of interest in distributing the EU budget in Czechia will clear the air for more constructive cooperation, as will be required by the

upcoming Czech Presidency in the EU Council. Czechia will also distance itself slightly from Hungary and Poland and look for other allies in the EU. However, no radical break should be expected because parts of ODS maintain good relations with the two countries' representatives, notably Poland's Law and Justice party and because the long-established working relations within the Visegrád Group will continue at the lower levels where the interests of the countries align.

Conclusion

To sum up, the legislative elections of 2021 changed the political landscape in Czechia significantly. In the long term, the demise of the communist party will be the most important takeaway. But in the short- and middle-term, we can expect more constructive cooperation between the Czech government and the European institutions, a smooth passing of laws, and a more mainstream political communication that was the case during the Babiš years. However, the new government will struggle to maintain cohesion due to the high number of participating parties and differences in their positions. The continuous election campaign will heighten the pressure at various levels and fuel the need to appeal to the large share of disappointed voters whose votes got wasted in 2021.

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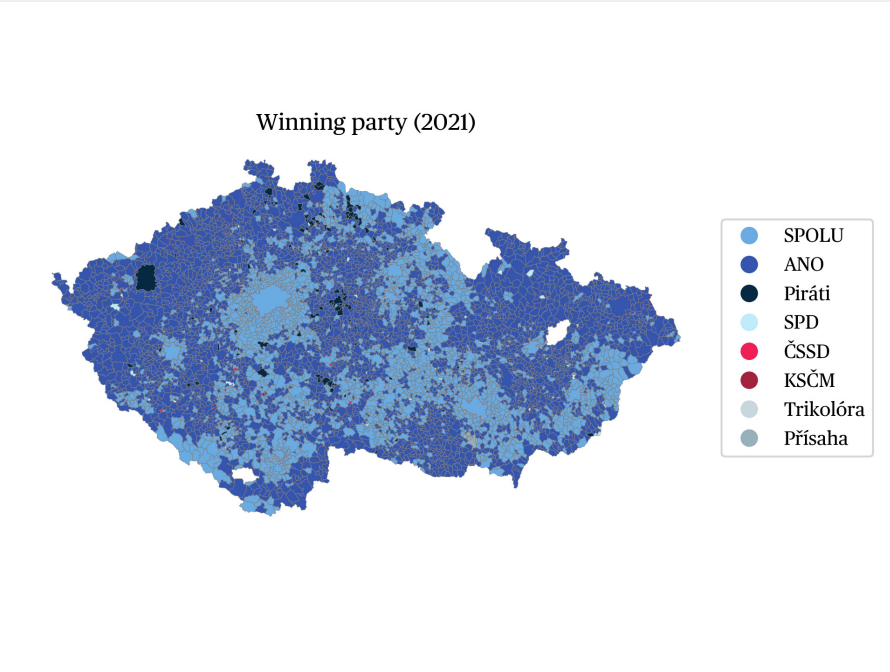
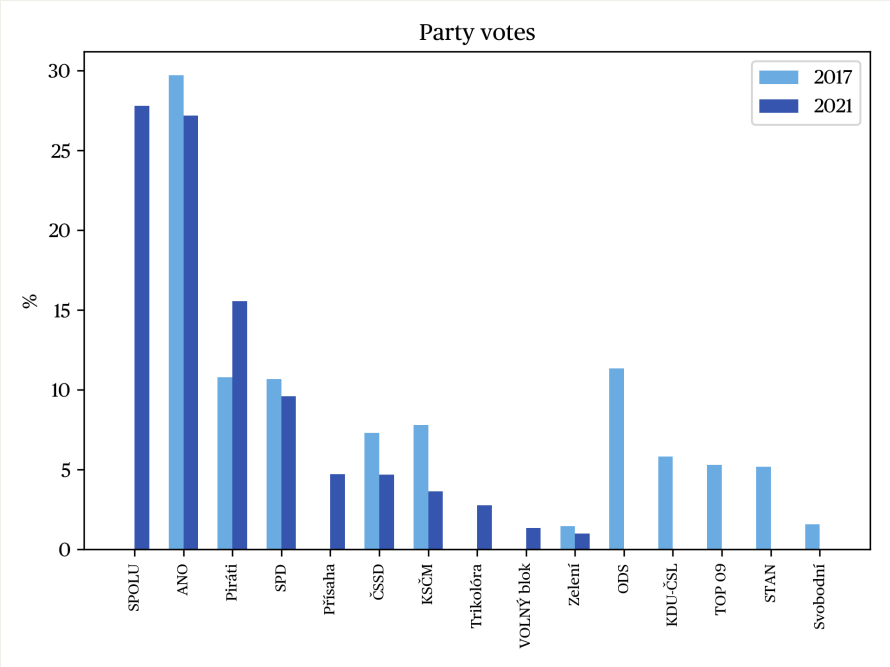
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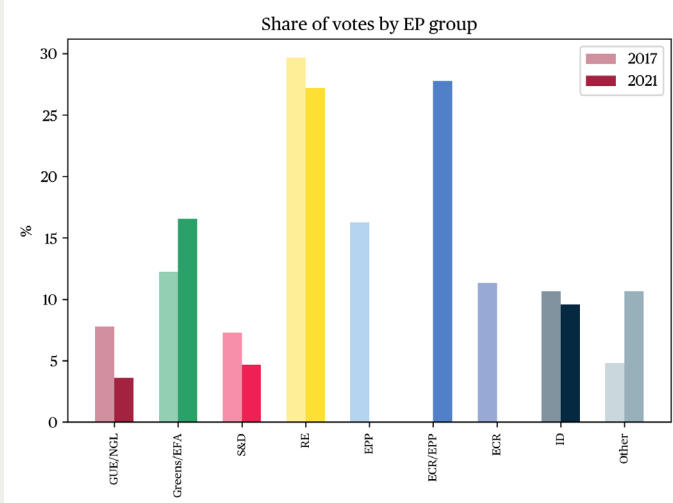
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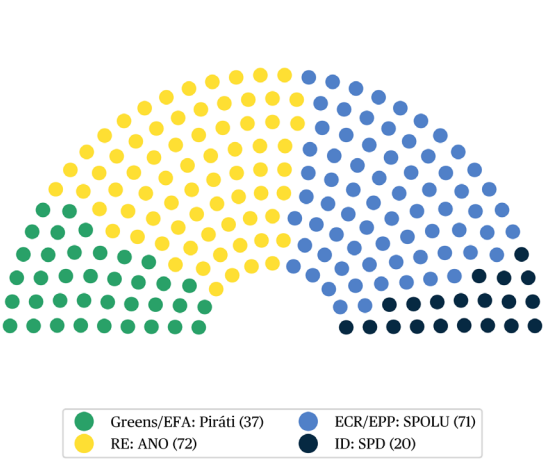
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European indicators



Poslanecká sněmovna Parlamentu České republiky (2021)





Regional and municipal elections in Denmark, 16 November 2021

On November 16, 2021, local elections were held in all of the 98 municipalities and the five regions of Denmark. The electoral cycle is fixed with municipal and regional elections held simultaneously every fourth year on the third Tuesday of November (see also Kjær 2020a, 2020b). The 2021 elections were held in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and although special measures were introduced around the voting procedure, the turnout decreased slightly. As for the electoral results, the swings in national politics seems to have had a larger-than-usual impact on the local elections.

The context

The current structure of local governments was created by a major reform in 2007 amalgamating 275 municipalities into 98 and 14 regions into five. Local governments in Denmark are quite important, with municipalities responsible for approximately half the public expenditures (48% in 2020) and regions responsible for one quarter (25% in 2020). In a country with a large public sector, this also means that the local governments' budget accounts for a third of the GDP of Denmark. The municipalities are truly multi-purpose, with a task portfolio including as diverse a set of tasks as primary schools, elderly care, child care, social care, housing, planning, employment initiatives, cultural activities, parks, water, sewage and waste management. The regions are primarily responsible for health care and run the hospitals.

On election day, voters are handed over two ballots when they go to the pollings stations (of which there are 1,383) – a white-coloured one for the municipal election and a yellow-coloured for the regional election. And Danes vote. At the municipal elections the participation rate was as high as 67,2% and at the regional elections 67,0%. And this was even a decrease compared to the latest local elections of 2017, where 70,8% and 70,7%, res-

pectively, cast a vote. For comparison, the turnout was 84,5% at the latest parliamentary election (June 5, 2019) and 66,0% at the latest elections for the European Parliament (May 26, 2019). It should be noticed that the number of COVID-19 cases in Denmark rose very significantly during the last week before the elections and, therefore, the decreasing turnout might have been a result of this. Measures were taken to have voters show up at the polling stations even though they were nervous about the COVID-19 situation: for instance, voters were allowed to bring their own pencil to mark the ballot with, instead of using the one available in the polling booth (which is normally the only option accepted). Moreover, voters infected with COVID-19 could vote from their car and did not have to enter the polling station. The media did what they could to get a high turnout – in Denmark local elections and the local candidates are covered very extensively by the national, regional and local media (for instance, the two major national TV networks broadcast live all night on election day), and this coverage is not in decline, almost the opposite.

The results

The local party systems in Denmark are truly multi-party systems and also quite nationalized – the many political parties running and getting elected in parliamentary politics are also contesting each other in most municipalities and regions. The entry barriers to run at municipal elections are quite low (only signatures from 25 voters are required), and therefore non-partisan lists are also running in most municipalities. However, many of the parties running have an official "designated letter" which means that they can run under the same label in all municipalities and regions where they run, namely the official letter and name of their nationwide party. The

a • Aggregated result of the 2021 municipal and regional elections (compared to the last local election in 2017 and national election)

	Votes%		Mayors		Votes%		Mayors		Votes%
	2017	2021	2017	2021	2017	2021	2017	2021	2019
A.Social Democrats	32.4	28.4	47	44	30.4	28.0	4	3	25.9
B.Social Liberal Party	4.6	5.6	1	1	5.1	6.1	0	0	8.6
C.The Conservative People's Party	8.8	15.3	8	14	6.9	14.1	0	0	6.6
D.The New Right	0.9	3.6	0	0	1.2	4.0	0	0	2.4
F.Socialist People's Party	5.7	7.6	1	2	7.3	7.4	0	0	7.7
G.Vegan Party	-	0.2	-	0	-	0.4	0	0	-
I.Liberal Alliance	2.6	1.4	0	1	3.1	1.6	0	0	2.3
K.Christian Democrats	-	0.8	-	0	-	1.2	0	0	1.7
O.Danish People's Party	8.8	4.1	1	0	9.7	4.2	0	0	8.7
S.Schleswig Party	0.3	0.3	0	1	0.2	-	-	-	-
V.Venstre	23.1	21.2	37	34	24.2	23.0	1	2	23.4
Ø.Red-Green Alliance	6.0	7.3	0	0	6.3	7.7	0	0	6.9
Å.The Alternative	2.9	0.7	1	0	2.7	0.7	0	0	3.0
Others	3.9	3.5	2	1	2.9	1.6	0	0	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0	98	98	100.0	100.0	5	5	100.0

Note: *The results of an opinion poll conducted right before the elections asking respondents what they would vote in a parliamentary election if "one was held tomorrow" publicized by Berlingske Barometer.

Source: Statistics Denmark (local elections 2017 and parliamentary elections 2019), TV2 (local elections 2021), Berlingske barometer 14.11.21 (parliamentary election poll 2021) and The Danish Mayoral Archive (mayoralities 2017 and 2021).

parties which are allowed to run at the parliamentary elections have such a designated letter – at the time of the 2021 local elections, this amounted to twelve parties (supplemented with the German minority party which is designated the letter S in the part of Denmark bordering Germany). As can be seen from Table 1, the nationwide parties dominated the municipal and regional elections (with 96 and 97% of the votes, respectively). The local lists are weak in almost all municipalities and totally absent in the largest cities. There is no formal threshold to pass to get represented, but with the number of seats at the councils varying from 9 to 31 (55 in the capital of Copenhagen), the natural threshold is quite high – in an average municipality with 25 seats, it takes 4% of the votes to get represented. Each of the Regional Assemblies have 41 seats, and therefore the natural threshold is slightly lower here.

Table 1 also demonstrates that the two parties traditionally dominating local politics in Denmark – the Social Democrats and the Liberal Party – were very present and popular also this time. They are the biggest parties and usually win the lion’s share of the municipal and regional mayoralities (as well the Mayor in the municipalities as the Chairman of the Regional Assembly in the regions is indirectly elected by and among the councillors). However, as can also be seen from Figure a, the Conservative People’s Party had a very good election, almost doubling their vote share and their number of municipal mayors – an increase which very much confirmed the success of the party in the national opinion polls. So, in Denmark – as it has been labelled – “two-and-a-half parties rule within a multi-party system” (Kjaer 2022).

However, the most pronounced electoral change was the defeat experienced by the Danish People’s Party.

This populist, somewhat right-wing, party which at the 2015 general election became the largest party of the opposition, had a very tough election. Their vote share decreased in all municipalities and regions: the party won only 91 seats across municipalities, down from 223 in 2017 and six seats across regions down from 21 in 2017. As a result, the chairman of the party, Kristian Thulesen Dahl, declared right after the local elections that he, as a consequence of the result, would step down as party leader. Never before have local elections in Denmark had such consequences for the national leadership of a party.

As for the two major parties, Social Democrats and Liberal Party, both of them experienced a decrease in electoral support. However, just months before the elections, Social Democrats were doing rather well in the national polls, while the Liberal Party was performing quite badly (a situation which changed in the last months before the local elections). Therefore, in relative terms Social Democrats were having a worse election result than expected, while the Liberal Party was probably relieved that they got away with a relatively small electoral defeat (and for instance keeping most of their mayoralities). In each of the four biggest municipalities (Copenhagen, Aarhus, Aalborg and Odense), however, the loss of the Social Democrats was as big as around 10 percentage points, which not only came as a surprise to most pundits but also hit the Social Democrats hard, since in these cities they have historically almost monopolized power. Even though they kept the mayoralty in all four cities, not least the electoral defeat in the capital of Copenhagen was sensational, since Social Democrats is no longer the largest party – a position which is now held by the extreme left party Red-Green Alliance.

The dramas

As could be expected when 103 elections (98 municipal and five regional) are held on the same day, electoral dramas occur. At the 2021 local elections, a number of government coalition formation processes were difficult, with the name of the mayor changing a few times in the weeks from the elections to the first meeting of the council where the mayor is formally selected. However, the biggest headlines of the 2021 elections were probably made in three other municipalities:

- In Kolding municipality, the former foreign minister of Denmark ran for his party Socialist People's Party challenging the mayoral party Liberal Party, who (therefore?) ended up running former minister of agriculture, Eva Kjer Hansen. Much attention was paid to this "presidential campaign", not least by the nationwide media. It then turned out that neither party won an absolute majority and in the process of finding a mayor, the frontrunner from the Conservative People's Party, Knud Erik Langhoff, turned out to be the best negotiator and to much surprise, and almost out of nowhere, became the new mayor.
- In Holbæk municipality, Christina Krzyrosiak Hansen from the Social Democrats became the youngest mayor in Denmark when she at the age of 24 took office after the 2017 elections. Some commentators pointed to her young age and lack of experience as a problem, but they were proved wrong at the 2021 elections – no less than 46% of the voters cast a preferential vote for her (and this was by far the highest percentage across the 98 municipalities).
- In Frederiksberg municipality, which is the 7th-largest municipality in Denmark and located within the borders of Copenhagen, the Conservative People's Party lost the mayoralty. This was quite a defeat since Frederiksberg is the quintessential conservative municipality and has been a conservative stronghold for many years. In fact, this was the first election in 112 years where the

Conservatives did not conquer the mayoralty: the mayoralty it went to a Social Democrat.

Of course other municipalities would claim that their electoral result was also outstanding, but this was to mention the most obvious. Across the municipalities and regions different patterns can also be observed. For instance, 103 women got elected to the regional councils compared to 102 men, which means that for the first time ever, women are more than half of the regional councillors (also at the municipal level, a record-high number of women were elected, but here it was a more modest 36%). It should be noticed that there are no formal gender quotas in Denmark.

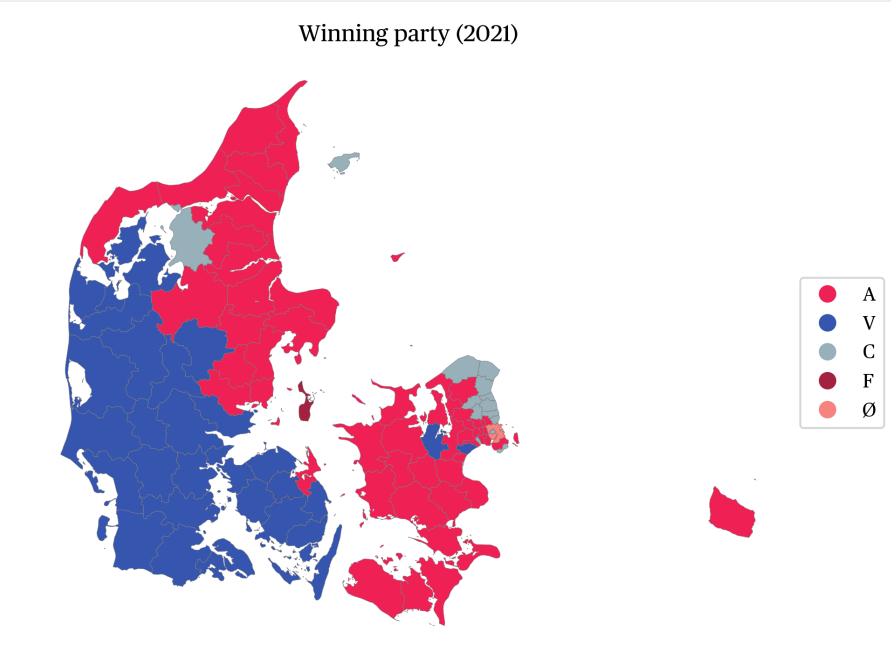
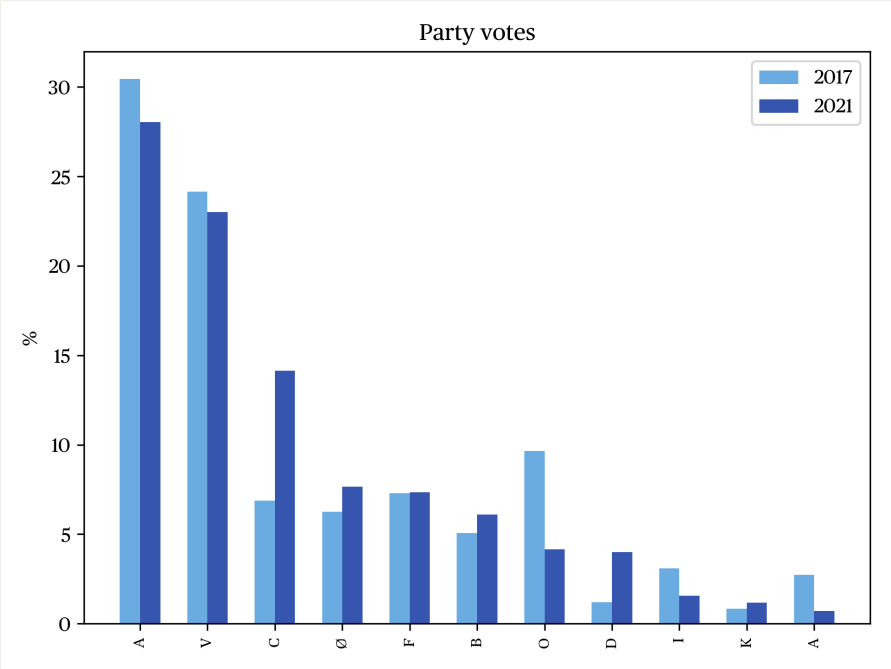
However, more analyses are needed of the elections to point out more patterns. These analyses will be conducted in the coming months and years when the electoral statistics are published and not least when the results from the survey from the Danish Local Election Study is made available. However, as a first conclusion it should be assessed that the 2021 local elections were more mid-term elections than what is usually seen in Denmark. Several of the nationwide parties had something at stake, and the national swings seems to have been more important for the local electoral results than usually. The spectacular stepping down of Kristian Thulesen Dahl as party chairman of Danish People's Party is a case in point, since the end of his tenure was a result of how the party soldiers in the 98 municipalities and five regions performed.

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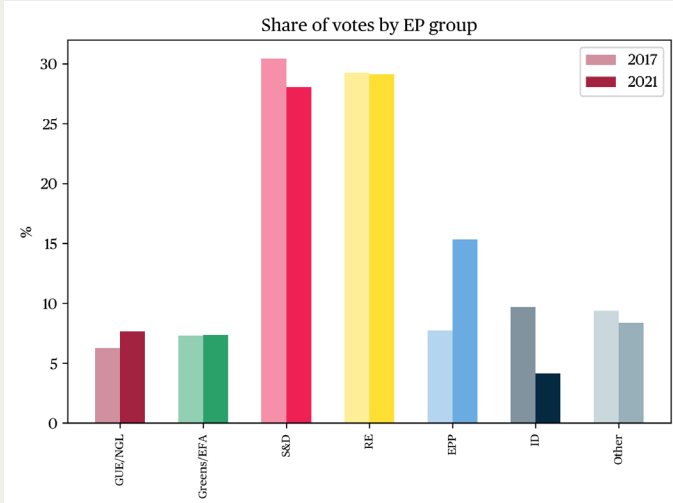
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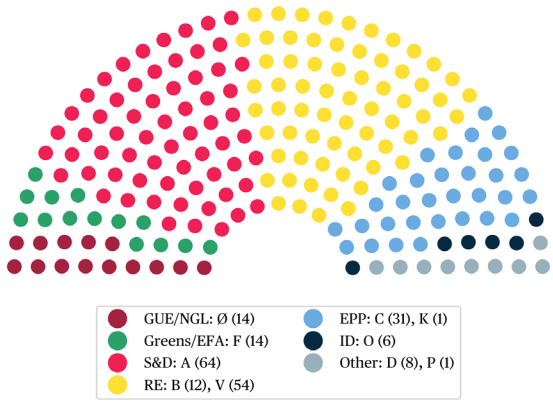
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European indicators



Regionsråd (5 regional parliaments) (2021)



Les élections dans les États candidats et les États de l'AELE

Scrutins nationaux

03



Stine Hesstvedt • Institutt for Samfunnsforskning, Oslo

Parliamentary elections in Norway, 13 September 2021

146

Introduction

After eight years in power, the Conservative-led coalition government of Erna Solberg had to step down on the 13th of September 2021. The left bloc in Norwegian politics – headed by the Labour Party leader Jonas Gahr Støre – had received an overwhelming share of the votes: Results revealed a historic majority to the left-bloc with 100 out of 169 seats in the Norwegian Storting. While the polls had predicted a left-wing majority for quite some time, the election results nonetheless offered a few surprises. For one, the fragmentation of the party system reached new heights in the evening of September 13th. Second, and relatedly, the election left the left-bloc historically fragmented, as the former communist party Rødt multiplied support and surpassed the electoral threshold. Third, the popular support of the former right-wing governmental parties declined more than expected, especially for the populist right party Fremskrittspartiet and the Christian democratic party Kristelig Folkeparti. Moreover, the election campaign took some unexpected turns; the ‘code red’ UN climate report hit in the midst of the campaign in addition to a political scandal related to MPs’ housing benefits. Lastly, government formation was unanticipated, as the negotiations resulted in a two-party, minority coalition between the agrarian Centre Party and the Labour Party – without the expected presence of the Socialist Left.

In the rest of this article, these key observations are laid out in greater detail. First, however, the next section provides a brief background to the election and describes key features of Norway’s party and electoral system.

The Norwegian electoral and party system: A brief introduction

Political cleavages and the party system

As an advanced social democratic state in Northern Europe, the Norwegian party system bears both resemblance and distinctness to other European countries. When political scientists Stein Rokkan and Seymour Lipset wrote their seminal work on early state formation and political cleavages in Western Europe (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), the Norwegian political conflict structure was coined ‘multidimensional’ compared to other countries. As a former colony of Sweden and Denmark¹ with strong popular scepticism to urban elites; a vocal nationalist counterculture in the periphery; strong religious lay movements in rural areas; and a powerful working class movement, early state-building resulted in a distinct and multi-faceted political cleavage structure (ibid).

Decades after Rokkan and Lipset’s description, old political cleavages still and to some extent structure Norwegian party competition. As in other Western European countries, new issues related to immigration, climate change, and globalization have become salient and spurred new political conflicts (Hooghe & Marks, 2018). Also, as a wealthy, oil-producing welfare state with an open economy, issues related to Norway-EU relations/EEA and the oil and gas industry are examples of ‘new’ political conflicts with a specific Norwegian flavor (see Bergh, Haugsgjerd and Karlsen, 2021).

Today, Norway is characterized as a moderately polarized and fragmented party system (Lijphart, 2012). As

1. The kingdoms of Norway, Sweden and Denmark were united in the Kalmar Union between 1397 and 1523. After the abolishment of the Kalmar union, Norway was ruled as a province of Denmark until 1814, when Denmark was forced to cede Norway to Sweden after its defeat in the Napoleonic wars. Norway then became an independent constitutional monarchy, ruled by the Swedish king in a two-state confederacy until 1905.

in other European countries, the Norwegian party system has gradually become more fragmented with an all-time high in the 2021 election (see below). Up until the election of 2013, the party system had traditionally consisted of seven parties. The left bloc includes three parties: the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet), the new left party Socialist Left (Sosialistisk Venstreparti), and the agrarian, centre-left Senterpartiet that represents rural interests. The right-wing bloc includes two centre-right parties - the Liberals (Venstre) and the Christian Democrats (Kristelig Folkeparti) - as well as the Conservatives (Høyre) and the right-wing Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet). In 2013, two additional parties entered parliament with one MP each: the Green party (Miljøpartiet De Grønne), which proclaimed a neutral left-right position, as well as the former communist and currently radical socialist party, Rødt.

Party competition and government formations

Norwegian party competition has been – and still is – structured by the economic left-right dimension, with the Labour Party being the most dominant actor (but the party's support has been declining, see below). In every election since the Second World War, the Labour party has received the lion's share of the votes (in total 20 elections between 1945 and 2021), in total occupying 13 out of 21 prime minister posts in the period. Along with the other Scandinavian countries, Norway used to exhibit some of the highest levels of class voting in the world, and the two main competitors have mostly been, and still are, the Conservative party and the Labour Party. As such, competition adhere to a two-bloc logic: With the exception of a center-based government in the 1990s, political power has shifted between the left and the right.

As for party cooperation, coalition governments have become more common over time. Minority governments have also been the rule. While the Labour Party ruled as single-party cabinets until the 2000s, former Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg (2005-2013) induced a three-party coalition between Labour, the Centre Party and the Socialist Left after receiving a decline in support.

When the former Prime Minister Erna Solberg took office in 2013, yet another historic coalition was born. The Conservative party was joined by the populist Progress Party in government, making Norway one of the first countries in Western Europe to be governed by a populist right-wing party. However, after the Liberals and the Christian Democrats joined in 2018-2019, the cooperation turned out to be fragile. The four-party majority coalition lasted until January 2020, when the Progress Party resigned due to discontent with the government's immigration policy. Up until the election in September 2021, Solberg therefore ruled a minority government with the support of the Liberals and Christian Democrats.

The electoral system

Lastly, some details about the electoral system (see also Aardal, 2011). In particular, the 4 percent electoral threshold concerning 19 adjustment seats deserves notice, as it had important implications for the 2021 results. In short, Norway has a proportional (PR) electoral system where votes from 19 election districts are translated into a total 169 seats in parliament.² Of the overall 169 seats, 150 are district seats distributed according to the constituencies. In addition, 19 seats are so-called adjustment seats (also called levelling seats or compensatory seats). This is to compensate for the fact that the electoral system is skewed in favour of the peripheral electoral districts and the biggest parties.³ As a result, the electoral system systematically disfavours the smaller parties; in particular the smaller parties that receive most of their support from the urban and populous electoral districts. To account for these biases and increase proportionality, 19 out of 169 seats therefore serve the purpose of adjustment. However, in order to compete for the 19 seats, parties need at least 4 percent of the national vote. This 4 percent requirement is – quite confusingly – referred to as the “electoral threshold”. In practice, a party may receive less than four percent of the national vote and lose out of the 19 adjustment seat competition, while still receiving some of the 150 constituency seats if its support is strong enough in a single electoral district. In the 2013 election, this was the case for the Greens and the Radical Left party Rødt, which entered parliament with one MP each from the capital Oslo, even though they received less than 4 percent at the national level. As we will see, this threshold had important implications in the 2021 election.

Run-up to the 2021 election: The long and short election campaign

When Norway entered the election year of 2021, things did not look too bad for the incumbent government of Erna Solberg. Indeed, winning the election and embarking on a third victory would have been most extraordinary in historical terms, as Norwegian prime ministers rarely sit for more than two terms. Nonetheless, after eight years in power, Erna Solberg started 2021 with quite a solid lead in the polls. One year earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic had thrown Norway into one of its most urgent crises since the Second World War. As elsewhere, the Solberg government had received a considerable rally-around-the-flag boost in support, and this effect retained well into the election year of 2021. However, when the vaccines arrived and the political agenda slowly started to normalize,

2. The 19 electoral districts used to overlap with the borders of the administrative counties or regions of Norway (fylker). Due to a major regional reform implemented by the Solberg government in 2020, where the number of administrative counties was reduced to 11, this is however not the case anymore.

3. While the Northernmost electoral district Finnmark (75 800 citizens) has five MPs, the capital Oslo (635 000 citizens) has 20 MPs. The seat allocation is conducted by modified Sainte-Laguë method with a first divisor of 1.4.

the Left flank made a leap. By the summer, the pandemic boost to the government's support had disappeared, and cards were turned.

Throughout the campaign, two issues that are consistently favourable for the left flank dominated the media's agenda; namely social inequality, as well as discussions about rural areas and centralization policies. In addition, IPCC's sixth climate report – with the alarming “code red” message – hit amidst the Norwegian campaign, dominating the traditional news press almost entirely for a week or two. For some time, then, commentators were convinced that the 2021 election would be the climate election (Aftenposten, 2021). However, in the end, the green parties did not receive a landslide of votes as expected after the UN report. While the reasons for this are manifold, there is no doubt that other issues entered the agenda; in particular a scandal about MPs' housing benefits. The scandal broke the last week before the election, involving a range of MPs as well as the Christian Democrats Party leader, Kjell Ingolf Ropstad. According to the Aftenposten newspaper that brought the story, Ropstad had for years received free housing from the Norwegian Parliament on dubious grounds, and on purpose (although not illegally). While talks of fraud and prosecution were quickly rejected, Ropstad resigned as minister and party leader shortly before the election. The scandal did arguably steal some of the limelight in the crucial last week of the election campaign.

2021 election results: Some key elements

In short, the election results revealed an overwhelming majority for the Left in Norwegian politics and a sharp decline in support for the former governmental parties. Below, the outcome is summarized in four key points: 1) increased fragmentation of the party system, 2) a historic majority (and fragmentation) of the Left, 3) the steep decline in support to the former cabinet, and 4) the surprising outcome that the Green party did not surpass the electoral threshold.

Increased fragmentation of the party system

With the effective number of parties rising from just below 5 to 6.5 parties, the fragmentation of the Norwegian party system hit a new high on the night of 13th of September. The main factor driving this fragmentation was that the largest parties became smaller – namely the Labour Party, the Conservatives and the Progress Party, while middle-sized parties (the Center Party and the Socialist Left) became larger. Moreover, Rødt passing the threshold and the Christian Democrats failing to do so contributed to increased fragmentation. In addition, a new single-issue party campaigning for a hospital in Northern Norway (Pasientfokus) entered the parliament with one seat.

Overall, Norway followed a trend of fragmentation

familiar elsewhere in Western Europe. It also seems clear that the parliament may have become more polarized after the election. For the first time in history, the Norwegian Storting comprises two weighty parliamentary groups at the far left as well as the far right: On the left flank, the former communist party Rødt, and on the right flank, the populist Progress Party.

The Left bloc's historic majority (and fragmentation)

The five Left parties – the Labour Party, the Centre Party, the Socialist Left, the Red party Rødt, and the Greens – received 100 out of 169 seats; the largest majority the left bloc had seen in years. While the election result was not particularly uplifting in absolute terms for the Labour Party (the party saw a slight drop in votes and lost one seat in parliament compared to 2017), it did much better than expected. About a year before the election, the party had seen polls down in the low twenties, and – for a short period – the Center Party was Norway's biggest party. In the end, on Election Day the Labour Party managed to retain its much-needed support in the traditional and important strongholds in the industrial municipalities in middle of the country, as well as in the regions in the North. Overall, Jonas Gahr Støre's Labour Party retained its position as Norway's largest and expanded their lead in seats over the Conservatives compared to 2017.

As the third biggest party, the agrarian Senterpartiet could celebrate one of its best elections ever, with an increase of nine MPs (from 19 to 28) and the largest increase in support among all parties (3.2 percentage points). In particular, the party benefitted from opposition to the former government's centralization reforms, that among other things concerned amalgamations of municipalities and administrative regions. As such, the Center Party's leap in support was by and large driven by the high saliency of periphery issues, and its strong increase mainly came from voters in rural and peripheral municipalities.

To many commentators, the biggest winner of the 2021 election was the radical socialist party Rødt. Not only did the party obtain its best result ever; it was also able to surpass the adjustment seats threshold at 4 percent, which is vital for small parties as it implies allocation of adjustment seats (see above). Up until 2021, Rødt had twice been represented in the Storting with a single Member of Parliament; in 1993-1997 (the party's predecessor Rød Valgallianse) and in 2017-2021 when the party leader Bjørnar Moxnes gained a seat from the capital Oslo. Up to 2021, however, Rødt – together with other small and newly established parties – had never been able reach the 4 percent national threshold for the much-needed adjustment seats. Thus, when the radical left party received 4.7 percent of the votes and increased their parliamentary group from 1 to 8 MPs, it secured a historic win. Interestingly, the party seems to have significantly broadened its voter base.⁴ Up

4. At the time of writing this article, we are still awaiting the Norwegian National election survey to arrive; we do therefore not know much about the new Rødt

until 2021, the former communist party, which had abandoned explicit reference to revolution and Marxism in its party platform only a few years earlier, had a somewhat limited appeal to the highly educated in the largest cities. In this election, Rødt increased its support all over Norway – both in rural and urban areas, in the South and North. Quite tellingly, Rødt’s support grew in all but one municipality in Norway (355 out of 356).

Furthermore, the Socialist Left Party had a good election, increasing their support by two mandates in parliament. However, given the favourable campaign and media agenda (cf. social inequality and the IPCC report), the party did not grow as much as expected. The same disappointment was also apparent among the Greens, which failed to reach the electoral threshold despite receiving increased support (see also discussion below).

All in all, the election turned out to be a small landslide for the left in Norway, which won by a solid majority after eight long years in opposition. As the Labour Party retained its position as the largest party, the Norwegian 2021 election did not reflect the steep trend of declining support for traditional social democratic parties as seen elsewhere in Europe. Nonetheless, the election did indeed show increased fragmentation of the left flank and new and fragile patterns of leftist party cooperation. The growth of a more complex party landscape of medium and small sized left-leaning political parties with various ideological shadings and issue emphases seems to be a trend that could stick well into the future, and is something we observe elsewhere in Europe too.

Erna Solberg’s defeat and the decline of the former government parties

The biggest loser of the election was the Conservative party and the former government parties the Progress Party and the Christian Democrats. The past few years, the Conservative party Høyre had been fiercely criticised from the Left bloc opposition about centralization reforms, tax cuts, and generous spending of the Norwegian oil revenues. Combined with a somewhat limited public enthusiasm towards the government project due to the pandemic as well as the cabinet’s eight years in power, few – if any – were in the end surprised to see the party decline in the 2021 election.

The fall of the Progress Party was also more or less predictable. In the previous election in 2017, their primary issue – immigration – was on top of the Norwegian agenda following the refugee crisis. By 2021, voters no longer considered the issue important, as the pandemic essentially stopped most immigration to Norway.

In addition, the Christian Democratic Party fell below the electoral threshold for the first time since 1936, making the election results even grimmer for the right wing. The Christian Democrats had been ripe with internal conflict over the decision to enter the right-wing cabinet

in 2020 while the Progress Party took part in it. Indeed, this conflict eventually led to a party split that probably contributed to the Christian Democrats falling just below the adjustment seats’ electoral threshold. Finally, as mentioned, their party leader was involved in a housing scandal in the middle of the campaign, having obtained free housing from the parliament on questionable grounds. All in all, this contributed to the decline in the Christian Democratic Party’s support from 4,2 to 3,6 percent and a total of 3 mandates (down from 8).

The only right-wing party to perform rather stably was the small Liberal party, which seems to have capitalised on the climate agenda.

Not so green after all? The surprising turn in support for the Green party

Lastly, among the more surprising results, the Green party was not able to capitalise on the salience of the climate issue in the election campaign. As mentioned, the UN IPCC Climate Report announced “code red” for humanity in the middle of the campaign, spurring tense political debate about climate and oil issues. One of the world’s largest oil-dependent economies, 20 percent of Norway’s national income comes from oil and gas production and more than 150,000 citizens are employed in the oil and gas sector. The IPCC report therefore not only spurred heated debate about climate change but also the future of Norwegian economy; a debate that more or less dominated the election agenda, including the televised political debates, for a couple of weeks following the report. The Green Party, which entered parliament as late as 2013, rose sharply on the polls and obtained a record 3,000 new members in the period. In these few weeks, polls predicted that the Greens would rise comfortably above the electoral threshold, granting them access to the above-mentioned harmonising seats. However, in the 13th of September, the Greens received 3.96% of the votes, falling a few thousand votes short of the threshold. In contrast to the radical socialist party Rødt, the Greens did not fare too well in rural areas and outside the big cities. Despite some growth in support and their best election so far, the failure to cross the electoral threshold was overall a disappointment for the party.

Government formation

Labour’s preferred majority coalition of the Socialist Left and the Centre party (with whom they governed in 2005-2013) did eventually obtain a majority in parliament. Both the Labour Party and the Socialist Left preferred this three-party coalition, while the Centre Party would rather not have the Socialist Left aboard.

The three parties embarked on government pre-negotiations in September, of which the Socialist Left Party withdrew after a week, citing their disagreement over issues like petroleum and welfare. All three parties had

voters’ socio-economic background.

committed to the ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement, slashing emissions by 50-55% by 2030, but disagreed strongly about how to get there.

On the 14th of October, Jonas Gahr Støre therefore became the prime minister of a minority government. Paradoxically, because the Socialist Left left government negotiations, he was not able to capitalize from the landslide election of the left flank after eight years in opposition. Nonetheless, the Labor Party and Centre party cabinet enjoys parliamentary support and cooperates with the Socialist Left in parliament.

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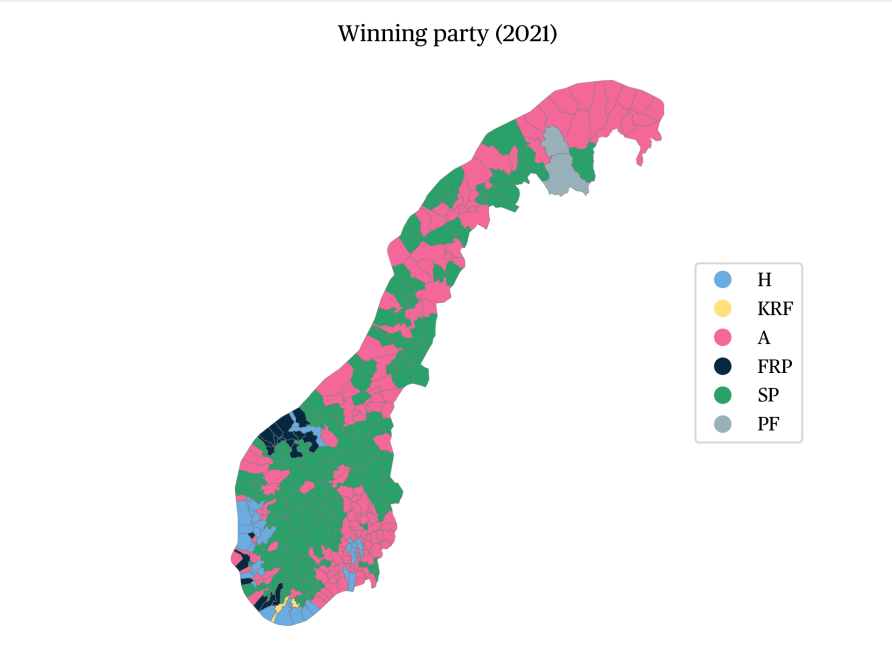
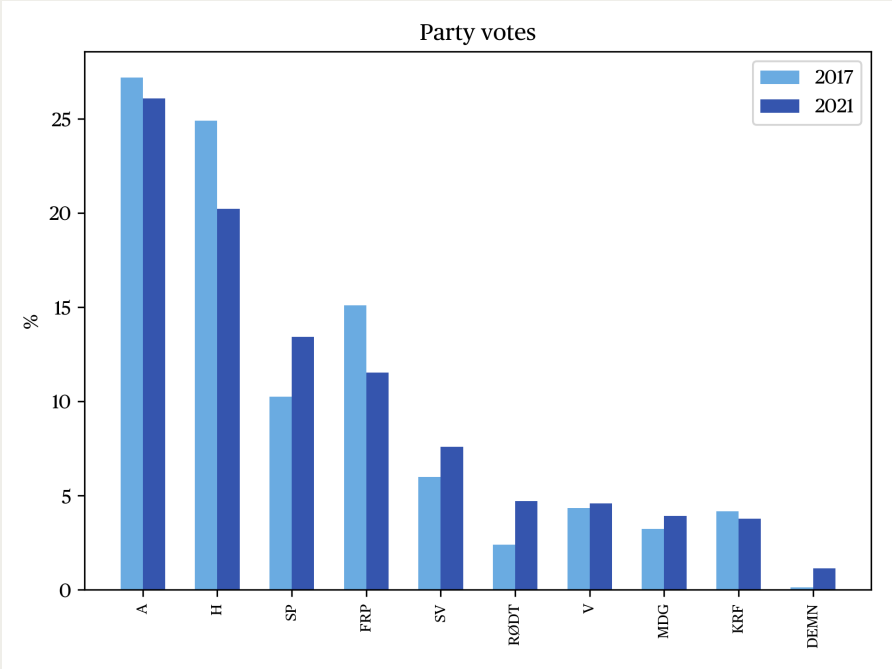
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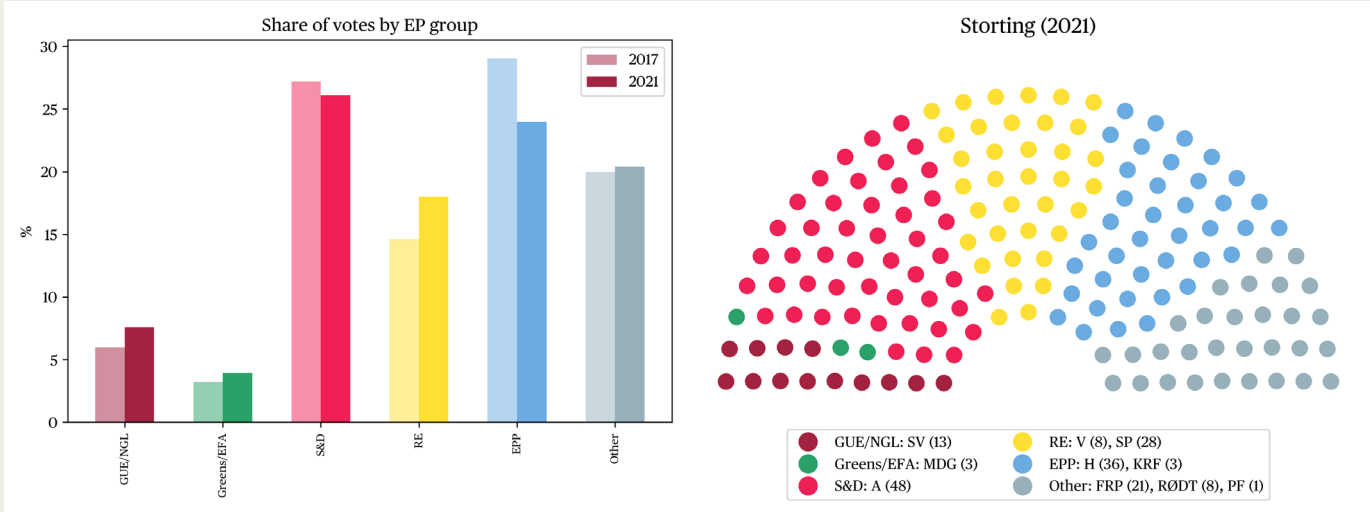
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European indicators





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Parliamentary election in Iceland, 25 September 2021

152

A parliamentary election took place in Iceland on the 25th of September 2021. Turnout was 80.1%. In the election the government coalition survived with a slight increase in its' combined majority, and it is the first government that survives an election in Iceland since the collapse of the country's financial system in 2008 following the Great Recession. Since then, politics have been turbulent with three early elections in 2009, 2016 and 2013, and only two government coalitions have survived their whole term, including the incumbent government in the 2021 election. The 2009 government was brought down after months of protests following the economic crash, while the government coalitions that did not last for the term broke down due to scandals concerning ministers in the government (e.g. Harðarson and Önnudóttir 2018). The incumbent coalition was formed following the 2017 election when eight parties were elected to the parliament. The coalition is unusual in the sense that it includes three ideologically distinct parties, the Left-Green Movement (a left-wing party), the Progressive Party (a centre party) and the Independence Party (a right-wing party).

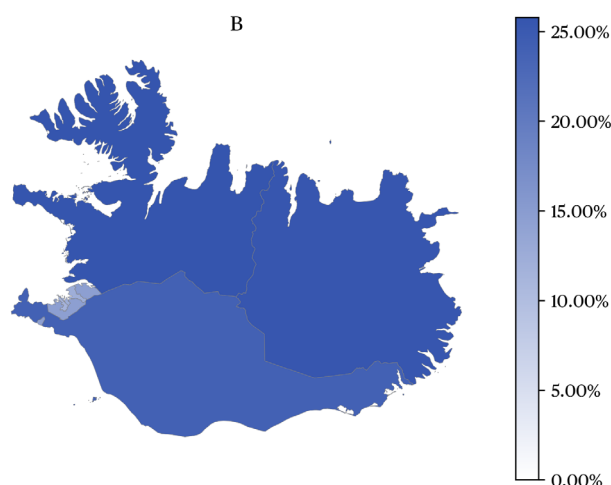
Among the government parties, the Progressive Party (B) was the main winner of the election, increasing its' electoral support by 6.6 percentage points, while the Left-Green (V) and the Independence Party (D) lost support (-4.5 and -0.8 percentage points) (see Figure 1). Ten parties fielded candidates nation-wide, the eight parliamentary parties and two new parties, the Socialist Party (J) and the Liberal Democratic Party (O), and one party, Responsible Future (A) fielded candidates in one constituency. None of the three new parties got enough votes to reach the electoral thresholds, but for a party to get elected it must either reach a 5% threshold of the vote nation-wide or have a member elected in one of the six constituencies in Iceland. Prior to the election, polls had indicated that the Socialist Party would get between 6 to 9% of the vote, but their final result gave them 4.1%

and no MPs. The two other new parties got less than then 0.5% of the vote. Among the opposition parties the People's Party (F – a centre-left welfare party) and the Reform (C – a centre right liberal party) increased their support slightly (+1.9 and +1.6 percentage points), while the three other opposition parties, the Social Democratic Alliance (S, -2.2 percentage points), the Pirate Party (P, -0.6 percentage points) and the Centre Party (M, -5.5 percentage points) lost support. The result of the election was largely in line with what the polls had shown prior to the election, however with some twists. For example, the government parties seem to have been systematically underestimated in the polls, while some of the other parties (e.g. the Pirate Party and the Reform) were systematically overestimated. These discrepancies could be due to several reasons, e.g. whether that is due to systematic errors in the polls or that there were certain trends among voters in whom to vote for in the last days before the election.

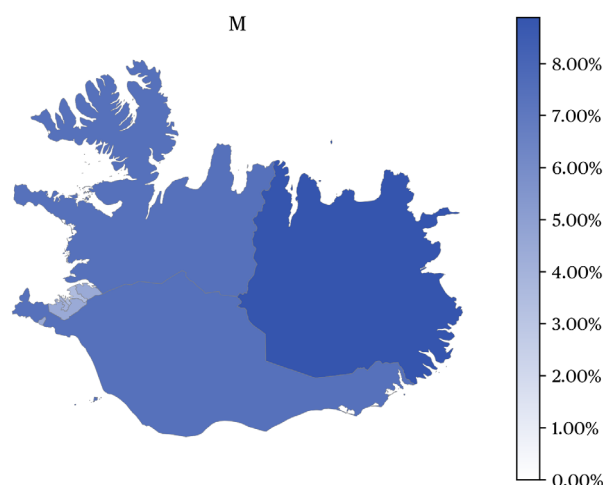
The election campaign during covid

The election took place during covid times. However, the pandemic and how to deal with it was not an electoral issue. That could be due to that at the time of the election over 70% of people living in the country had been fully vaccinated. Also, in general people were happy with how the government and health care authorities had handled the covid crisis. The government had largely followed the advice of the health care authorities when fighting the pandemic, and it was the scientists that were at the forefront of the fight, e.g. in regular briefings on TV, while the government ministers were not in the limelight. The government had increased spending and support to firms that were suffering due to the crisis and on both fronts, how to fight the pandemic and the economic actions taken, the government's actions were largely supported by the opposition parties. Thus, covid and how it had

a • Results of the Progress Party (Framsóknarflokkurinn, B)



b • Results of the Center Party (Miðflokkurinn, M)



been dealt with was not a divisive issue in the election campaign.

Instead, the main issues that the voters said to be of importance were about the health care system, the economy, social welfare and living standards, and environmental issues and climate change². Respectively these were the main issues discussed in the election campaign. Even if covid and the government's response to the pandemic was not an issue of the campaign, the impact of the pandemic was reflected in the discussions about the status of the health care system, the economy, and social welfare and living standards. In the case of the health care system the pandemic had brought to light shortcomings in the national health care system e.g. it being short of staff and that it was already overcrowded prior to the pandemic when it came to bed space. As in other countries, the economy was suffering due to the pandemic, unemployment increased, and businesses closed either temporarily or permanently. Thus, it is not a surprise that those issues and how to deal with them were one of the main issues of the electoral campaign and the discussion lined up on the ideological left-right scale about what would be the proper actions of the government.

One could say that the fifth main issue of the campaign was whether the government would survive or not. The opposition parties campaigned for a change in government, which is of course not unusual. What was more unusual is that even if the three government parties from left to right disagree about policies of the main issues of the election, e.g. about how to run the health care system and how much public funding the government should divert to businesses so they can stay afloat during the covid pandemic, the parties stood united advocating for a continuation of their coalition and stability in Icelandic politics.

Why certain parties fared better than others as a result of their campaign can only be speculated on at this time-point. However, it can be assumed that the government parties were successful in advocating for stability and a continuation of their coalition. Given that the only government party that increased its support, was the centre Pro-

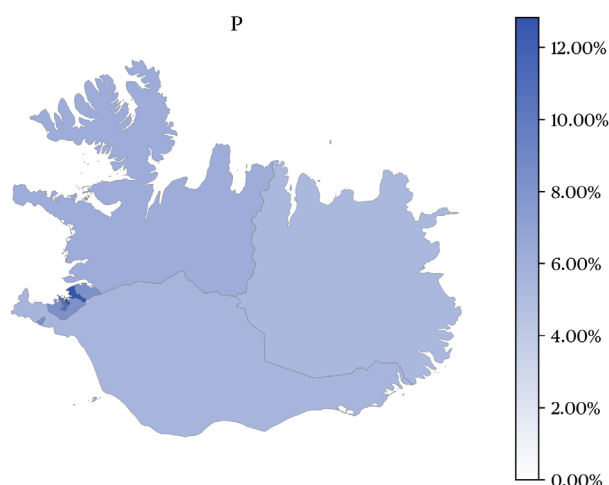
gressive Party, might indicate that voters who supported a continuation of the incumbent government opted for the party in the middle as a strategy to keep the government in power. Meaning, instead of giving the right or the left-wing government parties their support, which might have resulted in a change in the government (to the left or the right), voters opted for the government party in the middle and by that increasing the probability that the government might continue.

A rural-urban divide

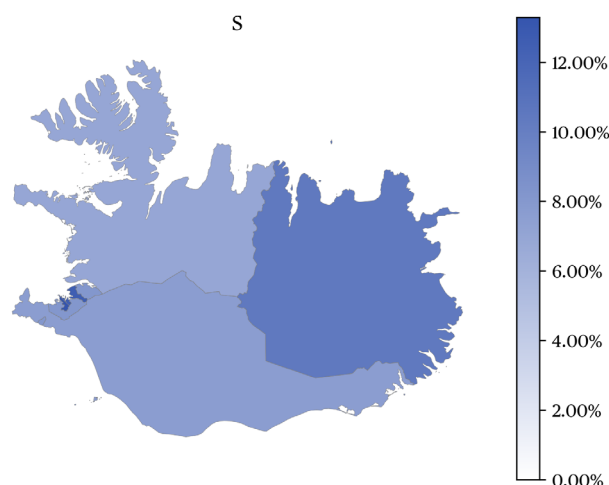
Historically the rural-urban cleavage, a conflict between the interests of urban and rural areas, has been one of the main cleavages in Iceland (in addition to the economic left-right cleavage). In Iceland the largest urban area includes the capital and the surrounding towns. For example, in 2016, 63% of Iceland's voter population (332,529) resided in the capital area with the rest of the voters being scattered around the country in smaller towns, villages and rural areas.

The six constituencies in Iceland are equally divided between the capital area, with three geographically small but urban constituencies (Reykjavik North, Reykjavik South and South West), and the countryside, with three rural constituencies (North West, North East and South), that cover most of the country. Historically, the countryside has been overrepresented in the Icelandic parliament. After the latest changes in the electoral system, which came into the effect with the 2003 election, this disproportionality between the capital area and the countryside was reduced to some extent but not eliminated. This rural-urban divide is reflected in the support of the parties, for example the Progressive Party and the Centre Party (see Figures 2 and 3) both have more support in the countryside compared to the capital area, while parties such as the Pirate Party, the Social Democratic Alliance and Left-Green Movement are stronger in the capital (see Figures 4, 5 and 6).

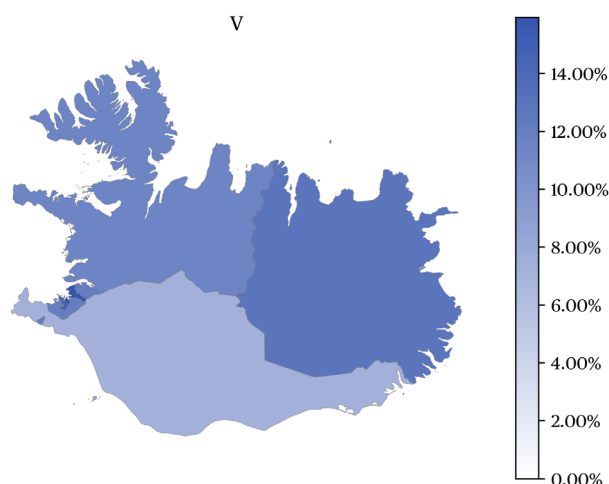
c • Results of the Pirate Party (Píratar, P)



d • Results of the Social-Democratic Alliance (Samfylkingin, S)



e • Results of the Green-Left movement (Vinstrihreyfingin – grænt framboð, V)



breaking the election law concerning the preservation of the ballots. As a result of the investigation of the parliament that took over a month, three proposals were voted on in the parliament. Two of the proposals were that a re-election should be held in the whole country or in the North-West constituency and they were both rejected. The third proposal, that the result of the recount should be valid, was accepted.

The electoral system and bonus MPs

In 1999 there was made a change in the constitution that made it possible to make changes in electoral law that would guarantee equality between parties - without changing the constitution as was before. Prior to this change the Progressive Party had always been overrepresented in the parliament due to that the electoral system favoured the rural areas. At first this change was successful in the sense that in the 2003, 2007 and 2009 elections, all parties that reached the threshold to get elected were allocated MPs that reflected their share of votes. However, in 2013 this changed when the Progressive Party obtained a bonus MP at the cost of the Left-Green Movement, and this has been repeated in every national election since then. In 2016 the Independence Party got one bonus member from the Left-Greens, in 2017 the Progressive Party got a bonus member from the Social Democratic Alliance and in 2021 it got a bonus member at the cost of the Independence Party. The parliament can easily eliminate this discrepancy between votes and MPs, by changing the electoral law. All parties say that they support equality between parties. However, the parliament has not yet corrected this discrepancy that has now occurred four elections in a row.

Party system fragmentation

Prior to the Great Recession in 2008 the number of parties in the Icelandic party system was rather stable with four main parties, the Left-Green Movement, the Social Democratic Alliance, the Progressive Party and the

The election and recount

For the first time in the history of established democracies it seemed that female representation would exceed 50% (33 out of 63) of the MPs after the votes had been counted for the first time around. That only lasted for a few hours. After a recount in one of the constituencies (North-West) female representation dropped down to 48% (30 out of 63 MPs). This recount did not change the total number of seats won by each party, but it changed the allocation of adjustment seats within parties. At first it seemed that this recount would not be an issue other than changing the allocation of adjustment seats within parties. However, once it got out that the ballots had been left in a room, in which the staff at the hotel where the count took place had access to between the two counts, and that the ballot boxes had not been sealed as the election law in Iceland requires, people started to question the result of the election. One candidate decided to press charges to the police and several candidates and voters decided to press charges to the parliament, questioning the results of the election in the North-West constituency. The police investigation led to that the election officials in charge of the election in North-West were all fined for

Independence Party, and usually with one minor party in the three decades prior to the crisis. Until the 2013 election, apart from 1987, the number of effective parliamentary parties was from 3.2 in June 1959 to 4.2 in 2009. Since then, the number of effective parliamentary parties has increased, first to 4.4 in the 2013 election, to 5.1 in 2016, 6.5 in 2017 and 6.3 in the 2021 election. Thus, in the last decade party system fragmentation has increased. That has created challenges for the parties, one of them being that more than two parties are needed to form a government coalition as was the norm prior to the economic crisis.

Government formation

All three *leaders* of the government coalition parties stated in the campaign that their first option would be to continue their coalition if their majority would hold. Shortly after the election they started formal negotiations for a continuation of their coalition. The negotiations took two months, and at the end of November it was announced that Katrín Jakobsdóttir, the leader of the Left-Green Movement, would continue as prime minister. Katrín Jakobsdóttir has been by far the most popular politician in Iceland for a long time. Surveys show that approximately 40-50% of people prefer her as prime minister, even if they do not support her party, which got 12.6% in the recent election. It is safe to assume that her popularity, outside of the ranks for her own party, makes her the most credible leader of the ideological distinct parties in the government.

What the future holds for the next government

One of the key challenges for the next government will be to steer the economy on a path of recovery after the

recession due to the covid pandemic. In 2020 there was the largest contraction in economic growth since 1920. The government's response was among other things to divert public funding to businesses so they could either stay open or would stay afloat while they had to shut down due to the pandemic. In the next few years we might see increased public spending to speed up the recovery of the industries, specifically the tourism industry which has been a major source of income in Iceland in the last ten years.

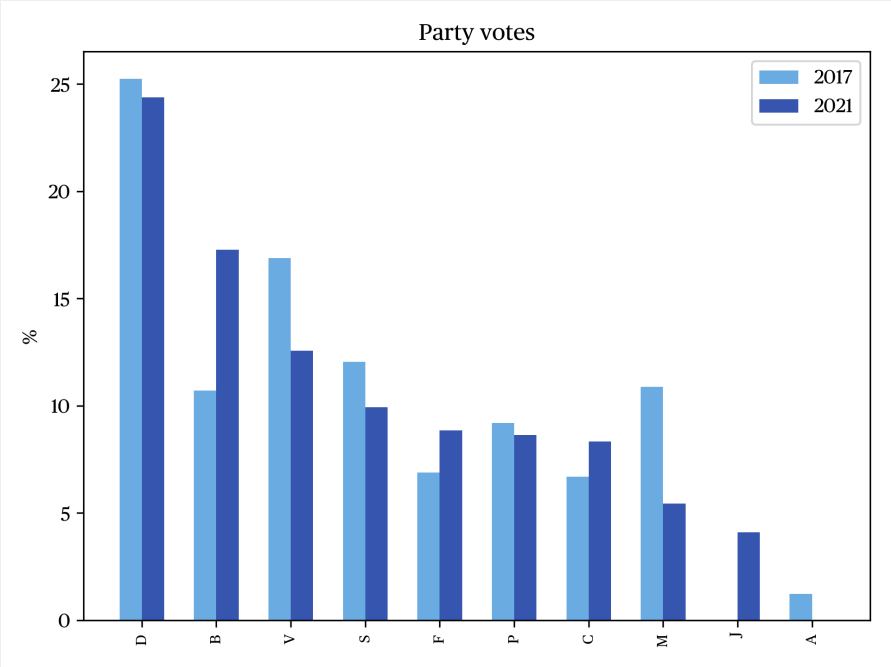
Many people predicted that the current government would not last for the term when it was formed following the 2017 election. They were wrong, the government survived the whole term. Some say that the Covid pandemic saved the government as the fight against it removed potentially dividing issues from the political sphere. The continued government coalition has a good chance of surviving as they have already worked together for four years laying a solid foundation for their cooperation in the current government.

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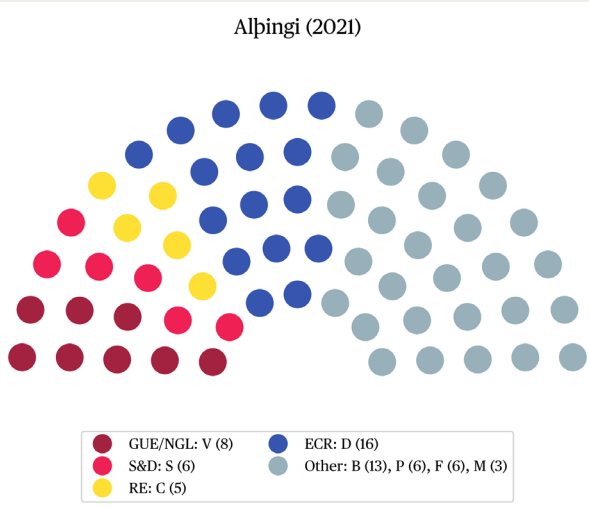
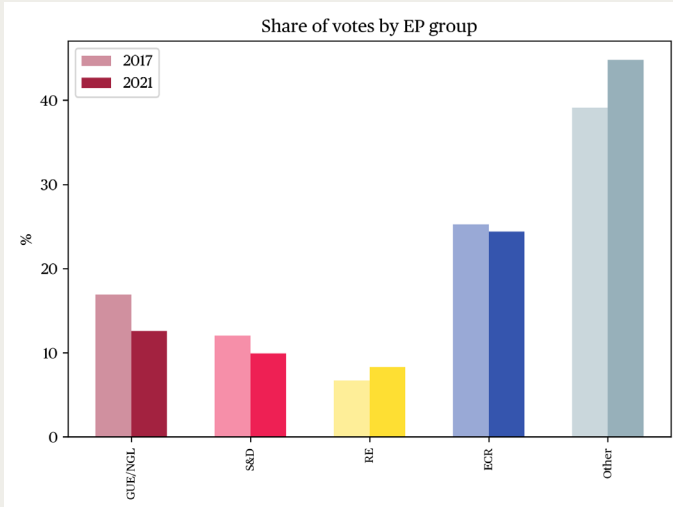
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European indicators



Les élections dans les M15

Élections locales dans
les 15 villes européennes
de plus d'un million
d'habitants

04



Sofia Marini • Universität Wien / Editor, BLUE

Italian municipal elections (Rome and Milan), October 2021

158

BLUE's editorial team is following the local elections in the 15 European cities with more than one million inhabitants. On October 3-4 and 17-18, 2021, Milan and Rome, as well as a majority of Italian municipalities, renewed their municipal councils.

A first round marked by the success of the left and the collapse of the Five Stars

In the first round of voting on 3-4 October 2021, the success of the centre-left (-S&D) was greater than expected: the coalition won in the first round not only in Bologna, where Matteo Lepore's victory (with 61.9%) was expected, but also in Naples (where former minister Gaetano Manfredi won with 62.9%) and even in Milan, a city historically governed by the centre-right, where the incumbent mayor, Giuseppe Sala, was reappointed with 57.7%. In Rome and Turin, where the centre-left candidates did not win the mayor's office in the first round, they were nevertheless favourites (and prevailed) for the second.

In contrast, the performance of the centre-right (EPP, ECR, ID) was mediocre, with the coalition's candidates leading only in Rome and Trieste, where they failed to win the election in the first round. Enrico Michetti (30.2%) and Roberto Dipiazza (47%) faced the centre-left (Roberto Gualtieri and Francesco Russo, 27% and 31.7% respectively) in the second round held two weeks later. In Turin, the centre-right candidate Paolo Damilano received less votes (38.9%) than the centre-left candidate Stefano Lo Russo (43.8%), against whom he appeared to be the favourite in the polls.

The 5-Star Movement (M5S, NR) obtained disappointing results everywhere, with the partial exceptions of Bologna and Naples where it had run in coalition with the centre-left even in these two cases, however, the contribution of the M5S lists was not decisive. The most significant fact is their defeat in Rome and Turin – cities where

they had succeeded in 2016 in getting Virginia Raggi and Chiara Appendino elected – where they did not even qualify for the second round.

Within the coalitions, the parties that emerged weakest from the first round of voting were the Five Star Movement (M5S, NI) and the League (Lega, ID), while in the centre-right coalition, Brothers of Italy (FdI, ECR) scored well. On the centre-left, the main force, the Democratic Party (PD, S&D), emerged stronger from the election weekend. As all these parties, with the exception of Brothers of Italy, are part of the majority, it was feared that this would have a destabilising effect on the Draghi government, which instead remained strong despite the divisions in the centre-right coalition.

Rome: the outgoing mayor eliminated in the first round

In Rome, where none of the candidates obtained more than 50% of the vote, a second round was organised between the two leading candidates on 17 and 18 October. Five points can be noted about the results of the first round in the capital.

The centre-right candidate, lawyer Enrico Michetti, obtained the most votes (30.1%, or 334,327 preferences). Despite a promising result after a relatively low-key campaign, Michetti was at a disadvantage compared to his second-round opponent in the evening of the first round.

After an afternoon of uncertain polls, it was confirmed that Michetti would face the centre-left candidate, former economy minister Roberto Gualtieri, who obtained 27.03% of the vote (299,870 votes). He was expected to win votes from other left-wing political forces in the second round – including M5S voters, who had formed a separate list.

The outgoing mayor Virginia Raggi (M5S) performed rather disappointingly. She obtained only 19.1% of the vote

(211,816 preferences), while some initial polls suggested that she could have won the second round. The result is particularly remarkable when compared to Raggi's clear victory in the 2016 local elections, where she obtained 35.3% of the vote in the first round and 67.2% in the second.

Virginia Raggi was overtaken by MEP Carlo Calenda, the Action (S&D) candidate, who came third with 19.8% of the vote. Calenda's decision not to participate in the centre-left primaries but to run as an individual candidate probably took a lot of votes away from Gualtieri, who could however hope to win them back in the second round.

Another surprising fact concerns the turnout, which turned out to be extremely low, at 48.8% – a drop of more than 8 points compared to the previous election, in June 2016, when it reached 57%. Despite the significant differences between the different constituencies, these figures are in line with the general decline in turnout observed in all municipal elections.

Milan: unexpected victory for the outgoing mayor in first round

The electoral race in the city of Milan came to a halt in the first round, where the outgoing mayor Giuseppe Sala, candidate of the centre-left, collected 57.73% of the vote (277,478 votes). A result beyond expectations, which saw his centre-right rival, Luca Bernardo, obtain 31.97% of the votes (corresponding to a total of 153,637 preferences).

Particularly negative was the result of the 5 Star Movement, whose candidate Laila Pavone collected only 2.7% of the consensus (equal to 12,953 votes). This result was even lower than that of Gianluigi Paragone, a former member of the Movement's parliament, who, with 2.99% of the vote, narrowly missed the 3% threshold that would have guaranteed him election to the city council.

With regard to the vote in the nine districts of Milan, the analysis by Boldrini and Collini (2021) for the CISE (Italian Centre for Electoral Studies) reveals “a substantial territorial homogeneity of centre-left and centre-right candidates,” with a slightly greater imbalance in the case of the M5S. The winning candidate Sala garnered a slightly higher percentage of support in the central districts (with over 60% in districts 1 and 3) but in the constituency where he fared worst he still got 54.9%. In 2016 he had only won in 4 town halls.

The victory of the centre-left in the first round in Milan, considered a historic bastion of the right, is an unprecedented event. Especially considering that in 2016 Sala went to the ballot with 41.7% of the votes, facing the centre-right candidate Stefano Parisi who had obtained 40.7%.

Yet another record was set in terms of abstentionism: with a turnout of 47.69%, this is the lowest participation rate recorded in the capital. Even the highest abstention rate was recorded in the city centre, where only 44.57%

of those eligible went to the polls (Boldrini & Collini 2021).

In the second round, the strength of the centre-left is confirmed

The second round of local elections took place on 17 and 18 October 2021 in the municipalities concerned. In the aggregate of the two rounds, the centre-left won in 58 of the 119 municipalities with more than 15,000 inhabitants.

The centre-left, which had performed well beyond expectations in the first round, confirmed its performance in the second round. In the big cities, the centre-left candidates obtained similar percentages to those of Milan (Giuseppe Sala, 57.7%), Bologna (Matteo Lepore, 61.9%) and Naples (Gaetano Manfredi, 62.9%) two weeks earlier: 59.2% for Stefano Lo Russo in Turin and 60.2% in Rome for Roberto Gualtieri.

The centre-right, on the other hand, came out of this election clearly weakened, except in the city of Trieste where the incumbent mayor Roberto Dipiazza, with 52.3%, only narrowly beat the centre-left candidate Francesco Russo (48.7%). Surveys in the weeks leading up to the election, as well as the assault on the CGIL union headquarters in Rome on Saturday 9 October, which highlighted the links of the League and the Brothers of Italy with neo-fascist groups, may have contributed to the coalition's underperformance.

The party most strengthened by these results was the Democratic Party (S&D), which fielded candidates in all the cities where the centre-left won. Interestingly, the only centre-right candidates who won were from Silvio Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia (EPP), the most moderate in the coalition. On the contrary, in Rome and Milan, the candidates proposed by Giorgia Meloni (FdI) and Matteo Salvini (Lega), although leading more popular parties and stronger in the polls, performed badly. The M5S, already in difficulty in the first round where it did not run in coalition with the centre-left, did not carry weight in this election.

Conclusion

Another notable feature of these municipal elections is the turnout, which declined everywhere, to the point that many analysts spoke of a “victory of abstentionism.” In the first round, the highest turnout (51.16%) was recorded in Bologna, although well below the 59.7% achieved in 2016, the lowest in Trieste (46% compared to 53.5%). The aggregate national figure was 54.7%, much lower than the 61.6% achieved in 2016.

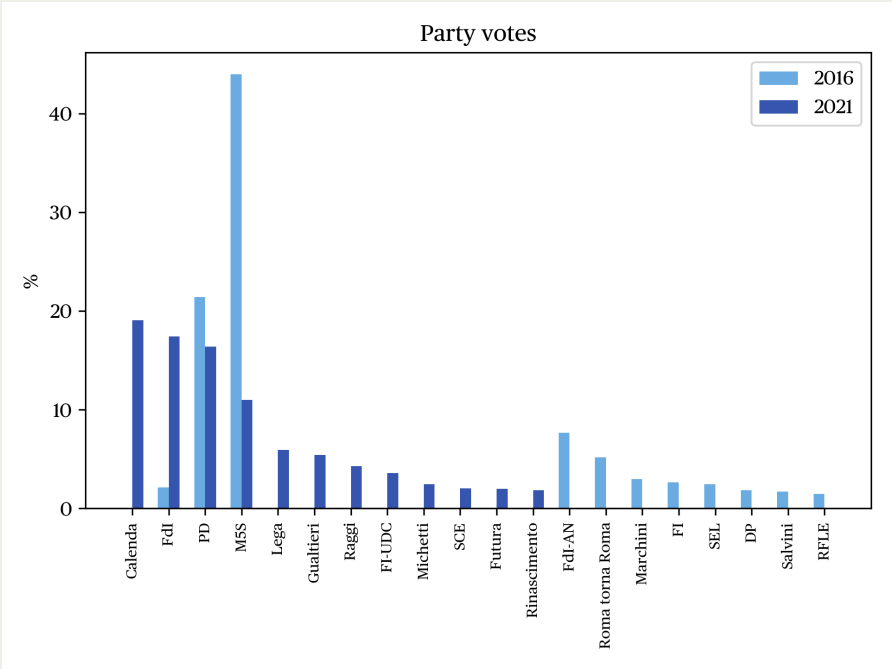
The turnout, already particularly low in the first round (54.7%), was below 50% in the second round, causing concern to many observers. Benevento was the provincial capital with the highest turnout (59.6%), while the greatest abstention rate was recorded in Rome, where only 40.7% of registered voters cast their ballots.

A final striking feature of the election was the overwhelming gender inequality: not only were no women elected as mayors or regional presidents, but no female candidate reached the second round in the major cities. This was not even the case in Rome and Turin, where the last administration was headed by mayors Virginia Raggi and Chiara Appendino (M5S). It seems that at this level, regardless of political affiliation, there is still an incredibly

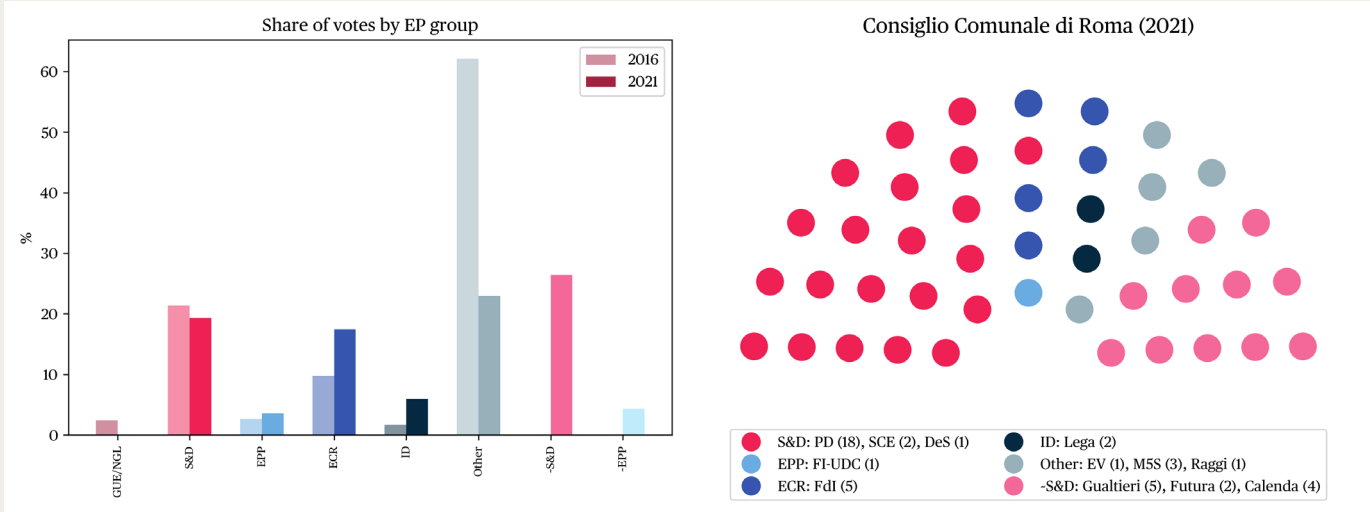
long way to go.

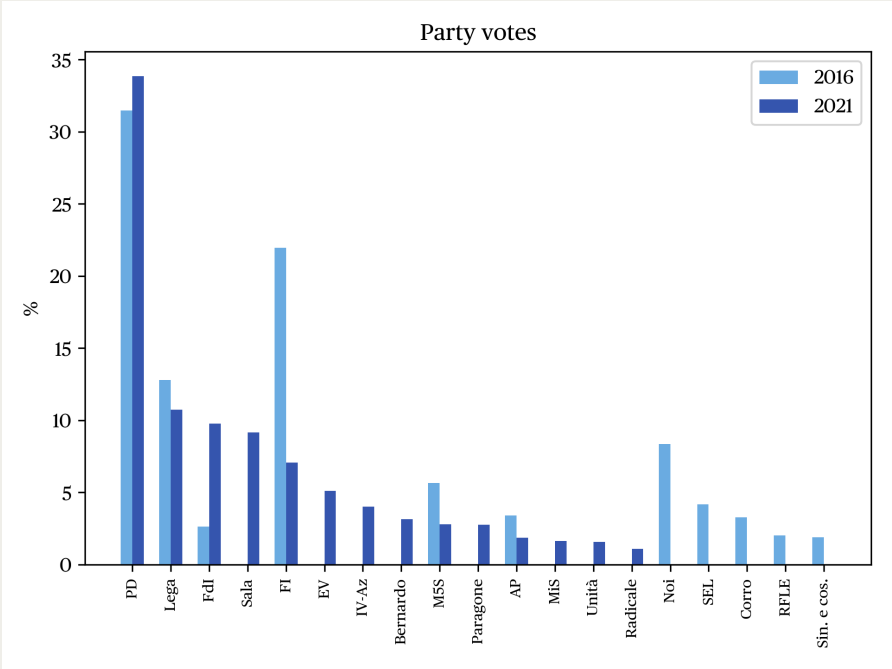
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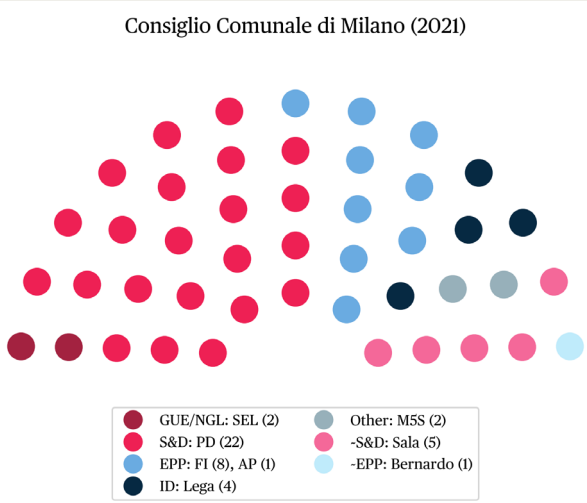
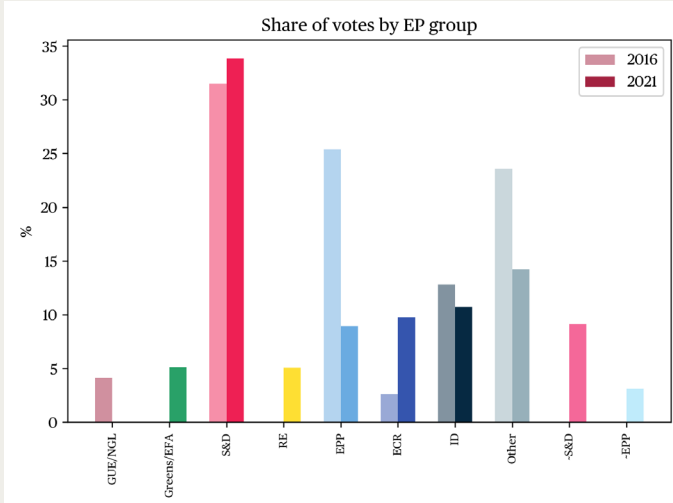


European indicators





European indicators



Short analyses

Legislative election in Moldova, 11 July 2021

The 2021 Moldovan legislative election ended with a clear victory of pro-European parties. The center-right and pro-European PAS won 52.8 per cent of the vote and 63 out of 101 parliamentary mandates, while the pro-Russian electoral alliance of socialists and communists, BECS, came second with 27.2 per cent of the vote and 32 mandates. Turnout was stable at 49 per cent.

A defeat for the pro-Russian bloc, this ballot paves the way for greater integration within the European Union's neighbourhood policy, with the hope of reaching a membership application in the medium term [an application was submitted on March 3, 2022], and for the development of the fight against corruption. This is in stark contrast with the policy of the incumbent socialist government, which had been supportive of rapprochement with Moscow.

The risk of Russian interference and corruption-related electoral fraud has been contained, with observers from the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe confirming the fairness and regularity of the vote. The parties led by the oligarchs were the big losers in the election. Implicated in the embezzlement of one billion euros, or 12% of Moldova's GDP, between 2012 and 2014, billionaire Ilan Șor had fled the country in 2019. His party (the "Șor Party"), declines from 8.3 to 5.7 percent of the vote. The Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM, S&D), whose historical leader, oligarch Vlad Plahotniuc, had also fled in 2019, collapses from 23.6 percent to 1.8 percent of the vote.

The far-right Romanian party AUR (CRE), which had just entered the Romanian parliament with more than 8% of the vote in December 2020, was also competing in the Republic of Moldova around the idea of reunification of the two countries – the province of Bessarabia, which became the Republic of Moldova, was annexed by the USSR in 1940. However, their campaign was not successful, and the party eventually received only 0.5 per cent of the vote. The central issue of the campaign was indeed not "reunification", but European integration.

Sofia Marini

Legislative and presidential elections in Bulgaria, 14-21 November 2021

Bulgaria held its third legislative election in less than a year on Sunday, November 14, after two elections in April and July that failed to provide a stable government majority. After the GERB (EPP) of outgoing Prime Minister Boiko Borissov in April and the anti-corruption group "There is such a people" (ITN, NI) in July, it is this time the new anti-corruption and pro-European party "Let's continue the change" (PP, NI) which won the election with 25.3%

of the vote.

GERB, for its part, suffered a slight decline (22.4%, -1.1 pp), while ITN lost more than half of their voters (9.4%, -14.7 pp). The other centrist, pro-European and anti-corruption parties (BSP, S&D; Democratic Bulgaria, EPP/Greens; "Stand up BG", NI) also suffered strong losses to PP, with 10.1% (-3.3 pp), 6.3% (-6.4 pp) and 2.3% (-2.7 pp) of the vote respectively. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS, ALDE), traditionally associated with the ethnic Turkish minority, obtained 12.8% of the vote (+2.3 pp). The smallest party represented in the new parliament, the pro-Russian nationalists of the "Revival" party, obtained 4.8% (+1.8 pp).

"Continuing Change" was founded by Kiril Petkov and Asen Vasilev, two ministers in the technical government set up on May 12. The two men are entrepreneurs and economists, as well as Harvard University graduates. Their list won with the technical support of three small parties, Volt (European federalists, Greens/EFA), "European Middle Class" (pro-European liberals) and the social democratic PDS. Immediately after the election, PP announced its desire to launch coalition negotiations with ITN and Democratic Bulgaria. A four-party coalition with the social democrats of the BSP would control a solid majority in parliament.

The first round of presidential elections was also held in parallel with the general elections. President Rumen Radev (independent), whose role in organizing this chaotic political year was central, narrowly missed out on direct re-election with 49.4 per cent of the vote. He was supported by the BSP, PP, ITN and "Stand up BG". GERB candidate Anastas Gerdzhikov came second with 22.8% of the vote, followed by Mustafa Karadayi (DPS) with 11.6% – a very good score for the party. About 20 other candidates obtained between 0.1 and 4% of the vote. Rumen Radev won the second round on November 21 with 66.7 per cent of the vote against 31.8 per cent for Anastas Gerdzhikov.

These elections mark a new stage in the recomposition of the Bulgarian political landscape. After failing to form a government, the ITN party and its leader Slavi Trifonov, a former television star, suffered a severe setback. Led by two more technocratic and international profiles, "Let's continue the change" concentrated the hopes of the anti-corruption electorate who was eager to turn the page of the Borissov era. The new party appeared to have more room for manoeuvre to achieve this.

Meanwhile, the two former major parties of the centre-left (BSP) and the right (GERB) bring together roughly one-third of the electorate, whereas they had gathered 60 per cent of the vote in 2017. A coalition between PP, BSP, ITN and DB was finally formed in December 2021 under the leadership of Kiril Petkov.

François Hublet



