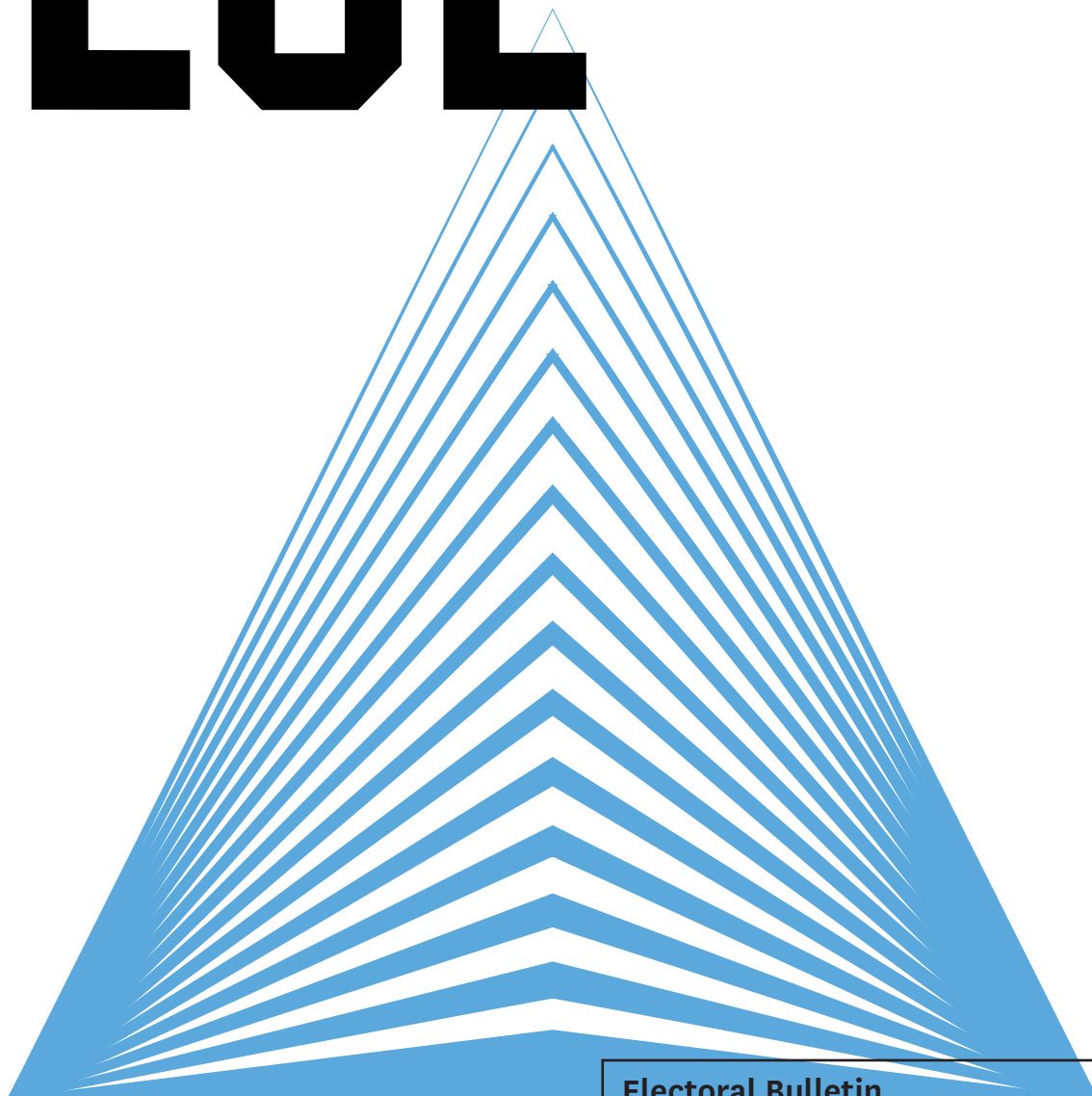


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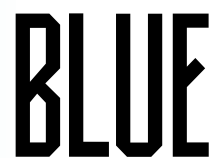
Elections in Europe :
2022

BLUE



Electoral Bulletin
of the European Union

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Elections in Europe: 2022

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The year 2022 will probably go down in history as a year of great violence, of utmost international tension, and of considerable global uncertainty. Not only did Russia's war against Ukraine bring back mass killings and the specter of a nuclear confrontation on the top of the European agenda. As further evidence of irreversible climate and environmental damage accumulates, the tragic events of a year of war are unlikely to be more than a foretaste of the coming century's challenges.

The immense global risks call for a renewal of political practices. The integration of mutually interdependent local, national, and regional communities in a global political network is no grand design for the future; rather, it is a fact of the present. Whether this integration will eventually prove destructive or constructive, conducive or detrimental to life and autonomy, largely depends on our capacity to understand, acknowledge, and manage common responsibilities.

Continental organizations can play a key role in this process. Without access to qualitative cross-border political information, however, a continental citizenry as fragmented as Europe's cannot even start to acknowledge the common challenges it faces. Developing a genuine mutual understanding requires transcending national communicational spheres, taking into account local, regional, and national dynamics alike, and going beyond a Brussels-centric view to appreciate European politics in its diversity.

It is in this spirit that, over the course of the past two years, BLUE's authors and editors have strived to contribute to a better understanding of European politics. For the first time, the present issue compiles in a single volume summary analyses of all major regional and national elections in the European Union and its neighborhood over the course of a calendar year. Written by academic experts from all over the EU and beyond, accompanied by a wealth of exclusive graphs and maps, meant to be understandable by both interested citizens and researchers, these texts together compose a unique panorama of the political year 2022.

BLUE's editorial team wishes you an informative and enjoyable read.

François Hublet • Editor-in-chief

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The Continental Review

A comparative analysis
of elections in Europe

01

The Continental Review

Evolution of the results of European groups

We open this summary with an analysis of the evolution of the balance of power between the different European political families in 2022. For this purpose, the results of national and regional parties are aggregated according to their groups in the European Parliament.¹ Figure a shows the overall change in the share of votes obtained by each group with respect to the previous election, weighted by the number of voters in each region or state.²

Overall, this year has seen a weakening of the traditional center-left (S&D) and center-right (EPP) groups, while the Greens and regionalists (Greens/EFA), and the neonationalist right (ECR) gained votes. The radical left (GUE/NGL) experienced a downward trend in many regions – with the notable exception of France –, while the historical group of the European far-right (ID) suffered important overall losses.

In most ballots, the radical left parties in the GUE/NGL group are losing ground, confirming the negative trends of the previous year. The sharpest declines were observed in Saarland (-8 pp), where Die Linke seems to have lost its historical bulwark, Portugal (-5.5 pp), and Slovenia (-4.9 pp). Only the French presidential elections saw a rebound, despite scattered candidacies, making for a slightly positive overall trend (+0,5 pp); the group saw a gain of 4.3 pp in the first round, but was unable to qua-

lify a candidate to the second round. In the French general elections, the LFI (GUE/NGL) party took the lead in the electoral alliance New Popular, Ecological and Social Union (NUPES) coming in second place in the second round, a gain of 19.73 pp compared to the results of PCF (GUE/NGL), LFI (GUE/NGL), PS (S&D) and EELV (Greens/EFA) in 2017.

The Green and regionalist parties in the Greens/EFA group are up for the third consecutive quarter, with an average gain of 3.6 pp. Gaining ground in all elections in which they were present except in Portugal (-1.9 pp), Hungary (where the LMP party ran in a coalition, making it impossible to assess its individual performance) and the Austrian state of Tyrol, the Greens experienced strong growth in North Rhine-Westphalia (+11.76 pp), Schleswig-Holstein (+7.94 pp), Lower Saxony (+6,33 pp) and France (+4.63 pp). The Green president of Austria, Alexander Van der Bellen, was reelected in the first round of voting in a landslide victory (56,7%).

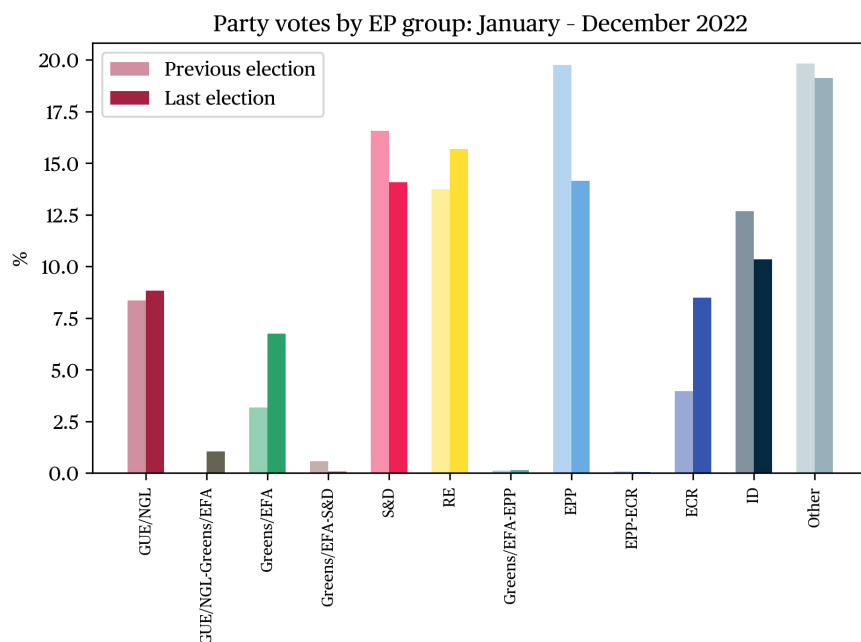
After six months of relative stability, the Social Democratic S&D group again suffered significant losses, averaging 2.5 pp. The group's vote share went down in Latvia (-15 pp), Schleswig-Holstein (-11.6 pp), France (-4.6 pp), Castilla y León (-4.9 pp), and North Rhine-Westphalia (-4.6 pp). The Social Democrats, however, had three spectacular victories – each time gaining an absolute majority – in Portugal (+4.3 pp), Malta (+0.1 pp), and Saarland (+13.9 pp), three historical S&D strongholds. They consolidated their majority in Denmark in the snap elections, giving the outgoing minority government a (theoretical) outright majority (+1.6 pp).

Despite significant losses in some regions, the liberal-centrists of the Renew Europe (RE) group gain 1,9 pp on average. Defeats in Andalusia (-15,2 pp), Denmark (-15 pp), Castilla y León (-10.6 pp), Latvia (-7 pp), North Rhine-Westphalia (-6.4 pp) and Schleswig-Holstein (-4.9 pp) are offset by more modest successes, albeit in larger electoral contests, in France (+3.8 pp in the presidential election in April, but with incumbent Macron obtaining only a minority government after the June parliamentary elections), Portugal (+3.9 pp) and Saarland (+2.8 pp), and only one clear victory, that of Robert Golob's Freedom movement in Slovenia (+13.9 pp for all RE-affiliated parties). Hence, this good overall performance, which newly places RE ahead of all other groups with 15,7% of the vote, is more fragile than what vote figures suggest. When considering only parliamentary and regional elections, the RE group suffers a net loss of seats.

The European People's Party (EPP) has experienced major setbacks, losing 5,6 pp on average. Apart from the reelection of the conservative Latvian government (+12,45 pp), their only victories were in local elections, first in Andalusia (+22,5 pp), and later in the German *Länder* of

1. In order to facilitate inter-semester comparison within the EU, all numbers presented below exclude elections in Northern Ireland and Bosnia-and-Herzegovina and local elections in the Netherlands, which are dealt with in a special section of this issue.

2. In Figure a, the results of all elections discussed in this issue are weighted by the number of votes, excluding the ballots in Finland (for which there is no previous history) as well as France (presidential 2nd round and parliamentary), Sicily (regional) and Tyrol (regional) to avoid double counts..



neral election saw the strongest increase in the vote share of non-affiliated parties (+23 pp), via the appearance of two new parties in June 2022: the Moderates, a split from the Liberal Party, which came in third place, and the Danish Democrats, a split from the Danish People's Party, which came in fifth place. These two new parties, if they join a European group, would be close to the positions of RE and the EPP respectively. Owing to the presence of ultranationalist candidate Éric Zemmour, the French presidential election also saw a strong increase in the score of non-affiliated parties (+7.8 pp).

North Rhine-Westphalia (+3.0 pp) and Schleswig-Holstein (+10.0 pp), where incumbent Minister-President Daniel Günther saw his popularity confirmed. All other elections resulted in losses, some of them severe: in France (-15.2 pp), Saarland (-12.1 pp), Slovenia (-4.4 pp), Portugal (-2.1 pp) and Malta (-1.9 pp), the electoral weight of traditional right-wing parties declined.

Despite competing in only 8 elections in BLUE's main program, the national-conservative ECR group was by far the biggest winner of this electoral year, with +4.5 pp on average. The neonationalists within the ECR celebrated a series of major successes with Fratelli d'Italia's victory at the general election (+20.7 pp), the second place of the Sweden Democrats (+15.1 pp), the victory of the FI/Lega/FdI coalition in Sicily, and the good results of Vox in Castilla y León (+12.3 pp). Giorgia Meloni (FdI) now leads the Italian government, while in Sicily, Castilla y León and Sweden, an ECR member party is part of the parliamentary majority in a coalition with the center-right.

The far-right ID group continues its decline (-2.3 pp). Despite significant gains in Portugal (+6.0 pp), France (+1.9 pp in the first round of the presidential elections, 7.7 pp in the second, +5.6 pp in the first round of the general election, +8.5 pp in the second), in the Austrian state of Tyrol (+3.3 pp) and the German state of Lower Saxony (+4.8 pp) at the expense of the traditional center-right, the group has faced hard setbacks. They declined in the three other German *Länder* that voted this year (from -0.5 to -2.0 pp), in the Austrian presidential election (-17.3 pp), in the Italian general election (-9.2 pp) and the Danish general election (-6.1 pp).

Non-affiliated parties and cross-group coalitions lost slightly (-0.7 pp), but their vote share remains higher than that of any EP group. Outside of Hungary, the Danish ge-

Parties entering and exiting regional and national parliaments

With the exception of those in North Rhine-Westphalia, Malta, Sicily, Sweden and Tyrol, all parliamentary elections in the first semester of 2022 saw parties entering or leaving the respective regional or national legislatures.

Slovenia was the country with the most party upheaval. Between the elections of 2022 and 2018, nine new parties from the centre, the right, the environmental movement and also a conspiracy-inspired party in reaction to the anti-covid19 policy competed in the general elections. Only the Movement for Freedom, which brought together a large coalition of centrist parties, made it into parliament by winning the elections against the outgoing right-wing Prime Minister, Janez Janša, who was accused of undermining the rule of law and press freedom in the country. The Slovenian Pensioners' Interest Party left parliament, dropping from around 5% to less than 1%, which was not enough to remain in the Slovenian parliament.

In Latvia, the parliamentary elections saw the entry of three parties and the exit of four others. The Russian minority and Eurosceptic party For Stability, founded in 2021, entered parliament with 11 seats and a score of 6.9%. The right-wing populist party Latvia First, founded in 2021, also entered parliament with 9 seats (6.3%). The Progressives (Greens), who had failed to win a seat in the 2018 elections manage to enter parliament with 6.2% of the vote (10 seats). The Conservatives (-16 seats), Harmony (S&D, Russian minority interests, -23 seats), For Development (RE, centrism, -13 seats) and For a Humane Latvia (populist right, -16 seats) all lost representation in the Latvian parliament, failing to reach the 5% mark.

In the French National Assembly, the NUPES coalition

enabled Europe Écologie Les Verts (EELV) to obtain 23 seats, allowing it to make a comeback in the National Assembly after a gap between 2017 and 2022 when there was no group representing this party. While the National Rally (far right) already had just under 10 seats between 2017 and 2022, the breakthrough in June 2022 allows the party to be fully represented in the National Assembly and to have a group.

In Bulgaria, where a general election was held for the fourth time in 18 months, the anti-corruption party There is such a people, founded in 2020 with the aim of fighting corruption and which had previously finished second in the April 2021 general elections (17.4% of the vote, 51 seats), then 1st in the July 2021 early elections (24.1%, 65 seats), only to fall to 5th place in November 2021 (9.4%, 25 seats), obtained only 3.7% of the vote, losing all of their seats in parliament. The national-conservative party Bulgarian Awakening, founded in May 2022 by former Prime Minister Stefan Yanev, entered parliament with 12 seats and 4.5% of the vote.

In Hungary, the far-right party Our Homeland, founded by dissidents of Jobbik, a former ultranationalist party but which has made its aggiornamento towards the conservative right, and which then guided the coalition of the United Opposition against Viktor Orban, entered the Hungarian Parliament winning 6 seats.

In Portugal, where early elections were held following the collapse of the left-wing coalition, the center-right Popular Party, which held 5 seats, lost its representation in the Portuguese Parliament, dropping from just under 5% to 1.60%.

Italy's early general election on September 25 saw the regionalist and populist party Sud chiama Nord ("South Calls North"), founded in 2022 by former Messina mayor Cateno de Luca, win one seat in the Italian Chamber of Deputies and one in the Senate. The centrist "Third pole" coalition Azione-Italia Viva (RE), an alliance between Carlo Calenda's Action Party and Matteo Renzi's Italia Viva, confirms its presence in the Chamber of Deputies (21 seats) and the Senate (9 seats).

Following the snap elections held in November, two parties are newly present in the Danish parliament: the Moderates (liberalism, centre-right) with 16 seats (9.3%) and the Danish Democrats (populist right, euroscepticism) with 14 seats (7.9%).

Ciudadanos (center-right) continues its process of disappearance from the Spanish political scene, but manages to save a meager representation in the regional parliament of Castilla y León, going down from 12 seats to 1. In Andalusia, Ciudadanos loses all of its 21 seats after obtaining only 3% of the vote, compared to 18.3% in the 2018

regional elections. The movement for the defense of the interests of rural Spain, "Empty Spain," obtained 3 seats and entered the regional parliament of Castilla y León.

Finally, in Schleswig-Holstein, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AFD) party leaves the regional parliament, losing its 5 seats acquired in the 2017 elections. In Lower Saxony, the FDP (RE) left the regional parliament by failing to pass the 5% threshold, losing the 11 seats it held.

Outside the Union, the general election in Bosnia-Herzegovina saw six new parties gaining parliamentary representation: the centre-right People and Justice party with three seats (5%), the pro-European European Union of Citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina party with 3% and two seats. Finally, 4 parties obtained one seat each with about 2% of the vote: Justice and Order (Serbian nationalism), Initiative of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Pro-EU), Serbian Unity (Serbian nationalism), and the Democratic Union (Serbian conservatism).

In Northern Ireland, the Green Party, which does not take a position on the institutional future of Northern Ireland, lost its 2 seats and joined the extra-parliamentary opposition. The party had had seats in the Northern Ireland Parliament since 2007. Between 2016 and 2022, the party obtained between 16,000 and 18,000 votes without making any progress.

Turnout

In the period covered by this issue, the average voter turnout decreased. This trend affected several crucial elections, despite Europe facing major crises.

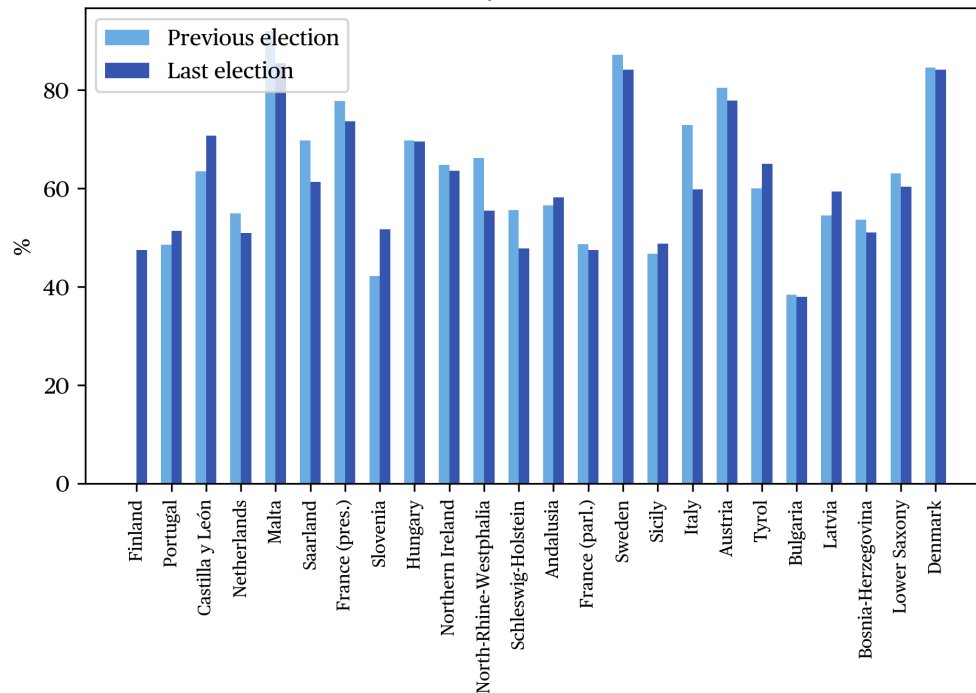
In France, two major elections took place between April and June 2022: the presidential election on April 10 and 24, and the legislative election on June 12 and 19.

The two rounds of the presidential election attracted fewer voters than in 2017. There was a -4.1 pp drop for the first round compared to the last election, and a -2.6 pp drop for the second round. As the war in Ukraine began, incumbent President Emmanuel Macron ran a relatively low-key campaign, and there were fewer public debates between candidates. This produced a form of 'non-campaigning' which was abundantly discussed in the French media.

As regards the legislative election, no clear trend emerges. Turnout was down -1.2 pp in the first round compared to the 2017 election, but up 3.6 pp in the second round. However, turnout remains very low, below 50%.

In Portugal, an early parliamentary election was held after the Left Bloc (BE) and the Unitary Democratic Coalition (including the Greens and the Portuguese Commu-

Turnout, January 2022 – December 2022



nist Party) withdrew their non-participatory support for António Costa's Socialist government. The turnout in this crucial general election increased slightly compared to 2019, exceeding the symbolic threshold of 50%: it gained +2.9 pp from 48.6% to 51.4%.

In Hungary, turnout remained stable at 69% as Victor Orbán succeeded in mobilizing his electorate, in particular by organizing, on the same day, a referendum on issues of sexual education, officially aimed at ending the alleged “promotion of homosexuality and transidentity” in Hungarian schools.

In Malta, despite a well above-average turnout in a European comparison (85.4%), voter mobilization decreased. The March 26, 2022 election saw the lowest turnout since 1955, down 6.6 pp from the 2017 election.

Despite high stakes, turnout in the Italian general elections was much lower than in 2018 (-9 pp). On the same date, early elections were called for the renewal of the Sicilian Regional Assembly. Due to general elections taking place the same day, turnout was higher than in the last election, with a slight increase of +2.1 pp.

In Germany, four regional elections were held in 2022, which all saw severe drops in turnout. In Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein, turnout plunged by more than 8 points (-8.1 pp and -8.8 pp respectively) compared to the previous elections, falling below the 50% mark in the latter. In North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), turnout fell even more sharply, losing more than 10 percentage points (-10.6 pp). The loss in participation was more moderate in Lower Saxony (-2.8 pp, at 60.31%).

In Austria, the election for President of the Republic, whose executive power is limited, was nevertheless marked by relatively high turnout (65.19%), down by 3.3 pp.

In Bulgaria, turnout, although low in historical comparison, was up by +0.9 pp in October compared to the previous election in November 2021.

The election renewing the Northern Ireland Assembly saw for the first time the Republican and Irish nationalist party Sinn Féin come out on top, in a context where participation remained relatively stable, falling by only -1.2 pp.

In Finland, the first elections for the new regional councils were held on January 23, 2022. Less than half of all voters turned out to vote (47.5%).

In Denmark, two important electoral moments took place in 2022. In the referendum on ending the opt-out from participation in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in the European Union, turnout was 65.8%, with a large majority in favor – given the complexity of the matter, such a high turnout is noteworthy. Early general elections were also held on November 1, 2022 for the renewal of the Folketing, the Danish parliament. Turnout remained relatively stable (and high), at 84.2%, down by only 0.4 pp.

Finally, municipal elections were held in the Netherlands. The turnout was historically low, at just over 50%, whereas figures in previous elections were usually around 55%. The large parties dominating the Dutch political scene (VVD, CDA, and the Socialist Party) have seen a considerable decline in their vote shares, with more local par-

ties gaining ground.

In contrast to this overall trend, five elections showed a significant increase in turnout, in Slovenia (parliamentary and presidential), Castilla y León, Latvia, and Tyrol.

In the Slovenian parliamentary elections, turnout rose by 18.3 pp from 52.6% to 71.0%. A presidential election was also held on October 23 (first round) and November 13 (second round). Turnout was up sharply in the first round (+8.2 pp), and in the second round (+11.8 pp).

In the regional elections in Castilla y León, voters turned out in large numbers. Turnout on February 13, 2022, increased by more than 10 points compared to the 2019 election, partly to increased mobilization around the future of the region's rural areas. In contrast, in Andalusia, turnout went up only slightly (+1.6 pp).

In Latvia, the election campaign saw a confrontation between a camp described as “pro-Western” and another described as “pro-Russian.” A significant increase in participation was observed, with turnout rising to almost 60% (+5.1 pp).

Finally, in Tyrol, a snap election was called following the resignation of the regional governor. The turnout was up by 5 points, and the outgoing coalition lost its absolute majority.

Urban-rural divide

BLUE constructed an indicator to measure the polarization of the vote between urban and rural areas. Given

the aggregate vote shares u_p, \dots, u_p of the parties in the urban electorate and the aggregate vote shares r_p, \dots, r_p of these same parties in the rural electorate (in percent), we consider

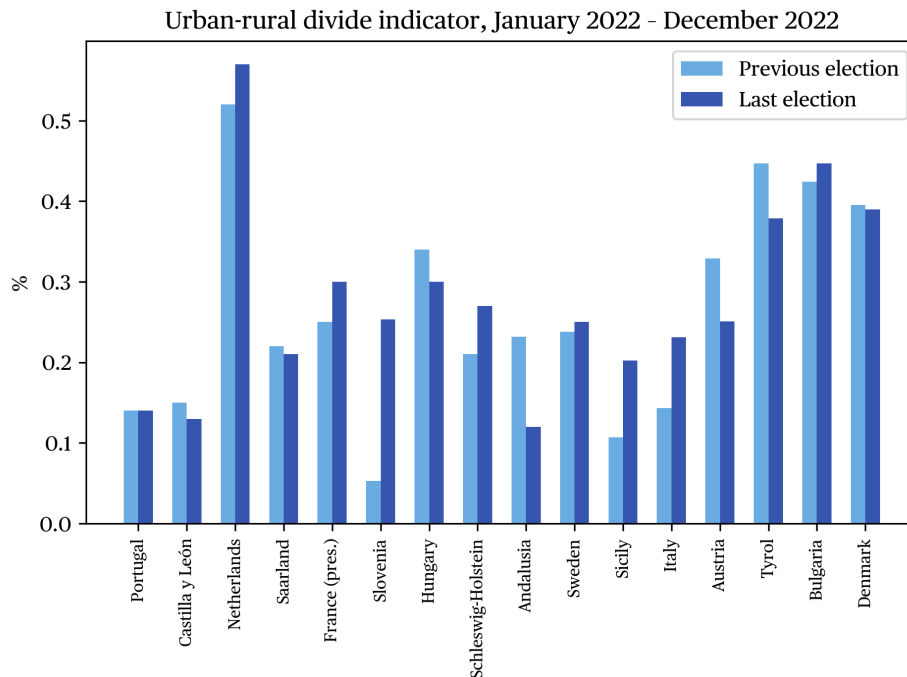
$$1/2 (|r_1 - u_1| + \dots + |r_p - u_p|).$$

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.

For most of the elections covered by this issue, our indicator remained stable. The main exception concerns the Dutch municipal elections, where the indicator is also much higher than in other regions. In fact, 57% of urban voters voted differently from rural voters. In these municipal elections, which showed the lowest turnout since 1955, the rural/urban divide increased even further, by 5 pp.

In the French presidential elections, the gap also widened, increasing by 6 pp from 24% in the previous election of 2017, to 30% in 2022. A clear divide could be observed between the larger metropolises, where support for Jean-Luc Mélenchon was high, the countryside in the North and South of the country which rather voted for Marine Le Pen, and the West of France dominated by the Macron vote. The 2022 election thus saw a deepening of the trends already observed in 2017.

In the Italian general election, the picture is relatively similar. There was an increase of 8 pp, with the indicator rising from 14% to 23%. In the Sicilian regional elections,



c • Urban-rural divide indicator in elections from December 2021 to May 2022 and in previous elections

d • Results of the statistical model at NUTS 3 level

Group	Positive effect	Negative effect	R ²
GUE/NGL	Pop. density*** Birth rate*** Med. age***	Net migr.** Unemploy- ment* GDP/capita PPP**	0.87
Greens/EFA	Net migr.** GDP/capita PPP***	Birth rate** Med. age ***	0.97
S&D	Med. age** GDP/capita PPP**	Unemployment* GDP growth***	0.90
RE		Sec. educ.** Unemployment**	0.80
EPP	Net migr.* Unemploy- ment*** GDP growth*		0.90
ECR		Unemployment*** GDP/capita PPP*	0.94
ID		Pop. dens.*** Birth rate*** Med. age*** Sec. educ.** Unemployment***	0.91
Other / Non-Inscrits	Unemployment***	Net migr.* Birth rate** GDP/capita PPP**	0.89

*** 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.

422 NUTS 3 regions: 35 AT, 38 BG, 21 DE, 17 ES, 18 FI, 99 FR, 20 HU, 107 IT, 6 LV, 2 MT, 25 PT, 21 S, 12 SI

Notes:

- a) The elections in North-Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony could not be included in the dataset, since results had not yet been published below the constituency level, and one constituency may span several NUTS3 units.
- b) Lists mixing several EP groups were ignored.
- c) Local elections in the Netherlands and regional elections in Sicily, Tyrol and were not included.
- d) For FR, only the first round of the presidential election is considered.

the indicator also increased from 10% to 20%. The 2022 elections have thus seen a strengthening of the rural-urban divide in Italy.

In Slovenia, the gap only widened slightly by +2 pp, with the indicator raising from 29% to 31%. Overall, the electoral divide between urban and rural voters remained relatively stable. The same holds of the parliamentary elections in Portugal, where the indicator is relatively low (14%), Sweden (25%), Denmark (39%), and Bulgaria (44%, +2 pp). For the Danish opt-out referendum, we do not have a previous point of comparison, but the gap is very small, at 8%.

Hungary, on the other hand, stands out for a decrease in the vote gap between urban and rural voters. In these parliamentary elections, won by incumbent Viktor Orbán, the indicator has dropped by -4 pp, from 34% in 2018, to 30% in April 2022 election.

In Austria, the gap has also shrunk in the presidential election, as the indicator decreased by 8 pp down to 25%. As similar trend can be observed in the Tyrolean regional ballot (-7 pp).

In Germany, the results of two regional elections can be analyzed, in Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein. In Saarland, the indicator fell slightly, losing -1 pp, from 22% to 21%. In Schleswig-Holstein, on the other hand, it increased by 6 pp, to 27%; the divide has thus been reinforced in this state.

After an electoral campaign marked by the issue of rural exodus, Castilla y León showed a decrease in the gap, which was already very low in the last election. The indicator declined by 2 pp compared to the last regional elections, to 13%. The gap shrinks even more strongly in Andalusia, reaching only 12% (-11 p).

Socio-economic determinants of the vote

Figure d shows the results of an OLC regression model measuring the effect of seven socio-economic variables observed at the NUTS 2 or NUTS 3 level³ on the vote for the various European groups.

The vote for the radical-left GUE/NGL group is characterized by a significantly higher prevalence in high-density, high-birth rate, and older regions, and a significantly lower prevalence in areas with high net migration, unemployment, and GDP per capita.

The profile of the Greens/EFA group shows almost entirely inverse effects: a lower age or birth rate positively affects their vote share, as does a high net migration rate or GDP per capita. Overall, the Greens/EFA appear to be overrepresented in affluent, attractive, and younger areas, while the GUE/NGL group performs better in dense areas whose population is older and less affluent, but where unemployment remains comparatively low.

The S&D obtain more votes in older, prosperous regions, while their vote share is negatively affected by both unemployment and economic dynamism (measured by GDP growth). In contrast, the EPP appears to perform better in growing, but high-unemployment regions with a positive net migration rate.

On the other hand, unemployment affects negatively the vote share of the RE and ECR groups, which however seem to perform better in areas with lower educational attainment levels (for RE) and lower GDP per capita (for ECR). This is untypical of urban environments and more typical of environments featuring an intermediate level of economic development.

The far-right ID group is more successful in low-density, low-birth rate, younger, less-educated and lower-unemployment areas. These features can be matched with peripheral, less-attractive areas facing limited economic

3. Namely: population density, birth rate, median age, net migration rate, unemployment rate, GDP per capita (PPP), growth of GDP per capita (PPP), share of individuals with secondary education.

difficulties, and make for an overall profile diametrically opposed to that of the far-left.

Finally, unaffiliated parties obtain more votes in areas with high unemployment, low net migration rates, low birth rates, and low GDP per capita, which is typical of structurally weaker regions. These parties, which may be either new or located at one end of the political spectrum (most frequently far-right), appear to grow stronger in regions facing the biggest economical and social challenges.

Autonomy — independence

The historic victory of Sinn Féin (far left, Irish nationalist) in Northern Ireland, taking advantage of the partial collapse of the Democratic Unionist Party (radical right, unionist) to become the leading political force in the region, is a major development in Northern Irish politics. For the first time since the formal independence of the Republic of Ireland in 1922, republicans have been able to win in this historically Protestant and unionist region. If Sinn Féin hopes to capitalise on this victory and accelerate the unification of the island, the result of the nationalist party is not a plebiscite and should be put in perspective with the emergence of a third non-partisan party, positioned in the centre of the political spectrum. By obtaining 17 seats, 9 more than in the 2017 elections, the Alliance wants to be a pivotal force in Northern Irish politics, especially as the issue of the Northern Ireland Protocol, allowing the free movement of goods and people between the North and the South of the island of Ireland, is at the heart of political tensions in the region. While the Unionists would like to denounce the agreement, the Nationalists and the Alliance are keen to preserve it for reasons of identity, culture and trade.

In the French National Assembly, the Corsican autonomists of Femu a Corsica and Partitu di a nazione corsa keep the 3 seats out of 4 obtained in June 2017. The 1st constituency of Corse-du-Sud remains in the hands of the insular right, allied to the party of former Prime Minister Edouard Philippe. The 3 autonomist deputies will undoubtedly be part of the negotiations on the institutional future of Corsica initiated following the unprecedented riots in Corsica in March 2022, following the death in prison of pro-independence militant Yvan Colonna, murdered by a fellow prisoner. Brittany officially elects Paul Molac, who ran under the regionalist banner, formerly a Socialist MP and then LREM. He left the LREM group during the 2017-2022 legislature to form the “Liberté et Territoires” group with centrists and Corsican autonomists. In the overseas territories, the Tahitian and Martinique independence parties and the Reunionese regionalists also obtained seats and strengthened the NUPES coalition (left to far left) in the National Assembly.

In Sicily, the Movement for Autonomy, a member of

the centre-right coalition of President Renato Schifani, maintains its presence in the regional parliament with three seats, while regionalist Sud chiama Nord (SCN) newly holds eight seats. In the Italian general elections, the various autonomist currents (in the Aosta Valley, South Tyrol, and Southern Italy) maintained their overall influence in the two houses of parliament: the Union valdôtaine (Greens/EFA) holds one seat in the Chamber, the South Tyrolean People's party (SVP, EPP) holds three seats in the Chamber and two in the Senate, and SCN controls one seat in each house.

Anti-corruption movements

While corruption issues were discussed in the campaign preceding some of the elections, most notably Hungary, Slovenia, Malta, and Bulgaria, it seems that only in Slovenia these accusations translated into concrete political change.

There are obvious corruption issues in Hungary, additionally to breaches in the rule of law and biases in the campaign funding. Yet the anti-Orbán coalition did not manage to become a credible anti-corruption movement and they eventually lost the election – as Eszter Farkas explains, this can be explained, among others, by the different parties themselves not being free of corruption scandals.

In Slovenia, whose political scene has been characterized by relative political instability since 2008, several corruption scandals emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as allegations of meddling with independent state institutions. This led to anti-government protests centered on anti-corruption demands, which especially targeted the incumbent populist Prime minister Janez Janša (SDS, EPP) and his inner circle. Janša's government distributed energy vouchers to the general population just two weeks before the election. Relative newcomer Robert Golob (Svoboda, RE), who encouraged anti-government feelings, was eventually elected Prime minister. In the run-up to the election, Golob himself was accused by opponents of having undeclared foreign bank accounts; these allegations, however, seems to have had little impact on his election. A similar scenario unfolded in the presidential election leading to the election of independent president Nataša Pirc Musar.

Malta was shaken by large scale corruption scandals in the past few years. The “Golden Passport Scheme” as well as the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia and the revelations of the Panama and Pandora papers influenced national politics in the last few years and impacted this year's election. Similarly to Slovenia, the Maltese government distributed “supplementary cheques” and offered tax rebates in the weeks prior to the election. Despite consistent negative press on the island, the an-

ti-corruption movement did not manage to capitalize on the dissatisfaction; on the contrary, it seems that citizen's anger rather resulted in abstention, with participation dropping by 7 pp (from 92% to 85%).

In Bulgaria, where accusation of corruption against long-serving Prime minister Boyko Borisov (2009-2022) triggered massive protests in 2020-2021, citizens were called to vote for the fourth time in eighteen months. In the aftermath of the protests, several new political movements emerged, among which TV moderator Slavi Trifonov's There is such a people (ITN, populist) and liberal-centrist Continue the change (PP) led by Harvard graduates Kiril Petkov and Asen Vasilev. The far-right pro-Russian party Revival (NI) also gained ground in the course of 2022. Following a first ballot in April 2021, the incapacity of the various political parties to negotiate a stable government coalition has led to snap elections being held in July and November 2021, as well as in October 2022. The new anti-corruption and former opposition parties mostly reject government collaboration with Borisov's GERB (EPP) party, but are also internally divided between 'Russophiles' and 'Russophobes,' as well as by diverging policy preferences. As of December 2022, the holding of a fourth snap election in early 2023 appears possible.

Overseas territories

Three elections discussed in this issue have taken place in part in Outermost Regions (OMR) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) of the EU: The French presidential and legislative election has been held in all French overseas territories, the Portuguese general election in the Portuguese OMRs of Azores and Madeira, and the Danish general election in the Danish OCT of Greenland.

The result of the vote of French overseas residents diverged strongly from the national average. In the first round of the presidential election, third-placed Jean-Luc Mélenchon (FI, GUE/NGL) won a majority of the vote in three OMRs (Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane) and a plurality in two others (Saint-Martin and Réunion), while in Mayotte – the EU's least developed first-level region –, Marine Le Pen (RN, ID) obtained 43% in the first round. Unlike a majority of left-wing voters in mainland France, and largely due to dissatisfaction with the incumbent's performance after years of unresolved social and political tensions, overseas voters more often supported Le Pen against Macron in the second round, giving her a majority in all OMRs. In two other OCTs located in the Atlantic Ocean (Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon and Saint-Barthélemy), similar trends were observed, while in the Pacific OCTs of French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna, Emmanuel Macron came out on top in both rounds. Turnout was lower than average in all overseas territories,

with the very low figures registered in New Caledonia (35%) largely reflecting pro-independence parties' refusal to participate in the voting process. Overall, the vote of overseas residents highlighted the growing disconnect between metropolitan French dynamics and the public opinion of overseas territories, as well as the dissatisfaction of the latter vis-à-vis central authorities.

In comparison, the electoral behavior in the autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira, whose level of political autonomy is larger than that of their French OMR counterparts, was less distinctive. In the two regions, the PSD (EPP), unlike in other constituencies in the country, ran on a common list with other right-wing parties. The PSD-led coalition won in the Madeira constituency (its only victory in a Portuguese constituency), obtaining its third best result nationwide, while the PS won in the Azores constituency. Both the far-left BE and the far-right Chega underperformed in the two regions.

Much like in the case of Portugal, the results of the Danish snap elections in Greenland demonstrate the relative autonomy of the country has from mainland Danish politics. As part of the Danish Kingdom, Greenland has 2 seats in the 179-strong *Folketing*. Both seats have been controlled by the same two parties since 2001. These parties are both pro-independence and have a left-wing program. As Greenland is not a part of the EU since it left the EEC in 1985, none of them has a European affiliation, although Siumut ("Forward"), the dominant party since Greenland's autonomy in 1979, seats with the Social-Democrats (S&D). In line with their 2021 drop in the Greenlandic parliamentary election, the left-wing nationalists from Inuit Ataqatigiit ("Community of the People") lost votes, finishing second with 24,6% (-8,8 pp). This loss benefited Siumut (37,6%, +8,2 pp), who won the election for the first time in 15 years. The Democrats, the centre-right unionist party affiliated to the Danish Social Liberals (RE), reaffirmed their status as the main unionist party and had their best scores in 17 years, with 18,5% (+7,6pp). As it already was 3 years earlier, voter turnout continued to plummet below 50%, with 47,78% of registered voters participating.

European issues

These elections were also impacted by EU news and developments, and in some cases, their outcome is likely to have consequences for EU decision-making, especially in the European Council.

Firstly, the invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 largely captured media interest, turning the coverage of national and regional elections into a secondary priority. In the Netherlands, Malta or Castilla y León, the elections were less covered by the national press. It is also likely that the onset of the war disserved pro-Russian parties

and those with close ties to the Putin regime – except in the case of Hungary, where Fidesz won a parliamentary majority. The impacts of the war – in particular the European sanctions on Russia, its consequences on supply chains, and the energy situation – were also at the heart of electoral debates within member states. In Hungary, the victory of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party, which since the beginning of the war has pursued a policy of strategic ambiguity towards the Putin regime, threatened European unity. Indeed, while Hungary accepted the first five packages of European sanctions against Moscow, it blocked the adoption of the sixth package, which included an embargo on Russian oil. Hungary finally obtained a temporary exemption for oil imports by pipeline, allowing it to continue buying cheap oil from Russia. Since then, Orbán has met with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in Moscow to discuss the purchase of 700 million cubic meters of gas.

The resurgence of war on European territory has led Denmark to renounce its opt-out clause concerning the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). On June 1, 2022, the referendum on CSDP integration won broad support with 66.87% of the vote. Traditionally Atlanticists, the Danes are now fully participating in the EU's foreign policy.

In the second half of 2022, the war and the resulting energy crisis further monopolized the electoral debates in several states and regions, again relegating national or regional issues to the background. In Bulgaria, the elections were held early due to the fall of the Petkov government, due in part to differences of opinion over support for Ukraine. While the government – especially the PP (-RE) and DB (EPP) parties – wanted to support Ukrainian citizens in a more assertive way, the president, Radev, was in favour of more moderate aid. Similarly, while the government was heavily criticized for diversifying its energy supply sources, driving up the price of electricity, the caretaker government put in place by Radev after the call for early elections tried to reverse the coalition's positions by starting talks with Gazprom to restore gas supplies to Bulgaria.

Beyond the Russian-Ukrainian war, other political trends are also of European relevance. In the following, we underline a) the new nationalist majority in Northern Ireland b) the election of a pro-European presidency in Bosnia and Herzegovina and c) the continued rise of neo-nationalist and eurosceptic parties throughout Europe.

In Northern Ireland, the Irish nationalist Sinn Féin became for the first time the leading party in the Northern Ireland assembly with 27 seats, relegating the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to the second place with 25 seats. After DUP First Minister Paul Givan resigned in February to protest against the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol as part of the Brexit process, his party still

refuses to form a new government unless border controls are abandoned. Although British MPs unilaterally voted to revise the protocol in June, this decision is subject to an infringement procedure by the European Commission, leaving the conflict unresolved. The appointment of a new First Minister in Northern Ireland remains suspended to the renegotiation of the protocol. As of December 2022, the position of First Minister is still vacant.

This issue also features a special analysis dedicated to the presidential and parliamentary elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been a candidate for entry into the Union since 2016, and whose official candidate status was approved by the European Affairs Ministers on December 13, 2022. The election of the collegiate presidency on October 2, 2022 saw the victory of the Bosnian Denis Becirovic, the Croatian Željko Komšić and the Serbian Željka Cvijanović, all three pro-Europeans.

Several eurosceptic, neonationalist, and populist parties gained (additional) parliamentary or government representation in 2022. In Hungary, Fidesz strengthened its position while the far-right parties in Spain and Portugal saw their vote share increase. The second half-year also saw the rise of the far right in Italy and Sweden. In Italy, the parliamentary elections of September 25 were won by the centre-right coalition with 43.82% of the vote. FdI (ECR) obtained 119 seats – 87 more than in 2018 – making its leader Georgia Meloni the new head of government. While she once claimed to be a eurosceptic, Meloni has since then moderated her positions in order to broaden her electoral base. Her FdI party, however, still advocates a restrictive immigration policy and a 'return' to conservative values regarding LGBT and reproductive rights. Similarly, for the renewal of the Riksdag in Sweden, while the Social Democratic Party came out on top with 30.33% of the vote, the nationalist and populist Sweden Democrats managed to come in second, obtaining 20.54% of the vote, 3 points more than in 2018. The party is openly eurosceptic, Islamophobic and anti-immigration.

On the other hand, Volt, a pan-European political party, was represented in the Dutch municipal elections and the Maltese parliamentary elections. In the Netherlands, it was only present in a few municipalities, while in Malta, its result appeared disappointing, partly due to its pro-abortion position which is not consensual on the island. The party currently polls over 10% in the Netherlands, and officially supports the PP coalition in Bulgaria.

Finally, the European news is also marked by the biggest corruption scandal in the history of the European Parliament. Eva Kaili, Vice President of the institution, is defeated from her duties after being indicted for corruption. She is suspected of having received large sums of money from Doha to "influence the political and economic decisions" of the Parliament.

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 candidate 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.

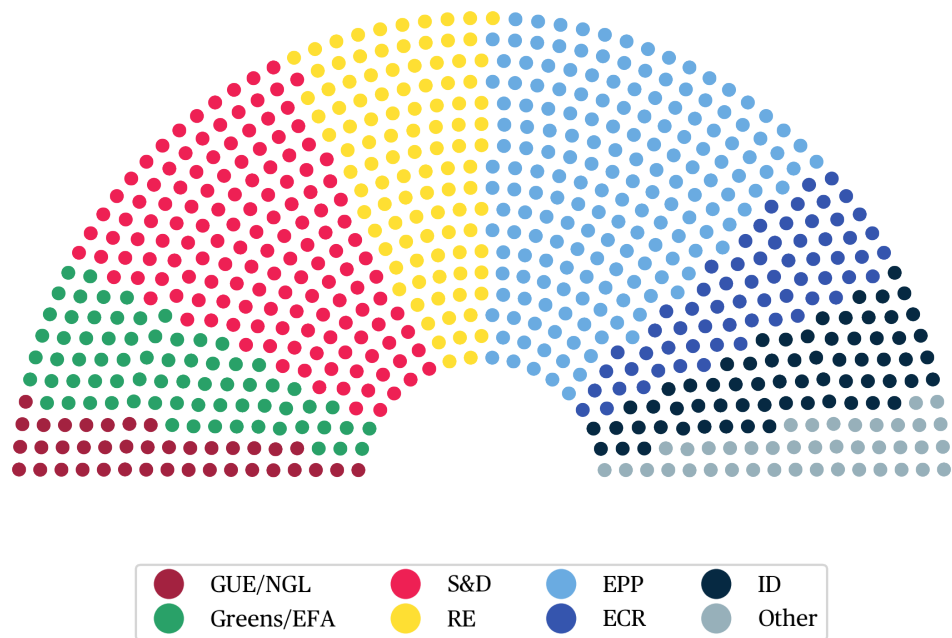
Seats shares of political groups

Group	European Parliament	European Council	European Commission	Member states' Parliaments (lower house)	Regional Parliaments (first level)	M15
GUE/NGL	38 (5%)	-	-	419 (7%) +34	534 (6%) -11	72 (6%) =
Greens/EFA	71 (10%)	-	1 (4%)-	368 (6%) +12	755 (8%) +49	212 (18%) =
S&D	145 (21%)	6 (22%)	9 (33%)	1217 (19%) -43	1811 (20%) -38	336 (28%) =
RE	102 (14%)	6 (22%)	5 (19%)	952 (15%) -106	832 (9%) -68	91 (8%) -13
EPP	176 (25%)	7 (26%)	10 (37%)	1595 (25%) -107	2412 (27%) +50	303 (26%) -1
ECR	63 (9%)	3 (11%)	1 (4%)	655 (10%) +98	587 (7%) +22	46 (4%) -1
ID	64 (9%)	-	-	414 (7%) +21	820 (9%) +1	58 (5%) =
Others/NI	46 (7%)	5 (19%)	1 (4%)	645 (10%) -140	1166 (13%) -4	59 (5%) +15

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.

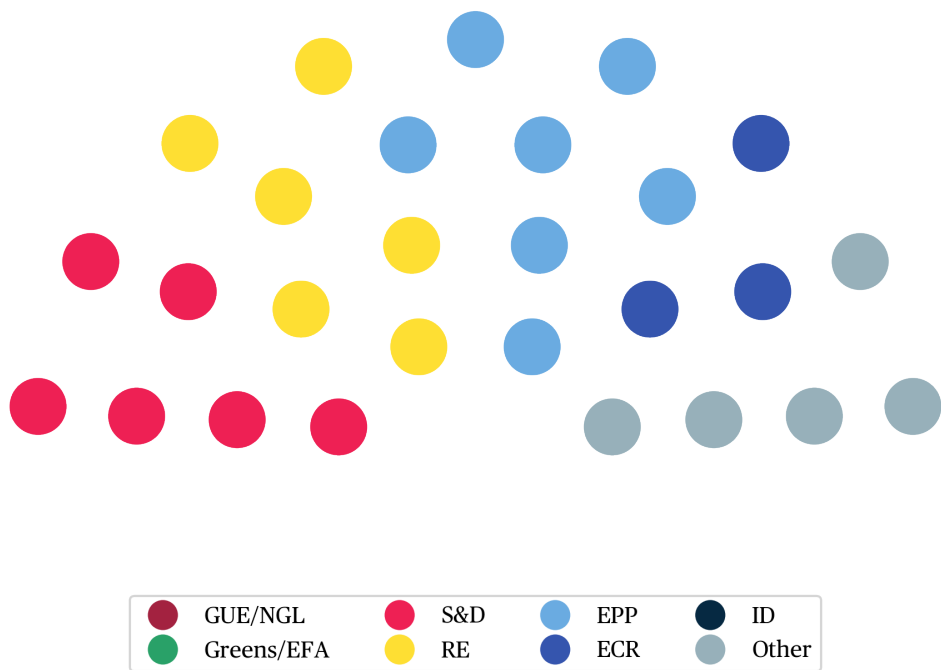
Seat shares of European political families, Jan. 2023

The European Parliament



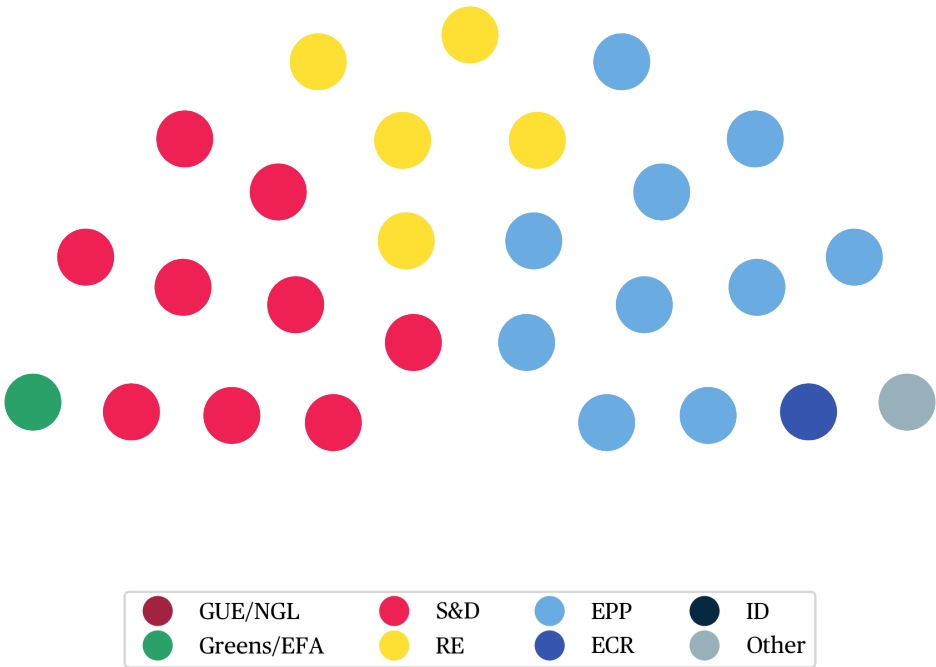
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The European Council

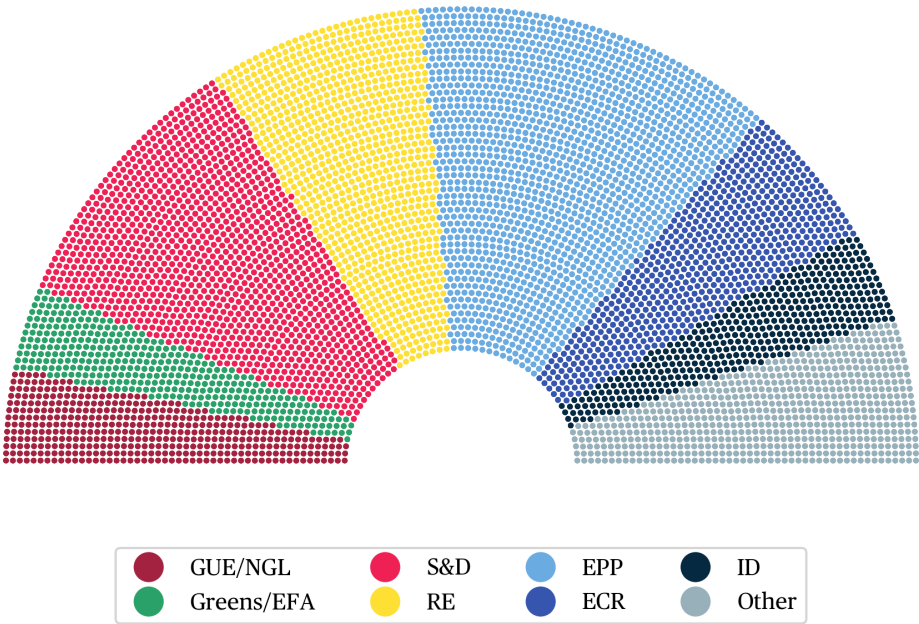


Seat shares of European political families, Jan. 2023

The Commission

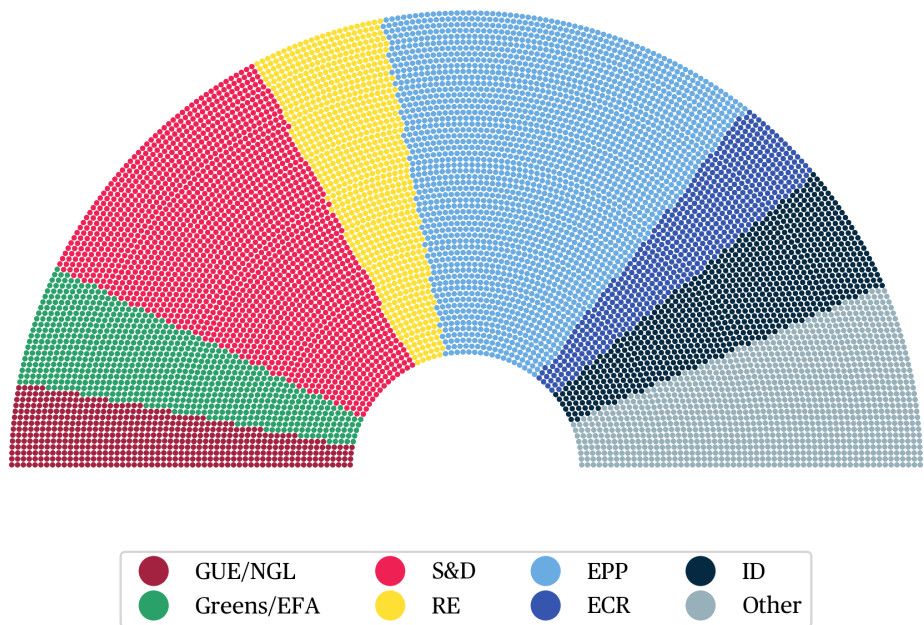


Member states' parliaments

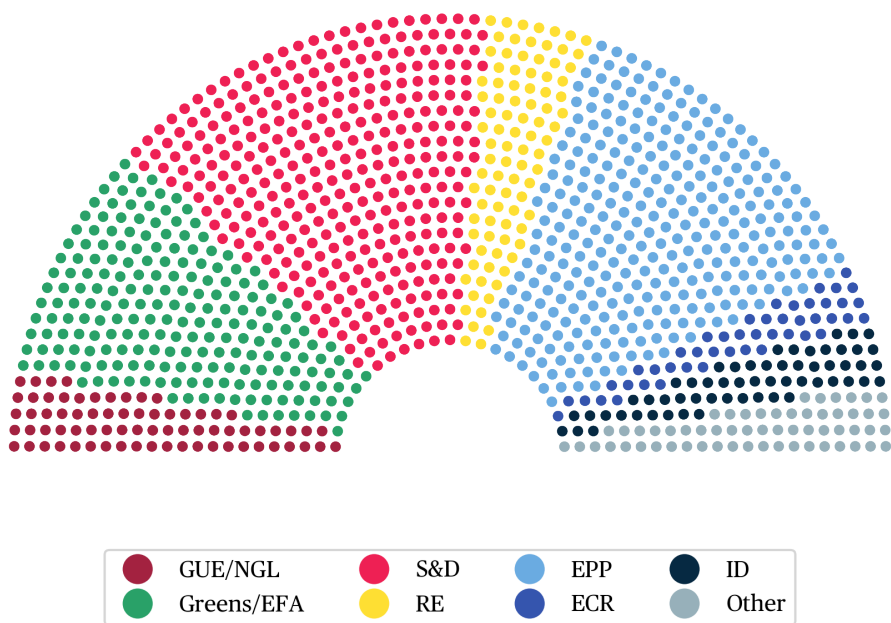


Seat shares of European political families, Jan. 2023

Regional parliaments



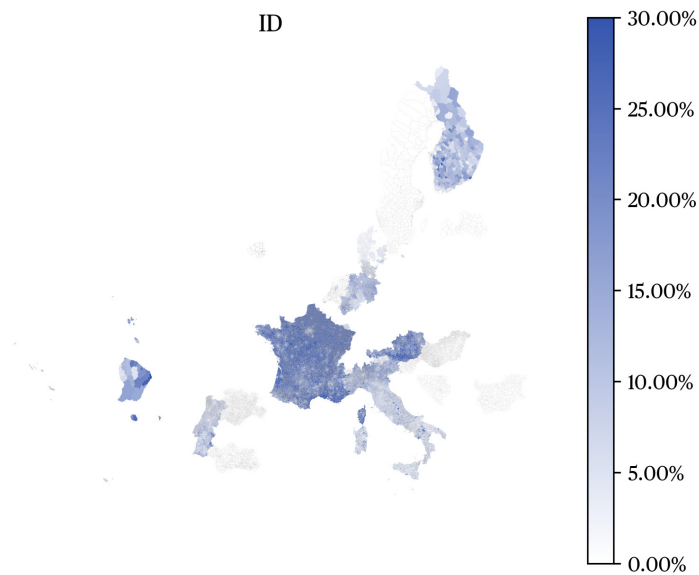
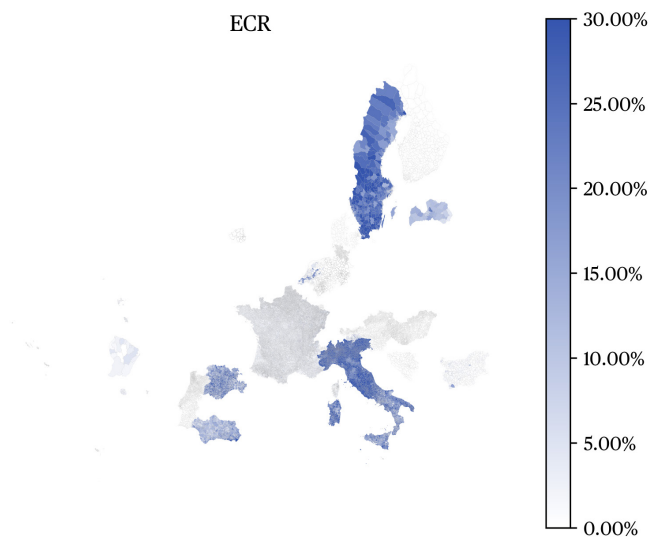
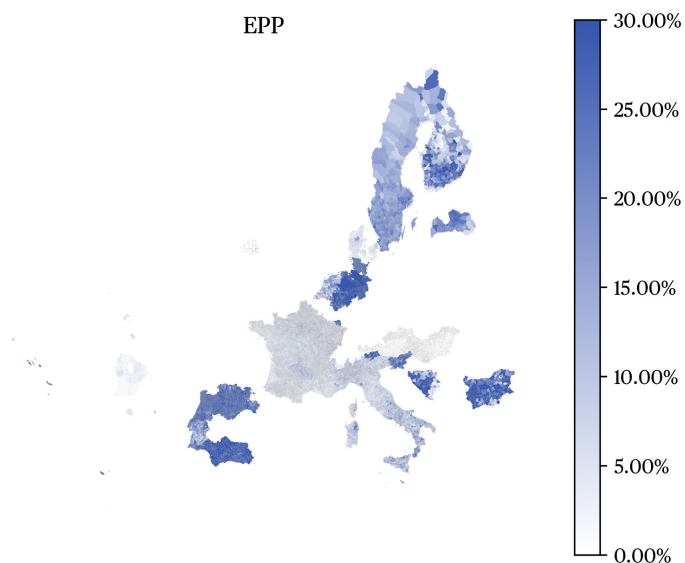
City councils of the EU's 15 cities with over one million inhabitants ("M15")



Scores of European political families, 2022



Scores of European political families, 2022



BLUE #3
January – December 2022

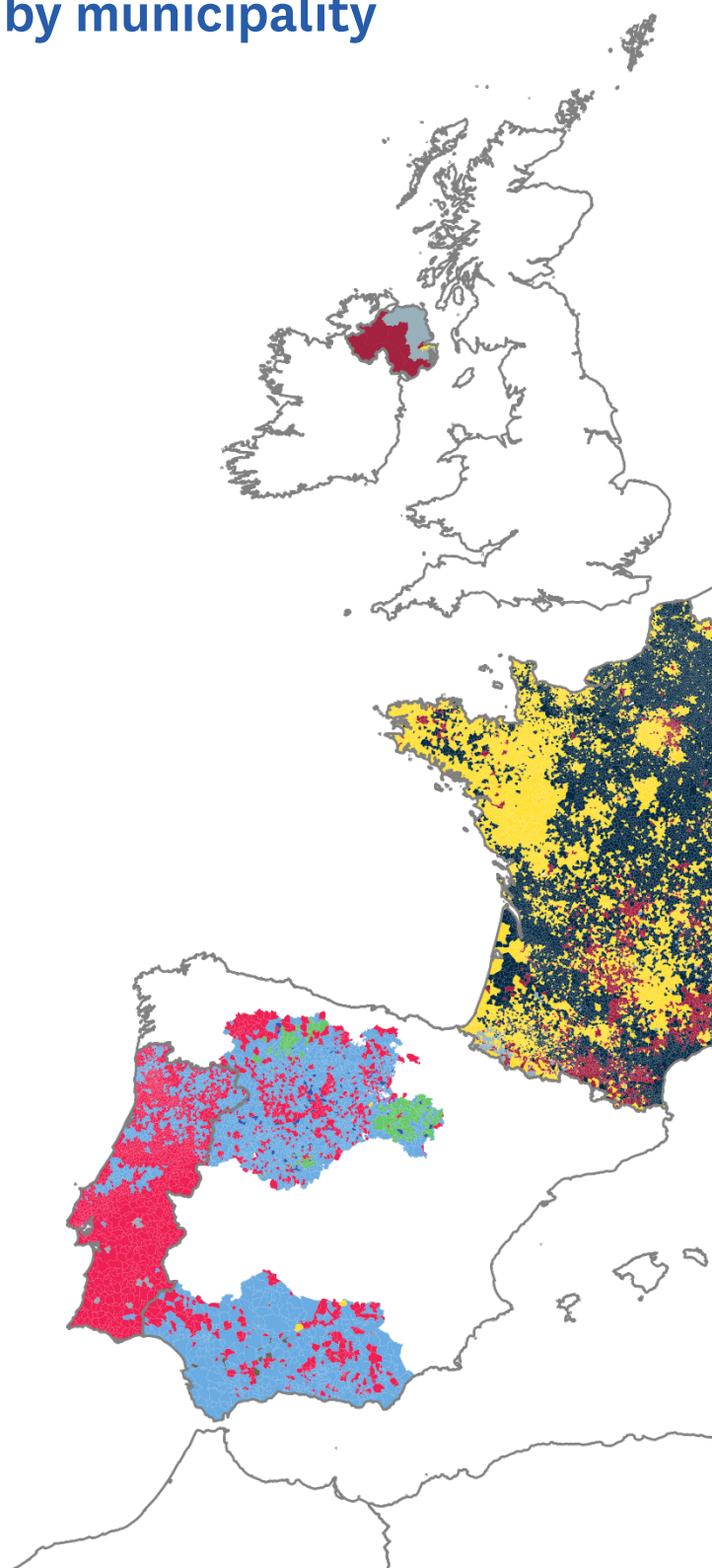
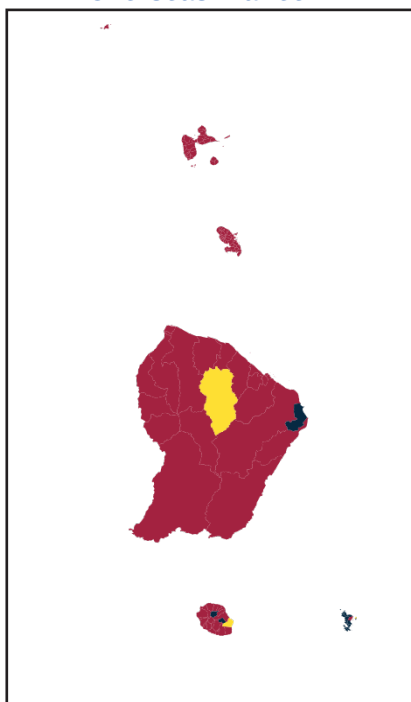


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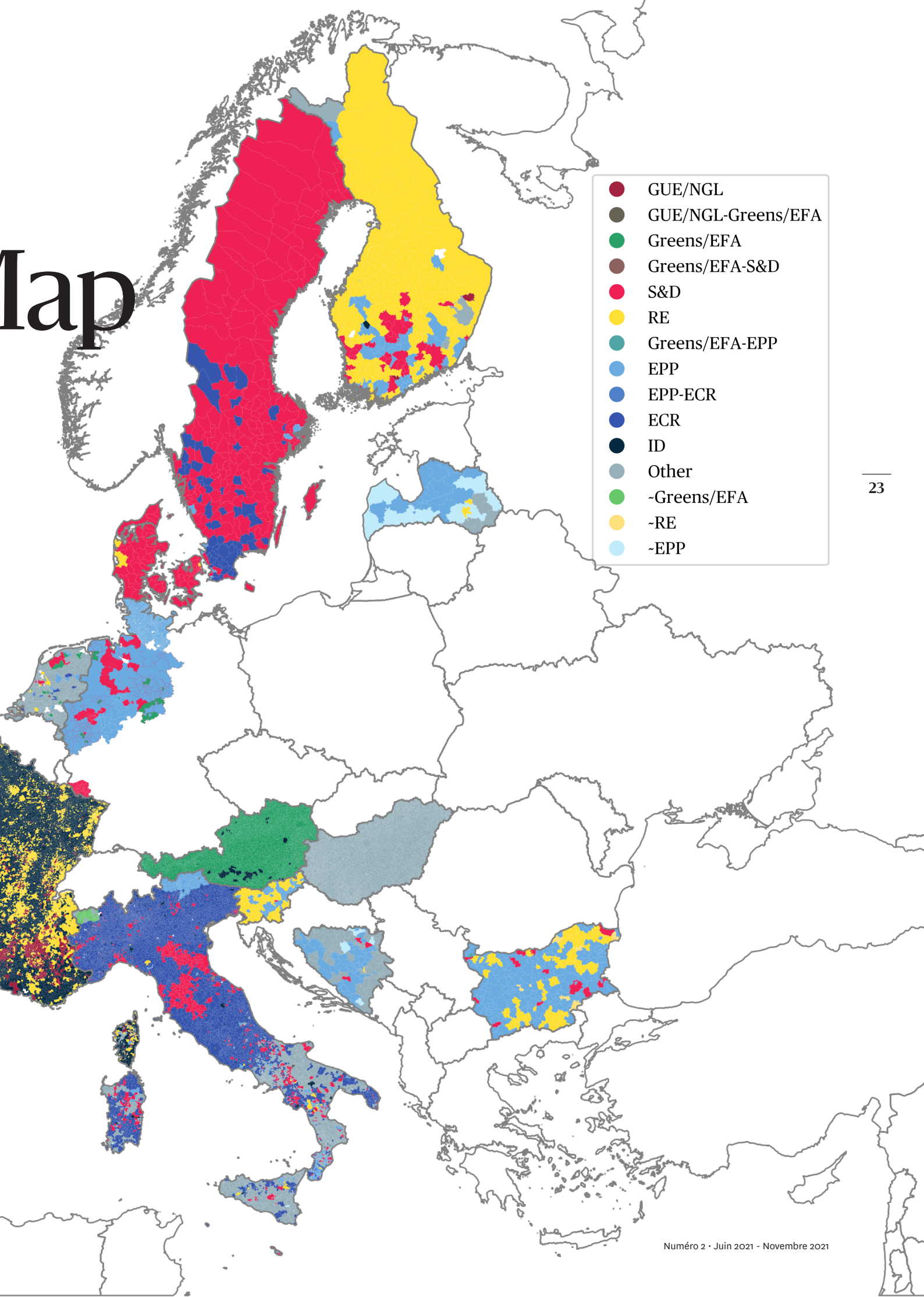
Group of winning party, by municipality

22

Overseas France



Map



Elections in the European Union

Regional, national and European elections

02



Josefin Sipinen • Tampereen yliopisto

Regional elections in Finland, 23 January 2022

A new type of election in Finland

The first-ever county elections were conducted in Finland on 23 January 2022. The elections were held as a result of a health and social services (SOTE) reform, which is one of the largest administrative reforms in the country's history. The key objective of the SOTE reform is to improve citizens' equal access to and quality of basic public services throughout Finland, as well as contain the future cost increases of these services resulting from rapidly aging population.

In proportion to the country's population (5.5 million), Finland has a large number of municipalities (309) in European comparison. Municipalities have their own right of taxation and they have been responsible for delivering most of the public services—thus far also health and social care services. For long, there has been a consensus between political parties that this is an inefficient way to organise health and social care, and that larger organizations than municipalities are needed to take on this responsibility. Both the aging population as well as very small population sizes in most municipalities (less than 5,000 inhabitants in almost half of the municipalities) have resulted in inequities and problems with access to and effectiveness of services. While those relying on public health care have experienced high waiting times particularly for specialist and primary care and social services, those with access to occupational health services have enjoyed access to services comparatively much more

quickly (Couffinhal et al. 2016; Finnish Government 2022).

Despite the consensus regarding the importance of the SOTE reform, planning of the reform took approximately 15 years. The main bones of contention among parties were the number of counties or units responsible for organizing the services, individuals' freedom to choose service providers, and the role given to the private section (Kangas & Kallioma-Puha 2018). The successive Sipilä government (2015-2019) even resigned five weeks before the 2019 Parliamentary Elections, when it became clear that the SOTE reform could not be delivered (Yle News 8.3.2019).

In June 2021, the current government of Prime Minister Sanna Marin (SDP) approved of a reform under which a total of 21 self-governing wellbeing services counties will be established. From the beginning of 2023, the responsibility for organising health, social and rescue services will be transferred from municipalities to these counties, which means an entirely new layer of administration (Finnish Government 2022). As an exception, the capital city Helsinki continues to be responsible for health, social and rescue services within its own area and, hence, does not participate in county elections. This is primarily because of Helsinki's population size, for Helsinki is bigger than any of the other new regions being created. Municipalities of the autonomous region Åland Islands have not participated municipal elections before and will not participate county elections either.

With reduced municipal tax rates, Finnish municipalities will continue to organise certain services, including child daycare, education, sports, and cultural services. The wellbeing services counties are not at least initially given the right of taxation. Instead, the counties receive their funds from the government, which raises its tax rate in proportion to decreased municipal tax rates. The highest decision-making power in each wellbeing services county will be exercised by a county council, whose members and deputy members will be elected in county elections. From 2025 onwards, county elections will be held every four years in conjunction with municipal elections (Finnish Government 2022). However, since the counties have no right of taxation (at least not yet), they must operate within the budget frame determined by the government, which emphasises the government/opposition divide also at the county level and reduces regional autonomy.

The reform should improve democracy in the sense that now, the eligible county residents get to directly select their representatives to county councils that are responsible for the decisions on social and health care. In the current (soon to be prior) model, several municipalities organized social and health jointly, and the representatives to municipalities' joint boards were selected by the

political parties.

The county councils have members who are on municipal councils and in parliament as well, which has raised concerns about conflicts of interest as well as centralization of power to the same people. One of the main reasons why MPs and other most well-known politicians stand as candidates in municipal and—from now on—county elections, relates to the Finnish open-list proportional representation electoral system with mandatory preferential voting (see e.g., von Schoultz 2018). Citizens are obliged to vote for one candidate and one candidate only. Every vote for a candidate is directly a vote for the party the candidate represents. Each candidate belongs to a list of a registered political party, or to an ad hoc non-party list of candidates. Within a party or other group, the candidate with the most votes ranks first on the list, the candidate with second most votes second etc. Seats are allocated based on the d'Hondt formula. Hence, the most popular politicians, the "vote-getters," have a significant role in contributing to their party's vote share, meaning that it is hard for them to decline candidacy, although in reality their ability to fully engage in all representative roles is limited.

The electoral threshold—the minimum share of the vote which parties were required to achieve before acquiring seats in county councils—ranged between 1.3-1.7 percent, which corresponds to electoral threshold in large municipalities in municipal elections (Borg 2022: 99) and is much lower than in parliamentary elections. In other words, the electoral threshold in county elections was relatively low, which favoured small parties' and groups' chances of securing representation.

Results

County elections focus on a very limited yet budget-wise significant issues. Finnish parties' history and reputation regarding their expertise and emphasis on health care issues clearly affected their chances of securing support in the county elections. The parties who succeeded were those big old "catch-all" parties—the Social Democrats (SDP), the liberal/agrarian Centre Party, and the conservative National Coalition (NCP)—that have been key actors in building of the Finnish welfare state during the 20th century. After the Second World War, the Finnish party system remained rather stable, with the "big three" securing most power. The rise of the populist Finns Party from the beginning of the 2010s changed the status quo and produced a situation of four about equally sized large parties in the parliament (Arter 2016; Borg 2019; Raunio 2022). However, this fragmentation characteristic to the past decade did not show in the County elections, where the big three got 19.2-21.6 percent of the votes each (Figure 1). In contrast, the Finns and also the Greens that have gained support in recent parliamentary and muni-

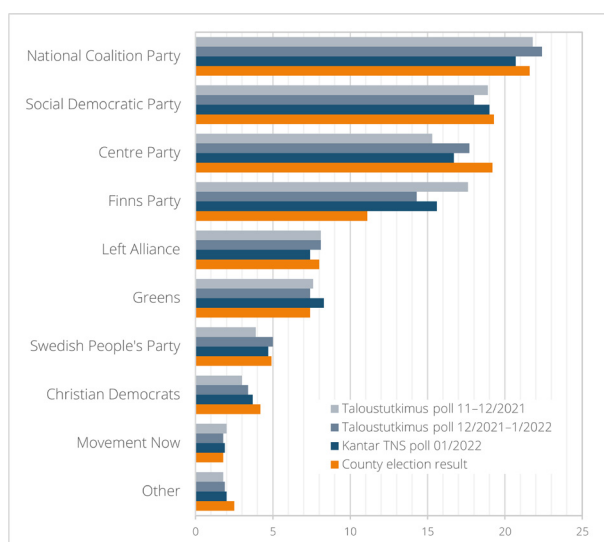
cipal elections by focusing on sociocultural issues (such as immigration, minority rights and environment) lost support.

The NCP was the biggest party with 21.6 per cent of all votes cast (Figure a). The SDP came second and the Centre Party third, although the latter two had only a 0.1 percentage point difference in their vote share. In general, the "big three" were all on home ground in terms of the themes discussed in the county elections. As the main opposition party as well as the winner of four municipal elections in row (between years 2008-2021) the NCP was the clear favourite also in county elections, as can be seen from the latest polls released under the elections and reported in Figure b.

In the campaign debates, the NCP stood out as an alternative to the leftist politics of the government by discussing about taxation and highlighting the role of the private sector in providing health and social services. To the left parties in the government (the SDP and the Left Alliance), strengthening the public sector was an important aim in the SOTE reform. The liberal/agrarian Centre Party, also in the government, was very much on home turf in regional elections, because it draws its support mainly from rural municipalities. In their county elections manifesto, the Centre Party promised at least one social and health care center to all 293 municipalities. Generally, although the main purpose of the SOTE reform is to contain growing expenses of health and social care expenses, many parties gave similar pledges about improved services. Thus, instead of giving voters a realistic idea about the impact of the reform, parties more likely accelerated voters' expectations.

The second main opposition party, the populist Finns Party, which has gained growing support in the 2010s with its anti-immigration and anti-EU agenda, was not a credible challenger due to its weak profile on health and social issues. As Figure b shows, the party fared poorly in comparison to the previous municipal and parliamentary elections. The Finns Party's result was poor also in comparison to the polls released under the elections (Figure b). The Taloustutkimus poll collected in November/December predicted over 17 percent support for the party, while eventually the party only gained 11.1 percent of the total vote. Another loser in the elections was the Greens, which like the Finns Party has a rather narrow profile concentrating mainly on environmental and minority rights issues (Borg 2020). To summarise, the so-called GAL-TAN or sociocultural division—which contributes to the support of especially the Finns and the Greens (see also Westinen 2015)—had much less impact in these elections, whereas the traditional left/right and center/periphery cleavages were emphasised.

Another explanation to the success of the NCP and



a • Polls forecasting the results of the 2022 Finnish county elections (%)

the downfall of the Finns Party and the Greens relates to the low turnout rate (47.5%) of the elections. Among both lawmakers and scholars, the turnout rate was considered poor (Yle News 23.1.2022), although it hardly came as a surprise after the historically low turnout rate in municipal elections (55.1%) held in previous summer. Reasons for low turnout likely relate to county elections being completely new type of elections, of which voters had no prior experience, but also because the focus was on issues not equally important to all voter groups. For instance, young voters deem health and social issues much less important reason behind their motivation to vote compared to elder age groups (Borg 2022). Third potential reason for low turnout is linked to the short campaign period and parties' modest campaign budgets. The county elections were held in the end of January, and the parties began their campaigns only after the new year. Knowing how parliamentary elections will be held next year (Spring 2023), parties did not invest too much money on "second-order elections." Also, postponing the 2021 municipal elections from April to June due to the difficult COVID-19 situation yielded costs to parties that had already begun their campaigns when the decision of postponing the elections were made in March (Helsingin Sanomat 8.11.2021).

Low turnout rate usually reduces the support of the Finns and the Greens whereas the NCP has reliable voters from election to election mainly because their voters have higher-than-average socioeconomic status. In contrast, among the voters of the Finns and the Greens the level of partisanship is lower and turning out to vote just out of habit or due to sense of duty is less likely (Borg 2020). When the turnout rate is low, the Finns are likely to lose votes from the working-class segment and the Greens from their younger voters (Borg 2022). Another difficulty in the county elections for the Greens was that the residents of the capital city Helsinki, where the Greens have strong support, did not participate in the elections.

Due to low electoral threshold, the small parties, such as the Christian Democrats, but also a new party "Power Belongs to the People" (unofficial translation from Finnish "Valta kuuluu kansalle", VKK) succeeded in getting representatives on county councils. The latter is run by strongly anti-immigrant and right-wing politicians expelled from the Finns Party, and its success very likely contributed to the Finns Party's poor result.

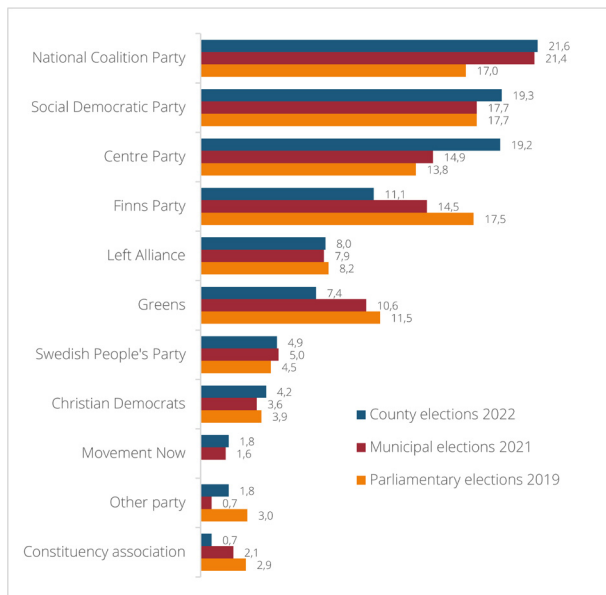
Candidates are placed in wellbeing services counties, with no quota for each municipality or other arrangement in the system itself to control which municipality's candidates get elected. When examining the votes cast in municipalities, however, in all wellbeing services counties the majority of votes cast in the municipality went to a candidate living in the same municipality (Statistics Finland 2022). This demonstrates how important the candidates' place of residence was to the voters—especially from small municipalities—who were concerned that as an outcome of the reform the health and social services will in the future be centered on the largest cities. This concern potentially increased the turnout in the small municipalities even though in the campaigns, all parties emphasized how all their candidates were engaged in representing the whole county if elected. While voters may hold strong expectations that the councillors represent interests of their own place of residence, in practice this is very difficult, which may disappoint the voters (Wass 2022).

One very interesting and welcomed aspect from a gender-equality perspective was that in the county elections more women (53%) were elected than men. Never in the history of parliamentary nor municipal elections in Finland has the share of women among the nominated nor elected candidates exceeded the number of men. The success of women candidates is remarkable also against the background that the share of women among the nominated candidates was 45.4 percent. Women's success is most likely associated with women having for long been heavily overrepresented in social and health care occupations but also publicly visible as experts and high-profile decision-makers in the field (e.g., the minister of social and health has often been a woman).

Indeed, out of altogether 10,584 candidates, a large share had a background as employees and/or experts of social, health, or rescue services. According to newspaper Helsingin Sanomat (13.1.2022), alone 16 percent were doctors or nurses. Alongside well-known politicians, social and health care experts also succeeded and were among the top vote-getters in all counties.

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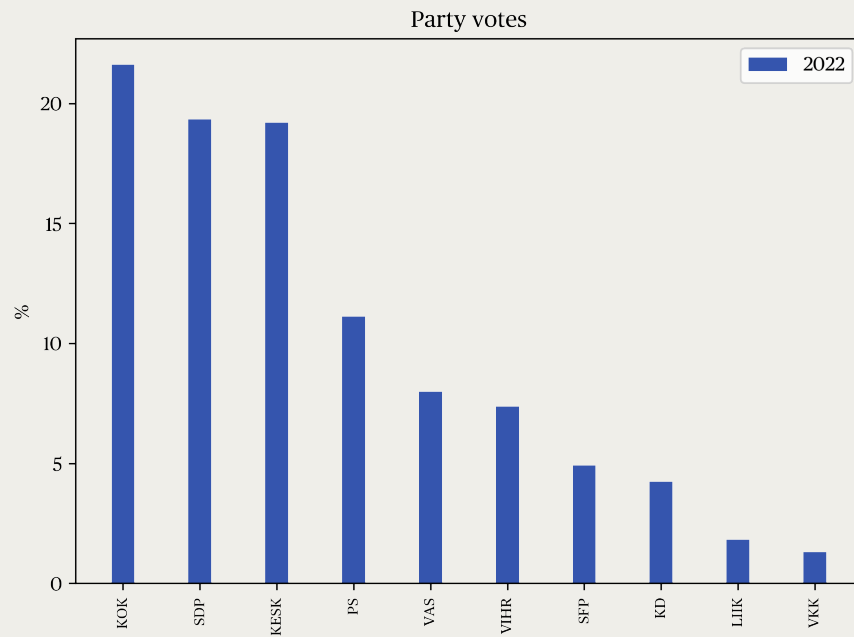
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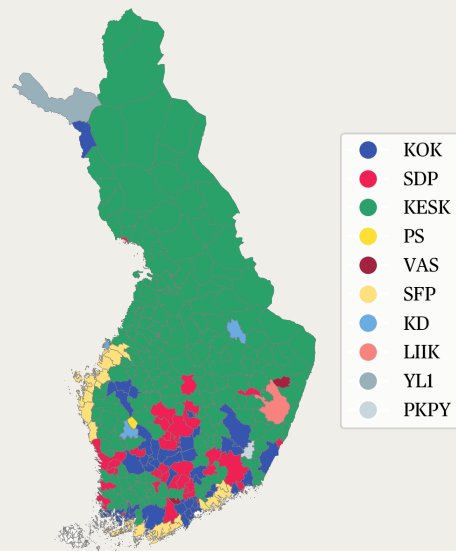
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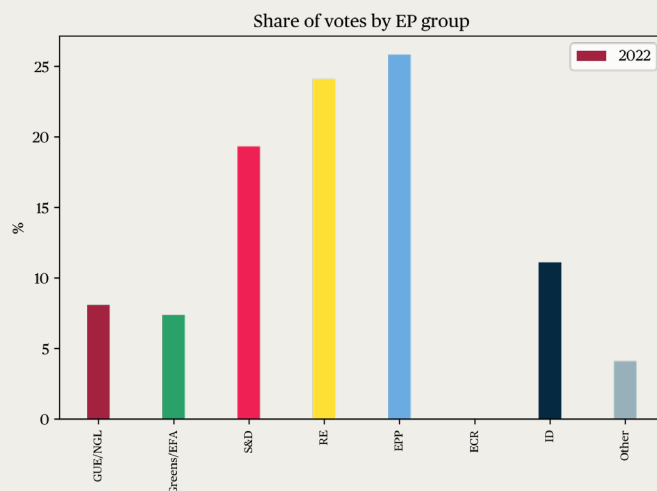
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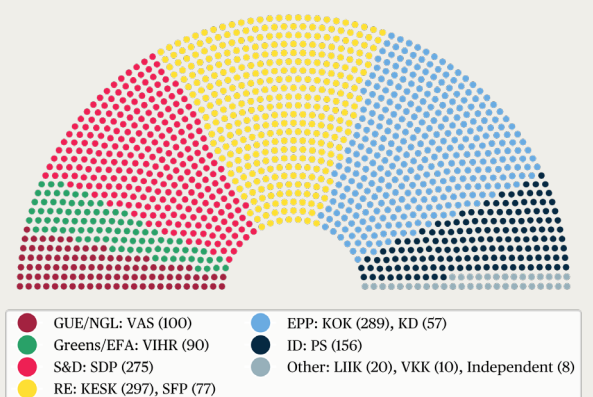
Winning party (2022)



European indicators



Hyvinvointialue / Vålfårdsområde (2022)





Marco Lisi • Universidade NOVA de Lisboa

30

Parliamentary election in Portugal, 30 January 2022

Background

The Portuguese party system has been named an “island of stability” in the European political landscape, as it did not suffer any electoral earthquake or major reconfiguration of party competition in recent years. This was remarkable given the deep transformation of party systems experienced by Southern European countries hit by the Great Recession.¹ The two mainstream parties – the centre-left Socialist Party (PS) and the centre-right Social Democratic Party (PSD) – have been able to retain widespread support and maintain a pivotal role in government formation, while no new populist party made a major breakthrough in the electoral arena.

Despite this apparent stability, however, a process of dealignment has fostered incremental changes in the party system, evidenced by growing rates of abstention and increasing levels of party fragmentation. New parliamentary forces also emerged. The first was the green party PAN (People-Animals-Nature party), which was able to obtain one MP in the 2015 elections. In the following election (2019), three new actors emerged. On the left side of the political spectrum, the left-libertarian Livre obtained one representative. The party defends pro-European stances and an ecologist agenda, and puts a strong emphasis on digital innovation. On the right side, the liberals (Iniciativa Liberal, IL) and the populist right-wing party Chega (‘Enough’, CH) also gained representation for the first

time, although with different programmatic stances and strategies.

While the reconfiguration of the right followed some of the trajectories already experienced by most European countries in the past decades, party system innovation on the left was triggered by an unprecedented cooperation between left-wing parties. After the 2015 election, a new government formula emerged, when the PS signed an agreement with the radical left (composed of the Communist Party [PCP], the Left Bloc [BE] and the Greens [PEV]), which included the reversal of some policies implemented during the Troika years.² Despite divergence on fundamental issues – e.g., labour policies, pro vs. anti-European stances, etc. –, this cooperation (dubbed the “Contraption”, pt. *Geringonça*) allowed the PS minority government to govern to the end of its four-year mandate.³ This important shift marked a watershed in Portuguese politics and had important transnational consequences, as it demonstrated that moderate left-wing parties can cooperate with more radical allies, a path followed in the following years in Spain. While coalitions between right-wing parties have been frequent throughout the democratic regime, this innovation contributed to reduce the disadvantage suffered by left-wing parties in the government formation process.

Despite this important experience, the left-wing parties decided not to renew their government agreement after the 2019 elections, in which the PS won a plurality of the vote but did not achieve an overall parliamentary majority. This time, the Socialists did not pursue their cooperation with the radical left, instead choosing to govern alone and to negotiate policy proposals one by one with opposition parties. Only a few months after being formed, the new government had to face the Covid-19 emergency, and was in charge of implementing the policies needed to address the associated public health and economic issues. During the pandemic, the PS could benefit from the support of a number of opposition parties which toned down political conflictuality in an effort to deal with the public health emergency and to avoid unnecessary social tensions. Most of the time, the PSD proved cooperative, while the radical left gradually distanced itself from the Socialist executive. By the end of 2021, strategic motivations determined the end of this unstable arrangement. On the one hand, both radical-left parties were losing electoral support, and this was particularly evident for the PCP, which had lost some major strongholds in the local elections held in October 2021. On the other, the PS was confident that a snap election could strengthen its position vis-à-vis opposition parties, given not only the difficulties experienced by the radical left, but also the weakness of right-wing parties, which were not able to influence the

1. See De Giorgi and Santana Pereira (2020).

2. The communists (PCP) and the Greens (PEV) run together in the legislative election as the CDU (Unitary Democratic Coalition) coalition.

3. See Lisi (2016); Fernandes et al. (2018).

political agenda and to avoid internal conflicts. The pandemic context was also especially important as it boosted the PS's confidence in its ability to win an early election. In fact, during its initial stages, low levels of political polarization, a climate of cross-party collaboration and the support of the President of the Republic facilitated the control of the pandemic.

The campaign

The election took place after the collapse of António Costa's minority government, which followed the Parliament's failure to approve the state budget for 2022. In view of the unwillingness of the main parties to form a new parliamentary majority, the President of the Republic Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, who had himself been re-elected for a second mandate in January 2021, called for early elections

The election campaign was characterized by three main aspects. The first was the pandemic, as the country was in a declared state of calamity. This limited grassroots mobilization and increased the importance of television debates among party leaders as well as the use of new digital tools and platforms. Notably, Portugal experienced a peak of the coronavirus in the month preceding election day. The government facilitated advance voting, an option used by more than 300,000 voters. Despite this, many political observers feared the circumstances could demobilize voters, especially among older cohorts. As political parties limited the organization of rallies or mass events, TV debates among party leaders assumed a key role in the campaign. The televised debate between PS leader Costa and PSD leader Rio played a particularly important role, reaching the highest audience figures with more than three million viewers. The pandemic also shaped the media agenda and health issues have been one of the most debated topics. Yet the way the socialist government dealt with this situation was not strongly politicized and very few policy proposals were directed at the effects of Covid-19, with the exception of mental health. This could explain the electorate's positive perceptions of the government's management of the health and social crises.

The second major aspect was the unprecedented fragmentation of the political system and the role played by new leaders and parties. Minor parties were able to set the campaign agenda by politicizing new policy issues and focusing attention on social media. While IL appealed to young people and upper social classes by stressing liberal policies, Chega was effective in mobilizing its electorate around an anti-elite populist narrative. Livre emphasized the importance of digital transition and the fight against climate change. However, the health emergency continued to consume much political attention during the campaign, and this was to the advantage of PS, which was perceived to have handled it competently.

Another aspect that dominated the campaign was the debate around political stability and the high competitiveness of the elections, with the PSD showing – according to opinion polls – an increasing capacity to gain support and challenge the predominant position of the PS. Indeed, one week before the election, several polls suggested a technical tie between PS and PSD, neither of which seemed able to obtain an overall parliamentary majority (with both parties gathering around 35% of the vote). However, the polls published during the campaign made it clear that the PS was going to win the election, although probably without an overall parliamentary majority.

From this viewpoint, the campaign was also fought on post-electoral scenarios. The PS started seeking an absolute majority to avoid having to deal with a hung parliament after the election. Opposition parties argued that an absolute majority was not desirable as it could endanger democratic equilibria. As the polls made this scenario less and less realistic and a potential victory of the right against the left was not to be excluded, another topic entered in the campaign, namely post-electoral agreements. Many observers considered an agreement between the PS and PSD as a probable outcome, which would have resulted in a kind of grand-coalition government. This solution was backed up by many economic interest groups, especially due to the management of the European recovery program. On the other hand, left-wing parties talked about a potential alliance between PSD and CH as a threat for democracy. Indeed, one of the main weaknesses of the PSD leadership was the ambiguity of its strategy of alliances. Rio did not firmly reject the possibility of cooperation with the radical right party, and at the same time he claimed to be willing to facilitate the survival of a socialist government in case the PS would win a plurality, but no majority of seats in parliament.⁴

The results

Voter turnout (51.4%) registered a slight increase compared to previous elections. This is quite remarkable not only because of the long-term trend towards demobilization that affected Portuguese elections, but also because of the constraints associated to the pandemic. Moreover, the fact that this was a snap election was also expected to negatively affect voter participation. The turnout increase was probably due to the competitiveness showed by the polls and the mobilization fostered by new parties.⁵ But organizational aspects of the election also played an

4. It is worth noting that in the autonomous region of Azores, the current government (2020-) is supported by a coalition between right-wing parties, namely PSD, CDS (Social Democratic Centre) and Chega. This was considered an important precedent and radical left parties used it as an example of the availability of the PSD leader to negotiate or cooperate with Chega in order to defeat left-wing parties.

5. There is evidence that in the 2019 legislative elections new parties reported higher scores of the vote in districts with higher levels of turnout (see Lisi et al. 2020).

important role in fostering mobilization. For instance, alternative voting options have been made available, such as early and mobile voting. Additionally, the government decision (although controversial as it was made very close to election day) to allow voters in self-isolation to vote in person can also explain the high turnout levels.

The results of the 2022 legislative elections were quite surprising in light of the opinion polls published during the campaign. Few of them predicted the possibility of an overall parliamentary majority for the PS; even more striking was the low score achieved by the PSD. Instead, opinion polls indicated a convergence between the two main competitors, with a clear upward trend of the PSD since December 2021. Meanwhile, many political observers and journalists tried to interpret the failure of opinion polls to predict the final results. The fear of a potential loss of a leftist majority certainly led many left-wing voters to vote strategically and to concentrate their vote on the PS. However, there may be other causes for this phenomenon, such as asymmetrical mobilization or the high proportion of undecided voters and abstentionists. In any case, this was quite exceptional in the Portuguese context as opinion polls for legislative elections have not traditionally failed to predict election outcomes.

The results of the 2022 elections were also quite exceptional because of the absolute majority achieved by the PS. This is a historical achievement, as the socialists only obtained a similar result in 2005, and not an easy one given the proportionality of the electoral system and the distribution of the socialist vote in the territory, which is quite dispersed and homogeneous. The PS's score of 41.4% was its second-best result ever in a legislative election and a significant breakthrough compared to previous elections, with a more than 5-percentage-point increase. By contrast, the PSD only obtained 29% of the votes, remaining at the same level as in the 2019 election. This was the second defeat of Rui Rio in legislative elections, and the party lost important strongholds, especially in the Northern part of the country.

The surprise also came for the score achieved by minor parties. The populist radical right Chega came third, with a score of 7.2% and 12 MPs. Liberal Initiative also performed well, obtaining 4.9% of the votes. Overall, both forces were able to substantially increase their vote shares compared to previous elections, strengthening their parliamentary representation. Chega's resounding success was based, first of all, on protest and ideologically radical voters, most of whom came from the CDS. Populist attitudes may hence be key in explaining Chega's electoral breakthrough. The new party was also disproportionately supported by male voters. On the other hand, IL presents a very different support base, mostly concentrated on younger and educated people. Territorial support also shows distinct patterns for the parties. While CH dis-

played higher levels of penetration in the interior (as the distance from the capital increases), IL is more popular in urban constituencies.

All other parties suffered a heavy defeat. Both radical left parties (BE and PCP) lost a significant proportion of votes and parliamentary seats and, even more importantly, they were bypassed by newcomers. The result for the BE speaks for itself, with a decrease in parliamentary representation from 19 to just 5 seats (from 9.5% to 4.4% in terms of votes). The CDU was not able to halt this declining trend, and suffered a substantial decrease in both its percentage (4.3%) and absolute number of votes compared to previous elections. In addition, for the first time since 1983, its coalition ally (PEV) was not able to elect any MP. Radical left parties were attacked during the campaign for bearing the main responsibility for the political instability created by the lack of approval of the budget proposal. In addition, it was not clear to the leftist electorate why, despite traditional programmatic differences, they were not able to cooperate with the socialists as during the "*Geringonça*". Finally, PAN also lost votes and MPs (from 4 to 1), while Livre was able to secure one MP, as in the previous elections.

The defeat was felt even more strongly in the case of the CDS (a conservative, right-wing party), which was not able to send any representative to the parliament. This was a historical result, as the CDS was one of the founding parties of Portuguese democracy and it was always able to elect MPs in every parliamentary election. Despite its attempt to compete with Chega, the lack of leadership appeal, internal conflicts and the failure to promote programmatic renewal led the party to a dramatic defeat.

The PS obtained an overall parliamentary majority mainly due to the 'punishment' inflicted by voters on radical parties, which were held responsible for triggering an undesired political crisis, as well as the lack of credibility of the PSD, which was not able to capitalize on the weakening of the socialist government. The management of the government with regard to the public health emergency and economic recovery also helped the PS consolidate its position vis-à-vis opposition parties. Indeed, it is important to underscore that Portugal has been praised by international organizations regarding the management of the pandemic and of the vaccination campaign. Although post-election surveys are not available yet, looking at the aggregate level it is plausible that the PS attracted voters not only from the radical left, but also from the PSD and abstentionists.

Conclusions

Government formation took more time than expected due to illegal procedures registered in out-of-country constituencies. This led the national electoral administra-

tion to repeat elections in these electoral districts on 12 and 13 of March. After the confirmation of the seat allocation for out-of-country constituencies, the new executive took office. The new cabinet showed a significant centralization of powers in the Prime-Minister's hands; António Costa appointed some members of his coterie in key cabinet positions, and also directly controlled EU affairs and the digital transition portfolio. The fact that, during this mandate, the government will manage the financial package of the Recovery and Resilience Plan seems to have played a key role in António Costa's decision to centralize and politicize the executive in comparison to the previous mandate. Finally, it is worth noting that this is the first parity government in Portuguese history, including women in traditionally male portfolios (for instance, Defense).

The 2022 legislative elections were significantly marked by the pandemic context, which had a multidimensional impact on this electoral process, not only in terms of campaign mobilization and agenda, but also by influencing the decision to call for early elections, as well as voting choices. Nonetheless, the outcome of these elections can perhaps be best understood as a reward to the moderate orientation of the PS and a fear of political instability and a potential radicalization of the political landscape. Portuguese voters punished the lack of cooperation between radical left parties and the PS government, but they also mistrusted a possible alliance of the PSD with Chega, which could have led to unpredictable policies. Overall, the political change these elections brought to the fore was more evident on the right than on the left side of the political spectrum, a pattern which follows (with some delay) the trajectory experienced by many European countries, as Portugal is a latecomer in terms of the rise and success of a new radical right populist party. It also exhibits a pattern of increasing fragmentation of party politics, which will make it more difficult to form stable governments in future elections. This trend is most visible on the right side of the political spectrum: new parties emerged as a consequence of the crisis experienced by the PSD (internal conflicts, lack of clear programmatic strategy, etc.) and its competition with the CDS. From

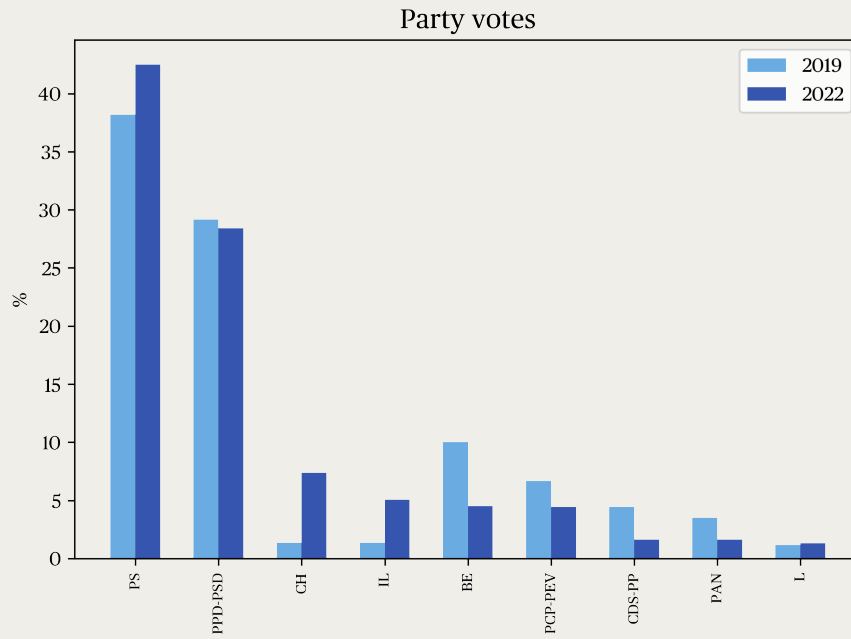
this viewpoint, it is worth noting that the growing party system fragmentation does not reflect the emergence or politicization of new cleavages; rather, it is the effect of party strategies and the successful performance of political entrepreneurs.

The PS will enjoy a unique opportunity to implement the policies presented in its electoral manifesto during the next four years. The overall parliamentary majority provides the government the necessary stability to plan and execute key reforms, especially in the financial, economic and welfare sectors. The guidelines are quite clear and follow the path already taken during the previous governments. This means a cautious management of public finances, more investments in the health and education sectors and the reduction of inequalities. Decentralization is another key reform that the government aims to achieve during this mandate. How to foster economic development of the country remains the greatest challenge, together with the rise of inflation created by the Ukraine war. In the midst of an energy crisis and with the international situation still to be resolved, the task of the new government may not be easy.

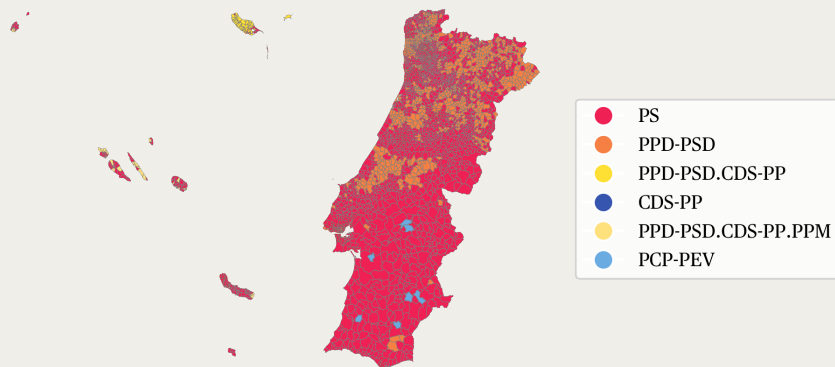
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PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN PORTUGAL, 30 JANUARY 2022. DATA

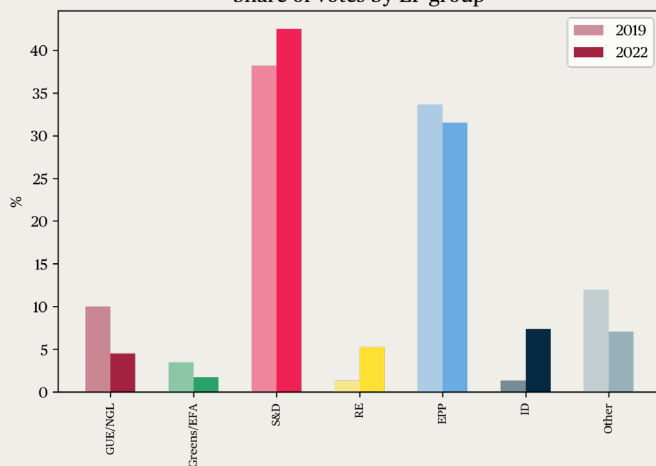


Winning party (2022)

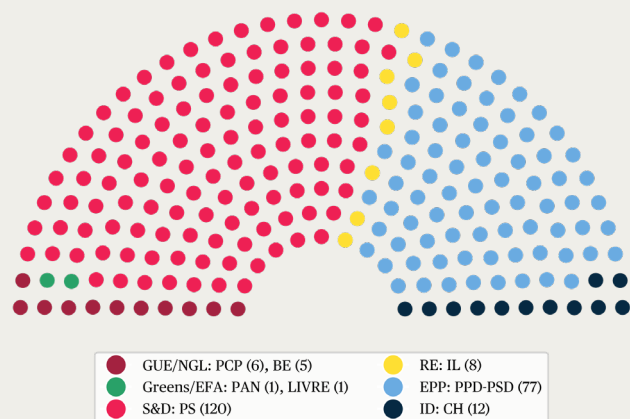


European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



Assembleia da República (2022)





Luis Mena Martínez • Universidad de Salamanca

Regional election in Castilla y León, 13 February 2022

In 2022, for the first time, the regional election in Castilla y León was organized independently of other regional or national ballots; the previous elections had been held on the same day as the municipal elections and the regional elections in most of Spain's Autonomous Communities. This change was accompanied by a slight loss in turnout with respect to 2019 (from 65.8% to 63.4%). This is the lowest turnout figure in a regional election, although very close to the same figure in the 2011 election.

To understand what has happened in these elections, we will analyze the evolution of the results in regional elections since 2011 (2011, 2015, 2019 and 2022).

In Castilla y León, the Partido Popular (PP) has obtained parliamentary majorities from 1991 to 2019, and has been governing the region since 1987, for 35 uninterrupted years. The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) won the first election (1983) as well as the 2019 election, although, in the latter case, he failed to form a coalition government. When it did not achieve a majority, the Popular Party has gathered the parliamentary support needed to govern from other right-wing groups (the Democratic and Social Center in the 1987-1991 legislature, Ciudadanos in 2019-2022, and Vox since 2022). Despite a lack of alternation in power, there have been relevant changes in the party system since 2011 (the last elections with 'traditional' results). In the following, we analyze these changes along three axes:

- The ideological left-right axis
- The axis between traditional and new parties

- The axis between national and provincial parties (to this day, no Community-oriented party has ever obtained parliamentary representation in Castilla y León).

Axis 1: Right v. left

In terms of both popular vote and elected representatives, the Community of Castilla y León has been historically right-leaning. The parties traditionally identified as left-wing are the PSOE, Podemos and the United Left, while the parties traditionally identified as right-wing are the PP, Ciudadanos, Vox and Union Progress and Democracy.¹ Although the distribution of votes and seats within each bloc varies over time, the cumulated vote shares of left-wing and right-wing parties have remained relatively stable, with a percentage of votes and seats superior to 50% for the right, while the left was able to surpass the 40% mark in only a few occasions. Parties that cannot be located on the left-right axis (typically, provincial parties) have caused a loss of votes for the left bloc in the last elections.

Axis 2: Traditional v. new parties

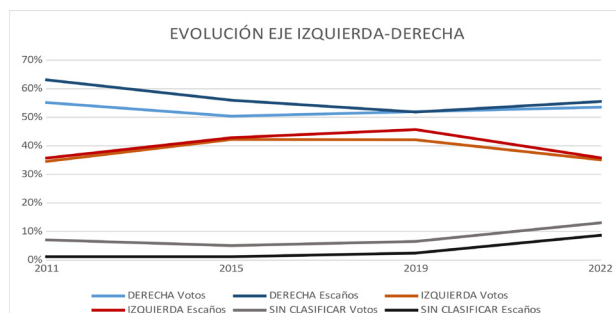
Until 2011, the two largest traditional parties (PP and PSOE) won most of the seats in the parliament of the Autonomous Community. Together, the two parties gathered about 80% of the popular vote, and their seat shares were boosted by the electoral system in place. The 2015 election put an end to this bipartite hegemony, and the shares of new parties has stabilized since then, reaching over 20% of the seats and 33% of the vote. The current regional parliament has the highest number of parties represented in the history of the Community.

Since 2011, a change in electoral behavior is observed, which has been interpreted as an expression of disenchantment with traditional parties. This has led to the emergence of new parties with parliamentary representation, despite the electoral system favoring large parties. This way, the diversification that has taken place in the national party system with the emergence of new parties with parliamentary representation – Podemos, Ciudadanos, and Vox –, has been translated on the regional political scene. While the overall vote share of new parties has been relatively stable, the shares of individual parties have varied significantly since 2015.

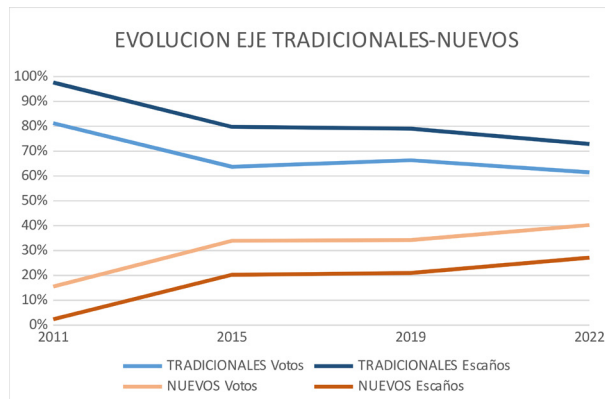
Podemos played a leading role in the 2015 election, when it obtained 12% of votes and seats. In 2019, however, it only gathered 5% of the vote and 2.5% of the seats, while the PSOE's vote share grew from 26% to 35%, and its seat share from 30% to 43% as the party successfully

1. Parties with parliamentary representation that define their position along territorial rather than ideological cleavages are not discussed here. These include the Union of the Leonese People, Por Ávila and Soria Ya.

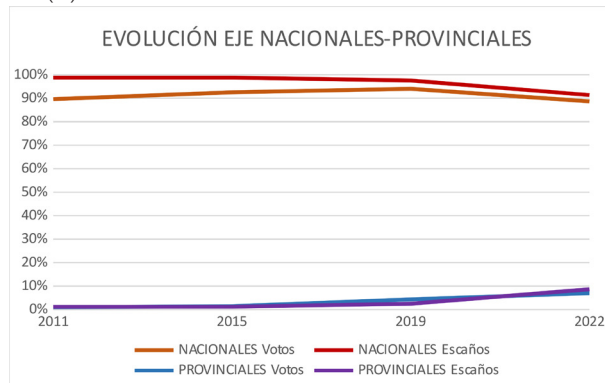
a • Evolution of vote and seat shares between the left and the right (%)



b • Evolution of vote and seat shares of traditional and new parties (%)



c • Evolution of the vote and seat shares of national and provincial parties (%)



concentrated left-wing votes. In the last election, despite a coalition with the United Left, Podemos stagnated at 5% of the vote and only obtained one seat. Its vote was urban, and, in 2015, was concentrated in districts of the main metropolitan areas, a few less populated provincial capitals (Soria, Zamora) and other smaller cities (Ponferrada, Villablino, Aranda de Duero, Miranda de Ebro), with little rural presence.

Ciudadanos also emerged in the 2015 election with 6% of the seats and 10% of the votes. They achieved their best results in the 2019 election, with 15% of both votes and seats. However, their score plummeted in the 2022 election, falling to 4.5% of votes and only one seat. In 2019, Ciudadanos voters were concentrated in the peripheral areas of metropolitan areas, as well as in some districts of the provincial capitals.

Vox is the youngest of these new parties. In 2015, it obtained 1% of the votes, and in 2019, its vote share grew

to 5.5%, earning it its first seat in parliament. In 2022, Vox gathered 17.5% of the votes and obtained 16% of the seats. Vox voters are much more evenly distributed over the territory of the Autonomous Community, with a stronger presence in rural areas.

Ciudadanos and Vox are both associated with Spanish nationalism, which has been reinforced, at the national level, by the dynamics of other regional nationalisms. In these respects, the national political dynamics are better known and more relevant than the regional political reality. Changes in regional voting patterns follow those occurring at the national level. The best example of such an evolution is the success of Vox in 2022: their candidate was little known at the regional level, and their campaign centered around the figure of their national leader, Santiago Abascal. Their success thus rather resulted from their national popularity than from their regional programs and candidates.

Despite common features, there have been no significant transfers of votes between Ciudadanos and Vox. This can be seen by comparing the distribution of the Ciudadanos vote in 2019 and the Vox vote in 2022.

Axis 3: National v. provincial parties

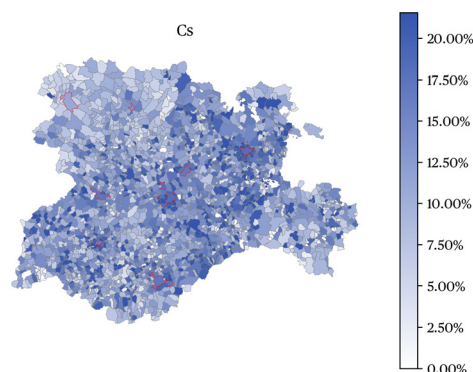
In the 2022, the most significant novelty was the strong increase in the parliamentary presence of provincial parties, which grew from one to seven seats (9% of the parliament).

It must be noted that these parties develop a political discourse focusing on individual provinces, rather than the entire Autonomous Community. Just as before, Community-centric parties show very little mobilization capacity in Castilla y León. On the contrary, provincial parties originating from three of nine of the provinces are now represented in the regional parliament.

Castilla y León is a very large region with a weak sense of common belonging. Every province has its own dynamics and interests, leading to different voting patterns, including in the results of the two traditional parties.

At the national level, new parties with territorial, but non-nationalist roots have emerged (their archetype is Teruel Existe, a provincial party which has achieved representation in the national parliament). In Castilla y León, similar political discourses have been articulated around the sensation of abandonment felt in some of the less urbanized and depopulated areas of what has been called “empty Spain.”

In only three years, the provincial parties have increased their presence from 5% of the votes and 2.5% of the seats to 9% of both votes and seats. It remains to be



seen if this share will be stabilized, as has occurred with the new parties since 2015.

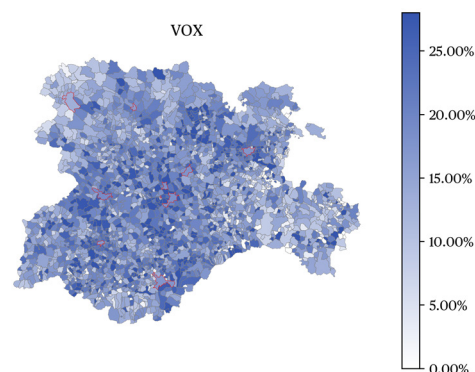
While provincial parties were running in all constituencies, only three of them eventually obtained seats in parliament. The Union of the Leonese People (UPL) was the only provincial party traditionally represented in the parliament of the Community (even though the party focuses its discourses on the Leonese region - which includes León, Zamora, and Salamanca -, in practice it only obtained seats in the province of León), and has been strengthened by the reinforcement of the territorial axis. Soria Ya (SYA) is a social movement that, together with Teruel Existe, has been pioneering “empty Spain” revendications for years. It has been able to increase its vote share in its home province, mostly at the expense of the PSOE. Por Ávila (XAV) is a provincial party that was split off from the Popular Party; it is centered around the figure of its leader and is not part of the “empty Spain” movement, and has been able to preserve the seats it had secured in the 2019 election.

Principal Component Analysis of municipality-level results

We have performed a Principal Component Analysis of the vote at municipality level to identify groups of municipalities whose voting patterns deviate from the Community average, and analyze their specific behavior.

In the following, we discuss the first six components of the vote in both 2019 and 2022. Each of the components is different in the two elections, which is reflected in the tables below. We will analyze them in light of the three previously introduced axes. This will allow for a more in-depth analysis of the evolution of the electoral behavior in Castilla y León.

The principal component that explains the largest share of municipality-level variance corresponds to our first axis, i.e., to the right-left cleavage, and mostly involves the two traditional parties (PP and PSOE). Clearly, a larger share of the variance is explained by this compo-



nent in 2019 than in 2022. The territorial distribution is also different, as can be seen in the following figures.

Regarding the second axis, we observe that various principal components give a negative weight of the two traditional parties. While this is the case of only two components (2 and 3) in 2019, all other components (2-6) are concerned in 2022.

In 2019, three components (2, 3, and 5) give a stronger weight to new national parties: component 2 captures Ciudadanos strongholds (with higher than average vote shares for Podemos and Vox), and explains 17% of the variance; component 3 corresponds to municipalities with lower Ciudadanos, PP, and PSOE vote and higher provincial (UPL, XAV), Podemos, and Vox vote, and explains 7% of the variance. Finally, component 4 corresponds to areas of strong Podemos (and Por Ávila) vote, with less support for other new parties and the PSOE; it explains 4% of the variance.

In 2022, we focus on the components which involve the new national parties (3 and 6). In component 3, we see areas of strong Vox vote, with some degree of UPL, XAV, and Ciudadanos support, which explains 17% of the variance. Component 6, which only explains 4% of the variance, captures municipalities with higher than average support for Podemos, Ciudadanos, and other “empty Spain” parties without parliamentary representation.

The territorial distribution of the component with the largest vote share for the most successful new party (Ciudadanos in 2019: component 2, and Vox in 2022: component 3) is also different. In 2022, Vox enjoys a much broader territorial basis, which includes many rural municipalities.

In summary, the second axis (new v. old parties) explains around one-third of the variance, and is divided into two components: a main component centered around the most successful party (Ciudadanos in 2019 and Vox in 2022), and a secondary one with less votes for the most successful party and more votes for other new

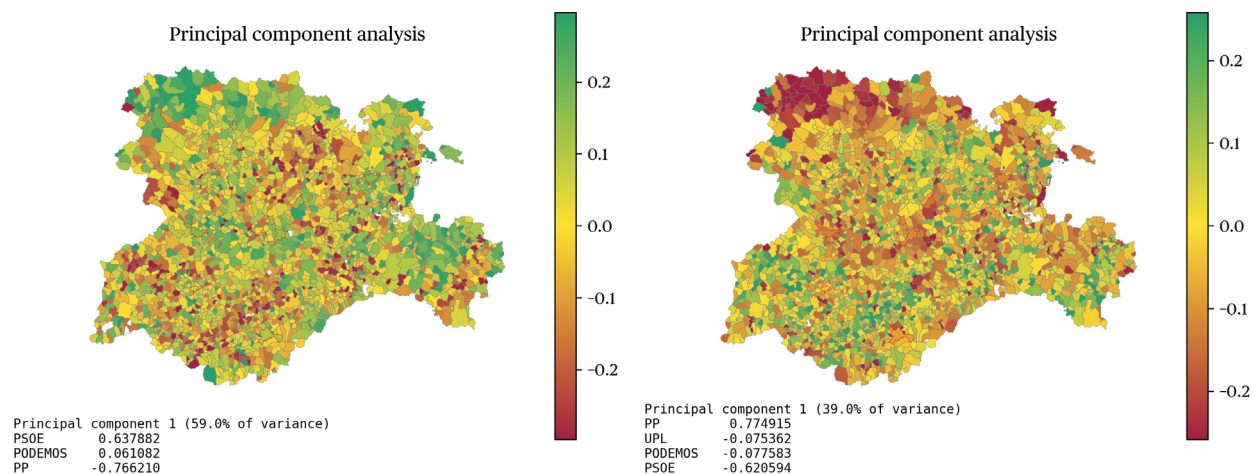
f • Principal Component Analysis, 2019 election

	1	2	3	4	5	6
PP	-0,76621	-0,508621	-0,26576			
PSOE	0,637882	-0,631902	-0,316665	-0,057228	-0,069817	
PODEMOS	0,061082	0,101804	0,16593	0,064698	0,555276	-0,602943
CIUDADANOS		0,543296	-0,765177	0,127045	-0,095841	
VOX		0,159165	0,187421	-0,735439	-0,485211	-0,119835
UPL			0,352976	0,652234	-0,536883	
X AVILA		0,087326	0,201919	-0,77253	0,376371	0,78224
VARIANZA EXPLICADA	59%	18%	7%	4%	4%	3%

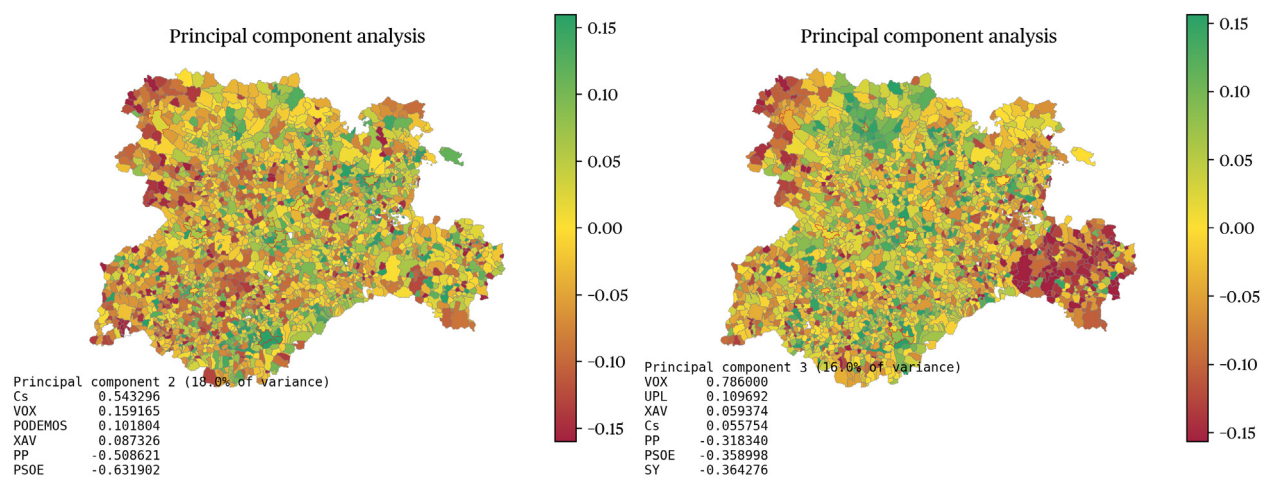
g • Principal Component Analysis, 2022 election

	1	2	3	4	5	6
PP	0,777317	-0,360971	-0,314268	-0,094773	-0,181297	-0,1607
PSOE	-0,617484	-0,4577	-0,355244	-0,245547	-0,197825	-0,29174
PODEMOS	-0,077558				0,143648	0,435914
CIUDADANOS			0,055842	-0,052832	0,072813	0,420399
VOX			0,783208	-0,370395	-0,273466	-0,258339
UPL	-0,075517		0,10952	0,856836	-0,326349	-0,171121
SORIA YA		0,809026	-0,37733	-0,20751	-0,182431	-0,158619
X AVILA			0,059382	0,090707	0,827549	-0,432826
ESPAÑA VACIADA				-0,057302		0,460637
VARIANZA EXPLICADA	39%	22%	16%	8%	6%	4%

h-i • Territorial distribution of the first component, 2019 and 2021 elections



j-k • Territorial distribution of the second and third component respectively, 2019 and 2021 elections



parties.

The third axis, which contrasts national and provincial parties, displays the strongest variation between 2019 and 2022. In 2019, two components (4 and 6) display a stronger vote for provincial parties (UPL and XAV), explaining 7% of the variance. In 2022, a new component reflecting the Soria Ya vote (component 2, which explains 22% of the variance) emerges, while the components capturing the UPL (component 4) and Por Ávila (component 4) votes remain. In total, these three components explain 26% of the variance.

Obviously, their territorial distribution reflects the provinces they intend to represent (Ávila, León, and Soria). However, it is interesting to note, especially regarding Soria, that local parties have contributed to slow down the territorial expansion of Vox in smaller municipalities; in the case of León and Ávila (due to the territorial differences that exist in the Community), this effect is not as clear as in Soria.

Final note: National tactical errors that explain regional results

The results of this election were to a large extent the consequence of two tactical errors committed by the governing parties since 2019. Both were due to an inaccurate evaluation of opinion polls results by the national party leadership, leading to regional politics being neglected in the face of national party interests.

Following its victory in Madrid in 2021, and based on the opinion polls of the time, the Partido Popular decided to end the government coalition with Ciudadanos. It followed a regional strategy subordinated to a future victory in the national elections of the then national chairman of the PP (Pablo Casado, which later resigned, in part because of the failure of his party in this very election).

Ciudadanos was originally a liberal party that would participate in both PSOE- (Andalusia 2015) and PP-led governments. After the 2019 national elections, it could have formed a coalition government with the PSOE. However, some polls at the time claimed that it could then overtake

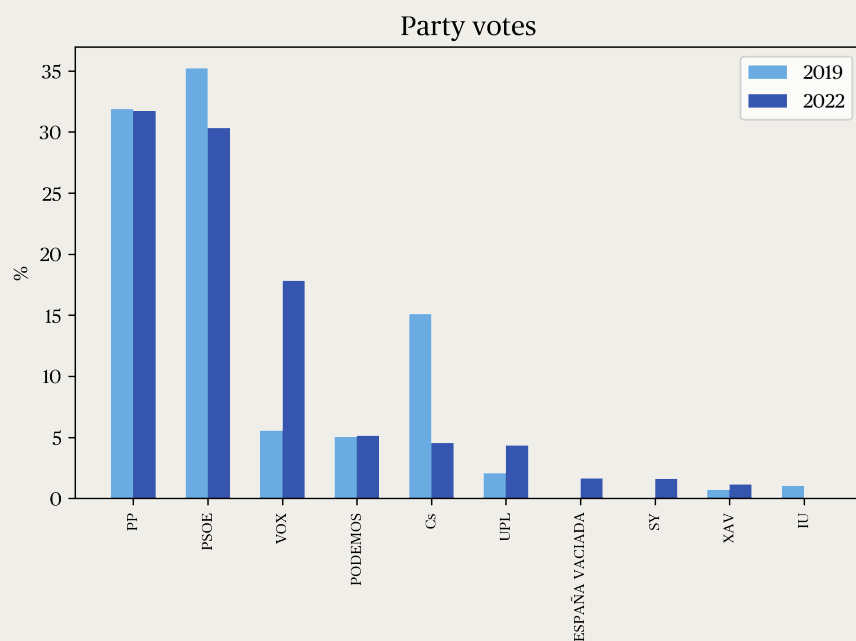
the Popular Party and become the main center-right party. For this reason, it decided to reject such a coalition and instead push for new general elections. This strategy was transferred to the regional level, where Ciudadanos exclusively collaborated with right-wing parties. In Castilla y León, the result of the 2019 election would have allowed a coalition of the PSOE (which had won the election) with Ciudadanos. The national leadership of Ciudadanos, however, instead decided to implement its national strategy of rejecting alliances with the left in order for the party to conquer the right. In the following election, in 2022, it has lost three quarters of its electorate and is left with a single seat in parliament.

Conclusion

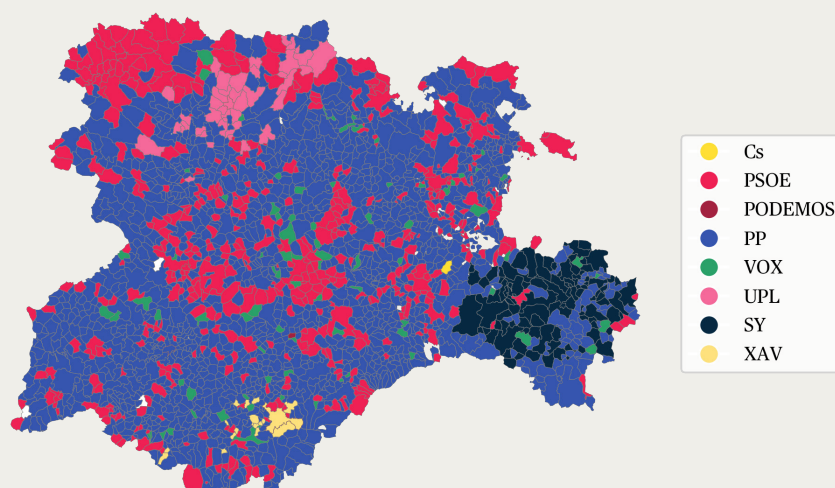
Castilla y León has a long record as a right-leaning Autonomous Community, in which the Popular Party has been governing for 35 uninterrupted years.

Since 2015, in line with national trends, new parties (Podemos, Ciudadanos, and Vox) have obtained seats in parliament. The traditional parties (PP and PSOE) have concentrated most of the votes (over 60%) and seats (over 70%). However, new national parties have gathered around 25% of the votes and 18% of the seats since that date, despite the leading “new” party changing from one election to the other as it did in the rest of Spain.

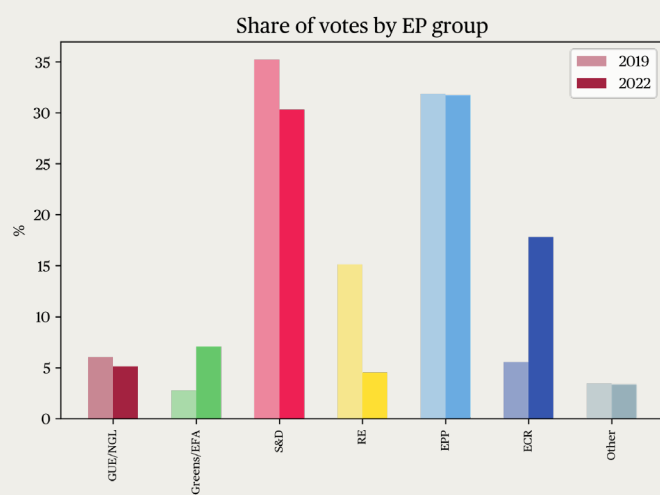
The main novelty of the 2022 election is the increase in provincial vote, which has led to an important increase of the corresponding vote shares. From 5% of the votes and 2.5% of the seats in 2019, the score of provincial parties has increased to 9% of votes and seats in 2022. The discourse revolving around the institutional abandonment of some of the provinces, which have suffered strong population losses in areas already characterized by low population density, has now been translated into political representation (as with other phenomena, this first occurred in other parts of Spain, and then in Castilla y León). It remains to be seen if this trend will be confirmed in subsequent elections, as it happened for the new national parties. Unless the other two new parties, Vox has been able to benefit from this discourse, and has obtained good results in the less urban areas of the Community.



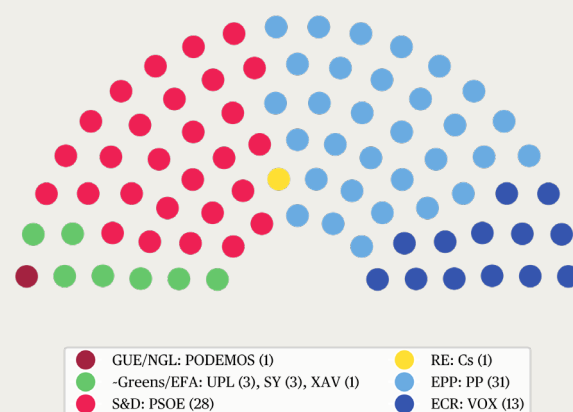
Winning party (2022)



European indicators



Cortes de Castilla y León (2022)





Mark Harwood • L-Università ta' Malta

Parliamentary election in Malta, 26 March 2022

Introduction

Malta is the EU's smallest and most densely populated country, situated south of Italy in the central Mediterranean. A British colony for 160 years, it gained independence in 1964 and joined the EU in 2004. A unitary state, its political system is based on the Westminster model and its main political parties were established over a century ago (Harwood 2014). After independence all minor parties lost their seats in parliament and since 1966 Malta has been a two-party system, only the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats being elected to parliament, meaning that governments always enjoy absolute control over parliamentary business (the Democratic Party entered parliament in 2017 in an electoral coalition with the Christian Democrats but lost their seats in 2019 when both its MPs resigned from their party). Through patronage, the political parties have become exceptionally powerful and have consolidated their grip on the country through ownership of the main commercial TV channels, newspapers and online media.

While powerful, the parties must satisfy a broad spectrum of interests if they hope to win an election because the electoral system entails few wasted votes; Malta has utilised the Single Transferable Voting (STV) system since 1921, a ranked preferential system based on multiple member constituencies with the country divided into 13 districts with 5 seats available for each district. STV allows voters to rank candidates, normally up to the number 10 with the candidate listed '1' being their preferred candi-

date, and then based on the valid votes in each district, a quota is established which candidates must reach to be elected. Few candidates automatically reach this quota and most are elected after repeated rounds of counting where they inherit the surplus votes of the candidates who performed best (and met the quota) or inherit the votes of those who performed worst (and who were eliminated). Voters can spread their preferences across multiple parties but their first preference denotes their support for the party of the candidate they have voted for and will determine the final balance of seats in parliament.

To ensure that the composition of parliament reflects this balance and assuming that party candidates may have won more seats than the final balance entitles their parties to, additional seats are allocated and, consequently, parliament often has more than the 65 seats stipulated in the General Election Act (2021). The result is an electoral system where few votes are wasted but voters might not always know who they elected as their ballot might have included several candidates who eventually reached the quota and gained a seat. While protracted, for over 50 years turnout was in excess of 90%, indicating popular support for the electoral system.

The 2022 General Election

Before beginning a discussion of the 2022 general election, two points should be mentioned to provide a wider context to the election. The first relates to the 2018 constitutional amendment lowering the voting age to 16, injecting a degree of uncertainty as to how the 16-18 age group would engage with the elections. Second, in an attempt to address the under-representation of women in Maltese politics, constitutional amendments enacted in 2021 meant that, should the final tally of female members of parliament not reach 40% of the total, that 12 extra seats would be added to the final number of seats so as to increase the number of 'the lesser represented gender' in parliament, the extra seats being distributed equally between the two parties (Constitution of Malta 2021, No. 52A). Interestingly, few people knew about this new system and many were surprised when the mechanism was put into effect in March 2022.

The Government announced the election on 20 February with the date set for 26 March.¹ The ruling Social Democrats, the Labour Party (PL, S&D), had been in power since 2013. In that year it had won the largest majority in Malta's post-independence history, a feat it repeated in 2017. This was a significant reversal of fortunes for a party which had, effectively, been in opposition since 1987, undermined by its staunch anti-EU membership policy.² Since 2013 the country's economy has grown strongly with one of the highest growth rates in the EU and economic growth has been accompanied by social reforms with Malta now the European leader for LGBTIQ

rights (ILGA-Europe 2021) though abortion remains taboo, reflective of the continued influence of the Catholic Church. The ruling PL was also buoyed by its COVID-response measures which had seen Malta become the first EU country to reach herd immunity in 2021 and predicted by the Commission to be the EU economy least impacted by the pandemic. However, the PL government also had to contend with negative press, especially following the murder of a prominent journalist in 2017 and revelations in the Panama and Paradise Papers which saw the PL prime minister resigning in 2020, replaced by Robert Abela (PL), the son of a former president. On the other side of the House, the Christian Democrats, the Nationalist Party (PN, EPP), in power from 1987-1996 and 1998-2013 has struggled to re-establish its place in Maltese politics, having had 4 different leaders in the last 10 years and riven by discord on social progress as the party tries to balance traditional and more progressive party members. Going into the 2022 general election, parliament was composed of 67 members, 36 for the PL, 28 for the PN and three independents (two being the former members of the Democratic Party and the last being a former PL minister) (Parliament of Malta 2022).

The Parties, Candidates and Campaigns

Six parties contested the 2022 general election with the ruling PL fielding the largest number of candidates with 122 while the PN fielded 108 candidates. ABBA (ultra-conservative), established in 2021, fielded 28 candidates across all thirteen districts, the AD+PD party (a merger of the Democratic Alternative (commonly referenced as the Green party) (AD, EGP) and the Democratic Party (PD, ALDE)) fielded 20, the People's Party (PP) (far-right) fielded 15 while Volt Malta (a branch of Volt Europa - European federalists) fielded only 4 candidates and were not represented across the 13 districts. There were also four people who stood as independent candidates (Electoral Commission 2022a).

The general consensus across the media was that the 2022 general election campaign was lacklustre and overshadowed by the war in Ukraine with a notable shift to online advertising as the Maltese remain some of the highest users of social media in Europe, second only to Cyprus (European Commission 2020). The main parties ran highly confusing advertising campaigns with party logos missing, party slogans which never took hold and were difficult to differentiate (the PL went with Malta Flimkien (Malta Together) while the PN went with Mieghek ghal-Malta (With You for Malta)) while polls maintained that a PL victory was inevitable. The PL promised continued economic growth, free childcare, a slash in corporate tax rates and investment in green areas. In a dubious move, cheques rained down on the country in the weeks before the election as every household received one-off tax rebates and 'supplementary cheques' which

compensated lower income workers and pensioners most. The PN, eager to portray itself as capable to maintain the country's economic growth, promised a '€1 billion investment programme', building of a tram system to combat the growing problem of traffic congestion and the creation of more green areas. Outside the main parties, the AP+DP focused on promising a 'green' clean sweep of the political system while ABBA, with several candidates linked to anti-LGBT and anti-migrant statements in the past, spent most of the time warning against the introduction of abortion, a warning echoed by PP candidates which also included individuals previously associated with far-right policies, primarily anti-migrant.³ On the other side, Volt Malta was of note for being the first party to advocate in favour of the decriminalisation of abortion. Of the independent candidates, even the promise of Nazareno Bonnici, a repeat candidate who often helped alleviate the intensity of elections with his irreverent statements and pledges, struck an unpleasant note when he promised to provide €4000 to women for breast augmentation, a pledge made on International Women's Day. Against the war in Ukraine, the election seemed superficial, the messaging incoherent and popular engagement seemed to falter, the election never actually 'taking off'.

The Results

Voting took place on Saturday 26 March and counting began soon after 9:30 am on Sunday 27. As in previous elections, counting began with ballots being opened in public view at the Counting Hall in Naxxar. From this exercise, party members can begin to predict the final vote by counting a sample of first preference votes and within 90 minutes and in an unprecedented manner, the PM phoned into the state broadcaster and announced on-air that his party had won. Celebrations began soon after with the main focus being on calculating the margin of victory for the Social Democrats. That said, as the morning progressed it became increasingly apparent that the 2022 election was going to be seismic for the drastic drop in turnout, a key variable as the main parties are synonymous with pushing loyalists to vote, often using 'street leaders' to monitor who has not yet voted before calling and encouraging them to vote. Even though pollsters had predicted that turnout would dip, no one could predict it would drop so steeply; Malta has always had turnout for general elections above 90%, reaching a peak of over 96% in 1996 and 2003. For the first time since 1966, turnout dropped below 90% and fell to a dramatically low 85%, see Figure a. Some continued to argue that this was still exceptionally high but the fact that the PM, in his first address after being sworn in, spoke to those who did not vote indicated how serious this development was, seeming to bring into question the two parties' hold over the electorate. Ultimately, for a political system where each vote counts, the loss of 15% of the electorate brings into question the tried and tested methods of the main parties and the overall

	2022 Votes	2022 % of Votes	2022 Seats	2017 Votes	2017 % of Votes	2017 Seats
Registered Voters	355,075			341,856		
Total Votes	304,050			314,696		
Invalid Votes	8,802			4,031		
Valid Votes	295,248			310,665		
Turnout		85.63			92.06	
PL	162,707	55.11	38	170,976	55.04	37
PN	123,233	41.74	29			
PN+PD				135,696	43.68	30
AD+PD	4,747	1.61	0			
AD				2,564	0.83	0
PP	1,533	0.52	0			
ABBA	1,364	0.46	0			
Volt Malta	382	0.13	0			
Independents	1,282	0.43	0	91	0.03	0

a • General Election 2022 and 2017 Results
(Electoral Commission 2022b)

support for the electoral system. While analysis remains ongoing, allegations of misconduct by members of both parties, persistent negative press (Malta's greylisting by the FATF and the European Commission's infringement procedure against Malta's 'golden passport scheme' both happened in 2021), a growing number of independent news-portals and an economic boom which actually frees people from the need for seeking political favours might help explain the record drop in turnout.

Beyond the issue of turnout, the result was far from convincing for any party. While the PL scored a notable victory over the PN with a majority of nearly 40,000 votes, in actual fact it won fewer votes in 2022 than it did in 2017 despite the number of eligible voters increasing due to the voting age being lowered. As Figure a shows, the PL lost 8,000 votes while the PN lost even more dropping by 10,000 votes (if we do not include the 2017 votes for PD candidates with which the PN had formed an electoral coalition). Outside the main parties, the performance of AD+PD was of note, not simply because it gained the third largest number of votes but because it indicated that AD remains a united party though they have lost some of their most prominent members while PD, which was synonymous with its two MPs before their resignation, remains a viable party with the amalgamation of the two parties also appearing to be working. Outside the main parties, PP and ABBA failed to gain much traction with the electorate while Volt Malta performed poorly, potentially as a consequence of its pro-abortion stance or because of the fact that it did not run across all districts so was precluded from participating in several, high profile party-leader debates.

In terms of gender balance, a central aim of the election was to increase female representation but with only

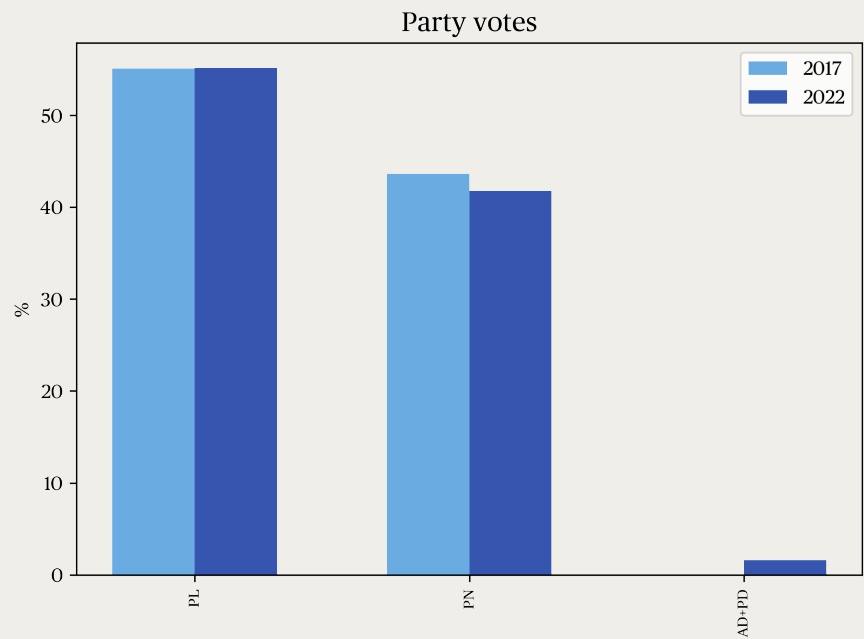
ten women winning a seat (and often through casual elections), it was a very poor showing and while female representation was bolstered by the additional 12 seats, it will still mean that only 25% of the seats in parliament are occupied by women.

Conclusion

The final tally of the general election of 2022 sees a parliament of 79 members, 44 for the PL and 35 for the PN (which includes the extra seats for female candidates). The PM, appointed after the resignation of Joseph Muscat (PL), will be empowered by the result as indicating his ability to win the popular vote. The leader of the PN has announced he will seek re-election as party leader but the party remains a shadow of its former self. While the leader of the PN might manage to re-establish his party, many PN supporters are turning their gaze to Strasbourg; Roberta Metsola, the PN MEP who was elected President of the European Parliament in 2021, kept a low-profile during the campaign but many in the party will see her as the only viable leader for the future and though she has not indicated a wish to return to national politics, her shadow will loom large over the party. Outside the interests of the main parties, the Maltese election of 2022 will become a turning point in Maltese politics due to the historic disengagement shown by the electorate. The main parties will scramble to understand why 15% of the population stayed away (as well as the doubling of invalid votes) and it will be the shadow of the disengaged voter which will dominate Maltese politics over the next five years.

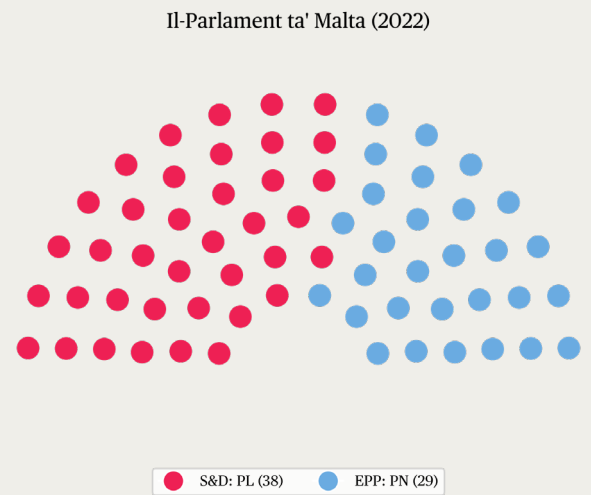
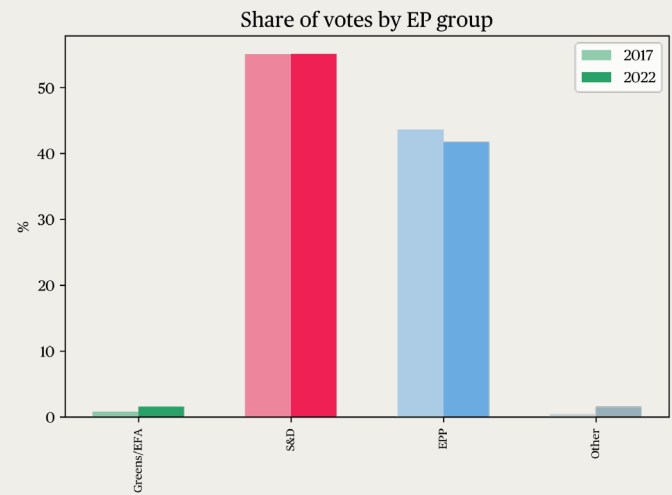
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Nota bene: These graphs/maps show first preference votes by constituency. Malta uses the Single Transferable vote (STV) system.

European indicators





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Regional election in Saarland, 27 March 2022

The Saarland state election in 2022 was the first after Olaf Scholz (SPD) was elected chancellor in the 2021 federal election and Friedrich Merz (CDU) was elected federal party leader. While the election was in any case a tough challenge for the Saarland Christian Democrats, who had occupied the Saarbrücken State Chancellery for 22 years and were in danger of losing it according to pre-election polls (Infratest Dimap 2022a), it was also seen in the public debate as the first test of public opinion for the two newly elected figures at the federal level. The fact that the different levels in the German federal political system are interdependent is not a new phenomenon (Detterbeck and Renzsch 2008; Minas 2021). Elections can certainly influence other elections. However, people and specific issues set their very own trends in the states and the federal government, as this election clearly illustrated.

While politics in the federal capital Berlin in the spring of 2022 were mainly driven by the war in Ukraine and its effects, with foreign, security, trade and defence policy being primarily federal competences, one thing above all was true of the outcome of this state election: the focus of the Saarlanders in this election was on genuinely regional issues and personalities, despite the extensive presence of the war (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2022; John 2022: 6). As will be demonstrated in the further course of this analysis, this election seemed unusually detached from the usual logics of interdependencies between federal and state politics.¹

1. Whether this specific observation can also be found in other elections at the state level, whether a new trend and thus a new dynamic between the federal and state levels can be deduced in this respect, and what the possible rea-

Therefore, contrary to the widely discussed public assumption, it was only suitable to a very limited extent as a barometer of sentiment for federal politics and as a predictor for the state elections in Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia in May, both of which shaped their own dynamics through state-specific issues and personalities (for more on this see: Drewes (2022) and Wurthmann (2022) in this volume). The following analysis explains the election result of the Saarland state election in 2022 on the basis of different, commonly used perspectives of electoral research and particularly addresses socio-demographic, geographic, party-political and economic factors as well as the role of leadership candidates.

“The Saarland faces a mountain of problems” (Kirch 2022a: 7), which are also compounding each other. In addition to the persistent fiscal weakness, the demographic development is a cause for concern in what is already the second-smallest federal state. In the last 25 years, the Saarland has lost almost 100,000 inhabitants (currently approx. 983,000). In addition, there is the ongoing structural change in the economy. Traditionally, (heavy) industry has formed the economic backbone of the state. While jobs in the coal mining industry disappeared years ago, the automotive and steel industries, which are also not considered climate-friendly, are now under great pressure (ibid.) to address these problems of economic development and job security.

The result of this state election was therefore at the same time the decision on which policy should be used to pursue these goals and the no less important answer to the question of who the Saarlanders trust to lead this policy.

Election results in perspective: The Saarland sees red

Election results in figures

In 2022, 51 MPs were elected in three constituencies in Saarland by means of list voting according to pure proportional representation. All German citizens who are over 18 years of age, have had their main residence in Saarland for at least three months and have not been explicitly excluded from voting have the right to vote (Kollmann 2020: 361).² Each eligible voter has exactly one vote, which can be used to elect a party or electoral group whose candidates are on fixed lists. The parties or electoral groups have the option of submitting a district list in each of the three constituencies and, in addition, a state list for the whole of Saarland as an election proposal, on which they can distribute their candidates and determine their own order (*ibid.*: 363f). Seats are allocated on the basis of the number of votes cast according to the maximum d'Hondt

sons for this decoupling are, is to be examined in a separate study.

2. Cf. Article 64 (1) of the Saarland's Constitution.

method, on condition that at least five per cent of the votes are obtained (five per cent clause). Of the 51 MPs in the Landtag, 41 are determined via the district lists and 10 via the state lists.³

As can be seen from the figures in the “data” panel, and taking into account the results of the State Election Commissioner (2022), the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD; S&D) emerged as the clear winner – more so than predicted by the poll results (Infratest Dimap 2022a) in the months leading up to the election. With 43.5 per cent of the vote, it won 29 of the 51 seats to be allocated in the Landtag, thus achieving Germany's only absolute majority in a Land parliament. The Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU; EPP) obtained 28.5 per cent of the vote on election day, giving it 19 seats in the state parliament. The Alternative for Germany (AfD; ID) scored 5.7 per cent and thus received the remaining three seats – all other parties and voter groups thus missed out on entering parliament. Bündnis90/Die Grünen (EFA) failed to meet the threshold with 4.99502 per cent. In absolute numbers, the party fell 23 votes short of entering parliament (Kirch 2022b: B1). The Free Democratic Party (FDP; RE) also failed to enter parliament for the third time in a row, with 4.8 per cent of the vote. The otherwise comparatively strong party in this federal state, Die Linke⁴ (GUE/NGL) missed its re-entry into the state parliament with a result of 2.6 per cent. The small and very small parties, such as the Tierschutzpartei⁵ (Animal Protection Party), FREIE WÄHLER⁶ (RE), die Basis⁷ (The Basis), bunt.saar⁸ (Colourful Saar), Die Partei⁹ (The Party) and all the other voter groups and parties¹⁰ also failed to win a seat in the Saarland state parliament.

Compared to the 2017 state election, among the parties represented in the new state parliament, only the SPD was able to improve in terms of the results it achieved. It increased its share of the vote by +13.9 percentage points. Alliance90/The Greens (+1.0 %) and the FDP (+1.5 %) also recorded a slight increase. While the AfD only suffered a relatively small decline in votes of -0.5 per cent, the CDU (-12.2 per cent) and Die Linke (-10.3 per cent) recorded a severe decrease in their share of the vote. The ‘other parties’ climbed in their total by +6.5 percentage points from a total of 3.4 per cent in 2017 and reached a combined 9.9 per cent of the electoral vote in 2022. Looking at the

format of the parties at the parliamentary-governmental level, the four-party parliament of the last legislative period (CDU, SPD, Die Linke, AfD) became a three-party parliament consisting of SPD, CDU and AfD. It can thus be stated that with the elimination of the Left Party in the Saarland state parliament, the polarisation in this institution has also decreased compared to the previous legislative period.

Out of 746,307 eligible voters, 458,113 went to the polls, resulting in a voter turnout of 61.4 % in 2022 (2017: 69.7 %). The proportion of absentee voters was 43.5 per cent (SR.de 2022). Figure 3 shows the voter turnout in the individual municipalities of the Saarland. It is interesting to note that voter turnout was high in rural areas – i.e. in the south-eastern part, in the centre as well as in the north of the state – while it was comparatively lower in urban areas – the reasons for this are discussed in the following sections. More than half of Saarland's population lives in a V-shaped urban agglomeration (Loth 2021: 572; red line on Figure a). This comprises most of the populous cities in the state¹¹ and includes precisely those areas with the lowest turnout this year. This is a significant circumstance especially for the Greens, who can normally win comparatively more votes in urban areas.

The reasons for voting in favour of a party are manifold. In the following, the election result is therefore discussed from different perspectives. The analysis is based on the criteria of the established social-psychological Ann Arbor model, according to which so-called ‘relevant factors’ such as socio-demographic and geographical characteristics are temporarily preceded by ‘party identification’ and these in turn by ‘candidate’ and ‘issue orientation’ with a view to election day (for this, see: Campbell et al. 1960; Schoen 2009).

Socio-demographics and political landscape

Looking at Saarland's socio-demographics, one key point in particular can be identified that suggests a significant connection with the election result. “Since the 19th century, the state's economy has been dominated by heavy industry” (Loth 2021: 573), in particular the steel industry, coal mining as well as automobile manufacturing – i.e. precisely those economic sectors that are coming under pressure due to structural change. A differentiated look at the voting decisions of various relevant groups reveals that the SPD's ‘landslide victory’ can be attributed above all to the fact that it was able to win back its former core voter clientele: Workers, senior citizens and people with lower levels of education (Kruse and Müller-Hansen 2022). Among blue-collar workers, 39 per cent voted for the Social Democrats (CDU: 20 per cent). 42 per cent of white-collar workers voted for the SPD (CDU: 25

3. For further specifics regarding voting laws, the electoral system and the distribution of seats in the Saarland see Kollmann (2020).

4. In the previous elections Die Linke had obtained 12,8 % (2017), 16,1 % (2012) and 21,3 % (2009) of the votes.

5. 2,3 % of the votes.

6. 1,7 % of the votes.

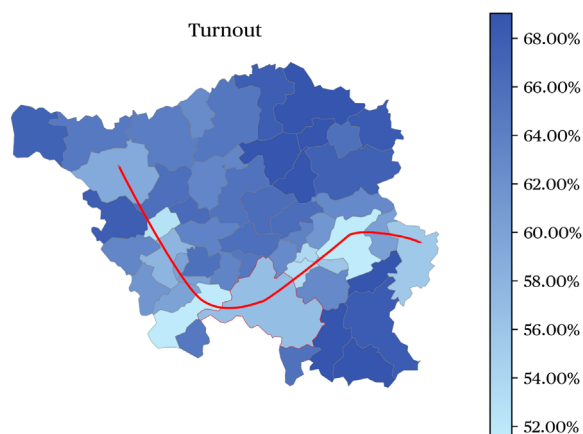
7. 1,4 % of the votes.

8. 1,4 % of the votes.

9. 1,0 % of the votes.

10. Other parties or voter groups with a result of under 1 % of the vote: FAMILIE, Volt, Piraten (EFA), ÖDP (EFA), SGV, Gesundheitsforschung, Die Humanisten.

11. From west to east: Merzig, Dillingen, Saarlouis, Völklingen, Saarbrücken, Neunkirchen, Homburg.



a • Turnout in 2022 by municipality

per cent). Among public servants and the self-employed, only the CDU (37 and 36 per cent) had a lead over the SPD (31 and 27 per cent) (Infratest Dimap 2022c: 2). The age structure of voters also provides interesting insights into the election results: the SPD won significantly in all age groups. A significant movement compared to the 2017 election can be seen in the 60+ age group. A 20 percentage point increase propelled the SPD to 49 per cent in this cohort (CDU: 33 per cent) (*ibid.*), which in turn accounted for over 40 per cent of the electorate (John 2022: 9). The FDP and the Greens performed comparatively strongly among the young generation, so the trend of the previous Bundestag election continued there. The CDU came in at only 19 per cent – its weakest age cohort (Infratest Dimap 2022c; Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2022: 2). The AfD recruited its voters primarily among middle-aged men (*ibid.*). If one differentiates between voters according to their level of education, it can be summarised that higher levels of education were associated with a lower share of the vote for the Social Democrats. While 55 per cent of those with a lower secondary school degree voted for the SPD, only 37 per cent of those with a university degree did so. The CDU achieved a maximum of 30 per cent, regardless of the level of education. The Greens and the FDP in particular benefited from the SPD's declining share of the vote in the more highly educated groups (Kruse and Müller-Hansen 2022).

Surveying the political map of Saarland reveals only a few nuances regarding the performance of different parties besides the completely red colouring (see the “data” panel) – i.e. the victory of the SPD in all municipalities of the state.¹² The CDU (Figure b) scored particularly well in the north-eastern constituency 3 (Neunkirchen) (30.7 per cent), but came in at only 25.5 per cent in constituency 1 (Saarbrücken). While its strongest municipalities were in the rural north-east of Saarland (see the principal component analysis in Figure f), the AfD (Figure c) performed well by its standards in the south-east, as well as in

scattered municipalities throughout the state. In 15 rural municipalities, it was able to slightly improve its result compared to 2017, but declined everywhere compared to the federal election in the previous year. Interestingly, the Greens (Figure d) were also able to generate many votes by their standards in the south-east. In contrast to the AfD, however, they collected their votes mainly in the two most populous cities – Saarbrücken and Saarlouis (see also principal component analysis Figure f). In 42 of the 52 municipalities they were able to improve their state election result, albeit only marginally. Compared to its performance in the rest of the state, the FDP (Figure e) performed well in the municipalities close to the border with Luxembourg in the north-west, which can also be confirmed by the principal component analysis (Figure f). In all municipalities, the FDP improved compared to 2017, but in contrast to the 2021 federal election (11.5 per cent in Saarland), the result was very weak (John 2021: 3f).

The larger and the smaller parties

The next step in the analysis is to look at the role of the parties. Looking at figures h and i, a mixed picture emerges. While a smaller proportion of voters identified with the SPD and FDP than five years previously, the CDU recorded a strong increase in party loyalty, the Left and AfD a moderate increase and the Greens a slight increase.¹³ However, the fact that these are only relative statements in reference to their own electorate is shown by the voters' migration.¹⁴ In addition to the strong support from its own electorate, the SPD was able to gain voters from all other parties, benefiting most from the CDU (approx. 32,000 voters) and from Die Linke (approx. 17,000 voters). The latter lost another 12,000 voters who did not go to the polls voluntarily this year; the CDU had to do without 19,000 voters. The AfD was also able to score with the former voters of Die Linke (4,000 voters) (Infratest Dimap 2022c).

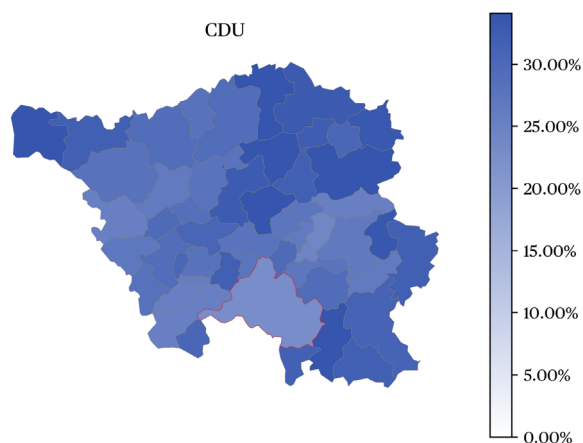
The evaluation of the parties (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2022) shows an opposite picture compared to party loyalty. Here, the SPD was able to rise on the scale between -5 and +5 from 1.9 in 2017 to 2.1 and the FDP from -0.5 to -0.1 in the same period. All other parties recorded losses: CDU from 2.1 to 1.1; AfD from -3.6 to -3.8; Greens from -0.4 to -1.0; Die Linke from -0.1 to -1.8. The SPD benefited significantly more than the CDU from the quite positive perceptions of Saarlanders of the

12. In the municipality of Rehlingen-Siersburg in constituency 2 (Saarlouis), the SPD achieved an absolute majority of 50.5 per cent of the votes cast (Landeswahlleiterin 2022).

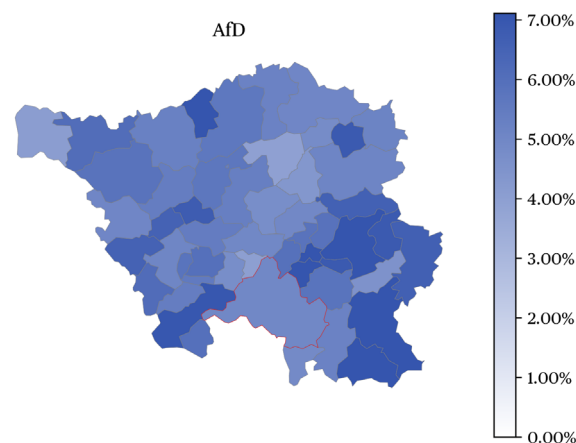
13. One possible explanation for this is that the values given are to be considered relative to each other. On the one hand, a strong leadership candidate for the SPD increased the influence of the factor leadership candidate to the detriment of the factor party loyalty. On the other hand, a weak leading candidate for the CDU reduced the influence of the factor leadership candidate in favour of the factor party loyalty.

14. Under the following link you will find an animated representation of voters' migration. <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/waehlerwanderung-saarland-103.html>. However, the following figures refer to the exit polls published by Infratest Dimap and reflect the balances of the voter flow accounts.

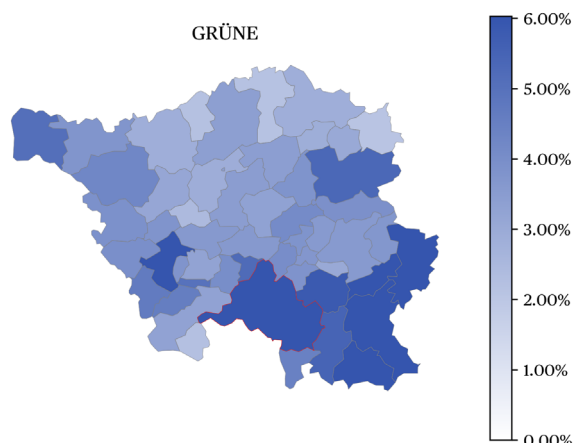
b • Share of CDU vote by municipality (2022)



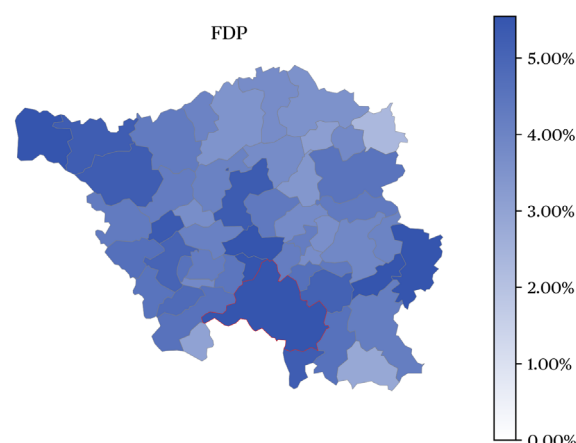
c • Share of AfD vote by municipality (2022)



d • Share of Green vote by municipality (2022)



e • Share of FDP vote by municipality (2022)



Grand Coalition¹⁵ (Infratest Dimap 2022b). The poor performance of the Greens and the Left can be explained, among other things, by internal disputes that had been running through the parties since the year before. While this had little or no consequences for the AfD at the ballot box, the quarrels in Die Linke and Bündnis90/ Die Grünen led, among other things, to the founding of the electoral alliance bunt.saar, which won 1.4 per cent of the electoral votes – a particularly bitter circumstance for Bündnis90/Die Grünen, considering that they were only 23 votes short of entering the state parliament and that their internal disputes, which culminated in the inadmissible list in the 2021 federal election, were considered largely settled (John 2022: 8). Die Linke also had to pay for its internal strife by leaving parliament; in addition, however, the dispute with its figurehead Oskar Lafontaine played a special role, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

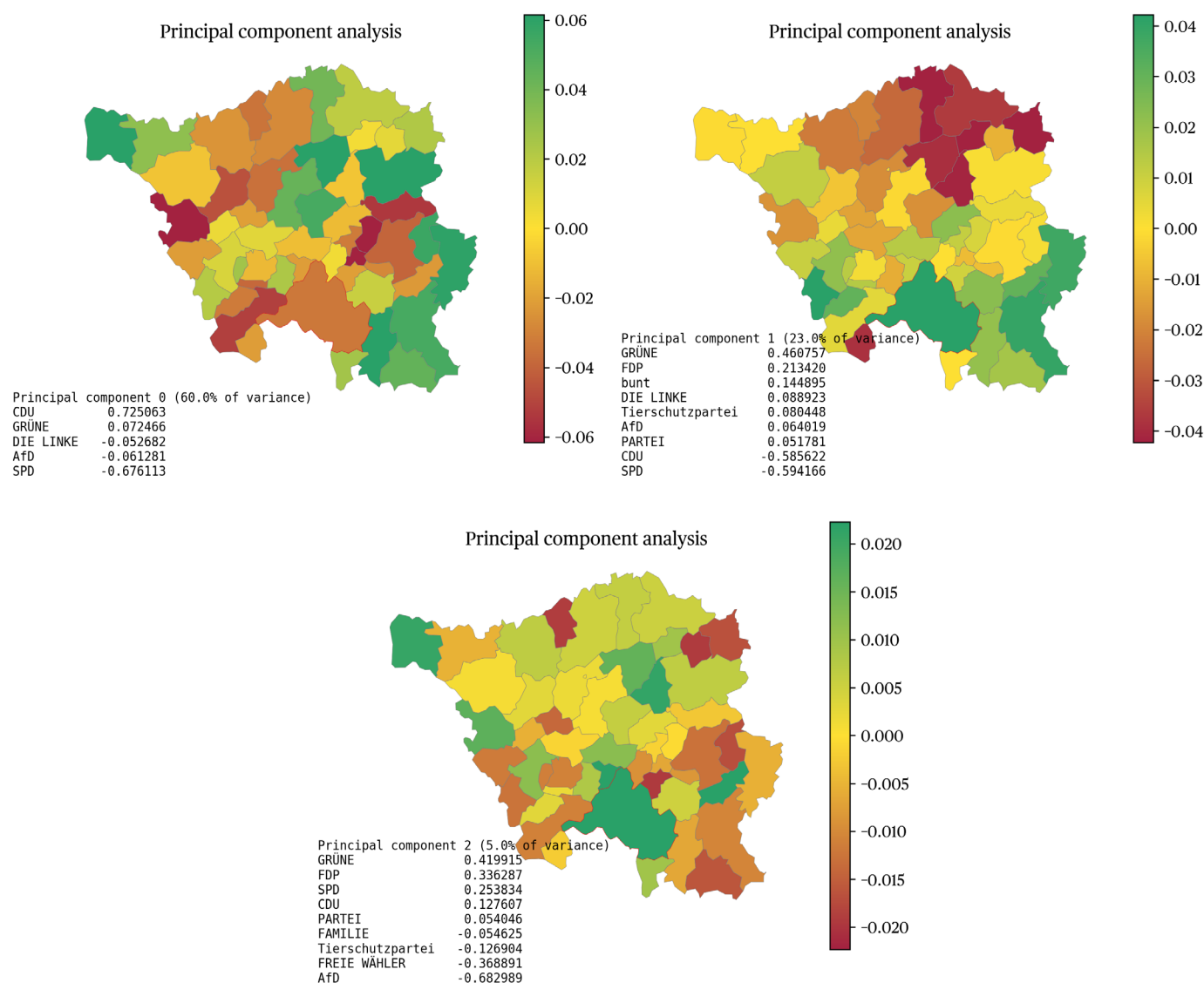
The personality factor

The role of personalities in the public debate as well as in everyday political life has been increasingly important for years (Karvonen 2010; Bittner 2011; Rahat and Kenig 2018). This circumstance is becoming increasingly

evident especially in the context of elections and election campaigns. This state parliamentary election was no exception – on the contrary. The election campaign as well as the public debate surrounding the upcoming election were repeatedly conducted with enormous intensity about the personalities of the contesting parties.

As already mentioned, the focus was also on the former figurehead of the Left Party, Oskar Lafontaine. The former Minister-President of the Saarland (1985-1998) – at that time still under the Social Democratic banner – became the co-founder of the Left Party in 2007, which from 2009 onwards always achieved double-digit results in Saarland state elections, unlike its predecessor party, the PDS (Winkler 2018: 48). The strong position of the party, which otherwise performed rather poorly in the western states of Germany and was able to achieve good results mainly in the east, could so far be attributed not only to the socio-economic factors of the state but also to Oskar Lafontaine personally (Winkler 2018: 41ff; Hirndorf and Roose 2022: 4). The personal factor emerged all the more clearly when one looks at this year's result of the Left Party and relates it to Lafontaine's initially announced decision not to run for another legislative term (Saarbrücker Zeitung 2022), which ultimately culminated in his leaving the party (Kirch 2022c). After Lafontaine's withdrawal from the party, the party finally found itself back where the predecessor party, the PDS, had been be-

15. This refers to both the incumbent state government (CDU/SPD) and the desired coalition of respondents in opinion polls before the election.



fore Lafontaine's activities in the Left Party (most recently in the 2004 state elections): at just over two per cent of the vote.

In addition to the outgoing candidate, however, the contenders for the office of Minister President played a role, if not the biggest role, in this election. Unlike, for example, in the state elections in March 2021 in Rhineland-Palatinate (Minas 2021) and Baden-Württemberg (Drewes 2021), it was not possible to identify any incumbency bonus for the incumbent Prime Minister Tobias Hans (CDU) running for election in Saarland in 2022 (Fahrenholz 2022). Hans, who was rather unknown until then, took over the Saarland State Chancellery from his predecessor Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU) in 2018. While the latter clearly won the fictitious direct election question for the office of Minister-President against her opponent Anke Rehlinger (SPD) with 52 to 38 per cent in the polls in the 2017 election, Hans lost this year in the fictitious direct election with 33 to 49 per cent against the very same Anke Rehlinger, who only built up a lead over the incumbent since November 2021 (Infratest Dimap

2022c). The Christian Democrat also lost out to the Social Democrat in polls on their ratings or popularity (*ibid.*; Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2022; Hirndorf and Roose 2022: 5). Hans' poor poll ratings were based on several reasons. First, he was repeatedly accused of wavering in his management of the Coronavirus during the pandemic (Fahrenholz 2022). Moreover, he made a gaffe during the election campaign with a Twitter video in which he denounced high fuel prices and blamed the federal government while filming himself in front of a petrol station, differentiating between “low-income people” and “hard-working people.”

If we look at the role of leadership candidates in Table 1, we can see that, with regard to the CDU, just under a third of its voters chose the party because of Tobias Hans. The leadership candidates of the smaller parties remained rather pale and played only a minor role in the electoral decision for them. However, the leading role of the social democratic candidate Rehlinger is striking. With her personality, she developed a power of appeal that was recently only observed with Malu Dreyer in Rhineland-Palatinate

(John 2022: 6; Minas 2021). 49 percent of SPD voters said they had voted for the party because of the candidate. No other party came close to such a high figure. During her tenure as minister, she also managed to build up a kind of incumbency bonus beyond the SPD's supporters – a fact that the Social Democrats' election campaign strategists took advantage of. As Minister of Economic Affairs, she was concerned by virtue of her office with issues such as jobs and the broader consequences of structural change in the country, the management of which was one of the main concerns of voters, as will be discussed in more detail in the next section. Her strongly personalised election campaign came to a head with a large-print election poster (Figure g) on which Rehlinger's likeness was accompanied by the text "Our candidate for the office of Minister President." While "Our Minister President" could be read large and clearly, one had to look much closer for the text in the middle – a coup of the party that visualises the role of the top candidate and her forced, suggested official bonus in the election campaign.

It's the economy, stupid

Just under a month before the election, a quarter of the Saarlanders surveyed said that dealing with (the threat of) unemployment in the country was the most important problem at the moment. This was followed by dealing with the Corona pandemic (21 percent), mobility issues (18 percent), the economy and structural change in general (17 percent) and education (16 percent). Environmental protection and climate change ranked sixth with 10 percent (Infratest Dimap 2022a). The priority of the Saarlanders was therefore clearly on consequences (including jobs) and coping with economic structural change, which is not surprising in view of the dependence of the Saarland economy on its key industrial sectors. It is therefore interesting to look at the voters' assessment of which party had the greatest competence in the individual policy areas (Table 2). It can be clearly stated that the SPD had a massive lead over its competitors in most of the decisive issues. The SPD is clearly ahead both in securing jobs and creating new ones, and in advancing the economy, as well as in the somewhat more abstract category of solving the most important problems of the Saarland. Not even in the area of Corona management does the SPD lose out to the CDU, which can be attributed in part to the fact that CDU top candidate Hans has been repeatedly criticised for his meandering course in Corona policy. In environmental and climate protection, the Greens rank first, while with regard to education policy, the SPD again scores best. Infratest Dimap (2022a) already painted a similar, if not yet so clear, picture one month before the election. The CDU not only lost out to the SPD in most categories, but also had to note in self-reflection that its competence attribution scores deteriorated significantly in retrospect to the last election in 2017 (Hirndorf and Roose 2022: 5f).

Outlook

If one interprets the results of this state election with a differentiated view of the electoral motives and contextual factors described above, it appears clearly that Saarlanders chose Social Democracy, but also primarily Anke Rehlinger herself, to solve the region's problems. Despite the list voting system laid down in Saarland electoral law, a crucial personal factor can be identified which had a decisive influence on the voting motives of many Saarlanders. Another factor is that the issues that dominated were those that fell within Anke Rehlinger's sphere of competence as former Minister of Economic Affairs.

Coalition issues only had to be speculated about before the election. Despite the recently elected traffic light coalition (SPD, Greens, FDP) in the federal government and the rather unloved coalition of CDU and SPD at the federal level, the Saarlanders clearly favoured the latter for the coming legislative period. In addition to the topical priorities, it became particularly clear here that this election clearly had a regional character, i.e. it hardly functioned as an indicator for federal politics or a predictor for other federal states. Due to the weakness of the smaller parties, which, with the exception of the AfD, all failed to enter the state parliament, the Social Democrats won an absolute majority in parliament and will henceforth govern the Saarland alone, while the CDU will have to reposition itself in the opposition and give itself a new profile. Although the AfD lost votes, it can so far rely on a small but solid electorate in Saarland that is willing to overlook internal party disputes. This is not the case for Bündnis90/Die Grünen. The Greens and the FDP continue to struggle to establish themselves in Saarland – which is partly due to the socio-demographics and the economic circumstances of the state. Whether the Left Party will manage to regain a foothold in Saarland politics without Oskar Lafontaine remains open or even doubtful.

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	SPD	CDU	AfD	Grüne	FDP	Die Linke
Voted out of...						
Conviction	66	70	36	65	50	44
Disappointment	28	23	55	25	44	51
Voted because of...						
Party identification	19 (-4)	34 (+16)	12 (+7)	17 (+4)	16 (-8)	13 (+8)
Program	32 (-12)	31 (-1)	67 (-10)	76 (+1)	71 (+14)	72 (+8)
Lead candidate	49 (+20)	32 (-15)	10 (0)	7 (+1)	9 (-6)	11 (-20)

h • Voting grounds (change compared to 2017 in brackets)

Parties	SPD	CDU	AfD	Grüne	FDP	Linke
Competence domain						
Protecting jobs	45	22	3	2	5	3
Creating new jobs	43	22	3	2	5	3
Advance the economy	40	25	3	2	9	1
Climate and environment policy	24	15	3	27	3	2
Energy policy	28	20	4	17	4	1
School and education policy	39	24	3	5	4	3
Management of the Covid pandemic	30	27	6	3	3	1
Social justice	45	14	4	3	3	10
Domestic security	24	35	8	1	2	3
Migration policy	30	24	8	5	3	3
Solving the most important issues in Saarland	38	22	4	3	4	3

i • Assignment of party competence by voters (%)

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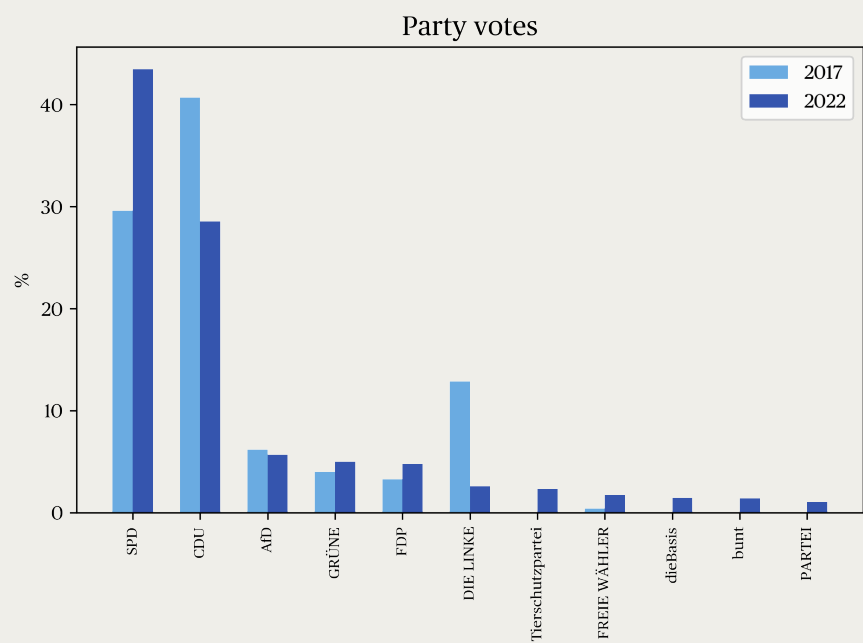
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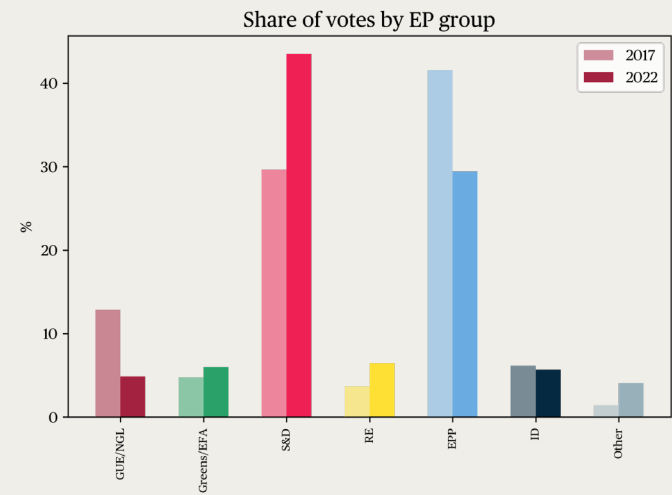
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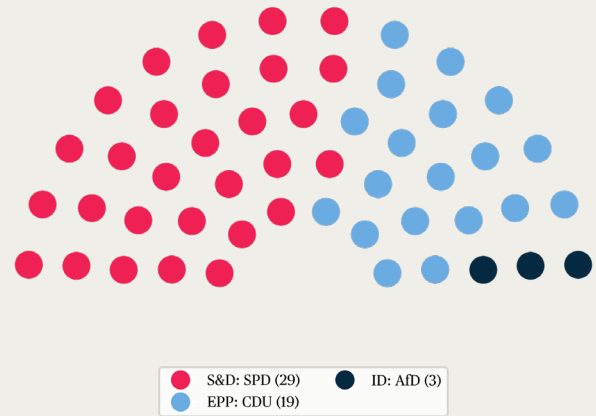
Winning party (2022)



European indicators



Landtag des Saarlandes (2022)





Eszter Farkas • Central European University

Parliamentary election in Hungary, 3 April 2022

The 2022 Hungarian national elections resulted in the rearrangement of the country's party system. The governing party Fidesz was re-elected for the 4th time with an absolute majority¹ and thus re-occupied the central force position, the “central magnetic field,” whereas opposition parties remained ideologically diverse, fragmented, and rather weightless regarding their legitimacy and political representation. Moreover, a new far-right party (Mi Hazánk) exceeded the parliamentary threshold, and a small party (Párbeszéd) consolidated its position as a cartel party in the recent ten years.

Before the election, survey estimations were ambiguous: although most of the opinion polls showed that Fidesz will have more supporters on 3 April, the alliance of opposition parties has never seemed to be this close to possibly defeat the governing parties (Tóka 2022a). One reason for that were the primary elections held in October 2021, when opposition parties managed to organize a pre-selection among their members. Electoral rules require strong opposition candidates in single member districts, which dominates the allocation of seats. This cooperation and the establishment of a new democratic institution was clearly an innovation of the opposition alliance. During the weeks of the primary, the policy ideas of various opposition candidates were publicly discussed

(due to the intensive work of an independent media outlet Partizán [Kováts 2022]), and thus they could dominate media discussions about politics in general. As a consequence, opinion polls pointed to a leading popularity of the opposition alliance against Fidesz for the first time since 2010. Because of the clear messages, the open discussion and declaration of political values, opposition supporters most probably considered them competent enough against Viktor Orbán. However, this innovation did not manage to sustain the opposition's popularity: after the primaries, the intensity of the discussion drastically decreased, opposition voters were left in apathy, which was shown by the decreasing number of supporters in opinion polls as well (Tóka 2022b).

Election results signaled that the political/strategic cooperation among opposition parties alone will not bring political success. The Fidesz won most of the single member districts, whereas the party list of the opposition alliance also received only 34.44% of the votes, which is a huge disappointment, regarding the efforts that were put in the collaboration, and the expectations preceding the elections. Opinion bubbles in the polarized media system made opposition politicians believe that defeating Orbán was possible; in reality, an overall victory and strong legitimacy of the governing parties was achieved.

Comparing campaign strategies, the opposition alliance made serious mistakes during the electoral campaign. Although the strong anti-Orbán cleavage among voters and the obvious corruption issues of the current regime could have had its political benefits, the silent period (and long recovery) after the primaries, the public conflicts between collaborative members of the alliance discouraged opposition voters to appear on the election's day. Furthermore, the imbalance between government and opposition's political resources should be emphasized, too: the huge media dominance and almost infinite campaign resources of the governing parties has been creating unfair conditions since 2010.

To scrutinize the current situation and the newly (re) established party system in Hungary, I will elaborate on the political position of every related political actor: the governing parties, the opposition parties, and Mi Hazánk, as the new far-right party in the Hungarian parliament. Although the 2022 national election results – similarly to any elections – brought some significant alterations, the main phenomena have not changed since 2010: the political power and legitimacy of the government is unquestionable. Moreover, due to the imbalance of political resources, the biased electoral rules favoring Fidesz, and the incapability to form an ideologically homogeneous political group and suitable campaign strategy, the alliance of opposition parties failed again to gain enough political support from the voters.

1. Fidesz gained 54.3% of party list votes and 67.84% of parliamentary seats. The alliance of opposition parties (DK, Jobbik, LMP, Momentum, Párbeszéd) received 34.44% of party list votes and 28.64% of parliamentary seats. Mi Hazánk received 5.88% of party list votes and possesses now 3.02% of parliamentary seats. However, the electoral system favors those who can win most of the first-past-the-post single vote districts – in which the governing party has absolute dominance since 2010, too. Source: National Election Office.

The current European discourse considers the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán as one of the most successful and powerful political leaders in Europe. This is not only because of the long time spent in government, but also because of the illiberal, authoritarian governing style that they exercise, and the anti-EU and pro-Russian rhetoric, which has been dominating Fidesz's communication in the last decade (whereas the first Orbán government's policies were clearly more centrist and pro-EU). Orbán and other significant politicians of Fidesz refer to their party and values as conservative christian-democratic, but – as suggested and elaborated by András Körösenyi in his recent article – these are overweighted by the centralization of political institutions, radical political thoughts, the absence of rule of law, and the will of the people, as a crucial legitimizing factor in the sustention of power (Körösenyi 2022). The referendum on the election day about the depiction of LGBTQ contents in schools similarly signalized these trends. In other terms, Orbán established the plebiscitary leader democracy in Hungary (Körösenyi et al. 2020).

Therefore, the most important question of the 2022 Hungarian election was whether the 12 years reign of the Orbán-regime could be broken. If not, Orbán would gain enough power to continue the exclusive and chauvinistic politics he favours that privileges national sovereignty, heteronormative families as the micro foundations of the society, and an unhealthy fiscal policy that harms mostly people on the bottom level of society and sustains a distorted allocation of economic resources (Mike 2022), where the decisive factor of wealth is the loyalty towards the government. This illiberal form of democracy, where the absolute majority of power belongs to a single party for longer than a decade, was first called the central magnetic field by Gábor Tóka, but the term was used by other government and opposition analysts as well (Urfi 2022), whereas some leading analysts of the government refer to the system as the “national block” instead of central magnetic field (Békés, 2022), whereas some radical opposition voices call it “controlled”, “Putin-style” democracy (Keller-Alánt 2022), where several human rights experts already signalized the threat under which the rule of law of Hungary is set.

Opposition parties: ideologically diverse, politically weak

One of the main purposes of politicians in the opposition alliance was to finally find the right candidate who can be an equal (or preferably stronger) opponent to Viktor Orbán in 2022. However, Péter Márki-Zay, the prime minister candidate of the opposition alliance did not manage to justify the trust of his voters in the primaries. As an openly christian, right-wing person with seven

children and strong conservative views, the idea was that he would be able to convince rural people (where Fidesz is especially strong) to vote for him instead of Orbán. As a ‘newcomer’ in politics in 2018, he defeated Fidesz's candidate in Hódmezővásárhely where Fidesz was outstandingly strong, and became the major there. Therefore, he was long considered to be able to mobilize undecided voters especially in rural areas. However, the extreme negative campaign of the government against Márki-Zay which messages were spread throughout the whole government media holding and some doubtful political statements of Márki-Zay made a successful campaign impossible.

For a long time, it was Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, who seemed to possess this image in voters' perceptions as a leader in waiting. But he backtracked from the second round of the primaries and supported Márki-Zay publicly against Klára Dobrev, the wife of the former prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány. Since Gyurcsány was the main and most intensively demonized enemy figure of the Fidesz campaign, it was obvious that most opposition voters and politicians did not believe that she would be able to lead a successful political campaign against Orbán. As our election day poll research with Daniel Mikecz during the primaries showed, Dobrev was supported by older female voters, while higher educated, politically more interested and informed people voted for Márki-Zay (Farkas & Mikecz 2022).

Although currently represented values of parties in the opposition alliance became more or less homogenized at the end of the electoral campaign, clear policy messages and the perception of governing competence were missing from this political offer. The party of Gyurcsány, the Democratic Coalition, and the pro-European liberal Momentum Movement have been in most powerful positions in this alliance. The formerly successful and promising green party LMP has lost its electoral support in the European Parliamentary elections in 2019, and has not recovered since.

Párbeszéd (Dialogue) has a particular role in this political alliance. Since the foundation of the party in 2012, survey companies measure their popularity at 1-2%, whereas its politicians have been possessing significant decision making authority in various political positions. The number of these positions is clearly disproportionate to the popularity of the party. One of the main declared purposes of Párbeszéd's founders (one of the mayor Gergely Karácsony) was to initiate cooperation among opposition parties, because they declared this as the only way to accommodate current electoral rules and defeat the Orbán-regime. Thus, Párbeszéd's politicians became one of the main engines of opposition alliances, which launched a common party list already for the 2014 national elections against Fidesz. Although every election more and more opposition parties joined this alliance, the lack

of integrated political program and any decisive, substantive (counter)narratives against Fidesz's political messages hindered the victory of this political formation. The 2019 municipal elections were the only exception where opposition politicians ran surprisingly well: not only the mayor position, but several other districts and seats were won by opposition parties, among them many politicians of Párbeszéd succeeded. According to their website,² they have the mayor, one district mayor, 6 deputy mayors, five members in the parliament, and twelve representatives in various districts and municipalities as elected politicians.

Therefore, we can claim that the party has become a cartel party in the recent decade, according to the related definitions of political sciences. As Katz and Mair point out in their study in 1995, "Cartel parties are the entanglement of party and state, and the established norm of inter-party collaborations. (...) Related dynamics are dependent on the collaborations and cooperation with other political forces, and these collaborations require the contributions of every or almost every other political actor." (Katz & Mair, 1995). Consequently, there is a particularistic (and in the Hungarian context unique) situation when the institutional representation and the available state and political resources of a party is (and has always been) much stronger than its electoral support.

The re-birth of the far-right in Hungary

With 5.88% of party list votes, the extremely radical right-wing Mi Hazánk managed to reach the parliamentary threshold for the first time in their history. The party is the successor of the previously far-right, now consolidated "people's party" Jobbik, or in other words, extreme politicians who left Jobbik founded Mi Hazánk to represent a clearly radical position on the immigration and refugee issue, on the problems of roma people, the coronavirus crisis or the war in Ukraine. Since the decade-long xenophobic rhetoric of Fidesz and the constantly applied "moral panic button" strategy by governing parties (Gerő & Sik 2020), right-wing feelings in the Hungarian society could be preserved, and Mi Hazánk could serve as the shelter of those voters who identify with these thoughts. Official statements after the elections confirmed that Mi Hazánk spent the most amount of money on campaigning in 2022, so the party possessed enough resources to run successfully. Some opinion polls measured the party as the largest opposition force after the elections.

The stable reign of Fidesz and the expansion of Mi Hazánk means a significant loss for Jobbik primarily. Although Jobbik was clearly a far-right party in 2009, after some unsuccessful elections the party has been starting to frame itself as a mainstream conservative "people's party;" as suggested before, politicians who did not agree with this political direction were founders of Mi

Hazánk. Thus, the question of how much the rate of far-right minded people in Hungary increased, is difficult to answer. Clearly, most voters of Mi Hazánk might belong to this category. Parallel with the national elections, a referendum about LMBTQ rights was held, which mobilized and significantly intensified homophobic attitudes in the Hungarian society.

To conclude: the decade of consolidation

The not so surprising conclusion of my analysis is that the Hungarian party system did not change but consolidated during the recent decade. Orbán and Fidesz have an absolute majority in the Hungarian national parliament, whereas opposition parties suffered a significant defeat and still continue the inter-party conflicts that have been dominating their political activity for a while now. Moreover, the far-right party Mi Hazánk woke the partly latent, extremely xenophobic and homophobic attitudes, of which consequences on Hungarian laws and policies are unclear yet.

Whether current opposition parties will be ever able to defeat Orbán remains a question, while several analysts of opposition parties seem more and more pessimistic (Bojar et al., 2022). In fact, as pointed out in another article by Dániel Róna (2022), instead of blurred values and identity politics, the level of education seems to be decisive among voters. Those who are uneducated are the least likely to vote, or they are the easiest to convince by the government. Therefore, opposition parties and politicians should start to primarily concentrate on these facts, rather than any "meta versions" of politics. Although the war in Ukraine, the economic recession, inflation and the possibly increasing of coronavirus cases might create a more uncertain political environment for Orbán in the EU opposition politicians should prove their political competences as well, and not to be remembered as those who were never able to provide an appropriate alternative against Orbán's political regime.

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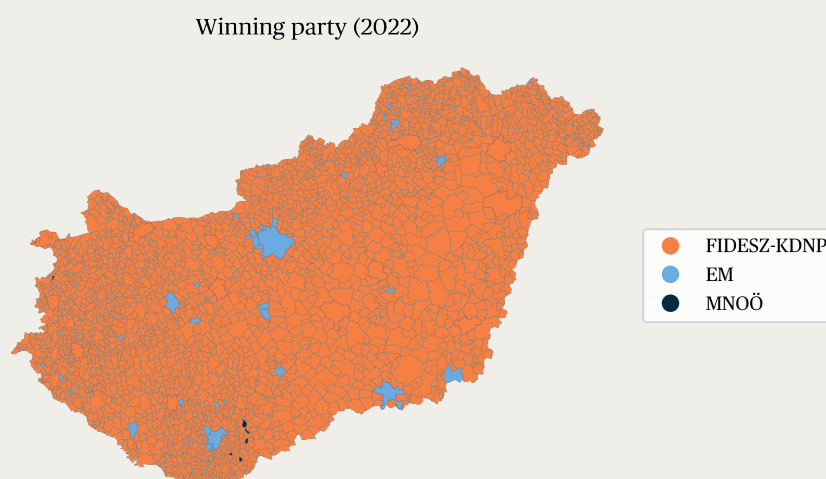
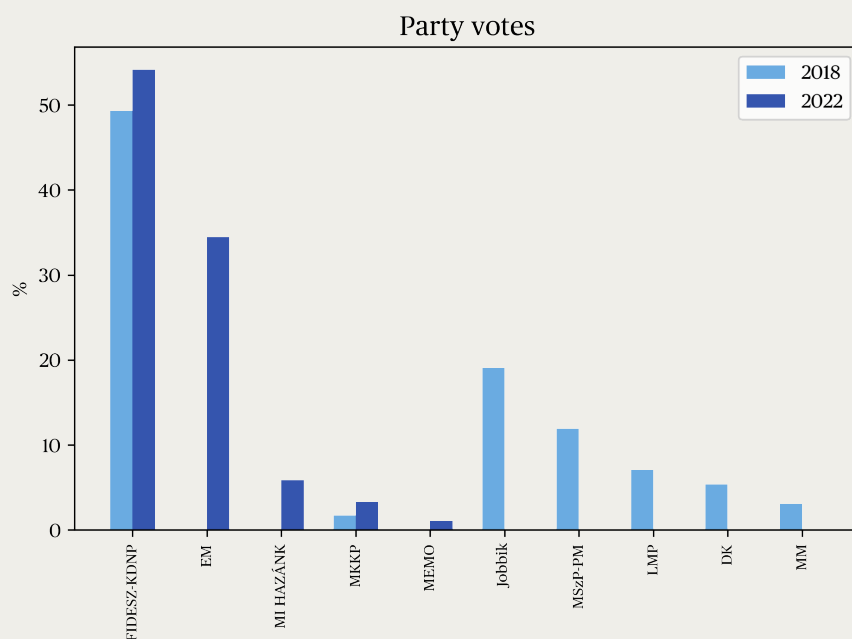
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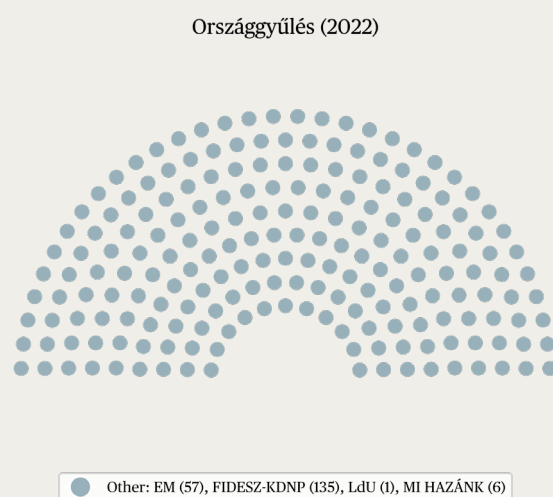
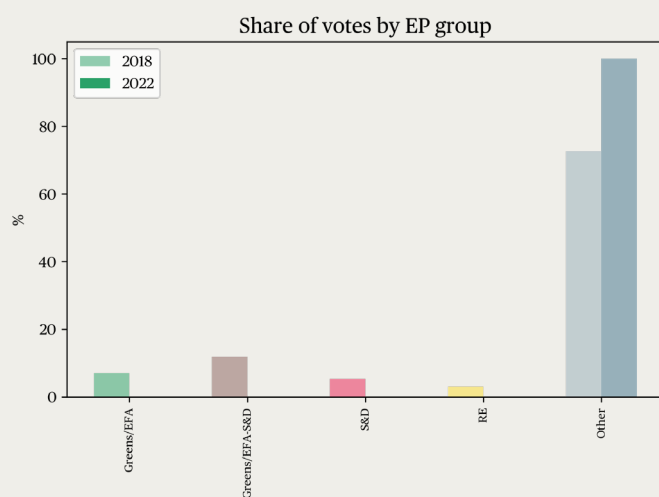
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European indicators



Presidential and legislative elections in France, April-June 2022

The 2022 national election sequence in France (presidential and legislative elections) came at the end of a five-year period in which most intermediate elections (the 2020 municipal elections and the 2021 departmental and regional elections) had been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the ongoing health crisis, the results of these intermediate elections had not been easy to interpret. Hence, it was unclear to what extent the French party system had really been reconfigured by the election of Emmanuel Macron in 2017 and the emergence of his new party (LREM, now Renaissance), which claims a central position in the political life of the country. Beyond the designation of a new government for the next five years, these national elections were therefore an exercise in measuring the country's political situation, and, in particular, the balance of partisan forces. While neither the results of the presidential election nor the results of the legislative election allow us to draw definitive conclusions about the effects of a political reconfiguration that does not seem to be complete, they still confirm a long-lasting trend: citizens appear to have become increasingly alienated from representative institutions, an evolution which weakens the mobilizing capacity of democratic rituals and, consequently, the political legitimacy and strength that they confer on those in which power is vested.

The confirmation of a democratic disaffection

The first round of the presidential election concluded a campaign that seemed to have generated more disappointment and frustration than enthusiasm. The late en-

try into the campaign of one of the main contenders, incumbent president Emmanuel Macron, in a context of a very gradual exit from the pandemic period and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, gave way to a media campaign that was very much focused on security, migration and “identity” issues, while opinion polls showed higher levels of concern about economic and social issues (purchasing power, access to the health system). With polls repeatedly giving the Rassemblement National a high probability of qualifying for the second round of voting, a shadow was cast over the campaign, in which the candidates’ positioning vis-à-vis the far-right became a central issue. In the ballot box, this campaign, which, as various opinion polls have underlined, has generated little interest among voters, ended with both a concentration and a dispersion of votes.

On one hand, in the first round, the votes concentrated on only three candidates, with all other candidates obtaining very low results. The presidential election has always been the most mobilizing ballot in France, due, at least in part, to the presidentialism of the Fifth Republic and the strong personalization of political issues it generates. In 2022, these mechanisms were again in full play: the only three candidates who managed to obtain at least 20% of the vote were those who benefited from the highest levels of notoriety and identification, especially since they had already played a major role in the 2017 election.

In the same time, the votes were also dispersed among these three candidates, none of whom, including the incumbent who was clearly in the lead, really managed to dominate the election. The presence in the second round of voting of the same two candidates who had already qualified in 2017 made the second round appear once again as a “barrage” against the extreme right; this lack of novelty, together with the high likelihood of Macron’s victory despite polls predicting a close outcome, had a demobilizing effect on the electorate between the two rounds of voting. In the end, Macron’s victory was not very close in relative terms (58.5% of the vote) but his advantage narrowed dramatically compared to 2017, as the number of votes separating the candidates decreased by almost half (from 10 to 5.5 million votes). Support for the incumbent president also shrunk in terms of registered voters, insofar as abstention had, as in 2017, increased between the two rounds (+ 2.7 points), reaching its second-highest level under the Fifth Republic, at 28.01%. This decrease in turnout, together with the historically high number of blank and invalid ballots, led to over one third (34.2%) of registered voters not expressing any preference in the second round. The President of the Republic was thus chosen by 38.5% of registered voters in 2022, down from 43.5% in 2017.

The legislative election of June 2022 was also marked by voter disaffection. While voter turnout in legislative

elections has always been lower than in presidential elections, it has been continuously declining since the 2000s. Turnout rates, which were close to 80% from 1967 to 1986, fell below 70% in 1988; from 2002 onward, participation decreased even further, falling below 60% in 2012 and below 50% in 2017. The institutional reforms that introduced a five-year presidential term and inverted the order of the presidential and legislative ballots are deemed to have accentuated the trend toward differential mobilization by promoting a perception of legislative elections as subordinate to the presidential elections: as both official and informal mobilization mechanisms became less effective, the legislative elections came to be perceived as devoid of any autonomous political significance or impact, discouraging the least politicized citizens to turn out to vote.

In 2022, owing in part to the active politicization strategy implemented by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the legislative elections benefited from a degree of attention uncommon since the beginning of the century. The left-wing political leader had called on the French to “elect him Prime Minister,” placing its hopes in some genuinely parliamentary features of the Fifth Republic, in which cabinets must rely on a majority in the National Assembly to govern. At 52.5% in the first round and 53.8% in the second round, abstention was nevertheless very high, confirming that France is caught in a cycle of very low electoral mobilization, marked by patterns of increasingly intermittent participation (which concern more than half of registered voters), a detached attitude towards electoral processes, a regression of traditional mechanisms of transmission of civic habits, the weakening of moral incentives to vote, and a reinforcement of the feeling that voting is useless.

Social and territorial patterns of electoral behavior

While abstention in the presidential election was more moderate and affected all categories of voters, the sharp increase in abstention in the legislative election that took place two months later was socially differentiated, particularly according to age and socio-economic characteristics. Not only does turnout always increase with age, but the decrease in participation between the presidential and legislative elections was also much more pronounced among those under 35 than among those over 60, leading to retirees being over-represented among those who turned out to vote in the legislative election. Similarly, the differences in turnout widen considerably between blue-collar and white-collar workers on the one hand, and managers on the other, or according to income or educational attainment level. The spatial distribution of abstention is consistent with its social determinants: abstention is particularly common in the deindustrialized areas of Northern and Eastern France, in working-class suburbs, and in the suburbs of the Rhône and Mediterranean regions, with differences of several dozen percentage points

(up to 40) between working-class and middle-class polling stations.

The same factors that influence voter turnout also affect the choice of a candidate. Thus, Macron is preferred by the youngest (under 25) and oldest (over 65) voters, while Le Pen wins among working class voters between 30 and 50; the social and professional profile of the two candidates' electorates is also radically different: while three out of four managers choose Macron, Le Pen is clearly in the lead among workers and employees. Social determinants exhibit consistent patterns, with the share of Macron votes increasing as education and income rise.

Looking at maps of election winners in the second round of the presidential election in 2017 and in 2022, the increase in the number of communes where Le Pen was leading is blatant. The RN is deepening and broadening its presence in its traditional strongholds of Northern, North-Eastern and Mediterranean France, but its penetration in the Garonne and Rhône valleys is also very significant. While its successes remain unevenly distributed, the areas in which the RN has not made any inroads are now much rarer: even in Brittany, a region traditionally hostile to the RN, in a few municipalities voters gave more votes to Marine Le Pen than to Emmanuel Macron in the second round. At the same time, the spatial distribution of the RN's gains also provides insights into the geography of Macron's core electorate. A clear preference for Macron is expressed in the West (especially in Pays de la Loire, Brittany, Normandy, Basque Country and Bearn), as well as in Ile-de-France (which is beginning to constitute an isolate in the northern half of the country), and, more generally, in the metropolises where the outgoing president always won in the second round, including in Eastern and Southeastern France, where the RN vote is more widespread; Lille in Northern France, Marseille and Montpellier on the Mediterranean coast constitute enclaves of Macron vote in areas quite clearly dominated by the RN.

However, the political behavior observed in 2022 cannot be explained only by the urban-rural divide. While curves correlating the density of communes with the candidates' results show almost inverse trends for right-wing and left-wing candidates, a higher degree of urbanization generally proves favorable to the left-wing and ecologist candidates, but also, very clearly, to Macron, while the RN thrives more in small communes and towns, especially in suburban areas.

It should be remembered that, since electoral behavior is socially anchored, territorial variations also reflect differences in the spatial distribution of social characteristics (e.g., higher education).

At the same time, the success of LFI in municipalities with a population of 2,000-5,000 inhabitants testify to

the existence of a strong rural left, which appears on the map of the first round of 2022 in the southern edges of the Massif Central or in the department of Drôme. However, in both rounds, vast rural areas, many of them located in Western France, voted even more massively for Macron than in 2017, as some former Les Républicains (LR) supporters embraced Macron's candidacy. The outgoing president also achieved good results in medium-sized cities (over 20,000 inhabitants), while the LR candidates obtained better results in small towns of 5,000-15,000 inhabitants. But while Macron achieved better results in the largest cities, he can hardly claim to be the sole "candidate of the metropolises," since Mélenchon has often been on a par with him in these areas. LFI, for its part, achieved some of its best results in working-class suburban municipalities, winning, in particular, in all of the 12 constituencies of Seine-Saint-Denis. These successes are certainly to be relativized given the high abstention rates (over 65%) that affected these areas; however, it can also be emphasized that these results were achieved despite a marked trend towards abstention among the categories of voters that make up LFI's core electorate.

Despite the failure of a reform project that was supposed to introduce proportional representation for a fraction of the National Assembly's seats, the voters who turned out for the legislative election eventually elected a hung parliament, in which opposition groups on the right and the left have become stronger. While opposition parties probably lack the capacity to impose their political line (all the more so since these parties seem difficult to coordinate), the composition of the parliament now more accurately reflects the country's political mosaic and will most certainly enhance the importance of parliamentary work. The high abstention rate needs to be taken into account when analyzing the results of the legislative election. Segments of the electorate most favorable to Macron (over-65-year-olds, graduates) are also the most assiduous at the polls; conversely, the strong demobilization of young and working-class voters has penalized the left (which, despite this differential abstention, tied in the first round with Macron's coalition). The RN was also affected by a loss of momentum in the legislative election, although less strongly than in previous elections, and benefited from increased legitimacy in some territories (as Benoît Coquard has shown, in some areas, the RN vote can now serve as a respectability marker) as well as from a greater presence among active middle classes less inclined to withdraw from voting. Finally, the fact that the re-elected president has obtained only a plurality of seats in the National Assembly can be understood as the result of the demobilization of part of his electorate, which is suggested by the increase in abstention in the legislative elections in the strongholds of electoral Macronism, particularly in the West. With about 25 per cent of the vote in the first round, the Ensemble electoral coalition achieved – by far – the lowest result of any presidential coal-

tion since 2002. Thus, despite the sociological sources of differential abstention traditionally being more favorable to the parties of the center and the right, the electoral base of the outgoing president proved insufficiently solid to guarantee him a majority, while, in spite of their electorates being more inclined to demobilization, the two main opposition forces held up rather better.

A still ongoing political reconfiguration

In the context of the ongoing reconfiguration of the French party system, intense struggles are taking place between, and just as much within, the three blocs that emerged in the first round of the presidential election (as we have seen, a rigorous description of the political landscape should require at least a mention a fourth "bloc," that of non-voters). As an unprecedented political period begins (for the first time since the introduction of five-year presidential terms, a president is serving a second term without a parliamentary majority), the reconstruction of the party system is far from stabilized.

The major historical parties, LR and Parti socialiste, who had been eliminated in the first round in 2017, have experienced even harsher defeats in 2022, with their respective candidates not even managing to reach 5%. However, during the territorial elections of the last legislative period, these two parties have shown some resilience and demonstrated strong local presence, as if a scalar differentiation of political organizations was emerging, with different parties dominating at different institutional levels.

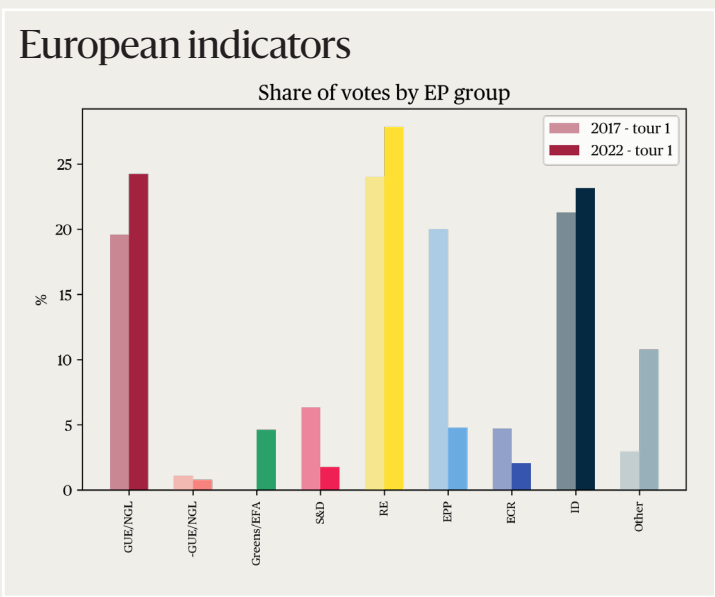
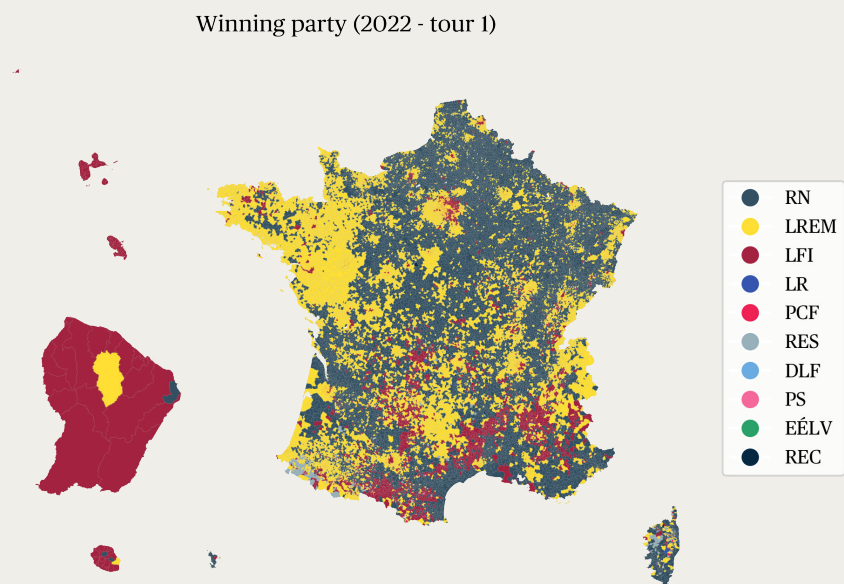
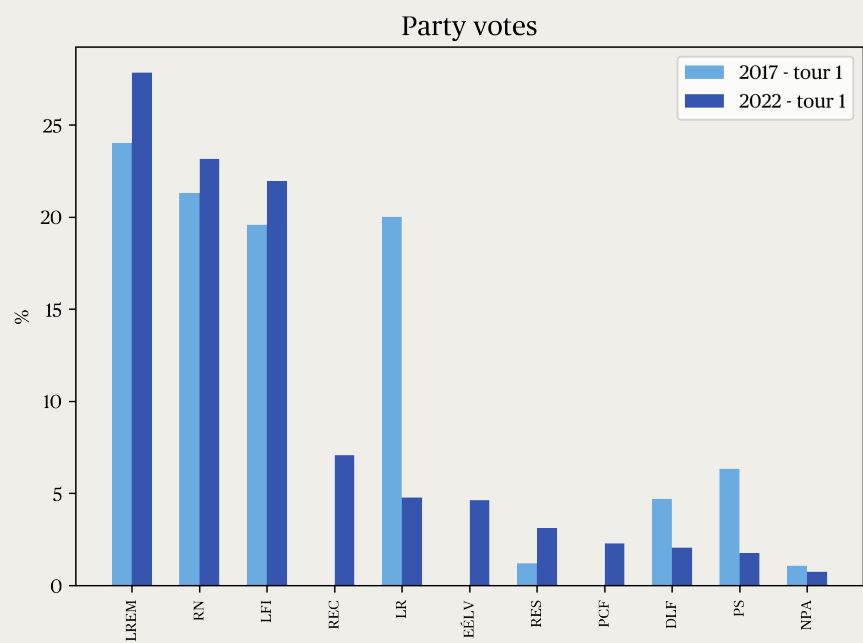
More than ever, the electorates resemble, as Patrick Lehingue often reminds us, diversified and more or less stable conglomerates much more than homogeneous and consolidated blocs. The NUPES alliance has demonstrated its electoral effectiveness in implementing a "useful vote" strategy on the left via single candidacies (a strategy which had already boosted Mélenchon's candidacy in the days leading to the first presidential round) without, however, resolving all the programmatic or strategic divisions between its constituent parties. In the same way, the presidential party, now largely identified with the center-right, is confronted with the challenge of its institutionalization after the programmed departure of its founder. However, Macronism has not yet established itself as a very clear political doctrine, and the President's centrist party is competing with other organizations, some of which claim a similar position on the political spectrum while others seek, on the contrary, to reactivate the right-left divide. While Macron had won in 2017 with the support of a majority of voters coming from the left, his electoral base has since then significantly shifted to the right, which had already been attested to by the alliances concluded during the municipal elections of 2020, and has now been confirmed by the movement of LR voters towards the outgoing president.

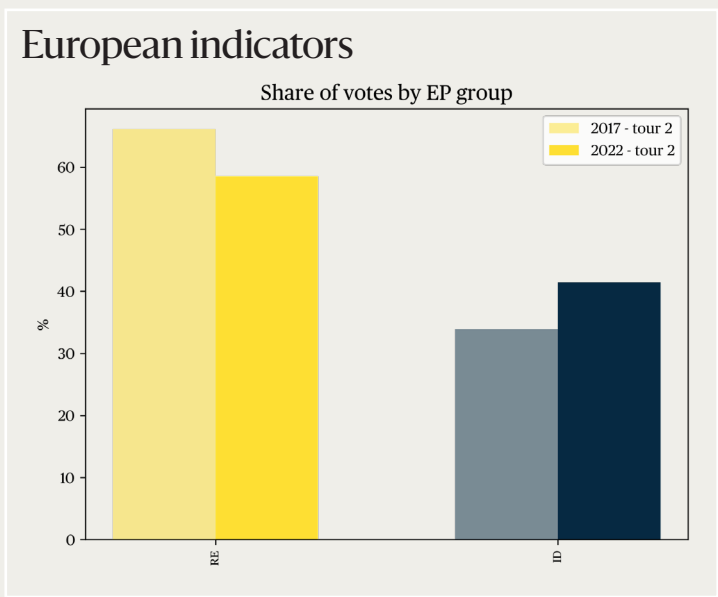
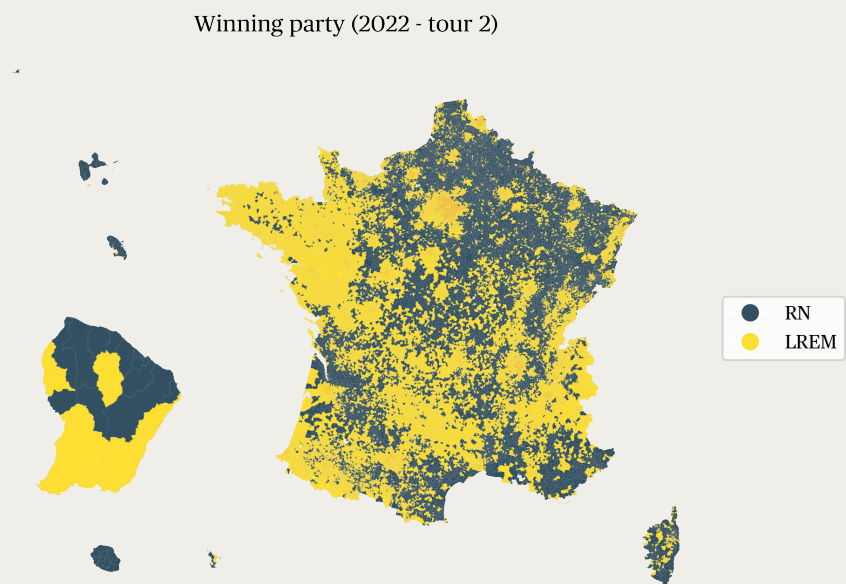
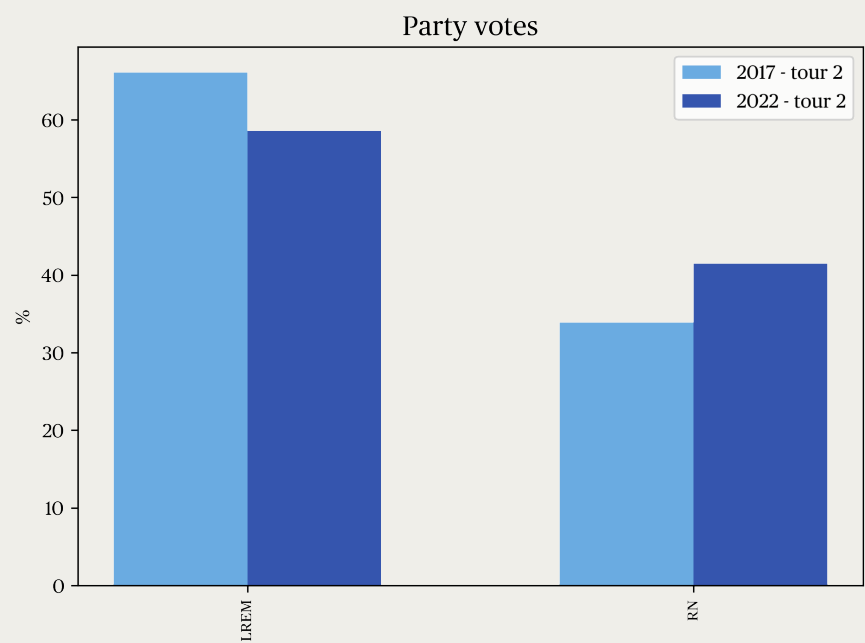
The RN, for its part, has emerged stronger from these ballots. Its candidate once again reached the second round of the presidential election. She lost again, but gained almost 3 million votes in the process. With 89 MPs, her party can now compete with the NUPES for the title of leading opposition group. The RN's presence has also consolidated in a growing number of territories, where it has undergone a process of electoral normalization that has proved successful in large segments of electorate, reaching beyond traditional protest audiences.

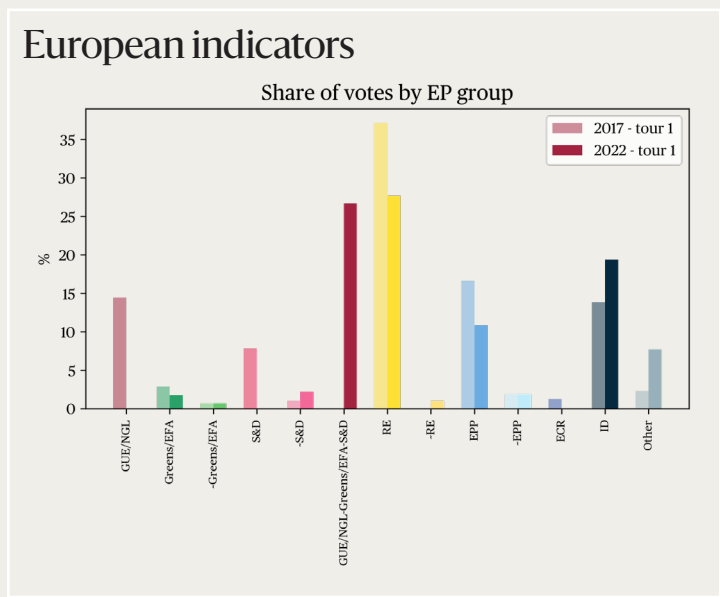
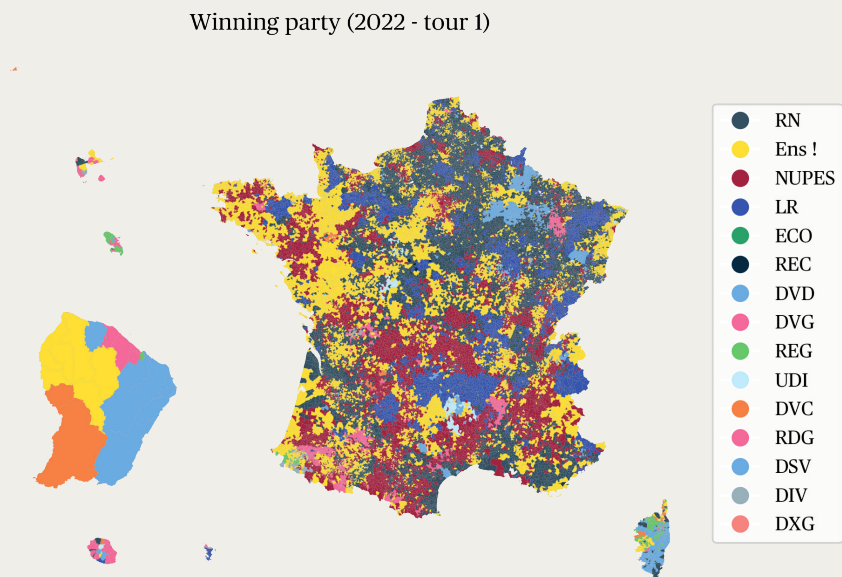
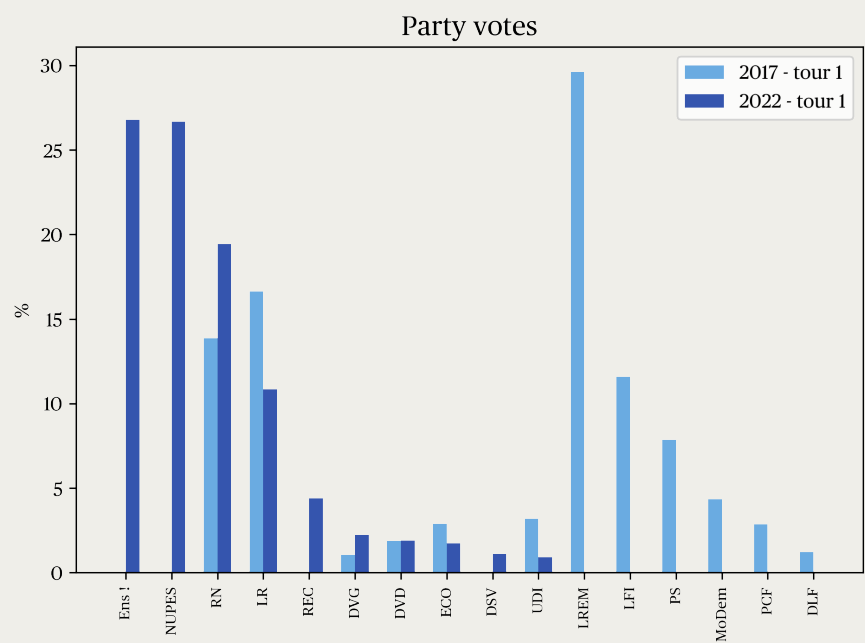
Finally, we observe that the popular prediction that French political parties were in decline has hardly come true. Parties continue to structure French political life, as attested by the creation of Renaissance: even Emmanuel

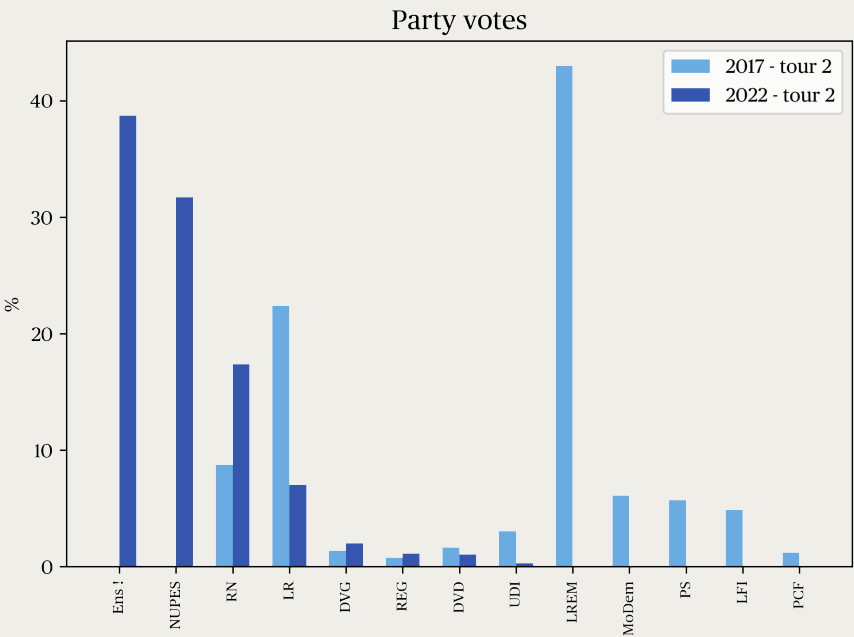
Macron, who had originally claimed that he wanted to build a movement, but not a party, has now engaged in an enterprise of partisan consolidation.

Nevertheless, the party system continues to undergo changes and mutations, which at this stage have hardly produced any democratic re-enchantment among citizens. The 2022 national election sequence indeed shows that the French electorate's relationship to political parties is distant and strongly polarized, especially from a generational and social point of view. While the new National Assembly elected in June 2022 has seen a relative diversification of its MPs in terms of social and professional backgrounds, the revitalization of representative democracy appears more than ever as a crucial issue.

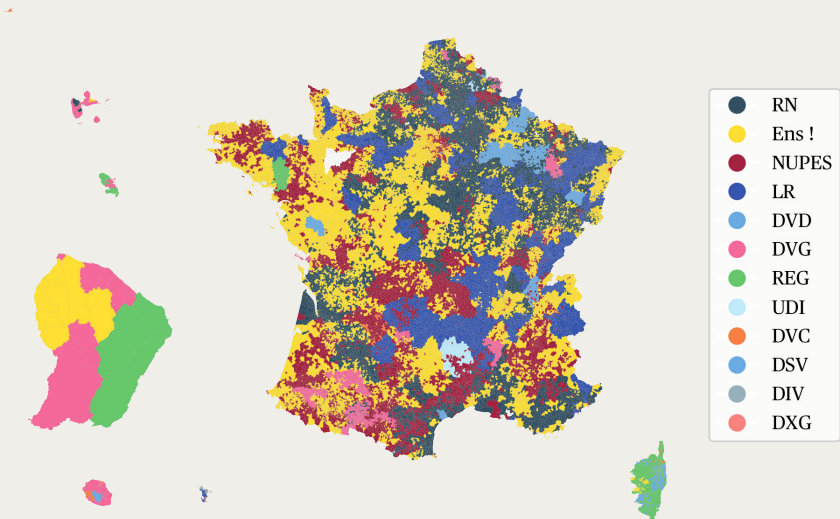




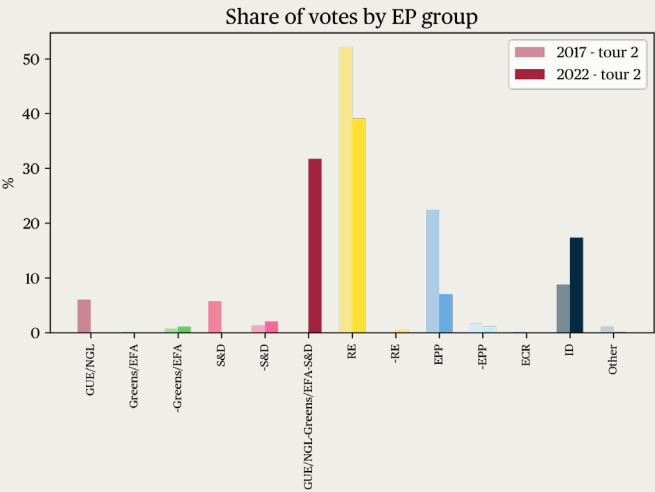




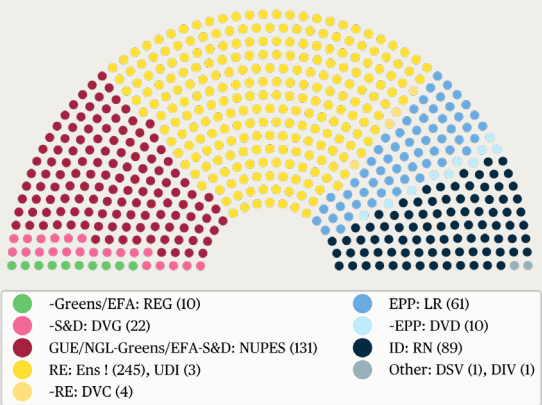
Winning party (2022 - tour 2)



European indicators



Assemblée nationale (2022 - tour 2)





Marko Lovec • Univerza v Ljubljani

Parliamentary election in Slovenia, 24 April 2022

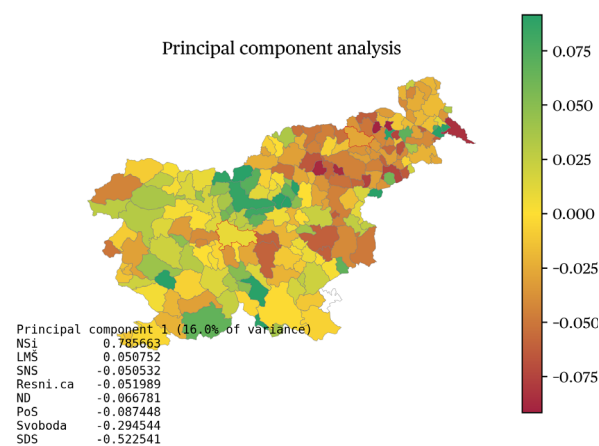
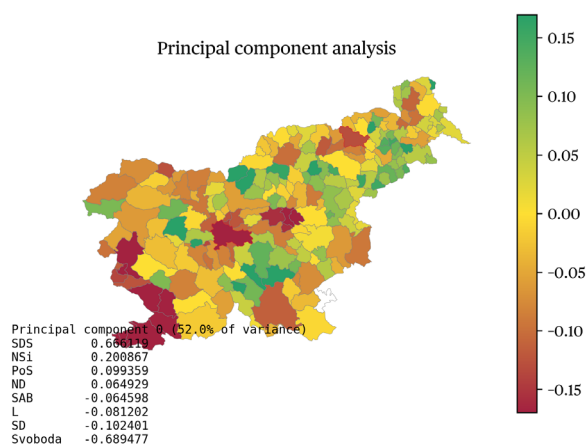
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In Slovenia, parliamentary elections were held on 24 April 2022. These were the first regular parliamentary elections since 2008, a sign of a political turbulence in the country over the past 15 years. The elections were characterized by a high turnout of 70.79%, the highest since the new millennium. The Freedom movement (Freedom-RE) led by newcomer Robert Golob won the elections by 34.45% gaining 41 seats in the 90-seat parliament (two seats are reserved for elected representatives of the Italian and Hungarian national minorities). The relatively strong victory of a party that emerged just a couple of months before the elections came as a surprise. The Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS-EPP, nationalist-conservative) led by Prime Minister Janez Janša came second with 23.48% of votes (27 seats), followed by the government coalition partner of SDS, New Slovenia (NSi-EPP, Christian-liberal), with 6.86% (8 seats), the Social Democrats (SD-S&D) with 6.69% (7 seats) and The Left (Levica-GUE/NGL) with 4.46% (5 seats). The remaining of about 20 parties and lists which participated at the elections fell short of the 4% threshold. This included several parliamentary parties, namely the government coalition members *Konkretno* (former Modern Centre Party-SMC-RE) that joined the newly established list *Let's unite Slovenia* (PoS), the Democratic pensioner's party (DeSUS-E/RenewRE) and the Slovenian National Party (SNS, nationalist) which was not a formal coalition member but supported the government, as well as opposition parties Marjan Šarec's List

(LMŠ-RE) and Alenka Bratušek's Party (SAB-RE). Elections were characterized by a strong mobilisation of especially centrist and non-traditional voters against Janša's government. These criticized the incumbent's alleged interference with independent state institutions and the restrictions it imposed during the pandemic, that were broadly seen as poorly communicated and disproportionate. The election was marked by tactical voting of especially centre-left voters, as a reaction to the fragmented and weak role of the centre-left opposition parties in the past.

Strong mobilisation against Janša's SDS

The coalition government led by Janša came to power in early 2020 after the fragmented center-left minority government coalition led by Šarec collapsed. Šarec's government consisted of LMŠ, SD, SMC, SAB and DeSUS and was supported by Levica. In hope of snap elections, Šarec resigned. However, Janša managed to put together a center-right coalition, which consisted of SDS, NSi, SMC and DeSUS and was supported by SNS. Janša was successful in forming a coalition because, according to the polls, many MPs would likely lose their seats at the snap elections. Moreover, the start of the pandemic created a sense of an emergent need for an effective government. The support for the government was relatively high in the first months but soon plummeted due to allegations of corruption related with procurement of emergency medical supplies and restrictive measures that were often poorly communicated, disproportional and lacked proper legal basis. The government was also accused of using the pandemic as a cover for interfering with the independent state institutions, the media and civil society. Civil society organizations launched anti-government protests, which with some interruptions and against attempts to suppress those protests (including by overstepping police authorities), lasted throughout the government mandate. Janša was also criticized for allying with the Eurosceptic and illiberal forces internationally, especially with the regime of Viktor Orbán in Hungary which financially supported pro-Janša media outlets in Slovenia, and for controversial foreign policy actions, such as when Janša congratulated Donald Trump for winning the elections in the United States (which he lost) and waging rhetoric attacks against individual MEPs and European journalists. In the second part of the Slovenian presidency of the EU Council in 2021, Janša started to use more constructive rhetoric to present himself as a moderate and pro-European actor. When the war in Ukraine broke out in early 2022, at a time which coincided with the official start of the electoral campaign, Janša strongly condemned the attack and became one of the first Western leaders to travel to Kiev to gain positive coverage from Western media and regain international legitimacy. Janša's government, in the backdrop of the pandemic and war in Ukraine, used expansionist fiscal policy that included subsidies distributed to large segments of the population such as tourist and ener-



a-b • First and second principal components of the municipality-level vote

gy vouchers, the latter handed out just two weeks before the election. SDS used two electoral slogans: »We Build Slovenia« and »No Experiments«. The former referred to several construction projects (cofunded by the EU) and the latter to the increasingly unstable international environment and to political contender Golob, who had little political experience. It also referred to some of the ideas of the center-left opposition, often painted as successors of the former communist regime, itself largely considered as a failed social experiment. Despite the increase of the total number of votes since the 2018 elections (279,897 vs 219,415), SDS obtained a lower share of votes (23.48 vs 24.92%) but gained more seats (+2) due to more parties failing to reach the threshold. SDS reached higher scores in areas with relatively lower voter density (ie. rural areas) and especially in the South-Eastern parts of Slovenia. In line with the principal component analysis of the vote, 54% of district-level variance can be explained by better performance of SDS in rural areas compared to urban areas and the Adriatic coast. Janša's coalition partner NSi, led by Matej Tonin, had been in the shadows of the SDS due to SDS's hegemonic role on the right side of the political spectrum, and did not distance itself sufficiently from some of the Janša's most controversial moves; it also reached lower result compared to the 2018 elections (6.86% vs 7.16%). For the reasons explained above, NSi managed to gain one additional seat. NSi achieved better score in rural areas but to a lesser extent compared to SDS and, as opposed to SDS, achieved better scores in central and Western parts of the country. According to the principal component analysis, 16% of the variance can be explained by stronger NSi vote in the South-West of the country compared to the North-East. But the largest defeat for the government coalition and the center-right parties was that the rest of the SDS's potential coalition partners fell short of entering the parliament. SMC, renamed Konkretno, led by Zdravko Počivalšek, which formed PoS together with several smaller non-parliamentary parties (Greens, Slovenian People's party, New People's party) was just below the threshold (3.41%) and lost 10 seats. Our country (ND) led by Aleksandra Pivec, a for-

mer minister in Janša's government, was also below the threshold (1.5%) as was also the Slovenian National Party led by Zmago Jelinčič (1.49%) which lost 4 seats. Among the reasons for poor performance were competition between center-right parties such as between PoS and ND in the South-Eastern parts of Slovenia, failure to mobilize more voters, especially the 'left behind' voters (in parts of the rural areas where SDS, NSi, PoS and ND achieved better results, participation rates were often lower), and broad mobilization against Janša which went beyond the center-left and included right-wing and non-traditional voters. This was particularly evident in the case of the SNS voters; while Jelinčič supported Janša's government, SNS voters were more pro-Russian and skeptical towards the Covid related restrictions. This was demonstrated by the relatively strong performance of the anti-covid-restrictions parties such as Resni.ca and NLLGZD (2.86 and 1.76% respectively).

A newcomer's surprisingly high relative win due to tactical votes

The centre-left opposition parties – LMŠ, SD, SAB and Levica – faced criticism from their electorate due to their fragmented and weak role. Towards the end of 2020 they decided to work together more closely and established the Constitutional arch coalition (KUL), suggesting that acts of Janša's government were a threat to the constitutionally guaranteed checks and balances and personal rights and freedoms. However, none of the parties managed to take a convincing lead in the polls to become the alternative to Janša's predominance on the right. In the past 15 years, tactical and non-traditional voting of especially centre-left voters has taken extreme proportions in Slovenia, in a context of deconsolidation of the centre-left. Entirely new parties emerged and won the elections, only to be replaced by newer parties during subsequent elections. Thus, the Positive Slovenija of Zoran Janković won in 2011 (SAB was partially a successor of that party), the Modern Centre party led by Miro Cerar won the elections in 2014 (and was later renamed into SMC and Konkretno), and Šarec's LMŠ came first among centre-left parties at the 2018 elections. Towards the end of 2021, Robert Golob,

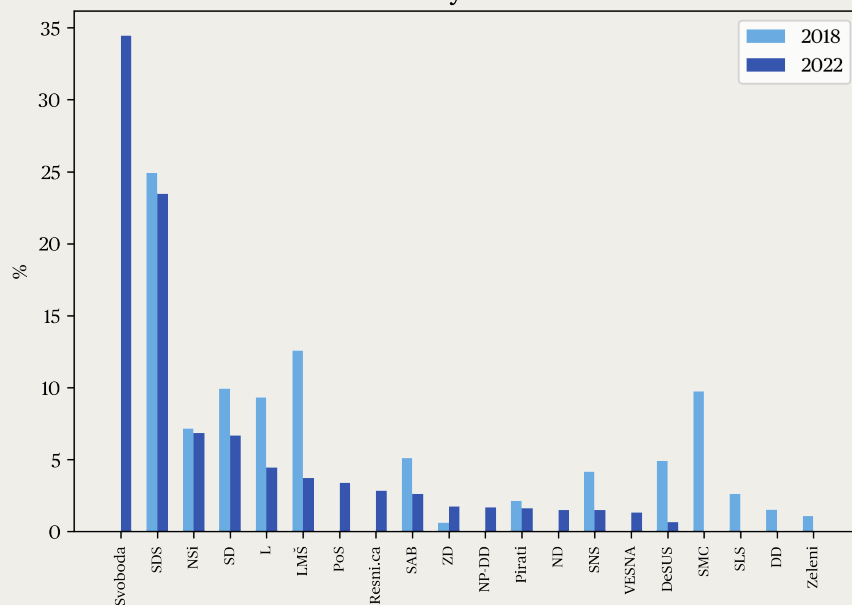
the former head of a state-controlled energy company, announced to run in the parliamentary election after Janša's government did not extend his mandate. His Freedom movement was joined by individuals personally pressured by Janša's government such as former judge Urška Klakočar Zupančič (new president of the parliament) or journalist Mojca Šetinc Pašek. In late 2021 and early 2022, polls demonstrated that Golob could challenge Janša's relative victory at the elections. As a result, many centre-left voters shifted their support to Freedom. Freedom mainly focused on anti-government sentiments caused by interference with independent institutions and restrictions due to Covid, which enabled it to attract a broad range of voters. Despite his and his party's limited political experience (Golob was previously associated with PS and SAB but did not play any major political role), throughout the campaign as well as last-minute allegations of Golob possessing an undeclared foreign bank account, Freedom won the elections with 34.45% of the vote and gained 41 seats. Freedom received 410,769 votes which is the single highest number achieved by any party in the history of Slovenia. Freedom reached top scores especially in the urban districts of the two largest cities in Slovenia – Ljubljana and Maribor – and the Western part of Slovenia next to the Italian border. This was to a large extent at the expense of the parliamentary centre-left opposition parties. A comparison with the opinion polls demonstrated that many of the centre-left voters decided to support Freedom in the weeks and even days before the election. Compared to the 2018 elections, SD went from 9.93% to 6.69% (-3 seats) and Levica from 9.33% to 4.46% (-4 seats). The more centrist LMŠ and SAB fell short of reaching the threshold (3.72 and 2.61%) and lost as much as 13 and 5 seats each. SD and Levica were particularly disappointed as they failed to mobilize some of their traditional voters, some of which even abstained from voting. They failed to make socioeconomic issues a central topic of the campaign, due to a predominant focus on more liberal topics such as interference with state institutions and liberties. SD also used slogans with ambiguous messages such as “Different” and “No promises.” Levica performed poorly

outside urban areas. After the elections, Golob, despite a strong position that would require just 3-5 additional votes for an absolute majority in the parliament (national minority MPs traditionally support each government coalition) decided to form a broader centre-left coalition that included SD and Levica. Individual members of LMŠ and SAB were also offered positions. This was done to compensate for the lack of experience and membership on the side of Freedom, to consolidate the centre-left and to prevent future opposition from the left. Two thirds of the parliamentarians were newly elected and over half of those were MPs of Freedom. Freedom also lacked experienced people for executive positions. Becoming part of the government kept the existing leadership of SD and Levica in position and prevented internal overhaul in these parties due to poor election result. SD president Tanja Fajon became new Minister of Foreign and European affairs. SD also nominated ministers for judiciary and economy. Levica nominated ministers for solidarity, labour and culture. Presidents of LMŠ and SAB and former prime ministers, Šarec and Bratušek, became minister (of defense and secretary at the ministry of infrastructure. The planned merger of Freedom with LMŠ and SAB consolidated liberal-social parties and provided Freedom with the necessary membership and network ahead of the autumn local and presidential elections. Freedom also gained 2 MEPs ahead of its entrance into Renew.

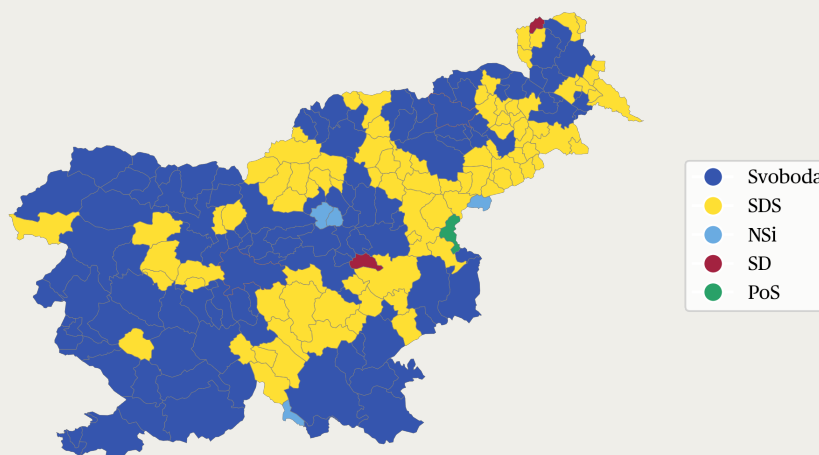
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Party votes

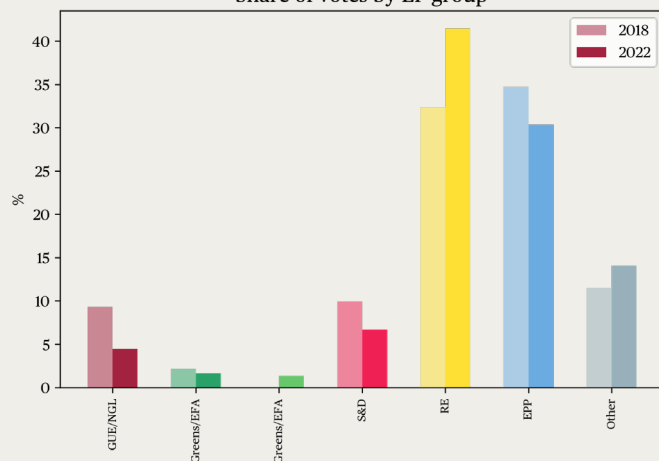


Winning party (2022)

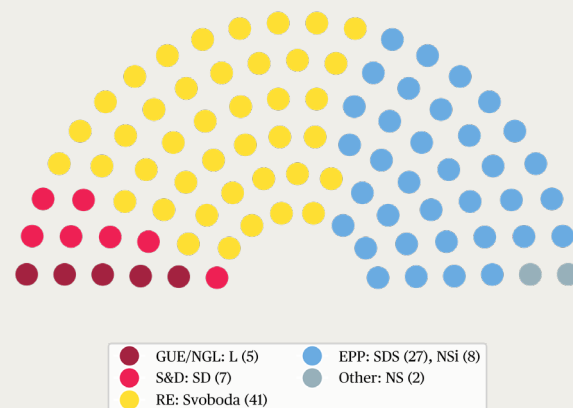


European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



Državni zbor Republike Slovenije (2022)





Oliver Drewes • Universität Trier

Regional election in Schleswig-Holstein, 8 May 2022

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Introduction and context

In the run-up to the state election that was held in Schleswig-Holstein on May 8, 2022, a few key issues shared with other European regions have received the most public attention. Not only the still ongoing Covid-19 pandemic was a present topic, but also rising inflation figures, Russia's war against Ukraine (that broke out at the beginning of the year) and the associated challenges for German energy security. In view of this context, it would not have been no surprise if the election outcome had been shaped by these very issues. In the end, however, factors arising from the specific characteristics and structure of state politics appear to have played a must greater role than the political situation might have suggested: 70% of voters declared that state politics was a decisive factor in their voting decision, with only 26% citing federal politics (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2022). This is an important fact to keep in mind: the results are strongly influenced by state-specific structures, characteristics and circumstances.

Besides these important issues, the popularity of political leaders, but also the party and coalition equilibria that marked the last parliamentary term, greatly contributed to the outcome. Prime Minister Daniel Günther (CDU, EPP) enjoyed a popularity rating of 76% (Infratest dimap 2022d), well above average in comparison with other regional leaders. He had governed relatively “quietly” (Becke 2022) despite leading Schleswig-Holstein's first ever three-way coalition, and his government experienced an overall satisfaction rating of 75% (Infratest dimap 2022d). Hence, it can be argued that the outcome of the election

owes significantly to the popularity of the prime minister and his governing style. In the following sections, we will first analyze the performance of parties and party leaders, then explore programmatic and geographic trends and examine the coalition situation in Schleswig-Holstein in more detail, and finally summarize the significance of this election for the state's party system.

Results and change

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU, EPP), which had already won the 2017 state election, extended their lead (+ 11.4 pp) in 2022, garnering 43.4% of the popular vote. This put it 27.4 pp ahead of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD, S&D), which had trailed the CDU by only 4.7 pp in 2017 and was now unable to compete with the CDU. The SPD ended up with 16% of the popular vote, losing 11.3 pp. For decades, the SPD and CDU were the two main parties competing for political dominance in Schleswig-Holstein, but never was one of them able to permanently assert itself as the dominant force. By inflicting on the regional SPD their most severe electoral defeat in history, the Schleswig-Holstein CDU was able to modify the previously existing competitive situation between the two parties, at least in the medium-term. This allowed Conservatives to assert a clear claim to leadership for themselves in the region, while forcing the SPD to enter a phase of self-reflection. Although the SPD narrowly won the federal elections in Germany in September 2021 and currently holds the office of chancellor, its role and performance in Schleswig-Holstein are not comparable to its role and performance in the federal government. Leadership, in particular, plays too large a role in the results of both elections for this to be the case. To a very high degree, the popularity of the prime minister was relevant to the electoral decision (Infratest dimap 2022a). With a satisfaction rating of 75%, Daniel Günther is among the most popular minister presidents nationwide; when considering the popularity of incumbent minister presidents at the time of the last election, he is in fact Germany's most popular minister president (Infratest dimap 2022b). Within the state, too, he is by far the most popular politician (Infratest dimap 2022c). The latter is hardly surprising, however, since prime ministers, who enjoy greater political and media attention, are usually much better known than other state politicians. Moreover, Daniel Günther is depicted as an approachable, pragmatic and less ideological politician (Becke 2022), and the coalition he led performed well in the polls, with a satisfaction rating of over 70%, even reaching over 80% among supporters of the coalition parties (Infratest dimap 2022d). For the first time, Günther had succeeded in forming a coalition consisting of three parties (CDU, FDP – RE and Greens – Greens/EFA) and in leading it to the next regular state election.

The SPD eventually placed third in the 2022 election,

allowing another party, the Greens, to celebrate a historical success. Not only did the Greens, in line with a nationwide upward trend, gain votes in Schleswig-Holstein, but, with an increase of 5.4 pp to 18.3% of the popular vote, they even achieved an unprecedented success and moved into second place ahead of the SPD. On the other hand, the FDP shared the SPD's fate in suffering an electoral defeat. While the FDP had been able to win 5.1 pp more votes in the 2017 election, it now came dangerously close to the 5% hurdle, which sets the mark for entry into the state parliament, gathering only 6.4%.

The AfD (Alternative für Deutschland, ID) incurred an even more dramatic loss than the SPD and FDP, despite losing only 1.5 pp. With a final result of 4.4%, it fell short of the required 5% threshold and lost its seats in the state parliament. The party had entered the state parliament for the first time in the aftermath of the 2017 election. The party's downfall was mainly due to internal disputes, which led to debates about the quality of its leadership. For example, the AfD's regional parliamentary group broke apart after the party's regional spokeswoman was expelled from the party (triggering a still ongoing legal dispute) due to contacts with the far-right scene (dpa 2018), and another deputy left the party after calling it radicalized (dpa 2020). The loss of two deputies shrank the AfD's representation to three deputies, whereupon it lost its status as a parliamentary group.

The SSW (Südschleswigscher Wählerverband or Southern Schleswig Voters' Association, Greens/EFA), the party of the Danish minority, was the fifth and last party to enter the state parliament in Kiel. The fact that the party achieved 5.7% of the vote (+ 2.7% pp) did not affect their capacity to enter the state parliament, because the party, who represents the Danish national minority, is exempt by law from the 5% hurdle. Nevertheless, this result constitutes the party's greatest success in a state election.

The election results gave rise to a state parliament composed of five parties, in which the CDU, by far the strongest force with 34 seats, narrowly misses the majority (35 seats). Thus, the CDU is still dependent on at least one coalition partner (see the data panel).

Programmatic trends

When looking at the political issues that have played a role in citizens' voting decisions, a differentiated picture: issues that have been decisive in the election are not always those that are viewed as constituting the most pressing problems in Schleswig-Holstein specifically. Thematically, "climate," "energy supply," "price increases" and "education" (Infratest dimap 2022e) were almost equally important for the electoral decision. However, these topics are not very specific to the political situation in Schleswig-Holstein, so a more precise question about

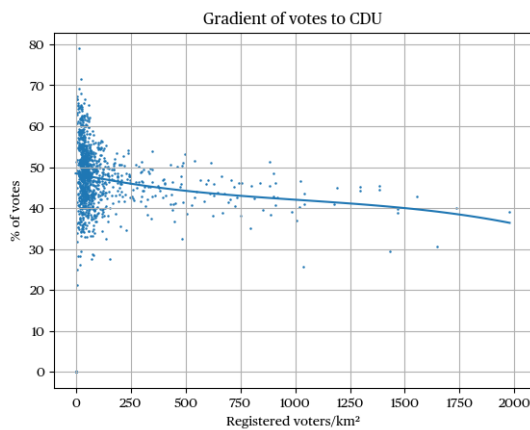
the problems facing the state and the perceived competence of the different parties in various policy areas provides somewhat deeper insights into the state's self-perception. For example, 27% of respondents consider "mobility and transport," 20% "energy policy or energy transition" and 19% "education and training" to be the most important problem in the state (NDR/Infratest dimap 2022). The still ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which had occupied society for two years, was named as the most important problem by only 10%. At the same time, the CDU obtained high competence scores on economical and educational issues, while the Greens performed well in energy and environmental policy. The SPD stands out in family policy and social justice, which likely did not win it many votes, since these issues were not nearly decisive for the election; in the same time, the CDU and the Greens were both deemed competent on issues that were most important at the time of the election.

In comparison to other German states, the assessment of the economic situation stands out, with 69% of respondents (Infratest dimap 2022f) assessing the economic situation as good. This is not only a high value in a comparison between the federal states, but is particularly remarkable because Schleswig-Holstein is a rather "structurally weak" (Deutsche Fördermittelberatung 2022) state within Germany, characterized by below-average industrialization and above-average reliance on agriculture. Although Schleswig-Holstein has a rather low unemployment rate (5.3%) and an average household income compared to other German states, its infrastructure and economic strength remain behind those of other German states. The belief that Schleswig-Holstein is economically on the right track and popularity of the state government, as well as the fact that the prime minister is credited with very good crisis management in the pandemic, are likely to have contributed significantly to the confirmation of Daniel Günther as prime minister and the CDU as a senior coalition partner.

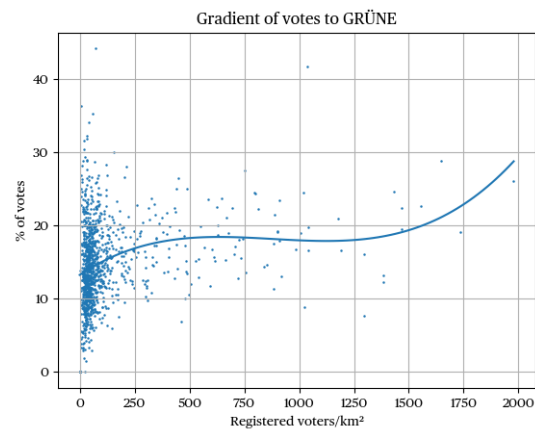
Geographic trends

At just under 60%, voter turnout was low in historical comparison. The reasons for this low figure cannot be precisely identified from the available data, but this fact may be connected with a general downward trend in voter turnout that can also be observed nationwide.

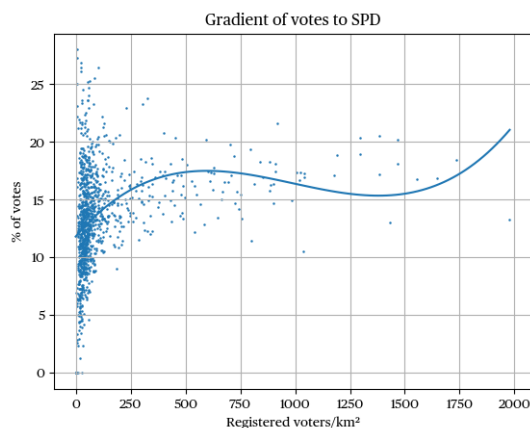
The analysis of the constituency-level results clearly shows the dominance of the CDU, which won all but two constituencies (out of a total of 35). The electoral system in Schleswig-Holstein provides for two votes. The first vote is used to elect a direct candidate in each constituency, while the second vote goes to a party list. Thus, the CDU's ability to win almost all constituencies demonstrates their strong standing in most areas of the region: only the two urban constituencies in Kiel and Lübeck were won by the



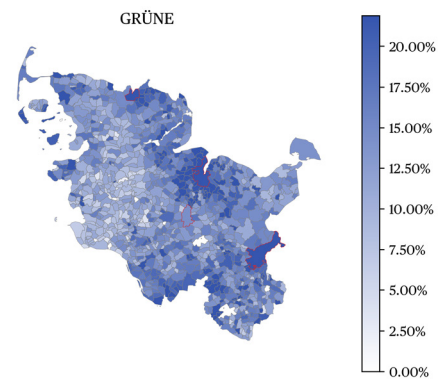
a • Share of CDU vote by population density



b • Share of Green vote by population density



c • Share of SPD vote by population density



d • Share of Green vote by municipality

Greens, illustrating once again that the Greens' electorate is strongest in urban areas and university towns. Where the Greens and the SPD have a tendency to perform better in more urban areas (Figures b and c), the CDU has a clear tendency to be stronger in rural areas (Figure a).

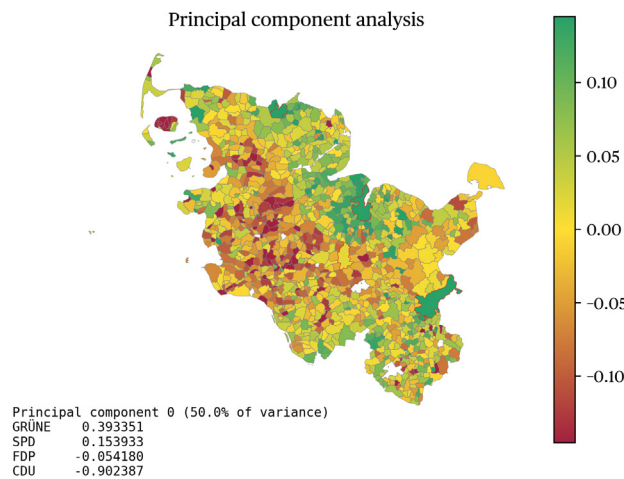
The Greens' primary reliance on urban voters is evident (Figure d). Compared to the last state election, the correlation between the Green vote and urbanization is greater (Figure b), which indicates a stronger polarization of the municipality-level vote. Green voters primarily live in and around Lübeck or Kiel and next to Hamburg. Markedly rural areas, on the other hand, are a major challenge for the Greens. The major difference between rural and urban milieus in terms of their propensity to vote primarily for the CDU and the Greens, respectively, stands out in a principal component analysis that draws attention to how people voted in cases that deviate from the regional average (Figure e).

In contrast to both the CDU and Green vote, the SPD vote does not exhibit any clear geographic pattern; as before, the SPD appears to be capable of attracting voters from all areas of the region. The clearest, but also most logically understandable, geographic clustering of votes concerns the SSW, whose electorate is concentrated near the Danish border (Figure f).

For the FPD, only marginal regional differences can be observed. The party only appears to enjoy slightly greater support in the western part of Schleswig-Holstein than in the rest of the country. Geographical differences for the AfD are similarly small. Its electoral performance is slightly higher on the border with the eastern German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania than in the rest of the country.

Coalition formation

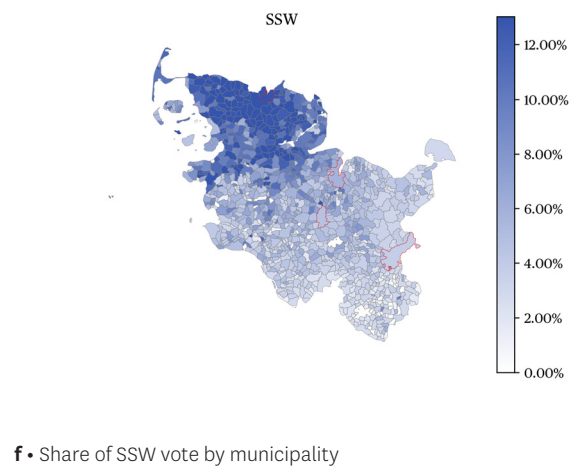
A three-way coalition was formed for the first time in Schleswig-Holstein in 2017, bringing together the CDU, the FDP, and the Greens. Given the ideological cleavages that divide the coalition partners, such a coalition model is deemed difficult to manage. Hence, the fate of the coalition following this year's election appeared uncertain, even though Daniel Günther declared himself open to continuing the coalition in this format despite other coalition models being mathematically possible. The FDP's poor electoral performance meant that it also had a weak negotiating position, although it had agreed to govern together with the CDU. At the same time, the increase in the Greens' vote share meant that a third party would not even have been necessary for a majority, and that the FDP would have more to lose than to win by being



e • First principal component

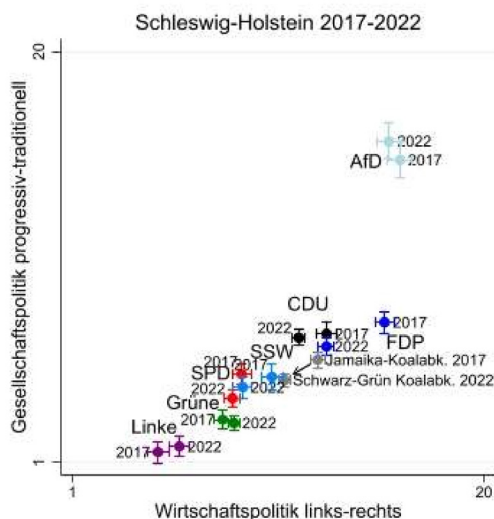
in government: as an optional partner in the coalition, it would hardly have been able to impose its views. For that same reason, the Greens rejected Günther's first impulse to continue the three-way coalition, instead proposing a two-party alliance. The fact that the CDU opted for the Greens as a coalition partner seemed to make tactical sense insofar as the Greens, as a stronger competitor (especially in climate policy), would otherwise have been likely to overtake them during the next term. At the same time, Günther shares the progressive stance of the Greens with regard to gender parity and political modernization – including within his own party.

Modernizing both the content and structure of its own policies is not unimportant for the CDU, whose electorate is becoming smaller and smaller in younger age cohorts (Infratest dimap 2022g), among whom Green voters are much more numerous (ibid.). Thus, the Greens are slowly emerging as a competitor to the CDU in terms of issues, demographics and, increasingly, personnel, as Green politicians play a more and more important role in public life. Currently, Robert Habeck (Greens), the Federal Minister of Economics and the Environment and a former Minister of Agriculture and the Environment and Deputy Prime Minister in Günther's cabinet until 2018, and Annalena Baerbock (Greens), the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, are among Germany's most popular and successful politicians (ZDF PolitBarometer 2022). Although Habeck is no longer active in Schleswig-Holstein's state politics, his visibility at the federal level had appeal and relevance for the election (Infratest dimap 2022h) in that his popularity (at the time of the election, he was Germany's most popular politician (Infratest dimap 2022j)) provided a tailwind to the Greens. The Green's lead candidate, Monika Heinold, may lie behind Günther in a direct comparison of satisfaction ratings with her political work, but she is by no means unpopular – especially when compared to the lead candidate of the SPD, Tomas Losse-Müller (Infratest dimap 2022i).



f • Share of SSW vote by municipality

To explain why the CDU-Green coalition was formed, the scientific literature suggests a number of relevant mechanisms. The most prominent of these are the policy-seeking, vote-seeking, and office-seeking (Müller/Strøm 1999), as well as the identity-seeking (cf. Sturm 2013), models. While policy-seeking parties strive to maximize overlaps with the political programs of their coalition partners, vote-seeking parties follow strategies that would optimize their future vote share, and office-seeking parties try to acquire the largest possible share of political offices. Additionally, identity-seeking parties attach great importance to mutual trust. The CDU and the Greens enjoyed the latter to a great extent during the previous legislative term. At the same time, ministries could be divided up based on different preferences: eventually, the Greens obtained the environment, social affairs and finance portfolios. In light of this distribution of ministries, and given the rapidity and smoothness of the negotiation process that led to the signature of the new coalition agreement, the two-party alliance has begun its term under very favorable conditions, showing no signs of instability. Of the three main models, the policy-seeking model appears least relevant to explain the formation of the coalition between the CDU and the Greens, since the FDP and the CDU are classically much closer to each other, both ideologically and programmatically, than the CDU and the Greens are (see Figure g). The office-seeking model appears more suitable, since in a coalition between the CDU and the Greens, offices can be easily divided on the basis of different preferences, competencies, and demands, than between the CDU and the FDP, which do not differ too much in these respects. Ultimately, the vote-seeking factor is of limited importance, as a continued coalition of the CDU, the Greens and the FDP would have been approximately as popular (39% in favor) as the current coalition of the CDU and the Greens (38% in favor, see Infratest dimap 2022k). Only a coalition of the CDU and the FDP would have been less popular, at 31% (ibid.). Overall, the new government alliance can be explained in terms of the classical mechanisms of coalition theory “taking into account, on the one hand, the marginal conditions



g • Position of the parties on the main ideological axes (Benoit et al. 2009, updated dataset)

of government formation, such as voter behavior and strategic party competition, and, on the other hand, the expectations of voters and political actors regarding the future performance of governments.” (Bräuninger; Debus 2012: 174)

Owing to his landslide victory – his score of over 40% sets a record among contemporary CDU state premiers –, Günther puts himself in a powerful position within the federal party. At the same time, the Greens currently participate in government in eleven of the sixteen federal states and are slowly but steadily continuing their political ascent. Daniel Günther's role in this state election campaign and the CDU's strong result show that personalization is playing an increasingly important role in election campaigns, and that party loyalty is decreasing. As a result, competition between the parties increases considerably, and parties struggle to establish themselves in stable positions in the long run. After its defeat, the SPD is looking for a new political offer that can help it regain competitiveness. At least as long as Daniel Günther continues to govern with a firm footing, this is likely to be difficult. The FDP must analyze the considerable voter losses it suffered and seek new orientation in its new role as an opposition party. Whether the AfD will succeed in making a comeback in the next state elections remains doubtful, as debates about its leadership and internal power struggles continue. The fact that the party was put under observation by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Verfassungsschutz*) in 2021 is likely to have severely harmed its reputation. As of 2022, the AfD still occupies an isolated position in the party system, where it has moved further and further to the democratic fringe.

Party system

In conclusion, the following core trends can be emphasized with regard to the development of the party system in Schleswig-Holstein, which differ only in part from those

of other states and the federal level: Fragmentation, polarization and segmentation.

The fact that the AfD has left the state parliament, that the Left Party is still not represented in the state parliament, but that the SSW, as a unique case of a significant national minority party, is virtually guaranteed to win a few seats, leads to an overall medium fragmentation of the regional legislature, with an effective party number (calculated according to Laakso and Taagepera 1979) of 3.1 for 5 represented parties. In the last legislative term, the effective number of parties was 4.2. In a comparison with other German state parliaments, the current Schleswig-Holstein parliament is slightly below the average effective party count of 3.99 (for an average of 5.7 parties). Nevertheless, the level of fragmentation is such that one-party majorities are impossible – which does not come as a surprise in a political system featuring both proportional representation and a high degree of pluralism.

The polarization of the party system has decreased slightly between 2017 and 2022, and the 2022 coalition agreement between the CDU and the Greens has shifted the government's position slightly towards the left in comparison with the 2017 coalition agreement (Figure g).

However, when one takes into account that the two parties on the fringes of the political spectrum – the Left Party and the AfD – are now no longer represented in the state parliament, polarization in the state legislature has decreased significantly.

With regard to segmentation, i.e. the relationship between arithmetically possible and politically feasible coalitions, we observe that four coalitions would have been arithmetically possible, but that only three of them were politically realizable. The SSW, FDP and Greens had all signaled their willingness to participate in the future government on election night. Only the SPD, after its bitter loss, could hardly meaningfully envision being part of the next executive. Thus, the segmentation in Schleswig-Holstein is rather low.

With all these characteristics, the party system in Schleswig-Holstein hardly stands out from those of other German states and roughly corresponds to the characteristics of the German party system as a whole.

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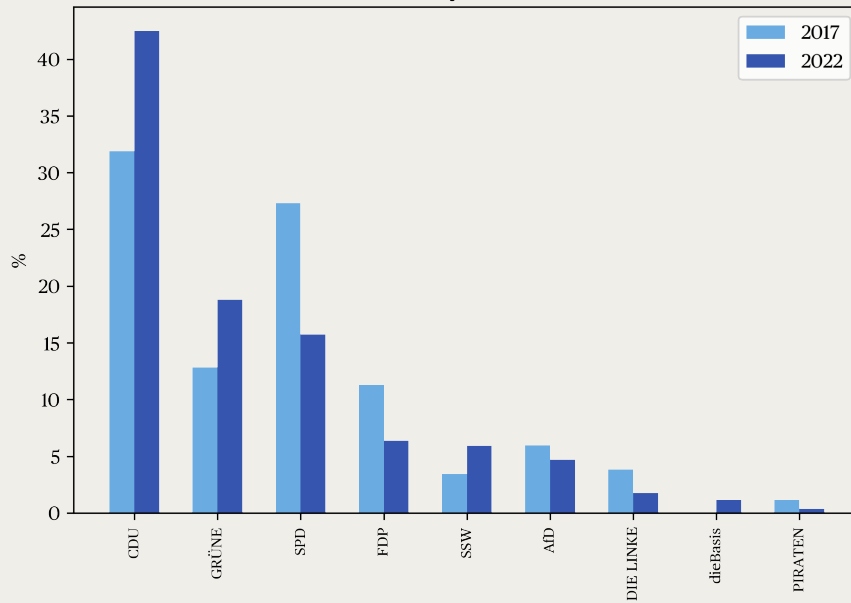
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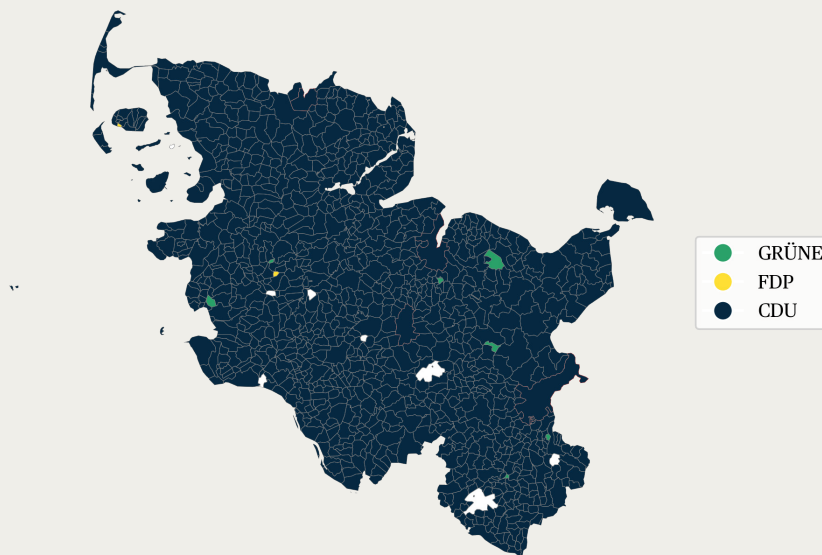
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REGIONAL ELECTION IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, 8 MAY 2022. DATA

Party votes

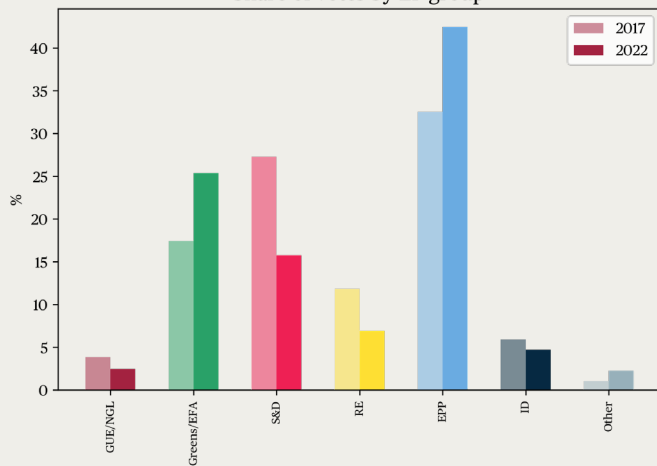


Winning party (2022)

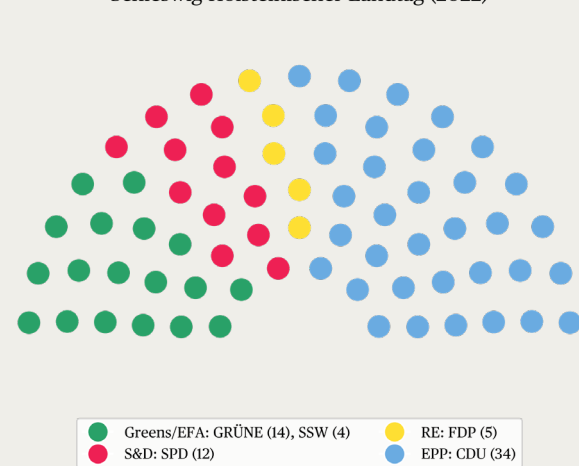


European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



Schleswig-Holsteinischer Landtag (2022)





Constantin Wurthmann • GESIS, Mannheim

Regional election in North Rhine-Westphalia, 15 May 2022

In Germany, the state election in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is often, and not without reason, dubbed a ‘small[er] federal election’ (Skroblies 2019: 159). With just under 18 million inhabitants, NRW is the most populous state in the Federal Republic of Germany, and its elections have always had, and probably still have, a direct impact on federal politics (Korte 2020, 216-217). It is often said that whoever can become head of government (minister-president) of NRW is also in a key position to lead the entire country as chancellor; a thought to which Armin Laschet of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), who lost the 2021 federal election and had been in office NRW until then, may well have succumbed. Following his defeat, Laschet eventually resigned as Minister-President to serve on the back benches of the Bundestag, while Hendrik Wüst (CDU), who had been his Minister of Transport, was elected as his successor by the Landtag of North Rhine-Westphalia. From the outset, Wüst’s election appeared to be without alternative, as all his potential contenders were prevented from running by a peculiarity of NRW’s electoral law: article 52, paragraph 1, of the NRW constitution requires that the Minister President be elected from among the members of the state parliament (Korte 2020: 57).

Hendrik Wüst took office as Minister-President of NRW on 27 October 2021 – 200 days before the upcoming election –, leading a coalition of the CDU and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). The NRW election was widely perceived as the first major electoral test to be faced by the new federal government, composed of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Alliance 90/The Greens (Grüne) and FDP – unlike the Saarland election, which

took place two months earlier (Minas 2022).

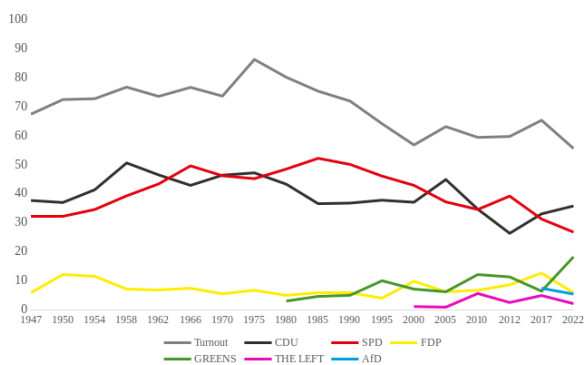
The SPD’s and the Greens’ candidates, Thomas Kutschaty (SPD) and Mona Neubaur (Greens), were running for the office of Minister President, while the FDP, with its top candidate Joachim Stamp – a minister under Wüst –, aimed at being the junior partner of the future government. Although Stamp repeatedly expressed that the FDP would like to continue its successful cooperation with the CDU, he also emphasised the political independence of his liberal party when it comes to possible alliances, stating that the FDP was not committed to the CDU as a partner – a boomerang that came back on election night and gave the FDP the final knockout after a chaotic election campaign without substantive orientation.

The result was the first coalition of the CDU and the Greens in the most populous state of the Federal Republic of Germany. For the first time in over 40 years, two parties from different political camps would govern together. The purpose of the present analysis is twofold: we will put into perspective the results of the NRW state election and, at the same time, give an overview of the factors that have influenced the voting behaviour of NRW citizens. In the course of our analysis, we will dwell on the question of whether the formation of a government of Christian Democrats and Greens was without alternatives, or which other alternative options would have existed, but were ultimately rejected. (In terms of content, for example, a coalition of the CDU and the SPD would presumably have involved far fewer compromises, as both parties are more similar in content than the CDU and the Greens.) This article also discusses the challenges facing the newly formed government and the opportunities that could arise from this coalition model, which is new in NRW.

This paper is organised as follows. The next section will first discuss the factors influencing citizens’ electoral behaviour which emerge from the results of NRW surveys. Then, the focus will be on the formation of the coalition and whether this outcome was to be expected from a political science perspective. Finally, regional differences in voting behaviour in favour of the parties now in government (the CDU and the Greens) will be taken as a starting point to argue that the present coalition can not only serve as a model for future governments, but also contribute to the pacification of society as a whole.

The moment of truth: election night

When the first forecasts appeared on the screens of German televisions at 6 p.m. on 15 May 2022, the outcome was immediately clear: the incumbent government of the CDU and the FDP had been voted out of office – with significant losses for the latter and slight gains for the former. The composition of the future government coalition, however, remained unpredictable until 3.42 a.m. on the



a • Voter turnout and election results: Source: Zicht and Cantow 2022. Own representation.

morning of 16 May, when the provisional election results were announced. According to these results, the CDU achieved 35.7 per cent (+2.7), the SPD 26.7 per cent (-4.5), the Greens 18.2 per cent (+11.8), the FDP 5.9 per cent (-6.7) and the far-right AfD 5.4 per cent (-2.0) of the vote. The left-wing populist party Die Linke (The Left), which had succeeded in entering the NRW state parliament for the first time in its history in 2010, failed to reach the five-percent threshold needed to obtain seats in parliament, with 2.1 per cent (-2.8). This is the first time since 1975 that the CDU has managed to finish ahead of the SPD in two consecutive state elections in NRW - SPD's political heartland. With the CDU and the Greens, there are two clear winners of this election - with the Greens even achieving the best election results in their history in NRW. On the other hand, the SPD, FDP, AfD and Left Party suffered losses. The biggest election loser, however, is voter turnout, which plummeted to a historic low of 55.5 per cent (see Figure a).

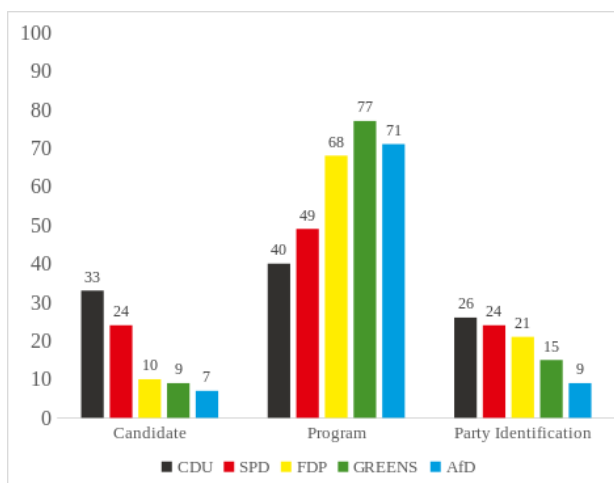
Why did the election results turn out as described here? In classical election research, a central approach, the so-called social psychological approach (Campbell *et al.* 1960), distinguishes between general party identification as a long-term structuring feature, and candidate and issue orientation as more short-term features of electoral decision-making. Wüst, who with 200 days in office could not count on any substantial incumbent bonus, still satisfied 48 per cent of all respondents with his work – according to an election survey by the polling institute Infratest dimap. Opposition leader Kutschaty, who was NRW's minister of justice from 2010 to 2017, only convinced 38 per cent of all respondents. Although these values increased over the course of the year, survey data from January 2022, i.e., four months before the election, was rather revealing. At that time, 75 percent of respondents to a survey said they knew Hendrik Wüst; in contrast, only 46 percent of respondents knew Thomas Kutschaty, while the Green Party's top candidate Neubaur still achieved an awareness level of 33 percent. Much more concerning was the score of the FDP deputy prime minister, Joachim Stamp: only 38 percent of respondents said they knew the minister and former deputy of Laschet and Wüst, despite

him having been in office for five years at the time of the vote (Infratest dimap 2022). For none of the parties did a clear 'candidate factor' suffice to explain a significant proportion of the vote. To some extent, leadership may have played a role for CDU voters, 33 percent of whom named Wüst's personality a decisive factor in their voting decision. Among SPD voters, on the other hand, the candidate factor was only cited by 24 percent. In fact, for all main parties, political programmes appeared as the main reason why they obtained votes on election day. The Greens, in particular, obtained 77 percent of their supporters in that way. The AfD followed with 71 percent and the FDP with 68 percent. The SPD's supporters also voted mainly for the party on the basis of its election programme, with 49 per cent. The CDU, which is generally not considered a strongly programme-oriented party (Hemmelmann 2017, 143), was chosen by only 40 percent of its supporters on the basis of its programme. According to the respondents, long-term party identification, which is still considered the most central factor in electoral research, did not play a very prominent role (cf. Figure b) – although it should be noted that identification with or perceived closeness to a party does have a major impact on the assessment of candidates or issues.

After the Election is Before the Coalition Building Process

The results of the state election led to a general shift of seats in the NRW state parliament in Düsseldorf, which now has 195 members. Of these, 76 are held by the CDU, 56 by the SPD, 39 by the Greens and 12 by the FDP and the AfD respectively. The majority required to form a new state government is 98 MPs. Thus, exactly three coalition formations were mathematically and politically possible after the election. The largest coalition in terms of MPs was a black-red coalition (CDU-SPD), with a total of 132 MPs. The second option, with a total of 115 MPs, was a black-green coalition (CDU-Greens), and the third option, a so-called 'traffic light coalition' (SPD-FDP-Greens), with a total of 107 MPs (see the "data" panel).

The political science literature provides various models explaining the formation of coalitions. A common approach is to use indicators of programmatic closeness between the future coalition partners to estimate the likelihood of a given coalition government being formed. But other factors can be considered: for instance, a coalition model is more likely to be adopted the fewer parties are involved in it; this is justified by the fact that parties can also be classified as utility-maximising actors who hope to gain more influence through political offices (Debus 2022, 81). The latter factor could rather easily explain why no 'traffic light coalition' was formed after the North Rhine-Westphalia state elections, since three parties would have had to compete for the allocation of government offices. But what about the closeness of the possible



b • Motives for the election decision. Source: Tagesschau (2022). Own compilation and presentation.

	Black-red (CDU-SPD)	'Traffic light' (SPD-FDP-Greens)	Black-green (CDU-Greens)
Degree of agreement in percent	61	39	51

c • Own representation and calculation based on the party positions in the Wahl-O-Mat for the North Rhine-Westphalia 2022 state election.

coalition parties in terms of programme? One possibility to measure such closeness is the use Wahl-O-Mat data. The Wahl-O-Mat is a tool published by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung), which can be used by citizens to check, on the basis of 38 theses, how much they agree with policy stances of the parties running in an election. The parties themselves select a position between agree, neutral or disagree. Afterwards, users can position themselves on the same 38 propositions and are then shown how much they agree with the content of the corresponding parties. The data is particularly suitable for explaining coalition formation processes because the party positions are taken by the parties themselves and can be quickly evaluated (for the calculation see Wagschal and König 2014). On the basis of this computation of programmatic (dis)coherence, it appears that the parties in a 'traffic light coalition' would only have had a minor degree of programmatic overlap. It is therefore understandable that this option was not seriously considered. Nonetheless, this clear rejection of the 'traffic light' is not without fault on the part of the FDP, especially since the FDP's lead candidate Stamp had clung to a continuation of the CDU-FDP coalition for a very long time during the election campaign. Such announcements, which are also referred to as coalition signals in the academic literature, send clear impulses to the potential electorate and can have enormous consequences, as they can influence voting behaviour both negatively and positively (Bahnsen et al. 2020; Debus and Müller 2014). By making very clear that they did not want to abandon their previous coalition partner, the CDU, by entering a coalition with the SPD and the Greens, the FDP had manoeuvred

itself into a tactical impasse.

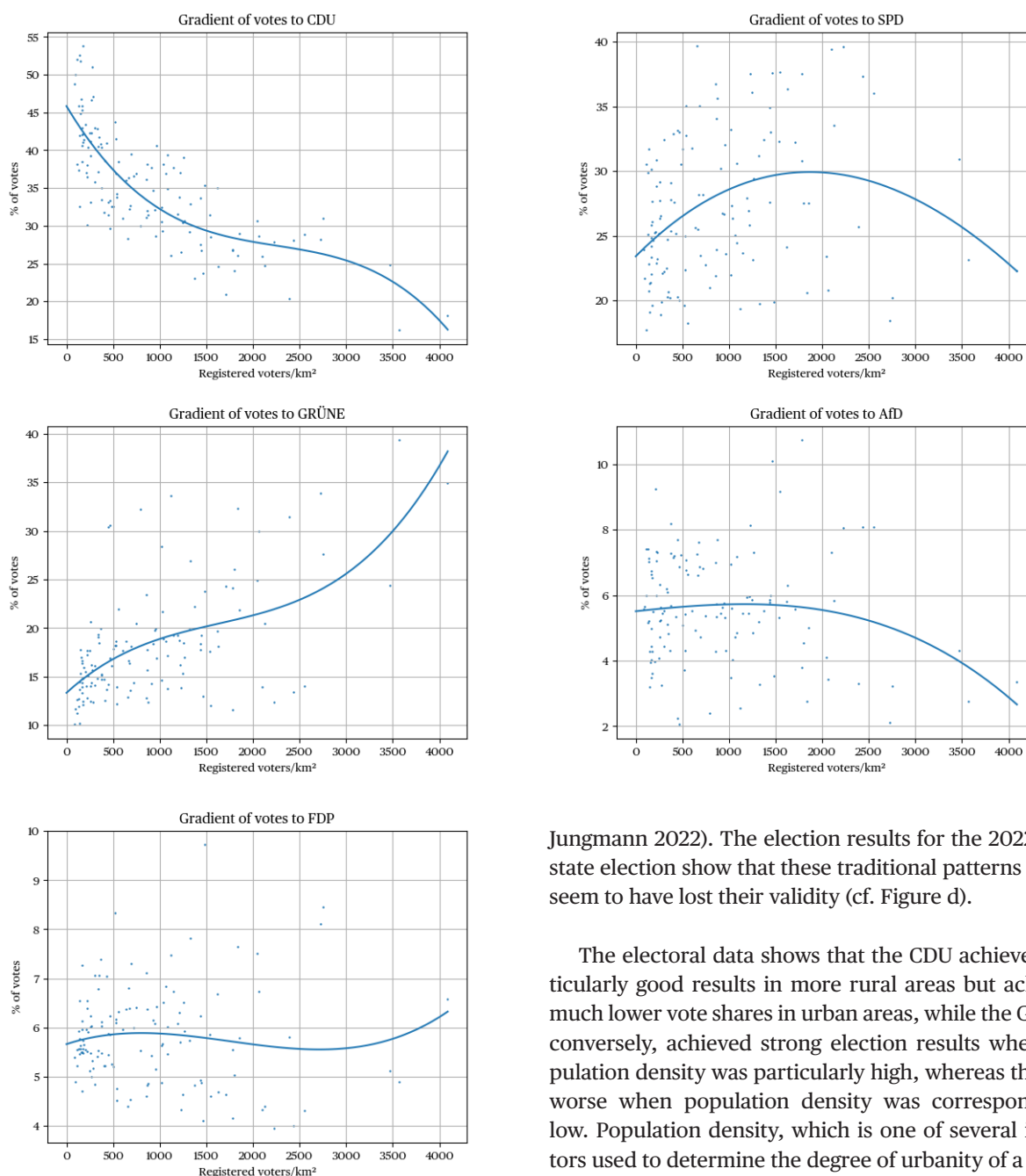
The fact that no black-red coalition of CDU and SPD was formed in NRW after the state elections, although it would have been considerably more coherent in terms of content than the black-green coalition of CDU and Greens that was finally formed (cf. Figure c), can be explained in a similar way.

Indeed, in recent years, the NRW chapter of the SPD had taken a particularly clear stance against coalitions of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats at the national level. Kutschaty himself largely contributed to this positioning. Just as the FDP expressed clear signals against a traffic light coalition, the SPD appeared to reject a coalition with the CDU. A coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats would have run counter to central campaign commitments of the SPD.

So why a coalition of the CDU and the Greens? Since such an alliance was already being discussed as a future coalition option in the run-up to the Bundestag elections – even though, as we know, a different government model was finally adopted – it certainly seems as if the differences in content between these parties are no longer irreconcilable. In some federal states, the CDU and the Greens have either already governed as a pair (Hamburg: 2008-2010), have been confirmed in this government once (Hesse: since 2014; Baden-Württemberg: since 2016) or have recently governed in such an alliance (Schleswig-Holstein: since 2022). With the formation of the black-green coalition, the share of votes that the CDU and the Greens control together in the Bundesrat, the higher chamber of the Federal Republic of Germany, also increases to 21 out of 69 votes – eleven more than the current 'traffic light coalition' has. It thus seems to be in the interest of both parties to come closer together in the long term, so that in the event of a new election they will be in a position to push through federal policy projects with the backing of the federal states. Nevertheless, the CDU and Greens's positions still lie far apart on a number of issues. How these differences can be acknowledged and what significance the formation of a black-green coalition could have for the overall pacification of society will be explained in more detail below.

Black-Green bridge-building between urban and rural areas?

Historically, the major differences between urban and rural regions have contributed to the emergence of parties representing specific, regionally contextualised interests (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In Germany, however, this classic line of conflict was overlaid by other factors, which is why it was never able to develop any significant political clout. Nevertheless, over the course of time, some parties have been able to strengthen or weaken their regional profile. The CDU, for example, traditionally performs better



in rural areas than in urban areas – a consequence of its historically grown proximity to farms and medium-sized enterprises, which are overrepresented in rural areas. The Greens, on the other hand, who have their roots in an urban and academic milieu (Fogt and Uttiz 1984: 225), are particularly successful in urban areas.

Thus, for the first time, the two coalition partners who sit together on the government benches of the state parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia present two widely different profiles: while one partner, the Christian Democrats, positions itself as a decidedly middle-class conservative party and therefore also achieves high election results in rural areas, the other party, the Greens, is particularly popular in urban areas, where it positions itself as an ecological and progressive force (Haffert 2022; Stroppe and

Jungmann 2022). The election results for the 2022 NRW state election show that these traditional patterns do not seem to have lost their validity (cf. Figure d).

The electoral data shows that the CDU achieved particularly good results in more rural areas but achieved much lower vote shares in urban areas, while the Greens, conversely, achieved strong election results where population density was particularly high, whereas they did worse when population density was correspondingly low. Population density, which is one of several indicators used to determine the degree of urbanity of a region (Stroppe & Jungmann 2022: 54), paints a picture of regionally contrasting electorates, which the new black-green state government will have to take into account.

The significant differences between the two parties' programmes make this government alliance seem daring at first glance. Bearing in mind that, at least until the founding of the far-right AfD (Bräuninger *et al.* 2020: 146), the Greens and the CDU have historically played the role of socio-cultural antipodes to each other in NRW, the alliance appears all the more interesting. On the other hand, a coalition between parties assumed to stand in such fundamental opposition to each other may have the potential to develop a national political impact and to build bridges between strongly differing voter milieus. Not only the black-green coalitions in Hesse, Baden-Württemberg and – more recently – in Schleswig-Holstein

have shown that Christian Democrats and Greens can govern successfully and, when possible, continue a government together in the following legislative period. In North Rhine-Westphalia, too, the new black-green coalition could succeed in pacifying long-simmering social conflicts as well as in resolving possible conflicts between urban and rural populations.

Building joint projects out of opposites?

As one of the EU's largest industrial regions, NRW is no economic lightweight. If the current state government succeeds in reconciling economic and ecological necessities, making NRW more sustainable as an industrial location without losing economic clout, this will also have an impact beyond the state's borders. Such a coalition could therefore serve as a model for other federal states, but also for other EU member states.

In times of advancing climate change, the new NRW state government faces enormous challenges. In addition to price increases (19 percent), energy supply (16 percent), the war in Ukraine (12 percent) and education policy (12 percent), climate policy (17 percent) was named as one of the central problem areas before the election (Tagesschau 2022). From the Greens' point of view, it seems all the more prudent that their former top candidate, Mona Neubaur, was able to create her own super-ministry for economy, industry, climate protection and energy during the coalition negotiations. In contrast, social and financial policy, which are also part of the electorate's priorities, are now in the hands of Christian Democratic ministers - another not unwise move by the CDU in NRW.

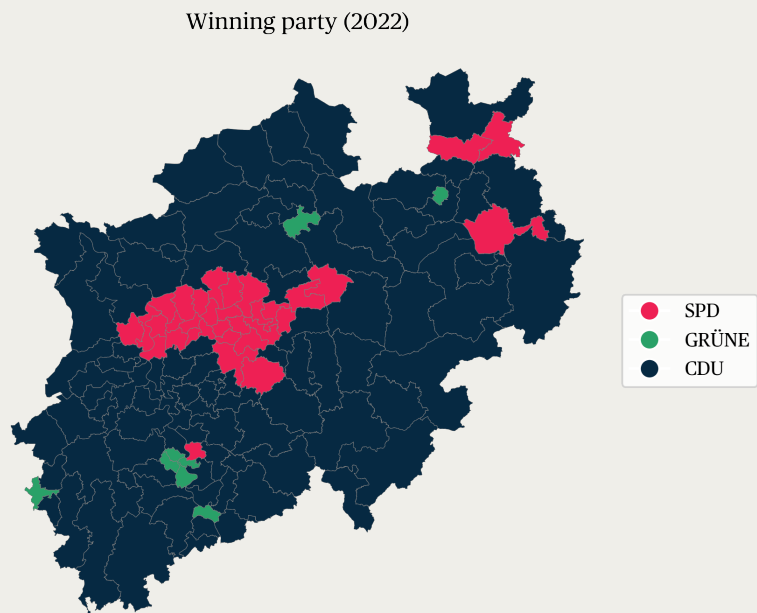
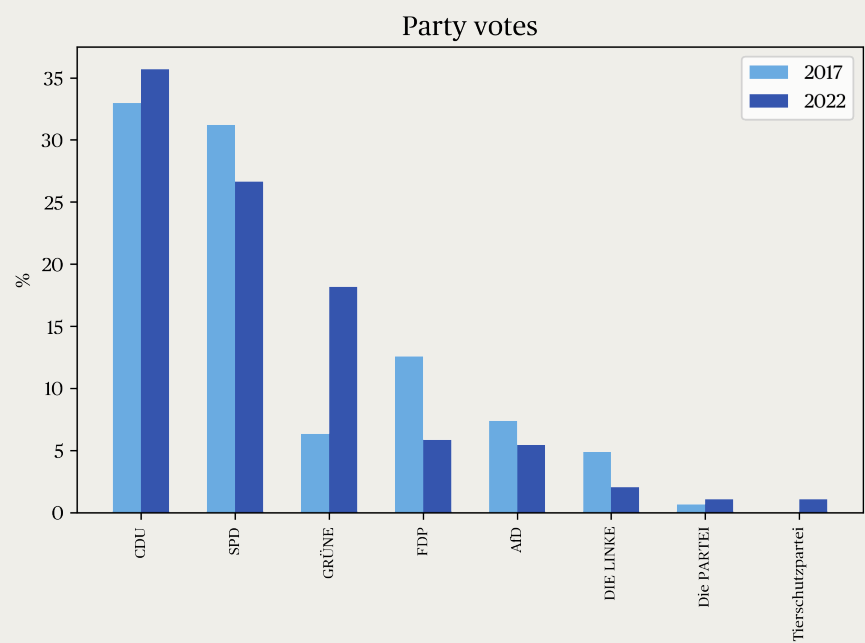
The new NRW state government will have to live up to its role as mediator between urban and rural areas. The fact that the CDU is a coalition partner that is primarily successful in rural areas and the Greens are a coalition partner that is primarily successful in urban areas could allow them to build new political bridges. The programmatic differences between the coalition partners have not been an insurmountable obstacle to the formation of a government - even though the Greens, in particular, obtained most of their support from voters who valued their political program, and are under pressure to meet the demands placed on them. NRW Prime Minister Wüst, on the other hand, has yet to show whether he is capable of finding a common ground between opposites, and to carry forward common projects.

The fact that, for the first time since the 1960s, the prime minister of NRW has come from the CDU for two consecutive legislative periods (Korte 2020: 95) can certainly be interpreted as a kind of cultural upheaval. What may be unexpected here - at least in retrospect - is that the former traditional partner of the CDU, the FDP, is increasingly being replaced in this role by the Greens. This

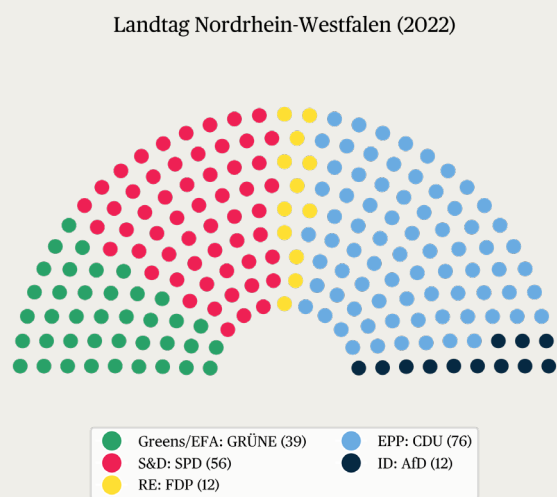
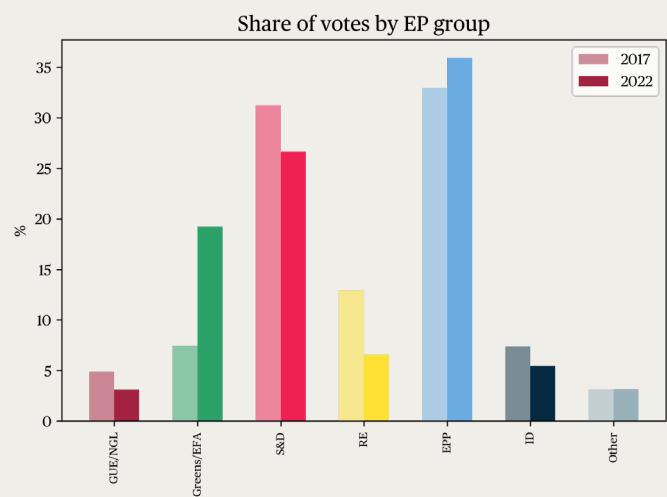
is the case in North Rhine-Westphalia as well as in other states, and could be the symbol of a much longer-term change, the outcome of which is not yet foreseeable.

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European indicators





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Danish defense opt-out referendum, 1 June 2022

Introduction

In a historic referendum on June 1st 2022, the Danish citizens voted in favor of removing the country's defense opt-out. As a result, Denmark joins all of the other member states in participating in EU defense policy cooperation. The referendum was announced by the Danish government on 6 March 2022 following a broad multi-party defense agreement that came in the wake of the shake-up of Europe's security architecture after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which also triggered the applications by Sweden and Finland to join NATO.

The Defense opt-out was one of the four Danish opt-outs from further European integration that followed in the wake of the Danish rejection of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. As the scope and importance of several of the Danish opt-outs has increased over the years following the deepening of European cooperation in areas covered by them, Denmark has held three referendums since 2000 that were aimed at abandoning or modifying its opt-outs: 1) joining the third phase of EMU in 2000, 2) revising the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) opt-out to a British-style opt-in in 2015, and 3) joining the EU defense cooperation in 2022. In the EMU referendum, 53.2% of the voters voted No, and 53.1% of the voters rejected revision of the JHA opt-out in 2015. Based on past behavior, it might have been expected that the Danes would again vote no to removing an opt-out.

While high levels of Euroscepticism can explain the Danish no in 1992, Danish attitudes had softened by the

mid-1990s to being broadly supportive of the European cooperation but without wanting more. In the No votes in 2000 and 2015, voters expressed their opposition to transferring more competences to the EU level (Hobolt 2009; Beach 2021). In contrast, despite having relatively unchanged attitudes towards transferring more sovereignty to the EU, Danes voted overwhelmingly in June 2022 by 66.9% to 33.1% in favor of removing the defense opt-out. What can explain this change in voter behavior?

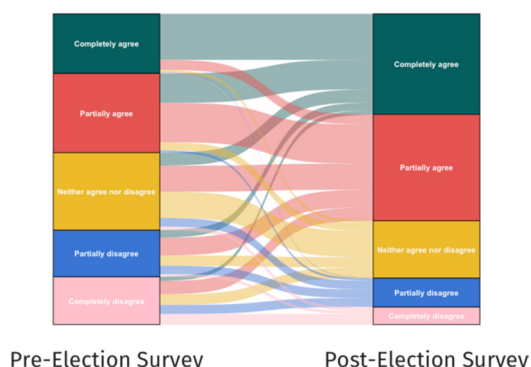
The Danish defense opt-out

In the referendum on the 2 June 1992, a slim majority (50,7%) of Danish voters rejected the Treaty of Maastricht. To avoid blocking the treaty being adopted, a compromise was found between a majority of Danish parties which stated that Denmark would stay outside of four areas of potential future EU cooperation: JHA, the third phase of EMU (the euro),¹ EU citizenship and EU defense cooperation. As with the other opt-out areas, in 1992 there were not common defense policies in the EU. But Danish voters were concerned in the referendum that a supranational framework might develop in defense policies that could even lead to Danish troops coming under the EU flag (an 'EU army'). Therefore, the Danish opt-out was formulated based on the need to reassure skeptical voters that Denmark would not be forced to join unwanted areas of cooperation. When the first intergovernmental EU defense policies were adopted in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1998, Denmark received a protocol allowing it to remain outside of defense cooperation (Nissen 2022).

The Danish opt out is unique, as no other country has an opt-out in the defense area (Butler 2020). From a judicial perspective, the opt-out allowed Denmark to stay outside of several areas of Treaty cooperation (Art. 26 (1); Art. 42-46 EU) that have "military implications." This implies that Denmark is outside the parts of the European cooperation that are based on these articles because they involve EU military cooperation. For instance, this means that Denmark cannot participate in EU missions with a military component, but Denmark can participate in civilian missions even though they take their point of departure in article 43 (DIIS 2019). The opt-out has been designed in a manner in which Denmark formally does not take part in the cooperation, in exchange for not blocking developments for others. Since EU defense cooperation is intergovernmental (participation is voluntary and decisions are taken with unanimity), removing the opt-out would have no sovereignty implications legally. Because EU common defense policies are intergovernmental, there were for many years only low intensity cooperation in the issue area. This changed after 2014 and the Russian invasion of Crimea, which sparked a rapid development

1. Denmark had already been granted the option of not joining the third phase in a protocol to the Maastricht Treaty. In the compromise, Denmark stated that it had decided to not join the third phase.

I have/had sufficient knowledge to assess what I should vote for in the referendum on the defense opt-out



in EU defense policies. This meant that Denmark was increasingly marginalized. In the period from 1993-2022 the Danish opt-out was activated 235 times (Think Tank Europe 2022), understood as instances where Denmark did not participate in EU military cooperation decisions related to articles 42-46 EU. In concrete terms, Denmark was excluded from the working of the European Defense Agency (EDA), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), military operations and missions under the CFSP, and negotiations and discussions related to the broader developments in the defense area in the EU (DIIS 2019).

Campaign dynamics

In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a new defense agreement was adopted by a large majority in parliament. There is in total 179 seats in the Danish Folketing. 175 are elected in Denmark, while the Faroe Islands and Greenland each has 2 seats in the Folketing. The parties behind the defense agreement were the Social Democrats (49), the Liberals (39), The Conservative People's Party (13), the Socialist People's party (15), and the Social Liberal Party (14). The agreement both included a decision to increase defense spending, end the dependency of Russians oil and gas, but it also included an ambition to abolish the Danish defense opt-out. Liberal Alliance (3), the Christian Democrats (1) and the Independent Greens (3) also endorsed the agreement. The Danish Peoples Party (16), the New Right party (4) and the Red-Green Alliance (13) opposed the abolition of the opt-out and recommended a no-vote.

The campaign was dominated by the narrative from the Yes campaign that Denmark needed to stand together with the rest of Europe. Implicit in this argument was that it was a response to an increasingly aggressive and assertive Russia. However, most Yes elites did not suggest that the EU's common defense policy could be actually used to stop current Russian aggression. Instead, it was argued that the EU could play an important complementary security role regionally (e.g. in the Balkans) that could free

NATO to concentrate on Russia. The main argument put forward by the No-campaign was that the abolishment of the opt-out could lead to a slippery slope of stronger defense cooperation that might become supranational in the future which could result in Denmark losing the ability to control the deployment of Danish troops. One particular concern was whether Denmark might be forced to take part in common EU actions in Africa.

Observers and analysts noted that the campaign was rather underwhelming when compared to the level of debate in national elections and (most) previous EU referendums in Denmark. Given the complexity of the topic and the uncertainty about where EU common defense cooperation was going, the campaign was also characterized by the frequent appearance of experts in the press and in tv debates who were asked to qualify political arguments made by the Yes and No side.

Public opinion polls published throughout the campaign showed a relatively comfortable lead for the Yes-campaign. In the 2015 referendum, there had also been an early lead for the Yes side that had slowly eroded during the course of the campaign. In 2022, while the gap between the 'Yes' and 'No' supporters narrowed somewhat by the beginning of May 2022, there were no polls that showed a lead for the No vote. As with previous opt-out referendums, there were a substantial number of voters (roughly 35-40% of the electorate) who were undecided until very late in the campaign. As with the 2015 referendum, undecided voters played a major role for the result. But whereas the undecided voters in 2015 broke towards voting no, the opposite occurred in 2022.

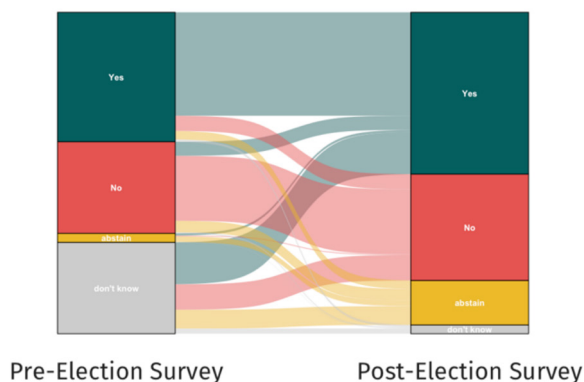
Election results — a strong country-wide 'yes'

While the Yes majority was not surprising given the consistent polling, what was surprising was the size of the Yes vote. In total, 66,87% voted 'Yes' and 33,13% votes 'No.', with 65.77% of the electorate participating in the referendum. This was the second-lowest turnout ever observed in an election or referendum in Denmark. Observers lamented the relatively low turnout, but when compared to other referendums across the EU, the turnout is still relatively high (Beach, 2018). The clear victory of the yes campaign is also reflected in the results across the country. Overall, there was not a single municipality in which the voters preferred a 'No.' In fact, only a few polling station areas in the country reported a majority for the No-campaign.

What can explain the yes vote?

Data from a panel survey that we conducted in which a representative sample of the Danish voting population was interviewed at the beginning of the campaign in April and re-interviewed immediately after the referendum

Do you vote/Did you vote for (yes) or against (no) the abolition of the Danish opt-out from the EU's common defense and security policy at the referendum on 1 June?



(N=1249) allow us to gain insights about dynamic changes in public opinion throughout the campaign, and assess the motivations for voting yes or no (Beach et al. 2022).

First, as with previous opt-out referendums (Hobolt 2009; Beach 2021; Beach and Finke 2021), there is evidence that most voters believed to have sufficient information to make a qualified choice, and that they thought the referendum was important enough to vote based on the issue and not second-order factors such as the popularity of the incumbent government. In April 2022, 45% of the respondents said they had sufficient information to make an informed choice, whereas by the vote, 67% believed they had this information (see Figure a). Additionally, more voters were able to identify misleading arguments from the No-camp as such by the end of the campaign than at the start.

As in the 2015 JHA opt-out referendum (Beach and Finke 2021), most voters ended up voting as they stated they intended at the start of the campaign. However, a majority of undecided voters broke towards voting no in the final weeks of the campaign (Beach 2021). In 2022 a larger share of undecided voters moved to the Yes-camp. In total, 46% of the undecided voters ended up voting 'Yes' and 28% voted 'No' (see Figure b).

What can explain the movement towards voting yes?

When we compare EU attitudes of voters in 2015 and 2022 in our surveys, there is little evidence that Danes have become more supportive of more EU integration in general (Beach 2016; Beach et al. 2022). Indeed, a majority of voters in both 2015 and 2022 stated that they did not desire 'more EU.'

When voters were asked about why they voted yes or no in our 2022 survey, the strongest arguments for voting yes related to solidarity with the 'common foreign and security policies of our European neighbors' (39%

very important, 53% important), and increasing Danish influence in the EU (30% very important, 50.5% important). In contrast, fewer yes voters were motivated by the desire to take part in EU military missions (9.5% very important, 42.6% important). "No"-voters were motivated by the desire to not transfer more power to the EU (39% very important, 37.5% important), uncertainty about the consequences of voting yes (44.3% very important, 32.9% important), and a lack of trust of politicians (34.4% very important, 32.2% important). Overall, most voters agreed that removing the opt-out was important for Danish security (40.5% agreed versus 27.8% disagreed).

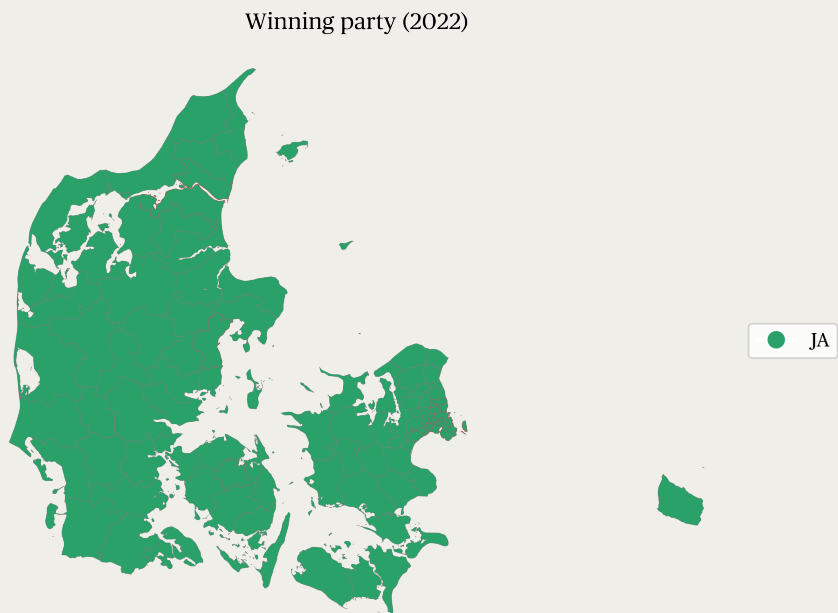
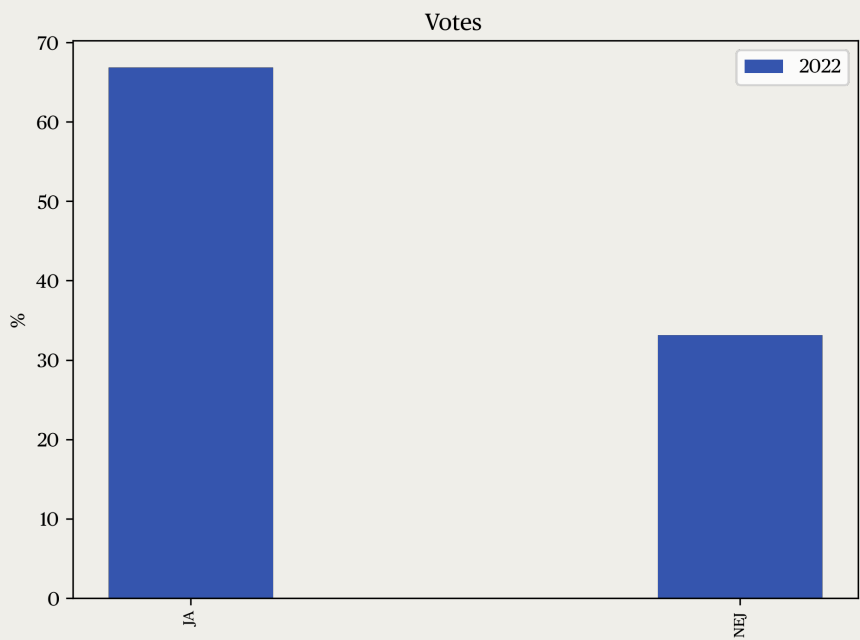
The data supports the conclusion that arguments about solidarity and Danish influence resonated amongst voters. Given that the yes-side emphasized both the intergovernmental nature of EU defense cooperation and the relatively minor scale of current operations, this can have enabled Danish voters who are otherwise skeptical about 'more EU' to focus more on solidarity with EU partners during the crisis. The logic here is that given the intergovernmental nature of the area, Danes did not fear a massive transfer of sovereignty on the defence area, as the country through a formal veto option could keep the developments 'under control.' This also suggests that it would be a mistake to think that Danes would be prepared to remove the euro and JHA opt-outs, given that both involve supranational cooperation in sensitive issue areas.

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Regional election in Andalusia, 19 June 2022

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The June 2022 elections in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia resulted in an absolute majority for the PP (Partido Popular), which obtained 43.11% of the vote and 58 of the 109 seats that make up the Andalusian Parliament. These elections also confirmed the decline of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) in the region: with 24% of the votes and 30 seats, the PSOE lost its historical position as the most voted party in Andalusia.

Electoral system and socio-demographic features of Andalusia

Andalusia is one of the four Spanish regions that have their own electoral calendar, unlike the thirteen other regions that usually hold their elections simultaneously. For this reason, Andalusian electoral contests frequently revolve around specifically regional, rather than countrywide, issues. As in the general elections, the electoral system for the Andalusian elections uses the D'Hondt method with an electoral threshold of 3%. The parties present closed lists in each of the eight provinces. Seats are apportioned among the provinces by population, with the Seville constituency being assigned the most seats (eighteen).

Among the most noteworthy socio-demographic features of Andalusia is its large population, which represents 18% of the total population of Spain according to INE's 2022 data. As is the case in other Spanish regions, Andalusian provinces are characterized by stark contrasts between rural and urban areas. In addition, several of the Andalusian provinces have among the highest levels of unemployment in the country. In line with these econo-

mic difficulties, employment is the main concern of 47% of Andalusians, well before other issues (Andalusian Barometer, September 2022).

On the other hand, Andalusia is a gateway for a high number of immigrants, although it is not the community with the greatest migratory pressure, with many migrants moving to other areas of the country. However, one of its provinces, Almería, has the highest proportion of immigrants Spain-wide (21.78% compared to the national average of 11.62), according to INE data (2022). This is due, in part, to the importance of the agricultural sector. Moreover, together with the Canary Islands, Andalusia is the Spanish Autonomous Community with the lowest GDP per capita. In this context, it is understandable that economic and social issues received special attention from parties, candidates and voters during the last election campaign.

The electoral performance of the PP and the PSOE

The Andalusian electoral process was relevant beyond the regional context, as it confirmed the very positive dynamics of the Spanish Conservatives. A few months earlier, the PP had won the elections in Castilla y León, a traditionally conservative stronghold, where it now governs in coalition with Vox. In Madrid, in 2021, the PP had also celebrated an overwhelming victory in a regional election under the leadership of the president of the Community, Isabel Díaz Ayuso. In addition, in a context of increasing national polarization, this contest was perceived as a test by political parties.

In Andalusia, the polls pointed to another victory for the PP, led by presidential candidate Juanma Moreno. The biggest unknown was whether the PP would need to gather support from other right-wing parties (Ciudadanos and Vox) to form a government, as it had happened in 2018. This apparent uncompetitiveness, coupled with the traditionally low turnout in Andalusia, may explain why only 56% of Andalusian citizens participated in this election. Andalusian electoral contests may also suffer from a lack of mobilizing capacity, due, in part, to their being scheduled independently of other elections.

The PP won in all provinces, beating the PSOE in 70% of Andalusian municipalities. This was a reversal of the traditional voting trend in Andalusia which had seen the PSOE dominate the party system, governing for six terms with a parliamentary majority, for one term with a minority, and for four terms with the support of third parties. However, population size and income level have had a significant impact of the distribution of the vote. The PP has obtained better results in large municipalities and provincial capitals, as well as in higher-income areas. Among the reasons for these results is the transfer of the Ciudadanos vote to the PP, due to two factors: its role as

a junior government partner for four years and the erosion of the Ciudadanos brand throughout Spain. On the other hand, the economic situation occupied a large part of the discussions during the campaign. The PP managed to defend its record in office by exposing the decrease in unemployment and the growth above the Spanish average during Moreno's term. Moreno's management capacity, together with his image of honesty, are the two factors most frequently wielded by those in Andalusia who voted for the PP in last June's elections (24.4% and 13.6%, respectively, according to CIS data).

On the other hand, the poor performance of the Andalusian PSOE was the product of a progressive erosion of the three pillars on which its past success was anchored: (1) the culture and political memory of a left-leaning community; (2) its contribution to the modernization of the region while in government, including through the management of European funds earmarked for less developed regions; (3) but also a model of electoral clientelism related to the administration of those funds (Cazorla 1992; 1994). Thus, although from 2012 onwards it continued to govern, first in coalition with Izquierda Unida and then as a minority government, it did so while losing voters (45.5% PP vs. 35.5% PSOE). In the subsequent elections of 2015 and 2018, despite being the most voted party, it suffered a notable decline in support in the polls, eventually losing the capacity of forming a government in 2018.

The PP took advantage of this period to gain ground among urban voters and the middle classes. In recent times, the effects of the 2008 crisis and the chronification of problems such as unemployment, as well as the corruption cases being settled in the courts of justice, added to the decline of the Socialists. In 2011, the so-called "ERE case" was opened, which would not be closed by the Supreme Court until November 2019 and in which, among other important charges, José Antonio Griñán, the former PSOE president of Andalusia (2015-2018), was sentenced to 6 years in prison for prevarication and embezzlement of public funds.

The pre-electoral period saw a confrontation between the autonomous and national leadership of the PSOE. In an attempt to appease tensions, primaries were held to choose the candidate for the 2022 regional elections, a process that only further exposed the division of the party between a centrist wing and another more aligned with the positions of the national left-wing coalition with Unidas Podemos and Izquierda Unida. The winner of these primaries was Juan Espadas, the favorite candidate of the national leadership who, despite being mayor of Seville, failed to be known and connect with the electorate of the autonomous community. From that moment on, the socialist campaign focused on the threat of Vox becoming part of a future PP government, a scenario which the polls had made credible; this message, which appealed to the

past, was shared by other left-wing parties. But the PSOE's electoral narrative proved rather ineffective; in fact, it may even have favored the PP by making it appear a more centrist, moderate and efficient alternative to the radicality of a potential PSOE government.

Other political parties across the ideological spectrum

Besides the PSOE, other left-wing parties also went to the polls, and the left showed signs of fragmentation. Despite the opening of a negotiation process, Adelante Andalucía (AA) did not join the Por Andalucía (PA) coalition, instead pursuing its own anti-capitalist, Andalusian agenda. The party has never exercised governmental functions along with the PSOE in Andalusia in the past; nor did it exercise it at the national level in the post-pandemic context. This distinctive factor, however, took a back seat with the accentuation of anti-fascist sentiments caused by the scores of Vox in the polls and the rise of a radical Andalusianist discourse in the party's rhetoric.

Finally, AA would obtain two seats in the regional parliament: one for the Seville constituency, the largest, and another for Cádiz, where the party governs the capital of the province. As was the case for PA, these elections were experienced as part of the struggle for the leadership of the left, with a view to the next general elections. In the choice of the candidate, the configuration of the electoral lists and, later, the development of the campaign, Unidas Podemos and, in particular, its ministers in the national government, were marginalized in the face of IU and PCE ministers, such as Alberto Garzón and Yolanda Díaz. As for the content of their campaign, they exploited not only the fear of the radical right, but also the social policy achievements of the central government, in which the left and PSOE were associated. This claim did not prevent the PSOE from dropping from 17 to 6 seats. The debacle of the left in Andalusia was blatant.

Besides the PP, other center and right-wing parties participated in the election. In the 2018 elections, the center was represented by Ciudadanos, which entered the government as the PP's junior partner, with the regional leader of the party, Juan Marín, serving as its vice president. The party and its leader thus established their presence and in the community. However, as of 2022, the party had become increasingly marginalized, and its representatives had been losing their seats from regional parliaments all over Spain following its resounding failure in the general elections of November 2019. The party had lost 37 seats and 3 million votes Spain-wide compared to the previous national elections held eight months earlier. As pre-electoral polls had anticipated, the Andalusian election was no exception for Ciudadanos in this regard. The expected transfer of votes to the PP was even reinforced by Marín's campaign strategy. The Ciudadanos leader defended the

record of an executive of which he had been a member, but which was led by the PP. In the electoral television debate, the candidate of Ciudadanos was the only one who did not ask Moreno Bonilla the uncomfortable question: Would Vox enter a hypothetical PP government? In the end, Ciudadanos was left without representation in the Andalusian Parliament.

Vox, which had become the great protagonist of the campaign thanks to the left's narrative, aimed to grow electorally in the community from which it had emerged nationally in 2018. To this end, the party was betting on being essential to form a government, which would have provided it with greater negotiation leverage. The first objective was met, although not to the extent expected at the beginning of the campaign: Vox obtained two additional representatives, reaching fourteen seats. The second objective failed due to the PP's achievement of an absolute majority. This led Vox to interpret the result as a defeat to be followed by a review of the failures of the campaign, and the election triggered an internal crisis. Among other issues, the party had to improvise an electoral program when the media criticized its lack of a project for the community. It chose to present a candidate with a national profile, Macarena Olona, who did not have roots in Andalusia. In addition, the campaign was highly personalized and ideologized, with the candidate trying to force her PP counterpart to recognize the role that Vox would play in a future government. After the failure of this strategy, Olona resigned from her position as a member of parliament for Andalusia, initiating a public drift away from Vox. The Andalusian autonomous process made it clear that, while part of the electorate is receptive to radical right-wing discourses, the party faces dilemmas when trying to grow at the regional level despite its highly centralized structure.

The year 2023 in the polls

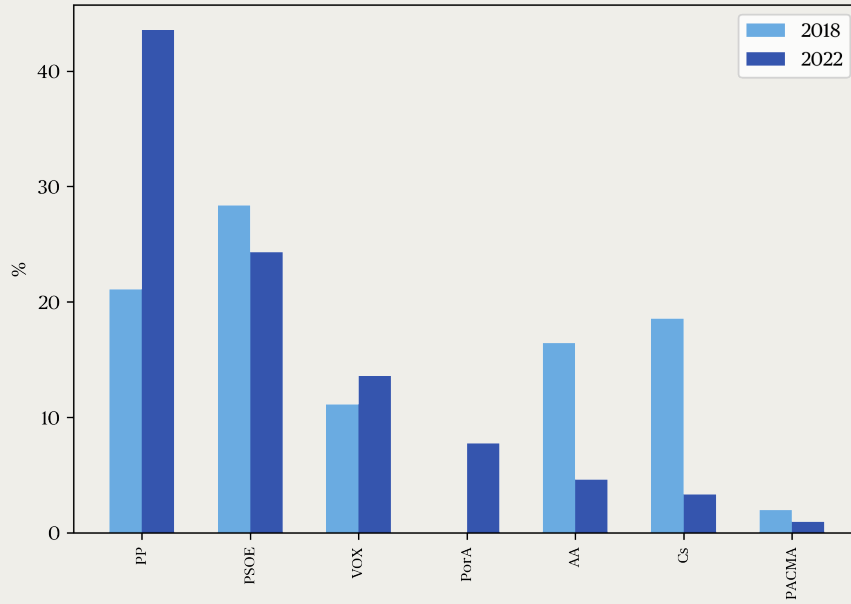
The Andalusian elections of 2022 were the last elec-

tions to be held in Spain until the municipal and regional elections of 2023. There will also be general elections, foreseeably in the last quarter of 2023. The low nationalization of Spain's party system, with nationalist and regional cleavages, issues and parties, makes it difficult to make projections based on a single regional election. However, it is likely that at least at the national level, two trends registered in the Andalusian elections will be repeated. On the one hand, the fragmentation of the non-socialist left into parties or coalitions with both nationwide presence and multiple local brands, as in this case of AA, is likely to persist. On the other hand, the struggle for right-wing votes between the PP and VOX will probably continue: the Popular Party seems to attract former Ciudadanos voters and have the capacity to articulate a liberal management model as an alternative to the social-democratic one, a strategy that appeals to the moderate electorate.

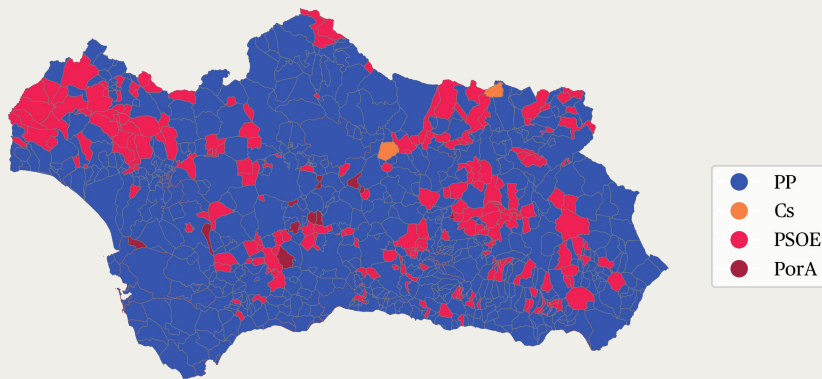
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Party votes

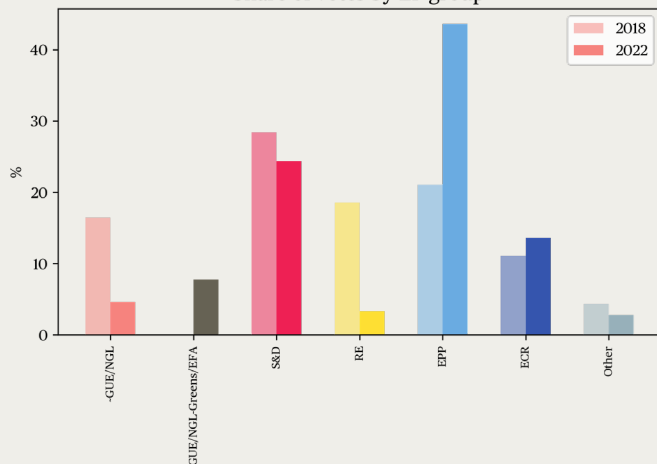


Winning party (2022)

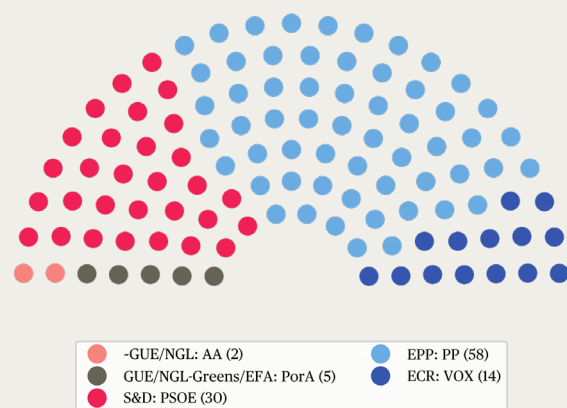


European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



Parlamento de Andalucía (2022)





Sofie Blombäck • Mittuniversitetet

Parliamentary election in Sweden, 11 September 2022

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The context of the election

The 2022 election was heavily influenced by a turbulent previous parliamentary period, with several simultaneous crises as a backdrop.

This turbulence is indicative of the breakdown of the traditional political blocs and the drawing of new political boundaries. For most of 20th century, Swedish politics consisted of a left-wing bloc, dominated by the Social Democrats (S), and a bourgeois bloc. The entry of the radical right Sweden Democrats (SD) into parliament in 2010 shifted these dynamics. Initially, the other parties imposed a strict *cordon sanitaire* and continued working together in the traditional blocs. After the 2014 election, this became increasingly difficult to sustain as the minority government was unable to get its budget through parliament. For a few weeks, the country was on brink of new elections being called, for the first time in modern history. Instead, most of the parties struck a bargain intended to exclude SD, and to a lesser extent the Left Party (V), from power. While this allowed the government to remain in place, it also marked the beginning of intensified discussions about the relationship to SD within several parties in the bourgeois bloc (Demker & Odmalm, 2022).

Normally, several factors in the Swedish constitutional system make it easy to form governments and ensure that

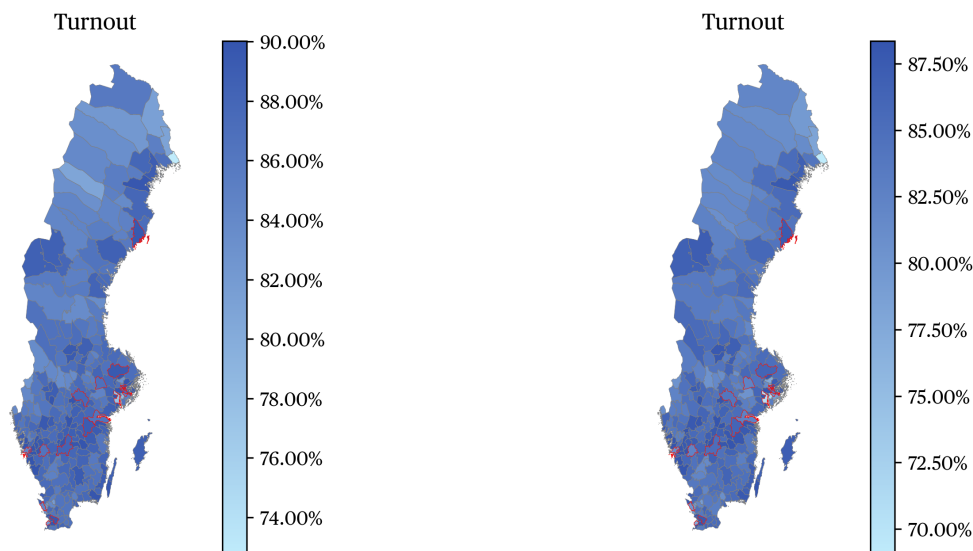
even relatively weak minorities governments are able to function. However, both the 2014 budget crisis and the aftermath of the 2018 election indicates that this might no longer be true. The 2018 election resulted in the longest government formation process in Swedish history, lasting 134 days and needing three investiture votes in parliament, before a minority coalition between S and the Greens (MP) was in place (see Eriksson, 2019).

The 2018 election resulted in no government being possible without the support of the liberal Centre Party (C). C ideally wanted a centrist coalition, but were not able to persuade other parties. In the end C were forced to choose between supporting a left-wing government, being a part of a right-wing government dependent on SD or being seen as the cause of new elections being called. C, together with the Liberal Party (L), opted for a deal where they supported the S-led coalition in exchange for policy concessions (Aylott & Bolin, 2019).

Once formed, the S/MP government was far from stable. For the first time in modern history a Swedish prime minister lost a confidence vote, when the opposition parties on the right supported V's motion of no confidence in June of 2021. After a period of negotiations, the same coalition was reformed, lasting until Stefan Löfven's resignation as party leader and Prime Minister in November 2021. The very same day his successor Magdalena Andersson was elected, the right-wing opposition's budget was adopted by parliament. This caused MP to leave the government, citing unwillingness to implement this budget, which in turn prompted the resignation of Andersson after a mere seven hours as Prime Minister. A new round of negotiations resulted in Andersson leading a single party S minority government for the remaining months of the parliamentary term.

The root of this instability was largely the continued existence and growth of the SD, and the effect this had on the functioning of the party system. Neither of the two traditional blocs could hope to gain majority on their own, and C and L's choice to support the left-wing government effectively split the bourgeois bloc in two. During the 2018-2022 parliamentary period, the largest party on the right, the Moderate Party (M), shifted its stance on SD, opening for some form of collaboration. This can be compared with how center-right parties in other European countries have started co-operating with the far right (Bale 2003; Heinze 2018). The smaller Christian Democrats (KD) made a similar shift. L were still uneasy about SD, but towards the end of the electoral period publicly stated that it would support an M-led government, even one dependent on SD support. C made the opposite choice, endorsing Andersson as their candidate for prime minister.

Besides the turmoil in the party system, the 2018-2022



a • Turnout in the 2018 (left) and 2022 (right) parliamentary elections

period was characterized by multiple crises, some of which were curiously absent from the election campaign. The Swedish Covid-response was a non-issue in the campaign. There was unity around both health policies and the economic response between most parties, and the issue was largely seen as belonging to the past before the campaign started. The war in Ukraine had a profound effect on Swedish foreign policy. In the space of a few weeks S changed its policy of decade-long opposition to NATO membership, and Sweden applied for membership in May 2022 with broad support. The agreement between the leaders of the respective blocs effectively neutralized NATO as a policy issue before the campaign begun.

Instead, most of the focus in the campaign was on two other crises: violent crime and energy prizes. Sweden has seen an unprecedented increase of gun violence, primarily among gang members in socio-economically deprived areas, pushing crime as well as economic and ethnic segregation to the front of the political agenda. In the last few months before the election, the issue of energy costs, in particular electricity and petrol, also became a focus of debate, with the parties outbidding each other in offering solutions to bring costs down before the winter months. Both these issues resonated with voters. Exit polls show that Law and order, and Energy and nuclear power were named as very important determinants of their party choice by 50 and 45 percent of voters respectively, ranking them just behind the perennially important issues of Healthcare and Education. The energy issues in particular rose sharply in importance compared to the previous election, when only 26 percent cited it as very important (SVT 2022).

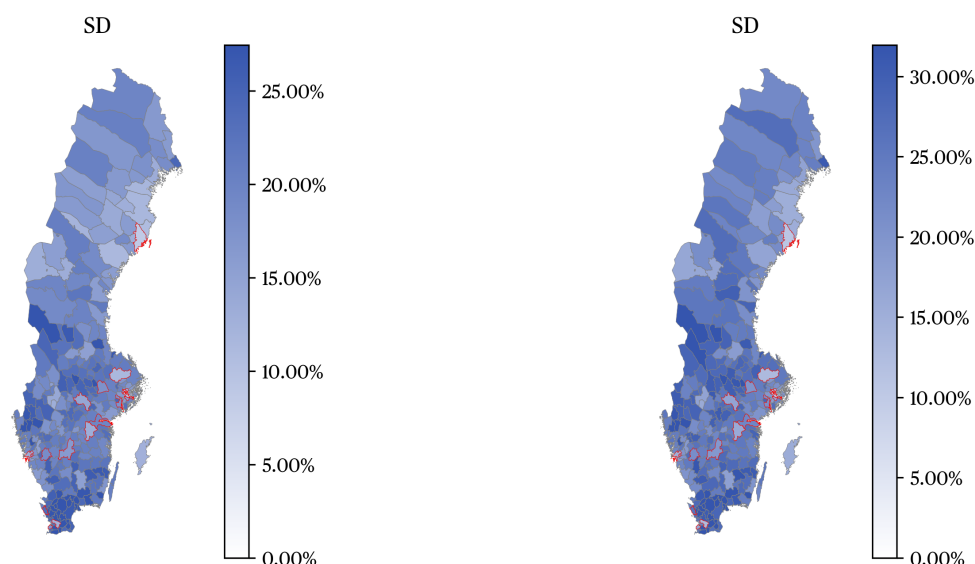
Turnout and election results

Sweden usually has high turnout levels and has seen an increase in turnout over the past few decades from a low of 80.1 percent in 2002 to 87.2 percent in 2018. However, this election broke that trend, with a decline in turnout to 84.2 percent. Areas with relatively low turnout in 2018 typically saw the largest decreases.

Among the reasons for the high turnout is that the electoral system is highly proportional and there are few barriers to participation. Registration is automatic, and early voting is available for 18 days before the elections. Voters can cast a ballot at any early voting polling place in the country, including on election day itself. Analyses of previous elections indicate that early voting is higher among groups that traditionally have lower turnout, highlighting its importance in making electoral participation more equal. In 2022 early voting again reached record levels, with almost half the voters casting their ballots either before election day or on election day but in a district other than the one they belong to (Dahlberg & Högström 2022).

In terms of voter support, the most significant change was that SD for the first time became the second largest party, pushing M down to third place. This continues a trend of remarkable growth for the party that first entered parliament with less than 5 percent of the vote just twelve years ago. Furthermore, the party once again gained voters from both sides of the economic left-right divide (SVT 2022) highlighting shifts away from the established parties and traditional bloc politics.

At the other end of the scale, several parties have hovered around the 4 percent threshold in recent elections, but none have fallen below it since the 1990s. In the past electoral period, L and MP have often scored below or near the threshold in opinion polls. Likely, both were helped by strategic votes from supporters of their politi-



cal allies, M and S respectively. This has been a recurring phenomenon in Swedish politics for decades (Fredén & Oscarsson 2015).

The two parties that had been in government since the last election, S and MP, both performed better than expected. For MP this meant staying above the 4 percent threshold, and for S that the party once again received more than 30 percent of the vote, recovering somewhat from the worst result in its history in 2018.

Despite the fact that both government parties increased their vote share, the balance between the two blocs shifted to the right. The government ‘support parties’ V and C both suffered losses. On the other side, losses among M, L and KD were offset by the increase for SD.

Trends in voting

One of the clearest changes in the 2022 election was the change in geographical profile in the support for SD. Previously SD had always been strongest in the south, particularly in the Skåne region, while they fared less well in the traditionally left-leaning north. In 2022 the SD vote was spread more evenly across the country. The new trend can perhaps best be described as an urban-rural divide. The three largest cities were the only regions where SD did not make substantial gains, with Malmö being the sole constituency where the support for the party declined.

The second noteworthy trend is that there has never been a larger divide between the votes of men and women, at least not when it comes to which political bloc they support (Josefsson & Erikson 2022). In exit poll data, S was by far the largest party among women, with 34 percent of the female vote. Among men, S and SD were

virtually tied, with 26 and 25 percent respectively. The vote share for SD among women was only 16 percent. Looking at the two potential coalitions, 56 percent of women voted for parties that supported Andersson as Prime Minister, while 56 percent of men voted for parties that supported Ulf Kristersson (SVT 2022).

Government formation

The election can be viewed as a choice between two candidates for Prime Minister, the incumbent Andersson (S) and challenger Kristersson (M). Each candidate was supported by a four-party ‘team’. Both teams had similar composition, with the candidate’s party and a smaller party that had cooperated before, one party closer to the political center, and one party on the flank.

The outcome of election gave a small advantage to Kristersson. The tight result and the fact that many ballots cast by early voters or abroad are not counted on election night meant that Andersson did not concede until 14 September, and formally resigned the next day. The Speaker of the Parliament held talks with all parties, and tasked Kristersson with trying to form a government

The final result of 176 seats for parties on the right meant that Kristersson in theory had support from a majority of the 349 members of parliament. Despite this, the formation process was not straightforward. SD was largest party in the potential coalition, which normally would mean having largest share of portfolios and the premiership. However, none of the other parties on the right were willing to support SD’s Åkesson as Prime Minister. Furthermore, L would not support any government that included SD.

After a few weeks of negotiations, the four parties on

the right presented an agreement. Kristersson proposed a three-party minority government lead by M, with ministers from KD and L. SD were not included in the coalition but gained substantial policy influence, especially in the areas of migration, and law and order, in exchange for supporting the government. Furthermore, the party would be allowed to place staff within central government offices, in so called “co-ordination offices”. The four parties also committed to presenting and supporting a common budget bill.

The agreement sparked internal debate in L, which was cause of some concern given the slim majority. The close cooperation with SD is unpalatable to many in the Liberal party and several of the planned policy changes are not in line with party policy. In the end, all of L's Members of Parliament voted in favor of the new government, but a few have publicly stated that they will not vote for parts of the policy agreement, once they are up for votes in parliament.

European and international perspectives

Sweden's EU presidency in the first six months of 2023 is not likely to be affected by the change in government, since both blocs have similar attitudes towards the EU. Unusually for Swedish elections, M laid out a plan for the presidency in their election manifesto, but it was not subject of any real debate during the campaign (Blombäck, 2022)

Neither is the NATO-membership process likely to be affected. There is broad agreement in favor of membership among most parties, with the leaders of S and M making joint statements when the application process was begun in May. There is a tradition of consensus among the largest parties on important international issues, and both formal and informal channels for making sure that everyone is on board.

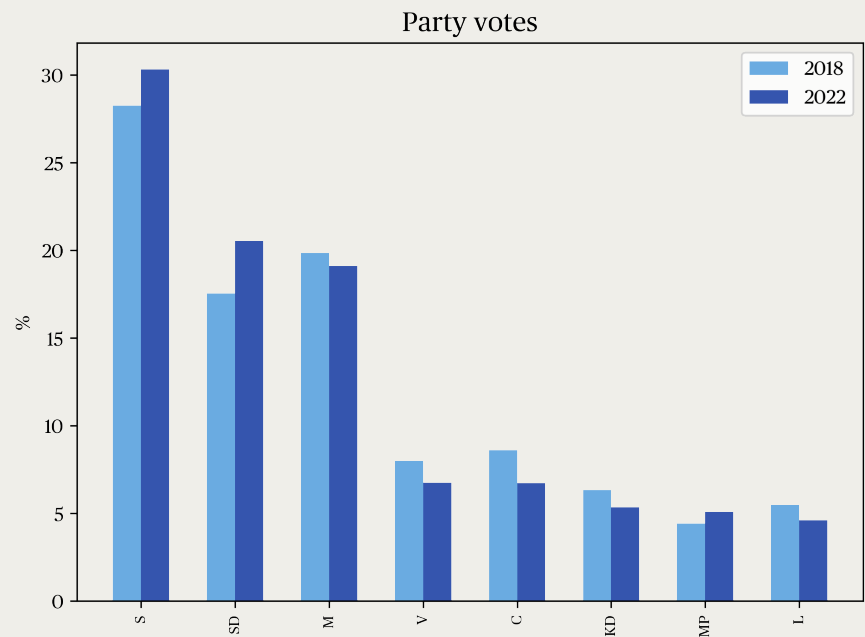
The government's close co-operation with SD has been the subject of some international criticism, given the party's roots in right wing extremist and neo-Nazi movements. L, in particular, has faced criticism from its European allies. ALDE has sent a fact-finding mission to Stockholm and L's leader is at the moment of writing not welcome at ALDE meetings. The sole Liberal MEP has been allowed to remain in Renew, at least for the time being. It should be noted that there are two Swedish parties in ALDE/Renew, but having made a different choice as

to which parties to cooperate with, C has not faced similar criticism.

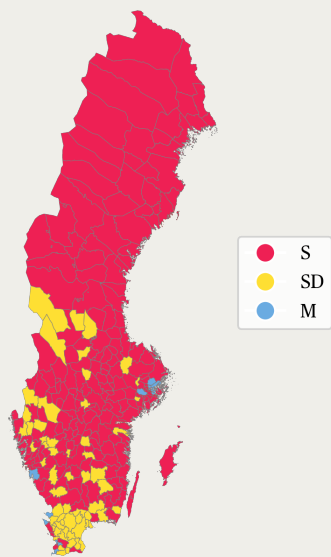
There is another possible source of controversy concerning international relations; until very recently the other Swedish parties did not consider SD trustworthy on international issues. The new agreement, however, gives the party the right to be informed before the rest of parliament on certain EU-related issues. It remains to be seen how closely the government and SD will cooperate on international issues, and on how SD will use its new influence.

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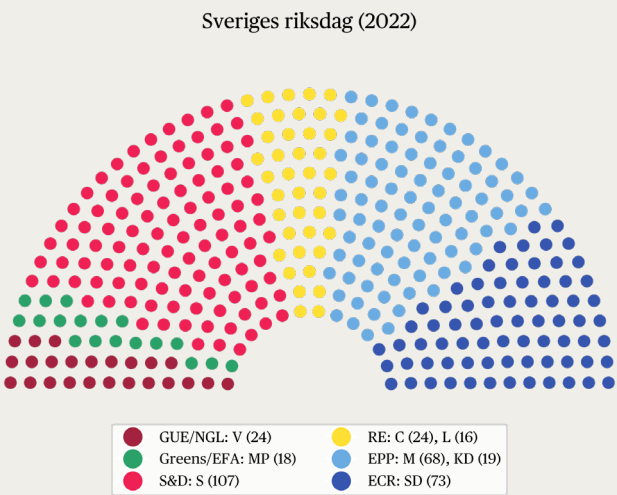
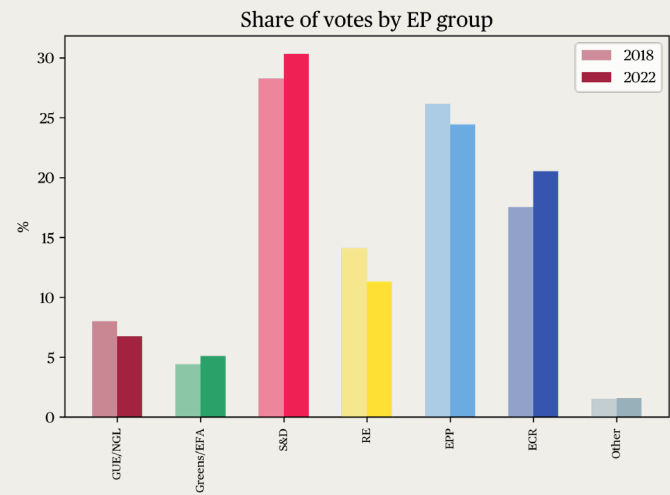
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Winning party (2022)



European indicators





Günther Pallaver • Eurac Research, Bozen

Regional election in Tyrol, 25 September 2022

Initial situation and context

The Tyrol, known throughout Europe since the 1800s thanks to its mountains and the emergence of alpinism, was still deeply Catholic and politically conservative in the decades following World War II. The saying “Loyalty is Tyrolean custom” was confirmed by the conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) receiving a high share of the vote election after election. In light of the results of the latest regional elections that were held on September 25, 2022, not much seems to remain of these golden times, when the ÖVP was assured to secure an absolute majority.

Apart from the municipal council and mayoral elections in Burgenland and Tyrol, the state parliament election was the first ballot to take place since Sebastian Kurz’s resignation as chancellor and federal chair of the ÖVP in October 2021. Due to the allegations of corruption that caused this resignation, the ÖVP slid into a genuine political crisis. In this context, the election in Tyrol was also seen as a kind of barometer of sentiment for the federal government and the two coalition partners, the ÖVP and the Greens.

Neither of the governing Tyrolean parties could count on a tailwind from Vienna, unlike the Freedom Party and, to a limited extent, the Social Democrats. Beyond the dimensions that are usually in the focus of election research, such as social change, the economic cycle, the volatility of the electorate, etc., genuinely regional dynamics have affected the electorate’s behavior.

In the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, as the contagious disease broke out in the well-known winter sports resort of Ischgl, Tyrolean regional leaders were

heavily criticized for their disastrous crisis management. Throughout Europe, Ischgl became synonymous with political incompetence and cynicism; those responsible at both the state and local levels were accused of putting sales figures before the health of their guests (cf. Schröder 2020).

The state government did not really regain its footing after this crisis management disaster. The incumbent governor, Günther Platter (2008-2022), who was also the chairman of the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), announced after a long wait that he wanted to run again, but shortly afterwards changed his mind and declared that he would not be available to run in the next election.

Willing to block the way for some of those seeking to succeed him, Platter surprisingly presented Anton Mattle (born in 1963), a regional councillor for economic affairs, as his successor. In view of the People’s Party’s poor poll results, no one within the ÖVP who opposed Mattle at the party conference, and he was elected the new party chairman with 98.9% of support (cf. Die Presse 2022).

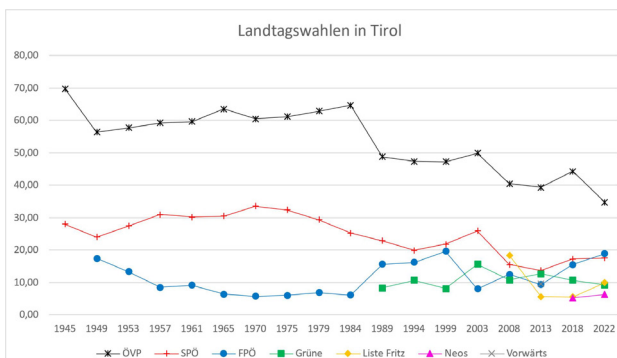
However, Platter retained his office as regional governor instead of making a clear change. Had he held the office of governor himself at the time of the election, Mattle would have had a much stronger standing in the election campaign (cf. Karlhofer 2022).

In June, the polls predicted a disastrous election result for the ÖVP, with a vote share frequently below 30%. In order to signal a new beginning with the future governor Mattle and to detach itself from the negative electoral dynamics of the federal ÖVP, the Tyrolean People’s Party ran under the list sign “MATTLE - Anton Mattle Tyrolean People’s Party.” Many election posters only carried the name “Mattle.” This was intended to signal Tyrolean independence and distance the regional party from the federal ÖVP (Willim 2022). Regional governor Wendelin Weingartner (1993-2002) had already used a similar strategy when he tried to avoid association with the federal ÖVP as much as possible, using the corporate design “Wir Tiroler” (We Tyroleans) to insulate himself from the negative trend of the federal party (cf. Gehler 2004: 250). But while Weingartner successfully employed this strategy, Mattle did not.

Spurred on by the good poll results, the FPÖ tried to challenge the ÖVP’s leadership, but did not succeed in this intent (Arora 2022a). At least since the abolition of proportional representation in Tyrol in 1999, the FPÖ falls under the *conventio ad excludendum*, by which other parties exclude the Freedom Party from any coalition. The SPÖ hoped for a strong boost from Vienna, but this did not materialize. The Greens, who had been in government with the ÖVP for almost ten years, first had to cope with the departure of their deputy regional governor, Ingrid

Jahr	ÖVP	SPÖ	FPÖ	Grüne	Liste Fritz	Neos	Vorwärts
1945	69,83	27,99					
1949	56,36	23,97	17,42				
1953	57,71	27,37	13,32				
1957	59,25	30,97	8,40				
1961	59,57	30,13	9,07				
1965	63,53	30,45	6,32				
1970	60,46	33,47	5,71				
1975	61,08	32,40	5,93				
1979	62,83	29,29	6,78				
1984	64,64	25,21	6,03				
1989	48,72	22,83	15,56	8,26			
1994	47,30	19,84	16,14	10,68			
1999	47,22	21,77	19,61	8,03			
2003	49,89	25,85	7,97	15,59			
2008	40,50	15,46	12,41	10,73	18,35		
2013	39,35	13,72	9,34	12,59	5,61		9,54
2018	44,26	17,25	15,53	10,67	5,46	5,21	
2022	34,71	17,48	18,84	9,20	9,90	6,29	

a • Results of regional elections in Tyrol 1945-2022 (in percent of valid votes)



b • Voter trends of the parties in state elections from 1945 - 2022 (data in percent).
Source: Wiener Zeitung and own research

Felipe, and were unable to free themselves from their longstanding tandem with the ÖVP. The Greens were often tied together politically with the ÖVP when a list of failures was to be drawn up: it was always the Greens who had adapted to ÖVP politics, not the other way around. The Neos and Liste Fritz, a 2008 split from the ÖVP, were considered outsiders.

The confidence crisis

Besides other factors, the state election was characterized by a strong loss of trust in politics. Trust is a central factor for any political system and one of the most important “synthetic forces” (Simmel 1992: 393) within a society, which builds on a positive correlation between the performance of a democratic system and the level of social capital present in a society. Trust forms an important prerequisite for cooperation, which in turn is a prerequisite for building a society that has a high level of attention for the common good.

The trust in Tyrolean regional politics, which was quite high in the past, seems to be eroding from one regional election to the next.

In response to the question: “Do you agree with the following statements very much, quite a bit, a little or not at all? I trust that politics in Tyrol will find good solutions to the challenges ahead,” 51% of eligible voters said they had a great deal or quite a bit of trust in politics. The other half of society, on the other hand, no longer had any

trust. Compared to the 2018 state elections, trust in the problem-solving competence of politics fell by 20% from 73% to 51%. ÖVP voters still have the greatest trust with 85%, followed by the Greens (50.0%) and the SPÖ (49%). The lowest percentages were recorded by Liste Fritz and the FPÖ, each with 33%. 55% of non-voters have no confidence in politics.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that almost half of those eligible to vote (47%) view the evolution of the political situation since the last regional elections negatively, while only 15% see a positive development (35% none). Four years ago, on the other hand, 32% of eligible voters were positive, and only 17% negative. Concerns about the division of society plague almost 80%; four years ago, the figure was significantly lower at 66%.

This negative mood among the population is also expressed in other ways. For example, 89% of eligible voters stated that life in Tyrol is becoming increasingly difficult to afford. In 2018, this share was 73% (Cf. Sora/ISA 2022: 6-8).

Despite an increasing trend towards personalization of politics, only 37% would have voted for the top candidate of the ÖVP, Anton Mattle, in a direct election of the state governor, followed by Markus Abzwerger of the FPÖ with 15% and Georg Dornauer of the SPÖ with 14%.

Related to this are also the main reasons for voting for a party. Among ÖVP voters, 18% voted for the party because of its top candidate. In the case of Liste Fritz, the figure was ten percent, while the FPÖ (6%) and the SPÖ (only 4%) could have run for election without a top candidate.

It is striking that, despite the erosion of its electorate, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) can still count on 28% of core voters, while the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) still has 17% and the Freedom Party (FPÖ) only 5%; the other parties can no longer draw on this group of voters.

Due to the early re-election in September 2022, the election campaign was very short and therefore rather unspectacular. As far as policy issues are concerned, the election campaign primarily discussed those that also dominated the political agenda at the federal level. The topics of inflation and rising prices were discussed by 54% of voters during the pre-election campaign. This was followed by affordable housing and securing energy supplies (37% in each case). Security and war as well as environment and climatic protection occupied with it the third place in the ranking with 26% each, followed by health care. The issue of traffic, which has been hotly debated in the Tyrol for years – due, in particular, to the flows of heavy goods that transit through the Tyrol –, was discussed by 23%. Topics that are usually ridden by

	Group size	Women	Men	Share of women
ÖVP	14 (17)	5 (7)	9 (10)	35,7 (41,2)
SPÖ	8 (6)	3	4 (3)	42,8 (50,0)
FPÖ	7 (5)	2 (1)	5 (4)	28,6 (20,0)
Liste Fritz	3 (2)	1 (1)	2 (1)	33,3 (50,0)
Grüne	3 (4)	2 (1)	1 (3)	66,7 (25,5)
Neos	2 (2)	1 (0)	1 (2)	50,0 (0,0)

c • Proportion of women in the Tyrolean state parliament by part (In parentheses, results of the 2018 state election)

	Total	Women	Men
Number of government members	8 (8)	3 (4)	5 (4)
Share of female ministers in %		37,5 (50,0)	62,5 (50,0)

d • Proportion of women in state governments (in parentheses, comparison with the 2018-2022 legislative period)

right-wing populist parties, especially immigration and integration, came in at 19%, followed by Covid (18%), jobs and working conditions (18%), and, far behind, education and schools at 16%.

The electoral result

With a turnout of 65.0% (2018: 60.0%), the outcome of the ballot was historical in at least two respects. For the first time in its history, the Tyrolean ÖVP fell below 35%. Whereas the party under Governor Günther Platter had scored 44.2% on the wake of Chancellor Sebastian Kurz's refoundation of a "turquoise" ÖVP in 2018, the ÖVP fell back to 34.7% in September. Given the ÖVP's disastrous scores in the polls before the election, its lead candidate Mattle presented himself as the savior of his party and thus as the election winner, despite the loss of almost ten percent of the vote. The second novelty concerns the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), which with 18.8% and a plus of 3.3% has become the second largest party in Tyrol. The gap between the largest and second-largest party had never been so small in the past: while it was still 27.1% after the 2018 elections (ÖVP: 44.3%; SPÖ: 17.2%), the gap was halved to 15.9% in the 2022 elections (ÖVP: 34.7%; FPÖ: 18.8%).

In Figure a, which shows the results of the state elections since 1945, the voter trend can be seen and it can be seen when the traditional two-and-a-half party system opened up and gradually developed into a multiparty system.

In 2003, the ÖVP still had a share of about 50% of the vote and 20 seats (out of 36 state parliament seats); in 2022, it won only 34.7% and 14 seats.

The ÖVP loses three seats in the 2022 state elections, while the FPÖ increases its share from 5 to 7, the SPÖ gains one seat from 6, while the Liste Fritz gains one seat and now has three. The Greens, still represented with 4 seats in the last state parliament, lose one. The

Neos keep their two seats.

Election winners from the perspective of seat gains are thus the FPÖ, the SPÖ, the Liste Fritz. The ÖVP and the Greens are on the losing side. The Neos are stagnating.

The performance of female candidates deserves a specific attention. There are 14 women in the Tyrolean state parliament, which is one more than in the 2018 state elections, representing 38.9% (2018: 36.1%) compared to 61.1% men (2018: 63.9%).

There are differences between the parties in terms of gender balance. The Greens have the highest proportion of elected women with 66.7%, which is a strong improvement compared to 2018 (25.5%). They are followed by the Neos with 50.0%, who were previously represented in the state parliament by two men. The SPÖ is close behind with 42.8%, up from 50% in 2018. The ÖVP is at 35.7% and loses a share of 5.5%, especially since it had 41.2% of women in parliament in 2018. Liste Fritz comes in at 33.3% (2018: 50%), and the FPÖ is in last place with 28.6% (2018: 20%).

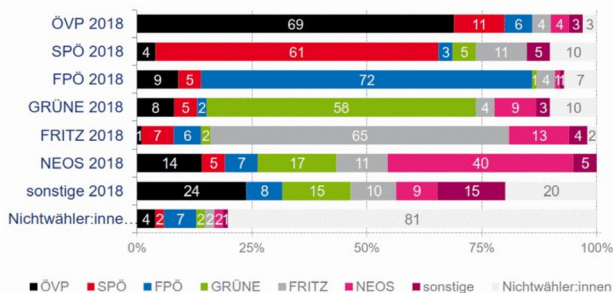
Voter flows

Compared to the 2018 state elections, the ÖVP lost to all other electoral lists, except the Greens, with whom it formed a coalition for almost ten years, according to the Sora Voter Flow Analysis. The Mattle list was able to retain 69% of its 2018 voters. However, the People's Party lost 16,000 votes to the SPÖ, 9,000 to the Freedom Party, 6,000 to the FRITZ list and 5,000 to the NEOS. The ÖVP was able to compensate for these losses by mobilizing non-voters (8,000). However, 4,000 ÖVP voters from 2018 did not go to the polls this time.

The SPÖ was able to win back 61% of its 2018 voters. The Social Democrats lost the most to Liste Fritz (6,000 votes) and to the Greens (3,000). These losses were more than offset by gains from the ÖVP (16,00 votes).

Of all electoral lists, the FPÖ succeeded most clearly in retaining its voters from 2018 with 72%. The exchange of voters between the ÖVP and the FPÖ is in favor of the Freedom Party. Non-voters proportionally supported the FPÖ the most (15,000). The Greens were able to retain only 58% of their 2018 voters. They lost 3,000 votes each to ÖVP and Neos, and something came back from former non-voters.

Liste Fritz was able to win over 65% of its 2018 voters again. 6,000 votes each came from the ÖVP and the SPÖ, but the list lost 2,000 votes to the Neos. The Neos managed to retain 40% of their voters from 2018. The ÖVP gained 5,000 new votes, but Neos votes also went to the ÖVP, albeit to a lesser extent. The List Austria - People's Freedom Fundamental Rights (MFG), a movement that is



e • Voter flows between the 2018 and 2022 state elections

critical of vaccination or even opposed to it, did not make it into the state parliament. Their striking success in

the 2002 state elections in Upper Austria (6.2% and three seats) did not repeat itself, likely due to the flattening of the pandemic in Tyrol (Tiroler Tageszeitung 2021). (All data from SORA 2022).

The new state government and a look into the future

The new provincial government of the ÖVP and SPÖ, controlling 21 of 36 seats in the state legislature, replaces the previous ÖVP-Green government after two legislative periods. The eight government offices are shared between five representatives of the ÖVP and three of the SPÖ. Compared to the previous legislative period, there is no parity among the sexes in the government. Namely, five men face three women, two being from the ÖVP (out of five), and one from the SPÖ (out of three).

The Tyrolean regional government was considered exemplary in terms of gender balanced under Governor Platter, who presided over two legislative periods marked by gender parity in government. The proportion of women fell from 50.0% to 37.5% in 2022.

Although the balance of power has changed, the distribution of portfolios has remained roughly the same. Despite its electoral defeat, the ÖVP retained all key portfolios, such as finance, regional corporations and regional planning. The SPÖ manages more intangible resources such as integration and social benefits (cf. Tiroler Tageszeitung 2022). Despite a declining consensus at the state level, the ÖVP still remains the dominant political force in Tyrol, due not only to the distribution of portfolios, but also to the capillary influence of professional associations such as the Farmers' and Business Associations. The dominance at the municipal level, where the ÖVP is still the "mayor's party," should not be underestimated despite some electoral erosion. Significant organizations that structure the political system remain within the ÖVP's sphere of influence.

Governor Toni Mattle's early months as party chairman were not uncontroversial. In particular, the economic sectors of the party had strong reservations about the

former mayor of Galtür, who first joined the government while being a regional councilor in 2021. However, the almost 100% consensus in his election as chairman of the People's Party gave Mattle strong backing. His quick and skillful formation of a government with the SPÖ has, for the time being, broken the dynamics of his last critics within the party. Above all, the fact that Mattle entered into a government agreement with the SPÖ and no longer with the Greens (an ÖVP-Green government would have been without a parliamentary majority) has reassured tourism experts, who did not always agree with the ecological ideas of the Greens.

An uncooperative behavior of the SPÖ is not to be expected. After almost ten years in opposition, the Social Democrats have achieved one of their election goals and are once again the governing party, although they do not want to be subordinated to the crisis-ridden People's Party (Arora 2022b). The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), however, will play the political first fiddle as it always has, while the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) will provide for the background music.

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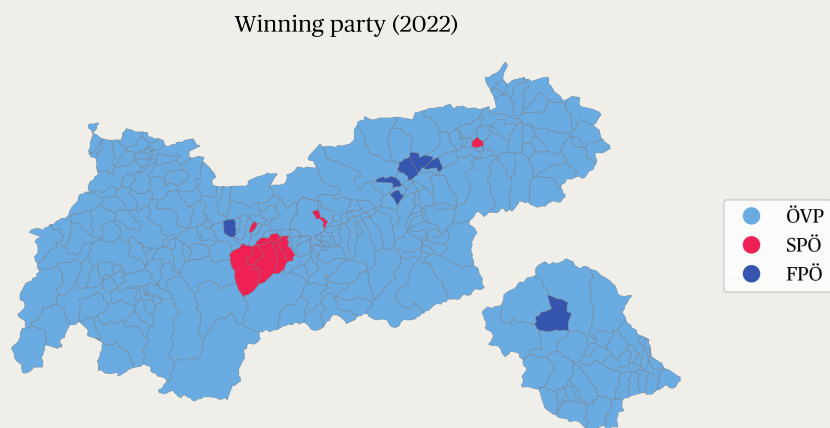
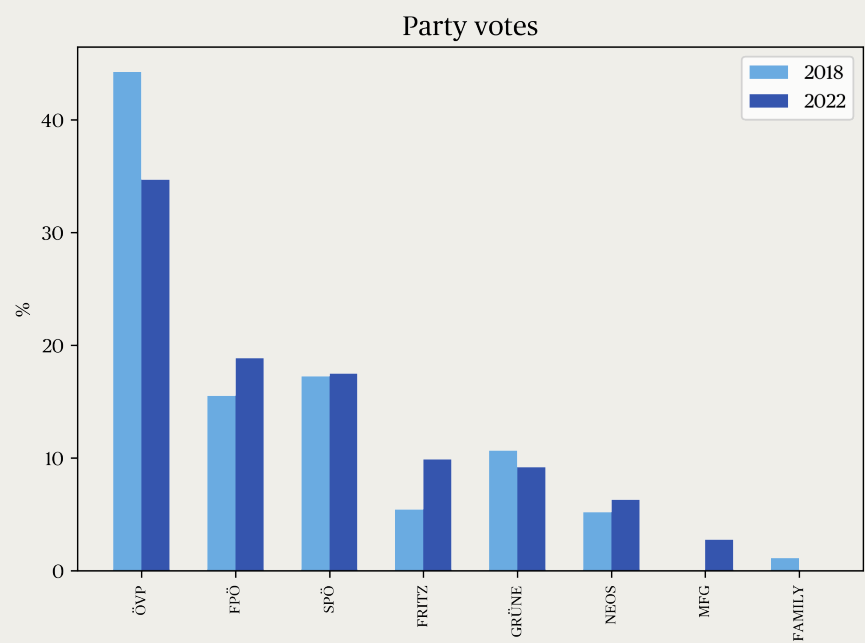
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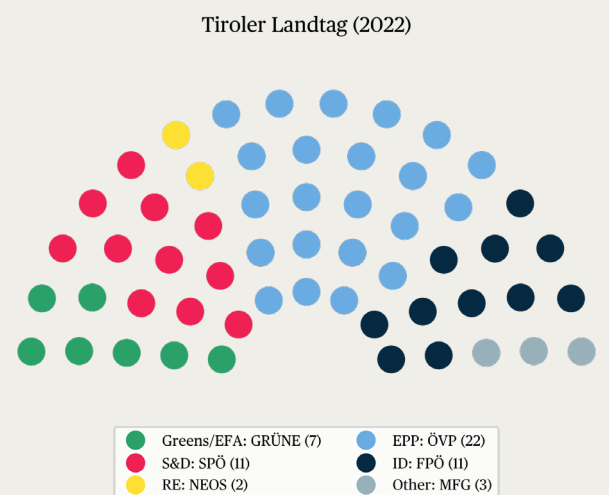
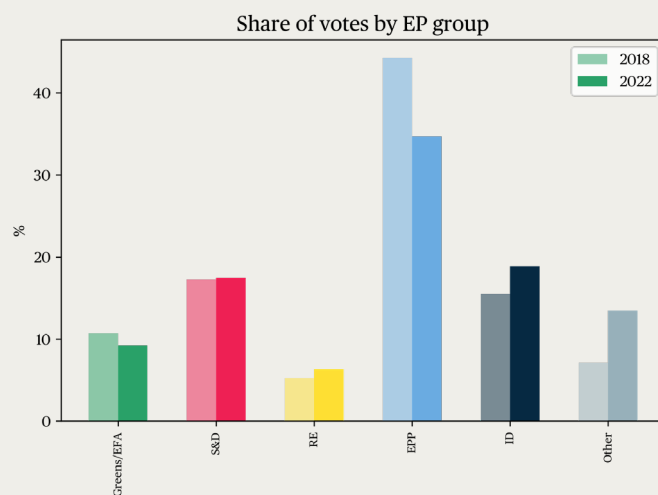
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European indicators





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Parliamentary election in Italy, 25 September 2022

Introduction

On the 25th of September 2022, a snap election took place in Italy. In a rushed political campaign, mainly revolving around coalition (dis)agreements, Italians were called to renew both Chambers of Parliament. Despite the technicalities of the electoral system and the substantial reduction in the number of MPs added some uncertainty to the final election results, there was little surprise as to who would the winner be. As expected, the right-wing coalition obtained a majority of seats in both Chambers. Still, they fell short of the two-thirds majority that would allow them to change the Constitution without the need for a referendum. With an unprecedented speed, the new government headed by Giorgia Meloni was sworn in less than one month after the election. Eventually she became the first woman Prime Minister of the country and her government is possibly the most right-wing in Italian republican history. Nevertheless, in the choice of Ministers she has highlighted continuity with previous right-wing Berlusconi governments and her pleaded Atlanticism reassured international observers.

This article will start by providing a general background of the political developments during the last legislature, that led to the dissolution of Parliament and to early election. It will then proceed to highlight the specifics of the electoral campaign and describe the final results, to conclude with government formation and policy implications thereof.

Background

The parliamentary election held in Italy in March 2018 was followed by the formation of what was regarded by

most observers as the “first ‘all-populist’ government in post-war Western Europe” (Newell 2019: 205). The two parties forming the government were the largest party winning the 2018 election with 34% of the vote – the Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*, M5S) led by Luigi Di Maio – and Matteo Salvini’s Lega (League, formerly the Northern League), that had emerged as the main political force within the centre-right electoral coalition (with 17% of the votes). Giuseppe Conte, a law professor politically unknown but ideologically close to the M5S, was appointed as Prime Minister. The Conte I government, however, only lasted 14 months. Following the European Parliament (EP) elections held on 26 May 2019, the League became the largest party in Italy and a few months later its leader, Matteo Salvini, hoping for snap election and the possibility to become Prime Minister, triggered a government crisis that led to Conte’s resignation. However, instead of calling for a new election, the President Sergio Mattarella gave Conte a mandate to attempt the formation of an inter-electoral government consisting of the M5S, the centre-left *Partito Democratico* (Democratic Party, PD) and the left-wing *Liberi e Uguali* (Free and Equal, LeU) party (Giannetti et al. 2020).

The government Conte II lasted until former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi withdrew his party’s support in early 2021. Upon the resignation of Giuseppe Conte, the mandate was conferred on to Mario Draghi, former President of the Bank of Italy and later of the European Central Bank (ECB). Attracted by plans on how to spend around 200 billion euros from the European Union Recovery fund,¹ the Draghi government received the confirmatory votes of confidence from all the parties represented in parliament except Giorgia Meloni’s *Fratelli d’Italia* (Brothers of Italy, FdI) and a fringe element of the M5S. The Draghi government would fall into the ‘technocratic-led partisan government’ category, because it included eight technocratic and fifteen partisan ministers (Garzia and Karremans 2021). Investors and beyond hoped that the man widely credited with saving the euro during the 2012 sovereign debt crisis could spearhead reforms to boost growth in a country that has long underperformed its European peers, weighing down the whole Eurozone. However, just a little over than a year later, the Draghi government suffered an irreversible political crisis, triggered initially by the M5S but then sharpened by tense relationships between the members of a patchy and frictious government coalition. After the fall of the government, which led to a parliamentary impasse, President Sergio Mattarella dissolved the parliament on 21st July, and called for new elections.

The campaign

1. Italy is one of the main recipients of the funds allocated by the Recovery and Resilience Facility of the European Union, aimed at supporting member states most hit by the coronavirus pandemic. The European Commission has approved Italy’s recovery and resilience plan in July 2021, making 191.5€ billion (corresponding to 10% of the total Fund) available for the country. Meloni has, however, repeatedly claimed that she wants to re-negotiate the agreement.

The election campaign was characterized by three main aspects. To begin with, it was the first one in Italy since World War II taking place during the summer. August, arguably the hottest month of the year in Italy, is usually spent in vacation by most Italians with little thought given to politics. Knowing this, political parties only started to really campaign for the election at the beginning of September, making it arguably one of the shortest and less eventful election campaign in Italy's republican history. Moreover, the timeframe was relatively tight, with just over two months to conduct the political campaign and only one month to finalize coalition choices (and collect signatures to allow new parties to contest the election), since the full lists had to be submitted by end August. The consequence of this was also a relatively limited grassroots mobilization but rather a cementation of the use of digital tools and platforms by political leaders, especially on the right wing of the electoral spectrum.

The second major aspect was the relatively little fragmentation of the otherwise usually very fragmented Italian political system. This was primarily due to the effect of the electoral law which would penalise small parties standing alone. The electoral law commonly known as *Rosatellum* from the name of its author² takes the form of a mixed electoral system in which for both chambers 37% of the seats are allocated by a single-round majority system in as many uninominal constituencies and 61% of the seats are distributed proportionally among coalitions and individual (closed) lists that have passed the required national bar thresholds.³ Moreover, no split vote is allowed: voters cannot choose a candidate for the single-member constituency that is not associated with the preferred proportional list. The electoral law requires each list to present its own program and declare its own political leader as well as, if necessary, the affiliation with one or more lists in order to create coalitions: the existence of a coalition, which is unique at the national level, binds the coalesced lists to present only one candidate in each uninominal constituency. The partisan affiliation of the candidates in uninominal constituencies and more broadly the formation of pre-electoral coalitions has dominated the election campaign.

While on the right, the formation of the coalition was rather straightforward with the Brothers of Italy (Fdi) of Giorgia Meloni, the League of Matteo Salvini and *Forza Italia* of Silvio Berlusconi coalescing together, on the left the road was bumpier. First there were speculations of the Democratic Party (PD) coalescing with the M5S but they did not last long due to the tense relationship between

the leader of the PD Enrico Letta and the leader of the M5S Giuseppe Conte. Rather, Letta signalled his intention to form a coalition with Carlo Calenda and its moderate liberal party *Azione* (Action) that was polling around 4% at that time. However, leadership incompatibilities as well as Calenda's openness to Matteo Renzi's party *Italia Viva* made the coalition between the three centre-left forces impossible. Eventually, the PD ran in a coalition with three smaller parties on the left, all polling around 1-2% (More Europe, +E, Civic Commitment, IC, and the Green and Left Alliance, AVS) while Calenda and Renzi ran together within a political force known as *Terzo Polo* or Third Pole.

The third major aspect of the election campaign was the relatively low importance of policy-related topics compared to the salience that media gave to the pre-electoral coalition formation. Giorgia Meloni, widely regarded as the likely winner of the election, was able to set the campaign agenda by politicizing her winning topics such as poverty, low wages and law and order – specifically linked to illegal immigration. Other parties, and the PD in particular, tried with no success to shift the focus on issues that arguably would weaken Meloni, such as European integration and abortion. In fact, while these two topics were not high on the agenda of many Italians, her positions were clearly at odds with those held by the majority of the population, which is widely seen as much more progressive on these issues compared to the female leader. Yet, arguably, she was able to quickly shift positions on these topics by diffusing her positions and lowering attention. The polls were remarkably stable during the short election campaign and made it clear that Fdi was going to win the election with a strong overall parliamentary majority for the right-wing coalition. From this viewpoint, the campaign was primarily fought on post-electoral scenarios.

The results

Voter turnout was record-low (63.8%) with certain areas in the South of the country having turnout as low as 30%. This is quite remarkable because Italy has been recording a relatively high election turnout compared to most advanced countries – but this was perhaps not surprising considering the relatively short and uneventful election campaign, as discussed above. Still, it was the largest change in turnout in Republican Italy, with a drop of 9 percentage points compared to the 2018 election (Garzia 2022). The clear and undisputed winner of the election was Meloni's party Fdi with 26% of the vote and a swing of 21.6 percentage points compared to the previous general election of 2018 (see "the data" below). All other parties were clearly losers of the election, since they received less votes than polls had predicted and far less than they had received in 2018. However, no leader admitted defeat except for the leader of the Democratic Party, Enrico Letta, which polled 19.1% of the vote – almost the same as in

2. Ettore Rosato, from PD, drafted the law in 2017.

3. For single lists, the electoral threshold is 3% of votes obtained at the national level or 20% of the votes obtained at the regional level valid only in the Senate. For coalitions, the electoral threshold is 10 percent of the votes obtained at the national level, provided they include at least one list that has passed one of the other thresholds. The remaining 2% of the seats are allocated based on the votes of Italians living abroad.

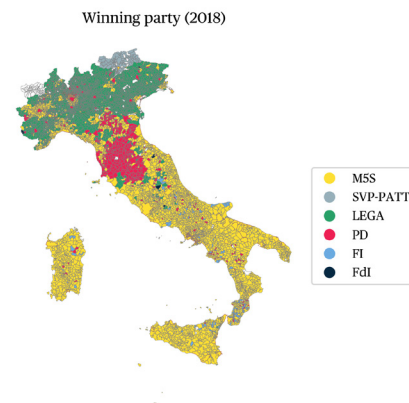
2018. The League of Matteo Salvini won 8.8% of the vote, more than 8.5 percentage point less than in 2018; the M5S obtained 15.4% of votes, about 17.3 percentage points less than in 2018 and Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* received 8.1% of the votes, down about 5.9 percentage points compared to 2018. The Third Pole (*Azione-Italia Viva*) won 7.8% of the votes, which was a relatively good result for a new political formation.

As it was the case in 2018, the election results again pointed out Italy as being divided between the North and the South, but with a clear differentiation: while the M5S was again the clear winner in the South of the country, in 2022 it won far less constituencies than in 2018 with the FdI being the clear winner almost everywhere else (see maps below; cf. Garzia 2022). The PD remained the largest party only in some of its strongholds in the so called "red-belt" in the centre of Italy. It was clear that all parties in government suffered loss and were punished by voters. In fact, and although post-election surveys are not available yet, looking at the aggregate level it is plausible that FdI attracted voters not only from the radical right, but from the entire ideological spectrum. As concerns the distribution of seats, it is interesting to note from the last figure that while elections were fought by three main coalitions, the resulting parliament is rather fragmented due to the internal fragmentation of those same coalitions. One has to notice that the referendum held in Italy in September 2020 had seen the significant reduction of the number of deputies in the lower chamber (from 630 to 400) and the upper chamber (from 315 to 200). This has made it more difficult for parties to anticipate the distortive effects of the electoral system, especially when drafting the electoral lists.

Conclusions

Given the formation of the pre-electoral coalition and the majority of seats enjoyed by the centre-right coalition, government formation was among the quickest in Italian recent electoral history. On October 21st, Giorgia Meloni has been named Italy's first female prime minister at the head of a right-wing government. In addition, given the much stronger support received by FdI compared to its coalition partners (League and FI), the expected new Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was able to push through many of her party's desires in terms of cabinet positions. FdI got 9 ministries and 4 vice-ministries, while the League and FI 5 each and 5 to independents. Symbolically, Matteo Salvini (League) and Antonio Tajani (FI) were appointed as Vice-presidents of the Council of Ministers. While several key ministries such as the Interior went to non-party members, FdI retains key ministries such as Defence, Justice and EU affairs. Overall, several Ministers of Meloni's cabinet are names long known in Italian politics, with experience in previous Berlusconi governments –

a choice that highlights continuity within the right-wing coalition and is probably aimed to reassuring international observers that despite her post-fascist background she will not enact radical policies.



a • Winning parties by municipality in 2018

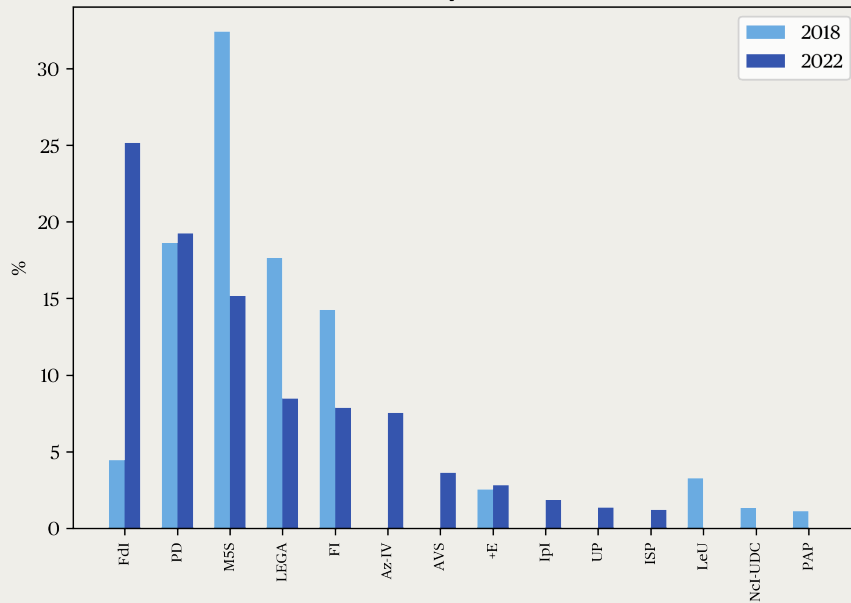
Looking specifically at some policy proposals, however, the practical impact of the new government on civil, political and social rights (in brief, some aspects of the quality of Italian democracy) might be large. Meloni supports a constitutional reform that, allowing for the direct election of the President of the Republic, might transform Italy from a parliamentary to a presidential republic. As concerns the economy, the government has proposed another pension reform ("quota 41"), a flat tax and a raise in the ceiling on the use of cash – provisions that could further increase public debt and encourage tax evasion. On cultural and identitarian issues, the agenda mainly revolves around restricting immigration (preventing NGO ships from disembarking migrants in Italian harbours) and safeguarding traditional family values (therefore strongly opposing LGBTQ+ communities and limiting reproductive rights). On the international scene, conversely, Meloni highlighted Atlanticist positions and toned down her past Euroscepticism, trying to appear as a legitimate and rather moderate counterpart. All in all, however, the impact of the new government will depend on the stability of the coalition itself, which at present relies on a delicate balance of power.

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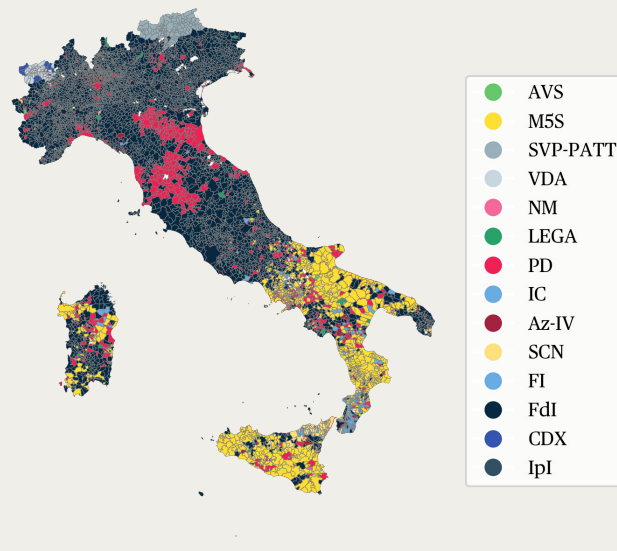
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PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN ITALY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2022. DATA

Party votes

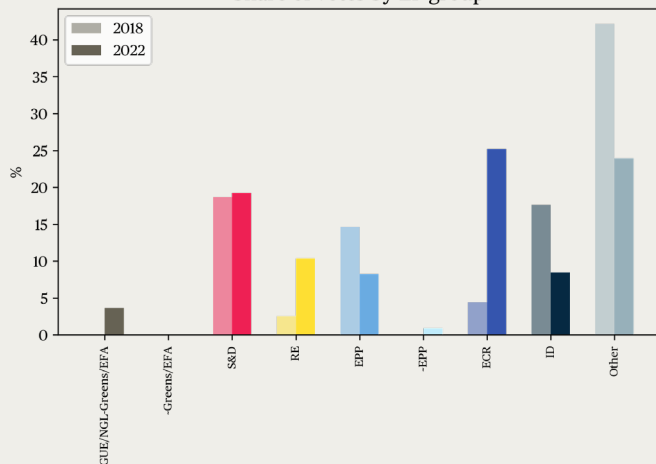


Winning party (2022)

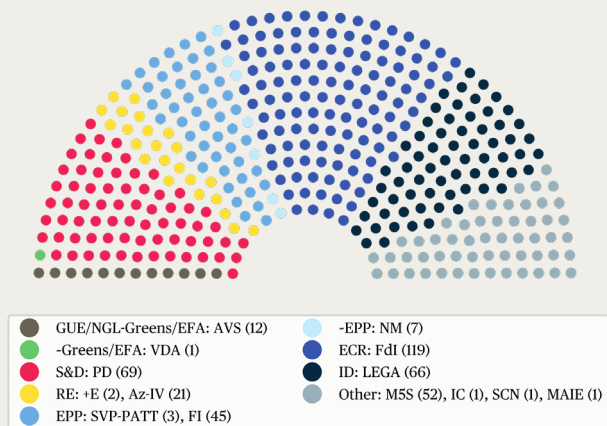


European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



Camera dei Deputati (2022)





Vincenzo Emanuele • LUISS, Rome

Regional election in Sicily, 25 September 2022

Introduction

The center-right won the September 25 Sicilian regional election, its second victory in a row following its win in the 2017 ballot. Renato Schifani, former president of the Senate, is the new regional president and succeeds outgoing president Nello Musumeci, who did not run again due to internal conflicts within the center-right coalition. The vote was in many ways a confirmation of the historical determinants of Sicilian politics. Indeed, Sicily has always expressed a moderate and conservative vote (Nuvoli 1989; Raniolo 2010). Christian Democracy has dominated the Island's politics for 45 years; following the mani pulite investigations in the 1990s, Sicily became the Eden of Berlusconiism. During the so-called 'Second Republic,' that is, since 1994, the center-right has always won regional elections, with the only exception of 2012. In that one case, the defeat was mainly caused by internal divisions within the conservative camp: the center-right was in fact divided between Musumeci (who would later win in 2017) and Micciché (the historic regional leader of Forza Italia); the center-left, strengthened by the entry in the coalition of the Union of the Center (UDC), a post-democratic party coming from the center-right, took advantage of these divisions to conquer Palazzo d'Orleans for the first time under Rosario Crocetta's leadership. This victory, however, was no sign of a sudden shift to the left of the Sicilian electorate. Crocetta collected 30.5 percent of the valid votes, corresponding to just 13.3 percent of the electoral body. In 2017, the center-right ran united again, from the UDC to Fratelli d'Italia (FDI), and the challenge between the two traditional poles of Italian politics ended with a clear victory for the center-right. In the September 25 elections, this scenario was repeated. The Italian par-

liamentary elections held on the same day saw the victory of the center-right led by FDI leader Giorgia Meloni, only consolidating the coalition's overwhelming victory in the Island. Schifani's victory was clear-cut, albeit in the context of a voter turnout of less than half the eligible voters, despite the potential for mobilization resulting from the simultaneous presence of the general elections. The Forza Italia candidate came in well ahead of his rivals, Caterina Chinnici of the center-left and Nunzio di Paola of the Five Star Movement (M5S). Both, moreover, were clearly outperformed by an outsider candidate, former Messina Mayor Cateno De Luca, who emerged as the main newcomer in these elections, coming in second with 24 percent of the vote.

This paper is structured as follows: in the next section, we will analyze the regional electoral environment on the eve of the vote, briefly describing the characteristics of the regional electoral law and the configuration of the political supply side; the next section is devoted to the analysis of the vote, focusing on three aspects: electoral participation, voting in the majoritarian competition, i.e., voting for presidential candidates, and proportional competition, i.e., voting for party lists.

The context: election law and configuration of the political supply side

The regional election is governed by Regional Law No. 7/2005. The voter has two votes, one for a presidential candidate and one for a list of candidates to be elected to the Regional Assembly (ARS). The competition for president is a classic plurality or first-past-the-post system: there is a single round of voting, and the candidate who gets a relative majority of votes is elected president. In the competition for the regional parliament, on the other hand, a mixed system applies. Of the 70 deputies to be elected to the ARS, 62 are elected by a proportional system on the basis of lists competing in the nine provincial constituencies.¹ Seats are distributed to lists that have exceeded 5 percent at the regional level, using the Hare quotient method with highest remainders (Emanuele 2013). Voters vote for a list and can cast a preference vote for a candidate from that list. In addition, 'disjunctive voting' is possible, that is, voters can choose a presidential candidate and a list not supporting that presidential candidate. Of the remaining eight seats, two go to the newly elected president and the second-place presidential candidate, respectively. The remaining six seats constitute the so-called 'list' of the President, i.e., an electoral bonus that, under certain conditions,² is awarded to the winning coalition to facilitate the emergence of a parlia-

1. The distribution is as follows: Palermo 16 seats, Catania 13, Messina 8, Agrigento 6, Syracuse and Trapani 5, Ragusa 4, Caltanissetta 3 and Enna 2.

2. The bonus is not awarded if the coalition of the president-elect won at least 42 seats in the proportional contest (60 percent of the ARS seats). In this case, the six seats are redistributed among minority lists that have exceeded the 5 percent threshold.

Candidate for president	Provincial lists
Renato Schifani	Fratelli d'Italia
	Forza Italia
	Prima l'Italia - Salvini Premier
	Popolari e Autonomisti
	Democrazia Cristiana
Cateno De Luca	De Luca sindaco di Sicilia - Sud chiama Nord
	Sicilia Vera
	Orgoglio Siculo con Cateno
	Terra d'Amuri
	Giovani Siciliani
	Autonomia Siciliana
	Impresa Sicilia
	Lavoro in Sicilia
	Basta Mafie
Caterina Chinnici	Partito Democratico
	Cento passi per la Sicilia
Nunzio Di Paola	Movimento Cinque Stelle
Gaetano Armao	Azione - Italia Viva - Calenda
Eliana Esposito	Siciliani liberi

a • Electoral supply side: candidates for president and lists, Sicily 2022

Note: Only two lists supporting Cateno De Luca run in all provincial constituencies, De Luca Mayor of Sicily-Sud chiama Nord and Sicilia Vera. Orgoglio Siculo con Cateno is not present in Palermo, while all other lists are present only in the constituencies of Messina and Enna (the Autonomia Siciliana list is also present in Ragusa).

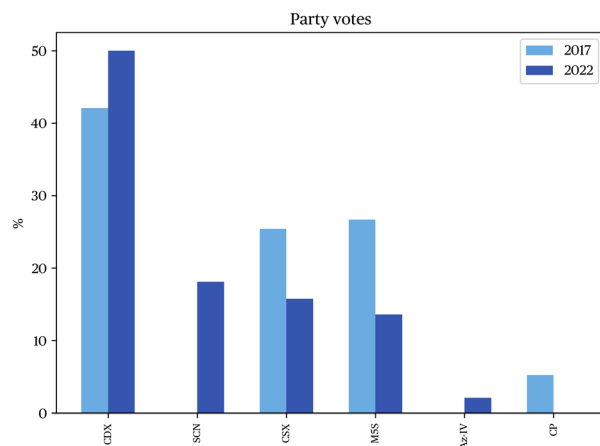
mentary majority. The Sicilian electoral law is ultimately a nonmajority-assuring law (Emanuele 2013: 40), that is, it does not guarantee a majority of seats to the winning coalitions. There have been five regional elections since the introduction of this system. In one case, in 2012, the winning president (Crocetta) did not obtain an absolute majority, while in another case, in 2017, that majority was of only one seat, that of the president himself (Emanuele & Riggio 2018a: 255). These characteristics produce clear incentives towards bipolarization and the formation of broad coalitions (to obtain a majority through the bonus seats), while pushing parties to contain intra-coalition fragmentation by reducing the number of competing lists (to make sure that they exceed the 5 percent threshold at the regional level).

As in 2017, the center-right (Cerruto & La Bella 2018: 41) seems to have fully understood the characteristics of the electoral system, and fields a united and unfragmented coalition to maximize institutional incentives. The coalition led by Renato Schifani is composed of five lists (see Figure a). The three political forces that make up the coalition at the national level (FDI, Forza Italia and the League, here called *Prima l'Italia – Salvini Premier*) are joined by two regional lists representing, respectively, the two former Presidents of the Region, Raffaele Lombardo (the *Popolari e Autonomisti* list) and Salvatore Cuffaro (the *Democrazia Cristiana* list). This coalitional arrangement, which enabled the center-right to win the Palermo municipal elections by a large margin in June 2022, is being implemented again at the regional level.

The center-left, on the other hand, presents only two lists (in 2017 there were four) in support of Caterina Chinnici (a magistrate and daughter of Judge Rocco Chinnici, who was killed by the Mafia in 1983): that of the Democratic Party (PD) and *Cento Passi per la Sicilia*, the list of Claudio Fava, a former radical leftist candidate in 2017 and at the time able to pass the 5 percent bar on his own. Even before the vote, the competition between the two coalitions appears decidedly unbalanced in favor of the center-right, which, as noted above, has never lost a regional election when it has stood united on the ballot. In addition, the center-left was unable to secure the support of either the so-called ‘Third Pole,’ that is, the *Azione* and *Italia Viva* list, or the M5S, which in 2017, while running alone under Giancarlo Cancelleri’s leadership, had come close to a resounding success, achieving 34.7 percent and almost overtaking the center-left candidate. The Third Pole decided to run alone behind the candidacy of the former budget councillor of the Musumeci government, Gaetano Armao, while the M5S, after participating in the center-left primaries that had decreed Chinnici’s victory, pulled out of the coalitional agreement and preferred to run on its own with the candidacy of the Five-Star MP Nunzio Di Paola.

Beyond these coalition dynamics, the gap between the center-right and center-left appeared unbridgeable in the run-up to the election by virtue of another fact. An army of 350 ARS candidates (70 from each of the five lists) supported Schifani’s candidacy, against only 140 from the center-left. This disproportion is made all the more significant by a number of transitions of 2017 ‘Lords of Preferences’³ (Emanuele & Marino 2016) from the center-left to the center-right. We highlight two of them in particular: in Palermo, preference boss Edy Tamajo (13984 votes in 2017) moves from *Sicilia Futura* (a list of the center-left coalition) to *Forza Italia*; in Catania, preference recordman Luca Sammartino (32492 votes in 2017, accounting for 7.3 percent of the list vote in the province of Catania, see Emanuele and Riggio 2018b, 290) moves from the PD to the League. The vote in Sicily, as in Southern Italy in general, has always been extremely candidate-oriented (Fabrizio & Feltrin 2007) with both a highly volatile party vote and stable links between candidates and their voter packs (Raniolo 2010; Emanuele & Marino 2016). Thus, it is a vote given to the person before the party, and not exempt from exchange and clientelistic dynamics (Parisi and Pasquino 1977; D’Amico 1993; Raniolo 2010). Winning the support of Lords of Preferences is therefore key for presidential candidates, especially in a context of low expected turnout, where vote packages controlled by local figures acquire even greater overall weight (Emanuele & Marino 2016; Emanuele & Riggio 2018b).

3. Editor’s note: The term “Lords of Preferences” (*signori delle preferenze*) refers to highly influential local leaders whose political choices affect their constituents’ voting behavior (called *preferenze*, “preferences,” in Italian).

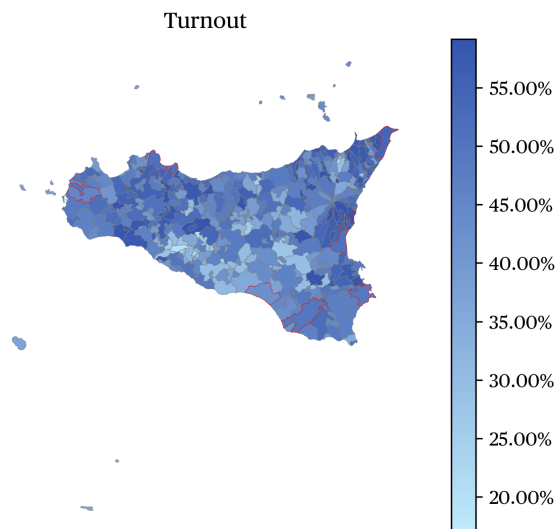


b • Sicilian regional elections 2022: votes for presidential candidates

Finally, the electoral supply side is rounded out by the civic candidacy of Eliana Esposito with the Siciliani Liberi list (already running in 2017 with Roberto La Rosa, 0.7 percent) and, most importantly, by Cateno De Luca's candidacy. The former mayor of Messina, building on almost unanimous support from the Peloritan city, presents himself as an outsider in the competition, with the intention of attracting the protest vote from both left and right. He enjoys the support of as many as nine lists, although only two (Sud chiama Nord and Sicilia Vera) are present throughout the region (see note of Figure a).

The results

Voter turnout, which has always been significantly lower than in general elections (Riggio 2018: 230), was around or just above 60 percent until 2008. In 2008, as in 2022, the regional election were held on the same day as the general elections. As a result, between 2008 and 2012, turnout collapsed by almost 20 percentage points, falling below 50 percent for the first time in any Italian regional election (D'Alimonte 2013). Over the past 10 years, the trend has not shown significant reversals: in 2017, turnout dropped further, albeit slightly, to 46.8 percent. In 2022, it rose again by two points, to 48.8 percent, very little if we consider the potential pull provided by the simultaneous general elections. Between 2008 and 2022, about 18 percentage points of turnout (more than 800,000 votes) have been lost. Fewer than one in two Sicilians went to the polls, and the most popular presidential candidate, Schifani, received less than 900,000 votes, corresponding to less than 20 percent of the Island's voters. To understand the magnitude of the phenomenon, one needs only consider that in 2008 the most voted presidential candidate, Lombardo, had obtained more than twice as many votes, more than 1.8 million. Looking at the distribution of turnout by province (see also Figure c), participation exceeded the absolute majority of eligible voters only in Messina (53.6 percent), probably dragged by Cateno De Luca's electoral boom, as well as Catania and Palermo (52.2 percent and 50.2 percent respectively). By contrast,



c • Turnout by municipality, 2022

the lowest turnout was recorded in Enna (40 percent), an inland province that has a comparatively more peripheral electorate from a socio-economic point of view and already set a negative voting participation record among the island's provinces in 2017.

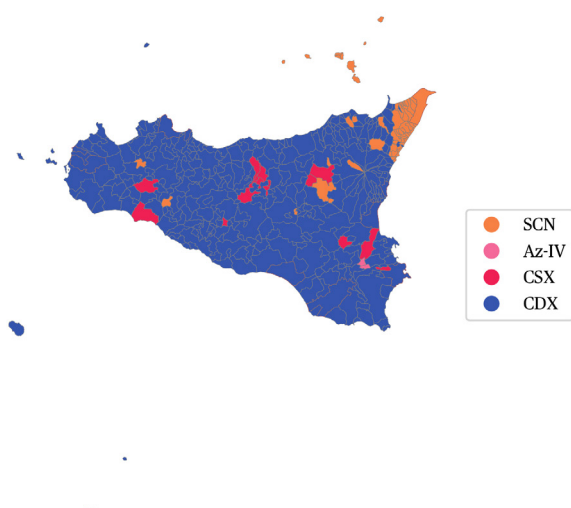
Turning to the results, Figure b shows the regional summary of the presidential ballot.

As mentioned above, Cateno De Luca's electoral success constituted the main novelty of the 2022 regional election. With 24 percent, the former mayor of Messina clearly outperformed his center-left and M5S competitors. In 'his' province of Messina, he obtained an absolute majority of the vote and, with 52.6 percent, overtook all his rivals including Schifani. His success affected the scores of all other parties, and especially of the M5S, which won 6.3 percent in the province of Messina (it had won 27.2 percent in 2017).

In all other provinces, Renato Schifani far outdistanced his competitors, obtaining more votes than the second and third candidates combined and more than 10 percentage points more than a potential center-left 'wide field' (a hypothetical coalition formed by the center-left and the M5S, which failed to emerge in the pre-electoral period after Caterina Chinnici won the primaries). Schifani gathered an absolute majority of the vote only in Agrigento, while in Messina he gathered 29.2 percent of the vote.

With 16.2 percent, the center-left coalition obtained its worst result ever at regional elections in Sicily: Caterina Chinnici took about 47,000 fewer votes than Fabrizio Micari, the candidate in 2017, and as many as 277,000 fewer than in 2012, when Rosario Crocetta won the election. The M5S did not perform better than the center-left: Nunzio Di Paola's 15.2 percent is a meager result compared with

Winning party (2022)



d • Party of winning candidate for President by municipality, 2022

Candidate for president	Provincial lists	List votes	%	Presidential votes	%
Renato Schifani	Fratelli d'Italia	282345	15.1	887215	42.1
	Forza Italia	275736	14.7		
	Prima l'Italia - Salvini Premier	127454	6.8		
	Popolari e Autonomisti	127096	6.8		
	Democrazia Cristiana	121691	6.5		
Total votes Schifani		934322	50.0		
Cateno De Luca	De Luca sindaco di Sicilia	254453	13.6	505386	24.0
	Sud chiama Nord				
	Sicilia Vera	50877	2.7		
	Orgoglio Siculo con Cateno	18165	1.0		
	Terra d'Amuri	3390	0.2		
	Giovani Siciliani	3042	0.2		
	Autonomia Siciliana	2987	0.2		
	Impresa Sicilia	2702	0.1		
	Lavoro in Sicilia	1793	0.1		
	Basta Mafie	1356	0.1		
Total votes De Luca		338765	18.1		
Caterina Chinnici	Partito Democratico	238761	12.8	341252	16.2
	Cento passi per la Sicilia	55599	3.0		
Total votes Chinnici		294360	15.7		
Nunzio Di Paola	Movimento Cinque Stelle	254974	13.6	321142	15.2
Gaetano Armao	Azione - Italia Viva - Calenda	39788	2.1	43835	2.1
Eliana Esposito	Siciliani liberi	7654	0.4	10973	0
Total		1869863	100	2109803	100.00
Turnout				2250399	48.8
Registered voters				4609984	

e • Election results; 2022 (absolute and percentage)

Giancarlo Cancelleri's 34.7 percent in 2017, and, even more, with the 27 percent obtained by the party in the general election on the same day. Finally, the Third Pole's attempt to emerge as a new player in Sicilian politics failed: Gaetano Armao obtained just over 2 percent and the Azione-Italia Viva list did not gain any seats in the regional assembly (see also Figure d).

The results of the proportional vote (see panel "the data") reveal the excellent 'strategic coordination' of the center-right coalition (Cox 1997). The five lists supporting Schifani all manage to pass the 5 percent threshold and enter the ARS. Fratelli d'Italia emerges as the most

voted party with 15.1 percent. Giorgia Meloni's party takes advantage of a positive overall trend to achieve an exceptional growth compared to 2017, when it collected just 5.6 percent of the vote despite running on a single together with the League. The League, for its part, gains 6.8 percent of the vote. Giorgia Meloni's party narrowly overtakes Forza Italia, which has declined slightly since 2017 when it led the coalition supporting Musumeci with 16.4 percent. The two post-Democratic lists supporting Lombardo and Cuffaro both pass the bar although they are down slightly from 2017.

Overall, the center-right forces rise from 42.1 percent in 2017 to 50 percent in 2022, and their result in the proportional contest are significantly better than in the presidential ballot, which uses a first-past-the-post system. Schifani, in fact, scores about eight percentage points less than his lists. The negative performance of the coalition in these respects is nothing new for the center-right (Emanuele & Riggio 2018a: 251) and once again confirms the decisive role played by the Lords of Preferences in shaping the electoral outcome: suffice it to say that the aforementioned Edy Tamajo, who run for member of the regional assembly in the province of Palermo in the ranks of Forza Italia after being elected in 2017 with the center-left, obtained 21,700 votes (or 4.8 percent) for his provincial list. The same percentage was obtained by Luca Sammartino, a former PD member and candidate for the province of Catania (21,011 votes).

The other side of the personal vote, i.e., the vote given to the presidential candidate alone, went almost entirely to Cateno De Luca, who was able to get about six points more than his lists, among which only Sud chiama Nord surpasses the bar, becoming one of the main parties on the island.⁴ In the ranks of the opposition, while, as anticipated, the Azione-Italia Viva list remained well below the threshold, the performances of the PD and M5S were very disappointing: the former won only 12.8 percent of the vote, making it only the fifth party in the region while in 2017 it came in second (albeit with a barely higher percentage, 13 percent); the latter, with 13.6 percent, has faced tough competition from De Luca when trying to attract protest votes and has eventually halved its 2017 performance, when it was the region's leading party with 26.7 percent. Finally, Claudio Fava's Cento passi per la Sicilia list stays out of the ARS, dropping from 5.2% in 2017 to 3% in 2022 (see also Figures A5 and A6 in the Appendix).

Regarding the territorial distribution of support (see also panel "the data"), Forza Italia is the most voted party in Agrigento (14.5 percent), Caltanissetta (20.7 percent) and Palermo (17.2 percent), while FDI is first only in Catania (16.8 percent) and Ragusa (19.3 percent). Sud Chiama

4. At the same time, the success of Sud chiama Nord also extended to the general election: candidates in the House and Senate uninominal constituencies for the province of Messina in fact elected two representatives from De Luca's list.

Nord is the most voted party in the province of Messina with 25.4 percent, while PD prevails in Enna (24.1 percent) and Trapani (16.2 percent) and M5S is the list with the highest support in Syracuse (15.7 percent).

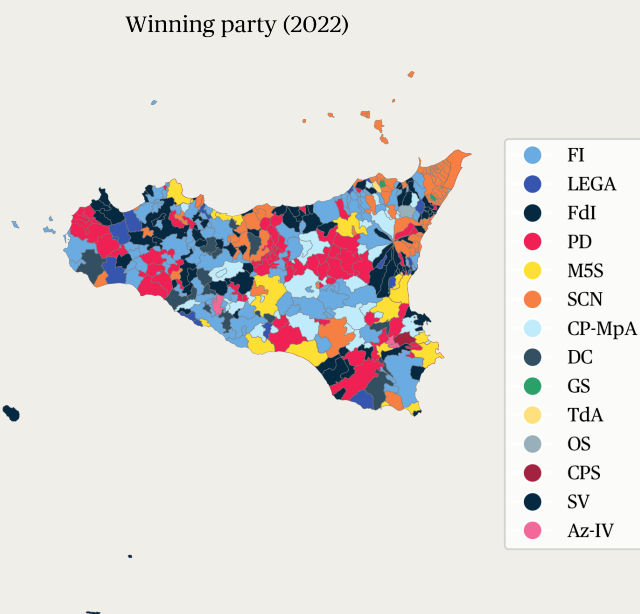
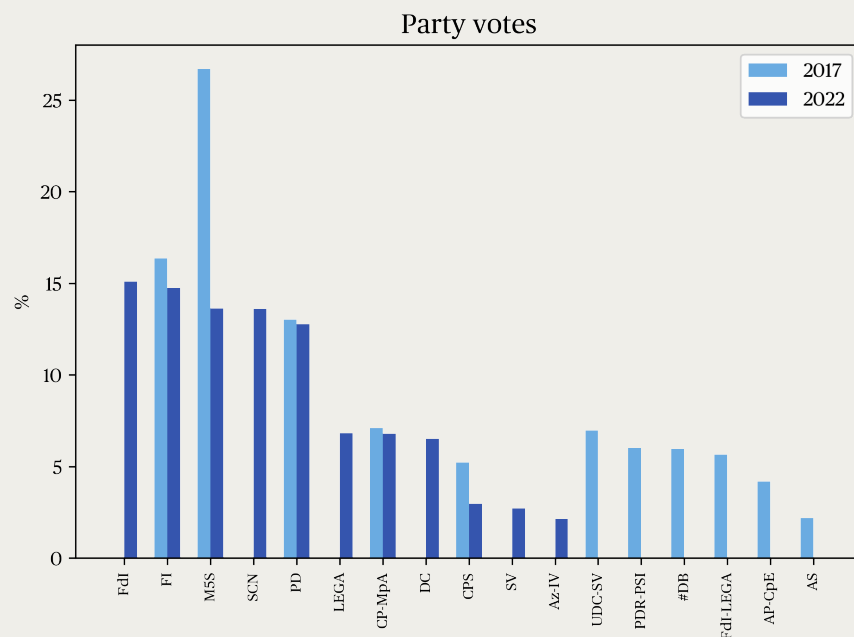
In view of these results, Schifani secures a solid majority in the Council with 40 out of 70 deputies (including President Schifani's own seat). FDI and Forza Italia lead the majority with 13 deputies each, followed by the League and DC with five and the Popolari e Autonomisti list with four. In the ranks of the opposition, only three lists enter the ARS: the PD and M5S with 11 seats and Sud chiama Nord with 8 seats.⁵

The center-right's dominance of Sicilian regional politics will continue for the next five years, and, what is more, will be able to rely on the advantage of benefiting from a 'friendly' government in Rome, led by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

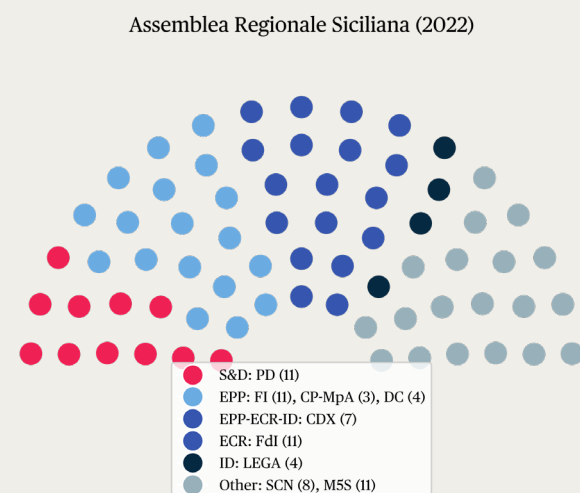
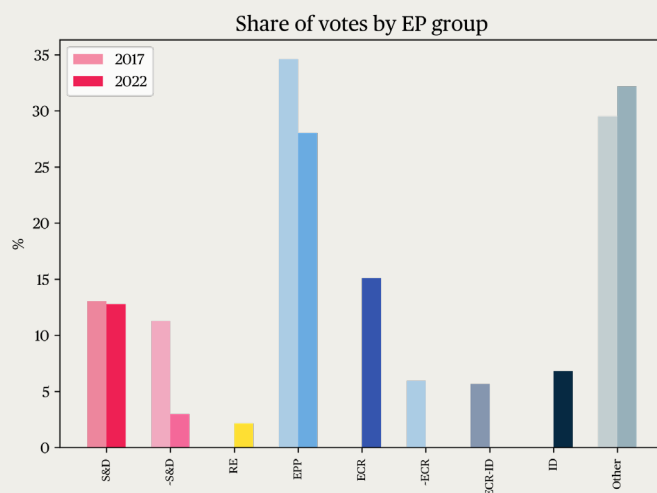
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5. At the time of writing, the number of seats collected by each list is not currently official, since the final results of 48 electoral sections remain to be determined.



European indicators





Jānis Ikstens • Latvijas Universitāte

Parliamentary election in Latvia, 1 October 2022

The 100-strong unicameral legislature of Latvia, the Saeima, is elected on the first Saturday of October once in four years. The country operates a flexible party list system affording voters the option of casting both negative and positive preference votes. The threshold of five per cent of valid ballots nationally is aimed at reducing the fractionalization of the legislature. Only registered political parties counting no less than 500 members or alliances thereof are eligible to submit candidate lists for five electoral districts. Each candidate can be fielded in one district only.

Background of elections

The parliamentary elections on 1 October 2022 took place against the background of various challenges.

Although the government's initial response to the COVID-19 outbreak enjoyed the general public's support, the tide changed when the cabinet led by Krišjānis Kariņš (New Unity) failed the vaccine procurement – not only did it trail behind a number of other European countries timewise but it was also surrounded with suspicions of corruption. That produced a sharp drop of public support to key political institutions in early 2021, from which it did not recover until the election day. Further, when vaccines arrived in numbers sufficient to begin mass vaccination, vocal resistance to it emerged, drawing on perceptions about dangerous side effects of the vaccines that were likely amplified by not only adherents of conspiracy theories and Russian-language misinformation but also the government's reluctance to swiftly investigate fatalities or major health problems following vaccination.

Moreover, several political newcomer parties attempted to capitalize on the anti-vaxx sentiments and the government's nearly mandatory vaccination policy.

The management of the COVID-19 crisis emerged as a potentially major campaign issue but its importance was dramatically reduced by the escalation of war in Ukraine in February 2022 that large parts of the society perceived as a major threat to Latvia's independence. The government moved swiftly to ban the access to Russian-origin TV channels in Latvia, close Latvia's airspace for all aircraft registered in Russia, drastically reduce visa issuance to Russian citizens, and demand a permanent NATO military base on the Latvian soil. Further, the Kariņš cabinet generously provided military aid to Ukraine, with Latvia becoming the top donor.¹ Also, arrangements were made to accommodate Ukrainian refugees, provide them with shelter, food, and education for refugee children.

Latvia's civil society responded with similar enthusiasm. Several rallies against the Russian aggression were held. As of 15 November 2022, more than 12 million Euro had been donated to the country's largest charity project, *ziedot.lv*, for Ukraine's needs. Many persons welcomed Ukrainian refugees to their homes.

In view of the changing international environment and responding to local demands, the government also proceeded with a further expansion of Latvian as the language of instruction at all institutions of pre-school, primary and secondary education that issue state-recognized educational documents beginning in 2023. The wider introduction of Latvian as the language of instruction began already in 2002 and continued in 2018. Further, the parliament ruled to remove some 300 Soviet-era monuments celebrating the Soviet regime by 15 November 2022. The two measures were not taken lightly by the sizeable Russian minority in Latvia as reflected in the heated parliamentary debates about the respective legislation and by subsequent protests staged near the monuments.

The war in Ukraine contributed greatly to the already notable inflation rate by way of a global increase of food and energy prices. The inflation in December 2021 stood at 8 percent year-on-year but it rose to 22.2 percent in September 2022, particularly affecting lower income brackets. Responding to wide-spread concerns about the cost of living and availability of heating and electricity in winter, the government capped electricity prices for companies and households, adjusted old-age pensions for inflation well ahead of the schedule but scrambled to convince consumers about the sufficient availability of the natural gas.

1. For details, see: <https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/society/latvia-ranks-first-in-aid-to-ukraine-by-gdp-share.a477661/> (last accessed 15 November 2022).

Campaign

The legislation requires that all parties wishing to field candidates in the Saeima elections be registered with the Registry of Enterprises no less than 12 months before the election date. This condition was introduced in 2016 with the stated aim of giving voters sufficient time to evaluate political newcomers.

The requirement prompted several political entrepreneurs to establish and register their electoral vehicles. The flamboyant Saeima deputy Aldis Gobzems who was elected on the populist KPV LV party list convoked the founding meeting of the Law and Order party already in January 2021 citing his concern that Latvian authorities could delay the registration of his party and effectively bar Gobzems from running for the parliament. The conservative, traditionalist party with populist overtones and intense criticism of government anti-COVID-19 policies was registered in February 2021. Vjačeslavs Dombrovskis, Saeima deputy elected on the Harmony party list, joined forces with several MPs formerly associated with the defunct KPV LV party to establish the Republic party, a centrist organization aiming to bridge differences in Latvia's society and to accelerate the country's economic development. Businessman and former Saeima deputy Ainārs Šlesers announced his plans to establish a political party on the day he was charged with large-scale fraud. The pro-business, socially conservative Latvia First party headed by Šlesers was established in August 2021.

Both the Law and Order party and the Latvia First party initially capitalized on the COVID-19 pandemic and clearly positioned themselves as fierce government critics. The Law and Order party vocally opposed the government's policy on battling COVID-19 by calling out ineffective government spending on pandemic-related health care measures and giving voice to the anti-vaxx movement. The Latvia First party took a slightly milder stance towards the government public health policies but severely criticized Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš for being a weak, indecisive and ineffective leader. That party presented Ainārs Šlesers as a successful and experienced alternative for the premiership in addition to promises to accelerate the country's economic development by means of attracting foreign investment (including 'golden visas') to pay compensations to the anti-vaxxers whose employment contracts were terminated, and to proceed with a socially conservative agenda.

However, the escalation of war in Ukraine drastically affected the campaign. Parties had to define their attitude towards the Russian invasion, which prompted the largest pro-Russian political party, Harmony, to condemn the Moscow's incursion. That move received mixed reactions among the sizeable East Slavic minorities living in Latvia and reinvigorated the Harmony's competitors –

Latvia's Russian Union and For Stability!. The latter two took a hardline position on the issue of war in Ukraine that aligned well with their previous policies and views of sizeable part of Slavic minorities. Moreover, For Stability! launched an energetic campaign in social media, primarily on Telegram and TikTok, to mobilize younger voters on promises to effectively protect interests of Slavic minorities. The pledge became increasingly appealing after the Saeima (where the Harmony party held 20 seats) ruled to introduce Latvian as the only language of instruction in all state-recognized institutions of pre-school, primary and secondary education.

The influential Mayor of Ventspils City, Aivars Lembergs whose case on charges of money laundering and bribery is in the second instance court after the first instance court issued him a five-year prison sentence, took in early March a dubious position on the escalation in Ukraine that not only drew criticism from the Union of Greens and Farmers (UGF), an alliance closely associated with Lembergs but also triggered a disintegration of UGF. As a result, the Green Party of Latvia and the Liepāja Party left the alliance to join forces with the Regional Alliance of Latvia under the leadership of Uldis Pīlēns, a wealthy entrepreneur with certain political experience at the national and municipal level. The resultant alliance under the name of United List (UL) highlighted the need for creating an effective crisis management system at the government level in view of the short supply of energy resources. The United List also presented Pīlēns as an experienced and skilled candidate for the position of Prime Minister.

The Farmers' Union of Latvia, however, managed to retain the brand of UGF as it invited the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Latvia to join UGF. Moreover, UGF returned to Lembergs as its candidate for the Prime Minister's position (Lembergs had been UGF's prime ministerial candidate until 2018). This move drew notable criticism in the media and led to several public debates exclude Lembergs. On the other hand, his approval ratings remained high and clearly helped mobilize UGF supporters.

Parties of the ruling coalition took pride in having a stable government for the entire parliamentary term since 2018, an achievement noteworthy for Latvia's volatile political milieu that was largely conditioned by the pandemic and the constellation of political forces. They also were unanimous in pledging increased funding for the country's defense and in replacing professional military service with conscription. However, the coalition parties had to respond to yet another challenge – a slower economic development of Latvia in comparison to Estonia and Lithuania. While the parties were swift to blame the pandemic and choices upon the exit from the 2009 economic meltdown that were never clearly defined, doubts about the government's economic policies strengthened against the background of uncertainty surrounding the

availability of energy supplies for the 2022/2023 winter. In an attempt to pacify some groups ahead of the winter, the government chose to adjust old-age pensions two months ahead of the usual schedule but the effect of the measure remains to be identified.

However, coalition parties pursued individual efforts as well. The Development/For! alliance had seen substantial decrease in public support over the last two years that likely stemmed not only from being in charge of Health Ministry and designing of anti-pandemic policies but also from involvement in allegedly illegal practices of political finance² and lobbying casino business interests. Moreover, this alliance had to compete with the Progressives, another left-libertarian party that, as a relative political newcomer that had achieved commendable results in the municipal elections in capital city of Rīga. The Development/For!, known for massive election campaigns, desperately began to criticize Prime Minister Kariņš for indecisiveness but fell short of offering a radically different economic policy.

The Conservatives had lost two key leaders and struggled to keep up with the National Alliance, another coalition partner who lost some supporters to the Conservatives in the 2018 elections. While the Conservatives mildly flirted with Catholic voters, they also promoted a legal arrangement of single-sex partners that was arguably seen by Conservatives' supporters as contradicting to their core values. Meanwhile, the National Alliance traditionally made appeals to Latvian nationalists referring to recent changes in the language regime in education, continued to emphasize its solutions for Latvia's demographic problems, and kept relatively low profile on economic issues. The loss of NA support (compared to the 2018 results) under the circumstances of intensification of war in Ukraine seems to be partly related to a lack of a strong candidate for the position of Prime Minister.

New Unity offered a catch-all platform to be implemented under the leadership of Krišjānis Kariņš. Many political competitors criticized him not only for meager leadership but also for evading public discussion during the campaign. Yet, Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs of New Unity seemingly compensated for the meagerness by stepping up a Twitter campaign projecting him as a decisive leader.

Results

A total of 19 candidate lists were registered for the elections, an increase from 16 lists in 2018 and 14 lists in 2014. The expanding number of contenders can be seen as a function of the greatly increased public funding to

2. Māris Mičerevskis of For Latvia's Development party claimed that Juris Pūce, one of party leaders, repeatedly gave him cash to donate to the party. However, the Anti-corruption Bureau tasked with the enforcement of party finance legislation could not prove the claims.

political parties garnering at least 2 per cent of votes in parliamentary elections.

The political elite was somewhat nervous about the constantly falling voter turnout that slid to 54.56 percent in 2018. The turnout was expected to decrease again in 2022 as the start of Russian-Ukrainian war did not boost the turnout in the 2014 Saeima elections. Contrary to the expectations, more voters chose to participate, with the turnout reaching 59.41 per cent. The electoral district of Latgale where many Slavic voters reside saw the largest turnout increase. They were likely mobilized by identity issues.

As in 2018, seven lists cleared the electoral threshold but a few surprises were involved. The long-dwindling support for Harmony resulted in a loss of parliamentary representation for this political dinosaur. Some of Harmony's erstwhile supporters likely sided with For Stability! and Latvia's Russian Union, others arguably switched to UGF while yet others abstained. Another well-known political brand, UGF, fared surprisingly well and came second gaining 17 seats. This arguably underscores the role of strong electoral leaders – while UGF chose the polarizing Lembergs as its candidate for premiership, Harmony settled for the experienced, yet lesser known parliamentarian Ivars Zariņš. Although the poor showing of the Conservatives was hardly surprising, the frantic end of Development/For! campaign bore no fruits parliamentary representation – likely for reasons mentioned above. The Progressives arguably attracted the bulk of former Development/For! supporters by offering a left-libertarian platform along with a cleaner political record. Further, the rapid ascent of For Stability! past the rival Latvia's Russian Union merits attention given the former's Euroskeptic and ethnically radical platform. The Latvia First attracted many protest voters who switched away from the strongly critical For Each and Every One (formerly – Law and Order) headed by Aldis Gobzems who had lost much of his credibility due to frequent outbursts of rage. New Unity turned out to become a focal point for voters who were content with the government's policies. Arguably, the United List benefitted from the merger of three minor parties and the galvanizing persona of Uldis Pīlēns who was capable to convince large segments of population about his qualities as a successful crisis manager.

Outlook

The 2022 elections brought crushing defeat for the populist forces among ethnic Latvians. However, the populist wave has reached the Slavic minorities and For Stability! will ride it during the present parliamentary term. Moreover, the success of For Stability! is an indication of radicalization of Slavic minorities in Latvia.

The United List will have to find its *modus operandi*

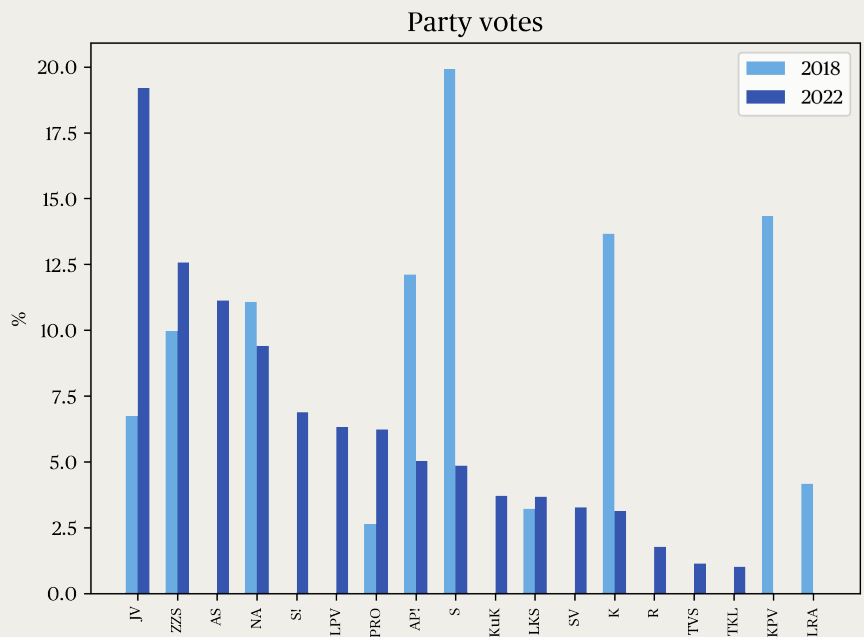
both in the parliament and the cabinet in view of the fact that Uldis Pīlēns, the main inspirator of the project, did not run for the parliament and will likely remain outside the cabinet as well. Ultimately, constituent parts of UL will have to decide whether they are prepared to give up their individual identities and merge into a single political organization.

The election results have produced prospects of a right-of-the-center, pro-European minimum-winning

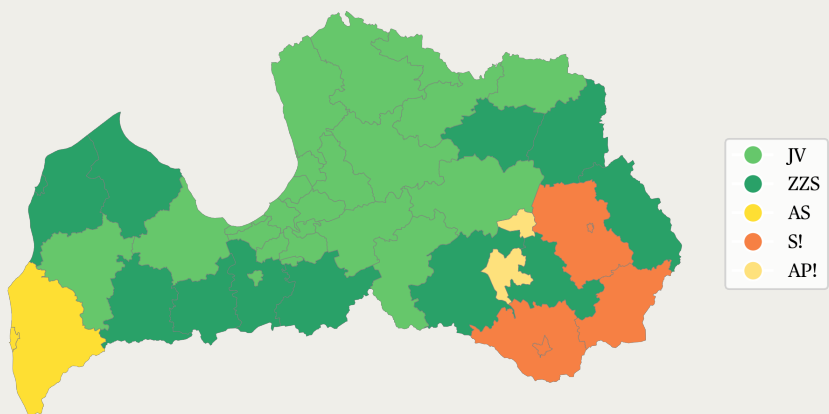
coalition to emerge. Given the ideological differences between the National Alliance and the Progressives that were voiced soon after the polls closed as well as the ongoing court proceedings against Aivars Lembergs, the number of viable coalitions is strictly limited. Social protection against the high inflation under the circumstances of the ongoing war in Ukraine and of notable budget deficit incurred during the pandemic will be a major challenge in a foreseeable future.

List	Valid votes	%	Seats	Party family
New Unity	173 425	18.97%	26	Liberal
Union of Greens and Farmers	113 676	12.44%	16	Agrarian
United List	100 631	11.01%	15	Conservative
National Alliance	84 939	9.29%	13	Ethnic
For Stability!	62 168	6.80%	11	Ethnic
Latvia First	57 033	6.24%	9	Conservative
The Progressives	56 327	6.16%	10	Green, Social Democratic
Development/For!	45 452	4.97%		
Harmony	43 943	4.81%		
For Each and Every One	33 578	3.67%		
Latvia's Russian Union	33 203	3.63%		
Sovereign Power	29 603	3.24%		
The Conservatives	28 270	3.09%		
Republic	16 088	1.76%		
Strength of People's Power	10 350	1.13%		
People's Servants for Latvia	9 176	1.00%		
Union for Latvia	2 985	0.33%		
Christian Progressive Party	1 379	0.15%		
United for Latvia	1 413	0.15%		

a •Official election results

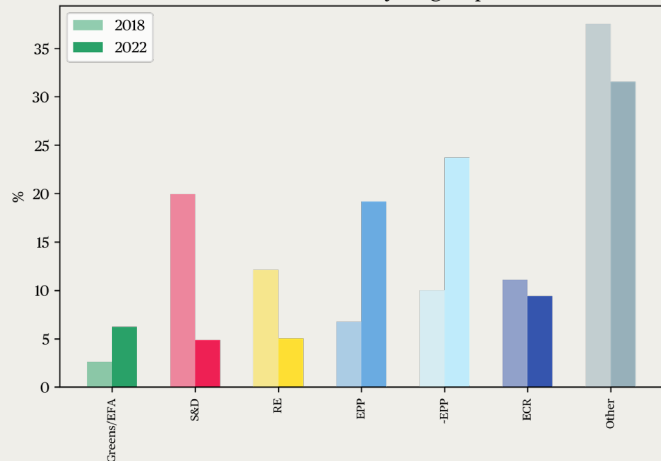


Winning party (2022)

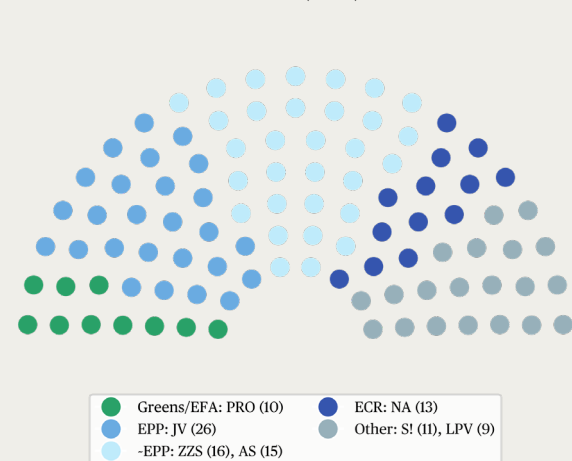


European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



Saeima (2022)





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Parliamentary election in Bulgaria, 2 October 2022

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On 2 October 2022, Bulgaria held its fourth parliamentary vote within 18 months, thus making the notorious record of being the established democracy with most parliamentary elections within the shortest period. These elections had the lowest turnout since the democratization of Bulgaria in 1990: only 39.4% decided to go to the polls. The results of the elections perpetuated the political impasse, lasting in the last couple of years, with little prospects for a viable government coalition. Consequentially, the country is still governed by a caretaker government with limited prerogatives, installed directly by the Bulgarian president, Rumen Radev.

The context

The elections of October 2022 were the third snap vote, following the regular one in April 2021 and the snap elections in July and November 2021. The November 2021 elections produced a four-party coalition government between the liberal centrist We Continue the Change (PP, no European affiliation), the centre-left Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, S&D), the populist There is Such a People (ITN, no EU affiliation), and the liberal right alliance, Democratic Bulgaria (DB, EPP/Greens-EFA). The main opposition came from the centre-right Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB, EPP), the liberal centrist Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS, Renew Europe), representing the sizable Turkish minority of the country, as well as the populist radical right Revival (Vazrazhdane, no European affiliation).

The formation of this government in the aftermath of months-long mass anti-government protests in 2020

and the combined and loosely coordinated efforts of reform-oriented and opposition parties to halt and potentially reverse the deteriorating state of democracy in Bulgaria following the 12 years of political dominance by GERB and its leader, Boyko Borisov. Led by prime minister Kiril Petkov and finance minister Asen Vasilev (both PP), the government embarked on an ambitious program of cracking down corruption, increased government investment in social welfare and low taxes, as well as a more pronounced pro-European and pro-Atlantic stance compared the previous GERB-led governments. These positions quickly faced internal and external backlash. The corruption crackdown faced the fierce opposition by GERB and DPS, particularly following the arrest of Boyko Borisov in March 2022. After his release Borisov claimed the government is using the anti-corruption drive to repress the political opposition (Mitov, 2022), whereas the government pointed out that the crackdown affected mainly businesses, affiliated to GERB and DPS (news.bg, 2022).

Internally, the four parties found it increasingly difficult to find a common political ground. For example, BSP was reluctant to provide military aid to Ukraine, leading the government to formulate an ambiguous policy of “military-humanitarian assistance” to Ukraine, which allowed BSP to argue that it prevented an outright Bulgarian involvement in the war in Ukraine, while it also kept the coalition stable. Yet, it was the rift between PP and ITN that caused the end of the government coalition. Following months of minor policy disagreements, the denied request of the ITN-affiliated deputy PM and regional minister, Grozdan Karadzhov, for additional funding for infrastructure projects, coupled with the ITN disagreement with Petkov’s policy of supporting the French proposal on the roadmap for North Macedonia’s accession to the EU led the ITN party leader, Slavi Trifonov, to withdraw his party from the coalition on 8 June 2022.

The result of this withdrawal has been twofold. First, ITN split as several of its MPs and ministers left the party and decided to continue supporting the government. Second, the government coalition has found it increasingly difficult to even to whip enough MPs to hold parliamentary sessions. A week after ITN’s withdrawal from the coalition a parliamentary hearing of foreign minister, Teodora Genchovska, on the Bulgarian relations with North Macedonia turned into chaos, leading to the dismissal of the parliamentary speaker, Nikola Minchev by GERB, DPS, Vazrazhdane and some of the ITN MPs. The same alliance passed a vote of no confidence on 22 June on grounds of “the government’s failure in the financial-economic policy”, thus ending Petkov’s government.

The fall of Petkov’s government came as a result also of several external factors. First and foremost, the government entered into an open conflict with the Bulgarian pre-

sident Rumen Radev over disagreements on the Bulgarian position on the war in Ukraine: while the government, particularly PP and DB, aimed for a more outspoken support for Ukraine, Radev advocated a more toned-down position. Thus, Petkov and Vasilev, viewed previously as the president's men due to their participation in previous caretaker governments, lost a significant institutional and social source of support. The result of this rift was that the caretaker government that was installed by Radev, following the call for early election, attempted to reverse some of the coalition's policies, particularly those related to gas deliveries for the country.

Second, the unilateral termination of gas deliveries by Russia to Bulgaria in early April has prompted the PP-led government to seek alternative sources for gas deliveries. While such sources were found through deliveries of Azeri gas, as well as through a new LNG gas interconnector with Greece, the government faced criticisms of the allegedly higher prices for these deliveries and in favouring PP-affiliated companies as intermediaries for the gas deliveries. Radev's subsequent caretaker government indeed attempted to enter talks with Gazprom to reinstate gas deliveries for Bulgaria, but current efforts to renegotiate the contract terms remain unsuccessful. Third, the position of the PP-led government in favour of removing the Bulgarian veto on the North Macedonian accession to the EU placed led to significant public criticism even after the approval of the French proposal shortly after ITN's withdrawal from the coalition and the vote of no confidence. Finally, Petkov and Vasilev and their party faced a noticeably hostile media landscape with regular accusations of their personal lifestyle, as well as of the role the government chief of staff, Lena Borislavova, in forming government policy.

The campaign

Following the failure of the parliamentary-represented parties to form a new government, on 1 August the Bulgarian president, Rumen Radev, called new elections and installed a caretaker government, led by Galab Donev. The campaign started officially on 2 September and had little to offer, as the parties focused mainly in mobilising their core electorate, while making little efforts to broaden their appeal. In this respect, the campaign revolved around four key matters. First, PP and DB were in a disagreement on whether to enter as an electoral alliance. Whereas DB were open to such a possibility, PP quickly rejected the idea, because it is "not right-wing" (segabg.com 2022). As both parties aimed to mobilise similar urban, high-educated, secured-salaried electorate, the potential effects of this decision could be the split of their vote. On the other hand, however, the outspoken support for Ukraine by both parties, their staunch rejection to enter into any agreement with GERB and DPS, as well as their strong emphasis of their anti-corruption record in

government led to the radicalisation of the urban liberal and right-wing electorate, heightening the prospects of a major electoral mobilisation.

Second, GERB amplified its efforts to exit their political isolation, which they entered since the April 2021 elections. The party emphasised its pro-European image, criticising the government for its rather undecisive stance on Ukraine, as well as its support for the speedy Bulgarian accession into the Eurozone (Trud 2022). In doing so, GERB set the stage for a potential coalition talks with PP and DB and depicted itself as a responsible coalition partner, while presenting PP and DB as unreasonable in their refusal to enter into such an agreement. Third, the populist radical right Vazrazhdane increased its popularity. The party doubled its support with each election in 2021, entering parliament in November 2021 with a strong anti-lockdown restrictions and vaccination sceptical message. The war in Ukraine allowed the party to expand on its appeal by staging several allegedly anti-war rallies with strong pro-Russian messages and symbolics. Vazrazhdane also speaks openly about a Bulgarian exit from the EU and NATO, thus placing itself as a clear alternative to both the more established parties, such as GERB, DPS and BSP, as well as the reform-oriented parties that are PP, DB and ITN, thus attracting nationalist and protest voters.

Fourth, an important question was whether ITN and the newly formed nationalist conservative Bulgarian Rise (BV, no EU affiliation) around Stefan Yanev, former caretaker PM with close affiliation to Radev, would manage to pass the threshold. Early during the campaign polling data gave BV a slight edge over ITN, but ITN managed to buck the trend by the election date, following a reasonably active campaign and relying on the party-affiliated 7/8 TV channel to spread its message. Which of the two parties would enter was an important question, as they could hold the key to potential future government coalition. Nevertheless, while ITN declared their openness to enter conversations with PP if Petkov and Vasilev would not be part of the new government, BV refrained from taking a clear stance. Given Yanev's close affiliation to Radev, the entry of his party would enable the Bulgarian president to directly influence the parliamentary work.

The electoral turnout was record low for the post-authoritarian history of Bulgaria, as it seems that political apathy and disillusionment with the continued quarrels between the parties turned people away from voting. The results themselves represented relatively minor changes for the main parties. GERB recovered slightly from their electoral losses in the July and November 2021 elections, but its result of 25.3% remains lower than its weak performance in April 2021. The party restored its top positions in all its electoral strongholds apart from two of the capital Sofia constituencies, where PP remained the main party. This suggests that while the party maintains

a stable level of support, its attempt to detoxify its legacy of its decade-long period in government remains largely unsuccessful.

The period in government took its toll on PP as well, as the party lost about 5.6 percentage points from its stellar result in November 2021, achieving a 20.2%. According to exit poll data from Gallup International the party lost almost half of its November 2021 voters mainly to Vazrazhdane, BV and DB, while it managed to attract some past ITN and DB voters, as well as non-voters (Gallup International 2022). The third spot remained for DPS who raised its result marginally, benefiting from its strongholds in places with sizable Turkish and/or Roma communities, as well as the diaspora vote. Vazrazhdane again doubled its performance, but their result of 10.2% was slightly below polling data. This suggests that the party still struggles to establish firm support, although it drew some noticeable parts of past PP and ITN voters (Gallup International, 2022), mainly in Sofia and major regional centres, where it outperformed BSP.

BSP continued its freefall and with 9.3% it got its worst electoral result since 1927. The party managed to get some support from previous PP voters, but overall, it relied on its declining core support of mainly senior voters (Gallup International 2022). The party still struggles to develop an attractive profile, as it deepened its conservative and pro-Russian policy positions. DB, like BSP and DPS, have not changed substantially its result from November 2021, attracting 7.5% of the vote. The failed attempt for an electoral alliance with PP, together with the internal tensions between and within the parties of the DB alliance over their cooperation with BSP in government demoralised its electorate and drove some of it to vote for PP. Geographically, DB remained strong in larger cities, particularly Sofia, where it came a third after PP and GERB (Gallup International 2022).

The elections saw the exit of ITN from parliament and the entry of BV as a new political actor. ITN lost significant support to PP and Vazrazhdane (Gallup International 2022), leaving it with about 3.8% (marginally less than the 4% threshold). The party were already on a downward spiral with the November 2021 elections, as it squandered almost all of its previous protest appeal. This comes as a no surprise, as ITN and its leader Slavi Trifonov made several major mistakes in the past year, not the least their reluctance to form a coalition government following the July 2021 vote. The party split following its exit from the coalition further limited its mobilisation abilities. On its place came BV, which managed to attract the main bulk of Rumen Radev's electorate (Gallup International 2022), who previously voted from PP, BSP, and the centre-left populist alliance Stand Up! We are coming! (ISNI, no EU affiliation). BV campaigned mainly on a platform of a moderate criticism of the government record, while its

main image came from its criticism of both sides in the war in Ukraine. Reports of clientelism related with the party, such as workers in the companies owned by one of BV's partners in its electoral alliance (Fileva 2022), seem to reveal further reasons for its strong electoral showing.

Overall, the 2022 elections have not revealed any major shifts in voting behaviour. In Sofia the main bulk of the vote went in favour of liberal and right-wing parties, particularly PP, GERB, and DB (Gallup International 2022). In the major regional cities, the trend was a two-headed competition between GERB and PP with significant support for Vazrazhdane and BSP (Gallup International 2022). Small cities were dominated by GERB, while PP, DPS and BSP remained noticeably behind, whereas rural areas were the domain of DPS and to a limited extent GERB (Gallup International 2022). In terms of age PP, DPS and GERB were the main parties of young voters, whereas it was GERB and BSP that mobilised the bulk of the more senior vote (Gallup International 2022). Similarly, people with high education voted predominantly for GERB and PP, whereas those with primary degrees and lower voted mainly for DPS (Gallup International 2022).

The post-electoral period

The political stalemate remained following the elections. Series of consultations organized by the Bulgarian president Rumen Radev with the parliamentary-represented parties have not produced significant outcomes; the same came out of the GERB attempt to negotiate with all parties aside from Vazrazhdane. The parliamentary work became increasingly stalled: for the first time in the most recent history the parliamentary speaker has not been elected in the first parliamentary session but rather after series of negotiations. In the end the deadlock has been broken after BSP joined GERB, DPS and BV in supporting Vezhdi Rashidov from GERB to avoid "blocking the state" (bTV Novinite 2022).

Currently, the caretaker government, installed by Radev in early August, continues to govern, while Radev avoids handing over the mandate to GERB and PP as per constitution, as currently there is little indication that any of these parties would form a government with it. Nevertheless, a framework for potential coalition government exists through the mandate of a third party. BV already expressed their interest for this role and current media reports suggest that GERB and BV seek a third coalition partner. Parliamentary work currently is dominated by the established parties of GERB, BSP and DPS. For example, ongoing debates on electoral code reform saw these three parties advocating for the restoration of paper ballots instead of machine voting (Kostadinova 2022). Such a change may significantly impact subsequent elections, as machine voting is seen as a fail-proof way to prevent corrupt voting practices. With incoming local elections

in Bulgaria in the autumn of 2023, such a change may enable GERB to hold onto its strong presence in local government.

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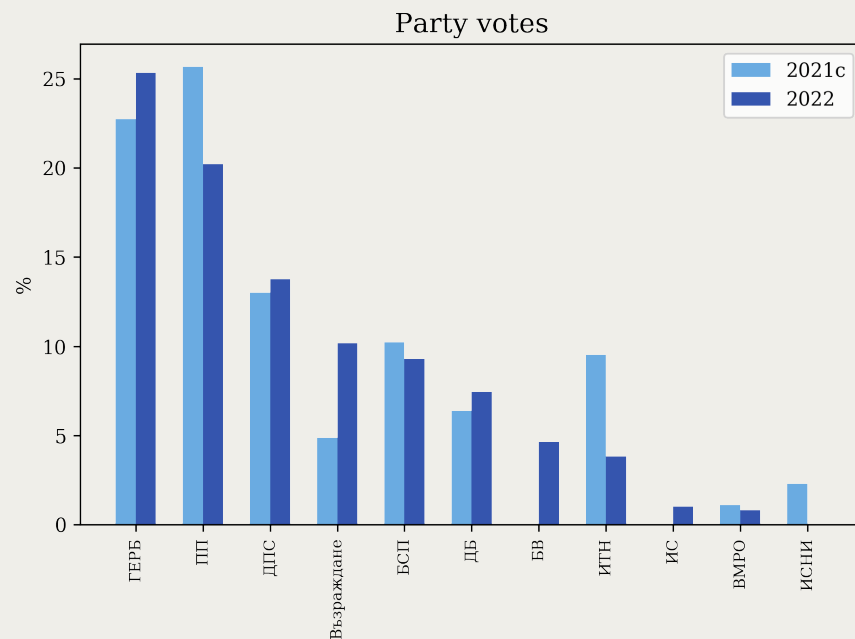
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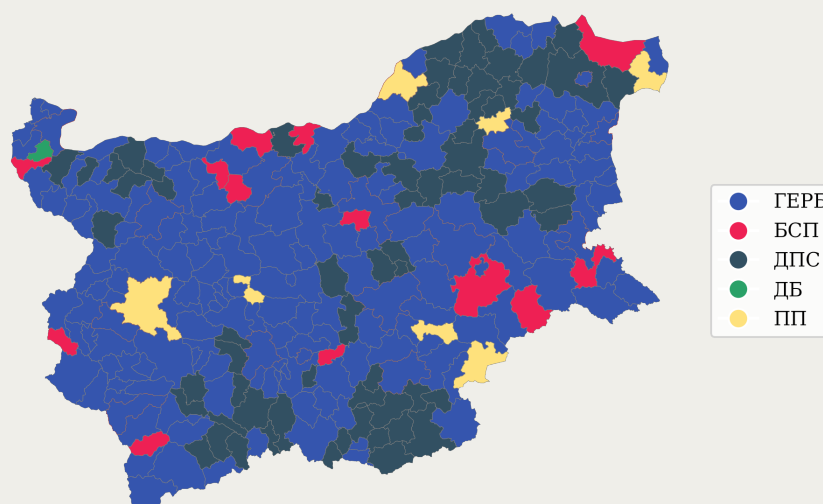
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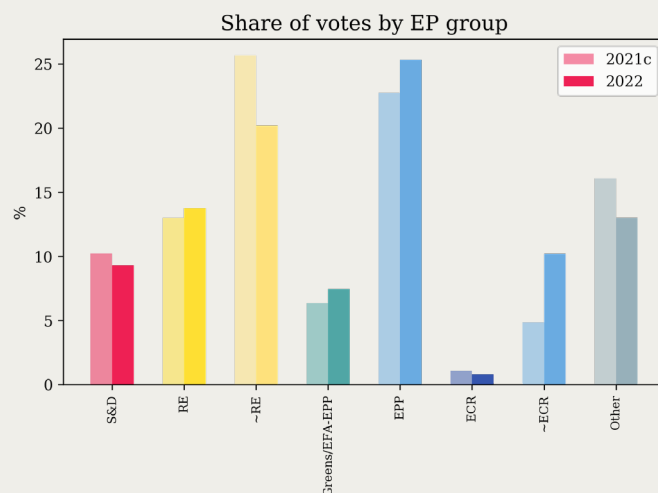
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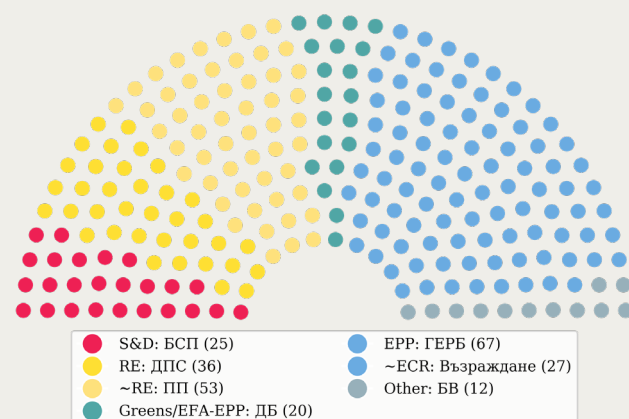
Winning party (2022)



European indicators



Народно събрание (2022)





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Presidential Election in Austria, 9 October 2022

Introduction

On October 9, 2022, Alexander Van der Bellen was re-elected as Austrian President, starting his second and last term in office. In the following, we describe the institutional role of the Austrian President, some historical aspects as well as the 2016 and 2022 elections which are closely connected.

Institutional role of the Austrian President

Austria can be classified as a semi-presidential system as “[...] All acts of the Federal President, unless otherwise provided by the Constitution, [must] be done on the proposal of the Federal Government or the Federal Minister authorised by it [...] and] require [...] the countersignature of the Federal Chancellor or the competent Federal Ministers” (Müller 2006). Following the definition presented by Elgie et al. (2011), semi-presidentialism is defined as a political system in which a country’s constitution makes provision for both a directly elected president as the head of state and a prime minister and cabinet that are collectively responsible to the legislature. Since this definition makes no reference to the powers of the president as a defining feature of the concept, it makes the identification of semi-presidential countries relatively straightforward because no judgment needs to be made as to whether a president is sufficiently powerful for a country to be classed as semi-presidential (Elgie 2011).

In the Austrian case, the president has de facto very limited decision making power, while being de jure endowed with manifold rights and obligations. The most important tasks of the Austrian President are the appointment and dissolution of the government, the dissolution of the National Council and the external representation of the Republic. In addition, the President is comman-

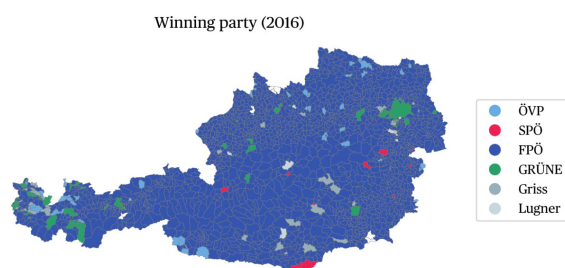
der-in-chief of the armed forces, is responsible for the certification of the constitutional coming into being of the federal laws, has the right of emergency decree and pardon and “represents the Republic as a whole” (Müller 2006). By means of these activities, it is also possible for the President to set the political tone or to signal approval or disapproval. While since 1929 the Federal Presidency in Austria can be considered a strong political institution, it nevertheless plays only a relatively passive role in day-to-day politics, as it requires a proposal from the government to take action. The reasons for this “weak” presidential component are (1) the historical character of the office with a rather reserved understanding of office, (2) the relatively strong role of the political parties in Austria and (3) the lack of bureaucratic resources to exert great influence. Thus, Austrian presidents so far saw themselves, and acted, as an authority in reserve (Müller 2006).

Austrian presidential elections since 1949

Only since 1951 has the Austrian president been elected by popular vote. Austrian Presidents are elected for a six-year term. Acting as President is limited to two consecutive terms of office. The electoral rule foresees a two-round electoral procedure: a candidate is elected President if s/he obtains 50 per cent plus one vote; if no candidate obtains this result in the first round, a second round follows with only the two top-candidates of the first round allowed to run. A 50% plus one vote result is thus guaranteed.

Former Austrian Presidents have usually been older – the median age at the first election is 66 years – and so far have been exclusively male. Candidates for office were often not top representatives of a party, but almost all of them had previously held “genuinely political positions” such as being the president of the National Council, former ministers, etc. (Müller 2006). Above all, the presidential election can be labeled a personality election.

From 1945 to 1974, all Austrian presidents came from the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) (Karl Renner, Theodor Körner, Adolf Schärf and Franz Jonas). Rudolf Kirchschläger, who was not officially affiliated with any party, but was nominated by the SPÖ, was President from 1974 to 1986, while from 1986-1992 Kurt Waldheim – nominated by the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) but also with no party affiliation – was in office. Waldheim’s candidacy for president was extremely controversial since during the election campaign it was revealed that he had been a member of the SA during the Nazi Regime and had been involved in a war mission in the Balkans during WWII. During his presidency, he therefore remained relatively isolated in foreign policy. He was succeeded, from 1992 to 2004, by a candidate of the ÖVP, Thomas Klestil, who was himself succeeded by the SPÖ politician Heinz Fischer (from 2004 to 2016).



a • Winning party by municipality in the 2016 presidential election (1st round)

In 2016, for the first time in the Austrian Second Republic, the presidential election was won by a candidate not nominated by the mainstream parties SPÖ or ÖVP: Alexander Van der Bellen was a long-time Green politician who had even been leading the Green party for many years. Alexander Van der Bellen officially ran as an independent candidate but was strongly supported by the Green Party. He became president after a long-lasting electoral campaign which featured many first-time events in Austrian political history.

In the 2016 presidential election, six candidates ran for presidency. In the first round, the SPÖ and the ÖVP candidates only received 11.28 and 11.12 per cent of the votes respectively. The independent candidate Irmgard Griss, supported by the NEOS party and the former president of the Supreme Court, came in third with almost 19 per cent of the votes. The later president Van der Bellen received 21.34 per cent of the votes in the first election round, while Norbert Hofer, who was running for the populist radical-right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), received 35.05 per cent - meaning that these two candidates, located at very different ideological positions on the political spectrum, went into the run-off. After counting the votes in the run-off on May 22, 2016, Van der Bellen was proclaimed winner with a very narrow margin: He obtained 50.35 per cent of the votes, Hofer 49.65 per cent (see panel “the data”).

However, the FPÖ challenged the election result arguing that votes had been counted improperly. The proceedings before the Constitutional Court revealed that the constitutional principle of secret ballots and the provisions of the Federal Presidential Election Act had been violated in 14 Austrian constituencies during the counting of the postal ballots. Approximately 77,000 votes were affected by the non-constitutional counting procedures, while the difference in votes between the two candidates amounted to only approximately 30,000 votes. Therefore, the election result of the second round was annulled by the Constitutional Court on July 1, 2016: the run-off of the presidential election had to be repeated (Parlament 2022). The re-run was held on December 4, 2016 for which the electoral register was updated, adding more than 42,000 newly eligible voters. In the run-off against the candidate

of the populist radical right, Alexander Van der Bellen was able to gain the support not only of the center-left parties but also of the center-right, and won the second run-off with 53.8 per cent of the votes. The importance of this particular presidential election was reflected in the voter turnout: 74.2 per cent of eligible voters participated in the election re-run of the second round as compared to 68.5 per cent in the first round and 72.2 per cent in the first second round in May.

The run-up to the 2022 presidential election

The run-up to the 2022 presidential election was marked by special circumstances and several novelties. With seven candidates, there were more candidates than ever before, but, for the first time since 1980, there was no woman running for office. The large number of candidates was also unusual, as the mainstream parties ÖVP and SPÖ did not nominate any candidate, but, as in 2016, supported the incumbent Van der Bellen together with the Green party. The liberal NEOS did not nominate or support any candidate. Van der Bellen kept a relatively low profile in the election campaign and announced only at a late stage that he would be running for president again. The only parliamentary party that nominated its own candidate was the FPÖ. It entered the electoral race with Walter Rosenkranz, a long-standing FPÖ party member.

All other candidates were either members of very small fringe parties not represented in the parliament or were running as independent “personalities”. Dominik Wlazny (also known as Marco Pogo) was the candidate of the Beer Party, which he had founded in 2015 as a satirical party. The Beer Party had limited its activities to the City of Vienna so far, where it won several seats in eleven district councils in the 2020 regional and municipal elections. Michael Brunner, member of the newly founded anti-vax party “Menschen – Freiheit – Grundrechte” (MFG – People, Freedom, Basic Rights) also presented himself as a candidate for presidency. During the electoral campaign, Brunner, a lawyer, attracted attention mainly with his anti-vaccine and science-denying statements.

The other three candidates ran as independent candidates: (a) Tassilo Wallentin, a conservative columnist at Austria’s largest tabloid “Kronenzeitung”; (b) Gerald Grosz, a former politician of the FPÖ and the ‘Bündnis Zukunft Österreich’ (BZÖ – a party founded by Jörg Haider in 2005 that no longer exists) who now was active as a blogger, known for his TikTok videos and the fact that he was Austria’s first openly homosexual presidential candidate; and (c) Heinrich Staudinger, an entrepreneur and shoe manufacturer who had become known to a wider public because of his dispute over crowdfunding with the Austrian Financial Market Authority. During the election campaign, he attracted some attention with questionable statements, amongst others, suggesting that the CIA was

behind the MeToo movement.

While the number of candidates running for presidency was very large, there was not much public interest in the election. Public attention largely focussed on the incumbent Van der Bellen and to a lesser extent on the FPÖ candidate Rosenkranz with the other candidates being rather underrepresented - most likely due to the fact that they had no large party supporting them. With regards to the content of the campaign, the usual claims arose, one of them calling for a more “active” president particularly vis-a-vis the government. As mentioned before the Austrian constitution would allow for a more active role but incumbents so far have not used these possibilities. Apart from this, the incumbent Van der Bellen was criticized, particularly by his rivals, for not appearing in TV debates with the other candidates. However, it is common practice in Austria that incumbent presidents do not participate in TV debates.

The results of the 2022 election

After a rather short and uneventful election campaign, the election was held on October 9, 2022. The incumbent Alexander Van der Bellen was able to defend his office with 56.7 per cent of the votes in the first round. Walter Rosenkranz (FPÖ) came in second place at a distance with 17.7 per cent. Tassilo Wallentin and Dominik Wlazny both achieved just over 8 per cent. While former politician Gerald Grosz managed to get 5.6 per cent, Michael Brunner of the MFG party and Heinrich Staudinger only received 2.1 and 1.6 per cent, respectively. The turnout was 65.2 per cent – a noticeable decrease since the last presidential election – reflecting the fact that the 2022 presidential election did not have the same partisan dynamic as in 2016.

While the 2022 results speak clearly in favor of Van der Bellen, some regional peculiarities need to be pointed out. Particularly, in some constituencies in Carinthia - in the south of Austria – the FPÖ candidate Rosenkranz outperformed the incumbent Van der Bellen (see the map in the panel “the data”). This, however, does not indicate

that Van der Bellen’s electoral success was ever endangered but rather that some ideological polarization can be observed across the country.

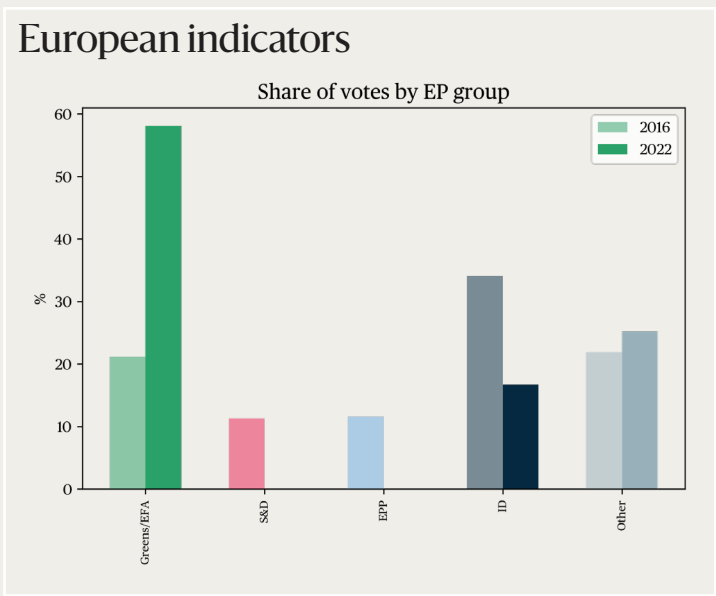
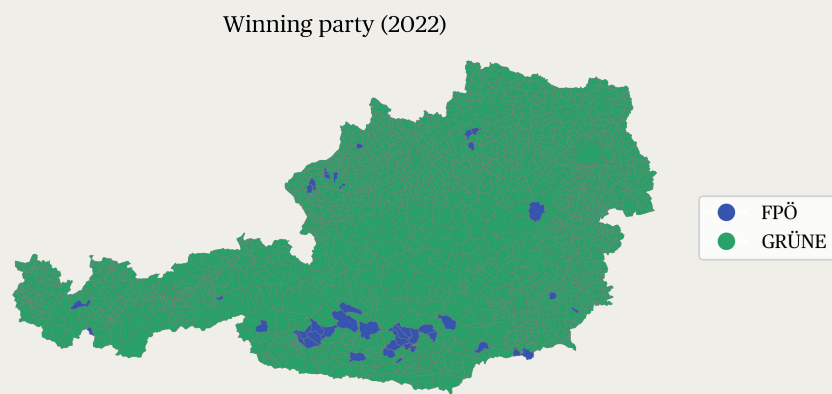
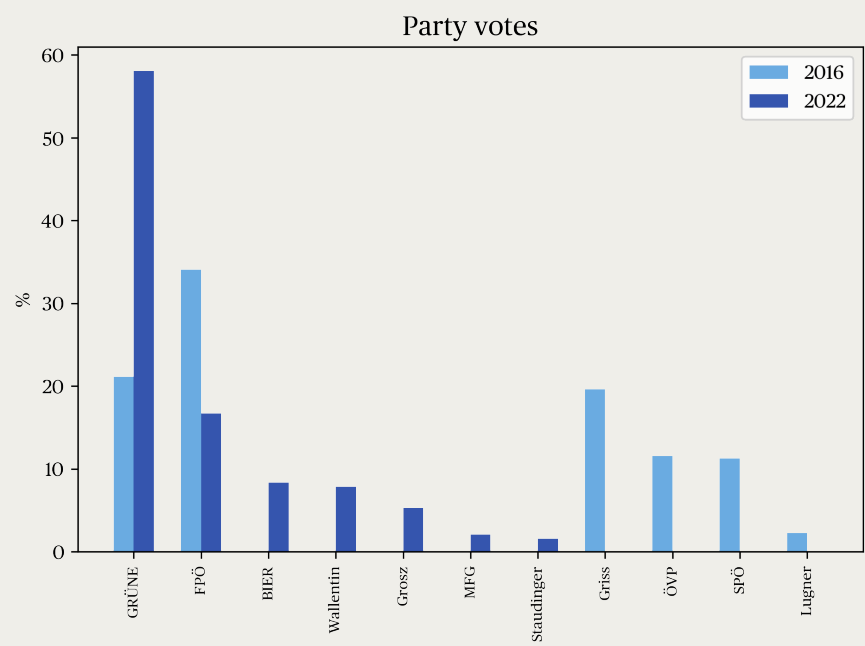
Comparing the 2022 results with the outcomes of the first round in 2016 (right hand map of Austria), it may seem as if the political landscape has changed quite substantially. The main reason for this, however, is that the mainstream parties had united and supported the incumbent in 2022, whereas they had their own competing candidates in 2016, so that the vote split across several candidates, to the advantage of Norbert Hofer.

Consequences of the election

The 2022 presidential election was certainly less dramatic than the 2016 one. Apart from the different nature of the candidates and the lower importance of partisanship, the electoral campaign was uneventful and not very exciting. This may seem surprising due to the far-reaching de jure powers of the head of state. Presidents, however, have never used much of their powers so far; rather, the Austrian President has remained mainly a symbolic figurehead. In the end, the 2022 election was “business as usual”, as most of the Austrian Presidents in the Second Republic have been re-elected for a second term. Whether a more active role of the president is desirable would necessitate a more intensive discussion than the one during the 2022 campaign. Maybe there will be time for that before the next presidential election in 2028.

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Regional election in Lower Saxony, 9 October 2022

The election campaign

The state election in Lower Saxony on 9 October 2022 was the first election in Germany since the reduction of Russian gas supplies to Germany (in stages starting in mid-June 2022) and the attacks on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines (in late September 2022). The dominant federal political theme in the run-up to this election was the public fear of supply shortages for electricity and gas, as well as concerns about high inflation on the whole and rising energy prices in particular. Although, at the time of the campaign, the federal government had already announced three relief packages and a gas and electricity price cap, there still was a high degree of uncertainty among citizens about the extent of future financial pressures. In addition, an important debate was taking place at the federal level on whether and when the three nuclear power plants still in operation in Germany should be closed. Federal Economics Minister Robert Habeck (Greens/EFA) had decided to put two of the nuclear power plants into reserve mode until the end of March 2023, as well as to shut down the Emsland nuclear power plant, located in Lower Saxony, by the end of the year. Although all these issues primarily concerned federal politics, they almost completely overshadowed the regional political issues in the state elections in Lower Saxony. The CDU (EPP), FDP (RE) and AfD (ID) all campaigned for the continued use of all three German nuclear power plants, criticizing the planned shutdown of the Emsland nuclear power plant in Lower Saxony. The SPD (S&D) and the Greens (Greens/EFA) categorically rejected the continued operation of all nuclear power plants, including and espe-

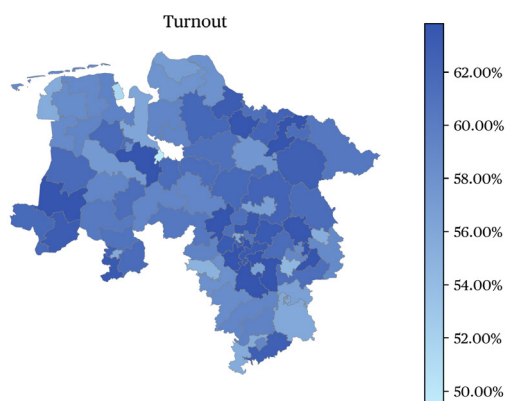
cially the one in Lower Saxony. In addition, the demand for a separate aid package specific to the state of Lower Saxony, which would have further protected the region's population against the financial burdens caused by the energy crisis, became a central campaign issue. The SPD (S&D) and the Greens (Greens/EFA), in particular, advocated for such a package.

The only regional factor to significantly affect the 2022 Lower Saxony state elections was the personality of the candidates for the office of Minister President. The SPD (S&D) incumbent Stephan Weil was popular among the population and his work was rated positively across party lines (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2022a). In the election campaign, he staged himself as a caring “father of the state” (*Landesvater*) who could lead Lower Saxony through the crisis. This strategy was particularly evident in the SPD's television election commercial (SPD 2022) and in the overarching campaign claim “The state in good hands”. In contrast, the position of his challenger Bernd Althusmann of the CDU (EPP) was more difficult. As deputy minister-president, Althusmann could not credibly criticise the Grand Coalition's policies at the state level, as he had been largely involved in their implementation in recent years. He therefore geared his campaign strategy towards turning the state election in Lower Saxony into a protest election against the traffic light coalition of SPD (S&D), FDP (RE) and Greens (Greens/EFA) governing at the federal level. Bernd Althusmann, however, received significantly worse individual ratings from the population than Stephan Weil (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2022b). When asked directly about their preference for a minister-president, Stephan Weil was consistently far ahead of Bernd Althusmann in the weeks leading up to the election (Hinford & Neu 2022). The leading candidates of the other parties, on the other hand, played only a minor role in the election campaign. The leading candidate of the Greens (Greens/EFA), Julia Willie Hamburg, and the leading candidate of the FDP (RE), Stefan Birkner, had only a low level of awareness among the population (Infratest dimap 2022). The same was probably true for the second top candidate of the Greens, Christian Meyer, as well as for the top candidate of the AfD (ID), Stefan Marzischewski-Drewes.

The election result

Voter turnout in the 2022 Lower Saxony state election fell slightly compared to 2017 (Figure a). It decreased by 2.8 percentage points from 63.1 per cent to 60.3 per cent. Only in the state elections of 2008 and 2013 had voter turnout been lower. After that, it had risen again slightly due to the emergence of the AfD (ID), which was able to mobilise some former non-voters for itself in the 2017 and 2022 state elections.

State elections in Lower Saxony are conducted according to the system of personalised proportional represen-



a • Turnout by municipality, 2022

tation. Voters have two votes. With their first vote, they chose a direct candidate in their constituency, while the second vote determines the distribution of seats among parties in parliament. The SPD (S&D) obtained 33.4 per cent of the second votes in the Lower Saxony state election of 9 October 2022. This corresponded to a decline of 3.5 percentage points compared to the 2017 election.

Nevertheless, it remained the strongest force and could therefore be called the winner of the election. The second ruling party in office, the CDU (EPP), also performed worse than in 2017, losing 5.5 percentage points at 28.1 per cent. This was the worst election result for the CDU (EPP) in Lower Saxony since 1955; together, the two governing parties in Lower Saxony lost a total of nine percentage points. Other winners in the 2022 Lower Saxony state elections were the Greens (Greens/EFA) and the AfD (ID). The Greens (Greens/EFA) increased their second vote result from 8.7 to 14.5 per cent, thus achieving the largest absolute increase in vote share among all parties.

The AfD (ID), on the other hand, was not able to double its result from 2017, which it had stated as its election goal. After 6.2 per cent in 2017, it nevertheless achieved an increase of 80 per cent with 11.0 per cent in 2022. This was the largest relative gain of all parties represented in the Lower Saxony state parliament to date. In contrast, the FDP (RE) suffered a bitter defeat; after losing 2.8 percentage points in the second votes, it landed at 4.7 per cent just below the 5 per cent threshold laid down in Lower Saxony's electoral law, and is thus no longer represented in the Lower Saxony State Parliament. The Left Party, which had already failed to enter the State Parliament in 2017, also lost votes and, with 2.7 per cent of the vote, was now even more clearly below the threshold. All other parties running in the State Parliament election were only able to attract marginal shares of the vote. Worth mentioning are the Animal Protection Party with 1.5 per cent of the second votes, the newly founded party dieBasis with

1.0 per cent and the satirical party "Die PARTEI" with 0.9 per cent.

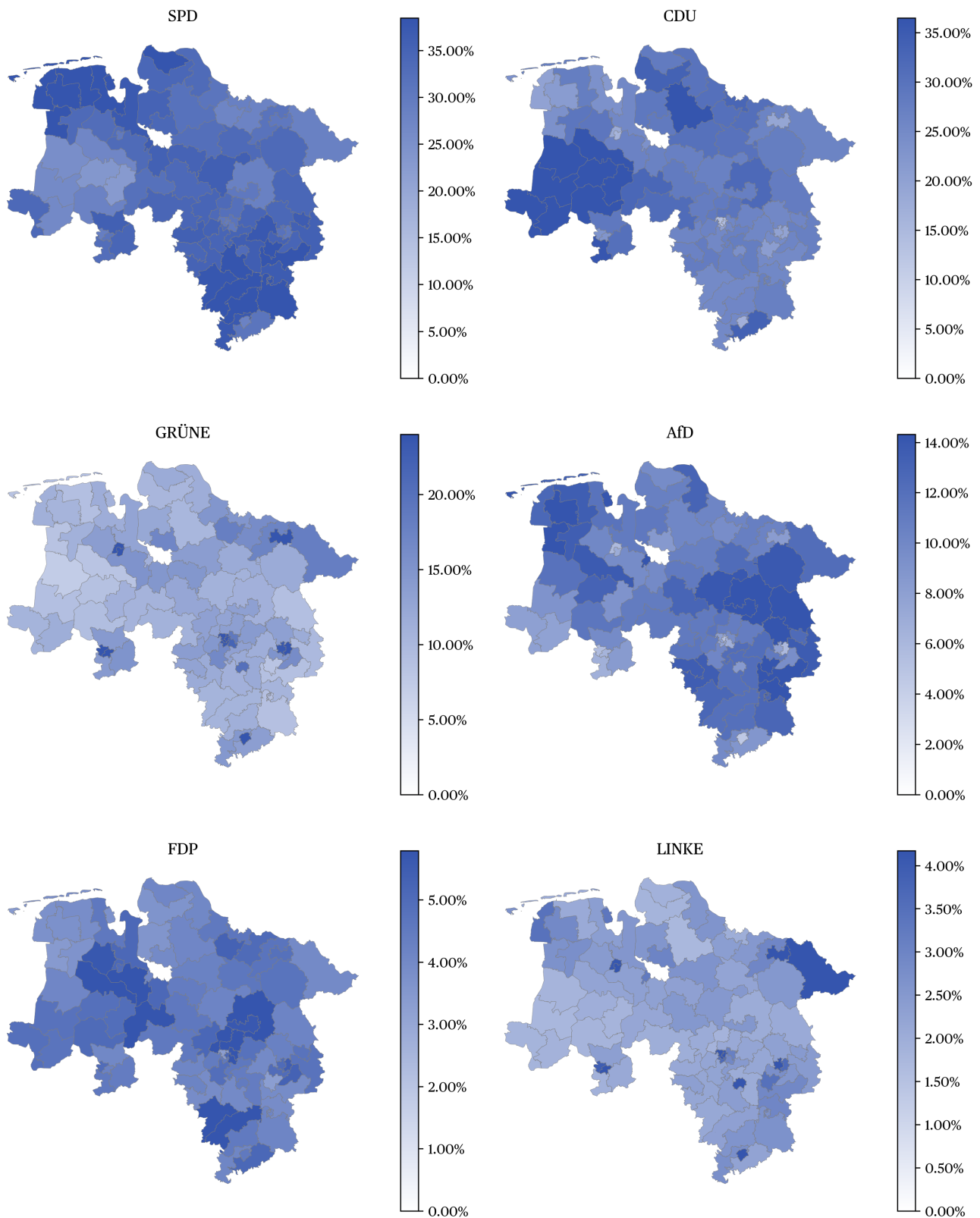
If we look at the regional distribution of the second vote shares of the various parties, we find that the SPD (S&D) has the greatest support among voters in East Frisia, the regions of Hanover and Hildesheim as well as in southern Lower Saxony. The CDU (EPP), on the other hand, is particularly strong in the south-western part of Lower Saxony, especially in the rural districts of Emsland, Cloppenburg and Grafschaft Bentheim. Other areas of support for the CDU (EPP) are in the districts of Rotenburg and Göttingen. The Greens (Greens/EFA) are particularly strong in Lower Saxony's university towns and the districts bordering them. Finally, the AfD (ID) has its greatest successes in the districts around Wolfsburg, which are strongly influenced by the automotive industry, as well as in the Weser-Ems region in the north-west of Lower Saxony (Figure b).

If we look at the urban-rural divide, it is very clear that the CDU (EPP) and the AfD (ID) do significantly better in the rural areas of Lower Saxony than in the big cities. This is exactly the reverse for the Greens (Greens/EFA). Finally, the SPD (S&D) and the FDP (RE) are roughly equally strong in urban and rural areas.

In Lower Saxony there are a total of 87 constituencies, with a minimum size of the Landtag of 135 seats. Of the 87 direct mandates, the SPD (S&D) won 57. This corresponds to a gain of two mandates. The CDU (EPP) achieved 27 direct mandates, five fewer than in 2017. The Greens (Greens/EFA) were able to win direct mandates for the first time in a state election in Lower Saxony. It achieved this with the constituencies of Lüneburg, Göttingen-City and Hanover-Centre, in three of Lower Saxony's major university cities

The distribution of mandates

The high number of direct mandates won by the SPD (S&D) had an impact on the size of the Lower Saxony state parliament. When the statutory minimum number of 135 seats was distributed according to the secondary vote result, the SPD (S&D) was entitled to 52 seats. This was five less than the number of direct mandates it won. The number of seats in the Lower Saxony state parliament was therefore increased in two steps by a total of eleven seats, in accordance with the provisions of the Lower Saxony state election law, so that the SPD (S&D) could retain all the direct mandates it had won and the other parties could receive corresponding compensatory seats. As a result, the Lower Saxony state parliament will have 146 seats after the 2022 state election. Compared to the previous legislative period, this is an increase of nine seats. Of the 146 seats, 57 are held by the SPD (S&D), which was able to fill all its Landtag mandates with directly elected MPs.



b • Party scores, 2022

The CDU (EPP) received 47 mandates, the Greens (Greens/EFA) 24 and the AfD (ID) 18. Due to the enlargement of the Landtag and the departure of the FDP (RE), the loss of votes by the SPD (S&D) and CDU (EPP) was only reflected in their mandate numbers in a diminished form. The SPD (S&D) even gained two mandates, although it had lost 3.5

percentage points in the second votes. The CDU (EPP) also only lost three mandates in the end, despite its sizeable losses in the second vote share. The Greens (Greens/EFA) and the AfD (ID), on the other hand, each doubled the number of their mandates. Of the total of 146 members of the Lower Saxony state parliament, 50 are female. The proportion of women is thus 34 per cent. However, the various parliamentary groups in the Lower Saxony state

parliament differ significantly with regard to the proportion of women. For example, women make up a majority of 58 per cent in the Greens/EFA parliamentary group, while they only make up 17 per cent in the AfD (ID) parliamentary group.

The formation of a government

The result of the Lower Saxony state election of 2022 would have allowed the continuation of the previous Grand Coalition. However, both the SPD (S&D) and the CDU (EPP) had already made it clear before the election that they would not seek a continuation of the Grand Coalition. The SPD (S&D) declared during the election campaign that it would rather govern with the Greens (Greens/EFA) than with the CDU (EPP). The CDU (EPP) had stated as an election goal that it wanted to become the strongest party so that Bernd Althusmann could become Minister President. The desired coalition partner was officially left open, but one can assume that the CDU (EPP) would have preferred a coalition with the FDP (RE). However, due to the departure of the FDP (RE) from the state parliament and the heavy loss of votes by the CDU (EPP), a government led by Bernd Althusmann was outside the realm of possibility. And so, after the election, there was a new edition of the red-green coalition that had already governed Lower Saxony between 2013 and 2017. SPD (S&D) and Greens (Greens/EFA) together have 81 mandates in the new state parliament, well above the absolute majority of 74 votes. This majority is comfortable enough that a situation like that of 2017 is not to be feared. Back in 2017, the Red-Green Party had governed with only a one-vote majority in the Landtag and a Green MP had switched to the CDU (EPP). This led to early elections, as the red-green state government had lost its majority in parliament.

The state government formed after the state elections is the third cabinet under Minister-President Stephan Weil. The leading candidate of the Greens (Greens/EFA), Julia Willie Hamburg, is the first woman in Lower Saxony's history to become Deputy Minister-President. She was also appointed as the new Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs and delegated to the Supervisory Board

of the Volkswagen Group on behalf of the State of Lower Saxony. In total, the state government comprises ten ministers. Six of these ministers are provided by the SPD (S&D), another four by the Greens (Greens/EFA). Gender parity is established with five male and five female ministers.

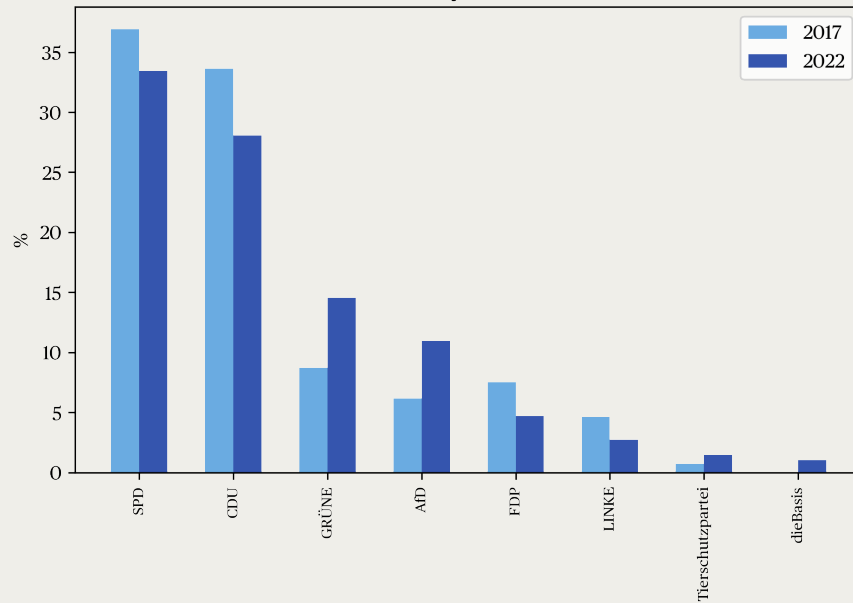
Outlook

With regard to state policy, the biggest change in the next few years will probably be that the red-green coalition will move away from the restrictive budgetary policy still pursued under the Grand Coalition at the insistence of the CDU (EPP). At the very least, the coalition agreement plans the creation of a "Lower Saxony Fund", which can be used to circumvent the so-called debt brake when financing state expenditure. In addition, a "Lower Saxony Green Bond" is to be issued to finance investments in ecological projects outside the regular state budget. The future policy of the red-green state government will focus on climate policy and housing policy. It has been announced that Lower Saxony is to become climate-neutral by 2040 and that, in addition, a non-profit state housing company that has yet to be founded will create 40,000 state-owned flats. In addition, all pupils in Lower Saxony will be provided with a free tablet for use in school.

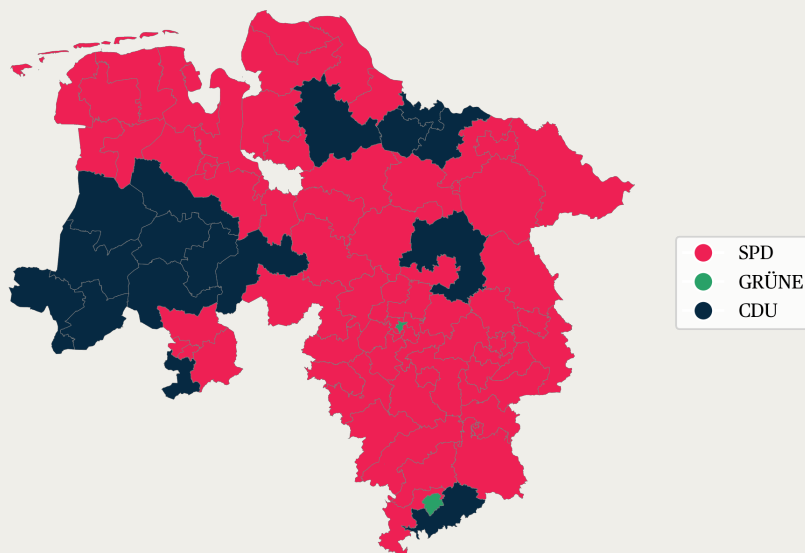
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Party votes

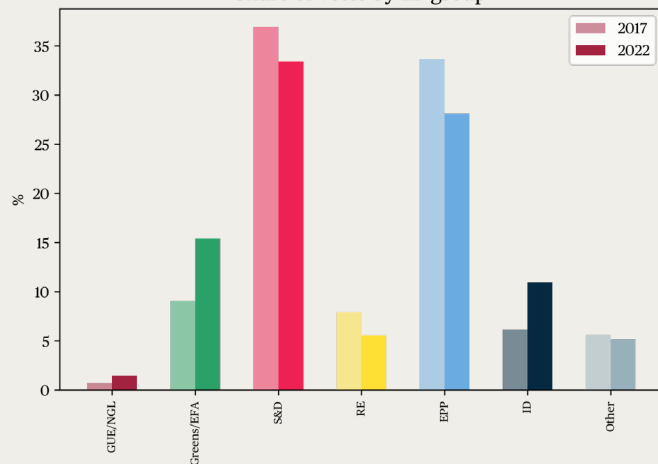


Winning party (2022)

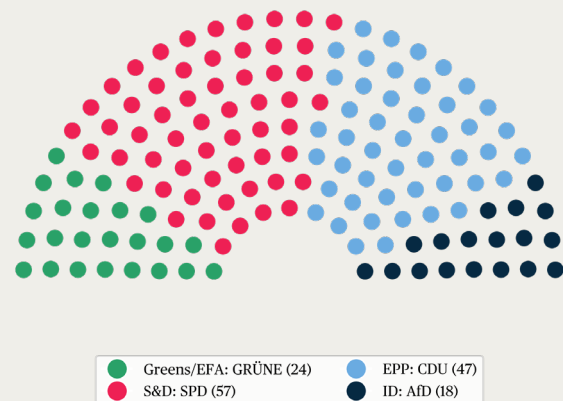


European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



Niedersächsischer Landtag (2022)





Meta Novak, Damjan Lajh • Univerza v Ljubljani

Presidential election in Slovenia, 23 October 2022

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Introduction

Although Slovenia has a parliamentary political system, the President of the Republic is elected in direct elections by secret ballot. Nevertheless, the presidential elections are seen as less important than general elections due to the limited area of the President's constitutionally determined functions and responsibilities. The main attributions of the President include representative and protocol functions, and being the Commander-in-Chief of the defence forces. Other powers of the President of the Republic include announcing parliamentary elections; promulgating laws after their adoption; appointing and recalling ambassadors; issuing instruments of ratification; deciding on pardons; awarding honorary titles; expressing an opinion on an individual issue at the request of the National Assembly; proposing a candidate for Prime Minister; nominating judges of the Constitutional Court and performing other duties determined by the constitution (Article 107 of the Constitution). In view of the duties and powers of the President of the Republic, his role is often seen as a mainly protocolary one (e-uprava, n.d.).

The President can serve at most two consecutive mandates, with each term lasting five years. Elections to the Presidency of the Republic are announced by the Speaker of the National Assembly.

The lower importance of presidential elections in the eyes of voters is evident mostly from voters turnout at the elections. Although electoral participation has been tendentially dropping for all types of elections, the turnout at the presidential elections is generally lower than

the turnout at national parliamentary elections. In the first presidential elections in 1992, the voters turnout was very high, at almost 86%. At the elections in 1997 and in 2002 it was still around 70%. In 2007 it dropped below 60%, while at the 2012 elections it dropped even below 50%. In 2022, when it was clear that voters would elect a new president because the current president, Borut Pahor, was already serving his second term, the turnout increased a little over 50%. This year's election was the only one that took place in the same year as a parliamentary election, which might have generated a more heated climate and motivated additional voters to cast their ballot.

The Presidential election takes place in two rounds. If none of the candidates gathers more than 50% of valid votes, a second round of voting is organised between the two candidates that gathered the highest share of votes. For this reason, the winner of the election is usually not the candidate who gathered the most votes in the first round, but rather the candidate who was more acceptable for voters who originally gave their vote to a candidate not among the top two candidates in the first round. Only the first president of Slovenia, Milan Kučan, was elected in the first round of voting in both of his terms. He was able to gather more than 50% of the vote despite the number of other competing candidates.

Slovenian voters are frequently split between a centre-right and a centre-left option, with the centre-left presenting a slight majority. The main cleavage in Slovenia could be named traditional-modern or libertarian-authoritarian. The communism-anticommunism cleavage is closely connected to developments during World War II, and importantly overlaps with the libertarian-authoritarian cleavage (Krašovec & Novak, 2021). According to public opinion data, a higher share of Slovenian voters position themselves on the left side of the ideological spectrum. In 2021, 29.1 percent of respondents positioned themselves on the left, 24 percent in the centre and 22.6 percent on the right (Hafner-Fink, Broder & Doušak, 2020). Higher support for centre-left and left parties is also evident from election results in 2022, where the left-wing political parties who entered the parliament together gathered 45.6% of the vote (Novak & Lajh, 2022).

The 2022 presidential election was specific in three respects: for the first time, a female president was elected; the ring-wing candidate gathered the highest support among right-wing candidates with respect to previous elections; the winning candidate entered the electoral campaign as an independent and was not supported (in the first round) by any political party. We will continue by reviewing the results, focusing on the candidates and their performance at the elections.

Results

First round of elections

While in parliamentary elections, it is quite common that voters resort to strategical voting by supporting that they deem most likely to win and form the government – which was the case in the 2022 parliamentary elections in Slovenia (Novak & Lajh, 2022) –, due to the two-round system of presidential elections voters in the first round usually support the candidate that they prefer, even if she/he will not gather sufficient amount of votes to enter the second round. In the second round, voters then decide to support their best, or least bad, option. The votes in the first round are thus likely to be dispersed among many candidates.

In the first round of the presidential election, held on 23 October 2022, seven candidates competed. None of the candidates gathered more than 50% of the vote, and a second round of elections needed to be organised. The candidates were different than those competing at the 2017 election, when seven candidates were also running for the position. Only three political parties – the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), New Slovenia - Christian democracy (NSi) and the Slovenian Democrats (SD) – ran with candidates in both elections.

In the first round, Anže Logar received the highest percentage of votes – 33.96%. He has been a member of the National Assembly, and despite being a highly visible member of the SDS party (and even the chairman of the party's program council), at the elections he ran as an independent candidate, he won in a majority of municipalities, achieving particularly good result in rural areas. This result also meant that the SDS as a party performed better than at the previous 2017 Presidential election, when they received 13.68% of votes, and even better than at the parliamentary election held earlier in 2022, when they received 23.48% of votes (DVK, 2022). One of the main reasons Logar ran as an independent candidate was that he also wanted to attract voters that position themselves against the SDS party, and, more specifically, against their controversial leader Janez Janša. In the pre-election debates, his status as a party rather than an independent candidate was challenged. Despite widespread doubts about the independence of his candidacy, this ambiguity has probably contributed to his success.

The candidate to announce her participation in the election was Nataša Pirc Musar, a former journalist, information Commissioner and, at the time of her nomination, a lawyer in her private firm. Together with her husband, she owns several companies. She ran as an independent candidate, but received support from the two former presidents Milan Kučan and Danilo Türk. She was able to receive the second highest share of votes (26.87%) performing better in the urban cities of Ljubljana, Maribor, Koper and Murska Sobota, and surrounding municipali-

ties. During the election campaign, she was confronted about the personal assets that she holds together with her husband, as well as about her tax bills (Vrkapić & Božič, 2022). She denied all the allegations and was even able to overcome them, although property issues have been important to Slovenian voters in the past. In the second round of the election, her candidacy was immediately supported by Robert Golob, president of the Freedom Movement Party (GS) (STA, 2022), as well as by the SD (Dnevnik, 2022) – giving her support from the two biggest coalition parties in the National Assembly.

Milan Brglez, member of the European Parliament, former president of the National Assembly and a university professor, was the official candidate of the SD and GS parties in the first round of the election. Initially, he was a candidate for the SD party, but received GS's support once Marta Kos, a former GS vice-president, decided not to run for president due to personal reasons. The 15.41% of the vote that Brglez received was, in eyes of many, a defeat of the winning party at the parliamentary election, and, at the same time, of the entire coalition. Compared to the 2017 presidential election, the SD performed worse – Borut Pahor, the Slovenian president in the previous two terms from 2012 to 2022, was a member of the SD.

Vladimir Prebilič, an independent candidate, exceeded most analysts' expectations, receiving 10.66% of the vote. He is a university professor and the mayor of Kočevje municipality. His candidacy was supported by the new, extraparlamentarian Green party Vesna, which was established by civil society actors. Through his candidacy, he supported green ideas and tried to present himself as a bridging actor that would be able to overcome the split between the political left and right. After the first round of elections, he even refused to support any of the first two candidates (N1, 2022). While at first public opinion data showed low public support for his candidacy (Žurnal24, 2022), he was able to convince voters in pre-election TV debates, using his rhetorical skills to gather more support. He performed especially well in his local environment, in the municipalities of Kočevje, Ribnica, Loški potok, Kostel and Osilnica, where he even received the most votes.

Sabina Senčar, a doctor and gynaecologist, also ran with the support of an extraparlamentary party. Namely, she received her support from the party Resni.ca. This party is slightly controversial as its leader was behind the organisation of anti-covid protests in Autumn 2021, which turned violent on some occasions (Novak, 2022). At the parliamentary election, Resni.ca received a surprising 2.86%. This was not enough to enter the parliament, since the minimal threshold is 4%, but the party was now entitled to financial support for the entire term. Senčar also performed better than expected and came at the fifth place with 5.96% of the vote. Resni.ca analyzed this performance as reflecting increasing support for their party

Janez Cigler Kralj and Miha Kordiš, who were both party candidates, obtained disappointing results, being able to gather only few votes. Janez Cigler Kralj is a member of the NSi party and former minister. He obtained only 4.35% of the vote, which was also disappointment for the party. For the second round of elections, NSi decided to support the SDS candidate Anže Logar (MMC RTV SLO, 2022). This was expected since both parties have often collaborated in the past.

Miha Kordiš is a member of the government coalition party, the Left. He received the least votes – 2.80%. Since his party's positions are often radical, he did not expect high support and was satisfied with the content he brought into the pre-election campaign (Kralj, 2022). He received votes mostly from urban areas, while Janez Cigler Kralj mostly received votes from rural areas. Nevertheless, the representatives of these two parliamentary parties were expected to perform better at the elections.

Second round of elections

The second round of elections was organised on Sunday, 13 November 2022. The second round is organised only between the two candidates who received the most votes in the first round. These were Anže Logar and Nataša Pirc Musar. Although Logar received more votes in the first round, in the second round he lost against Pirc Musar. It can be suggested that voters did not decide primarily between two candidates, but between left-wing and right-wing political options (Zavrtanik, 2022) or even on the basis of anti-Janša voting (Esih, 2022). Given that more Slovenians position themselves on the left of the political spectrum (Novak and Lajh, 2022), it was expected that Pirc Musar would win the election. This indeed happened, as Pirc Musar received 53.89% of the vote. She was elected mostly thanks to voters from urban areas in the West and North of Slovenia, where public support for the current government is also higher. This was the first victory of a female and independent candidate in a presidential election since the foundation of the independent Slovenian state 30 years ago. Logar received 46.11% of the vote and received support mostly from rural areas. The voters' turnout was 53.60%, which was higher by 2 pp in comparison to the first round. In both the first and second rounds, invalid and blank ballot papers were more common in the Western part of Slovenia. However, the share of invalid ballots was higher in the second round.

Conclusion

The 2022 presidential election was in many ways different from the previous ones. Given that current president Borut Pahor already served two mandates and a new president was about to be elected, the outcome of the

election was open, and parties searched for candidates that could gather broad support and potentially win. In many ways, Anže Logar tried to address the voters in a similar manner as his predecessor, by joining local events and sport events. Janez Cigler Kralj even used the slogan "One of us". At the end, it seemed that these presidential elections were mostly a competition between the left and the right, confirming the high level of political and social polarisation of Slovenian society. After the results of the first round, Nataša Pirc Musar even announced that this presidential election would be a "clash of values" and thus clearly emphasized the different political positioning of the two candidates (MMC RTV SLO, 2022b). This was also the impression given by the winning parliamentary party GS, which gave their support to Nataša Pirc Musar and "adopted" her as their candidate (because of her left-wing orientation) as soon as it became clear that their official party candidate would not enter to the second round. This led to the election of the first female Slovenian president, and to the first victory of an independent candidate in Slovenian history, despite Pirc Musar facing many allegations during the campaign regarding her salary and personal assets, issues that played an important role in previous presidential elections.

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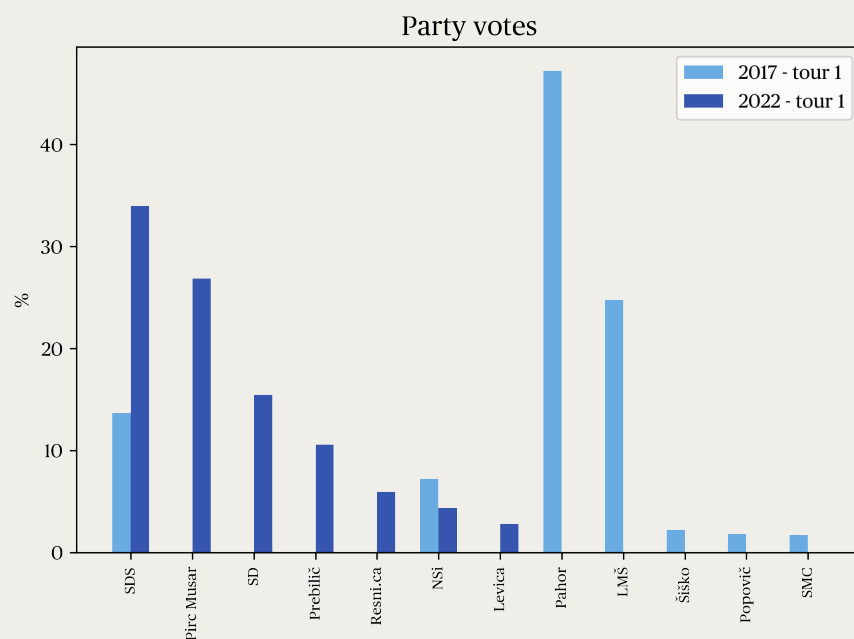
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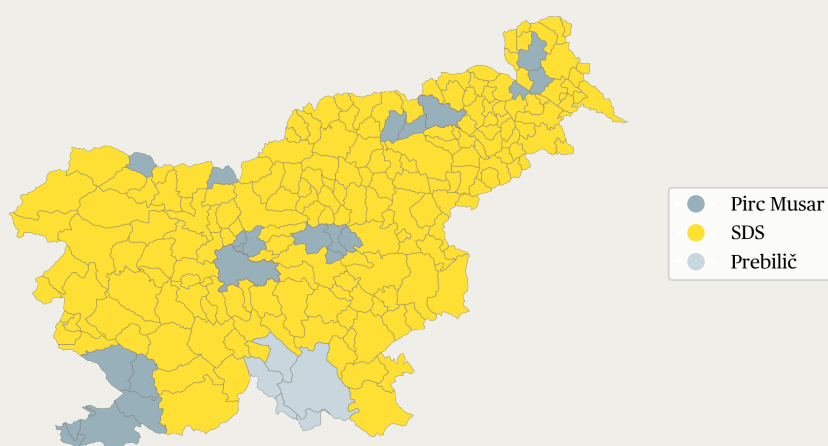
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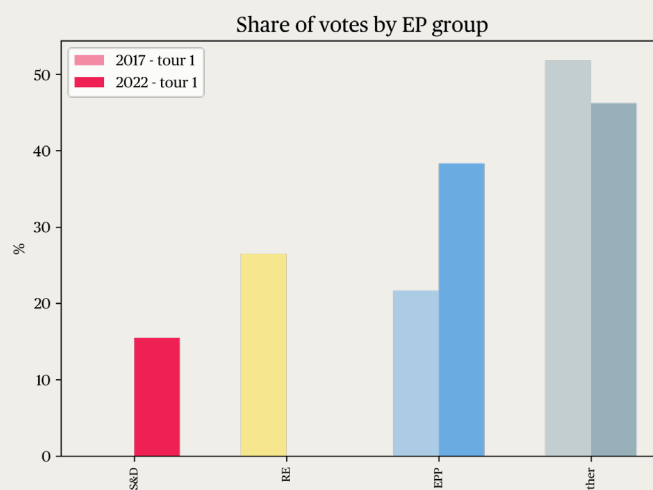
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN SLOVENIA, 23 OCTOBER 2022. DATA



Winning party (2022 - tour 1)



European indicators





Karina Kosiara-Pedersen • Københavns Universitet

Parliamentary election in Denmark, 1 November 2022

The context of the election

At the 2019 election, Mette Frederiksen from the Social Democrats (*Socialdemokratiet*) acquired the keys to the Prime Minister's Office with the support of the centre-left parties (Red-Green Alliance, Socialist People's Party and Social Liberals). The minority, one-party government successfully (in an international perspective and according to the electorate) handled the Covid-19 pandemic and there was for a while a 'rally around the flag' trend. However, the Covid-19 handling also included closing down the mink industry, including killing all minks, and not all decisions on this were legal. A minister stepped down, but the opposition put Mette Frederiksen and her role in the spotlight. A commission investigated this, and in light of the report from the "Mink commission", the Social Liberals (*Radikale Venstre*) announced on 2 July that they required Mette Frederiksen to call the election prior to the opening of the parliament season on the first Tuesday in October. Otherwise, they would withdraw their support, whereby the government would fall. Hence, the election campaign had already begun when the Prime Minister (on 5 October) called the election for 1 November 2022. The regular general election was to be held on 4 June 2023 the latest, and given her scores in the polls there is no doubt that Mette Frederiksen would have preferred to wait.

Lots of (new) parties

A high number of parties, 13 in total, fielded candidates across the ten electoral districts for the 175 seats in parliament elected in Denmark (in addition to these 175 seats, four MPs are elected in Greenland and the Faroe Islands).

Eleven parties elected in 2019 were still represented in parliament, and the Christian Democrats (*Kristendemokraterne*) stood for election as they have since 1971. In addition, new parties had been formed. MPs had left the Alternative (*Alternativet*) to create the Independent Greens (*Frie Grønne*), and two former high-profiled Liberals had launched their own parties.

Lars Løkke Rasmussen, a former Prime Minister, minister and chair of the Liberals (*Venstre*), left the Liberals on 1 January 2021. In his Facebook statement, he wrote that he had decided to 'set himself free after 40 years of Liberal membership'. He justified continuing as an independent in parliament, stating that: "Due to my number of personal votes, I'm elected in my own right and will therefore not leave my parliamentary seat" (Rasmussen 2021). At first, Rasmussen formed a political network but in June 2021, the party name, *Moderaterne*, was approved by the authorities, and by September 2021, they had collected the required number of signatures. In June 2022, the party was formally formed.

Inger Støjberg, a former minister and vice-chair in the Liberals, left the Liberals in light of their support for the 'impeachment' (decided February 2021). Støjberg was accused and later convicted for the handling of cases concerning the accommodation of married or cohabiting asylum seekers, one of whom was a minor, which had not taken place in accordance with administrative law rules and principles (Kosiara-Pedersen 2021). When sentenced to six months of unconditional prison in December 2021, Støjberg left parliament upon the sentence and served it in her home in the spring of 2022. In June 2022, she formally formed the party 'Danish Democrats – Inger Støjberg' (*Danmarksdemokraterne*) and broke the record for fastest collection of voter signatures to become eligible to stand for election.

Election results at the party level

When comparing the election results of 2019 and 2022 (see panel "the data"), two overall results stand out. First, there is only one large party left instead of two. Second, two new parties make it into the top 5 in 2022. However, changes at the party level can be seen as well.

At the 2019 elections, the Social Democrats gained only one seat but acquired the keys not only to the Prime Minister's office, but to all ministerial offices with the support of the Red-Green Alliance, Socialist People's Party and Social Liberals (Kosiara-Pedersen 2020). The election period brought unprecedented challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in a 'rally around the flag' tendency and high levels of support for the Social Democrats. However, the joyful period did not last, amongst other things due to the Mink Culling scandal. Hence, at the 2022 election, the Social Democrats gained two seats,

which was better than expected. The Social Democrats had struggled in the cities at the 2021 municipal elections, and while, at the 2022 general election, they did less well in densely populated areas, their losses there were not as large as feared.

Among the parties supporting the Social Democratic government in parliament, only one party gained electorally in 2022, namely the Socialist People's Party (*Socialistisk Folkeparti*, SF), which was considered the closest ally of the Social Democrats. The party gained one seat and now has 15. It thus managed to recover its usual level of support, stabilizing its score after a high of 23 seats in 2007 and a low of seven in 2015, caused by an unsuccessful term in government.

The most left-wing party, the Red-Green Alliance (*Enhedslisten*) lost four seats and ended with nine. This is a marked decrease, possibly partly explained by some voters choosing to 'save' the Alternative. However, this result is still above their electoral record of 1994-2007, where they, with 4-6 seats, were at or close to the electoral threshold.

Since 2001, the Social Liberals (*Radikale Venstre*) have been on a roller-coaster ride with a doubling and halving of their support at every other election. On this basis, the 2022 decline from 16 to seven could be expected. However, their losses in 2022 have been drastic, and also seem to result from their decision to require an early election – while still pointing to Mette Frederiksen as their preferred Prime Minister.

The Alternative (*Alternativet*) stormed into parliament with nine seats in 2015 but lost support in 2019 and ended with only five MPs. In 2022, they struggled with the 2 percent electoral threshold prior to the election but eventually made it into parliament with six seats. Some of the additional votes they received may be red-bloc sympathy votes from neighbour parties due to them being so close to the threshold, since opinion polls showed that if they did not make it into parliament, the centre-left would not be able to command a majority.

All parties in the centre-left bloc except the Social Democrats get markedly more votes as the population density increases. They are much stronger in suburban and urban areas. In addition, women, in comparison with men, cast more votes for centre-left parties than for parties right of the centre.

Turning to the right-of-centre parties, the most successful of them is still the Liberals, even if their vote share reduced drastically. In 2019, the Liberals gained seats but their government lost its majority, leading to Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen being replaced by Mette Frederiksen. In the aftermath of the election,

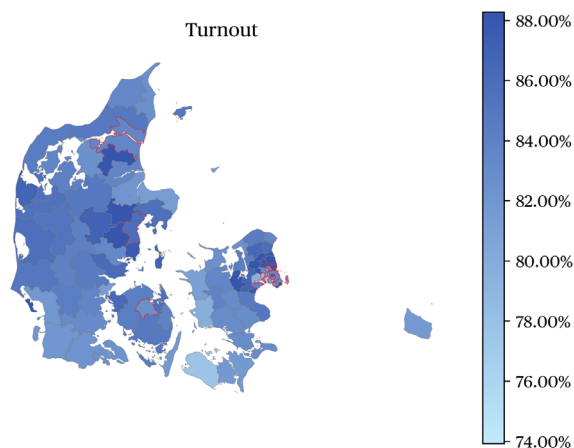
not only Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Inger Støjberg but also other prominent MPs left the Liberals or parliament. Opinion polls show that voters left them as well. The Liberals were struggling under the chairmanship of Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, son of former minister of foreign affairs and Liberal party chair Uffe Ellemann-Jensen. In this light, the electoral loss of 20 seats to a total of 23 seats was expected. But it is no less tough for a party who since 1994 have gotten at least 42 seats, and who saw the 2015 result with only 34 seats as a one-off incident due to issues with Lars Løkke Rasmussen's expense accounts (Kosiara-Pedersen 2016; 2017). The agrarian backbone of the Liberals is clearly seen in the electoral result, as they are doing markedly better in rural areas than in suburban and urban regions.

The Conservative People's Party (*Det Konservative Folkeparti*) doubled its representation from six to 12 seats in 2019, the largest gain in a long time. Due to the turmoil within the Liberals, their support more than doubled in 2021-2022 in the opinion polls. On this basis, their party chair, Søren Pape Poulsen, announced that he was also a Prime Minister candidate. With this came increased media attention and devastating coverage of decisions in his public and private life. Hence, while mid-election period expectations were very high, the loss of only two seats at the 2022 election came as a relief.

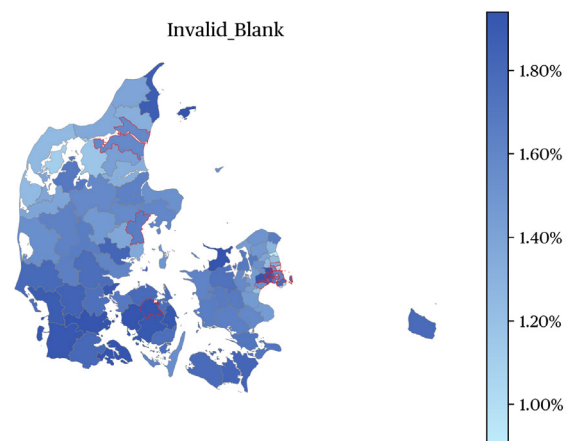
Except for the two new parties, the largest gain at the 2022 election was made by the Liberal Alliance (Liberal Alliance). Competing in elections since 2007, they have been roller-coasting from just over the electoral threshold in 2007 and 2019, to 13-14 seats in 2015 and 2022. Their young chair, Alex Vanopslagh, was particularly successful in gaining traction through campaigning on TikTok, and the Liberal Alliance has been successful with younger voters.

Turning to the three right-wing parties with clear anti-immigration stances, the oldest is the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*), created in 1996 as a splinter party from the Progress Party. It became the largest right-of-centre party in 2015, but was more than halved from 37 to 16 seats in 2019. After the 2019 election, the decline continued as the party dissolved, with MPs leaving in the aftermath of the election of Morten Messerschmidt as party chair. Polls indicated that they could land under the electoral threshold. Hence, even though they lost 11 seats in the 2022 election, they were relieved to secure representation with five seats.

The New Right (*Nye Borgerlige*) made it just above the threshold with four seats in 2019 in what was their first election. A period in clear opposition without marked influence left them rather outside the spotlight, but the turmoil within the Danish People's Party increased their electoral support in the opinion polls, and they eventually



a • Turnout by municipality, 2022



b • Blank and invalid votes by municipality, 2022

obtained six seats, gaining two.

Danish Democrats gained candidates, MPs and voters from the imploding Danish People's Party, which may at least partly explain how a party formally registered as late as June 2022 can storm into parliament with 14 seats (8 percent of the vote).

All three right-wing parties are, together with the Liberals, doing markedly better in rural areas than in suburban and urban ones. Their social profiles differ, in that the New Right gets more support from men and younger voters, while the gender balance is more equal in the other two parties, who also attract a large share of older voters..

Two parties stood for election but did not gain representation. The Christian Democrats have stood for election continuously since 1971 but has not gained election since 2001. The Independent Greens was the only green party not standing together with the Alternative at the 2022 election (Kosiara-Pedersen 2023). At 0.5 and 0.9 percent of the votes, they were both far from the 2 percent electoral threshold.

Election result at the system level

The 2022 election changed the format of the party system. Between seven and eleven parties have been elected to Folketinget since the 1973 election doubled the number of parliamentary parties from five to ten. After the 2022 election, 12 parties are represented in parliament.

At the core of the party system, the four old parties (Social Democrats, Liberals, Conservatives, and Social Liberals) regained their strength in 2019 with 68 percent of the seats after a major loss in 2015 (49 percent). However, in 2022 they are back to 2015 levels with 51 percent. This is markedly lower than at the 1973 election, in which these four parties got 59 percent of the seats. While keeping its monopoly on the Prime Minister's office, the old core of the Danish party system is being challenged (Kur-

rild-Klitgaard and Kosiara-Pedersen 2018).

In an international comparison, turnout in Denmark is high (Hansen 2020), but it saw a (further) drop from 85.9 percent in 2015 and 84.5 percent in 2019 to 84.2 percent in 2022. The downward trend is clear, even if more modest than in other European countries.

The share of invalid votes has been increasing for the past fifty years, but the 2022 election saw a marked increase both in the share of total invalid votes and in the share of blank votes (Hansen 2023). 1.3 percent of the Danish voters turned up but refrained from supporting any of the 13 parties and their candidates on the ballot. The share of invalid votes is higher in the southern part of Denmark, but there is no clear pattern across urban and rural areas.

Government formation

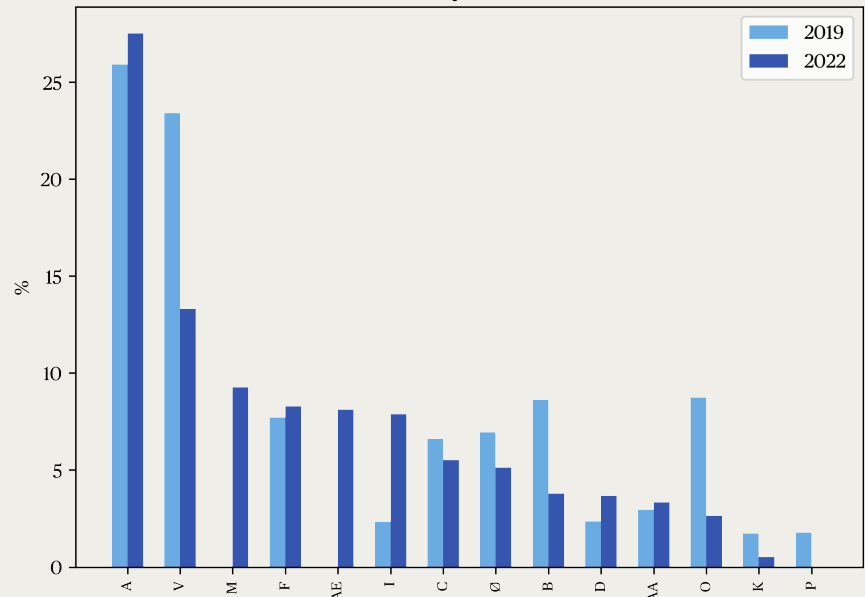
As regards government formation, the 2022 election also brings renewal. After three decades of long-serving Prime Ministers (Conservative-led right-of-centre government 1982-1993, Social Democratic-led centre-left 1993-2001, Liberal-led right-of-centre 2001-2011), the government has shifted side at all elections since 2011. However, the election night left PM Mette Frederiksen's centre-left bloc of parties with a marginal majority. While the government and its parliamentary basis had a comfortable majority at 92 seats after the 2019 election, not including the five Alternative MPs, who politically is part of the red bloc, the 2022 election saw their seat share decrease to 81. Only with the inclusion of the Alternative and three North Atlantic MPs (two from Greenland and one from the Faroe Islands), did Mette Frederiksen and the centre-left bloc of 'red' parties command the minimum majority of 90 seats. Nevertheless, this result preserved her right to form the new government. Mette Frederiksen was appointed formateur after a 'Queen round' (where all parties give advice on what government they support), and government negotiations are record long, being still ongoing five weeks after the election.

During the campaign, Mette Frederiksen repeated her message from June 2022, according to which she wanted to pursue a government formed across the two traditional blocks. At the time of writing, it seems as if she will succeed. The negotiations point towards a Social-Democratic led government with the Liberals, with the parliamentary support of the Moderates. This will be a historic government as the Social Democrats and Liberals have only collaborated in government once, in 1978-1979, in a political experiment that was not very successful. The implications of the advent of a centre government are extremely interesting. While Danish parliamentary affairs are well-known for a high level of consensus with broad support for a large share of the legislation, the government will be challenged by opposition parties from both the right and left, as well as from within, as ministers from the two sides are to agree and trust each other. Due to the high level of consensus among the majority of the parties on EU, foreign and defence policies, the government formation will only have little impact in these arenas.

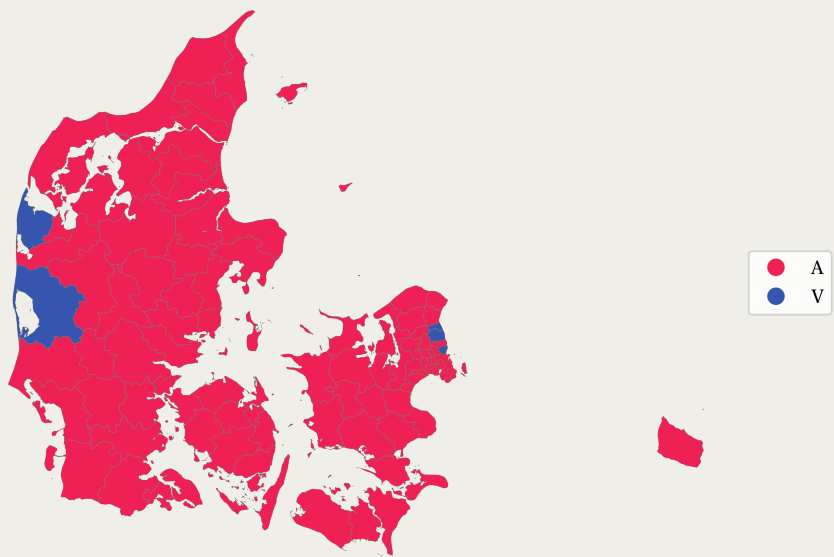
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Party votes

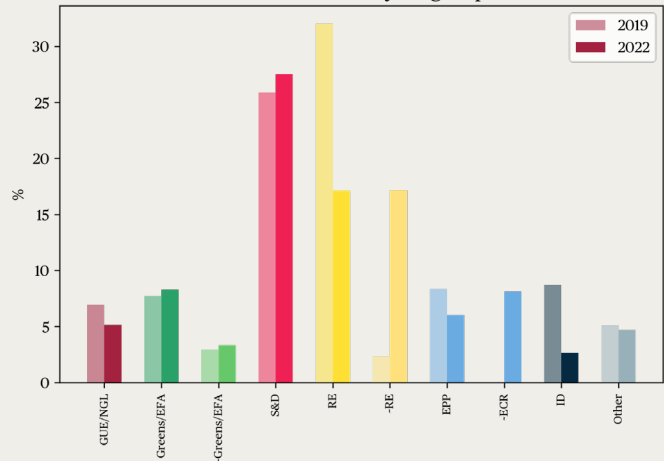


Winning party (2022)

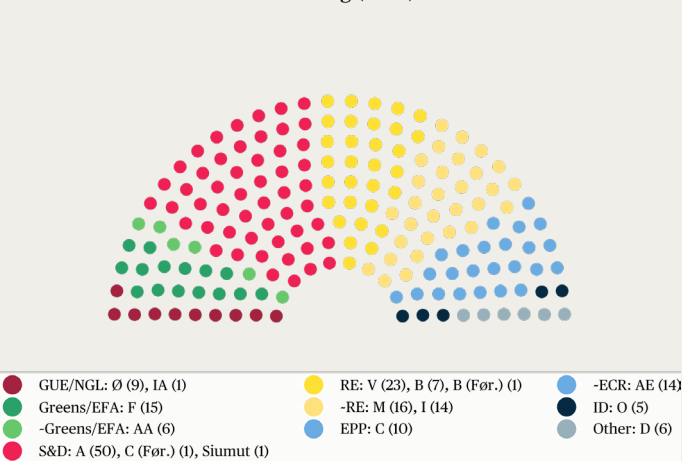


European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



Folketing (2022)



Special analyses

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02



Alexander Verdoes • Universitetet i Bergen

Municipal elections in the Netherlands, 13 March 2022

On the 16th of March 2022 municipal elections were held in the Netherlands. A total of 333 out of 344 municipalities elected a new municipal council. Elections were not held in 11 municipalities because “reform” elections were, or will, be held. Every four years, in March on a Wednesday municipal elections are held in all municipalities simultaneously. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic it was also possible to vote two days prior to the official election date. The report is divided in three parts. First will the organisation of Dutch municipalities be described. Second, will the campaign be discussed. Finally, the election results will be discussed. The 2022 elections can be characterised by three striking results: a record low turnout, a record high vote share won by local parties, and an all-time high fragmentation of the municipal councils.

The organisation of Dutch municipalities

Dutch municipalities are far from stable polities, as municipalities are subject to frequent territorial reforms. Until the 1950s, the number of municipalities was relatively stable, and there were more than 1,100 municipalities. Since then, the number of municipalities has gradually declined due to municipal mergers. In 2022, the Netherlands counted 344 municipalities. The organisation and competences of the municipalities are organised by the municipal law. All Dutch municipalities have the same responsibilities. The main responsibilities for municipal councils are spatial planning and development, housing, culture and recreation, local infrastructure, public health, primary schools, and since 2015, due to a decentralisation, municipal councils are also responsible for social

welfare, child protection, and employment and reintegration of the unemployed on the labour market. In addition, the mayor is responsible for public order and safety.

The size of the municipal council depends on the population and ranges from nine members (in municipalities with fewer than 3,000 inhabitants) to 45 (in municipalities with more than 200,000 inhabitants). The number of full-time aldermen¹ is at least two and no more than 20% of the number of councillors (i.e., nine in the largest municipalities). More aldermen can be appointed if they take up a part-time position.

During the elections, voters have one vote that they cast on one of the candidates who appear on the lists. The votes for the candidates are subsequently aggregated in the list on which the candidates appear. For the allocation of seats, the municipality forms one single electoral district. Each list obtains as many seats as it is proportionally entitled to following the Hare quota.² There is no legal electoral threshold. There is, however, a natural threshold that ranges between approximately 10% of the votes in the smallest municipalities, to about 2% of the votes in municipalities with more than 200,000 inhabitants. List seats are subsequently distributed to those candidates who obtained 25% of the electoral quota (50% in municipalities with fewer than 19 seats). In case not all seats can be allocated to candidates based on obtained preference votes, then those unfilled seats are allocated based on the list order.

After the election, a new municipal executive (*College van Burgemeester en Wethouders*) is formed that is composed of the mayor (*burgemeester*) and the aldermen (*wethouders*). The mayor has a special position as she is appointed for a six-year term, and can only be revoked, by the central government. The mayor chairs the municipal council but is *not* its member officially. The mayor is also the head and a full member of the executive. The aldermen in the executive are elected by, but not necessarily among, the members of the municipal council. In practice, this appointment happens after a coalition formation process, as single party majorities are rare, and even then, sometimes oversized coalitions are formed. In this process, parties negotiate a common government program that has the support of a majority in the council. However, because of the fragmentation of the councils, coalition formation can be a complicated process. A solution to this, that has become more common recently, is a “council-wide agreement” that is supported by (almost) all parties in the council.

1. The term aldermen is used to label the members of the executive (wethouders).
2. This quota is calculated by dividing the number of valid votes by the number of seats. Remainder seats are allocated following the D'Hondt method if 19 or more seats are allocated. Otherwise, remainder seats are allocated based on the largest remainders.

Municipal Size	Municipalities	Electorate	Turnout %	Local parties %	ENPP
<10,000	26	183,469	58.19	43.71	4.32
10,000-25,000	135	2,452,975	56.00	39.32	5.04
25,000-50,000	111	3,889,624	53.40	38.06	6.17
50,000-75,000	27	1,642,974	48.18	33.48	8.06
75,000-125,000	19	1,826,846	50.73	29.80	8.32
>125,000	15	3,600,898	46.08	16.35	9.03
Netherlands	333	13,596,786	51.00	31.58	5.98

Source: Kiesraad (2022), data cleaned by author.

a • Turnout, vote share for local parties, and fragmentation measured by the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) by municipal (electorate) size.

The campaign

Electoral campaigns were relatively local during the 2022 elections. The campaigns were extensively covered by local and regional media outlets. In addition to canvassing, it was also common to organise an election debate with local candidates on local topics. Salient local issues were often local development plans. In Zeewolde, for example, a local party (*Leefbaar Zeewolde*) that strongly opposed the construction of a data centre in the municipality won a majority of the vote in the elections. Another common theme in most municipalities was the housing crisis and accessibility to the affordable housing. Whether most voters were aware of these local campaign activities is another question, as interest in local politics is rather low (Den Ridder & Dekker 2019, p. 34).

Even though voters might not follow local politics, municipal elections usually receive considerable attention from the national media, and national politicians are generally visible during municipal election campaigns. However, this was different during the 2022 election, as attention from the national media and the visibility of national politicians remained rather limited. This can be explained by the outbreak of the war in Ukraine that dominated the news during the campaign period. Illustrative of this is that Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) attended a talk show in the context of the municipal elections. Rutte, however, had to leave during the live broadcast because the situation in Ukraine was escalating.

The results

In short, the elections revealed three striking outcomes. First, turnout in municipal elections reached its all-time low. Second, local parties obtained an unprecedented high vote share, and became the most prominent party, meanwhile most national parties presented themselves as “winners.” Third, local party systems have never been so fragmented.

First, turnout in municipal elections declined and reached its all-time low, as only 51.0% of the electorate showed up at the polling station. This is a 4-percentage

point drop, compared to the previous 2018 municipal elections. This was somewhat unexpected, as turnout was quite stable between 2002 and 2018, when it fluctuated around 55%. If we look at the turnout more closely, we see that turnout is primarily low in the larger municipalities (see Figure a). While turnout in the smallest municipalities is the highest (58.2% on average), the average for the largest municipalities is only 46.1%. An explanation for the low turnout in this specific election could be that the national media attention was limited for the municipal elections. Consequently, voters might have been less aware of these elections, and/or perceived the local elections as unimportant. It is, however, unwarranted to speak of a crisis in turnout, as turnout for national, provincial, and European elections has actually increased in the last decade.

Second, local parties became most prominent and grew even further, compared to the 2018 municipal elections. Local parties are parties that compete in one only municipality. In addition, these parties are not related to any national political party. Note that in many municipalities multiple local parties competed, in which case the votes for local parties are aggregated. While local parties obtained about 11.7% of the votes in the 1986 municipal elections, their vote share gradually increased during the 1990s, especially after the emergence of the Liveable (*Leefbaar*) movement (Van Ostaaijen 2012). In 2002, the local parties became for the first the time the plurality party as they obtained 25% of the votes. While in 2018 the local lists obtained an all-time high of 28.7% of the votes. This result was further improved in 2022, when local parties obtained a total of 31.6% of the votes. To understand the success of local parties one has to consider both the supply side (the parties that compete) and the demand side (what voters want).

From the demand side, we can understand the support for local parties because of political distrust. Voters who are dissatisfied with national, or local, politics, often vote for a local party. They do so to express their dissatisfaction with mainstream politics (Otjes 2018: 318-319; Otjes 2020: 103). Often, these local lists also find their origin and appeal to dissatisfaction with how the municipality is governed by the local branches of national parties (Van Ostaaijen 2012: 206). From this perspective, voting for local parties can thus be understood as a protest vote. Another demand side explanation is that local parties appeal to voters because local parties are better capable of defending local interests and/or appeal to a local identity. If this is the case, then voting for local parties is not a protest vote, but a local vote (Otjes 2018: 320).

From the supply side, the success of the local parties can be explained by the fact that not all parties that are represented in national parliament appear on the ballot in all municipalities (see Figure b). In almost all muni-

Party	Municipal coverage	Electorate coverage	Result 2022	Previous (2018)	2021 national
Local parties	98.20	99.36	31.58	28.65	-
VVD	94.29	98.16	11.61	13.5	21.87
CDA	98.20	99.41	11.19	13.41	9.5
D66	75.68	87.99	8.81	9.18	15.02
GroenLinks	53.15	76.09	8.47	8.87	5.16
PvdA	67.87	83.45	7.81	7.52	5.73
ChristenUnie	42.04	57.78	3.90	3.83	3.37
SP	25.83	52.16	2.79	4.44	5.98
SGP	18.62	19.91	2.30	1.9	2.07
Partij voor de Dieren	8.71	34.11	1.97	1.19	3.84
Forum voor Democratie	15.02	42.76	1.11	0.29	5.02
DENK	6.01	26.79	0.99	1.04	2.03
PVV	9.31	20.48	0.91	1.39	10.79
Volt	3.00	17.36	0.75	-	2.42
50PLUS	8.11	27.46	0.63	0.82	1.02
BIJ1	1.50	12.86	0.58	-	0.84
JA21	0.30	5.18	0.20	-	2.37
BBB*	-	-	-	-	1.00
PvdA-GroenLinks-D66**	23.12	12.97	2.01	1.56	-
SGP-ChristenUnie	10.21	13.04	1.02	1.29	-
Other parties***			1.38		

Municipal coverage entails the % of municipalities in which a party competed; electorate coverage is the % of the electorate that could vote for the party. Source Kiesraad (2022), data cleaned by the author.

* 20 local parties were "allies" with the BBB. ** Appears in different constellations: PvdA-GroenLinks, PvdA-D66, GroenLinks-D66, and PvdA-GroenLinks-D66. *** Fryske Nasjonale Partij (FNP), Belang van Nederland (BVNL), Partij voor Ouderen en Veiligheid, Partij voor het Noorden, JEZUS LEEFT, Piratenpartij, Algemeen Ouderen Verbond (AOV), LEF - Voor de Nieuwe Generatie, Hart voor Vrijheid, Trots op Nederland (TROTS), DE FEESTPARTIJ (DFP).

palities, voters could cast their vote for a local party, the VVD, or the CDA. Meanwhile, other parties that won a seat in the 2021 national elections only competed in a limited number of municipalities, often only in the more populated municipalities. Many voters could thus not vote for their preferred party and might have cast their vote for a local party instead (Otjes 2020: 103). Preliminary evidence for this is that in larger municipalities where most national parties compete, local parties obtained a smaller vote share. And relatedly to the distrust argument, many parties (e.g., SP, FVD, PVV, JA21, BBB) that do not compete in most municipalities, mobilise their voters based on a populist sentiment (Otjes 2020: 320). Local parties seem like a natural substitute for these voters, as many local parties also appeal to dissatisfaction with national political parties. Local parties could thus have benefited from the limited coverage of the many parties that are represented in national parliament.

Even though the local parties clearly are the winners of the elections with a record of 31.6% of the votes, most national parties have also declared themselves as winners. The VVD presented itself as the national party with the largest vote share even though it lost many votes in comparison to the previous municipal and national elections. The Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) became the national party with the most seats in the municipal coun-

cils. GreenLeft (*GroenLinks*) both obtained a record high vote share and record number of seats for municipal elections. The Labour Party (PvdA) became the largest party in the capital Amsterdam. Forum for Democracy (*Forum voor Democratie*) entered the municipal council in an additional 48 municipalities. While many other parties did better than expected compared to national election polls.

The interpretation of the election results (see Figure b) is, however, more difficult than it appears. First, it must be noted that these are aggregated results. The extent to which voters switch their vote is thus underestimated, as individual level vote switching can be cancelled out on the aggregated level. Similarly, the municipal results are aggregated to the national level. Consequently, vote swings at the municipal level can be cancelled out on the national level, as a party might win votes in one municipality, but loses in another. Second, one must choose a reference point which can either be the previous (2018) municipal election, or the previous (2021) national election. Both comparisons are difficult because the supply of parties' changes over time. The Socialist Party (SP), for example, competed in 111 municipalities in 2018, while in 2022 it competed in 87 municipalities. At

the same time, the SP lost 1.7 percent points in nationwide vote share. It is difficult to interpret this loss because some voters might have deliberately voted for another party. Meanwhile other voters could have wanted to vote for the SP, but they simply could no longer for vote the SP since it no longer competed. Consequently, these SP voters probably voted for another left-wing party, a local party, or did not turn out. The electoral performance of a party can thus partly be explained by which parties are present on the ballot.'

A comparison with previous national elections is even harder for the same reasons, as the parties that won seats in the parliament appeared on the ballot in all municipalities but their presence in on the ballot in the local election differs from municipality to municipality. Volt, a main competitor for the liberal democratic D66, for example did not compete in most municipalities. The vote loss for D66 could thus have been worse if Volt would have competed in more municipalities. In addition to the differences in supply of political parties, the huge turnout gap of 27.1 percentage points between national and local elections makes it difficult to compare the results on the aggregate level.

The final observation is that Dutch party system remains highly fragmented. While in 2018 there were on

average 5.8 effective number of parties represented in the municipal councils. This fragmentation increased further in 2022, when on average 6.0 effective parties were represented in the municipal councils. Again, we see a positive correlation with municipal size (Figure a). There are three related explanations for this positive relation. First, in the smallest municipalities on average only 5.3 lists competed, while in the largest municipalities on average 17.1 lists competed. Relatedly, the natural threshold in larger municipalities is lower, so it is relatively easier for parties to win a seat in larger municipalities. Finally, larger municipalities are often more socially diverse. Which is reflected in a more heterogeneous party system as parties can exploit these more heterogeneous political preferences. In addition, it is easier for parties to find local candidates and organise a local campaign as there is simply a higher number of supporters in more populated municipalities.

Fragmentation of the party systems complicates the coalition formation process, as it becomes more difficult to form, feasible, majorities. In the 2022 elections, there were only five municipalities where one single party obtained a majority of seats, while in 123 municipalities at least two parties will be needed to form a majority. In 151 municipalities, at least three parties are needed to form a majority, and in the remaining 54 municipalities at least four parties are needed to form a majority in the council. This leads to a complex coalition formation process, and at the time of writing (late May 2022), coalitions have been formed in only 130 municipalities. For comparison in 2018, about two months after the elections 233 local governments were formed, while in 2014 virtually all municipalities had their coalition in place two months after the elections (Van der Parre 2022). Explanations for these long formation processes, besides fragmentation, are the strength of anti-establishment parties, turnover of councillors, and municipal size (Otjes et al. 2021).

In addition to these three main arguments, it is worth noting that more female representatives were elected in the municipal councils. As the share of female representatives increased from 32% in 2018 to 37% in 2022. This is similar to the percentage of women in national parliament (38%), and higher than in provincial assemblies (33.2%). In The Hague the local party *Groep de Mos/Hart voor Den*

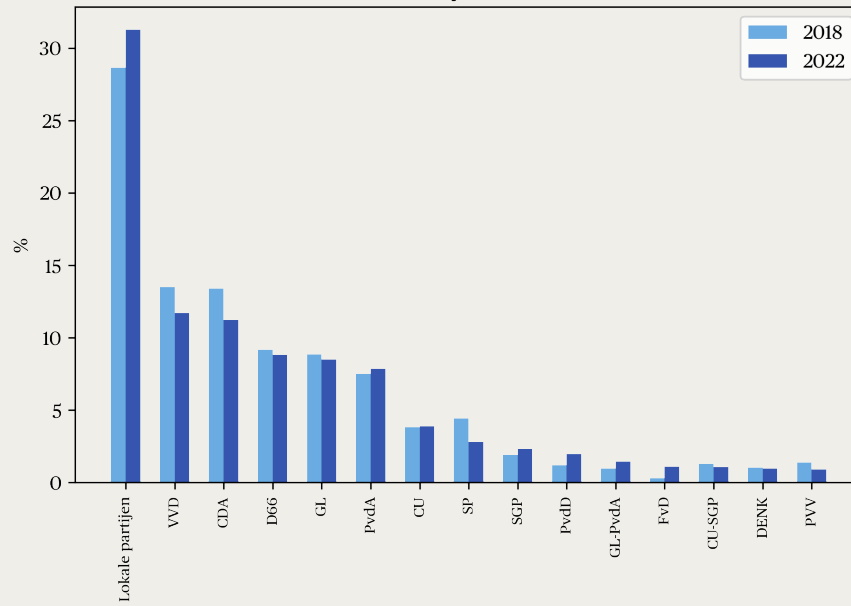
Haag and in Roermond the local party *Liberaal Volkspartij Roermond* became the largest parties, while the leaders of these local parties were under investigation (The Hague) or convicted for corruption (Roermond). Meanwhile, in 2018 in the municipality of Barendrecht, the local party *Echt voor Barendrecht* fell one seat short of an absolute majority, but it was nevertheless excluded from the government coalition. In 2022, the party won a staggering 20 out of 29 seats.

Local election surveys that have been conducted around the 2022 elections can further enlighten our understanding of these local elections. Which voters did not turn out, and what reasons did they have to stay at home: did their preferred party that did not compete, was interest in local politics lower than usual, or maybe some voters were afraid of COVID-19. Individual level evidence can also further our understanding of the extent of vote switching, which voters changed their vote compared to the previous national and local elections, and why so many voters voted for a local party.

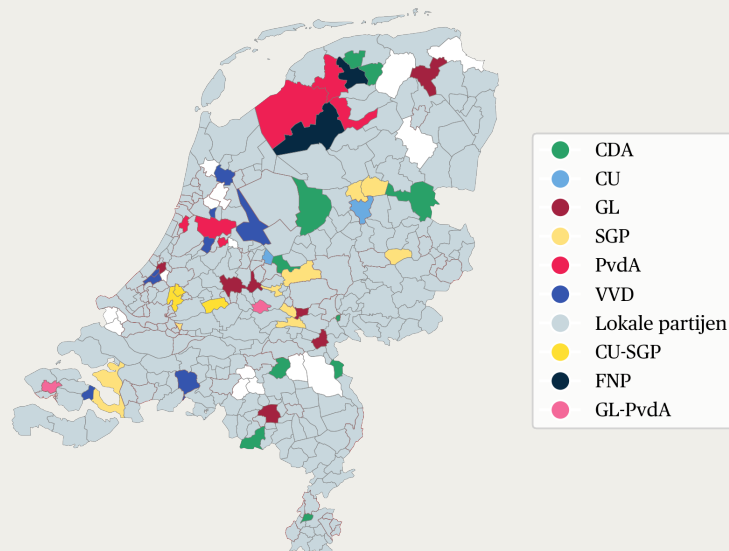
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Party votes

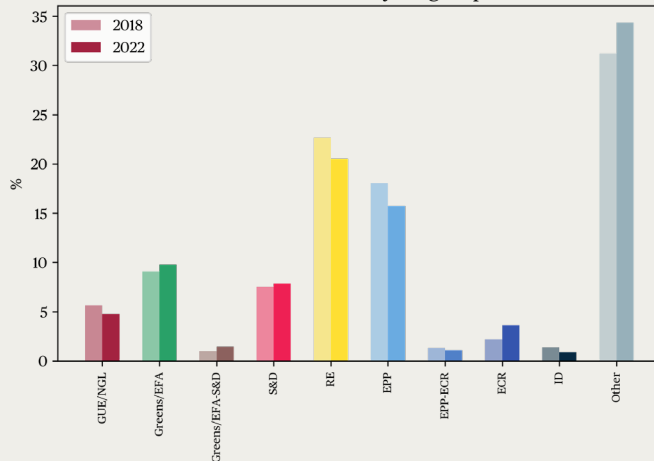


Winning party (2022)

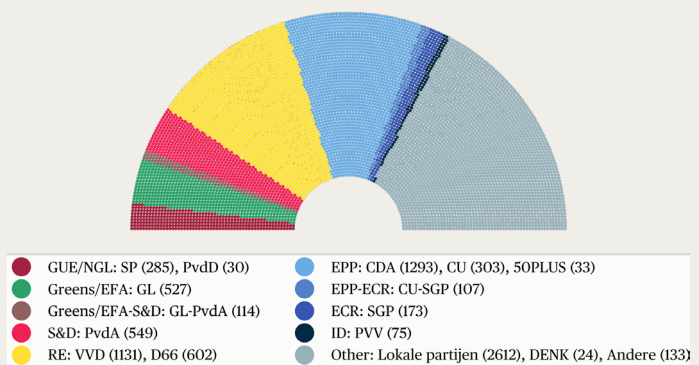


European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



Gemeenteraadsverkiezingen (2022)





Clare Rice • Queen's University Belfast

Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 5 May 2022

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The Northern Ireland Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly is a legislature within the United Kingdom (UK) with power to make laws on a range of devolved matters.¹ Since the signing of the Belfast/‘Good Friday’ Agreement 1998 (GFA), the design of the political institutions in Northern Ireland requires that parties enter a power-sharing arrangement after elections. This is based on consociationalism, a model of power-sharing which is used in different forms across a number of settings internationally to manage conflict and division broadly defined. The rationale for its use in Northern Ireland stems from the territory’s history of protracted violent conflict, commonly referred to as ‘the Troubles’, which deeply engrained a division in Northern Ireland between, on the one hand, the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (PUL) community, and on the other, the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (CNR) community. While clunky denotations of a complex and nuanced division, they capture the intermeshing of constitutional politics and religion within the historical conflict, while also demonstrating the deep and permeating bases of identity upon which the division proliferated. Power-sharing was the only potential form of governance that could command support in preventing one community holding a position of political dominance over the other, as was the case under the majoritarian system initially used fol-

lowing Northern Ireland’s creation.

This model entails a number of core features: a mandatory coalition of multiple parties within the Executive; proportional representation; and a mutual veto, which exists in the form of the Petition of Concern. In addition, cross-community votes can be held on some issues, which require support from a majority of unionist and nationalist representatives to pass. These operational elements are underpinned by a requirement for Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to officially designate as ‘Unionist’, ‘Nationalist’ or ‘Other’ when they are elected. The size of each group within the Assembly is significant, not least in determining which party can nominate to the positions of First Minister and deputy First Minister, which, despite their naming, are equal and form a joint office.

Each group comprises members of multiple political parties, and electoral competition is more common within these clusters rather than between them – for instance, parties at the opposite ends of Northern Ireland’s political spectrum are not in direct competition with each other for votes. The centre-ground – in this context meaning ‘Other’ identifying parties – differs somewhat to this, as parties in this field attract voters from across the spectrum. However, the institutional structures prioritise the ‘Unionist’ and ‘Nationalist’ designations, these being the groups at the centre of Northern Ireland’s division.

The Assembly has faced many political difficulties and has been suspended on numerous occasions. Most recently, MLAs did not meet for three years between 2017-2020, and it is currently in the midst of a further period of crisis following the resignation of the First Minister in February 2022.

Context of the 2022 Election

It is necessary to reflect on some key events preceding the 2022 election in order to contextualise the results and their significance in certain regards.

Going into the election, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was the largest party in the Assembly, and had been since 2003. In February 2022, the party resigned its First Minister from the Executive, setting the tone for the election – this action, the reasons for it, and its consequences for governance featured extensively in the election campaigns of all the parties. The resignation meant that ministers were unable to take any new or cross-departmental decisions, and only legislation already in progress within the Assembly was able to continue. The institutions operated in this shadow capacity until the Assembly dissolved ahead of the May election.

For the DUP, this decision was part of an ongoing protest at the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, part of

1. For further information, see https://education.niassembly.gov.uk/post_16/snapshots_of_devolution/gfa/devolution.

the Brexit arrangements agreed between the UK and the EU. The Protocol has been a source of contention within Northern Ireland since it came into force at the start of 2021, particularly for the unionist community. The purpose of the resignation was explained by Party Leader, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, as being a means of sending a signal to Westminster about the seriousness of the issues that exist with the Protocol and to ensure that unionist concerns would be addressed (Donaldson 2022). This established the Protocol as a key element in the DUP's election campaign from the outset.

In a number of ways, the resignation was as much a reaction to external political and electoral pressures as it was an attempt to reflect concerns from within the unionist community, which were themselves informed by political responses to the Protocol. Electoral competition for unionist first preference votes and transfers, combined with the lingering impact of internal upheaval (Rice 2021) in the preceding year, necessitated that the party should take a very clear line on the Protocol issue. It opted to prioritise mitigating the potential movement of voters to the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) party in adopting a harder-line approach, calling for the Protocol to be 'removed and replaced' (BBC 2022) in contrast to the Ulster Unionist Party's (UUP) position which was more in favour of the Protocol being retained and reformed.

An additional aspect to the election campaign was the question of whether or not the DUP would be returned as the largest party, and therefore, able to nominate again to the role of First Minister. Successive polling indicated a strong potential that Sinn Féin could be returned as the largest party for the first time, which entailed a symbolic significance both in terms of the nominal distinction it implies, and historically given that Northern Ireland was created with demographics that rendered this an unlikely outcome and was politically constructed to prevent it before power-sharing was introduced. This potential change was anticipated would encourage a strong vote for Sinn Féin in the election. Unionism's divisions and its crowded electoral field meant that this posed an additional pressure point for the DUP in particular as the largest party, and part of the party's election messaging was to encourage a consolidation of votes around it as a means to preventing a Sinn Féin First Minister.

From multiple angles, a lot of attention was placed on the DUP in the lead up to the election that meant the party was reliant on generating an appeal beyond its core voter base if it was to at least break even on its 2017 results. This was always going to be a challenging task and one made even more difficult with the decision to prioritise stymieing votes expected to flow to the TUV. This position also entailed that there was no obvious way that the party would return to power-sharing after the election given the reasons for the Executive being collapsed only three mon-

ths previously, and as such, votes for the party would also be considered a signal of support to continue to pursue a hard-line approach on the Protocol.

Nationalist and 'Other' parties operated within a very different set of circumstances ahead of the election. For Sinn Féin and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), broad agreement existed on the need for the Protocol's full implementation following reform, so this was not a point of distinction. For Sinn Féin, it was not an election where additional seats needed to be gained; instead, the party needed to work to ensure its 2017 vote was sustained given the projected losses for the DUP. It ran a campaign that was more presidential in style, highlighting what its prospective First Minister could bring to the role, and focused on social issues, stating that the party's constitutional aspirations for Irish reunification were not an immediate priority (Young 2022). The Protocol was also not a primary issue in the same way for the centre-ground parties. The Alliance Party, Green Party, and People Before Profit each had opportunities to capitalise on the dynamics at play elsewhere and, in different ways, all ran on platforms offering alternatives to Northern Ireland's traditionally binary politics and its challenges.

The nationalist and 'Other' parties might have been similar in terms of the Protocol not dominating their campaigns, however the DUP's actions in this regard shaped the way narratives and policy objectives of parties in this space were both articulated and received, meaning it became ubiquitous as an issue.

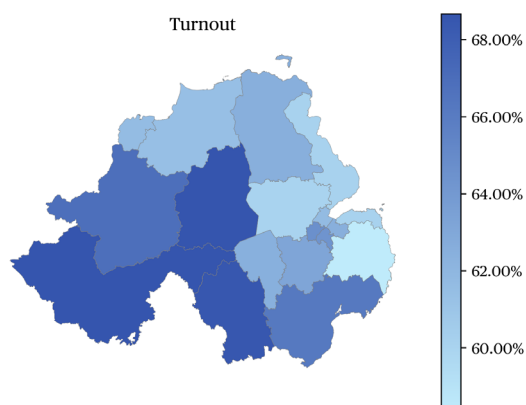
All of this made for an election that was difficult to predict, yet had the potential to alter the dynamics of contemporary politics in Northern Ireland as it was known.

A three-way split: Overview and analysis of the 2022 election results

Turnout varied across the 18 constituencies.² Overall turnout was 63.6%, down from 64.8% in 2017 which saw the highest recorded turnout since the first Assembly election, largely as a result of wider political factors at the time (RTÉ 2017). Higher turnout was seen mainly in constituencies where Sinn Féin topped the poll, due in part to two reasons: firstly, Sinn Féin has historically been adept at mobilising its voters; and secondly, the prospect of becoming the largest party and being able to nominate the First Minister further incentivised participation.

Sinn Féin topped the poll (i.e. achieved the most first preference votes; see map of parties with most first preference votes per constituency in "the data") in 9 constituencies, the DUP in 6, and Alliance in 3. The TUV saw the biggest increase in vote share (+5.1%) while the DUP saw the biggest decrease (-6.7%). North Antrim is now the

2. For the full data, see <https://www.eoni.org.uk/>.



a • Turnout by constituency, 2022.

most diverse constituency in terms of political representation, with all representatives now from five different parties. 5 constituencies have 3 or more representatives from a single party, which in all these cases is Sinn Féin. The DUP now does not hold more than 2 seats in any constituency, but it does have the widest spread of all the parties, with MLAs in 17 of the 18 constituencies (Belfast West being the exception). The Alliance Party saw the biggest change in its portfolio, gaining seats in 4 additional constituencies compared to 2017.

It was a somewhat unremarkable election for Sinn Féin in terms of changes, however, its notable success was in retaining the same number of seats and increasing its first preference vote share by 1.1%. As a result, the party is now the largest in the Assembly, and for the first time, the First Minister will come from Sinn Féin. The party benefitted from the attention the symbolic significance of this position received during the election campaign, and by focusing on retaining seats rather than trying to increase (which could have overall resulted in losing seats), the party turned the unremarkable into a significant moment in Northern Ireland's political history.

The DUP took a cautious approach and had 8 fewer candidates than in 2017. The success rate of its candidates was the highest of all the parties (83%), however, its share of first preference votes reduced by 6.7% with a total of 25 seats being won, a loss of three from 2017. Transfers from TUV voters were instrumental in mitigating the impact of the drop in first preference votes, a situation further aided by the TUV being a comparatively transfer-unfriendly party, which counterbalanced its 5.1% increase in first preference votes.

The Alliance Party saw a sizable increase in both its share of the vote and number of seats. It increased its first preference vote share by 4.5%, and more than doubled its representation in the Assembly, increasing from 8 to 17 seats. Crucially for the party, it made gains in new areas, including North Antrim and South Down for the first time. It also won a second seat in Belfast South, at the expense

	Seats won			1st preference votes		
	Number	% seats	Change	Number	% votes	Change
Sinn Féin	27	30.0	=	250,385	29.0	+1.1
DUP	25	27.8	-3	184,002	21.3	-6.7
Alliance	17	18.9	+9	116,681	13.5	+4.5
UUP	9	10.0	-1	96,390	11.2	-1.7
SDLP	8	8.9	-4	78,237	9.1	-2.9
TUV	1	1.1	=	65,788	7.6	+5.1
PBPA	1	1.1	=	9,798	1.1	-0.6
Green Party	0	0.0	-2	16,433	1.9	-0.4
Other	2	2.2	+1	44,986	5.2	+1.9
Total	90	100	=	862,700	100	=

b • Seat and vote shares for the main parties. Source: Burton (2022)

of the Green Party's leader. The party is strongest in eastern constituencies, so it was notable also that it increased its vote share in western areas. Its gains came at the expense of multiple parties: the DUP, the UUP, the Green Party, and the SDLP.

The SDLP, having retained its 12 seats in 2017 despite a reduction of total MLAs from 108 to 90, saw an almost 3% reduction in its first preference votes. This was a difficult election for the party, which lost 4 seats including the incumbent Minister for Infrastructure in Belfast North, and its long-held second seat in South Down, both of which were historically safe SDLP seats. For the UUP, the picture was similar – it lost 1 seat, that of a party stalwart in East Antrim, and saw an overall decline in vote share by 1.7%.

Voting was strongest at three points on Northern Ireland's political spectrum: its two extremes and the centre. Parties positioned elsewhere suffered as a consequence. The UUP and SDLP were Northern Ireland's largest parties when the power-sharing institutions were established following the GFA; now they are the 4th and 5th largest parties respectively.

Of the 18 'Other' seats won at this election, the Alliance Party holds 17, and People Before Profit holds 1. This swell for the Alliance Party came at the exclusion of Green Party representation entirely. While the Alliance Party has established itself in this election as the third largest party, the 'Other' designate group is not large enough to be considered to rival those of the 'Unionist' (37 MLAs, including 2 independent MLAs) and 'Nationalist' (35 MLAs) designations within the Assembly.

In summary, the election results reinforce that there is now a three-way split in Northern Ireland's politics, with each pillar being dominated by a single party – a direct challenge to the binary politics that has dominated in the post-GFA era.

Aftermath

Since the election, the DUP has extended its protest at the Protocol to include a boycott of the Assembly. Without a Speaker in place, the legislature cannot function, and an Executive cannot be formed. Ministers from the previous mandate are currently continuing in post in a caretaker capacity, but their powers are limited.

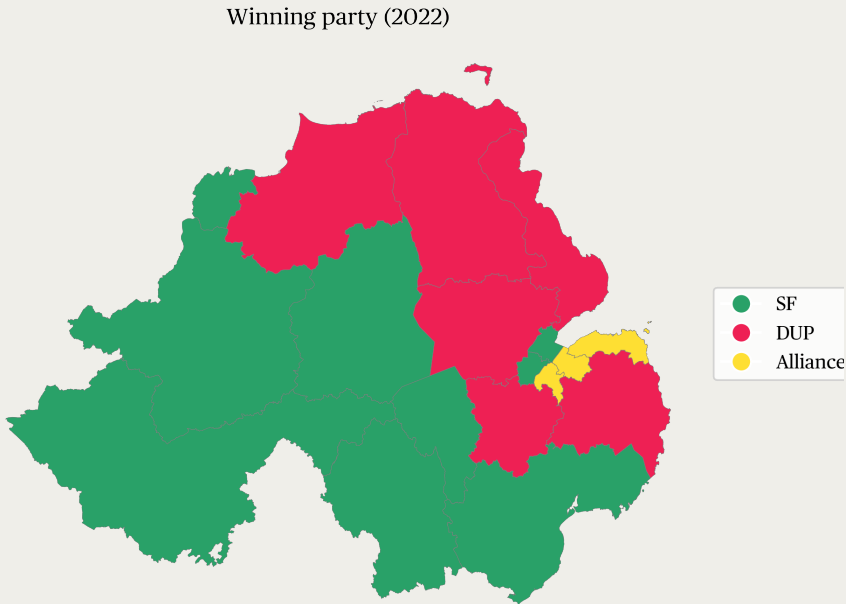
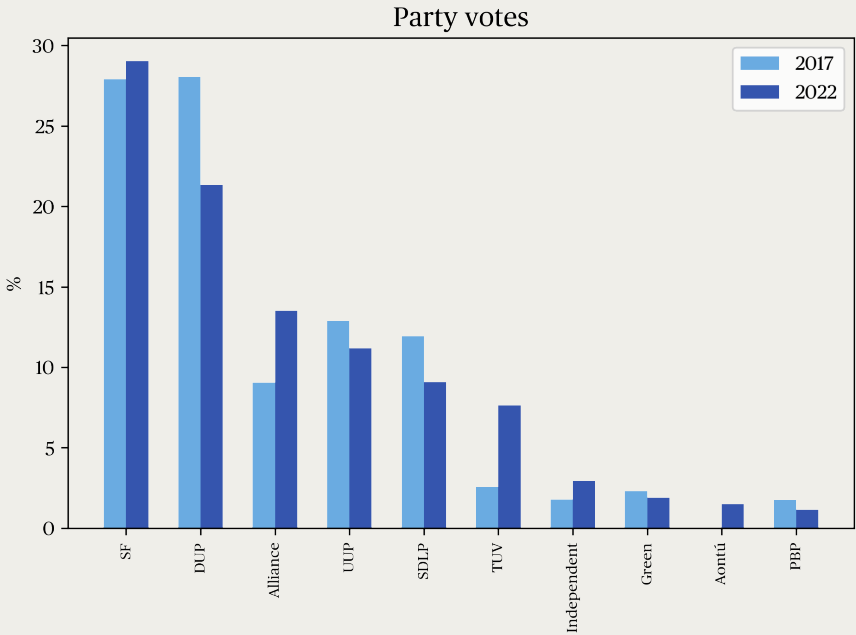
What happens next is dependent almost entirely on factors outside Northern Ireland. Sufficient movement to encourage the DUP to return to Stormont was not anticipated before Boris Johnson left office, and his successor, Liz Truss, has given little indication that there will be any change in approach in this regard. Controversial legislation³ aiming to override aspects of the Protocol, introduced in Westminster in June 2022 by the new Prime Minister, who was tasked at the time with leading negotiations with the EU, has added to the complexity of this.

The new Prime Minister will have to find a way to strike a fine balance between addressing concerns within Northern Ireland to ensure power-sharing is restored, placating adversaries within her own party, and reaching negotiated solutions with the EU regarding the Protocol, in order to secure a pragmatic solution to the current situation. That will be no easy task, indicating that an indefinite period of political instability lies ahead for Northern Ireland.

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3. Northern Ireland Protocol Bill. Updates on its progression can be found here: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3182>.



Nota bene: These graphs/maps show first preference votes by constituency. Northern Ireland uses the Single Transferable vote (STV) system.



Damir Kapidžić • Univerzitet u Sarajevu

General elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2 October 2022

Introduction

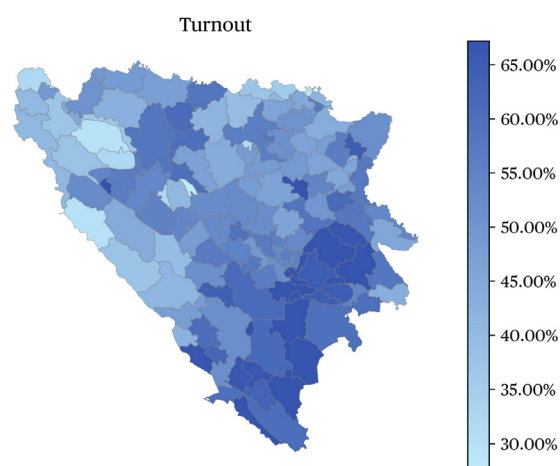
Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) elections are among the world's most consistent. The ninth general election in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the end of the Bosnian War in 1995 was held on 2 October 2022. Under the intricate system of governance established by the Dayton Peace Agreement, elections were held for three levels of government. Voters could cast their votes in up to four election contests, depending on their place of residence. These include a tripartite presidency at the state level, 13 parliaments at three distinct levels – national, subnational, as well as local in the subnational entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) –, and a subnational presidency election in the Republika Srpska (RS) entity.

For these elections the Central Electoral Commission approved 72 political parties, 38 coalitions, and 17 independent candidates for a total of 7257 candidates. The elections were called exactly four years after the previous elections in 2018 in line with the constitution and electoral law. However, in the lead-up to the election, there was much uncertainty regarding anticipated and much-needed changes to the electoral law, as well as political infighting over budgeting for elections. Election day was orderly with minor infractions that were addressed in line with laws and regulations. The counting of ballots, however, took more time, and several recounts were performed. The official results were confirmed one month after the elections, as per law.

The political and electoral system of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The country has a complex political system with a multiethnic population divided along religious lines: Catholic Croats, Muslim Bosniaks, and Orthodox Christian Serbs. The current system of governance places an emphasis on ethnic representation in institutions through a consociational model of democracy. It was created in 1995 following the Bosnian War and is part of the Dayton Peace Agreement, guaranteeing power-sharing and distribution of political offices along ethnic lines, as well as power-sharing between the national and subnational (or entity) levels of governance. The resulting electoral competition reinforces ethnic cleavages by emphasizing both the declared and perceived ethnicity of candidates, political parties, and voters. The electoral system of BiH consists of open list proportional representation for national, subnational, and local parliaments, and first-past-the-post contests for directly elected national and subnational presidents and mayors. Both the political and electoral system of BiH is heavily influenced by ethnic politics and the ethno-territorial distribution of the population. A peculiar element of the BiH political system is the Office of the High Representative, created to ensure civilian implementation of the peace agreement. The Office, and its current holder Christian Schmidt, have vast powers to make laws, veto legislation and dismiss officials, often compared to those of a viceroy.

The national level of government has limited competences and includes a directly elected three-member presidency consisting of one Serb member from the RS, and one Bosniak and one Croat member from the FBiH. The candidates run on separate ethnic lists, which discriminates against citizens not identifying with one of these three ethnic groups are excluded from running. The ballot in RS lists only Serb candidates with the winner decided by simple majority. In FBiH the Bosniak and Croat candidates are on the same ballot separated into two ethnic lists and voters have one vote. The winner is decided by simple majority on each list. The bicameral BiH Parliament consists of a 15-member House of Peoples whose members are equally distributed among the three ethnic groups and appointed by subnational parliaments, and the 42-member House of Representatives, whose members are elected from eight multimember districts (14 in three districts from RS; and 28 in five districts from FBiH). Only 30 members are elected directly through open-list PR, with a district size ranging from three to six members, while the remaining 12 seats are compensating seats awarded at the entity level to ensure proportionality of the vote and representation of parties whose support is dispersed (Kapidžić & Komar 2022). At the electoral district level, a 3% electoral threshold is applied with seats allocated using the Sainte-Laguë method, which also applies for subnational and local elections (Election



a • Turnout by municipality, 2022.

Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022). This low electoral threshold and method of distribution are designed to favor smaller and regional parties, which results in a highly fragmented legislature.

On 2 October 2022, concurrent elections were held for parliaments and offices at up to three levels of government. Voters in the FBiH could vote for either a Croat or Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency, the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliament, the 98-member subnational House of Representatives of the FBiH Parliament, and one of ten local Cantonal Assemblies. Voters in the RS cast their vote for the Serb member of the BiH Presidency, the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliament, the President (or vice-presidents) of the RS, and the 83-member subnational RS National Assembly. At most of these levels, the previous administration was made up of ethno-nationalist parties and leaders who were hesitant to work together and establish shared policies during their tenure, especially those related to constitutional and electoral change. Concurrent elections produced very similar outcomes across electoral contest at different levels of government and the analysis will focus on the contest at the national level.

Turnout, parties and ethnoterritorial voting patterns

The turnout was 51.5%, slightly lower than in the previous elections (54% in 2018), with almost 80,000 less votes cast. Turnout was lower in municipalities in the northwest of the country that have experienced a larger rate of emigration, and higher in the east and southeast (see Figure a). Electoral competition is largely confined within ethnic party subsystems, among parties that represent one of the three main ethnic groups. The Party for Democratic Action (SDA), People and Justice (NIP), and the People's European Union (NES) are the most significant ethnic parties among Bosniaks in these elections. For Serbs they are the Alliance of Independent Social Demo-

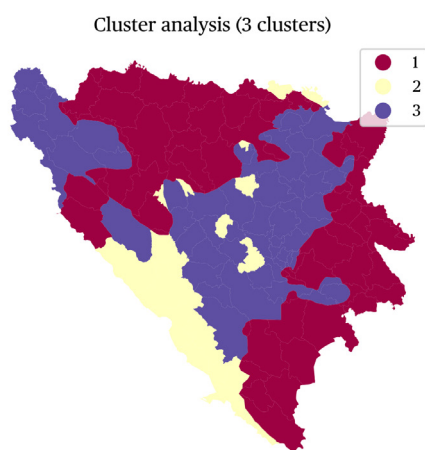
crats (SNSD), the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), and the Party of Democratic Progress (PDP). Among Croats it is the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH), and the Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ 1990). There are also multi-ethnic parties that regularly win a sizeable portion of the vote, but they mostly vie Bosniak voters. The Social Democratic Party (SDP), Democratic Front (DF), and Our Party (NS) are the most significant.

Even though there has been intense competition within ethnic party subsystems throughout the previous eight electoral cycles, hardly any voters have switched from one ethnic party to another (Kapidžić & Komar 2022). The majority of electoral competition is contained within the ethnic party subsystems. Bosniak parties compete among themselves for Bosniak votes, Serb parties for Serb votes, Croat parties for Croat votes, and multi-ethnic parties for secular (and some Bosniak) votes. As ethnic groups are territorially concentrated and most areas have a clear ethnic majority, this results in ethno-territorial patterns of competition that can be grouped into three clusters (see Figure b). A principal component analysis of election results at the municipal level confirms a domination of Serb parties in the RS, and Croat parties in Herzegovina (the country's south), as well as individual municipalities. Bosniak parties have a strong show in central FBiH and in the northwest. Essentially, party support is territorialized segmented along ethnic lines, without significant impact of other socio-demographic variables. This has not changed in the 2022 elections, except for a shift in two municipalities where Croat parties lost their majority to Serb parties (Bosansko Grahovo) and Bosniak parties (Busovača), most likely due to increased Croat emigration.

Post-election drama

During election day there were a few minor incidences of electoral irregularities, but no significant setbacks. After the polls closed at 7 o'clock, everything changed when the High Representative Christian Schmidt made a public speech on election night announcing that he would enforce new amendments to the Election Law and the subnational Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The changes did not affect the votes for direct contests that citizens had just cast but introduced changes to FBiH's indirectly elected upper chamber of Parliament. Although the verdict decision addressed longstanding issues that benefit the functioning of FBiH, the timing could not have been worse. After casting their ballots, voters in FBiH were shocked uneasy to learn that their vote might (indirectly) affect how the FBiH Parliament is constituted. The full implications of the decision in relativizing democratic elections and for government formation and decision-making are still uncertain.

Vote counting proceeded very slowly and was plagued



b • Cluster analysis of municipality-level vote

by delays and irregularities at the polling station level. Several municipalities had to do recounts to confirm results, due to mistakes in reporting or close contests. In the RS, the vote for the subnational President of RS went into a full recount amidst allegations of fraud and significant irregularities by the united opposition candidate Jelena Trivić (PDP), against incumbent Milorad Dodik (SNSD). After the recount was completed, the initial projection of Dodik's win was confirmed, but with a smaller margin. The Central Electoral Commission confirmed the results one month after the elections on 2 November 2022, after the Court of BiH rejected all outstanding appeals.

Winners and losers

The first votes counted and confirmed were for the three members of the Presidency. Željka Cvijanović (SNSD) won against Mirko Šarović (SDS) and other Serb candidates, thus retaining the office for her party. Cvijanović will become the first female President of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even though the role is largely ceremonial, she is expected to continue the policy of weakening central institutions to benefit the subnational RS. Voters elected Denis Bećirović (SDP) as the Bosniak member of the Presidency against Bakir Izetbegović (SDA) and Mirsad Hadžikadić (Platform for Progress). Bećirović is the first Bosniak nominated by a multiethnic party with support from a broad coalition of Bosniak and civic-oriented parties. His victory was a big upset for Izetbegović, the party leader of the conservative SDA that has held the office for the past three terms. The incumbent Croat member Željko Komšić (DF) won against Borjana Krišto (HDZ BiH), largely with support of non-Croat voters and after not having campaigned at all in Croat-majority areas. This is his fourth, but non-consecutive, term in office and his repeated victories have long been a thorn in the eyes of Croat ethnic parties. With two members of the Presidency coming from non-ethnic parties this could bring a new dynamic into the office.

It is necessary to look at the results for the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliament both along ethnic party subsystems, and incumbent vs. opposition dynamics. The results indicate a strong and stable performance of the main incumbent Croat, Serb, and Bosniak parties, HDZ BiH, SNSD, and SDA, respectively (see panel “the data”). These largely managed to hold on to their share of votes and seats. HDZ is the only Croat party in Parliament and will play a key role in government formation. A slight decrease of vote share and seats for members coming from Croat parties is however noticeable. It is worth exploring whether this is due to higher emigration levels of BiH Croats towards the EU who, as Croat passport holders, hold EU citizenship.

The SNSD increased its dominant position in Parliament, while keeping the same number of seats. This is mainly because Serb opposition parties, SDS and PDP, lost votes. With now six Serb parties in Parliament, the opposition's voice is splintered and weakened, which benefits the incumbent SNSD as it will be difficult avoid including them in governance. The three multiethnic, SDP, DF, and NS, parties managed to maintain their seats with minor changes in vote percentage. Among Bosniak parties the SDA was held on to its votes and seats but is still the big loser of the elections. This is largely due to a shift towards a more unified opposition of Bosniak parties in Parliament, led by NIP and NES (see panel “the data”). Together with some of the multiethnic parties this Bosniak opposition could bypass the SDA in government formation, despite the SDA having the most members of Parliament of any political party.

A fragmented Parliament and government formation

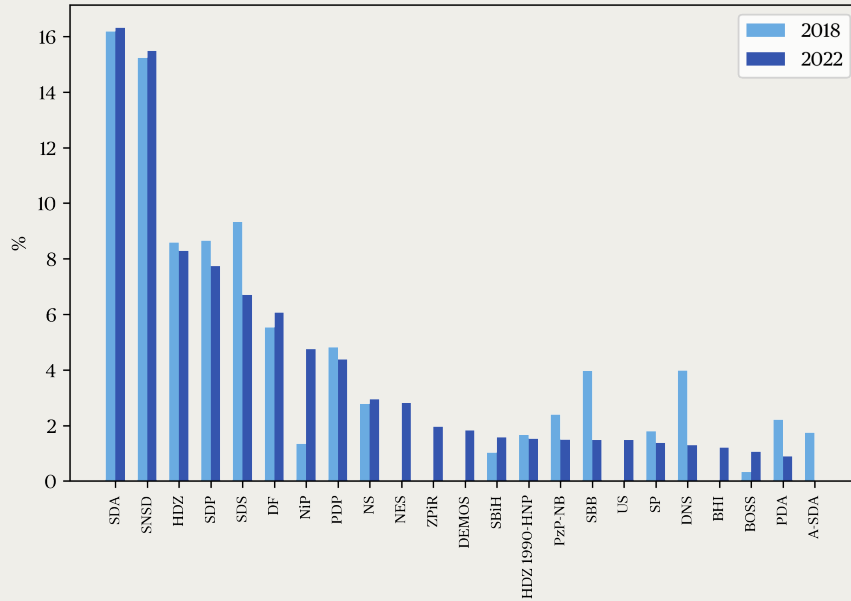
In order to form government at the national level, a coalition of Croat, Serb and Bosniak (and possibly multiethnic) parties is required under the consociational power-sharing system. This will be difficult to achieve as the Parliament remains highly fragmented with 14 parties, a consequence of a low electoral threshold and the Sainte-Laguë method. It is not certain that the largest three ethnic parties will come together. Government will likely include HDZ BiH and SNSD as they hold the majority in the upper chamber, the House of Peoples, where votes are needed to confirm government and pass legislation. However, Bosniak opposition and multi-ethnic parties have joined forces to oust the SDA out of government. Together with the Croat HDZ, eight multiethnic and Bosniak parties have signed a programmatic coalition agreement at the subnational level in the FBiH, which is seen as a precursor to forming a coalition at the national level. With the Presidency dominated by members from multiethnic parties, this might signal a nascent shift away from exclusive ethnic politics in BiH.

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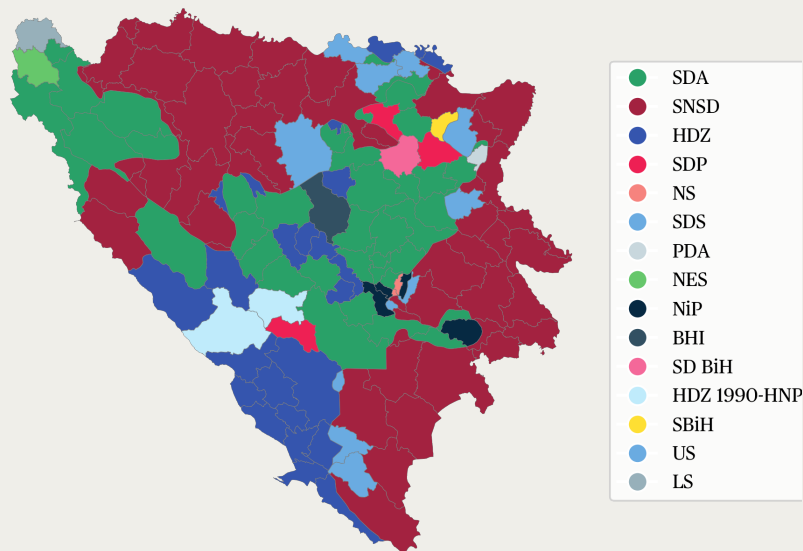
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Party votes

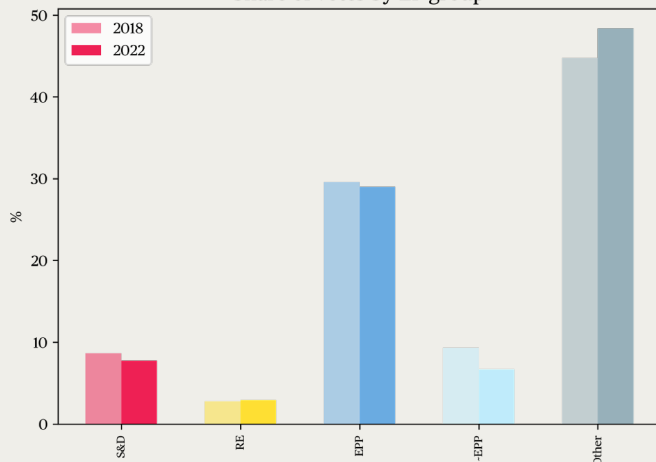


Winning party (2022)



European indicators

Share of votes by EP group



House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022)

