FRENCH LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS 2024

BACKGROUND

On 9 June, President Emmanuel Macron dissolved the *Assemblée Nationale* and called for snap parliamentary elections following his centrist coalition's significant defeat in the European elections (6-9 June). Marine Le Pen's far-right, anti-immigration *Rassemblement National (RN)* secured 31.5% of the vote, surpassing Macron's 14.6%.

Macron's move is seen as a high-stakes gamble that risks weakening his party's influence while potentially empowering the far-right. His strategy aims to consolidate support for his centrist party to counter rising nationalist sentiment ahead of the 2027 Presidential Elections. However, this strategy could backfire, potentially allowing a far-right party to gain power in France for the first time since World War II.

The elections, scheduled for **30 June** and **7 July**, come just before the Paris Olympic Games, amid heightened security concerns due to an elevated terror threat. The rise of extremist parties may either unite centrists behind Macron or significantly alter the parliamentary composition. Consequently, these elections are among the most significant in recent European history.

KEY INDIVIDUALS

- **Emmanuel Macron:** Leader of centrist *Renaissance* party, and the sitting president. Heading the *Ensemble* coalition of centrist parties.
- **Marine Le Pen**: Long-term leader of *RN*.
- **Jordan Bardella:** *RN*'s party president and potential candidate for prime minister.
- **Éric Ciotti:** Leader of center-right *Les Républicains*, Ciotti has allied with *RN* in key constituencies.
- **Jean-Luc Mélenchon**: hard-left *la France insoumise* (LFI) leader.

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

New & Dynamic Coalitions: Since Macron's shock announcement, the political landscape in France has been evolving rapidly, with new alliances forming and several public fallouts as parties attempt to hastily consolidate their coalitions.

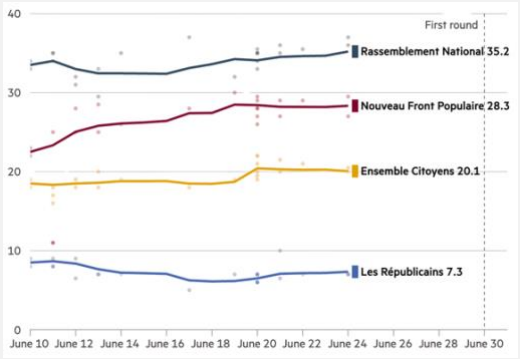
- ***Resurgent Left*:** Left-wing parties are uniting as the *Nouveau Front Populaire (NFP)*, presenting an alternative to both Macron's centrist party and the far-right. Polls indicate *NFP* has made surprising gains, though internal conflicts have emerged.
- ***Far-right*:** Éric Ciotti has shown a willingness to collaborate with the far-right, causing significant outcry and a split within France's mainstream right-wing party, *Les Républicains*.

French Stability: The election could lead to a fragmented and unstable French parliament, complicating governance and potentially affecting France's role in European and global politics. This is critical as the country faces increased security threats, including terror threats and Russian interference, during the lead-up to the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Shifting EU Dynamics: The snap-election and the rise of far-right influence could shift EU politics, especially regarding integration, immigration, national sovereignty, and European Strategic Autonomy.

LATEST POLLS

National Assembly voting intention (%)



Source: The Financial Times (06/24/24)

- As it stands, Macron's gamble is not showing signs of paying off. The *RN* is leading, followed by the *NFP* left-wing coalition, with Macron's centrist *Ensemble* alliance trailing in third place. LR is far behind.

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- Ukraine's EU accession and aid might be hampered by increasing influence of Russophile far-right politicians. Public support for Ukraine joining the EU is lowest in Hungary, Slovakia, France, and Austria — countries where far-right parties are influential.

Foreign & Defense Policy: An *RN* win could upend current policies. Despite Jordan Bardella's recent backpedaling on previous promises to remove France from NATO, *RN* has abstained on Ukraine aid, expressed interest in leaving NATO's integrated command, and opposed many landmark EU legislative measures in recent years.

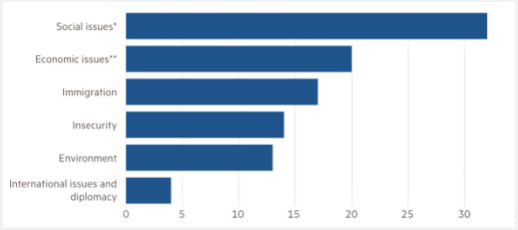
KEY OUTCOMES

- **Political stalemate:** The results can translate into various complex scenarios including cohabitation, an apolitical government to handle current affairs, and even the inability to form a government. Macron could thus face a hostile Assembly, making governance ineffective.
- **Neutralizing cohabitation**: The elections will determine the new composition of the lower house of the French Parliament. The question remains whether the far-right gains significant power or if a neutralizing cohabitation occurs, when the president and prime minister are from opposing parties.

- Although *RN* has not yet secured the 288 seats needed for an absolute majority in the national assembly, it appears to be within reach.
- Jordan Bardella recently stated that he would not accept the prime minister position if *RN* were to win a relative majority. This stance may be an attempt to boost voter turnout.

KEY ELECTION ISSUES

A June 2024 survey carried out by Ipsos, found that social issues* are French voters' priorities in the upcoming election.



Source: Ipsos • 2,000 responses from survey of French voters carried out June 19-20, 2024

* Purchasing power, social security, and inequality.

TOPIC EXPERTS: CLARA BROEKAERT; MICHAELA MILLENDER
DATA SOURCES: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT 06-24; FINANCIAL TIMES 06-24; IPSOS 06-24

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