



[Far-Right Makes Gains During the First Round of Parliamentary Elections in France](#)

France's far-right National Rally party (RN) rose victorious in the first round of the country's parliamentary elections. According to the Ministry of Interior, the RN and its allies obtained roughly 33 percent of the vote for France's lower house of parliament while the opposing left-wing New Popular Front (NFP) coalition achieved roughly 28 percent. NFP ally and French President Emmanuel Macron of the centrist Ensemble Alliance received 20 percent. Of the 577 seats in the National Assembly, 78 were won outright by candidates who received over 50 percent of the vote in their respective districts, with 38 of those candidates being members of the RN – including former party President Marine Le Pen. The proceeding political deal-making made between the rival parties will decide the final results prior to the upcoming run-off. If no candidate achieves 50 percent in the first round, the top two contenders will then move on to the second round, as well as candidates with at least 12.5% of the votes. The winner of the run-off will then be decided by the candidate with the most votes.

During the first round of the elections this past Sunday, voter turnout reached nearly 60 percent, trampling the 39.42 percent turnout just two years prior. The high turnout indicates that the country is heading for a record number of three-way run-offs. The RN has historically had more success in three-way run-offs than two-way contests. The latest developments occur after years of moderates on both sides of the aisle cooperating to uphold the "republican front," an attempt to block the RN from power. The stability of that organized effort is now in question. Le Pen has conveyed her party's mission to achieve an outright majority of 289 seats in the National Assembly, and the RN is now closer to that goal than ever.

The recent vote comes three years earlier than required and just a few weeks following French President Macron's Renaissance Party's significant loss to the RN in European parliamentary elections. Macron's decision to conduct a snap election is France's first in almost 30 years, taking the nation and its allies by surprise. The president has vowed to carry out the remainder of his presidential term until 2027. Macron now battles the potential of "cohabitation," the appointment of an opposition party member as prime minister, which could result in a challenging partnership for a final term as president. The French government is historically inefficient in passing laws when the president and parliamentary majority are of the opposing parties. The president is responsible for creating foreign, European, and defense policy, while the parliamentary majority constructs domestic policy. Yet, these policy processes can overlap, leading to a potential constitutional crisis. The boundary between domestic and foreign policy can be unclear in certain situations. For instance, President Bardella of the National Front Party is firmly against deploying troops to Ukraine, an idea proposed by Macron, and also ruled out permitting Kyiv to use French weaponry to strike entities inside Russia. Thus, in this possible situation, it is uncertain whose policy stance would triumph. Financial implications may also arise following the RN surge. The RN has made significant spending commitments, as the far-right party has pledged to adjust Macron's pension reforms and cut taxes on fuel, gas, and electricity.

Former French Prime Minister Eduardo Philippe stated that "no votes should be cast for National Rally candidates, but also for France unbowed candidates, with whom we differ on fundamental principles." Le Pen has attempted to reform her party's public image, which has for years been accused of racism and antisemitism. One of the tools that the RN has used to try and counter this is an attempt to incite voter aggression against Macron, sparked from

the growing worries regarding immigration and the rising cost of living. Following the release of election results this past weekend, anti-far right protests erupted in Paris and Lyon, as roughly 5,500 people assembled in Paris' Place de la Republique to express their resistance to the RN.

Europe as a whole has experienced a recent resurgence of the far-right. The usual allying of political parties to contain the far-right in European politics is lacking effectiveness. The presence and strength of nationalist and populist parties is expanding across Europe. An anti-Muslim group in the Netherlands under Geert Wilders have secured a deal to create the most right-wing government in Dutch history. Additionally, in 2022, Italy elected Giorgia Meloni, a right-wing politician and ultra-nationalist, whose party possessed neo-fascist roots, to be the head of state. Finland, Croatia, and the Czech Republic also have hard-right parties in their governments. There is an array of economic, cultural, social, and political proponents of the resurgence, and the growing support for the populist and nationalist parties is even represented in the European Union (EU). Recently, the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) received the second-most votes in the June 2024 EU elections. The center-right European People's Party (EPP), the center-left Socialist and Democrats (S&D), and the Liberal Renew groups are the most prominent entities in the parliament.

The recent success of the far-right has diminished the presence of the Renew, the party of President Macron. In the past, the EPP and S&D have connected and negotiated to pass substantial legislation, often supported by the Renew. However, recently the EPP has aligned more with the far-right European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), altering the dynamic and polarization of the EU. The ECR and the Identity and Democracy (ID) group, who host Le Pen and the RN, have seen an increase in parliamentary presence. The far-right's influence on policy has been evident, especially when it comes to the issue of immigration. These groups have used people's concerns over the cost of living and quality of health to drive forward their anti-immigration policies, framing it as a national security threat and hindering many immigrants from reaching the EU, despite coming from nations with frightening human rights records. Representation for individuals of color is in jeopardy as well. According to the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), only 3 percent of the European parliament is composed of these members. Thus, continued political gains for far-right groups could be consequential for underrepresented demographics in society.