



Overview

On 24 April 2022, Emmanuel Macron was re-elected President of France with 58.5% of the vote. Mr Macron defeated Marine Le Pen in the second round of a campaign that was dominated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, European sovereignty, and the cost-of-living crisis. The presidential election has set the political stage for the forthcoming legislative elections for the *Assemblée Nationale*, with the first and second rounds scheduled for 12 and 19 June 2022 respectively.

The 2022 election is being principally contested between three broad electoral alliances representing the left, centre and right of French politics. The centrist coalition, *Ensemble!*, which includes President Macron's *La République en Marche!* (LREM) party (now renamed *Renaissance*) currently holds a majority in the *Assemblée* and is predicted to maintain – and potentially increase – this position. The left, which had fragmented during the presidential campaign, has coalesced around first-round presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon's broad left-wing NUPES alliance. The right is split amongst Marine Le Pen's *Rassemblement Nationale*, Éric Zemmour's *Reconquête* and the neo-Gaullist *Debout la France* (DLF). The traditional mainstream parties currently hold just 129 seats between them, with; the centre-right *Les Républicains*, the largest opposition party with 101 seats, and the centre-left *Socialistes* with 28.

The bicameral French legislature is divided between the *Assemblée Nationale*, representing citizens, and the *Sénat*, representing the regions. In contrast to *Sénat* with a more consultative scrutinising role, the *Assemblée* is the primary French legislative body which is responsible for debating, proposing, amending and voting on legislation. It also has the power to recall the French government. Deputies are [elected](#) in 577 single-member constituencies by direct universal suffrage over two-rounds for a five-year term, with 289 seats needed for an absolute majority. If no candidate wins an outright majority (50%+1) in the first round on, a run-off is held during the second round between either all candidates who received at least 12.5% in the first round or else between the top two remaining candidates.

Presidential Results & Analysis

Table 1. First Round Results

Candidate	Party	% Vote Share 2022	% Vote Share – 2018	Change Up/Down
Emmanuel Macron	LREM	27.8	24.0	+3.8
Marine Le Pen	RN	23.2	21.3	+1.9
Jean-Luc Mélenchon	LFI	22.0	19.6	+2.4
Éric Zemmour	Reconquête	7.1	N/A	N/A
Valérie Pécresse	LR	4.8	20 – Francois Fillon	-15.2
Yannick Jadot	EÉLV	4.6	N/A	N/A
Jean Lassalle	Résistons	3.1	1.2	+1.9
Fabien Roussel	PCF	2.3	N/A	N/A
Nicolas Dupont-Aignan	DLF	2.1	4.7	-2.6
Anne Hidalgo	PS	1.8	6.4 – Benoit Hammon	-4.6
Phillippe Poutou	NPA	0.8	1.1	-0.3
Nathalie Arthaud	LO	0.6	0.6	-

Table 2. Second Round Results

Candidate	Party	% Vote Share 2022	% Vote Share – 2018	Change Up/Down
Emmanuel Macron	LREM	58.5	66.1	-7.6
Marine Le Pen	RN	41.5	33.9	+7.6

[Seventy three per cent](#) of the 48,747,876 eligible voters cast their ballots in the first round of the presidential election on 10 April 2022. This was a slight decline compared to the first round in 2017 which had a turnout of [77.8%](#). The second round in 2017 had a turnout of [74.6%](#), which fell slightly in 2022 to [72%](#).

As France wields considerable influence as the leader of the second largest economy and largest military in Europe, this election is important not only for France, but for all of Europe. The departure of Angela Merkel from the European stage had left Mr Macron as the heir apparent, and as primus inter pares of the EU, underscored by his strong support for European strategic

autonomy and sovereignty.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has also had considerable implications, both aiding Mr Macron's re-election while also damaging his rivals on the left and right due to their close links or previous support for Vladimir Putin.

A victory by a political bloc other than the centrist Ensemble! coalition, such as those of Le Pen or Mélenchon, would give them a powerful position in the creation of French domestic and foreign policy, at a time when France holds the Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers (until the end of June 2022). In the longer term, such a victory for anti-EU populist parties could not only damage French influence in the EU, but could also have an impact on broader EU unity on key issues such as Russia.

Key Factors at Play

1. Legislative Elections as Presidential “Third Round”

While the prospect of a far-right president in the Elysée garnered much attention before the Presidential elections, the consolidation of the left under Mr Mélenchon's far-left *La France Insoumise (LFI)* [may be a more consequential development](#). It is notable that Mr Mélenchon has framed the legislative elections as the “third-round” of the presidential elections and has called on voters to ensure he becomes Prime Minister. Polling suggests that Mr Macron's centrist coalition will likely secure an absolute majority, with estimates ranging between [275-318](#) or [260-300](#) seats. The more interesting contest, however, may be between Mr Mélenchon and Madame Le Pen, as they fight for the role of leader of the opposition. Mr Mélenchon's strong performance in the presidential election, finishing barely behind Marine Le Pen in third place, has given the left considerable political momentum. Mr Mélenchon has since [forged](#) a left-wing electoral coalition between the PS, Green Party and French Communist Party under the aegis of the LFI, called the *Nouvelle Union Populaire écologiste et sociales (NUPES)*. The NUPES alliance have fielded candidates in all 577 constituencies, mostly from LFI, and are expected to win 28% of the vote.

Pressure from this consolidated left may push Mr Macron's domestic policies further towards those of his opponents, especially in terms of greater social protections and expenditure. As signposted during the presidential campaign, the economic ramifications of the war in Ukraine, namely inflation and the cost-of-living crisis in France, have presented an opportunity for the far-left and far-right to advocate more economically protectionist policies. In response, President Macron may undertake more interventionist measures to protect French firms and workers, as part of a broader domestic policy strategy of a France “which protects.” Critical policy questions over the future age of retirement, pension reform and further employment market liberalisation all pose challenges for a future Macron administration.

2. President Macron Reinforced

The return of President Macron, the first French president to be re-elected since Jacques Chirac in 2002, has strengthened his hand in French politics and endowed his party with considerable political momentum ahead of the June 2022 legislative elections. He is the first president to be re-elected since François Mitterrand, and the first since Charles De Gaulle to not have endured a period of *cohabitation* with a prime minister from a rival party.

This political dominance is enhanced by the effective implosion of the two traditional parties of

government in France, the centre-right *Les Républicains* (LR) and centre-left *Parti Socialiste* (PS). Both failed to poll above 5% in the first round of the presidential election and seem incapable of contesting for political power in the short-to-medium term. In this context, the political centre is both dynamic and brittle, with several new political configurations, alliances and parties emerging as the LR and PS fall away. This development has been compounded by a series of defections from the pro-EU, economically moderate and socially liberal wings of the PS and LR, exemplified by Mr Macron, who himself left the PS to form his own party. The poor result has also damaged the organisational finances of PS and LR who both failed to reach the 5% threshold to recoup their deposits for the campaign, which will have impacted their ability to contest the legislative elections.

3. The EU is Critical to French Politics

Mr Macron's first term as president has been marked by a consistent strong support for the European Union, and in particular for reinforcing the Union's economic, defensive and normative power. A central plank of his approach has been to leverage the geopolitical potential of the EU and the economic power of the Single Market to enhance both Europe and France's place in an increasingly competitive and contested world. The perceived weakness of German Chancellor Scholz' response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the imminent end of Italian Prime Minister Draghi's term in office, offers France an opportunity to be the leader in the crucial Franco-German dynamic, and to play a leading role in European politics (though this ambition may face opposition from central and eastern European Member States who remain wary of President Macron's approach to Russia).

In contrast, both Marine Le Pen of the right and Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the left are both united in their Euroscepticism, and if Mr Macron were to be forced into a cohabitation with either a far-left or far-right prime minister, this could pose serious challenges for his EU ambitions.

A controversial aspect of the NUPES grouping is its commitment to "[disobey certain European rules](#)" in order to achieve French green and social policy objectives around retirement age, and food price caps. If this came to pass, it could potentially violate EU treaty obligations which would undermine European law and [weaken](#) France's credibility within the European Union.

4. Question over Future Leaders

The broad centrist coalition is primarily held together by the force of Mr Macron's political charisma. Considering that he will be ineligible to run again in 2027, this presidential term may be marked by political turbulence between those who seek to succeed him as de facto leader of the French centrist movement. This transition has already begun with the rebranding of LREM as *Renaissance*, which marks its evolution from an insurgent outsider movement and Macronist political vehicle, towards becoming a more established liberal centrist political party.

This uncertainty over the future of the political centre is mirrored on both the left and right as well. The traditional French left has been fractured since President Macron's political insurgency in 2017, and underlined by the very poor performance of the PS candidate, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, who polled only 1.8%. For Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the collapse of the traditional left-wing party and the relative weakness of myriad left-wing parties, combined with his very strong performance during the presidential election has effectively anointed him leader of the French left. Similarly, Le Pen's position as de facto leader of the French

far-right in France has been reinforced by her strong presidential election result, as well as the disappointing performance of Éric Zemmour and the defection of one-time heir apparent Marion Maréchal to *Reconquête*.

Who the future leaders of these three factions will be is uncertain for several reasons. For the centrists there is currently no clear heir apparent. For the right, RN is deeply tied to the Le Pen brand, and whether Marine Le Pen will secure sufficient support for a fourth run at the presidency or else be replaced by a new leader, such as her niece Marion Maréchal, or be subsumed into a new far-right grouping remains to be seen. On the left, Mr Mélenchon will be 75 in 2027 and has suggested that this election may be his last tilt at high office. Finally, a common theme is that each of these groupings is dominated by the central personalities of Macron, Le Pen and Mélenchon, and it is not clear whether any of the three groupings have sufficient institutional and organisational coherence to continue on without them.

5. Divided France

The French electorate is increasingly divided based on the geographical and socio-economic cleavages, namely income, age, location, ethnic and religious backgrounds. A clear cleavage is the divide between older, wealthier voters, who generally supported President Macron, while those younger or less affluent tended to back Marine Le Pen. Jean-Luc Mélenchon was the most popular candidate among voters between 18–24-year-olds as well as receiving 69% from Muslim and ethnic minority voters. Meanwhile, the influential catholic vote was broadly split among the RN, *Reconquête* and DLF. Another interesting outcome of the presidential election was the strong geographical variation of the result. While Marine Le Pen failed to win the election, she did significantly increase her vote share, particularly in [overseas départements such as Mayotte, Guadeloupe, and Réunion](#), where RN's message on tackling the cost of living and concerns about illegal migration struck a chord.

Overall Trends

The ultimate result for the 577 constituencies is difficult to predict, given the complexities of polling transfer preferences for potential second rounds, but there are three broadly discernible trends which can be partially discerned from the initial votes from [French voters overseas](#).

1. While Macron's Ensemble! alliance grouping is still predicted to secure a majority, of [275-318](#) seats, its popularity has decreased slightly ahead of the first round in some polls and it may be forced to work with another party like the centre-right [LR if it fails to secure a majority](#).
2. Despite Marine Le Pen's strong result in the presidential election and 21% national support, this support is not translating to legislative seats as the party is only predicted to secure 25-48 seats due to poor transfer-friendliness of RN candidates. This is considerably below the 50 seats threshold to form an official parliamentary grouping and would deny RN influence, committee chairs and speaking rights in parliament.
3. The left-wing alliance NUPES is expected to form the second largest group in parliament which would make Mr Mélenchon de facto leader of the opposition with 158-196 seats, and [could even potentially pip Macron's alliance to form the largest](#). While the centre-right LR group despite their poor performance in the presidential election are polling strongly and may form the third largest group in parliament with 42-62 seats, though this is within the margin of failing to form a parliamentary grouping which would diminish their profile.

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