

France – Snap elections (30 June and 7 July 2024): analysis of the results and their impacts

8 July 2024

SCENE SETTING

- The second round of the snap legislative elections was held this Sunday, July 7, following the **dissolution of the National Assembly decided by the President of the Republic on the evening of the European elections on June 9**, where the National Rally (RN, far-right) came out on top (31.37% of the votes). This dissolution occurred as the President of the Republic only had a relative majority in the National Assembly since 2024 and **aimed to regain “a clear majority to act in serenity and concord” through these snap elections**.
- With **historically high participation (66.71%, compared to 47.5% in 2022)**, the first round on June 30 confirmed the **momentum of the National Rally, leading (33.15%)** ahead of the united left under the banner of the New Popular Front (22.99%, NFP: alliance with far-left LFI, the Communist party, Ecologists, the Socialist party and the NPA – New anticapitalistic party) and then the presidential majority (20.76%). About 300 three-way races (possibility for more than two candidates to remain in the second round) were anticipated due to such participation.
- **The call for withdrawal and voting against the RN** by the main political forces significantly reduced the approximately 300 theoretical three-way races in the second round and **cast doubt on the RN’s ability to achieve an absolute majority, as well as the projection towards even a stable relative majority in the lower house**, contrary to the wish expressed by Emmanuel Macron on the evening of the dissolution.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SECOND ROUND: A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN THREE BLOCS

While the momentum of the RN in the European elections and the first round of these snap legislative elections suggested a comfortable relative majority for the RN, the National Assembly is now divided among three main political forces: the New Popular Front constitutes the first bloc (182 seats) ahead of the former presidential majority Ensemble (168 MPs) and then the RN (143 MPs).

- **Victory of the united left forces under the New Popular Front banner (182 seats) but a rebalancing of political forces within this union:** while LFI (far-left) maintains the number of its MPs (about 75), the **PS (socialist party) achieves the best result of this alliance** by more than doubling the number of its elected representatives (over 60 MPs). The Ecologists retain the possibility of having a group (over 30 MPs); only the Communist party (less than 10 MPs) is in clear decline.
- **A lesser failure than announced for the former presidential majority Ensemble (168 MPs)**, losing nearly 100 seats but positioning itself as the second force in the National Assembly – with an improved score compared to the European elections. **Almost all minister-candidates were elected or re-elected**. However, there was a certain distancing from the President of the Republic by former Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, launching the race for the 2027 presidential election, and current Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, recalling his opposition to the dissolution.
- **A record number of RN (National rally, far-right) MPs (143 seats, almost double that of 2022)** but far from the absolute majority demanded by Jordan Bardella (president of the party and MEP) or even the comfortable relative majority suggested by the party’s scores in the European elections or the first round. RN is thus the first party in the National Assembly, but its **normalization does not seem complete**: the missteps of several candidates despite a short campaign and the lack of presence on the ground for many of them, or even of embodiment, highlight the party’s difficulty in mobilizing beyond its executives and convincing of its respectability and ability to govern.

- **Relative stability of the right-wing Les Republicains (LR - 45 MPs)** despite the partition of LR President Eric Ciotti, allied with the RN for these elections, confirming the good performance of their constituencies and their territorial anchoring

This election saw historically high participation (66.63% for the second round): slightly lower than the first round's momentum, but still one of the highest figures in the past 25 years, giving strong legitimacy to the choices expressed at the polls.

IMMEDIATE POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE ELECTION: WHAT GOVERNMENT?

The Prime Minister, Gabriel Attal, presented his resignation and that of his government this morning as is the republican custom. **The President of the Republic asked him to remain Prime Minister “for the moment” to “ensure the stability of the country”.** With no absolute majority or even a comfortable relative majority in the National Assembly, it seems difficult for a Prime Minister to be designated this week. As he himself indicated last night, Gabriel Attal could be led to manage current affairs until the Olympics, or even beyond (but his government has resigned: cannot pass any structuring decision, cannot be overthrown).

Emmanuel Macron also announced last night that “in accordance with republican tradition, the President of the Republic will wait for the structuring of the new National Assembly to make the necessary decisions”; this is scheduled from July 18 to 20 with the formation of political groups, the election of the President and the bureau (vice-presidents, quaestors, and secretaries), the composition of committees, and the distribution of key positions (general rapporteur of the budget, presidency of the finance committee traditionally returning to the opposition, general rapporteur of social security financing laws, committee and delegation presidents).

Several scenarios are emerging:

- **The New Popular Front has indicated that it will meet to be able to propose the name of a Prime Minister “within the week”** who would be neither Jean-Luc Mélenchon (LFI leader who indicated he was ready to govern but considered too divisive by the other forces of the left-wing union) nor François Hollande (former President of the Republic, re-elected Corrèze MP last night). This Prime Minister would still need to gather behind him, if not the support, at least the absence of opposition from other forces than the New Popular Front in the National assembly.
- **Representatives of the former majority – including outgoing Prime Minister Gabriel Attal – have called for a plural majority** that could unite the outgoing Ensemble members with part of the LR, PS, and Ecologists, like the grand coalitions formed in some of our European neighbors.
- Finally, if no majority or alliance could be formed, the idea of a **technical government made up of consensual, apolitical personalities, experts, and senior officials** could return to the agenda.

Whatever the scenario chosen – except for the technical government which by definition does not depend on a political majority – it is important to keep in mind that any political Prime Minister is at the mercy of a motion of censure if not supported by a majority of MPs, especially during budget debates next autumn. If such a motion of censure were voted, the Government would be forced to resign; no dissolution being possible before June 2025.

BROADER LESSONS FROM THE ELECTION

- **Anchoring of the RN vote with a continuous dynamic since 2012:** in rural areas, former working-class territories (cf. RN deputies elected in the first round) but also in metropolis (according to calculations by Martial Foucault, former director of Cevipof, RN has progressed by 11 points on average in the 23 largest French cities between the first round of the 2022 legislative elections and that of 2024) except for Paris; beyond the working classes as well and with more varied age groups. RN has also strengthened in its historical territories by winning the majority of seats in Hauts-de-France and on the Mediterranean coast (with its LR allies).

- **A republican front still effective but increasingly difficult to mobilize** depending on political forces, with sometimes unclear voting instructions. Withdrawals in three-way races where an RN candidate could have won (there were about 300 three-way races after the first round), coupled with strong participation, proved effective for this second round and blocked the RN's path.
- **Questions about the future of several political forces and prospects for the 2027 presidential election:** with the new positive dynamic of the PS after good scores in the European elections and a doubling of its MPs in the snap legislative elections, facing LFI which had until now supplanted it; for the presidential majority, the second political force in the National Assembly, within which the distance from Emmanuel Macron is growing, especially with a view to 2027; the uncertainty of a right-wing recomposition after the LR partition and the ambitions expressed by Gérald Darmanin, Edouard Philippe, or Xavier Bertrand, still with a view to 2027; finally, the impact of a what could be seen as a *“stolen victory”* for the RN on its electorate, on its normalization efforts, its campaign choices... but also the impact of their greater exposure in Parliament with more seats...
- **Questions about French influence in Brussels:** the June 9 EU election significantly reduced France's place within the majority coalition in the European Parliament, and the results of these snap elections with cohabitation or the risk of an ungovernable France should not help France regain control at the European level, at least in the immediate future. The choice of the French commissioner (Emmanuel Macron announced on June 27 his wish for Thierry Breton) and for which portfolio, the excessive deficit procedure, and the Franco-German dynamic will have to be closely watched.
- **The two-round majority voting system is no longer the bulwark against RN** it was supposed to be nor the tool of a generally bipartisan political landscape. As a result, **the introduction of proportional representation** could return to the debate more strongly. One can also question the need for other institutional reforms when the Fifth Republic was designed and presented to avoid parliamentary instability and coalition problems experienced by our neighbors – which with the current context no longer seems to be the case.

AGENDA AHEAD

- **July 8:** Gabriel Attal presents his **resignation** and that of his government; the President of the Republic has asked him to remain Prime Minister *“for the moment”* to *“ensure the stability of the country”*.
- **July 9 to 11:** Emmanuel Macron at the **NATO summit** in Washington, DC.
- **July 14:** Traditional presidential address on **Bastille's Day**.
- **July 16:** EU Finance Ministers' Council during which the Commission is expected to formally propose opening **an excessive deficit procedure against France**.
- **July 18 to 20:** Opening of the XVIIth legislature, **installation of the National Assembly** and key positions.
- **July 22 to August 2:** A fifteen-day **legal session of Parliament**.
- **July 26 to August 11:** **Paris Olympic Games**.
- **By September 20:** France must present its **“national medium-term budgetary and structural plan”** as part of the excessive deficit procedure.
- **Early October:** Opening of the **ordinary session** including discussion and voting on **finance bills and social security bills** for 2025.
- **November 5:** **U.S. presidential election**.
- **June 9, 2025:** Date from which a **new dissolution** is possible.
- **2027:** **Presidential election**.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN THAT UNPRECEDENTED POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Delineate your absolute priorities** and non-negotiable commitments (in alignment with your headquarters and your global or pre-existing commitments) - to know your red lines in the face of new decision-makers.

- **Adapt your narrative** based on these absolute priorities and non-negotiable commitments and considering the priorities of the newly elected officials and the appointed Government to prioritize the issues on which you will have the most audience. The ultimate goal is to limit reputational risk in the face of decision-makers less accustomed to the exercise of power and dynamics of influence but in search of media coups to imprint their first steps in responsibility.
- **Remain neutral and factual in your commitments and proposals** - no affect or political stance to maintain your ability to interact with all decision-makers today and in the longer term depending on alternations.
- **Adopt collective approaches:** reassess your participation in professional associations to ensure their coherence with your positions and to be able to better rely on them in the future; consider forming new coalitions for the mutual defense of issues.
- **Consider the “political” dimension of debates in the National Assembly:** the new distribution of seats between three major blocs makes the formation of coalitions essential for the adoption of upcoming reforms. The specific sensitivities of each political family within these blocs and any coalition, as well as their respective weights, should therefore be carefully considered by entities wishing to see their proposals retained.
- **The Parliament and the Government are not the only levers of influence:** the administration is at work for the implementation of texts or even for more technical decisions, local authorities and especially the Regions have decision-making power on many issues concerning companies, the EU remains the compass for multinational companies operating at the continental scale and beyond.
- **Look further than the coming months:** start to project beyond this new reality and build connections and a network in view of the next political deadlines (dissolution in a year or more, municipal elections 2026, presidential election 2027... to prepare for alternations).

For more information, please contact

Floriane Delandre fdelandre@apcoworldwide.com

Majda Achab machab@apcoworldwide.com

Mehdy Taleb mtaleb@apcoworldwide.com