

# Understanding the results the day after June 30<sup>th</sup> 2024

## Results of the First Round of the Legislative Election 2024

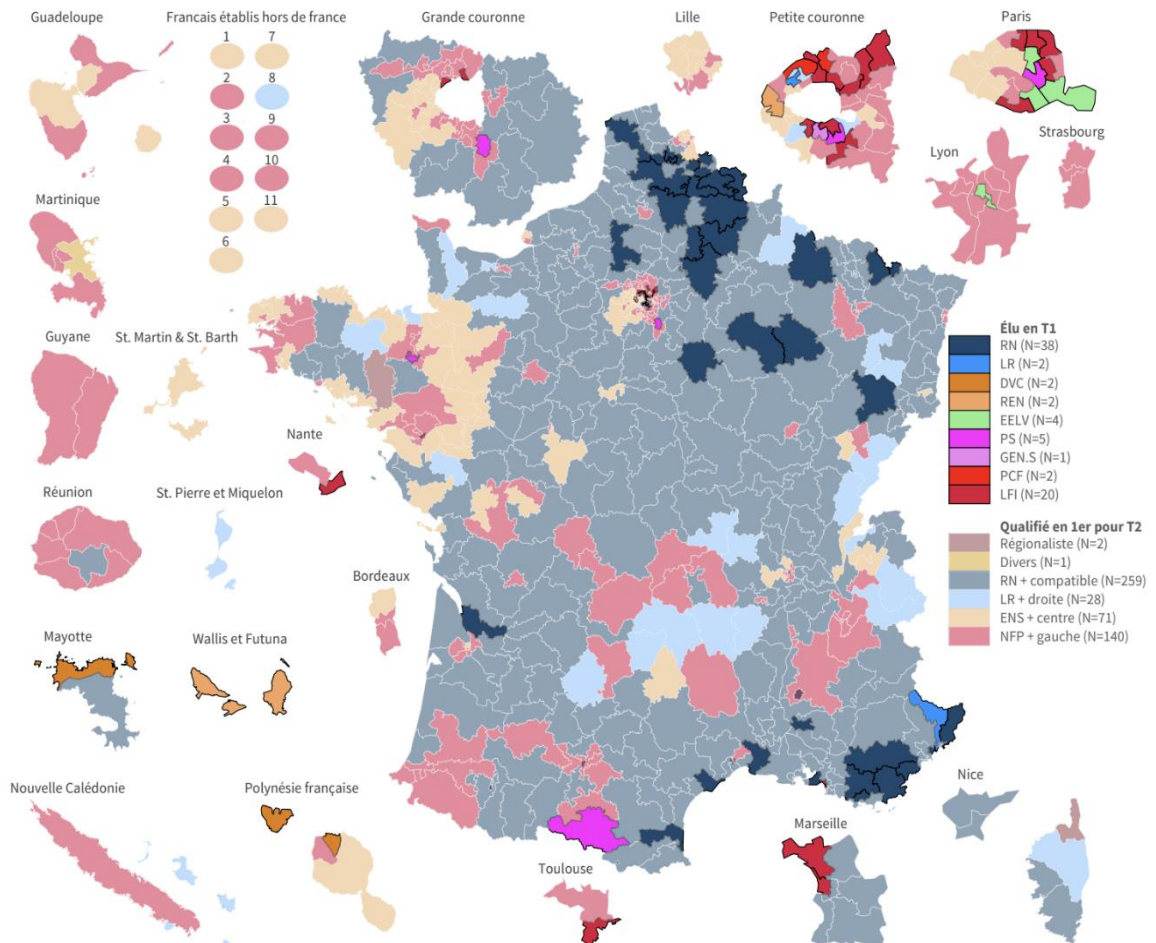
*Pierre-Henri Bono, Econometrician, specialised in the evaluation of public policy in the field of urbanism*



### General Results

A total of 76 candidates were elected in the first round.

The map below shows the results at the end of the first round of the 2024 legislative election. The nine bold colours represent candidates elected in the first round based on their party membership. The six pastel colours represent candidates who came first but were not elected because of the coalition they belonged to. The parties with the highest number of candidates elected in the first round are the National Rally and France Unbowed.



Map of results after the 1st round of the legislative elections - 010724 - PH Bono

## New Partisan Balances

Jérôme Jaffré, Associated Researcher at CEVIPOF

The first-round results of this unexpected and hasty legislative election have changed the partisan balance. The vote on June 30 echoes the "electoral revolution" of 2017, to use the title of the book edited by Bruno Cautrès and Anne Muxel. It has put an end to the Macronist power that had been observed at that time and that was already flagging in 2022. However, it has not restored the old order for either the Left or the classic Right. It has turned the National Rally into the leading party in the French political system, even if there is no guarantee that it will be the majority party. With 21% of the vote, the candidates in the Macronist camp (*Renaissance*, *MoDem*, *Horizons*) have suffered a severe defeat, with many of them in third place - synonymous with elimination, voluntary withdrawal or a future as powerless figures with no allies in a three-block system. Their decline has been constant: 34% in 2017, 26% in 2022, 21% today. A sanction vote against the current government is clearly at work. As they made slight progress in terms of percentage of the vote, compared to the European election, the scale of their loss has been somewhat attenuated.



But nonetheless, looking at scores obtained by the parties in power in the sixteen legislative elections held in France since 1962, there is only one precedent for this. In 1993, the Socialist Party together with its allies won just 19% of the vote. This was a catastrophic result for the Left, which had been in power for five years and had managed to have just 91 MPs elected in a Parliament with 577 seats, while the RPR and the UDF obtained 485 seats, i.e. 84% of seats, a record in French democratic parliamentary history. In 2017, Macron's domination sent the Left and the classic Right into a tailspin. However, the fall of Macronism in 2024 has not been sufficient to restore the old order. The Left - all tendencies taken together - totals only 31% of votes cast, which is admittedly more than in 2017 (26.7%) but barely better than in 2022 (30.5%). It is not even close to pre-Macronism levels. Setting aside 2012 (the year of its last victory) it obtained 39% of the vote in 2002 and 2007 in the legislative election that immediately followed the presidential election won by Jacques Chirac and subsequently Nicolas Sarkozy. In 2024, according to the latest pre-election poll carried out by Ipsos for Cevipof, it will win just 22% of the working-class vote, compared to 42% in 2007. As for the classic Right, there is no stopping its demise. It seems not to have gained anything from Macronism.

At its peak in 2007, it accounted for nearly 46% of the vote, and subsequently 35% in 2012, and 21% in 2017, the year Emmanuel Macron became President. However, since then, the fall of the classic Right has accelerated even further: 14% in 2022 and 10.5% in this election on June 30. In the first round of the election, the National Rally has taken the lead having obtained 33.2% of the vote for the party and its supporters. It is frequently seen to be increasing in popularity at a steady pace but in reality, 2024 represents a massive acceleration and a change in how the party's progress is occurring. It accounted for just 14% of the vote in 2017 and 19% in 2022. It has suddenly increased its influence by fourteen points. It would appear that the NR, which had already won the votes of the working classes, has also swallowed up a large proportion of classic Right supporters.

However, when we consider the wider Right (classic Right + Far-Right), their total number of votes leaves them as a minority throughout the country. With just a few days to go before the second round of the election, this is a significant fact. Looking at the legislative elections from the time Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National began to rise, the Far-Right exceeded 50% of votes cast for more than twenty years between 1986 and 2007. In 2012, the total was 48%. After that, the Macronist revolution reduced this score to 36% in 2017 and 38% in 2022. The rise of the NR in 2024 has raised this score to 44% which is still well below 50%. In the new partisan balances, the NR has emerged as the leader of the first round of the election. It remains to be seen if it can transform this lead in number of votes into an absolute majority of seats. This will be the issue at stake on Sunday July 7 when the second round takes place.

## **The National Rally: a dominant, national and ... popular party**

*Pascal Perrineau, Full Professor*



The National Rally (NR) and friends of Eric Ciotti candidates received over 10 and a half million votes (33,5% of votes cast) in the first round of this legislative election. Never in its history had the party attained such success. In the last legislative election in 2022, it won just 4,248,626 votes (18,68% of votes cast). In the space of just two years, it has thus progressed to dizzying new heights increasing its number of votes by over six million (+14.8% of votes cast). Until then, (with the exception of the second rounds of the 2017 and 2022 presidential elections) the highest number of votes obtained by the NR stood at 8,133,828 (23.15% of votes cast). Their current electoral success is without precedent. It should be recalled that since its electoral breakthrough in the 1984 European election, the National Front, (today's National Rally) vote bottomed out at 1,116,005 votes (4.29% of votes cast) in the 2007 legislative election and 4, 248, 626 votes (18.68% of votes cast) in the 2022 legislative election.

In exiting this zone where the NR was undoubtedly a party to be reckoned with but was nonetheless unable to impose itself in a leading role, Jordan Bardella's party has become a veritable dominant and national party. Dominant - as Jean Charlot said of the UNR in the 1960s<sup>1</sup> and as was the neo-Gaullist UDR in association with the Independent Republicans in the 1970s (31.38% in the 1973 legislative election) and the Socialist Party in association with left-wing radicals in the 1980s (36% in the 1981 legislative election). National - as just a few short weeks ago during the European election, the NR was in the lead in 93% of the 34,935 French communes. Wave 6 of the French electoral survey<sup>2</sup> that in the run-up to the legislative election, the party was in the lead among both women and men in all age brackets (with the exception of the under 35s who opted for New Popular Front candidates) and in all social categories (with the exception of white-collar workers). After the first round of this legislative election, the party led by Jordan Bardella and Marine Le Pen is not only a dominant and national party, it is also a popular party.

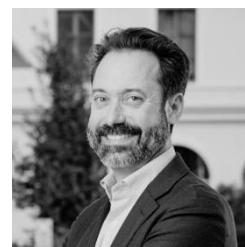
<sup>1</sup> Jean Charlot, *L'Union pour la nouvelle République. Étude du pouvoir au sein d'un parti politique*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Wave 6, French electoral survey, 2024 legislative election.

## **The National Rally Vote: A Vote for Social Recognition?**

*Kevin Arceneaux, Director of CEVIPOF*

Media coverage of the campaign prior to the early legislative election focused particularly on economic motivations for the increasing electoral support of French voters for the National Rally. The rise in inflation, combined with low income growth, has made many voters feel that their purchasing power has significantly declined. In addition, faced with disparities in resources and living conditions, many people living outside the major cities feel a certain degree of injustice when comparing their lives to those of people living in urban areas or large conurbations, particularly Paris. While this is undoubtedly an explanatory factor for working-class support for the National Rally, it seems paradoxical that the left-wing parties do not benefit from such support among this population even though they firmly defend strongly redistributive economic policies. An initial response to this paradox lies in the fact that in addition to its stress on purchasing power and unlike the Left, the National Rally focuses on immigration and cultural concerns that correspond to the preoccupations of large segments of the working classes. This is where it differs significantly from the Left. However, these themes and programmatic issues are also present in the campaign led by *Les Républicains* (LR) and the presidential majority, the latter of which is regularly accused of turning to the Right on these questions. However, they are not attracting the votes of



the working classes either. We therefore need to look at other explanations, particularly those based on social psychology.

Most people develop a sense of belonging to social groups. They are also aware of the social hierarchy in which these groups are embedded. When people feel that their social group is losing its position to other groups, they tend to feel strong resentment and a desire to do something about it. This sense of loss, known as 'relative frustration', can be linked to material conditions, but also to other factors. It can result from a perceived loss of social recognition. These two types of relative frustration are not necessarily linked. For example, owners of a butcher's shop may be materially well off (at least compared to many other people), but they may nevertheless feel that their way of life and the social group to which they belong have lost recognition and reputation in the eyes of those who believe, for example, that eating meat is morally reprehensible.

To explore this explanation, we included two questions taken from the 2024 French Electoral Survey. One of these questions measures the group's relative frustration with regard to their material living conditions (*In France, people like me are living in increasingly poorer conditions*) and the other with regard to their social status (*People like me don't get the respect we deserve*). It appears that the responses obtained in terms of the level of agreement with these two statements are closely correlated to voting intentions. All else being equal, once the socio-demographic factors that traditionally influence electoral behaviour are controlled for, there is a close link between economic frustration and the NR vote, and to a lesser extent the NPF vote. The higher the level of frustration on these questions, the greater the likelihood of voting for one of these two parties; the lower the level of frustration, the greater the likelihood of voting Ensemble! and, to a lesser extent, LR. On the other hand, frustration linked to a lack of social recognition does not affect NPF voters (the more they feel they are respected, the more likely they are to vote for the NPF) and all the more so for Ensemble! voters, whereas it is a decisive factor in explaining the likelihood of a vote for the NR. The NR has provided an outlet for voters who feel that they "don't get the respect they deserve". The NPF, on the other hand, has failed to cater to this relative frustration with social recognition.

## **The complex equation required for the NR to obtain an absolute majority**

Martial Foucault, Full Professor at Sciences Po



The National Rally (NR) has managed to pull off a veritable coup de force in obtaining 10.5 million votes (including LR-Ciotti candidates) in the first round of the 2024 legislative election.

Never before had Jordan Bardella's party won so many votes in a legislative election. In concrete terms, this is borne out by the first-round victory of 37 NR candidates and one *Les Républicains* (LR) candidate backed by the NR.

In spite of this historical electoral performance, the NR is not guaranteed to obtain an absolute majority on the evening on July 7 next. There are three main reasons for this.

Firstly, in order to obtain an absolute majority, the NR (and its allies) would have to achieve this in 251 constituencies in the second round. They could do so if the RN and their allies confirmed their momentum in the 258 constituencies where they took first place. However, in these same constituencies the withdrawal of Ensemble! or *Nouveau Front Populaire* (NFP) candidates in third place makes such an achievement difficult to reach.

Secondly, voting reserves for the second round remain very limited as a result of the smaller number of electoral candidates in 2024 (on average 7.5 candidates per constituency compared to 11.5 in 2022). The NR will therefore need to target potential voting reserves from among first-round abstainers. Again, this will be a challenge for a party which



will find it very difficult to go beyond its first-round bedrock, and even more so as voter turnout will be lower in the second round.

Finally, in the event of a greater number of RN duels against the left-wing coalition or Ensemble! (as a result of LR withdrawals), the IPSOS electoral survey carried out for CEVIPOF shows that the redistribution of votes will be heterogeneous. In the case of an NR vs. NPF duel, 41% of voters would choose the NR, 32% would choose the NPF and 23% would abstain. In the case of an Ensemble! vs NR duel, 40% of votes would go to Ensemble!, 35% to the NR and 22% of voters would abstain.

The key to solving this equation can therefore be found in the gap between the NR candidates and their opponents in second position but also and more especially in the strategy adopted by the Ensemble!, NFP and LR candidates in first or second place who remain under threat from the NR candidate in third place. It would seem difficult to convince these candidates to withdraw in the second round, thus increasing the chances of victory for the NR in almost 50 constituencies where the NR is on average less than 3,000 votes behind its opponents.

Thinking of a republican front only in cases where the NR is in the lead and the presidential majority or the Left-wing coalition is in third place is a fragile barrier to counter the arrival of the NR in power.

## **The Risky Strategy Adopted by the Left to Tackle the National Rally**

*Luc Rouban, CNRS Senior Research Fellow at CEVIPOF*

The strategy adopted by the Left during the campaign for the first round of the legislative election was to unite within a grouping they called the New Popular Front (NPF). The NPF brought together the far left and social democracy in an attempt to counter the growing strength of the National Rally (NR). This electoral alliance immediately took on a radical hue, due to the presence of *La France insoumise* (LFI – France Unbowed) and its now highly contested leader, Jean-Luc Mélenchon. It failed to learn the lessons of the European election, when Raphaël Glucksmann's *PS-PP* list did much better than the LFI list (14% compared to 9%). How could such a radicalisation strategy prove effective? The question has repercussions on several levels. First of all, one might have thought that the failure of Ensemble!, which garnered barely 20% of the votes cast on the evening of June 30, could have been much more severe in the face of a social-democratic left-wing force that alone would have been capable of completing the decomposition of the Macronist electorate. By locking the second round into a head-on opposition between the NPF and the NR, ("there's them and us, nothing in the centre" declared Jean-Luc Mélenchon), the radical nature of the grouping will no doubt lead many moderate left-wing voters to abstain in the event of a duel between an NR and an NPF candidate from LFI. The very nuanced position adopted by Ensemble! and Édouard Philippe on withdrawals from the second round – that any withdrawal must be made on a case-by-case basis to ensure that no votes are given to either the NR or LFI – is de facto likely to result in abstention or indeed a strengthening of the NR.



In the event of an NPF-NR duel, the Cevipof electoral survey shows that 36% of *Renaissance* voters in the European election would choose to vote for the NR candidate in the second round. Secondly, the strategy of the "*ad hitlerum*" argument, according to which NR voters are essentially motivated by racism and seek to overthrow the republican regime out of nostalgia for Vichy, fails to take into account the social dimension of the NR vote. The failure of Fabien Roussel, leader of the French Communist Party, in the first round against the NR speaks volumes about the fact that the NR has taken the social argument from the Left without adopting its tax proposals, which frighten the middle and upper classes. Lastly, the frivolous theories according to which abstainers constitute a reserve

army of the Left (voters are right-wing but France is left-wing) have proved their inanity. The very high turnout did not particularly benefit the NPF, but rather the NR, which improved on the score it obtained in the European election. The Left has garnered all the votes it can get and now represents less than a third of the electorate. LFI's strategy of radicalising the Left and claiming power exclusively therefore leaves it in a very vulnerable position for the second round. It would also be vulnerable if it comes to joining forces with *Renaissance* in the National Assembly to counter a large block of sovereigntist and nationalist right-wingers who will play the moderation and refocusing card, as the NR has done since 2022.

## **The Failure of Emmanuel Macron**

*Bruno Cautrès, CNRS Researcher*



The executive suffered a clear and uncontested defeat in the first round of the legislative election. Despite an honourable score of 20%, the presidential majority fell from first to third place in the "tripartition" of French political life. There will be many explanations for what has just happened that will require time for analysis, but two political factors can already be highlighted: on the one hand, the fact that it was impossible for the executive to convince people of any valid reasons for the dissolution of the National Assembly and, on the other hand, the hugely damaged image of Macron among the public, particularly since the announcement of the said dissolution. During the campaign, Emmanuel Macron never managed to make sense of this dissolution, which appeared to be more of a "dissolution of convenience" than an actual political project. For such a manoeuvre to have had even the slightest chance of working, it would have been essential to develop an argument proposing a complete overhaul of the executive's reform agenda, spelling out the programmatic foundations on which the new majority called for by the Head of State would rest. But nothing of the sort happened. The data from Wave 6 of the electoral survey conducted by IPSOS for Cevipof and its partners, clearly show that perplexity and incomprehension dominated feelings about the dissolution among the public. For LFI and more especially the NR electorates on the other hand, it was seen as an opportunity. This created a situation where the electorates who were the most opposed to Macron were also the most strongly mobilised, with all the Cevipof survey data showing interest in the campaign, commitment and certainty to vote among the RN electorate in particular. This situation would probably not have had such a negative impact on the majority if the image of Macron had been positive. But after seven years in power, the wear and tear had largely taken its toll. All the data produced by opinion polls clearly showed that Macron's image had run out of steam. Even among his supporters, the image of the daring reformer of 2017, which had mutated into the image of a crisis manager over time, had yesterday become a bewildered strategist with no plan B, as evidenced by the hesitations over the "Republican front". With just one week to go before the second round, there is little time to rectify the situation and avoid the fourth cohabitation of the Fifth Republic or the scenario of an ungovernable chamber - the very opposite of the clarification sought by Emmanuel Macron.

## Younger Voters: the Preference for Radicality But for the Left Rather than the Right

Anne Muxel, Deputy Director at CEVIPOF and Emeritus CNRS Senior Research Fellow

The high voter turnout for this first round of the legislative election also characterised the younger sections of the electorate. The under-35s expressed the importance they attached to the issues at stake in this election, in an unprecedented, particularly polarised and politicised electoral context. Three quarters of them (77%) acknowledged their interest in these elections (including 82% of students) and their intention to take part rose significantly in the latter stages of the campaign. Fully 58% of 18–24-year-olds and 52% of 24–34-year-olds voted in the first round of the general election. This was more than for the European election, respectively 40% and 34% and especially than for the 2022 general election (29% and 34%). When compared to other age brackets, turnout among this section of the population remains lower respectively (-8.7 and -14.7 points compared to voters as a whole and -23 and -29 points compared with voters aged 70 and over). However, in comparison with a number of previous similar elections, turnout among this age group reached a level that showed young people to be taking back their rightful place in electoral decision-making and the political equilibrium that results from such an act.



Their votes were divided between the three blocks, but with a clear preference for NFP candidates. The 18-24 age group gave them 48% of their votes, while the 25-34 age group gave them 38%, respectively +20 and +10 points more than voters as a whole. The National Rally garnered a number of votes equivalent to the number recorded among the electorate as a whole, with 32% among 18-24 year olds and 31% among 25-34 year-olds. Finally, Ensemble! received only 9% and 14% of their votes respectively, percentages which were well below the party's national low.

Younger voters thus largely voted to the left, although the National Rally also have an electoral base among this age group that should not be minimised. This base is now well consolidated among certain segments of young working-class voters and those with lower levels of education. In the 2022 legislative election, the National Rally had captured the vote of just 14% of the under-35s. Two years later, that figure has doubled.

This surge is strong, but the left nonetheless continues to prevail, and the NFP coalition has also made progress since the 2022 legislative election, when NUPES<sup>1</sup> won the votes of 38% of the under-35s.

The left-wing preference specific to young people had somewhat faded over time. However, it has clearly regained a certain strength and momentum. Significantly more under-35s approved of the creation of the NFP the day after the dissolution of the National Assembly by Macron (57% compared to 37% of French people overall).

Findings from Wave 6 of the electoral panel carried out by IPSOS for CEVIPOF, the *Institut Montaigne*, *La Fondation Jean-Jaurès* and *Le Monde* highlight three particularities of this left-wing preference among young people that deserve attention.

Firstly, there is quite a marked difference between young women and young men, with far more young women confirming their vote for the NFP than young men (50% of young women under 35 voted for a candidate from this coalition, compared to 37% of young men in the same age group).

The second singularity is that this tropism mainly concerns young people who are still in education. More than one in two students (52%) voted for an NFP candidate.

The third peculiarity is that young people who favour the Left are less likely to reject the LFI<sup>2</sup> than the rest of the electorate. For example, 23% of the under-35s think it would be a good thing if Jean-Luc Mélenchon were to become Prime Minister (compared to 11% of

the electorate as a whole). Young people are also more decided about voting for an LFI candidate representing the NFP coalition in their constituency, even acknowledging that this would strengthen their motivation to vote for this political grouping (24% compared to 14% of the electorate as a whole).

The process of radicality is at work among young people in France: those on the left are actively voting and mobilising in response to the NR's electoral victory, while those on the right are much less visible on the political protest scene but are nevertheless making their voices heard at the ballot box.

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvel Union populaire écologique et social* - New Ecological and Social People's Union

<sup>2</sup> LFI: La France Insoumise (France Unbowed); a far-left party created by Jean-Luc Mélenchon in 2016