
Macron's Party on Track to Win Majority in French Parliament

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As polls closed in France's first round of legislative elections Sunday, the first projections showed that President Emmanuel Macron's party was set to win a big majority in parliament, with a record low turnout of more than 50 percent.

Projections by two separate polling firms put Macron's En Marche, or "On The Move," party and its ally Modem on track to win more than 400 seats in the 577-seat National Assembly.

A poll by Elabe put the number of seats at between 415 and 445, while a poll by Kantar Sofres put it at between 400 and 445. The second round vote next Sunday, June 18 and will determine the exact breakdown of seats.

Communist leader Pierre Laurent commented that the victory of the governing party was the result of the "division of the left," implicitly blaming the leadership of the French Unbowed, a progressive movement recently founded by former Socialist senator Jean-Luc Melenchon, for the defeat. Both groups failed to form an alliance ahead of the elections for various reasons. The Communist Party obtained about 3 percent of the vote, while the French Unbowed scored about 11 percent.

Jean-Marie Le Guen, a former socialist minister, declared that "the socialist party was officially dead," arguing that traditional socialist voters preferred En Marche. Although En Marche candidates branded themselves as outsiders, at least half of them actually come from France's traditional centrist parties, like the new Prime Minister Edouard Philippe. Macron himself used to serve as the previous government's economy minister before splitting from the socialist party to run for president under what he branded as a new political movement.

Ahead of the vote, multiple opinion polls had tipped En Marche to be the front-runner for the first round of the parliamentary election, projected to win together with its allies at least 32 percent of the votes, followed by

conservative Republican party with 21.2 percent and Marine Le Pen's far-right National Front at about 13.9 percent, according to an IPSOS survey.

The En Marche candidates have already won 10 out of the 11 seats from France's 1.3 million overseas constituents. According to opinion polls, this could impact the mainland votes.

At noon, the turnout was at 19.24 percent, according to the Interior Ministry. This figure is slightly lower than that of the 2012 first-round ballot over the same time period. Voter turnout is expected to remain low.

The election is taking place amid heavy security, with an estimated 50,000 security personnel expected to be on patrol.

If no candidate wins over 50 percent in the first round, the two top vote-getters move on to the second round. Additionally, any candidate who wins 12.5 percent of the electorate, will also move to the next round.

There were 7,882 candidates standing nationwide in a process expected to produce a new parliament. Over 200 of the outgoing lawmakers are not running for re-election. Each constituency represents approximately 125,000 individuals.
