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FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DISCRETE STATE OF THE PROPERTY O

Edited by Dominique Reynié

Ukraine – Putin – Russian interference – immigration – media social networks – purchasing power – debt – Europe – NATO security – populism – abstention from voting – blank vote youth – rightward shift – political parties – political disaffiliation Yellow Vests – anti-vaxxers – anti-vaccine pass – Covid-19...

APRIL 2022

FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION INPACTED BY CRISES

Edited by Dominique Reynié

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APRIL 2022

The key findings of the survey:

I. An unprecedented context: how the war is impacting the French population's electoral choice

- **1.** The news in Ukraine is imposing itself on voters. To the question: "How often do you follow the news about Russia's war against Ukraine?", 70% of the voters surveyed answered that they keep themselves informed about it at least once a day. Only 2% of respondents said they never follow the news about the conflict.
- **2.** The impact of the war in Ukraine on the French presidential campaign is reflected in voters' assessment of the seriousness of events: 89% of respondents are worried about Putin's war in Ukraine.
- **3.** Concerns about the crisis in Ukraine are impacting the French electoral decision: 45% of respondents believe that the conflict will be a determining factor in their vote in the first round of the election. While only 10% of respondents say that they have changed their vote due to the war in Ukraine, this proportion doubles (20%) among those who say the conflict will matter in their vote in the first round of the election.
- **4.** It has become more difficult to follow the French presidential campaign: 26% of respondents say that they are unable to obtain adequate information on the various candidates and their proposals because of the health crisis and the war in Ukraine (compared to 43% who say that they are still able to obtain adequate information about the various candidates and their proposals). Almost a third (29%) of respondents say they do not try to inform themselves about the various candidates because they are not interested in the presidential campaign.

- 48% of respondents believe that the major issues affecting France and its future are no longer being discussed because of Russia's war against Ukraine. Significant variations can be noted according to potential electorates. The majority of potential voters for Emmanuel Macron (65%) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (56%) say that the crisis in Ukraine does not prevent the discussion of issues that concern the future of France, while the reverse is more often cited by voters for Valérie Pécresse (57%), Marine Le Pen (54%) and Éric Zemmour (59%), a view also shared by a majority of those (55%) planning to abstain from voting or casting a blank vote in the first round of the election.
- **6.** 70% of respondents fear that the conflict in Ukraine will escalate into a World War.
- 7. 68% of respondents consider foreign interference to be a major threat in the presidential campaign, as citizens do not have the capacity to inform themselves properly, notably in terms of distinguishing the truth from fake news.
- 8. 58% of respondents believe that "the Russian State will try to disrupt the French presiden-tial election, for example by spreading fake news". Of those who think so, more than a third (37%) believe that this will be done in order to favour a candidate preferred by the Kremlin. Marine Le Pen (45%), Éric Zemmour (40%) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (20%) are most often considered as the candidates who would be favoured by such an intervention by the Russian State.
- **9.** Almost all respondents (88%) have a negative opinion of Vladimir Putin. The opinion is even "very negative" for 68%. However, 10% of respondents have a positive opinion of Vladimir Putin. Positive views of the Russian President are more widespread among respondents aged 18-24 (24%) than among those aged 65 and over (4%).
- **10.** Electorates sensitive to Putinism (Zemmour, Mélenchon, Le Pen). A positive opinion of Vladimir Putin is present in the potential electorates of Éric Zemmour (22%), Jean-Luc Mélenchon (17%), Marine Le Pen (16%) and those who say they will abstain from voting (15%) in the first round of the presidential election.

2022 French presidential election impacted by crises

- 11. Two-thirds of respondents (64%) say that they are satisfied with the way in which President Emmanuel Macron is handling the crisis in Ukraine, compared with a third (34%) who are dissatisfied (2% did not answer). It should also be noted that 39% of respondents who say that they are dissatisfied with Emmanuel Macron's action as President of the Republic are nevertheless satisfied with his handling of the crisis in Ukraine.
- **12.** None of Emmanuel Macron's competitors are considered capable of handling the crisis in Ukraine better than he does.

II. Presidential election 2022: the revelation of a French political crisis

- 13. The protest vote: persistence and amplification. First-round voting intentions in favour of protest candidates reached 46%. The three candidates of the right-wing protest vote, Marine Le Pen (19%), Éric Zemmour (12%) and Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (1%), have 32% of voting intentions for the first round, i.e. 18 points more than all the candidates of the left-wing protest vote (14%), composed of Jean-Luc Mélenchon (12%), Philippe Poutou (1%) and Nathalie Arthaud (1%).
- **14.** The heterogeneity of voters likely to vote for the three main protest candidates is notable. The typical voter for Jean-Luc Mélenchon is rather young, metropolitan, employed in the public sector or unemployed. The typical Marine Le Pen voter is primarily a woman, aged between 18 and 24, living in a rural area, employed in either the private or public sectors, unemployed, a housewife and opposed to globalisation. Éric Zemmour has a comparable level of voting intentions in the different segments of the population, except that his electorate is significantly more male.
- **15.** Abstention from voting and blank votes: 35% of respondents could cast a blank vote in the first round of the presidential election, and 26% say they could abstain from voting.

- **16.** The main reasons given show that abstention from voting and blank votes are less a result of a lack of interest in politics or the presidential election than a form of protest. Thus, 30% of respondents say they might abstain from voting or cast a blank vote because "the different candidates do not appeal to them", 24% because "regardless of the outcome, the same policies are carried out", 15% to "protest against the current system". The hypothesis that Russia's war in Ukraine is influencing the election is partially borne out, as it comes fourth (11%) among the reasons for a potential abstention from voting or for a blank vote, on par with disinterest in politics (11%) and ahead of the idea that one's vote is "useless" (9%).
- 17. In a potential second round between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, those indicating that they are "certain" or "very likely" to vote for the RN candidate account for 31% of respondents, the highest result in the five waves of this survey (conducted since September 2019). Over the same period, Emmanuel Macron also reaches his highest level of support (40%).
- 18. In the event of a second round between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, 72% of voters who could vote for Éric Zemmour in the first round express a preference for Marine Le Pen, while 16% of Éric Zemmour's voters would abstain from voting or cast a blank vote, and 9% would vote for Emmanuel Macron.
- 19. 20% of voters who could vote for Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the first round would be willing to vote for Marine Le Pen in a second round against Emmanuel Macron. 37% would vote for the incumbent president, 37% would abstain from voting or cast a blank vote.
- 20. 25% of voters who could vote for Valérie Pécresse in the first round of the election would be willing to vote for Marine Le Pen in a second round against Emmanuel Macron. 42% would vote for the incumbent president, 28% would abstain from voting or cast a blank vote.

- 21. According to our data, almost one in two voters (44%) believe that their choice for the first round of the presidential election "could still change", against 55% who say it is "definitive" (1% did not respond). When voters are asked about their second choice ("And if you were to vote for another candidate, it would be for...?"), 20% of respondents say they that would cast a blank vote and 11% would abstain from voting. These forms of electoral protest thus constitute two major electoral reservoirs.
- **22.** The mistrust of political parties is confirmed: 80% of respondents do not trust political parties.
- **23.** Lack of affiliation with a political party continues despite the campaign: 39% of French voters report no proximity to a particular political party. LREM and the RN, the two most popular political parties, attract the interest of only 10% of voters respectively.
- **24.** The rightward shift of the protest vote in the French electorate is confirmed. In March 2022, 46% of voters surveyed say they want to vote for one of the right-wing candidates (Valérie Pécresse, Jean Lassalle, Marine Le Pen, Éric Zemmour, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan) in the first round of the elections. The right-wing protest vote accounts for a third of voters (32%), compared to 27% in 2017. In March 2022, the right-wing protest vote (32%) surpasses the right-wing government vote (12%) and far exceeds its 2017 level (27%).
- **25.** The right-wing trend of the protest vote in the electorate can also be observed through self-positioning on the left-right political scale. 40% of respondents position themselves on the right (between 6 and 10 on the scale), 21% on the left (between 0 and 4) and 15% in the centre (5 on the scale). Respondents could also choose not to position themselves on this scale. A quarter of respondents (23%) chose not to position themselves.
- **26.** Faced with the possibility of a second round of the French presidential election between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, slightly more voters on the right will "definitely" or "most likely" vote for the RN candidate (42%) than for the incumbent president (40%).

- 27. The younger generations of French citizens may be changing the political game, and the presidential election could provide them with a means to express a form of protest, even if abstention levels may be very high. This is evidenced by the populist temptation of 18-24 year olds in the first round of the presidential election: 54% say they will vote for one of the protest candidates, which is 8 points higher than the average (46%).
- **28.** Young people's political commitment is more often reflected in their desire to bypass the political system, as shown by their support for movements that break with the political system: two-thirds of 18-24 year olds (66%) have a positive image of the Yellow Vest movement (compared to 49% on average, and 34% for those 65 and older). Similarly, half (49%) have a positive image of antivaxxers (versus 30% on average and 14% of those aged 65 and over). Finally, 54% of the youngest respondents have a positive image of the antivaccine pass movement, which is 17 points higher than the average (37%) and 35 points higher than those 65 and over (19%).
- **29.** Conversely, there are also signs of positive politicisation. One of the most notable findings with regard to the younger generations is the proportion of young citizens who say they trust religious institutions: 50% among 18-24 year olds, compared to 35% on average.
- **30.** 49% of voters say they have a positive image of the Yellow Vests, the highest since 2019. On the other hand, 30% of voters maintain a positive image of anti-vaxxers, up 3 points from 27% in September 2021, and 37% have a positive image of the anti-vaccine pass movement.
- 31. Purchasing power (59%) is the issue that will count the most in voters' choices, ahead of immigration (24%) and social inequalities (24%). Among potential voters, purchasing power comes out on top among all electorates, with the exception of Éric Zemmour's potential voters, for whom immigration comes out on top (68%), and Yannick Jadot's potential voters, for whom global warming dominates their concerns (67%). Finally, Russia's war in Ukraine is cited more by potential voters for Emmanuel Macron in the first round of the election (35%) than by the average of respondents (20%).

III. A presidential election shaken up by the transitioning media space

- **32.** The use of social media has become part of voters' daily lives: 92% of them use at least one social network. Among those aged under 35, the use of at least one social network reaches 99%, but it concerns almost all 50-64 year olds (90%) and even those aged 65 and over (82%).
- **33.** On average, most respondents report using Facebook (77%) and YouTube (77%). Less massively, the use of WhatsApp (59%) and Instagram (47%) remain widespread. Twitter (32%) and TikTok (27%) are used less frequently, followed by Twitch (15%) and Telegram (15%). Three-quarters of respondents (77%) report using a social network at least once a day.
- **34.** Voters do not trust the information circulating on social media. 64% of respondents feel that they "give anyone an opportunity to express themselves on topics that they don't know about", 63% that they "encourage the spread of fake news", 50% that they "give others too much information about our private lives", and 37% that they "lead us to only engage with people who agree with us", i.e., filter bubbles.
- **35.** Protest behaviours and social media interact with one another. In the event of a second round of the presidential election between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, 49% of French respondents who use Telegram daily say they will "definitely" or "very likely" vote for Marine Le Pen (versus 31% on average) and 31% say they would vote for Emmanuel Macron (versus 40% on average). Similarly, 39% of daily YouTube users will "definitely" or "very likely" vote for the RN candidate (versus 30% for the incumbent president), and those using TikTok at least once a day are 38% (versus 40% for Emmanuel Macron).

IV. Points of resistance to negative politicisation

- **36.** Criticised, President Emmanuel Macron still outweighs his competitors. With the Covid-19 crisis, the proportion of voters satisfied with his action as president has improved significantly. It rose from 29% to 35% between January and September 2020, then to 40% in September 2021. The favourable judgment has been further strengthened since Putin's war in Ukraine: in March 2022, 45% of respondents are satisfied with Emmanuel Macron's action as President of the Republic.
- **37.** Support for the European idea is still growing in French public opinion. Respondents' trust in the European Commission has increased significantly, from 41% in July 2021 to 49% in March 2022. The same is true for the European Parliament (41% in July 2021, compared to 47% in March 2022). These trends are the opposite of those of our national institutions: over the same period, trust in the National Assembly has dropped by 6 points (from 48% in July 2021 to 42% in March 2022).
- 38. 70% of respondents who intend to vote for Marine Le Pen in the first round of the election do not want France to leave the European Union. There is also strong support for the euro (69%). Two-thirds (67%) of respondents who intend to vote for Éric Zemmour do not want France to leave the European Union and a similar proportion (73%) want to keep the common currency. Finally, almost all of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's potential voters do not want France to leave the European Union (88%) nor the euro (89%).
- **39.** Support for NATO is reinforced by Putin's war in Ukraine. Half of the voters questioned (50%) consider that France's membership in NATO is a good thing (compared to 47% in July 2021), 37% consider that their country's membership in this alliance is "neither good nor bad" and only 11% consider it a bad thing (compared to 14% in July 2021).
- **40.** Solidarity with Ukrainians is a popular cause among the French. Most respondents approve of "European Union countries standing together to deal with the crisis triggered by Russia's war on Ukraine": 86% see it as "a good thing" (compared to 12% who see it as "a bad thing" and 2% who did not respond). Moreover, 78% of voters are in favour of "economic sanctions by France and other European countries against Russia in order to support Ukraine".

- **41.** When it is stated that sanctions against Russia could lead to a decrease in purchasing power, respondents still maintain their support. Of those who support economic sanctions, 83% say they support them "even if they lead to an increase in the cost of living for a period of time (e.g. higher gasoline prices)."
- **42.** Family and friends: communities of trust that remain. We observe that in order to follow the latest news on Putin's war in Ukraine, discussions within one's family (22%) and discussions with friends (14%) are among the most cited options, far ahead of national newspapers, major radio stations, television channels and all social networks.
- **43.** For 85% of respondents, "it is still worthwhile to vote in the presidential election because democracy must work despite the war waged by Russia against Ukraine".

Introduction

2022, French presidential election impacted by crises

The Fondation pour l'innovation politique's new survey, 2022, French presidential election impacted by crises, proposes to better define the impact of the Russian war in Ukraine on the presidential campaign and on the outcome of the French presidential election. Its influence on the election could be all the more decisive as the traditional frameworks of electoral competition have lost much of their regulatory capacity: the role of

the media is being challenged by social networks, while the candidates and traditional political parties are being challenged, or even outdistanced, by the populists. This singular context describes a "presidential election impacted by crises", at the crossroads of internal and external upheavals. This survey extends our observation of the populist risk in France set up during the Yellow Vests crisis and in the perspective of the 2022 presidential election.

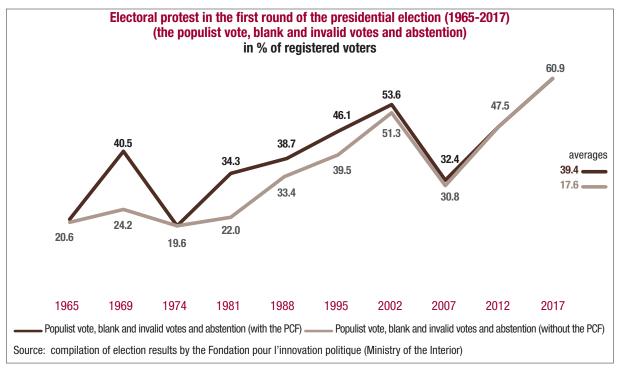
Our survey was administered from 10 to 14 March 2022, to a sample of 3,108 people registered to vote and drawn from a sample of 3,449 people representative of the French population aged 18 and over. The representativeness of the sample is ensured by the quota method, with regard to criteria of gender, age, socio-professional category, category of urban area and region of residence. The sample was interviewed by means of a self-administered online questionnaire using the Computer Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) system. The results of this survey should be read by taking into account the margin of error: between 0.8 and 1.8 points at most for a sample of 3,100 respondents. Note the small samples for those planning on voting for Nathalie Arthaud (27 people), Philippe Poutou (27 people) and Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (27 people).

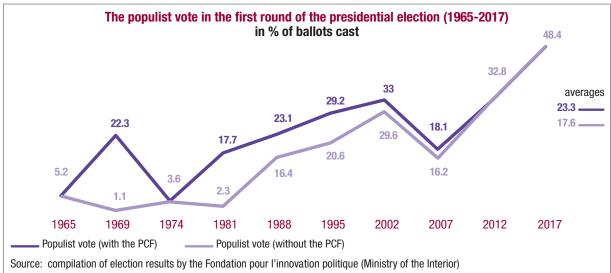
Electoral protest has come a long way. A look back at presidential elections since 1965

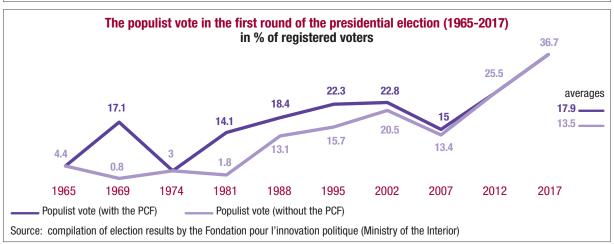
The populist vote has been steadily increasing since 1965. The graphs below represent its evolution in the first round of presidential elections from 1965 to 2017. Over this period, the level of the populist vote varies according to whether or not we include the vote for communist candidates. During the heyday of the communist vote, between 1945 and 1981, the PCF was not generally considered a populist party. In fact, in many respects, this party met the criteria of populism that we propose here. In other respects, it was far from it, in particular considering its strong integration into the French system of political, union, academic and media elites. Given the purpose of our indicator, it would be inappropriate to open such a debate here.

Nonetheless, in our reconstruction of the populist vote in the first round of presidential elections from 1965 to 2017, we have chosen to present two sets of data: one does not include the communist vote, and the other that does. We have not taken into account the vote for Pierre Juquin (2.10% of the votes cast in 1988), a dissident communist candidate. Finally, it is important to note that, in any case, from 1988 onwards, the PCF vote declined rapidly, to the benefit of the FN vote, which largely and systematically overtook it until 2017. The FN vote has also benefited from significant transfers from the communist electorate.

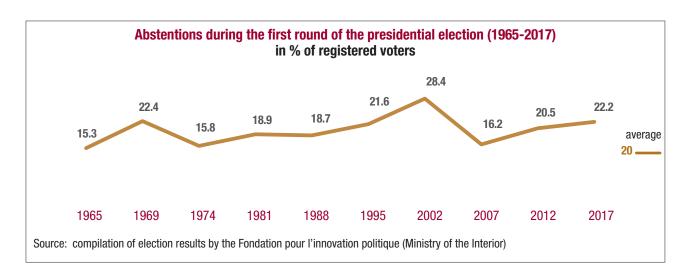
Finally, it should be noted that the results were calculated in relation to the votes cast and then in relation to registered voters, which makes it possible to integrate abstention and the blank vote on the same level, making up what we call "electoral protest".

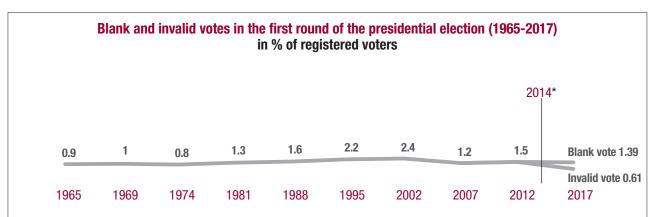






Selected Candidates: 1965: J.-L.Tixier-Vignancour (Comités Tixier-Vignancour); 1969: J. Duclos (PCF), A.Krivine (LC); 1974: J.-M.Le Pen (FN), B.Renouvin (NAR), A.Laguiller (LO), A.Krivine (FCR); 1981: A.Laguiller (LO), G.Marchais (PCF); 1988: J.-M.Le Pen (FN), A. Laguiller (LO), A. Lajoinie (PCF); 1995: J.-M.Le Pen (FN), A.Laguiller (LO), R.Hue (PCF), J. Cheminade (SP); 2002: B.Mégret (MNR), J.-M.Le Pen (FN), A.Laguiller (LO), O.Besancenot (LCR), R.Hue (PCF), D.Gluckstein (PT); 2007: J.-M.Le Pen (FN), A.Laguiller (LO), O.Besancenot (LCR), M.-G.Buffet (Left populaire et antilibérale), G.Schivardi (PT); 2012: M.Le Pen (FN), N.Dupont-Aignan (DLR), J.-L.Mélenchon (FdG), P.Poutou (NPA), N.Arthaud (LO), J.Cheminade (SP). 2017: M.Le Pen (FN), N.Dupont-Aignan (DLF), F.Asselineau (UPR), J.-L.Mélenchon (FI), P. Poutou (NPA), N.Arthaud (LO), J.Cheminade (SP).





Source: compilation of election results by the Fondation pour l'innovation politique (Ministry of the Interior)

^{*} Since the law on 21 February 2014, the census of blank votes has no longer been combined with invalid votes (null votes). The 2017 presidential election was the first where the new blank vote system was applied.

I. An unprecedented context: how the war is impacting the French population's electoral choice

The feeling of not being able to obtain adequate information in this election concerns a quarter of French voters

Question: "In terms of access to information about the various presidential candidates and their proposals, do you think that..." **Base:** the entire sample

"Despite the health crisis and the war led by Russia against Ukraine, I still manage to obtain adequate information on the various candidates and their proposals" "Because of the health crisis and the war led by Russia against Ukraine, I am unable to obtain adequate information on the various candidates and their proposals"

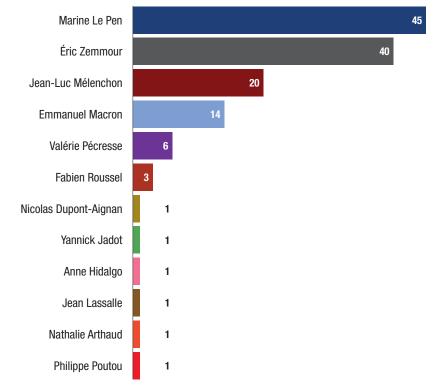
"I am not trying to inform myself about the different candidates because I am not interested in the electoral campaign"

Entire sample	43	26	29
Gender			
Men	48	22	27
Women	38	28	32
Self-positioning on the left	-right political scale		
Left	51	24	23
Centre	40	29	29
Right	48	28	23
Interest in politics			
Very much	65	27	8
Somewhat	54	29	15
Not very	28	27	43
Not at all	17	13	68

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In French public opinion, Marine Le Pen, Éric Zemmour and Jean-Luc Mélenchon are the candidates that the Russian State would favour

Question: "Which candidates do you think the Russian State would favour in the French presidential election?" **Base:** those who think "that the Russian State could try to disrupt the French presidential election in order to favour one candidate in particular"

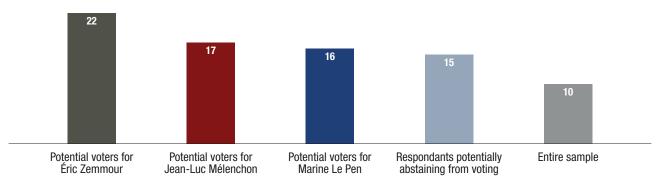


Voting intentions and Putinism in French public opinion

Question: "Would you say that your opinion of the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, is...?"

Responses: "very positive" and "somewhat positive"

Base: the entire sample



Memo for the reader: among Éric Zemmour's potential voters, 22% say they have a positive opinion of Vladimir Putin. This is 12 points higher than the overall average (10%).

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In French public opinion, no candidate would have done better than Emmanuel Macron in their handling of the crisis in Ukraine

Question: "Here is a list of candidates for the presidential election. For each of them, if they were in power, say whether you think they would have done better, worse or neither better nor worse than Emmanuel Macron in their handling of the crisis caused by Russia's war against Ukraine?"

Base: the entire sample

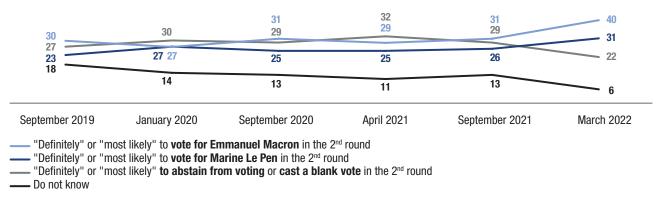
	"Better"	"Neither better nor worse"	"Worse"
Marine Le Pen	17	37	43
Éric Zemmour	13	32	52
Jean-Luc Mélenchon	12	36	49
Nicolas Dupont-Aignan	8	40	49
Valérie Pécresse	7	51	39
Yannick Jadot	6	42	49
Jean Lassalle	6	40	51
Anne Hidalgo	5	38	54
Fabien Roussel	5	43	49
Philippe Poutou	5	37	55
Nathalie Arthaud	4	38	55

II. Presidential election 2022: the revelation of a French political crisis

Electoral readiness and the hypothesis of an Emmanuel Macron-Marine Le Pen duel (September 2019-March 2022)

Question: "And in 2022, in the presidential election, in the event of a second round between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, would you say you will...?"

Base: the entire sample

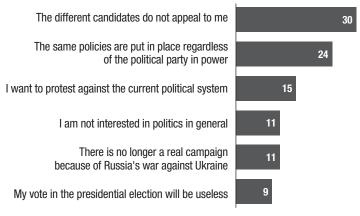


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The reasons for abstention from voting and blank voting

Question: "During the first round of the 2022 presidential election, would you say you could abstain from voting or vote blank because...?" (First)

Base: respondents who could abstain from voting or vote blank in the first round of the presidential election

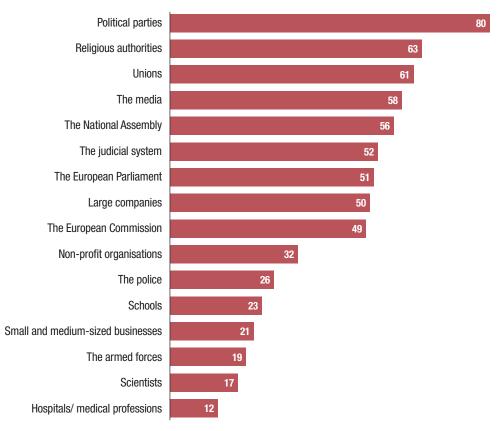


High level of mistrust among citizens in political institutions

Question: "We will now show you a list of institutions and ask you how much you trust them. For each institution, please tell me if you entirely trust them, trust them, distrust them or entirely distrust them"

Responses: "entirely trust" and "somewhat trust"

Base: the entire sample

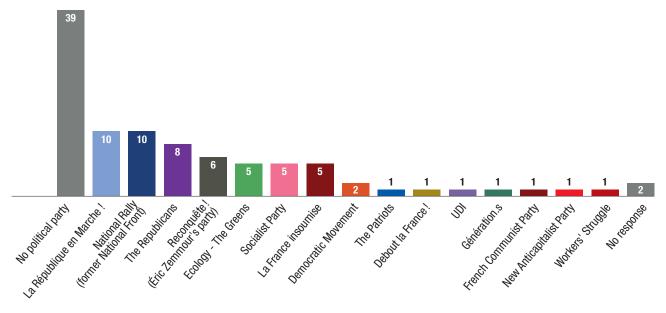


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Voters no longer recognise themselves in political parties

Question: "Which of the following political parties do you feel closest to, or least distant from?"

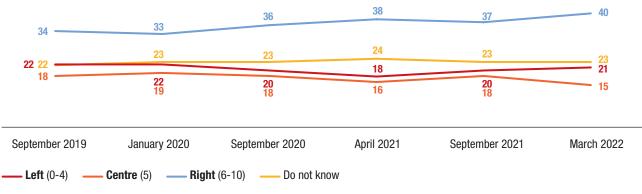
Base: the entire sample



French society is becoming more right-wing

Question: "On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 represents the left and 10 the right, where would you say you stand?"

Base: the entire sample

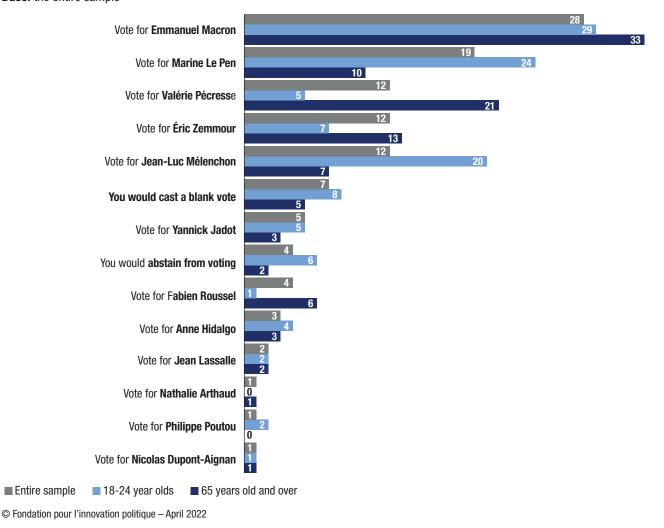


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Voting intentions by age

Question: "If the first round of the presidential election were held next Sunday, which of the following candidates would you be most likely to vote for?"

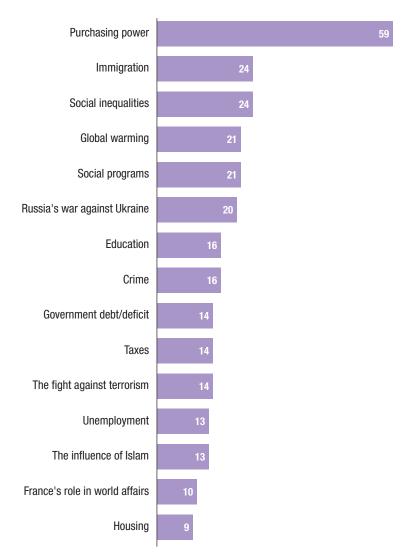
Base: the entire sample



Purchasing power is a major issue for the presidential election

Question: "Of the following issues, which will factor the most into your vote in the presidential election?" (Total: "firstly", "secondly" and "thirdly")

Base: the entire sample

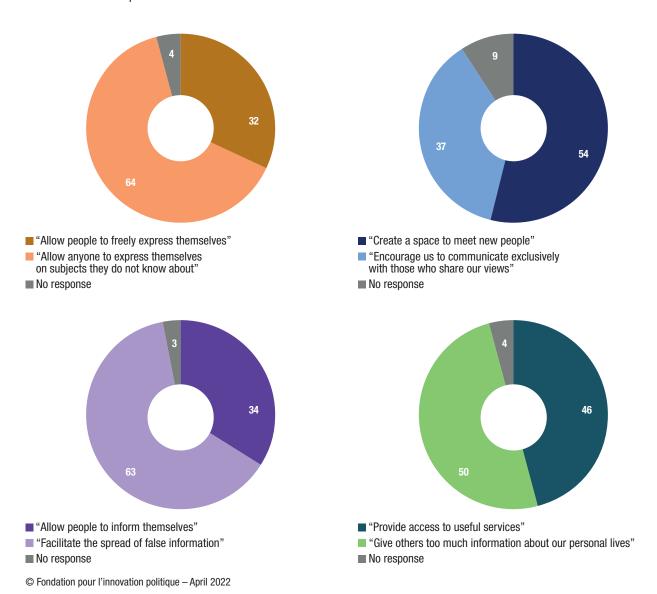


III. A presidential election shaken up by the transitioning media space

Voters perceive the ambivalence of social media's advantages and disadvantages

Question: "Generally speaking, what do you think of the following opinions regarding the Internet and social media: the Internet and social media..."

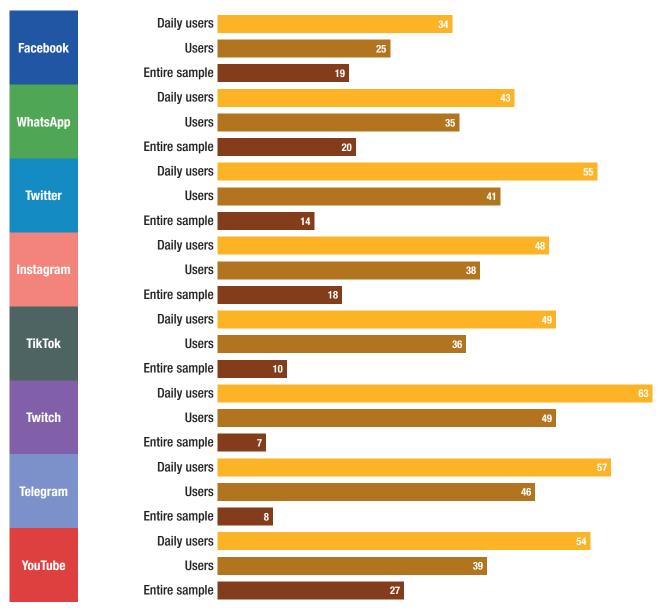
Base: the entire sample



The more respondents use a social network, the more they trust the information that circulates on it

Question: "Do you trust the information circulating on the following social networks?"

Response: "somewhat trust" **Base:** the entire sample

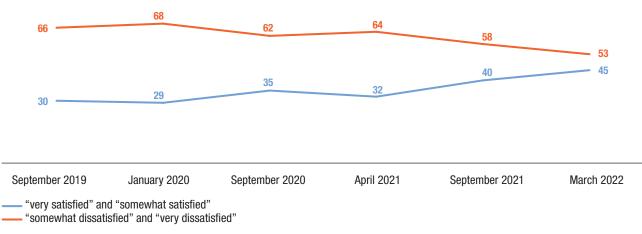


IV. Points of resistance to negative politicisation

In March 2022, 45% of voters are satisfied with Emmanuel Macron's presidential term

Question: "Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Emmanuel Macron's action as President of the Republic?"

Base: the entire sample



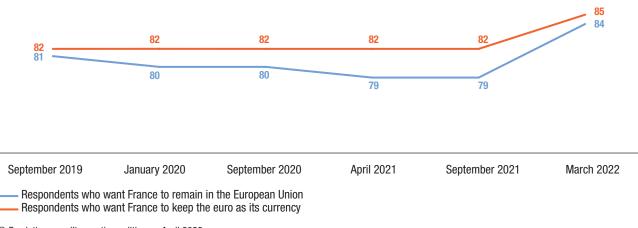
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Support for the European Union and the euro, already high, has increased

Questions: "With regard to the European Union, with which of the following opinions do you most agree?; "With regard to the euro, with which of the following opinions do you most agree?"

Responses: "I am in favour of the European Union and of France being a member" and "I am not in favour of the European Union but I do not want France to exit it, what's done is done"; "I am in favour of the euro" and "I am not in favour of the euro, but I do not want us to leave the euro and return to the franc. What's done is done"

Base: the entire sample



Regardless of age, the solidarity of EU countries in handling the crisis in Ukraine is widely seen as a good thing

Question: "Do you think that the fact that the countries of the European Union are standing together to face the crisis triggered by Russia's war against Ukraine is.."

Responses: "a very good thing" and "somewhat a good thing"

Base: the entire sample

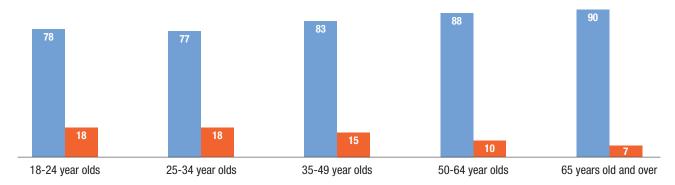


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"Democracy must work despite Russia's war against Ukraine"

Question: "Which of the following statements is the closest to your personal opinion?"

Base: the entire sample



"It is still worthwhile to vote in the presidential election because democracy must function properly despite Russia's war against Ukraine"
 "There is no point in voting in the presidential election because democracy can no longer function properly because of Russia's war against Ukraine"

