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POLITICAL SHIFTS AND GOVERNMENT MAJORITY IN RIGHT-LEANING FRANCE

Edited by
Dominique Reynié

A study on the electoral results of 2022
by the Fondation pour l'innovation politique

SEPTEMBER 2022

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Fondation pour l'innovation politique

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Some key findings to keep in mind

I. The repeated surge of protest votes undermines our democracy

1. If we consider the votes cast in favour of a protest party, abstention from voting or blank votes¹ during the legislative elections, more than three quarters of the registered voters were involved in electoral protest: 76.9% for the first round and 77.3% for the second round. We show that 87% of voters who abstained from voting in the second round do not regret it.

2. In twenty years, the total number of votes cast for protest candidates in the presidential election increased from 29.6% on 21 April 2002 to 55.6% on 10 April 2022.

3. The survival of mainstream political parties is at stake. In the first round of the presidential election, on 10 April 2022, the protest votes (in favour of Marine Le Pen, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Éric Zemmour, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, Philippe Poutou, and Nathalie Arthaud) accounted for a majority (55.6%) for the first time in our electoral history. In the first round of the legislative

elections on 12 June 2022, the protest vote (in favour of the *Nupes*, the *Rassemblement national* (RN), *Reconquête!*, various extreme left-wing parties, sovereigntist right-wingers, the radical left party (PRG), and other various extreme right-wing parties) also represented a majority of voters (50.9%).

4. In a major upset, the RN became the first opposition group in the National Assembly. However, only 55% of Marine Le Pen's voters in the first round of the presidential election voted in the first round of the legislative elections. The abstention from voting disguises a larger share of the vote for the RN. In fact, 58% of voters close to the RN who abstained from voting justify this abstention with a protest motive, against 46% of abstainers on average and 40% of abstainers close to the *French Communist Party* (PCF) or the *France insoumise* (LFI).

II. The RN's progression is notable in the ballot box and in public opinion

1. In the 2017 presidential election, the total protest vote amounted to 21.3% for the left-wing candidates (Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Philippe Poutou and Nathalie Arthaud); whilst the total for the right-wing candidates reached 27.1% (Marine Le Pen, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, François Asselineau and Jacques Cheminade). In the 2022 presidential election, the right-wing protest vote accounted for 32.3% of the votes cast (Marine Le Pen, Éric Zemmour and Nicolas Dupont-Aignan), compared with 23.3% for the left-wing protest vote (Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Philippe Poutou and Nathalie Arthaud). Between 2017 and 2022, the protest vote in the presidential election is dominated by the right, while increasing more strongly on the right (+5.2 points) than on the left (+2 points).

2. As it grows, the RN's electorate is diversifying. It is growing in towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants (excluding Paris), where its share (18%) in the first round of the legislative elections is the same as the national average (19%). The RN vote is growing in the upper social categories: between the first round of the 2017 parliamentary elections and the 2022 parliamentary elections, the RN (or previously *Front National*) vote among white-collar workers has risen from 5% to 13%, and the vote among those with intermediate professions rose from 11% to 16%.

3. Almost half of voters (47%) see it as "a good thing" that "in the June 2022 legislative elections, 89 RN MPs were elected, forming the largest opposition group in the National Assembly". It is considered a "bad thing" for 33% of respondents and "neither a good nor a bad thing" for 19%.

1. The blank vote consists of a voter placing either a blank ballot paper without any candidate's name or an empty envelope in the ballot box, or ruining the ballot paper.

4. Less than half (47%) of right-wing voters consider the RN dangerous for democracy, while 44% consider it to be a xenophobic party.

5. The RN's ideas are supported both on the right and the left. Most of those close to *Reconquête!* (89%) agree with the RN's ideas, as do half (47%) of those close to LR. But the RN's ideas also find support among the left-wing electorate: 39% of those close to the *Lutte Ouvrière* (LO) or the *Nouveau Parti Anti-capitaliste* (NPA), 24% of those close to EELV, 22% of those close to the PCF-LFI, 17% of those close to the Socialist Party. Finally, 15% of those close to La République En Marche (LREM) and a third (32%) of respondents who are not close to any party identify with the RN's ideas.

6. In public opinion, the RN has won the battle of populism: 39% of voters "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with the ideas of the RN, while 28% of voters say they "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with the ideas of LFI. Moreover, with 48% of voters who "strongly disagree" with the RN's ideas, 28% say they "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with LFI's ideas. In addition, with 48% of voters "not at all in agreement" with its ideas, LFI is, after *Reconquête!* (54%) and *Debout la France* (49%), one of the three political formations whose ideas are most widely rejected.

7. EELV and the RN are the two parties whose ideas attract the most support. In both cases, 39% of respondents "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with the ideas of the two parties. On the other hand, it is with the RN's ideas that the greatest number of voters "strongly agree" (17%).

8. The age criterion does not significantly affect support for the RN's ideas: 36% of 18-24 year-olds "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with its ideas, 37% of 25-34 year-olds, 40% of 35-49 year-olds, 42% of 50-64 year-olds and 35% of those aged 65 and over.

9. Right-wing voters consider the RN capable of governing (59%). They also believe that it advocates for a society in which they would like to live (57%).

10. More right-wing voters agree with the RN's ideas (61%) than with the LR's ideas (52%).

11. In the first round of the 2022 legislative elections, the RN vote represented between a third and a half of the right-wing vote, depending on the criteria used (see below page 36).

III. If Marine Le Pen no longer generates a "republican front", she still causes concern in a country that is in favour of Europe and the euro

1. Out of the three main candidates in the presidential election, Emmanuel Macron, Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the RN candidate has the lowest level of rejection (53%) and the highest level of support (36%).

2. Most of the voters close to the RN (71%) do not classify Marine Le Pen as "far right". This is also the case for those close to *Reconquête!* (87%) or LO-NPA (69%). Among the voters who still mostly place Marine Le Pen on the far right, there are significant variations between those close to the PCF-LFI (59%), the LR (61%), the PS (64%), EELV (72%) and LREM (81%).

3. A third of those close to LO-NPA (35%) and those close to PCF-LFI (34%) do not consider Marine Le Pen to be "worrisome". Most of those close to LO-NPA (59%) and 35% of those close to PCF-LFI even agree with the idea that Marine Le Pen "has a good plan for the country".

4. The RN candidate remains "worrisome" for 55% of respondents, with 54% believing that she would undermine fundamental freedoms if she became president of the French Republic, but the reservations about her are less political or moral than materialist and pragmatic. They are primarily based on the idea that her election would threaten the euro. Only a third (33%) of voters consider that, as president, Marine Le Pen would have been able to protect the euro, while 60% of voters credit Emmanuel Macron with this ability. The broad and constant support of the public for the European Union and, even more so, for its currency, is blocking the electoral expansion of the RN and countering the presidentialization of Marine Le Pen.

IV. In electoral terms, France is right-wing

1. Emmanuel Macron's electorate is on the right: half (47%) of Emmanuel Macron's voters in the first round of the presidential election position themselves on the right of the political scale, 19% in the centre and 20% on the left. Finally, 12% did not position themselves on the political spectrum. We show that Macron's voters who position themselves in the centre or who do not position themselves on the left-right axis are closer to the ideas of the right than the left.

2. Emmanuel Macron's voters who position themselves on the right (47%), those who position themselves in the centre but who adhere to a right-wing value system (9.4%), those who do not position themselves on the political spectrum but who adhere to a right-wing value system (6.5%), lead us to estimate the proportion of right-wing voters in Emmanuel Macron's electorate at 62.7%.

3. In the first round of the presidential election, the total votes obtained by Marine Le Pen, Éric Zemmour, Valérie Pécresse, Jean Lassalle and Nicolas Dupont-Aignan represented 40.2% of the votes cast. If we add Emmanuel Macron's voters on the right, we reach 53.2%. With Emmanuel Macron's voters who are in the centre but who express a right-wing value system, the total is 55.9%. Finally, with Emmanuel Macron's voters who do not position themselves on the political spectrum but share right-wing values, the total is 57.7%.

4. If we compare with the results of the legislative elections, we observe that the right-wing parties (RN, Reconquête!, Debout la France, LR and their allies) obtained 37.7% of the votes cast. We reach 49.3% if we add the Ensemble! voters who position themselves on the right and 52% if we add the Ensemble! voters who are in the centre but whose value system places them on the right. Finally, with the Ensemble! voters who do not position themselves on the left-right axis but who share a right-wing value system, the total is 53.2%.

V. Forming a government majority: Faced with the Nupes, who should be allied with whom?

1. If we consider the entire electorate, half of the voters questioned (46%) do not want LR to form an alliance with another right-wing party; a quarter (27%) are in favour of an alliance of LR with Ensemble!; the remaining quarter (23%) want "LR to form an alliance with the RN, Reconquête! and Debout la France".

2. If we consider right-wing voters, i.e. voters who position themselves on the right of the political spectrum, more of them (39%) would like an alliance between LR, RN, Debout la France and Reconquête! than an alliance between LR and Ensemble! (34%); finally, a quarter (26%) would prefer LR not to form an alliance at all.

3. If we consider LR voters in the legislative elections, the proportion of respondents wishing the party not to form an alliance (40%) is equivalent to the proportion favouring an alliance with the presidential coalition (39%). The hypothesis of an alliance associating all right-wing parties (LR-RN-DLF-Reconquête!) appeals to only 20% of LR voters.

4. Finally, three quarters (77%) of voters who voted for an Ensemble! candidate in the first round of the legislative elections would like to see an alliance between LR and the presidential majority. This result should be seen as a further indication of the right-wing orientation of Emmanuel Macron's electorate.

5. The populist parties are facing difficulties that can be hidden by their successful electoral results. The question arises as to what will become of the RN without Marine Le Pen or LFI without Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Moreover, as things stand, neither LFI nor the RN will become forces of government if they are judged incapable of defending the European Union, in general, and the euro, in particular.

VI. On key political issues, only *LR* and *Ensemble!* converge with the general opinion of voters

1. Immigration is a concern for public opinion: 63% of voters think that “most immigrants do not share our country’s values and this creates problems of cohabitation”. This is the majority opinion among Ensemble! (57%), LR (69%), RN (91%) and Reconquête! (94%). On the other hand, this opinion is in the minority among Nupes voters (38%).

2. Symbolising a hardening of positions on immigration and integration issues, the fear of the “great replacement” theory is present in public opinion. Questioned in the days following the first round of the presidential election, almost half of voters (47%) said they shared the opinion that “populations of foreign origin will end up being the majority in France”. Among voters on the left, 27% share this opinion, compared with more than half of voters on the right (56%), but also those positioned in the centre (54%). 28% of Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s voters in the first round of the presidential election fear the “great replacement” theory becoming a reality, as do a third of Emmanuel Macron’s (31%), Yannick Jadot’s (31%) and Fabien Roussel’s (31%) voters. Among voters of right-wing candidates, this opinion is predominant: it concerns 52% of Valérie Pécresse’s voters, 61% of Marine Le Pen’s voters and 83% of Éric Zemmour’s voters. This idea is also predominant among those who abstained from voting in the first round of the presidential election (58%).

3. More than half (56%) of voters think that “the unemployed could find work if they really wanted to”. This opinion is held by a majority of RN (61%), Reconquête! (64%), LR (68%) and Ensemble! (69%) voters. This opinion is in the minority among Nupes voters (36%).

4. The opinion that “we need more freedom for companies and less control from the State” is shared by 50% of voters. This was the majority opinion among RN voters (53%), as well as Ensemble! (63%), LR (66%) and Reconquête! (66%) voters. This a minority opinion among Nupes voters (32%).

5. More than half (53%) of the voters believe that “due to technical and scientific innovations, we will be able to continue to develop our economy while preserving the environment for future generations”. This opinion is held by a majority of Reconquête! (54%), RN (56%), LR (67%) and Ensemble! (69%) voters. This opinion is the least visible among Nupes voters (45%).

Introduction

A study on the 2022 electoral cycle by the Fondation pour l'innovation politique

Combining abstention from voting, the so-called “blank vote” and anti-system votes, electoral protest has entered a new phase in the aftermath of the presidential and legislative elections of 2022. The mainstream political parties both on the left, the Socialist Party (PS), and of the right, the Republicans (LR), pillars of political and governmental life under the Fifth Republic of France, are threatened with marginalisation, although it should not be forgotten that they retain their power in the local authorities. Having been knocked out of the second round of the presidential election for the second time in a row, they are suffering an even greater decline than in 2017. However, in 2022, one element adds a cause for concern that did not exist in 2017. Indeed, in the legislative elections, Ensemble! the presidential coalition that emerged in the wake of Emmanuel Macron's re-election, suffered a limited but real electoral setback. Although Emmanuel Macron was re-elected after an unprecedented term in office, the results of the legislative elections forced his government to negotiate a parliamentary majority, document by document, also a first.

The 2022 electoral cycle confirmed the rise in power of protest groups, dominated on the right by the Rassemblement national (RN) and on the left by La France insoumise (LFI). As in 2017, the presidential election saw Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon in a dominant position in opposition to the incumbent president. Unlike in 2017, not only did the populist vote not disappear in the legislative elections, but, and this is still unprecedented, the RN and LFI obtained the two largest parliamentary opposition groups. In one legislature, the total number of RN-LFI MPs increased from 25 to 164. The access of protest parties to parliament is in keeping with the order of the representative system.

However, the increase in the number of MPs from such political movements can make useful majorities costly or fragile, or even impossible to achieve, to the detriment of mainstream political parties.

At the end of Emmanuel Macron's first five-year term, neither the PS nor LR managed to roll out a campaign able to bring back their former voters. However, the coming five-year term necessarily raises the question of how to recompose the party in a more urgent fashion. At least four political parameters will determine the direction of such a reconstruction. Firstly, in reality, there is only one major governing party - the presidential party. However, this party is under pressure from a scheduled decline, as Emmanuel Macron will not be able to serve a third consecutive term. Secondly, France is, in our view, predominantly right-wing, as we show below. This shift is favoured by the rallying of the governing left to the Nupes, a protest coalition initiated and led by LFI. Thirdly, the RN dominates the universe of right-wing parties. Fourthly, the RN is no longer the same party that has so agitated French political life since the 1980s, and that has so often harmed the right. Indeed, after having ditched the name chosen by Jean-Marie Le Pen, shifting from FN to RN, the party will soon be separated from the name of its founder, given that the presidency will not be held by a member of the Le Pen family. We know the role played by this form of authority - which combines personalization, genealogy and charisma - in the success of political organizations of this kind¹. It is legitimate to ask how the fiftieth anniversary of the FN concerns the RN today² or to what extent the old far-right party can still exist following such profound changes to its structure.

1. Although much more recent (2016), LFI, the party of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, will also face the typical challenge of founder-leader succession in populist political formations.

2. On 5 October 1972, Jean-Marie Le Pen founded the Front National (FN), on the far-right of the political spectrum. Chaired by Marine Le Pen since 2011, the FN became the Rassemblement national (RN) in 2018.

The context opened up by the 2017 presidential election called for a re-composition that did not take place. The 2022 electoral cycle made it more urgent. The meaning of this re-composition is the re-establishment of political forces whose views, although different and in competition with one another, do not prevent the sharing of a culture of government, allowing them to participate in the conduct of public affairs in a responsible and constructive manner.

An imperative re-composition, because we must remember that in the first round of the 2022 presidential election, the mainstream candidates, Emmanuel Macron, Valérie Pécresse and Anne Hidalgo, totalled 34.4% of the votes cast, or 24.8% of registered voters. The reconstruction of a governing democracy cannot afford to wait for the results of the next presidential election.

Methodology

This study focuses on the results of the 2022 presidential and legislative elections, the two elections combined forming a complete “electoral cycle”. The opinion data were produced by a series of three successive surveys, initiated and carried out within the framework of a partnership between the Fondation pour l’innovation politique, the Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po (Cevipof) and the Centre d’études et de connaissances sur l’opinion publique (Cecop):

1. The first survey was conducted **in the days following the first round of the presidential election**, between 13 and 15 April 2022, among a sample of 3,005 people.
2. The second survey was conducted **in the days following the second round of the presidential election**, between 28 April and 2 May 2022, to a sample of 3,052 people.
3. The third survey was conducted **in the days following the second round of the legislative elections**, between 23 June and 28 June 2022, with a sample of 3,053 people.

The three waves of this survey were conducted by the OpinionWay Institute. Each of these three opinion surveys was conducted among a sample of more than 3,000 people registered to vote and representative of the French population aged 18 and over. The representativeness of the sample was ensured by the quota method, with regard to the criteria of gender, age, socio-professional category, category of urban area and region of residence.

The partnership made it possible to carry out these three surveys to better understand the logic and scope of two elections that probably mark a tipping point within a historical context.

The following study was written by the team of the Fondation pour l’innovation politique.

Abbreviations of the different political parties used in this study

DLF: Debout la France • **EELV:** Europe Écologie-Les Verts • **FdG:** Front de gauche
FN: Front national • **LCR:** Ligue communiste révolutionnaire • **LFI:** La France insoumise
LO: Lutte ouvrière • **LR:** Les Républicains • **LREM:** La République en marche
NPA: Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste • **Nupes:** Nouvelle Union populaire écologique
et sociale • **PCF:** Parti communiste français • **PS:** Parti socialiste
RN: Rassemblement national

I. The repeated surge of protest votes undermines our democracy

For us, overall, the rise of electoral protest is beyond doubt. It has now even reached the parliamentary elections, which - with the exception of 1986 - it had hitherto spared. However, the scale of the protest was significantly smaller then, and part of the cause was a sudden change in the rules of the game when proportional representation was introduced. Though in 2022, the parliamentary elections were held under the majority system.

1. In 2022, the majority of voters expressed some form of electoral protest

Between 2019 and 2022, we published six studies dedicated to the rise of electoral protest in France. The first five studies focused on the *Populist Risk in France*³, and then, in April 2022, a complementary study was devoted to the *French presidential election impacted by crises*⁴. This research allowed us to measure electoral protest by asking voters about their willingness to engage in one of the following protest behaviours: abstention from voting, blank voting and votes for protest parties. In each of the six surveys, we recorded the rise in protest sentiment as defined by these three types of behaviour. The results of the presidential election confirmed the reality of this trend.

In line with the presidential election, the legislative elections of June 2022 were also marked by a strong increase in electoral protest. It should be noted here that in order to evaluate the level of protest in the context of these legislative elections, we are taking into account, in addition to abstention from voting and the blank vote, the votes in favour of the candidates of the Nupes, the various extreme left-wing parties, DLF, Reconquête! and the RN. Of course, not all the candidates presented by the Nupes were from the so-called "protest" group, but this was indeed the case, in our opinion, for the LFI candidates. The protest nature of the Nupes stems firstly from the dominant role played by

Jean-Luc Mélenchon's party in its constitution, which is reflected in retrospect by the election of many LFI MPs, who far outnumbered the other parties in the coalition⁵. In addition to this, there are the candidates' of several other coalition parties, in particular EELV, and more broadly the parliamentary protest strategy accepted by the different components of Nupes. This leads us to include the totality of the votes in favour of the Nupes as part of the electoral protest, even if a minor proportion would not have been part of it in a different political configuration.

The same applies to those who abstain from voting. Even if interest in the legislative elections is generally lower than for the presidential election, abstention from voting in June 2022 is the result of a plurality of motives where the protest dimension is prevalent. We sought to better identify the motivations of those who abstain from voting: 15% of respondents told us that abstention from voting was their "way of protesting against the current political system", 11% justified it by the fact that "the same policy is pursued regardless of the outcome", 10% replied because "my vote is pointless", and 10% because "politics do not interest me". The total of these justifications accounts for 46% of the reasons for not voting.

Some people voted to express a form of spite or anger, while others were prevented from voting by practical or contingent reasons such as being away from their polling place on election day.

3. Dominique Reynié (ed.), 2022, *the Populist Risk in France*, Wave 1, November 2019, 44 p.; Waves 2-3, October 2020, 86 p.; Wave 4, July 2021, 64 p.; Wave 5, November 2021, 72 p., Fondation pour l'innovation politique (available on www.fondapol.org/en).

4. Dominique Reynié (dir.), 2022, *French presidential election impacted by crises*, Fondation pour l'innovation politique, April 2022, 84 p. (www.fondapol.org/en/study/2022-french-presidential-election-impacted-by-crises/).

5. "La France insoumise, which initiated this regrouping of the left, represents the largest contingent of MPs (75). Twenty-nine seats are held by Socialist Party members, 23 by Europe Écologie-Les Verts and 12 by the Communist Party", Matthieu Lasserre (with the AFP), *La Croix*, 21 June 2022.

In the first round of the 2022 legislative elections, less than a third of those questioned (29%) said that their main reason for not voting was because they were “not in their municipality on election day”. Without going into too much detail, as we have developed this argument elsewhere⁶, it is difficult not to see the fact that nearly a third of those who abstained from voting justified themselves by invoking a distance from their polling station on election day as a form of civic disengagement, or even indifference, given that the importance of the presidential and legislative elections could have motivated them to use the proxy system (where you can ask someone close to you to vote for you in your absence). It is difficult to measure in more detail the reason for these votes or abstentions from voting. The fact remains that, in the history of the Fifth Republic, the increase in abstention from voting is accompanied by an increase in protest votes. In this context, abstention from voting fuels electoral protest.

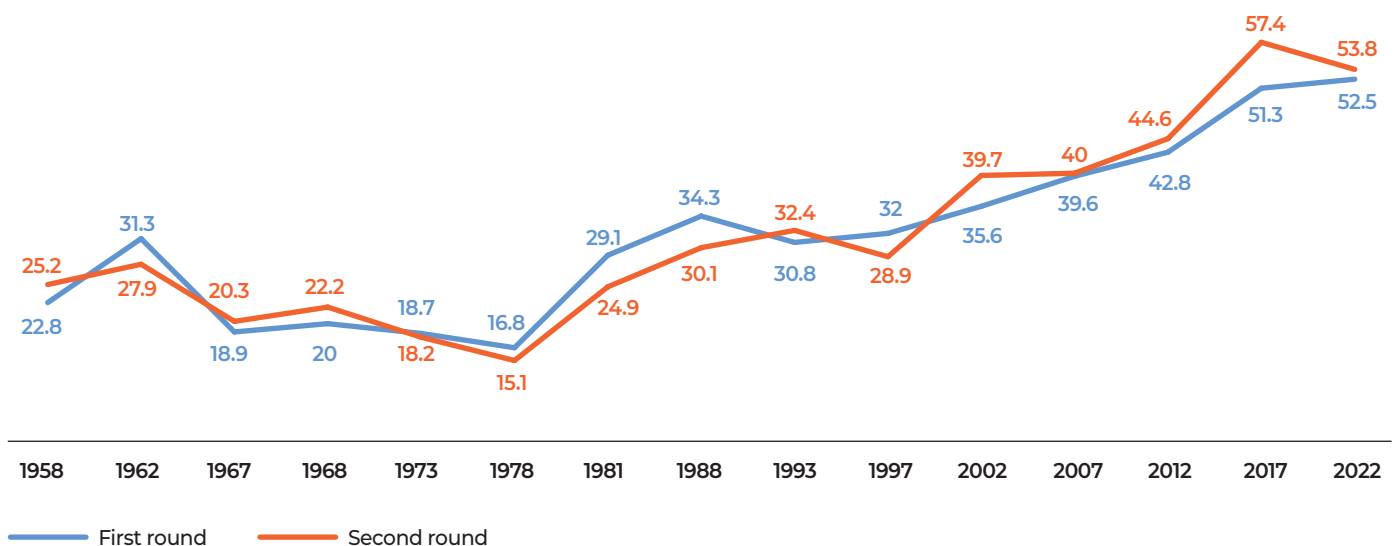
If we compare the results term by term, i.e. including abstention from voting, blank votes and votes for designated protest parties, electoral protest behaviour concerned most of the registered voters in the legislative elections: 76.9% for the first round and 77.3% for the second round, i.e. an increase of 11 points compared to the 2017 legislative elections, which were

already a historic record (66% in the first round, 66.1% in the second round). The level of electoral protest thus defined may be slightly lower than these figures, due to the difficulty of knowing more precisely the motives behind these electoral choices. However, electoral protest is largely predominant and we can easily observe, term by term, that it has never been so widespread in our electoral history as in 2022.

Massive abstention from voting has become a feature of our public life over the last ten years. In the legislative elections, the record high abstention rate for the second round was reached in June 2017 (57.4%). In 2022, for the second time in a row, more than one in two voters abstained, both in the first (52.5%) and the second rounds (53.8%).

Let it be stressed that the increase in abstention from voting has been a visible trend for several years. For the presidential election, the record for a first round was recorded on 21 April 2002 (28.4%). The 2022 presidential election has the second highest abstention rate (26.3%). The second round of the 2022 presidential election also holds the second highest figure (28%), the previous record (31.1%, in 1969) being in a very different context⁷. For municipal elections, which are the other preferred election of the French, together with the presidential election, the record for the second round is 28 June 2020 (58.4%).

Legislative elections now dominated by abstention from voting (in%)*



Source: data.gouv.fr

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* The level of abstention in the 1986 legislative elections does not appear in this graph since these elections were held under the proportional representation system with a single round of voting. However, it should be noted that 21.5% of voters abstained on 16 March 1986.

6. See *Rapport pour l'Assemblée nationale sur l'abstention. Mission d'information visant à identifier les ressorts de l'abstention et les mesures permettant de renforcer la participation électorale. Analyses et propositions* ("Report for the National Assembly on abstention. Fact-finding mission to identify the causes of abstention and measures to increase voter turnout. Analysis and proposals"), November 2021, Fondation pour l'innovation politique, 82 pages (report written at the request of the President of the National Assembly, Mr. Richard Ferrand).

7. It was a no-choice, no-threat election between two candidates of the moderate right, Georges Pompidou and Alain Poher. In the first round, the protest vote represented one-fifth of the votes cast, for Jacques Duclos, candidate of the PCF (21.3%), and Alain Krivine, candidate of the LCR (1.1%).

The pandemic, including its effects on the first round, does not account for everything. Indeed, the end of lockdown had been announced on 7 May and initiated on 11 May. When the second round took place, most of the French population were able to move around and lived more or less normally for a month and a half. Above all, abstention from voting in the 2020 municipal elections confirms a pre-pandemic trend. The previous record for the first round of municipal elections dates back to March 2014 (36.5%). The same is true for the regional and departmental elections in June 2021. Even though they have, by nature, less turn-out than municipal and national elections, the 2021 departmental and regional elections had spectacularly low turn-out rates (66.7% in the first round).

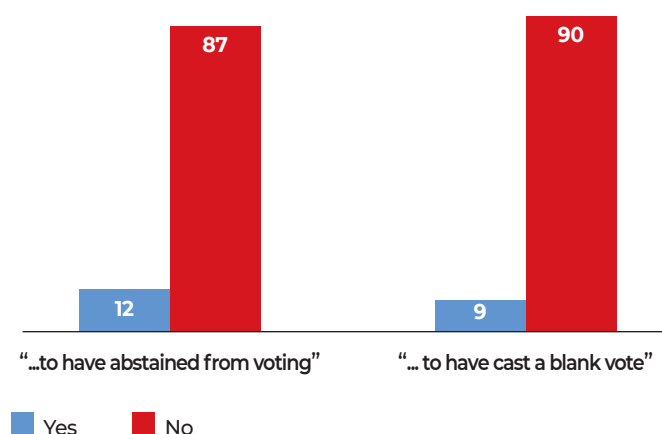
Abstention from voting strongly affects all our elections. It does not have the same impact depending on the nature of the election and the candidates and parties, but it is undoubtedly a powerful factor in the disintegration of the French political landscape. Abstention from voting acts as a disorientated force. It is not driven by any intention, so it produces effects that may surprise even those who abstained from voting, despite the fact that they tend to not regret their behaviour.

This new surge in electoral protest is all the more spectacular because it takes place in the context of a welfare state that is now more generous, or more spendthrift, than ever. Indeed, faced with the consequences of the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, the state has not hesitated to borrow and mobilise considerable sums of money to support these lockdowns, finance massive testing services and vaccination campaigns, support

Those who abstained from voting and those who cast a blank vote do not regret it

Questions: “Given the final result of the parliamentary elections in the country, do you regret having abstained from voting in the second round?”; “Given the final result of the parliamentary elections in the country, do you regret having cast a blank vote in the second round?”

Base: respondents who abstained from voting and those who cast a blank vote in the second round of the legislative elections



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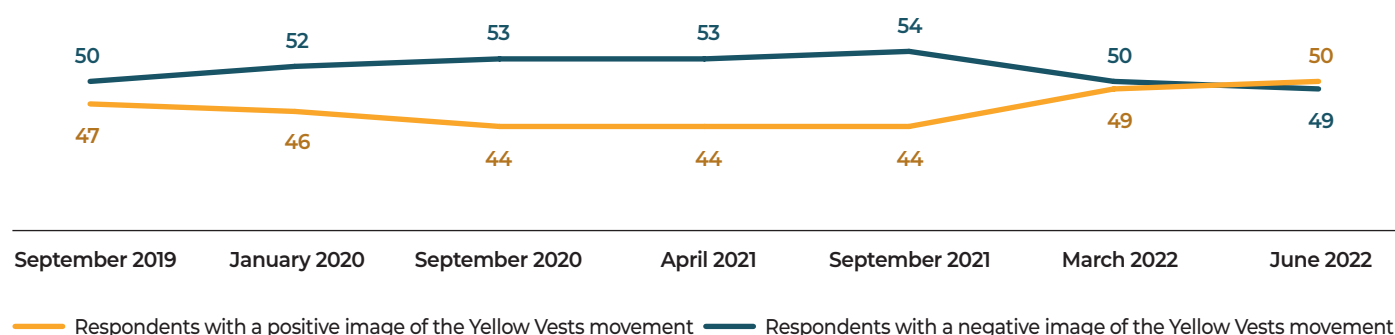
households, businesses or professions deemed most affected by the health crisis, etc. However, the deployment of these colossal public resources, unparalleled in any other democracy, did not prevent a widespread lack of interest in public affairs, as measured by the increase in voter abstention and, at the same time, a propensity to vote for anti-system candidates⁸. This is illustrated by the scores obtained by the populist candidates in the first round of the presidential election (55.6%), whose total exceeded the majority of votes cast for the first time.

Half of French people have a “positive image” of the Yellow Vest movement

Question: “We have heard a lot about the Yellow Vests movement. How would you define your image of the Yellow Vest movement?”

Responses: “very positive” and “rather positive”; “rather negative” and “very negative”

Base: the whole sample

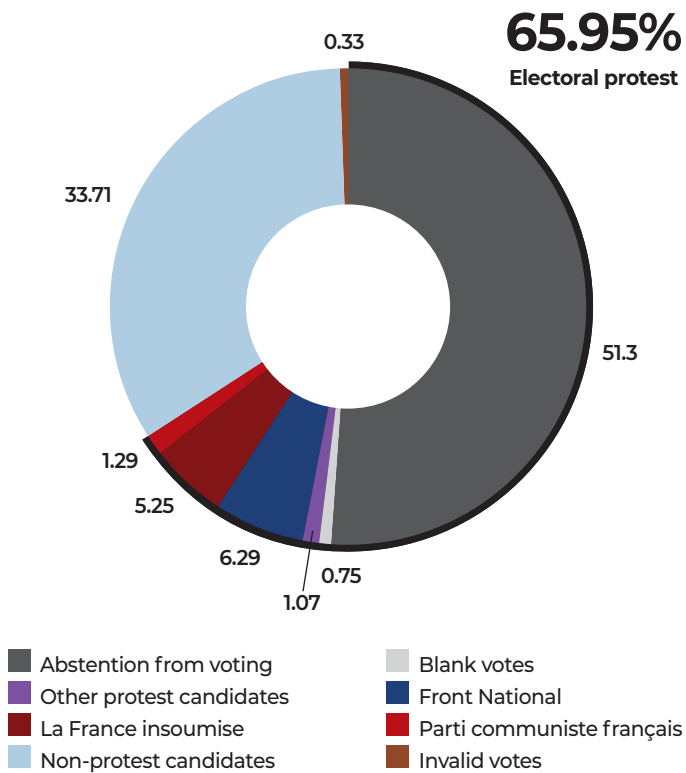


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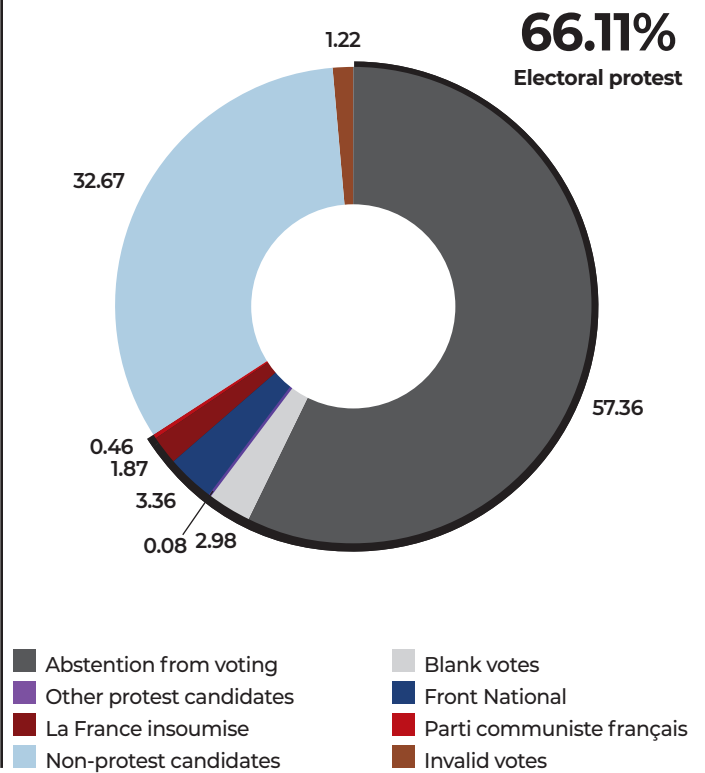
8. This counter-intuitive result is not necessarily paradoxical (see Dominique Reynié, “Le recours excessif à la dépense publique encourage l’agitation sociale”, *L’Express*, 13 June 2022).

Electoral protest in the 2017 and 2022 legislative elections

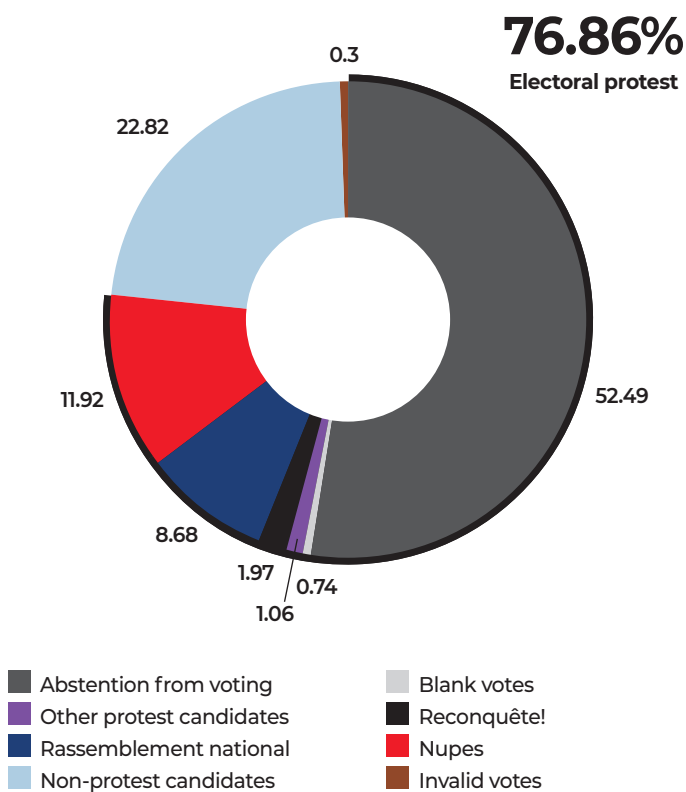
First round of the legislative elections 2017



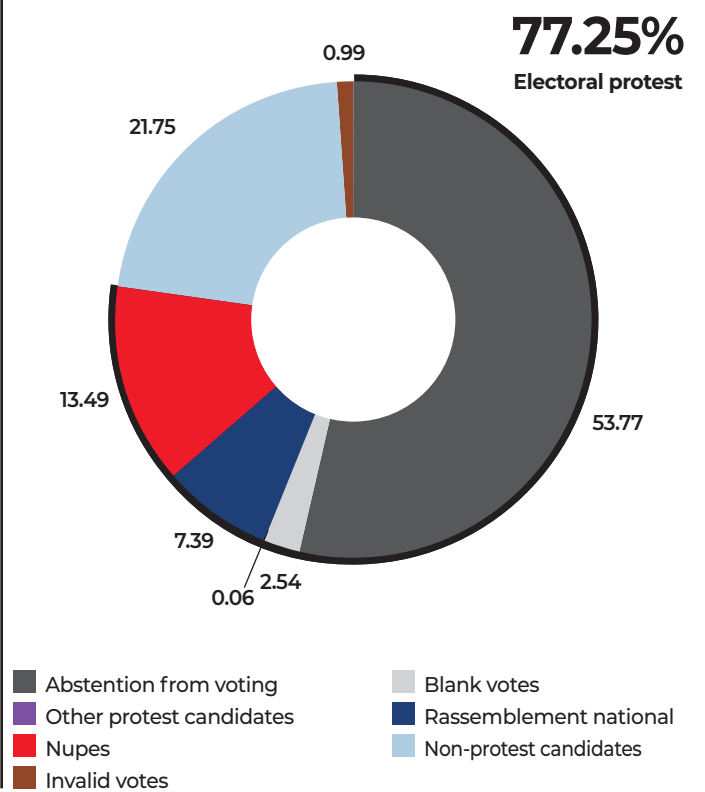
Second round of the legislative elections 2017



First round of the legislative elections 2022



Second round of the legislative elections 2022



Source: data.gouv.fr

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2. The spread of electoral protest is stronger on the right

In the first round of the 2017 presidential election, the total protest vote amounted to 21.3% for left-wing candidates (Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Philippe Poutou and Nathalie Arthaud); the total for the right-wing candidates reached 27.1% (Marine Le Pen, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, François Asselineau and Jacques Cheminade). In the first round of the 2022 presidential election, the right-wing protest vote accounted for 32.3% of the votes cast (Marine Le Pen, Éric Zemmour and Nicolas Dupont-Aignan), compared with 23.3% for the left-wing protest vote (Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Philippe Poutou and Nathalie Arthaud). Between 2017 and 2022, the protest vote in the first round of the presidential election was dominated by the right, while growing faster on the right (5.2 points) than on the left (2 points). Furthermore, in the first round of the legislative elections, the FN/RN vote rose from 13.2% of the votes cast in 2017 to 18.7% in 2022. The analysis of the results shows that the RN remains, in sociological terms, the most popular party. As in the FN's time, RN voters are less educated and more likely to live in small and medium-sized towns. However, as the RN electorate has grown in number, it has become more sociologically diverse, drawing in profiles that were not previously represented⁹.

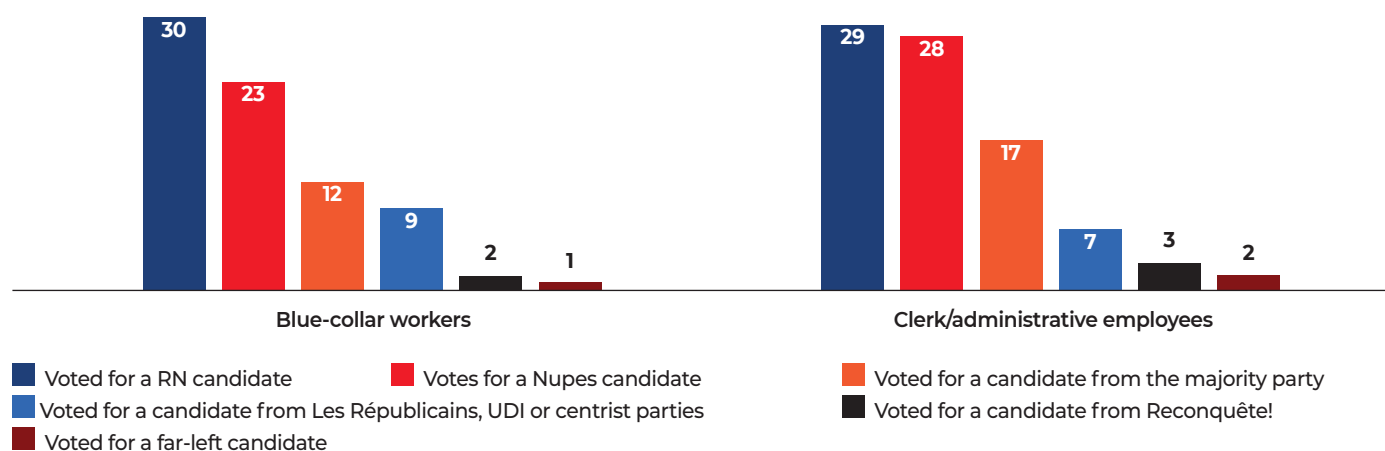
Thus, outside the Paris area, where the RN vote remains lower (11%) than the national average, it is strongly increasing in towns of more than 100,000 inhabitants, where a fifth (18%) of voters gave their support to a RN candidate, a similar percentage to the national average (19%). Similarly, the findings also confirm the existence of an electoral base that is now predominantly female. This is one of the impacts of the arrival of Marine Le Pen at the head of the party¹⁰. The sociology of the FN/RN vote underlines the historical failure of mainstream political parties, whether on the left or the right, among the working classes.

On the other hand, like all parties, the RN is struggling to mobilise young voters. This is a general weakness. The younger the voter, the less likely he or she is to participate in any election. The socio-demographic data collected therefore concerns a minority of young people, those who actually voted, i.e. only about a third of the age group considered. In addition, for most voters under the Fifth Republic, dominated by the culture of the presidential election, legislative elections are both less clear and less mobilising than the latter. Thus, in 2022, almost two-thirds (62%) of 18–24-year-olds did not participate in the first round of the legislative elections. Social stature combined with the effect of age means that, sociologically, the lower class an electorate is, the more likely it is to abstain from voting, especially in legislative elections, and even more so among the younger generations.

The RN, the leading party among workers and employees

Question: “For which candidate did you vote on Sunday 12 June 2022 in the first round of the legislative elections?”

Base: respondents who voted in the first round of the legislative elections



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9. On the subject, cf. Luc Rouban, *La Mutation du Rassemblement national*, Cevipof, July 2022, 7 pages (<https://acteurspublics.fr/upload/media/default/0001/40/fd831be4400a4f4dd24d746dffeb348f6513b37.pdf>).

10. See Abdelkarim Amengay, Anja Durovic, and Nonna Mayer, “L’impact du genre sur le vote Marine Le Pen”, *Revue française de science politique*, vol. 67, no. 6, December 2017, pp. 1067–1087 (www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-science-politique-2017-6-page-1067.htm).

The RN's score among young voters who took part in the legislative elections is the consequence of this triple constraint. The RN's low score (6%) among 18–24-year-olds must be assessed in the light of the proportion of young voters, who are socially more affluent and therefore more participative, who supported one of

the Nupes' candidates (41%). However, as mentioned, the presidential election mobilises more voters, among young age groups and even among young people from the working classes. In the first round of the presidential election, 16% of 18–24-year-olds voted for Marine Le Pen.

The profile of RN voters in the first round of the legislative elections

Question: "For which candidate did you vote on Sunday 12 June 2022 in the first round of the legislative elections?"

Response: "a candidate from the Rassemblement national"

Base: all respondents who voted in the first round of the legislative elections

		Respondents who voted RN in the 1st round of the legislative elections
The entire sample		19
Gender	Men	17
	Women	21
Age	18-24 years old	6
	25- 34 years old	19
	35-49 years old	22
	50-64 years old	24
	65 and over	15
Size of town	Rural area	22
	Town of 2,000 to 19,999 inhabitants	24
	Town of 20,000 to 19,000 inhabitants	17
	City with more than 100,000 inhabitants excluding Paris	18
	Paris area	11
Education level	No degree/BEPC/CAP/BEP	27
	Baccalaureate/ Baccalaureate + 2	21
	Above Baccalaureate + 2	8
Socio-professional category	Higher socio-professional categories	14
	Lower socio-professional categories	30
Monthly household income	Less than 1,000 euros	30
	from 1,000 to 1,999 euros	25
	from 2,000 to 3,499 euros	17
	3,500 euros and more	11
Image of the Yellow Vests Movement	Positive image	27
	Negative image	11

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The difficulties of the RN are largely offset by the fact that it is making significant progress in the upper social categories. In the first round of the 2017¹¹ legislative elections, 11.5% of managers and 11% of those with intermediate professions voted for the Front National; in 2022, in the first round of the legislative elections, the RN vote has gathered 13% and 16% respectively. The consequence is significant, even crucial. Indeed, the 2022 electoral cycle showed that it is by becoming more socially diverse and the ability to appeal to a wider range of classes that the RN is capable of better results, first and foremost in terms of voter turnout. In 2017, 57% of Marine Le Pen's voters in the first round of the presidential election did not take part in the first round of the legislative elections¹² in 2022 - this figure dropped to 45%.

By going from 8 MPs in 2017 to 89 MPs in 2022, the RN has enjoyed a historic political victory, far ahead of the 35 MPs elected under the proportional system in 1986, the best result for the FN/RN up to that point. The strong electoral progression of the RN allows for it to be emancipated from the proportional system. For Marine Le Pen's party, the constitution of the first opposition parliamentary group opens the pathway to new perspectives, offering it unprecedented means, notably in terms of human resources and financial resources, and the possibility of playing an important role within the National Assembly, which has suddenly become one of the most important places in political life.

11. See Games Changers-Ipsos-Sopra Steria "1er tour des élections législatives. Sociologie des électors et profil des abstentionnistes", ipsos.com, June 2017 (www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/files-fr-fr/doc_associe/ipsos_sopra_steria_sociologie_des_electorats_11_juin_21h00.pdf).

12. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

3. Abstention from voting disguises a larger share of the vote for the *Rassemblement national*

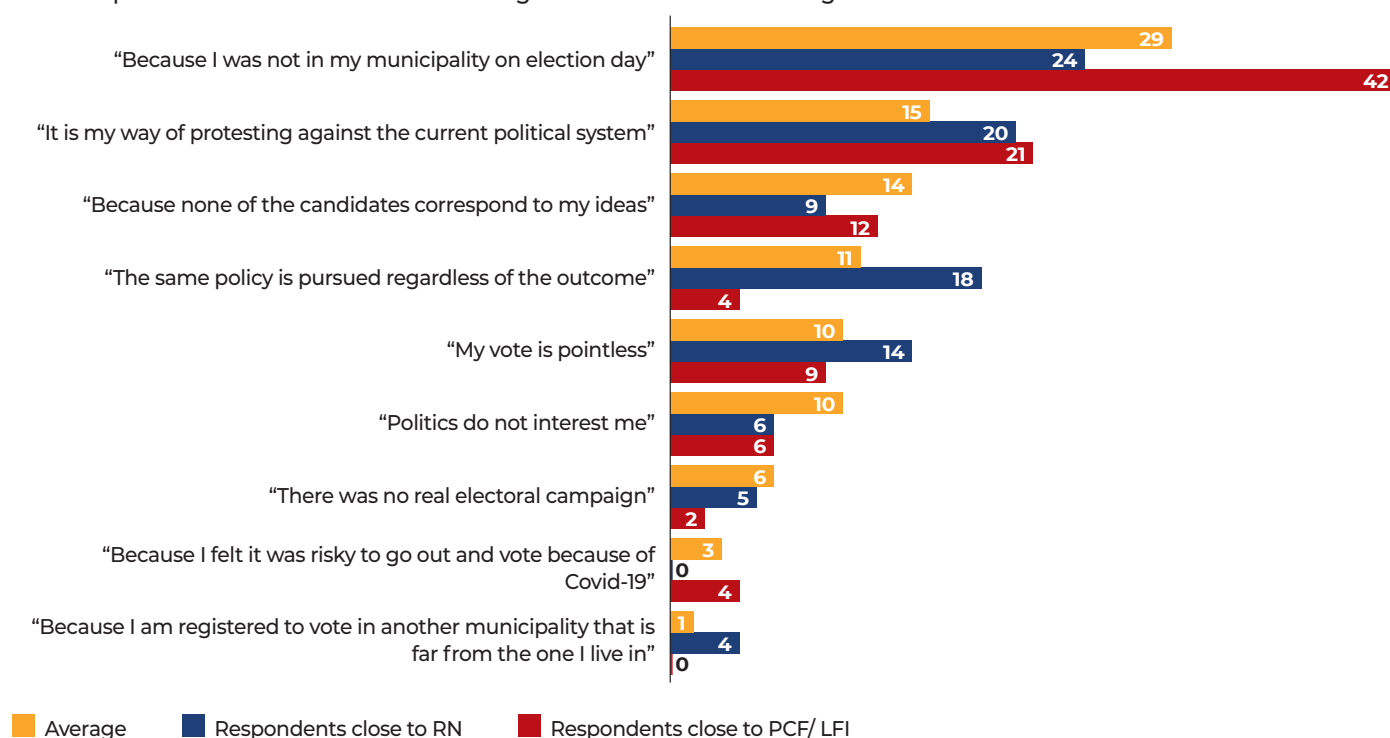
We have seen that while the RN has become the first opposition group in the National Assembly, only

55% of Marine Le Pen's voters in the first round of the presidential election voted in the first round of the legislative elections. It appears that a third of those who abstained from voting (33%) in the first round of the legislative elections considered voting for an RN candidate, 25% for a Nupes candidate and 23% for the presidential majority. Because of its protest dimension, abstention from voting is therefore a real source of potential future votes for the RN.

58% of voters close to the RN justify their abstention from voting by a form of protest

Question: "For what main reason did you not vote in the first round of the legislative elections? Firstly"

Base: respondents who abstained from voting in the first round of the legislative elections



Memo for the reader: Among respondents close to the RN, 20% abstained from voting because it is their "way of protesting against the current political system".

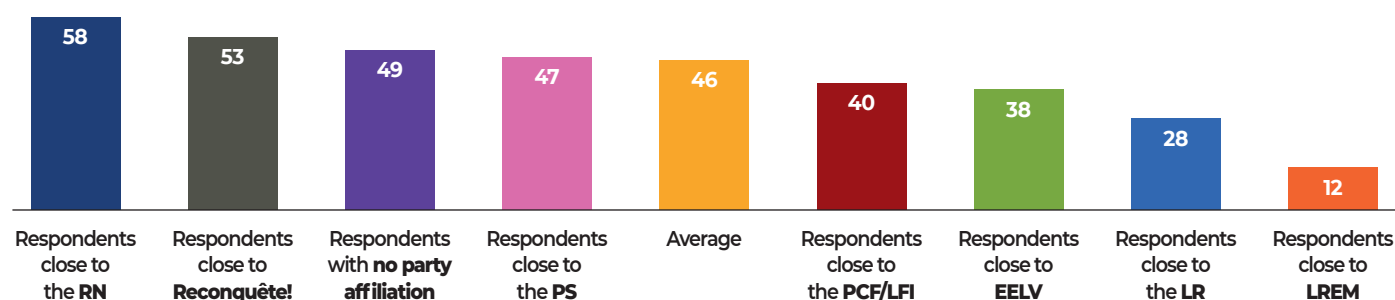
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Abstention from voting as a form of protest and political affiliation

Question: "What was your main reason for not voting in the first round of the legislative elections? Firstly"

Responses: "It is my way of protesting against the current political system"; "The same policy is pursued regardless of the outcome"; "My vote is pointless" and "Politics do not interest me"

Base: respondents who abstained from voting in the first round of the legislative elections



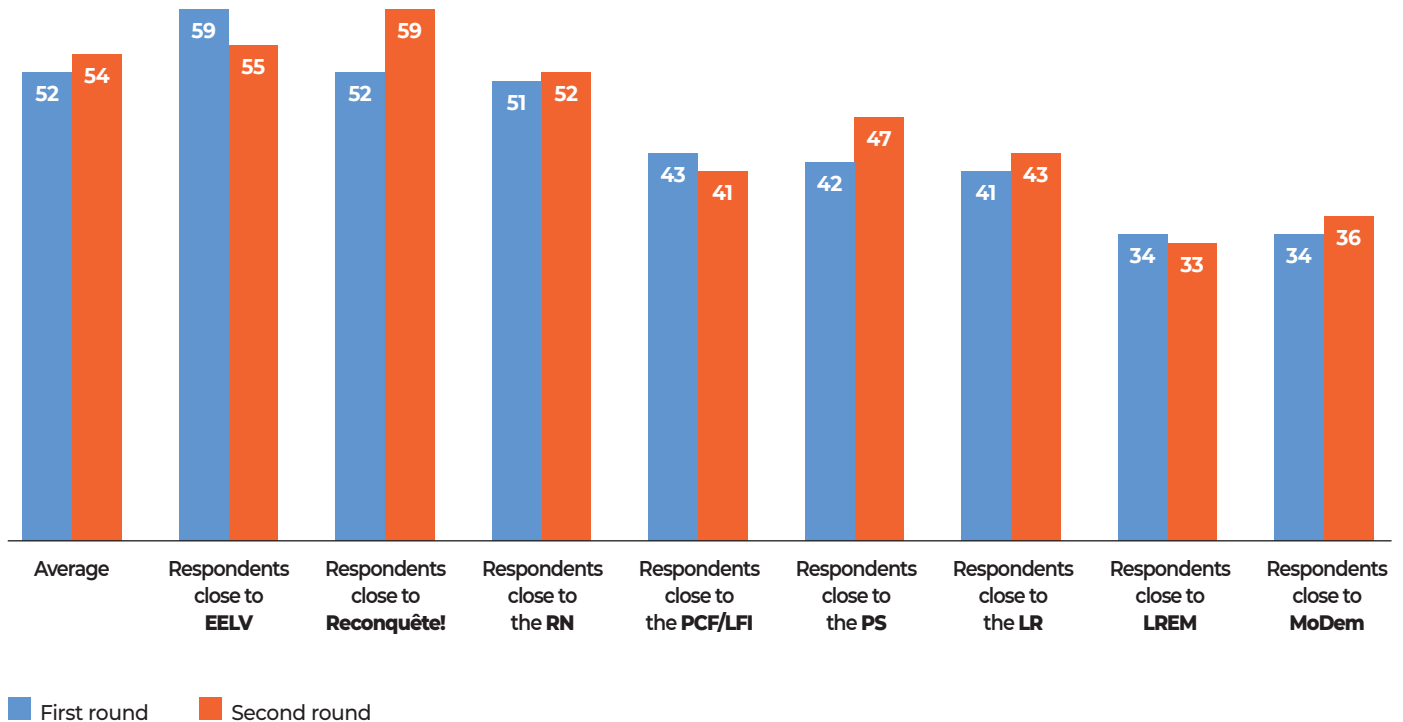
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Voters who feel close to the RN, Reconquête! or EELV mostly abstained from voting in the legislative elections

Questions: “52.5% of voters in the country did not vote in the first round of the legislative elections. Did you yourself vote in the first round on Sunday 12 June 2022?”; “53.8% of voters in the country did not vote in the second round of the legislative elections. Did you yourself vote in the second round on Sunday 19 June 2022?”

Response: “no”

Base: the whole sample



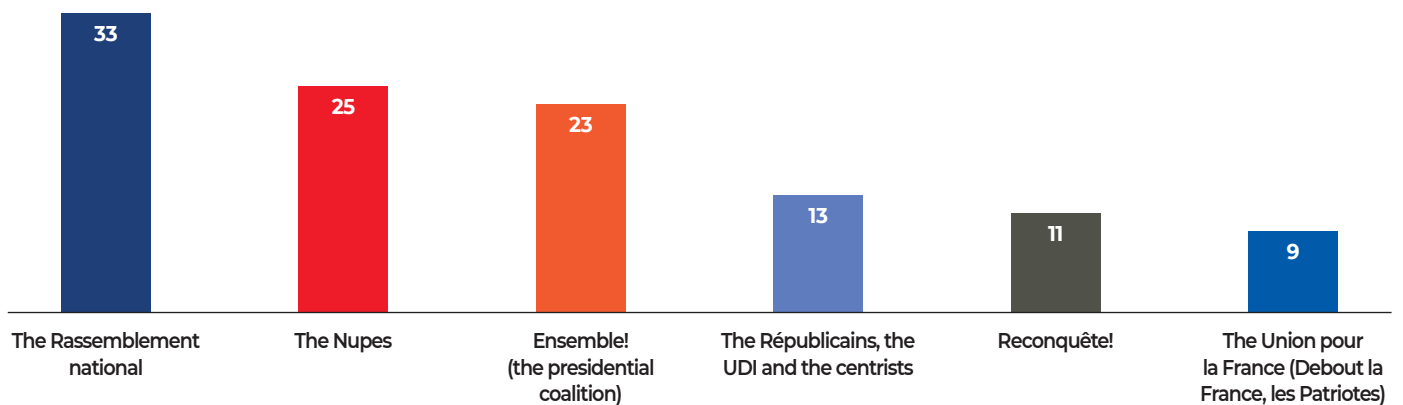
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Those who abstained from voting offer more electoral reserves to the RN than to the Nupes

Question: “In the first round of the legislative elections, did you consider voting for this political formation, did you not consider it or did you completely exclude the possibility?”

Response: “I considered it”

Base: respondents who abstained from voting in the first round of the legislative elections



Memo for the reader: Among respondents who abstained from voting in the first round of the 2022 legislative elections, 33% “considered” voting for the Rassemblement national, 25% for the Nupes, 23% for Ensemble!, 13% for the Républicains, the UDI or the centrists, 11% for Reconquête! and 9% for L’Union pour la France.

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4. The uncertain survival of mainstream political parties

In a genuine democratic regime, there is an incompressible level of abstention from voting, blank votes and protest votes, making up what we call here electoral protest. Such protest does not interfere with the proper functioning of the political and governmental system as long as it remains marginal, i.e. as long as the political system is able to control its causes. This is no longer the case today. If we consider the first round of the presidential election, on 10 April 2022, the combined total of abstentions from voting, blank votes and protest votes represented 68% of registered voters¹³ so in terms of votes cast, the protest vote accounts for the majority (55.6%) for the first time. In 2017, this total stood at 48.4% and at 29.6% on 21 April 2002. In twenty years, the total protest vote has thus increased by 26 points. Having become the majority, the protest vote remains dispersed among several candidates, even if two of them concentrate the largest share: on 10 April

2022, 45% of the votes cast were gathered around the candidacies of Marine Le Pen (23.1%) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (21.9%) alone.

For more than twenty years, the observation of the total scores of mainstream political parties and candidates, both on the left and on the right, has revealed a collapse of their electoral base. In 2022, Emmanuel Macron, Valérie Pécresse and Anne Hidalgo together do not reach a quarter of the registered voters (24.8%). To allow for minor conjectures, let us specify that, even if we include Yannick Jadot (3.3% of registered voters) and Éric Zemmour (5.1% of registered voters) in the list of mainstream candidates, the total of all government candidates, right-wing, left-wing and Macron candidates combined, would only ever represent 33.1% of registered voters. In 2017, during the first round of the presidential election, this total represented 38.2% of registered voters (Emmanuel Macron, François Fillon and Benoît Hamon), 50.6% in 2012 (François Hollande, Nicolas Sarkozy and François Bayrou) or, in the latter case, almost 65% of the votes cast¹⁴.

II. The ballot box and public opinion: the dual victory of the *Rassemblement national*

While protest votes on the right and the left have increased significantly in the 2022 election cycle, the success of Marine Le Pen and the RN has been more noticeable. This success is evident in the ballot box, as shown by the results of the presidential and legislative elections, but also in public opinion: there is a greater acceptance of the RN's ideas.

1. The growing acceptance of the *Rassemblement national* by the French public

Since it is now the primary opposition group in parliament, it is important to know whether the RN is still considered a protest party. The efforts to moderate the party's image since 2017, when it was still the FN, have been the subject of abundant commentary

which is already the mark of a certain success in the strategy of mainstreaming the party, or the so-called “de-demonization” of the FN. The move to the RN implies a break with the genealogy of the FN and of the father Le Pen. The mothballing of a programme historically hostile to Europe and the euro accompanied this change. Yet the election of 89 MPs is not only the result of these efforts of moderation. It is also the product of a general scepticism towards political forces and government institutions. The evolution of the RN

13. See Dominique Reynié, “L’élection se mue en instrument de protestation contre le pouvoir plus que de délégation du pouvoir”, remarks collected by Benoît Floc’h, *Le Monde*, 19 April 2022.

14. It was in the first round of the presidential election of 21 April 2002 that the total number of “mainstream candidates” in the first round of a presidential election became a minority for the first time, i.e. 38%, by adding the scores of Jacques Chirac (13.7% of those registered), Lionel Jospin (11.2% of those registered), François Bayrou (4.7% of those registered), Jean-Pierre Chevènement (3.7% of those registered) and Alain Madelin (2.7% of those registered). A maximum of 44.1% of registered voters can be obtained by adding Noël Mamère (3.6% of registered voters), Corinne Lepage (1.3% of registered voters), Robert Hue (2.3% of registered voters) and Christine Boutin (0.8% of registered voters).

in public opinion is also the result of society's shift to the right, particularly because of the importance of concerns such as safety, the difficulties associated with the integration of immigrants, and Islamism, fuelling a negative relationship with globalisation, which is perceived by the majority as a threat rather than an opportunity¹⁵, and leading to a demand for the assertion of public power in these areas, and subsequently to frustration and exasperation on the part of many voters not being heard on this crucial point.

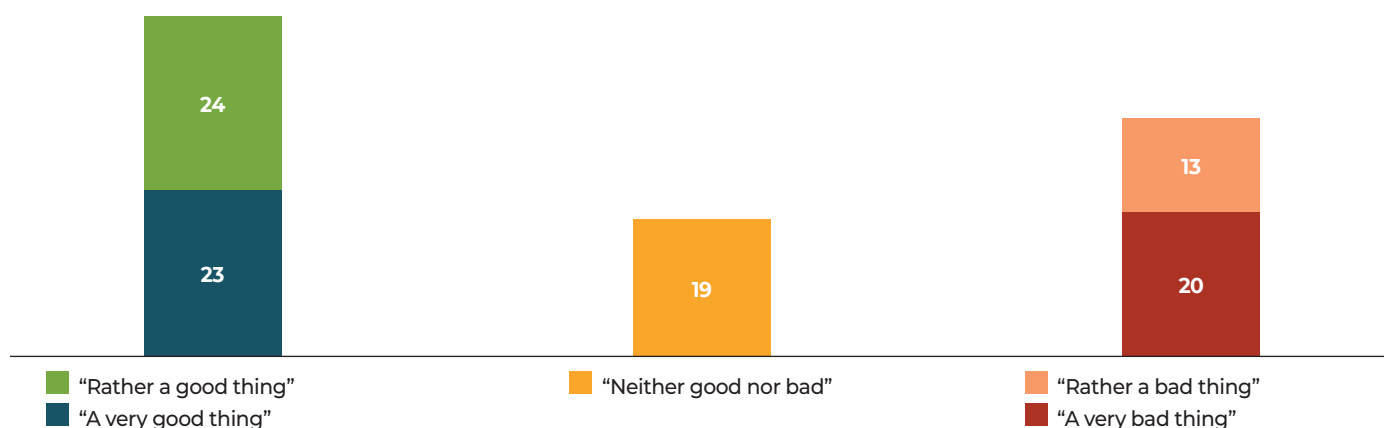
The historical conditions in which our national debate and, more broadly, our public space have been formed mean that these issues, considered illegitimate for sometimes confusing reasons, have been left in the hands of the right and even more so of the populist right. These concerns are deemed to be intrinsically right-wing rather than left-wing. The mainstream left has therefore not considered them, de facto leaving aside the defence of the working classes and immigrant suburbs, secularism, public services, safety, the most fundamental of all public services, or equality, a value

that is supposed to be unanimous, and the object of insatiable demands, except in these areas. The neglect of these issues by the left and also by the classic right has given the FN and then the RN a de facto programmatic monopoly, like a distinctive sign, initially sulphurous, but gradually beneficial, as these concerns have gained in importance. These issues now raise concerns that go well beyond the working classes. So, when asked: "In the June 2022 legislative elections, 89 RN MPs were elected, forming the largest opposition group in the National Assembly. Do you think this is...?", almost half of the respondents (47%) answered "a good thing". A third (33%) thought it was a bad thing and 19% answered "neither good nor bad". Of course, almost all respondents (95%) who voted for a RN candidate in the first round of the legislative elections consider it a "good thing", but 34% of those who voted for a Nupes candidate and 22% of those who voted for a presidential majority candidate consider the election of 89 RN MPs as a good thing.

Half of the respondents (47%) think that the election of 89 RN MPs is "a good thing"

Question: "In the June 2022 legislative elections, 89 National Rally MPs were elected, forming the largest opposition group in the National Assembly. Do you think this is..."

Base: the whole sample



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This view is shared by voters living in rural areas (50%) and in towns with between 2,000 and 19,999 inhabitants (52%), but also in urban areas (48%) outside the Paris region. Despite this, 41% of people living in the Paris region share this positive view of the results of the

RN in the 2022 legislative elections. This assessment is found in roughly the same proportions among the lower socio-professional categories (50%) and the upper socio-professional categories (47%).

15. See Victor Delage, *The conversion of Europeans to right-wing values. France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom*, Fondation pour l'innovation politique, May 2021, 40 p. (www.fondapol.org/en/study/the-conversion-of-europeans-to-right-wing-values/).

Major differences remain. For example, the “degree effect” has not entirely disappeared. The arrival of the new RN MPs is more appreciated among the least qualified (56%) than among respondents with a bachelor’s degree (46%) or a degree higher than

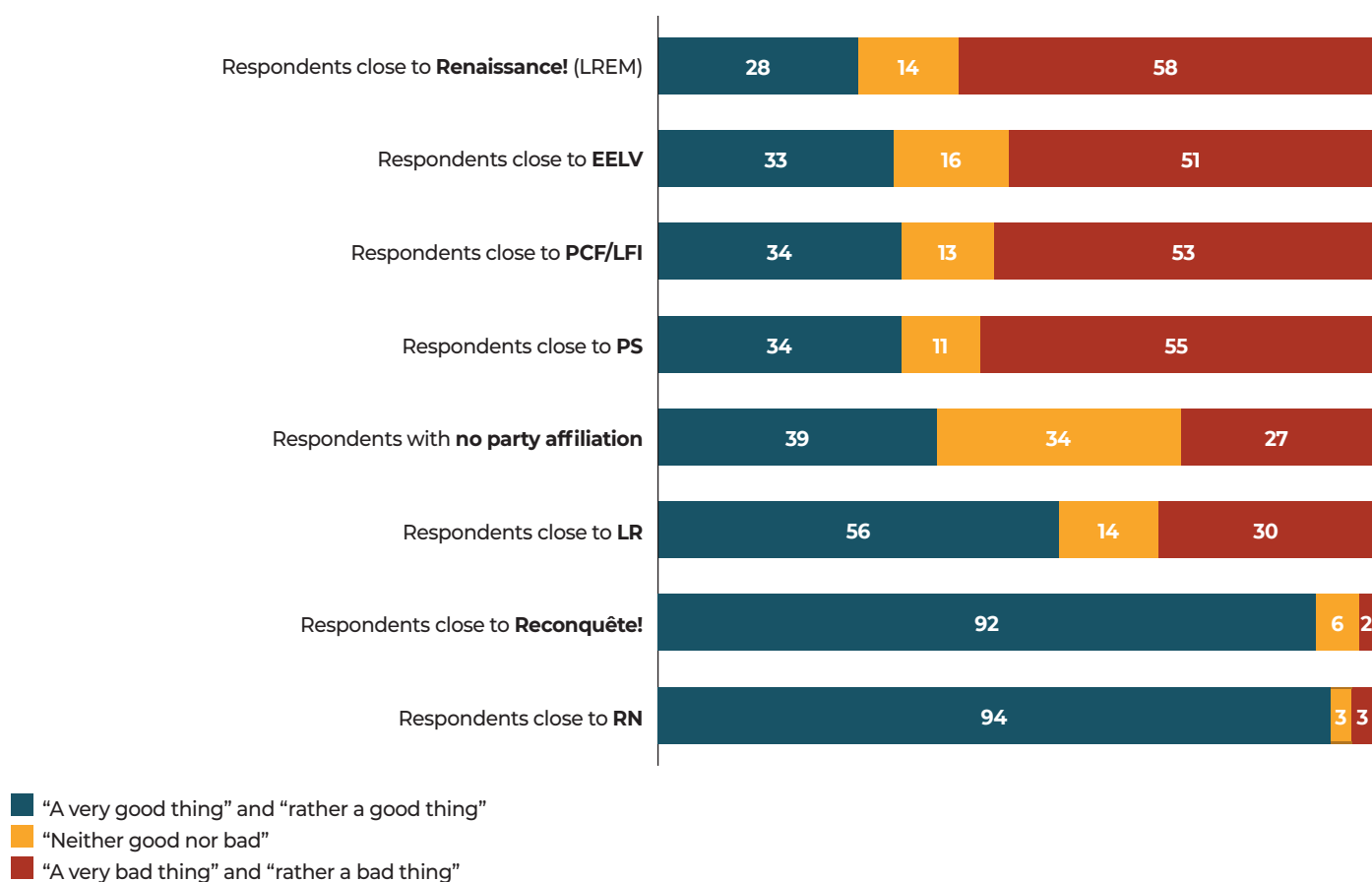
bachelor’s (39%). However, it should be noted that the level of favourable opinion of the RN is now high in all social categories and no longer only among the working classes.

A third of voters close to left-wing parties find the arrival of 89 RN deputies in the National Assembly “a good thing”

Question: “In the legislative elections of June 2022, 89 RN MPs were elected, forming the largest opposition group in the National Assembly. Do you think this is...”

Responses: “a very good thing” and “rather good thing”; “neither good nor bad”; “a very bad thing” and “rather a bad thing”

Base: by political affiliation



Memo for the reader: 34% of respondents who feel close to the PS believe that the arrival of 89 RN MPs in the National Assembly is “a good thing”. 56% of respondents close to the LR felt the same way.

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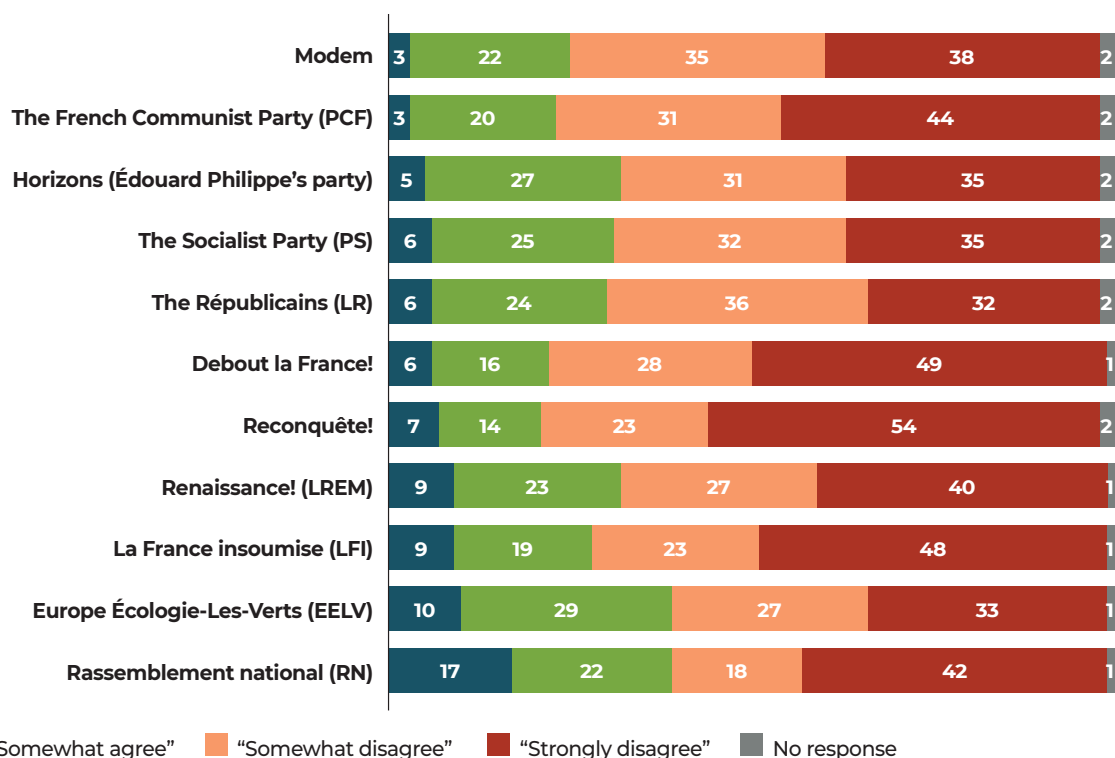
The success of the RN in the legislative elections opens up the possibility of the institutionalization of Marine Le Pen’s party. All the more so as, at the same time, the growing acceptance of the RN’s ideas testifies to its growing acceptance in public opinion. The two parties with which voters feel most in agreement are

EELV and the RN. In both cases, 39% of respondents either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the ideas defended by the party. However, although EELV and the RN are winning this battle, of all the political parties, only the RN attracts such a high proportion of voters who “strongly agree” with its ideas (17%).

Support for the RN's ideas in public opinion

Question: “Do you yourself agree or disagree with the ideas defended by...”

Base: the whole sample



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In the first round of the 2022 legislative elections, the RN's ideas appealed to 91% of Reconquête! voters. This is also the case for a significant proportion of LR voters. Thus, 37% of LR-UDI voters and various centrist candidates say they agree with the ideas of Marine Le Pen's party. It should be noted that the

age criterion has little effect on support for the RN's ideas: 36% of 18–24-year-olds say they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with these ideas, as do 37% of 25–34-year-olds and 40% of 35–49-year-olds, 42% of those aged 50–64 and 35% of those aged 65 and over.

The RN is one of the political parties with the most positive image

Question: “Do you have a rather positive, rather negative or neither positive nor negative image of the following political parties?”

Responses: “rather positive”; “neither positive nor negative”; “rather negative”

Base: the whole sample

	“Rather positive”	“Neither positive nor negative”	“Rather negative”
Europe Écologie-Les Verts	27	32	39
Rassemblement national	25	24	49
Renaissance! LREM	24	30	44
La France insoumise	22	29	47
Les Républicains	16	34	48
Parti socialiste	16	33	49
Parti communiste français	15	34	48
Reconquête!	15	30	53
Debout la France!	13	32	53

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Acceptance of the RN by age group

Question: “Do you have a rather positive, rather negative or neither positive nor negative image of the following political parties? - The Rassemblement national”

Base: the whole sample

	18-24 years old	25-34 years old	35-49 years old	50-64 years old	65 and older
“Rather positive”	32	30	25	26	20
“Neither positive nor negative”	28	32	30	20	18
“Rather negative”	36	38	43	51	61
Non-responses	4	-	2	3	1

Memo for the reader: A third of 18-24 year-olds (32%) have a “rather positive” image of the Rassemblement national. This is 12 points more than among those aged 65 and over (20%).

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Embodied by the LFI, left-wing populism does not attract the same level of support. With 28% of voters who say they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with LFI’s ideas, Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s party is clearly outpaced on this level by the RN (39%). However, with

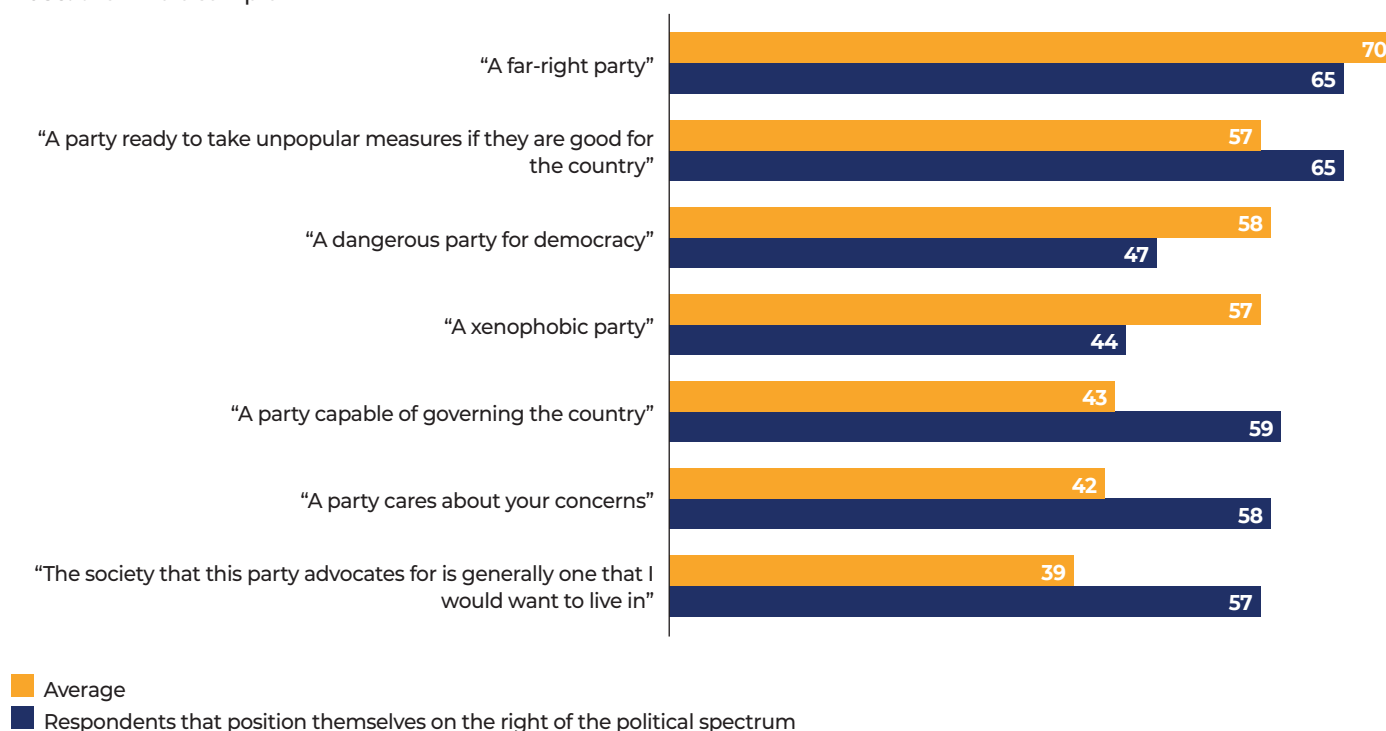
48% of voters who “strongly disagree” with his ideas, LFI becomes, after Reconquête! (54%) and DLF (49%), one of the three political formations whose ideas are the most rejected.

Less than half (47%) of right-wing voters see the RN as a danger to democracy

Question: “Would you say that each of these descriptions corresponds or does not correspond to the Rassemblement national?”

Response: “yes”

Base: the whole sample



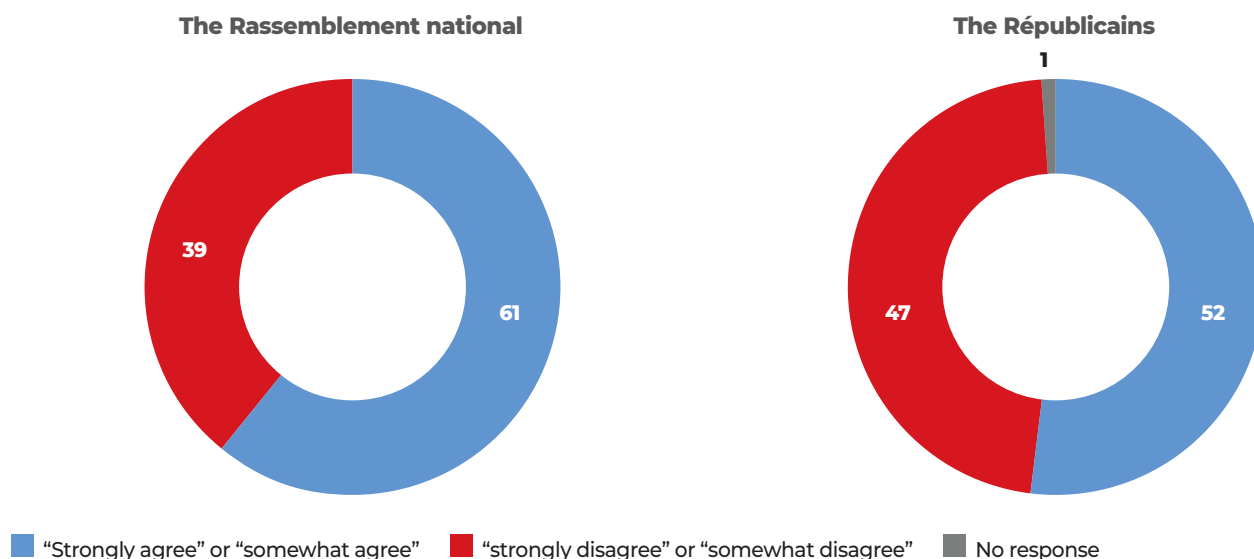
Memo for the reader: Among respondents who position themselves on the right of the political spectrum, 59% believe that the RN is “a party capable of governing the country”, versus 43% on average. Voters who consider themselves to be on the right are also 57% to think that “the society advocated for by the RN is generally one that I would want to live in”, compared to only 39% on average. 47% of right-wing voters consider the RN to be “a dangerous party for democracy”, compared to 58% on average..

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The right is growing closer to the RN: right-wing voters identify more with the ideas of the RN than with those of the LR

Question: “Do you yourself agree or disagree with the ideas defended by...”

Base: respondents who position themselves on the right of the political spectrum



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Finally, in the context of a political upheaval on the right, it is important to note that, among voters who position themselves on the right, less than half (47%) consider the RN to be dangerous for democracy¹⁶. An even smaller proportion consider it to be “xenophobic”

(44%). Conversely, the majority of right-wing voters consider the RN to be capable of governing (59%), believing that it advocates for a society in which they would like to live (57%).

2. Marine Le Pen is no longer a rejected public figure

The second of the three waves of our survey was administered after the second round of the presidential election. Half (46%) of the voters who said they were close to the RN placed Marine Le Pen on the right, but only 29% on the extreme right. Nearly a third of voters (31%) who voted for Marine Le Pen in the first round of the presidential election said they felt close to the moderate right (6, 7 or 8 on the left-right scale)¹⁷, while only a comparable proportion (29%) to those who classified themselves as “very right-wing” (9 and 10 on the left-right political scale). Finally, 19% of voters who voted for Marine Le Pen in the first round of the presidential election did not position themselves on the left-right political scale.

A large majority of respondents who say they are close to the RN (71%) do not classify Marine Le Pen as

“far right”. This is also the case among those close to Reconquête! (87%) but also among those close to the radical left LO-NPA (69%).

If, on the other hand, Marine Le Pen is still classified as far right by a majority of voters close to the EELV (72%), the PS (64%) and even the LR (61%), it is clear that these groups have weakened, or may be in decline. The two electorates that remain quantitatively important and that consider Marine Le Pen as a far-right figure are those close to the PCF-LFI (59%) and those closest to LREM (81%), which echoes the three-way competition between Macron, Le Pen and Melenchon supporters since 2017. Yet placing Marine Le Pen on the far right of the political spectrum does not prevent people from voting for her or her party, especially when it comes to opposing Emmanuel Macron.

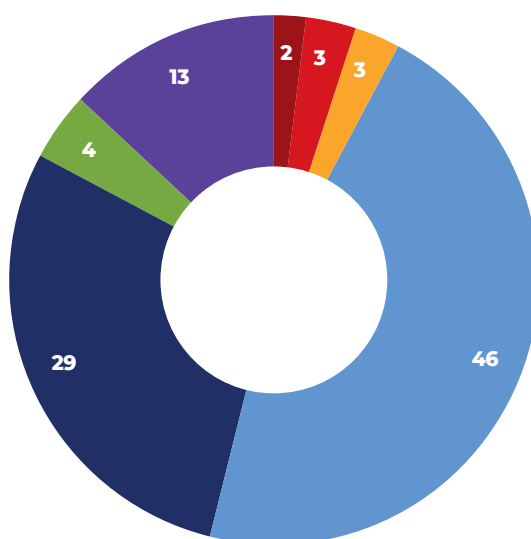
16. This data was taken from the second wave of our survey, administered in the days following the second round of the presidential election, between 28 April and 2 May 2022, among a sample of 3,052 people.

17. Voter self-positioning is done by asking the respondent to place themselves on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is the most left-wing and 10 the most right-wing.

More than two thirds (71%) of those close to the RN do not consider Marine Le Pen to be a far-right candidate

Question: “Politically, do you consider Marine Le Pen to be...”

Base: respondents close to the Rassemblement national

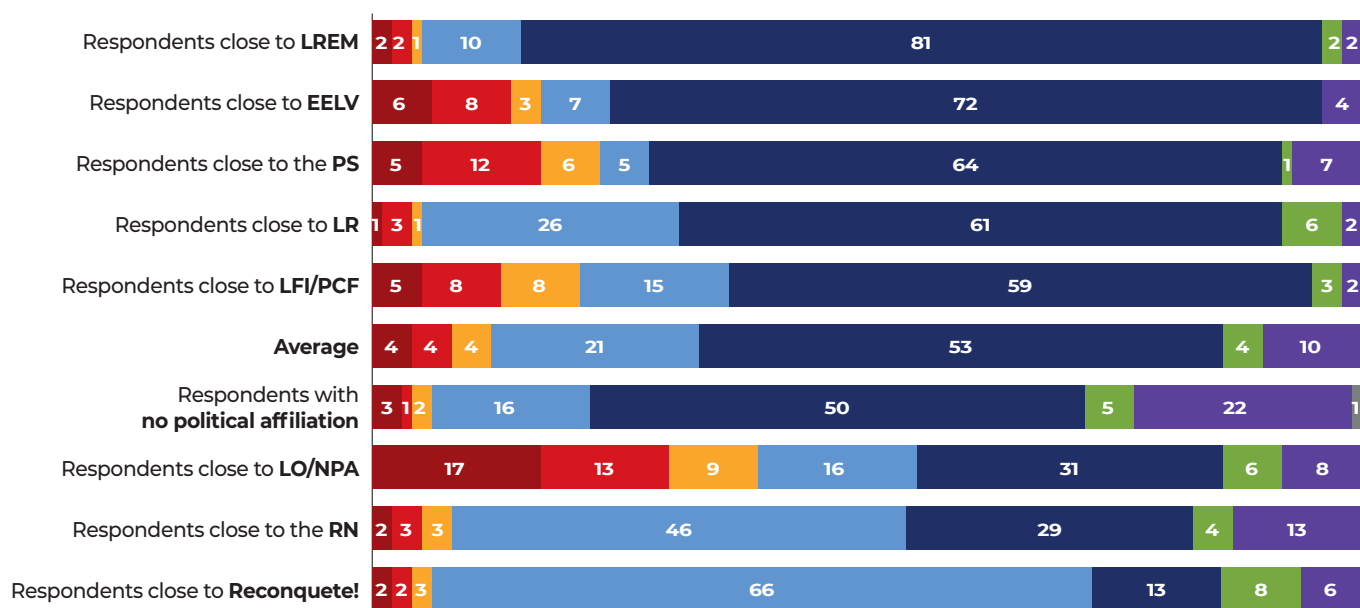


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For the radical Left and the protest Right, Marine Le Pen is not far right

Question: “Politically, do you consider Marine Le Pen to be...”

Base: the whole sample



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As we will see below, a fraction of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and LFI supporters will not hesitate to vote for Marine Le Pen or RN to try to defeat Emmanuel Macron in the presidential election or one of his candidates in the legislative elections. The same is true, symmetrically, for a fraction of Marine Le Pen and RN voters. To illustrate this, we should note that in the legislative elections, in the case of constituencies where, in the second round, the RN was opposed to Ensemble!, nearly a third (30%) of Nupes voters in the first round answered that their second round choice had been primarily motivated by their desire to “strengthen the opposition to Emmanuel Macron”.

It is obvious that the electoral development of one party, whether old or new, necessarily comes at the expense of others and, potentially, at the expense of abstention from voting. It is these electoral transfers - the shift from abstention to participation and the transition from one party to another - that produce electoral movements, whether temporary or long-lasting. In the case of the FN, during its electoral take-off in the 1980s, new voters came from the left as well as the right of the political spectrum. In 2022, the RN benefited from new transfers from the mainstream right. Thus, 11% of François Fillon’s voters in 2017 voted Marine Le Pen in the first round in 2022, while 18% preferred Éric Zemmour. Similarly, 8% of Fillon voters in 2017 voted for a RN candidate in the first round of the legislative elections, and 9% for a Reconquête! candidate. Zemmour’s entry onto the political scene seems to have drawn an additional fraction of the LR electorate into an airlock leading them eventually to vote for Le Pen, which they may not have done initially. At first, the leader of Reconquête! was able to hold the attention of a fraction of the mainstream right, which then shifted to Marine Le Pen and the RN, particularly in the second rounds of the 2022 presidential and legislative elections. This quantitative contribution could also account for the sociological evolution of the Le Pen/RN 2022 vote, where there is

a greater proportion of voters from the middle and wealthy class. However, as we have already indicated, the excellent results of Marine Le Pen’s party in the legislative elections are also due to the mobilisation of voters from the protest left in her favour¹⁸: 24% of Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s voters in the first round of the presidential election voted Marine Le Pen in the second round, as did, although the proportions relate to marginalised electorates, a fraction of the voters of Fabien Roussel (26%), Anne Hidalgo (15%), and Yannick Jadot (6%).

The RN achieved its best score in the June 2022 legislative elections, but it still has stockpiles of votes: on average, 26% of voters who did not vote for the RN considered doing so, compared to the 21% of voters who did not vote for the Nupes after considering it and the 20% of those who did not vote for Ensemble! but considered doing so.

Of the three main presidential candidates, Emmanuel Macron, Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the RN candidate relatively has the lowest level of rejection (53%) and the highest level of support (36%). Given the role played by a public figure in a political competition, particularly in a system structured around a presidential election, a role that is further enhanced by the new public media space and social networks, the image of a political party tends to merge with the face of its leader. The “normalisation” of the FN/RN owes much to the change of leader, in the transition from Jean-Marie Le Pen to Marine Le Pen. The shrinking, or even disappearance, of the mainstream political parties, the PS and LR, both of which still lack an authoritative leadership, contributes to placing the populists of the right and the left at the centre of the political arena. Electoral judgment is a relative judgment. The absence of credible competitors representing moderate parties, or their insufficient influence, mechanically favours the visibility and acceptance of less conventional candidates.

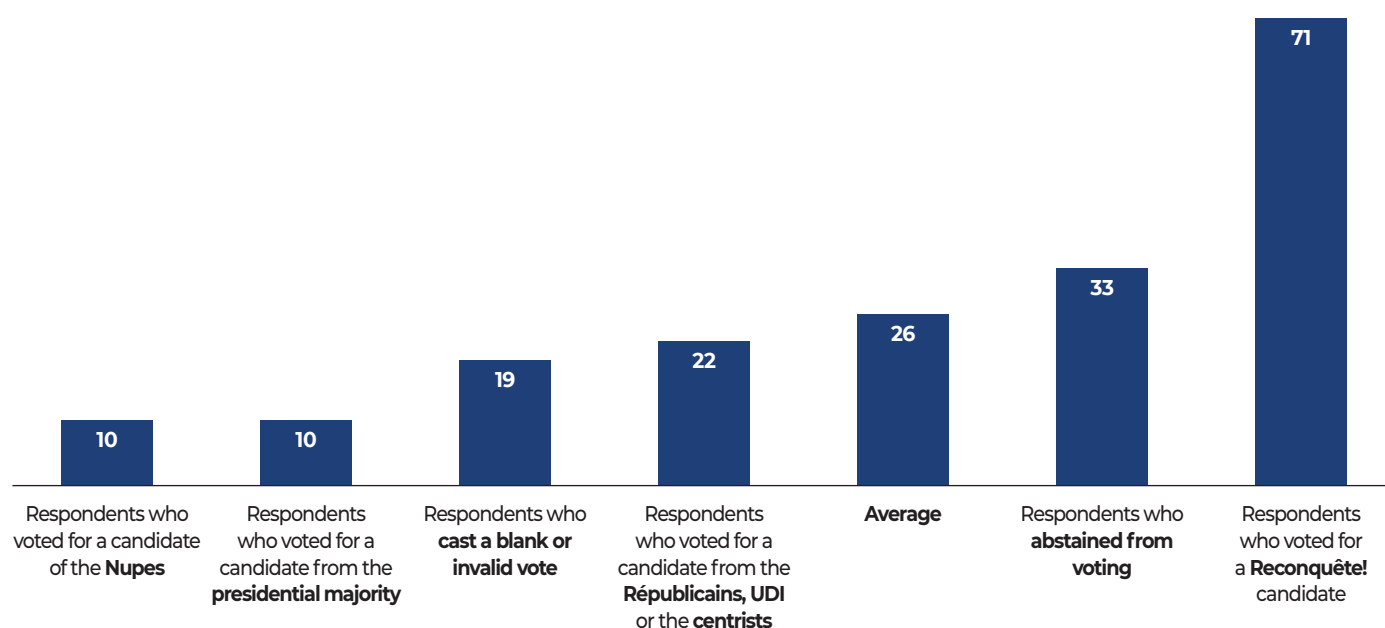
18. Pascal Perrineau had previously shown that the electoral progress of the FN between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was partly linked to the influx of voters from the left (see Pascal Perrineau, “La dynamique du vote Le Pen: le poids du ‘gaucho-lepénisme’”, in Pascal Perrineau and Colette Ysmal (eds.), *Le Vote de crise. L’élection présidentielle de 1995*, Presses de Sciences Po, collection “Chroniques électorales”, 1995, p. 243-261).

The RN has electoral potential on the right and among those who abstained from voting

Question: “In the first round of the legislative elections, did you consider voting for this political formation, did you not consider it or did you completely exclude the possibility? - The Rassemblement national”

Response: “I considered it”

Base: respondents who did not vote for an RN candidate in the first round of the legislative elections



■ Respondents who considered voting for a Rassemblement national candidate

Memo for the reader: Among respondents who abstained from voting in the first round of the legislative elections, a third (33%) considered voting for a RN candidate. Among respondents who voted for a Reconquête! candidate in the first round of the legislative elections, 71% considered voting for a RN candidate.

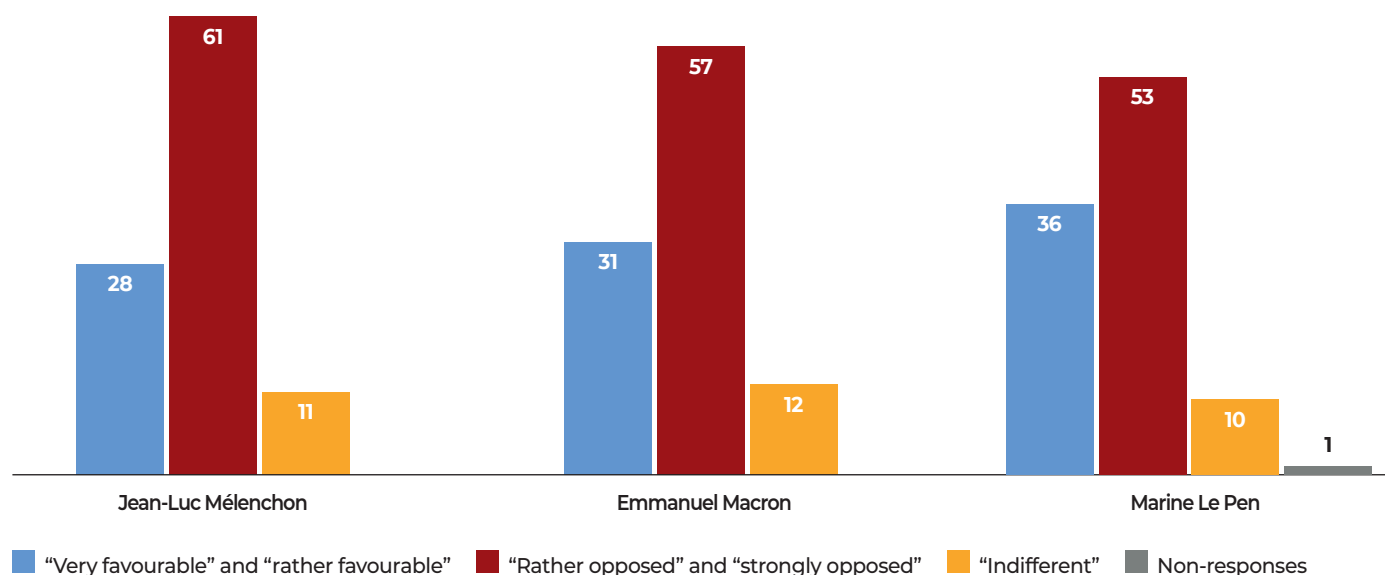
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Marine Le Pen is no longer particularly rejected by the public

Question: “If you had to position yourself, would you say that you are in favour of, opposed to or indifferent to...”

Responses: “very favourable” and “rather favourable”; “indifferent”; “rather opposed” and “strongly opposed”

Base: the whole sample



■ “Very favourable” and “rather favourable” ■ “Rather opposed” and “strongly opposed” ■ “Indifferent” ■ Non-responses

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3. An incomplete normalisation. Marine Le Pen attracts more support than the *Rassemblement national*

In the second wave of this survey, conducted after the second round of the presidential election, we asked voters who did not vote for Emmanuel Macron - either those who voted for Marine Le Pen, who cast a blank vote or who abstained from voting - to name the main reasons behind their decision, among a series

of propositions¹⁹. Among the reasons for not voting for Emmanuel Macron, “his personality” weighed as heavily (34%) as “his political ideas” (33%) and “his programme” (32%).

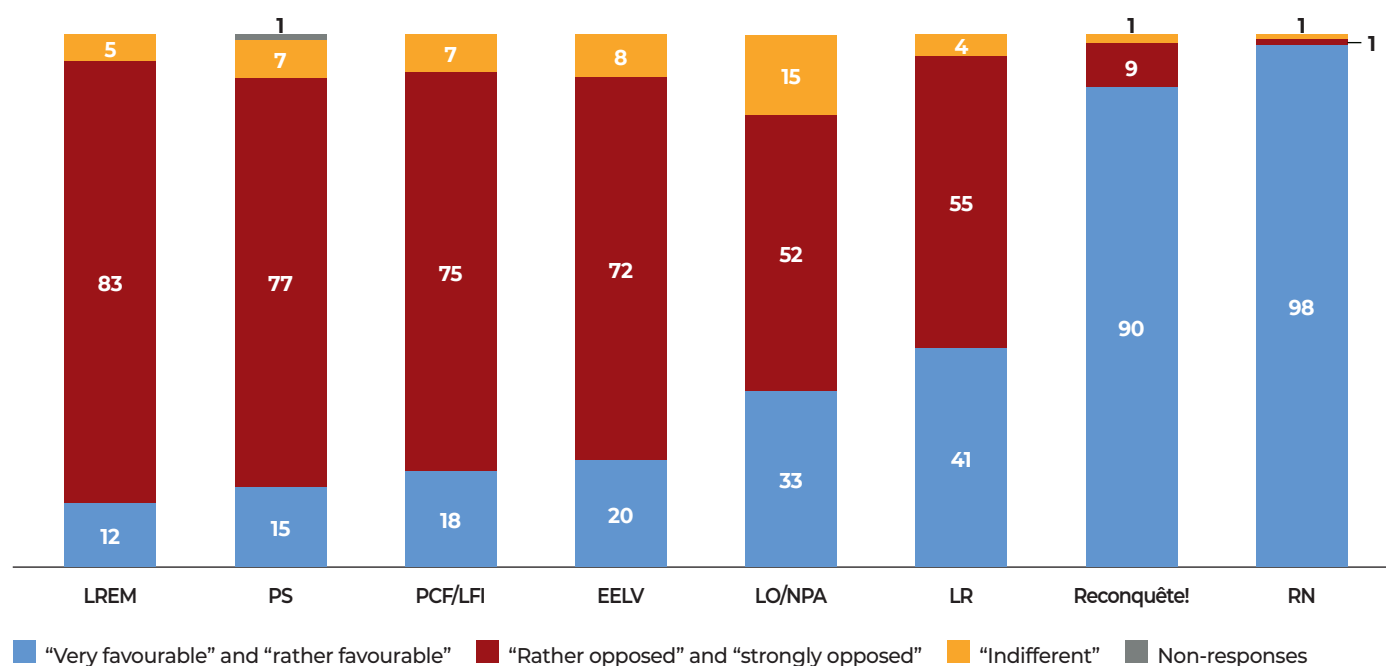
Conversely, among voters who did not vote for Marine Le Pen - i.e. who either voted for Emmanuel Macron, voted blank or abstained from voting - 11% gave “his personality” as the main reason, 21% “his programme”. However, there are still 67% of respondents who mention “his political ideas”.

Opinion of Marine Le Pen by political affiliation

Question: “If you had to position yourself, would you say that you are favourable, opposed or indifferent with regards to Marine Le Pen?”

Responses: “very favourable” and “rather favourable”; “indifferent”; “rather opposed” and “strongly opposed”

Base: according to political affiliation



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Following the second round of the presidential election, a significant proportion (42%) of voters believe that the RN candidate has the stature of a president, consider her to have “a good plan for the future of France” (44%) and believe that she “tells the truth” (44%).

Finally, it should be noted that Marine Le Pen is not considered to be worrisome by a third of respondents close to LO or the NPA (35%), and the same is true of those close to the PC-LFI (34%).

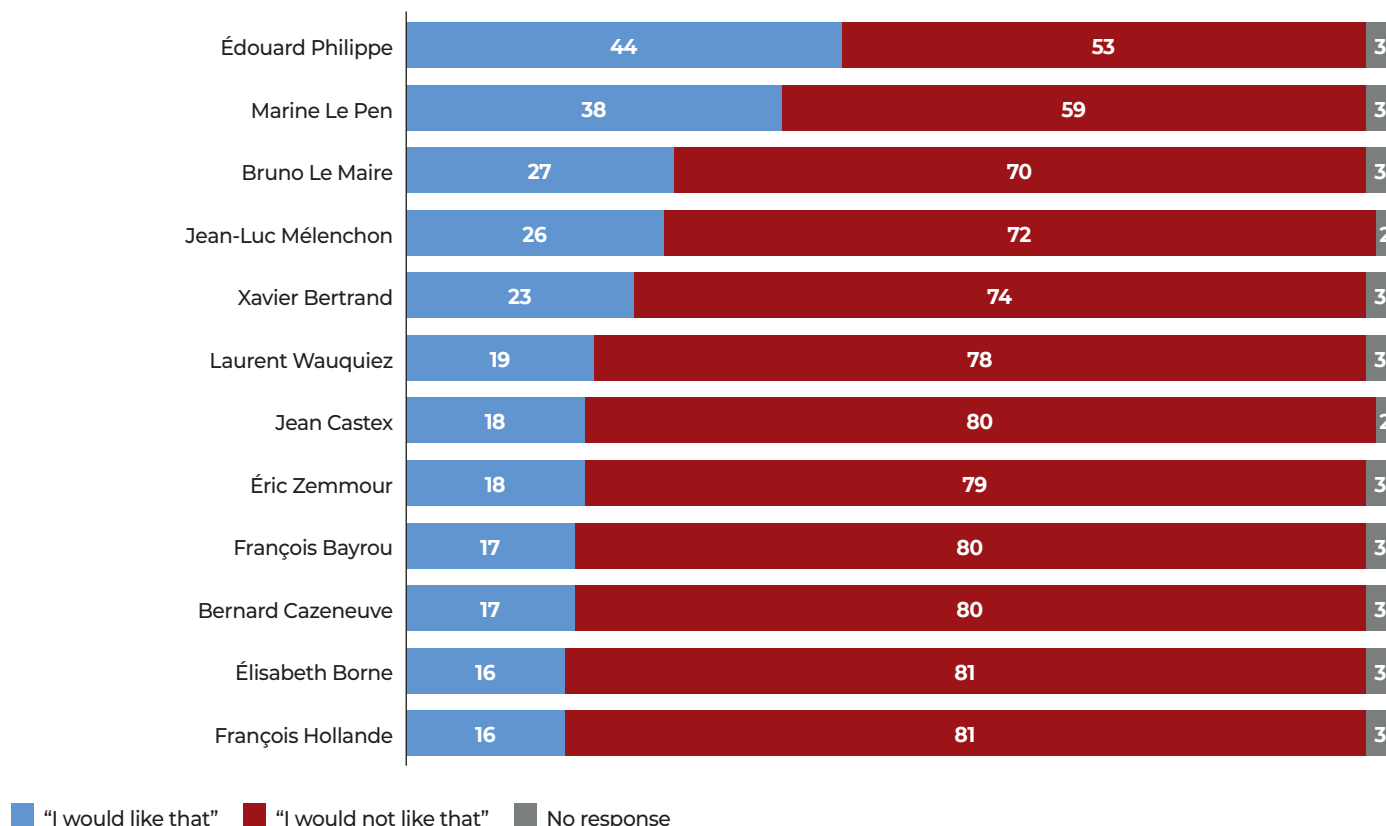
The convergence of these theoretically opposed universes occurs at least on the radical and authoritarian approach to political action. A significant proportion of LO-NPA supporters (59%) said they agreed with the idea that Marine Le Pen “has a good plan for the country”. This opinion is also shared by 35% of those close to the PC-LFI, i.e. mainly LFI, given the respective electoral weight of the PCF and LFI.

19. Respondents were given a choice between the following three propositions: “his/her personality”; “his/her programme”; “his/her ideas”.

In June 2022, the French expect Édouard Philippe and Marine Le Pen for the presidential election of 2027. To be continued...

Question: “For the next presidential election in 2027, Emmanuel Macron will not be allowed to run again. Would you like the following public figures to be candidates or not?”

Base: the whole sample



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Marine Le Pen was Emmanuel Macron's main competitor for access to his first five-year term in 2017, and in 2022 she remained his main opponent. Remarkably, despite her three successive defeats, her role does not seem to be taken away from her for the upcoming presidential election in 2027. Voters who want Marine Le Pen to run for a fourth time are found both among those close to the RN (96%), those close to Reconquête! (81%), but also among a significant proportion of those close to LR (46%) and those who are not close to any political party (34%).

In a more troubled France, the RN causes less concern. The year 2022 seems to be the year of its institutionalisation. This is apparently the logical consequence of its successful results. This so-called “far right” party is now capable of occupying first place in the electoral competition. This is not a new development, as this was already the case in 2014, during the European elections (24.9%); in 2015, during the regional elections (27.7%), and in 2019, during the European elections (23.3%)²⁰.

However, the hypothesis of the institutionalisation of the RN does not account for its new position in the political landscape. Indeed, its electoral results cannot be explained if we do not take into account the protest element, which is contradictory to the notion of its institutionalisation. The FN, since its creation on 5 October 1972, and the RN, from 2018 onwards, have never ceased to claim the status of a political party “unlike the others”, “the political party that says out loud what the French are thinking”, waving the promise of a break with the past. In addition to systematically taking on popular concerns side-lined by both the government parties and the media, it is the use of an “anti-system” rhetoric and posture that has allowed the FN/RN to aggregate over time a large number of voters disappointed with the right and the governing left, and even those disappointed with electoral participation, and ultimately to capture the main share of this varied accumulated anger.

20. See the numerous data available on the “France politique” website of journalist Laurent de Boissieu (www.france-politique.fr/).

One wonders how the RN could survive its institutionalisation, i.e. the erasure of the radical promise on which it has thrived for half a century, the weakening of its populist discourse, which denounces false democracy, corrupt elites, a stateless Europe, finance and globalisation, etc. Between 1972 and 2017, it is to this more or less explicitly radical programme that the FN/RN owes a large part of its media visibility and its electoral momentum; this is how it managed to capture the attention and then the support of an increasingly large number of diverse voters, and in the end, voters of all political persuasions.

However, the institutionalisation of the RN and the greater acceptance of Marine Le Pen in public opinion are not yet enough to ensure her presidential stature.

The scepticism and concern that she ignites are still based on the risks that she would pose to freedom. Indeed, the RN candidate is still considered to be “worrisome” by a preponderant share of respondents (55%), while a majority (54%) consider that she would infringe on fundamental freedoms²¹.

Nonetheless, public scepticism is also, and probably more so, related to the risks that the election of Marine Le Pen would pose to the euro. The broad and constant support of public opinion for the European Union, and even more so for the euro, limits the process of institutionalisation of the RN, which is a prerequisite for the further electoral progress of the party and for the fulfilment of Marine Le Pen’s presidency.

Voters are largely in favour of the European Union and the euro

Questions: “Regarding the European Union, which of the following opinions do you most agree with?” ; “Regarding the euro, which of the following opinions do you agree with most?”

Base: the whole sample

“I am in favour of the European Union and of France being part of it”	48
“I am not in favour of the European Union but I do not want France to leave it, what is done is done”	33
“I am not in favour of the European Union and I want France to leave it”	18
“I am in favour of the euro”	50
“I am not in favour of the euro but I do not want France to leave the euro to return to the franc, what is done is done.”	33
“I am not in favour of the euro and I would like France to leave the euro and return to the French franc”	15

Memo for the reader: Half (48%) of voters say they are in favour of “the European Union and the fact that France is part of it”, while a minority (18%) say they would like France to leave it. These figures are similar for respondents’ attachment to the euro: half (50%) are in favour and only 15% would prefer to leave the euro and “return to the French franc”.

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It should be noted, once again²², that even among those close to the RN, the wish to remain in the European Union (62%) and to keep the euro (70%) is still the majority opinion. However, only a third (33%) of voters consider that, as president, Marine Le Pen would have been able to protect the euro. By comparison, 60% of voters credit Emmanuel Macron with this ability. Voters’ attachment to the European Union, and in particular to the euro, is blocking the progression of some of the ideas that have historically made the FN/RN so strong. For the time being, the French do not want a return to political and monetary sovereignty. It is obvious that the RN and Marine Le Pen have scaled down their

ostentatious and vehement hostility to Europe. The comparison between the two debates between the two rounds, in 2017 and 2022, bears witness to this. A shift may be underway, but it is not clear what would happen to a populist party that becomes pro-Europe and pro-euro. The Europeanisation of populists is also a modality of their integration into the conventional political system. Institutionalisation has a price.

Finally, we should note that the ideological origins of the FN have left their mark. There are few more powerful indicators of a movement’s incompatibility with the idea of democracy and the republican ideal than antisemitism. The RN is the heir of an extreme

21. It should be noted that a portion of the population resists this fear, particularly on the left. Thus, when asked about the risk of an “attack on fundamental freedoms”, 39% of those close to the PCF-LFI believe that this risk does not apply to Marine Le Pen, as do 31% of those close to LO-NPA.

22. See Dominique Reynié (ed.), *What next for democracy? An international survey by the Fondation pour l’innovation politique*, 2017, 320 p.; *Democracies Under Pressure*, volume I, “The themes”, 156 p. (www.fondapol.org/en/study/new-global-survey-democracies-under-pressure-volume-i-the-issues/); volume II, “The countries”, 120 p. (www.fondapol.org/en/study/new-global-survey-democracies-under-pressure-volume-ii-the-countries/), Fondation pour l’innovation politique (survey carried out in partnership with the International Republican Institute), May 2019; Dominique Reynié (ed.), 2022, *the Populist Risk in France*, op. cit.

right-wing party, the FN, whose history intertwines with that of French antisemitism. As the work we are developing on this subject in partnership with AJC Paris demonstrates, anti-Semitism in France has changed since the turning point of the 1990s. Alongside extreme right-wing antisemitism, there has been a revival of extreme left-wing antisemitism, particularly in relation to the rise of French Muslim antisemitism²³. These three segments of the population are a minority, but a highly active one²⁴. Antisemitism is particularly widespread among French people close to the RN and LFI; it is also widespread among respondents of Muslim faith or culture. For example, the statement that “Jews have too much power in the

sectors of economics and finance” is shared by 39% of the electorate of Marine Le Pen and 33% of those close to the RN, 33% of the respondents within the electorate of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and 34% of those close to LFI, compared to 26% in the general population (and 51% of the respondents of the Muslim faith)²⁵. However, it should be noted that between 2014 and 2021, support for the idea that “Jews have too much power in the sectors of economics and finance” remained at the same level for those close to FdG/LFI (34% and 33% respectively), while the proportion of those close to FN/RN who share this idea is in sharp decline, down from 50% in 2014 to 33% in 2021²⁶.

III. In right-wing France, the dilemma of *Les Républicains*: Joining forces with *Ensemble!* or with the *Rassemblement national*?

While the political re-composition of France is still difficult to decipher, the reshaping of the political right is already underway. The most recent elections bear witness to this. The scores of the mainstream right are historically low, but the electoral performance of Marine Le Pen in the presidential election, followed by the arrival of 89 MPs in the National Assembly, has placed the RN at the heart of the political game, and all the more so as the absence of an absolute majority puts the National Assembly at the centre of the emerging geography of political power.

1. In 2022, two thirds of Emmanuel Macron's voters can be classified as right-wing

At the same time, Emmanuel Macron and his party have managed to bring together a significant proportion of voters from the mainstream right. More than five years after the creation of his party, which was intended to be “neither left-wing nor right-wing”, the Macron

electorate is nevertheless largely right-wing: half (47%) of Emmanuel Macron's voters in the first round of the presidential election positioned themselves on the right of the political spectrum, 19% in the centre, 20% on the left while only 12% did not position themselves. However, it appears that Macron's voters who position themselves in the centre or who do not position themselves on the left-right axis are often closer to the ideas of the right than to the left, according to the results of our survey.

23. Dominique Reynié, *Anti-Semitic Attitudes in France: New Insights*, Fondation pour l'innovation politique-AJC Paris, March 2015, 48 p. (www.fondapol.org/en/study/anti-semitic-attitudes-in-france-new-insights/).

24. On the subject, see François Legrand, Dominique Reynié, Anne-Sophie Sebban-Bécache and Simone Rodan-Benzaquen, *An analysis of antisemitism in France - 2022 Edition*, Fondation pour l'innovation politique-AJC Paris, March 2022, 48 p. (www.fondapol.org/en/study/analysis-of-antisemitism-in-france/), see also Dominique Reynié and Simone Rodan-Benzaquen, *Analysis of anti-Semitism in France - 2019 Edition*, Fondation pour l'innovation politique-AJC, January 2020, 30 p. (www.fondapol.org/en/study/analysis-of-anti-semitism-in-france/).

25. In its work on the subject, the Fondation pour l'innovation politique has identified three main sources of antisemitism: the extreme left, the extreme right and people of the Muslim faith. The statement that “Jews have too much power in the field of economy and finance” is shared by 51% of respondents of Muslim faith according to both the 2019 and 2022 editions of our *An analysis of antisemitism in France*, *op. cit.*

26. Dominique Reynié, *Anti-Semitic Attitudes in France...*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

In order to calculate the real weight of the right, it is therefore necessary to take into account a proportion of Emmanuel Macron's voters²⁷. We added to the weight of the scores achieved by the right-wing candidates, excluding Emmanuel Macron, the weight of the voters who voted for him in the first round of the presidential election and who are positioned themselves on the right of the political spectrum, i.e. 47% of all his voters. On the other hand, we have of course excluded Emmanuel Macron's voters who positioned themselves on the left.

Secondly, based on the responses to a series of items, we were able to determine whether the respondents who voted for Emmanuel Macron in the first round of the presidential election and who position themselves in the "centre", or who "do not position themselves" at all on the left-right scale, are right-wing or left-wing voters. Among the seven pairs of items tested as revealing a left-right divide, in our opinion, therefore leading to the expression of a right-wing or left-wing preference, we isolated the responses that could be considered markers of a right-wing value system, namely the following responses:

Item 1: "People who work should be able to put money aside as they see fit to finance their own retirement" (the other answer, revealing a rather left-wing value system, is specified in footnote²⁸).

Item 2: "Efforts should be made to reduce public spending, including the ones I benefit from today, so that we can pay off the debt and lessen the burden of it for future generations".

Item 3: "Most immigrants do not share our country's values and this creates problems of cohabitation".

Item 4: "We need more freedom for companies and less control from the State".

Item 5: "The unemployed could find work if they really wanted to".

Item 6: "To better protect the population, the police should be able to use their firearms more easily".

Item 7: "Students with educational difficulties should not be in the same classes as those without educational difficulties".

For Emmanuel Macron's voters in the first round of the presidential election who position themselves "in the centre" or who "do not position themselves" on the left-right scale, we measured an average level of support for the seven items that mark a right-wing value system. For example, among Emmanuel Macron's centrist voters (i.e. those who position themselves in the centre), we took into account the 17% who think that "people who work should be able to put money aside as they see fit to finance their own retirement", the 50% who think that "most immigrants do not share our country's values and this causes problems of coexistence", the 66% who think that "the unemployed could find work if they really wanted to", etc. The sum of the responses to these seven items provides a score of support for right-wing issues (here, in this case for Emmanuel Macron's centrist supporters, it is 342 points, which is the total of the percentage points found from the responses of Emmanuel Macron's supporters). Divided by the number of items, i.e. by seven, this allows us to determine an average level of support for these right-wing values, i.e. 48.9% in the case of Emmanuel Macron's centrist voters. Thus, among these Emmanuel Macron voters, the share of voters who share a right-wing value system is estimated at 48.9%. We therefore add to the total weight of the right-wing electorate 48.9% of the 19% of Emmanuel Macron's centrist electorate, i.e. 9.4% of the total number of Emmanuel Macron's voters in the first round of the 2022 presidential election.

We proceeded in the same way for voters who cast their ballot for Emmanuel Macron in the first round of the presidential election but who "do not position themselves" on the left-right scale. The level of support for the seven right-wing items is 371 points, which, divided by seven, gives us an average level of support of 53%. We therefore included in the weight of the right-wing electorate 53% of the 12% of Emmanuel Macron voters who do not position themselves on the left-right scale, which represents 6.5% of the total number of Emmanuel Macron voters.

27. These data come from a question asking respondents to position themselves on a left-right scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is the most left-wing position and 10 the most right-wing position: those from 0 to 4 are considered left-wing, 5 in the centre, and 6 to 10 right-wing. Respondents also have the option of choosing not to position themselves on this scale.

28. For these questions, the items that we considered markers of a rather left-wing value system were the following: "Students with educational difficulties should not be in the same classes as those without educational difficulties"; "People who work should pay to finance the retirement of those who are retired"; "We should make an effort to increase taxes for everyone, even if I don't pay any today, so that we can pay off the debt for it to be less of a burden on future generations"; "Most immigrants share our country's values and this represents cultural enrichment"; "We need more control from the State and less freedom for companies"; "Even for the unemployed who really want to, it is difficult to find work"; and, lastly, "To protect the population, the police can already use their firearms in a satisfactory manner".

Considering only Emmanuel Macron voters who position themselves on the right (47% of his electorate), Emmanuel Macron voters who position themselves in the centre and adhere to a right-wing value system (9.4% of his electorate) and Emmanuel Macron's voters who do not position themselves on the left-right scale but who adhere to a right-wing value system (6.5% of his electorate), we estimate the proportion of right-wing voters in Emmanuel Macron's electorate in April 2022 was 62.7%.

In the first round of the presidential election, the electorate of the right-wing candidates - that is, the total of the votes of Marine Le Pen, Éric Zemmour, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, Jean Lassalle and Valérie Pécresse - represented 40.2% of the votes cast. If we add Emmanuel Macron voters who position themselves on the right, we reach 53.2% of the votes cast. With Emmanuel Macron voters who are in the centre but share a right-wing value system, this figure rises to 55.9% of the votes cast. Finally, with Emmanuel Macron voters who did not position themselves on the left-right scale but who share right-wing values, this represents 57.7% of the votes cast.

Self-positioning on the left-right political spectrum and value system

Question: "Which of the following statements do you most agree with?"

Base: according to self-positioning on the left-right scale

	Respondents who self-position themselves on the left		Respondents who self-position themselves in the centre		Respondents who self-position themselves on the right		Respondents who did not self-position themselves on the left-right scale	
	Voted for E. Macron	Average	Voted for E. Macron	Average	Voted for E. Macron	Average	Voted for E. Macron	Average
"We need more freedom for companies and less control from the State"	54	41	57	44	71	64	46	44
"We need more control from the State and less freedom for companies"	44	58	42	51	28	35	54	52
"People who work should be able to put money aside as they see fit to finance their own retirement"	9	22	17	31	30	31	38	37
"People who work should pay to finance the retirement of those who are retired"	91	78	82	63	70	68	61	59
"Efforts should be made to reduce public spending, including the ones I benefit from today, so that we can pay off the debt and lessen the burden of it for future generations"	78	64	75	77	75	74	69	71
"We should make an effort to increase taxes for everyone, even if I don't pay any today, so that we can pay off the debt for it to be less of a burden on future generations"	21	33	24	20	24	24	30	22
"Most immigrants do not share our country's values and this creates problems for cohabitation"	40	39	50	61	67	79	64	67
"Most immigrants share our country's values and this represents cultural enrichment"	59	60	48	36	32	20	36	30
"Students with educational difficulties should not be in the same classes as those without educational difficulties"	30	38	42	46	46	54	39	52
"Students with and without educational difficulties should be in the same classes"	69	61	58	49	53	45	59	45
"The unemployed could find work if they really wanted to"	62	39	66	60	69	67	69	59
"Even for the unemployed who really want to, it is difficult to find work"	38	60	34	36	30	32	31	40
"To better protect the population, the police should be able to use their firearms more easily"	21	20	35	42	39	51	46	40
"To protect the population, the police can already use their firearms in a satisfactory manner"	79	78	64	54	60	48	52	55

2. The Rassemblement national vote represents between a third and a half of the right-wing vote

The right-wing parties (RN, Reconquête!, Debout la France, LR and their allies) obtained 37.7% of the votes cast in the first round of the legislative elections. This

total reached 49.3% if we add the Ensemble! voters who position themselves on the right (between 6 and 10 on the left-right scale) and 52% if we add the centrist Ensemble! voters (i.e. those who position themselves at a 5 on the left-right scale) but whose value system positions them on the right. Finally, with the Ensemble! voters who do not position themselves on the left-right scale but whose value system also places them on the right, we reach 53.2% of the votes cast.

The proportion of the RN vote within the right-wing voting share in the first round of the 2022 presidential election (in%)

Proportion of the RN vote in the total votes for right-wing candidates (excluding Macron)	Proportion of the Le Pen vote in the total votes for right-wing candidates + the vote of Macron's voters who position themselves on the right	Proportion of the Le Pen vote in the total vote for right-wing candidates + the vote of Macron voters who position themselves in the centre and adhere to right-wing values	Proportion of the Le Pen vote in the total votes for right-wing candidates + the vote of Macron's right-wing voters + the vote of Macron's voters position themselves in the centre and adhering to right-wing values + the vote of Macron voters not positioning themselves on the left-right scale but adhering to right-wing values
57.6	43.5	41.4	40.1

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The proportion of the RN within the right-wing voting share in the first round of the legislative elections (in%)

Proportion of the RN vote in total votes for right-wing candidates (excluding Ensemble!)	Proportion of the RN vote in total votes for right-wing candidates + the vote of Ensemble! voters who position themselves on the right	Proportion of the RN vote in the total votes for right-wing candidates + the vote of Ensemble! voters on the right + the vote of Ensemble! voters who position themselves in the centre and adhere to right-wing value	Proportion of the RN vote in the total votes for right-wing candidates + the vote of Ensemble! voters who did not position themselves on the left-right scale but who adhere to right-wing values
49.6	37.9	35.9	35.1

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3. Should we form an alliance with the right? And if so, with whom?

On the left as well as on the right, the decline and then collapse of the mainstream political parties has given the question of alliances an imperative dimension. The election of a National Assembly without an absolute majority makes this necessity even more apparent. The next question is with which parties an alliance would be possible. On the left, the question has been settled. The legislative elections of 2022 gave rise to an electoral coalition of the main left-wing parties

(LFI, EELV, PS and PCF) under the name of Nouvelle Union populaire écologique et sociale (Nupes).

But what about on the right? In the days following the legislative elections, we asked voters whether a symmetrical coalition of the right-wing parties LR-RN-Reconquête!-Debout la France would have been a good or bad thing for these elections. The prospect of such an alliance is considered a “bad thing” by 62% of respondents, while a third (36%) see it as a “good thing”.

It should be noted, however, that respondents under the age of 35 are clearly more in favour (43%) than those aged over 50 (30%).

We then asked respondents to comment specifically on the alliances that LR should form. Indeed, given the parliamentary state of affairs, marked both by the absence of an absolute majority and by the impossibility for the presidential coalition to establish a formal alliance with the Nupes or with the RN, the hypothesis of an alliance seems to necessarily and mainly involve LR.

The question was formulated as follows: “Among the following proposals, which one do you feel closest to?”

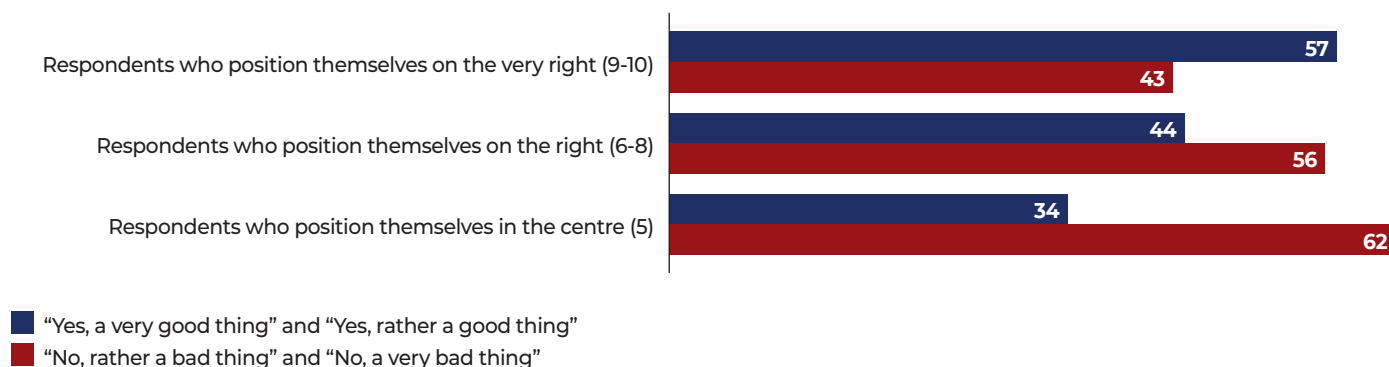
Three hypotheses then followed:

1. “In the coming months, I would prefer Les Républicains to form an alliance with Emmanuel Macron’s Ensemble!”;
2. “In the coming months, I would prefer Les Républicains to form an alliance with the Rassemblement national, Reconquête! (Éric Zemmour’s party) and Debout la France”;
3. “In the coming months, I would prefer that Les Républicains not form an alliance with anyone”.

The more right-wing the respondents are, the more they want a right-wing coalition

Question: “The Nupes is an alliance of the four main left-wing parties. Do you think it would have been a good or bad thing if all the right-wing parties had come together in a coalition involving Les Républicains (LR), UDI, Rassemblement national (RN), Reconquête! (Éric Zemmour’s party) and Debout la France?”

Base: respondents who position themselves on the right and centre of the left-right scale

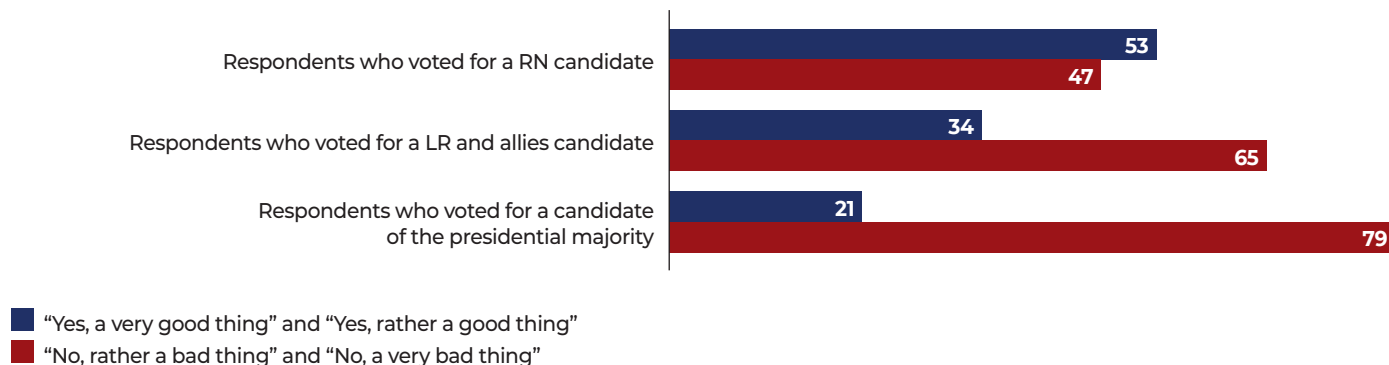


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RN voters favour a coalition of the right-wing parties

Question: “The Nupes is an alliance of the four main left-wing parties. Do you think it would have been a good or bad thing if all the right-wing parties had come together in a coalition involving Les Républicains (LR), UDI, Rassemblement national (RN), Reconquête! (Éric Zemmour’s party) and Debout la France?”

Base: based on the vote in the first round of the legislative elections



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The answers obviously differ according to whether we consider all voters, right-wing voters, LR voters or those of the presidential majority. In all cases, the position of LR appears very constrained.

1. If we consider the totality of the electorate, the preferences are distributed as follows: half of the surveyed voters (46%) do not want an alliance of LR with another right-wing party; the first quarter (27%) said they are in favour of an alliance of LR with Ensemble!, the coalition led by Emmanuel Macron's party; the last quarter (23%) prefers that "LR form an alliance with the RN, Reconquête! (Éric Zemmour's party) and Debout la France".

2. If we consider right-wing voters, i.e. voters who position themselves on the right on the left-right scale, more of them (39%) would like to see an alliance between LR, RN, Debout la France and Reconquête! than an alliance between LR and Ensemble! (34%); finally, a quarter (26%) would prefer LR not to join any alliance.

3. If we consider only LR voters in the legislative elections, the proportion of respondents wishing that the party would not form an alliance (40%) is equivalent to that of those who prefer an alliance with

the presidential coalition (39%). The hypothesis of a right-wing LR-RN-DLF-Reconquête! alliance appeals to only 20% of LR voters.

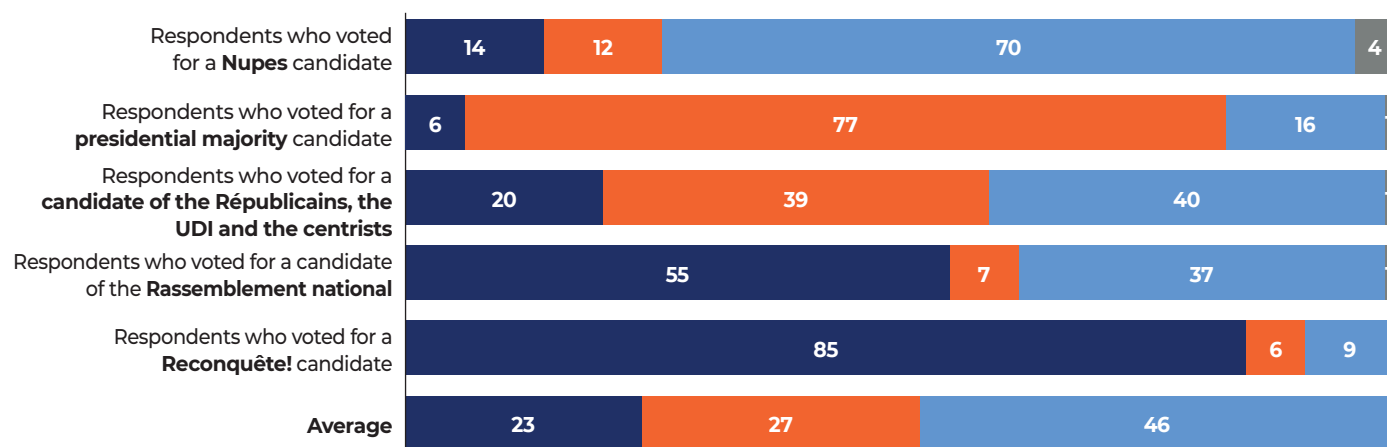
4. Finally, three quarters (77%) of voters who voted for an Ensemble! candidate in the first round of the legislative elections want to see an alliance between LR and the presidential majority. This result should be seen as a further indication of the right-wing orientation of Emmanuel Macron's electorate.

It is important to note that the hypothesis of a right-wing alliance (LR-RN-DLF-Reconquête!) appeals to a majority of RN voters (55%), but it is rejected by a minority whose weight cannot be ignored (45%) and this alliance of the right is only really supported by Reconquête! voters (85%). Overall, two thirds (62%) of voters who position themselves very much to the right (i.e. 9 and 10 on the left-right scale) prefer a LR-RN-DLF-Reconquête! alliance. The further to the right the voters are or vote, the more they consider it "a good thing" that the right-wing parties come together in an electoral coalition (LR-RN-DLF-Reconquête!) comparable to Nupes. Further right, support is stronger but fewer voters are concerned.

The LR and alliances: between a Rubik's cube and Rubicon

Question: "Which of the following proposals do you feel closest to?"

Base: based on the vote in the first round of the legislative elections



- "In the coming months, I would prefer that Les Républicains form an alliance with the Rassemblement national, Reconquête! (Éric Zemmour's party) and Debout la France"
- "In the coming months, I would prefer Les Républicains to form an alliance with Emmanuel Macron's Ensemble!"
- "In the coming months, I would prefer that Les Républicains not form an alliance with anyone"
- Non-responses

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4. On key political issues, only *Les Républicains* and *Ensemble!* converge with the general opinion of voters

Above, we used a series of pairs of items to define value systems on the left-right axis²⁹. These items represent issues, both in terms of the values they mobilise and the public policies they imply. We will now consider them again to observe, on the one hand, the average position of the public opinion on each of these subjects and, on the other hand, the position occupied by the respondents according to their vote in the first round of the 2022 legislative elections (by retaining only the

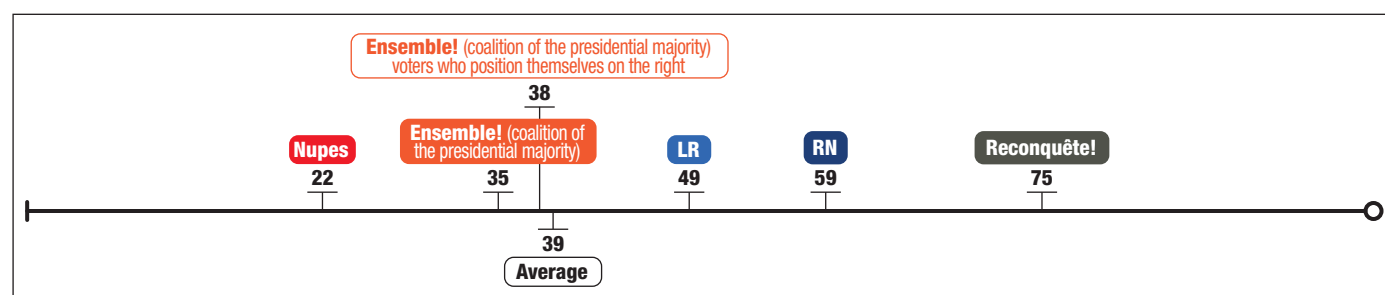
vote for the following parties: Nupes, Ensemble!, LR, RN and Reconquête!). Finally, we supplement the information by isolating the opinion of respondents who voted for Ensemble! in the first round of the legislative elections and who position themselves on the right (i.e., in the tables and graphs presenting the data in this document, the label “Ensemble! positioning itself on the right”).

Question: “Which of the following statements do you most agree with?”

Responses: “to better protect the population, the police should be able to use their firearms more easily”; “to protect the population, the police can already use their firearms in a satisfactory manner”

Base: vote in the first round of the legislative elections

To better protect the population, the police should be able to use their firearms more easily



Memo for the reader: Among the voters who voted for Nupes in the first round of the legislative elections, 22% think that in order “to better protect the population, the police should be able to use their firearms more easily”, whereas 75% of Reconquête! voters agree with this statement. There is a difference between the average of voters who voted for an Ensemble! candidate (35%) and those who voted for Ensemble! and who consider themselves to be on the right on the political spectrum (38%).

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29. As a reminder, the pairs of items we used to determine the position of a value system on the left-right axis are the following:

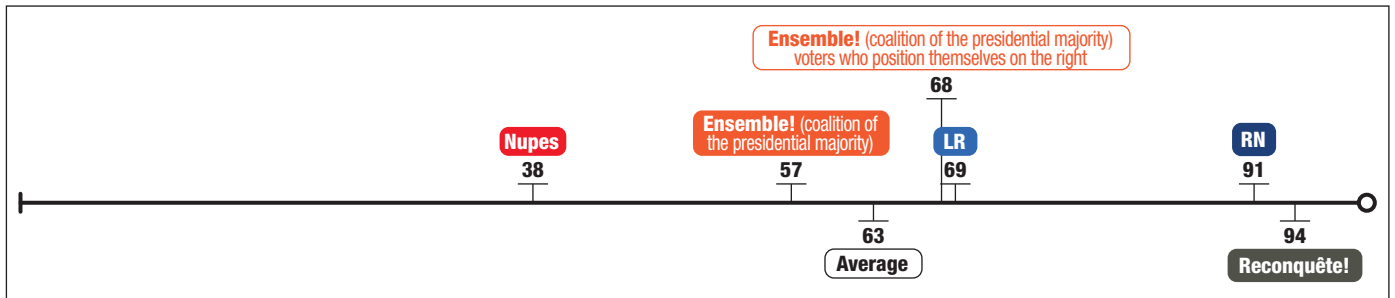
- “People who work should pay to finance the retirement of those who are retired” or “People who work should be able to put money aside as they see fit to finance their own retirement”.
- “We should make an effort to increase taxes for everyone, even if I don’t pay any today, so that we can pay off the debt for it to be less of a burden on future generations” or “Efforts should be made to reduce public spending, including the ones I benefit from today, so that we can pay off the debt and lessen the burden of it for future generations”.
- “Most immigrants share our country’s values and this represents cultural enrichment” or “Most immigrants do not share our country’s values and this creates problems for cohabitation”.
- “We need more control from the State and less freedom for companies” or “We need more freedom for companies and less control from the State”.
- “Even for the unemployed who really want to, it is difficult to find work” or “The unemployed could find work if they really wanted to”.
- “To protect the population, the police can already use their firearms in a satisfactory manner” or “To better protect the population, the police should be able to use their firearms more easily”.
- “Students with and without educational difficulties should be in the same classes” or “Students with educational difficulties should not be in the same classes as those without educational difficulties”.

Question: “With which of the following statements do you most agree?”

Responses: “most immigrants do not share our country’s values and this creates problems of cohabitation”;
“most immigrants share our country’s values and this represents cultural enrichment”

Base: vote in the first round of the legislative elections

Most immigrants do not share our country’s values and this creates problems of cohabitation



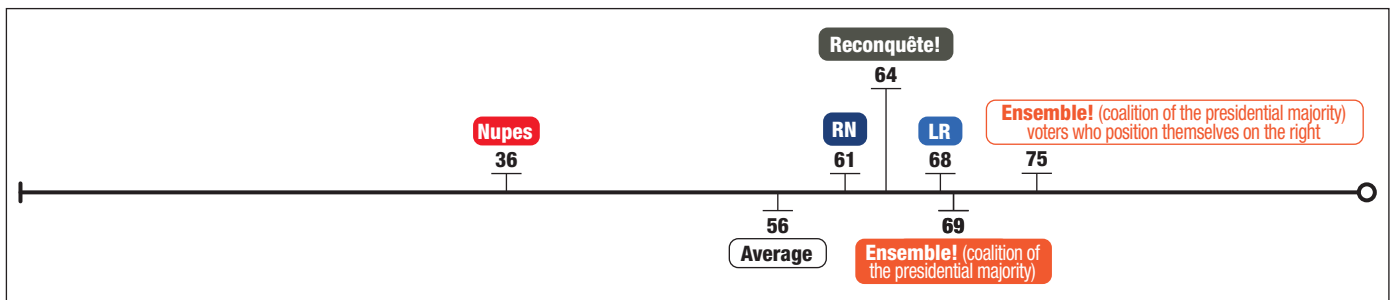
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Question: “With which of the following statements do you most agree?”

Responses: “The unemployed could find work if they really wanted to”; “even for the unemployed who really want to, it is difficult to find work”

Base: vote in the first round of the legislative elections

The unemployed could find work if they really wanted to



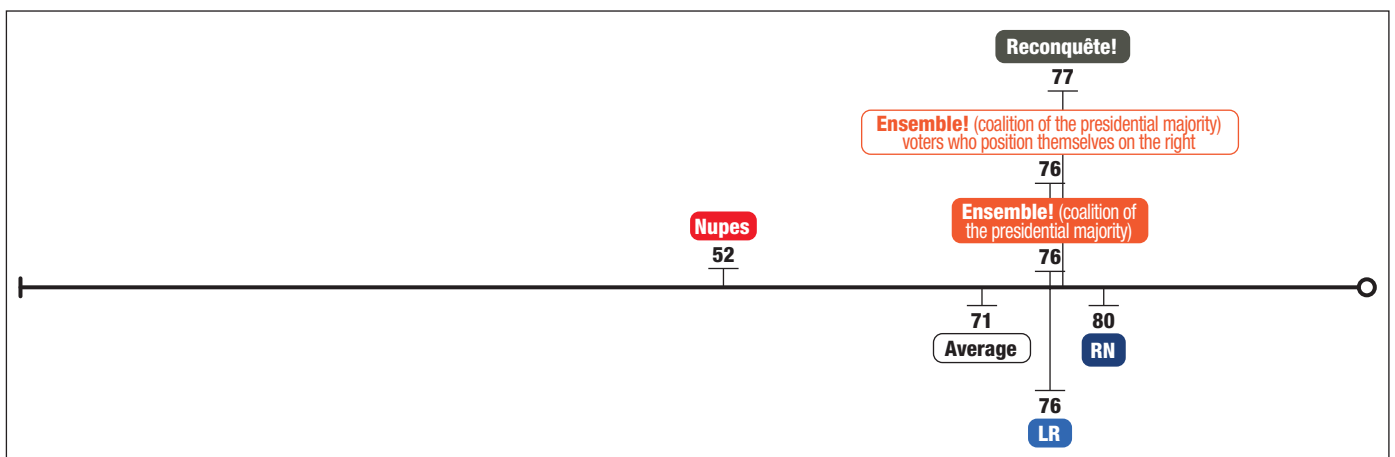
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Question: “Today, France’s debt is 2,813.1 billion euros (which represents 112.9% of the national wealth produced in the year 2021). Which of the following proposals do you feel closer to?”

Responses: “We should make an effort to increase taxes for everyone, even if I don’t pay any today, so that we can pay off the debt for it to be less of a burden on future generations” or “Efforts should be made to reduce public spending, including the ones I benefit from today, so that we can pay off the debt and lessen the burden of it for future generations”

Base: vote in the first round of the legislative elections

Efforts should be made to reduce public spending, including the ones I benefit from today, so that we can pay off the debt and lessen the burden of it for future generations



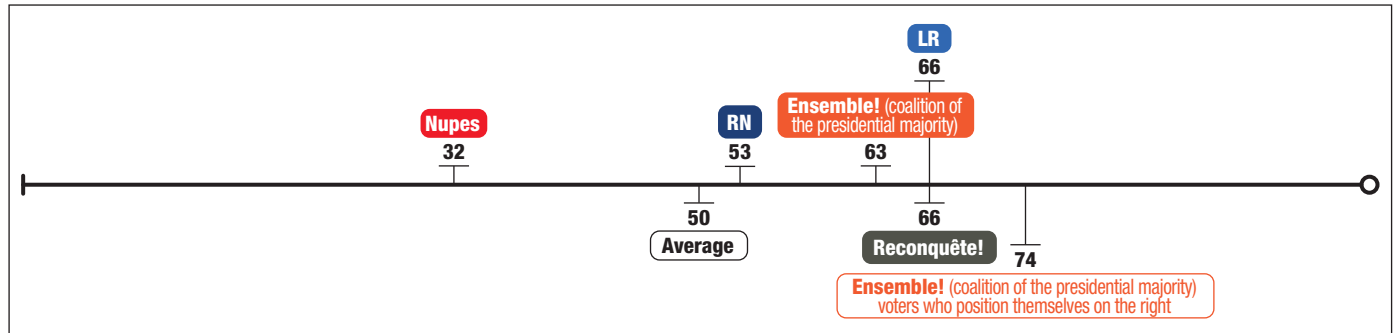
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Question: “Which of the following statements do you most agree with?”

Responses: “We need more freedom for companies and less control by the State”;
“We need more control from the State and less freedom for companies”

Base: vote in the first round of the legislative elections

We need more freedom for companies and less control by the State



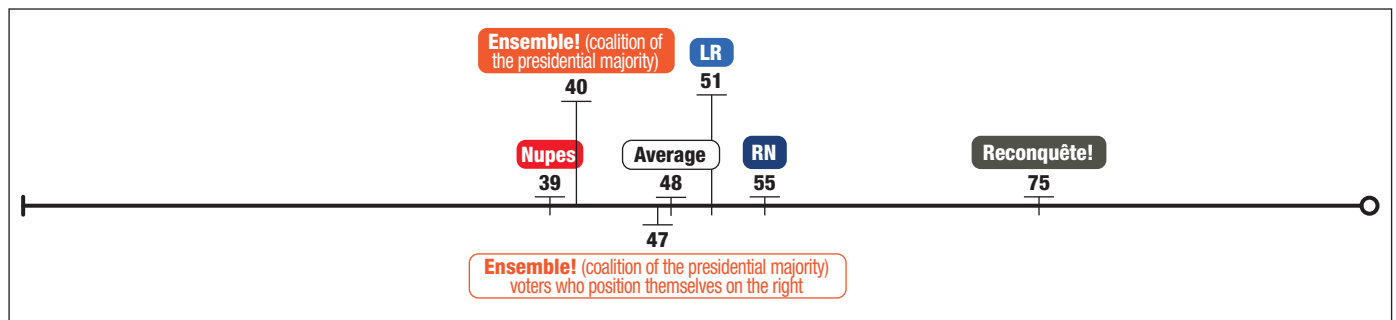
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Question: “Regarding school and the organisation of education, you would say that:”

Responses: “Students with educational difficulties should not be in the same classes as those without educational difficulties”; “Students with and without educational difficulties should be in the same classes”

Base: vote in the first round of the legislative elections

Students with and without educational difficulties should be in the same classes



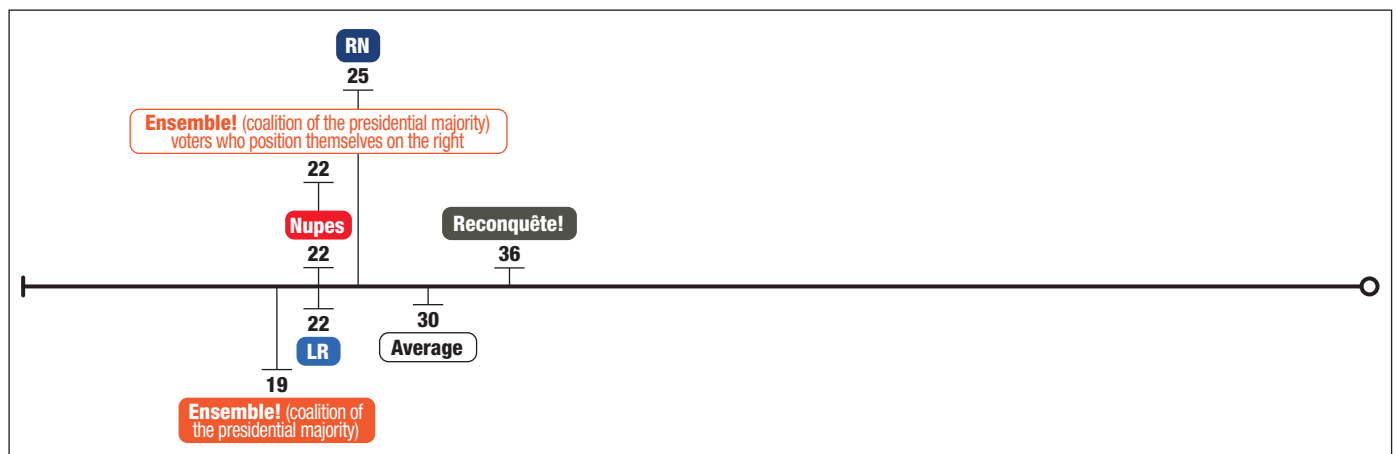
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Question: “Which of the following statements do you most agree with?”

Responses: “People who work should pay to finance the retirement of those who are retired”;
“People who work should be able put money aside as they see fit to finance their own retirement”

Base: vote in the first round of the legislative elections

People who work should put money aside as they see fit to finance their own retirement



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Of the seven items defining a right-wing value system, the average support of the general opinion is 51%. This is the average level of support of all voters surveyed for each of the seven items. There can be significant variations from one item to another. For example, 56% of all voters surveyed agreed with the proposal that “the unemployed could find work if they really wanted to” rather than that “even for the unemployed who really want to, it is difficult to find work”. As another example, 63% of voters think that “Most immigrants do not share our country’s values and this creates problems of cohabitation”, rather than the opposite option that “Most immigrants share our country’s values and this represents cultural enrichment”, etc. We thus obtain a level of support of public opinion for each of the items and an average of the level of support of public opinion for all these items. We can thereby define the position of each of the groups determined, i.e. the voters of the Nupes, Ensemble!, LR, RN and Reconquête! in the first round of the legislative elections.

It should be noted that Ensemble! voters have the most similar position (51.3%) to that of public opinion (51%). The biggest differences from this public opinion are on the side of voters who voted for the most left-wing coalition, the Nupes (34.4%), i.e. a difference of 16.6 points with the average opinion, and on the side of voters who voted the most right-wing, the RN (60.6%), i.e. a difference of 9.6 points, or Reconquête! (69.6%), a gap of 18.6 points.

If we look at the voters who voted for Ensemble! and

who are on the right of the left-right scale, we see that they constitute a group whose average level of support (57.1%) is more or less similar to that of LR voters’ (57.3%). In other words, this leads us to believe that Ensemble! and LR voters are close to each other in terms of opinion, but are also close to the general average opinion in terms of values and possible public policies. On the other hand, we observe that the left-wing (Nupes) and right-wing (RN and Reconquête!) groups are clearly and consistently at a great distance from the average opinion on all subjects, almost always occupying a marginal position from this perspective.

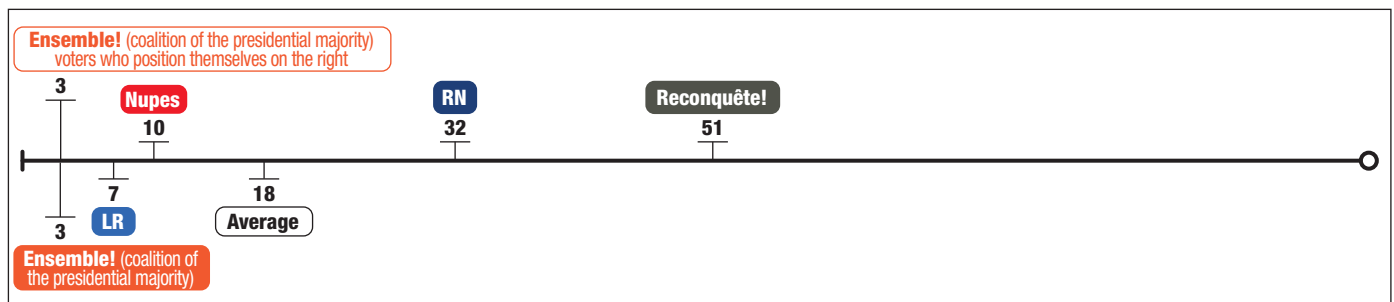
In this respect, one of the most significant issues is the question of the European Union. Measured on numerous occasions in our previous work, the attachment of the French to the European Union and the euro is strong and constant. Less than a fifth of voters surveyed (18%) want France to leave the European Union. The level of desire for a “Frexit” is 7% among LR voters and 3% for Ensemble! but it jumps to 32% for RN voters and is even in the majority among Reconquête! (51%). It is hard to see how LR could get anywhere near political formations that cultivate this rejection of the European Union when more than three quarters of voters do not want their country to withdraw from the European Union.

Question: “Concerning the European Union, which of the following opinions do you most agree with?”

Responses: “I am not in favour of the European Union and I would like France to leave it”; “I am in favour of the European Union and the fact that France is part of it” and “I am not in favour of the European Union but I do not want France to leave it, what is done is done”

Base: vote in the first round of the legislative elections

I am not in favour of the European Union and I want France to leave it



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Lastly, the relationship with innovation and progress deserves to be examined. At a time when progress, economic growth and even knowledge, particularly in the scientific field, including the medical field, are being strongly questioned, it appears that the majority of voters (53%) continue to see the possibility of not giving up on the development of our economy while preserving the environment. However, the Nupes voters in the first round of the legislative elections, who were most opposed to this concept, were in a strong

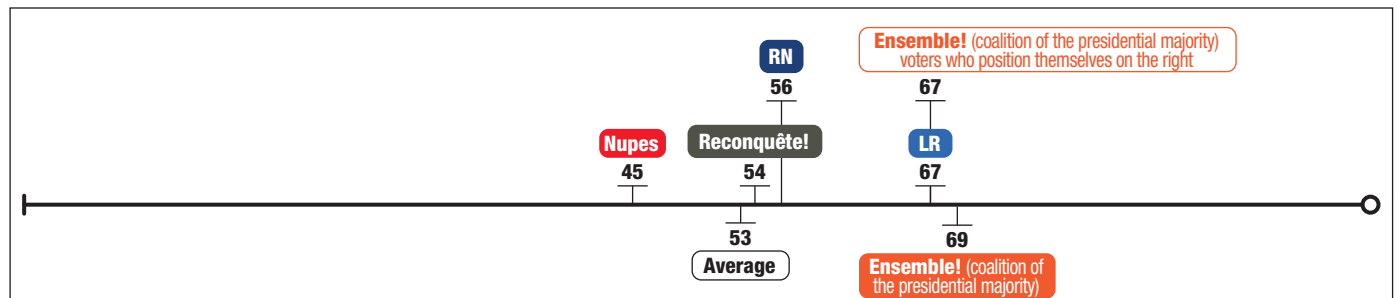
minority (45%) in sharing this optimistic opinion. Here again, LR voters (67%) and Ensemble! (69%) converge with regards to this trust in progress, reaching a level significantly higher than that of the average opinion. Thus, highlighting the Ensemble!-LR convergences, both between them and the overall opinion, sheds light on the existence of a paradigm of values and action common to these two groups.

Question: “Which of the following statements do you most agree with?”

Responses: “Due to technical and scientific innovations, we will be able to continue to develop our economy while preserving the environment for future generations”; “even with technical and scientific innovations, we will be obliged to halt economic growth if we want to preserve the environment for future generations”

Base: vote in the first round of the legislative elections

Due to technical and scientific innovations, we will be able to continue to develop our economy while preserving the environment for future generations



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Conclusion

As we have seen, this study is particularly focused on the political right. At least three observations justify this particular focus. The first is of course the results of the presidential election and the legislative elections of 2022. The right is now predominant through the variety of trends that represent it. Our opinion data confirm this balance of power. The second reason can be deduced from the political constraints generated by the legislative elections. In this legislature, if legislative documents can be adopted by changing majorities, only a combination of the right-wing parties makes it possible to constitute a governing force, i.e. a more or less formal and majority coalition, carrying out coherent and reasonable public action that is capable of a certain consistency over time.

As things stand, the question remains as to whether there is an alternative governing alliance to the association of the presidential bloc with LR. This is all the more true, and this is the third observation, since the left-wing parties, from the PS to the PC or EELV, have made the weighty decision to join an electoral coalition not only with LFI but, even more so, placed under its lead. The LR right has not accepted this option, or, symmetrically, an alliance of the same type with the RN, it has a margin of manoeuvre that gives it a political weight much greater than that of the mainstream left and the PS in particular, while their respective situations in the aftermath of the presidential election are not so different. If we must hope for the return of the mainstream left to stand up to the anti-system forces, to encourage electoral participation and to ensure the security of our democratic life, the choice of the Nupes postpones this virtuous process until the end of this legislative term, which can be accelerated by a dissolution.

The political picture in France today is worrisome. The PS and LR no longer have the means to rely on their own forces. For LR, it would be paradoxical to imagine a renewal in an alliance with the RN. Such an alliance is possible and it could happen, but in the current state of the balance of power, it would inevitably be built around the RN and not without consequences in terms of public opinion. On the left, given the dominance of LFI, the Nupes is less a promise of future victories for the PS than a challenge to its status as a political party capable of governing. If it were to continue, in an anti-system, post-secular radicalism that is too often favourable to despotic regimes, the “LFI-isation” of the members of the Nupes would end up devouring any hope of returning to mainstream politics of past years. Finally, Macronism, for its part, is being pushed to transform itself, both by this new environment and as a result of the effects of being institutionally constrained by Emmanuel Macron’s final term.

There is a window of opportunity as populist parties are also facing difficulties that are hidden by their admittedly impressive electoral results. Uncertainty does not spare the RN, soon to be deprived of the Le Pen family members. Let us add that LFI and RN will have no access to real government policy as long as they are deemed incapable of defending the European Union in general and the euro in particular. We are faced with the evidence of a political party system in disarray. This is a sign of a general crisis of historic proportions, which cannot be addressed by electoral arrangements. Our politics are in crisis because we are collectively unable to grasp the era into which we are entering and therefore fail to define the role we could play in it. We only have two years, perhaps three, to meet this challenge and to ward off the risk of a new surge of an anti-system vote that is now capable of victory.



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MUTATIONS POLITIQUES ET MAJORITÉ DE GOUVERNEMENT DANS UNE FRANCE À DROITE

Sous la direction
de Dominique Reynié

Une étude de
la Fondation pour l'innovation politique
sur les résultats électoraux de 2022

SEPTEMBRE 2022









Political shifts and government majority in right-leaning France

A study on the 2022 electoral cycle by the Fondation pour l'innovation politique

Combining abstention from voting, the so-called “blank vote” and anti-system votes (LFI, RN...), electoral protest has entered a new phase in the aftermath of the presidential and legislative elections of 2022. The success of Marine Le Pen and the RN have become more noticeable. As we show, this success is evident not only by the results of the presidential and legislative elections, but also in public opinion: there is a greater acceptance of the RN's ideas.

The surge in electoral protest has resulted in a further decline of the mainstream political parties. The mainstream parties both on the left, the Socialist Party (PS), and of the right, the Republicans (LR), are suffering an even greater decline than in 2017, in a more anti-system and right-wing France. Both the PS and the LR are threatened with marginalisation. One new element in 2022, during the legislative elections, is the presidential coalition (Ensemble!) that suffered a limited but real electoral setback in view of the clear re-election of Emmanuel Macron.

The political picture in France today is worrisome for the parties deemed capable of governing. The PS and LR no longer have the means to rely on their own forces nor to be the driving force behind a government alliance. Macronism, for its part, is being pushed to transform itself, both by this new environment and as a result of the effects of being institutionally constrained by Emmanuel Macron's final term. The continued weakening of our party system undermines our ability to govern, even as times are filled with immense challenges. There is, however, a window of opportunity as populist parties are also facing difficulties that are hidden by their admittedly impressive electoral results.

This study from the Fondation pour l'innovation politique focuses on the results of the 2022 presidential and legislative elections, the two elections combined forming a complete “electoral cycle”. The opinion data were produced by a series of three successive surveys, initiated and carried out within the framework of a partnership between the Fondation pour l'innovation politique, the Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po (Cevipof) and the Centre d'études et de connaissances sur l'opinion publique (Cecop). The first survey was conducted in the days following the first round of the presidential election, to a sample of 3,005 people. The second survey was conducted in the days following the second round of the presidential election, to a sample of 3,052 people. Lastly, the third survey was conducted in the days following the second round of the legislative elections, to a sample of 3,053 people. The three waves of this survey were conducted by the OpinionWay Institute.



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