

Research Briefing

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# France: 2022 presidential election and future prospects



## Summary

- 1 Background
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## Summary

France held a presidential election on 10 April, with a run-off poll taking place on 24 April.

12 candidates were approved to contest the first round, with the top two candidates then facing off in the second round, to see who would win the presidency.

The election campaign officially began on 28 March, with the spiralling cost of living being the top concern for voters. Other big issues included health, security, pensions, the environment and immigration.

The crisis between Russia and Ukraine overshadowed the beginning of the campaign, but the focus soon returned to domestic matters.

None of the candidates reached an overall majority of votes in the first round, so the two candidates with the most votes – Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen – went on to the second round run-off poll. This was a repeat of the 2017 election, which Macron won.

Many of the losing candidates encouraged their supporters to back Macron and he went on to be re-elected for a second and final term in office.

However, many French citizens were disillusioned with the two candidates on offer and intentionally spoiled their ballot paper. Indeed, the three million blank and invalid votes cast demonstrated the highest level of abstentions of any second-round vote in France since 1969.

With parliamentary elections due in June, Macron's party now faces an uphill struggle, with rivals on both the left and right vowing to put up a strong challenge.

If Macron fares badly in the June elections, he could end up losing his majority in parliament and may not be able to form his own government. Consequently, his opponents are referring to the legislative election as the "third round".

# 1 Background

France has a semi-presidential system, which means it has both a president and a prime minister. However, the French president has considerably wide-ranging powers.

The French Constitution states presidential elections shall take place every five years and presidents can serve no more than two consecutive terms in office.

## Voting system

The electoral system used in France has defied calls for more flexibility or modernisation, with no absentee voting and no early voting allowed. Machine-voting has been allowed on an experimental basis, but the purchase of new machines has been frozen since 2008 due to security concerns. Only about 60 towns, out of 35,000 municipalities still use them.<sup>1</sup>

In 2021 President Macron's Government tried to pass an amendment to allow early voting by machine to encourage electoral participation amid the Covid-19 pandemic, but this was rejected by the Senate.

When casting their vote, citizens must show photo identification and sign a document, next to their name, to complete the process.

The presidential vote is divided into two rounds, on Sundays two weeks apart.

A candidate could win the presidency in the first round of voting if they secure an overall majority of more than 50% of votes, but this has never happened. In practice, the run-off vote between the two candidates who topped the first round poll decides the winner.

## Who can vote?

All French citizens aged 18 and over can vote, whether they reside in France or not. In the 2022 presidential election, 48.8 million people were eligible to vote.

French nationals aged 18 and older can also contest presidential elections, under certain conditions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> AP News, [Explainer: How France's old-school voting system works](#), 24 April 2022

<sup>2</sup> France 24, [Explainer: How does France's two-round presidential election work?](#) 11 February 2022

## Key dates

On 13 July 2021 French government spokesman Gabriel Attal announced the dates for the 2022 presidential election: the first round was to take place on 10 April, with the second round on 24 April.<sup>3</sup>

Owing to their locations in earlier time zones, however, many French overseas territories (Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint-Martin and French Polynesia) vote a day earlier, on 9 April.<sup>4</sup>

The winner will be sworn in on 13 May to commence their five-year term.

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<sup>3</sup> France 24, [France to hold 2022 presidential election rounds on April 10 and 24](#), 13 July 2022

<sup>4</sup> France 24, [Dates with destiny: France's 2022 presidential election calendar](#), 11 February 2022

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## 2 2022 presidential election

### 2.1 Presidential candidates and their political parties

To contest the first round of French presidential elections, potential candidates must first collect 500 signatures from elected officials across the country. This rule was designed to limit the number of candidates on ballot forms and to filter out some of the more eccentric bids.

To ensure presidential hopefuls can attract voters from across France, a candidate's list of sponsors must represent at least 30 different French départements (there are currently 101) and no more than 50 signatures can come from any single one.<sup>5</sup>

For the 2022 election, 42,433 individuals elected to 46,157 positions (some hold more than one elected office) were eligible to sponsor candidates. This list includes Senators and members of the lower-house National Assembly, as well as city mayors and town mayors.<sup>6</sup>

The deadline to collect 500 signatures for the 2022 election was 4 March (by law the period to collect signatures closes on the sixth Friday before the first round of the presidential election.)<sup>7</sup>

Once a potential candidate had secured the required 500 signatures, they then had to be validated by France's Constitutional Council to contest the election.

64 candidates sought the necessary signatures to be a position to contest the election, with 12 meeting the threshold and being approved by the Constitutional Council.<sup>8</sup>

Profiles of the 12 presidential candidates, listed in alphabetical order, are below.

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<sup>5</sup> France 24, [Explainer: Why are 500 signatures required to run for president of France?](#) 2 February 2022

<sup>6</sup> As above.

<sup>7</sup> Vie Publique, [Presidential election: the rules for candidate sponsorships](#), 24 January 2022

<sup>8</sup> Presidential Election 2022, [Sponsorships validated by candidate](#) [accessed 22 April 2022]

## Nathalie Arthaud – Workers' Struggle (LO)

Nathalie Arthaud was born in 1970, in Peyrins, a village in Drôme.

She discovered communist ideas while at high school and started taking part in political activities – distributing leaflets and going door-to-door for the Lutte Ouvrière (Workers' Struggle) – while at university.<sup>9</sup>

Arthaud is a secondary school teacher and 2022 saw her third presidential campaign, having also contested the elections in 2012 (finishing in ninth place) and 2017 (coming tenth).

Politically, Arthaud advocates for large increases in the minimum wage and a ban on job cuts.<sup>10</sup>

## Nicolas Dupont-Aignan – France Arise (DLF)

Nicolas Dupont-Aignan was born on 7 March 1961 in Paris and is married with two children.

Dupont-Aignan graduated from the Paris Institute of Political Studies in 1982 and obtained his law licence in 1984. He then received a postgraduate degree from Paris Dauphine University, before going on to attend the École nationale d'administration.

He has been a member of the National Assembly since 1997 and previously served as the mayor of Yerres, a suburb of Paris, from June 1995 to July 2017.

2022 was Dupont-Aignan's third attempt at securing the presidency, having previously contested the elections in 2012 (coming seventh in the first round) and 2017 (coming sixth).

Leader of the right-wing Debout la France party (France Arise), he describes himself as being “neither part of the system nor an extremist”.<sup>11</sup>

Dupont-Aignan campaigned on the importance of national sovereignty and pledged to “bring back an independent foreign policy which serves the interests of this country alone.”<sup>12</sup>

He believes France should be a global player on the world stage and is opposed to EU enlargement.

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<sup>9</sup> Nathalie Arthaud website, [Who am I?](#) [accessed 23 April 2022]

<sup>10</sup> Sky News, [When are the French presidential elections, who is running, and how do they work?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>11</sup> The Good Country, [Nicolas Dupont-Aignan: The Global Vote — France: First Round](#) [accessed 23 April 2022]

<sup>12</sup> The Good Country, [Nicolas Dupont-Aignan: The Global Vote — France: First Round](#) [accessed 23 April 2022]

## Anne Hidalgo – Socialist Party (PS)

Anne Hidalgo was born on 19 June 1959, in San Fernando, Spain.

She fled Spain with her family in 1961, during the rule of Franco, and gained French citizenship at the age of 14 on 25 July 1973. Due to nationality laws in Spain at the time, Hidalgo lost her Spanish citizenship upon taking up French citizenship, but was able to regain this in 2003 and is now a dual citizen.<sup>13</sup>

Hidalgo holds a Masters degree in Social Sciences, specialising in Employment, and a postgraduate diploma in Advanced Studies (DEA) in Social Law.

She is married with three children (two from her first marriage).

Hidalgo is the Mayor of Paris, having first been elected to the position in 2014 and subsequently re-elected in 2020. As Mayor, her priorities have included promoting the use of bicycles and reducing car use in the city, by lowering speed limits and reducing the number of road lanes and even closing off dozens of streets to cars completely. She has also proposed transforming 60,000 roadside parking spaces into cycle lanes.<sup>14</sup>

Hidalgo officially announced her intention to contest the 2022 presidential during a visit to Rouen on 12 September 2021. On 14 October 2021 she was formally nominated as the Socialist Party's candidate.

Her election manifesto was launched on 14 January 2022, which consisted of 70 proposals to respond to what she identified as “three emergencies: social, ecological and democratic,” which would cost €50 billion<sup>15</sup>

Her manifesto prioritised education, health, purchasing power, ecological transition, youth and public services. She proposed increasing the minimum wage by 15%, establishing a strict gender pay equality policy and creating a “climate solidarity wealth tax” to finance the energy transition.

Hidalgo faced two major challenges in the election: first, that she was seen as a local politician, tied to Paris; second, that she was the candidate of a floundering party.<sup>16</sup>

The Socialist Party's candidate in 2017 secured just 6.2% of votes (a record low for the party) and was followed by heavy defeats in subsequent elections to the legislature and European Parliament.

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<sup>13</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Anne Hidalgo](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>14</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Anne Hidalgo](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>15</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Anne Hidalgo](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>16</sup> Euro News, [France election: Who's who in the race to unseat Macron?](#) 11 April 2022

## Yannick Jadot – Europe Ecology the Greens (EELV)

Yannick Jadot was born on 27 July 1967 in Clacy et Thierret.

He studied Economics at Paris-Dauphine University, before going to work in Asia and Africa for an anti-globalisation NGO.<sup>17</sup>

In 1999 Jadot joined the Europe Ecologie les Verts (EELV) party (Europe Ecology the Greens) and served as Director of Campaigns for Greenpeace France from 2002-2008.

In 2009 he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament and was re-elected in 2014 and 2019.

Jadot won the Green Party primary to contest the 2017 presidential election, but ultimately withdrew his candidacy to endorse the Socialist Party candidate, having agreed a common platform between the two.

In September 2021 Jadot was selected to contest the 2022 election and his platform included pledges to end intensive livestock farming and to weaken the powerful lobby groups, so that “the climate, health, the environment and social justice finally take precedence”.<sup>18</sup>

Jadot also outlined plans to restore a tax on wealth and to increase taxes on financial assets that invest in fossil fuels. Furthermore, he announced plans to inject €50 billion a year throughout the five-year presidential term to fund infrastructure projects, housing and transport.

## Jean Lassalle – Let's Resist (RES)

Jean Lassalle was born on 3 May 1955 in Lourdios-Ichère, Pyrénées-Atlantiques. The son of a shepherd, he trained as an agricultural technician but became involved in politics from an early age.

Aged 21, Lassalle was elected Mayor of Lourdios-Ichère and served from 1977 to 2017. He also sat on the General Council of Pyrénées-Atlantiques from 1982 to 2015, representing the canton of Accous.

Lassalle has been a member of France's National Assembly since 2002.

In 2016 he left the Democratic Movement and founded the Résistons! (Let's Resist!) party. He came seventh in the presidential election the following year.

On 16 March 2021 Lassalle announced his intention to contest the 2022 presidential election.

Passionate about rural issues, he is President of the World Mountain People Association (WMPA), an organisation which aims to safeguard mountains

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<sup>17</sup> France Culture, [Yannick Jadot](#) [accessed 23 April 2022]

<sup>18</sup> Euro News, [France election: Who's who in the race to unseat Macron?](#) 11 April 2022

worldwide, and has emphasised his connection with nature. His political platform is centred on local partnerships and local issues.<sup>19</sup>

## Marine Le Pen – National Rally (RN)

Marine Le Pen was born on 5 August 1968 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, Paris. Named Marion Le Pen at birth, she is always referred to as “Marine”.

Le Pen has been married twice and has three children. Her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, founded the National Front.

She obtained a degree in Law from Pantheon-Assas Paris II University and then trained as a criminal lawyer.

Le Pen joined the National Front in 1986, aged 18, and became its chief legal advisor in 1998. On 21 April 2003 she was appointed vice-president of the party and was elected its president on 16 January 2011, succeeding her father.

Le Pen has won elections in the past: to the European Parliament (in 2004), as a municipal councillor for Henin-Beaumont constituency (2008) and as a regional councillor for Nord-Pas-de-Calais constituency (2010).<sup>20</sup>

2022 was the third time Le Pen had run for the presidency, having previously contested the elections in 2012 (coming third) and 2017 (finishing in second place, after Emmanuel Macron).

After losing to Macron in 2017, she rebranded the National Front to National Rally (Rassemblement National) on 1 June 2018.

Le Pen launched her 2022 campaign on 12 September 2021, focusing her message on the slogan “Libertes, Libertes Cheries” (Freedom, Cherished Freedom).

Although still regarded by many as being far-right, she has sought to soften her party’s image.<sup>21</sup>

Her manifesto centred around her preferred themes, namely immigration and security, with pledges to end naturalisation by marriage and to restrict access to family allowances to French people, with a five-year waiting period for foreigners.

Once a fervent advocate of “Frexit” (France leaving the European Union) and abandoning the Euro in favour of the Franc, Le Pen now wishes for France to remain in the bloc.

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<sup>19</sup> The Good Country, [Jean Lassalle: The Global Vote — France: First Round](#) [accessed 23 April 2022]

<sup>20</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Marine Le Pen](#), 19 April 2022

<sup>21</sup> Euro News, [France election: Who's who in the race to unseat Macron?](#) 11 April 2022

## Emmanuel Macron – En Marche! (LREM)

Emmanuel Macron was born on 21 December 1977 in Amiens.

He obtained a scientific Baccalaureate with the highest distinction, high honours, from the Henri IV high school in Paris, before studying at the Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po) in Paris. He graduated from the National School of Administration (ENA) in 2004 and has a postgraduate diploma in Philosophy.

Before entering politics, Macron worked as an investment banker at the Rothschild Group.

On 26 August 2014 he was appointed minister of economy, industry and digital technologies in then President François Hollande's government, where he served for two years until resigning in late August 2016, a few months before the announcement of his candidacy in the upcoming presidential election.

Macron had founded a new political movement the "En Marche!" (On the move!) on 6 April 2016; later renamed "La République en Marche" (LREM) on 8 May 2017. He describes the party as neither belonging to the left nor the right.<sup>22</sup>

Macron was first elected president of France on 7 May 2017, defeating Marine Le Pen, with 66.1% of the vote.

During his presidency, Macron's pro-business policies have seen an overhaul of France's staunchly-protected labour code, nationalised railways and pension system. As a result he has faced major opposition from the Yellow Vests – or Gilets Jaunes – who staged regular protests during his presidency.<sup>23</sup>

During the current crisis in Ukraine, Macron has played a negotiating role between the two sides, although he has faced from criticism for keeping an open dialogue with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin.<sup>24</sup>

On 14 April 2022 Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denounced Macron's refusal to call the killings in Ukraine a genocide as "painful".<sup>25</sup>

Macron's manifesto pledges for 2022 include plans to reduce unemployment levels, limit access to some unemployment benefits, and to raise the

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<sup>22</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Emmanuel Macron](#), 19 April 2022

<sup>23</sup> Sky News, [When are the French presidential elections, who is running, and how do they work?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>24</sup> Sky News, [When are the French presidential elections, who is running, and how do they work?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>25</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Emmanuel Macron](#), 19 April 2022

retirement age to 65. He also said he wants to concentrate on education and health, with a focus on preventive care.<sup>26</sup>

Other measures in his programme include plans to build six new nuclear power plants and to increase the number of police officers.

## Jean-Luc Mélenchon – France Unbowed (LFI)

Jean-Luc Mélenchon was born on 19 August 1951 in Tangiers, Morocco.<sup>27</sup>

He gained a degree in Philosophy from the University of Franche-Comté and, before entering politics, worked as a teacher.<sup>28</sup>

Mélenchon joined the Socialist Party in 1977 and stayed with the party until 2008, when he co-founded the Left Party with other disaffected Socialists.<sup>29</sup>

During his political career Mélenchon has been elected to the French national Senate and the European Parliament, as well as serving as Minister of Professional Education from March 2000 to May 2002. He has been a member of the National Assembly since 2017.

2022 was Mélenchon's third attempt at winning the presidency, having previously contested the elections in 2012 and 2017, when he finished fourth on both occasions.

Ahead of his 2017 election bid, Mélenchon launched a “citizens’ movement” called La France Insoumise (Unbowed France), to support his candidacy, and he again represented the party in 2022.

Many of his proposals for the 2022 presidential election were based on social issues and the cost of living, including a plan to create a “social emergency law” that would provide for the price of basic necessities to be frozen, including fuel, gas, electricity and some food items. He also pledged to boost the monthly minimum wage from the current €1,258 net to €1,400 net.<sup>30</sup>

Other policies include reducing France's use of nuclear energy and reducing the powers of the president.<sup>31</sup>

## Valérie Pécresse – The Republicans (LR)

Valérie Pécresse was born on 14 July 1967 in Neuilly-sur-Seine. She is married with three children.

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<sup>26</sup> Euro News, [France election: Who's who in the race to unseat Macron?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>27</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Jean-Luc Melenchon](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>28</sup> Al Jazeera, [Profile: Jean-Luc Mélenchon](#), 18 April 2012

<sup>29</sup> Al Jazeera, [Profile: Jean-Luc Mélenchon](#), 18 April 2012

<sup>30</sup> Euro News, [France election: Who's who in the race to unseat Macron?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>31</sup> Sky News, [When are the French presidential elections, who is running, and how do they work?](#) 11 April 2022

Pécresse obtained her Baccalaureate at the age of 16 and went on to graduate from the HEC business school in 1988 and the National School of Administration (ENA) in 1992. She is fluent in English, Russian and Japanese.<sup>32</sup>

In May 2007 Pécresse was appointed minister of higher education and research in then President Nicolas Sarkozy's first cabinet; the youngest minister appointed. Part of her brief was to implement contentious reforms of the university system.

On 13 December 2015 she was elected president of the Ile-de-France region and was subsequently re-elected on 27 June 2021.

In an interview with French newspaper Le Figaro on 22 July 2021, Pécresse announced her intention to run in the 2022 presidential election, saying: "I am a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic to restore French pride. I can't stand people talking instead of acting. We must break with ten years of bad choices, half measures, indecision, and ultimately the collapse of our country."<sup>33</sup>

Pécresse won the primary of Les Republicains (formerly Union for a Popular Movement – UMP) on 4 December 2021, becoming the first woman selected to represent the party in a presidential election.<sup>34</sup>

Her campaign pledges included reviewing plans to close nuclear reactors, while conceding the need to boost renewables, and a proposal to include a carbon tax at Europe's borders and a "European preference in public procurement".<sup>35</sup>

Pécresse also called for reforms of the unemployment and pension systems and promised to bring down public debt.

Many of her policies were similar to those of Macron and she sometimes struggled to differentiate herself from the incumbent president.<sup>36</sup>

## Philippe Poutou – New Anticapitalist Party (NPA)

Philippe Poutou was born on 14 March 1967.

He is a former trade unionist and car factory worker and is a far-left candidate for the New Anticapitalist Party.

2022 was the third time Poutou had been a candidate in a presidential election, having previously contested the elections in 2012 (finishing eighth) and 2017 (again coming eighth).

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<sup>32</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Valerie Pécresse](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>33</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Valerie Pécresse](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>34</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Valerie Pécresse](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>35</sup> Euro News, [France election: Who's who in the race to unseat Macron?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>36</sup> Sky News, [When are the French presidential elections, who is running, and how do they work?](#) 11 April 2022

He made headlines in the 2017 campaign when he insulted his fellow candidates and refused to take part in a joint photo.<sup>37</sup>

## Fabien Roussel – French Communist Party (PCF)

Fabien Roussel was born in 1969 in Bethune, Pas-de-Calais. He is a trained journalist-cameraman and spent time reporting in Vietnam.

In 2010 he became a member of the French Communist Party national council and, in 2014, was elected as a city councillor in charge of culture and festivities.<sup>38</sup>

He has been a member of the French National Assembly since 2017, representing the northern-most region of the country, on the Belgian border.

Roussel supports reducing the working week to 32 hours and bringing down the retirement age to 60, as well as raising the minimum wage to €1,500 a month. He is pro-nuclear and pro-hunting, a stance for which he has faced criticism.<sup>39</sup>

## Éric Zemmour – Reconquest (RI)

Éric Zemmour was born on 31 August 1958 in Montreuil, Seine-Saint-Denis. He is married with three children.

He graduated from the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, in 1979.

A former columnist and television pundit, Zemmour is described as a far-right candidate and was convicted of provoking racial discrimination in 2011 and provoking hatred towards Muslims in 2018.<sup>40</sup> He was considered to be the more radical option to Le Pen.<sup>41</sup>

On 30 November 2021 he announced his intention to run in the April 2022 presidential election, saying: “No other politician has the courage to save the country from the tragic destiny that awaits it.”<sup>42</sup>

Zemmour had argued France is in decline both geopolitically and economically; something he blames on immigration, as well as the “Islamisation” and “feminisation” of society.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Sky News, [When are the French presidential elections, who is running, and how do they work?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>38</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Fabien Roussel](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>39</sup> Euro News, [France election: Who's who in the race to unseat Macron?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>40</sup> Euro News, [France election: Who's who in the race to unseat Macron?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>41</sup> Sky News, [When are the French presidential elections, who is running, and how do they work?](#) 11 April 2022

<sup>42</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Eric Zemmour](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>43</sup> Euro News, [France election: Who's who in the race to unseat Macron?](#) 11 April 2022

His pro-Russian views have also been a burden on him since Russia began military operations in Ukraine. Discussing tensions on the Ukraine-Russia border in an interview with the Europe 1 radio station on 20 February 2022, Zemmour said the Ukraine government does “not respect the Minsk 2 agreements” and declared: “NATO no longer has a purpose. If I was president, we would have left the integrated military command of NATO.”

## 2.2 Election campaign

The presidential election campaign officially began on 28 March, ending at midnight on 8 April. During that time, the French broadcasting regulator demanded strict equality in the airtime each network afforded to every candidate.<sup>44</sup>

French campaign financing is regulated under a strict ceiling. A candidate contesting the first round can spend no more than €16,851,000 on their campaign; the two candidates who contest the second round see their total allowed spending rise to €22,509,000.<sup>45</sup>

The top issue for voters in the 2022 presidential election was the spiralling cost of living: from energy bills and food shopping, to the price of filling up a car. Even though the crisis in Ukraine overshadowed early campaigning, the cost of living crisis continued to be the most important issue to voters.

Marine Le Pen promised a government of national unity to tackle the high cost of living and made this a key campaign pledge, recognising early in the campaign the importance of this issue to voters.

Other big issues included health, security, pensions, the environment and immigration.<sup>46</sup>

On the latter, Le Pen committed to a referendum on immigration and a ban on wearing headscarves, with a simple message to voters: “It’s Macron or France.”<sup>47</sup>

Emmanuel Macron also kept his message brief: “This election is a form of referendum, on secularism and on Europe.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> France 24, [Dates with destiny: France's 2022 presidential election calendar](#), 11 February 2022

<sup>45</sup> France 24, [Explainer: How does France's two-round presidential election work?](#) 11 February 2022

<sup>46</sup> BBC News Online, [French election: A really simple guide](#), 22 April 2022

<sup>47</sup> BBC News Online, [French election: Macron and Le Pen trade taunts as campaigning ends](#), 23 April 2022

<sup>48</sup> BBC News Online, [French election: Macron and Le Pen trade taunts as campaigning ends](#), 23 April 2022

Official statistics suggest that in 2020 there were approximately 6.8 million immigrants living in France.<sup>49</sup>

The importance of security has also become increasingly important to voters in the wake of a string of terror attacks across France in recent years.

Macron has claimed crime has fallen under his presidency and, after criticism from Le Pen, pledged to put thousands more police officers on the streets.

Overall, Macron was considered to have made a slow start to his campaign,<sup>50</sup> spending more time on trying to negotiate a diplomatic solution to the ongoing crisis between Ukraine and Russia.

Voters were initially supportive of Macron's efforts on the world stage, but this began to wane as he focused too much on being president and not enough on being a candidate.<sup>51</sup>

As Le Pen narrowed the gap to less than five percentage points in opinion polls, Macron concentrated more on the campaign and domestic concerns.

Le Pen's campaign was also affected by the crisis in Ukraine. Known to be an admirer of President Putin in the past,<sup>52</sup> she toned down her rhetoric on Russia and barely acknowledged the crisis during the election campaign.<sup>53</sup>

Macron and Le Pen topped the first round of voting and faced off in the run-off poll a fortnight later.

The campaign for the second round officially began on 15 April and ran until midnight on 22 April. Again, by law, networks had to allow equal airtime between each of the finalists.

## 2.3 Election results (first round), 10 April 2022

The second round run-off was a repeat of the 2017 election, when Macron defeated Le Pen with 66.1% of the vote against her 33.9%. 2022 was predicted to be closer.

France's Ministry of the Interior published the results of the second round of the 2022 presidential election.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> BBC News Online, [French election: A really simple guide](#), 22 April 2022

<sup>50</sup> NPR, [On the presidential campaign trail, competing visions of France emerge](#), 12 April 2022

<sup>51</sup> Politico, [How Russia's Invasion Upended the French Presidential Election](#), 10 April 2022

<sup>52</sup> UK in a Changing Europe, [Le Pen's campaign aims to smokescreen extreme foreign policy positions](#), 20 April 2022

<sup>53</sup> The Conversation, [French election: as Marine Le Pen makes it to second round, the left-wing vote is what troubles president Emmanuel Macron](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>54</sup> French Ministry of the Interior, [Presidential election 2022: Results](#) [Accessed 25 April 2022]

As expected, none of the candidates secured an overall majority of votes, which meant a second round would be held two weeks later, with the top two candidates from the first round – Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen – contesting the presidency.

Candidate	Party	No. of valid votes	% of valid votes
Emmanuel Macron	En Marche! (LREM)	9,783,058	27.85
Marine Le Pen	National Rally (RN)	8,133,828	23.15
Jean-Luc Mélenchon	France Unbowed (LFI)	7,712,520	21.95
Éric Zemmour	Reconquest (RI)	2,485,226	7.07
Valérie Pécresse	The Republicans (LR)	1,679,001	4.78
Yannick Jadot	Europe Ecology - The Greens (EELV)	1,627,853	4.63
Jean Lassalle	Let's Resist (RES)	1,101,387	3.13
Fabien Roussel	French Communist Party (PCF)	802,422	2.28
Nicolas Dupont-Aignan	France Arise (DLF)	725,176	2.06
Anne Hidalgo	Socialist Party (PS)	616,478	1.75
Philippe Poutou	New Anticapitalist Party (NPA)	268,904	0.77
Nathalie Arthaud	Workers' Struggle (LO)	197,094	0.56
<b>Total</b>		<b>35,132,947</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Due to rounding to two decimal places, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Source: [French Ministry of the Interior](#) [Accessed 14 April 2022]

In third place, Jean-Luc Mélenchon narrowly missed out on second place and many commentators identified a restructuring of the French political field around three major poles dating back to 2017:

A liberal, centrist and European pole attracting, at every national election, a little more than a quarter of the voters but which, thanks to the mechanics of the majority vote, manages to dominate political life until now.

A populist and identity-based pole, today dominated by Le Pen and represented by two candidates whose cumulative score (over 30%) constitutes an all-time record for the extreme right and populist identity in a national election in France: it is therefore this pole that has recorded the strongest surge over the last five years.

A radical left-wing pole, dominated by the La France Insoumise. If we include the results of the communist and Trotskyist candidates, this totals just under 25% of the vote.<sup>55</sup>

The results also showed 543,609 blank votes were cast, with a further 247,151 invalid votes. Turnout was 73.69%.

<sup>55</sup> The Conversation, [First round of the French election: apparent stability, yet a profound reconfiguration](#), 11 April 2022

## Losing candidates take sides

Many of the ten candidates who lost in the first round called on their supporters to back Emmanuel Macron in the second round, largely to prevent Le Pen taking office.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon declared: “We know for whom we will never vote for. As for the rest, just as I told you five years ago: the French are capable of knowing what is good for democracy. We must not give a single voice to Madame Le Pen.”<sup>56</sup>

Valérie Pécresse also said she would vote for Macron in the second round, saying: “I will mindfully vote Emmanuel Macron to prevent Marine Le Pen from taking power and the chaos that would cause”. She added: “I do not own the votes that were cast for me. But I am asking the voters who honoured me with their trust to greatly consider in the coming days the potentially disastrous consequences for our country and for future generations of any choice different from mine that they may consider for the second round.”<sup>57</sup>

Yannick Jadot called on his supporters to vote for Macron in order to “block the far right”.<sup>58</sup>

Fabien Roussel urged his supporters to vote for Macron in the second round, saying: “Faithful to the whole history of our political family, I will never allow a racist and xenophobic project to be implemented at the head of state. Tonight I call for beating the extreme right, using the only ballot paper at our disposal.”<sup>59</sup>

Anne Hidalgo also asked her supporters to vote for Macron, saying: “So that France does not fall into the hatred of all against all, I call on you with gravity to vote on 24 April against Marine Le Pen’s far right by using Emmanuel Macron’s ballot paper.”<sup>60</sup>

Éric Zemmour, however, backed Marine Le Pen and called on his supporters to vote for her in the second round. He declared: “I cannot sit idly by when faced with the troubles that threaten our country. I have many disagreements with Marine Le Pen, I have raised them during this campaign. But facing her is a man who brought in two million immigrants, who has not spoken a word about identity, security and immigration during the campaign, and who will do worse if he is re-elected. I will not pick the wrong opponent. This is why I call on my voters to vote for Marine Le Pen.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Jean-Luc Melenchon](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>57</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Valerie Pecessee](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>58</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Yannick Jadot](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>59</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Fabien Roussel](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>60</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Anne Hidalgo](#), 11 April 2022

<sup>61</sup> BBC Monitoring – France, [Biography: Eric Zemmour](#), 11 April 2022

## 2.4 Election results (second round), 24 April 2022

Following the second round of the presidential election, France's Ministry of the Interior published the results.<sup>62</sup>

These results showed Emmanuel Macron securing a majority of votes and being re-elected president for a second and final term.

Candidate	Party	No. of valid votes	% of valid votes
Emmanuel Macron	En Marche! (LREM)	18,779,641	58.54
Marine Le Pen	National Rally (RN)	13,297,760	41.46
<b>Total</b>		<b>32,077,401</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: [French Ministry of the Interior](#) [Accessed 25 April 2022]

The results also showed 2,228,044 blank votes were cast, with a further 790,946 invalid votes. Turnout was 71.99%, lower than in the first round.

The political map showing the election results revealed significant disparities, with Macron largely enjoying support in Paris, the west, southwest and centre of the country, while Le Pen won the northern industrial heartlands, the Mediterranean south and the French overseas territories.<sup>63</sup>

Macron won the support of the large city centres, the upper-middle classes and older voters, while lower-income groups voted overwhelmingly in favour of Le Pen.<sup>64</sup>

In his victory speech, President Macron acknowledged the divisions in the country and pledged to govern for all citizens: "Our country is full of doubts and divisions, so we will need to be strong. But nobody will be left by the wayside."<sup>65</sup>

## 2.5 Looking ahead

Many French citizens were disillusioned with the two candidates on offer and used their vote to abstain. Indeed, the number of blank and invalid votes submitted demonstrated the highest level of abstentions of any second-round vote in France since 1969.

<sup>62</sup> French Ministry of the Interior, [Presidential election 2022: Results](#) [Accessed 25 April 2022]

<sup>63</sup> The Guardian, [French election 2022: full second round results](#), 25 April 2022

<sup>64</sup> France 24, [Five takeaways from France's presidential vote](#), 25 April 2022

<sup>65</sup> Politico, [Macron reelected but Le Pen's big score shows France increasingly divided](#), 24 April 2022

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who finished third in the first round, commented that Macron “is submerged in an ocean of abstention and nullified ballots”.<sup>66</sup>

Although Macron won the election convincingly, political commentators noted a large section of the electorate dislike him.<sup>67</sup>

And, immediately after the election result was announced, a number of small demonstrations protesting against Macron’s victory took place in cities across France. Local media reported many held banners reading: “Neither Macron, Nor Le Pen — Revolution”.<sup>68</sup>

With parliamentary elections due in June, Macron’s party now faces an uphill struggle, with rivals on both the left and right vowing to put up a strong challenge.

Many of those who voted for Macron in the presidential election are not his natural supporters and some merely voted for him in order to prevent Le Pen taking power.

If Macron fares badly in the June elections, he could end up losing his majority and may not be able to form his own government.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, his opponents are referring to the legislative election as the “third round”.

One opinion poll indicated 63% of voters would rather Macron lost his majority in parliament and then have to share power with an opposition government, known in France as “co-habitation”.<sup>70</sup>

It is important for Macron to rush through important reforms to persuade a jaded electorate to vote for his party in the June legislative elections. He must also quickly form a new government and replace Prime Minister Jean Castex, who led France through the Covid pandemic. In keeping with tradition, Castex announced he and his government would hand in their resignation should Macron be re-elected.<sup>71</sup>

Junior Economy Minister Agnès Pannier-Runacher identified four priorities that Macron must push in the coming weeks: spending, education, health and the environment.<sup>72</sup> The latter is particularly important to younger voters and, given 41% of 18 to 24-year-olds did not bother to vote in the second round, Macron will be keen to win their support.

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<sup>66</sup> France 24, [Five takeaways from France's presidential vote](#), 25 April 2022

<sup>67</sup> BBC News Online, [France election: Macron faces immediate challenges to power after victory](#), 25 April 2022

<sup>68</sup> Politico, [As it happened: French presidential election](#), 24 April 2022

<sup>69</sup> The Constitution Unit, [How would Emmanuel Macron govern without a parliamentary majority?](#) 26 April 2017

<sup>70</sup> BBC News Online, [France election: Macron faces immediate challenges to power after victory](#), 25 April 2022

<sup>71</sup> Le Monde, [French PM Castex announces government resignation if Macron re-elected](#), 19 April 2022

<sup>72</sup> BBC News Online, [France election: Macron faces immediate challenges to power after victory](#), 25 April 2022

The fact that Marine Le Pen won so many votes carries warnings for the EU and NATO.

In the midst of Russia's military action against Ukraine, with harrowing footage playing on daily news bulletins, millions of voters backed a candidate who had called for forming an alliance with Moscow and who had said she would pull France out of NATO's integrated command if elected.

Meanwhile, for the EU, these same voters supported a candidate whose campaign platform advocated dismantling the EU from within, by suspending its free-travel rules and downgrading the supremacy of EU law.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Politico, [Macron reelected but Le Pen's big score shows France increasingly divided](#), 24 April 2022

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