



In Focus

Catalan Parliamentary Elections, 27 September 2015

Overview

The Catalan parliamentary election was held on 27 September 2015. Results [revealed](#) that the two separatist parties, Together for Yes, who won 62 seats, and the smaller Popular Unity Candidacy Party, who won 10 seats, had gained a majority in the Catalan Parliament. Some commentators have described the elections in the region as a “[de facto](#)” referendum on independence.

Catalonia's Electoral System

Elections to determine who sits in the Catalan Parliament are held every four years. The Catalan Parliament [consists](#) of a single house comprising of 135 members, who are directly elected using a proportional representation system. The region itself is split into four constituencies: Barcelona; Gerona; Lerida; and Tarragona. Under [electoral law](#), Barcelona elects a member to the Catalan Parliament for every 50,000 residents in the province, up to a maximum of 85 seats. The other three provinces elect a member for every 40,000 inhabitants, and must each have a minimum of six seats in Parliament. Since 1980, the [allocation of parliamentary seats](#) has seen Barcelona possess 85 seats; Gerona possess 17 seats; Lerida possess 15 seats; and Tarragona possess 18 seats.

Background

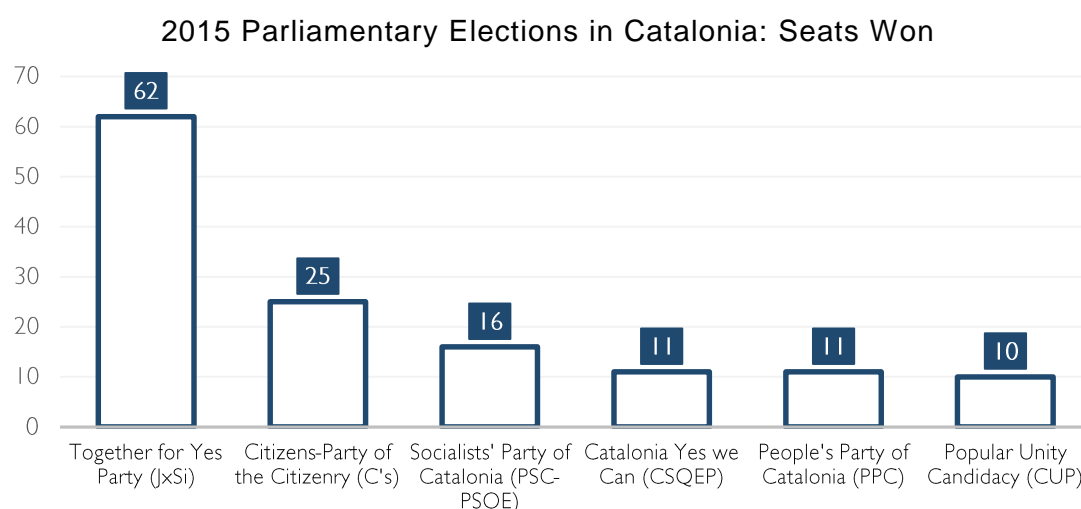
On 19 October 2014, the Catalan Parliament [voted](#) in favour of allowing the region's president, Artur Mas, to call an independence 'consultation'. It was agreed the consultation would take place on 9 November 2014, and would take the form of a regional referendum. However, on 4 November 2014, the Spanish Constitutional Court provisionally suspended the vote, following a successful appeal by the Spanish Government who described the referendum as “[illegal](#)” under Spanish constitutional law.

Despite the court judgment, however, the Catalan Government decided to proceed with the referendum on 9 November 2014. In that poll, the questions, “do you want Catalonia to become a State?”, and, “do you want this State to be independent?”, were put to the electorate in the region. The results [revealed](#) that 80.76 percent of those who took part voted in favour of independence. (Based on an estimated turnout of between [37](#) and [41.6](#) percent.) Following the results, Artur Mas [described](#) the outcome as “a lesson in democracy”, before [outlining](#) a ‘road map’ towards Catalan independence, which included plans to call an early election in the region. In contrast, Spanish President, Mariano Rajoy, [described](#) the low turnout was a “deep failure of the pro-independence project”.

On 15 January 2015, Artur Mas called a snap regional election to be held on 27 September 2015. He [argued](#) that the elections would indicate whether there was a “social majority in favour of this political process [independence]”.

Election Results in Full

The results of the 27 September 2015 [poll](#) showed that the pro-independence parties, Together for Yes and Popular Unity Candidacy, had won a majority 72 out of 135 seats in the Catalan Parliament. However, they did not [receive](#) an overall majority in terms of vote share, instead, achieving 48 percent of the total vote. A full breakdown of the results by party according to the Government of Catalonia is provided below.



Going Forward

Following his party’s electoral victory, Artur Mas [announced](#) that his party would continue with their plans for independence. He described the results as a “[democratic mandate](#)” to move forward with an 18-month secession process, which would see Catalonia creating a number of state institutions, including a central bank and a diplomatic service. However, the Spanish President, Mariano Rajoy, [stated](#) that despite being “ready to listen” to the next Catalan government, he would not “discuss the unity of Spain, the national sovereignty or the freedom of all Spaniards” with the government of Catalonia [as long as he remained president](#).

Two days after the election, on 29 September 2015, Artur Mas was [summoned](#) to appear in Spain’s High Court on 15 October 2015 over the role he played in organising the referendum of November 2014. He has been accused of civil disobedience, abuse of power and embezzlement of public funds. If found guilty of those charges, Mas could be banned from holding public office for up to ten years and could face up to a year in prison.

Library In Focus are compiled for the benefit of Members of the House of Lords and their personal staff, to provide impartial, politically balanced briefings on a selection of topical subjects. Authors are available to discuss the contents of the Notes with the Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

Any comments on In Focus should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London, SW1A 0PW or emailed to purvism@parliament.uk.