

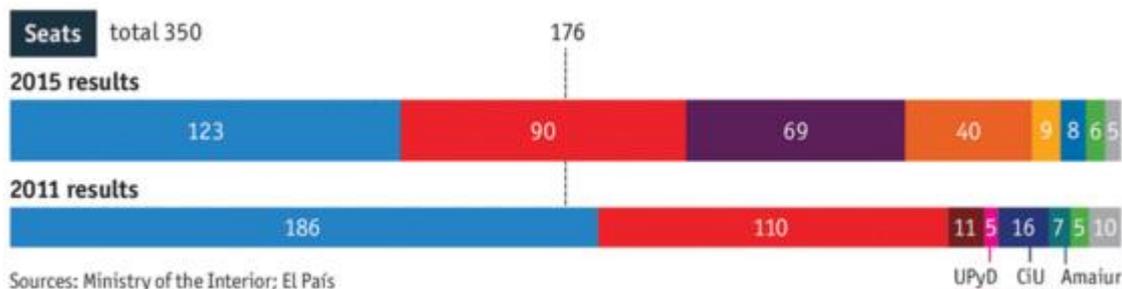


In Focus

Spanish Elections: Results and Next Steps

On 20 December 2015, voters in Spain went to the polls to elect a new Congress of Deputies—the first chamber of the country’s bicameral Parliament—and Members of the Senate—the second. No political party won an outright majority in elections for the new Congress of Deputies, leading some commentators to argue that Spain has entered a new era of coalition government.¹ Incumbent Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has stated that he will attempt to form an administration.²

The conservative Popular Party (Partido Popular), led by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, won the most seats in the new Congress of Deputies, winning 123 seats in the 350 seat chamber on 28.7 percent of the vote, but lost its absolute majority (the party had had 186 seats in the previous Congress after elections held in 2011, ten more than the 176 needed to form a government).³ The Socialists (Partido Socialista Obrero Español— PSOE), led by Pedro Sánchez, won 90 seats on 22 percent of the vote; the anti-austerity Podemos (We Can) movement, led by Pablo Iglesias, won 69 seats on 20.6 percent of the vote; and the liberal Ciudadanos (Citizens) party, led by Albert Rivera, won 40 seats on 13.9 percent of the vote. Separatist movements performed strongly in the Basque Country and Catalonia.



Sources: Ministry of the Interior; El País

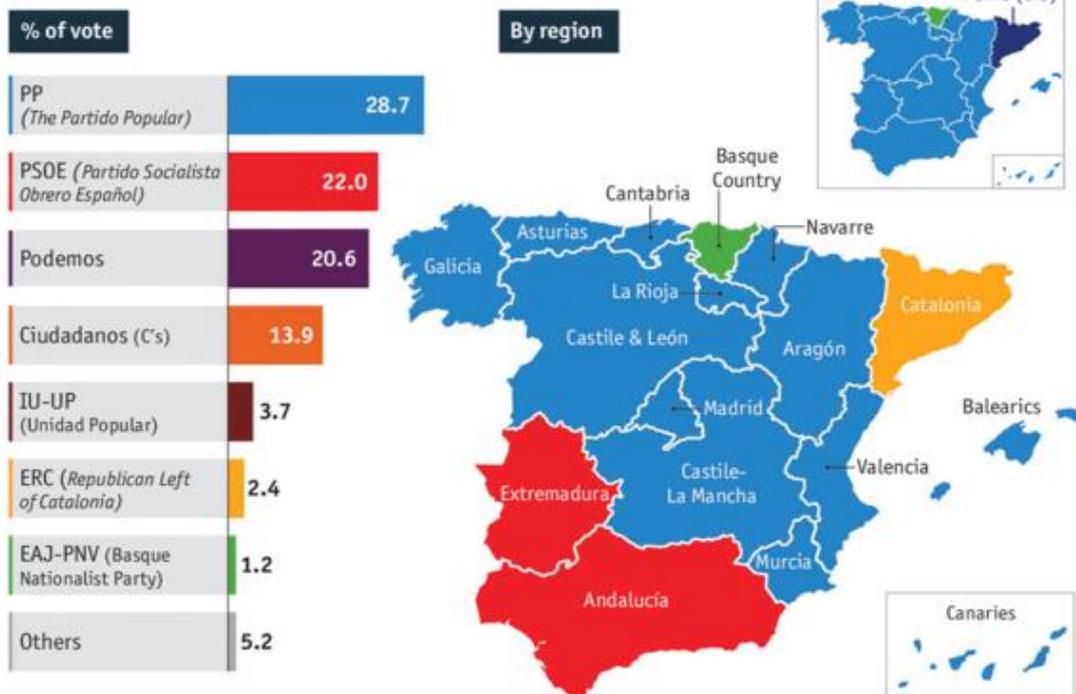
(Source: *Economist*, ‘[Spain Ushers in an Era of Coalition Government](#)’, 21 December 2015)

The election result has been described as producing a “perfectly hung parliament, something unprecedented in the country’s political history”.⁴ It has also been described as signalling the weakening the “bipartisan hegemony” of the Popular Party and the Socialists, parties which have “dominated” Spanish politics since the restoration of democracy in the 1970s.⁵

Senate

Voters also elected 208 of the 266 Members of the Senate in the general election (the remaining 58 are nominated by regional Parliaments).⁶ The Popular Party retained an absolute majority in the Senate, having won 124 of the contested seats (compared to 136 in 2011). The Socialists won 47 seats (compared to 48 in 2011) and Podemos won 16 seats (the party was founded in 2014).⁷

Spanish general election 2015



Constitutional Process

Elected deputies are scheduled to be sworn in on 13 January 2016, after which they will elect a Speaker. King Felipe VI, who acceded to the Spanish throne in June 2014 following the abdication of his father, King Juan Carlos I, is then expected to play a key role in the nomination of the head of government as set out in Section 99 of the constitution.⁸ After discussions between the King and the political parties, the monarch will propose a candidate for the position of President of the Government (Prime Minister) through the Speaker of the Congress. This candidate will be sworn into office if he or she is supported by an absolute majority of deputies—or if this is not possible, by a simple majority in a second round of voting to be held 48 hours later. If the first candidate is unable to secure an absolute or simple majority, the King may put forward new candidates for the position. If no candidate is able to secure the confidence of the Congress of Deputies two months after the first vote, the King “shall dissolve both Houses and call for new elections, with the countersignature of the Speaker of the Congress”.⁹

¹ *Economist*, ‘[Spain Ushers in an Era of Coalition Government](#)’, 21 December 2015.

² BBC News, ‘[Spain Election: Tough Talks Ahead After Historic Result](#)’, 21 December 2015.

³ *Economist*, ‘[Spain Ushers in an Era of Coalition Government](#)’, 21 December 2015.

⁴ *Financial Times*, ‘[Spain’s General Election Weakens Decades of Bipartisan Hegemony](#)’, 21 December 2015.

⁵ *ibid*; and *Reuters*, ‘[Splintered Spanish Vote Heralds Arduous Coalition Talks](#)’, 20 December 2015.

⁶ Senado de España, ‘[Composition of the Senate](#)’, accessed 21 December 2015.

⁷ *El País*, ‘[Spanish General Election 2015: As it Happened—Senate Results](#)’, 21 December 2015.

⁸ Constitute Project, ‘[Spain’s Constitution of 1978 with Amendments Through 2011](#)’, 21 December 2015, p 26.

⁹ Constitute Project, ‘[Spain’s Constitution of 1978 with Amendments Through 2011](#)’, 21 December 2015, p 26; and *El País*, ‘[What Happens Now If There’s No Majority to Form a Government?](#)’, 20 December 2015.

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