

# French Regional Elections - seven things we learnt

Tuesday 29 June 2021, by [KELLAWAY Dave](#) (Date first published: 28 June 2021).

**Dave Kellaway continues his analysis of the recent regional elections in France.**

The second round of the French regional and departmental elections took place yesterday (Sunday 27 June). Only one in three bothered to vote again but the trends highlighted in our previous article have been confirmed.

- The **traditional right-wing parties** such as the Republicans (LR) have reasserted their support and mobilised their base better than the post-fascist hard right of Marine le Pen and her National Rally (RN). They are talking up their chances of making the second round of the 2022 Presidential elections. A hardening of their policies – imitating the RN – has paid off for them unlike for Macron. Now the big regional LR winners, Peceresse in the huge Parisian region, Bertrand in Calais/Lille north and Wauquiez in Auvergne/Rhone along with Michel Barnier (remember Brexit) are on manoeuvres to become the party's presidential candidate.

- **Marine le Pen** failed to take her top target in Provence and Cote D'Azur as nearly all other parties, centre right and centre left coalesced against her. In a sense, this region reflects a national scenario that we saw on the last occasions a post-fascist far right party made it through to the second round of the presidential elections. What many people – including some alarmists on the radical left – regarded as a certain second-place slot for her is now more doubtful than before. As Le Monde commented today, the Republican Front against RN is holding up pretty well.

- **Macron's party Onward with the Republic** (La Republique en Marche – LREM) did as badly as it did in the first round with less than 10%. In some regions, both left or right of centre coalitions refused second-round electoral agreements. Electors have lost whatever enthusiasm they might have had four or five years ago for Macron and are angry at the economic, social, and Covid policies of this government. Macron's use of fake secularism to attack Muslims through a campaign about Islamo-gauchisme (Islamic Leftism) has not paid off in these elections. Even the decline in support for Le Pen's RN is not good news since it makes her less of a threat in the eyes of the electorate as a whole. Macron constructed his movement and victory (partly) on being the one who could mobilise a majority against Le Pen, in a context where the traditional left and right of centre parties were divided and in crisis. Macron has also failed to embed or construct his party on the ground, at a local or regional level. These elections showed the usefulness of being incumbents, particularly when campaigning has been more limited due to Covid. Regional and departmental governments have resources that can be deployed to consolidate electoral support. Macron's party was not leading regional government anywhere before the elections.

- **The ecologists in EELV** (Europe Ecologie les Verts) in many places linked up with the **Socialist Party**. The Greens have continued the impetus of their strong showing in the previous municipal elections. They lead a number of important cities. In the case of regional governments the SP is much stronger than their national opinion polls ratings indicate – they govern in 5 of the dozen or so

regions. All these councils were re-elected. It is more likely for an SP/EELV candidate to do well in the Presidential election than for a socialist or green to stand alone. The two together were running at about 35% in the second round which is the basis for a credible candidature next year. However, this is not yet a done deal and no doubt each current wants their candidate to be chosen. Oliver Faure, PS leader, is already calling on his Green coalition partners to recognise that the PS is the natural leader of a green/PS coalition since these elections show its superior local implantation. (Le Monde 28<sup>th</sup> June). Yannick Jadot, MEP and Greens' leader is expressing more or less exactly the converse position, that the Greens are better placed...

- **For groups to the left of the PS like the Communist Party (PCF) or Melenchon's La France Insoumise** (LFI - France Unbowed) they rarely got near 10%. The continued historic decline of the PCF was shown by the loss of the last department that they run, the Val de Marne in the Paris suburbs. The PCF in the regional elections were nearly everywhere in a union with the PS. The LFI did manage to coalesce with the Greens in some areas. Both currents say they will stand presidential candidates. If that happens it obviously makes it harder, but not impossible, for a PS/EELV candidate to make the second round. Melenchon is barely polling at half the level of his creditable first-round score in the 2015 Presidential elections. If the CP put up a candidate, the PS continues to recover and the Greens maintain their surge it is difficult to see how Melenchon can find the space to reconstruct his 2015 coalition.

- **Revolutionary groups like the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) and Workers Struggle (Lutte Ouvriere-LO)** also stood candidates in some places either in the regional or departmental elections. Phillipe Poutou, former NPA candidate and car worker, scored around 5% in the Occitanie area and Lutte Ouvriere got 2.5% in the Normandie region. The NPA discussed at a national conference this weekend whether and who to stand as a Presidential candidate. We have just learnt that they have selected Poutou. Lutte Ouvriere will stand as a candidate, as they have done for many years.

- Finally, the mass alienation from the political system continued into the second round with an abstention rate of around 65%, hardly better than in the first. Such a high figure means even the above trends cannot be read as forecasting exactly what will happen next year. For the **revolutionary left**, the problem is how to rebuild the movement of resistance to Macron's pro-capitalist policies and how to develop self-organisation and a strategic political alternative. As the NPA statement on 22 June commented: "strikes and demonstrations then elections, in that order". All the politicking and discussions about candidates and coalitions cannot become the priority over building opposition between now and Spring 2022.

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**P.S.**

- Anti\*capitalistresistance. 28 Jun 2021:

<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/french-regional-elections-seven-things-we-learnt/>

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