

2023 GENERAL ELECTION

ELECTION REPORT



**JULY
2023**



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JULY 2023



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8 TAKEAWAYS FROM THE ELECTION

01 The PP won the election

The PP won the general election with **32.9% of the vote and 136 seats**, a 47-seat gain. This falls short of the projections of the major polling agencies, however, as they had predicted a PP victory with more than 150 seats. Núñez Feijóo himself had publicly set that figure as his target. The PP completed the absorption of old Ciudadanos voters and also attracted part of Vox's electorate.

02 The right failed to reach a majority

The 136 seats won by the PP combined with the 33 won by Vox fall short of the absolute majority threshold (169 < 176). For the investiture, aside from Vox, Núñez Feijóo also needs the support of the Canarian Coalition (1 seat), UPN (1), and the PNV (5). Negotiations with the latter will be particularly challenging. At the moment, the PSOE is very unlikely to abstain.

03 The PSOE improved on its results

The PSOE won 31.8% of the vote and 122 seats, compared to 28% of the vote and 120 seats in 2019. It has thus expanded its support base despite the anti-incumbency factor. The D'Hondt apportionment method used in Spain explains the 14-seat difference in favour of the PP despite the fact that the difference in votes between the two parties is only 1 percent point. The Socialists performed best in Catalonia, while they trailed the PP by just 4 seats in Andalusia.

04 Re-emergence of the two-party system

Combined, the two major parties (PP and PSOE) won the highest share of votes (64.7%) since the 2011 election (73.4%), the last ones under the de facto two-party system. Both Sumar and Vox held their ground, but they performed well below expectations – Vox obtained 33 seats, a loss of 19 seats, while Sumar won 31 seats, 4 fewer than Podemos in 2019.

05 Deals, or a repeat election

Both the conservatives (with 169 seats) and the progressives (with 153) fell short of an absolute majority. Securing the investiture will thus require negotiating deals with the nationalist and regionalist parties, which hold 28 seats. Junts per Catalunya and the PNV are the most obvious choices. If there is no agreement, a repeat election would be called.

06 Catalonia: the PSC wins, pro-independence parties collapse

Contrary to the rest of Spain, turnout fell in Catalonia. The drop was significant – 4 points lower than in 2019. The Socialists' Party of Catalonia (PSC) won the election with 34.5% of the vote and 19 seats. The PP tripled its seats, going from 2 to 6. Pro-independence parties suffered a debacle: ERC won 7 seats, losing 6. Junts per Catalunya also lost 1 seat, being left with 7, while the CUP lost the 2 seats it had. As for Vox, it kept its 2 seats.

07 Basque Country: the PSOE wins, Bildu catches up with the PNV

The Socialists also won in the Basque Country, ahead of the PNV and Bildu. All three parties won 5 seats each. The PP went from 1 to 2 seats, while Sumar obtained 1 seat, 2 fewer than the seats held by Podemos after the 2019 election. The narrow gap between the PNV and Bildu (just 1,000 votes in total) will be a factor in the PNV's decision to negotiate with either the PSOE or the PP.

08 High turnout and no incidents

There was a record-high number of postal votes, as turnout rose to **70.4%**, 4 points higher than in the 2019 election. This is in line with the historical average. The region with the highest turnout was Cantabria (75.4%), while the Balearic Islands had the lowest (63.6%). In Galicia, turnout increased by 17.3%, while in Catalonia it fell by 4%. There were no incidents during the election day.

ELECTORAL CONTEXT

02

THE ROAD TO THE GENERAL ELECTION

Political overexertion after the 28 May elections

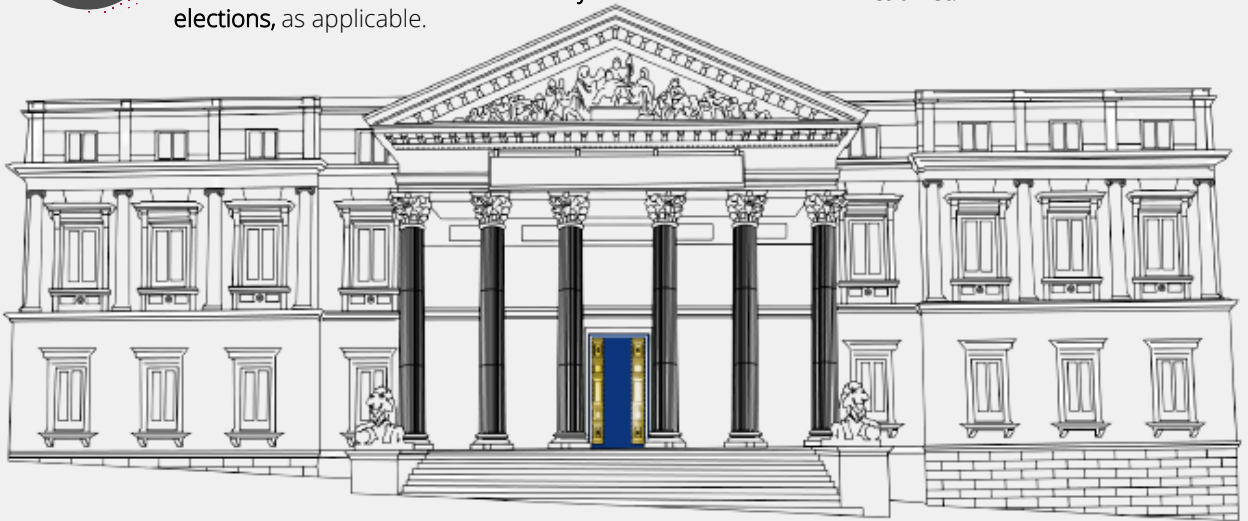
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As an immediate consequence of the new political landscape emerging from the 28 May local and regional elections, a snap general election was called. The goal was to either confirm or revert the perceived shift in political trends. The election would also be a trial by fire for Sumar, the new party of the unified left, while keeping alive the hope of governing with the support of other parties. In just six weeks dominated by the talks to form regional and local governments, each party had to rally itself in order to launch a campaign and either recover from the blow or ride the tailwind of the 28 May elections, as applicable.

An internationally significant election

3

Exceptionally, the election campaign coincided with the beginning of the Spanish presidency of the Council of the EU. Were it not for the snap election, the six-month presidency would have provided a potential political platform ahead of the December election. In the current political climate, the campaign prevented the Spanish prime minister from fully participating in EU presidency events. There is uncertainty on whether a hypothetical new government would continue the programme laid out by the current cabinet.



Negotiations to form regional governments were ongoing during the campaign, which was a factor affecting the Popular Party (PP) in particular. The partnership between the PP and Vox in some regions generated a lot of buzz in the media.

The discourse focused on the presence of Vox in some regional governments and in the policies it implemented ahead of the general election. The PP was unable to counter this narrative. As for Vox, it exploited the situation to increase its media presence and its space going into the general election.

2

Concurrent negotiations and agreements

The fact that the election was scheduled in the middle of the traditional vacation season for most Spaniards resulted in a record-high number of postal vote applications – 2,622,808 in total, 1,924,976 of which were filed in person at national post offices and 697,832 of which were requested online. As of 21 July, the last day to vote by mail after the extension granted by the Central Electoral Board, 162,614 applicants (6.2% of the total 2,622,808) had yet to pick up their papers, meaning that they did not cast their votes. Applying to vote by mail disqualifies someone from voting in person.

4

Postal voting

5

ELECTORAL CONTEXT

02

BEFORE & AFTER FOR EACH CANDIDATE

Before...

After...

Alberto Núñez Feijóo

He was bolstered by the **good performance** of the PP in the 28 May elections and in the polls. His campaign, which was heavily affected by the **regional PP-Vox partnerships**, tried to attract tactical voters to be able to govern on his own. The leader of the PP said that this would be his only attempt to be invested as prime minister.



While everything suggested he would be the new prime minister, he **failed to secure the expected support** despite winning the election. As the possibility of a repeat election looms in the horizon, this could **cast doubt on his party leadership**.

Pedro Sánchez

He was in a **weak position after the end of his term** and the results of the 28 May elections. He tried to balance his international agenda with his campaign, which was built around his **appearances on media shows where he had not featured in the four years prior**. This did not have the desired effect on the political discourse. A bad result could mean the beginning of a new era for the PSOE.



Apparently immune to the anti-incumbency factor, **Sánchez improved on his results from the 2019 general election**. His standing was helped by his constant appearances in the media (together with those of former Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero), and also by the three-candidate debate right at the end of the campaign. If the government formation process is successful, **he will remain at the head of the cabinet and of the PSOE**.

Santiago Abascal

He toured much of the country in a bid to **win the contested seats in smaller provinces**. He focused on his campaign rallies and emphasising that **his support for a PP government would not come 'for free'**.



He **lost ground** relative to the previous election. In light of the election results, the Vox leader will not be part of a conservative government but rather **remain in the opposition**. Even though his result was notably worse than in 2019, **his leadership over the party is not in danger**.

Yolanda Díaz

After her tenure in the cabinet and following a period of tensions with Podemos during the race against time to register a new left-wing coalition, this election was the **baptism by fire for her personal project**. The main challenge for her was winning representation in certain key provinces.



Despite **falling short of expectations**, she has successfully established herself as the second most important figure of the left-wing bloc. In a hypothetical progressive coalition government, she would **strengthen her position even further**.

03

TURNOUT

SLIGHTLY HIGHER TURNOUT THAN IN 2019

Historically, voter turnout in general elections ranges from a low of 66.5% to a record-high of 80% in 1982.

Spanish voters were expected to mobilise en masse, given the date of the election. In the end, that was apparently not the case. A bitter and highly-polarised campaign dissuaded voters on both sides of the political spectrum from voting. However, the fact that it was summer did affect **postal voting**, which played a key role in the 23 July election. Over **2.47 million** Spaniards voted by post, an all-time high.

Voter turnout topped **70.39%, slightly above 2019 (66.23%)**. Despite the summer season, it was only a 4.16% increase over the turnout of the most recent general election (November 2019).

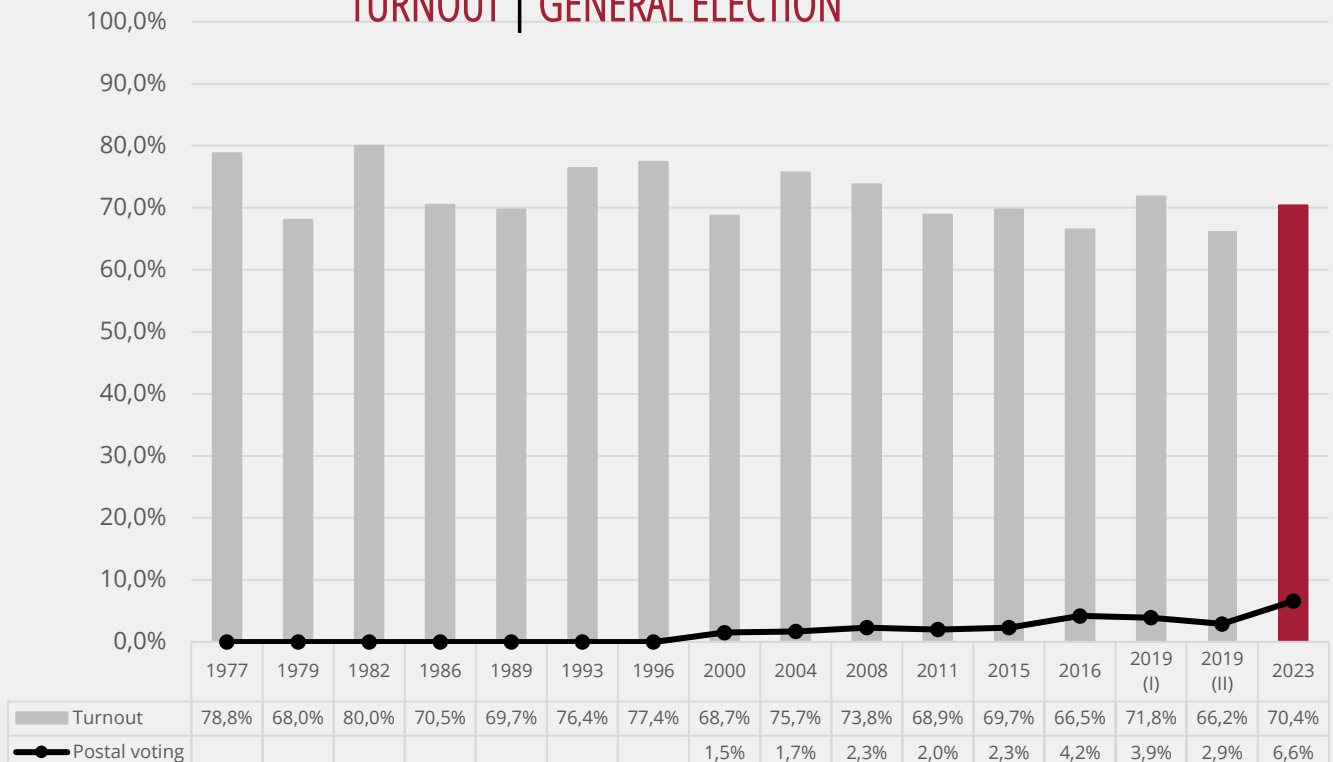
At the regional level, turnout in **Catalonia** dropped significantly, by 4 percent points.

Back in 2019, the region was in a heightened state of tension. The strong performance of the PSC in the 28 May election and the subsequent deal between constitutionalist parties in the Barcelona city council could also have contributed to the demobilisation of pro-independence voters in the region.

Galicia was the region with the highest turnout increase compared to the previous election, a **17.3% rise**. The Galician electorate is intimately familiar with two of the major candidates and mobilised accordingly.

As for voters from abroad, it should be noted that this was the first general election after the abolition of the old expat vote system, which could result in a higher turnout. **CERA (Electoral Census of Absent Residents) votes will be recounted in 5 days**, on 28 July 2023, which might cause one or two seats to flip.

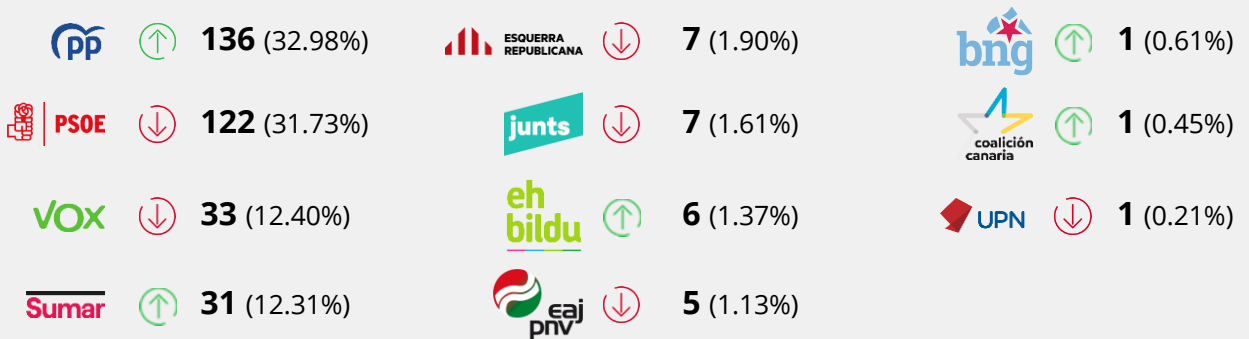
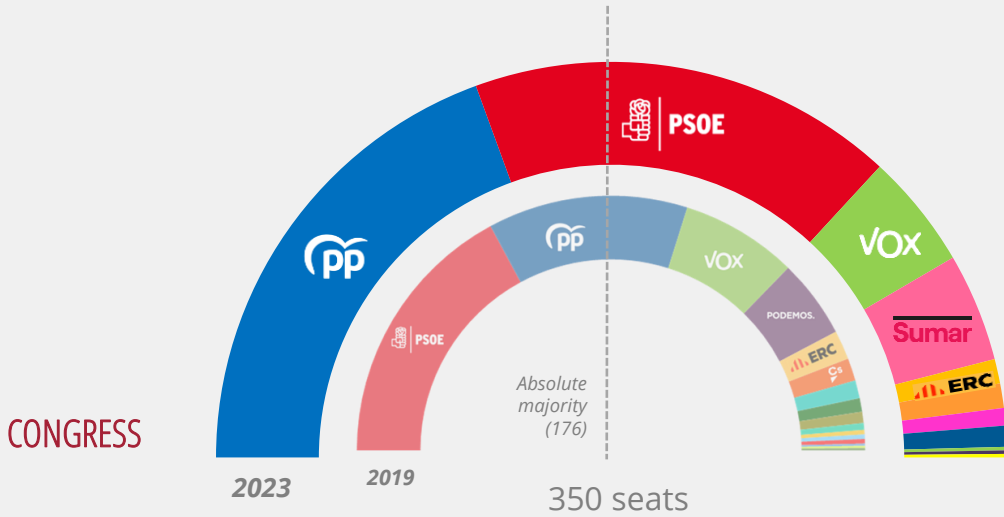
TURNOUT | GENERAL ELECTION



ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS

04

RIGHT-WING VICTORY WITH NO MAJORITY



The Popular Party won the election with 136 seats, 47 more than in 2019

The Socialist Party came second with 122 seats, a 2-seat increase over its 2019 results

Vox held as the third party, but it lost 19 seats compared to the 2019 general election

Sumar, the new party of Yolanda Díaz, entered Congress with 31 seats, but failed to match the results of Podemos

Significant plunge in the number of seats for Catalan pro-independence parties

The CUP, Navarra Suma and Teruel Existe lost their representation in the Congress of Deputies. BNG, the Canarian Coalition and UPN won one seat each

ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS

04

RIGHT-WING VICTORY WITH NO MAJORITY

The Popular Party won the election with 136 seats, 47 more than in the 2019 election

It was also the most voted party with **8.091.840 votes**, **3.044.800** more than in the previous election.

The PP made particularly significant gains in Andalusia, where it won 25 seats, a 10-seat increase over its 2019 results. It also extended its lead in the Community of Madrid, the Valencian Community, and Castile and León, gaining an additional 5 seats in each of these regions compared to the previous election.

Vox held as the third party, but it lost 19 seats compared to the 2019 general election

It won **33 seats**, down from 52 in the previous election.

Moreover, support for Vox fell away in a key region for the party, Castile and León, where it lost 5 seats. It also lost 2 seats in Castile-La Mancha, the Community of Madrid, and Andalusia.

The Socialist Party came second with 122 seats, a 2-seat increase over its 2019 results

Against all expectations, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) obtained **7.760.970 votes**, i.e. **968,771** more than in the previous general election of 2019. In Catalonia, the PSOE overpowered the pro-independence parties, gaining 5 seats. The Socialist Party also gained seats in Madrid and Valencia, but lost ground in provinces like Ciudad Real, Ourense, and Málaga.

Sumar, the new party led by Yolanda Díaz, entered Congress with 31 seats, but failed to match the results of Podemos

Sumar became the fourth largest party in the general election, with **3.014.006 votes**. Sumar won representation in 20 out of 54 constituencies. Most of its seats come from Catalonia, the Community of Madrid, the Valencian Community, and Andalusia, however.



ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS

04

RIGHT-WING VICTORY WITH NO MAJORITY

Significant plunge in the number of seats for Catalan pro-independence parties

Catalan pro-independence parties lost ground in parliament, as the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) lost 6 seats and Junts per Catalunya lost 1. However, the latter will likely play a key role in the formation of the central government.

On the other hand, the CUP lost its representation in the Spanish Congress, losing its 2 seats. All in all, Catalonia's pro-independence parties lost 9 seats.

The CUP, Navarra Suma, PRC and Teruel Existe lost their representation in Congress. BNG, the Canarian Coalition and UPN won one seat each

The CUP lost the 2 seats it had won in the 2019 general election. The Regionalist Party of Cantabria (PRC) also lost its seat, as did Teruel Existe, while Navarra Suma lost the 2 seats it held.

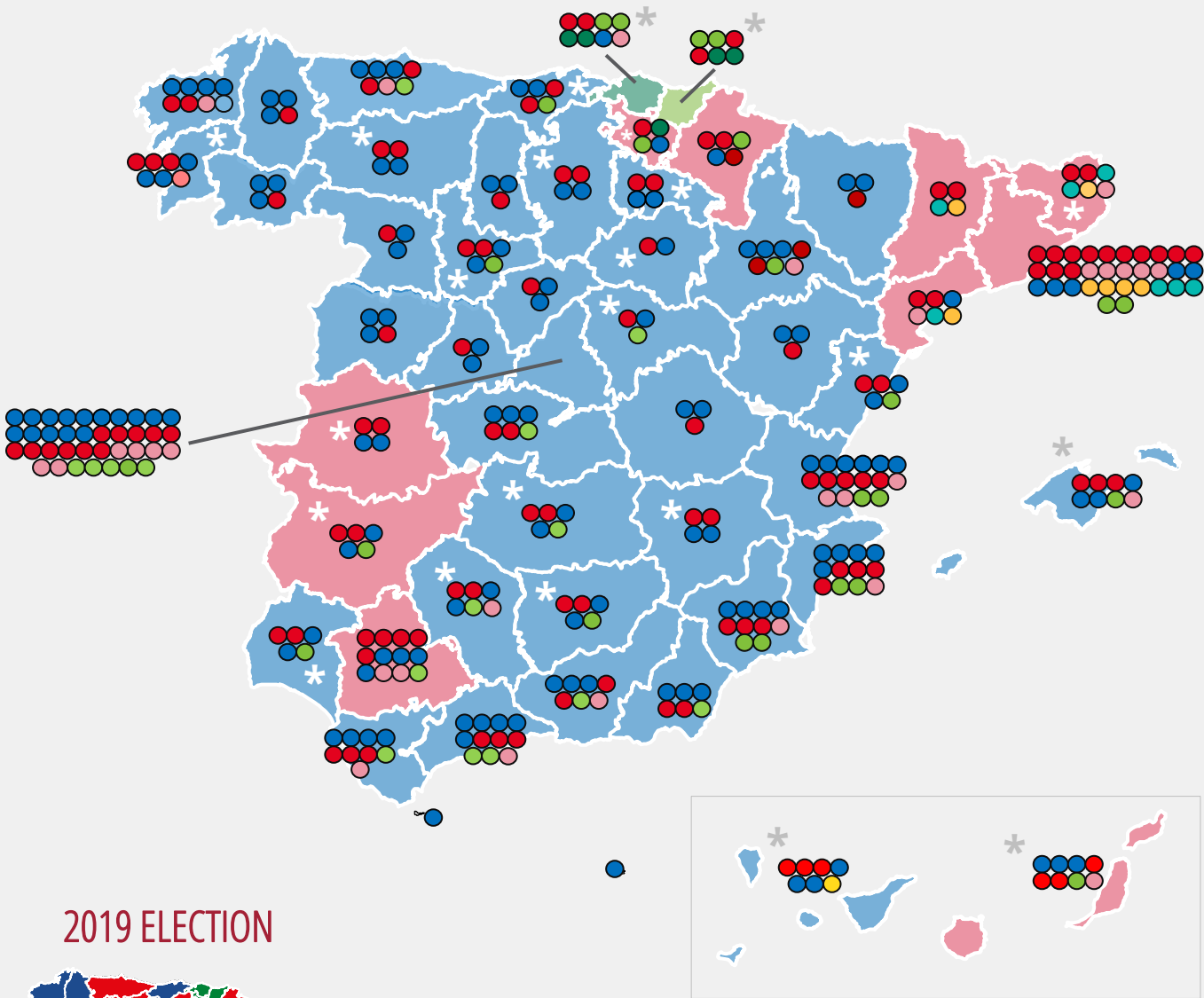
On its part, the BNG managed to retain the seat it had, while UPN entered Congress with 1 seat. The Canarian Coalition, which this time ran its own ticket, also won 1 seat.



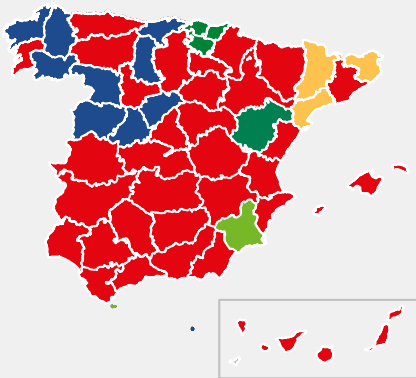
ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS

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ELECTION RESULTS MAP BY PROVINCE AND PARTY – CONGRESS



2019 ELECTION

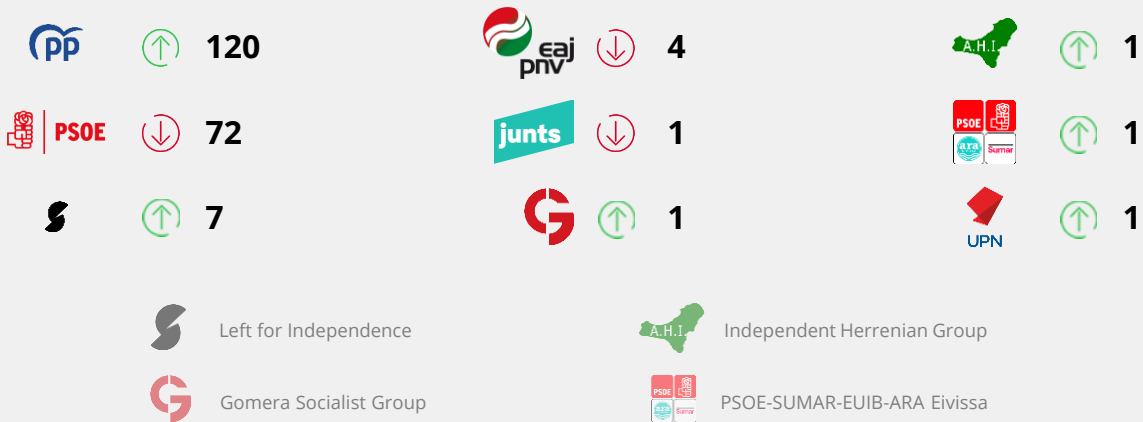
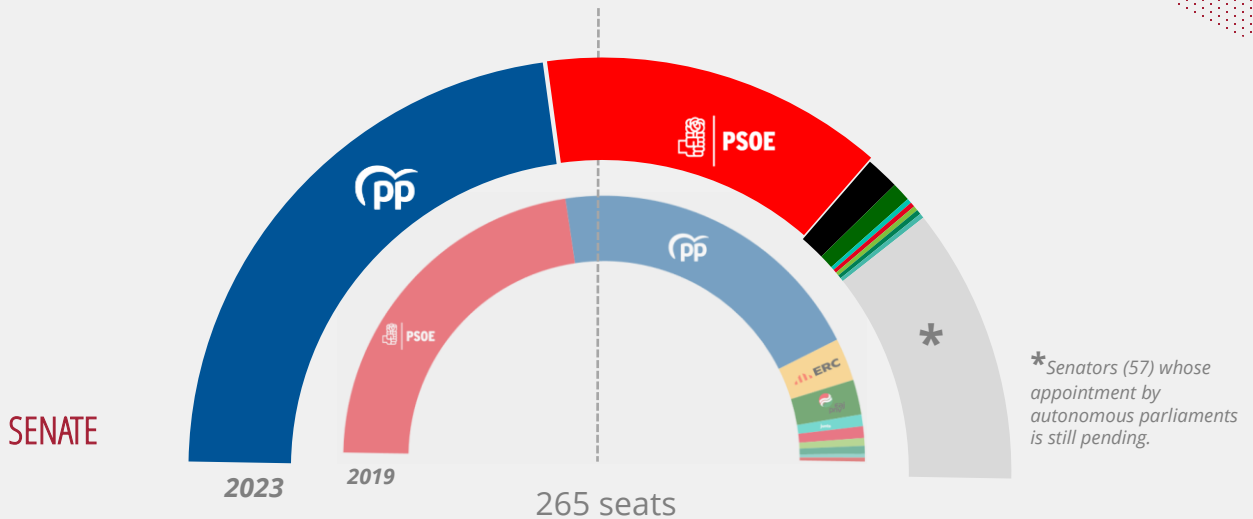


Party	Seats	Party	Seats
PP	136	EH Bildu	6
PSOE	122	EAJ-PNV	5
Vox	33	BNG	1
Sumar	31	CC	1
ERC	7	UPN	1
JxCat	7		

* The provinces noted with an asterisk have been assigned a colour in accordance with the vote distribution, as the number of seats is tied.

ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS

04



The Senate has **265 members**, **208 of whom** were elected last Sunday, 23 July. The **other 57 senators** will be appointed by the **regional parliaments**. Therefore, these results are not yet complete, as some appointments are still pending.

The **Popular Party won a majority** of seats in the Senate – **120 seats**, 37 more than in the general election of 2019. Once all regional senators have been appointed, the PP will likely have an absolute majority in the upper house.

The Senate is the **house of territorial representation**. It is made up of representatives from each of the 17 autonomous regions, and its purpose is to defend regional interests.

The Senate has several **functions**. It participates in the approval procedure for State laws and for the General State Budget, it authorises international treaties, it provides supervision and political impetus, and, importantly, it has powers related to territorial integration.

ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS

04

EARLY REACTIONS



PEDRO SÁNCHEZ

"The Spanish people have made themselves clear. The regressive bloc has failed".

"There are many more who want Spain to keep moving forward, and it will".



PSOE

ALBERTO NÚÑEZ FEIJÓO

"As the candidate of the most voted party, it is my duty to open up a dialogue and attempt to govern our country in accordance with our electoral victory".

"I formally ask everybody, and more specifically the PSOE, to refrain from deadlocking Spain again".



YOLANDA DÍAZ

"We need to keep expanding our rights, and we are committed to doing so".

"Starting tomorrow, I will talk to all progressive parties in our country to ensure that Spain has a government".




SANTIAGO ABASCAL

"Pedro Sánchez could be invested with the support of communism, coup-plotting separatism, and terrorism".

"I am ready to continue my frontal opposition to Sánchez and his partners, or to prepare for a repeat election".

VOX



ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS

04

EARLY REACTIONS



GABRIEL RUFÍAN

"Catalonia or Vox. That is the dilemma for Pedro Sánchez and Yolanda Díaz if they want to govern their country".

"These are not the results we would have wanted, and we may not have that many victories to celebrate".



ARNALDO OTEGI

"We are at the threshold of a political change for our people".

"Euskal Herria Bildu keeps its word. The PP and Vox will not govern the Spanish State. We do not engage in bothsidesism. There will be no government of the reactionary bloc".



ehbildu

MÍRIAM NOGUERAS

"Our priority is Catalonia, not the governability of the Spanish State".

"We will not make Pedro Sánchez prime minister in exchange for nothing. We are perfectly aware of the power of these 7 seats, and we will not fail".



junts

ANDONI ORTUZAR

"Our votes will be decisive once more".

"We will handle our votes with our usual sense of responsibility, combining the defence of the Basque Country with the advancement of democratic principles".



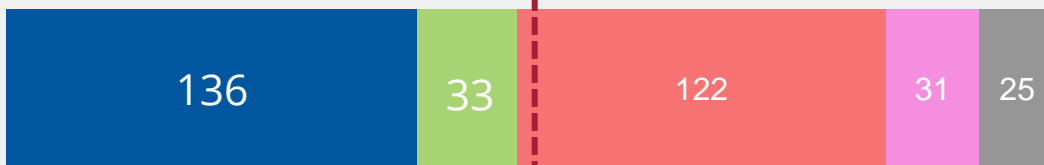
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GOVERNMENT SCENARIOS

SÁNCHEZ STAYS

LIKELY

PSOE + SUMAR



176 seats

The current ruling bloc consisting of the PSOE and Sumar surpassed the projections of most polls and is still in the running to secure the necessary majority to rule with the backing of the nationalist and separatist parties. The PSOE and Sumar managed to win practically the same number of seats as in 2019.

These results might allow the incumbent government to continue as long as it has the support of most separatist and regionalist parties. BNG and EH Bildu have already announced that they will not block Sánchez's investiture. The negotiations with ERC will be crucial, since this party already warned during the campaign that securing its support also meant accepting an independence referendum in Catalonia, a red line for the PSOE. Additionally, the incumbent government needs either the support or the abstention of Junts per Catalunya. In principle, Junts seems determined to block any agreement, as its members are more interested in the governability of Catalonia than in that of Spain.

On the right, the PP and Vox failed to fulfil the poll projections and to achieve a victory that seemed certain in light of the results of the 28 May regional and local elections. If Núñez Feijóo fails to form a government despite his electoral victory, the PP might be headed towards a new party congress to revamp its current leadership.

In this scenario, regional leaders Juan Manuel Moreno Bonilla (Andalusia) and Isabel Díaz Ayuso (Madrid) could be among the top candidates to lead the PP.

The gains of the Popular Party in the local and regional elections of 28 May would serve as an institutional counterweight to a potential new Sánchez cabinet.

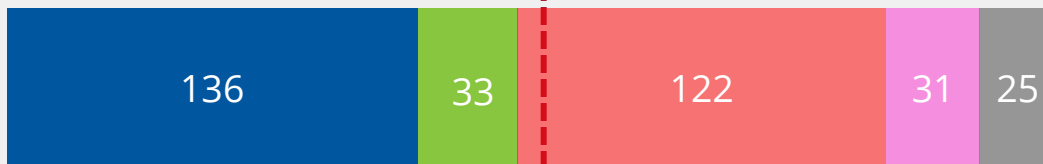
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GOVERNMENT SCENARIOS

REPEAT ELECTION

LESS
LIKELY

PP, MOST VOTED PARTY



176 seats

Despite winning the election with 136 seats, the Popular Party **failed to win a majority**. The combined seat count including those of Vox (33 seats) is narrowly below the threshold for a right-wing absolute majority. An institutional deadlock is thus inevitable. Núñez Feijóo's eventual investiture would **depend on the support of regionalist and nationalist parties**. If Vox, the Canarian Coalition and UPN voted in his favour, Núñez Feijóo would only have 171 votes, which is not enough to be invested.

Despite being only the second largest party in Spain, the PSOE could still form a government backed by the same partners who supported him in 2019. The combined seat count for the PSOE, Sumar, ERC, the PNV, Bildu and BNG is 172, which could be enough to invest Pedro Sánchez in the second round of voting.

In this scenario, Junts per Catalunya and ERC would play a decisive role in the governability of Spain. After the final count was announced, **Junts said that its 7 seats "will not make Pedro Sánchez prime minister in exchange for nothing"**. On its part, ERC noted that its support to Sánchez's investiture is conditional on the conduct of a self-determination referendum in Catalonia.

If the PSOE is unwilling to satisfy these or any other subsequent demands and negotiations break down, there would be a **repeat election**.

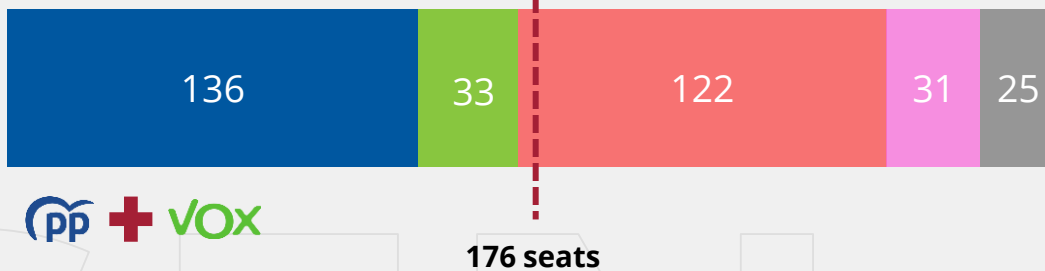
The experience of previous repeat elections (in 2016 and 2019) **suggests that there is a tendency for the previous winner to either increase his or her lead slightly** (as was the case with Rajoy, who went from 123 to 137 seats) or get very similar results as the first time. For example, in 2019 the PSOE only lost 3 seats in the repeat election, and the same power dynamics between right and left remained in operation.

05 GOVERNMENT SCENARIOS

NÚÑEZ FEIJÓO ACHIEVES A MAJORITY

UNLIKELY

GATHERING SUPPORT WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR THE PP



The PP gained 47 seats in the Congress of Deputies and also won an absolute majority in the Senate. It absorbed nearly all the votes obtained by Ciudadanos in the 2019 election, and also some of those won by Vox. However, this result means that the PP has failed to cement the institutional hegemony which it had partially achieved at the 28 May regional and local elections, and it is unlikely to take over the central government.

While it remains the country's third political party, Vox, the party led by **Santiago Abascal**, lost a significant number of seats and it cannot ensure a right-wing government by itself.

There are two improbable scenarios where Núñez Feijóo would have a chance to be invested as prime minister:

- First of all, the PP may urge the PSOE to abstain. However, the Socialists have already rejected this possibility, which in any case would need to be endorsed by the party members.

- For the second hypothetical scenario, the PP would need to secure the support of the Navarrese People's Union (UPN), the Canarian Coalition (CC), and the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV). The latter is highly unlikely, though, as the PNV has repeatedly said it will refuse to join any agreement in which Vox is also a participant. The proximity of the Basque regional election and the strong performance of Bildu in the election also contribute to the PNV's refusal.

For these reasons, a scenario where Núñez Feijóo was invested seems unlikely.

NEGOTIATION CHALLENGES

06

DISAGREEMENTS AND RED LINES BETWEEN THE PSOE AND SUMAR

The left is determined to **continue the coalition between the progressive parties to the left of the PSOE (coalesced around Sumar) and the PSOE itself**. Unlike the conservatives, who have been less transparent about their potential government agreement, the two main left-wing parties have been quite open about their intentions. That is, they intend to unite in a coalition government.

If this scenario came to pass, however, it is not at all clear that the resulting Council of Ministers would have the same size as the current one. Nevertheless, it is likely that the distribution of ministries would follow a principle known in political science circles as Gamson's Law. In other words, **the number of ministries should be proportional to the number of seats contributed towards a majority**. The specific portfolios are yet to be discussed. Sumar will try to retain some of the most social portfolios, with special emphasis on the Ministry of Labour, the party's flagship.

For the PSOE, meanwhile, keeping the key ministries and particularly the Ministry of Economy is not negotiable. There is uncertainty surrounding the Ministry of Equality, since this portfolio is highly valued by progressive voters and the PSOE will likely prevent its coalition partner from holding it again.

The results show that the coalition partners **would also need external support from nationalist and regionalist parties**. This factor should not be overlooked, as relations with these parties deteriorated in the final stretch of the term. The main broker of the agreements with these nationalist and regionalist parties was Pablo Iglesias, an **asset that is no longer available to the left**.

Indeed, ERC has adopted a more antagonistic attitude towards Yolanda Díaz's project in recent weeks. **The PSOE must ensure that its vision of Spain's territorial organisation prevails** over that of Sumar's in order to secure the support of regionalist parties.

ERC seems to have lost strength due to its moderate discourse and a degree of rapport with the central government. While securing its support is essential for the progressive coalition, the above could be a serious obstacle.



Getting Junts to abstain will be another challenge for the left-wing coalition. There is no doubt that the coalition partners will need to **adjust their territorial policy**, since a potential coalition government would rest on the seats of regionalist and pro-independence parties.

NEGOTIATION CHALLENGES

06

DISAGREEMENTS AND RED LINES BETWEEN THE PP AND VOX

The chances of the right-wing bloc to take power are vanishingly small, as **the PP and Vox failed to win an absolute majority**. Therefore, **Núñez Feijóo needs the support of smaller parties**. But the only real options are the PNV, UPN, the Canarian Coalition, and perhaps even Junts per Catalunya. However, these parties have already raised concerns about the possibility of Vox being in the cabinet.

The only scenario where a PP government could be possible would necessarily involve some **nationalist parties**. However, the presence of Vox in support of Núñez Feijóo is a serious obstacle. These are the parties which will play a **decisive role in the governability of Spain**.

A **hypothetical deal with the PNV** would be a possible solution for the PP-Vox bloc, but this scenario is **unlikely**. Aside from the **significant differences in their respective political platforms**, the proximity of the regional election in the Basque Country makes it particularly risky for the PNV to make a deal with Vox.

The situation is similar for **Junts per Catalunya**, for which **the presence of Vox in any pro-PP alliance would also cross a red line**. After all, their respective territorial policy ambitions for Catalonia are polar opposites.

A scenario where the PP would govern on its own without entering a coalition with Vox also looks highly unlikely for the same reason – **these nationalist parties and Vox hold diametrically opposed views**.

Despite these obstacles, which stem from incompatibilities between his main prospective partner and the nationalist parties, **Núñez Feijóo claimed victory in the election as the party with the most votes**. Indeed, during his appearance after the vote tally was released, **Núñez Feijóo appealed directly to the PSOE and the other parliamentary parties, formally asking them not to blockade his candidacy**.

Whether that would actually be possible **depends on the regional parties**. Thus, in the coming days the PP will likely need to define its territorial strategy, a conspicuous sticking point in its relationship with Vox.



07

TIMETABLE

Timeline of the next steps after the 23 July election for the formation of a new government and the beginning of the 15th legislative term of the Spanish democracy. These are the key dates in the coming weeks.

**23 JULY**

General election

The process is repeated by nominating other candidates in succession. If one of the subsequent candidates has a sufficient majority, a government is formed and the process ends.

**17 AUGUST**

Constituent meeting of the Spanish Parliament

Constituent meetings of both chambers at 10:00 a.m.

**22 AUGUST**

Formation of parliamentary groups

After consultation with the representatives of the political parties with parliamentary representation and through the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies, **the king nominates a candidate to the premiership.**

**INVESTITURE SESSION**

First round of voting by absolute majority

If the candidate does **NOT** have an absolute majority

If the candidate **DOES** have an absolute majority

**48 HOURS LATER**

Second round of voting by simple majority

If the candidate **DOES** have a simple majority



If the candidate does **NOT** have a simple majority



2 MONTHS AFTER THE FIRST INVESTITURE VOTE

Repeat election

**GOVERNMENT FORMATION**

KREAB RESEARCH

We help anticipate the key points of the political and regulatory context

We analyse the issues that are marking the political agenda so that organisations can navigate with certainty in changing or unstable scenarios. We ensure that our clients have the most reliable projections about the evolution of the socio-economic and political environments in which they carry out their activity and identify potential risks and opportunities.

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