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Results
1st round

François Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy will face each other in the 2nd round of the French presidential election on 6th May

The Socialist Party candidate (PS), François Hollande came first in the first round of the French Presidential election on 22nd April. He won 28.63% of the vote ahead of the outgoing President Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP) who won 27.18% of the vote. For the first time in the history of the 5th Republic an outgoing head of State has failed to come out ahead in the first round.

The National Front (FN) candidate, Marine Le Pen came third with 17.9% of the vote; she achieved a higher score than her father Jean-Marie in the first round of the presidential election on 21st April 2002 (16.86% of the vote). The FN candidate is ahead of Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Left Front, FG), who won 11.1% of the vote, a score that was lower than predicted in the polls. Likewise François Bayrou (Democratic Movement MoDem) did not succeed in rising above the 10% mark and won 9.13% of the vote.

The other candidates won under 5%: Eva Joly (Europe Ecology-The Greens, EELV) 2.31% Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (Debout la République, DLR) 1.79%, Philippe Poutou (New Anticapitalist Party, NPA) 1.15%; Nathalie Arthaud (Lutte ouvrière, LO) 0.56% and finally Jacques Cheminade (Solidarity and Progress, S&P), 0.25%.

Turnout was high and lay at 79.47% and was exceptionally below that recorded on 22nd April 2007 but amongst the highest in the 5th Republic. Whilst the abstention rate has grown progressively over the last few years with each intermediary election, the presidential vote is still motivates the electorate and maintains its exceptional status in France.

"This evening after the vote by the French population I have become the strongest candidate, of those who want to turn over a new leaf and open another chapter. I am also the candidate who can rally all of the citizens who are attached to a Republic that is finally exemplary, of those who are concerned by the impartiality of the State – of all of the French who want the interest of all to prevail;" declared François Hollande as the results were announced. The socialist has set several goals: *"first to succeed in a change of power that results in confidence; then to respond to legitimate concerns, the various sources of anger (unemployment, precariousness, purchasing power, insecurity). My last responsibility is to re-direct Europe on the right path of growth and employment."* He also said he was pleased with the turnout and spoke of his concern about the result achieved by the National Front: *"It is a further sign that calls for a change in the Republic*

and for understanding, not just of the anger but also of what happens in our country when it is not taken forward with pride in terms of what lifts it up and when it is sometimes diminished," he stressed.

The socialist candidate aimed to stand as a federator and after having received the support of Eva Joly (EELV) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (FG) seems to be facing the 2nd round on 6th May with confidence. *"Thanks to you the change is now happening and nothing will stop it. It is up to the French people and the choice is simple: continuing with a policy that has failed with an outgoing candidate who has divided them or they can opt for France's recovery with a candidate who can federate,"* indicated François Hollande. *"On 6th May I want victory, a clear victory, for France and its future,"* he concluded.

Before 22nd April he declared *"There is no room for negotiation between parties in a presidential election.*

Presidential election in France 22nd April and 6th May 2012

No swapping, no concessions, no trading. I am a socialist. I shall rally on the left and address the French who want change. I have said that there will be no discussions and no negotiations. It is with the project I presented in the first round that I shall approach the French in the second. However if the French take me through to the second round I shall address all of the electorate. Every vote in the first round deserves to be understood." He again rejected the proposal put forward by the outgoing President to meet for discussions in several TV debates. *"If I am in the second round there will be one main debate,"* said François Hollande. This will take place on 2nd May next.

The outgoing president, who fell behind the PS candidate, did not succeed in creating any momentum and, enjoying very little room to manoeuvre, now finds himself in a weaker position in the 2nd round. The relative weakness of Jean-Luc Mélenchon is not good news for Nicolas Sarkozy who will find it difficult to present François Hollande as the hostage of the radical left. Moreover the high score achieved by Marine Le Pen bears witness to his failure, in spite of an electoral campaign that lent to the right in order to attract FN voters to his name.

"I am calling on all of those who refuse to take refuge in uncontrolled public spending and who do not want France to experience the same fate as our European neighbours who are in the midst of a crisis. I will welcome all of those who want to rally to my project, I will do this in all neutrality, I am addressing the entire population of France," he declared after the results were announced. A real challenge faces the outgoing president in the second round: he has to rally both the electorate of Marine Le Pen and those who support François Bayrou, i.e. two electorates who have little, if nothing, in common and so in fine – in one movement he has to continue a campaign that is oriented really on the right and also move to the centre.

Nicolas Sarkozy is counting on the start of a new campaign. He will continue with the theme that he started i.e. an attempt to turn the election into a *"referendum on François Hollande"* and to introduce doubt about the ability and credibility of his rival and to make him seem lacking in terms of the vital competences required to accede to the supreme office.

Marine Le Pen won her gamble by doing better than her father, Jean-Marie, in the first round of the presidential election on 21st April 2002. *"I would be annoyed if I achieved less than 16.86% of the vote won by Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002. It would be a regression,"* she declared before the first round. The rise of the FN is still the most impressive if it is gauged in numbers of votes: Marine Le Pen won 6,344,097 votes. Ten years ago Jean-Marie Le Pen won 4,804,713 votes in the 1st round and 5,525,032 on 5th May 2002.

Although she has failed to qualify for the second round, the FN candidate has succeeded however in positioning her party as an inevitable force on the right that might become an important player if Nicolas Sarkozy is beaten by François Hollande on 6th May. The FN's influence is spreading across France including in areas where its results have been below the national average to date.

The score achieved by Marine Le Pen, who stood for the entire campaign as the only *"anti-establishment candidate"*, allows her to approach the upcoming general elections on 10th and 17th June with a certain amount of confidence (Marine Le Pen will be running in the 11th constituency of Pas-de-Calais). The FN may achieve results in many constituencies that will enable it to stay for the second round, which might be a handicap for the UMP.

Marine Le Pen will probably not call for a vote in support of Nicolas Sarkozy nor for François Holland on 6th May next. As for her electorate, according to a poll by Sofres for itélé, published on 13th April last, half (51%) will vote for Nicolas Sarkozy, 20% are due to vote François Hollande and 29% will abstain.

A revelation in the presidential campaign, Jean-Luc Mélenchon is certainly disappointed by his result. A victim in part of the strategic left vote which led people who normally vote in this direction to rally to the socialist candidate in the first round, he notably failed to draw ahead of Marine Le Pen as he had intended. Acknowledged as a good orator, he succeeded in focusing his discourse on the French population's concern about globalisation; he has given life back to the communist far left which is quick to protest. *"The Left Front is neither up for sale nor can it be bought, nor can it be tamed,"* he declared calling for a vote *"to beat Nicolas Sarkozy"* on 6th May. He does say however that he is confident about the future of his movement. *"The capitalist crisis is far from being over; we shall be in power*

in ten years time. Our goal is to take power and make a radical change to society," he declared.

François Bayrou did not manage to repeat the result he achieved on 22nd April 2007 and will not therefore be the kingmaker in this presidential election. Although the MoDem leader indicated regularly that Nicolas Sarkozy embodied "division" and François Hollande "illusion" he did however say that he would speak to both candidates in the 2nd round and that he would choose before 6th May next.

In the Sofres poll 43% of François Bayrou's supporters want to vote for François Hollande in the second round in May; one third

(33.5%) say they prefer Nicolas Sarkozy and one quarter (24%) are planning to abstain.

After ten years of government on the right and in a context of economic crisis, which makes the re-election of outgoing governments difficult, France seems to be preparing itself for political change. After the first round of the presidential election François Hollande (PS) retains his position of favourite, which he has occupied since the start of the campaign. Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP) will not be an easy rival to overcome though and will undoubtedly fight to the end. A new campaign for the second round is now starting in which the TV debate on 2nd May will be a high point.

Results of the 1st round of the presidential election on 22nd April 2012 in France

Turnout : 79,47%

Candidates	No. of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)
François Hollande (Socialist Party, PS)	10.273.475	28,63
Nicolas Sarkozy (Union for a Popular Movement, UMP)	9.754.324	27,18
Marine Le Pen (National Front, FN)	6.421.808	17,9
Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Left Front, FG)	3.985.088	11,10
François Bayrou (Democratic Movement, MoDem)	3.275.390	9,13
Eva Joly (Europe Ecology-The Greens, EELV)	828.392	2,31
Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (Debout la République, DLR)	644.065	1,79
Philippe Poutou (New Anticapitalist Party, NPA)	411.183	1,15
Nathalie Arthaud (Lutte ouvrière, LO)	202.562	0,56
Jacques Cheminade (Solidarity and Progress, S&P)	89.558	0,25

Source : French Interior Ministry, <http://elections.interieur.gouv.fr/PR2012/FE.html>

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