

European  
Elections monitor

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RESULTS

# The Social Democratic Party (SPD) takes the lead in the elections, but the next government coalition may be difficult to form

For the first time, the Germans do not know the identity of their future chancellor in the wake of the federal elections.

Opinion polls had predicted it: the Social Democratic Party (SPD), co-chaired by Norbert Walter-Borjans and Saskia Esken and led by outgoing Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, took first place in the election with 25.7% of the vote and 206 elected members in the Bundestag, the lower house of the German parliament, (+53 compared to the previous federal elections on 24 September 2017) narrowly ahead of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), party of the outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel, led by Armin Laschet, which suffered a serious setback as it fell below 30% of the vote for the first time, with 24.1% and 196 seats (151 for the CDU and 45 for the Christian Social Union (CSU), i.e. -50 compared to 2017.

"Amin Laschet's behaviour - during the severe floods in North Rhine-Westphalia in mid-July but not only that - led to a loss of trust in and reputation of the CDU. All of a sudden, it found itself in a challenger's position for which it was not prepared and only noticed it afterwards," said Thorsten Faas, professor of political sociology at the Free University of Berlin.

Armin Laschet made a series of blunders during the campaign and saw his lead in the polls shrink as the weeks went by.

For the first time in Germany's history, the two main political parties - the CDU and the SPD - have been steadily losing ground and together have won less than 50% of the vote in the federal elections.

The Greens/Alliance 90 (Bündnis 90, die Grünen), led by Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck, improved

their result with 14.8% of the vote and 118 seats (+51 compared to 2017) and beat their record of 10.7% achieved in 2009. However, they did less than the polls predicted a few months ago. However, they can rejoice: they came out on top in the regional elections held in Berlin on the same day, where they overtook the SPD.

The Liberal Democratic Party (FDP), led by Christian Lindner, has regained its long-standing role as kingmaker by obtaining 11.5% of the vote and 92 elected members (+12).

It should be noted that these two parties, the Greens and the FDP, scored high among young voters, respectively 22% and 19%.

The Alternative for Germany (AfD), of which Jörg Meuthen and Tino Chrupalla are the spokespersons (the latter was head of the list with Alice Weidel), lost slightly but managed to maintain its position with 10.3% of the vote and 83 seats (-11). The party came second in eastern German Länder with 19% of the vote behind the SPD (24%). It even took first place in Saxony with 24.6% of the vote and Thuringen with 24%.

The Left Party (Die Linke), led by Susanne Hennig-Wellsow and Janine Wissler (the latter was the head of the list with Dietmar Bartsch), fell sharply: 4.9% of the vote and 39 elected members (-30). It saved its position in the Bundestag thanks to the direct mandates it secured.

Turnout was 76.6%, almost the same as in 2017 (+0.45 points).

**Results of the federal elections of 26 September 2021 in Germany**

Turnout: 76.6%

Political parties	Number of votes won	Percentage of votes cast	Number of seats	Number of votes won	Percentage of votes cast	Number of seats	Total number of seats won
<b>Social Democratic Party (SPD)</b>	12 228 363	26.4	121	11 949 756	25.7	105	<b>206</b>
<b>Christian Democratic Union (CDU)</b>	10 445 571	22.5	98	8 770 980	18.9	53	<b>151</b>
<b>Christian Social Union (CSU)</b>	2 787 904	6	45	2 402 826	5.2	0	45
<b>Total Christian Union (CDU/CSU)</b>	<b>13 233 475</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>11 173 806</b>	<b>24.1</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>Greens/Alliance 90 coalition</b>	6 465 502	14	16	6 848 215	14.8	102	<b>118</b>
<b>Liberal Democratic Party (FDP)</b>	4 040 783	8.7	0	5 316 698	11.5	92	<b>92</b>
<b>Alternative for Germany (AfD)</b>	4 694 017	10.1	16	4 802 097	10.3	67	<b>83</b>
<b>Left Party (Die Linke)</b>	2 306 755	5	3	2 269 993	4.9	36	<b>39</b>
<b>Association of voters of South Schleswig (SSW)</b>	34 979	0.1	0	55 330	0.1	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Others</b>	43 003 108	7.2	0	42 415 895	8.6	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Independents</b>	110 799		0			0	<b>0</b>

Source : <https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahlen/2021/ergebnisse/bund-99.html>

**WHICH COALITION?**

The elections mark a rebirth of the SPD, which was still moribund a few months ago. Olaf Scholz has the best chance of succeeding Angela Merkel as chancellor. In addition to the fact that the SPD came out on top, Olaf Scholz is, according to the surveys, the candidate that Germans would prefer for the chancellorship with 48%, largely ahead of Armin Laschet 24%.

*"I am very happy to see these election results. The Germans have decided to give us a good score, this is a huge success. What I am sure of is that many of our fellow citizens voted for us because they want an alternative, because they want Olaf Scholz to become the country's chancellor,"* he said.

Olaf Scholz expressed his wish to form, with the Greens and the FDP, an "Ampel" or "traffic light" coalition, in reference to the colours of each party: red, yellow and green.

Armin Laschet admitted that his party had to face "severe losses" and that it had achieved "results that we are not satisfied with" but he is refusing to bow down to the SPD. "We will do everything we can to build a government led by the Christian Democratic Union," he said. He also stressed that coming second does not preclude the CDU from leading the next government and pointed out that there are precedents. For example, in the elections of 28 September 1969, the CDU won 46.1% of the votes and the SPD 42.7%, but it was Willy Brandt (SPD) who became Chancellor after the FDP chose to join him.

Already, the Greens, who came third, and the FDP, who came fourth, seem to want to discuss together so as to iron out their differences and find a possible consensus on a programme before formally starting negotiations with either the SPD ... or the CDU.

Armin Laschet, for his part, proposed a so-called "Jamaica" coalition with the Greens and the FDP, named after the colours of that country's flag (black, green, yellow).

It is worth remembering that the negotiations with the CDU, the Greens and the FDP stalled in 2017 and that Angela Merkel finally had to agree on a renewal of the GroKo (grand coalition) with the SPD. It is not certain that the FDP will make the same mistake as in 2017, but the scenario of a GroKo should not be totally ruled out, even if it is not the most likely hypothesis ... as in 2017. For the first time ever, the future coalition is likely to include three parties.

Moreover, the next Bundestag will have 735 members, a record number. It was 709 before. The absolute majority is therefore 368. An Ampel coalition would have 416, a Jamaica coalition 406 and the GroKo 402.

*"We have to do everything to ensure that the future coalition is formed before Christmas, a little earlier would be good,"* said Olaf Scholz. *"Germany will take over the G7 presidency in 2022,"* said his opponent Armin Laschet, suggesting that it would be good if the next government could be formed before the end of the year. Let us remember that in 2017 it took 171 days after the election before the government was announced. Negotiations may take longer than expected. In the meantime, the outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel remains in the Chancellery.

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