

Alexander Stubb and Pekka Haavisto will face each other in the second round of the presidential election

Alexander Stubb (National Coalition Party, KOK) came out ahead in the first round of the presidential election held on 28 January in Finland. The former Prime Minister (2014-2015) won 27.21% of the vote, while his main opponent Pekka Haavisto (Green League, VIHR) won 25.8%.

The two men will therefore face each other in the second round of voting on 11 February.

"This is much more than I had dared to hope for, and I am very happy and grateful," said Alexander Stubb when the results were announced. "Experience in foreign policy was probably the priority for voters when selecting the two candidates. Alexander Stubb and Pekka Haavisto are two very experienced and down-to-earth politicians who know what they are

talking about", said Hanna Ojanen, a political science researcher at Tampere University.

Jussi Halla-aho (Finns Party, PS), President of the Eduskunta/Riksdag, the single chamber of parliament, came third with 18.99% of the vote. He was followed by Olli Rehn (Centre Party, KESK), who won 15.32% of the vote. The other five candidates secured less than 5% of the vote.

Turnout was high: 71.53% of Finns went to the polls, 4.8 points more than in the first round of the previous presidential election on 28 January 2018. More than four out of ten Finns (43.9%) voted in advance, a record in the country. Finally, 58,757 Finns living abroad fulfilled their civic duty.

Results of the first round of the presidential election on 28 January 2024

Turnout: 71.53%

Candidates	Number of votes won	% of votes won
Alexander Stubb (National Coalition Party, KOK)	882 113	27.21
Pekka Haavisto (Green League, VIHR)	836 357	25.80
Jussi Halla-aho (Finns Party, PS)	615 487	18.99
Olli Rehn (Centre Party, KESK)	496 518	15.32
Li Andersson (Left Alliance, VAS)	158 328	4.88
Jutta Urpilainen (Social Democratic Party, SDP)	140 802	4.34
Sari Essayah (Christian Democratic Party, SKL)	47 82	1.48
Mika Aaltola (Independent)	47 426	1.46
Harry Harkimo (Movement Now, LN)	17 013	0.52

Source : https://tulospalvelu.vaalit.fi/TPV-2024_1/fi/ehdtulos_kokomaa.html

Presidential election in Finland

28th January 2024

"Whichever candidate I face in the second round, I know that we will have a constructive, civilised and high-quality debate on the difficult issues of foreign policy" declared Alexander Stubb, stressing that "the next President of the Republic of Finland will above all be a President who supports the West, one who supports NATO, and one of our most important relationships is our partnership with the United States". For his part, Pekka Haavisto welcomed the fact that following this presidential election, "Finland will remain a peaceful country", saying "It is important that we maintain stability".

The powers of the President of the Republic were reduced in Finland at the end of the previous century, but the Head of State still has the role of overseeing foreign and security policy, an essential role in view of the war between Ukraine and Russia. All the candidates in the presidential election shared the same position on the conflict and the threat from Moscow (Finland shares a 1,340-kilometer border with Russia). The attack by the Russian armed forces on Kyiv on 24 February 2022 united the country's political class as well as its population, who largely approved the country's entry into NATO on 4 April 2023, a decision that put an end to the policy of military non-alignment in force since the 1990s and, before that, to decades of neutrality on the part of Helsinki.

"The Head of State is seen as a strong personality whom people trust. Pekka Haavisto and Alexander Stubb both have a strong background in domestic and foreign policy, which voters value," said Hanna Wass, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki. "Over the past 2 years, national security has become a more important issue, so the role of the President of the Republic has become more important in the eyes of the Finns. He takes part in NATO meetings and if anyone was going to talk to Vladimir Putin, it would be him," said Teivo Teivainen, professor of political science at the University of Helsinki, adding: "Here, it's not like in other European countries where the far right and the far-left show

sympathy for Russia. In Finland, everyone is anti-Russian".

"Alexander Stubb and Pekka Haavisto agree that we must support Ukraine whatever the cost; Russia remains an existential threat and Finland's future lies within the European Union. The presidential candidates all defend Finland's independence and its new role as a member of NATO. They all emphasise Finland's self-sufficiency, i.e. that the country should take care of its defence independently and actively contribute to the construction of a shared European defence and Nordic cooperation", analyses Hanna Wass.

Voters should therefore look to the personal qualities and style of each of the candidates to make their choice on 11 February.

"The election will be based more on personality. The differences between the candidates will come down to nuance in terms of foreign policy. It will be more a question of electing a personality, taking into account his credibility, his reliability and his perceived qualities as a leader in foreign policy" said Tuomas Forsberg, Professor of Political Science at the University of Tampere. "The two candidates have a similar vision of the presidential office, but their personalities differ. Alexander Stubb is positioned more on the right of the political spectrum and Pekka Haavisto on the left, even though the latter has tried to emphasise that there is nothing 'red' about him and that he has taken a middle path as a Green", he added, concluding "in the second round, the debates could be decisive".

Alexander Stubb can count on the invaluable support of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo (KOK), who took office on 20 June 2023 following the National Coalition Party's victory in the general election on 2 April. "The 2 candidates are supporters of liberal democracy and agree on the fundamental principles of Finland's foreign and security policy. The differences between them lie more in style and accent: Alexander Stubb is a staunch

Transatlanticist who favours the European Union and NATO, while Pekka Haavisto is known for his peace mediation, environmental activism and UN-related functions," analysed Henri Vanhanen, Research Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

The latest opinion polls point to a victory for Alexander Stubb. Watch out for the final results on 11 February.

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