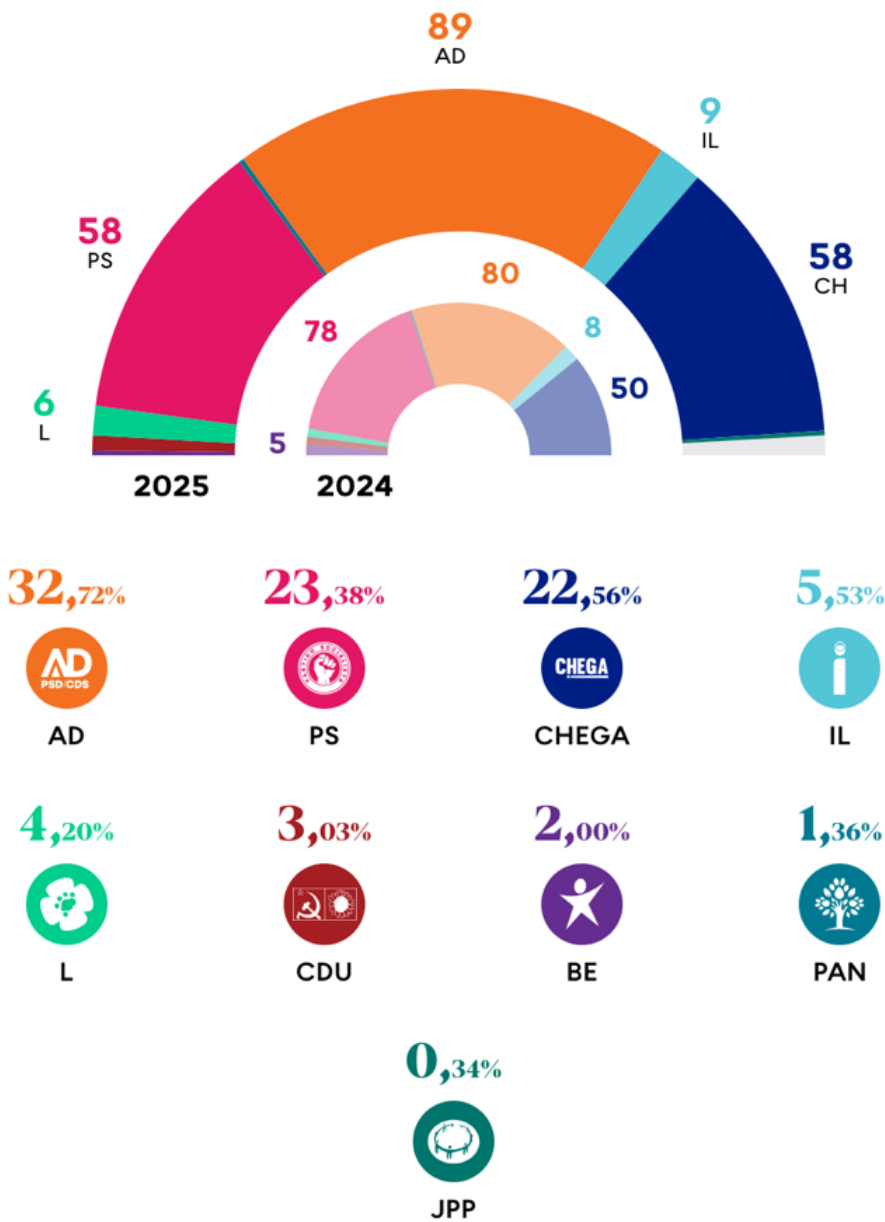


Portugal emerged from last Sunday's election night as a country that has clearly turned to the right.

Still with four mandates to be determined by the emigration electoral circles, the provisional figures are: on right spectrum the governing right coalition won the elections with 32.7% (89 MPs – increases by 9 seats the 2024 result), the far-right party Chega scores 22.6% and elects 58 MP (+8 in comparison to 2024) and the liberals of the IL party score 5.5% with 9 elected MPs (+1); on the left the social-democrats of PS have an astounding defeat, scoring 23.4% and 58 MPs (the same number of mandates as the far-right, losing 20 MPs in comparison to 2024), Livre – another social-democrat party affiliated to the European Greens – scores 4.2% and 6 MP (+2), CDU (the coalition of the Communist parties scores 3% and loses one seat (3 MPs elected) and Bloco scores 2%, loses four seats and has now only one MP. The animalist party PAN managed to secure its only seat and JPP (Juntos Pelo Povo/Together for the People), a regional party from Madeira island) that might be considered as a centre-left party managed to elect its first MP.

Out of 22 electoral circles, AD coalition won 15, Chega party one 4 (all in the south: in Alentejo region Beja, Setúbal e Portalegre and Algarve region) and the social-democrats have now only one (Évora in Alentejo).





The winners:

1. Chega party is, once again, the big winner of the elections. Not only managed to continue its growth in share of votes, member of votes and mandates, but it also may become the second political force in the parliament if the distribution of mandates of the emigration circles is the same as one year ago, which is extremely likely. If in 2024 Chega had only won the Algarve region, it is now the strongest party in the south of the country.

This increase of the far-right party was not captured by the majority of polls; though some polls pointed to some possible gains, but small ones.

1. The governing coalition also comes out of this election as a winner, managing to distance itself from the other parties as compared to one year ago. Even if AD coalition attained more MPs than the whole left combined (89 vs 70, including with the mandates of PAN and JPP) yet, they failed to attain the desired full majority. In the last weeks of the campaign, Luís Montenegro, called for a “major majority” while leaving open the possibility of forming a governing coalition with the liberals to attain a parliamentary full majority.
2. The liberals of the IL managed to increase in votes and mandates (+1) but this victory comes with a bitter-sweet flavour, since they were counting on a stronger result that would

force AD to include them in a stable governance solution. This did not happen, and they will be out of the new government.

3. The only winner on the left camp is Livre, who performed better than one year ago and is now the strongest party on the left of the social-democrats.

The losers:

1. PS is the clear loser of this election and its leader, Pedro Nuno Santos, has already presented its resignation. The socialist attained its second worst result ever, after the 1987 elections that granted Cavaco Silva and PSD (the senior party of AD) with their first full majority, and risks now to become the third political force in Portugal – something never seen before. Although the majority of the polls pointed to PS not winning this election, falling behind the far-right party was unpredicted.
2. The result of Bloco is extremely disappointing and leaves the party in an extremely fragile position, in many ways. Bloco entered the parliament from the first time in 2002 with 2 MPs elected and, from one election to the next, had always been increasing its representation until 2015 and 2019, when Bloco obtained 19 MPs. Since then, Bloco's representation had narrowed down to 5 MPs in the 2022 and 2024 elections and now loses its parliamentary group – only Mariana Mortágua will be in the Parliament.
3. To a lesser extent, the coalition of the Communists and PAN had also lost share and votes but managed to endure.

How did we get here? Some notes on a debate that is now starting to unfold.

1. Perhaps we'll never know if Chega's silly campaign stunt (an episode similar to Trump's gunshot or Bolsonaro's stabbing, but in a lighter Portuguese version – a ridiculous heartburn) that we had to witness for hours and hours in the media over the three last days of campaign, was effective in conquering votes. But, what is much clear is that AD's campaign strategy of bringing far-right issues into the debate – namely immigration and security – far from stealing votes, only served to reinforce the far right. In this respect, it's also important not to forget the responsibility of the PS, which also saw fit to chime in with the 'immigration problem' and the 'cultural values of the country' (the districts PS lost in the south were won by Chega).
2. In Portugal, the rule that "whoever is perceived as responsible for a political crisis always loses" seems to apply without any deviation. In this respect, the PS has tasted its own poison. If in the snap elections of 2022, and with the President's helpful assistance, PS (led back then, by the President of Council, António Costa) managed to impose the distorted narrative that the parties to its left, Bloco and PCP, were responsible for the crisis that led into new elections, this time AD was absolutely effective in doing exactly the same... only

against the PS.

3. The left in general is lost in a maze: the answer is going to take a long time to find and the recovery will be slow.

The leadership crisis in the PS leaves open the possibility of the party drifting to the right. Several pundits have stated that the party maybe going through the same crisis faced before by other European social-democratic parties, namely the French homologue.

The poor results of both Bloco and PCP indicate that there is a Herculean task ahead that urgently needs to be done. This work cannot be done without an intense, honest and clear debate, not only within and between parties, but also – and above all – with the society.

On the governability:

As already mentioned, the winning coalition will most likely be invited to a govern but, in the Parliament, will be forced to in dialogue with either the far right or the PS. What will result from this scenario of variable geometries is still unclear, not least because of the crisis of leadership and rum in the PS itself. Importantly, one must note that if the leader Montenegro, apparently still holds to the “no means no” regarding an alliance with Chega, the truth is that the far-right party is now being portrayed by AD political leaders as “a regular party that is part of the system”.

Another possibility that arises from this parliamentary composition is that, for the first time in democracy, the right combined secures a majority of 2/3, needed for constitutional changes. Knowing that neoliberalist capitalism is one of the lines common to all the three right parties, this leaves to Welfare State at an eminent and imminent risk. And this happens in the year preceding the 50th anniversary of the Portuguese constitution.

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