

Uncertainty remains after the Spanish parliamentary elections in which the People's Party of outgoing Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy came out ahead.

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Results

Abstract:

The People's Party (PP) of outgoing Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy came out ahead in the parliamentary elections that took place on 20th December in Spain. With 28.72% of the vote, the party won 123 seats in the Congress of Deputies, the lower house of the Spanish Parliament, i.e. 63 less than in the previous parliamentary elections that took place on 20th November 2011. The PP also won 124 seats in the Senate (12 less). The PP was followed by the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), led by Pedro Sanchez, which won 22.01% of the vote and 90 seats (20 less) and 47 Senators (1 less).

The two main Spanish parties did however achieve the lowest ever results in their history. Together they only rallied half of the Spanish vote (50.02%) in comparison to nearly three quarters in 2011 (73.40%) and 83.80% in 2008.

The two parties drew ahead of Podemos (We can) a far left party led by Pablo Iglesias, which won 19.03% of the vote and 63 seats and Ciudadanos (C's), a centrist party led by Alberto Rivera, which won 13.93% of the vote and 40 seats. Pablo Iglesias's party also won 14 seats in the Senate.

"For the first time at the end of an electoral evening the Spanish will go to bed without knowing the name of the new leader of the government," declared José Pablo Ferrandiz, researcher at the pollster Metropolis, some days before the vote. His forecast was correct.

"Tonight for certain, our country's history will have

changed," maintained the leader of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, adding, *"The results show that the two-party system, in force since the end of Franco's dictatorship forty years ago, has had its time. It is an historic day for Spain (...) we are starting a new political era in our country. Spain will no longer be the same."*

The parliamentary elections on 20th December have caused great disruption to the balance of power in the Spanish political arena, which has been dominated since 1982 by a two-party system. (PP/PSOE). Looking at the results it is difficult to say who will govern Spain over the next four years and whether the next Parliament will be able to form a government.

Turnout was higher than that recorded four years ago during the same election: it totalled 73.20%, i.e. 1.53 points more than in November 2011.

Parliamentary election results of 20th December 2015 in Spain

Turnout : 73,20% (71.88% in the Senatorial elections)

Political Parties	Congress of Deputies			Senate
	Number of votes won	% of votes won	No. of seats won	No. of seats won
People's Party (PP)	7 215 530	28,72	123	124
Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)	5 530 693	22,01	90	47
Podemos	4 780 963	19,03	63	14
Ciudadanos (C's)	3 500 446	13,93	40	0
Others	3 638 809	16,31	34	23

Source : <http://resultadosgenerales2015.interior.es/congreso/#/ES201512-CON-ES/ES>

"The People's Party is still the main political force, preferred by the Spanish, and as a result if the polls prove right it will be the only force to have won in the elections," indicated Pablo Casado, spokesperson of the party of the outgoing government.

Mariano Rajoy said that he was ready to form a government whilst noting that negotiations would be complicated: *"the winner of the election must try to put a government together. I shall try to form a government, one which is stable, but it will not be easy."*

"It is up to the political party which wins the most votes to try and form a government," the Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez said.

"The People's Party will be the first to try and form a coalition but the left bloc has a better chance because it has won more seats," indicated Ignacio Jurado, a political analyst. *"It is about whether there will be a coalition of parties against Mariano Rajoy,"* maintained his colleague, Antonio Barroso.

A priori, there are four possible solutions: a coalition rallying the People's Party and Ciudadanos; a PSOE/ Podemos coalition, a minority government led by the People's Party and finally a grand coalition with the PP and the PSOE. We must not forget the MPs from the regionalist parties either, on whom the right-wing and especially the left-wing forces might possibly turn to for support.

The first two coalitions seem impossible since neither

of them would comprise an absolute majority. A minority government seems difficult to support given the parties on the left who would certainly oppose this. Finally although the PP has not ruled out the possibility of a grand coalition, it has however said that it cannot do this with the present Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez. Some political analysts are already forecasting the organisation of early parliamentary elections in the spring of 2016.

"Podemos's biggest success to date has been to capitalise on the anger felt about the system. Elsewhere in Europe and notably in France, this has been channelled by the far right. In Spain by the far left," indicated Eurne Uriarte, a political analyst. This analysis is shared by Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca, director of the Juan March Institute: *"In spite of the pressure being placed on the country's social fabric, in spite of the enormous phenomenon of the Indignados, Spain is still a fundamentally reformist, moderate country. The feeling of anger, which is real and quite justified with the crisis, has not yet led to extremist options."*

"By making the public believe that politics are subject to the economy, exasperation has exploded against the system in place," stresses Josep Ramoneda, a philosopher, who views the vote as a punishment for the two main political parties. *"The People's Party and the Socialist Party have turned the institutions into entitlement legacies; this is the poison of the two-party system. The conservatives are mainly linked to*

inequalities, to vulnerability and to a lack of care vis-à-vis the citizens; as for the socialists, dominated by baronies, they are entrenched in an ideological vacuum and have run out of steam. In 2011 the Indignados shouted "You do not represent us!" Due to their inability to see, it remains that today, the hegemonic parties are reaping what they sowed."

"To date we thought along a left/right axis. But the new parties have created a gulf: a generational gap. The Spanish who were born into a democracy are much more demanding regarding corruption and the

implementation of electoral programmes and also about the defence of the healthcare system and education."

Stresses Enrique Gil-Calvo, a political analyst from the University Complutense - Madrid,

Long negotiations will undoubtedly be necessary to try and form a government in Spain. To be elected head of government a candidate has to rally the absolute majority of MPs to his name in the first round of voting, then a simple majority in the second round.

The new Congress of Deputies will convene for the first time on 13th January next.

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