

Outgoing President Andrzej Duda and the Mayor of Warsaw Rafal Trzaskowski will face each other during the second round of the Polish presidential election on July 12

Outgoing President Andrzej Duda (Law and Justice, PiS) came out ahead in the first round of the presidential election in Poland on June 28. He won 43.67% of the vote and Rafal Trzaskowski, Mayor of Warsaw and former Minister of Administration and Digital Affairs (2013-2014), candidate of the Civic Platform (PO) led by Grzegorz Schetyna, who obtained 30.34% of the votes. The two men will face on July 12 for a second round of voting.

Szymon Holownia, a journalist and presenter of the television programme Poland has incredible talent

who was running as a freelancer, took third place with 13.85% of the votes. He failed to embody an alternative force capable of dethroning the country's two main parties, which have fought a fierce battle in every election for the past fifteen years. Krzysztof Bosak (National Movement, RN) won 6.75% of the votes. The other seven candidates each received less than 3%.

More than six in ten Poles voted (62.90%), 13.64 points more than in the first round of the previous presidential election on May 10 2015.

Results of the first round of the presidential election on June 28 2020 in Poland

Turn out: 62.90%

Candidates	Number of votes won (first round)	% of votes won (first round)
Andrzej Duda (Law and justice, PiS)	8 412 188	43.67
Rafal Trzaskowski (Civic Platform, PO)	5 845 164	30.64
Szymon Holownia (independent)	2 667 655	13.85
Krzysztof Bosak (National Movement RN),	1 360 923	6.75
Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz (Farmers' Party PSL)	457 092	2.37
Robert Biedron (Wiosna)	425 734	2.21
Stanislaw Zoltek (New Right Congress, KNP)	45 092	0.23
Marek Jakubiak, independent	33 294	0.17
Pawel Tanajno, independent	27 610	0.14
Waldemar Witkowski (Labour Union, UP)	26 877	0.14
Miroslaw Piotrowski (Movement of Real Europe)	20 944	0.11

Source: <https://wybory.gov.pl/prezydent20200628/pl/wyniki/pl>

Andrzej Duda, a strong favourite in the election until a few weeks ago (some opinion polls showed him to be victorious in the first round), saw his lead shrink as the difficulties in organising the election by the government led by Mateusz Morawiecki (PiS) became apparent. Originally scheduled for May 10, the presidential election had been postponed indefinitely, before being set for June 28 (second round on July 12) due to the coronavirus pandemic[1] and the government's inability to reach a compromise with the opposition on the modalities of the vote as well as its legality.

Feeling weakened, Andrzej Duda stepped up his election campaign in the last month to better mobilize his supporters: he strongly defended family values and opposed the recognition of the rights of sexual minorities. On June 13, he compared the defenders of the rights of homosexual and transgender (LGBT) minorities, who for him "are not human beings", to "defenders of Bolshevik ideology". Andrzej Duda clearly sought to distinguish himself from his main opponent, Rafal Trzaskowski, a signatory of the LGBT+ Charter, who, for his part, advocates tolerance and openness towards sexual minorities.

By hardening his tone, the outgoing president may have locked himself into conservative rhetoric that could make it difficult to rally moderate voters in the second round. "Unlike parliamentary elections, you need more than 50 percent of the vote to win a presidential election. Andrzej Duda therefore needs the centrist electorate. By stirring up the LGBT issue, he has mobilized his base, but moderate voters may find his rhetoric too clumsy, too extreme," said Stanley Bill, a professor of Polish studies at Cambridge University. Krzysztof Bosak's voters are expected to switch to Andrzej Duda on July 12, but this rapprochement could deter Poles who have voted for other candidates from doing the same.

Rafal Trzaskowski replaced the Vice-President of the Parliament Malgorzata Kidawa-Blonska as the Civic Platform's candidate in the presidential election on May 16. The latter, who had fallen below 5% of the vote in opinion polls, chose to withdraw. "Rafal Trzaskowski set the tone and Andrzej Duda tried to regain control, without much success. The LGBT issue was raised very late in the campaign, compared to the previous elections, which shows a certain form of panic within the ruling party," analysed Ben Stanley, professor of political science at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS) in Warsaw.

"I won this first round thanks to your votes in an absolutely unquestionable way. The lead is huge and I'm grateful to you for that. The campaign is going to continue, we are having a very important discussion about Poland, we raise the question of the Poland of the future," said Andrzej Duda on the announcement of the first results.

Rafal Trzaskowski said that "the second round will not be a choice between Andrzej Duda and Rafal Trzaskowski, but a choice between an open Poland and a Poland that is always looking for an enemy and prefers to divide the population" adding "I will be the candidate for change".

The victory of the PO candidate is possible on July 12 but the outgoing head of state Andrzej Duda does not admit defeat. He is the incumbent president and enjoys preferential treatment in the State media, an important advantage in a context where the election campaign is made difficult.

The second round is therefore very open. We will see on July 12 whether Poland chooses to turn the page on Duda or whether it prefers to keep its trust in him for the next five years.

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[1] As of June 28, Poland had 33,907 cases of Covid-19. The country recorded 1,438 deaths due to the disease (Ministry of Health figures).

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