

Left-wing forces narrowly win Danish general elections

The Red Bloc of left-wing parties came out on top in Denmark's snap general elections held on 1 November.

The Social Democratic Party (SD), led by outgoing Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, won 27.54% of the vote and 50 of the 179 seats in the Folketing, the single chamber of Parliament, an increase of 2 seats compared to the previous elections on 5 June 2019. The party remains by far the largest in the country. "This is the best election for the Social Democrats in more than 20 years," said Mette Frederiksen when the results were announced.

The Socialist People's Party (SF), led by Pia Olsen Dyhr, secured 8.29% of the vote and 15 seats (+1); the Unity List-Red-Green Alliance (E) won 5.16% of the vote and 9 seats (-4).

On the other hand, the Social Liberal Party (RV), led by Sofie Carsten Nielsen, was sanctioned for having been at the origin of the government's downfall (the party had issued an ultimatum to Mette Frederiksen to call elections after the summer recess, at the latest at the opening of the Parliament session on 4 October 2022 [1]). The party won 3.79% of the vote and halved its number of elected members to 7 (-9), one of the lowest results in its history. The RV leader had indicated during the election campaign that she would support the continuation of Mette Frederiksen as Prime Minister, a statement that destabilised many of her party members. The green and pro-European Alternative (A) party led by Franciska Rosenkilde won 3.33% of the vote and 6 seats.

Together, these five parties won 48.11% of the vote and 87 seats. The left-wing forces also won

two seats in Greenland and one seat in the Faroe Islands, giving them a majority of 90 seats.

The Blue Bloc, which regroups the right-wing parties, won 41.06% of the vote and 72 seats.

The Liberal Party (V), led by Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, won 13.31% of the vote and halved its number of MPs to 23 (-20), its lowest result since the general elections of 10 May 1988 (at that time it was led by Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, father of the current leader).

The Danish Democrats (AE), recently founded by the former Minister of Immigration and Integration (2015-2019) in Lars Lokke Rasmussen's (V) government, Inger Støjberg (former member of the Liberal Party), entered parliament with 8.08% of the vote and 14 MPs. The Liberal Alliance (LA), led by Alex Vanopslagh, won 7.87% of the vote and 14 seats (+10) (the party seems to have attracted many former Liberal Party voters); the Conservative People's Party (KF), led by Soren Pape Poulsen, won 5.51% of the vote and 10 seats (-2) and the New Right (D), a nationalist party founded and led by Pernille Vermund, won 3.66% of the vote and 6 seats.

The People's Party (DF), a right-wing populist party led by Morten Messerschmidt, registered a sharp decline: it obtained 2.63% of the vote and won 5 seats (-11), its lowest result since it entered the Folketing 24 years ago.

Finally, the Moderates (M), founded by former Prime Minister (2015-2019) Lars Lokke Rasmussen, at the time leader of the Liberal Party, entered parliament with 9.27% and 16 elected members.

[1] The motion of no confidence was a consequence of the handling of the "mink scandal". In November 2020, around sixteen million minks were killed after a variant of the coronavirus was identified in the country's farms. However, the Danish government overstepped its powers in taking the decision to cull mink, as it had no legal basis to do so. On 30 June 2022, a committee of enquiry said that Mette Frederiksen had deliberately misled her fellow countrymen but was unaware that the mink cull was an illegal action.

General elections in Denmark

1st November 2022

02

The turnout was almost the same as in the previous elections on 5 June 2019. It totalled 84.10% (-0.44 points). However, it was the lowest turnout since 1990, since Danes traditionally turn out in large numbers to do their civic duty.

Results of the 1 November 2022 general elections in Denmark

Turnout: 80.10%

Political Parties	Number of votes won	% of votes won	Number of seats
Social Democratic Party (SD)	973 244	27.54	50
Liberal Party (V)	470 289	13.31	23
Moderate (M)	327 659	9.27	16
Socialist People's Party (SF)	292 915	8.29	15
Danish Democrats (AE)	285 614	8.08	14
Liberal Alliance (LA)	278 098	7.87	14
Conservative People's Party (KF)	194 808	5.51	10
Unity List-Red-Green Alliance (E)	182 305	5.16	9
Social Liberal Party (RV)	133 802	3.79	7
The New Right (D)	129 410	3.66	6
The Alternative (A)	117 629	3.33	6
People's Party (DF)	93 100	2.63	5
Christian Democrats (K)	18 503	0.52	0
Others	36 003	1.02	0

Source: <https://www.dst.dk/valg/Valg1968094/other/Valgopgorelse2022.pdf>

After the results were announced, Mette Frederiksen said that the outgoing government (a minority government formed by the Social Democratic Party alone and supported by the other four left-wing parties) no longer held a majority in the country. The

outgoing Prime Minister repeated that her hand was still extended to the centre parties.

During the campaign, she had expressed her wish to form an wider government "*because times are difficult and crises are interconnected*". The outgoing Prime Minister said she supported the formation of a "*grand*

coalition" government in a move that would break the traditional two-bloc political system. *"The time has come to try a new form of government in Denmark. We are ready for compromise and cooperation. We want a broad-based government, made up of parties from both sides of the political spectrum,"* she said. Only the Social Liberal Party and the Moderates were interested in the proposal.

"Chaos is the last thing Denmark needs," Mette Frederiksen said after the results were announced. *"It will take time and compromises will be necessary"* she admitted during the debate with the other party leaders. *"The formation of a new government will be very difficult. Climate crisis, inflation, war in Europe... and a potential recession in the European economy, all of us have to put behind us the harsh words we exchanged during the election campaign and agree to sit down at the negotiating table,"* said the outgoing Prime Minister.

"It is not a case of thinking red block or blue block but of knowing where the common sense is", said Lars Lokke Rasmussen. *"We will do our best to be the bridge, that's the idea",* he said as he performed his civic duty. He promised to *"build bridges"*.

The former head of government said he was not seeking a third term as Prime Minister. He said he wanted to get out of the left/right logic and federate around a centrist project.

"The Prime Minister wants a broad government because she wants to be Prime Minister again. It is possible, but what we know for sure is that Denmark must have a new government" said Lars Lokke Rasmussen who

knows that he holds Mette Frederiksen's future partly in his hands.

"We hope for a government consisting of liberals, social democrats and moderates," said the Moderates' number two Jakob Engel-Schmidt.

Denmark was governed by a *"grand coalition"*, bringing together the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party, under the third government of Anker Jorgenson (SD) in 1978. This lasted fourteen months.

"One of the major questions now is whether Lars Lokke Rasmussen will have the will and courage to act," said Politiken editor Christian Jensen. *"If Mette Frederiksen can lure him into it, she can make his triumph a historic turning point in Danish politics,"* he added.

The negotiations to form the next government could be long. And Lars Lokke Rasmussen is an experienced man who knows how to assert his interests. *"He has been extremely skilful, putting himself above the other candidates and campaigning for a government in the centre, without saying who he might support as prime minister,"* said University of Aarhus political science professor Rune Stubager. *"In the current context, his experience as Minister of the Interior and Health (2001-2007) has also contributed to his credibility,"* he added.

In the aftermath of the elections, it is difficult to say who will reside in Marienborg, the Danish Prime Minister's home.

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