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Legislative elections in Portugal

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS | 31st January 2022

OVERVIEW

- The centre-left **Socialist Party** wins the anticipated legislative elections with an absolute majority in Parliament, while former left-wing allies are heavily penalised
- The centre-right **Social Democratic Party** remains the second most voted party whilst recent and further to the right parties rise
- The populist far-right party **Chega** witnesses an overwhelming growth, becoming the third largest party

Two years after the last general elections in Portugal, the vote for the composition of the parliament has given the majority to António Costa's Socialist Party and a very different national assembly will now be formed. Votes from international circles, which represent 4 seats in parliament, are yet to be published, but the general context and parliamentary balance will not change.



With 41,7% of the votes, the **Socialist Party** (PS) elected 117 of the 230 deputies that constitute the Portuguese Parliament, guaranteeing an absolute majority. Promises to govern with dialogue.

The former left allies of PS, **Left Block** and **PCP**, fall in vote and lose seats (19 to 5 and 12 to 6, respectively) in parliament. **PAN** (People, Animals and Nature) also loses strength compared to 2019, from 4 to 1 MPs. **Green Party** (PEV), in coalition with PCP, leaves the parliament.

On the right, **Chega** gets 12 seats in Parliament. It is the political force that experiences the most significant growth in recent electoral history, followed by **Iniciativa Liberal** (IL) that rises from a single member of parliament to 8 MPs. **Christian Democrat Party** (CDS) accentuates the decline, leaves the parliament and its President resigns.

ANALYSIS

António Costa has met the conditions to be reconducted for a third mandate as prime-minister ensuring an absolute majority of seats in Parliament. The Socialist Party (PS) meets the campaign goals despite polls pointing to a technical tie between PS and Social-Democrat Party (PSD) and political erosion from being in power for 6 years.

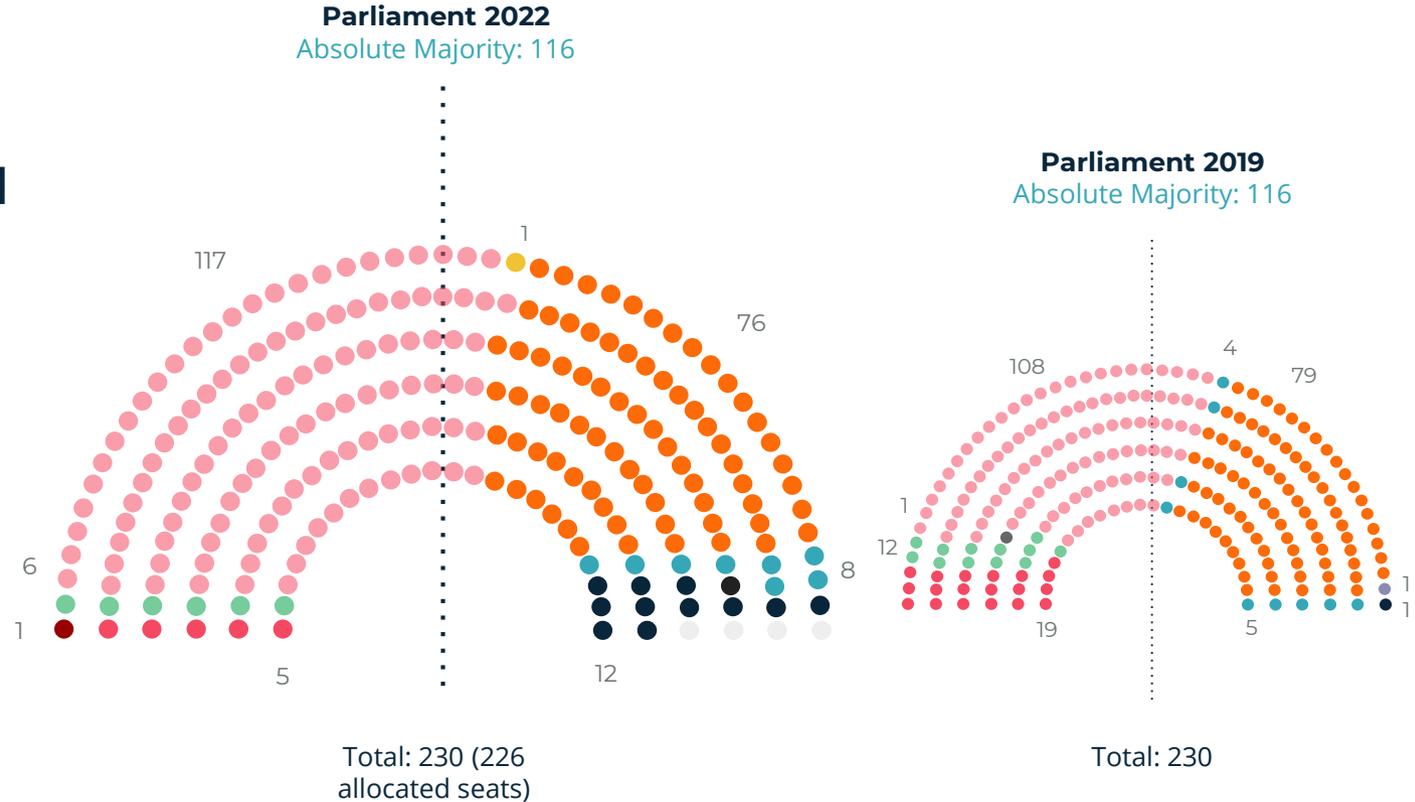
While the Socialist Party achieved electoral reinforcement, winning in all districts except Madeira, the left-wing parties and former allies in the Parliament, **PCP and Left Block, suffered a strong electoral blow**, losing half of the MPs and 14 seats, respectively. Both were penalised in the polls after rejecting the State Budget that led the President to call for early elections.

PSD fails to make electoral gains despite favourable results in the polls. The centre-right party essentially keeps its electoral expression, while seeing **substantial growth of parties further to the right, Chega and Iniciativa Liberal**. The historical party CDS-PP loses parliamentary representation.

The majority of votes are concentrated on the two parties of the political centre, PS and PSD, back to levels of 2009 and 2011. Nevertheless, at the same time, a trend towards distribution of Parliament in recent parties is confirmed.

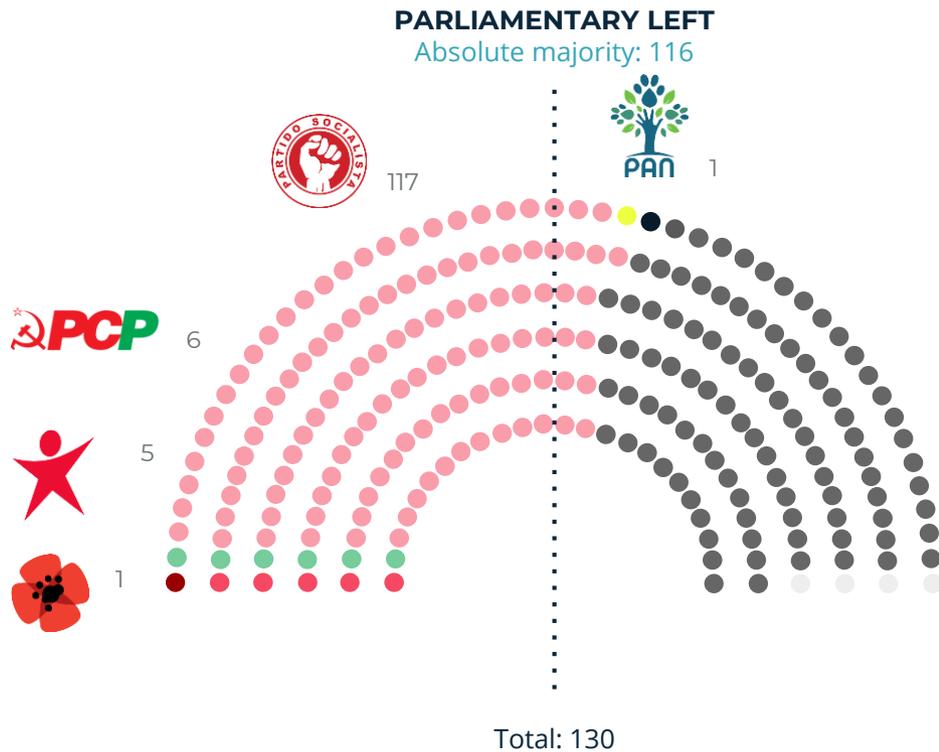
PARLIAMENT'S CONFIGURATION

A new Parliament where the political centre holds the majority of seats, with PS as the main party and a more fragmented right-wing block with the significant rise of the far-right.



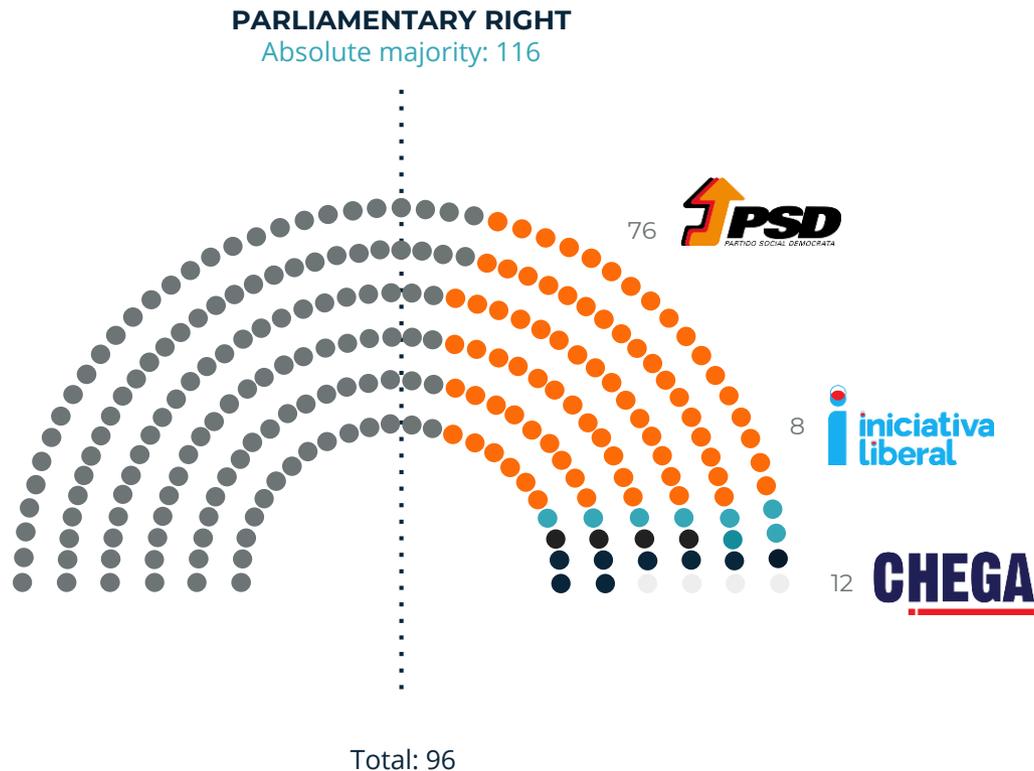
PARLIAMENT'S CONFIGURATION

The Socialist Party increases its dominant position on the left by taking many of the seats of former allies PCP and Left Block, now small parties.



PARLIAMENT'S CONFIGURATION

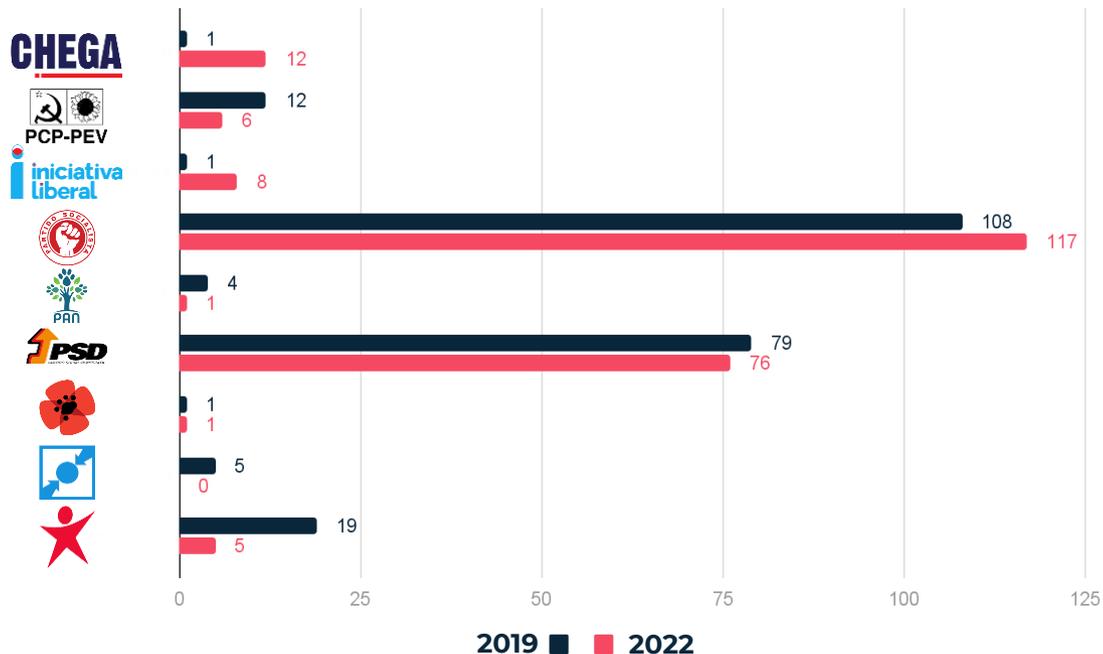
More fragmented right with growth of Iniciativa Liberal (IL) and Chega, which are now medium-size parties.



Variation of MPs

The Socialist Party broke through the crucial number of 116 Members of Parliament needed to hold a majority of the 230 available seats in the Portuguese Parliament*.

Far-Right party Chega! and Right-Wing party Liberal Initiative also conquered a significant number of seats in the Parliament, at the expense of the Left-Wing parties.

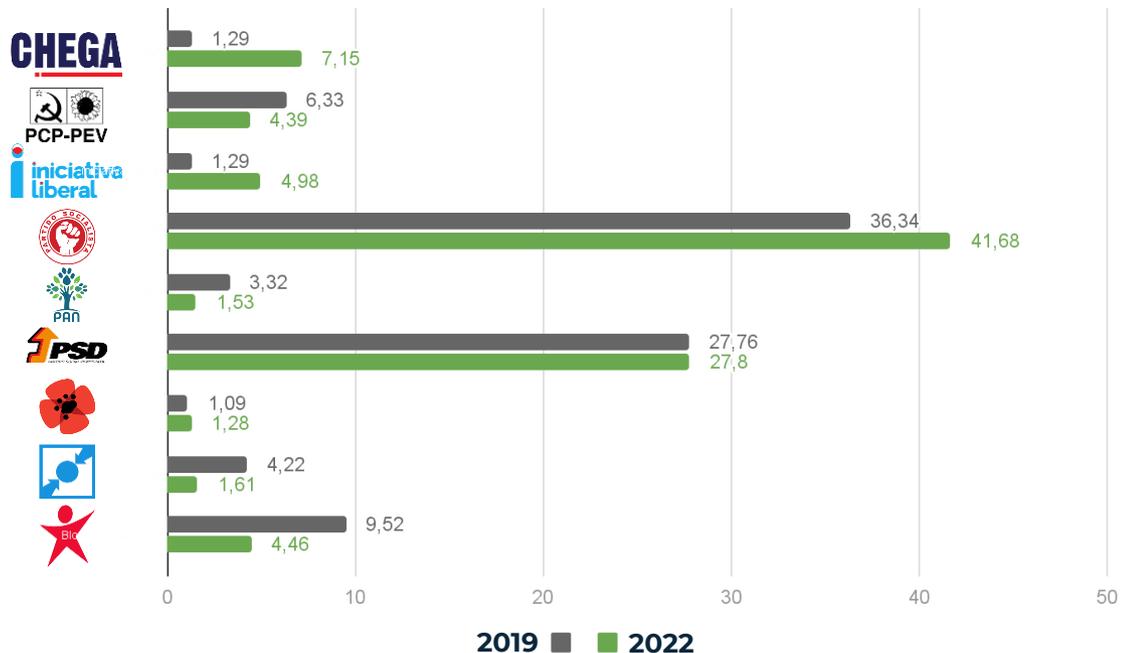


*4 seats remain available until emigration votes are tallied

Variation in votes

The Socialist Party's victory looks to have been achieved through a dislocation of votes from the parties further to the Left: Left Block, Communist Party, and Party of People, Animals and Nature.

On the Right-Wing, the main opposition party - PSD - failed to push past the same voting of 2019. Abstention rates drastically feel (42,04% compared to 51,43% in 2019), favouring Chega!, the Liberal Initiative and the Socialist Party.*



*Emigration votes not yet included

MAIN ACTORS' POSITIONING

The **Socialist Party** emerges strengthened with an absolute majority after the political crisis provoked by its former left-wing partners in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis. This is an historical victory to the party, which after six years in Government will now rule without any need to negotiate agreements in the parliament.

António Costa claims, however, that an absolute majority will not equal “absolute power” and so he will continue to seek dialogue with other political parties (with the exception of the far-right party Chega), the President and social partners (unions and trade associations). The new Government will be smaller and a “task force” focused on economic recovery.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Left Block (BE) and **Communist Party** (PCP) concede defeat and acknowledge the likely absence of dialogue with the Socialist Party that will result from its absolute majority.

These left wing parties will analyze the electoral results in detail.

The leader of the **Social Democratic Party**, which finished in second place, acknowledges a heavy defeat. Though not resigning immediately, Rio does not see how can he be useful for the party, envisioning a stable four-year Government of the Socialist Party, in which his role as opposition leader will be of little significance.

He blames the bad results on the fragmentation of votes on the right that resulted from the rise of two new right-winged parties: far-right Chega and Liberal Initiative.

MAIN ACTORS' POSITIONING

Chega's leader, André Ventura, promises a strong opposition to the socialists by using his newly conquered power as the third largest party leader. He affirms to be focused on his goal of making Chega the country's largest political party within the next six years and replacing the Social Democratic Party as the most relevant party on the whole right-wing spectrum.

Liberal Initiative emerged from the ninth biggest political force to the fourth and claims to be "the political phenomenon".

Christian Democrats (CDS) are out of the parliament and consequently the leader Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos has already resigned.

Rui Tavares, **Livre's** founder and leader, points that his party will be the main ecological and environmentalist political force in the portuguese parliament, also reminding its with ties to the transnational Green European Left movement.

The party managed to re-enter the parliament after its previously only elected MP cut ties with it.

PAN, an environmentalist party that refuses to identify itself with either the left or the right, has suffered a significant loss and will reflect on the results. Its leader expressed concerns with the rise of the far-right and populism.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

While the new parliamentary configuration confirms a **clear majority of deputies belonging to the centre** in ideological terms, there is a **rise of recent and smaller parties** and a fall of historic parliamentary forces.

With a total of 8 parties, the Portuguese National Assembly is, at the same time, one of the most **fragmented parliaments since the 1974 revolution**.



It will be the main opposition party in a context where the majority of the electorate has shown a preference for the centre. Room for reform in conjunction with the PS is unlikely given the expected exit of its leader Rui Rio and the absolute majority of the socialists.



Known so far in the person of its leader, André Ventura, the party will face the challenge of creating a parliamentary group, promising a “strong opposition” to António Costa.



Ideologically contrary to the socialists in what concerns the economic model and the role of the state, IL, which rises from 9th to 4th political force, is expected to monitor and question the new government’s public policies.



The Left Block’ main target in the parliament will be the far-right party Chega.



Reduced to less than half of the previous parliamentary group, appeals for the dialogue of the socialists with the left and not the social democrats.



It was the most natural ally of the Socialists in the Parliament after the breakdown of its agreement with the former partners Left Block and PCP. With only one deputy and the absolute majority scenario, loses legislative relevance.



Livre (far-left) achieves the goal of electing one deputy, the leader Rui Tavares, who has defended a left-convergence in the Parliament. It will be the new Green Party.

NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

These are the main milestones up to the formation of the next government

1

The new parliament takes office three days after publication of the electoral maps in Diário da República.

3

The Constitution does not impose a deadline for the nomination of the Prime Minister by the President of the Republic, but since PS has an absolute majority, the process should be quick.

5

The State Budget is delivered to Parliament within 90 days of the government taking office, but it could be quicker since António Costa already confirmed he will present the same State Budget blocked in October and the country is living on a budget limited to twelfths.

2

The President of the Republic begins **institutional hearings with the parties** that guaranteed parliamentary seats with a view to appointing the prime minister.
1st and 2nd February

4

The Prime Minister is appointed and **the new government takes office**. The Parliament discusses and votes the **programme of the new government within ten days**.

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