

Germany votes: Still undecided

Our new weekly take on the German elections today looks at the most recent polls and a still undecided race



Candidates for Chancellorship Laschet (CDU) and Scholz (SPD) visit flood affected city of Stolberg, Germany

With less than five weeks to go, the German election campaign is finally heating up. Most Germans still call it a very dull campaign but the polls have become more exciting than ever. Since the start of the year, swings in support for the different parties as well as their leading candidates have been much stronger than in previous election years.

With the CDU (Laschet) and SPD (Scholz) currently at around 22%, it would be the worst result ever for the CDU

Over the last two weeks, the SPD and its Spitzenkandidat, current finance minister Olaf Scholz, have gained support, while at the same time the CDU and Spitzenkandidat, Armin Laschet, have lost support, resulting in a head-to-head race to become the largest party. Both the CDU and the SPD would currently come in at around 22%. This is a clear surprise as it would be the worst result ever for the CDU and an unexpected comeback for the SPD, which had been on a downward trend for a long while. The Greens and Spitzenkandidat Annalena Baerbock have lost further ground after their rise in April. There are several reasons for the ongoing shifts. Even if Germans do not vote for

the chancellor directly, the popularity of the Spitzenkandidat clearly has an impact on the votes for the parties.

The election campaign so far has been affected by personal missteps and mistakes. First it was the controversial nomination of the Spitzenkandidat in the CDU compared to a very smooth process in the Green party, which benefited Annalena Baerbock’s popularity. After several setbacks caused by blown up resumes and plagiarism allegations, Annalena Baerbock dropped in the popularity rankings. Armin Laschet dropped in the popularity rankings after pictures showing him laughing at an event for the victims of the floods. According to recent polls, German voters have very little trust in both Baerbock and Laschet. Laschet is also often characterized as being ‘boring’. As a result, Olaf Scholz currently seems to fully exploit his potential of government experience. He leads the popularity rankings by a large margin on the back of being perceived as competent and experienced.

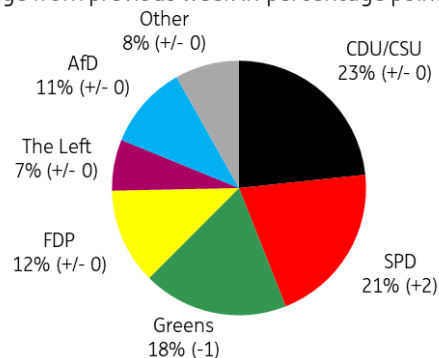
The swings in the polls over the last months are a strong warning against drawing premature conclusions. However, with the expected high number of postal votes (28% of all votes in the 2017 elections and probably much more this year), the election will not be decided on 26 September but earlier. Single events like currently Afghanistan or the floods can easily tip the balance; the upcoming tv debates as well.

It looks as if the German electorate is still very much undecided on what it really wants

As it currently stands, the drop in electorate support for the CDU seems to suggest a clear wind of change in the electorate. The fact that Olaf Scholz and the SPD are on the rise, however, seems to suggest that the electorate is in search of continuity and not in search of new faces or parties. Or to put it differently, it actually looks as if the German electorate is still very much undecided on what it really wants.

German elections weekly voting

If there were general elections next Sunday who would you vote for? (Change from previous week in percentage points in brackets)



Source: Kantar, Forsa, INSA, survey period: calendar week 32/33; ING Economic & Financial Analysis

Postal votes at the 2017 elections



More than 28% of the German voters used postal votes at the 2017 elections

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