

Poland's ruling party candidate edges ahead in tight presidential first round

The ruling party (Civic Coalition) candidate Rafal Trzaskowski won the first round of the presidential election in Poland with 31.36% of the vote, but his lead over Karol Nawrocki (29.54%) was smaller than expected at just 1.6pp vs 6.2pp on average in the pre-election polls



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Rafal Trzaskowski victory came as no surprise

Rafal Trzaskowski's victory and level of support were in line with expectations, but Nawrocki's result was about 4.5pp above poll averages. Other far-right candidates also exceeded expectations i.e. Mentzen (14.81%) and Braun (6.34%), by about 3.7 and 1.8pp each. In contrast, support for candidates from the ruling coalition, centrist Szymon Holownia (4.99%) and leftist Magdalena Biejat (4.23%) was weaker than poll averages by about 2pp each. Far left candidate Adrian Zandberg's result (4.86%) was also slightly weaker than expectations. The turnout was high at 67.31%.

The second round result will be a close call

Trzaskowski and Nawrocki will now face each other in the second round of the elections, which will take place on 1 June. The outcome will be determined by (1) the flow of support from the

candidates who were eliminated in the first round to those who will clash in the second, (2) the ability to mobilise new voters, and (3) the candidates failures and weaknesses, which will be of crucial importance in the second round, due to their impact on swing voters. In the second round, shifts in voter support—particularly from candidates eliminated in the first round—will be crucial. The ability to win over young voters, who largely backed far-right or far-left candidates, will play a decisive role in shaping the final outcome.

Our simulations, factoring in expected vote transfers from candidates eliminated in the first round, indicate an even tighter race between Trzaskowski and Nawrocki than before. With the second round set for 1 June 2025, the final outcome is poised to be a very close call.

The implications of the second round

The second round carries greater significance than the presidential election itself, effectively serving as a referendum on two competing political blocs: the current ruling Civic Coalition-led government, and the Law and Justice camp, which governed from 2015 to 2023. If Trzaskowski fails to secure the presidency, it could destabilise the current ruling coalition and obstruct its planned reforms. Conversely, a Trzaskowski victory would test the coalition's ability to implement structural reforms in both the state and economy. So far, legislative efforts have been hampered by the possibility of a veto from President Duda, representing the opposition. If Trzaskowski wins, the ruling coalition will face pressure to deliver on the reform promises made in the run-up to the 2023 general elections.

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