

German election results explained in graphics

di Kristin Zeier e Gianna-Carina Grün

The conservative CDU led by Friedrich Merz won Germany's 2025 election. Here's a look in charts at the wins and losses, seats in parliament, voter demographics and possible coalition outcomes.

The [German election on February 23](#) saw a record-breaking voter turnout of 82.5%, according to the Federal Election Commission. That's a significant increase from 76.6% in 2021, and the highest voter participation since unification in 1990. The high voter turnout is an indicator of the [public's heightened concern](#) about the country's current political and economic outlook after the government collapsed in November.

More than 59 million people were eligible to vote in this year's federal election.

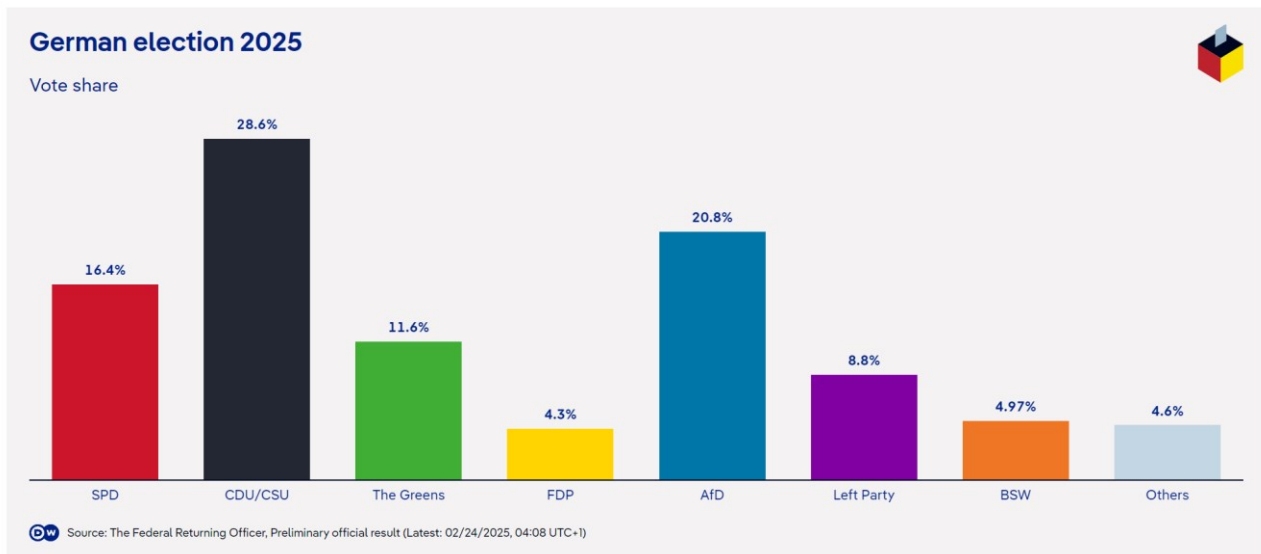
Who won Germany's election?

With vote counting finished, preliminary results show the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) led by [chancellor candidate Friedrich Merz](#) and its sister Christian Social Union (CSU) won the election with 28.6% of the vote.

The far-right [Alternative for Germany \(AfD\)](#), which has been designated in parts as extremist, came in second with 20.8%.

Former governing coalition partners the [Social Democrats \(SPD\)](#) and the [Greens](#) won 16.4% and 11.6% respectively. The fiscally conservative [Free Democratic Party \(FDP\)](#), which was also part of the coalition but left the government in November, failed to get past the 5% hurdle to enter Germany's lower house of parliament or Bundestag.

The Federal Electoral Committee is expected to verify and announce the final official results of the election in the Bundestag on March 14.



Which parties had the biggest gains and losses?

The big winner of the election in terms of voter gains was the right-wing populist AfD, which nearly doubled its voter share over the previous federal election in 2021. The party, whose chancellor candidate [Alice Weidel received praise from Elon Musk](#) for her hard stance on migration, was particularly strong in the East.

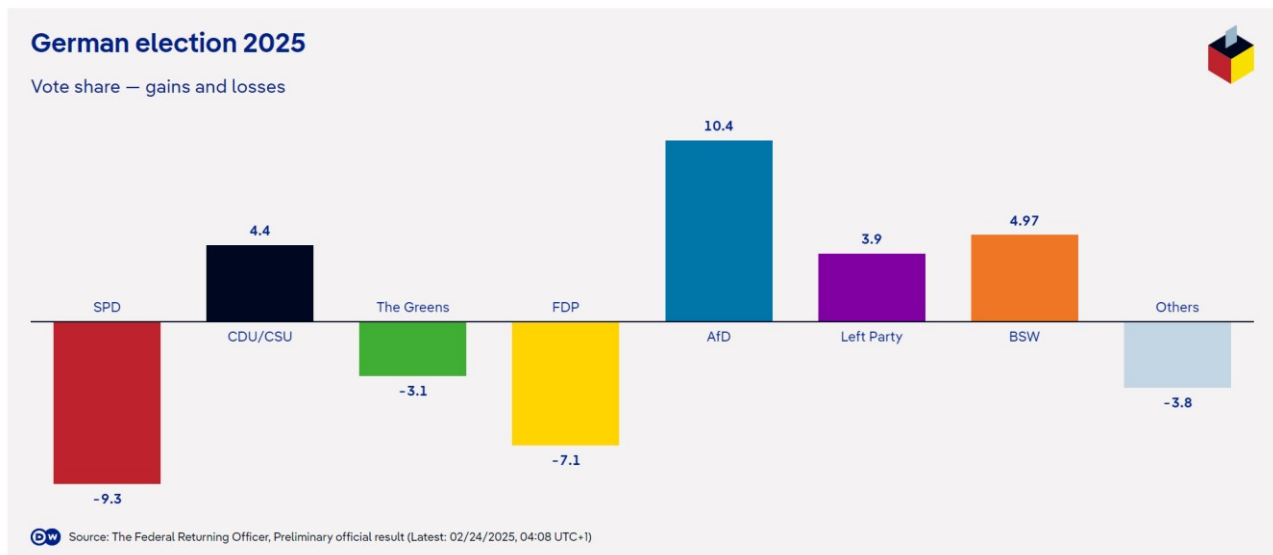
The surprise winner of the election was the [Left Party](#). After years of declining membership and poor returns at the polls, the party managed to [pull off a comeback](#). The Left Party, which has its roots in East Germany's communist party, launched a highly popular social media campaign and succeeded at appealing to young voters, many of whom were concerned by the rise of the far right and disillusioned with the SPD and Greens.

The center-left SPD, Germany's oldest party, recorded not only its worst result in a federal election in over a century but also its largest loss of votes compared to previous elections. Former [Chancellor Olaf Scholz](#) has announced he will not serve in the next government.

The Green Party, which soared to popularity in the 2021 election, took a 3% loss. Whether it was high energy prices, frustration at the slow pace of adopting renewable energy policies or the focus on migration, the Greens [failed to hold on to their votes](#).

The Left Party in particular profited from the Greens' losses, picking up 700,000 votes (see voter migration chart below).

The FDP, whose withdrawal from the coalition triggered the snap election, suffered heavy losses. The party won't enter the Bundestag after missing the 5% threshold. Since 2013, it is the second time in its history that the FDP has failed to pass the mark. Party head Christian Lindner announced that he would retire from politics.



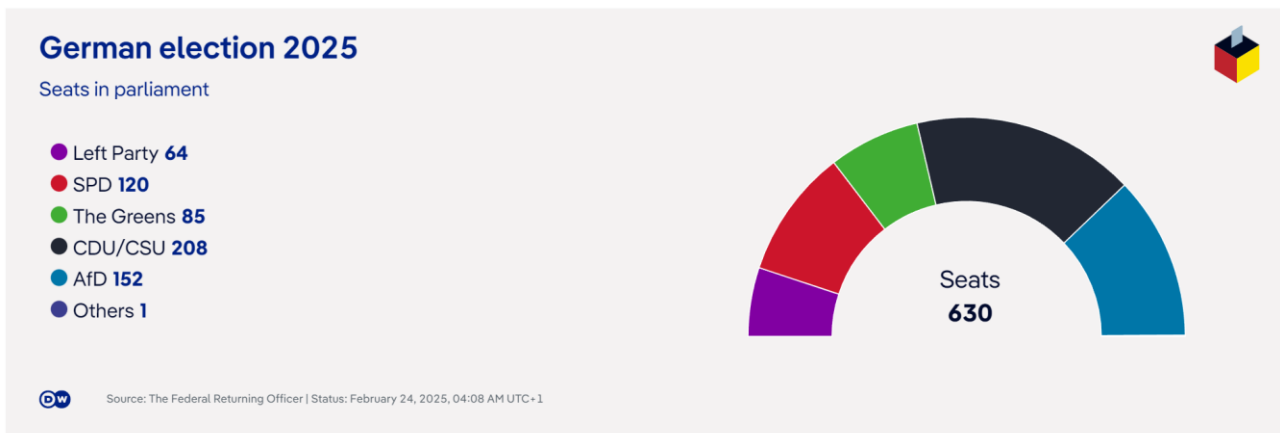
How are seats distributed in Germany's parliament?

When Germans go to the polls, [they have two votes](#): one for a candidate to represent their constituency and the second for a party's state list.

The first vote is for a direct candidate running in the respective electoral district and determines half of the parliament's total composition, ensuring each district is represented. The second vote decides the strength of the parties in the Bundestag, and thereby establishes how many candidates from that state list will be granted seats in the Bundestag.

There are 630 seats in the Bundestag. The number of seats a party has is determined by their vote share. A party must receive at least 5% of votes to enter parliament. However, an exception is granted to parties that field winning candidates in at least three electoral districts: winning three individual mandates lifts the 5% threshold for the respective party.

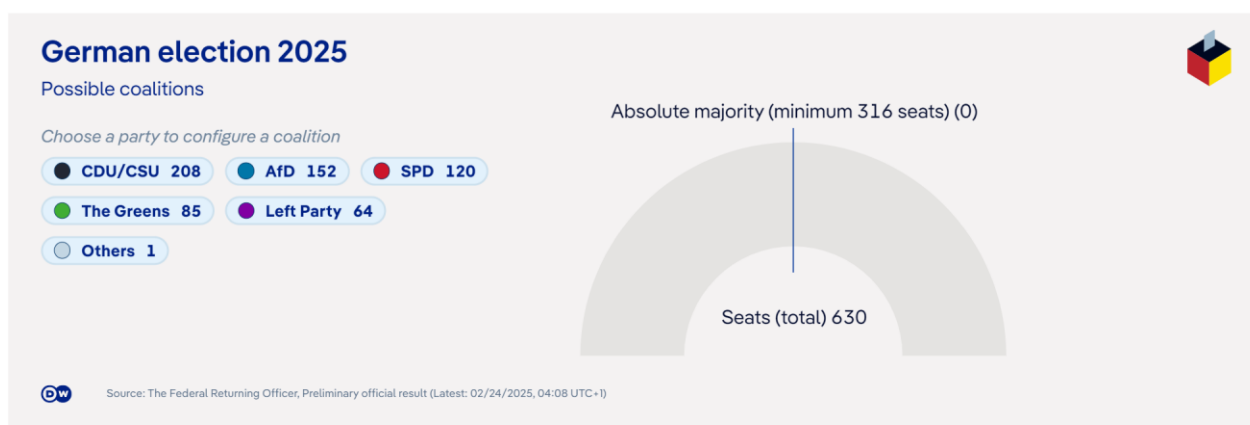
The CDU will have 208 seats in the Bundestag. The next largest party is the AfD with 152 seats. The SPD has 120 and the Greens 85, both fewer than in the previous legislative period. The Left Party will have 64 seats.



What kind of coalition government could Germany have?

While the CDU/CSU have won the largest share of votes, they don't hold an absolute majority in the Bundestag. They will need to enter a coalition with another party to secure 316 seats, the minimum for a majority, and form the next government.

The CDU has ruled out a coalition with the AfD, insisting that it is the ["firewall" to the far right](#). That leaves a two-way coalition with the SPD as the most likely option. Friedrich Merz, the leader of the CDU, has said he [favors a coalition with the Social Democrats](#) and hopes to close a coalition agreement in a "short time."

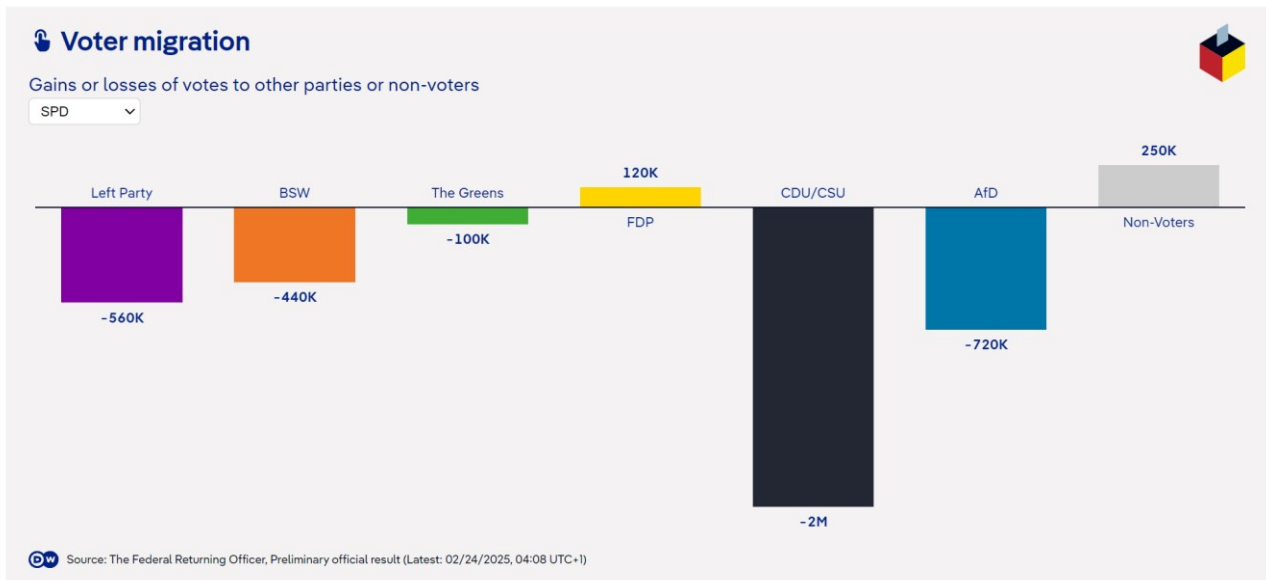


Voter migration: How did voters move between parties?

The February 23 election saw voters switching affiliations and moving across the party spectrum. One of the most significant migrations was away from the center-left SPD

to the conservative CDU/CSU, which picked up roughly 2 million votes from the Social Democrats.

The Left Party benefited from voter migration from both the SPD and the Greens, adding 560,000 and 700,000 votes, respectively.



What are the regional differences in voting patterns?

Nationally, the AfD achieved roughly 20% of the vote, but [in eastern Germany, the AfD is the strongest force](#). In the states of Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia, the AfD won the largest portion of the second-ballot vote, which determines the strength of the party's representation in the Bundestag. In many constituencies, over 30% of the second vote went to the AfD. The CDU and SPD trailed far behind.

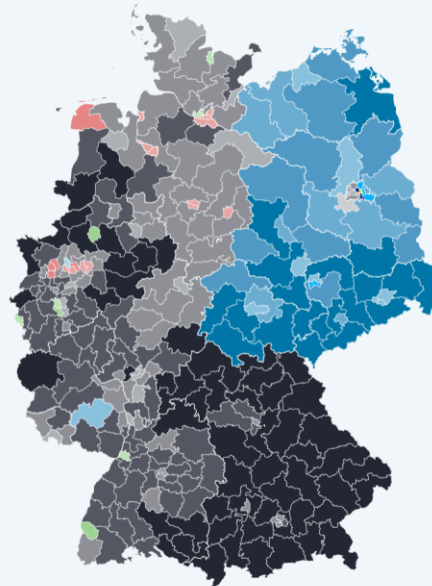
In the state of Thuringia, home to [Björn Höcke](#), who was convicted for using banned Nazi slogans, the party received more than 38% of the vote, double the number of votes for the CDU.

The city-state of Berlin is the exception in Germany's former East. Here the Left Party won the most votes.

📍 Strongest party by constituency

Party with the highest proportion of second-ballot votes by constituency

20 25 30 35 40%



Source: The Federal Returning Officer, Preliminary official result (Latest: 02/24/2025, 04:08 UTC+1) • Map data: © 2024 Die Bundeswahlleiterin

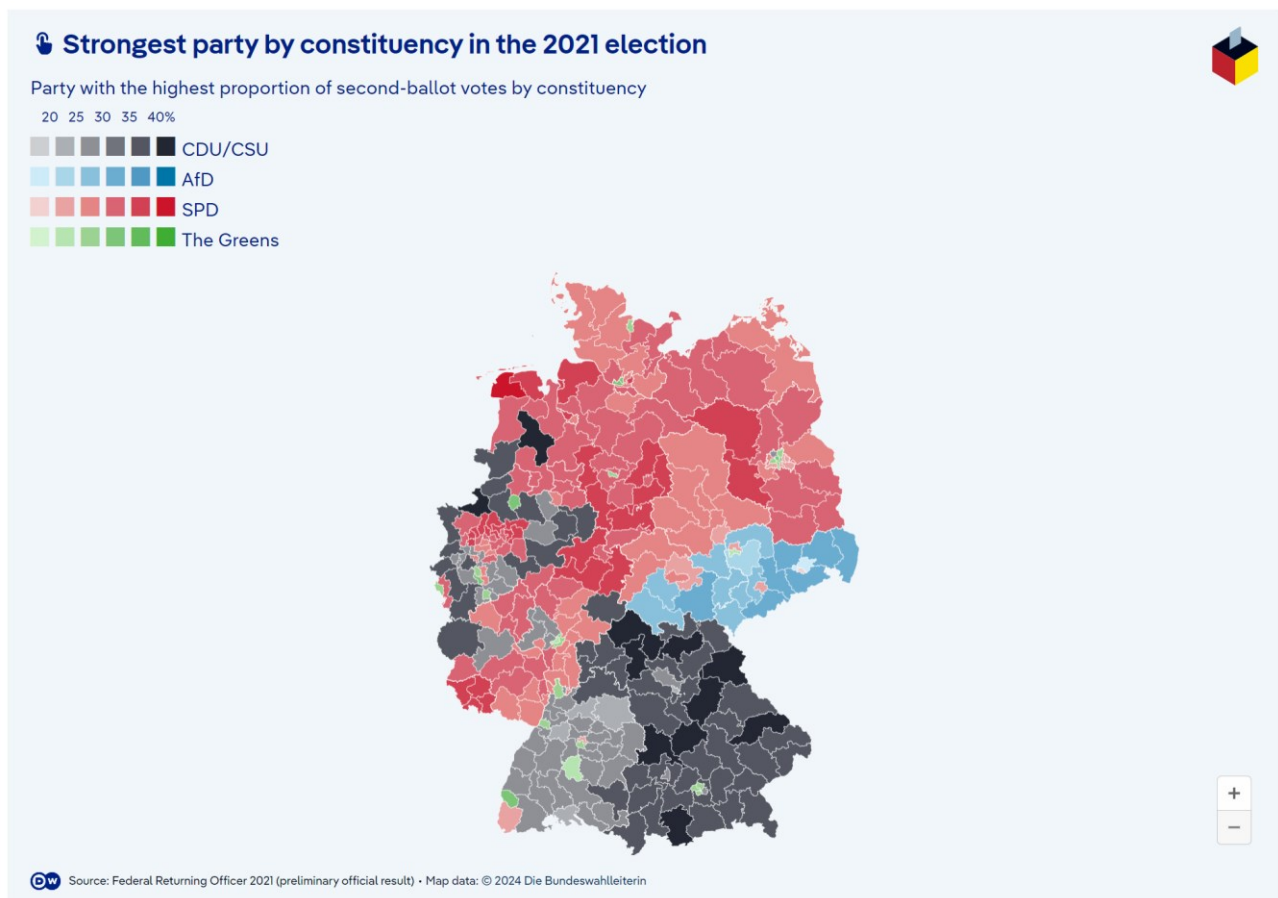
The East-West divide is mirrored in the distribution of votes for the CDU/CSU. Whereas the AfD was strong in the eastern part of the country, CDU/CSU won the majority of second-ballot votes in the south, west and north. In Bavaria, the CSU won all 47 constituencies.

For the first time in an election, the AfD won the majority of the second-ballot votes in two constituencies in the western part of the country, [Gelsenkirchen](#) and Kaiserslautern. However, in both cities, SPD candidates won the majority of the first votes.

From red to blue: change in party wins from 2021 to 2025

The recent shift in Germany's political landscape is illustrated by contrasting results for the second-ballot vote in 2021 versus 2025. Whereas the northern and eastern parts of the country were primarily red in 2021, meaning the constituencies were SPD-led, they have switched to black (CDU) and blue (AfD) in 2025.

In 2017 SPD won second-ballot votes in 149 out of 299 constituencies, while in 2025 it was down to 17. Many of those losses are in the eastern part of the country, where AfD is now the dominant party.



For the CDU/CSU the opposite is true. The conservatives won 108 second-ballot votes in 2021 and doubled the number four years later to 217 constituencies. The CDU is now the majority party in previous SPD strongholds in the West.

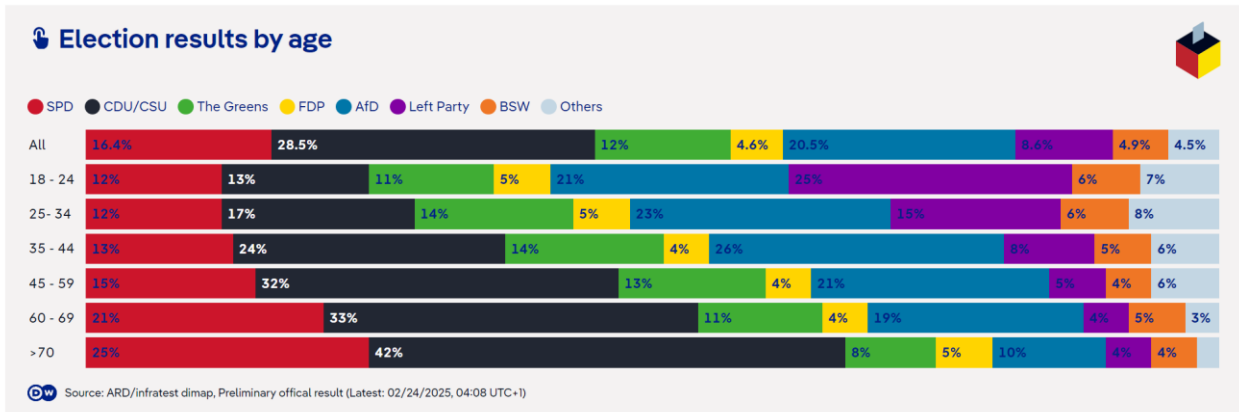
In 2017 AfD only won 17 constituencies, compared to the 49 in 2025.

How did voter age influence German election results?

Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 leaned to the far ends of the political spectrum, casting their ballot [more often for the far-right AfD](#) and the Left Party. The established parties of SPD and CDU received their lowest voter returns from younger voters.

The Greens, long a favorite with the youth vote, had one of their lowest percentage of votes in this age group.

The AfD received its largest percentage of voters in the 35-44 age bracket. Voters over 60 were more likely to vote SPD and CDU and the least likely to vote AfD.

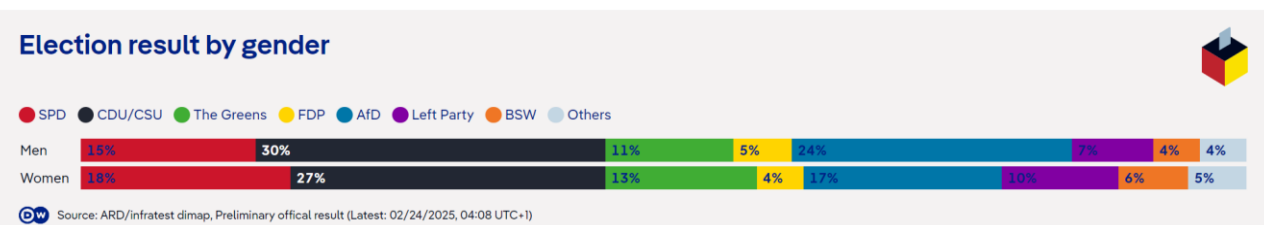


How did men and women vote?

Men tended to vote more conservatively than women, casting their ballots more often for the CDU and the AfD, whereas women tended to vote more for the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party.

The difference in votes according to gender was only a few percentage points, except when it came to voting for the AfD.

The gender gap between men and women voting for the AfD was 7%. The gender difference for the other parties was only 2-3%.



How did voting differ by education level?

Voters without a college education were more likely to vote conservative, with the CDU and AfD being their favored parties, followed by the SPD. People with a basic education level were twice as likely to vote AfD as those with advanced degrees. German voters with advanced degrees were more than twice as likely to vote for the Greens and the Left Party compared to those with basic education levels.

Election result by level of education



● SPD ● CDU/CSU ● AfD ● FDP ● The Greens ● Left Party ● BSW ● Others



Source: ARD/Infratest dimap, Preliminary official result (Latest: 02/24/2025, 04:08 UTC+1)

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