

# [***Big opposition win in South Korean parliament election poses setback to President Yoon***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BS3-N141-JC5B-G1B8-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea’s liberal opposition parties appeared set to win a landslide victory in Wednesday’s [*parliamentary election*](https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-election-hot-issues-green-onions-860cbb313a4afb3776fd87052a051c9d), vote counts showed, a result that could make conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol a lame duck for his remaining three years in office.

With most of the votes cast counted, the main opposition Democratic Party and its satellite party appear to have won a combined 175 seats in the 300-member National Assembly. Another small liberal opposition party was expected to win 12 seats under a proportional representation system, according to South Korean media tallies.

Yoon's ruling People Power Party and its satellite party were projected to have obtained 109 seats.

The final official results were expected later Thursday.

But the outcome means the liberal opposition forces would extend their control of the parliament, though they will likely fail to garner the super majority of 200 seats that gives them legislative powers to pass bills vetoed by a president and even impeach him or her.

Wednesday’s election was widely seen as a mid-term confidence vote on Yoon, a former top prosecutor who took office in 2022 for a single five-year term.

He has pushed hard to boost cooperation with the U.S. and Japan as a way to address a mix of tough security and economic challenges. But Yoon has been grappling with low approval ratings at home and a liberal opposition-controlled parliament that has limited his major policy platforms.

Regardless of the results, Yoon will stay in power and his major foreign policies will likely be unchanged. But the ruling party’s big election defeat could set back Yoon’s domestic agenda and leave him facing an intensifying political offensive by his liberal opponents.

Exit polls sponsored by South Korea's major TV stations earlier predicted a bigger win by the opposition parties.

“We did our best to do ***politics*** that follow public sentiments, but results of exit polls are disappointing,” ruling party Han Dong-hoon said in televised comments. “We’ll watch ballot counting to the end.”

After gathering to watch TV broadcasts showing results of the exit polls, Democratic Party members cheered and clapped their hands. “We’ll humbly watch the people’s choices to the end. Thanks much!” party leader Lee Jae-myung told reporters.

Of the 300 seats, 254 will be elected through direct votes in local districts, and the other 46 to the parties according to their proportion of the vote. The final voter turnout for South Korea’s 44 million eligible voters was tentatively estimated at 67%, the highest for a parliamentary election since 1992, according to the National Election Commission.

Ahead of the election, the conservatives and their liberal rivals exchanged toxic rhetoric and mudslinging. Their mutual contempt deepened during the [*2022 presidential election*](https://apnews.com/article/elections-asia-presidential-elections-seoul-south-korea-3e102da44c68b0c9a4c3ecd0ecb36d24), during which Yoon and Lee, then the Democratic Party candidate, spent months demonizing each other. [*Yoon eventually beat Lee*](https://apnews.com/article/business-elections-voting-campaigns-seoul-f29dd8982b18c1f7318d579b9afc83f1) in the country’s most closely fought presidential contest.

Lee is now a harsh critic of Yoon’s policies and is eyeing another presidential bid. His main potential conservative rival in the next presidential race is Han, an ally of Yoon who served as his justice minister. Lee faces an array of [*corruption investigations*](https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-opposition-leader-lee-arrest-corruption-a2788076d0e6049d9cceffed939a104c) that he argues are politically motivated and pushed by by Yoon’s government.

There was brief soul-searching about South Korea’s divisive ***politics*** after [*Lee was stabbed*](https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-opposition-leader-attacked-47eb0b444b1f9620704d7087d1f8ffd7) in the neck in January by a man who, according to police, tried to kill Lee to prevent him from becoming president. But as the parliamentary election approached, the rival parties began churning out abusive rhetoric and crude insults against each other.

During the election campaigning, Han called Lee “a criminal” and labeled his past comments as “trash.” Lee’s party spokesperson described Han’s mouth as a “trash bin.” Han accused Lee of using a sexist remark against a female ruling party candidate.

Chung Jin-young, a former dean of the Graduate School of Pan-Pacific International Studies at Kyung Hee University, predicted that the opposition parties could win a combined 150 to 180 seats.

“That would cause a political deadlock for the Republic of Korea for the next three years, as both the ruling and opposition parties can’t pursue things unilaterally and won’t likely make terms with each other,” Chung said.

Earlier this year, Yoon saw rising approval ratings over his strong push to drastically increase the number of [*medical students*](https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-doctors-walkouts-patients-explained-326632dd061fc3b004b663cc761f9016) despite vehement protests by incumbent doctors. Yoon has said he aims to create more doctors to brace for the country’s rapidly aging population, but thousands of young doctors have gone on strike, saying that schools can’t handle an abrupt increase in students.

The doctors’ walkouts eventually left Yoon facing growing calls to find a [*compromise*](https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-doctors-strike-president-yoon-673d7cd4fe30cec0601519ff7c4b2466), with patients and others experiencing delays of surgeries and other inconveniences. Yoon’s ruling party has also been struggling with rising prices of agricultural products and other goods and criticism of Yoon’s personnel management style.

“This election is an assessment of Yoon’s presidency. The stakes for him are whether he’s able to fully implement his liberal democratic agenda, which is his top priority,” Duyeon Kim, a senior analyst at the Washington-based Center for a New American Security, said. “He and his party have criticized the previous progressive party for democratic backsliding.”

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