

# [***Portugal's center-right coalition claims slim election win as radical right surges***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BHR-4BR1-DY7V-G01V-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; A center-right coalition won a narrow victory in Portugal's snap elections on Sunday but fell short of an outright majority, as fledgling radical right party Chega took nearly a fifth of the vote.

The Democratic Alliance coalition won 29.5% of the 98.98% of votes counted early Monday, with the incumbent Socialist Party on 28.7%. The results are not final - but Socialist Party leader Pedro Nuno Santos has already conceded.

Chega won 18%, a breakthrough for the radical right party and its leader, Andre Ventura, a former trainee priest and football pundit.

Democratic Alliance leader Luis Montenegro reiterated he would not work with Chega as he claimed victory in the early hours of Monday, though others in his party have been more ambiguous.

The results set the stage for difficult negotiations in the days and weeks ahead, and, potentially, new elections in the not-too-distant future.

For decades the Socialist Party and center-right Social Democratic Party - the main party in the Democratic Alliance - have taken turns in power.

But both parties failed to secure a working parliamentary majority from the vote Sunday, called after Prime Minister Antonio Costa resigned in November in the wake of a corruption probe into the government's handling of major investment projects. He has not been accused of any crime.

Chega - which was created just five years ago and translates as "Enough" - has been the third-largest parliamentary force in Portugal since the 2022 election, when it obtained 7% of the vote.

A hung parliament turns Chega into a potential kingmaker, where the party could become part of a coalition government to break the political deadlock.

Corruption scandals cast a shadow over Sunday's election and fueled public disenchantment with the political class. A recent EU study found 93% of people in Portugal believe corruption to be widespread, the [*third highest*](https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2968) in Europe behind only Greece and Croatia.

Economic concerns have also played a part. Portugal - one of the poorest countries in Western Europe - is suffering a housing crisis, with soaring rents and shortages of affordable homes, as well as a struggling health care system.

The center-left Socialist Party has been in power since late 2015. Nuno Santos, 46, took over from Costa as the party's leader following his resignation. Dubbed the "caviar leftist," Santos has sought to prove his dedication to the working classes despite coming from a wealthy background.

The Socialist Party's traditional rival is the center-right Social Democratic Party (PSD), which in December formed an alliance with two other conservative parties without parliamentary representation to fight in the March elections and combat the rise of Chega.

At the helm of the Democratic Alliance is the 51-year-old PSD leader, Montenegro, who campaigned on a platform for change and sought to present his alliance as a safer option than Chega.

Chega meanwhile has been advocating for tougher sentences for criminals as well as a tightening of Portugal's immigration policy.

Much like other radical parties across Europe, Ventura's Chega has also preyed on issues of gender equality, security, and crime. The party has flirted with extremism - at a recent convention one of its members claimed he was a "fascist," before later saying he was being ironic.

The party has flirted with extremism and has been accused racism. Ventura himself has been convicted for making racist remarks. The party has denied accusations of racism, but some members, and many of its supporters, openly flaunt hateful narratives on social media.

The rise of the far-right in Portugal echoes a trend seen throughout Europe, as voters disenfranchised with mainstream ***politics*** look for an alternative. Extremist parties that were once excluded from governing coalitions are increasingly propping them up, and the membrane separating the far and center right is proving more and more permeable.

By Vasco Cotovio and Sophie Tanno, CNN

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