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International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Election FAQs: Senegal

Presidential Elections

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Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Election Snapshot

- Election Day: March 24, 2024 (rescheduled from February 25)
- Registered voters: 7,033,852 throughout the national territory and 338,258 abroad, for a total of 7,372,110 voters: 3,708,754 men (50.3 percent) and 3,663,356 women (49.7 percent).
- Polling stations: 15,633 within 6,681 polling centers throughout Senegal, and 809 polling stations within 369 polling centers abroad. These are distributed among 38 diplomatic and consular jurisdictions in 51 countries.
- Senegalese voters will elect the president of Senegal for a five-year term.
- Candidates: 19
- Campaigning began on March 9, (14 days before Election Day) and will end the Friday before Election Day (March 22). March 23, the day before the election, will be a day of election silence.
- Domestic and international observers: 2,207 (1,619 national and 588 international observers).

When is Election Day?

Senegal will hold presidential elections on Sunday, March 24, 2024. There will be 15,633 polling stations throughout Senegal and 809 abroad, in 51 countries. As stated in Article 66 of Senegal's Electoral Code, no more than 650 voters may be registered at any one polling station. The list of polling stations was published 30 days before Election Day.

Polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Why are these elections important?

Senegal is often cited as a beacon of democracy in West Africa's turbulent environment. However, in this election cycle Senegalese President Macky Sall issued an unprecedented decree on the eve of the election campaign period. On February 3, 2024, he announced the indefinite postponement of the presidential election scheduled for February 25, citing concerns over its credibility due to accusations of corruption against the Constitutional Council following the announcement of its approved list of candidates for the election.

Senegal had never postponed its elections, and many called this event a constitutional coup by a president unwilling to give up power for himself or his party.¹ This is not the first time President Sall, who is completing his second term in office, has wavered on giving up power. Early in the election cycle, he remained ambiguous about plans to run for a divisive third term. Sall eventually announced on July 4, 2023, that he would not run in 2024 but he is clearly playing a role in shaping the presidential race.

On February 5, members of the National Assembly legalized the postponement of the election, set the new election date for December 15, 2024, and extended the president's mandate through April 2. However, the police removed over 30 opposition Members of the National Assembly

¹ [Senegal's democracy hangs by a thread](#). (2024, February 24). *The Economist*.

before the vote,² calling into question the legitimacy of the vote and its result. After the vote, 14 presidential candidates and 39 Members of the National Assembly filed a complaint with the Constitutional Council. Facing widespread condemnation of the postponement of the election by members of Senegalese society and the international community, President Sall continued to justify his decision by claiming the need to hold a second national dialogue, following one in mid-2023, to improve the relationship between the National Assembly and the Constitutional Council.

On February 15, the Constitutional Council issued a historic and unexpected decision that cancelled the presidential decree postponing the election. The council declared that the election must be held as soon as possible—before the expiration of the presidential mandate in April. President Sall agreed to respect the council's decision and began a two-day national dialogue on February 26. Boycotted by most political factions, the dialogue included only Sall and two other candidates. The dialogue resulted in recommendations including:

- A new election date of June 2;
- Retention of the current candidate list, with the proposed inclusion of Karim Wade, who was excluded due to questions regarding his citizenship, and other invalidated candidates;
- An amnesty law covering political arrests dating to protests in 2021; and
- Extension of President Sall's term until the election of his successor.

The recommendations were submitted to the Constitutional Council, which rejected them on March 5. The council stated that the proposed election date conflicted with its original decision and called for an election date of March 31, 2024. The following day, President Sall announced that the election would take place on March 24. In the meantime, to assuage political tension, the National Assembly voted on, and passed, an amnesty law for those arrested for participating in political demonstrations between 2021 and 2024.

In 2023, President Sall called for a national political dialogue that identified by consensus some key political and electoral reforms implemented in this election cycle. However, the leading opposition bloc boycotted the proceedings. Its leader, Ousmane Sonko, ran for president in 2019, placing third, but has faced repeated prosecutions that have made him ineligible for the presidential race. In July 2023, President Sall dissolved Sonko's political party, the Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics, and Fraternity, for allegedly inciting violence during protests the previous month.³ The legal proceedings against Sonko and other political opponents spurred some of the bloodiest protests in decades for Senegal,⁴ resulting in hundreds of injuries and deaths since 2021. His conviction for "corrupting youth," in June 2023, resulted in Sonko being barred from running in the 2024 presidential election. Many view this outcome as politically motivated, suspecting Sall of using Senegal's legal system to ban political opponents from

² [Democracy is under attack in Senegal](#). (2024, February 8). *The Economist*.

³ Dione, N., and Joel Kouam. [Senegal Dissolves Opposition Party as Protests Persist](#) (2023, August 1). *Reuters*

⁴ [Tension in Senegal is set to persist](#). (2023, June 8). *The Economist*.

elections.⁵ However, due to the amnesty law, Sonko and the presidential candidate he is backing, Bassirou Diomaye Faye were released from prison on March 14.

The Autonomous National Electoral Committee (Commission Électorale Nationale Autonome, CENA), which supervises the electoral process managed by the Ministry of the Interior's Directorate General for Elections, took the unusual step of condemning Sonko's exclusion from candidacy. In response, President Sall replaced the CENA's 12 members. Although those members' terms had expired, the timing of the change prompted public outcry.

These issues reflect democratic backsliding and shrinking political space for civil society organizations, political opposition, and media outlets, and restrictions on freedom of speech. This latest episode demonstrates the importance of the crucial principle of balance of powers and of solid democratic institutions that are resilient to anti-democratic forces. Moreover, this election will be the first in Senegal's history with an incumbent president organizing it but not running.⁶ It is the most open presidential competition in Senegal's history. A total of 93 potential candidates submitted applications to the Constitutional Court, which approved 19 registrations. Therefore, this election is about more than just who will be the next president; it is about the health of Senegal's democracy and its continued leadership in the region.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

This election will see the highest number of candidates running in a Presidential Election in Senegal with 19 candidates on the ballot for the presidency of Senegal (in alphabetical order) they are:

- Amadou Ba, Coalition Benno Bokk Yakaar, Current prime minister;
- Boubacar Camara, Parti de la Construction et de la Solidarite Pcs/Jengu Tabax;
- Aliou Mamadou Dia, Parti de l'Unité et du Rassemblement;
- Mamadou Lamine Diallo, Coalition MLD Tekki 2024;
- El Had'i Mamadou Diao, Coalition Diao 2024;
- Cheikh Tidiane Dieye, President Bi Nu Begg 2024, member of opposition coalition Yewwi Askan Wi;
- Mahammed Boun Abdallah Dionne, Coalition Dionne 2024, former prime minister;
- Dethie Fall, Dethiefall 2024, member of opposition coalition Yewwi Askan Wi;
- Papa Djibril Fall, Coalition Papa Djibril Fall President, journalist;
- Bassirou Diomaye Diakhar Faye, Coalition Diomaye Président, member of opposition coalition Yewwi Askan Wi, and dissolved political party PASTEF;
- El Hadji Malick Gakou, Coalition Gakou 2024, former minister of commerce;
- Serigne Mboup, And Nawle And Ligueey, businessman;
- Daouda Ndiaye, President Daouda 2024;
- Aly Ngouille Ndiay, Coalition Aly Ngouille 2024, former prime minister;
- Anta Babacar Ngom, Alternative pour la Releve Citoyenne ARC, businesswoman;

⁵ [Senegal's president asks if democracy can work in Africa's coup-belt](#). (2023, October 26). *The Economist*.

⁶ Meakem, A. (2024, January 29). [Senegal Tries to Beat the Odds in Africa's Coup Belt](#). *Foreign Policy*.

- Khalifa Ababacar Sall, Khalifa President 2024, former mayor of Dakar;
- Thierno Alassane Sall, Republique Des Valeurs Rewum Ngor, opposition leader, current member of National Assembly;
- Idrissa Seck, Coalition Idy 2024, former president of the Economic and Social Council, ranked second in 2019 presidential election;
- Habib Sy, Parti de l'espoir et de da Modernite/Yaakaar U Rew Mi, member of opposition coalition Yewwi Askan Wi;

What is the electoral system?

Presidential elections in Senegal are organized through a majoritarian system with two possible rounds of voting. A candidate who receives 50 percent or more of the vote is deemed the winner. If no candidate receives 50 percent of the vote, there will be a second-round runoff election between the two candidates who received the most votes. In this case, the Constitutional Court announces the necessity of a runoff immediately after the elections, if no complaints are filed. The runoff must be organized within 15 days of the announcement. However, if a candidate files a complaint within 72 hours after the results are announced, the Constitutional Council has a maximum of five days to render a decision. The second round of elections typically falls on the third Sunday after the original presidential election.

Who is eligible to run as a candidate?

Anyone who wishes to run as a candidate for president of the Republic of Senegal must submit a package of information to the Constitutional Council for validation. After a national dialogue in June 2023, several amendments to the Electoral Code addressed the eligibility of presidential candidates. For the 2024 election, a presidential candidate must meet the following criteria:

- Hold exclusive Senegalese nationality.
- Be at least 35 years old on Election Day.
- Must not been convicted of a felony or have received a presidential pardon.
- Must present proof of sponsorship by either citizens or elected representatives such as deputies, mayors, or the heads of departmental councils. Citizen sponsorship requires the signatures of between 0.6 percent and 0.8 percent of the general electoral roll (between 44,231 and 58,975 signatures), with a minimum of 2,000 signatures from at least seven regions. Elected representative sponsorship requires the signatures of either 13 deputies or 120 mayors or heads of department councils. Citizens and elected representatives may sponsor only one candidate.
- Must pay a fee of 30 million CFA francs (just over \$50,000); the fee is refundable if the Constitutional Council rejects a potential candidate or if, after running, a candidate receives at least 5 percent of the total vote.

The Constitutional Council must validate the required documentation.

A number of steps have been taken to improve the candidate registration process. The controversial sponsorship (*parrainage*) provision, which the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS) ruled violated principles of free participation in elections,⁷ remains in force. However, the process of reviewing candidates' application packages and collected signatures has been made more transparent and neutral through the use of a lottery system to determine the order of review, along with the introduction of a control committee to analyze the sponsorship signature collection. While the Constitutional Council previously reviewed candidate registration packages behind closed doors, the analysis of sponsorship lists is now conducted by a committee of neutral parties such as lawyers and university professors, members of the administration, and representatives of Autonomous National Electoral Committee (Commission Électorale Nationale Autonome), in front of witnesses representing the applying party or candidate.

How is the election campaign regulated?

Article LO129 of the Electoral Code states that campaigning for presidential elections begins 21 days before the election. However, due to the abrupt cancellation and rescheduling of the 2024 election, campaigning was limited to 14 days. The campaign period began on March 9 at midnight and will end on March 22 at midnight. The day before the election is a day of election silence, when all types of campaigning are forbidden. During the official electoral campaign, rallies and meetings can be held freely throughout the national territory. In accordance with the provisions of Article 59 of the Electoral Code, announcements of meetings should be sent to the competent local authority 24 hours in advance. This is only a notification; the authorities cannot prohibit such meetings.

The Electoral Code requires equal surface area to be allocated to each candidate to post billboards and flyers. Outside these areas, election posters are prohibited. Article 32 of the Constitution authorizes courts and tribunals to "supervise the regularity of the campaign and equality among candidates in the utilization of campaign finances. The Court of Appeal of Dakar judges cases in which the equality among candidates is not respected.

Commercial advertising is prohibited during the campaign. The National Audiovisual Regulatory Council (Conseil national de régulation de l'audiovisuel) is responsible for ensuring that this prohibition is respected during the campaign. Social media is not regulated for campaign purposes. However, Senegalese legislation prohibits the use of public property and the dissemination of opinion polls for campaign purposes during the electoral period.

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

Senegal has a dual structure for election management and oversight. The election management body is the Ministry of Interior, which organizes national and local elections and referenda through the Directorate General for Elections (Direction Générale des Élections). In the field, administrative authorities are responsible for the organization of the election.

The Electoral Code defines the Autonomous National Electoral Commission (Commission Électorale Nationale Autonome, CENA) as a permanent and autonomous body responsible for monitoring Senegal's elections. The CENA is composed of 12 neutral and independent members

⁷ APA. (2021, April 29). [ECOWAS Court mandates Senegal to remove obstacles to free participation in elections](#). APAnews - African Press Agency.

appointed by presidential decree after consultations with various institutions. Members hold six-year terms, and one-third of the membership is renewed every three years. The CENA has additional representatives at all levels, and its members are present at every polling station on voting days.

Who can vote in these elections?

Registered voters throughout the national territory and overseas are able to vote in the presidential election.

According to the Electoral Code, the following are eligible to vote:

- Senegalese citizens of both sexes, aged 18 years or over, who enjoy their full civil and political rights and are not otherwise ineligible as provided by law;
- Naturalized citizens who do not hold any other nationality; and
- Foreigners who have acquired Senegalese citizenship by marriage, unless opposed by government decree for a period of one year.

Each Senegalese citizen who wishes to vote must be registered in the voter registry and have a voter identification card.

Due to the postponement of the 2024 election, only those who turned 18 years old before February 25, 2024, are currently registered to vote in this election.

How many registered voters are there?

Following the revision of the voter registry in 2023, the voter registry for the presidential election includes 7,372,110 voters (7,033,852 throughout the Senegalese national territory and 338,258 abroad). Voters are nearly evenly divided by sex, with 50.3 percent men and 49.7 percent women.

What provisions are in place that support persons with disabilities?

The Electoral Code addresses accessibility for voters with disabilities, and local government authorities take measures to ensure compliance with this part of the code. Article 80 allows any voter with disabilities to request the assistance of a voter of her or his choice or a polling staff member to cast a ballot. Article 69 allows disabled voters who are unable to access their regular polling stations to vote at the closest accessible polling station in their voting location. This new article of the Electoral Code is a significant reform to make the elections more accessible to people with disabilities.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Yes, Senegalese citizens who are established or a resident in a country within the jurisdiction of a diplomatic or consular representation where electoral operations are organized, and who are registered to vote in that jurisdiction, may vote. For this election, the Minister of Interior has organized the vote in 37 jurisdictions worldwide.

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

According to Article 25 of the Electoral Code, any national or international organization whose application the government of Senegal accepts can observe presidential elections in the country and abroad. The terms and conditions for carrying out observation missions are specified by decree and managed by the Directorate General for Elections.

The Collective of Civil Society Organizations for Elections (Collectif des Organisations de la Société Civile pour les Élections, COSCE), an association of civil society organizations in Senegal, will field 46 long-term and 390 short-term observers for the presidential elections. International observation missions from the European Union, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and African Union will be present as well.

What is the vote counting process?

According to Article 83 of Senegal's Electoral Code, vote counting takes place in polling stations after the polls close. Polling staff open the ballot box and check the number of envelopes. If the number of ballots is greater than the number of signatures on the signature sheet, this is noted in the minutes. Members of the polling staff then appoint, from among the voters present, at least four vote counters capable of reading and writing French, Senegal's official language.

One vote counter removes the ballot from each envelope and passes it to another vote counter, who reads it aloud. At least two vote counters record the names on the ballots, using sheets prepared for this purpose. All ballots are counted twice. According to Articles 85 and 86 of the Electoral Code, the president of the polling station reads the results aloud, and they are immediately displayed on the door of the station. The results are recorded in the minutes.

All poll workers must sign the minutes and note, where appropriate, their observations, complaints, and disputes. Each polling station staff member must receive a copy of the minutes. The original minutes and any annexed documents are sent to the chair of the district-level tally center (Commissions Départementales des Recensement des Votes, CDRV). The CENA also receives a copy of the minutes under seal.

Where will vote tabulation be held?

Polling station results are tabulated at the district level. The CDRV is responsible for vote tabulation. This committee is composed of magistrates, the district level branches of the CENA (Commission Électorale Départementale Autonome, CEDA) representatives, and candidates' representatives. It has no power to annul the election, but it can correct material mistakes.

The CDRV tabulates votes from polling stations in the department as it receives them and must publish the results no later than midnight on the Tuesday following voting (March 26), in accordance with Article 88 of the Electoral Code. After this first compilation is complete, each CDRV sends the results to the national-level tally center (Commission Nationale des Recensement des Votes, CNRV). This committee is led by the President of the Court of Appeal

of Dakar (Cour d'Appel de Dakar); it compiles the votes from the departments throughout the country, along with out-of-country votes.

When will official results be announced?

The National Committee for the Counting of Votes will announce provisional results no later than midnight on the Friday following voting (March 29, 2024), according to Article 89 of the Electoral Code.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

The Constitutional Council is the judicial body responsible for adjudicating election disputes for presidential and legislative elections.

Only candidates may lodge electoral complaints. Candidates may challenge electoral operations within 72 hours of the provisional proclamation of results by the CNRV.

The Constitutional Council must rule on complaints within five days of their filing, and its decisions are final. Its decision either proclaims definitive results or cancels the election. In the event of cancellation, a new election must be held within 21 days.

If necessary, the second round of the presidential election will occur on the second Sunday after the Constitutional Council's decision.

Resources

- [Constitution of Senegal](#)
- Electoral Code (not available online)
- [Autonomous National Electoral Commission \(Commission Électorale Nationale Autonome, CENA\) Website](#)
- [Directorate General for Elections Website](#)

About IFES in Senegal

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Elections Support Program in Senegal aims to help civil society organizations facilitate dialogue, monitor elections, and conduct civic and voter education. The program also supports election management bodies to reinforce specific aspects of election administration to promote a fair and credible democratic process.

As part of the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), IFES is working to build the capacity, inclusiveness, and independence of Senegal's electoral institution, the Directorate General for Elections (Direction Générale des Élections, DGE), under the Ministry of Interior. IFES supports the DGE to strengthen its institutional capacity and enhance human resources, communications, training, and voter education. In addition, IFES has partnered with the Gorée Institute and three universities to create a network of youth peace ambassadors to promote peaceful electoral participation in 2024.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Constitution and Electoral Code, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any International Foundation for Electoral Systems policy or technical recommendations.

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