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# **Election FAQs: Senegal**

## *Snap Legislative Elections*

### *November 17, 2024*

Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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## Election Snapshot

- Election Day: November 17, 2024
- Registered voters: 7,371,890, including 3,708,218 men (50.3%) and 3,663,672 women (49.7%). 7,033,850 voters are registered in Senegal and 338,040 abroad.
- Polling stations: 16,440 (15,633 in Senegal and 807 abroad)
- Senegalese voters will elect the 165 members of the National Assembly for a five-year term.

## When is Election Day?

Senegal's snap legislative elections are scheduled for Sunday, **November 17, 2024**. Polls will be open from **8 a.m. to 6 p.m.** To facilitate the right to vote, a governor, prefect, or subprefect may issue an order extending the closing time of one or more polling stations in all or part of an electoral district. Abroad, the head of diplomatic or consular representation may advance the opening time or extend the closing time for polling, depending on local circumstances. These decisions must be made immediately, at the entrance of the affected polling stations. The official campaign period begins on **October 27** and concludes on **November 15**. The day before the vote is a silent day during which no campaigning is allowed.

## Why are these elections important?

The snap legislative elections will determine the composition of the National Assembly. While the election of President Bassirou Diomaye Faye in March 2024 marked a significant shift in Senegal's political history, his party did not hold a majority in the National Assembly elected in July 2022. In this context, on September 12, President Diomaye Faye dissolved the National Assembly, as he needed a parliamentary majority to implement the ambitious program of governance and social reforms announced during his presidential campaign. President Diomaye Faye dissolved the assembly as early as allowed by the constitution, i.e. two years into the incumbent assembly's mandate. The elections will be essential for ensuring political stability and citizens' trust in the democratic process.

## What candidate lists are registered for the legislative election?

The Ministry of the Interior registered 41 parties, coalitions, and independent entities to run in the November 17 elections. The Constitutional Council subsequently confirmed them as the final candidates' lists running in the elections. Among the 41 lists, the main contenders are:

- The African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics, and Fraternity, also known as PASTEF, which brought President Bassirou Diomaye Faye to victory in March 2024, is running as a party, with Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko as the head of list.
- TAKKU WALLU SENEGAL, is a coalition that brings together former rivals Macky Sall's Alliance for the Republic and Karim Wade's Senegalese Democratic Party. Macky Sall is the lead candidate.
- DIAM AK NJARIN, a coalition led by former prime minister and presidential candidate Amadou Ba, the runner-up in the last presidential election.

- SAMM SA KAADU, a coalition led by the mayor of Dakar, Barthélemy Dias, supported by well-known political figures such as Khalifa Sall, Déthié Fall, and Anta Babacar Ngom, all of whom were candidates in the last presidential election.

## **How is the Senegalese National Assembly structured?**

The National Assembly is Senegal's unicameral legislature. It controls the actions of the government, adopts legislation, and can bring down the government through a motion of no confidence. The President of the Republic has the power to dissolve the National Assembly.

## **What is the electoral system?**

The 165 members of the National Assembly are elected to five-year terms through a parallel voting system, with 112 seats allocated through a majoritarian system and 53 seats through a proportional system based on the total number of votes obtained by each list across all majoritarian districts.

Under the majoritarian component, citizens will elect 112 candidates (97 national and 15 abroad) in 54 multi-member electoral districts, 46 national and eight abroad (see below), based on a party block vote system. According to that system, the list that receives the highest number of votes takes all the seats in the district. Each district elects between one and seven members, depending on its population. This includes 15 seats for diaspora constituencies, each represented by one to three members.

Under the proportional component, 53 seats are allocated to parties, coalitions, and independent lists based on the votes they receive in all majoritarian constituencies, through a proportional representation system using the largest remainder method.

Voters cast only one ballot paper, which shows the national proportional list of the party or coalition on one side, and their majoritarian lists on the other.

## **How is out-of-country voting organized?**

The 338,040 Senegalese voters registered abroad vote in diplomatic premises for 15 seats across eight majoritarian districts, each electing between 1 and 3 seats; these are: North Africa (1 seat), West Africa (3), Central Africa (2), Southern Africa (1), Southern Europe (3), West-Center-North Europe (3), America-Oceania (1), and Asia-Middle-East (1). Their votes also count for the proportional component.

## **What is the legal framework for conducting the elections?**

Elections in Senegal are governed by the Constitution, the Electoral Code (last amended in August 2023), and several decrees that determine, for example, the date of the elections and the number of seats in each constituency. The Gender Parity Law (2010) establishes equal representation of men and women in elected positions and prescribes that candidate lists follow a vertical rank-order (zebra) system.

## Who is eligible to run as a candidate?

Senegalese law allows any registered voter to run as a candidate in legislative elections, subject to certain conditions and requirements. These include:

- Senegalese nationality (following a period of 10 years since naturalization for non-native citizens);
- A minimum age of 25 years;
- Lack of a criminal record; and
- High-level civil-servants (judges, prosecutors, Regional Governors, Head of the Treasury) are ineligible for candidacy.

Candidacies may be submitted by a legally constituted political party, a coalition of legally constituted political parties, or an entity grouping independent candidates.

A 2021 amendment to the Electoral Code requires electoral contestants for legislative elections to collect support signatures from between 0.5 percent and 0.8 percent of registered voters, with at least 1,000 signatures of support from each region of Senegal. However, on July 10, 2024, the Constitutional Council granted an exemption to this provision for the November 17, elections, as the short timeframe for holding snap elections was insufficient for the signature collection process to take place.

## Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

The Gender Parity Law (2010) established the equal representation of men and women in elected positions. For legislative elections, Article L149 of Electoral Code provides that each candidate list should respect parity between women and men. Moreover, the vertical rank order rule (zebra system) for the distribution of female and male candidates is compulsory: Female and male candidates appear in alternating order throughout the list. In the outgoing National Assembly elected in 2022, the proportion of women deputies was 46.1 percent (77 of 165).

## 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* – DGE). Across the country, administrative authorities are responsible for the practical organization of the elections.

The Electoral Code also creates an Autonomous National Electoral Commission (*Commission Électorale Nationale Autonome* – CENA), which is responsible for monitoring the elections. The CENA is composed of 12 members appointed by presidential decree after consultation with various institutions. The CENA has representatives at all administrative levels, and they are

present in every polling station on Election Day. The CENA issues comprehensive reports after each election on the conduct of the process.

## **Who can vote in these elections?**

Registered voters throughout the national territory and living overseas can vote in the legislative elections.

According to the Electoral Code, the following are eligible to vote: Senegalese people 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 in the local elections must have a voter identification card.

## **How many registered voters are there?**

As of September 17, 2024, there were 7,371,890 eligible voters, including 3,708,218 men (50.3%) and 3,663,672 women (49.7%).

7,033,850 voters are registered in Senegal and 338,040 abroad.

## **What provisions are in place that support the rights of persons with disabilities?**

The Electoral Code addresses accessibility for voters with disabilities, and local government authorities take measures to ensure compliance with those provisions of the code. Article 80 allows voters with disabilities to request the assistance of a voter of their choice or a polling staff member to cast a ballot. Moreover, if disabled voters are unable to access their regular polling stations, they can vote at the most accessible polling station available in their voting location (Article 69). This new provision is a significant step toward making elections more accessible to people with disabilities.

## **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 is accepted by the government of Senegal can observe legislative elections in the country and abroad. The terms and conditions for conducting 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*), a coalition of Senegalese civil society organizations, is fielding 46 long-term observers and some 400 short-term observers for the legislative elections. Among

international organizations, the Economic Community of West African States is expected to deploy some 60 short-term observers.

## **How are vote counting and tabulation conducted?**

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 envelopes is greater than the number of signatures on the signature sheet, this is noted in the minutes. Members of the polling staff then appoint at least four vote counters from among the voters who are present.

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 votes, using sheets prepared for this purpose. All ballots are counted twice. According to Articles 85 and 86 of the Electoral Code, the polling station chairperson reads the results aloud, and they are immediately displayed outside the polling 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 (the Departmental Committee for the Counting of Votes, *Commission Départementale de Recensement des Votes*, CDRV). The Autonomous National Electoral Commission (*Commission Électorale Nationale Autonome*, CENA) also receives a copy of the minutes under seal.

Article 88 of the Electoral Code states that the CDRV is to tabulate the votes of the department as it receives them and must publish the results no later than midnight on the Tuesday following balloting (in this case, by November 19, 2024). The National Committee for the Counting of Votes (*Commission Nationale des Recensement des Votes*, CNRV) receives results coming from all CDRVs in-country and abroad and runs another tabulation. The CNRV then announces the provisional results.

## **How will election disputes be adjudicated?**

The Constitutional Council is responsible for adjudicating election disputes for legislative elections. Candidates may challenge electoral operations within five days of the provisional proclamation of results by the National Committee for the Counting of Votes (*Commission Nationale des Recensement des Votes*). When a candidate files a complaint about the results, the legal representatives of the other candidates involved receive a communication from the head clerk of the Constitutional Council. They then have up to three days to file a response. Applications that are inadmissible or contain complaints that have no definitive effect on the result of the election are rejected by reasoned decision, without a preliminary hearing. The Constitutional Council must rule on complaints within five days of their filing. Its decision either proclaims

definitive results or cancels the election. In the event of cancellation, a new election must be held within 21 days.

## Resources

- Constitution of Senegal ([Constitution du Senegal](#))
- Electoral Code ([Code Electoral](#))
- Autonomous National Electoral Commission (Commission Électorale Nationale Autonome) ([CENA Website](#))
- Directorate General for Elections (Direction Générale des Élections) ([DGE Website](#))
- IFES Election Guide ([Republic of Senegal](#))

## About IFES in Senegal

The United States Agency for International Development 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, 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 six 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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