

The 1995 French Presidential Vote

What Happened?

Already holding a (large) majority in the National Assembly won in the April 1993 election, the right-of-center coalition regained the presidency with the election of Jacques Chirac. Vallery Giscard d'Estaing's victory in 1974 was the last time before this year's May 7 run-off that the Right coalition had managed a victory.

French Presidential Elections		
Name/Party	Percent of Vote, First Round	Percent of Vote, Runoff
1995		
Jacques Chirac/RPR	20.8	52.7
Edouard Balladur/RPR	18.6	
Jean-Marie Le Pen/National Front	15.0	
Philippe de Villiers/Movement for France	4.7	
J. Cheminade/Unaffiliated	0.3	
Percent of Vote for Candidates of Right	59.4	
Lionel Jospin/Socialist party	23.3	47.3
Robert Hue/Communist party	8.6	
Arlette Laguiller/Workers' Struggle party	5.3	
Dominique Voynet/Green party	3.3	
Percent of Vote for Candidates of Left	40.5	

1988		
Francois Mitterand	34.1	54.2
Jacques Chirac	19.9	46.0
Raymond Barre	16.5	
Jean-Marie LePen	14.4	
Other candidates	15.1	

1981		
Francois Mitterand	25.9	51.8
Georges Marchais	15.3	
Giscard d'Estaing	28.5	48.2
Jacques Chirac	18.0	
Other candidates	12.3	

Source: 1995, French Interior Ministry; 1988 and 1981, Institute of Political Studies of Lyon, France.

What the Surveys Showed

Polling organizations have had a hard time estimating the vote in recent elections in many different democracies, including the United States and the United Kingdom. France joins this roster. The polls underestimated support for Socialist nominee Lionel Jospin in the first round of the French vote held April 23. They overestimated support for Chirac—who had been shown the leader in every pre-election poll taken after March 1.

The BVA Polls

Question: If the first round of the presidential election were to be held next Sunday and you had to choose among the following candidates, which one would you vote for?

Name/Party	Pre-Election, Published Polls					Pre-Election Polls, Unpublished		
	3/2-5	3/16-19	3/20-4/1	4/6-10	4/12-14	4/17-19	4/20	4/22
Lionel Jospin/Socialist party	20.0	19.5	21.0	21.0	19.0	19.0	19.5	20.0
Robert Hue/Communist party	8.5	7.5	8.5	8.0	10.0	10.0	9.0	9.0
Ariette Laguiller/Workers' Struggle party	3.0	3.5	4.0	5.0	5.0	6.5	5.5	5.0
Dominique Voynet/Green party	2.5	2.5	2.0	3.5	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.5
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Jacques Chirac/RPR	24.5	28.5	25.5	26.0	26.0	26.0	24.0	24.5
Edouard Balladur/RPR	18.0	17.0	19.5	17.5	16.0	14.5	16.0	15.5
Jean-Marie Le Pen/National Front	12.5	13.5	12.0	12.0	14.0	14.0	14.5	14.5
Philippe de Villiers/Movement for France	8.0	5.5	6.5	6.5	6.0	6.0	7.0	6.5
J. Cheminade/Unaffiliated	*	*	*	0.5	*	*	0.5	0.5

Source: Surveys by Brulé Ville Associés (BVA). The public domain polls conducted between 3/2 and 4/14 were sponsored by a partnership of media organizations: *France 2/Europe 1/Paris-Match/Le Monde*. The three BVA polls that under French law could not be published (in the last week before the election), were done for the campaigns of the leading candidates. *=less than 0.1%

The SOFRES Polls

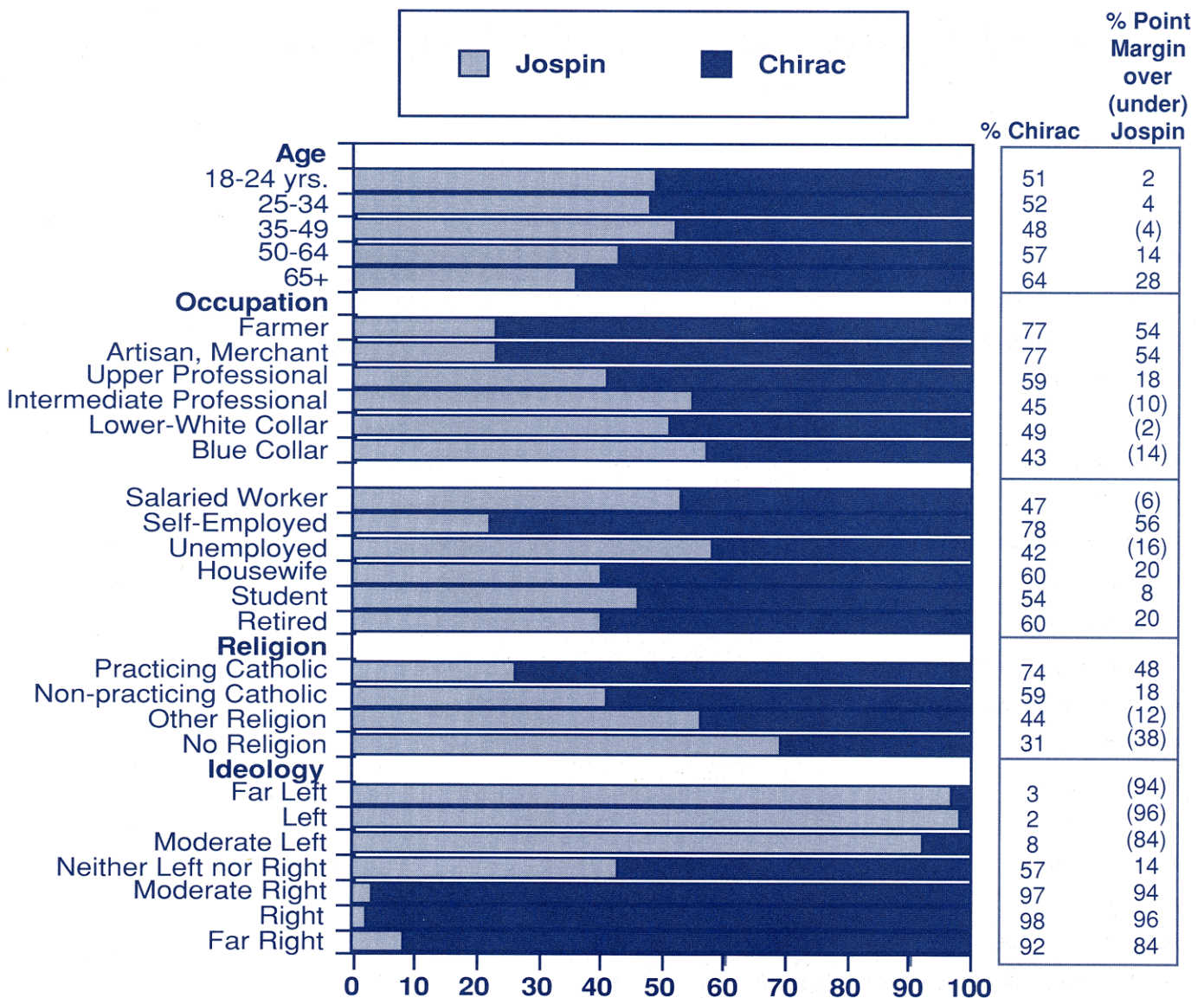
Name/Party	3/8-9	3/11-13	3/21-22	3/25-27	4/4-5	4/8-10	4/13-14
Lionel Jospin/Socialist party	21.0	20.0	22.0	21.0	22.0	21.0	21.0
Robert Hue/Communist party	9.0	8.0	8.5	8.0	8.0	8.5	8.5
Ariette Laguiller/Workers' Struggle party	4.0	3.5	3.0	3.5	4.5	4.5	5.0
Jean-Francois Hory	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.5	*	*	*
ECOLOGISTES	3.5	2.5	2.5	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.5
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Jacques Chirac/RPR	24.0	27.0	26.0	26.0	24.0	26.0	26.0
Edouard Balladur/RPR	20.0	20.0	17.0	18.0	20.0	19.0	16.0
Jean-Marie Le Pen/National Front	10.5	12.0	13.0	13.0	12.0	13.0	13.0
J. Cheminade/Unaffiliated	*	*	*	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.5

Note: SOFRES did conduct at least one survey in the period in which they could not publish results, but the organization has chosen not to release it. **Source:** Surveys by SOFRES, sponsored by *Nouvel Observateur, TF1-RTL, Nouvelle Republique, and 7 sur 7*. *=less than 0.1%

In the Run-Off, Though, BVA was Right on the Money

	April 24	April 29	May 3	May 4	May 5	May 6	Actual Results
Lionel Jospin	45.0	46.0	46.0	47.0	47.5	48.0	47.3
Jacques Chirac	55.0	54.0	54.0	53.0	52.5	52.0	52.7

Who Backed Whom?



Source: Exit poll taken by BVA/ZENITH Data Systems for *Le Monde*, May 7, 1995. n= 4,798 respondents leaving polling stations in metropolitan France.