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Election update Germany – Who will be in the next parliament?

There has been little movement in the polls for the Bundestag elections over the Christmas period and the turn of the year. The CDU/CSU continue to lead the field despite slight losses, and there is still no sign of the SPD catching up. With the Sahra Wagenknecht alliance, the Liberals and the Left Party, three parties are still just above or below the 5% threshold, making their entry into the Bundestag uncertain. Their success or failure could have a major impact on the formation of the government.

CDU/CSU still clearly ahead in the polls

Just under 5 weeks before the Bundestag elections, the changes in the election polls are still limited. Despite slight losses, the combination of the Christian Democrats (CDU) and their Bavarian sister party (CSU) is still clearly in the lead with a good 30% (Chart 1). The right-wing AfD and the Greens have made some gains in recent weeks, while the Social Democrats (SPD) remain trapped in a narrow range between 15% and 16%. So far, there is no indication that they will rapidly close the gap to the CDU/CSU as they did in the hot phase of the last general election campaign.

17 January 2025

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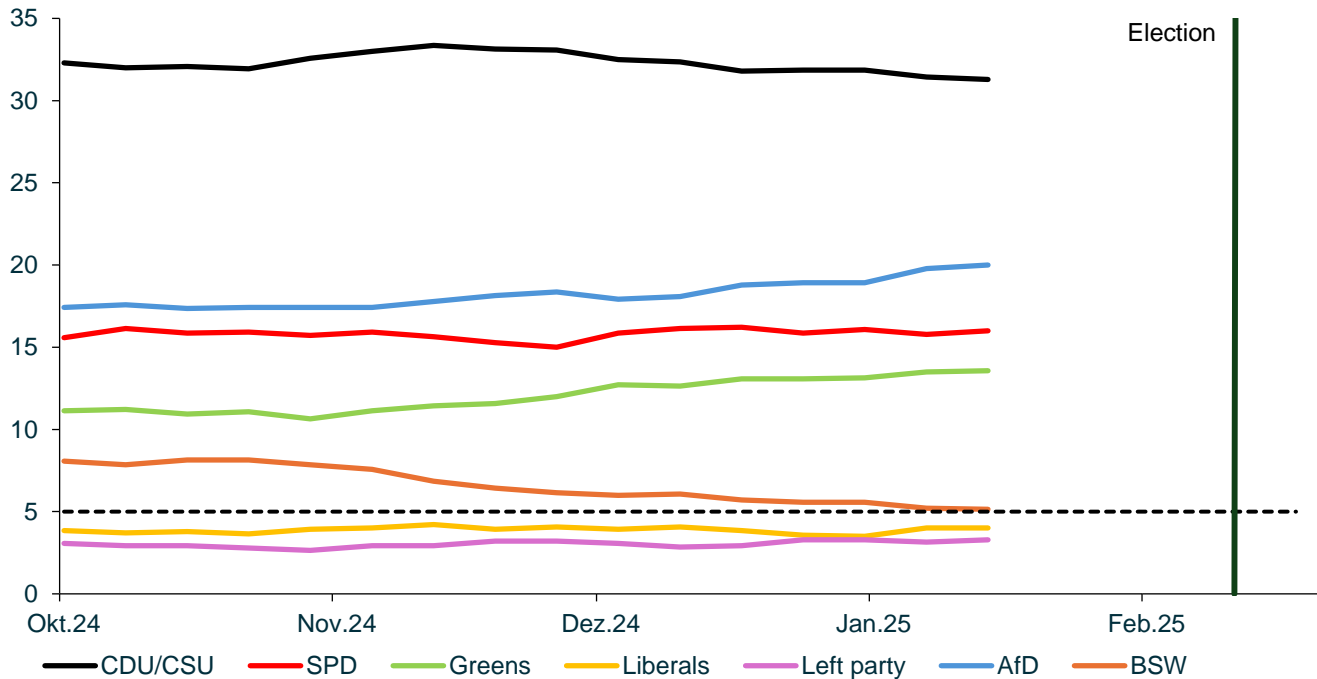
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Chart 1 - CDU/CSU with a big lead, FDP and Left party below 5%

Parties' share of the vote in the next general election, average of the most recent projections by 8 opinion research institutes, in percent



Source: wahlrecht.de, Commerzbank Research

BSW only just over the 5% hurdle, ...

Perhaps the most important change of the past week is the further decline in the ratings of the “Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance” (BSW), a new left-wing party founded just one year ago. While the polls shortly after the BSW’s election successes in the three state elections in September were still predicting an average vote share of 8% and thus a secure entry into the Bundestag, the party is currently only averaging 5.1% in the polls we look at, with two projections suggesting it would currently fail to clear the 5% threshold with 4%.

... FDP and Left Party still below

There has been little change in the polls for the Liberals (FDP) and the Left Party, both of which remain below 5%. The FDP’s poll ratings are still slightly higher than those of the Left Party.

Rescue anchor: basic mandate clause?

However, this does not mean that the FDP is more likely to enter parliament than the Left Party. This is because the Left party can hope to win a direct mandate [1] in at least three constituencies and thus re-enter the Bundestag even if the 5% threshold is breached. In the last federal election in the fall of 2021, she secured her re-entry in this way. Whether it will succeed in doing so again in the face of new competition from the BSW is not yet certain, but certainly possible.

Another party, the conservative “Free Voters”, who are so far away from the 5% threshold in most polls that they are not even shown separately, are also hoping to win at least three direct mandates. However, their chances are likely to be smaller than those of the Left Party, even though they won two constituencies in the last state election in Bavaria, their local stronghold.

Fate of the smaller parties decisive for coalition options?

At first glance, whether BSW, FDP and Linkspartei manage to (re-)enter the Bundestag may seem like a side note. This is because the Left Party and BSW have no potential alliance partner, and a renewed government participation of the FDP is also rather unlikely, as a combination of CDU/CSU and FDP is far from a majority in the polls.

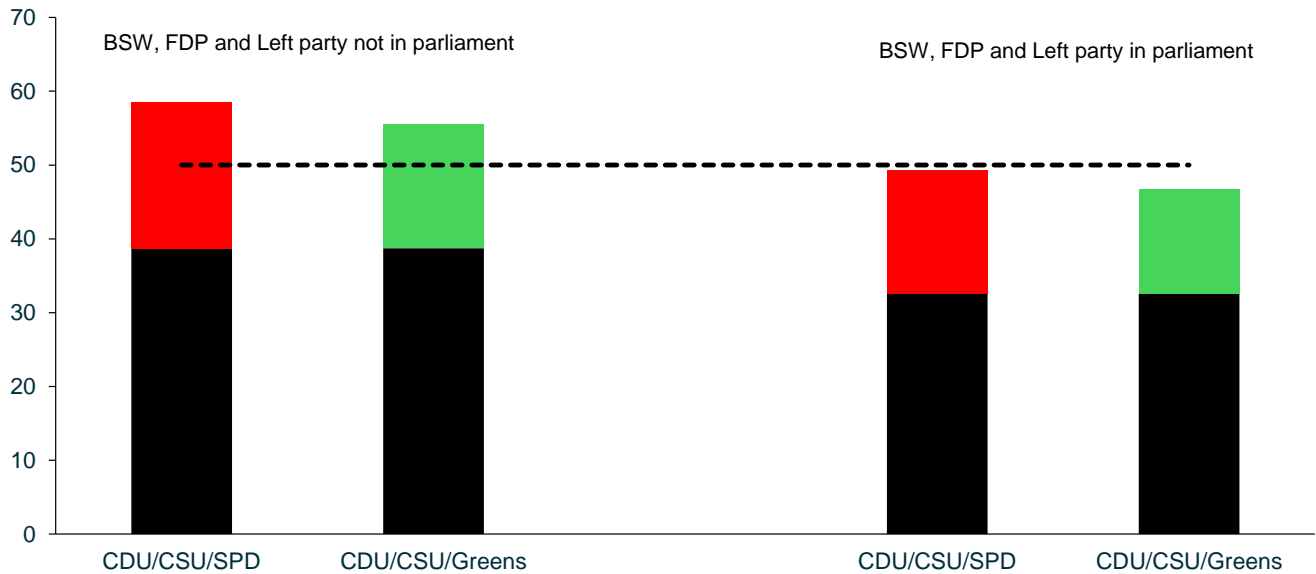
However, the performance of the smaller parties could be decisive in determining which coalitions will ultimately be possible. If they all fail to win seats, a coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD as well as an alliance of CDU/CSU and Greens would have a majority in the



Bundestag based on the current poll results (Chart 2). However, if all three of the smaller parties were represented with at least 5% of the vote, both combinations would require an additional alliance partner, i.e. probably either the FDP or the Greens or the SPD. This would certainly not make forming a government any easier.

Chart 2 - Performance of smaller parties could determine coalition options

Parties' shares of seats in the Bundestag in percent if BSW, FDP and Left party fail to reach the 5% threshold (left columns) or if they all receive at least 5% (right columns), based on the average of the latest poll by 7 institutes



Source: wahlrecht.de, Commerzbank Research

Former publications on the general election 2025:

- ["What happens to the debt break?"](#), Economic Insight 21 November 2024
- ["German election update - Upper house a big hurdle for the next government"](#), Economic Insight 2 December 2024
- ["Election update Germany - Will the SPD succeed in catching up?"](#), Economic Insight 11 December 2024
- ["Election update Germany - The plans of CDU and CSU"](#), Economic Insight 17 December 2024

[1] A direct mandate is the parliamentary seat won by the candidate with the most votes in one of the 299 constituencies. Since the representation of the parties in the 630 seat strong Bundestag is determined by their relative vote share, not every winner in a constituency is necessarily guaranteed a seat in parliament, however. [\(back to text\)](#)



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