

Russian Elections 2016: Kremlin Landslide Confirmed

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Members of a local election commission count votes during the Russian parliamentary elections.

Vladimir Lamzin / TASS

Russia's ruling United Russia party has secured a higher-than-expected landslide victory in the country's parliamentary elections.

As of 10:00 am Moscow time, with 94 percent of ballots currently counted, the party had secured 54.23 percent of the vote. When combined with candidates in single-constituency districts, the result will see the party control at least 343 places in the 450-seat State Duma.

The fight for second place still hangs in the balance, with the Communist Party only just pulling ahead of the nationalist-leaning LDPR with 13.44 percent of the vote. The LDPR has so far secured 13.25 percent of the vote, while the Just Russia Party has 6.18 percent, just above the 5 percent needed to secure a seat in parliament.

All three parties held seats in the last Russian Duma, and have been widely dubbed as “systemic opposition” groups, due to their loyalty to the Kremlin on all major political issues.

Liberal opposition parties Yabloko and Parnas finished the night without a single Duma representative, and without the promise of any state funding for future campaigns. Under Russian law, funding is given to parties which secure over 3 percent of the vote.

Result for both parties has been blamed on an abysmal turnout in their traditional urban strongholds of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Both cities saw widespread protests after vote tampering in the 2011 parliamentary elections, followed by a Kremlin crackdown and mass arrests.

Just 30 percent of Muscovites turned out to vote on Sunday, compared to 50 percent five years ago. St. Petersburg saw even greater voter apathy, with just 16 percent of city residents voting by 5 p.m. local time.

Under a new system devised for the 2016 elections, half of the 450-seat State Duma were selected through party lists. The remaining 225 seats are awarded in a single-constituency system, where select districts are represented by a single winner-takes-all candidate.

The new system has been credited to United Russia's close brush with defeat in the 2011, when all 450 deputies had been elected through party lists and United Russia only secured a simple majority of 238 seats.

Video footage of vote tampering has also suggested that other outside factors may have influenced the vote, yet Russian Central Election Commission chief Ella Pamfilova declared the election to be completely legitimate.

Yet for many, the result was never in doubt.

"We can already say with certainty that the party [United Russia] won with a good result," Putin said on state television after polling had closed. "The situation is hard and difficult but people still voted for United Russia."

"People want stability in their political system," he added.

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