

Elections to the Reichstag (1890–1912)

Abstract

These tables show the evolution of the parliamentary landscape at the turn of the century. Having been abandoned by Bismarck in 1878, the National Liberals declined, whereas the Catholic Center party remained constant. The most striking feature of the “landscape” below, however, is the transformation of the Social Democratic Party into the largest in the federal parliament.

Source

	7. Reichstag 1887				8. Reichstag 1890				9. Reichstag 1893			
a) Eligible voters	a) Millions	b) Millions	c) %	d) %	a) Millions	b) Millions	c) %	d) %	a) Millions	b) Millions	c) %	d) %
b) Votes cast	9.770	7.570	77.5	20,9	10.146	7.262	71.6	21.7	10.628	7.702	72.5	21.5
c) Turnout												
d) Eligible voters as % of population ¹												
a) Number of votes	a) Millions	b) %	c)	d) %	a) Millions	b) %	c)	d) %	a) Millions	b) %	c)	d) %
b) Percentage of votes												
c) Number of parliamentary seats												
d) Percentage of parliamentary seats												
Conservatives	1.147	15.2	80	20.2	0.895	12.4	73	18.4	1.038	13.5	72	18.1
Reich Party	0.736	9.8	41	10.3	0.482	6.7	20	5.0	0.438	5.7	28	7.1
National Liberals	1.678	22.2	99	24.9	1.178	16.3	42	10.6	0.997	13.0	53	13.4
Liberals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liberal Union ²	0.973	12.9	32	8.1	1.160	16.0	66	16.6	0.258	3.9	13	3.3
German Progressive Party ³									0.666	8.7	24	6.0
German People's Party	0.089	1.2	-	-	0.148	2.0	10	2.5	0.167	2.2	11	2.8
Center	1.516	20.1	98	24.7	1.342	18.6	106	26.7	1.469	19.1	96	24.2
Guelphs	0.113	1.5	4	1.0	0.113	1.6	11	2.8	0.102	1.3	7	1.8
Social Democrats	0.763	10.1	11	2.8	1.427	19.7	35	8.8	1.787	23.3	44	11.1
Poles	0.220	2.9	13	3.3	0.247	3.4	16	4.0	0.230	3.0	19	4.9
Danes ⁴	0.012	0.2	1	0.3	0.014	0.2	1	0.3	0.014	0.2	1	0.3
Alsace-Lorrainers ⁵	0.234	3.1	15	3.8	0.101	1.4	10	2.5	0.115	1.5	8	2.0

Antisemites, Economic Association ⁶	0.012 ⁹	0.2	1	0.3	0.048	0.7	5	1.3	0.264	3.4	16	4.0
Others	0.048	0.6	2	0.5	0.075	1.0	2	0.5	0.129	1.7	5	1.3
Total	7.541		397		7.229		397		7.674		397	

I. 7. Reichstag 1887; 8. Reichstag 1890; 9. Reichstag 1893

II. 10. Reichstag 1898; 8. 11. Reichstag 1903; 12. Reichstag 1907

	10. Reichstag 1898				11. Reichstag 1903				12. Reichstag 1907			
	a)	b)	c)	d)	a)	b)	c)	d)	a)	b)	c)	d)
a) Eligible voters	Millions	Millions	%	%	Millions	Millions	%	%	Millions	Millions	%	%
b) Votes cast	11.441	7.787	68.1	21.9	12,531	9,534	76,1	22,2	13,351	11,303	84,7	22,0
c) Turnout												
d) Eligible voters as % of population ¹												
a) Number of votes	Millions	%		%	Millions	%		%	Millions	%		%
b) Percentage of votes												
c) Number of parliamentary seats												
d) Percentage of parliamentary seats												
Conservatives	0.859	11.1	56	14.1	0.948	10.0	54	13.6	1.060	9.4	60	15.1
Reich Party	0.344	4.4	23	5.8	0.333	3.5	21	5.3	0.472	4.2	24	6.0
National Liberals	0.971	12.5	46	11.6	1.313	13.8	51	12.8	1.637	14.5	54	13.6
Liberals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liberal Union ²	0.196	2.5	12	3.0	0.243	2.6	9	2.3	0.359	3.2	14	3.5
German Progressive Party ³	0.558	7.2	29	7.4	0.543	5.7	21	5.3	0.736	6.5	28	7.1
German People's Party	0.109	1.4	8	2.0	0.091	1.0	6	1.5	0.139	1.2	7	1.8
Center	1.455	18.8	102	25.7	1.875	19.7	100	25.2	2.180	19.4	105	26.4
Guelphs	0.105	1.4	9	2.3	0.094	1.0	6	1.5	0.078	0.7	1	0.3
Social Democrats	2.107	27.2	56	14.1	3.011	31.7	81	20.4	3.259	29.0	43	10.8
Poles	0.244	3.1	14	3.5	0.348	3.7	16	4.0	0.454	4.0	20	5.0
Danes ⁴	0.015	0.2	1	0.3	0.015	0.2	1	0.3	0.015	0.1	1	0.3
Alsace-Lorrainers ⁵	0.107	1.4	10	2.5	0.102	1.1	9	2.3	0.104	0.9	7	1.8
Antisemites, Economic Association ⁶	0.284	3.7	13	3.3	0.245	2.6	11	2.8	0.249	2.2	22	5.5
Others	0.397	5.1	18	4.5	0.334	3.5	11	2.8	0.528	4.7	11	2.8
Total	7.752		397		9.495		397		11.263		397	

II. 13. Reichstag 1912

	13. Reichstag 1912			
a) Eligible voters	a)	b)	c)	d)
b) Votes cast	Millions	Millions	%	%
c) Turnout	14.442	12.261	84.9	22.2
d) Eligible voters as % of population ¹				
a) Number of votes	a)	b)	c)	d)
b) Percentage of votes	Millions	%		%
c) Number of parliamentary seats				
d) Percentage of parliamentary seats				
Conservates	1.126	9.2	43	10.8
Reich Party	0.367	3.0	14	3.5
National Liberals	1.663	13.6	45	11.3
Liberals	-	-	-	-
Liberal Union ²	1.497	12.3	42	10,6
German Progressive Party ³				
German People's Party				
Center	1.997	16.4	91	22.8
Guelphs	0.085	0.7	5	1.3
Social Democrats	4.250	34.8	110	27.7
Poles	0.442	3.6	18	4.5
Danes ⁴	0.017	0.1	1	0.3
Alsace-Lorrainers ⁵	0.162	1.3	9	2.3
Antisemites, Economic Association ⁶	0.300	2.5	10	2.5
Others	0.301	2.5	9	2.3
Total	12.207		397	

¹ According to the last census. One must bear in mind that in these elections, which took place a considerable time after the previous census (e.g., the elections of 1890, which were based not on the census of 1890 but on that of 1885), the percentage of eligible voters relative to the overall population seems slightly higher than it was in actual fact. The low percentage in 1871 is attributable in part to poorly kept voter lists.

² After 1893 Liberal Association [*Freisinnige Vereinigung*], after 1910 absorbed into the Progressive People's Party [*Fortschrittliche Volkspartei*].

³ After 1884 German-Liberal Party [*Deutsch-Freisinnige Partei*], after 1893 Liberal People's Party [*Freisinnige Volkspartei*], after 1910 absorbed into the Progressive People's Party [*Fortschrittliche Volkspartei*].

⁴ The votes cast in Schleswig-Holstein for both the Particularists and the Protest Party are here added to the Danes to the extent that no further information is provided in the official statistics.

⁵ Here, as was usual, the votes cast in Alsace-Lorraine for the Center [*Zentrum*] were included among the

Alsace-Lorrainers until 1878, likewise the deputies allocated to the Center [*Zentrum*] in the official statistics 1874–78, who were labeled as “not belonging to the parliamentary group.”

⁶ Antisemites participated in the Reichstag elections from 1887 to 1903 as splinter groups under the party names Christian-Social Party [*Christlich-Soziale Partei*], German Reform Party [*Deutsche Reformpartei*], German-Social Reform Party [*Deutsch-Soziale Reformpartei*], and German-Social Party [*Deutsch-Soziale Partei*]. After 1907 this heading also includes the Economic Association [*Wirtschaftliche Vereinigung*], into which the Antisemites were absorbed as the dominant group.

Source: *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, Bd. 250, 1912–1913, Appendix o.S. “Compilation of the Basis of the Figures for Table 2.” The figures for the following parties: Guelphs, Danes, and Alsace-Lorrainers, as well as the breakdown of the Liberal Parties were calculated according to: *Vierteljahreshefte zur Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, first series, 3 Jg. 1875, pp. 2–51; *Monatshefte zur Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, 1879, June edition, pp. 4–35, 40–71; 1882, Heft III, pp. 2–33; 1884, Heft IV, pp. 2–33; 1885, Heft I, pp. 106–37; 1890, Heft IV, pp. 24–59; *Vierteljahreshefte zur Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, new series, 2. Jg., 1893, Heft IV, pp. 4–55; 12. Jg., 1903, Heft III, pp. 100–07; Supplement for the year 1903, Heft IV, pp. 6–7; Supplement for the year 1907, Heft I, pp. 62–69; Heft III, pp. 8–9; *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, vol. 250, 1912–1913, Heft II, S. 49; tables reprinted in Gerhard A. Ritter, *Wahlgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch*. Munich, 1980, pp. 40–42.

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