



By: TA | AP Insight

Moroccans vote after mass migration attempts and deadly youth protests



More jobs. Higher wages. Less inequality. Better housing, schools, hospitals and infrastructure.

Those are among the main concerns for **Moroccan voters** as they head to the polls Wednesday to elect a new parliament.

The next government will oversee billions of dollars in investment as Morocco prepares to co-host the **2030 FIFA World Cup**, prompting some to describe it as the “World Cup government.” A soccer boss could even emerge as prime minister.

Morocco's new political leadership will mainly face pressure to address everyday concerns, while operating alongside a powerful monarchy that retains decision-making authority in strategic affairs.

Morocco's economy is strong but jobs are scarce

Morocco's economy is growing and attracting foreign investment, and new industries are developing. It has also become Africa's most-visited destination.

The kingdom is a close U.S. ally and maintains strong ties with Western capitals. It is among the few Arab countries that have diplomatic relations with Israel.

Development remains uneven across the country

Behind the medieval palaces, glistening seas and breathtaking mountains that draw tourists from around the world lies an uncomfortable reality: Development remains uneven across the country, economic growth is not creating enough jobs, and 12.7% of Moroccans live in relative poverty.

Politicians say they have heard these grievances and have proposed solutions in their election manifestos. Many young Moroccans in particular say they have heard

such promises before.

Parties make pledges for schools, hospitals and housing

A total of 7,288 candidates from 27 political parties are competing for 395 seats.

The RNI party, part of the current governing coalition, has promised a guaranteed monthly minimum wage of 5,000 dirham (\$525) and to create 1 million jobs.

Another member of the governing coalition, the PAM party, said it would exempt salaries below 15,000 dirham (\$1,575) from taxes and pledged 100,000 housing solutions for young people.

The Istiqlal Party wants to speed up treatment at public hospitals. The opposition left-wing PPS aims to cut the school dropout rate in half and tighten anti-corruption rules.

The moderate Islamist PJD party aims to narrow economic disparities between major economic hubs like Casablanca and other regions.

The next PM could be a soccer boss or the first woman in the job

Morocco's constitution requires the king to choose the prime minister from the top-performing party in legislative elections.

Since no single party is expected to capture an absolute majority, the winner will need to build a coalition government. Portfolios are split among the political allies, but the palace traditionally keeps key posts such as defense and foreign affairs under royal control.

“The government's overall policy platform is set by a circle of advisers close to the king, who retains ultimate power,” said Hamish Kinnear, a U.K.-based risk analyst focusing on

North Africa and the Middle East.

Traditionally, the king has named the leader of the party that comes first as prime minister. But in recent months, attention has turned to other possibilities, such as Faouzi Lakjaa, president of Morocco's soccer federation, who recently joined the PAM party as a member of its political bureau but is not the top party official.

Lakjaa, 56, who also oversees Morocco's budget, has been buoyed by Morocco's recent soccer achievements.

Yet at a rally last week, PAM members rooted for another candidate.

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"We want a woman as prime minister," many shouted, referring to Fatima-Zahra Mansouri, 50, mayor of Marrakech and minister of urban planning. If PAM wins the election and she is named, she would be Morocco's first female prime minister.

Another potential contender is Nizar Baraka, head of PI and minister of water. The grandson of a leader of Morocco's colonial-era independence movement, Baraka's supporters see his party as a defender of Moroccan values.

Former Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane, leader of the moderate Islamist PJD, is seeking a comeback after the party's sharp defeat in 2021, when it went from 125 seats to 13.

Some call to boycott the elections

The Democratic Path, a far-left party, has urged a boycott of Wednesday's elections, saying that they "lack the minimum conditions

of democracy and fairness."

"The elections will not give us a parliament that expresses people's will and the government will not have any decision-making power," said Jamal Berrajaa, the party's leader. He added that more than 30 members of his party were arrested after calling people to boycott the ballot box.

Elections in Morocco are used to produce sham institutions that cannot perform their functions - Abdelwahed Moutawakkil

"We want a new democratic constitution," Berrajaa said.

Al Aadl Wal Ihsane, a banned but tolerated Islamist organization, issued similar calls.

"Elections in Morocco are used to produce sham institutions that cannot perform their functions," said Abdelwahed Moutawakkil, head of the group's political department.

Young Moroccans who tried to reach Ceuta are divided over elections

Young Moroccans are especially frustrated as the vote approaches. Youth unemployment reached 37% in 2025, while 2.9 million Moroccans aged 15 to 29 were not in education, employment or training, according to government figures.

Rather than joining traditional politics to make their voices heard, some have turned to street protests and attempts to leave the country. Their anger was evident in last year's deadly Gen Z protests and the **mass crossing into Ceuta** this summer.



Young Moroccans are especially frustrated as the vote approaches – Migrants in Ceuta, Spain

Ayoub Lasli, a lifeguard from Casablanca, was among the young Moroccans who swam into the Spanish exclave in July, hoping to find better job prospects.

Lasli doesn't plan to vote.

"I don't care about politics and elections, and I don't want to care," he told The Associated Press.

Others who made the same attempt, such as 23-year-old Ayoub Belaidi, have a more nuanced view.

"Following the **Gen Z movement**, if young people's voices are truly heard, change will happen," he said. "Voting needs to improve the lives of Morocco's youth."

Voter turnout remains a key challenge

Of the 26.7 million Moroccans of voting age, 15.8 million are registered voters. Turning 18 is not enough to vote; citizens must register on the electoral rolls — a bureaucratic hurdle for many.

The number of registered voters has declined 9.7% from the 2021 elections even as the population has grown.

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"Turnout is a key barometer of public engagement with the state," said Kinnear.