

Beat: Politics

DAVID LISNARD, FRANCE'S BEST- ELECTED MAYOR AN 81.1% LANDSLIDE IN CANNES

FROM LOCAL SUCCESS TO A PRESIDENTIAL BID

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USPA NEWS - In a city that has always leaned to the right, Cannes has just delivered one of the most spectacular scores of the 2026 municipal cycle. According to official results relayed by the Interior Ministry and regional media, incumbent mayor David Lisnard, from Les Republicains (LR, Classic Right) and founder of the Nouvelle Energie movement, is re elected in the first round for a third term with 81.1% of the vote. It is slightly below his extraordinary 88% landslide in 2020, but still enough to make him, according to his team, the best elected mayor in France among cities of more than 30,000 inhabitants with more than two lists in the race. Across all 56 polling stations, Lisnard crosses the 71% threshold; even in Ranguin, his lowest scoring district, he still reaches 71.59%, while the National Rally (Rassemblement national, RN) peaks at 17.62%

This article is written from the field by our accredited wheelchair using senior political reporter, with part of the election results gathered on site at several party headquarters and the remaining figures drawn from official sources, including the French Interior Ministry and Public Senat, and it draws on her experience and expertise as a senior political correspondent to examine the political implications of the local election results.

AN 81.1% SCORE ON THE CROISETTE DAVID LISNARD, THE MOST POWERFUL MAYOR ON THE RIGHT IS A POTENTIAL CHALLENGER IN PRESIDENTIAL 2027

This tidal wave does not entirely erase opposition, but it keeps it tightly contained in the council chamber. The RN (Marine Le Pen's Far right Party) list led by Lucas Mussio gathers 11.66% of the vote and wins three seats, while a united left list headed by local Socialist Party (Parti socialiste, PS) figure Michel Hugues takes 7.23% and secures a single seat. During the campaign, the left focused on housing, denouncing the gentrification of Cannes and calling for a renewed push on social housing. David Lisnard's critics on the left acknowledge that his management has reduced the city's debt while maintaining investment, but they question the social cost of this rigour: "We have dropped half of the population overboard, especially the weakest," Hugues warned in a televised debate. The RN (Marine Le Pen's Far right Party), for its part, claimed that insecurity persists and complained about "endless" works in the festival city, trying to portray David Lisnard as more concerned with image than with daily life.

DAVID LISNARD IS, THE MAYOR WHO TURNS LOCAL MANAGEMENT INTO A POLITICAL BRAND

Lisnard's own reading of the result is very different. In a statement, he hailed a "grand slam", stressing that he had won a large victory in every single polling station, in wealthy districts as well as in working class neighbourhoods. "This victory is the result of enormous work in sound local management and concrete improvements to the city, of a very practical and ambitious project for Cannes and of a ground campaign that was methodical and respectful," he argued. For him, Cannes is not just a well run tourist town; it is proof that "it is possible to win with an independent right, on solid principles, with new ideas, a concrete project and decent candidates", a formula that he now promises to "carry to make France win".

A NATIONAL FIGURE AND "PRESIDENTIABLE" ON THE RIGHT

Beyond Cannes, Lisnard has become a central figure of the French right. As president of the Association of French Mayors (Association des maires de France, AMF), he represents the 36,000 communes of the country and regularly confronts the central government over funding, decentralisation and respect for local powers. Within Les Republicains, he is one of the few leaders capable of speaking both to traditional party activists and to a wider audience, managing to avoid open enmities even when he takes very clear positions on security, migration or public finances. His supporters point to a style that is both direct and uncompromising, particularly towards offenders and criminals in Cannes, where several of his decisions have become "legendary" among right wing voters, and yet perceived as serious and competent rather than purely ideological.

SUPPORTED BY ERIC CIOTTI, COURTING A WIDER RIGHT

Although he remains formally an LR member and has created Nouvelle Energie as a vehicle for his presidential ambitions, Lisnard received support during the municipal campaign from Eric Ciotti (Former President of Republicans, now joined Marine Le Pen & Jordan Bardella's RN far Right Party), who is now allied with the RN in the Alpes Maritimes departmental majority. This local convergence illustrates Lisnard's delicate balancing act: he wants to appear as the candidate of a firm but respectable right, capable of talking to hard liners without fully embracing Marine Le Pen's line. In that sense, his 81% score in Cannes, hailed on social networks with comments such as "when the work is well done, it is rewarded" but also ironic remarks about "banana republic scores", feeds a growing narrative: that he is "certainly one of the most presidential looking right wing candidates" for the April 2027 presidential election

A LOCAL PLEBISCITE WITH 81.1% LANDSLIDE IN CANNES THAT TURNS LOCAL SUCCESS INTO A PRESIDENTIAL SPRINGBOARD

For now, David Lisnard insists that his priority remains Cannes and the mayors he represents through the AMF. But the numbers speak for themselves: three consecutive first round victories, two of them above 80%, in a high profile city on the Cote d'Azur (French Riviera), with controlled debt, continued investment and limited opposition. In a fragmented right torn between Emmanuel Macron compatible moderates, Eric Ciotti's hard line and the gravitational pull of the RN, such a profile is rare. The coming months will show whether this Riviera mayor can convert a local plebiscite into a national momentum or whether Cannes will remain his fortress while others on the right try to claim the Elysee, the supreme role of head of State.

Yet there is a paradox at the heart of his rise. The more Lisnard moves towards a harder line on security, identity and migration, the closer he comes to the political territory already occupied by Jordan Bardella and the National Rally. According to a CSA poll for CNEWS, the JDD and Europe 1 published on 19 March, around 70% of right wing sympathisers say they are in favour of alliances with the RN in future elections. In that context, if Lisnard one day decides to cross the Rubicon and openly embrace such an alliance, will he still stand out as the architect of an "independent right", or will he risk diluting his profile into that of Bardella, who already appears as the natural frontrunner of the nationalist camp for 2027? And if Marine Le Pen does not run and Bardella leads the presidential ticket, would Lisnard become his most direct rival on the right or simply another figure swept up by the same wave he claims he can control? Sources: Public Senat, France TV, JDD, Nice Matin

This is a special elections report on the 2026 French municipal elections of 15 and 22 March, based on official results from the Interior Ministry and live coverage by Public Senat and LCP, complemented by our own political analysis.

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