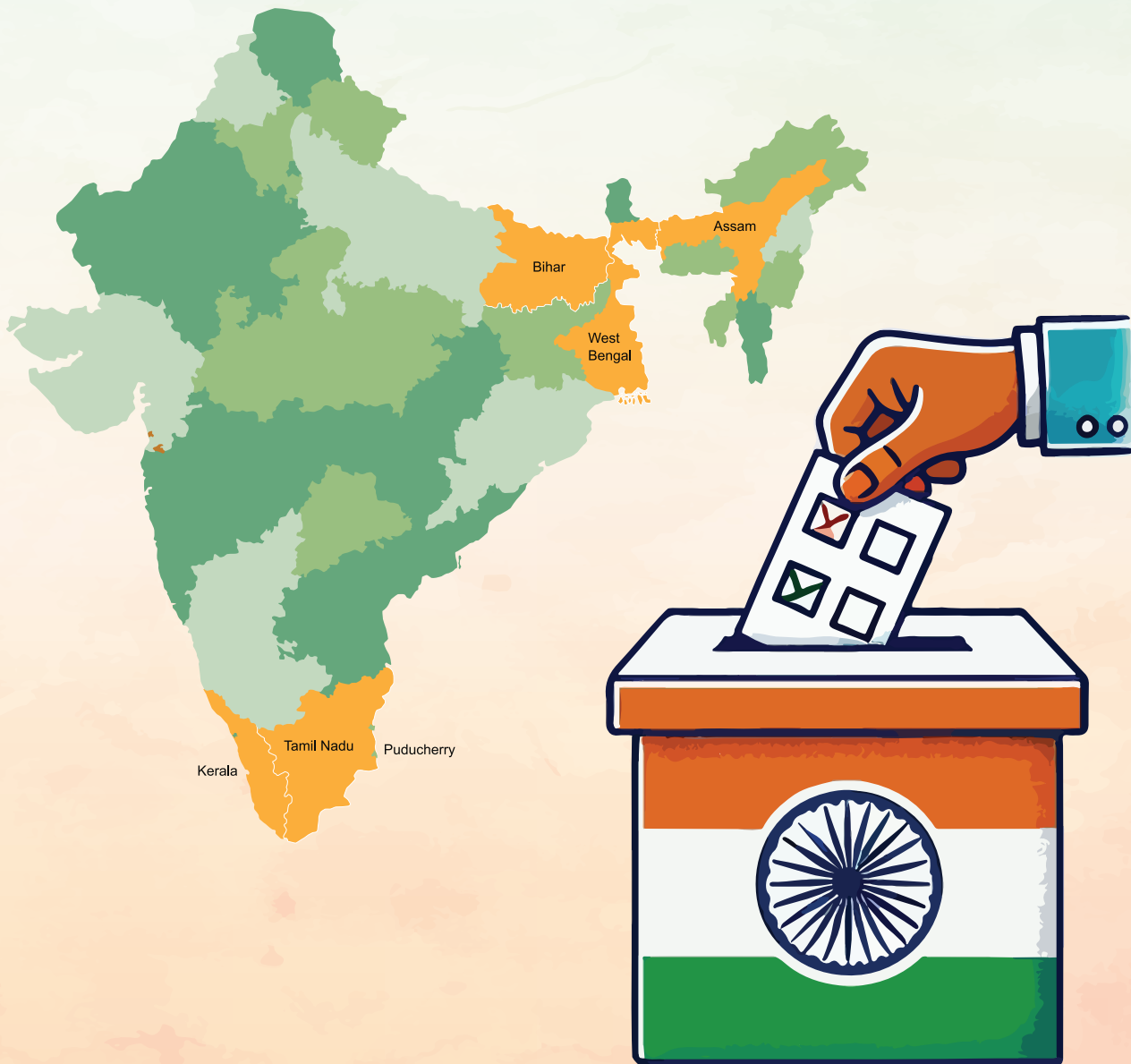


INDIAN STATE ELECTIONS

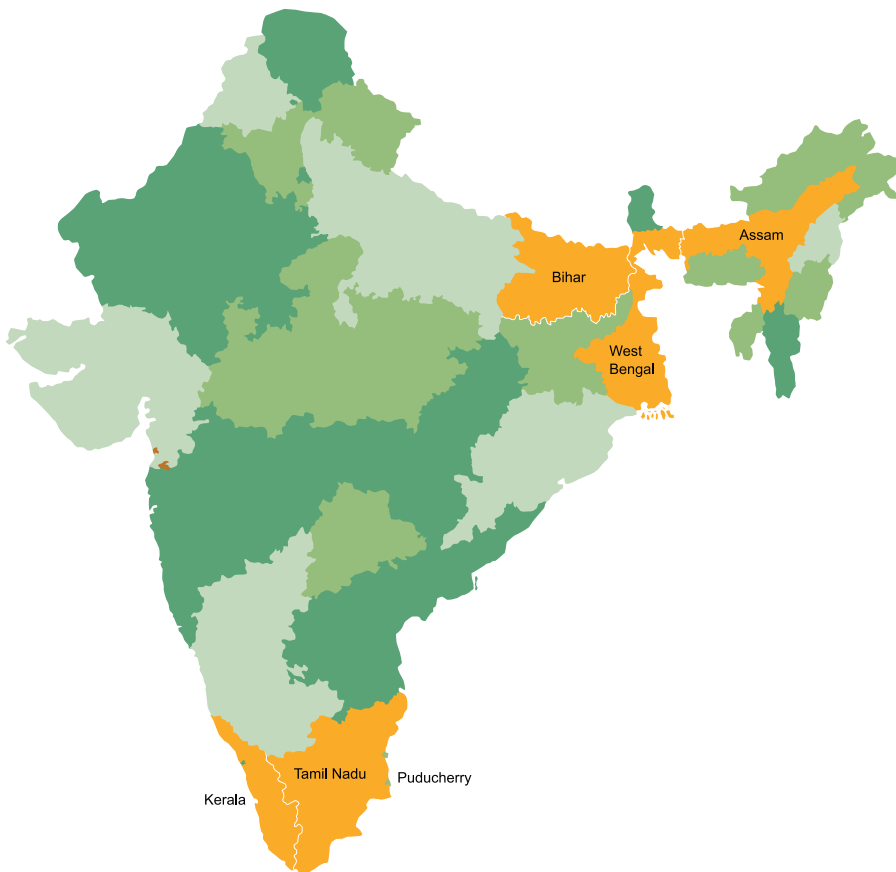
2025-2026



INDIAN STATE ELECTIONS

2025-2026

Maryum Tamoor, Faizan Riaz & Hamza Zaman



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Acronyms

AASU	All Assam Students' Association
AGM	Anchalik Gana Morcha
AGP	Asom Gana Parishad
AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AIFB	All India Forward Bloc
AIMIM	All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen
AINRC	All India Naresan Rangasamy Congress
AITMC	All India Trinamool Congress
AIUDF	All India United Democratic Front
AJP	Asom Jatiya Parishad
ANP	Adivasi National Party
ASDC	Autonomous State Demand Committee
BDJS	Bharath Dharma Jana Sena
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BOPF	Bodoland People's Front
BP	Bangla Congress Party
CAA	Citizenship Amendment Act
CAPF	Central Armed Police Forces
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI (ML)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist Liberation)
CS	Congress Secular
DMDK	Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
DPA	Democratic Progressive Alliance
DSP (PC)	Democratic Socialist Party (Prabobh Chandra)
ECI	Election Commission of India
FB	Forward Bloc
FB (M)	Forward Bloc (Marxist)
GJM	Gorkha Janmukhti Morcha

GL	Gorkha League
GNLF	Gorkha National Liberation Front
HAM	Hindustani Awam Morcha
I.N.D.I.A	Indian National Developmental and Inclusive Alliance
IMDT	Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act
INC	Indian National Congress
ISF	Indian Secular Front
IUML	Indian Union Muslim League
JD (S)	Janata Dal (Secular)
JD (U)	Janata Dal (United)
JDPP	Jimochayan (Deori) People's Party
JMM	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha
JP (S)	Janvadi Party (Socialist)
JSP	Jan Suraj Party
KC (J)	Kerala Congress (Jacob)
KC (M)	Kerala Congress (Marxist)
KDP	Kerala Democratic Party
KMK	Kongunadu Munnetra Kazhagam
LDF	Left Democratic Front
LJP	Lok Janshakti Party
LSP	Left Socialist Party
MGB	Mahagathbhandhan
MNMK	Manithaneya Makkal Katchi
NCP	Nationalist Congress Party
NCRC	National Crime Records Check
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NRC	National Register of Citizens
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
PDS	Party of Democratic Socialism
PMK	Pattali Makkal Katchi
PT	Puthiya Tamilagam
PULF	People's United Left Front

RCPI	Revolutionary Communist Party of India
RD	Raijor Dal
RJD	Rashtriya Janata Dal
RLM	Rashtriya Lok Morcha
RLSP	Rashtriya Lok Samta Party
RSMP	Rashtriya Secular Majlis Party
RSP	Revolutionary Socialist Party
SBSP	Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party
SIR	Special Intensive Revision
SJD (D)	Samajwadi Janata Dal (Democratic)
SP	Samajwadi Party
SPA	Secular Progressive Alliance
SRP	Socialist Republican Party
SSC	School Service Commission
SUCI (C)	Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist)
UCC	Uniform Civil Code
UDF	United Democratic Front
ULF	United Left Front
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Asom
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
UPPL	United Peoples' Party Liberal
VCK	Vidhuthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi
VIP	Vikassheel Insaan Party

INTRODUCTION

India's electoral cycle is a perpetual phenomenon. There is hardly any period when the country is not undergoing an electoral process. Its parliamentary democracy operates at several levels. The Lok Sabha, the lower house, holds nationwide elections every five years through direct voting, while the members of Rajya Sabha, the upper house, are elected by state assemblies for a six-year term, with one-third members renewed every two years. States and Union Territories have their assemblies, generally elected every five years, though dates vary. The President and Vice-President are chosen indirectly by an electoral college. Together, these overlapping cycles keep India's democratic machinery constantly active.

After the 19th Lok Sabha elections, the next round of elections is due in the states of Bihar and Assam in the northeast, West Bengal in the east, and in the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, as well as in the Union Territory of Puducherry. Each state has a distinct political climate shaped by its local issues. These elections carry weight, as they come soon after the general polls and build on the nationwide Narendra Modi wave. These contests will test how national momentum translates into state-level politics, where local factors often shape voters' choices differently. This study reviews how politics in these states has evolved, comparing shifts in party seats and vote shares, their earlier campaign priorities, and where they stand now, to show how regional dynamics feed into India's wider political story. Building on the assessment of the factors contributing to the success story of the incumbent political party, this research identifies the contemporary developments and strategies adopted by the parties in the run-up to the elections and pinpoints opportunities that can be harnessed to influence future electoral outcomes. Following are the state elections being analysed in this study:-

Sr. No.	State	Election Date	Ruling Party
1.	Bihar	6-14 November 2025	NDA (JD+ BJP)
2.	Tamil Nadu	April-May 2026	DMK
3.	West Bengal	May 2026	AITMC

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4.	Kerala	May 2026	CPI(M) (LDF)
5.	Assam	March-April 2026	BJP
6.	Puducherry	May 2026	NDA (BJP)

BIHAR



BIHAR

Bihar, the beating heart of Hindi belt politics, has always been a place where politics runs deep, messy at times, but never dull. Its politics has long been defined by coalition governments, primarily revolving around two dominant forces: the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and the Janata Dal (United) (JD (U)). The RJD, under Lalu Prasad Yadav, held sway through the 1990s and early 2000s, marked by its emphasis on caste-based politics and populist appeal.¹ The political tide shifted in 2005 when Nitish Kumar, leading the JD (U), ended Lalu's prolonged rule by focusing on governance, infrastructure, and social development. Since then, Nitish has remained a central figure in Bihar's politics, serving as Chief Minister eight times and frequently navigating between alliances with the RJD and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

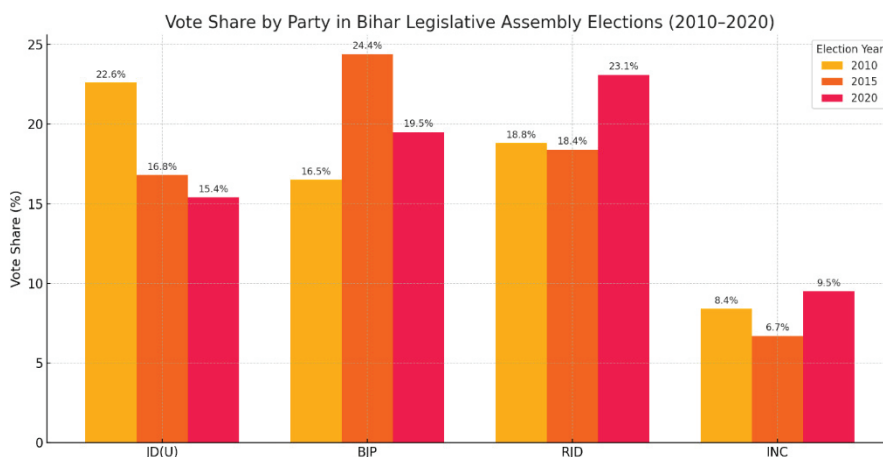
Nitish Kumar, a veteran politician and leader of the JD (U), has long been a central figure in Bihar's politics, known for his pragmatic approach and shifting alliances. In 2005, the public mood changed as people grew weary of poor roads, failing schools, and rising lawlessness. Kumar shifted the discourse from caste-based politics to governance, promising development, better infrastructure, and effective administration. This was a message that resonated strongly with the electorate. In Bihar politics, nothing stays still for long. Nitish Kumar joined hands with Lalu Prasad Yadav in 2015, only to return to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in 2017.

Between 2015 and 2020, alliances kept shifting along with the voters' preferences. By the 2020 elections, cracks had appeared within the NDA, though it narrowly managed to retain power.² The chasms in the NDA allowed the RJD to emerge as the single largest vote securing party. Consequently, Bihar's voters became more politically conscious, closely scrutinising the

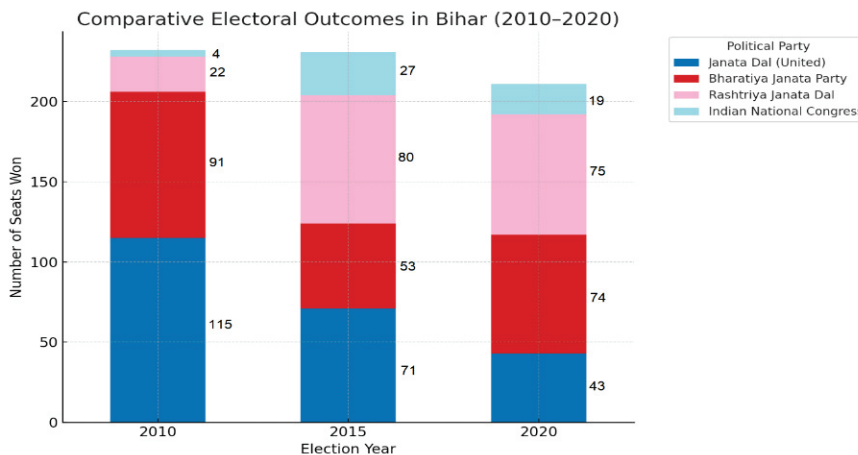
¹ "Bihar (BR) Infographics," *Elections in India*, Last Updated on May 26, 2015, accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.elections.in/infographics/bihar-politics.html>.

² Manish Kumar, "Nitish Kumar, BJP Retain Bihar, Tejashwi Yadav's RJD Single-Largest Party," *NDTV*, November 11, 2020, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/nitish-kumar-bjp-retain-bihar-tejashwi-yadav-s-rjd-single-largest-party-2323562>.

actions of their political representatives in contrast to mere rhetoric. Bihar's political mood now suggests: perform, or prepare to be shown the door. The voters' preferences are also changing. They are more impatient, more demanding, and not easily swayed by old loyalties.



Comparative Electoral Outcomes in Bihar (2010–2020)



Bihar's Coalition Outcomes over the Years (2010-2020)

Sr. No.	Election Year	Coalition Name	Member Parties	Coalition Head	Seats won by Coalition	Votes Secured by Coalition
1.	2010	National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	Janata Dal (United), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	JDU	206	39.07
		RJD alliance	Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP)	RJD	25	25.58
		United Progressive Alliance (UPA)	Indian National Congress (INC)	INC	4	8.37
2.	2015	Mahagathbandhan	Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Janata Dal (United), Indian National Congress (INC)	JDU	178	41.9
		National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP), Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM)	JDU	58	34.1
		Left Front	Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party Marxist-Leninist Liberation Party (CPI(ML)), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) (SUCI (C)), All India Forward Bloc (AIFB), Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP)	CPI (ML)	3	3.57
3.	2020	National Democratic Alliance	Janata Dal (United) (JD (U)), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP),	JD (U)	125	37.26

			Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) ³			
		Mahagathbandhan	Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Indian National Congress (INC), Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) (CPI(ML)), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M))	RJD	110	37.23
		Grand Democratic Secular Front	Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Samajwadi Janata Dal (Democratic) (SJD (D)), All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP), Janvadi Party (Socialist) (JP (S))	RLSP	6	4.60

Electoral Agendas of Key Parties in Bihar (2015-2020)

Sr. No.	Political Party	Focus Areas 2015	Focus Areas 2020	Observed Shift
1.	Janata Dal (United)	Development, law and order.	Good Governance, women empowerment, and alcohol prohibition.	Increased focus on social reform.
2.	Bharatiya Janata Party	Development, and <i>Hindutva</i> .	Employment, nationalism, and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) support.	Stronger emphasis on employment and youth.
3.	Rashtriya Janata Dal	Social justice and anti-incumbency.	Jobs, education, and anti-incumbency.	More youth-centric agenda.

³ Part of the National Democratic alliance at the Center but not in State.

4.	Indian National Congress	Welfare schemes and secularism.	Youth and farmer welfare.	Slight shift to economic issues.
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Evolving Trends in the Run-up to Elections

A Tired Electorate

The 2025 Bihar elections are more like a waiting game than a full-blown contest. People are not excited but tired. They are frustrated about jobs, broken roads, and the young population leaving the state to seek employment. The BJP is trying to stir things up by leaning on Modi's image, especially after the Pahalgam incident, but that also cannot go far. Bihar's voters have experienced a lot over the years. They do not just get swayed by tall claims or national drama. Elections are still about the local issues. People are concerned who helped, who showed up, and who kept their word. They have not made up their minds yet, and with so many players in the field, these elections are going to go down to the wire.

The Real Deciders

Despite Modi's strongman posture and talk of security, it is not the speeches that will win Bihar, rather the quiet, hard-to-measure loyalties on the ground. Elections are more about caste allegiance, local grievances, and the candidate's reach than national slogans.⁴ The battle is unfolding among key voting groups: the Economically Backward Classes (EBCs), *Mahadalits*, women voters, and those still loyal to regional heavyweights. Deep-seated caste alignments remain the spine of electoral strategy. EBCs, including *Koeri*, *Kurmi*, *Mallah*, and other sub-castes, form almost one-third of Bihar's population, which in the past few elections supported Nitish Kumar's JD (U) due to his targeted welfare and quota policies.⁵ Starting around 2010, the JD (U) began focusing more directly on *Mahadalit* communities, including

⁴ Satish K. Jha, "Bihar Yearning for Change But the Election Is Wide Open," *The Diplomat*, June 16 2025, <https://thediplomat.com/2025/06/bihar-yearning-for-change-but-the-election-is-wide-open/>

⁵ Ashutosh Kumar Pandey, "Rahul Gandhi in Darbhanga: Who Are the EBCs, and Why They Matter in Bihar Politics," *The Indian Express*, May 18, 2025, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-politics/rahul-gandhi-darbhanga-ebc-bihar-politics-10014287/>

extremely marginalised groups like the *Musahar* and *Chamar*. Through targeted welfare schemes and outreach, they built strong support among these voters, who have since leaned firmly towards the JD (U)-led alliance in successive elections.

Nitish Kumar and the Search for a New Face

Nitish Kumar, even as his political energy seems to fade, continues to command trust in certain circles. However, with him getting older and the wear and tear of two decades in power showing, there is real talk in political circles about what comes next. The BJP, even after all these years, has still not found a strong local face to take the lead. They have tried names like Chirag Paswan and Upendra Kushwaha to pull in support from *Dalits* and backward caste groups, but have not succeeded so far. The question now is whether anyone can truly tap into the undercurrent of change that so many voters are clearly yearning for. Nitish Kumar, despite age and setting of fatigue, still commands a base that sees him as the most accessible and experienced hand.

The NDA's Dilemma

The NDA seems to be uncomfortable in Bihar, whereas the Mahagathbandhan appears well-structured, with the RJD, Congress, and Left joining forces. Its past partnerships with JD (U) and over-reliance on the Muslim-Yadav vote base has kept it from breaking through to newer voter blocs. So far, all political alliances are maintaining their momentum, which makes this election an open-ended contest. On the other hand, Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj Party (JSP) has entered the competition with no real ideology, but a sharp message against the old guard. It is aiming at voters who are tired of the same old choices and do not vote strictly along caste lines. Since Bihar's voters are looking for change with no single party dominating the mood, and with new forces like Prashant Kishor's JSP gaining momentum, this election could go in any direction.⁶ Kishor is now contesting all 243 seats. His party is mainly targeting the estimated 28 per cent of voters who did not support either the NDA or the

⁶ Ashutosh Kumar Pandey, "Rahul Gandhi in Darbhanga: Who Are the EBCs, and Why They Matter in Bihar Politics."

Grand Alliance in the 2020 elections. Even if his party manages to get a modest 5-7 per cent of the votes in these elections, it will certainly act as a powerful spoiler in most of the marginal seats.⁷

Opinion Polls

The field is wide open in Bihar's upcoming election, and a new opinion poll by *InkInsight* has only added to that sense of unpredictability. While Nitish Kumar continues to enjoy support from women voters, likely due to years of social welfare programmes, young voters are gravitating toward Tejashwi Yadav. Interestingly, many young people say they will vote for the NDA, yet they also see Tejashwi as their preferred Chief Minister. It is a curious split that speaks to the complexity of voter sentiment. People might align with a party for practical reasons but still hope for a different face at the helm.⁸

The gender divide in Bihar is vividly seen leaning more towards Nitish Kumar, maybe because of long-standing familiarity or the visible benefits of his welfare programmes. Among the men, especially younger voters, there is clearly more enthusiasm for Tejashwi Yadav, as his appeal seems rooted in the hope for something different. Meanwhile, names like Prashant Kishor and Chirag Paswan are floating around, but they have not quite stirred up things when it comes to real public preference for Chief Minister.⁹ This election has not settled into a clear narrative yet. There is no obvious wave, no single leader dominating hearts and minds. The mood on the ground feels cautious; voters are holding back, watching closely, and not ready to commit yet. Everything is still wide open, and that is what makes this race genuinely interesting.

⁷ Ashish Pandey, "Bihar Assembly Election 2025, | From poll strategist to game-changer? Prashant Kishor's gamble explained," *Deccan Herald*, October 7, 2015, <https://www.deccanherald.com/elections/bihar/bihar-assembly-election-2025-from-poll-strategist-to-game-changer-prashant-kishors-gamble-explained-3755670>

⁸ Akriti Anand, "Bihar Election 2025: Women want Nitish Kumar, youth want Tejashwi Yadav as next CM, new opinion poll suggests," *Mint*, May 20, 2025, <https://www.livemint.com/politics/bihar-election-2025-women-want-nitish-kumar-youth-want-tejashwi-yadav-as-next-cm-new-opinion-poll-suggests-11747726642618.html>

⁹ Akriti Anand, "Bihar Election 2025: Women want Nitish Kumar, youth want Tejashwi Yadav as next CM, new opinion poll suggests."

A recent survey conducted by political strategist Amitabh Tiwari reveals a strong wave of anti-incumbency in Bihar. Nearly half of the respondents are expressing dissatisfaction with Nitish Kumar's leadership, which has spanned almost twenty years. Despite this growing discontent, the political battlefield remains tight. Both the NDA and the Mahagathbandhan still hold similar core support, estimated at 32–35 per cent each. The real contest, however, lies in the hands of roughly 12 per cent of voters who are yet to make up their minds. On the question of who should be the next Chief Minister, Tejashwi Yadav leads the pack with 39 per cent preference, leaving Nitish Kumar slightly behind at 34 per cent. Meanwhile, Prashant Kishor, through his JSP, is slowly but steadily emerging as a potential third force in Bihar's political landscape.¹⁰

Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

The Election Commission's latest revision of voter's identification in Bihar has stirred serious concerns across the political spectrum. The routine process has become far more contentious since the voters are being asked for birth certificates that most families do not have, or decades-old land and revenue papers. The IDs that people have relied upon for years, such as, *Aadhaar* cards, ration cards, and passports, are suddenly being brushed aside. For many, it has left a bitter taste. How did something as basic as casting your vote become so complicated and out of reach?¹¹

The timing and tone of this exercise, just months before the Bihar state elections, are even more bothersome. Opposition leaders see it as an attempt to influence the voter's list under the guise of verification. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi called the Election Commission of India's (ECI) Special Intensive Revision in the poll-bound Bihar a "conspiracy to steal" in the

¹⁰ Sanket Upadhyay, Bihar election opinion poll: 'Tejashwi set to edge out Nitish; Prashant Kishor rising force', *The Federal*, July 25, 2025. <https://thefederal.com/category/politics/bihar-opinion-poll-nitish-unemployment-kishore-198693>.

¹¹ Shikha Mukerjee, "The Disturbing Return of 'Scientific Rigging' Charges," *The New Indian Express*, July 7, 2025. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2025/Jul/07/the-disturbing-return-of-scientific-rigging-charges>

upcoming Assembly elections.¹² And it is not just Bihar, there is growing unease that this approach could spread to states like West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry (Union State), all of which are headed to the polls in 2026. In states where citizenship and identity are already politically-charged issues, this could escalate. Protests have already been announced. People are worried that what began as an administrative task might end up redefining who gets to participate in India's democracy.¹³

In its response to petitions filed before the Supreme Court, the ECI maintained that it is empowered to verify the citizenship status of voters during the revision of electoral rolls. The counter-affidavit pointed to Article 326 of the Constitution, along with Sections 16 and 19 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, as the legal basis for this authority. According to the Commission, these provisions place a duty on it to ensure that only Indian citizens are registered as voters.¹⁴

With the completion of the first phase of the SIR of electoral rolls in Bihar, the ECI reported that approximately 92 per cent of the state's 7.89 crore registered voters are expected to remain on the draft. Conversely, nearly 8 per cent, equivalent to around 65 lakh entries, are set to be removed, as these were identified as belonging to individuals who were deceased, registered at multiple locations, had permanently migrated, or could not be traced. The ECI says that while 22 lakh voters were found to have passed away, 7 lakh were registered in more than one location, and approximately 35 lakh either permanently migrated or could not be traced.¹⁵ However, the Supreme Court has directed the ECI to publish the list of 65 lakh excluded voters in Bihar.

¹² Pushkar Tiwari, "New Conspiracy To Steal Bihar Elections": Rahul Gandhi On Poll Roll Revision, *NDTV*, August 17, 2025. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/rahul-gandhi-launches-voter-adhikar-yatra-says-ecs-sir-is-new-conspiracy-to-steal-bihar-assembly-polls-9101816>

¹³ Shikha Mukerjee, "The Disturbing Return of 'Scientific Rigging' Charges."

¹⁴ Rimjhim Singh, 'Can't allow dead, migrants, or duplicates on voter rolls', says CEC Kumar, *Business Standard*, July 24, 2025. https://www.business-standard.com/elections/bihar-elections/bihar-voter-list-revision-cec-gyanesh-kumar-dead-voters-verification-125072400816_1.html

¹⁵ Damini Nath, 'Bihar SIR Phase 1 concludes, 65 lakh voters likely to be dropped from draft rolls,' *The Indian Express*, July 26, 2025. <https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/bihar-sir-phase-1-concludes-65-lakh-voters-likely-to-be-dropped-from-draft-rolls-10149958/>

The final electoral roll list issued by the ECI on September 30 reveals a contentious pattern. While Muslims make up 24.7 per cent of the 65.75 lakh voters initially flagged for verification, they represent 32.1 per cent of the 3.23 lakh voters ultimately deleted after on-ground verification.¹⁶ These figures have intensified debate over the integrity of the voter roll revision, with opposition parties questioning whether the process has disproportionately affected minority communities, especially Muslims.

With the announcement of elections to be conducted in two phases on November 6 and 11, the likely agendas of competing political parties are given below:

Electoral Agendas of Alliances for 2025 Elections

Sr. No.	Coalition Name	Member Parties	Focus Areas (2025)
1.	National Democratic Alliance	Janata Dal (United), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) (LJP), Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM), Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM)	Caste inclusion, development narrative, law & order, minority outreach, women's engagement.
2.	Mahagathbandhan	Rashtriya Janata Dal, Indian National Congress, Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) Liberation, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Vikassheel Insaan Party	Job creation, free electricity/pensions, women's payments, agrarian reforms, and education & health.

Findings

- There is no clarity of outcome in a highly competitive race. The 2025 Bihar elections are wide open. Both NDA and Mahagathbandhan have similar vote bases of 32–35 per cent, while 12 per cent of undecided voters are likely to decide the outcome. There is no dominant narrative yet, making it an unpredictable election.

¹⁶ Pravan Korada, 'The Rate of Exclusion for Muslims Higher in Election Commission's Final Bihar Voter Roll', The Wire, October 9, 2025 <https://m.thewire.in/article/communalism/election-commission-bihar-special-intensive-revision-muslim-population-seemanchal/amp>

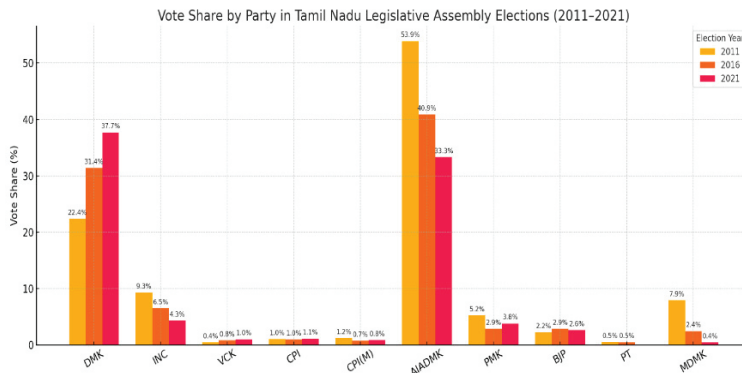
- There is an anti-incumbency sentiment against Nitish Kumar, but gender & youth split matters. Nearly 50 per cent of voters express dissatisfaction with Nitish Kumar's two-decade-long rule. Women voters largely support Nitish due to social welfare schemes, while young men prefer Tejashwi Yadav, who leads the CM preference poll with 39 per cent, compared to 34 per cent for Nitish.
- New political forces are emerging, but those are not decisive yet. Prashant Kishor's JSP positions itself as a third front, attracting voters tired of traditional parties. However, it has not yet translated into a significant Chief Minister preference. Chirag Paswan and Upendra Kushwaha are also in the run, but without clear momentum.
- Key issues dominating the campaign are unemployment, migration of youth, broken infrastructure, and caste alignments. National issues like security (post-Pahalgam attack) and Modi's image are important, but local governance, jobs, and welfare remain a decisive factor. Additionally, the controversial voter roll revision requiring old documents has sparked protests and may influence trust and turnout in the process.
- Nearly 65 lakh voters, about 8 per cent of the electorate, have been excluded from the rolls on grounds of death, duplication, migration, or being untraceable. This large-scale removal has triggered political controversy, with opposition leaders alleging manipulation ahead of state elections.

TAMIL NADU

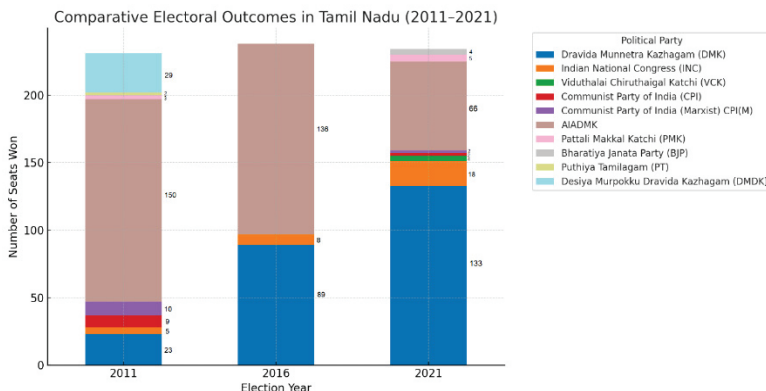


TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu's upcoming Legislative Assembly elections are scheduled in April-May 2026. Its Legislative Assembly has 234 seats. The state has witnessed anti-incumbency in the electoral process over the years. This trend, however, was broken in 2016 when All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), led by Jayalalithaa, won consecutive elections (2011 and 2016). The party capitalised on the successful implementation of welfare projects and freebies in its previous tenure. The strong and charismatic leadership of Jayalalithaa also played a crucial role in the success of AIADMK in 2016. However, internal fragmentation in AIADMK and poor governance led to the return of anti-incumbency, as Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) won the 2021 Legislative Assembly elections.



Comparative Electoral Outcomes in Tamil Nadu (2011-2021)



Tamil Nadu's Coalition Outcomes over the Years (2011-2021)

Sr. No.	Election Year	Coalition Name	Member Parties	Coalition Head	Seats won by Coalition	% of Votes Secured by Coalition
1.	2011	AIADMK-led Alliance	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), Communist Party of India (CPI), Manithaneya Makkal Katchi, Puthiya Tamilagam, All India Forward Bloc	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)	203	51.9
		DMK led alliance	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Indian National Congress (INC), Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Kongunadu Munnetra Kazhagam (KMK)	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	31	39.5
2.	2016	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra	—	—	136	40.88

		Kazhagam (AIADMK)				
		Democratic Progressive Alliance (DPA)	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Indian National Congress (INC), Puthiya Tamilagam, Manithaneyya Makkal Katchi	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	98	39.40
	2021	Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA)	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Indian National Congress (INC), Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI(M)	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	159	45.38
		National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK)	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)	75	39.71

Electoral Agendas of Key Coalitions in Tamil Nadu (2011-2022)

Sr. No.	Coalition	Focus Areas 2011	Focus Areas 2016	Focus Areas 2021
1.	DMK-led Alliance	Welfare projects (free medical insurance for the poor) ¹⁷ , freebies (one kg rice for one rupee and gas stoves besides TV sets) ¹⁸ , development projects, and education and digital access ¹⁹ .	Freebies (waive student loans, give students laptops or tablets with internet access) ²⁰ , total prohibition of liquor ²¹ , Chennai floods – Critique of AIADMK's poor governance.	Tamil Pride (AIADMK's alliance with BJP) ²² Fiscal autonomy against the centre, opposition to AIADMK's endorsement of BJP-led Centre's policies like UDAY, National Food Security Act, Land acquisition act, NEET, ²³ Opposition to AIADMK's indecisiveness against CAA, freebies, ²⁴ Anti-Incumbency, critique of AIADMK's COVID-19 policies.
2.	IADMK-led Alliance	Anti-incumbency, anti-corruption rhetoric (against	Social welfare schemes and freebies (Amma schemes), ²⁹	Dispensation of free stuff among voters (Housing for all, solar cookers, education

¹⁷ "Mixies, grinders and a churning verdict," *Times of India*, May 14, 2011.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/assembly-elections-2011/tamil-nadu/mixies-grinders-and-a-churning-verdict/articleshow/8309215.cms>

¹⁸ "Mixies, grinders and a churning verdict," *Times of India*, May 14, 2011.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/assembly-elections-2011/tamil-nadu/mixies-grinders-and-a-churning-verdict/articleshow/8309215.cms>

¹⁹ "MK releases DMK poll manifesto," *THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS*, May 19, 2011.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/elections/elections-2011/2011/Mar/19/mk-releases-dmk-poll-manifesto-237126.html>

²⁰ Andrew Wyatt, "The AIADMK's re-election conceals the nuances of a highly competitive campaign in Tamil Nadu," *LSE Blogs*, May 27, 2016. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2016/05/27/the-aiadmk-re-election-conceals-the-nuances-of-a-highly-competitive-campaign-in-tamil-nadu/>

²¹ Shailesh Subramanian, "Tamil Nadu Elections 2016 – A Fight Well Fought," *TFIPOST*, May 20, 2016. <https://tfipost.com/2016/05/tamil-nadu-elections-2016-fight-well-fought/>

²² S Narayan, "Tamil Nadu Elections 2021: Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam back in the Driver's Seat" (ISAS, 2021). <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/836.pdf>

²³ Aishwarya Sudha, "10 Reasons Why DMK Led Alliance Won The 2021 Tamil Nadu Election," *ABP Live*, May 02, 2021. <https://news.abplive.com/elections/tn-election-2021-results-final-vote-counting-10-reasons-why-mk-stalin-s-dmk-led-alliance-won-2021-election-aiadmk-1456518>

²⁴ "Tamil Nadu Election 2021: Experts flag financial burden as AIADMK, DMK shower freebies in poll manifestos," *Firstpost*, May 17, 2021. <https://www.firstpost.com/india/tamil-nadu-election-2021-experts-flag-financial-burden-as-aiadmk-dmk-shower-freebies-in-poll-manifestos-9430821.html>

²⁹ Shailesh Subramanian, "Tamil Nadu Elections 2016 – A Fight Well Fought," *TFIPOST*, May 20, 2016, <https://tfipost.com/2016/05/tamil-nadu-elections-2016-fight-well-fought/>

		DMK's 2G Scam), ²⁵ anti-inflation, ²⁶ opposition to dynastic politics and family rule in politics, electric power management, ²⁷ and freebies. ²⁸	phased alcohol prohibition, campaign against corruption scandals of DMK alliance (e.g. 2G Scandal), Dravidian populism, ³⁰ and effective delivery of government services.	loan waiver; government jobs to families without anyone in state service), 10.5% quota for Vanniyars before elections, drew criticism from other OBC groups, ³¹ and Covid-19 performance.
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After the death of AIADMK's Chief Minister Jayalalithaa in December 2016, the ruling party, which was in power for a second consecutive term, faced fragmentation and a power struggle. This resulted in the gradual weakening of AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. Ineffective management of the COVID-19 pandemic, failure to deliver on welfare projects, and corruption scandals led to the re-emergence of anti-incumbency in Tamil Nadu in the 2021 Legislative Assembly elections. Additionally, AIADMK's alliance with the BJP proved to be a disastrous decision as it shattered AIADMK's previous rhetoric of protecting the Dravidian identity.

DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance (PSA) won a clear majority in the 2021 Legislative Assembly elections by securing 159 out of 234 seats. The inclusion of AIADMK in the BJP-led NDA disenchanted the Tamil voters

²⁵ "Tamil Nadu Election Results 2011: DMK set to lose due to 2G impact," *The Economic Times*, May 13, 2011, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/tamil-nadu-election-results-2011-dmk-set-to-lose-due-to-2g-impact/articleshow/8290826.cms?from=mdr>

²⁶ "Trichy: Jayalalithaa targets DMK in mega rally," *NDTV*, August 14, 2010, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/trichy-jayalalithaa-targets-dmk-in-mega-rally-427374>

²⁷ "AIADMK shows its strength in Coimbatore," *The Economic Times*, July 13, 2010, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/aiadmk-shows-its-strength-in-coimbatore/articleshow/6163233.cms>

²⁸ S.Ganesanr, "Freebies galore in AIADMK manifesto," *The Hindu*, November 17, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/Freebies-galore-in-AIADMK-manifesto/article14964107.ece>

³⁰ Andrew Wyatt, "The AIADMK's re-election conceals the nuances of a highly competitive campaign in Tamil Nadu," *LSE Blogs*, May 27, 2016. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2016/05/27/the-aiadmk-re-election-conceals-the-nuances-of-a-highly-competitive-campaign-in-tamil-nadu/>

³¹ Arun Janardhanan, "Tamil Nadu elections: DMK lessons in opposition, AIADMK missteps ahead of polls," *The Indian Express*, May 03, 2021, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/tamil-nadu-assembly-elections-aiadmk-dmk-stalin-7299701/>

from AIADMK and swayed them towards M. K. Stalin's DMK. Stalin's vigorous articulation of the Dravidian identity and opposition to the ingress of the BJP into Tamil Nadu garnered him massive support, resulting in DMK reviving anti-incumbency in Tamil Nadu. The support of the Indian National Congress (INC), the arch-rival of the BJP, also helped DMK secure a sound victory in the 2021 Legislative Assembly elections.

In contrast to the poor governance of AIADMK, M. K. Stalin delivered on his election promises as he implemented welfare schemes and initiated several infrastructure projects. This led to the absolute victory of DMK, part of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (I.N.D.I.A.) in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The I.N.D.I.A. alliance won 39 seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, with DMK winning 22 seats. The opposing NDA alliance, comprising the BJP and AIADMK among other parties, failed to gather people's support.

This trend is likely to continue in the upcoming 2026 Legislative Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, as AIADMK and the BJP's support in Tamil Nadu is receding. DMK leads the emblem of protecting the Dravidian identity and Tamil language against the BJP-led centre's incursion. The support of the INC further enhances the prospects of the DMK's victory. AIADMK faces severe internal fragmentation and power struggles, coupled with a lack of support among the masses due to its alliance with the BJP. In these circumstances, DMK is expected to once again break Tamil Nadu's electoral tradition of anti-incumbency and return to power in the upcoming 2026 Legislative Assembly elections.

Possible Electoral Agendas of Alliances for 2026 Elections

Sr. No.	Party/Coalition	Member Parties	Likely Focus Areas (2026)
1.	Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA)	DMK, INC, Left parties (CPI/CPI-M and others)	National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) exemption push, “Dravidian model” welfare schemes (e.g., women’s monthly entitlement, public health/education), Tamil language primacy— state vs. centre, jobs, infrastructure development, social justice, and anti-communal campaigning. Credit and start-up policies for the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), Centre–State fiscal federalism, women & youth employment initiatives. Labour and workers’ rights, price controls on essentials, anti-privatisation, land/tenancy issues, climate resilience and flood management.
2.	National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	AIADMK, BJP, PMK	Anti-incumbency and graft charges against the DMK, law & order, drug menace narrative, targeted welfare schemes (students, housing, LPG), price rise and tax burdens, women’s safety, and a stance on NEET to outflank the DMK without ceding ground. Industrial development, fishermen/coastal security, temple administration, cultural issues, outreach to youth/first-time voters. PMK’s focus on Most Backward Classes (MBC)/Vanniyar reservations & education quotas, infrastructure, jobs, farm support & prices of essential goods realisation, and rural health programmes.

Findings

- Internal fragmentation in AIADMK and a lack of charismatic leadership plummets the prospects of AIADMK’s victory in the upcoming state elections.
- AIADMK’s alliance with the BJP further suppresses AIADMK’s public support and diminishes its prospects of victory.
- DMK’s capitalisation upon Dravidian identity politics, stern opposition to the BJP’s ingress, public welfare, and charismatic leadership of M. K. Stalin brightens the prospects of victory of DMK (currently in power) in the upcoming state elections.

- The victory of the DMK-led I.N.D.I.A. alliance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections further indicates their promising prospects in the upcoming Legislative Assembly elections.

WEST BENGAL





WEST BENGAL

The 18th Legislative Assembly elections of West Bengal are scheduled to be held in May 2026. Its Vidhan Sabha comprises 294 members, and like other states, the Assembly elections in West Bengal have been a multi-party contest and a chessboard of coalitions. Once dubbed the most ‘violent state’ in the late 1960s, West Bengal has undergone a long journey to be described as one of the best-governed states of India.³² The first democratic and institutionalised elections in West Bengal were held in 1952. The notable and unprecedented development, not only at the regional and national levels but also at the international level, was that West Bengal served as the site of the longest-serving democratically elected Marxist government.³³ The leftist parties, such as the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Bolshevik Party, Forward Block (Marxist) (FB) (M), Socialist Republican Party (SRP), and Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), gathered under an umbrella, forming the United Left Front (ULF), was the formidable opposing political force to the INC in West Bengal. In 1952, the INC etched its mark in the state by securing 150 out of 238 seats, followed by the ULF coalition with 42 seats.³⁴ The INC continued to dominate the Vidhan Sabha in 1957, 1962, and 1967.

As in many other states, West Bengal was also a bastion for the INC. However, its popularity began to wane after 1967. The CPI, which fractured in 1964, led to the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)). CPI (M) emerged as the largest seat winner of the ULF in 1967, opposing the other coalition called the People’s United Left Front (PULF). PULF was headed by the CPI with the Bangla Congress Party (BP), Gorkha League (GL), Forward

³² Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³³ Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability*.

³⁴ Subrata Mitra & Harihar Bhattacharya, *Politics and Governance in Indian States: Bihar, West Bengal, and Tripura* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2018), 188.

Bloc (FB), and Left Socialist Party (LSS) in its fold.³⁵ With volatile governments and intervals of presidential rule, the elections were held in 1969 and then in 1972. In the 1972 elections, widely labelled as rigged, the INC seat tally touched the staggering figure of 216.³⁶ The 1977 elections were a turning point as the dominance of the INC was shattered, and the CPI (M) won an absolute majority with 178 seats.³⁷ The ascendancy of the Left continued for 34 years till 2006, when a combination of factors, including anti-incumbency, the Nandigram massacre, and the systematic erosion of democratic representation of the people in local institutions such as *Panchayats*,³⁸ precipitated its downfall. This paved the way for the rise of the All India Trinamool Congress (AITMC) as a durable political force.

³⁵ “West Bengal Assembly Elections 1967: A Look Back at The Polling, Alliances and Results of The Election in 1967 Ahead of 2021 Vidhan Sabha Polls,” *Latestly*, March 15, 2021, <https://www.latestly.com/india/politics/west-bengal-assembly-elections-1967-a-look-back-at-the-polling-alliances-and-results-of-the-election-in-1967-ahead-of-2021-vidhan-sabha-polls-2370360.html>.

³⁶ Shreya Maskara, “Uncovering Politics of West Bengal Elections from 1972 onwards,” *Statistically Speaking*, December 30, 2020, <https://statisticallyspeaking.in/statistically-speaking/uncovering-politics-of-west-bengal-elections-from-1972-onwards/>.

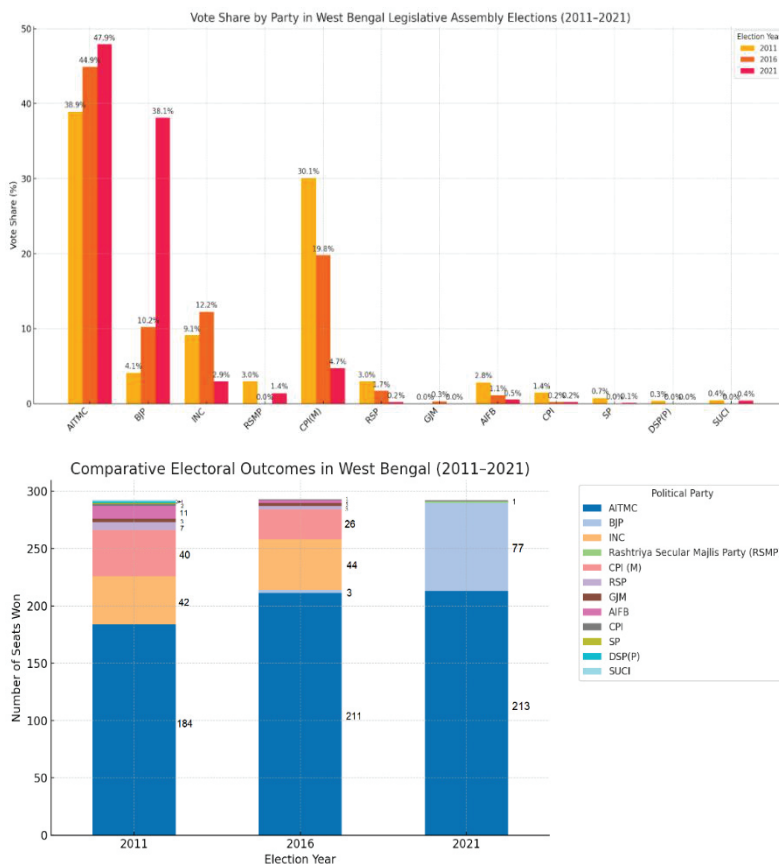
³⁷ “Left front government in West Bengal an alternative journey of 34 years 1977-2011,” *Left Government Web Blog*, September 10, 2008, <https://leftgovtwb.blogspot.com/2008/09/brief-chronology-1977-2007-three.html>

³⁸ H. Bhattacharyya, “Marxist democratic problematic and the decline of the Left in West Bengal,” in *Democracy in Asia (Discourses and Counter-Discourses)*, ed. S. Priya (New Delhi: Knowledge Publishers, 2013), 101–16.

Electoral Performance in Previous Three Assembly Elections: (2011-2021)

The results of the past elections reveal that the AITMC has positioned itself as a dominant player, the Left is losing its ground, and the BJP has made significant inroads in the state. The comparative analysis of the party's performance in terms of seats and votes is shown in the graph.

Comparative Electoral Outcomes in West Bengal (2011-2021)



West Bengal's Coalition Outcomes over the Years (2011-2021)

West Bengal coalition politics has been marked by a strong alliance between the leftist parties under the ULF. The INC till the 1970s was a dominant party,

free from coalition restraints; however, it forged alliance with the newly rising Mamata's party, the AITMC, in 2011. Together they secured 227 seats, with the AITMC holding the dominant share. This alliance did not last long, and the INC allied with the Left in 2016 and 2021, in an attempt to put up a coordinated and joint challenge to the rising AITMC. Since 2011, the BJP has also allied with the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) in the 15th and 16th Vidhan Sabha elections.

Sr. No.	Election Year	Coalition Name	Member Parties	Coalition Head	Seats won by the Coalition	Votes Secured by the Coalition
1.	2011 ³⁹	AITMC-INC Alliance	All India Trinamool Congress (AITMC), Indian National Congress (INC), Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) SUCI(C), Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), and Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)	AITMC	227	48.62
		Left Front	Communist Party of India (CPI (M)), Communist Party of India (CPI), Revolutionary	CPI (M)	62	40.98

³⁹ "Final Result of West Bengal Assembly Elections 2011," *Bengali Information*, September 1, 2012, <https://www.bengalinformation.org/2012/09/final-result-of-west-bengal-assembly.html>, Also "Trinamool Congress: A Timeline Tracing The Journey Of The Party," *Outlook India*, March 26, 2024, <https://www.outlookindia.com/elections/trinamool-congress-a-timeline-tracing-the-journey-of-the-party>.

			Socialist Party (RSP), Forward Bloc (FB), Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI), Marxist Forward Bloc (MFB), Samajwadi Party (SP), and Democratic Socialist Party (Prabodh Chandra) DSP(PC)			
		BJP+GJM	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM), 2 Independents	BJP	5	7.92
2.	2016 ⁴⁰	AITMC (no alliance)	-----	-----	211	38.93
		Congress+ Left	Indian National Congress (INC), Communist Party of India (CPI (M)), Communist Party of India (CPI), Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), Forward Bloc (FB), Revolutionary Communist Party of India	INC+CPI(M)	76	38.7

⁴⁰ “West Bengal Election Results 2016: TMC storms back to power in Bengal, Cong-Left alliance loses,” *Financial Press*, May 20, 2016. <https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/west-bengal-election-results-2016-counting-begins-for-294-assembly-seats/259295/>. Also see, Ritesh K Srivastav, “West Bengal Assembly Election Results 2016: As it happened,” *Zee News*, May 19, 2016, <https://zeenews.india.com/live-updates/west-bengal-assembly-election-results-2016-latest-updates-1886311>.

			(RCPI), Marxist Forward Bloc (MFB), Samajwadi Party (SP), Democratic Socialist Party (Prabodh Chandra) DSP(PC)			
		BJP+GJM	BJP	BJP	6	10.7
3.	2021	AITMC	AITMC	AITMC	213	44.91
		<i>Sanjukta Morcha</i> (Secular Democratic Alliance)	Indian National Congress (INC), Communist Party of India (CPI (M)), Communist Party of India (CPI), Indian Secular Front (ISF), RSP, Forward Bloc (FB), Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI), Marxist Forward Bloc (MFB), Samajwadi Party (SP), Democratic Socialist Party (Prabodh Chandra) DSP(PC)	INC+CPI(M)	0	7.84
		BJP	BJP	BJP	77	38.1

The Rise of the AITMC

Several factors contributed to the rise of the AITMC in 2011. Under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee, who adopted the sobriquet of *Maa, Mati, Manush* (Mother, Soil, and People), the party gained ground through targeted welfare schemes and the provision of quality services. Her schemes included the distribution of bicycles, a grant of 25,000 rupees aimed at promoting girls' education, granted to those attaining the age of 18, and the provision of subsidised grain under the National Food Security Act⁴¹. Additionally, the lack of leadership, organisational weaknesses, and rampant dissatisfaction with the Left due to corruption and mismanagement bolstered the AITMC's position. Mamata also campaigned and rallied voters over land issues and galvanised the support of Gorkhas by endorsing their demands.⁴² Her politics marked a shift from the conventional politics of organisational mobilisation. Personality-based politics, along with an emphasis on indigenous Bengali leaders in the party, the utilisation of religious and cultural symbols such as *Durgotsav* and *iftaar* gatherings, and the use of local media influencers, reaped political benefits for the AITMC and elevated it to the forefront of West Bengal's political landscape. Besides the AITMC, the state politics is shaped by multiple parties, with the INC, the BJP, and the Left as major players. A breakdown of major focus areas and key electoral strategies of these notable political players is given in the table.

⁴¹ Suhas Palshikar, K.C Suri, & Yogendra Yadav, ed., *Party Competition in India: Electoral Politics in the Post-Congress-Polity* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁴² Lakhwinder Singh Sidhu & Sumandeep Kaur Punia, "State Assembly Elections in India-2011: West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala," *Journal of Political Studies*, 19, 1 (2012): 19:34.

Electoral Agendas of Key Parties in West Bengal (2011-2021)

Sr. No.	Political Party	Focus Areas 2011	Focus Areas 2016	Focus Areas 2021
1.	AITMC	Maa, Mati, Manush, land reforms, farming, raising the concerns of Singur ‘unwilling peasants’, ⁴³ agriculture and livelihood of the masses, ⁴⁴ highlighting unemployment issues. ⁴⁵	Avoiding open, divisive and communal politics, but using religious and cultural symbols such as Durgostav, social welfare schemes, better governance, and highlighting the past development initiatives.	Development and welfare schemes such as <i>Duare Sarkar</i> , doorstep service delivery, <i>Swasthya Sathi</i> , the healthcare program, <i>Didike Bolo</i> , telephonic complaint mechanism, and <i>Laxmi Bhandar</i> , cash transfers to women. ⁴⁶ Avoiding communal politics, organising all-women rallies and participation by top brass leadership, including Mamata herself, Bengali language promotion by using it in campaigns and targeting opposition like the BJP for lacking ‘indigenous’ Bengali-speaking leaders, and use of social media.
2.	INC	Competing alongside AITMC, anti-Left, clean drinking water, schemes for	Projecting a narrative of the AITMC-BJP alliance based on divisive politics, anti-corruption campaigning,	<i>Sankalp Patra for Sonar Bangla</i> . Improving the health and education sector, anti-incumbency and anti-BJP, pledging to

⁴³ This term refer to those farmers who have rejected to get any monetary compensation in return for their lands sold to Tata Motors. For more reading, see, Suhas Palshikar, K.C Suri, & Yogendra Yadav, ed., *Party Competition in India: Electoral Politics in the Post-Congress-Polity* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), 384.

⁴⁴ Suhas Palshikar, K.C Suri, & Yogendra Yadav, ed., *Party Competition in India: Electoral Politics in the Post-Congress-Polity*, 392.

⁴⁵ Lakhwinder Singh Sidhu & Sumandeep Kaur Punia, “State Assembly Elections in India-2011: West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala,” *Journal of Political Studies*, 19, 1 (2012): 19:34.

⁴⁶ Suman Nath & Subhasish Ray, “Political campaigning in West Bengal: Violence, Professionalisation, and Communalisation,” *South Asian History and Culture* (2022).

		poverty alleviation, employment generation, ecological balance and halting deforestation, pledging to amend the Amendment to the Citizenship Act, 2004, social welfare and development programmes, improvement in the education and health sector, and infrastructure development ⁴⁷ .	especially against the chit fund scams, better education, health, development, and industrialisation. ⁴⁸	restore the Minimum Support Price programme, promising to reward 5000 rupees to the migrants who lost their jobs during the pandemic, increasing the number of women police officers, industrialisation and addressing the issue of depleting groundwater resources. ⁴⁹
3.	BJP	<i>Hindutva</i> and majoritarian politics ⁵⁰ expel all the ‘infiltrators,’ power subsidies, anti-AITMC. ⁵¹	Highlighting the inefficiencies of the Left, anti-incumbency, promoting Hindu festivals and <i>Hindutva</i> by organising events through various active RSS offshoots (1,010), using the Modi appeal, and rigorous targeted majoritarian campaign in specific areas such as Jangal Mahal and North Bengal.	Nationalistic, <i>Hindutva</i> rhetoric and identity-based politics, anti-corruption and anti-incumbency campaigning, capitalising on the ‘us vs them’ and the issue of refugees, use of social media, especially WhatsApp to send texts on behalf of Narendra Modi himself asking for vote.

⁴⁷ “15th Assembly Elections West Bengal: Election Manifesto,” *Scribd*, accessed July 7, 2025, <https://www.scribd.com/document/53913633/socio-eco-W-B>.

⁴⁸ “INC West Bengal Manifesto,” *Info Elections*, April 9, 2016, <https://infoelections.com/infoelection/index.php/kolkata/7390-inc-west-bengal-manifesto-2016.html>.

⁴⁹ “Bengal Congress releases manifesto, promises help for migrants and restoration of MSP,” *The Economic Times*, March 22, 2021. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/assembly-elections/west-bengal/bengal-congress-releases-manifesto-promises-help-for-migrants-and-restoration-of-msp/articleshow/81636101.cms>.

⁵⁰ Maidul Islam, “Big national parties in West Bengal An exceptional outcast?” in Mujibur Rehman, ed., *Rise of Saffron Power: Reflections on Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2018).

⁵¹ “West Bengal BJP manifesto, Info Elections,” *Info Elections*, April 3, 2016, <https://infoelections.com/infoelection/index.php/kolkata/7341-bjp-bengal-manifesto.html>.

4.	Left Front	Agriculture and social development, employment generation, urban-rural development, constructing toilets, accessibility of clean drinking water, use of digitisation to ensure transparency in the implantation of the development projects and proposed 150 per cent increase in investment in this sector, and restoration of secularism and democracy. ⁵²	Restoration of democracy and secularism, ⁵³ anti-AITMC and BJP, release of political prisoners, pledging to launch food relief programmes such as a universal public distribution system, 20 per cent budget to improve education, subsidised electricity. ⁵⁴	Anti-incumbency, anti-BJP campaigning, anti-corruption, ⁵⁵ the restoration of inclusivity, secularism, and democracy, anti-BJP and AITMC, highlighting unemployment and the poor conditions of farmers, announcing schemes such as granting 25,000 rupees to the labourers of closed factories, food delivery, pledging to protect the rights of migrant workers, promising 20 per cent budget for education sector, health care services, industrialisation, revival of the three layers of <i>Panchayat</i> system, development. ⁵⁶
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⁵² “West Bengal, 15th Assembly Elections 2011: Election Manifesto,” *CPIM*, accessed July 8, 2025, <https://cpim.org/wp-content/uploads/old/documents/2011-WB-manifestol.pdf>.

⁵³ “West Bengal Assembly elections 2016: Left Front manifesto promises to restore freedom of opinion,” *India*, March 20, 2016, <https://www.india.com/news/india/west-bengal-assembly-elections-2016-left-front-manifesto-promises-to-restore-freedom-of-opinion-1046331/>.

⁵⁴ “West Bengal Assembly polls: Left Front manifesto calls for secular democratic government,” *Firstpost* March 21, 2016, <https://www.firstpost.com/politics/west-bengal-assembly-polls-left-front-manifesto-calls-for-secular-democratic-government-2687146.html>.

⁵⁵ “West Bengal elections: Left Front-Congress alliance projects itself as ‘third alternative force’,” *The Scroll*, March 1, 2021. [https://scroll.in/latest/988205/west-bengal-elections-left-front-congress-alliance-projects-itself-as-third-alternative force#:~:text=The%20Left%20Front%2C%20in%20alliance%20with%20the%20Congress,need%20of%20a%20people%E2%80%99s%20welfare%20government%2C%20reported%20PTI.](https://scroll.in/latest/988205/west-bengal-elections-left-front-congress-alliance-projects-itself-as-third-alternative-force#:~:text=The%20Left%20Front%2C%20in%20alliance%20with%20the%20Congress,need%20of%20a%20people%E2%80%99s%20welfare%20government%2C%20reported%20PTI.)

⁵⁶ “17th Assembly Election in West Bengal: 2021 Manifesto of the Left Front,” *CPIM*, accessed July 8, 2025, <https://cpimwb.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/LF-Manifesto-2021-English.pdf>.

Evolving Trends in the Run-up to 2026 Assembly Elections

As the political parties are gearing up for the upcoming Assembly elections, scheduled in May 2026, there are significant developments that can bring a shift in state politics. Protests and chaos have been a constant feature in West Bengal after the 2021 Legislative Assembly elections. One such case in point is of April 2024, when the people took to the streets against the Anti-Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024, and the situation worsened in Murshidabad. A fake news story about the death of a boy, mismanaged by the local administration, aggravated the crisis.⁵⁷ It led to the High Court's deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) in any West Bengal district experiencing a lack of law and order situation.⁵⁸ The BJP portrayed these riots as the systematic persecution of Hindus, as these protests coincided with the Ram Navami processions. It also led to demands for imposing 'Presidential Rule'.⁵⁹

There has been a surge in communal cases in various parts of the state. According to statistics, between 2021 and June 2022, almost 65 cases of communal violence were reported.⁶⁰ In March 2023, a communal clash between the Hindus and the Muslims erupted during Ramazan and Ram Navami processions.⁶¹ In July 2024, on the 'Martyrs Day,' Mamata made headlines when she handed a narrative tool to the BJP while referencing the UN norms. She offered sanctuary to Bangladeshis fleeing violence in their

⁵⁷ Anupam Mishra, "How a rumour sparked violence during anti-Waqf Act stir in Bengal's Murshidabad," *India Today*, April 9, 2025. <https://www.bing.com/search?pglt=41&q=Inida+today+how+a+spark+rumor+violence+anti+wafq&evid>.

⁵⁸ Rahul Goreja, "Calcutta High Court extends CAPF deployment in riot-hit Murshidabad," *Business Standard*, May 15, 2025. https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/calcutta-high-court-capf-deployment-murshidabad-violence-125051501644_1.html.

⁵⁹ Abraham Thomas, "SC to hear plea for President's rule in Bengal, notes criticism on alleged overreach," *The Hindustan Times*, April 22, 2025, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/murshidabad-violence-sc-to-hear-plea-seeking-president-s-rule-in-west-bengal-101745220406156.html>.

⁶⁰ Sandip Chakraborty, "West Bengal: 65 Cases of Communal Violence in the Past 18 Months, Highest in Howrah District," *News Click*, 15 Apr 2023. <https://www.newsclick.in/west-bengal-65-cases-communal-violence-past-18-months-highest-howrah-district>.

⁶¹ "Bengal Burning: A Timeline of Communal Violence under Mamata's Regime," *The Commune*, April 22, 2025. <https://thecommunemag.com/bengal-burning-a-timeline-of-communal-violence-under-mamatas-regime/>.

country.⁶² In April, while cautioning against divisive and communal politics, she also proclaimed to strongly oppose the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and the BJP agenda of introducing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).⁶³

Although West Bengal is ruled by a female Chief Minister, the safety and security of women in the state have also sharply declined. The National Crime Records Check (NCRC) data reveals that West Bengal tops the list of domestic violence against women,⁶⁴ the highest acid attack cases,⁶⁵ and the rising number of rape cases. The ‘multi-crore ration distribution scam’ opened the floodgates of complaints of sexual harassment and abuse against the AITMC leader, Shahjahan Sheikh, and culminated in Sandeshkali protests.⁶⁶ The rape of a female medical trainee in the premises of a government hospital,⁶⁷ and more recently, a girl’s rape in the law college,⁶⁸ are also amongst similar incidents that continue to undermine the AITMC’s political standing. The alleged involvement of the party’s workers in such cases, as well as the victim blaming by the party officials,⁶⁹ makes the prospects more dismal for the AITMC.

⁶² “Bengal Burning: A Timeline of Communal Violence under Mamata’s Regime,” *The Commune*.

⁶³ “Bengal Burning: A Timeline of Communal Violence under Mamata’s Regime.”

⁶⁴ “West Bengal reports highest domestic violence cases by husband, in-laws: NCRB,” *Hindustan Times*, August 30, 2022. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/west-bengal-reports-highest-domestic-violence-cases-by-husband-in-laws-ncrb-101661870434326.html>.

⁶⁵ Ravik Bhattacharye, “NCRB Report: Bengal tops acid attack cases for third year in a row, activists say ‘it’s just tip of iceberg’,” *Indian Express*, December 19, 2023. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/ncrb-report-bengal-tops-acid-attack-cases-for-third-year-in-a-row-activists-say-its-just-tip-of-iceberg-9073769/>.

⁶⁶ “Explained: What is Sandeshkali?” *The Deccan Herald*, February 15, 2024. <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/west-bengal/explained-what-is-happening-in-sandeshkhali-2896061>.

⁶⁷ “Kolkata rape-murder: How RG Kar incident has spurred a political blame game in Bengal,” *Firstpost*, August 16, 2024. <https://www.firstpost.com/explainers/kolkata-doctor-rape-murder-rg-kar-vandalism-tmc-bjp-political-blame-game-west-bengal-13805215.html>.

⁶⁸ “Kolkata Law Student Rape Case: TMC government under fire again as harrowing details of incident emerge,” *Times of India*, June 28, 2025. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/kolkata-law-student-rape-case-tmc-government-under-fire-again-as-harrowing-details-of-incident-emerge-what-we-know-so-far/articleshow/122128654.cms>.

⁶⁹ Sulagna Sengupta, “TMC-backed doctors’ unions split over Kolkata medic rape-murder case,” *New India Express*, August 13, 2024. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2024/Aug/13/tmc-backed-doctors-unions-split-over-kolkata-medic-rape-murder-case>.

In the employment sector, the data shows that three million jobs have been lost in the informal sector.⁷⁰ Another AITMC's financial corruption saga was unravelled by the SSC (School Service Commission) Scam. Dubbed as the 'school jobs for cash,' it refers to the selection process of teachers and non-teaching staff. Around 25,753 teachers lost their jobs in April when the Supreme Court, upholding the verdict of the Kolkata High Court, declared that 'the whole process of recruitment was deeply flawed and lacked legitimacy.'⁷¹ Additionally, a NITI Aayog report reveals a sharp decline in students' enrolment in higher education in West Bengal.⁷² There are also reports of internal discord and increasing factionalism within the AITMC, and Mamata losing her grip over the party.⁷³ All this is giving a déjà vu in the context of West Bengal, as the AITMC appears to be in hot water, as the ULF was before the 2011 elections. The opposition, the BJP, is also ready with its narrative. Meanwhile, Mamata has ruled out the possibility of replicating, at the regional level, a coalition similar to the I.N.D.I.A. alliance. She has said that no such coalition is on the cards.⁷⁴ The return of the Tatas in West Bengal is echoing the rekindling of the nexus between the industrialists, the real-estate elite, and the ruling party. This development is reminiscent of the elite-driven politics that led to the decline of the Left and the emergence of AITMC. It reveals that history may not be repeating itself but rhyming, albeit with changed faces and figures. Though there has only been a meeting between Mamata and the head

⁷⁰ Shiva Rajora, "West Bengal lost 3 million jobs in informal sector in 7 years: NSO data," *Business Standard*, July 7, 2024. https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/wb-lost-3-mn-jobs-in-informal-sector-maha-gained-2-4-mn-shows-nso-data-124070700509_1.html.

⁷¹ "NCRB Report: Bengal tops acid attack cases for third year in a row, activists say 'it's just tip of iceberg,'" *Indian Express*, April 3, 2025. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/bengal-teacher-recruitment-scam-supreme-court-9921712/>.

⁷² "Bengal cuts a sorry figure in central report on enrolment, expenditure in higher education," *Nation Herald India*, February 11, 2025. <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/national/bengal-cuts-a-sorry-figure-in-central-report-on-enrolment-expenditure-in-higher-education>.

⁷³ Tanmay Chatterjee, "Rift in TMC out in open after leaders' remarks on rape," *Hindustan Times*, June 30, 2025. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/rift-in-tmc-out-in-open-after-leaders-remarks-on-rape-101751222201235.html>.

⁷⁴ "Mamata says TMC to fight solo in 2026 Bengal polls, Cong hit," *Times of India*, February 11, 2025. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/mamata-says-tmc-to-fight-solo-in-2026-bengal-polls-cong-hits-back-over-panic-reaction/articleshow/118145900.cms>.

of the Tata Group,⁷⁵ the political rhetoric against this prospective collaboration could be exploited by the opposition to bring back the ghosts (the Singur Campaign led by Mamata against the Tata projects in 2006) of the past to haunt Mamata and destabilise her hold on power.

Potential Determinants of 2026 Assembly Elections

Following are the areas that the parties, whether in power or opposition, need to focus on to win in West Bengal:

- Since women have been a critical force in terms of vote strength, the focus on their security and safety, and welfare schemes for their empowerment, will be essential to unlock the gates of the West Bengal Assembly.
- The data reveals that there has been a rise in communal violence in the state, suggesting that a focus only on minorities such as Muslims could prove detrimental to any party. Over the past few years, the political rhetoric of ‘us vs them’ has intensified. Hindus have been successfully mobilised by the BJP, resulting in a higher turnout in some areas. It will be crucial for any political party to maintain a balanced position, avoiding any stance that appears to be appeasing or favouring any side of the binary.
- Migrants, mainly the Bangladeshis, will be one of the main issues in the future elections. As the BJP is capitalising on the narrative of ‘infiltrators’ taking the resources of the indigenous people, i.e., the Hindus, the opposition parties will also have to come up with a plan to protect the rights of the locals and the migrants.
- Focusing on the socio-economic development, welfare services, employment, and improving infrastructure policies can pave the way to earn the trust of the electorate.
- As the AITMC currently seems determined not to ally with the INC, it might damage its prospects due to the splitting of the vote between them

⁷⁵ “Mamata rekindles Tata ties? Nearly two decades after the Nano walkout, a new chapter could be beginning.”

and the Left, which could benefit the BJP. Therefore, forming strategic alliances and a calibrated campaign could yield political benefits.

- The use of social media will be another significant factor in the upcoming elections. Given the BJP's dominance over the national media landscape, amplified by its digital machinery and a strong fillip provided by the RSS, it will be imperative for the AITMC and other parties to use social media platforms to further their electoral agendas.
- The AITMC government's dismal performance in the education sector can adversely affect its political position. Focusing on this domain, particularly the employment concerns of teachers, will translate into significant electoral gains for any party.

Possible Electoral Agendas of Parties/Alliances for 2026 Elections

Sr. No.	Party/Coalition Name	Likely Focus Areas (2026)
1.	AITMC	Bengali culture, language and identity (depicted in the recent <i>Bhasha Adolan</i> (language movement) by Mamata, ⁷⁶ infrastructure and other development initiatives, agricultural development initiatives, gender-specific and women-centric welfare schemes, highlighting the Election Commission's inefficiency and alleged poll rigging and vote-theft, resisting Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in West Bengal, religious symbolism, targeted and decentralised campaigning aided by a divided workforce at the constituency level. ⁷⁷
2.	INC	Possible continuation of the alliance, <i>Sanjuka Morcha</i> (Secular Democratic Alliance), restoration of democracy, anti-corruption, anti-incumbency, employment opportunities, reforms in the education sector, and industrial development.
3.	BJP	Politics of 'us vs them,' <i>Hindutva</i> variant of West Bengal (evident from the change in <i>Jay Shree Ram</i> slogan to <i>Jay Durga Maa, Jay Kaali Maa</i>), ⁷⁸ law and order, women safety and security, anti-incumbency and anti-corruption, development oriented campaign, such as <i>Viksit Bangla</i>

⁷⁶ "Mamata launches 'Bhasha Andolan' from Tagore's land Bolpur," *Hindustan Times*, July 28, 2025. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/mamata-launches-bhasha-andolan-from-tagore-s-land-bolpur-101753693212911.html>.

⁷⁷ Kuldeep Pisda, "Mamata Banerjee's Grassroots Strategy for West Bengal 2026 Elections," *Indian Politics*, August 7, 2025. <https://indianpolitics.co/mamata-banerjees-grassroots-strategy-for-west-bengal-2026-elections/>

⁷⁸ Arghya Prasun Roychowdhury, "Detentions, Protests, and Identity: Bengal Poll Battle Heats up," *Times of India*, July 28, 2025. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/122953424.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

		promise, ⁷⁹ reorganising party structure and nominating candidates who are loyal to the party and known to the general public rather than nominating the defectors from other parties, targeted campaigning based on the 2024 General Elections data, ⁸⁰ and SIR in West Bengal.
4.	Left Front	Possible continuation of the alliance, <i>Sanjuka Morcha</i> (Secular Democratic Alliance), agriculture development, labour rights, digital outreach, youth mobilisation, anti-corruption and anti-incumbency, narrative of inclusivity and secularism.

Findings

- Given a plethora of challenges confronting the incumbent AITMC, including reports of corruption in the education and health sectors, concerns about women's security, and internal factionalism, the ruling party's prospects appear dim for the upcoming elections.
- The BJP is capitalising on increasing chaos characterised by frequent clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims and the rising communal violence. It is portraying these issues as symptomatic of mismanagement by the AITMC. Additionally, the BJP is also pushing its narrative of 'infiltrators' seizing Hindu resources, which is appealing to the Hindu voter base. These factors will increase the BJP's chances to expand its foothold, which will likely shift the electoral balance in West Bengal.
- As Mamata Banerjee is steering clear of any alliance, including the INC, a vote split appears likely, which could work to the BJP's advantage, especially when combined with the BJP's strong social media machinery and considerable presence of the RSS in the state.
- Despite the significant setbacks, Mamata's current political standing suggests that she may still retain her ground in the state. However, anti-incumbency and opposition mobilisation can alter the extent of her dominance and complicate the electoral contest.

⁷⁹ "Modi's Promise of a 'Viksit Bangla': BJP's Vision for West Bengal's Transformation," *Devdiscourse*, July 18, 2025. <https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/politics/3509990-modis-promise-of-a-viksit-bangla-bjps-vision-for-west-bengals-transformation>.

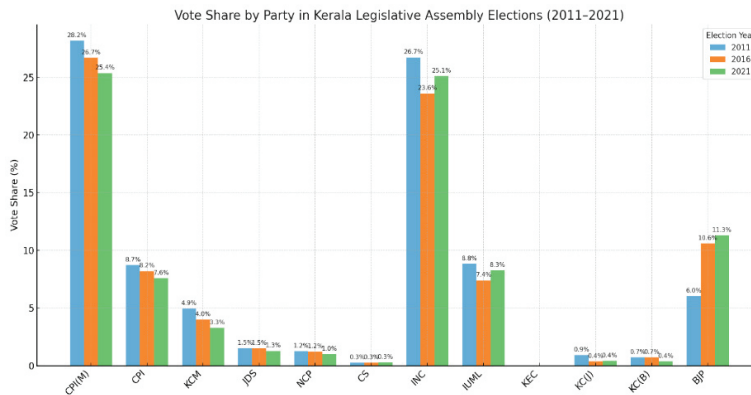
⁸⁰ Noor Muhammad, "BJP redraws Bengal strategy for 2026 with focus on loyalty and vote-base mapping," *Finance Saathi*, June 16, 2025. https://financesaathi.com/news_details/bjp-redraws-bengal-strategy-for-2026-with-focus-on-loyalty-and-vote-base-mapping?

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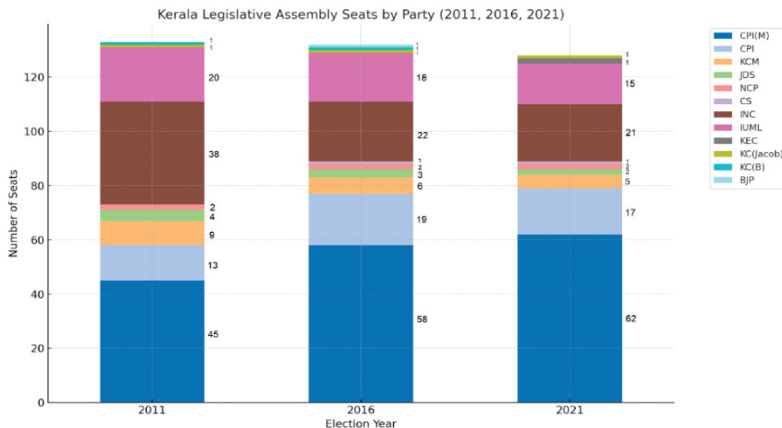


KERALA

Kerala's upcoming Legislative Assembly elections are scheduled in May 2026. With 140 seats in the Legislative Assembly, the state has witnessed the phenomenon of anti-incumbency over the years. No party or alliance had managed to win successive state elections. This trend, however, was broken for the first time in the 2021 elections as the Left Democratic Front (LDF), led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)), successfully made its way to power by winning 99 out of 140 seats. It was for the first time in the history of Kerala that an alliance or party won consecutive elections to the Legislative Assembly.



Comparative Electoral Outcomes in Kerala (2011–2021)



Kerala's Coalition Outcomes over the Years (2010-2020)

Sr. No.	Election Year	Coalition Name	Member Parties	Coalition Head	Seats won by Coalition	% of Votes Secured by Coalition
1.	2011	Left Democratic Front (LDF)	Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI(M), Communist Party of India (CPI), Janata Dal (Secular) (JDS), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	CPI(M)	68	43.63
		United Democratic Front (UDF)	Indian National Congress (INC), Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), Kerala Congress (M) (KCM), Kerala Congress (Jacob) (KCJ), Kerala Congress (B)	INC	72	45.83
2.	2016	Left Democratic Front (LDF)	Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI(M), Communist Party of India (CPI), Janata Dal (Secular) (JDS), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Congress (Secular) (CS), Kerala Congress (B), Independent Politicians	CPI (M)	91	43.48
		United Democratic Front (UDF)	Indian National Congress (INC), Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), Kerala	INC	47	38.81

			Congress (M) (KCM), Kerala Congress (Jacob) (KC (J)			
3.	2021	Left Democratic Front (LDF)	Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI(M), Communist Party of India (CPI), Kerala Congress (M) (KCM), Janata Dal (Secular) (JD (S), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Congress (Secular) (C (S)	CPI(M)	99	45.43
		United Democratic Front (UDF)	Indian National Congress (INC), Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), Kerala Congress (KEC), Kerala Congress (Jacob) (KCJ)	INC	41	39.47

Electoral Agendas of Key Coalitions

Sr. No.	Coalition	Focus Areas 2011	Focus Areas 2016	Focus Areas 2021
1.	Left Democratic Front (LDF)	Welfare projects, job creation, subsidised rice provision, infrastructure projects, and	Anti-incumbency, anti-corruption (solar scam, bar bribery scam), ⁸¹ liquor abstinence and consumption	COVID-19 management, ⁸⁴ Crisis Management (handling two severe floods), ⁸⁵ welfare Programmes (modernisation of healthcare centres, upgrading government schools to smart schools, supplying regular food

⁸¹ "Why did the LDF win in Kerala?," *MyIndia*, May 19, 2016. <https://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/india/why-did-the-ldf-win-in-kerala>

⁸⁴ Shesh Narain Singh & Shreya Maskara, "Kerala 2021: Will LDF break the state's anti-incumbency cycle?," *Polstrat*, March 22, 2021. <https://polstrat.com/resources/kerala-2021-will-left-front-break-states-anti-incumbency-cycle>

⁸⁵ K.M.Sajad Ibrahim, "Assembly Polls 2021: Good Governance And Successful Crisis Management Helped LDF Sweep Kerala," *Outlook*, May 03, 2021. <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/heres-why-the-ldf-swept-kerala-news-381871>

		pensions increase.	management, ⁸² infrastructure development, and job creation. ⁸³	kits to all during the flood-affected periods and the Covid pandemic, implementation of a pension scheme for the elderly), housing Schemes (Life Mission Housing Scheme), opposition to CAA. ⁸⁶
2.	United Democratic Front (UDF)	Anti-incumbency, freebies, welfare projects, ⁸⁷ job creation, farm loans, and development initiatives.	Ban on liquor, infrastructure development, freebies, agricultural support to farmers, promotion of tourism, and an increase in jobs. ⁸⁸	Anti-incumbency, anti-corruption, ⁸⁹ opposition to CAA, ⁹⁰ welfare Projects (Housing, Increased Pensions, free rice distribution). ⁹¹

The deviation from anti-incumbency in the 2021 elections was primarily due to the LDF's effective management of the COVID-19 pandemic, two severe floods, and comprehensive welfare programmes. Additionally, the LDF government in Kerala took a firm stance against the CAA introduced by the BJP, refusing to enforce the provisions of the Act in the state. Even though the

⁸² "LDF poll manifesto says liquor abstinence its policy." *Times of India*, April 19, 2016, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/ldf-poll-manifesto-says-liquor-abstinence-its-policy/articleshow/51896197.cms>

⁸³ "Kerala Elections 2016: LDF, UDF release respective manifestos," *The Indian Express*, April 22, 2016. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/kerala-assembly-elections-2016-live-updates-cpm-congress-bjp/>

⁸⁶ Jeemon Jacob, "Kerala's ruling Left and Congress-led Opposition stage joint protest against CAA," *MyIndia*, December 16, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/kerala-s-ruling-left-and-congress-led-opposition-stage-joint-protest-against-caa-1628612-2019-12-16>

⁸⁷ "UDF promises Re 1 a kg rice to BPL families," *mathrubhumi*, March 25, 2011. <https://web.archive.org/web/20120328122528/http://www.mathrubhumi.com/english/story.php?id=106434>

⁸⁸ "UDF promises 15 lakh jobs, fillip to tourism, IT & farming," *The Times of India*, April 21, 2016. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/elections-2016/kerala-elections-2016/news/udf-promises-15-lakh-jobs-fillip-to-tourism-it-farming/articleshow/51922997.cms>

⁸⁹ Vishnu Varma, "Kerala's 'jinx' factor: LDF hopes to buck trend, UDF thinks anti-incumbency will prevail," *The Indian Express*, April 5, 2021. <https://indianexpress.com/elections/keralas-jinx-factor-ldf-hopes-to-buck-trend-udf-thinks-anti-incumbency-will-prevail-7259752/>

⁹⁰ "Kerala Assembly Election 2021: BJP, CPI(M) Spar Over CAA Implementation," *NDTV*, March 28, 2021. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/kerala-assembly-election-2021-bjp-cpi-m-spar-over-citizenship-amendment-act-implementation-2401174>

⁹¹ "Congress-Led UDF Releases Manifesto For Kerala, Promises Homes to Poor," *NDTV*, Mar 20, 2021. <https://www.ndtv.com/kerala-news/kerala-election-2021-congress-led-udf-releases-manifesto-for-kerala-promises-homes-to-poor-2395126>

opposition alliance of the United Democratic Front (UDF), led by the INC, took a similar stance against CAA, this narrative complemented the effective administration and welfare projects of the LDF government.

However, after two consecutive terms in the Legislative Assembly, voter fatigue resulted in the resurgence of anti-incumbency as the Congress-led UDF won the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, securing 18 out of 20 seats. The deviation from anti-incumbency in the 2021 state elections was an electoral anomaly. The historic trend of anti-incumbency once again appears to have revived. The delivery fatigue has caught up with the LDF government as the voters appear weary of the delayed welfare projects and unfulfilled electoral promises.

This provides an insight into the upcoming 2026 state elections. This delivery fatigue was a fundamental determinant of the UDF alliance's victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Following this electoral success, the prospects of the continuation of the LDF government in Kerala appear bleak. Rahul Gandhi has imbued a new spirit in the INC, as it exhibited a palpably improved performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. This renewed popularity of the INC is expected to positively impact the prospects of the UDF alliance in the upcoming 2026 state elections.

The possibility of the BJP's victory in the upcoming state elections is dismal, much akin to the past elections. BJP's vote share has been on the rise for the last three Legislative Assembly elections owing to its special interest in making inroads in the state of Kerala. However, in the previous three state elections, the BJP has managed to win only a single seat in the 2016 state elections. The BJP's declining support in the centre, signified by a lesser seat count in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, further diminishes the prospects of its victory in the upcoming elections. Despite the minuscule chance of victory, the BJP's rising vote bank in the state highlights its growing popularity in Kerala.

Possible Electoral Agendas of Parties/Alliances for 2026 Elections

Sr. No.	Party/Coalition Name	Member Parties	Likely Focus Areas (2026)
1.	Left Democratic Front (LDF)	Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)), Communist Party of India (CPI), Kerala Congress (M) (KC (M)), Janata Dal (Secular) (JD (S)), Nationalist Congress Party NCP, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Indian National League (INL), Congress (Secular) (C (S)), and others	Digital governance (e-Sevanam, K-FON), Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), job generation, poverty reduction, welfare policies, public health, anti-corruption, and disaster resilience.
2.	United Democratic Front (UDF)	Indian National Congress (INC), Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), Kerala Congress (KC), Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), Kerala Democratic Party (KDP), and others	Anti-incumbency and governance critique (Nilambur by-poll momentum), welfare expansion, pensions, infrastructure, and minority rights.
3.	National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bharath Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS), All India Dravida Munnetra Kazham (AIADMK)	“End LDF-UDF dominance” messaging, a corruption-free governance narrative, local body outreach (targeting a 25% vote share), development, and an emphasis on law and order. ⁹²
	Breakaway and Emerging Parties	All India Trinamool Congress’s (AITMC) P.V. Anvar (independent), DMK (Kerala wing), and smaller regional outfits	Localised issues (settler farmer grievances, anti-polarisation), new regional identity building, and possible spoiler impact.

Findings

- Anti-incumbency trend has already been overturned by the CPI (M)-led LDF’s return to power in the 2021 Legislative Assembly elections.

⁹² “Amit Shah says BJP will form government in Kerala after 2026 elections an urges workers to win local body polls,” *Times of India*, July 12, 2025. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/amit-shah-says-bjp-will-form-government-in-kerala-after-2026-election-and-urges-workers-to-win-local-body-polls/articleshow/122404239.cms>.

Another reversal of anti-incumbency in the 2026 state election seems unlikely.

- The prospects of the LDF's victory in the upcoming state elections appear bleak due to voter and delivery fatigue, as the voters appear weary of the delayed welfare projects and unfulfilled electoral promises.
- The victory of the INC-led UDF in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Kerala highlights the prospects of its victory in the upcoming 2026 state elections.
- The likelihood of the BJP's victory in the upcoming state elections is little to none. The BJP has historically struggled to win any seat in Kerala's Legislative Assembly. Its declining popularity in the centre, signified by a lesser seat count in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, further undermines the prospects of the BJP's victory in the upcoming Kerala state elections.
- Despite the grim prospects of the BJP securing any seat in the upcoming elections, its increasing vote percentage indicates the growing radicalisation of the Hindu mind-set even in Kerala.

ASSAM





ASSAM

The 16th Vidhan Sabha elections are set to take place in April-May 2026, with 126 seats up for contest. Historically, the INC has been a major player in Assam's electoral politics. It had been the only party with over half of the seats in Assam's Legislative Assembly, having a seat-sharing arrangement with the smaller regional parties from 1952 to 1972.⁹³ However, as the 'Emergency' in the 1970s changed the landscape of elections nationally, its effects were also observed at states level, including Assam. In 1978, the INC's seat and vote share declined significantly as more than 938 political parties contested the elections, and the precursor of the BJP, the Janata Party (JP), turned out to be the largest seat-winning party.⁹⁴ Anti-immigration politics and protests engulfed the state from 1979 to 1985. The Assam Movement, as it is called, reshaped and gave a new colour to the state's politics by entrenching language, resource distribution, and ethnic identity as the core issues. The political climate became increasingly volatile with insurgency and demands for independence.⁹⁵

In this milieu, the armed group called United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) was formed in April 1979, gripping the state in violence, fear, and panic.⁹⁶ The peculiar elections of 1983 were held under the shadow of heavy militarisation of the state and boycott by the protesting organisations. The INC again returned to power as the largest state party with 91 seats.⁹⁷ To deal with the rising tensions, the INC introduced the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act (IMDT), which remained controversial. The ULFA movement was put to rest with the watershed agreement between the government and the

⁹³ Dr Navajyoti Borah, "The Journey of Congress in Assam: Post Independence Period," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 8, no. 9 (2019): 46-49.

⁹⁴ S. Goswami, & A.K. Baruah, "Fractured Identity Politics in a Multi Ethnic State," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34, no. 34/35 (1999): 2492-2501.

⁹⁵ Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, *Assam; The Accord, The Discord* (Delhi: Penguin Random House, 2019).

⁹⁶ Ritamoni Gogoi, "Emergence Of Ulfa And Socio-Political Situation Of Assam," *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 8, no. 10 (2019).

⁹⁷ Dr Navajyoti Borah, "The Journey of Congress in Assam: Post Independence Period."

All Assam Students' Association (AASU) in 1985.⁹⁸ The AASU morphed into a political party, the Asom Gona Parishad (AGP), in October 1985, signifying the role of early developments in the rise of a major political player in Assamese politics. Another prominent political force that emerged in the aftermath of these events was the United Minority Front (UMF), which aimed to mobilise Assamese Muslims.⁹⁹ Later, due to the defection of several prominent figures, the party fragmented, and in 2005, a total of 20 minority factions merged, leading to the creation of All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF).¹⁰⁰

Assam's politics was reshaped in the aftermath of the Assam Accords in 1985, as state politics focused on five key areas: illegal immigration, concerns regarding the security of Assamese ethnic and cultural identity, regionalism, language, and resource distribution. These years were critical, as the issues of this period laid the cornerstones of contemporary regional politics of Assam. The impact of the formation of these ethnic and religious-centric parties was reflected in the 1985 elections, as the AGP secured a lead over the INC by winning 63 seats.¹⁰¹ However, in 1991, due to the split in the party, the INC was able to regain its dominant seat position. In a remarkable turn, the BJP entered the electoral fray of Assam with 10 seats,¹⁰² marking the beginning of the saffron wave in Assam. In 1996, realising the risk of internal fragmentation and understanding the significance of coalition building, the AGP reunited and entered into a coalition with the Left. As a result, it relegated the INC to second position.¹⁰³ The BJP could only win four seats. In 2001, the BJP and the AGP allied and cumulatively won 28 seats (AGP 20,

⁹⁸ J. Mazumdar, "BJP's Emergence in Assam: A Short History," *Swarajya*, May 16, 2016. <https://swarajyamag.com/politics/bjps-emergence-in-assam-a-short-history>

⁹⁹ Monoj Kumar Nath, "Muslim Politics in Assam: The Case of AIUDF," *Studies in Indian Politics*, 7, no. 1 (2019): 33–43.

¹⁰⁰ Sandhya Goswami, *Assam Politics in Post-Congress Era 1985 and Beyond* (Delhi: Sage Publications, 2020), 122.

¹⁰¹ Sandhya Goswami, *Assam Politics in Post-Congress Era 1985 and Beyond*, 69.

¹⁰² Goswami, 2021,

¹⁰³ Goswami, *Assam Politics in Post-Congress Era 1985 and Beyond*, 79.

and BJP 8).¹⁰⁴ The BJP added two more seats in the 2006 elections, amounting to 10, and in 2011, it secured only five seats.¹⁰⁵ After frequent defeats to the INC in 2001, 2006, and 2011, the BJP reoriented its electoral and political game. It covered a long distance from winning 10 seats in 1991 to touching the landmark figure of 60 seats¹⁰⁶ in the 2016 and 2021 Assembly elections.

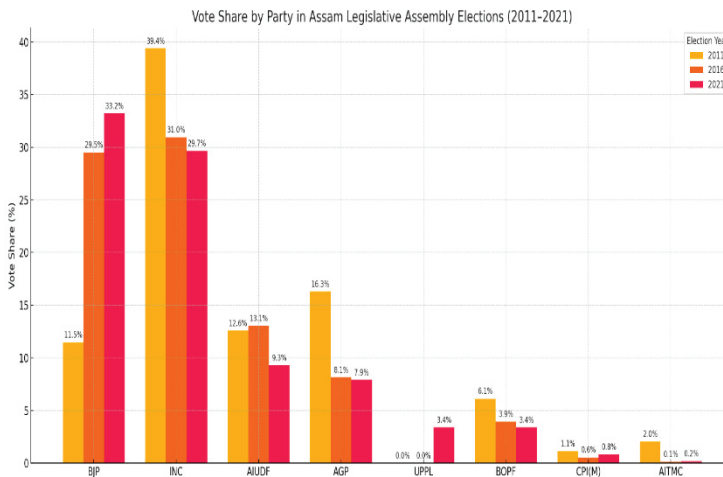
Electoral Performance in Previous Three Assembly Elections: (2011-2021)

The comparative analysis of the party's performance in terms of seats and votes reveals distinct trajectories. There is a sharp rise in the BJP's seat share and a steady surge in its votes, signifying the success of its politics and strategies of people's mobilisation and voter alignment. On the other hand, the INC, once a bastion of Assam politics, has a sharp net loss of 49 seats and a 9-point decline in the vote share, underscoring the waning popularity, an insipid performance, and inability to adapt to the paradigmatic shifts in the polity. AIUDF performance presents a stable picture, enduring with too fewer seats and a three-point erosion in its support base. The AGP maintained a continued presence by 2016 and then lost ground with the net drop of one seat, coinciding with a steep decrease of eight points in vote share, reflecting its gradual decrease and disenchantment of its voters. The net fall of eight seats and a two-point drop in vote share signal the reduced electoral strength and relevance of the Bodoland Peoples Front (BOPF) (Annex A).

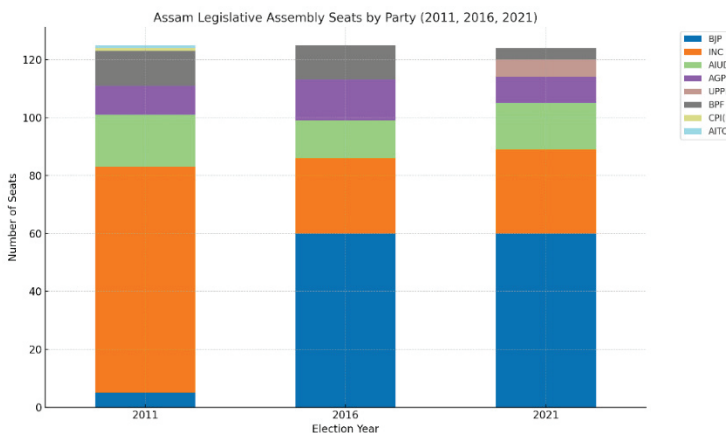
¹⁰⁴ Suhas Palshikar, K.C Suri, & Yogendra Yadav, ed., *Party Competition in India: Electoral Politics in the Post-Congress-Polity*, 459.

¹⁰⁵ Suhas Palshikar, K.C Suri, & Yogendra Yadav, ed., *Party Competition in India: Electoral Politics in the Post-Congress-Polity*, 459-461.

¹⁰⁶ "Assam Assembly Election Results 2021, 'A visual guide to the check out the history of Assam Assembly elections from 2011 to 2021.'" *Data Analytics*, accessed https://data-analytics.github.io/Election_Data_2021/Assam.html?year=2021#overall_view



Comparative Electoral Outcomes in Assam (2011–2021)



Coalition Dynamics and Alliance Strategies

The era of coalitions in Assam began in 2006. However, with the INC making a remarkable comeback in 2011, the parties mostly contested elections without forming any coalitions, with the exception of few seat adjustments. For instance, in 2011, the INC formed government in alliance with the BOPF. The 2016 period brought back the coalition politics in Assam's Assembly elections, and two major coalitions appeared on the fore. The long-lost alliance between the BJP and AGP of the year 2006 was rekindled in 2016 along with BOPF and other smaller regional parties representing various ethnic groups.

This coalition brought back a novel equation in the state, as it not only ushered in the end of the INC's monopoly, but it also brought back the political approach of focusing on good governance, development, and creating space for new faces. The AIUDF, capitalising on Muslim identity politics, particularly among immigrant Muslims¹⁰⁷ in the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys, consolidated its standing as the representative of Bengali immigrant Muslims. The BJP capitalised on the communal politics of AIUDF to consolidate its Hindu vote and started the phase of becoming the representative of Bengali Hindus.¹⁰⁸ A detailed illustration of the alliance in the last three Assembly elections is given in the table.

Sr. No.	Election Year	Coalition Name	Member Parties	Coalition Head	Seats won by the Coalition	Votes Secured by the Coalition
1.	2011	No major coalitions, though INC and BPF together formed the government through seat adjustment ¹⁰⁹	-----	-----	-----	-----
2.	2016	NDA	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Bodoland People's Front (BOPF), Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), Tiwa	BJP	86	41.67

¹⁰⁷ The Muslims whose families migrated to Assam during or after the British rule till March 24, 1971. The Assam Accord, however, changed cut-off date to March 25, 1971. Any individual who has moved to Assam after this date will be categorised as a 'foreigner.'

¹⁰⁸ Suhas Palshikar, K.C Suri, & Yogendra Yadav, ed., *Party Competition in India: Electoral Politics in the Post-Congress-Polity*.

¹⁰⁹ Thirteenth Assembly Elections Results in Assam," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46, no. 25 (2011): 131-134.

			and Ribha Organisations			
		Mahajot	Indian National Congress (INC), All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), 1 Independent	INC	40	55.05
		AIUDF	All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Janata Dal (United) (JD (U)) Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD)	AIUDF	13	
3.	2021 ¹¹⁰	NDA	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), United People's Party, Liberal (UPPL)	BJP	75	44.51
		Mahajot	Indian National Congress (INC), All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Bodoland People's Front (BOPF), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)), Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist)	INC	50	49.47

¹¹⁰ “Elections,” *The Mirrority*, accessed July 5, 2025. <https://www.themirrority.com/data/assam-assembly>

			Liberation) (CPI(ML)), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Jimoachayan (Deori) People's Party (JDPP), Adivasi National Party (ANP), Anchalik Gana Morcha (AGM), ¹¹¹ and 1 Independent			
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BJP's Rise and Consolidation in Assam

Multiple factors contributed to the BJP's rise in Assam's regional politics and retention of a majority in two consecutive Legislative Assembly elections. Its success story is rooted in the political shifts at the national level in 2014, when the BJP secured an outstanding victory in the Lok Sabha elections. The national satisfaction of the populace was aptly translated in the state politics along with the blend of state-centric policies. It effectively exploited the religious divides, the anxieties regarding the increase in the Muslim and non-Assamese population. The BJP vernacularised its national agenda and adjusted it to Assam's milieu by focusing on local cults, symbols, the issue of cultural identity, and welfare activities. The party introduced leaders and new faces who were popular and resonated with the locals, rather than relying on high stature or national-level leaders. Thereby, it positioned itself as a regional force rather than a national outsider. Another potent strategy was not restricting itself to the Hindi speakers, which made it win in the areas that were once the strongholds of the strong regional pillars, such as the AGP. The policy of alliance formation with the parties that are popular in the ethnic minority communities, such as Tiwa and Ribha, and the AGP, has made the BJP a politically undeniable reality in Assam politics.

¹¹¹ "Cong-led 'Mahajot' in Assam now has 10 parties," *The Siasat Daily*, March 15, 2021, <https://archive.siasat.com/news/cong-led-mahajot-in-assam-now-has-10-parties-2110230/>.

The BJP effectively centred its campaigns and politics on the issue of illegal immigration and subsequent fears about the demographic changes in Assam, creating concerns in Assamese about the preservation of their culture and identity. Anti-incumbency sentiments were also astutely leveraged as a strategic tool to shape electoral discourse and public perception in order to undermine the INC's legitimacy.¹¹² Moreover, the classic 'us vs them' majoritarian populist politics was customised as a local Hindu culture variant. The polarising politics of the AIUDF, combined with the Christian religious outreach in Assam, provided a fertile ground for the BJP's polarising politics. The BJP conflated the fear of Muslims among Hindus along with the concerns over the erosion of Assamese identity due to illegal migration. The party invoked the head of AIUDF, Baddaruddin Ajmal, as the guardian of illegal Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh, contextualising the Hindu-Muslim communal narrative into Assam's binary of illegal immigrants versus native identity.¹¹³ The BJP defied the anti-incumbency, which had become a cardinal component of India's political lexicon, by securing an unambiguous victory in the 2021 elections. Despite the widespread protests against CAA, NRC and corruption allegations, the BJP maintained its strength by highlighting its developmental work in education, infrastructure, agriculture, and industry. Apart from the BJP, there are multiple parties in Assam as well. A breakdown of major focus areas and key electoral strategies of the four major political players is given in the table.

¹¹² Kaushik Deka, "How the BJP returned to power in Assam," *India Today*, May 3, 2021.
<https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/how-the-bjp-returned-to-power-in-assam-1798192-2021-05-02>

¹¹³ Kaushik Deka, "How the BJP returned to power in Assam."

Electoral Agendas of Key Coalitions over the Years

Sr. No.	Political Party	Year	Focus Areas
1.	INC	1996	Better governance, bringing peace, restoring law and order, and socio-economic development. ¹¹⁴
		2001	Mostly maintaining the electoral politics and policies of the preceding electoral year, with a focus on anti-communal polarisation, and advocating secularism.
		2006	Anti-corruption, economic development, including infrastructure. ¹¹⁵
		2011	Rural development schemes such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), infrastructure such as roads and bridges development, inter-communal peace and harmony, opposing illegal immigration, ¹¹⁶ welfare schemes such as tractors for farmers, cycles distribution, laptop scheme ¹¹⁷ steering clear of any alliance with AIUDF to avoid vote splitting, Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi, visiting the constituencies, ¹¹⁸ introducing fresh pool of new male and female candidates for the state electoral race, ¹¹⁹ granting refugee status to the Bengali Hindu immigrants, ¹²⁰ and peace talks with the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). ¹²¹
		2016	Reliance on the migrant and indigenous votes, a moderate position on anti-infiltration discourse, social welfare, and development. ¹²²

¹¹⁴ Dr Navajyoti Borah, "The Journey of Congress in Assam: Post Independence Period."

¹¹⁵ Dr Navajyoti Borah, "The Journey of Congress in Assam: Post Independence Period."

¹¹⁶ Parthna Gahilote, "Trifecta on the Luit," *The Outlook*, February 7, 2024, <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/trifecta-on-the-luit-news-271842>.

¹¹⁷ "Awarding Computers to Students in Assam Successful : Gogoi," *New Indian Express*, June 4, 2015. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2015/jun/04/awarding-computers-to-students-in-assam-successful--gogoi-750930.html?botrequest=true>.

¹¹⁸ Lakhwinder Singh Sidhu & Sumandeep Kaur Punia, "State Assembly Elections in India-2011: West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala," *Journal of Political Studies*, 19, no. 1 (2012): 19-34.

¹¹⁹ Sandhya Goswami, "Assam: Mandate for Peace and Development," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46, no. 23 (2011).

¹²⁰ "Gogoi for refugee status for people facing persecution," *News Track India*, April 23, 2012. <https://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2012/04/23/327--Gogoi-for-refugee-status-for-people-facing-persecution-.html>.

¹²¹ Suhas Palshikar, K.C Suri, & Yogendra Yadav, ed., *Party Competition in India: Electoral Politics in the Post-Congress-Polity*, 70.

¹²² V. Bijukumar, "Assam Assembly Elections 2016: BJP Triumphs and Congress Dwindles," *Mainstream Weekly*, June 11, 2016. <https://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article6476.html>

		2021	Anti-incumbency, highlighting the incompleteness of the NRC and the issue of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), anti-corruption and 'syndicate raj', ¹²³ the issues of high unemployment, inflation in the prices of necessities like gas cylinders, petroleum, the issues related to floods and soil erosion, women's safety concerns and underscoring past development projects and promising tea garden development. ¹²⁴
2.	AGP	1996	Identity politics (preserving Assamese identity), employment, implementation of the Assam Accord, and improving the living standards of the tea-garden communities. ¹²⁵
		2001	Identity politics, regional autonomy, local socio-economic development schemes such as Operation Blackboard to appoint teachers to fill the vacancies, and the self-employment scheme. ¹²⁶
		2006	Carrying on the previous policies, along with highlighting the issues in the health and education sectors, and the implementation of the Assam Accord. ¹²⁷
		2011	Implementation of the Assam Accord, job creation, reforms in the health and education sectors, administrative reforms; industrial and agricultural development. ¹²⁸
		2016	Anti-immigration, implementation of Assam Accord, increasing representation of locals in government sectors, administrative reforms aiming to ensure decentralisation of power, flood management infrastructure and industrial development. ¹²⁹
		2021	Implementation of the Assam Accord, mainly Clause 6 to ensure institutional, legal, and constitutional measures to

¹²³ Syndicate Raj is a term which alludes to black money and extortion scandals involving the party in government.

¹²⁴ Pratyush Paras Sarma & Tanaya Hazarika, "Social Media and Election Campaigns: An Analysis of the Usage of Twitter during the 2021 Assam Assembly Elections," *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 6, no.2 (2023): 96-117.

¹²⁵ Dr. Navajyoti Borah, "Regional Politics in Assam: The Journey of AGP," *International Journal of Engineering Development and Research*, 7, no. 3 (2019).

¹²⁶ Sandhya Goswami, *Assam Politics in Post-Congress Era 1985 and Beyond*, 104.

¹²⁷ Memphis Winter, "Asom Gana Parishad," *Slide Share*, Accessed on July 2, 2025. <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/2-asom-gana-parishadpptx/255837098?>

¹²⁸ Memphis Winter, "Asom Gana Parishad."

¹²⁹ "Assam poll 2016: AGP promises constitutional protection for indigenous people," *Firstpost*, March 18, 2016. <https://www.firstpost.com/politics/assam-poll-2016-agp-promises-constitutional-protection-for-indigenous-people-2684290.html?>

			protect Assamese cultural heritage. ¹³⁰ Anti-immigration and provision of agricultural land to illegal immigrants, employment, flood management, reforms in health and education sector. ¹³¹
3.	BJP	2001	Regional development, economic reforms, national pride, and <i>Hindutva</i> /communal politics.
		2006	Same as the previous year, with increased focus on Hindu nationalism and communalism.
		2011	Anti-corruption ¹³² along with Hindu nationalism.
		2016	Alliance with regional ethnic parties such as BPF, AGP, ¹³³ Tiwa, and Ribha organisations, vowing to protect the <i>Khilonjiyas</i> (the indigenous) rights and lands; implementing the Assam Accord, upgrading National Register of Citizens (NRC); and giving the tribal status to 6 ethnic groups. Anti-incumbency, 25,000 RSS <i>Swayamsevaks</i> tireless campaigning and groundwork, ¹³⁴ consolidating the Hindu vote by promising anti-infiltration policies, given credibility by the case filed by the Chief Ministerial nominee, Sarbananda Sonowal against the IMDT Act. Promising the settlement of Hindu Bangladeshis, cultural and identity politics, area and community-specific campaigning, top-tier leadership visits, exploiting the religious divide and demographic anxiety as a response to AIUDF's Muslims-targeted campaign and dividing the opposition (INC and AIUDF) votes from the Muslim population. ¹³⁵ Bringing INC's Trojan horse, Himanta Biswa Sarma, into its fold, ¹³⁶ customising its Hindu nationalism as a local Assamese

¹³⁰ "AGP promises implementation of Assam Accord, Clause 6 implementation," *India Today*, March 25, 2021. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2021/Mar/24/agg-promises-implementation-of-assam-accord-clause-6-implementation-2281032.html?>

¹³¹ "Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) Releases Poll Manifesto for Assembly Election 2021," *The Sentinel*, March 25, 2021. <https://www.sentinelassam.com/topheadlines/asom-gana-parishad-agg-releases-poll-manifesto-530322?>

¹³² Parthna Gahilote, "Trifecta on the Luit," *The Outlook*, February 7, 2024 <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/trifecta-on-the-luit-news-271842>.

¹³³ Udayon Misra, "Victory for Identity Politics, Not Hindutva in Assam," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 51, no. 22 (2016): 20-23.

¹³⁴ Udayon Misra, "Victory for Identity Politics, Not Hindutva in Assam," *Economic & Political Weekly*, 51, no. 22 (2016): 20-23.

¹³⁵ Sangit Kumar Ragi, "Infiltration of Illegal Immigrants and Electoral Politics in Assam," *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 62, no. 3 (2017): 559-571.

¹³⁶ V. Bijukumar, "Assam Assembly Elections 2016: BJP Triumphs and Congress Dwindles," *Mainstream*, 54, no. 25 (June 11, 2016), <https://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article6476.html>.

			variant of Hindu culture, ¹³⁷ and the grassroots activities of the RSS offshoots (more than 830) in Assam. ¹³⁸
		2021	Identity and immigration issues, highlighting the educational schemes such as free uniforms and school admission fee waivers in schools, infrastructure and developmental projects such as roads, bridges, flyovers, and building worship places, corruption allegations against the opposition, women-centric welfare schemes such as <i>the Arunodai Scheme</i> , ¹³⁹ and pledging to relieve women from their micro-finance loans, ¹⁴⁰ Introducing a series of welfare and development schemes targeting tea-garden areas. ¹⁴¹
4.	AIUDF	2006	Anti-immigration, Muslim-centric politics with a particular attention to immigrant Muslim interests. ¹⁴²
		2011	Minority-centric, religious identity and polarising politics, securing Muslim interests.
		2016	Minority, mainly securing Muslim interest, resolving the issue of Doubtful (D) Voters, ¹⁴³ and anti-BJP.
		2021	Muslim-centric politics, better health and education facilities for minorities, especially Muslims, and agrarian reforms. Alliance under the <i>Mahajot</i> and focus on development, ¹⁴⁴ particularly of 'char areas,' and opposing the BJP rhetoric.

Source: Manoj Kumar Nath, "Muslim Politics in Assam, the Case of AIUDF." Also see, Pratyush Paras Sarma & Tanaya Hazarika, "Social Media and Election Campaigns: An Analysis of the Usage of Twitter during the 2021 Assam Assembly Election."

¹³⁷ Christophe Jefferlote, 2016 'BJP's Assam Win Is Proof Hindutva Has Reached Areas Where It Was Marginal,' *The Indian Express*, June 11, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/bjp-sarbananda-sonowal-assam-assembly-elections-tarun-gogoi-congress-the-enigma-of-arrival-2846193/>.

¹³⁸ Sandhya Goswami, 153.

¹³⁹ K. Deka, "How the BJP returned to power in Assam," *India Today*, May 3, 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/how-the-bjp-returned-to-power-in-assam-1798192-2021-05-03>.

¹⁴⁰ K. Deka, "How the BJP returned to power in Assam."

¹⁴¹ Pratyush Paras Sarma & Tanaya Hazarika, "Social Media and Election Campaigns: An Analysis of the Usage of Twitter during the 2021 Assam Assembly Elections."

¹⁴² Sourodipto Sanyal, "Everything you need to know about Assam's upcoming elections," *News Laundry*, 25 Mar, 2016. <https://www.newslaundry.com/2016/03/25/everything-you-need-to-know-about-assams-upcoming-elections?>

¹⁴³ "AIUDF Manifesto promises to solve D voter problem," *Times of India*, March 29, 2016. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/aiudf-manifesto-promises-to-solve-d-voter-problem/articleshow/51590161.cms?>

¹⁴⁴ Imtiaz Ahmed, "Assam election manifesto: UPA promises land patta to char dwellers," *India Today*, March 28, 2021. <https://www.indiatodayne.in/assam/story/assam-election-manifesto-grand-alliance-promises-land-patta-char-dwellers-416531-2021-03-28?>

Contours of Assam's Electoral and Political Landscape

Any prognosis of Assam's electoral and political dynamics can be done by analysing its socio-political mosaic. It has a diverse ethno-linguistic and religious demography landscape. According to the 2011 census, Hindus constitute 61.4 per cent, Muslims 34.2, and Christians 3.74 of the total population.¹⁴⁵ These statistics reveal that Muslims make up an electorally and politically significant and influential minority. Another demographic categorisation significant to understanding the electoral dynamics is the linguistic composition of the state. There are two major and two minor linguistic communities. As per the 2011 census, the Assamese are 48.38 per cent of the total population, which is 0.42 percentage points less than the 2001.¹⁴⁶ The Bengali speakers are 28.9 per cent, showing a rise from 27.54 per cent in 2001. The Bodo community number has fallen from 4.8 per cent in 2001 to 4.5 in 2011, and the number of Hindi speakers has surged from 5.89 in 2001 to 6.7 per cent in 2011.¹⁴⁷ The voting trends in the past three consecutive Assembly elections reveal that the AIUDF has become the party of Muslims of the six lower Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley.

The BJP has successfully registered itself as the party of Hindu Bengalis and championed the agenda of preserving Assamese identity, which was previously the AGP's premise and its electoral and political agenda. The AGP has lost its base due to internal factionalism, years of poor governance, and

¹⁴⁵ "Assam Hindu Muslim Population," *Population Census*, accessed July 1, 2015.
<https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/state/18-assam.html#:~:text=Hinduism%20constitutes%2061.47%25%20of%20Assam%20population.%20In%20all,1.07%20Crore%20%2834.22%20percent%29%20of%20total%203.12%20Crore>

¹⁴⁶ Sushanta Talukdar, "Census 2011 Language Data: Assam records decline in percentage of Assamese, Bodo, Rabha and Santali speakers," *NEZINE: Bridging the Gap*, June 28, 2018.
<https://www.nezine.com/info/bnhUV3NpcjlsUkxwVTVkNkFhdFJKdz09/census-2011-language-data:-assam-records-decline-in-percentage-of-assamese,-bodo,-rabha-and-santali-speakers.html#:~:text=Languages%20and%20mother%20tongue%20data%20of%202011%20Census,the%20state%20have%20increased%20over%20the%20decade%202001-2011>

¹⁴⁷ Sushanta Talukdar, "Census 2011 Language Data: Assam records decline in percentage of Assamese, Bodo, Rabha and Santali speakers."

the failure to deliver on the promised issues, leaving people unwilling to forget.

The decline of the INC lies in over-reliance on the Muslim and minority vote base, lack of public trust, failure to evolve and improve its political and social profile, the lack of organisational strength, the inability to adapt to political changes, and failure to present itself as a representative of all spectrums of communities and ethnicities.

Evolving Trends in the Run-up to 2026 Assembly Elections

The 2026 elections are scheduled to be held in March-April. Although it is too soon to predict who will win, the developments indicate that the state assembly elections are likely to emulate the national ones. They will plausibly take the form of a presidential election with Himanta Biswa Sarma, and with the continuation of the same alliance partners under the NDA versus Gaurav Gogoi.¹⁴⁸ The role of regional parties has diminished to a great extent, such as the decline of the AGP, once a leading political player, and others, including Rajbor Dal (RD), and Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP). These parties are gravitating towards larger coalitions like the NDA and Grand Alliance. So far, the INC has pivoted its electoral campaign around corruption, syndicate raj operations, and misappropriation of state resources.¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, the ruling party appears strong after bringing the ULFA to the table to sign an agreement, yielding arms and giving up violence to join the democratic process.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the BJP's prospects appear promising due to the resounding victory in 300 out of 397 *zila parishad* seats in the *Panchayat*

¹⁴⁸ Abhijeet Deb, "Once a Powerhouse, Assam's Regional Politics Faces Identity Crisis," *The Statesmen*, July 3, 2025. <https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/India/once-a-powerhouse-assam-s-regional-politics-faces-identity-crisis/ar-AA1HSRHp?ocid=BingNewsSerp>.

¹⁴⁹ Bikash Singh, "Assam polls will see a fight, says state Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi," *The Economic Times*, June 27, 2025. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/assam-polls-will-see-a-fight-says-state-congress-chief-gaurav-gogoi/articleshow/122104360.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

¹⁵⁰ "ULFA signs peace accord with govt; what does it mean for decades-old Assam insurgency," *Mint*, December 19, 2023. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/ulfa-signs-peace-accord-with-govt-what-does-it-mean-for-decades-old-assam-insurgency-11703855208038.html>.

elections.¹⁵¹ These elections served as a critical barometer to gauge the popularity of the incumbent party in general and Himanta Biswa in particular. The significance of this victory also lies in the fact that it has provided the BJP with several *Panchayat* representatives, which can help in mobilising the voters. The BJP appears on a strong footing in the state with schemes such as *Orunodoi*, *Nijut Moina*, and *Mahila Udayamita*, an emphasis on infrastructure development, an anti-corruption and employment drive, adding one lakh jobs in the government sector, as well as improvement in the education and health sectors.¹⁵² Another significant development that will have a decisive impact on the 2026 election outcome is the fourth delimitation exercise of Assam's constituencies based on the 2001 census. While the total number of seats has been retained, the number of Muslim dominant constituencies has been reduced to 22 from 30.¹⁵³ The number of Hindu and tribal seats has been increased to 23,¹⁵⁴ and seats in the Bodo community-dominated areas increased from 16 to 19,¹⁵⁵ which gives the BJP a clear advantage over other parties. Basing the delimitation on the decades-old data, altering demography along with the skewed representation of the minorities under the garb of empowering the indigenous communities will not only have a profound impact on the upcoming state elections but also on the future politics of Assam.

¹⁵¹ "What Assam's *panchayat* poll results reveal about Himanta's BJP and 2026 battle," *India Today*, May 15, 2025. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/assam-panchayat-election-bjp-nda-sweep-cm-himanta-biswa-sarma-targets-104-seats-2026-assembly-polls-gaurav-gogoi-2725147-2025-05-15>.

¹⁵² Nabaarun Barooah, "Assam Panchayat Polls Dash Three Gogoi Alliance, Himanta Biswa Sarma Appears Set For 2026," *Swarajya*, May, 18, 2025. <https://swarajyamag.com/politics/assam-panchayat-polls-dash-three-gogoi-alliance-himanta-biswa-sarma-appears-set-for-2026>.

¹⁵³ Bikash Singh, "Redrawn boundaries, renamed seats: Assam sees shake-up before polls," *The Economic Times*, April 19, 2025. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/redrawn-boundaries-renamed-seats-assam-sees-shake-up-before-polls/articleshow/120438425.cms>.

¹⁵⁴ B Boruah & D. Dutta, "Indigeneity, citizenship and the politics of re-delimitation in Assam," *Asian Ethnicity* (2025): 1–23. Also see, "A De-limitation Red Flag: The Lessons from J&K and Assam," *Chahal Academy*, March 20, 2025. <https://chahalacademy.com/public/the-hindu-editorial-analysis/20-mar-2025/1754>.

¹⁵⁵ B Boruah & D. Dutta, "Indigeneity, citizenship and the politics of re-delimitation in Assam." Also see, "A De-limitation Red Flag: The Lessons from J&K and Assam."

Potential Determinants of 2026 Assembly Elections

Following are the areas that the parties, whether in power or opposition, need to focus on to win in Assam:

- Maintaining a balance between the core issues of illegal immigration and its local dimensions.
- To attain a dominant position in Assam's politics, an inclusive and adaptive governance model is required by broadening the social base to encompass all communities rather than limiting it to the minorities. This matter has become more pressing following the delimitation process, which appears to be pro-incumbent (BJP).
- The ethnic, tribal, and linguistic identity concerns are key to the Assam Assembly. It is a tightrope to walk; therefore, the contesting parties must avoid taking any polarising position.
- Focusing on the socio-economic development, social welfare services, employment, education, health facilities, electricity supply, and improving infrastructure can pave the way to earn the trust of the electorate.
- Forming strategic alliances premised on regional and ethnic calculus will be significant to avoid vote splitting that can favour the incumbent party.
- The study of past elections reveals that to win Assam, instead of national-level stalwarts, launching new faces or the regional leaders who are more popular and known to the people can increase the chances of securing electoral success.
- Employing electoral strategies that can make the party look power-hungry can limit the chances of its victory. Furthermore, interparty and inter-alliance fragmentation, as it happened with the BJP and AGP in 2011, or relying on short-term or symbolic coalitions, such as the 'three Gogoi alliance' in the 2025 *Panchayat* elections, can reduce the likelihood of winning. The key is to form an alliance that addresses the grievances of the underrepresented groups and ensures a balance between minorities and the dominant sections of society.
- Sophisticated and widespread use of social media tactics such as memes, shorts, and trends on X can be utilised to project the campaign promises.

Creating videos of nominated candidates visiting their constituencies can also help give an impression of political leaders connecting with the masses. This was one of the strategies adopted by the BJP in 2021, which translated into its victory.

Possible Electoral Agendas of Parties for 2026 Elections

Sr. No.	Party/Coalition Name	Likely Focus Areas (2026)
1.	BJP	<i>Hindutva</i> narrative, immigration and identity politics, but ‘justice for all’ politics in the minorities’ areas, highlighting past development projects, women-centric welfare schemes, employment, youth outreach, border security, and implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).
2.	INC	Alliance reconfiguration (as the AIUDF has decided to contest without forming an alliance with the INC), ¹⁵⁶ anti-incumbency, rural development initiatives, flood management, emphasis on CAA/NRC incompleteness and highlighting it as a religiously polarising strategy of the BJP. Minority rights, development schemes for the tea-garden community, women safety, and positioning itself as the guardian of the indigenous people’s identity.
3.	AGP	Assamese language and culture, anti-immigration, likely continuation of alliance with the BJP, and agriculture reforms.
4.	AIUDF	‘ <i>Ekla Chalo</i> ’ contesting alone without any alliance, ¹⁵⁷ protection of minority (mainly Muslims) rights, agrarian reforms, anti-BJP, and opposing evictions and unjust detentions of minorities and marginalised communities.

Findings

- The 2026 Vidhan Sabha elections in Assam are likely to follow the presidential style and a bipolar contest between the BJP stalwart Himanta Biswa and the INC’s Tarun Gogoi. The role of regional parties such as the AGP, AJP, and RD appears to have a limited role.

¹⁵⁶ Kangkan Kalitra, “AIUDF decides to go solo in ’26 polls, poses challenge for Congress,” *Times of India*, March 8, 2025. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/aiudf-decides-to-go-solo-in-26-polls-poses-challenge-for-congress/articleshow/118809069.cms>.

¹⁵⁷ “Assam: AIUDF to contest limited seats in 2026 Assembly elections, to go solo,” *The Sentinel*, June 19, 2025. <https://www.sentinelassam.com/cities/guwahati-city/assam-aiudf-to-contest-limited-seats-in-2026-assembly-elections-to-go-solo/>

- While keeping a limited horizon by focusing on issues such as corruption and abuse of state resources by the incumbent party, the INC is trying to regain the lost ground. However, given that over the years, the INC has seen its stature reduced to being perceived as a representative party of Bengali Muslims, the prospects of its victory appear modest.
- The prospects of the BJP-led NDA looks promising owing to the development and welfare work, employment drive, agreement with the ULFA, as well as infrastructure projects. Its position is further strengthened for the upcoming contest due to its performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Assam constituencies and its dominant victory in 300 out of 397 *zila parishad* seats in the *Panchayat* elections. Another significant factor that will likely benefit the BJP is the fourth delimitation exercise, which has reduced the number of Muslim-majority constituencies, while increasing seats in the Hindu, tribal, and Bodo-dominated areas.
- Despite the favourable conditions for the BJP-led alliance, factors such as opposition consolidation through coalition building, the anti-incumbency, and national-level shifts, such as the recent nationwide drive of opposition against the vote theft and the involvement of the ECI¹⁵⁸ leave the outcome of the elections susceptible to the evolving dynamics closer to the polls.

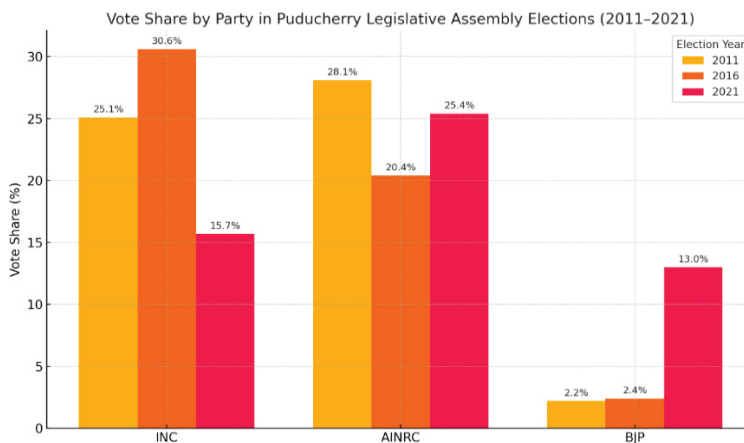
¹⁵⁸ Devika Bhattacharya, “Rahul Gandhi doubles down on vote 'chori' charge, cites more states in new video,” *India Today*, August 8, 2025. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/rahul-gandhi-alleges-vote-theft-ec-bjp-poll-rigging-fake-votes-2768175-2025-08-08>.

PUDUCHERRY



PUDUCHERRY

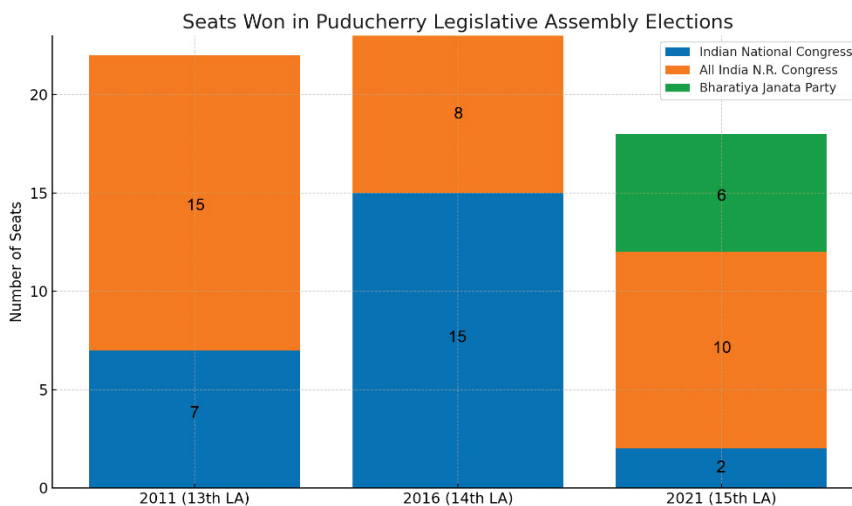
The 16th Legislative Assembly elections are expected to be held in April–May 2026 to elect members from 30 constituencies in the Union Territory of India. It is a small Union Territory on India’s south-eastern coast. Its politics has long been driven by shifting loyalties and local dynamics rather than by clear-cut ideology.¹⁵⁹ A key turning point came in 2011, when N. Rangaswamy broke away from the INC to launch his outfit, the All India Naresan Rangaswamy Congress (AINRC), reshaping the region’s political landscape. Riding on his popularity and teaming up with the AIADMK, he won enough seats to form the government. The tide turned in 2016 when the Congress–DMK alliance edged ahead, and V. Narayanasamy took charge as the Chief Minister.¹⁶⁰ However, that did not last. By 2021, the BJP had found a foothold, joining hands with Rangaswamy’s AINRC to sweep the polls, while the INC was nearly wiped out. Over the past decade, Puducherry’s politics has come to be defined by breakaways, quick alliances, and sharp voter swings—all playing out in a tight 30-seat Assembly.



¹⁵⁹ “Explained: Puducherry, the territory of coalitions and President’s Rule,” *The Week*, March 26 2021. <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2021/03/26/explained-puducherry-the-territory-of-coalitions-and-presidents-rule.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Elizabeth Roche and Dharani Thangavelu, “Anti-incumbency propels Congress–DMK to power in Puducherry,” *LiveMint*, May 20, 2016. <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/pkMpOznihEgaVxr6Mkzd2N/Election-results-Counting-of-votes-begins-in-Puducherry.html>

Comparative Electoral Outcomes in Puducherry (2011–2021)



Puducherry's Coalition Outcomes over the Years (2011-2021)

Sr. No.	Election Year	Coalition Name	Member Parties	Coalition Head	Seats won by Coalition	Votes Secured by Coalition
1.	2011	UPA+DPA alliance	Indian National Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Pattali Makkal Katchi, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi	INC	9	39.69
		AINRC AND AIADMK alliance	All India N.R. Congress, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra	AINRC	20	48.41

			Kazhagam, Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist)			
2.	2016	United Progressive Alliance	Indian National Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	INC	17	39.5
		All India N. R. Congress	All India N.R. Congress	AINRC	8	28.1
		All India Anna DMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	AIADMK	4	16.8
3.	2021	Secular Progressive Alliance+Unit ed Progressive Alliance	Indian National Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Communist Party of India, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi, Independent	INC	9	35.12
		National Democratic Alliance	All India N.R. Congress, Bharatiya Janata	AIADMK	16	43.65

			Party, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam			
		Independents	-		5	12.68

Electoral Agendas of Key Parties in Puducherry (2016-2021)

Sr. No.	Political Party	Focus Areas 2016	Focus Areas 2021	Observed Shift
1.	Indian National Congress	Welfare Schemes, Local Employment	COVID-19 Relief, Infrastructure	Added focus on pandemic response
2.	All India N.R. Congress	Anti-Congress Sentiment	Development, Governance	Sharper governance-centric campaign
3.	Bharatiya Janata Party	Marginal Presence	Central Schemes, Development	Major emergence as coalition partner

Evolving Trends in the Run-up to Elections

Dravidian Influence in Puducherry

Back in the 1950s, after Puducherry became part of India, its politics started changing. The major influence came from Tamil Nadu, where parties focused on regional pride and giving a voice to communities that did not have much power. Initially, Congress and local Communists were the main players, but over time, the DMK and AIADMK also started making their mark. Still, their rise was not just because people supported them; it also had a lot to do with political moves and deals happening during the French exit. A good part of their influence was rooted in early political manoeuvrings and defections that favoured the INC during the transitional period after French rule, leaving the region's political base somewhat unstable from the start.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ N Vinoth Kumar, "Puducherry's unique political history and how Dravidian parties lost their hold over the UT," *The Federal*, last modified 2021, accessed July 9, 2025. <https://thefederal.com/puducherry-elections-2021/puducherrys-unique-political-history-and-how-dravidian-parties-lost-their-hold-over-the-ut>

Why Dravidian Parties Lost Their Grip?

The hold of the Dravidian parties started to slip over the decades. The DMK and AIADMK, once seen as energetic forces of change, increasingly appeared out of touch. They were concerned with power equations and alliances rather than with Puducherry's identity. The majority of the people perceived that these parties did not view Puducherry as their place, but just an extension of Tamil Nadu politics. Feeling ignored and frustrated by decisions made far away, voters started seeking options that understood their local issues better. That is how the AINRC gained ground, and national parties, such as the BJP, found more support. Over time, the strong influence that the Dravidian parties once had slowly faded away.¹⁶²

BJP's Start for the 2026 Elections

The BJP has assigned Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya to lead the party's planning and campaign efforts for the 2026 Puducherry Assembly elections. To assist him in the role, Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal has been appointed as co-in-charge. This decision was shared by the party's national general secretary, Arun Singh, and both roles come into effect immediately as the BJP gears up for a crucial contest in the Union Territory. As part of the ruling alliance with the AINRC in the Union Territory, the BJP is gearing up for the polls well in advance of the Assembly's term ending on June 15, 2026.¹⁶³

BJP's Internal Setbacks

In Puducherry, the BJP is facing a growing backlash after A.K. Sai J Saravanan Kumar, the only Dalit minister in the ruling coalition, stepped down. His resignation, which many believed was ordered by the party's central leadership, has not gone down well with Dalit groups, who have taken

¹⁶² N Vinoth Kumar, "Puducherry's unique political history and how Dravidian parties lost their hold over the UT."

¹⁶³ "Puducherry elections: BJP appoints Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya as party's in-charge, Arjun Ram Meghwal co-incharge," *Mint*, April 19, 2025. <https://www.livemint.com/politics/puducherry-elections-bjp-appoints-union-minister-mansukh-mandaviya-as-partys-in-charge-arjun-ram-meghwal-co-incharge-11745068768455.html>

to the streets, accusing the BJP of side-lining their community. There is now a strong push from these groups to make Saravanan Kumar the head of the party's local unit. Alongside his exit, three nominated BJP legislators have also resigned, moves widely seen as the party's attempt to contain growing dissent in its ranks, especially after recent setbacks like the 2024 Lok Sabha loss. The BJP is expected to announce replacements soon, with speculation that a Dalit and a representative from Karaikal will be included to manage the fallout. Meanwhile, Saravanan's name continues to circulate as a possible pick to lead the party in the Union territory.¹⁶⁴

Congress-DMK Alliance: Hopes and Hurdles

As far as the Congress-DMK alliance is concerned, they hope that the people's dissatisfaction with the performance of the current government will work in their favour in the elections. They are discussing about addressing governance challenges, development, and fighting for the secular values in the state. The DMK is trying to reach out and appeal to the Tamil speaking voters, but on ground realities present a dismal picture. There is a lack of cohesion among the ranks, and some key communities, like the Vanniyars, feel being left out. If the alliance does not address its own internal issues and disregard people's demands and needs, they might find it hard to turn the voters' dissatisfaction towards their side.

Possible Electoral Agendas of Alliances for 2026 Elections

Sr. No.	Party/Coalition Name	Likely Focus Areas (2026)
1.	National Democratic Alliance	Booth-level strength, "double-engine" narrative, statehood & welfare, BJP consolidation, alliance cohesion
2.	Secular Progressive Alliance	Cultural identity, anti-incumbency, social welfare, alliance structure, push for autonomy

¹⁶⁴ “BJP faces Dalit backlash in Puducherry after Minister’s resignation on diktat from national leadership,” *The Statesman*, June 28, 2025. <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/bjp-faces-dalit-backlash-in-puducherry-after-ministers-resignation-on-diktat-from-national-leadership-1503451013.html?>

Findings

- The influence of DMK and AIADMK in Puducherry has faded over time as people felt the region was being treated like an extension of Tamil Nadu rather than having its own identity. This opened the door for parties like the AINRC and the BJP to gain ground.
- BJP has started preparations for the 2026 elections early, appointing Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya to lead the campaign and Arjun Ram Meghwal as co-in-charge, signalling an aggressive strategy ahead of the polls.
- The BJP is dealing with internal trouble after A.K. Sai J Saravanan Kumar, the only Dalit minister in the ruling coalition, resigned. His exit sparked protests from Dalit groups demanding more representation, and this comes on top of three BJP legislators stepping down after the party's poor 2024 Lok Sabha performance.
- The Congress-DMK alliance hopes to benefit from public dissatisfaction with the current government, but internal disunity and discontent among communities like the Vanniyars could make it hard for them to convert anger into votes.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Bihar

- There is no clarity of outcome in a highly competitive race. The 2025 Bihar elections are wide open. Both NDA and Mahagathbandhan have similar vote bases of 32–35 per cent, while 12 per cent of undecided voters are likely to decide the outcome. There is no dominant narrative yet, making it an unpredictable election.
- There is an anti-incumbency sentiment against Nitish Kumar, but gender & youth split matters. Nearly 50 per cent of voters express dissatisfaction with Nitish Kumar's two-decade-long rule. Women voters largely support Nitish due to social welfare schemes, while young men prefer Tejashwi Yadav, who leads the CM preference poll with 39 per cent, compared to 34 per cent for Nitish.
- New political forces are emerging, but those are not decisive yet. Prashant Kishor's JSP positions itself as a third front, attracting voters tired of traditional parties. However, it has not yet translated into a significant Chief Minister preference. Chirag Paswan and Upendra Kushwaha are also in the run, but without clear momentum.
- Key issues dominating the campaign are unemployment, migration of youth, broken infrastructure, and caste alignments. National issues like security (post-Pahalgam attack) and Modi's image are important, but local governance, jobs, and welfare remain a decisive factor. Additionally, the controversial voter roll revision requiring old documents has sparked protests and may influence trust and turnout in the process.
- Nearly 65 lakh voters, about 8 per cent of the electorate, have been excluded from the rolls on grounds of death, duplication, migration, or being untraceable. This large-scale removal has triggered political controversy, with opposition leaders alleging manipulation ahead of state elections.

Tamil Nadu

- Internal fragmentation in AIADMK and a lack of charismatic leadership plummets the prospects of AIADMK's victory in the upcoming state election.
- AIADMK's alliance with the BJP further suppresses AIADMK's public support and diminishes its prospects of victory.
- DMK's capitalisation of Dravidian identity politics, stern opposition to the BJP's ingress, public welfare, and charismatic leadership of M. K. Stalin envisage the victory of DMK (currently in power) in the upcoming state elections.
- The victory of the DMK-led I.N.D.I.A. alliance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections further indicates their promising prospects in the upcoming Legislative Assembly election.

West Bengal

- Given a plethora of challenges confronting the incumbent AITMC, including reports of corruption in the education and health sectors, concerns about women's security, and internal factionalism, the ruling party's prospects appear dim for the upcoming elections.
- The BJP is capitalising on increasing chaos characterised by frequent clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims and the rising communal violence. It is portraying these issues as symptomatic of mismanagement by the AITMC. Additionally, the BJP is also pushing its narrative of 'infiltrators' seizing Hindu resources, which is appealing to the Hindu voter base. These factors will increase the BJP's chances to expand its foothold, which will likely shift the electoral balance in West Bengal.
- As Mamata Banerjee is steering clear of any alliance, including the INC, a vote split appears likely, which could work to the BJP's advantage, especially when combined with the BJP's strong social media machinery and considerable presence of the RSS in the state.

- Despite the significant setbacks, Mamata's current political standing suggests that she may still retain her ground in the state. However, anti-incumbency and opposition mobilisation can alter the extent of her dominance and complicate the electoral contest.

Kerala

- Anti-incumbency trend has already been overturned by the CPI (M)-led LDF's return to power in the 2021 Legislative Assembly elections. Another reversal of anti-incumbency in the 2026 state election seems unlikely.
- The prospects of the LDF's victory in the upcoming state elections appear bleak due to voter and delivery fatigue, as the voters appear weary of the delayed welfare projects and unfulfilled electoral promises.
- The victory of the INC-led UDF in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Kerala highlights the prospects of its victory in the upcoming 2026 state elections.
- The likelihood of the BJP's victory in the upcoming state elections is little to none. The BJP has historically struggled to win any seat in Kerala's Legislative Assembly. Its declining popularity in the centre, signified by a lesser seat count in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, further undermines the prospects of the BJP's victory in the upcoming Kerala state elections.
- Despite the grim prospects of the BJP securing any seat in the upcoming elections, its increasing vote percentage indicates the growing radicalisation of the Hindu mindset even in Kerala.

Assam

- The 2026 Vidhan Sabha elections in Assam are likely to follow the presidential style and a bipolar contest between the BJP stalwart Himanta Biswa and the INC's Tarun Gogoi. The role of regional parties such as the AGP, AJP, and RD appears to have a limited role.
- While keeping a limited horizon by focusing on issues such as corruption and abuse of state resources by the incumbent party, the INC is trying to regain the lost ground. However, given that over the years,

the INC has seen its stature reduced to being perceived as a representative party of Bengali Muslims, the prospects of its victory appear modest.

- The prospects of the BJP-led NDA look promising owing to the development and welfare work, employment drive, agreement with the ULFA, as well as infrastructure projects. Its position is further strengthened for the upcoming contest due to its performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Assam constituencies and its dominant victory in 300 out of 397 zila parishad seats in the *Panchayat* elections. Another significant factor that will likely benefit the BJP is the fourth delimitation exercise, which has reduced the number of Muslim-majority constituencies, while increasing seats in the Hindu, tribal, and Bodo-dominated areas.
- Despite the favourable conditions for the BJP-led alliance, factors such as opposition consolidation through coalition building, the anti-incumbency, and national-level shifts, such as the recent nationwide drive of opposition against the vote theft and the involvement of the ECI, leave the outcome of the elections susceptible to the evolving dynamics closer to the polls.

Puducherry

- The influence of DMK and AIADMK in Puducherry has faded over time as people felt the region was being treated like an extension of Tamil Nadu rather than having its own identity. This opened the door for parties like the AINRC and the BJP to gain ground.
- BJP has started preparations for the 2026 elections early, appointing Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya to lead the campaign and Arjun Ram Meghwal as co-in-charge, signalling an aggressive strategy ahead of the polls.
- The BJP is dealing with internal trouble after A.K. Sai J Saravanan Kumar, the only Dalit minister in the ruling coalition, resigned. His exit sparked protests from Dalit groups demanding more representation, and

this comes on top of three BJP legislators stepping down after the party's poor 2024 Lok Sabha performance.

- The Congress-DMK alliance hopes to benefit from public dissatisfaction with the current government, but internal disunity and discontent among communities like the Vanniyars could make it hard for them to convert anger into votes.

Election Commission of India (ECI)

For the past few years, the credibility of the Election Commission of India (ECI) as a fair and independent democratic institution has been brought under scrutiny. The 2023 Election Commissioner Selection process has been a highlight of evolving developments. However, the downfall had started long before that. In 2021, the unusual multiphase polling in West Bengal, compared to fewer phases in other states, such as Bihar, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, raised concerns that the scheduling was done to favour the BJP.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, altering the rules regarding polling agents, harassment of electoral officials, such as of former Election Commissioner, Ashok Lavasa, the arrest of political leaders, including Arvind Kejriwal during the Moral Code of Conduct (MCC) period in 2024, and ignoring government's weaponisation of the investigative agencies, such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Income Tax department and the CBI to target the opposition.¹⁶⁶ All give an impression of ECI's withering independence and question its neutrality. Other indicators, including the delayed announcement of the MCC during the General Elections of 2019, and the resignation of the Election Commissioners (Ashok Lavasa and Arun Goel) just before the Lok Sabha 2019 elections, add to the long list of concerns illustrating ECI's partisan decision-making.

The government expanded its role within ECI by introducing the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Terms of Office) Act 2023. It gave the Prime Minister the powers to head the Selection Committee, which is responsible for the appointment of the new Election Commissioner. It is a selection body comprised of two more members: the opposition leader or the leader of the party with the largest seat-share in the Lok Sabha, and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister. As the panel clearly mirrors the

¹⁶⁵ Seema Chishti, "The Biased Referee: Why the Election Commission's neutrality is in doubt," *Caravan*, March 31, 2021. <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/why-election-commission-neutrality-doubt>.

¹⁶⁶ Eram Agha, "Cheques and Imbalances: The taming of the Election Commission of India," *Caravan*, April 1, 2024. <https://caravanmagazine.in/government/taming-election-commission>.

government's influence in the selection process, the Supreme Court of India proposed the replacement of the Union Cabinet Minister with the Chief Justice of India (CJI). The BJP passed a bill against this proposition and gave the government a greater role in the appointments.¹⁶⁷ A petition has been filed against this Act, but it is pending.¹⁶⁸ In light of the resignation of Election Commissioner Arun Goel and Anup Chandra's retirement, there were two vacant positions. Under the Law Ministry, a Search Committee was formed and tasked to select two candidates. The Selection Committee, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chose Gyanesh Kumar, a retired IAS officer serving as an Additional Secretary at the Home Ministry when Article 370 was abrogated, and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, a retired IAS officer. These appointments were also viewed with scepticism as, according to the leader of the INC, Adhir Ranjan 'six names were given 10 minutes before the selection.'¹⁶⁹

The process of a waning neutral electoral umpire made major headlines in the 2024 mayoral elections of Chandigarh, when the BJP's presiding officer was caught on camera tampering with the opposition ballots.¹⁷⁰ The nadir point in the neutrality of the country's election watchdog emerged after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, with reports revealing irregularities, inaccuracies in the voter lists and vote tallying, delay in releasing voter turnout data, and unexplained

¹⁶⁷ Rakesh Mohan Chatuurvedi, "Bill to replace CJI with cabinet minister in panel to select CEC, ECs tabled in Rajya Sabha; Opposition protests," *The Economic Times*, August 8, 2023, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bill-to-replace-cji-with-cabinet-minister-in-panel-to-select-cec-ecs-tabled-in-rajya-sabha-opposition-protests/articleshow/102620613.cms>.

¹⁶⁸ "Jaya Thakur v Union of India, Challenges to the Appointment of Election Commissioners Act, 2023," *Supreme Court Observer*, accessed August 29, 2025. <https://www.scobserver.in/cases/jaya-thakur-v-union-of-india-challenges-to-the-appointments-of-election-commissioners-act-2023-eci/>.

¹⁶⁹ "Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Sandhu: All you need to know about India's new Election Commissioners," *The Economic Times*, March 14, 2024. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/gyanesh-kumar-and-sukhbir-sandhu-all-you-need-to-know-about-indias-new-election-commissioners/articleshow/108491055.cms>.

¹⁷⁰ Gauri Kashyap, "The Supreme Court is watching" CJI warns Presiding Officer allegedly caught vote tampering in Chandigarh mayoral elections," *Supreme Court Observer*, February 5, 2024. <https://www.scobserver.in/journal/the-supreme-court-is-watching-cji-warns-presiding-officer-allegedly-caught-vote-tampering-in-chandigarh-mayoral-elections/>.

turnout spikes.¹⁷¹ The proof of it was given on August 7, 2025, when Rahul Gandhi, in a press conference, highlighted the irregularities in the voters' lists and turnout impacting the electoral outcome of one constituency, Mahadevapura in Karnataka. This press conference has opened the floodgates of a nationwide opposition bloc, I.N.D.I.A., led protests, citing 'vote theft' and demanding the release of digital machine-readable electoral rolls,¹⁷² submission of an apology from ECI,¹⁷³ and rolling back the SIR in Bihar.¹⁷⁴ The government and the ECI are dismissing these allegations as absurd, but the people have taken to the streets, and that reflects that the opposition's narrative is gaining ground. These developments signify a compromised and biased role of the ECI, putting a question mark on the credibility of the upcoming state elections, starting with Bihar.

Conclusion

The political and electoral dynamics of different Indian states require an in-depth individual investigation. Their location, culture, history, language, demography, and resource politics make them interesting areas of inquiry. The study has identified contemporary trends in the politics of Bihar, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Assam, and Puducherry to understand the rise and fall of various parties and the resulting governance patterns. The overarching feature is the decline of the INC and the expanding footprint of the BJP in states such as Assam and Bihar, and progress in the Southern states remains gradual. This shift coincides with the permeation of a national trend of personalist politics in regional politics. Personalities as Narendra Modi, Rahul

¹⁷¹ Association for Democratic Reforms, *Discrepancies between the votes cast and the votes counted in the 2024 Lok Sabha election: Multiple Perspectives* (New Delhi: ADR, 2024). https://adrindia.org/sites/default/files/Discrepancies_between_the_votes_cast_and_the_votes_counted_in_the_2024_Lok_Sabha_election_Multiple_perspectives_FinalVer_English.pdf.

¹⁷² Shreya Gosh, "Congress Turns 'Vote Chori' Allegation Into Campaign Ahead Of Bihar Polls," *NDTV*, August 10, 2025. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/congress-turns-vote-chori-allegation-into-campaign-ahead-of-bihar-polls-9057400>.

¹⁷³ Saubhadra Chatterji, "Over 100K votes 'stolen': Rahul; EC demands signed declaration," *Hindustan Times*, August 8, 2025. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/over-100k-votes-stolen-rahul-ec-demands-signed-declaration-101754592681466.html>.

¹⁷⁴ "India's opposition protests against electoral roll revision," *Al Jazeera*, August 11, 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/11/indias-opposition-march-against-controversial-electoral-roll-revision>.

Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, and Arvind Kejriwal have monopolised the national-level campaign discourse to the extent that the parliamentary elections have taken the presidential overtones. This concentration of political capital, driven by the individual leaders, has also extended into the regional sphere. Prominent men such as Himanta Biswa Sarma in Assam, Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal, Nitish Kumar and Tejaswi Yadav in Bihar, M.K. Stalin in Tamil Nadu, and N. Rangaswamy in Puducherry, have emerged as the central nodes in shaping state-level electoral dynamics. The upcoming state elections are likely to mirror the same trend. The role of women-focused policies, welfare projects, anti-immigration drives, developmental schemes, and identity politics will occupy a critical position in the future state elections. Additionally, in the increasingly polarising and communal rhetoric and campaigning, the politics of ‘us versus them’, evident in the case of Bihar’s SIR of the electorate, the blend of ethno-religious identity in Assam, is poised to provide an edge to the BJP. The groundwork of the RSS *shakhas*, coupled with the electronic and social media campaigning of the BJP, is expected to be instrumental in galvanising Hindu voters’ support and enhancing the party’s electoral foothold in the states. As India’s political landscape is volatile owing to the rapidly unfolding developments with each passing day, the election outcomes cannot be predicted with absolute certainty. The changing dynamics on a daily basis can tilt the electoral balance either in favour of the incumbent party or the opposition until the polling day.

Annexure -A

Prospects of Parties/Alliances in the Indian State Elections 2025-26

Sr. No.	State	Parties/Alliances	Prospects
1.	Bihar	NDA (JDU + BJP)	
		<i>Mahagathbandhan</i> (RJD + Congress + LJP)	
2.	Tamil Nadu	DMK-led I.N.D.I.A alliance	
		AIADMK-led alliance	
3.	West Bengal	AITMC	
		BJP	
		<i>Sanjukta Morcha</i> (INC and Left alliance)	
4.	Kerala	LDF (CPI (M)-led alliance)	
		UDF (INC-led alliance)	
5.	Assam	NDA (BJP + AGP + UPPL)	
		<i>Mahajot</i> (INC + AIUDF and allies)	
6.	Puducherry	AINRC + BJP	
		INC + DMK	

- **Upward Arrow ()**: It indicates that the party/alliance is gaining momentum and its prospects are on *upward spiral* compared to the past performance.
- **Downward Arrow ()**: It suggests that the party/alliance is losing ground, facing setbacks, and its prospects are on *downward spiral* compared to the past performance.
- **Dash ()**: It implies that the situation remains *uncertain*, with no clear trend yet. The contest could tilt either way depending on developments closer to the elections.

Annexure-B

Vote and Seat Share in Indian States in the Last Three Elections

BIHAR

Sr. No.	Political Party	Seats in 15 th LA, 2010	Seats in 16 th LA, 2015	Seats in 17 th LA, 2020	Net Change in Seats (2020-2010)	Votes % 2010	Votes % 2015	Votes % 2020	Net Vote Share (2020-2010)
1.	Janata Dal (United)	115	71	43	-72	22.6%	16.8%	15.4%	-7.2%
2.	Bharatiya Janata Party	91	53	74	-17	16.5%	24.4%	19.5%	+3.0%
3.	Rashtriya Janata Dal	22	80	75	+53	18.8%	18.4%	23.1%	+4.3%
4.	Indian National Congress	4	27	19	+15	8.4%	6.7%	9.5%	+1.1%

TAMIL NADU

Sr. No.	Political Party	Seats in 13 th LA, 2011	Seats in 14 th LA, 2016	Seats in 15 th LA, 2021	Net Change in Seats (2021-2011)	Votes % 2011	Votes % 2016	Votes % 2021	Net Vote Share (2021-2011)
1.	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	23	89	133	+110	22.4%	31.39%	37.70%	+15.3
2.	Indian National Congress (INC)	5	8	18	+13	9.3%	6.47%	4.27%	-5.03
3.	Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK)	0	0	4	+4	1.5%	0.77%	0.99%	-0.51
4.	Communist Party of India (CPI)	9	0	2	-7	2.0%	0.79%	1.09%	-0.91
5.	Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI(M)	10	0	2	-8	2.4%	0.72%	0.85%	-1.55

6.	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)	150	136	66	-84	38.4%	40.88%	33.29%	-5.11
7.	Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK)	3	0	5	+2	5.2%	5.36%	3.80%	-1.4%
8.	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	0	0	4	+4	2.2%	2.86%	2.62%	+0.42%
10.	Puthiya Tamilagam (PT)	2	0	0	-2	0.4%	0.51%	-	+0.11%
11.	Manithaneya Makkal Katchi (MNMK)	2	0	0	-2	0.5%	0.46%	-	-0.04%
12.	Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK)	29	0	0	-29	7.9%	2.41%	0.43%	-7.47%

WEST BENGAL

Sr. No.	Political Party	Seats in 15 th LA, 2011	Seats in 16 th LA, 2016	Seats in 17 th LA, 2021	Net Change in Seats (2021-2011) (+/-)	Votes % 2011	Votes % 2016	Votes % 2021	Net Vote Share (2021-2011) (+/-)
1.	AITMC	184	211	213	+29	38.93	44.91	47.9	+8.97
2.	BJP	0	3	77	+77	4.1	10.2	38.1	+34
3.	INC	42	44	0	-42	9.09	12.25	2.94	-6.15
4.	Rashtriya Secular Majlis Party (RSMMP)	0	0	1	+1	2.96	-----	1.4	-1.56
5.	Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M))	40	26	0	-40	30.08	19.75	4.7	-25.38
6.	Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP)	7	3	0	-7	2.96	1.67	0.2	-2.76
7.	Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM)	3	3	0	-3	0.72	0.5	0.0	-0.72
8.	All India Forward Bloc (AIFB)	11	2	0	-11	4.80	2.82	0.5	-4.3

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9.	CPI	2	1	0	-2	1.84	1.45	0.2	-1.64
10.	Samajwadi Party (SP)	1	0	0	-1	0.74	0.1	0.0 0	-0.74
11.	Democratic Socialist Party (Prabodh Chandra) (DSP)(P)	1	0	0	-1	0.35	-----	0.0 0	-.035
12.	Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) (SUCI)	1	0	0	-1	0.44	----- -	0.4	-0.04
13.	Independent Candidates	2	1	1	-1	3.13	2.16	1.6	-1.53
14.	Vacant seats	0	0	2	-----	-----	-----	----	

KERALA

Sr. No.	Political Party	Seats in 13 th LA, 2011	Seats in 14 th LA, 2016	Seats in 15 th LA, 2021	Net Change in Seats (2021-2011)	Votes % 2011	Votes % 2016	Votes % 2021	Net Vote Share (2021-2011)
1.	Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI(M)	45	58	62	17	28.18%	26.7%	25.38%	-2.8%
2.	Communist Party of India (CPI)	13	19	17	4	8.72%	8.2%	7.58%	-1.14%
3.	Kerala Congress (M) (KCM)	9	6	5	-4	4.94%	4.0%	3.28%	-1.66%
4.	Janata Dal (Secular) (JDS)	4	3	2	-2	1.52%	1.5%	1.28%	-0.24%
5.	Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	2	2	2	0	1.24%	1.2%	0.99%	-0.25%
6.	Congress (Secular) (CS)	0	1	1	1	-	0.27%	0.29%	+0.02%
7.	Indian National Congress (INC)	38	22	21	-17	26.73%	23.8%	25.12%	-1.61%

8.	Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)	20	18	15	-5	8.28%	7.4%	8.27%	-0.01%
9.	Kerala Congress (KEC)	0	0	2	2	-	-	2.66%	+2.66%
10.	Kerala Congress (Jacob) (KCJ)	1	1	1	0	0.91%	0.37%	0.41%	-0.5%
11.	Kerala Congress (B)	1	1	-	-1	0.72%	0.37%	-	-0.35%
12.	Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	0	1	0	0	6.03%	10.6%	11.30%	5.27%

ASSAM

Sr. No.	Political Party	Seats in 13 th LA, 2011	Seats in 14 th LA, 2016	Seats in 15 th LA, 2021	Net Change in Seats (2011-2021) (+/-)	Votes % 2011	Votes % 2016	Votes % 2021	Net Change in Vote Share (2011-2021) (+/-)
1.	BJP	5	60	60	+55	11.47	29.51	33.21	+21.74
2.	INC	78	26	29	-49	39.39	30.96	29.67	-9.72
3.	All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF)	18	13	16	-2	12.57	13.05	9.29	-3.28
4.	Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)	10	14	9	-1	16.29	8.14	7.91	-8.38
5.	United People's Party, Liberal (UPPL)	Not formed then	Not registered then	6	+6	Not formed then	Not registered then	3.39	+3.39
6.	Bodoland Peoples Front (BOPF)	12	12	4	-8	6.13	3.94	3.39	-2.74
7.	Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM)	0	0	1	+1	1.13	0.55	0.84	-0.29

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8.	Independent Candidate(s)	2	1	1	-1	9.17	11.04	5.93	-3.24
9.	AITMC	1	0	0	-1	2.05	0.16	0.19	-1.86

PUDUCHERRY

Sr. No.	Political Party	Seats in 13th LA, 2011	Seats in 14th LA, 2016	Seats in 15th LA, 2021	Net Change in Seats (2021-2011)	Votes % 2011	Votes % 2016	Votes % 2021	Net Vote Share (2021-2011)
1.	Indian National Congress	7	15	2	-5	25.1%	30.6%	15.7%	-9.4%
2.	All India N.R. Congress	15	8	10	-5	28.1%	20.4%	25.4%	-2.7%
3.	Bharatiya Janata Party	0	0	6	+6	2.2%	2.4%	13.0%	+10.8%

Annexure-C

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