

Electoral Outcome of Lok Sabha Elections in Madhya Pradesh 2024: Explanation of Continuous Ascendance of BJP

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ABSTRACT

A well-known illustration of the premise of a stable two-party framework for government is Madhya Pradesh. The elections of the last three decades provide evidence of the existence of party political rivalry. The Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have proven to be the two winnable parties in the state. The INC had controlled Madhya Pradesh politics until the 1990s in Lok Sabha elections. The BJP has governed the state for the past 20 years. One after another, the election results have amply demonstrated this. To evaluate the nature of the competition and the variables influencing the results of the elections, this paper ventures to analyse state electoral politics with a particular emphasis on the Lok Sabha elections of 2024. The Madhya Pradesh Lok Sabha elections of 2024 took place against the backdrop of the 2023 Assembly election, in which the BJP received an extraordinary mandate. The primary factor behind this explosive success was Modi's magnetism, which the party's grassroots members helped to further solidify and bolster. The exodus of the leadership of Congress from the state to the district level immensely contributed to the weak performance of the party. This paper explains why the BJP performed so admirably in Madhya Pradesh's 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The paper analyses issues in the election campaign; the verdict; and responses to various socio-economic factors in the Lok Sabha election 2024.

Keywords: *Madhya Pradesh, BJP, Congress, BSP.*

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Madhya Pradesh¹ is a classic example of the thesis of a stable two-party political competition (Yadav & Palshikar, 2009). This fact of party-political struggle is demonstrated by the elections over the past thirty years. Madhya Pradesh is still one of the biggest states in India in terms of both territory and population, even after Chhattisgarh was created. The state elects 29 members to the Lower House (Lok Sabha) and 11 to the Upper House (Rajya Sabha) of the Indian Parliament. There are 230 seats in the State Legislative Assembly for Madhya Pradesh. The Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have been the two "winnable parties" in the state. The INC has controlled Madhya Pradesh politics up until the 1990s. Even though the state has a sizeable population of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and a sizeable presence of middle/intermediate castes, the lower castes' support-based parties have not succeeded in galvanising their votes. The BJP challenged the Congress's domination of politics in the state. With its sizable population of socially marginal communities, particularly the SCs and STs, successive state governments led either by Congress or the BJP have always focused on state-sponsored social reform measures and welfare schemes (Gupta, 2005). However, the state has been ruled by the BJP for the last 20 years. The election outcomes have clearly shown this, one after another.

In order to evaluate the nature of the competition and the variables influencing the election results, this paper analyses state electoral politics with a particular focus on the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

ISSUES IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN (2024)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's considerable popularity helped the BJP

1 The Madhya Pradesh as of today is territorially a conglomeration of Madhya Bharat (a union of states in the Malwa Plateau region), Vindhya Pradesh (a union of states in the Vindhya Mountain region) Bhopal (a centrally administered princely state) and Hindi-speaking portion of the Central Provinces. Malwa region occupies a plateau in western Madhya Pradesh. Over the centuries, the region has developed its own distinct culture, influenced by the Rajasthani, Marathi and Gujarati cultures. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Malwa. Malwa has been a traditional stronghold for the BJP since the time of Jansangh. Mahakoshal lies in the upper or eastern reaches of the Narmada River valley. It has Satpura and Maikal ranges of deep forests and also major rivers namely Narmada and Tapti. Vindhya Pradesh was created in 1948 from the territories of the princely states in the eastern portion of the former Central India. It was named for the Vindhya Range, which runs through the centre of the province. It lies between Uttar Pradesh to the north and Mahakoshal region to the south.

run a strong and well-organised campaign in Madhya Pradesh during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The campaign was led by prominent figures who spoke at multiple public gatherings throughout the state, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP President JP Nadda, and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh. Both Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and state BJP Chief VD Sharma were actively involved; Yadav led 58 road shows and attended more than 180 public gatherings. The BJP's aim to weaken the Congress's hold on the area was demonstrated by their significant organisational efforts, which included micro-booth management and a target of enlisting one lakh Congress workers, especially 50,000 from Chhindwara. This aggressive approach, coupled with Modi's appeal, enabled the BJP to sweep the state and wrest Chhindwara from Congress (Deccan Herald, 2024).

The BJP's strategy for the election was to emphasise the achievements of the Narendra Modi-led national government. The consecration of Ram Mandir, the abrogation of Article 370 in J&K, and the introduction of new welfare programmes (such as Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Ujjawala, Jan-Dhan, Pradhan Mantri Aawas, MGNREGA, NRLM, etc.) were among the topics that dominated the BJP campaign. With cadres, the party leadership also raised concerns about cultural nationalism and majoritarianism. In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP's electoral apparatus skillfully persuaded voters that the Modi administration had improved India's international standing. The party's rank and file also raised concerns about the Citizenship Amendment Bill's implementation and the promise of a \$5 trillion economy. This election was fought against the backdrop of the 2023 Assembly elections, in which the BJP performed remarkably well. The leadership of the BJP purposefully decided, to centre their campaign around Modi's personality cult.

However, the Congress campaign lacked both plan and strength. Rahul Gandhi held five rallies, but Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra spoke at just one each. This was insufficient to offset the BJP's extensive reach. The ineffective state leadership of the Congress, particularly Kamal Nath, was criticised for concentrating too much on Chhindwara in an effort to ensure his son's victory. When Jitu Patwari, who lost the 2023 Assembly elections, was viewed as an inept leader and was not accepted by senior party members, more internal strife emerged. Internal strife and a lack of strategic direction allowed the BJP to dominate the state (Economic Times, 2024).

Using issues like youth unemployment, the caste system, inflation, economic woes, constitutional protection, the reservation system, etc.,

Congress led the campaign. Nyay Patra (manifesto), which promised an opulent doll-out package, did not reach or appeal to the potential voter base in an anticipated manner. Due to a weak organisational structure, the party's rank and file were unable to properly respond at the booth level to the several talking points that the BJP used to successfully block the Congress in Madhya Pradesh. Unfortunately, a substantial portion of Congress party officials at all levels—from the block to the district to the state to the national—left the party and joined the BJP. These leaders included senior party office bearers including three sitting MLAs, and multiple Congress candidates who fought in the 2023 Assembly elections. This departure shattered the morale of the party workers. Veteran leaders like Kamal Nath and Digvijay Singh were forced to remain in their parliamentary constituencies. The new state leadership was effectively established and tasked with leading the campaign after just a few months of exposure to the 2023 Assembly elections, but there was not enough time to allow the entire state to participate. A well-organised, cadre-based party that could ensure micromanagement at the booth level faced off against the Congress party, which lacked organisation and resources.

It was necessary to create a considerably more expansive, flexible utterance that would spread to party cadres and reach a wider audience, but the Congress campaign operated in a stereotypical fashion utilising the same political narrative and metaphors. The Samajwadi Party obtained a seat as the INDIA alliance partner in Khajuraho but had her nomination rejected, and the official Congress candidate from Indore withdrew his nomination, bringing the total number of seats up for election to 27. The strategic choice by the BJP leadership to focus the campaign around Modi was very advantageous to the party. The Madhya Pradesh Lok Sabha 2024 elections may have taken on a presidential structure with the slogan "*Modi ki Guarantee*".

The BJP's decision to replace 16 candidates and repeat 13 from the 2019 elections demonstrates a strategy that strikes a balance between change and stability. Retaining a sizeable percentage of incumbents indicates that the party was optimistic about these candidates' abilities, perhaps relying on their existing support base and local clout.

In contrast, Congress chose a more drastic revamp, changing a substantial 24 candidates and retaining only three of the 2019 candidates. This dramatic reorganisation demonstrated a determination to change the party's direction and an admission of its poor performance in the prior elections. The choice to change so many candidates was made in response to the pressing need for fresh leadership and revitalised tactics in the areas where the party has either

struggled or lost ground.

This extensive replacement suggested that the Congress reacted to Madhya Pradesh's changing political climate, perhaps as a result of internal evaluations of the party's prior shortcomings. However, there were hazards associated with such a big shift as well since fresh candidates found it difficult to establish the reputation, trust, and recognition that their predecessors had earned over time. The party's strong reliance on new members suggested a larger attempt to counter the BJP's hegemony, but it also highlighted the difficulties Congress had preserving organisational continuity and utilising established political connections.

THE VERDICT (2024)

The voting turnout stayed at 66.87%, a 4.29% decrease from 2019. In contrast, the Congress's (32.44%) and BJP's (59.27%) vote difference rose to 26.83% in the 2024 election. Despite Madhya Pradesh's reputation as a traditional BJP stronghold, the state's Congress party has never seen the same kind of destruction as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The triumph of one party nearly immediately impacts the other major adversary due to the state's bipolar political system (Sisodia, 2022). With the exception of 2009, when the Congress took 12 of the 29 seats, the BJP routinely secured a majority in Madhya Pradesh in eight of the nine Lok Sabha elections held between 1996 and 2024. But because it was held in the context of the 2023 Assembly election, where the BJP managed to retain political power now for 20 years, the 2024 Lok Sabha election was especially significant.

The BJP achieved its most victorious outcome in Madhya Pradesh since its founding in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, taking 29 of 29 seats (Table 1). Isolated BSP strongholds may be found all over the state, particularly in Vindhya Pradesh and Chambal, which are next to Uttar Pradesh. However, outside of these areas, the BSP's base has not grown sufficiently to make the party competitive (Pai, 2003). The BJP won by a relatively smaller margin in parliamentary constituencies where the BSP was well-represented. In the Morena and Satna seats, the BSP garnered a substantial share of the vote, far exceeding the margin of victory.

Table 1: Madhya Pradesh Lok Sabha Elections of 2024, 2019, 2014, 2009 and 2004: Comparison of Results

Party	2024		2019		2014		2009		2004	
	Seats Won	Vote (%)	Seats Won	Vote (%)	Seats Won	Vote (%)	Seats Won	Vote (%)	Seats Won	Vote (%)
BJP	29	59.27	28	58.00	27	54.03	16	43.45	25	48.13
INC	-	32.44	1	34.50	2	34.89	12	40.14	4	34.07
BSP	-	3.28	-	2.38	-	3.79	1	5.85	-	4.75
SP	-	-	-	0.22	-	0.75	-	2.83	-	3.20

Source: CSDS Data Unit

Table 2: Victory Margins of BJP and Congress in 2024, 2019 and 2014

Victory Margin (Votes)	2024		2019		2014	
	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress
5 lakh and above	6	-	3	-	-	-
4 - 4.99 lakh	6	-	4	-	2	-
3 - 3.99 lakh	3	-	10	-	5	-
2 - 2.99 lakh	4	-	5	-	9	-
1 - 1.99 lakh	6	-	5	-	8	2
Below 99,000	4	-	1	1	3	-
Total	29	-	28	1	27	2

Source: CSDS Data Unit

According to the results of the 2024 election, the BJP's lead over the Congress in terms of vote share grew to 21.83%, setting a new record for the party in Madhya Pradesh's electoral history. This election's result was notable for the state in terms of win margin, ranging from over 4 lakhs on 12 seats, compared to only 2 seats in 2014 and 7 seats in 2019 (Table 2). Thus, in the Lok Sabha election, the BJP did exceptionally well throughout the state.

Table 3: Region-wise Lok Sabha Election 2024 Results

Regions	Total Seats	Voter Turn out (%)	BJP		Congress		BSP		Others	
			Seats Won	Vote (%)	Seats Won	Vote (%)	Seats Won	Vote (%)	Seats Won	Vote (%)
Chambal	4	62.29	4	53.45	0	38.74	0	5.33	0	2.48
Vindhya Pradesh	8	58.92	8	59.60	0	26.06	0	7.55	0	6.79
Mahakoshal	6	71.32	6	56.80	1	35.74	0	1.81	0	5.65
Malwa North	7	71.04	7	66.76	0	27.48	0	1.19	0	4.57
Malwa Tribal	4	73.47	4	54.29	0	40.50	0	0.90	0	4.31
Overall	29	67.04	29	58.00	1	34.50	0	3.28	0	5.00

Source: CSDS Data Unit

The BJP won a bigger share of the vote in each area. Nonetheless, Chambal and Malwa Tribal were the two areas where the major political parties had a somewhat narrow vote share. The BJP had a noticeable presence in Vindhya, Mahakoshal, and Malwa North. The BJP had further solidified its vote share in all three regions, which was remarkable (Table 3).

RESPONSES TO VARIOUS SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The two political parties focused their tactics on gaining support from important socio-economic segments. In the survey, electorates with different levels of educational access had shown different voting preferences. This is clearly shown in Table 4. Regardless of educational attainment, the BJP performed better than the Congress in terms of support. Unlike previous elections, the Congress has received support from the less educated and/or uneducated. Furthermore, it is important to remember that previous Madhya Pradesh election studies have also found a similar tendency (Ram Shankar & Sisodia, 2009; Sisodia, 2014a). The recent election has simply made the trend in favour of the BJP even more obvious.

Table 4: Support for Political Parties across Education Levels in 2024 Elections

Education	BJP	Congress	Others	n
Non-Literate	69	25	6	79
Up to Primary	64	32	4	199
Upto Matric	57	34	9	264
Up to Intermediate	57	33	10	104
College & above	55	35	10	99
Total	60	32	9	745

Note: Figures in per cent (except n).

Source: CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2024; Weighted Data Set (n=745).

Table 5: Support for Political Parties across Locality in 2024, 2019 and 2014 Elections

Locality	BJP			Congress			Others			n		
	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014
Rural	62	57	55	29	33	35	9	10	14	527	690	777
Urban	53	60	52	41	39	35	6	1	16	238	251	296
Total	59	58	54	33	35	35	8	7	11	765	941	1073

Note: Figures in per cent (except n).

Source: CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2024; Weighted Data Set (n=765); CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2019; Weighted Data Set (n=941); and CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2014; Weighted Data Set (n=1069).

Madhya Pradesh is predominantly a rural state; less than 28% of the state's total population lived in urban areas as per the 2011 census. According to conventional wisdom, support for the Congress is centred in rural areas, whereas the BJP is predominantly an urban phenomenon. However, based on the outcomes of the most recent elections, this viewpoint has not received much support lately. The BJP has recently done exceptionally well in rural regions while simultaneously holding firmly to urban seats (Sisodia, 2019b). The BJP managed to take a 33% lead in rural areas in the 2024 elections (Table 5). The party not only performed extraordinarily well in rural regions but also kept complete control in urban areas.

Table 6: Support for Political Parties across Gender in 2024, 2019 and 2014 Elections

Gender	BJP			Congress			Others			n		
	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014
Male	59	63	51	31	33	35	10	4	13	393	482	576
Female	60	53	57	34	36	34	6	11	9	372	459	496
Total	59	58	54	32	35	35	9	7	11	765	941	1069

Note: Figures in per cent (except n).

Source: CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2024; Weighted Data Set (n=765); CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2019; Weighted Data Set (n=941); and CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2014; Weighted Data Set (n=1069).

Support for the parties does not differ significantly by gender. In fact, in earlier elections, the BJP had almost equal support from men and women. In general, women seemed to favour the BJP a little more than men did, but men's affinity for the party was still evident. Additionally, the study revealed that both male and female support for the BJP was substantially higher than in any prior election (Table 6).

Table 7: Support for Political Parties among Different Age Groups in 2024, 2019 and 2014 Elections

Age	BJP			Congress			Others			n		
	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014
Up to 25 years	68	62	61	23	30	24	9	8	15	99	164	225
26-35 years	54	62	53	36	35	35	10	3	12	249	274	334
36-45 years	59	57	53	33	32	37	8	11	10	171	254	250
46-55 years	61	54	50	32	40	39	7	6	9	137	112	150
56 years & above	61	50	54	36	40	44	3	9	6	94	139	110
Total	59	58	54	32	35	35	9	7	11	765	941	1069

Note: Figures in per cent (except n).

Source: CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2024; Weighted Data Set (n=750); CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2019; Weighted Data Set (n=939); and CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2014; Weighted Data Set (n=1069).

The survey data indicates that the BJP gained overwhelming support across all age categories, which helps to determine whether there is a generational divide in BJP support base (Table 7). Furthermore, among older age groups, the difference between the Congress and the BJP was comparatively smaller (Sisodia, 2014b). However, the BJP's popularity was more noticeable and far higher among those under 35 and first-time voters. It should be clear that the victor must have made a name for itself across the board. However, younger generational groupings were more eager to back the BJP.

Table 8: Support for Political Parties among Different Economic Classes in 2024, 2019 and 2014 Elections

Economic Class	BJP			Congress			Others			n		
	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014
Upper	61	67	55	34	25	29	5	8	16	44	273	58
Middle	53	59	53	42	33	36	8	7	11	179	207	569
Lower	57	53	56	35	38	32	8	9	12	179	302	372
Poor	62	56	49	28	37	47	10	7	4	395	273	76
Total	59	58	54	33	35	35	8	7	11	763	942	1075

Note: Figures in per cent (except n).

Source: CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2024; Weighted Data Set (n=763); CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2019; Weighted Data Set (n=939); and CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2014; Weighted Data Set (n=1069).

There is a class component to the Congress's defeat as well. The BJP managed to regain the support of the weaker segments, which had drastically declined during the last Assembly election, while also retaining a considerable share of the votes among the economically affluent sectors. Similarly, Table 8 demonstrates that BJP support was fairly constant across all economic levels. The poor have historically supported the Congress (Manor, 2004; Sisodia, 2022; Sisodia & Jha, 2024). That has not happened this time, though, the BJP has maintained its base among the wealthy while garnering a significant amount of support among the impoverished.

SHIFTING THE BASIS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

In elections, caste and community have different functions. The electorate is the second; the candidates and parties are the first. To gain favour, the former

portrays themselves as champions of social and economic causes. At the same time, the latter dimension symbolises the base of support for the parties (Sisodia, 2014a). A clear social coalition in favour of the two parties has been formed, as seen by the social composition of the state's constituencies for the two major candidates. It is essential to look at how castes and communities vote in elections. Table 9 depicts the social chemistry that led to the election result.

Table 9: Vote by Social Background in 2019, 2018 and 2014 Elections

Caste	BJP			Congress			Others			n		
	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014	2024	2019	2014
Brahmin	69	83	56	12	17	22	19	-	22	32	82	101
Rajput	73	72	69	25	28	27	2	-	4	51	105	121
Other Upper Caste	74	60	71	16	40	21	11	-	8	19	25	48
Yadav	65	50	70	27	24	16	8	26	14	49	46	43
Other OBC	67	69	66	25	27	20	8	4	14	235	286	260
SC	53	38	43	36	50	42	11	12	7	122	129	170
Bhil	68	50	59	31	50	39	1	-	2	72	48	44
Gond	75	41	54	25	39	43	-	20	3	8	49	87
Other STs	71	55	54	17	31	34	12	14	12	70	94	73
Muslims	6	33	8	86	67	92	8	-	-	71	55	92
Others	49	26	56	35	48	22	16	26	22	37	19	36
Total	59	58	54	32	35	35	9	2	24	766	938	1075

Note: Figures in per cent (except n).

Source: CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2024; Weighted Data Set (n=766); CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2019; Weighted Data Set (n=939); and CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2014; Weighted Data Set (n=1069).

There seems to be division within each caste group. OBCs are more likely to support the BJP (Table 9). SCs are also more in favour of the BJP than they were in previous elections. The tribal communities, like as the Gonds, Bhils, and other STs, also have a strong BJP inclination. The BJP now has a far larger

base of support among the higher castes. However, this election demonstrates that the BJP has effectively shifted support from the OBC and ST to the Upper Castes, which has been extremely advantageous to the party. Table 9 depicts the vote by social background for the preceding three elections, clearly indicating that the social churning and vote consolidation have occurred progressively.

Table 10: Support for Political Parties among Different Media Exposure Groups in Lok Sabha Election 2024

Media Exposure Groups	BJP	Congress	Others	N
High Media Exposure	71	26	3	61
Moderate Media Exposure	58	38	4	157
Low Media Exposure	56	38	6	312
No Media Exposure	61	23	16	236
Total	59	33	8	766

Note: Figures in per cent (except n).

Source: CSDS-Madhya Pradesh NES Post-Poll Survey 2024; Weighted Data Set (n=766).

Notably, 71 per cent of respondents with extensive media exposure expressed a strong preference for the BJP. Significant support for the BJP was seen even among respondents with limited (56%) and moderate (58%) media exposure (Table 10). The BJP was more popular, even among those who were not exposed to the media (61%). Therefore, when political parties develop storylines for the media, especially on social media, and presume that voters would comprehend them, it seems as though they are working for the BJP.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of the state election in Madhya Pradesh explains the Congress's resounding loss. The entire election was a presidential contest, and the Congress was too weak and scattered to challenge Modi's narrative, analogy, and language. It was not helped by the Congress's organisational shortcomings, which were exacerbated by the departure of important leaders. Indeed, the BJP has recently succeeded in raising a sizeable base of committed voters in Madhya Pradesh above the winnability threshold. The BJP's campaign strategy was unparalleled and completely different. Madhya Pradesh polls have consistently followed the national trend, and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections were no exception (Sisodia; 2014a, 2024). This election was undoubtedly held to reinforce the mandate of the central government. In reality, voters of all

genders, castes, classes, and regions backed the BJP because they were so captivated and won over by Modi's charisma. Even political heavyweights like Digvijay Singh and Kamal Nath, who had spent years cultivating and expanding the electorate, were swayed by this thunder in Madhya Pradesh. The party suffered greatly as a result of the departure of Congress leadership during the election. As a result, the BJP won every seat, with Madhya Pradesh recording the biggest victory margin.

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