

# Primer On Gujarat Elections

<b>Primer On Gujarat Elections</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Overview</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>History</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Geography</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Economy</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Zonal Level Details</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Political History</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Past Elections Results Analysis</b>	<b>10</b>
2012 Vidhan Sabha Elections	10
2014 Lok Sabha Elections	11
2017 Vidhan Sabha Elections	12
Region Wise Voting in Gujarat	14
2019 Lok Sabha Elections	16
<b>Zonal Political Analysis</b>	<b>17</b>
North Gujarat	17
Central Gujarat	17
Saurashtra - Kachchh	18
South Gujarat	19
<b>Major Voter Groups</b>	<b>19</b>
Major Caste and Religion Analysis	19
Patel - Patidar	20
Major Political Leaders in Patidar Community	21
Brahmins	21
Major Political Leaders in Brahmin Community	22
Jains	22
Major Political Leaders in JainCommunity	22
Major Factors of General Caste While Voting	22
Other Backward Castes (OBCs) - Rajputs, Kolis, Thakors	23
Major Political Leaders in OBC Community	23
Scheduled Castes (SCs) - Dalits	23
Major Political Leaders in SC Community	24

Scheduled Tribes (STs)	24
Major Political Leaders in ST Community	24
Major Factors of SC/ST/OBC While Voting	25
Caste Wise Inclination in Current Situation in Gujarat	25
<b>Rise of BJP in Gujarat</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>History of Congress Party in Gujarat</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Major Areas of Opportunities for BJP in the State</b>	<b>29</b>
Lack of a Strong leader in the Opposition	29
Defections from the Congress Party	30
Modi Face	30
Nationalism	30
Organisational Strength	30
Development	31
<b>Major Areas of Threats for BJP in the State</b>	<b>31</b>
Patidar Agitation movement	31
Backward Castes	31
Anger and Division among the Youth	31
Uprise of the AAP in the Country	32
Representation of Women	32

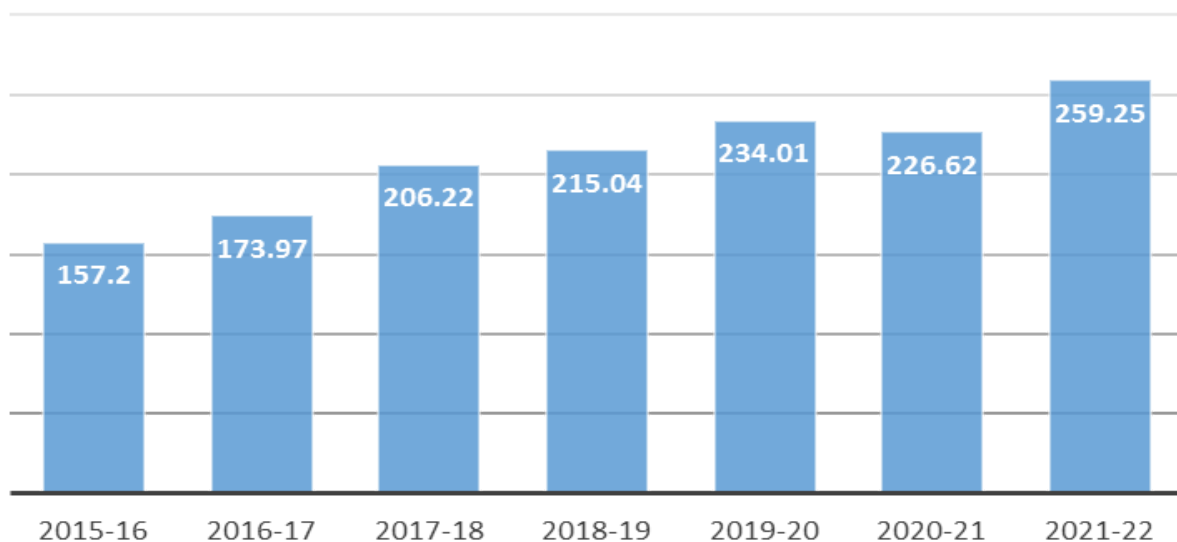
## Overview

Around the fifth century AD, a tribe known as the Gurjaras arrived in Gujarat. The Gurjaras are responsible for the name Gujarat. The Huns were on the lookout in the north at the time. Although a big number of Gurjaras settled in the north, the majority of them relocated to the western coast, where they established a Gurjara Rashtra. For several years, Hindu regents governed over these areas. This was also the site of entry into India for Zoroastrians who had fled Persia to avoid being persecuted by Muslims who had nearly conquered the Middle East at the time. The local Rajas accepted the Parsis into the Indian community, and they adopted Gujarati as their language.

Gujarat had long desired land, particularly because of its coastline. For a time, the Rajputs were able to hold off the Muslim invaders, but their stronger troops soon acquired control of the entire region, and the Sultans of Gujarat dominated these lands from the 11th century until the 17th century, when they were finally defeated by Europeans. Following independence, British-ruled Gujarat and many princely kingdoms were merged to form Bombay, which was later partitioned into Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Gujarat is one of the wealthiest states in the country, and Gujaratis are among the wealthiest people in the country.

### GSDP of Gujarat (US\$ billion)



Area	196,000 sq km
Population	42 million
Capital City	Gandhinagar
Main Languages	Gujarati, Hindi, English
Literacy Rate	78.03%

## History

Gujarat encompassed the Indus Valley civilization and Harappan civilization's regions. In Gujarat, there are approximately 50 Harappan sites. Some of these places include Lothal, Rangpur, Amri, Lakhabaval, Rozdi, and others. As a result, it is a significant territory that reveals India's past. The Dravidian tribes were considered to be the region's first residents. Gujarat is reported to have had trading contracts with Sumer, the Persian Gulf, in the period 1000-750BC, even before the Aryan occupation. Ashoka's domain was expanded into Gujarat, according to rock edicts found in the Girnar hills. The influence of Buddhism was felt in this region under the Mauryan rule. The Mauryans also promoted trade and contributed to the expansion of the Mauryan culture. The Bactrian Greeks, commanded by Meander, are claimed to have imposed their dominance around 150BC. They are claimed to have had trading agreements with Rome until 40AD. The Scythians governed it from around AD 130 to 390. The Guptas came to power after 300 AD and reigned until 460 AD. Between the two, the Vallabhi established their dominance (500-700AD). The Gujjars ruled it after Harshvardhana's death until 746AD.

Gujarat was controlled by the Solankis till 1143. From the 9th century, the Solanki dynasty was responsible for Gujarat's greatest territorial expansion. The Solankis were defeated when Muhammad of Ghazni attacked Somnath in Gujarat. The conquest of Delhi by Ala-ud-din Khilji in 1288 had an impact on the state of Gujarat. From 1298 to 1392 AD, the Sultans of Delhi ruled Gujarat. In 1411, Ahmad Shah I, Gujarat's first independent Muslim monarch, constructed Ahmadabad. The Mughals then ruled for nearly two centuries until the Marathas overthrew them in the mid-eighteenth century. Gujarat was partitioned among a number of chiefs during the 18th century. The British established their government between 1803 and 1827.

Surat was the location of the British East India Company's initial headquarters in India. Later, it was relocated to Bombay. Finally, on May 1, 1960, the state of Gujarat was created from the north and west parts of the state of Bombay, with the rest of the state renamed Maharashtra.

## Geography

Gujarat is a state in India that lies on the Arabian Sea's western coast. It includes the entire Kathiawar Peninsula (Saurashtra) as well as the mainland territory surrounding it.

The state is predominantly bordered to the northwest by Pakistan and to the north, east, and southeast by the Indian states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Gujarat also shares a tiny portion of its southeastern border with the Indian union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and also surrounds the Indian union territory of Daman and Diu with the Arabian Sea.

Gujarat's coastline stretches for 992 miles (1,596 kilometres), with no area of the state being more than 100 miles (160 kilometres) from the sea. The state capital is Gandhinagar, which is located on the outskirts of Ahmadabad (Ahmedabad), the former capital, the state's largest city, and one of India's most important textile centres. Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi established his Sabarmati ashram (Sanskrit: ashrama, "retreat" or "hermitage") at Ahmadabad as a headquarters for his anti-British efforts.

Gujarat is a place of huge differences, ranging from the seasonal salt deserts of the Kachchh (Kutch) district in the northwest to the rainy, rich coastal plains of the southeastern section of the state, north of Mumbai. The Rann of Kachchh, which encompasses both the Great Rann and its eastern appendage, the Little Rann, is best described as a large salt marsh that covers around 9,000 square miles (23,300 square km). On the west, north, and east, the Rann forms the Kachchh district, while the Gulf of Kachchh marks the district's southern boundary.

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The Rann floods during the rainy season, even if the rains are modest, and the Kachchh district becomes an island; during the dry season, it is a sandy, saline plain plagued by dust storms. The huge Kathiawar Peninsula is to the southeast of Kachchh, between the Gulf of Kachchh and the Gulf of Khambhat (Cambay). It is mostly desert, rising from the beaches to a low, rolling stretch of hill country in the centre, where the state reaches its greatest elevation, 3,665 feet (1,117 metres), in the Girnar Hills. The peninsula's soils are primarily degraded, having been formed by

a variety of ancient crystalline rocks. Except for seasonal streams, there are no rivers in the area. Small plains and low hills in the north meet fertile farmlands in the south to the east of the Kathiawar Peninsula. The southern soils' richness is due to their partial origin from the Deccan basalts, which make up the majority of peninsular India's physiographic plateau region. The Narmada and Tapi (Tapi) rivers, which both flow into the Gulf of Khambhat, run through southeastern Gujarat from east to west. The landscape gets mountainous along the eastern border with Maharashtra; the region is the northern continuation of the Western Ghats, a mountain range that runs parallel to the Arabian Sea on southern India's western coast.

## Economy

Gujarat is one of the country's fastest-growing states. Gujarat is one of India's most industrialised states. Gujarat's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is anticipated to be Rs. 18,79,826 crore (US\$ 259.25 billion) in FY22 at current prices, up 7% year on year.

In Gujarat's industrial economy, 13 key industry groups account for about 82.05 percent of all factories, 95.85 percent of total fixed capital investment, 90.09 percent of production value, and 93.21 percent of value addition. In 2019-20, the state's total exports were US\$ 63,440 million, and in 2020-21, they were US\$ 60,587 million.

Gujarat is a global leader in chemical, petrochemical, dairy, medications and pharmaceuticals, cement and ceramics, gems and jewellery, textiles, and engineering.

Over 800 large industries and 453,339 micro, small, and medium businesses make up the industrial sector.

Gujarat has about 3,300 pharmaceutical manufacturing plants, which contributed 30-35 percent of India's pharmaceutical sector turnover and around 28 percent of India's pharmaceutical exports in 2018-19. Gujarat's pharmaceutical formulation exports were US\$ 3,053.53 million in 2019-20 and US\$ 2,789.92 million in FY21.

The state produced 4.6 million tonnes of crude oil and 1,287 million cubic metres of natural gas in 2019-20. In 2019-20, total petroleum product consumption was 22.53 million metric tonnes (MMT). Gujarat's petroleum product exports totaled US\$ 7,180.92 million in FY21.

Gujarat had 21 SEZs in operation as of September 2020. Gujarat also had four SEZs with valid in-principle permits as of December 2020. Gujarat had 21 SEZs in operation as of September 2020. Gujarat also had four SEZs with valid in-principle approvals, 26 SEZs with official approvals, and 22 SEZs with notified approvals as of December 2020.

According to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Gujarat attracted the most FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in FY21, totaling US\$ 21.89 billion and accounting for 30% of total equity inflows.

*The government's significant measures to promote Gujarat as an investment destination:*

- Gujarat received 220 investment intentions of Rs 46,141 crore (US\$ 6.36 billion) in 2020.
- According to data given by the Indian Ports Association in June 2020, the state has 46 ports. Deendayal (Kandla) port handled 73.86 million tonnes of cargo traffic from April to November 2020.
- The Gujarat government has taken various initiatives to turn Mundra into a world-class port city. The port can handle more than 200 million tonnes of goods each year.
- To accommodate the increased demand for containers, the government stated in May 2021 that it will launch container trial projects. It hopes to attract a total investment of Rs 1000 crore (US\$ 137.91 million) from private investors.
- Borosil Renewables stated in May 2021 that it will invest Rs. 500 crore (US\$ 68.96 million) in expanding its manufacturing facilities in Gujarat, with the goal of doubling its capacity to 900 tonnes per day or 5GW of installed capacity at its solar power plants.
- ReNew Power announced in May 2021 that it would build a solar component manufacturing plant in Gujarat for Rs. 1,200 crore (US\$ 165.49 million), with plans to expand to Rs. 2,000 crore (US\$ 275.82 million).
- Coal India Limited (CIL) and Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Ltd (GUVNL) inked a 25-year PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) in April 2021 for the sale of 100 MW of solar power.
- Mr. Nikhil Kamath, a co-founder of Zerodha, announced the establishment of True Beacon Global, Gujarat's GIFT City's first alternative investment fund (AIF), in May 2021.
- The Singapore Stock Exchange (SGX) announced in April 2021 that it would open an offshore office at GIFT City.

## ***Zonal Level Details***

There are 33 districts in Gujarat which are grouped into 5 zones - South Gujarat, Central Gujarat, North Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch. Central and Northern Gujarat consist majorly of plains. South Gujarat has the highest forested area in the state. Central Gujarat is focused on agriculture and there is not a lot of forest cover here. Kutch has very little forest cover and is not used for agricultural activities either as the sandy and saline soil does not allow for such activities.

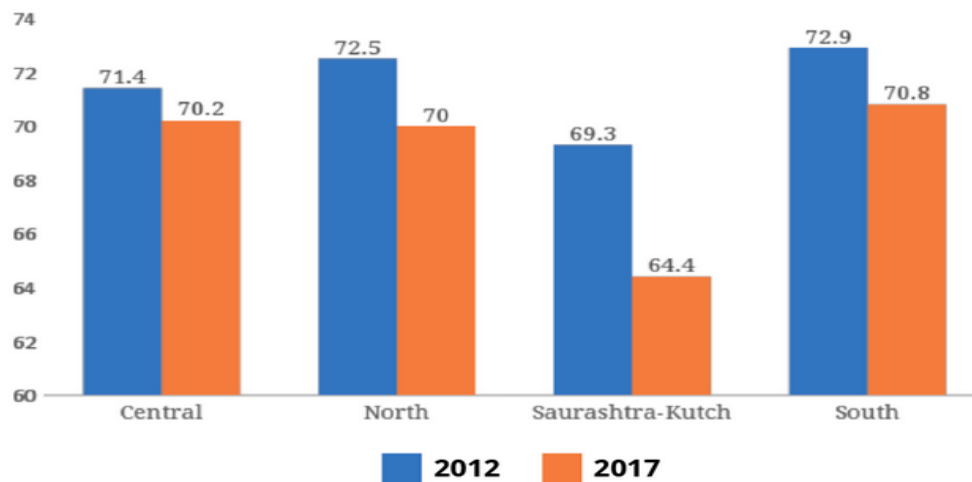
Zone (No of Districts)	Districts' Name	Total Vidhan Sabha Seats	Major Caste	Remarks
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Central Gujarat (8)	Ahmedabad Vadodara Anand Chhota Udaipur Dahod Kheda Mahisagar Panchmahal	60	Agriculturalist (Patel, Koli, Gurjar), Traders (Shah, Bhatia, Soni), Kshatriya, OBCs, STs, Muslims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consists of a lot of urban population.</li> <li>• Most agricultural activities are also concentrated here</li> </ul>
North Gujarat (6)	Gandhinagar Aravalli Banaskantha Mehsana Patan Sabarkantha	32	Agriculturalist, Traders, Kshatriya, OBCs, STs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consists of a lot of urban population.</li> <li>• Most agricultural activities are also concentrated here</li> </ul>
Saurashtra - Kutch (12)	Rajkot Amreli Bhavnagar Botad Devbhoomi Dwarka Gir Somnath Jamnagar Junagadh Morbi Porbandar Surendranagar Kachchh	49 + 6	Artisans (Prajapati, Sindhi Mochi), Brahmin (Joshi, Anavil, Nagar, Modh) Traders, Kshatriya, OBCs, STs, Muslims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of the muslims of Gujarat are concentrated in these zones.</li> <li>• Kutch is mostly barren land and very few people live there.</li> <li>• These areas also consist of the majority of the Brahmins.</li> <li>• Most of the major ports are located here</li> </ul>
South Gujarat (7)	Surat Baruch Dang Narmada Navsari Tapi Valsad	35	Agriculturalist, Traders, OBCs, STs, Muslims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the major ports are located here</li> </ul>



## Sub-regional turnout (2012 - 2017)

Source: Trivedi Centre for Political Data

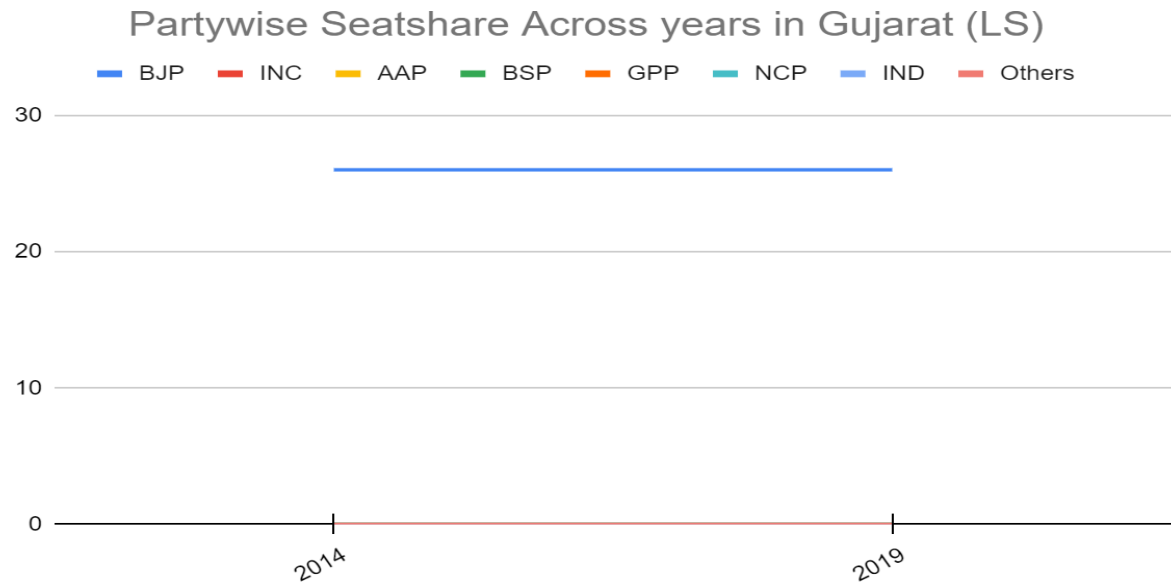
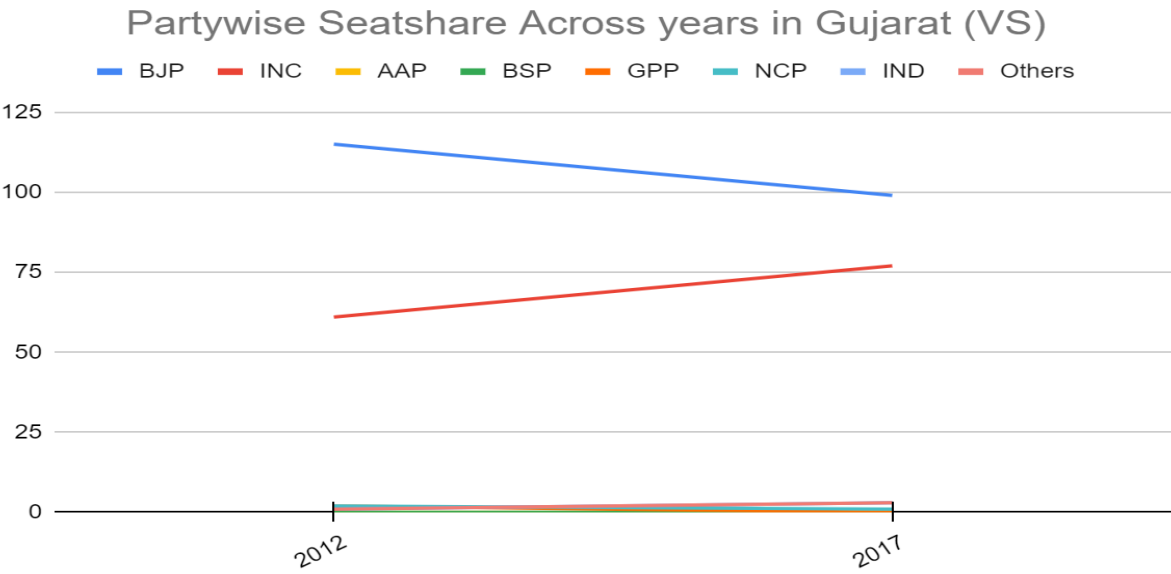


Sub-regional variances are also substantial. While voter turnout has decreased in most regions, it has decreased significantly in Saurashtra-Kutch, where it has decreased from 69.3 percent to 64.4 percent. This is notable because the Congress outpaced the BJP in terms of seats and vote share in this sub-region. Saurashtra has been the most hit by the agrarian crisis among Gujarat's sub-regions. Patel farmers have been struck hard by decreasing agricultural goods prices in recent years, and they feel bitter towards the BJP. The assertion of the Congress's resurgence is slightly tempered by a lower turnout in that sub-region. In Saurashtra-Kutch, the Congress did well, backed by widespread resistance to the BJP and its candidates.

## Political History

Party	2012 VS	2014 LS	2017 VS	2019 LS
BJP	47.9% (115)	60.1% (26)	50% (99)	63.1% (26)
INC	38.9% (61)	33.5% (0)	42.4% (77)	32.6% (0)
AAP	-	1.2% (0)	-	-
BSP	-	1% (0)	-	0.9% (0)
GPP	3.6% (2)	-	-	-
NCP	0.9% (2)	0.9% (0)	0.6% (1)	-

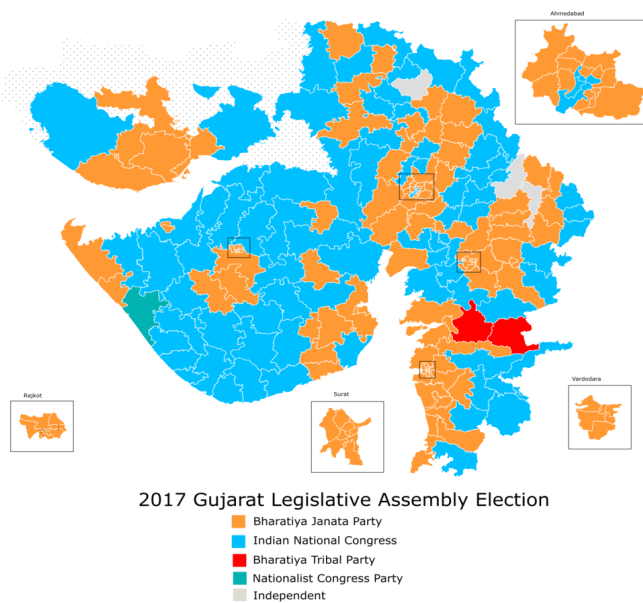
IND	5.8% (1)	-	4.4% (3)	-
Others	2.9% (1)	3.3% (0)	5.7% (3)	2.7% (0)



*Past Elections Results Analysis*

Gujarat, like the rest of India, is governed by the parliamentary system. The government is in charge of the Legislative Assembly, and it can only stay in power if a majority of its members approve it. Elections are held on a first-past-the-post basis, which means that the candidate who receives the most votes, regardless of an absolute majority, gets the seat. Every 18-year-old or older resident of the state is eligible to vote. The Governors of India's States then invite the leader of the largest political party or alliance to form a government. The Indian Constitution stipulates that Legislative Assemblies have a five-year term.

## 2012 Vidhan Sabha Elections



Gujarat Legislative Assembly elections were held in December 2012 for all 182 members of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly in the Indian state of Gujarat. Chief Minister Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who has been in power since 2002, was seeking a fourth term. The Indian National Congress's Shaktisinh Gohil was the opposition's leader (INC).

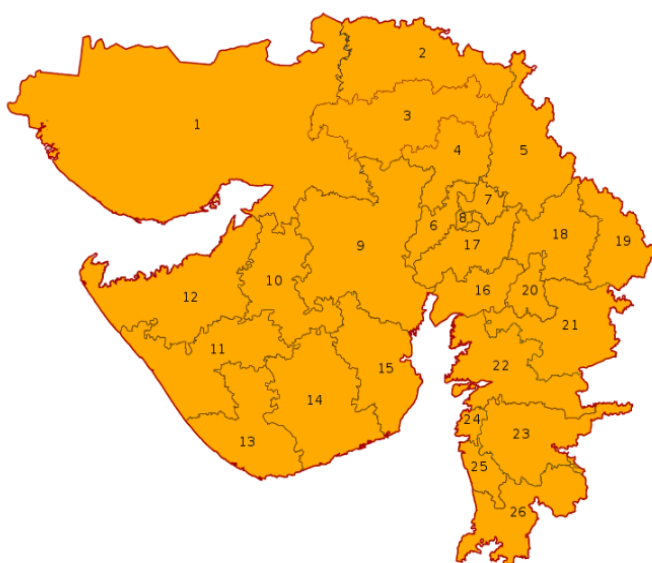
The elections took place in two stages, the first on December 13 and the second on December 17, 2012. The combined voter participation was 71.32 percent, the highest since 1980. The results were announced on December

20, 2012.

The BJP, led by Narendra Modi, gained 116 seats out of a total of 182 to form the government, while the INC received 60. Gujarat has been ruled by the BJP since 1995.

Party	Votes	Vote %	Seats won (2012)
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	1,31,19,579	47.85	115
Indian National Congress (INC)	1,06,74,767	38.93	61
Gujarat Parivartan Party (GPP)	9,95,297	3.63	2
Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	2,59,957	0.67	2
Janata Dal (United) (JD(U))	1,83,114	0.45	1

Independent	15,97,589	5.83	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,74,17,045</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>182</b>
Valid votes	2,74,17,045	99.92	
Invalid votes	22,718	0.08	
<b>Votes cast / turnout</b>	<b>2,74,39,763</b>	<b>72.02</b>	
Abstentions	1,06,59,347	27.98	
<b>Registered voters</b>	<b>3,80,99,110</b>		



### ***2014 Lok Sabha Elections***

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, BJP managed to win all 26 constituencies in the state. This was a major rise as compared to the 2009 elections where it had won only 15 out of the 26 seats; the rest 11 were taken by Congress. In 2014, BJP had managed to establish complete control over the state. This was mainly due to a few reasons. The topic of economic growth and inflation under the Congress was

targeted by the BJP, which promised similar growth across India as seen in Gujarat. The people of Gujarat had faith in Mr. Narendra Modi and his words resonated with the people of the state. He also claimed to serve as a “chowkidar” against the corruption scandals which had plagued the Congress government and had a role to play in their downfall. The third major factor leading to the victory of BJP was the working class- they were able to appeal to the youth with the promise of job creation and employment. These people are also susceptible to changing their mindset from the rest of their community and constitute the majority of the population. The BJP campaign included a lot of social media activism which appealed even more to the youth. This resonated with the digital India campaign of the Modi Government. This involved tweets by the party leaders as well as campaign selfies; while Congress was far behind in this regard.

Gujarat being the home state of Mr. Narendra Modi and party leader Amit Shah led to a deep connection between the party and the voters, this tied with the effective political campaign and

lack of a powerful candidate by Congress led to the complete victory over the 26 constituencies of the state.

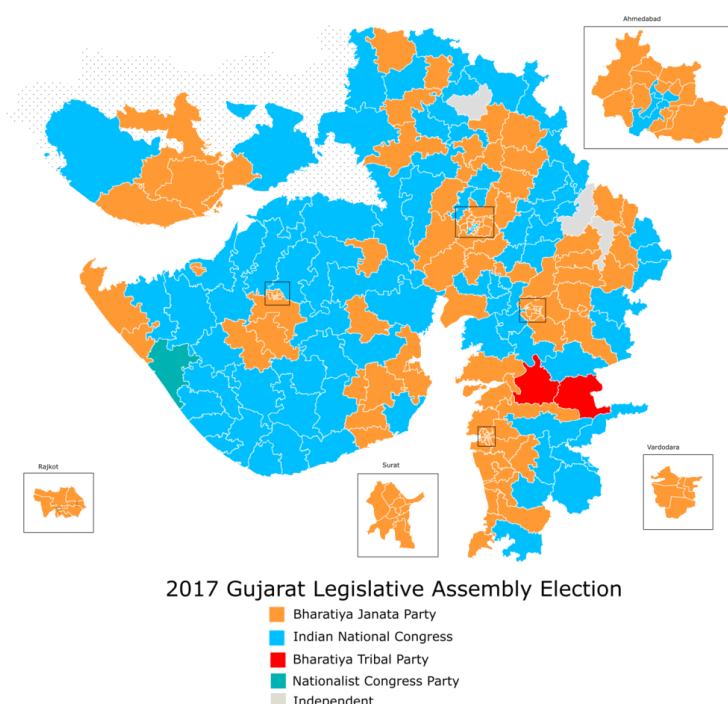
## 2017 Vidhan Sabha Elections

In the Indian state of Gujarat, the 14th Gujarat Legislative Assembly election was held between the 9th and 14th of December 2017. On the 18th of December, the votes were counted. The leader of the largest party or alliance is projected to be next chief minister after all 182 members of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly were elected. With a higher vote share, the incumbent

Bharatiya Janata Party won a simple majority. Despite a drop in seats, the incumbent government maintained its simple majority in the House of Commons. In comparison to the last election in 2012, the vote share and number of seats in Congress increased. After the 1985 election, when Congress won 149 seats, this was the largest number of seats won by Congress in the last 32 years. In December 2022, the next election will be held.

In the 2017 elections, VVPAT-equipped EVMs were used in 50,128 polling stations across Gujarat, marking the first time the technology had been utilised across

the whole state. In each of Gujarat's 182 constituencies, VVPAT slips were counted in a polling location. As of September 25, 2017, Gujarat had 43.3 million voters registered.

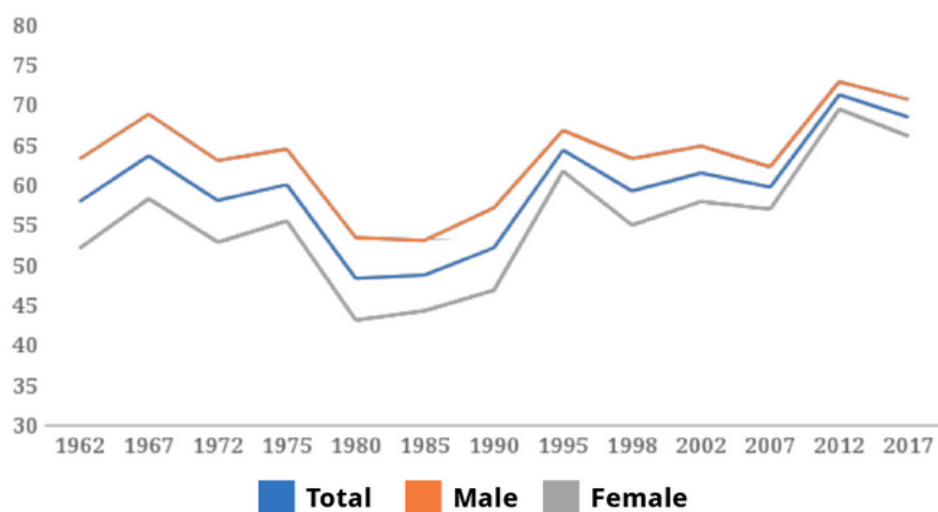


Parties and coalitions	Votes	%	Seats won (2017)
Bharatiya Janata Party	1,47,24,427	49.1	99
Indian National Congress	1,24,38,937	41.4	77
Independent	12,90,278	4.3	3
Bharatiya Tribal Party	2,22,694	0.7	2

Bahujan Samaj Party	2,07,007	0.7	0
Nationalist Congress Party	1,84,815	0.6	1
All India Hindustan Congress Party	83,922	0.3	0
Rashtriya Samajwadi Party (Secular)	45,833	0.2	0
Aam Aadmi Party	24,918	0.1	0
Janata Dal			0
None of the Above (NOTA)	5,51,615	1.8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,00,15,920</b>	<b>100</b>	
Valid votes	3,00,15,920	99.87	
Invalid votes	37,706	0.13	
<b>Votes cast / turnout</b>	<b>3,00,53,626</b>	<b>69.01</b>	
Abstentions	1,34,93,330	30.99	
<b>Registered voters</b>	<b>4,35,46,956</b>		

## Voter turnout in Gujarat Vidhan Sabha Elections (1962 - 2017)

Source: Trivedi Centre for Political Data



### Region Wise Voting in Gujarat

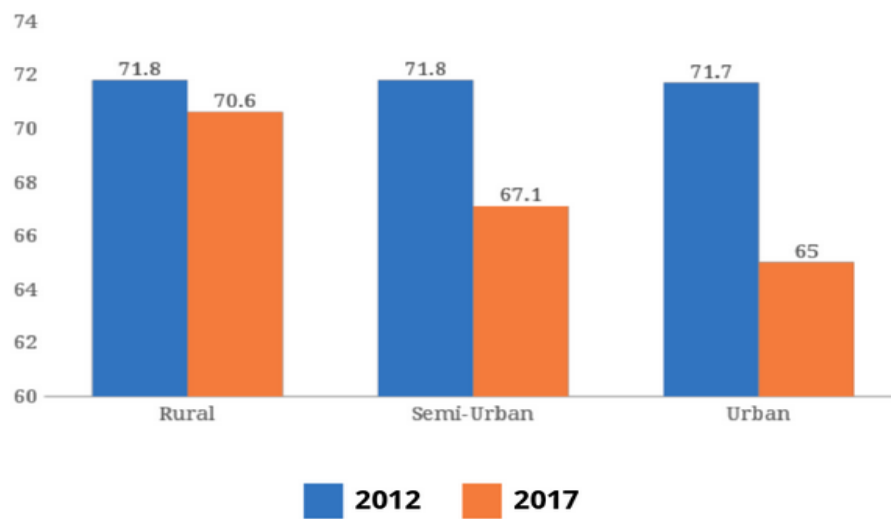
Here is the region-wise voting list for the Gujarat Assembly election (based on counting numbers)

REGIONS	2017	2012	GAIN/LOSS
<b>RURAL</b>	98	98	
BJP	38	47	-9
INC	55	46	9
NCP	1	2	-1
BTP	2	0	2
IND	2	1	1
GPP	0	1	-1

JD (U)	0	1	-1
<b>SEMI-URBAN</b>	31	31	
BJP	17	20	-3
INC	14	10	4
GPP	0	1	-1
<b>URBAN</b>	53	53	
BJP	44	48	-4
INC	9	5	4

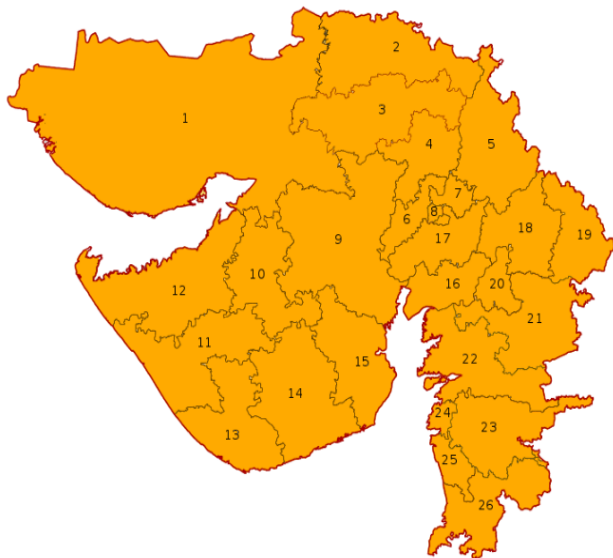
## Rural - Urban Turnout (2012 - 2017)

*Source: Trivedi Centre for Political Data*



The drop in turnout in urban (almost seven points) and semi-urban (nearly five points) areas suggests that eligible voters are not enthusiastic about voting.





## **2019 Lok Sabha Elections**

In the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections, there was a record turnout of 64.11%. The Modi wave had once again led to the BJP winning all the 26 constituencies of the state of Gujarat. One of the major factors other than the momentum of the last election was nationalism and the government's response to the Pulwama terror attacks. This led to the faith in BJP being renewed among those who were doubting them and strengthening the belief of those that were already supporting them.

One of the Major constituencies which is said to dictate the fate of the Lok Sabha elections for Gujarat is Valsad - Dr. K C Patel of BJP had managed to take it away from the congress and retain it in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections respectively.

Another notable constituency is that of Mahesana which has been the epicentre of the Patidar reservation agitation since 2015. It is said that the Patidars play a crucial role in deciding who wins from this constituency. Other major communities include the Thakurs, OBCs and Dalits. The Patidar leader Hardik Patel, had sided with congress but the High Court did not allow him to contest elections for his conviction in a 2015 rioting case.

The Saurashtra-Kutch regions also saw a fall in the votes for Congress as compared to before.

## ***Zonal Political Analysis***

The Politics of Gujarat depend upon the four zones - North Gujarat, South Gujarat, Central Gujarat and Saurashtra - Kutch. All political parties try to establish cohesion in both the circles. Brahmins, Rajputs and Patels have the dominant share of votes all over Gujarat with other major groups being OBCs and other SCs. No one community has a domination all over the state, but it changes from district to district.

### ***North Gujarat***

North Gujarat Zone Seat Share

Party	2012 VS	2014 LS	2017 VS	2019 LS
BJP	47.9%	60.1%	50%	63.1%
INC	38.9%	33.5%	42.2%	32.6%

North Gujarat has 6 districts which includes the state capital of Gandhinagar. This region is dominant in the Dairy industry. Koli is one of the largest OBC subcommunities and is dominant in this region too. The people of this community are almost equally divided between BJP and Congress. Other major communities include the Leuva and Kadva Patels; both of which are strongly attached to the BJP with leaders like the then state president Ranchoddas Faldu (Leuva) and former national vice president Purshottam Rupala (Kadva). Kshatriyas also have a presence in North Gujarat in Sabarkantha. Thakor's also have some influence in the region.

At present, the major issues faced by the people of this region include migration of people from rural to urban areas as agriculture is turning unviable and uneconomical for people with small land holdings, the gender ratio is one of the lowest in the state for some districts like Mehsana and Gandhinagar, electricity, water and transport.

### ***Central Gujarat***

Central Gujarat Zone Seat Share

Party	2012 VS	2014 LS	2017 VS	2019 LS
BJP	50%	60.1%	62.5%	63.1%
INC	45%	33.5%	32.5%	32.6%

Central Gujarat has 8 districts which include the large cities of Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Anand. In terms of industries, Suzuki Motor Gujarat is located near Ahmedabad, General Motors

is also located near Vadodara. Ahmedabad and Vadodara are also the chemical industry hubs of the state. Therefore, central Gujarat is very important when it comes to economics and is majorly industrial in nature.

Demographically, Central Gujarat is very similar to North Gujarat. But there is a significant number of Muslims too. Other castes include Thakors, Brahmins, Jains, Kolis and Kadva and Leuva Patels.

Some of the major problems faced by the people of central Gujarat include low immunisation rates among children less than 2 years old, this leads to higher child mortality rates. Thus health is a major issue in this sector. Education is also an issue since only 43% of children attend higher secondary education (class 11-12).

Major BJP leaders in the region include Kanubhai Dabhi, Manisinh Chauhan, Hitendra Patel and Ramsinh Parmar

### ***Saurashtra - Kachchh***

Saurashtra - Kachchh Zone Seat Share

Party	2012 VS	2014 LS	2017 VS	2019 LS
BJP	64.8%	60.1%	42.59%	63.1%
INC	29.6%	33.5%	55.56%	32.6%

The Saurashtra-Kachchh zone includes the important districts of Rajkot, Devbhoomi Dwarka, Porbandar and Kutch. Kachchh is one of India's fastest growing zones. The Kandla, Mundra (Kachchh), and Porbandar, Bhavnagar and Jamnagar (Saurashtra) ports are of vital importance to the country. The region is also well connected by road and air.

Demographically, it is slightly different from North and Central Gujarat. This region does not see a dominant presence of the Kolis. This region has the dominant presence of STs and Patels. This region also sees a lot of Kshatriyas, Brahmins and Ahirs. In some parts, there is Muslim presence too in the region.

The major problems faced by the people of this region include skewed gender ratio and high crime rates and low conviction rates for crimes against SCs and STs. This region sees the least voter turnout out of all the zones of Gujarat. People are starting to say that the low voter turnout is because people have started losing faith in BJP as they believe they have failed to develop the state.

Major BJP leaders in the zone include Jitu Vaghani and Vijay Rupani.

## ***South Gujarat***

### South Gujarat Zone Seat Share

Party	2012 VS	2014 LS	2017 VS	2019 LS
BJP	80.0%	60.1%	71.4%	63.1%
INC	17.14%	33.5%	28.57%	32.6%

South Gujarat sees the highest voter turnout out of all the regions of Gujarat. It consists of 7 districts including Surat and Valsad. This region faces one of the lowest unemployment levels in the country. This region also houses SEZs with investments of many thousands of crores. It is also home to Vapi (Asia's biggest Industrial Estate) and is world's largest diamond cutting and polishing hub. It is also India's biggest man-made textile industry.

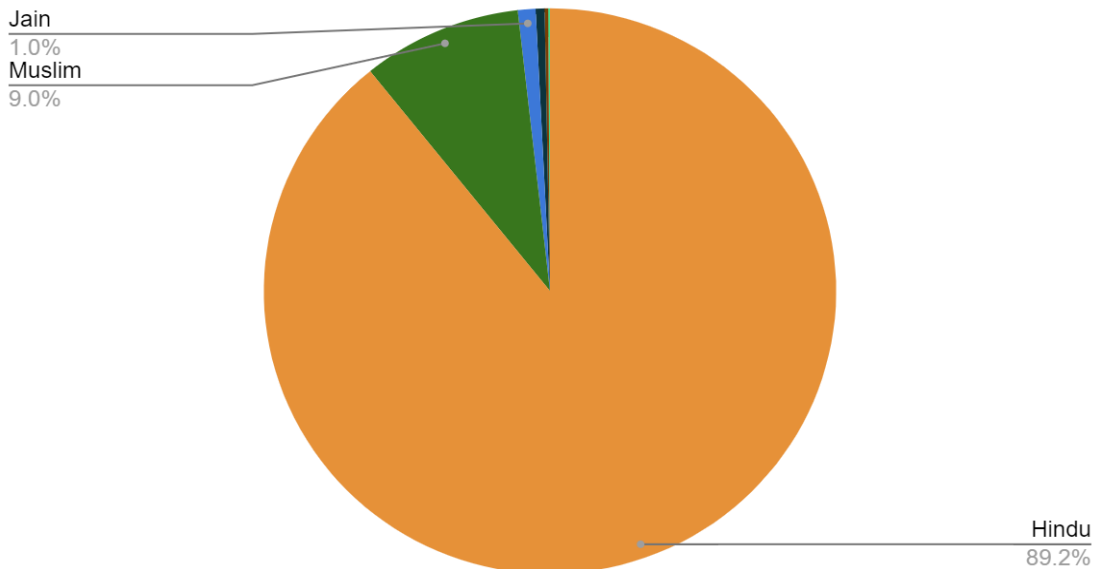
Demographically, it is somewhat similar to North and Central Gujarat, with the major voters being Koli's, STs, Brahmins, Jains and Muslims.

This is one of the most developed zones in Gujarat and does not face any major problem as such. Major BJP leaders in the region include Ishwarsinh Patel, Ganpat Vasava and Bharatsinh Parmar.

## ***Major Voter Groups***

### ***Major Caste and Religion Analysis***

#### Religion in Gujarat



Caste	Sub-Division	Percentage
<b>Patel - Patidar (14%)</b>	Kadva	6%
	Leuva	7%
<b>OBC (35%)</b>	Darbars (Rajputs)	7%
	Kolis	8%
	Thakors	8%
	Others	12%
<b>Muslims</b>	-	9.6%
<b>Jains</b>	-	0.96%
<b>Brahmins</b>	-	9.5%
<b>SC</b>	Majorly Dalits	6.7%
<b>ST (14.24%)</b>	Bhil, Garasia, Bhagalia, Bhilala, Pawra, Vasava, Vasave (Dalits)	6.9%
	Pargi	1.6%
	Others	5.74%
<b>Others</b>	-	10%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

### *Patel - Patidar*

They are one of the most dominant castes in Gujarat making up around 14% population alone. Although there are many subdivisions, in Gujarat, Kadvas and Leuvas make up almost all of the patels. They claim to be the descendants of Kush and Lav respectively (descendants of Lord Rama). Patidars are found all over Gujarat. Kadva Patels are mostly located in North Gujarat while the Leuvas are located mostly in Central Gujarat and Saurashtra. South Gujarat has a mixed population of both.

They were a vote bank for the Congress till the 80s, but now have taken the side of BJP in recent times. At present, most of them support the BJP. In 2015, there was a Patel agitation movement in which they demanded the status of OBC because the youth were facing higher competition due to reservations. Also, since they are mainly agriculturalists, due to crop failures and getting

poor prices worsened their socio-economic position. This movement was led by Hardik Patel. They were not given the OBC status, however, the Parliament amended the constitution and granted a maximum of 10% reservation to the economically weaker sections.

In the 2017 VS elections many of them had aligned themselves with INC, while some still supported the BJP. Due to this, BJP performed poorly as compared to the 2012 VS elections, but still managed to win the majority of the seats. In the 2019 LS elections, BJP still managed to win all 26 seats even though the Patels were divided.

### *Major Political Leaders in Patidar Community*

Name	Caste	Party	Responsibilities
Anandiben	Leuva	BJP	EX CM
Nitin Patel	Kadva	BJP	Deputy CM
Hardik Patel	Kadva	BJP	Patidar agitation leader
Naresh Patel	Leuva	INC (inclination)	Influential figure
Harshad Ribadia	Patel	INC	MLA, Farmer leader
Bhupendra Patel	Kadva	BJP	Present CM
Hrishikesh Patel	Patel	BJP	MLA
Vinu Mordia	Patel	BJP	MLA
Arvind Raiani	Patel	BJP	MLA
Raghavji Patel	Patel	BJP	MLA
Brijesh Merja	Patel	BJP	MLA
Jitu Waghani	Patel	BJP	MLA

### *Brahmins*

The Brahmins majorly support the BJP with around 64% of the vote share. But a considerable chunk of votes also goes to the INC at 31%. It is said that their votes are decisive for 22 of the Legislative Assembly seats. In the last VS election (2017), Congress had gotten 4% more votes from Brahmins than before. The Major Sub Castes of Brahmins are Anavil, Audichya, Bardai, Gauda, Girnara, Gurav, Khedaval, Modh, Nagar, Sidhra-Rudhra, Sompura, and the Sompura Salat Brahmins. They concentrate mostly in and around parts of Central and South Gujarat and Saurashtra and constitute about 9.5% of the population of Gujarat.

### *Major Political Leaders in Brahmin Community*

Name	Caste	Party	Responsibilities
Rajendra Trivedi	Brahmin	BJP	Gujarat Assembly speaker
Kanubhai Desai	Brahmin	BJP	Minister of Finance, and Energy

### *Jains*

Jains only constitute about 0.96% of the population in Gujarat. They are equally split between BJP and INC and are not susceptible to being swayed by either party easily. They constitute for only a little part of the population and are generally well off; so they do not have many demands from the government as such. Their participation in politics is also very minimal.

### *Major Political Leaders in Jain Community*

Name	Caste	Party	Responsibilities
Vijay Rupani	Jain Baniya	BJP	Former CM

### *Major Factors of General Caste While Voting*

Factors	Description
<b>Caste Preference</b>	Caste plays a vital role in the elections. People associate better with a political party if the candidate is from their caste. For example, the Patels will vote for a Patel candidate more often than outsiders.
<b>Reservations for other communities</b>	The General Caste feels that due to reservations, they are facing higher competition for positions like University seats and Government jobs. Steps must be taken to ensure that the general caste does not face unjust competition from the backward castes due to such reservations.
<b>Localised vs Outsider</b>	Most voters are inclined towards the candidate of their assembly or district, so care must be taken while allotting tickets to individuals. The candidates must belong to the community which dominates the region.

### ***Other Backward Castes (OBCs) - Rajputs, Kolis, Thakors***

OBCs constitute for the single largest community in Gujarat coming in at 35% of the population of the state. They are divided into many smaller sub communities with Thakors, Rajputs and Kolis being the largest. The Kolis are the biggest OBC subcommunity and are almost equally attached to both INC and the BJP. In recent times they have been leaning more towards the BJP. Thakors are actually a sub community within the Kolis. They are mostly businessmen or land-owners. They are slightly more inclined towards the INC as compared to the other Kolis. Rajputs are the third largest OBC community in the state. They are almost equally divided between the INC and the BJP.

#### ***Major Political Leaders in OBC Community***

Name	Caste	Party	Responsibilities
Jagdish Thakor	OBC	INC	Party chief
Geniben Thakor	OBC	INC	MLA
Shambhuji Thakor	OBC	BJP	MLA
Pradipsinh Jadega	OBC	BJP	State Home Minister
Kiritsinh Rana	OBC	BJP	Forest, environment and climate change minister
Jagdish Panchal	OBC	BJP	MLA

### ***Scheduled Castes (SCs) - Dalits***

Dalits make up about 6.9% of the population of Gujarat and almost half of the SC population. The rest are smaller groups and are divided between the INC and BJP. They are almost evenly distributed in Gujarat, but are concentrated in the districts of Ahmedabad, Banaskantha, Junagadh, Mehsana and Vadodara.

Dalits mostly side themselves with the INC. This is due to various reasons such as Not enough action being taken against crimes against Dalits and low conviction rates of crimes against SCs and STs. They also believe that the issue of untouchability and discrimination was not addressed properly by the successive BJP governments. Valmikiis from only 10% of the Dalit population and are unable to take advantage of reservation policies which mostly benefit the dominant Dalit sub-castes like Vankars and Rohits.



### *Major Political Leaders in SC Community*

Name	Caste	Party	Responsibilities
Jignesh Mevani	Dalit	Independent - anti BJP	MLA (Vadgam)
Maheshwari Malti Kishor	Dalit	BJP	MLA

### *Scheduled Tribes (STs)*

They are concentrated in the Eastern Districts from Mt. Abu on the Rajasthan border to Dhanu district on the Maharashtra border in the South. In the 2017 VS elections, the STs had voted majorly for the INC, thus they were leading in the ST constituencies. The reasons they sided with the INC are the same as those of the SCs and OBCs, Viz. discrimination and crimes against backward communities not being taken up by the present BJP government. There are 27 constituencies reserved for the STs in Gujarat.

### *Major Political Leaders in ST Community*

Name	Caste	Party	Responsibilities
Bhavesh Katara	ST	INC	MLA
Vajesing Panada	ST	INC	MLA
Shaileshbhai Bhabhor	ST	BJP	MLA
Sukhrambhai Rathwa	ST	INC	MLA - Leader of Opposition

### ***Major Factors of SC/ST/OBC While Voting***

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Anti General Caste Party</b>	The Dalit society believes that the BJP is a party of the upper caste and runs only on the development of the upper caste. Dalit society has always been casting votes against the upper caste party. Even in Gujarat, they have sided with the INC. They do not want their reservations to be taken away, rather they want them to be more lenient.
<b>Discrimination</b>	Very little progress has been made against untouchability and discrimination faced by the lower castes in Gujarat under BJP, and thus they are more inclined towards the INC which has promised them these.
<b>Less candidates belonging from their communities</b>	Since they do not constitute for a lot of the population and are spread thin across the state, political parties tend to give tickets to candidates whose caste dominates the constituency. Since they do not get a lot of representation, their turnout also remains low except for in those constituencies which are reserved for them.

### ***Caste Wise Inclination in Current Situation in Gujarat***

<b>Party</b>	<b>Caste</b>
<b>BJP</b>	Majorly Patidars, Brahmans, Jains, Kshatriyas, Kolis and Thakors
<b>INC</b>	Some Patidars, Dalits, STs, Muslims and Rajputs

### ***Shree Khodaldham Trust (SKT)***

In Kagvad, some 60 kilometres from Rajkot, the Shree Khodaldham Trust (SKT) is in charge of a highly patronised temple dedicated to Goddess Khodiyar, the patron goddess of the Leuva Patidar community. Naresh Patel, a prominent leader in Gujarat's Patidar community and chairman of the Shree Khodaldham Trust (SKT). Many young people think he should run for office without resigning from his position at the Trust. According to the SKT's bylaws, joining politics also entails giving up the SKT chair. According to community leader and head of Shree Khodaldham Trust (SKT), Naresh Patel, the Patidars must engage in "strong" politics to ensure that members of the community hold political and governmental positions. From clerk to collector, patidars should work in such jobs. Patidars should hold political positions from local sarpanch to member of parliament. Our sons and daughters currently hold respectable positions.

However, they wouldn't be able to work for the community if they weren't given the right posting. Strong politics are therefore necessary, according to Patel. Patel would be a terrific find for Congress as it looks to win back the Patidar community's support. With the help of the Patidar community, AAP registered its presence in the Surat municipal elections.

After months of uncertainty, SKT Chairman Naresh Patel stated he would not enter politics "for the time being," adding that Khodaldham will establish an academy to prepare young people for politics.

### ***Rise of BJP in Gujarat***

To choose the members of Gujarat's 9th Legislative Assembly, elections for that body were held in 1995. 121 seats were won by the Bharatiya Janata Party. After the election, Keshubhai Patel was appointed chief minister for the first time. Gujarat has been controlled by the Bharatiya Janata Party since it won the state's assembly election in 1995. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, two of the BJP's most prominent politicians, were developed in that period in the Gujarat assembly. In 1995, the Congress and the BJP engaged in a direct contest for the first time. With 42% of the vote in the 1995 assembly, the BJP won with an impressive margin and wasn't just a temporary wave. Since the 1960s, the party has been constructing its support structure brick by brick. When the BJP took control of a local institution in the late 1980s, it served as a precursor to the party's rising popularity. In 1983, the BJP first took control of the Rajkot Municipal Corporation, and two years later, in 1987, it took control of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. These victories served as a prelude to the assembly elections by serving as a symbol of the party's growth in the state. However, while the party eventually gained political legitimacy at the urban level, it was the Sangh Parivar's expanding influence that permeated local structures there, including cooperatives and agricultural boards and committees. These institutions served as stepping stones for people with political aspirations because the Congress dominated the political scene and implicitly extended its patronage to mainly the KHAM members.

However, with the BJP in power, these organisations served as entry points for reorganising the previous Congress patronage networks. By first institutionalising and then legitimising the 'Hindutva' ideals that were supported by the 'yatras' and other activities in the state, this in a sense served as a highly effective political strategy for the BJP. It led up to the elections in 1995 when BJP formed the government in Gujarat. Prior to 1995, the BJP had either agreed to seat sharing arrangements with other minor parties or been a member of a coalition administration in the state. The BJP therefore made an all-out effort to win the 182 seats that were available for election. The BJP's remarkable gains in the Zilla Panchayat election, where it won 599 seats out of a total of 772, were one of the grounds that made it necessary for it to run alone in elections. Comparatively, in the same elections, the Congress party only won 111 seats. As a result, the BJP chose to run in elections by itself in 1995 after realising its appeal among both the rural and urban population. The Jan Sangh in the state, which was founded in the 1960s and garnered enormous popularity among the Bania and Brahmin castes, who belonged to the class of petty

traders, may provide a more balanced understanding of this. A portion of Saurashtrian Rajputs were also included in this group of supporters. In the 1980s, the Jan Sangh gradually and slowly drew the influential Patidar/Patel group into its fold as well. However, the Ram-Janmabhoomi movement and anti-reservation agitations in the 1980s and 1990s compelled the upper castes and backward communities to band together and switch their allegiance to the BJP from the Congress party. The period from 1998 to 2001 is particularly significant since it saw significant changes for the party as well as the birth of Hindutva and religious polarisation, which had an impact on elections and took over the political narrative during this time.

The confluence of caste and communal identification as the main factor on which the BJP expanded its electoral base was a major development in politics during this time. In retrospect, the Sangh Parivar pushed the idea of Savarna as seen through the lens of Hindutva, which intended to serve as a unifying principle for the Hindu community in the state, between 1985 and the late 1990s. As a result of the support given to the Muslims by the Congress Party during the long period of time it held power in the state, the earlier forms of polarisation in society based on the hierarchical difference between the Savarna and Avarnas, which was also reflected in the anti-reservation agitations, had now changed into a direct Hindu-Muslim confrontation. The party won 117 seats in the 1998 Gujarat Assembly elections, with a vote share of 47.44 percent overall. The Chief Minister, Keshubhai Patel, took the oath of office. Factionalism within the party began to emerge almost immediately after the significant triumph. As a result, there were conflicting allegiances between Keshubhai's supporters and those of the party's then-General Secretary, Narendra Modi. The party and the approaching Zilla Panchayat elections in 2000 suffered significantly as a result of this factionalism. Out of 717 seats in various Zilla Panchayats, BJP was able to win 192 of them. Patel was under tremendous pressure to quit as a result of the party's dismal performance. In 2001, Narendra Modi was subsequently chosen to serve as the interim chief minister of Gujarat. The ascent of Narendra Modi, who had previously served as the BJP's general secretary in Gujarat, has been the most significant change to occur within the party throughout this period of Gujarati politics. In October 2001, Narendra Modi was appointed Gujarat's chief minister after Keshubhai was expelled from the party.

The fact that an OBC person or politician had been appointed chief minister was a significant contribution made by Modi. The party was in a precarious position at the time Narendra Modi held political office. In addition to facing anti-incumbency, particularly from the Patidars in the Saurashtra region, the BJP also had to deal with the death of former CM Keshubhai Patel. . The BJP's defeat in the 2001 by-elections, in which it lost one Lok Sabha seat and two Vidhan Sabha seats, was another worrying development. Prior to this, it already lost the state's municipal corporations for Rajkot and Ahmedabad in 2000.

In addition to this, the BJP only won 27% of the District Panchayat seats in 2000. But Narendra Modi's leadership style given it a new lease on life. The voters' and citizens' opinions of

Narendra Modi and the BJP were an encouraging indicator for the party's comeback in the state, especially after 2002. In the 2007 Assembly elections, the party won 117 seats with a 49.36 percent vote percentage, and it won 115 seats with a 48 percent vote share in the 2012 Assembly elections. BJP won again in 2017 elections for the 6th straight time.

### ***History of Congress Party in Gujarat***

Gujarat was a Congress stronghold prior to the BJP taking control. In every Gujarat assembly election from 1962 through 1985, the Congress earned more votes and won more seats than any other party. The Congress had a strong basis in Gujarat throughout the liberation movement because of people like Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel, and that relationship persisted in the early decades following independence. Early Gujarati chief ministers were traditional Gandhian Congress figures with highly respected public lives. They were all from the traditionally powerful neighbourhoods: Jivraj Mehta, Balvantrao Mehta, Hitendra Desai, Ghanshyam Oza, Chimanbhai Patel, and Babubhai Patel are examples of Patel and Brahmin individuals. For the state of Gujarat, the Indian National Congress is represented by the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC). The Committee's president is Jagdish Thakor. It was established in 1920, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel served as its first and longest-serving president. After India gained independence in 1947, the GPCC was charged with providing Congress candidates for local and state election campaigns. During the Indian liberation movement, the GPCC would coordinate Indian nationalist campaigns.

The conflict between Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai on the national political stage coloured Gujarat's political evolution from the early 1960s through the early 1970s. In Gujarat's 1972 assembly election, a confrontation resulted from the flotation of their separate organisations known as Congress (R) and Congress (O). Out of 168 seats, 139 were won by the Congress (R), and just 16 by the Congress (O). While there was a brief period of relative political stability in the 1970s, the party encountered new issues when newly elected Brahmin leader Ghanshyam Oza was appointed Chief Minister by Indira Gandhi. The Patidar community rapidly destroyed the new structure and established its all-powerful status in Gujarat politics thanks to the newly attained power status it had attained under Chimanbhai Patel's leadership. When the turbulent early 1970s period discovered a reliable voter base in what is known as the KHAM coalition, it was able to establish some degree of stability.

One of the gatherings held by the Gujarat Khedut Ane Vikas Parishad (Society for the Development of Farmers and Farmland) in the 1970s is where the KHAM coalition was first established (Sud, 2012: 27). Jinabhai Darji, the president of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress, emphasised the urgency of implementing the political plan. The KHAM coalition's

straightforward strategy was to attack the 69.3 percent of the state's population that was made up of Kshatriyas (40 percent), Harijans (7 percent), Adivasis (14 percent), and Muslims (8.3 percent). The backward communities that were listed in the Bakshi Commission of Gujarat (1976) report and designated as OBCs were also an aim of this electoral formula. With this, the Congress party for the first time created a space for Muslim minorities as well as the economically underprivileged to advance politically. In the 1980 elections, the KHAM coalition gave the party considerable gains. 96 of the 111 KHAM candidates the Congress nominated for the 182 seats actually won their seats (Sud, 2012: 27). Madhavsinh Solanki, a member of the Kshatriya community, was sworn in as Gujarat's chief executive after this significant victory and newfound success in the KHAM formula. The influential KHAM formula not only controlled the assembly but also the several, equally significant government boards and businesses that were in place. . In the 1990s, the BJP's new power base would come from this disenchanted class. Despite the Congress party's early success with the KHAM formula, after it lost the 1987 elections to the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, it suffered severe effects. This, along with a number of other elements, helped Gujarati politics enter a new age that witnessed the growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the state. Two highly significant events defined Gujarat's political environment under the Congress regime after 1960. First, the party's KHAM formula, which it used to gain power, allowed it to broaden its voter base by integrating the Muslim minority and lower castes, giving them a chance to advance in politics. Indira Gandhi's crucial action disproved the idea that the party was an upper caste, landlord-dominated one. The strategy used alienated the upper caste, which later found wider acceptance among the BJP and the Sangh Parivar. Second, despite losing power in other Indian states, the party maintained control over the state, which was referred to be the "declining of the Congress System." The BJP's expansion occurred in the context of the Congress's decline, which ultimately led to the BJP's ascent to political power in the 1990s.

## Major Areas of Opportunities for BJP in the State

### *Lack of a Strong leader in the Opposition*

The Congress leaders have not been able to put up a strong candidate for the last few elections. The image of Congress at the national level is not strong at the moment either. The rise in the seats won by the INC in 2017 VS elections was because of the Patidar agitation and not because they had a strong leader. BJP should benefit the most from this in a state like Gujarat because a lot of the top party leaders in BJP come from here such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself and Home Minister Amit Shah.

### ***Defections from the Congress Party***

A lot of MLAs and leaders have been defecting from the INC to the BJP in recent years due to politics within the party and factionalism in the Congress. A lot of congress members have been unsatisfied because of the policies of the Congress leaders such as Rahul and Sonia Gandhi. A lot of them are also unsatisfied because the party did not give the deserving candidates tickets to contest in the elections.

### ***Modi Face***

People here associate with PM Modi a lot because he has been the former CM of the state and a lot of development took place under him which made Gujarat one of the fastest growing states in the country. Because of this, BJP had an advantage in both the LS elections, as well as the 2017 VS elections in which they would have probably lost if not for PM Modi's support.

### ***Nationalism***

BJP's image is made of a nationalist party among the public. In the recent past, BJP has had a good influence among the people due to the decisions taken by the central government regarding the security of the country. The government's strong response to border conflicts and terror attacks happening in the states bordering Pakistan and China (something which had plagued our nation for some time) gave the people a sense of security. It proved to them that India would not sit idle if attacked and would fight back, and thus, instilled a sense of nationalism and national pride in them which they associated with the new BJP government.

### ***Organisational Strength***

Gujarat has been one of BJP's strongest states in the country. They know the ins and outs of the states, its issues, caste politics and preferences of the people. Thus in Gujarat, they have a skilled organisation and a large army of active workers. No other party has such an active presence as BJP does at the grassroot levels of Gujarat. Due to digitalisation and increased communication between the leaders and the general public, it is now possible for them to voice their concerns directly to the leaders or party workers. This has led to a stronger bond between the people and the BJP workers and leaders. Thus by being a closely knit body, both with the public and between themselves, BJP has set up a strong organisational structure in the state and will not easily fall to infighting.

## ***Development***

The state government has done a lot of work for the development of the state. The BJP government has focused on development the most since the past 2-3 decades, and has propelled Gujarat into becoming one of the fastest growing and most prosperous states in the country. Rapid industrialisation has taken place and due to government policies such as SEZs, a lot of investment and therefore growth took place. Gujarat is also one of the few states with very low levels of unemployment in India.

## ***Major Areas of Threats for BJP in the State***

### ***Patidar Agitation movement***

Although the movement has lost its momentum which affected the 2017 VS results and the movement leader Hardik Patel has joined BJP, the Patel youth still remain divided. Though the older generations of the community still support BJP, the youth are also a divisive force. Some of their demands were met when the constitution was amended and reservation for economically weaker sections were added, their demand for backward status due to increased competition because of reservations still remain unaddressed. They can be riled up by opposition parties such as Congress again.

### ***Backward Castes***

On the other hand, backward castes such as STs and SCs (Dalits) still remain unsatisfied with BJP. They feel not much work has been done to abolish untouchability and discrimination. Low conviction rates also lead them to believe that the government is not taking the necessary steps to punish the criminals. Although they do not make up for the majority in any large region, the OBCs, STs and SCs combined make up a large chunk of the Gujarat Population. Should they be rallied all under one party, it may prove difficult for the BJP to win. Though this is unlikely because there are a lot of sub-communities in the backward castes and it is difficult to unite all of them. Still the BJP should try to appeal to these communities by giving them more representation in the party (but not at the cost of other major communities such as the Patels and Brahmins). Stricter laws should be made to punish the crimes against them.

### ***Anger and Division among the Youth***

In recent times, the youth of the state have been divided between BJP and other parties. In the years leading up to the 2017 VS elections, major movements led by young leaders have tarnished the image of the BJP to some extent. The Patidar agitation movement by Hardik Patel, the OBC



leader Alpesh Thakor and the Dalit rights activist Jignesh Mewani have divided the youth in the state based on caste politics. Thakors support BJP but due to the movement led by Alpesh Thakor, they were divided in the 2017 VS elections in Gujarat. SCs were already discontent with the BJP government and the victory of Jignesh Mewani (an independent candidate) shows that if they are united against BJP under one banner, it would be quite the predicament for BJP. The long-time and biggest supporters of BJP, the Thakors were also divided because of the movement led by Hardik Patel.

Since the youth constitute a large part of the population and will be the voters of the future, special attention must be given to them to ensure that they remain attached to the BJP and that they do not get swayed by movements such as these.

### *Uprise of the AAP in the Country*

Although their presence in the state of Gujarat is minimal, their hold over the National Capital and now in Punjab shows that their influence is definitely spreading all over the northern part of India. They may still take a long time to pose a substantial threat to the BJP, but their progress must be monitored and kept in check.

### *Representation of Women*

The gender ratio of Gujarat falls behind a lot of the other states in India. No special policies have been introduced to uplift the status of women in Gujarat as such. Although there is no immediate threat as such and the condition of women is not as bad as some of the other states, they still lag behind men in a lot of fields such as literacy, employment and income. This can be taken up by the opposition while targeting BJP in the state and may potentially sway the general public against them.

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