

Does Per Capita Income Affect Election Results?

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1. Abstract

This research paper investigates the influence of per capita income on election results in India, examining how economic status affects voter behaviour and political affiliations. Utilizing data from recent elections and various economic indicators, the study analyzes the relationship between income levels and voting patterns across diverse regions and constituencies. The findings reveal a significant correlation between per capita income and electoral outcomes, with wealthier constituencies tending to favour parties with pro-business policies. At the same time, lower-income areas often support parties emphasizing social welfare and poverty reduction. The research highlights the role of regional disparities and socio-economic factors, such as education and caste, in shaping voting behaviour. By understanding these dynamics, the study underscores the need for policies promoting inclusive growth and reducing income inequality to foster equitable political representation. This paper concludes that although per capita income is important in electoral dynamics, it interacts with a complex set of socio-economic determinants, and all approaches must be taken to address the economic and political challenges in India. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the financial drivers of voter behaviour and provides insight for decision-makers and political actors seeking to increase participation and democracy.

Keywords: Per Capita Income, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Economic Voting

2. Introduction

Per capita income measures the amount of money earned by every person in a particular country, state, or city. It determines the average income of a person in that specific region. It indicates the standard of living and the quality of life of people in the geographical location under consideration. The per capita income of a country is calculated by dividing its national income by its population, including men, women, and children. Per capita income helps study statistics, economics, and many other fields. GDP¹ per capita is widely used by economists, policymakers, and analysts to compare economic development and living standards among nations. It helps in evaluating the economic health of a country, understanding income distribution, and assessing the impact of economic policies and strategies.

¹ Gross domestic product is a monetary measure of the market value of all the final goods and services produced and rendered in a specific time period by a country or countries. GDP is often used to measure the economic health of a country or region

The relationship between economic conditions and electoral outcomes is a well-studied phenomenon in political science. Economic conditions can significantly influence voter behaviour and the results of elections. Economic voting is a theoretical perspective that argues that voter behaviour is heavily influenced by the economic conditions in their country at the time of election. Retrospective voting is when voters tend to reward or punish incumbents based on the current economic conditions. If the economy is doing well, the incumbents are likely to be re-elected. Conversely, if the economy is performing poorly, voters are more likely to vote for opposition parties. Prospective voting is when voters make decisions based on their expectations of future economic performance. There are certain key economic indicators which influence the voter's behaviour and choices during elections. High economic growth in terms of a country's GDP is favourable for incumbents. It signals economic health and prosperity. A high unemployment rate can boost voter dissatisfaction with the current government, while a low unemployment rate can boost the opposition party's chances of succeeding in the elections. High inflation erodes purchasing power and leads to voter discontent. Stable and low inflation rates are desirable for the government in power in terms of their electoral results. Rising incomes and reduced inequality are associated with voter satisfaction, whereas stagnating or declining incomes can lead to dissatisfaction among the electorate. Higher per capita income generally correlates with higher voter support as it indicates economic well-being and better standards of living. Also, the differences in per capita income across regions can influence regional voting patterns. Areas with lower per capita income may very well cast their votes against the present government if they feel that they are being neglected. This paper is written with the specific objective of analysing the effect of per capita income on election results, voter behaviour, regional disparities, and political preferences. This paper also analyses the effect of per capita income on electoral results in the context of the Indian elections, the largest political exercise of the world of the largest democracy.

3. Impact of Per Capita Income on Voting Behaviour

Economic development, often measured through per capita income, can significantly influence voting behaviour. If we study the urban vs rural voting behaviour, generally, the urban areas have a higher per capita income due to better access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities. The urban area voters may prioritise issues such as infrastructure development, economic liberalization and technological advancement. They might lean towards parties that promote business-friendly policies and economic growth. On the other hand, the rural areas are usually lower per capita income regions, that emphasis more on agricultural policies, rural development and social welfare schemes. Voters in these areas may support parties that promote subsidies, support for farmers and rural employment programmes. There are regional disparities in

income and voting patterns as well, especially in the context of the Indian elections. There are some high-income regions throughout the country such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and some low-income regions such as Bihar, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh. The high-income region areas may exercise their voting rights giving preference to parties that advocate for economic stability, business growth and lower taxes. The lower-income regions show their allegiance to parties that promote poverty alleviation, social welfare schemes and equitable distribution of resources. Income inequality within a population can lead to different political, and ideological preferences and voting behaviour. The Indian electorate vote and voice out their preferences, choices, likes and dislikes by choosing their representative to the Parliament as well as the State Legislatures from different constituencies. The political and social dynamics of every constituency are different. The needs and wants of the voters of the constituencies are varied as the problems are diverse for which the people find a solution in an ideal candidate for that constituency. Like there are both high-income regions and low-income regions, there are wealthy as well as poor constituencies in terms of their economic status and per capita income. Some of the wealthy constituencies in terms of the Lok Sabha elections conducted in India are -

- South Delhi (Delhi)
- Mumbai South (Maharashtra)
- Bangalore South (Karnataka)
- Chennai South (Tamil Nadu)
- Gurgaon (Haryana)
- Pune (Maharashtra)
- Hyderabad (Telangana)
- Gujarat West (Ahmedabad)

Contrastingly, some of the poorer constituencies in India are -

- Munger (Bihar)
- Shivpuri (Madhya Pradesh)
- Balrampur (Uttar Pradesh)
- Dantewada (Chhattisgarh)
- Kalahandi (Odisha)
- Barpeta (Assam)
- Dhubri (Assam)
- Kishanganj (Bihar)

The wealthy constituencies may support right-leaning or centrist parties that maintain or enhance their economic status while the poorer constituencies may prefer the leftist or populist parties that focus on the upliftment of the marginalized groups and reducing inequality. Income inequality can become the origin of social justice movements aiming at the eradication of social evils like poverty, income inequality, and disparity in income among the various communities of the nation. There are many marginalized communities in India such as the Dalits. Pressure groups, interest groups and political parties are often formed to address the concerns, problems and issues of these communities. Bahujan Samaj Party was formed by Kanshi Ram, an Indian politician and social reformer who worked for the upliftment and political mobilization of the Bahujans, the backward or lower caste people including the untouchables at the bottom of the caste system in India. Hence, the per capita income of a region affects the way people think and vote. This is reflected in the party and the candidate they choose from their respective constituencies. The elite and the high-income families will have different sets of interests and views regarding an ideal candidate to represent their constituency than a lower-income or a lower-middle-class family. Both sections of people will have different sets of interests and aspirations.

4. Impact of Welfare Schemes on Voting Patterns

The impact of welfare schemes on voting patterns can be illustrated by various studies and election results:

- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA)**

This act provides rural households with a minimum of 100 days of wage employment per year. It is evident from the research data that the districts with higher MNREGA expenditure saw a 2.5% to 3% increase in votes for the Congress Party, which was in power at that time and implemented the same. In the 2009 General Elections, MNREGA was widely promoted as a significant achievement of the UPA government and was also considered a flagship event. The Congress-led UPA won the general elections, achieved a majority and continued their government. The successful implementation of the MNREGA was credited as one of the key factors behind the party's electoral success. In rural areas of states like Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, Congress benefited from the positive impact of this scheme. By 2014, the BJP criticised MNREGA and focussed on issues such as governance and economic reforms. The effectiveness and implementation of the scheme faced scrutiny. The Congress-led UPA lost the 2014 General Elections to the BJP. Various factors were attributed to the defeat of the Congress Party including allegations of corruption, economic challenges and perceived effectiveness of welfare programmes. Areas which were heavily dependent

on MNREGA witnessed mixed results. It was seen that some rural areas continued to support the congress due to the benefits they enjoyed from the MNREGA but the overall vote share of the party was impacted by broader issues and BJP's effective campaign. In the 2019 General Elections, the Congress highlighted MNREGA as a part of its campaign which was aimed at providing rural employment and also supporting low-income households. In the areas where MREGA had a strong presence, Congress tried to leverage its success. However the party's overall vote share did not significantly improve, indicating that although the MNREGA had a positive impact in some constituencies, it was not capable of counteracting other political and social dynamics. Congress performed much better in states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka in 2009 where MNREGA was effectively implemented. In the states where the BJP was stronger or where MNREGA faced challenges in terms of its implementation, the Congress Party struggled to maintain its support base.

The BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi, during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections criticised the MNREGA. They argued that the scheme was flawed and did not properly address the rural employment issues. The BJP was still critical of MNREGA but acknowledged its success in providing rural employment. The party shifted its stance to improve the rural infrastructure and the implementation of new welfare schemes. The BJP had performed strongly in the urban areas and states where the effect of MNREGA was not profound. In states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where MNREGA was widely implemented, the BJP faced stiff competition from regional parties that tried to benefit from the scheme's popularity. Beneficiaries of MNREGA will likely be supporting parties in the future that promoted or maintained the scheme. Resultantly, in the states where MNREGA had a strong presence, the performance of the BJP was shaped by the regional political dynamics and competition.

The details of funds allocation at the Budget Estimate stage, Revised Estimate stage and funds released under MNREGA are given below (in crores):

Year	Budget Estimate	Revised Estimate	Released Funds
2018-19	55,000.00	61,830.09	61,829.55
2019-20	60,000.00	71,001.81	71,687.71
2020-21	61,500.00	1,11,500.00	1,11,170.86
2021-22	73,000.00	98,000.00	98,467.84

2022-23	73,000.00	89,400.00	90,810.99
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[Figure 1 - Table showing funds allocation by the central government between the years 2018-23](#)

During the Congress-led UPA rule from 2004-2014, the central allocation for MNREGA steadily increased as the program expanded:

- 2006-07: ₹11,300 crore
- 2007-08: ₹12,000 crore
- 2008-09: ₹30,100 crore
- 2009-10: ₹39,100 crore
- 2010-11: ₹40,100 crore
- 2011-12: ₹31,000 crore
- 2012-13: ₹29,387 crore
- 2013-14: ₹33,000 crore

During the Congress regime (2004-14), the MNREGA budget witnessed a gradual increase from ₹11,300 crore (2006-07) to ₹33,000 crore (2013-14). MNREGA was a flagship rural employment scheme, with steady funding increases during the Congress rule. Under the BJP, there have been significant increases in the funds allocation for the MNREGA from ₹33,000 crore in 2014 to ₹1,00,000 crore (2020-21). The policy focuses on continued support and increased funding, with a focus on improving scheme implementation and addressing rural needs. BJP increased the MNREGA budget more sharply compared to Congress. After 2014, BJP kept on increasing the funds and never spoke against it unlike when they were in the opposition benches. Narendra Modi during his tenure always voiced against the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The BJP criticized the Congress-led UPA government citing massive corruption, malpractices and inefficiencies in the implementation of MNREGA. When they were in government, the BJP changed its stance regarding the MNREGA. This scheme could help them garner votes at the rural and village level, especially among the poorer sections of the Indian population who are always in dire need of work to sustain themselves and their family. Opposing this scheme could have resulted in electoral losses for the BJP. Rather, the BJP-led NDA government worked on the proper and efficient implementation of the scheme. They tried to eliminate the practices of corruption and any malice that existed in the system. The major reform was the direct transfer of money to the bank account of the individual working under the scheme. As a result, the funds will not be misused and wages will directly be transferred to the actual beneficiary. Previously, there were massive

allegations of the workers not getting their due wage, and payment of appropriate wages getting delayed.

State/UT-wise details of funds released under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS during the financial years from 2018-19 to 2022-23 (Rs. in lakh)						
S. No	States/UT's	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1	Andhra Pradesh	657110.67	720472.46	1030509.79	718267.16	798909.30
2	Arunachal Pradesh	19800.64	21020.01	34027.69	45374.43	57757.99
3	Assam	103097.37	168752.49	260233.46	222026.01	205234.84
4	Bihar	281936.01	325093.78	728423.57	540736.96	639528.76
5	Chhattisgarh	289476.07	264031.92	394347.98	389433.98	338355.40
6	Goa	48.83	216.76	356.91	3.81	511.53
7	Gujarat	102449.67	74758.23	147812.01	161524.32	169207.36
8	Haryana	34829.10	33812.58	76355.62	72267.99	37398.62
9	Himachal Pradesh	75090.72	59748.12	94833.37	97575.08	115747.62
10	Jammu and Kashmir	79334.12	118370.31	115231.99	95013.74	105061.12
11	Jharkhand	149989.63	127292.89	342408.42	306382.91	270863.73
12	Karnataka	297813.10	546271.17	550099.46	602807.73	622528.20
13	Kerala	234048.78	352016.95	428677.68	355193.00	381842.70
14	Madhya Pradesh	452909.74	471894.15	908672.51	847908.76	570213.49
15	Maharashtra	194892.31	167066.42	160025.70	205645.71	254973.07
16	Manipur	28698.66	61074.66	130673.85	56310.74	108663.26
17	Meghalaya	78903.38	102443.59	128416.59	112166.07	111691.95
18	Mizoram	39783.58	52507.57	59045.38	54891.55	53871.87
19	Nagaland	19322.98	33044.70	48382.14	56945.51	89744.90
20	Odisha	216328.30	243278.38	521529.26	568015.17	463836.25
21	Punjab	57826.49	74886.26	123913.55	125759.36	118213.27
22	Rajasthan	524471.10	726747.87	892076.25	986774.85	966299.14
23	Sikkim	9586.17	8269.34	11016.55	11241.97	9255.39
24	Tamil Nadu	488286.16	555969.31	878881.54	963813.22	970662.48
25	Telangana	295817.48	222132.13	411121.10	410519.85	298868.14
26	Tripura	43543.49	73113.77	119498.53	98888.29	92203.45
27	Uttar Pradesh	530494.79	601701.90	1201410.42	850956.51	1062900.83
28	Uttarakhand	59004.61	45580.30	88626.63	64203.24	79284.44
29	West Bengal	718525.61	850761.08	1145405.21	750780.15	0.00
30	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	761.93	583.78	485.89	763.16	960.42
31	Lakshadweep	15.97	23.82	0.00	30.05	0.00
32	Puducherry	1461.29	1691.87	2683.69	1307.28	2494.55
33	Ladakh	0.00	0.00	2248.57	5904.39	6893.31
34	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	484.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	161.87
	Daman & Diu	0.00	0.00	0.00		

[Figure 2 - State-wise funds allocation by the central government from the years 2018-23](#)

Bihar

According to the Ministry of Rural Development, Bihar was among the lowest-performing states in terms of MNREGA implementation in 2014-15. Only 29.79% of households completed 100 days of work. There was a massive delay in wage payment. Over 50% of the wage payments were delayed beyond the stipulated 15 days. Although the JDU retained power as part of the Mahagatbandhan (grand alliance), its seat count dropped significantly from 115 in 2010 to 71 in 2015 in the state elections.

Uttar Pradesh

In 2011-12, Uttar Pradesh witnessed a reduction in the average days of employment provided under MNREGA, from 44 days in 2010-11 to 39 in 2011-12, well below the 100-day entitlement. The reports have indicated that only about 60% of the allocated funds were utilized due to inefficiencies and corruption. The BSP which had 206 seats in the 2007 assembly elections, saw its tally fall to 80 seats in 2012 losing 126 seats. The Samajwadi Party won with a majority of 224 seats out of 403.

Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh ranked poorly in terms of timely wage payments in 2014-15, with over 55% of payments delayed. The average employment that was provided was only 34 days per household which was far below the entitlement. The BJP, which dominated rural areas in the previous elections, saw a reduced majority in many panchayats. Independent candidates won approximately 18% of seats, indicating dissatisfaction with the ruling party.

West Bengal

In 2017-18, West Bengal saw a significant delay in MNREGA wage payments, with more than 60% of payments being delayed by over 15 days. The state's average workdays under MNREGA dropped to 36 days in 2017-18, below the national average of 46 days. Despite winning the most panchayat seats, the TMC faced an unprecedented challenge from the BJP, which gained around 18% of the seats. The growing discontent over welfare schemes like MNREGA was a significant factor.

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana**

The main objective of the PMAY-Urban is to address the housing needs of the urban poor, including slum dwellers by providing them with affordable housing units and PMAY-Gramin is aimed at providing pucca houses with basic amenities to rural households living in kutcha or dilapidated houses. As of July 2024, approximately 1.12 crore houses have been sanctioned under PMAY-U, with over 70 Lakhs houses which were completed and handed over to the beneficiaries. By mid-May, around 2.45 crore houses had been sanctioned under PMAY-G, with 2.14 crore houses already completed. PMAY was used as a political tool to appeal to the weaker sections and lower-income groups. State-wise distribution of the sanctioned houses under PMAY-G:

- a. Uttar Pradesh - 26 Lakhs
- b. Madhya Pradesh - 22 Lakhs
- c. West Bengal - 20 Lakhs
- d. Bihar - 18 Lakhs
- e. Other States - 1.28 Crores

There was a significant number of beneficiaries of PMAY-G in Uttar Pradesh, with the scheme being a major highlight in the rural areas. The BJP saw a 5-7% increase in the vote share in rural constituencies which was partly attributed to the success of this scheme. In Maharashtra, a large number of houses under the PMAY-U scheme were constructed especially in urban slums. The BJP gained an additional 3-4% vote share in those urban constituencies which directly benefited from this scheme.

5. Role of Freebie Politics in Impacting Election Dynamics

Madhya Pradesh

The Ladli Behna Yojna which was launched by the Ex-Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Shivraj Singh Chouhan aims to cover approximately 1 crore women from economically weaker sections in Madhya Pradesh. As of early 2024, over 60 lakh women have been enrolled in the program. This scheme provided financial support to women in the form of a monthly stipend of ₹1000 per month. The state government has allocated around ₹12,000 crore annually for this scheme. The scheme includes provisions for skill development, with around 10,000 women having participated in vocational training programs in its initial phase. Approximately 5,000 small businesses have received support through subsidies and low-interest loans. Beneficiaries receive access to subsidized medical treatments; the government has allocated ₹500 crore for healthcare benefits under the scheme. The scheme provides scholarships and educational aids to about 1 lakh children of beneficiaries. The BJP saw an increase in support among women voters in the 2023 local elections, with a reported 15% rise in votes from female voters compared to previous elections. These statistics highlight the scope and impact of the Ladli Behna Yojana, reflecting its role in providing financial assistance and promoting women's empowerment in Madhya Pradesh.

Tamil Nadu

During the 2011 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, J Jayalalithaa's AIADMK party promised and delivered several gifts like laptops, colour TVs and wedding money to students. Jayalalithaa's Amma

Canteens provided subsidised meals to the poor and became a key part of her campaign. Jayalithaa's "Amma Canteens" offered subsidized food to the poor, which became a significant part of her campaign. The AIADMK won a landslide victory in 2011, securing 203 out of 234 seats in the Tamil Nadu Assembly.

M.K. Stalin's DMK has also introduced some programs, such as free laptops for students, free high-quality nutrition distribution for schoolchildren, and subsidies for various important products. In the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, the DMK won 159 out of 234 seats, defeating the AIADMK.

Delhi

Under Arvind Kejriwal's regime, the AAP introduced several initiatives, including:

- Free water up to 20,000 litres per month.
- Free electricity up to 200 units per month for households.
- Subsidized or free healthcare services at Mohalla Clinics.
- Free education and mid-day meals in government schools.

In the 2015 Delhi Assembly elections, the AAP secured 67 out of 70 seats, a dramatic win attributed to the popularity of these schemes and the perception of effective governance.

Karnataka

In the 2013 Karnataka Assembly elections, Siddaramaiah's Congress party promised and delivered several welfare schemes, including free smartphones for students, free bus fares for women, and a host of subsidies. The Congress won the elections in 2013 with 122 out of 224 seats, largely due to the appeal of its welfare promises. The BJP, under B.S. Yediyurappa and later Basavaraj Bommai, introduced schemes like free laptops for students and increased subsidies for farmers. The BJP won the 2023 Karnataka Assembly elections with 113 out of 224 seats.

West Bengal

Under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee, the TMC introduced several schemes, including:

- Kanyashree Prakalpa, a cash transfer scheme for girls.
- Rupa (free bicycle) scheme for students.
- Subsidized rice and other essentials under various schemes.

The TMC won the 2011 and 2016 West Bengal Assembly elections, and in 2021, despite criticism and allegations of financial mismanagement, the TMC retained power with 213 out of 294 seats.

6. Economic Reforms and Election Outcomes

India was faced with a severe balance of payments crisis in the year 1991, prompting the Congress-led government under the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh to initiate major economic reforms. The reforms included liberalization, privatization and globalization policies which reduced the state control over the economy and encouraged foreign investment. In the 1991 elections, the return to power of the Congress party was partly to address the economic crisis that was prevailing at that time. The reforms were necessary which the congress party adopted but they were politically contentious and received strong reactions and opposition. Despite the economic recovery, the Congress party faced setbacks in the 1996 elections partly due to the social and economic upheaval caused by the reforms. The key reforms under the BJP-led NDA government before the 2004 General Elections were focused on infrastructure development, disinvestment in public sector enterprises, promotion of the IT and Telecom sectors and economic liberalization as well. The BJP-led NDA lost the elections despite the economic growth. The campaign of “India Shining” was criticized because it did not properly address the rural distress and economic inequality. The voters felt that they were disconnected from the benefits of economic growth. In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress-led UPA emerged triumphant because of the combination of economic reforms with social welfare initiatives that resonated with the voters particularly in the rural areas. It continued the policies of economic liberalization, schemes of social welfare like MNREGA, focusing on inclusive growth and rural development. The second term of the UPA before the 2014 General Elections were marred by corruption scandals, economic slowdown and policy paralysis. The BJP led by Narendra Modi emerged resoundingly victorious. They promised economic reforms, improved governance and development which contributed to the BJP’s success in the elections. The NDA government in its tenure after the victory in the 2014 General elections initiated various economic reforms such as the implementation of Demonetisation and the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The Goods and Services Tax was launched in July 2017 with the objective of creating an unified tax system. Initially, it was disruptive for small businesses but GST was seen as a major economic reform for long-term economic stability. Although there were initial challenges, the way BJP

handled the initiation and implementation of the GST² did not significantly harm its electoral prospects in 2019 as the voters perceived the government's overall economic management system positively. Another major economic reform that was introduced by the BJP-led NDA government was Demonetisation which called for the sudden withdrawal of Rs 500 and 1000 notes aimed at curbing black money and promoting digital transactions. It led to a short-term economic disruption but was popular among the voters who perceived it as a bold move against corruption. BJP performed well in the state elections following demonetisation indicating their support for the move. It was more evident from the 2019 General Elections that the implementation of Demonetisation did not prove to be adverse in the context of BJP's electoral prospects. On analysing the electoral data, it is clear that economic reforms with effective implementation and communication positively impacts the vote share. The states with high implementation rates of PMAY and Ayushman Bharat were among those states where there was a significant increase in BJP's vote share in 2019. But, economic reform impact can vary from state to state depending on the local conditions and priorities. Narendra Modi as the Chief Minister of Gujarat focussed on industrialization, infrastructure development and investor-friendly policies. The economic reforms that were adopted for Gujarat were a determining factor in Mr Modi's repeated electoral victories in the state eventually propelling him to national prominence. The BJP state government in Rajasthan before the state assembly elections in 2018 implemented several economic and administrative reforms. However, the reforms were of no help to the BJP in succeeding in the assembly elections in 2018 which indicated the complexity of voter behaviour which is often influenced by multiple factors such as local issues and anti-incumbency.

7. Role of Regional Parties in Economic Voting

The role of regional parties in economic voting is crucial in understanding the political and electoral landscape of India as it is highly decentralized with significant state-level variations in development and economic concerns. The then Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) which is now known as Bharatiya Rashtra Samithi (BRS) emphasized issues such as irrigation projects and farmer loan waivers. They introduced the Rythu Bandhu scheme which provided financial assistance to farmers and has been a significant vote winner for TRS. This scheme was a major reason behind the TRS victory in the 2018 state elections. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in its studies has found that the Rythu Bandhu scheme has positively impacted the income of farmers and also reduced much of the financial stress and burden. It also leads to higher agricultural

² The Goods and Services Tax is a successor to VAT used in India on the supply of goods and services. Both VAT and GST have the same taxation slabs. It is a comprehensive, multistage, destination-based tax: comprehensive because it has subsumed almost all the indirect taxes except a few state taxes.

productivity and increased incomes. As of 2020, the Rythu Bandhu scheme has provided financial assistance to over 5.8 million farmers in Telangana and the annual budget being Rs 14,000 Crores. TRS in the 2018 state elections won 88 out of 119 seats, with Rythu Bandhu scheme being the game changer for garnering the farmers support.

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu has always stressed on the need for greater fiscal autonomy for the states and a fair share of the central funds. This party has always focussed on regional development and believed in igniting strong regional and state sentiments among the people which helped it in maintaining a strong voter base. The BJP, like its strong presence in the northern states, has failed to mark its presence in Tamil Nadu and the other southern states. It is also partly due to the belief of the southern voters that BJP is a Hindi imposing and dominating party which has been alleged by the opposition too. The people of the southern states have very strong linguistic sentiments. Tamil Nadu's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) grew at a compound annual growth rate of 11.26% between 2011-12 and 2018-19. The focus on industrial development, IT sector growth and welfare schemes have pushed Tamil Nadu higher in the Human Development Index (HDI), with the state often ranking among the top three in India.

Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh in coalition governments have used their position to persuade and influence to negotiate for better economic packages for the state. During the UPA I government, the BSP's support was crucial as it leveraged this for economic concessions for Uttar Pradesh. A research conducted by the Centre for Policy Research shows that the states which have strong regional parties in coalition governments tend to receive more significant central funds and projects. The allocation of the central government for schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and National Rural Health Mission (NHRM) had significant increases, benefiting the state's rural population.

Trinamool Congress in West Bengal led by Mamata Banerjee implemented several economic initiatives like the Kanyashree and Sabuj Sathi. These schemes had a significant impact on TMC's electoral performance. The Kanyashree scheme won the United Nations Public Service Award in 2017, and the TMC secured a landslide victory in the 2021 state elections. TMC secured 213 out of 294 seats, mainly because of the successful implementation of schemes like Kanyashree, Sabuj Sathi, and Lakshmir Bhandar.

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has majorly focussed on agricultural issues, demanding better prices for crops and subsidies for the farmers. It previously had an alliance with the ruling party at the centre, BJP. This often resulted in economic packages for Punjab. According to data from the Ministry of

Agriculture, Punjab has one of the largest per capita income among other states, largely due to its agricultural productivity.

Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) in Andhra Pradesh introduced the Navaratnalu scheme which includes nine welfare programmes targeting agriculture, education and healthcare, with an estimated budget of Rs 60,000 crores for five years. The scheme has certain benefits such as direct cash transfers and free healthcare, and has significantly improved the living standards, helping YSRCP win 151 out of 175 assembly seats in the 2019 state elections.

8. Voter Turnout and Economic Status

Analyzing the relationship between voter turnout and economic status in the Indian electoral context will help us understand how economic factors influence voter turnout. Voter turnout is an important measure of democratic participation, and understanding its dynamics in the economic situation sheds light on the political landscape. India's diverse economic landscape, characterized by wide disparities in income, urbanization and access to resources, affects voters in many ways. Different economies exhibit distinct voting behaviours that are influenced by factors such as access to information, political participation and the impact of government policies.

Empirical Data and Trends - Voter Turnout Statistics (General Elections)

2019 Lok Sabha Elections:

Overall Voter Turnout: 67.11%

High-Income States: Gujarat (64.11%), Maharashtra (60.8%)

Low-Income States: Bihar (57.33%), Uttar Pradesh (59.21%)

2014 Lok Sabha Elections

Overall Voter Turnout: 66.40%

High-Income States: Delhi (65.08%), Maharashtra (60.5%)

Low-Income States: Bihar (56.28%), Odisha (73.78%)

Case Studies

1. Delhi (High-Income Urban Area)

- **Per Capita Income:** INR 3,60,000
- **2019 Turnout:** 60.6%
- **Factors:** Lower turnout compared to the national average due to urban disengagement and satisfaction with economic conditions.

2. Bihar (Low-Income Rural Area)

- **Per Capita Income:** INR 40,000
- **2019 Turnout:** 57.33%
- **Factors:** High dependence on government policies and community mobilization efforts drive turnout.

3. Kerala (High Literacy and Mixed Income)

- **Per Capita Income:** INR 1,70,000
- **2019 Turnout:** 77.68%
- **Factors:** High literacy and political awareness lead to active voter participation.

Analysis and Interpretation

Motivations for Voter Participation

- **Economic Dependency:** Lower-income groups are more likely to vote as they are directly affected by government welfare policies and economic reforms.
- **Perceived Impact:** Voters in high-income areas may feel their economic status is less influenced by political changes, leading to lower turnout.
- **Community Influence:** In rural and low-income regions, community leaders and local dynamics significantly impact voter mobilization.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Addressing Disengagement:** Increasing political engagement in urban and high-income areas requires addressing issues of voter apathy and improving the perceived relevance of elections.
- **Enhancing Accessibility:** Improving voter access through infrastructure and information dissemination in rural areas can further boost turnout.
- **Targeted campaigns:** Political parties can organize campaigns to address the needs and concerns of different economic groups to increase participation.

The relationship between conversions and socioeconomic status in Indian elections is multifaceted, influenced by factors such as income, urbanization, literacy and community dynamics. While small and rural areas may benefit more from direct economic ties, urban and high-income areas may need more effort to increase attendance. Understanding these dynamics is important for political parties and policymakers seeking to engage diverse voter populations.

9. Long-Term Economic Trends and Political Affiliations

Pre-Liberalization Era (1947-1991)

Economic Overview

- **Nehruian Socialism:** After independence, India adopted an inclusive economic model with an emphasis on state-led development, focusing on heavy industry, infrastructure and self-sufficiency.
- **Five-year plan:** planned economic development with goals such as poverty reduction, self-sufficiency and industrialization.
- **Economic Challenges:** slow growth, called “Hindu inflation” (about 3.5% per year), high population growth and many problems with prices.

Political affiliation

- **Indian National Congress (INC):** Indian politics dominated during this period, focusing on state development and social welfare.
- **Socialist and Communist parties:** gained support among the working class and the rural poor and supported land reform and labour rights.

Statistical highlights

- **Growth rate:** average GDP growth of 3-3.5% per year.
- **Poverty:** About 50 to 60 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line in the 1960s and 1970s.

Industrial investment

- Focused on public enterprises, with little participation from the private sector.

Economic Liberalization (1991 Onwards)

Economic Overview

- The economic crisis of 1991: due to the burden of the balance of payments, economic reforms were introduced.
- Corrective measures: devaluation of the rupee, deregulation of industries, reduction of trade barriers and encouragement of foreign direct investment (FDI).

Impact of Liberalization

- GDP growth: rapid growth at an average annual rate of 6-8% over the next few decades.
- Poverty reduction: There has been a significant poverty reduction, with the poverty rate falling to 22 per cent in 2011.
- Global inclusion: Increased inclusion in the economy of the world, and growing abroad and increasing foreign investment.

Political Affiliations

- Congress Party: reforms initiated and associated with reform-oriented policies. It retained the support of middle-class urban voters.
- BJP: Embraced reforms, focused on social-economic policies and economic reforms, gained influence among urban and industrial areas.
- Regional Parties: emerged more strongly when governments sought autonomy to adapt economic policies to regional needs.

Statistical Highlights

- Per capita income: increased from Rs 11,535 in 1991 to Rs 197,153 in 2023. 45% in 1993 to 22% in 2011.
- Foreign investment: FDI inflows increased dramatically, from \$0.1 billion in 1991 to \$70 billion in 2020.
- Poverty rate: decreased from 45 per cent in 1993 to 22 per cent in 2011.

Post-Reformation (2000s onwards)

Economic Outlook

- **Technology and Information Technology:** India became a global center for information technology and services, due to economic growth.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Focus on improving roads, airports, ports and power supply to support economic activity.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Programs to expand financial access and digital payments, including the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana.

Economic growth and disparities

- **Regional disparities:** While some states like Gujarat and Maharashtra are doing well, others like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have lagged in development.
- **Urban-rural gap:** Urban areas experienced rapid growth, while rural areas continued to face challenges in infrastructure and employment.

Political Affiliation

- **BJP:** Made a strong presence in the cities and used economic growth and infrastructure development to consolidate its base.
- **Congress Party:** Perceptions of corruption and instability, it faced challenges in maintaining its traditional position.
- **Regional Parties:** continued to grow in influence and address specific issues and development needs.

Statistical Indicators

- **IT Sector Growth:** About 8% contribution to GDP by 2020, with major centres in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Pune.
- **Investment in infrastructure:** The country's highway network was greatly expanded, increasing communication and trade.
- **Financial inclusion:** Over 440 million bank accounts opened under Jan Dhan Yojana by 2023.

Long-term integration and economic impact

1. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

Economic policy

- Pro-growth and pro-business: policies aimed at decriminalizing, privatizing and increasing investment in key sectors. Focus on infrastructure: Major projects like Bharatmala and Sagarmala to improve road and port connectivity.
- Digital India: Emphasis on digitization and use of technology to increase efficiency and innovation.

Political base

- Urban middle class: Support is strong among urban, middle-class voters who follow business politics.
- North and West: Dominance in states like Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, where economic growth has been strong.

Statistical support

- Election results: In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won 303 out of 543 seats with major victories in urban and economic areas.
- Economic growth: Under the leadership of the BJP, India maintained high growth rates, with GDP growth of more than 7% per year before COVID-19. 2. Indian National Congress (INC)

2. Indian National Congress (INC)

- Inclusive Welfare and Growth: Focus on poverty reduction, rural development and welfare programs.
- Economic reform: privatization began in the 1990s, but later faced challenges in finding a balance between growth and social justice.

Political Base

- Rural and agricultural communities: Support rural areas, where welfare policies and agricultural reforms are the priority.
- South and North East: There is a strong presence in states like Kerala and Assam, where regional issues and welfare policies are important.

Statistical Support

- Election results: In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress won 52 seats, highlighting the challenges of regaining its traditional position.
- Poverty Reduction: In Congress, significant progress has been made to reduce poverty and expand welfare programs.

3. Regional Parties

Economic focus

- Special government issues: Address regional economic differences and cultural identities through appropriate policies. Social welfare and development: Focuses on local development, welfare programs and managing government challenges.

Political base

- State power: Strong presence in states like Tamil Nadu (DMK), West Bengal (Trinamool Congress) and Telangana (Telangana Rashtra Samithi).

Statistical Support

- Election Performance: In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, regional parties collectively won a substantial number of seats, highlighting their influence in state politics.
- State Development: States with strong regional parties often have distinct development models and policies tailored to local needs.

The long-term economic trends and political affiliations in India are deeply intertwined, reflecting the impact of economic policies, regional disparities, and socio-economic factors on voter

behaviour. The transition from a state-led economy to a market-oriented one has reshaped political alignments, with national and regional parties adapting to the changing economic landscape. Understanding these dynamics provides valuable insights into India's evolving political and economic trajectory, highlighting the importance of addressing diverse voter needs and regional challenges to foster inclusive growth and stability.

10. Recommendations

- Create an accurate and comprehensive data set on per capita income, voter demographics and election results at the constituency level
- Use advanced statistical and econometric techniques to analyze the relationship between income and election results.
- To understand local dynamics, focus on specific case studies of constituencies with different incomes.
- Encourage policies that promote equitable economic development across regions and address disparities in infrastructure and access to services.
- Considering how income interacts with other socioeconomic factors such as education, class, religion and gender as influences on voting outcomes
- Evaluate the effectiveness of welfare programs in influencing voting patterns among low-income groups.
- Encourage political groups and parties to engage with economic communities to achieve their interests and priorities.
- Work with volunteer organizations and community groups to promote voter education and political participation among minority populations.
- Support economic policy that promotes inclusive growth and reduces income inequality.
- Organize programs that focus on job creation and skill development in underdeveloped areas.
- Set up a framework to monitor and evaluate the impact of economic policies on election results from time to time.
- Use feedback methods to gather voters' opinions about their economic situation and political preferences. Feedback can change policies to better meet the needs of different economic groups and improve voter turnout.

11. Conclusion

This research paper aimed to explore the relationship between per capita income and election results in India, examining how economic status influences voter behaviour and political outcomes. Our analysis indicates that per capita income significantly impacts electoral outcomes, with wealthier constituencies often exhibiting distinct voting patterns compared to their lower-income counterparts. Economic factors such as income levels, employment opportunities, and access to resources contribute to shaping voter preferences and party affiliations.

Throughout the study, we identified several key trends. Firstly, higher-income areas tend to support parties with pro-business and growth-oriented policies, while lower-income regions often favour parties advocating for social welfare and poverty alleviation. Additionally, regional disparities in income and development levels highlight the importance of localized economic conditions in determining electoral behaviour. The interaction of per capita income with other socio-economic variables, such as education, caste, and gender, further complicates this relationship and underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach to understanding voter behaviour.

The findings suggest that policies aimed at reducing income inequality and promoting inclusive growth can potentially alter electoral dynamics by addressing the economic grievances of disadvantaged groups. Political parties and policymakers must recognize the economic needs of various constituencies and tailor their platforms accordingly to ensure equitable representation and engagement in the democratic process.

Future research should continue to investigate the interplay between economic conditions and electoral outcomes, utilizing more granular data and advanced analytical techniques to uncover deeper insights. By promoting a better understanding of the economic drivers of voter behaviour, India can work toward a more meaningful polity and strengthen its democratic institutions.

Thus, while per capita income is important in influencing election outcomes, it is only one part of a complex network of socio-economic determinants. Addressing the economic challenges faced by different regions and communities can lead to an informed constituency and the opportunity to participate in a strong and fair democratic system in India.

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