

# Himachal Pradesh 2022 Elections Analysis

## I. Introduction

The Himachal Pradesh Assembly Election 2022 was a crucial political event that determined the state's governance for the next five years. The strength of the legislative assembly in HP is 68, out of which 20 constituencies comprise **SCs** (scheduled castes) and **STs** ( scheduled tribes) and the remaining to **Rajputs, Brahmins, and OBCs** (other backward castes). Currently, Himachal Pradesh is represented by the **Indian National Congress (INC)**, **Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu**, who held the position for the last 2 years.

Over the years, Himachal Pradesh has witnessed a distinct electoral pattern for decades, where one election favors the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the next swings to the Indian National Congress (INC) every five years. This makes the state a classic example of **anti-incumbency-driven politics**, where voters ensure no party stays too long.

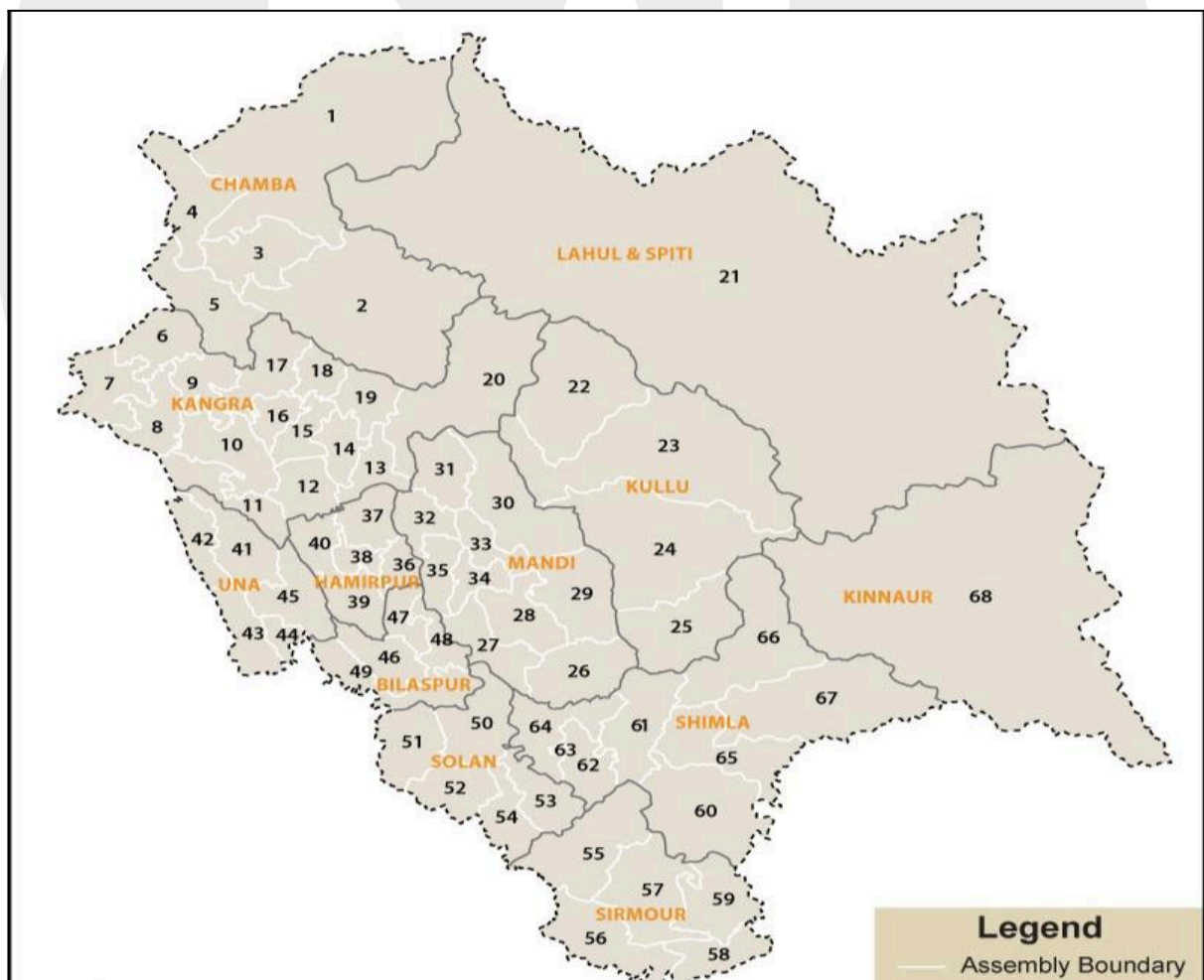
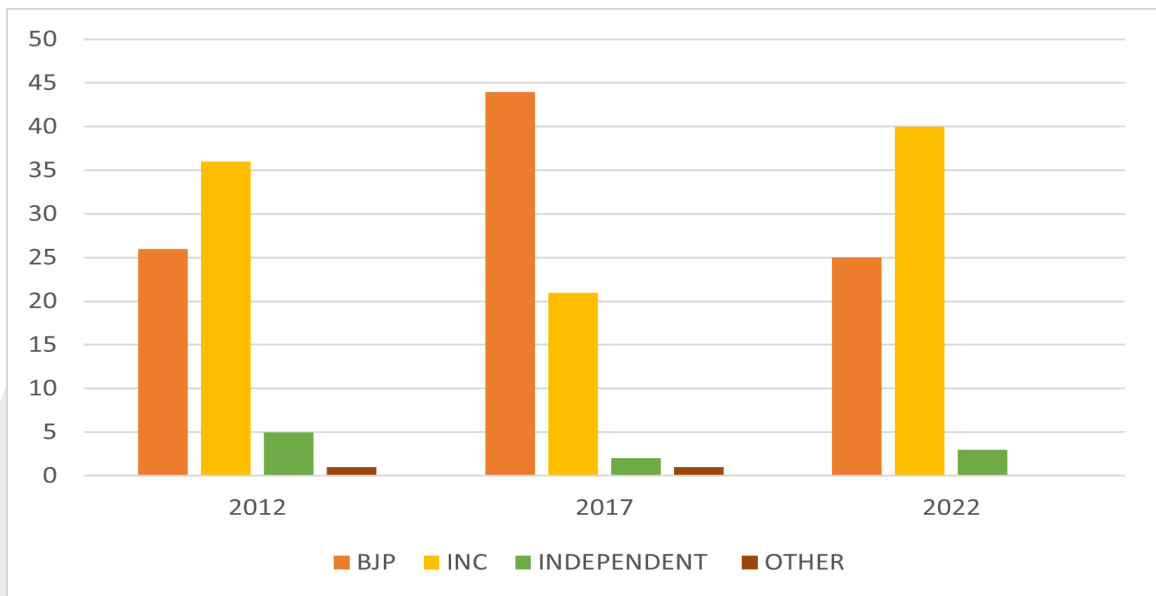


Image 1: Himachal Pradesh map

## II. Past Elections

As mentioned, Himachal Pradesh has been consecutively swung into the hands of BJP and INC every five years. The seat was with the Indian National Congress(INC) till 1985, won by the **late Virbhadra Singh**, followed by BJP's **Shanta Kumar** in 1990. In the past three elections of 2012, 2017, and 2022, **BJP's Jai Ram Thakur** won the 2017 election whereas in the years 2012 and 2022 **Inc's virbhadra Singh and Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu** respectively.



**Image 2:** Election Results

Elections	Vote share		Seat won	
	BJP	INC	BJP	INC
2012	38.5	42.8	26	36
2017	49.2	42.1	44	21
2022	43.3	44.2	25	40

**Table 1:** vote share and seat won trends in HP

## 2012 Election

Indian National Congress's **late Virbhadra Singh** won the 2012 Legislative Assembly election by 36 seats(42.8%), while the Bharatiya Janata Party won 26 (38.5%)of the 68 seats. Where Jagjiwan Paulit(GEN) gets a maximum vote of 62,507 from the district Kangra.

## 2017 Election

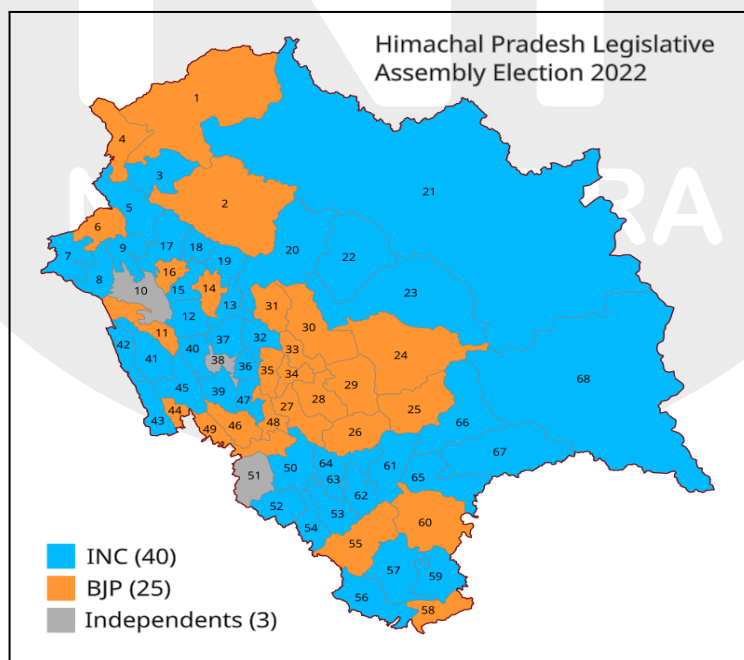
Bharatiya Janta Party's **Jai Ram Thakur** won the 2017 election by 44 seats (49.2), while the Indian National Congress won 21(42.1) of the total seats. Lakhvinder Singh Rana(GEN) got the maximum votes of 69,653 from Solan district.

## 2022 Election

Again Indian National Congress won the election of the year 2022 by 40 seats(44.2), while the Bharatiya Janata Party won 25 seats(43.3) from the total. Bjp candidate Vipin Singh Parmar had the maximum votes of 75,451 from the Kangra district.

### III. Legislative Assembly Seats in the Constituency

Himachal Pradesh has **three division** where legislative assembly consists of 12 districts with each having different numbers of constituencies seats which are Hamirpur(5), Kangra(15), Kinnaur(1), Shimla(8), Lahaul and Spiti(1), Chamba(5), Mandi(10), Bilaspur(4), Una(5), Kullu(4), solan(5), and Sirmaur(5). The last election of the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly was held in 2022, in which the majority of the seats were **won by the Indian National Congress(INC)**.



**Image 3:** 2022 Election results<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [HP Election result](#)

The 2022 election was fought after a long time in the absence of Virbhadra Singh for the Congress, who died a year before the election. In his absence, there were many other candidates to represent such as Pratibha Singh, Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu, Mukesh Agnihotri, Kaul Singh Thakur, Sudhir Sharma, and Asha Kumari. Still, HP results showed that out of the total 68 seats, 40 were won by INC by brutally defeating bjp with 25 seats. While the Congress secured 44.2% votes, the BJP lagged by **0.09%** but this cost it a loss of 15 seats. However, three BJP rebels won as independents, **Hoshiyar Singh (Dehra)**: A sitting MLA who won as an independent in 2017, joined the BJP in 2022, but quit again after being denied a ticket. He defeated the INC's Rajesh Sharma by 3,877 votes, capitalizing on tensions with Anurag Thakur's faction, **Krishan Lal (K.L.) Thakur (Nalagarh)**: A former BJP MLA (2012–2017) denied a ticket in 2022, he won by 13,264 votes against the INC's Hardeep Singh Bawa, leveraging his past tenure and local resentment against the party's choice of a Congress turncoat, **Ashish Sharma (Hamirpur)**: Denied a ticket, he won against the INC's Pushpinder Verma, reflecting discontent in a district linked to Anurag Thakur and Prem Kumar Dhumal.

## Division

### A. Kangra

It consists of 3 districts, **Chamba, Kangra, and Una**, which have 20 seats. In Chamba, out of 5 seats, 3 are won by bjp with 95,919 votes and 2 by INC with 58,772 votes. Whereas Kangra out of 15 seats, 10 are won by INC and the rest by bjp. Followed by Una, 4 seats were won by INC and 1 by bjp. In total, INC won by 16 seats in Kangra. Aam Aadmi Party also failed to get the votes from the Kangra division where the majority of people favoured voting to NOTA than AAP. The majority of OBCs and SCs vote in favor of the Indian National Congress.

### B. Mandi

It consists of 5 districts, which are **Lahaul and Spiti, Kullu, Mandi, Hamirpur, and Bilaspur**. In Lahaul and Spiti, INC won the only seat in the district, whereas in Kullu both the parties won the same seat of 2 each. In Mandi, INC was trimmed by bjp by winning 9 seats out of 10, and 3 out of 4 in Bilaspur, followed by Hamirpur, where part of Anurag Thakur's Lok Sabha constituency, has a significant Rajput population. The BJP's victory here indicates continued Thakur backing, though the INC made inroads, reflecting a competitive caste dynamic.. The elections saw the rise of **Jai Ram Thakur** (Rajput) as a strong state leader since he succeeded in securing a majority seat in the Mandi district. A Rajput stronghold, Seraj reflects strong Thakur support for Jai Ram Thakur, a prominent BJP leader and incumbent CM. Despite the statewide loss, the BJP retained this seat, showcasing Thakur's loyalty to a local heavyweight. Hence, mandi votes are mainly cast by upper castes, which made the BJP win 14 seats. Hiteshwar Singh, son of former BJP MP Maheshwar Singh, contested as an independent after the party replaced his father with Narottam Thakur. While he didn't win, his candidacy weakened the BJP's Surendra Shourie, enabling the INC's Khimi Ram Sharma (a former BJP leader) to prevail.

### C. Shimla

It consists of 4 districts, which are **Solan, Sirmour, Shimla, and Kinnaur**. In all four districts, INC won the majority of seats, making a stunning victory by 15 votes, whereas bjp won only 3 out of the total seats. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which contested the assembly polls in Himachal Pradesh for the first time drew a blank securing just 1.10 per cent of the total votes cast, and in several constituencies polling less than NOTA.<sup>2</sup>

Overall result showed that INC won 40 seats with a vote share of **approximately 43.9%**, whereas BJP won 25 seats with the vote share of **roughly 43%**.

Division	Seats	INC	BJP	Others
Kangra	25	16	8	1
Mandi	24	9	14	1
Shimla	19	15	3	1
Total	68	40	25	3

**Table 2:** Election Results by Division

### IV. Voting Pattern

Caste and religious divisions play a crucial role in determining the voter dynamics in the politics of Himachal Pradesh. In terms of population, according to the 2011 census, more than 50% of the population in Himachal is upper caste. **Rajputs constitute 32.72 %, and Brahmins 18%, Scheduled Castes (SC)25.22%, and 5.71% Scheduled Tribes(ST). OBCs are 13.52% and minorities 4.83% in the state.** Of the total 68 in the 2022 assembly election, **48 are unreserved**, out of which Rajputs have 33 seats with 18 from BJP, 12 from Congress, one from CPIM, and two independent faces.<sup>3</sup>

Rajputs have been dominating the politics of Himachal Pradesh since the beginning. More than half of the MLAs in HP belong to Rajputs, which is why the BJP and Congress mostly choose to field Rajput candidates and avoid fielding non-Rajput candidates. However, based on regional studies and political commentary, prominent Rajput sub-castes in the state include, **Rathore:** Found across the state, particularly in Mandi and Hamirpur, this sub-caste is associated with leaders like Jai Ram Thakur; **Chauhan:** Prevalent in areas like Sirmaur and Bilaspur, known for political activism and local influence;

<sup>2</sup> [AAP results in HP](#)

<sup>3</sup> [etvbharat](#)

**Jamwal:** Common in Kangra and Chamba, linked to historical ruling families; **Katoch:** Dominant in Kangra, historically significant as one of the oldest Rajput clans in the region; **Thakur:** A broader identifier often overlapping with other sub-castes, prominent in Mandi and Hamirpur, with leaders like Anurag Thakur tracing their lineage here. Apart from Rajputs, **brahmins** have made a great impact in Himachal Pradesh politics, as they comprise 18% of the population.

The Scheduled Caste population is the **second largest** after Rajputs in Himachal, where **17 seats are reserved for SCs and the remaining 3 seats to others.** Within the state, Sirmaur has the highest population percentage, over 30% of SCs, and caste-based discriminations are widely prevalent.<sup>4</sup> Himachal's SC and even the ST voters have **traditionally remained with the Congress party**, they have not been in power as chief ministers, but they often influence elections. overlooking opposition by the SC community of the Sirmaur region, the union cabinet has approved the long-pending demand of granting tribal status to the Haati community, which will benefit around 1.6 lakh members of the Haati community. The scheduled castes in Himachal Pradesh consist of various sub-castes with different socio-economic statuses and political influence. While an exact population figure can not be broken down comprehensively in public data, some key sub castes that can be inferred based on available studies are **chamar (including sub groups of jatav):** one of the largest SC sub-castes in Himachal Pradesh, They form a significant portion of the SC population, potentially around 40-50% of the SCs.

**Koli:** After Chamara, Koli has the highest population in the community, they are often engaged in agriculture and labor; **Bhamiki:** also known as Valmiki, are traditionally involved in sanitation work. They constitute around 10-15% of the sc population; **Doom:** A smaller sub-caste, historically linked to traditional occupations like music and scavenging; and **Rehgar:** Another SC sub-caste with a presence in the state, though less dominant numerically. Some other minor sub-castes include **Sippi, Lohar, and Hali.**

The ST population is not uniformly distributed and is concentrated in tribal districts and certain pockets of non-tribal areas. Major ST sub-caste include **Kinnara (Kinnaura):** Predominantly found in Kinnaur district, they form a significant portion of the ST population there. They are known for their unique cultural practices and polyandrous traditions; **Lahaula:** Residing primarily in Lahaul-Spiti district, this group is adapted to high-altitude living and has a distinct Buddhist influence; **Gaddi:** Found in parts of Chamba, Kangra, and Mandi districts, the Gaddis are a semi-nomadic pastoral community. They are one of the larger ST groups in terms of population; **Gujjar:** Scattered across districts like Chamba, Sirmaur, and Kangra, the Gujjars are traditionally pastoralists and form a notable ST sub-caste; **Bhoti/Bhotia:** These are Tibetan-origin communities living in Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur, closely linked to Buddhist culture; **Swangla:** A smaller ST group in Lahaul-Spiti, often clubbed with the Lahaula; **Hatti:** Recently granted ST status in 2022, the Hattis are concentrated in the Trans-Giri region of Sirmaur district (e.g., Shillai, Renukaji, Paonta Sahib, and Pachhad constituencies). Their population was estimated at around 2.5 lakh in 2011, potentially growing to 3 lakh by 2022, making them a politically significant group.

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<sup>4</sup>TOI

As far as the OBC population in Himachal is concerned, they may only be 13.52%, but the OBC vote may become a game changer in the Assembly elections, especially in Kangra district ( it is often said the seat power goes through the fort of Kangra) where there is a maximum of 15 seats which has more than 50% of the OBC population accounting for about 18 to 20 seats in the state. The OBC category in Himachal Pradesh includes a diverse array of sub-castes, as notified by the state government under the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment. Some of the prominent sub-castes listed as OBCs in the state include: Aheri/Ahori/Heri/Naik/Thori, Ard Pop/Popo Brahman, Bahti, Bata/Hensi/Heso, Bagria, Baragi/Bairagi, Bhat/Bhatta (with or without Brahman appendage), Bhuhalia, Chang, Chirimar, Dhosali/Dosal, Faquir, and Others. The 2022 elections showed a clear shift of OBC voters toward the INC, reversing the BJP's 2017 advantage (48% vs. 43% among OBCs). This shift was not uniform across all OBC sub-castes, with lower OBCs (e.g., artisan communities) leaning more toward the INC due to economic grievances, while some upper OBCs (e.g., landed communities like Sainis) retained support for the BJP. Kangra district, with its nine OBC-dominated seats, saw a near-even split, but the INC edged out the BJP in most close contests, often by margins below 2,000 votes.

On the other hand, what determines the voting pattern is **manifestos**, which are written statements by a political party that explain what it hopes to do if it becomes the government in the future. In the **Aam Aadmi party's manifesto**, they promised 300 units of free electricity to every household if AAP comes to power.<sup>5</sup> Further, the party published 10 promises that include a monthly allowance to women of rupee 1000, job guarantee to young youth, MSP for agricultural products, an advisory board for traders, and health and education facilities similar to Delhi.<sup>6</sup>

BJP launched the '**mission repeat**' to retain power again in the state.<sup>7</sup> Alongside, they launched the online website for the suggestions of their manifesto. The BJP manifesto includes various promises, such as, for the youth, they promised to launch the '**Him Startup**' scheme, providing employment, building 5 new medical colleges for health facilities.

In the "**Shakti**" scheme, ₹12,000 crore will be spent over 10 years to develop infrastructure and transportation around areas of religious significance. Under PM - Kisan Nidhi Yojna, an additional grant of ₹3,000 annually and Implementation of the Uniform Civil Code.

The Indian National Congress launched its manifesto with 10 promises in **Himachal Ka Sankalp**. During the campaign, Priyanka Gandhi rallied in Kangra districts where she promised 10 lakh government jobs and the restoration of the old pension scheme. In their manifesto, Congress promised 5 lakh job opportunities in HP along with the Implementation of a Rs 680 crore startup fund.

They further address upgrading health facilities as a part of its 10 guarantees in Himachal Ka Sankalp, providing quality education and monthly allowance of rupee 1500 to women between the ages of 18-60.

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<sup>5</sup> [Hindustantimes](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Thehindu](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Abplive](#)

In agriculture, they promised to buy 10 liters of milk from locals at Rs2/kg, and a new policy for tourism, the "Smart Village" project, will be started.

## Results

Jai Ram Thakur's leadership helped the BJP secure Mandi seats, also declaring him as the CM face, but the districts of Kangra and Shimla saw a big loss as the region favored the Congress. Before the elections, the BJP had an advantage due to the absence of Congress's Virbhadra Singh and the **"double-engine" slogan**<sup>8</sup>. However, the BJP failed to capitalize on this and faced challenges. The **Old Pension Scheme (OPS)** issue created strong anti-incumbency sentiment where government employees demanded the restoration of OPS, and Congress promised to bring it back. **Rising unemployment, inflation, and corruption fueled voter resentment**, and the Indian National Congress organized demonstrations throughout Himachal Pradesh as a part of its **"Mehangai Chaupal"**. The block units of the Himachal PCC protested in all the 68 constituencies against price rise and inflation. The protests were a part of the wider "Halla Bol" demonstrations organized by the Congress against the BJP-led government in Delhi.<sup>9</sup> BJP's tally dropped significantly to 7 out of 17 sc reserved seats, as the Dalit vote share declined from 47% in 2017 to 34% in 2022. Further, the **Haati community** voted against bjp due to the long-pending demand of granting tribal status to them.

Also, in the 2022 Himachal Pradesh elections, the BJP suffered a split due to the factional rivalry between the Dhumal and Jai Ram Thakur camps. These factors led to the BJP's struggle in the elections. In contrast, Congress focused heavily on local issues and balanced regional narratives with Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu from the lower Himachal belt and Pratibha Singh from the upper Himachal. Congress overcame its internal divides by projecting a narrative of **"Himachalhood."** They charged Jai Ram Thakur with pushing a Hindutva agenda, questioning his commitment to Himachali identity. The strategy proved to be a conduit for the voters and hence a struggle for the BJP. Congress's regional mandate trumped Hindutva. INC showed remarkable performance by winning 10 out of 17 sc -SC-reserved seats, and the dalit vote share rose approximately 50-52%, resulting in a shift of SC voters back to Congress.

## V. Conclusion

The 2022 Himachal Pradesh elections were a major setback for the BJP, despite the state's small size. The loss shocked key BJP leaders and ministers. On the other hand, the Congress, which was seen as weak and divided, managed to win by gaining public trust through a well-coordinated campaign. This victory strengthens Congress and the opposition ahead of the 2024 general elections.

Unlike in many other states, nationalism, security, and Hindutva did not dominate the election narrative in Himachal Pradesh. Instead, local issues like the Old Pension Scheme (OPS)<sup>10</sup>,

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<sup>8</sup> [TOI](#)

<sup>9</sup> [TOI](#)

<sup>10</sup> [The Hindu](#)



unemployment, and inflation played a crucial role in shaping voter behavior. The BJP lost support from Dalits, OBCs, and government employees, as highlighted by the CSDS survey. Despite Congress winning only by a narrow 0.09% margin, OPS turned out to be the key factor behind its success. The election also saw an increase in the use of money and liquor to influence voters. However, Congress now faces a tough challenge in fulfilling its promises, as the state's financial situation is weak. Without financial support from the central government, keeping those promises might become difficult.

