

THE POPULARITY STAKES

Rahul Gandhi emerges as the most popular political leader and the preferred choice as the next Prime Minister

Theme: PERSONALITIES AND LEADERSHIP

Rahul Gandhi's sudden rise to the top of the charts as the preferred choice for Prime Minister is a significant moment, perhaps even a turning point in India's contemporary political history. The CNN-IBN & CNBC-TV18 'State of the Nation Poll,' conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and presented by *The Hindu*, records a sharp erosion in Manmohan Singh's popularity. Having opted out of the prime ministerial race, Sonia Gandhi's ratings have continued to fall steadily. But the Congress general secretary occupies much of the space vacated by the two senior leaders. As a result, the combined ratings of Sonia-Manmohan-Rahul have not suffered.

The BJP, however, has steadily lost ground in this respect. Lal Krishna Advani has managed to occupy less than half the popular space vacated by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The popularity of the next generation of the BJP's leadership adds up to only half of that enjoyed by Mr. Advani in 2004. Ironically, when the political class faces a crisis of credibility, the ruling party occupies the top three slots in the race for the country's most powerful job.

That 19 per cent of the people feel Mr. Gandhi is the most suitable choice for Prime Minister is not really remarkable. He is still far behind the rating his mother had in 2004 and is only half as popular as Mr. Vajpayee was at his peak. But a major shift has taken place over the last two years: Mr. Gandhi's rating has jumped three-fold from a mere 6 per cent in 2009, and he has overtaken the ratings of

the Prime Minister and the Congress president, for the first time. Other indicators confirm this: two-thirds of the people interviewed have heard his name and know who he is; his general image is that of a sincere and pro-poor leader. No other Congress leader poses any challenge to him and the proportion of those who want him to take the top position rightaway is more than the combined figure of those who want him to wait and those who never want him to land the job.

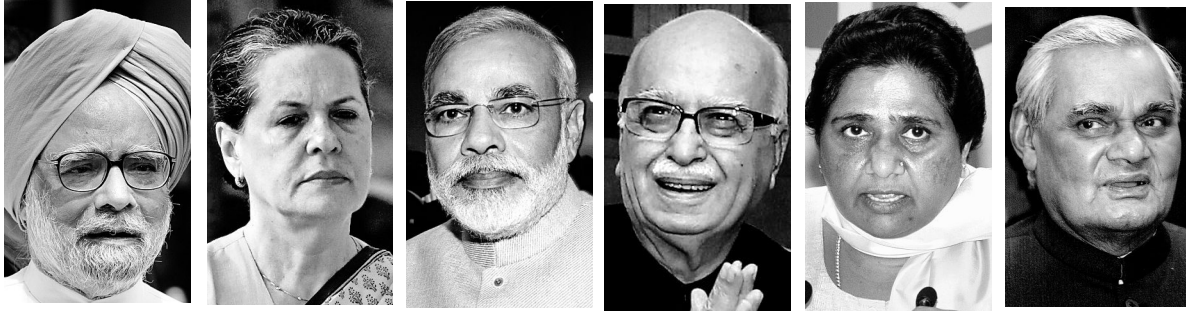

Contrast this with the sudden and sharp erosion in Dr. Manmohan Singh's public image. Though he was never a mass leader, his popularity level gradually rose from 2004 to 2009. This trend has been reversed for the first time. His approval rating as Prime Minister is more adverse now than at any other point in the last seven years. The positive image of an honest man is now giving way to that of someone who stands helpless in the face of corruption. Most significantly, those who want him to continue as Prime Minister are outnumbered by those who want him replaced.

However, this loss of the credibility does not seem to be helping any of the Opposition leaders. For the first time in the last 15 years, a period during which CSDS has continuously tracked prime ministerial choices, no Opposition leader has recorded a double-digit figure. Among BJP voters, Narendra Modi has improved his position, his nearest competitor being Sushma Swaraj. But with just 5 per cent of the people naming him as their first choice, Mr. Modi has a long way to go.

Yogendra Yadav

CNN-IBN & CNBC-TV18 STATE OF THE NATION POLL Conducted by CSDS

PRESENTED BY *THE HINDU*

NEXT PRIME MINISTER: RAHUL GANDHI MOST POPULAR CHOICE

Choice as Prime Minister	1999	2004	2006	2009	2011
Rahul Gandhi	-	1	2	6	19
Manmohan Singh	0	1	12	18	10
Sonia Gandhi	25	26	22	16	10
Narendra Modi	-	0	1	2	5
L.K. Advani	0	1	2	15	4
Mayawati	1	3	3	5	3
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	38	38	16	3	3

Question asked: After the election, who would you prefer as the next Prime Minister?

Most people want Rahul Gandhi as the next Prime Minister, three times as many as those in 2009. There is a sharp decline in the proportion of those who want Manmohan Singh retained for the country's top job; support for Sonia Gandhi has steadily declined ever since she turned down the prime ministership in 2004. Significantly, the top three prime ministerial choices are from the Congress. From the BJP, L.K. Advani's support has declined drastically, while the percentage of those who back Narendra Modi for the prime ministership has risen slightly.

DISSATISFACTION WITH MANMOHAN SINGH RISES

	2006	2007	2009	2011
Satisfied	56	63	70	56
Dissatisfied	18	16	17	24

Question asked: What is your assessment of Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister — would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied with his performance?

Satisfaction with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's performance has fallen since he became Prime Minister for a second term in 2009. During his first term, satisfaction levels had gradually risen. Two years ago, for every dissatisfied person, there were four people satisfied with Mr. Singh's performance. Now there are only two. Among Congress voters, satisfaction with Manmohan Singh is higher at 69 per cent.

RAHUL'S TRUSTWORTHY AND PRO-POOR IMAGE

	Yes	No
Trustworthy	54	16
Mature	41	28
Has concern for the poor	54	17
Has concern for farmers	53	18
Good leader for the country	53	15

Question asked: Please tell me whether you think Rahul Gandhi is trustworthy, mature, concerned for the poor, concerned for the farmers, a good leader for the country.

Rahul Gandhi is rated very highly on a number of parameters. For every person who does not find Rahul trustworthy or concerned for the poor, or for farmers, there are at least three who think otherwise. On the count of maturity too, his image is favourable but less markedly.

SHIFT WITHIN CONGRESS VOTERS AS WELL

Should Manmohan Singh continue as Prime Minister?	All respondents	Among Congress voters	Among voters of Congress allies
Yes, he should continue	22	31	21
No, he should be replaced	33	29	25
Makes no difference	16	14	9

Question asked: As above.

The percentage of those Congress voters who want him to remain Prime Minister is only slightly more than those who think he should be replaced. There is a marked preference for his replacement among those who vote for parties allied with the Congress.

RAHUL GANDHI WAY AHEAD OF UPA SENIORS

Post-Manmohan Singh preferences for PM within the UPA	All respondents	Congress supporters	18-25 yrs
Rahul Gandhi	42	57	47
Pranab Mukherjee	7	6	7
P. Chidambaram	6	5	7
Sharad Pawar	4	2	3
Digvijay Singh	2	2	3

Question asked: If the Prime Minister is to be changed and Sonia Gandhi is not willing to be the Prime Minister, who among the following should then be made Prime Minister — Pranab Mukherjee, P. Chidambaram, Digvijay Singh, Rahul Gandhi, Sharad Pawar or someone else?

As the prime ministerial choice, Rahul leads all senior UPA leaders by a wide margin. With 41 per cent of those who surveyed backing his candidature, Pranab Mukherjee with seven per cent is a distant second. Among Congress voters and young respondents, support for Rahul Gandhi is even higher.

MODI AHEAD OF OTHER BJP LEADERS

Post-Advani preferences for Prime Minister within BJP	All respondents	BJP voters
Narendra Modi	19	33
Sushma Swaraj	15	18
Rajnath Singh	7	8
Arun Jaitley	4	4
Shivraj Singh Chauhan	3	4
Nitin Gadkari	3	4

Question asked: If Mr Advani is unavailable to lead the party in the next election, which BJP leader should be the prime ministerial candidate — Rajnath Singh, Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitley, Narendra Modi, Shivraj Singh Chauhan or Nitin Gadkari?

Within the BJP fold, Narendra Modi (19 per cent) is the top choice as Prime Minister followed closely by Sushma Swaraj (15 per cent). Among BJP voters, Modi has a clear lead with 33 per cent wanting him to succeed Advani.

How to read the tables

- * All figures in percentage and rounded off.
- * Data for 2009 based on National Election Study conducted during the Lok Sabha polls.
- * Data for 2006 based on an opinion poll conducted by CSDS in July that year.
- * If figures don't add up to 100 per cent, it is because some respondents had no opinion or named someone not mentioned in the table.

Note on methodology

The findings presented here are based on a survey conducted in 19 States by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi. A total of 1,300 locations were randomly selected (four polling stations each in 325 Assembly constituencies). At 10 locations the survey could not be conducted (four in Assam due to floods, four in Chhattisgarh due to security risks and two in Andhra Pradesh). Data were not received from three Assembly constituencies in Orissa (12 locations) as the Field Investigators could not return on time from the polling stations situated in remote areas.

A total of 39,000 randomly selected persons from the updated electoral rolls were approached for interviews, of which 20,268 interviews were successfully completed. Forty six per cent of the sample were women. Dalits comprised 21 per cent, Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes) 7 per cent, and Muslims 10 per cent. Seventy three per cent of the respondents were from rural areas. These numbers reflect the representative nature of the sample, although there is a slight over-representation of Dalits and a slight under-representation of Muslims (see Table).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face at the place of residence of the respondents using a standard-structured questionnaire in the language spoken and understood by them. The voting question was posed using a dummy ballot paper and dummy ballot box to ensure confidentiality. The fieldwork was conducted between July 25 and 31, 2011.

Sample profile figures compared to Census figures

	Census 2001 (%)	Survey (%)
Rural	72	73
Women	48	46
Muslims	13	10
Adivasis	8	7
Dalits	16	21

The survey was designed and analysed by a team of researchers at the CSDS. The team included Banasmita Bora, Dhananjai Kumar Singh, Himanshu Bhattacharya, K.A.Q.A. Hilal, Kanchan Malhotra, Kinjal Sampat, Rahul Verma, Rupali Warke, Shreyas Sardesai, Vibha Attri and Yogendra Yadav. The survey was directed at the national level by Sanjay Kumar.

The survey was coordinated by scholars from the Lokniti Network: Pemmasani Narsimha Rao (Andhra Pradesh), Subhrajeev Konwar (Assam), Rakesh Ranjan (Bihar), Md. Shamsad Ansari (Chhattisgarh), Biswajeet Mohanty (Delhi), Bhanu Parmar and Mahashweta Jani (Gujarat), Kushal Pal (Haryana), B.K. Sinha and Harishwar Dayal (Jharkhand), Veena Devi (Karnataka), Sajad Ibrahim (Kerala), Yatindra Singh Sisodia (Madhya Pradesh), Nitin Birmal (Maharashtra), Satyaprakash Dash (Orissa), Ashutosh Kumar and Jagroop Singh Sekhon (Punjab), Sanjay Lodha (Rajasthan), G. Koteswara Prasad (Tamil Nadu), Annapurna Nautiyal and Jaya Pande (Uttarakhand), A.K. Verma, Asmer Beg, and Sudhir Kumar (Uttar Pradesh), and Suprio Basu (West Bengal).

MANMOHAN SINGH SHOULD BE REPLACED

Should Manmohan Singh continue as PM?	2006	2011
Yes, he should continue	40	22
No, he should be replaced	21	33
Makes no difference	-	16

Question asked: Some believe the time has come to replace Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister, while others feel he should continue in office. Some others believe that it does not make a difference whether he is replaced or not. What is your opinion about this?

Two years into his second term as Prime Minister, the balance seems to have tilted in favour of those who want him replaced. Five years ago, for every two persons who wanted him to continue, there was only one who wanted him to be replaced. Now there are three.

MANMOHAN NO LONGER 'MR CLEAN'?

Opinion about Prime Minister's image	All respondents	Congress voters
Honest man who has tried his best to control corruption	27	35
He is himself corrupt	9	7
He may be honest but he has done nothing to control corruption	31	30

Question asked: People have different opinions about Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Some say he is a clean and honest man who has tried his best to control corruption, others say he is himself corrupt, and some others say that he may be clean and honest but he has done nothing to control corruption. Which one of these do you agree with?

Manmohan Singh does not retain the squeaky clean image he once enjoyed. The percentage of those who believe that he is clean and honest is smaller than the total percentage of those who fall in the other two categories — those who believe that while he is clean and honest he has done nothing to control corruption and those who think he himself is corrupt.

OPINION ON RAHUL AS PRIME MINISTER

	All respondents
Should become PM rightaway	34
Is not yet ready to be PM	25
Is not suited to become PM	10

Question asked: People have different opinions about Rahul Gandhi becoming Prime Minister of the country. Some say that he is ready to be the PM, while others say he is young and needs more time, and yet others say that he is simply not suited for the job. Which one of these do you agree with the most?

34 per cent of the respondents want Rahul Gandhi to become Prime Minister rightaway, while 25 per cent feel he is not yet ready for the job; only 10 per cent believe he is unsuited for it. Support for Rahul Gandhi comes from all walks of life — rural, urban, rich, poor. In 2006, 34 per cent had said he was not ready for the job and should wait.

RAHUL BETTER KNOWN THAN HIS WORK

	All India	Uttar Pradesh
Rahul Gandhi	73	75
His padyatra in Uttar Pradesh	41	51
His visit to Bhatta Parsaul	30	46

Question asked: Have you heard of Rahul Gandhi? Have you heard of Rahul Gandhi's padyatra in Uttar Pradesh and visit to Bhatta Parsaul?

While a large number of respondents have heard of Rahul Gandhi (73 per cent) and know who he is (66 per cent), awareness of his work and initiatives is not as high. Fifty nine per cent were unaware of his much publicised padyatra in Uttar Pradesh and 70 per cent about his visit to Bhatta Parsaul. As one may expect, awareness of Rahul and his work is much higher in Uttar Pradesh.

