

MIT-SOG-Lokniti-CSDS survey

A mixed assessment in Maharashtra

It is quite clear that voters in Maharashtra are not swayed by either of the two coalitions yet. While a greater share of voters are satisfied rather than dissatisfied with the incumbent government, they expressed concerns about unemployment, inflation, and corruption, which are likely to dominate the electoral discourse

Maharashtra was one of the States that contributed substantially to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s setback in the Lok Sabha elections, held four months ago. Now, Assembly elections are scheduled to be held on November 20 in the State.

The rivals

The incumbent alliance, called the Mahayuti, consisting of the BJP, the Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde, and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Ajit Pawar, will expect to improve its performance. The Mahayuti government has rolled out a number of welfare schemes, which it has been aggressively publicising for the last few months.

The rival coalition group, called the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), comprising the Congress, the NCP led by Sharad Pawar, and the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), expects to repeat its performance from the Lok Sabha elections. The MVA has held the BJP responsible for splitting two main parties of the State — the Shiv Sena and the NCP — into two parties each.

In a survey conducted between September 21, 2024, and October 6, 2024, Lokniti-Centre for the Stu-



Waiting for a comeback: Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde (centre) flanked by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and Devendra Fadnis during a press conference in Mumbai. EMMANUAL YOGINI

dy of Developing Societies and the MIT-School of Government (MIT-SOG) sought to gauge the views of the public about the performance of the Mahayuti government led by Eknath Shinde, which recently completed two years in power, compared to the performance of the previous MVA government, led by Uddhav Thackeray. It also sought to tap the mood of voters in the State on various crucial issues that are bound to be central to the election cam-

aign. The purpose was not to make any vote projections, but to understand what factors may impact voters' choice. It is quite clear that voters are not swayed by either of the two coalitions yet.

More voters believe that the MVA government that was toppled was better for the development of the State and for social harmony. However, voters seem to think that the Shinde government has done better in providing key services, such as water, electricity,

and roads. In many cases, voters are willing to concede that during the last two years of the Mahayuti government, at the least, things have 'remained the same'. If things have remained the same, will voters punish the incumbent government for not improving things or will they be happy that the government did not let things deteriorate further?

Mahayuti's schemes

Overall, the proportion of voters who said they are

dissatisfied with the incumbent Shinde government was smaller than the share who said they are satisfied with it. Roughly one in every five voters are fully satisfied with the government and a little less than that (18%) are fully dissatisfied with it. The main factor in favour of the Shinde government is the reasonably large reach of the various welfare schemes floated by both the Central and State governments. It would be interesting to see if this helps the Mahayuti

The main factor in favour of the Shinde government is the reasonably large reach of the various welfare schemes floated by both the Central and State governments

overcome various other concerns of the voters. The catch is that the survey shows that among the beneficiaries of the welfare schemes, there is no clear trend in favour of the government.

The main concerns

When asked which issue will matter the most at the time of voting, nearly half the respondents mentioned unemployment and price rise. Voters think that price rise and corruption have increased in the last five years, so it is unclear who they will punish for this. But two things are clear: first, voters do not see price rise as a routine matter; they think that prices have increased specifically in recent times; and second, more voters think that corruption has increased during the tenure of the Shinde government.

For the past few years, the single-biggest burning question has been that of Maratha reservations. While there is an overarch-

ing consensus in support of the demand for reservations to the Marathas, it is anybody's guess as to how the Maratha community will react to this matter. Opinion is divided on whether the leader fighting for the Maratha cause, Manoj Jarange Patil, should field candidates. Previous surveys have shown that the Maratha vote is split among parties, but contrary to expectations, Maratha voters do not seem to be adversely disposed towards the Mahayuti. In fact, when this survey was conducted, the Mahayuti had an advantage among Maratha voters.

Thus, as the election process kicks off, the Mahayuti expects that its aggressive campaign on the issue of welfare schemes will fetch votes for it. However, the mood of the voters seems somewhat ambivalent. Overall, while satisfied with the incumbent government, voters expressed concerns about unemployment, inflation, and corruption.

The analysis and reports in this series were jointly prepared by the Lokniti-CSDS and MIT-SOG teams, which include Sanjay Kumar, Suhas Palshikar, Sandeep Shastri, Devesh Kumar, Jyoti Mishra, and Vibha Attri from Lokniti-CSDS, Delhi, and Sridhar Pabbisetty, Parimal Maya Sudhakar, and V. Lenin Kumar from MIT-SOG, Pune

Methodology

These findings are from the Maharashtra pre-poll study 2024, conducted by MIT-SOG, Pune, and Lokniti-CSDS, Delhi, between September 21 and October 6. A total of 2,607 respondents were interviewed across 39 Assembly constituencies (ACs) and 139 polling stations in the State.

We used the multi-stage random sampling design. This procedure ensures that the selected sample is fully representative of the cross-section of voters in the State. The ACs where the survey was conducted were randomly selected using the probability proportional to size method. Four polling stations were then selected from within each of the sampled ACs using the systematic random sampling method. Although 156 polling stations were selected, the survey was conducted in 139 of them. Finally, 40 respondents were randomly selected using the systematic method from the electoral rolls of the sampled polling stations. Of these, we set a target of 25 interviews per station.

Students from MIT-SOG were trained to conduct face-to-face interviews using a pre-designed mobile app. The questionnaire was translated into Marathi. Though the sample is relatively small, it is truly representative of the State's voters in terms of social composition. To correct for the under-representation of any social groups, weights were applied.

The main concerns of voters: unemployment and inflation

The MIT-SOG-Lokniti-CSDS survey sheds light on the key issues shaping voter sentiment and their preferences for political alliances in the State. In the survey, nearly a quarter (24%) of the voters identified unemployment as their primary issue, while over one-fifth (22%) cited inflation. Other concerns included a lack of development (9%), agricultural issues (8%), and infrastructural challenges (7%). This data underscores growing voter discontent regarding economic stability and job opportunities, which are likely to dominate the electoral discourse (Table 1). The concerns expressed in Maharashtra are no different from the concerns that have been expressed by citizens in the rest of the country.

Three in four voters (74%) believe inflation has increased over the past five years, while nearly half (51%) observed a rise in corruption during the same period (Table 2).

A majority of the voters feel that the prices of essential commodities have risen far beyond normal trends (Table 3). This perception of worsening economic conditions could well influence political strategies as parties shape their manifestos and campaign messaging.

A slight edge for MVA

When asked which alliance would be better for Maharashtra over the next five years, the MVA got a slight edge over the Mahayuti government. The survey highlights that unemployment could well be a key factor in shaping preferences for the upcoming election. Of those concerned about unemployment, nearly three in five (58%) favour the MVA, compared to the nearly one in three (31%) who back the Mahayuti. Similarly, those concerned about



In hope: Job seekers fill up forms during a job fair in Chinchwad, Maharashtra. REUTERS

Table 1: The most striking issues

	%
Unemployment	24
Inflation	22
Lack of development	9
Agricultural or farmers' issue	8
Infrastructural issues	7
Women safety	5
Reservation	4
Poverty	4
Corruption	3
Other issues	11

Note: Rest did not respond

reservation policies also lean towards the MVA over the Mahayuti (46% versus 26%). Support for the MVA slightly increases among voters who prioritise inflation as a major issue.

Mahayuti's strengths

Conversely, those concerned about women's safety and corruption overwhelmingly prefer the Mahayuti over the MVA. While the MVA is seen as stronger on economic issues, the Mahayuti's strengths in ensuring women's safety and anti-corruption could sway voter decisions, making the up-

Table 2: Concerns after five years

	During the last five years, this has...		
	Increased	Decreased	Remained the same
Inflation	74	7	15
Corruption	51	15	27
Establishment of new industries	27	30	28
Employment opportunities	23	41	28

Note: All figures in percent. The rest did not respond

Table 3: Rising prices of essential commodities

	%
Prices have increased a lot in recent times	60
Price rise is a normal process	29

Note: Rest did not respond

Table 4: Issues shaping choices

	Which alliance would be better for Maharashtra for the next five years?	
	Maha Vikas Aghadi	Mahayuti
Unemployment	58	31
Inflation	45	41
Lack of development	44	45
Women safety	24	56
Issue of reservation	46	26
Poverty	45	48
Corruption	21	58

Note: All figures in percent. The rest either said 'neither' or did not respond

coming election highly competitive.

Given the public sentiment on economic issues, the effectiveness with

which each coalition communicates its vision will be crucial in determining its success in the Assembly elections.

On Maratha reservation, there is near social consensus

Since the agitation for Maratha reservation under the leadership of Manoj Jarange Patil, the discussions in the State have revolved around the role that this agitation would play in the Assembly elections. In this context, the pre-poll survey attempted to capture voters' perception on the demand of reservation for the Marathas, the agitation to achieve it and social acceptability of this demand.

Influential leader

When asked whether Mr. Patil and his followers should contest the election, four out of 10 respondents said yes (Table 1). For a long time, Mr. Patil and his supporters have been threatening the existing political players with the launch of their own political outfit to contest the election. While he has not reiterated this since the announcement of the election schedule, it nonetheless shows the potency of independent Maratha candidates in the election, who have the potential to garner considerable votes and damage the established political parties in the fray.

Mr. Patil has been continuously targeting BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis during his public meetings and interviews. On the question of the correctness of the mode of protests for demanding reservation, almost two-fifths of the respondents believed that movement and strikes were the correct way of making demands. Nearly one-third of the respondents had no opinion on the mode of protest. Less than three of every 10 respondents thought that the demand could have been pursued through different means (Table 2).

Before the Lok Sabha elections, the State government had passed a new law to provide 10% reservation to those eligible from the



The man at the forefront: Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange Patil during a rally in Pune. PTI

Table 1: Opinion on Manoj Jarange Patil

	%
Heard of Manoj Jarange Patil	70
Manoj Jarange Patil and his supporters should not contest	35
Manoj Jarange Patil and his supporters should contest	40
No opinion	25

Table 2: The method of demanding reservation

Opinion on the way the demand for reservation was carried out	%
The movement and the strikes were the correct way to make demands	38
Demands could have been raised in a different way	28
No opinion	34

Table 3: The law providing 10% reservation for Marathas

Awareness about law providing 10% reservation for Marathas in educational institutes and government jobs	All	Maratha voters
Know about the law	42	58
Don't know about the law	29	22
Not sure	18	13
No response	11	7

Note: All figures in percent

Table 4: Consensus over reservation

	Maratha community needs reservation to...		
	A great extent	Some extent	Not at all
All	39	44	11
Maratha	58	35	4
Scheduled Tribes (all religions)	49	45	3
Kunbi	38	42	18
Other caste communities	31	43	11
Other OBC	28	58	12
Upper caste	27	45	20
Other Scheduled Castes (all religions)	22	55	20

Note: All figures in percent. The rest did not respond

Maratha community in educational institutions and government jobs. When respondents were

asked whether they knew about such a law being made by the State government, only four of 10 said

they knew about it. Among the respondents from the Maratha community, three fifths (58%) knew about such a law, while two of every 10 did not know about it (Table 3).

On the question of whether the Maratha community needs reservation, an overwhelming share of respondents supported the demand to some extent. Only one of every 10 respondents did not support it. Support for reservation was higher among Maratha voters, with nearly three in five strongly favouring reservation for their community and over one-third supporting it to some extent (Table 4).

The missing battle

The demand received equally strong support from Scheduled Tribe respondents and those identifying themselves as Kunbi. Among respondents from Other Backward Classes, one of every 10 opposed any kind of reservation to Marathas, while one-fifths of respondents from the Scheduled Castes and upper castes opposed it. Overall, the numbers opposing reservation to Maratha community are not considerably high. One of the perceived scenarios in the Maharashtra Assembly elections has been the pitched battle between the Marathas and the OBCs. This does not seem to be happening across the State, at least for now, on the issue of reservation to Marathas.

Comparing the governments led by Thackeray and Shinde

While the previous MVA govt. has a higher rating in terms of overall development of Maharashtra and social harmony, the incumbent Mahayuti govt. has edge in the areas of condition of hospitals, supply of electricity, drinking water, and roads

In June 2022, Maharashtra witnessed a sudden change in government, with Eknath Shinde becoming the new Chief Minister in alliance with the BJP. This Shinde-led Mahayuti government has been in power for the past two years and four months.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government, formed in 2019 through an unusual alliance, lasted for a little over two years, marred by the pandemic and internal party rebellion.

Thus, during the five-year tenure of the current Legislative Assembly of Maharashtra, two governments have ruled the State, both led by Shiv Sena leaders. Naturally, a comparison between these two governments is often made. The survey sought responses on the performance of the two governments.

When people were asked to compare the Thackeray-led government with the Shinde-led government on overall development of the State, the former had a marginally higher rating (Table 1). The Thackeray-led government had a similar edge among respondents on the question of maintaining social harmony in the State. There is a mere one percentage point difference between the MVA and the Mahayuti on the question of providing a stable government (Table 1), with one in five (21%) neither answering nor responding to the question.

On the question of improved basic infrastructure and amenities, the respon-



Banking on past performance: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray during an event of civil society members in Mumbai on October 8. PTI

Table 1: Maha Vikas Aghadi gets high rating in key governance matters

	Which government is better?	
	Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance	Mahayuti alliance
Overall development of the State	45	41
Social harmony among communities	41	37
Providing a stable government	40	39

All figures in %. The rest either said neither or did not respond

Table 2: Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti alliance gets positive rating for Bijli, Sadak, Paani

	Condition improved under...		
	Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance	Mahayuti alliance	Remained the same
Condition of government schools/colleges	35	32	24
Condition of government hospitals	33	35	25
Condition of farmers	31	23	30
Supply of electricity	27	37	32
Supply of drinking water	26	34	35
Condition of roads	24	43	28

The eight percentage-point gap between the performance of the two governments on the condition of farmers could play a pivotal role in the Assembly election, given the large agrarian base

All figures in %. The rest did not respond

dents have given edge to the incumbent Shinde government in the areas of condition of government hospitals, supply of electricity, drinking water, and roads.

The respondents were

more positive about the MVA government in the areas of condition of government schools and colleges and condition of farmers (Table 2). The Shinde-led government scored emphatically over

the Thackeray government in the areas of electricity, drinking water, and roads, with the lead of over eight percentage points (Table 2).

The MVA government scored higher than its suc-

cessor by eight percentage points on the issue of condition of farmers, while its lead was three percentage points on the issue of condition of government schools and colleges. Importantly, in most areas of development, more than a quarter of respondents felt that the performance of both governments has been same (Table 2).

Voters who did not experience drastic changes in the performance of the two governments – whether positive or negative – have the potential to tilt the political balance in the coming election. Both alliances have their tasks cut out, needing to highlight their perceived successes and point to the alleged failures of their opponents during the campaign period.

The eight percentage-point gap between the performance of the two governments on farmers' condition could play a pivotal role in the State, given the large agrarian base.

At the same time, improvements in road facilities and electricity may help the incumbent government in urban constituencies and among middle-class and upper-class voters.

On the other hand, the fact that close to half (45%) of the respondents still have positive memories of the Thackeray-led government could prove to be politically significant. However, it is also important to note that there appears to be no strong anti-incumbency sentiment against the incumbent government.

Six in 10 Maharashtra relate more to the national identity than the regional

The State of Bombay was bifurcated in 1960 into the Marathi-speaking Maharashtra and the Gujarati-speaking Gujarat.

Balasaheb Thackeray's satirical cartoons on anti-migrant sentiments gained steam with the local population which led to the formation of the Shiv Sena in 1966. Since then, the "Marathi first" identity has gained traction, including the "Marathi Manus" sentiment. This identity has strong following in Mumbai, Pune, and the Konkan coastal areas.

Unemployed youth were drawn to this demand for employment for local people at the expense of migrants from South India and Uttar Pradesh.

Pro-Hindutva party

The 1970s saw the transformation of the Shiv Sena to a pro-Hindutva party. The core base continued to be the supporters of the Marathi-first identity with the newer base coming from the pro-Hindutva voters. The Shiv Sena's pro-Hindutva position led to a long association with the Bharatiya Janata Party, resulting in it being one of the founding members of the National Democratic Alliance in 1998.

After the Shiv Sena split into the Shiv Sena (UBT), led by Uddhav Thackeray, and the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, the Marathi base continues to be strongly with the faction led by Mr. Thackeray and the pro-Hindutva base being equally distributed between the two factions.

The BJP, by itself, has been a favoured choice for the pro-Hindutva base as can be evidenced from the



Students paint posters during the Lok Sabha election. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Table 1: National identity overshadowed regional identity

	%
Maharashtrian first, Indian later	22
Indian first, Maharashtra later	58
Equally both	15

All figures in %. The rest either gave other responses or did not respond

Table 2: Has the government worked to promote Marathi culture?

	To what extent, the government worked to promote Marathi culture...			
	Very much	Somewhat	Not much	Not at all
Overall	15	35	17	11
Maharashtrian first, Indian later	15	32	18	13
Indian first, Maharashtra later	15	39	18	9

All figures in %. The rest either gave other responses or did not respond

Two in 10 believe that they are Maharashtra first, Indian later. A little over one-sixth of the respondents favoured both identities equally

electoral trends till 2019.

Mood check

In order to ascertain the mood of the respondents, they were asked the following question: Some people say that they are Maharashtra first and Indian later, while some others say that they are Indian in the first place. What do you think? Are you a Maharashtra first or an Indian first?

From the responses, we find that the national identity has overshadowed the regional identity

significantly.

Close to six in 10 (58%) respondents believe that they are Indian first, Maharashtra later as compared with two in 10 (22%) who believe that they are Maharashtra first, Indian later. A little over one-sixth (15%) of the respondents favoured "equally both" identities.

When probed further, it was found that those who prioritise their regional identity are more likely to believe that the government has not worked to promote the Marathi culture.

A higher percentage of those who supported the "India first" identity (53%) felt that the government has promoted Marathi culture compared with those who supported the "Maharashtrian first" identity (47%).

Keen contest on the cards as caste equations shape up ahead of Assembly polls



On the road: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis in Nagpur during the Lok Sabha election. ANI

A month before the Maharashtra Assembly election, the way voters from different castes and communities are polarised in the State, it shows that it is going to be a keen contest between the two alliances – the Maha Vikas Aghadi and the Mahayuti.

The Mahayuti is more popular amongst the upper castes, the Marathas, the Other Backward Classes, and Dalits. It seems to be drawing large support among the upper class voters and those who are economically well-off.

The MVA seems to be the first choice among Muslims, who constitute nearly 12% of the total voters in the State.

The MVA also leads among voters belonging to the Buddhist, the neo-Buddhist, and Adivasi communities. It also leads over the Mahayuti among the economically poor and lower classes of voters. The MVA seems to be the first

Table 1: Maha Vikas Aghadi leads over Mahayuti

	% point lead
Among Muslims	48
Among Buddhists/Neo Buddhists	44
Among Adivasis	30
Among poor classes	11
Among lower classes	5

The middle class voters are more or less equally divided

Among the farmers, Maha Vikas Aghadi is ahead by	11
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The rest did not respond

Table 2: Mahayuti is ahead of Maha Vikas Aghadi

	% point lead
Among upper castes	45
Among Marathas	18
Among OBCs*	16
Among Dalits	7
Among the upper class/rich voters, Mahayuti is ahead of Maha Vikas Aghadi by	17

*Kunbis are more or less equally divided between the two alliances

choice among a large number of farmers in Maharashtra.

It is important to note that the Kunbis seem to be equally divided between the two alliances.

As the alliances finalise their candidates and electoral strategies, the social coalitions taking shape assume significance and could well be the deciding factor in the coming polls.

Shinde-led Mahayuti government perceived as high on corruption, not bad on performance

For the past two and a half years, Maharashtra has been ruled by the Mahayuti government, with Eknath Shinde as the Chief Minister. The State holds very high political value for the BJP's national leadership. The pre-poll survey posed a few questions to assess voters' perceptions of the performance of the incumbent government on various parameters. The majority of respondents seem to be neither fully satisfied nor fully dissatisfied with these parameters, while overall maintaining an approval rating for the government's performance.

Among all areas of performance, it is only in the condition of roads and bridges that a greater number of respondents acknowledged improvement over the past five years compared with those who did not notice any change. In all other areas, a greater number of respondents said that the condition either remained the same or worsened (Table 1). These areas ranged from law and order to women's safety, as well as traffic situation, floods, and drinking water supply.

The combined percentage of respondents who felt that things had not improved or had worsened was far greater than those who believed improvements had been made. At the same time, the percentage of respondents who experienced worsening conditions was slightly less than those who experienced improvement.



Gearing up: Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde pays tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Nagpur on Sunday. ANI

level of corruption under the current government (Table 2).

Significantly, when asked whether the level of corruption had increased or decreased under the Shinde government compared with the Uddhav Thackeray government, only one in 10 (11%) respondents said corruption had decreased under the incumbent government. Two in five (42%) voters believed that corruption had increased under the Mahayuti government. This is a significant number, given that the Opposition has dubbed the Shinde government as the *Khoke Sarkar* (a government formed with the influence of money boxes).

A little over one-third (37%) responded that there has been no change in the

Table 1: Mixed assessment of the performance of Shinde government

	Under the Eknath Shinde govt., these have...		
	Improved	Remained the same	Worsened
Condition of roads and bridges	42	32	22
Drinking water supply	35	46	16
Law and order	31	42	21
Safety of women	29	41	25
Traffic situation	29	42	21
Floods	17	39	15

All figures in %. The rest did not respond

Table 2: Corruption spiked under the Shinde government

In comparison to Uddhav Thackeray government, under the Shinde government, corruption has...	%
Corruption has increased	42
Corruption has remained the same	37
Corruption has decreased	11

The rest did not respond

Table 3: Limited dissatisfaction with the Shinde-led Mahayuti coalition

Level of satisfaction with Shinde-led Mahayuti coalition	%
Fully satisfied	20
Somewhat satisfied	41
Somewhat dissatisfied	14
Fully dissatisfied	18

The rest did not respond

response to another question discussed in a different article, the Mahayuti was seen as the best suited to tackle corruption.

In fact, despite the perceived significant increase in corruption and the lack of improvement across all the given parameters, the overall level of dissatisfaction with the performance of the incumbent government is not alarming for the ruling coalition. While

six in 10 respondents were satisfied with the government's performance, one-third were dissatisfied (Table 3). The net satisfaction stood at 30 percentage points. However, four in 10 were only somewhat satisfied. This suggests that there is ample room for the political parties to campaign on the performance or the non-performance of the incumbent government.

MIT-SOG-LOKNITI-CSDS SURVEY

Maharashtra elections: do welfare schemes and leadership play a role?

While welfare schemes may have been a contributing part of the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance's strategy, their impact on voting behaviour has been limited. Similarly, while leadership may hold some influence among voters, the key seems to lie in the finer nuances of alliance politics

The Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP)-led Mahayuti (Grand Alliance) in Maharashtra appears to be banking on welfare-driven politics to consolidate voter support, a strategy BJP has successfully employed in other States. However, in Maharashtra, the performance of State-level welfare schemes has been uneven, with only a few schemes achieving significant outreach.

The MIT-SOG and Lokniti-CSDS survey sought to analyse the penetration of these schemes and their impact on vote choice.

State versus Central schemes

Among State government schemes, the Ladki Bahin yojana has emerged as the most popular one. Designed to empower women by providing ₹1,500 to each beneficiary via direct bank transfer, it has reached a considerable segment of beneficiaries. Eight in 10 voters are aware of it, and seven in 10 have benefited directly. This scheme is a success story, both in terms of awareness and impact. However, the popularity of other State schemes has been fairly limited. For instance, Balasaheb Thackeray Aapla Dawakhana, aimed at improving primary healthcare, was known to only one-third of voters, and among them, only 30% benefited. The Kisan Mitra Urja Yojana, intended to reduce farmers' dependence on diesel and increase agricultural income, also saw low penetration. Nearly a quarter have heard of the scheme and 37% have benefited. Similarly, the Mahasamruddhi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana, focused on empowering rural women through official property registrations, saw limited awareness, with just one-quarter of voters aware of it and 37% benefiting.

In comparison, Central government schemes demonstrated wider outreach. Ujjwala Yojana, which provides subsidised LPG connections, was familiar to nearly seven in 10 voters, with 45% reportedly benefiting from it. The Ayushman Bharat, offering free health insurance to low-income groups, had greater awareness, with three in four voters being aware of it, though the proportion of those benefiting was comparatively lower (35%). It was also explored whether beneficiaries of schemes were more inclined to support the Mahayuti alliance.

The data shows that both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of Central government schemes supported the Mahayuti in almost equal proportions, indicating that the alliance failed to gain an edge among the beneficiaries. For State schemes, non-beneficiaries showed greater support for the alliance than beneficiaries, except for the Ladki Bahin Yojana, where those benefiting from the scheme voted for the alliance slightly more than the non-beneficiaries (45% versus 41%, respectively).

In summary, while welfare schemes may have been a contributing part of the Mahayuti alliance's strategy, their impact on voting behaviour has been limited. Although the Ladki Bahin Yojana successfully bolstered support for the alliance, other State schemes failed to attract voters. As Maharashtra heads into elections a month from now, the challenge for the alliance will be to

Election fervour in Maharashtra

These tables elucidate how various welfare schemes of the Centre and the State might affect voter choices in Maharashtra. It also looks at whether the leadership factor plays a prominent role in selecting a party to vote for



Same hue: A man arranges scarves of political parties at a shop, ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly elections, in Mumbai, on October 17. PTI

Table 1: Welfare schemes and their popularity

Welfare Schemes	Heard	Benefited/not benefited	Voted for Mahayuti alliance
Central government schemes			
Ayushman Bharat	73	Beneficiaries (35) Non-beneficiaries (62)	42 44
Ujjwala Scheme	69	Beneficiaries (45) Non-beneficiaries (52)	45 45
State government schemes			
Ladki Bahin	80	Beneficiaries (71) Non-beneficiaries (29)	45 41
Balasaheb Thackeray Aapla Dawakhana	33	Beneficiaries (30) Non-beneficiaries (65)	28 44
Kisan Mitra Urja Yojana	26	Beneficiaries (37) Non-beneficiaries (60)	34 42
Mahasamruddhi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana	26	Beneficiaries (37) Non-beneficiaries (56)	39 49

Note: All figures in per cent. Rest either did not hear about the scheme or did not respond.

enhance the effectiveness and reach of its welfare programs to sustain voter loyalty.

On the leadership factor

With the dynamics of alliance politics defining the cut and thrust of Maharashtra's State-level politics, the leadership factor appears to be secondary. Both alliances – the Mahayuti as well as the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) – are unlikely to declare their Chief Ministerial candidate prior to voting, in order to keep their alliances intact. The MIT-SOG and Lokniti-CSDS pre-poll study provides some insights into the public mood on this important factor.

Regarding their preferred Chief Minister, the leaders of the two factions of the Shiv Sena – the former Chief Minister

(Uddhav Thackeray) and the current Chief Minister (Eknath Shinde) – account for the choice of close to half of the respondents (48%). Mr. Thackeray holds a critical eight percentage point lead over Mr. Shinde. Devendra Fadnavis is close behind, backed by one-sixth of the respondents (16%). The two Pawars (the patriarch and his nephew), however, have single-digit support (Table 2).

The emerging caste coalitions may well be reflected in the support for leaders across castes. Eknath Shinde enjoys greater support among Kunbis and other OBCs, while Fadnavis leads among the upper castes. Mr. Thackeray draws his support from Muslims, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Buddhists. If the support for the two leaders of the

Table 2: Preferred candidate for Chief Minister

Top five CM candidates	Per cent
Uddhav Thackeray	28
Eknath Shinde	20
Devendra Fadnavis	16
Sharad Pawar	8
Ajit Pawar	3
Others	11

Note: The rest did not respond.

Table 3: Candidates supported by different castes and religious groups

	Top three CM candidates		
	Eknath Shinde	Devendra Fadnavis	Uddhav Thackeray
Maratha	27	15	20
Other upper castes	20	40	15
Kunbi	34	9	30
Other OBC	32	20	25
SC	22	14	30
ST	15	4	31
Muslims	7	1	52
Buddhist	7	10	25

Note: All figures in per cent. The rest either named other leaders or did not respond.

Table 4: The urban-rural divide

	Top three CM candidates		
	Eknath Shinde	Devendra Fadnavis	Uddhav Thackeray
Rural	23	13	28
Urban	17	21	28

Note: All figures in per cent. The rest either named other leaders or did not respond.



ANI

Mahayuti is combined, the Mahayuti's leaders appear to be ahead among Marathas, Kunbis, other upper castes, and Other Backward Castes. The Aghadi leadership fares much better among Muslims, Scheduled Tribes, and Buddhists (Table 3).

Rural versus urban

Mr. Thackeray, however, appears to have uniform support in both urban and rural areas. Mr. Shinde has more support in rural areas compared to urban areas, while the reverse is true for his alliance partner, Devendra Fadnavis (Table 4). Thus, while leadership may hold some influence among voters, the key seems to lie in the finer nuances of alliance politics that are likely to play out.



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

The anecdote he told us was a knee-slapper!

My old television is on its last legs but I still don't want to give it away and buy a new one

S. Upendran

"Heard you visited your uncle yesterday. How is he doing? Much more important, how's that famous scooter of his?"
"Uncle is doing fine. The scooter, however, is on its last legs."

"A scooter doesn't have legs, my friend. It has tyres."

"You think I don't know that, genius? When you say that something is on its last legs, what you're suggesting is that it's in bad shape. It's likely..."

"In other words, it's going to break down soon and stop working."

"Exactly! My cell phone is rather old. It's on its last legs."

"Our radio has been on its last legs for several years now. Every time, it stops working, my father manages to fix it."

"I guess that's the big difference between our generation and our parents'. They don't want to buy anything new unless it's absolutely essential."

"That's true! But can 'on one's last legs' be used with people?"

"Yes, it can. When you say that someone's on his last legs, what you're suggesting he's near his end."

"In other words, the person is close to dying."

"That's right! It was obvious that the old man was on his last legs."

"Our dog is on its last legs."

"Good example. By the way, this informal expression can also be used to mean that the individual is so tired or exhausted that he's ready to collapse."

"I see. We've been walking in this hot sun for three hours. I'm on my last legs."

"I was asked to clean all three cars. By the time I started on the third one, I was on my last legs."

"I would have been on my last legs after cleaning the first one!"

"That's you! So, did you and your friends go for the play yesterday?"

"Yes, we finally managed to see it. It was good."

"That's what I've been told. Understand there were quite a few knee-slappers that..."

"Knee-slappers?"

"The term is used in informal contexts to refer to a joke that makes you laugh."

"In other words, it's a joke that makes you laugh hard and for a long time. But why is it called a knee-slapper?"

"When someone tells you a really good joke when you're sitting down, what is it that you normally do?"

"Most people laugh really hard, and some slap their knee while doing so."

"Exactly! That's why such jokes are called knee-slappers. Here's an example. I enjoy being in the company of my cousin Bharath. He keeps us entertained with his knee-slappers."

"My niece's daughter calls me 'joke mama'. As far as she is concerned, every joke I tell is a knee-slapper."

"Looks like you have a fan."
upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

Men's club football took a break last week and has resumed international matches. Quiz yourself on some stars in Indian men's football

Vighnesh P. Venkitesh

QUESTION 1

Who is known as the father of Indian football?

QUESTION 2

Which club is regarded as the first football club in India? Which sport is the club believed to have been for originally?

QUESTION 3

In which year did Indian football team set out on its first known official international tour? To which country?

QUESTION 4

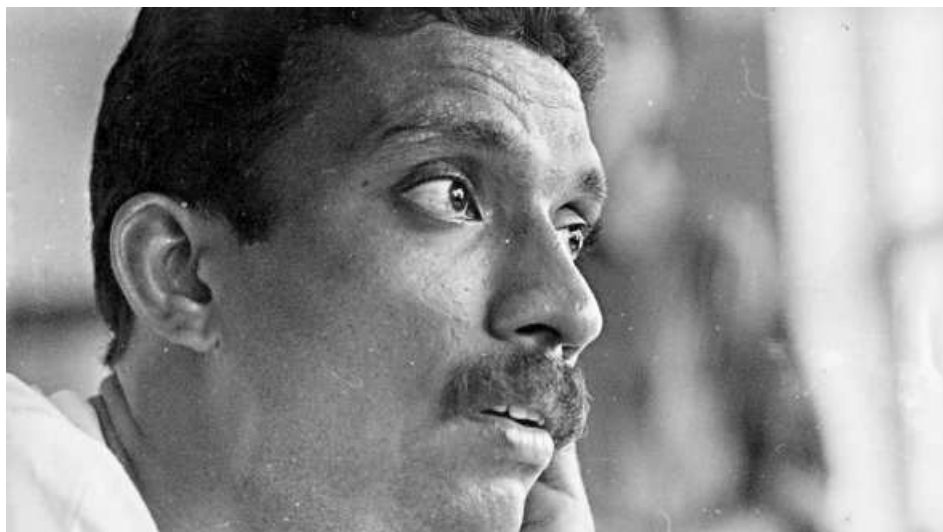
Which is the first official international tournament that India participated in?

QUESTION 5

Name the Indian footballer who scored one of the quickest goals in international football just 12 seconds after kick-off?

QUESTION 6

Nicknamed 'the Chinese wall', this person is the first footballer to win a Padma award. Who is he?



Visual question: Identify this defender who led the Indian national team to a gold medal at the 1995 SAF games. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Questions and Answers to the October 18 edition of the daily quiz: 1. The christened name of Chuck Berry. **Ans: Charles Edward Anderson Berry**
2. Berry worked at this automobile company. **Ans: General Motors**
3. This famous single was released in July 1955. **Ans: Maybellene**
4. This group's first single was a cover of Berry's "Come On". **Ans: Rolling Stones**
5. Name the number by Berry that was one of the 27 songs on the Voyager Golden Record sent to outer space. **Ans: Johnny B. Goode**
6. The title of Berry's album, released posthumously in 2017. **Ans: Chuck**
Visual: The name given to this famous movement by Berry. **Ans: 'Duck Walk'**
Early Birds: Sonali Das| Dodo Jayaditya| K.N. Viswanathan| Bharath Viswanathan| Kunal Singh

Word of the day

Disseminate: cause to become widely known

Synonyms: spread, broadcast, diffuse, disperse, distribute, propagate, circulate

Usage: The group leaders held the meeting to disseminate their findings.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/disseminatepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /dɪˈsɛmɪneɪt/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'