

## Gujarat 2014: Vote for a Gujarati Prime Minister

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### Introduction

A complete rout of the Congress in Gujarat in the 2014 Lok Sabha election was a new record as the BJP managed to better the Congress's 1980 performance of 25 seats. In Gujarat, the election was primarily fought on the issue of leadership as for the first time voters from a state were voting to elect their incumbent Chief Minister as the Prime Minister of the country. In 2014 there has been a sharp decline in the Congress's vote share as compared to previous elections while the BJP nearly touched the 60 percent mark for the first time. Since 2004, Gujarat has seen different patterns of voting in the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections as the BJP has dominated the former while the latter have been closely contested between the two parties. For the first time in many years, the Lok Sabha result seems to be an extension of the Vidhan Sabha result as the BJP seems to have consolidated its dominance in the state. The gap between the BJP and Congress which was less than 4 percentage points in

**Table 1**  
Vote Shares of BJP and Congress in Gujarat (2004-2014)

Election	BJP	Cong
2004 Lok Sabha	47.3	43.9
2007 Vidhan Sabha	49.1	38.0
2009 Lok Sabha	46.5	43.4
2012 Vidhan Sabha	48.3	40.6
2014 Lok Sabha	59.1	32.9

*Note: All figures are in percent*

*Source: Election Commission of India*

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the 2004 and 2009 Lok Sabha elections and slightly less than 8 percentage points in 2012 has now increased to more than 26 percentage points (See Table 1).

### Image Makeover of Narendra Modi: From 'Hindutva' to 'Vikas'

The transformation of Narendra Modi's image from a Hindu hardliner to a moderate leader focused on the goal of development is quite fascinating. Nationally, this story is based on the portrayal of the Gujarat model, as Modi used the state's development model as a showpiece of his larger vision for the country.

To build a new image, Narendra Modi depended heavily on corporates and the state government machinery. Within one year of the Gujarat riots Modi began his image makeover exercise. He organized the Vibrant Gujarat Global Investor Summit in 2003 and invited all big corporate houses of the country to participate and invest in Gujarat. Some of the first calls for electing Modi as the Prime Minister were heard in later Vibrant Gujarat Summits when some of the country's top businessmen including Anil Ambani, Sunil Bharti Mittal and Gautam Adani endorsed Narendra Modi as a 'Vikas Purush'. Modi's exercise of branding Gujarat and making

**Table 2**  
Opinion in Select States About the Most Developed State in the Country

	'Gujarat is most developed state' (In Percent)
Overall (21 states)	20
Gujarat	62
Rajasthan	36
Maharashtra	31
Jharkhand	28
UP	25
Odisha	23
Karnataka	21

*Source: National Election Study 2014 (Pre poll) conducted in 21 states by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies; Sample size for all states combined - 917.*

it a pro-business state got its biggest push when Tata Motors decided to shift its manufacturing plant for the Tata Nano from West Bengal to Gujarat. This helped Modi develop a pro-growth and pro employment image and sell the Gujarat model.

The success of the BJP in marketing the Gujarat model to people across the country is reflected in the fact that when in the countrywide National Election Study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) respondents were asked as to which state according to them was the most developed in the country, 20 percent said Gujarat (a state-wise break up is given in Table 2). The next state was Maharashtra at around 4 percent. Gujarat was the most preferred option in most states where the BJP managed to make heavy inroads. Gujarat was ranked either first or second in 17 out of the 21 states where the survey was conducted. In some ways these figures indicate the success of the BJP's campaign team as Gujarat is not the best performing state on most social and economic indicators. Whether Gujarat is indeed the most developed state in the country overall is a question which requires deeper research and doesn't fall within the domain of this article.

Most events of the Gujarat government after the 'Sadhbhavana Mission' organized by the state government in 2011 seemed to be a part of Modi's larger national project. Even the 2012 Gujarat Elections were considered by many to be the first hurdle that Modi had to cross before entering national politics.

### Leadership

This election in Gujarat was primarily fought on the plank of electing a Gujarati Prime Minister for the country. Narendra Modi and the BJP repeatedly raised this issue and attempted to connect it to their old agenda of Gujarati Asmita (pride). Probably, Modi's decision to contest from Vadodara along with Varanasi was also a part of this larger strategy. In his rallies in Gujarat, Modi referred to Sardar Patel and said, "Gujarat lost an opportunity in 1947 but now you have a chance to make a Gujarati the Prime Minister." He would then ask, "Will you lose this opportunity this

time?" And the crowd would reply with a roar, "No." He would ask again, "Do you want just an MP or PM?" The answer lies in the results.<sup>1</sup> What many probably failed to recall was that Morarji Desai was the first Gujarati Prime Minister. It must be noted though that this was not the first leadership driven election in Gujarat, almost all Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha elections in the last half decade have been individual centric with the BJP fighting with the face of Narendra Modi. As expected, Modi's Prime Ministerial rating in the state (47 percent) was much higher than his national average. Rahul Gandhi on the other hand was preferred by less than one fifth of the respondents. Looking at leadership related questions almost half the respondents (47 percent) felt that the BJP had good leadership. As compared to this, slightly less than a quarter (22 percent) felt that the Congress had good leadership.

Interestingly though, 55 percent of the respondents said that they would have voted for the BJP even if Narendra Modi would not have been the Prime Ministerial candidate of the party. This was slightly higher than the national average of 49 percent.

The Congress on the other hand failed to come up with any major issue to counter the personality cult of Narendra Modi in the state. Even the 'Snoopgate' controversy could not tarnish Modi's image as people hardly knew about it. Even in Gujarat there was very low awareness about this issue. A survey conducted by CSDS in January 2013 showed that almost three fourth of the respondents hadn't even heard about the controversy.

### Youth and Electoral Support

Modi seems to have made conscious efforts to win support among the youth and first time voters, an important electoral constituency in the country. In many speeches, Modi has spoken about the demographic dividend and role of the youth in economic development and nation building. He emphasized importance of young voters in electoral politics and systematically chalked out a plan to woo them.

It is interesting to note though that the relationship between age and support for the BJP is opposite to the national trend in Gujarat (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
**Vote Choice by Age Group**

Age Group	BJP	Cong
18-29 years	56	27
30-39 years	60	33
40-49 years	55	36
50-59 years	61	40
60 years and above	66	33

Note: All figures are in percent

Source: National Election Study 2014 (Post poll) conducted by CSDS; Sample size - 876

Though a majority of the youth voted for the BJP, the proportion is lower than the support the party is able to draw among the older sections. Its vote share among senior citizens (60 and above) is almost 10 percentage points higher than its vote share among the youth (18-29 years). This trend could be attributed to the fact that the party has been in power in the state for close to two decades now.

### Changing Caste Dynamics

Looking at regional voting patterns in Gujarat, until the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Congress used to do fairly well in Central Gujarat as the caste dynamics of the region were in their favour. Kshatriyas and Adivasis, who have been traditional supporters of the Congress in the state and one of the pillars of its erstwhile caste alliance - KHAM, are in substantial numbers in this region. Central Gujarat which used to be a savior of the Congress up till 2012 Vidhan Sabha elections, seems to have become a BJP stronghold now. If we compare the 2009 and 2014 elections, we can see a heavy decline in support for the Congress among Kshatriyas. The BJP managed to do well even in the Tribal belts of the state. In Saurashtra also, the BJP excelled as it managed to consolidate the dominant community - the Patidars. In the last Lok Sabha election, the Patel votes got split between BJP and Congress due to the rivalries between Kadva Patidars and Leuva Patidars. The symbolic re-entry of Keshubhai Patel (a Leuva leader) in the BJP was

one of the factors which helped the party as the former Chief Minister's breakaway outfit - GPP had damaged the BJP's prospects in some seats in the last Vidhan Sabha elections. Our data shows that slightly more than 70 percent of the Patels voted for the BJP. Winning over Leuva Patidars was crucial for Modi as the BJP had lost few Leuva Patel dominated seats including Rajkot and Porbandar in 2009. Apart from that they had trailed in many Leuva Patel dominated assembly segments. A comparison of votes for the BJP and Congress in some of the Patel dominated assembly segments throws light on this fact (Table 4).

**Table 4**

**Performance of BJP and Congress in Patel Dominated Assembly Segments (2009-2014)**

Lok Sabha Constituency	Assembly Segment	Year	BJP Votes	Cong Votes
Ahmedabad East	Bapunagar	2009	29,536	38,911
		2014	58,555	49,942
Amreli	Amreli	2009	43,523	46,842
		2014	65,094	58,028
Surat	Varachha	2009	37,730	49,348
		2014	98,813	11,995

Source: Election Commission of India (2009) and Chief Electoral Officer, Gujarat (2014)

Data from NES 2014 also shows that 'Kolis', who constitute a significant proportion of the population in the state, voted remarkably for the BJP (79%). The Kolis had been traditional Congress voters in Gujarat. While the Congress continues to enjoy a substantial lead among the Dalits, the Adivasis are almost equally divided between the BJP and the Congress. The Muslims seem to be the only community who are still with the Congress. The BJP seems to have successfully broadened its social coalition beyond the Upper castes while the Congress's social base in the state has shrunk gradually.

**Table 5**  
**Vote Choice by Caste/Community**

Caste-Community Group	BJP	Congress
Upper Caste*	95	5
Patidar*	71	25
Kshatriya (OBC)	61	34
Koli	79	15
Other OBCs	70	26
Dalits*	32	46
Tribals	41	47
Muslims	17	66

*Note: All figures are in percent \* Figures must be read with caution due to low sample size*  
*Source: National Election Study 2014 conducted by CSDS.*

### Conclusion

Coming in the wake of a series of consecutive assembly defeats, this result clearly highlights the deep rooted problems faced by the Congress party in Gujarat. The fragmented leadership has led to infighting within the party. As a result, a number of Congress leaders are joining the BJP and the party is becoming weaker day by day. On the other side BJP's future in Gujarat could change due to the change in state leadership. It would be an uphill task for Anandiben Patel to prevent any infighting in the state unit and become a mass leader comparable to Modi. A drubbing of the Congress elections at all levels has left it with a weak organizational base in the state. Earlier Gujarat was a bi-polar state but now with BJP's dominance in most local bodies, the state assembly and Lok Sabha elections, the state has almost become a one-party regime which has its own negative repercussions in the long run.

### References

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