

# National Election Study 2004

## An Introduction

*The essay introduces the National Election Study 2004 to readers of the set of papers published here which draw heavily on the findings of the study. It presents the basic methodological details so that the quality and limitations of the data can be assessed. The paper also traces the evolution of the tradition of the NES in India and discusses some of its current dilemmas, so as to invite a healthy debate on value and limitations of survey research. To this end, after marking the continuities and changes in a four decade-old tradition and noting the distinctive attributes of the NES 2004, the essay presents the sample frame, the sampling technique and the profile of the sample. It concludes by placing NES 2004 in a comparative perspective and raising some larger questions.*

**LOKNITI TEAM**

**T**he National Election Study 2004 (NES 2004), is the largest social scientific study of the political behaviour, opinion and attitudes of the Indian electorate to this date. Building on the time series data generated by the rigorous survey research tradition developed at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), NES 2004 attempts to take the series forward not merely by updating it to include the Lok Sabha elections 2004, but also by expanding the sample size and coverage, undertaking some methodological experiments and introducing new focus areas.

NES 2004 comprised a single wave of post-poll survey undertaken in the period between the completion of polling and the start of counting, a unique window of opportunity provided by the current electoral practice in India.

This was the first ever survey, social scientific or popular, of the Indian electorate to be carried out in all the 28 states of the Indian union, besides three union territories. While the immediate objective of the study was to map the behaviour and opinion of the Indian voter and help explain the electoral outcome, the survey included a wide range of secondary objectives that would continue to be of relevance to students of democratic politics in and outside India for a long time to come. In that sense the NES 2004 continues the tradition of survey research at the CSDS that has sought to use elections as an occasion or a window to making sense of trends and patterns in democratic politics. The NES 2004 also continues a more recent tradition of collaborative research undertaken by a community of political scientists drawn from academic institutions from all over the country. This was the fourth general election in a row (beginning with 1996) being studied by the group, the Lokniti network, whose members have been actively involved in survey research and have been keen students of the finer nuances of electoral politics in their respective states. This makes the recent NES series and the Lokniti network as perhaps the only instance of collaborative research in the discipline of political science in India that is spread nationwide and has lasted for nearly a decade now. Through this period, as in NES 2004, the entire research

effort was coordinated by Lokniti, a research programme of the CSDS.

The principal objective of this essay is to introduce the NES 2004 to the readers of the present set of papers that draw heavily on the findings of this study. It seeks to present the basic methodological details in a non-technical manner so that methodologically conscious readers can assess the data they are reading and be aware of their limitations. Yet, this essay goes beyond functional necessities; it seeks to summarise the evolution of the tradition of NES in India and discuss some of its current dilemmas so as to invite a healthy debate on the value and limitations of survey research in the Indian context. To this end, the essay first discusses the NES tradition at the CSDS so as to mark continuities and changes in this four decade-old tradition. Having noted the distinctive attributes of the NES 2004, the essay turns to presenting the sample frame and the sampling technique and then discusses the profile of the achieved sample so as to discuss its representativeness. After summarising some basic information concerning the research instrument and the organisation of this study, the essay concludes by placing NES 2004 in a comparative perspective and raising some larger questions. The Lokniti team is committed to methodological transparency in survey research and will be happy to supply more methodological information and technical details to any prospective user or critic.

### Three Generations of NES

NES 2004 is firmly anchored in the tradition of survey research on politics pioneered by the CSDS way back in the 1960s. The first survey-based analysis of an Indian election carried out by the centre was the Kerala Assembly Election Study in 1965.<sup>1</sup> The National Election Study in 1967 was the first survey-based national level study of political opinions and attitudes in India.<sup>2</sup> This was followed by another national level study conducted at the time of the 1971 general elections.<sup>3</sup> During the 1980 Lok Sabha elections, while the CSDS designed the all-India survey,

the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (IIPO), Delhi conducted the fieldwork. Although strictly not a part of the NES series, this survey can be used to partly fill the gap in the series. During the 1980s, survey research did not figure prominently on the centre's intellectual agenda, nor was the series taken over by any other institution. This resulted in a long break in the time series data. It was not before the mid-1990s that the CSDS revived the tradition. Some qualitative studies were carried out for the assembly elections held in 1993 and 1994.<sup>4</sup> This was followed by a survey in Bihar during and after the state assembly elections in 1995. This paved the way for the formation of Lokniti network in December 1995, initially called the Lokchintan group of political scientists and visualised as a one time coming together. The group designed the National Election Study 1996; the study was undertaken and successfully completed by the network. The study was done in three waves – pre-election, mid-campaign and post-poll, using the panel design (i.e., going back to the same respondents). Additionally, an exit poll was also undertaken with a much larger sample of 17,604. This study was widely reported both in academic circles and in the media. It was the basis for several research publications and is often cited by scholars analysing Indian politics in general and its electoral politics in particular.<sup>5</sup> At the time of the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, two waves – a pre-election and a post-poll survey – were carried out as part of NES 1998. This involved revisiting the panel of respondents sampled for the NES 1996. Yet another general election followed in 1999, and the centre reverted to the earlier practice of conducting only a post-poll survey, as this yielded a data set with longest shelf-value. In the NES 1999 the same panel of respondents, as NES 1996 and 1998 were interviewed.<sup>6</sup> Thus, a total of six waves of surveys of a nationally representative sample of the electorate were conducted in a short span of three years. NES 2004 is a product of learning from the experience of NES 1996-99.

A useful way of understanding this evolving tradition is to speak of three generations of NES conducted in India. The first generation was from 1967 to 1971 of which the 1980 study also formed a part. The NES 1996-99 series could be seen as the second generation. NES 2004 can be seen as the beginning of the third generation of survey research in the CSDS tradition. Table 1 presents the basic information about the sample size and variables in each round of the NES carried out so far. But these numbers do not tell the real story leading up to NES 2004. A quick look at the methodological attributes of the first and the second generation surveys allows us to put the NES 2004 in perspective and understand what is truly distinctive about it.

The first generation of surveys established a tradition of probability sampling, in-depth questionnaires and rigorous fieldwork that has since been a hallmark of the NES series carried out at the CSDS. The very first survey conducted in 1967, in collaboration with the scholars like Samuel Eldersveld, involved in election studies at the University of Michigan, established the basics of the NES tradition in India. A self-weighted national probability sample, representative of all the diversities within the Indian electorate, was drawn on the basis of a multistage stratified random sampling. A total of 55 Lok Sabha constituencies were selected by stratifying these on the basis of party competition types. Within these sampled constituencies, assembly segments and polling station areas were selected by following the probability proportionate to size (PPS) procedure. Finally, respondents were randomly sampled from the electoral rolls of the sampled polling station areas, with strict emphasis on non-substitution.

With minor changes, this sampling frame has remained the defining feature of the NES series. There was one major lacuna though. Women voters were excluded in the NES 1967.

This was because of the perceived field difficulties and the belief that there was no significant difference between the opinions of men and women. However, this gap was filled very soon and NES 1971 onwards women too were included in the sample. Though the sample size of the first generation studies appears small today compared to the next generation studies, it is important to remember that the sample was larger when compared to other national studies of its time and was sufficient for the purpose it was designed, namely, to monitor trends and patterns in political behaviour and attitudes at the national level. Besides, the sample was drawn very rigorously and yielded a representative sample at the national level. One of the distinctive attributes of the first generation was a combination of the cross-sectional survey with an elite survey of political opinions and attitudes carried out in 1971.<sup>7</sup> The experiment has not been repeated thereafter.

Besides sampling, the first generation of NES also established conventions of the research instrument and fieldwork. Long survey schedules with more than 250 or even 300 items involving face to face interaction for well over one hour characterised the research instruments of the first generation. The schedules used thereafter have tended to be shorter but have retained the basic orientation of the first generation surveys: election surveys were then and continue to be instruments for understanding a wide range of political subjects, and not just elections. The emphasis was on a wide range of themes of political behaviour, opinions and attitudes, with some questions on enduring values. An extensive range of background variables was used for documenting the social profile of the respondents. The first generation surveys also began the rigorous practice of carefully translating the survey schedule into all the major languages spoken in India. The first generation surveys also signalled a fundamental departure from the prevailing practice of academic surveys in North America and Europe of leaving the execution of the survey to commercial agencies. Given the state of the opinion poll industry and the rigorous requirements of the NES, the founders of NES series decided not to entrust the fieldwork to any external agency. The survey team working at the CSDS directly took charge of the survey: recruitment, training and supervision of the investigators were done by the CSDS faculty. Specially selected and trained investigators under direct supervision of the headquarters conducted the fieldwork. The sample size in NES in 1967 and 1971 allowed it to be directly coordinated by the headquarters in Delhi. The studies of the first generation thus established a CSDS tradition of survey research with many of the features continuing to guide future surveys.

The second generation of NES (1996-1999) built upon this legacy while introducing some new features. The first and the

**Table 1: Total Achieved Sample and Variables in National Election Studies (NES) 1967 to 2004**

| Year | Achieved Sample | Variables |
|------|-----------------|-----------|
| 1967 | 2287            | 342       |
| 1971 | 3800            | 255       |
| 1980 | 3789            | 71        |
| 1996 | 9614            | 183       |
| 1998 | 8133            | 44        |
| 1999 | 9418            | 119       |
| 2004 | 27189           | 160       |

*Note:* All surveys except NES 1980 were post-poll surveys conducted by the CSDS. The 1980 survey was a pre-poll survey and was conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (IIPO), Delhi.

most noticeable change was in the sample size, which was now expanded to more than double that of the first generation surveys. A self-weighted national probability sample was drawn; the expanded size ensured representative sample for major states along with national representation. As in the past, the probability proportionate to size (PPS) procedure was used for sampling parliamentary constituencies and the assembly segments. The second change was used of multi-wave surveys with panel design. NES 1996 itself comprised three waves of polling: a pre-election, mid-campaign and a post-poll survey.<sup>8</sup> Since the two Lok Sabha elections followed in quick succession, it was decided to extend the same panel for the NES 1998 and the NES 1999. The third major change pertained to the polling procedure. The second generation NES started using dummy secret ballots and dummy ballot box for ascertaining the voting preference of the voters. This innovation brought much greater accuracy to estimating vote shares than was the case in the first generation.

These methodological changes were combined with a change in the organisational structure of the NES and its funding pattern. Unlike the first generation, when the entire survey was directly supervised from the CSDS in Delhi, now the members of the Lokniti network in their respective states coordinated and supervised the fieldwork for the study. However, the data was processed and analysed mostly in the national headquarters in Delhi. With the second generation, the NES moved beyond its dependence on purely academic grants and successfully secured, perhaps for the first time for academic research on politics in India, funds from the media. Some of the leading media publications like *The Hindu*, *India Today*, *Frontline* and *Economist* supported the NES between 1996 and 1999. The media support brought greater visibility to the NES series, while ensuring greater accountability and requiring a very short turnaround time.

The NES 2004 marked the beginning of the third generation of CSDS surveys. Though the sample size was increased, the earlier practice of drawing a self-weighted national probability sample was replaced by a probability sample drawn at the state level. The sampling frame reflected the changing reality of politics: a representative sample at the national level was achieved through an aggregation of the probability samples at the level of the states. Accordingly, the sample size was enlarged by nearly three times as compared to the NES of the second generation to allow a representative sample at the level of the smaller states. Better representativeness was sought by reducing the sample size at the primary sampling unit, the polling station area, so as to reduce the cluster effect. In analytical terms, abandoning a self-weighted sample meant the use of weightages for national level analysis of the data set. The expansion in the coverage of NES had several corollaries. The number of languages that the questionnaire was translated into also increased. For the first time, some systematic attention was paid to the issue of 'dialects' of the major languages. For the first time in the NES series, the questionnaire had stated specific questions designed keeping in mind the local political issues so as to help in state-level analysis of the survey data. The organisation of NES also began to reflect the expansion in its coverage: decentralised training of investigators, intra-state extension of the Lokniti network and data entry and a limited experiment in data entry and analysis outside the headquarters helped give NES 2004 a truly national character.

Besides these, the NES 2004 made two significant departures from the established practice. For the first time, an experiment

in selective substitution of the sampled respondents was carried out. The outcome of this experiment is reported in this paper. The NES 2004 also started the practice of deciding upon a thematic focus for an NES. The focus in this round was on three themes: economic reforms, involvement in religious activity and majoritarianism.

### Sampling for NES 2004

The nearly threefold expansion in the sample size of NES 2004 as compared to its predecessor, the second generation series of NES 1996-99, was dictated by the requirement of statewise analysis of survey data. The emergence of state politics as the frontier discipline in the study of politics in India had underscored the limits to an undifferentiated national analysis of the political phenomenon. Yet, the second generation of NES did not permit a meaningful analysis of the social basis of voting in any state, save the big seven states with at least 40 seats in the Lok Sabha. The sample size was too small even for big states like Rajasthan and Gujarat. The main consideration in fixing the target sample size for NES 2004 was that it should permit an analysis of social basis of voting behaviour for all the big states (states with seven or more Lok Sabha constituencies). The target for each of these states was fixed in such a way as to yield at least 1,000 achieved interviews. While the same could not be attempted for the remaining smaller states, it was decided to do at least 500 interviews in each of these states so as to draw the basic picture of voting behaviour and opinions. Table 2 presents the statewise number of targeted and achieved sample.

While the decision mentioned above set the broad parameters, the precise determination of sample size was influenced by some other secondary considerations as well. One, given the minimums defined above, bigger states were allocated relatively bigger sample, though not in proportion to their electorate size. Two, states with greater requirement of intra-regional analysis (e.g., Maharashtra, Andhra and Karnataka) were allocated a relatively bigger sample. Three, since it was useful to select assembly constituencies and polling stations as multiples of the number of Lok Sabha constituencies in the state, that has influenced the number of interviews per state. Finally, the exact schedule of election also had its influence on the sample size. The sample size for the states of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu had to be cut down, for these states went to the polls in the final round and the 48 hours available for the fieldwork did not permit a larger scale of fieldwork. Eventually, a mix of all these considerations led to the fixing of statewise sample that totalled 35,700, a substantial increase from the sample of 15,015 selected by the NES 1996-99 series.

If the quest for better representativeness took the form of an increase in the sample size at the state level, the same resulted in the decision to cut down on the sample to be picked up from one sampling point. The second generation of NES had continued with the practice of selecting around 35 sampled respondents (an average of 20 achieved interviews) per polling station area, the primary sample unit. This led to clustering and affected the quality of the sample. It was therefore decided to reduce this clustering by picking no more than a sample of 15 from every sampled polling station area. Thus not only was the sample bigger, it was also spread much better. In all there were 2,380 sampling points in NES 2004 (compared to 432 in the previous series), a sixfold increase.

The sample was drawn using multistage stratified random sampling that has been the hallmark of the CSDS tradition. The sample for the NES 2004 was drawn using a four-stage stratified random sampling. In the first stage, 420 of the 543 parliamentary constituencies (PCs) in the country were sampled. This was a substantial enlargement from the 108 constituencies sampled for the NES 1996-99 series. In the larger states of India where there were 40 or more constituencies, a sample from among the constituencies was chosen by simple circular sampling. In most of the states, this step was skipped since all the parliamentary constituencies were included in the sample. In this sense, the selection of PCs has ceased to be a significant stage of sampling in the NES. The second stage was the sampling of assembly segments within the parliamentary constituencies. In every state, a certain number of assembly segments that form part of a parliamentary constituency were selected. This number varied from state to state – from two in most of the big states to five in some of the smallest states – but remained constant within a state and was selected so as to yield the appropriate number of polling stations and respondents. Thus, a total of 932 assembly constituencies (ACs) were selected. This was a substantially larger number than 216 assembly segments sampled in the NES 1996-99 series. The selection of assembly constituencies was done on the basis of random circular sampling (probability proportionate to the size of electorate in each constituency as per the last available election records for that state) from within all the ACs of that PC.

The third stage was the sampling of polling station (PSs) areas within each sampled AC. The number of sampled polling stations varied from state to state – usually between two to five per AC – but was constant within a state. In the 932 sampled ACs a total of 2,380 PSs were sampled. The selection of PSs was done by listing all the PSs within the sampled AC in the serial order followed by the Election Commission and using the systematic

random sampling procedure. At this state it was not feasible to apply the PPS procedure, for the data for the electorate size in each PS was not available at the time of sampling.

The fourth and final stage in the sampling was the selection of the respondents. Here the NES 2004 stuck to the NES tradition of drawing the sample from the latest electoral rolls of the selected polling stations. Electoral rolls of the sampled PS were obtained from the office of the chief electoral officer of the state or the district election office. In every polling station, usually 15 respondents, or sometimes as few as 10 respondents, were chosen from the electoral rolls by circular sampling with a random start. In each sampled polling station area, our field investigators were given a list of Sampled Respondents containing the name, age, gender and address of each of the sampled respondents and were asked to approach them. This process yielded a total of 35,360 names as the target sample.

A significant departure was made in NES 2004 from the earlier practice of not allowing substitution of respondents under any condition. This was considered necessary in view of the very poor achievement rate in the urban areas in NES 1998-99 and the severe constraints of time in some states. Accordingly, it was decided that if the investigator was unable to meet the person to be interviewed after more than two attempts, substitution of the respondent was permitted on two conditions. The substitute had to be from the same family and the same gender as the respondent being replaced. This was to ensure that the person who replaced the original respondent would be, in terms of her or his socio-logical profile, as close to the original respondent.

## Sample Profile

Table 2 also presents the basic data on the achieved sample and proportion of substitution per state. Eventually, the entire exercise yielded an achieved sample of 27,189. The national

**Table 2: All-India and Statewise Distribution of Targeted and Achieved Sample, NES 2004**

| States                     | PC  | AC  | PS   | Target | Achieved | Achieval Rate (Per Cent) | Substitution Rate (Per Cent) | Proportion of Achieved Sample | Weighted Share |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|------|--------|----------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Andhra Pradesh             | 30  | 60  | 120  | 1800   | 1398     | 77.6                     | 2.4                          | 5.1                           | 7.7            |
| Arunachal Pradesh          | 2   | 10  | 40   | 600    | 476      | 79.3                     | 11                           | 1.7                           | 0.1            |
| Assam                      | 14  | 28  | 112  | 1680   | 1549     | 92.2                     | 7                            | 5.7                           | 2.2            |
| Bihar                      | 30  | 60  | 120  | 1800   | 1191     | 66.1                     | 6.9                          | 4.4                           | 7.5            |
| Goa                        | 2   | 10  | 40   | 600    | 388      | 64.7                     | 20                           | 1.4                           | 0.1            |
| Gujarat                    | 26  | 52  | 104  | 1560   | 1106     | 70.8                     | 11                           | 4.1                           | 5.1            |
| Haryana                    | 10  | 20  | 80   | 1200   | 883      | 73.6                     | 5.7                          | 3.2                           | 1.9            |
| Himachal Pradesh           | 4   | 12  | 48   | 720    | 665      | 92.4                     | 8                            | 2.5                           | 0.6            |
| Jammu and Kashmir          | 6   | 24  | 96   | 1440   | 1104     | 76.7                     | 6                            | 3.5                           | 1.0            |
| Karnataka                  | 28  | 56  | 112  | 1680   | 1500     | 89.3                     | 7.7                          | 5.6                           | 5.7            |
| Kerala                     | 20  | 40  | 80   | 1440   | 1104     | 76.7                     | 7.6                          | 4.1                           | 3.1            |
| Madhya Pradesh             | 29  | 58  | 116  | 1740   | 1193     | 68.6                     | 4.6                          | 4.4                           | 5.7            |
| Maharashtra                | 32  | 64  | 128  | 1920   | 1494     | 77.8                     | 11                           | 5.5                           | 9.4            |
| Manipur                    | 2   | 10  | 40   | 600    | 488      | 81.3                     | 3.9                          | 1.8                           | 0.2            |
| Meghalaya                  | 2   | 10  | 40   | 600    | 471      | 78.5                     | 2.1                          | 1.7                           | 0.2            |
| Mizoram                    | 2   | 10  | 40   | 600    | 505      | 84.2                     | 19.6                         | 1.9                           | 0.1            |
| Nagaland                   | 2   | 10  | 40   | 600    | 522      | 87                       | 1.7                          | 1.9                           | 0.1            |
| Orissa                     | 21  | 42  | 84   | 1260   | 922      | 73.2                     | 18.2                         | 3.4                           | 3.8            |
| Punjab and Chandigarh      | 14  | 26  | 84   | 1260   | 862      | 68.4                     | 9                            | 3.2                           | 2.6            |
| Rajasthan                  | 25  | 50  | 100  | 1500   | 1295     | 86.3                     | 11.5                         | 4.8                           | 5.1            |
| Sikkim                     | 1   | 10  | 40   | 600    | 516      | 86                       | 0                            | 1.8                           | 0.1            |
| Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry | 20  | 40  | 80   | 1200   | 887      | 73.9                     | 8.2                          | 3.3                           | 7.1            |
| Tripura                    | 2   | 10  | 40   | 600    | 597      | 99.5                     | 12.2                         | 2.2                           | 0.3            |
| Uttar Pradesh              | 40  | 80  | 160  | 2400   | 1708     | 71.2                     | 12                           | 6.5                           | 16.5           |
| West Bengal                | 21  | 42  | 84   | 1260   | 1026     | 81.4                     | 9.8                          | 3.8                           | 7.1            |
| Delhi                      | 7   | 35  | 140  | 1400   | 1090     | 77.9                     | 16.8                         | 4.1                           | 1.3            |
| Uttranchal                 | 5   | 10  | 40   | 720    | 490      | 68.1                     | 3.1                          | 1.8                           | 0.8            |
| Jharkand                   | 14  | 28  | 84   | 1260   | 887      | 70.4                     | 5.3                          | 3.3                           | 2.5            |
| Chhattisgarh               | 11  | 22  | 88   | 1320   | 918      | 69.5                     | 0.9                          | 3.3                           | 2.1            |
| All-India                  | 420 | 932 | 2380 | 35360  | 27189    | 76.9                     | 8.5                          | 100                           | 100            |

Note: PC – parliamentary constituency; AC – assembly constituency; PS – polling station.

Proportion of the total sample achieved refers to the per cent of the total (unweighted) national sample achieved in a state, while weighted share refers to the post-weightage share of the sample from a certain state that duly reflects its share in the national electorate.

achieved rate was thus 76.9 per cent, a substantial improvement from the achieved rate of 62.7 per cent in the NES 1996-99 series. The statewise achieved rate was around the national mean. Thus the sample size for each state broadly fulfilled the original expectation: there are more than 1,000 completed interviews for as many as 13 states (including the NCT of Delhi), between 800 and 1,000 for another six states and around 500 for the remaining 10. The rate of completion was unusually high in some small states like Assam, Himachal Pradesh and Tripura. It is possible that the electoral rolls in these states were more authentic and updated compared to other states, thus enhancing the possibility of interviewing the persons on the rolls. Yet, the abnormally high level of achieved in these states suggests another possibility: the proportion of substitution in the field may have been higher than reported. At the lower end of the achieved rate, there are no highly unusual cases that need explanation.

If the final achieved sample of NES 2004 was satisfactory, some of it could be credited to the substitution experiment. Substitution explains an overwhelming proportion of the rise in achieved rate between the last and the current series. It is also encouraging to note that substitution was limited to a modest proportion of 8.5 per cent of the final achieved sample (6.5 per cent of the target sample) and that there was no indiscriminate replacement of respondents in the original sample. At the same time it needs to be noted that the variation in substitution rates across different states was quite high and without an obvious pattern. Substitution was exceptionally high in the states of Goa, Orissa, Mizoram and Delhi while it was abnormally low in Sikkim, Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya and Andhra Pradesh. This indicates that different survey teams in different states may have interpreted and applied the substitution rules with varying degrees of strictness; this may also reflect some degree of error in coding and thus masking of some substituted respondents. The jury is still out on the substitution experiment. One of the crucial and still unsettled question is the effect of the substitution on the social profile of the sampled respondents. This requires further research.

Finally we can turn to the representativeness of the NES 2004 in terms of its social and partisan profile. Tables 3 and 4 present the profile of the achieved sample by its demographic profile and compares it to the data released by Census of India 2001. In terms of the broad demographic categories and at the national level, the profile of the NES 2004 appears quite satisfactory as all major social groups found a fair representation within the sample of the NES 2004. But a close look at some of the key variables reveals noteworthy discrepancies. There was a slight over-representation of men in NES 2004, a reversal of the pattern in NES 1996-99.

Apparently, the new substitution rule had helped the investigators to make up for the work or migration-related non-availability of a larger proportion of men in the earlier NES. Among the substituted sample, men are disproportionately large. This cancelling out seems to have weighed the scales against women who tend to have a higher refusal rate. As far as the urban/rural division is concerned, NES 2004 continues the earlier pattern of the rural areas being significantly over-represented in comparison to the census figures. Like the earlier surveys, the problem lies to a small extent in a lower achieved rate in urban areas and to a greater extent in the opacity of the census classification at the ground. The census distinction between a class IV and class V town on the one hand and a village on the other is not obvious to an investigator, which results in many 'urban'

localities being classified as rural. It is to be noted that the over-reporting of the rural cuts across all the states. Therefore it does not seem that we are dealing with a sampling bias except in a state like Tamil Nadu where the gap is unusually big. Yet the consistent gap between survey and census figures calls for better survey classification to match it with the census definition.

In caste-community terms too, the NES 2004 sample is fairly representative at the national level. Table 4 presents the profile of the NES 2004 sample by major religious communities, dalits (scheduled caste) and adivasis (scheduled tribe) for all the states. It shows a small degree of under-sampling of Muslims and over-sampling of dalits. This pattern is consistent across most of the states, but it is not clear what the explanation could be. The adivasis are reflected most accurately as they live in concentrated pockets and their recognition and classification in those areas poses little difficulty. Even at the state level, major communities have been represented in fair proportions. A close look at this table gives at lot of confidence in the representativeness of the achieved sample and suggests that the discrepancies that we notice between NES 2004 and official statistics may have less to do with sampling errors and more to do with classifications and coding, etc.

In party-political terms too the NES 2004 captures the existing divisions fairly well at the national level. Table 5 presents a statewise comparison of actual vote share for major parties as captured by the official data and the raw vote preference reported in our post-poll survey carried out with the help of dummy ballot paper and box. The reported vote overestimates both the leading alliances and – as is always the case with academic and non-academic surveys – underestimates smaller parties and independent candidates. But it captures the relationship between the UPA and the NDA very accurately: the final raw figures show the UPA with a lead of less than 1 percentage point over the NDA, a near

**Table 3: Comparison of the Profile of NES 2004 with Census 2001 by Gender and Locality by States**

| States            | Men    |        | Women  |        | Rural  |        | Urban  |        |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                   | Census | Survey | Census | Survey | Census | Survey | Census | Survey |
| Andhra Pradesh    | 50.6   | 50.2   | 49.5   | 49.8   | 72.7   | 84.5   | 27.3   | 15.5   |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 52.8   | 55.3   | 47.2   | 44.7   | 79.2   | 85.5   | 20.8   | 14.5   |
| Assam             | 51.7   | 52.1   | 48.3   | 47.9   | 87.1   | 85.7   | 12.9   | 14.3   |
| Bihar             | 52.1   | 56.8   | 47.9   | 43.2   | 89.5   | 86.5   | 10.5   | 13.5   |
| Chhattisgarh      | 50.3   | 55.0   | 49.7   | 45.0   | 79.9   | 84.6   | 20.1   | 15.4   |
| Goa               | 51.0   | 47.9   | 49.0   | 52.1   | 50.2   | 77.8   | 49.8   | 22.2   |
| Gujarat           | 52.1   | 49.5   | 47.9   | 50.5   | 62.6   | 74.5   | 37.4   | 25.5   |
| Haryana           | 53.7   | 57.1   | 46.3   | 42.9   | 71.1   | 81.8   | 28.9   | 18.2   |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 50.8   | 51.5   | 49.2   | 48.5   | 90.2   | 96.5   | 9.8    | 3.5    |
| Jammu and Kashmir | 52.9   | 65.5   | 47.2   | 34.5   | 75.2   | 75.1   | 24.8   | 24.9   |
| Jharkhand         | 51.5   | 59.5   | 48.5   | 40.5   | 77.8   | 80.7   | 22.2   | 19.3   |
| Karnataka         | 50.9   | 51.5   | 49.1   | 48.5   | 66.0   | 75.2   | 34.0   | 24.8   |
| Kerala            | 48.6   | 46.8   | 51.4   | 53.2   | 74.0   | 85.2   | 26.0   | 14.8   |
| Madhya Pradesh    | 52.1   | 55.4   | 47.9   | 44.6   | 73.5   | 82.1   | 26.5   | 17.9   |
| Maharashtra       | 52.0   | 50.9   | 48.0   | 49.1   | 57.6   | 67.4   | 42.4   | 32.6   |
| Manipur           | 50.6   | 49.4   | 49.4   | 50.6   | 73.4   | 74.2   | 26.6   | 25.8   |
| Meghalaya         | 50.7   | 49.3   | 49.3   | 50.7   | 80.4   | 94.3   | 19.6   | 5.7    |
| Mizoram           | 51.7   | 50.3   | 48.3   | 49.7   | 50.4   | 65.9   | 49.6   | 34.1   |
| Nagaland          | 52.6   | 58.6   | 47.4   | 41.4   | 82.8   | 75.7   | 17.2   | 24.3   |
| Orissa            | 50.7   | 55.5   | 49.3   | 44.5   | 85.0   | 73.1   | 15.0   | 26.9   |
| Punjab            | 53.3   | 58.4   | 46.7   | 41.6   | 66.1   | 71.7   | 33.9   | 28.3   |
| Rajasthan         | 52.1   | 52.3   | 47.9   | 47.7   | 76.6   | 84.5   | 23.4   | 15.5   |
| Sikkim            | 53.3   | 51.2   | 46.7   | 48.8   | 88.9   | 82.8   | 11.1   | 17.2   |
| Tamil Nadu        | 50.3   | 52.3   | 49.7   | 47.7   | 56.0   | 83.2   | 44.0   | 16.8   |
| Tripura           | 51.3   | 52.6   | 48.7   | 47.4   | 82.9   | 82.1   | 17.1   | 17.9   |
| Uttar Pradesh     | 52.7   | 54.4   | 47.3   | 45.6   | 79.2   | 84.0   | 20.8   | 16.0   |
| Uttaranchal       | 51.0   | 56.3   | 49.0   | 43.7   | 74.3   | 84.9   | 25.7   | 15.1   |
| West Bengal       | 51.7   | 54.5   | 48.3   | 45.5   | 72.0   | 69.4   | 28.0   | 30.6   |
| Chandigarh        | 56.3   | 50.0   | 43.7   | 50.0   | 10.2   | 20.8   | 89.8   | 79.2   |
| Delhi             | 54.9   | 57.2   | 45.1   | 42.8   | 6.8    | 8.4    | 93.2   | 91.6   |
| Pondicherry       | 50.0   | 46.5   | 50.0   | 53.5   | 33.4   | 0.0    | 66.6   | 100.0  |
| All-India         | 51.7   | 53.5   | 48.3   | 46.5   | 72.2   | 78.6   | 27.8   | 21.4   |

perfect anticipation of the actual outcome. In its ability to capture the national vote division fairly accurately, the NES 2004 represents an advance over the practices of the NES in the first and the second generation. As already noted, this accuracy is a function of the use of 'secret' ballot and dummy boxes along with the timing of the survey in-between polling and counting.

The accuracy at the national level is the end product of various errors at the state level cancelling each other out. A close analysis of the state-level reported and actual vote share brings out some major discrepancies in states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, etc. On the other hand, states like Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh present instances of a fairly accurate assessment of vote divisions. The disturbing pattern is that there is no direct connection between a bigger sample and greater accuracy. It is safe to conclude therefore that while the estimates are robust for purposes of analysis, the post-poll survey of this size cannot be the basis of a forecast of the outcome at the state level. This, of course, was not the objective of the survey. Nor are the inaccuracies of an order that cannot be corrected by weightage. In order to deal with the distortion introduced by the inaccuracy of estimates, and the resultant partisan bias at local level, all the state level data reported in this collection of papers have been weighted by actual vote share. For analysis, both at the national level and at the state level, the data sets are weighted by actual vote shares to eliminate any partisan or biases.

### Questionnaire and Fieldwork

The questionnaire that was administered by our investigators was designed after thorough and rigorous debates within the Lokniti network. A special meeting of the network was called in Pune to discuss NES 2004. After the network approved the basic design, time schedule and thrust areas, the questionnaire committee met in Delhi. Finally, an expert group met several times at the CSDS to finalise the questionnaire. In each of the meetings, the expert group debated the wording of different

questions. In all, eleven drafts of the questionnaire were prepared. A pilot survey was conducted in some urban and rural areas of Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh where the questionnaire was pre-tested. The end product was a questionnaire that included 52 questions (112 items) besides 43 background items.

A few standard questions administered in all election surveys and those used with great success in our previous surveys were included. Questions like those, which assess the electorate's faith in democracy were retained as they permit a comparative analysis across time and countries. A new set of questions, which would help gauge popular response to issues of contemporary relevance and political significance, were also added. Another new feature of NES 2004 was that the questionnaire in each state had a few questions specific to the political issues of that state. These questions focused on state level issues, performance of the state government and peoples' opinion about the states' political leaders. Besides background variables, the first 52 questions were common to all states, which were followed by eight to ten state specific questions. These state specific questions were instrumental in analysing the verdict at the state level.

One of the distinguishing features of the NES series has been the attention paid to communicating the nuances of the questions to the respondents. Therefore the questionnaire was translated into 19 Indian languages. Great care was taken to ensure that the most appropriate colloquial terms were used and were heard similarly in different languages. If there was any other language or dialect in which we anticipated more than 100 interviews, key terms were translated into that language or dialect.

An elaborate survey team was in place for the study. Each state had a state coordinator. The state coordinator was a senior social scientist and a member of the Lokniti network. The state coordinator was asked to identify state supervisors to assist in the conduct of the survey. The field investigators for the study were chosen with great care. A set of factors was kept in mind while identifying the potential field investigators. As far as possible, graduate or postgraduate students of political science were chosen

**Table 4: Comparison of the Profile of NES 2004 and Census 2001 by Religious Community, SC and ST by States**

| States            | Hindus |        | Religion   | Other Major Religions |        | Dalit  |        | Adivasi |        |
|-------------------|--------|--------|------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|
|                   | Census | Survey |            | Census                | Survey | Census | Survey | Census  | Survey |
| Andhra Pradesh    | 89.0   | 82.3   | Muslims    | 9.2                   | 9.1    | 16.2   | 17.7   | 6.6     | 6.2    |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 34.6   | 23.3   | Christians | 18.7                  | 30.7   | 0.6    | 3.2    | 64.2    | 79.8   |
| Assam             | 64.9   | 67.9   | Muslims    | 30.9                  | 27.2   | 6.9    | 12.6   | 12.4    | 14.6   |
| Bihar             | 83.2   | 82.4   | Muslims    | 16.5                  | 16.5   | 15.7   | 17.1   | 0.9     | 2.8    |
| Chhattisgarh      | 94.7   | 96.1   | Muslims    | 2.0                   | 1.2    | 11.6   | 13.9   | 31.8    | 27.6   |
| Goa               | 65.8   | 63.4   | Christians | 26.7                  | 26.0   | 1.8    | 5.2    | 0.0     | 2.8    |
| Gujarat           | 89.1   | 87.0   | Muslims    | 9.1                   | 10.7   | 7.1    | 12.4   | 14.8    | 14.6   |
| Haryana           | 88.2   | 91.1   | Muslims    | 5.8                   | 4.0    | 19.3   | 24.6   | 0.0     | 0.8    |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 95.4   | 95.9   | Muslims    | 2.0                   | 1.3    | 24.7   | 15.7   | 4.0     | 4.6    |
| Jammu and Kashmir | 29.6   | 26.2   | Muslims    | 67.0                  | 64.3   | 7.6    | 17.0   | 10.9    | 11.7   |
| Jharkhand         | 68.6   | 75.3   | Muslims    | 13.9                  | 12.1   | 11.8   | 11.6   | 26.3    | 27.5   |
| Karnataka         | 83.9   | 86.1   | Muslims    | 12.2                  | 10.9   | 16.2   | 18.8   | 6.6     | 9.3    |
| Kerala            | 56.2   | 54.8   | Muslims    | 24.7                  | 17.4   | 9.8    | 11.3   | 1.1     | 3.3    |
| Madhya Pradesh    | 91.2   | 90.7   | Muslims    | 6.4                   | 6.1    | 15.2   | 15.3   | 20.3    | 20.2   |
| Maharashtra       | 80.4   | 78.6   | Muslims    | 10.6                  | 10.7   | 10.2   | 13.8   | 8.9     | 10.7   |
| Manipur           | 46.0   | 42.2   | Christians | 34.0                  | 31.8   | 2.8    | 3.9    | 34.2    | 32.4   |
| Meghalaya         | 13.3   | 9.8    | Christians | 70.3                  | 77.3   | 0.5    | 1.7    | 85.9    | 88.7   |
| Mizoram           | 3.6    | 0.0    | Christians | 87.0                  | 96.6   | 0.0    | 0.0    | 94.5    | 95.6   |
| Nagaland          | 7.7    | 3.6    | Christians | 90.0                  | 93.9   | 0.0    | 1.0    | 89.1    | 94.6   |
| Orissa            | 94.4   | 95.4   | Muslims    | 2.1                   | 0.9    | 16.5   | 17.8   | 22.1    | 14.6   |
| Punjab            | 36.9   | 30.5   | Sikh       | 59.9                  | 62.0   | 28.9   | 24.8   | 0.0     | 1.0    |
| Rajasthan         | 88.8   | 86.9   | Muslims    | 8.5                   | 8.8    | 17.2   | 14.7   | 12.6    | 12.8   |
| Sikkim            | 60.9   | 65.7   | Buddhist   | 28.1                  | 28.5   | 5.0    | 7.2    | 20.6    | 24.8   |
| Tamil Nadu        | 88.1   | 89.6   | Muslims    | 5.6                   | 3.8    | 19.0   | 18.4   | 1.0     | 1.4    |
| Tripura           | 85.6   | 87.3   | Muslims    | 8.0                   | 5.7    | 17.4   | 21.3   | 31.1    | 32.3   |
| Uttar Pradesh     | 80.6   | 80.7   | Muslims    | 18.5                  | 15.7   | 21.1   | 22.0   | 0.1     | 1.2    |
| Uttaranchal       | 85.0   | 89.2   | Muslims    | 11.9                  | 7.8    | 17.9   | 16.9   | 3.0     | 1.4    |
| West Bengal       | 72.5   | 68.4   | Muslims    | 25.3                  | 15.1   | 23.0   | 27.5   | 5.5     | 11.3   |
| Chandigarh        | 78.6   | 75.0   | Sikh       | 16.1                  | 16.7   | 17.5   | 35.4   | 0.0     | 4.2    |
| Delhi             | 82.0   | 80.6   | Muslims    | 11.7                  | 8.8    | 16.9   | 23.0   | 0.0     | 1.4    |
| Pondicherry       | 86.8   | 95.3   | Christians | 7.0                   | 2.3    | 16.2   | 11.6   | 0.0     | 0.0    |
| All-India         | 80.5   | 79.8   | Muslims    | 13.4                  | 11.3   | 16.2   | 17.9   | 8.2     | 9.0    |

to do the fieldwork. It was also ensured that they were familiar with the local language or dialect and knew the area reasonably well. An attempt was also made to ensure that a large number of women investigators were chosen. Just as we expected our NES 2004 sample to mirror Indian reality, it was hoped that the social profile of our field investigators too would as far as possible, reflect the myriad social variety found in the country.

To train the investigators, in survey methodology and techniques, two levels of workshops were held. In the first instance three trainers' workshops were held at New Delhi (for the northern, central and western regions), Bangalore (southern region) and Guwahati (east and north east region). The state coordinators and state supervisors attended the workshops in their respective regions. Subsequently three-day workshops were conducted in each state by the state coordinators with the assistance of others from the Lokniti network and from CSDS. At these workshops, the field investigators were trained in survey research techniques of sampling, general investigation techniques and coding. They were also sensitised to the subtle issues involved in conducting interviews. After the workshop, they were asked to take mock interviews. On the final day of the workshop, the difficulties they faced during the mock interviews solved. A detailed investigators' manual was prepared as a guide for every investigator in the field. The training workshop was held a few days prior to the start of the survey.

As this was a post-poll survey, the dates of the survey were finalised depending on the day on which an area went to the

poll. The field investigators began the survey on the day after voting and completed the survey before the date of counting.<sup>9</sup> A team of two investigators were given the task to complete interviews in one polling station. A team at the CSDS checked and coded each and every question. Special emphasis was laid on the detailed coding of castes and occupation of respondents. After coding and checking of data, it was sent to CSDS where the data was entered and analysed. Continuing the decentralising process and keeping in mind the constraints of time and the volume of work, the data from Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal was entered at their state headquarters.

While making national analysis, weightage was given to each state sample depending on its share in the national population. This permitted an authentic analysis of the national picture even while permitting a detailed analysis of every state and the sub-regions within a state. The preliminary analysis of the NES 2004 was presented in a special supplement ('How India Voted') of *The Hindu* on May 20, 2004.

### Administration and Funding

One unique feature of the NES series from 1995-96 onwards has been the collegial nature of its administration. The main findings of NES 2004 were collectively discussed and interpreted by a group within the Lokniti network informally before the initial write ups for *The Hindu* were prepared within less than one week

**Table 5: Actual Vote Share, Reported Vote Share and Average Error in NES 2004 by States**

| States            | INC +  |        | BJP +  |        | Other Major Parties<br>(More than 5 Per Cent Votes) |        |        | Others |        | Average Error |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|
|                   | Actual | Survey | Actual | Survey | Party                                               | Actual | Survey | Actual | Survey |               |
| Andhra Pradesh    | 48.9   | 54.3   | 41.5   | 40.2   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 9.6    | 5.5    | 3.4           |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 29.8   | 30.5   | 53.9   | 39.5   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 16.3   | 30.0   | 7.6           |
| Assam             | 35.1   | 36.7   | 30.8   | 26.7   | AGP                                                 | 20.0   | 20.1   | 14.1   | 16.5   | 2.9           |
| Bihar             | 44.3   | 41.6   | 36.9   | 42.3   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 18.8   | 16.1   | 4.1           |
| Chhattisgarh      | 40.2   | 48.3   | 47.8   | 49.8   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 12.0   | 1.9    | 5.1           |
| Goa               | 45.8   | 38.9   | 46.8   | 58.0   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 7.4    | 3.1    | 9.1           |
| Gujarat           | 45.0   | 57.8   | 47.4   | 41.4   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 7.6    | 0.8    | 9.4           |
| Haryana           | 42.1   | 44.8   | 17.2   | 19.7   | INLD                                                | 22.4   | 19.7   | 7.0    | 3.8    | 4.8           |
|                   |        |        |        |        | BSP                                                 | 5.0    | 6.2    |        |        |               |
|                   |        |        |        |        | HVP                                                 | 6.3    | 5.8    |        |        |               |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 51.9   | 57.6   | 44.2   | 42.3   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 3.9    | 0.2    | 3.9           |
| Jammu and Kashmir | 42.8   | 35.6   | 23.0   | 26.4   | JKNC                                                | 22.0   | 14.4   | 7.8    | 4.0    | 9.1           |
|                   |        |        |        |        | INDs                                                | 4.4    | 19.6   |        |        |               |
| Jharkhand         | 41.5   | 42.3   | 33.0   | 42.2   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 25.8   | 25.5   | 5.0           |
| Karnataka         | 36.8   | 41.2   | 36.6   | 44.3   | JD (S)                                              | 20.5   | 11.2   | 6.1    | 3.4    | 10.7          |
| Kerala            | 38.4   | 44.7   | 12.1   | 9.3    | LF                                                  | 46.2   | 40.3   | 3.3    | 5.7    | 7.5           |
| Madhya Pradesh    | 34.1   | 41.8   | 48.1   | 47.7   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 17.8   | 10.5   | 4.1           |
| Maharashtra       | 44.9   | 49.4   | 42.7   | 43.1   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 12.4   | 7.5    | 3.0           |
| Manipur           | 25.3   | 26.2   | 20.7   | 26.2   | CPI                                                 | 10.1   | 15.3   | 12.9   | 3.9    | 10.5          |
|                   |        |        |        |        | FPM                                                 | 8.5    | 10.5   |        |        |               |
|                   |        |        |        |        | INDs                                                | 22.5   | 17.9   |        |        |               |
|                   |        |        |        |        | MPP                                                 | 7.4    | 0.0*   |        |        |               |
| Meghalaya         | 45.6   | 45.1   | 36.9   | 42.2   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 17.5   | 12.7   | 2.9           |
| Mizoram           | 45.7   | 49.2   | 52.5   | 47.0   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 1.8    | 3.8    | 4.5           |
| Nagaland          | 25.8   | 32.6   | 73.1   | 63.3   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 1.1    | 4.1    | 8.3           |
| Orissa            | 40.4   | 37.0   | 49.3   | 58.1   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 10.3   | 4.9    | 7.3           |
| Punjab            | 34.2   | 37.1   | 44.8   | 46.2   | BSP                                                 | 7.7    | 7.7    | 13.3   | 8.9    | 2.2           |
| Rajasthan         | 41.4   | 42.1   | 49.0   | 55.5   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 9.6    | 2.4    | 3.6           |
| Sikkim            | 27.4   | 20.7   | 69.8   | 74.0   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 2.8    | 5.3    | 5.5           |
| Tamil Nadu        | 51.6   | 59.4   | 34.8   | 37.2   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 13.6   | 3.4    | 5.1           |
| Tripura           | 14.3   | 11.2   | 12.9   | 10.5   | CPM                                                 | 68.8   | 76.9   | 4.0    | 1.5    | 6.8           |
| Uttar Pradesh     | 12.5   | 13.2   | 23.0   | 25.3   | SP +                                                | 31.2   | 32.9   | 8.6    | 4.6    | 2.8           |
|                   |        |        |        |        | BSP                                                 | 24.7   | 23.9   |        |        |               |
| Uttaranchal       | 38.3   | 46.2   | 41.0   | 43.8   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 20.7   | 9.9    | 5.3           |
| West Bengal       | 15.0   | 18.5   | 29.1   | 25.6   | LF                                                  | 50.7   | 51.9   | 5.2    | 4.1    | 4.1           |
| Chandigarh        | 52.1   | 67.5   | 35.2   | 25.0   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 12.7   | 7.5    | 12.8          |
| Delhi             | 54.8   | 58.0   | 40.7   | 38.0   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 4.5    | 4.0    | 3.0           |
| Pondicherry       | 50.0   | 31.7   | 35.7   | 68.3   | -                                                   | -      | -      | 14.3   | 0.0    | 25.5          |
| All-India         | 36.5   | 39.8   | 35.9   | 39.1   | LF                                                  | 8.0    | 6.9    | 19.6   | 14.2   | 3.8           |

*Note:* All figures in per cent. Average error is calculated by summing up the deviation of the survey estimates from the actual votes share for all the parties/alliances that secured more than 5 per cent votes and dividing it by two. However, this measure is sensitive to the total number of parties that cross the 5 per cent threshold and tends to show higher error for states where more parties are above the threshold.

\* Not reported in NES – 2004.

after the results of the 2004 elections. Many informal rounds of discussions and electronic exchanges have preceded the writing of papers in this collection. Papers have been repeatedly edited by the two editors of this collection and also reviewed and edited by members of the Lokniti network. Most of the authors of the papers in this collection have been part of the Lokniti either as members or as state coordinators. The NES 2004 was conducted in all the 28 states and also in the union territories of Delhi, Chandigarh and Pondicherry. The field administration in each state was under the direct supervision of the state coordinator. At the all-India level, the research team at the CSDS coordinated this effort and also supervised the data entry and data checking work. Data analysis has been done by the CSDS Data Unit. An empirical work of such all-India dimension requires vast amount of resources. Since 1996, sections of the media have been partially supporting the elections studies. In the case of NES 1996, the ICSSR also extended some financial assistance. This time, we were not fortunate enough to have the financial support of two premier public institutions of higher education, the ICSSR and the UGC. However, generous assistance from, *The Hindu*, and a research grant from the EU-India programme made this study possible.

### NES in Comparative Perspective

The survey research tradition of the NES, associated with CSDS and the Lokniti network, invited comparison with similar election studies done across the world, be it the Comparative Study of Election Systems (CSES), a network of scholars undertaking election studies across the world, or the National Election Study in the US, or the British Election Studies.<sup>10</sup> National Election Studies in India have been much bigger in terms of sample size than most similar studies conducted in other parts of the world. Besides, the NES does not resort to any short cut like telephone or e-mail interviews and insists that all the interviews are carried out in face-to-face interaction.

Within India, the NES series has sought to distinguish itself from the growing industry of pre-election opinion polls. Of late, there has been a phenomenal growth in the number of institutions and individuals involved with survey research linked to elections. Those most visible are market research groups, which conduct opinion and exit polls at the time of elections and are sponsored by the print and electronic media. The difficulties of obtaining independent support for NES made the Lokniti group turn to media support which in turn required the group to carry out some pre-election opinion polls and even exit polls linked to seats forecast. The experiment yielded mixed results, some reasonably accurate forecasts along with some embarrassing ones.<sup>11</sup> While these experiments attracted considerable public attention to the

work produced by the Lokniti group and also secured financial support for it at crucial moments, it did lead to some blurring of identities in the minds of ordinary readers. It is true that the methodological attributes of the NES set it apart from the run-of-the-mill opinion polls. Its insistence on strict probability sample drawn from electoral rolls, in-depth and extended research instrument, specially trained investigators, transparent reporting practices and an analysis of the social pattern underlying voting behaviour always distinguished the opinion polls conducted by the Lokniti group and in some ways influenced the practices of other market research organisations.

### Concluding Remarks

This third generation of NES has signalled a move back to the first generation's preference for analytical post-poll surveys as the principal means of data collection. This helps foreground the significantly different logic and reasoning that informs the NES. Though the NES is also reported in the media, its objective is to carry out a post-mortem of the electoral verdict that helps deepen an academic understanding of the electoral processes and the various dynamics, which play a role in the making of democratic choices. In this attempt, the timing of the post-poll surveys has great technical advantage. The respondents are approached after polling is over but before the votes are counted. Thus, unlike the pre-poll survey, the reported voting preference is not provisional and subject to uncertainties of turnout and late swings. At the same time, this does not suffer from the usual problem faced by all post-poll surveys, namely, a bias in reported vote and opinions in favour of the eventual winner of the elections.

In this collection of papers we are presenting the first in-depth analysis of the Lok Sabha elections of 2004. These papers include two different types of analyses. One is the statewide analysis. This is not because the state is a relatively easy unit to understand the political process. The decision to offer state-specific analysis is a conscious one, based on our collective understanding about the major turn in political competition in India in the last decade and a half. Elsewhere, we have attempted to sketch the contours of electoral competition in a state-specific manner.<sup>12</sup> The state based papers are a continuation of that exercise. As a branch of Indian politics, the study of state politics has a long history, but the 1990s have witnessed the rise of the state as the theatre at which political competition unfolds and the party system of India is shaped.<sup>13</sup> However, this is the first time that any serious analysis of Indian politics is attempted on the basis of such a large number of the Indian states. The collection of the papers in this special issue, thus, can boast of a distinction of sorts: for the first time, so many states are analysed.


Then, there are papers in this collection that attempt to integrate the various themes that are implicit in the state-specific political processes. These papers focus on the various themes that the questionnaire of NES 2004 chose to emphasise. By focusing on trying to provide answers to complex questions of the what, why, when and how of electoral preference and choice, the NES enters into a meaningful engagement with the emerging discourse on representative democracy and electoral politics. The aim of NES is not only to make sense of particular electoral verdicts. Important as this is, political analysis cannot stop at an interpretation of one verdict. Nor can it stop at the so-called psephology. Elections have a broader political context and also implications of a long-term nature. This is where the larger questions about

**Table 6: Completed Face to Face Interviews in Recent Post-Election Studies in Different Countries**

| Country | Institution                                                         | Study Name              | Year | Respondents |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------|-------------|
| US      | University of Michigan                                              | National Election Study | 2000 | 1555        |
| UK      | University of Essex                                                 | British Election Study  | 2001 | 2359        |
| Canada  | Université de Montréal, McGill University and University of Toronto | Canadian Election Study | 2001 | 3648        |
| India   | CSDS                                                                | National Election Study | 2004 | 27185       |



meaning of democracy, the normative ground at which political competition unfolds, the wider contestations about identity and resources occupy the centre stage. One characteristic common to all three generations of NES has been the awareness of this larger terrain of the political. The third generation NES has expanded this concern with the wider terrain. Essays in this collection attempt to make sense of the 2004 verdict in the context of the structure of people's opinions about the economic reforms, their perceived impact on people's lives, the questions of majoritarianism and religiosity. In other words, our effort has been to locate the election verdict in the deeper sentiments and expectations, beyond mere partisan politics and personality issues. On the other hand, the NES is an intellectual enterprise that seeks not only to study elections, but is also a means to define the issues in Indian politics. The National Election Study hopes to grasp the core issues before democratic politics in India.

The papers in this collection are a modest step in this direction and we sincerely hope that they would be put to serious academic scrutiny, that will enrich the future evolution of this endeavour. 

Address for correspondence:  
lokniti@vsnl.com

### List of Languages into which the Questionnaires for NES 2004 were Translated

Languages – Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Khasi, Malayalam, Marathi, Manipuri, Mizo, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Telugu, Tripuri, Urdu, Konkani, Ladakhi, Dogri, Nagalese, Bodo. (The questionnaires used and related material are available at [www.lokniti.org](http://www.lokniti.org)).

### Notes

[The papers in this section have been brought together and edited on behalf of the Lokniti team by two of its members Sandeep Shastri of International Academy for Creative Teaching, Bangalore and K C Suri of Department of Politics, Nagarjuna University, Guntur (AP). Both of them would like to thank and acknowledge various institutions and individuals for their support in bringing these essays together.

These essays as also the NES 2004 project have been the product of a joint research work of the Lokniti network of scholars and the Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. For many years now, the CSDS has been second home to many of the scholars from outside of Delhi. Special thanks to D L Sheth and V B Singh for their support and guidance in designing the NES 2004, in framing the questionnaire and in training the investigators. As usual, Kanchan Malhotra, Himanshu Bhattacharya and K A Q A Hilal of the CSDS Data Unit were helpful in meeting the authors' requests regarding aggregate data as well as the survey data. The long hours of work put in by Dhananjai Joshi, Banasmita Bora and SriRanjani, have improved the quality of data presentation and interpretation to a large extent. They practically worked as an editorial team under the guidance of Yogendra Yadav, Peter D'Souza, Suhas Palshikar and Sanjay Kumar over the last few months.

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Most of the scholars involved in this work are affiliated with colleges, universities and research institutes in different parts of the country. These institutions not only allowed the scholars to work on this project but in many cases, also allowed access to infrastructures of the respective institutions.

The authors of these papers deserve thanks for their cooperation and patience with the publication delays. The *Economic and Political Weekly* has, over the last decade, provided a forum for Lokniti network to take its

findings to a wider audience. The persistence, patience and the work put in by the editorial team at the *EPW* is sincerely acknowledged.

Finally, a special thanks to thousands of respondents who spared their valuable time for the interview and to the 1,200 investigators whose commitment and skills made such a study possible.

The data is available to students of Indian politics. After the Lokniti team has used the data, it will be made available to the academic community at a cost rate. There is a special scheme to encourage students based in Indian universities to draw on the data. For further details visit our website at [www.lokniti.org](http://www.lokniti.org).]

- 1 Other surveys carried at that time apart from the CSDS's exercise include the Rudolph's study of electoral politics in Tamil Nadu and Sirsikar's study in Pune.
- 2 Sheth D L (ed) (1975), *Citizens and Parties: Aspects of Competitive Politics in India*, Allied, New Delhi, 1975. Iqbal Narain; D B Mathur; Sushil Kumar (1967), *State Politics in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut.
- 3 Ahmed, Bashiruddin and Eldersveld, Samuel (1977), *Citizens and Politics: Mass Political Behaviour in India*, The University of Chicago, Chicago, US.
- 4 See *Frontline*, 1996 – April 19, May 3, May 17, June 14, June 28 and July 12. *The Hindu*, 1996 – April 8, April 9, April 25, April 26, *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 13-20, 1996. *India Today*, 1996 – May 31 and August 31.
- 5 Jafferlot, Christophe (1996): *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*, (1925 to 1995) Viking, Penguin, New Delhi. Varshney, Ashutosh (1995 and 1998), *Democracy, Development and the Countryside: Urban-Rural Struggles in India*, Cambridge University Press, New York. Singh, V B and Subrata K Mitra (1999), *Democracy and Social Change in India: A Cross-sectional Analysis of the National Electorate*, Sage, New Delhi. Varshney, Ashutosh (2002) (2003), *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Yale University Press, US.
- 6 A panel design is when the same set of respondents is interviewed in different waves of surveys. However, a fresh set of respondents is added to the panel in each wave.
- 7 Roy, Ramashray and V B Singh (1987), *Between Two Worlds; A Study of Harijan Elites*, Discovery Publishing House, Delhi.
- 8 Some of the changes introduced in the second generation were –  
– Use of the mock secret ballot – Respondents were asked to mark their voting preference on a dummy ballot paper and drop it in a dummy ballot box. This innovation proved to be very useful in estimating vote shares and analysing voting preferences of respondents.  
– Use of softwares designed for statistical analysis in the 1990s further facilitated quick and more detailed analysis.  
– Unlike the first generation, when the entire survey was directly supervised from the CSDS in Delhi, the members of the Lokniti network in their respective states coordinated and supervised the fieldwork for the study. The surveys were coordinated in a decentralised manner.
- 9 Dates of fieldwork of NES 2004.  
Round 1 – April 21-25, April 27-May 1, May 5-8, May 12-18.
- 10 Clarke, Harold D, David Sanders, Mariann C Stewart, Paul Whitely (2004), *Political Choice in Britain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Also see <http://www.essex.ac.uk/bes/>; <http://www.umich.edu/~nes/>
- 11 Payne, C; R Karandikar and Y Yadav: 'Predicting the 1998 Indian Parliamentary Election', *Electoral Studies*, 21, 69-89, 2002. 'Two-thirds Majority for Congress (I) in Delhi', *The Hindu*, November 26, 1998. 'Change of Guard in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh', *The Hindu*, November 27, 1998. 'End of Congress Rule in Mizoram', *The Hindu*, November 28, 1998. 'Kaante ki takkar hai Congress-BJP mein', *Amar Ujala*, February 16, 2003, Yadav Y and Kumar S, 'Congress Books Return Ticket', *Hindustan Times*, October 19, 2003. 'Congress Headed for a Landslide in Delhi' – CSDS-HT Team, *Hindustan Times*, November 27, 2003.
- 12 *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, special issue on political parties and elections in Indian states; 1990-03, Vol XV, Nos 1 and 2, January-June, 2003 Guest edited by Suhas Palshikar and Yogendra Yadav.
- 13 See, Yadav Yogendra and Yadav-Palshikar, 2003, 'From Hegemony to Convergence: Party System and Electoral Politics in the Indian States, 1952-2002' in *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, special issue on political parties and elections in Indian states; 1990-2003, Vol XV, Nos 1 and 2, January-June, 2003 Guest edited by Suhas Palshikar and Yogendra Yadav, pp 5-44.