

Maharashtra Lok Sabha Election 2024 Results: Emerging Trends

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Abstract

The Maharashtra Lok Sabha Election 2024 presents a great chance to examine the changing dynamics of electoral politics in one of India's most politically important states. This article conducts a comparative analysis of the 2019, and 2024 Lok Sabha elections to discern emerging trends in voter behaviour, political strategies, and socio-political variables. Principal areas of emphasis encompass variations in party performance, the evolving dynamics of alliances, the influence of caste and regional identities, and the effects of socio-economic trends on electoral results. The research additionally investigates the growing significance of digital campaigns, social media, and the engagement of youth and first-time voters. The research employs a mixed methodology to reveal significant trends influencing Maharashtra's political landscape. Research reveals a substantial shift in conventional vote-bank politics, an increase in issue-oriented voting, and an escalating impact of regional parties in contesting the supremacy of national parties. The research underscores the impact of leadership narratives, policy commitments, and grassroots mobilisation tactics on voter preferences. The article finishes by providing insights into the future direction of elections in Maharashtra and its influence on policy-making and governance at both state and national levels.

Keywords: Electoral trends, voter dynamics, caste politics, Maharashtra

Introduction

Elections and voting have become a significant and universal practice intended to exemplify the democratic principles of societal governance. It necessitates those rulers regard citizens as stakeholders pursuing Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. The Indian Constitution enshrined these values, aligning with contemporary aspirations and historical insights. Maharashtra has historically led in this endeavour, as evidenced by the rule of Shivaji Maharaj and the teachings of the

saint tradition in the state. Consequently, the Maharashtrian psyche appears to be more socially advanced, reflecting constitutional efforts in the political processes of elections and voting. It is apparent in the elections for the Assembly, Parliament, and municipal bodies.

The political power struggle in Maharashtra has historically been dominated by the Congress party. Subsequent to 1995, the party began to forfeit its pre-eminence in the state's politics. During the three assembly elections from 1999 to 2009, the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) successfully thwarted the opposing coalition of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena. In the general elections of 2014 and 2019, the BJP emerged as the predominant party, marking a significant shift in the politics of what is referred to as "the last bastion of Congress dominance" (Palshikar and Deshpande 2021). Since 2014, Narendra Modi's leadership has significantly impacted Maharashtra, as the Congress and NCP have experienced a decline in support throughout the state and among many social groups in both rural and urban areas. In the 2014 and 2019 elections, the BJP became a nearly dominant force in the state's electoral landscape, however insufficiently dominant to operate independently (Deshpande and Birmal 2019).

Since 1999, the contest for power in the state has been between two coalitions: the BJP and Shiv Sena vs the Congress and NCP. This equation began to alter following the abrupt ascent of the BJP in state politics. In the 2019 assembly elections, the BJP and Shiv Sena collaborated and achieved a vote share of 42%. Following the election, Shiv Sena severed ties with the alliance and allied with the Congress–NCP coalition. The newly formed post-election coalition, referred to as Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), appointed Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray as the chief minister.

During the 2019 general elections, the BJP–Shiv Sena combination was dominant in 230 assembly constituencies in Maharashtra. Nevertheless, the coalition secured merely 161 seats in the subsequent assembly elections six months later. The vote trend in Maharashtra shifted from the Lok Sabha to the assembly elections, indicating the limitations of BJP's power in the state. This explains why Uddhav Thackeray was able to lead and maintain a government composed of ideologically diverse allies for two and a half years. Subsequently, the Shiv Sena and the NCP fractured (in June 2022 and July 2023, respectively), resulting in the formation of a coalition government named Mahayuti, comprising the BJP, Shiv Sena under Eknath Shinde, and NCP led by Ajit Pawar. Although the BJP is the predominant party in this Mahayuti (grand coalition), it accepted the position of deputy chief minister.

The developments, such as the disturbances within the party system due to divisions, discontent among various factions regarding the alleged forced splits, and the abrupt emergence of multipolarity in the state's political landscape, formed the context for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

2019 General Election

In April 2019, the general election in Maharashtra, India took place. These were held for 48 seats in four phases: 7 seats on April 11, 2019, 10 seats on April 18, 2019, 14 seats on April 23, 2019, and 17 seats on April 29, 2019. The major contenders in the state are the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and National Democratic Alliance (NDA). UPA consisted of the Indian National Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party whereas the NDA consisted of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Shiv Sena. In February 2019, BJP and Shiv Sena again announced alliance with 25 seats for BJP and 23 for Shiv Sena. In March 2019, Congress and NCP also announced their alliance with each contesting 26 and 22 seats respectively. Of the 26 seats of INC, 1 seat each were given to Bahujan Vikas Aaghadi (BVA) and Swabhimani Shetkari Saghtana (SSS). Similarly, NCP would also forgo of two seats; one each to SSS and one to Yuva Swabhimani Party.

Table 1: Lok Sabha Election Result 2019

Party name	Seats Won	Vote Share (%)
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	23	27.84
Shiv Sena	18	23.28
Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	5	15.52
Indian National Congress (INC)	1	16.28
Others (Including Independents)	1	17.08

Source: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) data unit, <https://www.csdS.in/data-unit/>

BJP-Shiv Sena Alliance dominated the elections, winning a combined total of 41 out of 48 seats. The opposition, primarily the NCP and INC, faced a significant setback, securing only 6 seats collectively. The BJP emerged as the single largest party in Maharashtra, securing the highest number of seats. The voter turnout was approximately 61.4% across the state.

2024 General Elections

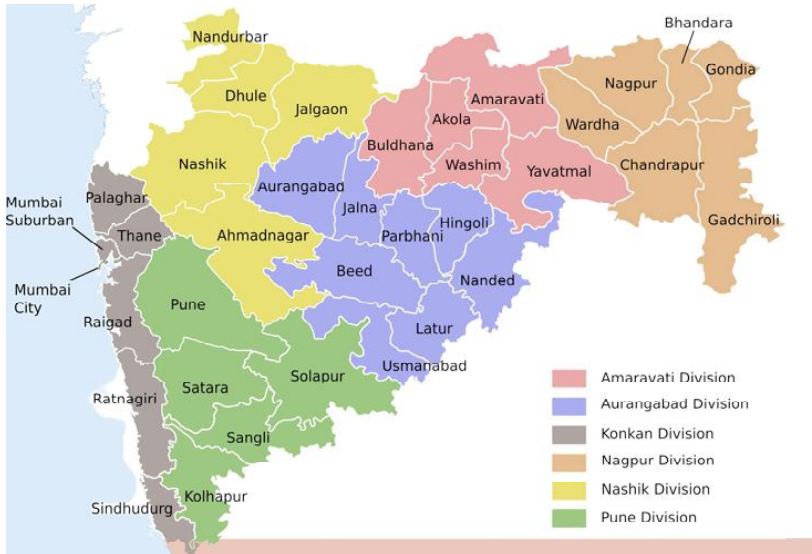


Figure 1: District Map of Maharashtra, Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Maharashtra

The 2024 general elections resulted in the establishment of two coalitions, each of three parties. On one side was the coalition of the BJP, Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction), and the NCP (Ajit Pawar faction)—the Mahayuti or, on a national level, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)—while on the other side was the coalition of the Congress, Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction), and the NCP (Sharad Pawar faction)—MVA or, nationally, INDIA. These two factions were vying for all 48 positions.

The BJP contested a total of 28 seats. In these 28 constituencies, the Shiv Sena electorate, previously aligned with the BJP due to the former alliance, is now fragmented between the two factions of Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena (UBT), as a member of the MVA, contested 21 seats, all located in areas where they previously held influence, such as Marathwada. The Congress contested 17 electoral seats, primarily located in the regions of Vidarbha and Marathwada. The NCP, led by Sharad Pawar, contested ten seats in western and northern Maharashtra. The seat allocation in the MVA was determined by the regional influence of each party involved. Consequently, their vote share remained undivided. The Mahayuti appears to have overlooked regional influence as a primary factor in its seat-sharing decisions. The findings indicate

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that a political party with an incumbent member of the legislative assembly in a specific assembly segment did not automatically secure a lead in the Lok Sabha elections. All six assembly segments within a specific Lok Sabha constituency exhibited a uniform voting pattern, indicating that voters consistently supported the same party across these segments.

Table 2: Lok Sabha Election Result 2024

Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Vote Share (%)
Mahayuti (NDA)			
BJP	28	09	26.18
Shiv Sena	15	07	12.95
NCP	04	01	03.60
Rashtriya Samaj Paksha	01	00	0.82
Total	48	17	43.55
aha Vikas Aghadi (INDIA Bloc)			
Congress	17	13	16.92
Shive Sena (UBT)	21	09	16.72
NCP (Sharad Pawar)	10	08	10.27
Total	48	30	43.91

Source: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) data unit, <https://www.cds.in/data-unit/>

The BJP's election campaign in Maharashtra focused on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He conducted 18 public meetings and one roadshow in the state. The campaign exhibited a sense of triumph. The concerns identified included inefficiency and corruption within the Uddhav Thackeray administration. The achievements of the Eknath Shinde administration were emphasized. The MVA campaign emphasized the division of the Shiv Sena and the NCP by the BJP. The Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP (SP) featured their leaders, Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar, as prominent campaigners. Both parties prioritized conducting a greater number of small-scale public meetings over large rallies. Rahul Gandhi was central to the Congress campaign. The issues were localized and customized to fit the specific constituency. The BJP was unable to identify and concentrate on a singular central issue. The MVA focused

on local and constituency-specific issues rather than state or national issues, which contributed to its success. The issue of Maratha reservations significantly affected Marathwada. This factor played a role in the BJP's loss. The inefficiency of the incumbent ruling party members of Parliament (MPs) in Vidarbha was a significant factor contributing to the success of the MVA. The MVA successfully established and utilized social equations in each sub region.

Rahul Gandhi's national campaign prominently used the accusation that the BJP seeks to alter the Constitution. It was highlighted during his campaign in Maharashtra as well. This aided the Congress in securing Dalit and Muslim votes. In Mumbai, Muslim voters supported the Shiv Sena (UBT). Thackeray's campaign rhetoric against Adani's influence unified Mumbai's electorate and effectively garnered Muslim support. Sharad Pawar endeavoured to reclaim his electoral constituency from the era of the Indian Congress (Socialist) Party in 1978. The Mahayuti failed to mobilise a successful campaign. The voters likely disapproved of the disparaging character of their criticism towards Thackeray and Sharad Pawar. The numerous programs designed to offer financial assistance to the disadvantaged segments of society did not benefit the BJP–NCP–Shiv Sena coalition. Conversely, challenges such as the onion export prohibition and the procurement of land for the Shaktipeeth Highway were detrimental to their interests.

Neither alliance has a concern that would include the entire state. Local concerns, caste dynamics, anti-incumbency sentiments towards incumbent legislators, and the financial distress of poor and middle classes were significant factors in numerous constituencies.

The BJP experienced a significant defeat, losing its stronghold in this election. In the previous two Lok Sabha elections, it secured 23 seats on each occasion. This remarkable figure decreased to only nine this time—equivalent to its strength in 2009. The Mahayuti secured 17 seats with a 43% percent of the vote. Compared to the NDA of 2019, it secured 24 fewer seats and experienced an 8% decline in its vote share. The MVA secured 30 seats with a 44% share of the vote. In comparison to 2019, they secured 25 additional seats and increased their vote share by 12%. The overall vote share of the two groupings differs by scarcely half a percent. The NDA's decline of 8% in votes and the INDIA bloc's increase of 12% significantly impacted seat allocation, culminating in a critical defeat for the BJP in this populous state with 48 seats.

Despite the apparent alteration in seats, the state experienced relatively negligible fluctuations in vote shares. For the BJP, the one consolation

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was that despite a significant loss of seats, its decline in vote share was minimal: in 2019, it garnered approximately 28% of the votes compared to 26% in 2024. The Congress experienced a marginal increase in votes, rising from 16% previously to merely 17%. Despite the division of the Shiv Sena into two factions, the organisations collectively achieved a 30% vote share. In the 2019 general elections, the undivided Shiv Sena secured 23% of the vote share, whereas the current combined vote share of the NCP (13%) was somewhat lower than the undivided NCP's vote share in 2019 (16%). The overall consistency of votes, with the exception of Shiv Sena (which likely benefited from vote transfers from significant partners in both coalitions), highlights the essential role that alliances have played and will continue to play in the next assembly elections. Notably, the most intriguing aspect of this episode of party fragmentation and competitive coalition formation is that the Congress experienced a significant increase in seats, rising from one in 2019 to thirteen in the current election, while the BJP, despite a mere one and a half percent decline in votes, suffered a substantial reduction in seats, decreasing from twenty-three to nine.

Table 3: Maharashtra Lok Sabha Elections 2024- Region Wise seats and Votes

Table 2: Maharashtra Lok Sabha Elections 2024—Region-wise Seats and Votes

Party	MVA (INDIA)			Mahayuti (NDA)			
	Congress	NCP (Sharad Pawar)	Shiv Sena (UBT)	BJP	Shiv Sena	NCP	Independent
Vidarbha (10)	05 (33.8)	01 (4.5)	01 (7.7)	02 (30.0)	01 (7.1)	00	–
Marathwada (12)	03 (15.5)	01 (6.0)	03 (23.2)	00 (13.4)	01 (11.9)	00 (3.7)	–
Western Maharashtra (12)	02 (14.1)	04 (24.8)	01 (8.9)	02 (25.2)	02 (9.3)	00 (8.7)	01
North Maharashtra (06)	02 (18.6)	01 (12.7)	01 (14.1)	02 (39.8)	00 (6.1)	–	–
Konkan (06)	–	01 (7.2)	00 (30.9)	02 (21.4)	02 (19.1)	01 (7.3)	–
Mumbai (06)	01 (14.24)	–	03 (31.4)	01 (28.3)	01 (21.0)	–	–
Total (48)	13 (16.92)	08 (10.27)	09 (16.72)	09 (26.18)	07 (12.95)	01 (3.60)	01

Source: CSDS data unit.

Source: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) data unit, <https://www.csdS.in/data-unit>

Table 3 presents the regional results of the Lok Sabha election in Maharashtra, elucidating how the BJP-led coalition lost while the MVA gained, despite a minimal vote differential. Relative to the 2019 elections (Birmal and Bhoiwar 2020), the Mahayuti had a decline in votes in Vidarbha, western Maharashtra, and Marathwada. In Marathwada, the BJP recorded its lowest vote percentage across all state regions at 13% and failed to secure any seats. This indicates that the numerically

dominant Maratha population in this region distinctly refrained from supporting the BJP. It did not incur significant losses in Mumbai, Konkan, and Thane. Nonetheless, the influence of the Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) has amplified in Mumbai and Thane, while the BJP's authority has diminished. In Vidarbha, the BJP's vote share stayed unchanged, whilst the Congress increased their votes by nearly 6%, leading to an acquisition of seats. Conversely, despite the BJP receiving its highest vote count in north Maharashtra compared to other regions, it failed to increase its seat count there.

A view of Social Base

The political landscape of Maharashtra is characterised by Maratha hegemony. In 2024, fifty percent of the Members of Parliament are from the Maratha caste, with four identified as Maratha-Kunbi. The quantity of Maratha and Maratha-Kunbi Members of Parliament has risen since 2019. All parties nominated additional Maratha candidates in response to the Maratha reservation movement. The two factions of Shiv Sena collectively possessed 12 Maratha MPs, the largest number among all parties.

Table 4: Maharashtra Lok Sabha Elections 2024- Social back ground of MPs

Table 3: Maharashtra Lok Sabha Elections 2024—Social Background of MPs in Maharashtra

Caste	Congress	BJP	Shiv Sena (UBT)	Shiv Sena (Shinde Group)	NCP (Sharad Pawar)	NCP (Ajit Pawar)	Independents and Others	Total
Brahmin	—	01 (03)	01 (01)	—	—	—	—	02 (04)
Maratha	03	04 (06)	06 (12)	06	04 (02)	—	01	24 (20)
Maratha-Kunbi	02 (01)	01 (01)	—	—	01	—	—	04 (02)
Other Backward Classes	01	01 (06)	01 (01)	01	02 (02)	01	—	07 (09)
Scheduled Castes	05	—(02)	01 (03)	—	—	—	(01)	06 (06)
Scheduled Tribes	02	01 (03)	— (01)	—	01	—	—	04 (04)
Non-Marathi (Marwari-Jain)	—	01 (02)	—	—	—	—	—	01 (02)
Muslim	—	—	—	—	—	—	(01)	—(01)
Total	13	09	09	07	08	01	01	48

Figures in brackets indicate the background of MPs in 2019.
Source: Ghotale (2024).

The 2024 National Election Study data elucidate voting patterns across various social strata (Deshpande and Birmal 2024). Nevertheless, a caution is warranted. Due to the intricate coalitional dynamics of competition, accurately determining the precise vote share for different parties across various social groups is challenging, as people may support a particular party not due to their affiliation with it, but rather due to coalition factors.

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A crucial factor in the BJP's success since 2014 has been its capacity to infiltrate rural regions. However, this time, the voting trend indicated that rural people predominantly supported the Congress and its affiliates. The BJP, perceived as favouring urban interests and higher castes, experienced a decline in support from rural voters. Both the BJP and its affiliates performed favourably in urban regions, gaining 30% and 24% of the vote, respectively, in contrast to rural voters. The Congress-led MVA has received support from 48% of rural people. The Shiv Sena (Shinde group) exhibits popularity in urban regions, but the Shiv Sena (Thackeray group) maintains a support base in rural areas as well. The BJP is the most preferred party in metropolitan regions. In contrast to the NES 2019 figures, the BJP-led alliance had a 13% decline in vote share in rural regions. This is due to the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray group) no longer being their ally. The Mahayuti maintained its support from urban voters in 2019. The vote percentage of the Congress-led coalition in rural regions rose by 12%.

Table 5: Maharashtra Lok Sabha Elections 2024—Caste Community Vote

	Congress	Congress Allies	BJP	BJP Allies	Others
Maratha and Kunbi	14 (13)	25 (22)	27 (29)	19 (30)	16 (6)
Upper castes	18 (5)	20 (7)	33 (56)	25 (28)	4 (4)
OBC	11 (12)	28 (7)	33 (39)	17 (38)	11 (4)
Neo-Buddhist	21(8)	24 (9)	18 (6)	13 (4)	25 (74)
Other Scheduled Castes	14 (15)	33 (8)	37 (23)	7 (23)	9 (31)
Scheduled Tribes	21 (11)	41 (42)	26 (23)	4 (12)	8 (13)
Muslim	42 (54)	32 (33)	2 (8)	10 (4)	13 (1)
Other	12 (19)	22 (8)	31 (35)	29 (19)	6 (19)

Figures in brackets are for 2019 as per the alliances in 2019. In other words, figures for Congress allies and BJP allies for 2019 indicate the support enjoyed by NCP and Shiv Sena respectively, before their respective splits. n (2024)=1,465; n (2019)=1,297. Source: NES 2024 and NES 2019, Maharashtra, CSDS data unit.

Table 5 illustrates the voting patterns of various caste and community groupings in the years 2019 and 2024. In 2019, the BJP ally, Shiv Sena, secured a significant portion of votes from all demographics except Muslims; however, this time, the BJP's allies were unable to obtain those votes. The BJP primarily lost support among its core constituency of upper castes, as well as among OBCs, SCs, and to a lesser extent, among Marathas and Kunbis. The Congress increased its support among higher castes, neo-Buddhists, and Scheduled Tribes, while its new allies attracted more votes from Other Backward Classes and neo-Buddhists. Consequently, the INDIA or MVA coalition exhibited greater internal cohesion and achieved a more equitable societal backing compared to the NDA or Mahayuti, which suffered from frail alliance partners, while the BJP also experienced a decline in popularity among upper and backward populations. This sociological mapping of votes elucidates the reasons behind the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi's decrease from 7% to

under 4% (3.67) in the current election. The Dalit-Bahujan electorate opted for the INDIA bloc instead.

Table 6 indicates that the BJP and its affiliates exhibited the least support among impoverished voters and the most support among affluent voters. The MVA received support from 56% of impoverished voters, but the NDA garnered backing from 53% of affluent voters. Nonetheless, the BJP and its affiliates performed favourably among low-income voters, hence challenging any simplistic class-based voting patterns. The NDA held a 10-percentage point advantage (49%) against the INDIA bloc (39%) among middle-class voters, but the Mahayuti garnered support from both the middle and upper classes. In comparison to the NES 2019, the Congress-led coalition achieved a 17% vote share among impoverished voters (Table 6).

**Table 6: Maharashtra Lok Sabha Elections 2024—
Economic Class Vote**

	Congress	Congress Allies	BJP	BJP Allies	Others
Poor	14	42	17	15	11
Lower	16	20	27	21	17
Middle	21	18	32	17	12
Upper	18	22	35	18	8

Source: NES 2024 Maharashtra, CSDS data unit; n=1,455.

Challenges Ahead

For the BJP and Allies:

Rebuilding Trust: Addressing the discontent among voters, particularly in rural areas, is crucial for regaining support. The BJP faces the challenge of addressing rural grievances, particularly in areas affected by agricultural distress and unemployment. Additionally, its failure to mitigate inflationary pressures has eroded trust among middle-class and lower-income groups.

Strategic Realignment: The BJP must reassess its alliances and campaign strategies to counter the consolidated opposition effectively. The BJP's strained relationship with allies, particularly the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction), needs careful negotiation and realignment. Internal dissent and factionalism within the coalition have also undermined its cohesiveness.

Localized Campaigns: The BJP must adopt region-specific strategies that cater to diverse voter concerns in Maharashtra. Solely emphasizing national narratives has proven insufficient to counter localized dissatisfaction.

Policy Focus: Delivering tangible results on issues like inflation, job creation, and rural development is essential to reconnect with the electorate. With rising youth unemployment, the BJP needs to implement robust policies to engage and secure the support of this demographic.

For the Maha Vikas Aghadi:

Sustaining Unity: Maintaining cohesion among alliance partners despite ideological differences will be critical for future electoral success. The MVA's diverse ideological composition presents a constant challenge. Managing competing priorities among Congress, NCP, and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction) is critical to sustaining alliance stability.

Governance Delivery: Demonstrating effective governance in Maharashtra can serve as a model and bolster the alliance's credibility nationwide. Demonstrating effective governance in Maharashtra will be key. Addressing issues such as infrastructure development, farmer welfare, and public health can strengthen the MVA's credibility.

Expanding Base: The MVA must work to strengthen its urban appeal and consolidate support among young voters. The MVA's weaker appeal in urban areas, where the BJP traditionally performs well, remains a significant hurdle. Targeted outreach programs are necessary to bridge this gap.

Countering BJP Narratives: The MVA must craft a compelling counter-narrative to the BJP's focus on central leadership and national security. This involves consistently emphasizing regional development and local governance successes.

Conclusion

The Lok Sabha results in Maharashtra indicate unrest in rural regions. The rural constituency has not supported the Mahayuti. The plight of the agricultural sector appears to benefit the MVA. The inadequate selling prices of agricultural produce and the prevailing dissatisfaction within the agriculture sector appear to have undermined the Mahayuti government. Neither of the national parties—BJP and Congress—can instill confidence in the agricultural sector. The Lokniti-CSDS data

indicates that the BJP receives minimal support from agriculturists (17%), while the Congress also garners limited backing from this group (25%) in contrast to non-agriculturists (36%). This indicates their reliance on the various allies.

Moreover, the general economic expansion in the state appears to be unbeneficial for the poorer and impoverished groups. These classes appear to be dissatisfied with the Mahayuti as the ruling entity at both the state and national levels. The anger within the Maratha community, exacerbated by the Maratha reservation campaign, has also undermined the Mahayuti. This has mainly emerged in Marathwada. The Mahayuti secured only one of the eight seats in Marathwada.

The political landscape in Maharashtra is currently bifurcated into two coalitions, each comprising three parties. This could affect the future development of specific parties. All parties are reliant on alliances; no party can successfully broaden its base. Conversely, employees from each faction will be discontented due to the obstruction of opportunity resulting from the changes required for coalitions. Moreover, the conventional electorate of parties does not inherently transition to candidates of coalition partners. The prevailing coalition politics in the state appears to exhibit this constraint. These variables indicate that there will be ongoing uncertainty and instability in the social support that each party can obtain. As Maharashtra prepares for assembly elections, the trends from the Lok Sabha, the intense rivalry between the two coalitions, and the unstable societal support for each party will shape the political competition in the state.

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