



Pre-Election Poll in Karnataka

People Studies, Loyola College, Chennai, undertook a State-wide Study of Karnataka as a follow-up to the earlier Study conducted in January 2008. The aim of the present Study was to gauge the patterns of people's preferences in the context of imminent elections in the State.

Methodology

The study was conducted between 18.04.2008 and 27.04.2008 in 75 assembly constituencies spread across 28 districts, travelling around 4000 KMs. A total of 3669 persons, around 40% urban and 60% rural, were interviewed, employing *convenience sampling* technique. The *social-psychological approach*, a unique methodology devised by People Studies, was adopted for the interview. Around 30 persons, including an 11-member core team with five faculty members, were involved at various levels in this study. *Prof. Dr S Rajanayagam*, Director, People Studies, designed and guided the entire study. *Prof. Davidraj*, research scholar, University of Madras, and *Mr Adaikalaraj*, Field Coordinator, People Studies, efficiently organised the logistics.

Respondents' Background

The sample consists of almost equal number of men and women. *Age-wise*, a majority of the respondents (38.6%) are from the age-group 26-35, followed by age-group 36-45 (25.4%), age-group 46-60 (21.3%), upto age 25 (10.7%), and the rest are above 60. *Education-wise*: uneducated / little educated - 47.2%, from 6th to junior college - 30.1%, degree level - 16.2, and the rest, other studies including technical courses. *Religion-wise*: Hindus - 63.5%, and Muslims - 23.3% (the rest belong to other religions including Christians, Jains, and non-believers). Of the *major castes*, SC / ST - 16.3%, Vokkaligas - 16.8%, Lingayats - 11.2%, and Kurubas - 3.9%.

FINDINGS

01. Most Pressing Local Need:

Among the most pressing *local needs*, the top five are: drinking water - 34.9%, toilet / sanitation - 24.8%, road / transport - 10.1%, medical facility - 6.1%, and electricity - 3.0%.

Regarding the parties / candidates who would be the *right choice to address the local needs*, BJP leads with 33.0%, followed by INC with 27.2%, and JD (S) with 10.9%. However, the number of those who think no party candidate can do anything about these is quite significant [27.1%].

Regarding the *chances of their preferred party candidate winning* in the election, those who prefer BJP are more confident than the others. Of those who think that BJP candidate is the right choice to solve local needs, 92.1% are confident that s/he will win, whereas in the case of JD (S) it is 63.5%, and INC, only 59.4%.

02. Most Pressing State Issue:

The top five issues at the *State level* are: price rise - 34.1%, *unemployment* - 15.5%, no preference to Kannadigas in employment - 11.9%, no support to agriculture - 8.1%, and caste / communal clashes - 4.0%. Surprisingly, water / border disputes with Thamizh Nadu has not figured as a major issue [only 1.9%].

When it comes to the *party that will be able to tackle* the above issues, if voted to power, BJP has a significant edge over INC [BJP - 36.3, INC - 24.8, and JD (S) - 7.5]. Here again, as many as 30.8% are of the opinion that no party will solve the issues. Interestingly, irrespective of their opinion on the best-suited party, there is an *overwhelming enthusiasm across parties* about the likelihood of their preferred party winning [INC - 91.2%, JD (S) - 90.4%, and BJP - 88.1%].

When the above response pattern [with regard to the State issues] is compared to the response regarding the local issues, it could be observed that INC is comparatively less confident at the local level than at the State level.

03. Choice of Candidates:

Regarding the choice of candidates by the three major players, over one-third of respondents opine that the choice is okay [BJP - 39.7%, INC - 38.6%, JD (S) - 36.7%], though close to one-thirds have said that they do not know the candidates yet.

When it comes to inner-party rivalries, INC is seen to suffer the most. While only 34.6% consider INC to be *free of inner-party bickerings*, it is 43.1% for JD (S), and 48.9% for BJP.

04. Voting Today - Overall Scenario:

The response of the voters, *if they were to vote today*, is not as clear-cut as it was in January.

Party	Vote Share	
	April	January
BJP	36.1	40.0
INC	31.0	25.8
JD (S)	14.7	10.7
Others	2.3	1.5
<i>Undecided / no response</i>	15.9	22.0

The following observations on the above Table are in order:

- (1) BJP still has an edge over its rivals, but it has suffered bruises in its popularity; the ‘widespread sympathy’ for BJP found in January has considerably waned over the last three months;
- (2) INC has made some gains over this period, but not significant enough to sweep the polls;
- (3) JD (S) too has marginally improved its position between January and April;
- (4) undecided voters in January have, by and large, shifted in favour of INC and JD (S).

05. Voting Today - Phase-wise Scenario:

While the overall scenario presents BJP in the lead, the Phase-wise analysis shows a mixed picture, placing BJP and INC in a tight neck-to-neck contest in two Phases [with INC having a slender margin over BJP].

Party	Vote Share		
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
BJP	27.3	48.6	34.7
INC	30.3	26.2	36.6
JD (S)	22.5	10.3	9.3

The Table above further reinforces the four observations made earlier. The Table also makes it clear that JD (S) is far more favourably placed in Phase 1 than the other two Phases.

06. Sex-wise Voting:

The sex-wise voting pattern is more or less similar to that of January, with male voters preferring BJP, and the female voters preferring INC.

Sex	BJP	INC	JD(S)
Male	41.7	25.0	13.2
Female	30.2	37.2	16.3

07. Religion-wise Voting:

Of the two significant religious groups in the State, the Hindu voters are more favourably disposed to BJP, while the Muslim voters are solidly behind INC.

Religion	BJP	INC	JD(S)
Hindu	41.9	25.9	12.7
Muslim	9.8	57.1	23.7

08. Caste-wise Voting:

Among the four major caste groups listed below, the Vokkaliga votes are almost evenly distributed among the three main parties, while the majority of Lingayat and Kuruba votes go in favour of BJP.

Caste	BJP	INC	JD(S)	Undecided
SC / ST	29.1	26.6	12.1	31.2
Vokkaliga	22.0	24.9	21.5	23.9
Lingayat	75.2	8.8	6.6	8.8
Kuruba	60.4	14.6	6.3	18.8

The unusually huge proportion of undecided voters among SC/ST is noteworthy. According to the qualitative assessment of the research team, based on the one-to-one interviews held during the Study, the undecided SC/ST votes are likely to be more favourable to INC and JD (S) than BJP.

09. Type of Government:

The expectations of most of the respondents converge, as in January Study, on the likelihood of a *single party with its own majority* forming the Government.

Single party with own majority	68.0
Coalition Government	24.0
Single party with external support	4.6

More than half of those who guess a single party with own majority would form the Government consider *BJP* to be that party [BJP - 52.6, INC - 37.4, JD (S) - 8.7].

10. Next CM: Yediyurappa tops the list of candidates likely to be elected Chief Ministers, though with reduced support now when compared to January.

Candidate	Likelihood	
	April	January
Yediyurappa	37.8	49.1
S M Krishna	20.1	5.7
Kumaraswamy	18.4	37.6
S Bangarappa	2.3	-
Siddaramaiah	2.0	1.1

Dharam Singh who enjoyed fourth position in January is out of the top-five list, while Bangarappa who did not figure in the January list occupies fourth position now. S M Krishna, now in the electoral field, has improved his position from third to second.

11. Functioning of Election Commission:

A majority of the respondents [45.0%] consider that the functioning of the Election Commission is objective and neutral. 21.9% feel it is too strict, and 7.1%, too lenient. Only a negligible percentage sense a partisan bias in its functioning [favouring BJP - 0.9%, favouring INC - 1.0%]. At the same time, a considerable 23.1% say that they do not know much about the Commission.

12. The Tally:

Based on the support each party enjoyed in the constituencies where the Study was conducted, and the overall political climate that prevailed during the Study period, the following could be *tentatively predicted*: Of the 224 constituencies, 75-80 are favourable to BJP, 50-55 to INC, 20-25 to JD (S), and 3-5 to others including JD (U) and independents. There is neck-to-neck contest between INC and BJP in about 35-40, and between JD (S) and INC / BJP in about 25-30.

From a paradigmatic point of view, if BJP is able to sustain the various factors that presently work in its favour till the end [of Phase 3], it has a chance of mustering *just enough* strength to form a Government on its own. On the other hand, from a syntagmatic perspective, if INC is able to consolidate the gains it has been making from January onwards and take them forward, it has a chance of emerging as the *single largest party*, falling a few seats short of the magic number to form its Government. While JD (S) has to be content with the third place, it can improve its seats tally by concentrating on the constituencies where it has a significant presence.

Prof. Dr S Rajanayagam & Team
05 May 2008

Note: (1) All the numbers in the Tables denote per centages, unless specified otherwise. (2) Since only the major parties are taken for comparative analysis, the total of per centages may not be 100.

Thanks to all those who generously helped us during the study, especially during data collection throughout the State.