

Maharashtra Assembly Election: BJP-led Coalition in Landslide Victory

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Summary

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Mahayuti coalition achieved a landslide victory in the recent Maharashtra Assembly election. The BJP, on its own, won 132 of the 288 seats in the Maharashtra Assembly. The victory in Maharashtra, coming after the BJP's win in Haryana, has successfully turned the electoral narrative in favour of the party after a relatively poor performance in the 2024 general election.

The ruling Mahayuti coalition, comprising the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the faction of the Shiv Sena led by former Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the Ajit Pawar wing of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), secured a landslide victory in the Maharashtra Assembly election in November 2024. The Mahayuti won a staggering 235 of the 288 seats in the Maharashtra Assembly, with the BJP alone winning 132 seats. Shinde's Shiv Sena bagged 57 seats and Ajit Pawar's NCP secured 41. In contrast, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), consisting of the Congress, the Uddhav Thackeray faction of the Sena and the Sharad Pawar section of the NCP, could only win 46 seats.

The Assembly election results represented a huge divergence from the 2024 general election results where the MVA won 30 of Maharashtra's 48 parliamentary seats and the vote share of both the competing coalitions was around 44 per cent. However, in the Assembly election, the Mahayuti opened up a 14 per cent lead, a turnaround of the kind rarely seen given that only a few months separated the national and Assembly polls. Indeed, none of the explanations put forward fully capture the scale and extent of the reversal of the general election results. For comparison, one can look at Haryana, which had its Assembly election earlier in 2024. There the opposition Congress led the BJP by around one per cent of the vote share in the general election. In the Assembly election, the two parties were separated by less than one percentage point though the BJP won a majority of seats due to its concentrated vote share.

As has been its political strategy since 2014, the BJP was successful in putting together a winning social coalition in Maharashtra. According to a [CSDS-Lokniti survey](#), a majority of the upper castes, the Marathas, the Kunbis and the remaining Other Backward Classes voted for the BJP along with a significant chunk of Adivasis and Scheduled Castes. The MVA secured over 50 per cent of the vote share only among the Adivasis and Muslims. The issue of reservations for the Maratha community, which comprises around 28 per cent of the state's population, had helped the MVA perform well in the general election, particularly in the Marathwada region where it won seven of the eight Lok Sabha (Lower House of the Parliament) seats. However, in the Assembly elections, the Mahayuti staged an extraordinary comeback there, winning 41 of the 46 Assembly seats.

In addition to getting the caste equations right, the Mahayuti government took steps to turn the narrative in its favour. Before the Assembly election, it rolled out measures like the [Ladki Bahin Yojana](#) (Beloved Sister Scheme), which provides a monthly ₹1,500 (\$24) direct cash transfer to 25 million eligible women in Maharashtra. According to the CSDS-Lokniti survey, 80 per cent of the eligible women signed up to avail of the scheme. Of these, 54 per cent voted for the Mahayuti. Of the overall women's vote, 50 per cent voted for the Mahayuti and 33 per cent for the MVA.

Agrarian distress had played a part in the MVA's strong performance in the general election. However, in the Assembly election, it failed to capitalise on this issue. This had something to do with the several central schemes for the farmers, including cash handouts and crop insurance. According to the CSDS-Lokniti survey, nearly half the beneficiaries of these schemes voted for the Mahayuti.

While the party machinery, particularly of the BJP, no doubt played a critical role in the overwhelming victory of the Mahayuti, the election result also reaffirmed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity. There had been talk of voter fatigue with Modi in the 2024 general election, but the [CSDS-Lokniti survey](#) showed that a third of respondents mentioned the prime minister as an important influence in their vote.

The Mahayuti's victory in Maharashtra, along with the BJP's convincing win in Haryana, has successfully turned the electoral narrative in favour of the party after a relatively poor performance in the 2024 general election. Although the BJP could not prevent the incumbent Jharkhand Mukti Morcha from returning to power in Jharkhand – the other state that held elections alongside Maharashtra – it did well in the set of byelections held across India.

Despite the dominant performance of the BJP – the party won 132 of the 149 seats it contested with a strike rate of nearly 90 per cent – the Mahayuti's government formation has not been that easy. At the time of writing, the chief minister's name had not yet been announced though it was widely believed that Devendra Fadnavis, a former chief minister and the face of the BJP in Maharashtra, would get the post. The delay has reportedly been due to the demands of Shinde, whose faction of the Shiv Sena won 57 of the 81 seats it contested, regarding cabinet berths. Shinde has in public though said that [he will support the BJP's choice](#) of the chief minister. While the BJP, given its poll numbers, can do without Shinde, he is important for the coming municipal polls in Mumbai and as a prominent Maratha face.

The date for the [swearing-in ceremony](#) of the Mahayuti government has, however, been fixed for 5 December 2024. Whatever the composition of the government, the Maharashtra verdict has been a phenomenal boost for the BJP and a serious setback for the Congress and the opposition.

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