

Shyam Kumar

Data Science

12/18/24

GITHUB: <https://github.com/Kumarshyamwork/Data-Science-Final->

## **Hindu American Voting Trends**

### **Introduction:**

My research question was, “Has the number of Hindu American voters changed over time?” I was motivated to explore this topic as I am a Hindu American myself and am very interested in the data provided for Hindu-American voting. I have been working in the Hindu advocacy space for more than half a year and have come to see that many Hindus are interested in getting involved but lack the knowledge and motivation to truly delve into political participation. I feel that there is still a significant stigma against political participation within the Hindu community. I wanted to explore how many Hindu Americans actually vote, and when I came across this data, I was excited to examine voter numbers over the years. I was also curious to determine if that number of voters changed over time or remained stagnant.

My approach was to utilize data from the Cumulative CCES dataset, covering the years 2006–2023. I conducted R-based data analysis, creating visualizations (maps and bar plots) to examine yearly voter trends and geographic patterns. My key results showed that Hindu voter participation has increased modestly over time, with the most significant surge occurring during the 2016 election. This surge was influenced by targeted outreach and cultural alignment with Trump’s campaign. My findings are important because they showcase how the Hindu community has increased its

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participation rates but still has a long way to go in order to be fully represented in this country.

### **Background:**

I believe that my research question is important as it examines the growth of Hindu American voters and explores why 2016 was such a pivotal year for them. My initial theory was that Hindu American voter numbers have increased moderately over the years due to the growing spotlight on Hindu American contributions and key political figures. Both the Republican and Democratic parties include a variety of Hindu Americans who are currently serving as elected officials or playing key political roles, such as Kamala Harris, Vivek Ramaswamy, and Tulsi Gabbard.

Through two academic sources, I was able to deepen my understanding of Hindu American participation and the reasons Hindus were so active in 2016. Prema Kurien, in *Multiculturalism, Immigrant Religion, and Diasporic Nationalism: The Development of an American Hinduism*, focuses on the gradual institutional integration and mobilization of Hindu Americans in U.S. politics. Kurien discusses how Hindu Americans navigate recognition within U.S. multicultural policies. She elaborates on how increased voter engagement reflects these efforts, with gradual adaptation leading to steady political involvement (Kurien, 2006). One important note is that Kurien published her paper in 2006, which aligns with only the earliest years of the dataset used. However, her work indicates that Hindu American participation would steadily grow over time. Secondly,

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Sitara Thobani, in *Alt-Right with the Hindu-right: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Perfection of Hindutva*, focuses on the alignment of Hindutva with Trump's nationalist rhetoric, driving Hindu voter turnout in 2016. Thobani discusses how the 2016 "Hindus for Trump" movement purposefully and strategically aligned Hindu identity with conservative nationalist ideologies. Furthermore, she elaborates on how Bollywood and cultural narratives played a strategic role in presenting Hindu American identities within Trump's campaign (Thobani, 2019). Taking these two academic sources into account, I created both a map and a bar plot showcasing the U.S. map and the number of Hindu respondents each year from 2006 to 2023. I predicted that the growth of Hindu Americans would be steady, matching the arguments presented by both Kurien and Thobani.

### **Data and Approach:**

The dataset I used in my research was the Cumulative CCES dataset (2006–2023), created by YouGov, a global public opinion and data company, and hosted on the Harvard Dataverse. This dataset contains 641,955 rows and 103 variables. Each row represents an individual survey respondent. Some of the key variables I used were religion (to identify Hindu voters), year (to analyze trends over time), and state (to map geographic distribution). My approach to processing the data involved subsetting Hindu respondents using the religion variable, counting Hindu voters by year and state, and creating visualizations. Specifically, I used a bar plot to showcase yearly trends in voter participation and created a faceted map to display

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state-wide voter distribution over time. This approach allowed me to create visualizations that reveal trends and geographic patterns, effectively addressing my research question. I also contextualized my findings using Kurien and Thobani's research to explain the trends and peaks observed in my analysis.

### **Results:**

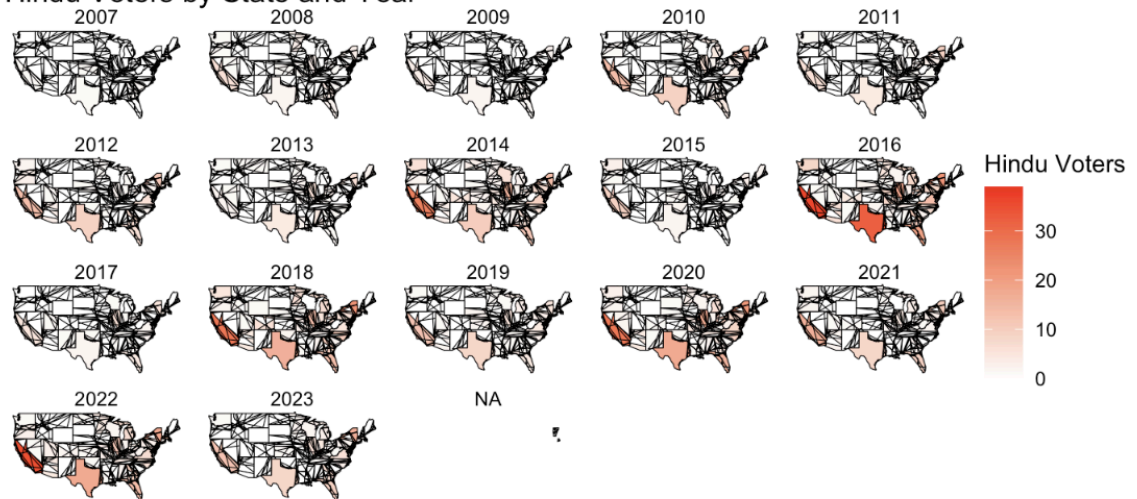
My results indicated that Hindu voter participation has grown modestly over time, with a significant spike in voter turnout in 2016. I am not surprised by my findings, as I expected Hindus to still face stigma regarding political participation. This could be attributed to the extremely chaotic political situation in India, where Hindu culture originates. To showcase my results, I first created a map displaying Hindu voter density by state for each year. Geographic patterns reveal concentrations of Hindu voters in states with higher immigrant populations, such as California, Texas, the Northeastern region, and Florida. Additionally, I created a bar plot to showcase yearly Hindu voter counts, highlighting 2016 as the year with the highest participation. This trend reflects the influence of targeted political mobilization. Thobani's research on Hindutva and Trump's campaign explains the 2016 spike, driven by shared nationalist ideologies. Kurien's findings align with the gradual increase in participation, showcasing the integration of Hindu Americans into U.S. political systems.

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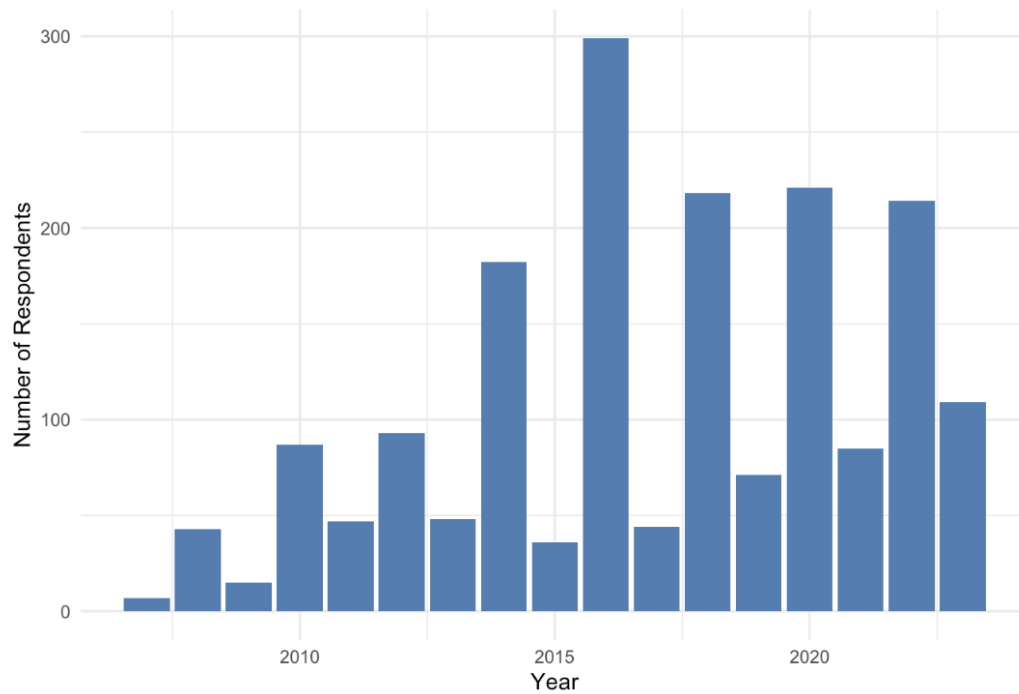
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Hindu Voters by State and Year



Total Hindu Respondents Per Year



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### **Conclusion:**

Answering my research question of whether the number of Hindu American voters has changed over time, I would conclude that their participation has increased at a slow but steady rate, aligning with my expectations. My data indicated that 2016 marked a peak due to geopolitical factors and targeted political mobilization, with an overall modest upward trend. The scholarly sources mentioned provide qualitative explanations for these trends.

My findings are important because they highlight the growth of the Hindu American community, a group that has steadily increased its political participation over the years. A direction for future research would be to explore the data for the year 2024 to determine whether the Trump-Hindu rhetoric remains influential, whether Hindu voter participation continues to rise, and if there is a potential generational gap in voters.

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