Electoral Behaviour in India

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Outline

1. Quiz!
2. Theories of voting behaviour : US
3. How do Indians vote?
4. Studying voting behaviour using surveys
5. Way forward

Section 1

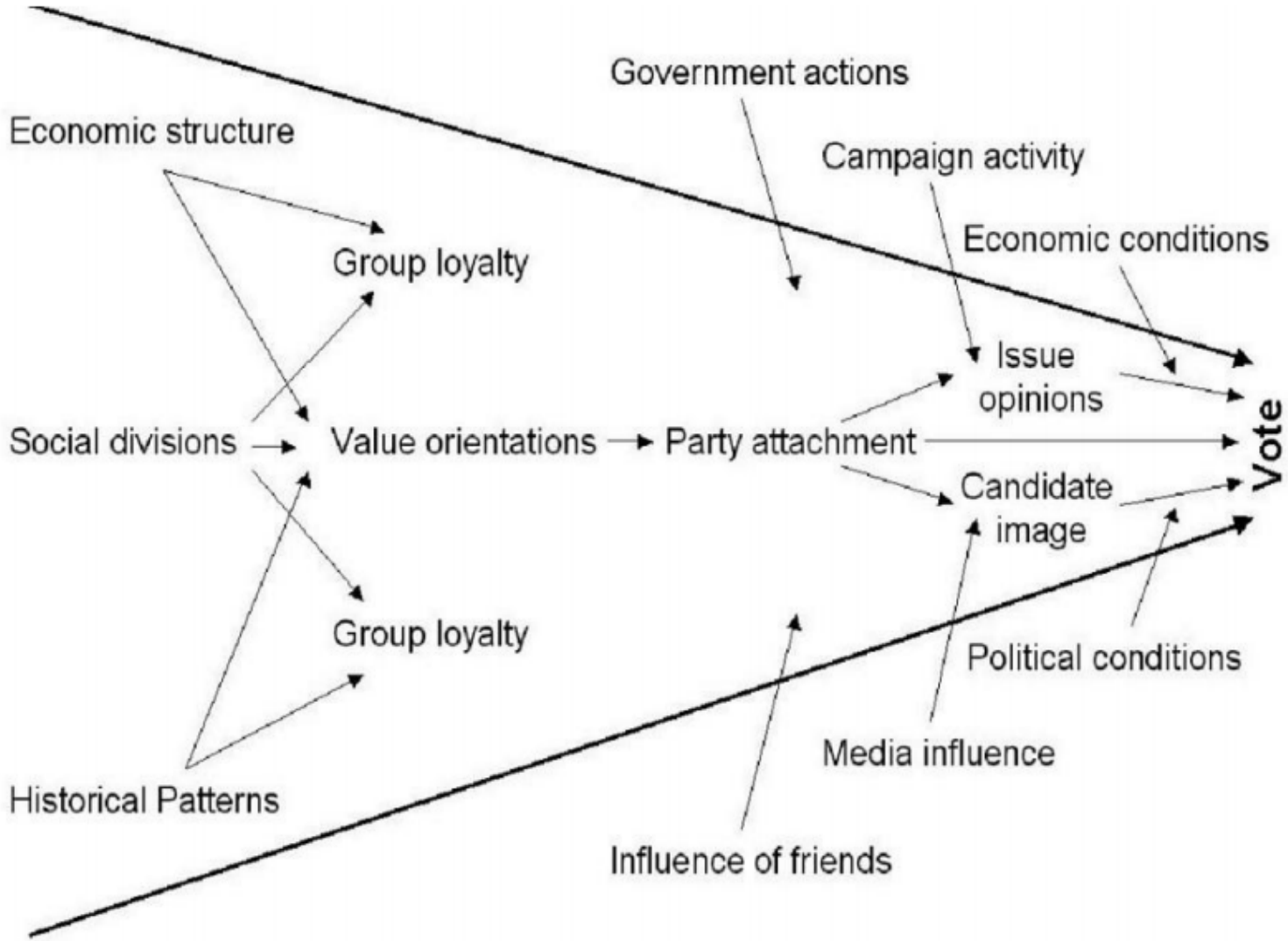
Quiz!

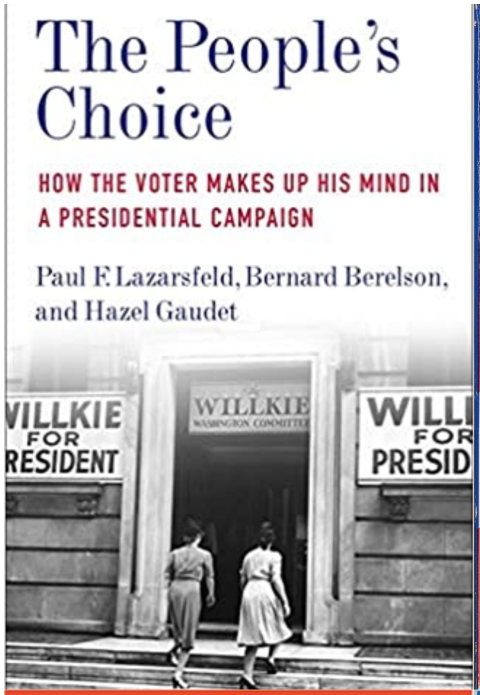
What is the single most important issue guiding your vote choice?

Section 2

Theories of voting behaviour : US

Funnel of causality




The People's Choice
HOW THE VOTER MAKES UP HIS MIND IN A PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN
Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet
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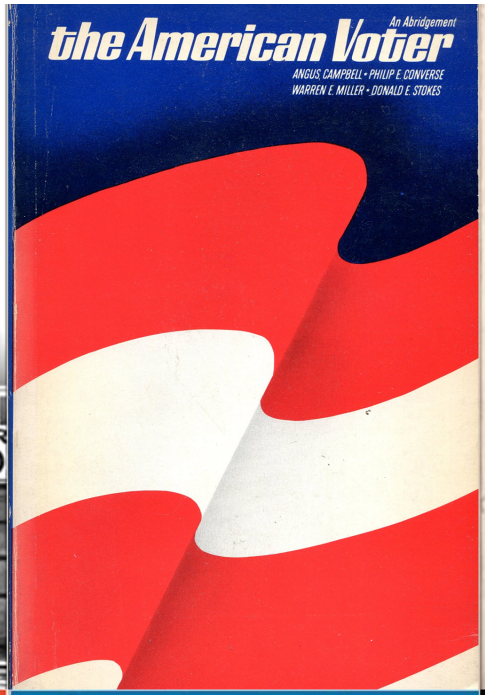
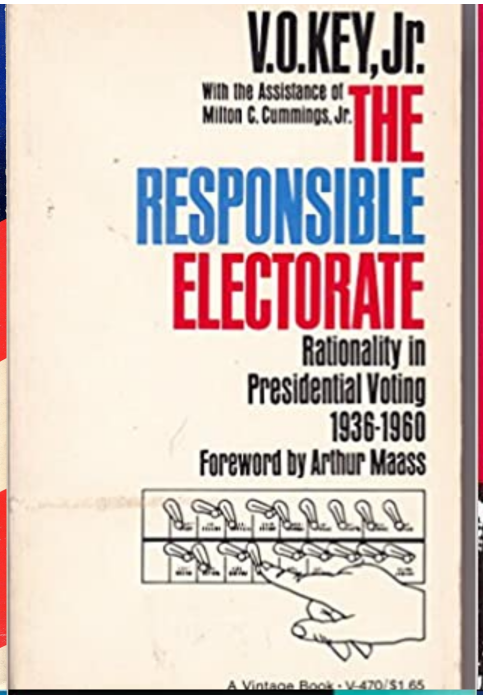
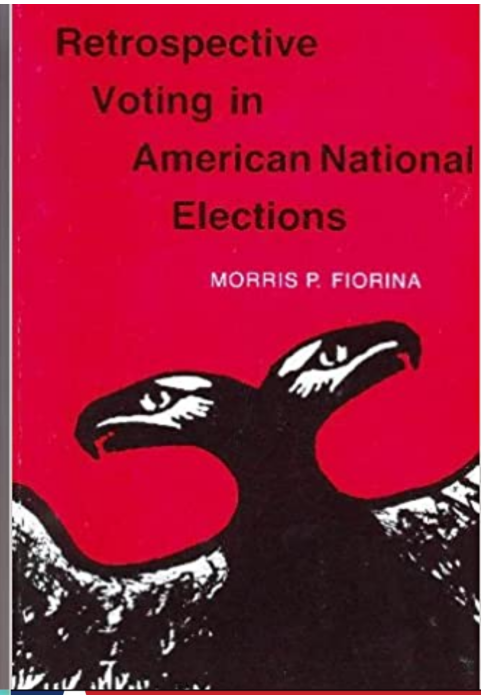
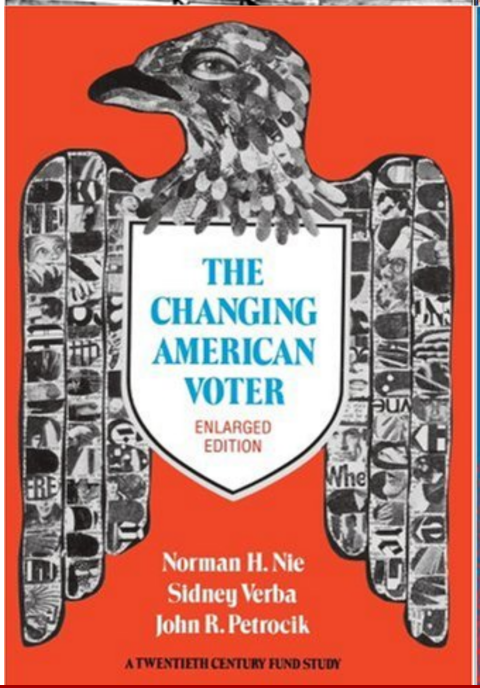
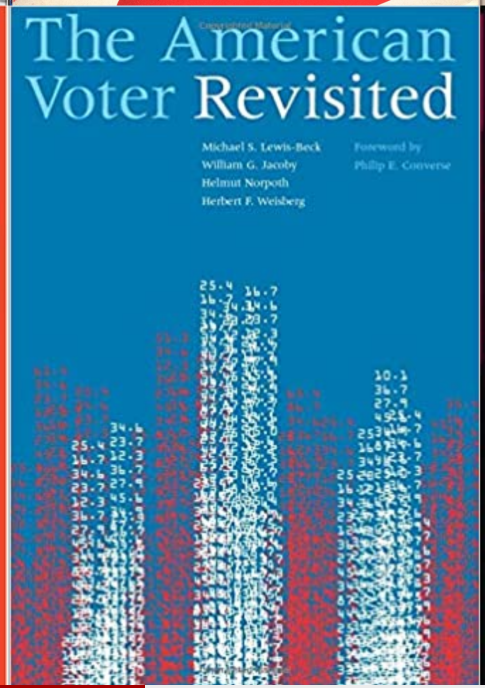
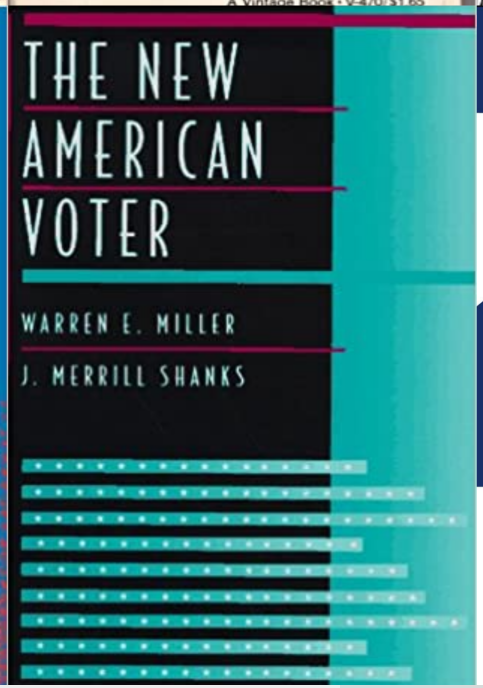

An Abridgement
the American Voter
ANGUS CAMPBELL • PHILIP E. CONVERSE
WARREN E. MILLER • DONALD E. STOKES

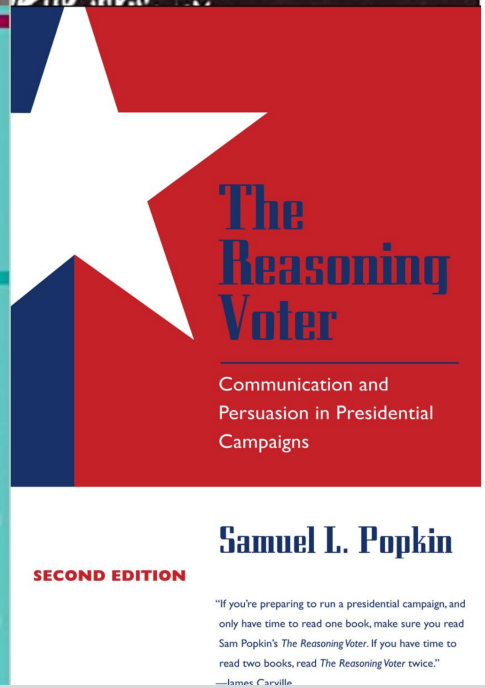

V.O.KEY, Jr.
With the Assistance of Milton C. Cummings, Jr.
THE RESPONSIBLE ELECTORATE
Rationality in Presidential Voting 1936-1960
Foreword by Arthur Maass
A Vintage Book • V-470/$1.65


Retrospective Voting in American National Elections
MORRIS P. FIORINA


THE CHANGING AMERICAN VOTER
ENLARGED EDITION
Norman H. Nie
Sidney Verba
John R. Petrocik
A TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND STUDY


The American Voter Revisited
Michael S. Lewis-Beck
William G. Jacoby
Helmut Norpoth
Herbert F. Weisberg
Foreword by Philip E. Converse


THE NEW AMERICAN VOTER
WARREN E. MILLER
J. MERRILL SHANKS


The Reasoning Voter
Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns
Samuel L. Popkin
SECOND EDITION
"If you're preparing to run a presidential campaign, and only have time to read one book, make sure you read Sam Popkin's The Reasoning Voter. If you have time to read two books, read The Reasoning Voter twice."

Major theories of voting behaviour

- Sociological Model: Identified with the Columbia school - focuses on influence of social factors like group affiliation (**The People's Choice; Personal Influence**).
- Psycho-social Model: Identified with the Michigan school - focuses on effect of partisanship or party identification (**The American Voter**).
- Rational Choice Model: Identified with the work by Anthony Downs (**An Economic Theory of Democracy**) and argues that voters seek to maximise the utility of their vote and parties seek to maximise electoral gains.

Section 3

How do Indians vote?

Major theories and framework

Preferences and Political accountability

- Ethnicity, caste, religion
  - In-group favoritism - Ethnic voting
  - Co-religiosity and voting behaviour
- Clientelism/Patronage Politics:
  - Quid pro quo - Political parties earn support by the distribution of public or private goods to targeted groups of voters
  - India as a patronage democracy -> ethnic favouritism .
  - Brokers/ Intermediaries
    - *Naya Neta's*
    - *You can't buy a vote*

- Programmatic Voting
  - Voters reward performance on civic/economic and developmental issues.
  - Public provisioning of private, tangible goods
  - Retrospective voting
    - Voters make the government accountable by punishing/rewarding them based on their actions during the rule.
  - Prospective voting
    - Voters prefer a party based on their promises that will be delivered once they are in rule.
- Personalistic voting

- Partisanship
  - People identify with certain parties and their loyalty stays intact despite political circumstances.
- Ideology
  - Spatial / Downsian model
    - Preference based on ideological proximities between parties and voters ; Median voter theorem .
    - Ideology & Identity

Section 4

Studying voting behaviour using surveys

- **Why use surveys?**
  - Is there utility beyond poll predictions? Use in academia, policy-making
  - Extensive thematic spread
  - Consistency of questions gives temporal comparability
- **Kinds of surveys**
  - Pre, Post and Exit
- Clarifies issues salient to making voting decisions - short term and long term factors.
- Snapshot of group behaviour at macro level - group affiliation, groupthink, partisan sorting .

National Election Studies

- Conducted by the Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies , NES are a series of nationally representative surveys conducted during before and after Lok Sabha elections.
- Consistent data on electoral choices available from 1996 onwards.
- Emphasis on random sampling, representativeness and vote integrity (through hidden ballot).

National Election Studies

Studying voting behaviour involves going beyond the question of who people vote for. Major themes in the questionnaire :

- Voting choice and partisan affiliation
- Issue and current events based voting
- Public opinion on institutions
- Ideological position
- Religiosity
- Political participation and mobilisation
- Leadership effect
- Demographic details
- Media exposure

Limitations of survey research

- Biases associated with questionnaire design, sampling
- Sacrifice depth for scale
- Difficult to maintain comparability across waves
- Expensive

What does the future hold?

- Technological changes allows for greater frequency of large scale surveys.
- Survey experiments
- Longitudinal panel-based studies to understand nuanced changes in opinions.
- More researchers with technical skills.

Why is it difficult to study Indian voters ?

- Conceptual limitations: diverse country, post-colonial experiment, nascent democracy
- Data paucity: lack of longitudinal data, methodological concerns
- False binary of methods : conversation between disciplines needs to move beyond simple criticism and towards greater synthesis and rigour
- Lack of trained data researchers
- Lack of open data access

Section 5

Way forward

What do we know about Indian voters from surveys?

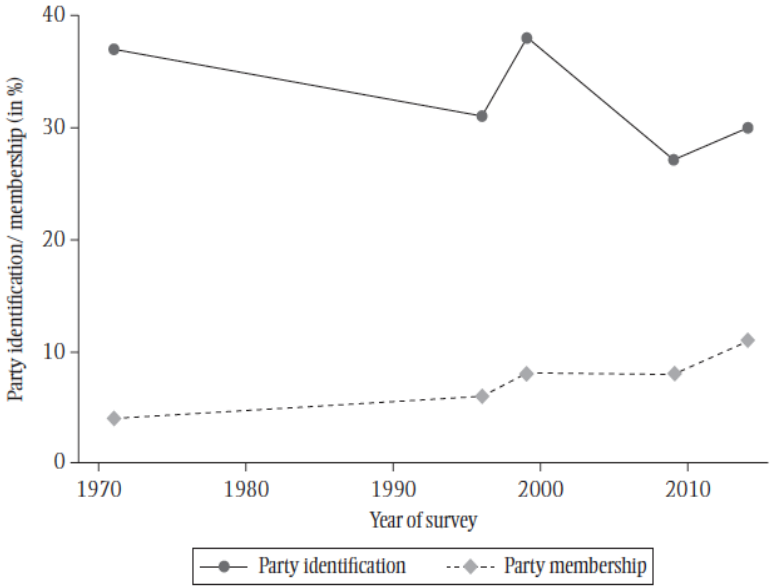


Figure 6.6 Thin Party Penetration in India

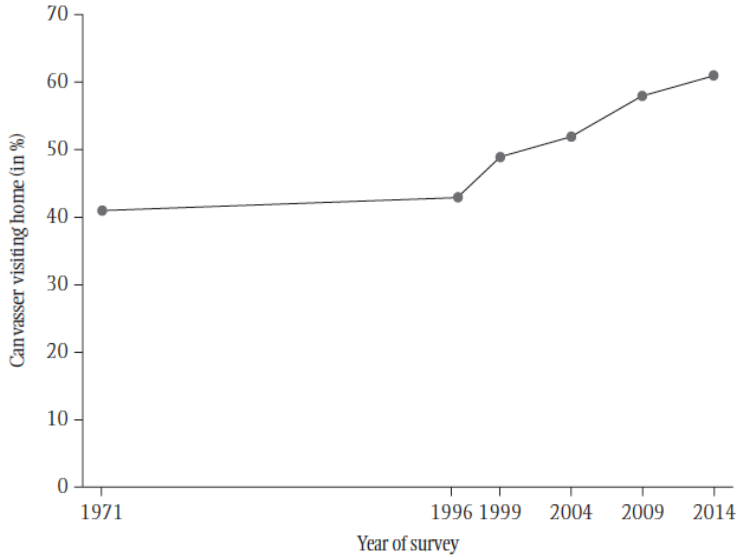
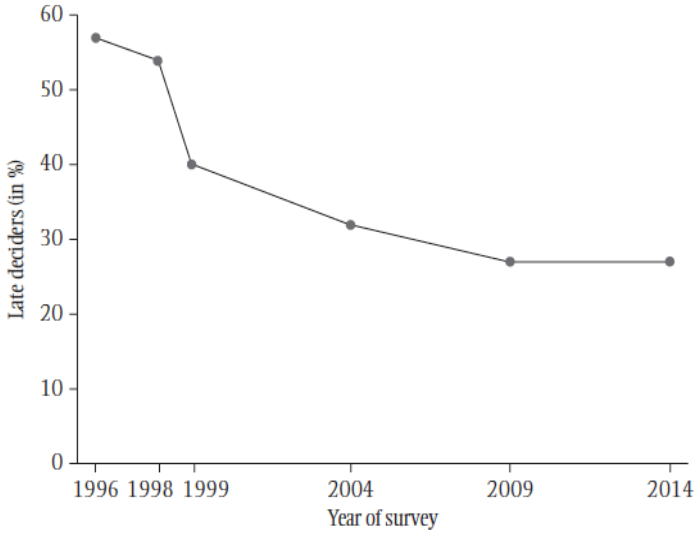
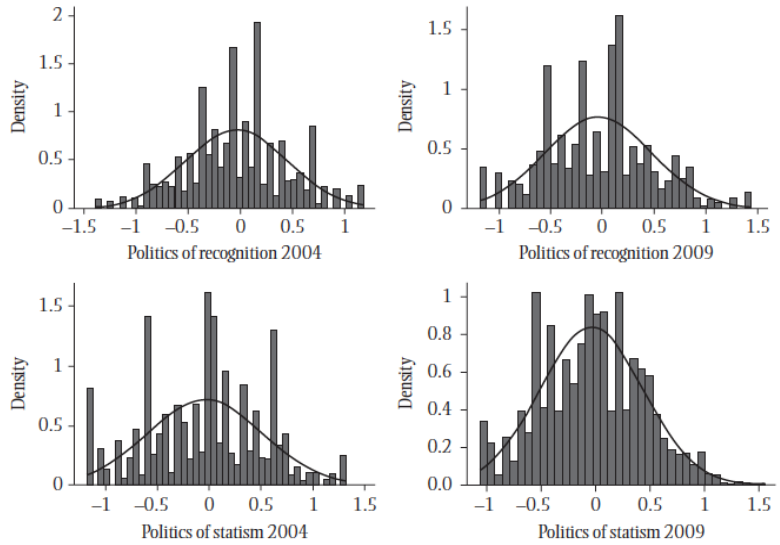
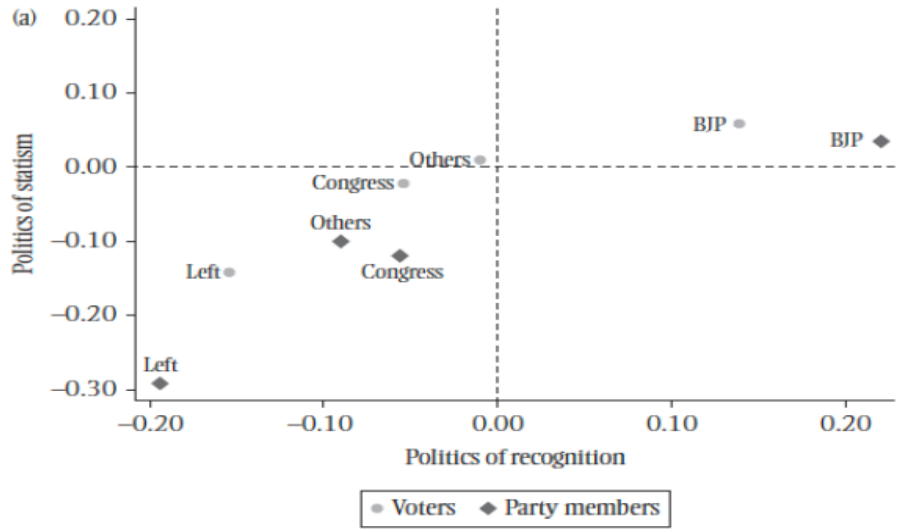


Figure 7.1 Ideological Polarization and Increased Canvassing during Elections
SOURCE: Lokniti-CSDS Datasets.







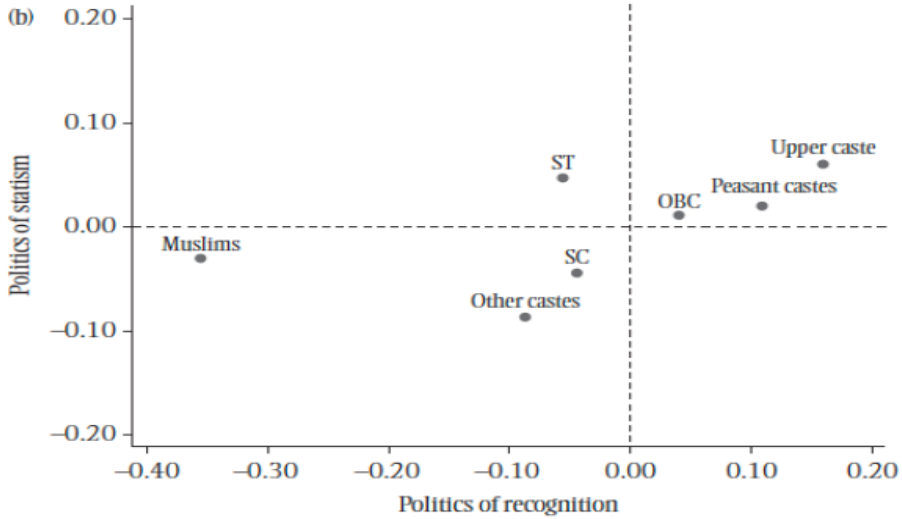


Table 8.3 PARTY LOYALTY AMONG VOTERS IN 2014

	Congress	BJP	Left	Regional Parties
Congress	64	10	1	15
BJP	2	83	1	5
Left	2	8	79	4
Regional Parties	3	9	1	81

NOTE: This does not add to 100 because the others either did not reveal their choice or did not vote. The figures are percentages. The rows represent vote choice in 2014 and columns represent which party's traditional supporter the respondent is.

SOURCE: NES 2014, Lokniti-CSDS.

Table 5.2 WHAT DRIVES VOTERS' CHOICE IN INDIA?

	NES 2014	NES 2009
Party level characteristics	38	40
Candidate level characteristics	15	12
Social Network	14	17
Clientelism	7	9

NOTE: Rest either did not vote or expressed no opinion on this question.

SOURCE: NES 2009 and 2014, Lokniti-CSDS.

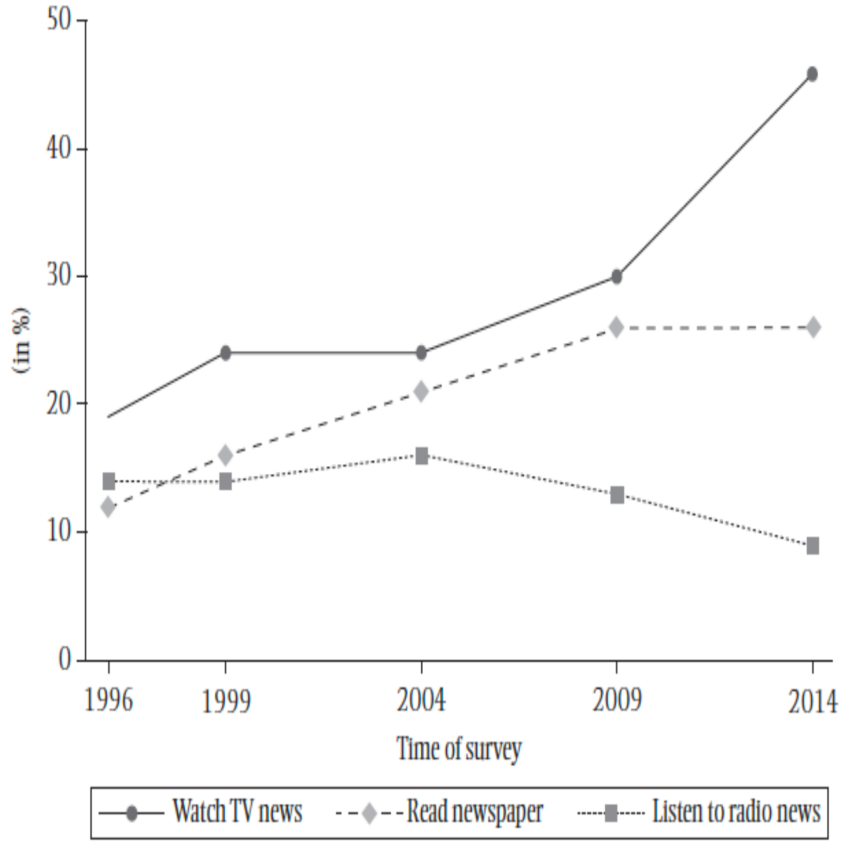
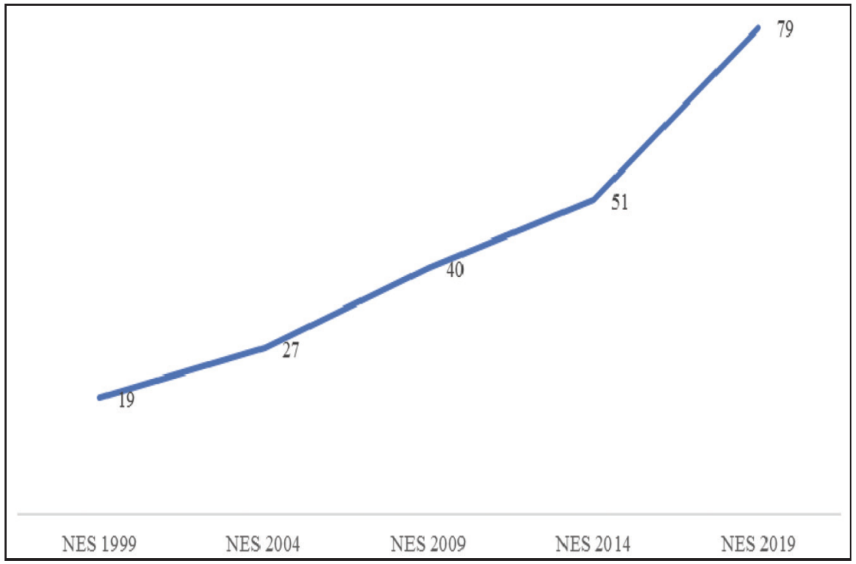


Figure 7.2 Media Exposure in India
SOURCE: Lokniti-CSDS Datasets.

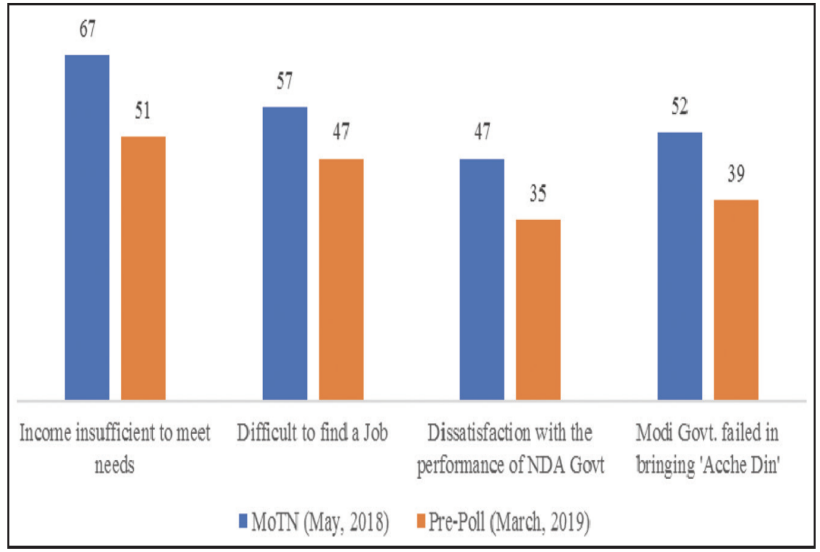
Table 7.3 EXTENT OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN INDIA (IN %)

	Praying	Visiting Religious Sites	Participating in Religious Services	Donations for Religious Activities
Daily/Frequently	47	19	15	15
Weekly/Occasionally	26	37	43	45
On festivals/Rarely	21	34	23	26
Never	7	10	18	15

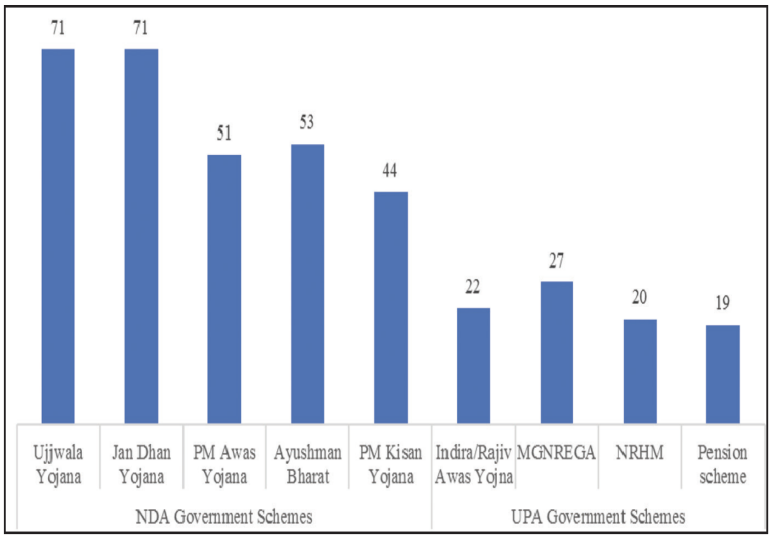
SOURCE: NES 2014; Lokniti-CSDS



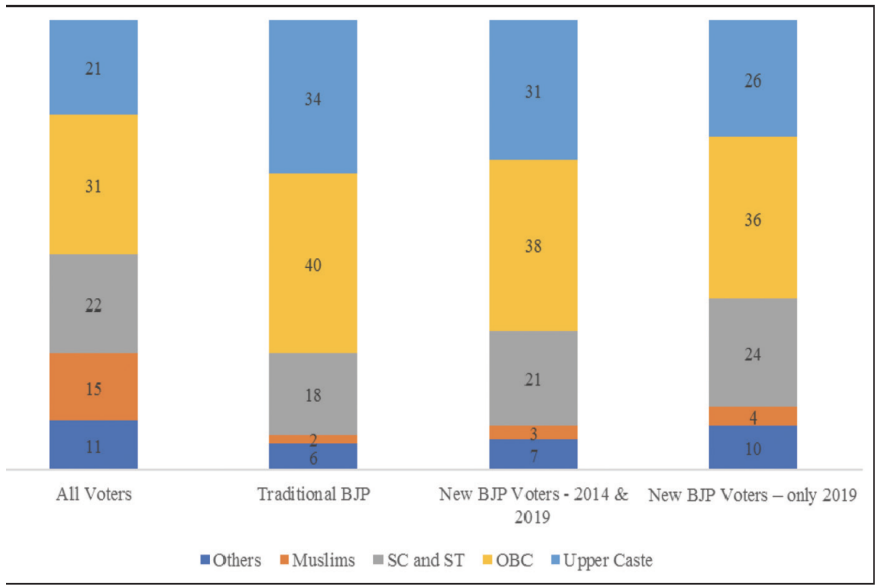
Ujjawala Effect: Increase in LPG Ownership (in %)



The Effect of Nationalism Lens on Economic Concerns (in %)



1. Credit Attribution of Welfare Schemes to Central Government (in %)



BJP's New Caste Coalition

Future promises for electoral studies in India

- Fill gaps in the data: Increasing ease of doing surveys allows for more data
- Indian voters not a mysterious entity! Possible to develop epistemology of Indian voters.
- Silent voters, swing voters, fluctuations, volatility - concepts developed elsewhere are even valid for the Indian context; only needs careful examination.
- Increasing media exposure, political churn and demographic changes are producing new political engagements.