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UP Polls: BJP yet to reveal all their cards, advantage in opinion polls

The BJP seems to be gaining in Uttar Pradesh because the party is being increasingly backed by the Other Backward Classes in the state with 44 per cent of the non-Yadav OBCs saying that they will vote for the lotus symbol.

Rahul Kanwal | Posted by Anand Jayaram New Delhi, October 13, 2016 | UPDATED 05:00 IST

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 BJP leads opinion poll in UP elections.
2 71 per cent of the Dalit indicated that they would be voting for the BSP.
3 Congress is expected to bag only 6 per cent of the overall voteshare.

The BJP could emerge as the single-largest party with 170 to 183 constituencies if elections were held today for the 403-seat Uttar Pradesh assembly, according to an opinion poll by market research agency Axis My India for the India Today Group.

The party in power at the Centre inched ahead of Mayawati's BSP and UP's ruling Samajwadi Party in the survey months ahead of polls in India's most populous and politically crucial state. The Bahujan Samaj Party chief though is the most popular choice for the CM's post.

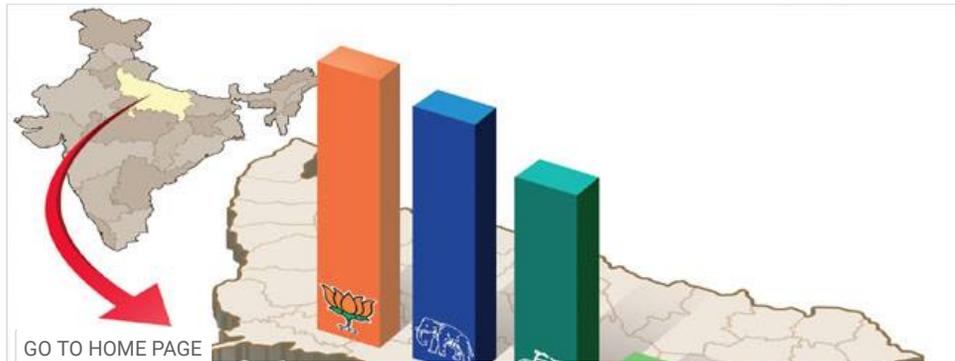
Both the BSP and SP have been battling controversies in recent weeks.

Rocked by a series of highprofile exits over the past few months, the Bahujan Samaj Party is projected to trail the BJP with a seat share in the range of 115-124, the survey predicted.

The Samajwadi Party's prospects too have taken a hit after a very public fight among members of the Yadav clan at the helm of the outfit. According to the Axis-My-India poll, the SP is slated for the third spot, bagging between 94 and 103 seats.

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The Congress does not seem to have made significant inroads into Uttar Pradesh despite its vice-president [Rahul Gandhi's Kisan Yatra](#). The Grand Old Party is projected to secure only between 8 and 12 constituencies.



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This is the first time that the BJP is seen in pole position in any opinion survey months ahead of the assembly elections.

BIG GAINS

Our study in August by polling agency CVoter suggested a close contest between the BJP and SP. A CSDS opinion survey the same month put the SP in the lead followed by the

From September 5 to October 5, a team of 60 surveyors conducted face-to-face interviews with 22,231 respondents in the 403 assembly constituencies of Uttar Pradesh. The pollsters targeted a sample size of 50 in every borough.

The Samajwadi Party government in Uttar Pradesh faces sharp anti-incumbency, according to the findings. Pollsters from Axis asked respondents how satisfied they were with the government across 17 different parameters - from the condition of local roads, electricity, drinking water, health facilities, education, law and order to employment opportunities.

On an average, 59 per cent of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the SP administration over the last four-and-a-half years. Less than a third of the voters said they were satisfied.

The BJP seems to be gaining in Uttar Pradesh because the party is being increasingly backed by the Other Backward Classes in the state with 44 per cent of the non-Yadav OBCs saying that they will vote for the lotus symbol.

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CASTE MATRIX

The upper castes of UP also appear to be firmly backing the BJP, with 61 per cent pledging their support

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The SP is holding on to its core Yadav (67 per cent) voting bloc. The ruling party is still the preferred group for the state's Muslims, with 58 per cent of the community members saying they back the SP.

Around 21 per cent of Muslims indicated that they would vote for the BSP.

A series of anti-Dalit crimes across the country has seemingly marred the BJP's attempt to break Mayawati's votebank. An overwhelming 71 per cent of the Dalit respondents indicated that they would be voting for the BSP.

The overall electoral picture of Uttar Pradesh is the sum of four separate sub-plots. The BJP is leading in eastern and western Uttar Pradesh while the Samajwadi Party has a narrow lead in central UP or Awadh.

In development starved Bundelkhand, Mayawati's BSP holds pole position. In western UP, 31 per cent vote share while the BSP and the SP have 27 per cent each



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state's next chief minister. As many as 31 per cent of the respondents said she was their first choice.

Incumbent **Akhilesh Yadav** comes in second in the popularity sweepstakes with 27 per cent people backing him. Union home minister and former CM **Rajnath Singh** is third with 18 per cent respondents backing him, while Gorakhpur MP Yogi Adityanath has the backing of 14 per cent of the participants.

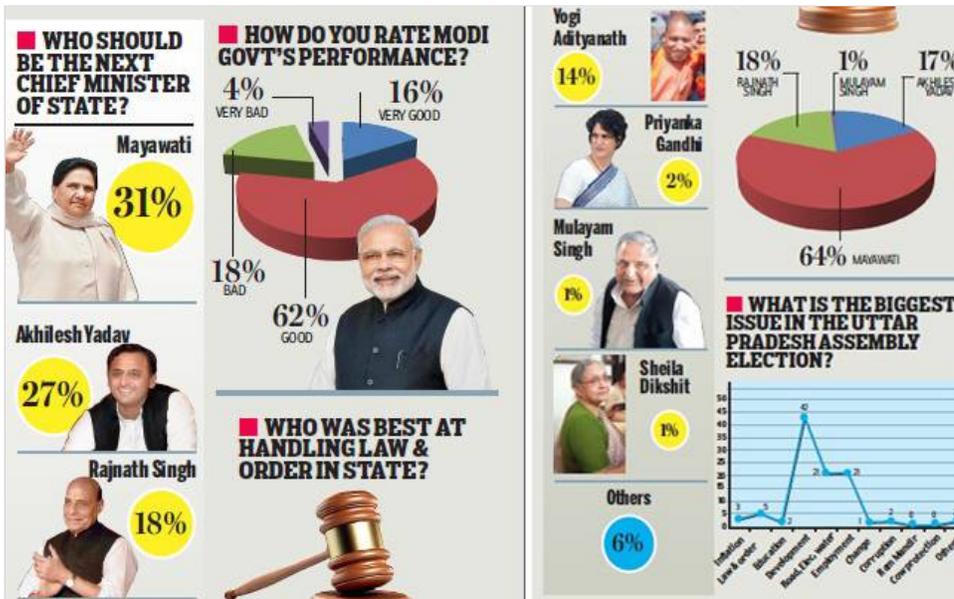
as 54 per cent of the respondents said they disagreed with the notion of Congress harat. But there's hardly any other silver lining for the Grand Old Party in the opinion

Despite the hype around Priyanka Gandhi's imminent entry into active politics, only 19 per cent of the respondents felt that she could play a key role in reviving the Congress. The party's chief ministerial candidate, Sheila Dikshit, received the backing of only 1 per cent of the total respondents.

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CONGRESS LOSS

The Congress is expected to bag only 6 per cent of the overall voteshare and get between 8-12 seats, which is worse than the party's performance in the previous assembly elections.

One of the key highlights of this opinion poll is that almost a third of the respondents said they would primarily consider the performance of the central government while deciding whom to vote for in the elections.

The Ram Mandir issue seems to be dead as far as voting preferences are concerned. Surprisingly, 0 per cent of the respondents said the issue would determine who they vote for. Development is by far the biggest issue for voters in this election.

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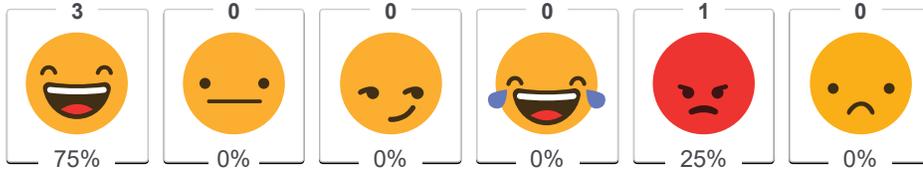
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