

# **PRE-POLL SURVEY**

**ON**

**KARNATAKA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2018**

## **KARNATAKA TO HAVE A HUNG ASSEMBLY**

The Karnataka Assembly Elections, which is dominating national attention, is heading for a dramatic finish between the Ruling Congress, BJP and JD(S). Elections to the 224 Karnataka Legislative Assembly being held today throw up a hung verdict leaving the field open for parties to cobble together a meaning and workable arrangement for the next five years.

Karnataka 2018 is headed to have a hung Assembly with the Congress set to emerge as the single largest party in the 224-member House. The BJP would be the next largest party. The JD(S) would have a say in who would govern Karnataka in the next term.

**Peoples Pulse**, Political research organization conducted a field study and Pre-poll survey in Karnataka from **27<sup>th</sup> April to 9<sup>th</sup> May** covering **3,600 kilometers** across all the regions. The survey was done in coordination with Kannada daily, '**Kolaravani**'. The survey comprised of mixed methodology of social listening by talking to different sections and a structured questionnaire with respondents' options.

**According to Peoples Pulse-Kolaravani survey the ruling Congress would get 93-103 seats followed by BJP between 83-93 seats. The JD(S) would get 33-43 seats. Others would get 2-4 seats. The survey shows that the Congress would have a vote share of 39.6 percent, BJP 34.2 percent, JD(S) 21.6 percent and others 4.6 percent.**

For any survey a margin of error is plus or minus three percent. The survey did not factor the last two days of campaign and therefore could not assess the last minute swing in favour of or against any of the main parties.

Further our survey showed that most of the winners in the treasury or the opposition benches would find themselves past the post with pretty thin margins. Significantly there is no real anti-incumbency against Sri Siddharamaiah government. On the contrary, the voter is speaking favorably about the developmental work done by this government. The survey showed that the anti-incumbency factor, however, is working against the sitting MLA belonging to Congress, BJP and JD(S).

The survey showed that the Congress is leading over the other parties uniformly on all parameters, namely, development, welfare, community preference, C.M choice, party preference, across age and gender.

The report was compiled and prepared by Peoples Pulse senior associate **Dr Sajjan Kumar**, a Ph.D from CPS, JNU and co-author of ‘Everyday Communalism’ published by Oxford University Press. **Peoples Pulse** team members, **Kolaravani network** on the field assisted in gathering the data. Based on the data we categorized 224 Assembly Constituencies as “**Edge**” and “**Keen Contest**”.

It will be the outcome of 43 keenly contested seats between Congress, BJP and JD(S) that is going to decide which party shall form the next government in Karnataka. The possible result in the rest of the constituencies 224 is by and large predictable while the verdict can go in favour of the three parties in the 43 keen assembly segments and hence becomes crucial.

Congress has an edge over its main rival BJP in all the regions except coastal Karnataka. In fact, the dominant characteristic of the ensuing election happen to be a complete absence of ‘anti-incumbency’ factor. In our fieldwork, majority of respondents rated both, the performance of Congress and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah as satisfactory. The popular welfare schemes, absence of any corruption issue and stability factor were offered as the reasons behind the largely positive image of the ruling party and its leader.

On the other hand, BJP seeking to oust the incumbent Congress, failed to build a dominant election narrative resonating with the electorates. This lacuna on part of BJP has been on account of its inability to offer better credentials on parameters of corruption, stability and welfare. Besides, the issue of Hindutva had few takers besides coastal region. Finally, Modi factor was found to be a non-starter except part of Mumbai Karnataka, particularly Belgaum district and coastal region.

### **VOTE SHARE AND SEATS PROJECTION**

<b>PARTY</b>	<b>VOTE SHARE*</b>	<b>SEATS PROJECTION*</b>
CONGRESS	39.6	93-103
BJP	34.2	83-93
JD(S)	21.6	33-43
OTHERS	4.6	2-4

*\*Margin of error +or- three percent*

Congress is witnessing a consolidation of Dalits, Tribals, Muslims and lower OBC voters on account of the welfare policies reaching out the weaker sections and corresponding satisfaction with the party and state leadership. This is translating into positive vote or a pro-incumbency vote for the ruling party.

BJP is prime beneficiary of the consolidation of Lingayats due to merger of KJP that contested 2013 election separately. However, the projection of Tribal leader Sriramulu as possible deputy C.M doesn't seem to resonate with most of the tribal voters beyond certain pockets in Southern Karnataka.

JD(S)' main traction comes from its strong position in Southern Karnataka and Bangalore where Vokkaliga concentration is most intense, which in turn, is attracting other communities and castes like Muslims, OBCs and in some constituencies Dalits too. However, the party is very weak in coastal region and Mumbai Karnataka. The party would have a better strike rate than Congress and BJP in southern Karnataka region.

### **REGION WISE VOTING PATTERN**

<b>REGIONS</b>	<b>CONG</b>	<b>BJP</b>	<b>JD(S)</b>	<b>OTHERS</b>
SOUTHERN KARNATAKA	38	18	35	9
CENTRAL KARNATAKA	43	38	15	4
HYDERABAD-KARNATAKA	42	33	22	3
MUMBAI-KARNATAKA	43	43	12	2
COASTAL KARNATAKA	41	42	15	2
BANGLORE RURAL & URBAN	33	31	28	8

Congress' decisive edge in Southern, Central and Hyderabad Karnataka is on account of the demographic advantage of Dalits, Tribals and Muslims– the core support base of the ruling party. On the other hand, BJP has a strong presence in Mumbai Karnataka and Coastal region as demographically, the core support base of Congress is relatively weak while the castes like Lingayats and Marathas, Konkan Bhandaris, Bunts, who dominate the two regions respectively, favouring BJP. JD(S) is a distant third in these two regions on account of near absence of its core support base, i.e, Vokkaligas.

Thus, it is caste and community that is the main electoral determinant in this election which is defining the respective bastions of Congress, BJP and JD(S)

**COMMUNITY WISE VOTING PATTERN**

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>CONG</b>	<b>BJP</b>	<b>JD(S)</b>	<b>OTHERS</b>
DALITS	51	22	21	6
TRIBALS	50	27	18	5
MUSLIMS	69	12	15	4
UPPER CASTES	21	51	23	5
OTHER OBCs	42	35	18	5
LINGAYATHS	15	65	12	8
VOKKALIGAS	24	20	52	4
OTHERS	39	35	15	11

**‘AHINDA’ FOR CONGRESS, UPPER CASTES**

**INGAYATS FOR BJP AND VOKKALIGAS FOR JD(S)**

As is seen in the table above, the AHINDA (non-Vokkaliga OBCs+Dalits+ Tribals+Muslims) support base is working in favour of Congress. The prime reason accounting for this happen to be the success of popular pro-poor welfare schemes, mainly, Anna-Bhagya, that has created a good-will for the ruling party and its incumbent Chief Minister. Besides, Muslims are veering solidly towards Congress more intensely as the perception that a likely post-poll alliance between JD(S) and BJP is an imminent possibility, is driving a significant percentage of minorities away from JD(S) in favour of the Congress.

Majority of Dalits and tribals are preferring the Congress government’s pro-poor welfare schemes over other factors. Besides, Sriramulu, has not captured the imagination of majority of the tribal except in certain pockets. This is contrary to the BJP’s expectations that these two sections would shift their loyalties towards it. Further their calculation that a section of Madigas would sail with them given their so-called anger towards the ruling Congress does not seem to hold much water.

On the other hand, the upper castes, like Brahmin, Bunts, Jains, Lingayats etc. are strongly consolidated in favour of BJP, primarily on account of the perception that the incumbent Congress government led by Siddaramaiah has catered to the interests of Dalits, Tribals and Muslims at their cost.

Similarly, for Vokkaligas, this election is a ‘now-or-never’ moment to see the revival of JD(S) and its leader Kumaraswami, whom they intend to catapult to C.M’s post through any possible permutation and combination of post-poll alliance. Moreover, the dominant Vokkaligas and Lingayats, nurture a sense of loss of power given their perception that Siddaramaiah has been championing the interest of non-Vokkaliga OBCs, Dalits, Tribals and Muslims at their expense. So, the popularity of C.M candidates merits attention.

Overall, JD(S) has not gained in any way by receiving support from the MIM and BSP. Only in the Mysore region some of their candidates have received electoral bolstering among Dalits and Muslims because of the support of BSP and MIM.

### **C.M CHOICE**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
SIDDARAMAIAH	37
B S YEDDYURAPPA	24
H D KUMARASWAMI	19
OTHERS	20

Majority of the respondents belonging to non-Vokkaliga OBCs, Dalits, Tribals and Muslims, unequivocally preferred Siddaramaiah as the next C.M on account of his performance in the last two years. Surprisingly, majority of the Muslims have a connect with Siddaramaiah on account of his welfare policies rather than mere secular posturing. Similarly, along the expected lines overwhelming majority of Vokklingas preferred Kumaraswami while the Lingayats were near unanimous in preferring Yeddyurappas as their C.M choice.

Interestingly, while Vokkaligas justified their choice in terms of pro-farmer image of JD(S) and Kumaraswami, rather than caste matrix, majority of Lingayats rationalised their choice for Yeddyurappa by arguing that he caters for entire public rather than just for Dalits, Tribals and Muslims.

In this regard the satisfaction percentage of Siddaramaiah government's is pertinent.

### **RECEPTION OF POPULAR WELFARE SCHEMES**

<b>WELFARE SCHEME</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Anna Bhagya	84
Ksheera Bhagya	71
Krishi Bhagya	38
Akshara Dasoha	58
Indira Canteen	28
Cycle Bhagya	25
Bus Pass to Students	34

The most important electoral determinant affecting the voting preference of the majority of the electorates happen to be the popular welfare policies, especially, the Anna-Bhagya, that has truly found favour among the poor. This factor acquires overarching importance in the backdrop of three years of drought in different parts of the state wherein the efficient delivery of the highly subsidised food emerged as the saviour for the people. Undoubtedly, this has reaped dividends for both the Congress and Siddaramaiah.

### **MODI NOT A FACTOR IN THIS ELECTION**

The major strength of BJP since 2014 has been the 'Modi factor', which has usually put rival parties at a disadvantage. However, from Karnataka perspective, barring coastal region, Modi doesn't seem to be an electoral factor. His speeches don't seem to resonate with the majority of the electorates including the Lingayats who constitute the bulk of its support base. The community members are driven more by the factor of seeing Yeddyurappa as next C.M rather than stay enchanted by Modi.

Similarly, majority of peasant castes, consider BJP and Modi not being friendly to the interest of the farmers. Thus, Karnataka election presents a case wherein the local and regional factors are dominating the electoral dynamics— a factor not in the best interest of BJP.

### **JD(S) AS PRO-FARMER PARTY FOLLOWED BY CONGRESS**

Another significant finding of the field study happen to be the reception of JD(S) as the pro-farmer party followed by Congress which is seen as championing the cause of the small peasants. However, BJP is seen as ignoring the cause of the farmers. In fact, a significant section of the respondents found BJP being “hostile” to farmers’ interest. Demonetization was cited as an illustration. This has also contributed to the non-emergence of Modi factor in the state as an electoral determinant.

### **RETURN AND CENTRALITY OF WELFARE POLITICS**

Another notable aspect, that Karnataka reveals is the emergence of the centrality of welfare politics as the superseding issue over the intangible factors like nationalism, secularism and Hindutva. The fact that BJP is on the defensive pertaining to the strong delivery of Siddaramaiah government’s welfare schemes speaks volumes about the emerging centrality of tangible welfare policies.

### **NO ELECTORAL IMPACT OF SEPARATE LINGAYAT**

#### **RELIGION AND SEPARATE FLAG ISSUES**

The much hyped issue of granting a separate religious status for Lingayats and Karnataka having a separate flag of its own doesn’t resonate with the political calculation of the electorates on the ground. These issues have been political theatrics by the Congress leadership to privilege regional issues over the national one at the level of media in order to entrap BJP and make it respond to agendas set by the ruling party. Thus, both the issues seem to be mainly posturing by the political leaders while the vast majority of the electorates don’t consider them crucial. Consequently, Congress attempt to dent a section of Lingayat voters to its side doesn’t seem to be working as they are intact behind BJP.





## **TACTICAL VOTING BY LINGAYATS AND VOKKALIGAS** **AGAINST CONGRESS OUTSIDE THEIR RESPECTIVE BASTIONS**

The consolidation of AHINDA behind Congress has created a sense of resentment among the two dominant castes, Lingayats and Vokkaligas, against the incumbent Congress. Both are used to see C.Ms hailing from their respective castes. The fact, that Siddaramaiah belongs to none and from the vantage point of the two dominant castes, champions the cause of lower OBCs, Dalits, Tribals and Muslims, has further angered them against Congress. Therefore, while majority of the Lingayats and Vokkaligas are veering to BJP and JD(S) respectively– a factor helping Congress as anti-Congress vote is splitting, in many constituencies they are voting for each-other tactically in case they happen to be in minority. Thus, in various pockets, the dominant castes, Lingayats and Vokkaligas, seem to tactically support each other against Congress in case either of them happen to be in minority. This aspect emerges despite the fact that state is known to witness an intense rivalry between these castes for power.

## **SIDDARAMAIAH CONTESTING FROM TWO CONSTITUENCIES** **A CANON FOR BJP AND JD(S)**

One of the vulnerability that has put the C.M in bind and open to opposition attacks is his decision to contest from two constituencies, Badami and Chamundeshwari. In particular, the position of Siddaramaiah in Chamundeshwari constituency is not very comfortable as Vokkaligas numerically dominate the constituency and BJP has put up a weak candidate hailing from numerically meagre Brahmin caste to make the going tough for the C.M.

## **BJP's FAILURE TO SET AN ELECTION NARRATIVE AND AGENDA**

Finally, on the expected lines, our field study confirmed the failure of BJP to dominate the war of perception on account of its failure to set an election narrative, which it has been doing in other states. In other words, this election is about the lack of any significant narrative by BJP as neither the issue of development nor that of anti-corruption; neither the agenda of stability nor of delivering welfare schemes have any positive correlation with the BJP in the state. In fact, Congress emerges as the unequivocal champion on all these fronts and the party has been setting the agendas and BJP seems to have been reacting to them. Notably, even JDS has a narrative in this election when it comes to championing the interest of the farmers.

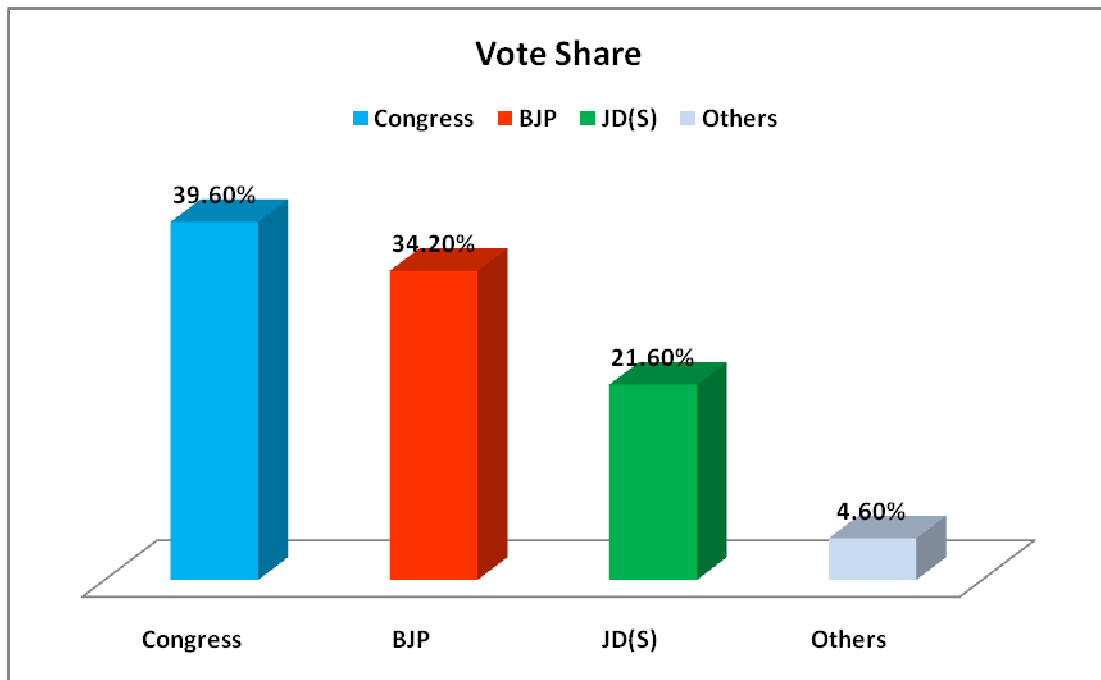
On the question of leadership, BJP seems to have erred in announcing Yeddyurappa as C.M candidate and not give him a free hand. In popular parlance, as the field visit also confirmed his projection by the party seems half-hearted. The fact that in a state where local and regional factors are constituting the voting behaviour, the emergence of Modi and Amit Shah and in some pockets Yogi Adityanath as the main campaigner was be a strategic mistake by the BJP. This alone failed to tackle Siddaramiah, who hit the field as a local Kannadiga who is also the flag bearer of Karnataka pride and Karnataka autonomy.

Having said all these, the last word can only be said only after the last vote is counted on 15 May. The Congress has done well thus far by not getting bogged down by incumbency. The BJP did exceedingly well is attempting to capture their “gateway to the South”. The question that remains to be answered is if they started their focus a bit too early.

### VOTE SHARE & SEATS PROJECTIONS

Party	Vote Share*	Seats Projection*
Congress	39.6%	93-103
BJP	34.2%	83-93
JD(S)	21.6%	33-43
Others	4.6%	2-4

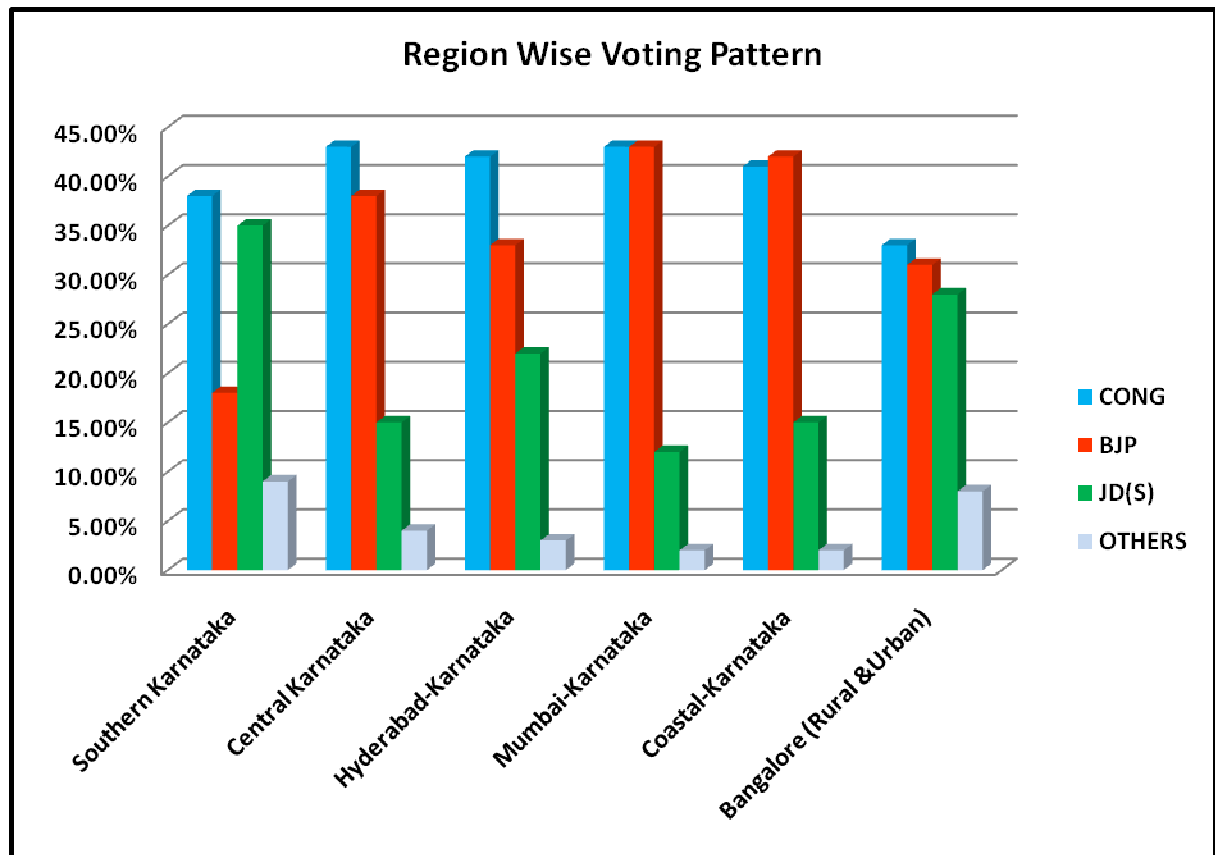
\* Margin of Error + or - 3%



### REGION WISE VOTING PATTERN

REGION	CONG	BJP	JD(S)	OTHERS
Southern Karnataka	38.0%	18.0%	35.0%	9.0%
Central Karnataka	43.0%	38.0%	15.0%	4.0%
Hyderabad-Karnataka	42.0%	33.0%	22.0%	3.0%
Mumbai-Karnataka	43.0%	43.0%	12.0%	2.0%
Coastal-Karnataka	41.0%	42.0%	15.0%	2.0%
Bangalore (Rural &Urban)	33.0%	31.0%	28.0%	8.0%

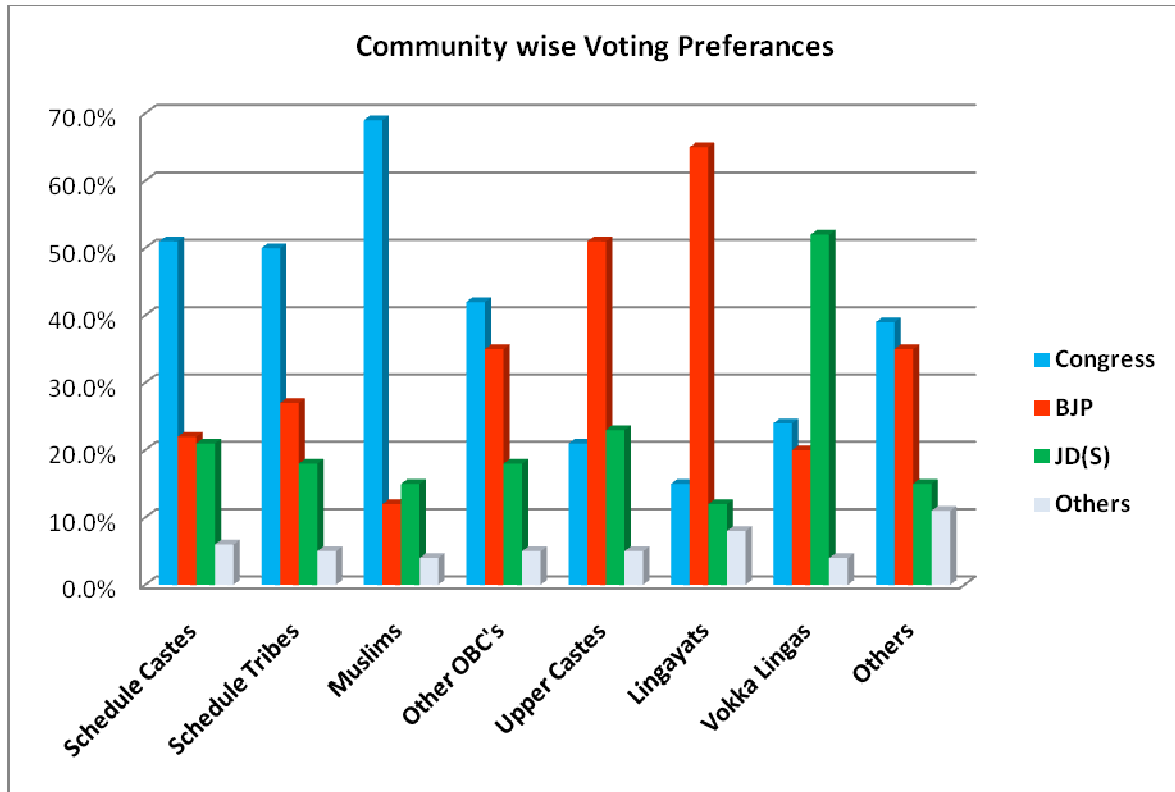
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**COMMUNITY WISE VOTING PREFERENCES**

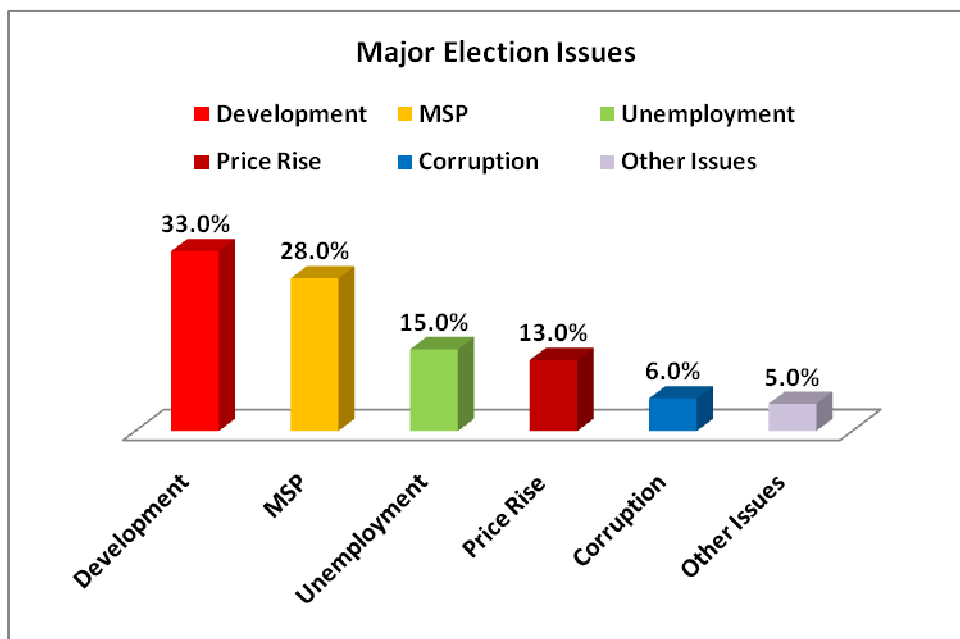
COMUNITY	CONG	BJP	JD(S)	Others
Schedule Castes	51.0%	22.0%	21.0%	6.0%
Schedule Tribes	50.0%	27.0%	18.0%	5.0%
Muslims	69.0%	12.0%	15.0%	4.0%
Other OBC's	42.0%	35.0%	18.0%	5.0%
Upper Castes	21.0%	51.0%	23.0%	5.0%
Lingayats	15.0%	65.0%	12.0%	8.0%
Vokka Lingas	24.0%	20.0%	52.0%	4.0%
Others	39.0%	35.0%	15.0%	11.0%

\* Margin of Error + or - 3%



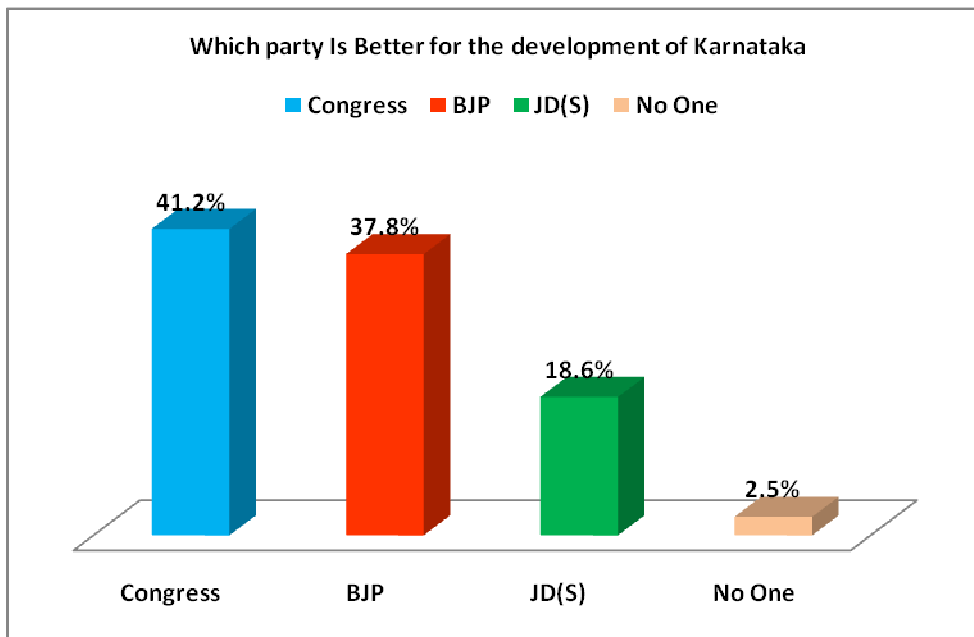
### MAJOR ELECTION ISSUES

Major Election Issues	Percentage
Development	33.0%
MSP	28.0%
Unemployment	15.0%
Price Rise	13.0%
Corruption	6.0%
Other Issues	5.0%



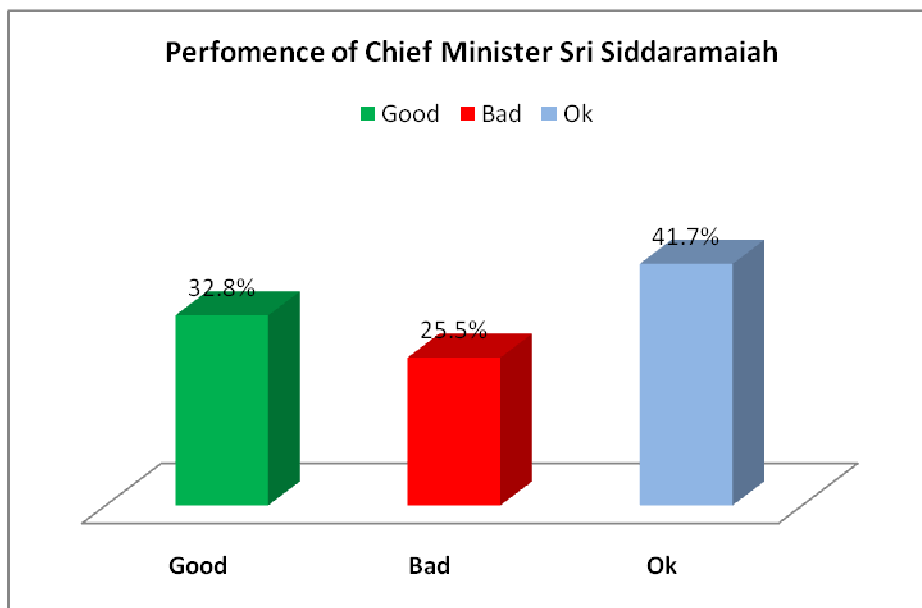
**WHICH PARTY IS BETTER FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
KARNATAKA?**

Party	Percentage
Congress	41.2%
BJP	37.8%
JD(S)	18.6%
No One	2.5%



**RATE THE PERFORMANCE OF**  
**CHIEF MINISTER SRI SIDDARAMAIAH**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Good	32.8%
Bad	25.5%
Ok	41.7%





**WHOM DO YOU PREFER AS NEXT CHIEF MINISTER OF  
KARNATAKA?**

Name	Percentage
Siddaramaiah	37.0%
B.S Yeddyurappa	24.0%
H.D Kumara Swamy	19.0%
Others	20.0%

