

MOOD FOR PORIBORTON

WEST BENGAL - 2021



PEOPLES PULSE
an ear to the ground

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by
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MOOD FOR PORIBORTON

COMPREHENSIVE MOOD SURVEY REPORT

This is the second report on the ensuing Assembly election in West Bengal. A note on the methodology has already been outlined in the first report which is available on the website of Peoples Pulse. www.peoplespulse.in

Here, we have combined five factors: a) the subregional dynamics of the state, b) aggregation of the rich demographic profile of the individual assembly segments collected from the field and corroborated with other sources, c) the political orientation of various caste and communities, d) the relevance/insignificance of various issue with electoral relevance and e) the state of various parties in different regions.

Based on the collation of entire field data and narratives in all the 294 Assembly Constituency, we are confident that BJP is going to win quite comfortably, its organizational weaknesses notwithstanding. This is primarily, as discussed in the report, on account of the undercurrent of an intense anti-incumbency sentiment which is running across the state. Hence, BJP emerged as the default beneficiary.

Secondly, as the question that our survey was completed in December 2020 whereafter many significant events have happened which may alter the existing dynamics is natural. However, in the qualitative method based on the narratives one of the factor that we have been employing is mapping the interplay of two factors: one, the political psychology of the respondents and two, the direction of their inclination. That is, the focus is to infer as to how the sentiment expressed is conditional to factors like leadership, candidate profile, organizational presence, impact of various issues etc., which may reverse it or accentuate it. Here, the field narratives revealed an intense desire for change wherein the degree of anti-incumbency seemed irreversible. Therefore, the issues like leadership, candidate profile, organizational presence or weaknesses don't appear to reverse the dynamics that we witnessed until December 2020.

This aspect was summed up in one of the response by a respondent who stated, 'here, we decide much earlier as to who we want to vote for and then remain we remain silent'. Hence, the factors like Abbas Siddique joining the Left Front alliance, Trinamool launching a series of new outreach program or fielding more Dalit and less Muslim candidates on the assumption that this would get a section of Dalit votes back to the party while Muslims would keep voting to the incumbent as the election is polarized, simply don't add up.

While, the thinking about Muslims' consolidation behind the Trinamool is right, the strategy regarding the Dalits betrays party's ignorance about the ground fact. Dalits in Bengal feel alienated from the party not as Dalits but as Dalit-Hindus who in their communitarian perception feel marginalized as they share the perception that incumbent prefers minorities over them. Hence, the material dimension of the subaltern Hindu castes has an identitarian dimension, albeit more of religious nature than of their caste one. The Trinamool finds itself plateaued on this plank.

Similarly, Abbas Siddiqui factor would be a non-starter as minorities on the ground have two choices: one, to vote as per the dynamics of local constituencies wherein at majority of seats the people's satisfaction index of the Trinamool MLA happen to be very low and two, to vote by keeping the prospect of a possibility of BJP government wherein, in their perception, only Mamata and TMC is capable check-mating the saffron wave. Since, we had explored this question before the alliance happened, based on my findings, we can state unambiguously that Abbas won't be able to dent into the Muslim consolidation behind the Trinamool except in districts like, Murhsidabad, Maldah and Dinajpur wherein the community was already divided.

However, there is one aspect which must be recognized. While Abbas Siddique factor won't be splitting Muslim votes, it certainly has done a damage of perception about the Muslim's consolidated support to the incumbent. The war of perception has its own logic which may be diametrically opposite to the reality. This certainly is the case w.r.t Muslim support to the Trinamool Congress in Bengal.

While in reality the incumbent will get the consolidated support of the Muslims barring the three districts mentioned above, in the game of perception, everyone including the minorities assume that their votes would be divided due to Abbas Siddiqui factor. This, then, would have a negative bearing on the incumbent's mobilizational plank and electoral prospect as the rank and file of the party may feel further demotivated on account of the prevailing but partly erroneous perception: "while the Hindu votes are united behind the BJP, the Muslim votes may witness a split due to Abbas Siddique". To this extent, Abbas Siddiqui has done a damage of perception to the Trinamool.

Further, as far as new policy and political initiative of the incumbent is concerned, one need to look into the obvious fact in the political arena: no initiative taken by the anti-incumbency facing ruling party in the six months preceding the election has got it voters back. In Bengal, the anti-incumbency is intense and therefore irreversible.

Finally, as far as leadership factor is concerned, the relatively better image of the Chief Minister is outshined by the villainous image of the rest of the leaders. Her image won't neutralize the bitterness that majority on the ground nurture on account of systematic battering by her regime. Peoples' everyday experience far outweighs the managerial effort by marketing agencies to manage politics. These public relation exercises and spins succeed only when the wind is in the favour of the incumbent. Neither they nor the ideological moorings could reverse the popular wind. Bengal is witnessing the wind of change for sure.

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EXPECTED SEATS

PARTY AND ALLIANCE WISE

EDGE

BJP	160
TMC	70
LF+	12

KEEN CONTEST

TMC - BJP	39
TMC - LF	5
TMC - LF - BJP	7
BJP - LF	1

NORTH BENGAL

DARJEELING & KALIMPONG

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	17.2 %
ST	21.5 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
74 %	5.7 %	7.7 %	11 %

JALPAIGURI & ALIPURDUAR

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	37.7 %
ST	18.9 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
81.5 %	11.5 %	4.8 %	1.3 %

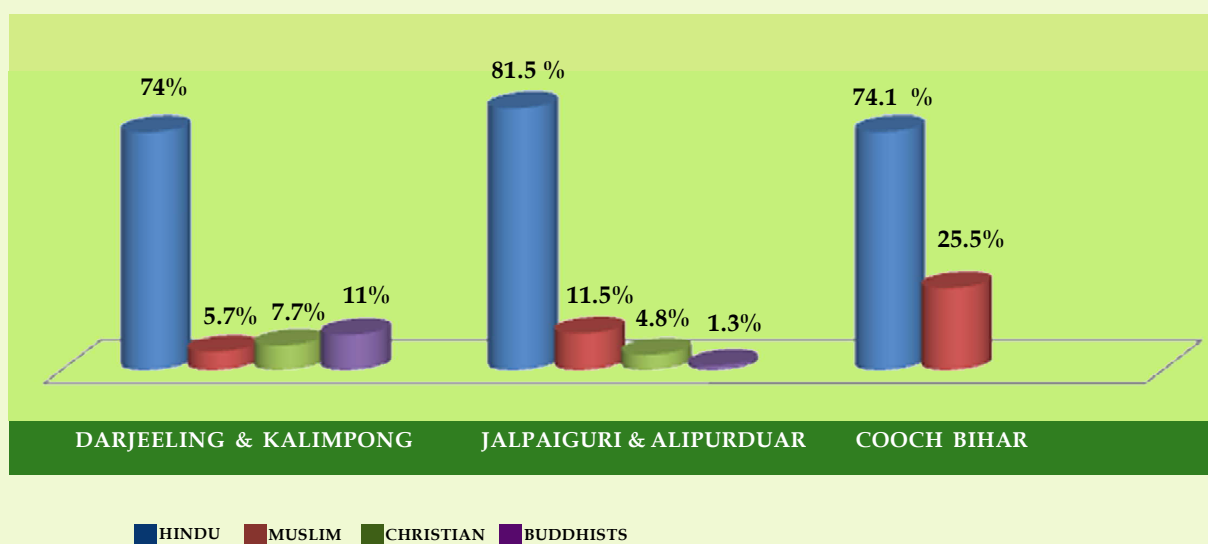
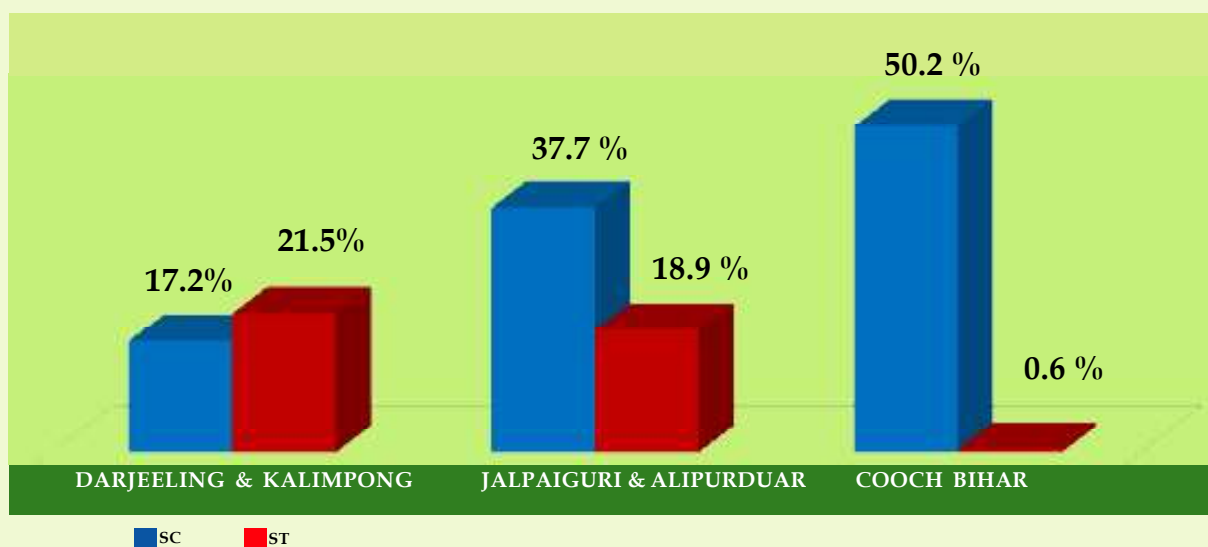
COOCH BIHAR

DEMOGRAPHY

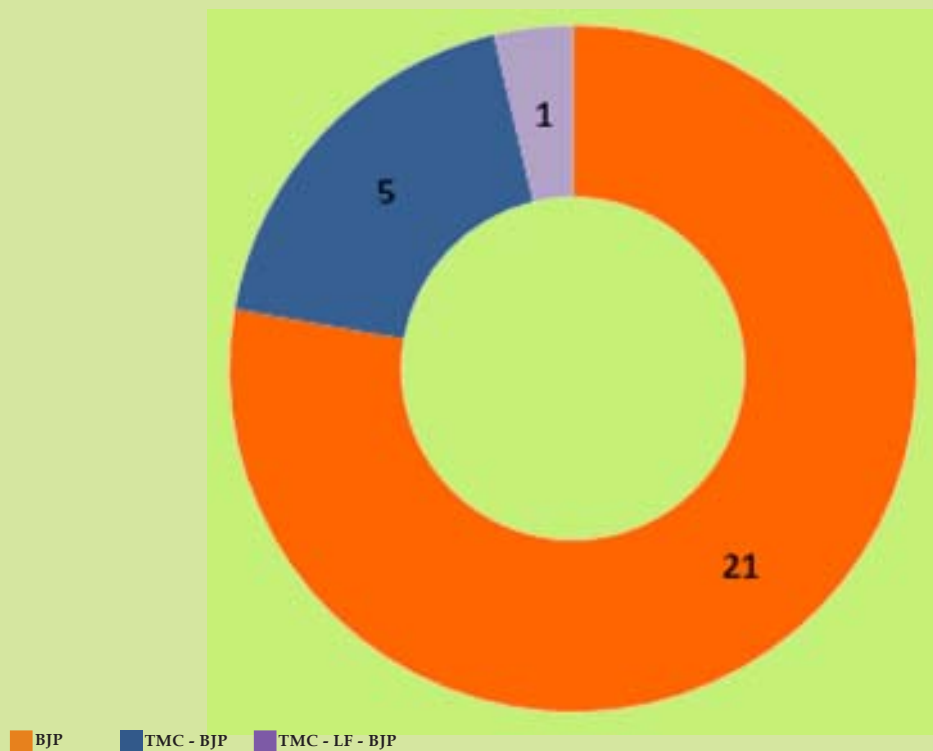
SC	50.2 %
ST	0.6 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
74.5 %	25.5 %	-	-

NORTH BENGAL



NORTH BENGAL



ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES : 28

EDGE

BJP	22
TMC	-
LF+	-

KEEN CONTEST

TMC - BJP	5
TMC - LF	1

CASTE AND COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ORIENTATION

There are four Loksabha seats in the region: Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduars and Cooch Behar. The regional demography is dominated by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Among the SCs, the Rajbanshis, Namoshudras and a section of Gorkhas are found in different sub-regions. However, the Rajbanshis have the overall numerical dominance. All the three communities share an intense anti-Trinamool and pro-BJP inclination on account of political repression, battering, hooliganism and rampant corruption allegedly by the local leaders of the incumbent party. This anti-Trinamool sentiment gels well with the newly found fascination with the discourse of Hindutva which has an element of tacticality which is getting internalized rapidly.

The same trend is true about the Scheduled Tribes. In popular reference, a politically incorrect but prevalent demarcation of the tribes here is into: black and white. The former includes the tea tribes like Santhal, Munda, Oraon among others while the latter is composed of the tribes belonging to Gorkha community and others like Rabhas. Demographically, the black tribes have slight advantage. In the past, there have been political rivalry between the Tribes hailing from Gorkha community on the one hand and Santhals, Mundas and Oraon on the other. However, in continuation with the new trend since 2019, as of now they are consolidated behind the BJP.

Others, like Bengali Hindus, Hindi Speakers, a section of Gorkhas also share an anti-Trinamool and pro-BJP sentiment predominantly for the same reason as mentioned above. The perception that Bimal Gurung factor would veer the majority of Gorkhas in Darjeeling region towards Trinamool doesn't hold the ground as the community shares an intense anti-incumbent sentiment wherein Gurung's popularity was found to be inadequate to shift the majority of Gorkhas away from the BJP, their dissatisfaction with the later on the plank of Gorkhaland issue and demand for ST status for all Gorkhas notwithstanding.

Finally, the Muslims are completely consolidated behind the Trinamool Congress even though a significant section of the community shares the lower machinery and leaders of the party as being corrupt and hooligan. The underlying reason is the nature and by extension the perception of ensuing election as being polarized between the BJP and the Trinamool wherein barring one seat, voting for the Left Front and Congress is considered futile.

ISSUES AND NON-ISSUES

CORRUPTION

This happens to be the most damning issue going against the Trinamool Congress. The terms like cut money, tolabazi and Durnitiis omnipotent among the common people. Even the basic employment schemes like MNREGA was reported to be completely scandalous even in the wake of the Lockdown. However, while the minorities also share this opinion, they still don't consider it to be the prime electoral issue on account of their apprehension and insecurity in the wake of the emergence of the BJP as the potential contender for power in the state.

WELFARE SCHEMES

On the ground three welfare schemes, Kanyashree, Rupashree and SaboojSath found popular reference by a majority of the respondents. However, in majority of the cases, the immediate refrain was two-fold: one, the accusations of political partiality in the disbursal of these schemes, cases of corruption in the same and the juxtaposition of welfare schemes with lack of employment opportunities. Hence, the wide network of welfare schemes doesn't seem to help the Trinamool electorally among the majority of the Hindu castes and communities. This aspect is evident in the fact that majority of the SCs and STs, the prime beneficiary of these schemes, happen to be more intense in their support to the BJP than the other sections.

EMPLOYMENT

Trinamool Congress has lost the majority of youths on account of lack of employment opportunities. They are categorical in their articulation that they expect economic empowerment rather than having the status of being unemployed who are dependent on schemes. It was consistently pointed out that in the last 10 years there haven't been WBSSC teacher recruitment drive which used to be a major source of public sector employment during the Left rule. Further, it was opined that whatever recruitments happened during the incumbent's rule, they were grossly unfair and partisan. No wonder, it is this section which has emerged as the most vocal peddler of pro-change narrative.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

As per the ground sentiment, the dominant mood for change among a vast majority of the Hindu community is on account of two factors: first, the prevailing everyday corruption and second, the systematic battering of the political opponents by the supporters and cadres of the incumbent party. The dominant responses were made in a comparative mode wherein it was pointed out as to how the nature of political violence under the Trinamool shifted tremendously as compared to the same under Left's regime. Apparently, it was stated, the Left used to target the cadres and the local leaders of the rival parties, the Trinamool doesn't spare even the common man. The systematic political violence by the incumbent was cited as a case in point.

NRC - CAA

First and foremost, majority of the people on the ground don't differentiate the two. To the majority of Hindus, the issues have lost their electoral salience. Upon being asked the majority of Rajbanshis and other tribes spoke in favour of the NRC but supported CAA for the Hindu refugees as illegal infiltrators from Bangladesh in their view happen to be the Muslims.

Similarly, to the majority of Namoshudras, who migrated from today's Bangladesh at different stages, while these issues are no more the prime electoral plank, they expressed their faith in the assurances given by BJP's central leadership that the CAA signify granting of citizenship for the Hindu refugees.

On the other hand, for Muslims, these issues have aggravated their apprehension of being at the receiving end in case BJP wins the ensuing election. This has added to the minorities veering to the Trinamool in an unprecedented manner, even in areas and sections that have been politically loyal to the Left.

HINDUTVA

To an overwhelming majority of the Hindu community who desire political change, Hindutva is a tactical tool to amplify the anti-Trinamool sentiment as the Left and the Congress are not considered a credible alternative, thereby making the BJP as the preferred choice.

OTHER ISSUES

There are other community specific issues like Rajbanshi's expectation of Kamatapuri language getting more policy attention, Gorkha sentiment veering from the issue of Gorkhaland to the demand of ST status for entire Gorkha community, irrespective of their castes. Similarly, Bimal Gurung's political swing from the BJP to the Trinamool Congress has dented the pro-BJP enthusiasm of a section of Gorkhas, but that doesn't seem even capable enough to turn them away from the BJP, let alone getting them support the Trinamool in greater number.

STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

BJP

Organizationally weak. Lack an impressive profile of the local leadership. Yet, huge traction on account of the anti-Trinamool sentiment.

TMC

Most unpopular party primarily on account of corruption, unemployment and employment of system political violence against the party rivals.

CPM

The contradiction wherein their image has improved but they aren't considered as electorally relevant in the ensuing election barring one seat.

CONGRESS

Electorally insignificant.

MINORITY DOMINATED REGION

NORTH DINAJPUR

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	26.9 %
ST	5.4 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
49.3 %	49.9 %	-	-

SOUTH DINAJPUR

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	28.8 %
ST	16.4 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
73.5 %	24.6 %	1.5 %	-

MALDA

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	20.9 %
ST	7.9 %

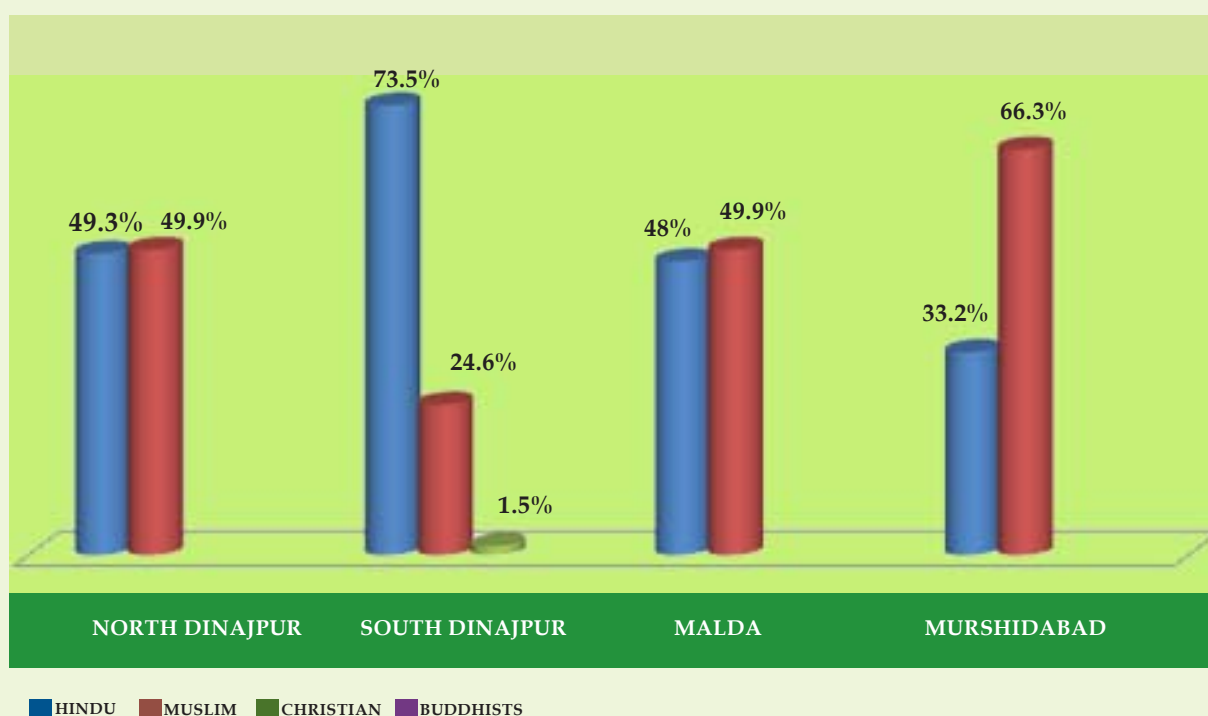
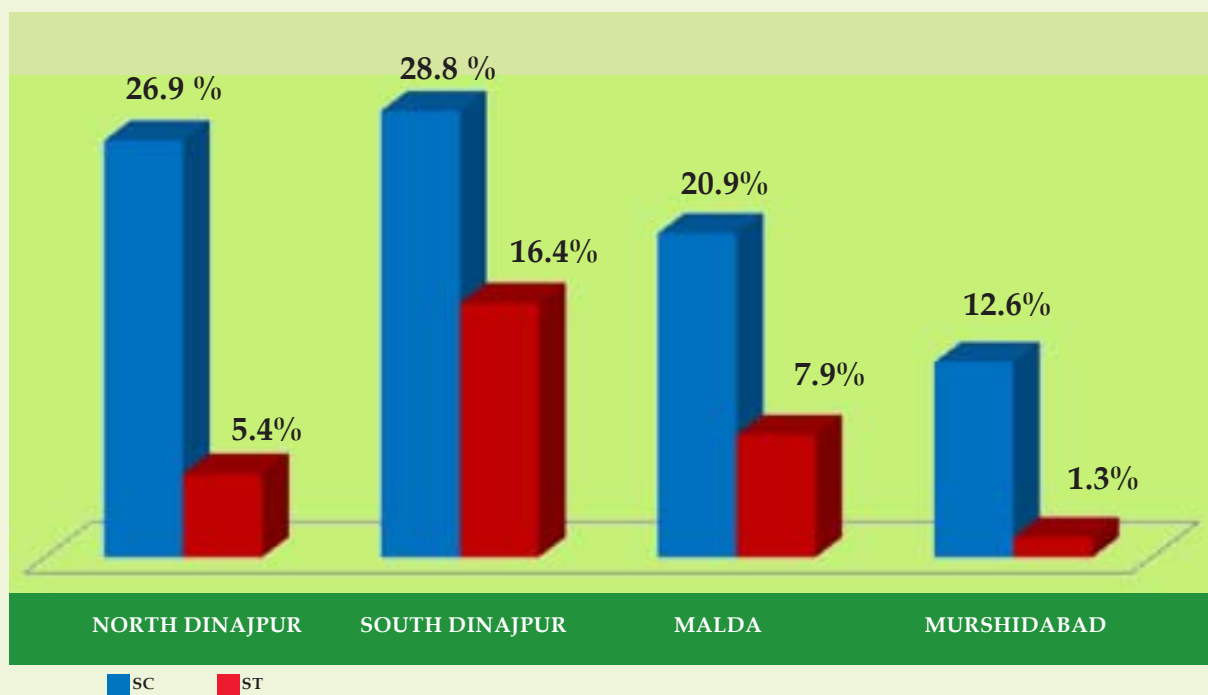
HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
48 %	49.9 %	-	-

MURSHIDABAD

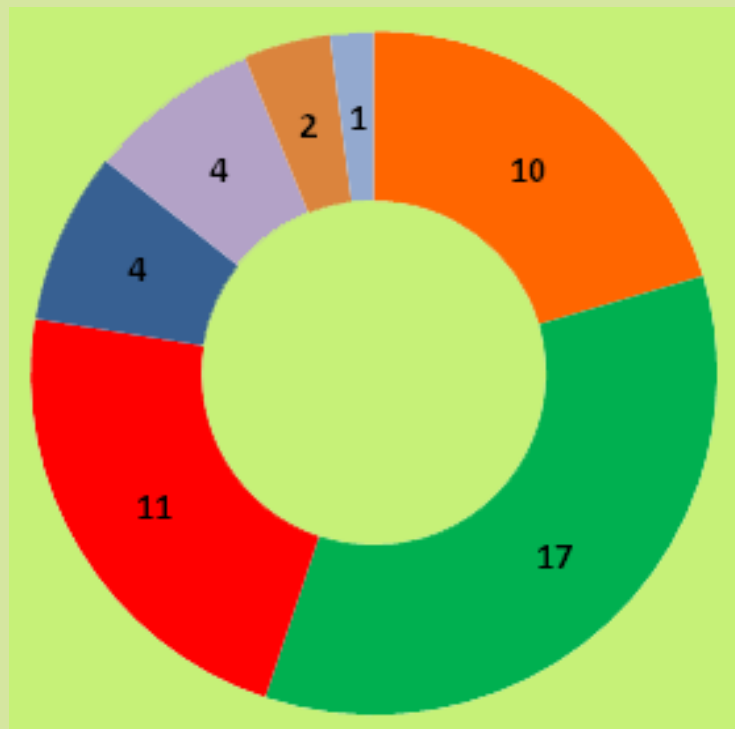
DEMOGRAPHY

SC	12.6 %
ST	1.3 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
33.2 %	66.3 %	-	-



MINORITY DOMINATED REGION



■ BJP
 ■ TMC
 ■ LF+
 ■ TMC-BJP
 ■ TMC-LF
 ■ TMC-LF-BJP
 ■ BJP-LF

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES : 49

EDGE

BJP	10
TMC	17
LF+	11

KEEN CONTEST

TMC - BJP	4
TMC - LF	4
TMC - LF- BJP	2
BJP - LF	1

CASTE AND COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ORIENTATION

There are seven Loksabha seats in the region: Raiganj, Balurghat, Maldaha Uttar, Maldaha Dakshin, Jangipur, Bahrapur and Murshidabad.

Barring south Dinajpur, the Demographically Muslims dominate the region. Among the Hindus, the Scheduled castes come second wherein Rajbanshis are numerous in districts like north Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and parts of north Malda, while the Namoshudras and Chain Mondal Dalits are found in significant numbers in South Malda and Murshidabad area. Further, Tribals like Santhal, Munda and others are found in significant numbers in parts of South Dinajpur and North Malda. Going by their recent political articulations, it could be confidently inferred that they have as a community shifted to the BJP. The underlying reason for the same started with their sense of being left out materially which seamlessly gelled with the political dominance of the Muslims. The Trinamool and its leadership were perceived as bringing backwardness and favouring the Muslims over them. Hence, anti-incumbency shifted to embracing the discourse of Hindutva. The assertive presence of BJP further entrenched this positive interplay between the backwardness and Hindutva of the subaltern Hindus. This explains why a thicker Hindu subaltern base in Bengal signify a comfort zone for the saffron party.

Thereafter, the general and OBC Bengali Hindus are a divided lot wherein their political articulations vary from one region to the other. For instance, while the majority of them are pro-BJP in Dinajpur and Maldah, a significant section of them are still loyal to the Congress in BahrapurLoksabha region under Murshidabad district.

Further, there is a distinct trend among the Muslim electorates. Driven by the polarized nature of the election between the Trinamool Congress and the BJP, the community is as a trend is veering to the Trinamool Congress in a way.

This is the trend in at many seats wherein they have been voting for the Congress or the Left front and where they have been critical of the incumbent party until recently. This shift in the voting behaviour among the minorities is detrimental to the electoral prospect of the Left in general and the Congress in particular as the later has been the traditional beneficiary in this region.

ISSUES AND NON-ISSUES

CORRUPTION

The region suffers from economic backwardism wherein majority of Muslims, Dalits and the Adibasis are at the recoinng end. Naturally, in areas like Dinajpur and Maldah, the region the remnants of feudal culture is still prevalent. Political families are revered and thus they have been dominating the socio-political life of the region, the history of Left movement notwithstanding. This has led to massive corruption, the scale of which increased recently and a relative sense of tolerance, particularly among the minorities. On the other hand, there is a sense of relative as well as absolute deprivation among the Rajbanshi, Namoshudras and Chain Mondal Dalits, which is further accentuated due to the increasing communal fault lines.

This trend gets slightly better in the Murshidabad district.

WELFARE SCHEMES

In terms of the communitarian framework, we found a clear trend. While the presence of the numerous welfare policies—a hallmark of TMC government's template of ground outreach— the Muslim respondent complained of the irregularities and discrepancy in availing the benefits, but in the final analysis, they were in the overall positive mode. On the other hand, the majority of the Dalits and Adibasis complained of being deprived from the schemes on account of political partisanship, another indication of the religious polarization. Here too, at Murhsidabad district, particularly in the Jangipur area, the political division among the demographically dominant Muslims also seeped into their response on the state of welfare schemes.

EMPLOYMENT

As usual, the record of the incumbent regime dips on this plank even among the supporters who get defensive when asked about the state of unemployment. Since, the region shares border with Bangladesh and states like Bihar and Jharkhand, the source of employment happen to be outward migration to other states as daily wage labourers, smuggling of everyday products across the border, paddy and mango cultivation by the peasants and in parts of Murshidabad district, a significant section of women gets subsistence level employment in Beedi-manufacturing. The youths complain about their precariat situation but seems to lack the spark to make it the main electoral determinant.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The region, as per respondents' narratives, follows the same complaint of political violence wherein the watershed moment happen to be 2018 Panchayat election. This narrative doesn't spare any sub-region or any community. Surprisingly, the fact was endorsed by many Muslim respondents in overwhelmingly minority dominated areas as to how the TMC's local leadership has established a reign of terror via the syndicate, a popular reference to the rank and file of the party.

NRC - CAA

This is no more the decisive electoral issue for the Hindus, including the refugees from east Pakistan as they think the COVID-19 Pandemic led to the issue losing its edge. To the Muslims, the issue is not something which affect their everyday life as most of them happen to be the local Muslims. However, they mention this issue as something which would emerge as the political and policy based tool of discrimination and harassment if BJP wins in the state.

Hence, more BJP will raise its pitch on NRC-CAA, more and more minorities would mobilize behind the Trinamool Congress while the Hindus would not be enthused by this plank.

HINDUTVA

The anti-Trinamool incumbency, particularly among the majority of the Dalits and Adibasis in the backdrop of the demographic and political dominance of the minorities had led to the internalization seeing the party's through communitarian perspective. Thus, the Trinamool is considered by the subaltern Hindus as the party catering primarily to the Muslim interest. On the other hand, the many Muslim respondents stated that with the emergence of the BJP as a potential political force, the Dalits and Adibasis have become Hindu. Thus, we do see the trend of subaltern's positive interface with the Hindutva wherein the saffron discourse in its subaltern avatar has gained strong ground.

STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

BJP

Organizationally weak. Lack an impressive profile of the local leadership. Yet, huge traction on account of the anti-Trinamool sentiment.

TMC

Relatively in a better position as compared to the other regions on account of the insecurities and demographic dominance of the minority community who are supporting the party.

CPM

As compared to the 2016, the party would lose some seats as Muslims are shifting to the TMC on the logic that only Mamata could stop the rise of the BJP.

CONGRESS

Party would perform decently in Maldah and Murshidabad district.

CENTRAL BENGAL

BIRBHUM

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	29.5 %
ST	6.9 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
62.3 %	37.1 %	0.3 %	-

PASCHIM BARDHMAN+PURBABARDHMAN

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	27.4%
ST	6.3 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
77.9 %	20.7 %	0.3 %	-

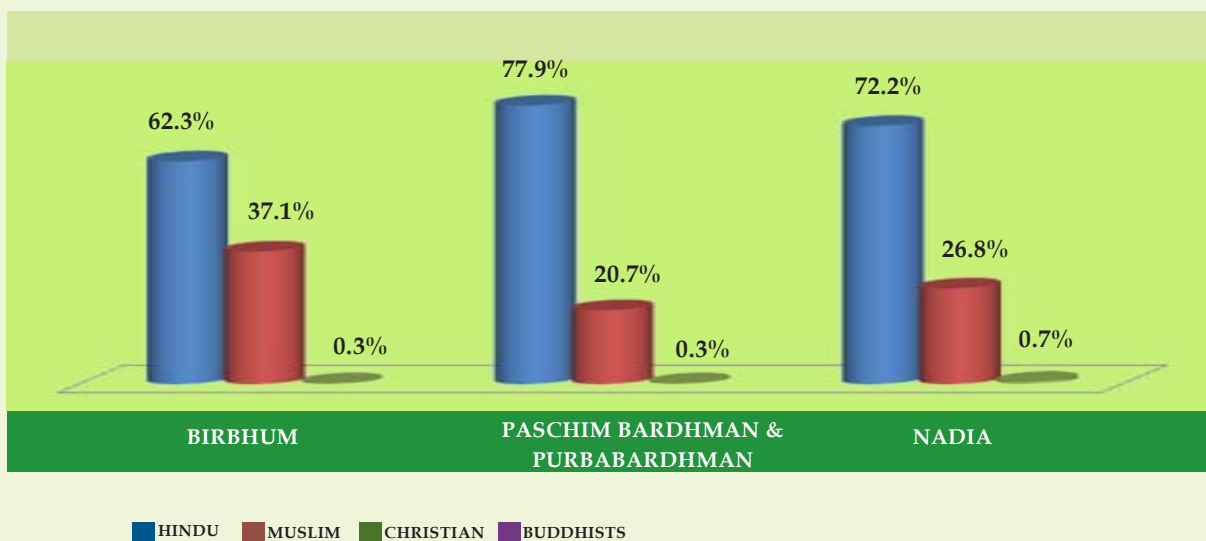
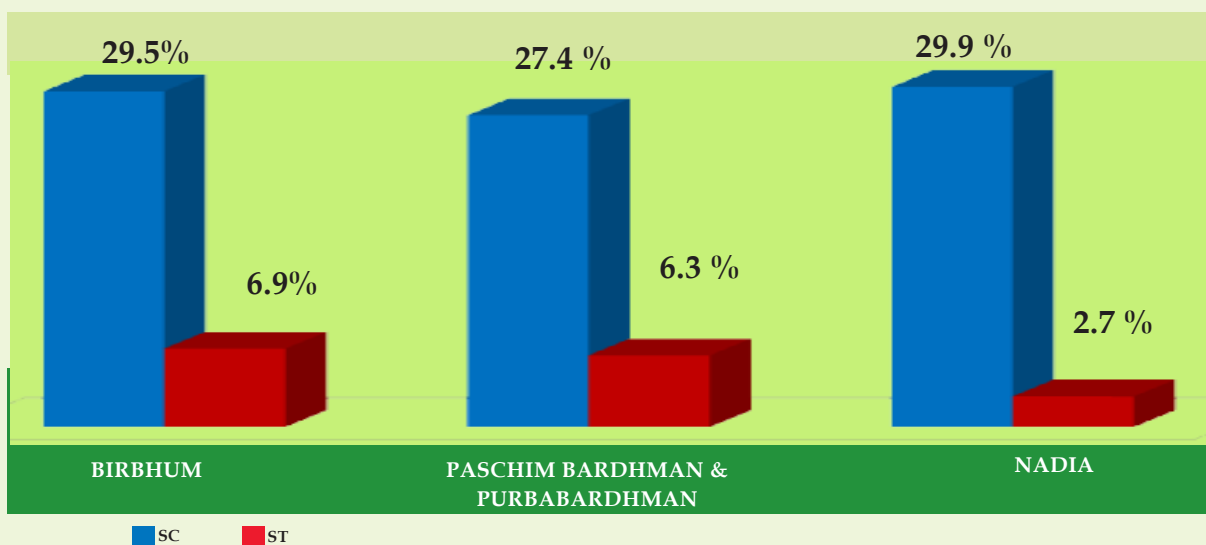
NADIA

DEMOGRAPHY

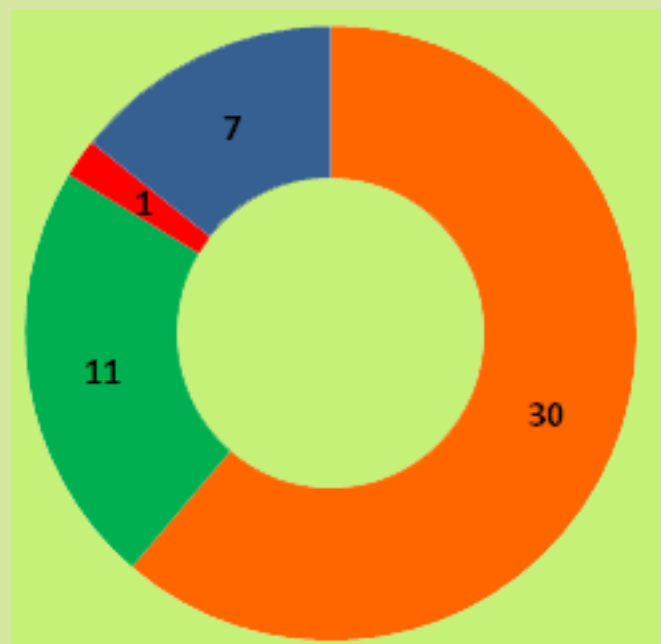
SC	29.9 %
ST	2.7 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
72.2 %	26.8 %	0.7 %	-

CENTRAL BENGAL



CENTRAL BENGAL



■ BJP
 ■ TMC
 ■ LF+
 ■ TMC-BJP

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES : 49

EDGE

BJP	30
TMC	11
LF+	1

KEEN CONTEST

TMC - BJP	7
TMC - LF	-

CASTE AND COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ORIENTATION

There are seven Loksabha seats in the region: Krishnanagar, Ranaghat, BardhamanPurba, Bardhaman Durgapur, Asansol, Bolpur and Birbhum. Nadia district is dominated by refugee Bengali Hindus, primarily the Mahishyas, Gwala Ghosh, the Bhadrals. Then comes, the Namoshudra/Matua Dalits who also migrated from east Pakistan. The third constituent happen to be the Muslims who are local. The Birbhum region has two Lok Sabha wherein Muslims, Hindu Bengalis, Schedule Castes and in some pockets the Santhal, Munda and Oraon tribes constitute the prime demography. Further, in the West-Bardhaman region which accounts for two Lok Sabha seats, Bardhaman Durgapur and Asansol, the Hindi-bhashis, Hindu Bengalis, Schedule castes like Chain Mondal and Bagdis, Muslims and a thin presence of Adibasis have demographic significance. Similarly, the East Bardhaman has a thick presence of the Bengali Hindus, like Aguris, Mahishyas, Ghosh and Bhadrals, Scheduled Castes like Bagdis and the Muslims. The dominant political orientation of the people fits seamlessly with their religious identity wherein majority of the Hindus happen to be anti-Trinamool while Muslims as a community are supporting the incumbent party.

The only notable difference is in the degree of assertion in the electoral articulations among the Schedule Castes. While anti-Trinamool sentiment is ubiquitous among these subaltern communities, in the Nadia region the degree is more intense.

ISSUES AND NON-ISSUES

CORRUPTION

In the field narrative this region emerged as the hub of corruption, both in kind and scale. More specifically in the Birbhum and Bardhaman region wherein the parallel economy sand, stone are rampant in Birbhum area while, coal, iron scrap and sand related corruption was reported to be run by people who are popularly referred as the syndicate. Similarly, in the Nadia region, the cases of cross border smuggling of products like gold, medicine besides the cow was reported as a matter of everyday. This scale of corruption is in addition to and over and above the generic corruption that informs all the region of Bengal.

WELFARE SCHEMES

The response has the same logic as stated above, that is, in terms of the communitarian framework, we found a clear trend. While the presence of the numerous welfare policies—a hallmark of TMC government's template of ground outreach—the Muslim respondent complained of the irregularities and discrepancy in availing the benefits, but in the final analysis, they were in the overall positive mode. On the other hand, the majority of the Bengali Hindus, Hindi-Bhasis and Dalits complained of being deprived from the schemes on account of political partisanship, another indication of the religious polarization.

EMPLOYMENT

Major source of employment in the Nadia region happen to be paddy, vegetable and mango cultivation besides outward migration to other states. Besides, it was reported that cross border illegal trade is also a mode of employment. Affiliation to the ruling party has its perks everywhere but here at Bengal, this also translates into having a visible share in the economic resources available at the disposal of the incumbent regime.

On the other hand, the East Bardhaman region is relatively prosperous wherein peasants are relatively better off on account of better chain of irrigation and productivity. Paddy, potato and other vegetables. In pockets the handicraft sector related to weaving is also there which gets the policy support from the government.

Further, in West-Bardhaman, the agrarian productivity takes a dip as compared to the eastern part on account of a major portion of the region being arid. Therefore, the seasonal in-state migration to other parts like East-Bardhaman and outward migration is normal. Further, there is a thick segment of urban working class in the industrial zones like Asansol, Durgapur, Chitranjan etc. As usual lottery business is quite rampant.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Political violence is as normal a phenomena as it could be in this region. The syndicate performs both the controller of the economy and political resources. Hence, hitherto, the face of violence in the Nadia districts came from the numerically preponderant Bengali Hindu refugees affiliated with the incumbent party, in Birbhum region the same hail from the Bengali Hindus and the Muslims affiliated to the incumbent party in their respective areas of demographic dominance. Naturally, in parts of Bardhaman wherein the Hindi-Bhashis are numerous have their share in political violence too. Some of the prominent figures therein have recently left the Trinamool for the BJP.

NRC - CAA

Barring Nadia district, no one on the ground considers the NRC-CAA as electorally relevant issue as neither the Muslims here nor the Hindus have passionate stake in the issue. They are more concerned with the issue of corruption and political violence.

HINDUTVA

The affinity to Hindutva as a political project is on the rise. While in the Nadia region it revolves around the issue of partition, Muslim dominance, in the Birbhum and Bardhaman region, the main driving force happen to be the perception that Muslims and TMC are co-terminus entities who thrive by depriving the Hindus. This aspect is equally present in all the communities: among the Hindi-Bhashis in West Bardhaman area, among the Bengali Hindus in Birbhum and East Bardhaman. Further, following the natural trend the affinity of the subaltern Hindus to the Hindutva is more in degree than the others.

STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

BJP

Organizationally weak. Lack an impressive profile of the local leadership. Yet, huge traction on account of the anti-Trinamool sentiment.

TMC

Most unpopular party primarily on account of corruption, unemployment and employment of system political violence against the party rivals.

CPM

The contradiction wherein their image has improved but they aren't considered as electorally relevant in the ensuing election barring one seat.

CONGRESS

Electorally insignificant.

JANGAL-MAHAL

PURULIA

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	19.4 %
ST	18.5 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
81 %	7.8 %	0.3 %	-

BANKURA

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	32.2%
ST	10.3 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
84.3 %	8.1 %	0.1 %	-

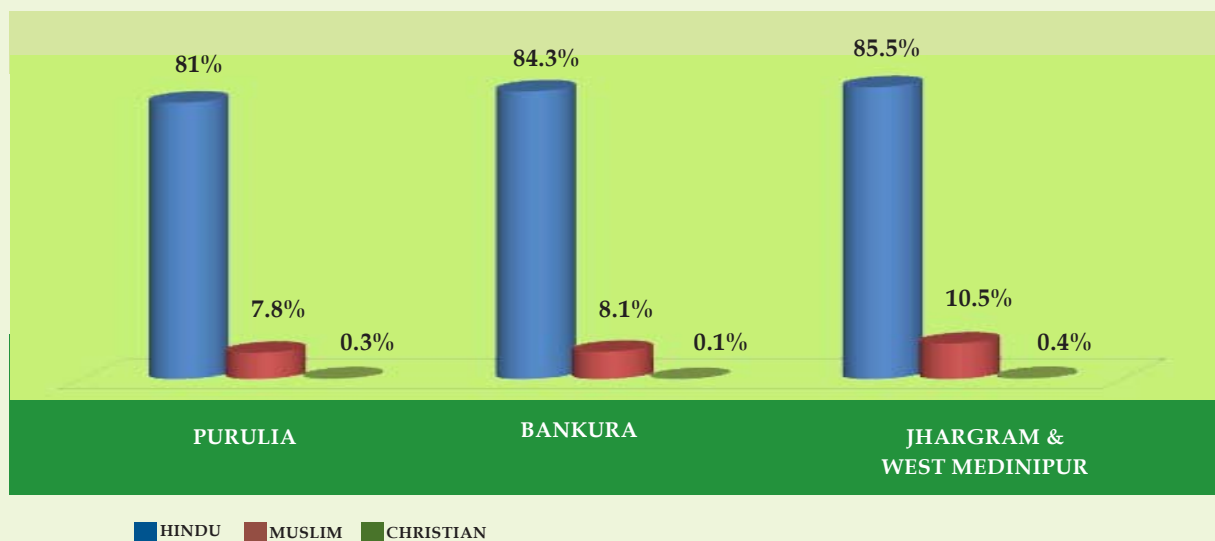
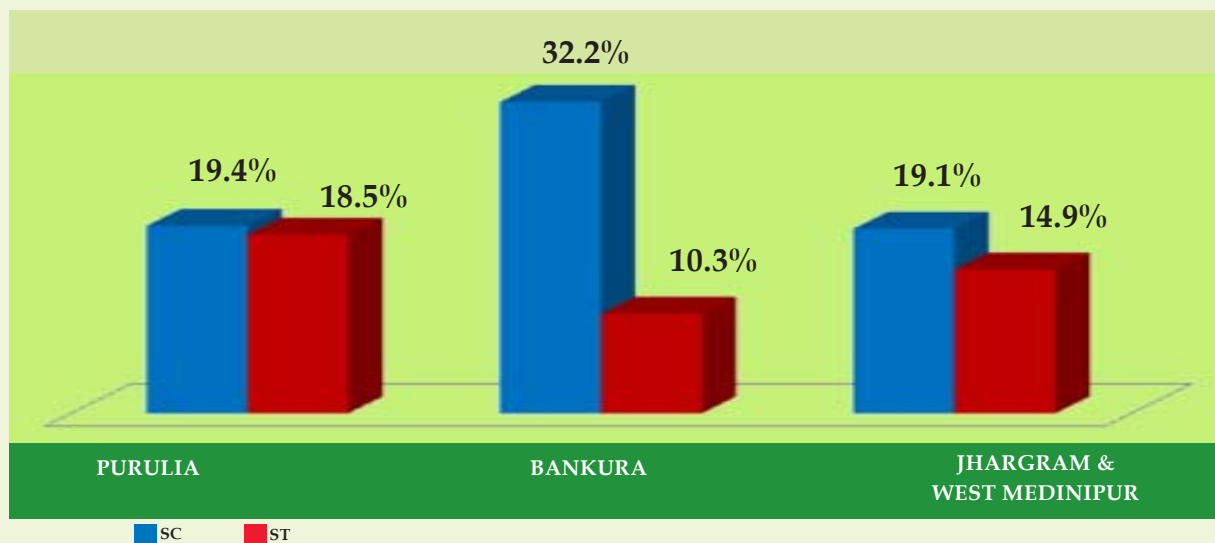
JHARGRAM & WEST MEDINIPUR

DEMOGRAPHY

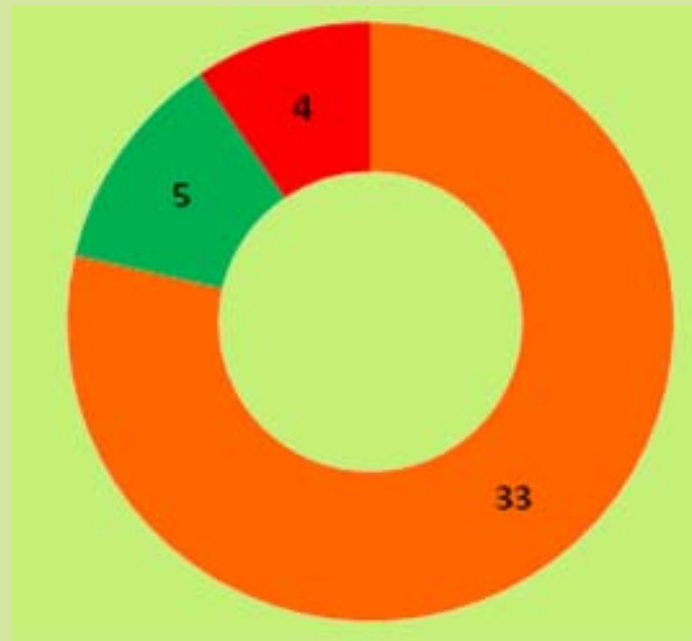
SC	19.1 %
ST	14.9 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
85.5 %	10.5 %	0.4 %	-

JANGAL-MAHAL



JANGAL-MAHAL



■ BJP
 ■ TMC
 ■ LF+

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES : 42

EDGE

BJP	33
TMC	5
LF+	0

KEEN CONTEST

TMC - BJP	4
TMC - LF	-

CASTE AND COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ORIENTATION

The region consists of six Lok Sabha seats: Purulia, Bankura, Bishnupur, Medinipur, Jhargram and Ghatal. While in the West Medinipur, the Bengali Hindus dominate the political landscape, there are significant numbers of Adibasis, Mahto-Kurmis and Schedule Castes, primarily the Bagdis and Bauris, in general and at the Kharagpur, the Hindi-Bhashis and Telugu people also have a significant presence. Besides, Muslims are also in thick numbers in some pockets.

Further, at Jhargram and Purulia region, the Mahto-Kurmis with their distinct socio-political identity dominate the electoral landscape. Thereafter, the Adibasis, primarily the Santhals, the Schedule Caste, mainly the Bauris and Bagdis, and the Bengali Hindus constitute have good presence. Muslims have a very thin presence therein. Similarly, at Bankura and Bishnupur there is a near balance of the Scheduled Castes, Bauris and Bagdis and the Bengali Hindus. Besides, there are substantial number of Santhal Tribes.

Overall, Muslim demography is thin and below 10% in the region.

Politically, the Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes happen to be the most committed BJP voters at present. Although with slightly less intensity, the majority of the Hindu Bengalis are also anti-Trinamool. Muslims as usual are committed TMC voters, but their numerical presence in this region is quite thin.

ISSUES AND NON-ISSUES

CORRUPTION

The sense of people claiming to be aggrieved on account of corruption is overwhelming. Since, the regions like Bankura, Purulia and Jhargram happen to be one of the most backward region of the state, inhabited by a thick section of Dalits and Adibasis, the nature of anger happen to be a sense of being left out of the policy benefit and being wronged. The main villain in this outlook happen to be the local rank and file of the incumbent party. Their newly acquired lifestyle in terms of the attire, vehicle and houses makes a mockery of the rampant poverty in the region. This has not gone down well with the people in general and the subaltern section in particular. The incumbent regime has been identified with corruption wherein the everyday political conversation is laden with the terms like cut money, durniti etc.

WELFARE SCHEMES

The response has the same logic as stated above, that is, in terms of the communitarian framework, we found a clear trend. While the presence of the numerous welfare policies—a hallmark of TMC government's template of ground outreach—the majority of the Scheduled Castes, Adibasis, the Bengali Hindus complained of being deprived from the schemes on account of political partisanship.

EMPLOYMENT

This region accounts for the massive level of unemployment wherefrom both, the inward migration to the other districts and outward migration to other states happen at a wider scale. Since, part of the region is arid, the agrarian productivity is not profitable.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

This region could be the textbook template of the systematic political violence in Bengal. It is here wherein along with the opposition members, the 9 times M.P, the veteran leader of the CPM, Basudeb Acharia, a septuagenarian, was assaulted allegedly by the Trinamool's supporters in 2018 during the Panchayat election in the state.

NRC - CAA

Electorally, the issue is completely irrelevant here electorally.

HINDUTVA

Overall, the region has less than 10% of Muslim demography. Yet, Hindutva as a political discourse has taken deeper roots on account of majority of people sharing the perception that the incumbent party favours the minority. Drawing on the model of subaltern-religiosity and subaltern-Hindutva, the slogan of Jai Shri Ram has a popular resonance. Surprisingly, the terms like love-jihad, demographic change, etc. could be heard frequently in the pro-change and anti-incumbent narratives of the people.

STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

BJP

Organizationally weak. Lack an impressive profile of the local leadership. Yet, huge traction on account of the anti-Trinamool sentiment.

TMC

Most unpopular party primarily on account of corruption, unemployment and employment of system political violence against the party rivals.

CPM

The contradiction wherein their image has improved but they aren't considered as electorally relevant in the ensuing election barring one seat.

CONGRESS

Electorally insignificant.

SOUTH BENGAL

HUGLI

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	24.4 %
ST	4.2 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
82.9 %	15.8 %	0.1 %	-

HAORA

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	14.8%
ST	0.3 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
72.9 %	26.2 %	0.2 %	-

N-24 PARGANAS

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	21.7 %
ST	2.6%

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
73.5 %	25.8 %	0.3 %	-

KOLKATA

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	5.4%
ST	0.2 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
76.5 %	20.6 %	0.9 %	-

S-24 PARGANAS

DEMOGRAPHY

SC	30.2 %
ST	1.2 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
63.2 %	35.6 %	0.8 %	-

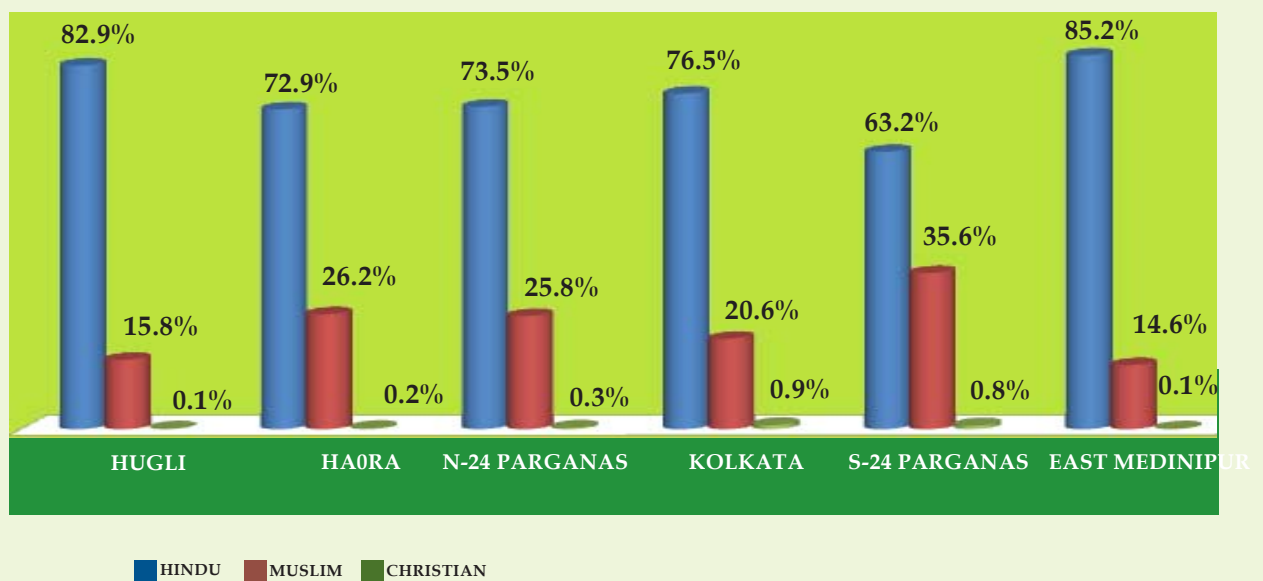
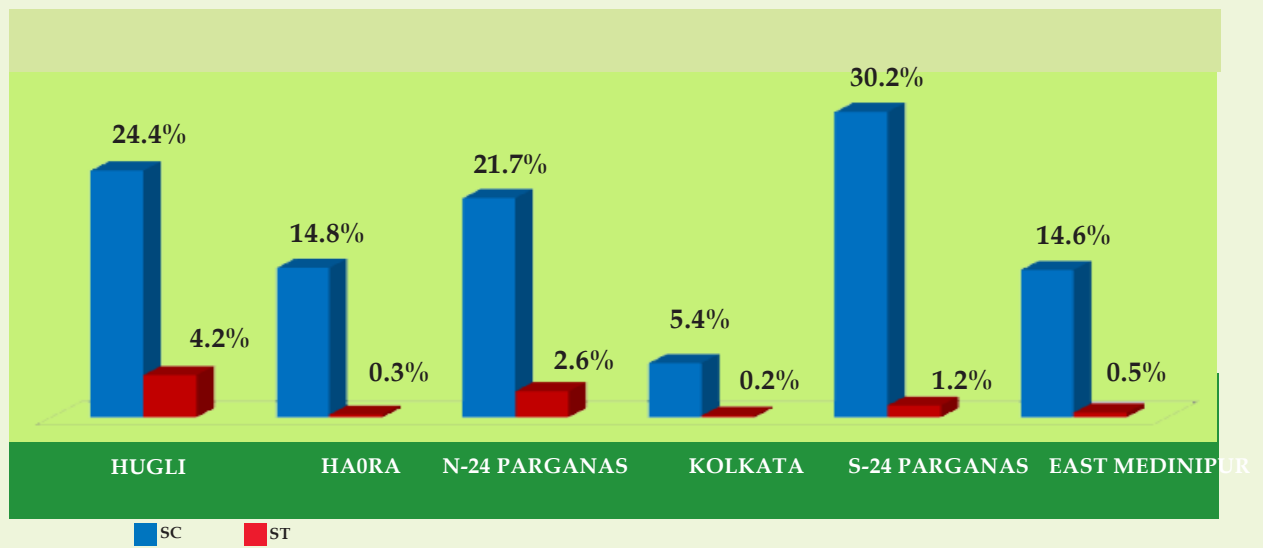
EAST MEDINIPUR

DEMOGRAPHY

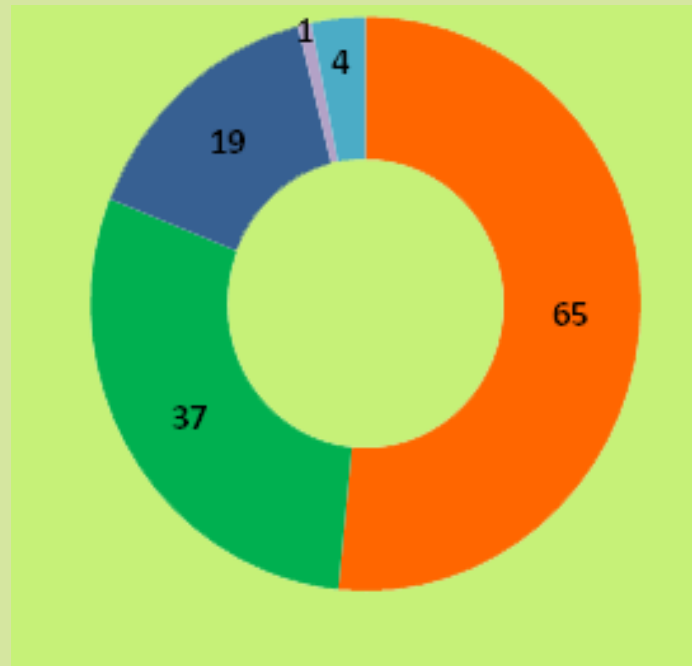
SC	14.6%
ST	0.5 %

HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN	BUDDHISTS
85.2 %	14.6 %	0.1 %	-

SOUTH BENGAL



SOUTH BENGAL



■ BJP
 ■ TMC
 ■ TMC-BJP
 ■ TMC

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES : 126

EDGE

BJP	65
TMC	37
LF+	0

KEEN CONTEST

TMC - BJP	19
TMC - LF	1
TMC - LF- BJP	4

CASTE AND COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ORIENTATION

The region is comprised of 18 Loksabha seats, Kanthi and Tamluk in East Medinipur; Arambagh, Hoogly and Sreerampur in Hoogly district; Uluberia and Howrah in Howrah district, Kolkata Uttar and Kolkata Dakshin at Kolkata; Jadavpur, DiamongHarbour, Mathurapur and Jaynagar in S-24 Parganas and Basirhat, Barasat, Dum Dum, Barrackpur and Bongaon in N-24 Parganas.

Demographically, in East Medinipur and Hugli district, the Bengali Hindus comprised of various castes like Mahishyas, Ghosh, and other constituents of the Bhadrалoks inhabit the region in thick numbers. Thereafter, the Scheduled castes, primarily, the Bagdis and some Namoshudras, mostly the Ghotis, i.e., the non-refugee section are in significant numbers. IN some pockets the Santhan and Munda tribe also have visible presence. Muslims are around 15% of the total population, albeit in some pockets their concentration is more than the average. Nevertheless, they don't have the demographic weight to change the electoral outcome significantly. Hence, in these five Loksabha seats, the BJP has a tremendous advantage over the Trinamool with Left and Congress being left out of the popular imagination of the majority of the electorates. The overwhelming majority of the Hindus across the caste and community seemed to clearly veer towards the BJP barring some areas, particularly among the peasant castes like Mahishyas.

Further, in Howrah, there are two Loksabha seats, Howrah and Uluberia. Here, Muslims have a thick demographic presence of constituting more than a quarter of the population. Similarly, the Scheduled castes in this area have a thin presence, which leads to the dilution of the momentum the BJP has got on account of the subaltern Hindutva wherein a thick Dalit demography is suiting the party. The another major constituents after the Muslims happen to be the Bengali Hindus followed by the Hindi-Bhasis.

The fact that at Howrah at many constituency the Bengali Hindus and Hindi-Bhashi Hindus don't gel together politically, and more concentration of the Muslims at the UluberiaLoksabha seat and less of the Scheduled castes lead to the Trinamool having slight edge over the BJP.

Another distinctive interplay of demography and political psychology appears at the two of the Kolkata Loksabha seats, namely, Kolkata Uttar and Kolkata Dakshin. At Kolkata Uttar and Dakshin, the major constituents are Bengali Hindus, Muslims and Hindi-Bhashis. Here, breaking from the state wide trend, majority of the Bengali Hindus, primarily of the Bhadralks, who dominate the area, are still inclined to the Trinamool Congress on account of their logic of Bengali exceptionalism. Here, they are the last of their kind as a major section of the non-KolkatanBhadralkshave already jumped the gun to the BJP in significant numbers. However, their political orientation in combination with the committed pro-Trinamool Muslim electorates ensures that the incumbent party is dominating the region even tough BJP is gaining significant ground at their costs. The Hindi-Bhashis as usual are overwhelmingly pro-BJP.

Thereafter, in the N-24 Parganas which has 5 Loksabha seats, the main constituents happen to be the Scheduled Castes, primarily the Matua sect of Namoshudras, Muslims and the Bengali Hindus. Here, the Muslims are more concentrated into Loksabha like Basirhat and some pockets of Barasat. Naturally, TMC is doing well in Basirhat and parts of BarasatLoksabha. On the otherhand, at BongaonLoksabha where Matua/Namoshudra Dalits have the decisive vote, the BJP is sweeping everywhere except on one assembly seat. Further, at Barrackpur where the Hindi-Bhashis, Bengali Hindus to a lesser extent the Muslims are the three main communities, the BJP has advantage over the Trinamool. However, here, the political disquiet between the Hindi-Bhashis and the Hindi Bengalis has kept the equations in balance.

Here, the suffocating dominance of Arjun Singh, who switched over to the BJP from TMC before the 2019 Lok Sabha election, is not liked by a section of Bengali Hindus who otherwise share the anti-Trinamool sentiment may still end up voting to the Trinamool on seats like Noapara and Barrackpur. Nevertheless, the presence of a thick presence of Hindi-Bhashis has ensured that BJP will have edge herein. Further, at the Dum Dum Lok Sabha, the Bengali Hindus dominate the demography wherein the majority is pro-BJP. A section of them at Dum Dum Uttar Assembly Constituency is also supporting the CPM. They are followed by the Hindi-Bhashis and a thin demography of the Muslims. The former is pro-BJP while the later pro-Trinamool.

Finally, at the South-24 Parganas, there are 4 Lok Sabha seats: Jadavpur, Diamond Harbour, Mathurapur and Jaynagar. Herein, the Jaynagar area is dominated by PoudraKhatiya Scheduled castes who are decisively pro BJP and the Muslims who are consolidated behind the Trinamool Congress, leading to both parties winning those seats wherein their support base dominate numerically. Hence, BJP has the advantage of one seat more than the incumbent. Thereafter, at Mathurapur Lok Sabha area, the Bengali Hindus, Scheduled castes and Muslims are the main constituents wherein besides the Scheduled castes, the major section of Bengali Hindus are also pro-BJP. Muslims follow the state wise trend of supporting the Trinamool. Here, again BJP has the edge on more seats over the TMC and at some seats, the two parties are in close contest. At Diamond Harbour, Muslims as a single constituent comprise the biggest share followed by the Bengali Hindus and the Scheduled Castes. However, here the Trinamool retains its dominance at more seats on account of the demography as well as the domineering presence of Abhishek Bannerjee. Nevertheless, BJP also is expected to do well on some seats. Finally, at Jadavpur Lok Sabha area, demographically the Bengalis Hindus dominate the area. The Scheduled caste and the Muslims are also in significant numbers. Here, while the political orientation of the Scheduled Castes and Muslims are weighed decisively in favour of the BJP and the Trinamool respectively, the same in the case of Bengali Hindus stands divided. In fact, at two assembly segments, the Left also has a decent presence. Hence, the electoral outcome in this area is expected to be mixed.

ISSUES AND NON-ISSUES

CORRUPTION

The region is another core/hub of the corruption. Besides, the generic everyday corruption informing the grassroot rank and file of the incumbent regime, the region came under the devastating Amphan cyclone. The swelling ground sentiment was indicative of the scale of the corruption in the relief measures so much so that the people have come up with the term Amphan-durniti (Amphan-corruption). People lost their shelter as their houses were destroyed and needed the necessary monetary help besides other measures. However, in the allocation of the relief measures, as per the common respondents, there were massive corruption by the rank and file of the incumbent regime at the ground level. Further, the ones who protested or question the local leaders on this plank had to bear the brunt of the crude power. Undoubtedly, the Trinamool lost the golden chance to consolidate and revive its electoral prospect after 2019 Lok Sabha election. Amphan cyclone damaged the TMC electorally in the region in a big way.

WELFARE SCHEMES

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EMPLOYMENT

In the rural area, the agriculture remains the main source of employment. Paddy, potato, other vegetables and in S&N 24 Parganas the fisheries, particularly the cultivation of Prawn has emerged as a mode of employment. Daily wage labour still remains a significant mode of employment. In state and outward migration is the trend. Unemployment is rampant among the youths which is a potent electoral issue.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Along with the Jungle Mahal, this region witnesses the intensity of the political violence. While the cases of political violence is a state wide phenomenon, it's kind and scale in parts of N-24 Parganas and entire South-24 Parganas is scary. The political opponents are hounded in a systematic way.

NRC - CAA

The issue has some electoral significance in the N-24 Pargana area, particularly among the Matua community. Nevertheless, this is not a decisive determinant of their voting choice as the community members are willing to take the BJP top leadership on their words. Rest of the Bengali Hindus opined that the fear they had initially has waned now. On the other hand, to Muslims the issue is a matter of concern as they fear this to become a tool of harassment.

HINDUTVA

Subaltern Hindutvahas taken deeper roots in this region, particularly in the North-24 and South-24 Parganas Districts among the Scheduled Castes and other Hindu Bengalis who happen to be refugee from East Pakistan.

STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

BJP

Organizationally weak. Lack an impressive profile of the local leadership. Yet, huge traction on account of the anti-Trinamool sentiment.

TMC

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CPM

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CONGRESS

Electorally insignificant.





PEOPLES PULSE

an ear to the ground

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