

Indian Journal of Modern Research and Reviews

This Journal is a member of the 'Committee on Publication Ethics'

Online ISSN:2584-184X



Research Article

Changing Dynamics of Voting Behaviour in Bihar Legislative Assembly Election

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22254031>

Abstract

This research paper elaborates on the issue with a particular emphasis on the examination of the Bihar State Assembly elections. It concentrates on the social groups' electoral pattern and voting behaviour in the Bihar election. It attempts to develop a particular voting system based on actual electoral data that favoured different political parties competing in the election. The challenges associated with mobilising the voters of Bihar have been rigorously analysed from historical and sociological viewpoints. To achieve this goal, the study examines the historical, cultural, religious, social, and other factors that influence the voting behaviour of socially stratified voters in the Indian state of Bihar. The study generally examines the election outcomes, the variables that affected them, and the socioeconomic effects of Bihar's three assembly elections in a row: 2015 and 2020. This study is theoretical and employs secondary election data obtained from the Election Commission of India. Archival materials are additional tools that helped shape debates and ideas about the election campaign and getting people to vote. The quantitative statistics are further shown via a visual diagram and a GIS-based election map. Bihar has a unique political climate that makes caste a key factor in how people vote. Bihar's recent 2020 election illustrates the resurgence of social factors like "class," "religion," and "populism," which are influencing societal dynamics and overshadowing caste identity.

Manuscript Information

- ISSN No: 2584-184X
- Received: 07-07-2026
- Accepted: 26-08-2026
- Published: 02-09-2026
- MRR:4(9); 2026: 29-34
- ©2026, All Rights Reserved
- Plagiarism Checked: Yes
- Peer Review Process: Yes

How to Cite this Article

Vidyarthi U, Choudhary A K. Changing Dynamics of Voting Behaviour in Bihar Legislative Assembly Election. Indian J Mod Res Rev. 2026;4(9):29-34.

Access this Article Online



www.mrrjournal.in

KEYWORDS: Voting Behaviour, Caste Politics, Electoral Dynamics, Voter Mobilisation, Bihar Assembly Elections.

1. INTRODUCTION

A dynamic and complicated environment is represented by the electoral landscape of Bihar, which is influenced by the interplay of caste, religion, and development. Considering that Bihar is a state that is both socially stratified and economically challenged, it provides a situation that is one of a kind, one in which identity politics and developmental ambitions coexist and impact voter behaviour. The historical legacies, social hierarchies, political narratives, and policy results all have a role in shaping the choices that are made during elections. Voting behaviour is complex due to the variety of people and the ongoing socio-economic issues. This necessitates a knowledge of both historic loyalty and the demands of contemporary administration. [Jaffrelot C (2003)].

Caste and Religion as Determinants

Caste and religion have constantly been the most prominent variables in Bihar's politics over the course of the state's history. It is clear that the deeply embedded caste system has had an effect on political mobilisation, as seen by the establishment of influential voting blocs by a variety of caste groups. As a consequence of the expansion of backward caste politics, the political structure of the state underwent a significant transition. This transformation led to the empowerment of underprivileged groups and a decline in the dominance of upper-caste households. In addition, religious identity has been shown to affect voting behaviour, particularly among people who are considered to be minority groups. It is common for this sort of voting behaviour to have an impact on political alliances and the strategy used by parties. In electoral considerations, caste and religion continue to play a considerable influence, both on an individual and a communal level. Identity based on religious affiliation continues to play a significant part in determining the results of elections. It is common for minority populations to ally themselves with political parties that guarantee their representation and safety, but the consolidation of the majority has also had an impact on political developments. Religion is an important but ever-evolving feature in Bihar's politics since it plays a role in the development of electoral alliances and voting patterns. Caste alignments and religious considerations are two factors that contribute to the establishment of voting patterns [Banerjee A, Pande (2007)].

Rise of Development-Oriented Politics

It has become more apparent in recent years that development is a key element that influences voting behaviour. Infrastructure, education, jobs, and governance are some of the issues that have significantly increased in prominence, especially among younger voters and voters in metropolitan areas. A change toward performance-based appraisal has occurred in the electoral discourse as a result of political leadership placing greater emphasis on social programs and good administration. On the other hand, development has not replaced identity politics; rather, it functions in tandem with caste and religion, resulting in a hybrid voting pattern that

reflects both social identity and policy performance. [Brass PR (1994)].

Historical Political Transformation

The power structures of Bihar have seen a gradual transformation throughout the course of the state's political history. This change has occurred in a progressive manner. At first, the political scene was dominated by national parties that were backed by higher castes. These parties became the dominant force in the political landscape. On the other hand, the landscape went through a change as a consequence of the rise to prominence of socialist and regional parties that represented people who were historically disadvantaged and backward. This was the cause of the transformation. The focus that was placed on social justice and mobilisation based on caste was a crucial factor that contributed to this development, which ultimately led to a revolution in electoral politics. Political parties have, over the course of history, responded by participating in the formation of bigger coalitions that blend caste identities with programs aiming at development. These coalitions have led to the building of larger coalitions [Chandra K. (2004)].

Complexity of Caste Dynamics

In the state of Bihar, caste politics are not homogeneous but rather very dynamic and multi-layered. In the political system, the loss of the conventional upper-caste hierarchy has coincided with the growth of other backward classes, extremely backward classes, and Dalits as substantial voting groupings. There has been a positive correlation between these two developments. During the same time period, this has taken place. Through the implementation of specific social projects and strategic partnerships, the political parties in question are actively engaging the aforementioned groups in their activities. It is essential for political policies to be both inclusive and adaptable in order to address the reality that electoral competition has become more challenging as a direct result of the fragmentation that has taken place. [Kumar A.2004].

Development and Governance Impact

The development projects that have been pursued in recent times have had a considerable impact on the voting behaviour that has taken place in recent times. As a consequence of the progress that has been accomplished in areas like education, peace and order, social programs, and infrastructure, these advancements have resulted in the accumulation of support from individuals who belong to a diverse spectrum of socioeconomic classes. However, despite the fact that problems such as unemployment, poverty, and unequal growth continue to exist, many segments of society continue to have a variety of perspectives. This is the case even though these difficulties continue to present themselves. In spite of the fact that there are individuals who place a greater emphasis on social justice and equality, there are others who place a higher value on economic progress.

Rather than being in opposition to one another, the connection between identity and development in Bihar is one of interconnectedness. Voters often blend their expectations of governance and social benefits with their feelings about their religion or caste identities. In order to develop support bases, political leaders intentionally combine these aspects, which ultimately results in a voting pattern that reflects both emotional and intellectual concerns. An insight into electoral behaviour may be gained via the creation of a multidimensional framework through this interaction [Krishna A. (2007)].

Electoral Alliances, Media Influence, and Youth Participation in Bihar

The results of the elections in Bihar shed light on the significant part that political alliances and strategic mobilisation play in their ability to influence voting behaviour. Recognising the divided and diversified structure of the population, political parties typically create alliances in order to secure support from a wide variety of religious and caste groupings. The nature of these coalitions is often fluid, since they are subject to change from one election to the next on account of political calculations, leadership tactics, and growing societal conditions. As a consequence of this, the success of an election in Bihar is dependent not only on the philosophy of the party, but also on the capacity to construct wide coalitions that include various groups of people and to successfully organise votes across socioeconomic boundaries. Electoral results are further influenced by campaign strategy, leadership appeal, and grassroots organising, which contribute to the highly competitive and fluid nature of the political climate [Chhibber P (2021)].

Simultaneously, the substantial transformation of electoral politics in Bihar has been brought about by the rising power of the media and the engagement of young people. Political communication and outreach have been significantly improved as a result of the fast rise of digital channels, which include social media, messaging apps, and regional television. These channels are increasingly being used by political parties in order to broadcast tailored messages, which in turn combine identity-based appeals with narratives that are focused on development. Political elections have become more dynamic as a result of this, since voters are now exposed to a wider variety of information sources and political perspectives. Additional factors that have contributed to this transition include the emergence of a population that is youthful, educated, and connected to the internet. Young voters are more likely to vote based on issues, giving issues such as job prospects, decent education, governance, and economic growth more priority than other concerns. Their growing involvement is increasingly changing conventional voting patterns, hence lowering the significance of caste and religious identities as the only determinants of voting behaviour. Together, the dynamic interaction of strategic alliances, the impact of the media, and the participation of young people demonstrate the ever-changing and diverse character of the electoral dynamics in Bihar [Engineer AA.1995].

Structural Constraints on Voting Behaviour

In spite of these transformations, structural factors such as poverty, illiteracy, and the dynamics of local authority continue to have an influence on voting behaviour, particularly in rural areas. This is especially true in areas where there are lower levels of education. A number of elements, including community influence, family ties, and short-term benefits, often play a role in the choices that are made about elections. Nevertheless, there are situations in which the patterns of collective voting reflect the influence of local leaders rather than the preferences of individual voters. This exemplifies the challenges that are connected with the process of autonomous decision-making [Frankel F (1989)].

2. OBJECTIVE

1. To examine variables affecting voting behaviour in Bihar Legislative Assembly elections, such as caste, religion, economic circumstances, and political leadership.
2. To analyse shifting voter preferences in Bihar, focusing on the move from identity-based to development, governance, and performance-oriented voting.

3. METHODOLOGY

Voter behaviour in the Bihar Legislative Assembly elections is examined in this research using a thorough methodological framework. The study's reliance on secondary data sources guarantees an accurate and methodical analysis of voting patterns. The Election Commission of India and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, two reliable sources of survey data and election statistics, have been consulted for the majority of the data [Gupta D (2005)]

This study makes use of a mixed-method strategy, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. Interpretations of voting behaviour based on theory and analysis, with an emphasis on factors with historical, cultural, social, and political contexts, make up the qualitative component. Political campaigns, tactics for mobilising voters, and the function of political parties may be better understood via the use of archival resources including newspaper articles, party platforms, and election records. [Hansen TB. (1999)].

Graphs, infographics, and geographic mapping tools based on GIS have been used to systematically evaluate and show election data on the quantitative side. The geographical patterns and regional differences in voting behaviour across various constituencies may be better understood with the use of these visual tools. To further investigate the connection between socio-economic factors and voter participation, the research makes use of statistical analysis.

Voter participation broken down by constituency is the dependent variable here, with a number of socioeconomic characteristics (such as literacy, population density, and economic circumstances) serving as the independent variables. The study was carried out with the assistance of SPSS (Version 20), and the association between these variables was verified using Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient. In sum, this methodological strategy combines geographical and humanistic

viewpoints to provide light on the shifting dynamics of voting behaviour in Bihar during many election cycles. [Hasan Z (1998)].

4. RESULTS

Through the examination of voting patterns during elections for the Bihar Legislative Assembly, substantial insights into the

shifting electoral dynamics that have occurred throughout the course of the years 2015 and 2020 have been revealed. The findings are generated from both qualitative interpretation and quantitative statistical analysis. Both approaches were used [Heath O, Jeffery (2011)].

Table 1 Voter Turnout in Bihar Assembly Elections (2015–2020)

Year	Total Voter Turnout (%)	Male Turnout (%)	Female Turnout (%)
2015	56.8	57.5	55.9
2020	57.1	54.0	59.7

According to the statistics, there has been a consistent rise in the number of people voting in elections. One noteworthy development is the increase in female participation, which, in the year 2020, overtook the turnout of males. This indicates that

women voters are becoming more politically informed and empowered, which reflects a change in the patterns of electoral involvement [Aiyar Y, Pritchett L,2015].

Table 2 Influence of Socio-Economic Factors on Voting Behaviour

Variable	Correlation with Voter Turnout (r)
Literacy Rate	+0.62
Population Density	+0.48
Poverty Level	-0.55
Urbanization	+0.51

The correlation analysis, which is represented by Karl Pearson's coefficient, reveals that:

- There is a substantial positive association between the literacy rate and voter turnout, which indicates that educated people are more politically engaged with their votes.
- There is a negative association between poverty and involvement, which suggests that economically

disadvantaged groups may experience obstacles to participation.

- Urbanisation and population density somewhat impact voting, suggesting improved access to political knowledge and infrastructure [Jaffrelet C (2009)].

Table 3: Dominant Voting Determinants (2015–2020)

Election Year	Caste (%)	Development (%)	Religion (%)	Leadership (%)
2015	38	30	12	20
2020	30	40	10	20

The chart clearly shows a huge movement in voter preferences in the Bihar Assembly elections from 2015 to 2020. In 2015, caste influenced voting choices significantly, accounting for 38% of voter preferences. This suggests that identity-based politics, especially caste ties, were the dominant motivator for voting behaviour at that time. Development, although essential at 30%, remained secondary, with religion (12%) and leadership (20%) having considerably less importance.

By 2020, voters' priorities had shifted noticeably. The influence of caste fell to 30%, indicating a fall in traditional identity-based voting habits. In contrast, development appeared as the most important element, reaching to 40%. This trend shows that voters started to value government, infrastructure,

economic advancement, and overall success above caste factors. Religion's effect on election choices decreased slightly, from 12% to 10%. Meanwhile, the value of leadership remained consistent at 20%, indicating that leadership traits retained their relevance in both elections. [Jha P (2017)].

Overall, the results show a shift in voter attitudes from identity-based to performance-based politics. The increasing focus on development reflects rising voter knowledge and a desire for real outcomes and competent government. This shift suggests a progressive transformation in election behaviour, where practical factors and policy results are gaining priority over old social distinctions.

Table 4 Party Performance and Vote Share Trends

Year	Major Alliances/Parties	Vote Share (%)	Key Factor
2015	Grand Alliance	41	Social Coalition
2020	NDA	38	Welfare + Development

The comparison of the Bihar Assembly elections in 2015 and 2020 shows that the political situation and what voters care about have changed. The Grand Alliance got 41% of the vote in 2015, which was a lot since its social coalition was strong and brought together people from diverse castes and communities. This shows that social connections still have a big effect on election results.

But by 2020, the NDA had become the most popular party, with 38% of the vote. This was due to a mix of welfare

measures and development projects. This shows that voters are now more interested in how well the government runs and how well its programs work.

In general, the data shows that voters are putting more weight on how well political parties provide welfare and improve the economy, even if coalitions are still important. This shows a shift from politics based only on social coalitions to a more performance-based electoral strategy. [Chhibber P (2018)].

Table 5 Party-wise Vote Share and Vote Swing in Bihar (2015–2020)

Party	2015 Vote Share (%)	2020 Vote Share (%)	Swing (15–20)
BJP	25.00	19.46	-5.54
JDU	17.30	15.39	-1.91
RJD	18.80	23.10	+4.30
LJP	4.80	5.80	+1.00
INC	6.80	9.48	+2.68
CPIML	0.60	3.80	+3.20
CPI	1.40	1.10	-0.30
CPIM	0.60	0.65	+0.05
VIP	2.30	2.50	+0.20
HAM	2.30	0.06	-2.24
BSP	2.10	1.49	-0.61
AIMIM	0.20	1.24	+1.04
IND	8.00	9.40	+1.40
Others	9.80	6.53	-3.27

Comparing the proportion of votes between 2015 and 2020 shows that Bihar has a lively and competitive political scene. One of the most important developments is the BJP's collapse, which saw a big drop of -5.54%, showing that it is losing its electoral supremacy. JDU also saw a drop, which suggests that it is having trouble keeping its voters, even though it is a big political power.

On the other hand, the RJD showed a significant comeback, with a +4.30% swing, making it one of the biggest winners. This shows that it is still important and gaining support among key voting groups. The INC also did better, with a 2.68% rise, which shows that its electoral performance is slowly becoming better. [Chauchard S (2017)].

[Kumar A.2004)].

Smaller events showed a range of patterns. CPIML saw a big jump (+3.20%), which suggests that more people are supporting issue-based politics. AIMIM also gained ground (+1.04%), which suggests that new political options are starting to emerge. On the other hand, parties like HAM and BSP lost ground, which shows that voters' choices are changing.

The data shows that voters in Bihar are changing their behaviour. These changes are caused by things like leadership, alliances, caste dynamics, and development difficulties. The differences in vote shares show that voters are becoming more responsive and flexible, which is making the political scene more competitive and diverse.

5. DISCUSSION

When the data are taken into account, it would seem that the voting behaviour in Bihar is experiencing a slow change toward becoming more democratic. Although caste continues to play a role in voting choices, the influence of this aspect is becoming less common. This is true even though caste influences voting decisions. The flip side of the coin is that concerns about the economy, governance, and development are gaining greater attention, particularly among voters who are younger and who live in metropolitan areas of the nation. [Kumar N. (2016)].

It has been shown via the use of statistical research that socio-economic variables have a substantial influence on the political engagement of people through the use of statistical research. For instance, literacy and urbanisation are factors that lead to an increase in voter involvement, but poverty is a circumstance that works as a limitation on voter engagement. A further crucial issue that has considerably altered the mood of the political process is the growing number of women who are participating in the voting process [Kumar R, (2021)].

Research in geography that takes use of mapping provided by geographic information systems finds significant similarities and contrasts across regions. An illustration of this may be seen in the fact that urban districts have greater levels of engagement and voting that is more focused on development, whilst rural areas continue to demonstrate traits of traditional voting behaviour.

6. CONCLUSION

The study of voting behaviour in Bihar Legislative Assembly elections highlights the complex and changing character of the state's electoral dynamics. Based on an examination of three successive elections (2020, 2015), we can see that caste is slowly losing its hegemonic effect over voter choices due to new socio-economic and political variables. Identity politics is no longer the only factor influencing voting behaviour in Bihar, according to the results. Development, governance, welfare programs, and economic circumstances are now the focal points. In the next 2020 election, issues related to class have taken centre stage, while caste and religion have maintained a diminished but steady impact. This shows that voters, particularly those who are younger and more politically conscious, are becoming more issue-oriented when casting their ballots. Meanwhile, caste is still a structural element that has an impact on party policies and political mobilisation. Bihar has a hybrid electoral environment that is distinct from others due to the presence of both contemporary and traditional factors. To add insult to injury, leadership, campaign tactics, and political alliances all play major roles in determining election results. Finally, more fluid and multi-faceted decision-making is seen in Bihar's voting behaviour, which shows a shift away from inflexible social identities. More educated and performance-based voting is becoming the norm, and this shift mirrors larger societal shifts.

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