

ADR's 2018 Telangana Survey Report -

Brief Analysis of Voters' Priorities in Telangana: Importance of Issues and Performance of the Government

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the key findings of the 2018 Survey on the Expectations of the Voter from Telangana and their perception on the Performance of the Government conducted by the Association for the Democratic Reforms (ADR).

The main objective of this survey was to find out voter perception of specific governance issues and the rated performance of the government on those issues. ADR believes that one of the most effective means to establish accountability in politics is to evaluate the effectiveness of the legislators by measuring the public's perception of the legislator's performance in addressing issues that the people consider important. This survey also serves as a method to determine the level of coherence between the needs of the population and the legislator's performance.

The 2018 Telangana survey was administered exclusively with the help of android based hand-held devices against the more traditional methods of paper-based surveys. The survey sought to identify the issues considered most important by the voters and obtained their opinion on the performance of the government in relation to such issues.

This report outlines the findings of a survey of voters' expectations, perceptions and their evaluation of the 25 most important issues for the voters in their particular region in terms of their capacity, governance and specific roles in improving the living conditions of the voters. These aspects are analysed in relation to the performance of the government on those issues as perceived by the respondents.

To identify what are voter priorities in terms of governance issues like water, electricity roads, food, education and health, a list of 25 items were given to voters and they were asked to rate the issues as low, medium, high and not applicable for them. The list was comprehensive as less than 5% said that the given issues were "not applicable" to them.

The results of the perception assessment show the striking difference between the priorities of the voters and the performance on those issues and highlights the overall weak efforts of all institutions in fulfilling their role in providing what the voters really need.

ADR believes that the assessment report can be an important tool in engendering improvements within all institutions in refining their own institutional practices or developing better oversight of other bodies. We hope the report will be instrumental in starting a coordinated effort to work together to ensure the most efficient use of resources to serve the nation as a whole.

The key objectives of this perception assessment are to generate:

1. An improved understanding of the important needs of the voters.
2. Momentum among key stakeholders for addressing priority areas.

The primary aim of the assessment is, therefore, to evaluate the effectiveness of the government, government-institutions, mechanisms, etc. in terms of planning and providing for the needs of the country in fostering transparency and integrity. In addition, it seeks to promote the assessment process as a springboard for action among the government and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in terms of policy reforms, evidence-based advocacy, or further in-depth evaluations of specific governance issues. This assessment should serve as a basis for key stakeholders to advocate for sustainable and effective reforms.

We hope that this report will bring out the gap between expectations from the voters and the disappointments from the government and this gap can be minimized.

METHODOLOGY

At the outset, it is important to note that the survey is entirely about voter perceptions. Whether the voter's perception is right or wrong is immaterial for our purposes. For instance in urban areas, some group may perceive garbage clearance as very important while another may not think so 'scientifically'. One may say that garbage causes health hazards, but we present the data as voters tell it, and not based on what 'ought' to be done. The reason is that a voter votes on his/her perception, and not on what may be 'scientifically' known to be true or false. There was no attempt to prompt or influence responses during the survey. At the same time, there are socially accepted preferred answers. For instance asking "will you vote for someone with a serious criminal record?" is of no use. The questionnaire was suitably designed to take care of these issues.

The survey was conducted in the period of August to November 2018. While a professional agency was hired to do it, ADR designed the questionnaire, and also made random checks to ensure that the survey was proceeding smoothly. The survey was conducted in all the parliamentary constituencies of the state, with roughly 500 to 550 respondents selected from each constituency. Given the size of the survey, the time and the budget limitations, we wanted to keep the questionnaire short and simple. It collected the following information:

- Demographic Data. Name, gender, caste/religion, age, types of assets owned (to get wealth ranking information).
- What are the important factors for voting: Candidate, Political Party, Candidate Caste/religion, Party's CM candidate, Distribution of 'gifts'.
- 'Knowledge' of voter regarding crime and money in elections. Specifically, whether they know of distribution of such gifts and whether they know of criminal records of candidates.
- The 25 Issues on Governance and rating of local governance on each issue. These included agriculture, electricity for agriculture and domestic use, farm prices, consumer prices, irrigation, subsidy for seed and fertilisers, accessibility and trustworthiness of MLA, terrorism, health care, law and order, public transport, roads, education, drinking water,

empowerment and security of women, eradication of corruption, reservation, strong defence/military, subsidized food distribution (PDS), training for jobs, garbage clearance, encroachment of public land/lakes, traffic management, environment protection, etc.

The respondents were randomly selected to represent various segments of the population like rural-urban, gender, caste, religion and income classes. Every care was taken to make the samples fully representative of the population. The accuracy of the survey is 95%, i.e., the true values are within 5% of the survey predictions.

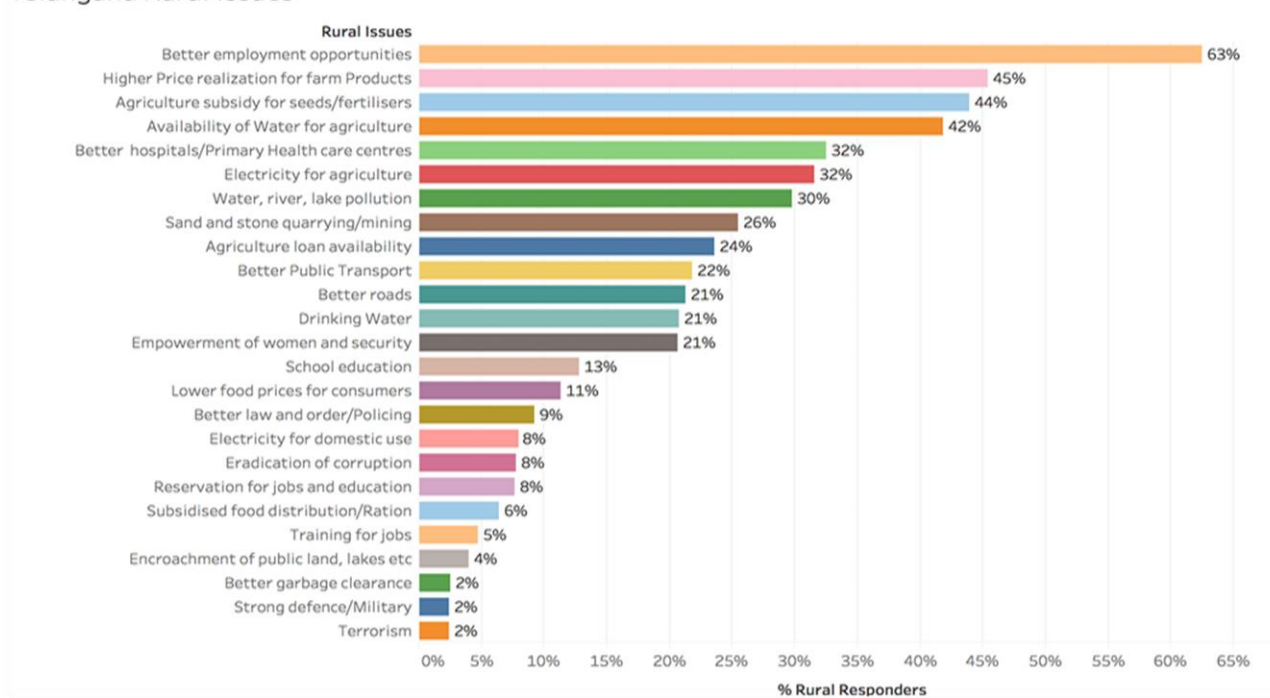
The assessment does not seek to offer an in-depth evaluation of specific governance issues. Rather, it seeks breadth, aiming to examine all relevant pillars across a wide number of indicators in order to gain a view of the overall system. Understanding the interactions between various inter-related institutions helps to prioritize areas for reform.

Along with the importance of these 25 issues, voters were also asked to rate the performance of their government on these particular issues and whether the performance was GOOD, AVERAGE or BAD.

For calculating the performance score, separate weightages were given to GOOD, AVERAGE and BAD where GOOD was given weight equal to 5, AVERAGE was weighted 3 and BAD was weighted as 1. The weighted average was taken and the scores were between 1 and 5, where 1 was the lowest and 5 was the highest.

KEY FINDINGS

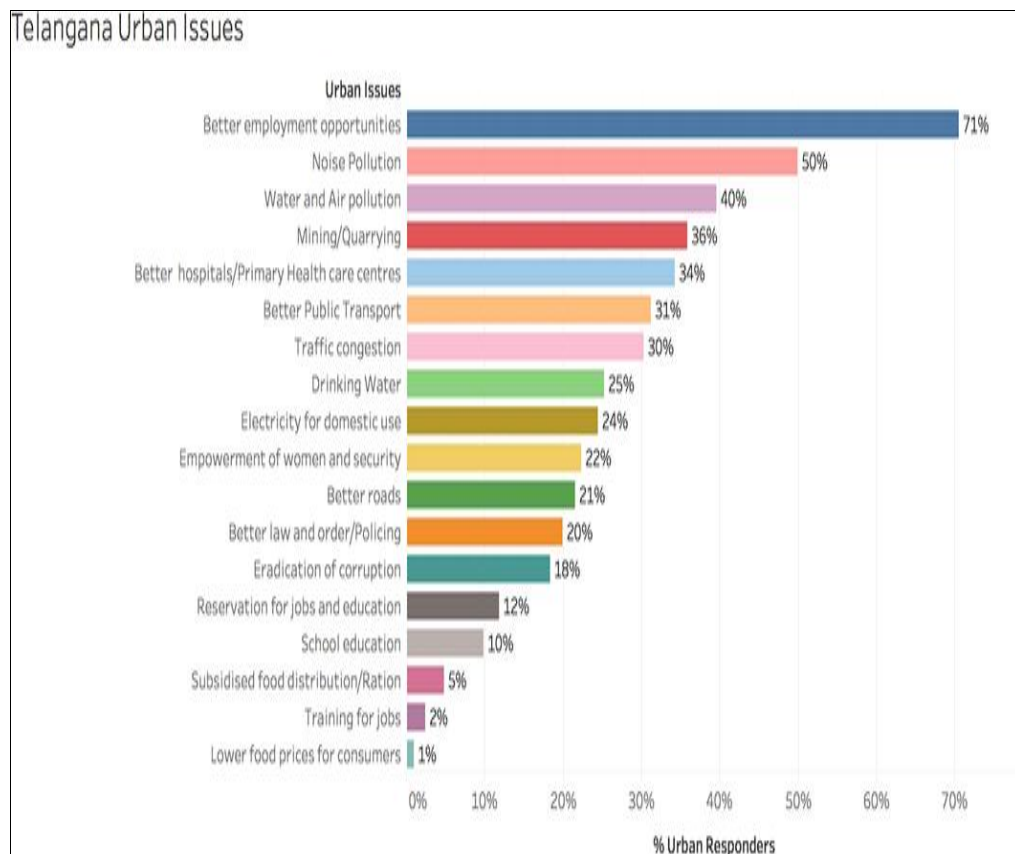
Telangana Rural Issues



1. Telangana Rural Issues As per Importance:-

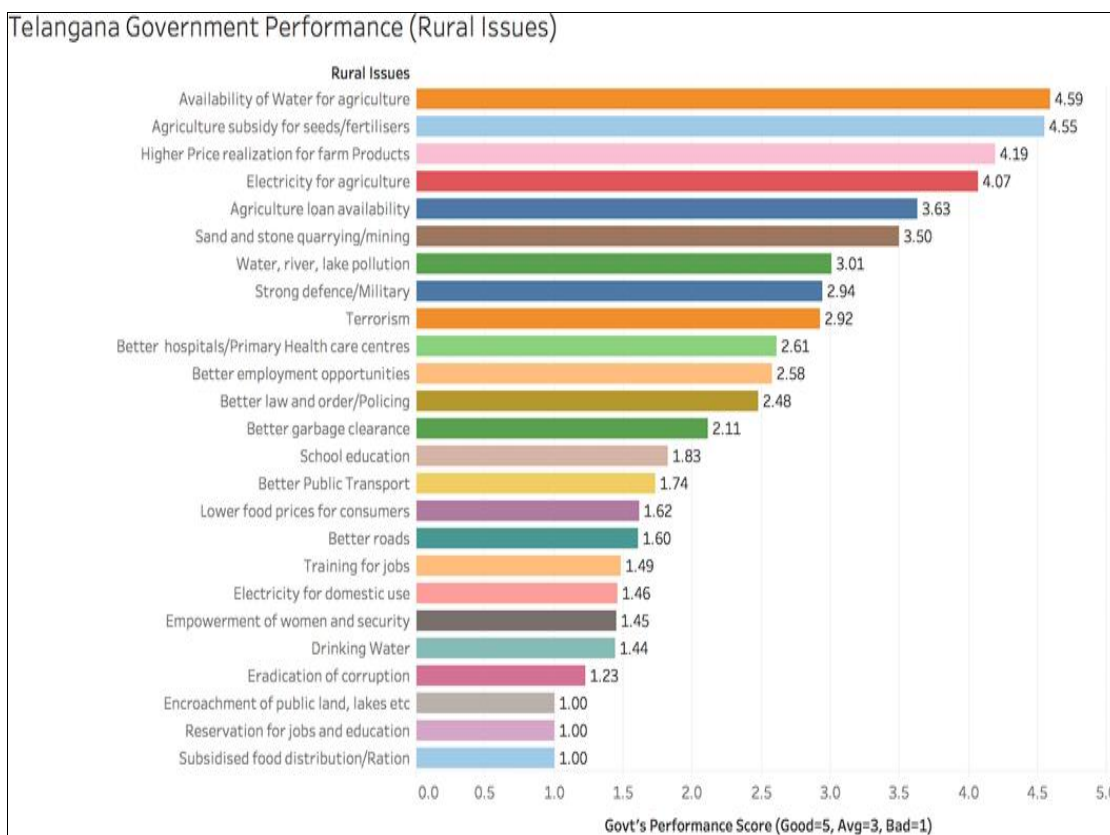
- a. Among the top 3 most important issues, the data suggests that ‘better employment opportunities’ was the most important rural issue with 63% of the rural respondents stating so. It was followed by ‘Higher Price Realization for Farm Products’ at 45% and at third place was ‘Agriculture Subsidy for Seeds/Fertilizers’ at 44%.
- b. While 63% of the rural respondents found ‘better employment opportunities’ as an issue, only 5% considered ‘training for jobs’ as an issue. This shows the clear disparity between the employment available and the skill-set in the minds of the rural people.

- c. The most important rural issues are primarily agriculture-based with 'High Price Realization for farm products', 'Agriculture subsidy for seeds/fertilizers', 'Availability of water for agriculture' and 'Electricity for agriculture' taking the second, third, fourth and sixth positions respectively with 45%, 44%, 42% of the rural responders considering it as an issue respectively.
- d. 'Better Roads', 'Drinking Water', and 'Empowerment of Women and security' were all voted by 21% of the respondents.
- e. 'Better Garbage Clearance', 'Strong defence/ military', and 'Terrorism' were all voted as the least of the problems with each receiving the votes of only 2% of the rural respondents.



2. Telangana Urban Issues:-

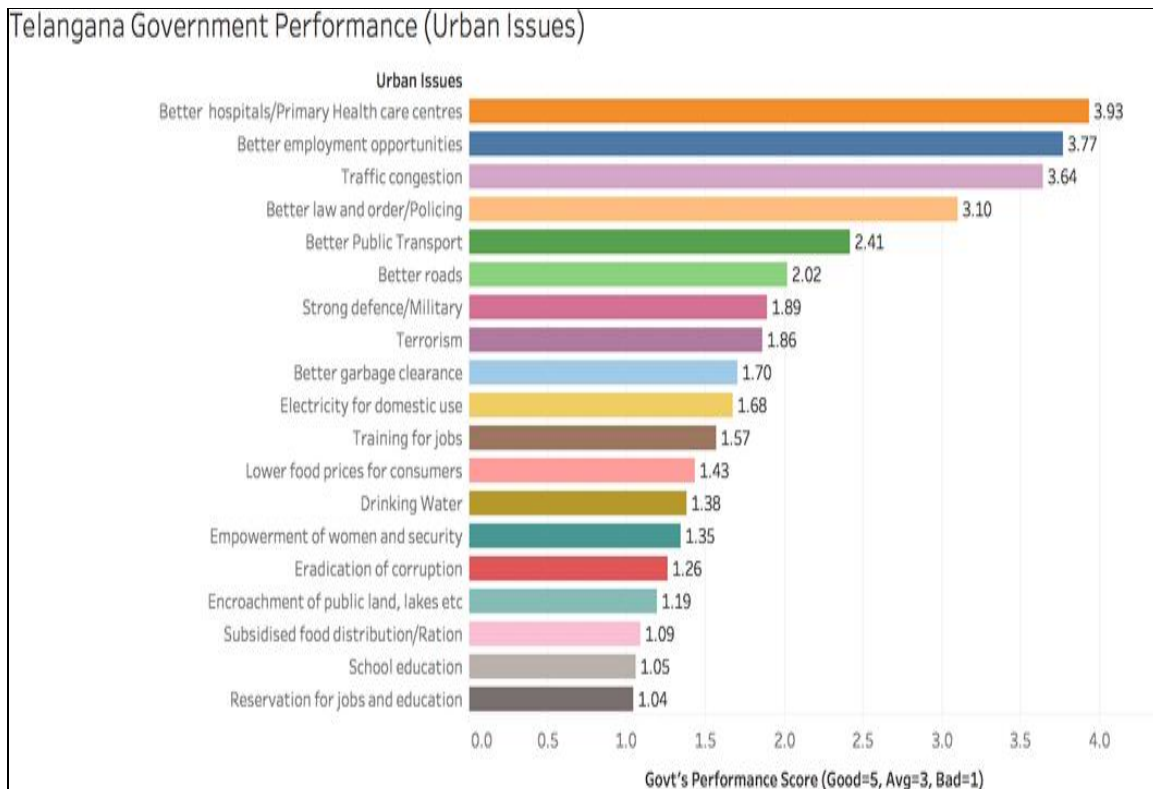
- a. The data suggests that 'better employment opportunities' was the most major urban issue with 71% of the urban respondents finding it as an issue.
- b. While 71% of the urban respondents found 'better employment opportunities' as an issue, only 2% considered 'training for jobs' as an issue. This shows the clear disparity between the employment available and the skill-set in the minds of the people.
- c. The most important urban issues are all pollution-based with 'Noise Pollution', 'Water and Air Pollution', and 'Mining/Quarrying' taking the second, third, and fourth positions respectively with 50%, 40%, and 36% of the urban responders considering it as an issue respectively.
- d. 22% of the urban responders considered 'Empowerment of women and their safety' as a problem.
- e. 34% of the responders wanted 'better hospitals/ primary health care centres'.
- f. 'Subsidized food distribution/ Ration' and 'Lower Food Price for Consumers' were voted as the least of the problems with only 5% and 1% of the voters voting for them.



3. Performance of the Telangana Government on the rural issues:-

- The performance of the Telangana Government was best on 'Availability of Water for Agriculture' with an average score of 4.59.
- The next best performance of the government was on 'Agricultural Subsidy for Seeds/ Fertilisers' with an average score of 4.55.
- Next, the average score of the government on 'High Price Realization for Farm Products' was 4.19.
- Therefore, the government performed well in the agricultural sector with 'Electricity for Agriculture' and 'Agricultural Loan Availability' coming in next with an average score of 4.07 and 3.63 respectively.
- 'Electricity for Domestic Use', 'Empowerment of Women and Security', 'Drinking Water' and 'Eradication of Corruption' were poorly performed with the respective average scores of 1.46, 1.45, 1.44 and 1.23.

- f. The worst performed sectors were 'Encroachment of Public Land/Lakes', 'Reservation for jobs and education' and 'Subsidized food distribution' with each getting the average score of 1.



4. Performance of the Telangana Government on the urban issues:-

- The performance of the Telangana was best on 'Better hospitals/Primary Health Care Centres', 'Better Employment Opportunities' and 'Traffic Congestion' with respective average scores of 3.93, 3.77 and 3.64.
- The next was 'Better Law and Order/ Policing' with an average score of 3.10.
- 'Drinking Water' and 'Empowerment of Women and Security' were relatively poorly performed and had respective average scores of 1.38 and 1.35.
- The worst performed sectors were 'Subsidized food distribution/Ration', 'School Education', 'Reservation for jobs and education' with respective average scores of 1.09, 1.05 and 1.04.

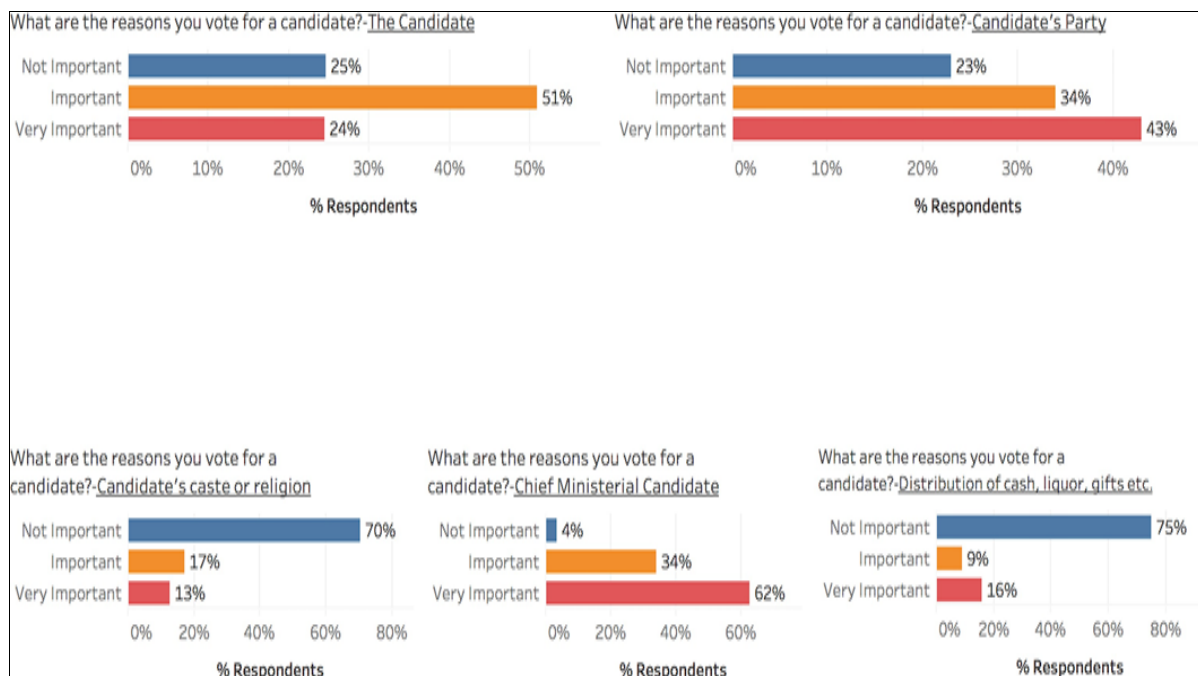
This measure of voters' perceptions highlights the need for awareness of the criminal, financial and other backgrounds of the candidates as well as the transparency and accountability of the political parties. Only then can a voter make an informed choice and contribute to electoral reform efforts.

VOTING BEHAVIOUR

The survey identified the important factors that people take into account before voting for a particular candidate. Issues like whether the candidate matters the most or other issues like caste/religion of the candidate and CM candidate of the party.

The survey asked respondents about the reason they vote for a particular candidate. They were given five choices - candidate, party, party's chief ministerial candidate, religion and caste. Respondents had to rank each of these as either very important, important or not important. Taking the weighted average across respondents for each of these factors, we can gauge the aggregate importance of each of the five factors across all voters.

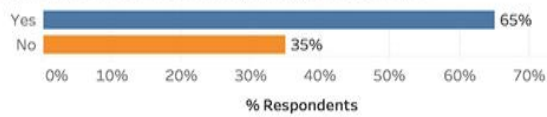
It is interesting that, according to the survey, the most important factor for voters is the CM Candidate, followed by the Candidate's party and the candidate. The least important factors were the distribution of cash, liquor, gifts, etc. and the Candidate's caste or religion.



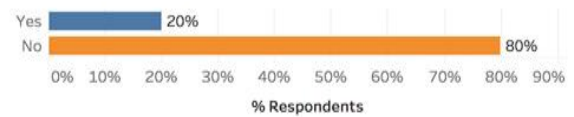
Some Salient Points of the Voting Behaviour:-

1. 65% of the responders were aware of the fact that the distribution of cash/gifts/money is illegal.
2. 20% of the responders were aware of the instances of the distribution of cash/gifts/money/liquor.
3. 40% of the responders were aware that they can get information on criminal backgrounds of the candidates.
4. 93% of the responders think that people should not vote for candidates with a criminal record/arrested in jail.
5. 96% of the responders think that someone with a criminal case should not be in Parliament or State Assembly.
6. When asked the responders about why the people vote for a candidate with a criminal record - 21% agreed to the candidate being of the same caste/religion, 85% agreed to the candidate being powerful, 65% agreed to the candidate doing good work, 82% agreed to the cases against the candidate not being serious, 68% agreed to the candidate spending generously in the elections and 69% agreed to not knowing about the criminal records of the candidates.
7. When asked about the social influence on the votes of the respondents - 63% voted on their own, 16% were influenced by their spouse, 17% were influenced by other family members, 1% were influenced by the local political leaders, 1% by caste/community, 1% by colleagues and 2% by their friends and neighbours.

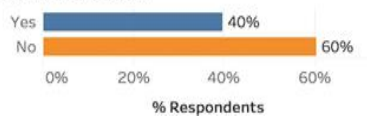
Do you know that distribution of Cash/money/gifts are illegal?



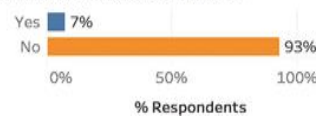
Are you aware of instances of distribution of money/cash/gifts/liquor in your constituency during the last election?



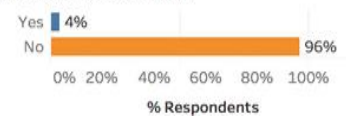
Do you know that you can get information on criminal records of the candidates?



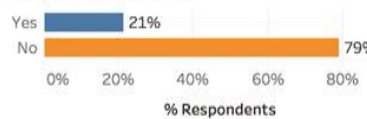
Do you think people should vote for candidates with a criminal record/arrested in jail?



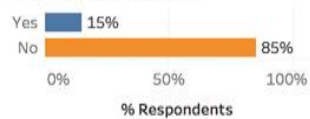
Should someone with a criminal case be in Parliament or State Assembly?



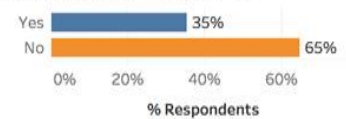
Why do you think people vote for candidate with a criminal record? Candidate is of similar caste/religion



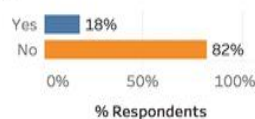
Why do you think people vote for candidate with a criminal record? Candidate is powerful



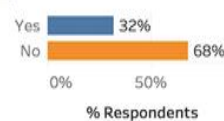
Why do you think people vote for candidate with a criminal record? Candidate otherwise does good work



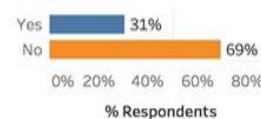
Why do you think people vote for candidate with a criminal record? Cases against him are not serious



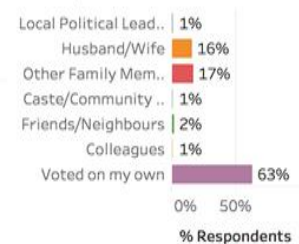
Why do you think people vote for candidate with a criminal record? Candidate has spent generously in elections



Why do you think people vote for candidate with a criminal record? Voters don't know about the criminal record



In deciding who to vote for in an election, whose opinion mattered the most?



CONCLUSION

The survey assessed the voter characteristics and the voter perception towards issues of importance to them and how they think the government has performed on those issues. Thus, the analysis brings out mainly two important questions to the forefront. What important factors may drive divergence? What can be done to improve congruence? Through the analysis, we can see that men and women whether in rural or urban areas are equally interested in politics and have actively participated in bringing forth their concerns. The decisions of the policymakers are likely to differ from the preferences of the constituents; however, this survey provides an opportunity to the policymakers to evaluate the issues that the respondents have raised and work towards minimising the gap between voters and the government.

The voters have to make a choice from those candidates that are available. It is assumed that the voters vote for candidates that have similar opinions based on the promises made during election campaigns and in their election manifesto. However, besides the lack of information with the constituents, the candidate's own preferences are not transparent, they advertise what seems to be good for election or re-election, and they avoid talking or declaring anything that could be unpopular.

The relative importance of these promises shifts with proximity to the elections. The fact that the electorate has no role once the politician is elected and suspended animation of electorates is brought back to life only when next elections are due allows the priority of candidates selected to be determined by the political parties. It is then hoped that the electorate takes care to elect a better politician to represent them.

Political representation is about championing constituent preferences. In the larger and complete report, we also provide constituency wise information. However, the top two issues of employment and better health services remain relevant across the country. We hope this report will give peoples representatives to do their work more effectively. The gap between people's expectations and its fulfilment needs to be addressed.

RESPONDENT DETAILS

1. 57% of the respondents were from rural areas and 43% were from urban areas.
2. 63% were of general caste, 15% OBC, 7% SC and 15% ST.
3. The other respondent details can be observed from the graphs below.

