



Political lines sharpen as 2024 election nears

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The share of Indians who do not identify with any political party has seen a sharp decline in the latest round of our bi-annual survey. Meanwhile, urban Indians are not too happy with the Centre's work on jobs and price rise, the survey found.

Chart 1
Parties' support bases little changed, but more Indians now taking a side

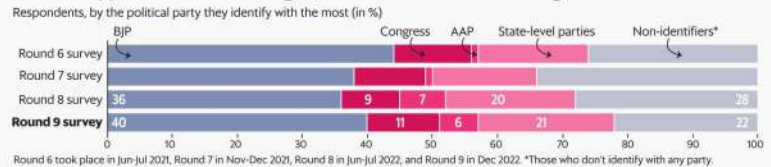


Chart 2
Partisan biases deepening in successive rounds of the survey

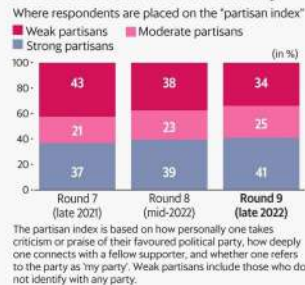


Chart 3
Centre rated highly on boosting India's global image, low rating on jobs

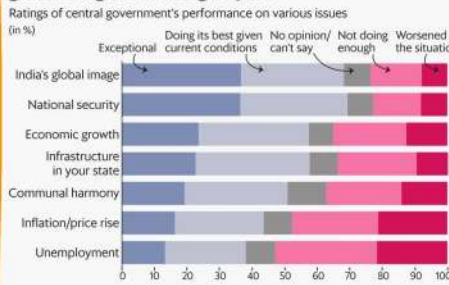


Chart 4
Partisan gaps are narrower on views about jobs and inflation

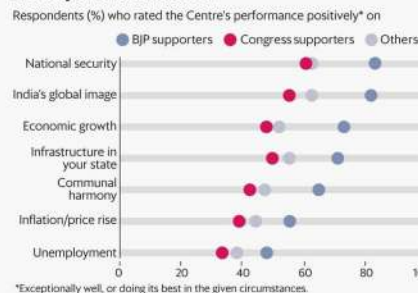
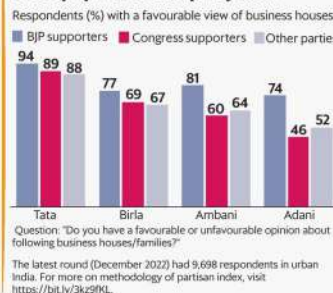


Chart 5
Indians bright-eyed on big business, Tatas popular across party lines



PARAS JAIN/MINT

More urban Indians are choosing a side as the 2024 general elections get closer, the latest round of the YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial Survey suggests. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a clear beneficiary of this trend, regaining some of the footing it had lost in the earlier rounds.

Around 40% of the respondents to the survey said they identified the most with the ruling party, up from 36% in mid-2022 and 38% in late 2021 (see chart 1). The Congress also made some gains, albeit small—up to 11% from 9% in mid-2022. Support for the Aam Aadmi Party and smaller, regional parties was roughly at similar levels as before.

The biannual online survey has been tracking changes in political support among urban Indians over its last four rounds, since mid-2021. The survey is conducted by Mint, in association with survey partner YouGov India and Delhi-based think tank Centre for Policy Research (CPR). The latest round, the ninth, was held in December 2022, with 9,698 respondents across 207 cities and towns. Over 42% were post-millennials (born after 1996), and 40% were millennials (born between 1981 and 1996).

Around 22% respondents said they did not identify with any political party, sharply down from 28% in the mid-2022 survey and the lowest across the four rounds in which the question was put. The figure had peaked at 34% in the survey held in late 2021.

The partisan index, a measure of the level of attachment with one's favoured political party, showed rising churn. The share of "weak partisans", the group that is either weakly attached to a party or does not identify with any party at all, has eroded over the last two rounds, falling from almost 43% in late 2021 to 33% in late 2022. Almost 41% of the respondents were "strong partisans" and 26% were "moderates"—up from 39% and 23%, respectively (see chart 2).

The three categories of partisans are based on respondents' reactions to four situations they are given involving the political party they claim to identify with the most.

CENTRE'S REPORT CARD

The survey also tried to find out Indians' assessment of the BJP-led central government on various issues. Respondents were given a list of seven topics—economic growth, national security, unemployment, price rise, India's global image, state-level infrastructure, and communal harmony. They had four options to describe their view on the Centre's performance: "exceptionally well", "doing its best under the given circumstances", "not doing enough", and "worsened the situation".

National security and India's global image are two areas where most respondents (nearly 70% in both cases) felt the

central government was doing exceptionally well or its best in the given circumstances. Unemployment and inflation were the biggest areas of concern, with nearly half the respondents saying the government was either not doing enough or had worsened the existing situation (see chart 3).

Predictably, supporters of BJP were the most likely to rate the government positively on all measures. But, the gap between BJP supporters and others was relatively small on matters of inflation and joblessness. That means the anxiety around daily-life economic issues brings out greater convergence of dissatisfied views outside of partisan biases (see chart 4).

BIG BUSINESSES

On the flip side to this anxious view of the economy is the popularity of big businesses, particularly among BJP supporters. When asked about their opinion about four influential business groups, BJP supporters had an overwhelmingly positive view for all of them.

The Tata family came out as the most popular across party lines, with 90% of the respondents holding a favourable view of the group. The Birlas and Ambanis emerged a distant second and third, though still with around 70% approval ratings. Only 59% of the respondents had a favourable view of the Adani family (see chart 5). (The survey was taken before US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research made allegations of fraudulent practices in Adani group companies, wiping off half of their market value within weeks.)

For all four business groups named by the survey, BJP supporters had a support level of close to or more than 75%, revealing a clear bent. The divergence of views between BJP supporters and non-BJP supporters was the highest for Adani group. While 74% of the BJP supporters held a favourable view, this was true for around 50% among non-BJP supporters. The gap is significant for Ambanis as well—around 80% versus 60%.

Congress supporters are particularly likely to rate these two families lower.

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This is the third part of a series about the survey's findings. The next part will look at how political preferences impact views about the world of cinema. The first part looked at perceptions around the economy and jobs, while the second part looked at the evolving views on remote work. Note that these surveys are skewed towards urban well-to-do netizens, with 82% respondents falling under the NCCS-A socio-economic category of consumers. Full methodology note: <https://bit.ly/3lMgKHG>.

YouGov-Mint-CPR
Millennial Survey

Part 3: Youth and politics