

Building a Transparent Democracy: Political Funding, Electoral Impact & the Road Ahead for India



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Preview

- I. Democracy & Transparency
- II. Political Funding: Framework, data and key issues
- III. Money Power during General Elections
- IV. Electorate's Trust
- V. Road Ahead to Strengthening Democracy
- VI. What ails our Electoral System?
- VII. Recommendations

Democracy and Transparency

1. What is Democracy?
2. Open, Representative, Direct, and Participatory Government
3. Various indices to judge a Government's performance
4. People's Right to Know
5. Separation of Powers
6. Free and fair elections: When citizens elect a government, they expect it to deliver based on the founding principles of their country's constitution. They expect good governance, which should be participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follow the rule of law.



Democracy Indices

There are number of definitions of democracy. The most famous being the one by Abraham Lincoln:
“A democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people”

1. Human Development Index 2023-24 (UNDP): 134/193
2. World Press Freedom 2023 (Reporters without Borders) : 164th rank
3. Rule of Law 2023 (World Justice Report): 79th rank
4. Corruption Perception Index 2023 (Transparency International): 93rd rank
5. Democracy Index 2023 (Economist Intelligence Unit): 41st rank (flawed democracy)
6. V Dem Institute – one of the worst autocracies

March 2024 news report: Government has tasked ORF to develop its own Democratic Index to counter downgrades by international groups which could Affect country's credit ranking.



Political Funding: Framework, data and key issues

COUNTRY PROFILE: INDIA

POPULATION (UN REPORT): 1.44 BILLION; 10-24 YEARS (26%) WOMEN (49%)

PARLIAMENTARY
SYSTEM: WESTMINSTER; BICAMERAL

ELECTORAL SYSTEM: FIRST PAST THE POST
SYSTEM (FPTP)

NO. OF ELECTORS: 969 MILLION (MALE:
497M; FEMALE: 471.5M)

NO. OF RECOGNISED POLITICAL PARTIES: 6
NATIONAL & 60 STATE PARTIES

UNRECOGNISED PARTIES: 2764+

PEI INDEX 2019-21: 55 (CLOSED DEMOCRACY)

GENERAL ELECTIONS 2024

1

VOTER

TURNOUT: **642 MILLION**

2

% TURNOUT: **65.80** (MALE)
65.78 (FEMALE); **27.08** (OTHERS)

3

46% MPs (CRIMINAL CASES)

31% MPs (SERIOUS CRIMINAL CASES)

93% MPs WITH ASSETS 10M & ABOVE

4

14% (74/543) WOMEN MPs IN PARLIAMENT
NO MINORITY MP IN THE WINNING COALITION
52% MP > 55 YRS

5

ESTIMATED COST: **INR 1,35,000 M** (CMS REPORT)

VOTE BUYING: **INR 90,000 M** (18.05.24)

POLITICAL FINANCE FRAMEWORK

S.No.	Provisions	India	Details
1.	Presence of a legal framework for political finance	Yes	Companies Act 2013 Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 Representation of People Act, 1951 Income Tax Act, 1961 Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 Transparency Guidelines of EC Signatory to the New Delhi Declaration on Political Finance Regulation 2015
2.	Existence of institution(s) responsible for political finance oversight	Yes	Election Commission of India, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)
3.	Anonymous sources of Funding	No (currently)	Electoral Bonds scrapped in Feb 2024 by SC; Non-disclosure of contributions below INR 20,000
4.	Foreign Donations	No	Donations from foreign companies with majority stakes in Indian companies permitted
5.	Corporate Donations	Yes	Direct & Indirect funding through Electoral Trusts Scheme 2013
6.	Companies with govt. contracts/partial govt. ownership	No	
7.	Limit on Political Contributions	Yes (currently)	7.5% of average profits during previous 3 years No limit on individual donations
8.	Presence of Direct Public or State Funding	No	Indirect: Free airtime on state owned media for campaigning; free provision of electoral rolls and other prescribed materials; tax exemption
9.	Disclosure of Political Finances	Yes (CIC 2008)	Representation of People Act, 1951 (Parties) – above INR 20,000 Affidavits filed by election candidates (EC's order 2003)
10.	Availability of Disclosure reports in Public Domain	Yes	Available on the Election Commission's website for public scrutiny

POLITICAL FINANCE FRAMEWORK

S.No.	Provisions	India	Details
11.	Spending Limits for Political Parties	No provision	
	Candidates	Yes	INR 9.5 million (parliamentary constituency); INR 4 million (assembly constituency)
12.	Disclosure of Campaign Expenditure	Yes	Political Parties within 90 days and candidates within 30 days of Parliamentary elections
13.	Regulation/guidelines on Third Party Expenditure	Yes (partially)	Spending limit for party/candidate includes spending by other (election agents) on their behalf No comparable restrictions on third party spenders/campaigners; challenges of monitoring/tracking such expenditure
14.	Sanctions for political finance infractions	Yes	Fines Prison Forfeiture Loss of nomination of candidate Loss of political rights Loss of elected office
15.	Penalty for delay/default on disclosure of funding	Yes	Parties can lose tax exemption Inactive unrecognised political parties are delisted/declared inactive
	Penalty for non-disclosure/incorrect disclosure of campaign expenses for parties	No	
	For candidates	Yes	Disqualification for a period of 3 years

Political Finance & Problematic Areas

- Parties need **access to campaign finance** to reach out to voters, communicate relevant information and persuade them to vote for them.
- It is seen as necessary and unavoidable **costs of democracy**.
- However, **money** can become a **tool to unduly influence** the political process.
- Unequal access to funding can **hurt** the **level-playing field**.
- Un-regulated political funding can result in **illicit finance flows**, co-optation of politics by **business interests** and wide-spread **vote buying**.
- This **distorting effect of money** on the democratic process **demand**s effective **regulation** and **implementation**.

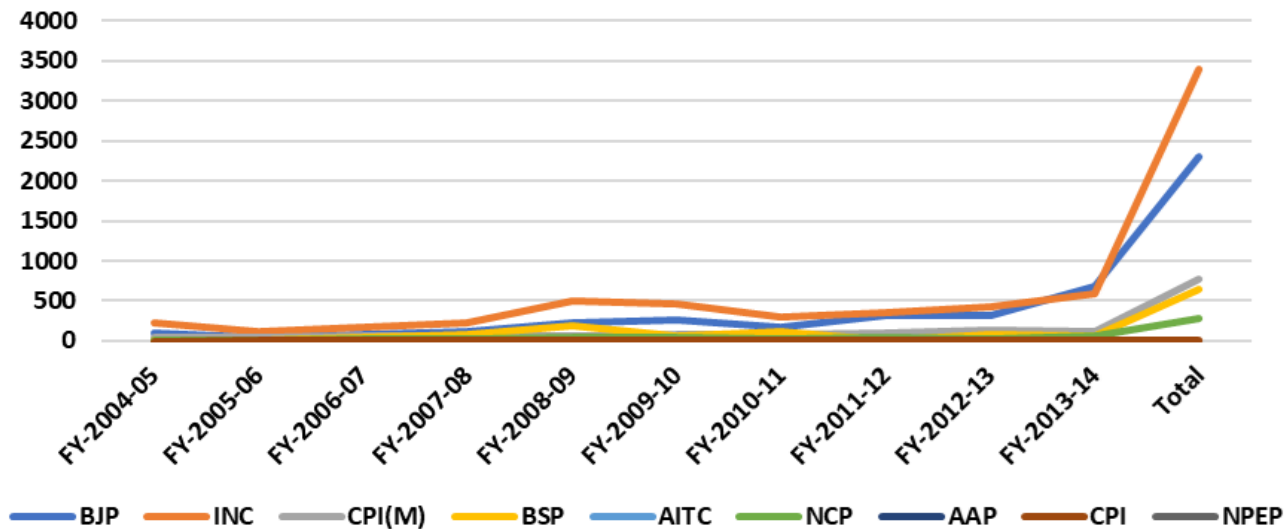


Political Finance regime in India – Issues and Challenges

- **ECI's transparency guidelines lack statutory authority** and legal consequence for non-compliance.
- **Absence** of frequent and complete **scrutiny of financial disclosures** of parties by tax authorities.
- Section 77 of RPA, 1951 only regulates “individual” candidates’ and not parties’ expenditures.
- No restriction on the amount that corporate entities may contribute to political parties.
- No requirement for corporates to report political contributions in profit and loss accounts.
- Prior to SC judgment, parties did not reveal names of individuals/organizations who donated via **anonymous Electoral Bonds**.
- **Non-disclosure** provisions had **legalized anonymous donations**.
- **Around 64 percent** of the funds of National Parties cannot be traced and are from **‘unknown sources’** (ADR Report).
- **Rs. 20,000 limit easily evaded** as disclosure of donor is not required.



Income of National Parties, FY 2004-05 to FY 2013-14



Absence of Level-playing field

Total:

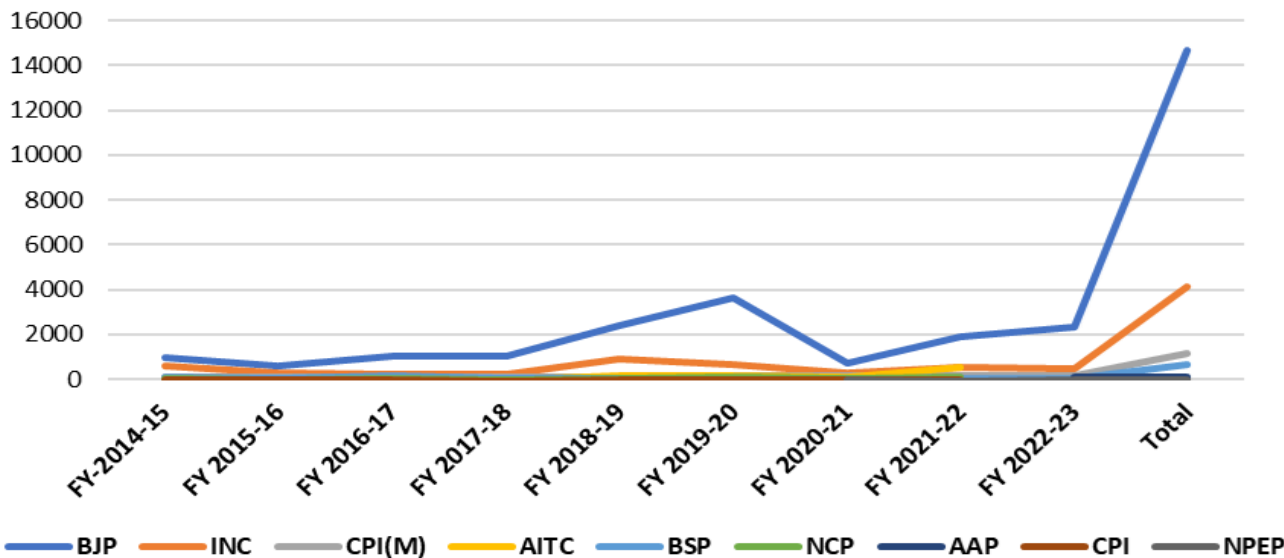
INC – INR 33,888 M (45.74%)

BJP – INR 23,022 M (31.07%)

CPI (M) – INR 7,691 M (10.38%)

BSP – INR 6,520 M (8.80%)

Income of National Parties, FY 2014-15 to FY 2022-23



Total:

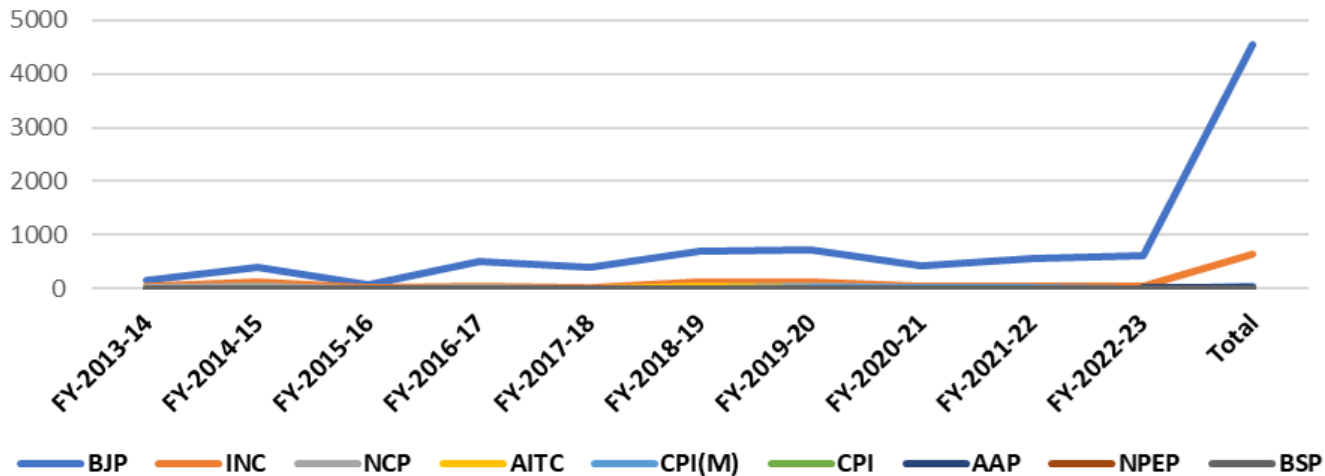
BJP – INR 146,666 M (66.34%)

INC – INR 41,590 M (18.81%)

CPI (M) – INR 11,710 M (5.30%)

BSP – INR 6,382 M (2.89%)

Direct Corporate Donations declared by National Parties, FY 2013-14 to 2022-23



Absence of Level-playing field

Total:

BJP – INR 45,430 M (83%)

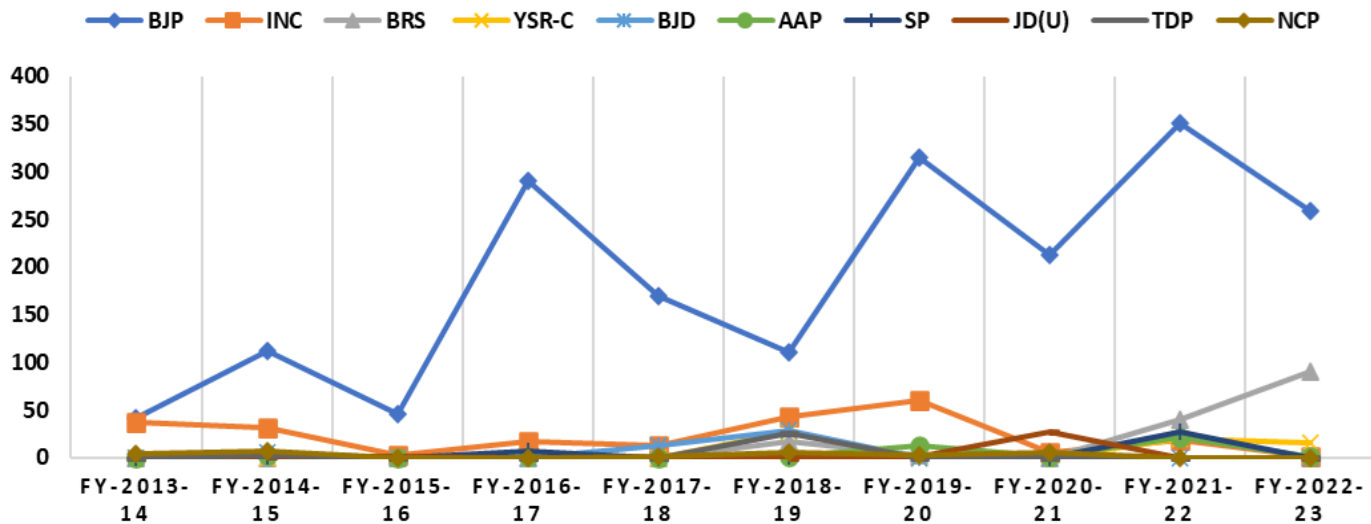
INC – INR 6,526 M (12%)

CPI (M) – INR 316.8 M (0.58%)

AAP – INR 112.6 M (0.21%)

Top sectors: Manufacturing, Mining, Real Estate, Oil & Power, Construction etc

DONATIONS FROM ELECTORAL TRUSTS SINCE FY 2013-14



Total:

BJP – INR 19,051 M (72%)

INC – INR 2,260.2 M (8.5%)

(26 Electoral Trusts)

Prudent E.T.: INR 22,548 M

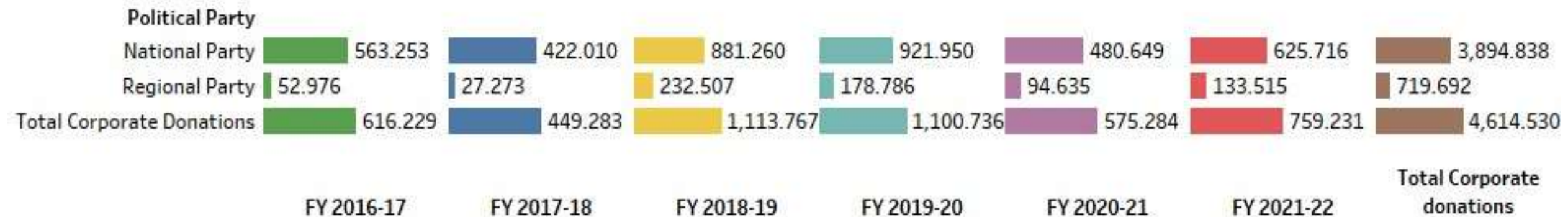
AB General E.T.: INR 990.5 M

Political Finance regime in India – Issues and Challenges

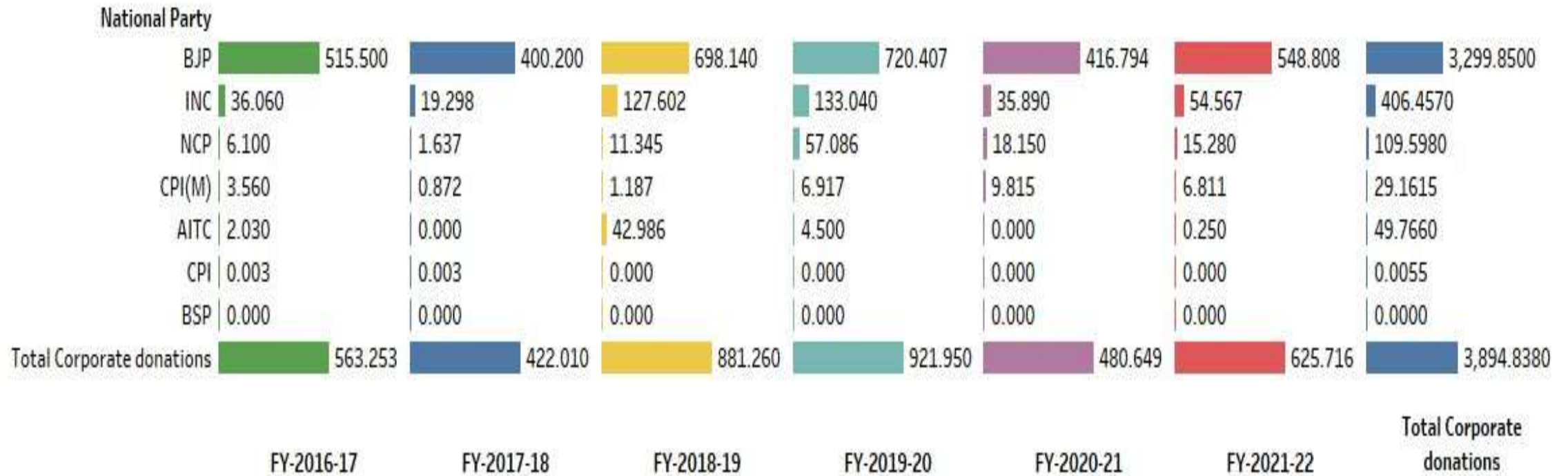
Unlimited Corporate Donations

- No limit on corporate donations to political parties (earlier limit of 7.5% removed after amendment to Section 182 of Companies Act 2013 in 2017).
- No requirement for corporates to report political contributions in profit and loss accounts.
- Between FY 2016-17 and 2021-22, the total direct corporate donations declared by **National parties** was **Rs 3,894.838 cr** while **Regional parties** declared **Rs 719.692 cr**.
- The direct corporate donations declared by **7 National parties** are **more than five times** the **corporate donations** declared by **31 Regional Parties** during the six-year period.
- National parties declared the highest direct corporate donations in the **FY 2019-20** and Regional parties received the highest corporate donations in the **FY 2018-19**.

Total Corporate Donations declared by Recognised Political Parties, FY 2016-17 to FY 2021-22 (In Rs Cr)

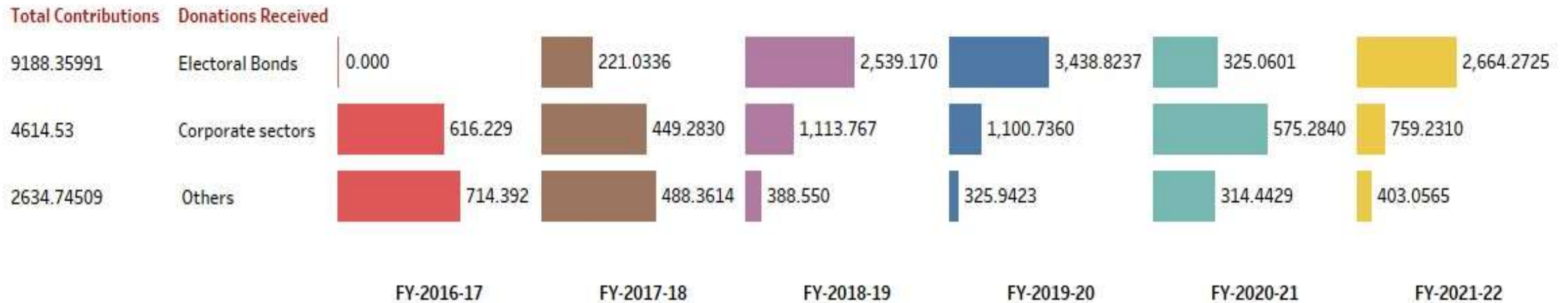


Year-wise corporate donations declared by National Political Parties, FY 2016-17 to 2021-22 (in Rs Cr)



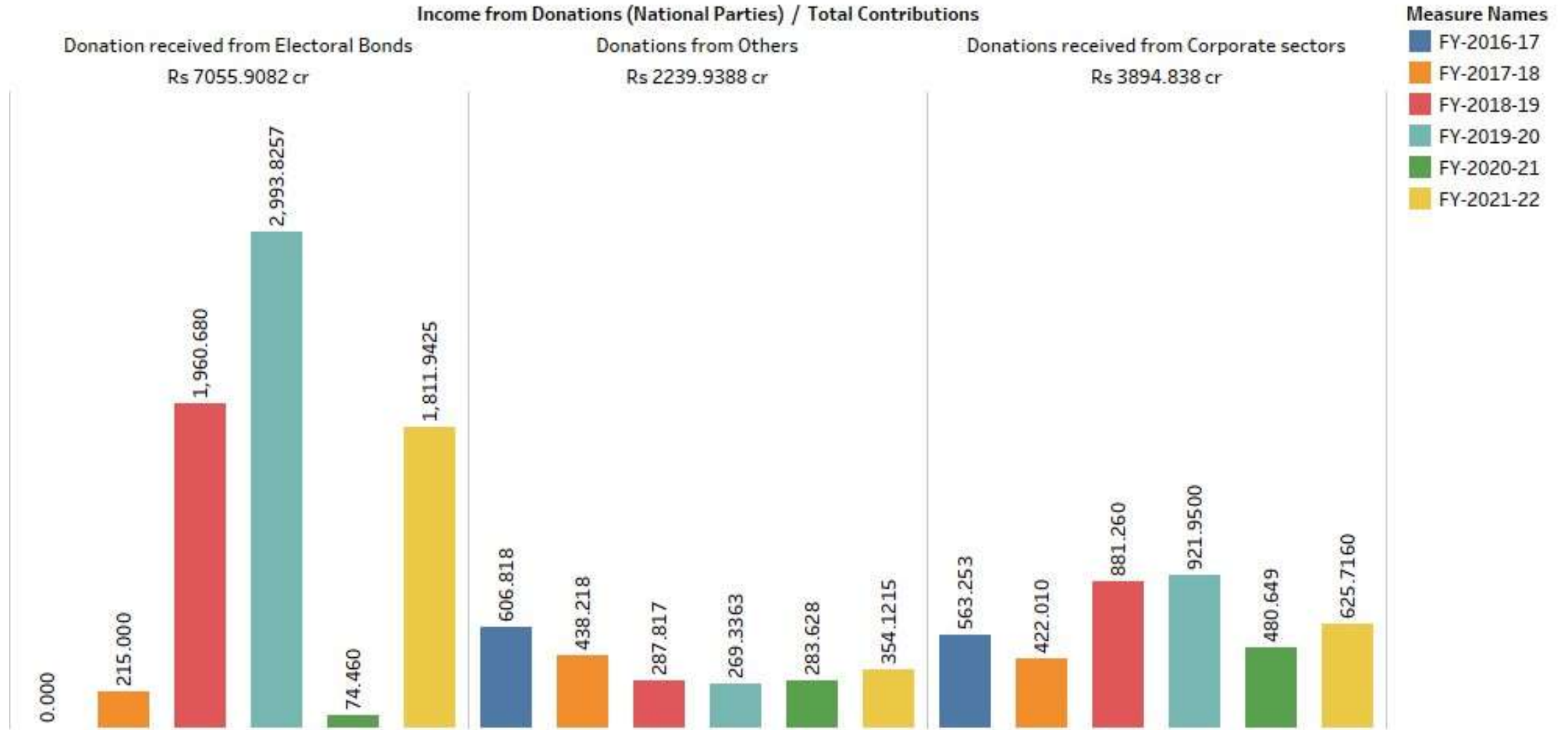
- For every year between FY 2016-17 and 2021-22, **maximum direct corporate donations** have been declared by **BJP** followed by **INC** and **NCP**. **BJP** declared **84.72%** of the total corporate donations from 2016-17 to 2021-22, followed by **INC (10.44%)**.
- Each year, the **corporate donations** declared by **BJP** are **four-five times more than** the total corporate donations of **all other National Parties**. In **FY 2017-18**, it was **more than eighteen times** that of all other National parties.

Donations received from EBs, Corporates and Others, FY 2016-17 to 2021-22 (in Rs Cr)

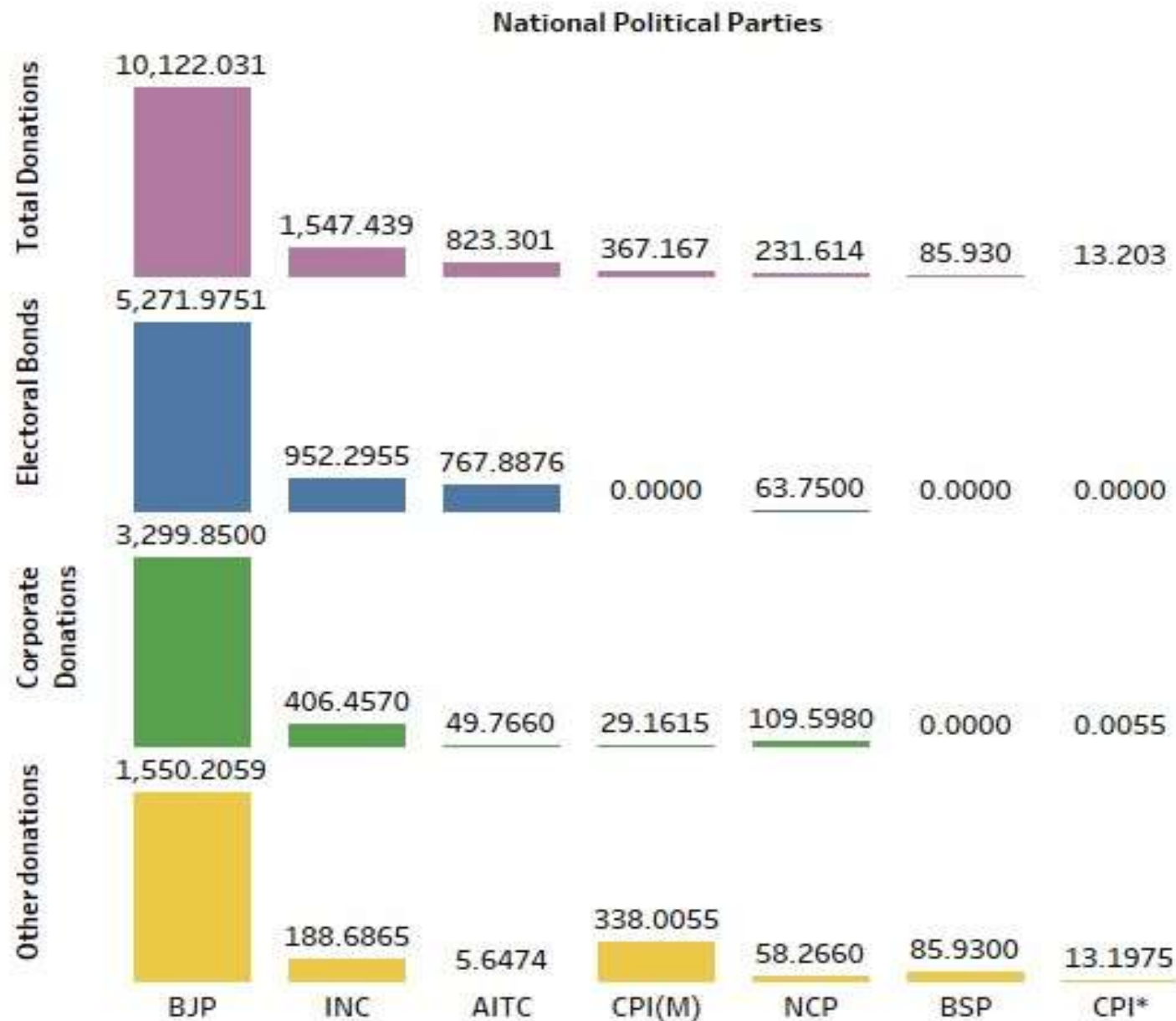


The total **donations** received by the 31 political parties analysed (including 7 National and 24 Regional) during the six-year period was **Rs 16,437.635 cr**. Out of this, donations worth **Rs 9188.35991 cr** were received from **Electoral Bonds** (55.90%), **Rs 4614.53 cr** were received from **corporate sector** (28.07%) and **Rs 2634.74509 cr** were received from **other e total sources** (16.03%).

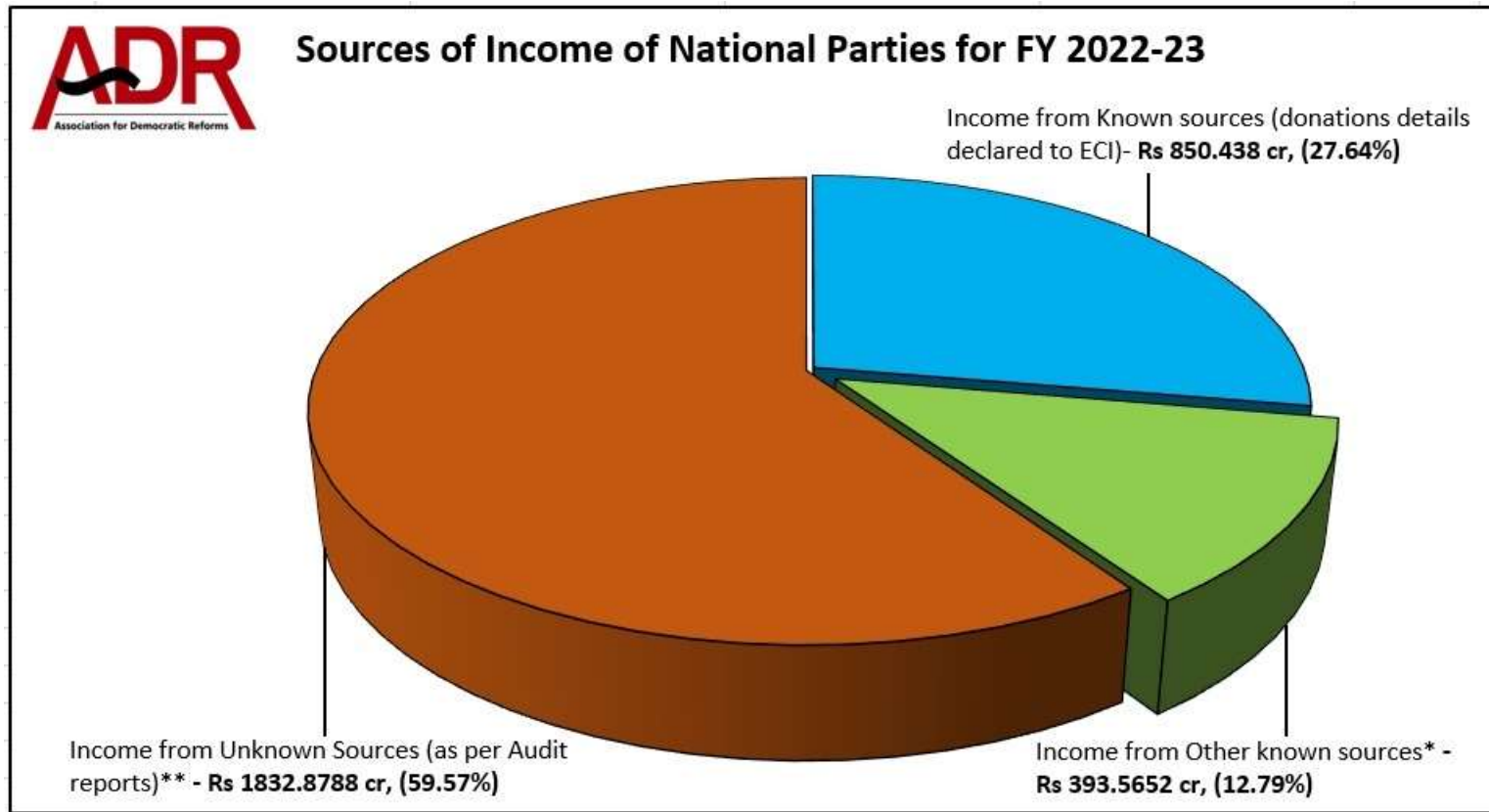
Year-wise donations declared by National Parties (in Rs Cr)



Party-wise share of donations, FY2016-17 to FY 2021-22 (In Rs Cr)



Sources of Funding of National Parties, FY 2022-23



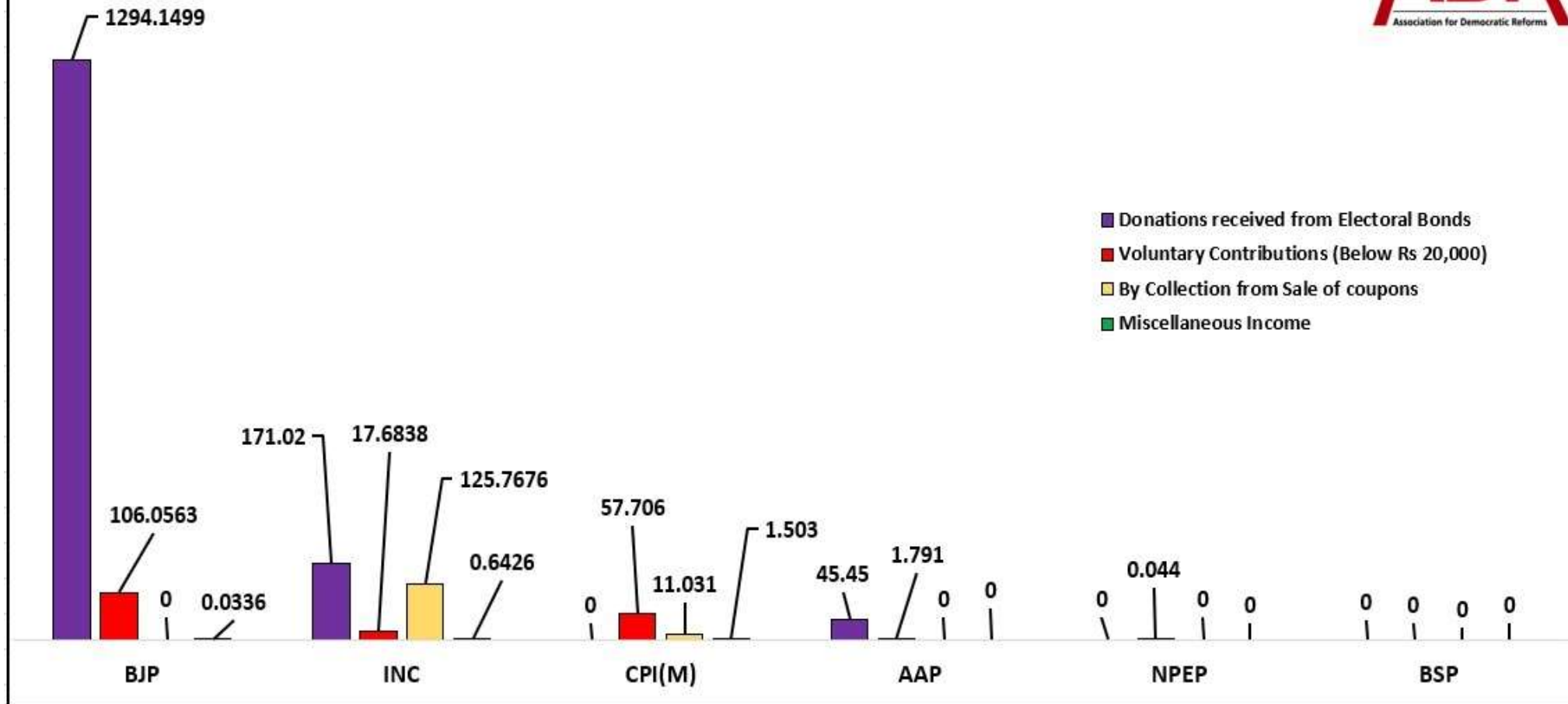
- During FY 2022-23, **BJP** declared **Rs 1400.2398 cr** as income from unknown sources which is **76.396%** of the total income of National Parties from unknown sources (Rs 1832.8788 cr). This income of **BJP** is **Rs 967.6008 cr more** than the aggregate of income from unknown sources declared by the other 5 National Parties (**Rs 432.639 cr**).
- INC declared **Rs 315.114 cr** as income from unknown sources which is **17.192%** of the total income of National Parties from unknown sources.

* include voluntary contributions (< Rs 20,000), donations via Electoral Bonds, collection from Sale of Coupons etc.

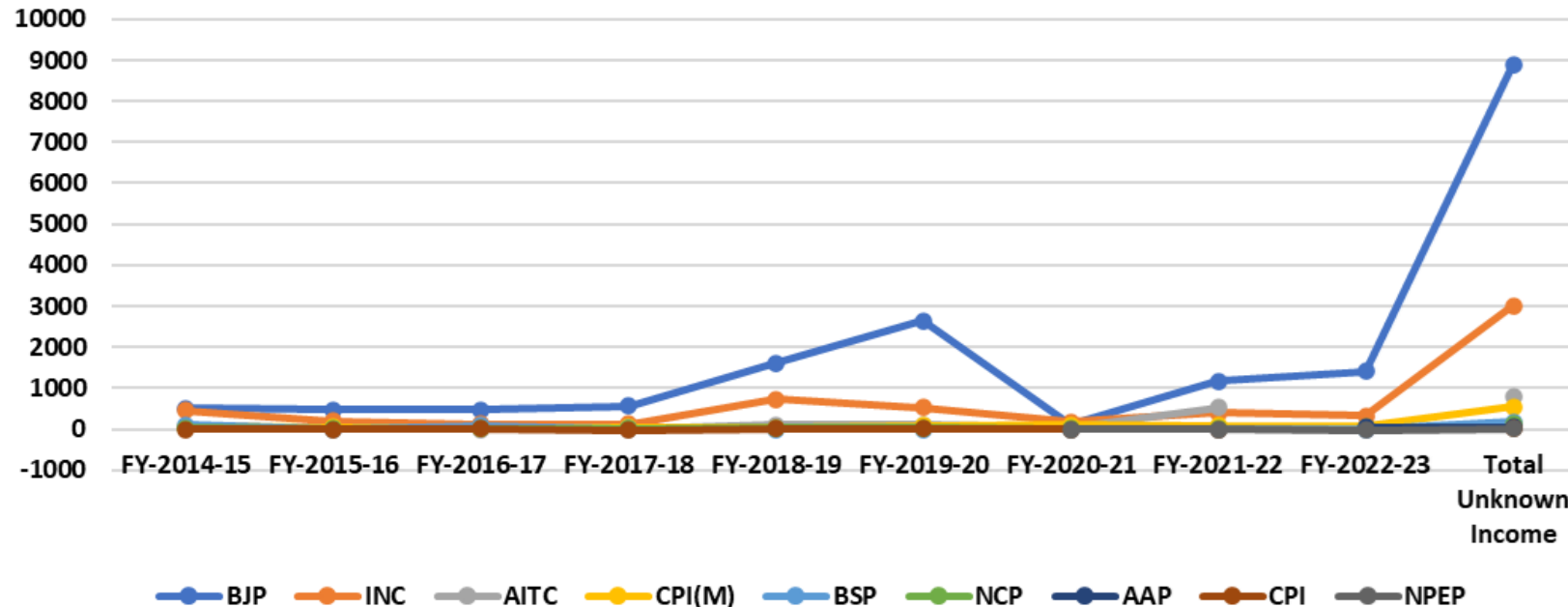
Sources of Funding of National Parties, FY 2022-23

- Between **FY 2004-05** and **2022-23**, the National Parties collected **Rs 19,083.08 cr. from unknown sources**
- Out of **Rs 1832.8788 cr** as income from unknown sources, the share of income from Electoral Bonds was **Rs 1510.6199 cr** or **82.42%**.
- **INC** and **CPI(M)** have declared **Rs 136.7986 cr** combined income from the Sale of Coupons for FY 2022-23.

Unknown sources of Income of National Parties, FY 2022-23 (in Rs Cr)



National Parties' income from Anonymous/Unknown Sources



Total (FY 2014-15 to 2022-23):

BJP – INR 89,008 M (65.39%)

INC – INR 30,149 M (22.15%)

CPI (M) – INR 5,437 M (3.99%)

BSP – INR 1,787 M (1.31%)

AAP – INR 472.4 M (0.34%)

Total (FY 2004-05 to 2013-14):

INC – INR 28,782 M (52.47%)

BJP – INR 16,206 M (29.54%)

CPI (M) – INR 4,110 M (7.49%)

BSP – INR 3,559 M (6.48%)

AAP – NA

Anonymous/Unknown Sources: Contributions below INR 20,000

including 'sale of coupons', 'relief fund', 'miscellaneous income', 'voluntary contributions', 'contribution from meetings/morchas' etc. and 'donations via Electoral Bonds (now prohibited)'.

BSP declared non-receipt of any donations above INR 20,000 for the past 17 years; non-disclosure of political contributions exceeding this amount.

Donor details of funds collected during elections are not known

Weak Compliance & Accountability

- Nearly all forms of organized activity are regulated by proper laws. However, the word “political party” is rarely used in the Constitution, and there is **no comprehensive law for political parties**.
- None of the six political parties have complied with the CIC’s 2013 order.** The commission issued show-cause notices to the political parties for non-compliance, hearings on November 21, 2014 and consequently on the 7th of January, 2015, but all the parties were conspicuously absent from both the hearings.
- Political parties regularly delay/default on the submission of their annual audit accounts/contributions reports.** While law recommends suspension of tax relief of parties in such cases, however, not a single case can be cited where a parties’ tax relief was withdrawn.

S. No.	Party Name	No. of times submission delayed to ECI (FY 2013-14 to 2022-23)
		Annual Audit Report
1	BJP	9
2	INC	9
3	NCP	9
4	CPI	8
5	CPM	2
6	AITC	2
7	BSP	2

- For FY 2022-23, 18 Regional Parties’ Annual Audit reports are not available in public domain.
- From FY 2018-19 to FY 2021-22, National parties declared a total of 3620 donations worth INR 901.5 million without PAN details. 82.40% of such donations (by amount) were declared by BJP, followed by INC (10.32%).
- Despite EC having overarching powers, there are almost no provisions with respect to penalties on defaulters. Once a political party is registered, **EC has no powers to review the registrations** for having violated the undertaking given at the time of registration.

Money Power during General Elections

GE 2024 data

16% ('09) to 31% ('24) crorepati candidates

High campaign expenditure hurts the level-playing field.

0.7% winning chance for non-crorepatis

Electoral politics inaccessible to those deserving but not wealthy

92% BJP & 89% INC candidates were crorepatis (LS'24)

Parties with money guzzling campaigns select self-financing candidates.

19.6% winning chance for crorepatis

Money rather than merit becomes determining factor in election outcomes..

Rs 46.34 cr avg. assets per winner

Access to financial resources, an essential pre-requisite for securing party ticket.

The law under Section 77 of the RPA is **silent on** the subject of **ceiling on expenditure by political parties**.

INDIA
TODAY

Is government sitting on ECI's proposal to fix expenditure limit on political parties?

Our second query linked to the first - If the EC had taken such a proposal/initiative what had been the outcome? In response, the ECI said, "The proposal is pending with the government." efforts have been made to compile the same and this is to inform you that proposal for a ceiling of election expenditure was sent on 09-04-2013 to the Law Commission, a copy was endorsed to

NATIONAL HERALD



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INDIA

BJP spent nearly ₹27000 crores in 2019 Lok Sabha polls, says report

According to a report released by the Centre for Media Studies, the BJP spent nearly ₹27000 crores in the recent Lok Sabha polls, which is about 45 % of the total expenditure

The law on candidates' expenditure limits **only covers** the period between candidates' date of nomination & the date of poll results.

regulation on election expenditure should be amended to extend from the date of notification of the elections to the date of declaration of results, given that many candidates file their nominations only on the last date of filing, to prevent the application of section 77 limiting their expenses. Campaigning commences before or at least once the ECI announces the date of elections, and the filing of nominations is often viewed only as a formality.

DECCAN
Chronicle

NATION, POLITICS

Nellore: Candidates rush to file nomination on last day

DECCAN CHRONICLE.

Published Mar 26, 2019, 2:43 am IST

Updated Mar 26, 2019, 2:43 am IST

THE HINDU

VISAKHAPATNAM

Candidates file nomination papers amid fanfare

Issues & Challenges

Under-reporting of election expenses, says Law Commission and former CEC Nasim Zaidi – winners report only 40-80% of their expenses to ECI

2.27.6 Therefore, there is clearly under reporting of election expenditure and opacity of political contribution. Part of the explanation lies in the lacunae in the law, and part in black money and poor enforcement. To this, we now turn.

hindustantimes

Candidates may not reveal actual expense: Poll experts

With politicians, who contested the February 15 assembly poll, getting busy in calculating their poll expenditure for submitting before the election commission, experts on Tuesday warned that the candidates might not reveal the actual amount spent

Only 2/464 MPs
exceeded exp. limit in Lok
Sabha elections 2019, as
per ADR Analysis

Weak disclosure norms – delayed submission of election expenditure reports by candidates. Several parties default each year in submission of their annual reports to ECI. No clarity about actions taken against non-compliance

Crony Capitalism: As campaign costs grows, the **nexus between politicians and big business houses** starts to become stronger.

Character of election support determines who most easily interacts with elected officials, as well as the policy priorities of those in office.

Proliferation of parties: No. of registered political parties increased nearly four times since 2004. From 753 parties in 2004, it spiked to 2,359 in 2019 and it further rose to 2,830 in 2024.

Quality of governance is compromised: Undue influence of money dissuades good people from joining both politics causing implications for public policy.

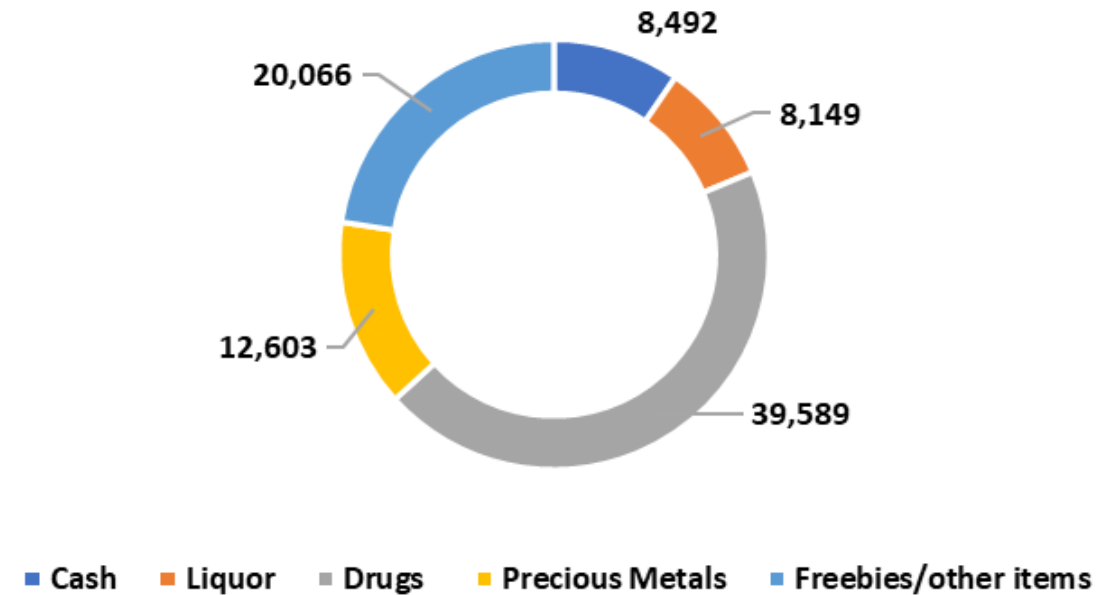
ELECTION TIME SEIZURES

Crossed INR 90 billion mid-way

- Money power and inducements (vote-buying) in the GE 2024 resulted in staggering seizures worth **INR 88,890 M (\$1,063.71 M)** between March 1 to May 18, 2024
- Narcotics amount to 45% of seizures
- Highest seizures in Gujarat, followed by Rajasthan and Punjab
- **INR 46,500 M** seized even before polling begins: Higher than total seizures in 2019 polls
- Final seizures not disclosed yet. No information on the status of pendency of such cases

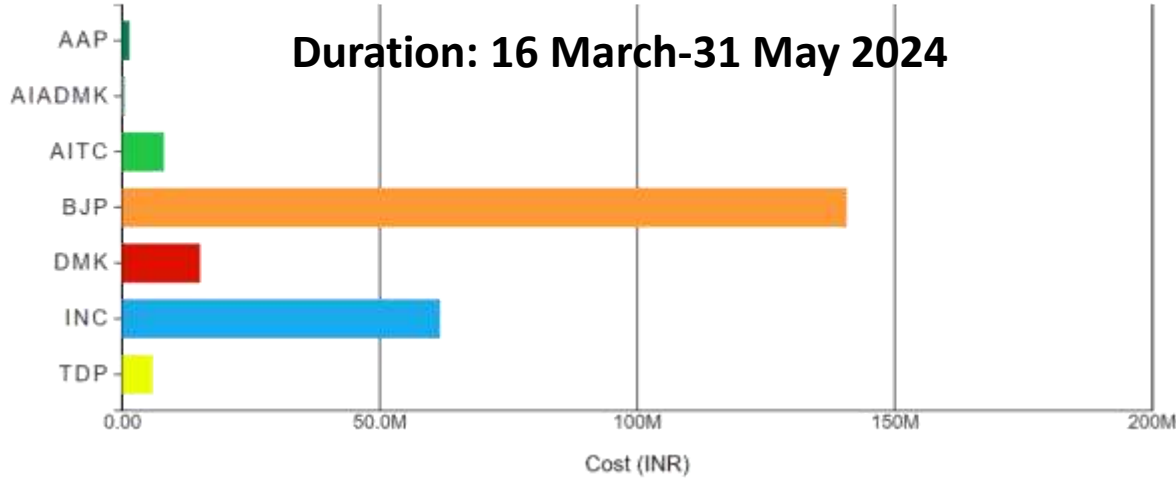
Transparent & fair usage of campaign finance

**Seizure of Prohibited items during GE 2024
(INR Million)**

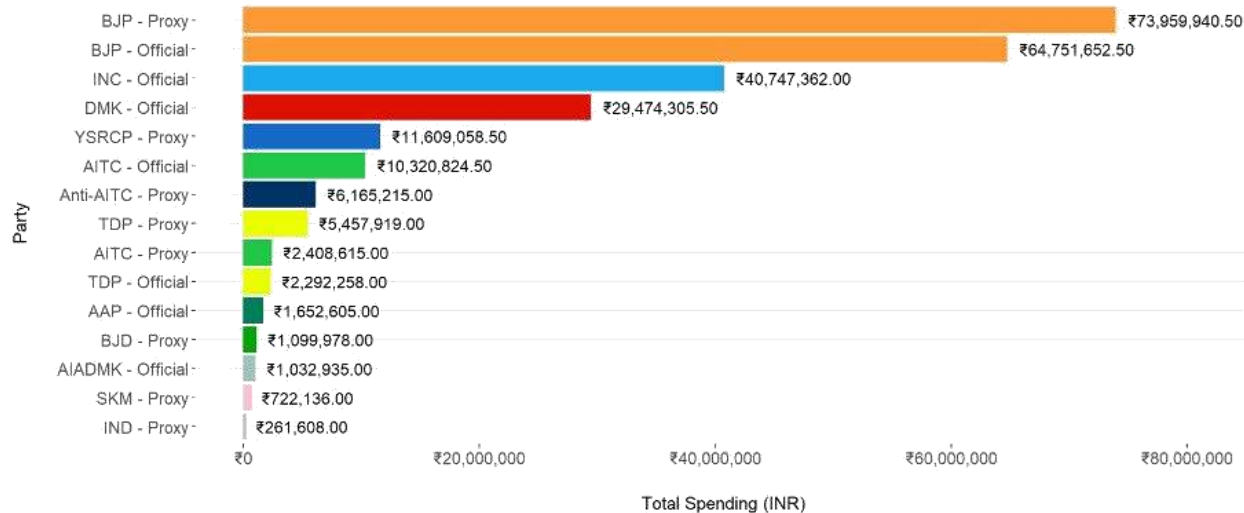


Spending by Party

Duration: 16 March-31 May 2024



Amount of Money Spent Running Ads on Meta 1st March to 22nd April, 2024



Advertiser	Ad spend ↓
Bharatiya Janata Party	₹853M
Indian National Congress	₹453M
Biju Janata Dal	₹193M
POPULUS EMPOWERMENT NETWORK PRIVATE LIMITED	₹147M
Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party	₹125M
Telugu Desam Party	₹60.5M
INDIAN PAC CONSULTING PRIVATE LIMITED	₹41.8M
Shree Cement Ltd	₹33.3M
Way2News Private Limited	₹32.1M
D B Corp Limited	₹15.3M

BJP – 171,164; INC – 3,798; BJD – 4,776
YSR-C – 1,711; TDP – 1,723

Source: Meta Ad library

Charts: Neyazi, Taberez A, Ozan Kuru, Subhayan Mukerjee. Digital Campaign Asia; Election Campaign Study.

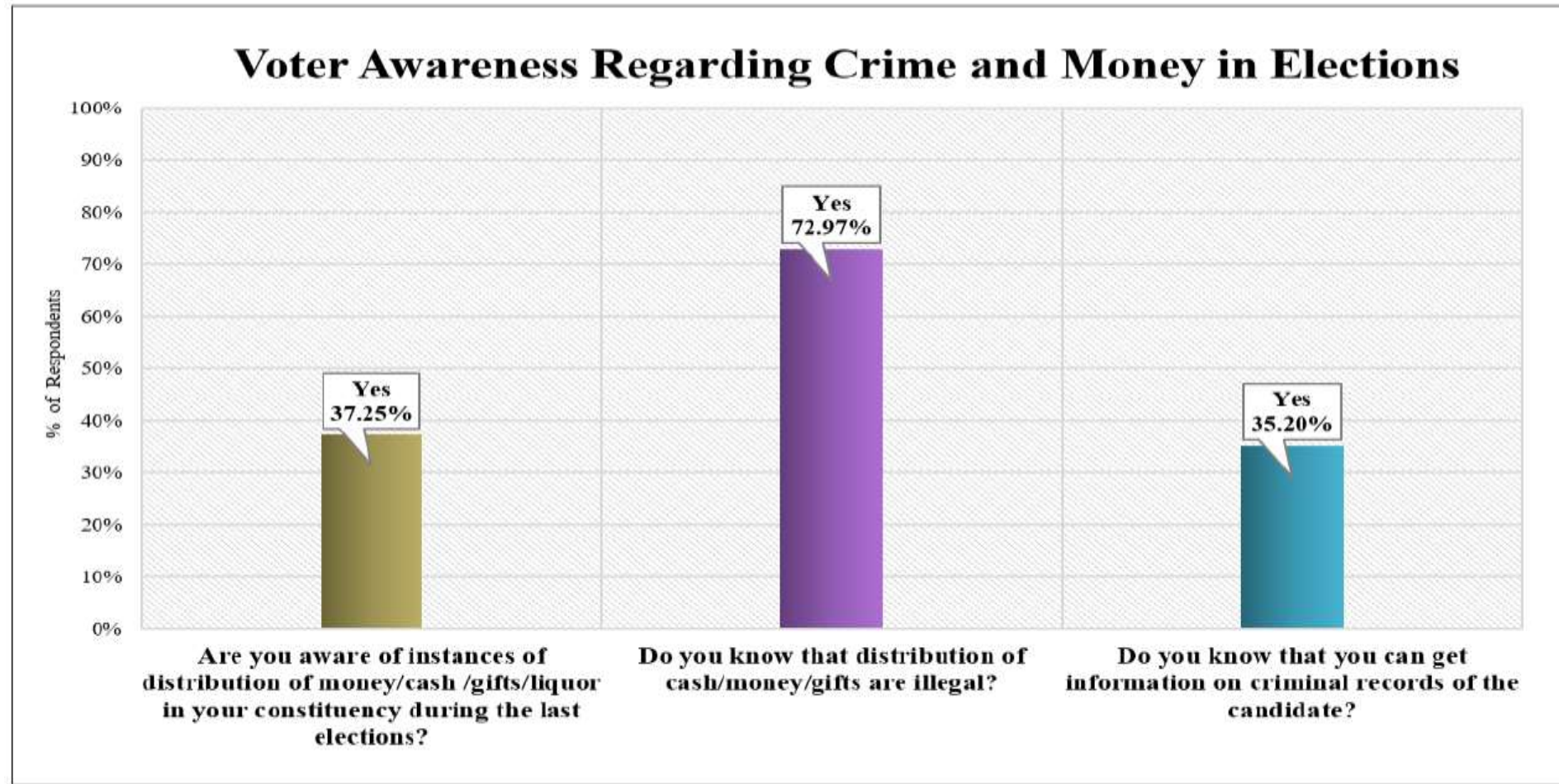
Source: Google Ad library

Electorate's Trust/Trust Deficit

- As per media report of 12 April 2024, recent pre-poll survey of CSDS-Lokniti, found that the extent of peoples trust in the ECI of India has nosedived from 51% in pre poll 2019 to 28 % in pre poll 2024.
- The percentage of survey respondents who trust the ECI to “some extent”, has marginally increased, to 30 per cent from 27 per cent. Sceptics who do not trust ECI much, have also doubled over the last five years, to 14 percent from 7 percent.
- Every fourth voter believes that there is some scope of manipulation in EVMs by the ruling party, while only a sixth of the respondents believe that there is no scope of EVM manipulation at all. The remaining 11 percent believe that there is “not much” likelihood that the ruling party can manipulate EVMs.
- Common voter is not really concerned about the funding of and expenditure by politicians /political parties.
- Elections have become transactional, the common voter looks forward to freebies, cash transfers by the party in power etc. unmindful of the source of the doles and what effect it has on the state economy.

Electorate's Trust/Trust Deficit

- The CSOs, academics and others who analyze the political funding/ expenditure realize the enormity of the problem.
- The real elephant in the room is the undeclared campaign expenditure by candidates and political parties. The candidate's election expenditure limit is mostly breached by all. The actual expenditure runs into many crores of rupees (cash, black money).
- The growing acceptability of politicians with criminal antecedents is a dangerous phenomenon that undermines the quality of our democracy as crime and money, rather than merit/performance drive electoral choices.
- A candidate facing criminal charges had a 15.5 percent chance of winning the 2019 Lok Sabha elections against a 4.7 percent chance for a clean candidate.
- A candidate facing criminal charges had a 15% chance of winning the 2024 Lok Sabha elections against a 4.4% chance for a clean candidate.
- In the 18th Lok Sabha, 2019, 46% (251) of elected MPs had declared criminal cases against them (an increase of 44% since 2009).



Graph 103: Voter Awareness Regarding Crime & Money in Elections

Contrary to popular notion, **voters are not only informed of politicians' criminal backgrounds but willingly vote for such candidates.** Around **35.89%** people in India said that they will ignore the criminal record of their candidates because they feel such candidates have done “good work”.

Road Ahead to strengthen India's Democracy

- Having seen where India stands on various parameters earlier that help us gauge the health of a democracy, it is important to ponder on the way forward.
- To realize the vision of India becoming an economically developed country by 2047, democracy has to be strengthened, the standard of living of the common man has to improve, and inequalities of income and corruption have to be removed.
- For this to happen the political system needs urgent reform. Political funding is the fountainhead of corruption. Political parties have to be transparent and accountable to the public.
- All political parties should be mandatorily subjected to disclosing for public scrutiny complete details about their income, expenditure, donations and funding received by them, irrespective of the amount donated and full details of donors making donations to them.
- Several lawbreakers become lawmakers. Governance will not improve merely with cleaner candidates and representatives. A lot more needs to be done. Political party reforms and greater voter awareness are a must.
- Civil society plays an important role in this regard. Several organizations are working in India towards a more vibrant and stronger democracy.
- **ADR's role:** building awareness and mobilising/empowering citizens about informed voting, training citizens for public engagement, advocacy for policy design and implementation, facilitating independent and inclusive journalism, and last but not least, using the Right to Information (RTI) as a tool to hold the public authorities accountable by getting information

What ails our Electoral System?

Entry Barriers	Lack of level-playing field	Undue influence of big donors	Lack of adequate disclosure & unfair usage of political finance	Lack of trust in institutional framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money and Muscle Power reign supreme – winnability (C7 disclosures) • Low female candidate representation • Skewed process of nomination – instances of withdrawal under pressure/rejection of nominations • Absence of inner-party democracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequitable access to funds/resources by political parties • Political finance framework favouring major/incumbent parties • Digital media/election campaign expenditure by parties • Role of big money in splitting opposition parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unchecked and unlimited corporate donations in absence of stringent oversight • Representation of the interests of a specific sectional group – award of licenses and contracts • Dilution of principle of one person one vote & right to equal political participation • Right to privacy of corporate donor >>> citizen's right to information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legalizing anonymous donations • Absence of disclosures below INR 20,000 • Underreporting of expenses, incorrect, incomplete disclosures without any major action taken against parties • Political finance & instances of quid pro quo • Vote buying – highest seizure of prohibited items in GE 2024 • Promises of freebies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective oversight and monitoring mechanisms • Lack of enforcement/implementation of regulations • Declining trust in the ECI/electoral machinery – impacts electoral integrity • Low voter turnout

Suggested Reforms

Transparency & Disclosure

- Bring **political parties under RTI**, 2005 in compliance with CIC's 2013 order.
- **Abolish cash donations** altogether.
- Disclose names, addresses, and PAN details of donors and donation amount even for contributions less than Rs 20,000.
- **Status of submission** of reports by political parties should be made available on the ECI website.

Ensuring Compliance & Accountability

- Requirement of a **law regulating political parties**, party constitution, organization, internal elections, candidate selection etc.
- **Penalty (fine) for non-compliance = de-recognition** in extreme cases while penalty for filing false information should be up to a maximum of fifty-lakh rupees (Law Commission report).

Empowering the ECI

- **Power to ECI to de-register political parties** and/or impose strict penalties in case of non-compliance, violated the Constitution or breached the undertaking given to ECI at time of registration.
- Political parties **inactive over a prolonged period, do not take part in any election should be de-listed by the ECI** from time to time.
- **ECI transparency guidelines** need to be given **statutory backing**.
- **Scrutiny of financial documents** submitted by parties to be conducted annually by a body approved by CAG and ECI.

Reducing the role of criminality in elections

- Any person against whom charges have been framed by a Court of Law of offences punishable for two years or more should not be allowed to contest elections. **Any candidate charged with serious charges** like murder, attempt to murder, rape, kidnapping, extortion, etc. **should be banned from contesting any elections.**
- Stricter enforcement of the **SC directions on publication of criminal antecedents** by political parties and contesting candidates.
- Provisions should be made to introduce **inner-party democracy** within the political parties.
- SC in March 2014 directed all subordinate courts to **dispose cases involving legislators within one year**; in case of failure to do so, reasons must be provided to the Chief Justice of the High Court. However, progress on this issue is yet to be assessed.
- Need for **increased role of media, civil society organizations and institutions like ECI** to increase awareness among voters about consequences of electing tainted candidates to power.
- **Political parties must take lead by fielding only clean candidates** and change the discourse among voters about the winnability of such candidates.

Regulating Campaign Expenditure

- **Imposition of ceiling** on candidates' election expenses to the **period before nomination**.
- Reasonable & enforceable **limits** electoral **expenses of political parties**.
- **Monitoring** of and restrictions on expenses by **third party campaigners**.
- Political parties should start **submitting a statement of election expenditure beginning one year before an election** is due for the Parliament or the State Assembly.
- Expenditure **reporting format is strictly and uniformly followed** by all parties to ensure transparency and accountability.
- **Vote-buying & bribery** should be made a **cognizable offence** during elections. There should be penalties extending up to de-registration of party/disqualification of candidates /imprisonment in some cases.
- The EC has proposed for making **paid news an electoral offence** under the Representation of the People Act.
- The **inconsistencies observed between the reporting of Election Observers** (appointed to monitor the expenditure of political parties) and the expenditure accounts declared by the parties themselves **must be made available in the public domain**, on the ECI website.

THANK YOU