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# Who Wins in the Indian Parliament Election? Criminals, Wealthy or Incumbents

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## **Who Wins in the Indian Parliament Election? Criminals, Wealthy or Incumbents**

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**Working Papers Series**

# Who Wins in the Indian Parliament Election? Criminals, Wealthy or Incumbents

Palanigounder Duraisamy

August 2014

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## The text

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## Abstract

The study examines the impact of criminal charges, wealth, incumbency status of the candidates and the party on their chances of winning and vote share in the Indian parliamentary elections 2009 using candidate level information on 8070 contestants from 543 constituencies. The descriptive and econometric analyses of the data reveal that there is a strong association between wealth, criminal charges and incumbency status of the candidates and the electoral outcomes. Wealthy incumbent candidates had higher chances of winning the election and these candidates also seem to be facing criminal charges. The incumbent candidates belonging to the state ruling party had higher chances of winning and increasing their vote share. Though criminal charges depress the chance of winning and vote share, the incumbency effects, particularly the party incumbency, has a bigger effect than criminality and wealth status.

## Keywords

India, election, chance of winning, criminal charges, wealth, incumbent Member of Parliament

## Quels sont les candidats qui gagnent les élections en Inde? Rôles respectifs du casier judiciaire, de la fortune personnelle, et du fait d'être un député sortant

## Résumé

L'analyse porte sur le statut des candidats qui se présentent aux élections en Inde et leur chance de réussite, selon qu'ils ont un casier judiciaire rempli, leur fortune personnelle, et le fait qu'ils soient des candidats sortants. L'étude porte sur l'élection législative nationale de 2009 et s'appuie sur un échantillon de 8070 candidats dans 543 circonscriptions. L'analyse descriptive et économétrique révèle une forte corrélation entre la fortune du candidat, son casier judiciaire et le fait qu'il soit, ou non, sortant. Ceux qui ont le plus de chances d'être élus sont les plus fortunés; ce sont ceux aussi les candidats qui ont eu le plus affaire à la justice. Les candidats sortants qui appartiennent au parti au pouvoir dans l'Etat concerné par l'élection ont également plus de chances de l'emporter. Même si le fait d'être un «criminel» diminue les probabilités de réussite, le fait d'être un candidat sortant est un facteur de réussite plus grand que celui d'avoir un casier judiciaire chargé ou de la fortune.

## Mots-clefs

Inde, élections, criminalité, richesse, réélection, député, Assemblée nationale

## Sommaire

<b>Studies on Incumbency Effect and Other Issues in the Indian Parliamentary Election</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Data and Methodology</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Differences Between Contestants and Winners on Key Characteristics and Their Relationship with Election Outcome: A Descriptive Analysis</b>	<b>8</b>
Criminal Charges Faced by the Contestants and Winners	10
Differences in the Wealth status of the Contestants and Winners	11
Educational Level and the Chances of Winning the 2990 Election	12
<b>Econometric Model and Empirical Results</b>	<b>13</b>
Determinants of the Probability of Winning the Election	14
Determinants of Vote-Share	16
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>17</b>

What determines the outcome of an election? Researchers, media, political parties and people at large have put forth several factors such as good governance, stable government, economic reforms, performance of the economy, anti-incumbency wave, corruption, misrule, regionalism, alliance partners, caste and religion to explain election outcomes at the national or regional level and also at the constituency level. On rare occasions, unexpected outcomes happen due to a national event preceding an election, (e.g. Bangladesh war in 1971, Indira Gandhi's Assassination in 1984 and Rajiv Gandhi's Assassination in 1991<sup>1</sup>), The clear mandate to Congress and its alliance parties (United Progressive Alliance (UPA)-II) in the 2009 parliament (Lok Sabha) election has been attributed to good governance and as a mandate given to continue with the economic reforms process. These conclusions are based on observation, perception and descriptive evidence. To our knowledge, systematic analysis of the results of the 2009 parliamentary elections is lacking. This paper makes an attempt to examine the determinants of election outcomes using the recently available candidate-wise information. The study focuses on the effect of important factors namely incumbency effect (both individual and party), criminal charges against the candidates, wealth or assets owned and education of the candidates on the outcome of the 2009 parliamentary election. The findings will be useful to predict the outcome of the forthcoming parliamentary election in May 2014.

India, the largest democracy in the World, has certain distinctive features not shared by many matured Western Democracies. While there is ample evidence from various country settings that the incumbent contestants have an advantage over their rivals, the non-incumbents, in getting elected in national elections, the evidence for India points to the contrary suggesting that an anti-incumbency wave has prevailed since 1991 (Linden, 2004, Borooah, 2006, Duraisamy, Lemennicier and Khouri, 2011, Uppal 2011). In contrast to these studies, Borooah (2006) shows evidence that there is no anti-incumbency effect

in the case of the Indian National Congress (INC), a major political party in India, in the ten parliamentary elections held during 1967-1999. Ravishankar's (2009) study on the Indian elections held during the period 1977-2005 finds that incumbent members of the parliament from the national ruling parties are 9% less likely to be reelected and incumbent members of legislative assembly from state ruling parties are 14.5% less likely to win compared to incumbents belonging to opposition parties when they contest for reelection. As against the above findings, the election results of the 2009 parliament election indicate that many of the incumbents won. Is this indicative of a reversal in the anti-incumbency trend or were political parties sensitive to the anti-incumbency sentiments of the voters and hence responded by fielding only strong incumbents in the 2009 elections? We investigate the incumbency effects on the election outcomes of the ruling party at the state as well as the individual contestant using candidate level data from the recent election.

The second issue, and also related to the first one, pertains to the adverse effects of criminal charges against the contestants on the chances of winning the elections. There is a steady rising trend of contestants with criminal cases winning an election compared to those with no charges or offences. A preliminary analysis of the affidavits filed by contestants reveals that there has been a 27% increase in the number of elected Members of Parliament (MPs) who have been charged with criminal cases in 2009 compared with those elected in 2004. About 162 newly elected MPs have criminal cases pending against them. These include 76 who have serious charges on various counts under the Indian Penal Code against them. The proportion of candidates with one or more criminal cases registered against them is 14% among those who contested and a striking 30% among the elected members. A detailed analysis of party-wise contestants and winners with a record of criminal charges will shed interesting insights and help come out with valuable suggestions for election reforms.

The third issue investigated in this paper is the role of accumulated wealth on the chances of winning in the parliament election. Out of 543 MPs, more than 300 have declared assets worth more than one crore Indian rupees (approximately € 140,000) and the maximum wealth of an

1. The assassination took place after first phase of polling in 211 of 534 constituencies in May 1991 and the remaining constituencies went to polls after the assassination in June 1991. The congress party did poorly in the pre-assassination constituencies and swept the polls in the post-assassination constituencies.

MP is 1.7 billion rupees (€ 25 million). Further, the wealth of the incumbent MPs has increased several folds during the period 2004–2009.

The last issue examined in the study is the effect of educational level of the candidates on the election outcome. There has been a remarkable increase in the educational levels of our MPs; out of 543 members, 260 are post-graduate, higher or technical degree holders and an additional 157 have undergraduate degrees. Thus, four in five members now have an undergraduate or higher degree. Only about 4% of the MPs are with primary or lower levels of education. The question addressed is: does education enhance the contestant's chances of winning in an election?

The availability of information on the key characteristics of the candidates facilitates us to examine the above mentioned issues. Such information is hardly available for any other country, including the Western mature democracies. In compliance with the Supreme Court of India's directive in 2002, all candidates contesting in elections are required to file an affidavit to the Election Commission of India with details about any criminal cases pending against them and details of the form and value of the assets held and their educational level. The study makes use of the valuable information provided by the candidates in their election affidavits.

The paper proceeds as follows: Incumbency advantage has been an important issue in many countries and been extensively studied. However, the evidence from the previous studies for India is mixed. A brief review of the studies on incumbency and recent works on the electoral victories of persons with criminal record and those in possession of huge assets (crorepathis) is presented in the following section I. The sources of data and key statistics relating to the 2009 Parliamentary election are described in section II. In section III, the difference between contestants and winners in the 2009 parliament election in key characteristics such as age, gender, caste, education, wealth, criminal cases, vote share and margin of victory are examined using descriptive methods to understand the relationship between the election outcome and the factors mentioned above. The study employs the maximum likelihood probit and regression methods to quantitatively assess the impact of incumbency, criminality, wealth and education on the election outcome (chance of winning and vote share). Section IV reports

the model, hypotheses and empirical results. The last section, section V, presents the findings and conclusions of the study and highlights the needed policy changes and electoral reforms.

## **Studies on Incumbency Effect and Other Issues in the Indian Parliamentary Election**

A large number of studies have examined the incumbency advantage in the US House of Representatives elections. Levitt and Wolfram (1997) indicate that 90% of incumbents seeking reelection to the US House of Representatives have been successful. Gelman and King (1990) observed a positive incumbency advantage in the US Congressional elections for most of the years since 1900 and the effect was found to be much larger in the latter half of the twentieth century than it was in the past. Lee (2008) finds the incumbency advantage to be 40–45%. Uppal (2010) reports that incumbents are 30% more likely to win an election in the US state legislatures and gain 5.3% more votes. Heinmuller (2008) shows that incumbency leads to a gain of 1.4–1.7% points in proportional representation vote share in Germany's mixed electoral system. Lemennicier and Katir-Lescieux (2010) show evidence of a significant positive incumbency effect in French National Assembly elections and their results indicate that a 10% increase in the margin of votes in 2002 raised the probability of winning in 2007 by 8.9%.

In an earlier unpublished paper, Linden (2004) examined the incumbent advantage in the Indian parliamentary elections from 1951–1999 using Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) and found that incumbents had about 37% advantage over non-incumbents in the elections held before 1991. This trend was reversed post 1991 when incumbents suffered a 14% disadvantage in comparison with their non-incumbent counterparts. This change has been attributed to a decline in the dominance of the Congress party, emergence of coalition or multi-party rule and an increasing awareness among the electorate. In a recent work, Uppal (2009) studied the incumbency effect in State Assembly elections in India from 1975 to 2003 and found an incumbency disadvantage of 9% in the post 1991 elections. An earlier study by Duraisamy, Lemennicier and Khouri (2011)

on the 2004 and 2009 parliament elections using Regression Discontinuity Design found evidence of an anti-incumbency effect in both the years and a decline in the effect in 2009 elections. In a recent unpublished work, Dutta and Gupta (2012) used regression analysis and found a positive incumbency effect on vote share in the 2009 parliamentary election. However the study is confined to 478 (88% of the total) constituencies in 19 major Indian states. They also show evidence that the share of votes obtained by a candidate increases (decreases) with the candidate's wealth (criminal charges). A major drawback of this study is that increase in the vote share does not always lead to victory in an election. The determinants of the probability of winning an election is more important than the vote share per-se in the First-Past-Post election systems like the one prevailing in India.

Aidt, Golden and Tiwari (2011) examined the impact of criminal charges on the margin of victory using RDD. The study shows evidence that political parties are more likely to field candidates with criminal charges when confronted with greater electoral uncertainty and in parliamentary constituencies where the population exhibits lower levels of literacy. Further, they argue that candidates with criminal record intimidate voters and depress the electoral turnout and the incumbency disadvantage stems largely from the better performance of the criminal candidates. The RDD methodology is a non-parametric approach and it takes into account only the narrowly defined margin of victory in the estimation. The method assumes that the differences in other characteristics of the candidates will be the same at the narrowly defined margin of victory (say 1% or less). This study uses a parametric approach (regression model) which is considered to be a better method when information on control variables is available for estimation.

The present study differs from the earlier works on the determinants of election outcome in the Indian elections. First, the study is based on data from all the constituencies. Second, the effects of criminal charges, wealth, incumbency status and education are examined on the two election outcome indicators namely the probability of winning and vote share and the results are compared. Last, the covariates are modelled based on a parametric approach and the model is estimated by maximum likelihood methods.

## Data and Methodology

The data used in the study are compiled by the author from the publications and websites of the of the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the National Election Watch (NEW), an NGO website, for the General Elections to Lok Sabha (Lower House of the Indian Parliament) for the year 2009. The constituency-wise information on the number of contestants, total number of electorates, number of electorates who voted and whether the constituency is reserved for minorities, that is, Scheduled Castes (SC) or Scheduled Tribes (ST). For each contestant, the name of the candidate, party affiliation, and votes polled are collected from the ECI website (<http://www.eci.gov.in>). The National Election Watch, a national body consisting of more than 1200 NGOs and other citizens led organizations working on electoral reforms, has obtained copies of these affidavits filed by the contestants and consolidated the information on all contestants and posted in their website. The NEW also brought out several volumes containing descriptive information on criminal charges and wealth of the winners and their affiliation to political parties. The website of the NEW provides data on the criminal cases, value of assets and educational level of the contestants in a usable form (<http://www.electionwatch.in>).

The 2009 Parliament election covered 543 electoral constituencies spread over all the Indian States and Union Territories (35). There were totally 8070 contestants from 362 political parties (7 National political parties, 34 State parties and 321 unrecognized parties by the election commission and also from a large number of Independent contestants). Data on education, criminal record and asset information are compiled for all 8070 individuals from the NEW website are matched with the ECI data on contestants and election outcomes. The study uses descriptive analysis supplemented by quantitative methods. The determinants of the chances of winning in an election is modeled as a binary dependent variable model and estimated using by maximum likelihood method and the vote share function is estimated by ordinary least squares method based on the data described above.



## Differences Between Contestants and Winners on Key Characteristics and Their Relationship with Election Outcome: A Descriptive Analysis

The analysis of the data on the contestants and winners reveals certain interesting features of the Indian elections. First let us look at the age distribution of the contestants and winners, given in Figures 1 and 2 respectively. The mean age of contestants is 46 years and of the winners is 53 years. The share of older candidates (61 and above) is just 13% of the contestants while it is 25% among the winners, almost double that for all contestants. Thus the aged candidates have a higher chance of winning the election, perhaps because they have longer experience in politics and as a result have gained popularity which helps them win in the election. There are more women among the winners (11%) compared to contestants (7%). 24% and 7% of the contestants belong to Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribes (ST) community compared to 16% and 10% share of SC and ST community respectively among the winners.

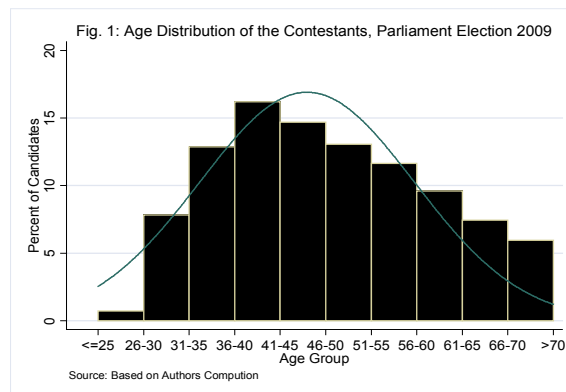


Table 1: Differences in the characteristics of the Contestants and Winners in the Indian Parliamentary Election, 2009

Characteristics	Contestants	Winners
Number of candidates	8070	543
Age (years)		
Mean	46	51
Median	45	53
% aged above 60	13	25
<b>Gender</b> (% of Women)	6.9	10.7
Caste (%)		
General	69.4	74.4
SC	23.6	16.2
ST	7.0	9.6

Source: Author’s Computation.

The distribution and summary statistics of vote share of the contestants and winners are given in Table 2. In the Indian election, the entry cost is very low and hence a large number of candidates enter the fray. Out of 8070 candidates, 6411 secured less than 5% of the total votes polled in their constituency. They are not serious contenders and file their nomination papers for various reasons. Some of them are ‘spoilers’ who spoil the chances of the party candidate since they were themselves unable to get the party nomination, some are dummy candidates who will step in as party candidate if the party nominee’s nomination papers are rejected by the ECI. The distribution of vote share of the winners show that about one-half of the total MPs won the election with votes ranging from 40-50% of the total votes of the constituency while their minimum and maximum vote share are 21% and 78% respectively. The mean and median vote shares of the candidates are 44 and 45% and hence distribution of vote share of the winners is close to normal distribution (see Fig, 3).

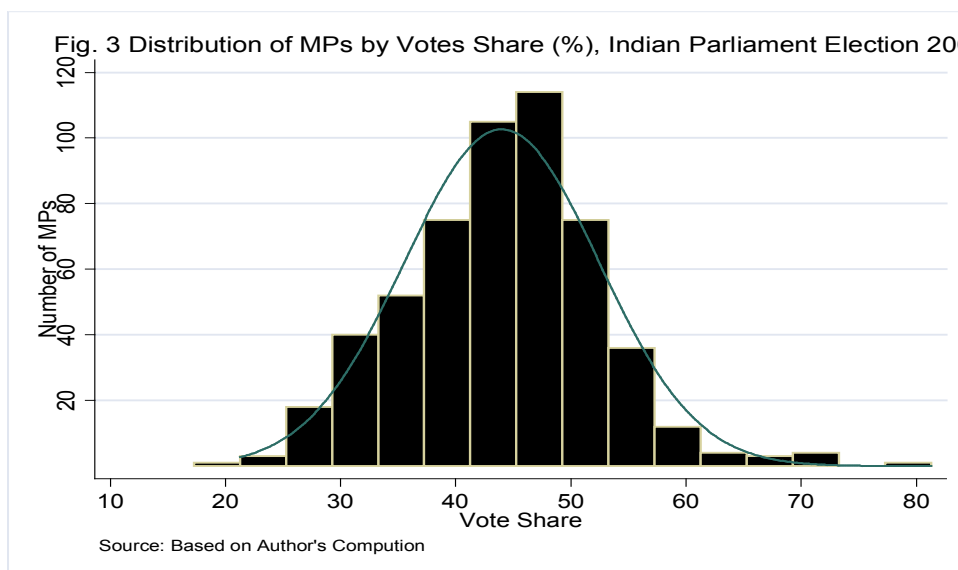
Table 2: Distribution of Vote Share of Contestants and Winners, 2009 Election

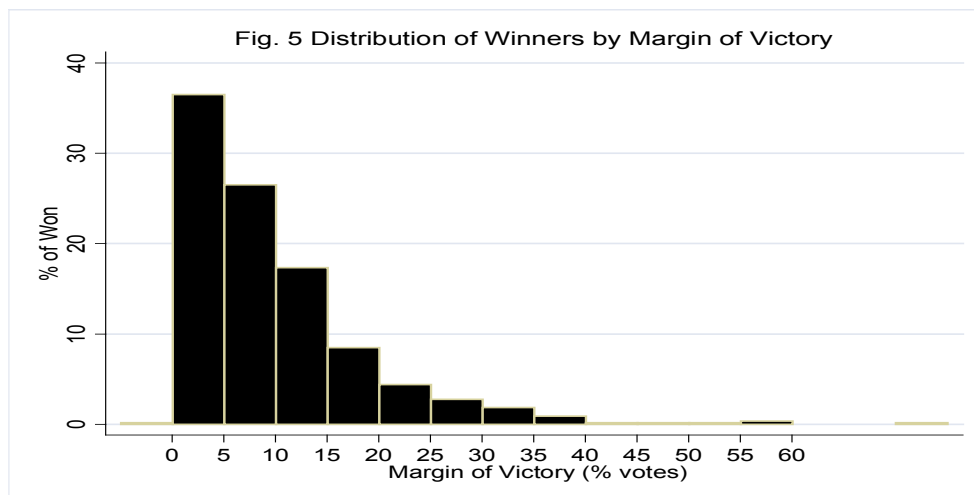
Vote Share (%)	Contestants			Winners		
	# of Candidates	%	Cumulative %	# of Candidates	%	Cumulative %
<b>Distribution</b>						
0-1	5,146	63.8	63.8			
1-2	794	9.8	73.6			
2-5	471	5.8	79.4			
5-10	221	2.7	82.1			
10-20	272	3.5	85.6			
20-30	278	3.4	89.0	29	5.34	5.3
30-40	372	4.6	93.6	138	25.4	30.8
40-50	396	4.9	98.5	256	47.2	77.9
>50	120	1.5	100.0	120	22.1	100
All	8,070	100		543	100	
Summary Statistics						
Average		6.7			44.0	
Median		0.55			44.6	
Minimum		0.016			21.3	
Maximum		78.8			78.8	

Source: Based on Author’s computation.

A majority of the candidates in Indian election win with a narrow margin of victory. The distribution of the margin of victory is shown Figure 4. As we notice, 38% of the candidates won with

a narrow margin of less than 5% while another 28% won with a margin of victory ranging from 6-10%.





### Criminal Charges Faced by the Contestants and Winners

Do Indian voters have any choice between a candidate with no criminal charges and one with criminal cases in their constituencies? Table 3 provides details of the distribution of constituencies based on the candidates with criminal records and the winners without any criminal cases. Out of 543 constituencies for which elections were held, only in 93 constituencies (17%), no candidate had any criminal charges. Thus candidates with criminal record contested in 83% of

the constituencies (450) which is quite alarming. It is amply evident from the data shown in the table that as the number of contestants with criminal charges increases, people’s choice between a non-criminal candidate and a criminal candidate reduces and the chances that a winner is one with no criminal charges against him/her declines. Thus the more the number of candidates with criminal records in the fray, higher their chances of entering the parliament.

Why do political parties choose candidates with criminal records over a clean candidate? The

Table 3: Criminal Charges and the Chances of Winning in 2009 Election

# of candidates with criminal charges	# of constituency	Candidates with no criminal charges won	
		Number	%
1	150	125	83%
2	104	70	67%
3	85	50	59%
4	55	23	42%
5	33	12	36%
6+	23	8	35%
One or more criminal charges	450	288	64%
No criminal charges	93	93	100%
All	543	381	72%

Source: Based on Author’s computation.

argument in favor of criminal candidates is that the criminal charges against a politician need not be taken seriously as these were framed by opposition party due to animosity or revenge. The criminal cases may be due to the activities in support of their own party and not due to any personal activities. The party may want to reward them. Only in certain cases the criminal cases may be in the course of the act to strengthen their own trade or business. In such cases, they may be wealthy and can spend more money to win the election. Dutta and Gupta (2012) argue that candidates who face the threat of conviction are keen to contest.

Table 4 shows the number of MPs with criminal cases and serious criminal cases in 2004 and 2009. The number of MPs with criminal cases has increased from 128 to 162, that is, 27% over the last two elections. The current Lok Sabha has more MPs facing serious criminal cases (31%) than the earlier one.

**Table 4: MPs with Criminal Charges: Change over Time, 2004 and 2009**

	2004	2009	Change
MPs with Criminal Cases	128	162	26.6%
MPs with serious criminal cases	58	76	31.0%

Source: Based on author's computation.

Tables 5 and 6 give the party-wise and state-wise number of MPs with criminal charges. Among the two major parties, the Bharathiya Janatha Party (BJP) has the largest number of MPs (38%) with criminal charges against them followed by the Indian National Congress (INC) (21%). Among the State level parties, the Samajwadi party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) have respectively 36% and 28% of MPs with criminal charges against them.

Among the States, a large number of MPs with criminal cases are in UP, Maharashtra, Bihar, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu and of these states; Maharashtra and Gujarat have about 50% of the elected members of the parliament with criminal charges.

**Table 5: Party-wise MPs Criminal Charges, 2009 Election**

Party	Total MPs	Criminal Charges	% of MPs with Criminal Charges
BJP	116	44	38
INC	206	44	21
SP	22	08	36
BSP	21	06	28
Others	178	60	34
Total	543	162	30

Source: Author's computation

**Table 6: State-wise MPs with Criminal Charges, 2009 Election**

State	Total MPs	MPs with Criminal Cases	% of MPs with Criminal Cases
UP	85	31	36
Maharashtra	48	23	48
Bihar	54	17	31
Gujarat	26	11	42
Andhra Pradesh	42	11	26
West Bengal	42	07	17
Tamil Nadu	39	07	18
Other States & UTs	207	75	36
Total	543	162	30

Source: Author's computation

### Differences in the Wealth status of the Contestants and Winners

The change in the value of the assets owned by the incumbent MPs in 2009 is given in table 7. As we notice, the wealth of MPs has increased by more than 100% and that of the incumbent MPs increased by 300%.

The distribution of assets of the winners in the 2009 election is given in table 8. The chances of winning increased from 6% to 33% as the value of assets increased from less than one million to more than 500 million Indian rupees. Thus there is a strong positive association between the value of assets owned and the chances of winning the election.

**Table 7: Average Value of Assets of MPs (above Rs. 10 million): Change Over Time, 2004 and 2009**

	2004	2009	Change
# of MPs with value of assets greater than Rupees 10 million	156	315	102 %
Average value of assets (Rupees In million Rupees) of MPs	18.6	53.3	186 %
Average value of assets of Re-contesting MPs (Rupees in million)	19.2	48.0	289 %

Source: Author's computation

**Table 8: Value of Assets and the Chances of Winning, 2009 Election**

Assets (million rupees)	Contested	Won	% won
500 & above	343	112	32.6
5 - 500	1592	294	18.5
1 - 5	1911	120	6.3
< 1	3964	17	0.4
Data Missing	200	0	0
All	8010	543	

Source: Author's computation

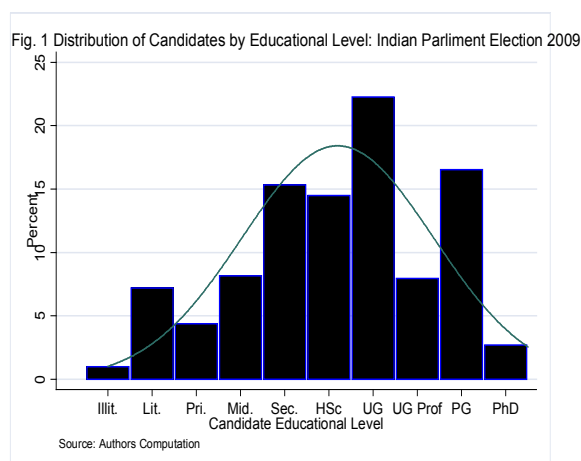
### Educational Level and the Chances of Winning the 2990 Election

The educational level of the contestants and the winners are given to examine whether there is any difference between the two groups (Table 9) in their educational level. Only 1.4% of the contestants who are illiterates won the election as against 11.8% of candidates who were graduates and above. Thus, as the educational level of the contestants increased, the percent of winners also increased.

**Table 9: Education and the Chances of Winning in 2009 Election**

Educational Level	# of contestants	# lost	# won	% won
Illiterate	72	71	1	1.4
Primary	1,518	1,483	35	2.3
Secondary	2,039	1,940	99	4.9
Grad & above	3,341	2,952	389	11.6
Not Given	706	687	19	2.7
Missing	394	394	0	0
Total	8,070	7,527	543	6.7

Source: Based on author's computation



## Econometric Model and Empirical Results

The descriptive analysis in the previous section provides evidence on the positive (negative) association between wealth, education (criminal charges) and the chances of winning the election. However, we need to test the relationship between each of these variables and chances of winning controlling for the effect of other factors.

The election outcome—the chances of winning or alternatively vote share— may be influenced by several factors and can be specified as

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Candidate Incumbency}) + \beta_2 (\text{Party Incumbency}) + \beta_3 C + \beta_4 W + \beta_5 E + \beta_6 Z + \sum_k \lambda_k (\text{Political Party}) + \sum_{lj} \mu_{lj} (\text{State}) + u_i$$

$i = 1, 2, \dots, N$  (Contestants) and  $\beta, \alpha, \lambda$  and  $\mu$  are

the parameters to be estimated.

Where  $Y$  the dependent variable represents election outcome measured as (a) probability of winning (dummy variable takes the value of 1 if the candidate won and 0 otherwise) and (b) share of votes (percent to total votes polled in a constituency) secured by the candidate. The determinants of election outcome and the hypothesis based on past studies, both theoretical and empirical, are discussed below:

**(i) Incumbency status of the candidate:** The incumbency status is measured as a dummy variable taking the value of 1 if the person is an incumbent (sitting MP) and 0 otherwise. A candidate is considered to be an incumbent if he is a sitting MP from the state, not necessarily from the same constituency.<sup>2</sup> Based on the evidence available for many countries, it is hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between incumbency and the chances of winning the next election. The argument is that the incumbents have better resources and are popular among the

voters. However, the available evidence in the Indian context is mixed. While Linden (2004), Ravishankar (2009), Duraisamy et al. (2011) and Uppal (2011) show evidence on the anti-incumbency effect, Borooah (2006) and Gupta and Dutta (2012) found incumbents have an advantage in the parliament election. This needs to be empirically verified.

**(ii) Party incumbency:** A dummy variable takes the value of 1 if the candidate belongs to the party in power at the state and 0 otherwise to capture the party incumbency effect. This variable captures the effect of the performance of the government on the election outcomes. There is no evidence on the effect of party incumbency and in the Indian context anti-incumbency sentiment prevailed prior to 2009 Parliament election. This will enable us to test whether votes were cast for or against the ruling party.

**(iii) Criminal Charges (C):** Alternative measures of criminal charges are used (a) dummy variable indicating whether the candidate is facing any criminal charges or not (b) number of criminal charges and (c) whether the candidate is facing criminal charges for serious offences to test the effects of criminal charges on the two election outcome variables. Criminal charges are expected to create a negative image of the contestant and voters prefer “clean” rather than “criminal” candidates and hence it is expected to have a negative effect on the chances of winning and vote share in the election.

**(iv) Wealth (W):** Information on the value of movable and immovable assets is available. The movable assets are expected to have much stronger effect than the immovable assets as the movable assets are liquid and the contestant can use it to meet the election expenses. The value of wealth is expected to have a positive effect on the election outcome. It has been observed that ‘the misuse of monetary incentives to buy votes has increased sharply since the last elections and continues to be a source of threat to real democracy.’ (Anil Bairwal, Coordinator, NEW, TOI, May 18, 2009)

**(v) Educational Attainment (E):** Education enables individuals to gather information, analyse and take right decisions. It is generally believed that the voters prefer candidates with higher levels of education than those with lower level of education since it is believed that they have the

2. Political parties may change the constituency of the incumbent MPs due to several reasons. For instance, the MP's home constituency may not be available to the party due to seat sharing arrangement between alliance parties. The incumbent MPs are generally well known within the State and hence it is appropriate to treat them as incumbent even if their constituency is changed.

wisdom to understand what is happening within and outside the country. Education is measured as a set of dummy variables for below secondary, secondary and higher secondary and graduate and above to capture each level of education. It is hypothesized that education has a positive effect on the election outcome.

**(vi) Personal Characteristics of the Contestants (Z):** The age and gender of the candidates are also included in the set of exogenous variables. The coefficient of gender (dummy variable) enables us to test whether there is any gender discrimination in choosing the candidates for the national law making body. Certain constituencies are reserved for persons belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) community. A set of dummy variable for SC and ST is also included in the set of explanatory variables. The effects of the two caste dummy variables are not statistically significant in any of the specification of the two election outcome model and hence dropped in the final analysis.

**(vii) Political Party Affiliation:** A set of dummy variables representing the alliance fronts: UPA, NDS, Left, Other Regional political parties (Third Front) and Independent candidates are included to capture the effect of party affiliation on the election outcome. This variable controls the party specific fixed effect and also enables us to infer the effect of party affiliation on the election outcome.

**(viii) State Dummies:** State specific economic (growth rate, unemployment, price raise etc.), social (communal harmony, caste and religious factors) and ideological (long tradition of belief in communism, Dravidian movement etc.) factors also influence the election outcome. It is not possible to include all these due to non-availability of complete information and due to high correlation among the explanatory variable and hence I include a set of state dummy variables to capture the state fixed effects. The unobserved heterogeneity that persists overtime within a state is expected to capture by the state fixed effects.

The probability of winning equation is estimated by maximum likelihood probit method and the vote share model is estimated by ordinary least squares method.

## Determinants of the Probability of Winning the Election

The maximum likelihood probit estimates of the determinants of the probability of winning the 2009 parliamentary elections are given in table 8. The marginal effects based on the probit estimates are computed and presented for easy interpretation. There are a large number of candidates in the fray and in order to study the effects of the variables within these contestants, the analysis is restricted to candidates who have secured at least 5% of the total votes in their constituency. Three specifications of the model are estimated to study the stability of the effects of the key determinants of the election outcome. All specifications of the model control for state fixed effects.<sup>3</sup>

In the first specification of the model, the personal characteristics of the candidates along with wealth and criminal charges are included. The results suggest that every additional year of age increases the chances of winning by 0.2% while being a women candidate reduces the chances of winning by 10%. Does this imply that there is discrimination against women candidates by the voters? It is true only if the effect persists after controlling for other factors such as incumbency.

The effect of the two dummy variables for secondary and graduate & above levels of education is positive and statistically significant at 5% levels, The contestants with secondary and graduate & above levels of education have 10% and 7% respectively higher chances of winning than those with lower levels of education.

Among the two variables capturing the effect of wealth, an only movable asset exerts a statistically significant effect at 1% level. Every additional one crore rupee of movable wealth of the candidate increases his/her chances of winning by 0.05%. The effect of criminal charges measured as a dummy variable representing serious cases against the candidate is negative and also statistically significant at 5% level. The results suggest that the candidates charged with serious criminal cases are 1.2% less likely to win the election.

The specification 2 of the model includes two incumbency (candidate and state) variables. The results are quite interesting. The candidate

3. The state fixed effects are not individually statistically significant but jointly (likelihood ratio test) significant at 5 % level. The estimates are not presented in the table but can be obtained from the author.

incumbency effect and the state party incumbency effect are positive and statistically significant at 1% level. The results suggest that being an incumbent candidate improves the chances of victory by 10% while being a state ruling party candidate increases the chances of winning by 30%. The effect of criminal charges turns out to be insignificant which indicates that there is no strong association between criminal charges against candidates and their incumbency status.

The last specification of the model includes the dummy variables representing national alliance party affiliation of the candidates. The results suggest that being a candidate of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) party increases the chances of winning by 32% compared to other regional parties (Third Front parties), whereas

the candidates of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) party have only 15% more chances of the winning the election compared to the reference group party. It should be noted that the negative effect of sex of the candidate, that is, disadvantage of women candidates when we control for party affiliation, is smaller which implies that party rather than gender assumes importance in winning the election. The statistically insignificant effect of gender of a candidate when all the other characteristics are controlled for suggests that there is no discrimination against women candidates in getting elected to the national legislature. The effect of movable wealth turns out to be insignificant which suggests that political parties choose wealthy candidates and hence the wealth effect is captured by the party effect.

**Table 10: Probit Estimates: Probability of Winning in the Indian Parliamentary Election, 2009**  
Dependent variable: Election outcome (Won=1, Lost = 0)

Explanatory Variable	$\partial y/\partial x$	't' value	$\partial y/\partial x$	't' value	$\partial y/\partial x$	't' value
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	0.00183	1.65	0.000906	0.79	0.000342	0.29
Gender (male=1)	-0.0971	-2.24	-0.0985	-2.22	-0.0647	-1.46
Ed. Secondary	0.0970	1.96	0.104	2.04	0.104	2.00
Ed. Graduate & Above	0.0654	2.25	0.0608	2.05	0.0537	1.78
Immovable Assets	-0.00000599	-0.57	-0.00000559	-0.53	-0.00000793	-0.77
Movable Assets	0.0000481	2.98	0.000032	2.03	0.0000229	1.45
# serious crimes	-0.0119	-1.75	-0.00798	-1.19	-0.0028	-0.43
C a n d i d a t e Incumbency			0.0921	3.33	0.0732	2.61
Party incumbency			0.303	11.47	0.3179	11.27
UPA					0.3229	9.29
NDA					0.1526	4.08
Left					-0.0653	-0.98
Independent					0.1347	1.55
State Dummies	Included		Included		Included	
Pseudo R-sq	0.0261		0.0983		0.153	
Log Likelihood Ratio	54.35		205.03		319.89	
# of Obs	1644		1644		1644	

Note: Marginal effects underlying the coefficient of the probit estimates are reported

Source: Author's computation



### Determinants of Vote-Share

The determinants of the other election outcome variable namely, vote share, is estimated for the three specifications used in the above model and the results are reported in table 9. The results in column 1 suggest that age has a positive effect on vote share and every additional year of age increases the vote share by 0.1 and being women reduces the vote share by 2%. The effect of secondary level of education is not statistically significant while candidates with graduate and higher levels of education obtain 3% more votes.

As observed in the case of probability of winning model, only the value of movable assets exert a statistically significant effect (1% level) and every additional one crore rupees in the movable assets increases the vote share by 0.15%.

The dummy variable for criminal charges is not statistically significant even at 10% level. This is perhaps due to high correlation between wealth and criminal charges and hence the effect of criminal charges is partly captured by the wealth variable.

The model is re-estimated with two incumbency variables – candidate and state party –and the results are given in columns 4 and 5. Both the incumbency effects are positive and also statistically significant at 1% level. The incumbent candidate has an advantage of 5% additional vote share compared to non-incumbent and being a candidate of the ruling party of the State, increases the vote share by 12%. Thus the state party incumbency effect is much larger than the incumbency effect of the candidate which implies that the ruling party has a strong influence in enhancing the vote share of their party candidates.

Table 11: Regression Estimates of the determinants of vote share (%), Indian Parliamentary Elections, 2009

Dependent variable: percent of vote secured by the candidate

Explanatory Variable	Coeff.	t'	Coeff.	t'	Coeff.	t'
Age	0.0967	3.01	0.0449	1.51	0.022	0.79
Gender (male=1)	-2.335	-1.9	-2.213	-1.99	-1.297	-1.23
Secondary	2.0898	1.52	2.124	1.71	2.256	1.9
Graduate & Above	3.130	3.74	2.703	3.56	2.303	3.19
Immovable Assets	-0.0000941	-0.48	-0.0000851	-0.48	-0.00016	-0.96
Movable Assets	0.00154	3.52	0.000824	2.07	0.000493	1.3
# serious crimes	-0.0630	-0.4	0.0573	0.41	0.205	1.52
Candidate Incumbency			4.743	6.68	3.835	5.66
Party Incumbency			11.698	17.26	11.138	16.67
UPA					10.119	13.05
NDA					3.592	4.32
Left					4.303	2.65
Independent					-0.253	-0.14
State Dummies	Included		Included		Included	
Constant	37.657	12.7	33.742	12.47	28.028	10.64
Adjusted R-square	0.162		0.316		0.385	
# of observations	1644		1644		1644	

Source: Author's computation

The last specification of the model includes the dummy variables for national party alliance and the estimates are given in columns 6 and 7. The coefficient of the dummy variables for UPA, NDA and Left are all statistically significant at 1% level. The results indicate that being a candidate of UPA increases the vote share by 4% while belonging to the NDA increases vote share by only 5% compared to third front candidates. Being a candidate of the left parties also increases the vote share by 4%. As observed earlier, the effects of gender and wealth on vote share decline when we introduce the party affiliation variable. Perhaps the voters are more concerned about the party affiliation rather than the gender of the candidate and the political parties may choose wealthier candidates.

## Conclusion

The study has examined the effects of candidates' educational level, criminal charges against them, assets owned and incumbency status of the candidate and the state party on the chances of winning and vote share in the Indian parliamentary elections 2009 using candidate level information available from the Election Commission of India and the information given in the affidavit filed by the candidates. The empirical results based on descriptive analysis of the data and the econometric model lead to certain interesting findings:

1. Education of the candidate particularly secondary level and above significantly increases the chances of winning while graduate and above levels of education improves the vote share of the contestants.
2. Criminal charges, wealth status and incumbency status are interlinked. Criminal charges of serious nature leveled against a candidate reduce the chances of winning and also vote share. However, the effect is taken away by the incumbency status of the candidate as well as by the state party.
3. The most significant factor is the incumbency status of the candidates and the state party. The larger impact of state party incumbency factor suggest that the ruling party has a strong influence in enhancing the chances of winning and increasing the vote share of their party candidates.
4. Being a candidate of the UPA increases chances of winning and securing higher

vote share. Belonging to NDA also increases the chances of winning and vote share but somewhat to a lesser extent.

The study brings to the fore the nexus between wealth, criminal charges and incumbency status and how each of these factors influence the election outcome. There is an urgent need for electoral reforms and legislations to safeguard the democracy from wealthy criminal incumbents becoming the law makers of the National body.

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