

India election results 2019: Narendra Modi secures landslide win

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Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has secured another five-year term after winning a landslide general election victory.

BJP supporters celebrate as their party looks set to win a clear majority in parliament

Results so far show his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is set to win about 300 of the 543 seats in parliament.

The main opposition alliance, which is headed by Rahul Gandhi's Congress party, has admitted defeat.

The vote had been widely viewed as a referendum on the prime minister's Hindu nationalist politics.

Over 600 million people voted in a marathon six-week process.

Mr Modi has not just exceeded exit poll predictions but has also won a larger share of the vote than the 2014 elections, partial results show.

"Thank you India!" the prime minister tweeted. "The faith placed in our alliance is humbling and gives us strength to work even harder to fulfil people's aspirations."

Many viewed the election as a referendum on Mr Modi (L) who won a landslide in 2014

At a press conference in Delhi, opposition leader Mr Gandhi conceded the general election as well as his Amethi seat in Uttar Pradesh - which he had held since 2004 and his family had held for decades.

What are the numbers?

Partial and declared results show Mr Modi's BJP is projected to win 300 seats, while the main opposition alliance headed by Rahul Gandhi's Congress party is expected to win fewer than 100.

A party or coalition needs at least 272 seats to secure a majority in the 543-member lower house of parliament, or Lok Sabha.

In 2014, the BJP won 282 seats - the biggest victory by any party in 30 years - and with its allies it secured 336 seats in that parliament.

The Congress, which won just 44, suffered its worst defeat in 2014 and with its allies took up just 60 seats in the lower house.

This year, there were 900 million voters eligible to take part in seven rounds of voting, making it the largest election the world had ever seen.

Results are being released in phases by the Election Commission but a final result may not be known for several hours or longer.

Narendra Modi made this an election all about himself.

He should have faced some anti-incumbent feeling. Joblessness has risen to a record high, farm incomes have plummeted and industrial production has slumped.

Many Indians were hit hard by the currency ban (also known as demonetisation), which was designed to flush out undeclared wealth, and there were complaints about what critics said was a poorly-designed and complicated uniform sales tax.

The results prove that people are not yet blaming Mr Modi for this.

A combination of nationalist rhetoric, subtle religious polarisation and a slew of welfare programmes helped Mr Modi to coast to a second successive win. He also mined national security as a vote-getter in a manner never seen in a general election in recent history.

"It is all right if there's little development, but Modi is keeping the nation secure and keeping India's head high," a voter in the eastern city of Kolkata told me.

Mr Modi is a strongman, and people possibly love him for that.

What has the response been?

At BJP headquarters in Delhi party members cheered, handed out sweets and set off fireworks as the results came in.

Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, a senior BJP leader, said in a tweet that the BJP had won a "massive victory".

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan congratulated Mr Modi for his victory on Twitter, and said he looked forward to working with him for "peace, progress and prosperity in South Asia".

The BBC's Zubair Ahmed in Delhi says Congress Party staff, who had been hoping for a much improved performance, looked lost for words.

Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka had been hoping to improve on a dismal Congress performance last time

Where were the key contests?

It's often said that whoever wins Uttar Pradesh wins the Indian election. The huge northern state sends 80 MPs - more than any other - to parliament. In 2014 the BJP won 71 seats there. It is currently projected to win almost 50% of the vote.

This is despite a tie-up between two powerful regional parties, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party

(SP). The bitter rivals banded together to form a so-called "grand alliance" against Mr Modi and they were expected to win more seats than the governing party.

The BJP is doing better than expected in West Bengal, where it holds just two of the 42 parliamentary seats.

Here, it is up against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee - a strident critic of Mr Modi - and it is leading in 17 seats.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has emerged as one of Mr Modi's fieriest opponents

Four of India's five southern states - Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala - have long eluded the BJP and appear to have done so again in this election.

Of the 91 seats in these states, the BJP holds just four. In this part of the country, the party contests few seats, relying instead on alliances with regional heavyweights.

What challenges does Modi face?

Growing unemployment and fears of India heading into a recession will see Mr Modi face demands to provide jobs to the millions of young people entering the labour market in coming months.

Under his first term, India's economy - the world's sixth largest - lost some of its momentum. A leaked government report this year put the unemployment rate at the highest it's been since the 1970s.

Farmers in India will also be hoping he will prioritise the agricultural industry, after a crop glut and declining commodity prices saw their incomes stagnate.

India has seen huge protests by farmers in recent years

Many saw this election as a battle for India's identity and the protection of minorities. A strident - and at times violent - Hindu nationalism has become mainstream in the past five years, with increased attacks against minorities, including the lynching of dozens of Muslims accused of smuggling cows.

And national security was put into the spotlight after a suicide attack by a Pakistan-based militant group killed at least 40 paramilitary police in Indian-administered Kashmir in February. India then launched unprecedented air strikes in Pakistan, prompting it to respond in kind and bringing the two countries to the brink of war.

- BBC