



Electoral Trends and Political Shifts in Lakhimpur (2021–2025): An Overview

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Abstract

Election plays a crucial role in every democratic system, such as India. They form the cornerstone of democratic governance by establishing a direct link between the government and the people. Through elections, citizens participate in the political process and express their will, making it a key mechanism for political socialization and engagement. Democracy and elections are often viewed as two inseparable elements—one cannot function effectively without the other. Hence, elections are rightly considered the *lifeblood* of any democratic society, providing the means through which people choose their representatives to lead and make decisions on their behalf. As political awareness rises globally and voters take greater interest in national and international affairs, understanding electoral behaviour has become increasingly important. Understanding how and why people vote is essential for strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring responsive governance.

Keywords : Election, Democracy, Electoral Politics, Assembly, Loksabha, Lakhimpur.

Introduction

Election plays a vital role for the proper functioning of democracy. It is a very significant aspect of every democratic system such as India. It opens up channels between the polity and the masses, between the individual and his government. They are the major agencies of political socialization and political participation. It is said that democracy and election are the two sides of a same coin. One cannot exist without other. So election is considered as the heart of any democratic system like as India. According to Joseph Schumpeter, “Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them.” From that point of view, democracy is about conducting elections and to choose political leaders. Therefore, election can be said as the ‘backbone’ of any democratic society and through this process, the people can choose their representatives. Elections in India have always been the

corner stone of political system of the country (Ahmed : 2006). It is that procedure through which people exercise their right to franchise to select their representatives. It plays a significant role in bringing political change. It opens up channels between the polity and society, between the elites and the masses, between the individual and their Government. They are the major agencies of political socialisation and political participation (Palmer : 1976). Elections are among the principal mechanisms through which contemporary states regulate mass political action and strengthen their own power and authority (Krierger: 1998). Election has, in fact, been the greatest gift of the people of the world civilization (Bhuyan: 2010). In a democratic system, the importance of elections cannot be overstated. Elections play a vital role in the functioning and sustainability of a democratic government. They provide peaceful and legitimate means for citizens to choose their representatives and hold them accountable. Through free and fair electoral processes, people exercise their right to influence public policy, leadership, and the overall direction of the state. Elections foster political participation, embody the will of the people, and encourage transparency, competition, and periodic change within governance structures. Moreover, they provide an essential platform for mass participation in the political, electoral, and administrative spheres, thereby contributing significantly to the growth and survival of democracy. Election is the machination through a modern state creates amongst its citizens a sense of involvement and participation in public affairs (Bhalla : 1989). It also provides an opportunity to the people to have a direct interaction and participation in the political system.

Objectives Of the study:

The objectives of the present study are-

- i) To study the electoral behaviour in Lakhimpur during 2021-2025.
- ii) To discuss recent shifts in electoral dynamics in Lakhimpur

Methodology:

The present study is descriptive and analytical based on primary and secondary sources. The primary data are collected survey and census report. The secondary data are collected from relevant books, election office, internet, magazines, and newspapers.

Nature of diversity :

Lakhimpur is one district of Assam which is remotely situated from the State capital and located in the North Eastern part of Assam. The district stands on the foot hills of Arunachal Pradesh and serves as a bridge between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The district is surrounded by Arunachal Pradesh on the North, Dhemaji and Dibrugarh on the East, Jorhat, Sivasagar and Brahmaputra on the South and Sonitpur and Arunachal Pradesh on the West. The total population of the district is 1,042,137 as per 2011 census, of which male population constitute 5,29,674 and female constitute 5,12,463. Out of total population, urban

people constitute 8.76% and rural people constitutes 91.24%. In total, 91,333 people live in urban areas and 9,50,804 live in rural areas. Population growth is 17.22%. The total literacy rate of the district is 77.2%. This constituency has a diversified population composition. Assamese speaking people constitute 57.8%, Hindi speaking constitute 1.17%, Mishing constitute 17.64%, Bengali constitute 12.96%, Nepali constitute 2.35% , Bodo constitute 0.88%, Deory constitute 1.21% and Sadri constitute 2.46% of total population (Table – 1).

Table 1
Distribution of population according to language

Sl. No.	Language	Percentage (%)
1.	Assamese	57.8
2.	Hindi Speaking	1.17
3.	Mising	17.64
4.	Bengali	12.96
5.	Nepali	2.35
6.	Bodo	0.88
7	Deory	1.21
8	Sadri	2.46

Source : *Handbook of Assam and Census of India, 2011.*

Besides, the district is inhabited by the people belonging to various religions, castes and creeds. There are people from Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain, Sikh religions. Hindu constitutes 76.49 percent, while Muslim constitutes 18.57 percent, Buddhist 0.10 percent, Sikh 0.04 percent, Christian 4.43 percent, Jain 0.02 percent and other 0.23 percent of total population (Table-2). There are also a considerable section of people belonging to Scheduled Tribe, constituting 23.9 %, Scheduled Caste constituting 7.9 % (as per 2011 census) and other constituting about 66 % of total population. Tea garden labourers constitute 2.07 % of total population. Lakhimpur is a district in Assam, consisting of four Assembly constituencies (ACs),

including Lakhimpur, Naoboicha, Bihpuria and Dhakuakhana etc. Current Assembly segments are Lakhimpur, Naoboicha, Bihpuria, Dhakuakhana and Ronganodi.

Table – 2
Distribution of population according to Religion

Sl. No.	Name of the Religion	Lakhimpur		Assam	
		Number	%	Number	%
1.	Hindu	7,97,130	76.49%	19,18,07,59	61.47%
2.	Muslim	1,93,476	18.57%	10,67,93,45	34.22%
3.	Christian	46,217	4.43%	1,16,58,67	3.74%
4.	Sikh	412	0.04%	20,672	0.07%
5.	Buddhist	1,074	0.10%	54,996	0.18%
6.	Jain	250	0.02%	25,949	0.08%
7.	Others	2410	0.23%	27,118	0.09%
8.	Not stated	1168	0.11%	50,873	0.16%
Total		1,04,21,37	100.00%	31,20,55,76	100.00%

Source : Census of India, 2011

Electoral politics offers valuable insights into the functioning of a democratic system, and the electoral landscape of Lakhimpur holds particular significance. Each election, whether it is parliamentary or Assembly, stands unique due to changing political scenario Historically, Lakhimpur has been a stronghold for the Congress (I) party, which dominated the constituency by winning all parliamentary elections from 1952 to 1977. Since India's independence, the Congress (I) party has consistently held the Lakhimpur seat, winning it nine times up until 2009, making it a Congress-dominant constituency for much of its history. However, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) party has also played an important role in shaping

the political dynamics of Lakhimpur. The political scene in the constituency has largely been dominated by the alternating influence of the Congress and AGP, with one party or the other often coming to power in succession. In recent years, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a national force, in alliance with regional political entities, has begun to make significant inroads into Lakhimpur's political landscape. The BJP has been increasingly influential, playing a decisive role in shaping voter sentiment and political outcomes in the region.

Key Events and Outcomes: 2021 Assembly Election

- **Voters Turnout :** In 2021, the overall voter turnout in Lakhimpur district dropped slightly compared to 2016. In 2021, turnout was 82.59 % (male 82.15 %, female 83.04 %).
- **Seat Performance :** In the 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly elections, out of the four LACs in Lakhimpur district, the BJP-led alliance won three- Bihpuria (No.109), Lakhimpur (No.111), Dhakuakhana (No.112). The lone seat won by the opposition (Congress) was Naoboicha (No.110). In Lakhimpur Assembly constituency (Seat No. 111), Manab Deka (BJP) won, defeating Dr. Joy Prakash Das (Congress) by a relatively narrow margin of 3,036 votes and in 2024 Lok sabha election BJP candidate Pradan Baruah won the Lakhimpur seat .Table -2 presents 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly election results in Lakhimpur and and Table -3 exhibits recent electoral outcomes (2021 Assembly and 2024 Lok sabha).
- **Close Contests & Shifts :** The contests in some seats were competitive. For example, in Lakhimpur AC in 2021, the margin was close (Manab Deka vs Joy Prakash Das). In earlier elections (2016), independent or regional party candidates had stronger influence (e.g., Utpal Dutta of AGP in 2016 in Lakhimpur AC) which suggests shifting loyalties.
- **Gender and Turnout:** Female participation is relatively strong in Lakhimpur. In 2021, female turnout (83.04 %) slightly higher than male (82.15 %) for district.

Table -2

2021 Assam Legislative Assembly election: Lakhimpur

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
BJP	Manab Deka	70,387	45.03
INC	Dr Joy Prakash Das	67,351	43.09
AGP	Utpal Dutta	12,486	7.99

AJP	Ranjan Borpatra Gohain	2,453	1.57
NOTA	None of the above	1,114	0.71

Election Results, Govt of Assam

Table -3

Recent electoral outcomes (2021 Assembly and 2024 Lok sabha)

Election	Winner	Party	Vote Share	Margin
2021 Assam Legislative Assembly Elections – Lakhimpur Assembly Constituency	Manab Deka	BJP	70,387 votes closely followed by INC’s Joy Prakash Das with 67,351 votes.	3036 votes
2024 Lok Sabha Election – Lakhimpur HPC	Pradan Baruah (third consecutive time)	BJP	663,122 votes. He defeated Uday Shankar Hazarika (INC)	2,01,257 votes

Election Results, Govt of Assam

Key Causes Behind BJP’s Win

- i. **Development & Welfare Schemes** : The BJP-led government had rolled out several welfare schemes that found resonance among voters. For example, the *Arunodoi* scheme (cash transfers to eligible households) became quite popular. Also, promises such as waiving microfinance loans for indebted women and implementing women-centric empowerment programs were appealing, especially in areas where microfinance indebtedness is high (Upper Assam, for instance).
- ii. **Strong Leadership & Party Strategy** : Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma played a significant role. Before joining BJP, he had long experience in state politics, giving him both credibility and organizational knowledge. His positioning, campaign conduct, and public persona were noted as

important. The BJP's alliance with regional partners (AGP, etc.), and a stable leadership (Center + State alignment) made for a more coherent message.

- iii. ***Polarisation & Religious Consolidation*** : There was a considerable consolidation of Hindu votes in favor of the NDA (BJP and its allies). Analysts point to religious polarisation (perception of opposition alliances being linked with Muslim-centred parties) as catalysing this consolidation. The opposition alliance (Mahajot), which included AIUDF, was viewed by many Hindu voters as “communal” or tilting too far in one direction, which contributed to their hesitation.
- iv. ***“Double-Engine” Government & Center-State Synergy*** : The idea that having the same party (or aligned party) in power both at the State and at the Central level (i.e. a “double-engine” government) helps in getting resources, fast implementation, etc., was a persuasive narrative.
- v. ***Opposition Weakness / Vote Split*** : Though there was a grand opposition alliance, in several places opposition candidates failed to unify completely or connect effectively with voters. Also, newer regional parties had limited reach. The opposition's campaign was seen as less effective compared to the BJP's in terms of messaging, grassroots mobilization, and delivering on past promises.
- vi. ***Focus on Local Issues & Infrastructure Gains*** : Infrastructure improvements, road connectivity, public works, etc., were emphasized by the BJP. These kinds of tangible development outcomes can help win voter trust and loyalty.

Key Takeaways & Trends:

- i) ***Dominance of BJP in Lakhimpur*** : While the BJP-led alliance won three of four seats, margins in Lakhimpur and Naoboicha were narrow, suggesting growing competition. The influence of regional and tribal parties is increasing, particularly in ST/SC reserved constituencies.
- ii) ***Decline of AGP Influence*** : AGP candidates performed poorly in all contested seats, including the humiliating loss of five-time MLA Utpal Dutta, reflecting voter disenchantment with AGP and its alliance with BJP.
- iii) ***Congress Shows Strategic Adaptability*** : Bharat Narah's switch to Naoboicha and his successful Mising alliance indicates Congress's ability to adapt and mobilize community support, though broader success remains elusive.
- iv) ***High-Profile Campaigning and Personalities Matter*** : The involvement of national leaders (e.g., PM Modi, CM Sonowal) and state leaders (e.g., Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma) heavily influenced outcomes, particularly in Bihpuria and Lakhimpur.

The 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly elections in Lakhimpur district presented a nuanced picture of the region's shifting political landscape. Although the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) maintained a dominant position, narrower victory margins, the noticeable decline of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), and the emergence of tribal and regional political forces indicate a transition towards a more competitive environment. Issues such as ethnic identity, demands for regional autonomy, and continued opposition to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) remain significant factors influencing voter sentiment. These dynamics suggest that Lakhimpur is likely to remain a strategically important constituency in upcoming state and national elections.

Political Dynamics 2021-2025

1. Consolidation of BJP & Allies

The 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly elections in Lakhimpur district reflected the growing influence of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its alliance partners. The BJP, in collaboration with regional parties such as the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), and Sanmilito Gana Shakti, formed a formidable electoral front. This alliance secured victory in three out of the four Legislative Assembly Constituencies (LACs) in the district, underscoring its consolidated political presence. In particular, the BJP won in Bihpuria (LAC 109), Lakhimpur (LAC 111), and Dhakuakhana (LAC 112), while the Congress-led Grand Alliance managed to win only Naoboicha (LAC 110). The contest in Bihpuria drew considerable attention from political analysts, as it featured BJP candidate Dr. Amiya Kumar Bhuyan—supported by then Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal—against senior Congress leader and former MLA Bhupen Kumar Borah. This high-profile contest was further intensified by a major campaign event led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Narayanpur under the same constituency. Ultimately, Dr. Bhuyan secured the seat with 58,979 votes, defeating Borah by a margin of 10,178 votes. In Naoboicha, former Congress minister Bharat Chandra Narah contested the seat after relinquishing his traditional constituency, Dhakuakhana. The Congress strategy appeared to rely heavily on Narah's efforts to build alliances with Mising community organizations, a move that played a crucial role in his victory. He defeated Raijor Dal candidate Azizur Rahman by a narrow margin of 3,791 votes, securing 52,905 votes against Rahman's 49,292. Notably, the BJP did not contest this seat directly, instead allotting it to its ally AGP. However, AGP candidate Jayanta Khaund came in third with 35,279 votes, indicating limited voter support. The Lakhimpur constituency (LAC 111), which includes the district headquarters, saw a close battle between BJP candidate Manab Deka and Congress's Dr. Joy Prakash Das. Deka, who had the backing of North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) convener Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, narrowly defeated Das

by 3,036 votes. He received a total of 70,387 votes, while Das secured 67,351. A significant outcome of this election was the defeat of five-term AGP MLA Utpal Dutta, who garnered only 12,486 votes, reflecting a sharp decline in his political standing and the waning influence of AGP in the region. In Dhakuakhana (LAC 112), a Scheduled Tribe (ST) reserved seat, BJP candidate Naba Kumar Doley retained his seat for the third consecutive term. Despite facing opposition from sections of the Mising community and critics of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019, Doley succeeded in securing 86,382 votes. His Congress opponent, Padma Losan Doley, a former leader of the Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK), managed 76,786 votes. The margin of victory stood at 9,595 votes, highlighting both the BJP's resilience and the emerging challenges posed by community-based organizations. With the Election Commission of India declaring the results of the 15th Assam Legislative Assembly election on May 2, 2021, the political direction of the state for the following five years was set. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) secured a majority by winning 75 out of 126 seats across the state. Meanwhile, the Congress-led Grand Alliance (Mahajoot) emerged as the primary opposition force with 50 seats, preparing to assume its role in the legislative assembly.

2. Role of Congress / Opposition

Congress retains some foothold: as seen in Naoboicha seat. But the trend suggests weakening in many places, with margins often narrowing or seats being lost. Also, opposition's ability to mobilize perhaps limited by the strength of state-level narratives and incumbent governance.

3. Development Projects & Government Performance

The BJP-led government has initiated multiple development projects in Lakhimpur:

- In 2024, Cabinet approved Rs 213 crore projects for infrastructure, education, culture across Lakhimpur district.
- In June 2025, several development projects worth Rs 110 crore were launched/inaugurated, including eco-parks, water supply schemes, educational and veterinary facilities. These are likely aimed at consolidating electoral support by demonstrating delivery, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

Conclusion :

In Lakhimpur, the dominance of the Congress party was evident between 1952 and 1977, during which it consistently secured the parliamentary seat. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), a regional political party, has also played a significant role in shaping the political history of the constituency. Lakhimpur first

came under non-Congress rule in 1985, coinciding with the emergence of the AGP. Since then, both the Congress and AGP have alternated in power, maintaining a strong influence over the region's political landscape. In addition to these parties, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a national force, has steadily gained ground in Lakhimpur, particularly through strategic alliances with regional parties. Since 1996, the BJP has emerged as a significant electoral force, successfully attracting Assamese voters and expanding its influence within the constituency. Currently, the main political contenders in the constituency are the Congress, the AGP, and the BJP, each of which continues to shape the electoral dynamics of Lakhimpur.

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