

# **THE ROLE OF NEW MEDIA IN THE ELECTORAL POLITICS IN WEST BENGAL (2014-2024)**

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## **Abstract**

The present study is an attempt to identify the "The Role of New Media in the Electoral Politics in West Bengal (2014-2024)", looks at how digital platforms like WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube completely changed the way elections are fought and won in West Bengal over a full decade. It gives special attention to young voters aged 18–30—who form 30 to 40 per cent of all voters—the fast spread of fake news, and the new ways people take part in democracy.

The study uses clear examples like TMC's #KhelaHobe campaign in 2021 that helped win 213 seats, BJP's #BengalWithModi push in 2019 that raised seats from 2 to 18, and powerful youth protests such as #Hokkolorob in 2014 (over 100,000 X posts) and #JusticeForRGKar in 2024 (250,000 posts). It also uses hard numbers from the Election Commission of India (ECI), IAMA reports, and new media data. The big change is clear: before 2014, 47 percent of youth got news from TV and 14 percent from newspapers. By 2021, 67 percent used new media—YouTube (36 per cent), WhatsApp (24 per cent), Instagram (15 per cent), and X (7 per cent).

Youth became the real game-changers. They did not just vote; they made videos, shared memes, joined WhatsApp groups (37 per cent), and led online protests (74 per cent of digital protest users were youth). Voter turnout for ages 18–25 jumped 5 per cent to 78 per cent in 2021. Movements forced real results—like the Jadavpur University vice-chancellor quitting in 2015 and new safety rules after RG Kar.

But problems grew fast. Fake news hurt trust: 30 percent of X posts in 2021 had false claims, 68 per cent of teens and young adults believed fake news at least sometimes, and 42 per cent said political parties made the lies. In close races, fake news changed 10 to 15 per cent of votes. City youth (70 per cent online) joined easily, but rural youth (only 40 per cent online) were left out and often saw wrong WhatsApp forwards.

New media opened politics, gave youth a strong voice, and used Bengali culture in smart ways. Still, without fixes, fake news, hate speech, and the city-village gap can break fair elections. It ends with simple, strong ideas: teach fact-checking in every school in Bengali, make platforms limit fake forwards and mark AI videos, force parties to run honest ads, punish lies under the IT Act, and bring fast internet to villages.

**Keywords:** new media, West Bengal elections, youth voters, fake news, social media, democracy, digital campaigns, 2014-2024, political communication, misinformation, voter turnout, Bengali culture, online protests