1. **Senior BJP leaders systematically seeking votes in the name of religion, often inciting hate against minorities:**
   
   Making appeals to religion to seek votes goes against India’s secular constitution and disadvantages India’s minorities. The time around the festival of Ram Navami saw multiple violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) with mostly ruling BJP leaders making clear appeals to religion as part of their election campaign.

   - Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a *brazenly communal statement* on 21 April that is full of Islamophobic rant and dog-whistle, falsely claimed that the Congress party promised to take people’s wealth and give it to the Muslims, who he refereed as “infiltrators” and “those with more children”. Apart from the disinformation about Congress’s manifesto promises and a speech by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the speech is a direct incitement to hatred and hostility against India’s Muslims. Besides being a major violation of the relevant penal provisions and the Representation of People’s Act, it also violates the MCC. *Thousands of citizens* and *various former civil servants* have written to the ECI to take action according to domestic law, against the PM for this violation.

   - Blatant MCC violation by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), whose Bihar unit posted an image on X asking voters to remember “who got the Ram Temple made” while going to vote, on voting day on 19 April. Unambiguously invoking Lord Ram in this manner is tantamount to Hindu majoritarianism.

   - Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the religious slogan ‘*Jai Shri Ram*’ in an election speech in Assam.

   - PM Modi’s X account also posted a video showing Lord Ram, the Ram Temple, and the PM performing religious worship. The video begins with the text ‘Ramkaj se Rashtrakaj’ (from the work of Ram to the work of the nation). Such videos evoke religious sentiment and distract citizens from the challenges facing the citizen and national security.

   - Union Minister Smriti Irani shared a video on her X account showing multiple images of temples and religious activities, among others, with the caption #PhirEkBaarModiSarkar.

   - Such electoral mobilization sets a bad precedent for the political opposition. The Lok Sabha candidate for the Trinamool Congress (TMC) from Howra in Bengal conducted a Ram Navami Shobhayatra as part of his election campaign.

   - These are just a few of the examples of the blatant use of religion to secure votes. Many social media users have been actively tagging the Election Commission of India (ECI) in videos of such violations, but the ECI has not taken action to ensure that religion and caste are not used to ask for votes.

2. **Polling day violations from first-phase constituencies**

   - Opposition parties have alleged that state authorities in constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, including Rampur, Moradabad, Nagina, Muzaffarnagar, were preventing some voters from casting their vote or intentionally delaying the process, and alleged *booth capturing*. 
Videos have also surfaced on social media with journalists reporting vandalism of polling booths in Manipur. The high voter turnout in Manipur notwithstanding, there have been reports and allegations of proxy voting, vandalism, firing, armed groups preventing people from voting, and damaging of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

3. **Suppression of opposition and questions of level-playing field**
   - Civil society actors have highlighted and raised complaints with the ECI regarding undue pressure being put on voters by the state machinery in the constituency of Gandhinagar, in favour of the BJP candidate and Home Minister Amit Shah.
   - A BJP candidate was declared the winner on the Surat Lok Sabha seat when nomination papers of the Congress candidate were rejected. All other candidates on the ballot curiously withdrew their nominations. One of the candidates, from the BSP, has alleged that BJP pressured candidates to withdraw their nominations. This raises concerns about the sanctity of elections and unfair means being used to suppress opposition candidates.

4. **Continued concerns over EVMs**
   As highlighted in previous reports, the concerns over EVMs are continuing. While the matter is in the Supreme Court and the ECI recently stated that allegations of EVMs incorrectly logging votes in favour of the BJP were false, we reiterate that it is extremely important for the ECI to instil high public faith in the efficacy of the EVMs and the ECI as an impartial body. Survey findings show that this is not the case.