SCORE
MAKING PUBLIC OPINION COUNT

Press Release: SCORE launches opinion polling with Punjab, finds AAP leading, drugs emerge as biggest concern

BANGALORE, 16 October 2026: SCORE, a new opinion polling organisation, launched here today, with an opinion poll on Punjab.

"SCORE is India's first and only opinion polling organisation that will measure public opinion not for media or politicians but directly for the public so that the ordinary voters can be better informed about the issues that matter," said Naresh Arora, founder of SCORE.

The organisation has released its full opinion poll on Punjab in view of the assembly elections to be held early next year. The opinion poll, which finds the Aam Aadmi Party leading in the state, has also measured the popularity of sitting MLAs as well as probable candidates on all 117 seats of the state.

"We have put out all our data on our website and it is also available on WhatsApp if you just message SCORE to +919501141114. Never before has any opinion poll been put out in such great detail directly for the public," said Mr. Arora.

SCORE will be releasing its Punjab Tracker Poll on the 15th of every month, as well as a monthly Uttar Pradesh tracker starting 20 November.

AAP in the lead

The Punjab SCORE Round 1 finds that the Aam Aadmi Party would win 69-82 seats if elections were held on 15 October 2026. This is well past the majority mark of 59 but short of the 92 seats the AAP won in 2022. The range reflects a number of seats that are neck to neck as of now, but things could change.

Speaking on the poll findings, SCORE founder Mr. Naresh Arora said, "The Punjab elections are five months away and a lot of political churning is under way. We shall be tracking and presenting the changing scenario on the 15th of every month."

SCORE spoke to 28,347 voters across all 117 constituencies between 13 September and 13 October 2026. With a vote-share of around 38%, the AAP is seen declining from its 42% vote-share in the 2022 assembly election. The AAP's lead comes from its high ratings among women and SCs, but also from enjoying a heavily divided opposition.

The Congress is placed a distant second at 24%, which could get it 17-34 seats, followed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at 14% and 4-12 seats. Interestingly, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the BJP's former ally in the state was found to be behind the BJP, with 12.5% vote share and 2-6 seats. One major reason for the poor ratings of the Akali Dal is its core vote being split by a new entrant, the Amritpal Singh-led Akali Dal (Waris Punjab De). The WPD is seen to be getting 8.5% votes and 2-6 seats.

Despite AAP's lead, the findings point to significant regional and demographic differences in its support, as well as vulnerabilities on governance and public services.
AAP leads across all three regions

AAP leads in Majha, Doaba and Malwa, although its strength varies considerably by region.
Doaba is AAP's strongest region, with an estimated vote share of 43.9%, followed by Majha at 40.8%. In Malwa, which accounts for 69 of Punjab's 117 Assembly seats, AAP's calculated vote share stands at 35.2%.

Malwa is also the principal battleground, containing 14 of the 16 close contests identified by the poll. The report identifies 22 constituencies that could determine where AAP finishes within its deemed seat range: six tied seats and 16 close contests.

Women remain AAP's strongest constituency

The poll identifies a pronounced gender divide in voting preferences. AAP commands 51.2% support among women, compared with 20.8% for Congress. Among men, however, the contest is much closer: AAP is standing at 27.4% and Congress at 26.6%.

AAP leads among women across every age group. Its support is particularly strong among women aged 61 and above, at 57.8%.

Among male voters, Congress leads among those aged 18–25 and over 60, while AAP performs best among men aged 51–60. Akali Dal (Waris Punjab De) draws a significant share of younger male voters, securing between 17% and 19% among men under 35.

The findings suggest that women's support is a central pillar of AAP's statewide electoral position.

Bhagwant Mann leads on leadership ratings

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann remains AAP's principal leadership asset. He is the preferred Chief Minister for 46.3% of respondents who named a leader, well ahead of Congress leader Charanjit Singh Channi at 18.3%, SAD leader Sukhbir Singh Badal at 12.3% and Amritpal Singh at 8%.

Interestingly, the SCORE poll finds the chief minister to be more popular than his government. Mann's personal approval rating stands at 63.9%, while 57.7% approve of the AAP state government. These ratings are not reflected on MLAs. Only 48.1% respondents reported satisfaction with their local MLA, and 42.4% favour re-electing their sitting representative.

The gap between the Chief Minister's personal ratings and assessments of local representatives suggests that anti-incumbency is more pronounced at the constituency level than at the level of state leadership.

Drugs emerge as the biggest governance challenge

Drugs are the most prominent public concern identified by the poll. Nearly four in ten respondents, or 39.3%, identify drugs as the biggest local problem. Drugs are also the most frequently cited failure of the state government, named by 22.2% of respondents.
The concern is particularly acute in Majha, where 49% identify drugs as their biggest local problem.

Roads are the second-largest local concern statewide, cited by 13.2% of respondents, and are especially prominent in Doaba. Other issues include drainage and sanitation, water, unemployment and inflation.

While law and order is a big issue in some areas, the poll found drugs and development-related issues being of greater concern to most people despite a spate of high-profile incidents of crime in the state.

Welfare schemes remain a significant government strength

The poll finds that 79.7% of households report receiving at least one state government scheme.
The women's cash-transfer programme, Mawan Dheeyan Satkar, is reported by 58.1% of households, while 49.9% report receiving the benefit of free electricity of up to 300 units. The Ghar-Ghar Ration scheme reaches 40.6% of households, according to the poll.

The report identifies free electricity as the most frequently cited success of the state government. It also notes that 70% of women report receiving the cash transfer.
The reported reach of these programmes represents an important strength for AAP as it seeks a second consecutive term in office.

Twenty-two seats could determine the final outcome

The poll identifies 22 constituencies where narrow margins could significantly affect the final seat tally. These include tied contests in Khem Karan, Patti, Phillaur, Balachaur, Kharar and Fazilka.
Among the close contests, AAP faces challenges from Congress, BJP, SAD and Akali Dal (Waris Punjab De), depending on the constituency. The concentration of close contests in Malwa makes the region particularly consequential for the final result.

Key findings at a glance

AAP: 38% vote share; estimated 69–82 seats.
Congress: 24% vote share; estimated 17–34 seats.
BJP: 14% vote share; estimated 4–12 seats.
SAD: 12.5% vote share; estimated 2–6 seats.
Bhagwant Mann: 46.3% preferred Chief Minister; 63.9% approval.
Women's support for AAP: 51.2%, against 27.4% among men.
Biggest public concern: Drugs, identified as the biggest local problem by 39.3% of respondents.

Key battleground: Malwa, which contains 14 of the 16 close contests.

Undecided voters: 22.5%, leaving considerable room for the electoral picture to change.

The SCORE Punjab Opinion Poll, Round 1, presents a picture of an incumbent government that retains a clear electoral advantage but faces substantial challenges on drugs, infrastructure and local-level performance. With more than one-fifth of voters still undecided, the findings offer an assessment of the current political landscape rather than a definitive prediction of the final result.