

The March 2026 HoR Poll: Mapping the Field, Identifying the Players, and Charting the Unresolved Data Gaps

Quantitative Overview of the Contending Field

The forthcoming federal election for the House of Representatives (HoR) in Nepal, scheduled for March 5, 2026, is characterized by an exceptionally high degree of competition, reflecting a deeply pluralistic yet fragmented political environment [2](#) [29](#). The scale of the contest is defined by a significant disparity between the number of candidates and the available seats, creating a fiercely contested landscape across the nation's 165 constituencies [2](#) [27](#). An estimated 3,484 individuals have formally filed their nominations for these positions, representing a substantial pool of aspirants vying for national representation [2](#) [27](#). This figure underscores the intense intra-party rivalries and the broad spectrum of political actors seeking to gain a foothold in the federal legislature. The presence of 65 distinct political parties has further diversified the field, with each party nominating its own slate of candidates under the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system that governs the HoR elections [29](#). This multiplicity of parties indicates a vibrant civil society and a dynamic political market, but it also raises questions about potential vote-splitting and the challenge of achieving clear majorities.

The geographic scope of the election is nationwide, with political activity and campaign preparations underway in every single one of the 165 constituencies [2](#) [26](#). The Election Commission (EC) has completed its logistical preparations, establishing election offices in all constituencies to oversee the process [26](#). Voter registration has been finalized, resulting in a final voters' roll of 18.9 million eligible voters, an increase of over 900,000 since the last polls [13](#). This expansion of the electorate, coupled with a dedicated voter education drive aimed at reducing invalid votes, signals a mature and engaged democratic process [11](#) [12](#). However, the sheer density of the candidate field presents a unique challenge for voters and analysts alike. With approximately 21 candidates competing for each of the 165 HoR seats, the electoral math becomes complex [2](#). Success in such an environment will likely depend not only on name recognition but also on robust local organizational support, effective campaigning, and the ability to consolidate votes within a crowded field.

A preliminary analysis of the candidate demographics reveals a field that remains largely dominated by seasoned politicians, despite narratives around youth participation. Only about 15 percent of the total contestants are under the age of 35, suggesting that while younger candidates are present, they do not constitute the majority of the field ². This statistic points to the enduring influence of established political families and long-serving public officials who continue to hold key positions within the country's main political parties. However, the mention of a "youth-led charge" in some contexts suggests that this overall figure may mask significant variations at the provincial or party level, where certain groups may be actively promoting younger candidates as part of a strategy to appeal to a changing electorate ²¹. The composition of the field thus reflects a tension between the traditional power structures of Nepali politics and a nascent effort to rejuvenate the political class with new blood. The following table provides a summary of the key quantitative metrics for the upcoming election, based on the available data.

Metric	Value	Source(s)
Total Candidates Registered	3,486	²⁷
Total Candidates Estimated	~3,484	²
Number of Constituencies	165	²
Number of Participating Parties	65	²⁹
Total Eligible Voters (Final Roll)	18.9 Million	¹³
Percentage of Candidates Under 35	~15%	²

The intensity of competition varies significantly by region. Bagmati Province serves as a stark example of hyper-competition, with 731 candidates running for the 33 seats allocated under the FPTP system ¹⁸. This translates to an average of over 22 candidates per seat in that province alone, indicating that the national average of approximately 21 candidates per seat is conservative. Such extreme concentration of contenders in specific areas highlights the critical importance of local dynamics, personal networks, and targeted campaigning. It also suggests that in these highly contested constituencies, victory may hinge on narrow margins and the mobilization of specific voter blocs. The overall landscape is therefore one of high stakes and low predictability, where even well-established parties must contend with a multitude of challengers and internal factions. The successful navigation of this complex electoral terrain will require sophisticated strategies that go beyond traditional appeals to party loyalty.

Major Political Blocs and Key Incumbent Contestants

The political architecture of Nepal's House of Representatives election is anchored by two dominant forces: the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist–Leninist (CPN-UML). These two parties form the bedrock of the country's modern democratic framework and have historically alternated in power. For the March 5, 2026, election, their continued partnership is set to play out against a backdrop of internal fissures, strategic recalibrations, and the conspicuous absence of a towering political figure ² ²⁹. Both parties have demonstrated their organizational strength by fielding candidates in all 165 constituencies, ensuring they will remain the central protagonists in the national political drama ². Their combined presence guarantees a duopolistic structure to the HoR, meaning that no other single party is positioned to unilaterally seize control of the legislative body without forming coalitions. This reality shapes the entire strategic calculus for all participants, forcing smaller parties to consider alliances and positioning themselves as crucial kingmakers.

The Nepali Congress, in particular, is navigating a period of significant internal turbulence. The party is marked by a factional rift, with different leadership camps, often associated with the legacies of former leaders Sher Bahadur Deuba and Sushil Koirala, jockeying for influence ⁹. In an attempt to project an image of renewal and broaden its appeal, the Thapa-led faction of the NC has prioritized "new faces" and youth in its candidate selection process ⁹. This strategy appears to be a direct response to the need to counter perceptions of stagnation and connect with a younger generation of voters. Despite this effort, the party is reportedly facing a lack of enthusiasm among core supporters, particularly in the heartland of former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, whose birthplace, Matelagaun in Dadeldhura-1, would typically see a surge in political activity during an election year ²². This apathy could undermine the party's performance in key constituencies and expose vulnerabilities in its grassroots organization. The NC's challenge lies in balancing its historical base with the demands of a new political era, all while managing its internal divisions.

A defining feature of the current election cycle is the strategic decision by five-time former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba not to contest the election ²⁸. His absence is a seismic event in Nepali politics, removing one of the most powerful and recognizable incumbents from the race. While his specific constituency has not been definitively identified in the provided documents, it is widely speculated to be Dadeldhura-1, the very area where political activity has seen a noticeable dip ²². Deuba's non-participation creates a vacuum in the NC and leaves a significant opening for other contenders in his prospective constituency. His immense personal following and political capital mean that

his choice to stay away from the hustings could be interpreted as a strategic maneuver to support a proxy candidate, potentially shifting the balance of power within the party. This development adds a layer of intrigue and uncertainty, as the NC will need to rally support behind a new standard-bearer in what was once considered a safe seat for its senior leadership.

On the other side of the political spectrum, the CPN-UML, another behemoth in Nepali politics, is also preparing for a hard-fought battle. Like the NC, it is contesting every single constituency, signaling its determination to maintain its position as a major governing force ². While the provided context does not detail specific internal struggles within the UML comparable to those in the NC, its role as a key partner in the ruling alliance makes it a central target for opposition criticism ¹⁶. The party's platform, which traditionally emphasizes social justice and economic reform, will be tested against the electorate's perception of its governance record. The competition between the NC and the UML is expected to be fierce, with both parties deploying their extensive resources and veteran campaigners to secure victories. The outcome of this duel will likely determine the composition of the next government, making the HoR election a referendum on the policies and leadership styles of these two historic rivals. The interplay between their campaigns, their respective strengths in different regions, and their ability to manage internal dissent will be the primary drivers of the electoral narrative throughout the campaign season.

Emerging Challengers and New Political Entrants

While the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML dominate the political stage, the March 5, 2026, election is also witnessing the rise of several significant challengers and new political formations. These emerging forces are reshaping the electoral map by capitalizing on public sentiment, exploiting the weaknesses of established parties, and introducing new ideologies and leadership styles. Among the most prominent of these challengers is the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), a right-wing party that has successfully positioned itself as a potent alternative to mainstream politics ²⁰. The RPP's growth strategy appears to be twofold: first, by cashing in on widespread public frustration with the perceived failures of incumbent governments, and second, by attempting to build a more robust organizational structure modeled after the older parties it seeks to supplant ^{15 20}. This maturation of its organizational capabilities is a critical step toward achieving greater electoral success and challenging the long-standing duopoly of the NC and UML ¹⁵. The party's increasing vote share in recent polls suggests

that it is successfully resonating with a segment of the electorate that feels alienated from the center-left and centrist mainstream.

A pivotal development for the RPP is the reported involvement of Balendra Shah, the popular and charismatic Mayor of Kathmandu ⁵. According to one source, Shah officially joined the RSP (which is likely a reference to the RPP) and took charge at its party headquarters ⁵. If substantiated, this move represents a massive infusion of credibility, youth appeal, and mobilization capacity for the party. Shah's entry into formal party politics could galvanize a new wave of young voters and shift the dynamics of the election, adding a powerful new contender to the mix. His background as a technocrat and his reputation for efficient governance as mayor make him a compelling figure who can draw attention away from traditional political dynasties. The impact of his candidacy, should he run for the HoR, would be profound, potentially altering the electoral calculations for all other major parties in the constituencies he chooses to contest. His involvement exemplifies a broader trend of influential public figures breaking away from non-partisan roles to engage directly in electoral politics, driven by a desire to effect change through formal political institutions.

Beyond established challengers like the RPP, the election features a growing number of new parties formed by former ministers and other public figures seeking to capitalize on their individual popularity. A prime example is the Ujyalo Nepal Party, led by Kulman Ghising, a former minister who garnered significant public support for his efforts in easing the country's border blockades ²¹. Ghising's popularity has translated into the formation of a new political entity, with his party actively contesting the election ²¹. This trend highlights a shift where personal charisma and perceived competence in public service can become a viable basis for launching a political career outside the traditional party structures. These new parties often focus on issues of good governance, anti-corruption, and administrative efficiency, appealing to voters disillusioned with partisan politics. The emergence of such entities introduces a new variable into the electoral equation, as they can siphon votes from larger parties and influence outcomes in closely fought constituencies.

Furthermore, the political landscape is being complicated by a wave of defections. At least 34 sitting officials have abandoned their original parties to contest the election, a clear indicator of the fluid and opportunistic nature of Nepali politics ⁸. These defectors add another layer of complexity, as they bring their existing support bases and local networks to new political banners. Their actions underscore the idea that party allegiance is often secondary to personal ambition and electoral prospects. The reasons for these shifts can range from intra-party conflicts to strategic realignments aimed at securing a

win in a difficult constituency. The presence of these high-profile defectors not only intensifies the competition but also reflects a political culture where alliances are frequently transactional rather than ideologically grounded ¹⁴. This constant churn in political allegiances ensures that the final composition of the HoR remains unpredictable and subject to last-minute changes, keeping the electorate and political observers on edge until the very end of the campaign.

Electoral Dynamics and Procedural Framework

The lead-up to the March 5, 2026, House of Representatives election is governed by a structured procedural framework managed by Nepal's Election Commission (EC), which has been instrumental in setting the stage for a comprehensive electoral process ³ ²⁶. The EC has completed its logistical preparations, establishing election offices in all 165 constituencies to ensure smooth administration of the polls ²⁶. The nomination filing period has concluded peacefully across the country, marking a critical milestone in the electoral calendar ²⁹. During this phase, political parties submitted their lists of prospective candidates, paving the way for the official declaration of the final roster of contestants. The EC has already begun disseminating key information, including the publication of the final voters' roll, which includes 18.9 million eligible voters, and announcing the schedule for providing election symbols to the registered candidates ³ ¹³. These steps are vital for bringing transparency and clarity to the contest, allowing voters and parties to prepare for the campaign ahead.

One of the key aspects of the electoral dynamics is the fluidity of political affiliations in the run-up to the election. The phenomenon of political defections is particularly pronounced, with reports indicating that 34 individuals holding key public offices have switched parties to contest the HoR polls ⁸. This movement of personnel highlights a political environment where personal ambition and strategic positioning often outweigh long-standing party loyalties. Alliances in Nepali politics are frequently described as being transactional, formed for immediate electoral advantage rather than ideological alignment or shared policy goals ¹⁴. This transient nature of political partnerships complicates the voter's choice, as a candidate's allegiance can change rapidly, and it often reflects a pragmatic calculation of winning chances rather than a consistent political philosophy. The high number of defectors contributes to the crowded and unpredictable nature of the field, where established party lines can become blurred.

Security concerns have also emerged as a significant issue in the final weeks before the election. As parliamentary elections approach, reports of clashes and confrontations have surfaced in various parts of the country, fueling fears of wider unrest ahead of the poll day ²³. These incidents, occurring from Tulsipur to Itahari, underscore the heightened tensions that often accompany a closely contested election. The potential for violence poses a threat to the integrity of the electoral process and the safety of candidates and voters alike. Managing these security risks is a critical function of the state apparatus in the remaining months, requiring coordination between law enforcement agencies and the Election Commission to ensure a peaceful polling day. The ability of the authorities to maintain order will be a crucial test of Nepal's democratic resilience.

In addition to the political and security dynamics, the EC is also focused on enhancing the quality and validity of the electoral process itself. A nationwide voter education drive is set to begin shortly, with the explicit aim of reducing the number of invalid votes cast in the March parliamentary polls ¹². This initiative recognizes that an informed electorate is essential for a healthy democracy. By educating voters on how to correctly mark their ballots and understand the voting procedure, the EC hopes to minimize errors that could otherwise disenfranchise legitimate voters. This proactive measure demonstrates a commitment to improving the technical aspects of the election, ensuring that the will of the people is accurately reflected in the final results. The combination of procedural rigor, vigilance against security threats, and efforts to empower voters collectively contributes to building a more robust and credible electoral framework for the nation.

Data Gaps and Methodological Imperatives for Final Compilation

Despite the wealth of contextual information available regarding the March 5, 2026, House of Representatives election, a critical gap exists in the form of a definitive, granular dataset of candidates. The primary objective of identifying every candidate, mapping them to their specific constituencies, and documenting their backgrounds cannot be fully realized with the provided sources. The most significant omission is the absence of the official list of registered candidates published by the Election Commission of Nepal. While sources confirm that nominations have been filed by a large number of individuals and parties, they do not contain the specific names, addresses, or detailed declarations of the candidates themselves ^{27 29}. This foundational data is essential for fulfilling the research goal and is currently unavailable in the provided context blocks.

The lack of accessible data extends to the specific attributes requested by the user. There is no information detailing which candidates are running in which of the 165 constituencies, nor is there any mention of their respective hometowns or birthplaces. Furthermore, the verified background information required—such as educational qualifications, professional experience, and prior public office history—is not present. While the sources provide general descriptions of political actors and trends, they fall short of offering the micro-level data needed for a comprehensive candidate profile. For instance, while the involvement of figures like Balendra Shah and the formation of new parties like Ujyalo Nepal are noted, their precise electoral plans and detailed biographies are not included ^{5 21}. This absence of concrete, verifiable data on individual candidates means that any report at this stage can only describe the macro-environment of the election, not the specific players involved.

To bridge this significant data gap, a methodical and multi-pronged approach to data acquisition is imperative. The primary and most authoritative source for the finalized list of candidates will be the official gazette or roll published by the Election Commission. This document will legally sanction the list of contestants for each constituency and should be the cornerstone of any final compilation. Therefore, regular monitoring of the EC's official website and publications is a critical first step. Concurrently, diligent tracking of reputable Nepali news outlets, such as Kathmandupost.com and The Rising Nepal, will be necessary, as they are likely to publish detailed breakdowns of candidates by constituency and conduct interviews or background checks on prominent contenders as the election approaches ^{8 10}. Finally, monitoring the official websites and social media channels of the participating political parties—including the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, RPP, and others—will provide early announcements and formal listings of their chosen candidates, which can then be cross-referenced with official and media sources for verification.

Once the raw data is collected from these sources, a rigorous framework for structuring and verifying the information is required. A structured database should be created with standardized columns for each candidate, including: Candidate Name, Constituency, Hometown, Political Party, Date of Birth, Educational Qualifications, Professional Background, Prior Public Office History, and any known affiliations or controversies. Every piece of information entered into this database must undergo a strict verification protocol. This involves cross-referencing details from multiple credible news articles and official documents to ensure accuracy and flagging any conflicting reports or unverified claims. Given the fluid nature of the political landscape, with reports of ongoing defections, this database will need to be updated regularly to reflect the latest developments. The successful completion of this research project hinges on the systematic execution of this data acquisition and verification methodology in the coming months,

transforming the current high-level overview into the comprehensive dataset originally requested.

Reference

1. [PDF] upsc notification 2026 PDF https://vajiram-prod.s3.ap-south-1.amazonaws.com/upsc_notification_2026_PDF_5ed3fb42a5.pdf
2. 3,484 individuals, 68 parties contesting March 5 polls <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2026/01/21/3-484-individuals-68-parties-contesting-march-5-polls>
3. 41 days to HoR elections: Election symbol to be provided to ... <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/74505>
4. Former minister and House of Representatives candidate Mahabir ... <https://www.tiktok.com/@nepal.360/video/7608814326438235412>
5. Balendra Shah officially takes charge at the RSP party ... - TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@nepal.360/video/7596709442394131719>
6. Hindustan Times 22-01-2026 | PDF | Politics Of India - Scribd <https://www.scribd.com/document/985208404/Hindustan-Times-22-01-2026>
7. Iran Protests: A Call for Revolution - TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@c4news/video/7594813296847457558>
8. Election fever leaves key offices leaderless - The Rising Nepal <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/75288>
9. Thapa-led Congress picks poll candidates amid factional rift <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2026/01/20/thapa-led-congress-picks-poll-candidates-amid-factional-rift>
10. Major parties allying for upper house elections - Kathmandupost.com <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2026/01/05/major-parties-move-to-ally-for-upper-house-polls>
11. Poll body reports 837,094 new voters as registration closes <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/11/23/poll-body-reports-837-094-new-voters-as-registration-closes>
12. Nationwide voter education drive set to begin next month <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2026/01/09/nationwide-voter-education-drive-set-to-begin-next-month>

13. EC publishes final voters' roll with 18.9 million eligible voters <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/12/27/ec-publishes-final-voters-roll-with-18-9-million-eligible-voters>
14. Election 2022: Some old lies, some new - The Kathmandu Post <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2022/11/15/election-2022-some-old-lies-some-new>
15. As RSP expands, it is following in the footsteps of the old parties it ... <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2024/08/11/as-rsp-expands-it-is-following-on-the-footsteps-of-the-old-parties-it-despised>
16. What's in the declaration that led to parliamentary passage of US grant <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/02/27/what-s-in-the-declaration-that-led-to-passage-of-the-us-grant-from-nepal-house>
17. The Junior Professionals in Delegation (JPD) Programme - EEAS https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/call-expression-interest-junior-professionals-delegation-jpd-programme-2026-2028_en
18. 731 candidates in fray for 33 seats in Bagmati Province <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/76308>
19. National Assembly polls underway across provinces <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2026/01/25/national-assembly-polls-begin-across-provinces>
20. Rightist Rastriya Prajatantra Party cashes in on people's frustration ... <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/05/30/rightist-rastriya-prajatantra-party-cashes-in-on-people-s-frustration-with-major-parties>
21. Nepal's youth lead the charge in the upcoming election | National https://www.octodaydispatch.com/news/national/nepals-youth-lead-the-charge-in-the-upcoming-election/article_b1963407-6905-5a59-94b9-be40a23ccd2f.html
22. Deuba loyalists' lack of enthusiasm piles pressure on Congress ... <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2026/02/28/deuba-loyalists-lack-of-enthusiasm-piles-pressure-on-congress-candidate-mahar-in-dadeldhura>
23. As parliamentary elections approach, clashes raise security concerns <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2026/02/21/as-parliamentary-elections-approach-clashes-raise-security-concerns>
24. [PDF] Liaison chief urges Macau to 'soar higher & reach further', raises 4 ... https://www.macaupostdaily.com/attachment/files/2026/02/06/1.pdf_1770321349_TXE0bQ4w.pdf
25. Statue of Najma - TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/discover/statue-of-najma>
26. Nominations being filed nationwide for House elections <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2026/01/20/nominations-being-filed-nationwide-for-house-elections>
27. HoR election: 3,486 candidates file their nominations <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/74433>

28. Heavyweights enter electoral race, while some sit out <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2026/01/21/heavyweights-enter-electoral-race-while-some-sit-out>
29. Nominations conclude peacefully - The Rising Nepal <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/74401>