



Women Representation in Parliament

For Prelims: Inter-Parliamentary Union, ECI, Social Mobility, MLAs, Article 243D, PRI.

For Mains: Reasons for Low Representation of Women in Parliament.

Why in News?

Recently, the representation of women in parliament in New Zealand crossed the **50% mark**.

- According to the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#), New Zealand is among a half-dozen nations in the world that can claim at least 50% female representation in their parliament by 2022.
 - In 1893, New Zealand became the first nation to allow women to vote.
- Other nations include **Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Rwanda and the United Arab Emirates**.
- Globally, about 26% of lawmakers are women.

What is the Indian Scenario?

- As per the data compiled by the IPU, of which India is a member, women **represent 14.44% of the total members of the Lok Sabha**.
- As per the latest [Election Commission of India \(ECI\) data](#):
 - As of October 2021, Women represent **10.5%** of the total members of the Parliament.
 - The scenario for women [Members of Legislative Assemblies \(MLAs\)](#) across all state assemblies in India is even worse, with the national average being a pitiable 9%.
 - In the last 75 years of independence, **women's representation in Lok Sabha has not even increased by 10%**.
- In electoral representation, India has fallen several places in the **Inter-Parliamentary Union's global ranking of women's parliamentary** presence, from 117 after the 2014 election to 143 as of January 2020.
 - India is currently behind Pakistan (106), Bangladesh (98) and Nepal (43) and ahead of Sri Lanka (182).

What are the Reasons for Low Representation?

- **Gender stereotypes:**
 - The role of managing household activities has been traditionally assigned to women.
 - Women should be **encouraged to move outside their stereotypical roles** and participate in the decision-making process of the country.
- **Competition:**
 - Politics, like any other field, is a field of competition. At the end of the day, Women politicians are their competition as well.
 - Many of the politicians fear that, in the case of **women reservation, their seats can rotationally be reserved for women candidates**, thus, making them lose any chance of even fighting from their seats.
- **Lack of Political Education:**

- Education influences the [social mobility of women](#). Formal education such as provided at educational institutions create opportunities for leadership, and impart leadership essential skills.
- Because of a lack of understanding of politics, **they do not know about their basic and political rights**.
- **Work and Family:**
 - Uneven distribution of family care responsibilities means that women spend far more time than men in home- and child-care.
 - A woman not only has to give her time and effort at time of pregnancy and childbirth, but it continues till the child is dependent on parents for care.
- **Lack of Political Networks:**
 - The lack of openness in political decision-making and undemocratic internal processes pose a challenge for all newcomers, but particularly for women as they tend to lack insider knowledge or political networks.
- **Lack of Resources:**
 - Because of their low proportion in the inner [political party structure of India](#), women fail to gather resources and support for nurturing their political constituencies.
 - Women do not get adequate financial support from the political parties to contest the [elections](#).
- **Social Conditioning:**
 - They have to accept the dictates imposed on them and bear the burden of society.
 - Public attitudes not only determine how many female candidates win a general election but also directly and indirectly how many are considered and nominated for office.
- **Unfriendly Environment:**
 - Overall political parties' environment too is not women-friendly, they have to struggle hard and face multi-dimensional issues to create space for them in the party.
 - There has been increasing violence in politics. A significant rise in [criminalization](#), corruption, insecurity has driven women out of the political arena.

What are the Government Efforts?

- **The Women's Reservation Bill 2008:**
 - It proposes to amend the Constitution of **India** [to reserve 1/3rd of all seats](#) in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women.
- **Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions:**
 - [Article 243D of the Constitution](#) ensures participation of women in [Panchayati Raj Institutions](#) by mandating not less than one-third reservation for women out of total number of seats to be filled by direct election and number of offices of chairpersons of Panchayats.
- **Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women:**
 - The Committee on Empowerment of Women was constituted for the first time in 1997 during the 11th Lok Sabha of the Parliament for improving the status of women.
 - The Members of the Committee are expected to work together for the empowerment of women cutting across party affiliations.

Way Forward

- It is the need of the hour in a country like India to have equal participation of all the sections of society in mainstream political activity therefore necessary steps should be taken to promote it.
- All political parties have to reach a **consensus and ensure the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill**, which calls for reserving 33 % of seats in Parliament and all state legislative assemblies for women.
- There is a pool of women out there who **have been sarpanches**, and members of local bodies, with experience of governance at the local level over a period of three decades.
 - They are waiting to play a larger role in state assemblies and in Parliament.
- There is a need to implement the proposal of the Election Commission of India (ECI) to make it mandatory for the **recognized political parties to ensure putting of minimum agreed percentage for women in State Assembly and Parliamentary elections**, so as to allow them

to retain the recognition with the Election Commission as political parties.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question

Q. What are the continued challenges for Women in India against time and space? (2019)

Q. Discuss the desirability of greater representation to women in the higher judiciary to ensure diversity, equity and inclusiveness. (2021)

Source: [IE](#)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/women-representation-in-parliament>

