



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** “Declining legislative productivity reflects a deeper crisis in parliamentary democracy and national consensus.” Examine with reference to recent parliamentary sessions in India. (150 words)

29 Jul, 2025    GS Paper 2 Polity & Governance

### Approach:

- Briefly explain the concept of legislative productivity.
- Discuss the recent trends in legislative productivity.
- Highlight the key implications of the lower productivity of the legislature.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

### Introduction:

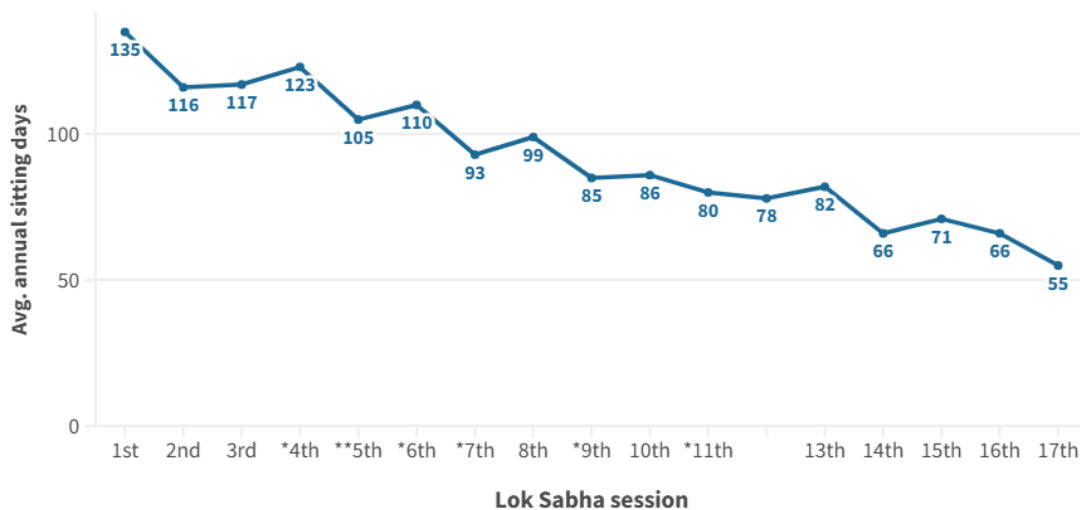
**Legislative Productivity** refers to the **efficiency and effectiveness** with which Parliament and State Legislatures perform their core functions—lawmaking, executive oversight, budget approval, and debate on public issues. A persistent decline in output signals not just procedural lapses, but a deeper **crisis of democratic functioning and erosion of national consensus**.

### Body:

#### The recent trends in legislative productivity :

- **Number of Sitting Days:** Parliament's sitting days have declined from around 135 days/year in the 1st Lok Sabha to just around 55 days/year in the 17th Lok Sabha.
  - Despite fewer sitting days, the 17th Lok Sabha passed over 200 Bills, reflecting a high volume of legislative activity.

## Average annual sitting days



Source: [PRS India](#) • \* indicates a term less than five years; \*\* indicates a six year term | The Hindu Graphics

- **Length of Each Sitting:** Longer sittings are essential for in-depth legislative deliberation.
  - However, in the 2023 Budget Session, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha functioned for only 33% and 24% of scheduled time respectively, making it the 6th shortest Budget Session since 1952.
- **Number of Members Present:** A strong quorum is vital for meaningful debate and informed decision-making.
  - In the 17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024), average MP attendance was 79%, but debate participation remained low, with MPs averaging only 45 debates each.
- **Level of Disruption:** Frequent disruptions, such as slogan shouting and walkouts, drastically reduce debate time.
  - The 15th Lok Sabha (2009–14) lost over 30% of its scheduled time to disruptions, severely affecting legislative productivity.
- **Examination by Parliamentary Committees:** In the 17th Lok Sabha, only 10% of Bills were referred to committees, a sharp drop from the 14th LS (60%), 15th (71%), and 16th (25%), with just 14 Bills reviewed.
- **Functioning of Debates:** Question Hour & Zero Hour, essential tools for executive accountability, remain underutilized or absent.
  - In the 17th Lok Sabha, Question Hour functioned for only 19% of scheduled time in Lok Sabha and 9% in Rajya Sabha.

### Implications for Democracy

- Weakens **institutional checks and balances** by sidelining Parliament's oversight role.
- Reflects a **crisis of representation**, where public concerns are not adequately discussed.
- Reduces transparency and public trust in democratic institutions.
- Accelerates the **ordinance route**, bypassing legislative scrutiny (e.g., three farm laws of 2020 introduced as ordinances first).

## Conclusion:

As political theorist **Rajni Kothari** noted, “**Democracy is not just about numbers; it’s about negotiated consensus.**” Reviving institutional respect, enhancing cross-party dialogue, and promoting reforms like **NeVA** and increased **committee scrutiny** are essential to restore **parliamentary integrity**.

