



WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT - GS II MAINS

Q. Denial of opportunity for political representation represents grave injustice to the women. Analyse the causes behind their lower representation at present. (10 marks, 150 words)

News: *What 2024 Lok Sabha Elections Tell About Women Representation In Indian Politics*

What's in the news?

- The 2024 Lok Sabha elections in India have highlighted a complex narrative regarding women's representation in Indian politics. Despite an increase in the number of women candidates, the total number of women elected to the lower house experienced a slight decrease.

Key takeaways:

- The number of women contesting general elections has increased from 2.9 percent in 1957 to nearly **10 percent in 2024**.
 - BJP led with 69 women out of 440 Lok Sabha nominees, constituting 16 percent.
 - The Congress had 41 women out of 327 candidates, making up 13 percent.
 - Notably, smaller parties and regional players fielded a higher proportion of female candidates.
- The **18th Lok Sabha (2024) had over 13.62 percent female MPs**. This is a marginal drop from the 17th Lok Sabha, which had the highest female representation at over 14 percent.

Significance of Women Representation in Parliament:

1. Promote Gender Equality:

- Women's active political participation is crucial in their fight against the abuse, discrimination, and inequality they face, and in promoting gender equality.

2. Inclusive Political Participation:

- Sustainable progress towards human development indicators relies heavily on women's political participation.
 - **Only 14% of the parliamentarians in India are women.**

3. Better National Development:

- Women's political participation can inspire them to work towards creating a more equal and better society, leading to inclusive national development.

4. Eliminate Gender Discriminations:

- Eliminating gender discrimination and empowering women, as outlined in the Preamble and Constitution of India, is integral to promoting equality of rights and freedoms.

5. Promotion of Women's Issues:

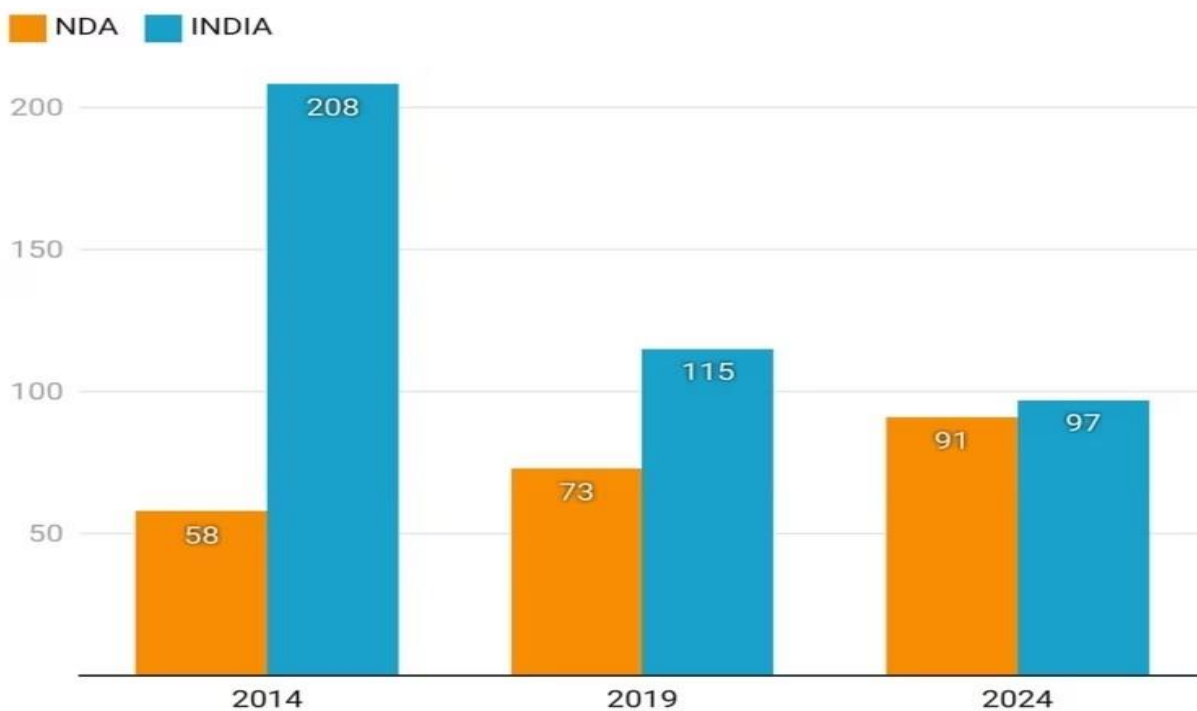


- Women in politics often prioritize and advocate for issues that directly affect women, such as gender-based violence, women's health, education, and economic empowerment.
- Their presence can lead to the prioritization of these issues in policy discussions.

6. Highly Effective and Less Likely to be Criminal and Corrupt:

- Study found that, women legislators perform better in their constituencies on economic indicators than their male counterparts also women legislators are less likely to be criminal and corrupt, more efficacious, and less vulnerable to political opportunities.

Women Candidates from NDA & INDIA blocs in 2014, 19, 24



Source: Election Commission, PRS Legislative Research • Created with Datawrapper

Reasons for Lower Women Representation in Parliament:

1. Inaccessibility of Institutions:

- Election records show that most political parties, though pledging in their constitutions to provide adequate representation to women, in practice give far too few party tickets to women candidates.

2. Notion of Women Less Likely to Win:

- It is still widely held in political circles that women candidates are less likely to win elections than men, which leads to political parties giving them fewer tickets.

3. Challenging Structural Conditions:

- Election campaigns in India are extremely demanding and time-consuming.



- Women politicians, with family commitments and the responsibilities of child care, often find it difficult to fully participate

4. Highly Vulnerable:

- Women politicians have been constantly subjected to humiliation, inappropriate comments, abuse and threats of abuse, making participation and contesting elections extremely challenging.

5. Expensive Electoral System:

- Financing is also an obstacle as many women are financially dependent on their families.
- Fighting parliamentary elections can be extremely expensive, and massive financial resources are required to be able to put up a formidable contest.
- Absent adequate support from their parties, women candidates are compelled to arrange for their own campaign financing this is a huge challenge that deters their participation

6. Internalized Patriarchy:

- A phenomenon known as 'internalized patriarchy' where many women consider it their duty to prioritize family and household over political ambitions.

Women have been waiting for too long for their right to govern not just for themselves but for the greater common good. Women's leadership qualities are not hidden from anyone, so the denial of opportunity for political representation represents grave injustice.