



INDIAN WOMEN IN POLITICS – POLITY

NEWS: In the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly elections, **65.21% of registered women voters** cast their votes, a significant increase from **59.62% in 2019**.

Near Gender Parity: Of the **6.4 crore** voters who participated, **3.06 crore** were women, closely trailing the **3.34 crore** men, demonstrating women's growing electoral engagement.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Electoral Impact of the Scheme

The **Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Scheme** emerged as a pivotal factor in mobilizing women voters, significantly influencing the election narrative.

Despite increased voter participation, women's actual representation in the **Maharashtra Assembly** remains low.

Women's Representation in the Maharashtra Assembly

Limited Representation

Women in Power: Out of **288 seats**, only **21 women** were elected, constituting **less than 10%** of the Assembly.

Low Candidate Pool: Merely **363 women** contested, representing **8.8%** of the total candidates, highlighting systemic barriers to entry in political candidature.

Structural Barriers

Challenges for Non-Dynastic Leaders: Women not belonging to political dynasties face deliberate hurdles, limiting their opportunities for leadership roles.

Token Representation: Despite increased voter turnout, political parties tend to view women primarily as voters rather than serious contenders for legislative positions.

Comparative Analysis: Local Governance vs. State Assemblies

Progress at Local Levels

Impact of Reservations: Following the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments**, **33% reservation** for women in rural and urban local bodies has led to over **1 million women** entering local governance.

States with 50% Reservation: In **22 States**, including Maharashtra, **50% of Panchayati Raj seats** are reserved for women. For example:

Manipur: Despite no legal mandate, **50.7%** of local representatives are women.

Persistent Gap in Higher Governance

While women have gained traction in local governance, their transition to State or national politics remains limited. In Maharashtra, known for its progressive stance, the proportion of women in the Assembly remains strikingly low.



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Lessons from Local Bodies:

The success of reservations at the local level could serve as a model for broader reforms at State and national levels.

Broader Societal Change:

Addressing deeply rooted gender biases in political structures is crucial for ensuring equitable representation.

The analysis reveals a critical gap between women's participation as voters and their empowerment as policymakers, emphasizing the need for sustained policy and societal interventions.