

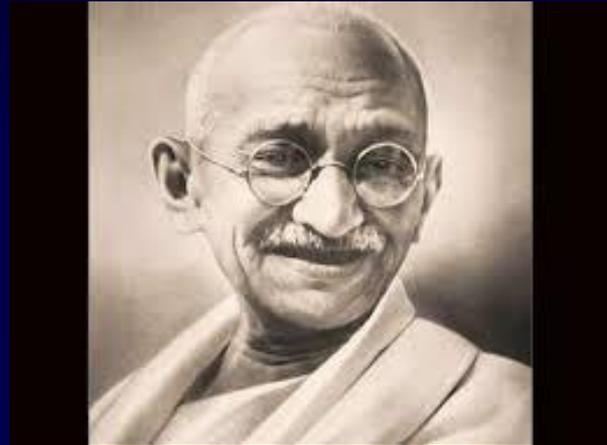
Public Ownership of Democracy

International Conference on
Better Elections for Healthier Democracy

Mumbai, 25th October 2018

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“Democracy, disciplined and enlightened, is the finest thing in the world”

“The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaching down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men”

Democracy & People

- ⌘ Democracy is revolution by consent.
- ⌘ Parliamentary democracy answers the challenges through the instrument of representation – direct stake holding- People’s participation in decision making
- ⌘ Need for active Participation than for silent observers to rule out any silent threat to democracy.
- ⌘ New challenges - terror and subversion, globalisation, demographic changes, class alliances, growing expectations of expanding middle class - Regimes failing to recognise citizen’s need for freedom and democracy

Democracy & Elections

- ∞ Elections most operational part of democracy- free and fair elections are accepted as best indicator of a functioning democracy.
- ∞ Democratic elections hold elected representatives accountable to people
- ∞ Elections provide a starting point of justice and equality- paving the way for people-centred good governance that is essential for sustainable development
- ∞ Minimises practice of 'street democracy' – helps build democracy from within that can't be imported or exported.

India – We the People

- ✉ With barely 16% literacy at Independence in 1947 and with myriad problems, India took the giant leap forward by providing universal adult franchise from the very beginning.
- ✉ The conspicuously emerging trend of leadership from among the poor and the marginalized, villagers, farmers, minorities, women have definite link to elections.
- ✉ Magnitude: 880 million electorate, 1 million polling stations
- ✉ Complexities: Dealing with Regional, Religious, Ethnic, Cultural and Linguistic Diversities
- ✉ Democracy even at the remotest locations/ Separate polling station for a lone voter

Election and People's Participation

Willing and informed participation of citizens in elections enhance quality of elections and in turn of democracy.

Elections surely have political parties, political leaders and even election managers as actors.

But elections belong to the people, it is they who own the elections.

Global Scene

- ⌘ General Decline in participation, more consistently in recent years
- ⌘ 1945-1960 – average turnout 76.4%
- ⌘ 1961-1975 – average turnout 77.1%
- ⌘ 1976-1990 – 74.8%
- ⌘ 1990-2006 – 69.7%
- ⌘ 2000- 2018 – 66.3%
- ⌘ Global concern about lower youth participation (Studies in UK, Canada, India)

Outlook - Concerns

- ❧ Situation suggests a democracy deficit- Representatives increasingly represent smaller majorities – with participation declining and contestants increasing
- ❧ Weakening of stake holding in governance through lower participation
- ❧ Decline, decadence and eventual death of democracy may not happen through assassination or ambush, but might suffer slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment

Ideological Clarity

- ⌘ Conservative point: voters participation, especially turn out at booths is a political agenda
- ⌘ EMBs are umpires, should not care if any one played or not, any one is in audience or not
- ⌘ Most EMBs have gone past this debate. If not, they need to do so soon
- ⌘ Voters participation cannot be half-hearted - has to occupy the centre table of election management operation to succeed.
- ⌘ Compulsory voting not best fit with democracy and not most feasible among large populations

Barriers in Participation

Information
gap
(awareness,
knowledge)

Apathy
(mental
condition)

Threat,
handicap,
Inconvenience,
difficult
conditions
(deficient
supply)

Disparity
(age, gender,
region)

Task Before EMBs

- ⌘ How to engage the disaffected, alienated and excluded
- ⌘ People must know their identity as voters and voters must know importance of voting
- ⌘ Information + motivation + facilitation = Participation
- ⌘ Information and Motivation covered under Voters Education
- ⌘ Education in universal role of creating ability and raising individual's capacity to participate, remove pathological conditions that induce non-participation

Programmatic Direction - IMF



Information

- ⌘ Election literacy (awareness)- what, when, where. how
- ⌘ Political and electoral systems – connection between election-democracy-governance.
- ⌘ Rights and responsibilities
- ⌘ Procedures
- ⌘ Technical aspects of voting process and casting of vote – secrecy etc
- ⌘ Available and accessible information

Motivation

- ⌘ Study of minds-location of motif
- ⌘ Traditional factors- duty? Right?
- ⌘ New finds of motif : profit ? Fashion? stemming the rot? routine business? – can we ignore them
- ⌘ The why part of voting

Facilitation

- ⌘ Without this supply side intervention, the call for participation would not travel the full distance. Worse, shall lose credibility
- ⌘ Our registration procedures. Voting methods and environment – Do they attract or repel?
(Deterrence of Distance/ Migrant students and migrant labourers/ Fear of combative politics)

Social Marketing Approach

- ✧ Understanding Environment
- ✧ Baseline Study
- ✧ Target audience segmentation
- ✧ Pre-Validation of interventions
- ✧ Targeted Intervention (both demand and supply side)
- ✧ Process Study
- ✧ End line Study (impact)
- ✧ Scientific and planned approach rather than a routine and supportive activity

Informed and Ethical Participation

- ⌘ Becoming increasingly necessary in view of corrupt practices and role of black money
- ⌘ Education is a need, especially in conditions of poverty and illiteracy
- ⌘ VE here touches upon a political or whom to vote dimension
- ⌘ This may hurt some political contenders , but has a definite role

Harvest Time Attention & Continuous Education

- ⌘ Narrow focus- Voters turnout - When, What, Where, How of Voting - special registration drives
- ⌘ Wide Focus- Inculcate balanced, objective, non-partisan, democratic values – with voting as a consequential activity
- ⌘ Imaginative curriculum and extra-curricular activity
- ⌘ Significant correlation between learning about voting and elections in school to the average student expecting to vote

Efficient Structure/ Processes

- ⌘ Voter Education Divisions at apex level in EMB
- ⌘ Strong and sufficiently decentralised arm
- ⌘ Technical staff/ Resources
- ⌘ Partnerships (unlike other components of election management) Civil Society/academic/ media collaboration
- ⌘ On the main table of election operations-
- ⌘ Guarding against negative fallout, politicisation, accusation

Collaboration

- ❧ EMBs could Exchange Best Practices. Idea exchange through workshops and seminars
- ❧ Exchange of Technical Personnel through MOU, multi-lateral arrangements
- ❧ Material bank
- ❧ Identification of commonality of situations and replication of successful interventions with due local adaptations

The SVEEP Watershed

- Policy Framework
- Voters' KABP surveys
- Special focus on women, urban, young, disadvantaged voters
- Bulwark of Partnerships
- Plans and accountable implementation at all levels
- Special focus on Ethical voting
- National Voters' Day (NVD)

SVEEP: Endeavours

SVEEP: Endeavours and Innovations

Social Media (Facebook)

From May - December 2017, ECI's Facebook page (then known as 'India Voters') was managed by SVEEP division. During this period an interactive post series was created on voter education and electoral awareness under daily themes.



#MondayMemoirs
Photos of elections from the bygone era with a nostalgic caption.

#TuesdayTrivia
Simple questions on elections basics and elections around the world.

#WednesdayWonders
Interesting electoral processes and elections around the world.

#ThursdayToons
Educative, tongue-in-cheek cartoons featuring ECI's Chairman, Triveni.

#FridayFrames
Weekly awarding program capturing Indian elections.

#SaturdayStats
Interesting statistical info-graphics on our elections.

#SundayStories
Human interest stories on voters from 'Belief in the Ballot'.

SVEEP: Endeavours and Innovations

Q-Elections

National Elections Quiz (NEQ) 2018: The World's Largest Quiz on Elections

- A pan-India knowledge venture for students from Classes IX-XII on elections and electoral processes, NEQ witnessed participation of 13,63,000 students from 38,160 schools.
- Split into 8 Levels, the Quiz began with the School Round followed by the District, State and Zonal Rounds and ended with the National Grand-Final-the entire event extending from November 01, 2017 to January 16, 2018.
- Divided into 6 Zones-North, North-East, South, West, East, and Special Central, NEQ saw ECI collaborate with Raja Sabha TV for production and national broadcast.
- While the team from Jharkhand emerged Champions, teams from Puducherry and Manipur secured the 2nd and 3rd positions. Delhi, Goa and Jammu & Kashmir were the other Finalists.
- With the national telecast garnering an impressive response and an online viewership above 3,00,000, NEQ 2018 holds the distinction of being the pre-eminence show on Indian Elections.



QuizUp topic-Indian Elections

In June 2017, ECI launched the topic-Indian Elections on the hugely popular mobile gaming app-QuizUp. Available for both Android and iOS users, the app gamifies voter education using a multi-player, time-based format.



SVEEP: Publications

Unfolding Indian Elections

The coffee table book was put together as a tribute to the nation and its people on the occasion of India's 70th year of Independence. Thematically organized, Eleven photo chapters of the book celebrate the spirit of participative democracy and take the readers through the journey of elections.



Belief in the Ballot

Belief in the Ballot is an anthology that presents 101 real life stories from the perspectives of both voters and election officials, which showcase the gigantic picture of elections in India. The hindi edition of the book 'Matlab Mein Vishwas' was launched in the World Delhi Book Fair on January 06, 2018.



Project Document: ELCs in India

Electoral Library Clubs (ELCs) promote electoral literacy and create a culture for voting in children falling in the age group of 14-17 years. The project document on ELCs in India discusses in detail the needs of this initiative and lays out a road map towards the achievement of its success.



VOICE India

Released on January 25, 2018 - the eighth National Voters' Day at New Delhi by the Hon'ble President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, VOICE India aims to showcase the national initiatives and innovations in the field of voter education and outreach in India.



SVEEP: Endeavours and Innovations

VOICE.NET

Voter Information, Communication & Education Network (VOICE.NET), is a global knowledge network for sharing information, resources and expertise on Voter Education.

At present, VOICE.NET has 27 active members which includes 23 Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and 4 apart international institutions besides numerous EMBs across the world as associates who provide the VOICE.NET content. The portal is maintained by Election Commission of India.

VOICE.NET hosts numerous features such as Resources, Best Practices, Announcements, Calendar of Events and Publications etc. as also the quarterly e-magazine VOICE International.

VOICE International, the quarterly e-magazine on voter education, is presented with a specific thematic focus in each issue. From January 2017 to September 2018, six issues of VOICE International were released.



SVEEP: Endeavours and Innovations

Making Elections Accessible

'Accessible Elections' was announced as the central theme of National Voters' Day (NVD), 2018 aiming at the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the electoral process of the country.

- DEOs asked to assess interventions taken up on various directions issued by ECI on accessibility to Polling Station
- District and State Level Consultations with the stakeholders to identify challenges and form strategies to remove the barriers
- National Consultation on Accessible Elections organized on 3rd-4th July 2018 at New Delhi witnessed the CEOs and the stakeholders discuss the State Level Reports. The Strategic Action Plan of ECI for PwDs devised on the basis of the recommendations of the National Consultation.
- Developing voter education material and awareness films for different disabilities in accessible format



'Mat Evam Matdan, Kare Loktantra Nirman' Community Radio Programme

A series of aspects of elections and electoral processes were aired from June - November 2017 through NIOS Community Radio and 67 community radios pan India through Federation of Community Radio Association (FCRA).



Episodes, one-hour each, were aired monthly incorporating interviewees' discussions with experts) along with snippets of audio creatives by ECI to spread awareness on importance of elections. A question was posed at the end of each programme and first 25 correct entries were given a prize by ECI.

SVEEP: Endeavours and Innovations

Interactive School Engagement (ISE) Programme

ISE is a platform to connect future voters with the election machinery. It was the precursor to the ELC project. To sensitize the future voters about the electoral processes and voting procedures, ISE witnessed visits to schools and interaction with students by the CEOs, DEOs and EROs in their respective districts.



Launched in January 2017, ISE covered 11,800 schools & 25,11,594 students in Phase I. In Phase II, July-August 2017, 16,855 schools & 32,58,080 students were reached out. In all, ISE covered more than 57,00,000 students in 28,000 schools.



Integrating Diaspora with Electoral Process

For reaching out to over 13 Million Indian Passport holders settled abroad, Election Commission of India in partnership with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) conducted an international online campaign with twin goals of engaging with overseas electors through an online competition and

assessing their electoral awareness, voting preference and participation levels. The Competition and Survey conducted on a dedicated campaign website www.everyindianvotescounts.in. The website achieved 7,738,980 online impressions during the campaign.



SVEEP: Endeavours and Innovations

Millennium Voters

A special campaign to enroll those born on January 01, 2000 and newly eligible 18-19 year-olds, the Millennium Voter series began with identification through Panchayat records, Hospitals and Registrar/ Sub-Registrars.

Millennium Voters were also invited by CEOs/ DEOs via their social media handles/websites. Following engagement involved-Doorstep visit by BLOs, issuing of EPICs and Millennium Voter series based on National Voters' Day functions.

Six Millennium Voters were presented Electors' Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) by the Hon'ble President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, on the occasion of National Voters' Day. More than 60,000 Millennium Voters were felicitated across the country.



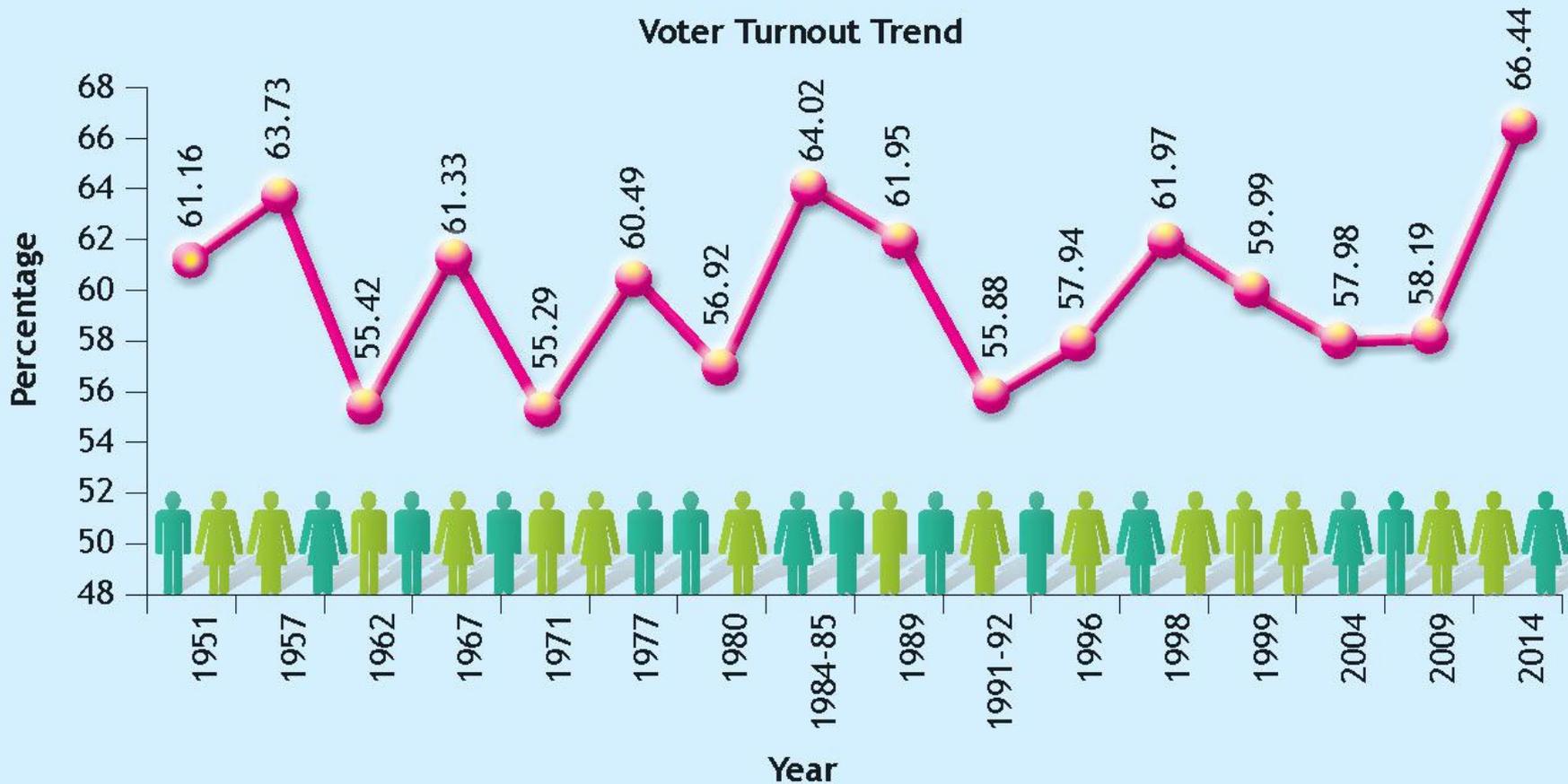
LS 2014 - a New High

- ⌘ Highest ever turnout of 66.4 % against 58.19% in 2009 (68% turnout reported among first time voters)
- ⌘ 55.38 crore voted in 2014, compared with 41.73 crores in 2009 – 32.71% increase
- ⌘ 33 out of 35 states/UTs have recorded higher turnout than 2009
- ⌘ 16 States/UTs have recorded highest ever turnout

Historic Participation

Graph 2.1: Voter turnout in Lok Sabha elections

Voter Turnout Trend

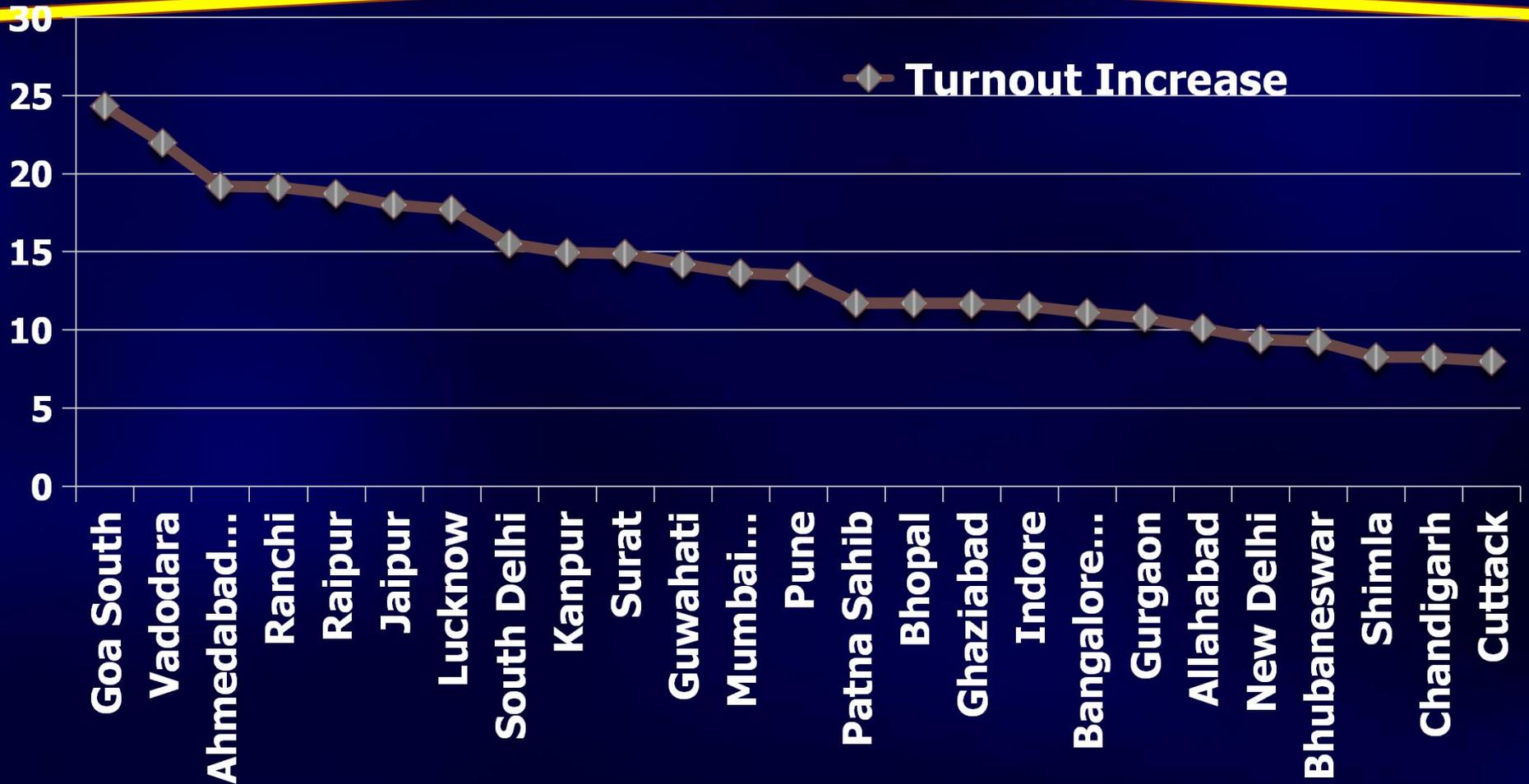


Women own the Elections

- ⌘ Highest Ever Female Turnout
- ⌘ Female turnout at 65.71% in 2014 against 55.82% in 2009
- ⌘ Gender Gap of 1%, lowest in history
- ⌘ Women outnumbered men for the first time in 9 States/UTs



Urban Apathy: Breaking the Mould



Though urban centres have shown a marked increase over 2009 turnout they still fall short of state average turnout

Challenges Ahead

- ✧ Complete and correct enrolment
- ✧ Migratory population – students, workers
- ✧ Participation of Service/ NRI Voters
- ✧ Turning around Urban Apathy
- ✧ Bridging Gender Gap in all States
- ✧ Substantial and systematic work on Inclusion
Homeless, physically challenged etc.
- ✧ Voting habit among youth and prospective voters
- ✧ Ethical and Informed voting
- ✧ Basic minimum facilities at ALL Polling Stations

Greater Ownership for a Stronger Democracy

