

# EMPOWERING THE FUTURE: YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN INDIAN POLITICS

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**Abstract:** India adopted Parliamentary form of democracy where citizens are given the right to participate in the political system without the barriers of gender, caste, religion or any political background. India is a young country with more than 65% of its population belongs to the age group of 35. This research paper will explore the dynamic and transformative participation of youth in the politics of India. Youth involvement in the political field is crucial for the development of a democratic country like India. This paper overview historical and present scenario of the political participation in India. Despite significant potential, youth faces several barriers and obstacles in the political system. This paper highlight the importance of active participation of young buds in the political system and aims to contribute in the area of democratic processes and inspire youth to harness their visions for a better future beyond their constraints.

**Keywords:** Political system, Youth participation, Democratic process, Development

**Introduction:** Indian Political system runs under the guidance and motivational spirit of the constitution. Constitution has given the right to cast vote during elections. The election commission of India holds the prime role and responsibility to conduct free and fair elections once in 5 years. The political party which got majority numbers in the elections has right to form the government. Government works for the progress of the country. The relation between governed and government is the determinant factor which decides the progressive democracy. India has witnessed exceptional youth engagement and leadership during National Movement. Swadeshi, Swaraj and Boycott movements were successful due to youth involvement and creating awareness among the Indians against Britishers. At a very young age leaders like Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Sukhdev, Subhash Chandra Bose sacrificed their precious leaves for the country. Political participation of younger generation is not new to India. The first general election was held in India after Independence in 1951-52. Since then Indian youths are contributing as key drivers for accelerating progress of our nation. India being representative democratic country every elected leader represents the interest of the voters. Since the majority population belongs to young and dynamic age group their political participation in Indian Politics has immense importance.

## **Review of the literature:**

Vinayaka Verma and Prof. (Dr) Aparna Srivastava (2024) highlighted the role of youth on policy agendas, electrol dynamics and emphasized the significance of social media in amplifying youth voices and mobilizing support for progressive causes.

Abdullah Qureshi (2023) explored the challenge and opportunities for youth engagement in Indian politics and excitement factor such as social economic status educational backgrounds and cultural influences that impact youth participation. The study called for embracing

opportunities that leverage technology mentorship and grass root initiatives to youth participation in Indian politics since India's median age is 27.9 years.

Azad Pratap Singh((2017) trust the crucial role played by Indian youth in nation building and suggested fixing retirement age for politicians and minimum educational qualification to entry into the politics.

**Objectives of the study:**

- To understand the need and potential of youth's participation in Indian politics
- Identify the challenges and barriers for youth's Political Participation
- To find out the strategies for increasing youth's Political Participation

**Present scenario of youth participation in Indian political arena:**

Present generation in India is increasingly making its presence in Indian politics. Social media platforms are helpful in this regard to spread developments in the country. Through several civil society groups youth and young professionals are making meaningful contribution to the government and political affairs without associating of any political parties. Many youth lead movements are gaining the center stage which focuses the issue of unemployment, corruption and several social and environmental issues. India is home for one of the world's largest youth populations, with individuals aged 18-35 constituting a significant demographic segment. According to census data, approximately 65% of India's population is under 35 years old, highlighting the potential influence of youth in electoral outcomes and policy formulation. Young voter turnout in Indian elections has been increasing, reflecting growing political awareness and participation. The emergence of youth-led voter mobilization campaigns and initiatives to encourage voter registration have contributed to higher youth representation in electoral processes. Numbers of first time young voters are increasing in every general elections to exercise their civil right. Usually the age group between 18 and 35 is considered as young age to participate in electrol process as a voter and as political leaders.

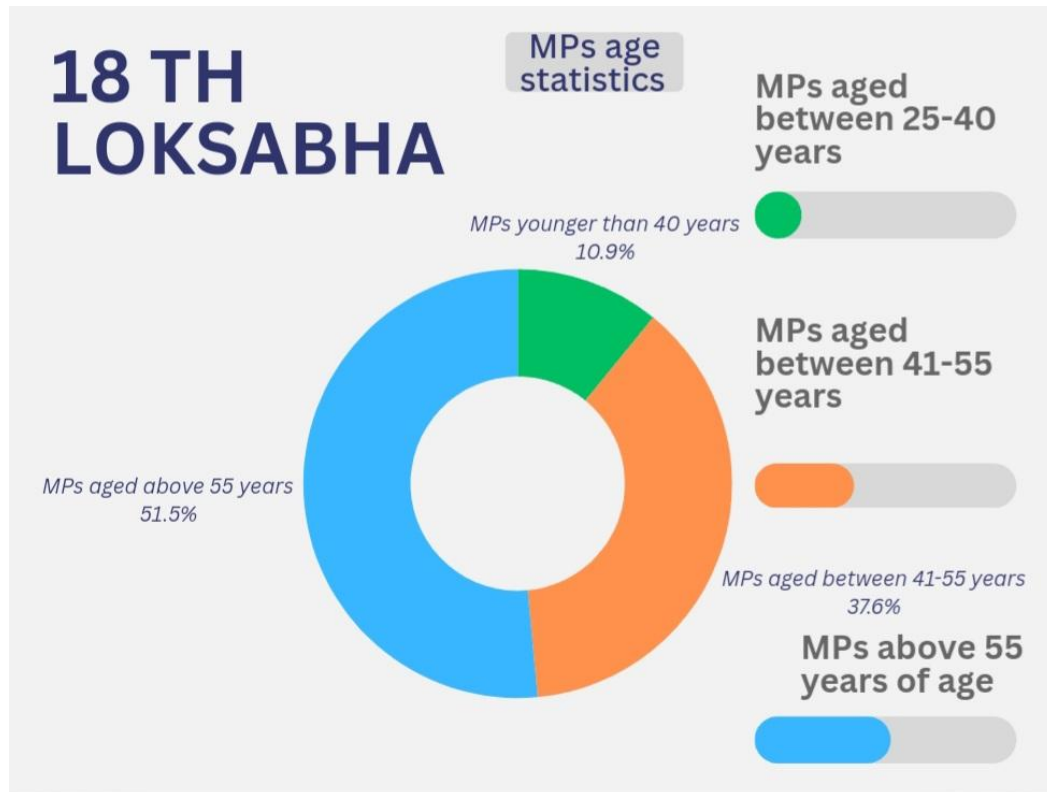
In the following statistical data we can understand the first time voter's enrollment as a voter and political leaders as members of parliament through their age.

**First time voters age data of 2019 and 2024 general Lok Sabha election India**

<b>Lok Sabha elections</b>	<b>Total voters</b>	<b>First time voters between 18 and 19 years</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>912 million</b>	<b>15 million</b>
<b>2024</b>	<b>968.8 million</b>	<b>18.5 million</b>

We can observe growing interest and involvement of youth in Indian politics. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections approximately 15 Million out of 912 million first time voters aged between 18 and 19 years were eligible to vote. Whereas 18.5 million of voters out of 968.8 million people are registered to vote in the 18<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election 2024 are between the ages of 18-19 years. It was 23.3% increase from 2019.

**MP's age statistics of 18<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha**



- Graph created by author

According to the analysis of PRS legislative research, the average age of MP's elected to the 18<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha is 56 years and which was 59 years in the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha. 11% of MPs are 40 years or younger and 38% are between the age of 41 and 55 years of age. 52% of MPS are older than 55 years. The oldest MP is 82 years old and 3 MPs elected to the 18<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election are 25 years old.

The rate of entry into the direct politics as member of parliamentarians shows less number. Challenges such as age restrictions for contesting elections, financial constraints associated with political campaigns, and bureaucratic hurdles hinder youth from entering formal political arenas. Limited opportunities for mentorship and leadership development within political parties also pose barriers to young aspirants.

### **The need of youth political participation in Indian politics:**

- Youth can give innovative and unique insights to solve the several issues faced by our country.
- Youth can become change agents by their creative thinking to address the issues quickly.
- Youth can ensure their voices, concerns, and aspirations are represented in decision-making processes through their political participation.
- Youth empowerment through political participation can help in nation building process.
- Young India through young political leaders can solve socio - political issues of our country.

### **Identifying the barriers that hinder Youths political participation:**

- **Lack of Representation and Influence:** Despite their demographic significance, youth often face marginalization within political structures, where decision-making power remains concentrated among older generations. Limited representation in legislative bodies and policy-making bodies underscores the need for inclusive practices that amplify youth voices.
- **Societal Attitudes and Stereotypes:** Societal perceptions regarding youth competence and readiness for political leadership can discourage young individuals from pursuing political careers. Stereotypes about youth being apathetic or inexperienced in governance contribute to systemic challenges in promoting youth leadership and participation.
- **Financial Constraints:** The high cost associated with political campaigns, including expenses for travel, advertising, and organizing rallies, poses a significant barrier to youth from less affluent backgrounds who may lack access to financial resources or sponsorship.
- **Lack of Political Networks:** Established political parties often prioritize candidates with existing networks and connections within the party hierarchy. Youth without political lineage or familial ties to established politicians find it challenging to gain entry into mainstream political parties and secure nominations.
- **Gender Discrimination:** Gender biases and stereotypes often disadvantage young women in politics. Cultural norms, unequal access to resources, and safety concerns may deter young women from participating actively in political activities or seeking leadership roles within political parties.
- **Limited Representation in Decision-making Bodies:** Despite their demographic significance, youth are often underrepresented in decision-making bodies such as legislative assemblies, local councils, and policy-making committees. Limited opportunities for youth to influence policy agendas and legislative outcomes restrict their impact on governance.
- **Educational Disparities:** Disparities in educational opportunities and levels of political literacy impact youth engagement. Lack of access to quality education and civic education programs may hinder young people's understanding of political processes and their confidence in participating effectively.

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### **Strategies for enhancing youth political participation in India:**

- **Educational Reforms and Civic Education:** Integrating civic education into school curricula and promoting political literacy programs can empower youth with essential knowledge and skills for active citizenship. Educational reforms should emphasize critical thinking, ethical leadership, and civic responsibility to cultivate future political leaders.
- **Institutional Support and Mentorship:** Political parties, civil society organizations, and government institutions should prioritize mentoring programs and leadership training for young aspirants. Creating inclusive platforms and opportunities for youth engagement in decision-making processes can enhance their representation and influence within political systems. Government auspicious National Youth policy is commendable in this regard.
- **Digital Engagement and Outreach:** Harnessing digital platforms for voter education, political campaigns, and community engagement initiatives can broaden youth

participation in political discourse. Innovative use of social media, online forums, and digital storytelling can amplify youth voices and mobilize support for advocacy efforts.

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch nationwide campaigns to raise awareness among youth about their rights, responsibilities, and the impact of political engagement on societal development. The constructive work of Nehru Yuva Kendra in the nation building programs best example in creating political awareness campaigns.
- **Training Workshops:** Organize workshops and seminars focused on leadership skills, public speaking, policy analysis, and campaign management tailored for aspiring young politicians.
- **Internship Programs:** Establish internship opportunities within political parties, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations to provide hands-on experience in policymaking and political operations.
- **Promotion of Youth Wings in Political Parties:** Encourage political parties to actively engage and empower their youth wings by providing leadership roles, decision-making opportunities, and resources for organizing youth-centric campaigns and activities. Create platforms for dialogue and collaboration between youth leaders and senior party members to facilitate mentorship and knowledge-sharing.
- **Youth Participation in Local Governance:** Advocate for policies that promote youth representation in local governance bodies, such as municipal councils and panchayats, through reserved seats or youth advisory councils. Providing support for youth-led community development projects and initiatives that address local issues, fostering a sense of civic responsibility and leadership.

### **Conclusion :**

The influence that young people have on the development of our nation is enormous. They help to mould our nation's destiny and steer it towards great achievements. However, in the process, one of the main elements influencing the nation's development is its political system, which the youth must also work to lead. They must remember that their opinions count and that their involvement in Indian politics has a real impact—as long as they remain true to their goals and don't let outside influences sway them in the wrong direction. Youth participation in Indian politics is both a vital and transformative force within the country's democratic framework. As one of the world's youngest populations, Indian youth possess immense potential to influence political outcomes, advocate for progressive policies, and drive social change. However, realizing this potential requires addressing several barriers, including age restrictions, financial constraints, and socio-cultural challenges. Our exploration underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach to enhance youth engagement in politics. Initiatives such as integrating civic education in schools, promoting youth leadership development programs, leveraging digital platforms, and ensuring representation of marginalized groups are essential steps towards fostering a more inclusive political landscape. The impact of youth participation extends beyond immediate political gains; it strengthens democratic institutions, promotes accountability, and ensures that the voices of future generations are heard and respected. By empowering young Indians to actively engage in political processes, we can cultivate a new generation of informed, responsible, and dynamic leaders who will shape the future of the nation.

In conclusion, the active and meaningful participation of youth in Indian politics is not merely an ideal but a necessity for sustaining and enhancing the democratic ethos of the country. By overcoming existing barriers and implementing strategic measures to support youth engagement, India can harness the energy, creativity, and vision of its young population to build a more vibrant, equitable, and prosperous society.

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