

## **NOTA in India**

### **What is NOTA?**

\n\n

\n

- None Of The Above (NOTA) is a ballot option designed to allow the voter to indicate disapproval of all of the candidates in a voting system.

\n

- It was introduced in India following the 2013 Supreme Court directive in the People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India judgment.

\n

- However, NOTA in India does not provide for a 'right to reject'.

\n

- The candidate with the maximum votes wins the election irrespective of the number of NOTA votes polled.

\n

\n\n

### **What is the current pattern of NOTA?**

\n\n

\n

- NOTA polling figures are still small.

\n

- In the 2013 Assembly elections held in four States NOTA constituted 1.85% of the total votes polled.

\n

- Then it dropped to 0.95% in the 2014 Assembly elections held in eight States.

\n

- It increased to 2.02% in the 2015 Assembly elections held in Delhi and Bihar. While Delhi polled a mere 0.40%, Bihar saw 2.49% of NOTA votes, which remains the highest NOTA votes polled so far in any State in Assembly elections.

\n

- The number of NOTA votes polled was larger than the winning margin in 261 Assembly constituencies and in 24 constituencies in the Lok Sabha elections since 2013.

\n

- Therefore in these constituencies the NOTA votes did make a difference to the election results.  
\n
- **Reserved constituencies** - Reserved constituencies have seen a relatively larger number of NOTA votes. This points to the continued social prejudice against political reservation for SC/STs.  
\n
- **Left-Wing Areas** - Constituencies affected by left-wing extremism have also recorded higher NOTA performance and here probably it served as an instrument of protest against the State itself.  
\n
- **Mainstream Parties** - It is comparatively higher in the constituencies which have seen a direct contest between the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party. This might be some indication of the people's disenchantment with two mainstream political parties.  
\n
- NOTA is also used to express their protest against many things they perceive wrong in the political system.  
\n

\n\n

### **What is the way ahead?**

\n\n

- So far, a small number of Indian voters have come to see NOTA as an instrument of protest.  
\n
- The perceived cynicism of Indian voters against the political class thus seems exaggerated.  
\n
- Nevertheless, it is important to note that these voters have used the democratic means of NOTA to express their resentment rather than boycotting the polls outright.  
\n
- This electoral option will become a meaningful means of negative voting only if it becomes a 'right to reject' rather than being a symbolic instrument to express resentment as it is now.  
\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n

