

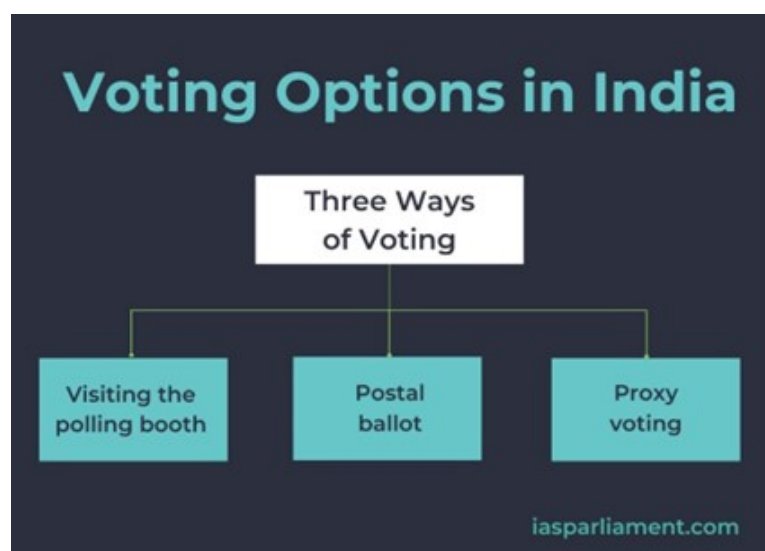
## Postal Ballot

### Why in news?

Recently, in Madhya Pradesh, an opposition party confronted election officials for opening the strong room where postal ballots had been stored.

### What options are available for voting in India?

- **Visiting the poll booth** - A person will visit the polling booth to exercise his/her franchise.
- **Postal ballots** - A voter exercises his/her franchise through post.
- **Proxy voting** - The person can authorize another residing in the same polling booth area to cast a vote on his/her behalf.



### What is postal vote ballot?

Features	Postal Vote Ballot
Postal ballot voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It refers to the <i>distribution of ballot papers to registered voters by post</i> instead of people coming to the polling booth directly to vote.</li> <li>• These votes are returned in the post or handed in person in the elections office or at a polling station</li> </ul>
Applicable to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service voters</li> <li>• Special voters</li> <li>• Absentee voters</li> <li>• Voters on election duty</li> <li>• Electors under preventive detention</li> </ul>

<b>Service voters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service voter includes a member of the Armed Forces of the Union, Armed Police Force of a State or employed under the Government of India.</li> <li>• They can cast their votes either through postal ballot or through a proxy voter.</li> <li>• A voter who opts to vote through a proxy is called a <i>Classified Service Voter</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Special voters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It includes President of India, Vice President, Governors, Union Cabinet ministers, Speaker of the House and government officers on poll duty.</li> </ul>
<b>Absentee voters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are voters employed in <i>essential services</i> and unable to cast their vote due to their service conditions.</li> <li>• <b>Notified voters</b>- Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, Northern Railway (Passenger and Freight) Services and media persons.</li> <li>• Senior citizens <i>above 80 years of age</i> and those belonging to the category of physically disabled (<i>PWD</i>).</li> <li>• COVID-19 infected or suspected patients.</li> </ul>
<b>Electronically Transmitted Post Ballot System (ETPBS)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through this system, the service voters cast their vote on an electronically received postal ballot, from anywhere outside their constituency.</li> <li>• It is a fully secured system, having 2 security layers - <i>OTP and PIN</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Launched by</b> - <i>Election Commission of India</i> with the help of Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).</li> <li>• <b>Applicable for</b> - Service voters</li> <li>• <b>Motto</b> - "No voter to be left behind"</li> </ul>	

### What is the procedure for storing postal voting ballot system?

- **Casting of votes**- Voters who are eligible for postal ballots can cast their votes at facilitation centres or by post.
- The ballots are collected daily and stored in a strong room by the Returning Officer (RO).
- **Transfer of ballots**- The RO informs the candidates when the postal ballots will be moved from one strong room to another.
- The postal ballots are taken out of the strong room in front of the candidates or their agents, put in a steel box and sealed.
- **Opening of ballots** - The steel box is escorted by armed CPF to the strong room at the counting centre a day before counting and opened in the presence of candidates or their representatives.

### What are the issues with postal ballot?

- **Tampering of votes**- They are vulnerable to being altered, stolen, or forged by malicious actors.
- **Time constraints**- They may cause delays in counting and declaring the results due to the time required to process and verify them.
- **Violates privacy**- They may violate the voting confidentiality and expose the voters to undue influence or coercion by others.
- **Complexity**- They may impose unequal burdens and consequences on different groups

of voters depending on their literacy, accessibility, and availability of postal services.

## Quick facts

### Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)

- It is an [electronic device](#) for recording votes that consists of 2 units – a Control Unit and a Balloting Unit.
- It was introduced in *Parur Assembly Constituency* of Kerala in the year 1982.
- **Developed by-** State-owned Electronics Corporation of India and Bharat Electronics Limited

### Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)

- It is an independent system attached to an EVM.
- It acts as a second line of verification and allows the voters to verify that their votes are cast as intended.
- When a vote is cast, a slip is printed on the [VVPAT](#) printer containing the *serial number, name and symbol* of the candidate voted.
- This remains visible through a *transparent window* for **7 seconds**.
- The printed slip automatically gets cut and falls into a sealed drop box which can be counted if needed.

**Related links** - [Transfer of EVMs](#)

## References

1. [Indian Express- How EVMs, Postal EVMs stored](#)
2. [ECI- Procedure to vote through postal ballots](#)

