

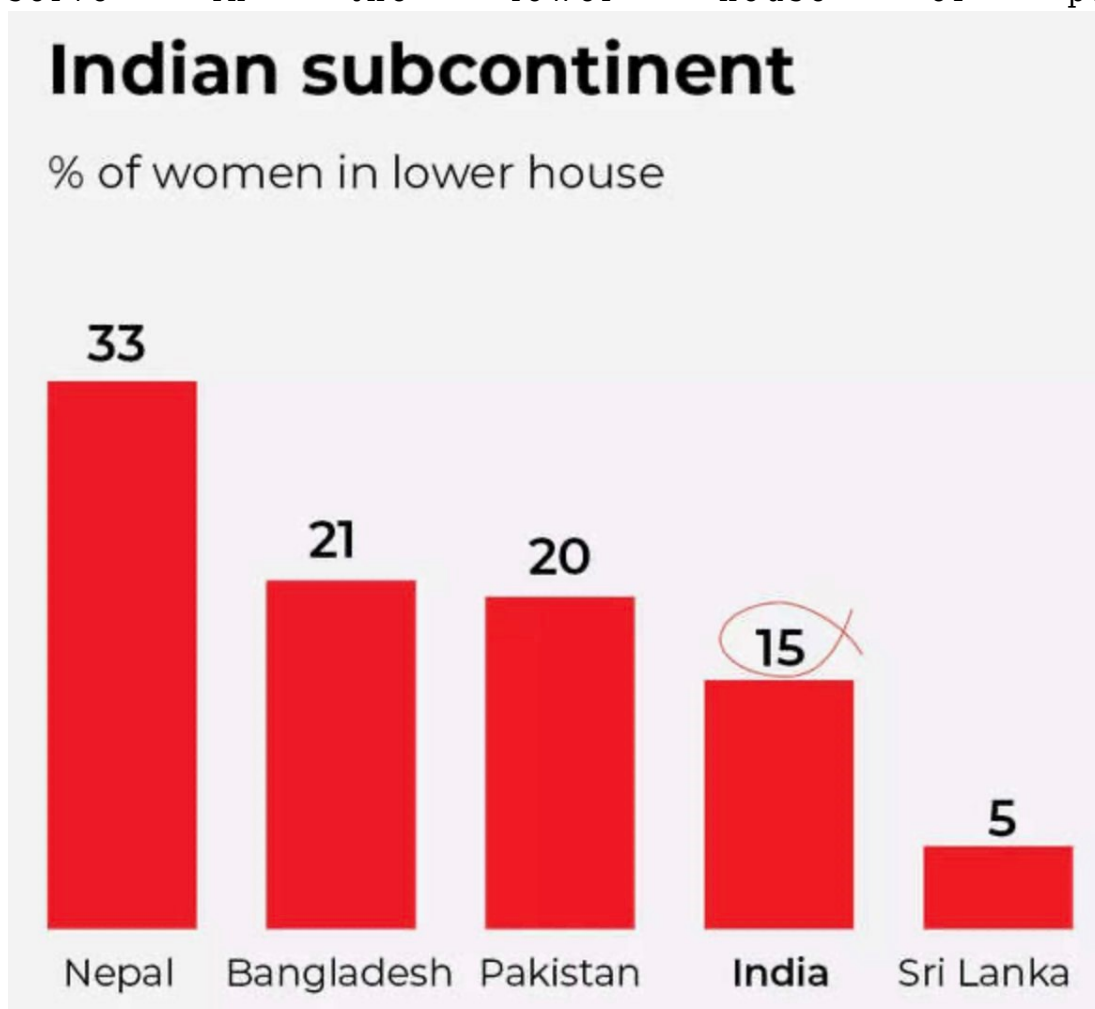
Women's Participation in Politics

Why in news?

Over the years, Lok Sabha's gender composition has shown a general trend towards increasing women's representation, but progress has been slow and not linear.

What is the current trend of women's participation in politics?

- In 1952, women made up just 4.41% of the strength of the Lower House.
- India has elected **74 women MPs to Lok Sabha this year**, four fewer than in 2019 and 52 more than in India's first elections in 1952.
- These 74 women make just 13.63% of the elected strength of the Lower House, much less than the **33% that will be reserved** for women after the next delimitation exercise.
- India was ranked **149th out of 193 nations** in terms of the percentage of women who serve in the lower house of parliament.



- In the **Global Gender Gap Report 2023**, India ranked **127th out of 146 countries**.

- **Global study-** India still lags behind several countries 46% of MPs in South Africa, 35% in the UK, and 29% in the US, are women.
- **Asia specific study-** IPU data of 2022 showed that women's representation in Nepal was 34 percent, in Bangladesh 21%, in Pakistan 20%, in Bhutan 17% and in Sri Lanka 5%.

What are the major challenges regarding women's Participation in politics?

- **Patriarchal society-** India is a traditionally patriarchal society where women often face societal pressure to conform to traditional roles of homemaking and caregiving, which limits their participation in public life, including politics.
- **Lack of support-** Women often lack support from their families and communities to pursue political ambitions due to entrenched gender biases.
- **Under-representation-** Despite the Preamble providing for equality as one of the objectives and inclusion of fundamental rights, directives principles, **Art. 324, Art 325, Art 326** the representation of women in electoral politics is not up to the mark.
- **Societal issues:** The various reasons of low women representation in politics are patriarchal mindset with male domination of most fields, women being viewed as homemaker only, child bearing role is emphasised as the most important priority of women, absence of equal opportunities etc.
- **Lack of political will-** Political parties are reluctant to distribute tickets to female contestants as they are considered weak by the society thus reducing the chances of winning election.
- **Sarpanch pati concept-** The reservation to women in Panchayats and urban local bodies through 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments respectively have bestowed women with an opportunity to participate in politics at village and local levels though the problems such as Sarpanch pati can't be neglected.
- **Illiteracy-** In India, women have a literacy rate of 65% compared to men's 82%.
- **Employment disparities-** Women in India generally have lower levels of employment and income, which reduces their capacity to fund political campaigns and activities.
- **Slander and abuse:** This is one of the primary barriers that prevent women from running in elections that they encounter during campaigning. Lack of safety is the additional factor stated.

Global regulatory landscape of women in politics

- **Chile-** The committee rewriting the constitution has 50% women members.
- **Switzerland-** 42% of those elected to lower house are women.
- **Zipper method-** It is used in Rwanda where every third position in the party is set aside for women, such adjustments can be made for improved outcomes.

What should be done?

- The increased representation of women in politics ensures not only women empowerment but also *betterment of society at large*.
- Women's participation in decision making can result in increased efforts to *reduce infant mortality, maternal mortality, anemia, malnourishment* and various other challenges related particularly to women and children.
- The need of the hour is to bring about *behavioural change through socialization*

process with significant role being played by family, school, peers.

- **128th Amendment Act, 2023** also called as Women reservation Act is rightly perceived as a powerful and indispensable tool for eliminating gender inequality and discrimination.

Constitutional rights of women

- **Right to equality**- The Constitution guarantees that women have the same rights as men, and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. This means that women have the right to equal pay for equal work, and are entitled to the same opportunities for education, employment, and property ownership as men.
- **Right to education**- Women have the right to education and the state is directed to make efforts to provide free and compulsory education to children up to the age of 14.
- **Right to vote**: Women have the right to vote and participate in the political process, and are entitled to be represented in the government.
- **Right to property**: Women have the right to own and inherit property, and are protected against discriminatory inheritance laws.
- **Right to work**-Women have the right to work and choose their occupation, and are entitled to equal pay and working conditions as men.
- **Right to be protected against domestic violence**: Indian law provides for the protection of women from domestic violence, and the government is required to take measures to protect women from such violence.
- **Right to constitutional remedies**: Women have the right to seek remedies for any violation of their rights through the courts, and can challenge any discriminatory laws or practices.
- **Special provisions for women in the Constitution**: Article 15(3) of the Indian Constitution allows the state to make any special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Article 15(4)**- It allows the state to make special provisions for women and children
- **Right to Maternity Relief**- Women are entitled to Maternity Relief under the Maternity Benefit Act, of 1961.
- **Right to live with dignity**- The Constitution guarantees the right to live with dignity and freedom from exploitation to all citizens, including women.

References

1. [Indian Express- Representation of women](#)
2. [IJPSCG- Women's participation in politics in India](#)