

Indian Youth and Politics

An Emerging Engagement

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Indian Youth as a category is extremely complex and difficult to ascertain at a time when there is no general consensus yet amongst scholars on its minimal definition. The importance of youth as a demographic category due to its sheer size in the subcontinent is undeniable. The young (those in the age group of 15 to 24 years) make up about one - fifth of the total population of the country, projection for 2011 suggested a population 240 million of them ¹ and according to various estimates by 2020 the average age of the country would be 29 years². This demographic bulge has been of interest to economists and demographers for some time now. The assumption that this bulge will have ramifications in the socio – political world is a result of viewing youth as a homogenous category. By using a cross sectional survey of youth as a backbone of this study we shift away from the homogenous definition of the category of youth and reveal youth as a demographic category which is differentiated on basis of their socio- economic location in the society. The study is a comparative exercise juxtaposing the young and the older generation, and an overtime analysis of certain aspects of youth.

Contrasting the demographic importance vis a vis political opinions of the youth is the revelation of the fact that youth as a political community, distinct, solely on the basis of their age has as yet not emerged. On various parameters the young continue to think and act in ways similar to the older generation. In the political arena youth do not have choices which unite them despite their social co ordinates. In other words political choices of the youth are determined by factors other than age such as location, caste, education attainment and class. This in turn deters youth across the country to identify with choices that are specific to young people. Voting patterns analysed in this study suggest that youth per se do not show leanings towards any single political ideology or affiliate themselves with any political party in particular which would distinguish them from their older counterparts located within the same socio – political co ordinates. Locality, class and level of education and gender intersect with the variable of age creating a matrix which reflects diversity rather than uniformity of thought and action within the category of youth.

Factors affecting diversity of opinions among youth are not only limited to those mentioned above, rather age itself seems to be creating an effect profound enough on various counts, for us to believe that on certain issues the category of youth (defined in this report as those between 18 to 33 years) can be further divided into two separate age segments – the younger group consisting of all those aged 18 to 25 years and a more mature segment of those aged between 26 years to 33 years. We are yet to ascertain whether this is an age or a period effect but on a number of significant parameters like participation in politics, interest in politics and ideas regarding electoral reforms youth in the age group of 26 to 33 years voice opinions rather distinct from the younger age group. It is difficult to determine whether this age group behaves more like those above the age of 33 or are more aligned with the youngest segment due to lack of any such consistency. However the distinctness of their opinion on certain occasions and the significant juncture of socialization in terms of their life cycle that they presently find themselves highlight their importance as a sub group of youth which needs further attention.



Not only is the category of youth wrought with diversity but also with internal contradictions especially when arena of ideas is contrasted with that of actual action. While participation in voting remains consistent across time, interests in politics is observed as rising among youth over the years. To further engage with this idea, while youth political leadership as an idea is strongly supported by the youth, across all constituencies with young leaders in the run, the youth voter turnout either remains comparable to the overall turnout or dips lower in some cases. Support for the idea of a young leadership does not seem enough to mobilize the young to exercise their vote even in situations where young candidates are contesting elections.

What here is suggested as a gap between ideation and action could also in turn be conceptualized as a specific emerging engagement of the youth with politics at an ideation level. Three indicators observed across various facets of this study strongly suggest the same. Youth across categories are a lot more opinionated than their older counterparts. Secondly the support for young political leadership and finally an overwhelming agreement with the idea of electoral reforms such as right to reject and the right to recall seem to suggest a certain unity within the ideas of youth. Young political leadership and electoral reforms prove as significant nodes where this faint and as yet emerging engagement between the arena of politics and country's young can be further strengthened.

Gender matters. We cannot say this more emphatically, as across themes – interest, participation and opinions, women and men continue to occupy different worlds both on the arena of ideas and more so in the arena of action. While instruments of modernization like education and exposure to media, help to a limited extent, in making women more opinionated however none of these factors have any significant impact upon women when it comes to actual participation in public sphere. Far less young women as compared to young men participate in protests or demonstrations or in any electoral activities. Though a number of women have political aspirations, this is lower than that of young men. The fact of invisibility of young women from the public sphere, whether physical or ideational, and more so among the world of politics stands unchallenged as according to our study.

While studying youth, it seems one cannot over emphasise the importance of studying the effect of media on the youth. Exposure to media instantly raises awareness about political events, interest in politics, makes one opinionated regarding electoral reforms and greater support for young political leadership. The importance of media exposure lies in the fact that it has an instantaneous impact on an individual rather than gradual. The sudden increase in proportion of respondents aware about political events, having opinion on political reforms or having interest in politics between those not exposed to media and those having low media exposure is unmatched and far beyond the impact of education or urbanization.

As evident this particular study is an exploration in the world of youth through tapping their attitudes, perceptions and behaviour. It is a systematic study of the opinions of the young on topics such as political awareness, interest and level of



participation in politics, voting pattern, political leadership by the young and ideas on electoral reforms.


The first section tries to answer two preliminary questions of the why and how nature. It describes the rationale and methodology of the study. The study is conducted at a significant juncture when the media at a frenzied pace has been highlighting the issue of young leaders in politics.

Section 2 traces changing patterns and profiles of young members of parliament with regard to their level of educational attainment, caste background, gender, and other such variables. The result of the inquiry was that no significant change in proportion of young MPs in parliament in recent years as hyped by media was found; rather the number of young MPs has declined compared to early years. The 15th Lok Sabha is only significant due to an increase in numbers of young MPs with higher level of educational qualification and increased proportion of women parliamentarians in Lok Sabha.

The level of awareness of Indian youth about current political events and political institutions is explored in section three. The study indicates that youth are more aware about political events compared to those older than them. Higher awareness is not merely a function of the young being more educated as compared to the rest, since even with similar level of education, youth as compared to their older counterparts rank higher on awareness. Young men are more aware compared to young women and this too is not merely due to a difference in the level of education attainment. Urban youth are more aware compared to rural youth across education categories. This shows that gender and locality matter in the attainment of awareness about political events in the country.

Section 4 focuses on the important issue of interest in politics and political participation amongst Indian youth. While interest in politics among youth is rising, electoral participation in terms of youth voter turnout has remained consistent ever since. Participation in electoral and extra electoral activities like protests and demonstrations seems to be on rise though. Again gender matters; political participation is lower amongst young women compared to young men. This difference remains despite of women being urbanised and educated. Attaining education does not necessarily increase the presence of women in the political sphere. Overall urban youth is more interested in politics but rural youth outnumber urban youth in political participation.

In section 5, an effort has been made to analyse voting patterns of Indian youth over a period of time (1996-2009). The analyses have been done with the help of the data collected by the National Election Study conducted by CSDS after every Lok Sabha elections since 1996. The voting pattern of the youth is not very different from voters of other age group; they do not seem to be inclined for or against any political party in particular. The mid 1990's witnessed a distinct shift of the youth towards the BJP, (1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha election) more amongst the urban, and educated youth. But BJP seems to have lost its advantage amongst the urban and educated youth in recent years. The gender divide is quite evident amongst



the youth, young women are more in favor of the Congress while the young men more inclined towards the BJP.

The idea of political leadership by the young and the proposition that young political candidates make a difference in attitudes, perceptions and participation of the voters in elections more so amongst the young voters are studies in section 6. There is a preference for the young candidate amongst all voters across age groups however youth are more supportive of the young candidate compared to the older age groups of voters. Over all young respondents evaluate the young candidates more positively compared to the older candidate in-terms of taking care of voters in their constituency. While all are in principle against dynasty politics when it is between choosing young dynastic leader over an old non dynastic one, young leader seem to be a unanimous choice. However very few admit to the idea that young age of a candidate can be a sole attribute or the most important one for electing a candidate.

Ideas and opinions of youth about reforms in the electoral process are discussed in section 7. If there is an issue on which youth across age, gender, and level of educational attainment come together, it is in their support for ideas of electoral reforms. While the various kinds of ideas or proposed electoral reforms get approval both amongst the youth and the older age groups, the support for such proposed reform is more amongst the youth as compared to people from older age groups. The proposed electoral reforms get greater approval amongst the urban and educated youth. There is more support, than opposition for all four electoral reform ideas suggested in the survey. The consensus upon right to recall is highest among both the young and older age group whereas the support for setting an upper age limit of 65 years for contesting elections is the lowest, among both young and old.

The last chapter is about political aspirations of the young of the country. It analyses responses to the question asked in the survey- if given an opportunity would one like to make politics their career. A sizeable proportion of youth want to take up politics as their career. Amongst those who are unwilling to take up politics as career, large proportion see lack of their acquaintance with political leaders and their not belonging to any political family as a serious bottleneck.

► Notes

1. Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2009). A Profile of Youth in India. [Online] Available from <http://measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/OD59/OD59.pdf> [Accessed on 19/2/2012]
2. C P Chandrasekhar, Jayati Ghosh and Anamitra Roychowdhury (December 9, 2006) 'The 'Demographic Dividend' and Young India's Economic Future' Economic and Political Weekly, [Online] Available from http://www.eledu.net/rrcusrn_data/The%20%E2%80%98Demographic%20Dividend%E2%80%99%20and%20Young%20India%E2%80%99s%20Economic%20Future.pdf [Accessed on 19/2/2012]

SECTION: 01

Purpose and Methodology of the Study



SECTION: 01

Purpose and Methodology of the Study

The distinctiveness of the youth vote in India has been much debated by the media especially after the 2009 Lok Sabha election. However, there are few comprehensive studies mapping the trends of youth's political participation and their opinions over-time on pertinent issues. In light of this lacuna in the research debate, the aim of this study is to describe the patterns of youth participation in electoral and democratic processes in India over the years. In addition, this study also provides a discussion on the evolving changes in political opinions and attitudes amongst the youth in the country.

► Broadly, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the trends and patterns of young politicians elected to the Lok Sabha over the past six decades?
2. How aware are the youth and non-youth about recent political events? How frequently do they discuss politics, political events, and the work done by political institutions and actors?
3. How is youth involvement with politics distinct from that of non-youth? How different are youth from one another regarding their political participation and interest?
4. What are the patterns in youth electoral participation as measured by their propensity to vote? What is the level of turnout amongst youth compared to the rest of the population?
5. Is the preference for a political party amongst youth different from the rest of the voters? Have political preferences amongst youth changed over a longer period of time?
6. Is a candidate's age a valued attribute among the electorate?
7. Does the youth have distinct opinions and attitudes regarding the democratic process and electoral reforms?
8. Is the Indian youth attracted towards politics? What is their opinion on politics as a career option?



► The NES Advantage

National Election Study (NES) post-poll surveys, conducted by CSDS, covering the five General Elections between 1996 and 2009 are the longest unbroken chain of post-election surveys in India. These datasets have the advantage of providing an over-time view of political and electoral participation. The NES surveys enquire about voting choices and turnout as well as various attitudinal questions. Moreover, the comprehensive ‘background’ information on each respondent allows for a more in-depth demographic analyses compared to analysis that can be conducted with aggregate data on voting patterns alone. For a better understanding of the political participation of the youth over time, we have situated this current youth study within the previous NES studies so that we are able to carve out the changing trend and pattern of the youth. For example, in section 5 of this report, we have used the voting preference for the political parties between 1996 and 2009 to indicate that electoral choice and party preference of youth are not consistent among this age group but show a wide variation. The NES studies were conducted among cross section of constituencies and it was found that the youth has not yet emerged as a distinct political category. In terms of political participation and attitudes, youth are similar to other age groups.

► Methodology

The study was conducted using three research pathways namely survey, focus group discussions and in-depth

interviews amongst young Members of Parliament (MPs).

The Survey

Earlier NES studies indicate that political opinions, attitudes and political participation of the youth across constituencies are not different compared to others. However, it is largely seen in the last few elections that the youth have a lower electoral participation compared to the others. One common explanation given by many is that the quality of a candidate matters more to the young voters than the seniors. A shared belief is that the youth may be more inclined to vote for younger candidates contesting elections. In order to test this belief and look at other issues mentioned earlier, we decided to conduct this study only in constituencies which elected a young Member of Parliament during the 2009 Lok Sabha election or in the constituencies where a young candidate was “runner up” in the electoral race. Here, the young candidate is defined as someone who was between the ages of 25 to 40 years when he/she got elected to the parliament during the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. A careful analysis of the age of all the winners and runner up candidates during the 2009 Lok Sabha indicated that there were 140 such Lok Sabha constituencies where the young candidate (25 to 40 years of age) either got elected or were runners-up. Since it was not feasible to conduct the study in all these 140 constituencies, we conducted the study in 10 percent of these constituencies, which is equal to 14 Lok Sabha constituencies. These 14 Lok Sabha constituencies were selected randomly.¹

Having randomly selected our 14 Lok Sabha seats for the survey, we then selected two assembly segments in each selected Lok Sabha constituency. Thereafter we selected four polling stations in each selected assembly constituency. The selection of polling booths within the assembly constituencies helped us in locating the villages and the location in urban areas where the survey was to be undertaken.

The final stage in sample selection was of the people whom we wanted to interview. The sample of respondents who were to be interviewed was drawn from the most recent electoral rolls of each sampled seat. Since the study was to be conducted amongst those above the age of 18 (who have voting rights), this was the best method (list of voters) available to us for the sampling of voters in each location. At every selected location we selected 22 voters for the interview. Keeping in mind that we may not be able to interview all the voters

selected for the interview for various reasons (non response, absence of respondent, refusal etc.), we therefore oversampled the voters. We hoped that on an average, we should be able to interview about 14 to 15 voters at each selected location. Of the total 22 voters selected for interview at each location, two-third were in the age group 18 to 33 (Youth) while one third were voters who were 34 years of age or more. A total of 3700 voters were selected out of which 2352 voters were successfully interviewed. All the interviews were conducted at voters' houses or their place of work, using a questionnaire with closed ended questions on the topic of politics, participation in politics and elections, political preferences, opinion on electoral reforms, opinion on dynasty politics and their views about choosing politics as their career. Profile of the voters who were interviewed in the survey is shown in Table 1.1.

1.1: Profile of Voters who were interviewed in the survey

| Categories | Youth | Others |
|------------------|-------|--------|
| Male | 57 | 54 |
| Female | 43 | 46 |
| Hindus | 88 | 88 |
| Muslims | 8 | 8 |
| Scheduled Castes | 25 | 22 |
| Scheduled Tribes | 5 | 6 |

Note: All figures are in percent.

Focus Group Discussions

Further we conducted four focus group discussions (Ajmer, Sonapat, Mathura and Delhi) to help us understand in detail the perception and attitude of the youth towards politics. The focus group discussion at Ajmer was conducted amongst college students and student leaders, while the focus group discussion in Delhi was conducted only amongst student leaders. The two other focus group discussions were held amongst voters cutting across different age groups. This was intentionally done to obtain views and perceptions of even those who are above the age of 34 years on issues related to youth and politics.


Detailed Interview of Young Members of Parliament

In addition to the survey and focus group discussions, detailed interviews with young MPs elected to the 15th Lok Sabha were conducted. This helped us understand the views of the young MPs about questions related to youth and politics, and thereby juxtapose the reaction of the young Members of the Parliament with that of the young voters. The young MPs who formed a part of the current study were asked whether they believe that their young age helped in mobilising voters, especially young voters in their favour; or if they think that their age hardly had an effect on voters' choices? This helped us understand whether youth as a category makes any effect on how India votes. A number of young Members of Parliament who were between 25 to 40 years during the 2009 Lok Sabha

elections were approached. Interviews were conducted with eight young MPs who spared their time to talk to our researcher in great detail.

► Definition of Youth for the CSDS Study

According to the Government of India (Department of Youth Affairs and Sports) the youth is the group between the ages of 13 to 35 years.² However, for the purpose of this study, the youth is defined as those between the ages of 18 to 33 years.³ The rationale for choosing 18 years as minimum age is because it is the minimum voting age in India.⁴ We have juxtaposed our findings of the youth in comparison to those who are 34 years and above, and have been referred to as “others”. Comparison is provided with those aged 34 and above to better understand if the trend and political participation of the youth differ from rest of the population. For our analysis, we have further subdivided the youth into those who are very young, within the age group 18 and 25 years old and not so young between the age group of 26 and 33 years old, within the larger category of youth. Terms youth and young have been interchangeably used throughout the sections of the study to mean all those respondents in the age group of 18 to 33. Youth leaders or young leaders as terms have also been interchangeably used. The age definition for young leaders in this study is all those in the age group of 25 to 40 years. Terms older respondents, senior respondents, other respondents, non-youth respondents have been interchangeably used throughout



the sections of the study to mean all those respondents in the age group of 34 years and above. Senior leaders or older leaders as terms have also been interchangeably used. The age definition for senior leaders in this study is all those in the age group 41 years and above.

► Notes

1. 14 Lok Sabha constituencies where the survey was conducted: Vijaywada, Supaul, Sonipat, Alathur, Khandwa, Sangli, Sambalpur, Jalore, Thoothukkudi, Badaun, Jaunpur, Lalganj, Bishnupur and Rajnandgaon.
2. The National Youth Policy, 2003 covers “all the youth in the country in the age group of 13 to 35 years”. [Online], Available from <http://yas.nic.in/index3.asp?sslid=73&sublinkid=9&langid=1> ; [Accessed on 15/12/2011]
3. It is not possible to take an age-band younger than 18, as the NES datasets are election studies and hence restricted to the voting age population.
4. After independence the voting rights were given to those above the age of 21 years, but it was by the Constitution Amendment (61st amendment) Act, 1989 that the voting age was lowered from 21 years to 18 years. This was done with a view to encourage more active political participation of the Indian youth.

SECTION: 02

Social Profile of Young Members of Parliament

Changing Trends



SECTION: 02

Social Profile of Young Members of Parliament: Changing Trends

The 2009 Lok Sabha election saw the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) headed by the Congress return to power for a second consecutive term. The post-election media coverage had analysed the Congress-led UPA's victory in terms of a 'youth factor' and attributed UPA's win to younger political leaders. In reality however, the composition of the 15th Lok Sabha in terms of age is no different than that of the previous 14th Lok Sabha. Moreover, the total numerical strength of young MPs continues to be the second lowest ever. In order to understand the changing social profile of the young MPs, this section explains the trends and patterns of young politicians elected to the Lok Sabha over the past six decades. This exercise may also be helpful to understand the dynamics underlying participation of youth in politics as well as prospect of transformation in political representation.

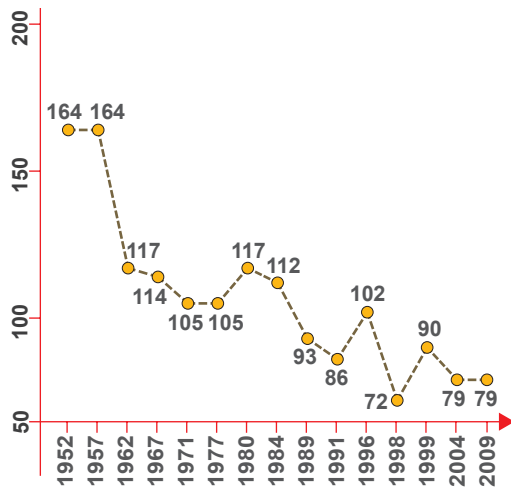
► The Trend

A study of the composition of all the fifteen Lok Sabhas till date shows varying trends. The first two Lok Sabhas (1952 and 1957) saw as many as 164 young MPs (those aged between 25 and 40

years) getting elected, the highest ever. While there were fluctuations in the numerical strength of young MPs in successive elections between 1962 and 1984, what is significant is that the figure of young MPs never went below 100 during this period. In contrast, from 1989 to 2009, the numbers have always remained below hundred, with the exception of the year 1996 when it was 102. Both the 14th and the 15th Lok Sabha, saw the second lowest number of young MPs getting elected, the lowest being in the 12th Lok Sabha at 72 (Figure 2.1). During the last seven Lok Sabhas (1989-2009) the share of young members does not cross one-fifth of the total strength of the Lok Sabha, highest being 18 percent in 1996. In the 15th Lok Sabha, 79 out of a total of 543 elected members are from the age group of 25 and 40 years (defined in this report as young leaders), which is approximately over one-tenth of the total strength. Not only is the share of young members rather low, their number has remained in a state of flux over the last seven elections.

If we look at the proportion of young MPs in different age-categories since 1952, we see that the highest percent-

2.1: Number of young MPs decreasing with time

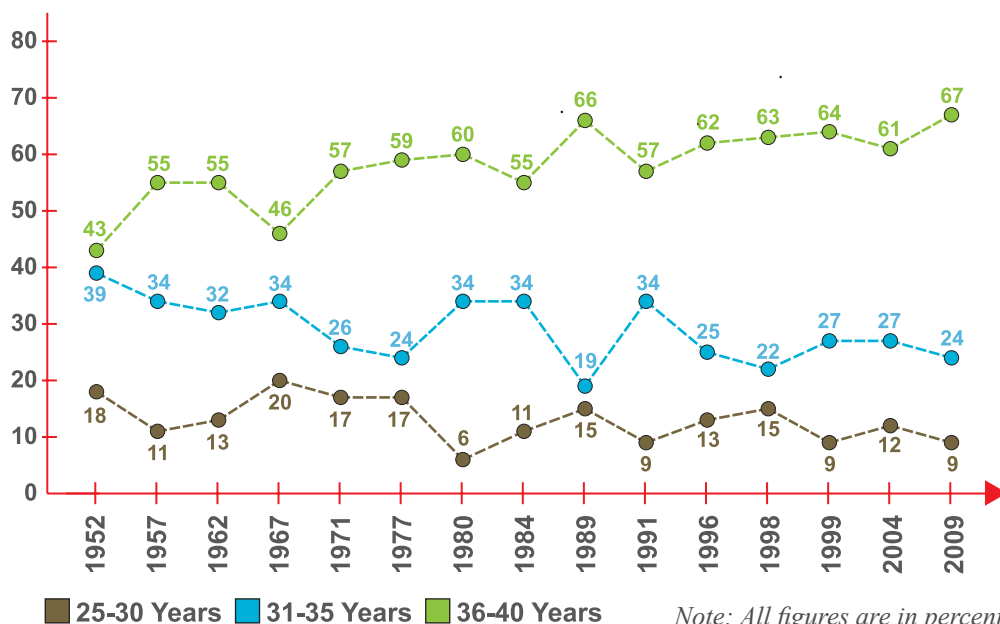


age is in the age group of 36 to 40 years, followed by 31 to 35 years, and then a comparatively smaller proportion is in the youngest age category of 25 to 30

years. The percentage of young MPs in the age group of 25 to 30 years has dropped from 18 percent in 1952 to 9 percent in 2009 (It was the highest at 20 percent in 1967). On the other hand the percentage of young MPs in the age group of 36 to 40 years has increased from 43 percent in 1952 to 67 percent in 2009, the second highest so far (It was the highest in 1989 at 66 percent). This trend shows that young MPs are not that young (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.3 depicts the average age of MPs over the years and shows that it has continued to rise. The average age of the current Lok Sabha is 53.03 years, making it the second oldest House, the oldest being the 14th Lok Sabha with an average age of 53.13 years. If we look at it in terms of gender, we find that while the average age of male MPs

2.2: Young MPs are not that young



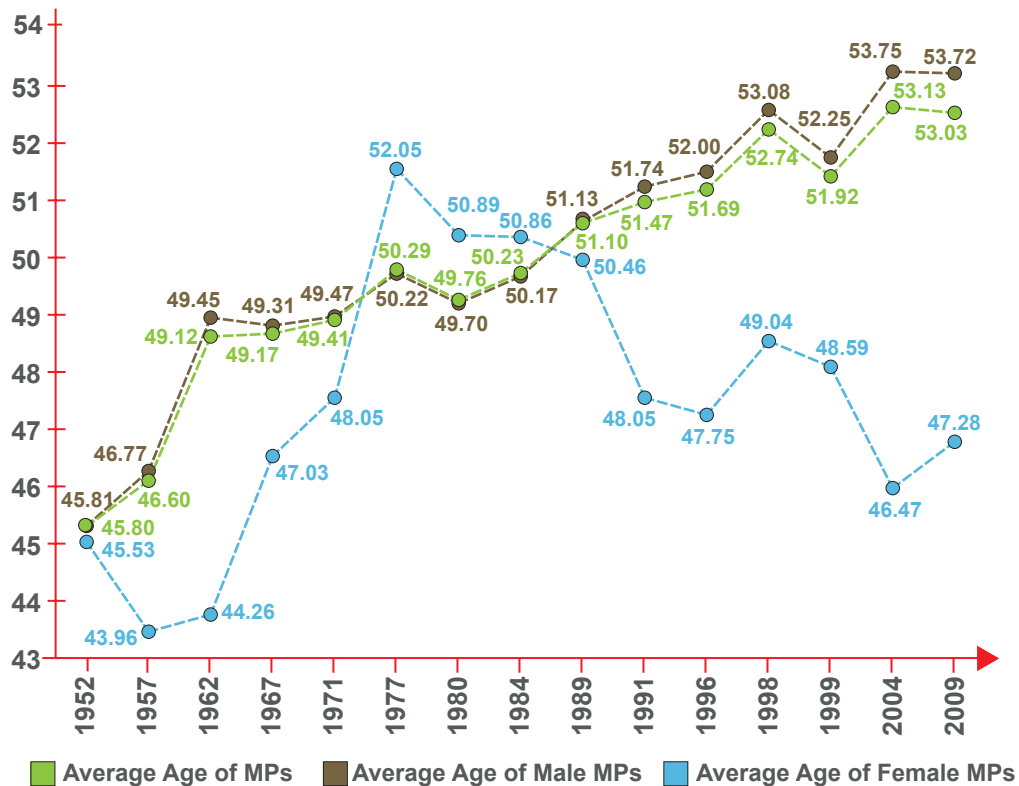
has gone up over the years, the average age of women MPs has declined, barring the period between 1977 and 1989, when it crossed 50 years. In other elections however, the average age of women MPs remained in the 40s and has in fact reduced in every election since 1998.

If we analyse in terms of the localities (rural and urban) from which young MPs have been elected since 1952, we see no clear trend till 1984. However in every election thereafter, except 2009, young MPs got elected mostly from urban constituencies. In the 15th Lok

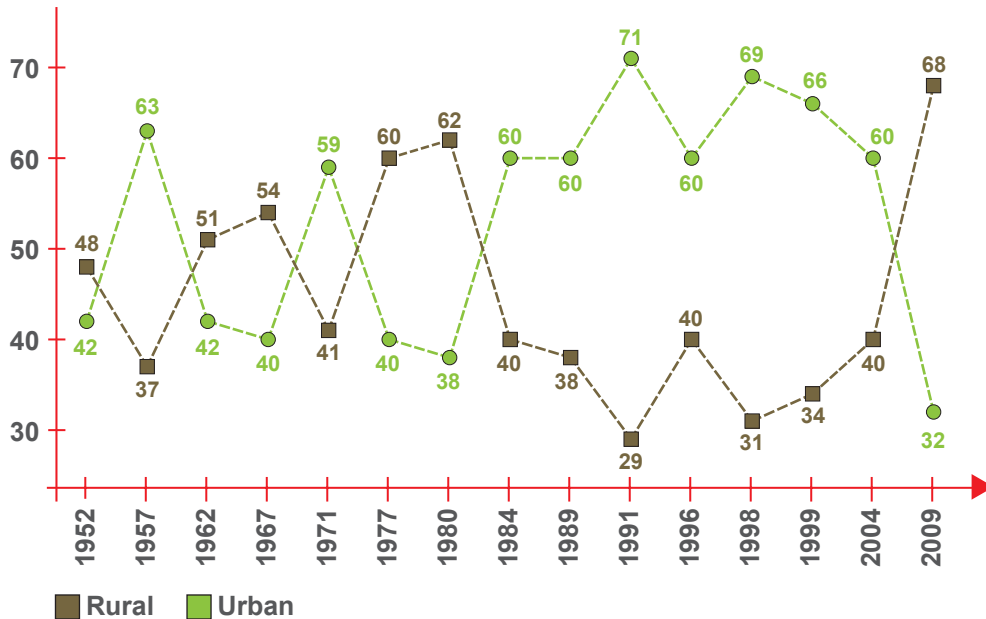
Sabha the trend was reversed with more young MPs getting elected from rural seats (Figure 2.4).

The educational qualification of young MPs has gradually risen over the years. In the present (15th) Lok Sabha, while there is a sharp decline in the proportion of graduates compared to previous elections, a significant increase is noticeable in the proportion of those having educational qualifications beyond graduation. 54 percent of young MPs are post-graduates. This is a sharp increase from the 14th Lok Sabha which had 24 percent of the young MPs

2.3: Average age of MPs over the years



2.4: Proportion of Young MPs from Rural and Urban seats



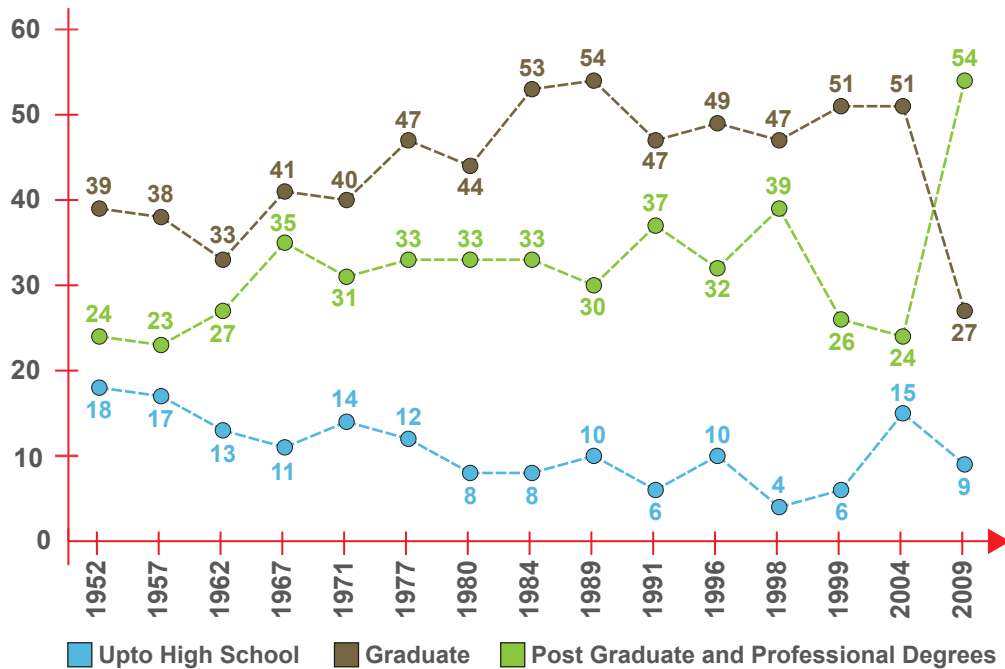
Note: All figures are in percent. In few cases number does not add to 100 as we had no information about the locality

qualified above the graduation level. Barring a few years, overall there has been an increase in the educational qualification of young MPs. Moreover, the proportion of young MPs with educational qualifications up to the High School level has reduced significantly. From 18 percent in 1952 it is now at 9 percent. It did however touch 15 percent in 2004 (Figure 2.5).

Along with this increased number of educated young MPs, another shift which can be seen in 15th Lok Sabha is the increased number of women MPs. In the first Lok Sabha, there were only 4 percent women MPs. In 2009, 11 percent women MPs were elected, the highest ever. In comparison, the 14th Lok Sabha had only 45 women MPs, a mere 8 percent of the total strength of

the House. The proportion of young women MPs is also at its highest ever in the present Lok Sabha at 20 percent (Figure 2.6). It is interesting to note that though women's representation in Parliament has not been high in all the Lok Sabhas till now, the success rate of women candidates (percent of contestants getting elected vis a vis those who contested) has always been higher than the success rate of male candidates.¹ In the 15th Lok Sabha elections, of the 556 women who contested elections, 59 won. This is a much better ratio as compared to men. Of 7,514 men who contested elections, 484 won.

2.5: More young MPs with Post Graduate and Professional Degrees in the 15th Lok Sabha



Note: All figures are in percent.

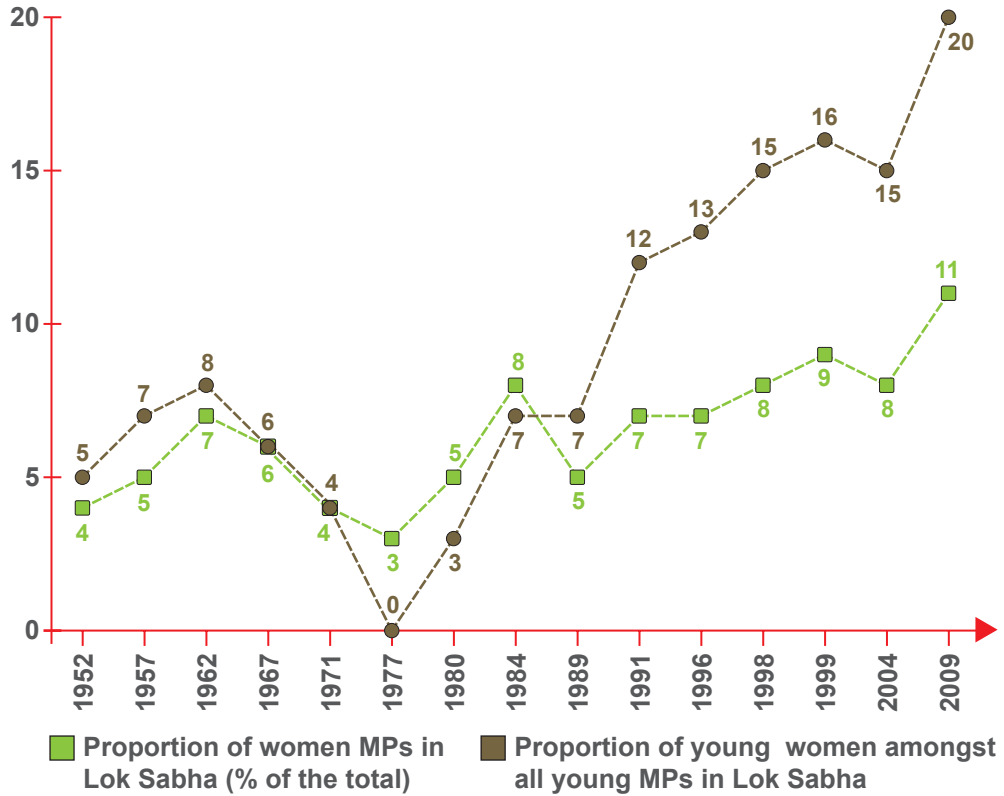
In the 15th Lok Sabha, a total of 16 women MPs belong to the age group of 40 years and below. If we further disaggregate the data, we find that 10 out of 16 young women MPs belonged to families who were involved in politics. There were only 6 women who joined politics without having any political family background.

However, the important point to note is that out of the total 79 young MPs, 66 percent belong to a political family (Figure 2.7). In India, the role of family in political recruitment is well known. There are families that have traditionally engaged in active politics and produced political leaders. Further, there are no gender differentials and both male and female are equally likely to

belong to political families.

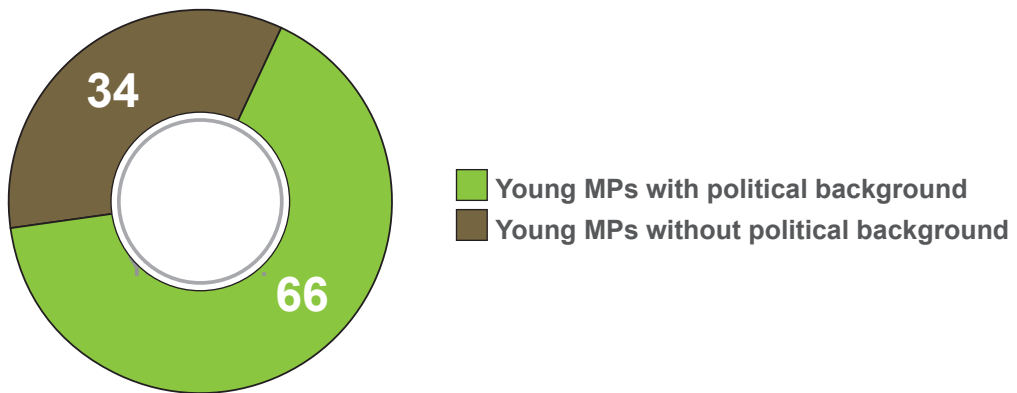
66 percent of the young MPs come from political families. Moreover, all the MPs aged between 25 and 30 years, have a political background, except one woman MP. Among all young MPs who have no family background in politics, 22 are men and 6 are women. These young MPs are mostly highly educated. A party-wise analysis of the young MPs in the 15th Lok Sabha also shows some interesting trends. The BJP has 18 young MPs and 11 of them have no family background, whereas the Congress has 26 young MPs and 2 of them are without a family background.

2.6: Proportion of young women MPs has increased in Lok Sabha



Note: All figures are in percent.

2.7: 6 out of ten young MPs belong to political families in the 15th Lok Sabha



Note: All figures are in percent.

► Key Highlights

- Number of young MPs in Lok Sabha has decreased with time (with a few exceptions).
- There are 79 young MPs in the Lok Sabha, the second lowest ever.
- The average age of the current Lok Sabha is 53.03 years, making it the second oldest House.
- Though the number of young MPs in the Lok Sabha has not increased, but the 15th Lok Sabha has some other trends which are distinct from previous Houses.
- The number of young women MPs and the total number of women MPs in the Lok Sabha has increased.
- In the present Lok Sabha, most young members enjoy a high level of education.
- Most of the young MPs are from prominent political families.

► Notes

1. Sakthivel, P. (2009, Sep 30). Dynamics of Women's Reservation in India. [Online] Available from <http://www.articlesbase.com/politics-articles/dynamics-of-womens-reservation-in-india-1285182.html>. [Accessed on 16/11/2011]

SECTION: 03

Awareness of Political Issues among Indian Youth

Awareness of Political Issues among Indian Youth

The study of political awareness among citizens in a democratic country like India is important. The survey conducted by CSDS enables us to take this initiative to study political awareness among Indian citizens. In our study, political awareness refers to how aware the young voters are about politics and other political activities which occurred in the country in the recent past. Awareness is not seen in a narrow sense of just knowing the name of political representatives but relates to awareness about important political events in the country as well.

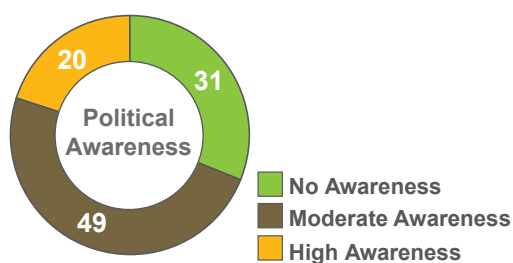
The level of political awareness differs among citizens. This section tries to delve into the level of political awareness among Indian youth. It also looks at whether age has an effect on political awareness and discussion about current political issues and events. Are the Indian youth, in the constituencies with a young political contestant, politically more aware as compared to other age groups? We also analyzed the relationship between the pattern in level of awareness and various socio-demographic factors. To measure political awareness among younger and older respondents an index was formed

using some questions which gauged the frequency of awareness about important issues of the recent past.¹

► Political Awareness among Indian youth

The surveys reveals that 31 percent of youth respondents fall in the category of no awareness, which means nearly one third of Indian youth were not aware of political events that happened around them. 69 percent of youth were aware of these events; out of these 20 percent of them were highly aware and 49 percent young respondents had moderate political awareness (Figure 3.1).

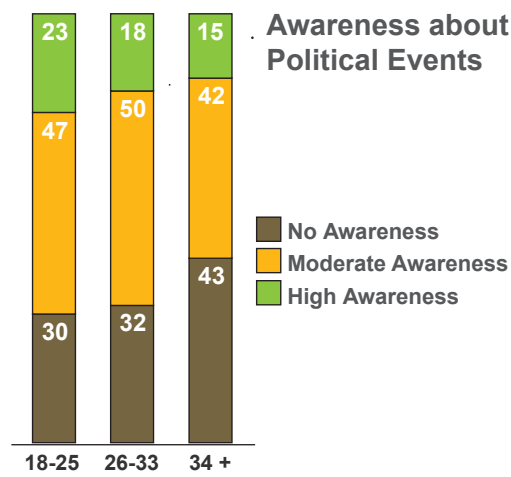
3.1: About one-third of Indian youth politically unaware



Note: All figures are in percent.

The level of awareness is not uniform among citizens and varies among different age groups. While 20 percent youth have a high level of political awareness, only 15 percent older respondents have high awareness levels. When we combined moderate and high levels of awareness, this gap widened substantially. 69 percent youth are in the category of politically aware citizens compared to 57 percent older respondents. Within the youth category, the age group of 18 to 25 years is more aware than those between 26 and 33 years. 23 percent of youth between the age group of 18 to 25 years have high political awareness whereas, 18 percent of youth between the age group of 26 to 33 are highly aware about current political events. This shows that the level of awareness increases with decrease in age of the respondents (Figure 3.2).

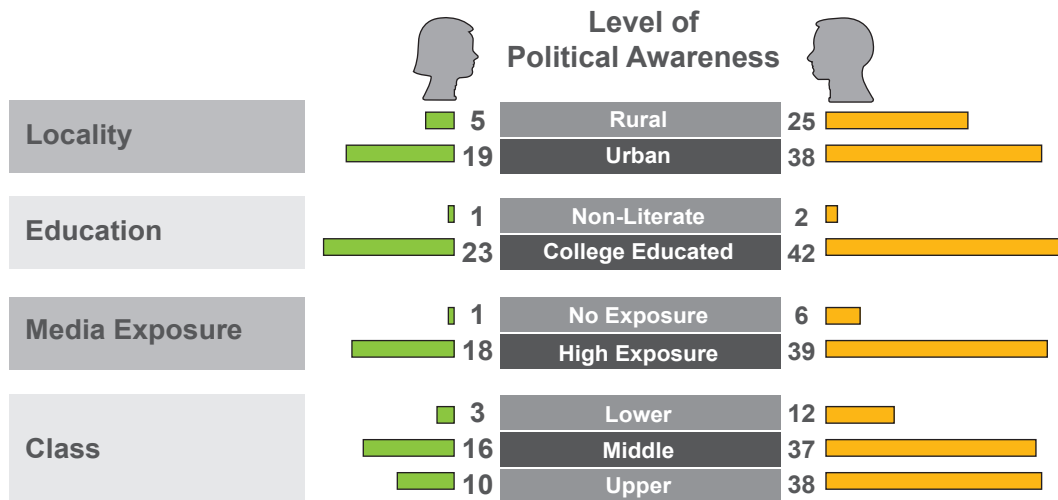
3.2: About political events, youth more aware compared to others



Note: All figures are in percent.

This increased level of awareness among youth compared to the non-youth further leads us to take a look at the level of awareness within the youth as a group from various socio-demographic perspectives. The subsequent figures indicate that these socio-demographic variables are factors for the determination of level of political awareness among youth. Young women lag behind young men in attainment of political knowledge and awareness about current political issues. 29 percent young men are highly politically aware compared to only 9 percent women having high political awareness. To look into the matter as to why there is a huge gap between the levels of political awareness of young men and young women, we compared men and women from similar level of education, locality, media exposure and economic class. If we carefully look at the Figure 3.3, we can see that the young women who are high on political awareness belong to the middle and upper strata of the society, are highly educated, live in urban areas, and have high media exposure. The educational background of a woman is an indicator of high awareness. 23 percent of college educated young women are highly politically aware compared to other young women from various categories. But when we compare young women with young men from the same socio-economic background we find that the difference between their levels of awareness is very huge.

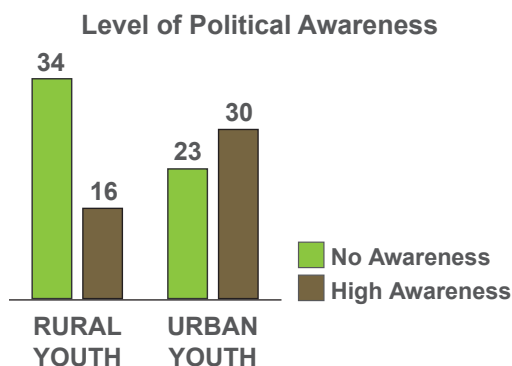
3.3: Political awareness higher among young men compared to young women



Note: All figures are in percent.

Both gender and locality are factors which affects awareness levels among youth. Youth living in rural areas are less politically aware compared to youth from urban areas. 16 percent rural youth are highly aware about politics and political events, compared to 30 percent urban youth (Figure 3.4).

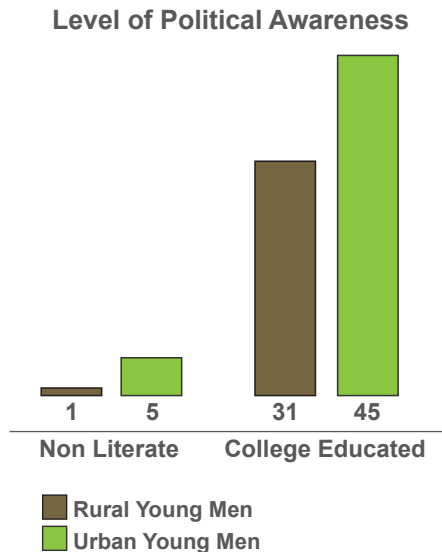
3.4: Rural youth less aware compared to urban youth



Note: All figures are in percent.

This indicates the correlation between effect of urbanisation and the level of political awareness. With the modernization and urbanization, youth is getting more education and they consistently discuss political and social issues with their peer group and family. Urbanisation increases the amount of political communication, and leads to greater awareness of social and political needs among citizens. Urbanisation is one of the processes of modernisation which shifts the political orientations of citizens from parochial to participant.² As we can see in Figure 3.5 non-literate youth in urban areas are more politically aware than rural non-literate youth. Similarly, more urban college educated men are politically aware than rural young men with same educational attainment. This shows that locality has a stronger influence than education for attaining political knowledge and political awareness.

3.5: Even with similar level of education, urban youth more aware compared to rural youth



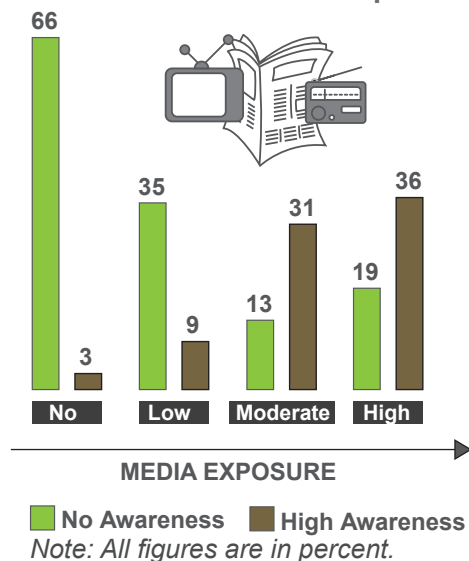
Note: All figures are in percent.

Hence, it is important to check whether the level of education has an effect on the level of awareness. Youth having college education are more politically aware than non-literate youth. There is a huge gap between the level of political awareness among non-literates and higher educated youth. Only 2 percent non-literate youth are politically aware, whereas 36 percent highly educated youth have high level of political awareness. Education is a factor to generate political awareness among citizens, but locality overshadows the influence of education.

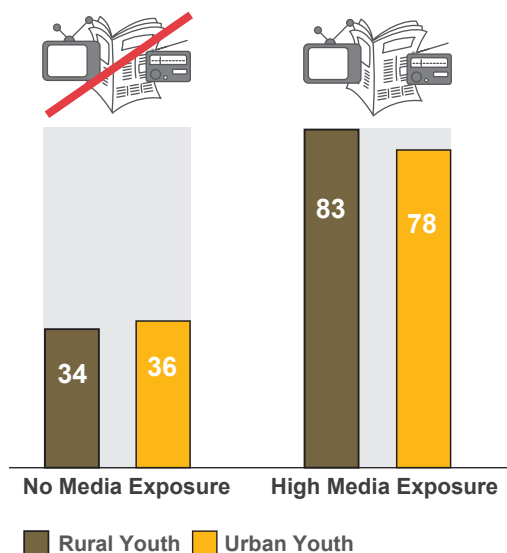
Media exposure does have an impact on the level of political awareness. Since media is a source from where one can get information and details about various political events, it is not surprising

that the person with no media exposure is less likely to be politically aware. That is why only 3 percent youth who have no media exposure acquire high level of political awareness. In contrast 36 percent youth with high media exposure are also highly aware about political events of the recent past. With the increase in the level of exposure to media, the level of awareness also increases (Figure 3.6). We find an interesting fact when we look at rural-urban political awareness and control the media exposure. Rural youth are more politically aware if they are highly exposed to media. As we can see in Figure 3.7 rural youth with no media exposure are less politically aware than urban youth with no media exposure. The moment rural youth attain high level of media exposure the trend changes. The rural youth become more politically aware than urban youth when they get more exposed to media.

3.6: Awareness among youth increases with increase in level of media exposure



3.7: Rural youth with high media exposure more aware about political issues

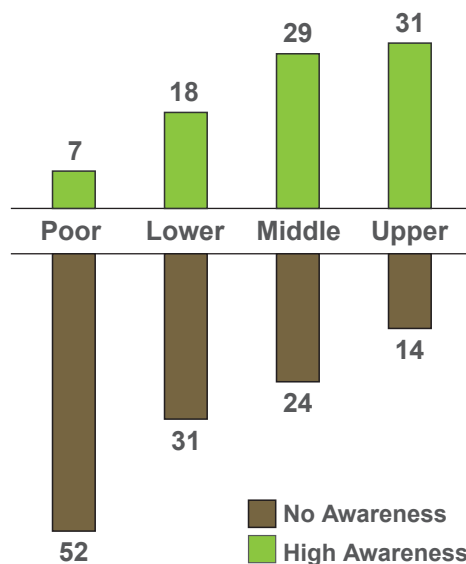


Note: All figures are in percent.

Economic background also influences political knowledge and awareness of the youth. Youth from upper class are more aware than youth from poor class. More than half of the youth belonging to the poor class have no political awareness and political knowledge. Seven percent of youth from poor class have high political awareness and the level of political awareness increases with the increase in the economic class of the youth. As we can see in Figure 3.8, 31 percent of youth from upper class are highly political aware.

We can see that differences in awareness levels among demographic groups stand out. Education levels, exposure to media, economic class, locality and gender have an effect on youth's awareness level. The educated youth are

3.8: Upper class youth most aware, Poor youth least aware about political events



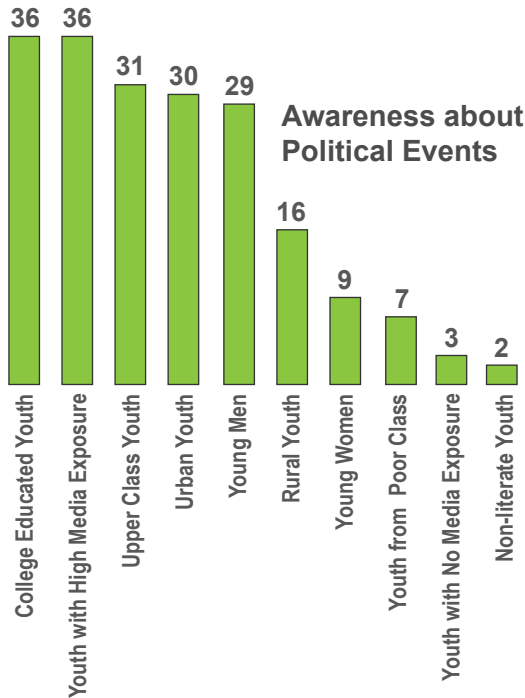
Note: All figures are in percent.

more politically aware. Youth with high media exposure also rank high in the political awareness. Our results clearly show that political awareness is significantly influenced by various socio-demographic aspects (Figure-3.9).

Moving on to youth who have no awareness about political events, non-literate youth topped with 69 percent. The youth with low media exposure followed the non-literate youth with 66 percent of them belonging to the category of no awareness, followed by youth belonging to poor class, young women and rural youth (Figure-3.10).

We also tried to look at the awareness of youth and older respondents about the names of their MPs and MLAs. The awareness of the youth about both, MP

3.9: Urban, educated, upper class youth and youth with high media exposure, more aware about political events

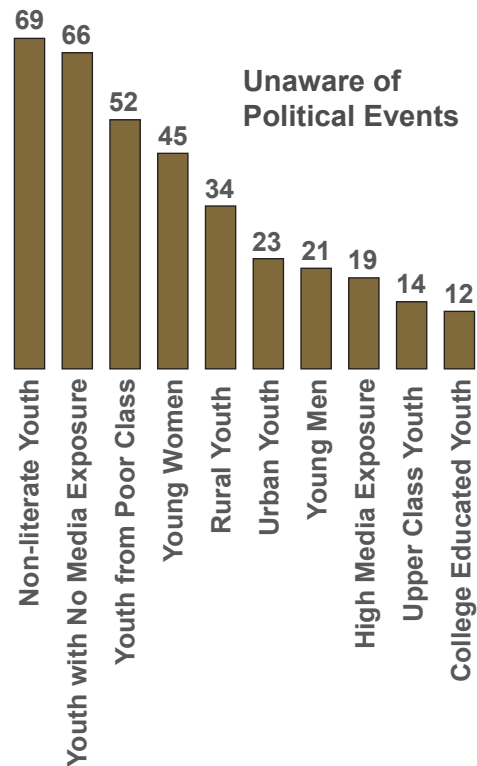


Note: All figures are in percent.

and MLA, is higher than the others. One thing that is common to both the age groups is that both are more aware of their MLA than their MP. This fact shows their affiliation with regional politics compared to national politics (Figure 3.11).

With the socio-demographic factor some attitudinal factors also influence political awareness of the respondents. Among these attitudinal factors, interest in politics, having faith in voting, discussion of politics and political issues are the major factors which influence political awareness. Youth who have interest in politics have more chances

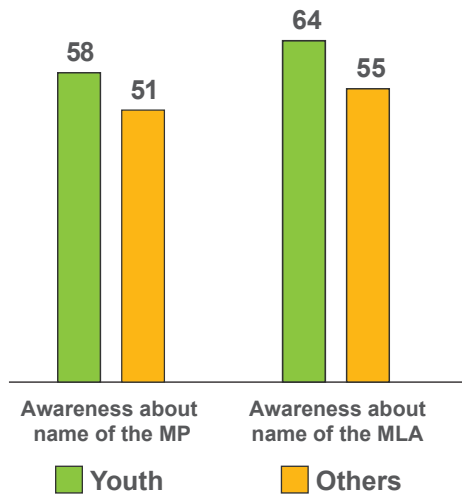
3.10: Non-literate, poor youth and youth un-exposed to media are politically least aware



Note: All figures are in percent.

of being aware as compared to ones who have no interest in politics and political affairs. If youth are interested in politics they will try to keep themselves aware about day to day political events that are taking place. This in turn will boost their awareness in politics. Our data also revealed this trend. As we move from no to high interest in politics, the level of political awareness also goes up. More than half of the youth who have no interest in politics have no political awareness (Figure 3.12).

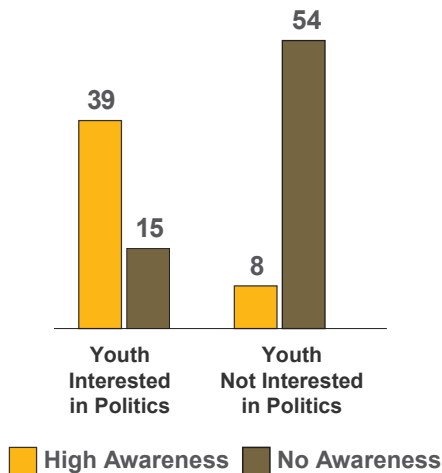
3.11: Youth more familiar with names of their MP and MLA compared to others



Note: All figures are in percent.

3.12: Youth who are interested in politics are more aware compared to other youth

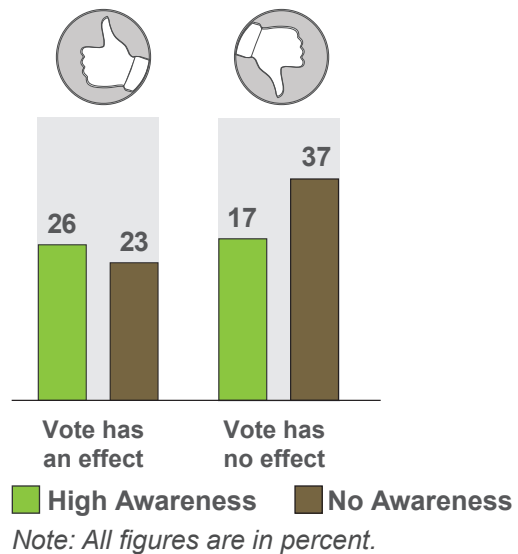
Level of Political Awareness



Note: All figures are in percent.

Youth who value their vote more, that is, those who feel that their vote has an effect on how the country is run, are more politically aware than those who think that their votes have no effect. Youth, belonging to the category of “no awareness”, are unlikely to have trust in their vote (Figure 3.13).

3.13: Youth who value their vote are more aware about political events

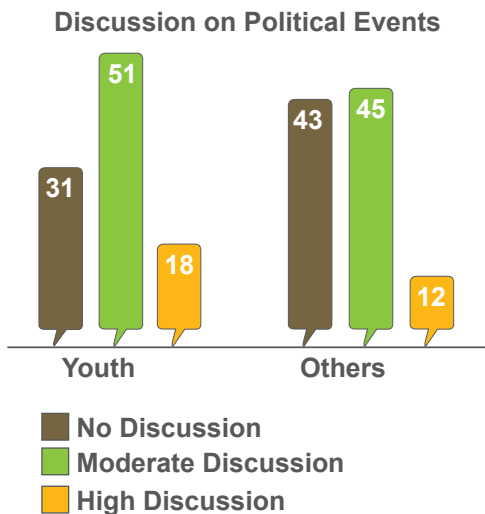


► Discussions on Politics and Political Events

Social networks play a prominent role in the explanation of many political phenomena. Individuals who are more participative in political discussions are likely to be more aware on politics and political issues and take active part in politics. Discussions result in enhancing awareness which further provide political knowledge to citizens. Figure 3.15 shows that 18 percent of the

youth had high discussion on the political events that occurred around them.³ There is a difference among the youth and the older respondents on this issue. Only 12 percent of the older respondents have frequent discussions on politics and current political affairs as compared to 18 percent youth. 43 percent of the older respondents have no discussion on political events as compared to 31 percent of the youth. If we take a look at the youth and non-youth who take part in moderate discussion, we see that the difference between the two is quite big. 51 percent of the youth have moderate political discussions (to measure moderate discussion frequently and very frequently discussions are merged together) compared to 45 percent of the non-youth. This shows that youth compared to others have more discussions than others (Figure 3.14).

3.14: Frequent discussions about political events, more amongst youth compared to others

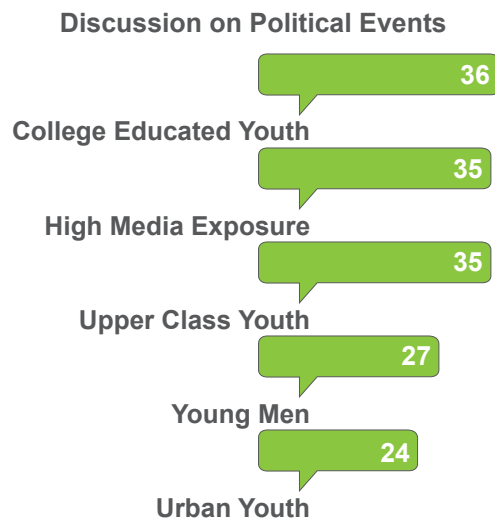


Note: All figures are in percent.

The level of discussion among the youth rises on the basis of their socio-demographic background. Youth who are college educated have frequent political discussions followed by youth who have high exposure to media, upper class youth, male youth and youth residing in urban areas. Therefore we can clearly see that it is the educated youth who take more frequent part in political discussion. Youth with high exposure to media also had discussions on recent political issues that took place in the country (Figure 3.15).

There is no similarity between young men and young women even if they have attained the same level of education. Women with the same level of education are not taking part in political discussions as much as young men. Education could be an important factor

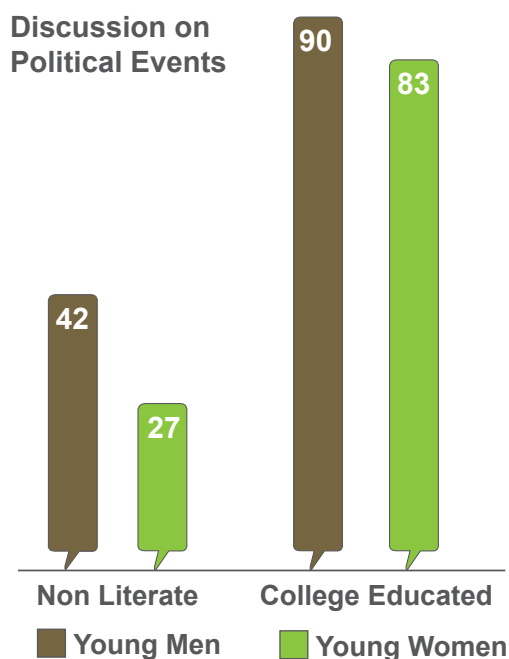
3.15: Upper class, educated youth and youth with high media exposure take more active part in political discussion



Note: All figures are in percent.

as we can see that with the increase in education level, both young men and young women get into more discussion about current political issues, but we can see that gender is controlling the political discussion (Figure 3.16).

3.16: Even with similar level of education, young men discuss politics more compared to young women

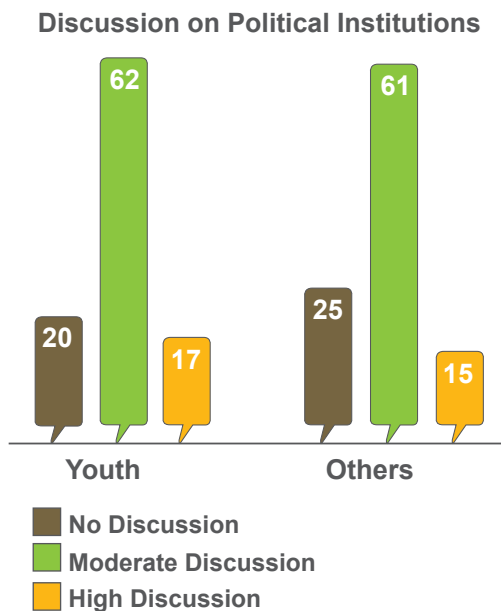


Note: All figures are in percent.

► Discussions on Political Institutions and Actors

The discussions on political events are not sufficient; rather assessment of government and its functioning is also a crucial part of political discussions where citizens discuss the work done

3.17: Compared to others, youth take more active part in discussions on political institutions



Note: All figures are in percent.

by political institutions and by political actors.⁴ Our survey shows that youth are taking more part in discussions on political institutions and political actors than older respondents.

Again, there is a difference (2 percent) among the youth and the others on the high frequency of discussion about the work done by political institutions and actors. 25 percent of the older respondents never have any discussion about the work done by political institutions as compared to 20 percent of the youth (Figure 3.17). It is important to highlight the fact that the youth discuss the work of panchayats and municipality much more than they discuss the work of state and central governments.

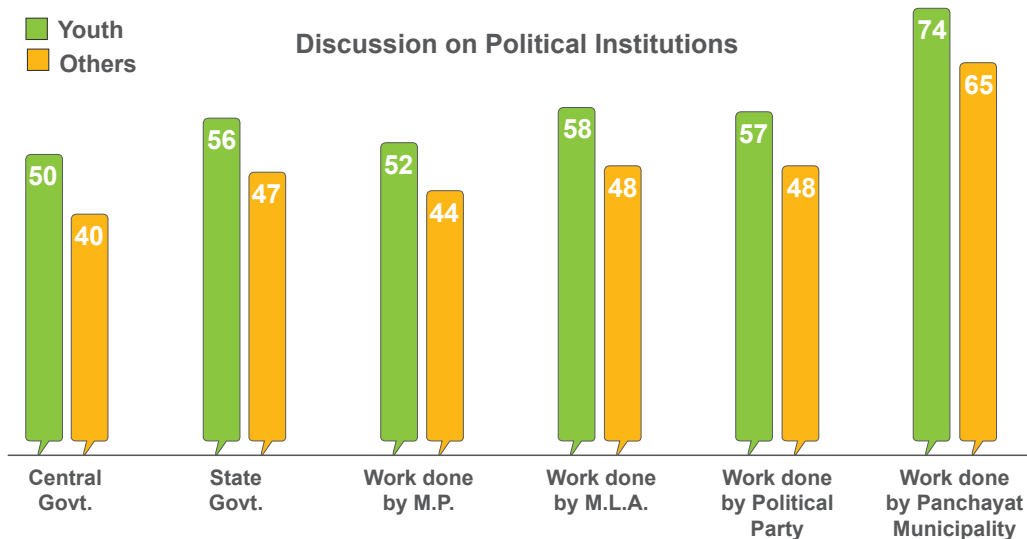
We can see almost the same pattern among the older respondents too. The youth belonging to the age group of 18 to 25 years discuss the work of the governments more than the other two age groups. As far as the discussion of work of MP, MLA and political parties is concerned, the work of MLA is discussed a little more when compared to the work of political parties and MPs. One reason for this could be that people feel more close to the local government as they are themselves more connected to the local government as compared to the state and central government and Members of Parliament and political parties (Figure 3.18).

To see whether there is any difference in frequency of political discussions among young men and women or is it a result of education, we tried to look at the young men and women from different education levels. We see that

the difference among young females and males on frequency of political discussions is not a result of education and even with the same educational qualification young women are lagging behind the young men (Figure 3.19).

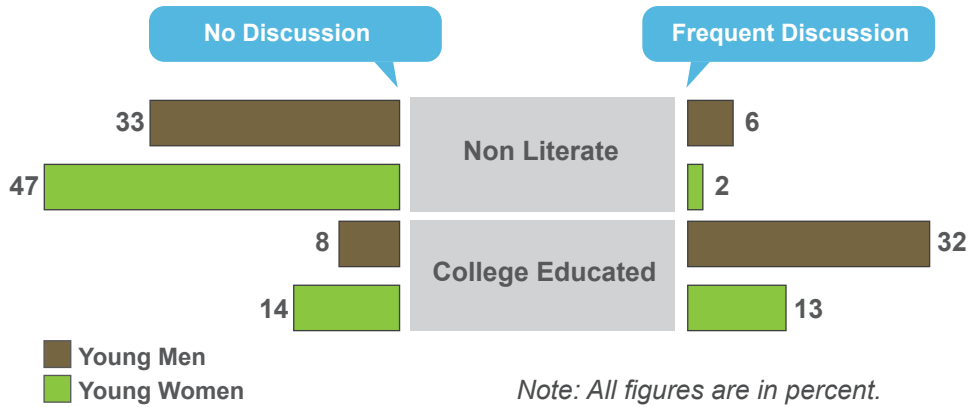
When we look at the frequency of political discussion, upper class and media exposure seems to play an important part in whether youth take part in discussion. 31 percent of the youth from upper class have frequent political discussion on political institutions and actors, followed by 28 percent of the youth having high media exposure. 26 percent of the graduate youth have frequent discussions. Male youth are more likely to have political discussion on political institutions and actors as compared to women youth. This also implies for urban youth and rural youth where urban youth are more active on political discussions (Figure 3.20).

3.18: About every political institution, youth discusses more compared to others



Note: All figures are in percent.

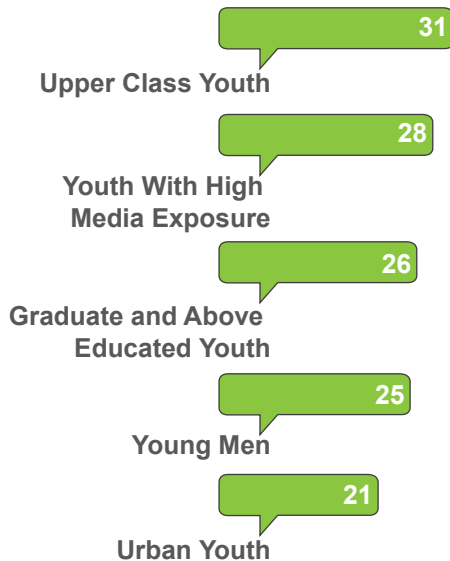
3.19: Even with similar level of education, young men discuss political institutions more compared to young women



Note: All figures are in percent.

3.20: Upper class youth and youth with high media exposure discuss about political institutions the most

Discussion on Political Institutions



Note: All figures are in percent.

The non-literate youth, followed by youth with no media exposure, rarely discuss political institutions and actors. 31 percent of the female youth have no political discussion followed by 21 percent of the rural youth. Worldwide women are less likely to discuss politics (with friends). Gender disparity in political interest (How often do you discuss politics with friends?) are generally larger in low-income countries.⁵ This is related to large gap in educational and participatory opportunities for girls and women in low income societies. This in turn also leaves the women less interested in politics.



► Key Highlights

- The youth is more aware as compared to older respondents.
- Awareness also increases with educational attainments. A higher educational background corresponds positively with the level of political awareness.
- Gender differences can be seen in the awareness levels. Young women are less aware as compared to the male youth.
- Youth with high media exposure know more as compared to the ones with no and low exposure.
- Other than awareness, youth discusses politics and political events more than others.


► Notes

1. See End Note (1)
2. Norman H. Nie, G. Bingham Powell, Jr., Kenneth Prewitt. 1968. 'Social Structure and Political Participation: Developmental Relationships' *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2, pp. 361-378.
3. See End Note (2)
4. See End Note (3).
5. World Development Report. (2007). *Development and the Next Generation*. The World Bank: Washington, Dc. [Online] Available from www.adeanet.org/ [Accessed on 4/11/2011].

► Index Notes

1. Index of political awareness

The index about political awareness was created to assess overall levels of awareness about current political issues. The questions used were Q3a1, Q3b1, Q3d1, Q3e1 and Q3f1 from the CSDS Youth and Politics survey. The questions measured awareness level of youth regarding various political and social national events which occurred in that year namely – demonstrations by youth in Kashmir, Allahabad High Court verdict on the Ayodhya Issue, Naxal violence and the corruption scandals related to the commonwealth games and allocation of 2G spectrum respectively.



All five questions were asked in a similar format where respondents had a choice of replying Yes, No and No Answer. Responses to all these questions were collated and ordered into four categories – No Awareness, Low Awareness, Moderate Awareness and High Awareness. All those who were aware of all five events formed the category of High Awareness. All those who were aware of 3 out of five and four out of five events formed the category of Moderate Awareness. All those who formed the category of No Awareness were not aware of any of the five events mentioned. All those aware of either one or two events out of the five were grouped as those low on awareness.

2. Index about discussion on current political issues

The index about discussion on current political issues was created to assess the frequency of discussion on current political issues. The questions used were Q3a2, Q3b2, Q3c2, Q3d2, Q3e2 and Q3f2 from the CSDS Youth and Politics survey. Q3a2 inquired about whether respondents have heard of protest demonstrations by the youth in Kashmir, Q3b2 regarding Allahabad High Court verdict on Ayodhya issue, Q3c2 regarding Bihar assembly election, Q3d2 regarding naxal violence, Q3e2 regarding corruption in the Commonwealth games held in Delhi and Q3f2 is about 2G Spectrum/Telecom scam.

All six questions were asked in a similar format where respondents had a choice of replying Yes, No, Don't remember. Responses to all these questions were collated and ordered into four categories – No Discussion, Low Discussion, Moderate Discussion and High Discussion. All those who discuss all six political events formed the category of "High Discussion". All those who discuss four out of six and five out of six formed the category of "Moderate Discussion". All those who formed the category of "No Discussion" did not discuss any of the six political events mentioned. All those who discuss one, two or three political events out of the six were grouped in the category of "Low Discussion".

3. Index about discussion on political institutions/ actors

The index about discussion on political institutions/ political actors was created to assess the frequency of discussion on political institutions and political actors. The battery of Q2 (from Q2a to Q2f) is used to create this index. Work done by the Central government, the State government, M.P. M.L.A., political parties and Panchayat/Municipality were taken into consideration for discussion.

All six questions were asked in a similar format where respondents had a choice of replying Always, Sometimes, Never, and No opinion. Responses to all these questions were collated and ordered into four categories –Never, Sometimes, Frequently and Very Frequently. All those who discuss all six political institutions and actors formed the category of "Very Frequently". All those who discuss 4 out of six and five out of six formed the category of "Frequently". All those who formed the category of "Never" did not discuss any of the six political institutions and actors mentioned. All those who discuss one, two or three political institutions and actors out of the six were grouped in the category of "sometimes".

SECTION: 04

Interest in Politics and Political Participation

Interest in Politics and Political Participation

The theme of youth and politics has been explored in this section through the following aspects:

- Interest in politics
- Political participation; Participation of youth in voting
- Political participation in election related activities
- Extra electoral participation in protests and demonstration

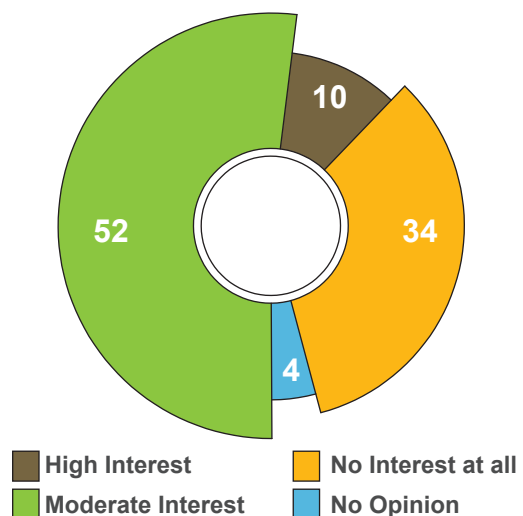
How is youth involvement with politics distinct from that of other respondents? How different are youth from one another regarding their political attitudes and interest? Are there underlying consistent demographic and attitudinal trends dictating political involvement. These are some of the questions that we have tried to systematically explore in this section.

► Interest in Politics

The analysis in this section is based on the question that inquired respondent's degree of interest in politics. The responses to this question were collected in four categories: Great deal of interest, some interest, no interest at all. Responses from those who refused to

answer this question were coded as No Opinion. For the sake of efficient readability, the category of great deal of interest has been reported as high interest, and some interest is reported as moderate interest. While very high interest in politics is reported by only 10 percent of the sample, overall more than 60 percent of youth have interest in politics. About one-third of youth do not have any interest in politics (Figure 4.1).

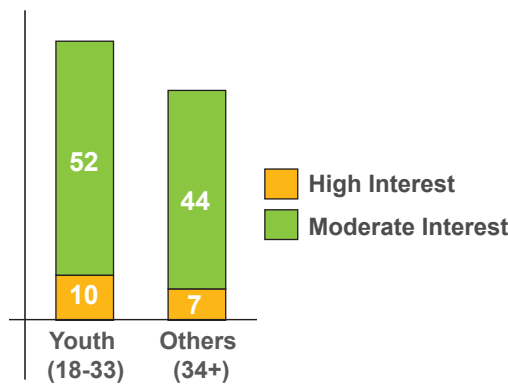
4.1: Level of interest in politics among youth



Note: All figures are in percent

Variations across age categories suggest that youth compared to older respondents are more interested in politics. The interest in politics declines with age. Over 60 percent of the Indian youth are interested in politics as compared to nearly 50 percent of the older respondents. (Figure 4.2).

4.2: Youth are more interested in politics than others

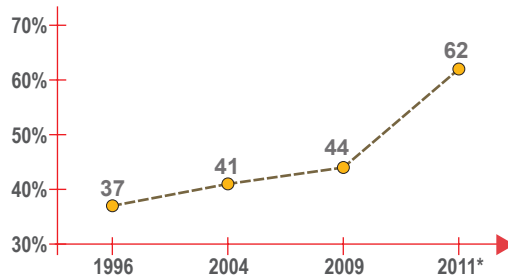


Note: All figures are in percent

Not only are youth in the same time and the same social space more interested in politics than the rest, over time too youth interest in politics seems to be on a consistent rise. Figure 4.3 reveals that in 1996, 37 percent of youth were interested in politics and this number has been consistently rising ever since.

While youth interest in politics is rising and their participation in politics is higher than that of older respondents, age in itself does not exhaust all explanations regarding youth and their interest and involvement with politics. Indian youth, itself, is not a homogeneous group. Locality, education, gender, economic background, and media

4.3: Interest in politics among youth on the rise



Note:

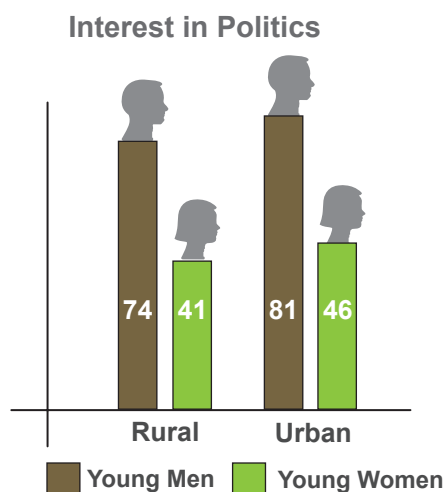
1. All figures are in percent.

2. All these figures are calculated from National Election Surveys conducted by CSDS, except the 2011 figures. *2011 figures have been calculated from CSDS Youth and Politics Survey

exposure are some factors which seem to be responsible for the differences observed. Overall, according to our data men are more interested in politics and political affairs than women. About 45 percent of young women are interested in politics, whereas 76 percent of young men are interested in politics. This difference in terms of interest in politics among gender remains consistent. Neither education nor media exposure aids enough to equalise the levels of interest among both these categories. This gender gap in the interest levels in politics is proportionately widened when figures for high interest in politics are not merged with moderate interest. About four percent of young women admit having high interest in politics vis-a-vis 15 percent young men. Across locality women are less interested in politics as compared to men. Locality does not seem to make a significant difference

to interest levels in politics, however both men and women in urban areas admit to higher levels of interest in politics as compared to their rural counterparts (Figure 4.4).

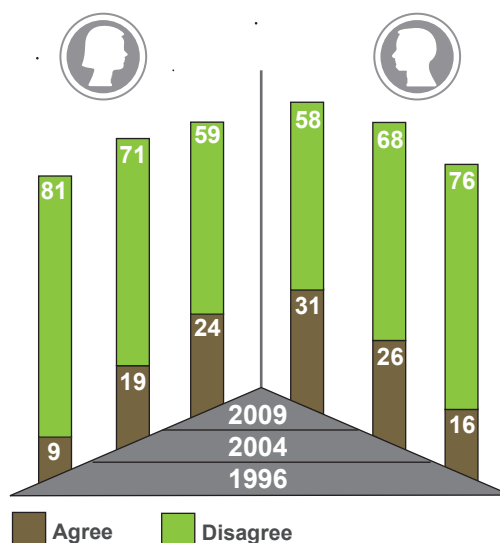
4.4: Young men show greater interest in politics compared to young women



Note: All figures are in percent.

The figure above is consistent with the trend that one observes in another one of our questions on women and politics. Large majority of the men and women respondents in all the election studies conducted by CSDS have stated that they believe that politics is indeed not meant for women and surprisingly over time the proportion of the population stating that they believe that politics is not meant for women has increased, across gender, among both the youth and the rest (Figure 4.5).

4.5: Support for the idea “politics not meant for women” increasing



Note: All figures are in percent.

Source: Un-weighted datasets, NES 1996-2009.

Overall as education level goes up, interest in politics and political news also rises. Non Literate youth are less likely to have interest in politics. If we look at the continuum of education level and interest in politics, we observe that it ranges from 35 percent non-literate youth being interested in politics to 78 percent of higher educated youth being interested in politics. Education does seem to have a positive relationship with interest in politics across gender.

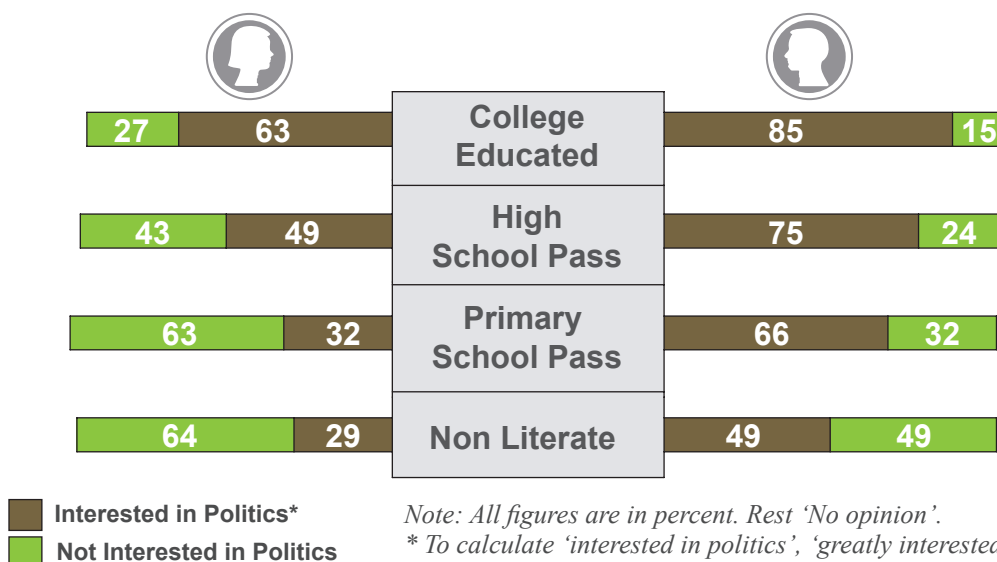
Across all education categories more men are interested in politics as compared to those not interested in politics within the same education level. The only exceptions are non-literate men where the proportion of men interested and not interested in politics is exactly equal. Among the high school and

college educated young women, there is in some sense a reversal of a trend, that is, women interested in politics among moderately and highly educated exceed women not interested in politics within the same education categories. This is not the case for non literate and primary pass women. Interestingly “No Opinion” among women increases with education. The categories among women which report the highest “No Opinion” are College educated and High school pass women. This is not only in contradiction to men but to the general hypothesis that education makes an individual more opinionated (Figure 4.6).

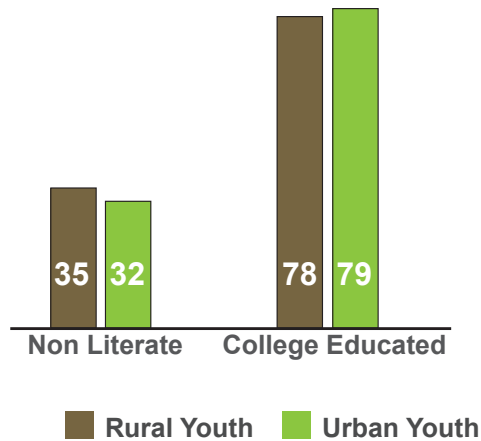
the college educated in both, rural and urban, areas are equally interested in politics. Non Literate in rural areas are marginally more interested in politics as compared to their urban counterparts however across the moderate education categories urban respondents exceed rural in admitting their interest in politics. Also while at the primary education level, among urban respondents one finds more youth interested in politics as compared to those not interested in politics, this is not the case for rural respondents until they attain a high school level education. Hence the cultivating of interest due to education occurs at an earlier stage in urban areas than in the rural.

Education produces interesting trends for interest in politics across localities especially for the two extreme end categories of non literate and college educated. As we can see in Figure 4.7,

4.6: Political interest rises with education, among both young men and women



4.7: Interest in politics similar among college educated rural and urban youth

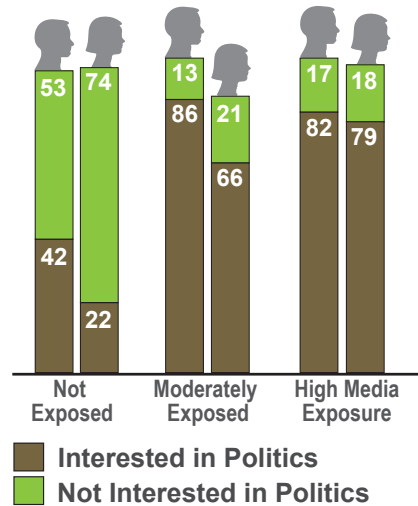


Note: All figures are in percent.

While education seems to generate higher level of interest in politics, its effect is mediated by the respondents' class. This is to say, as one goes up the ladder of education, there is a rise in the overall interest in politics. However when comparing respondents within the same education level, the upper class respondents show much higher interest in politics as compared to the poor class. Within the same education category, the rich are more likely to be interested in politics than poor.

More than locality and education, media exposure seems to be the one dictating respondents' interest in politics. Media exposure seems to have a rather dramatic effect on interest in politics as compared to any other factor. The moment one receives any degree of media exposure, interest in politics increases rapidly (Figure 4.8).

4.8: Exposure to media leads to greater interest in politics

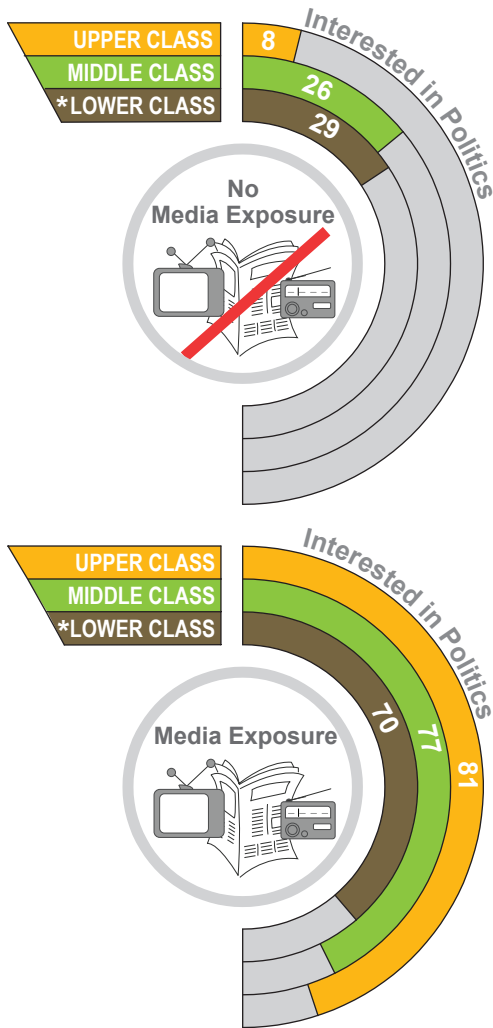


Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

Comparing figures of respondents who are exposed to media and who have absolutely no media exposure across classes, one finds that if the effect of media is extricated from class, then class shares a negative relationship with interest in politics. Almost one-third of the respondents from lower and poor classes, who are not exposed to media, reported being interested in politics. While respondents from all classes react to media exposure in a similar way when it comes to taking interest in politics, the middle and lower classes admit fair levels of interest in politics, even without being exposed to the media (Figure 4.9).



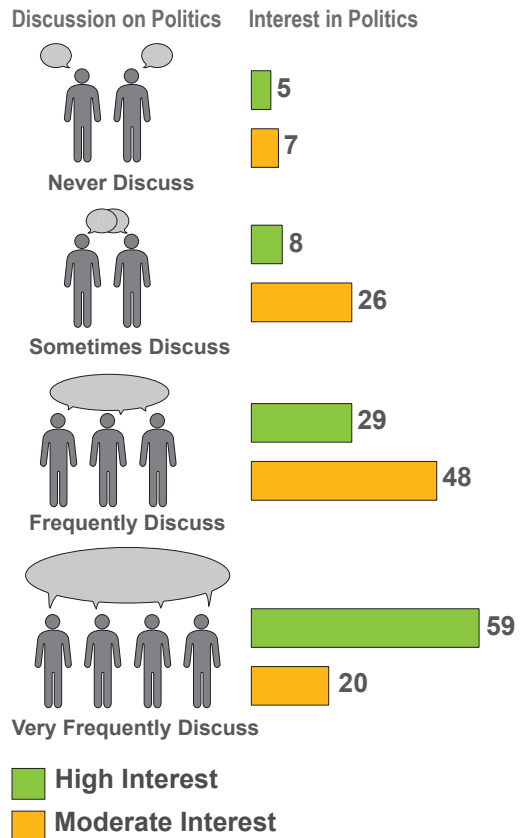
4.9: Unlike upper class youth, middle and lower class youth unexposed to media, show decent political interest



Note: All figures are in percent.
 * For lower class 'lower' and 'poor' categories are merged.

There is a reciprocal relationship between taking interest in politics and discussing political institutions and political actors. One is likely to believe that each of these implicate each other. 59 percent of youth who “very frequently” discuss about political institutions/actors and their functioning are also greatly interested in politics. Whereas there are only five percent youth who never discuss politics and political institutions, who are greatly interested in politics (Figure 4.10).

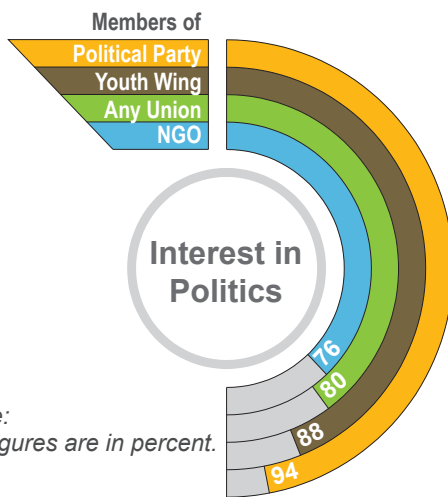
4.10: Greater the frequency of political discussions, greater the interest in politics



Note: All figures are in percent.

Membership of various political and non-political communities inspires an individual to participate actively in politics. The main reason for being a member of these kinds of political and social communities/organisations could be individual interest in politics. Membership of a political party, very expectedly, generates interest in politics, closely followed by membership of student/youth wing. 90 percent of youth who are members of political parties are interested in politics. Similarly, 88 percent youth who are members of any student/youth wing are interested in politics (Figure 4.11).

4.11: Members of political parties show maximum interest in politics, followed closely by members of student and youth wings



► Political Participation

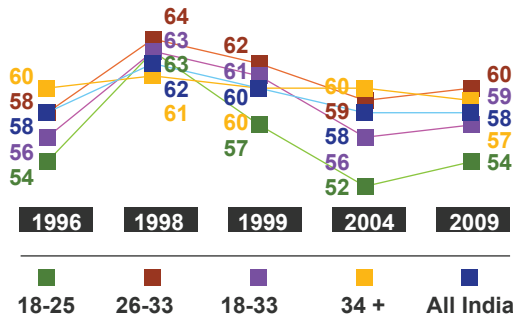
Does the interest in politics lead to political participation? Is interest and participation consistent across categories?

What constitutes political participation? Do the same demographic categories, the ones that affect individual's interest in politics affect political participation too? For example Milbrath also admits that higher socio-economic status (SES) is positively associated with increased likelihood of participation in many different political acts; higher SES persons are more likely to vote, attend meetings, join a party, and so forth.¹ These are some of larger questions that are dealt in the following sections. Political participation, in case of this survey is measured three way – participation in terms of voting, participation in election related activities like attending meetings, distributing pamphlets and collecting funds for parties and finally political participation in terms of extra electoral participation in protests and demonstrations.

► Political Participation - Voting

Youth consistently have recorded lower voter turnout than the overall. There is no significant increase in youth voter turnout over the years. Since the very beginning, youth voter turnout is lower than all India turnouts, as well as voter turnout of those aged 34 and above (Figure 4.12). What is noteworthy here is that within the category of youth, there appear to be two distinct trends. The younger segment of the youth i.e. 18 to 25 years olds have a turnout lower than the older respondents. However the more mature segment among the youth, that is, respondents between 26 and 33 years has most times recorded the highest voter turnout, exceeding the voter turnout levels of those above the age of 34 years and overall turnout.

4.12: Turnout among different age groups over the years



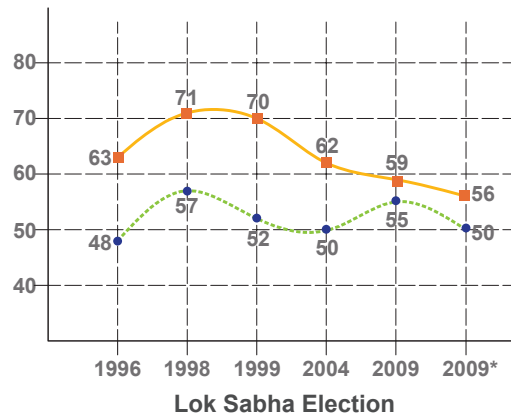
Note: All figures are in percent

Source: All India figure from Election Commission of India, turnout among young and adult from CSDS Surveys.

Young women consistently display lower voter turnout as compared to men. However the voter turnout difference between young men and young women has been fluctuating in various Lok Sabha elections. In the 1996 Lok Sabha election, the difference between the turnout level of both genders was 15 percent, which reduced by one percent in 1998. In 1999, the difference between men and women voter turnout was about 18 percent. Since the 2004 Lok Sabha election, this gap has been shrinking from 18 percent in 1999 to 12 percent in the 2004 election, and in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections difference between young men and young women voter turnout was reduced to 4 percent.

Across different countries urbanisation shares a different relationship with voter turnout. In the West and in India till

4.13: Turnout among young men more compared to young women



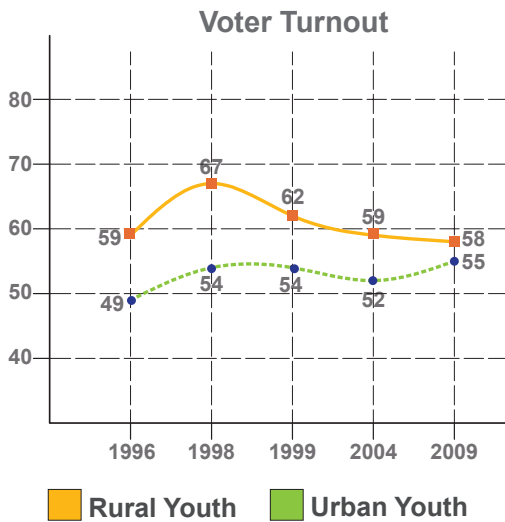
Legend: Young Women (Green), Young Men (Yellow)

Note: All figures are in percent.

*Voter turnout in selected constituencies in CSDS Survey 2011.

the 60s it was assumed that electoral turnout and urbanisation shared a positive relationship.² Over the years in the case of India this has not only been rejected but empirically a complete reversal of this trend has been postulated. Urban areas tend to register lower voter turnout than rural areas. As demonstrated further ahead, this is consistent with low political participation of urban areas in all spheres - voting, election activities and protests. The gap between the rural and urban areas has remained consistent over the years narrowing down only in the National election of 2009. However over the years there has been a rise in the electoral turnout of urban youth. This is in tandem with their rise in interest in politics over the years (Figure 4.14).

4.14: Turnout among rural youth more compared to urban youth



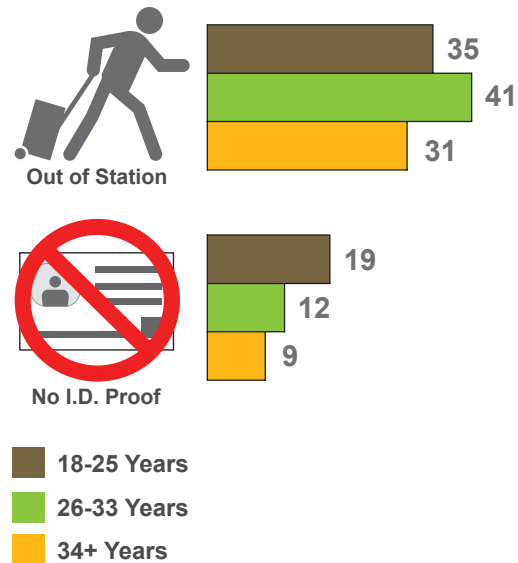
Note: All figures are in percent.

The overall voter turnout in selected constituencies in the CSDS youth survey where young candidates contested in the 15th Lok Sabha election and were either winner or runner up, was 59 percent. Even among those constituencies, participation of older respondents in voting was considerably higher than youth. The overall voter turnout across constituencies, where a young leader was a winner, was about 57 percent. However, the overall turnout of youth across these 79 constituencies was much lesser than the average turnout of youth nationally and much below the turnout of non-youth in these constituencies. Youth recorded an average turnout of 36 percent as opposed to 63 percent average voter turnout of non-youth across these 79 constituencies. What is noteworthy here is the fact that the voter turnout among older age categories is much higher in constituencies

where a young leader won as compared to their national voter turnout.

Youth's rising interest in politics and their abstinence from voting in some sense presents a paradoxical picture which leaves a space for theorising the political engagement of youth in a more nuanced way. However before we delve into that, consider Figure 4.15.

4.15: Main reasons for not voting



Note: All figures are in percent
Question was asked in NES 2009 conducted by CSDS

The major reason for not voting was absence of voters. 35 percent of younger voters among youth were out of station on the day of voting. Other than this reason, 19 percent of them were not able to vote because they did not have identity cards/identity proof for voting. 10 percent of young voter did not cast their votes as they were not interested

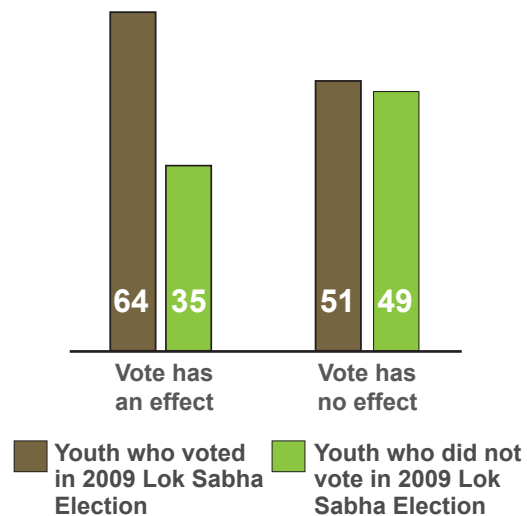
in voting or did not feel like voting. Only two percent of young voters did not vote due to lack of good choice to cast their votes. The analysis above partially explains the paradox between political interest and participation of youth. Rather than pointing to some latent political and theoretical explanations for lower voter turnout among 18-25 years old, the empirical data unearth reasons which were rather everyday and logistical in nature.

The belief in the efficacy of vote definitely makes a difference when it comes to voting. More respondents from among those who think their vote makes a difference are likely to vote as compared to those who do not think their vote makes a difference. Not only that, almost an equal number of respondents, who do not think their vote makes a difference, are likely to not vote as compared to those who vote. However more than 50 percent of those who did not believe that their vote made any difference voted in the 2009 elections (Figure 4.16).

► Participation in Election Related Activities

Participation in activities related to election like collecting funds for the candidate, attending election meetings/rallies, taking part in the election campaign or distributing pamphlets are also considered as political participation and this sort of participation has been increasing over time for both the young and older age groups. Responses to three questions – have you ever participated in election rallies, collected funds for a candidate and distributed

4.16: Lesser the belief in vote's efficacy, lesser the urge to vote



Note: All figures are in percent

pamphlets during elections were collated together and divided into three categories – No Participation, Moderate Participation and High Participation. This collation of responses is referred to in this section as index of electoral participation.³ Around 28 percent of young Indian voters participate in electoral activities other than voting. Not only that but this number has been rising over the years (Figure 4.17).

There is a marginal difference between youth and older respondents in terms of participation in election related activities, nevertheless, youth are ahead of older respondents in electoral participation (Figure 4.18). 14 percent of older respondents fall in the high participation category in election related activities, whereas 17 percent of youth participate in high numbers in election related activities.

4.17: Sizeable number of youth participate in electoral activities

Level of Electoral Participation

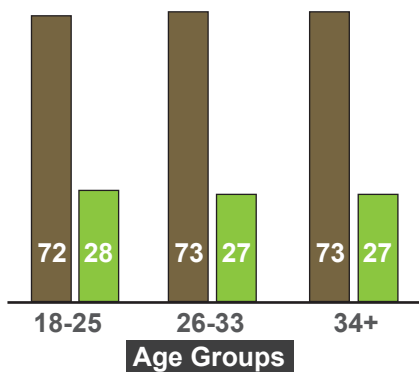


- No Participation
- Moderate Participation
- High Participation

Note: All figures are in percent

4.18: Electoral participation of youth marginally higher than others

Level of Electoral Participation



- No participation*
- Participation*

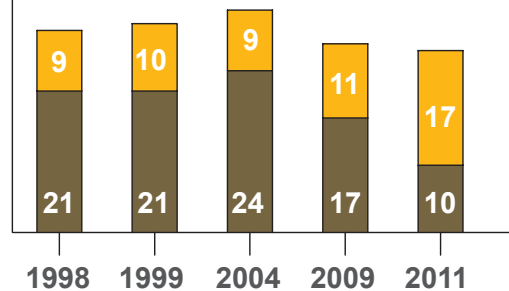
Note: All figures are in percent.

*'Moderate participation' and 'high participation' categories are merged together for participation in election related activities.

A marginal rise in the high participation category is witnessed in the 2009 elections. While this number sure does rise in the present survey, since the sampling of constituencies in the present survey was purposive rather than random as in all other national surveys, methodologically it impedes any comparison with nationally representative surveys like the NES series. However, overall the participation of youth has remained steady over the last decade.

4.19: Electoral participation of youth rising steadily

Level of Electoral Participation



- Some Participation
- High Participation

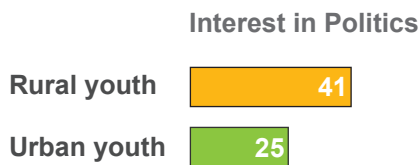
Note: All figures are in percent.

*Participation in election related activities in selected 14 constituencies in CSDS Youth and politics Survey.

The participation levels of youth in electoral activities are not similar across socio-demographic background. Young men are more participative in election related activities than young women. About 4 percent of young women participate in election related activities compared to 27 percent of young men who participate in election related activities. Locality produces a very

very interesting and paradoxical picture. 19 percent of rural youth participate in election related activities which is seven percent higher than urban youth. While overall urban youth admitted having interest in politics a lot more than rural youth, when it comes to participating in electoral activities, the ones in rural area exceed the urban youth by a considerable margin. Having interest in politics translates into different activities for respondents across localities. The interest in politics is in tandem with participation in electoral activities for youth located in rural areas whereas comparatively the interest of urban youth is restricted and is not supplemented with political action. Overall, as mentioned earlier about 28 percent of youth participate in varying degree in electoral activities. For rural youth who are interested in politics this number increases by 13 percent. As we can see 41 percent of rural youth having interest in politics participate in election related activities, whereas on the other hand 25 percent urban youth having interest in politics participate in electoral activities (Figure 4.20).

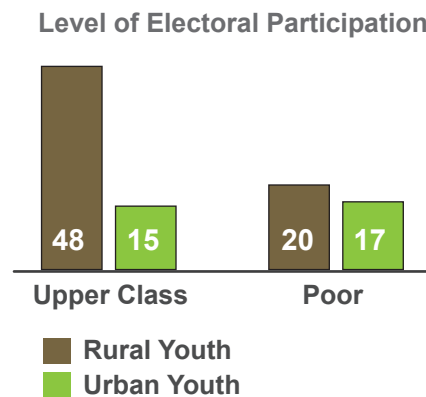
4.20: Rural youth more interested in politics compared to urban youth



Note: All figures are in percent.

One of the most interesting findings regarding electoral participation is that economic class of the youth who participate in election related activities in rural and urban areas are completely different. The rural upper class is not only the most active category of people participating in election related activities but their participation reaches almost 50 percent levels. On the other hand the urban upper class reports the lowest levels of participation in election related activities among all other categories. In urban areas the middle classes report the highest levels of participation, about 23 percent. Urban poor exceed urban upper class in terms of participation. However across all class categories the participation levels of rural respondents is much higher than their urban counterparts (Figure 4.21).

4.21: Rural youth participate in electoral activities more compared to urban youth



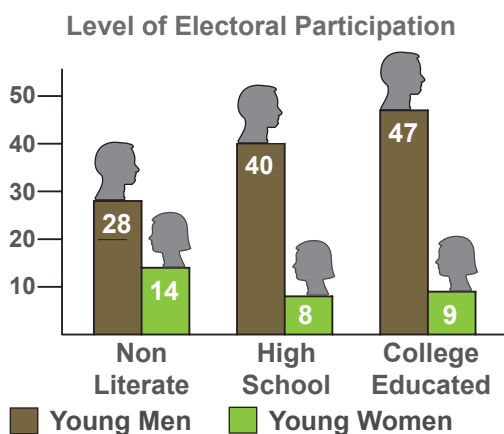
Note: All figures are in percent.

Within the same economic class, education seems to have a positive impact on participation. This impact is felt greatly among the upper class. While for all other classes their level of participation increases with the gradual increase in education this is not completely true for respondents belonging to poor class. Among the respondents belonging to the poor class, college educated followed by non literate are the most participative categories. Overall the middle educated ones participate lesser as compared to the non literate ones.

Reiterating what has been said earlier, education has a positive impact on overall electoral participation. However when one looks at this large encompassing finding through the prism of gender, a whole new trend emerges. While education greatly aids in increasing electoral participation for men, the same does not hold true for women. In fact education has a negative impact on the electoral participation of women. As is evident from the Figure 4.22 there is a five percent difference between participation levels of non literate vis-a-vis college educated women. The positive impact of education on electoral participation of men and its negative impact on women results in the widening of gap between the participation level of men and women as one goes up the ladder of education. The difference between the electoral participation levels of non literate men and non literate women is about 14 percent which increases for educated respondents who record a difference of 38 percent among participation levels of educated men and educated women. Class on

the other hand does not seem to have a negative impact on the participation levels of women. The participation of women among poor, lower and middle classes hovers around ten percent while 14 percent of upper class women participate in election related activities.

4.22: Irrespective of education electoral participation low among young women compared to young men

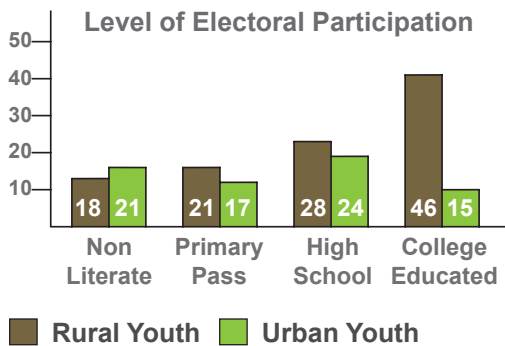


Note: All figures are in percent.

Exactly as in the case of class, education has not only different but contradictory effects across localities. While attaining education also makes rural respondents more participative in election related activities, this is not so for their urban counterparts. The most participative group among the urban respondents is those who are not literate. While education has an inverse relationship with electoral participation among urban respondents, it shares a direct one with rural participants as far as their participation in election related activities is concerned. The most non participative of the lot are urban college edu-

cated youth. As a result the difference in participation levels between rural and urban college educated youth is the highest (figure 4.23).

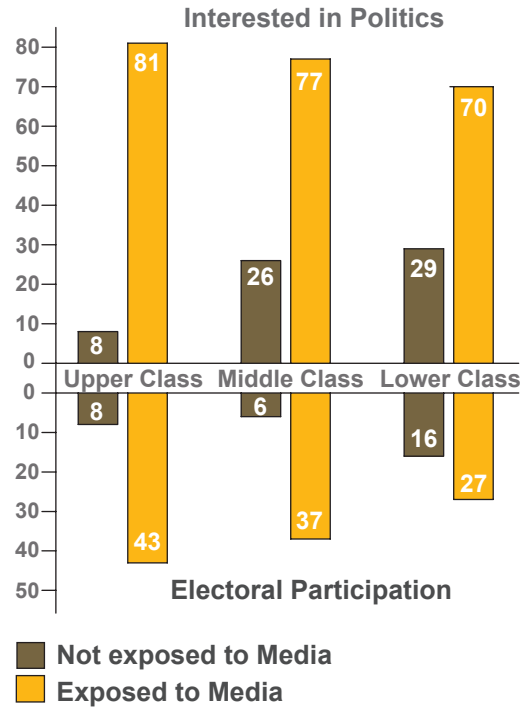
4.23: Electoral participation more among educated rural youth compared to educated urban youth



Note: All figures are in percent.

Media exposure has a positive impact on electoral participation across classes; however, the magnitude of the effect is much lower as compared to its effect on interest in politics. The point one is trying to make is about the limited efficacy of media exposure in terms of political mobilisation or participation across classes and education levels. While exposure to any degree of media instantaneously increases the respondents' interest in politics, participation in electoral activities presents itself as a lot more complex phenomenon. Media exposure shares a positive relationship with electoral participation even within different classes and respondents with varying levels of education (Figure 4.24).

4.24: Media exposure has a positive impact on interest in politics and electoral participation



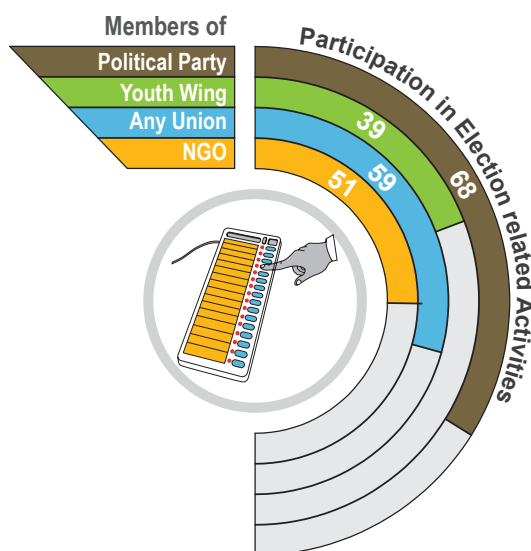
Note: All figures are in percent.

The impact caused by media exposure among respondents from varying education levels is clearly a positive one for electoral participation and the college educated youth respond to the media exposure the most with the highest increase in electoral participation observed between college educated youth not exposed to media and college educated youth exposed to media. About 12 percent of college educated youth not exposed to media, participate in election related activities as opposed to 36 percent of college educated youth exposed to varying degrees of media exposure. The least respondent to

media exposure are non literate and primary educated youth who record an increase of about 11 percent and 12 percent respectively. 26 percent of non literate youth and 25 percent of primary pass youth who are exposed to media, participate in election related activities.

Members of student and youth wings of political parties participate the least in election related activities. Members of political parties are the most active. Members of unions are second only to members of political parties as far as electoral participation is concerned. Members of Non Governmental organizations participate in electoral activities much more as compared to members of student and youth wings (Figure 4.25).

4.25: Members of student & youth wings surprisingly not very participative in electoral activities



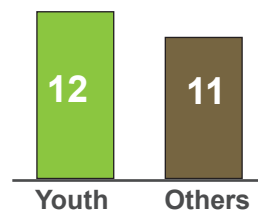
Note: All figures are in percent

► Participation in Protest and Demonstration

Participation in protests and demonstrations is an important aspect to assess overall political participation. This form of participation occurs outside the electoral space. Respondents, in the CSDS Survey, were asked whether they had ever participated in protests or demonstrations. 12 percent respondents have participated in protest and demonstration. There is minor difference between youth and older respondents in terms of participation in protests and demonstrations (Figure 4.26).

4.26: Participation in protests low, among both youth and others

Participation in Protest/ Demonstration

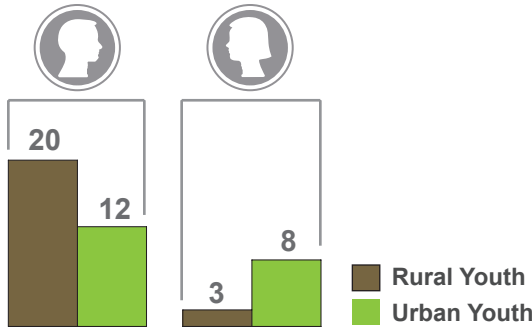


Note: All figures are in percent

Very few young women in rural areas reported participating in any protests or demonstrations. Cities/ Urban areas seem to provide for women the space for extra electoral participation, since more women in urban areas reported to have been a part of a demonstration or a protest. On the other hand young men in rural areas consistently exceed youth in urban areas in any form of political participation including this one (Figure 4.27).

4.27: Participation in protests higher among young men compared to young women

Participation in Protest/ Demonstration



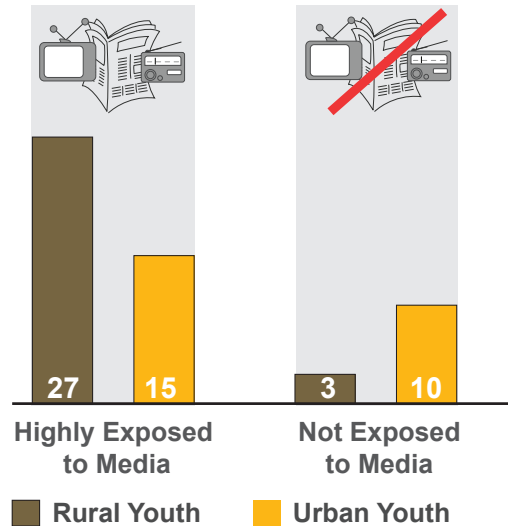
Note: All figures are in percent

Media exposure in rural areas shares a positive and linear relationship with participation in protests and demonstrations. However one wonders whether the same can be said for urban areas. While the urban respondents with media exposure also participate the most in protests and demonstrations, however one it is not a linear increase and two the difference between those not exposed to media and those exposed to media is not very high (Figure 4.28).

Education seems to be providing men with spaces that allow for dissenting voices. The participation of men in extra electoral protests and demonstrations consistently rises with education, but the same is not true for women. The percentage of women across educational categories who participate in protests and demonstrations hovers around five percent (Figure 4.29).

4.28: Greater the exposure to media higher the participation in protests

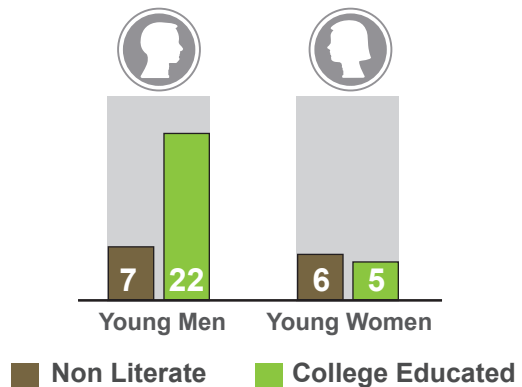
Participation in Protest/ Demonstration



Note: All figures are in percent

4.29: Higher the level of education attainment, higher the participation in protests

Participation in Protest/ Demonstration



Note: All figures are in percent

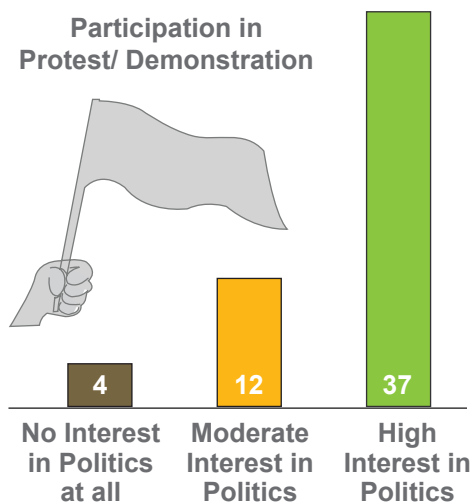
The space of extra electoral participation, according to our survey, witnesses the highest participation from the rich in rural areas and the middle classes in urban areas. The participation of poor is similar across localities and is below five percent. Class in rural areas shares a linear relationship with participation in protest and demonstrations.

While demographic categories of locality, gender, class, education help locate the social sites of active respondents, it is the attitudinal categories of political orientation of individual which provides the insight into the political attitudes of these youth. Participation in protests and demonstrations increases more than nine times when comparing those who are not at all interested and those who are highly interested in poli-

tics. Among those who are absolutely not interested in politics, about 4 percent of youth among them admit that they have participated in protest and demonstration. On the other hand, 37 percent of youth who are highly interested in politics participate in protests and demonstrations (Figure 4.30).

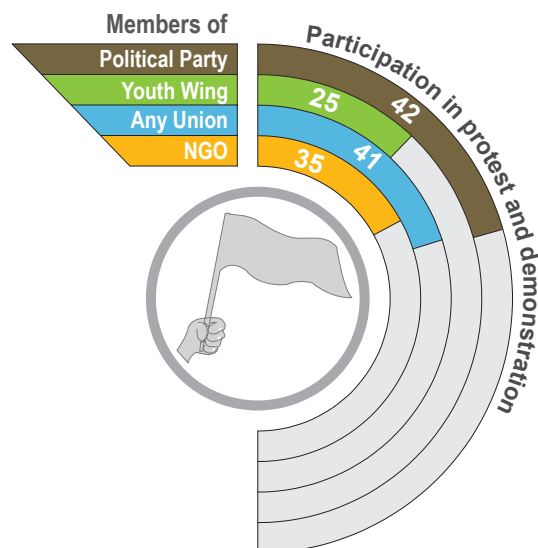
Members of political parties are most likely to have participated in protests and demonstrations. 42 percent of youth who are members of political parties participate in protests and demonstration. Compared to this, only about 25 percent of youth who are members of student/youth wing participate in protests and demonstration (Figure 4.31). In fact members of political student wings are least participative. Even youth who are members of any union

4.30: Greater the interest in politics, greater the participation in protests and demonstrations



Note: All figures are in percent

4.31: Participation in protests highest among political party and union members, followed by NGO members



Note: All figures are in percent

are more participative than members of student wings. Expectedly participation of NGO members in election related activities is slightly low, yet more than 1/3rd of them have participated in protests and demonstrations.

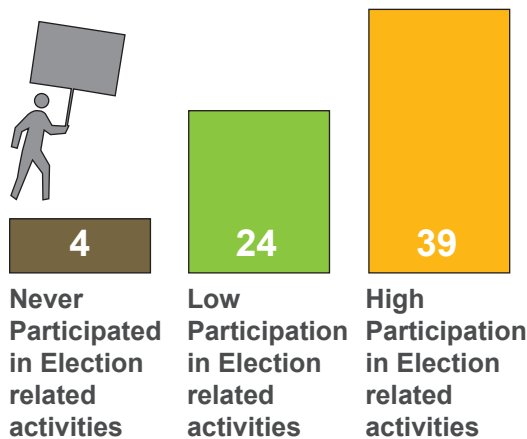
Participation in electoral activities leads to participation in protests and demonstrations. There is a rather huge overlap between those who have participated in electoral activities and those who have participated in protests and demonstrations. About 39 percent of youth who record a high participation in election related activities also record highest participation in protests and demonstrations, whereas the number decreases drastically to 4 percent among youth who have never participated in electoral activities (Figure 4.32).

Overall the survey reveals that “Interest in Politics” vis-a-vis “Participation in political activities” are conceptually very different, they do not overlap completely, and socially both these categories – Interest and Participation, have members from two distinct geographic and socio economic locations. However over the years, on the whole one witnesses an increase in interest and in participation in certain political activities. Important factors responsible for this increase in participation and interest in politics are education and media exposure. As literacy rate increases among the youth, their participation and interest in politics also increases.

4.32: Higher the participation in electoral activities, higher the participation in protests



Participation in Protest/ Demonstration



Note: All figures are in percent

► Key Highlights

- Overall, Urban youth is more interested in politics, whereas the rural youth outnumbers urban youth in political participation in all three spheres: Voting, Participation in election related activities and participation in extra electoral protest and demonstrations.
- For generating interest in politics among all other demographic categories, exposure to media seems to have the highest effect.
- Media exposure has a drastic effect when it comes to generating interest in politics, however the intensity of its effect is not maintained when it comes to participation.
- Economic Background plays a contradictory role in urban and rural areas with electoral participation. The high class in rural areas is politically active whereas the high class in urban areas is comparatively passive.
- Attaining education does not necessarily increase the presence of women in the political sphere.
- Student wings and Student unions are politically most inactive units.

► Notes

1. Milbrath, L.W. (1965). Political Participation: How and why do people get involved in Politics, USA: Rand McNally & Company.
2. Alan D. Monroe. (1977) Illinois State University, 'Urbanism and Voter Turnout: A Note on Some Unexpected Findings, American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Feb), pp. 71-78, Published by: Midwest Political Science Association
3. See Index Note (1)

► Index Notes

1. Index about participation in election related activities

This index has been formed on the basis of responses collected for Q9a, Q9b & Q9c- collecting funds for the candidate, attending election meetings/rallies and taking part in the election campaign/distributing pamphlets respectively. The answer choices provided to the respondents for each of these questions were “Yes”, “No”, “Don’t remember” and “No opinion”. The responses to all these three questions were collated and divided in three categories- “No participation”, “Moderate participation” and High participation”. Participation in any two out of the three activities or all three activities assessed here is considered as “High” participation. Participation in any one or more than one but less than three activities is considered as “Moderate” participation.. All those who responded whether in negative or do not recall participating in any activity form the “No participation” category.

SECTION: 05

Voting Pattern among Indian Youth



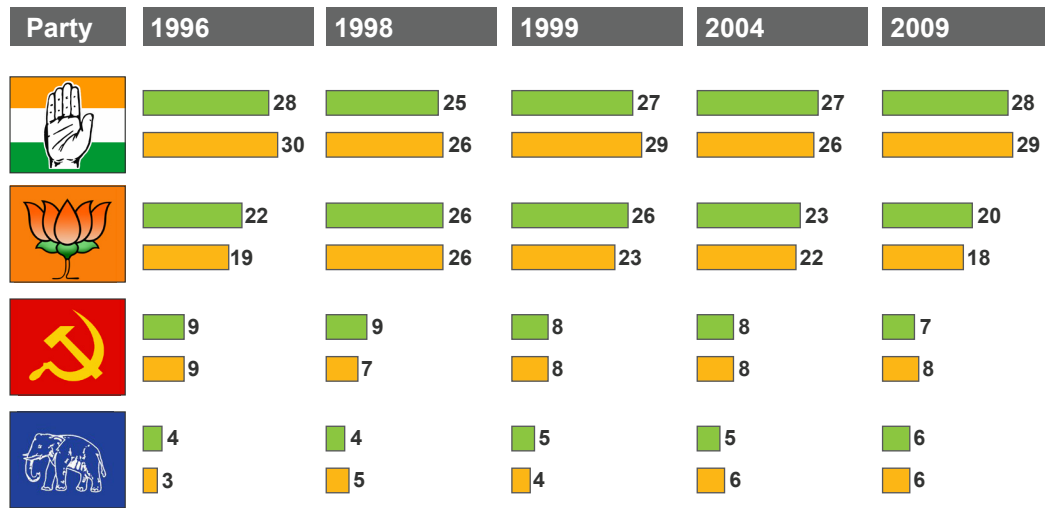
SECTION: 05

Voting Pattern among Indian Youth

In India, the youth has increased its electoral participation in significant numbers, in spite of the appeal to the youth by the political parties. While it is difficult to say whether Congress lost its vote bank among the young voters during the 1990s and after, the party did not receive more votes amongst the young voters compared to the other/older voters. The vote share of the Congress among the young voters remained somewhat representative of its national vote share; at times the party got more votes among the older voters compared to the youth. On the other hand, the young voters, mostly from the upper caste and urban areas played an important role in the electoral success of the BJP during the last one decade. While the overall vote share of the BJP has declined to below 20 percent (18.8 percent), the BJP received more votes from the youth voters compared to non-youth voters. The Left parties (CPI and CPM) do attract the young mind, especially of those studying in the universities, but they do not seem to be getting more votes amongst the youth as compared to the older voters. There is hardly any difference in the vote share of the Left parties among the young and older voters. The BSP's support base is evenly increasing both amongst the young voters as well as amongst the older voters, though it is concentrated more amongst the dalit youth compared to youth from other communities (Figure 5.1). These are some interesting trends among youth voters during last one decade. Hence, the objective of this section is to highlight the recent trends and voting choice of the youth for political parties in various Lok Sabha elections during that period.

Over the years, Congress has generally won more votes from older voters than from the youth; but the young women had voted for the Congress in bigger numbers compared to young men. Though, Congress seemed to have lost this advantage amongst the young women voters during 2009 Lok Sabha election. The BJP has always received more votes amongst the young men compared to young women (Figure 5.3). If Congress has lost its advantage amongst young women voters vis-a-vis young men, similarly, the BJP has also lost its advantage amongst the young men compared to young women. However, the gap between the votes of the young

5.1: Hardly an advantage for any political party amongst Young Voters

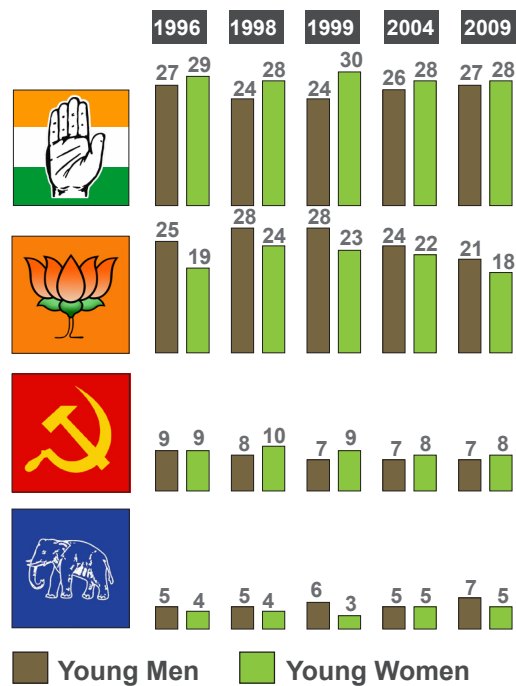


 Young voters  Other voters

Note: All figures are in percent. Voteshare weighted datasets, NES 1996-2009

men and young women for BJP has narrowed down from 6 percent during the 1996 Lok Sabha election to 2 percent during the 2004 Lok Sabha election, increasing marginally by 1 percent during the 2009 Lok Sabha election. The Congress had an advantage over the BJP amongst the young women voters, except during the 1998 Lok Sabha elections. But the Congress does not enjoy similar advantage over the BJP amongst the young men voters. In fact during the 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP got more votes compared to the Congress amongst young men voters, even though overall, Congress had secured more votes compared to the BJP during the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. The Left parties have secured marginally higher votes from the young women, while slightly higher number of young men have voted for the BSP (Figure 5.2).

5.2: More Young Women Voted for Congress compared to Young Men

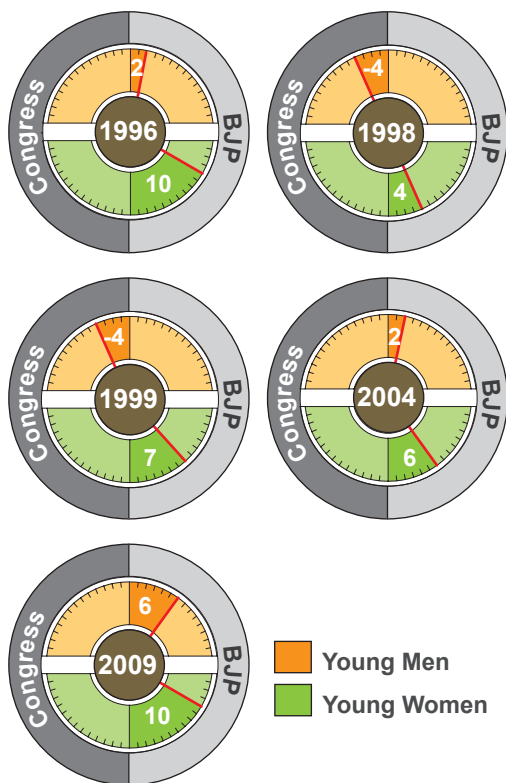


 Young Men  Young Women

Note: All figures are in percent

5.3: Congress has enjoyed an advantage over BJP amongst Young women voters, but not amongst young men voters

Advantage for Congress over BJP



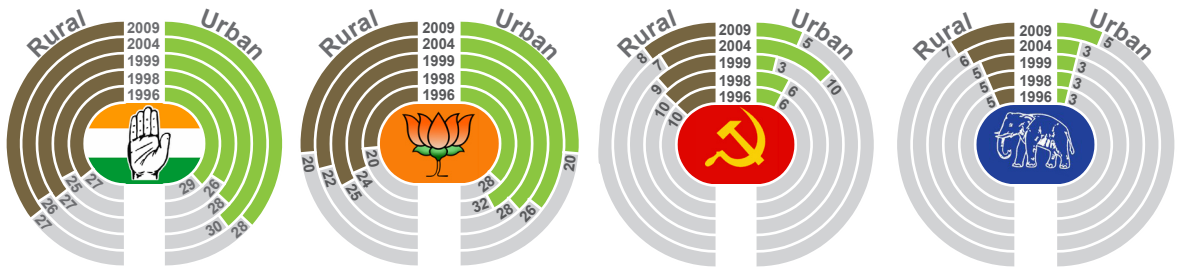
Note: All figures are in percent

The differences in voting patterns amongst rural and urban youth is much sharper compared to what we see amongst young women and young men. A study of the voting pattern of the youth over the last 13 years show that the rural youth seem to be more in favour of Congress, while the urban youth is more inclined to vote for the BJP. The vote for the BJP amongst the urban youth has been higher compared

to its vote amongst the rural youth over last several elections, while the support base of Congress is more or less evenly spread both amongst urban and rural youth. This hardly comes as a surprise as BJP draws greater support amongst the urban voters compared to rural voters. The electoral success of the BJP during the early 1990s can be credited to its strong support amongst the urban youth. The urban youth voted for the BJP in large numbers during the 1996, 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections. The BJP enjoyed this advantage amongst the urban young voters till the 2004 Lok Sabha election, but since then, the party lost its preference amongst the urban young voters. The loss of urban young votes of the BJP translated into the gain for regional parties in different states. The Congress could not muster greater support from the urban young voters during the 2009 Lok Sabha election. The Left parties draw greater political support amongst the rural youth compared to urban youth except for in 2004, when it received more votes amongst the urban young voters compared to rural young voters. The victory of the Left parties during the 2004 Lok Sabha may be credited to its increased support amongst urban youth. Though the support base of BSP has increased both amongst rural and urban youth during last one decade, BSP's support has increased more amongst the rural youth compared to the urban youth (Figure 5.4).



5.4: BJP's voteshare has declined amongst urban youth



Note:

All figures are in percent.

Vote-share weighted datasets NES 1996-2009.

► Key Highlights

- There is hardly an advantage for any political party amongst young voters.
- More young women voting for Congress compared to young men.
- Congress has enjoyed an advantage over BJP amongst young women voters, but not amongst young men voters.
- BJP's vote share has declined amongst urban youth over the years.



SECTION: 06

Young Candidates and Young Voters:

An Emerging Relationship

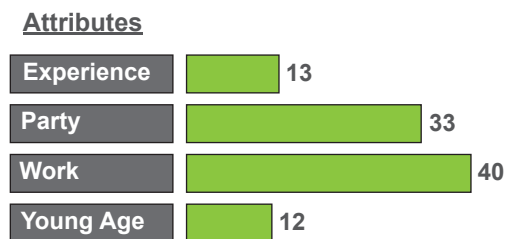
Young Candidates and Young Voters: An Emerging Relationship

Is a candidate's young age (25-40 years) a valued attribute among the electorate? Do younger voters (18-33 years) prefer younger candidates? Do older voters (34 years and above) resist younger political leaders? Among all attributes of the candidates, does young age have the potential for becoming a winning attribute for any political leader? Does young age of a political leader come to symbolise more than just young age, rather promising enthusiasm, higher education and modernity? These are some of the questions that this section deals with. We have tried to juxtapose the categories of youth voters vis-a-vis non-youth voters in greater frequency here so as to inquire the distinctiveness of the opinion of the youth.

► Leadership Preference

Respondents of the survey were asked to rank candidate's experience, party, work and young age respectively in the order of importance they give to each while voting. Figure 6.1 denotes the percent of respondents who ranked these attributes at the number one position.

6.1: Candidate's work most important consideration for youth

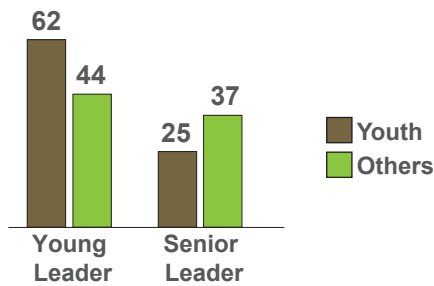


Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

Among the youth, age as an attribute receives lowest support when compared to the other attributes like experience, party affiliation and work. Majority of the people consider candidate's work and party affiliation as the most important quality. Experience, receives marginally higher ranking from youth respondents than age itself. A little over 50 percent of the youth respondents ranked age as the least important. However, about two-thirds of voters above the age of 34 ranked age as the least important attribute as compared to experience, party affiliation and the work done by the candidate. While there is a similarity among the responses of youth and older respondents, since both

attribute high importance to work of the candidate and least to age, comparatively lesser number of youth feel that age of the candidate is least important as compared to others. However, when we asked whom would they vote for if a senior 50 year old candidate and a young 28 year old candidate were contesting for the first time, young candidate over the old was the overwhelming choice of majority of youth (Figure 6.2).

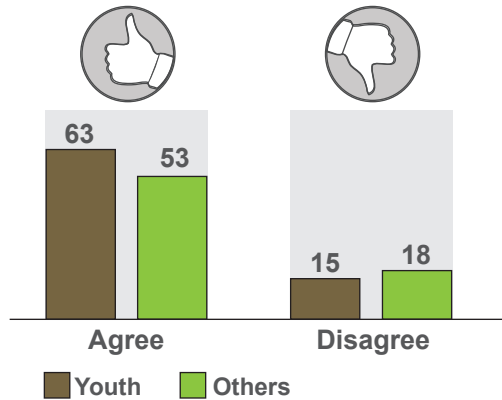
6.2: Youth and old both prefer young leader



Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

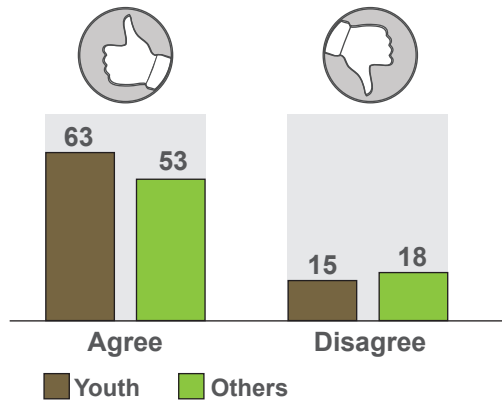
Only about a quarter of the youth admit their preference for the older political leader. Conversely nearly two-thirds of the youth prefer a young leader. The opinions of the other respondents are not so evidently divided. Hence, while the older respondents in lesser strength as compared to the young respondents support a young candidate, the higher preference for a younger leader over a senior one, in the given scenario, continues to exist even among the older respondents.

6.3: For better development, young leaders should be given the charge of governing the country: young and old, both agree



Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

6.4: Young leaders can govern better than other leaders: young and old, both agree



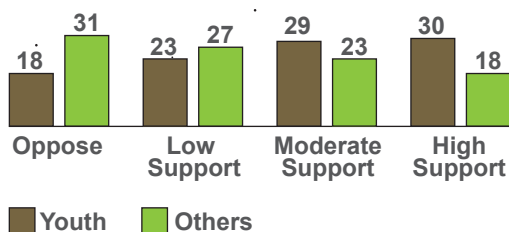
Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

Two trends are observed in Figures 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4. First is that the support for a young leader exceeds the support for senior leaders among both young respondents as well as older respondents across the three questions. Second, youth as compared to non-youth, in

much greater numbers support either young leaders or agree that in various scenarios they have an edge over the older leaders. To reconfirm the trend observed above, to check for its consistency and to understand the overall picture, an index¹ was created using all four questions mentioned above. Responses to importance given to candidate's young age while voting, preference between a young and an old leader other things remaining constant, agreement to the idea that for better development young leaders should be given the charge, and the idea that young leaders can govern better than others were collated together and graded into four categories – oppose young leaders, low support for young leaders, moderate support for young leaders and high support for young leaders. A little less than two-thirds of the youth moderately and highly support young leaders. Exactly the opposite is the case with older respondents. 58 percent of respondents from older age groups either oppose young leaders or fall in the category of low support. Youth are most likely to highly support a young leader, whereas older respondents are most likely to oppose the idea of a young leader (Figure 6.5).

Men as compared to women across localities support young leaders in greater strength. This is consistent across education categories as well, where men when compared to women counterparts with similar education, exceed women in terms of their support for a younger candidate. Education on the whole has a positive impact on support for young leaders and this is true across gender and across rural and urban areas. The

6.5 Support for young leaders more among youth compared to others



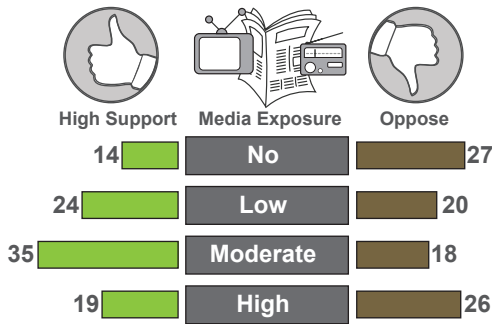
Note: All figures are in percent.

support for young leaders is higher from urban areas as compared to rural. College educated urban youth form one of the most supportive categories, offering least resistance to young leaders.

Media exposure, overall, has a positive impact but the effect of exposure to media is slightly nuanced. While those not exposed to the media at all are the least acceptant to the idea of young leadership in politics, the highest acceptance occurs at moderate exposure levels. Among respondents highly exposed to the media, the support for a young candidate drops drastically. About 40 percent of youth, who are moderately exposed to the media highly support young political leaders. Among those highly exposed to media, the support for a young candidate falls to 32 percent. In fact among women this trend is even more pronounced. Women highly exposed to media support young leadership in far lesser strength as compared to women having moderate media exposure or low exposure. The level of opposition to young leaders is almost equal among women who have absolutely no media exposure, and among

women who are highly exposed to media (Figure 6.6).

6.6 Support for young political leaders most among women moderately exposed to media

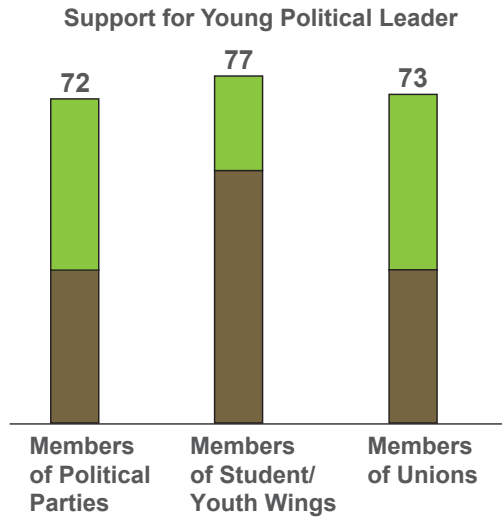


Note: All figures are in percent. Figures only for young women.

Members of youth/ student wings far exceed in their support for young political leadership as compared to the overall support, as well as compared to the support for young leadership from members of political parties and members of unions. However, being a member of any of these three aforementioned organisations leads to substantially higher support for young leadership as compared to the overall support levels (Figure 6.7).

What is interesting to note is the juxtaposing of the very first graphic of this section regarding ranking of age, work experience, party affiliations and candidate’s work, with the overall support for young leaders. Among the four attributes – work, experience, party affiliations and age, age of a candidate was the most unpopular of the attributes mentioned among respondents

6.7 Support for young leaders most among youth who are members of student and youth wing of political parties



Legend: High Support (dark brown), Moderate Support (green)

Note: All figures are in percent.

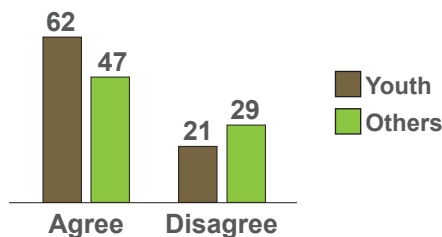
irrespective of their age group. In a larger sense, the idea of young leadership finds fair acceptance, more so among youth and to some extent among older respondents, but young age of candidate, exclusively as a reason for voting has definitely not emerged as a practice.

► **Reasons for Preference**

So far we have seen that most of the young respondents of the survey clearly prefer young leaders over older leaders. In this section we would see the possible reasons for this preference for young leaders which go beyond young age of the leader itself to the idea of political leadership by the young, and the attributes of enthusiasm leading to

efficient governance and higher education leading to better development related to it. In the survey, we asked the respondents if they think that the young leaders have enthusiasm and fresh thinking and hence perform better or do the people think that the young leaders have the zeal but they lack experience, and hence cannot perform well (Figure 6.8).

6.8: Young leaders perform better due to their enthusiasm



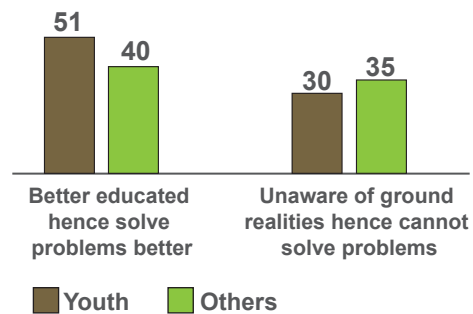
Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

The trend regarding various questions on attributes of young leadership as observed earlier, where those acceptant of young leadership or attributes of young leader exceed those who oppose it, continues here as well. In addition to that, young respondents in greater strength are acceptant of the proposition that young leaders perform better due to their enthusiasm and fresh thinking as compared to older respondents.

Another reason for the preference for a young leader over an older leader is higher education attainment of the candidate. Through our survey we tried to find out if educated young leaders speak to the collective aspiration of attaining higher education prevalent in the

country. The question was posed in a way where education of young respondents was pitched against their distance from ground realities and their respective effects on candidate's ability to solve problems. As compared to the previous proposition regarding the enthusiasm of young leaders, this particular one overall incites lesser support in favour of young leaders. The consistency of larger number of respondents agreeing to a positive statement about young leaders as compared to those who oppose it continues through this section. However among all propositions mentioned till now, this particular one finds least acceptance (Figure 6.9).

6.9: Young leaders are better educated and hence can govern better

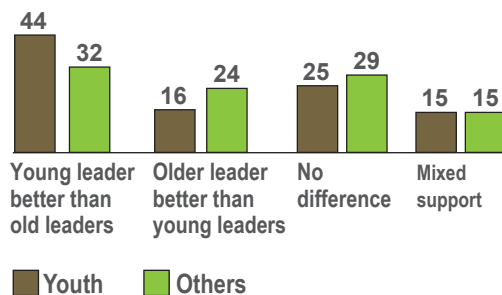


Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

In the survey, the respondents were asked to compare young and senior/older leaders on various aspects of governance. These aspects of governance were – regularity of the candidate in visiting their respective constituency, keeping in touch with the voters, keeping in touch with party workers, development of the constituency, and working honestly.² The assessment of young leaders is consistently more

positive than that of senior leaders. Among all the five aspects of governance, young leaders were found to be most efficient at visiting their constituencies by both young and older respondents. Keeping in touch with party workers was the task where the young respondents felt that the young leaders did not perform that well, whereas the older respondents assess young leaders the worst in the arena of carrying out development activities in their constituency. The responses to all these aforementioned five aspects were collated and it was found that positive assessment for young leaders is higher than that for older political leaders. As one can see in Figure 6.10, a little less than quarter of older respondents have a positive assessment of old leaders whereas nearly one third of them think young leaders are better than the old in majority of the five activities mentioned earlier. Youth in much higher numbers assess the young leaders positively, whereas in much lower numbers as compared to the older respondents assess the old leaders positively. This is in tandem with the overall trend that has been observed as yet.

6.10: Young leaders better evaluated by young respondents

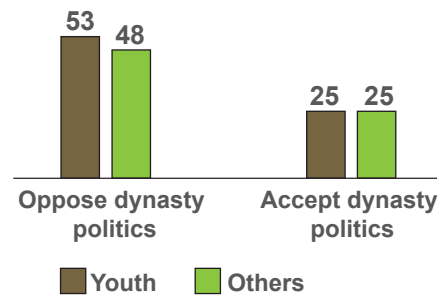


Note: All figures are in percent

► Dynasties in Politics

This section of the report analyses opinions of young respondents regarding the phenomenon of dynasties in the Indian political system. Respondents in this survey were asked whether just like other professions it was acceptable if politicians’ children continued with their father’s or family occupation of politics. 53 percent youth and 48 percent older respondents said that “politicians children becoming politicians is wrong”, respectively (Figure 6.11). Hence overall more youth are against the concept of dynastic politics than respondents from older age groups.

6.11: Everyone not opposed to dynasty politics



Note: All figures are in percent. Rest ‘No opinion’.

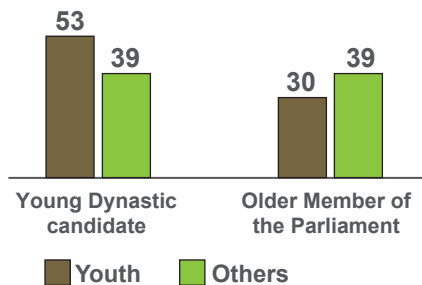
Acceptance for the proposition of dynastic politics is slightly more among non-literate as compared to educated youth. While among both, non-literate as well as college educated youth, there is more opposition than acceptance, college educated youth in greater strength oppose it than non-literate youth. In addition to this, young male respondents and young urban respondents in a greater strength are against the idea of dynastic politics as compared to

females and rural counterparts respectively.

The next finding presents a contradiction to the one just discussed above. When asked whom between a 50 year old senior candidate who is also the sitting MP and a 28 year old young candidate who is also a son of an ex-MP would the respondents vote for, most of the respondents across all social backgrounds said that they would choose the young candidate in spite of his political lineage over the older non-dynastic candidate. Across youth and older respondents, the probability of the young candidate with lineage being chosen is higher than that of the older non-dynastic candidate. It seems that even though the voters are against the idea of dynastic politics, when it comes to voting, age of the candidate is more important than lineage for the voters, especially for the young respondents. So even if choosing a young candidate means choosing a dynastic one, they would prefer it over electing an older candidate (Figure 6.12).

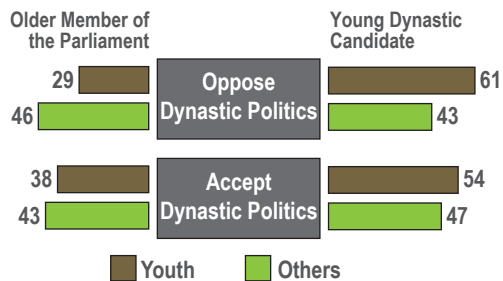
Young men are more likely to choose a young dynastic leader as compared to young women, and young dynastic leader finds more support in urban areas. As the level of education increases, support for a young dynastic leader increases too. This particularly is in contradiction to the earlier question where education helped to form an opinion against the idea of dynastic politics. What one observes here is a disjunction between the arena of ideation and action among the young respondents. This disjunction not only continues but deepens when we look at opinions of those against dynastic politics. Young respondents who say that politician's children becoming politicians is wrong are more likely to prefer a young dynastic candidate over a senior non-dynastic one. This is not entirely the case with older respondents. However, even among the older respondents a substantial percent of those against dynastic politics are likely to choose a 28 year old candidate as their leader over a 50 year old non-dynastic leader (Figure 6.13).

6.12: Young dynasty candidate preferred over senior non dynasty MP



Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

6.13: Young dynasty candidate finds support even among those opposed to dynasty politics



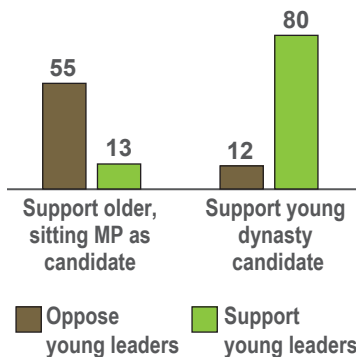
Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

Expectedly all those for whom candidate's young age mattered most while voting and all those who supported the idea of young leaders taking over politics are much more likely to choose a younger although dynastic candidate. Youth who felt that candidate's young age was the most important factor as compared to candidate's work, his experience and party affiliations, in large numbers choose the young dynastic candidate. About 72 percent of youth for whom young age of candidate mattered a lot chose the young dynastic candidate. Conversely 46 percent of young respondents for whom young age of the candidate was not at all important chose the young dynastic candidate. Comparing all those who oppose young political leaders vis-a-vis all those who highly support young leaders, the support for the young dynastic candidate increases multiple times between those who oppose and those who support young leaders respectively among young respondents (Figure 6.14).

Hence one could say that when age and dynasty are pitched against each other, the young age of the candidate overshadows the eminent political lineage. Also between young leadership and dynastic politics one finds more people in favour of young political leaders in spite of the fact that they may belong to political dynasties as against older non dynastic leaders.



6.14: Young age of the candidate given preference over political lineage by youth



Note:

1. All figures are in percent. Rest "No opinion".
2. Support is all those who formed the category of "High Support" in Index.³

► Key Highlights

- Across age categories, overall, young leaders find high support.
- Support for young leaders, greater among urban, educated and young respondents.
- Young and older respondents do not differ greatly regarding their choices on political leadership. Youth, only in greater strength, as compared to the old, support young leadership.
- Support for young leaders on various issues does not necessarily translate into voting which is based solely on the basis of the candidate's young age.
- Opinions of young and older respondents regarding dynastic politics are alike.
- When dynastic politics is pitched against young age of political candidate, young age is preferred.

► Notes

1. See Index Note (2)
2. See Index Note (1)
3. See Index Note (2)

► Index Notes

1. Index about comparative assessment of work done by young and old political leaders


This index was created based on five questions asking the respondents to compare old vis-a-vis young leaders' regularity in visiting their constituency, keeping in touch with the voters, keeping in touch with party workers, development of the constituency and about working honestly. The questions used to create this index were Q26a, Q26b, Q26c, Q26d, and Q26e. The answer choices provided to the respondents for each of these questions were young leader, old leader, No difference and No Opinion/Can't say. The responses to all these five questions were collated and divided in four categories – Those who had positive opinion about young leaders, those having positive assessment of senior leaders, those who majorly felt that there was no difference and lastly those with no clear verdict were clubbed as mixed response. Those who had absolutely no opinion in any of the five instances were not considered for the analysis.

► **Table: Index political assessment**

| Assessment of leaders | Respondents who... |
|---|---|
| Young leaders better than older leaders | All respondents who in three out of five instances felt that compared to old young leaders performed better. |
| Older leaders better than young leaders | All respondents who in three out of the five instances posed felt that in comparison to the young leaders senior leaders were better at doing those tasks. |
| No difference | All respondents who in three out of five instances felt that young and old were fared same. |
| Mixed Support | All respondents whose responses were disparate and did not provide any major preference for either of the three options of young leaders, senior leaders and Young and old identical were clubbed together in this category |

2. Index of Support for young leaders

The aim of this index was to understand the overall support and opposition to the idea of young political leaders. This index was created using Q12d, Q25b, Q27, Q35 from the CSDS Youth and Politics Survey. Question 12d inquired whether candidate's young age was an important factor while voting, Q25b asked assessed agreement on the proposition that for better development young leaders should be given the charge of governing the country, Q27 was whom between a young and an old candidate would they choose in a Lok Sabha election and Q35 asked whether young leaders govern country better than other leaders. These questions were collated and finally the responses were ordered in four categories – Oppose, Low Support, Moderate Support and High Support. The Index was accomplished in a two step procedure. Q12d and A25b were first merged together and ordered into five categories – Oppose, Low, Moderate, High and No Opinion. Respondents who formed the category of oppose were all those who had ranked candidate's young age as the last or the second last among the four attributes provided and disagreed to Q25b "For better development, young leaders should be given the charge of governing the country". Conversely all those who fully agreed with this statement and ranked candidate's young age as the most important attribute or second most important attribute formed the category of High Support. High Support also contained all those who responded as somewhat agree to Q25b but for whom candidate's young age mattered the most. All those who somewhat disagreed with the above-mentioned statement and ranked candidate's young age as second or third



most important attribute along with those who somewhat agreed with the statement but ranked candidate's young age as least important formed the category of Low supporters. No Opinion remained a separate category and all others formed the category of moderate supporters.

In the second step this initial index was added to Q27 and Q35, the responses were collated and finally ordered into four categories – Oppose, Low Support, Moderate Support and High Support. All those who had no opinion in all the four questions used in creating this index were set as missing from analysis. All those who answered in favour of young leaders in Q27 and Q35 and were either high or moderate supporters of young leaders as per Step I of this index formed the group of High Supporters. All those who did not favour young leaders in both Q27 and Q35 and were low supporters of young leaders in the step I of the Index or opposed Young leaders formed the category of oppose. All those who in either of the two questions - Q27 and Q35 did not support young leaders and opposed or had low support for young leaders in step I were categorized as low supporters. Rest formed the group of moderate supporters.



SECTION: 07

Opinions on Issues of Electoral Reforms

Opinions on Issues of Electoral Reforms

Electoral reforms have engaged the attention of India's parliament, government, judiciary, the election commission, the media and civil society. Since 1990, there have been seven major government-commissioned reports for electoral reforms.¹ This section will look at the perceptions of the youth and the rest about some of these proposed reforms, according to the CSDS survey.

► Idea of the Right to Recall

One important question in modern democratic systems has been about how to make elected representatives more accountable to the voters who have chosen them. Under the present system, voters in India voting in national and state elections can assert their voting right once every five years or whenever elections are held. An MP or an MLA has a fixed term of office for five years and can only be disqualified under the anti-defection provisions or if he/she holds any office of profit, is of unsound mind and so declared by a competent court, etc (Article 102 and 191).² There is no provision in the Constitution or

the Representation of People Act, 1951, whereby the people who have elected an MP or MLA can remove him/her before the end of the fixed term.

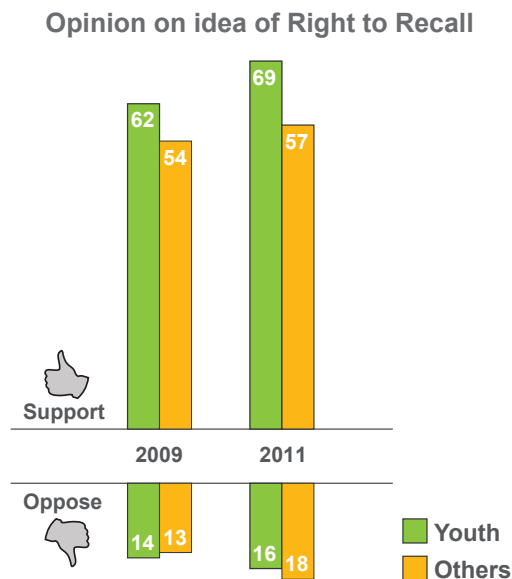
The CSDS survey results show that over two-thirds of the young respondents (69 percent) interviewed in constituencies which either elected a young candidate in 2009 or where a young candidate came second, agreed with the statement that "People should be given the right to recall their MP/MLA if they are not satisfied with their performance". 16 percent were of the opinion that elected representatives should be allowed to work for the full five year term even if people are unhappy with them. The support for the "Right to Recall" has risen over the last two years, as a similar question asked in the National Election Study conducted by CSDS during the 2009 Lok Sabha elections had seen 62 percent of the young respondents answering in the affirmative. However, it must be added that the proportion of those against the idea has also gone up since 2009. While the support for "right to recall" among the older respondents has gone up as well, it is still less compared to the youth. Among the youth, for every person against the idea of

recall there are four who are in favour. Among the older respondents this ratio drops to three people in support for every person who opposes (Figure 7.1).

An analysis in terms of locality reveals that the sentiment in favour of calling back MPs and MLAs is stronger in urban areas (cities and towns) compared to rural areas (villages). In both urban and rural areas, the youth (18-25 years and 26-33 years) show much higher

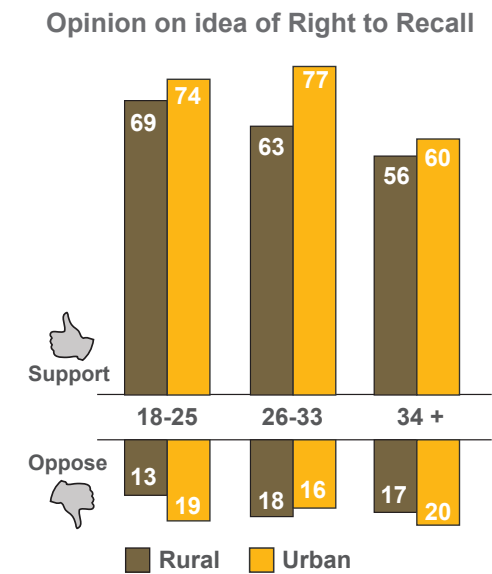
support for the idea of “right to recall” compared to the others (34+years). In urban areas, the strongest support for recall is seen among youth aged between 26 and 33 years. Within rural areas, youth in the 18-25 years age-group show the highest support. While the gap in terms of percentage of people who support recall among rural and urban 18-25 year olds is fairly small at 5 percent, it widens to 14 percent among the 26-33 years age-category (Figure 7.2).

7.1: High support for Right to Recall, particularly among Youth



Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'. Figure for 2009 based on National Election Study conducted by CSDS during the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. Figure for 2011 is based on the survey conducted for the present CSDS study. In 2009, the question was worded slightly differently. These were the exact words: “If people are not satisfied with their MP/MLA they should have the right to call back their representative even before the five year term is over. Tell me, whether you agree or disagree.”

7.2: Urban youth more strongly in favour of recall; Rural youth not far behind



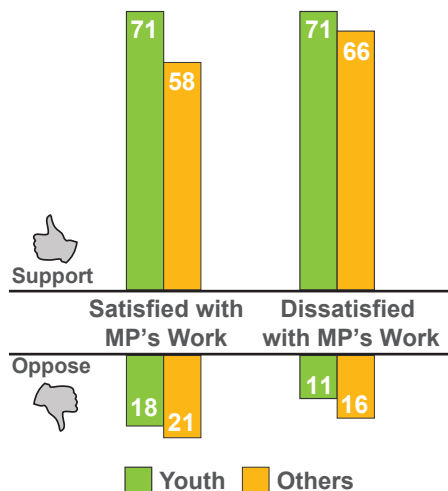
Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

The support for recalling an elected representative before the completion of his/her term is much less among older respondents who are satisfied with their MP’s and MLA’s work, compared to older respondents who said they are dissatisfied with their work. This

distinction is however not seen among the youth who strongly support the right to recall even when they are satisfied with the performance of their elected representatives. This might indicate that unlike the older respondents, the youth are supportive of the recall idea irrespective of their assessment of the work done by their MP and MLA. However, it must be added that when it comes to opposing the idea of recall, youth and rest show similar behaviour - that is to say, youth who are content with the performance of their MP and MLA, show higher opposition to recall than those who are dissatisfied (Figures 7.3 and 7.4).

7.3: Youth strongly support recall even when satisfied with MP's work

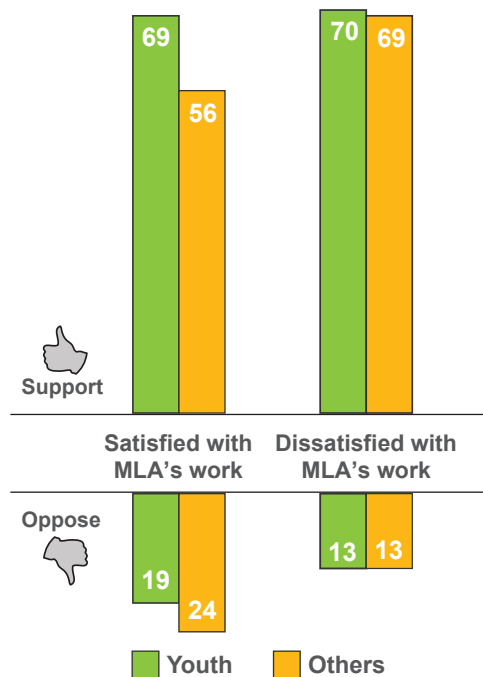
Opinion on idea of Right to Recall



Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

7.4: When satisfied with MLA's work, opposition to recall is higher

Opinion on idea of Right to Recall



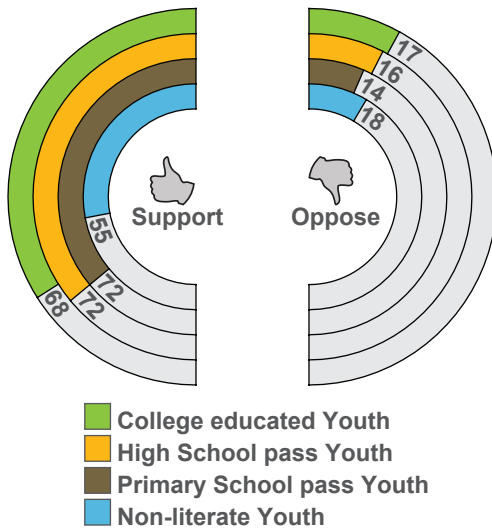
Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

Compared to young non-literates, the young educated respondents are more supportive of the right to recall. However among the educated youth, support for recall is strongest among those who are low to moderately educated (primary school pass and high school pass), than those who are college educated. Among young non-literates a majority supports the right to recall by a wide margin (Figure 7.5).

Figure 7.6 shows that endorsement for the recall device is higher among young respondents with high, moderate and low exposure to the media (that is,

7.5: Youth who are low to moderately educated are more supportive of recall than the highly educated

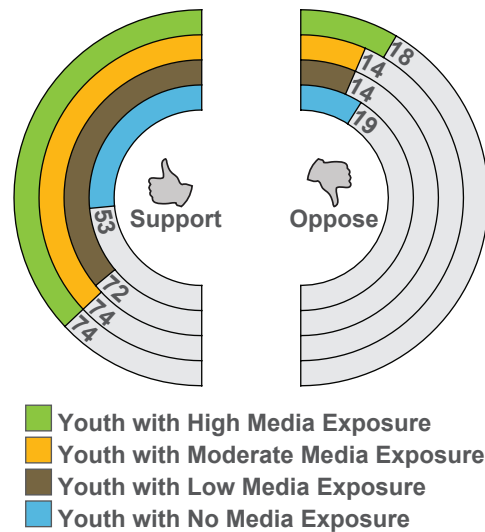
Opinion on idea of Right to Recall



Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

7.6: Youth with media exposure are more supportive of recall than youth with no media exposure

Opinion on idea of Right to Recall



Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

those who are regular readers of newspapers, regular listeners and watchers of news on radio and TV respectively, and those who use the internet regularly) than among youth with no exposure to the media at all. The level of support for the idea of recall rises gradually as exposure to media increases. However when it comes to opposing the idea of recall, it is not a linear transition.

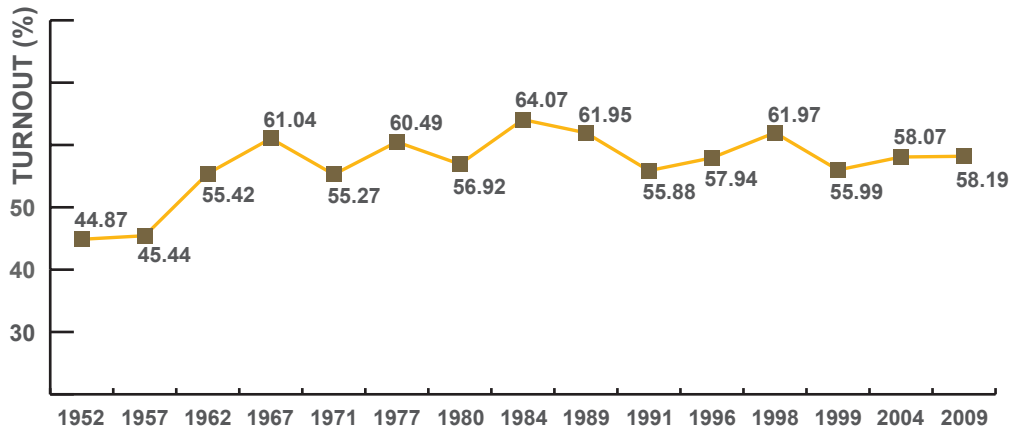
► **Idea of Compulsory voting**

In India, voter turnout in National Elections has mostly hovered between 55 and 59 percent, crossing 60 percent

in five elections (1967, 1977, 1984, 1989 and 1998), many of which are considered as landmark elections. In the Lok Sabha Elections of 2009 and 2004, a little over 58 percent of all registered voters turned out to vote (Figure 7.7).

Compared to other democracies, both in our neighbourhood and those in the West, India ranks low (barring Pakistan) in terms of voter turnout in national elections (Figure 7.8).

7.7: Voter turnout in Lok Sabha Elections (1952-2009)



Source: ECI Statistical Reports of Lok Sabha elections, [Online] Available from http://eci.gov.in/eci_main1/key_highlights.aspx; [Accessed on 24/10/2011].

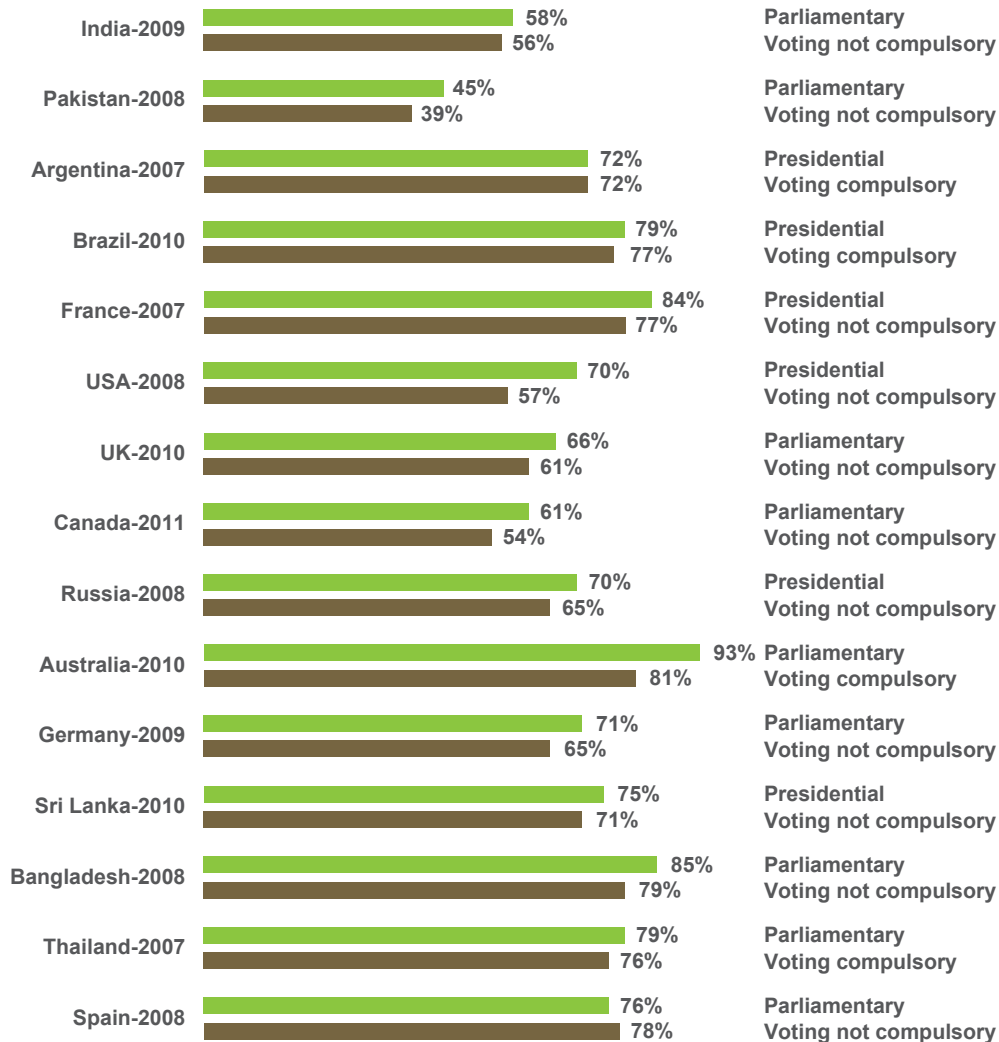
The CSDS survey shows that a large number of people seem to believe voting should be made compulsory. More than half the respondents, young and old, are of the view that “voting should be made compulsory for all eligible voters in order to strengthen democracy”. About a quarter are of the view that “in a democracy, people should be free to decide whether to vote or not.” While youth respondents are clearly more enthusiastic about making voting mandatory than the non-youth, the opposition to the idea runs consistent across both age-groups (Figure 7.9).

for the idea is seen among the youth, particularly those aged between 18 and 25 years. Again, as we saw in the case of right to recall, even on this issue while the difference in terms of percentage of people who support this proposition among rural and urban 18-25 year olds is 11 percent, it nearly doubles to 21 percent among the 26-33 years age-category. In both urban and rural areas, those aged 34 years and above are least supportive of the idea of making voting mandatory.

Figure 7.10 shows that the support for compulsory voting is much stronger in urban areas compared to rural areas. Within urban areas, the support is highest among the 26-33 years age group, followed closely by the 18-25 year olds. Even within rural areas, where approval for compulsory voting is not as high as urban areas, the highest support



7.8: Voter turnouts around the world



■ Voter Turnout*
 ■ VAP Turnout**

Note: Figures have been rounded off.

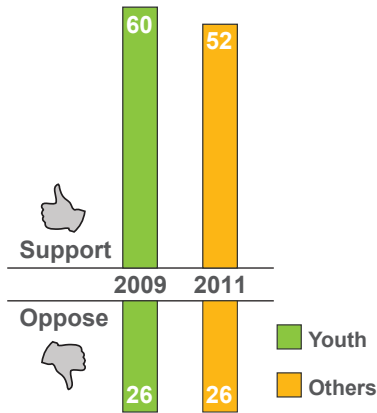
Source: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm?id=72; [Online] [Accessed on 24/11/2011].

*Voter turnout is the total number of votes cast (valid or invalid) divided by the number of names on the voters' register, expressed as a percentage

**VAP is the total number of votes cast (valid or invalid) divided by the Voting Age Population figure, expressed as a percentage. When this table was prepared, the IDEA website had not yet reported the latest turnout figures for Argentina, Thailand and Spain where elections took place in 2011.

7.9: Majority in favour of compulsory voting, youth more so than others

Opinion on idea of Compulsory voting

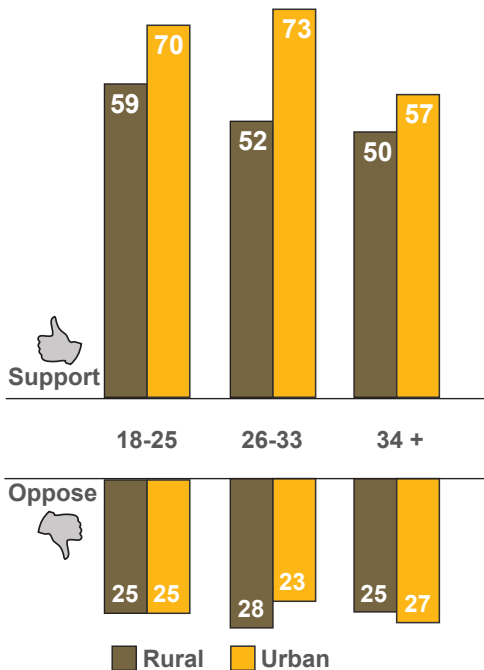


Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

If we look at the opinion on mandatory voting in terms of education, we find that youth who are more educated tend to favour mandatory voting in much larger numbers than those with little or no education. In fact, the higher is the level of education, greater is the support for the idea of compulsory voting. However it must be stressed that the opposition to the idea also increases as we go up the education ladder. A large proportion of non-literate youth did not have an opinion on the issue (Figure 7.11). A deeper analysis reveals that the support for compulsory voting crosses 70 percent among college-educated youth who belong to the upper class.

7.10: Very high support for compulsory voting among urban youth

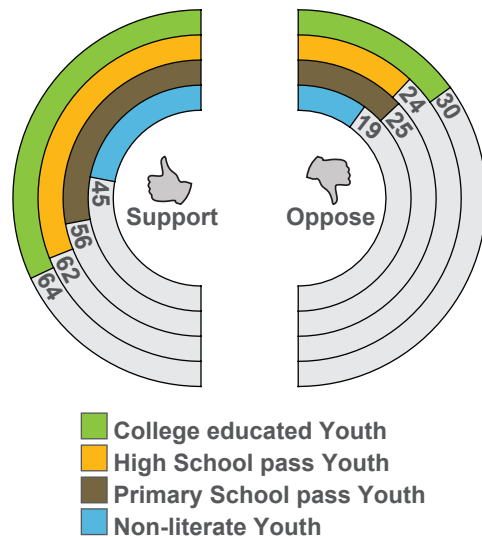
Opinion on idea of Compulsory voting



Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

7.11: Higher the level of education, more the support for compulsory voting among youth

Opinion on idea of Compulsory voting

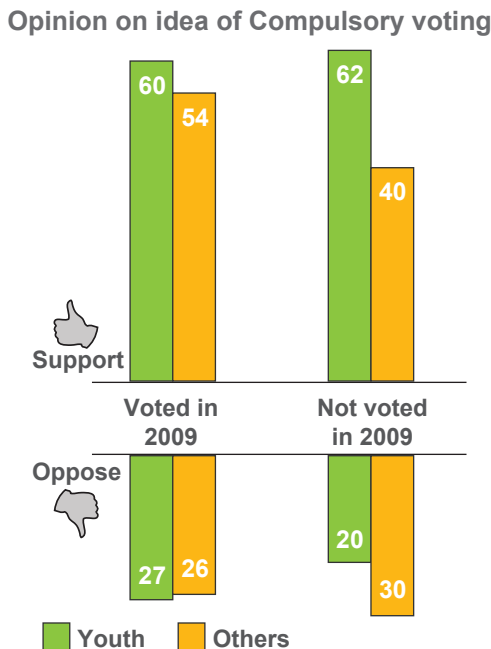


Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

If we look at the opinion on compulsory voting among those who voted in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections and those who did not vote, we find that while 20 percent of young respondents who did not vote hold the opinion that in a democracy people should be free to not vote, more than three times of that (62 percent) support compulsion. This figure in affirmation of compulsory voting is surprisingly higher than young respondents who had voted. If you observe among those who did not vote, only the youth exceed their counterparts who voted. The trend does not continue for the older respondents, among whom there is a substantial 14 percent difference (Figure 7.12).

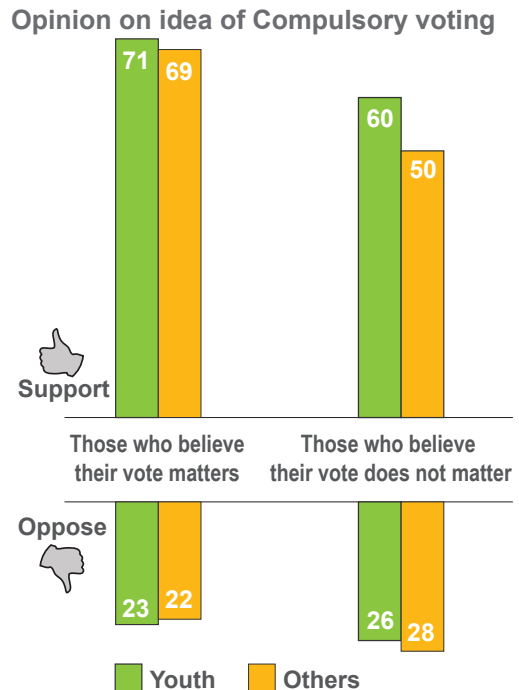
Figure 7.13 shows that the support for mandatory voting is much higher among respondents who said that their vote has an effect on how the country is run, than those who think otherwise. Both youth and non-youth who believe in the efficacy of their vote, support compulsory voting strongly and in almost equal measure. However the gap between the two age categories widens when we look at the flip side, that is, those who do not believe in the efficacy of their vote. While the support for compulsory voting is still quite high among youth who think their vote does not have an effect, the same cannot be said about the others who hold the same view.

7.12: Compulsory voting finds supporters even in youth who did not vote in the 2009 Lok Sabha polls



Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

7.13: Compulsory voting favoured more by those who believe their vote matters

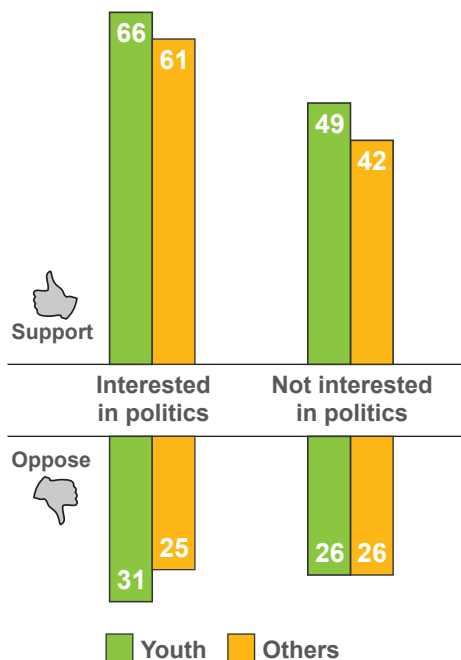


Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

Similarly, those who have a greater interest in politics are more in favour of mandatory voting than those who do not have an interest in politics. Among the latter category, we find that the youth are more enthusiastic about mandatory voting than the older respondents. Among the former category, that is, those who have an interest in politics, while the youth show stronger support for compulsory voting compared to the older respondents, they also are stronger opponents of such a move (Figure 7.14).

7.14: Those interested in politics favour the idea of Compulsory voting

Opinion on idea of Compulsory voting



Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

► Idea of the Right to Reject

The right to reject gives the voters a chance to cast their vote of disapproval if they do not support or are not enthused by any of the given choices provided to them. This measure is also known as negative voting or neutral voting. The Election Commission of India has twice recommended the Right to reject proposal to the government, once in 2001 and then again in 2004.³ In 2004, after receiving “proposals from a very large number of individuals and organisations that there should be a provision enabling a voter to reject all the candidates in the constituency if he does not find them suitable,” the Election Commission recommended to the government that “the law should be amended to specifically provide for negative/neutral voting. For this purpose, Rules 22 and 49B of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 may be suitably amended adding a proviso that in the ballot paper and the particulars on the ballot unit, in the column relating to names of candidates, after the entry relating to the last candidate, there shall be a column ‘None of the above’ to enable a voter to reject all the candidates, if he chooses so.” However the present Chief Election Commissioner thinks that the demand to reject all candidates in elections is a “ticklish affair” and requires debate and discussion before being considered.⁴ Moreover, while many proponents of right to reject attribute low voter turnouts to the disillusionment among the electorate with bad candidate choices and the lack of an option to express their dissent, there

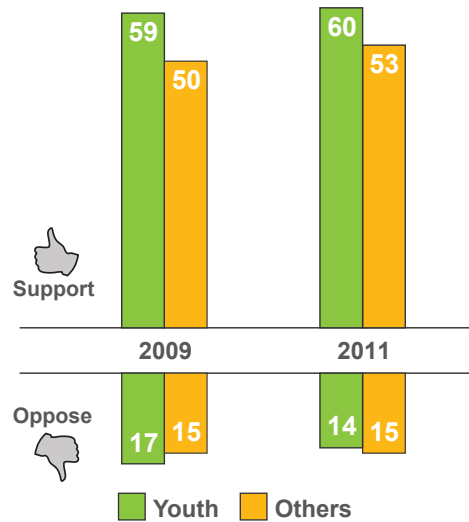
is support to indicate that this kind of reasoning might be too simplistic. The National Election Study conducted by CSDS during the 2009 Lok Sabha elections reveals that only about 2 percent of the respondents who did not vote said it was because of the lack of good candidate choices.

The CSDS survey on Youth in Indian Politics shows that there is a considerable section of the population, which is supportive of the concept of negative voting. Figure 7.15 shows that a majority of the respondents, both youth and others, in the constituencies that were surveyed for the study are of the view that voters should get the option of rejecting all candidates while voting, if they do not like any of them. The support for the idea among both the age-groups has gone up marginally compared to 2009, when a similar question was asked during the National Election Study. Youth favour the “right to reject” more strongly than the others.

As seen in the cases of right to recall and compulsory voting, the idea of right to reject also finds more support in urban areas than in rural areas. The difference in terms of percentage of people who support this proposition among rural and urban areas is a good 11-14 percent across age-groups. While the support for this idea is highest (nearly three-fourths) among urban respondents aged between 26 and 33 years, it is lowest (50 percent) among rural respondents aged 34 and above (Figure 7.16).

7.15: High support for right to reject, particularly among youth

Opinion on idea of Right to Reject



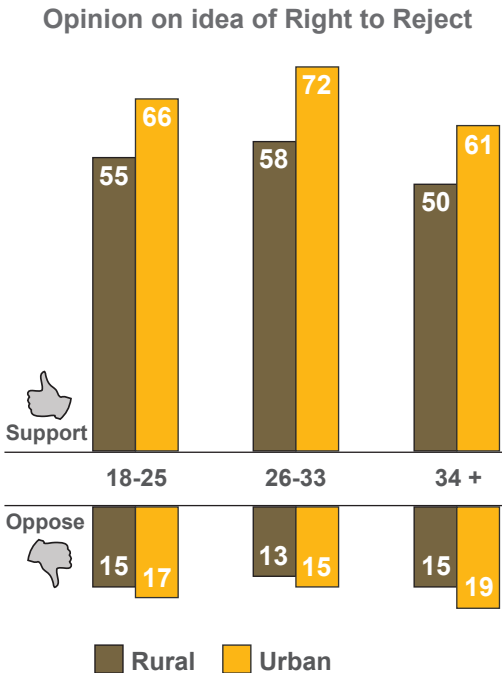
Note:

All figures are in percent.

Rest either said “No” or had “No opinion”. Figure for 2009 based on National Election Study conducted by CSDS during the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. Figure for 2011 is based on the survey conducted for the present CSDS study. In 2009, the question was worded slightly differently. These were the exact words: “While casting their vote, voters should have a choice to vote for none of the candidates if they do not like anyone. Tell me, whether you agree or disagree.”



7.16: Urban areas more in favour of right to reject

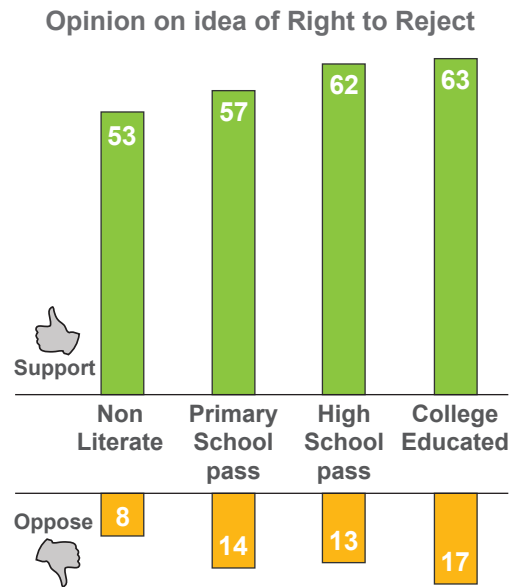


Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

The findings indicate that the higher the education attainment of the youth is, the stronger is their support for the right to reject. A high proportion of non-literate youth (39 percent) abstained from answering and opted for the third option. Among the educated youth, the strongest opinions for and against the idea are found among the college educated youth (Figure 7.17).

Those youth who said that they had voted mainly for the candidate and not his/her party during the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, are slightly more supportive of the right to reject candidates, than those who said that they voted on the basis of party loyalties irrespective

7.17: Stronger opinions among the educated on right to reject



Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

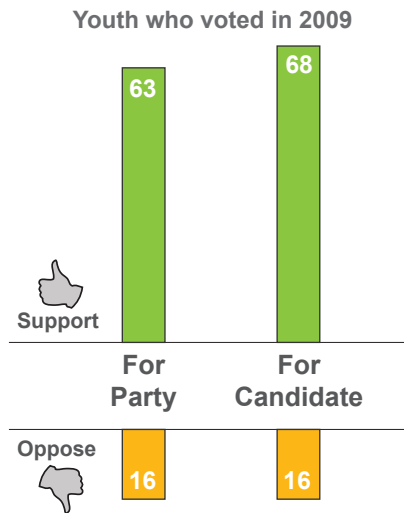
of the candidate. However, the difference between the two is not very wide (Figure 7.18).

► Idea of debaring those above 65 years from contesting elections

Nearly 57 percent of India's population falls in the age bracket of 15-59 years (working age group) according to Census 2001 (53.3 percent in 1961).⁵ This is in sharp contrast to 7.5 percent of India's population which is 60 years and above (5.6 percent in 1961) (Figure 7.19). While the absolute numbers in both age brackets have risen and

7.18: 'Reject' favoured more by youth who voted on candidate lines rather than party lines in 2009

Opinion on idea of Right to Reject

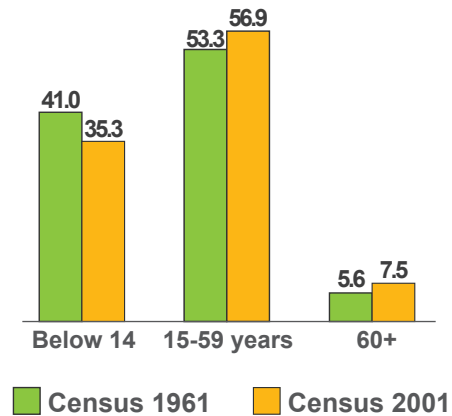


Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

are expected to rise further, the difference between the two is expected to remain as stark, as it has been, at least for the next two decades. Moreover, the youth segment, that is, the 15-39 years age-group is also a significant 40.66 percent of the total population (39.80 percent in 1991).⁶ Clearly, the demographic numbers indicate that much of India's employable population is getting younger by age.

Considering the relatively young age profile of India's population, the profile of India's elected representatives, poses quite a contrast. How representative of the population are the Lok Sabha MPs in terms of age? 27 percent of the 543 elected Members of Parliament in the

7.19: Proportion of population in different age-groups in India



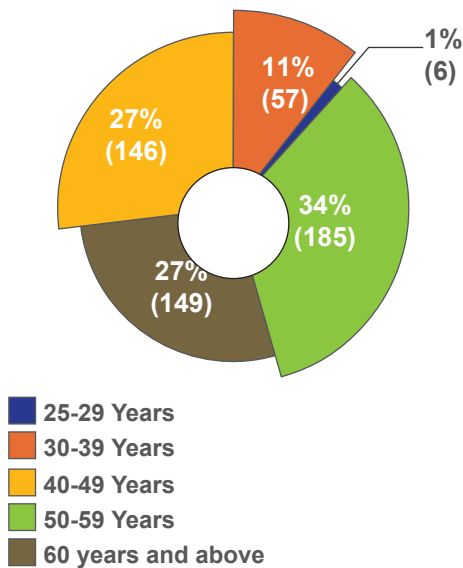
Note: All figures are in percent.

Lok Sabha following the 2009 Lok Sabha elections were 60 years and above. 73 percent were between 25 and 59 years (34 percent fall in the 50-59 years age group, 27 percent were between 40-49 years, 11 percent of all MPs were aged between 30 and 39 and one percent were between 25 and 29) (Figure 7.20).

On the question of debarring those above the age of 65 years from contesting elections, the survey reveals that while more respondents are in favour of such a move than against, the support is not as high as in the case of right to recall, right to reject and compulsory voting. The support for prohibiting those over 65 from contesting elections is stronger among the youth respondents (18-25 and 26-33 years) compared to the others (34+). The support for such a move is expectedly least among those respondents aged 60 years and above, but even here interestingly, a fairly high percentage of respondents, that is

about 33 percent, are in favour of making 65 as the cut off age limit for contesting elections (Figure 7.21).

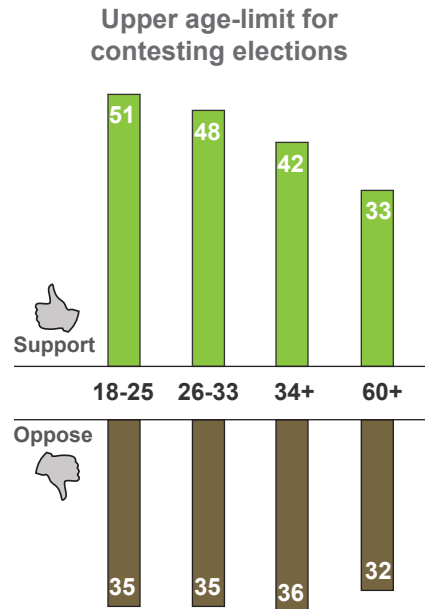
7.20: Proportion of Lok Sabha MPs in different age groups



Source for date of birth of MPs: loksabha.nic.in; Based on the age of MPs when they were elected to the 15th Lok Sabha.

Figure 7.22 shows that urban areas are slightly more supportive of a move to disallow people from contesting elections based on their age, than rural areas. Within both the localities, there is a clear age difference, with the youth being more supportive of the idea to fix an upper age-limit of 65 for fighting elections, compared to those above 34 years. The support for such an idea is strongest among urban residents aged between 26 and 33 years. In fact, their support for the idea exceeds the support shown by their rural counterparts from

7.21: Moderate support for setting an upper age-limit for contesting elections



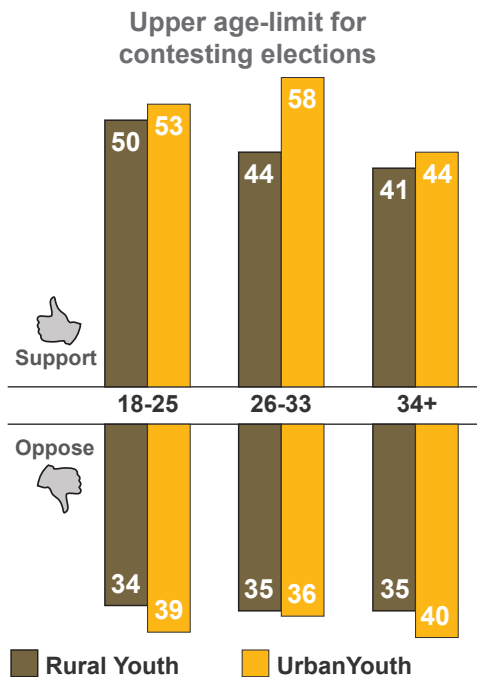
Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

the same age-group by a wide margin. On the other hand, the gap in terms of percentage of people who support recall among rural and urban 18-25 year olds, and rural and urban 34+ years, is fairly small. The strongest opposition to the idea of fixing a maximum age for contesting elections is found almost equally among urban respondents aged between 18 and 25 years and 34 years and above.

Educated young respondents are more supportive of debarring those above 65 years from taking part in elections compared to the non-literates. Non-literates are least opinionated on this issue. Among the educated youth, those

who are primary school pass and high school pass are more supportive of the idea of barring older contestants from elections as compared to those who are college educated (Figure 7.23).

7.22: Urban areas slightly more in favour of fixing an upper age-limit for fighting elections

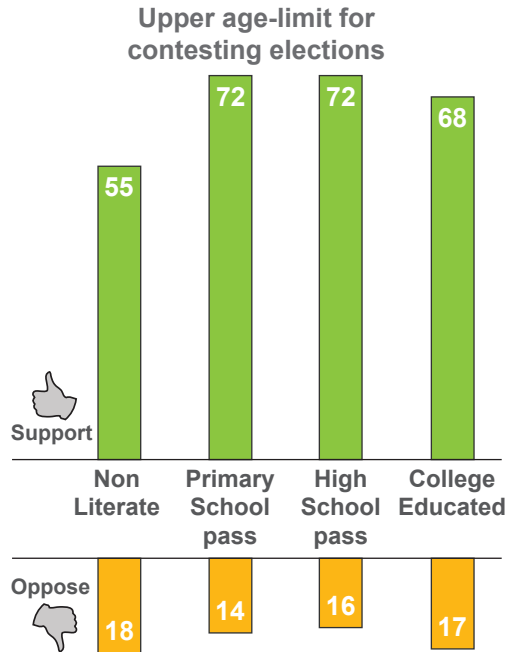


Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

who are primary school pass and high school pass are more supportive of the idea of barring older contestants from elections as compared to those who are college educated (Figure 7.23).

Another finding from the survey is that a majority of those who feel that the young can govern better than the old

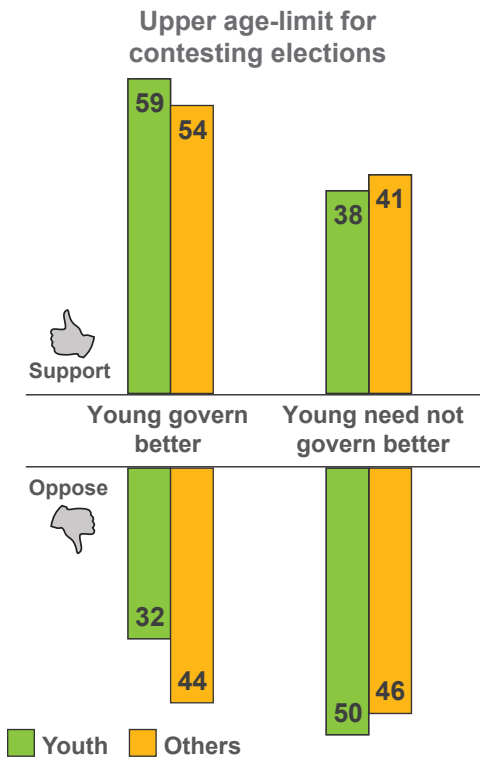
7.23: Moderately educated youth most supportive of setting an upper age-limit for contesting elections



Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

are in favour of fixing a maximum age for contesting elections. While this support is seen among both youth and older respondents who hold this view, it is slightly higher among the former. Conversely, among those who feel that the young need not necessarily be better administrators than the old, the support for such a move is lesser. In fact nearly half of such respondents feel that in a democracy it would be unfair to debar people from contesting elections on the basis of their age (Figure 7.24).

7.24: Greater support for setting an upper age-limit for fighting elections among those who feel young govern better than old

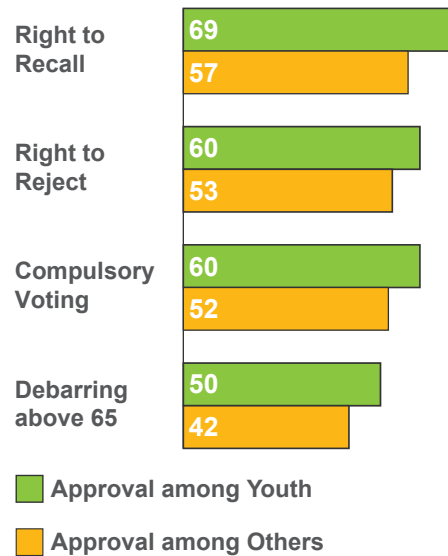


Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

► The Big picture

Overall, of all the four electoral reform ideas (right to recall, right to reject, compulsory voting and fixing an upper age limit for contesting elections) about which opinion was sought separately during the survey, the reform idea that gets the highest approval from both the youth and the older respondents is the “Right to Recall”. The reform measure which has the lowest approval is the

7.25: Right to recall gets highest approval

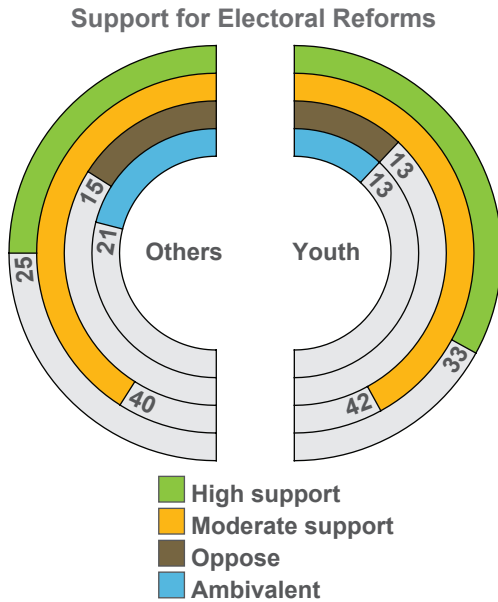


Note:
All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'

one that would set an upper age limit of 65 years for contesting elections (Figure 7.25).

In order to gauge the level of support for electoral and political reform among different sections of society, an index was created using all the four electoral reform ideas on which questions were asked during the survey (The Index of Electoral Reform).⁷ Overall, the level of support for electoral and political reforms is fairly strong among both youth and others. While three-fourths of the young respondents fall in the moderate and high support categories (the former outweighs the latter), the figure for others is 65 percent. Older respondents in fact show high ambivalence on the entire issue (Figure 7.26).

7.26: Moderate to High support for electoral reforms, particularly among the youth

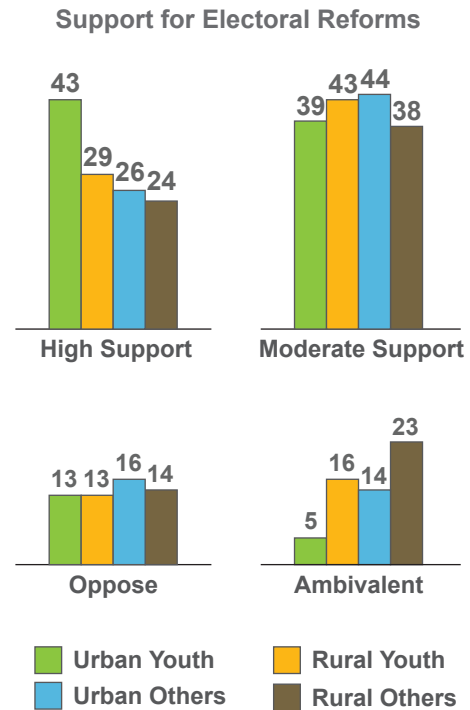


Note: All figures are in percent; may not add up as a result of rounding.

Figure 7.27 shows that support for electoral reforms is much higher in urban areas than in villages. In urban areas it is even higher among the youth, with nearly nine out of ten young people residing in cities and towns supporting electoral reforms, either moderately or strongly. Others (34+) residing in rural areas are found to be most ambivalent on the issue, followed by rural youth.

Men, young and old, are much more supportive of electoral reforms than women. Figure 7.28 shows that not only are young men (18-33 years) more in favour of electoral reforms compared to young women, but even men aged 34 years and above are stronger in their approval of electoral reforms

7.27: Urban areas more supportive of electoral reforms

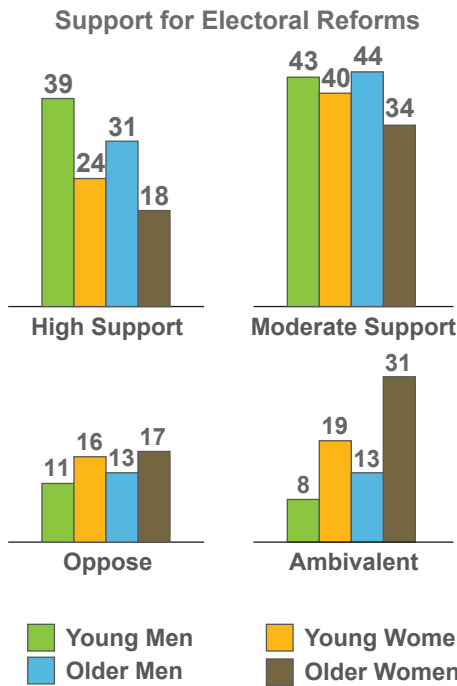


Note: All figures are in percent; may not add up as a result of rounding.

compared to young women. Among women, those aged between 18 and 33 years show much higher support for electoral reform compared to women aged 34 years and above. In fact the latter not only show the highest opposition for electoral reforms but are also the most uncertain.

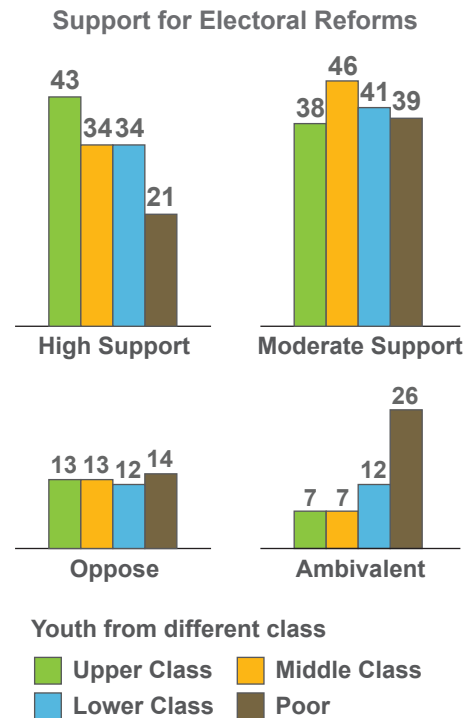
In terms of economic classes, we find that approval for electoral reforms among the youth rises as we go up the economic ladder. The support for reforms is the lowest among youth who are poor. They are also the most ambivalent on the issue. The support is

7.28: Men, young and old, show high support for reforms compared to women



Note: All figures are in percent; may not add up as a result of rounding.

7.29: Youth from upper and middle classes support electoral reforms more than those from lower and poor class



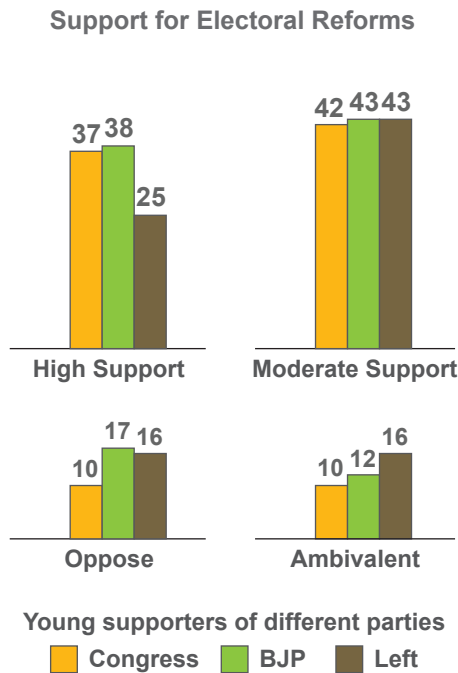
Note: All figures are in percent; may not add up as a result of rounding.

highest among youth belonging to the upper class, followed by those from the middle and lower classes, who show a high degree of moderate support (Figure 7.29).

And finally, when we look at the entire issue in terms of political preferences, we find that there is not much difference between the opinions of supporters of the Congress and BJP on this issue. Young supporters of both the parties are strongly in favour of reforming the electoral system and show a similar

pattern. The young supporters of Left parties however are not fully convinced, and a lesser degree of high support for reforms, and a greater degree of opposition plus ambivalence can be seen among them (Figure 7.30).

7.30: Young left supporters more skeptical of electoral reforms than young Congress and BJP supporters



Note: All figures are in percent; may not add up as a result of rounding.



► **Key Highlights**

- There is fairly strong (moderate to high) support among both youth and others for electoral reforms.
- There is more support, than opposition for all four electoral reform ideas suggested during the survey.
- For once, youth stand out as a distinct category from others; the support for all four electoral reform ideas is higher among the youth compared to the others, across demographic categories.
- Taken together, three-fourths of the young respondents show moderate and high support for the all four electoral reform ideas suggested to them.
- Among the youth, support for reform measures is highest among the 18-25 years age-group, except for right to reject, which gets greater support among the 26 to 33 years old.
- Of all the four electoral reforms covered in the study, support for right to recall is the highest among both young and old.
- Of all the four electoral reforms, the support for setting an upper age limit of 65 years for contesting elections is the lowest, among both young and old.
- The support for all four electoral reforms is higher in cities and towns, compared to villages.
- Overall, approval for electoral reforms is strongest among young respondents who are educated, live in urban areas and are economically better off.

► Notes

1. ADR. 2011. 'ADR/NEW Recommendations for Electoral Reforms – By Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), and National Election Watch (NEW)', [Online] Available from <http://adrindia.org/files/ADR-NEW%20Recomendations-April20%202011-Final.pdf> [Accessed on 4/10/2011].
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7. See Index Note 1

► Index Notes

1. Index of Electoral Reform:

This Index was created so as to measure respondents' stance namely on four electoral reforms – right to reject, right to recall, compulsory voting and upper age limit for contesting elections. The questions used to create this index were Q5a, Q5b, Q5c and Q25d of the CSDS Youth survey. Responses to all these questions were collated and ordered into four categories: - Ambivalent, Oppose, Moderate Support and High Support.

► **Table: Index of electoral reforms explained**

| Level of support for electoral reforms | Respondents who... |
|--|--|
| Ambivalent | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Had no opinion on all four reforms. 2. Had no opinion on three reforms and agreed with one reform. 3. Had no opinion on three reforms and disagreed with one reform. 4. Had no opinion on two reforms, supported one reform and opposed one reform. |
| Oppose | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disagreed with all four reforms. 2. Disagreed with three reforms and agreed with one reform. 3. Disagreed with three reforms and had no opinion on one reform. 4. Disagreed with two reforms, agreed with one reform and had no opinion on one reform. 5. Disagreed with two reforms and had no opinion on two reforms. |
| Moderate support | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agreed with three reforms and disagreed with one reform. 2. Agreed with two reforms and disagreed with two reforms. 3. Agreed with two reforms, disagreed with one reform and had no opinion on one reform. 4. Agreed with two reforms and had no opinion on two reforms. |
| High support | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agreed with all four reforms. 2. Agreed with three reforms and had no opinion on one reform. |



SECTION: 08

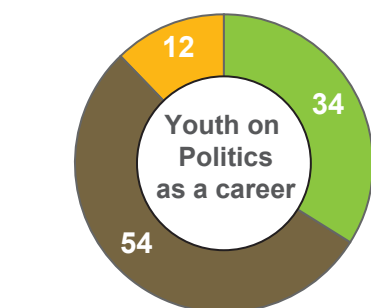
Politics as Career: Attitudes of Indian Youth

Politics as Career: Attitudes of Indian Youth

In the earlier sections of this report, we have explored the interest, awareness and the participation of the youth compared to other age groups. The pertinent question that follows from this is whether the political activity among the youth has had any impact on their perception of politics as a career.

When asked if they would like to make politics their career if given an chance, 34 percent of the youth showed interest, 54 declined an interest and 12 percent were neither for nor against a political career (Figure 8.1).

8.1: One third of youth open to the idea of a career in politics



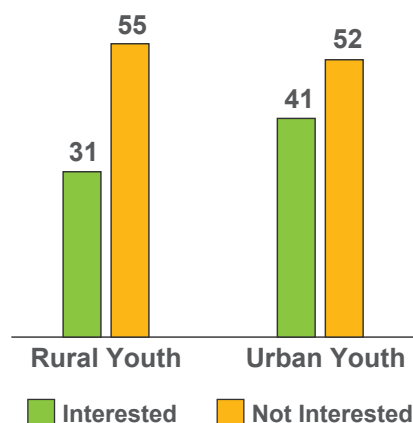
■ Interested
■ Not Interested
■ No Opinion

Note: All figures are in percent.

When we look at this question in terms of locality, the urban youth has indicated a higher interest in making politics their career compared to their rural counterparts. 41 percent of the youth residing in urban areas said that they would like to make politics their career, compared to 31 percent from rural areas (Figure 8.2).

8.2: Urban youth more inclined towards a career in politics

Politics as a career



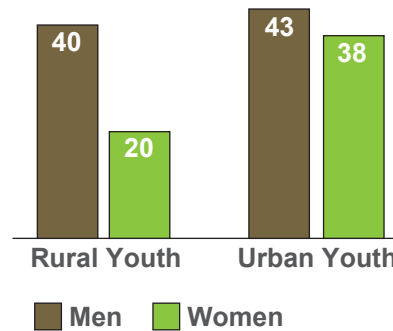
*Note: All figures are in percent.
Rest 'No opinion'.*

Young men and young women look at this issue differently. While 41 percent of young men are open to a career in politics, among young women the figure falls to 24 percent. However when seen in terms of locality, this difference between young men and young women narrows down considerably in urban areas. 43 percent young men in urban areas are interested in making politics their career as compared to 38 percent of young urban women, a difference of just five percent. In rural areas, the difference is a huge 20 percent (Figure 8.3).

Figure 8.4 shows that as the level of education increases, the difference between the opinions of rural youth and urban youth on the issue of politics as a career decreases. College educated youth in both the rural as well the urban areas show almost equal inclination for the idea of politics as a career. At the same time it must be pointed out that while urban youth are more open to the idea irrespective of their education levels, the same cannot be said for rural youth. Only 20 percent of the non-literate rural youth are open to the idea

8.3: Young men, across locality, more likely to choose politics as their career than women

Willing to choose politics as a career



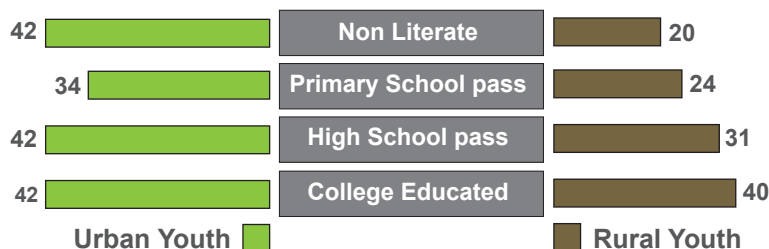
Note: All figures are in percent.

of making politics their career. Among urban non-literate youth the figure stands at 42 percent (Figure 8.4).

When analysed at in terms of economic class, we find that youth from the middle class are most in favour of making a career in politics. 41 percent of youth from the middle class say that they would like to make a career in politics, followed by 39 percent youth from

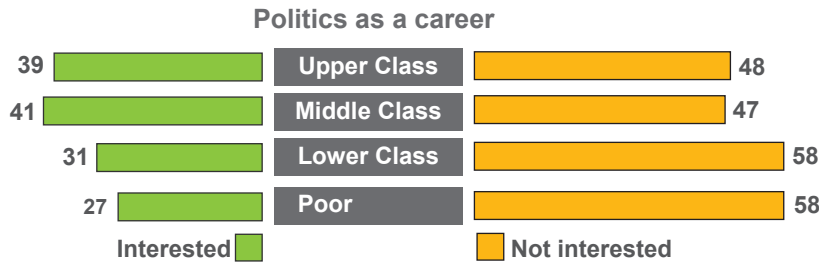
8.4: Education lessens the rural-urban divide: College educated youth in both rural and urban areas show similar inclination

Willing to choose politics as a career



Note: All figures are in percent.

8.5: Middle class youth most open to idea of making a career in politics



Note: All figures are in percent. Rest 'No opinion'.

upper class who say that they are interested in making career in politics (Figure 8.5).

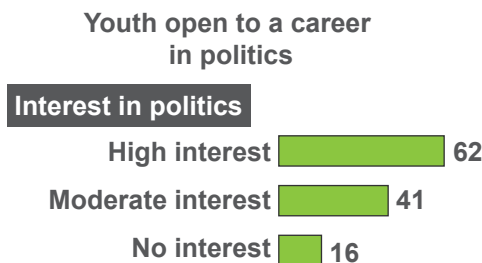
More than socio-economic factors, attitudinal factors like interest in politics, may perhaps explain this issue better. We can see in Figure 8.6 that 62 percent youth with great deal of interest in politics say that they would like to make a career in politics if they are given an opportunity, whereas there are only 16 percent youth with no interest in politics who are interested in making politics their career. In other words, as the level of interest in politics decreases

among youth, their willingness to make politics their career also decreases.

Similarly, in Figure 8.7, we can see that youth who take part in election related activities are more interested in making politics their career, than those who do not take part in electoral activities. As the level of participation in election related activities goes up, the interest in making politics their career also increases.

Political awareness among youth is also an important factor in building an opinion in favour of a career in politics.

8.6: Interest in politics makes youth more open to idea of politics as a career



Note: All figures are in percent.

8.7: Participation in electoral activities and interest in making politics a career, share a positive relationship



Note: All figures are in percent.

In Figure 8.8, we can see that as the level of political awareness among the youth increases their willingness to make politics their career also increases, and vice versa. 27 percent youth with no political awareness say that they would make a career in politics compared to 49 percent youth with high political awareness.

8.8: Youth who are politically more aware are more inclined to join politics

Youth open to a career in politics

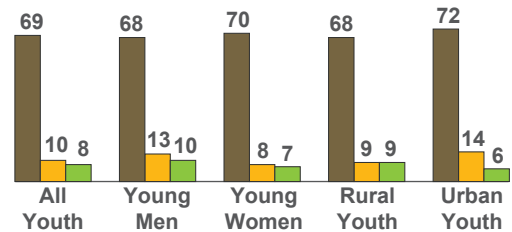
Political Awareness



Note: All figures are in percent.

Having looked at those who are open to a career in politics, let's now look at those who aren't. As mentioned earlier, the survey finding reveals that 54 percent of youth do not show any interest in making politics their career. When we asked them to give the reasons for their unwillingness to make a career in politics, 69 percent answered they have no interest in politics. Some of the youth said they are interested but disillusioned with politics, and some others said they are interested but they have no connections in politics (Figure 8.9).

8.9: Possible reasons dissuading youth from making career in politics



- No interest in politics
- Interested but disillusioned with politics
- Interested but no connections in politics

Note: All figures are in percent.
Rest 'No opinion'.





► Key Highlights

- 34 percent of the Youth are open to the idea of making politics their career if given a chance.
- Urban youth is more willing to make politics their career than their rural counterparts.
- Young men and young women look at this issue very differently, especially in rural areas.
- As the level of education increases, the difference between the opinions of rural youth and urban youth on the issue of politics as a career decreases.
- Youth from the middle class are most in favour of making a career in politics.
- Greater the political interest and awareness, greater the eagerness to make politics a career.



