



Who owns the elections?

Creating Responsive Voters and Responsible Parties

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Who owns elections?

- Voters
- Candidates
- Political parties
- Election Commission
- Government



Voters: The First Stakeholders

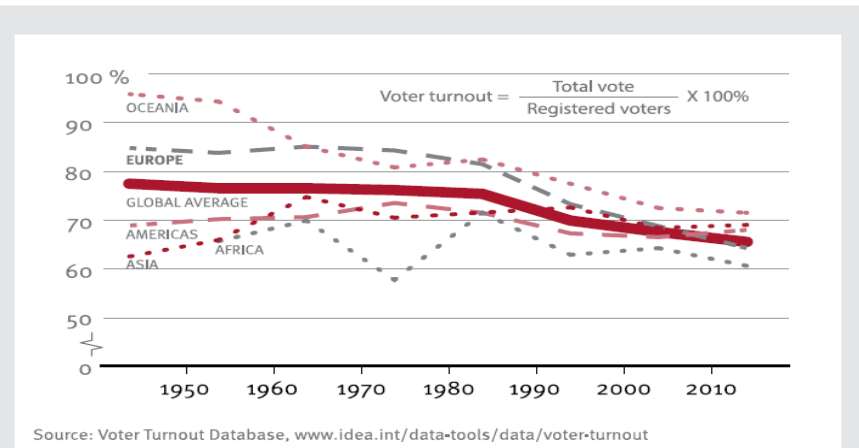
- ▶ Voting: The most important act of a citizen's engagement with democracy.
- ▶ Globally, voter turnouts show a falling trend
- ▶ In India, however, there seems to be a **stagnation** in voter turnouts



- ▶ Lok Sabha Voter Turnout @ 60%
- ▶ Vidhan Sabha (Maharashtra) Turnout @ 62%
- ▶ Zilla Parishads @ 68%
- ▶ Municipal Corporations @ 56%

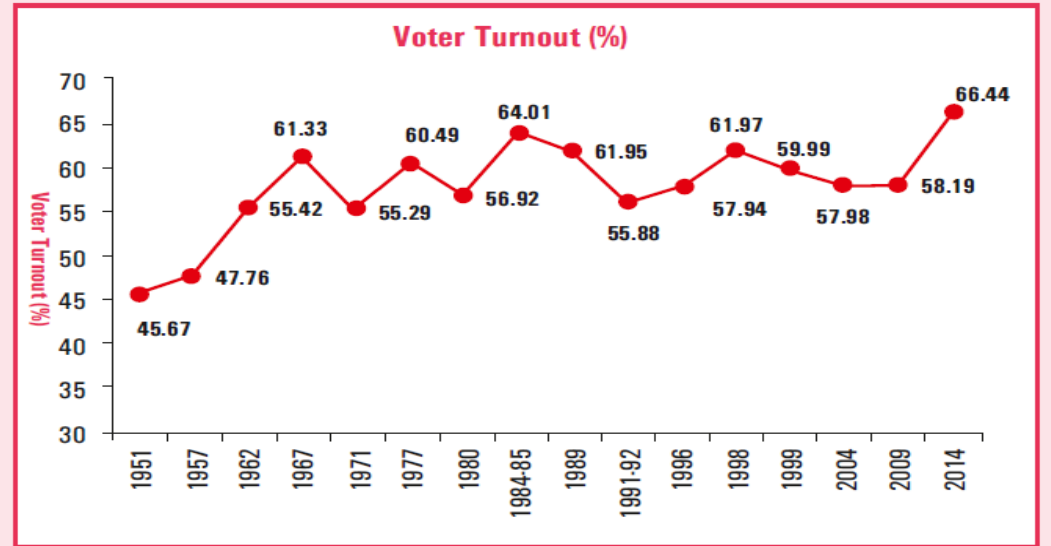
Voter Turnouts: Global

Figure 4. Global voter turnout by region, 1945–2015

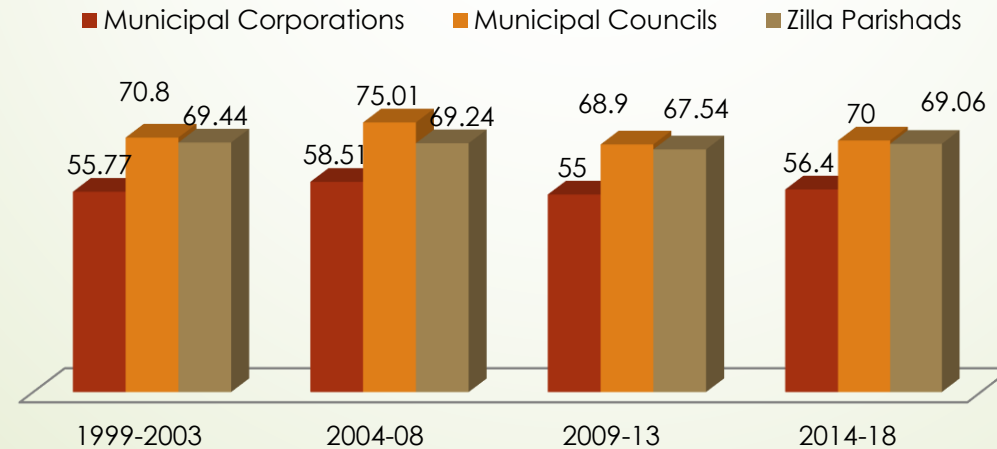


Voter Turnouts: Lok Sabha (India)

C. Graphs : Electoral Participation in 2014 Lok Sabha - Trends



Voter Turnouts: Local Body Elections (Maharashtra)





Challenges in increasing Voter Participation at the local body elections

- Improvement in the voter lists quoted as one of the top reasons as to why people do not vote.
- An apathy seems to have set in at all levels which leads to disengagement of the voter from the polity.
- Voters only engage with the polity actively once in 5 years through the act of voting.
- Instances of voters not depending on local bodies for certain services; disconnect in new “townships” obvious (lighting in the streets of the township)
- Voters increasingly use social media to voice their concern or dissent; thus, voting does not have the power of voice it once had

Participation of candidates and political parties

- In terms of numbers, participation by political parties as well as candidates has risen sharply in the country.
- The average number of candidates per constituency also shows a huge increase from 1951 – 2014.

Year of elections	Total no. of political parties contesting LS elections	Poll Percentage (LS)	Average no. of candidates per constituency
1951	53	45.67	4.67
1991	145	56.88	16.64
2014	465	66.44	15.19

Challenges in participation of candidates/ political parties



QUALITY OF CANDIDATURE

- Voters not happy with quality of candidates
- Winnability depends on money power/ political connections
- How to incentivize parties into fielding good candidates?



NOTA

- Can we make NOTA more potent?
- Can re-elections be scheduled if the NOTA % > Voter % to any candidate?



DELIVERY MECHANISMS

- Parties do not deliver on electoral promises
- Can we institutionalize an M&E process on electoral promises?

Changing role of the Policy Makers

- ▶ Election Commission of India and/or State Election Commissions have undertaken bold steps for electoral reform
- ▶ Has often led to alienation of some political parties/ parties in power/ candidates/ Government
- ▶ Role of a regulator in the market for “delivery of public services”

Instances of face-offs with political parties/ candidates

Warnings to parties on not carrying out internal elections in a democratic manner

Re-order polls in specific locations

ECI prohibited convicted individuals from contesting elections, regardless of pendency of appeal

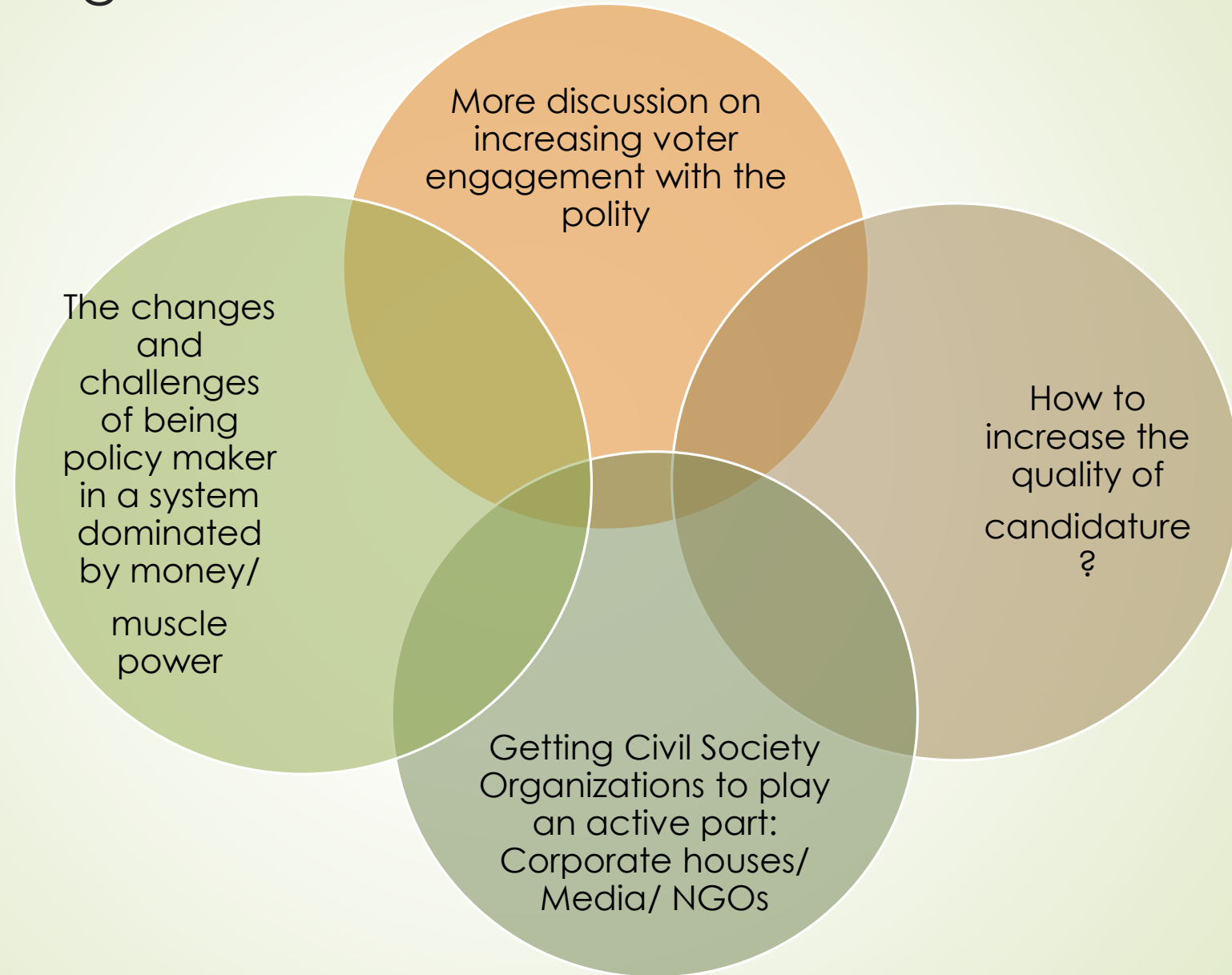
ECI issued orders to candidates to furnish information about past criminal records/ assets/ liabilities, etc.

This was tricky:
Face-off was with the Government!

The innovative steps undertaken by SECM in Maharashtra in the 2014 elections

- Formation of the ward should be done by using Google map and satellite mappings
- Committee of Divisional Commissioner, Municipal Commissioner and Collector for the approval of the formation of the draft ward
- While starting the ward formation, announce the last date for accepting the voter's list
- Restrictions on spending voluntary fund three months before the end of the term
- Filing of Nomination and Affidavit of the Candidates online
- Summary of the submitted affidavits of the candidates to be displayed at the polling booths and at the main chowk
- Cancellation of the registration of the political parties which do not contest the elections in last five years.

Setting the theme.. Who owns the elections?





Thank You!

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