

4.5 Participation in Decision Making

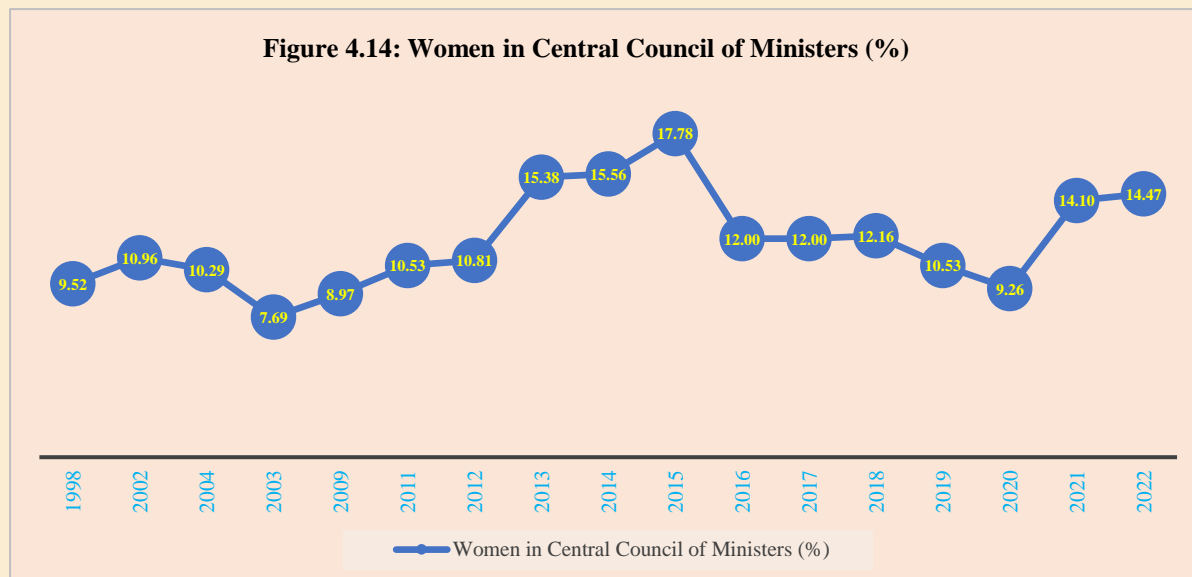
4.5.1 Women's participation in decision making accounts for development and standardization of a country. Women's increased participation in decision-making contributes to positive transformative processes for societies, such as changes in laws, policies, services, institutions, and social norms. It is important to make sure that women's voices on decisions affecting their lives, the lives of their families and the wider community are heard for the improvement of quality of their life at every layers of the society. It is evident that these decisions affect women as much as they affect men. Therefore, women must be a part of the decision-making process, in every area and have equal power and number with men. It is the responsibility of the society to ensure that women are given the opportunity to participate equally in all decision-making levels and that the institutions have a variety of people and communities that they represent.

Participation of women in Political Decision Making

4.5.2 The 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation reiterated that *"women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalised from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care, and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women."*

4.5.3 Achieving gender parity in representative politics is required not only to uphold social justice and women's rights, but as an important condition of effective democracy and good governance that strengthens and enhances the democratic system. Involvement of women in all levels of political posts are important not only because of the fact that women constitute half of the population, but also because of the fact that realisation of balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making is a matter of full enjoyment of human rights and social justice which is a necessary condition for the better functioning of a democratic society. The realisation of equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making leads to better and more efficient policy making through the redefinition of political priorities and the placement of new issues on the political agenda. Political empowerment could lead to opening more opportunities for women and as a result, create a level playing field for them.

4.5.4 The participation of women in decision-making in India has been discussed many times before, however, very little has changed or improved. The data on percentage of women in central council of Ministers as given in **Table 5.1** shows that except in 1996 when the percent was only 2.56, in the subsequent years women's



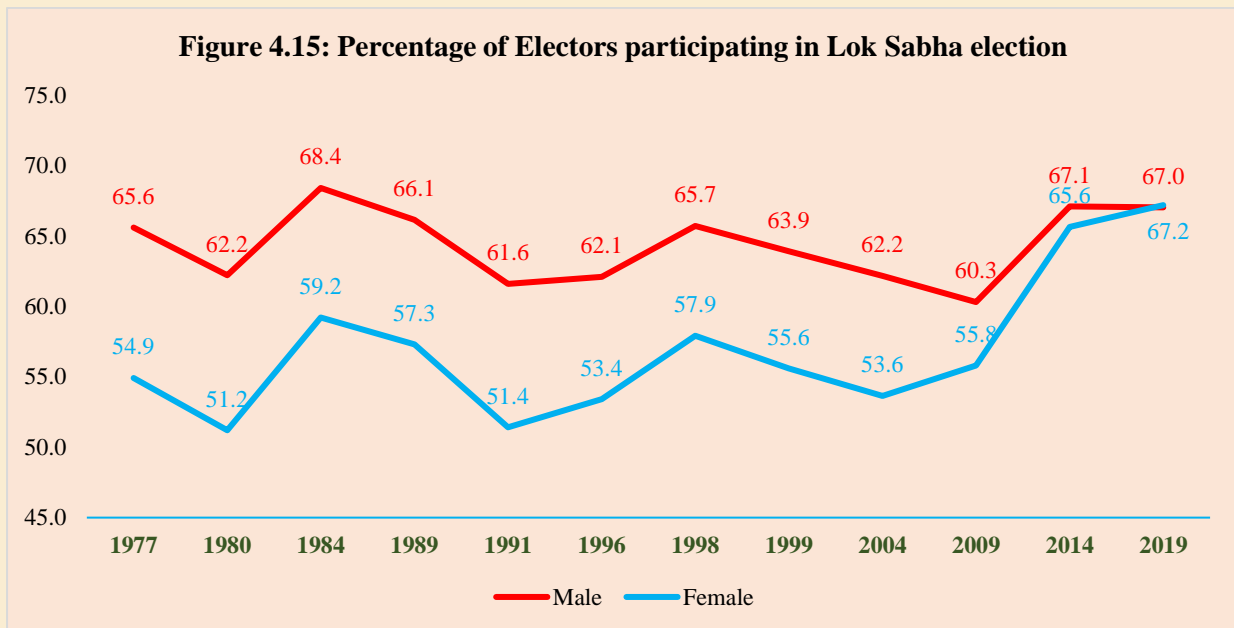
Source: Lok Sabha Secretariat

representation in Central Council of Ministers has been wavering around 12 reaching its peak in 2015 (17.8%). The current percentage is 14.5. **Table 5.2** reflects upon another important aspect that in comparison to percentage of men elected to Lok Sabha (out of total men candidates), the percentage of women elected (out of total women candidates) has always been higher. This indicates that further steps must be taken to ensure that a wide range of women are encouraged to be contesters as the probability of winning the election is more in comparison to men. If we consider State-wise Women participation in 17th Lok Sabha Election (**Table 5.3**), among States with more than ten seats, the percentage of women MPs out of total seats is the highest in Odisha at 33 percent and lowest in Kerala (5%). Considering the share of women (49.5%) in the total population of India, their representation in Parliament represents a skewed statistic, which needs to be worked upon for the better representation of women in the world's largest demography.

4.5.5 However, since the early 1990's, the 73rd and 74th amendments, which necessitates 33 per cent reservation for women in rural and urban local bodies made it possible for lakhs of women to enter in the political decision making of the country. Since then, there has been a dramatic change in women's representation in local administration. Twenty states have made provision of 50% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions which is a welcome step. All these states except Punjab and Tripura have achieved this mandate. Further, in Manipur also, 50.7% of the elected representatives are women even though the state has no such legal provision. As on date, the three tyre local bodies had more than 1 million women as elected

representatives from various facets of social background and become part of the political decision-making process. (Table 5.5)

4.5.6 Another important aspect of elections is the voting rights. The principle of universal adult suffrage was adopted by India when the constitution was enacted in 1949. But up to the 15th national election, less than 60% of women electors only participated in the elections and the men turnout was 8 percent points more than that of women. However, more women turned out to vote in 2014 as compared to earlier elections, the participation being 65.6% in 2014 which further rose to 67.2% in 2019. Surprisingly, for the first time, the turnout percentage was to the advantage of women, though marginally (Table 5.6). This could be attributed to increasing literacy of women resulting in improved political awareness. In 2019 women voter turnout ratio was seen higher than total voter turnout ratio by greater than 1 percentage point in Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep, Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Jharkhand and Goa.



Source: Election Commission of India

Participation of women in Judicial System

4.5.7 No one can deny the fact that more representation of women in the judicial system will tend the women community to seek justice and enforce their rights through the courts. Achieving equality, in terms of representation at all levels of the judiciary should be the goal, not only because it is right for women, but because it is to ensure a more just rule of law. Women judges also live their lives as women, with all the social and cultural norms and obligations of the society. So, women judges are more likely to bring those lived experiences to their judicial actions, experiences that tend toward a more comprehensive and empathetic perspective- one that encompasses not only the

legal basis for judicial action, but also awareness of consequences on the people affected.

4.5.8 As per **Table 5.9** pertaining to the year 2022, in Supreme court of India, out of 29 judges sitting in the office, only 3 are women. In high courts also, only 13% of the judges are women. Such a small representation of women in Judicial decision-making process of the country forces us to think about the need to bring about **institutional, social and behavioural change** by sensitising India's population on inclusion of women in every sector. This poor representation of women in judicial systems is a global phenomenon. Noting that a relatively small number of women have been judges including at senior judicial leadership positions at all level, 10th march was proclaimed as the International Day of Women Judges in 2021 by the UN. The UN Resolution was supported by India which is a positive step.

Participation of women in Management

4.5.9 When women become leaders, they provide a different set of skills and imaginative perspectives. More importantly, female leaders bring structural and cultural differences to the table, which drive effective solutions. This creative standpoint and unique sense of awareness will also allow them to study and uncover the finer details that may go missed by others. As we've established, the working landscape is changing, and the business world is no longer just a man's game. However, competing in this challenging environment is no walk in the park. In case of participation in Management, there are several barriers for women such as lack of education, awareness, criminal and violent acts, health problems and illnesses, lack of participation, discriminatory treatment, etc.

4.5.10 As per data of Periodic Labour Force Survey, among the officials working at managerial positions in India, 18.8% were women in 2020 and 18.1% in 2021. In 2021, the highest percentage is seen in Mizoram (41.5%) followed by Sikkim (32.5%), Manipur (31.1%), Meghalaya (30.9%) and Andhra Pradesh (30.3%). The lowest representation of women at managerial position was seen in Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (1.8%), Uttarakhand (3.4%), Jammu & Kashmir (4.6%), Andaman & Nicobar Islands (7.2%) and Bihar (7.3%) (**Table 5.11**) Among the workers working as Legislators, Senior officials and Managers in India, 22.2 percent were females in 2022. Among the states, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya and Andhra Pradesh are better off whereas Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Uttarakhand, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Punjab and Nagaland are lagging behind with a wide margin (**Table 5.12**).