



## Women's Political Participation in Gujarat

### KEYWORDS

Political participation, Women empowerment, Education, Gujarat, gender inequality.

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### ABSTRACT

*Women empowerment has today gained significant importance. In this paper, we try to evaluate the effect of women's political participation in Gujarat. Women's participation in politics is a step forward toward their empowerment. It helps reduce the inequality between men and women and with women in politics, they can bring out better policies which support and empower women. Gujarat has come a long way in terms of empowering women and has made many efforts which support women and encourage them, making them economically and socially independent. In this paper, using the data available we analyze and compare the difference in the male and female political participation for all the 26 districts of Gujarat.*

### Introduction:

Empowerment of women throughout the globe had now become a necessity. By women empowerment we mean, the power to acquire knowledge, have control and make informed decisions. It is a process of reaching one's maximum capacity and be economically, socially and politically independent. In India, there has been gender discrimination among men and women since decades. Therefore it is, important and necessary for women to have a sense of power, make decisions and actively participate and negotiate to have an equal place among men in the society. Thus political participation of women will empower them, as their opinion in any political decision will be mattered and so they can help empower all the women in the nation. By including women in politics, especially at district level or even at talukas level may help the government provide a view point which incorporates women's issue and thus make policies which benefit women so that there will be an overall development and equality in the society

In India various steps have been taking in order to provide constitutional safeguards and institutional framework for activities for women welfare. The main focus of the government is the development and empowerment of women in all areas and therefore the National Perspective Plan for women has recognized that political participation of women was almost invisible to before and thus a 30 per cent quota for women was introduced at all levels of elective bodies, as their contribution to the nation equally matters.

Talking about Gujarat, a very prosperous state of India also deals with the problem of gender discrimination among women. Even then the state has made efforts to empower women by bringing in various policies which benefit women. The following paper compares the male-female political participation at district level and talukas level and the gender difference in politics in Gujarat for the year 2004.

### Literature Review:

Lot of work has been done related to this research at state, national and global level.

According to the Human Development Research Paper by Desai M. (2010), the trends in women's empowerment

over the past 20 years show that there has been a positive development in primary and secondary education, and an improvement in the political representation at the national level, which has led to a decline in the fertility rate and maternal mortality rate. And violence against women and HIV/AIDS continue to be endemic.

Vissandjee B. , Apale A, Wieringa S, Abdool S. and Dupéré S. (2005) in their article through number based strategies towards gender equality and women empowerment suggested that in India, for empowering women, women's political participation as facilitated by a quota system should be substantially strengthened. This can only be done through participation of the government and the encouragement of their male counterparts at every level of society. Only then the women's interests are met and their opportunities are widened.

Adhikari H. (2012) in her article found out that in West Bengal, India, when it comes to political participation, women are dominated by their male colleagues and this leads to a greater gender gap. She believes that besides educating women, it is important for them to be economically and politically empowered and so she suggests that gender inequality and justice to women are two issues the government should give priority, only then women will be empowered and the country will develop in true sense.

### Objective of the Study:

1. To compare political participation of men and women in Gujarat.
2. To study the gender discrimination in Gujarat with specific reference to political participation.
3. To study the importance of women's political participation in order to empower them.

### Research Methodology:

Present study is based on the political participation of men and women elected at taluka and district level for the year 2004. The secondary data were collected from Gender Resource Centre Ahmedabad. Political participation of men and women for all 26 districts of Gujarat is analyzed in this paper.

**Table 1 – Political participation of men and women at Taluka and District level - 2004.**

Sr. No.	District	Taluka Panchayats				District Panchayats			
		Male	Female	Total	% Female	Male	Female	Total	% Female
1	Ahmedabad	118	60	178	33.71%	22	11	33	33.33%
2	Amreli	120	61	181	33.70%	21	10	31	32.26%
3	Anand	116	58	174	33.33%	25	12	37	32.43%
4	Banaskantha	183	91	274	33.21%	37	18	55	32.73%
5	Bharuch	103	51	154	33.12%	21	10	31	32.26%
6	Bhavnagar	144	69	213	32.39%	27	14	41	34.15%
7	Dangs	15	8	23	34.78%	11	6	17	35.29%
8	Dahod	116	59	175	33.71%	26	13	39	33.33%
9	Gandhinagar	67	33	100	33.00%	18	9	27	33.33%
10	Jamnagar	116	58	174	33.33%	22	11	33	33.33%
11	Junagadh	167	85	252	33.73%	30	15	45	33.33%
12	Kutch	119	59	178	33.15%	22	11	33	33.33%
13	Kheda	134	68	202	33.66%	27	14	41	34.15%
14	Mehsana	124	63	187	33.69%	26	13	39	33.33%
15	Narmada	48	24	72	33.33%	13	6	19	31.58%
16	Navsari	78	37	115	32.17%	19	10	29	34.48%
17	Panchmahal	156	79	235	33.62%	30	15	45	33.33%
18	Patan	88	45	133	33.83%	19	10	29	34.48%
19	Porbandar	34	17	51	33.33%	11	6	17	35.29%
20	Rajkot	164	82	246	33.33%	27	14	41	34.15%
21	Sabarkantha	168	83	251	33.07%	31	16	47	34.04%
22	Surat	118	57	175	32.57%	23	12	35	34.29%
23	Surendranagar	110	58	168	34.52%	21	10	31	32.26%
24	Tapi	62	31	93	33.33%	15	8	23	34.78%
25	Vadodara	177	87	264	32.95%	34	17	51	33.33%
26	Valsad	87	42	129	32.56%	21	10	31	32.26%

**Source: Gender Resource Center, Ahmedabad**

#### Interpretation:

In this table we can clearly see that in each and every district whether at Taluka level or district level, the participation of male is quite high than the female. The percentage of females is 33 per cent for almost all districts. Not one district had female participation more than 36 per cent which is a sad sight to see. In the Taluka level Banaskantha has maximum female political participation with 91 seats and Porbandar with the least at only 17 seats. At the District level we can see that Banaskantha again has the maximum seats i.e. 18 out of 55 seats and Dang, Narmada and Porbandar with the least seats i.e. 6.

#### Discussion:

As we can see from the table that Gujarat is doing poorly in terms of political empowerment of women for all the 26 districts. One of the few reasons for this is gender discrimination and lack of education among women. Women are still not allowed to take roles regarding decision making for their household. Women's limited participation in politics is not only depriving them of the social benefits and empowerment but it also leads to low growth and development of a nation. This limits their economically, social and political independence. We should take women's political participation as a tool which would provide them with opportunities to empower themselves. The Gujarat govern-

ment needs to make policies to bring changes regarding the conditions that women are living in this day and age. Education should be promoted to make men and women aware of the importance of women's contribution in each and every field of work.

#### Conclusion:

Even though there is a 33 per cent of reservation for women, the need for more females in the politics helps give the government an equal prospective towards the problems of the state and the nation. By having a reservation quota, the problem of gender inequality will not be solved. Today the gender gap has decreased compared to last many decades. Women are now seen actively participating in politics. The government of Gujarat through the ministry of women and child welfare has brought in many programs and policies for the empowerment of women, which will only benefit them if these programs and policies are acted upon. When women actively take part in the politics at local levels, they are already aware of their surroundings and can actually bring change in their talukas. Empowering women politically can lead a nation to success both socially and economically.

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