

Women's representation in Parliament and state assemblies, explained in 4 charts

Women Reservation Bill: An analysis of past numbers shows that in terms of representation, the share of women in India's elected legislatures has rarely breached the 15% mark.

Written by: [Abhinav Chakraborty](#) 7 min read New Delhi Updated: Apr 18, 2026 07:31 AM IST



Women Reservation Bill: Lok Sabha proceedings in the House during the special session of Parliament, in New Delhi on April 17, 2026. Photo: Sansad TV via PTI

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Women Reservation Bill: On Friday, Lok Sabha defeated a constitutional amendment Bill to raise the share of women in India's elected legislatures — both Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas — to 33% of their respective total seats. An analysis of past numbers shows that in terms of representation, the share of women has rarely breached the 15% mark across legislatures.

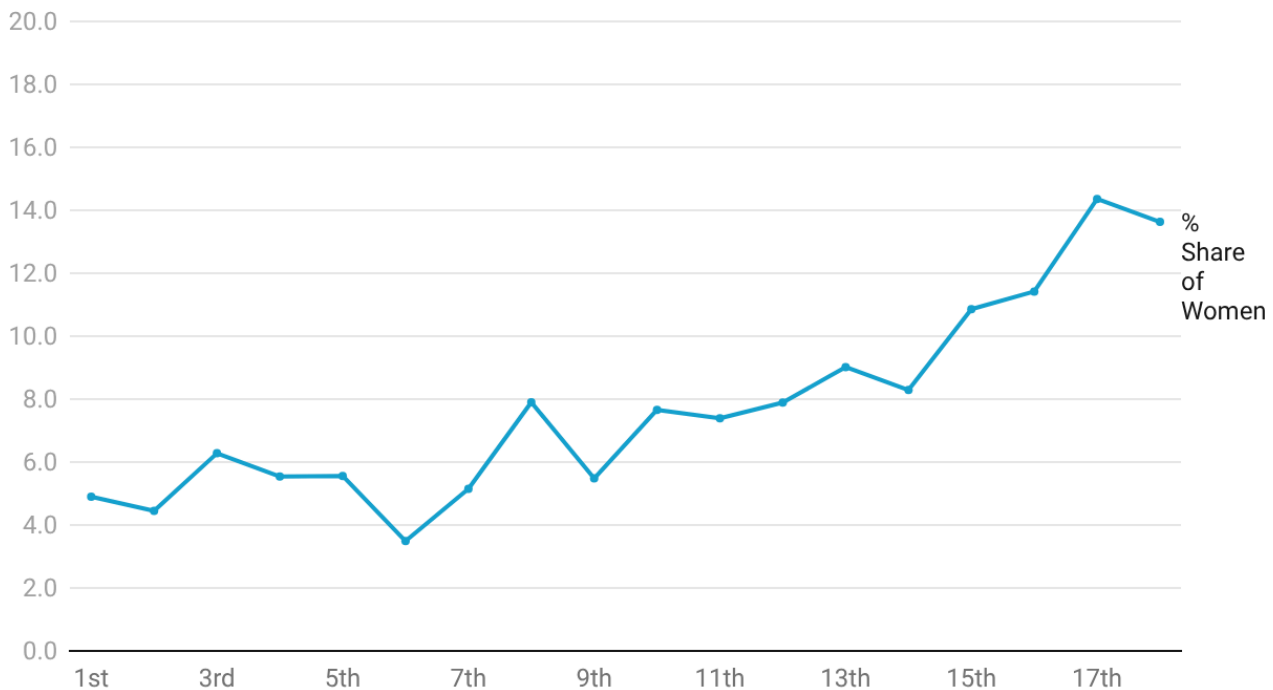
Parliament trends on women's representation

In Lok Sabha, the Lower House of India's Parliament, the figure has never exceeded even that. From the first Lok Sabha (1951-52), when there were 24 women MPs out of a total 489 (4.9%), the figure for the incumbent House — the 18th Lok Sabha (2024-29) — stands at 75 out of a total 543 (13.6%).

The highest figure in this regard was in the previous Lok Sabha (2019-24), when women comprised 14.36% — 78 out of 543 — of the House's membership. On the other hand, India's lowest figure of 3.5% came during the 6th Lok Sabha (1977-79): the 1977 general election was held right after the Emergency (1975-77) imposed by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Gandhi, India's first woman PM (and the only one to date), lost that election after 11 years at the helm.

Chart 1 | Lok Sabha: % share of women

The share of women in Lok Sabha has seen a gradual upward trend over time. But it took India 15 general elections to reach a double-digit percentage figure.



The number for the 18th Lok Sabha does not include women MPs elected in subsequent bypolls.

Source: PRS Legislative Research, ECI • Created with Datawrapper

The share of women in Lok Sabha has seen a gradual upward trend over time.

As *Chart 1* indicates, the percentage share of women in Lok Sabha has seen a gradual upward trend over time. **But it took India 15 general elections to reach a double-digit percentage figure (10.9% in 2009), which underlines the fact that women still have some way to go to reach the 33% mark if reservation is not implemented.**

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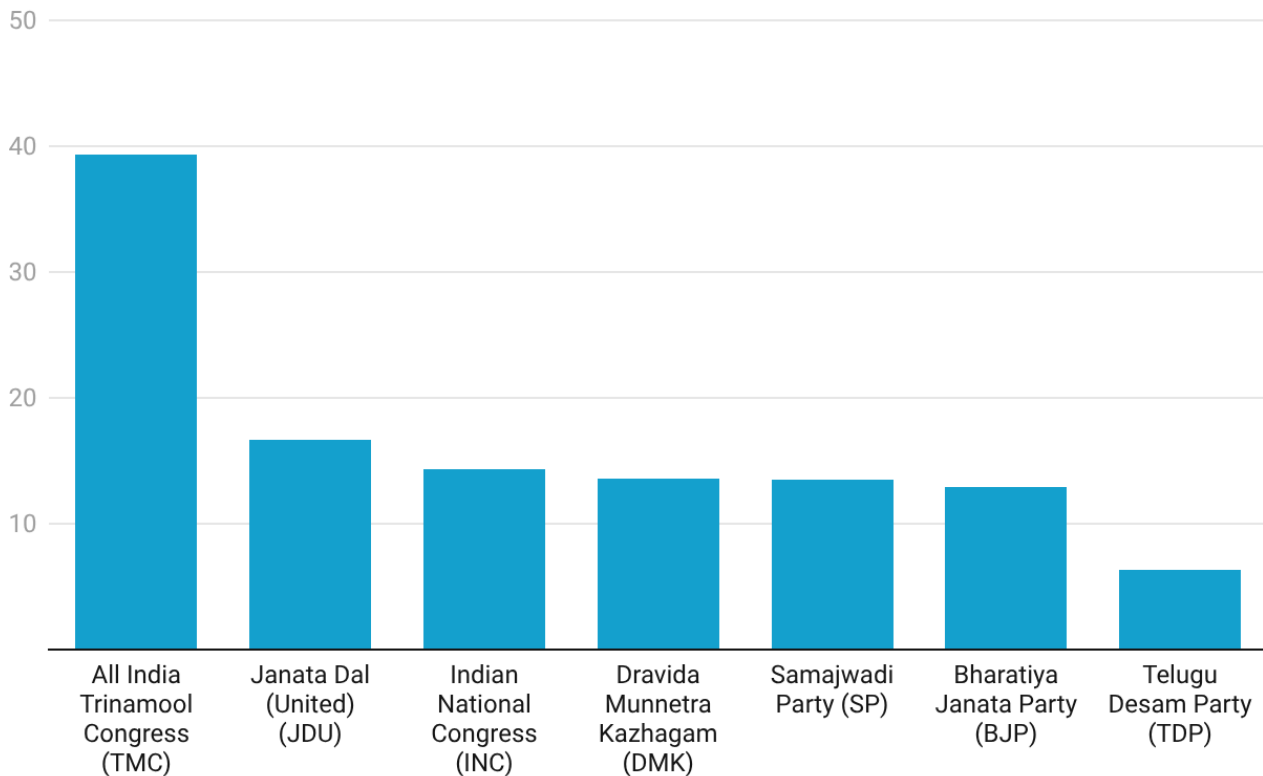
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[Rajya Sabha](#), or the Upper House, while not a legislative body whose members are directly elected by the people, presently has 39 women MPs out of a total of 245: about 16%.

A look at party-wise numbers in Lok Sabha (*Chart 2*) shows that of all parties with a minimum of 10 MPs in the Lower House, only the Trinamool Congress's share of women MPs exceeds the 33% mark: 11 of its 28 Lok Sabha MPs (39.3%). It leads the House on this count by a wide margin — second on this list is the Janata Dal (United) with 16.7%, but it has only two women MPs out of a total 12.

Chart 2 | Lok Sabha: Party-wise % Share of Women MPs

Of all parties with a minimum of 10 MPs, only the Trinamool Congress's share of women MPs exceeds the 33% mark.



Source: Lok Sabha • Created with Datawrapper

A look at party-wise numbers in Lok Sabha shows that of all parties with a minimum of 10 MPs in the Lower House, only the Trinamool Congress's share of women MPs exceeds the 33% mark.

The BJP, which leads the ruling National Democratic Alliance and is the single largest party in Lok Sabha, has only 31 women MPs out of a total of 240 (12.9%). The Congress, which is the primary Opposition party and has the second most number of MPs, isn't much better off: 14 of its 98 MPs are women (14.3%).

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Interestingly, the Trinamool Congress leads the tally in percentage terms even in Rajya Sabha among parties with at least 10 MPs. There, six of its 13 MPs are women — a 46% share. The Congress and the BJP are some way behind in second and third place, with a 17.2% and 17% share respectively.

According to Satish Deshpande, former Head of Department, Sociology, [Delhi](#) School of Economics, this was a “clear reflection” of how serious the top leadership of some parties were in terms of sending women to Parliament. He told *The Indian Express*

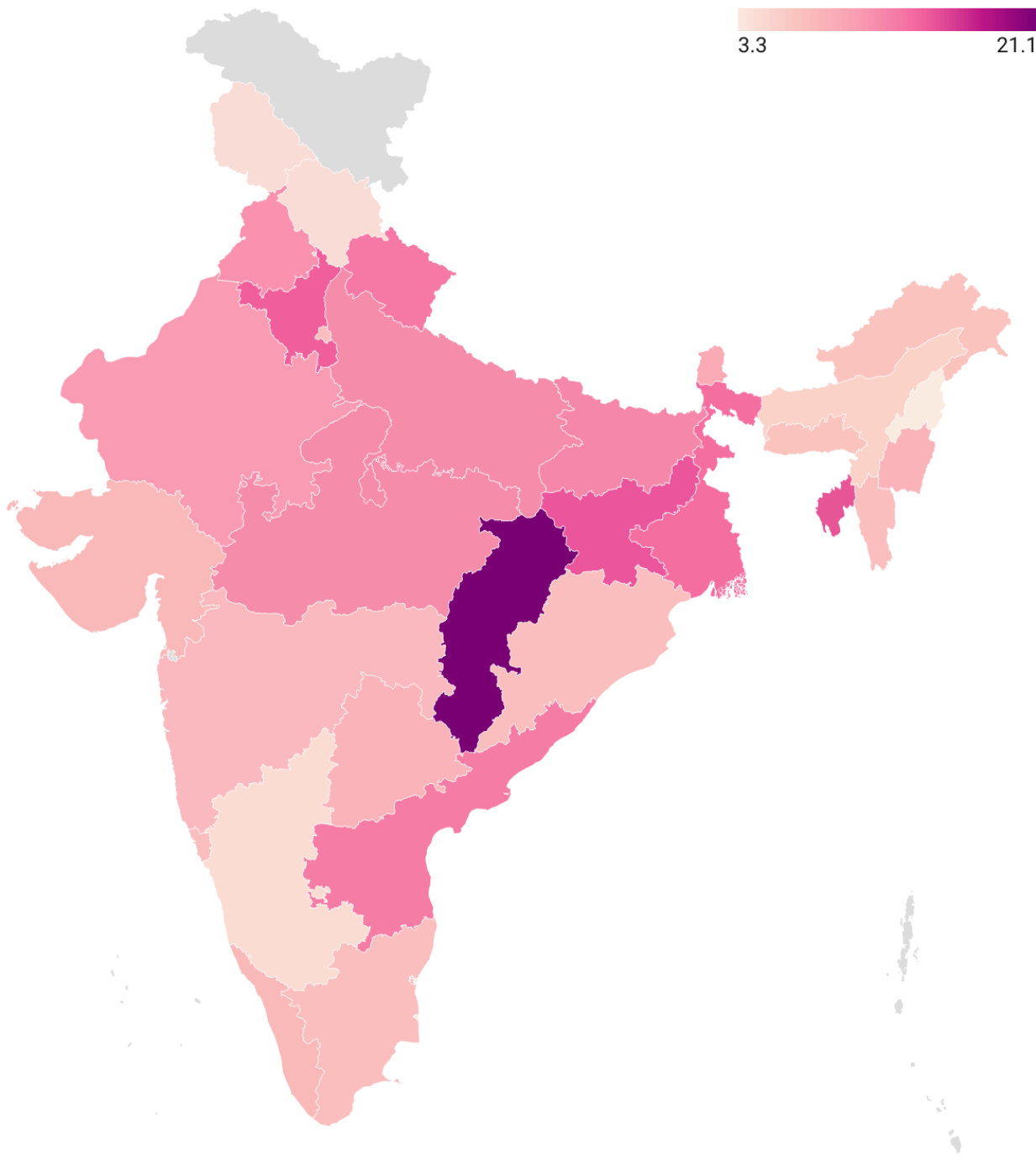
that “things happen” when a party’s top leadership is interested and when they aren’t, “they drag their feet, as the major parties have always done”.

Where the states stand

Data from India’s legislatures in 31 states and Union Territories (UTs) indicates that barring one state (Chhattisgarh at 21.1%), no other incumbent Legislative Assembly has more than 15% share of women MLAs (*Chart 3*). In fact, until the 2023 state election in Chhattisgarh, no Indian state had ever crossed the 15% mark since India conducted its first general and provincial elections in 1951-52.

Chart 3 | Vidhan Sabhas: % Share of Women

Data from 31 states and U-Ts indicate that except for one state, no other incumbent Legislative Assembly has more than 15% share of women MLAs.



Source: Vidhan Sabhas, PRS Legislative Research • Map data: © OSM • Created with Datawrapper

As things stand, as many as 19 Assemblies have less than 10% women.

In terms of women's representation in Assemblies, Tripura comes second with 15%, followed by Jharkhand (14.8%), Haryana (14.4%), and West Bengal (13.6%). The lowest share of women MLAs are in Nagaland and Puducherry (both 3.3%). It is worth noting that when two women were elected to the Nagaland Assembly in 2023, it was the first time ever that women made it to the state legislature.

As things stand, as many as 19 Assemblies have less than 10% women. Among them are bigger states such as Gujarat (7.7%), Maharashtra (7.6%), [Tamil Nadu](#) (7.3%), Assam (5.5%), and Karnataka (4.5%).

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On why the share of women has struggled to cross 15% in India's elected legislatures, Deshpande said: "Politics is about power, and power is not very hospitable to any kind of weaker groups. So, women being in a patriarchal society (and) being the less privileged group, they would not get their due share in this field as well."

With four states and one UT — Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Puducherry — currently going through Assembly elections, the percentage numbers in these legislatures are likely to change on May 4, when results are announced.

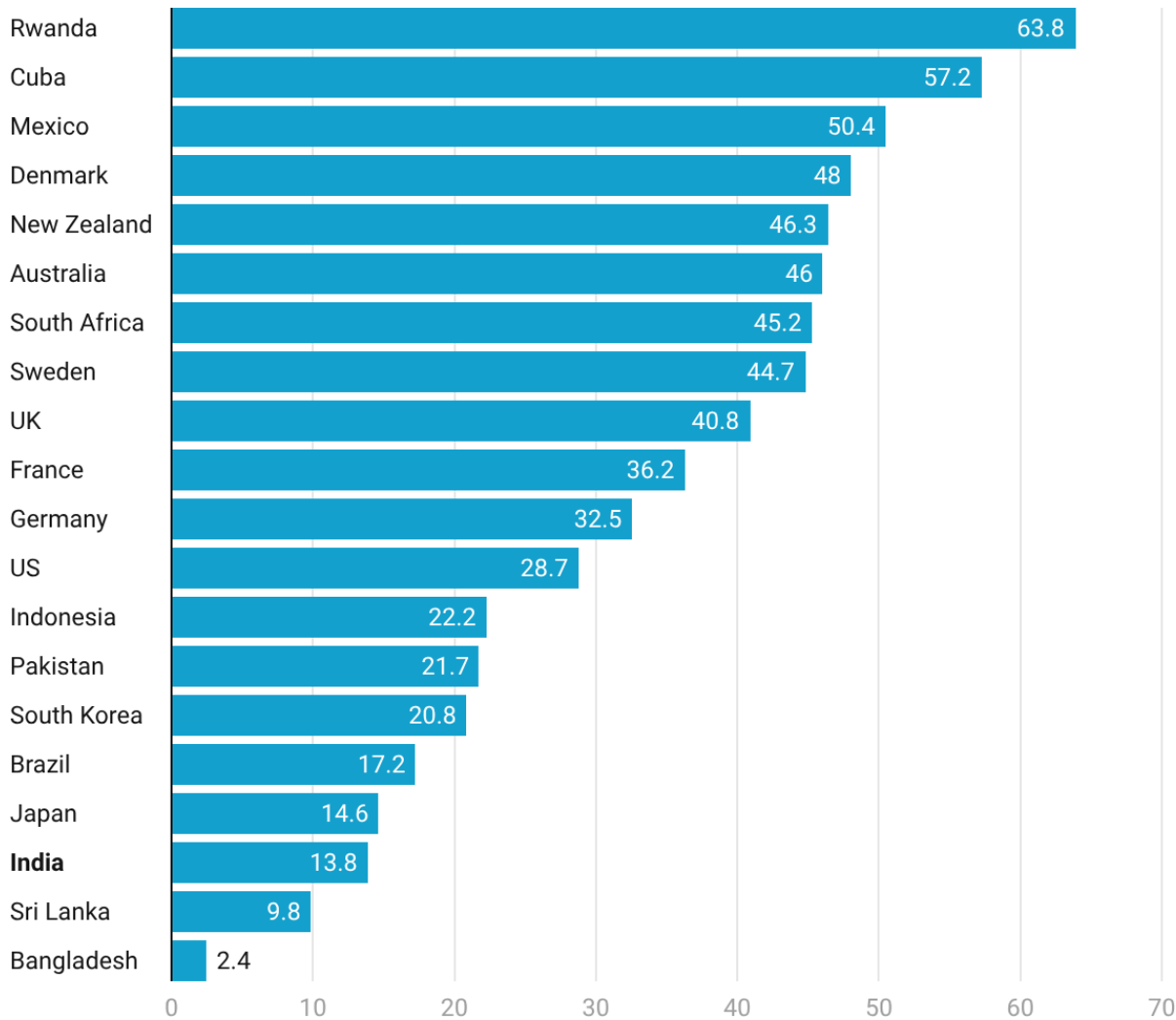
Where India stands globally on women in Parliament

Out of some 190 countries, India ranks 147 in terms of women's representation in Lower Houses of Parliament according to April 2026 data by Parline, a tracker on national parliaments maintained by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). IPU is a Geneva-based global nonprofit that facilitates parliamentary diplomacy and empowers parliaments and parliamentarians to promote peace, democracy, and sustainable development worldwide.

Parline data shows that there are eight countries that have achieved parity or more number of women compared with men (at least 50%): Rwanda, Cuba, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Mexico, Andorra, and the United Arab Emirates. Some 56 countries have over 33% women in their national legislatures.

Chart 4 | Global trends: % Share of Women Parliamentarians

Out of some 190 countries, India ranks 147 in terms of women's representation in Parliament.



This chart refers to figures only in the lower house of national parliaments as of April 2026.

Source: Parline/IPU • Created with Datawrapper

An IPU report released last year said that the percentage of parliament seats held by women worldwide rose from 11.3% in 1995 to 27.2% in 2025.

Chart 4 shows a comparison with a few other countries across different geographies.

According to an IPU report released last year (“Women in parliament 1995-2025”), the percentage of seats held by women rose from 11.3% in 1995 to 27.2% in 2025. The report showed that the proportion of women in parliament rose steadily from 2000 to 2015. In recent years, this progress has slowed.

The report noted that countries that have taken steps towards ensuring greater gender balance — such as implementing well-designed quotas, making parliaments more gender-sensitive, and addressing violence against women — have seen the most laudable progress.

It also said that two factors have made a significant difference in the share of women elected to parliaments: electoral systems — especially proportional representation or mixed systems — and gender quotas in any form. In countries where gender quotas are in place, the share of women elected or appointed was 31.2% in 2024 compared to 16.8% in countries without.

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