



An analysis of voting behaviour of first time voters in 2024 General Elections

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Abstract

The enthusiasm of the youth is important for casting their vote in a democratic country. India's political landscape is defined and redefined by the choices made by its voters. There is no doubt that the participation of more than 2 crore young voters in the coming union elections 2024 underlines the important role of the first-time voters and youth participation in shaping the future of the country. The step first-time young citizens into the realm of electoral responsibility is not just a ritual, but a transformative moment that has the potential to redefine the direction of the country. The present research paper tries to find out the perceptions and driving forces working for first time voters while they are going to cast their votes in coming general elections and define their decision. The study is meticulously conducted on the first-hand responses of 100 students studying in various Higher Education Institutions in Sonapat District of Haryana state and voting for the first time in coming Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

Keywords: First time voters, elections, democratic country

Introduction

Elections play a vital role in shaping policies that address the multifaceted aspects of poverty and socio-economic inequalities. Voters seek coherence in civic principles, social values, and economic outlook. The participation of youth in the electoral process is a necessity for India's progress. A large part of our population is youth, so their participation in voting can decide the direction of the country. The demographic dividend, often seen as India's advantage, can be fully leveraged only when the youth actively participate in this democratic process. By voting thoughtfully, youth can ensure that their aspirations, concerns, and visions for the future are important in the decision-making process. Each vote represents the hopes and dreams of a diverse population united by the desire to build a more equitable, inclusive and prosperous society.

Objectives

- To explore the influencing behavior of persons on first time voters having effect on their preferences while choosing the party/candidate in general elections 2024.
- To assess the medium working as driving force for the perceptions and decisions of first-time voters.
- To see the most important issue for young voters to Sway the elections.

Research Design

A questionnaire carefully constructed, focusing on individuals who are preparing to vote for the first time in the upcoming elections in which respondents were asked to rank the given questions. A sample size of 100 respondents was selected, and they were personally interviewed to delve deeper into their perspectives and insights. In the initial two weeks of April 2024, direct interviews were conducted with respondents from 100 students studying in various Higher Education Institutions in Sonapat District of Haryana state and voting for the first time in coming Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

The present research paper data from the survey conducted on the young voters was used to shed some light on preferences and perceptions of very young voters i.e. first timers. The findings show the outlook and priorities of these voters while they are going to use ballot box for the first time. The questions asked were predominantly structured in an objective format to streamline the process and minimize the time required by the respondents. The researchers have elicited responses on key questions around the choice of these voters. The responses which are worked upon in the form of findings are enumerated below:

Question 1. Who is the Person influencing you most While You Vote?

Finding: Who is the person having influence on their choice to vote in favour of a candidate/party? Is it parents, siblings, friends, relatives, mentors, neighbours, or friends who have an influence on the choice of the party to vote? The present study shows first time voters largely come to the decision on their own while choosing which party to vote in the elections (52%). Parents also have a significant influence on the first-time voters (24%).

Influencer	% age	Rank
Parents	24	2
Siblings & family Member	7	3
Relatives	5	4
Friends	4	5
Teachers	5	4
Neighbours	2	6
Own Decision	52	1

Question 2. While voting, which medium influences you most?

Finding: What is the medium which influences the minds of young people, here the new voters? Now in the time of internet and access to different form of media, how the first time voters make their mind for voting preference?

Medium	% age	Rank
FM/Radio	4	4
Newspapers/Magazines	3	5
Social media	56	1
Political Campaign	14	3
TV News Channels	22	2
Any Other Source	1	6

In the Study it was found that internet namely online news and social media — Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram etc are the go-to destinations for voters. Over 56% of the first-time voters make up their mind based on their engagement on internet and social media. After that comes the TV Channels which held a sway over voters and its share comes out to be 22%.

Question 3. What do you think is the most important issue for our country today?

Finding: What are issues and priorities that concern the new voters? How their aspirations will decide their preference to vote a certain candidate /party was the question put forth to these voters? They were asked whether it is infrastructure, law and security, corruption etc that will decide their choice.

Issue	% age	Rank
Infrastructure	21	2
Law & Other	12	4
Corruption	6	5
Price rise	4	6
Foreign Policies	19	3
Unemployment	38	1

On the basis of the study, it was found that the unemployment, the means of livelihood tops the list of the issues for the young voters (38%). Infrastructure namely electricity, roads, water etc. is another major issue to be addressed for young votes (21%). Next comes the foreign policy i.e. relations with other countries, safety of our borders etc. are the issues given more weightage by the youngsters (19%), law and order are another main issue considered important for them (12%). Corruption and Price rise 6% & 4% respectively they have given least importance.

Conclusion

On the basis of findings of the study it is concluded that majority of new voters consider themselves as fully aware and not affected by other persons whims while choosing the candidate for casting the vote as 1st Rank given by the respondents. Role of parents to affect voters preferences come on the 2nd place. While talking about the role of medium, access to internet in the form of social media affect the voters much. Voters give second rank to Campaign by Political parties to affect their perceptions. Voters under study perceive unemployment as the main issue to be taken care by the government. Good infrastructure, effective foreign policy for national security and favourable international trade to increase the national income are the next issues considered by the very young voters. The results of the study reflect the ideological preferences, influences and intent of the new voters in the world's largest democracy.

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