

URBAN GOVERNANCE DIALOGUE

Transforming Urban Governance



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www.praja.org
info@praja.org
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[PrajaFoundation](#)
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Empowerment of Women Elected Representatives in City Governments

Women constitute half of Indian population. Their involvement in political leadership fosters equity and inclusivity in decision - making, addressing unique challenges faced by women in cities. Women often lead in addressing civic issues, making their participation in local governance pivotal. Article 243T of the Constitution, introduced by the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) of 1992, mandates that at least one-third of municipal seats be reserved for women. All states have set aside either 33% or 50% of elected seats for women in city governments.

The 106th Constitutional Amendment Act passed recently by Indian Parliament aims to reserve one-third of Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly seats for women.

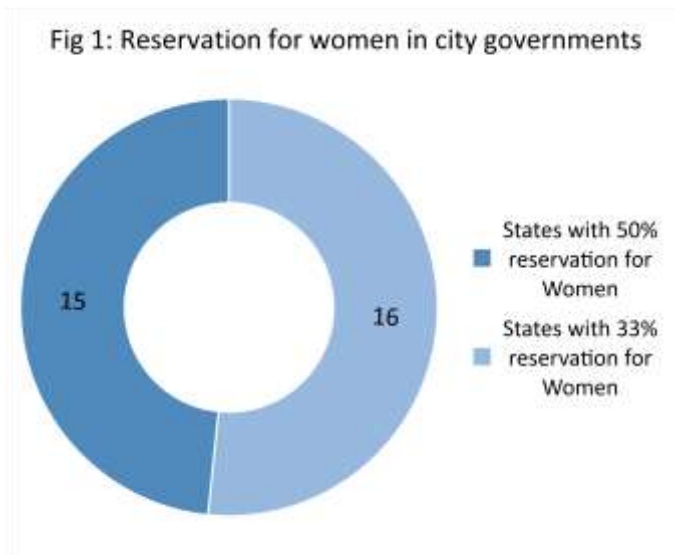


In this context, Praja focused on examining the status of inclusion, and performance of Women Elected Representatives in city governments across India. For this study, Praja Team visited 31 cities and interviewed respondents for their anecdotes on the subject. We studied 37 cities across 28 states, and 3 union territories (UT) to map the provisions for representation. Data on the deliberation by women ER could be availed from 14 cities during the study.

Legislative structure in City Governments

Reservation for women in city governments:

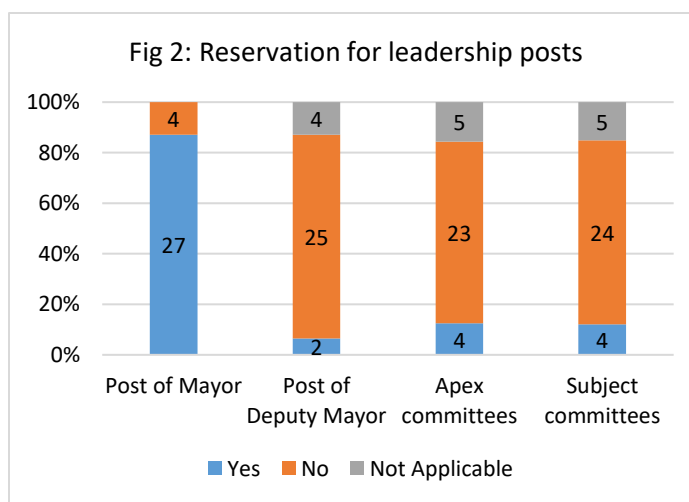
Extending 1/3 provision of reservation according to 74th CAA, **15 out of 31 states/UTs, have reserved 50% seats** for women in the council through their respective municipal acts. The other **16 states/UTs maintain 33% reservation**. Notably, actual representation of women ER in cities such as **Vijayawada, Patna, Mumbai, Bhubaneswar, Coimbatore, and Agartala** have **surpassed the 55% mark in actual representation** of women in their municipal. Agartala is a particular highlight. The Municipal Act makes provision of 33% reservation, however, 57% of the actual representatives are women in the municipal house.



Reservation in leadership posts:

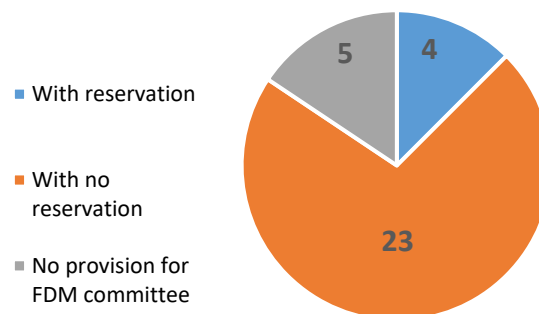
Leadership positions in the city governments include Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairpersons of Apex Committee, Standing/ Subject Committees, and others. To maintain true inclusivity, women must be actively engaged in these leadership roles.

- Some states and Union Territories like **Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, and Telangana** have not reserved positions like Mayor and Deputy Mayor for women.
- **Karnataka and Kerala** have made a provision for the **reservation of Women for the post of Deputy Mayor**.
- All city governments have standing/subject committees to deliberate on certain service delivery matters. **Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan** are only states that **reserve women members in the Standing/subject committees**.



Financial decision-making is of paramount importance for city governments as it determines how resources are allocated to essential services, infrastructure development, and economic growth. Ensuring equitable representation of women in financial decision-making committees is equally crucial. Effective budget management, responsible debt handling, and revenue generation strategies are vital components. These decisions impact public services, emergency response, accountability, and compliance with financial regulations, ultimately shaping the well-being and prosperity of local communities while fostering inclusivity and gender equality. Only **Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Kerala** have provision for reserving a seat for women in their financial decision-making committee. States such as **Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Telangana (Warangal)** have no provision for having a committee dedicated to financial decision-making.

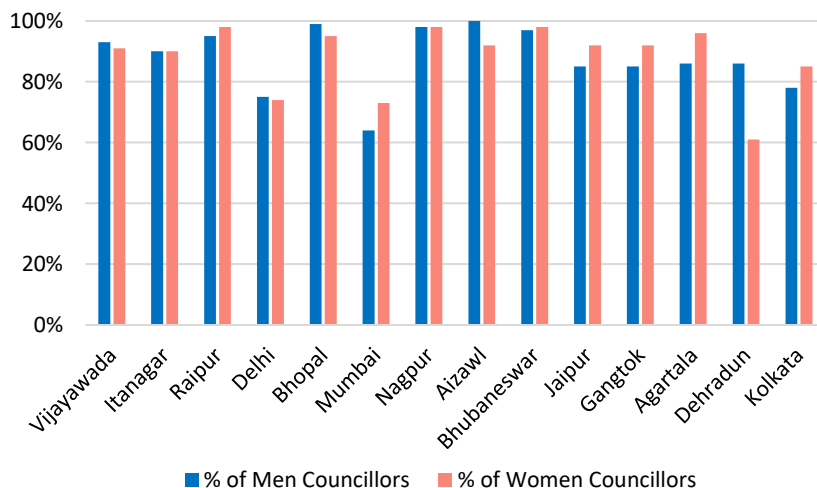
Fig 3: Reservation in financial decision-making committee (FDM) in States/UTs



Deliberations by Elected Representatives

Attendance of Councillors in House/General Body Meeting (GBM)

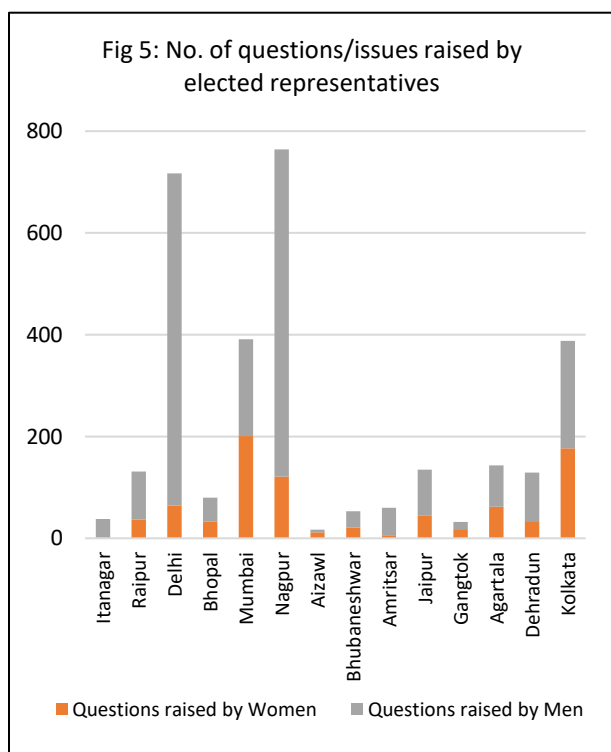
Fig 4: Attendance of Councillors in House/GBM



Councillors play a pivotal role in addressing the growing needs of citizens by raising question and deliberating on civic matters, education, healthcare, and other critical issues in appropriate platforms. This engagement fosters transparency, accountability, and effective governance, ensuring that elected representatives remain accountable to the concerns and aspirations of their constituents.

Attendance of Councillors in GBMs within the 14 studied cities varies significantly. In six cities, women councillors exhibit higher attendance than their male counterparts. However, four cities record lower than 75% attendance for women councillors, with Dehradun experiencing a significant attendance gap of 25%. These attendance patterns emphasize the need to explore and address factors influencing councillor participation in GBMs, which significantly impact local governance and decision-making processes.

Table 1: Questions/issues raised by councillors in the House/ General Body Meetings (GBM)



Type of Issues	No. of Questions
Top 5 Questions raised by Women Councillors	
Road / Footpath Related	78
Naming Renaming of Roads/Chowks/Monuments/Buildings/Stations Related	75
Scheme Policies	64
Solid Waste Management Related	59
Health	57
Top 5 Questions raised by Men Councillors	
Human Resources Related	256
Naming Renaming of Roads/Chowks/Monuments/Buildings/Stations Related	221
Maintenance of Municipal Property	220
Scheme Policies	165
Road / Footpath Related	155

Raising questions in appropriate forums is a constitutional duty of elected representatives. The data on deliberation during one-year from 14 cities reveals interesting insights into the pattern of raising questions by councillors. In most of the cities, male councillors, more actively ask questions. Women councillors from **Agartala, Raipur, Bhopal, Mumbai, Jaipur, Gangtok, and Kolkata** raise similar number of questions as their male counterparts. Women councillors from **Aizawl** register higher participation than male councillors, asking four-times higher questions. In contrast, women councillors in **Amritsar, Itanagar, Delhi, Bhubaneswar, and Nagpur** exhibit lower involvement in questioning as compared to male councillors.

The **questions raised by women councillors account for only 27% of the total questions** posed by councillors across the 14 studied cities. However, women councillors, tend to focus more on issues of civic importance like Roads, Schemes & Policies, Solid Waste Management and Health. Notably, women councillors actively participate in discussions concerning Storm Water Drainage, Garden, Nuisance due to Animals, and Mosquito Nuisance & Fogging, contributing more than 40% of the questions raised on these subjects.

National Webinar to discuss findings from the report



Prajna conducted a National Webinar to discuss key findings from the report.

The panellists of the session were **Vandana Chavan**, Member of Parliament; **Satyajeet Tambe**, Member of Maharashtra Legislative Council; **Ratna Singh**, Deputy Speaker, Guwahati; **Meenal Chaubey**, Leader of Opposition, Raipur; and the

session was moderated by **Meghna Malhotra**, Deputy Director, Urban Management Centre. Subsequently, the report on the Status of Women Elected Representatives in City Governments was launched publicly on zoom, and the key highlights were presented by **Yogesh Mishra**, Head – Research and Analysis, Prajna Foundation.

Discussion Themes:

Representation of Women in City Governments:

The panellists had consensus on addressing gaps in ensuring women's representation at all levels, with a focus on civic issues like public amenities, education, and healthcare. Empowering women beyond the 33% reservation was asserted, with emphasis on the importance of involving women in deliberative and decision-making committees for effective governance. The need for continuous training and support for women representatives was highlighted, acknowledging the drawbacks of the five-year rotation in reservations.

Capacity-building of Women in City Governments:

Panellists agreed on the necessity of capacity building to enhance deliberations and improve the effectiveness of elected representatives. Women elected representatives shared their journey in political leadership, underlining the significance of workplace training for better questioning abilities. The discussions concluded by addressing the reasons for low women participation, including confidence issues, limited education, family interference, and financial constraints. Strategies were proposed, such as empowering women through various political activities to



increase their participation and phasing out proxy representation through adequate women leadership. Overall, the discussions provided insights into the barriers and solutions for enhancing women's political engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Mandatory capacity building for Councillors:** For effective deliberation and decision making, councillors need to understand their roles, duties and responsibilities. Regular capacity building trainings held for the Councillor during their term of office enables them to better fulfil their constitutional responsibilities. This can also help the councillors to make the best use of various schemes which are available for development and best practices in the functions that come under their responsibility.
- **Representation in committees:** It is imperative to ensure adequate representation of women in decision-making and deliberative committees of city governments. By proactively involving women representatives to these committees, city governments can harness diverse perspectives, improve governance effectiveness, and address the unique needs and concerns of the citizens.
- **Councillor Fellowship:** Similar to MPs and MLAs, Councillors should also engage in research on critical civic issues. A Councillor fellowship program can assist Municipal Councillors and the administration in fulfilling their key responsibilities, which include raising questions in the House or committees, conducting research on public interest topics, and supporting various official tasks. These fellows will work on city matters and present relevant issues to Elected Representatives and the administration.



To read Full Report (Empowerment of Women Elected Representatives in City Governments)

Scan the QR Code or Click on the link below

Link: **(Link & QR code will be added while designing)**

We would like to know your views and feedbacks based on the above information shared. Feel free to reach us at info@praja.org

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Mehta'.

Nitai Mehta

Managing Trustee, Praja Foundation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Mhaske'.

Milind Mhaske

CEO, Praja Foundation