

# The Impact of Reservations for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions on Elections to State and Union Legislatures

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## Outline

### 1 Introduction

In my final paper I will seek to examine the impact of reservations for women in local body elections on voter attitudes towards female candidates in state and general elections. I study this effect by examining states that implemented 50% reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), the most local level of governance in India.<sup>1</sup> By considering data on candidates contesting state and general elections, I try to isolate the treatment effect by noting the change in female candidates' performance:

1. in constituencies that do and do not have reservations
2. across elections between 2009 and 2015, as a result of imposition of reservation during the interim period.

One can expect that the reservations for women are likely to have a positive impact on the probability of women being elected and improve their performance in elections in terms of vote share. I will seek to test this hypothesis through my analysis.

### 2 Background

The PRI system of local governance was instituted in 1992 with the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution through the Panchayati Raj Act. From its inception, PRI mandated one-third reservation of all seats for women. Thus we can note that all states begin with a baseline representation of women in 34% of seats in PRIs in 2009.

In September 2009, the Union Government passed a constitutional amendment mandating 50% reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). 19 of 28 provinces and union territories with PRIs have implemented this reservation since and had 50% representation of women in PRIs during 2014 general elections. While the nationwide average of PRI seats held by women remains about 46%, the average in these 19 states is 50.1%, as per data available from November 2016.[2]

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<sup>1</sup>Figure 1

While this act was passed soon after the May 2009 general elections to the Lok Sabha, states took varying amounts of time to implement it over the intervening five year period till the 2014 general elections. This forms an interesting case study to examine the impact of female election to higher levels of government due to reservations in local bodies. In this vein, I would like to conduct my analysis across elections to state legislatures (Vidhan Sabhas) and the national Parliament (Lok Sabha). State elections are held on a differing schedule depending on the state in question and occur across smaller constituencies, which may help us conclude the magnitude of change in voter behaviour toward female candidates in general, as a result of increased female representation in local government bodies.

### 3 Analysis

I hope to estimate the treatment effect using the following model:

$$y_i = \alpha.female + \delta.female \times reservations + \gamma_{ie} + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Here, the treatment effect is denoted by  $\delta$  and gives us the impact of female reservations on the dependent variable. I will consider the following three dependent variables to reach precise model:

1. *win* - a binary variable that takes on values of 0 and 1 depending on whether the candidate wins the seat
2. *vote\_share\_percentage* - continuous variable denoting the percentage of vote share received by a candidate in a given race. This can help isolate changes in female candidate's performance, even if the reservation does not actually lead to them winning more seats (as in *win*)
3. *position* - discrete variable that gives the rank of a candidate in a given race (with rank 1 implying a win) and similarly to *vote\_share\_percentage*, can provide a more accurate assessment of performance of female candidates

$\gamma_i$  consists of dummy variables to account for other observed measures and fixed effects, to better help isolate the effect of reservations.

$$\gamma_{ie} = \beta_1.year + \beta_2.incumbent + \beta_3.state_e + \beta_4.caste \quad (2)$$

I will conduct this analysis on:

1. nationwide general election data from 2009 and 2014
2. state election data from two elections between 2009 and 2016 for states that implemented PRI reservation for women<sup>2</sup>

The primary datasets I am working off are sourced from the Trivedi Center for Political Data at Ashoka University. The datasets note all candidates who contested seats in state and general elections, and their performance in terms of votes and margins.[1]

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<sup>2</sup>States that have implemented reservation - Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, West Bengal"

## References

- [1] Trivedi Center for Political Data. *Indian State and General Election - Candidates and Performance*. Ashoka University, 2018.
- [2] National Institute for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. *Participation in Decision Making: Women Men In India – 2016*. 2016.

## 4 Appendix

### 1. Organization of Government in India

