

Political Awareness Among Young Women: A Case Study

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Abstract:

Despite the efforts of the world community to accelerate the actions for equal representation and decision making, women are still underrepresented to date. Gender stereotyping, low level of awareness, lack of political motivation, illiteracy, household duties and responsibilities, etc., are the common factors of keeping women aside from the arena of politics. Since awareness of the political system, political rights and duties, and responsibilities of the citizens impact the level of participation, studies on the understanding of political institutions, political leaders, voting rights, assertion of voting rights, etc., seem significant. This paper studies the level of political awareness among women in the 18-21 age group. The study is based on primary and secondary data collected from interviews and other relevant materials such as books, research papers, articles, international and national databases, etc.

Keywords: Political, Young Women, Equal representation, Decision making, Gender Stereotyping, Awareness

1.1: Introduction:

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Platform of Action- 1995) clearly states that the participation of the better half is also crucial for accountable and transparent governance. The state's general will must also reflect the women's will. However, the statistics show that women are underrepresented in every system of government. The Report on Facts and Figures of Women's Leadership and Participation stated that "there are only 27 (twenty-seven) countries where 28 women serve as Head of the State and Government, and it will not be possible to reach the target of gender equality in the highest position for another 130 years." The report again states that only 26.9 percent of the legislative bodies in single or lower houses are women (UN, 2025).

Although the Constitution of India guarantees equal political rights without any discrimination the rate of participation of women in politics is very meager. With only 13.62 percent of female MPs in the Eighteenth Lok Sabha (2024), India ranks 143 out of 185 countries globally (TOI, 2024). However, the participation of women as voters was slightly up to the mark in the last Lok Sabha election. The women voters' turnout in the Lok Sabha election (2024) was 65.7%, whereas the turnout of men voters was 65.8%. Although the women of Assam are actively involved in political issues such as Assam agitation, CAA agitation, etc., their participation in electoral politics is very low. Out of 12 female contested candidates for 7 of 14 constituencies, Assam elected a single woman representative to the 18th Lok Sabha (2024). However, the female voter turnout in the state rose to 79.92 percent in the latest general election of 2024. Political participation among youths is being discussed and pointed out by political analysts after the regular elections of each democratic state. In a report published by the Centre for Information and

Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) states that only 47% of Young Voters cast a ballot in the 2024 Presidential Election. Youth voter turnout among 18- and 19-year-olds was 41%, 6 percentage points lower than turnout for all youth. That turnout gap by age group increased from 2020, when it had been 4 percentage points: 46% for ages 18-19, compared to 50% for the full 18-29 age group. ([New Data: Nearly Half of Youth Voted in 2024 | CIRCLE](#)).

The analysis of voter turnout among Indian youths shows an increasing trend. Accordingly, there was a substantive gap regarding young voters' turnout in 2014 and 2019. The rate of voters' turnout in the 2014 Lok Sabha election was 1 point higher than in 2019, which was 66 and 67 percent, respectively (Attri and Mishra 2020). Less enthusiasm among the young voters was highlighted as the main cause of such decline. However, the study shows that the voter turnout among the youth is almost equal to that of other voters.

1.2: Significance of the Study:

Political awareness and political participation are two sides of the same coin. Only a politically aware citizen can accurately judge the situation and actively participate in the electoral process. Considering the lower turnout of young voters in the General Elections of 2014 and 2019, the Election Commission of India launched several campaigns to attract young voters, including “Turning 18”, “You are the One”, etc. Since the incessant attempts of women's empowerment, women's education, and efforts to reduce gender disparities have been showered with a ray of hope for increasing the participation of women in politics. In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the political knowledge of young women on political institutions, political leaders, political process, and attitudinal changes towards politics.

1.3: Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To study the concept of political awareness from the theoretical perspective
2. To study the awareness of young women on the politics and political process of India.
3. To study the rate of participation of young women in politics.
4. To study the attitude of young women towards political leadership.

1.4: Methodology:

An empirical approach was adopted to investigate the research questions. Descriptive and analytical methods are used to describe and analyse the phenomena. The study is based on empirical data collected through a field study. Questionnaires and an interview schedule were prepared to collect the required information. To know the level of awareness of young women on the political process and political institutions, a set of structured questions was given to be answered. The study was conducted among women students of a girls' college in Jorhat District, Assam, India. For this, a purposive random sampling method was followed.

statistical methods, including Figures, were applied. Here, the issues like political institutions, name of the political leaders, political facts such as electoral rolls, NRC, etc., were used as the independent variables and the answers of the respondents were used as the dependent variables of the study.

1.5: Sources of Data:

The study is based on primary and secondary data. The data published in official websites such as the Election Commission of India (ECI), Field study data, etc., are considered as primary sources, and books, articles, journals, PhD theses (unpublished), newspapers, and relevant websites form the secondary sources of data collection.

1.6: Location of the study:

For the present study, 40 women students of the 18- 21 age group from D.C.B. Girls' College, Jorhat,

Assam, India (www.dcbgirlscollgejorhat.org) were selected as the sample area of the field study.

1.7: Research Questions to be answered:

1. What are the theoretical aspects of Political awareness?
2. What is the level of awareness of young women on political institutions and the political process of the state?
3. How far do the young women participate in politics?
4. What is the attitude of women toward politics and political leaders?

1.8: The concept of political awareness:

The term “political awareness” can be defined from its very terminology, “Political” and “Awareness”. The **Merriam-Webster Dictionary** defines the term political as

1. a. of or relating to government, a government, or the conduct of government

b: of, relating to, or concerned with the making as distinguished from the administration of governmental policy

2. of, relating to, involving, or involved in politics and especially party politics

3: organised in governmental terms

4.: involving or charged or concerned with acts against a government or a political system

On the other hand, the term “awareness” can be understood as the quality or state of being aware: knowledge and understanding that something is happening or exists (**Merriam Webster Dictionary**).

Thus, etymologically, political awareness implies the quality or state of being aware of the government's policies or activities.

Political Awareness implies three levels. Firstly, perceptions on current affairs, earned through the quest for truth. This perception helps one to admit or reject the ideas at any time. Secondly, political awareness implies a sense of belongingness towards a community. Belongingness encourages individuals to work for the community, enhancing assertiveness on rights and duties. Thirdly, political awareness implies adherence towards any institution, system or particular groups either intellectually or religiously (William, & Anthony, 2017; Ostrander, Sandler & Nieman, 2015 and Fiske, Susan, Donald, 2000).

In this study understanding of young women of political institutions, political leaders, and assertiveness of rights and duties, involvement with any political groups, and quest for political knowledge has been accepted as political awareness of young women.

1.9: Review of existing literature:

Al-Khaza'leh and Lahiani in “University and Political Awareness among Students: A Study in the Role of University in Promoting Political Awareness” observe that “university students have an important degree of political awareness. This degree varied according to the variable of college to the benefit of the students of humanities, according to the variable of gender to the benefit of males and according to the variable of academic level to the benefit of fourth year students”.

Rahman S. (et al) 2018 observes “Political awareness among students is important in order to ensure they understand the political agenda and the problem of the nations. This is because the students are considered as the potential human capital in the future. Therefore, they should aware that policy, law, rule and regulations of this country is set by the politician and must obey what decided by the government of the day” (<https://ir.uitm.edu.my/29447/1/29447.pdf>).

“Political awareness is one of life's most important requirements since it aids in the evolution of societies and lays the path for civil society institutions to be active within these communities, which necessitates

ongoing effort. To summarise, it may be concluded that students have a basic level of political awareness and knowledge. The findings revealed that students have a high level of political awareness. Gender, academic level, and other factors all influenced the degree. According to the findings, college students have a high level of political awareness” (Tomy, Jose and Chesneau, 2022, <https://iase-idje.ir/article-1-1191-enpdf>).

2: Discussion and Analysis:

2.1: Awareness of young women on the politics and political process of India: To determine the level of awareness of young women on the politics of the state, questions about the current prime minister, the chief minister, the first woman president and prime minister of India, the process of enrolment in the electoral roll, and the application for a voter card, etc., were surveyed. The following Figures show the level of awareness of young women on politics and political processes of the state:

2.1.1: About Voter Card:

After the General Election 2019, the Government of India initiated several programmes and campaigns to raise awareness among the voters on voting rights, the importance of asserting voting rights, the duties and responsibilities of the citizens, etc. Among such programmes, “Turning 18”, “You are the One”, observance of Voters’ Day, Constitution Day, International Human Rights Day, etc., are such programmes to attract the young voters to the mainstream of politics. To evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes, questions on enrolment in the electoral roll and application for a voter card were asked.

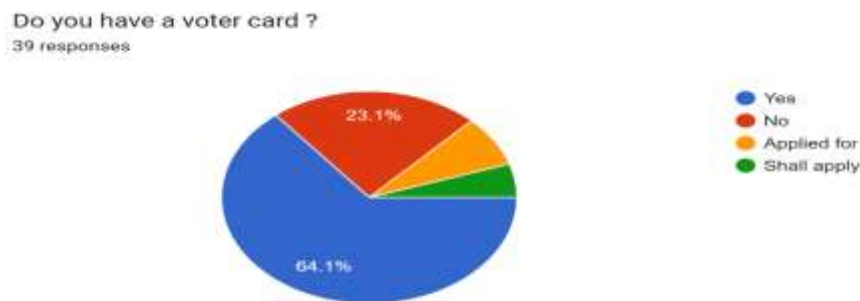


Figure: 1

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

Figure 1 shows that 64.1 per cent of the respondents have had a valid voter card till January 2025. Among the respondents, 7.7 per cent have applied for a voter card but not yet received. Almost 28 per cent of educated young women have not applied for the issuance of their voter cards.

2.1.2: About National Register of Citizenship (NRC):

The National Register of Citizenship is a new addition to the politics of India in general and Assam in particular. The matter of NRC impacted the politics of Assam and Bangladesh because it was concerned with the enrollment of names of the original Assamese people based on the base year of 1971. The main purpose of the NRC was to identify the illegal migrants coming from Bangladesh at the time of the Bangladesh freedom movement. From the present study, it has been found that 69.2 per cent of young women have checked their names in the NRC (Figure: 2).

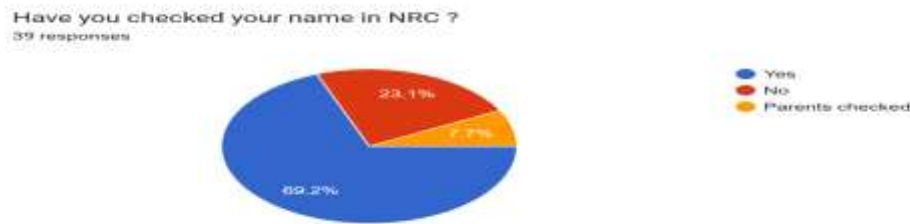


Figure: 2

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

2.1.3: About the Constitution of India:

To determine the level of awareness of the Constitution of India, a basic question was asked as to whether it is written. This will also evaluate the respondent's awareness of basic types of constitutions.

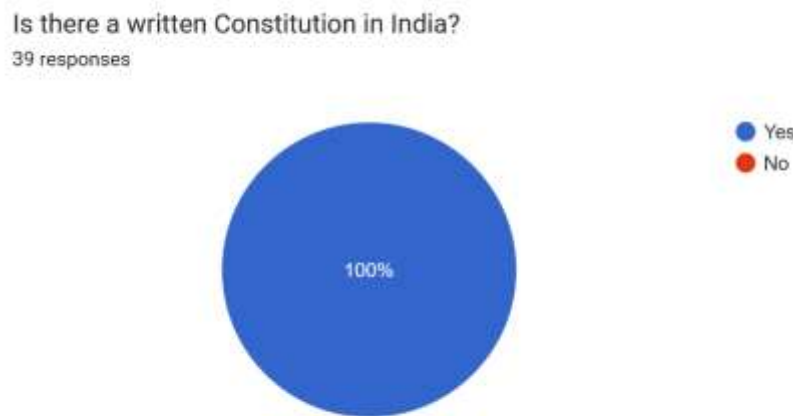


Figure: 3

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

Figure: 3 shows that 100% of the respondents know the basic features of the Constitution of India.

2.1.4: Term of Periodic Election: To check the knowledge of the democratic process of the state, a question on the General election of the state was asked. Figure 4 shows that 100 per cent of the respondents are aware of the fact (Figure: 4).

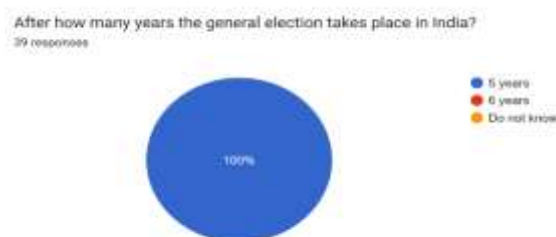


Figure: 4

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

2.1.5: Knowledge of Political Institutions:

To evaluate the awareness of young women on political institutions, such as the Union parliament and State legislative Assembly, questions on popular terms used by the public were asked. It was found that an average of 93.5 (Mean of Figure: 5 and 6) per cent of the respondents know the abbreviations of the terms



Figure: 5

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

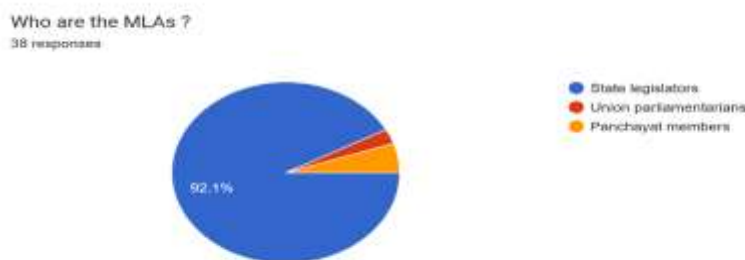


Figure: 6

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

2.1.6: About D Voters:

The concept of D Voters is a lesser-known provision concerning citizenship of the state of India. To resolve the issue of the possibility of enrolment of illegal migrants in the electoral roll of the state of Assam, the Election Commission of India introduced this provision in 1997. Though the D voters can cast their vote at the time of the election, they are under suspicion, or their cases are pending in the Foreigners Tribunal. Figure 7 shows that only 40.5% of educated young women are concerned about this fact.

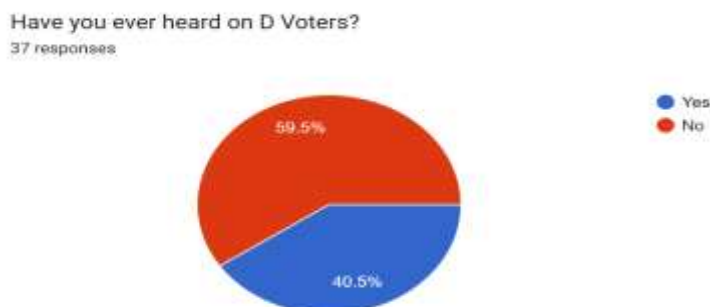


Figure: 7

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

2.1.7: About legendary Women politicians of the state:

To Judge the knowledge on legendary women politicians such as Late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, first women president of the state Pratiba Devi Singh Patil and the present president of India Drupadi Murmu question related to first woman President of India was asked and it was found that 89.7 per cent young women are aware of them (Figure 7). 87.2 per cent of Young Women Know about the Union Government and the head of the Government of the state of India (Figure 8). All the respondents know the name of the current Chief Minister of the state government of Assam (Figure 8).

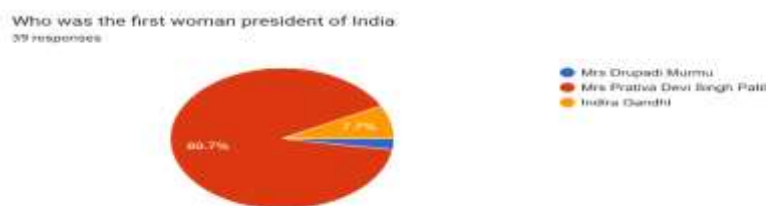


Figure : 8

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

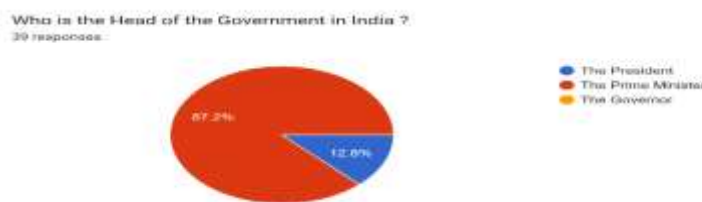


Figure: 9

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

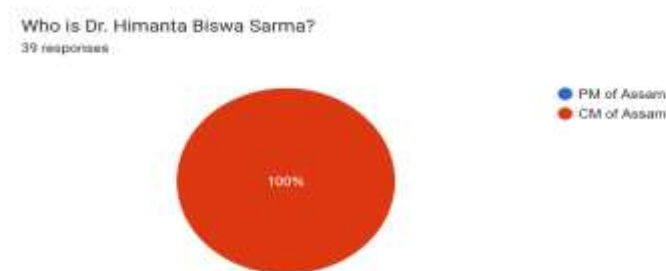


Figure: 10

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

2.2: Political Participation of Young Women:

Political awareness increases participation. Right to vote, right to form a political party, right to be a member of any political party, right to participate in a campaign of any political party, and participation in electoral politics are important rights demanded by women's rights activists for women as equal political rights. Considering these, the involvement of young women was evaluated with a set of dichotomous questions. The following statistics reveal that only 47 per cent of young women voted in the general election of 2024. 94.4 per cent of young women are not directly involved with any political party. 94.1

per cent have not joined any youth political forum such as ABVP, Yuba Congress, Yuba Parishad, etc. 89.7 per cent of young women have not participated in any political campaign, 94.7 per cent of young women have not either helped any political party at the party booth at the time of the election poll.

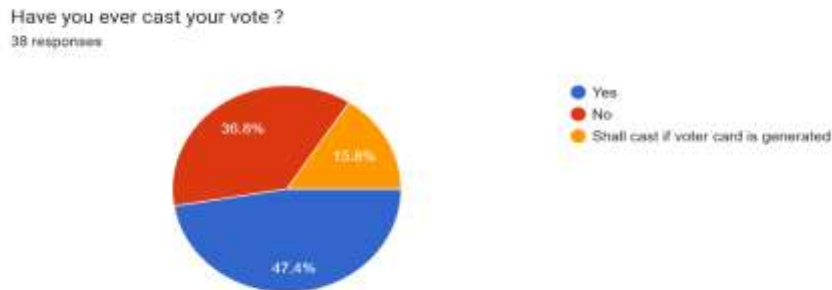


Figure: 11

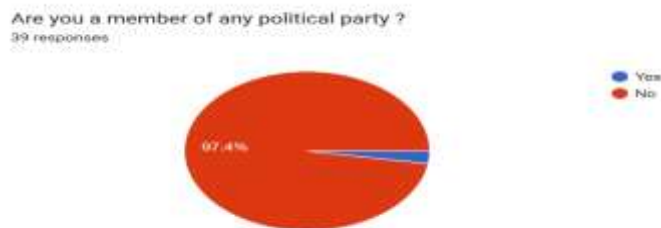


Figure: 12

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

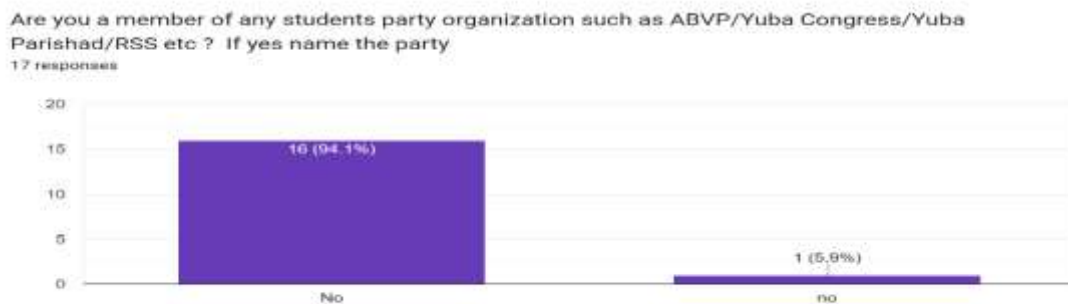


Figure: 13

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

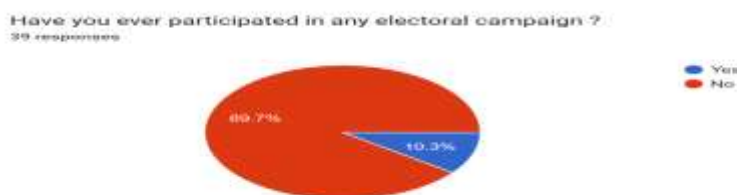


Figure: 14

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

Have you ever helped any party in election booth at the time of polling?
38 responses

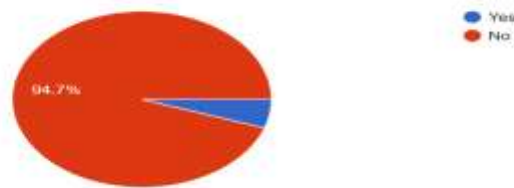


Figure: 14

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

2.3: Impact of observation of important days in educational institutions:

In this study, an attempt has also been made to study the results of observation of important days such as Voter's Day, Constitution Day, International Women's Day, Human Rights Day, etc. It was found that although 79.5 per cent (Figure 13) of women respondents attended the programmes of the important days organised to build awareness among the young students, the level of participation of young women in politics is very low.

Have you ever attended any program on Constitution Day/Voters Day/Human Rights Day/Women's Day?
39 responses

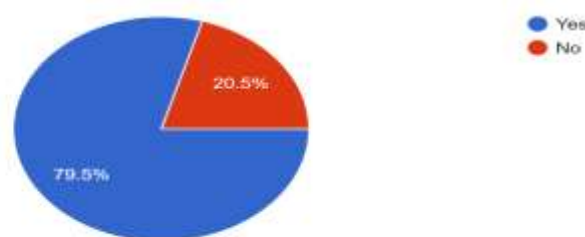


Figure: 15

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

2.4: Attitude of Young Women on Politics:

Considering the incessant attempts of the government to increase political participation and attract the meritorious young generation to the practical field of politics, respondents were asked whether they wish to be a future leader of the state or not. 89.1 per cent of young women responded "yes" (Figure 14). This implies that young women do not consider politics or the role of leadership as a dirty game.

Do you want to be a future leader of the country?
38 responses

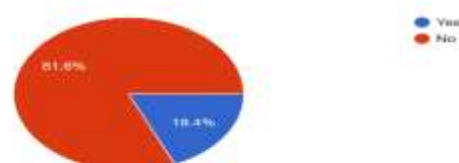


Figure: 16

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

2.5: Impact of social media on attitudinal change: An attempt was made to determine the influence of social media on attitudinal changes and on building political awareness. It was found that 56.4 per cent of respondents follow their supported leaders on social media (Figure 16).

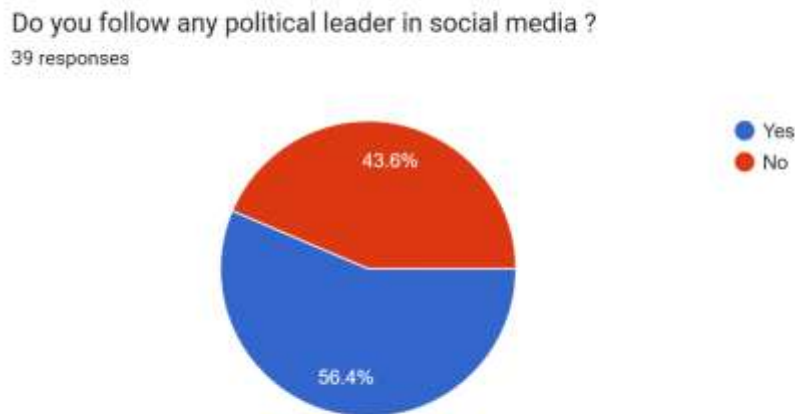


Figure: 16

Source: Survey on political awareness (2025).

1. 2.6: Findings and Conclusion:

1. It has been found that the educated young women of Assam are highly conscious of political institutions and political processes. The majority of the young college students of Assam have enrolled their names in the electoral roll and received the voter card from the Election Commission. Besides this, the young women are aware of NRC, and 69 per cent of respondents have verified their names in the respective portal.
2. Though the student community of Assam participated in the movements against the Citizenship Amendment Bill (2019), only 40.5 per cent of them were conscious of the peculiar arrangement for the D Voters of Assam.
3. Only 47.5 per cent of educated young women have cast a vote in the General Election of 2019. This proved that merely the level of consciousness does not ensure political participation of the Young Educated Women. The major barriers to the participation of young, conscious, and educated women need to be broadly studied.
4. The educated young women, basically the women students of colleges, are indifferent towards the students' politics. The study reveals that only 5.9 per cent of young women are directly involved with the students' politics.
5. The study reveals that young women have developed a positive attitude towards a leadership role.
6. It has been found that 56.4 per cent of educated young women follow a leader in social media. Thus, social media plays a significant role in mobilizing young women.

From the above discussion and findings, it can be summarized that educated young women are politically conscious but not active in politics. The level of political participation among them is very low. The hypothesis that political awareness increases the level of political participation hence not proved. Though

the young women possess a positive attitude to be the future leader of the state the level of participation in either state or students' politics shows a different picture. The aspects of barriers of participation of young women, role of women students in students' politics and the role of social media in political education and mobilization etc., need to be studied further.

1. [Press Release: Press Information Bureau](#)
2. [Do Young Indians Participate In Elections? - Centre for Public Policy Research \(CPPR\)](#)
3. [Young voters set to shape India's political future in 2024 Lok Sabha Elections | Lok Sabha Elections News - Business Standard](#)
4. [the youth vote in lok sabha elections 2019.pdf](#)
5. [New Data: Nearly Half of Youth Voted in 2024 | CIRCLE&ntb=1](#)
6. [\(32\) University and Political Awareness among Students: A Study in the Role of University in Promoting Political Awarenesssb2d1ZS9kYjFmMzI4My0yNGU2LTM4ZTI0OGRhZi1hN2YwOTg3YTZkMmQv&ntb=1\)](#)
7. [Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation | UN Women – Headquarters](#)
8. [Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation | UN Women – Headquarters](#)