

Political Participation Behaviour among Voters in Aizawl District, Mizoram: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Political participation is central to democratic governance, enabling citizens to select representatives, express political preferences, and hold public institutions accountable. This study examines political participation behaviour among voters in Aizawl District, Mizoram, focusing on voting and selected forms of participation beyond voting. Based on field data from 50 respondents concerning the 2023 Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election, the study analyses voting behaviour in relation to age, education, marital status, gender, occupation, and place of residence. The findings show that 82 per cent of respondents voted, while individual judgment was the dominant reported basis for voting decisions. Participation beyond voting was comparatively limited: political discussion was more common than campaigning, attendance at rallies, contacting political leaders, or party membership. The study argues that political participation among the respondents is predominantly electoral and discursive rather than organisational. Because the sample is small and the analysis descriptive, the findings should be treated as indicative rather than generalisable to the entire electorate of Aizawl District.

Keywords: political participation; voting behaviour; Aizawl District; Mizoram; electoral participation; political discussion

Introduction

Political participation is a fundamental dimension of democratic life. It encompasses citizens' involvement in selecting political representatives, influencing public decisions, communicating demands, and holding political authorities accountable. McClosky defines participation in terms of voluntary activities through which citizens take part in the selection of rulers and the formulation of public policy (McClosky). Verba and Nie similarly treat participation as a means through which citizens influence governmental decision-making (Verba and Nie).

Voting is the most widespread form of participation, but democratic engagement extends beyond the ballot to campaigning, attending political meetings, contacting representatives, joining parties, and discussing political issues. Verba, Scholzman, and Brady demonstrate that citizens differ in the range and intensity of their political activity (Verba et al.). Political participation is also conditioned by social resources and life-cycle experiences, including age, education, occupation, gender, family status, and social environment (Nie et al.).

Against this background, the present study examines political participation among voters in Aizawl District, focusing on voting behaviour and participation beyond voting. It asks whether respondents' engagement is primarily electoral, discursive, or organisational.

Objectives and Methodology

The study seeks to assess voting participation; identify factors influencing voting decisions and reasons for abstention; examine voting in relation to age, education, marital status, gender, occupation, and residence; and assess participation in campaigning, meetings and rallies, political contacting, party membership, and political discussion.

The study is based on field data collected from 50 respondents in Aizawl District in 2026, with specific reference to the 2023 Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election. Voting was measured through a yes/no question. Other forms of participation were assessed using a five-point frequency scale from “Never” to “Very Often.” The analysis is descriptive and percentage-based. The small, selected sample limits generalisation and does not permit claims of statistical causation.

Findings and Discussion

Voting Participation

Of the 50 respondents, 41 (82 per cent) reported voting in the 2023 Assembly Election, while nine (18 per cent) did not. Among voters, 78 per cent identified “Self/Own Decision” as the main influence on their choice; candidate preference accounted for 12 per cent, family influence for 8 per cent, and other factors for 2 per cent. The result indicates substantial electoral engagement and a strong reported emphasis on individual choice.

Among non-voters, lack of interest in politics was the most frequently reported reason (22.2 per cent). Other reported reasons, each accounting for 11.1 per cent, included lack of interest in voting, illness or personal circumstances, dissatisfaction with candidates, residence outside Mizoram during the election, being underage, and ineligibility. Abstention thus reflected both attitudinal and practical circumstances. The psychological and institutional dimensions of turnout identified by Harder and Krosnick provide a useful framework for interpreting such variation (Harder and Krosnick).

Socio-Economic Dimensions

Age: The 26–35 group constituted 52 per cent of voters, followed by 18–25 at 38 per cent and 36–45 at 10 per cent. The relatively strong participation of younger adults may reflect increasing political awareness and social integration. At the same time, research associates youth with weaker community attachment and political experience (Abramson; Converse and Niemi).

Education: Postgraduate respondents accounted for 52 per cent of voters and undergraduates for 38 per cent, while secondary-educated respondents accounted for 8 per cent and those with no formal education 2 per cent. The pattern is consistent with the view that education provides political knowledge and civic resources (Goel). Nevertheless, political awareness can also be acquired through informal social and media networks, so education should not be treated as the sole determinant of participation.

Marital status: Unmarried respondents constituted 88 per cent of voters and married respondents 12 per cent. This differs from studies linking marriage and social integration with participation (Jennings and Stoker). Given the sample composition, particularly its younger respondents, the result should not be generalised.

Gender: Male respondents represented 62 per cent of voters and female respondents 38 per cent. The difference is consistent with research identifying gendered inequalities in political resources and opportunities (Burns et al.; Welch). It should, however, be understood as socially structured rather than inherent.

Occupation: Students constituted 39.2 per cent of voters and government employees 35.3 per cent, followed by private employees (11.8 per cent), self-employed respondents (7.8 per cent), other occupations (3.9 per cent), and unemployed respondents (2 per cent). Occupational environments can provide social networks, skills, information, and civic resources (Lane), but the present data do not establish occupation as a causal determinant.

Residence: Urban respondents constituted 82.4 per cent of voters and rural respondents 17.6 per cent. The pattern may reflect greater urban access to political information, institutions, and media, but it may also reflect the composition of the sample. It should not be interpreted as evidence that rural citizens are inherently less politically engaged.

Participation Beyond Voting

Participation beyond voting was considerably lower. Most respondents reported little or no involvement in election campaigning, attendance at meetings and rallies, contacting political leaders, or political party membership. Party membership was the least common form of participation. Political discussion, in contrast, was comparatively widespread.

This pattern is consistent with the distinction between different intensities of participation proposed by Verba et al. (Verba et al.). The respondents may therefore be characterised as predominantly electoral and discursive participants. Their willingness to vote and discuss politics indicates political engagement, but their limited involvement in organisations and campaign activities suggests relatively weak institutional or activist participation. Rosenstone and Hansen emphasise the importance of mobilisation and organisational structures in encouraging participation (Rosenstone and Hansen).

Conclusion

The study reveals a clear distinction between electoral participation and participation beyond voting in Aizawl District. Electoral turnout among the 50 respondents was high, with 82 per cent reporting that they voted in the 2023 Assembly Election. Most voters also reported making their choice independently. However, participation in campaigning, political meetings and rallies, contacting political leaders, and party membership was limited, while political discussion emerged as the most accessible form of engagement beyond voting.

The socio-economic findings show variations by age, education, marital status, gender, occupation, and residence, but these relationships should be interpreted cautiously because the study uses a small descriptive sample. Overall, the evidence suggests that political participation among the respondents is strong in its electoral and informal-discursive dimensions but comparatively weak in sustained organisational involvement. Greater civic education, opportunities for citizen–representative interaction, and avenues for meaningful political participation could help broaden democratic engagement beyond periodic voting.

Table 1. Selected Findings

Indicator	Finding
Voting turnout	82% voted; 18% did not
Main voting influence	Self/Own Decision – 78%
Highest age group	26–35 – 52%
Highest education group	Post-Graduate and above – 52%
Marital status	Unmarried – 88%
Gender	Male – 62%; Female – 38%
Largest occupational group	Students – 39.2%
Residence	Urban – 82.4%; Rural – 17.6%
Participation beyond voting	Political discussion comparatively highest; party membership lowest

Source: Field Study, 2026.

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