



Remote Voting for Migrants

For Prelims: [Remote Voting for Migrants](#), [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#), Remote EVM (R-EVM), [Electronic Voting Machines \(EVMs\)](#).

For Mains: Remote Voting for Migrants, significance and challenges. Salient features of the Representation of People's Act, Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in the News?

In late 2022, the [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) proposed a [Remote EVM \(R-EVM\)](#) to address issues related to domestic migrant voting. The goal was to improve the 67.4% voter turnout in the 2019 general election.

- A survey by Lokniti-CSDS was conducted in September 2023, involving 1,017 migrants living in Delhi's slums, with 63% men and 37% women, aiming to understand whether the proposed **R-EVM system would gain a viable level of trust** among its intended users, setting aside legal and logistical concerns raised by political parties.

What is Remote EVM (R-EVM)?

- **About:**
 - The term "**R-EVM**" stands for "**Remote Electronic Voting Machine.**" It is a proposed system by the [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) aimed at facilitating **voting for domestic migrants** who are unable to vote in their home constituencies due to their current location away from their registered constituencies.
 - The R-EVM is designed to address the issue of domestic migrant voting, allowing registered voters who have moved away from their home constituencies to cast their votes remotely.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Registration Process:** Voters interested in using the remote voting facility must **register (online or offline)** within a pre-notified timeframe with the concerned Returning Officer (RO) of their home constituency.
 - **Remote Polling Station:** A multi-constituency remote polling station will be set up in the area of the **voter's current residence**, allowing for remote voting from that location.
 - **Handling Multiple Constituencies:** The RVM can handle **multiple constituencies (up to 72)** from a single remote polling booth, making it efficient for voters from different constituencies to cast their votes at the same location.
 - **Voting Process:** When the voter scans their constituency card in the presence of the **Presiding Officer at the remote polling station**, the respective constituency and candidate list will appear on the RVM display.
 - The RVMs have the same security system and voting experience as the existing

EVMs and use **electronic ballot display** to present candidates and their symbols instead of a fixed paper ballot sheet.

- Voters can select their preferred candidate on the RVM display. The system will count and store the votes for each candidate in a constituency.

▪ **Countries Practice Remote Voting:**

- There are some countries such as **Estonia, France, Panama, Pakistan, Armenia** etc, which practice remote voting for the citizens living abroad or away from their respective constituencies.

How Significant is the Migrant Vote?

▪ **Migration Patterns and Reasons:**

- Migrants in Delhi primarily come from neighboring states such as **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Rajasthan**.
- Employment opportunities are the major reason for relocation (58%), followed by family-related reasons (18%) and relocation due to marriage (13%).

▪ **Migrant Demographics and Residence Duration:**

- A majority of migrants (61%) have lived in Delhi for more than five years, suggesting a significant presence of long-term migrants.
- However, a **considerable number of short-term migrants**, especially from Bihar, come to Delhi for seasonal work.

▪ **Voter Registration and Electoral Participation:**

- Approximately 53% of migrants have registered as voters in Delhi, while 27% are registered in their home states. Migrants participate more in national and **state-level elections compared to local/panchayat elections**.

▪ **Return to Home States for Voting:**

- Migrants, particularly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, **maintain connections to their home states** by going back to vote, especially in local and state assembly elections.
- The reasons for returning to vote include exercising their fundamental right to vote (40%) and using the election season as an **opportunity to visit family (25%)**.

▪ **Trust in Remote Voting System:**

- **47% of respondents tend to trust the proposed remote voting system**, while 31% express distrust.
- There's a notable gender difference, with **men (50%) showing higher trust compared to women (40%)**. Trust in the system is higher among better-educated individuals.

What are the Concerns and Challenges Ahead?

▪ **Similar Challenges as With the EVMs:**

- The Multi-Constituency RVM for migrant voting will have the same security system and voting experience as the EVM. This essentially means that the **challenges with regard to the current EVMs will persist when it comes to the RVMs**.

▪ **Amendments to Electoral Laws:**

- Remote voting requires amendments to existing laws such as The **Representation of People's Act of 1950 and 1951**, The Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, and The Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 to **accommodate the new voting method**.
- The **legal** framework needs to **redefine "migrant voter"** and determine whether they retain registration at their original place of residence.

▪ **Voter Portability and Residency:**

- Determining how to manage voter portability while respecting the legal constructs of "ordinary residence" and "temporary absence" is a social challenge.
- Also, the territorial constituency concept of remote voting and defining remoteness itself that is an outside constituency, outside district or **outside state will need to be dealt with**.

▪ **Secrecy of Voting and Administrative Challenges:**

- Ensuring the secrecy of voting in remote locations **can be challenging**, as it is important for maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the voting process.
- Implementing methods to identify voters accurately and prevent impersonation is crucial for a fair and secure remote voting system.

- Arranging for polling agents and effective supervision of remote voting stations **pose logistical and administrative challenges.**

- **Technological Challenges:**

- Ensuring that voters are familiar with the technology and interfaces used for remote voting is **essential to prevent voter confusion** and errors.
- Establishing efficient mechanisms for accurately counting votes cast through remote voting is a **technological challenge that must be addressed.**

Way Forward

- **Machine-Independent:**

- For the voting process to be verifiable and correct, **it should be machine-independent**, or software and hardware independent, meaning, the establishment of its veracity should not depend solely on the assumption that the EVM is correct.

- **Right to Cancel if Not Satisfied:**

- The **“voter should have full agency to cancel a vote if not satisfied; and that the process to cancel must be simple and should not require the voter to interact with anybody”.**

- **Confidence and Acceptability:**

- It is important to **take into account the confidence and acceptability** of all the stakeholders of the electoral system – voters, political parties and election machinery.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/remote-voting-for-migrants-2>

