



Chief Election Commissioner Criticises Exit Polls

Why in News?

The [Chief Election Commissioner \(CEC\)](#) of India raised concerns about the reliability of [exit polls](#) and premature display of vote counting trends, citing the recent [Haryana elections](#) as a case where exit polls created unrealistic expectations and raised political concerns.

Key Points

- **Distortion by Exit Polls:**
 - Exit polls often set unrealistic expectations, leading to a significant gap between predicted and actual election results.
 - In the recent Haryana elections, most **exit polls predicted a landslide victory** for the Congress, projecting over 50 seats, but the actual results did not match these expectations.
 - This created frustration among the public and political parties, with Congress raising concerns about the exit polls' accuracy.
- **Premature Display of Early Counting Trends:**
 - Some news channels aired early trends before official [vote counting](#) began, contributing to misinformation and speculation.
 - CEC criticized this practice as "nonsense," pointing out that initial trends shown before counting lacks a scientific basis and can mislead the public.
 - He explained that the actual counting process begins **only after 8:30 a.m.**, with verified results being posted on the [Election Commission's website after 9:30 a.m.](#)
- **Call for Self-Regulation:**
 - While the Election Commission **does not directly control exit polls**, CEC urged that [regulatory bodies overseeing media and polling](#) must take a stronger stance on improving exit poll practices.
 - Transparency in exit poll methodology, including factors such as sample size, polling locations, and data collection methods, is necessary to maintain credibility.
 - CEC also emphasized that bodies governing media and polling agencies should enforce better practices to avoid [misinformation](#) during elections.
- **Exit Poll Methodology Issues:**
 - Exit polls are based on interviews conducted with voters as they exit polling stations, but their **accuracy depends on the quality of data collected** and how representative the sample is.
 - The methodology behind exit polls, including the **sample's size and representativeness** (reflecting various voter profiles **like caste, religion, and geography**), plays a crucial role in determining the accuracy of the polls.
- **Swing Models and Prediction Challenges:**
 - Exit polls use **swing models to predict seat allocations** based on vote share estimates from the previous election.
 - However, in a complex political environment like Haryana, where multiple parties and alliances are involved, these swing models often fail to capture shifts in voter behavior or alliance changes.

Election Commission of India

▪ **About:**

- The [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
 - It was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950 (celebrated as [National Voters' Day](#)). The secretariat of the commission is in New Delhi.
- The body administers elections to the [Lok Sabha](#), [Rajya Sabha](#), and [State Legislative Assemblies](#) in India, and the offices of the [President and Vice President](#) in the country.
 - It is not concerned with the elections to [panchayats](#) and [municipalities](#) in the states. For this, the Constitution of India provides for a separate [State Election Commission](#).

▪ **Constitutional Provisions:**

- **Part XV (Article 324-329):** It deals with elections and establishes a commission for these matters.
- **Article 324:** Superintendence, direction and control of elections to be vested in an Election Commission.
- **Article 325:** No person to be ineligible for inclusion in, or to claim to be included in a special, electoral roll on grounds of religion, race, caste or sex.
- **Article 326:** Elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assemblies of States to be based on adult suffrage.
- **Article 327:** Power of Parliament to make provision with respect to elections to Legislatures.
- **Article 328:** Power of Legislature of a State to make provision with respect to elections to such Legislature.
- **Article 329:** Bar to interference by courts in electoral matters.

▪ **Structure of ECI:**

- Originally the commission had only one election commissioner but after the [Election Commissioner Amendment Act, 1989](#), it was made a multi-member body.
- The Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and such number of other election commissioners, if any, as the President may from time-to-time fix.
- Presently, it consists of the CEC and two Election Commissioners (ECs).
 - At the state level, the election commission is helped by the Chief Electoral Officer.

▪ **Appointment & Tenure of Commissioners:**

- The President appoints CEC and Election Commissioners as per [the CEC and Other ECs \(Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office\) Act, 2023](#).
- They have a fixed tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- The salary and conditions of service of the CEC and ECs will be equivalent to that of the [Supreme Court Judge](#).

▪ **Removal:**

- They can resign anytime or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.
- The CEC can be removed from office only through a process of removal similar to that of a SC judge by Parliament, while ECs can only be removed on the recommendation of the CEC.