



Exit Polls

For Prelims: [Exit Polls](#), [Lok Sabha Elections](#), [Centre for the Study of Developing Societies](#), [Election Commission](#), [Article 324 of the Constitution](#)

For Mains: Impact of exit polls on the result of elections.

Source: IE

Why in News?

Recently, the [exit polls](#) results were released for five states **Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Telangana** and **Mizoram**.

- **Exit polls** in many recent elections have been **unreliable**, providing **conflicting results**.

What are Exit Polls?

- Exit polls are surveys conducted with **voters** as they leave a **polling station** during an **election**.
- The purpose is to **gather information** on how people voted and their **demographic characteristics**.
- These polls provide early indications of **election results** before **official results** are announced.
- An **exit poll** was conducted by the **Indian Institute of Public Opinion** during the **second Lok Sabha elections in 1957**.

How can Accuracy of Exit Polls Can be Judged?

- **Sampling Methods:** The **reliability** of the **sampling methods** used in conducting exit polls is crucial. A **well-designed** and **representative sample** is more likely to produce accurate results.
 - Some common parameters for a good, or accurate, opinion poll would be a sample size that is both large and diverse, and a clearly constructed questionnaire without an overt bias.
- **Structured Questionnaire:** Surveys, like exit polls, collect data by interviewing many respondents using a structured questionnaire, either over the phone or in person.
 - According to the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, "Without a structured questionnaire, the data can neither be collected coherently nor be analyzed systematically to arrive at vote share estimates."
- **Demographic Representation:** Ensuring that the surveyed population is **demographically representative** of the **overall voting population** is essential. If certain groups are over or **underrepresented**, it can impact the accuracy of the predictions.
 - A **large sample size** is important but what matters most is how well the sample **represents the larger population**, rather than the **size of the sample**.

What are the Criticisms of Exit Poll?

- **Exit polls** can be **controversial** if the agency conducting them is perceived to be **biased**.
- **These surveys** can be influenced by the **choice, wording** and **timing of the questions**, and by the **nature of the sample drawn**.
- Critics argued that many opinion and **exit polls** are motivated and sponsored by their rivals, and could have a distorting effect on the choices voters make in a protracted election, rather than simply **reflecting public sentiment or views**.

How is Exit Poll Regulated in India?

- **Section 126A of the [Representation of the People Act, 1951](#)** prohibits conduct of **Exit poll** and dissemination of their results by means of print or electronic media during the period mentioned therein, i.e. between the **hour fixed** for commencement of poll in the **first phase** and half an hour after the time fixed for close of poll for the last phase in all the States.
- The **Election Commission** is responsible for regulating the use of **exit polls**. According to the **ECI**, exit polls can only be conducted during a specific period. This period starts from the time when the polling booths close and ends 30 minutes after the last booth has closed.
- Exit polls cannot be conducted during the **voting period** or on **polling day**.
- The **Election Commission** issued guidelines under **Article 324 of the Constitution**, prohibiting **newspapers** and news channels from publishing results of **pre-election surveys and exit polls**.
- The **EC** also mandated that while carrying the results of exit and opinion polls, newspapers and channels should disclose the sample size of the electorate, the details of polling methodology, the margin of error and the background of the polling agency.
- The ban on the **publication of exit polls** remains in place until the last phase of voting is completed.
- In addition to the ban on the publication of exit polls, the ECI also requires that all media outlets that conduct exit polls must **register with the commission**.

Way Forward

- **Transparency and Methodological Rigor:**
 - Emphasize the importance of **transparency** in the methodology of conducting exit polls.
 - **Polling agencies** should disclose details such as **sampling methods, questionnaire structure**, and the criteria for respondent selection.
- **Regulatory Reforms:**
 - Collaborative efforts between **election authorities, media, and polling agencies** can lead to refined guidelines that address emerging challenges and ensure fairness and accuracy in the reporting of **exit poll results**.
- **Collaboration with Election Authorities:**
 - Foster closer collaboration between polling agencies and election authorities. Election commissions can provide valuable insights into the electoral process, share data on voter demographics, and offer guidance on minimizing potential disruptions caused by exit polls.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Prelims

Q.1 Consider the following statements: (2017)

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.
3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 3 only

Ans: (d)

- According to Article 324 of the Indian Constitution, the Election Commission of India is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
- The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.
- Originally the Commission had only one Chief Election Commissioner. It currently consists of a Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.
- The Commission is vested with quasi-judicial power to settle disputes relating to splits/ mergers of recognised political parties. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
- It decides the election schedules for the conduct of elections, whether general elections or bye-elections. Hence, statement 2 is not correct. Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.

Mains

Q.1 In the light of recent controversy regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines(EVM), what are the challenges before the Election Commission of India to ensure the trustworthiness of elections in India? **(2018)**

Q.2 To enhance the quality of democracy in India the Election Commission of India has proposed electoral reforms in 2016. What are the suggested reforms and how far are they significant to make democracy successful? **(2017)**

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