



First General Election 1951-52

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

As India gears up for the **2024 general election**, the historic importance of the **country's first Lok Sabha election in 1951-52** is gaining attention. This inaugural election was a pivotal moment in **India's democratic evolution**.

What are the Key Facts About India's First General Elections?

▪ Historic Vote:

- Independent India's first general elections were held between 25th October 1951 and 21st February 1952. It was a humongous exercise in which a **sixth of the world's population was going to vote**, making it the largest election conducted in the world at the time.
 - Ultimately, 17.32 crore voters from across the country (excluding Jammu and Kashmir) were enrolled, and **45% were women**.
- This was the first time such a massive exercise of universal adult franchise was undertaken, with **176 million electors above the age of 21 (the voting age was brought to 18 only in 1989, the Constitution (Sixty-first Amendment) Act, 1989)**, of whom 82% were unlettered.

▪ Legal Framework:

- The Parliament enacted the [Representation of the People Acts of 1950 and 1951](#) laying down the groundwork for voter qualifications, election machinery, and other electoral processes.
- The [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) was set up in January, 1950, with **Sukumar Sen as the Chief Election Commissioner**.

▪ Election Machinery:

- **Coloured ballot boxes and ballot papers the size of a Re 1 currency note** were used to aid the largely illiterate electorate.
 - **In 1951, India's low literacy rate of 18.33%** led to the idea of using different coloured ballot boxes for each candidate, but this was deemed impractical. Instead, it was decided to **use separate ballot boxes for each candidate** at all booths, with the candidate's election symbol on it.
 - The **ballot papers pink in color**, with "Election Commission India" and a serial number with two letters denoting the state - HY for Hyderabad State, BR for Bihar, AS for Assam, etc.

▪ Political Landscape and Party Participation:

- There were **53 political parties, of which 14 were national**. These included the Indian National Congress, the Communist Party of India, the Socialist Party, the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, and Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha, among others.

▪ Election Outcome:

- The **Indian National Congress**, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, **emerged as the dominant political force**, securing 318 out of 489 Lok Sabha seats, consolidating its position as the ruling party.
 - The **Communist Party of India (CPI) emerged as the runner-up** in the first Lok Sabha election, followed by the Socialist Party and other political parties.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. In the first Lok Sabha, the single largest party in the opposition was the Swatantra Party.
2. In the Lok Sabha, a "Leader of the Opposition" was recognised for the first time in 1969.
3. In the Lok Sabha, if a party does not have a minimum of 75 members, its leader cannot be recognised as the Leader of the Opposition.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (b)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2017)

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. The 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)