

# **Gender and Party Representation in City Urban Local Governance: A Comparative Study of the 2017 Municipal Elections in Delhi and Mumbai**

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**Abstract:** This study provides a comparative analysis of councillor representation in Delhi and Mumbai, with a focus on two primary dimensions: gender and political party affiliation. Through the examination of electoral data, it evaluates the participation of women in urban local governance and the political distribution within municipal corporations. The findings reveal that both cities have a predominant representation of female councillors, underscoring the progress achieved through institutional reforms aimed at promoting gender inclusion. Additionally, Delhi and Mumbai exhibit distinct party dynamics; two national parties predominantly influence Delhi, whereas Mumbai operates within a coalition-based, regionalized political framework. These findings are contextualised within the broader concepts of inclusive governance and local democracy, providing valuable insights into the urban political landscape of metropolitan India.

**Keywords:** Gender Parity, Municipal Corporation, State Election Commission, City Governance, Caste, Policy, Political Inclusion, Party-wise Distribution

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## **Introduction**

Local governance is the most immediate sphere of democratic engagement, with councillors representing urban communities. Metropolitan municipal corporations are significant because they highlight issues of gender inclusivity and the power struggle between national and regional political forces.

Delhi and Mumbai, the two biggest metropolitan areas in India, serve as excellent examples for comparison. Both cities have influential municipal corporations, yet they differ significantly in political outlook and representation. Delhi reflects the national political scene, while Mumbai exemplifies coalition-based regional diversity.

This study concentrates on two key aspects of representation: gender and party affiliation. Gender representation emphasises inclusivity and women's empowerment in decision-making processes, whereas

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party affiliation indicates the overall structure of political power. Collectively, these aspects demonstrate how metropolitan governance either aligns with or departs from India's democratic principles.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the extent of women's representation in the municipal corporations of Delhi and Mumbai during the 2017 elections.
2. To analyse the party-wise distribution of councillors in both cities and compare patterns of political competition.
3. To evaluate the intersection between gender representation and party affiliation in shaping urban governance.
4. To contribute to the theoretical understanding of inclusive governance within a metropolitan context.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent have women achieved representation in the municipal corporations of Delhi and Mumbai in 2017?
2. How do the patterns of political party competition differ between Delhi and Mumbai?
3. What is the relationship between gender representation and party structures in shaping local governance outcomes?
4. Do institutional reforms such as reservations ensure gender inclusivity across different political configurations?

### **Hypotheses**

1. H1: Women's representation in both Delhi and Mumbai municipal corporations has surpassed parity due to institutional reforms.
2. H2: Delhi's party representation reflects polarization dominated by national parties, whereas Mumbai's party structure demonstrates regional pluralism and coalition politics.
3. H3: Women's majority presence is not dependent on the type of political system (polarized or pluralistic) but on institutional guarantees of inclusion.
4. H4: The intersection of gender and party representation reveals that inclusivity transcends variations in political competition.



## **Literature Review**

The analysis of local governance and representation in India predominantly focuses on three interconnected themes: gender involvement, party politics, and comparative urban political frameworks. The role of gender has garnered significant attention in discussions on governance. The advocacy for women's participation in decision-making processes underscores a belief that inclusivity serves to enhance democratic principles (Phillips, 1995; Nussbaum, 2001). At the municipal level, women's political engagement is frequently facilitated through institutional measures such as reservations (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004; Rai, 2011). Such measures are instrumental in enabling women to enter political spaces and contribute to the transformation of traditionally male-dominated environments.

Delhi and Mumbai exemplify these patterns in distinct ways. Municipal governance in Delhi mirrors the national bipolarity, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) representing the dominant forces, whereas Mumbai exhibits coalition pluralism rooted in regional identities (Harriss, 2010; DeSouza, 2006). Scholars argue that women's political participation is shaped by party systems, rendering their representation dependent on the political opportunity structures established by both national and regional parties (Pai, 2001; Jenkins, 2014).

## **Methodology**

This study relies exclusively on quantitative data drawn from the *2017 municipal elections of Delhi and Mumbai*. The scope of the research is limited to two key dimensions of representation: *gender distribution and party affiliation*. These dimensions were chosen because they directly reflect inclusivity and the structural balance of political competition in metropolitan governance.

The analysis employs *descriptive statistical methods* to examine numerical patterns in councillor distribution. Percentages and totals are used to highlight the relative strength of male and female councillors, as well as the comparative weight of different political parties in each city. To enhance clarity and accessibility, the data is represented visually through *tables and bar charts*, which illustrate the contrasts between Delhi and Mumbai in terms of gender participation and party-wise power distribution.

The study maintains a *dataset-focused approach*. No external secondary sources or supplementary datasets are incorporated into the analysis. This methodological decision ensures a concentrated interpretation of the electoral results without the influence of external explanatory variables. While this approach allows for

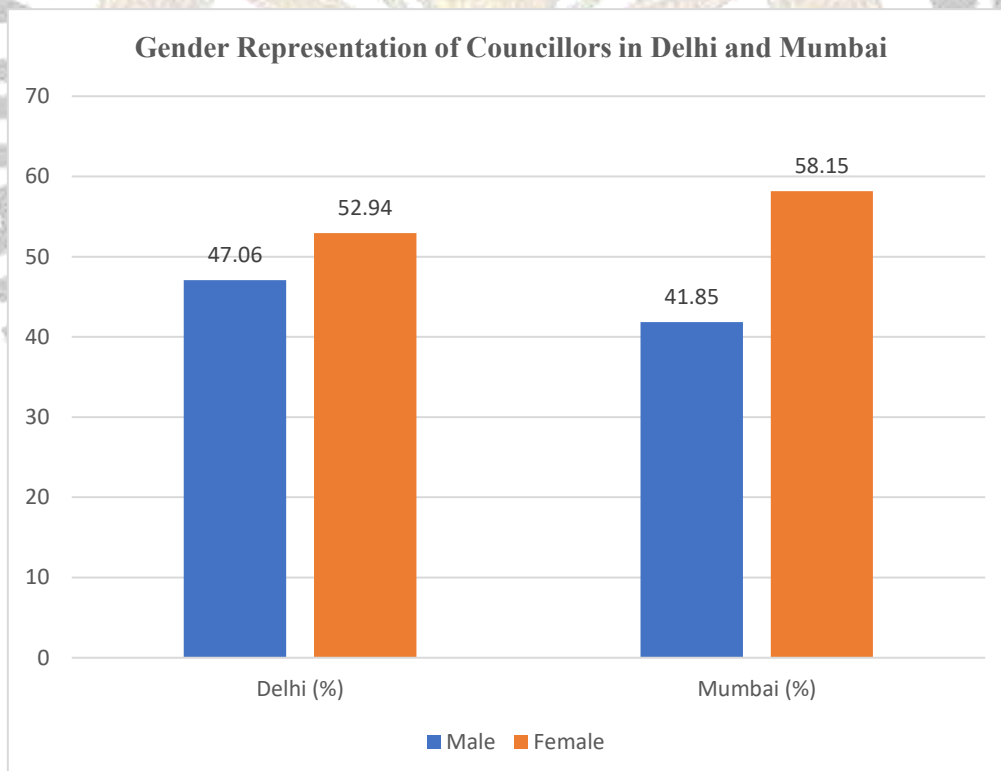
a focused comparison, it also represents a *limitation*, since the findings rely solely on the dataset and cannot be contextualized with additional socio-political or historical evidence.

### Analysis

**Table 1: Gender Distribution of Councillors in Delhi and Mumbai**

Gender	Delhi (No.)	Delhi (%)	Mumbai (No.)	Mumbai (%)
Male	128	47.06	95	41.85
Female	144	52.94	132	58.15
Total	272	100	227	100

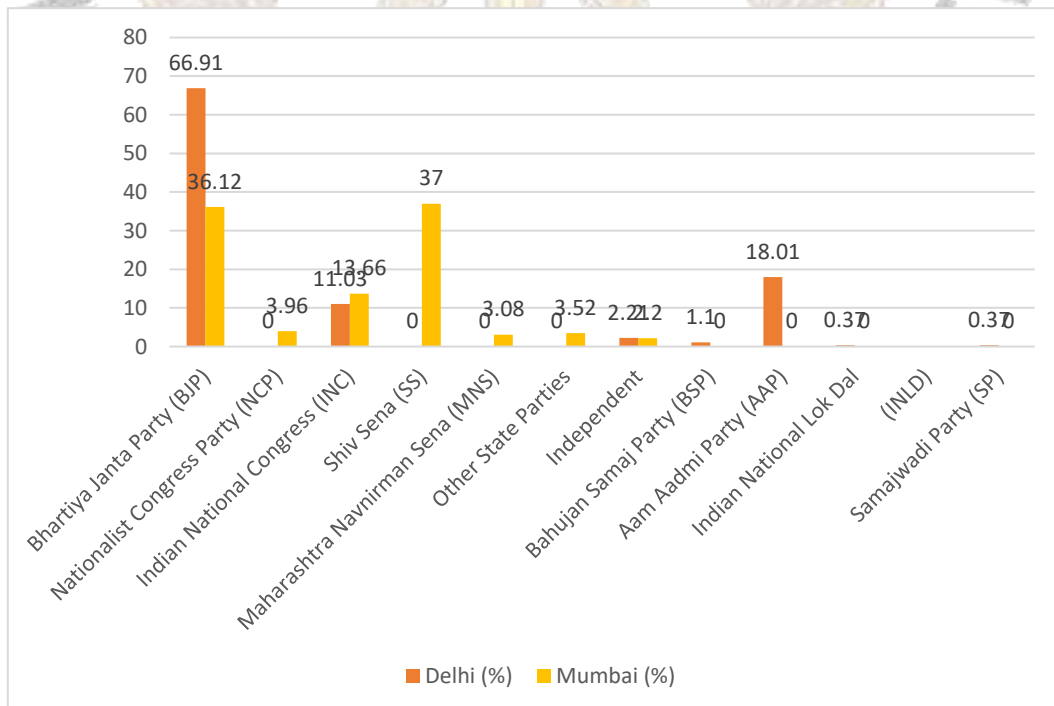
**Chart 1: Gender Distribution of Councillors in Delhi and Mumbai**



**Table 2: Party-Wise Distribution of Councillors in Delhi and Mumbai**

Party	Delhi (No.)	Delhi (%)	Mumbai (No.)	Mumbai (%)
Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP)	182	66.91	82	36.12
Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	0	0.00	9	3.96
Indian National Congress (INC)	30	11.03	31	13.66
Shiv Sena (SS)	0	0.00	84	37.00
Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS)	0	0.00	7	3.08
Other State Parties	0	0.00	8	3.52
Independent	6	2.21	5	2.20
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	3	1.10	0	0.00
Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)	49	18.01	0	0.00
Indian National Lok Dal (INLD)	1	0.37	0	0.00
Samajwadi Party (SP)	1	0.37	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>100</b>

**Chart 2: Party-Wise Distribution of Councillors in Delhi and Mumbai**





The gender distribution demonstrates that both Delhi and Mumbai have achieved a majority of female councillors. In Delhi, women constitute 52.94% of councillors, whereas in Mumbai the figure is higher at 58.15%. This indicates that women have surpassed parity and now occupy a dominant position in local governance across both metropolitan areas.

The data suggest that institutional mechanisms such as electoral reservations and gender-sensitive policies have translated into practical political outcomes. Moreover, Mumbai's stronger female representation may be attributed to a political culture more accepting of women's participation in civic bodies.

The party-wise distribution reveals a sharp divergence between Delhi and Mumbai. Delhi demonstrates *BJP dominance* with 66.91% councillors, followed by AAP (18.01%) and INC (11.03%). Other parties, including BSP, INLD, and SP, hold negligible shares. This indicates that Delhi's municipal politics is highly polarised between the BJP and AAP, with the INC as a distant third.

In contrast, Mumbai reflects a *multi-party and coalition-driven scenario*. Shiv Sena leads with 37% councillors, followed closely by BJP at 36.12%. INC holds 13.66%, while smaller regional parties like NCP (3.96%), MNS (3.08%), and others (3.52%) collectively contribute to a fragmented political structure. This difference highlights Delhi's nationally oriented political contest versus Mumbai's regionally driven coalition politics.

### **Comparative Discussions**

The comparative analysis of Delhi and Mumbai demonstrates both convergences and divergences in urban governance. The most important convergence lies in gender representation: both cities have achieved and surpassed parity, confirming *H1*. Women constitute 52.94% of councillors in Delhi and 58.15% in Mumbai. This outcome strongly suggests that institutional reforms, particularly reservations, have successfully translated into tangible gains for women's descriptive representation.

In terms of party systems, the findings confirm *H2*. Delhi reflects a polarized competition dominated by two national parties, the BJP and AAP, with the INC as a smaller presence. Mumbai, in contrast, displays coalition-based pluralism, where Shiv Sena, BJP, INC, and regional parties collectively share power. This divergence illustrates how metropolitan governance reflects broader national and regional political dynamics.



The assessment of *H3* requires a more nuanced approach. The evidence shows that women's majority presence is evident in both polarized and pluralistic contexts, suggesting that institutional guarantees rather than party system type drive inclusivity. However, the analysis remains limited to numerical outcomes. Whether institutional reforms alone can sustain women's influence in the long term, or whether systemic barriers within polarized and pluralistic structures constrain their substantive participation, is not fully addressed.

Similarly, *H4* is partially supported. Women councillors are distributed across dominant parties in Delhi (BJP and AAP) and dispersed across a broader set of parties in Mumbai. This indicates that inclusivity operates across political systems. However, the analysis does not extend to whether women across these party contexts exercise genuine influence over governance agendas, resource allocation, or leadership positions. As such, inclusivity is demonstrated descriptively, but the substantive dimension remains unexplored.

The discussion also reveals several research gaps. First, the study does not address the *substantive outcomes of women's representation*, such as agenda-setting, policy priorities, or leadership roles. Second, the dynamics of *party strategies in nominating women candidates* remain underexplored, particularly whether women are mobilised to fulfil quota requirements or supported as genuine political actors. Third, the analysis omits **intersectional factors**, including caste, class, and religion, that shape women's access to political power in urban India. Fourth, the focus on reservations overlooks complementary mechanisms such as party support, training, and financial resources that influence women's effectiveness. Finally, by limiting the study to Delhi and Mumbai, the analysis does not capture the broader diversity of urban governance across India's metropolitan centres.

## **Conclusion**

This study compared gender and party representation in Delhi and Mumbai during the 2017 municipal elections. The findings confirm that women have not only achieved parity but now constitute a majority of councillors in both cities, thus supporting *H1*. The analysis also confirms *H2*, demonstrating that Delhi reflects a polarized contest dominated by national parties while Mumbai reflects pluralism rooted in regional political traditions.

At the same time, the evaluation of *H3* and *H4* highlights limitations. While women's representation transcends party system types, the evidence remains restricted to descriptive patterns. The study cannot



conclusively establish whether institutional guarantees alone ensure substantive empowerment, or how women's presence translates into agenda-setting power. Inclusivity across political contexts is evident, but its depth and effectiveness remain untested.

These gaps have important implications. Future research should move beyond descriptive representation to examine women's *substantive influence* on local governance. This requires attention to women's policy priorities, their leadership within municipal committees, and the impact of their decisions on urban communities. Further, the role of *party strategies* in candidate selection and support must be analysed to distinguish between token representation and genuine empowerment. Intersectional perspectives are also necessary to assess how caste, class, and religion intersect with gender to shape women's political pathways. Finally, extending the analysis to additional metropolitan cities such as Bengaluru, Chennai, and Kolkata will allow for more generalizable insights into the relationship between gender and urban governance.

In conclusion, while Delhi and Mumbai provide evidence of the success of institutional reforms in promoting women's representation, they also highlight the need for deeper inquiry into the quality of that representation. Numbers alone are insufficient; the real challenge lies in ensuring that women's political presence transforms into *substantive influence* within urban local governance.

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