

State of Sector Report on Political Entry in India

On

Lok Sabha Elections, 2024

by

Prajatantra Foundation

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About Prajatantra

Prajatantra is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to reducing barriers to political entry and facilitating electoral participation for better governance. We aim to create and disseminate information about political entry in India, fostering a more informed and engaged political landscape. In recent years, India's political arena has seen the emergence of grassroots politicians, sparking discussions that are still in their early stages. We are committed to advancing these discussions, creating an ecosystem with statistical information on politicians' method of entry and a roadmap for each aspirant to enter the political arena. Our primary focus is improving governance quality by making it easier for meritorious people to contest elections.

To know more, visit our website: [Prajatantra.org](https://prajatantra.org)

Executive Summary

1. This preliminary report on the 2024 Lok Sabha elections examines data from 768 candidates from the two major political parties, BJP and INC. The study identifies gatekeeping barriers and pathways to political entry based on 10 parameters gathered through primary and secondary research.
2. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, 76% of candidates from the BJP and INC had significant gatekeeping barriers, including dynastic backgrounds, substantial wealth (₹5 crore or more), or criminal antecedents. This underscores the entrenched nature of political power among a privileged few.
3. Financial status is the most prevalent gatekeeping factor. Half of the candidates possess assets exceeding ₹5 crore, and 83.1% have assets over ₹1 crore, highlighting a stark wealth disparity between electoral representatives and the general population.
4. 27.6% of the candidates are from dynastic backgrounds, with 71.2% being second-generation politicians. This indicates a significant influence of political families in candidate selection, perpetuating political legacies.
5. Beyond dynastic politics, the most common pathways for candidates are Party Organizational Politics (15.4%), Local Politics (12.2%), and Student Politics (9.5%). BJP favors candidates from Party Organizational Politics and Association with Sangh, while INC prefers those from party org roles and student politics.
6. Only 13.4% of tickets were given to women candidates by BJP and INC. Of these, 80.6% are gatekeepers, with 54.4% entering through dynastic means. This points to significant gender barriers in political entry and advancement.
7. Karnataka, Bihar, and Maharashtra have the highest percentage of dynastic candidates among larger states, while Haryana leads among smaller states. Southern states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, and northern states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh exhibit high levels of gatekeeping.

Introduction

The world's largest democracy is currently undergoing its most extensive electoral process. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are being conducted over seven phases, spanning 44 days and involving over 90 crore registered voters. This monumental event will determine the representatives with the effective power to govern India. While citizens are generally aware of who represents their constituency, the pathways through which these candidates enter the political arena & the extent of gatekeeping to contest remain less understood. This report delves into the data of candidates contesting in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from the two major political parties, the BJP and INC. By examining various parameters such as family legacy, local politics, and party organization work, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the methods of political entry in India.

Methodology

For our second State of the Sector report on the 2024 Lok Sabha election, we have collected comprehensive information on all the candidates given tickets by India's two largest political parties, the INC and BJP. Our study encompasses data from 768 candidates contesting in the 7 phases of the Lok Sabha elections. Our study is based on both primary and secondary research. We have meticulously collated information on 10 parameters from candidates' affidavits, their teams, stringer networks, journalist articles, and stories on the candidates. This approach ensures a detailed profiling of the candidate's pathways to political entry into the country.

The data of candidates who defected to another party or withdrew their nomination has not been considered while assessing the data.

Definitions of Key Terms

The report explores a new dimension in electoral research, and understanding the various terms and definitions is a prerequisite.

Gatekeeping in Politics

1. **Privilege:** If a candidate comes from a dynastic background, has assets >1 crore, or has criminal charges against them.
2. **Strong Privilege/Criteria:** If a candidate comes from a dynastic background, has assets > 5 crore, or has serious criminal charges against them.
3. **Serious Criminal Charges:** Offenses for which the maximum punishment is five years or more, non-bailable offenses, electoral offenses, offenses involving assault, murder, kidnap, crime against women, and offenses under the Prevention of Corruption and Representation of People Act (Section 8).
4. **Grassroots Politicians:** Elected Representatives who have won without a political or criminal background with assets <1 crore.

Method of Entry

1. **Family Legacy:** Family legacy in politics is when an individual enters politics because of their familial ties or connections to relatives already established in the political sphere, providing them with advantages such as access to networks and resources.
2. **Local Politics:** Elected Representatives in urban local bodies or Panchayat Raj Institutions.
3. **Party Organizational Politics:** A person holding a non-elected post in the party structure serves as the party apparatus at any level of the political hierarchy.
4. **Student Politics:** Student politics involves political activities and organizations within educational institutions, driven primarily by student participation and engagement.

5. **Mass Movement:** Large-scale collective action by citizens aimed at instigating change in a government's political structure or policies.
6. **Social Service:** Social service refers to voluntary or organized efforts to enhance the well-being and quality of life of individuals, families, or communities.

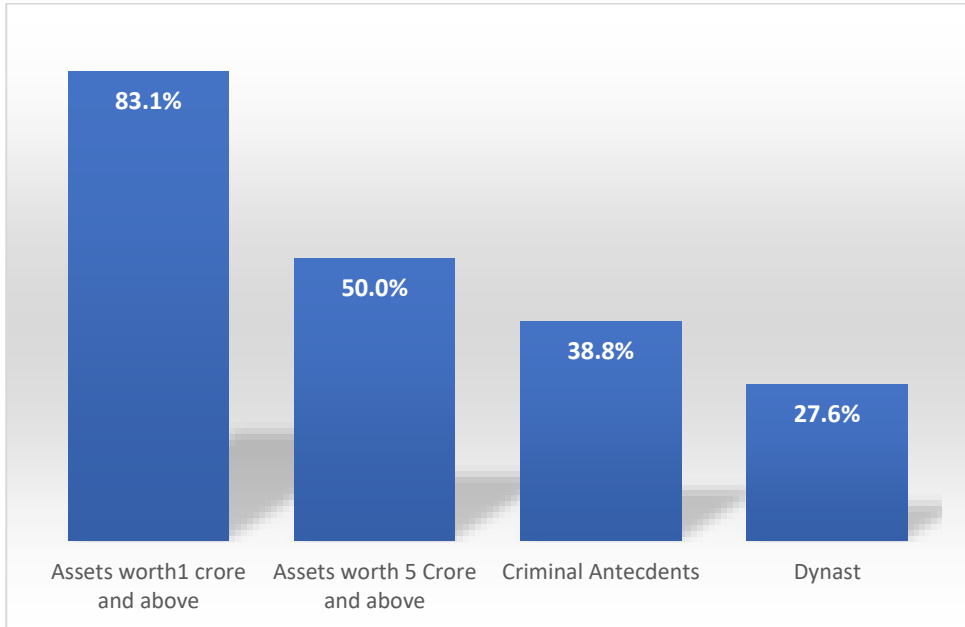
Chapter 1

Gatekeepers: Dynast, Crorepatis, and Criminal Antecedents

To understand who enters the Indian political arena, how they do so, and when, it is crucial to identify major gatekeepers that restrain many political aspirants from entering politics. Prajatantra has analyzed these major gatekeeping barriers by examining each candidate's political journey. This includes charting factors such as dynastic connections, money, and criminal antecedents. For our study, we have collected information on 768¹ Candidates from two major political parties in India, the BJP and the INC. The BJP is contesting 441 seats, while the INC is contesting 328 seats.

Remarkably, these two major political parties allocated a significant portion of their tickets, approximately **76%, to candidates with dynastic backgrounds, individuals with criminal antecedents, or those possessing assets valued at 5 crore rupees or more**. This sheds light on a significant trend in the allocation of tickets, revealing the prevailing dynamics of candidate selection in Indian electoral politics. Money emerges as the most prevalent gatekeeping barrier, with 50% of the candidates possessing assets worth ₹5 crore or more. This is closely followed by individuals with criminal antecedents, who constitute 38.8% of the candidates, and dynasts, who represent 27.6%. The stark wealth disparity between electoral representatives and common citizens is even more pronounced when considering candidates with assets exceeding ₹1 crore, who make up 83.1% of the total.

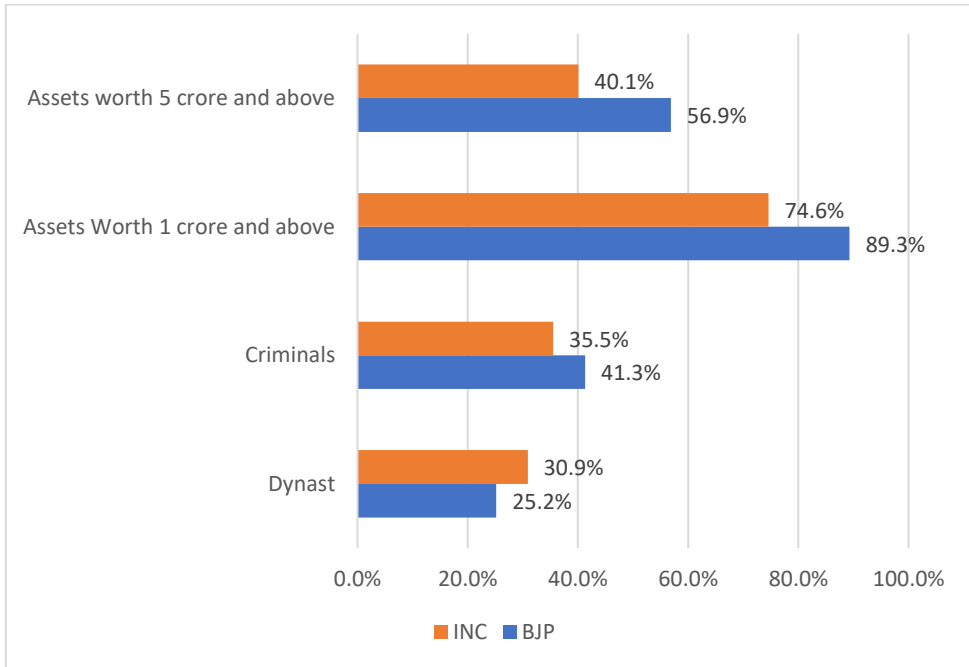
¹ 768. As Rahul Gandhi is contesting two seats, the nomination of the Surat candidate was rejected, and candidates from Indore and Ghatal for INC withdrew their candidature.

Figure 1: Overall Gatekeepers in 2024 General Elections

Party wise Gatekeepers

Party-wise analysis reveals significant disparities across various factors among the 2024 MP candidates. Dynastic connections are prevalent, with 25.2% of BJP candidates and 30.9% of INC candidates coming from political families. The incidence of candidates with criminal antecedents comprises 41.3% of BJP candidates and 35.5% of INC candidates. Financial disparities are stark, as 89.3% of BJP candidates and 74.6% of INC candidates possess assets worth ₹1 crore or more. This gap widens further, with 56.9% of BJP candidates and 40.1% of INC candidates holding assets valued at ₹5 crore or more. While the INC has a higher percentage of dynastic candidates, the BJP has more candidates with strong financial backgrounds and criminal antecedents.

Figure 2: Party wise Gatekeeping Barriers to Political Entry



Dynastic Lineages

Of the 27.6% of dynastic candidates, 71.2% are second-generation politicians, the sons, daughters, nieces, or nephews of current politicians. An additional 25% are first-generation dynasts, meaning they are siblings or spouses of current politicians. Approximately 3% of dynastic candidates come from multi-generational political families, underscoring the deep-rooted legacy and continuity of political power within certain families in India.

Chapter 2

Method of Entry: Grassroots Politicians' Routes to Enter Politics

Though dynastic politics stands as the most prominent method of entry in both political parties, with 27.6% of candidates hailing from dynastic backgrounds, we have identified ten other significant pathways to political entry beyond dynastic politics, providing a detailed profile of how politicians advance to national or state-level positions. The most common methods of entry, regardless of party affiliation, are Party Organizational Politics (15.4%), Local politics (12.2%), and Student Politics (9.5%). Association with Sangh is also a major pathway, with 7.7% of candidates entering through this method.

Our analysis of candidate data reveals similar patterns in candidate selection between both parties, with one notable exception prevailing in the BJP. The BJP has allocated more tickets to candidates emerging from Party Organizational Politics (13.9%) and Association with Sangh (13.2%), followed closely by those from local politics (12.2%). On the other hand, the INC has favored candidates from the party worker route (18%), followed by those from Local politics (12.2%) and Student politics (11.3%). While the Sangh has historically served as an umbrella association from which many right-wing aspirants have entered politics. At the same time, Congress has a tradition of nurturing student leaders who transition into politicians.

Table 1: Party-wise Method of Entry

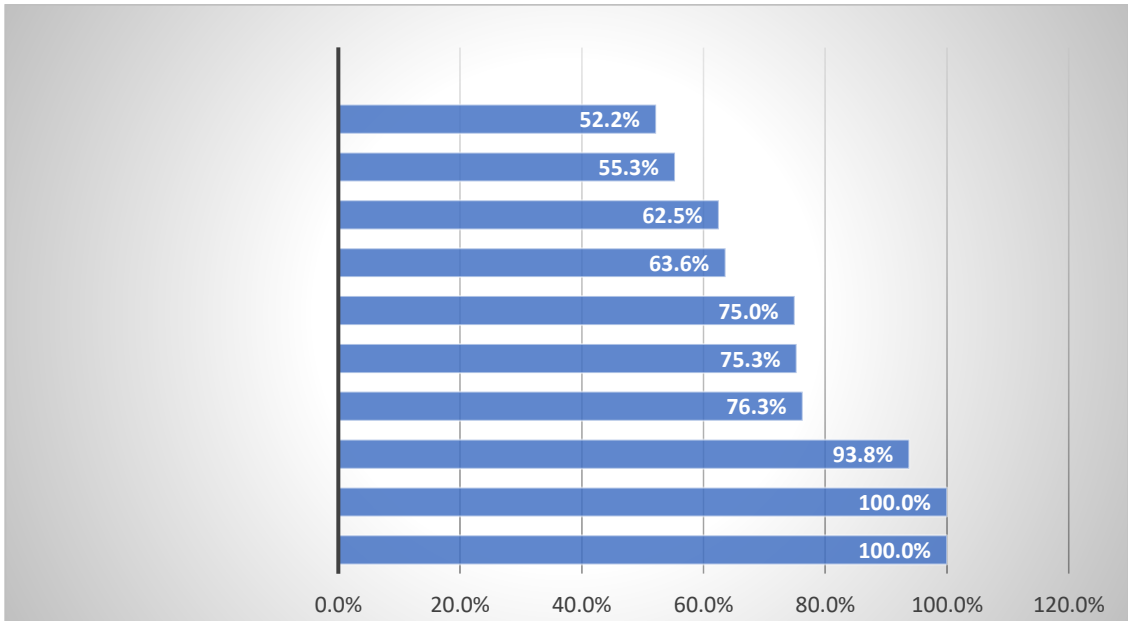
Method of Entry	Total	Percentage for BJP	Percentage for INC
Family Legacy	212	25.2%	30.9%
Party Organisational Politics	118	13.4%	18.0%
Local Politics	94	12.2%	12.2%
Student Politics	73	8.2%	11.3%
Association with Sangh	59	13.2%	0.3%
Civil Services	23	2.0%	4.3%
Celebrity	16	2.9%	0.9%
Mass Movement	8	0.7%	1.5%
Activism	4	0.5%	0.6%
Defence	3	0.0%	0.9%
Social Service	2	0.5%	0.0%

Gatekeeping in Non-Privilege Method of Entry

The pathway to political entry without inherent privileges also encounters gatekeeping barriers, notably regarding financial resources. For instance, local politics and party organizations, which are major routes to political entry for non-privilege, also face 55.3% and 63.6% gatekeeping levels, respectively. Interestingly, with comparatively lower gatekeeping barriers at 52.2%, the Civil services route saw only 23 civil servants receiving tickets from both parties across the four phases.

75.3% of student politics is gatekept, indicating that candidates with muscle power and financial power have the highest chance of entering through the easiest route into politics. Historically, student politics in India has served as a pathway for aspiring leaders from various backgrounds to enter the political realm. However, recent trends show a rise in caste-based maneuvering and the influence of muscle and financial power.

Figure 3: Gatekeeping percentage amongst Political Pathways to Entry



Chapter 3

Women's Representation in Major Political Parties

India has seen a very small number of women representing their constituencies, and the distribution of tickets to women candidates by political parties remains low in the 2024 general elections. In all the phases of the General elections, both political parties distributed tickets to only 103 women candidates, 13.4% of the total tickets distributed by the parties. While the BJP gave tickets to 62 women candidates, the Congress gave tickets to only 41.

Out of the 103 women candidates, 80.6% are gatekeepers. Dynastic politics is the primary pathway to entry among women candidates, with 54.4% entering through this pathway. This highlights a significant exposure deficit among women in the political arena and suggests that other pathways have not been as accessible or chosen by women.

Table 2: Gatekeeping in BJP and INC

Gatekeeping	BJP	INC	Aggregate
Women Dynast	51.6%	58.5%	54.4%
Assets worth 1 crore and more	90.3%	70.7%	82.5%
Assets worth 5 crore and above	72.5%	45.2%	53.4%
Criminals	25.8%	31.7%	28.2%

Among self-made or grassroots women politicians, the most common pathways are through local politics (15.5%) and party organizations (11.7%). This trend indicates that local politics is a significant entry point for women, with 16.1% of women in the BJP rising through local political roles. In contrast, 14.6% of women in the INC chose party org. and local politics equally. This suggests that while local politics remains a crucial stepping stone for women in the BJP, the INC provides more opportunities to climb the political ladder through internal party roles and activities. These patterns reflect the broader dynamics and opportunities available to women in India's different political party structures beyond dynastic politics.

Table 3: Percentage-wise method of Entry amongst women Candidates

Method of Entry	Percentage	Gatekeeping
Family Legacy	54.4%	100.0%
Local Politics	15.5%	50.0%
Party Organisational Politics	11.7%	41.7%
others	5.8%	50.0%
Celebrity	3.9%	100.0%
Association with Sangh	2.9%	100.0%
Civil Services	2.9%	66.7%
Student Politics	1.0%	0.0%
Not Known	1.0%	100.0%
Social Service	1.0%	100.0%

High gatekeeping among women persists across all methods of entry into politics, indicating a systemic barrier that impedes their self-made advancement. Whether through local politics, party organizational politics, or other avenues, women encounter significant hurdles in gaining entry and progressing within the political arena. This trend underscores a broader issue of gender inequality within political structures, where established power dynamics often favor male incumbency and hinder the rise of women leaders.

Chapter 4

State-wise Dynast Candidates

Based on data from all phases of the elections, the analysis of dynastic representation across states and union territories shows that it is the prominent method of entry. Among the Sizing states, Karnataka has the highest number of dynasties, with 45.3%, followed by Bihar (42.3%) and then Maharashtra (40%). While fewer tickets were distributed to dynasts in states like Bengal (14.5%) and Gujarat (16%).

Among small states, Haryana has the highest number of Dynasties, with 42.1%, followed by Jharkhand at 33.3% and Punjab at 32.0%.

Table 4: Percentage of Dynast in all States

State	Number of Dynast	% Dynasty
Uttar Pradesh	23	25.3%
Madhya Pradesh	18	32.1%
West Bengal	8	14.5%
Karnataka	24	45.3%
Gujarat	8	16.0%
Rajasthan	13	27.1%
Maharashtra	18	40.0%
Orissa	9	22.0%
Telangana	12	35.3%
Tamil Nadu	7	21.9%
Kerala	5	15.6%
Andhra Pradesh	5	17.2%
Bihar	11	42.3%
Punjab	8	32.0%
Assam	2	8.3%
Chhattisgarh	5	22.7%
Jharkhand	7	33.3%
Haryana	8	42.1%
Uttarakhand	3	30.0%
Delhi	3	30.0%
Himachal Pradesh	3	37.5%

Jammu & Kashmir	1	25.0%
Goa	0	0.0%
Arunachal Pradesh	1	25.0%
DNH & Daman and Diu	2	50.0%
Tripura	1	33.3%
Manipur	2	66.7%
Sikkim	0	0.0%
Puducherry	2	100.0%
Mizoram	0	0.0%
Meghalaya	0	0.0%
Chandigarh	2	100.0%
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	0	0.0%
Nagaland	0	0.0%
Lakshadweep	1	100.0%
Ladakh	0	0.0%
Grand Total	212	27.6%

Gatekeeping Among States

Gatekeeping among states manifests through candidates who are either dynastic, possess a net worth of 5 crore or more, or have criminal antecedents. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in southern states such as Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Telangana, where over 90% of candidates meet these criteria, highlighting the significant influence of wealth and power in southern elections. Similarly, northern states like Bihar (84.6%) and Uttar Pradesh (83.5%) also exhibit high levels of gatekeeping, underscoring a broader trend of entrenched political elites and the critical role of financial and influential clout in securing electoral positions across various regions.

Table 5: State-wise Gatekeepers

<i>State</i>	Gatekeepers in Number	% Gatekeeping
Goa	4	100.0%
Arunachal Pradesh	4	100.0%
DNH & Daman and Diu	4	100.0%
Puducherry	2	100.0%
Chandigarh	2	100.0%
Lakshadweep	1	100.0%
Tamil Nadu	30	93.8%
Telangana	31	91.2%
Kerala	29	90.6%
Karnataka	48	90.6%
Delhi	9	90.0%
Jharkhand	18	85.7%
Bihar	22	84.6%
Maharashtra	38	84.4%
Uttar Pradesh	76	83.5%
Madhya Pradesh	45	80.4%
Haryana	15	79.0%
Rajasthan	36	75.0%
Himachal Pradesh	6	75.0%
Jammu & Kashmir	3	75.0%
West Bengal	41	74.6%
Punjab	17	68.0%
Manipur	2	66.7%
Chhattisgarh	14	63.6%
Orissa	25	61.0%
Gujarat	30	60.0%
Andhra Pradesh	15	51.7%
Uttarakhand	5	50.0%
Sikkim	1	50.0%
Meghalaya	1	50.0%
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1	50.0%
Assam	9	37.5%
Tripura	1	33.3%
Mizoram	0	0.0%
Nagaland	0	0.0%
Ladakh	0	0.0%
Grand Total	585	76.2%

Future Directions

This is a preliminary report, and we will publish the full report on our website in the coming week. Moving forward, we will focus on generating state-specific report cards and creating a state-wise ranking on the ease of entry into politics. This approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the electoral landscape in each state. Through this comprehensive analysis, we will offer valuable insights into the electoral process, which will help create a new landscape for people who want to enter politics through non-privilege methods.