

An Analysis of Women Participation in By-Election NA-154 (Lodhran-I)

This report is published by Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI)¹ to bring forth different trends of women participation in the electoral process and factors hindering or encouraging it during by-elections of NA-154 (Lodhran-I) held on February 12, 2018. This analysis is generated on a sample size of 50 polling stations. The sample was drawn using systematic random sampling method to select 15% of total polling stations.

The total number of registered voters in the constituency is 4,31,002, with 2,36,496 (54.9%) male voters and 194,506 (45.1%) female voters. To accommodate these voters, an equal number of 49 polling stations for men and women have been set up in addition to 240 combined polling stations in the constituency. These polling stations consist of total 1043 polling booths including 566 for men and 477 for women.

The data collected on election day shows that mostly same-gender staff is deployed at the polling booths. The CPDI team observed that all booths set up for female voters at combined and female polling stations had women as assistant presiding officers and polling officers.

A dominance of men as presiding officers was observed on male and combined polling stations. At female polling stations all the polling staff was female. Moreover, at all 32 sampled combined polling stations had men as their presiding officer. This shows women are not often the first choice for top positions.

In terms of women participation as party polling agents, PTI had largest number of polling agents at female sampled polling booths with presence at 75% booths, while PML (N) polling agents covered 60% female sampled polling booths. PPPP polling agents were present at only 14% sampled female booths.

A lower turn out of women was observed in comparison to men. On an average 22 women voters voted in an hour on a sampled female polling booth as compared to 27 men on the male booth. This lower turn out of women was noticed despite ECP's effort to mobilize women voters and the provisions of section 12 (C) of Elections Act 2017.

The CPDI teams interviewed female voters on sampled polling stations on election day to collect more data about women participation. Women from the age group 23 to 35 years participated heavily (43%) while participation of age group 18 to 22 years was low (8%). Moreover 36% of the women voters belong to the age group of 36 to 50 years. It appears that middle age women especially married are encouraged to participate in electoral activities but younger women are discouraged and it is considered unnecessary exposure for them. This data also signifies the need to focus and pay more attention to women youth as their low participation in electoral process may also be reflecting their lack of interest in political engagement.

The interview data further sheds light on relation between marital status and occupations of women and their turn out. The data reveals that 58% of women appearing to vote were Housewife, 12% were unemployed, 8% were doing government or private job and 7 % were students. This data reflects that majority of the women voters in the sample were housewives.

¹ Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) is an independent, non-partisan and a not-for-profit registered civil society organization working on the issues of Development and Peace in Pakistan.



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The CPDI interviewers also asked about educational background of women voters; 14% out of them were matric, 25% were below matric but literate, 38% were illiterate and 22% were graduates or above.

It was observed that women turnout was the highest during 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm when per booth ratio remained 23 voters per hour. It appears that this is the time when women get free from their household responsibilities and feel their daily routine would not be disturbed by leaving home during this time.

During the rush hours polling staff was unable to provide special assistance to older women, expecting mothers and mothers of infants. From 42% of sampled polling stations, there were no reports of preferential treatment being given to expecting mothers. In 39% polling stations CPDI observers said no preferential treatment was giving to old age women. Mothers carrying young children were further neglected in this category and observers from 46% polling stations reported that no preferential treatment was given to them either.

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