

# A Study on Women's Political Awareness and Participation from 2000 to 2023: With Reference to West Bengal

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## **Abstract**

*Democracy depends on women's political understanding and involvement. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and universal suffrage, social, cultural, and economic barriers have limited women's political participation in India. However, over the past two decades, the political landscape has shifted, especially in West Bengal, where women have become a significant political constituency. This study investigates West Bengali women's political awareness and participation from 2000 to 2023. It explores women's political awareness, voting behaviour, and involvement in election campaigns, community mobilization, and decision-making. Additionally, it considers socio-economic and educational factors influencing women's political participation at the state level. The research utilises both primary and secondary data for descriptive and analytical purposes. Primary data are collected through surveys and questionnaires from selected respondents, while secondary data include election reports, official publications, books, journals, and reliable web sources. The report analyses voter turnout, awareness of political rights, election involvement, and women's roles in politics over the last two decades. The study should show a gradual increase in West Bengal women's political knowledge and participation, especially in voter turnout and grassroots political activity. The results may also reveal that women continue to face barriers to leadership and decision-making. The study enhances understanding of gender dynamics in regional politics and highlights the need for policies and measures to empower women politically. It also supports policymakers, scholars, and civil society organizations in promoting inclusive democratic participation and gender equality in politics.*

**Keywords:** *Democratic, politics, empowerment, mobilization, awareness.*

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## **I. Introduction**

The study of women's political awareness and involvement in West Bengal from 2000 to 2023 is critical for comprehending larger gender and democratic dynamics in India. Political participation represents democratic inclusion, and women's active participation in politics strengthens democratic institutions and governance. Women's political responsibilities in West Bengal, a varied and politically lively state, have changed dramatically during the last two decades. Women in India have always participated in political movements since independence, but their presence in formal political institutions has been restricted. Despite constitutional protections for equality and universal suffrage, social, cultural, and economic impediments frequently hampered women's political participation. Since the early 2000s, advances in literacy, socioeconomic empowerment, and gender equality policies have gradually increased women's political knowledge and engagement.

From 2000 to 2023, West Bengal experienced notable shifts in its electoral landscape. Women increasingly became a key voting group, with participation climbing steadily. Recent data shows women make up nearly half of the electorate, with voter turnout in several elections matching or surpassing that of men. For example, in the 2021 state assembly election, women's turnout was approximately 75%, slightly higher than men's, indicating growing political engagement. Additionally, the gender ratio among registered voters has improved considerably, with women accounting for about 49% of voters, reflecting an expanding role in democratic processes. These trends suggest that women in West Bengal are asserting their political rights more strongly and influencing election outcomes.

However, women's representation in political offices and decision-making bodies remains limited relative to their population share. While there has been some progress in legislative and local governance participation, structural challenges like patriarchal norms, resource access issues, and gender bias within political parties persist. This study aims to evaluate the level of women's political awareness and participation from 2000 to 2023 in West Bengal. It investigates factors shaping women's political engagement, including education, socio-economic status, media exposure, and mobilization efforts. It also assesses whether increased participation has led to meaningful political empowerment and representation.

By analyzing voter behaviour, awareness, and political activity participation, this study seeks to contribute to broader gender and democracy discussions. Understanding the evolving role of women in West Bengal's politics will highlight current challenges and opportunities to promote women's political empowerment and foster more inclusive democratic governance.

### **Women's participation has steadily increased, especially after the 1990s :**

The main reasons for the increase are due to policies that provide for the reservation of a specific percentage of seats, jobs, or opportunities for women are known as affirmative action through gender quotas. These policies are aimed to increase the number of women who are represented in professions that have traditionally been dominated by men. It is possible to execute these quotas in a variety of fields, including politics (as represented by legislative bodies and municipal governments) and business (as represented by corporate boards and recruitment). It has been established that quotas are associated with an increase in the number of women who participate in elections; nevertheless, they are also subject to criticism addressing issues of justice, tokenism, and the possibility of establishing a hierarchy between "merit-based" and "quota-based" candidates.

An awareness campaign is a strategic effort to educate the public or a specific audience about an issue, cause, product, or service to increase visibility and understanding. These campaigns aim to shape knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, and can be used for social issues like health and environmental protection, or for commercial purposes like promoting a new product. They utilize a mix of communication tools like media, social media, public events, and printed materials to reach the target audience.

### **Women Empowerment in Politics:**

It is necessary to have a comprehensive awareness of the social fabric in which women in India live in order to bring about empowerment for women in India. A multitude of forces, which operate on both the macro and the micro levels, are responsible for this success of women. The irony is that at one extreme, the government frames policies, programmes, welfare measures, and other provisions to empower women and on the other extreme, the country is not able to bring the women out from the patriarchal system of domination in which she undergoes sufferings, harassment, torches, and discrimination on a day-to-day basis both by the family members and the community in which she lives. Access to education, quality food, job, a marriage of her choosing, basic health needs, the pattern of attire, economic freedom, and the ability to make decisions for her children are only some of the things that are restricted for the majority of women. Most women. It is difficult to think that she would be in a state of mind to participate in the election or even to choose a candidate to vote for when this is the situation for the majority of women in this country.

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **Objectives of the study are:**

1. To explore the socio-economic status of women related to the political participation with special reference to West Bengal.
2. To investigate the political interest and opinion of women towards political participation with special focus to West Bengal.
3. To evaluate the political participation of women with special reference to West Bengal.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The study was basically on women because their involvement and participation play an important role in the development of the nation. The study is intended to find out the social, economic, and political background of the women interested and involved in political activities.

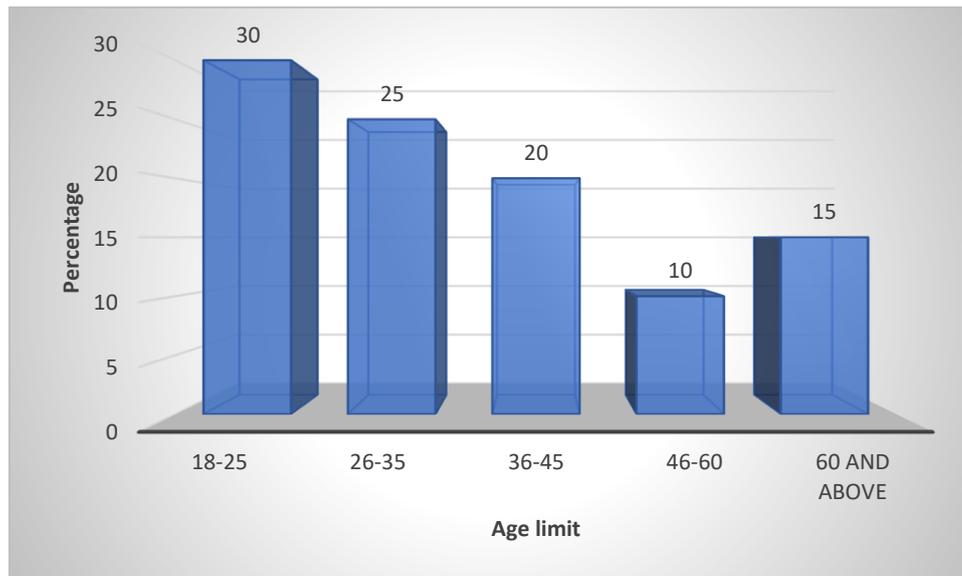
#### **1. Age**

The data was collected regarding age of the respondents and the data was tabulated as follows:

**Table 1: Age of respondents**

<b>Age</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
18-25	180	30
26-35	150	25
36-45	120	20
46-60	60	10
60 and above	90	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data



**Fig 1: Bar graph showing age of respondents**

The data shows that the young women between 18-25 yrs are maximum with 30 percent, 25 percent of the women were between 26-35 yrs, 20 percent of the women were between 36-45 yrs, 10 percent were between 46-60 yrs, 15 percent of the women were 60 and above age. The young women were much eager to response.

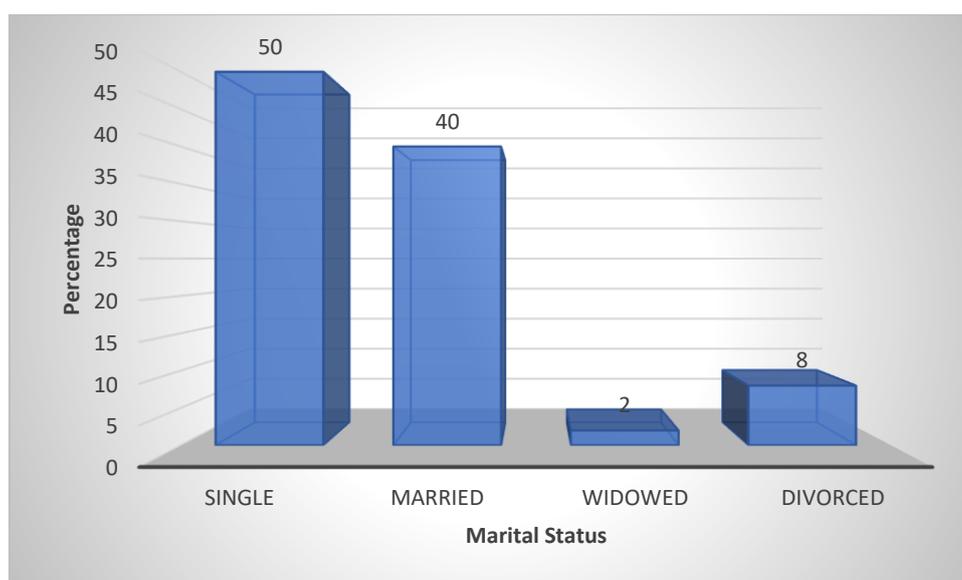
## 2. Marital Status

The data was collected regarding marital status of the women and the different type of them was tabulated: -

**Table 2: Marital status of respondents**

Marital Status	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Single	300	50
Married	240	40
Widowed	12	2
Divorced	48	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data



**Fig 2: Bar graph showing marital status of respondents**

The data shows that 50 percent of the women were single, 40 percent were married, 2 percent were widowed and 8 percent were divorced. The majority of the women are single among the respondents.

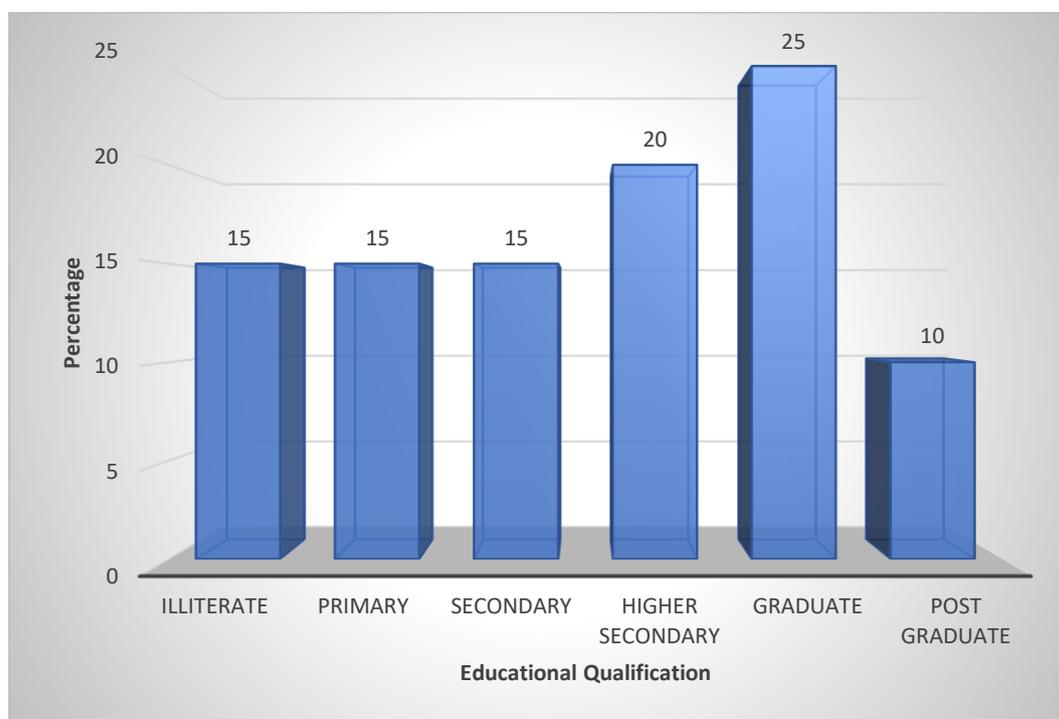
### 3. Educational Qualification

The data was collected regarding educational qualification of the women and the data was tabulated as under.

**Table 3: Educational Qualification of respondents**

<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Illiterate	90	15
Primary	90	15
Secondary	90	15
Higher Secondary	120	20
Graduate	150	25
Post graduate	60	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data



**Fig 3: Bar graph showing educational qualification of respondents**

The data shows that 15 percent women are illiterate, 15 percent women are primary level educated, 15 percent women belongs to secondary level, 20 percent belongs to higher secondary, 25 percent are graduate and 10 percent belongs to post graduate. The majority of them are graduate by qualification.

### 4. Occupation

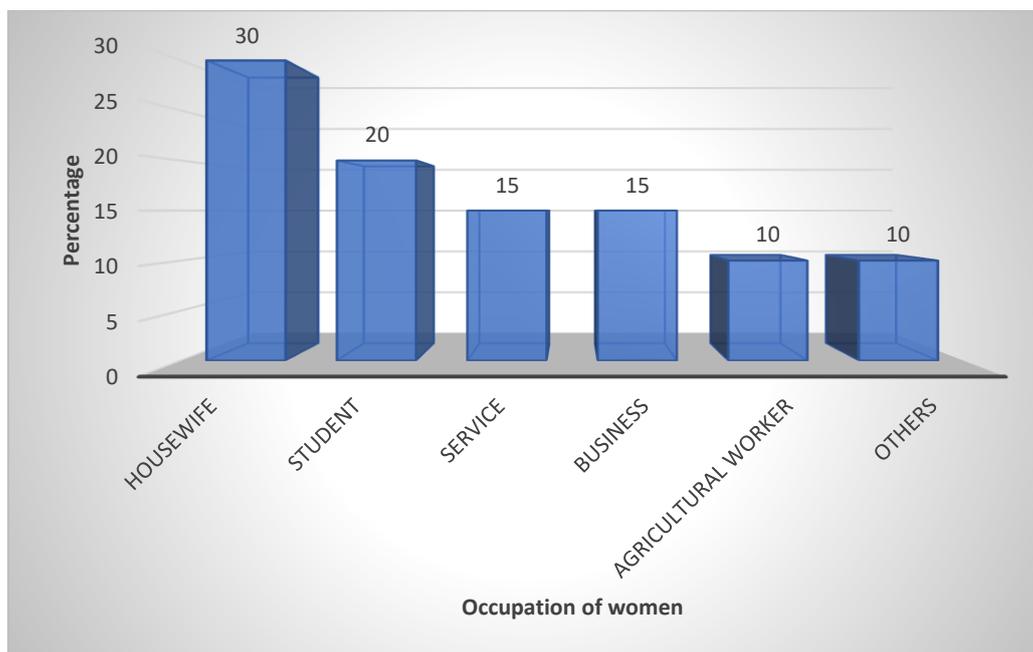
The data was collected regarding occupation of the women and the data was tabulated as follows: -

**Table 4: Occupation of respondents**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Housewife	180	30
Student	120	20
Service	90	15
Business	90	15
Agricultural Worker	60	10
Others	60	10

<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>
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Source: Primary data



**Fig 4: Bar graph showing occupation of respondents**

The data shows that 30 percent of the women are housewife, 20 percent of the women are student, 15 percent of the women are in service, 15 percent are in service, 10 percent of the women are agricultural worker and 10 percent are in other sectors. The majority of the women are housewife.

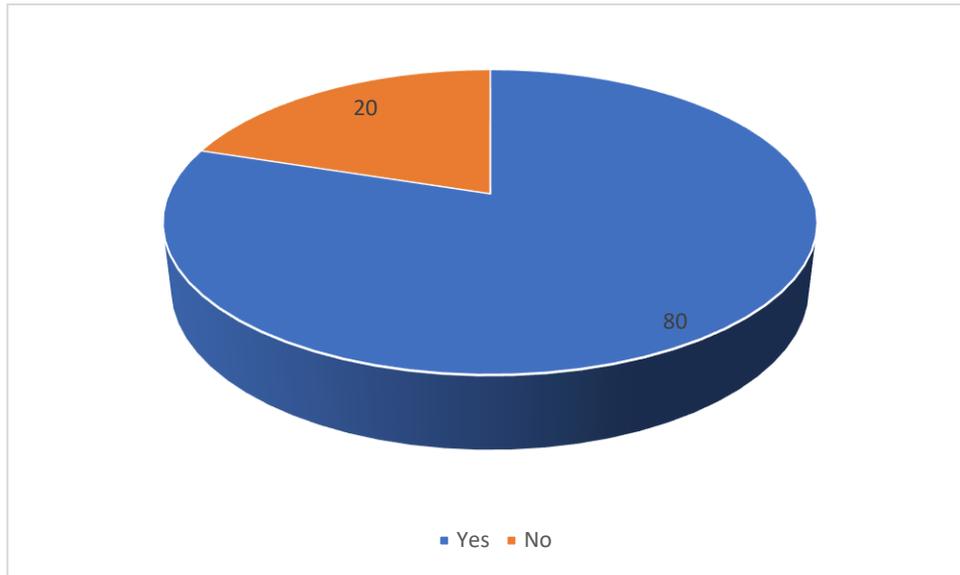
#### **5. Participation to vote in an election**

The data was collected regarding participation of vote in an election. The data was collected in option Yes/ No option.

**Table 5: Participation to vote in an election**

<b>Option</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	480	80
No	120	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data



**Fig 5 : Pie chart showing participation to vote in an election**

The data shows that 80 percent of the women participated in voting in an election. The 20 percent of the women did not participate in vote in an election. The majority of the women participated in voting of election.

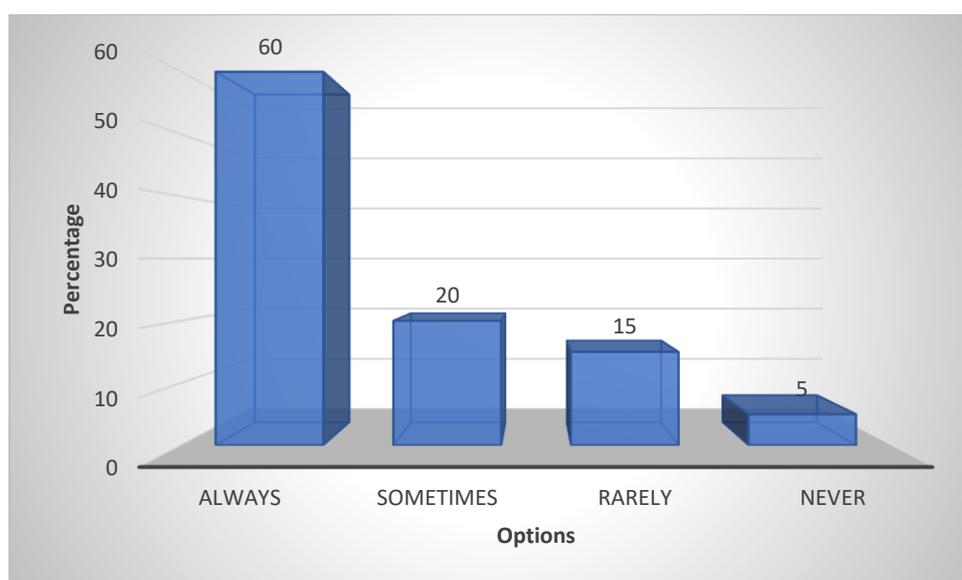
#### **6. Regularity of voting in elections**

The data was collected regarding regularity of voting in elections among women. The data was tabulated in options as below:

**Table 6: Regularity of voting in elections**

Option	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Always	360	60
Sometimes	120	20
Rarely	90	15
Never	30	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data



**Fig 6 : Regularity of voting in elections**

The data shows that 60 percent of the women always vote in an election, 20 percent of the women sometimes regular to vote in an election, 15 percent of the women rarely regular in voting an election and 5 percent of the women never vote on regular manner in an election. The majority of the women always vote on regular manner.

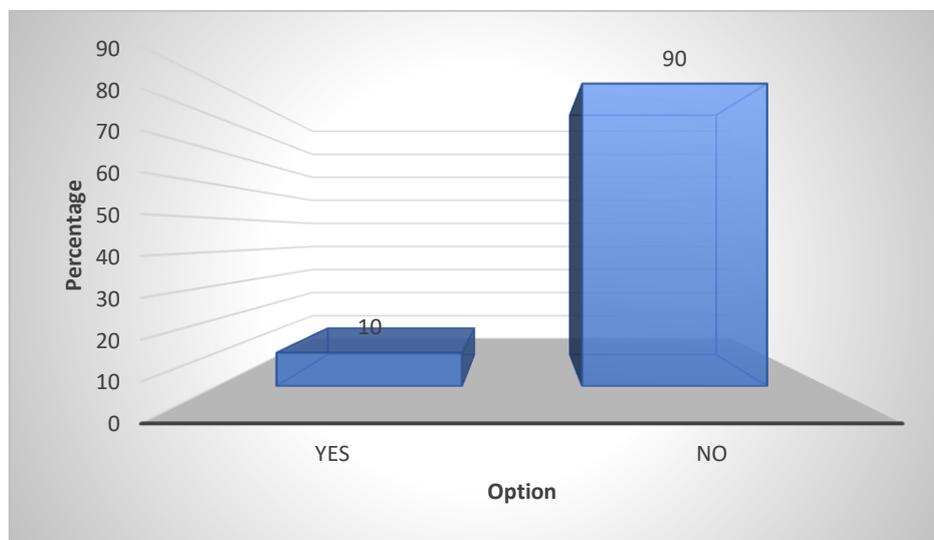
**7. Membership of any political party or organization**

The data was collected regarding membership of any political party or organization. The option Yes and No were asked.

**Table 7: Membership of any political party or organization**

Option	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	10
No	540	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data



**Fig 7 : Bar graph showing membership of any political party or organization**

The data shows that 10 percent of the women were only political party member or organization. The 90 percent of the women were not party member or organization member. So, most of them doesn't belong to any political party or organization.

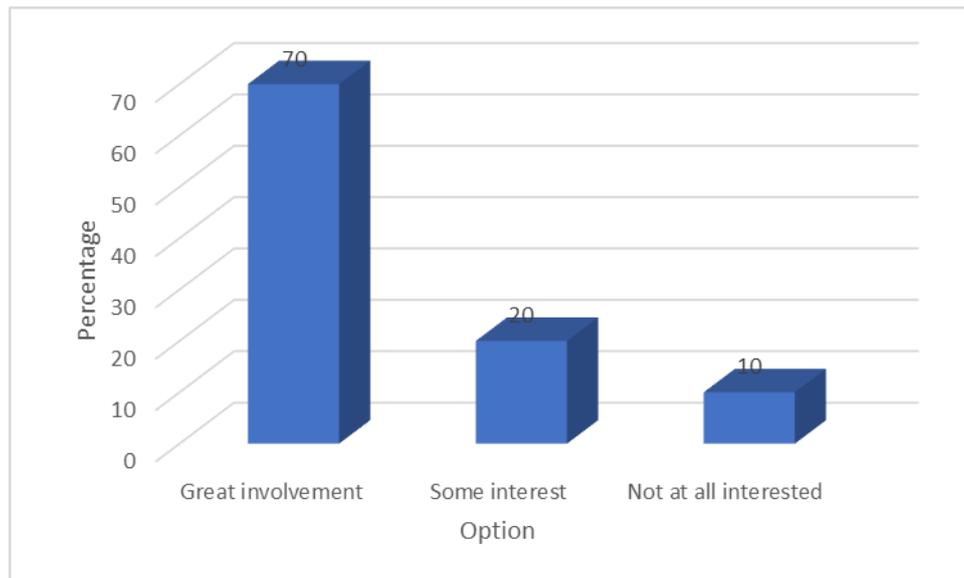
**8. Interest in politics and its related issues**

The data was collected in three options. In great involvement, some interest and not at all interested option. The data was tabulated as below:

**Table 8 : Interest in politics and its related issues**

Option	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Great involvement	420	70
Some interest	120	20
Not at all interested	60	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

The data shows that 70 percent was greatly involved in politics and its related issues, 20 percent were having some interest and 10 percent not at all interested in politics and its related issues.



**Fig 8 : Interest in politics and its related issues**

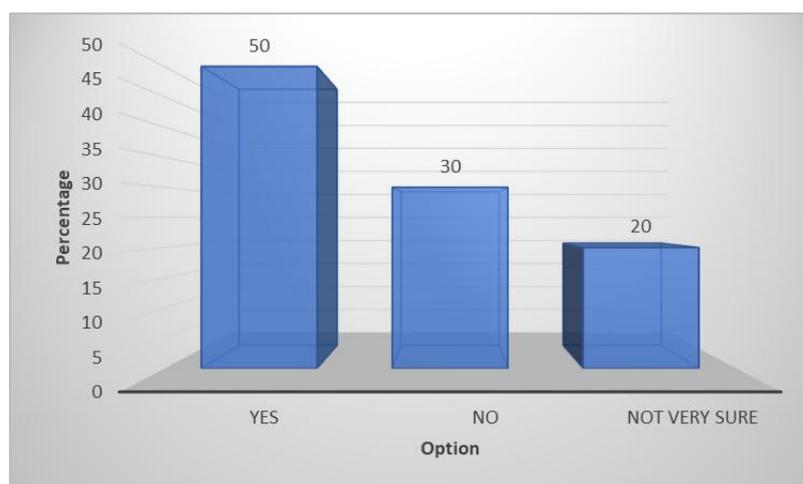
**9. Interested in listening to political news and in debating about politics**

The data was gathered regarding listening to political news and in debating about politics and it was tabulated under three categories 'Yes', 'No' and 'Not very sure' option.

**Table 9 : Interest in listening to political news and in debating about politics**

Option	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	300	50
No	180	30
Not very sure	120	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

The data shows that 50 percent answered 'Yes', 30 percent answered 'No' and 20 percent were 'not very sure' to answer to the question. The majority of the respondents answered 'Yes'.



**Fig 9 : Bar graph showing interest in listening to political news and in debating about politics**

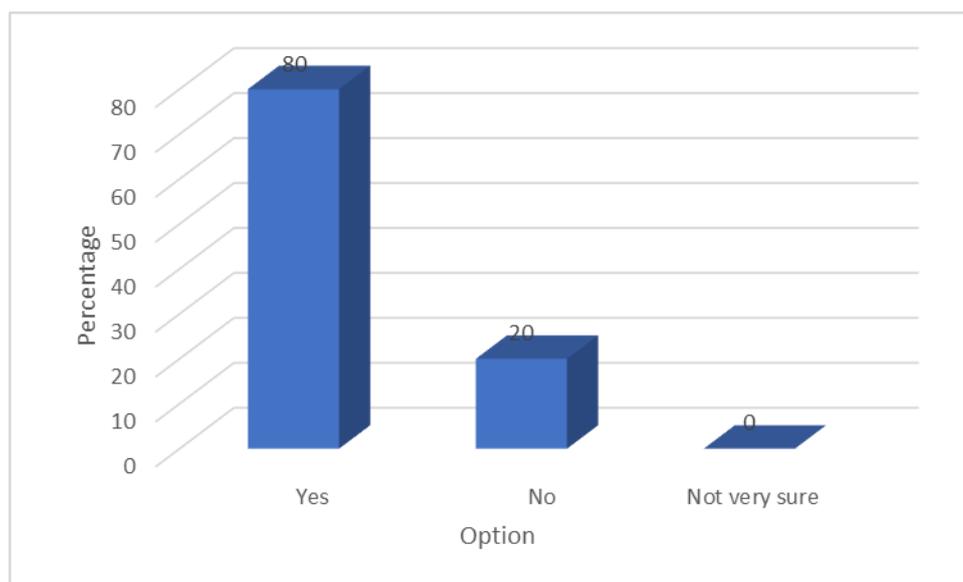
**10. Voting is right and doesn't like to miss it**

The data was collected regarding the voting rights concept from women and whether they liked it or not.

**Table 10 : Voting is right and doesn't like to miss it**

Option	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	480	80
No	120	20
Not very sure	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

The data shows that 80 percent of the women answered 'Yes' and 20 percent of the women answered 'No'. The majority of the women answered 'Yes'.



**Fig 10 : Bar graph showing voting is right and doesn't like to miss it**

### III. Conclusion

The study on women's political awareness and participation from 2000 to 2023 shows that women in West Bengal have made great strides in being politically involved. Voter turnout and political literacy have both seen significant increases among the state's female population throughout the last 20 years, empowering them to play an active role in the state's democratic processes. A greater number of women are politically engaged as a result of increased access to education, the proliferation of news and social media, and initiatives by both official institutions and non-profits.

According to the results, women in West Bengal are already a powerful electoral bloc whose involvement considerably impacts election results, rather than just being on the sidelines. As a whole, the traditional view of women's role in politics is changing, and this is evident in their participation in voting, community-level activities, political discourse, and local governance. During the study period, there was a positive trend toward increased democratic inclusion as women's voter turnout equalled or even surpassed men's in several elections.

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