

Who Entered the 15 Legislative Assembly of Maharashtra

Analysis of Method of Entry and Gatekeeping in Maharashtra Politics

Prajantra

2-A/3, S/F Front Side, Asif Ali Road

Turkman Gate, Delhi 110002

Email: prajatantramovement@gmail.com

Table of Content

Definitions of Key Terms	4
Gatekeeping in Politics	4
Method of Entry	4
Chapter 1	5
Gatekeepers: Dynast, Crorepatis, and Criminal Antecedents	5
Figure 1: Representation of Overall Gatekeeping in the 14th and 15th Maharashtra Assembly.	6
Figure 2: Representation of Individual Gatekeeping Barriers in the 14th and 15th Maharashtra Assembly.	7
Chapter 2	8
Method of Entry: Non-privileged Politicians' Routes to Enter Politics	8
Gatekeeping in Non-Privileged Methods	8
Figure 3: Representation of Non-Privileged Method of Entry and Gatekeeping	9
Partywise Method of Entry	10
Figure 4: Representation of Methods of Entry in BJP and INC.	10
Figure 5: Representation of Methods of Entry in SHS and SHS-UBT.	11
Figure 6: Representation of Methods of Entry in NCP and NCP-SP.	12
Chapter 3	13
Women Representation in Maharashtra Politics	13
Table 1: Method of Entry Among Women Representatives in 14th and 15th Maharashtra Legislative Assembly	13
Way Forward	14

About Prajatantra

Prajatantra is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that aims to **reduce barriers to political entry** and **facilitate electoral participation** for **better governance**

Our mission is to enable the best individuals to compete in elections and enhance the quality of governance. Through our unique 3E strategy—**Encourage**, **Educate**, and **Empower**—we celebrate the success stories of self-made politicians, educate aspirants on electoral processes and methods of political entry, and empower them with tools, teams, and mentorship to navigate their political journey.

As a political incubator, we aim to bring governance-centric individuals into politics. So far, we have worked with over 40 aspirants and helped seven governance-focused candidates secure party tickets, one of whom now serves as a Member of Parliament in the current Lok Sabha. Our incubation model focuses on states with upcoming elections, supporting candidates committed to governance reform. For example, our flagship program, **Maha Sangharsh**, targeted the Maharashtra elections, providing strategic and on-ground support to individuals driven by governance goals.

Additionally, we are conducting a groundbreaking longitudinal study to develop the **Ease of Doing Politics Index**, which will rank states based on critical factors like gatekeeping, campaign costs, methods of entry, and political accessibility. This Index will provide actionable insights into political barriers and promote a transparent, merit-based political system.

Through these initiatives, Prajatantra is breaking down barriers and transforming India's political landscape, ensuring that governance-centric leaders can emerge and thrive.

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 him.
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. **Self-made politicians:** Elected Representatives who have won without a political or criminal background with assets <1 crore.

Method of Entry

1. **Family Legacy/Dynasts:** Family legacy in politics occurs when an individual enters politics because of familial ties or connections to relatives already established in the political sphere, which provides 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

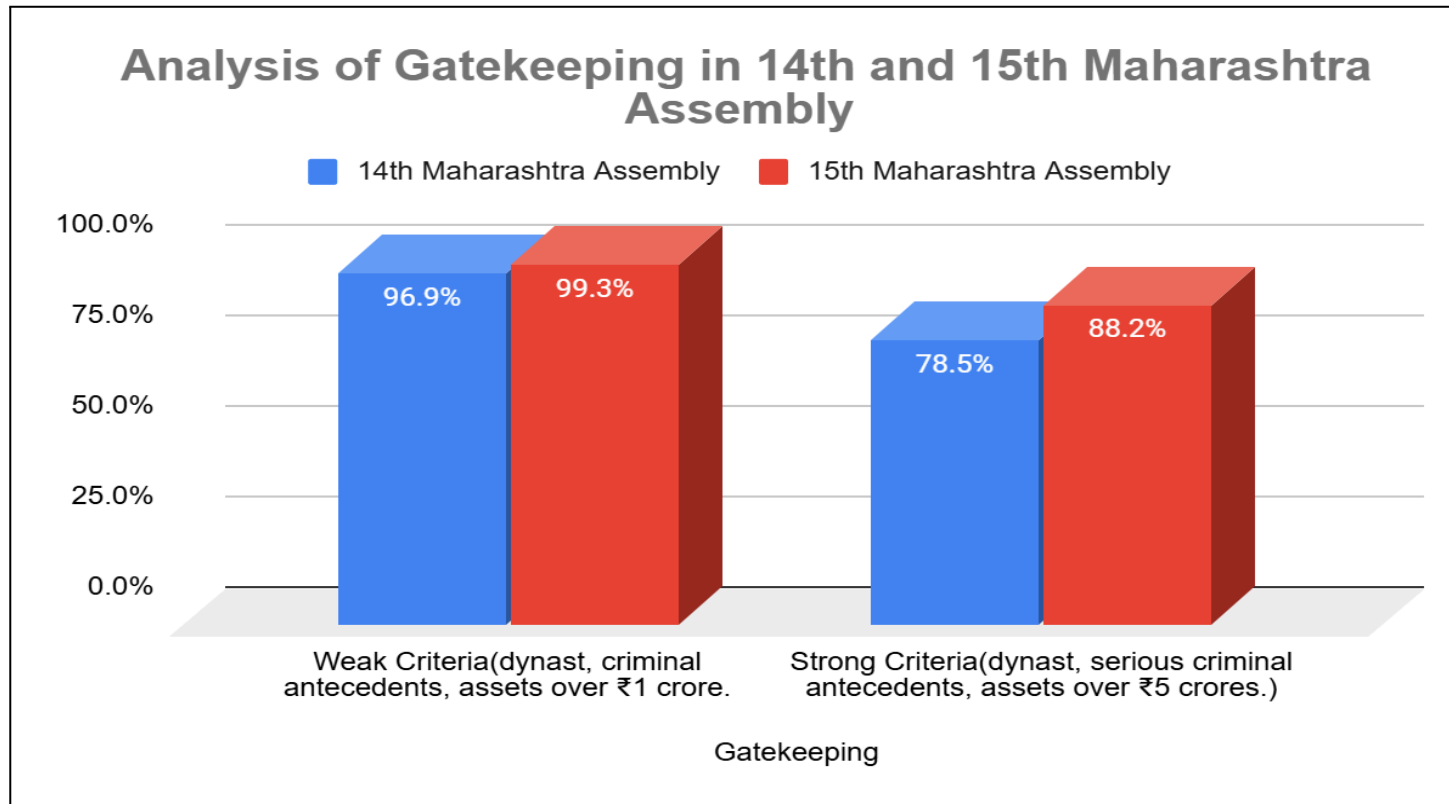
Gatekeepers: Dynast, Crorepatis, and Criminal Antecedents

To understand who enters the Maharashtra 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 Maharashtra, we have assessed both the 14th as well as 15th Maharashtra legislative assembly, to understand the increasing or decreasing trend of gatekeeping in Maharashtra politics.

In the newly elected Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, 99.3% of the representatives come from a privileged background—either they belong to a dynastic background, have criminal antecedents, or possess assets worth more than ₹1 crore. On applying stricter criteria, this percentage doesn't go significantly down as 88.2% of the elected representatives come from privileged backgrounds—either belong to a dynastic background, have serious criminal antecedents, or possess assets exceeding ₹5 crores.

In the last Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, 96.9% of the representatives came from privileged backgrounds—either they had a dynastic background, criminal antecedents, or assets exceeding ₹1 crore. Under stricter criteria, 78.5% of the representatives qualified as privileged, having either a dynastic background, serious criminal antecedents, or assets over ₹5 crores. The increase in these percentages in the newly elected assembly to 99.3% (general criteria) and 88.2% (stricter criteria) highlights increasing gatekeeping in Maharashtra politics. This indicates a concerning trend: either more representatives with serious criminal antecedents were elected, or the wealth concentration among elected representatives has increased, with more candidates surpassing the ₹5 crore asset mark.

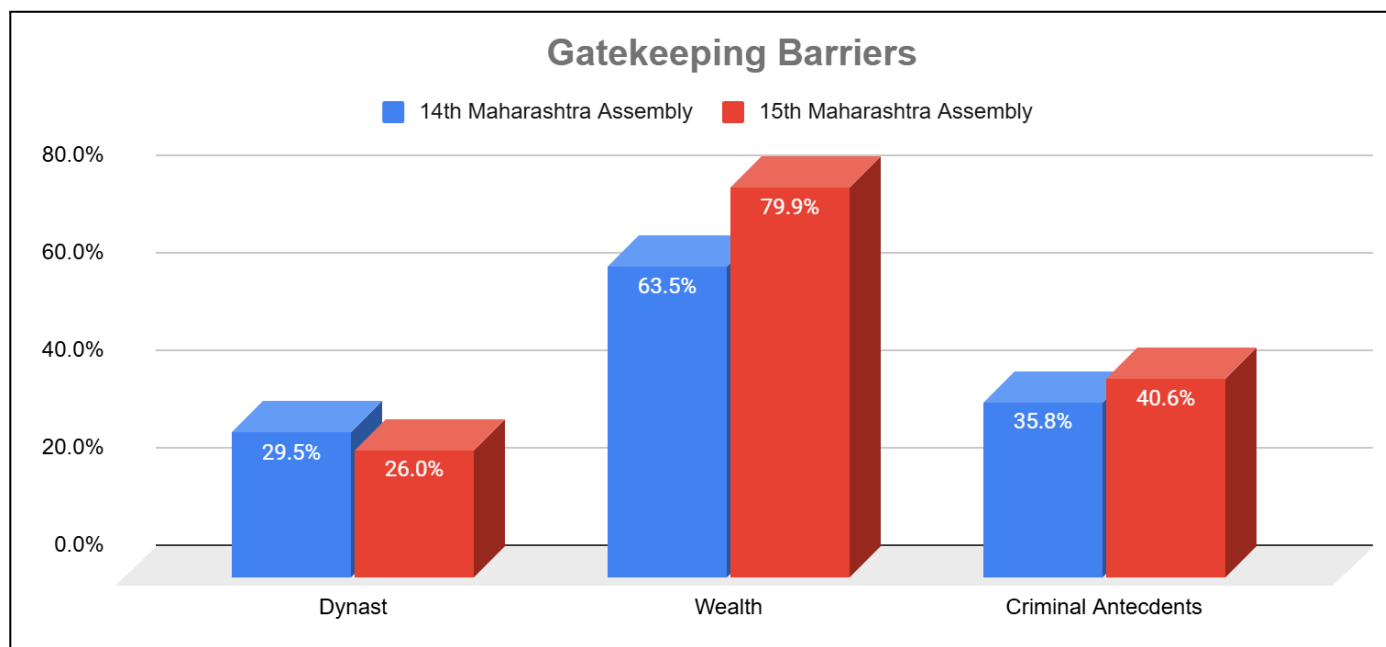
Figure 1: Representation of Overall Gatekeeping in the 14th and 15th Maharashtra Assembly.



- **Dynastic Representative:** In the 15th legislative assembly, 26.0% of the representatives are dynasts. Out of these 26.0%, 69.3% are second-generation dynasts, 10.7% are third-generation dynasts, and 18.7% are first-generation/ relatives. This percentage has declined from the 14th assembly, where 29.5% of the representatives were dynasts. Out of the 75 total dynasts 48 are elected again, which makes the strike rate of repeated dynasts 64.0%.

- **Assets:** out of all the three gatekeeping barriers, the wealth of the representatives has increased the most. In the present assembly, 96.5% of the representatives have assets of more than ₹1 crore, whereas, 79.9% of the representative have assets of more than ₹5 crore. Whereas, in the 14th assembly 92.4% of the representatives have assets of more than ₹1 crore, whereas, 63.5% of the representative have assets of more than ₹5 crore.
- **Criminal Antecedents:** In the present assembly, 66.0% of the representatives have criminal antecedents against them whereas, 40.6% of them have serious criminal antecedents against them. The number of representatives with criminal antecedents has increased in 1the 5th assembly as in the past assembly 62.2% of the representatives have criminal antecedents against them whereas, 35.8% of them have serious criminal antecedents against them.

Figure 2: Representation of Individual Gatekeeping Barriers in the 14th and 15th Maharashtra Assembly.



Note: Graphical representation of Strong criteria having either a dynastic background, serious criminal antecedents, or assets over ₹5 crores

Chapter 2

Method of Entry: Non-privileged Politicians' Routes to Enter Politics

Though dynastic politics stands as one of the most prominent methods of entry in Maharashtra politics, with 26.0% of candidates hailing from dynastic backgrounds, we have identified nine other significant pathways to political entry beyond dynastic politics, providing a detailed profile of how politicians advance to state-level positions. The most common methods of entry beyond dynasty, regardless of party affiliation, are Party Organizational Politics (28.1%) and Local politics (20.1%). Methods like student politics and association with Sangh also come under considerable pathway with 3.5% and 3.1% of the candidates coming from this background. A similar trend was observed in the previous legislative assembly, where dynastic candidates were the most prominent at 29.1%, followed by those from party organizations at 23.6% and local politics at 19.1%. Non-conventional pathway to entry into politics has no presence at all as only 0.7% of the Representatives are from civil services and 1.0% are from social service backgrounds.

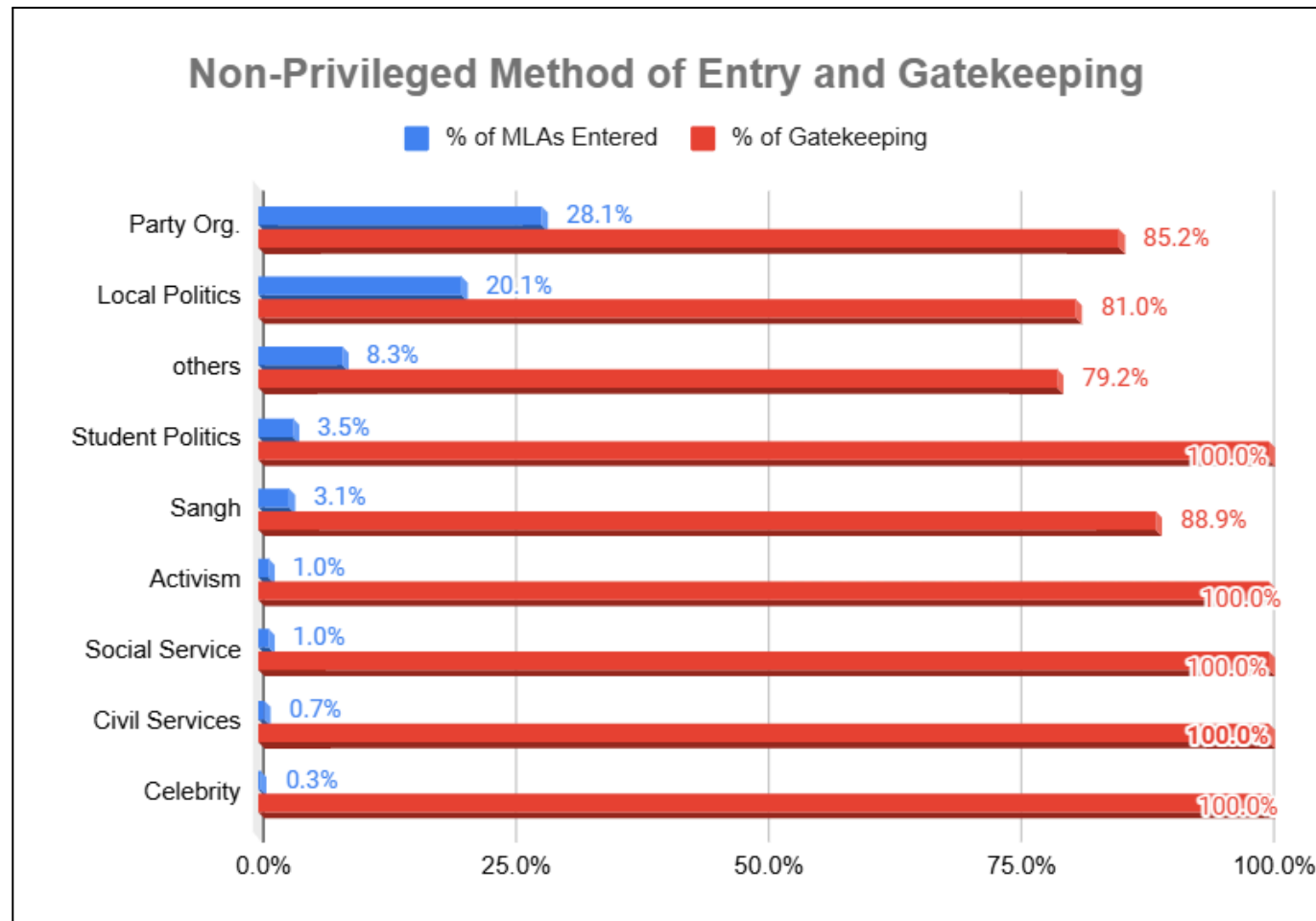
Apart from conventional and non-conventional methods of entry, the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly has seen many representatives emerging from sugar cooperatives, big business backgrounds, and professions such as teaching and medicine. Since these categories encompass a wide range of professions, we have grouped such representatives under the "Others" category for convenience.

Gatekeeping in Non-Privileged Methods

Gatekeeping in non-privileged methods of entry refers to instances where, despite coming from a non-political background, individuals still rely on wealth and muscle power to progress in state politics. In Maharashtra, party organizational politics and local politics are notably gatekept, with 85.2% and 81.0% of entrants respectively being gatekeepers. Among the non-privileged methods of entry, student politics emerges as the most gatekept pathway, with 100% of

representatives relying on gatekeeping mechanisms. This data highlights the pervasive influence of wealth and coercive power, even in avenues considered accessible to non-privileged aspirants, underscoring the structural barriers to genuine merit-based political participation.

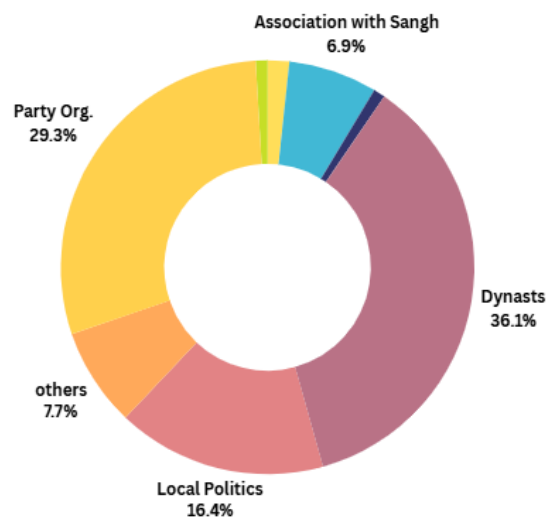
Figure 3: Representation of Non-Privileged Method of Entry and Gatekeeping



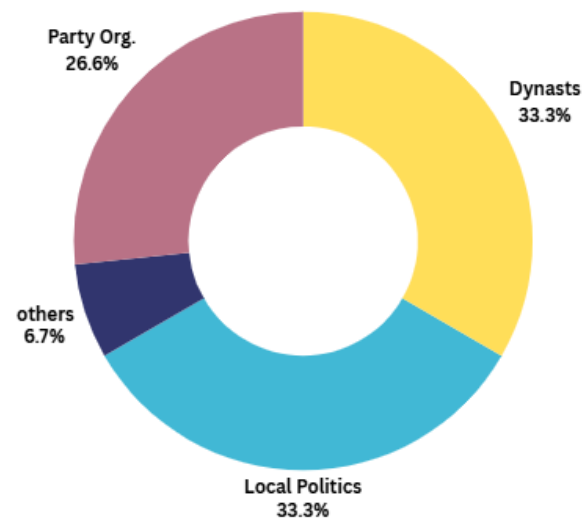
Partywise Method of Entry

In the present Maharashtra assembly, BJP emerged as the single-largest party, winning 132 seats on its own. Whereas, another alliance partner of Mahayuti - SHS won 57 and NCP won 41 seats. Whereas, MVA combined won 46 seats, while 12 seats went to small parties and Independent candidates. In the BJP, the most prominent method of entry is through dynastic connections, accounting for 31.8%, followed by party organizational politics at 25.8% and local politics at 14.4%. In contrast, the INC sees 31.3% of its representatives coming from both dynastic backgrounds and local politics, with party organizational politics contributing 25%. The national parties have a high dependence on Dynastic candidates for winning.

Figure 4: Representation of Methods of Entry in BJP and INC.



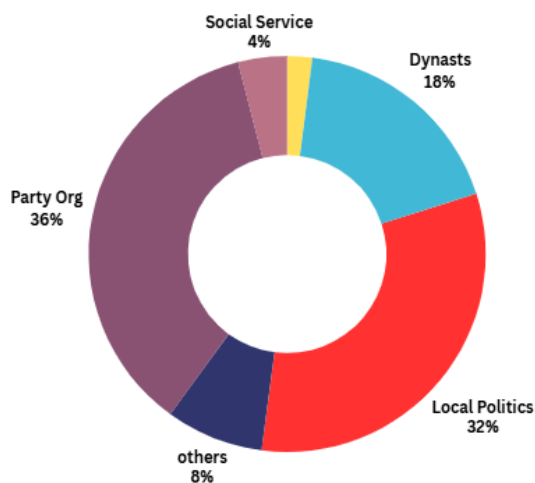
Method of Entry Among BJP Representatives



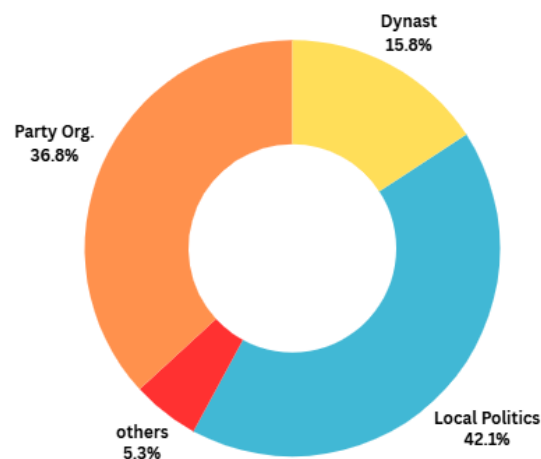
Method of Entry Among INC Representatives

In the split Sena, the Shinde faction's most prominent method of entry is party organizational politics, accounting for 31.6%, followed by local politics at 28.1% and dynastic connections at 15.8%. Meanwhile, in SHS-UBT, local politics dominates at 40.0%, followed by party organizational politics at 35.0% and dynastic backgrounds at 15.0%. This indicates that for regional parties, party organizational politics remains a significant pathway for political entry, reflecting their foundation on strong grassroots networks and core regional dynamics.

Figure 5: Representation of Methods of Entry in SHS and SHS-UBT.



Method of Entry Among SHS Representatives¹

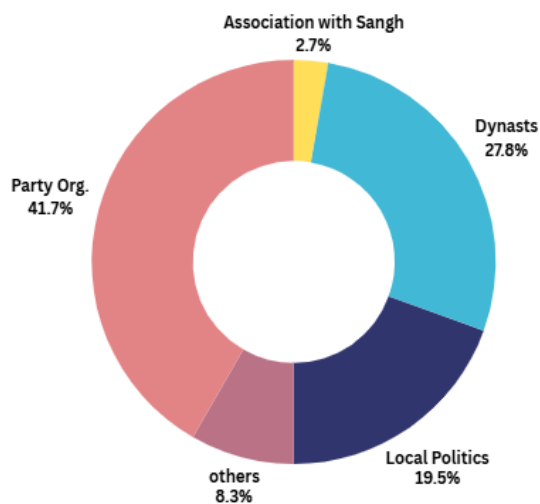


Method of Entry Among SHS-UBT Representatives

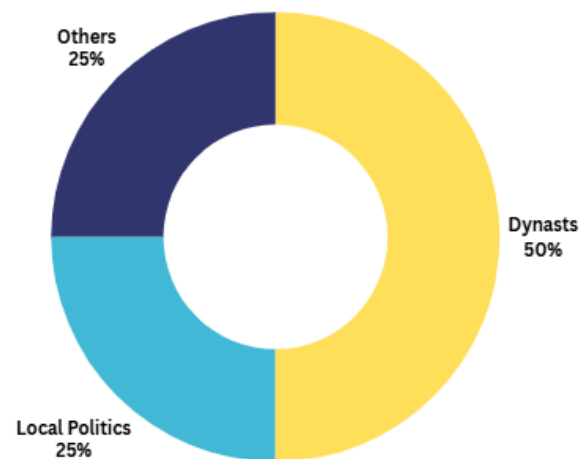
¹ The values do not add up to 100% because, for some representatives, the pathway to entry was either unclear or no information was available regarding their journey prior to becoming MLAs.

In the split NCP, the Ajit Pawar faction sees party organizational politics as the most prominent method of entry, comprising 36.6%, followed by dynastic backgrounds at 24.4% and local politics at 17.1%. On the other hand, in the Sharad Pawar faction, 40.0% of representatives come from dynastic backgrounds, with local politics and others each contributing 20.0%.

Figure 6: Representation of Methods of Entry in NCP and NCP-SP.



Method of Entry Among NCP Representatives



Method of Entry Among NCP-SP Representatives

Chapter 3

Women Representation in Maharashtra Politics

In the newly elected 15th Maharashtra Assembly, 22 women secured seats, maintaining the same number as the 14th Assembly. Among these, 15 women (68.0%) in the 15th Assembly come from dynastic backgrounds, compared to 12 (54.5%) in the 14th Assembly. This marks an increase in the dominance of dynastic pathways for women in the current assembly. The other methods of entry in the 15th Assembly include local politics (18.2%) and party organizational politics (13.6%), while in the 14th Assembly, 6 women (27.3%) entered through local politics, 2 through party organisational politics (9.1%), and 1 each from social service and other categories. The average asset size of women representatives in the 15th Assembly stands at ₹21.5 crore, higher than the ₹19.84 crore observed in the 14th Assembly. Moreover, the percentage of women identified as gatekeepers has risen from 81.8% in the 14th Assembly to 95.5% in the 15th Assembly.

Table 1: Method of Entry Among Women Representatives in 14th and 15th Maharashtra Legislative Assembly

Method of Entry	14 th Maharashtra Legislative Assembly	15th Maharashtra Legislative Assembly
Dynast	12	15
Local Politics	6	4
Party Organisational Politics	2	3
Social service	1	-
Others	1	-
Total	22	22

Way Forward

Prajatantra, with its focus on building the Ease of Doing Politics Index, has studied five states so far, including Maharashtra, along with the current Lok Sabha. The findings reveal a significant dominance of representatives with dynastic, wealthy, and criminal backgrounds across all the states analyzed. Haryana stands out with the highest number of dynastic MLAs, coupled with substantial wealth concentration, while Maharashtra exhibits a strong presence of all three gatekeeping factors. Additionally, the current Lok Sabha has also witnessed rise of all the three gatekeeping factors..

This growing trend of gatekeeping underscores how Indian politics is increasingly being monopolized, despite public discourse against dynastic politics. Such gatekeeping has long excluded self-made, governance-centric individuals from decision-making roles. To address this challenge, Prajatantra is dedicated to empowering self-made individuals to emerge as self-made politicians, thereby disrupting the influence of gatekeepers. Through our reports, we trace the journey of every elected representative, enabling a deeper understanding of political pathways and aiding in the development of more effective strategies for aspirants seeking to enter politics. This approach aims not only to enhance democratic participation but also to introduce fresh ideologies and innovative ideas into the political sphere.