

## **Citizen participation in the Democratic Process across South Asia : Who, How and Why<sup>1</sup>**

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*The cultures, practices and institutions of democracy have transformed the people of South Asia from subjects to citizens, as bearers of rights and dignity.... This gives rise to citizens' expectations that most of our regimes fail to meet*

*State of Democracy in South Asia Report*

### *I*

The South Asia region has seen citizen participation with varying degrees of assertiveness and intensity. In recent times, political developments within the region have focussed attention on the avenues and forms of participation of ordinary citizens in the democratic process. This paper – tentative in its formulations and limited in its sweep, focuses attention on who, why and how do citizens in the South Asia region take part in the processes of democracy in their respective countries. The paper uses data from the South Asia Barometer (also referred to as the State of Democracy in South Asia Study) undertaken in 2004-05. The South Asia Barometer covered Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This is the only survey that provides a comparative snapshot of attitudes and opinions of common citizens across these five nations.

The study indicates that there is an element of robustness in terms of citizen participation in the democratic process across South Asia. It also points out to the implications of the democratic expansion to the larger democratic enterprise in the region.

### *II*

The Report on the State of Democracy in South Asia highlighted seven big ideas which formed the main themes of the study. Three of them merit attention in the present analysis

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<sup>1</sup> In preparing this paper, I have sought the help of many people. Some of the ideas emerged from a detailed dialogue with Suhas Palshikar and Yogendra Yadav and I am grateful to them for the insights they provided. Pradeep Chibber helped me with the more sophisticated statistical analysis and Himanshu Bhattacharya helped with the preparation of the Index. My indebtedness to both of them. I take full ownership for the data analysis and the interpretations presented in this paper and absolve the colleagues who are mentioned in this note of any responsibility in this regard.

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1. Politics continues to be one of the most vibrant forces shaping contemporary South Asia....Political organizations, from political parties to non-party formations continue to attach a high degree of interest and involvement in politics and have the capacity not only to shape loyalties and ideologies, but also social identities and economic interests (SDSA :6)

Politics is central to the lives of even ordinary people in most of South Asia. Politics has an important resonance in the normal imagination of most people. Traditional and historical social identities have today assumed the status of political communities in large parts of South Asia. These identities often define and determine political loyalties and preferences and economic well being of most South Asians across the region.

2. The strength of the practice of democracy in South Asia lies in its capacity to move away from the received model of democracy. Every aspect of democracy in South Asia is marked by a disjunction between the script and the practice of democracy....Rather than being merely a source of slippage and failure, and this a distortion and deviation, this disjunction is also a source of innovation. Clearly, not all kind of deviations are necessarily sources of strength, but most sources of strength arise out of a capacity to deviate from a given rule. (SDSA : 7)

South Asia and its people have attempted to relate to democracy and its attendant institutions on their own terms and from their distinct world views. This creates `multiple mismatches`, unique and distinct to this geographical space and its people. South Asians have deftly adapted to the new scenarios that democracy throws up and skilfully re-negotiated the inherited `terms` and `conditions` for operating democratic systems.

3. The encounter between South Asia culture of democracy and the largely imported institutions has resulted in a bifurcation of, and within, institutions. On the one hand there are institutions or aspects of institutional functioning that while meeting all the formal requirements of democracy nevertheless lack in substance and vibrancy. On the other, there are institutions or aspects that connect to the people but do not have formal sanctity. Institutions and organizations that serve as a `hinge` between these two dimensions hold the key to the successful working of democracy (SDSA : 7)

The `route` that the traditional functioning of formal institutions indicates and the `direction` that the reality of politics dictates is a clear `disjoint` in the functioning of democracy. Making sense of this disconnect is the starting point of any analysis of democratic politics in South Asia.

The above three postulates are the basis for the analysis of citizen participation in the democratic process in the countries of South Asia. Who participates among the citizens? Are there any trends across the nations in the region? What

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are the distinctive markers in this regard? What are the avenues of citizen participation? What are their implications for the practice, working and status of democracy? What triggers off higher levels of participation? These are some of the questions this paper seeks to address.

### *III*

#### **Does ones vote matter**

A direction form of citizen participation in the democratic process is by exercising their right to vote. At the outset, it would be useful to tap citizen response on whether they think they are in a position to make a difference to how the country is run through their vote. Across South Asia, save in Pakistan, two-thirds of the citizens asserted that their vote has an effect on the way things are run in their country (see Table 1). In Pakistan half the respondents felt that their vote made difference stand while close to one in every four opined that their vote made no difference. The pessimism in Pakistan could be linked to the fact that the country has frequently transitioned from democratic to non-democratic regimes and is a reflection of how citizens feel about the stability of democracy in their country.

Among citizens, are there any groups which feel more strongly on the question of the impact of their vote? Across the region it was found that men tended to be more positive than women in asserting the importance of their vote. Education too had a clear impact. Those who had access to high education tended to be more optimistic on the impact of their vote. In all the countries, save Pakistan, those with lower incomes tended to be more convinced of the efficacy of their vote. In India and Nepal, the Upper Castes were more convinced that their vote had an impact as compared to those belonging to other caste groups. In Pakistan the Punjabis and in Sri Lanka the Sinhala community were more likely (than other ethnic groups) to say that their vote had an impact on the way things were run in their country. Age appeared to make a difference only in Nepal where the younger generation of respondents tended to demonstrate greater positivism with regard to the power of the vote. Urban voters were more convinced of the impact of their vote in India and Nepal whereas in Sri Lanka's case the some optimism was expressed by rural voters more (see Table 2).

It is evident from this data, that a reasonably high percentage of voters across the region (save in Pakistan) are convinced of the efficacy and power of their vote. The impact of education in enhancing the confidence levels is apparent. On the other hand greater cynicism is demonstrated as income levels rise. Most crucially, the upper castes/dominant ethnic groups appear to believe that their vote has a greater impact as compared to the backward castes/ minority ethnic groups. This possibly is a reflection of popular perception on the nature of control over democratic political processes in South Asian nations.

### **Citizens as voters**

How did respondents answer the question on having voted ever since they became eligible? In Sri Lanka nearly three fourths of the respondents stated that they voted in every election. In India and Bangladesh more than two thirds of the respondents reported having voted in every election. Studies have found (Indian National Election Study 2004, 2009) that respondents tended to over report voting and this appears true in the case of the three countries mentioned above as aggregate voting statistics relating to elections shows that the actual voting turnout was much lower. In Nepal and Pakistan less than half the respondents stated that they voted in every election that they were eligible to vote in. In Nepal, another twenty percent stated that they voted in most elections. In Pakistan, only another ten percent reported that they voted in most elections (see Table 3). In Nepal and Pakistan given the fact that regular elections have either be a more recent phenomenon (Nepal) or elections are held intermittently (Pakistan) respondents may have understood the question as implying whether they had opportunities to vote ever since they passed the eligible age for voting. This possibly explains the lower reporting of voting in these two countries.

Given the fact that surveys have respondents generally over-report on voting, it would be useful to delineate are there any sections among voters who stated that they voted less frequently/ more frequently?

Across nations, men tended to report that they voted more frequently than women. In some countries the difference was marginal (Bangladesh, India and Nepal) while in others it was significant (Sri Lanka and Pakistan). In all five nations the older generation tended to say that they participated more often in elections as compared to the youth. Education and Income levels did not make a significant difference and in Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka the caste/ethnic factor was significant. In Nepal the Upper Castes were more likely to report that they voted in all/most elections. Same is the case with the Punjabi's in Pakistan and Sinhala's in Sri Lanka. The non-Punjabi's ethnic groups in Pakistan and the Tamils in Sri Lanka were more likely to state that they rarely voted/never voted.

Reporting of having voted on most occasions/all occasions after becoming eligible to vote was more commonly reported by men in all the five countries, by older voters and by the dominant ethnic/caste groups.

### **Index of Political Participation**

To capture the nature of participation in the democratic process, an index of political participation was prepared combining the response to four important

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questions that tapped political participation.<sup>2</sup> The Index of political participation across the five countries of South Asia makes for interesting analysis.

Across the region, it is noticed that save in Pakistan, the range of respondents in the high level of participation band is from 24 to 44 percent. Sri Lanka reported reasonably significant numbers in the high level of participation band with close to half the population being in this segment. One thirds of the Bangladeshi and Nepali respondents and one fourth of the Indian respondents were in the high participation zone. Less than one of every ten respondents from Pakistan were in the high participation zone (see Table 4).

On the other hand, four of every ten Pakistani respondents were in the low participation category. One fourth of the Nepali participants too were in this category. The recent transition to democracy could account for the high

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<sup>2</sup> The Index of political participation was developed by combining responses to four different questions.

Q 19 : Thinking of whether you voted or not ever since you became eligible for voting, how would you describe yourself – have you voted in every election, voted in most elections, voted in some elections or hardly ever voted

1. Voted in every election. 2. Voted in most elections 3. Voted in some elections  
4. Hardly ever voted 9. N.A. 0. Could not understand 8 No opinion

Those who had given the opinion that they voted in every election and voted in most election were clubbed together and given the value as 2 - high voting. Those who stated that they voted in some election and hardly voted were given the value of 1 - low voting. For no opinion and did not understand they have been given the value of 0.

Q 20 a, 20b, 20c

Now I will ask you some social and political activities that you have have ever taken part in. Tell me have you, ever in your life taken part in

Yes	No	Don't Remember	Could Not Understand	No Opinion
1	2	7	0	8

20a. Any protest or demonstration or struggle or movement

20b. Campaign in elections or referendum

20c Solving problems connected to the locality

Those who stated 'Yes` to questions 20a to 20c have been given a value of 2 for every question signifying participated to. Those who said 'No` and `Don't Remember` have been given a value of 1 for every question and those who had no opinion were given the score of 0

The summed values for all four variables were then taken and were in a range from 0 to 8. Those whose cumulative Score came to 0 were excluded from analysis as they had given a No Opinion answer to all questions. The mean for this Index is between 5 and 5.25 for each country. 1 to 4 has been clubbed as Low levels of Participation 5 has been categorized as Average levels of Participation and 6 to 8 as High Levels of Participation

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numbers in this zone in Nepal and Pakistan's phases of non-democratic rule may have induced respondents to be in the low participation band. Less than two of every ten respondents in Bangladesh and India were in the low participation category and Sri Lanka has the lowest percentage of respondents in this category – a mere five percent.

In most countries between 40 to 50 percent of the respondents were in the moderate zone of participation. In India's case nearly two thirds were in this category.

Save in the case of Pakistan and Sri Lanka, there is a significant distribution of respondents at the two ends of the range – High and Low Participation. In Pakistan's case there is a higher concentration at the lower end while Sri Lanka reported the opposite. Are there significant differences in terms of which sections of society are more likely to be at the higher or lower ends? An analysis of select demographic variables was undertaken in this regard.

### Age

The first variable that is assessed is age. In the moderate range of political participation there is no major difference in terms of age. In the band of high political participation it is noticed that across countries the percentages dips at the two ends of the age band – less than 25 years and more than 55 years (see Table 5). The highest percentages are in the middle age ranges and in most cases (save India) in the 46 to 55 age group. The variation in the higher political participation range across age group is evident but does not appear to be significant.

The variation across age groups is much more pronounced in the low participation zone (see Table 6). Here it is evidently clear that the highest percentages in each country are stacked in the lowest age bracket and the difference with as compared to the higher age brackets appears much more pronounced.

Thus age appears to be a factor not in the entire index of political participation but places a significant role among those at the lower end of the participation curve.

### Gender

Does gender play out as an important marker of difference? The gender divide in political participation is transparently evident. In all countries men have participate much more in political activities as compared to women (see Table 7). In the high participation part of the index, the gender differences in Nepal, Pakistan and India are more than double. In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the percentage of men in the high participation end is much higher than women though the difference is not as stark as in the case of the other three countries.

In the low participation end of the index, the percentage of women in each of the countries is nearly double that of men (see Table 7) . In Pakistan, more than

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half the women respondents were in the low participation category. Three of every ten women respondents in Nepal also came in the low participation range of the index.

Gender is clearly an important indicator of the difference in political participation in South Asia. This is noticed both at the high end and low end of the index of political participation.

### Urban/Rural

Does the location that the respondent lives in determine the extent of his/her involvement in political activity? Given the political significance of the `rural` in any political dialogue in South Asia and the increasing migration of the new generation to urban locales, many would argue that the rural-urban divide is quite pronounced in several sites including the political. The survey finds that this need to necessarily be true in the South Asia region.

At the high end of the index of political participation it is found that in all the five countries there is a difference in the intensity of participation in urban and rural areas (see Table 8). However, all the differences are within the five percentage points range. In Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan, there is a higher percentage of rural respondents in the high participation range of the index, India and Nepal report a marginally higher number of urban respondents in the high participation range.

In the moderate participation zone, there is hardly a difference between rural and urban areas save in the case of Sri Lanka where there is a five percentage point difference in favour of urban respondents.

In the low participation zone of the index too the difference between urban and rural areas is less than five percentage points (see Table 8). In Bangladesh and Pakistan a higher percentage of urban respondents are in the low participation range as compared to their rural counterparts. In Nepal, rural respondents are in a higher percentage in the low participation zone while in Sri Lanka and India the differences are very minimal.

Place of residence thus does not seem to impact significantly on the nature and intensity if of political participation of citizens.

### Education

Earlier in the paper it was reported that access to education was an important indicator of whether respondents felt that they vote made a difference. Is the same trend also noticed with regard to political participation?

A review of the figures in the high participation range of the index indicates that, except in the case of Bangladesh, as education levels decline high levels of participation also dip (see Table 9). In Bangladesh the high level of participation is the same at the two ends of the education range (graduates+ and illiterates).

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The differences at the two ends of the education spectrum in all countries (save Bangladesh) are significant in terms of percentage points.

In the moderate zone of participation, the differences across education levels appear not significant.

At the lower end of the participation index, it is noticed that the trend as stated above gets reversed. Save in the case of Bangladesh, in all other countries, with increase in the level of education, there is a decline in the percentage of those in the low participation band (see Table 10). A caveat needs to be added at this stage, the differences across the education band in the low participation end of the index are not as significant as compared to what is noticed at the high participation end.

Thus, while education levels may help explain intensity of political participation, there is a crucial difference both across countries in the region and at the lower and higher ends of the index of political participation.

### Income levels

Do income levels of the respondent make any difference in defining the strength of their political participation? The study has classified respondents in four income bands<sup>3</sup>.

At the higher end of the participation index it is noticed that with the rise in income the percentage of those in the high participation band decreases. The only exception is the case of Pakistan where there is a rise with increase in income (see Table 11). However, in the case of Pakistan the overall figures of high level of participation are very low and the difference across income bands is marginal. In the case of Sri Lanka, India and Nepal, the difference across income levels at the higher end of participation is as much as ten percentage points.

In the case of the lower end of the index of political participation, in all countries save Bangladesh, the percentage of those in the lower band increases with the rise in incomes (see Table 12). However the differences within each country across the income bands at the lower end of the participation in index are marginal.

Thus, income seems to be a critical marker at the higher end of the participation index in most countries in South Asia while at the lower end of the participation index the differences are not very significant.

### Caste/Ethnicity

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<sup>3</sup> Income bands were created on the basis of reported income by respondents and the assessment of assets that respondents possessed. The creation of each income quarter is specific to each country.



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Does social stratification impact on the intensity of political participation. Across the South Asian region different indicators have been used to analyse social stratification<sup>4</sup>.

In the high end of the participation index it is found that the upper caste/dominant ethnic (religious) group tends to have a higher percentage point of participation as compared to the other castes/ minority ethnic (religious) group(s). The differences in Pakistan and India are marginal while there are reasonably high in the other countries (see Table 13).

At the lower end of the participation index , the other castes/ minority ethnic (religious) group(s) report higher percentage points as compared to the upper caste/dominant ethnic (religious) group (see Table 13). The only exception is India where there is no major difference across social groups at the lower end of the participation index.

In the case of caste/ethnicity too the range of difference across the participation index is not uniform across countries. However, it is a crucial marker in the case of some nations in the region.

### Regression Analysis

To determine which of the above variables had the maximum impact in determining citizen participation a multi-variate regression analysis was undertaken with the index of political participation as the dependent variable and Age, Gender, Education, Place of Stay (residence), Income level and Ethnic/Caste classification as the independent variables. The results of the regression analysis are outlined in Table 14.

The regression analysis clearly indicates that across South Asia, gender is an important determinant of political participation. The Index of political participation sees a much higher level of involvement of men. This is significant ways is a reflection of the social reality in South Asia and limited avenues that are available for women's participation. In spite of the fact that in India, one-thirds of the positions are reserved for women in local governments, the democratic process has been unable to ensure higher levels of participation among women.

Education too does have an impact on political participation save in Bangladesh. The higher the level of education the greater is the formal participation in the democratic process.

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<sup>4</sup> While in India and Nepal caste is the basis of analysis in Pakistan and Sri Lanka ethnicity is the social marker. In Bangladesh the religious majority and minority are the classification categories employed.

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Place of stay impacts significantly on political participation in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan and does not appear significant in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Income levels appear to have an impact on political participation in India and Sri Lanka. Those at the lower end of the income scale seem to be more involved in the democratic process.

Ethnicity appears to be an important indicator of political participation in Sri Lanka with the majority Sinhala ethnic groups demonstrating higher levels of participation as compared to the Tamil minorities. Similarly in Bangladesh, the majority religious community appears to be more politically engaged than those from the religious minority.

#### *IV*

The SDSA survey clearly points out to the fact that the levels of participation in the democratic process in South Asia is relatively high and is triggered off by a range of factors. In some of the region of South Asia as the systems are either new-comers to the democratic experiment or have frequently transitioned between democratic and non democratic regimes, the interest in politics is significantly high. More often than not this interest in politics is not often matched by avenues for participation in politics. This fact was transparently evident in the range of other instruments that the State of Democracy in South Asia (SDSA) study employed as part of its methodology. The study chose multiple pathways - besides the survey, the study include case studies, dialogues and qualitative assessments.

At one level the survey indicates that those with higher levels of education tend to be more active participants in the democratic process. Our other research instruments tend to make us believe that this more of an aspiration rather than a reality. Across South Asia, a challenge to democratic deepening has been the apparent disinterest of the educated middle class who often occupy the high moral ground which does not transfer itself into actual participation and involvement.

A survey finding that is strongly corroborated by evidence from the other research instruments has been the more active participation in politics by those from the economically less privileged sections of society. This is something that many countries in South Asia have experienced and consistently demonstrated. The `seeping downwards` of the democratic process has been a fact of life in many parts of South Asia.

The findings also indicate that in some parts of South Asia, the domination of the more powerful ethnic/religious groups is a reality in the working of the political process. The lower levels of participation among the minorities (ethnic, religious) is seen across the South Asia region. This is both a reflection of absence of avenues of meaningful participation and the nature of the power structure in each of the countries in the region.

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The SDSA study draws attention to the three important challenges linked to citizen participation in the democratic process. The first is a foundational challenge. The inherent inequalities in society put certain groups at a disadvantage. While they may enjoy an equality of status in the democratic process this is often not translated into equality in opportunities for access and results. This paper draws attention to this fact.

Secondly, democracies in South Asia face a challenge of expansion. The deepening of democracy bring in its wake new opportunities, new challenges and new aspirations. More often than not the system finds it difficult to accommodate and negotiate with all the competing interests. This challenge is also seen in who participates.

Finally, as was mentioned in the SDSA report, the democratic enterprise in South Asia hinges on the ushering in of meaningful social change and sustained political transformation. Indicators in terms of political participation reflect both the road so far traversed and the journey still ahead.

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**Table 1**

Does your vote have an effect on the way things are run in the country  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	Has effect	Makes no difference	N
Nepal	75	10	3249
India	67	20	5205
Sri Lanka	67	21	4629
Bangladesh	66	24	2504
Pakistan	50	39	2681

Source : SDSA Data file

Note : No Opinion and Could Not Understand not included

Question 30 : Do you think that your vote has an effect on how things are run in our country or do you think your vote makes no difference?

1. Has effect                      2. Makes no difference    0. Could not understand                      8. No Opinion

**Table 2**

Does your vote have an effect on the way things are run in the country :  
Across select demographic variables  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	Age	Gender	Education	Locale	Income	Caste/Ethnic group
Bangladesh	No Difference	Men more positive	Higher the education, the more positive the response	No difference	Higher the income less the optimism	No major differences
India	No Difference	Men more positive	Higher the education, the more positive the response	Urban votes more positive	Higher the income less the optimism	Upper Castes tended to be more positive
Pakistan	No Difference	Men more positive	Higher the education, the more positive the response	No difference	No Difference	Punjabi's tended to be more optimistic
Nepal	Younger were more optimistic	Men more positive	Higher the education, the more positive the response	Urban votes more positive	Higher the income less the optimism	Upper Castes tended to be more positive
Sri Lanka	No Difference	Men more positive	Higher the education, the more positive the response	Rural votes more positive	Higher the income less the optimism	Sinhala's tended to be more optimistic

Source : SDSA Data file

Question : No 30 as stated in Table 1 footnote

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**Table 3**

Does your vote have an effect on the way things are run in the country  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	Voted in every election	Voted in most elections	Voted in some elections	Hardly ever voted	N
Sri Lanka	74	18	6	1	4634
India	68	19	7	2	5207
Bangladesh	64	20	13	3	2504
Nepal	44	20	19	10	3249
Pakistan	44	11	16	28	2681

Source : SDSA data file

Note : No Opinion and Could Not Understand not included

Question 19 : Thinking of whether you voted or not ever since you became eligible for voting, how would you describe yourself – have you voted in every election, voted in most elections, voted in some elections or hardly ever voted

1. Voted in every election. 2. Voted in most elections 3. Voted in some elections  
4. Hardly ever voted 9. N.A. 0. Could not understand 8 No opinion

**Table 4**

Index of Political Participation  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	High level of Participation	Moderate Level of Participation	Low level of Participation	N
Sri Lanka	44	51	5	4623
Bangladesh	39	44	17	2503
Nepal	36	40	24	3241
India	24	63	13	5187
Pakistan	9	49	42	2671

Source : SDSA Data file

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote

**Table 5**

Index of Political Participation by age : High level of participation  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	56 years and above	46-55	36-45	26-35	25 years and below	N
Sri Lanka	45	50	45	43	39	4623
Bangladesh	39	43	42	37	38	2503
Nepal	37	43	41	35	19	3241
India	21	23	24	28	22	5187
Pakistan	11	12	13	9	6	2671

Source : SDSA Data file

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote

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**Table 6**

Index of Political Participation by age : Low level of participation  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	56 years and above	46-55	36-45	26-35	25 years and below	N
Sri Lanka	5	4	5	6	8	4623
Bangladesh	12	11	14	20	21	2503
Nepal	15	16	17	27	51	3241
India	10	11	16	26	35	5187
Pakistan	21	23	28	41	64	2671

Source : SDSA Data file

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote

**Table 7**

Index of Political Participation by gender :  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	High Level of Participation		Low Level of Participation		N
	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Sri Lanka	57	34	4	7	4623
Bangladesh	47	32	11	22	2503
Nepal	51	22	17	30	3241
India	38	9	9	18	5187
Pakistan	16	2	25	56	2671

Source : SDSA Data file

Note : Moderate level of participation has been left out

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote

**Table 8**

Index of Political Participation by place of stay (locale) :  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	High Level of Participation		Moderate level of participation	Low Level of Participation		N
	Urban	Rural	Urban (Rural)	Urban	Rural	
Sri Lanka	41	45	56(50)	4	5	4623
Bangladesh	35	40	45(44)	21	16	2503
Nepal	38	35	42(40)	21	26	3241
India	26	24	63(63)	12	13	5187
Pakistan	7	10	48(50)	44	40	2671

Source : SDSA Data file

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote

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**Table 9**

Index of Political Participation by Education levels: High level of participation  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	Graduate+	High School Pass	Primary Pass	Below Primary	Illiterate	N
Sri Lanka	56	51	46	36	25	4623
Bangladesh	39	43	41	40	38	2503
Nepal	62	50	43	46	23	3241
India	43	36	29	21	11	5187
Pakistan	22	12	11	15	5	2671

Source : SDSA Data file

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote

**Table 10**

Index of Political Participation by Education levels: Low level of participation  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	Graduate+	High School Pass	Primary Pass	Below Primary	Illiterate	N
Sri Lanka	3	4	5	4	11	4623
Bangladesh	21	15	16	17	17	2503
Nepal	13	22	26	20	27	3241
India	13	13	11	11	15	5187
Pakistan	31	43	40	42	44	2671

Source : SDSA Data file

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote

**Table 11**

Index of Political Participation by Income levels: High level of participation  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	I income quarter (Lowest)	II income quarter	III income quarter	IV income quarter (Highest)	N
Sri Lanka	52	45	39	38	4623
Bangladesh	41	40	40	37	2503
Nepal	43	40	31	31	3241
India	32	27	23	19	5187
Pakistan	8	9	10	11	2671

Source : SDSA Data file

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote

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**Table 12**

Index of Political Participation by Income levels: Low level of participation  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	I income quarter (Lowest)	II income quarter	III income quarter	IV income quarter (Highest)	N
Sri Lanka	6	5	6	7	4623
Bangladesh	19	16	14	18	2503
Nepal	20	22	27	28	3241
India	12	11	14	14	5187
Pakistan	35	44	45	43	2671

Source : SDSA Data file

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote

**Table 13**

Index of Political Participation by ethnic group/caste :  
(all figures in percentages)

Country	High Level of Participation		Low Level of Participation		N
	Upper Caste/ Dominant Ethnic Group	Backward or lower castes/ Minority ethnic group(s)	Upper Caste/ Dominant Ethnic Group	Backward or lower castes/ Minority ethnic group(s)	
Sri Lanka*	48	29	5	11	4623
Bangladesh***	40	22	16	28	2503
Nepal ****	40	30	21	27	3241
India ****	26	23	13	13	5187
Pakistan**	9	7	36	46	2671

\* Dominant Ethnic Group – Sinhala/ Minority Ethnic Group: Tamils

\*\* Dominant Ethnic Group – Punjabis/ Minority Ethnic Group: Others

\*\*\* Majority – Muslims/ Minorities : Hindus

\*\*\*\* Upper Caste/ Backward and Lower Castes

Source : SDSA Data file

Questions : As stated in the Index footnote



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**Table 14**  
Regression Analysis  
Index of Political Participation

Independent variable	Bangladesh		India		Nepal		Pakistan		Sri Lanka	
	B	Std. Err	B	Std. Err	B	Std. Err	B	Std. Err	B	Std. Err
Age	.034**	.011	.049**	.006	.156**	.011	.126**	.009	.052**	.008
Gender	<b>-.247**</b>	.029	<b>-.311**</b>	.017	<b>-.299**</b>	.029	<b>-.373**</b>	.025	<b>-.242**</b>	.021
Education	.01	1.014	<b>.071**</b>	.007	<b>.124**</b>	.015	<b>.058**</b>	.010	<b>.084**</b>	.015
Locality	<b>-.126**</b>	.040	<b>-.052**</b>	.020	-.041	.035	<b>-.059*</b>	.025	-.004	.033
Income Level	-.016	.014	<b>-.017**</b>	.008	-.051**	.013	-.020	.012	<b>-.031**</b>	.010
Caste/ Ethnic Group	<b>.054**</b>	.015	.000	.004	.001	.008	-.007	.007	<b>-.044**</b>	.015

\*\* p < .01

\* p < .05

For regression, the values of all the independent variables are

Age: 1= less than 25 years, 2=between 26-35 years, 3=between 36-45 years, 4=between 46-55 years, 5=more than 56 years.

Gender: 1=men, 2=women

Educational: 1=illiterate, 2=primary pass, 3=High school pass, 4=college educated

Locality: 1=Village, 2=Urban

Income level: 1<sup>st</sup> quarter (Low income); 2: 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter; 3: 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 4: 4<sup>th</sup> quarter (High Income)

Ethnic classification: India and Nepal: Upper caste and Other Castes; Bangladesh : Muslims and Hindus; Pakistan : Punjabis and others' Sri Lanka : Sinhala and Tamil

Similarly the answer categories of political participation index

1= Low, 2= Medium, 3= High