

---

# A SNEAK PEEK INTO THE WORLD'S LARGEST AND MOST EXPENSIVE DEMOCRATIC EXERCISE

Gaurav Sinha – Associate Director, Asset Allocation and Modern Alpha  
04/11/2019

There's a common saying in the intellectual circles of Delhi, India: "Elections are the biggest festivals of a democracy."

This once-every-five or so years festivity is back, and nearly one billion voters in the world's largest democracy are ready to celebrate.

India's Election Commission announced federal election dates while I was recently in the country. The election is a month-long process, held in seven stages from April 11 through May 19.

## The World's Largest Democracy

While the United States is the world's oldest and most mature democracy, India has the unique distinction of being the largest. After its independence in 1947, with memories of World War II and fascism still fresh, founders of this new republic—but ancient civilization—realized that the checks and balances of a democracy ensure smooth and sustained growth.

Since then, India has had 16 federal elections. Here are some key facts and figures for this mammoth exercise.

- **Nearly 1 Billion Voters – world's Largest!**

More than 830 million people were eligible to vote during the 2014 election, and more than 550 million actually cast their vote (an impressive > 66% turnout!). This time, the size of the electorate is expected to swell to over 900 million, which is more than the populations of all European countries combined.

- **Expected Bill of \$7 Billion – World's Most Expensive!**

About \$6.5 billion was spent in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, making it the most expensive election on this planet to date. But India's 2019 federal elections are estimated to cost over \$7 billion, a 40% increase from the \$5 billion bill of India's 2014 federal elections. With almost one billion voters, this is nearly \$7 spent per voter. In 2014, one 98-year-old man in the Himalayan mountains trekked several miles to vote—something that he had done in every election held since India's independence in 1947.

- **Over 10 Million Polling Staff – Trains to Helicopters**

Coordinating the polling of one billion voters is an incredible logistical challenge. There will be one million polling stations across the country and over 10 million polling staff, 600,000 security personnel, 600 special trains and 100 helicopters.

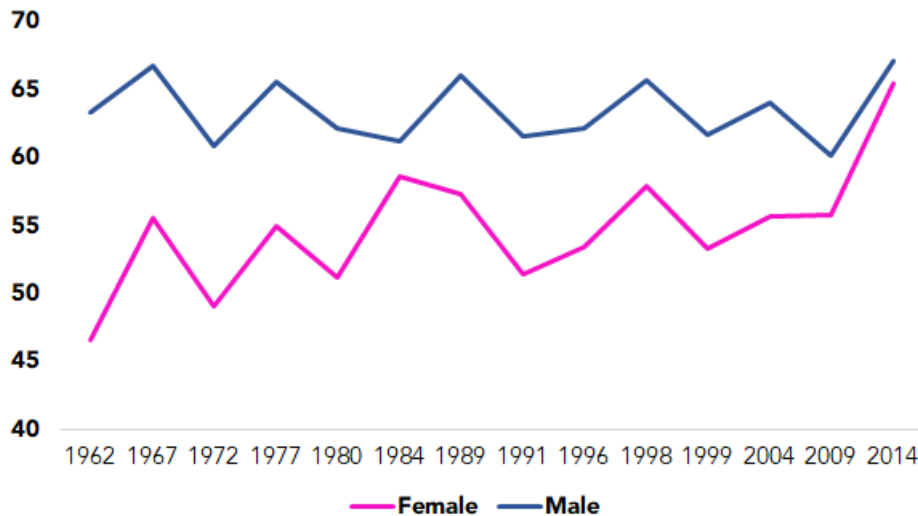
- **Over One Million Polling Stations – From Hermits to Leopards and Lions**

Ensuring that each of India’s one billion voters gets reasonable access to polling stations, including in some of its remotest locations, is a humongous task. Polling locations range from 15,000 feet above sea level in the Himalayas to one for a sole hermit living deep in the leopard- and lion-ruled jungles of western India.

- **Over 65% Female Voter Turnout – Pink Is the Unofficial Color!**

Women outnumbered men in the last election in half of India’s states. Since its first election, the gap between men and women in voter participation has been gradually narrowing. In the last elections, women even managed a few polling stations; this time, the Election Commission plans to set up more “pink polling booths.”

Male & Female Participation in India's Federal Elections



Source: Election Commission of India, as of 2/28/19.

- **Leveraging Technology – From Electronic Voting to Online Advertisements!**

Indian elections are almost entirely ballot-less, with electronic voting using over two million electronic voting machines (EVMs). An estimated \$500 million will be spent on online advertisements by political parties. India has half a billion Internet and smartphone users, 300 million Facebook users and 200 million WhatsApp users. With a tech-savvy population of this size, technology is everywhere.

• **Over 450 Political Parties and 8,000 Candidates – A Fight of Epic Proportions!**

Over 8,000 candidates across 450 political parties are running for 545 seats in the lower house, or “Lok Sabha” (which would correspond to the House of Representatives in the U.S.). The winner would have to surpass the magic number of 273 to govern the world’s largest democracy.

When India had its first national elections in 1951, little did its forefathers know of the juggernaut that the election machinery would become in the decades to follow. But as they say with any festival, “the more, the merrier.”

In a relatively short time, within a turbulent part of the world, a complex society and a vast country, India has truly exemplified the Festival of Democracy.

For standardized performance and the most recent month-end performance click [here](#) NOTE, this material is intended for electronic use only. Individuals who intend to print and physically deliver to an investor must print the monthly performance report to accompany this blog.

For more investing insights, check out our [Economic & Market Outlook](#)

View the online version of this article [here](#).

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**U.S. investors only:** Click [here](#) to obtain a WisdomTree ETF prospectus which contains investment objectives, risks, charges, expenses, and other information; read and consider carefully before investing.

There are risks involved with investing, including possible loss of principal. Foreign investing involves currency, political and economic risk. Funds focusing on a single country, sector and/or funds that emphasize investments in smaller companies may experience greater price volatility. Investments in emerging markets, currency, fixed income and alternative investments include additional risks. Please see prospectus for discussion of risks.

Past performance is not indicative of future results. This material contains the opinions of the author, which are subject to change, and should not to be considered or interpreted as a recommendation to participate in any particular trading strategy, or deemed to be an offer or sale of any investment product and it should not be relied on as such. There is no guarantee that any strategies discussed will work under all market conditions. This material represents an assessment of the market environment at a specific time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events or a guarantee of future results. This material should not be relied upon as research or investment advice regarding any security in particular. The user of this information assumes the entire risk of any use made of the information provided herein. Neither WisdomTree nor its affiliates, nor Foreside Fund Services, LLC, or its affiliates provide tax or legal advice. Investors seeking tax or legal advice should consult their tax or legal advisor. Unless expressly stated otherwise the opinions, interpretations or findings expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of WisdomTree or any of its affiliates.

The MSCI information may only be used for your internal use, may not be reproduced or re-disseminated in any form and may not be used as a basis for or component of any financial instruments or products or indexes. None of the MSCI information is intended to constitute investment advice or a recommendation to make (or refrain from making) any kind of investment decision and may not be relied on as such. Historical data and analysis should not be taken as an indication or guarantee of any future performance analysis, forecast or prediction. The MSCI information is provided on an “as is” basis and the user of this information assumes the entire risk of any use made of this information. MSCI, each of its affiliates and each entity involved in compiling, computing or creating any MSCI information (collectively, the “MSCI Parties”) expressly disclaims all warranties. With respect to this information, in no event shall any MSCI Party have any liability for any direct, indirect, special, incidental, punitive, consequential (including loss profits) or any other damages ([www.msci.com](http://www.msci.com))

Jonathan Steinberg, Jeremy Schwartz, Rick Harper, Christopher Gannatti, Bradley Krom, Tripp Zimmerman, Michael Barrer, Anita Rausch, Kevin Flanagan, Brendan Loftus, Joseph Tenaglia, Jeff Weniger, Matt Wagner, Alejandro Saltiel, Ryan Krystopowicz, Jianing Wu, and Brian Manby are registered representatives of Foreside Fund Services, LLC.

WisdomTree Funds are distributed by Foreside Fund Services, LLC, in the U.S. only. You cannot invest directly in an index.