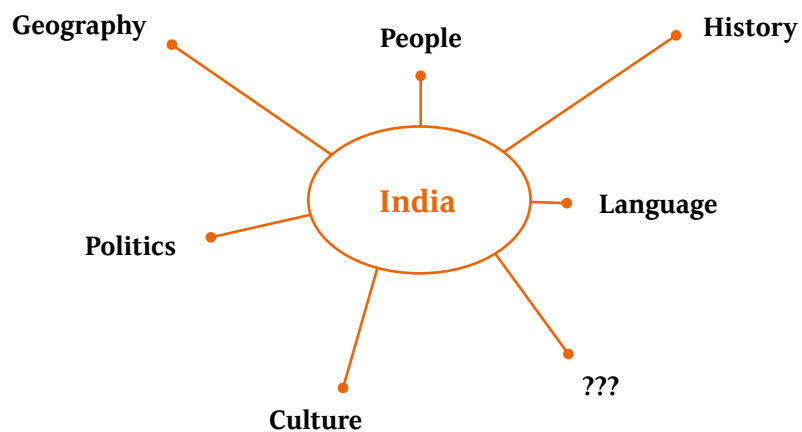


A Before you start

1 Brainstorming

a) With a partner, write down in a mind map all that comes to mind when you think of these topics regarding India:



b) After a few minutes, create a mind map on the board with others and examine how much you collectively know about the different aspects of India.

India's elections

B Reading

2 Comprehension

As you read through the text, give each section a heading before continuing to the next part.

1.

The most populous countries in the world lie on the other side of the world from Europe. The two ancient civilizations of India and China have both profited from various aspects of globalisation as well as contributed to them. As the world's largest democracy, India has the eyes of the world watching its elections in 2024.



The building which houses the Lok Sabha

Over the past centuries of foreign rule, the British Parliament took gradual steps towards instituting – or allowing – elections and legislatures in India. Running a country as large as India required a strong central government but also effective administration in its 28 states and eight union territories. India became independent of Britain in 1947. When the Constitution of India came into effect in 1950, it established a system of checks and balances among the executive (which implements laws), legislative (which makes laws) and judicial (which interprets laws) branches of government. At the same time, the states were

granted their own legislative councils and assemblies which are also capable of making laws. As in most democracies, there are both political executives who are elected and bureaucrats who are selected to carry out certain jobs. The power is shared between the union and state governments, allowing for a decentralized political system.

The 543 seats in India's powerful "House of the People" are filled by newly elected politicians after the elections. The second chamber of India's parliament is called the "Council of States". It has a maximum of 250 members, of which 12 are nominated by the President and 238 represent the States and the two Union Territories. The biennial elections for one third of the members of this chamber, the Rajya Sabha, were held in February 2024.

Federal government		
Executive	Legislature	
Prime minister	Parliament	
	Rajya Sabha (Upper house, "Council of State")	Lok Sabha (Lower house, "House of the People")
	In addition: 25 high courts and several district courts	

President

In 2022 the electoral college elected Droupadi Murmu to a five-year term as president of the Republic of India. The electoral college comprises the upper and lower houses of the federal government as well as the parliaments of India's states and territories. The president is the supreme commander of the Indian Armed Forces and the nominal head of state, playing more of a representational role, such as that played by the King in England. However, as head of state, the president must approve of any actions taken by the executive or legislative branches.

India's elections

2.

In 2019 a record 67.4 percent of Indians turned out for the general election, despite the fact that the illiteracy rate in the country is around 30 percent. To promote electoral literacy, symbols are used on ballot papers to help citizens cast their votes, and efforts are made to help voters understand the importance of voting. While literacy itself has not proven to be a direct driver of voter turnout, it contributes to overall awareness and empowerment. Income and employment, on the other hand, do influence citizens' decision to vote. Even with 134 million people living on less than two dollars a day, it is reported that not the poor, but minorities and women make up a disproportionate number of the disenfranchised citizens. As in other countries, misinformation and disinformation spread on social media proliferate during elections. Independent platforms work overtime during the elections to help combat false information. In the general elections of 2024, 945 million registered voters were allowed to cast their ballot in over one million polling places. The seven polling days stretched from April 19 till June 1 so that security staff could adequately guard the polling stations.



The symbols of the BJP (top) and the INC (bottom) can be seen on the flags here.

3.

In a country covering 3.3 million km², electoral rules state that every resident citizen must be able to reach a polling booth conveniently. Over one million polling stations were set up with 5.5 million electronic voting machines. A few of the polling places were set up for just a few voters because the law states that no one should have to travel more than two kilometers to vote. The 8.2 million registered voters over the age of 85 and Persons with Disabilities (PwD), however, were allowed to vote from home. Two polling officials, accompanied by a videographer and a security person, visit the elector's home and oversee the postal ballot voting process. Over 13 million Indian citizens live abroad, though, and since there is no absentee voting, these people must return to India if they want to cast their vote.

4.



A voter casts her ballot at the polling place.

First-time voters must carry out the complete registration procedure before they are allowed the privilege of voting. If they are an Indian citizen and at least 18 years old as of January 1, they can register for a voter picture ID card either online or offline. They fill in details about their identity and address. A few weeks before the election they should make sure their correct name is on the electoral roll, either online or at the local polling station. When they arrive at the polling station, their name and ID card are verified. Other forms of identification can also be used, such as a driving license, passport or other official IDs. Moving on to the second polling official, the voters have their left index finger inked to avoid people being able to vote twice. The voters sign the register and proceed to the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) in the polling booth. In the booth, voters press the button next to the symbol of their chosen candidate. The name, serial number and symbol of the candidate they have chosen appears for seven seconds so that the voter can verify their choice.

While many western democracies, such as England, France and the US, no longer use EVMs, India still uses them. In fact, the German Supreme Court declared their use unconstitutional in 2009. The Indian government has found that the number of invalid votes cast with paper ballots has been eliminated through the use of EVMs. In addition, with nearly one billion votes being cast, the EVMs are significantly more eco-friendly because they cut down on the use of paper. Finally, the votes can be counted more quickly and correctly in the country's numerous polling stations.

5.

Whereas many of us have become used to a two-party system – Democrats and Republicans, Tory and Labour – in India over 2,700 political parties have taken part in parliamentary and state elections since 1960. In the last general elections in 2019, over 8,000 candidates representing 669 parties stood for election to become a Member of Parliament. Some of these parties consist of only a few people – and there are even one-person parties – while other parties register with authorities but do not contest. From these thousands of existing parties, only 36 of them won at least one seat in the general election in 2019. While the number of candidates has increased by 622 percent since 1962, the number of independent candidates getting elected dropped by 80 percent. Of the 3,460 independent candidates who took part in the 2019 elections, only four of them won. One of the unsuccessful contenders was a 75 year-old man who has now lost his 25th election.

Why do so many people try to become elected to the “House of the People”? Some do it because they see it as their civic right, but it can also help boost one's image and social status. Others do it because they perceive a real chance of winning on account of India's fragmented political system and the winner-takes-it-all – or “first-past-the-post” – system where candidates receiving the most votes in their community win the seat. Finally, there are the material incentives to run for election. Tax breaks and political funding mechanisms that unfortunately often lead to money laundering can make a wealthier person out of an impoverished one.

6.

What can one expect from the 2024 general elections? There are six nationally recognized parties, including the centrist Indian National Congress (INC) and the right leaning Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). There are also over 50 regional parties which have ruled in the past together with one of the national parties in a coalition government. The leaders of the two largest parties are the incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the BJP and Rahul Gandhi of the INC, whose father, grandmother and great-grandfather were all prime ministers. The INC governed India for most of the time since the country's independence in 1947, but the party has struggled since Modi's BJP took power in 2014. Running on a nationalist, pro-Hindu platform, Modi hoped to draw votes along religious lines, the country being 80% Hindu and 14% Muslim. When the results were tallied on June 4, the BJP had reportedly won 240 seats in parliament, a sound majority yet a far cry from the 400 seats Modi had hoped to win. He is the country's first prime minister to win a third consecutive term in over 60 years, but he will have to form a coalition with other parties in order to achieve an outright majority in parliament (272 seats).

India's elections

C Tasks

1 Learning about India's elections

Complete the sentences with key words from the text.

1. In order to ensure that no single branch of the government can assume sole power, _____ was established.
2. The three branches of government in India are _____, _____ and _____.
3. The name of the governmental body that was filled with newly elected politicians in 2024 is called _____.
4. India's _____ is the head of state.
5. In order to help all voters recognize the different parties, the ballots are printed not only with the names of the parties but also with their _____.
6. If voters are too old or unable to go to a polling station personally, they can _____.
7. Before you are allowed to vote in India, you must first _____.
8. To prevent voters from casting two ballots, this safety precaution is made: _____.
9. These countries no longer use electronic voting machines: _____.
10. Some of the reasons that people run for office in India include: _____.

2 The Indian numbers game

Match the information with the correct numbers, as provided in the text. The first answer is given.

1	m)	2014	a) number of registered voters
2		13 million	b) literacy rate in India
3		1947	c) number of polling stations used in 2024
4		25	d) number of Indian citizens living in another country
5		28	e) number of times one particular candidate has lost the election
6		534	f) number of parties that ran for election in 2019
7		669	g) year India gained independence from Great Britain
8		67.4 %	h) percentage of the Hindu population in India
9		70 %	i) number of seats in the Lok Sabha
10		80 %	j) percentage of registered voters who cast their ballot in 2019
11		945 million	k) number of states in India
12		biennial	l) taking place every two years
13		over one million	m) year that Narendra Modi became Prime Minister

India's elections

3 Evaluation

Compare the Indian election process to others which you know (US/UK/Germany), looking especially at the challenges posed by India's size.

4 Research

Do some research and report on the 2024 election results to your class.

A Before you start

1 Brainstorming

The mind map will serve as a good starting point for gathering the group's combined knowledge about India before reading the text.

B Reading

2 Comprehension

The following titles might be given to the sections of the text:

1. A brief look at India's political system
2. How India votes
3. Aiding the election process
4. How to register and cast your vote
5. India's political parties
6. The 2024 elections

Tip: The teacher could also divide the class into six groups, have each one read one of the sections, give it a title and report about its contents to the rest of the class.

C Tasks

1 India's elections

1. A system of checks and balances
2. Executive, legislature, judicial
3. Lok Sabha
4. President
5. symbols
6. Vote from home
7. Register to vote
8. The left index finger is inked
9. England, France, Germany, the US
10. They see it as their civic right, it can boost their image or social status, they think they might win, they can get tax breaks and make money

2 The Indian numbers game

1	m)	2014	a) number of registered voters
2	d)	13 million	b) literacy rate in India
3	g)	1947	c) number of polling stations used in 2024
4	e)	25	d) number of Indian citizens living in another country
5	k)	28	e) number of times one particular candidate has lost the election
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10	h)	80 %	j) percentage of registered voters who cast their ballot in 2019
11	a)	945 million	k) number of states in India
12	l)	biennial	l) taking place every two years
13	c)	over one million	m) year that Narendra Modi became Prime Minister

3 Evaluation

The registration process differs in most countries, as does the actual voting procedure. The absence of absentee ballots (*Briefwahlen*) in India is shared only by a handful of other countries, including France, Mexico, Belgium, Sweden, Italy, Ukraine, Russia, Japan, the Middle East and some "Latin" countries.

✂ For more information, see: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/10/30/from-voter-registration-to-mail-in-ballots-how-do-countries-around-the-world-run-their-elections/>

	US	Germany
Political system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> federal republic presidential democracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> federal republic parliamentary democracy
Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> two main parties: Democrats (donkey, blue) and Republicans (elephant, red), first past the post system (FPTP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> many parties, have to pass 5 % in order to enter the Bundestag coalition governments more likely
Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> registered US citizens 18 and older directly elect their Representatives to Congress every two years, FPTP can lead to disproportional representation 1/3 of the Senate elected every two years, Senators serve for six years, President elected indirectly every four years via the Electoral College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> German citizens 18 and older directly elect members of the Bundestag and cast 2nd vote for a party every four years, proportional representation Bundesrat consists of representatives of state governments that change with state elections, citizens do not elect the Chancellor or the Bundespräsident
Legislative branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congress (House of Representatives and Senate) meets in the Capitol they pass/veto/ratify laws and treaties, approve appointment of justices and regulate taxes and federal expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bundestag/Bundesrat sit in different buildings they pass/veto/ratify laws and treaties, regulate taxes and federal expenses, appoint eight judges each, elect Bundespräsident every five years
Judicial branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supreme Court: nine judges appointed by the President for life, highest court of appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bundesverfassungsgericht: 16 judges, eight appointed by the Bundestag, eight by the Bundesrat, highest court of appeal
Executive branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President: head of executive branch and federal agencies, Commander in Chief, appoints Cabinet, not part of Congress, cannot dissolve Congress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bundespräsident: largely representative role; Chancellor: heads Cabinet, suggests members of the Cabinet and candidates for Bundespräsident, part of the Bundestag
Division of powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strictly divided, checks and balances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> powers are interlinked, Chancellor is integral part of the Bundestag
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the President has a comparatively powerful role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> head of state and head of government share the President's role, the Parliament has a stronger position

4 Research

The election results were made public on June 4, 2024.