

# Missing names top reason for voters' no-show

## Ahead Of Municipal Elections, Gokhale Institute Conducts Study On Low Turnout In 2012 Poll

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Pune:** Mere indifference to the voting process, or even local politics, should not be blamed entirely for the low voter turnout in local elections, according to an officially-sanctioned study. In fact, the study blames laxity on the part of the district administration.

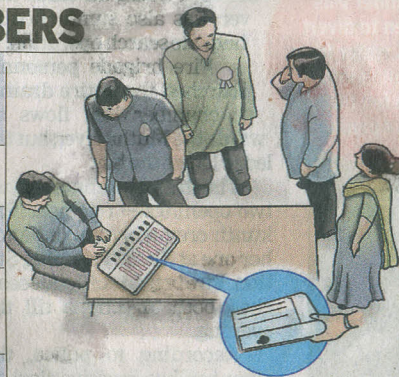
The Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, in a study commissioned by the state election commission, found that missing names from the voters' list is the primary reason for the low turnout of 55% in the 2012 municipal elections.

Six wards in the city were surveyed. Of these, four wards — NIBM, Vimannagar, Balewadi and Kothrud — reported a low turnout while two wards — Hadapsar and Alka Talkies — had a high turnout.

Around 1,800 responses were considered for the study. Of those, 1,200 were from areas with a low voter turnout,

### MIDDLING NUMBERS

- ▶ On a scale of **1-10**, interest in local politics is at **4.4**. It is lower in affluent wards
- ▶ Voters rate corporation services an average of **4.5/10**
- ▶ Middle-income groups form a solid voter base
- ▶ There is a demand to extend poll timings to 9pm, to increase voting percentage
- ▶ **60%** of the population does not attend political events
- ▶ Of the six wards studied, Balewadi and Vimannagar have a higher proportion of intermittent voters, as they are mainly new



voters. Kothrud and NIBM have a lower average of intermittent voters

- ▶ Techies and seasonal labour class, who come to city for jobs, have low political engagement

ut, while the rest were from areas with high turnout.

"If a citizen is not able to vote due to not finding their name in the voters list, it should be a matter of concern to the administration," said lead researcher Manasi Phad-

ke. "While the civic elections showed this as the main reason, even the 2014 Lok Sabha elections had many instances of citizens being turned away for the same reason," she said.

In the 2012 municipal elec-

tions, in the areas that had low turnouts, the study found that nearly 50% could not find their names in the list.

Among other reasons cited by the respondents were indifference, and not being in the city at the time of voting.

### TIMES VIEW

The study shows that much improvement is needed in the process of compiling the voters' list. Missing names, mistakes in names made during the compilation of lists, misspelt names, wrong photographs getting printed and corrections not getting reflected despite submitting required forms multiple times are grievances that we hear frequently. The problems worsen when voters' lists are split as per wards during municipal elections. During the 2012 civic elections, there were numerous complaints from voters about missing names and displacement to other wards due to the unscientific division of the list. Hundreds of names had just disappeared without a trace. Many a time, revised lists are not made available at polling centres, causing heartburn. Use of technology has become imperative if we are to have a list with minimum errors, which will encourage people to exercise their right.

found to be a responsibility to vote (50%), voting for a good candidate (24%) and no proxy voting allowed (19%).

The study, which was conducted jointly with the Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce and Economics in the last week of December, was met with some resistance. "It was not an easy task as many refused to answer questions," said Phadke.

A low interest in politics and low engagement with local elections too have been cited in the study. "Only 50% felt proud for voting while only 20% felt guilty for not voting," said Phadke.

The study also finds that voting percentage is inversely proportional to the level of the respondent's education, and that women were intermittent voters. In the six wards, 30% of the people vote regularly, 30% vote rarely and 40% are intermittent voters. "These people have to be converted through innovative campaigns," she said.

Around 43% of the population said that casting a vote would not make any difference, while 22% maintained that they were out of town during this period.

Phadke added that top three reasons for voting were