

Dated: 10.06.2024

In LWE affected seats and in Bihar, NOTA still matters

In 2024, less than 1% of voters in India chose the NOTA option, the lowest share since it was first used in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls

DATA POINT

Nitika Francis
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

While the share of voters who pressed the None of the Above (NOTA) button has continued to decline in the Lok Sabha elections, the option is still relevant in some seats. In 2014 and 2019, a significant share of voters in some select seats, particularly those impacted by Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), and many constituencies in Bihar exercised this option. This trend continued in 2024 as well.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, an unusually high share of votes (14%) were polled for NOTA in the Indore seat. The Congress urged the voters to choose the option after its candidate, Akshay Kanti Bam, withdrew his nomination and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the last minute. In November 2022, in the Andheri East Assembly by-poll in Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) candidate, Rutuja Ramesh Latke, won comfortably after the BJP candidate withdrew from the contest. NOTA received the second highest share of votes (14.8%).

The remarkable results in Indore in 2024 and the Maharashtra by-poll in 2022 show that NOTA continues to serve a purpose. A significant share of voters use it from time to time to reject all the candidates in the fray. However, in the following analysis, we have treated the Indore result as an outlier and excluded it in Charts 2 and 3.

As shown in Chart 1, the NOTA vote share across India dropped below the 1% mark in 2024 for the first time since 2014 (when NOTA was introduced for the Lok Sabha polls). In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, 0.99% of voters opted for NOTA.

That said, a constituency-level analysis of NOTA vote share shows an interesting pattern. Chart 2

shows the share of voters in each seat who chose the option in the 2014, 2019, and 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Each circle corresponds to a parliamentary seat. Only those seats in which the NOTA vote share crossed the 3% mark have been depicted.

The Bastar constituency in Chhattisgarh, and Koraput and Nabarangpur, which are both in Odisha, featured in all the three years. Aruku in Andhra Pradesh featured in 2019 and 2024. The common thread linking these seats is that they are all impacted by LWE. This trend of the NOTA vote share being high in LWE-affected districts has been recorded in several Assembly elections as well.

Another trend that can be observed is that there is a relatively high number of seats in Bihar in which the NOTA vote share crossed the 3% mark both in 2019 and 2024. In 2019, the NOTA vote share was more than 3% in 11 seats in Bihar, while in 2024, this was the case in four seats. Close to 4% of the voters in 2024 and 5% in 2019 chose NOTA in the Gopalganj seat in Bihar.

Dahod in Gujarat, where more than 3% of the voters chose NOTA in the 2014, 2019, and 2024 Lok Sabha elections, is the only seat outside Bihar to have consistently recorded such a high share. It is also not part of the districts affected by LWE.

Chart 3 shows the seat-wise NOTA vote share recorded in 2024 (in %) and the change from 2019 (% points). All the seats in Bihar have been highlighted. Clearly, most of the seats in Bihar stand out. Notably, while there was a significant decline in the NOTA vote share in seats such as Paschim Champaran, Saran, Nawada, and Jahanabad in Bihar in 2024 compared with 2019, in other seats in the State such as Banka and Jhanjharpur, the NOTA vote share increased significantly.

Taking note of NOTA

The data for the charts were sourced from the Election Commission of India and Ashoka University's Lok Dhaba

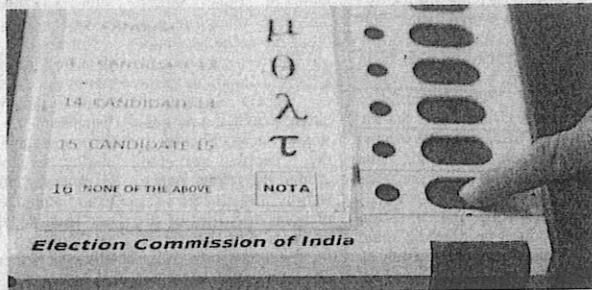


Chart 1: The chart shows the share of voters who chose the NOTA option across three Lok Sabha polls. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, 0.99% of voters opted for NOTA

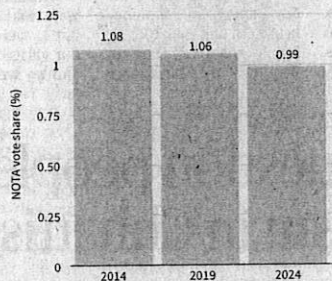
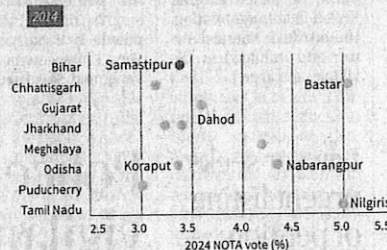
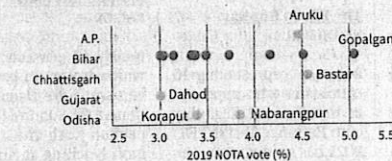


Chart 2: The chart shows the share of voters in each seat who chose the option in the 2014, 2019, and 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Each circle corresponds to a parliamentary seat



2019



2024

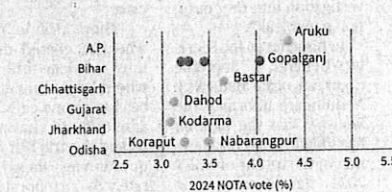


Chart 3: The chart shows the seat-wise NOTA vote share recorded in 2024 (in %) and the change from 2019 (% points). All the seats in Bihar have been highlighted

