



**International Journal of Allied Practice, Research and Review**

**Website: [www.ijaprr.com](http://www.ijaprr.com) (ISSN 2350-1294)**

# **Strengthening Democracy in Rajasthan: Insights from the KAP End line Survey 2024**

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**Abstract** =Democracy is often described as the most participatory form of governance — a system in which power ultimately rests with the people. In India, elections are the primary mechanism for translating the people’s will into governmental action. The right to vote is not merely a privilege; it is the most direct way for citizens to influence policy, demand accountability, and shape the trajectory of the nation.

This article aims to provide a deep, narrative-driven analysis of Rajasthan’s democratic engagement — not just as data points, but as part of an evolving story about governance, empowerment, and public trust.

**Key Words:-** Election, Democracy, KAP, Electoral Participation, SVEEP, End line Survey.

## **I, Introduction**

In Rajasthan, a state with deep historical roots in governance and community leadership, elections hold special significance. Its people — spread across deserts, hills, fertile plains, and bustling urban centers — form a diverse electorate, making the state a microcosm of India’s democratic challenges and opportunities.

The Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) End line Survey – Rajasthan 2024, conducted by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Rajasthan, in collaboration with the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, offers an extensive assessment of the state’s electoral environment. It captures what voters know about the election process, how they feel about participating, and how they actually engage with the ballot.

## II. Background of the Study

At the heart of the Indian democratic system lies the principle of universal adult suffrage: every citizen aged 18 or above has the right to vote, regardless of caste, creed, religion, or gender. The significance of this principle is magnified in Rajasthan, where vast geographical distances, cultural diversity, and socio-economic disparities present unique challenges to ensuring equal participation.

However, democracy is more than just the legal right to vote; it requires active engagement from the electorate.

Globally, electoral researchers have raised concerns about declining voter participation. This “democracy deficit” weakens representative institutions and erodes public trust. In India, while turnout rates are relatively high compared to some democracies, variations between regions, communities, and age groups suggest that more work is needed to sustain and grow participation.

The Election Commission of India (ECI), under its constitutional mandate of “Superintendence, Direction, and Control” of elections, is tasked with conducting elections that are free, fair, and accessible. In Rajasthan, this means ensuring that:

- Every eligible citizen’s name is on the electoral roll.
- Polling stations are accessible, even in remote villages.
- Voters are aware of rules, procedures, and rights.
- Misinformation and undue influence — whether through money, muscle, or misinformation — are countered effectively.

The KAP survey framework is uniquely suited to bridging the gap between electoral entitlement and electoral engagement. It moves beyond turnout numbers to explore:

- Why do some citizens fail to register?
- What deters eligible voters from going to the polls?
- Which sources of information are most trusted?
- How do socio-cultural factors influence voting behaviour?

### The SVEEP Program: From Concept to Core Strategy

In 2009–10, the ECI launched SVEEP —Systematic Voters’ Education and Electoral Participation — to address precisely these questions. The program’s motto, “Greater Participation for a Stronger Democracy”, encapsulates its vision: to ensure that all eligible citizens are registered, informed, and motivated to vote.

Initially piloted in Jharkhand and Bihar assembly elections, SVEEP has since evolved into a nationwide strategy implemented across multiple election cycles. Its progression can be mapped through four phases:

1. Phase I (2009–2011): Pilot projects; early adoption of multi-channel voter awareness campaigns.
2. Phase II (2013): Strategic framework introduced, covering 23 state assembly elections.
3. Phase III (2016): Increased use of technology, social media, and local influencers.
4. Phase IV (2023): Data-driven targeting, partnerships with civil society, and focused interventions in low-turnout areas.

## Rajasthan's Journey with SVEEP

Rajasthan was one of the earliest adopters of SVEEP. The 2013 Legislative Assembly elections marked a watershed moment: the state implemented large-scale, culturally adapted outreach strategies, from folk performances to radio jingles in local dialects.

By the 2014 Parliamentary elections, these strategies had matured into a structured, repeatable framework. The 2023 Assembly elections and 2024 Parliamentary elections demonstrated just how far Rajasthan's SVEEP program had come:

- Targeted outreach to districts with historically low turnout.
- Booth Level Officer (BLO)-led door-to-door campaigns.
- Engagement with schools, colleges, NGOs, and media houses.
- Special drives for women, first-time voters, and persons with disabilities (PwDs).

These efforts contributed to record-high voter turnout in certain districts, showcasing the potential of well-executed voter education.

## Understanding the KAP Framework

The KAP model — Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices — is a public policy tool originally used in health and education, now increasingly applied to governance.

In the electoral context:

- Knowledge covers awareness of voter rights, registration processes, polling logistics, and ethical norms.
- Attitude reflects trust in the system, perceived importance of voting, and willingness to participate.

- Practices track actual behavior: voter registration, turnout, and adherence to democratic norms.

In Rajasthan, the KAP End line Survey 2024 was designed to assess these three dimensions after SVEEP interventions and compare them to baseline surveys from 2013, 2018, and 2023.

### **III. Research Objectives of the 2024 End line Survey**

The survey's objectives were both diagnostic and strategic:

1. Measure voter registration rates and identify reasons for gaps.
2. Evaluate EPIC (Electoral Photo Identity Card) ownership and barriers to obtaining it.
3. Assess turnout rates in sample constituencies.
4. Understand awareness levels about critical elements like NOTA, VVPAT, and National Voters' Day.
5. Review perceptions of electoral fairness and EVM reliability.
6. Gauge the impact of SVEEP interventions at grassroots levels.
7. Provide actionable recommendations for the next election cycle.

#### **Expected Outcomes**

By analyzing voter knowledge, attitudes, and practices, the survey is expected to:

- Offer a baseline for targeted communication strategies.
- Identify geographical and demographic disparities in participation.
- Support policy reforms in voter registration and facilitation.

- Strengthen partnerships between election authorities, civil society, and the media.

#### **IV. Geographical Coverage and Methodology**

Rajasthan's electoral landscape is vast: 41 districts, 200 Assembly Constituencies, and over 51,000 polling stations. The 2024 Endline Survey covered:

- 40 Assembly Constituencies (2 from each district with 8+ ACs, and 1 from the rest).
- 20 polling stations per AC, chosen for low turnout in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.
- 15 respondents from each polling station, ensuring representation across gender, age, caste, and education.

This sampling method ensured statistical validity while highlighting problem areas.

#### **Why This Matters for the Future of Democracy in Rajasthan**

The findings from this survey are not just about numbers — they are about people's trust in democracy. Understanding where knowledge is lacking, where attitudes are skeptical, and where practices fall short allows policymakers to:

- Design more inclusive voter education programs.
- Remove barriers to participation.
- Build public confidence in the electoral system.

The road to 2028 — the next scheduled assembly elections — begins now. By acting on these insights, Rajasthan can continue to set benchmarks for democratic participation in India.

## **V. Challenges Identified Through the KAP Lens**

While Rajasthan has made commendable progress in voter awareness and participation, the KAP Endline Survey 2024 highlights persistent challenges that need attention before the 2028 Assembly elections.

### **1. Knowledge Gaps**

- Qualifying date awareness: Only 40.88% of respondents correctly identified the qualifying date for voter registration.
- KYC App awareness: Awareness of the Know Your Candidate app fell from 39.24% in 2023 to 32.08% in 2024.
- National Voters' Day: 58.79% of respondents were aware of it, leaving a sizeable information gap.
- Special facilities: While awareness of postal ballots for senior citizens and PwDs rose sharply to 86.18%, it remains uneven in rural areas.

These figures suggest that while general election knowledge has improved, specific procedural awareness still requires targeted campaigns.

### **2. Attitude Barriers**

- Perception of effort: 12.74% of respondents consider voting a cumbersome chore.
- Trust in EVMs: Encouragingly, trust increased from 81.65% in 2023 to 92.62% in 2024 — but a small minority still doubts results.
- Gendered decision-making: 22.38% believe women should consult male family members before voting, though this is down from 28.75% in 2023.

- Skepticism toward fairness: While most respondents believe elections are fair, a minority continues to associate them with money and muscle power.

These attitudes highlight the intersection of cultural norms and political engagement, particularly in rural and less-educated populations.

### 3. Practice-Related Issues

- EPIC ownership: Already high at 97.98% in 2023, it rose marginally to 98.39% in 2024.
- Non-registration: Dropped slightly from 7.9% to 7.7%, but migration and lack of documents remain key causes.
- Voting day obstacles: 3.67% faced difficulties, primarily due to long queues (63.22%) and lack of separate queues for senior citizens (7.95%).
- PwD voting: 95.37% turnout among PwDs is commendable, but 10.02% faced challenges such as steep ramps or inadequate facilities.

Here, the challenge is not just in getting people to the polling station but in ensuring the experience is smooth, respectful, and dignified.

### Socio-Cultural Dynamics in Rajasthan's Electoral Landscape

Rajasthan's voting behavior is shaped by a tapestry of social, cultural, and economic factors:

1. **Caste and Community Influence:** Voting blocs in rural areas often align along caste lines, influencing turnout and choice.
2. **Gender Dynamics:** Patriarchal norms still influence women's political agency, though urbanization and education are shifting attitudes.

3. **Urban-Rural Divide:** Urban voters often have better access to electoral information but sometimes show lower turnout than rural counterparts.

4. **Literacy and Education:** Higher education levels correlate with greater political independence and awareness of electoral rights.

#### Lessons from the SVEEP Interventions

- The survey confirms that SVEEP interventions have made measurable impacts:
- Campaign recall: 80.38% remembered election-related campaigns.
- BLO communication: Ranked as the top information source by 20.58% of respondents.
- Icon engagement: Para Olympian Avani Lekhra recalled by 21.58% as a motivating figure.
- Digital tools: 28.19% accessed the voters.eci.gov.in site, with 94.68% satisfaction. However, digital divides remain — rural, elderly, and less-educated voters are less likely to access online resources.

#### The Way Forward: Strategic Recommendations

Based on the KAP findings and broader democratic principles, here are seven strategic priorities for Rajasthan's election authorities:

##### 1. Deepen Procedural Awareness

Launch micro-campaigns explaining specific topics like the qualifying date, postal ballots, and the KYC app. Use hyperlocal media — community radio, village notice boards, folk theatre — for dissemination.

## **2. Challenge Cultural Norms That Limit Autonomy**

Collaborate with women's groups and educators to encourage independent voting decisions. Showcase stories of women leaders and change-makers in SVEEP materials.

## **3. Improve Polling Day Logistics**

Introduce queue management systems in high-turnout booths. Expand separate queues and accessible infrastructure for PwDs and seniors.

## **4. Target Migrant Voters**

Create a "mobile registration" campaign in industrial hubs and migrant-heavy areas. Partner with employers and trade associations to facilitate enrolment.

## **5. Strengthen BLO Engagement**

Provide BLOs with more training, printed resources, and incentives. Enable BLO Digital Kits with videos, info graphics, and FAQs for in-person visits.

## **6. Expand Digital Literacy and Access**

Set up voter facilitation kiosks in public places with guided internet access. Partner with rural internet service providers for election awareness drives.

## **7. Sustain Multichannel Campaigning**

Continue the blend of digital, print, broadcast, and interpersonal outreach. Use icons and influencers who resonate across caste, class, and age divides.

## **VI. Conclusion: A Shared Responsibility**

The KAP End line Survey 2024 reveals a Rajasthan that is on the right path but still facing hurdles on the road to full democratic participation.

Knowledge gaps remain, certain attitudes need transformation, and logistical challenges must be resolved.

Yet the successes are undeniable: record-high trust in EVMs, strong recall of voter awareness campaigns, and near-universal EPIC ownership. These gains are the product of sustained effort, strategic planning, and community engagement — proof that when institutions invest in the electorate, the electorate responds.

The challenge for the years ahead is to translate awareness into consistent action, ensuring that every Rajasthani — regardless of geography, gender, or socio-economic status — feels both the right and the responsibility to vote.

Democracy is not an event that happens every five years; it is a living process, strengthened by each informed choice made at the ballot box. As Rajasthan moves toward the next election cycle, the findings of this survey should serve not just as a report card, but as a roadmap to an even stronger, more inclusive democracy.

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