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**Research Article** 



# **Public Perception on One Nation, One Election: Constitutional** Feasibility, Challenges, and Way Forward Komal Jagdishbhai Arora\*

#### **Abstract**

To reduce the number of polls, save money, and improve governance, the "One Nation, One Election" concept proposes holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies in India. Although the idea has recently acquired momentum, there are significant constitutional, legal, administrative, and governmental barriers to its implementation. This study thoroughly examines the constitutional validity of synchronized elections, as well as relevant clauses, the need for revisions, and the logistical and political problems that must be solved. It also discusses prior practices, recommendations from expert panels, and other alternatives such as phased synchronization. It also discusses prior practices, recommendations from expert panels, and other alternatives such as phased synchronization. The analysis concludes that, despite the proposal's potential benefits, caution must be exercised in order to find a balance between efficacy and essential values of Indian democracy and federalism.

**Keywords:** Election reforms, Federalism, Constitution

#### Introduction

The "One Nation, One Election" concept envisions a co-ordinated election procedure for the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies every five years. This system was in operation in the early years after India gained independence, but it eventually crumbled due to the premature dissolution of multiple legislatures. The concept has recently gained popularity as a strategy to reduce the frequency of election cycles, save public funds, and increase administrative effectiveness. Proponents argue that it would reduce the frequency with which the prescribed Code of Conduct is enforced, provide uninterrupted governance, and promote policy continuity. However, putting this reform into effect raises severe constitutional, legal, and practical concerns, prompting debate about how it will influence political diversity, federalism, and democratic representation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Economic Times Online. (2024, September 18). What is 'One Nation, One Election'? How it will change the way the polls are conducted in India. The Economic Times. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/what-is-one-nation-oneelection-how-will-it-change-the-way-the-polls-are-conducted-in-india/articleshow/113453745.cms Last Visited 25/07/2025 at 4:35 PM



This research study investigates the constitutional validity of this substantial electoral shift, as well as its various aspects.

## Important terms

1) One Nation, One Election (ONOE):<sup>2</sup>

A proposed electoral reform where elections to the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies are held simultaneously once every five years.

2) Lok Sabha:<sup>3</sup>

The lower house of India's bicameral Parliament; members are elected directly by the public.

3) State Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha):<sup>4</sup>

The legislative body in each Indian state, whose members are also elected directly by the public.

4) Federalism:<sup>5</sup>

A constitutional division of powers between the central government and state governments.

5) Election Commission of India (ECI):<sup>6</sup>

An autonomous constitutional authority responsible for conducting elections; plays a key role in logistical planning and implementation.

## **Research Objectives**

- 1. To look at the constitutional provisions governing the duration and dissolution of the House of Representatives and State Legislative Assemblies.
- 2. To assess the viability of holding simultaneous elections in India from a procedural and legal perspective.
- 3. To assess the political, legal, and governmental barriers to the One Nation, One Election idea.
- 4. To evaluate the potential benefits and drawbacks of simultaneous elections in terms of governance, costs, and policy implementation.
- 5. To find out what the general public thinks about the change's viability and the recommendations of expert groups (including the High-Level Committee, NITI Aayog, and the Law Commission).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *One Nation, One Election*. Wikipedia. Retrieved July 28, 2025, at 2:37 PM, from <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One Nation">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One Nation</a>, One Election

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). Lok Sabha. Retrieved July 28, 2025, at 2:40 PM, from <a href="https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lok-Sabha">https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lok-Sabha</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Study'n'Learn. (n.d.). What is Legislative Assembly? Retrieved July 28, 2025, at 2:42 PM, from <a href="https://www.studynlearn.com/what-is-legislative-assembly">https://www.studynlearn.com/what-is-legislative-assembly</a>?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). Federalism. Retrieved July 29, 2025, at 9:45 AM, from <a href="https://www.britannica.com/topic/federalism">https://www.britannica.com/topic/federalism</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Election Commission of India. (n.d.). About ECI. Retrieved July 29, 2025, at 9:50 AM, from https://www.eci.gov.in/about-eci



## **Review of Literature**

- 1. Sharma, Mehta, and Prasad<sup>7</sup> convey a thorough examination of the constitutional issues that impede simultaneous elections. They contend that, despite its administrative appeal, One Nation, One Election poses serious risks to the federal structure unless carefully executed through proper legal amendments.
- 2. Verma and Singh<sup>8</sup> investigate the electoral load on the Indian economy and conclude that state and central elections must be synchronized in order to save public monies and reduce the frequency of code-of-conduct enforcement. Their report makes use of Election Commission data and advocates for a phased deployment.
- 3. Mukherjee and Das<sup>9</sup> look at global examples like South Africa and Sweden to establish connections with India's election system. They conclude that, while India cannot directly copy other models, a hybrid approach that balances federalism and efficiency could be ideal.

## **Background & Historical content**

"One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) is not a novel concept in Indian democracy. The practice of holding elections simultaneously was used in India in the early decades after independence. Most State Legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha simultaneously cast ballots in the first general elections in 1951–52 and the following elections in 1957, 1962, and 1967.<sup>10</sup>

But this cycle was broken by a number of political events, including the early dissolution of the central legislature and state legislatures, particularly during the political unrest of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Votes of no-confidence in both Parliament and State Assemblies, along with the installation of President's Rule under Article 356<sup>11</sup>, caused repeated midterm elections, disrupting the electoral synchronization. Separate elections have become the norm over time, which has resulted in widespread use of administrative tools, high public spending, protracted Model Code of Conduct enforcement, and voter fatigue. Discussions over the viability of holding simultaneous elections again were rekindled by these problems.

Through constitutional and legislative changes, the Law Commission of India (2018) and the NITI Aayog (2017) have suggested bringing back simultaneous elections. The concept was further supported in speeches

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Sharma, A., Mehta, R., & Prasad, D. (2022). *One Nation, One Election: Constitutional Dilemmas and Practical Feasibility. Journal of Constitutional Law and Governance, 10*(1), 55–72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Verma, P., & Singh, N. (2021). Electoral Reforms in India: A Step Towards Simultaneous Elections. Indian Journal of Political Studies, 29(3), 88–102

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Mukherjee, R., & Das, K. (2020). *Reimagining Indian Democracy: The Case for One Nation, One Election. South Asian Journal of Public Policy and Law, 5*(2), 44–60.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> LawBhoomi. (n.d.). What is One Nation One Election? Retrieved July 27, 2025, at 11:00 PM, from <a href="https://lawbhoomi.com/what-is-one-nation-one-election/">https://lawbhoomi.com/what-is-one-nation-one-election/</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Centre for Law and Policy Research. (n.d.). *Article 356: Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in states*. Constitution of India. Retrieved July 27, 2025, at 11:05 PM, from <a href="https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-356-provisions-in-case-of-failure-of-constitutional-machinery-in-states/">https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-356-provisions-in-case-of-failure-of-constitutional-machinery-in-states/</a>



and policy debates, where supporters pointed out its possible advantages for cost-effectiveness and governance while detractors warned about its effects on federalism and democratic accountability. 12

## **Constitutional Framework and Required Amendments**

Each State Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha are granted autonomous and flexible terms under the present version of the Indian Constitution. Without major constitutional and legislative changes, the implementation of One Nation, One Election (ONOE) would be difficult due to this flexibility, which permits early dissolution and midterm elections.

### 2.1 Important Clauses in the Constitution

The existing electoral system is based on the following constitutional clauses, which ONOE would immediately impact:

According to Article 83(2)<sup>13</sup>, the Lok Sabha would remain in office for five years unless it is dissolved earlier. According to Article 172(1)<sup>14</sup> State Legislative Assemblies are given a similar five-year term. According to Articles 85<sup>15</sup> and 174<sup>16</sup> give the president and governors the authority to dissolve state-assemblies and parliament, respectively. Article 356 gives the President authority over state apparatus, which can result in assemblies being dissolved or suspended.

#### 2.2 Required Constitutional and Legal Amendments

A number of legislative and constitutional changes would be required in order to operationalize ONOE:

Important changes must be made to several important constitutional clauses in order to establish One Nation, One Election. To align the terms of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, the Constitution's Articles 83, 85, 172, and 174 must be changed. In order to maintain continuity in a shared electoral cycle, these reforms would also need to limit or regulate the early dissolution of legislative bodies. In order to update the election schedule and processes and allow for simultaneous polling and coordinated result announcements for both the federal and state elections, it is also imperative that the Representation of the People Act, 1951 be amended. Strengthening the Tenth Schedule<sup>17</sup>, which addresses the anti-defection statute, would also be necessary to prevent political defections that could topple administrations and throw off the synchronized cycle. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> LawBhoomi. (n.d.). What is One Nation One Election? Retrieved July 27, 2025, at 11:00 PM, from <a href="https://lawbhoomi.com/what-is-one-nation-one-election/">https://lawbhoomi.com/what-is-one-nation-one-election/</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Centre for Law and Policy Research. (n.d.). *Article 83: Duration of Houses of Parliament*. Constitution of India. Retrieved July 27, 2025, at 11:00 PM, from https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-83-duration-of-houses-of-parliament/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Centre for Law and Policy Research. (n.d.). *Article 172: Duration of State Legislatures*. Constitution of India. Retrieved July 26, 2025, at 10:00 PM, from <a href="https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-172-duration-of-state-legislatures/">https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-172-duration-of-state-legislatures/</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Centre for Law and Policy Research. (n.d.). *Article 85: Sessions of Parliament, prorogation and dissolution*. Constitution of India. Retrieved July 28, 2025, from <a href="https://www.constitutionofindia.net/article-85-sessions-of-parliament-prorogation-and-dissolution/">https://www.constitutionofindia.net/article-85-sessions-of-parliament-prorogation-and-dissolution/</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Centre for Law and Policy Research. (n.d.). *Article 174: Sessions of the State Legislature, prorogation and dissolution*. Constitution of India. Retrieved July 28, 2025, from <a href="https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-174-sessions-of-the-state-legislature-prorogation-and-dissolution/">https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-174-sessions-of-the-state-legislature-prorogation-and-dissolution/</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> BYJU'S. (n.d.). *Schedules of the Indian Constitution*. Retrieved July 28, 2025, from <a href="https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/schedules-indian-constitution/">https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/schedules-indian-constitution/</a>



amendment procedure under Article 368<sup>18</sup>, which calls for a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Parliament and ratification by at least half of the state legislatures, must be followed since such changes impact the federal structure of the Constitution.

## 2.3 Challenges in Amending the Constitution

Sr. No	Challenges in Amending the Constitution			
1)	Federal Resistance	States may perceive this move as an intrusion into their constitutional autonomy.		
2)	Political Consensus	Achieving agreement among a diverse set of national and regional parties is a major hurdle.		
3)	Judicial Review	Any attempt to enforce ONOE may be challenged in court on the basis of irreverent basic structure doctrine, especially federalism and free and fair elections.		
4)	Disruption to Democratic Mandate	Either curtailing or extending the tenure of an elected government to align election dates could be seen as undemocratic unless backed by public or judicial support.		

## **Benefits of One Nation, One Election:**

1) Reduces Time and Cost: By holding elections nationwide, the significant time and expense associated with holding multiple elections will be avoided.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Centre for Law and Policy Research. (n.d.). *Article 368: Power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and procedure therefor*. Constitution of India. Retrieved July 28, 2025, from <a href="https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-368-power-of-parliament-to-amend-the-constitution-and-procedure-therefor/">https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-368-power-of-parliament-to-amend-the-constitution-and-procedure-therefor/</a>



- 2) Less Disruption to Government Work: Because of the Model Code of Conduct, government operations frequently come to a halt when elections are held frequently. Regular disruptions will be avoided with simultaneous elections.
- 3) Enhances Governance Focus: Rather than constantly preparing for elections, leaders and officials can concentrate more on managing the nation and its states.
- 4) Decreases Political Pressure: As there are fewer elections, there will be fewer political rallies, speeches, and campaigns, which occasionally causes social unrest.
- 5) Improved Voter Participation: If voters are only required to cast one ballot in each state and national election, they might show up in greater numbers.
- 6) Ease of Election Management: Reduces burden on Election Commission of India, security forces, and civil administration. Less frequent disruption of academic institutions and public services, which are usually repurposed for election duties.
- 7) Strengthening of National and State Policy Coordination: An unchanging electoral cycle may result in better alignment between central and state governments. This could enhance cooperative federalism and the execution of national development programs with shared priorities.

## One Nation, One Election's Principal Difficulties

- Various Government Terms: Not every state government begins or ends at the same moment. Some
  governments' tenure would have to be shortened or extended in order to bring them into alignment,
  which could be viewed as undemocratic.
- Big Constitutional Changes Are Needed: A number of constitutional adjustments are required, but obtaining the support of both houses of parliament and numerous states is difficult.
- Federalism Issues: States may believe that holding elections at the same time weakens their autonomy and authority over their own cycle of government.
- Political Opposition and Lack of Consensus: It is challenging to come to a consensus on this significant reform since different political groups have divergent interests.
- Problems with logistics and security: Holding elections simultaneously throughout the entire nation requires a huge number of personnel, security personnel, and resources, all of which can be extremely challenging to coordinate.

## **Expert Opinions on One Nation, One Election**

Expert	Year	Key points	Stance
Law Commission of	1999	Supported in principle; required	Supportive with
India		constitutional amendments and	caution
		political consensus	



NITI Aayog	2017	Favoured phased	Strongly supportive
		implementation; highlighted	
		cost and governance benefits	
Election Commission	2016-	Technically feasible; needs	Conditionally
of India	2019	legal reforms, funds, and	supportive
		massive logistical planning	
High-Level	2023	Reviewing feasibility, legal	Under review
Committee (Kovind)		changes, and stakeholder views	

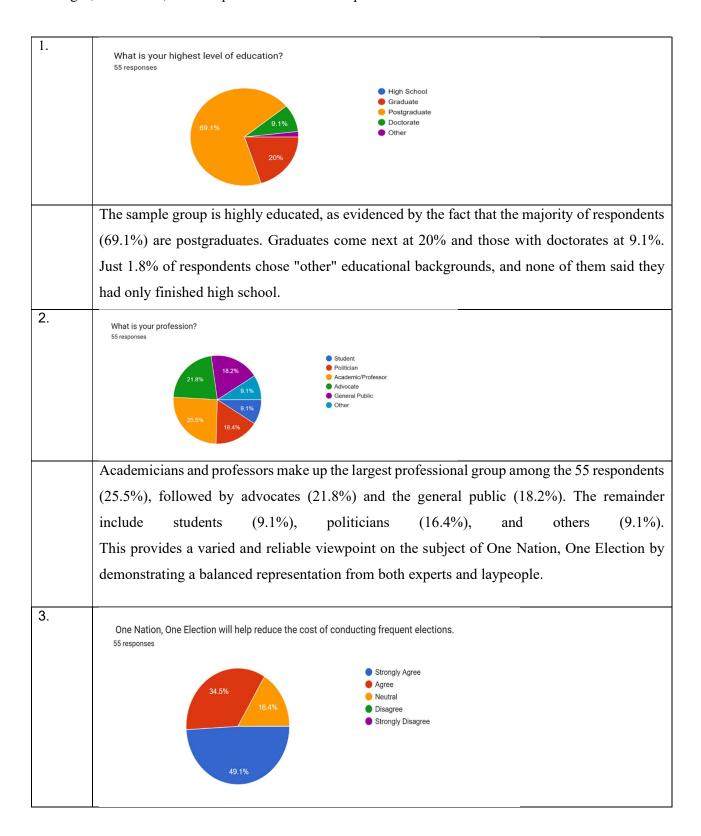
#### Global Practices on Simultaneous Elections:-

Country	<b>Election Model</b>	<b>Key Features</b>	Relevance to India
South Africa	Simultaneous	Fixed 5-year terms;	Moderate – Similar
	national &	centralized political	system but smaller
	provincial elections	system	scale
Sweden	Sweden Fixed-date national High vote		Low – Homogenous,
	and local elections	strong electoral discipline	small population
	(every 4 years)	discipinie	
Indonesia	Simultaneous	Massive logistics;	High – Large
	presidential,	2019 election fatigue reported	democracy,
	parliamentary, and	langue reported	logistical parallels
	local polls		
United States	Staggered elections	Strong federalism;	High – Reflects
	at federal, state, and	states have	India's current
	local levels	autonomy over	federal model
		electoral timelines	
Bangladesh	Separate national	No synchronization	Moderate – Similar
	and local elections	due to political	political
		volatility	complexities

## Research methodology, Data Collection & Data Analysis

With a quantitative research methodology, the current study collects information on public opinion of One Nation, One Election through a structured online survey. Responses were gathered from a purposeful sample of 55 people, including students, academicians, politicians, advocates, and members of the general public. The survey was distributed using Google Forms. In addition to basic demographic data, the questionnaire included

15 closed-ended multiple-choice questions with a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). Google Sheets was used to organize and analyze the gathered responses. Frequency counts, percentages, and graphical tools were used to interpret patterns and trends related to the constitutional viability, possible advantages, difficulties, and comparative international practices of simultaneous elections in India.

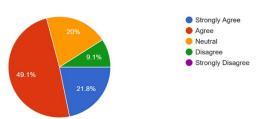


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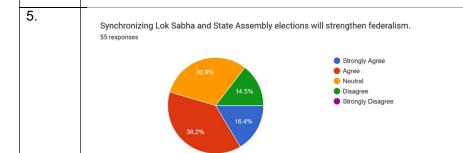
The chart shows that a majority of respondents believe that One Nation, One Election will help reduce the cost of frequent elections. Specifically, 49.1% strongly agree and 34.5% agree, totalling 83.6% in support. Only 16.4% remained neutral, and none disagreed with the statement. This indicates strong public consensus that ONOE could bring significant financial savings to the electoral process.

Holding simultaneous elections will improve administrative efficiency and governance.

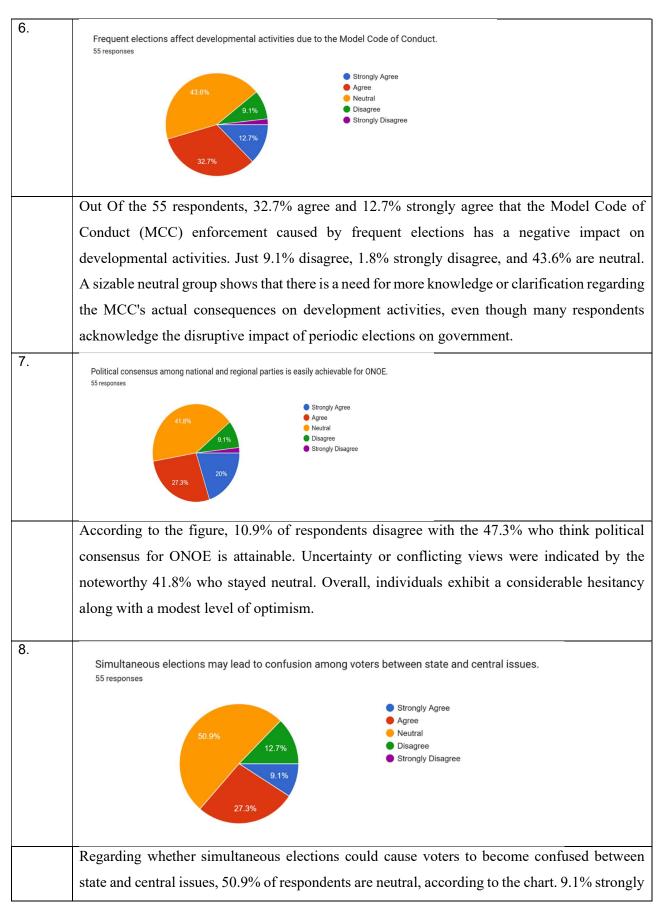
Strongly Agree

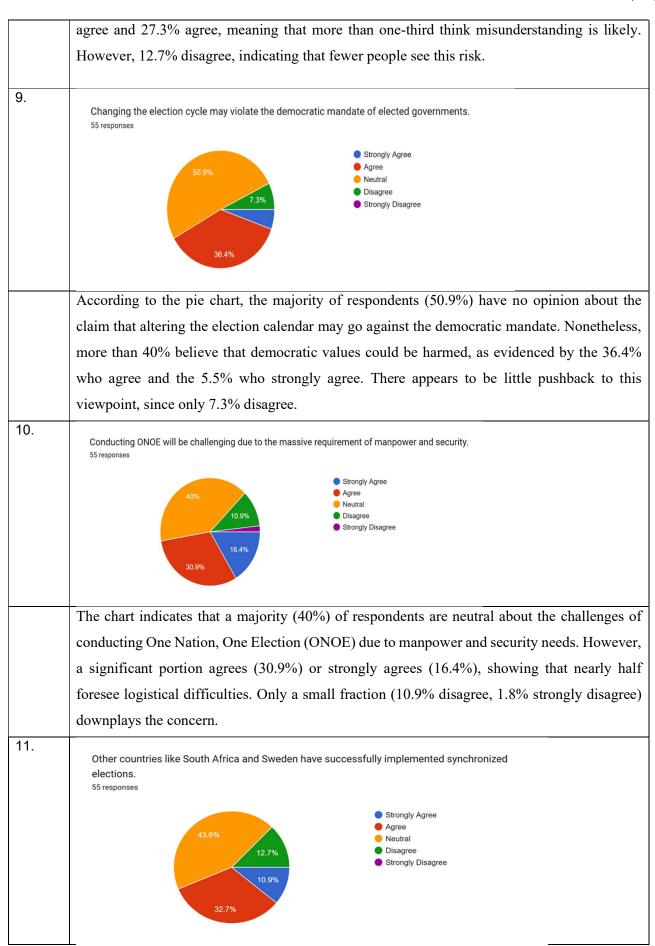


A total of 70.9% of the 55 respondents (49.1% agree, 21.8% strongly agree) think that conducting elections at the same time will improve governance and administrative effectiveness. Just 9.1% disagree, 20% are neutral, and nobody strongly disagrees. This indicates that respondents strongly believe One Nation, One Election may improve government by lessening the disruptions brought on by frequent elections.

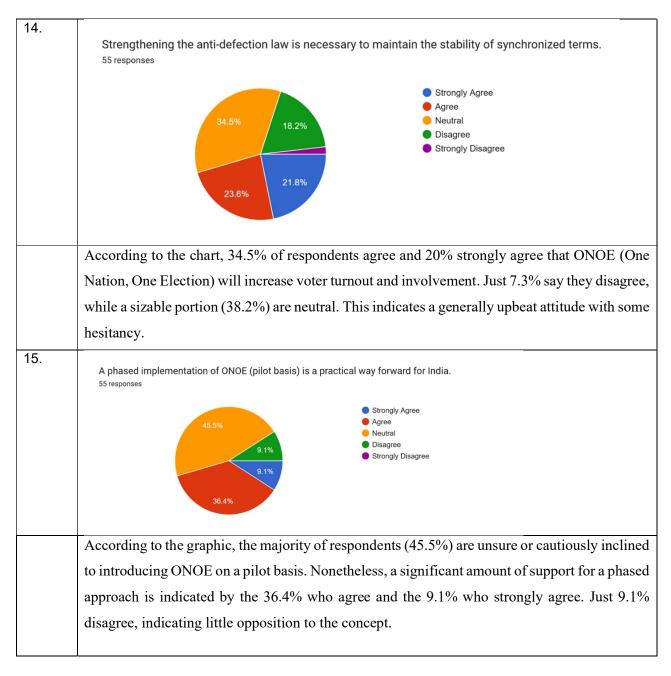


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According to the pie chart, a sizable percentage of respondents (43.6%) have no opinion about whether synchronized elections in nations like Sweden and South Africa are successful. However, the allegation has moderate support, with 32.7% agreeing and 10.9% strongly agreeing. Limited scepticism is indicated by the tiny percentage of respondents that disagree. 12. Global practices show that simultaneous elections ensure political stability. 55 responses Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree The chart shows that 45.5% of respondents are neutral on whether simultaneous elections ensure political stability. Meanwhile, 36.4% agree and 7.3% strongly agree, suggesting a fair level of belief in the statement. Only a small portion (9.1% disagree, 1.8% strongly disagree) disagrees, indicating limited opposition. 13. ONOE will promote better voter turnout and public engagement. 55 responses Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree



## Conclusion

Respondents to the survey have a generally positive opinion of the One Nation, One Election (ONOE) idea, with strong support for its ability to increase political stability, boost voter turnout, and conform to international best practices. There was significant support for a phased or pilot-based strategy, indicating confidence in its viability. On the other hand, a sizable percentage of indifferent answers and worries regarding logistical issues like security and manpower underscore the necessity of more thorough preparation and wider awareness.



#### Recommendations

- Start with a staged or pilot-level rollout in a few states to assess viability and deal with real-world issues.
- Public education and awareness campaigns should be launched to educate the public about the advantages and difficulties of ONOE.
- Consult with political parties, electoral authorities, and civil society organizations to establish a consensus and obtain suggestions for a fair implementation.
- Infrastructure strengthening like invest in electoral infrastructure, staff training, and security procedures to efficiently support simultaneous elections.
- Legal and Constitutional Review is most important. Make appropriate legislative and constitutional reforms after careful consideration to maintain legal consistency and uphold democratic values.

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