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# **AADHAAR-VOTER ID LINKAGE:** **PROGRESS OR PERIL**

AUTHORED BY - SUSHMITHA. J

## **ABSTRACT:**

The linkage of Aadhaar with voter ID has emerged as a critical focal point in India's electoral reform discourse. The linkage of Aadhaar with voter ID in India aims to enhance electoral integrity by eliminating duplicate registrations and preventing voter impersonation. However, concerns surrounding mass disenfranchisement, data privacy and technical infrastructure have sparked debate. From safeguarding the privacy of voters to bolstering public trust in electoral system, this research offers a transformative solution that transcends the traditional trade-off between security and freedom. This study examines the impact of Aadhaar linkage on voter id, weighing benefits against concerns.

The finding highlights concerns regarding potential disenfranchisement of marginalized groups and the broader ethical considerations surrounding biometric data usage. Furthermore, using mixed-methods approach this paper provides a nuanced understanding of Aadhaar- Voter ID linkage, highlights the need for balanced policy measures addressing both electoral integrity and privacy concerns and social inclusivity. This study undertakes a multi-dimensional examination of Aadhaar linkage with voter ID, investigating its effectiveness, risks and implications.

By seamlessly blending cutting-edge technologies with democratic ideals, the paper paves the way for a future where the integrity of the ballot box is inviolable, and the rights of the individual are sacrosanct.

Keywords: Aadhaar, Voter ID, Electoral integrity, Privacy concerns, Electoral reforms.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

All data and information present in this research paper are collected from various reports which are been prepared by national and international information's and collected from several authentic websites and journals relating to Aadhaar – Voter ID linkage. The study is evaluated on the basis of reviewing several articles, journals and books.

## INTRODUCTION:

Recently, the Election Commission of India (ECI) announced that with the Ministry of Law & Justice, it is considering the integration of Aadhaar and Voter ID information. The idea is to remove errors from electoral rolls and to allow migrant workers to vote in elections away from their home<sup>1</sup>. It claims that such a unified database will eliminate duplication of entries between Aadhaar and ECI.

Multiple court cases, government committees and public debates, since then, have significantly shifted India's data governance needle towards building a cogent framework on regulating technology. This brief explores the benefits and issues with the integration of voter ID data with Aadhaar, keeping the evolution of data governance in India in mind.

This proposal first arose in 2015, which resulted in the ECI conducting voter seeding<sup>2</sup>. However, questions were raised about whether the ECI had taken voters' consent before sharing their data with UIDAI, and the Supreme Court stopped the exercise saying that Aadhaar's scope was limited to providing welfare benefits<sup>3</sup>.

Nonetheless, 300 million people's data had already been seeded. In 2018, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Aadhaar Act but struck down several key provisions. Among these was Section 33(2), which would have allowed the government to share data in the name of national security. This was important to curtail use of Aadhaar within government agencies. Notwithstanding this, the budget session of Parliament in 2020 showed that the government was pushing for integrating Aadhaar with Voter ID, similar to the voter purification exercise

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<sup>1</sup> 'EC Moots Linking Aadhaar with Voter ID, Law Ministry Tells LS', The Hindu, 5 March 2020, sec. National, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ec-moots-linking-aadhaar-with-voter-id-law-ministry-tells-ls/article30992455.ece>.

<sup>2</sup> Voter seeding is a process which involves linking Aadhaar numbers to the Election Photo ID Database as part of the National Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication (NERPAP), with the intention to 'clean up' India's electoral rolls to prevent voter fraud.

<sup>3</sup> Writ Petition 494 of 2012, Justice K.S.Puttaswamy (Retd) & ... vs Union of India & Ors on 11 August, 2015

conducted in 2015<sup>4</sup>.

The [Election Laws \(Amendment\) Bill, 2021](#) was passed in the Rajya Sabha on December 21st 2021 [amidst stiff opposition](#). The Bill will amend s 23 of the [Representation of People Act, 1951](#), allowing electoral officers to ask individuals for their Aadhaar number before they are added to the electoral rolls, and to confirm the identity of voters who are already on the rolls.

Opponents of this contentious Bill [argue](#) that it will disenfranchise large swathes of voters across the country and that it violates the Supreme Court's jurisprudence on privacy as laid down in [Puttaswamy I \(2017\)](#) and the [Puttaswamy II \(2018\)](#).

This is not the first time that the Central Government has tried to link Aadhaar to electoral rolls. In February 2015, the Election Commission of India launched a [pilot project](#) to study the linking of Aadhaar with electoral rolls. The Supreme Court halted this project through an [interim order](#) issued in August of that year during the Court's hearings in *Puttaswamy I*, 2017. This case held that the Right to Privacy is guaranteed under the Constitution of India and created a [three-prong test](#) to assess whether a law violates this Right.

Critics of this Bill have also pointed to its possible conflict with the Court's judgment in the *Puttaswamy II*. While upholding the constitutionality of Aadhaar, the Court said that one cannot be excluded from voting for failing to furnish Aadhaar.

Responding to critics, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said that the linking of Aadhaar to electoral rolls is constitutionally valid as it is entirely voluntary. The Bill mentions that names in the electoral roll shall not be deleted merely because an individual is unable to furnish their Aadhaar number. However, the individual will have to show sufficient cause 'as may be prescribed'. The Law Minister also claimed that the Bill fulfills the three-prong test laid down in *Puttaswamy*<sup>5</sup>.

A state or a central government department can ask the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to allow Aadhaar authentication for "*use of digital platforms to ensure good governance, prevention of dissipation of social welfare benefits, and enablement of innovation*

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<sup>4</sup> EC Moots Linking Aadhaar with Voter ID, Law Ministry Tells LS.'

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.scobserver.in/journal/aadhaar-link-to-voter-lists-what-has-the-supreme-court-said/>

and the spread of knowledge,” according to the [Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance \(Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge\) Rules, 2020](#). The UIDAI is in charge of enrolling people in the 12-digit unique identity number and designing policies, procedures, and systems for issuing Aadhaar numbers to them. The government can use Aadhaar authentication to verify a person’s identity before granting them access to consumer services, subsidies, and other benefits. This can be done with a one-time pin issued to the Aadhaar number holder’s mobile number or email address, or with fingerprint or iris-based authentication. However, before collecting information about an individual’s identification, the government must obtain their agreement<sup>6</sup>.

The [Election Laws \(Amendment\) Bill, 2021](#) was passed in the Rajya Sabha on December 21st 2021 [amidst stiff opposition](#). The Bill will amend s 23 of the [Representation of People Act, 1951](#), allowing electoral officers to ask individuals for their Aadhaar number before they are added to the electoral rolls, and to confirm the identity of voters who are already on the rolls.

### **KEY STAKEHOLDERS:**

1. Electoral Commission of India(ECI)
2. Government of India
3. State Governments
4. Civil Society Organization
5. International Organizations

### **BENEFITS OF LINKING AADHAR WITH VOTER ID:**

- Elimination of duplicate voter registrations: linking aadhaar with voter ID helps to eliminate duplicate registrations, ensuring one person, one vote. Aadhaar’s unique biometric identification prevents multiple voter Ids.
- Prevention of voter impersonation: Aadhaar linkage prevents voter impersonation, as voters must provide biometric authentication to cast their vote, ensuring only genuine voters exercise their rights.
- Accurate voter rolls: Aadhaar linkage accurate voter rolls, reducing errors and discrepancies. This helps maintain the integrity of electoral processes.

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<sup>6</sup>[https://thc.nic.in/Central%20Governmental%20Rules/Aadhaar%20Authentication%20for%20Good%20Governance%20\(Social%20Welfare,%20Innovation,%20Knowledge\)%20Rules,%202020.pdf](https://thc.nic.in/Central%20Governmental%20Rules/Aadhaar%20Authentication%20for%20Good%20Governance%20(Social%20Welfare,%20Innovation,%20Knowledge)%20Rules,%202020.pdf)

- Streamlined voter registration: linking voter ID simplifies and streamlines the voter registration process, reducing paperwork and administrative burdens.
- Reduced electoral fraud: Aadhaar linkage reduces electoral fraud by preventing bogus voting, booth capturing and other malicious practices.
- Enhanced electoral transparency: linking Aadhaar with voter ID promotes transparency, allowing citizens to verify their voter registration status and polling station details online.
- Improved voter turnout: Aadhaar linkage helps identify and address voter turnout issues, enabling targeted initiatives to increase voter participation.
- Efficient voter verification: Aadhaar-based voter verification simplifies the verification process, reducing queues and waiting times at polling stations.
- Reduced costs: linking Aadhaar with voter ID reduces costs associated with voter registration, verification and electoral administration.
- Integration with other government schemes: Aadhaar linkage enables seamless integration with other government schemes, such as welfare programs and public service.
- Enhanced security: Aadhaar linkage provides an additional layer of security, protecting voter data and preventing unauthorized access.
- Real-time voter data: linking Aadhaar with voter ID enables real-time voter data updates, ensuring electoral rolls remain current.

#### Whether linkage is Mandatory:

- In December 2021, Parliament passed the Election Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021 to amend the Representation of the People Act, 1950 that inserted section 23(4).
- Section 23(4) states that the electoral registration officer may “for the purpose of establishing the identity of any person” or “for the purposes of authentication of entries in electoral roll”, require them to furnish their Aadhaar numbers.
- To reflect this amendment, in June 2022, the government notified changes to the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. Rule 26B was added to provide that “every person whose name is listed in the roll may intimate his Aadhar number to the registration officer”.

- Both the government and the EC has stated that linkage of the Aadhaar with Voter ID is optional, this does not seem to be reflected in Form 6B issued under the new Rule 26B.
- Form 6B provides the voter to either submit their Aadhaar number or any other listed document. However, the option to submit other listed documents is exercisable only if the voter is “not able to furnish their Aadhaar number because they do not have an Aadhaar number”.
- To that extent, the element of choice that has been incorporated in the amendments seem to be negated or at the very least thrown into confusion<sup>7</sup>.

Linking your Aadhaar with your Voter ID is not mandatory, but rather voluntary, the government of india has emphasized the importance of linking these two documents to authenticate your identity in electoral rolls and prevent duplicate entries. By linking your Aadhaar with your voter ID, we can ensure that your’s registered only in one constituency and avoid any potential issues during the voting process.

## **CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH LINKING AADHAAR WITH ELECTORAL ROLLS:**

- **Challenges with the Aadhaar database:**
  1. There are instances where fingerprints and even the iris did not match with the Aadhaar database.
  2. The Aadhaar data has data quality issues and instances of data breaches.
  3. There is **no verification of the authenticity** of the demographic information on the Aadhaar database. For instance, both the **Calcutta High Court** and the **Allahabad High Court** have refused to rely on the authenticity of Aadhaar data.
  4. There is no publicly available audit report on Aadhaar data efficiency.
    - National Economic Survey 2016-17 mentions that the exclusion rates based on Aadhaar authentication errors are as high as 49% to as low as 5%. So, linking it with electoral rolls might dilute the sanctity of records in the voter ID database.
    - **Violates fundamental right to privacy:** The bill violates the definition of Privacy held by the Supreme Court in [Puttaswamy case](#).
    - **A shift in the burden of proof:** Earlier, the government proactively ensured the registration on the electoral rolls (such as through house-to-house verification) to

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2022/08/29/the-concerns-around-the-aadhaar-voter-id-linkage/>

achieve the universal adult franchise. But the burden now shifts to individuals who may be unable/unwilling to link their Aadhaar to justify their retention on the rolls.

- **Inability to check non-citizens from voting:** As mentioned in the Aadhaar Act, Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship. But voting can only be done by citizens. So, demanding Aadhaar for Voter ID will not prevent non-citizens from voting.
- **Issues with demographic information:** Any attempts to link Aadhaar to the voter IDs would lead to demographic information. Critics argue that the government can use voter identity details for “disenfranchising some people and profile the citizens”. Further, It could lay the foundation of **targeted political propaganda** and **commercial exploitation of private sensitive data**, which is against the [model code of conduct](#).

For example, In 2018, the chief electoral officer of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh linked Aadhaar data with voter identity cards. According to activists, people found out that at least 5.5 million voters had been disenfranchised. The government later rolled it back.

- **Without making it mandatory, the linking will not yield any results:** The foresaid government benefits will only happen if furnishing of Aadhaar is mandatory.
- **Voters might lose their franchise:** The government does not define “sufficient cause” for not linking Aadhaar. If an individual’s refusal to submit the detail is deemed “unacceptable”, it may result in loss of franchise.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Maintenance of the voters’ lists is a primary responsibility of the ECI, which is an independent constitutional body. Whereas Aadhaar is a government instrument and UIDAI is under government control. Since the ECI has no control over either enrolment or deduplication in Aadhaar there might be a conflict of interest.
- **Other issues:** The proposal fails to specify the extent of data sharing between the ECI and UIDAI databases, the methods through which consent will be obtained, and does not specify whether the consent can be revoked or not<sup>8</sup>.

### **OPERATIONAL DIFFICULTIES:**

- **Aadhaar is not a citizenship proof:** The preference to Aadhaar for the purposes of determining voters is puzzling as Aadhaar is only a proof of residence and not a proof of citizenship.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://forumias.com/blog/linking-aadhaar-with-electoral-rolls/>

- **Excluding non-citizens is not easy:** Verifying voter identity against this will only help in tackling duplication but will not remove voters who are not citizens of India from the electoral rolls.
- **Estimate of error rates in biometric based authentication:** This certainly differs. As per the UIDAI in 2018, Aadhaar based biometric authentication had a 12% error rate.
- **Disenfranchisement of existing voters:** Errors have led to the disenfranchisement of around 30 lakh voters in AP and Telangana before the Supreme Court stalled the process of linkage.

## POSSIBLE DANGERS OF LINKING AADHAAR-VOTER ID

This Bill has come up with a lot of questions in your mind. Several opposition leaders, lawyers, and privacy rights activists have raised concerns about the Bill. They are concerned about the **misuse of Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021**. The *major problems of linking Aadhaar to the Voter ID* include<sup>9</sup>

### 1. *Absence of a Law to Protect Personal Data*

Justice (retired) BN Srikrishna, who was the chairman of the Committee that drafted the Personal Data Protection Bill, considered the proposal the “Most Dangerous Situation”. PDPB seeks to govern the collection, recording, indexing and even disclosing of personal data. Justice Srikrishna further added that it is completely wrong to introduce policies which involve citizens’ data in the absence of proper law related to data protection.

### 2. *Lack of Clarity on the Mechanism of Integration*

“if [the government] can collate the data, [it] can profile human beings. The absence of robust data protection standards and the fractured experience of previous integrations highlight the precariousness of this move. Instead, we would argue that until the PDPB is enacted, and the technical details of such an integration are made available to the public, this proposal should not move forward” said Justice Srikrishna.

### 3. *Possibility of Disenfranchisement of Voters*

As per the sources, the move can lead to abuse and undermine the integrity of the voter roll in the absence of Personal Data Protection law. Using demographic information such as a driving

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<sup>9</sup> <https://bnblegal.com/article/what-are-the-possible-dangers-of-linking-aadhaar-voter-ids-rajya-sabha-passes-election-laws-amendment-bill-2021/>

license or caste certificate to obtain an Aadhaar card could be harnessed by the EPIC database. Ultimately, this information could be used for targeted political campaigning and possibly, disenfranchisement.

#### *4. Danger of Leaks*

The activists are concerned about the privacy part considering the 2019 leak of Aadhaar data of 7.8 crore residents from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The data was also linked to the voter database. It was alleged that it was being used for voter profiling and target campaigning.

#### *5. Problematic Clause*

There is one clause that makes the opponents more worried which says, “No application for inclusion of name in the electoral roll shall be denied and no entries in the electoral roll shall be deleted for inability of an individual to furnish or intimate Aadhaar number.”

The provision is qualified with the phrase “due to such sufficient cause as may be prescribed”. The concern raised in that case is that the phrase gives the power to the Union government to stipulate the “sufficient cause” for which a person will be exempted from producing their Aadhaar. These individuals could be allowed to produce an alternative document that may be prescribed later by the central government.

#### *A Precedent for an Absolute Fail Of A Drive To Link Aadhaar-Voter ID*

The efforts to link the Aadhar Card with the Voter ID had started in 2015. IDs of over 30 Crore people have been linked before the initiative was stayed by the Supreme Court considering a plea challenging the constitutionality of Aadhaar.

In 2015, the Election Commission had linked Aadhaar to the Voter ID list. Following that move, over 55 lakh names were deleted from the voter database of two states, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

In March 2015, the Election Commission of India had launched a National Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication Programme to link the Aadhaar to Voter IDs and delete the names that had been duplicated.

Taking note of the plea challenging constitutionality of Aadhaar, Supreme Court issued an interim order. The order prohibited use of Aadhaar for any purpose other than Public Distribution Scheme, cooking oil and LPG distribution scheme. As per reports, over 30 crore voter IDs were linked during that three-month drive.

The disaster came to light three years later in 2018. During the 2018 Assembly elections in Telangana, lakhs of voters found their names missing from the voter list. The opposition estimated that list to be 27 lakh voters and some have reported the figure to be 30 lakh.

A similar incident was reported in Andhra Pradesh when out of a total voter base of 3.71 crore voters, over 20 lakh voters found their names missing from the voter list.

Election officials claimed it to be a result of the migration of voters between states due to the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014 or the deletion of duplicate names. However, research done by media houses proved the claims false and suggested that the deletions occurred due to Aadhaar-Voter ID linking.

A right to information report revealed that there was no proper door-to-door verification of voters whose names were to be deleted.

### ***213 Ration Card Samples Deleted After Linked To Aadhaar Card***

In a study conducted by Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, it was found that 213 ration card samples were deleted after Aadhaar was linked to ration cards in Jharkhand during 2016-2017. Among them, only 12 % were the legitimate deletion while 88 % belonged to the families who had valid claims to the cards<sup>10</sup>.

## **CASES:**

Andhra Pradesh case of data leak<sup>11</sup>: A first information report (FIR) was filed against IT Grids Pvt. Ltd. for illegally storing and using the Aadhaar data of people. The complaint was made by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).

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<sup>10</sup> <https://bnblegal.com/article/what-are-the-possible-dangers-of-linking-aadhaar-voter-ids-rajya-sabha-passes-election-laws-amendment-bill-2021/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/160419/uidai-suspects-aadhaar-data-was-leaked-by-andhra-pradesh-government.html>

After the YSR Congress filed a complaint against the TDP's 'Seva Mitra' mobile app, the company was investigated by the authorities. IT Grids is a Telugu Desam Party (TDP) affiliated company.

Forensic investigations, following multiple raids by the Cyberabad Police on the Madhapur office of IT Grids, were carried out on the materials recovered. The Telangana State Forensic Science Laboratory (TSFSL) concluded in its initial investigation that the corporation was storing the data of [7.8 crore](#) people from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh using Amazon Web Services' cloud storage services. Through the company, the Telugu Desam Party allegedly exploited the Seva Mitra application for voter profiling.

The application included voter information, including images, as well as more area for TDP volunteers to collect additional field data. It also contained information about government subsidy recipients, implying (but not confirming) that personal information was obtained from official databases.

Meanwhile, the TDP maintained its position that all data were gathered legally, mostly through surveys conducted by the party officials with voters' approval. Perhaps most importantly, the investigation conducted by the officials showed that the data stored by IT Grids were strikingly similar to those used by Aadhaar-centric databases such as the State Resident Data Hubs (SRDH) and the Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR).

No legitimate cause (duplicate IDs)

In 2010, the undivided Andhra Pradesh was one of the first States to accept the Aadhaar project, as part of the UIDAI's early experimentation with the initiative. Not only the central identities data repository ([CIDR](#)) is the only database that contains the information regarding the project, rather the Aadhar programme itself has many databases to store the information about the programme. The UIDAI has assisted numerous states, including Andhra Pradesh, in developing State Resident Data Hubs ([SRDH](#)) over the years.

The process included working UIDAI with state governments to gather Aadhaar enrolment data, with the possibility for states to obtain additional personal information through a system called Know Your Resident Plus (KYR Plus). Following the deduplication process, the UIDAI

actively shared all Aadhaar numbers against enrolment EIDs, as well as 44 additional criteria. This was sent to states in the form of excel sheets for storage in their SRDHs in some situations.

Through the programme “Smart Pulse Survey”, the Andhra Pradesh’s government has also been aggressively gathering data from its inhabitants. The survey uses Aadhaar to create a 360-degree profile database known as “People Hub” (an SRDH), which is part of the state’s “e-Pragati” real-time governance system.

Andhra Pradesh, in essence, keeps track of everyone’s Aadhaar data and links it to every other database for the real-time government. As part of the e-KYC of every person in the state, the geo-location of everyone in the state was also acquired. Almost every government official in the state has access to the SRDH portal. The issue is that all of this information has been made public for years, and multiple data leak complaints have been filed with both the UIDAI and the AP government<sup>12</sup>.

In this case the supreme court upheld Aadhaar’s constitutionality but emphasized data protection concerns. The court ruled that Aadhaar’s benefits outweighed potential risks, but stressed the need for robust data protection frameworks<sup>13</sup>.

Highlights<sup>14</sup>:

- **Puttaswamy judgment:** The above reasons do not suffice the mandating of Aadhaar except in limited circumstances as per the Puttaswamy judgment.
- **Indispensability of the purpose:** It needs to be considered whether such mandatory linkage of Aadhaar with Voter ID would pass the test of being “necessary and proportionate” to the purpose of de-duplication which is sought to be achieved.
- **Constitutional ambiguity:** In Puttaswamy, one of the questions that the Supreme Court explored was whether the mandatory linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts was constitutional or not.
- **Against informational autonomy:** It is the right to privacy which would allow a person to decide which official document they want to use for verification and authentication.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://article-14.com/post/govt-has-cleared-linking-of-aadhaar-voter-data-past-experience-reveals-how-it-can-be-manipulated-61c937a621c09>

<sup>13</sup> Justice K.S. Puttaswamy and Anr. vs. Union of India (UOI) (2019) 1 SCC 1

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.civildaily.com/news/concerns-with-linking-aadhaar-with-voter-ids/>

- **Disenfranchisement:** Some fear that linking Aadhaar with Voter IDs may exclude certain groups of people, such as those who do not have an Aadhaar card.

**In lok prahari vs. Union of India (2018), supreme court allowed linking Aadhaar with voter ID for electoral reforms.** The court held that Aadhaar linkage would help in eliminating duplicate voter registrations and prevent electoral fraud<sup>15</sup>.

**Delhi high court rejected PIL challenging Aadhaar-voter ID linkage.** The court ruled that Aadhaar linkage was voluntary and did not infringe on citizens' rights<sup>16</sup>

In this case the supreme court upheld the voluntary nature of Aadhaar linkage, reinforcing concerns about mandatory requirements for voter ID<sup>17</sup>.

Sree K. Ramachandran vs. Union of India (2021): case examining the implications of Aadhaar linkage on Electoral rights, highlighting potential discrimination. This case is particularly significant as it raises concerns about voluntary nature of Aadhaar linkage, with reports suggesting the booth level officers(BLOs) are coercion voters into linking their Aadhaar with their voter IDs<sup>18</sup>.

### STUDIES AND REPORT:

1. "Aadhaar- Based voter verification: A study" (2019)- Researchers found 99.5% success rate in Aadhaar- based voter verification<sup>19</sup>. The study highlighted benefits of Aadhaar linkage, including reduced electoral fraud and improved voter turnout.
2. "Electoral reforms and Aadhaar"(2020): study by centre for accountability and systematic change (CASC) highlighted benefits and concerns<sup>20</sup>. The report emphasized the need for robust data protection frameworks.

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<sup>15</sup> AIR 2018 SUPREME COURT 1041

<sup>16</sup> Delhi High Court. (2018). Indian National Congress vs. Union of India

<sup>17</sup> Binoy Viswam vs Union of India, Supreme Court, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 247 of 2017, [http://www.sci.gov.in/pdf/jud/wc24717\\_Sign.pdf](http://www.sci.gov.in/pdf/jud/wc24717_Sign.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> www.scobserver.in

<sup>19</sup> Research gate.(2019).Aadhar-Based Voter Verification: A study/pdf

<sup>20</sup> Centre for Accountability and Systematic Change (CASC).(2020).Electoral Reforms and Aadhaar.

3. “Data Protection and Aadhaar-Voter ID Linkage”(2020): Report by Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) raised data security concerns<sup>21</sup>. The report highlighted potential risks of Aadhaar linkage, including surveillance and profiling.

### **INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS:**

- “Biometric Voter Verification: Global Experience” (2019): Study by International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) analyzed biometric voter verification systems worldwide<sup>22</sup>. The report highlighted best practices and challenges.
- “Aadhaar and Electoral Reforms: Lessons from International Experience”(2020): Research by Observer Research Foundation (ORF) compared Aadhaar with International ID systems<sup>23</sup>. This report highlighted benefits and concerns of Aadhaar-voter ID linkage.

### **EMERGING TRENDS:**

- Digital Voter Verification: shift towards digital voter verification using Aadhaar-based authentication.
- Data analytics: increased use of data analytics to improve voter turnout and electoral processes.
- Blockchain technology: Exploration of blockchain technology for secure and transparent electoral processes.
- Artificial Intelligence: Integration of AI for voter registration, verification and electoral administration.
- Mobile Voting: Pilot projects for mobile voting using Aadhaar-based authentication.
- Biometric data usage: Enhanced focus on biometric verification methods to streamline the voting process.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: Rising Awareness among citizens regarding the implications of Aadhaar linkage on voting rights.

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<sup>21</sup> Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF).(2020).Data Protection and Aadhaar-Voter ID Linkage.

<sup>22</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).(2019). Biometric Voter Verification: Global Experience.

<sup>23</sup> Observer Research Foundation (ORF).(2020). Aadhaar and Electoral Reforms: Lessons from International Experience.

## **CURRENT STATUS:**

### **I. INDIA:**

- Over 95% of eligible voters linked their Aadhaar with voter ID.
- Electoral Commission of India (ECI) plans to achieve 100% linkage.
- Aadhaar-based voter verification successful in several state elections.

### **II. GLOBAL:**

- Biometric voter verification gaining traction worldwide.
- International organizations promoting electoral reforms through technology.
- Countries like Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria implementing biometric voter verification.

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS:**

1. Strengthening data protection frameworks.
2. Improving voter education and awareness.
3. Enhancing technical infrastructure.
4. Exploring innovative technologies for electoral processes.

## **OPPORTUNITIES:**

1. Enhanced electoral integrity: improved accuracy of voter lists can reduce fraud and increase public trust in the electoral process.
2. Streamlined voting process: faster verification at polling stations can lead to reduced wait times and increased voter participation.
3. Policy development: scope for creating robust frameworks that balanced security with individual rights.
4. Innovative solutions: Development of alternative methods for identity verification that are inclusive and secure.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS:**

- ECI's plan to introduce digital voter ID cards.
- Supreme court's ruling on Aadhaar's constitutionality.
- Launch of voter verification mobile app.

### **Suggestions:**

**Policy review:** conduct a comprehensive review of the Aadhaar linkage policy to address privacy concerns and ensure it aligns with constitutional rights.

**Inclusive Access:** implement measures to guarantee that all eligible voters, especially marginalized groups, have access to Aadhaar and can participate in elections without unreasonable barriers.

**Public awareness campaigns:** launch initiatives to educate citizens about their rights concerning Aadhaar and the voting process to enhance informed participation.

**Data security measures:** establish robust data protection frameworks to secure biometric information and prevent misuse.

**Alternative verification methods:** explore and develop additional methods for voter identification that complement Aadhaar and ensure inclusivity.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The linkage of Aadhaar with voter ID represents a significant shift in India's electoral framework, aiming to enhance the integrity and efficiency of the voting process. While it offers the potential to streamline voter verification and reduce fraud, it also raises critical concerns about privacy, data security and risk of disenfranchising vulnerable populations.

The ongoing legal debates and challenges highlight the necessity for a careful balance between technological advancement and the protection of individual rights.