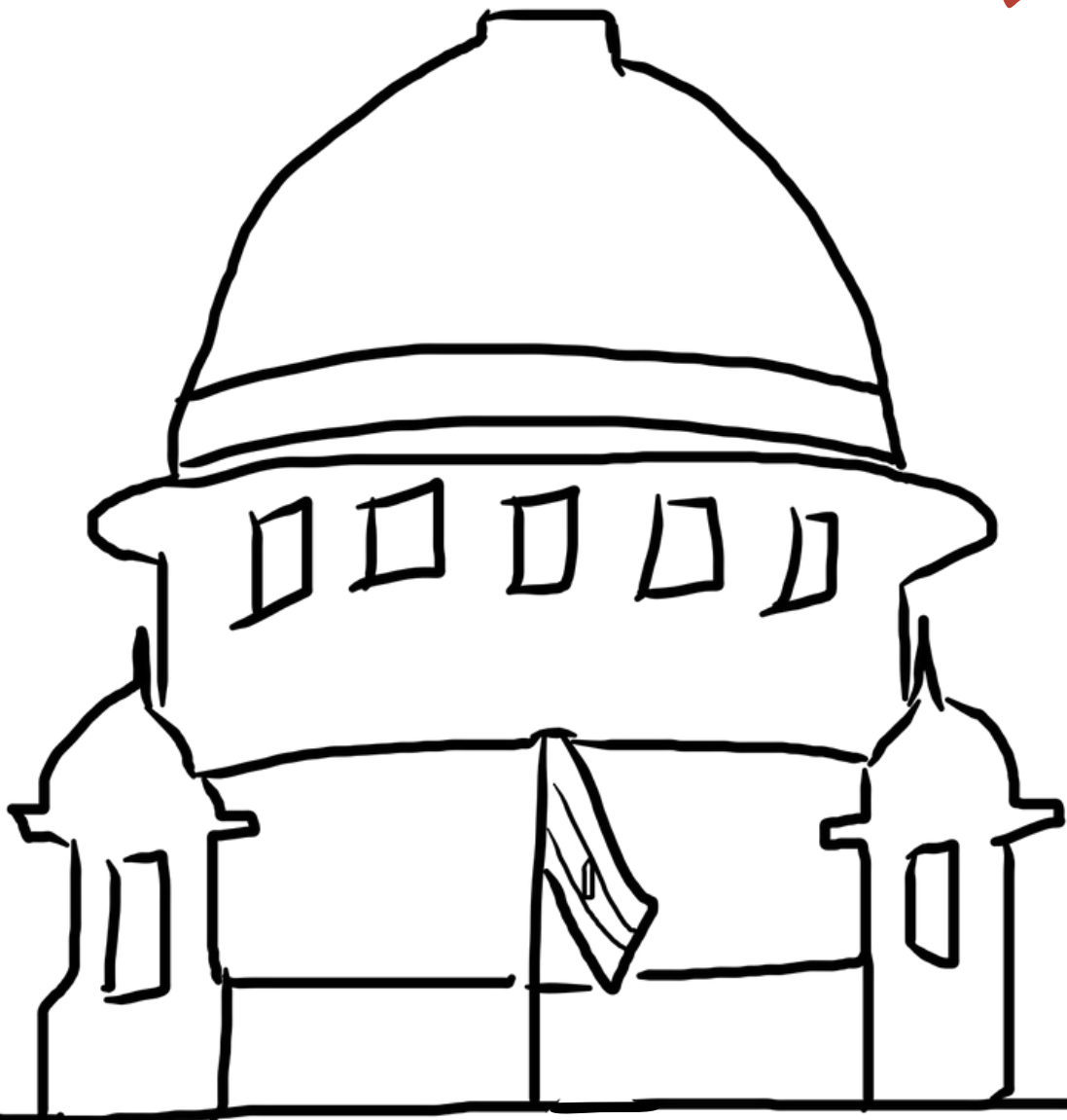


EQUAL JUSTICE

WOMEN JUDGES: IN NUMBERS



CENTRE FOR
LAW & POLICY
RESEARCH

Background

The Centre for Law and Policy Research (CLPR) is leading a research initiative titled **“Equal Justice: Addressing the Gender Gap in the Higher Judiciary in India.”**

This initiative examines the systemic gender discrimination in judicial appointments to develop pathways for establishing an ecosystem that supports women’s leadership and intersectional representation in the higher judiciary. Through the collection and publication of comprehensive disaggregated data on judicial appointments and research on gender mainstreaming efforts, the aim is to propose institutional reforms for fair and equitable representation in the higher judiciary in India.

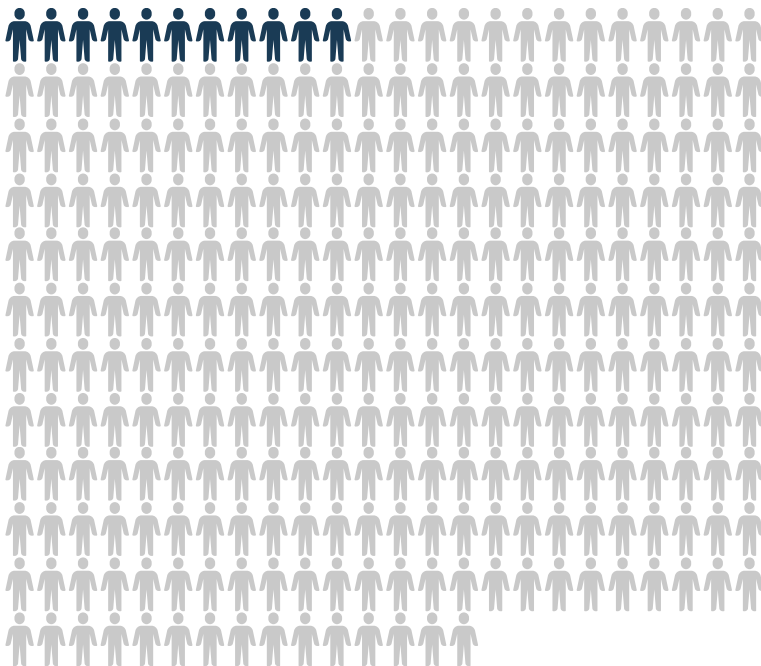
Women Judges in the Supreme Court of India

Currently, only



2 out of 33
(6.06%) judges are women

Historically, only



11 out of 279
(3.94%) judges have been women

51 Chief Justices
in 75 years of the Supreme Court

No woman

**Data updated as of 20 March, 2025*

1897



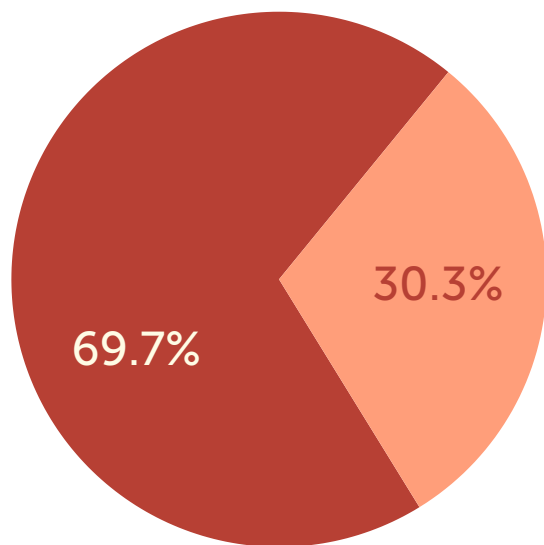
Cornelia Sorabjee, the first woman law graduate in India. Women only became eligible to practice law in 1923.

1937



Justice Anna Chandy becomes the first woman judge in India, appointed as a District Judge in Kerala.

Appointments to the Supreme Court



■ Judges Appointed September 2021 onwards

■ Sitting Judges Appointed before September 2021

Since September 2021,

23 Judges

69.7% of the Current Strength
(2/3 of the sanctioned strength)

have been appointed to the Supreme Court

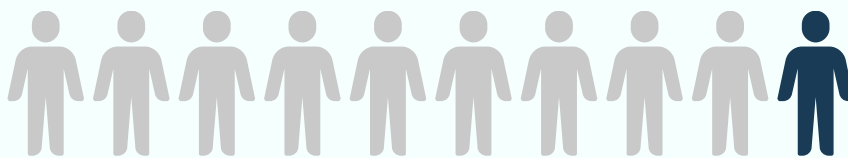
No Woman Appointed



The last time a woman judge was appointed to the Supreme Court was on 31 August, 2021.

**Justice Hima Kohli,
Justice B V Nagarathna &
Justice Bela Trivedi**

were all sworn in on the same day by then Chief Justice of India, Justice N. V. Ramana



The Supreme Court has had 9 male judges directly elevated from the Bar. In contrast, **only one woman lawyer** has been **elevated (Justice Indu Malhotra in 2018).**

1989



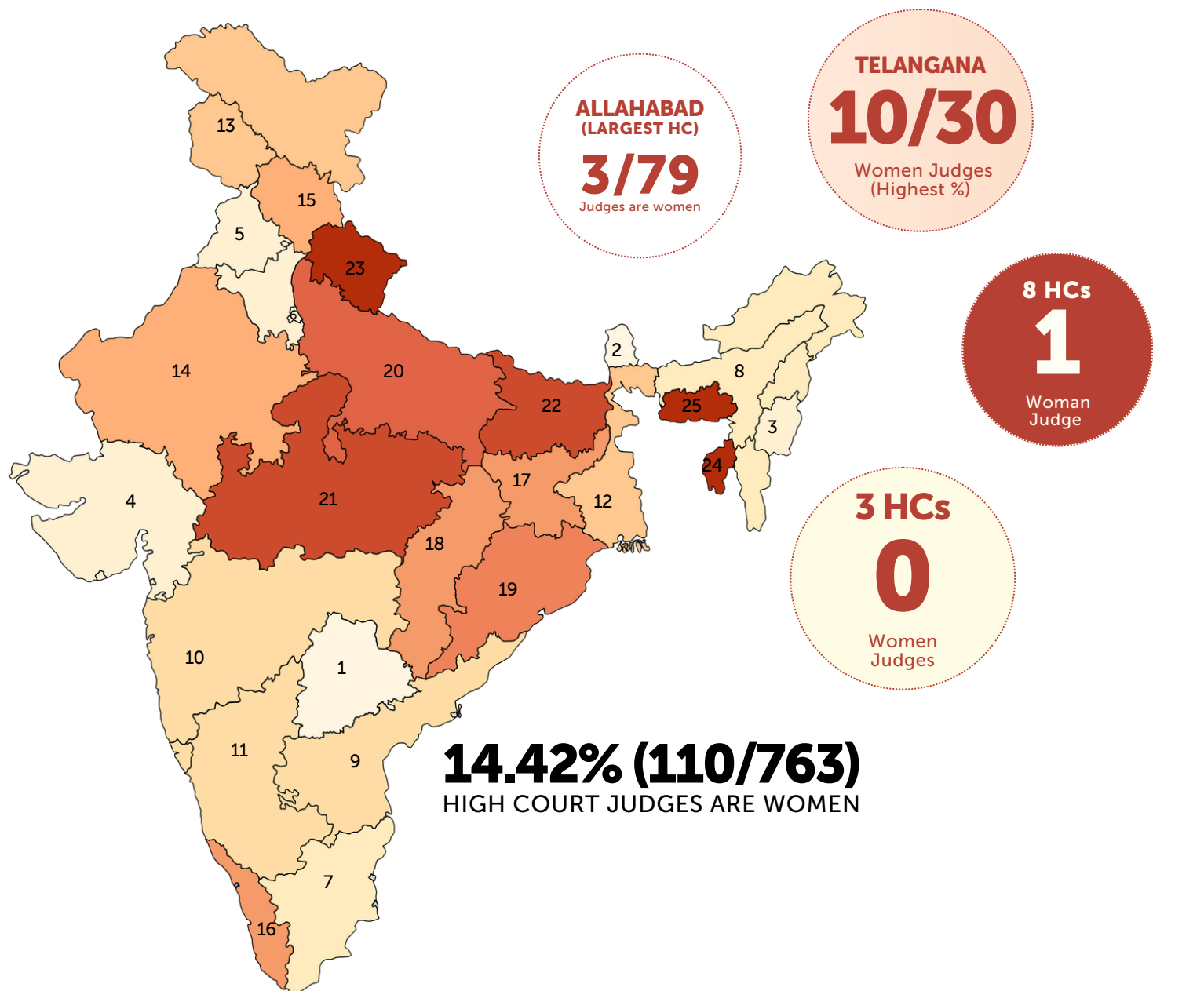
Justice Fathima Beevi becomes the first woman elevated to the Supreme Court.

1991



Justice Leila Seth becomes the first woman Chief Justice of a High Court.

Women Judges in the High Courts



Best Performing High Courts

1. Telangana: 33.3% (10/30)	3. Manipur: 25% (1/4)
2. Sikkim: 33.3% (1/3)	4. Gujarat: 25% (8/32)
5. Punjab & Haryana: 24.53% (13/53)	6. Delhi: 24.39% (10/41)
7. Madras: 21.54% (14/65)	8. Gauhati: 20% (5/25)

9. Andhra Pradesh: 16.67% (5/30)
10. Bombay: 16.67% (11/66)
11. Karnataka: 16% (8/50)
12. Calcutta: 15.91% (7/44)
13. Jammu & Kashmir: 13.33% (2/15)

14. Rajasthan: 8.82% (3/34)
15. Himachal Pradesh: 8.33% (1/12)
16. Kerala: 6.82% (3/44)
17. Jharkhand: 6.25% (1/16)
18. Chhattisgarh: 6.25% (1/16)
19. Odisha: 5.56% (1/18)

Worst Performing High Courts

20. Allahabad: 3.80% (3/79)
21. Madhya Pradesh: 2.94% (1/34)
22. Bihar: 2.94% (1/34)
23. Uttarakhand: 0% (0/9)
24. Tripura: 0% (0/5)
25. Meghalaya: 0% (0/4)

1994



Justice Sujata V. Manohar becomes the first woman to be Chief Justice of different High Courts.

2000



Justice Ruma Pal becomes the youngest woman ever appointed to the Supreme Court at the age of 58.

Appointments to the High Courts

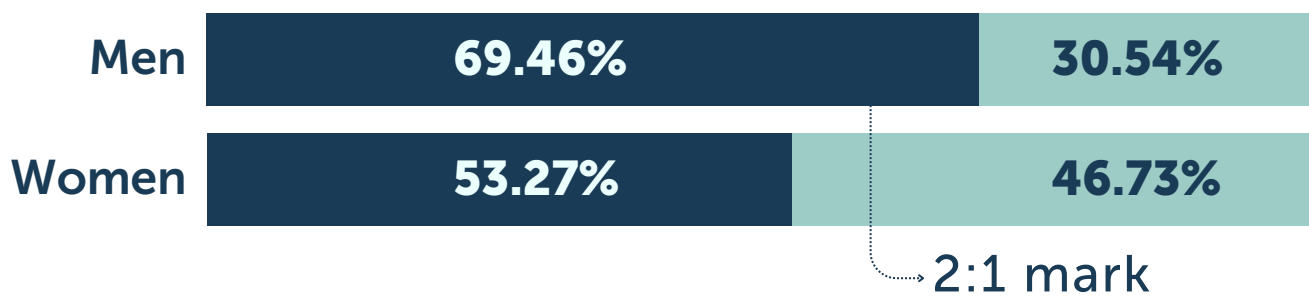
Judges to the Higher Judiciary are Appointed from Two Sources

- Bench: Appointed from District Judicial Services
- Bar: Lawyers with 10+ Years of Experience

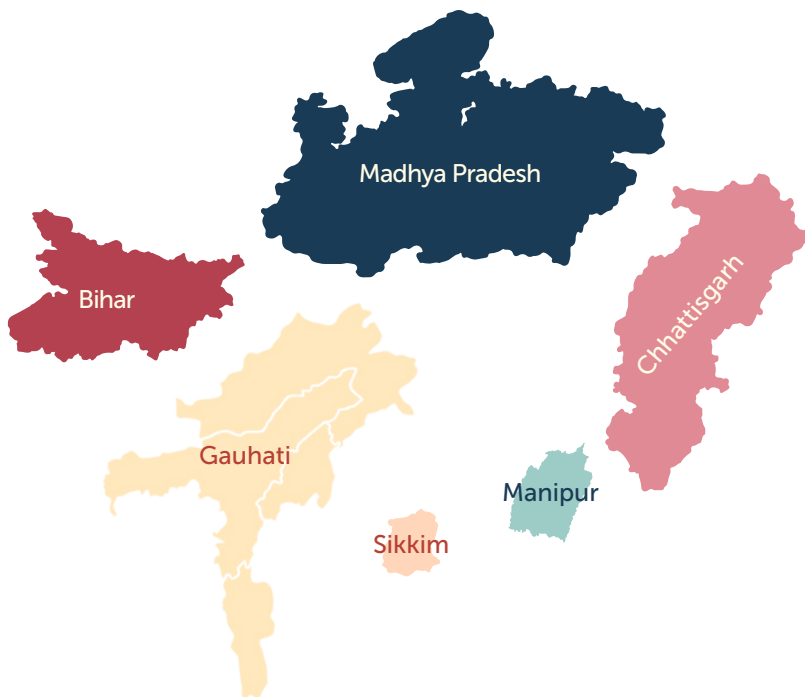
As a rule, appointments to the High Courts must be made in a 2:1 ratio with 66.67% of judges being appointed from the Bar and 33.33% from the Bench.

BAR VS **BENCH**

Current High Court Judges' Source of Elevation



6 High Courts currently do not have a single woman judge elevated from the Bar



Telangana High Court currently has the highest proportion of women judges. However, only 40% are Bar appointees.



2013



The first all woman bench in the Supreme Court, comprising Justice Ranjana Desai and Justice Gyan Sudha Misra, is constituted.

2014



Justice R. Banumathi becomes the first woman judge from the District Judiciary to be appointed to the Supreme Court.

High Courts: Recommendations vs Confirmations from the Bar

(January 1st 2020 - December 31st 2024)

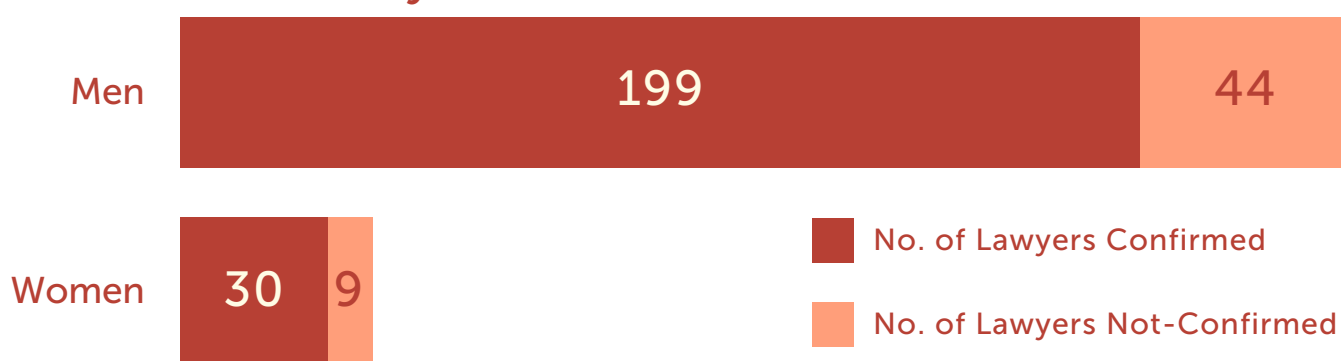
282 Lawyers recommended

for judgeship to the 25 High Courts

229 Lawyers confirmed

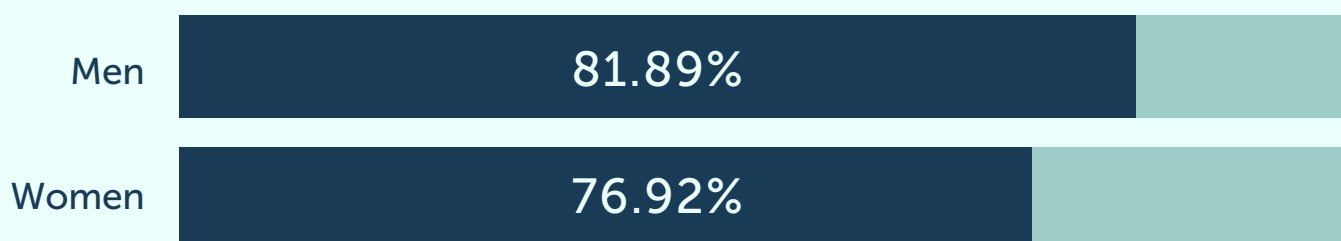
for judgeship to the 25 High Courts

No. of Lawyers Confirmed vs Not-Confirmed



For the 9 women candidates who were not appointed, in 5 instances, the woman was the sole candidate rejected from the list.

Percentage of Confirmations: Men vs Women



2017



Justice Manjula Chellur becomes the only woman to be Chief Justice of 3 High Courts—Kerala (2012), Calcutta (2014) and Bombay (2016-2017).

2018



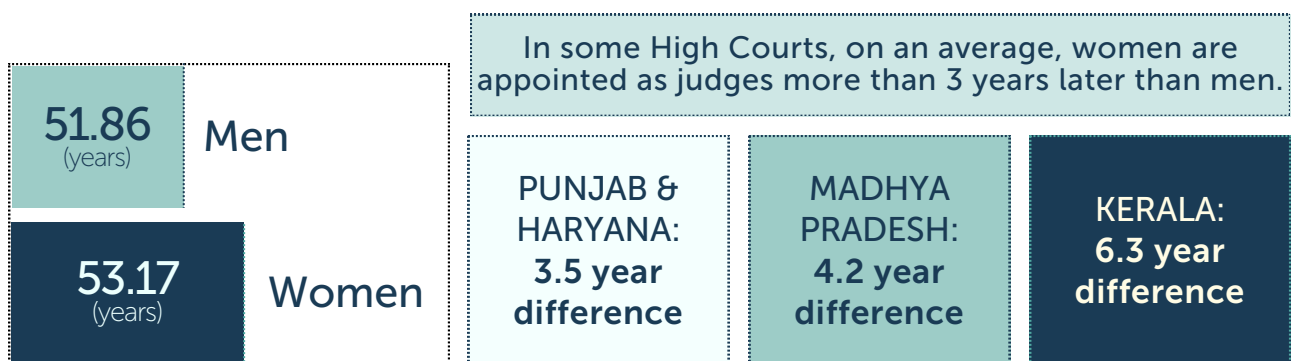
Justice Indu Malhotra becomes the first and only woman elevated to the Supreme Court directly from the Bar.

Age of Appointment: Women vs Men

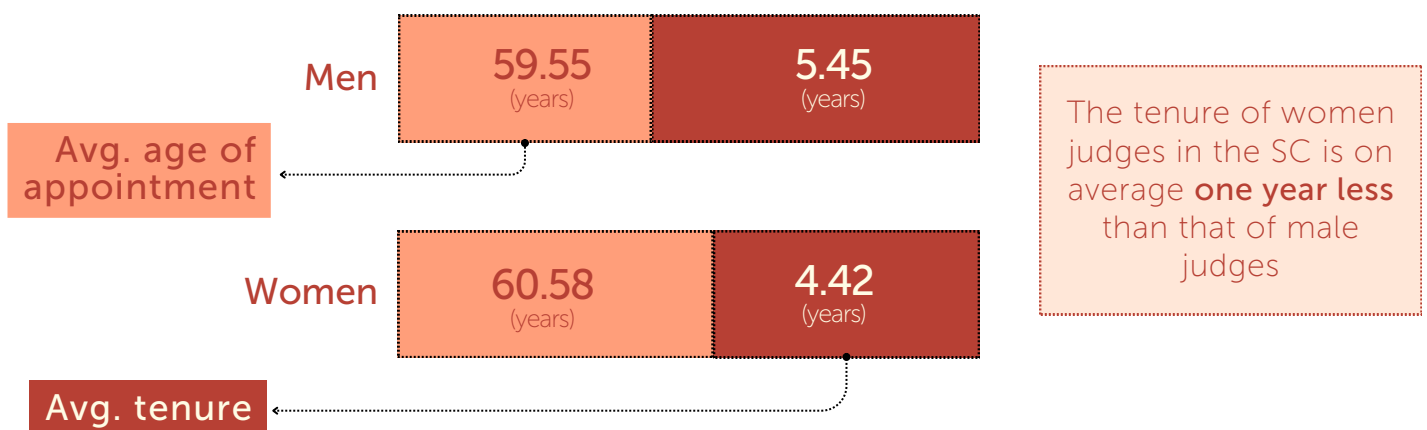
Appointments from the High Courts to the Supreme Court are based on seniority, calculated from the date of appointment as a High Court judge. Women lawyers are appointed later than men, which negatively impacts their seniority on the Bench.

Women judges are also appointed to the Supreme Court at a later age than male judges. As a result, women judges of the Supreme Court have shorter tenures and rarely reach the senior ranks of the Bench, which comprise the Collegium.

Average Age of Appointment to the High Courts



Average Age of Appointment to the Supreme Court & Tenure

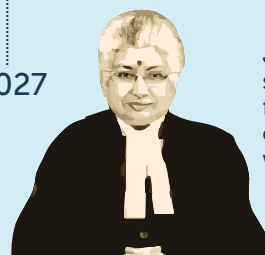


2025



Justice Sunita Aggarwal, currently the only woman serving as Chief Justice of a High Court (Gujarat).

2027



Justice B.V. Nagarathna is scheduled to become the first woman Chief Justice of India in 2027. Her tenure will be of 36 days.

Sources

1. Unless otherwise specified, all data has been retrieved and analysed from the following official sources and updated up to 1 March 2025:
 - <https://doj.gov.in/list-of-high-court-judges/>
 - <https://www.sci.gov.in/collegium-resolutions/>
 - Official websites of the High Courts of India
2. "Source of Elevation" and "Age of Appointment" analysis includes all appointments of current sitting High Court judges updated up to 1 March 2025.

Learn more
about the project
and access this
infographic
online

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The Centre for Law and Policy Research (CLPR) is a not-for-profit organisation committed to making the Constitution work for everyone.

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