

Vertical and Horizontal Reservations in India

What are Vertical and Horizontal Reservations?

Reservation in India refers to affirmative action practiced by the government of India to improve the backwardness of certain castes, communities, and religious minorities. Currently, two types of reservations exist in India, i.e., horizontal and vertical reservations. The scheduled castes (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs), and other backward classes (OBCs) are the primary beneficiaries of the reservation policies under Indian law.

Let us look at the two types of reservations in India under the reservation policy, i.e., Vertical and Horizontal Reservations, in detail -

What is Horizontal Reservation?

Horizontal reservation is a form of affirmative action that seeks to promote the inclusion of socially and economically backward groups by guaranteeing them a fixed proportion of positions in employment, education, and representation at the political level.

Since these reservations are proportional to the population of a particular section, they do not affect the relative position of different areas vis-a-vis each other. For example, if there is a 25% reservation for lower castes (SC/ST/OBC) in central government jobs, it will be 25% for every posts the government creates. The number of reserved seats will depend on the number of posts made.

Such groups include

- Children of veterans who are serving in the armed forces, retired, or killed in action.
- Disabled persons.
- Widows and unmarried women.
- People from rural areas.

What is Vertical Reservation?

Vertical reservation is a form of reservation that seeks to uplift socially or economically underprivileged groups. Under this type of reservation, the state creates separate classes or categories within an educational institution or service and reserves seats in those categories for the section which is being uplifted. In this type of reservation, there is no guarantee that members belonging to a particular group will get one specific seat every time an opportunity arises.

The Constitution of India provides reservations in education and employment to citizens' socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs). However, right from the beginning, this provision has been facing constitutional challenges to the extent of being ultra vires in Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution.

Difference between Vertical and Horizontal Reservation

The difference between vertical and horizontal reservations in India is explained in the table below-

Vertical Reservation	Horizontal Reservation
Vertical Reservation is the reservation for the people belonging to the backward classes.	Horizontal reservation is the reservation for the disadvantaged group in society.
It promotes the inclusion of socially and economically backward groups, i.e., lower castes (SC/ST/OBC)	It is a reservation for Children of veterans who are serving in the armed forces, retired or killed in action, disabled persons, widows and unmarried women, and people from rural areas.
The limit for reservations was extended to 40% after the introduction of EWS Reservation	The reservation number depends upon the number of seats available.
Article 16(4) deals with the Vertical Reservation	Article 15(3) deals with the Horizontal Reservation.

Significance of Vertical and Horizontal Reservations

The policy of reservation that is in place in India is an example of positive discrimination. It gives preferential treatment to certain groups in society to support and aid the groups that have been lagging in many aspects due to different reasons. Having such a policy in place would help these groups access higher education and government jobs, which were previously out of their prospects.

The debate arises in society and the political field when the question of who deserves such vertical and horizontal reservations comes up.

How does Vertical and Horizontal Reservation work?

Vertical and Horizontal Reservation is the need of the hour, which can ensure overall reservation for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. This will help eliminate the inequality between the upper castes and lower castes in our country. But one of the major questions that can a person be eligible for two categories at the same instance of time?

The explanation to this question can be understood from the Saurav Yadav vs. The State of Uttar Pradesh Case.

Saurav Yadav vs. The State of Uttar Pradesh Case

In 2020, Saurav Yadav raised a case against the state of Uttar Pradesh in the Supreme court. In this case, Rita Rani had secured 233.1908 while Sonam Tomar scored 276.59 marks. Rita applied under the SC- female category, and Sonam applied for the OBC-female one. Another girl who scored 274.82 marks under the general category was selected, but these two were not considered qualifying.

To this, the two judges penal of the Supreme Court ruled against the government of Uttar Pradesh. According to the court, if a candidate belonging to two reserved categories (i.e., at an intersection of the vertical-horizontal reserved category) will be considered as qualifying under the vertical as well as horizontal category.

