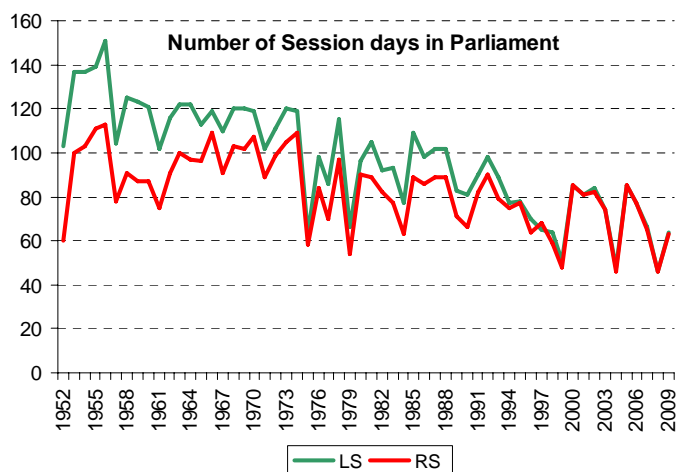


Vital Stats

Parliament in 2009

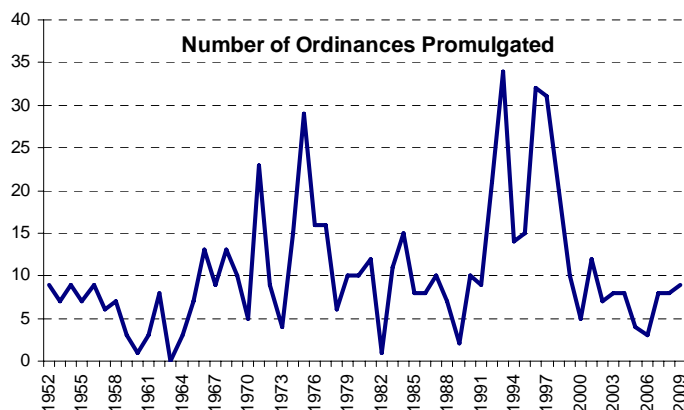
During 2009, Lok Sabha met for 64 days and Rajya Sabha for 63. The Parliament passed 25 Bills. In this note, we outline the performance of Parliament during the year.

Steady decline in the number of session days



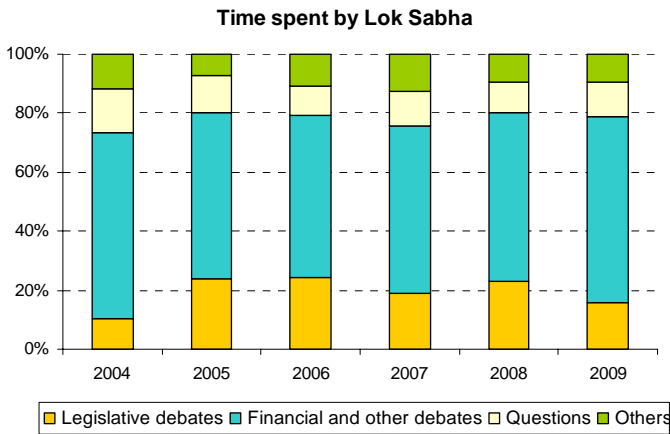
- In 2009, Lok Sabha sat for a total of 64 days and Rajya Sabha for 63.
- The days that Parliament meets has steadily decreased since the 1950s. The highest number of sittings was recorded in 1956 when Lok Sabha met for 151 days and Rajya Sabha for 113.
- Some MPs have introduced Private Member Bills to amend the Constitution to require that Parliament meet for a minimum number of days every year. Indeed, one such Bill was discussed in December and withdrawn after the Parliamentary Affairs Minister termed the proposal as impractical.

Number of ordinances promulgated – second highest in the past decade



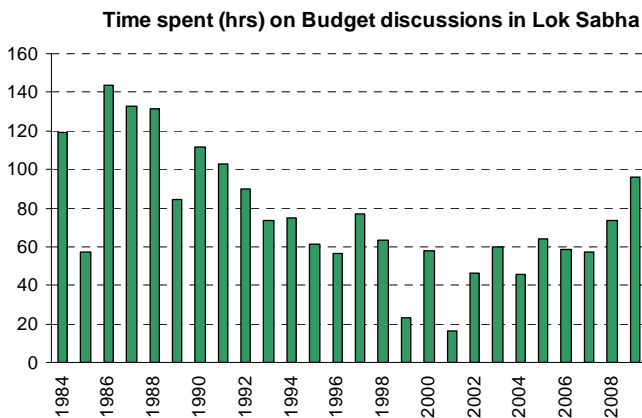
- When Parliament is not in session, the government may promulgate an Ordinance to make a new law (or amend an existing one). The Ordinance has to be ratified by Parliament within six weeks of its next sitting.
- The government promulgated nine ordinances in 2009. This is the second highest figure for the past decade.
- In October, the government issued an Ordinance to change the price at which it purchased PDS sugar, and a subsequent Order to change the pricing formula for sugarcane. The first two days of the winter session saw disruptions on this issue, and the government agreed to roll back some of its measures.

63% of total time in Lok Sabha spent on financial and non-legislative issues



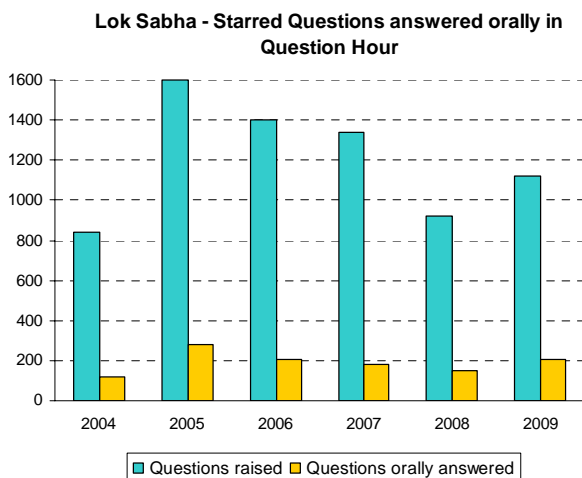
- Productive time in Lok Sabha in 2009 was 350 hrs, 89% of scheduled time.
- Nearly two-third of this time was spent on financial issues and in non-legislative debates. Some of the important issues that featured in discussions this year included internal security, inflation, swine flu, drought situation, PM’s international visits, climate change and the Liberhan report.
- 16% of total time was spent in framing laws. The Bills passed included the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education.
- Question Hour accounted for 12% of total time. A total of 209 questions were orally answered and 11,539 questions received written replies.

More time spent on Budget discussions in Lok Sabha this year



- Lok Sabha spent a cumulative of 96 hours discussing the Interim, General and Railway Budgets this year.
- The Interim budget was passed in the February session of the 14th Lok Sabha, before the dissolution of the House for the 2009 elections.
- Post election, the General and Railway Budgets were discussed and passed in the July-August session of the 15th Lok Sabha.
- However, unlike previous years, the General and Railway Budgets were not referred to Standing Committees as these were yet to be formed; Budget proposals were thus directly debated on the floor of the House.

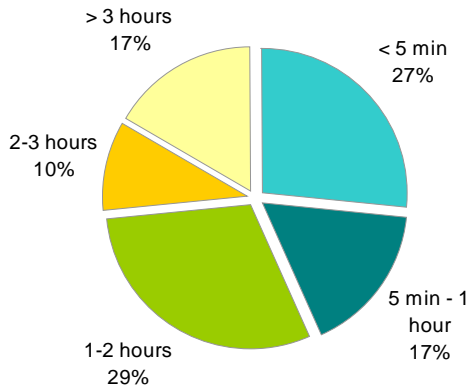
Only 19% starred questions orally answered in Lok Sabha



- Starred questions – questions orally answered by Ministers during Question Hour – are usually followed by supplementary questions from other MPs.
- However, of the total 1100 starred questions admitted in Lok Sabha in 2009, only 266 (24%) were called in the House; remaining questions could not be called due to the paucity of time.
- Of the 266 called, the inquiring MP was not present in the House for 57 questions. Thus, only 209 (19% of admitted questions) were orally answered.
- A similar pattern can be observed in previous years. Interestingly, the percentage of admitted questions that received oral answers was higher in 2009 than in the previous five years.
- Recently, Rajya Sabha amended its rules to ensure that no starred question goes unanswered in the absence of members who posed them.

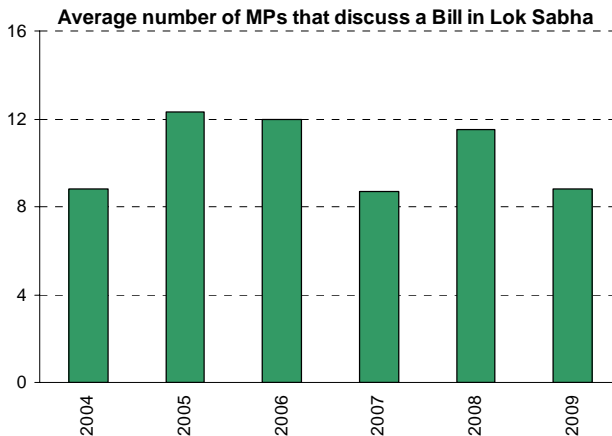
27% of the Bills passed by Lok Sabha discussed for less than five minutes

Time taken to discuss a Bill - Lok Sabha, 2009



- In total, Lok Sabha passed 30 non-financial Bills in 2009.
- Eight Bills were passed in less than five minutes – all in the recently concluded winter session of the 15th Lok Sabha. Some of the important Bills that figure in this list – The Legal Metrology Bill, The Commercial Division of High Courts Bill, and the Trade Marks Amendment Bill.
- Only five Bills were debated for more than three hours.

Low participation by MPs in Bill discussions



- In 2009, on average, nine MPs participated per Bill. This was lower than the participation seen in some recent years.
- Average participation was low due a large proportion of Bills that were passed without any discussion.
- There were, however, a few Bills that saw wide participation. For instance, 46 MPs spoke in the debate on the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill.

Notes:

1. The analysis is based on detailed data obtained from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha websites.
2. Data on debates was compiled from the daily Bulletin I supplemented with the actual text of debates as published by the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha secretariats
3. In our analysis, we did not include proposals and responses by Ministers to various issues.

DISCLAIMER: This document is being furnished to you for your information. You may choose to reproduce or redistribute this report for non-commercial purposes in part or in full to any other person with due acknowledgement of PRS Legislative Research (“PRS”). The opinions expressed herein are entirely those of the author(s). PRS makes every effort to use reliable and comprehensive information, but PRS does not represent that the contents of the report are accurate or complete. PRS is an independent, not-for-profit group. This document has been prepared without regard to the objectives or opinions of those who may receive it.