Understanding Reservations

What survey it is?

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- A new survey called SARI, Social Attitudes Research for India, investigated what people in cities, towns, and villages think about reservations.
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- SARI uses a sampling frame based on mobile phone subscriptions, random digit dialling, within-household sample selection, and statistical weights to build representative samples of adults 18-65 years old.
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What are the reasons were cited for opposing reservations?

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- Seats should be given on merit.
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- There should be equality.
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- Should be based on income.
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- People should work hard.
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Merit vs Reservation:

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- When people say that jobs and seats in schools should be allocated on the basis of “merit,” they are referring to the fact that people from reserved categories are often given a concession of a few points on exams and in interviews.
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- This view overlooks the important disadvantages that people from reserved

categories face in going to school or getting a job today.
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- We cannot expect groups who have been historically deprived of education, skills, and access to other means of economic mobility to suddenly start competing with those from groups who have had access to these means for centuries.
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- Social transformation and building of economic and cultural capital takes time to be passed on from one generation to another. It is an all too commonly held belief that people from general castes are meritorious inherently.
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- Yet, the ability to decipher test answers or speak confidently in an interview is often the result of being nurtured in an environment that is a result of accumulated economic, social and cultural capital.
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- Children who grew up in a dominant caste household are often encouraged, supported, and helped to succeed by other members of their caste groups, while reserved category students rarely have such networks to draw on.
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- It is worth noting that many reserved candidates have reached schools and jobs in spite of economic and social disadvantage as well as overt exclusion and discrimination.
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- They have succeeded in the face of adversity, they bring a different and desirable kind of merit to a school or workplace.
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Equality vs Reservation:

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- Reservation is a policy tool that promotes equality rather than undermines it. The primary reason why reservation was written into India’s Constitution was to ensure representation of all social groups in positions of power.
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- When people from all social groups are represented in government, higher education, and in business, it is less likely that traditionally marginalised groups will continue to be denied fundamental rights and access to their fair share of society’s resources.
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Poverty vs Reservation:

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- However, reservation is intended not to be an anti-poverty programme. The government has many programmes which are, in principle, accessible to all poor people.
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- Reservation exists because, in addition to being more likely to be poor than general castes, Dalits, backward Muslims, and Adivasis face social discrimination and exclusion that poor people from general caste backgrounds do not face.
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- The fact that the right to education, the right to own land, the right to conduct business, or to pursue a well-remunerated occupation has been reserved for men from high caste backgrounds for generations means that government must take steps to correct the unequal distribution of rights.
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Way ahead:

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- Reservation is a policy tool that is used not only in India. In many countries, reservation or other types of affirmative action are used to try to overcome human prejudice based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, caste or any other group identity, and to encourage representation of and participation by groups traditionally excluded and discriminated against.
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- One way to make these measures more acceptable and help people better understand the historic, social and cultural background behind reservation would be to educate children in schools about caste, ethnic, gender and regional diversities and the need for public policy interventions to make society more equal and fair.
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\n**Category: Mains | GS - II | Social Justice**

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Source: The Hindu

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