

India's Digital Population Census 2027: Caste Enumeration and Delimitation Impact

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Population Census 2027 India Latest News

- India will conduct its next population **census** by March 1, 2027, after a historic 16-year gap, as announced by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. This will be India's **first digital census** and the first post-Independence census to include **caste enumeration**.

India's Next Census Scheduled for 2027

- The government has announced that the next nationwide population census will begin on April 1, 2026.
- Key Features of the 2027 Census**
 - First Digital Census:** The upcoming exercise will be India's first fully digital census.
 - Caste Enumeration:** For the first time since Independence, the census will include **caste-based data collection**.
- Timeline and Phases**

- The census will be held in **two phases**:
 - House Listing and Housing Schedule
 - Population Enumeration (includes caste data)
- Both phases will span April 1, 2026 to February 28, 2027.
- **Reference Date:**
 - **March 1, 2027** (for most of India)
 - **October 1, 2026** (for Ladakh and snow-bound areas in J&K, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand)
- **Legal and Procedural Aspects**
 - The census will be conducted under the Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990.
 - A gazette notification under Section 3 of the Census Act is expected soon, which will formally announce the schedule.
- **Political Implications**
 - As per the constitutional mandate, the first census after 2026 can be used for the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies.
 - This data could form the basis for electoral constituency restructuring before the 2029 General Elections.
- **Impact on Women's Reservation**
 - The 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, as mandated by the recently passed Women's Reservation Act, will also come into force only after a new delimitation exercise is conducted based on post-2026 census data.
- **No Update on NPR**
 - There was no mention of updating the **National Population Register (NPR)** during the announcement.
 - As per Citizenship Rules, 2003, NPR is the first step toward compiling a National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC/NRC).
- **Background**
 - The last census was conducted in 2011, with the first phase held in 2010.
 - The 2021 census was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other administrative reasons.

Delimitation to Begin After Release of Census 2027 Data

- Once the final census data is released in late 2027, the process of delimitation will begin.
- The Parliament must first pass a new Delimitation Act to legally empower the formation of a Delimitation Commission.

Legal Provision and mandate

- The process is mandated under **Articles 81 and 82 of the Constitution**, which require delimitation after every **Census**.
- Once formed, the Commission will consult **state governments and stakeholders** to devise a formula based on **population per constituency**.

Formation and Composition of the Delimitation Commission

- The Delimitation Commission will be:
 - Headed by a retired Supreme Court judge
 - Include the Chief Election Commissioner and State Election Commissioners
 - Assisted by MPs and MLAs from states as associate members (*without voting rights*)

Historical Background

- Delimitation was done after the 1951, 1961, and 1971 censuses.
- The 42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976) froze the number of seats until after the 2001 Census.
- The 84th Constitutional Amendment (2002) extended this freeze until the first census after 2026.

Current Scenario

- The current 543 Lok Sabha seats are based on the 1971 Census.
- The Delimitation Act of 2002 allowed only boundary redrawing, not an increase in seat numbers.
- To increase seats, a Constitutional Amendment is required, needing a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

Political and Regional Challenges

- Southern states may lose out in a population-based seat redistribution, as they have successfully controlled population growth.
- Maintaining the current cap of 550 seats (Article 81) without increasing total seats could disadvantage them further.

Population Census 2027 India FAQs

Q1. When will the next census in India be held?

Ans. India's next census begins April 1, 2026, with data reference set for March 1, 2027.

Q2. What makes the 2027 census historic?

Ans. It will be India's first digital census and first post-Independence caste enumeration.

Q3. What is the significance of this census for delimitation?

Ans. Census 2027 data will guide redrawing of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies after 2026.

Q4. What is the legal framework for the census?

Ans. It follows the Census Act, 1948 and Census Rules, 1990, requiring gazette notification.

Q5. How does the census affect women's reservation?

Ans. Women's 33% reservation in Parliament/Assemblies depends on delimitation using post-2026 census data.

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