



Delimitation

For Prelims: [Delimitation](#), Delimitation Commission Act 1952, [Constitution of India](#), Delimitation Commission, [15th Finance Commission](#), [ECI](#).

For Mains: Need for Delimitation and Related Concerns.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

The [Delimitation](#) of constituencies for the [Lok Sabha](#) and State Legislative Assemblies is to be carried out on the basis of the **First Census after 2026**.

- The 2021 Census was originally postponed due to the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) and subsequently due to delays on the part of the Central government.

What is Delimitation?

▪ About:

- Delimitation means the **process of fixing the number of seats and boundaries** of territorial constituencies in each State for the Lok Sabha and Legislative assemblies.
 - It also includes determining the seats to be reserved for [Scheduled Castes \(SC\) and Scheduled Tribes \(ST\)](#) in these houses.
- This 'delimitation process' is performed **by the 'Delimitation Commission'** that is set up under an act of Parliament.
 - Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times — **1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002** under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002.
 - The first delimitation exercise was carried out by the President (with the help of the Election Commission) in 1950-51.

▪ History:

- The last delimitation exercise that **changed the state-wise composition of the Lok Sabha** was completed in 1976 and done on the basis of the 1971 census.
- The [Constitution of India](#) mandates that the allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha should be based on the population of each state so that the **ratio of seats to population is as close as possible to being equal across all states**. It is intended to ensure that each person's vote carries roughly the same weight, regardless of which state they live in.
 - However, this provision meant that states that took little interest in population control could end up with a greater number of seats in Parliament.
- To avoid these consequences, the **Constitution was amended 42nd Amendment Act** of 1976 **froze the allocation of seats** in the Lok Sabha to the states and the division of each state into territorial constituencies till the year 2000 at the 1971 level.
- The **84th Amendment Act of 2001** empowered the government to **undertake readjustment** and rationalisation of territorial constituencies in the states on the basis of the population figures of 1991 census.

- The **87th Amendment Act of 2003** provided for the delimitation of constituencies **on the basis of 2001** census and not 1991 census.
 - However, this can be done without altering the number of seats allotted to each state in the Lok Sabha.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - Under **Article 82**, the Parliament enacts a **Delimitation Act after every Census**.
 - Under **Article 170**, States also get divided into territorial constituencies as per Delimitation Act after every Census.

What is the Significance of Delimitation?

- **Representation:**
 - Delimitation ensures fair representation in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies by adjusting the **number of seats based on population changes**.
 - This is crucial for **upholding the democratic principle of "one citizen-one vote-one value."**
- **Equity:**
 - By readjusting the **boundaries of territorial constituencies**, delimitation aims to ensure **equitable distribution of seats** among different regions, considering population shifts over time.
 - This helps prevent underrepresentation or overrepresentation of specific areas.
- **Reserved Seats for SC/ST:**
 - Delimitation determines the allocation of reserved seats for **Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)** in accordance with constitutional provisions, ensuring adequate political representation for marginalized communities.
- **Federalism:**
 - Delimitation impacts federal principles by influencing the distribution of political power among states. It is essential to **strike a balance between population-based representation and federal considerations** to maintain harmony among diverse regions.
- **Population Control Measures:**
 - Historically, the freezing of seats based on the **1971 Census aimed to incentivize population control** measures. However, the impending delimitation exercise raises questions about the effectiveness and implications of this policy in the context of changing demographics.

What are the Concerns Related to Delimitation?

- **Regional Disparity:**
 - Disparity in representation **between north and southern part of India** in the Lok Sabha due to population as a deciding factor.
 - The delimitation based solely on population disregards the progress made by the southern states in population control and may lead to disparities in the federal structure.
 - Despite having **only 18% of the country's population**, the southern states **contribute 35% to the country's GDP**.
 - The northern states, which did not prioritise population control, are expected to benefit in the delimitation process due to their higher population growth.
- **Inadequate Funding:**
 - After the **15th Finance Commission** used the 2011 **Census** as a basis for its recommendation, concerns were raised about **southern states losing funding** and representation in parliament.
 - Previously, the **1971 Census was** used as the base for funding and tax devolution **recommendations to states**.
- **Affecting the Reservations for SCs/ STs:**
 - The scheduled delimitation and reallocation of seats may result in **not only a loss of seats for southern states** but also an increase in power for political parties with their base of support in the north.
 - This could potentially lead to a shift of power toward the north and away from the south.

- The exercise will also affect the division of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in each state (under Articles 330 and 332).

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Table 1: If the number of seats is retained at 543 and reapportioned among States based on the projected population in 2026

State	Number of seats at present	Number of seats projected	Net gain/loss
U.P.	80	91	11
Bihar	40	50	10
Rajasthan	25	31	6
M.P.	29	33	4
Tamil Nadu	39	31	-8
Andhra + Telangana	42	34	-8
Kerala	20	12	-8
Karnataka	28	26	-2
Punjab	13	12	-1
Himachal	4	3	-1
Uttarakhand	5	4	-1

Table 2: If the number of seats is increased to 848 based on the projected population in 2026

State	Number of seats at present	Number of seats projected	Net gain
U.P.	80	143	63
Bihar	40	79	39
Rajasthan	25	50	25
M.P.	29	52	23
Tamil Nadu	39	49	10
Andhra + Telangana	42	54	12
Kerala	20	20	-
Karnataka	28	41	13
Punjab	13	18	5
Himachal	4	4	-
Uttarakhand	5	7	2

What are the International Practices Related to Delimitation?

▪ In the US:

- The number of **seats in the House of Representatives** (the equivalent of our Lok Sabha) has been **capped at 435 since 1913**.
- The **population of the country has increased almost four times** from 9.4 crore in 1911 to an estimated 33.4 crore in 2023. The seats among the **States are redistributed after every Census through the 'method of equal proportion'**. This does not result in any significant gain or loss for any of the States.
 - For example, based on the Census of 2020, the reapportionment has resulted in no change in the number of seats for 37 States.

▪ European Union (EU):

- In the EU Parliament which consists of 720 members, the number of seats is **divided between 27 member countries** based on the **principle of 'degressive proportionality'**.
- Under this principle, the ratio of population to the number of seats shall increase as the population increases.
 - For example, **Denmark** with a population of around 60 lakh has 15 seats (**average population of 4 lakh per member**) as against Germany with a population of 8.3 crore having 96 seats (**average population of 8.6 lakh per member**).

What is the Delimitation Commission?

▪ Appointment:

- The Commission is appointed by the [President of India](#) and works in collaboration with the [Election Commission of India](#).

▪ Composition:

- Retired [Supreme Court judge](#)
- [Chief Election Commissioner](#)

- Respective **State Election Commissioners**
- **Functions:**
 - To **determine the number and boundaries of constituencies** to make the population of all constituencies nearly equal.
 - To identify seats reserved for **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**, wherever their population is relatively large.
- **Powers:**
 - In **case of a difference** of opinion among members of the Commission, the **opinion of the majority prevails**.
 - The Delimitation Commission in India is a high-power body **whose orders have the force of law and cannot be called in question before any court**.

Way Forward

- There is a **need to balance democratic representation with federal considerations**. Suggestions include capping the number of Lok Sabha seats while increasing the number of MLAs based on population, alongside empowering local bodies for grassroots democracy.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. With reference to the Delimitation Commission consider the following statements: (2012)

1. The orders of the Delimitation Commission cannot be challenged in a Court of Law.
2. When the orders of the Delimitation Commission are laid before the Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly, they cannot effect any modification in the orders.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (c)