



Caste-Census in Bihar

For Prelims: [Other Backward Classes\(OBCs\)](#), [Extremely Backward Classes\(EBCs\)](#), [Census, Socio-Economic Caste Census\(SECC\)](#), [Rohini Commission](#), [Sub-Categorization](#)

For Mains: Impact of Caste Census in improving governance and mobilization of resources for the marginalised sections.

Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the Government of the State of Bihar released findings of the [Caste Survey, 2023](#) which revealed that [Other Backward Classes \(OBCs\)](#) and [Extremely Backward Classes \(EBCs\)](#) together **constitute 63 %** of the state's total population.

- The findings are supposed to have wider connotations in the State and National Elections and also in the identification of intended beneficiaries for various welfare schemes.

What are the Key Findings of the Bihar Caste Survey?

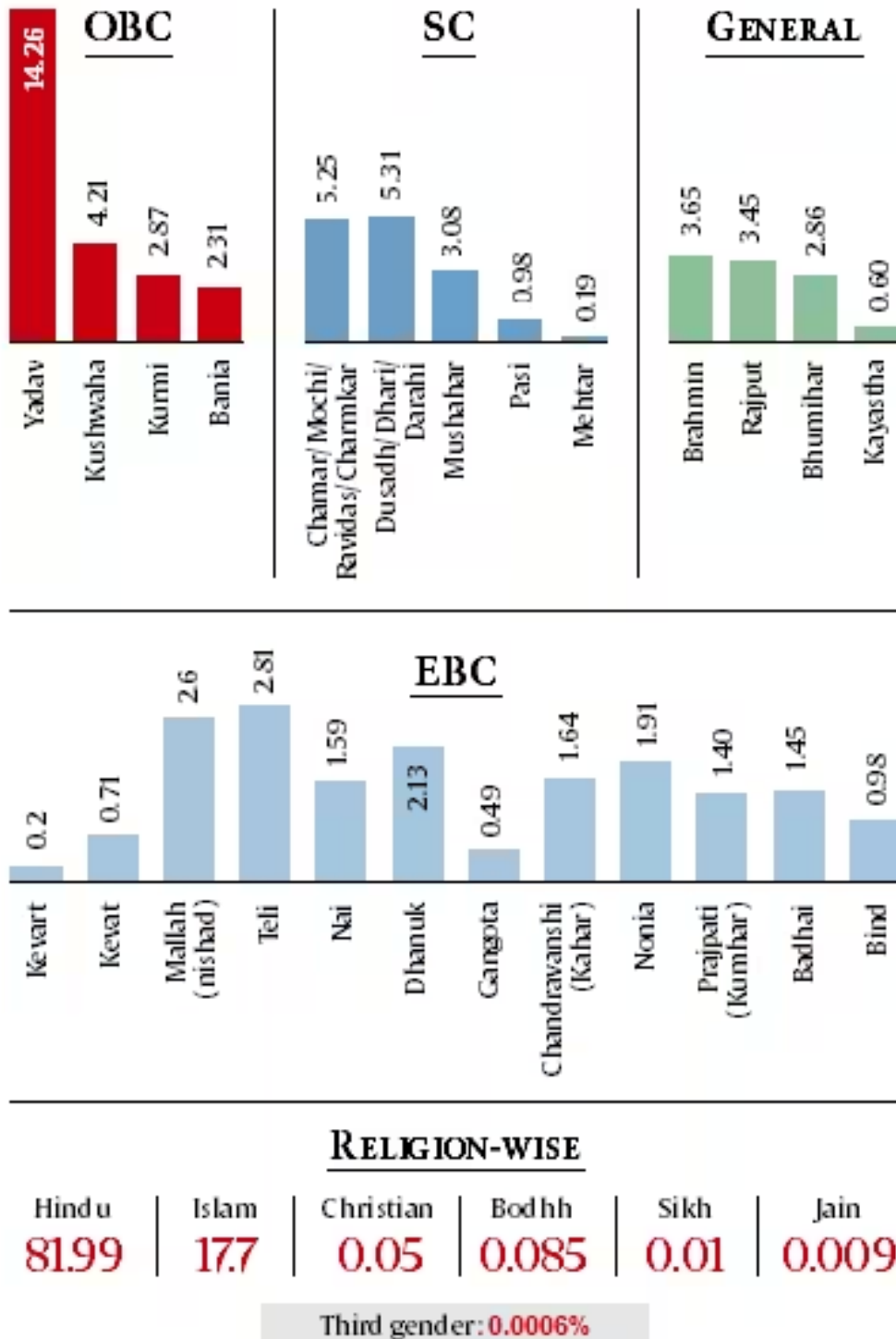
Different Castes and Communities (Bihar)	Percentage Population (%)
Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs)	36.01 %
Other Backward Classes (OBCs)	27.12 %
Scheduled Castes	19.65 %
Scheduled Tribes	1.68%
Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs and Jains	< 1 %
Total Population (Bihar)	13.07 crores

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TELLING NUMBERS

How major groups stack up in Bihar

(figures in%)



What was the procedure adopted in the Caste Survey?

The survey was carried out in **two phases**, which each had its **own criteria and objectives**.

▪ **First Phase:**

- During this phase, the **number of all households** in Bihar were counted and recorded.
- Enumerators were given a **set of 17 questions** which were to be mandatorily answered by the respondent.

▪ **Second Phase:**

- During this phase data on people living in the **households, their castes, sub-castes, and socio-economic conditions** were collected.
- However, filling **the Aadhaar** number, caste certificate number and ration card number of the head of the family, were optional.

What is the Significance of the Bihar Caste Survey Findings?

▪ **Increasing the OBC Quota:**

- The survey results will amplify the clamour for increasing the **OBC quota beyond 27%**, and **for a quota within quota for the EBCs**.
 - The [Justice Rohini Commission](#), which has been examining the question of [sub-categorisation of OBCs since 2017](#), submitted its report and recommendations are not yet made public.

▪ **Redrawing of 50% Reservation Ceiling:**

- The survey data will also reopen the debate over the **50%** ceiling on reservation imposed by the Supreme Court in its landmark ruling in [Indra Sawhney v Union of India \(1992\)](#).
 - Depending upon the population of OBCs, **the demand for increase in reservation quota in proportion to that of the population** can arise from different quarters of the caste groups.

▪ **Fulfilment of Constitutional Obligations:**

- Caste Survey will help attain the objectives as enunciated in [Directive Principles of State Policies \(DPSPs\)](#) as mentioned in [Part IV](#) of the constitution.
 - This will majorly help achieve the socio-economic objectives as outlined by the Constitution drafters.

▪ **Realisation of Sarvodaya:**

- Caste Census can be properly utilised to develop targeted measures so as to reduce rampant inequality across the State and promote equity and social justice In the long term.

What are the Issues With the Caste Census?

▪ **Repercussions of a Caste Census:**

- Caste has an emotive element and thus there exist the political and social repercussions of a caste census.
- There have been concerns that counting caste may help solidify or harden identities.
- Due to these repercussions, nearly a decade after the [SECC](#), a sizable amount of its data remains unreleased or released only in parts.

▪ **Caste is Context-specific:**

- Caste has never been a proxy for class or deprivation in India; it constitutes a distinct kind of embedded discrimination that often transcends class.
- For example:
 - People with Dalit last names are less likely to be called for job interviews even when their qualifications are better than that of an upper-caste candidate.
 - They are also less likely to be accepted as tenants by landlords.
 - Marriage to a well-educated, well-off Dalit man still sparks violent reprisals among the families of upper-caste women every day across the country.

When was the last Caste Census Conducted in India?

▪ **Caste Census of 1931:**

- The last caste census was **conducted in 1931**, and data was made publicly available by the British Government of the day.

- This caste census became the basis for the implementation of [Mandal Commission Reports](#) and subsequent reservation policies by the government for **Other Backward Classes**.
- **Census of 2011:**
 - The Census of 2011 became the first time to collect Caste-based data after independence.
 - However, the data related to caste were not made public due to fear of political favouritism and opportunism.

What is the Census?

- **Origin of Census:**
 - The origin of the Census in India **goes back to the colonial exercise of 1881**.
 - Census has evolved and been used by the government, policymakers, academics, and others to capture the Indian population, access resources, map social change, [delimitation exercise](#), etc.
- **First Caste Census as SECC (Socio-Economic and Caste Census):**
 - SECC was **conducted for the first time in 1931**.
 - SECC is meant to canvass every Indian family, both in rural and urban India, and ask about their:
 - **Economic status**, so as to allow Central and State authorities to come up with a range of indicators of deprivation, permutations, and combinations of which could be used by each authority to define a poor or deprived person.
 - It is also meant to ask every person their **specific caste name** to allow the government to **re-evaluate which caste groups** were economically worse off and which were better off.
- **Difference Between Census & SECC:**
 - The Census provides a **portrait of the Indian population**, while the SECC is a tool to identify beneficiaries of state support.
 - Since the **Census falls under the Census Act of 1948**, all data are considered confidential, whereas according to the SECC website, “all the personal information given in the SECC is open for use by Government departments to grant and/or restrict benefits to households.”

Legal Insights

[Bihar Caste Survey Challenged in Supreme Court](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q1. Consider the following statements: (2009)

1. Between Census 1951 and Census 2001, the density of the population of India has increased more than three times.
2. Between Census 1951 and Census 2001, the annual growth rate (exponential) of the population of India has doubled.

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: (d)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/caste-census-in-bihar-1>

