



## Census

**Prelims:** Census 2011, SC, ST, Welfare Scheme, Government Planning, Public Distribution System.

**Mains:** Significance of Census.

### Why in News?

Recently, the government has **extended the date for states and Union territories to finalise their administrative boundaries** by June 2023, which may delay the Census 2021 Exercise.

- During a Census operation – both the house-listing phase and the population enumeration — the states and Union territories are **not supposed to change the boundaries of districts, towns, villages and tehsils.**

### What are the Implications of Delay?

- **Affect Political Representation:**
  - Census are used to determine the **number of seats to be reserved for SCs and STs in Parliament**, State legislatures, local bodies, and government services.
  - Therefore, delay in the Census means that the data from the 2011 Census would continue to be used.
  - In many towns and even panchayats that have seen rapid changes in the composition of their population over the last decade, this would mean **that either too many or too few seats are being reserved.**
- **Delimitation of Of Constituency:**
  - **Delimitation** of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies would continue to be based on 2001 Census till **data from a Census after 2026 are published.**
- **Unreliable Estimates on Welfare Measures:**
  - The delay will impact government schemes and programmes, and would result in **unreliable estimates from other surveys on consumption, health and employment**, which depend on census data to determine policy and welfare measures.
    - As many as 100 million people are likely being excluded from the government's food subsidy programme—the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**—as the population **figures used to calculate the number of beneficiaries are from the 2011 census.**
- **Impact Houselisting:**
  - It takes nearly a year to prepare an **abridged house list for the entire country which the enumerator uses to locate an address.**
  - The main purpose of the houselisting is **to prepare a list of all households that are to be surveyed before undertaking population** enumeration, besides providing data on housing stock, amenities and the assets available with each of the households.
  - The population enumeration **follows the houselisting after a year.**
    - So, for Census 2011, the government conducted houselisting between April and September 2010, and the population enumeration in February 2011.

- Houselisting is important because unlike the US, India does not have a robust address system.
- **Migration:**
  - The images of migrant workers rushing out of the cities and walking the highways towards their villages during the first COVID lockdown brought their plight to the spotlight and raised queries on the numbers, **causes and patterns of migration, which could not be answered using outdated 2011 Census data.**
    - For example, the **Centre had no answers on how many migrants were likely to be stranded in each city or State** and in need of food relief or transport support.
  - The new Census is likely to capture the extent of the observed movement in migration trends towards smaller two-tier towns apart from the large metropolitan centres.
    - It could help answer questions of what kind of healthcare and social services are most needed for migrants and where.

## How is the 2021 Census being Different from Previous ones?

- For the first time the data is **collected digitally via mobile applications** (installed on enumerator's phone) with a provision of working in offline mode.
- The **Census Monitoring & Management Portal will act as a single source** for all officers/officials involved in Census activities to provide multi-language support.
- First time that information of a person from the **Transgender Community and members living in the family will be collected.**
  - Earlier there was a column for male and female only.

## What is the Census?

- **Definition:**
  - **Population Census** is the total process of **collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating demographic**, economic and social data pertaining, at a specific time, of all persons in a country or a well-defined part of a country.
  - Census is the **basis for reviewing the country's progress in the past decade, monitoring the ongoing schemes** of the government and plan for the future
  - It provides an **instantaneous photographic picture of a community**, which is valid at a particular moment of time.
  - The census also provides **the trends in population characteristics.**
- **Frequency:**
  - **The exercise is undertaken every 10 years in India.**
    - The first complete census of an Indian city was conducted in 1830 by **Henry Walter (known as the father of the Indian Census)** in Dacca.
    - First non-synchronous Census was conducted in India in 1872 **during the reign of Governor-General Lord Mayo.**
    - The first synchronous census was taken in 1881, by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.
  - **Other Countries:**
    - Every 10 years in many countries (Ex. United States and Britain) and every **five years (Ex. Canada, Japan) or at irregular intervals** in some countries.
- **Nodal Ministry:**
  - The decennial Census is conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner**, Ministry of Home Affairs.
  - Until 1951, the Census Organisation was set up on an ad-hoc basis for each Census.
- **Legal/Constitutional Backing:**
  - Census is conducted under the provisions of the **Census Act, 1948.**
    - The bill for this Act was piloted by **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, the then Home Minister of India.
  - The population census is a **Union subject under Article 246** of India Constitution.
    - It is listed at serial number 69 of the **seventh schedule** of the constitution.
- **Confidentiality of Information:**

- The information collected during the population Census is so confidential that it is not even accessible to the courts of law.
  - The confidentiality is guaranteed by the Census Act, 1948. The law specifies penalties for both public and census officials for non-compliance or violation of any provision of the Act.

## What is the Significance of the Census?

- **Source of Information:**
  - The Indian Census is the **largest single source of a variety of statistical information** on different characteristics of the people of India.
  - Researchers and Demographers use census data to analyze growth and trends of population and make projections.
- **Good Governance:**
  - The data collected through the census is used for **administration, planning and policy making** as well as management and evaluation of various programmes by the Government.
- **Demarcation:**
  - Census data is also used for **demarcation of constituencies** and allocation of representation to Parliament, State legislative assemblies and the local bodies.
  - The Census data are also used to determine the **number of seats to be reserved for SCs and STs in Parliament, State legislatures, local bodies**, and government services.
    - In case of panchayats and municipal bodies, reservation of seats for SCs and STs is based on **their proportion in the population**.
- **Better Access for Businesses:**
  - The census data is also **important for business houses and industries for strengthening and planning** their business for penetration into areas, which had hitherto remained, uncovered.
- **Giving Grants:**
  - The Finance Commission provides grants to the **states on the basis of population figures available from the Census data**.

### UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Years Question (PYQ)

#### Q. 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)**

**Source: TH**

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/census-25>