



The Concern of South Indian States on Delimitation

For Prelims: Delimitation, Delimitation Commission, Lok Sabha.

For Mains: Indian Constitution, Issues Faced by Southern States Due to Lack of Seats in Lok Sabha & Recommendations, Statutory Bodies, Delimitation Process.

Why in News?

As the Country is preparing for the next [census](#), it is observed that the [delimitation](#) of [Lok Sabha](#) seats along with a smaller share of central funds to states on the basis of the population **can be unfair to Southern states**, which have implemented family planning programs more effectively than the states in North India.

- The argument is that **Southern states should be recognized and rewarded for their efforts** to control population growth, **rather than being penalized for their success**. The national delimitation exercise has, however, **raised concerns about the unequal representation of states in the Lok Sabha**.

What is Delimitation?

- **About:**
 - Delimitation means the **act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country** to represent changes in population.
 - The Delimitation Commission Act was **enacted in 1952**.
 - Once the Act is in force, the **Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission**.
 - **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 during Indira Gandhi's [Emergency rule](#) in 1976 to **suspend delimitation until 2001**. Another amendment postponed this until 2026. It was **hoped that the country would achieve a uniform**

population growth rate by this time.

- **Need:**
 - To provide **equal representation** to equal segments of a population.
 - **Fair division of geographical areas** so that one political party doesn't have an advantage over others in an election.
 - To follow the principle of **"One Vote One Value"**.
- **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 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**.

How Delimitation is Being Unfair to the Southern States?

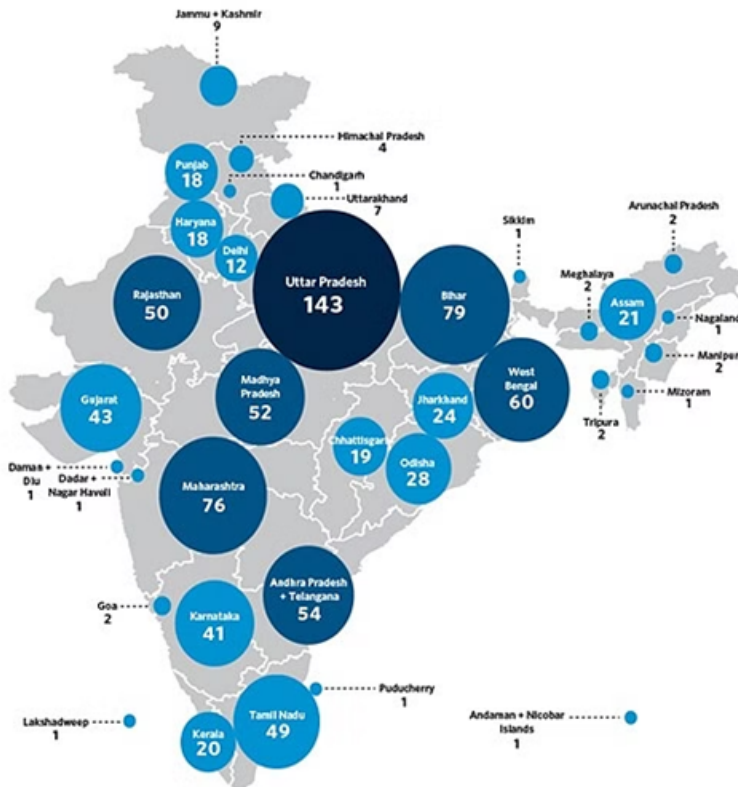
- **Development:**
 - The economic situation of Southern states **has improved dramatically since the turn of the 21st century**. Prior to the 1990s, **Northern states were outperforming Southern states in terms of income and [poverty levels](#)**.
 - However, the Southern states have **seen a significant increase in their economic performance** in recent years, which has led to a significant reduction in poverty and an increase in income levels.
 - This economic turnaround has **had a significant impact on the region and has helped to drive growth and development** in the Southern states.
 - The combined **[Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#)** of just three States — Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu is **greater than 13 States in the East**.
- **Educational and Health Outcomes:**
 - The previous **[Annual Status of Education Reports \(ASER\)](#)** data suggests that southern regions have performed better in terms of children being enrolled in schools and having **better learning outcomes compared to their northern counterparts**.
 - Further, a **higher proportion of graduates in the southern States indicates the greater prevalence of a specific set of skills**.
 - For instance, in 2011, **only 5% of Uttar Pradesh's population was graduated, while in Tamil Nadu, nearly 8% of its population was graduated**.
 - During the **[Covid-19 pandemic](#)**, Tamil Nadu has 314 testing centres for a population of 78.8 million as of December 2021 and Uttar Pradesh has only 305 Covid testing centres for a population of 235 million, **which is clearly inadequate**.
- **Governance Factor:**
 - If the educational and health outcomes are better in the southern States, **this also implies that the ability to discern and the quality of decision-making must be significantly better there**.

- The expectation for better public services and high civic activism in southern states suggests that **the electorate there is more likely to vote for better governance compared to the north.**
- **Advantages for the North:**
 - Based on the population patterns, the existing distribution of **parliamentary constituencies across the States is tilted in favour of populous States** such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, while southern **States like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka have a lesser number of seats.**
 - If delimitation occurs, **Southern states will face a decrease in the number of seats allocated to them, compared to the northern states,** during the next delimitation process.
 - **Hence, during the electoral representation, it should be kept in mind that it is not the number of people, but their quality that should be the deciding factor.**

What are the Issues in this Regard?

- **Inadequate Representation:** According to the 2019 research paper India's Emerging Crisis of Representation, if the delimitation is carried out according to the 2031 Census (the earliest scheduled after 2026), **Bihar and Uttar Pradesh alone would gain as many as 21 seats in total, while Tamil Nadu and Kerala together will lose 16 seats.**
- **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 (SC/ST)** in each state.
- **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.
- **Demographic Dividend:** In 1976, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, during the Emergency, suspended the revision of seats until after the 2001 Census. In 2001, the Parliament extended this freeze until the next decennial census after 2026, scheduled for 2031 as per the [Constitution \(84th Amendment\) Act, 2001](#).
 - Therefore, if Lok Sabha seats are reallocated after 2031, **legislators and policy makers will have to factor in demographic and political changes in the country over the past 60 years.**

EXPANDING THE LOK SABHA USING 2026 POPULATION PROJECTIONS



NOTE: Calculations use projected population figures while ensuring no state loses seats during reapportionment.

What are the Recommendations?

- **Establishment of a Robust Plan:** Making a firm commitment to reallocating resources after 2031 without any further delays due to political or policy challenges. It would provide certainty and stability for southern states in terms of funding and representation.
- **Increase in Number of Seats:** The advantage of increasing the number of seats in the Lok Sabha is that **Members of Parliament (MPs)** would represent smaller constituencies. This **would lead to more efficient governance as administrative agencies would not be burdened by a large population**, allowing for faster and more effective decision making.
 - Increasing the number of seats is seen as a **more politically feasible option** as it is easier for politicians to agree to adding seats in certain areas or states, **rather than giving up seats in areas where they have more power.**
- **To Maintain Existing Position:** Increasing the total number of seats in Parliament could be considered to ensure that no state loses the seats it currently has. This proposal may be under consideration by the Union government.
- **Adequate Representation:** Reports suggest that the architects of the new Lok Sabha, being built as part of the Central Vista project, have been asked to plan for at least 888 seats in the lower house.
 - This would **allow for adequate representation for all states and prevent any state from losing its current number of seats.**

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