



Mains Practice Question

Q. People should not be considered as a mere headcount but as citizens having certain basic rights. Discuss the significance and challenges associated with the census in India. (250 Words)

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Approach:

- Highlight the significance and challenges associated with the census in India.
- Highlight some measures to overcome them.

Introduction

- Census in India is conducted every 10 years to collect data on demography which is helpful in governance, planning, administration, policy making, the basis of Finance Commissions' recommendation, demarcation of territorial constituencies.
- Census 2021 will be 16th and incorporates newer tools like digital technology for the process. Post-Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 several challenges and issues have been highlighted in census exercise:

Body

- **Error:** People should not be considered as a mere headcount but as citizens having certain basic rights. Therefore, accurate data collection with minimal exclusion should be focused upon.
- **Furnishing of false information:** Due to fear of losing intended benefits of various schemes (or fear of losing citizenship this time) and lack of education, people fabricate and tend to provide false information.
- **Associated Costs:** Huge expenditure (thousands of crores) is incurred by the government in conducting this exercise.
- **Security:** The move towards the digital mode of collecting the data is a step forward to speed up the process of analysis. However, the security of the data being collected (especially on the application) and adequate backup mechanism for such data has to be looked into. The mistrust and fear of misuse of data need to be minimized and mitigated.
- **Abuse of Data:** The availability of data with regional authorities has the potential for abuse of such data, as the concerned authority has access to everything about a particular family (ownership, caste, financial aspects, occupation, lifestyle, etc.).
- **Lack of community participation** and inadequate training of enumerators to collect the precise and accurate data acts as a big challenge in conducting the Census exercise.

Measures to overcome challenges

- Capacity Building of enumerators as well as a safe and conducive environment for their working.
- Strengthening Data Quality by minimizing errors.
- Campaigns to make people aware of the exercise and its advantage along with dispelling any fears and scepticism.

Conclusion

- Census in India is the largest single source of a variety of statistical information on different characteristics of the people of India. It is a sacred democratic exercise. To follow an integrated approach should be the aim of all involved stakeholders in order to conduct this exercise in a hassle-free manner.

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