



# Special Voter Roll Revision in Bihar

## Why in News?

The [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) has initiated a **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of the electoral rolls in Bihar ahead of the upcoming Legislative Assembly elections scheduled for November 2025.

## Key Points

- **Constitutional Mandate:**
  - **Article 324** of the Indian Constitution entrusts the ECI with the superintendence, direction, and control over the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections to [Parliament](#) and [State Legislatures](#).
  - **Article 326** guarantees the right to vote to every citizen of India who is **not less than 18 years of age**.
- **Legal Framework under the Representation of the People Act, 1950:**
  - **Section 16** disqualifies non-citizens from being enrolled in the electoral rolls.
  - **Section 19** mandates that a person must be at least 18 years old on the qualifying date and be an ordinary resident of the constituency.
  - **Section 20** defines “ordinarily resident,” clarifying that mere property ownership in a constituency does not qualify one as a resident.
    - However, a person who is temporarily absent from their place of residence is still considered ordinarily resident.
  - **Section 21** empowers the ECI to carry out a special revision of electoral rolls at any time, for reasons recorded in writing.
- **Reasons for Initiating SIR:**
  - The ECI has observed significant changes in the electoral rolls over the past two decades due to widespread urbanisation and internal migration.
  - Concerns over duplicate and ineligible voter entries have prompted ECI to launch a nationwide SIR, starting with Bihar.
  - Bihar last underwent an **SIR in 2003** and has been prioritized by the ECI for the exercise ahead of the November 2025 Assembly elections.
  - The qualifying date for the current revision has been set as **1st July 2025**.
- **Revised Procedure for SIR:**
  - **Voters enrolled before 2003** need only submit an extract of the 2003 roll.
  - **Voters enrolled after 2003** must submit additional documents proving their own and their parents’ **date and place of birth**.
- **Supreme Court’s Observations and Directives:**
  - The Supreme Court observed that the ECI’s list of **11 acceptable documents** for voter verification is **not exhaustive**.
  - The Court advised the ECI to consider [Aadhaar cards](#), [Elector’s Photo Identity Cards \(EPIC\)](#) and [Ration cards](#) as proof for voter registration in the ongoing SIR.
- **Jurisdictional Authority of the ECI:**
  - The ECI lacks the constitutional or statutory authority to determine questions of citizenship.
  - The power to determine citizenship rests with the Ministry of Home Affairs.
  - The Supreme Court’s judgment in **Lal Babu Hussein v. Electoral Registration**

**Officer (1995)** held that individuals already listed in the electoral roll cannot be asked to re-prove their citizenship.

▪ **Challenges associated with SIR:**

- The SIR guidelines now require additional documentation even where Aadhaar exists, potentially excluding many eligible citizens.
- According to the **RPA, 1950**, only those who are "ordinarily resident" should be included in the electoral roll of a constituency.
  - Migrants can register in their current place of residence if they have moved permanently for work or education.
- The SIR places the entire burden of proof on citizens to verify their eligibility.
- According to a Bihar government survey **87% of people possess Aadhaar cards, only 14% have matriculation certificates and merely 2% have passports.**
- The exclusion of Aadhaar from the list of valid documents could disproportionately affect poor and marginalised groups.

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