

Delimitation Post-2026

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Delimitation Post-2026: Justice or Imbalance?

Context

At a recent southern Chief Ministers' conclave (also attended by Punjab CM), the **Joint Action Committee on Fair Delimitation** demanded an **extension of the freeze** on Lok Sabha seat allocation (based on **1971 Census**) for **25 more years**, citing concerns over **federal balance** and **equity in representation**.

What is Delimitation?

Delimitation is the process of **fixing the boundaries and number of constituencies** for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies based on population data.

Constitutional Basis:

- **Article 81(1):** Max **550 Lok Sabha seats** (530 for states, 20 for UTs).
 - **Article 81(2):** Uniform ratio between population and seats across and within states.
 - **Article 82:** Requires readjustment **after every Census**.
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Historical Background

- Delimitation was done in **1952, 1963, 1973, and 2002**.
- **42nd Amendment (1976):** Froze seat distribution till **2001 Census**.
- **84th Amendment (2001):** Extended freeze till **2026**.
- **87th Amendment (2003):** Allowed boundary changes (not seat change) based on **2001 Census**.

Current Status:

Lok Sabha's strength (**543 seats**) is still based on the **1971 Census**.

Delimitation Commission

- Set up under **Delimitation Act**.
 - Appointed by the **President**; includes:
 - A retired SC/HC judge
 - **Chief Election Commissioner**
 - **State Election Commissioner**
 - Its decisions have the **force of law** and are **not subject to judicial review**.
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Why Delimitation is Needed Now

- **Mandated** after the **2026 Census** (as per 84th Amendment).
 - India's population rose from **54.79 cr (1971)** to approx. **141 cr (2025)**.
 - Current seat allocation ignores demographic shifts like **urbanisation** and **migration**.
 - Ensures "**One Vote, One Value**" and addresses **voter inequality**.
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Challenges Ahead

- **Disproportionate Representation:** States with high population growth (e.g., **UP, Bihar**) may gain, others (e.g., **Tamil Nadu, Kerala**) may lose.
- **Federal Imbalance:** Risk of **central dominance** and **weakened cooperative federalism**.

- **Population Control Penalty:** Progressive states may be **disadvantaged** for effective governance.
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Way Forward

- Use a **composite index** (governance, health, education) for seat allocation.
- Start with **state assembly expansion** before altering Lok Sabha composition.
- Ensure **status quo in seat shares** during delimitation.
- **Enhance Rajya Sabha representation** for underrepresented states.
- Form a **national consultative body** to ensure **fair and consensus-based** delimitation.

