

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2025 · 20 marks

The decision to conduct Population Census-2027 has reopened the debate on delimitation in India. Discuss its various aspects.

📌 FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** delimitation not routine → sets each state's Lok Sabha share → decides who holds power in a federation
- R2** decades-long freeze on seats → 2027 census lifts it → contest is population vs federal trust

Body flow

delimitation = boundaries + seat distribution → Commissions 1952 / 1963 / 1973 / 2002 → 42nd + 84th Amendment freeze (until first census after 2026) → seats fixed while population grew → disparities: North grew faster, large + urban constituencies, unequal vote value, heavy service burden → 2027 turns it political → North may gain / South fears penalty for population control → reserved seats + women's reservation recalibrated → fairness reaches within states, not just across them

Counter-view

strict democratic equality (seats track population) vs federal trust + unfairness of penalising states that met a national goal

Conclusion routes

- R1** balance democratic equality, federal trust and population justice
- R2** let representation follow population without breaking federal trust

Delimitation is not a routine redrawing of boundaries. It decides how many seats each state sends to the Lok Sabha, and so who holds power in a federation.

The Population Census - 2027 reopens this question because it ends a freeze that has kept seat numbers fixed for decades. The debate is whether representation should follow population or whether federal trust should limit it.

Delimitation adjusts constituency boundaries and seat distribution. India set up Delimitation Commissions in 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002. But the 42nd amendment froze seat revision and the 84th amendment extended that freeze until after the first census following 2026.

Population changed sharply while seat numbers stood still. Northern states grew faster than southern states. Member serve uneven, often huge constituencies.

The Northern states may gain seats through higher growth, while southern states fear a penalty for their success in population control. Democratic equality and federal balance pull in opposite directions.

Delimitation recalibrates reserved seats and shapes how women's reservation is implemented. It decides not just how many seats a state holds, but who within it is represented i.e. widening the fairness question the redraw must settle.

This ignores federal trust and the unfairness of punishing states that met a national goal. Reform must balance democratic equality, federal trust and population justice.