

DELIMITATION: POLITY

NEWS: *Why are southern states wary of delimitation? Understanding the exercise*

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The **Union Home Minister** has assured that no **parliamentary constituencies in southern states** will be reduced due to the upcoming delimitation exercise. This statement was made in response to concerns raised by the **Tamil Nadu Chief Minister**, who feared that states with **lower population growth rates** might lose their representation.

Understanding Delimitation

- **Delimitation** is the process of **redrawing the boundaries of parliamentary and legislative assembly constituencies** to reflect changes in population.
- The main objectives of delimitation include:
 - Ensuring **fair representation** based on demographic shifts.
 - Adjusting the **number of seats allocated** to different states.
 - Determining **reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)** in various constituencies.
- The system is designed to balance **population growth with political representation**, upholding the democratic principle of “**one citizen, one vote, one value.**”

Constitutional Provisions Related to Delimitation

1. **Article 82**
 - After every **Census**, Parliament enacts a **Delimitation Act** to redefine constituency boundaries.
2. **Article 170**
 - The total number of **seats in state legislative assemblies** is adjusted according to the Delimitation Act after each **Census**.

Who Conducts Delimitation?

- The **Delimitation Commission** is an **independent body** established through a **Parliamentary Act** and is responsible for overseeing the delimitation process.
- **Key characteristics of the Delimitation Commission:**
 - Its **authority is final**, and its **decisions cannot be challenged in court**.
 - The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** provides **technical assistance** for the exercise.

- However, the **Supreme Court ruled in 2024** that delimitation orders can be reviewed if they violate constitutional values.

Population-wise seat ratio was broadly equitable after last delimitation

States	1961 Population	1967 Seats	Population/ Seat Ratio	1971 Population	1976 Seats	Population/ Seat Ratio
Uttar Pradesh	7,01,43,635	85	8,25,219	8,38,48,797	85	9,86,456
Bihar	3,48,40,968	53	6,57,377	4,21,26,236	54	7,80,115
Rajasthan	2,01,55,602	23	8,76,331	2,57,65,806	25	10,30,632
Tamil Nadu	3,36,86,953	39	8,63,768	4,11,99,168	39	10,56,389
Kerala	1,69,03,715	19	8,89,669	2,13,47,375	20	10,67,369
India	43,92,34,771	520	8,44,682	54,81,59,652	542	10,11,365

Composition of the Delimitation Commission

- **Chairperson:** A retired Supreme Court judge.
- **Members:**
 - The **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)** or a commissioner appointed by the CEC.
 - **State Election Commissioners** of the respective states where delimitation is taking place.

History of Delimitation in India

- The **power of delimitation** (deciding the number and boundaries of constituencies) is vested in **Parliament**.
- Delimitation has been carried out **four times** under the following **Delimitation Commission Acts**:
 - 1952
 - 1962
 - 1972
 - 2002

Key Amendments Related to Delimitation

1. **42nd Amendment Act (1976)**
 - Froze the **allocation of Lok Sabha seats** to states and the **division of territorial constituencies** based on the **1971 Census**.
 - This was done to **protect states that successfully implemented population control measures** from losing their representation in Parliament.
2. **84th Amendment Act (2001)**

- Allowed **readjustment and rationalization** of territorial constituencies based on the **1991 Census**.
 - Did **not permit an increase or decrease** in the number of seats allotted to each state in the **Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies**.
 - The objective was to **maintain uniformity in population representation** without disturbing the total number of seats.
3. **87th Amendment Act (2003)**
 - Changed the basis of delimitation from the **1991 Census** to the **2001 Census**.
 - Like the 84th Amendment, it did **not alter the number of seats allocated** to each state in **Parliament and State Assemblies**.
 - The primary aim was to ensure **fairer representation based on more recent population data**.

Why Is Delimitation Being Revisited?

- The **next delimitation exercise** is expected to be based on the **2021 Census** (delayed due to the pandemic).
- This has raised concerns among **South Indian states**, as their **population growth has been lower** compared to the **North Indian states**.
- If delimitation follows **historical patterns** (based on past exercises in **1951, 1961, 1971, and 2002**), the **number of Lok Sabha seats** could **increase from 543 to 753**, based on a **population ratio of 20 lakh people per constituency**.

Why Are Southern States Worried About Delimitation?

1. **Higher Population Growth in Northern States**
 - Northern states like **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh** have experienced **higher population growth** over the decades.
 - This could result in them **gaining more seats** during delimitation.
2. **Fear of Losing Representation**
 - Southern states like **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana** have successfully **controlled population growth** through various measures.
 - They fear a potential **loss of representation in the Lok Sabha** if seats are redistributed **solely based on population growth**.
3. **Disparity in Representation and Resource Allocation**
 - If northern states get **more Lok Sabha seats**, they will have **greater influence in policymaking and national resource allocation**.
 - This could **reduce the political weight** of southern states in national decision-making.

Based on projected 2025 population, current seat ratios not equitable

States	Current Seats	2025 Projected Population	Seats at the same ratio as last time #	Seats at 15 lakh ratio	Seats at 20 lakh ratio
UP*	85	25,23,42,000	250	168	126
Bihar*	54	17,08,90,000	169	114	85
Rajasthan	25	8,27,70,000	82	55	41
Tamil Nadu	39	7,73,17,000	76	52	39
Kerala	20	3,60,63,000	36	24	18
India	543	141,33,24,000	1,397	942	707

What's Next?

1. Potential Increase in Total Seats

- Instead of **reducing seats from any state**, the **total number of Lok Sabha seats** may be **increased** to accommodate growing population disparities.
- This would ensure that no state **loses representation**, even if new seats are added based on **population growth trends**.

2. 2026 Review

- The **next delimitation exercise** can happen **only after the first Census post-2026**, which is **likely to be based on the 2031 Census**.

3. Impact of Women's Reservation Act

- The implementation of the **33% Women's Reservation Act** may also impact **seat adjustments**, as certain constituencies may need **reserved seats** for women.
- This could further influence the **delimitation exercise and political representation** across states.

Conclusion

- Delimitation remains a **highly sensitive issue** due to its impact on **political representation, federalism, and regional balance**.
- While northern states argue for **increased seats based on population**, southern states demand **fairness for controlling their population growth**.
- The **Union government's assurance** that **no southern state will lose seats** reflects an effort to **balance these concerns** while ensuring a **fair and transparent delimitation process** in the future.

Source: <https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/India/why-are-southern-states-wary-of-delimitation-understanding-the-exercise/ar-AA1zT4R6>