



# IAS PARLIAMENT

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## Conducting the Census

### What is the issue?

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the census process was postponed.
- But the repeated postponement and the undue delay in the Census's commencement will severely affect the availability of vital information on population numbers at district and other lower levels.

### What is Census?

- The Census is the process of collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specific time, of all persons in a country.
- It is the basis for reviewing the country's progress in the past decade, monitoring the ongoing government schemes and plan for the future.

*The census is a Union subject under Article 246 of India Constitution. As per the provisions of the Census Act 1948, the Census of India is conducted.*

- In India, the Census is conducted 10 years once.
- Census 2011 was the 15th National Census of the country since 1881 (first Census) and the 7th after Independence.

### What is the significance of census?

- Census provides detailed information on demography, economic activity, literacy and education, housing and household amenities, urbanisation, fertility and mortality, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, etc.
- Since the Census tallies data on several features of the Indian population, the Census is vital to administrative functions and planning of welfare schemes.
- Census data are also critical as they are used as a frame to underpin other sample surveys that are representative of the whole population.
- The national Census is utilised by international agencies to project the world's population as well.

### Is it conducted regularly?

- Since 1881, only 2021, a pandemic-affected year, was an exception as the exercise was

postponed.

- With the deadline for freezing of boundaries further extended to June 30, 2023, the Census can effectively be conducted only some months after this event.

*Freezing of boundaries is necessary as State governments are in the habit of creating new districts and tehsils or reorganising existing ones.*

- Census enumeration is preceded by activities such as house-listing.
- Most States were in line to begin this in early 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.
- But the repeated postponement and, consequently, the undue delay in the Census's commencement will severely affect the availability of vital information on population numbers at district and other lower levels.

### Why is there a delay?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has been cited as a reason for the delay. But, this is no longer a valid excuse, since
  - Lockdowns and physical distancing norms are now a thing of the past,
  - Infection levels in the country have remained relatively low ever since the last COVID wave happened in early 2022.
- In fact, Census data should validate the various estimates on mortality based on **'excess deaths' analyses** during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It is imperative that decadal changes in India's demography related to **urbanisation and migration** of people across States are captured adequately.
- Welfare schemes such as the targeted Public Distribution System under the National Food Security Act depend on population estimates.
- But, the government continues to rely on Census 2011, which is now clearly outdated.
- Inter-State disparities in population growth rates could also impinge upon debates on the prospective delimitation of electoral boundaries and apportioning of seats across States.
- Considering these and other imperatives for the smooth planning and implementation of administrative, welfare and statistical management for governance, the Union government must commence the Census.

[Click here](#) to read **'Census as a Mirror of Past and Present.**

### Reference

1. [The Hindu | Time to count: On government's delay in conducting census](#)
2. [The Hindu | Avoid further delay in conducting the Census](#)



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