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Census 2027

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Every ten years or so, India counts every single person. That count is the Census. The next one, Census 2027, is already under way. It will ask a question most Indians have not been asked since 1931: what is your caste? This lesson explains how the Census works, what is new, and why it matters for jobs, welfare and even Lok Sabha seats.

> **1872** First census attempt. Regular ten-year counts began in 1881.
> **Entry 69** Census is a Union subject, in the Union List.
> **40 questions** Asked of each person in Phase 2. Census 2011 had 29.
> **1 March 2027** Reference date for most of India.

Census: A full count of every person in the country, with basic details about each.

Reference date: The fixed moment the count describes. Everyone is counted “as on” this date.

Enumerator: The person who visits homes and records the answers.

Self-Enumeration: Filling in your own household’s details online, before the visit.

1 What is the Census, and who runs it?

Must Know

When did India start counting?

- The first census attempt was in **1872**, under Lord Mayo. It was not done on one single day.

- The first full census on one fixed date came in **1881**.
- Since then, India has counted roughly every ten years.

Who is in charge?

- Census is a **Union subject**. It is **entry 69** of the Union List, in the Seventh Schedule.
- The **Census Act, 1948** and the Census Rules, 1990 set the rules. The Act is older than the Constitution.
- The **Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India** runs it. This office is under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Why is 2027 the 16th census?

- The last census was in 2011.
- The 2021 round was **postponed**, not cancelled, because of COVID-19.
- So Census 2027 is the 16th census, and the first in 16 years.

(Source: PIB)

> **Quick check 1.** Q1. True or False: Census is a State subject, so each State runs its own count. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 How does Census 2027 run in two phases?

Must Know

Think of it like a school survey. First, you list every classroom. Then, you list every student inside. The Census works the same way.

Two phases, two sets of questions

Phase 1: Houselisting

April to September 2026

33

questions on the house

rooms, water, assets

Phase 2: People count

Population Enumeration

40

questions on each person

includes caste

Reference date: 1 March 2027 for most of India.

Snow-bound areas use 1 October 2026.

First the houses are listed. Then every person is counted.

Phase 1: Houselisting

- Its full name is the **Houselisting and Housing Census**.
- It ran from **April to September 2026**, State by State.
- It asks **33 questions** about the house: housing, amenities and assets.

Phase 2: Population Enumeration

- This is when every person is counted.
- For most of India, it happens in February 2027. The **reference date is 1 March 2027**.
- Ladakh and snow-bound parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand go first. Their reference date is **1 October 2026**.
- Goa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and parts of Uttarakhand go early too. They have Assembly elections in 2027. Their count runs from 1 December 2026 to 4 January 2027.

(Source: Daily Excelsior)

Quick check 2. Q2. True or False: For most of India, the Census 2027 reference date is 1 March 2027. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Think it through, before reading on. Why would snow-bound areas be counted months before the rest of India?

Show the explanation

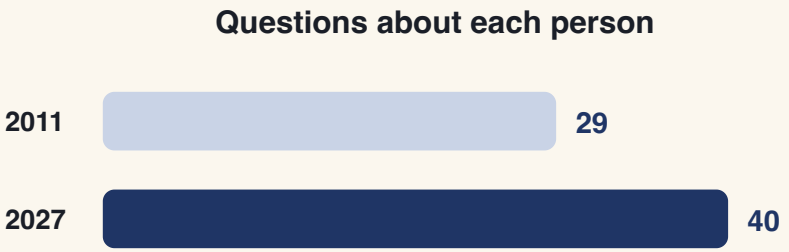
Picture a village in Ladakh in February. Roads are blocked by snow. Temperatures fall far below zero. An enumerator could not reach many homes. So these areas are counted in September, when roads are open. They get their own reference date, 1 October 2026, so the count still describes one fixed moment.

3 What is new in Census 2027?

Good to Know

How is the data collected?

- It is India's **first digital census**. Enumerators record answers on a mobile app.
- Households can also use **Self-Enumeration**. They fill in their own details online, before the visit.
- Door-to-door visits still happen.
- All answers are **confidential** under the Census Act. They are used only for statistics and planning.



Census 2027 adds 13 new data fields, including caste and ID details.

The people count grows from 29 to 40 questions.

What will people be asked for the first time?

- **Caste**, for everyone, not only SCs and STs.
- The place of **COVID-19 vaccination**.
- The number of **bank accounts**.
- ID details where available: **Aadhaar**, voter ID, passport, driving licence and mobile number.
- Parents' particulars.

How much will it cost?

- The Cabinet approved **₹11,718.24 crore** for Census 2027.

(Source: PIB; The Hindu)

> **Quick check 3.** Q3. True or False: Census 2027 asks more questions in the population phase than Census 2011 did. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Remember this: Phase 1 = 33 questions on houses. Phase 2 = 40 questions on people. 2011 had 29. 13 new fields. First digital census. Cost ₹11,718.24 crore.

4 Why does the caste count matter?

Must Know

When was the decision made?

- On **30 April 2025**, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs decided to count caste.
- Caste is asked in **Phase 2**, Population Enumeration.
- It is the first count of all castes since **1931**. SCs and STs were always counted.

Didn't India try this in 2011?

- Yes. The **Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011** collected caste data.
- But it was a separate survey, not part of the main Census.
- Its caste data was **never released**. The government said it had over 46 lakh caste entries, full of errors.

- On 15 December 2021, the Supreme Court turned down Maharashtra's plea to make it public.

Why does it matter?

Caste data shapes big decisions. Reservation in jobs and colleges is one. Welfare schemes are another. Without fresh data, debates rely on numbers from 1931. Bihar ran its own caste survey in 2023, which pushed this national debate forward.

(Source: Tribune)

> **Quick check 4.** Q4. True or False: The caste data from the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census was published in full. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

5 How is the Census linked to Lok Sabha seats?

Great to Know

Here is a link many students miss. The Census does not just count people. It can also redraw India's political map.

- Seats in the Lok Sabha are shared among States by population.
- The **42nd Amendment (1976)** froze the number of seats, based on the **1971 Census**.
- The **84th Amendment (2001)** extended the freeze until the first census taken **after 2026**.
- Census 2027 is that census. So it may open the door to a fresh **delimitation** of seats.
- Southern States worry. They slowed population growth and may lose seats in relative terms.

Quick check 5. Q5. True or False: The freeze on Lok Sabha seat numbers was based on the 1971 Census. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

6 How have exams tested the Census?

7 What changed for Census 2027 in August 2026?

Current Affairs

What was notified on 14 August 2026?

- The Registrar General, Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan, notified **40 questions** for Population Enumeration.
- They include whether a person is SC or ST, and their **caste**.
- There are **13 new** questions or data fields. Census 2011 had 29 questions.

(Source: The Hindu)

Where does the count stand?

- In snow-bound areas, Self-Enumeration ran from **17 to 31 August 2026**.
- House-to-house counting there ran from **1 to 30 September 2026**.
- By mid-August, Houselisting had ended in most States. West Bengal, Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Tamil Nadu were still going.
- Houselisting must end across India by **30 September 2026**.

(Source: The Hindu)

Quick check 6. Q6. True or False: Census 2027 counts the caste of all communities, not only SCs and STs. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick Q&A

- **When was the first census attempted in India?** 1872, under Lord Mayo.
- **Which law governs the Census?** The Census Act, 1948.
- **How many questions are asked of each person in Census 2027?** 40, including caste.
- **When was caste last counted for all communities?** 1931.
- **Which census will end the freeze on Lok Sabha seat numbers?** The first census taken after 2026, that is, Census 2027.

Practice MCQs

1. Census-taking in India is a Union subject, listed at entry 69 of which schedule to the Constitution?

A. Fifth Schedule

B. Sixth Schedule

C. Seventh Schedule

D. Ninth Schedule

See answer ↓

2. Which law, whose bill was piloted by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, governs how every Indian census is conducted, and predates the Constitution itself?

A. The Citizenship Act, 1955

B. The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969

C. The Representation of the People Act, 1950

D. The Census Act, 1948

See answer ↓

3. Census 2027 is India's first census since 2011. Why was the usual ten-year cycle broken?

A. States refused to cooperate with the 2021 round

B. A funding shortfall delayed the 2021 round

C. A Supreme Court order paused the 2021 round

D. The 2021 round was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic

See answer ↓

4. For most of India, Census 2027's Population Enumeration phase uses which reference date?

A. 1 October 2026

B. 1 January 2027

C. 1 March 2027

D. 1 April 2026

See answer ↓

5. On 30 April 2025, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs decided Census 2027 will also collect caste data. This will be the first time since which year that India's census records caste beyond SCs and STs?

A. 1911

B. 1971

C. 1951

D. 1931

See answer ↓

6. The All India Census was
1. first attempted in 1872
2. regularly undertaken since 1881
3. always undertaken as a five-year exercise.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

A. 1 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 2 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

See answer ↓

7. How many questions were notified in August 2026 for the Population Enumeration phase of Census 2027?

A. 29

B. 35

C. 40

D. 53

See answer ↓

8. The 42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976) froze Lok Sabha and Assembly seat numbers, based on which census?

A. 1961 census

B. 1981 census

C. 1971 census

D. 1991 census

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.** Census-taking is a Union subject at entry 69 of the Seventh Schedule, under Article 246. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** The Census Act, 1948, governs the census and predates the Constitution; all censuses since 1951 have been held under it. ↑ Q2
3. **D.**
   The 2021 census houselisting was due in April 2020. It was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and then deferred again.
   The 2027 census uses 1 March 2027 as its reference date.
   Sources: PIB, Census 2027 note · The Tribune, Census 2027.
   ↑ Q3
4. **C.** The reference date is 1 March 2027 for most of the country; snow-bound areas like Ladakh use an earlier date, 1 October 2026. ↑ Q4
5. **D.** Census 2027 will record caste data for groups beyond SCs and STs for the first time since 1931 — a gap of nearly a century. ↑ Q5
6. **C.** The answer is 1 and 2 only. India's first census attempt was in 1872, with regular decennial censuses since 1881; the census has always been a ten-year, not five-year, exercise. ↑ Q6
7. **C.** 40 questions were notified, including 13 new ones. Census 2011 had 29. ↑ Q7
8. **C.**
   The correct answer is **1971 census**. The seat freeze of 1976 kept each State's Lok Sabha seats on the 1971 census. Article 82 still names the 1971 census today.
   The 1961 census was used for the Second Commission's work in the 1960s, but the 1976 freeze moved the seat allocation to 1971. The 1981 and 1991 censuses were not used for delimitation, because the freeze was in force.
   Memory hook: 1976 freeze, 1971 count.
   ↑ Q8

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2

3. **True.** ↑ 3

4. **False.** ↑ 4

5. **True.** ↑ 5

6. **True.** ↑ 6

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