



LOK SABHA

BACKGROUND GUIDE

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Greetings Members!

Welcome to the SHIS Model United Nations 2025 in the “Lok Sabha”. The Agenda for the committee being *“Deliberation upon the Delimitation Act 2002 and the provisions of Delimitation”*.

This study guide is by no means the end of research, we would very much appreciate it if the leaders are able to find new realms in the agenda and bring it forth in the committee. Such research combined with good argumentation and a solid representation of facts is what makes an excellent performance. In the session, the executive board will encourage you to speak as much as possible, as fluency, diction or oratory skills have very little importance as opposed to the content you deliver. So just research and speak and you are bound to make a lot of sense. We are certain that we will be learning from you immensely and we also hope that you all will have an equally enriching experience. In case of any queries feel free to contact us. We will try our best to answer the questions to the best of our abilities.

We look forward to an exciting and interesting committee, which should certainly be helped by the all-pervasive nature of the issue. Hopefully we, as members of the Executive Board, do also have a chance to gain from being a part of this committee. Please do not hesitate to contact us regarding any doubts that you may have.

All the Best!

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1. Introduction

Purpose of the Guide

Delimitation plays a central role in maintaining the foundational principle of representative democracy, equal representation for equal segments of the population. This guide aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Delimitation Act, 2002, its constitutional underpinnings, historical background, and contemporary relevance, particularly in light of emerging demographic, political, and constitutional debates.

Importance of Delimitation in Representative Democracy

Delimitation refers to the process of redrawing the boundaries of electoral constituencies based on changes in population to ensure balanced representation in legislative bodies. The core idea is to provide each citizen equal weight in democratic participation, thereby upholding the value of universal adult franchise.

Without periodic delimitation, rapidly changing population dynamics can distort electoral representation, leading to unequal voting power across constituencies. Some constituencies may become overcrowded while others remain underpopulated, creating a disproportionate legislative voice and, ultimately, a democratic deficit. Delimitation, when undertaken transparently and equitably, strengthens the legitimacy of electoral processes and enhances public trust in democratic institutions.

2. Historical Background of Delimitation in India

Evolution of Delimitation Pre-Independence and Post-Independence

The concept of delimitation predates Indian independence. During British rule, constituency boundaries were often drawn for administrative convenience or political control rather than equitable representation. Post-independence, the framing of the Indian Constitution emphasized the need for a fair and dynamic electoral framework. This gave rise to constitutional provisions and specific laws to institutionalize the delimitation process.

Constitutional and Legislative Developments

Following independence, the Indian Constitution laid down the structure for representative democracy, making provisions for the periodic readjustment of constituencies. Articles 81 (for Lok Sabha) and 170 (for State Legislative Assemblies) directed Parliament to provide by law the mechanism for such readjustments after every census.

To operationalize this, the **Delimitation Commission Act, 1952** was enacted, followed by similar Acts in subsequent decades (1962, 1972, and 2002). These Acts provided for the constitution of independent commissions tasked with redrawing constituency boundaries based on census data, while ensuring that demographic changes did not undermine electoral fairness.

Key Delimitation Commissions in Indian History

- **1952 Delimitation Commission:** Based on the 1951 Census, focused on the first general elections.
- **1963 Delimitation Commission:** Acted upon the 1961 Census.
- **1973 Delimitation Commission:** Functioned under the 1972 Act using the 1971 Census.
- **2002 Delimitation Commission:** Set up after a long gap, using the 2001 Census, with certain restrictions due to constitutional amendments.

Each commission played a critical role in reshaping electoral landscapes and has had lasting political and administrative impacts.

3. Understanding the Delimitation Act, 2002

Objectives and Scope

The **Delimitation Act, 2002** was enacted to set up a new Delimitation Commission after a long hiatus due to the freeze imposed by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976), which prevented any delimitation until after the 2001 census. The 84th Constitutional Amendment (2002) allowed delimitation to proceed using the 2001 census for redrawing boundaries **without altering the number of seats allocated to each state**, which was still frozen until 2026.

The primary objective of the Act was:

- To redraw the boundaries of parliamentary and assembly constituencies based on population changes reflected in the 2001 Census.
- To rationalize the distribution of seats within states to maintain uniformity in representation.

Key Provisions of the Act

- **Establishment of the Delimitation Commission:** A high-powered body consisting of:
 - A retired Supreme Court judge (Chairperson)
 - Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner nominated by the CEC
 - State Election Commissioners of respective states/UTs as ex-officio members
- **Use of 2001 Census Data:** The Commission was to base its decisions solely on the 2001 population figures.
- **No Change in Number of Seats per State:** As per the constitutional amendment, the number of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats allocated to each state remained unchanged.
- **Reservation Adjustment:** Adjustment of constituencies reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) was allowed based on updated population figures of these communities.

Formation and Role of the Delimitation Commission (2002)

The Commission, chaired by Justice Kuldip Singh (retired SC judge), was constituted in 2002 and functioned until 2008. It had the responsibility of redefining constituency boundaries in 25 states and Union Territories.

Its tasks included:

- Equalizing population size across constituencies as far as practicable.
- Ensuring that administrative boundaries (districts, tehsils) were considered to avoid fragmentation.
- Redrawing SC/ST reserved constituencies as per updated community population percentages.
- Conducting public sittings and engaging stakeholders before finalizing recommendations.

4. Provisions Related to Delimitation in the Indian Constitution

Articles 82 and 170

The Indian Constitution lays the legal foundation for delimitation through:

- **Article 82:** Empowers Parliament to enact a law for the readjustment of Lok Sabha constituencies after every census.
- **Article 170:** Deals with delimitation of State Legislative Assembly constituencies.

These articles provide the mandate to ensure that each constituency, whether for the Lok Sabha or a State Assembly, represents an approximately equal population size, maintaining the principle of “one person, one vote.”

Delimitation is carried out following every decennial Census, subject to constitutional provisions and legislative frameworks enacted by Parliament.

Constitutional Amendments Impacting Delimitation

Several constitutional amendments have altered or frozen the process of delimitation to respond to socio-political realities.

- **42nd Amendment Act (1976):** Froze the number of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats until the year **2000**, based on the **1971 Census**, to encourage population control policies and avoid penalizing states that had successfully reduced birth rates.
- **84th Amendment Act (2001):** Extended the freeze on seat allocation until **2026**, but permitted internal readjustment of constituencies within a state based on the **2001 Census**, without changing the total number of seats.
- **87th Amendment Act (2003):** Allowed for **redefinition of constituencies** using the 2001 Census data, while reaffirming the freeze on inter-state seat allocation.

These amendments have created a paradox — although population dynamics have shifted significantly since 1971, states continue to have the same number of parliamentary seats, raising concerns about representation equity.

5. Process and Methodology of Delimitation

Use of Census Data

The Delimitation Commission uses official Census data to determine the population of each administrative unit (state, district, constituency). For the 2002 Commission, the **2001 Census** served as the basis. The guiding principle is that constituencies must have roughly equal populations to ensure equal representation.

Population figures are considered at multiple levels:

1. State-wide population for Lok Sabha seat distribution (though frozen until 2026)
2. District-wise and tehsil-wise population to align constituencies within states
3. SC/ST population data for reservation of constituencies

Criteria for Redrawing Boundaries

Delimitation must respect certain criteria:

- **Population Equality:** Constituencies should have, as far as practicable, the same population size.
- **Geographical Compactness:** Constituencies should be contiguous and avoid unnatural shapes.
- **Administrative Boundaries:** The process must avoid splitting villages, towns, or wards across constituencies.
- **Reservation Proportionality:** Based on the SC/ST population percentage in each state and district, appropriate constituencies are designated as reserved.

The commission publishes **draft proposals**, seeks **public feedback**, and conducts **public hearings** before finalizing the delimitation orders.

Role of Public Consultations and Stakeholder Engagement

The Delimitation Commission holds public sittings across states to gather representations from political parties, civil society groups, and the general public. These consultations play a crucial role in:

- Ensuring local grievances are addressed
- Avoiding gerrymandering or partisan bias
- Incorporating ground realities like geography and demography

Although the Commission's decisions are final and cannot be challenged in court, stakeholder participation adds transparency and legitimacy to the process.

6. Challenges and Controversies

Political and Demographic Imbalances

One of the most contentious issues is the **disproportionate representation** of states. States like **Uttar Pradesh** and **Bihar**, with high populations, are underrepresented due to the freeze on seat allocation. Meanwhile, **Southern and Northeastern states** with better population control face a reduced share in national representation over time, raising the fear of being “punished for progress.”

This leads to:

- A growing **North-South divide** in electoral influence
- Skewed policy-making that may not reflect proportional demographic needs
- Increasing demand for constitutional review post-2026

Representation of SC/ST Populations

Delimitation must balance general representation with **social justice** through the reservation of constituencies for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. However, issues arise when:

- SC/ST populations are concentrated in specific areas, leading to a clustering of reserved constituencies
- Some constituencies remain reserved for long periods, potentially impacting electoral competitiveness and local development

There are also debates about whether OBC reservations should be considered in legislative seats, which currently the Constitution does not provide for.

Urban-Rural Divide and Electoral Disparity

Urban areas with high population densities often have fewer representatives per capita than rural constituencies due to outdated population data and legacy boundaries. This creates a **democratic under-representation** of urban populations, despite their increasing political and economic significance.

For example:

- A rural constituency with 1.5 lakh voters may have the same MLA or MP as an urban one with over 3 lakh voters.
- This imbalance distorts the allocation of development funds and political attention.

Regional Sensitivities and Opposition

Delimitation can alter traditional political strongholds, break up communities, and disrupt local power dynamics. As a result:

- Political parties may oppose changes that threaten their electoral base.
- States with lower representation may resist changes perceived as politically disadvantageous.
- Ethnic and linguistic communities, especially in the North-East, often express concerns about loss of cultural or demographic identity through altered boundaries.

Thus, delimitation remains not just a technical exercise but a highly **sensitive political and social process**, requiring a fine balance between equity, stability, and representation.

7. Delimitation and Jammu & Kashmir

Delimitation under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019

The delimitation process in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) holds distinct political and constitutional significance due to the region's **special status** (prior to 2019) and its **strategic and demographic sensitivity**.

Following the **abrogation of Article 370** and the **bifurcation of the state into two Union Territories (J&K and Ladakh)** under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, a new delimitation exercise was mandated for the UT of Jammu & Kashmir.

Key highlights include:

- The Reorganisation Act increased the number of Assembly constituencies in J&K from **83 to 90** (excluding 24 seats reserved for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir).
- Unlike the national freeze on delimitation until 2026, the J&K exercise proceeded independently, citing specific legal provisions and the need to reflect demographic realities post-2011 Census.
- A **Delimitation Commission was formed in 2020**, headed by Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, with the task of redrawing the boundaries of assembly constituencies for the Union Territory.

Special Considerations and Developments Post-2019

The delimitation process in J&K has been politically sensitive due to:

- **Ethnic and religious composition:** Balancing the representation of Kashmir Valley (Muslim majority) with Jammu (Hindu majority) was a key concern.
- **Demands from stakeholders:** Various regional parties and civil society groups raised concerns over perceived biases or imbalances in the draft proposals.
- **Increased seats in Jammu region:** Out of the 7 new seats added, **6 were allocated to Jammu** and only 1 to Kashmir, raising concerns of gerrymandering.

The process, finalized in **2022**, will significantly impact future elections and regional power structures in the Union Territory. It also serves as a precedent for delimitation outside the national schedule, invoking constitutional flexibility for union governance.

8. Comparative Perspective

Delimitation Practices in Other Democracies

Studying delimitation processes in other countries offers insights into best practices and pitfalls.

- **United States:** Redistricting is done every 10 years based on the Census. However, it is often influenced by partisan politics, leading to **gerrymandering** — the manipulation of district boundaries for electoral advantage.
- **United Kingdom:** An independent **Boundary Commission** undertakes periodic reviews, using detailed public consultations and legal criteria to maintain neutrality and transparency.
- **Canada:** Employs **non-partisan commissions** in each province. Emphasis is placed on population parity, community of interest, and manageable geographic size.

These models underscore the importance of **independence**, **transparency**, and **public engagement** in boundary delimitation to prevent political manipulation and uphold democratic integrity.

Best Practices and Lessons for India

From international experiences, the following practices stand out:

- **Independent oversight:** India's Delimitation Commission is already independent, but its credibility can be enhanced through greater public visibility and transparent decision-making.
- **Regular updates:** Countries like the U.S. and UK follow a strict timetable. India's long freeze periods undermine the democratic value of equal representation.
- **Public participation:** While public hearings are held, they could be more proactive, inclusive, and better publicized to ensure community voices are genuinely reflected.
- **Use of technology and data analytics:** Other nations use digital mapping and public portals to improve transparency. India can integrate these tools to reduce disputes and increase public trust.

India's approach, while constitutionally robust, can benefit from procedural reforms and comparative learning to make delimitation more dynamic, inclusive, and contemporary.

9. Future of Delimitation in India

Post-2026 Scenario and Emerging Debates

The year **2026** marks a turning point when the freeze on seat reallocation among states is constitutionally set to expire. This raises several critical questions:

- Will Lok Sabha and Assembly seats be reallocated among states based on **actual population** figures (likely from the 2031 Census)?
- How will the resulting increase in representation for high-population states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar be balanced against the interests of lower-population southern states?

This impending realignment could significantly:

- Alter the **federal balance of power**
- Reshape national political equations
- Fuel demands for **constitutional safeguards** or **asymmetric federal arrangements** to protect regional interests

Population Control and Representation Equity

The freeze on seat allocation was introduced to incentivize **population control**, particularly in southern states. These states argue that lifting the freeze now would reward states with higher population growth, penalizing those who followed national policy directives.

A future model must:

- Balance **demographic proportionality** with **policy fairness**
- Consider **per capita representation** and **development indices**, not just raw population numbers
- Possibly explore **multi-member constituencies** or **weighted voting systems** as alternatives

The future of delimitation thus intersects deeply with **political justice**, **federalism**, and **demographic governance** in India.

10. Conclusion

Reaffirming the Centrality of Delimitation in Indian Democracy

Delimitation stands as a cornerstone of India's representative democracy. At its heart lies the principle that every citizen's vote should carry equal weight, irrespective of geography, demography, or historical advantage. As the population landscape of the country continues to evolve rapidly, the periodic redrawing of electoral boundaries becomes indispensable to preserving the fairness, balance, and responsiveness of the electoral system.

The objective of delimitation is not merely administrative; it is deeply democratic. It ensures that densely populated regions do not remain underrepresented, that every social group receives equitable representation, and that legislative bodies accurately reflect the voice of the people they are meant to serve. In a vast and diverse country like India, where regional, linguistic, and socio-economic differences are pronounced, this task is both technically complex and politically sensitive.

Challenges in the Present Framework

Despite its constitutional importance, the history of delimitation in India reveals inconsistencies and delays that have led to representational imbalances. The freeze imposed on seat reallocation until 2026, while originally intended to encourage population control, has unintentionally created disparities among states. Regions that succeeded in stabilising population growth now risk losing their proportional influence in Parliament, while high-growth states stand to gain. This situation has sparked an increasingly intense debate about the future of federal equity and political justice.

Additionally, under-representation of urban areas, inadequate updating of reserved constituencies for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and delays in the formation of new commissions have created bottlenecks in realising the full potential of democratic inclusivity. The growing urban-rural divide, demographic shifts, and regional anxieties have all heightened the urgency to revisit and strengthen the delimitation process.

The Road Ahead: Democratic Renewal Through Reform

Looking ahead, India must envision a delimitation process that is transparent, participatory, and rooted in constitutional morality. This means institutionalising regular, time-bound delimitation exercises synchronised with census data, strengthening the independence of delimitation bodies, and ensuring broader public engagement in the process.

Moreover, India must evolve a model that respects both demographic realities and policy achievements. As the 2026 deadline approaches, there is a compelling need to explore reform alternatives such as per capita representation adjustments, hybrid models of seat allocation, or even phased expansion of parliamentary representation to prevent a zero-sum scenario between regions.

India can also draw from global best practices to introduce digital mapping tools, public data portals, and grievance redress mechanisms that bring clarity and legitimacy to the delimitation process. By embedding these innovations within the constitutional framework, the country can minimise disputes and foster trust among all stakeholders.

Delimitation as a Catalyst for a Viksit Bharat

Ultimately, delimitation must not be seen merely as a redrawing of lines on a map. It is a transformative instrument of nation-building, one that reinforces the integrity of democratic institutions and ensures that the machinery of governance remains accountable and representative. As India aspires towards the ambitious goal of Viksit Bharat @2047, ensuring fair and inclusive representation will be central to fulfilling the promise of a participatory democracy for every citizen.

A forward-looking, fair, and flexible delimitation framework, grounded in constitutional vision and responsive to India's plural realities, can act as a catalyst for democratic renewal. It can reinvigorate public confidence in the electoral system and pave the way for a more just, equitable, and united India.