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**Registrar General of
India**

CENSUS 2027

**Phased Approach, Digital
First, Inclusion of Caste Data**



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CENSUS 2027 AND REGISTRAR GENERAL OF INDIA

CENSUS 2027

Context

The Registrar General of India (RGI) has sought a Rs 14,618.95-crore budget to conduct the Census 2027, which will be the first “Digital Census” and collect data on caste

Registrar General of India

- The Registrar General of India, formally called the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, is the top authority responsible for conducting and managing the Census of India and civil registration systems related to vital statistics such as births and deaths.
- Established in 1961 under the Ministry of Home Affairs, this office systematically collects data on population size, growth, distribution, and linguistic diversity through the decennial census and various surveys.
- The Registrar General also implements the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969, and oversees the Civil Registration System which provides continuous real-time population data.
- The position is typically held by a senior civil servant of the rank of Additional Secretary and leads critical demographic surveys that support informed policymaking and governance in India.

Key Responsibilities

- Conducting the Census of India every 10 years under the Census Act, 1948.
- Managing the Civil Registration System for compulsory registration of births and deaths.
- Overseeing the Sample Registration System for estimating vital statistics like birth rate, death rate, infant mortality rate, and maternal mortality rate.
- Coordinating the National Population Register and linguistic surveys.
- Ensuring timely issuance of birth certificates in hospitals per recent government instructions.

Organizational Details

- Under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- Permanent office existing since 1961 (prior census were organized on ad hoc basis).
- Headquarters in Delhi.
- Staffed by civil servants and supported by state/UT census directorates.
- This office plays a fundamental role in demographic data collection and statistical analysis which underpins planning, governance, and social welfare policies in India.

History of Census in India

- India's **first nationwide census**, though **non-synchronous**, was carried out in **1872**. It attempted to count people across most regions of the country, but some areas under British rule were not covered.
- The **first synchronous census** of India was conducted in **1881** under the supervision of **W.C. Plowden**.
- The **1881 Census** represented a major step toward a **modern, coordinated census system**, focusing not only on complete population coverage but also on the **classification of demographic, social, and economic features**

Key milestones in India's census timeline since ancient times

Key milestones in India's census timeline since ancient times are as follows:

- Ancient Period: Population data mentioned in the Rigveda (800-600 BC), Arthashastra by Kautilya (3rd century BC), and Ain-i-Akbari during the Mughal era. These were not systematic censuses but early population enumeration references.
- Early British Period (1800s): The first population headcounts and enumerations happened regionally for administrative and taxation purposes. Henry Walter conducted the first almost complete census of an Indian city, Dacca, in 1830.
- 1865-1872: The first non-synchronous Census attempts conducted by Henry Walter covering different regions at different times, setting the foundation of modern census taking.
- 1872: The first synchronous census attempt under Viceroy Lord Mayo, consisting of a house-listing exercise rather than a full population count.
- 1881: The first decennial, synchronous census across British India supervised by W.C. Plowden. This laid the foundation for the modern census tradition.
- 1891: The second census with improved coverage including Upper Burma, Kashmir, and Sikkim.

- 1901: Third census including Balochistan, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and remote areas.
- 1921: Census year saw a population decline due to the 1918 flu pandemic; an unusual demographic event.
- 1931: Last census under British rule with detailed caste enumeration.
- 1941: Census held despite World War II, but with incomplete tabulations.
- 1948: Census of India Act enacted, giving legal framework for census operations.
- 1951: First census after Independence, conducted by the Indian government.
- 2001 and 2011: Recent decennial censuses conducted on schedule, with 2011 being the last completed census.
- 2021: Census planned but postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2026-27: The upcoming 16th decennial census will be conducted in two phases and is set to be the first digital population census, including detailed caste enumeration after decades.

Census 2027

The Census 2027 in India is scheduled to be conducted in two main phases starting from October 1, 2026, for snow-bound and hilly areas like Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, and from March 1, 2027, for the rest of the country. This will be the 16th national census and the first fully digital census in India, incorporating digital data collection via mobile apps and self-enumeration options. Notably, it will include caste enumeration for the first time since 1931, marking a significant and historic data collection. The census data will be crucial for policy-making, administrative boundary delimitation, and electoral constituency redistribution post-2027.

Key Highlights of Census 2027

- **Phased Approach:** Phase 1 is house listing and housing census beginning April to September 2026; Phase 2 is individual population enumeration starting February-March 2027.
- **Digital First:** Enumerators will use their smartphones with dedicated apps, enabling real-time data entry and monitoring.
- **Self-Enumeration:** Households can self-enumerate data online or via mobile before enumerator verification.
- **Inclusion of Caste Data:** For the first time since 1931, caste data will be officially collected across all communities.

- **Geographical Reference Dates:** Different reference dates for snow-bound regions (October 1, 2026) and the rest of India (March 1, 2027).
- **Data Use:** Census results will guide the delimitation of parliamentary constituencies and resource allocation.

The census process has been postponed multiple times from its original 2021 schedule due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other administrative reasons but is now firmly set for 2027. It will represent a major technological leap in India's demographic data collection and administration.

NPR india

The National Population Register (NPR) of India is a comprehensive database of usual residents of the country, defined as individuals who have resided in a locality for six months or more or intend to stay for that duration. It is legally mandatory for all usual residents to register under NPR, which aims to support better governance, policy formulation, and national security by creating a reliable demographic database.

NPR includes both Indian citizens and foreigners residing in India and collects demographic and biometric data through house-to-house enumeration conducted periodically, integrated with Aadhaar data for accuracy. It is a preparatory step towards the creation of the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) but is not a citizenship verification exercise itself. NPR helps streamline government services and supports the idea of a "One Identity Card" that combines multiple identity documents for residents.

Key points about NPR:

- Contains details of all usual residents of India, citizens and non-citizens.
- Mandatory registration under Citizenship Act and rules.
- Data collection includes demographic and biometric details.
- Supports governance by aiding in accurate policy formulation and beneficiary targeting.
- It is distinct from but linked to the National Register of Citizens (NRC).
- Conducted through local enumeration across villages, towns, and cities.
- First collected as part of Census 2011 and updated subsequently.
- Managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs under the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India.

This data aids in eliminating duplicates, improving service delivery, and enhancing security with a centralized identity database for residents of India.

The current status of NPR

The current status of the National Population Register (NPR) in India is that it remains a legally mandated database of usual residents, collecting demographic and biometric details. The NPR is maintained under the Ministry of Home Affairs, with the last major update planned alongside the decadal Census, originally scheduled for 2021 but postponed. The next decadal Census is now officially planned for 2027, and updating the NPR is likely to happen during the house-listing phase of this Census. However, as of mid-2025, the government has not yet decided on a fresh NPR updation timeline, and no concrete update process for NPR has officially commenced.

The NPR aims to create a comprehensive identity database of all usual residents (persons residing or intending to reside for six months or more) and collects detailed demographic and biometric data. There have been privacy concerns, political opposition, and federal tensions around NPR's link with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

In the Union Budget 2025-26, a reduced allocation was made for Census and NPR work, indicating that the NPR update has not been prioritized for immediate implementation. The government is expected to update NPR with the Census in 2027, but no notification or formal decision on the NPR update has been published so far in 2025.

Summary points:

- NPR is a register of usual residents as per the Citizenship Act, maintained by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Census 2027 is scheduled, and NPR update is expected during the house-listing phase of this Census.
- No government decision or notification on NPR update has been announced as of mid-2025.
- Budgetary allocation for Census and NPR is low in 2025, reflecting delay.
- NPR collection includes demographic and biometric details of usual residents.
- NPR has faced political opposition and privacy concerns in several states.
- This status reflects the latest known official position and timelines for the NPR as of September 2025.