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Delimitation 2026 — Lok Sabha Seats to Rise from 543 to 816 with Women's Reservation

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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Delimitation 2026 — Lok Sabha Seats to Rise from 543 to 816 with Women's Reservation

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WHY IN NEWS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that **Lok Sabha seats will increase from 543 to 816** in the upcoming delimitation exercise, while assuring that **southern states which controlled population will not lose any seats**. Parliament's session has been extended to **April 16-18, 2026** to pass the constitutional amendment that also implements the **33% women's reservation** (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) in Lok Sabha and state assemblies.



WHAT IS DELIMITATION?

Delimitation is the process of **redrawing the boundaries of parliamentary and assembly constituencies** based on the latest Census data to ensure roughly equal representation per constituency. It is conducted by an independent **Delimitation Commission** appointed under the Delimitation Commission Act.

PARAMETER	CURRENT	PROPOSED
Lok Sabha seats	543	816 (50% increase)
Population basis	Census 1971	Census 2011/2021
Freeze on seats	84th Amendment (2002) until 2026	Being lifted
Women's reservation	Not in force	33% of 816 = ~272 seats

WHY WERE SEATS FROZEN?

The **42nd Amendment (1976)** froze Lok Sabha seat allocation at 1971 Census levels to ensure states that aggressively pursued family planning (southern states) were not penalised with fewer seats. The **84th Amendment (2002)** extended this freeze until **the first Census after 2026**.

The Southern States Concern

STATE	TFR (2021)	FEAR
Kerala	1.8	Below replacement level
Tamil Nadu	1.8	Below replacement level
Karnataka	1.7	Below replacement level
Andhra Pradesh + Telangana	1.6	Lowest in India
Goa	1.3	Lowest state TFR

vs.



STATE	TFR (2021)	GROWTH
Bihar	3.0	Well above replacement
Uttar Pradesh	2.4	Above replacement
Madhya Pradesh	2.0	At replacement

If seats were allocated strictly by current population, UP and Bihar would gain massively while Kerala, TN, and AP would lose – penalising states that achieved **demographic** transition. PM Modi’s assurance addresses this directly: **no southern state will lose seats; the total pie will expand.**

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Delimitation Commission

- Appointed under the **Delimitation Commission Act, 2002**
- Chaired by a **retired Supreme Court judge**
- Members include the **Chief Election Commissioner** and respective State Election Commissioners
- Orders have the **force of law** and **cannot be challenged in any court** (Article 329(a))

Constitutional Provisions

ARTICLE	PROVISION
Article 81	Composition of Lok Sabha (not exceeding 550 from states, 20 from UTs)
Article 82	Readjustment of seats after every Census
Article 170	Composition of State Legislative Assemblies
Article 329(a)	Bar on courts questioning delimitation
84th Amendment	Froze seats at 1971 Census levels until first Census after 2026

Note: To increase seats beyond 550, Parliament must amend **Article 81** – which requires a constitutional amendment (simple majority, as it does not fall under Article 368 special majority categories).



WOMEN'S RESERVATION — NARI SHAKTI VANDAN ADHINIYAM

The **106th Constitutional Amendment Act (2023)** — also called the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** — reserves one-third (33%) of seats in Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women. However, it was linked to delimitation — reservation could only be implemented **after the next Census and delimitation**.

With delimitation now proceeding:

- **33% of 816 = ~272 Lok Sabha seats** reserved for women
- Rotation of reserved seats every 15 years
- SC/ST women get reserved seats within the overall SC/ST reservation

OPPOSITION RESPONSE

Congress termed the proposal a “**Weapon of Mass Distraction**”, arguing:

- The timing (ahead of state elections) is politically motivated
- Expanding seats to 816 dilutes individual MP's influence
- Infrastructure (Parliament building, constituency offices) for 816 MPs is inadequate
- The government should release 2021 Census data first (still pending)

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 — Polity & Governance

- Delimitation: constitutional provisions, process, judicial non-reviewability
- 84th Amendment and the population-seat freeze
- Federal balance: population-based vs equal representation
- Women's reservation: 106th Amendment, Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam
- Southern states' demographic dividend vs political representation trade-off

Prelims Fast Facts:

- Current Lok Sabha seats: **543** (from states and UTs)
- Proposed seats: **816**
- Freeze on seats: **84th Amendment (2002)**, based on **1971 Census**
- Delimitation Commission: cannot be challenged in court (**Article 329(a)**)
- Women's reservation: **106th Amendment (2023)**, 33% seats



- TFR replacement level: **2.1**

FACTS CORNER

- The **new Parliament building** (inaugurated May 2023) was designed to accommodate up to **888 Lok Sabha members** and **384 Rajya Sabha members** — suggesting the government anticipated expansion beyond 543
- India's overall **TFR dropped to 2.0 in 2021** (NFHS-5) — at replacement level for the first time — meaning the demographic argument for delimitation must balance current population with fertility trends
- The **Rajya Sabha** (250 members) representation is allocated proportionally to state populations using the Fourth Schedule — delimitation of Lok Sabha does NOT automatically change Rajya Sabha allocation
- **Article 81(2)** requires that the ratio of Lok Sabha seats to population be “so far as practicable, the same for all states” — this equal-representation **mandate** is what drives delimitation
- If 33% of 816 seats are reserved for women, India will have approximately **272 women MPs** — making it one of the highest women's representation rates in any national legislature globally

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[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/04/06/delimitation-lok-sabha-816-seats-women-reservation/>

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