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Census 2027 — India's First Fully Digital Census; Self-Enumeration Phase Underway

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POLITY

SCIENCE & TECH

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)**ALSO FROM THE CREATOR****BharatNotes**Free UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**bharatnotes.com →**ADVERTISE****Advertise with Ujiyari**

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WHY IN NEWS

India's **Census 2027** — the country's first fully digital population enumeration — is currently in its **Phase 1 (House Listing and Housing Census)** running from April to September 2026. PM Modi highlighted the Census 2027 in today's Mann Ki Baat (133rd episode), urging citizens to take advantage of the **self-enumeration facility** — an unprecedented feature allowing households to fill in census data online before the enumerator's visit. The census has been delayed from its original 2021 cycle due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent logistical challenges.

WHY CENSUS 2027?

India's last census was in **2011** — making it a **16-year gap** by the time Census 2027 is completed. The original 2021 Census was postponed due to:

- COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022)
- Subsequent logistical and technological overhaul decisions
- Decision to upgrade to a fully digital system

A 16-year gap creates serious governance challenges: welfare scheme targeting (PM-KISAN, PMAY, PM Ujjwala) relies on household data; **delimitation** of constituencies requires updated population figures; planning commission projections are based on Census data.

WHAT'S NEW IN CENSUS 2027

FEATURE	DETAIL
Self-Enumeration (SE)	First time — citizens fill census data online via se.census.gov.in before enumerator visits
Languages	SE portal available in 16 languages
Mobile data collection	Enumerators use mobile apps instead of paper forms
Geo-referenced jurisdictions	Every household location geo-tagged for precision
CMMS Portal	Census Management & Monitoring System — near real-time tracking of enumeration progress
Unique SE ID	Households get a Self-Enumeration ID; verified during enumerator visit
Security	Multi-factor authentication, encryption for data security

TIMELINE AND STRUCTURE

PHASE	ACTIVITY	PERIOD
Phase 1	House Listing and Housing Census (HLO)	April–September 2026 (state-specific 30-day windows)
Self-Enumeration window	15 days before HLO in each area	Staggered
Phase 2	Population enumeration (counting persons)	February–March 2027
Publication	Provisional/final data release	2027 onwards

CENSUS 2027 — KEY DATA POINTS

ITEM	DETAIL
Budget outlay	₹11,718.24 crore (approved by Union Cabinet)
Officials involved	Over 3 million enumerators, supervisors, and officials
SE languages	16 (including Hindi, English, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Kannada, Malayalam, etc.)
Self-enumeration portal	se.census.gov.in
Nodal ministry	Ministry of Home Affairs (Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India)
Last census	2011 (original 2021 census postponed due to COVID)

CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY SIGNIFICANCE

Census 2027 data will directly drive:

- 1 Delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies** — the **Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026** and the Delimitation Bill, 2026 are designed to use Census 2027 data for readjusting parliamentary representation. This is **politically explosive** — South Indian states fear loss of seats due to lower population growth vs North India.
- 2 Women’s Reservation** — the **106th Constitutional Amendment (2023)** reserved 33% seats for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, but the provision is contingent on post-delimitation census — making Census 2027 the trigger for implementing women’s reservation.
- 3 OBC sub-categorisation** — Supreme Court in *Pankaj Kumar v. State of Punjab* (2024) upheld sub-categorisation within OBCs; Census 2027 will for the first time enumerate OBC population data at national level (OBC data was last surveyed through the Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011, not published in full).
- 4 Welfare scheme targeting** — PM-KISAN, PMAY, PM Ujjwala, Ayushman Bharat — all use household data for beneficiary identification; 16-year-old data significantly degrades targeting accuracy.

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — Polity	Delimitation; Women’s Reservation; OBC enumeration; Census Commissioner’s role
GS2 — Governance	Welfare scheme delivery; data-driven governance
GS3 — S&T	Digital census technology; self-enumeration; data security

Mains Keywords: Census 2027, self-enumeration, delimitation, 106th Amendment, OBC enumeration, CMMS, digital census, 16-year gap, women’s reservation trigger

Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Census year	2027 (delayed from 2021)
Last census	2011
Phase 1 period	April–September 2026 (house listing)
Total outlay	₹11,718.24 crore
SE portal	se.census.gov.in
SE languages	16
Officials	3 million+
Key trigger	Women’s Reservation (106th Amendment) implementation
Delimitation bill	Constitution 131st Amendment + Delimitation Bill 2026

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/04/26/census-2027-india-first-digital-enumeration/>

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