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Census 2027: India's First Digital, Caste-Enumerating Census

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Census 2027: India's First Digital, Caste-Enumerating Census


PIB Special Features
Chapter 1 · 2 min read

Source: New India Samachar Vol 6, Issue 22 (cover story) and PIB explainer “Census 2027: India’s First Digital Enumeration Exercise”

Census 2027, which commenced in April 2026, is the **16th census of India and the 8th since independence**, the first fully digital census, and the first since independence to enumerate the **caste of all communities**. It arrives after the longest gap in census history (the 2021 round was postponed by COVID-19).

THE TWO PHASES

PHASE	WHAT	WHEN
Phase 1: Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO)	34 notified questions on housing stock and amenities	April-September 2026 (30 days per state/UT, with a 15-day self-enumeration window first)
Phase 2: Population Enumeration	Full demographic count including caste	February 2027 (September 2026 in snow-bound Ladakh, J&K, Uttarakhand, Himachal)

THE DIGITAL MACHINERY

- **3.1 million+ field workers** trained, working on a Bring-Your-Own-Device model
- HLO mobile app (Android/iOS) in **16 languages**; CMMS management portal; HLBC satellite-imagery web app
- **Self-enumeration portal: se.census.gov.in** (an SE ID issues on completion); helpline 1855
- Legal basis: **Census Act 1948** and Census Rules 1990; MHA notification June 16, 2025
- Chain of command: Union Home Ministry to the **Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India** to state Census Directorates

THE 2011 BASELINE IT UPDATES

Population 121.0 crore; 25.0 crore households; literacy 73.0 percent; sex ratio 943; urban share 31.1 percent. Every welfare denominator, delimitation debate and reservation formula in use today still leans on these 15-year-old numbers.

MAINS ANGLE

Why this census is consequential: caste enumeration will reset the empirical basis of reservation and welfare targeting; fresh population data feeds the frozen-since-1971 delimitation question and the women's reservation timeline. **Risks:** digital exclusion in self-enumeration, data privacy in a BYOD exercise, and the political economy of caste data release. **Way forward:** publish anonymised microdata fast, and legislate clear rules on caste-data custodianship before release.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

IDENTITY:

16th census of India, 8th since independence; first synchronous census 1881

First fully digital; first post-independence caste enumeration of all communities

MACHINERY:

Census Act 1948; MHA notification June 16, 2025; RGI conducts

Phase 1 HLO April-September 2026 (34 questions); Phase 2 February 2027

3.1 million field workers; app in 16 languages; self-enumeration at se.census.gov.in

2011 BASELINE:

121.0 crore population; literacy 73.0 percent; sex ratio 943; urban 31.1 percent

Sources: [PIB](#), [Census of India](#)



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