



**KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY**  
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# Census in India

Published On: 28-08-2024

## About:

- **Population Census** is the total process of **collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating demographic, economic and social data** pertaining, at a specific time, of all persons in a country or a well-defined part of a country.
- It also **provides the trends in population** characteristics.
- The **Indian Census is one of the largest administrative exercises** undertaken in the world.

## Nodal Ministry:

- The decennial Census is conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner**, Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Until 1951, the Census Organisation was set up on an **ad-hoc basis** for each Census.

## Legal/Constitutional Backing:

- Census is conducted under the provisions of the **Census Act, 1948**.
- The bill for this Act was piloted by **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, the then Home Minister of India.
- The population census is a **Union subject under Article 246** of India Constitution.
- It is listed at **serial number 69** of the **seventh schedule** of the constitution.

## Confidentiality of Information:

- The information collected during the population Census is so confidential that it is **not even accessible to the courts of law**.
- The confidentiality is guaranteed by the **Census Act, 1948**. The law specifies penalties for both public and census officials for non-compliance or violation of any provision of the Act.

## Significance:

The Indian Census is the **largest single source of a variety of statistical information on different characteristics of the people of India**.

**Researchers and Demographers use census data to analyze growth and trends of population** and make projections.

Good Governance: The data collected through the census is **used for administration, planning and policy making** as well as management and evaluation of various programmes by the Government.

Demarcation: **Census data is also used for demarcation of constituencies** and allocation of representation to Parliament, State legislative assemblies and the local bodies.

**Kamaraj IAS Academy**

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477** / Whatsapp : **09710729833**

Giving Grants: **Finance Commission provides grants to the states on the basis of population** figures available from the Census data.

## History of Census

### Ancient and Medieval Period:

- **Rigveda:** The earliest literature 'Rig-Veda' reveals that *some kind of population count was maintained during 800-600 BC in India.*
- **Arthashastra:** 'Arthashastra' by 'Kautilya' written in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC prescribed the collection of *population statistics as a measure of state policy for taxation.*
- **Ain-i-Akbari:** During the regime of the Mughal king **Akbar**, the administrative report '**Ain-e-Akbari**' also included comprehensive data pertaining to population, industry, wealth and many other characteristics.

### Pre-independence Period:

- **Initial Attempts:**
- The history of the census *began with 1800 when England had begun its Census.*
- In its continuation, a census was conducted in **Allahabad (1824)** and in **Banaras (1827-28)** by **James Prinsep**.
- The first complete census of an Indian city was conducted in **1830** by **Henry Walter in Dacca (now Dhaka)**.
- The **Second Census** was conducted in **1836-37** by **Fort St. George**.
- In 1849, the Government of India ordered the local governments to conduct **quinquennial** (five-yearly) returns of population.
- **First Non-synchronous Census:** It was conducted in India in **1872** during the reign of **Governor-General Lord Mayo**.
- **First Synchronous Census:** The first synchronous census was taken under British rule on **February 17, 1881**, by **W.C. Plowden** (Census Commissioner of India).
- Since then, censuses have been undertaken **uninterruptedly** once every ten years.

## Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC)

### About:

The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) **was conducted in 2011** for the **first time since 1931**.

It seeks to canvass every Indian family in rural and urban India, and ask about their:

1 **Economic status**, to allow Central/State authorities to come up with a range of indicators of deprivation which could be used by each authority to define a poor or deprived person.

2 **Specific caste name**, to allow the **government to re-evaluate which caste groups** are economically worse off and which are better off.

### Difference Between Census & SECC:

Field of Coverage: The **Census provides a portrait of the Indian population** while the **SECC is a tool to identify beneficiaries of state support**.

Confidentiality of Data: The Census data is considered confidential, whereas the data of SECC is open for use by Government departments to grant and/or restrict benefits to the people.

## Significance of SECC:

**Better Mapping of Inequalities:** SECC has the potential to allow for a mapping of inequalities at a broader level.

It will be useful to establish statistical justification for preserving *caste-based affirmative action programmes or welfare schemes*.

**Legally Imperative:** It is *also legally imperative* as the courts require a '*quantifiable data*' to support the existing levels of reservation.

**Constitutional Mandate:** The Constitution of India also favours conducting a caste census.

**Article 340** mandates the *appointment of a commission to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes* and make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by governments.