

Delimitation in India: Constitutional Framework, Reservation Design and Post-2026 Electoral Policy Agenda

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Abstract: *Delimitation in India is the constitutional and statutory process of redrawing territorial constituencies and, when constitutionally permitted, readjusting the distribution of seats so that representation tracks population “so far as practicable.” The framework is anchored in Part V UNION and Part VI THE STATES of the Constitution—particularly Articles 81 and 82 for the House of the People, Article 170 for State Legislative Assemblies and Articles 330 and 332 for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)—together with the statutory regime created under the Delimitation Act, 2002 and related election laws.*

This research paper examines (i) how the Constitution’s “population-to-seat” equality principle is operationalized through delimitation, (ii) how the long “freeze” on inter-State seat readjustment has reshaped representation and federal bargaining and (iii) how reservation rules for SCs and STs are legally differentiated—SC-reserved constituencies are mandated to be geographically dispersed across a State, a requirement that is not present for ST-reserved constituencies.

This review uses a primary-source spine (Constitution text updated through the 106th Amendment; Delimitation Act, 2002; official notifications and gazettes; and official press releases) to map legal architecture and integrates prior scholarship to evaluate contested outcomes—such as the opacity of SC “dispersal” in practice; the governance burden created by very large constituencies; and the post-2026 policy menu (seat expansion, timing scenarios tied to census publication and institutional interactions with women’s reservation and simultaneous-election proposals).

Keywords: *delimitation; malapportionment; representation; constituency boundaries; Scheduled Castes; Scheduled Tribes; federalism; census; seat freeze; women’s reservation; simultaneous elections.*