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## Decoding delimitation: What the new Bills propose to change, and why it matters

*The Bills could alter the nature of future exercises to redraw constituencies, proposing to end the Constitutional framework for delimitation after every decadal Census.*



The capping of elected members at 815 is a 50% increase on the existing strength of 543 in the Lok Sabha. (Source: [File](#))

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4 min read New Delhi Apr 15, 2026 05:51 AM IST ✓

First published on: Apr 14, 2026 at 09:06 PM IST

Dealing with delimitation of constituencies for early implementation of women's reservation in Parliament and state Assemblies, the three Bills that the government proposes to bring in the extended Budget session of Parliament later this week answer many questions even as they raise doubts that may be debated in Parliament.

The capping of elected members at 815 is a 50% increase on the existing strength of 543 in the Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha chamber in the new Parliament building has a seating capacity for 888 members — expandable to 1,272 members for a joint session.

It is, however, not clear what will be the formula for seat allocation in each state based on population. In public statements on delimitation, the government has promised to maintain the proportion of seats held by each state currently in Parliament. Under the “one person, one vote, one value” principle of the Constitution, the exercise could be complicated given the vast gap that has accumulated over four decades in populations of states in north and south India.

No delimitation has been conducted following the one based on the 1971 Census. The latest delimitation is proposed to be conducted based on the 2011 Census.

More significantly, the Bills could alter the nature of future delimitation exercises. The Bills propose to end the Constitutional framework for delimitation after every decadal Census.

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At the core of this shift is a proposed amendment to Article 82 of the Constitution. The draft Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026 seeks to rename it from “Readjustment after each Census” to “Readjustment of constituencies”, while removing the explicit requirement that seat allocation and constituency division follow every Census. In effect, delimitation would no longer be a mandatory, periodic exercise tied to decadal population data.

A related change in Article 81 redefines “population” for the purpose of seat allocation. Instead of mandating reliance on the last published Census, the amendment allows Parliament to determine, by law, which Census figures will be used. This introduces flexibility in choosing the reference population, but also shifts discretion to the political executive of the day.

Together, these provisions move delimitation away from a constitutionally-triggered process to one that can be operationalised through ordinary legislation.

The Bills provide that readjustment will be carried out by a Delimitation Commission “in such manner and on the basis of such census” as may be specified. This means the timing of the exercise, and the dataset it relies on, can be determined through a simple majority in Parliament.

This marks a break from past practice. Since the 1970s, any decision to defer delimitation – primarily to avoid penalising states that had successfully controlled population growth – required constitutional amendments passed with a two-thirds majority, as in 1976 and 2001. The proposed

framework lowers that threshold, potentially giving greater latitude to future governments in shaping the exercise.

Even as the Bills retain population as the basis for redrawing constituencies, they do not spell out how Lok Sabha seats will be distributed across states while preserving existing regional balances.

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The Delimitation Bill, 2026 refers to the “latest census figures” available when the Commission is set up, and reiterates established criteria such as administrative boundaries, physical features and public convenience. But the absence of a clear allocation formula leaves a gap between the stated political assurance of maintaining current proportions and the legal framework proposed.

This gap becomes sharper when viewed against the constitutional principle of equal representation. Article 81 requires that the ratio between a state's population and its allocated seats be, as far as practicable, uniform across the country, and that constituencies within a state have broadly equal populations.

Reconciling this principle with the commitment to maintain the existing share of seats for each state will likely be a key point of debate on the Bills in Parliament.

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