

# Caste-based census

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## In news

The Chief Minister of Bihar has raised the issue of Caste based census recently, saying it will help in better decisions for the people's development and welfare.

## Demand for caste based census

There has been a demand for caste based census from the following parties:

- The demand usually came from among those belonging to Other Backward Classes (OBC) and other deprived sections.
- Maharashtra Assembly which passed a resolution on January 8 urging the Centre to hold a caste-based Census in 2021.
- The constitutional body National Commission for Backward Classes urged the government to collect data on the population of OBCs "as part of Census of India 2021 exercise.
- A writ petition seeking caste enumeration is pending in the Supreme Court, which issued notices on this on February 26 this year.
- However, sections from the upper castes oppose the idea.

## Rohini Commission for the sub-categorisation of reservation for OBCs

- Justice Rohini Commission proposed for the sub-categorisation of reservation for Other Backward Class (OBCs).
- The commission was set up in 2017 and has recommended splitting 27% reservation for the OBCs into different categories for equitable distribution of benefits among

different sub-castes to ensure that the benefits reached the really deprived sections.

- After several extensions, the panel submitted its report in February 2021 dividing 2,633 OBC castes on the Central list into four sub-categories for splitting the 27% quota into 2, 6, 9, and 10%.

### **Type of caste data is published in the Census**

- Every Census in independent India from 1951 to 2011 has published data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but not on other castes.
- However, in 1941, caste-based data was collected but not published.
- India's last caste census was conducted 90 years ago in 1931.

### **Current government's stand on caste based census**

- The Centre has said, as a matter of policy, there will be no enumeration as per caste other than that for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for the census.
- It has cited the provisions of the Constitution and reservation of seats for SCs and STs in Lok Sabha and in the assemblies as per their proportion in the population.
- The then UPA government in 2010 had decided to go for a full-fledged Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC).
- The SECC was conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development in rural areas and the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation in urban areas.
- The SECC data excluding caste data was finalised and published by the two ministries in 2016.
- The raw caste data was handed over to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, which formed an Expert Group under former NITI Aayog Vice-Chairperson Arvind Pangaria for classification and categorisation of data.

## History of Census in India

- Beginning from 1872 when the first census was conducted in India non-synchronously in different parts.
- But the first synchronous census in India was held in 1881.
- The responsibility of conducting the decennial Census rests with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India under Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India
- The Census Organisation was set up on an ad-hoc basis for each Census till the 1951 Census.
- The Census Act was enacted in 1948 to provide for the scheme of conducting population census with duties and responsibilities of census officers.