



**Date – 18 APRIL 2023**

## CASTE-BASED CENSUS

*This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “Caste Based Census”. The topic “Caste Based Census” has relevance in the “Polity and Governance” section for the UPSC CSE exam.*



***Caste-based Census***

### ***For Prelims:***

*What is a Caste-based Census?*

### ***For Mains:***

#### ***GS 2: Polity and Governance***

*What is the need for Caste Based Census?*

*What is the significance of Caste Based Census?*

*What will be the impact of Caste Based Census?*

*What are the challenges in conducting Caste Based Census?*

*What is the way forward?*

### ***Why in the news?***

Former Congress President Shri Rahul Gandhi has raised the demand for conducting Caste Based Census. He asserted that there is a need for equitable distribution of benefits in proportion to the population share. He also commented that there is a need to remove the cap of fifty percent on the reservations.

## What is Caste Based Census?

**CASTE BASED CENSUS**

The caste-based census is a type of population census where people are counted and classified according to their caste or social group.

**NEED**

- Representations.
- **Planning**
- Social Justice
- **Affirmative Action**
- Research

**CHALLENGES**

- Caste assertiveness
- **Privacy concerns**
- Cost and logistics
- **Fear of misuse**
- Caste-based identities
- **Political manipulation**

**WAY FORWARD**

- Need for Caste census to reflect the modern changes in the caste data
- **Rationalise reservation policies.**
- Socio-anthropological study.
- Social justice measures.
- **Addressing Caste based inequalities**

The caste-based census is a type of population census where people are counted and classified according to their caste or social group.

In this type of census, individuals are required to identify their caste or sub-caste, which is then recorded by the enumerators.

### Background:

In India, the first caste-based census was conducted in 1872 by the British colonial administration. However, the last caste-based census was conducted in 1931, and since then, there has been a demand to reintroduce it.

### What is the need and significance of Caste Based Census?

The need for a caste-based census arises from the fact that caste continues to play a significant role in Indian society, particularly in matters related to social, economic, and political power. Here are some reasons why a caste-based census is considered necessary:

- **Representation:** Caste-based census data can help ensure representation for marginalized communities in government and public institutions. It can help policymakers understand the distribution and demographic profile of different caste groups and formulate policies that address their needs.
- **Planning:** Caste-based census data can be used to plan and implement targeted development schemes and welfare programs for disadvantaged groups.
- **Social Justice:** Caste-based census data can help address the issue of social justice and inequality by identifying groups that have historically faced discrimination and exclusion.
- **Affirmative Action:** Caste-based census data can help ensure the effective implementation of affirmative action policies, such as quotas in education and employment, for marginalized communities.
- **Research:** Caste-based census data can be used by researchers to study various aspects of social, economic, and political life in India.

### **What are the arguments against conducting a Caste-based Census?**

Despite the positives related to the Caste-based census, there are certain reasons that go against the concept. The arguments against conducting a Caste-based Census are as follows:

- **Caste assertiveness:** Caste is a mobilising factor but at the same time it has the potential to turn one caste against the other. New data can lead to friction among the communities.
- **Privacy concerns:** Collecting caste-based data raises concerns about the privacy of individuals and their right to not disclose their caste identity.
- **Cost and logistics:** Conducting a caste-based census requires additional resources and logistics, which can be a burden on the government.
- **Fear of misuse:** There is a fear that caste-based data can be misused for discriminatory purposes, such as denying individuals access to certain services or opportunities based on their caste.
- **Caste-based identities are fluid:** The caste system in India is complex, and individuals often identify with multiple castes or sub-castes. This makes it difficult to accurately capture caste-based identities.
- **Political manipulation:** Some political parties and groups may use caste-based data for political gain, which could further polarize society.

### **What is the way forward?**

- The economic progress and affirmative action policies of the government have had an impact on the fortunes of different communities.
- In order to have an accurate understanding of the current situation, it is important to collect data that reflects these changes.
- Caste-based data is becoming increasingly important in order to rationalize reservation policies.
- Prior to conducting a census, a socio-anthropological study can be done at the state and district levels to identify all the sub-castes and sects in society.
- Although a caste-based census may not align with the goal of a casteless society, it can be an effective tool in addressing societal inequities.

**Sources:**

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-the-caste-census-debate-7422053/>

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