Census 2027

Mains: *GSII – Governance*

Why in News?

The Census 2027 introducing new questions highlights the importance of accurate enumeration, sensitive data collection and public trust in India's first digital Census.

What Are the New Questions?

Census 2027 – Key Features
• **Two phases** – House Listing Operations (HLO) and Population Enumeration (PE). • **The 1st phase,** HLO, was conducted from April 1 to September 30, 2026, except in Manipur. • The **2nd phase** will involve approximately 34 lakh enumerators and supervisors, mostly government school teachers. • **Enumerators** will collect information through a mobile application, making Census 2027 India's first digital Census. • Each enumeration block covers approximately 750–800 people, with 20–25 minutes required for each household interview. *13 new questions or data fields have been introduced compared with the 2011 Census questionnaire.*

- **Personal and Family Details** – Questions cover the respondent's caste, religion, nationality, spouse's name and parents' particulars, including their names, religion and place and date of birth.
- **Identity and Documentation** – The questionnaire seeks information on Aadhaar, mobile, voter ID and driving licence details, along with passport availability.
    - It also asks about the number of bank accounts and permanent residential address.
- **Digital and Social Information** – Questions cover digital literacy, disability, migration, fertility, economic activity and other demographic characteristics.
    - The questionnaire also includes the place of COVID-19 vaccination.

Why Is Enumerator Training Important?

- **Ensuring Data Accuracy** – Enumerators must understand the questionnaire, coding methods and probing techniques to record responses correctly.
    - Inaccurate information can affect demographic analysis, welfare planning and policy decisions.
- **Handling Sensitive Information** – Questions on caste, religion, disability, fertility

and migration require respectful interaction.
    - Enumerators must avoid assumptions, bias and unnecessary commentary while recording responses.
- **Maintaining Public Trust** – Respondents may hesitate to disclose personal information, especially Aadhaar and caste details.
    - Enumerators must explain the purpose of questions, maintain confidentiality and avoid coercion.

What are the Major Concerns and Challenges?

- **Caste Enumeration and Social Sensitivity** – Census 2027 will conduct caste enumeration beyond Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the first time in independent India.
    - Respondents outside SC/ST categories must enter their caste names manually. The questionnaire also provides options for not declaring caste or selecting no caste.
    - The absence of a separate OBC column and the use of open-ended responses may create challenges in classification and data consistency.
- **Aadhaar and Privacy Concerns** – The Aadhaar question has generated concerns regarding privacy and its possible connection with citizenship verification.
    - A Census official clarified that providing Aadhaar details is optional and that no instruction links Aadhaar with a citizenship test.
    - The Census cannot be treated as a citizenship verification exercise.
- **Political and Institutional Sensitivity** – The NPR, which was last updated in 2015, has faced opposition over concerns regarding its possible connection with the National Register of Citizens.
    - Questions on identity, caste and religion may generate apprehensions among respondents, making transparent communication essential.
- **Digital and Administrative Challenges** – Digital enumeration requires reliable technology, trained personnel and effective data security.
    - Technical failures, inadequate training or inconsistent interpretation of questions may affect the completeness and reliability of Census data.

What is the Way Forward?

- **Strengthen Enumerator Training** – Provide practical training on sensitive questions, digital applications, coding procedures and unbiased interviewing.
- **Ensure Transparency and Confidentiality** – Clearly communicate the purpose of data collection, the optional nature of Aadhaar disclosure and the confidentiality of Census information.
- **Improve Data Quality** – Establish robust verification mechanisms, standardised coding procedures and regular monitoring to minimise errors and inconsistencies.
- **Promote Public Participation** – Conduct awareness campaigns to address misconceptions and build public confidence in the Census process.

Conclusion

- Census 2027 is a crucial exercise for evidence-based governance and inclusive

development.
    - Its success depends on accurate enumeration, sensitive data collection and public trust.
- A transparent, secure and professionally trained Census workforce can ensure reliable demographic information while protecting individual dignity and privacy.

Quick Facts
Structure of Enumerator Training • The Census training programme follows a four-tier training pyramid to ensure uniformity across the country. 1. Subject Matter Experts train National Trainers. 2. National Trainers prepare Master Trainers. 3. Master Trainers train Field Trainers. 4. Field Trainers train enumerators and supervisors in batches of 35–50 participants. • Hands-on practice with the Population Enumeration mobile application is mandatory for all enumerators and supervisors. **PRAMAN Framework** • The government has introduced the PRAMAN framework to improve household interactions. - Pehchaan – Identity - Rishta – Rapport - Anurodh – Request - Madad – Assistance - Aankada Shuddhata – Data Accuracy - Nishtha – Commitment • A Seva Bhav pledge will reinforce respectful interaction and public service commitment.

Reference

The Hindu| Census 2027

