

Women's Reservation in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Polity and Governance

Why in News?

The government is exploring ways to implement the Women's Reservation Act (Constitution 106th Amendment Act, 2023) by increasing Lok Sabha seats based on Census 2011.

- **The Women's Reservation Act (Constitution 106th Amendment Act, 2023)** - Provides **33%** reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- Reservation includes seats for women within SC and ST reserved constituencies.
- To be implemented after delimitation and Census.
- Passed in September 2023 as the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam*.
- **Delimitation** - Current Lok Sabha strength is 543 seats.
- Reservation requires redrawing constituencies to allocate one-third seats for women.
- Delimitation ensures fair distribution of reserved seats across states and categories.
- Without delimitation, proportional representation cannot be guaranteed.
- Last delimitation - 2002, based on 1971 Census; seats frozen till 2026.
- **Increase based on Census 2011** - Government proposes using Census 2011 data instead of waiting for the ongoing Census (expected to conclude by 2029).
- Lok Sabha seats may be increased by 50% (to 816), maintaining existing state proportions.
- Addresses concerns of southern states about losing seats due to population-based delimitation.
- Ensures quicker implementation of women's quota, possibly from 2029 general elections.

- **Current State of Women's Representation in Politics** - Women constitute 14% of Lok Sabha (78 MPs in 2019).
- Representation in State Assemblies is even lower (9%).
- India lags global average (26% women in national parliaments).
- Countries with higher representation: Rwanda (>60%), Sweden (47%).
- **Women's Representation in Local Government** - 73rd and 74th Amendments (1992) mandated 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies.
- Many states (e.g., Bihar, Rajasthan) increased this to 50% reservation.
- Resulted in over 1.4 million elected women representatives at grassroots level.
- Considered one of the largest experiments in inclusive democracy worldwide.
- **The 73rd Amendment, 1992** - Inserted *Part IX* in the Constitution (Panchayats).
- Mandated *one-third reservation for women* in seats and offices of chairpersons.
- Empowered women in local governance and decision-making.
- **The 73rd Amendment - Success in Inclusive Participation** -
- Brought millions of women into politics at the grassroots.
- Enhanced women's role in *development, social justice, and governance*.
- Created a pipeline for women leaders to enter higher levels of politics.
- **Lottery / Rotation System** - Proposal to decide seats for women by lottery system.
- Rotational reservation ensures fairness but raises concerns about continuity of women leaders.
- **Significance of women's participation in politics** - Ensures inclusive democracy and balanced representation.
- Women legislators bring focus on health, education, welfare, and social justice.
- Strengthens legitimacy of democratic institutions.
- Helps achieve *SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Strong Institutions)*.

Reference

[The Indian Express | Women's reservation](#)