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Delimitation after 2026: Demographic Performance, Federal Balance and Women's Representation in India

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Abstract

The impending post-2026 delimitation exercise has revived concerns over the allocation of Lok Sabha (LS) seats among Indian states. Article 81 of the Constitution envisages representation broadly proportional to population, with similar population–seat ratios across states. While this principle posed few difficulties in 1951 or 1971, subsequent decades witnessed sharp interstate divergence in population growth. States that achieved fertility decline and population stabilisation earlier now risk losing political influence relative to states with higher population growth. This paper argues that a purely population-based allocation formula is no longer adequate for preserving federal balance. It proposes a two-part approach: the existing allocation of 543 LS seats should remain unchanged, while any additional seats created through LS expansion should be distributed according to a Demographic Performance (DemPer) principle derived from the logic of the 84th Constitutional Amendment, which recognised states' population stabilisation efforts. The paper develops a DemPer framework based on states' fertility transitions and applies it to alternative LS sizes, favouring a House of about 650 members. This approach preserves population as the primary basis of representation while avoiding the political penalisation of states that achieved demographic transition earlier. It also creates scope for implementing women's reservation through a hybrid First-Past-the-Post – Proportional Representation electoral mechanism.

JEL classification

D72, H77, J13, D71, P16, J16

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delimitation, Lok Sabha, parliamentary representation, federalism, demographic transition, population stabilisation, seat allocation, political representation, women's reservation, electoral reform, India

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Introduction

India's next delimitation exercise will occur in circumstances fundamentally different from those prevailing at the time of the last inter-state seat allocation based on the 1971 Census. The Constitution envisaged periodic adjustment of parliamentary representation in response to population change. Article 81 requires that LS seats be allocated among states so that the ratio between population and representation is, "so far as practicable", similar across states, while Article 82 mandates readjustment of intra-state boundaries of constituencies following each Census.

In practice, however, the allocation of LS seats to states has remained frozen for more than five decades. Constitutional amendments extending this freeze were intended to avoid penalising states that successfully reduced fertility and population growth through investments in health, education and family welfare. The 84th Constitutional Amendment (2002), in particular, explicitly linked the continuation of the freeze for another quarter century till the first Census after 2026 to differential progress in population stabilisation across states.¹

The central dilemma facing post-2026 delimitation is therefore clear. A return to strict population proportionality would significantly increase the representation of high-growth states while reducing the relative influence of states that achieved demographic transition earlier. Yet continuing the freeze indefinitely would undermine the constitutional requirement that representation be periodically adjusted to reflect demographic change.

This paper proposes a middle path. It accepts population as the dominant basis of representation while recognising that demographic performance has already been acknowledged by Parliament as a legitimate constitutional concern. The proposal leaves the existing 543 LS seats untouched. Any newly created seats are allocated using a Demographic Performance (DemPer) principle that rewards population stabilisation while preserving federal balance.

The argument rests on three propositions. First, constitutional practice has never relied on strict population proportionality alone. Small states, Union Territories and other exceptional cases have historically received representation that departed from a purely population-based formula.² Second, the demographic divergence among states is now substantially greater than

¹ For 2001 Delimitation, LS size was to remain same as before. Most of the additional seats for the north will have been picked up at the expense of the southern states. This is the crux of the fear about the so-called 'north-south divide'.

² These explicit exceptions to population proportionality (important) were three. First, **minimum** representation for small States (most important exception). Article 81 itself contains a proviso: States with a population of less than 6 million are entitled to at least ONE LS seat, even if strict proportionality would justify less than one. It benefited smaller States, especially in the **North-East** and hill regions. This exception was applied in all Delimitation Acts (**1952, 1962, 1972, 2002**). The second exception was Union Territories, which were not

it was when the Constitution came into force or when delimitation was last undertaken in 1971.³ Third, the political sustainability of India's federal system requires that states not be penalised for achieving policy objectives that Parliament itself encouraged.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. The next section develops the rationale for incorporating demographic performance into seat allocation. The following section presents alternative seat distributions under different LS sizes and examines their implications for federal balance and representation. Subsequent sections address constitutional and political objections, discuss the limits of a population-only approach in contemporary India, and outline a proposal for implementing women's reservation in an expanded Lok Sabha.

2. A Demographic Performance Framework for Post-2026 Delimitation

The principal challenge confronting post-2026 delimitation arises from the substantial divergence in state population growth since 1971. India's population increased from about 548 million in 1971 to nearly 1.4 billion by the mid-2020s. However, this growth was unevenly distributed across states. Several southern and western states achieved fertility decline and population stabilisation much earlier than many states in the Hindi belt. As a result, differences in population size between states widened considerably.

A purely population-based seat allocation formula would therefore produce political consequences very different from those envisaged when the Constitution was framed. States that invested early in public health, education and population stabilisation would see their relative parliamentary influence decline, while states with higher population growth would gain representation. The resulting redistribution of political power has become a major source of concern in discussions surrounding delimitation.

The constitutional basis for recognising demographic performance is stronger than is often acknowledged. The 84th Constitutional Amendment extended the freeze on inter-state seat allocation until the first Census after 2026. The amendment explicitly cited differential progress in family planning and population stabilisation across states. In effect, Parliament recognised that demographic outcomes should not be ignored when questions of representation are considered.

This paper therefore proposes a Demographic Performance (DemPer) principle for allocating only those LS seats that may be added through future expansion of the House. The existing

governed by Article 81 proportionality. Thus, UTs are represented under Article 81(1)(a) **and** Article 331 / later laws, not strictly by population ratio. Their representation has always been **statutory and discretionary**, not population-formula driven. Third exception is Jammu & Kashmir (historical exception). Until 2019, J&K had its own Constitution. LS seat allocation for J&K was statutorily fixed, and it was outside the Delimitation Acts applicable to other States. This was an accepted constitutional asymmetry.

³ Vaishnav and Hutton (2019) make the following international comparison. At present, Indian parliamentarians answer to vastly larger sums of people than their counterparts in literally every other democracy: Indian MPs represent an average of 2.5 million citizens—over three times the number represented by members of the House of Representatives in the United States. This is rather irrelevant given that India's population has always been several multiples of USA's.

allocation of 543 seats remains unchanged. Population thus continues to determine the overwhelming majority of representation, while demographic performance influences only the distribution of additional seats.

The DemPer principle has three elements.

First, it applies exclusively to newly created seats. This preserves continuity with existing constitutional practice and avoids disruption to the present balance of representation.

Second, the principle rewards both early achievement and subsequent progress in population stabilisation. States that had already reached replacement-level fertility by the mid-2000s are recognised for early achievement, while states that substantially reduced fertility thereafter are also rewarded. This avoids privileging only the earliest demographic performers and acknowledges progress made by states that began their transition later.

Third, small federal units are exempted from the formula. Union Territories, the north-eastern states and hill states possess distinctive constitutional and federal characteristics. Their populations are too small for strict proportionality to generate meaningful representation. Consistent with established constitutional practice, these entities should receive minimum representation irrespective of demographic performance.

The logic underlying DemPer resembles the principle of digressive proportionality employed in the allocation of seats in the European Parliament. Under that system, larger member states receive more seats than smaller ones, but representation is not strictly proportional to population. Citizens of larger countries are represented by fewer parliamentarians per capita than citizens of smaller countries, thereby balancing democratic representation with federal stability. The objective is not numerical equality alone but the preservation of political legitimacy within a diverse union (Pukelsheim, F., & Grimmett, G. (2018); Siecklucky (2013); Delgado-Marquez et al (2018)).

A similar challenge confronts India. It is simultaneously a democracy based on individual citizenship and a federation composed of politically meaningful states. Delimitation must therefore balance two legitimate objectives: representation of citizens and representation of constituent units of a large, diverse, and ancient within the Union. A purely population-based formula gives overwhelming weight to the first objective while neglecting the second (Kumar,). DemPer seeks to reconcile both.

The practical implications of this approach are illustrated in Table 1. The table shows that simply expanding the LS while retaining existing state shares would substantially increase the representation of the most populous states. In a LS of 800 close to what the current Union government proposed (815) in its Constitutional Amendment tabled in Parliament (16 April 2026) would increase the seats in UP to 136. By contrast, allocating additional seats through the DemPer principle moderates these changes while preserving the broad relationship between population size and representation.

The proposal does not prevent large states from gaining seats.⁴ Indeed, the states with the large and rapidly growing populations continue to receive most of the additional seats because population remains the dominant criterion. However, the increase is moderated sufficiently to avoid the perception that states which successfully implemented population stabilisation policies are being politically penalised for their success.

The preferred option examined in this paper is a LS of approximately 650 members (or precisely 651 members, as proposed in section 5 later). Such an expansion accommodates population growth, improves citizen representation and avoids creating an excessively large legislative chamber.

3. Federal Balance, Representation and the Limits of Population Proportionality

The principal objective of the proposed framework is not to privilege particular regions but to preserve federal balance. This distinction is important because debates surrounding delimitation are frequently framed as a conflict between northern and southern states. Such a characterisation is misleading.

Demographic transition has not been confined to southern India. States as diverse as Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal also achieved substantial fertility decline and population stabilisation. The issue is therefore not regional favouritism but recognition of differential demographic performance across a wide range of states.

The consequences of relying exclusively on population become apparent when representation ratios are examined. Since the last delimitation, population growth has significantly increased the number of citizens represented by each Member of Parliament. At the same time, disparities in constituency size across states have widened.

Table 2 presents the distribution of seats under the proposed DemPer framework. The results indicate that larger states continue to gain the greatest number of additional seats in absolute terms. However, states that achieved population stabilisation are protected against substantial losses in relative influence. The outcome is therefore protective rather than preferential.

The contrast with Table 1 outcomes, where the number of seats per state are arrived at purely on population proportionality is grossly unfair to the states that controlled their population. Punjab, which demonstrated early demographic performance, seats increase from 13 to 18, while Kerala had 20 seats, still in 2024 would still get 20 after the House seats increase. This

⁴ The Union government's proposal only mentioned that LS size would increase by 50%, not that state shares would increase by 50%. This is a dangerous proposal, as the government may well propose that Southern state shares will not drop, it may still differentially increase state seats to still add to a 50% increase, since the bills did not mention that *each* state share will also accordingly increase by 50%. Not making it explicit that each state share will rise by equal percentage terms does not instil trust among citizens.

would be patently unfair – penalising the states that performed demographically, in accordance with the expectations of Constitutional Amendment 84 (2002).

Table 3 reports representation ratios across states (and average persons per seat in each state). The ratio is of average person per seat in a given state, relative to the national mean (of persons per seat) for a LS of 650.⁵ The results suggest that expansion of the LS combined with the DemPer allocation formula narrows disparities in population per seat. Citizens in heavily populated states gain improved access to representation, while states that achieved demographic transition earlier avoid significant erosion of their political voice.

The proposal therefore advances three objectives simultaneously. First, it accommodates population growth through a moderate expansion of the Lok Sabha. Second, it improves citizen representation by reducing the number of people represented by each MP. Third, it mitigates the risk of federal tensions arising from a purely population-based redistribution of political power.

A further advantage is political feasibility. Because the existing allocation of 543 seats based on population proportionality remains intact, no state loses representation. Political conflict is therefore confined to the allocation of additional seats rather than the redistribution of existing ones. This substantially lowers the political costs of reform.

4. Constitutional and Political Objections

Several objections may be raised against incorporating demographic performance into seat allocation. The most common is that Article 81 requires representation to be based on population and therefore leaves little room for alternative principles.

This interpretation is difficult to sustain. Article 81 itself requires proportionality only “so far as practicable.” The Constitution therefore recognises that strict mathematical equality may not always be possible or desirable. Constitutional practice has consistently reflected this reality. Small states, Union Territories and other exceptional cases have long received representation that departs from strict population proportionality.

A related objection is that demographic performance violates the principle of “one person, one vote.” Yet India already exhibits substantial variation in constituency size. In practice,

⁵ In 1971, when the last major seat distribution occurred, the representative ratio for all states was still close to 1.0. But that was only because divergence of population growth rates diverged significantly only thereafter, after education and health interventions were made by different states at differing rates. The inevitable consequence followed. India’s population rose from 350 million in 1951 and 533 million in 1971 to at least 1.34 billion in 2024, driven largely by the poorly demographically performing states in the Hindi belt. Just six Hindi-belt states with TFRs still above 2.1 (the only ones in India) in 2024 drive 50% (401 of the 803 million) of the growth of India’s population between 1971 and 2024, it becomes impossible to realise the principle of “one vote, equal value” across India’s states.

complete voter equality does not exist. The relevant question is therefore not whether some deviation from numerical equality exists, but whether such deviation serves a legitimate constitutional purpose. Preserving federal balance and avoiding the political penalisation of population stabilisation constitute legitimate objectives.

Another concern is the possibility of judicial invalidation. However, Articles 81 and 82 provide Parliament considerable discretion in designing seat-allocation mechanisms. Courts have historically shown substantial deference to Parliament and Delimitation Commissions in matters relating to representation. A transparent and uniformly applied formula grounded in constitutional objectives would therefore possess a strong claim to legitimacy.

A final objection is political rather than constitutional. High-population states may argue that any departure from strict proportionality dilutes their democratic weight. Yet the proposed framework does not deny population its central role. Large states continue to gain the largest number of additional seats. The proposal merely moderates the extent of those gains in order to preserve federal cohesion.

The broader question is whether the logic that justified strict population proportionality in 1950 remains equally compelling today. At Independence, interstate differences in population were smaller, fertility rates were relatively similar, and no state possessed the demographic scale now associated with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (the only states that have total populations over 100 million).⁶ The founders could not have anticipated the degree of demographic divergence that emerged over the following seven decades.

Contemporary India is also a far more mature federation than it was in 1950. Linguistic reorganisation has stabilised state boundaries, regional identities coexist with a strong national identity, and the Union has acquired extensive experience in managing diversity. Under these conditions, preserving federal balance becomes an increasingly important constitutional objective.

Some scholars have argued that differences in demographic outcomes primarily reflect variations in the timing of demographic transition rather than differences in policy effort (Mishra, 2025). While the timing of transition undoubtedly matters, such arguments risk understating the role of public policy. Comparative evidence from both India and abroad demonstrates that investments in public health, education, female literacy and reproductive services can substantially accelerate fertility decline (Mehrotra and Jolly, 1997; Mehrotra, 2016)). States that achieved population stabilisation earlier did so not merely because of historical timing but also because of sustained policy interventions.

The implication is straightforward. Population should remain the dominant determinant of representation, but it need not remain the sole determinant. The constitutional recognition of population stabilisation, the widening divergence among states and the need to preserve federal

⁶ West Bengal has just crossed a 100 million population, but its TFR in 2004 was already 2.2, and is currently 1.3 in 2024.

balance together provide a strong justification for incorporating demographic performance into the allocation of newly created LS seats.

Political implications of Union government proposal of 50% increase in LS size, with state shares constant

The BJP has historically been weak or absent in Kerala and Tamil Nadu and until recently had limited strength in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, though has periodically performed better in recent years in Karnataka (29 seats of 129 total, or only 22.5% of LS in 2024). Its parliamentary strength has been heavily concentrated in the Hindi-belt states: Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar (often with allies), Haryana, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, and two western states, Gujarat and Maharashtra (with varying coalition arrangements, where too its strength is recent after it broke two regional parties).

Those states already constitute a very large share of the House. What happens under a uniform 50% increase? Suppose BJP wins 60 out of 80 seats in UP today. Then, all else equal, it might win about 90 out of 120 seats after expansion.

Similarly, if it wins two-thirds from Rajasthan (25 of 38); MP 29 of 44; and Gujarat (26 of 39). The "harvest" of seats available in BJP strongholds becomes much larger in absolute terms. At the same time Tamil Nadu's seats rise as do Kerala's seats.

But BJP currently captures very few of those seats. Therefore, under the *current* electoral map, a proportional increase expands the number of seats available where BJP is strong much more than it expands the number of seats it is likely to win in the South.

Whether this is an *advantage* depends on the benchmark. If every party's vote shares remain unchanged, then BJP's **share of Parliament** remains roughly unchanged too. For example: 240 seats out of 543 = 44%; just as 360 seats out of about 815 = 44%. In that arithmetic sense, there is no partisan bonus.

But politics is not only about percentages. The practical reality is that a party that dominates the largest states can often assemble a parliamentary majority without needing deep penetration into smaller or medium-sized states. That structural feature of Indian politics would remain—and arguably become more salient in an enlarged House.

Then the question is: does a uniform increase preserve a parliamentary structure in which victory in the large Hindi-belt states remains the principal route to power? The answer has to be **yes**.

The stronger proposition is actually the following. A uniform increase preserves the existing balance of political influence among states. Since the current balance already gives enormous weight to the large northern states where BJP has recently been strongest, the status quo is

arguably more favorable to BJP than to parties whose support is concentrated in the South. That is a political argument many Southern regional parties make.⁷

5. Women's Reservation in an Expanded Lok Sabha

The debate on delimitation intersects directly with another major constitutional reform: the implementation of one-third reservation for women (WR) in the LS and State Legislative Assemblies. The Union government has suggested that implementation may require a substantial expansion of the Lok Sabha. However, little attention has been paid to the institutional design through which women's representation can be achieved. The Union government simplified the matter by trying to avoid displacing existing MPs from their constituencies, and rejected the proposal of opposition parties that WR should be implemented within the existing LS of 543 seats. So it proposed just raising the number of seats by 50%, so 272/815 would give a one-third reservation. Of course, even the government's proposal will involve delimitation of new boundaries as the state will have many more constituencies.⁸

We argue that a moderate expansion of the LS provides an opportunity to implement women's reservation without requiring an exceptionally large increase in House size. The objective should be to achieve one-third representation while preserving the strengths of India's existing electoral system and maintaining effective parliamentary functioning.

The present LS consists of 543 elected members. If the House were expanded to approximately 650 seats, as proposed in this paper, a total of about 216 women members would be required to achieve one-third representation. Such an expansion would accommodate both the need for improved representation arising from population growth and the constitutional objective of increasing women's participation in LS.

A central question concerns the electoral mechanism through which women's reservation should be implemented. The traditional approach involves reserving specific constituencies for women and rotating those reservations over time. While constitutionally feasible, such a system has several disadvantages. Rotation weakens the relationship between elected representatives and constituencies, creates uncertainty for incumbents and parties, and may disrupt local political accountability.

⁷ A. Vardhan Shetty (2026a) points to another problematic design flaw in the delimitation exercise. In other large federal countries (Australia, Canada and even the small UK), when delimitation of constituency boundaries occurs, it is decentralized to a state-level body, thus ensuring that local specificities are taken into account. That is not so in India. Even worse, as "once the exercise is completed, there is no effective institutional forum to correct any illegality, arbitrariness, procedural breach, or jurisdictional excess before the new seat allocations and constituency boundaries become established. In a modern constitutional democracy, such a design cannot be justified. Under the Delimitation Acts (and even the unsuccessful Delimitation Bill, 2026), the Delimitation Commission's orders acquire the force of law..." He further notes: "the Delimitation Commission's orders acquire the force of law upon publication in the Gazette. They do not need approval from Parliament, State Legislatures, or even the Union Council of Ministers. These features are not constitutionally mandated. They are statutory choices consciously made". Also see Vardhan Shetty (2026b).

⁸ Ravi and Kapoor (2026) make interesting proposals regarding the bases for splitting constituencies into two or three, after choosing constituencies that indicate underrepresentation of women.

An alternative approach is to combine India's existing first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system with a limited proportional representation (PR) component.⁹ Such hybrid systems operate successfully in a number of democratic federations and allow multiple objectives to be pursued simultaneously.

Under this proposal, the existing 543 constituency-based seats would continue to be filled through FPTP elections. Additional seats created through LS expansion would be allocated through a PR mechanism based on party lists prepared at the state level. Legislation would require that women constitute at least one-third of candidates placed on these lists. Since seats allocated through PR are drawn directly from party lists, compliance with the constitutional requirement of one-third representation can be achieved transparently and predictably.

The principal advantage of this arrangement is that it preserves the constituency link that has long characterised Indian democracy. Citizens would continue to elect most members directly from territorial constituencies. At the same time, the PR component would provide an institutional mechanism for ensuring women's representation without requiring large-scale reservation and rotation of constituencies.

A LS of approximately 651 members illustrates the feasibility of this approach. The expansion would create 108 additional seats beyond the existing House size. These additional seats could be allocated through a PR mechanism designed to support implementation of women's reservation. Combined with half the women (108) elected through the ordinary constituency system, the remaining half (108) would be elected through the PR mechanism. This would make it possible to achieve the constitutional target of one-third representation while limiting the overall increase in House size.

⁹ Verma (2020) summarises the 4 disadvantages of FPTP system. First, it fosters inequity in that all votes do not count the same. This system exponentially increases the value of the fence sitting voter in these swing constituencies (or states in the US) and creates the moral hazard of politicians soliciting voters of such swing constituencies, often with inducements. Second, **Disproportionate Representation is the second disadvantage.** This anomaly is best illustrated by an example. In the 2019 general elections in India the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) won by a landslide. The ratio of votes received between BJP and the Congress Party was around 2:1 but the ratio of seats won was almost 6:1 (303:52). Congress similarly benefitted the same way when they were the dominant party in the past decades. This thereby subdues the voice of the 'losing' voters, undermining the core principle of democracy. This occurrence indicates that narrowly winning seats and losing large in other constituencies is a more efficient strategy to optimise vote distribution than winning large in any constituency, leading to other political banes such as gerrymandering. The probability of majority reversal is higher in close elections. Third, Duverger's Law (Duverger, states that in single ballot plurality elections, with constituencies represented by a single member (such as that of FPTP) will tend to favour a two-party system. People consider voting for a third party as a wasted vote. This leads to vicious cycle and trends to a two party dominant system – which India clearly is not. Finally, FPTP leads to majority reversal: narrowly winning seats and losing large in other constituencies is a more efficient strategy to optimise vote distribution than winning large in any constituency, leading to other political banes such as gerrymandering.

Limiting the LS size to 651 would keep the LS manageable, and serve the democratic principle of adequate time for debate. It would make the LS only as big as the UK's House of Commons.¹⁰

The proposed arrangement would also have broader democratic benefits. India's electoral system frequently generates significant differences between vote shares and seat shares. A limited proportional representation component would modestly improve representativeness while preserving the stability and simplicity associated with the FPTP system. The objective is not to replace India's electoral model but to supplement it for a specific constitutional purpose.

The federal structure of India suggests that party lists should be prepared at the state rather than national level. State-level lists would ensure that women's representation reflects India's regional diversity and would be more consistent with the federal principles underlying the Constitution. Such an arrangement would also reduce concerns regarding excessive centralisation of candidate selection.

Implementation would require constitutional and legislative changes. Article 81 would need amendment to permit a larger Lok Sabha, while the Representation of the People Act would need modification to accommodate a limited PR component. These reforms could be undertaken alongside the implementation of women's reservation, thereby integrating two major constitutional changes within a single framework.

Consideration would also need to be given to the interaction between women's reservation and the existing reservation provisions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Any proportional representation component should preserve the current constitutional commitment to SC and ST representation while ensuring that women from these communities are adequately represented. The detailed design of such arrangements would require further legislative consideration, but they do not present insurmountable institutional difficulties.

The key point is that delimitation and women's reservation should not be treated as separate constitutional questions. A moderate expansion of the LS creates an opportunity to address both simultaneously. By combining a Demographic Performance approach to seat allocation with a limited proportional representation mechanism for women, India can improve representation, preserve federal balance and strengthen the inclusiveness of its parliamentary democracy.

6. Conclusion

The forthcoming delimitation exercise will be one of the most consequential constitutional reforms undertaken since the reorganisation of states. The challenge is to reconcile two

¹⁰ It is highly inappropriate to have a LS that is larger than 651 members. This size itself is large for proper debate unless the number of days of LS sessions in a year are not increased commensurately, going back to levels prevailing in the 1950-1975 period, when Parliament met for 135-140 days a year. By the early 1990s, this had dropped to 95-100 days. The most spectacular drop has occurred since the mid-2010s, falling to only 55-65 days.

legitimate objectives: democratic representation based on population and the preservation of federal balance within an increasingly diverse Union.

This paper argues that these objectives need not be viewed as mutually exclusive. Population should remain the dominant criterion for allocating representation, but it should not be the sole criterion. The constitutional logic underlying the 84th Constitutional Amendment explicitly recognised differential demographic performance among states and sought to avoid penalising those that successfully achieved population stabilisation. That principle remains relevant to post-2026 delimitation.

The proposal advanced here leaves the existing allocation of 543 LS seats unchanged and applies a Demographic Performance (DemPer) principle only to newly created seats in an expanded House. This approach preserves continuity, avoids losses of representation for any state and moderates the political consequences of demographic divergence. The resulting allocations improve representation while reducing the risk of regional tensions associated with a return to strict population proportionality.

The preferred option is a LS of approximately 651 members. Such a House would accommodate India's population growth, improve representation ratios and remain small enough to function as an effective deliberative institution. The analysis presented in Tables 1–3 suggests that this approach narrows disparities in population per representative while maintaining the broad relationship between population size and political representation.

The paper also demonstrates that a moderate expansion of the LS provides an opportunity to implement women's reservation through a hybrid electoral system combining first-past-the-post and proportional representation. Such a mechanism would strengthen descriptive representation while preserving the constituency-based character of Indian democracy.

Ultimately, delimitation should not become a contest between regions of India. The issue is not one of North versus South, but of how a mature federal democracy should balance representation, demographic change and constitutional fairness. A Demographic Performance framework offers one possible path towards achieving that balance while remaining faithful to both the spirit of the Constitution and the requirements of democratic legitimacy.

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Table 1: Estimated LS Seat Allocation Under Alternative House Sizes Based on Population Proportionality

State	Current LS	Projected Pop'n (2025)					
		% Pop'n 2025	543	600	700	800	866
A&N Isl.	1	0.03%	0	0	0	0	0
Andhra Pradesh	25	3.79%	21	23	27	30	33
Arunachal Pradesh	2	0.11%	1	1	1	1	1
Assam	14	2.57%	14	15	18	20	22
Bihar	40	9.23%	50	55	65	74	80
Chhattisgarh	11	2.18%	12	13	15	17	19
Chandigarh	1	0.09%	0	1	1	1	1
Delhi	7	1.57%	9	9	11	13	14
Dadra Nagar Havel & Daman and Diu	2	0.10%	1	1	1	1	1
Goa	2	0.11%	1	1	1	1	1
Gujarat	26	5.18%	28	31	36	41	45
Himachal PRADESH	4	0.53%	3	3	4	4	5
Haryana	10	2.19%	12	13	15	18	19
Jammu & Kashmir	5	0.98%	5	6	7	8	8
Jharkhand	14	2.86%	16	17	20	23	25
Karnataka	28	4.85%	26	29	34	39	42
Kerala	20	2.55%	14	15	18	20	22
Ladakh*	1	0.02%	0	0	0	0	0
Lakshadweep	1	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0
Maharashtra	48	9.08%	49	54	64	73	79
Manipur	2	0.23%	1	1	2	2	2
Meghalaya	2	0.24%	1	1	2	2	2
Mizoram	1	0.09%	0	1	1	1	1
Madhya Pradesh	29	6.27%	34	38	44	50	54
Nagaland	1	0.16%	1	1	1	1	1
Odisha	21	3.32%	18	20	23	27	29
Punjab	13	2.20%	12	13	15	18	19
Puducherry	1	0.12%	1	1	1	1	1
Rajasthan	25	5.86%	32	35	41	47	51
Sikkim	1	0.05%	0	0	0	0	0
Telangana	17	2.72%	15	16	19	22	24
Telangana	39	5.47%	30	33	38	44	47
Tripura	2	0.30%	1	1	2	2	2
Uttarakhand	5	0.84%	5	5	6	7	7
Uttar Pradesh	80	17.01%	92	102	119	136	147
West Bengal	42	7.08%	38	42	50	57	61

Source: Census of India 2011; *Population Projections for India and States, 2011–2036*, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Table 2: Impact of Demographic Performance Weighting on Allocation of Additional LS Seats V4

State	Current LS	TFR as per SRS			No. of Additional Seats in Extended House Size			Total No. of Seats in Extended House Size		
		SRS 2004	SRS 2024	Rate of Decline	650	700	800	650	700	800
Andhra Pradesh*	25	2.10	1.40	-33%	5	8	14	30	33	39
Assam	14	2.90	1.90	-34%	5	7	12	19	21	26
Bihar	40	4.30	2.90	-33%	4	7	12	44	47	52
Chhattisgarh	11	3.30	2.20	-33%	5	7	12	16	18	23
Delhi	7	2.10	1.20	-43%	5	8	14	12	15	21
Gujarat	26	2.80	1.70	-39%	5	7	13	31	33	39
Haryana	10	3.00	1.90	-37%	5	7	12	15	17	22
Jharkhand	14	3.50	1.00	-71%	5	8	13	19	22	27
Karnataka	28	2.30	1.50	-35%	5	7	13	33	35	41
Kerala	20	1.70	1.30	-24%	4	6	10	24	26	30
Maharashtra	48	2.20	1.40	-36%	5	7	13	53	55	61
Madhya Pradesh	29	3.70	2.40	-35%	5	7	12	34	36	41
Odisha	21	2.70	1.60	-41%	5	7	13	26	28	34
Punjab	13	2.20	1.40	-36%	5	7	13	18	20	26
Rajasthan	25	3.70	2.30	-38%	5	7	12	30	32	37
Tamil Nadu	39	1.80	1.30	-28%	4	7	12	43	46	51
Telangana*	17	2.10	1.50	-29%	4	7	12	21	24	29
Uttar Pradesh	80	4.40	2.60	-41%	5	7	12	85	87	92
West Bengal	42	2.20	1.30	-41%	5	7	13	47	49	55
India**	543	2.79	1.90	-32%	91	135	237	600	644	746

Source: National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3 and NFHS-5); Sample Registration Statistical Report (many different years).

Note: *AP include Telangana for SRS 2004 and the same TFR is also used for Telangana; **India's values do not represent the overall national mean TFR or rate of decline but only the mean of the larger states above its row. For national mean TFR please refer to Table 1.

All UTs (except Delhi) and all North-Eastern states (except Assam), Goa have been assigned 1 LS seat each for all the extended LS size; all other Hilly states (J&K, HP, U'Khand) have been assigned 2 LS seats each for all the extended LS size.

For additional seats States are scored using a weighted index: 50% early achievement of replacement fertility, and 50% on if rate of decline was above -23%.

Table 3: State-wise Representation Ratios: 1971, 2024, and 2025

State	1971			2024			2025		
	Total Popn'	Avg. People per seat	Ratio	Total Popn'	Avg. People per seat	Ratio	Total Popn'	Avg. People per seat	Ratio
AP*	43,503,000	1,061,049	0.99	53,340,000	2,133,600	0.81	53,524,000	1,784,133	0.78
Assam*	14,625,000	1,044,643	0.97	36,047,000	2,574,786	0.97	36,382,000	1,862,211	0.82
Bihar*	56,353,000	1,063,264	0.99	128,592,000	3,214,800	1.22	130,429,000	2,964,295	1.30
C'garh	NA	NA	NA	30,524,000	2,774,909	1.05	30,867,000	1,929,188	0.85
Delhi	4,066,000	580,857	0.54	21,752,000	3,107,429	1.18	22,146,000	1,845,500	0.81
Gujarat	26,697,000	1,112,375	1.03	72,367,000	2,783,346	1.05	73,227,000	2,362,161	1.04
HR	10,036,000	1,115,111	1.04	30,573,000	3,057,300	1.16	30,936,000	2,062,400	0.91
JH	NA	NA	NA	39,964,000	2,854,571	1.08	40,461,000	2,129,526	0.93
KA	29,299,000	1,085,148	1.01	68,115,000	2,432,679	0.92	68,538,000	2,015,824	0.88
KL	21,347,000	1,123,526	1.05	35,920,000	1,796,000	0.68	36,063,000	1,502,625	0.66
MH	50,412,000	1,120,267	1.04	127,360,000	2,653,333	1.00	128,334,000	2,421,396	1.06
MP	41,654,000	1,125,784	1.05	87,610,000	3,021,034	1.14	88,641,000	2,607,088	1.14
Odisha	21,945,000	1,097,250	1.02	46,566,000	2,217,429	0.84	46,857,000	1,802,192	0.79
Punjab	13,551,000	1,042,385	0.97	30,926,000	2,378,923	0.90	31,122,000	1,729,000	0.76
RJ	25,766,000	1,120,261	1.04	81,897,000	3,275,880	1.24	82,770,000	2,759,000	1.21
TN	41,199,000	1,056,385	0.98	77,089,000	1,976,641	0.75	77,317,000	1,798,070	0.79
Telangana*	NA	NA	NA	38,272,000	2,251,294	0.85	38,454,000	1,831,143	0.80
UP*	88,342,000	1,039,318	0.97	238,078,000	2,975,975	1.13	240,468,000	2,829,035	1.24
WB	44,312,000	1,107,800	1.03	99,563,000	2,370,548	0.90	100,042,000	2,128,553	0.93
India	533,107,000	1,074,813		1,344,555,000	2,641,562		1,356,578,000	2,278,282	

Source: Census of India 1971, 2011; *Population Projections for India and States, 2011–2036*, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Note: The 2025 LS imagines a house with 650 seats; for state seat allocation refer to Table 7. *In 1971- AP included Telangana, UP included Uttarakhand, MP included Chhattisgarh, Bihar included JH, and Assam included Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh.