

Equal-Population Delimitation Model: A framework that balances federalism and accounts for the 2027 census.

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When the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill did not secure passage in the Lok Sabha this past April, it brought into sharp focus a structural tension that has long needed careful policy attention: how does a democracy meaningfully expand its legislative house after five decades, while preserving the federal compact that holds it together?

The drafters of that Bill undertook an exceptionally complex exercise, simultaneously proposing an expansion to 850 seats and offering assurance to Southern states that their decades of demographic stabilisation would not translate into diminished political voice. That these two objectives proved difficult to reconcile in a single legislative instrument is not a failure of intent; it is a signal that the underlying framework requires a cleaner conceptual separation. This article argues that the path forward lies in disaggregating two constitutionally distinct democratic requirements, **the vertical question of how seats are distributed between states**, and **the horizontal question of how boundaries are drawn within them**, and applying the most appropriate, transparent principle to each.

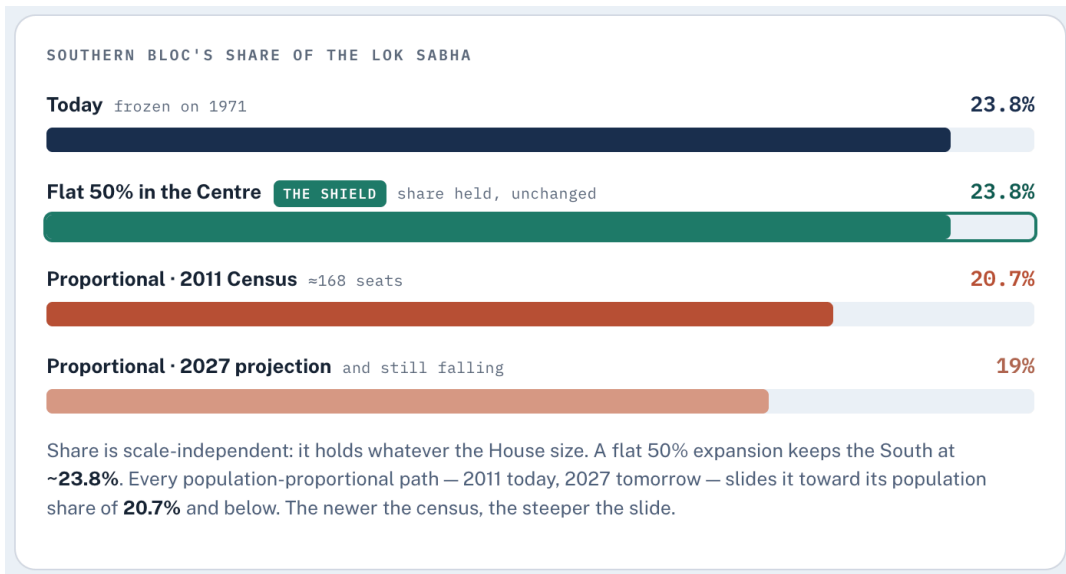
For readers who prefer to engage with the quantitative methodology, detailed mathematical models and district level projections are available at author's site at sujith.blog

Vertical: Preserving the Federal Balance Between States

It is understandable that initial policy thinking gravitated toward a nationally uniform, census-driven approach to seat apportionment. Tying representation directly to the population carries an intuitive democratic logic. However, when applied at the inter-state level under present demographic realities, this approach produces outcomes that are structurally inequitable and arguably contrary to the spirit of India's federal design.

Southern states currently hold approximately 23.8% of Lok Sabha seats, a share that has been protected through a freeze on constituency delimitation since 1976. Their relative demographic position has shifted substantially since then: fertility transitions achieved earlier in the South mean that a 2027 census-driven reapportionment would mechanically reduce the South's share of national representation, not because of any policy failing, but precisely because of a public health and social development success. It is worth noting that while the 2011 census already underrepresents Southern states relative to their 1971 baseline, the forthcoming 2027 census is likely to accentuate this trend further.

A delimitation framework that penalises demographic stability would send a counterproductive signal and would undermine the trust that federalism requires.



The Solution: A Flat 50% Expansion

A more durable solution is to decouple inter-state seat allocation from the national census altogether, at least for this delimitation exercise and instead apply a uniform proportional expansion to each state's existing seat count. Under this approach, every state's current allocation is multiplied by 1.5, producing a clean 50% increase while preserving each state's precise share of national representation exactly as it stands today. Andhra Pradesh would move from 25 to 38 seats; Telangana from 17 to 26; larger Northern states would scale proportionately. No state gains at another's expense; the federal equilibrium is maintained by design rather than negotiation.

The Lok Sabha is only half the federal compact. The Rajya Sabha, the Council of States, cannot be delimited at all as it has no constituencies, and its members are chosen not by voters but by each state's elected assembly. Yet the same principle governs it. Its state-wise composition should stay as it is now, because the upper house exists precisely to represent states as units, deliberately weighting the smaller ones above their raw population. If the chamber is ever re-sized to keep pace with an enlarged Lok Sabha, the arithmetic for those new numbers can be derived from the freshly delimited assemblies that elect it, but anchored, always, to each state's present share. Thus, the Upper House keeps it whole by holding its Fourth-Schedule share steady even as the assemblies beneath it grow. A different method but the same principle.

Horizontal: Navigating Intra-State Allocation, & Telugu States Case Study.

Once a state's total seat count is determined at the federal level, the internal question, where exactly boundaries fall within that state. This should be governed by a single, transparent principle: equal population per constituency.

Recent modelling exercises, including the PM-EAC working paper, have explored turnout-weighted or predictive demographic approaches to intra-state delimitation. The reasoning behind these models is not without merit: they attempt to account for differential civic participation and rapidly urbanising populations. However, they introduce a structural problem that deserves attention. When seat populations are weighted by projected turnout rather than raw population, a voter in a high-participation urban constituency carries

measurably greater effective weight than a voter in a lower-turnout rural one. Over time, this can harden existing disparities in political voice rather than correct them.

The Equal-Population Method: The alternative is simpler, more transparent, and more directly verifiable by ordinary citizens:

1. **Set the target population per seat:** Divide the state's total population by its newly allocated number of seats.
2. **Assign seats to geographic units:** Assess each district or old parliamentary constituency against that target and allocate seats proportionally.
3. **Draw assembly constituencies within:** Using 2027 census data, carve assembly constituency boundaries to reflect actual population distribution, with attention to women's demographic presence to facilitate reservation mapping.

This method ensures that any citizen can independently verify the basis on which their constituency was drawn. It requires no proprietary modelling assumptions, no contested turnout projections, and no opaque weighting factors.

Case Study: Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

Note: For detailed information, on AP, TS models and PM-EAC models mentioned in the article, please refer to the author's blog www.sujith.blog

Under a flat 50% national expansion, Andhra Pradesh scales from 25 to 38 parliamentary seats, and Telangana from 17 to 26. Applying the equal-population method to these allocations produces results that are markedly more equitable than those generated by turnout-weighted alternatives.

The disparity in voter weight between the most and least populated seats, measured as the ratio of the largest to the smallest constituency population is approximately **1.31:1 for Andhra Pradesh (Image 1)** and **1.40:1 for Telangana (Image 2)**. By comparison, turnout-weighted models such as the EAC-PM framework can produce ratios exceeding **3.25:1**, meaning a vote in one constituency may carry more than three times the effective weight of a vote in another. The equal-population approach brings this ratio within a range that is both administratively practical and constitutionally defensible.

Image 1- Equal - Population Plan: Andhra Pradesh Horizontal Distribution Model.

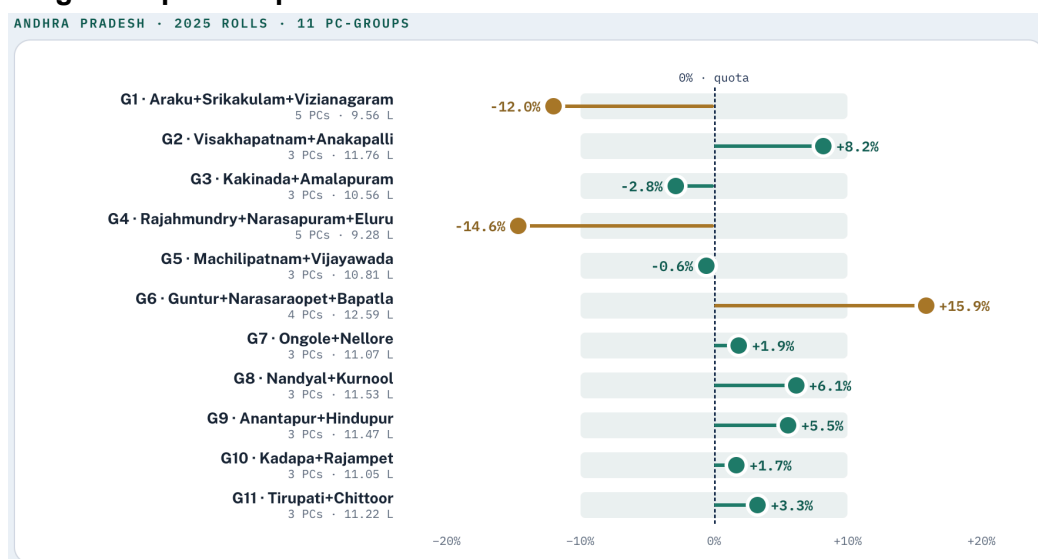
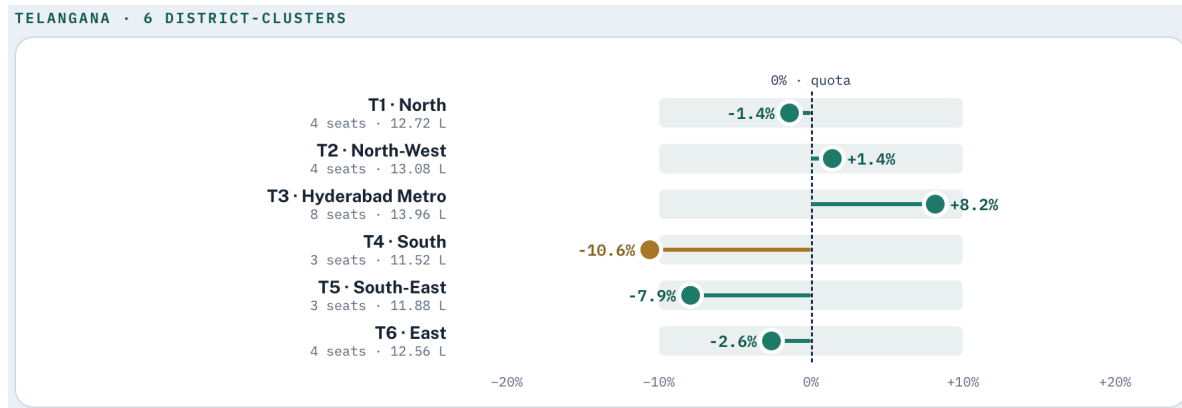


Image 2 - Equal - Population Plan: Telangana Horizontal Distribution Model.



The Endgame - Democratic Timeline and Ensuring a Level Playing Field

The army separates a peace posting from a war posting, the most sensitive preparation is done in the calm, long before the fighting. Electoral work has lost the discipline our army has. The Special Intensive Revision landed right before of an election, and when names fell off the rolls, former Election Commissioners made the point plainly: the gap was administrative, the exercise was begun by the ECI itself, and a roll that is not full and final by the date of nomination simply leaves people out. The burden cannot be shifted onto the voter for a process the State set in motion.

Delimitation demands that principle in its strictest form, because it is the work of an independent, quasi-judicial commission whose orders carry the force of law and cannot be questioned in any court: no appeal, no second pass, no election-eve repair. A body that final must finish earliest, not latest, boundaries drawn, published and locked a clear year before 2029, in the quiet of a peace posting rather than the noise of a war one. Fair math earns its legitimacy only when fair timing carries it.

Firstly, the federal identity of a state must be preserved, keeping census aside at national level seat distribution, Secondly the same census must be used to ensure the state normalises its population growth across its allocated seats. Finally, the timeline of delimitation is just as important as the method, so every political party contests 2029 general elections in a level playing field. Political parties, local leaders, and most importantly, the voters themselves, need adequate time to understand their new constituencies, shifting local demographics, and altered district lines. When boundaries are finalized too close to an election, it unintentionally disrupts the level playing field. A hard deadline of early 2028 ensures maximum transparency, allows time for any administrative anomalies to be reviewed, and gives everyone a fair chance to prepare for the democratic process.