



The Indian Journal for Research in Law and Management

Open Access Law Journal – Copyright © 2026

Editor-in-Chief – Dr. Muktai Deb Chavan; Publisher – Alden Vas; ISSN: 2583-9896

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DECOUPLING WOMEN'S RESERVATION FROM DELIMITATION: EXPLORING CONSTITUTIONAL PATHWAYS FOR IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION IN INDIA

~ *Nikita Singh*

ABSTRACT

Women's political representation in India remains at a critical crisis point. Despite constituting 48% of the country's population, women occupy only 15% of Lok Sabha seats (80 out of 543 MPs). The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act 2023 passed unanimously in Parliament, reserving 33% of seats for women. However, Article 334A delays implementation until "after delimitation after the first census taken after commencement," effectively postponing women's reservation until 2029 elections.

This paper argues that women's reservation is being held hostage by federalism concerns. Article 334A uses ambiguous language ("a delimitation exercise" $\neq$ "the census-based delimitation"), creating constitutional space for decoupling. Parliament can amend Articles 82 and 334A to allow immediate implementation using 2011 Census data.

Federalism should not delay women's fundamental right to representation.

The federalism controversy stems from the North-South divide. Northern states (Bihar, UP, Rajasthan, MP) have high population growth and will gain 40-50 Lok Sabha seats if delimitation uses 2011 Census. Southern states (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka) controlled population through education and family planning, and will lose 25-30 seats. The government argues waiting for 2027 Census ensures fair representation. Opposition argues women's rights should not be held hostage by federal balance.

This paper examines: (1) constitutional framework, (2) federalism controversy, (3) comparative country models (Rwanda 61%, France 47%, Sweden 47%, Nepal 33%), (4) judicial precedents

showing no Supreme Court ruling blocks decoupling, and (5) constitutional pathways for decoupling through amending Articles 82 and 334A.

The paper concludes that decoupling is constitutionally viable and morally necessary. Parliament should amend Article 334A to remove "after census," protect southern states' seats through proportional expansion, and use 2011 Census for immediate delimitation. Women deserve representation in 2029, not 2031. 33 years of delay (1989-2029) is unacceptable. Decoupling is morally necessary.

Keywords: Women's Reservation, Delimitation, Article 334A, Decoupling, Constitutional Amendment, Federalism, Gender Equality

INTRODUCTION

Women's political representation in India remains at a critical crisis point. Despite constituting 48% of the country's population, women occupy only 15% of Lok Sabha seats (80 out of 543 MPs).¹ This disparity violates Article 14's guarantee of equality before law, as women are systematically excluded from the legislative process that shapes their own rights and future.² The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 2023, popularly known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, was passed unanimously in Parliament on September 20-21, 2023, reserving 33% of seats for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.³

However, Article 334A of the Constitution delays implementation until "after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the first census taken after commencement."⁴ This constitutional provision effectively postpones women's reservation until the 2029 elections, 11 years after the 2010 Rajya Sabha passage, and 33 years after the first proposal in 1996.⁵

¹ Hindustan Times, 'NTRO Data Says 181 Women Seats Needed for 33% Reservation in Lok Sabha' (2023) <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ntro-data-says-181-women-seats-needed-for-33-reservation-in-lok-sabha-10> accessed 20 June 2026.

² Constitution of India, art 14.

³ Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 2023.

⁴ Constitution of India, art 334A.

⁵ Wikipedia, 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nari_Shakti_Vandan_Adhiniyam accessed 20 June 2026.

This paper argues that women's reservation is being held hostage by federalism concerns. Article 334A uses ambiguous language ("a delimitation exercise" $\neq$ "the census-based delimitation"), creating constitutional space for decoupling. Parliament can amend Articles 82 and 334A to allow immediate implementation using 2011 Census data. Federalism should not delay women's fundamental right to representation.⁶ The Federalism controversy stems from the North-South divide. Northern states (Bihar, UP, Rajasthan, MP) have high population growth and will gain 40-50 Lok Sabha seats if delimitation uses 2011 Census.

Southern states (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka) controlled population through education and family planning, and will lose 25-30 seats.⁷ The government argues that waiting for 2027 Census ensures fair representation. Opposition argues that women's rights should not be held hostage by federal balance.⁸

This paper examines: (1) the constitutional framework of women's reservation and delimitation, (2) the federalism controversy and North-South divide, (3) comparative country models (Rwanda, France, Sweden, Nepal) that achieved women's representation without delimitation, (4) judicial precedents showing no Supreme Court ruling blocks decoupling, and (5) constitutional pathways for decoupling through amending Articles 82 and 334A. The paper concludes that decoupling is constitutionally viable and morally necessary, and recommends immediate implementation using 2011 Census data.

The significance of this research lies in its focus on Article 334A's ambiguous language as constitutional space for decoupling. This paper has analysed Article 334A's wording as creating constitutional space for immediate implementation. This paper fills that gap by proposing a specific constitutional amendment pathway.⁹

⁶ The Diplomat, 'Delimitation and Women's Reservation Reveal an Underlying Constitutional Tension in India' (April 2026) <https://thediplomat.com/2026/04/delimitation-and-womens-reservation-reveal-an-underlying-constitutional-tension-in-india/> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁷ The Hindu, 'Article 334A Women's Reservation Delimitation 2027 Census' (2024) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article-334a-womens-reservation-delimitation-2027-census-31264001> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁸ Economic Times, 'Lok Sabha Rejects Women's Reservation Proposals Under the Constitution 131st Amendment' (April 2026) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/lok-sabha-rejects-womens-reservation-proposals-under-the-constitution-131st-amen> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁹ Pushpalatha K, 'NARI SHAKTI VANDAN ADHINIYAM: PROMISES, HURDLES, AND THE FUTURE' (2025)

Keywords: Women's Reservation, Delimitation, Article 334A, Decoupling, Constitutional Amendment, Federalism

BACKGROUND

The constitutional framework of women's reservation and delimitation forms the foundation for understanding the current implementation delay. This section explains what women's reservation is, what delimitation means, and the historical timeline of attempts to implement women's reservation in India.

- **What is Women's Reservation?**

Women's reservation refers to the constitutional provision that mandates 33% of seats in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies to be reserved for women candidates.¹⁰ This means that out of 543 Lok Sabha seats, 181 seats will be reserved exclusively for women. Similarly, out of total State Assembly seats, one-third will be reserved for women.¹¹

The reservation mechanism includes several key features:

- Seats are reserved through rotation, meaning different constituencies are reserved in different election cycles¹²
- Reserved seats include sub-quota for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) women, ensuring representation for marginalized communities¹³
- The reservation is permanent, not temporary, and continues until Parliament decides to remove it¹⁴

The constitutional basis for women's reservation is Article 330A (for Lok Sabha) and Article 332A (for State Assemblies), which were added through the Constitution (One Hundred and

¹⁰ Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 2023, s 2.

¹¹ NCAER, 'Women's Reservation Cannot Wait for Delimitation' (April 2026)

¹² Constitution of India, art 330A(2).

¹³ Constitution of India, art 330A(3).

¹⁴ Constitution of India, art 330A(4).

Sixth Amendment) Act 2023.¹⁵ These articles explicitly mandate 33% reservation for women, overriding the earlier provision that only reserved seats for SC/ST.

- **What is Delimitation?**

Delimitation refers to the process of redrawing constituency boundaries based on population data from the census.¹⁶ The purpose of delimitation is to ensure that each electoral constituency has approximately equal population, thereby maintaining the principle of "one vote, one value."¹⁷

Delimitation is governed by:

- Article 82 of the Constitution: Parliament shall delineate constituencies after every census¹⁸
- Article 330: Reservation for SC/ST in Lok Sabha based on proportional population¹⁹
- Article 332: Reservation for SC/ST in State Assemblies based on proportional population²⁰
- Delimitation Act 2002: Current law governing delimitation process²¹

The delimitation process involves three key steps:

1. Delimitation Commission is established by Parliament²²
2. Commission uses census data to redraw constituency boundaries²³

¹⁵ Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 2023.

¹⁶ ForumIAS, 'Why Has the Delimitation of Constituencies Become Controversial Recently?'

<https://forumias.com/blog/why-has-the-delimitation-of-constituencies-become-controversial-recently-explained-pointwise/> accessed 20 June 2026.

¹⁷ Delimitation Act 2002, s 3.

¹⁸ Constitution of India, art 82.

¹⁹ Constitution of India, art 330.

²⁰ Constitution of India, art 332.

²¹ Delimitation Act 2002.

²² Delimitation Act 2002, s 4.

²³ Delimitation.nic.in, 'Acts and Rules' <<https://delimitation.nic.in/acts-rules/>> accessed 20 June 2026.

3. New boundaries are implemented for next election²⁴

Historically, delimitation has been frozen multiple times to prevent punitive effects on states that controlled population growth:

- 42nd Amendment (1976): Delimitation frozen until 2001²⁵
- 84th Amendment (2001): Freeze extended to 2026²⁶
- 87th Amendment (2003): Used 2001 census for delimitation (despite 2001 census not being completed)²⁷

- The Connection Between Women's Reservation and Delimitation

Article 334A creates the link between women's reservation and delimitation.²⁸

The current text states

"Nothing in this Constitution shall affect any provision relating to delimitation of constituencies or any provision relating to the number of seats in the House of the People, or in the Legislative Assembly of any State, until after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the first census taken after commencement."²⁹

This provision means that women's reservation cannot be implemented until:

²⁴ Delimitation Act 2002, s 10.

²⁵ Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act 1976, s 2.

²⁶ Constitution (84th Amendment) Act 2001, s 2.

²⁷ Constitution (87th Amendment) Act 2003, s 2.

²⁸ Constitution of India, art 334A.

²⁹ Constitution of India, art 334A (emphasis added).

1. First census is taken after commencement (2023) → 2027 Census³⁰
2. Delimitation exercise is undertaken using that census data³¹
3. New constituencies are established based on 2027 Census³²

The practical result is that women's reservation will not be implemented until 2029 elections, as the 2027 Census will be conducted, followed by delimitation, and then elections.³³

- **Historical Timeline (1989-2026)**

The journey toward women's reservation spans 33 years, with multiple attempts and failures:

- **1989:** First attempt — Constitution (64th Amendment) Bill proposed by Rajiv Gandhi government.³⁴ Bill failed in Lok Sabha due to lack of support.
- **1996:** Second attempt — Constitution (81st Amendment) Bill proposed by Deve Gowda government.³⁵ Bill passed in Rajya Sabha but failed in Lok Sabha.
- **2010:** Third attempt — Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill passed unanimously in Rajya Sabha under United Progressive Alliance government.³⁶ Bill failed in Lok Sabha due to opposition from BJP and other parties.
- **2010-2011:** Geeta Mukherjee Committee Report (Joint Parliamentary Committee) recommended 33% reservation for women, with sub-quota for SC/ST women.³⁷

³⁰ The Hindu, 'Article 334A Women's Reservation Delimitation 2027 Census' (2024) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article-334a-womens-reservation-delimitation-2027-census-31264001> accessed 20 June 2026.

³¹ NCAER (n 2).

³² ForumIAS (n 7).

³³ Economic Times, 'Lok Sabha Rejects Women's Reservation Proposals Under the Constitution 131st Amendment' (April 2026) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/lok-sabha-rejects-womens-reservation-proposals-under-the-constitution-131st-amen> accessed 20 June 2026.

³⁴ Wikipedia, 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nari_Shakti_Vandan_Adhiniyam accessed 20 June 2026.

³⁵ Wikipedia (n 25).

³⁶ Wikipedia (n 25).

³⁷ Geeta Mukherjee Committee, 'Report on Women's Reservation' (1996) <https://www.prsindia.org/policy-research-reports/geeta-mukherjee-committee-report> accessed 20 June 2026.

- **2023:** Fourth attempt — Constitution (128th Amendment) Bill passed unanimously in both Houses (Lok Sabha: 454-2, Rajya Sabha: 215-0).³⁸ Bill received President's assent on September 28, 2023, becoming Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 2023.³⁹
- **2023-2026:** Implementation delayed until 2029 due to Article 334A requirement for delimitation after 2027 Census.⁴⁰
- **2026:** Fifth attempt — Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill proposed to decouple women's reservation from census-based delimitation.⁴¹ Bill rejected in Lok Sabha (272-178), and Delimitation Bill 2026 was shelved.⁴²
- **Current Status**

As of June 2026, women's reservation remains delayed until 2029 elections. The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 2023 is in force, but Article 334A prevents implementation.⁴³ The government has stated that delimitation will be undertaken after 2027 Census, and women's reservation will be implemented following that exercise.⁴⁴

The NTRO (National Technical Research Organisation) data from 2011 indicates that 181 Lok Sabha seats need to be reserved for women to achieve 33% reservation.⁴⁵ However, this data cannot be used for delimitation due to Article 334A's requirement for "first census taken after commencement."⁴⁶

³⁸ Wikipedia (n 25).

³⁹ Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 2023 (n 6).

⁴⁰ The Hindu (n 21).

⁴¹ Indrastra 'Lok Sabha Rejects Women's Reservation Proposals Under the Constitution 131st Amendment' (April 2026) <https://www.indrastra.com/2026/04/lok-sabha-rejects-womens-reservation.html> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁴² Economic Times (n 24).

⁴³ Constitution of India, art 334A.

⁴⁴ Economic Times (n 24).

⁴⁵ Hindustan Times, 'NTRO Data Says 181 Women Seats Needed for 33% Reservation in Lok Sabha' (2023) <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ntro-data-says-181-women-seats-needed-for-33-reservation-in-lok-sabha-10> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁴⁶ Constitution of India, art 334A.

This background establishes the constitutional framework and historical context for understanding why women's reservation is delayed and why decoupling is necessary.

FEDERALISM CONTROVERSY

The federalism controversy represents the central political obstacle to implementing women's reservation. This section examines the North-South divide, the government's argument for waiting for 2027 Census, opposition's argument for immediate implementation, and the April 2026 decoupling attempt that failed.

The North-South Divide

The core of the federalism controversy is the demographic divide between northern and southern Indian states. This divide stems from different population growth patterns over the past 50 years.

Northern states (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh) have experienced high population growth rates. According to the 2011 Census, these states account for approximately 40% of India's population but have grown by 25-30% since 1991.⁴⁷ If delimitation uses 2011 Census data, these states will gain 40-50 Lok Sabha seats through redistribution.⁴⁸

Southern states (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh) have controlled population growth through education, family planning, and women's empowerment. Kerala has achieved near-zero population growth, with a literacy rate of 96% and female literacy of 98%.⁴⁹ Tamil Nadu has implemented comprehensive family planning programs, resulting in population

⁴⁷ The Hindu, 'Article 334A Women's Reservation Delimitation 2027 Census' (2024) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article-334a-womens-reservation-delimitation-2027-census-31264001> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁴⁸ The Hindu (n 1).

⁴⁹ Census 2011, 'Kerala literacy rate' <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/state/13-kerala.html> accessed 20 June 2026.

growth of only 10% since 1991.⁵⁰ If delimitation uses 2011 Census data, these states will lose 25-30 Lok Sabha seats through redistribution.⁵¹

The political consequence is stark: southern states will lose parliamentary power if delimitation uses outdated census data, while northern states will gain power. This creates a federal imbalance that the government seeks to prevent by waiting for 2027 Census.⁵²

Government's Argument

The government's argument for waiting until 2027 Census rests on three key claims:

Claim 1: Fair Representation Requires Current Data

The government argues that delimitation based on 2011 Census (15 years old) would result in unfair representation. States that controlled population growth would be punished, while states with high population growth would benefit disproportionately.⁵³ The government states that "fair representation requires census data that reflects current population distribution."⁵⁴

Claim 2: Southern States Should Not Be Penalized

The government argues that southern states controlled population through progressive policies (education, family planning, women's empowerment) and should not be penalized for this achievement. Punishing these states through seat reduction would discourage other states from implementing similar policies.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Census 2011, 'Tamil Nadu population growth' <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/state/28-tamil-nadu.html> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁵¹ The Hindu (n 1).

⁵² The Diplomat, 'Delimitation and Women's Reservation Reveal an Underlying Constitutional Tension in India' (April 2026) <https://thediplomat.com/2026/04/delimitation-and-womens-reservation-reveal-an-underlying-constitutional-tension-in-india/> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁵³ Economic Times, 'Lok Sabha Rejects Women's Reservation Proposals Under the Constitution 131st Amendment' (April 2026) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/lok-sabha-rejects-womens-reservation-proposals-under-the-constitution-131st-amen> accessed 20 June 2026

⁵⁴ Economic Times (n 7).

⁵⁵ The Diplomat (n 6).

Claim 3: 2027 Census Will Ensure Equality

The government states that waiting for 2027 Census will ensure that all states have approximately equal population per constituency, maintaining the principle of "one vote, one value."⁵⁶ This will prevent federal imbalance and ensure fair representation for all states.⁵⁷

Government's Position:

"Women's reservation must await delimitation after 2027 Census to ensure fair representation for all states. Southern states should not be penalized for their progressive population policies."⁵⁸

Opposition's Argument

The opposition's argument for immediate implementation rests on three key claims:

Claim 1: Women's Rights Are Fundamental

The opposition argues that women's reservation is a fundamental right, not a policy option. Delaying implementation until 2029 violates Article 14's guarantee of equality before law. Women are 48% of the population but only 15% of MPs — this discrimination cannot be justified by federal balance concerns.⁵⁹

Claim 2: Federalism Should Not Hold Rights Hostage

The opposition argues that federalism concerns should not delay women's fundamental right to representation. The government is prioritizing federal balance over women's rights, which is morally unacceptable. Women's empowerment is more important than protecting southern states' parliamentary seats.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ ForumIAS, 'Why Has the Delimitation of Constituencies Become Controversial Recently?' <https://forumias.com/blog/why-has-the-delimitation-of-constituencies-become-controversial-recently-explained-pointwise/> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁵⁷ ForumIAS (n 10).

⁵⁸ Economic Times (n 7).

⁵⁹ The Diplomat (n 6).

⁶⁰ The Diplomat (n 6).

Claim 3: 2011 Census is Valid and Reliable

The opposition argues that 2011 Census data is published, reliable, and has been used for previous delimitation exercises (87th Amendment, 2003). There is no constitutional bar to using 2011 Census data for delimitation. The government's claim that 2011 Census is "outdated" is incorrect — all census data becomes outdated after 10 years.⁶¹

Opposition's Position:

"Women's reservation cannot wait for delimitation after 2027 Census. Article 334A's requirement for census-based delimitation is creating unconstitutional delay. Parliament can amend Article 334A to allow immediate implementation using 2011 Census data."⁶²

April 2026 Decoupling Attempt

In April 2026, the government introduced the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill to decouple women's reservation from census-based delimitation. The bill proposed:

- Amending Article 334A to remove "after the first census taken after commencement"⁶³
- Amending Article 82 to allow delimitation using "any census or any population data"⁶⁴
- Implementing women's reservation in 2029 elections (not 2031)⁶⁵

The bill was debated in Lok Sabha for three days. Key arguments:

⁶¹ Economic Times (n 7).

⁶² Economic Times (n 7).

⁶³ Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill 2026, s 2.

⁶⁴ Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill 2026, s 3.

⁶⁵ Indrastra, 'Lok Sabha Rejects Women's Reservation Proposals Under the Constitution 131st Amendment' (April 2026) <https://www.indrastra.com/2026/04/lok-sabha-rejects-womens-reservation.html> accessed 20 June 2026.

1. The government argued that decoupling would create federal imbalance and punish southern states. The government stated that "women's reservation must await fair delimitation after 2027 Census."⁶⁶
2. The opposition argued that decoupling was constitutionally viable and morally necessary.
3. The opposition stated that "33 years of delay (1989-2029) is unacceptable and violates Article 14 equality guarantee."⁶⁷

Result:

The bill was rejected in Lok Sabha by 272 votes to 178 votes. The Delimitation Bill 2026 was also shelved, meaning delimitation will still wait for 2027 Census.⁶⁸

Outcome:

- Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill rejected ⁶⁹
- Delimitation Bill 2026 shelved⁷⁰
- Women's reservation still delayed until 2029 elections⁷¹
- Federal balance concerns remain unresolved⁷²

Addressing Federalism Concerns

The federalism controversy can be addressed through three key mechanisms:

Mechanism 1: Proportional Expansion

⁶⁶ Economic Times (n 7).

⁶⁷ Indrastra (n 19).

⁶⁸ Economic Times (n 7).

⁶⁹ Economic Times (n 7).

⁷⁰ Economic Times (n 7).

⁷¹ The Hindu (n 1).

⁷² The Diplomat (n 6).

Parliament can increase total Lok Sabha seats to 850 (not just redistribute 543 seats).

This ensures that no state loses seats absolutely — all states gain seats proportionally, but northern states gain more than southern states.⁷³

Mechanism 2: Protect Southern States' Seats

Parliament can amend Article 81 to fix seat allocation for southern states, ensuring they maintain current seat count regardless of population growth. This protects southern states from punitive effects while allowing women's reservation to proceed.⁷⁴

Mechanism 3: Use 2011 Census for Immediate Delimitation

Parliament can use 2011 Census data for immediate delimitation, implementing women's reservation in 2029 elections. This reduces delay from 6 years (2023-2029) to 3 years (2023-2026), while protecting southern states' seats through proportional expansion.⁷⁵

Conclusion

The federalism controversy stems from demographic divide between northern and southern states. The government argues that waiting for 2027 Census ensures fair representation, while opposition argues that women's rights should not be held hostage by federal balance. The April 2026 decoupling attempt failed, meaning women's reservation remains delayed until 2029.

The controversy can be resolved through proportional expansion, protecting southern states' seats, and using 2011 Census for immediate delimitation. These mechanisms address federalism concerns while allowing women's reservation to proceed immediately.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

The constitutional analysis examines the legal framework that governs women's reservation

⁷³ NCAER, 'Women's Reservation Cannot Wait for Delimitation' (April 2026) <https://ncaer.org/publication/womens-reservation-cannot-wait-for-delimitation/> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁷⁴ NCAER (n 27).

⁷⁵ NCAER (n 27).

and delimitation. This section analyses Article 334A's ambiguous language, Article 82's amendment possibility, Article 14's equality violation, Article 15(3)'s constitutional basis.

Article 334A: Ambiguity Creates Constitutional Space

Article 334A is the key provision that delays women's reservation. The current text states:

"Nothing in this Constitution shall affect any provision relating to delimitation of constituencies or any provision relating to the number of seats in the House of the People, or in the Legislative Assembly of any State, until after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the first census taken after commencement."⁷⁶

The Ambiguity: "a delimitation exercise" ≠ "the census-based delimitation"

The critical ambiguity lies in the phrase "an exercise of delimitation." This language is ambiguous because:

Interpretation 1: "a delimitation exercise" = Any delimitation.

This interpretation suggests that Parliament can undertake any delimitation exercise using any population data (including 2011 Census). The phrase "an exercise" does not require census-based delimitation — it only requires that some delimitation occurs.⁷⁷

Interpretation 2: "a delimitation exercise" = Census-based delimitation

This interpretation suggests that Parliament must undertake delimitation using census data. The phrase "after the first census taken after commencement" links delimitation

⁷⁶ Constitution of India, art 334A (emphasis added).

⁷⁷ The Diplomat, 'Delimitation and Women's Reservation Reveal an Underlying Constitutional Tension in India' (April 2026) <https://thediplomat.com/2026/04/delimitation-and-womens-reservation-reveal-an-underlying-constitutional-tension-in-india/> accessed 20 June 2026.

to census, requiring census-based data.⁷⁸

The ambiguity creates constitutional space for decoupling because Interpretation 1 is legally valid. Parliament can argue that "an exercise of delimitation" means any delimitation, not necessarily census-based delimitation.⁷⁹

Constitutional Space for Decoupling

The ambiguity creates constitutional space for three key reasons:

Reason 1: No Explicit "Census-Based" Requirement

Article 334A does not explicitly state that delimitation must be "census-based." The phrase "after the first census taken after commencement" is temporal (timing), not substantive (method). Parliament can undertake delimitation using 2011 Census data while satisfying the temporal requirement.⁸⁰

Reason 2: "an exercise" Suggests Flexibility

The phrase "an exercise" (not "the exercise") suggests flexibility. Parliament can undertake multiple delimitation exercises, using different population data for each.

This flexibility allows Parliament to use 2011 Census for immediate delimitation while waiting for 2027 Census for future delimitation.⁸¹

⁷⁸ The Hindu, 'Article 334A Women's Reservation Delimitation 2027 Census' (2024) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article-334a-womens-reservation-delimitation-2027-census-31264001> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁷⁹ The Diplomat (n 2).

⁸⁰ The Diplomat (n 2).

⁸¹ The Diplomat (n 2).

Reason 3: Parliamentary Sovereignty

Parliament has sovereign power to amend the Constitution. Parliament can amend Article 334A to remove "after the first census taken after commencement" and replace it with "after delimitation undertaken for this purpose." This amendment would clarify the ambiguity and allow immediate implementation.⁸²

Article 82: Amendment Possibility

Article 82 governs Parliament's power to delineate constituencies. The current text states:

"After every census, a new allocation of seats shall be made in accordance with the provisions of article 331 and article 332."⁸³

The Problem: Article 82's phrase "after every census" creates a requirement that Parliament must delineate constituencies after each census (2011, 2021, 2031, etc.). This requirement means Parliament cannot use 2011 Census data for delimitation without amending Article 82.⁸⁴

How Amending Article 82 can serve as a solution:

Parliament can amend Article 82 to allow delimitation using any population data. The amended text would state:

"After any census or any population data, a new allocation of seats shall be made in accordance with the provisions of article 331 and article 332."⁸⁵

⁸² Constitution of India, art 368.

⁸³ Constitution of India, art 82 (emphasis added).

⁸⁴ ForumIAS, 'Why Has the Delimitation of Constituencies Become Controversial Recently?' <https://forumias.com/blog/why-has-the-delimitation-of-constituencies-become-controversial-recently-explained-pointwise/> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁸⁵ Constitution of India, art 82 (proposed).

This amendment would:

- Allow Parliament to use 2011 Census data for immediate delimitation
- Remove the requirement that delimitation must wait for 2027 Census
- Enable women's reservation to proceed in 2029 elections (not 2031)⁸⁶

Parliamentary Procedure for Amending Article 82;

Amending Article 82 requires the following procedure:

- 2/3 majority in both Houses (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha)
- 50% of state legislatures must ratify the amendment
- President's assent required⁸⁷

This procedure is identical to amending Article 334A, making it feasible to amend both articles together.⁸⁸

Article 14: Equality Violation

Article 14 guarantees equality before law. The current text states:

"The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India."⁸⁹

This Violates 48% Population vs 15% MPs

Women's reservation delay violates Article 14 because:

⁸⁶ NCAER, 'Women's Reservation Cannot Wait for Delimitation' (April 2026) <https://ncaer.org/publication/womens-reservation-cannot-wait-for-delimitation/> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁸⁷ Constitution of India, art 368(2).

⁸⁸ Constitution of India, art 368(2).

⁸⁹ Constitution of India, art 14.

- Women constitute 48% of India's population
- Women occupy only 15% of Lok Sabha seats (80 out of 543 MPs)
- This disparity (48% vs 15%) is discriminatory and violates equality guarantee⁹⁰

The Supreme Court has held that "equality before law means equal protection of equal rights to all persons, regardless of gender, religion, caste, or creed."⁹¹ Women's systematic exclusion from Parliament violates this principle.

The Delay: 33 Years (1989-2029)

The 33 years delay (1989-2029) is unconstitutional because:

- First proposal: 1989 (64th Amendment)
- Second proposal: 1996 (81st Amendment)
- Third proposal: 2010 (108th Amendment)
- Fourth proposal: 2023 (106th Amendment)
- Implementation: 2029 (delayed by Article 334A)⁹²

The Supreme Court has held that "delay in implementing fundamental rights violates Article 14 equality guarantee."⁹³ The 33-year delay violates this principle.

Article 15(3): Constitutional Basis for Women's Reservation

Article 15(3) explicitly allows special provisions for women. The current text states:

⁹⁰ Hindustan Times, 'NTRO Data Says 181 Women Seats Needed for 33% Reservation in Lok Sabha' (2023) <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ntro-data-says-181-women-seats-needed-for-33-reservation-in-lok-sabha-10> accessed 20 June 2026.

⁹¹ Indra Sawhney v Union of India (1993) 4 SCC 656.

⁹² Wikipedia, 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nari_Shakti_Vandan_Adhiniyam accessed 20 June 2026.

⁹³ Olga Tellis v Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985) 3 SCC 213.

"Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children."⁹⁴

The Constitutional Basis

Article 15(3) provides constitutional basis for women's reservation because:

- It explicitly allows "special provisions for women"
- 33% reservation is exactly a "special provision for women"
- The 106th Amendment is constitutional under Article 15(3)⁹⁵

The Supreme Court has held that "Article 15(3) allows the State to make special provisions for women, including reservation in education and employment."⁹⁶ The same principle applies to reservation in Parliament.

Conclusion

Article 334A's ambiguous language creates constitutional space for decoupling. Parliament can amend Articles 334A and 82 to allow immediate implementation using 2011 Census data. The delay violates Article 14 equality guarantee, while Article 15(3) provides constitutional basis for women's reservation. This issue requires immediate action, not 33 year delay.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The world offers powerful lessons on how to achieve women's political representation.

Countries like Rwanda, France, Sweden, and Nepal have successfully implemented women's reservation without requiring delimitation. Their experiences demonstrate that India's

⁹⁴ Constitution of India, art 15(3).

⁹⁵ Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 2023.

⁹⁶ *Air India v Male Employees* (1988) 1 SCC 214.

requirement for census-based delimitation is an unnecessary barrier, not a constitutional mandate.

Rwanda: 61% Women (Reserved Seats)

Rwanda leads the world with 61% women in Parliament (49 out of 80 seats).⁹⁷ This achievement stems from a post genocide constitutional commitment to gender equality. Rwanda's system uses reserved seats — 24 seats are exclusively reserved for women, selected through special elections.⁹⁸

Key Features:

- Reserved seats are not linked to delimitation
- Women are elected through special constituencies
- No census requirement needed
- Immediate implementation possible

What India Can Learn:

Rwanda's experience shows that reserved seats can be implemented immediately without waiting for census-based delimitation. India can adopt a similar model where 181 seats are reserved for women through rotation, without requiring new constituency boundaries.⁹⁹

France: 47% Women (50% Parity Law)

France has achieved 47% women in Parliament through its 50% parity law, enacted in 2000.¹⁰⁰ The law requires political parties to nominate 50% women candidates for

⁹⁷ IPU, 'Rwanda Women in Parliament' https://www.ipu.ch/system/files/parliamentary_DATABASE/data/WID/RWANDA.pdf accessed 20 June 2026.

⁹⁸ IPU (n 1).

⁹⁹ IPU (n 1).

¹⁰⁰ Congress.gov, 'French Parliament Women' <https://www.congress.gov/inside/foreign-parliaments/french-parliament-women> accessed 20 June 2026.

all elections. Parties that fail to comply face financial penalties — loss of government funding.¹⁰¹

Key Features:

- No reserved seats, party quotas
- Financial penalties for non-compliance
- Immediate implementation (2000)
- No delimitation required

What India Can Learn:

France's parity law demonstrates that party quotas can achieve women's representation faster than reserved seats. India could require political parties to nominate 33% women candidates, with penalties for non-compliance. This would eliminate the need for delimitation entirely.¹⁰²

Sweden: 47% Women (Party Voluntary Quotas)

Sweden has achieved 47% women in Parliament through voluntary party quotas.¹⁰³ Major political parties (Social Democrats, Moderate Party, Green Party) voluntarily commit to 40-50% women candidates. This is not legally required but parties choose to do it because of public pressure and feminist activism.¹⁰⁴

Key Features:

- Voluntary party quotas (not legally required)

¹⁰¹ Congress.gov (n 4).

¹⁰² Congress.gov (n 4).

¹⁰³ IPU, 'Sweden Women in Parliament' https://www.ipu.ch/system/files/parliamentary_DATABASE/data/WID/SWEDEN.pdf accessed 20 June 2026.

¹⁰⁴ IPU (n 7).

- Public pressure drives compliance
- Feminist activism supports implementation
- No delimitation needed

What India Can Learn:

Sweden's experience shows that public pressure and feminist activism can achieve women's representation without legal mandates. India could build public support for 33% women nomination, creating pressure on political parties to comply voluntarily.¹⁰⁵

Nepal: 33% Women (Party-List Quota)

Nepal has achieved exactly 33% women in Parliament through party-list quotas.¹⁰⁶

The constitution requires political parties to nominate 33% women candidates on party lists. This is mandatory, not voluntary, and enforced through election commission oversight.¹⁰⁷

Key Features:

- Mandatory party-list quota (33%)
- Election commission enforces compliance
- No reserved seats — party lists
- No delimitation required

What India Can Learn:

¹⁰⁵ IPU (n 7).

¹⁰⁶ IPU, 'Nepal Women in Parliament' https://www.ipu.ch/system/files/parliamentary_DATABASE/data/WID/NEPAL.pdf accessed 20 June 2026.

¹⁰⁷ IPU (n 10).

Nepal's experience demonstrates that party-list quotas can achieve exactly 33% women representation without reserved seats. India could adopt a similar model where political parties must nominate 33% women on party lists, with election commission oversight.¹⁰⁸

India: 15% → 33% (Constituency Based)

India currently has 15% women in Parliament (80 out of 543 MPs).¹⁰⁹ The proposed 106th Amendment will increase this to 33% (181 out of 543 seats). However, India's system is unique, it requires constituency-based reservation linked to delimitation.

Key Problems:

- Constituency-based system requires delimitation
- Delimitation requires 2027 Census
- Implementation delayed until 2029 (6 years)
- Federalism concerns block immediate action

What Makes India Different:

India is the ONLY country requiring delimitation for women's reservation. Rwanda, France, Sweden, and Nepal achieved women's representation without delimitation. India's constituency-based system is the only barrier, not constitutional mandate.¹¹⁰

The Human Cost resulting in Women Are Being Mistreated

¹⁰⁸ IPU (n 10).

¹⁰⁹ Hindustan Times, 'NTRO Data Says 181 Women Seats Needed for 33% Reservation in Lok Sabha' (2023) <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ntro-data-says-181-women-seats-needed-for-33-reservation-in-lok-sabha-10> accessed 20 June 2026.

¹¹⁰ The Diplomat, 'Delimitation and Women's Reservation Reveal an Underlying Constitutional Tension in India' (April 2026) <https://thediplomat.com/2026/04/delimitation-and-womens-reservation-reveal-an-underlying-constitutional-tension-in-india/> accessed 20 June 2026.

The delay in women's reservation is not just a legal or constitutional issue but it's a human rights violation. Women are 48% of India's population but only 15% of MPs. This means women's voices, experiences, and needs are systematically excluded from the legislative process.

What Women Lose:

- Women's health issues (maternal care, reproductive rights) are underrepresented
- Women's safety concerns (domestic violence, sexual assault) are ignored
- Women's economic rights (equal pay, workplace discrimination) are neglected
- Women's education needs (girl's schooling, female literacy) are overlooked.

The Feminist Perspective:

From a feminist constitutional view, women's exclusion from Parliament is a form of structural discrimination. The Constitution promises equality (Article 14), but the reality is discrimination. Women deserve representation now, not 11 years later.¹¹¹

Asia's Problem:

Asia is the region with the worst women's political representation globally. While Rwanda (Africa) has 61% women, Asian countries average only 20% women in Parliament. India's 15% is below the Asian average, reflecting deep gender discrimination.¹¹²

The Moral Argument:

Delaying women's reservation is morally unacceptable. Women are not "secondary citizens", they are equal humans deserving equal rights. The Constitution's promise

¹¹¹ UN Women, 'Women's Political Participation in India' (2023) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/04/briefing-paper-womens-political-participation-india> accessed 20 June 2026.

¹¹² UN Women (n 15).

of equality must be realized now, not in 2029.¹¹³

Conclusion

Rwanda, France, Sweden, and Nepal demonstrate that women's reservation can be implemented immediately without delimitation. India's requirement for census-based delimitation is an unnecessary barrier, not constitutional mandate. The delay until 2029 is a human rights violation, excluding women's voices from Parliament. India must act now, not wait for 2027 Census. Women deserve equal treatment, equal representation, and equal dignity.

The constitutional pathways for decoupling women's reservation from census-based delimitation.

This section is the heart of the paper — the constitutional pathways for decoupling women's reservation from census-based delimitation. I propose three specific amendment pathways that Parliament can use to implement women's reservation immediately using 2011 Census data.

The Proposal

Element 1: Remove "after census" from Article 334A

Current text: "after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the first census taken after commencement"

Proposed text: "after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose"

This amendment removes the census requirement, allowing Parliament to undertake

¹¹³ UN Women (n 15).

delimitation using any population data (including 2011 Census).¹¹⁴

Element 2: Allow "any census or any population data" in Article 82

Current text: "After every census, a new allocation of seats shall be made"

Proposed text: "After any census or any population data, a new allocation of seats shall be made"

This amendment allows Parliament to use 2011 Census data for immediate delimitation, without waiting for 2027 Census.¹¹⁵

Element 3: Implement in 2029 Elections (not 2031)

With decoupling, women's reservation can be implemented in 2029 elections instead of 2031. This reduces delay from 6 years (2023-2029) to 3 years (2023-2026).¹¹⁶

Constitutional Pathway 1: Amend Article 334A Only

The Amendment

Amend Article 334A to remove "after the first census taken after commencement":

"Nothing in this Constitution shall affect any provision relating to delimitation of constituencies or any provision relating to the number of seats in the House of the People, or in the Legislative Assembly of any State, until after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Constitution of India, art 334A (proposed).

¹¹⁵ Constitution of India, art 82 (proposed).

¹¹⁶ NCAER, 'Women's Reservation Cannot Wait for Delimitation' (April 2026) <https://ncaer.org/publication/womens-reservation-cannot-wait-for-delimitation/> accessed 20 June 2026.

¹¹⁷ Constitution of India, art 334A (proposed Amendment 1).

This amendment:

- Removes census requirement from Article 334A
- Allows Parliament to undertake delimitation using 2011 Census
- Enables women's reservation in 2029 elections
- Reduces delay from 6 years to 3 years

Parliamentary Procedure

- 2/3 majority in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha
- 50% of state legislatures must ratify
- President's assent required¹¹⁸

Constitutional Pathway 2: Amend Article 82 Only

The Amendment

Amend Article 82 to allow "any census or any population data":

"After any census or any population data, a new allocation of seats shall be made in accordance with the provisions of article 331 and article 332."¹¹⁹

This amendment:

- Allows Parliament to use 2011 Census for delimitation
- Removes requirement to wait for 2027 Census
- Enables women's reservation in 2029 elections
- Reduces delay from 6 years to 3 years

Parliamentary Procedure

- 2/3 majority in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

¹¹⁸ Constitution of India, art 368(2).

¹¹⁹ Constitution of India, art 82 (proposed Amendment 2).

- 50% of state legislatures must ratify
- President's assent required¹²⁰

Constitutional Pathway 3: Amend Both Articles Together

The Amendment

Amend Article 334A and Article 82 together:

Article 334A:

"Nothing in this Constitution shall affect any provision relating to delimitation of constituencies or any provision relating to the number of seats in the House of the People, or in the Legislative Assembly of any State, until after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose."¹²¹

Article 82:

"After any census or any population data, a new allocation of seats shall be made in accordance with the provisions of article 331 and article 332."¹²²

Amending both articles together is stronger than amending either alone because:

Reason 1: Clearer Legal Basis

Amending both articles creates a clearer legal basis for decoupling. Article 334A

removes the census requirement, while Article 82 allows using any population data.

Together, they provide complete legal framework for immediate implementation.¹²³

Reason 2: Prevents Future Challenges

¹²⁰ Constitution of India, art 368(2).

¹²¹ Constitution of India, art 334A (proposed Amendment 3).

¹²² Constitution of India, art 82 (proposed Amendment 3).

¹²³ The Diplomat, 'Delimitation and Women's Reservation Reveal an Underlying Constitutional Tension in India' (April 2026) <https://thediplomat.com/2026/04/delimitation-and-womens-reservation-reveal-an-underlying-constitutional-tension-in-india/> accessed 20 June 2026.

Amending both articles prevents future legal challenges. If only Article 334A is amended, courts could argue that Article 82 still requires census based delimitation.

Amending both articles prevents this ambiguity.¹²⁴

Reason 3: Stronger Constitutional Foundation

Amending both articles creates a stronger constitutional foundation for women's reservation. Article 334A allows immediate delimitation, while Article 82 validates using 2011 Census data. Together, they provide complete constitutional authority.¹²⁵

Parliamentary Procedure

- 2/3 majority in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha
- 50% of state legislatures must ratify
- President's assent required
- Same procedure for both articles (can be combined)¹²⁶

2011 Census is Valid and Reliable because:

It is fully published and available. All population data is accessible to Parliament, courts, and public. There is no secrecy or confidentiality preventing use of 2011 Census for delimitation.¹²⁷

The 2011 Census has been used for previous delimitation exercises:

- 87th Amendment (2003): Used 2001 Census for delimitation (despite 2001 Census not being completed)

¹²⁴ The Diplomat (n 10).

¹²⁵ The Diplomat (n 10).

¹²⁶ Constitution of India, art 368(2).

¹²⁷ Census 2011, 'Official Census Data' <https://www.census2011.co.in/> accessed 20 June 2026.

- 2008 Delimitation: Used 2001 Census data for constituency redraw
- 2016 Delimitation: Used 2011 Census data for Jammu and Kashmir¹²⁸

So, this precedent shows that using old census data for delimitation is legally valid.

It is reliable because it is:

- Conducted by Registrar General of India (government authority)
- Methodology is scientifically rigorous (household surveys, population counts)
- Data is verified and cross-checked (multiple rounds of validation)
- Published in official government reports (Census 2011, Volume I-IV)¹²⁹

Addressing Federalism Concerns

Concern 1: Southern States Will Lose Seats

Solution: Proportional Expansion

Parliament can increase total Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 850. This ensures that no state loses seats absolutely and all states gain seats proportionally, but northern states gain more than southern states.¹³⁰

Example:

- Southern states: 25% of seats (135 seats) → 25% of seats (212 seats)
- Northern states: 40% of seats (217 seats) → 40% of seats (340 seats)
- Total: 543 seats → 850 seats

Southern states maintain 25% share while gaining 77 seats. Northern states gain 123

¹²⁸ Constitution (87th Amendment) Act 2003, s 2.

¹²⁹ Census 2011 (n 14).

¹³⁰ NCAER (n 3).

seats while maintaining 40% share.¹³¹

Concern 2: Federal Balance Will Be Disrupted

Solution: Protect Southern States' Seats

Parliament can amend Article 81 to fix seat allocation for southern states, ensuring they maintain current seat count regardless of population growth. This protects southern states from punitive effects while allowing women's reservation to proceed.¹³²

Example:

- Kerala: Current 20 seats → Protected 20 seats (no change)
- Tamil Nadu: Current 39 seats → Protected 39 seats (no change)
- Karnataka: Current 28 seats → Protected 28 seats (no change)
- Andhra Pradesh: Current 25 seats → Protected 25 seats (no change)

Southern states maintain current seats while northern states gain proportionally.¹³³

Concern 3: Women's Reservation Is Unfair to Southern States

Solution: Women's Reservation is Universal Right

Women's reservation is not unfair to southern states but it's a universal right for all women, regardless of region. Southern states have 48% women population, same as northern states. Women in Kerala deserve same representation as women in Bihar.¹³⁴

¹³¹ NCAER (n 3).

¹³² Constitution of India, art 81 (proposed).

¹³³ Constitution of India, art 81 (proposed).

¹³⁴ UN Women, 'Women's Political Participation in India' (2023) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/04/briefing-paper-womens-political-participation-india> accessed 20 June 2026.

The Feminist Argument

From a feminist constitutional view, women's exclusion from Parliament is structural discrimination. The Constitution promises equality, but the reality is discrimination.

Women deserve representation now, not 2029.¹³⁵

The Human Rights Argument

Women's reservation is a human rights issue. Women are not "secondary citizens" but they are equal humans deserving equal rights. Delaying reservation until 2029 violates women's fundamental right to equality and participation.¹³⁶

Conclusion

Parliament can amend Articles 334A and 82 to decouple women's reservation from census-based delimitation. This allows immediate implementation using 2011 Census data, reducing delay from 6 years to 3 years. Protecting southern states' seats through proportional expansion addresses federalism concerns. Women's reservation is morally necessary, women deserve equal representation now, not in 2029.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on my analysis, I make five recommendations for immediate implementation of women's reservation.

Recommendation 1: Parliament Should Amend Article 334A

¹³⁵ UN Women (n 22).

¹³⁶ UN Women (n 22).

Parliament must amend Article 334A to remove "after the first census taken after commencement." This amendment allows immediate delimitation using 2011 Census data, enabling women's reservation in 2029 elections (not 2031).¹³⁷

Recommendation 2: Protect Southern States' Seats Through Proportional Expansion

Parliament must increase total Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 850. This ensures southern states maintain current seat percentage while gaining seats proportionally. Kerala maintains 20 seats, Tamil Nadu maintains 39 seats, Karnataka maintains 28 seats, Andhra Pradesh maintains 25 seats.¹³⁸

Recommendation 3: Use 2011 Census Data for Immediate Delimitation

Parliament must use 2011 Census data for immediate delimitation. The 2011 Census is published, reliable, and has been used for previous delimitation exercises (87th Amendment, 2008 Delimitation). There is no constitutional bar to using old census data.¹³⁹

Recommendation 4: Consider Party-Quota System Instead Parliament should consider adopting France's 50% parity law. Political parties must nominate 50% women candidates, with financial penalties for non-compliance. This eliminates need for delimitation entirely and allows immediate implementation.¹⁴⁰

Recommendation 5: Monitor Implementation Post-2029

Parliament must track women's representation after 2029 elections. Key metrics:

- Percentage of women MPs (target: 33%)
- Reserved seats rotational pattern (ensure fairness)
- Sub-quota for OBC women (if needed)

¹³⁷ Constitution of India, art 334A (proposed).

¹³⁸ NCAER, 'Women's Reservation Cannot Wait for Delimitation' (April 2026) <https://ncaer.org/publication/womens-reservation-cannot-wait-for-delimitation/> accessed 20 June 2026.

¹³⁹ Census 2011, 'Official Census Data' <<https://www.census2011.co.in/>> accessed 20 June 2026.

¹⁴⁰ Congress.gov, 'French Parliament Women' <https://www.congress.gov/inside/foreign-parliaments/french-parliament-women> accessed 20 June 2026.

- Women's legislative participation (debates, bills, committees)¹⁴¹

Call to Action

Women's reservation is not optional but it's fundamental. Parliament must act NOW, not wait for 2027 Census. 33 years of delay (1989-2029) is unacceptable. Decoupling is constitutionally viable and morally necessary. India must lead in gender equality.

CONCLUSION

Women's reservation in India is delayed until 2029 due to federalism concerns. Article 334A's ambiguous language ("a delimitation exercise" $\neq$ "the census-based delimitation") creates constitutional space for decoupling. Parliament can amend Articles 82 and 334A to allow immediate implementation using 2011 Census data.

Comparative analysis shows Rwanda (61%), France (47%), and Sweden (47%) achieved women's representation without delimitation. India's constituency-based system is the only barrier — not constitutional mandate. No Supreme Court precedent blocks decoupling.

Transformative constitutionalism (Ambedkar's vision) requires immediate action, not 11-year delay.

The federalism controversy can be resolved through proportional expansion (543 $\rightarrow$ 850 seats), protecting southern states' seats, and using 2011 Census for immediate delimitation. These mechanisms address federalism concerns while allowing women's reservation to proceed immediately.

Women's reservation is morally necessary. Women are 48% of population but only 15% of MPs. This disparity violates Article 14 equality guarantee. 33 years of delay (1989-2029) is unacceptable. Women deserve representation in 2029, not 2031.

¹⁴¹ UN Women, 'Women's Political Participation in India' (2023) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/04/briefing-paper-womens-political-participation-india> accessed 20 June 2026.

Decoupling is constitutionally viable and morally necessary. Parliament must act NOW. India must lead in gender equality. Women's representation is not optional but it's fundamental.

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