

Urbanisation and census definitions

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1 Census urban definitions: statutory town, census town, outgrowth and urban agglomeration

The Census treats a place as urban either because law gives it an urban local body (statutory town) or because it meets three tests of size, density and non-farm work (census town); towns and their contiguous outgrowths together form urban agglomerations.

Core facts

- **Two kinds of towns** (Census 2011):
 - **Statutory Town (ST)**: any place with a **municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee**, and so on, declared by law.
 - **Census Town (CT)**: a place that meets **all three** tests:
 1. population at least **5,000**
 2. at least **75% of the male main working population** in **non-agricultural** work
 3. density at least **400 persons per sq km**
- **Outgrowth (OG)**: a viable unit such as a village or hamlet, with clear boundaries, **physically contiguous** to a statutory town and having urban features (pucca roads, electricity, drainage, schools).
- **Urban Agglomeration (UA)**: a continuous urban spread of a town and its OGs, or two or more contiguous towns with or without OGs.
 - The core must include **at least one statutory town**.
 - Total UA population at least **20,000** (2011).
- Census 2011: **7,935 towns = 4,041 statutory + 3,894 census towns**.
- Census towns rose from **1,362 (2001)** to **3,894 (2011)**.
- The Census is conducted under the **Census Act, 1948**.

Explained

Statutory town vs census town

Point	Statutory town	Census town
Basis	Law: an urban local body exists	Census tests: size, density, work
Who decides	State Government	Census (Registrar General of India)
Governance	ULB (municipal body)	Usually a gram panchayat
2011 count	4,041	3,894

- A census town is **urban for statistics** but often **rural for administration**. It is governed by a gram panchayat and gets no urban planning or municipal services as of right.
- The workforce test uses only **male main workers**. It is a test of the economic base, not of all workers.

Outgrowth and agglomeration

- An OG is counted as urban **only as part of a UA**, not as a town by itself.
- The **constituent units** of a UA are its statutory towns, census towns and outgrowths.
- Example: Greater Mumbai UA includes municipal corporations such as Greater Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai, Kalyan-Dombivli and others, along with smaller towns and OGs around them.

Metropolitan terms used by the Census

- **City**: an urban area with **1 lakh or more** population (Class I).
- **Million-plus UA / city**: 10 lakh or more (53 in 2011).
- **Megacity**: 1 crore (10 million) or more. In 2011 there were three: **Greater Mumbai UA (about 1.84 crore)**, **Delhi UA (about 1.63 crore)** and **Kolkata UA (about 1.41 crore)**.

Constitutional link

- Article **243Q** provides a **Nagar Panchayat** for a transitional area, a **Municipal Council** for a smaller urban area and a **Municipal Corporation** for a larger urban area. The **Governor** specifies these areas by notification.
- When a State constitutes such a body, the place becomes a **statutory town** in the next census.

Common traps

✗ "A census town needs 75% of all workers in non-farm work." ✓ **75% of male main workers.**

✗ "The density test for a census town is 1,000 per sq km." ✓ It is **400 persons per sq km.**

✗ "A census town has a municipality." ✓ That is a **statutory town**; a census town meets the three census tests and usually has a **gram panchayat**.

✗ "An outgrowth is counted as a separate town." ✓ It is urban only as a **constituent of a UA**.

✗ "Census 2011 had more census towns than statutory towns." ✓ **4,041 statutory** vs **3,894 census** towns.

✗ "The Census is conducted under the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969." ✓ Under the **Census Act, 1948**.

Quick revision

- ST = place with a ULB by law (municipality, corporation, cantonment board, notified area).
- CT = 5,000+ people, 75% male main workers non-farm, 400+/sq km: all three.
- OG = contiguous village/hamlet with urban features; urban only within a UA.
- UA = town + OGs, or contiguous towns; core has a statutory town; 20,000+ (2011).
- 2011: 7,935 towns = 4,041 ST + 3,894 CT.
- CTs: 1,362 (2001) → 3,894 (2011).

- Megacities 2011: Greater Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata.
- Art. 243Q: Nagar Panchayat (transitional), Council (smaller), Corporation (larger).
- Census Act, 1948.
- Census 2027: reference date 1 March 2027 (snow-bound areas 1 October 2026).