



Beyond Women's Reservation: *The Implications of an Expanded Lok Sabha*



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Beyond Women's Reservation: The Implications of an Expanded Lok Sabha

- Swapnil Tripathi and Mansi Tiwari¹

Earlier this year, during a special session of Parliament, the Union government introduced the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 (**Bill**),² which *inter alia* proposed to increase the size of the Lok Sabha,³ removed the freeze on the allocation of seats to States,⁴ and advanced the implementation of women's reservation.⁵ The Bill was accompanied by the Delimitation Bill, 2026 and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 (collectively referred to as '**legislative package**'), which sought to initiate the process of delimitation of parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly constituencies. The Bill ultimately failed to secure the requisite majority in the Lok Sabha and was therefore not passed. However, reports suggest that the Union Government may reintroduce the legislative package during the ongoing session.⁶

Previously, we have explained and examined the implications of the legislative package, focusing on the existing constitutional framework governing the size of the Lok Sabha, delimitation, and the impact of the proposed changes, particularly on the design of Parliament.⁷ This note focuses specifically on the proposal to increase the size of the Lok Sabha and its wider implications, examining them across four axes: people and

¹ The authors would like to thank Aditya Prasanna Bhattacharya (Lead, Vidhi West Bengal) for their comments and suggestions.

² The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026, Bill No. 107 of 2026.

³ *ibid*, cl 3(a).

⁴ *ibid*, cl 4(d).

⁵ *ibid*, cl 8.

⁶ BL New Delhi Bureau, 'Govt explores special Parliament session to revive women's quota, delimitation Bills', *The Hindu Businessline* (08 August 2026) <<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/govt-explores-special-parliament-session-to-revive-womens-quota-delimitation-bills/article71310229.ece>> accessed on 11 August 2026; Amrita Madhukalya, 'Buzz around delimitation bill as govt aims for required majority, FCRA bill likely this week' *Deccan Herald* (05 August 2026) <<https://www.deccanherald.com/india/buzz-around-delimitation-bill-as-govt-aims-for-required-majority-fcra-bill-likely-this-week-4100780>> accessed on 11 August 2026; Liz Mathew and Arun Janardhanan, 'Centre aims to revive delimitation Bill, push joint polls by 2029' *The Indian Express* (01 June, 2026) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/centre-aims-to-revive-delimitation-bill-push-delimitation-one-nation-one-election-by-2029-10717509/>> accessed on 11 August 2026.

⁷ For a detailed discussion on the impact of the proposed changes on parliamentary design, see 'Beyond Women's Reservation: The Constitutional Stakes of Delimitation' (Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 10 April, 2026) <https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Beyond-Womens-Reservation-The-Constitutional-Stakes-of-Delimitation_Charkha_VCLP.pdf> accessed on 11 August 2026;

To read further on the process of delimitation and the need for reforms to improve transparency in the process, see: Swapnil Tripathi, 'Monsoon Session—Delimitation Debate Must Move Past Reservation to Representation' *The Quint* (17 July 2026) <<https://www.thequint.com/opinion/delimitation-bill-shouldnt-take-backseat-in-parliament>> accessed on 10 August 2026.

representation; the impact on States; government accountability; and practical consequences.⁸

The Proposal

The Bill proposed to amend Article 81 to increase the maximum size of the Lok Sabha from the existing 550 seats to 850. The Statement of Objects and Reasons did not explain the rationale for either increasing the size of the House or arriving at the figure of 850, and instead focused largely on the allocation of seats to States and the process of delimitation.⁹ On the floor of Parliament, the Hon'ble Home Minister offered two explanations for the proposed increase. First, he referred to the increase in the country's population and argued that the existing disparities in constituency sizes

⁸ The question of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha received relatively limited attention during the deliberations in Parliament and outside. Existing work considers particular aspects of an increase in parliamentary strength, including its impact on the functioning of the House and the lack of a clear rationale for the figure of 850. See, Shashi Tharoor, 'Why an 850-seat Lok Sabha threatens Indian democracy' *The Indian Express* (30 July, 2026) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/shashi-tharoor-lok-sabha-indian-democracy-delimitation-10808828/>> accessed on 10 August, 2026; Louis Tillin, Milan Vaishnav and Andy Robaina, 'Delimitation After Defeat: India's Unfinished Debate Over Representation' *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (14 May 2026) <<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2026/05/india-parliament-lok-sabha-representation-reapportionment-vote-women-elections>> accessed on 10 August 2026; Randeep Singh Surjewala, '131st Amendment Bill was about torching federal compact, not women's reservation' *The Indian Express* (27 April 2026) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/131st-amendment-bill-torching-federal-compact-not-womens-reservation-10658716/>> accessed on 10 August 2026; B. Bhagwan Das, 'Ensure that voice of the South is heard in Parliament' *The Hindu* (23 April 2026) <<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/ensure-that-voice-of-the-south-is-heard-in-parliament/article70894393.ece>> accessed on 10 August 2026; Srinivas Goli, 'Beyond the population arithmetic: Do more MPs really mean better representation?' *The Indian Express* (19 April 2026) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/lok-sabha-expansion-delimitation-demographic-peak-analysis-10645089/>> accessed on 10 August 2026; M.R. Madhavan, 'Implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha,' *The Hindu* (16 April 2026) <<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/implications-of-increasing-the-size-of-the-lok-sabha/article70866451.ece>> accessed on August 10 2026; Tejasvi Surya, 'Set of Bills for women's quota benefits the south, strengthens democracy' *The Indian Express* (16 April 2026) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/set-of-bills-for-womens-quota-benefits-the-south-strengthens-democracy-10638833/>> accessed on 10 August 2026; John Brittas, 'Our worst fears have come true: NDA government is using delimitation to disempower the southern states' *The Indian Express* (14 April 2026) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/women-reservation-delimitation-federal-equilibrium-lok-sabha-10636498/>> accessed on 10 August 2026; Sansad TV Bureau, 'LS | Gaurav Gogoi | Delimitation Bill 2026 & Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill | UT Laws Amendment' *Sansad TV* (16 April 2026) <<https://sansadtv.nic.in/loksabha/ls-gaurav-gogoi-delimitation-bill-2026-constitution-131st-amendment-bill-ut-laws-amend>> accessed on 10 August 2026; Sansad TV Bureau, 'LS | Manish Tewari | Delimitation Bill 2026 & Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill | UT Laws Amendment' *Sansad TV* (16 April 2026) <<https://sansadtv.nic.in/loksabha/ls-manish-tewari-delimitation-bill-2026-constitution-131st-amendment-bill-ut-laws-amend>> accessed on 10 August 2026;

⁹ The 131st Amendment Bill, 2026, (n 2), Statement of Objects and Reasons, para 5 and 6.

violated the principle of ‘one person, one vote, one value’.¹⁰ He illustrated this by noting that while some constituencies had as many as forty-five lakh voters, others had around six lakh, resulting in considerable variation in the value of each vote.¹¹ He also noted that there were over ‘127 constituencies with more than 20 lakh voters each’, attributing these disparities to the continued freeze on the reallocation of seats.¹²

Second, he linked the 50% increase specifically to the implementation of women’s reservation. To explain the calculation, he gave the example of a hypothetical House with 100 seats. Reserving one-third of these seats for women would reduce the number of unreserved seats. However, if the size of the House was first increased by 50% to 150 seats, reserving one-third of the enlarged House (50 seats for women) would leave 100 unreserved seats, equal to the original strength of the House. Applying this logic to the existing Lok Sabha, the Minister explained that its strength would be increased by 50% so that one-third of the enlarged House could be reserved for women without reducing the existing number of unreserved seats. He stated that this produced a figure of approximately 816 seats, with 850 adopted as a ‘round figure’.¹³

While these explanations provide a rationale for increasing the size of the House, they do not fully explain why 850 is the appropriate number. The first explanation certainly identifies a genuine representational concern arising from large and unequal constituency sizes. However, it does not explain what population-to-MP ratio the proposal seeks to achieve or why 850 seats are necessary to achieve it. At a population of approximately 148 crore, a Lok Sabha of 850 members would result in approximately 17.4 lakh people per Member of Parliament (‘MP’). A House of 900 members would reduce this to approximately 16.4 lakh, while 1,000 members would reduce it further to approximately 14.8 lakh.¹⁴ The Bill or the debate in Parliament offer no explanation as to why the first of these represents the appropriate balance.

The second explanation draws on the objective of implementing women’s reservation without reducing the existing number of unreserved seats, rather than from an assessment of the appropriate size or institutional requirements of the Lok Sabha.

¹⁰ Sansad TV Bureau, ‘HM Amit Shah’s Reply | Delimitation Bill 2026 & Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill | UT Laws Amendment’ Sansad TV (17 April 2026), at 00:04:40 <<https://sansadtv.nic.in/loksabha/hm-amit-shahs-reply-delimitation-bill-2026-constitution131st-amendmentbill-ut-laws-amendment>> accessed on 09 August 2026.

¹¹ *ibid*, at 00:13:02.

¹² *ibid*, at 00:11:17.

¹³ Sansad TV Bureau, ‘LS | HM Amit Shah | Delimitation Bill 2026 & Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill | UT Laws Amendment’ Sansad TV (16 April 2026), at 00:08:38 <<https://sansadtv.nic.in/loksabha/ls-hm-amit-shah-delimitation-bill-2026-constitution-131st-amendmentbill-ut-laws-amend>> accessed on 09 August 2026.

¹⁴ A study by *The Hindu* similarly highlights how different benchmarks can produce vastly different outcomes: applying the representational ratio prevailing in the 1970s to India’s present population would require a Lok Sabha of approximately 1,380 members. See, Varghese K. George, ‘Introduction: Counting on people’ in *The Delimitation Debate: The Union and its Units* 15 (The Hindu Group 2026).

However, this calculation produces approximately 816 seats and not the rounded figure of 850 seats.

The question of the appropriate size of the Lok Sabha involves competing interests: on the one hand, improving representation, and on the other, the institutional and practical consequences of a larger House and its impact on federalism (discussed later in this Note). Any decision regarding the best mechanism to balance these interests requires careful deliberation and explanation, both of which were missing from the Bill and the parliamentary debates.

It must be noted that the more substantive discussion surrounding the Bill focused on its proposed removal of the existing constitutional freeze on the population-based reallocation of seats among States. Several MPs argued that a fresh allocation based on updated population figures could reduce the relative representation of States that have controlled their population growth. In response, the Hon'ble Home Minister assured the House that no State would lose its existing share of representation and that the seats allocated to each State would instead increase by 50 per cent, thereby broadly preserving their existing proportions in the Lok Sabha.¹⁵ However, this assurance was not reflected in the text of the legislative package,¹⁶ although media reports indicate that the revised Bills may incorporate it in some form.¹⁷ We have examined the constitutional implications of these changes separately.¹⁸

¹⁵ Hon'ble HM's Reply in the Lok Sabha, (n 9) at 00:21:07.

¹⁶ Swapnil Tripathi, 'On seat guarantee, states need a proviso in Constitution, not just a promise in Parliament' *Indian Express* (17 April 2026) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/on-seat-guarantee-states-need-a-proviso-in-constitution-not-just-a-promise-in-parliament-10641309/>> accessed on 11 August 2026.

¹⁷ See, Vikas Pathak and Jatin Anand, 'Government plan: 50% more Lok Sabha seats for each state, South share unchanged' *Indian Express* (16 April 2026) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/govt-plan-keep-south-share-unchanged-in-ls-list-each-states-new-count-in-schedule-10638965/>> accessed on 11 August 2026; Sravasti Dasgupta, 'No Mention in Bills But Shah, Meghwal Say 50% Rise for All States in LS; Modi Says No Change in Proportions' *The Wire* (16 April 2026) <<https://thewire.in/government/no-mention-in-bills-but-shah-meghwal-say-50-rise-for-all-states-in-ls-modi-says-no-change-in-proportions>> accessed on 11 August 2026; Saubhadra Chatterji, 'Lok Sabha seats for all states to be increased by 50%, says law minister; 272 reserved for women' *Hindustan Times* (16 April 2026) <<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/parliament-session-news-lok-sabha-seats-to-be-increased-by-50-says-law-minister-delimitation-womens-reservation-bill-101776324088836.html>> accessed on 11 August 2026; Varghese K. George, 'All States will have their number of Lok Sabha seats increase by 50% after delimitation: Official' *The Hindu* (16 April 2026) <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/south-states-will-not-lose-due-to-delimitation-will-clarify-in-parliament-centre/article70864566.ece>> accessed on 11 August 2026.

¹⁸ For a discussion on the constitutional implications of the legislative package, see: 'Implications of the Constitutional Amendment and Legislative Package on Delimitation and Women's Reservation' (Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 15 April 2026) <<https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/research/implications-of-the-constitutional-amendment-and-legislative-package-on-delimitation-and-womens-reservation/>> accessed on 11 August 2026.

Implications of the Proposal

This section examines the implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha across four axes: people and representation; the impact on States; government accountability; and practical consequences.

1. People and Representation

First, an expanded Lok Sabha would improve the population-to-MP ratio. At the time of the first general election in 1951-52, India's population was approximately 38 crore and the Lok Sabha comprised 489 elected members,¹⁹ amounting to approximately 7.4 lakh persons for every MP. By the 2019 general election, the population had increased to approximately 136 crore, while the number of elected members had increased to 543 (11% increase). Consequently, on an average, an MP represented approximately 25 lakh people.²⁰

This average is unusually large by global standards. The *Global Parliamentary Report* published by the United Nations Development Programme and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2012²¹ recorded India as having the highest average number of 'inhabitants per parliamentarian' among the countries examined, at approximately 1.5 million inhabitants per parliamentarian.²² The corresponding figure for the United States of America, the next highest, was approximately 600,000.²³ A high citizen-to-representative ratio can affect the accessibility of representatives, their ability to engage with constituents and respond to local concerns, and the effective discharge of their representative functions.²⁴

Therefore, increasing the size of the Lok Sabha to 850 members would significantly reduce the average number of people represented by each MP. For instance, based on the 2011 Census population of approximately 121 crore, the average would fall from the current 22.3 lakh persons per MP to approximately 14.2 lakh in a House of 850 members. This would create smaller constituencies and, at least in principle, allow MPs to engage more closely with the populations they represent.

¹⁹ Omir Kumar, '70 Years of Parliament' PRS Legislative Research (13 May 2022) 1 <https://prsindia.org/files/parliament/vital_stats/Vital%20Stats_70%20years%20of%20Parliament.pdf> accessed on 11 August 2026.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Greg Power, 'Global Parliamentary Report: The changing nature of parliamentary representation' United Nations Development Programme (April 2012) <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Global_Parliamentary_Report_English.pdf> accessed on 11 August 2026.

²² *ibid.*, at 12.

²³ Ronojoy Sen, *House of the People: Parliament and the Making of Indian Democracy* (Cambridge University Press 2022) ch 2, 106.

²⁴ This concern was also raised by the Hon'ble Home Minister in his speech on 17 April 2026.

However, this improvement must be considered alongside the Union government's proposal to increase the seats allocated to each State by approximately 50%, thereby preserving their existing relative shares in the Lok Sabha. The existing allocation of seats among States is substantially based on population distributions reflected in the 1971 Census. Since population growth across States has diverged considerably since then, a uniform percentage increase in seats would preserve these existing differences rather than equalise the present-day population-to-MP ratio across States. Consequently, while constituencies would become smaller across the country, the extent of this improvement would vary between States: an MP in one State could continue to represent substantially more people than an MP in another. Table 1 illustrates the revised population-to-MP ratio for select States under the proposal.

Table 1: Population-to-MP Ratio Across States

State	2011 population (approx.)	Current seats	Population per MP	Seats after 50% increase*	Population per MP (approx.)
Bihar	10.41 crore	40	26.0 lakh	60	17.4 lakh
Uttar Pradesh	19.98 crore	80	25.0 lakh	120	16.7 lakh
Maharashtra	11.24 crore	48	23.4 lakh	72	15.6 lakh
Karnataka	6.11 crore	28	21.8 lakh	42	14.5 lakh
Tamil Nadu	7.21 crore	39	18.5 lakh	59	12.2 lakh
Kerala	3.34 crore	20	16.7 lakh	30	11.1 lakh

Second, smaller constituencies may also lower some barriers to electoral participation. Candidates would be required to campaign across a smaller population and geographical unit, potentially reducing the organisational and financial resources required to reach voters. This could particularly benefit independent candidates and smaller political parties that do not possess the organisational infrastructure of larger national and regional parties.

Third, an increase in the number of MPs would also have implications for development funding in constituencies. Under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS),²⁵ each MP is presently entitled to recommend developmental

²⁵ Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 'Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme' Press Information Bureau (04 March 2014) <<https://www.pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?lang=2®=48&relid=104483&utm>> accessed on 11 August 2026.

works of up to ₹5 crore annually within their constituency, with an emphasis on 'creating durable community assets based on locally felt needs'.²⁶ Therefore, an increase in the number of Lok Sabha constituencies would mean that each newly created constituency would have a separate annual entitlement of ₹5 crore, unless the existing mechanism is revised.

For instance, Uttar Pradesh presently has 80 MPs, who can collectively recommend works worth up to ₹400 crore annually. If its representation increases to 120 seats, this would rise to ₹600 crore, while the average population represented by each MP would fall from approximately 25 lakh to 16.7 lakh. Thus, a larger House could result not only in smaller constituencies, but also in a greater availability of constituency-level development funds for the same population.

2. Impact on States

a. *More seats for States and Same Proportion*

During the debate on the Bill, the Hon'ble Home Minister had assured the House that no State would lose its existing share of representation in the Lok Sabha as the number of seats allocated to each State would increase by approximately 50%. As illustrated in Table 1, this would result in every State gaining additional seats while broadly preserving its existing proportion of representation in the House. However, it must be noted that this guarantee was not reflected in the text of the Bill. If the Bill is reintroduced, it is imperative that this assurance finds place in the Constitution itself, similar to the existing proviso,²⁷ thereby providing it the same constitutional protection as the existing freeze.

Such an arrangement attempts to balance competing considerations of representation and federalism. While more seats would create smaller constituencies and improve the population-to-MP ratio, preserving the existing share of seats would protect States that may otherwise lose relative representation if seats were redistributed solely on the basis of population.

b. *A weakened Rajya Sabha*

While the above-mentioned proposal seeks to protect State representation in the Lok Sabha, no corresponding increase has been proposed for the Rajya Sabha, which may raise concerns about a weakened House.

²⁶ Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 'Answer to Starred Question No. 352 in Lok Sabha' (17 July 2019) <<https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/171/AS352.pdf?source=pgals>> accessed on 11 August 2026.

²⁷ Swapnil Tripathi, 'The many constitutional questions around Women's Reservation Act' *The Indian Express* (13 April 2026) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/constitution-womens-reservation-delimitation-census-10633616/>> accessed on 11 August 2026.

The Rajya Sabha is also referred to as the 'Council of States' and provides the States with a distinct voice in Parliament. It performs an important revising function in the legislative process and enjoys certain special powers intended to protect State interests, including the power under Article 249 to enable Parliament to legislate on matters in the State List in the national interest and authorise the creation of new All India Services under Article 312.²⁸ The two Houses also embody different forms of democratic accountability. While the Lok Sabha provides direct representation through members elected by the people, the Rajya Sabha provides a more indirect form of representation of State interests, with its members elected by State Legislative Assemblies. Increasing the strength of the former without a corresponding increase in the latter therefore gives greater numerical weight to one form of representation without reconsidering the other.

Further, an expanded Lok Sabha would also alter the numerical balance between the two Houses, particularly during a joint sitting. Under Article 108, where a Bill passed by one House is rejected by the other, the Houses disagree on amendments to be made to the Bill, or more than six months elapse without the other House passing it, the President may summon a joint sitting, where the Bill is decided by a majority of members present and voting. Under the existing strength, the Rajya Sabha constitutes approximately 31% of the combined strength of the two Houses (245 out of 788 members). If the Lok Sabha increases to 850 while the Rajya Sabha remains unchanged, this would fall to approximately 22% (245 out of 1,095 members).

Technically the proposal will not diminish the formal constitutional powers of the Rajya Sabha. However, it will reduce its relative numerical influence when the two Houses vote in a joint sitting. Although joint sittings have historically been rare, a significant change of this nature must be debated and discussed in detail, given its impact on the role of Rajya Sabha as the Council of States.

3. Government Accountability

An expanded Lok Sabha would, in principle, also strengthen parliamentary oversight of the government. MPs hold the government accountable in several ways: they vote on legislation and other matters before the House; scrutinise Bills through debates and parliamentary committees; question Ministers on government policies and actions; introduce Private Members' Bills and resolutions; and approve the expenditure of public funds.

²⁸ According to the provisions of the Indian Constitution, the Rajya Sabha does not have powers over fiscal and financial subjects like budgetary legislation, state borrowing limits, or fiscal devolutions to states. See, *Beyond Women's Reservation*, (n 7).

a. *Revised Numerical Thresholds*

A larger Lok Sabha would first alter the numerical thresholds applicable to several of these functions. For instance, to command a majority, a government would require support of 426 members instead of the existing 272. Similarly, the minimum requirement of a majority of the total membership of the House for passing a constitutional amendment would increase from 272 to 426. Where all members are present and voting, the corresponding two-thirds requirement under Article 368 would increase from 362 to 567. Table 2 sets out the revised numerical thresholds resulting from an expanded Lok Sabha.

Table 2: Change in Numbers

Constitutional Requirement	Present Lok Sabha (543)	Proposed Lok Sabha (850)	Consequence
Majority of the House (required for passage of ordinary Bills and financial legislation, no-confidence motions, most resolutions and motions, and approval of President's Rule and Financial Emergency)	272	426	Number required for a simple majority increases by 154
Quorum Article 100	55	85	Minimum number required to constitute a meeting of Lok Sabha increases by 30
Constitutional amendment – majority of total membership (Article 368)	272	426	Minimum number of affirmative votes required increases by 154
Constitutional amendment – two-thirds present and voting (if entire House votes)	362	567	Number required where all members vote increases by 205
Council of Ministers Article 75(1A)	81	127	Constitutional ceiling on the Union Council of Ministers increases by 46
Lok Sabha share in a joint sitting with Rajya Sabha Article 108	68.9%	77.6%	Relative numerical weight of the Lok Sabha increases

b. More voices holding government accountable

In addition to voting, MPs hold the government accountable through questioning Ministers on government policy and administration, participating in debates and moving amendments to proposed legislation, introducing Private Members' Bills and resolutions, and scrutinising government legislation, policies and expenditure through Parliamentary Committees.

Question Hour is a particularly important example of holding the government accountable. A study covering the 30-year period between 1980 and 2009 highlighted that on an average an MP asked 0.42 questions per session per day, cumulatively accounting for more than half a million questions over the period.²⁹ Accordingly, the authors describe Question Hour as an 'important instrument of executive accountability' through which a substantial volume of information is sought from the Union Government.

An increase in the number of MPs could, in principle, strengthen these mechanisms by bringing a greater number and diversity of perspectives, constituency concerns, and issues while scrutinising the government.

c. Existing constraints that must be addressed

The benefits of increasing representation are contingent on factors such as regular sittings of the House, meaningful deliberation, and adequate opportunities for MPs to discharge their functions within Parliament. However, studies indicate that Parliament already faces constraints on each of these fronts. Therefore, an increase in the number of MPs without addressing these could undermine the objectives behind the Bill. A few examples are provided below.

- **Fewer sittings:** The number of days for which Parliament sits has declined considerably over time. In the 1950s, the Lok Sabha sat for an average of 127 days annually, compared to an average of 71 days since 1990.³⁰ The number of sitting days is significant as the available parliamentary time determines the opportunities MPs have to hold the government accountable. Therefore, an increase of MPs, without a corresponding increase in Parliament's calendar, would result in substantially more representatives seeking to participate within the existing limited time period.
- **Limited deliberation over Bills:** Reduced parliamentary time also has consequences for legislative deliberation, which has itself witnessed a decline.³¹

²⁹ Srikrishna Ayyangar and Suraj Jacob, 'Studying the Indian Legislature: What does Question Hour Reveal?', (2014) 2(1) Studies in Indian Politics 2 <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2321023014526023>> accessed on 11 August 2026.

³⁰ M.R. Madhavan, 'Parliament' in Devesh Kapur (ed.) *Rethinking Public Institutions in India*, 79 (Oxford University Press 2017); Ronojoy Sen, (n 23), 106.

³¹ *ibid* (M.R. Madhavan).

Scholars have highlighted instances where Bills have been passed with little or no discussion. For instance, Madhavan notes that on 23 December 2008, the Lok Sabha passed eight bills within seventeen minutes.³² Similarly, during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Lok Sabhas, legislative business accounted for around 20% of the total time spent by the House, while 28% of Bills were not discussed in detail.³³ In the Fifteenth Lok Sabha, more than one-fourth of all Bills were passed after less than 30 minutes of discussion.³⁴ A larger House can promote legislative scrutiny only if MPs have sufficient opportunity to participate in debates.

- **Greater role of political parties:** An increase in the number of MPs does not necessarily translate into a proportionate increase in independent parliamentary voices. MPs enjoy considerable independence in some parliamentary functions: for instance, submitting questions to Ministers during Question Hour. However, participation in debates over Bills is mediated by political parties, as time is allocated amongst parties based on their strength in the House, and hence, party leadership determines which MPs speak within the time allotted to them.

The influence of political parties extends to voting as well. Under the Tenth Schedule, an MP may be disqualified for voting or abstaining contrary to a direction issued by their political party. This creates a tension between an MP's role as a representative of their constituency and their obligations towards the political party to which they belong. Consequently, while an expanded House would bring more elected representatives into Parliament, it would not necessarily produce a corresponding increase in independent deliberation or voting by individual MPs. Unless corresponding changes are made to these institutional arrangements, the dominant role of political parties would continue.

4. Practical Consequences

An expanded Lok Sabha would also carry significant practical consequences for the functioning of Parliament. Additional members would entail increased expenditure on salaries and allowances, accommodation, security and other parliamentary infrastructure. As discussed above, the increase would also expand expenditure under MPLADS, with every additional constituency carrying a separate annual entitlement of ₹5 crore. If the existing entitlement remains unchanged, the annual MPLADS allocation attributable to the Lok Sabha would increase from ₹2,715 crore to ₹4,250 crore, an additional ₹1,535 crore each year. These costs form part of the institutional

³² *ibid* (M.R. Madhavan), at 76.

³³ Chakshu Roy, 'Legislative activity in Parliament: 2008' *PRS Legislative Research* (26 February 2008) 1 <<https://prsindia.org/parliamenttrack/vital-stats/legislative-activity-in-parliament-2008>> accessed on 11 August 2026.

³⁴ Kusum Malik, 'Performance of Parliament during the 15th Lok Sabha' *PRS Legislative Research* (21 February 2014) 2 <https://prsindia.org/files/parliament/vital_stats/1393227842--Vital%20Stats%20-%20Performance%20of%2015th%20Lok%20Sabha.pdf> accessed on 11 August 2026.

consequences that ought to be considered while determining the appropriate size of the House. An expanded Lok Sabha would also require adequate committee positions and facilities for members. Similarly, if additional MPs are to meaningfully perform their representative functions, there must be deliberation on whether sitting days and the time available for Question Hour, debates, and Private Members' Business should also increase.

These institutional and practical consequences highlight that an expanded Lok Sabha cannot be considered as a question of numbers alone. The representational benefits of an increase must be considered alongside its implications for the functioning of Parliament, institutional capacity, and public expenditure.

Conclusion: Towards a durable framework

Increasing the size of the Lok Sabha by 50% is a generational reform that would reshape political representation, the functioning of Parliament, and India's federal balance. This Note demonstrates that the reform involves several competing considerations: improving the population-to-MP ratio, preserving the interests of States, strengthening parliamentary accountability, maintaining the institutional effectiveness of Parliament, and accounting for the practical and financial consequences of a substantially larger House. These considerations must be evaluated against each other to arrive at a workable solution before the Bill is voted upon.

This is particularly important because a mere increase in the size of the Lok Sabha to 850 seats does not provide a durable answer to the underlying challenge of balancing population growth with effective representation. A one-time increase may improve the population-to-MP ratio today, but continued population growth could require Parliament to revisit the same question in the future. Therefore, any reform must look beyond the immediate increase to 850 seats and develop a more durable framework for determining the size and functioning of the Lok Sabha.

Such a framework should, at a minimum, address the following:

1. **A principled basis for determining the size of the Lok Sabha:** Parliament must identify an objective basis for determining the appropriate size of the House, including the population-to-MP ratio it seeks to achieve, while accounting for the considerations discussed in this Note. This framework should also be capable of accommodating future population changes without making periodic increases in the size of the House as the default response.
2. **Corresponding reforms to parliamentary functioning:** An increase in seats must be accompanied by corresponding reforms to parliamentary functioning, including the number of sitting days, the time available for Question Hour and

legislative deliberation, Private Members' Business, and the composition and capacity of parliamentary committees.

3. **Detailed parliamentary scrutiny before implementation:** The legislative package, if reintroduced, should be referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for detailed examination before it is voted upon.

