

CENSUS 2027: COUNTING DISABILITY, BUILDING INCLUSION

In 2011, India counted 2.68 crore persons with disabilities.

Global estimates suggest the actual number may be seven times higher.

The 2027 Census is our chance to close this gap.

October 2025

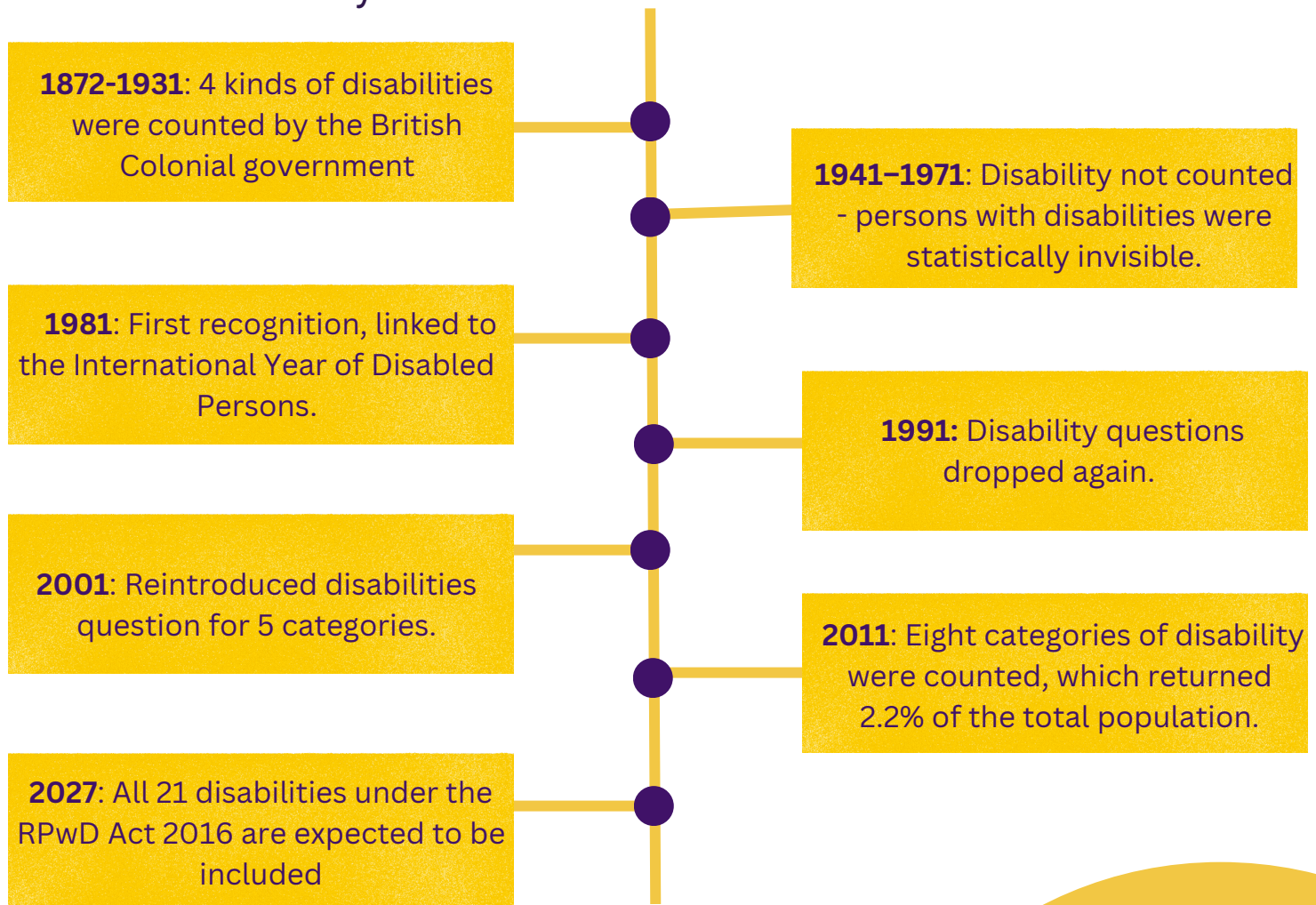


CENSUS IN INDIA – A BRIEF HISTORY

India has been conducting a national population census for over 140 years, making it one of the largest and most complex counting exercises in the world.

Disability in the Census: A Journey of Visibility

Disability has often been excluded or inconsistently included in census counts:



The census is how the State 'sees' its people. Being counted is the first step toward claiming rights as citizens.

UNDERSTANDING CENSUS 2027

Census 2027 will be India's 16th population count, covering over 25 crore households. It will be digital-first, but paper forms will also be used where necessary to ensure complete coverage.

Key Timeline:

- 16th June 2025 – Publication of Census notification in the Gazette of India
- Sep-Oct 2025- Pre Test exercise of the Census
- April 2026- Preparation and house-listing begins
- Feb 2027 – Main population enumeration phase
- Post 1st March 2027 – Data verification and publication of results

Who is Involved:

- Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India: National coordination
- State Census Directorates: Implementation across states
- District Administrations: Field management
- Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD): Technical guidance and training
- Community Organizations/DPOs: Bridging awareness and trust gaps

COUNTING DISABILITY IN 2027

For the first time, Census 2027 will fully reflect the **21 disabilities** recognized under the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016)**.

This marks a shift from the 2011 Census, which counted only eight broad categories and used limited questions like "**Is the person physically or mentally disabled? Yes/No.**"

Steps to Improve Accuracy in 2027:

- Sign language support during enumeration for persons with hearing or speech disabilities
- Comprehensive training for enumerators to conduct interviews respectfully and identify less visible disabilities
- Use of Indian Sign Language materials, Braille resources, and screen-reader friendly content
- Community outreach to reduce stigma and encourage self-identification

Counting every disability is the first step toward inclusion

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Nearly 3 million enumerators will be trained to conduct the 2027 Census, including modules on disability awareness and inclusive practices.



WHY DISABILITY DATA MATTERS

Census data shapes policies, budgets, and everyday services. When disability data is incomplete, persons with disabilities risk being excluded from development planning.

Why Accurate Data is important

1. Budget Allocation

In Union Budget 2025, allocations for disability were just 0.025% of total spending.

Without accurate data, funding remains inadequate for disability schemes and for the Union and State departments for Person with Disabilities.

2. Policy Design

Census data enables evidence-based planning in education, employment, healthcare, and accessibility.

3. Integration into Schemes

Social welfare programs rely on census data to identify target groups. If disability is undercounted, millions may be excluded from essential benefits.

4. Increased political power

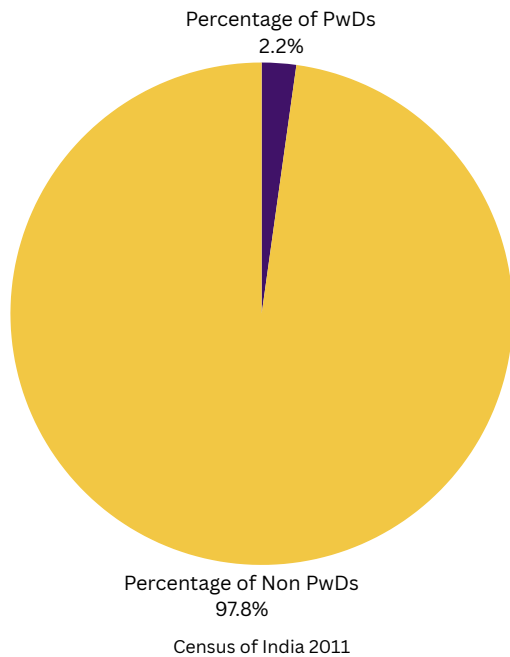
Accurate Census data helps reveal the true size and diversity of India's disability community. When persons with disabilities are correctly counted, their collective voice gains strength in shaping policies, demanding representation, and influencing leadership at every level.



UNEVEN GENDER REPRESENTATION IN DISABILITY DATA IN CENSUS

PwD representation in total population

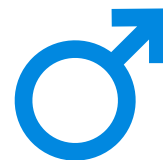
- Percentage of PwDs
- Percentage of Non PwDs



Disability in India reveals marked disparities—by gender, geography, and access—underscoring the importance of accurate counting in promoting inclusion.

“1 in every 45 Indians lives with a disability.”

Gender disparity



56.5% **43.5%**

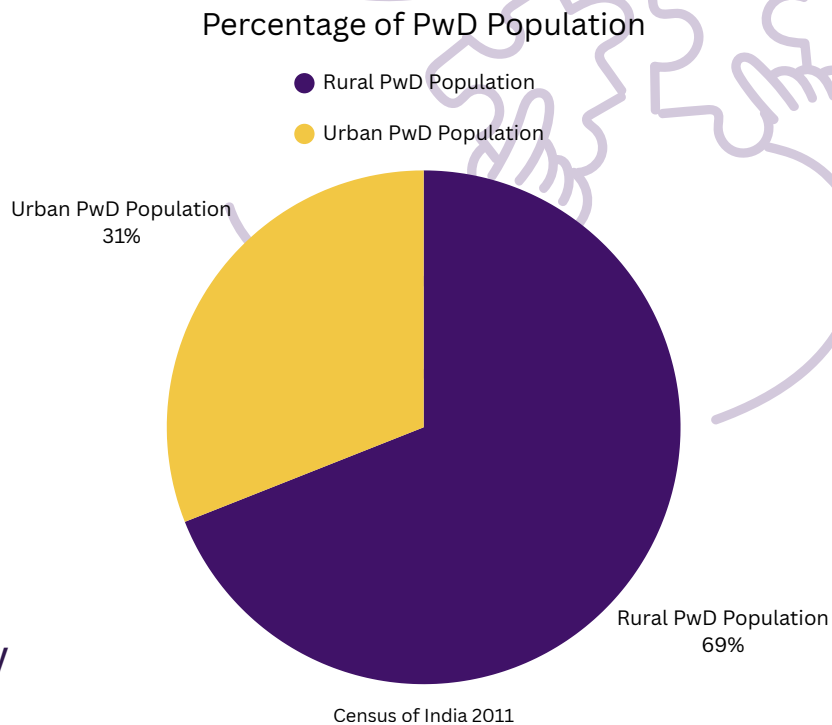
While India's 2011 Census reports only 2.01% of women as having a disability, global data, as per UN Women, estimates that nearly 19% of adult women are disabled. This large gap suggests significant under-reporting and that many women with disabilities remain invisible in India's official statistics



For every 100 persons with disabilities in India, roughly 57 are men and 43 are women.

RURAL VS URBAN DISABILITY DATA DIVIDE IN CENSUS

Although about 69% of India's persons with disabilities live in rural areas, the prevalence rate in rural (2.24 %) is only marginally higher than in urban areas (2.17 %). This small difference despite the much larger rural disabled population suggests that many rural persons with disability may be under-counted or face barriers in being recognized in official data.



Increase in prevalence from 2001 to 2011

- **Overall Increase:**

The national disability prevalence rose from 2.13% in 2001 to 2.21% in 2011, indicating a 8.5% increase over the decade.

- **Rural Areas:**

The rural disability prevalence increased from 2.21% in 2001 to 2.24% in 2011, a 1.4% rise.

- **Urban Areas:**

Urban areas saw a more significant increase, from 1.93% in 2001 to 2.17% in 2011, marking a 12.4% rise.

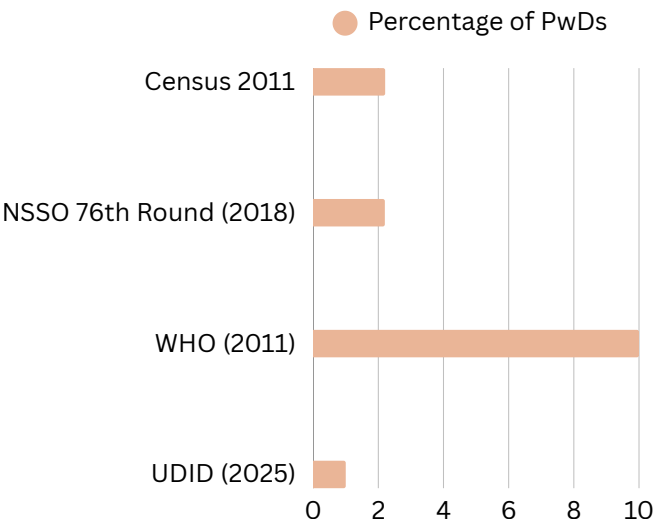
UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT DATA SOURCES

India has multiple datasets on disability, but their numbers often vary due to differences in methodology and coverage.

Data Source	Purpose	Who It Covers	Frequency
Census	Complete population count	Everyone in the country	Every 10 years
UDID (Unique Disability ID)	Registers persons with disabilities for certificates and benefits	Only those who register voluntarily	Continuous
NSSO	Studies employment, consumption, and social factors	Selected households	Varies

Disparity in Prevalence of Disability

Source	Source PwDs Counted/Estimated
Census 2011	2.68 crore (2.21% of population)
WHO Estimate (Globally, 2011)	60 Crores People (15% of Global Population)
UDID Registration (2025)	1.17 crore
NSSO 76 th Round (2018)	2.4 crore



PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS

Everyone has a role to play in ensuring Census 2027 counts disability accurately.



For Persons with Disabilities:

- Provide clear and accurate information about your disability.
- Ask for support if needed - sign language interpretation and other accessibility measures will be available.
- Your data is confidential and will not be shared publicly.



For Families:

- Support family members in answering questions honestly and comfortably.
- Help reduce stigma by encouraging openness and understanding.

For Organisations and DPOs:

- Report any accessibility barriers to local authorities.
- Bridge gaps between communities and census teams.

For Census Officials:

- Use inclusive communication techniques.
- Be respectful, patient, and professional.





**Scan the QR to visit Census 2027 and Disability
at India Disability Watch for more details**



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