

Electoral Roll and Revision in India: Process, Types and UPSC Relevance

Electoral rolls are the foundation of India's electoral process because only a person whose name is included in the electoral roll can exercise the right to vote. The preparation, updation and revision of electoral rolls are therefore essential for ensuring **free, fair and inclusive elections**.

The issue has gained renewed importance with the Election Commission of India (ECI) undertaking **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls in 2026.

What is an Electoral Roll?

An **electoral roll** is the official list of eligible voters in a constituency.

Under the **Representation of the People Act, 1950**, electoral rolls are prepared for constituencies and are subject to revision as prescribed by law. The Act also provides for correction, inclusion and deletion of names.

A person must generally:

- Be an **Indian citizen**
- Be at least **18 years old on the qualifying date**
- Be ordinarily resident in the relevant constituency
- Not be disqualified under law

The ECI currently recognises **four qualifying dates: 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October**.

Why is Electoral Roll Revision Necessary?

Electoral rolls are dynamic. People:

- Turn 18 and become eligible to vote
- Change their place of residence
- Die
- Change personal details
- Move between constituencies

Regular revision helps ensure that:

Eligible voters are included + Ineligible or duplicate entries are removed + Existing information is corrected.

This contributes to the principle of **universal adult suffrage** and electoral integrity.

Types of Electoral Roll Revision

1. Intensive Revision

An intensive revision involves preparing the electoral roll afresh through detailed enumeration. Booth Level Officers (BLOs) undertake house-to-house verification and collect information about eligible residents.

2. Summary Revision

In a summary revision, the existing electoral roll is updated rather than prepared afresh. A draft roll is published and citizens are given an opportunity to submit **claims and objections**.

3. Special Summary Revision (SSR)

The ECI can order a special revision when inaccuracies or other circumstances require additional measures. It may include activities such as house-to-house verification and special campaigns.

4. Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

SIR is a more detailed exercise involving enumeration and verification of electors. In its 2026 SIR order, the ECI stated that the objective is to ensure that **no eligible citizen is left out and no ineligible person is included** in the electoral roll.

How Does Electoral Roll Revision Work?

The process broadly involves:

Pre-revision activities → Enumeration/verification → Draft Electoral Roll → Claims & Objections → Verification → Final Electoral Roll

During revision, **Booth Level Officers (BLOs)** play an important field-level role. The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) processes applications and takes decisions according to the prescribed legal procedure.

Recognised political parties can also participate through **Booth Level Agents (BLAs)**, helping improve transparency and identify discrepancies.

Important Forms for UPSC

Form
Form 6
Form 6A

Purpose
New voter registration
Registration of overseas Indian elector

Form 7
Form 8

Objection/deletion of name
Correction, shifting of residence and
replacement/updation of EPIC

These services are available through the ECI's Voters' Services Portal.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

The **Election Commission of India** derives its constitutional authority primarily from **Article 324**, which vests in it the superintendence, direction and control of elections.

The preparation and revision of electoral rolls are principally governed by the:

- **Representation of the People Act, 1950**
- **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960**
- Instructions and directions issued by the Election Commission

Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 specifically deals with the **preparation and revision of electoral rolls**, while Sections 22 and 23 deal with correction and inclusion of names.

Key Issues and Challenges

Electoral roll revision involves balancing two objectives:

Electoral inclusion: Ensuring that genuine citizens who are eligible to vote are not excluded.

Electoral integrity: Preventing duplicate, deceased, shifted or otherwise ineligible entries from remaining on the rolls.

The process therefore requires:

- Accurate verification
- Transparent procedures
- Adequate notice and opportunity for claims and objections
- Protection of personal data
- Effective grievance redressal
- Coordination between election officials and citizens

UPSC Relevance Prelims

Focus on:

- Article 324

- Representation of the People Act, 1950
- Registration of Electors Rules, 1960
- ECI, ERO and BLO
- Intensive vs Summary Revision
- SSR vs SIR
- Electoral roll qualifying dates
- Forms 6, 6A, 7 and 8

GS Paper II - Polity & Governance

Possible Mains Question:

“An accurate electoral roll is essential for ensuring both electoral inclusion and the integrity of the democratic process. Discuss the importance and challenges of electoral roll revision in India.”

A strong answer should cover **constitutional provisions, legal framework, revision mechanisms, inclusion, transparency, data protection and grievance redressal.**

Conclusion

Electoral roll revision is not merely an administrative exercise. It is a critical component of India's democratic architecture. A credible electoral roll must simultaneously ensure **maximum inclusion of eligible voters and minimum scope for erroneous or ineligible entries.**

For UPSC aspirants, the topic provides an excellent link between **Constitutional Bodies, Electoral Reforms, Representation of the People Act, Fundamental Democratic Principles and Governance.**

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