

Current Issue

Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

Question 01

Discuss the constitutional and statutory provisions that empower the Election Commission to undertake a Special Intensive Revision (SIR). Analyse how such intensive exercises strengthen the principle of "one person, one vote" in a representative democracy.

Question Understanding - Finding Information

- **Precise Syllabus Mapping:** Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.
(GS Paper – II)
- **Marks and words limit:**
 - The marks-oriented approach to answering **(10-mark, 150-word)** questions in the question is to use **Bullet Points** (one idea per bullet point), **Brainstorming**, or a combination of both.
 - The way to score good marks in questions worth **(15 marks. 250 words)** is to use the **Heading** and **Subheading** method while writing your answers.
- **Directive words:**
 - Discuss → Explain provisions with brief description
 - Analyse → Link SIR to democratic principles with cause effect reasoning
- **Focal points of the questions:**
 - Election Commission of India (ECI)
 - Electoral rolls
 - Democratic equality
 - Representative democracy

Answer Writing Structure (Outline)

Introduction Paragraph

- Introduce ECI's constitutional role
- Mention SIR as part of electoral roll management

Body Paragraph

A. Constitutional & Statutory Basis

- Article 324 – Superintendence, direction and control of elections
- Representation of the People Act, 1950
 - Section 16 – Disqualifications
 - Section 21 – Revision of electoral rolls
- Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 – Procedural backing

Dos & Don'ts: Emphasise that SIR flows from these powers, not an ad-hoc exercise.

B. How SIR Strengthens 'One Person, One Vote'

- **Focus on:**
 - Removal of duplicate and ghost voters
 - Inclusion of eligible but excluded citizens
 - Updating migration and death data
 - Ensuring equal weight of each vote
- **Link explicitly to:**
 - Electoral equality
 - Democratic legitimacy
 - Representative governance

Conclusion (max. 40 Words)

- Normative + democratic closure

Dos & Don'ts

- **Do for Maximum Marks**

- ✓ Mention Article 324 explicitly
- ✓ Distinguish between constitutional authority and statutory procedure
- ✓ Link SIR to democratic principles, not just administration
- ✓ Keep analysis crisp and balanced

- **Don't do these Common Mistakes**

- × Don't discuss political controversies
- × Don't confuse SIR with delimitation
- × Don't over-detail operational steps
- × Don't exceed word limit

Notes Oriented Content for Writing Answer

In a representative democracy like India, the integrity of the electoral process rests on an accurate and inclusive voter list. The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is a comprehensive, house-to-house verification exercise undertaken by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure the "purity" and accuracy of the voter list. Unlike routine annual updates, SIR involves a fresh enumeration of every household, specifically aimed at addressing deep-seated errors like ghost voters, duplicate entries, and demographic shifts caused by migration.

Constitutional and Statutory Framework

The Election Commission of India (ECI) derives its authority for SIR from a combination of constitutional mandates and specific statutory provisions.

- **Constitutional Provisions:**

- **Article 324:** Grants the ECI "superintendence, direction, and control" over the preparation of electoral rolls. The Supreme Court, in the Mohinder Singh Gill (1977) case, clarified that Article 324 is a plenary power that allows the ECI to act where statutory laws are silent to ensure free and fair elections.

- **Article 326:** Establishes Universal Adult Suffrage, guaranteeing that every citizen aged 18+ has the right to be registered unless disqualified by law.
- **Statutory Provisions:**
 - **Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RPA):**
 - **Section 21(3):** Specifically empowers the ECI to order a "special revision" of the electoral roll at any time for reasons recorded in writing.
 - **Section 16 & 19:** Define eligibility (citizenship, age, and "ordinary residence") and disqualifications.
 - **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960:** Outlines the procedural steps for enrolment, handling claims, and objections.

Analysing SIR and the "One Person, One Vote" Principle

SIR is a comprehensive, house-to-house verification drive (unlike routine summary revisions) intended to "purify" the voter list. It strengthens democratic principles in the following ways:

- **Ensuring Accuracy (Integrity of the Vote):**
 - **Elimination of "Ghost Voters":** By removing deceased, permanently shifted, and duplicate entries, SIR ensures that no individual can exert more influence than another through multiple registrations.
 - **Preventing Impersonation:** Fresh house-to-house enumeration with updated photographs reduces the risk of fraudulent voting.
- **Strengthening Inclusivity (Universal Coverage):**
 - **Capturing New Electors:** SIR actively identifies and registers first-time voters and previously omitted eligible citizens, ensuring their right to "one vote" is not lost to administrative oversight.
 - **Accounting for Migration:** In a mobile society, SIR updates records to reflect where citizens "ordinarily reside," ensuring their vote is counted in the constituency where they currently live and have ties.
- **Enhancing Legitimacy and Trust:**
 - **Reducing "Turnout Bias":** Accurate rolls provide a correct denominator for calculating voter turnout, which is vital for the perceived legitimacy of a representative democracy.

- **Transparency:** The process involves political parties (through Booth Level Agents) and public disclosure of deleted names, building stakeholder confidence that the "one person, one vote" mandate is being followed fairly.

Challenges and Contemporary Concerns

- **Risk of Disenfranchisement:** Stricter documentation requirements (e.g., proving parentage or birth for registrations after 2003) may exclude marginalized groups like the poor or migrants who lack formal records.
- **Citizenship Scrutiny:** Critics argue that SIR can inadvertently turn into a de facto citizenship verification exercise, which is traditionally the domain of the Home Ministry, not the ECI.

In conclusion, the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) serves as a vital constitutional and statutory instrument that ensures the electoral roll remains a faithful reflection of the sovereign will. By systematically removing ghost voters and including newly eligible ones, SIR acts as a safeguard for democratic legitimacy. While the SIR is a powerful tool for purity, its success relies on balancing rigorous verification with procedural fairness to prevent the accidental disenfranchisement of genuine citizens.
