

LUKMAAN IAS

General Studies Paper II — Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice & IR

PYQ Trend Analysis & 2026 Expected Topics/Questions

21 Syllabus Sub-topics | 2013–2025 | UPSC Civil Services Mains

Topic-wise Popularity Ranking (2013–2025)

Ranked in descending order of frequency across 2013–2025, with approximate percentage share of all classified questions.

Rank	Syllabus Sub-topic	Qs (2013–25)	Share
1	Union-State relations, federal structure & devolution to local bodies	27	9.5%
2	Government policies/interventions for development & implementation issues	23	8.1%
2	Indian Constitution — evolution, amendments, basic structure	23	8.1%
4	Bilateral, regional and global groupings/agreements	21	7.4%
5	Development process & industry — NGOs, SHGs, donors	17	6.0%
5	Governance — transparency, accountability, e-governance	17	6.0%
7	Parliament and State Legislatures	16	5.7%
8	India and its neighbourhood relations	14	5.2%
9	International institutions, agencies and fora	14	4.9%
10	Structure/functioning of Executive and Judiciary	13	4.6%
10	Statutory, regulatory and quasi-judicial bodies	13	4.6%
12	Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections	11	3.9%
13	Separation of powers, dispute redressal mechanisms	10	3.5%
13	Constitutional Bodies — appointment, powers, functions	10	3.5%
13	Health, Education, Human Resources (Social Sector)	10	3.5%
16	Representation of the People's Act — salient features	9	3.2%
17	Comparison of Indian Constitution with other countries	8	2.8%
17	Pressure groups and formal/informal associations	8	2.8%
17	Effect of developed/developing-country policies; diaspora	8	2.8%
20	Issues relating to poverty and hunger	7	2.5%
21	Role of civil services in a democracy	5	1.8%

Social Justice & Development Processes (2013–2025)

Rank	Micro-Topic	No. of Times Asked	Specific Years Asked	Core Tested Themes & Focus Areas
1	Welfare Schemes & Vulnerable Sections	13 Times	2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025	Scheme design flaws, target leaks, gig worker social security, women's empowerment, NCPDR in digital era, child & disability rights.
2	Health	8 Times	2013, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2025	Universal Health Coverage (UHC), public-private divide, out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE), primary care, geriatric & maternal health.
3	Poverty & Hunger Issues	8 Times	2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2024, 2025	Divergence between poverty & hunger, multidimensional poverty (MPI), malnutrition cycle, resource inequality & the "paradox of poverty".
4	SHG (Self-Help Groups)	6 Times	2013, 2014, 2015, 2020, 2021, 2024	SHGs as anti-poverty tools, microfinance & asset creation, socio-cultural barriers in rural areas, state withdrawal from development.
5	Education	6 Times	2014, 2015, 2016, 2020, 2021, 2023	NEP 2020 & SDG-4, entry of foreign universities, digital divide in online education, quality & vocational skilling gaps.
6	CSOs (Civil Society Organizations / NGOs)	5 Times	2014, 2015, 2016, 2021, 2025	CSOs as anti-state vs developmental actors, environmental protection advocacy, constraints in funding (FCRA) & state oversight.
7	HRD (Human Resource Development)	4 Times	2016, 2019, 2021, 2024	Harnessing demographic dividend, education-employment disconnect, vocational skill training (<i>Earn While You Learn</i>).
8	Pressure Groups	3 Times	2013, 2017, 2025	Formal vs. informal pressure groups, influence on political process, environmental pressure groups & advocacy.
9	Informal Groups, Industries, Laws, Donors & Cooperatives	3 Times	2018, 2021, 2025	Public charitable trusts in inclusive development, CSR contributions, ministry of cooperation & cooperative reforms.

Governance (2013–2025)

Rank	Governance Micro-Topic	No. of Times Asked	Specific Years Asked	Core Tested Themes & Focus Areas
1	E-Governance	7 Times	2013, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2024, 2025	Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), routine tech application vs transformation, digital illiteracy in rural delivery, e-service models.
2	Governance / Good Governance	6 Times	2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2022, 2025	Minimum Government-Maximum Governance, public participation, decentralization models, ethics and morality in administration.
3	Transparency / RTI	5 Times	2014, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2023	RTI Act implementation bottlenecks, Section 4 proactive disclosure, information commission vacancies, DPDP vs RTI interface.
4	Role of Civil Services	5 Times	2014, 2016, 2017, 2020, 2022	Bureaucratic neutrality vs political commitment, Mission Karmayogi, lateral entry, civil services as facilitators of change.
5	Accountability	4 Times	2015, 2017, 2021, 2024	Horizontal vs vertical accountability, Lokpal/Lokayukta performance, executive discretion oversight, public grievance mechanisms.

Rank	Governance Micro-Topic	No. of Times Asked	Specific Years Asked	Core Tested Themes & Focus Areas
6	Citizen's Charter	3 Times	2013, 2018, 2022	Lack of legal enforceability, non-improvement in citizen satisfaction, Sevottam model integration.
7	Social Audit	2 Times	2015, 2019	Institutionalization in MGNREGA, resistance from local administrative machinery, Gram Sabha audit capacities.

Key Takeaways from the Updated Breakdown

1. **Welfare Schemes & Vulnerable Sections is a Non-Negotiable Core:** It has been tested **every single year** from 2013 to 2025 (13 consecutive years).
2. **Health & Poverty/Hunger Dominate Social Sector:** Combined, Health (8 times) and Poverty/Hunger (8 times) account for **16 questions**, representing the most reliable high-yield core in Social Justice.
3. **E-Governance Leads Governance:** With 7 appearances, E-Governance has overtaken traditional governance topics due to India's push toward Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and AI-assisted governance.

CONSTITUTIONAL & STATUTORY BODIES

Rank	Body / Institutional Category	Constitutional Status / Type	No. of Times Asked	Specific Years Asked	Core Focus & Tested Themes
1	Election Commission of India (ECI)	Constitutional (Art. 324)	6 Times	2013, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2022, 2024	Appointment transparency, EVM/VVPAT trust, Model Code of Conduct, electoral reforms, decriminalization of politics.
2	Finance Commission (FC)	Constitutional (Art. 280)	5 Times	2013, 2014, 2018, 2021, 2025	Horizontal/vertical tax devolution, local body grants, terms of reference, cesses/surcharges impact on fiscal federalism.
3	CAT / Tribunals & Quasi-Judicial Bodies	Constitutional/Statutory (Art. 323A/323B)	5 Times	2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2025	Tribunalization vs. judicial review (<i>L. Chandra Kumar</i>), executive interference in appointments, 2021 Tribunal reforms.
4	Regulatory Bodies (NGT, CCI, SEBI, TRAI, IBBI)	Statutory / Quasi-Judicial	4 Times	2014, 2019, 2022, 2023	NGT environmental enforcement, CCI regulating Big Tech/digital monopolies, regulatory overlap, autonomy deficits.
5	NHRC / NCW / NCPDR	Statutory Rights Commissions	4 Times	2014, 2018, 2021, 2024	"Toothless tiger" criticism, recommendatory limits, lack of independent investigative wings, child rights in digital era.
6	Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)	Constitutional (Art. 148)	3 Times	2016, 2018, 2021	Performance audit vs. policy overreach, auditing PPP projects, off-budget borrowings, digital/IT accounting.
7	NC-SC / NC-ST / NC-BC	Constitutional (Art. 338, 338A, 338B)	3 Times	2018, 2021, 2022	Reservation enforcement in minority institutions, 102nd Amendment granting constitutional status to NCBC, functional overlaps.

NOTE: YERS MAY NOT BE ABSOLUTELY CORRECT

Most Expected Topics for 2026, in Order of Priority

This priority order blends the 13-year frequency pattern above with concrete 2025–26 developments (see Section 5) most likely to be shaped into 2026 Mains questions.

Priority	Expected Topic	Sub-theme
1	Federalism under strain — Governor/President assent to bills, GST compensation-cess dispute	Polity
2	Failure of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 — delimitation & Lok Sabha expansion	Polity
3	Delimitation controversy — future of population-based reapportionment post-2026 freeze	Polity
4	Electoral reforms — Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of rolls, ECI's mandate under RPA	Polity
5	Judicial appointments — Collegium system debate, judicial independence vs. accountability	Polity
6	Basic structure doctrine and constitutional morality in recent Supreme Court jurisprudence	Polity
7	Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 — minority rights vs. state regulation of religious endowments	Polity
8	Civil service reforms — lateral entry re-calibration, Mission Karmayogi, Capacity Building Commission	Governance
9	Accountability institutions under strain — Lokpal's declining effectiveness, RTI/CIC backlog	Governance
10	e-Governance and Digital Public Infrastructure — DPDP Rules 2025, DPI diplomacy	Governance
11	Caste enumeration in Census 2027 and reservation-policy recalibration	Social Justice
12	Women's political representation — Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam's stalled rollout	Social Justice
13	Reservation jurisprudence — OBC creamy layer, EWS quota, disability rights	Social Justice
14	Health and education reforms — Ayushman Bharat expansion, NEP language-formula friction	Social Justice
15	Poverty, hunger and inequality — Global Hunger Index, "paradox of poverty"	Social Justice
16	India's strategic autonomy — balancing the US, Russia, China and the EU simultaneously	IR
17	Neighbourhood First recalibration — Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Afghanistan	IR
18	India's multilateral diplomacy — SCO, BRICS chairship 2026, QUAD/Indo-Pacific	IR
19	UN and global institutional reform — India's push for a permanent UNSC seat	IR
20	Counter-terrorism and escalation doctrine — lessons from Operation Sindoor	IR

Sub-theme-wise Most Expected Topics

The same expected topics, organised under the four GS-II sub-themes for focused revision.

1. Polity and Constitution

- Federalism under strain — Governor-President-Judiciary triad (Article 200/201/356)
- Delimitation & the failed 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill

- Electoral reforms — SIR of electoral rolls, RPA disqualification provisions
- Judicial appointments — Collegium vs. alternative models
- Basic structure doctrine & constitutional morality
- Waqf (Amendment) Act — minority rights vs. state regulation
- Vice-Presidential vacancy/election — Article 67(a) and its precedent
- One Nation One Election — status of the JPC and linked Bills

2. Governance

- Civil service reform — lateral entry, Mission Karmayogi, Capacity Building Commission
- Accountability mechanisms — Lokpal/Lokayukta effectiveness, RTI/CIC institutional strain
- e-Governance & Digital Public Infrastructure — DPDP Rules 2025, DPI diplomacy
- New criminal law (BNS/BNSS/BSA) implementation gaps
- Role of civil services in a democracy — neutrality amid reform

3. Social Justice

- Caste enumeration in Census 2027 & reservation-policy recalibration
- Women's Reservation Act — stalled implementation
- Reservation and equality jurisprudence — OBC creamy layer, EWS quota, disability rights
- Health sector reforms — Ayushman Bharat expansion, PM-ABHIM
- Education — NEP implementation, three-language formula friction
- Poverty and hunger — Global Hunger Index, inequality in resource ownership

4. International Relations (IR)

- India's strategic autonomy — US trade deal, Russia-oil ties, China thaw, EU FTA
- Neighbourhood First — Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Afghanistan-Taliban recalibration
- Multilateral diplomacy — SCO, BRICS chairship 2026, QUAD/Indo-Pacific
- UN and global institutional reform — India's UNSC push
- Counter-terrorism & escalation management — Operation Sindoor
- India-Russia strategic ties — defence/energy cooperation amid US pressure

5. Most Expected Questions for Mains 2026

Original model questions in UPSC's characteristic idiom, framed from the trend and sub-theme analysis above — illustrative of likely question construction, not leaked or verbatim UPSC questions.

Polity and Constitution

1. "The Supreme Court's basic structure doctrine has evolved from a check on Parliament's amending power to a broader safeguard of constitutional morality." Discuss. *[15 marks]*

2. Examine the recurring tensions between Governors and State governments, and suggest measures to make gubernatorial conduct more predictable and apolitical. *[15 marks]*
3. Discuss the case for and against expanding the strength of the Lok Sabha, linking it to the debate on delimitation and women's political representation. *[15 marks]*

Governance

4. "Institutional design, not the absence of political will, is the primary obstacle to effective anti-corruption bodies in India." Critically examine with reference to the Lokpal and State Lokayuktas. *[15 marks]*
5. Discuss the evolving role of civil servants amid growing lateral entry and capacity-building reforms, and its implications for civil service neutrality. *[15 marks]*
6. Examine the challenges India faces in building a robust data-protection regulatory architecture in the digital economy. *[10 marks]*

Social Justice

7. "Reservation policy in India is at a crossroads between economic and social criteria of backwardness." Discuss with reference to recent judicial pronouncements. *[15 marks]*
8. Examine why India continues to rank poorly on global hunger and nutrition indices despite sustained economic growth. *[15 marks]*
9. Discuss the challenges of implementing the New Education Policy's three-language formula in India's federal and linguistically diverse polity. *[10 marks]*

International Relations

10. "India's foreign policy increasingly rests on multi-alignment rather than non-alignment or strict strategic autonomy." Critically examine. *[15 marks]*
11. Examine the changing dynamics of India's neighbourhood policy in the context of recent political transitions in South Asia. *[15 marks]*
12. Discuss the significance of India's chairship of BRICS in 2026 for its global positioning amid competing multilateral blocs. *[10 marks]*

6. Current-Affairs Pipeline: August 2025 – August 2026

Major dated developments most likely to feed 2026 Mains questions, organised by sub-theme. Coverage is reliable through approximately mid-to-late July 2026; a final news scan closer to the exam is recommended for the last 1–2 weeks.

1. Polity and Constitution

- **Nov 2025** — SC's Presidential Reference verdict holds courts cannot impose timelines on President/Governors for assenting to bills, reversing the effect of the 2025 Tamil Nadu Governor case — tests Article 200/201, separation of powers.

- **Apr 2026** — Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 — seeking to expand Lok Sabha from 543 to up to 850 seats and operationalise the Women's Reservation Act — defeated in Lok Sabha, falling 54 votes short of the required two-thirds majority.
- **2025-26** — Delimitation-freeze controversy: southern states demand a 25-year extension of the 1976 (1971-census-based) freeze, fearing a net loss of 27-35 Lok Sabha seats to northern states.
- **Oct 2025-May 2026** — Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls rolled out nationwide (12+ states/UTs); Opposition alleges disenfranchisement risk; SC ultimately upholds ECI's mandate under the RPA.
- **Jul-Sep 2025** — Vice-Presidential vacancy: Jagdeep Dhankhar's unusual mid-term resignation (Article 67(a)); C.P. Radhakrishnan elected in the ensuing poll.
- **Ongoing (to Jul 2026)** — One Nation One Election JPC tenure repeatedly extended; still no final report on the linked Constitutional Amendment and UT Laws Bills.
- **Sep 2025 (interim)** — SC's interim verdict on the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 stays the '5-years practising Islam' clause pending final hearing on its constitutionality.
- **Feb 2026 onward** — GST Council fiscal-federalism dispute — states demand a 5-year compensation guarantee after GST 2.0 rate cuts eroded revenue, with the compensation-cess arrangement lapsing.

2. Governance

- **Apr-May 2026** — Lateral entry re-calibration with reservation compliance after the 2024 rollback; Mission Karmayogi marks its 5th anniversary with the Capacity Building Commission's continued rollout.
- **Nov 2025** — Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, 2025 notified — phased rollout establishes India's first comprehensive data-privacy regulatory architecture.
- **Oct 2025** — Lokpal's declining effectiveness flagged — complaints crashed from ~2,469 (2022-23) to 233 (2025); a Parliamentary panel notes its inquiry/prosecution wings remain non-operational.
- **Dec 2025** — RTI/CIC institutional strain — new Chief Information Commissioner takes charge amid a backlog of ~26,800 pending appeals and persistent commissioner vacancies.
- **Jul 2026** — Digital India marks 11 years — India Stack/DPI MoUs signed with 24+ countries; UPI now live in 8+ countries, illustrating e-governance as a foreign-policy/soft-power tool too.
- **2025-26** — Two years into rollout, the new criminal laws (BNS/BNSS/BSA) show ambiguous definitions and training/infrastructure shortfalls in police and judiciary.

3. Social Justice

- **Apr 2025 (approved); Apr-Sep 2026 (fieldwork)** — Caste enumeration included in Census 2027 — first caste count since 1931 — a landmark for welfare targeting and reservation-policy debates.
- **Oct 2025** — Global Hunger Index 2025 — India ranks 102/123 ("serious" category), a marginal improvement but still behind Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka on some measures.
- **Mar 2026** — SC rules income alone cannot be the sole determinant of OBC "creamy layer" status, reopening the economic-vs-social-backwardness debate.
- **2025-26** — SC reaffirms the 103rd Amendment's EWS quota does not breach the basic structure; also rules SC/ST/OBC/EWS candidates can claim unreserved seats on merit.
- **2025-26** — Disability-rights jurisprudence strengthens — SC strikes down disability-based exclusions in judicial service rules and MBBS admissions; orders footpath-accessibility measures.
- **2025-26** — NEP implementation friction — full 5+3+3+4 structural rollout proceeds, but the three-language formula draws political pushback in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

- **Jun 2026** — Ayushman Bharat expansion — West Bengal becomes the 36th state/UT to join; PM-JAY and PM-ABHIM allocations rise sharply in Budget 2026-27.
- **Apr 2026** — Women's Reservation Act (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) notified 30 months late, but its actual implementation depends on the now-defeated 131st Amendment Bill — leaving it in limbo.

4. International Relations

- **May 2025** — Operation Sindoor — India strikes multiple sites in Pakistan/PoK after a terror attack; ceasefire follows within days amid continued drone incursions — a landmark case in India's counter-terror doctrine.
- **Feb 2026** — India-US trade deal announced — reciprocal tariffs cut from 50% to 18% in exchange for India curbing Russian oil purchases, testing India's strategic autonomy.
- **Jan 2026** — India-EU Free Trade Agreement signed in New Delhi — the largest trade pact either side has concluded, still pending ratification.
- **Dec 2025** — Putin's India visit (23rd India-Russia Summit) — discounted oil/LNG/nuclear-fuel and defence cooperation discussed, signalling calibration under US pressure.
- **Aug-Sep 2025; Jan 2026 onward** — SCO Summit (Tianjin) and India's BRICS chairship from January 2026, hosting the 18th BRICS Summit — tests India's multi-alignment diplomacy.
- **2025-26** — India-China border thaw continues post-Depsang/Demchok disengagement; ~75% of disengagement issues resolved per the EAM, though friction persists.
- **Oct 2025-Jan 2026** — India-Afghanistan rapprochement — Taliban FM's India visit, Kabul embassy reopened, Taliban chargé d'affaires accepted in Delhi.
- **2025-26** — Neighbourhood-first recalibration — Bangladesh ties strained post-Hasina; Nepal's political crisis and 2026 elections; Maldives reset via a fresh India visit and debt relief.
- **Feb 2026** — UNSC reform push intensifies — India (via G4) demands expansion from 15 to 25-26 seats, opposed by the Pakistan-led "Uniting for Consensus" bloc.

7. Current-Affairs-Pegged Expected Questions

Questions tied directly to the named 2025–26 developments in Section 6 — the highest-probability, most specific question set in this report.

Polity and Constitution

13. The Supreme Court's November 2025 ruling on Presidential/Gubernatorial assent to bills reaffirms separation of powers but leaves federal disputes unresolved. Discuss, with reference to Articles 200 and 201. *[15 marks]*
14. Critically examine the circumstances that led to the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, and its implications for delimitation and women's political representation. *[15 marks]*

Governance

15. Discuss the significance of the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025 in establishing India's regulatory architecture for data privacy. *[10 marks]*
16. "Institutional design failures, not lack of intent, explain the Lokpal's declining effectiveness." Examine. *[15 marks]*

Social Justice

17. Examine the implications of including caste enumeration in the 2027 Census for India's reservation policy and welfare targeting. *[15 marks]*
18. Discuss the Supreme Court's 2026 ruling on the OBC "creamy layer" criterion and its impact on social justice jurisprudence. *[10 marks]*

International Relations

19. "India's foreign policy in 2025-26 reflects strategic autonomy under multipolar pressure." Discuss with reference to India's simultaneous engagement with the US, Russia, China and the EU. *[15 marks]*
20. Examine India's recalibrated Neighbourhood First policy in light of recent political transitions in Bangladesh, Nepal and Afghanistan. *[15 marks]*

8. Key Caveats

- This analysis is a preparation aid, not a guarantee — UPSC frequently innovates question framing even on recurring themes; treat 'expected topics' as priority areas for depth of preparation, not spot-guessing.
- Sub-topic rankings for the thinnest categories (Role of civil services, Poverty and hunger, Comparison with other countries, Diaspora/foreign-policy effects) rest on small samples (5–8 questions across 13 years) and should be treated with more caution than the top-ranked topics.
- The current-affairs pipeline (Section 6) is current through approximately mid-to-late July 2026; developments in the final 1–2 weeks before the exam are not captured and should be checked separately.
- Some questions in the underlying research are cross-listed at the GS2/GS3 boundary (e.g., FDI, Gati Shakti, inflation/unemployment) — these are genuine GS2 exam questions but sit close to Economy-paper territory, which may slightly inflate the 'Government policies for development' count.