

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/india-has-22446-as-per-new-census-they-need-the-support-of-local-communities-to-survive>

Wildlife & Biodiversity

India has 22,446 elephants, as per new census; they need the support of local communities to survive

Strengthening corridors and connectivity, restoration of habitat, improving protection strategies and mitigation of developmental projects need of the hour

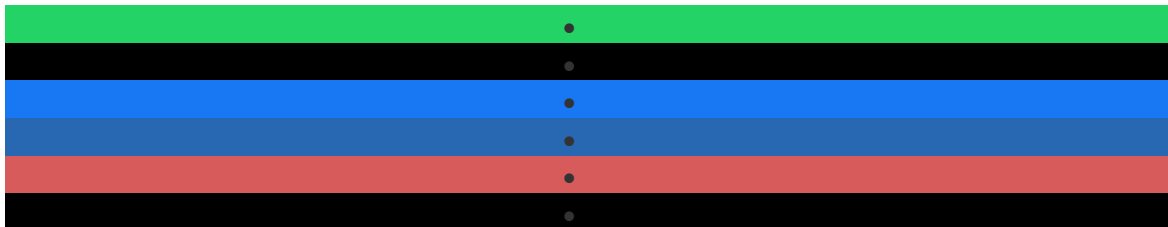


An Indian Elephant. Photo: iStock

[Rajat Ghai](#)

Published on:

15 Oct 2025, 9:09 am



India has 22,446 elephants, according to the latest census findings released on October 15, 2025. Support of local communities is vital for pachyderm conservation, according to the report.

The new nationwide estimate is unique as it uses DNA-based mark-recapture for the first time in India. "...given the methodological changes, it is not comparable to past figures and may be treated as a new monitoring baseline for further research, monitoring and estimation," *Status of Elephants in India: DNA based synchronous all India population estimation of elephants* noted.

The numbers

The survey divided elephant populations into four regions: Western Ghats, Central India and Eastern Ghats, Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains and North Eastern Hills & Brahmaputra Flood Plains.

The Western Ghats harbour the largest number of elephants in India at 11,934. The population is spread across Karnataka (6,013), Tamil Nadu (3,136) and Kerala 2,785.

However, the report noted that the population in the Ghats is in danger. "The once-contiguous elephant population in the Western Ghats is rapidly disconnecting due to changing land use, including expanding commercial plantations (coffee and tea), invasive plants, farmland fencing, human encroachment and mushrooming developmental projects."

This fragmentation, it said, jeopardises habitat contiguity, emphasising the importance of safeguarding the connectivity in the landscape to enable free movement between the populations without escalating conflicts.

The North Eastern Hills & Brahmaputra Flood Plains harbour the second largest population of elephants in India at 6,559. The population is spread across Arunachal Pradesh (617), Assam (4,159), Manipur (9), Meghalaya (677), Mizoram (16), Nagaland (252), Tripura (153) and northern West Bengal (676).

Like the Western Ghats, this population too is facing challenges. "However, historical exploitation of natural resources since the colonial era, driven by the productive nature of the floodplains and geopolitical considerations, has led to habitat fragmentation and increased conflicts. Currently, elephants are distributed in pockets amid various human land use patterns, including habitation, tea plantations, and mines," as per the analysis.

It added that it is crucial to ensure corridor connectivity across habitat patches, and better strategies for law enforcement monitoring, for the long-term survival of this species in the landscape. Electrocutation and railway collisions cause a significant number of elephant fatalities, while mining and highway construction disrupt habitats, intensifying man-wildlife conflicts.

The Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains support a population of 2,062 individuals, with Uttarakhand (1,792) constituting the highest population, followed by Uttar Pradesh (257) and Bihar (13).

There are 1,891 animals in Central India and Eastern Ghats: Jharkhand (217), Odisha (912), Madhya Pradesh (97), Chhattisgarh (451), Maharashtra (Western Ghats & Gadchiroli) (63), southern West Bengal (31) and Andhra Pradesh (120).

“Elephant habitats in the East Central landscape face fragmentation and deterioration from unmitigated mining and linear infrastructure construction, habitat degradation due to invasive plant species and human use. This has prompted long-ranging elephants to venture into historical range, but currently unoccupied areas, resulting in escalating conflicts with humans lacking cultural coexistence experience and posing a threat to elephant populations,” observed the assessment.

It concluded that the “critical aspect to ensure conservation of Asiatic elephants in the country needs the support of local communities. There is an urgent need to devise policy mechanisms for uniform compensation across areas with elephant presence, prioritizing the well-being of these communities.”

The report added that with increasing human elephant interface, reducing habitat and connectivity, it is important to critically analyse and arrive at future strategies that will not exacerbate existing threats. “Strengthening corridors and connectivity, restoration of habitat, improving protection strategies and mitigation of developmental projects are the need of the hour to ensure the well-being of these gentle giants.”

[elephants](#)

[Elephant Census](#)

[Status of Elephants in India: DNA based synchronous all India population estimation of elephants](#)