

Less than 1000 women senior officers in India's 20.3 lakh police force, says 2025 India Justice Report

Southern states sweep top ranks, Karnataka retains 1st position

Some improvements:

- 78% of all Police Stations have Women Help Desks
- The share of women in district judiciary is 38%
- 86% of all prisons now have video conferencing facilities
- The per capita spend on legal aid nearly doubled between 2019 and 2023, reaching Rs 6.46

But, nationally, persistent lacunae:

- Not a single state/UT meets their own reserved quotas for women in the police
- Within the district judiciary, the share of STs is 5% and SCs is 14%
- Within the Police, the share of STs is 12% and SCs is 17%
- The number of paralegal volunteers hits a record low; drop by 38% over the past 5 years
There are only 25 psychologists/psychiatrists available across prisons nationwide

15 April, New Delhi: The 2025 India Justice Report (IJR), India's only ranking of states on delivery of justice in the country, released today, has revealed that **India's 20.3 lakh strong police force has less than 1000 women officers in senior ranks** like Superintendents and Director-Generals. Including non IPS officers, the number is just over 25,000. Women officers in non-IPS ranks comprise just 8% of the 3.1 lakh total officers, with 90% of women in police in the constabulary.

The IJR, a unique periodic report, **ranks Karnataka first overall**, with the state retaining its top spot among the 18 Large and Mid-sized states (with populations of over one crore each). It was followed by Andhra Pradesh, climbing from fifth in 2022 to second, Telangana (2022 ranking: 3rd), and Kerala (2022 ranking: 6th).

The five southern states dominated the rankings, owing to better performance across the four pillars in comparison to other states. **Karnataka is the only state that met its caste quotas (SC, ST, and OBC) in both the police** (at the constabulary and officer level) **as well as in the district judiciary**. Kerala has the lowest vacancy among High Court judges. Tamil Nadu performs the best in prisons with one of the lowest occupancy rates (77%, compared to the national average of over 131%). Telangana and Andhra Pradesh also outperform other states, particularly with regards to the Police, ranking 1st and 2nd on that pillar respectively.

Sikkim (2022 ranking: 1st), topped the table among the seven Small States (with populations less than one crore each), followed by Himachal Pradesh (2022: 6th), and Arunachal Pradesh (2022: 2nd). Among other states, **between IJR 2022 and 2025, Bihar recorded the most improvement**, followed by Chhattisgarh and Odisha. Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand also performed better than 7 other states including Haryana, Telangana, and Gujarat on the improvement scorecard ([See: Improvement Scorecard in Infographics](#)).

Women in Police: Where are they?

- Out of the **2,42,835** total women in police, 960 are within the IPS ranks (Total 7,450: DIG, DG, IG, AIGP, Adl SP, ADLSP / Dy. Com)
- **24, 322** women are within non IPS ranks (Total 3,10,444: DySP, Inspector, SI and ASI)
- **1003** DySPs are women (Total 11,406: DySPs). Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of DySPs: 133.
- **2, 17,553** women in the Constabulary (Total 17, 24,312: Head constables and Constables)

The India Justice Report (IJR) was first initiated by Tata Trusts, with the first ever ranking published in 2019. This is the fourth edition of the report, in collaboration with partners including the Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, DAKSH, TISS–Prayas, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, and How India Lives, IJR’s data partner.

Discussing the India Justice Report, **Justice (Retd.) Madan B. Lokur** commented, *“The punishing process of accessing justice begins with the very first encounter an individual has with the system. With our failure to properly equip and train frontline justice providers—police stations, legal aid actors including paralegal volunteers and district courts—we fracture public trust. These institutions are intended to embody our commitment to equal justice. The strength of our entire justice framework rests on these critical first points of contact. The fourth edition of the India Justice Report points out that improvements remain few and far between in the absence of adequate attention given to resources. Alas, the burden continues to remain on the individual seeking justice, and not the state to provide it.”*

Ms. Maja Daruwala, Chief Editor, India Justice Report, highlighted, *“As India moves forward into a hundred years of being a democratic, rule of law nation, the promise of rule of law and equal rights will remain hollow unless underwritten by a reformed justice system. Reform is not optional. It is urgent. A well-resourced responsive justice system is a constitutional imperative that must be experienced as an everyday reality available to every citizen.”*

Through a rigorous 24-month quantitative research, the IJR 2025, similar to the previous three, has tracked the performance of states in **capacitating their Justice delivery structures** to effectively deliver mandated services. Based on the latest official statistics from authoritative government sources, it brings together otherwise siloed data on the **four pillars of Justice delivery – Police, Judiciary, Prisons, and Legal Aid**. Each pillar was analysed through the prism of budgets, human resources, workload, diversity, infrastructure, and trends (intention to improve over a five-year period), against the state’s own declared standards and benchmarks. This edition also separately assesses the capacity of the 25 State Human Rights Commissions (*see SHRC brief for more*) and consists of essays on mediation and access to justice for persons with disabilities.

The ranking of the 18 large-and mid-sized states is:

State	Rank 2025	Rank 2022
Karnataka	1	1
Andhra Pradesh	2	5
Telangana	3	3
Kerala	4	6

State	Rank 2025	Rank 2022
Tamil Nadu	5	2
Chhattisgarh	6	9
Madhya Pradesh	7	8
Odisha	8	11
Punjab	9	10
Maharashtra	10	12
Gujarat	11	4
Haryana	12	13
Bihar	13	16
Rajasthan	14	15
Jharkhand	15	7
Uttarakhand	16	14
Uttar Pradesh	17	18
West Bengal	18	17
State	Rank 2025	Rank 2022
Sikkim	1	1
Himachal Pradesh	2	6
Arunachal Pradesh	3	2
Tripura	4	3
Meghalaya	5	4
Mizoram	6	5
Goa	7	7

The ranking of the seven small states is:

Encouraging improvements, but persistent gaps:

Vacancy:

Judiciary: For 1.4 billion people, India has 21,285 judges, or approximately **15 judges per million population**. This continues to be significantly below the 1987 Law Commission’s recommendation of 50 judges per million population. **Vacancy among High Court judges is at 33%, and 21% at the district judiciary.** This translates to considerably high workload for judges, especially in the High Courts. For example, in Allahabad and Madhya Pradesh High Courts, the caseload per judge amounts to 15,000 cases. Nationally, in the district courts, the average workload is **2,200 cases per judge**.

Police: With a **28% officer vacancy and 21% vacancy among constables**, the national police to population ratio is 831. While the suggested international standard is 222 police persons per lakh population, in India, only **120 police persons are available per lakh population** (as per actual strength).

Prisons: With a **28% vacancy among Officers, 28% in Cadre Staff, and 44% in Correctional Staff**, high vacancies among prison staff continue to be a cause for concern. There is a **43% vacancy among medical officers**. While the Model Prison Manual (2016) benchmarks the prisoner-doctor ratio as 300 prisoners to 1 doctor, India's national average stands at **775 prisoners per doctor**. In fact, several large states, including Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal, had one doctor for over 1,000 prisoners.

Forensics: Within forensics, the **administrative staff vacancy is 47%**, and that of **scientific staff is 49%**.

Paralegal volunteers or PLVs: Community-based PLVs have **dropped in numbers by 38%** between 2019 and 2024, with Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Punjab reporting the largest drops. Now, there are only **3 PLVs per lakh population**. Nationally, out of more than 53,000 PLVs trained, **just one-third were actually deployed**.

Infrastructure:

There has been improvement in certain infrastructural facilities, such as an increase in the **share of prisons with video conferencing facilities (86%)**, a slight reduction in **courthall shortfall (14.5%)**, improvement in the **share of police stations with CCTVs (83%)** and **legal service clinics per jail** (1,215 clinics across 1,330 prisons). There has been a decline in **legal service clinics in villages** (from 42 villages per clinic in 2017 to only 163 in 2024). All India, between January 2017 and January 2023, **rural police stations** have reduced by 735, whereas **urban police stations** saw an increase of 193.

Infrastructural deficits are visible in prisons nationally. India's prisons are over-occupied, with a **national average occupancy rate of more than 131%**. As of 2022, 1 in every 3 prisons in Uttar Pradesh recorded an occupancy rate of over 250%. At its current rate, India's prison inmate population is projected to touch 6.8 Lakhs by 2030 while its prison capacity is likely to grow to 5.15 Lakhs at the existing rate of capacity.

More than two-thirds of prisoners (76%) are undertrials. A larger share of undertrials are spending more time in prisons, with the share of those staying in prisons between 3-5 years nearly doubling from 3.4% in 2012 to 6% in 2022. Further, those spending more than 5 years in prison has tripled, rising from 0.8% to 2.6% over the same period.

Performance of UTRCs: Data between 2019 and 2023 reveals significant variations in performance across states. The committees have recommended the release of almost 2.5 lakh prisoners across the country, with the median rate of release at 47 per cent.

Diversity:

SC/ST/OBC: 59% of the Police consists of personnel from SC, ST or OBC categories. However, there is a high rank-wise disparity. While **61% of the constabulary** consists of personnel from SC, ST or OBC caste categories, their share in senior positions like that of the **DySPs falls to 16%**.

Judges: At the district judiciary, only **5% of judges belong to STs and 14% are from SCs**. Out of the 698 high court judges appointed since 2018, only **37 judges are from SC and ST categories**.

Gender: With an enhanced focus on diversity, **the share of women in police has increased marginally to 12%**, however, at the **officer level, it is stagnating at only 8%**. **89% of the total female police force falls within constabulary positions only**.

There is also a **higher share of women judges in the district court (38%)** as compared to the **High Courts (14%) and the Supreme Court (6%)**. Currently, there is only **one woman Chief Justice across the 25 High Courts**.

Budgets for Justice:

The per capita spend on **Legal Aid struggles to reach the Rs 7 mark** while the **spend on police has grown by 55% over 6 years, with the national average now nearing Rs. 1300**. The spend on training, however, remains severely low, with the **national average share of training budget in the police budget at 1.25%**.

- **Legal Aid:** The national per capita spend on legal aid is a meagre **Rs 6.46** per annum
- **Prisons:** The national per capita spend on prisons is **Rs. 57**. In 2022-23, the national average spend per prisoner increased to Rs 44,110 from Rs 38,028 in 2021-22. Andhra Pradesh records the highest annual spend on a prisoner at Rs.2,67,673.
- **Judiciary:** The national per capita spend on judiciary stands at **Rs. 182**. No state spends more than one per cent of its total annual expenditure on the Judiciary.
- **Police:** The national per capita spend on police is at **Rs. 1,275** – the highest among the four pillars.

The IJR 2025 has reiterated both immediate and foundational corrections. It has flagged urgent filling of vacancies and increased representation. To effect irreversible change, it has exhorted that Justice delivery be designated as an essential service.

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Sources:

- 1. Police: Data on Police Organisation 2023, Bureau of Police Research and Development**
- 2. Prisons: Prison Statistics India 2022, National Crime Records Bureau**

3. Judiciary: 2024 & 2025- National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), Court News, Supreme Court of India; eCourts Services; Websites and annual reports of High Courts, Department of Justice

4. Legal aid: 2024, Statistics from National Legal Services Authority

ANNEXURE I:

OVERALL NATIONAL FINDINGS: AT A GLANCE

VACANCIES:

Nationally, vacancies in the justice system are at:

- **Police:** 21% (Constables); 28% (Officers)
- **Prisons:** 28% (Officers), 28% (Cadre Staff), 44% (Correctional Staff), 40% (Medical Staff), 43% (Medical Officers)
- **Judiciary:** 33% (High Court Judges), 21% (district Court Judges), 27% (High Court Staff)
- **Legal aid:** 6% (DLSA Secretary)

Improvements:

- **Police:** Bihar in constabulary from 30% to 23%, and Karnataka among officers from 11% to 1.2%
- **Prisons:** Madhya Pradesh from 72% to 31% among medical officers and Uttar Pradesh from 36% to 25% among officers
- **Judiciary:** Puducherry among district Court judges from 58% to 28%, and Tripura among High Court judges from 40 % to nil.
- **Legal aid:** Arunachal Pradesh for DLSA secretaries from 100% to nil

DIVERSITY

SC/ST/OBC Representation:

- Share in **Police:** **OBC:** 31%, **SC:** 17%, **ST:** 12%
- Share in **Judiciary:** **OBC:** 25.6%, **SC:** 14%, **ST:** 5%
- Karnataka remains the only state to consistently meet its quota for SC, ST and OBC positions, both among Police officers and the constabulary.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **CCTVs:** About 17% of police stations do not have a single CCTV. Nearly three in 10 police stations do not have women help desks.
- **Occupancy:** 56% (724 prisons) run above 100% capacity, with about 20% (262 prisons) recording occupancy rates between 150%-250%. **176 prisons in the country record occupancy rate of more than 200%**

● **Under trials:** With the exception of Arunachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the undertrial

WOMEN IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM: CHANGE OVER 5 YEARS OF THE INDIA JUSTICE REPORT

Police:

- The overall share of women in the police has increased from 7.28% in 2016 to 12.32% in 2022.
- In the same period, at the officer level it has increased from 5.5% to 7.9%
- Number of women in IPS ranks in 2022: 960
- 15 states/UTs still have less than 10% women in police

Judiciary:

- The overall share of women judges in district judiciary has increased from 30% in 2017 to 38.3% in 2025
- Among the High Court judges the growth is from 11.4% in 2018 to 14% in 2025

Legal Aid:

- Share of women in panel lawyers has increased from 18% in 2018 to 28% in 2024
- Share of women paralegal volunteers has grown from 36% in 2019 to 42% in 2024

WORKLOAD

- **Judiciary:**

Pending cases: Barring Karnataka, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Tripura, **1 in every two cases pending for more than three years in all High Courts.** At the district courts, Andaman & Nicobar, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal record **over 40% of all cases pending for over three years.**

- **Police:**

Population per civil police: Nationally, 1 civil police personnel is available for 831 persons

- **Prisons:**

Medical Officers: India has only 740 medical officers for its over 573,220 prison inmates. This averages to one doctor for 775 inmates. There are only 25 psychologists/psychiatrists available across all prisons.