**Kerala ranks 1st in Judiciary; recorded Lowest Vacancy in HC Judges and Staff reveals IJR 2025**

***Some encouraging improvements:***

* Nearly half of district court judges are women
* One of the states to record below 10% vacancies among constabulary in police
* Fulfils SC and OBC quotas among constables and a high representation (97%) among STs
* 9% undertrial prisoners detained for 1-3 years - one of the lowest shares among states

***Persistent lacunae:***

* Only 3% women among police officers - lowest in the country
* Poor representation of ST judges in district courts - 84% vacancy against a 2% reservation

**15 April, Thiruvananthapuram:** The 2025 India Justice Report (IJR), India’s only ranking of states on delivery of justice in the country, released today, ranks Kerala 1st in Judiciary and 3rd in Prisons, while Overall it was ranked 4th (2022: 6th) among the 18 Large and Mid-sized states (with population of over one crore each).

The top overall position was retained by Karnataka, followed by Andhra Pradesh, climbing from fifth in 2022 to second, Telangana (2022 ranking: 3rd), and Kerala (2022 ranking: 6th). Among the seven small states (with populations less than one crore each), Sikkim (2022: 1st) ranked first, followed by Himachal Pradesh (2022: 6th) and Arunachal Pradesh (2022: 2nd).

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.

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.

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*.”

**Kerala’s Ranks: Pillar Wise**

|  | **IJR 4** | **IJR 3** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OVERALL** | **4** | 6 |
| **POLICE** | **15** | 17 |
| **PRISONS** | **3** | 4 |
| **JUDICIARY** | **1** | 4 |
| **LEGAL AID**  | **6** | 6 |

**Improving vacancies across justice system**

Between 2022 and 2025, Kerala sharply reduced vacancies among High Court (from 21% to 4%); and high court staff (from 17% to 4%) – the lowest in the country. District court judge vacancies also reduced from 16% to 13%. In prisons, it registered vacancies below 10% among prison officers (9%) and correctional staff (7%).

Among the police, there was a 16% shortfall among officers and a 6% among constables - one of the lowest among large states and it was the only state to report the lowest vacancies among administrative staff (nil) and scientific staff (4%) in the forensic department.

**Low Gender and ST Representation**

Nearly half of the state’s district court judges are women but they account for a meagre 9% at the High Court in 2025. At 3%, Kerala also recorded the lowest share of women police officers in the country. Among the district judiciary, the state met and exceeded OBC quota fulfillment but registered poor representation of Scheduled Tribes recording over 80% vacancies.

**Prisons**

Kerala’s prisons were 6% over their capacity in 2022. While there were no prisons that recorded over 250% occupancy rates, 42% (24 of 57 prisons) recorded occupancy rates between 150-250%. Share of undertrials detained for 1-3 years (9%) was one of the lowest in the country.

**Legal Aid**

In 2022-23, Kerala spent just over Rs. 10 per capita on legal aid. There was a drop in the number of legal service clinics from 101 in 2022 to just 66 in 2024, averaging one legal service clinic serving over 15 villages. DLSA secretary vacancies stood at 23% and despite over 1 lakh cases being taken up by Lok Adalats in the state, it could dispose of only 24%.

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**

**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 |
| 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 |

**The ranking of the seven small states is:**

| **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 |











| ***BUDGETS FOR JUSTICE AT A GLANCE**** **Legal Aid:** The national per capita spend on legal aid, is a meagre **Rs 6** per annum
* **Prisons:** The national per capita spend on prisons is **Rs. 57**. In 2022-23, the national average spend per prisoner has 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** which is the highest among the four pillars.
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