**Odisha district courts have 2% ST judges, reveals India Justice Report 2025**

***Some encouraging improvements:***

* Recorded a 30% increase in prison budget allocation and utilised over 90%.
* Nearly one in every two district court judges
* Added 10% prison capacity, the highest in the country, thereby ensuring no overcrowding

***Persistent lacunae:***

* Medical staff vacancy increased to 51% in 2022 from 46% in 2021
* Over 55% cases were pending for more than 3 years at both High Court and district courts.
* Odisha recorded poor representation of Scheduled Tribes among district judges - only 2% in 2025. ST reservation is 23%.
* One legal service clinic served 373 villages

**15 April, Bhubaneswar:** The 2025 India Justice Report (IJR), India’s only ranking of states on delivery of justice in the country, released today, ranks Odisha 6th in Prisons and 8th in Police, while overall it was ranked 8th (2022: 11th) 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**, said, “*It is heartening to note that Odisha took concrete steps to reduce overcrowding in its prisons. In 2021, taking note of the severe overcrowding in Odisha’s prisons which was highlighted by IJR 2020, the honourable Chief Justice of Odisha High Court had passed directions to the DG Prisons, and it is a result of the state’s positive actions that we see a remarkable improvement in Odisha’s prison ranking*.”

**Odisha’s Ranks: Pillar Wise**

|  | **IJR 4** | **IJR 3** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OVERALL** | **8** | 11 |
| **POLICE** | **8** | 4 |
| **PRISONS** | **6** | 11 |
| **JUDICIARY** | **12** | 13 |
| **LEGAL AID**  | **8** | 10 |

**Improving capacity in prisons**

Odisha’s 92 prisons recorded an average occupancy rate of 83% in 2022, down from 99% in 2021. It recorded no prisons with over 250% occupancy and only 2.2% with an occupancy between 150-250% - the lowest among large states. Budget allocation towards prisons improved by 30% between 2021-22 and 2022-23 and consequently there was a 59% increase in spend per inmate.

However, its prisons run with persistent, overall staff[[1]](#footnote-0) shortfall of 28%. Within the prison staff, nearly half of the medical staff is missing and there is a 63% shortfall among doctors. Correctional staff vacancy stood at 45%.

**Increasing vacancies across justice system**

As of 2025 vacancies range from 46% in HC (second highest after Uttar Pradesh) and a 20% vacancy among district court judges. More than 1 in three HC staff was missing. In police, as of 2023, Odisha had 22% vacancy in constabulary and 24% among officers. In the Odisha Forensic department, 1 in every two scientific staff is missing in the forensic labs.

In 2022, the state could meet ST and OBC quotas among the constabulary as it has fulfilled since 2016. Among ST officers however, there has been a shortfall of over 30% since 2010. Between 2010 and 2022, the state has been unable to meet SC quotas but has shown a steady improvement in filling positions among officers with vacancies reducing from 57% in 2010; 27% in 2016 to 17% in 2022.

In the judiciary, however, Odisha records poor fulfilment of caste quotas. There was an 82% vacancy among SC judges; 98% among ST and 36% among OBC judges. Women accounted for just 6% among the higher judiciary - well below the 14% national average. In the lower judiciary, nearly half (48%) of all judges were women.

In legal aid, Odisha registered over 85% disposal of cases by Lok Adalats. Women accounted for 69% among DLSA secretaries - the highest in the country - and 38% among PLVs despite their numbers having halved since 2019. There were just 128 legal service clinics for its 48000 villages, averaging to one clinic serving 373 villages.

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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1. Overall staff includes officers, cadre staff, correctional staff, medical staff and medical officers, [↑](#footnote-ref-0)