



Crimes Against Women in India: Trends, Challenges, and Policy Responses

10
25

Tanvi Saxena



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES	5
3. EMPIRICAL TRENDS: REGIONAL & URBAN-RURAL VARIATION	6
4. SHIFTS IN CRIME CATEGORIES OVER TIME (2018-2022)	6
5. POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS	9
6. POLICY GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS	11
7. CASE VIGNETTE	12
8. CONCLUSION	13
9. REFERENCES	14

If you have any suggestions, or would like to contribute, please write to us at contact@sprf.in

© Social Policy Research Foundation™

OCTOBER 2025

Issue Brief

Crimes Against Women in India: **Trends, Challenges, and Policy Responses**

II BACKGROUND

Crimes against women have always been and remain a pressing societal and policy concern in India, cutting across domestic, public, and digital spaces. Despite legislative reforms and institutional mechanisms, women continue to face violence in multiple forms—domestic abuse, sexual assault, trafficking, cyber harassment, and workplace exploitation—shaped by structural inequalities and gaps in enforcement.

Recent statistics highlight both the persistence and evolution of this problem. The [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB, 2022\)](#) reported 4,45,256 cases of crimes against women in India ([Chapter 3, Table 3A.1, p. 211](#)), a 4% increase from the previous year, averaging [51 complaints every hour](#). State- and city-level variations reveal stark regional disparities. The national average crime rate against women in 2022 was 66.4 per lakh women (NCRB, 2022, Ch. 3A, p. 211). In comparison, Delhi (144.4), Haryana (118.7), and Telangana (117.6) recorded rates almost two to three times higher than the national average. Complementary surveys suggest that the true extent of violence against women is far higher than what official crime data captures. Findings from the [National Family Health Survey–5 \(2019–21\)](#) show that 32% of ever-married women in India have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their husbands in their lifetime, while 6.1% reported sexual violence specifically ([ResearchGate, 2023](#); [Ramamurthy et al., 2025](#)). These figures underscore the significant gap between lived realities and reported crime, pointing to persistent underreporting in the formal system.

These trends have shaped a dual policy trajectory. On one hand, long-standing frameworks such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and the post-Nirbhaya amendments to the Indian Penal Code remain foundational. On the other, newer measures—documented in the [Ministry of Women and Child Development's Annual Report \(MWCD, 2025\)](#)—emphasize One Stop Centres, women's helpdesks, digital complaint systems, and expanded helplines. Reports from the [National Commission for Women \(NCW, 2025\)](#) further illustrate how institutional responses are adapting to changing forms of victimization, particularly cyber-enabled crimes.

At the same time, the reliability and comparability of statistics remain a persistent challenge. Variations between NCRB's crime data, [MoSPI's state-wise incidence rates \(2022\)](#), and survey-based findings such as NFHS-5 highlight the need to interpret official figures with caution, recognizing the influence of underreporting, stigma, and uneven institutional capacity. The government's push for greater transparency through the [National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy \(NDSAP\)](#) represents a step toward more open and usable data, while recent NCW and MWCD reports underline the importance of aligning statistical monitoring with responsive policy frameworks. Situating crimes against women at this intersection of data, lived realities, and evolving interventions, this paper argues for a dynamic policy approach that is evidence-driven, context-sensitive, and attentive to both structural barriers and emerging forms of victimisation.

II METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

This paper draws upon multiple official datasets and government reports to provide a comprehensive picture of crimes against women in India. The primary source is the [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\) Report 2022](#), which remains the most widely cited administrative dataset on crime. Chapter 3A (state and union territory level) and Chapter 3B (metropolitan city level) are particularly significant, offering disaggregated data that captures both regional disparities and urban–rural differences. However, NCRB figures are limited by their reliance on registered police cases, which makes them vulnerable to underreporting and inconsistencies in legal categorisation across states.

To complement these administrative statistics, the paper also incorporates findings from the [National Family Health Survey \(NFHS-5, 2021\)](#). NFHS provides nationally representative household survey data on domestic violence, spousal abuse, and women’s autonomy, revealing patterns of gendered harm that frequently exceed the magnitude reflected in NCRB figures. This divergence exists because NFHS relies on direct survey responses capturing unreported experiences of violence since they also have in-person and structured interviews, whereas NCRB reflects only cases that enter the formal criminal justice system. Together, these sources illustrate both the hidden prevalence and the reported incidence of crimes against women.

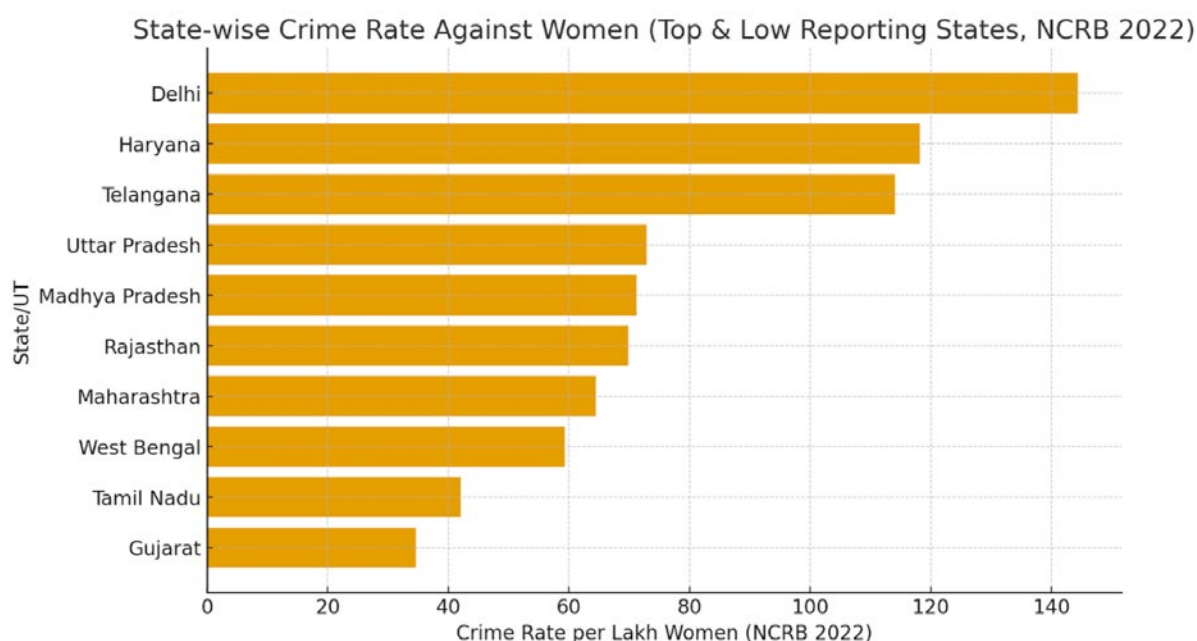
Further, state-wise rates of incidence (per lakh women) of various crimes are drawn from the [Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation \(MoSPI, 2022\)](#). MoSPI’s statistical approach helps to contextualise raw case numbers into proportional terms, allowing for meaningful comparison between states with different population sizes. Open-access datasets available through the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP) also provide disaggregated information that can be cross-verified with NCRB and MoSPI figures, strengthening the reliability of analysis.

Institutional responses are assessed using annual reports from both the National Commission for Women (NCW, 2024–25) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD, 2024–25). The available data on gender-sensitive policing initiatives is mostly descriptive rather than quantitative. For instance, the [MWCD Annual Report \(2024\)](#) and [NCW Annual Report \(2024\)](#) document the establishment and expansion of women’s help desks in police stations, but they do not systematically publish data on complaint volumes or case outcomes at these desks. Instead, they highlight them as part of a broader push toward institutional accessibility and gender-responsive policing. In contrast, One Stop Centres and helplines sometimes report usage numbers — such as the number of women assisted, calls received, or services provided — which makes them more measurable than help desks. Importantly, they provide insight not only into legislative frameworks but also into the institutional infrastructure created to address women’s safety.

Together, these sources allow for a triangulated approach—combining administrative crime data, household survey findings, statistical indicators, and institutional policy responses. This methodology ensures that the analysis is not restricted to the narrow lens of registered cases, but instead captures the broader structural, social, and institutional dynamics shaping crimes against women in India.

II EMPIRICAL TRENDS: REGIONAL & URBAN–RURAL VARIATION

The 2022 [NCRB Report](#) recorded 4,45,256 cases of crimes against women, representing a 4% rise from 2021 and translating into an average of 51 complaints every hour. The national crime rate per lakh women stood at [66.4 in 2022, compared to 64.5 in 2021](#), underscoring a persistent upward trajectory despite policy interventions.



Source: Crime rate against women (per lakh women) from NCRB 2022.

II SHIFTS IN CRIME CATEGORIES OVER TIME (2018-2022)

The trajectory of reported crimes against women in India underscores both persistence and transformation across categories of violence. At the aggregate level, total cases went from 3,78,277 in 2018 ([Crime in India 2018](#), Chapter 3A, p. 195) to 3,71,503 in 2020 ([Crime in India 2020](#), Chapter 3A, Table 3A.1, p. 199), then increased to 4,28,278 in 2021 and 4,45,256 in 2022 ([Crime in India 2022](#), Chapter 3A, p. 211). The NCRB notes that 2022 saw a 4.0% increase over 2021 (4,28,278 cases), with the majority of cases registered under cruelty by husband or his relatives (31.4%), followed by kidnapping and abduction (19.2%), assault with intent to outrage modesty (18.7%), and rape (7.1%). The national crime rate per lakh women rose from 64.5 in 2021 to 66.4 in 2022 ([Crime in India 2022](#), Snapshots, Point F, p. xii; Tables 3A.1 & 3A.2).

Kidnapping and abduction of women has shown a steady and concerning increase. Total cases stood at 1,05,734 in 2018 ([Crime in India 2018](#), Chapter 2C, Table 2C.1, p. 179) and 1,07,588 in 2019 ([Crime in India 2019](#), Chapter 2C, Table 2C.1, p. 183), with Haryana recording the highest rate in both years. By 2022, kidnapping accounted for nearly one-fifth of all crimes against women,

pointing to systemic issues of trafficking, forced marriage, and coercive mobility (Crime in India 2022, Table 3A.2).

Assault on women with intent to outrage modesty has remained a large and persistent category. In 2018, such assaults accounted for 27.6% of crimes against women (Crime in India 2018, Snapshots – Crime Against Women). Within related subcategories, insult to modesty (Sec. 509 IPC) recorded 6,992 cases in 2018 (Crime in India 2018, Table 3A.2(i), p. 205), rising to 83,344 cases in 2022 (Crime in India 2022, Table 3A.2(i), p. 220). This sharp increase signals that verbal and non-physical forms of harassment are increasingly visible in reported data.

Rape cases remain distressingly consistent in scale, with notable variation across years. Total victims recorded were 24,544 in 2018 (Crime in India 2018, Table 3A.3, p. 212), 27,283 in 2019 (Crime in India 2019, Table 3A.3, p. 212), and 30,965 in 2022 (Crime in India 2022, Table 3A.3, p. 228). Despite reforms post-2012, the stable volume of rape cases indicates enduring challenges in prevention, deterrence, and survivor support.

Finally, cybercrimes against women have expanded rapidly. From 2018 to 2022, reported cases more than doubled, with categories such as online harassment, stalking, and the circulation of intimate imagery growing disproportionately (Crime in India 2022, Table 3A.1, p. 211). This suggests that digital platforms are now a major site of gendered victimisation.

Taken together, these patterns demonstrate how violence against women in India operates across domestic, public, and digital spheres. The historical trajectory (2018–2022) reveals both the entrenched nature of intimate partner violence and the rise of newer forms of cyber-enabled threats, underscoring the dual challenge for policymakers: strengthening protections against persistent crimes while building new institutional responses to evolving risks.

I STATE-LEVEL DISPARITIES

The incidence of crimes against women varies sharply across states and union territories. According to NCRB 2022, Chapter 3A, states like Delhi, Haryana, and Telangana recorded crime rates far above the national average, while states such as Gujarat and Tamil Nadu reflected lower rates. However, interpreting “low crime” regions requires caution: MoSPI (2022) data indicate that weaker reporting mechanisms, social stigma, and limited access to police services often mask the real prevalence of violence. Studies have also highlighted that women frequently hesitate to report crimes due to fear of retaliation, social stigma, and inadequate conviction rates, suggesting that official statistics may significantly underestimate the true extent of gender-based violence ([Sikri et al., 2021](#)). High-reporting states may, paradoxically, reflect stronger institutional responsiveness and women’s willingness to report, rather than necessarily greater risk exposure.

I METROPOLITAN VS. NON-METROPOLITAN CITIES

Urban centres show distinct trends. NCRB 2022, Chapter 3B reveals that metropolitan cities account for a disproportionate share of reported crimes, particularly sexual harassment, stalking, and cyber-enabled offenses. Delhi continues to register the highest volume of complaints, followed by Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. These patterns are partly a function of higher population density and urban anonymity, but also reflect greater media attention and more accessible complaint mechanisms. Non-metro and rural regions, in contrast, demonstrate lower reporting

but higher hidden prevalence, as seen in NFHS-5 data on intimate partner violence. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21), intimate partner violence (IPV) is notably more prevalent in rural areas compared to urban regions. Specifically, 34% of women in rural areas reported experiencing IPV, whereas the figure was 27% in urban areas ([Srivastava et. al, 2023](#)).

This disparity underscores the challenges in accurately assessing the extent of IPV, particularly in rural settings where underreporting is more prevalent. Factors contributing to this underreporting include limited access to support services, social stigma, and a lack of awareness about available resources.

I HOUSEHOLD-LEVEL PREVALENCE

Survey evidence from the [NFHS-5 \(2021\)](#) underscores the gap between official crime statistics and women's lived realities. NFHS reports that nearly one in three married women (29.3%) aged 18–49 have experienced spousal violence, a figure far exceeding what NCRB records under domestic cruelty cases. This divergence demonstrates how cultural stigma, familial pressures, and fear of reprisal suppress formal complaints, particularly in rural communities where law enforcement institutions may be less accessible.

The National Commission for Women (NCW) Annual Report 2023–24 records a total of 28,650 complaints across multiple categories of violence and rights violations, with the highest numbers reported under the Right to Live with Dignity (8,271), Protection of Women against Domestic Violence (6,487), and Harassment of Married Women/Dowry Harassment (4,815) ([NCW, 2024](#)). Complaints of Outraging Modesty/Molestation (2,217), Rape/Attempt to Rape (1,521), and Cybercrime against Women (657) further highlight the range of issues women face. In comparison, the NCRB 2022 data reports 4,45,256 crimes against women, predominantly under cruelty by husband or relatives (31.4%), kidnapping/abduction (19.2%), assault with intent to outrage modesty (18.7%), and rape (7.1%) ([NCRB, 2022](#)). This stark difference underscores that NCW complaints represent only a fraction of total cases, often those escalated to a national-level statutory body, whereas NCRB captures broader police-registered cases. The disparity reflects systemic underreporting due to cultural stigma, limited access to formal mechanisms, and fear of reprisal, particularly in categories like domestic violence, dowry harassment, and cybercrime, emphasizing that official statistics alone underestimate the full scope of gender-based violence in India ([IIPS & MoHFW, 2021](#)).

I EMERGING URBAN–RURAL CONTRASTS

An important dimension of the 2022 trends is the divergence between rural and urban settings. While urban areas exhibit higher reported incidence of sexual harassment, workplace-related harassment, and cybercrimes, rural areas continue to show greater prevalence of domestic violence and dowry-related cases (NFHS-5; NCRB 2022). This suggests that crime against women is not uniform across geography but shaped by the interplay of cultural norms, availability of reporting mechanisms, and the evolving role of technology in women's lives.

An important dimension of the 2022 trends in crimes against women in India is the clear divergence between rural and urban areas. Urban regions report higher incidences of sexual harassment, workplace-related harassment, and [cybercrimes against women](#). In contrast, rural areas continue to experience a greater prevalence of domestic violence and dowry-related offences. This divergence highlights how crimes against women are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural norms, accessibility of reporting mechanisms, and the expanding role of technology in women's

lives.

Research shows that the [social stigma attached to reporting violence](#), particularly in rural settings, contributes to significant underreporting, obscuring the true scale of crimes such as domestic violence ([NFHS-5, 2019–21](#); [NCRB 2022](#)). The urban dominance in digital and workplace-related abuses reflects both improved reporting infrastructure and evolving societal interactions in cities.

These spatial disparities emphasize the need for nuanced, location-specific interventions to improve women's safety comprehensively across India ([NFHS-5 Volume II](#), [NCRB Crime in India 2022 Volume II](#), [PMC Article on Crime against Women](#), [Urban–Rural Domestic Violence Study](#)).

II POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

India's response to crimes against women has evolved through a layered policy and legal architecture, shaped both by long-standing structural issues and more recent social and technological shifts. The legal framework spans across multiple statutes — from older provisions such as the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, to workplace protections under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act), and successive amendments in the Indian Penal Code through the Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts of 2013 and 2018.

These legislative reforms, often catalyzed by high-profile cases and public mobilization, have progressively expanded definitions of sexual assault, strengthened penalties, and attempted to make the justice system more responsive to survivors. Yet, despite their scope, the persistent rise in reported crimes ([NCRB, 2022](#)) demonstrates that legal change alone has not been sufficient to deter violence.

These legislative reforms have often been catalyzed by high-profile cases. The 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape, for instance, spurred sweeping changes including the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, expanded definitions of sexual assault, and strengthened victim-oriented protocols ([Bandewar, Pitre & Lingam, 2018](#)). Later analyses confirm how these reforms reshaped rape law and introduced procedural safeguards ([Pratyaksha, 2025](#)). Subsequent tragedies—such as the Kathua and Hathras cases—played roles in prompting state-level reforms like the Disha Act, fast-track courts, and One-Stop Centres ([Nahvi, 2023](#)). Yet, despite these reforms, the persistent rise in reported crimes ([NCRB, 2022](#)) demonstrates that legal change alone has not been sufficient to deter violence or fully address systemic barriers to justice.

Parallel to statutory reforms, the government has introduced institutional mechanisms aimed at enhancing accessibility and survivor support. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD, 2025) [annual reports](#) significant investments in initiatives such as the [One Stop Centre Scheme](#), which provides integrated support for survivors of violence, and the national [Women Helpline \(181\)](#), designed to connect women with police, legal aid, and medical services. The introduction of Nari Adalats, a sub-component of Mission Shakti, provides women with an alternate grievance redressal forum for resolving petty cases such as harassment, subversion, or denial of entitlements, especially at the community level.

The umbrella initiative Samarthyaa further broadens the scope of institutional response by converging multiple women-centric schemes under one framework. Key components include [Shakti Sadans](#) — integrated relief and rehabilitation homes for women victims of trafficking and destitution; [Sakhi](#)

[Niwas](#) — safe accommodation for working women in cities and job-centric areas; [Palna Creches](#) — safe childcare centers for working women to support their labor force participation; and the [Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana \(PMMVY\)](#), which provides wage compensation during pregnancy and childbirth, now extended to cover a second child if it is a girl. In addition to these, Samarthyaa also encompasses other major interventions such as [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao \(BBBP\)](#), aimed at addressing gender-based discrimination and promoting the survival and education of the girl child, and [Mahila Police Volunteers \(MPV\)](#), which seeks to bridge the gap between the police and the community by engaging women volunteers at the grassroots. While not exhaustive, this range of initiatives illustrates the integrated approach of Samarthyaa in addressing both immediate safety needs and the broader socio-economic empowerment of women.

The role of the National Commission for Women (NCW) has also expanded in recent years. According to its Annual Report 2024–25, the Commission has intensified its complaint redressal mechanisms, conducted more frequent suo motu interventions, and issued recommendations to ministries on emerging challenges such as cyber-enabled violence and trafficking. However, while NCW and MWCD represent critical policy actors, their effectiveness is often undermined by limited resources, bureaucratic delays, and uneven state-level implementation.

Despite these efforts, the gap between policy intent and outcomes remains significant. The [Nirbhaya Fund](#) continues to be criticized for underutilization, with only a fraction of allocated resources reaching the intended beneficiaries. Similarly, conviction rates for crimes against women remain low, highlighting deficiencies in investigation and prosecution. Inter-agency coordination — between police, judiciary, healthcare, and social services — is frequently fragmented, resulting in survivors having to navigate multiple institutions with little systemic support. Moreover, while urban centers benefit from comparatively better access to helplines, fast-track courts, and NGOs, women in rural areas continue to face barriers linked to stigma, mobility, and lack of institutional infrastructure.

In recent years, emerging threats have pushed policymakers to adapt. The rise of cyber-enabled crimes, including sextortion, stalking, and the circulation of non-consensual imagery, has compelled both NCW and MWCD to prioritise digital safety. However, a persistent challenge is not just the scarcity of gender-disaggregated data, but also its quality and reliability. Courts have noted that the absence of standardised and comprehensive data on women’s issues undermines the effectiveness of state accountability and policymaking ([Delhi High Court, 2012, Para 4](#)). Integrating survey-based insights, such as the NFHS-5 (2019–21) finding that nearly one-third of women experience intimate partner violence, into program design is crucial, yet discrepancies across administrative datasets often obscure the real scale of such crimes. This raises critical questions about how institutional reliance on flawed or incomplete data can compromise evidence-driven interventions.

Taken together, India’s policy frameworks reflect both progress and limitations. While the institutional architecture has expanded considerably since 2013, its effectiveness remains uneven across geography, class, and digital access. The challenge ahead lies not in drafting new laws alone, but in ensuring that existing frameworks are better funded, more effectively coordinated, and informed by both administrative and survey-based data.

India’s policy response to crimes against women has moved beyond punitive legislation to encompass survivor support, empowerment, and preventive interventions. Yet, the persistence of violence, coupled with underutilization of funds, fragmented institutional delivery, and uneven rural access, suggests that systemic barriers continue to undermine impact. Bridging these policy–practice gaps will require not just stronger inter-agency coordination but also investment in grassroots accessibility, digital safety, and gender-sensitive governance.

II POLICY GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite an expanding legal and institutional ecosystem, gaps in design and implementation continue to hinder the effectiveness of India's response to crimes against women. At the structural level, under-reporting remains the most persistent challenge. While the NCRB 2022 records 4.45 lakh cases of crimes against women, the NFHS-5 (2021) shows that nearly one in three women face spousal violence — an indication of how cultural stigma and fear of reprisal suppress formal complaints. This mismatch highlights that data collection mechanisms remain reactive rather than preventive, reliant on police reporting instead of broader community-based surveys.

Institutional fragmentation also dilutes impact. While the MWCD Annual Report 2024–25 highlights schemes such as Nari Adalat and Samarthya (including Shakti Sadans, Sakhi Niwas, Palna, and PMMVY), their reach is often uneven across states. Urban centres benefit disproportionately from schemes like Sakhi Niwas and cybercrime redressal cells, while rural women remain dependent on overstretched district protection officers or poorly funded one-stop centres. This geographical inequity underscores the absence of a nationally coordinated monitoring mechanism that can ensure uniform service delivery.

Another persistent gap lies in low conviction rates. NCRB data show that while registration of cases has increased, conviction rates for specific offenses such as rape were also low — at 27.8% in 2022 (Crime in India 2022, Vol. I, Chapter 3A, Table 3A.4, p. 222). Earlier reports show a similar pattern, with conviction rates hovering around 28–30% across years, underscoring the systemic issue of protracted trials, hostile witnesses, and low evidentiary standards. This persistent gap not only erodes deterrence but also weakens public confidence in the justice system. Long trial durations, inadequate witness protection, and limited forensic capacity compound the problem. Although fast-track courts have been established, MoSPI reports indicate that case pendency remains stubbornly high, suggesting that procedural bottlenecks are outpacing judicial reforms.

At the policy design level, many interventions remain welfare-oriented rather than transformative. For instance, while the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) now extends benefits for a second girl child, it primarily addresses maternal health and wage loss, not broader structural constraints like women's labour market participation or unsafe workspaces. Similarly, initiatives such as Nari Adalat are designed to handle petty grievances, but lack integration with mainstream legal remedies, raising concerns about the enforceability of decisions.

Looking forward, the focus must shift towards three critical areas:

1. Data Systems – Moving from police-recorded figures to community-based reporting and integration of NCRB, NFHS, and NCW complaint data for more accurate prevalence mapping.
2. Access and Equity – Strengthening rural infrastructure for redressal mechanisms, ensuring that schemes like Samarthya are not urban-centric.
3. Legal-Policy Integration – Bridging welfare schemes with enforceable rights, such that grievance mechanisms are backed by institutional authority, and survivors can transition seamlessly from support services to formal justice systems.
4. Gender and Labour Inclusion – Addressing how law-and-order and safety concerns intersect with dismally low female labour force participation (FLFP) rates, limiting women's economic empowerment and mobility ([Saha, 2014](#)).

These future directions suggest that the battle against gender-based violence cannot rely on piecemeal schemes or legislative patchwork. Instead, what is needed is a systemic, whole-of-government approach that addresses both the symptoms (individual cases) and the structures (cultural, economic, and institutional barriers) that perpetuate crimes against women.

II CASE VIGNETTE

Consider two contrasting experiences. In rural Bihar, a woman facing repeated domestic abuse attempts to approach the nearest One Stop Centre for support. The centre, however, is located at the district headquarters—over 40 km away—and lacks adequate staff or transport facilities. As a result, she is forced to depend on local panchayat mediation, often reinforcing patriarchal norms rather than providing justice.

In contrast, a young working woman in Delhi, struggling with harassment at her workplace, can access both formal grievance cells and accommodation support through Sakhi Niwas, providing her temporary relief and safety. These divergent realities demonstrate how geography, institutional capacity, and socio-economic background shape the accessibility and effectiveness of state interventions. Without addressing such asymmetries, even well-intentioned policies risk reproducing existing inequalities rather than dismantling them.

These contrasting experiences reveal a stark urban-rural divide in access to support for women facing violence. Policies that merely establish centres without addressing staff shortages, geographic accessibility, and socio-cultural barriers risk reproducing existing inequalities rather than mitigating them. To create a more equitable system, policy interventions must focus on expanding infrastructure to underserved regions, ensuring adequate staffing and training, raising awareness about available services, and implementing robust monitoring mechanisms to assess effectiveness and accountability.

By grounding the discussion in real-life cases and available statistics, it becomes clear that improving accessibility, capacity, and responsiveness of support systems is critical to ensuring justice and protection for all women, irrespective of their location or socio-economic status.

Recent real-life cases from across India illustrate the wide variation in the functioning and impact of One Stop Centres (OSCs) and women's hostels, highlighting both successes and failures in implementation. In Delhi, the High Court recently flagged serious problems in the city's OSCs. According to a July 2025 order, these centres suffered from unpaid and absent staff, unclear infrastructure, lack of signboards and public awareness, and inadequate police deputation. The court directed the government to publicise the OSCs, recruit staff, and ensure core facilities are present (The New Indian Express). This case underscores that even well-designed policies can fail when staffing, logistical support, and awareness are weak, emphasizing the need for constant oversight, resource allocation, and accountability.

In Patna, [Bihar, a One Stop Crisis Centre](#) inaugurated in late 2024 presents a contrasting example of under-resourced implementation. The centre is essentially a bare room with four beds, lacking medical staff, emergency services, and adequate legal or counselling provision. Victims are often referred elsewhere for medical examinations (Hindustan Times). This scenario demonstrates how gaps between policy promises and on-ground delivery can render initiatives nearly unusable, critically undermining trust in state systems for legal protection and victim support.

Positive examples also exist. The [Sakhi Niwas hostel](#) in Indore (Madhya Pradesh), completed in April 2024 under Mission Shakti's Samarthya sub-scheme, has become a notable case of effective implementation. It offers safe accommodation exclusively for women, with surveillance and a location accessible to working women, including those from rural or tribal areas. Residents celebrate it as a lifeline. This example illustrates that when full implementation is achieved—with safety, accessibility, and usability in mind—schemes can meaningfully impact women's lives, though questions remain regarding scalability and the availability of similar facilities nationwide.

However, even successful schemes face challenges in maintenance and utilization. Government and RTI data show that the number of functional Sakhi Niwas hostels has declined, from around 500 in March 2022 to 463 by December 2024. Further, only a fraction of allocated funds has been used; of a ₹505 crore allocation over certain years, only about ₹92.33 crore (≈18%) was spent ([BehanBox](#)). This highlights that funding gaps, weak maintenance, and uneven execution can significantly weaken women's trust in state initiatives and make resources practically inaccessible.

By contrast, OSCs in Coimbatore and Pollachi show how proper implementation can produce tangible results. These centres assisted over 3,000 women in recent years, with 1,058 cases handled in 2024 alone (up from 651 in 2023), providing temporary shelter, legal aid, counselling, and support for education and skill training ([Times of India](#)). Cases include rescues from child marriage, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. This example demonstrates the importance of outreach, inter-agency cooperation, rehabilitation services, and consistent scale-up to maximize policy impact.

Collectively, these cases reveal that policy effectiveness in protecting women depends not only on design but also on adequate resources, staff, infrastructure, oversight, and scalability. Policymakers must ensure consistent funding, monitor implementation, and expand coverage to underserved regions to bridge the gap between policy intent and on-ground realities.

II CONCLUSION

The trajectory of crimes against women in India, as revealed through NCRB data, NFHS surveys, and policy frameworks, underscores a dual reality. On one hand, there has been clear progress in terms of legal reform, institutional innovation, and the establishment of mechanisms such as One Stop Centres, helplines, and digital complaint systems. On the other, persistent challenges — underreporting in rural areas, the rise of cyber-enabled crimes in urban spaces, and conviction rates that remain stubbornly low — show how deep-seated structural and cultural barriers continue to limit the effectiveness of these interventions. The evidence suggests that India's response to gendered violence has largely been reactive, often triggered by high-profile cases, rather than rooted in sustained, preventive strategies. Going forward, improving the quality and accessibility of data, strengthening institutional accountability, and designing context-sensitive, location-specific interventions will be essential. Only then can the policy and legal architecture move from being reactive safety nets to proactive frameworks that genuinely ensure women's safety, autonomy, and dignity.

REFERENCES

- Chakrabarti, S. (2023). The case for a feminist approach to gender-based violence policymaking in India. *Observer Research Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-case-for-a-feminist-approach-to-gender-based-violence-policymaking-in-india>
- Chandrasekharan, S., & Ghosh, S. (2024). Mapping gender-based violence in India: Trends, determinants, and institutional frameworks. *Economic & Political Weekly*. Retrieved from <https://cjp.org.in/mapping-gender-based-violence-in-india-trends-determinants-and-institutional-frameworks/>
- Dataful. (n.d.). *Crimes against women in India*. Retrieved from <https://dataful.in/datasets/21547/>
- Decker, M. R., et al. (2018). Violence against women in India: A review of the literature. *Journal of Global Health*, 8(2), 020405. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29650498/>
- Government of India. (2019). *Crime in India 2018: Statistics, Volume I*. National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs. [Chapter 2C, Table 2C.1, p. 179, 183; Chapter 3A, p. 195, 205, 212]. Retrieved from <https://ncrb.gov.in>
- Government of India. (2021). *Crime in India 2020: Statistics, Volume I*. National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs. [Chapter 3A, Table 3A.1, p. 199]. Retrieved from <https://ncrb.gov.in>
- Government of India. (2023). *Crime in India 2022: Statistics, Volume I & II*. National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs. [Chapter 3A, Table 3A.1, p. 211; Table 3A.2, p. 220; Table 3A.3, p. 228; Snapshots, Point F, p. xii]. Retrieved from <https://ncrb.gov.in>
- Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 373 of 2006. Retrieved from <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/70203395/>
- International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) & ICF. (2021). *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019–21: India Report, Volume II*. Mumbai: IIPS. Retrieved from https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375_II.pdf
- ISDM. (2023). It's women's day, but on ground little has changed. *ISDM Blog*. Retrieved from <https://www.isdm.org.in/blog/its-womens-day-but-on-ground-little-has-changed>
- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). (2022). *Women and Men in India 2022*. Government of India. Retrieved from <https://www.mospi.gov.in>
- Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). (2025). *Annual Report 2024–25*. Government of India. Retrieved from <https://wcd.nic.in>
- National Commission for Women (NCW). (2025). *Annual Report 2024–25*. Retrieved from <https://ncw.nic.in>
- Pratyaksha, M. (2025). Rethinking criminal law through a gendered lens. *De Facto Law Journal*, 4(2), 55–78. Retrieved from <https://defactolawjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Manha-Pratyaksha.pdf>
- [ResearchGate]. (2024). *Cybercrime against women: How cybercrime targets women's privacy and security*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/386604071_Cybercrime_Against_Women_How_Cybercrime_Targets_Women%27s_Privacy_and_Security
- Sikri, S., et al. (2021). *Women, work, and violence: Addressing gender-based vulnerabilities in India*. Reach Alliance. Retrieved from <https://reachalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/WPS-Final-March29-1.pdf>
- Srivastava, S., Kumar, K., McDougal, L., Kannaujiya, A. K., Sikarwar, A., Raj, A., & Singh, A. (2023). Intimate partner violence and reproductive health outcomes in India. *SSM – Population Health*, 23, 101465. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2023.101465>



WWW.SPRF.IN

If you have any suggestions, or would like to contribute, please write to us at contact@sprf.in

© Social Policy Research Foundation™