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How to read the NCRB 2022 report on crime in India

The report for the year 2022 is a compilation of crime statistics from across the country. It is a valuable resource, but may not be entirely accurate at all times. Here's what to note about the crime numbers just released.

Written by [Rishika Singh](#)

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NCRB reports have been valuable compilations of statistics over the years, on offences ranging from crimes against women to economic and financial crimes. (Representational/ Via Canva)

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) **released its annual report on crime in India** for the year 2022 on Sunday (December 3).

The report is a compilation of data on reported crime from across the country, and provides the big picture of broad trends in crime registration. Reports by the NCRB, which functions under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, include statistics on offences ranging from crimes against women to economic and financial crimes.

How are the data for NCRB reports compiled?

The NCRB was established in January 1986 as a body mandated to compile and keep records of data on crime. It also acts as a “national warehouse” for the fingerprint records of Indian and foreign criminals, and assists in locating interstate criminals through fingerprint search.

For the NCRB’s flagship annual Crime in India reports, information is obtained from the police forces of 36 states and Union Territories. Similar data are furnished for 53 cities with populations exceeding 10 lakh each as per the 2011 Census, by respective state-level crime records bureaus.

The information is entered by state/UT police at the level of the local police station, and is validated at the levels of the district and state, and finally, by the NCRB.

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What does the 2022 NCRB report say?

The data cover overall crimes, and separately note crimes against women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), cyber crimes, etc. Here are some takeaways from the latest report:



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* In 2022, a “total of 58,24,946 cognizable crimes comprising 35,61,379 Indian Penal Code (IPC) crimes and 22,63,567 Special & Local Laws (SLL) crimes were registered”. This was a **decline of 4.5%** in the registration of cases over the second pandemic year, 2021.

* The **crime rate**, or crimes registered per lakh population, has **declined** from 445.9 in 2021 to 422.2 in 2022. This is seen as a better indicator, since absolute numbers on crime increase as the population increases.

* 4,45,256 cases of **crime against women** were registered in 2022. This was an **increase of 4%** over the 2021 numbers. The largest share of crimes against women under IPC sections was registered under ‘Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives’ (31.4%), followed by ‘Kidnapping & Abduction of Women’ (19.2%), and ‘Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty’ (18.7%).

* **Reporting of cyber crime increased significantly by 24.4 percentage points** compared to 2021, to 65,893 cases. Around 64.8% of registered cases were of fraud, followed by extortion (5.5%), and sexual exploitation (5.2%).

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* **An increase of 4.2% was observed in suicides reported** during 2022 (1,70,924 suicides) as compared to 2021. ‘Family Problems (other than marriage-related problems)’ (31.7%), ‘Marriage Related Problems’ (4.8%) and ‘Illness’ (18.4%) have together accounted for 54.9% of total suicides in the country during the year 2022. The overall male-to-female ratio of suicide victims was 71.8:28.2.

What are the headline trends in state-wise data in the report?

The states/ UTs reporting the highest chargesheeting rate under IPC crimes are Kerala (96.0%), Puducherry (91.3%), and West Bengal (90.6%). This is the percentage of cases in which the police reached the stage of framing charges against the accused, out of the total true cases (where a charge sheet was not laid but a final report submitted as true, plus the total cases chargesheeted).

Does this mean that these states are more crime-prone than others?

Not necessarily. The NCRB report underlines that the data record the incidence of registered crime, not the actual occurrence of crime.

This is an important distinction — and also an acknowledgement of the fact that there are limitations to the data. So, when reported crimes against women in Delhi rose significantly in the aftermath of the 2012 bus gangrape case, it may have been a reflection of increased awareness about the need for registering crimes, both

among those affected and the police, rather than an actual increase in the incidence of crime against women.

Is that the only issue with the data?

The NCRB follows what is known as the 'Principal Offence Rule'. This means among the many offences registered in a single FIR, the crime that attracts the most severe punishment is considered as the counting unit. Thus, 'Murder with Rape' would be counted as 'Murder', not rape — which would result in an undercounting of the crime of rape.

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Also, since the NCRB report is only a compilation of data submitted at the local level, inefficiencies or gaps in data at that level have an impact on the accuracy of the report. A report in [The Indian Express](#) made this point earlier through the example of a farmer suicide.

Thus, since the FIR would be recorded by a policeman or policewoman who visits the suicide spot and talks to members of the dead person's family, the reason that is recorded for the suicide would depend entirely on how the policeman or policewoman understands the situation. Of course, this may or may not be accurate.

A Home Ministry official had [told *The Indian Express* earlier](#), "The immediate cause of a farmer suicide may be a quarrel with his wife over money. So the FIR invariably records the cause as 'family problem' or 'poverty'. However, the real, underlying cause could be farm distress due to crop failure, which led to indebtedness and financial difficulties."

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The NCRB itself notes that “The socio-economic causative factors or reasons of crimes are not being captured by the Bureau.”

Because of a range of reasons, including the fear of an uncooperative or a hostile response from the police, certain groups may not be willing to come forward to register cases. And a shortage of police officers or unfilled vacancies in the posts at the local level may hinder the collection of data.

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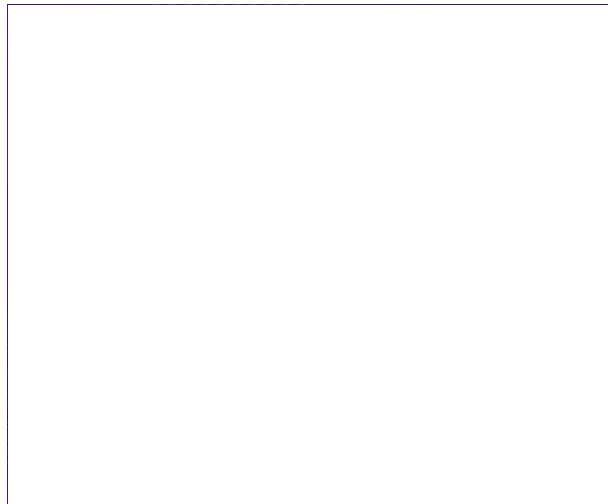
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