



Violence and Crime Against Children and Adolescents in India

Towards Creating Safer Cities

It is estimated that up to one billion children globally, aged 2–17 years, have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in the past one year. The magnitude of the problem amplifies in some of the world's most populous countries such as India and China and sub-Saharan African countries.¹ In India nearly 5.4 children per 100,000 child population has experienced some form of crime in 2009 which increased to 28.9 per 100,000 child population in 2017.²

Key Policy Messages

- Establish a real time crime and punishment database
- Conduct Behaviour Change Communication programmes for both parents and children
- Implement context specific crime prevention programmes with special focus on vulnerable children such as those on the street, those from poor families both of whose parents are working, child labourers and girls getting married before age 18.
- Creation of child friendly one-stop help centers
- Sensitise people towards violence against children

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse or maltreatment is defined as “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power” (WHO, 1999).

Who are Juveniles?

Males below the age of 16 years and females below the age of 18 years are considered as juveniles under the Juvenile Justice Act 2000.

¹ The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019

² National Crime Records Bureau. Report 'Crime in India-2017'

Impact of Crime on Victimised Children

- Crime against children has lifelong impacts on their health and well-being
- Exposure to violence at an early age can affect cognitive development and nervous system with lifelong consequences
- As victimised child grows older, the likelihood of communicable and non-communicable diseases increase
- Among girls sexual violence lead to unintended pregnancies, induced abortions and gynaecological problems
- Children exposed to violence and other adversities are more likely to smoke, consume alcohol and drugs
- Such children are more likely to drop out of school and/or be liable to under-achieve in education
- At times victimised children could resort to suicide or sustain injuries to themselves

Legal Provisions

Direct

- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012; POCSO (Amendment) Act, 2019
- The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015
- National Policy for Children, 2013
- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1986

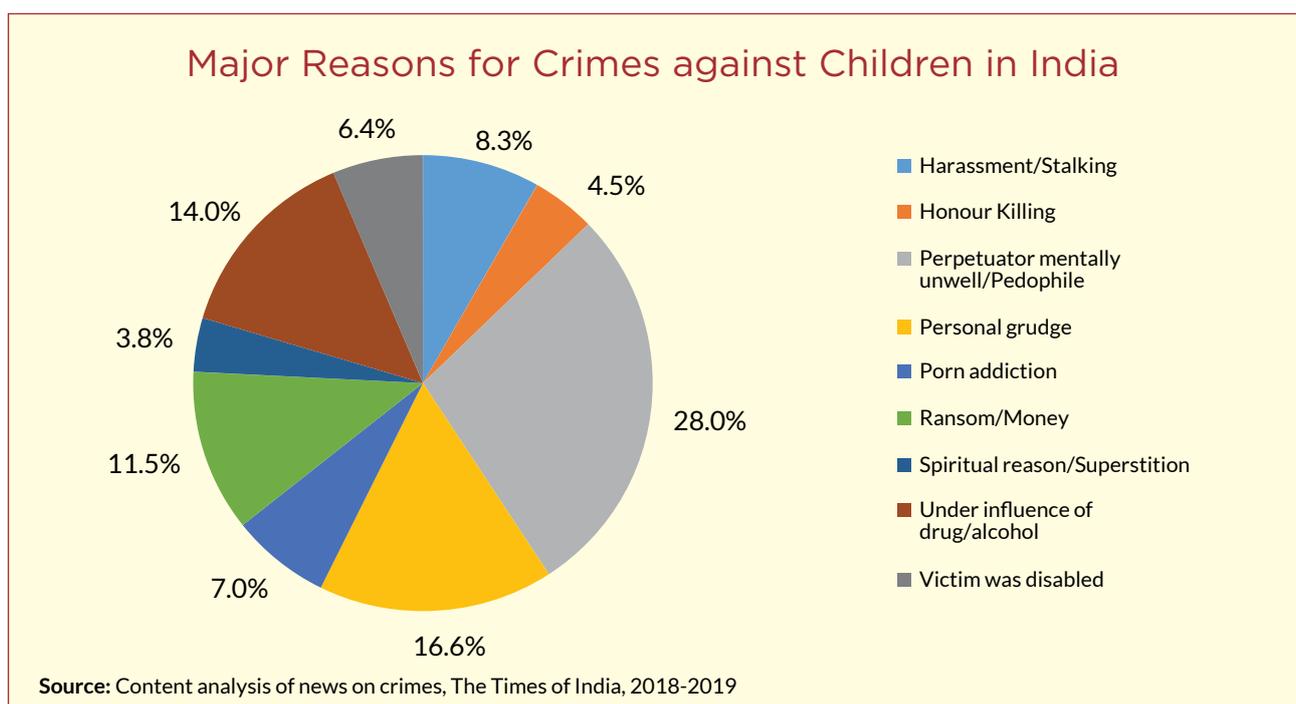
Indirect

- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009
- Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994
- Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976
- Indian Penal Code Secs. 302, 307, 315-317, 354, 363-369, 373, 376, 377
- Constitution of India, Article 15(3) and Article 39 of Part IV

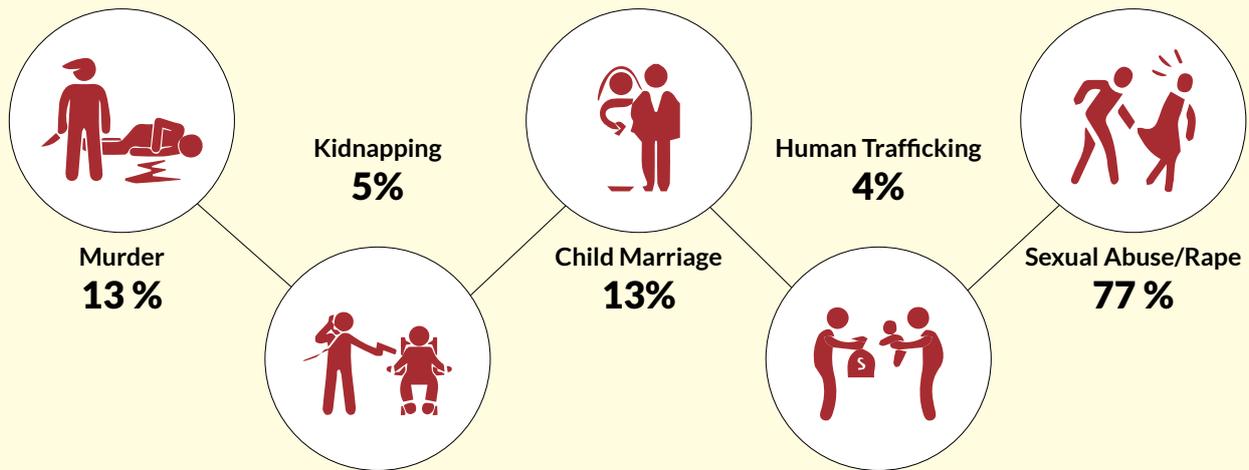
Facts

- Crime rate against children in India increased from 6.0 per 1,00,000 child population in 2009 to 28.9 in 2017
- Crime rate is highest in Delhi followed by states of Sikkim, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram
- At 14.8 per cent Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest share of crimes against children in 2017
- Girls are major victims (87%) as compared to boys (13%)
- Four in every five girl child victims encounter sexual abuse/rape
- Majority of victims of rape and sexual abuse are above 13 years (45%)
- Half of the crimes against children take place in their homes, neighbourhood or friends'/relatives' homes, while only one-third occur at public places
- One-fourth of the crimes were committed by paedophiles or mentally ill perpetrators
- In 92 per cent cases of murder and 80 per cent cases of sexual abuse, the perpetrators were known to children
- 148 children were kidnapped every day and 89 children were sexually abused/raped every day in 2017

Source: 'Crime in India' published by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 2009-2017, and content analysis of news on crimes, *The Times of India*, 2018-2019

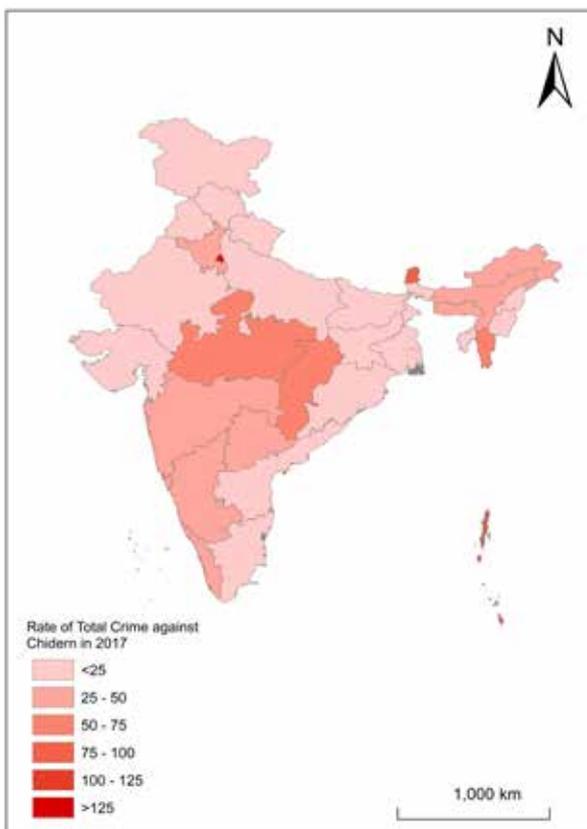


Type of Crimes against Children

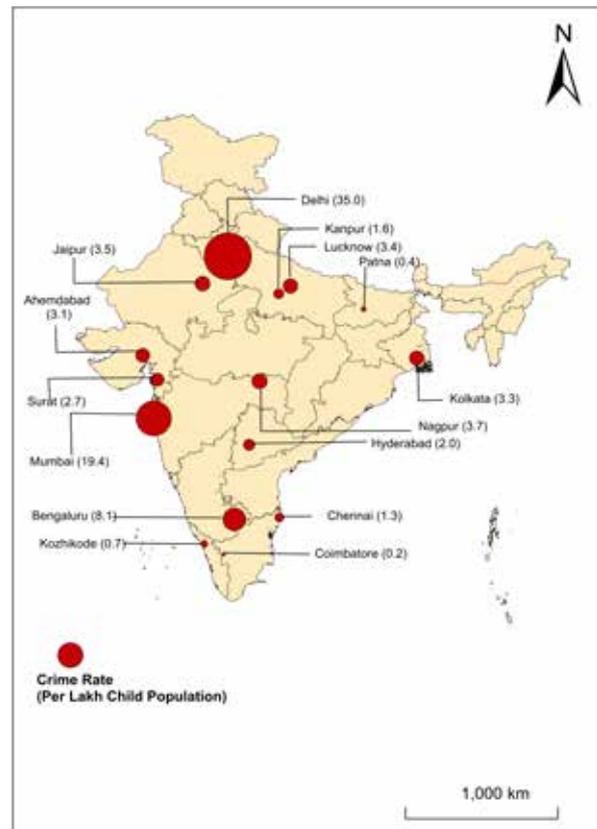


Source: Content Analysis of news on crimes, *The Times of India*, 2018-2019

State wise Crime Rate, 2017

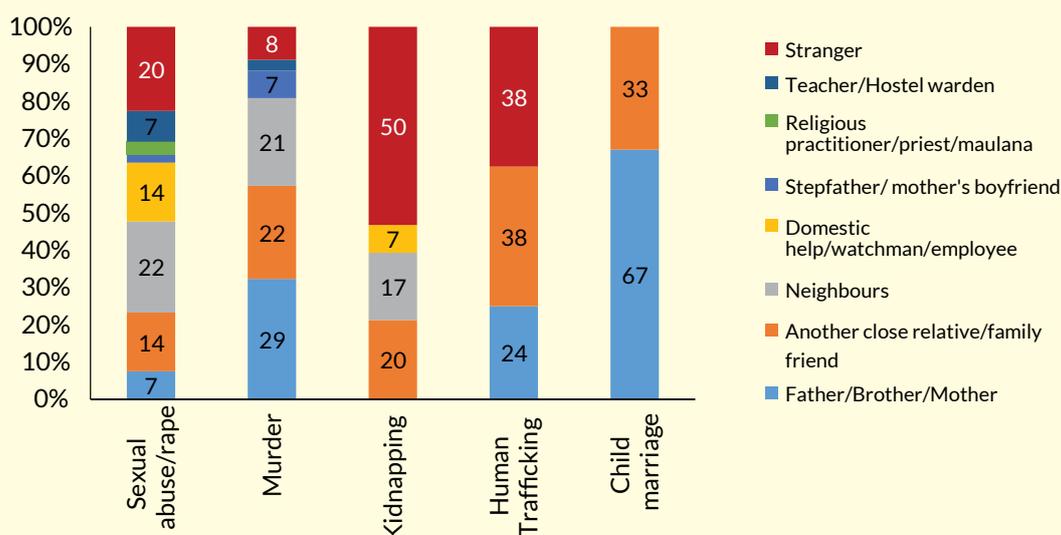


Crime Rate in Major Metropolitan Cities, 2017



Source: 'Crime in India' published by National Crime Records Bureau, 2017

Relationship of the Child-Victim with Perpetrator of the Crime



Source: Content analysis of news on crimes, The Times of India, 2018-2019

COVID-19 and Child Abuse

- Movement restrictions, loss of income, isolation, overcrowding, stress and anxiety are increasing the likelihood that children will be exposed to physical, psychological and sexual abuse at home – particularly those children already living in violent or dysfunctional family situations (WHO, 2020)
- Growing economic vulnerability will increase the threat of child labour, child marriage and child trafficking (WHO, 2020)
- The ChildLine has received 50 per cent higher distress calls for protection against violence and sexual abuse in the first 11 days of lockdown in India. This is an indication that the lockdown has turned into extended captivity for many children trapped with their abusers at home (The Week, Apr 4, 2020).
- Children spend more time online during the lockdown, often unsupervised, makes them more vulnerable to online sexual predators (ICPF, 2020)
- The traffic from India on pornographic websites have surged up by 95% between 24th and 26th March 2020. The searches for child pornography content was higher in COVID-19 hot spot cities such as Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi (ICPF, 2020)
- Governments must ensure that COVID-19 prevention and response plans integrate age appropriate and gender sensitive measures to protect all children from violence, neglect and abuse.

Policy Recommendations

- Sensitise general public about violence against children through media campaign, development of appropriate public advocacy tools and IEC materials
- Conduct Behaviour Change Communication programmes for children to protect them from being victims and committing any crimes themselves
- Self-defence training and information on “good and bad touch” to be included in school curriculum
- Sensitise children about legal protection from crime in the form of documentaries or plays in schools
- Regularly carry out sessions on anger management and sex education in schools and colleges
- Vigilantly track children's behaviour to identify early signs of deviance, both as victims and perpetrators
- Install street lights and cameras for vigilance at the local level
- Create child friendly one-stop help centers to provide counselling, guidance and referral services to victims and ensure their full recovery, development, and social re-integration
- Establish a link between missing person's bureau, anti-human trafficking units and law enforcement agencies to strengthen the response mechanism in cases of child kidnapping and abduction

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