



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

India: Women fearing gender-based violence

Version 4.0

August 2025

Contents

Executive summary	4
Assessment	5
About the assessment	5
1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals	5
1.1 Credibility	5
1.2 Exclusion	6
2. Convention reason(s)	6
3. Risk	7
4. Protection	9
5. Internal relocation	11
6. Certification	12
Country information	13
About the country information	13
7. Legal context	13
7.1 Constitution	13
7.2 Statutory provisions	14
7.3 Indian caselaw	18
8. Social, economic and political status	19
8.1 Global equality and inclusivity rankings	19
8.2 Marriage, divorce and inheritance	20
8.3 Political participation	22
8.4 Economic participation	25
8.5 Education	29
8.6 Access to healthcare	31
9. Position of women in society	34
9.1 Demography and geography	34
9.2 Cultural context and societal attitudes	35
9.3 Freedom of movement	40
9.4 Single women	42
9.5 LGBTI+ women	43
10. Sexual and gender-based violence	44
10.1 Forms of violence and prevalence	44
10.2 Domestic and dowry-related violence	45
10.3 Rape and sexual violence	48
10.4 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	50
10.5 Forced and child marriage	52

10.6 ‘Honour’ crimes and femicide	53
10.7 Violence against Dalits and women from tribal communities	55
10.8 Other forms of violence, discrimination and harassment.....	57
11. State treatment and attitudes	59
11.1 Government statements, attitudes and policies	59
11.2 Reporting violence and police response	60
11.3 Crime statistics	64
11.4 Prosecution, appeals and legal redress	68
11.5 State support	71
11.6 Social welfare schemes	80
12. Non-state assistance available to women	80
Research methodology.....	84
Terms of Reference	85
Bibliography	86
Sources cited	86
Sources consulted but not cited	93
Version control and feedback.....	94
Feedback to the Home Office.....	94
Independent Advisory Group on Country Information	94

Executive summary

India is listed as a designated state under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. This means that 'there is, in general in that state or part of it no serious risk of persecution of persons entitled to reside in that state or part of it.' Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Women in India are not considered to form a particular social group (PSG) under the Refugee Convention. However, rural women who have transgressed accepted social norms are a PSG.

Gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls, including domestic abuse, rape, dowry-related violence, early and forced marriage, honour crimes and sexual harassment, is reportedly widespread although prevalence varies by type. Most GBV occurs in a domestic context. GBV contains a wide spectrum of behaviour, much of which is not likely to be sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition to reach the high threshold of persecution or serious harm.

The constitution, domestic legislation and government policies uphold the protection and advancement of women's rights, both generally and in relation to GBV. There are specific statutory laws in place which provide tough penalties commensurate with other serious offences for domestic violence, rape, acid attacks, sexual harassment, trafficking and other related offences. Recent legal reforms in July 2024, have strengthened penalties for crimes like rape and introduced measures to expedite justice, including fast-track courts and digital evidence recording. However, policing is inconsistent, with some officers either taking no further action in cases of GBV, not registering cases or encouraging reconciliation. Victims can be reluctant to report abuse due to social stigma and lack of faith in police. There are individual cases of sexual abuse committed by police officers, including in police stations.

Perpetrators of GBV are charged and cases are prosecuted, although there can be delays both at the investigation stage and in the court system. The courts have the power to give compensation to women who have suffered from domestic violence and imprison offenders who breach protection orders.

State support includes accommodation to those who have experienced or are experiencing GBV. Over 800 One-Stop Centres are operational across India providing medical aid, legal aid and advice, temporary shelter, police assistance and psycho-social counselling. Although the law requires states to provide shelters, the quality and availability varies between shelters and within states and UTs, with some considered overcrowded and inadequate.

India is a diverse country with a population of over 1.4 billion people, almost half of which are women. Women who have family support or can live with relatives are likely to find it easier to relocate. Single women, including those with children may face difficulty relocating without the support or supervision of a male relative and in obtaining accommodation and accessing services due to societal discrimination. However, this alone does not make relocation unreasonable or unduly harsh. It is likely to be easier for wealthy, urban women to be single and live alone.

In general, the state is able and willing to provide effective protection, and internal relocation is likely to be reasonable.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

Assessment

Section updated: 18 August 2025

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by non-state actors because the individual is a woman
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

[Back to Contents](#)

1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when such a check has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

- 1.1.5 The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.
- 1.1.6 The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

- 1.2.4
- 1.2.5 The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Women in India are not considered to form a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the Refugee Convention. This is because while they do share an innate characteristic, or common background – being a woman – that cannot be changed, and although patriarchal views on women are still prevalent in parts of the country, overall, in view of their equality under the law and the general availability of state protection, they are not perceived as different by the surrounding society.
- 2.1.2 However, in accordance with the Country Guidance (CG) case [BK \(Risk, Adultery, PSG\) India CG \[2002\] UKIAT 03387 \(2 August 2002\)](#), heard in the Upper Tribunal (UT) on 15 May 2002 and promulgated 2 August 2002 women in rural India who have transgressed accepted social norms are considered to be ‘identifiable as a particular social group’.
- 2.1.3 In [BK](#), the UT considered whether the appellant – a woman from rural India who had committed adultery – would be at risk of persecution for a Convention reason. The Upper Tribunal noted:

‘The issue is whether the Appellant as a wife who has committed adultery could form part of a social group. As Lord Hoffman said in *Shah and Islam*, to identify a social group one must first identify the society of which it forms a part. Although the Tribunal has had its doubts about this, on balance we have come to the view that, looking at the Appellant’s background in rural India in the light of the social, cultural and religious mores, women in the Appellant’s circumstances are identifiable as a particular social group’ ([13]).
- 2.1.4 Since [BK](#) was heard, the position of women has not significantly changed or deteriorated. Therefore, there are not ‘very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence’ to justify a departure from [BK](#).
- 2.1.5 Whilst some women, for example, women from rural India who are deemed to have transgressed social norms, may form a PSG, establishing such

membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person will face a real risk of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.

- 2.1.6 In the absence of a link to one of the five Convention reasons necessary for the grant of refugee status, the question to be addressed in each case will be whether the person will face a real risk of serious harm sufficient to qualify for Humanitarian Protection (HP).
- 2.1.7 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

3. Risk

- 3.1.1 India is listed as a designated state under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. This means that, 'there is, in general in that state or part of it no serious risk of persecution of persons entitled to reside in that state or part of it.'
- 3.1.2 Women in India who fear gender-based violence (GBV) are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from non-state actors.
- 3.1.3 GBV, although reportedly widespread in India, contains a wide spectrum of behaviour, much of which is not likely to be sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition to reach the high threshold of persecution or serious harm.
- 3.1.4 Some women may be at more risk of persecution or serious harm, including those who are seen to have transgressed social, cultural and religious norms, or are single and living alone, or belong to a Scheduled Caste or Tribe. However, the onus is on the person to demonstrate this.
- 3.1.5 Of the nearly 1.4 billion population, just under half are female. The status of women has improved in recent years in areas such as education and political participation (although political representation remains low). The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for 2025, which measures gender parity annually ranked India 131st out of 148 countries (0 being high and 100 being low), and a general upward trend towards gender parity since 2021 (see [Demography](#), [Global equality and inclusivity rankings](#) and [Political participation](#)).
- 3.1.6 Social and cultural norms, alongside patriarchal attitudes (which exist particularly in the northern regions), prescribe discriminatory and stereotypical roles, rights and responsibilities according to gender. Women are expected to marry and have children, and they may face familial and societal pressure to do so. However, surveys undertaken since 2019 indicate a gradual shift in attitudes towards gender equality. In the 2019-2021 National Family Health Survey (NHFS-5) found 71% of married women made decisions about their own health care, major household purchases, and visits to family. A study undertaken by the Pew Research Centre in late 2019 and early 2020 found that most people believed both men and women should share responsibilities for childcare (62%) and earning money (54%). The ISPOS 2025 survey revealed that although 79% of Indians said gender equality was important, 60% still agreed that a man who stays home to care for children is 'less of a man' and 68% felt that efforts to promote women's rights had already gone far enough (See [Position of women in society](#)).

- 3.1.7 Attitudes towards gender-based violence, particularly in a domestic setting are mixed, with views not necessarily divided along gender lines but affected by caste, wealth and location. According to the NFHS-5 45% of women and 44% of men agreed with at least one justification for wife-beating. The Pew Research Centre found that although 76% of adults believed violence against women was a big problem in India, 87% agreed that ‘a wife must always obey her husband.’ The ISPOS 2025 survey indicated 49% of respondents believed men and women experience gender-based violence equally (see [Cultural context and societal attitudes](#)).
- 3.1.8 Ninety eight percent of girls aged 11-14 are enrolled in school and the youth female literacy rate is 96%. Women’s participation in the labour force is estimated to be at 45% which is an increase from previous years and the highest recorded level of participation. Women are increasingly delaying marriage and having children and this, alongside government policy initiatives has enabled more women to work. However, married women are traditionally expected to rely on their husbands financially or, if divorced or single rely on their family for financial support. In rural areas widowed women can be viewed as a burden to their families (See [Marriage, divorce and inheritance](#), [Education](#) and [Economic participation](#)).
- 3.1.9 GBV against women and girls, including domestic abuse, rape, dowry-related violence, early and forced marriage, acid attacks and sexual harassment is reportedly widespread, although prevalence varies by type. Most GBV occurs in a domestic context. According to the NFHS-5 domestic physical violence is the most reported type of abuse (28%) followed by emotional abuse (14%) and spousal sexual abuse (6%). In 2022, India’s National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported a total of 445,256 cases of crime against women which was an increase from 428,278 cases in 2021, with most cases (31.4% or 144,593) related to domestic violence committed by husbands and their families. The 2023 Women, Peace and Security Index reported 18% of women had reported to a government body experiencing intimate partner physical or sexual violence. In 2024 most complaints lodged in relation to GBV with the National Commission for Women were received from Uttar Pradesh (54%) with the next highest being much lower at almost 9% in Dehli (see [Crime rates](#) and [Domestic and dowry-related violence](#)).
- 3.1.10 Government figures indicate a rise in the number of women reporting GBV – this despite existing societal attitudes which blame or shame victims, particularly in relation to sexual violence, may result in underreporting of incidents or affect the content of answers women give in surveys about their experiences. An increase in reporting does not necessarily reflect a rise in the incidence of violence, it may also indicate growing public awareness, improved access to support services, or increased trust in reporting mechanisms (see [Crime rates](#) and [Domestic and dowry-related violence](#)).
- 3.1.11 Women from minority groups, including Dalits (who are at the bottom of the caste system) often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence – their gender combined with their low status (see [Violence against Dalits and women from tribal communities](#) and [Country policy and information note: religious minorities and scheduled castes and tribes](#)).
- 3.1.12 There are no government statistics on the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) although it is reported mostly among the Dawoodi Boheas, a religious group of an estimated 1 million people in Maharashtra, Gujarat,

Rajasthan, and Delhi. Around 70 to 90% of Dawoodi Bohras women and girls are estimated to have had FGM. A report by the Orchid Project from surveys between 2017 and 2021 found that FGM is more likely to occur in small to medium towns, the practice is referred to as khafd or khafz colloquially (see [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#)).

- 3.1.13 Child marriage is illegal but still occurs, particularly in rural areas, although it is in decline. Around 23% of girls are married before they are 18 and 5% before the age of 15. Levels of education and income are key factors in early marriage. The NCRB 2022 data indicates 13,927 victims under 18 were kidnapped or abducted for forced marriage (see [Forced and child marriage](#)).
- 3.1.14 Honour killings occur across religion, social status, wealth and age. They take place when families believe the honour of their family is at risk often when a woman's virginity is lost or marrying a partner belonging to a lower caste. Honour crimes are likely under reported as there are no specific laws to prosecute them. However, they are recorded as murder cases. The NCRB crime statistics recorded 18 killings motivated by 'honour' across India in 2022. Honour killings are considered more prevalent in Northern states, but some have occurred in Southern states such as Karnataka, which has a population of around 30.1 million women and had a reported 7 cases between October 2022 and September 2023. Acid attacks are often a subset of honour crime or committed in a domestic context. Reported numbers are low, between 133 and 296 in 2022 depending on the source (see ['Honour' crimes](#)).
- 3.1.15 For risk to LGBTI women see [Country Policy and Information Note India: Sexual orientation and gender identity and/or expression](#)
- 3.1.16 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

4. Protection

- 4.1.1 A person with a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a rogue state and/or non-state actor is likely to obtain protection from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 4.1.2 In general, India takes reasonable steps to prevent persecution by operating an effective legal system for the detection, prosecution and punishment of acts constituting persecution and a person is generally able to access the protection.
- 4.1.3 Corruption, sympathy or weakness of some individuals in the justice system does not mean that the state as a whole is unwilling to afford protection.
- 4.1.4 The constitution, domestic legislation and government policies uphold the protection and advancement of women's rights, both generally and in relation to GBV. There are specific statutory laws in place which provide tough penalties commensurate with other serious offences for domestic violence, rape, acid attacks, sexual harassment, trafficking and other related offences (see [Legal context](#)).
- 4.1.5 On 1 July 2024, three new criminal laws, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinayam (BSA) came into effect replacing the 1860 Indian Penal Code,

1973 Code of Criminal Procedure and 1872 Indian Evidence Act. The revisions include stricter punishments for rape including an increase in the sentence for rape from 7 to 10 years and, where it involves minors, a maximum sentence of life in prison or the death penalty. Measures to improve prosecutions include digital recording of evidence from victims of sexual assault, and 30-day time limits on delivering court judgements, with the goal of achieving a conviction rate of 90%. The West Bengal government, in response to the rape and murder of a female doctor in Kolkata, introduced the death penalty for the offence of rape when it results in the victim's death or leaves them in a 'vegetative state' (see [Statutory provisions](#) and [Rape and sexual violence](#)).

- 4.1.6 The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDVA) enables victims of domestic violence to seek interim protection and residence orders, as well as compensation and maintenance. The Act protects women not only from abuse by a spouse, but any kind of violence that occurs in the family. Its definition of violence against women encompasses physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, and economic abuse and dowry demands. Marital rape is not illegal, although in a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court found in September 2022 that it constituted rape in the context of the law on the termination of pregnancy. There is a case which is pending (at the time of writing) in the Supreme Court seeking the criminalisation of marital rape (see [Indian caselaw](#) and [State support](#)).
- 4.1.7 The government has implemented women's police stations, police desks, and One-Stop Centres throughout the country for reporting crimes and accessing support services. According to information from 2021 the implementation of women's police stations has led to an increase in domestic violence reporting. Training programs on GBV for police, judiciary and medical officers exist. However, policing is inconsistent in cases of GBV, with some police officers either taking no further action, not registering cases or encouraging reconciliation. Victims can be reluctant to report abuse due to social stigma and lack of faith in police. There are individual cases of sexual abuse committed by police officers, including in police stations. On 20 May 2025, the Supreme Court directed all states and UTs to identify and designate Protection Officers (POs) to ensure proper implementation of the PWDVA across the country. In sources consulted it is not clear the progress made by states and UTs in relation to this direction (see [Treatment by, and attitudes of, the justice and the police](#)).
- 4.1.8 Perpetrators of GBV are charged and cases are prosecuted, although there can be delays both at the investigation stage and in the court system. To address court delays, the government has set up 855 fast track courts across the country for cases involving crimes against women, including rape. The courts have the power to give compensation to women who have suffered from domestic violence and imprison offenders who breach protection orders. Conviction rates for GBV crimes vary, with some offences resulting in a higher number of convictions than others, the reasons for which are likely to be complex and wide-ranging but are unclear in the sources consulted. The NCRB 2022 crime statistics show the highest conviction rate was 69% for rape and murder or gang rape and the lowest was 17% for cruelty by husbands or his relatives (see [Prosecution, appeals and legal redress](#)).

- 4.1.9 The state offers support, including accommodation to those who have experienced or are experiencing GBV. In March 2025 the government reported that 802 One-Stop Centres were operational across India providing medical aid, legal aid and advice, temporary shelter, police assistance and psycho-social counselling. Although the PWDVA requires states to provide shelters, the quality and availability varies between shelters and within states and UTs, with some considered overcrowded and inadequate (see [State support](#)).
- 4.1.10 Access to protection can be affected by a woman's status and where she lives, especially for those from Scheduled Castes (Dalit) and those in more rural areas, and women with disabilities (see [Violence against Dalits and women from tribal communities](#) and [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 4.1.11 Although unable to provide protection, non-governmental support, including shelters, legal aid and 24/7 helplines are available to women across the country (see [State support](#) and [Civil society organisations](#)).
- 4.1.12 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where a woman has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a non-state or rogue state actor, they are likely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 This is because in general, there are parts of country, particularly urban areas such as (but not limited to) Mumbai, Bangalore or Kolkata, where it will be reasonable to expect a woman to relocate there.
- 5.1.3 Internal relocation for lesbians was considered in the CG case of [AR and NH \(lesbians\) India \(CG\) \[2016\] UKUT 66 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 23 June 2015, promulgated on 1 February 2016 and can also be taken into account for women generally. The UT held:
- If a lesbian woman's family wishes to pursue and harm her in the place of internal relocation, their ability to do so will depend on the reach of the family network, how persistent they are, and how influential. The evidence indicates that there is normally sufficient state protection for women whose families seek to harm them in their place of internal relocation (paragraph 78(11))
 - In general, where there is a risk of persecution or serious harm in a lesbian woman's home area, for educated, and therefore 'middle class' women, an internal relocation option is available. They are likely to be able to relocate to one of the major cities in India and are likely to be able to find employment and support themselves, albeit with difficulty, and to live together openly, should they choose to do so. In general, such relocation will not be unduly harsh (paragraph 78(12)).
- 5.1.4 India is a large and diverse country with a population of over 1.4 billion people, almost half of which are women. The law protects for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation which is generally respected by the government (see [Demography and geography](#))

and [Country Policy and Information Note India: Internal relocation](#)).

- 5.1.5 According to the NFHS-5 the proportion of women who report freedom of movement varies by state. In Himachal Pradesh, 82% of women report freedom of movement, compared with 2% in Lakshadweep (a UT of 36 Islands off the south-west coast), 15% in Kerala, and less than 33% in Goa, Odisha, Manipur, Nagaland, and Karnataka (see [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 5.1.6 Cities across India have introduced initiatives to make transport accessible and safe for women travelling. Delhi introduced women-only coaches on the Delhi Metro, women's only trains in Mumbai and Bihar introduced 'pink buses' which have CCTV, GPS tracking and female drivers across the district in Patna, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Purnia, Gaya and Darbhanga (see [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 5.1.7 There was no specific information found in the sources to indicate that across the country women in general face difficulties in obtaining employment or accessing healthcare, or that girls are unable to access education. These services are likely to be more available and accessible in larger towns and cities. It may be more difficult for rural women to access services (see [Social, economic and political status](#)).
- 5.1.8 Single women account for 71.4 million of the total population with 44 million living in rural areas, according to the (most recent) 2011 census. Most single women were widows, however 16.9 million were single, unmarried women aged 20-24. Although numbers of single women are rising, being single by choice remains rare due to a lack of social acceptance (see [Single women](#)).
- 5.1.9 Women who have family support or can live with relatives are likely to find it easier to relocate. Single women, including those with children, may face difficulty relocating without the support or supervision of a male relative and in obtaining accommodation and accessing services due to societal discrimination. However, this alone does not make relocation unreasonable or unduly harsh. It is likely to be easier for wealthy, urban women to be single and live alone (see [Single women](#)).
- 5.1.10 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94(3) of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as India is listed as a designated state. Such a claim must be certified under section 94(3) if you are satisfied it is clearly unfounded.
- 6.1.2 Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.3 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **18 August 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

[Back to Contents](#)

7. Legal context

7.1 Constitution

7.1.1 The following articles of the constitution set out provisions relating to women:

- ‘Article 14: Equality before law: The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India
- ‘Article 15: (1) Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.—(1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.
- ‘Article 15: (3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.
- ‘Article 16: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment: (2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.
- ‘Article 39: Certain principles of policy to be followed by the State. The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing
 - ‘(a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;...
 - ‘(d) that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women...
- ‘Article 42: Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.—The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.
- ‘Article 51A. Fundamental duties. It shall be the duty of every citizen of India...

amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women...'¹

[Back to Contents](#)

7.2 Statutory provisions

7.2.1 The 2019-2021 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), the most recent NFHS available, was a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted of a representative sample of 636,699 households throughout India² published by India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare which made findings on a number of areas surrounding Indian women's empowerment. In terms of the NFHS-5 methodology and the time span in which it covered; the report noted 'NFHS-5 fieldwork for India was conducted in two phases— Phase-I from 17 June 2019 to 30 January 2020 covering 17 states and 5 UTs and Phase-II from 2 January 2020 to 30 April 2021 covering 11 states and 3 UTs — by 17 Field Agencies and gathered information from 636,699 households, 724,115 women, and 101,839 men.'³ The NFHS-5 noted:

'Domestic violence has been recognized since 1983 as a criminal offence under Indian Penal Code 498-A. However, it was not until the enactment of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDVA), which came into effect in 2006, that civil protections were afforded to victims of domestic violence. The PWDVA provides a definition of domestic violence that is comprehensive and includes all forms of physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and economic violence, and covers both actual acts of such violence and threats of violence. In addition, the PWDVA recognizes marital rape and covers harassment in the form of unlawful dowry demands as a form of abuse.'⁴

7.2.2 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Country Information Report on India published on 29 September 2023 (DFAT 2023 report) which '...draws on DFAT's on-the-ground knowledge and discussions with a range of sources in India. It takes into account information from government and non-government sources...' noted: 'The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDVA) was enacted to provide more effective protection for female victims of any kind of violence occurring within the family, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic and sexual violence. The PWDVA defines domestic violence as any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent, which includes threat or actual abuse ...'⁵

7.2.3 The Freedom House report (FH report 2024) published on 26 February 2025, covering events in 2024, which according to its information is produced by in-house and external analysts who used a range of sources from news articles to on-the-ground research to inform the report⁶ stated: '...A 2006 law banned dowry-related harassment, widened the definition of domestic violence to include emotional or verbal abuse, and criminalized

¹ Gol, [The Constitution of India](#), 1 May 2024

² NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 1), March 2022

³ NFHS-5, [India report](#), (page 1), March 2022

⁴ NFHS-5, [India report](#), (page 639), March 2022

⁵ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.126), 29 September 2023

⁶ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World Research Methodology](#), no date

spousal sexual violence, but enforcement is reportedly poor.’⁷

For more information on protective services available, see [State support](#).

- 7.2.4 The DFAT 2023 report stated: ‘... Marital rape is not a crime in India, a matter being considered by the Supreme Court as at the time of publication.’⁸
- 7.2.5 On 1 July 2024, three new criminal laws, [Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita](#) (BNS), [Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita](#) (BNSS) and [the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinayam](#) (BSA) came into effect replacing the 1860 Indian Penal Code, 1973 Code of Criminal Procedure and 1872 Indian Evidence Act⁹.
- 7.2.6 Sentencing Provisions from Chapter 5 of the BNS, which covers offences against women and children are listed below¹⁰ (table by CPIT):

Offence	Minimum Sentence	Maximum Sentence
Rape (general cases)	10 years imprisonment	Life imprisonment
Rape of a girl under 16 years	20 years imprisonment	Life imprisonment
Rape of a girl under 12 years	20 years imprisonment	Life imprisonment or death penalty
Gang rape of a woman over 18 years	20 years imprisonment	Life imprisonment
Gang rape of a girl under 18 years	Life imprisonment	Death penalty
Assault or criminal force to outrage modesty of a woman	1 year imprisonment	5 years imprisonment
Sexual harassment	Fine (unspecified)	3 years imprisonment
Cruelty by husband or his relatives (domestic violence)	Fine (unspecified)	3 years imprisonment

- 7.2.7 In relation to ‘dowry deaths,’ the BNS states:

‘Where the death of a woman is caused by any burns or bodily injury or occurs otherwise than under normal circumstances within seven years of her marriage and it is shown that soon before her death she was subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or any relative of her husband for, or in connection with, any demand for dowry, such death shall be called “dowry death”, and such husband or relative shall be deemed to have caused her death...

‘Whoever commits dowry death shall be punished with imprisonment for a

⁷ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World Report 2025](#) (section G3), 26 February 2025

⁸ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.126), 29 September 2023

⁹ AI, [India: Authorities must immediately repeal repressive new criminal laws](#), 1 July 2024

¹⁰ Gol, [The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita](#) (pages 23 to 25, 27, 29), 25 December 2023

term which shall not be less than seven years but which may extend to imprisonment for life.’¹¹

- 7.2.8 In regard to the criminalisation of marital rape, on 23 October 2024, the Hindu, an independent Indian newspaper¹², reported that the Supreme Court had postponed a hearing on whether to criminalise marital rape. The government opposed amending the law, arguing that such a change could disrupt the institution of marriage. The article noted:

‘The Supreme Court on Wednesday (October 23, 2024) deferred hearing [a batch of petitions](#) seeking the criminalisation of marital rape.

‘... The petitions seek to strike down the exceptions in Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 63 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which replaced the colonial Code earlier this year. Exception two of Section 375 (rape) of IPC excludes non-consensual sexual intercourse by a husband with his wife, if the latter is over 15 years of age, from the definition of rape. A similar in Section 63 (rape) of BNS rules out forced sexual intercourse by a man with his wife, aged over 18 years, as rape.

‘However, a recent affidavit filed by the Centre said the punishment of non-consensual sexual acts in a wedlock and categorising it as rape would impact con Exception jugal relationships and lead to “serious disturbances” in the institution of marriage...’¹³

- 7.2.9 The same article reported: ‘The marital rape exception case would remain inconclusive until a fresh Bench is allotted for the case.’¹⁴ In the sources consulted by CPIT, there was no further update on the Supreme Court marital rape case (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 7.2.10 The UN Human Rights Committee’s (UNHRC) Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of India, published on 2 September 2024 noted ‘...the measures taken by the State party, including the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and some provisions of the new criminal code, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023...[however] [t]he Committee is... concerned that the definition of rape under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 does not include marital rape (arts. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 26).’¹⁵
- 7.2.11 On 27 October 2024, the Fair Observer, described as ‘... an independent, nonprofit media organization ...’¹⁶, article noted the new criminal laws ‘... include stricter punishments for rapes of minors, an increase in the sentence for rape from seven to ten years, mandatory digital recording of statements from victims of sexual assault and placing a 30-day time limit on delivering judgments — with the goal of achieving a conviction rate of 90%.’¹⁷

For information on implementation of sexual assault and rape laws see [Access to justice and state support](#)

- 7.2.12 In regard to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the US State Department

¹¹ Gol, [The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita](#) (page 29), 25 December 2023

¹² The Hindu, [About us](#), undated

¹³ The Hindu, [Supreme Court defers hearing pleas seeking criminalisation...](#) 23 Oct 2024

¹⁴ The Hindu, [Supreme Court defers hearing pleas seeking criminalisation...](#) 23 Oct 2024

¹⁵ UNHRC, [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report](#), (paragraph 21) 2 September 2024

¹⁶ Fair Observer, [About](#), no date

¹⁷ Fair Observer, [How Does Indian Law Now Treat Sexual Assault Victims...](#), 27 Oct 2024

Human Right Practices report, covering events in India in 2023, published 22 April 2024 (USSD 2023 report) stated: 'There was no national law that addressed FGM/C, although litigation was pending in the Supreme Court since 2017 seeking to ban the practice...' ¹⁸. The most up to date USSD report published 12 August 2025 and covering events in 2024 (USSD 2024 report) is notably shorter than in previous years and provides less coverage of certain topics and did not include any reporting on FGM/C ¹⁹.

7.2.13 On November 2024, the Orchid Project, described as a '... an international NGO ... working at the forefront of the global movement to create a world free from FGM/C ...' ²⁰, published a report on the Law on FGM/C in India which noted there is no specific law criminalising FGM/C in India, however the act of performing FGM/C on a person could be penalised under sections 114-117 and 129 and 130 of the BNS and sections 3,7 and 42 of the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences Act ²¹.

7.2.14 In regard to penalties for FGM/C, the same report stated:

'Under the BNS there are a range of penalties, as follows, for causing hurt and grievous hurt, which could apply to those performing FGC.

- Under Section 115(2), the punishment for voluntarily causing hurt is imprisonment for up to a year and/or a fine of up to 10,000 rupees.
- Under Section 117(2), the punishment for voluntarily causing grievous hurt is imprisonment for up to seven years and an unspecified fine.
- Under Section 131, the punishment for assault or criminal force is imprisonment up to three months and/or a fine of up to 1,000 rupees (depending on the degree of 'provocation', which would likely be irrelevant).
- For those assisting in FGC, Section 56 states that imprisonment may be up to a quarter of the longest term provided for that offence and/or the fine for that offence.
- Failing to report an offence is covered by Section 211(b), which states that a person who fails to pass on information to the relevant public servant, depending on the offence and the penalty for that offence, will be punished with imprisonment for up to six months or a fine of up to 10,000 rupees.' ²²

For more information on FGM see [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#) and [Access to justice and state support](#).

7.2.15 On 4 September 2023, a New Indian Express news article reported that there are no specific laws to prosecute or tackle honour killings, therefore they are prosecuted as murder cases, rather than specifically honour killings ²³.

7.2.16 In regard to caselaw related to honour killings, on 13 June 2025 Lawful

¹⁸ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

¹⁹ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

²⁰ Orchid Project, [About Us](#), no date

²¹ The Orchid Project, [The Law and FGC India](#) (pages 5 and 6), November 2024

²² The Orchid Project, [The Law and FGC India](#) (page 10), November 2024

²³ The New Indian Express, [Killing honour in the name of 'honour killings'](#), 4 September 2023

Legal, an Indian online legal platform²⁴, highlighted the following case law:

‘Shakti Vahini v. Union of India (2018) 7 SCC 192. The Supreme Court took serious notice of honor killings and the unlawful operations of Khap Panchayats [traditional assembly of elders who set rules and adjudicate disputes at village level, prevalent in the states of UP, Rajasthan And Haryana²⁵] in this historic ruling. The Court unequivocally ruled that it is unlawful and a violation of constitutional rights for community assemblies to meddle in marital affairs, especially when the marriage is between consenting adults. The right to life and personal liberty, which includes the freedom to select one’s life partner, were reaffirmed as fundamental rights under Article 21. The legal basis for defending individual liberty against societal pressures was greatly reinforced by this case.’²⁶

7.2.17 In relation to the practice of child marriage, the DFAT 2023 report noted child marriage and payment of a dowry were both illegal²⁷. For more information on child marriage see [Forced and child marriage](#)

7.2.18 In regard to child marriage, the USSD 2024 report stated:

‘The law set the legal age of marriage for women at 18 and men at 21 and empowered courts to annul early and forced marriages...

‘The law established a full-time child marriage prohibition officer in every state to prevent child marriage. These individuals had the power to intervene when a child marriage was taking place, document violations of the law, file charges against parents, remove children from dangerous situations, and deliver them to local child protection authorities.

‘... the national law indicated the minimum age of marriage was 18 for women and 21 for men.’²⁸

For more information on child marriage see [Forced and child marriage](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

7.3 Indian caselaw

7.3.1 In relation to relevant Indian case law on domestic abuse protection, the LAW Notes, an information portal related to Indian law for students, lawyers and citizens²⁹, website page dated 10 September 2024 stated:

‘The Indian judiciary has played a crucial role in interpreting and expanding the scope of domestic violence laws, ensuring that victims receive appropriate protection. Some important cases include:

1. Shiv Kumar v. Union of India (2010): This case reaffirmed that domestic violence is not confined to physical assault but includes emotional and psychological harm. The court stressed that any form of domestic violence, irrespective of its nature, should be condemned and dealt with under the law.
2. S.R. Batra v. Taruna Batra (2006): In this case, the Supreme Court

²⁴ Lawful Legal, [About Us](#), no date

²⁵ IAS Express, [Khap Panchayat in India- Functioning, Pros & Cons](#), 17 February 2023

²⁶ Lawful Legal, [Honour Killing in India...](#), 13 June 2025

²⁷ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.123), 29 September 2023

²⁸ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section3b), 12 August 2025

²⁹ LAW Notes, [About Law Notes](#), no date

ruled that a wife is not entitled to claim the right to reside in her in-laws' house under the PWDVA unless it can be shown that the husband holds a proprietary interest in that property. The case clarified the interpretation of "shared household" under the Act.

3. V.D. Bhanot v. Savita Bhanot (2012): The Supreme Court held that even if a woman had been subjected to domestic violence before the enactment of the PWDVA in 2005, she could still seek relief under the Act. This retrospective application of the law aimed to provide justice to women who had suffered abuse in the past.³⁰

- 7.3.2 In relation to relevant case law for domestic abuse protections, the LAW Notes website September 2024 article highlighted the below case: 'Indra Sarma v. V.K.V. Sarma (2013): 'This landmark case expanded the definition of domestic relationships to include live-in relationships. The Supreme Court ruled that women in live-in relationships could seek relief under the PWDVA if they were subjected to domestic violence.'³¹

[Back to Contents](#)

8. Social, economic and political status

8.1 Global equality and inclusivity rankings

- 8.1.1 The 2023 Global Women Peace and Security Index (2023 WPS Index), produced by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), ranks 177 countries and economies on women's status based on research and analysis on data from sources such as the UN between 2017 and 2023 and covering inclusion, security and justice³². The WPS Index is a composite measure ranging from 0 to 1, where 1 represents the best possible outcomes for women³³ in which India's overall score was 0.595³⁴.
- 8.1.2 In relation to the absence of legal discrimination against women, the 2023 WPS index scored India 74.4 out of 100 in which 0 is low and 100 indicates a full equal legal code³⁵ (see also [Legal context](#)).
- 8.1.3 The 2025 Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) on 11 June 2025, annually '... measures the current state and evolution of gender parity across... Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment ...'³⁶ India ranked 131st out of 148 countries in the 2025 GGGI with a score of 64.4%³⁷.
- 8.1.4 Previous scores from the WEF GGGI show a general upward trend towards

³⁰ LAW Notes, [Domestic Abuse in India](#), 10 September 2024

³¹ LAW Notes, [Domestic Abuse in India](#), 10 September 2024

³² GIWPS & PRIO, [Women, Peace, and Security Index 2023/24...](#), (pages 1,89 & 90), October 2023

³³ GIWPS & PRIO, [Women, Peace, and Security Index 2023/24...](#), (Index scores), October 2023

³⁴ GIWPS & PRIO, [Women, Peace, and Security Index 2023/24...](#), (pages 1,89 & 90), October 2023

³⁵ GIWPS, [WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Justice), October 2023

³⁶ WEF, [Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#) (page 5), 11 June 2025

³⁷ WEF, [Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#) (India), 11 June 2025

gender parity from 2021^{38 39 40 41 42} (table by CPIT).

Year	Number of countries included	Global rank (0 = high)	Score (imparity = 0, parity = 1)
2021	156	140	0.625
2022	146	135	0.629
2023	146	127	0.643
2024	146	129	0.641
2025	148	131	0.644

8.1.5 In regard to UN Sustainable Development Goal 5, to ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’, in the 2023-24 period India scored 49 out of 100 (0 to 49 ranking is ‘Aspirant’) which is an increase from 48 out of 100 in 2020-21⁴³.

8.1.6 In 2024, the UN in India evaluated the country’s legal framework for gender equality in public life, awarding it a score of 63.6 out of 100. This score reflects the extent to which national laws promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality. In the same assessment, the legal framework addressing violence against women received a score of 77.8⁴⁴.

[Back to Contents](#)

8.2 Marriage, divorce and inheritance

8.2.1 In relation to dowries, the USSD 2023 India report noted: ‘The law forbade the acceptance of marriage dowries, but many families continued to offer and accept dowries...’⁴⁵. The USSD 2024 report did not include information on dowries⁴⁶.

8.2.2 In regard to arranged marriages, the same USSD report noted: ‘In some cases, the widespread practice of arranged marriage resulted in forced marriage, which was illegal ...’⁴⁷. The USSD 2024 report did not include information on arranged marriage⁴⁸. However, the 2024 report is notably shorter than in previous years and provides less coverage of certain topics. This reduction in reporting should not be interpreted as indicating a decline in the prevalence of dowries or arranged marriage.

8.2.3 In regard to divorce, the DFAT 2023 report stated:
‘Divorce can be financially and socially devastating for women, especially if they were married young. Women may not have developed independent networks or life skills, and may find transition to single life very difficult. Often, the husband is the breadwinner (women’s participation in the

³⁸ WEF, [GGGR 2021](#) (India), 30 March 2021

³⁹ WEF, [GGGR 2022](#) (India), 13 July 2022

⁴⁰ WEF, [GGGR 2023](#) (India), 20 June 2023

⁴¹ WEF, [GGGR 2024](#) (India), 11 June 2024

⁴² WEF, [Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#) (page 38), 11 June 2025

⁴³ NITI Aayog, [SDG India Index](#) (Gender Equality), July 2024

⁴⁴ UN India, [Sustainable Development Goal 5](#) (Progress in the country), no date

⁴⁵ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

⁴⁶ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

⁴⁷ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

⁴⁸ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

workforce is very low) and his death or the termination of marriage can be financially devastating. This particularly affects women whose husbands initiate the divorce and provide no income support. In many cases, such women would be unable to rely on the support of their biological family, which is the traditional form of social welfare in India.⁴⁹

- 8.2.4 The same report noted: 'The experience of Muslim women can vary from that of other women. Sources told DFAT that some Muslim women, particularly where they are in a relationship with a man who has other wives as is permitted under personal status laws, may have less economic and social security, especially in the case of divorce.'⁵⁰
- 8.2.5 The UNHRC September 2024 report noted 'The Committee takes note of the steps taken by the State party towards equality in matters governed by the personal laws of religious communities or customs. It remains concerned, however, about the persistence of inequalities and discriminatory practices, such as those relating to the infringement of the right to inherit or own land and the dowry system.'⁵¹
- 8.2.6 The UN India in 2024 ranked '... the degree to which legal frameworks promote, enforce and monitor gender equality with respect to marriage and family benefits' noted that India 'stood at 100.0 points on a 0-100 scale.'⁵²
- 8.2.7 The same source reported: 'In 2021, the proportion of women between 20 to 24 years of age who reported having been married before their eighteenth birthday was 23.3%'⁵³.
- 8.2.8 On 21 November 2024, Leaders in Law, an online platform to access legal experts⁵⁴, article outlined a mutual consent, or a contested divorce is available in India, with mutual consent divorces taking around 20 weeks from application date. The article outlined that divorce law provides for alimony and maintenance for spouses, and child custody agreements⁵⁵.
- 8.2.9 On 21 March 2025, ETV Bharat, an Indian news platform⁵⁶, article reported: 'A recent study done by [UN Women suggests that divorce rates are increasing in India](#). For the longest time, India had one of the lowest divorce rates in the world, at just 1%... data from the [Periodic Labour Force Survey](#) revealed that Indians are getting divorced now more than they did a decade ago. Surprisingly, the proportion of divorced or separated women in rural areas is also increasing ...'⁵⁷
- 8.2.10 In relation to the reason for increasing divorce, the same article reported: 'One of the primary reasons why divorce cases are increasing in India, Parannjpe [a Relationship coach and expert] says, is financial independence... "The pressure of getting married at the right age is also reducing since women are no longer a burden on their family. They are independent and they make their own decisions. Parents are prioritising their

⁴⁹ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.133), 29 September 2023

⁵⁰ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.134), 29 September 2023

⁵¹ UNHRC, [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report](#), (paragraph 19) 2 September 2024

⁵² UN India, [Sustainable Development Goal 5](#) (Progress in the country), no date

⁵³ UN India, [Sustainable Development Goal 5](#) (Progress in the country), no date

⁵⁴ Leaders in Law, [About Us](#), no date

⁵⁵ Leaders in Law, [Understanding the Legal Process of Divorce in India](#), 24 November 2024

⁵⁶ ETV Bharat, [About us](#), no date

⁵⁷ ETV Bharat, [No Longer 'Till Death Do Us Part', Why More Indians Are Choosing...](#), 21 March 2025

daughters' education and skills over marriage," says Deepika Rathore, a relationship coach.

'Psychotherapist Khushi Gupta emphasises the role of changing priorities among women. "Marriage is no longer about duty. Women are now aware that it is about equal respect. Many couples struggle with emotional intimacy. If marriage becomes toxic, then it's better to part ways," says Gupta ...'⁵⁸

- 8.2.11 In regard to societal attitudes towards divorce, the same article noted '... changing societal attitudes are also playing a crucial role. While the stigma around divorce still exists, it is not as paralysing as it once was. Individuals are now more exposed to global ideas through social media, films, literature, and different communities. The concept of 'adjustment' is now questioned ...'⁵⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

8.3 Political participation

- 8.3.1 The Bertelsmann Stiftung, a German private foundation, in its Transformation Index 2024 country report on India (BTI 2024 India report), covering 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 which assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 127 countries through country experts⁶⁰, stated: '... The general election of 2019 was the largest democratic exercise in the world, with over 900 million people eligible to vote and a voter turnout of over 67% (including the highest participation of women voters in Indian history) ...'⁶¹
- 8.3.2 The same report noted: '... Women...occupy a subordinate role in politics, though there are some notable exceptions. In 2021, women constituted 14% of members of parliament in the Lok Sabha, demonstrating a gradual increase over the years.'⁶² The 2023 WPS Index calculated women's share of parliament seats as 14.7%, which increased from 11.6% in 2017⁶³.
- 8.3.3 The USSD 2023 report stated: 'Religious, cultural, and traditional practices were barriers to women's proportional participation in political institutions. In September [2023], parliament passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, known as the Women's Reservation Bill. The law reserves 33 percent of the seats in the lower house of parliament and state legislative assemblies for women.'⁶⁴ The USSD 2024 report did not include information on women's participation in politics⁶⁵.
- 8.3.4 The UNHRC September 2024 report noted: 'The Committee regrets that the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, also known as the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, will come into force only in 2029, after the completion of the census and ratification by the majority of states and will reserve only one third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha, the state

⁵⁸ ETV Bharat, [No Longer 'Till Death Do Us Part', Why More Indians Are Choosing...](#), 21 March 2025

⁵⁹ ETV Bharat, [No Longer 'Till Death Do Us Part', Why More Indians Are Choosing...](#), 21 March 2025

⁶⁰ BTI, [Methodology](#), no date

⁶¹ BTI, [BTI 2024 India Country Report](#) (political participation), 19 March 2024

⁶² BTI, [BTI 2024 India Country Report](#) (political participation), 19 March 2024

⁶³ GIWPS & PRIO, [WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Inclusion), October 2023

⁶⁴ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 3), 23 April 2024

⁶⁵ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

legislative assemblies and the Delhi legislative assembly.⁶⁶

- 8.3.5 On 5 April 2024, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP), a global think tank⁶⁷, April 2024 article noted:

‘... many observers have argued that institutional factors, such as the sustained effort by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to boost women’s electoral participation, better explain the rise in female turnout. In 2009, the ECI inaugurated the [Systematic Voters’ Education and Electoral Participation](#) program with the goal of increasing voter awareness and improving voter turnout. In fact, a key objective of the program was to increase female turnout and close the voting gender gap. Although a systematic study of the program has not been conducted, the upward trajectory in female turnout clearly begins in 2009 ...’⁶⁸

- 8.3.6 In regard to women’s engagement in politics, the same article stated:

‘... parties across the political spectrum have pursued policies to attract female voters. The [Bharatiya Janata Party] BJP’s outreach has centered around mobilizing women through [norm-compliant strategies](#) that focus on their care-related responsibilities... Fieldwork in northern Bihar revealed that women who might not know the names of their mukhiya (village leader) or state chief minister were readily able to identify Modi. While it was harder for them to correctly identify his position, female respondents would regularly say things like “Modi sarkar hai” (Modi is the government) or “Modi Bharat ke malik hai” (Modi is the leader of India).’⁶⁹

- 8.3.7 On the increase in female turnout in elections, the same article noted:

‘Female voters have become a formidable force in Indian elections. Now more than ever, political parties have made women a central preoccupation of both their electoral campaigns as well as their governing strategies once in office. With the eventual implementation of gender quotas in state and national legislatures, gender could become an important identity shaping electoral outcomes.

‘However, the euphoria over female turnout surpassing male turnout must be placed within a broader social context. Despite rising female voter participation, the number of female candidates fielded by major parties in this year’s election remains low. In 2019, female candidates made up less than one-tenth (8.9 percent) of the overall candidate pool—a record high, but still abysmally low.’⁷⁰

- 8.3.8 In regard to female turnout in the 2024 general elections, on 9 January 2025 State Bank India (SBI) produced a report based on Election Commission data from the 2024 general election which stated: ‘Total electors increased from 83.4 crore [834,000,000] in 2014 to 97.8 crore [978,000,000] in 2024 [sic – 2024], with female electors catching [up] fast with male voters. Currently, for every 100 male electors there are 95 female voters.’⁷¹

- 8.3.9 The same report found: ‘We empirically establish that states have witnessed

⁶⁶ UNHRC, [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report](#), (paragraph 19) 2 September 2024

⁶⁷ CEIP, [Who We Are](#), no date

⁶⁸ CEIP, [What Lies Behind India’s Rising Female Voter Turnout](#), 5 April 2024

⁶⁹ CEIP, [What Lies Behind India’s Rising Female Voter Turnout](#), 5 April 2024

⁷⁰ CEIP, [What Lies Behind India’s Rising Female Voter Turnout](#), 5 April 2024

⁷¹ SBI, [SBI Research Issue 25](#) (page 5), 9 January 2025

an incremental women voter turnout of 1.8 crores [18 million] in 2024 over 2019 primarily because of implementation of women centric schemes, at least one or more. This is also the result of many states having launched income transfer schemes among others.⁷²

- 8.3.10 The same report noted: 'Women representation in Lok Sabha has increased from 5% in the first Lok Sabha [General Election] to 14% in the current Lok Sabha, marginally lower than in 2019, when 78 women were elected. % share of women candidates elected to total women candidates is at 9%, slightly lower than 2019 election, but same as 2014 election.'⁷³
- 8.3.11 The same report concluded: '... in states, where one or more women-centric schemes have been launched, average women voter turnout in 19 beneficiary states increased by 7.8 lakh [780,000] (cumulatively: 1.5 crore [15,000,000]) in 2024 as compared to increase of only 2.5 lakh [250,000] (cumulatively: 0.3 crore [3,000,000]) in states where no-such schemes were launched after 2019.'⁷⁴
- 8.3.12 In regard to the overall factors which have increased female turnout in elections, the same report stated:
- 'Out of 1.8 crore [18,000,000] incremental female voters (2024 vs 2019 elections)
- 45 lakh [4,500,000] female voters rise is attributable to a rise in literacy
 - 36 lakh [3,600,000] can be attributable to employment /[Mudra Yojana](#) (women's business loans provided by Indian government⁷⁵) among others
 - 20 lakh [2,000,000] is attributable to House Ownership under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PAYM-U government urban housing scheme⁷⁶)
 - 21 lakh [2,100,000] is attributable to Sanitation
 - Electricity access and improved drinking water source show positive coefficients on female voter's turnout.'⁷⁷
- 8.3.13 The FH 2024 report stated: '...The 2024 general election saw robust turnout by women voters, with female participation surpassing that of men in 19 out of 36 states and Union Territories. Female representation in the Lok Sabha, however, remains low; women secured 74 seats (14 percent of the total), four seats lower than the number won by women in 2019 ...'⁷⁸
- 8.3.14 The 2025 Global Gender Gap Index report noted: 'Where India records a slight drop in parity ... since the last edition is in Political Empowerment. Female representation in parliament falls from 14.7% to 13.8% in 2025, lowering the indicator score for the second year in a row below 2023 levels. Similarly, the share of women in ministerial roles falls from 6.5% to 5.6%, moving the indicator score (5.9%) further away this year from its highest

⁷² SBI, [SBI Research Issue 25](#) (page 2), 9 January 2025

⁷³ SBI, [SBI Research Issue 25](#) (page 11), 9 January 2025

⁷⁴ SBI, [SBI Research Issue 25](#) (page 14), 9 January 2025

⁷⁵ Gol, [Mudra Yojana](#), no date

⁷⁶ Gol, [PMAY-U](#), no date

⁷⁷ SBI, [SBI Research Issue 25](#) (page 2), 9 January 2025

⁷⁸ FH, [Freedom in the World 2025: India](#) (section B4), 26 February 2025

level (30%, 2019).⁷⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

8.4 Economic participation

- 8.4.1 In regard to government initiatives to increase economic opportunities for women, the Ministry of Women and Child Development website highlighted the Palna scheme:

‘The Government’s sustained initiative on education and employment of women has resulted in increased opportunities for their employment, and more and more women are now in gainful employment, working within or outside their homes... Considering the difficulties faced by the working mothers in giving due child care and protection to their children, it has been decided to provide the day-care crèche facilities through the component of Palna. Creche services formalise the child care facilities hitherto considered as part of domestic work. Formalization of care work supports “decent work campaign” to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 8 – Decent work and economic growth.’⁸⁰

- 8.4.2 In regard to women’s participation in the workforce, the 2023 WPS Index reported India’s percentage of women’s employment as 34.6%. The source noted this is calculated as the percentage of women aged 25 to 64 years old who are employed in the formal or informal sector⁸¹. The 2023 WPS Index noted 2017 data was not available for India.

- 8.4.3 In relation to financial inclusion, the 2023 WPS Index calculated that 77.6% of Indian women aged 15 and over reported having an individual or joint account or having accessed a mobile money service⁸². This percentage has increased from 42.6% which was the previous estimate in 2017⁸³.

- 8.4.4 The DFAT 2023 report stated: ‘Some women report feeling unsafe using public transport to get to work, which can act as an economic barrier, either because of their own fears or because male members of the household will not allow them to go out to work because of fear of violence ...’⁸⁴

- 8.4.5 In regard to participation in the labour force, the BTI 2024 India report stated: ‘... India’s female labor force participation rate has steadily decreased over the past few decades, dropping from 27.7% in 2007 to 20.3% in 2021. Although there was a slight increase from 20.0% in 2020, likely influenced by the pandemic, the decline remains significant ...’⁸⁵

- 8.4.6 The USSD 2023 report noted:

‘Women faced discrimination in employment, occupation, and access to credit. Many tribal land systems, including in Bihar, denied tribal women the right to own land. Other laws or customs relating to the ownership of assets and land accorded women little control over land use, retention, or sale. The government did not effectively enforce discrimination laws.

⁷⁹ WEF, [Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#) (page 39), 11 June 2025

⁸⁰ MWCD, [Palna](#), no date

⁸¹ GIWPS & PRIO, [WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Inclusion), October 2023

⁸² GIWPS & PRIO, [WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Inclusion), October 2023

⁸³ GIWPS & PRIO, [WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Inclusion), October 2023

⁸⁴ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.119), 29 September 2023

⁸⁵ BTI, [BTI 2024 India Country Report](#) (Welfare Regime), 19 March 2024

‘The law prohibited discrimination in the workplace and required equal pay for equal work, but employers reportedly often paid women less than men for the same job, discriminated against women in employment, and promoted women less frequently than men.’⁸⁶ The USSD 2024 report did not include information on women’s discrimination in employment⁸⁷. However, the 2024 report is notably shorter than in previous years and provides less coverage of certain topics. This reduction in reporting should not be interpreted as indicating a decline in workplace discrimination.

- 8.4.7 In regard to trends in the increasing female workforce, on 7 March 2024, Observer Research Foundation, described as a non-partisan, independent Indian thinktank⁸⁸, article stated:

‘The overall increase in women’s participation in the labour force is driven by more rural women joining the workforce. The PLFS [Periodic Labour Force Survey] data show that the LFPR [labour force participation rate] increased by 5 percentage points for urban women and 14 percentage points for rural women. This could partly be [linked](#) to a more accurate measurement of women’s work, according to several analyses. Women in India, and many developing countries, are widely engaged in [unpaid economic work](#)—different from care work or domestic work, like working on farms or family enterprises for instance—for which they are neither paid nor recognised as workers. The data being collected now is more cognisant of the historical mismeasurement of women’s work and might be the reason for the increase in LFPR. Women unpaid workers rose from 31.7 percent of total women workers to 37 percent from 2017-18 to 2022-23.’⁸⁹

- 8.4.8 The same report highlighted:

‘In the latest round of PLFS (2022-23), another significant trend was observed, the proportion of self-employed women rose to its highest at 70.1 percent, up from 60 percent in 2021-22. The category of self-employed has two sub-categories in PLFS—own account worker and employer, and unpaid helper in household enterprises. More than half of the women worked as “unpaid helpers” in family enterprises.

‘The share of self-employed female workers has always been higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas. Agriculture and allied activities account for three-fourths of the work that rural women are involved in. The increase in self-employed workers can also be interpreted as a sign of [more women](#) taking up entrepreneurship across the country. Under Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana, which extends micro-credit for entrepreneurship, nearly [70 percent](#) of beneficiaries are female and [84 percent](#) of loans sanctioned under Start-Up India have also gone to female beneficiaries. Both these programmes have been enabled through the drive for digital financial inclusion in recent years, which have been gender inclusive in design.

‘Some caveats, however, must be looked at. The State of India Working Report connects the rise in self-employed rural women to the rise in economic distress after the pandemic, which has impacted women more

⁸⁶ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

⁸⁷ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

⁸⁸ Observer Research Foundation, [About Us](#), no date

⁸⁹ ORF, [The female workforce in India: Emerging trends and insights](#), 7 March 2024

than men. The data bears this out. The increase in the self-employed category of workers, which was prevalent during the pandemic amongst both men and for women, is back to pre-pandemic levels for men but remains increased for women. It might be that both trends coexist, economic distress forced more women to enter paid work, and easy access to credit through government schemes has enabled more women to start micro-enterprises. In any case, there is a fundamental shift underway in women's participation in the Indian economy.'⁹⁰

8.4.9 In April 2024, the International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, a peer-reviewed and open access journal⁹¹, published an article by Mohit Kharkwal, a research scholar from Almora University and Altaf Ali Khan, a research scholar from Kumaun University on India's progress of Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality. The article highlighted a number of initiatives taken by the Government of India to achieve Gender Equality such as Mahila E-Haat: 'The Ministry of Women and Child Development and Rastriya Mahila Kosh have launched Mahaila E-Haat as part of Digital India and Make in India initiatives. The project was launched on 7th March 2016 by Hon'ble Cabinet Minister Maneka Sanjay Gandhi. The Mahila E-Haat provides a unique online platform for Indian women entrepreneurs over 18 years old. By mobilizing and providing better paths for development, this portal is aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs.'⁹²

8.4.10 On 28 May 2024, Feminism in India, an Indian feminist media platform, stated:

'The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey data for [the January-March 2024 quarter](#) presents a complex picture of women's economic participation in urban India...

'On the positive side, the substantial jump in the urban female labour force participation rate to 25.6 per cent signals that more women are actively seeking employment opportunities in Q1 2024 from just 22.7 per cent a year ago. This can be attributed to factors like higher educational attainment of women, changing societal attitudes towards working women, and economic compulsions faced by households. The government's initiatives like Skill India and Stand-Up India, aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and vocational training, have also played a role in making women more employable.

However, the stark contrast with the stagnant urban male LFPR of around 74 per cent points to the entrenched gender disparities in the labour market. Deep-rooted socio-cultural norms, lack of safe public spaces and transport, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women continue to hinder their economic participation...

Even when women's participation rate in the labour force reflects a steep rise yet on closer scrutiny, the condition is abysmal. Women are still trapped in low-paying hazardous jobs like mining, sanitation...'⁹³

8.4.11 In regard to statistics on women's economic participation, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Women and Men in India 2024

⁹⁰ ORF, [The female workforce in India: Emerging trends and insights](#), 7 March 2024

⁹¹ IJMR, [About IJMR](#), no date

⁹² Kharkwal, M and Altaf, K, [Progress and Hurdles: India's Pursuit of Gender...](#) (page 3) April 2024

⁹³ Feminism in India, [Latest PLFS Data Presents A Complex Picture Of Women's...](#), 28 May 2024

cited by Insights IAS, an Indian Civil Service examination tutoring platform⁹⁴, reported: ‘Startups with at least one-woman director recognized by DPIIT rose from 1,943 (2017) to 17,405 (2024) – over 800% growth, showcasing improved startup ecosystem inclusivity.’⁹⁵

- 8.4.12 In relation to women’s access to banking, the same report noted: ‘Women account for 39.2% of total bank accounts and contribute to 39.7% of aggregate deposits in 2023-24. [and] Rural women hold 42.2% of accounts, indicating growing financial autonomy in non-urban regions.’⁹⁶
- 8.4.13 On 22 July 2024, an article in the Hindu reported: ‘... the [Chief Economic Advisor](#) on July 22 [2024] said there has been a 218.8% increase in budgetary allocation for schemes for the welfare and empowerment of women even as it acknowledged that women in India face the “motherhood penalty” with a drop in female labour force participation rate around childbearing years’⁹⁷.
- 8.4.14 On 25 October 2024, Drishti, an Indian civil service examination tutoring and information platform⁹⁸, article stated:
‘In a remarkable shift over the past 5 years, [India's female labor force participation](#) has surged from 24.5% to 41.7%, marking a silent revolution in women's economic engagement... the number of working women has nearly doubled from 11 crore [110 million] to 21 crore [210 million] between FY19 and FY24... [and a] rising tide of [women entrepreneurs](#), with those running their own enterprises increasing from 2.5 crore to 6.4 crore, potentially catalyzing a transformative shift in India's economic and social fabric ...’⁹⁹
- 8.4.15 The same article cited a number of factors which may have contributed to the increase in female labour participation which included educational empowerment, infrastructure and mobility improvement such as the rise of women-friendly workspaces and creches in commercial area, remote work, e-commerce, government policy initiatives, smaller family sizes, corporate sector initiatives such as diversity policies, and health and wellbeing support¹⁰⁰.
- 8.4.16 The 2025 Global Gender Gap Index report noted that India had improved on Economic Participation and Opportunity with parity in estimated income rising from 28.6% to 29.9% and the labour-force participation remaining at 45.9% which is India’s highest level achieved to date¹⁰¹.
- 8.4.17 On 11 June 2025, India Times citing the UN Population Fund 2025 State of World Population Report which reported a declining fertility rate in India quoted Dr Manjunath, Deputy Medical Director, Birla Fertility and IVF, Bangalore who attributed the decline to: “This decline is largely attributed to delayed marriages, and among those who are married, delayed pregnancies, with many couples opting to have only one child... Additionally, the rising trend of women prioritising careers and postponing childbirth is

⁹⁴ Insights IAS, [About Insights IAS](#), no date

⁹⁵ Insights IAS, [Women and Men in India 2024 Report](#), 8 April 2025

⁹⁶ Insights IAS, [Women and Men in India 2024 Report](#), 8 April 2025

⁹⁷ The Hindu, [India has moved from women's development to women-led...](#), 22 July 2024

⁹⁸ Drishti, [About Drishti](#), no date

⁹⁹ Drishti, [Investing in Women and India's Prosperity](#), 28 October 2024

¹⁰⁰ Drishti, [Investing in Women and India's Prosperity](#), 28 October 2024

¹⁰¹ WEF, [Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#) (page 39), 11 June 2025

contributing to the fertility decline.”¹⁰²

- 8.4.18 In regard to female employment in India's civil service, on 9 July 2025 the Times of India reported: ‘... more than 53,000 women of Bihar will soon get permanent jobs in different departments of the state govts... On Tuesday [8 July 2025], the state cabinet decided that the 35% horizontal quota for women in govt jobs will now be restricted to only permanent residents of Bihar. Earlier, women from any state used to take advantage of this quota against the unreserved seats.’¹⁰³
- 8.4.19 On 9 July 2025, the Times of India noted:
- ‘As per most recent Women Economic Empowerment index, Lucknow, Kanpur and Varanasi have emerged as cities with most conducive environment for women, while Shravasti, Sambhal, Mahoba, Balrampur and Siddharthnagar were identified for urgent intervention
- Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Tuesday [8 July 2025], directed special drive across all districts for participation of women in economic activities, ‘One District-One Product’ programme and various loan schemes and asked officials to give preference to in recruitment as home guard, teachers and in public transport system as drivers and conductors.’¹⁰⁴
- 8.4.20 In relation to female CEOs in India, on 11 July 2025 Reuters reported: ‘Hindustan Unilever on Thursday [10 July 2025] appointed Priya Nair, president of parent Unilever's beauty and wellbeing division, as its managing director and CEO, making her one of the few women to lead a major Indian company.’¹⁰⁵ The article highlighted that there are currently 11 female CEOs of publicly listed companies (excluding subsidiaries of global firms operating in the country)¹⁰⁶.

[Back to Contents](#)

8.5 Education

- 8.5.1 For general information on education see [India Country Background Note](#) (copy available upon request).
- 8.5.2 The BTI 2024 India report stated: ‘... In terms of education, there has been notable progress in primary and secondary schooling, as evidenced by the female-to-male enrollment ratio (Gender Parity Index), now at 1.0. In tertiary education, this ratio is even higher at 1.1.’¹⁰⁷
- 8.5.3 The same report noted: ‘... In 2022, enrollment of girls aged 11 to 14 in schools reached 98% – a noteworthy advancement compared to the past two decades.’¹⁰⁸
- 8.5.4 The World Bank data portal, based on 2024 UNESCO Institute for Statistics, recorded the youth female (15-24) literacy rate which is the percentage of people ages 15-24 who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement about their everyday life, as 96% in 2023 which had

¹⁰² India Times, [UN report: India's population hits 1.46 billion, fertility drops...](#), 11 June 2025

¹⁰³ Times of India, [More than 53k women to get permanent jobs: Nitish](#), 9 July 2025

¹⁰⁴ Times of India, [‘Lucknow, Knp, Kashi most growth-friendly for women’](#), 9 July 2025

¹⁰⁵ Reuters, [Breaking the glass ceiling: female CEOs and managing directors in...](#), 11 July 2025

¹⁰⁶ Reuters, [Breaking the glass ceiling: female CEOs and managing directors in...](#), 11 July 2025

¹⁰⁷ BTI, [BTI 2024 India Country Report](#) (Welfare Regime), 19 March 2024

¹⁰⁸ BTI, [BTI 2024 India Country Report](#) (Sustainability), 19 March 2024

increased from 87% in 2016¹⁰⁹.

- 8.5.5 In regard to government education initiatives, the April 2024 IJFMR article stated: "'Betī Bachāo, Betī Padhāo' (BBBP) aims to address gender inequality and promote girls' education and welfare. This campaign, started in 2015, seeks to end the deep-rooted preference for male child over females and the resulting neglect and discrimination against them. Three main objectives of the campaign are at its core: first, to enforce laws to prevent gender-biased sex-selective practices; second, to make sure girls are protected, educated, and survived; and third, to create an environment that fosters girls' empowerment and education.

'The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls in 2019-20 has increased to 90.5% (from 88.5%) at Upper Primary level, 98.7% (from 96.7%) at Elementary level, 77.8% (from 76.9%) at Secondary level, and 52.4% (from 50.8%) at Higher Secondary level.'¹¹⁰

- 8.5.6 The 2025 Global Gender Gap Index report noted: 'In Educational Attainment, India scores 97.1%, reflecting positive shifts in female shares for literacy and tertiary education enrolment, which result in positive score improvements for the subindex as a whole.'¹¹¹

- 8.5.7 On 18 March 2025, the International Journal of Teacher Education Research Studies (IJTERS), a peer-reviewed open-access journal, published an article regarding girls' education in rural India by Pemachandran P, Assistant Professor of Education, Navajyothi College of Teacher Education in Kerala which analysed data from secondary sources between 2011 and 2023 and conducted primary data collection across 40 villages in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu. The article stated:

'Gender bias remains deeply entrenched in many rural communities. Survey data revealed that 63% of parents believed that higher education was more important for sons than daughters. This bias was particularly pronounced among lower-income families and certain caste groups ...

'Safety concerns emerged as a significant barrier, particularly for adolescent girls. Over 70% of parents expressed concerns about their daughters' safety while traveling to school or during school hours. These concerns were exacerbated by reports of harassment and inadequate security measures in and around schools.'¹¹²

- 8.5.8 The same report identified economic and infrastructure barriers to girls' education:

'Poverty remains a fundamental constraint on girls' education. Our survey found that in the lowest income quintile, girls were three times more likely to drop out of school than those in the highest quintile. Direct costs of education (including transportation, books, and uniforms) consumed approximately 15-20% of household income for poor families.

'Opportunity costs also play a significant role. Girls from poor households are often required to contribute to household labor, agricultural work, or care for younger siblings. Our research found that rural girls spent an average of 4.3

¹⁰⁹ World Bank, [Literacy rate, youth female \(% of females ages 15-24\) – India](#), 23 April 2024

¹¹⁰ Kharkwal, M and Altaf, K, [Progress and Hurdles: India's Pursuit of Gender...](#) April 2024

¹¹¹ WEF, [Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#) (page 39), 11 June 2025

¹¹² Pemachandran P, [Girls' Education in Rural India: Barriers...](#) (page 39 & 40), 18 March 2025

hours daily on domestic chores, compared to 1.1 hours for boys, significantly reducing time available for studies.

School infrastructure deficiencies continue to disproportionately affect girls. Our field research found that 58% of rural schools lacked functional separate toilets for girls, 43% had no female teachers, and 67% lacked adequate security measures such as boundary walls or guards.

‘Distance to school emerged as a critical factor affecting girls’ participation in secondary education. In our sample, for every additional kilometer between home and school, girls’ enrollment decreased by 12%, with effects most pronounced at the secondary level.’¹¹³

[Back to Contents](#)

8.6 Access to healthcare

8.6.1 The USSD 2023 report noted: ‘... Care provided to women at public health facilities, particularly to those from marginalized and low-income groups, was often inadequate, and this contributed to a reluctance to seek treatment. Government initiatives resulted in a significant increase in institutional births, but there were reports that health facilities continued to be overburdened, underequipped, and undersupplied.’¹¹⁴

8.6.2 The same USSD 2023 report stated:

‘Limited access to quality reproductive and maternal health-care services – including prenatal care, skilled care at childbirth, and support in the weeks after childbirth – contributed to maternal mortality. In 2022, the Registrar General released a special bulletin on the country’s maternal mortality rate (MMR), which dropped from 113 in 100,000 during 2016-18 to 103 in 100,000 during 2017-19. The states of Rajasthan, UP, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Odisha, and Assam had a “very high” MMR of 130+ in 100,000 live births. The percentage of women receiving the recommended number of prenatal care visits, delivering at a health facility, and receiving a postnatal checkup was lowest among those from the poorest households.’¹¹⁵ The USSD 2024 report did not include information on women’s access to healthcare¹¹⁶.

8.6.3 Population Matters, described as an NGO focused on sustainable population¹¹⁷, report to the UN Commission on the Status of Women dated 31 July 2023 based on research conducted during November 2022, stated: ‘... India’s federal system allows states to adopt their own legislation and policies. In a number of them, the coercive policies of forced sterilisation have mutated into a subtler form of coercion: limitations on economic or career opportunities and civil rights for those who have more than two children.’¹¹⁸ The report did not provide detail on coercive policies of forced sterilisation.

8.6.4 The same report identified coercive family planning measures in 8 states: Assam, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and

¹¹³ Pemachandran P, [Girls’ Education in Rural India: Barriers...](#) (page 39), 18 March 2025

¹¹⁴ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

¹¹⁵ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

¹¹⁶ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

¹¹⁷ Population Matters, [Two-child policies in states of the Republic of India...](#) (page 1), 31 July 2023

¹¹⁸ Population Matters, [Two-child policies in states of the Republic of India...](#) (page 2), 31 July 2023

Telangana and Andhra Pradesh which ‘...primarily focused on eligibility for contesting elections or entering government service.’¹¹⁹

8.6.5 The UNHRC September 2024 report noted

‘While the Committee...[notes] the legislative framework concerning abortion, it notes that several legal and practical obstacles prevent or hinder effective access to safe and legal abortion, such as the lack of clarity of the relevant legislation, including the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, fear of reprisals against medical practitioners, very severe restrictions on abortion for medical reasons after the twentieth week of pregnancy, the obligation to obtain an authorization from a third party in many cases and conscientious objections on the part of medical personnel. The Committee regrets that such circumstances lead women, including minors, to resort to clandestine and unsafe abortions, which increase the risk of maternal mortality. The Committee is also concerned by sex-selective abortions, which, according to information received, is widely practised despite a ban under domestic legislation. The Committee is further concerned about reports of the practice of forced sterilization, under the guise of family planning, particularly among the poorest sections of the population (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 7).’¹²⁰

8.6.6 The 2025 Global Gender Gap Index report noted India recorded 89% of live births were attended by skilled personnel and the maternal mortality rate as 80 deaths per 100,000 live births¹²¹.

8.6.7 In regard to reproductive autonomy, the same sourced ranked India as having restricted rights¹²².

8.6.8 On 20 March 2023, a London School of Economics blog reported: ‘Women with disabilities in India suffer two-fold discrimination based on gender and disability. Often stigmatized and isolated by society, over [93%](#) of women with disabilities are denied their reproductive rights and are forced into procedures like sterilization to regulate their fertility...even today successive Indian governments have been accused of performing involuntary sterilization camps in unsanitary and unsafe conditions that often target the poor and vulnerable sections of society as a method of population control. Governments at the state and district level are allocated funds for family planning, which often assigns certain numbers or targets for sterilizing the population as a mode of permanent contraception...’¹²³

8.6.9 The same report stated:

‘In India, the [Right to Persons with Disabilities Act \(RPWD\), 2016](#) was introduced to legally address the problems faced by the disabled community and ensure equitable access to justice for all members of society. While the RPWD Act took a step towards recognizing the issue of forced abortions under [Section 92\(f\)\(1\)](#) which states that any medical procedure performed on a disabled woman without her express consent that leads to the termination of pregnancy is punishable with an imprisonment term, there is still no specific mention of forced sterilization as a problem. Another contentious factor is the need for “express consent”. While consent forms a crucial factor

¹¹⁹ Population Matters, [Two-child policies in states of the Republic of India...](#) (page 2), 31 July 2023

¹²⁰ UNHRC, [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report](#), (paragraph 23) 2 September 2024

¹²¹ WEF, [Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#) (page 213), 11 June 2025

¹²² WEF, [Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#) (page 213), 11 June 2025

¹²³ LSE, [Forced Sterilization of Disabled Women in India: A Tale of Lost Autonomy](#), 20 March 2023

in developing reproductive autonomy there is no mention regarding the procedure to take this consent free from any undue influence from the disabled woman...¹²⁴

8.6.10 The USSD 2024 report noted:

‘There were reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities. Some women, especially poor and lower-caste women, reportedly were pressured by their husbands and families to have tubal ligations or hysterectomies. The prevalence of this practice had regional disparities. The government provided monetary compensation for the wage loss, transportation costs, drugs and dressing, and follow-up visits to women accepting contraceptive methods, including voluntary sterilization. There were no formal restrictions on access to other forms of family planning; however, despite recent efforts to expand the range of contraceptive choices, voluntary sterilization remained the preferred method due to the costs and limited availability of alternative contraceptive choices.’¹²⁵

8.6.11 The same USSD report stated:

‘Policies and guidelines that penalized families with more than two children were not widely enforced but remained in place in various states. Certain states maintained quotas for government jobs and subsidies for adults with no more than two children.’¹²⁶ The report did not identify which states penalised families with more than two children or which states maintained quotes for government jobs and subsidies.’¹²⁷

8.6.12 The same report noted:

‘Many states promoted sterilization of women as a family planning method, which resulted in risky, substandard procedures and limited access to nonpermanent methods. The central government did not have the authority to regulate state public health policies since health fell under the state purview. Authorities in some areas paid health workers and facilities a fixed amount for each sterilization procedure and imposed quotas for sterilizations of women. Care provided to women at public health facilities, particularly to those from marginalized and low-income groups, was often inadequate, and this contributed to a reluctance to seek treatment. Government initiatives resulted in a significant increase in institutional births, but there were reports health facilities continued to be overburdened, underequipped, and undersupplied.’¹²⁸

8.6.13 The same report stated:

‘In March [2024], The New York Times reported women in the sugar harvesting sector of Maharashtra felt economic pressures to undergo hysterectomies. The article noted women viewed menstruation as a “nuisance” that kept them from earning wages. This, combined with the lack of proper sanitary facilities that often resulted in infection and the lack of reproductive health care, caused many women to undergo hysterectomies.

¹²⁴ LSE, [Forced Sterilization of Disabled Women in India: A Tale of Lost Autonomy](#), 20 March 2023

¹²⁵ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 1a), 12 August 2025

¹²⁶ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 1a), 12 August 2025

¹²⁷ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 1a), 12 August 2025

¹²⁸ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 1a), 12 August 2025

Activists reported some women were misinformed by private medical professionals regarding their risk of cancer if they opted against the surgery, noting some recommended the procedure for profit.

‘According to the article, a government investigation found that of the 82,000 women sugarcane workers in Beed District, approximately 20 percent had undergone hysterectomies. Since early 2019, the Maharashtra government enacted measures to address the high rate of hysterectomies in the region, including mandatory government approval for the procedure and health monitoring measures for women laborers in the sugar sector. State government officials reported the rate of hysterectomies had decreased by nearly 20 percent since 2019.’¹²⁹

[Back to Contents](#)

9. Position of women in society

9.1 Demography and geography

9.1.1 The CIA World Factbook updated 31 March 2025 estimated the total population of India as 1,409,128,296 with 725,784,825 men and 683,343,471 women¹³⁰.

9.1.2 On 22 September 2024, the Times of India published a list of the ‘10 safest cities for women in India’ based on crime and conviction rates, police presence, community engagement and technological integration. The top 10 cities were ranked as follows¹³¹:

1. Kolkata, West Bengal	6. Hyderabad, Telangana
2. Chennai, Tamil Nadu	7. Bangalore, Karnataka
3. Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu	8. Ahmedabad, Gujarat
4. Surat, Gujarat	9. Mumbai, Maharashtra
5. Pune, Maharashtra	10. Kochi, Kerala

9.1.3 India Today Group, a media conglomerate¹³², on 21 March 2025 published a survey of 30 questions based on Civic Behaviour, Public Safety, Gender Attitudes, and Diversity and Discrimination across 21 states and one UT based on responses from 9,188 participants. 54.4% of respondents were from urban areas and 45.6% from rural areas¹³³. In relation to gender attitudes, which was measured through ‘public attitudes toward gender-related issues, including domestic violence, support for women’s financial independence, and their right to make autonomous decisions’¹³⁴, the top 5 areas ranked for positive gender attitudes were¹³⁵:

1. Kerala
2. Uttarakhand

¹²⁹ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 1a), 12 August 2025

¹³⁰ CIA World Factbook, [India](#), 31 March 2025

¹³¹ Tol, [10 safest cities for women in India](#), 22 September 2024

¹³² India Today [About us](#), no date

¹³³ India Today, [Mapping India's GDB: Survey reveals how...](#), 21 March 2025

¹³⁴ India Today Group, [India's First Civic Survey: Insights into...](#) (Gender Attitudes), 21 Mar 2025

¹³⁵ India Today Group, [India's First Civic Survey: Insights into...](#) (Gender Attitudes), 21 March 2025

3. Tamil Nadu
4. Himachal Pradesh
5. Maharashtra

- 9.1.4 The same source reported Uttar Pradesh, in Northern India, ranked lowest for positive gender attitudes¹³⁶. The source did not provide a breakdown of how respondents answered the specific survey questions relating to gender attitudes.

[Back to Contents](#)

9.2 Cultural context and societal attitudes

- 9.2.1 In its key findings, considering cultural attitudes towards women in India, the NFHS-5 noted 'Seventy-one percent of currently married women participate in making decisions about their own health care, major household purchases, and visits to their own family or relatives alone or jointly with their husband, while 11 percent do not participate in any of the three decisions. Women's participation in decision making has increased since NFHS-4.'¹³⁷
- 9.2.2 Pew Research Centre's 2022 report (PRC report 2022) on attitudes toward gender roles, based on surveys with 29,999 Indian adults between 17 November 2019 and 23 March 2020 living in 26 Indian states and three UTs, including interviews with 22,975 Hindus, 3,336 Muslims, 1,782 Sikhs, 1,011 Christians, 719 Buddhists, 109 Jains and 67 respondents who belonged to another religion or are religiously unaffiliated¹³⁸, it was noted: 'India has a long history of women holding political power... The survey results reflect this comfort with women in politics. Most adults say that women and men make equally good political leaders (55%) or that women generally make better leaders than men (14%). Only a quarter of Indian adults take the position that men tend to make better political leaders than women.'¹³⁹ (see also [Political participation](#)).
- 9.2.3 The same report further noted:
- 'While most Indians say that men and women should share some family responsibilities, many still support traditional gender roles. For instance, 62% of adults say both men and women should be responsible for taking care of children, while roughly a third of adults (34%) feel that child care should be handled primarily by women. Similarly, a slim majority (54%) say that both men and women in families should be responsible for earning money, yet many Indians (43%) see this as mainly the obligation of men.
- 'Meanwhile, nearly nine-in-ten Indians (87%) completely or mostly agree with the notion that "a wife must always obey her husband." This includes a majority of Indians (64%) who completely agree with this sentiment. Women are only modestly less likely than men to say that wives should obey their husbands in all situations, and most Indian women express total agreement with this sentiment (61% vs. 67% among men). (Throughout this report, differences in opinion between men and women are modest. In other words, Indian women typically are not much more likely than Indian men to express

¹³⁶ India Today Group, [India's First Civic Survey: Insights into...](#) (Gender Attitudes), 21 March 2025

¹³⁷ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 579), March 2022

¹³⁸ Pew Research Centre, [How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society](#) 2 March 2022

¹³⁹ Pew Research Centre, [Key findings on Indian attitudes toward gender roles](#) 2 March 2022

egalitarian views on gender roles.)¹⁴⁰

- 9.2.4 With respect to differing views on gender roles in terms of religion, the PRC report 2022 noted: ‘Muslims are more likely than other Indians to support traditional gender roles in families, while Sikhs are often the least likely community to hold such views. For example, while most Indian Muslims (61%) say that men in a family should be primarily responsible for earning money, just 17% of Sikhs say this. And Muslims are more than twice as likely as Sikhs to assign sons the primary responsibility of caring for aging parents (43% vs. 17%).’¹⁴¹
- 9.2.5 The PRC report 2022 noted, in comparison to other countries surveyed on gender roles:
- ‘Although Indian adults are roughly in line with the global median in their support for equal rights for women, by two other measures the Indian public appears much more conservative, according to a series of other surveys conducted by the Center in recent years.
- ‘Only one out of 61 countries surveyed has a higher share of adults than in India who agree completely with the notion that men should have greater rights to a job than women when jobs are scarce. And just two out of 34 countries surveyed exceed India in the shares who say a marriage is more satisfying if the husband provides for the family and the wife takes care of the house and children. On this question, the percentage of Indians who take this view (40%) is well above the global median (23%).’¹⁴²
- 9.2.6 In considering Indian perceptions of violence against women, the PRC report 2022 noted: ‘... roughly three-quarters of Indian adults (76%) say violence against women is a “very big problem” in their country... ‘About half of Indians (51%) say it is more important to teach boys to respect all women, while roughly a quarter (26%) say it is more important to teach girls to behave appropriately. An additional quarter of Indian adults don’t take a clear position between those two options, instead voicing that some combination of the two approaches is necessary, that improved law and order through policing will improve the situation, or that women are already safe.’¹⁴³
- 9.2.7 Considering attitudes of Indian nationals to women, specifically violence against women perpetrated by spouses, the NFHS-5 noted: ‘Respondents are asked if they agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under each of the following seven circumstances: she goes out without telling him, she neglects the house or the children, she argues with him, she refuses to have sex with him, she doesn’t cook food properly, he suspects her of being unfaithful, and she shows disrespect for her in-laws. Respondents who answer “yes” in at least one circumstance are considered to have attitudes that justify wife beating.’¹⁴⁴
- 9.2.8 The NFHS-5 found that ‘Forty-five percent of women and 44 percent of men agree with one or more of seven specified reasons... for wife beating. Agreement with one or more reasons for wife beating has fallen for women

¹⁴⁰ Pew Research Centre, [Key findings on Indian attitudes toward gender roles](#) 2 March 2022

¹⁴¹ Pew Research Centre, [Key findings on Indian attitudes toward gender roles](#) 2 March 2022

¹⁴² Pew Research Centre, [Key findings on Indian attitudes toward gender roles](#) 2 March 2022

¹⁴³ Pew Research Centre, [Key findings on Indian attitudes toward gender roles](#) 2 March 2022

¹⁴⁴ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 585), March 2022

since NFHS-4 but has slightly increased for men.¹⁴⁵

9.2.9 In regard to women's status and class, the DFAT 2023 report stated: 'While women as a group tend to be disadvantaged in society, caste and wealth tend to play significant roles. For example, sources told DFAT that support for women's equality was often higher among privileged, upper-caste Hindus compared to other castes.'¹⁴⁶

9.2.10 In regard to attitudes towards women, the same report noted:

'Violence against women is a cultural phenomenon on which views are not necessarily divided along gender lines. For example, a social media video about a violent group assault in which a woman had her hair cut off and face painted black before being paraded in front of and assaulted by crowds went viral in January 2022. Many in the crowd who were abusing the victim were women, calling for the victim to be raped (which later occurred), illustrating how deeply culturally entrenched gender-based attitudes are in India. The video caused nationwide outrage, including against the women in the crowd ...'¹⁴⁷

For information on police response to this incident see [Reporting violence and police response](#)

9.2.11 The same report also stated: '... In practice, cultural factors prevent women from reporting violence ...'¹⁴⁸

9.2.12 The same report noted:

'Significant parts of Indian society remain conservative and patriarchal, intersecting with rural/urban divide, caste, religion and socioeconomic status. Social interaction, and particularly displays of affection, between unrelated members of the opposite sex is ... taboo in some contexts. Some functions in society that could otherwise lead to physical proximity between sexes (such as queues or public transport) are segregated; this is typically intended to preserve women's dignity. Girls are often traditionally valued less than boys, and women in poor households may experience less access to food, education resources or sanitation facilities than male members of the household.'¹⁴⁹

9.2.13 In regard to sexual violence and attitudes, the same report stated: '...Despite a series of high-profile rape cases since 2012 leading to overdue amendments to rape laws and heightened societal awareness of the status of women in India, considerable time will be required to bring about substantial changes in general attitudes ...'¹⁵⁰

9.2.14 On 11 December 2023, the Times of India cited a study by Bumble, an online dating app, which highlighted: '... how women in India are opting out of traditional relationship timelines like getting married or having children at a certain age. The trend reveals that 24% of surveyed women in India no longer feel obligated to follow traditional timelines, with 67% looking for long-term relationships and only 30% seeking marriage... the shift away from

¹⁴⁵ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 585), March 2022

¹⁴⁶ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.116), 29 September 2023

¹⁴⁷ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.122), 29 September 2023

¹⁴⁸ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.126), 29 September 2023

¹⁴⁹ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.114), 29 September 2023

¹⁵⁰ BTI, [BTI 2024 India Country Report](#) (Welfare Regime), 19 March 2024

traditional timelines is driven by reasons such as financial independence (43%), career focus (42%), the desire to choose their partner (36%), waiting for the right person to marry (35%), completing education first (28%), and delaying having kids (22%). Additionally, 22% of women defy traditional timelines to heal from toxic relationships or past trauma.¹⁵¹ The article did not provide a breakdown of the number of participants in the Bumble survey and in the sources consulted, CPIT could not find a full copy of the survey (see [Bibliography](#)).

- 9.2.15 The CEIP 2024 article stated: ‘Restrictions on [women’s mobility](#) and public presence, including their political engagement, are quite common within Indian households. In patriarchal contexts characterized by gender-biased norms, a woman’s own family members—including her husband or in-laws—might gatekeep or restrict her presence in public spaces as a way to uphold conservative norms that look down upon female presence beyond the household ...’¹⁵²
- 9.2.16 The UNHRC’s September 2024 report noted ‘Despite the measures adopted by the State party to promote gender equality and increase the participation of women in the public and private sectors, the Committee is concerned that inequality between men and women, stereotyping, multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination and the societal inferiority of girls and women continue to be structural problems.’¹⁵³
- 9.2.17 The LAW Notes September 2024 website page noted societal attitudes as a barrier in the implementation of domestic violence legislation: ‘... Societal Attitudes: Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and the stigma attached to domestic violence often deter women from coming forward and reporting abuse. Many victims prefer to endure the violence rather than face the social consequences of leaving their abusers.’¹⁵⁴
- 9.2.18 In regard to social norms, the FH report 2024 stated:
‘In parts of the country, particularly in rural areas, informal community councils issue edicts concerning social customs. Their decisions sometimes result in violence or persecution aimed at those perceived to have transgressed social norms, especially women and members of scheduled castes ...’¹⁵⁵ The FH 2024 report did not provide any specific examples of any informal edicts which resulted in violence or any specific time period in which these incidents occurred.
- 9.2.19 ISPOS, a private market research company¹⁵⁶, 2025 International Women’s Day Global Survey conducted in 30 countries, including India (ISPOS IWD 2025 survey). The results of India’s survey were based on a sample of 2,200 individuals which represents a large subset of India’s urban population¹⁵⁷. 1,800 persons were interviewed face-to-face and 400 were interviewed online between 20 December 2024 and 3 January 2025¹⁵⁸. In response to the question ‘How important or not important is achieving equality between

¹⁵¹ Tol, [Women in India are opting out of traditional relationship...](#), 11 December 2023

¹⁵² CEIP, [What Lies Behind India’s Rising Female Voter Turnout](#), 5 April 2024

¹⁵³ UNHRC, [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report](#), (paragraph 19) 2 September 2024

¹⁵⁴ LAW Notes, [Domestic Abuse in India](#), 10 September 2024

¹⁵⁵ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World Report 2025](#) (section F4), 26 February 2025

¹⁵⁶ ISPOS, [About us](#), no date

¹⁵⁷ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women’s Day 2025](#) (page 69), 8 March 2025

¹⁵⁸ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women’s Day 2025](#) (page 69), 8 March 2025

men and women to you personally?’ 78% of Indian respondents agreed that this was very/fairly important (77% men and 80% women), 9% believed there is already equality between men and women, and 6% did not believe it was that/at all important¹⁵⁹.

- 9.2.20 The same ISPOS survey reported in response to the statement ‘When it comes to giving women equal rights with men, things have gone far enough in my country’, 69% of Indian respondents agreed somewhat/strongly (68% men and 70% women) and 26% disagreed somewhat/strongly¹⁶⁰
- 9.2.21 According to the same source, in response to the statement ‘I define myself as a feminist’, 63% of Indian respondents agreed somewhat/strongly (56% men and 71% women and 31% disagreed somewhat/strongly¹⁶¹.
- 9.2.22 The same source reported in response to the statement ‘A man who stays home to look after his children is less of a man’, 60% of Indian respondents agreed somewhat/strongly (57% men and 64% women) and 26% disagreed somewhat/strongly¹⁶².
- 9.2.23 The same source asked respondents in regard to doing domestic work i.e cooking, housekeeping, ‘do you think it is more likely to apply to men or more likely to apply to women in ..., or both men and women equally?’, of which 28% of respondents believed it more likely applies to women, 48% of respondents believed it applied to both and 18% of respondents believed it more likely applies to men¹⁶³
- 9.2.24 Regarding attitudes towards equal rights movements, the same source asked ‘Do you think moves to promote equal rights for women in the last few decades have had a positive or negative impact on each of the following, or have they made no difference on today’s young women?’, of which 43% of Indian respondents believed it had a positive impact, 25% believed it made no difference and 23% believed it had a negative impact¹⁶⁴.
- 9.2.25 The same source asked the same question in regard to equal rights movement impact on older women, of which 44% believed it had a positive impact, 22% believed it had made no difference and 25% believed it had a negative impact¹⁶⁵.
- 9.2.26 In regard to the likelihood of achieving significant progress towards gender equality in the next 5 years, the same source found 52% believed it was very/fairly likely, 18% neither likely nor unlikely and 15% believed it was very/fairly unlikely¹⁶⁶.
- 9.2.27 The same source asked respondents in regard to domestic violence did they think it was more likely to apply to men, women or both, of which 22% of Indian respondents believed it was more likely to apply to women, 49% believed it applied to both and 19% believed it was more likely to apply to

¹⁵⁹ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 18), 8 March 2025

¹⁶⁰ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 6), 8 March 2025

¹⁶¹ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 9), 8 March 2025

¹⁶² ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 15), 8 March 2025

¹⁶³ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 20), 8 March 2025

¹⁶⁴ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 55), 8 March 2025

¹⁶⁵ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 53), 8 March 2025

¹⁶⁶ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 34), 8 March 2025

men¹⁶⁷.

- 9.2.28 The ISPOs survey asked respondents for their view on the statement 'Men are being expected to do too much to support equality', of which 66% of Indian respondents agreed somewhat/strongly (65% men and 67% women) and 28% disagreed somewhat/strongly¹⁶⁸

[Back to Contents](#)

9.3 Freedom of movement

- 9.3.1 According to the NFHS-5: 'Women are considered to have freedom of movement if they are usually allowed to go alone to all three of the following places: to the market, to the health facility, and to places outside the village or community.'¹⁶⁹
- 9.3.2 The survey also noted that, out of the sample of women aged 15-49:
'Fifty-six percent of women are allowed to go alone to the market, 52 percent to the health facility, and 50 percent to places outside the village or community. Overall, only 42 percent of women in India are allowed to go alone to all three places and 5 percent are not allowed to go alone to any of the three places...
'Trends: Slightly more women age 15-49 have reported that they have freedom of movement in the 4 years since NFHS-4. In NFHS-4, only 41 percent of women they were allowed to go alone to the market, the health facility, and to places outside the village or community. This percentage has increased marginally to 42 percent in NFHS-5.'¹⁷⁰
- 9.3.3 The NFHS-5 also noted: 'The proportion of women who report freedom of movement varies greatly by state. In Himachal Pradesh, 82 percent of women are allowed to go alone to all three places, compared with only 2 percent in Lakshadweep, 15 percent in Kerala, and less than one-third in Goa, Odisha, Manipur, Nagaland, and Karnataka.'¹⁷¹
- 9.3.4 The DFAT 2023 report stated: '...fear of violence can act as a barrier to women enjoying public spaces for leisure or social activities.'¹⁷²
- 9.3.5 The DFAT 2023 report provided its assessment in regard to internal relocation for women, based on its on-the-ground knowledge and discussions with a range of sources : 'In general, internal relocation is a practical option for most people seeking escape from violence related to marriage choices but this would be limited by the factors discussed above [access to welfare entitlements, domicile requirements for state jobs and preferential treatment to former students by local educational institutions]. For women, relocation might involve becoming a single woman ...'¹⁷³
- 9.3.6 On 22 August 2024, the New York Times (NYT) opined:
'Longstanding customs that both repress women and in many cases confine them to the home have made their safety in public spaces an afterthought. It

¹⁶⁷ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 22), 8 March 2025

¹⁶⁸ ISPOS, [30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#) (page 11), 8 March 2025

¹⁶⁹ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 585), March 2022

¹⁷⁰ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 585), March 2022

¹⁷¹ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 585), March 2022

¹⁷² DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.119), 29 September 2023

¹⁷³ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 5.22), 29 September 2023

can be dangerous for a woman to use public transportation, especially at night, and sexual harassment occurs frequently on the streets and in offices. Mothers tell their daughters to be watchful. Brothers and husbands drop their sisters and wives off at work.¹⁷⁴

- 9.3.7 In relation to safety efforts for women on public transport, on 9 October 2024 Changing Transport, a German-based NGO focussed on sustainable transport¹⁷⁵, article reported on initiatives taken in Delhi:

‘Delhi has taken significant steps to enhance the safety and accessibility of public transport for women, aiming to foster a more inclusive environment. One of the most impactful initiatives introduced by the Delhi government is the provision of free bus rides for women. Launched in 2019, this program allows women to travel for free on Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses...

‘Another critical measure to ensure the safety of female passengers has been [the introduction of women-only coaches in the Delhi Metro](#). These coaches, available on every train, provide a safe and secure space for women, helping them avoid harassment and other challenges often faced in crowded public transport ...’¹⁷⁶

- 9.3.8 In relation to initiatives in other regions, the same article reported: ‘Across India, many initiatives reflect a forward-thinking approach to creating a more inclusive and equitable public transport system... From [Bangalore’s Pink Hoysalas](#) [women’s only trains in Mumbai], [Kochi’s Gender Park](#) and [Mumbai’s Ladies Special Trains](#) to [Surat’s Pink Auto Project](#), cities are implementing innovative solutions to address the [unique needs of women and marginalized communities](#).’¹⁷⁷

- 9.3.9 In regard to government initiatives to facilitate women’s safety travelling, on 16 July 2025 the Times of India article reported: ‘The growing use of pink buses underlines the increasing need for safe and accessible public transport for women. “This surge highlights the demand for gender-sensitive infrastructure,” said a transport department official.

Each pink bus is equipped with features designed to ensure women’s safety and comfort, including panic buttons, GPS tracking, CCTV cameras, charging points... sanitary pad vending machines and medical kits. In addition to women drivers, the service has also deployed women conductors to make the experience more secure and reassuring for passengers.’¹⁷⁸

- 9.3.10 In relation to the availability of pink buses, the same article noted:

‘Bihar State Road Transport Corporation (BSRTC) has announced plans to launch 80 additional CNG pink buses by the end of August [2025] and 35 of them will operate in Patna. Currently, 20 pink buses are in service across the state, including eight in Patna, four in Muzaffarpur and two each in Bhagalpur, Gaya, Darbhanga and Purnia.

‘Officials said the demand for pink buses was not limited to the state capital. District such as Bhagalpur, Purnia, Gaya and Darbhanga have collectively

¹⁷⁴ NYT, [Is India a Safe Place for Women? Another Brutal Killing Raises the Question](#), 22 Aug 2024

¹⁷⁵ Changing Transport, [About](#), no date

¹⁷⁶ Changing Transport, [Pathways to Equality: Transforming Public Transport...](#), 9 October 2024

¹⁷⁷ Changing Transport, [Pathways to Equality: Transforming Public Transport...](#), 9 October 2024

¹⁷⁸ Times of India, [Govt set to roll out 80 more pink buses as demand surges](#), 16 July 2025

recorded over 7,000 passengers, primarily students and working women, since May [2025]. “In May 2025, approximately 5,000 women used the pink bus service. By June [2025], this number had exceeded 28,000,” said a BRTSC official, adding that the numbers are continuing to rise steadily.’¹⁷⁹

For general information on freedom of movement in India see [Country Policy and Information Note India: Internal relocation](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

9.4 Single women

9.4.1 The most up-to-date census is the 2011 census reported 71.4 million single women, which included widows, divorcees, unmarried women, and those ‘deserted’ by husbands. Of this 16.9 million were single women aged between 20-24, 29.2 million widowed women and 44.4 million single women in rural areas¹⁸⁰.

9.4.2 On 8 December 2022, a BBC News article reported:

‘... In a country that’s often described as being “obsessed with marriage”, a lot of stigma still surrounds singlehood.

‘In rural India, single women are often seen as a burden by their families - the never married have little agency and thousands of widows are banished to holy towns such as Vrindavan and Varanasi... The wealthy urban single women are increasingly being recognised as an economic opportunity - they’re wooed by banks, jewellery makers, consumer goods companies and travel agencies... But despite these welcome changes, society’s attitudes remain rigid and, as Ms Kundu [founder of a Facebook community for urban single women in India] says, being single is not easy even for the affluent and they are judged all the time too.

“I’ve faced discrimination and humiliation as a single woman. When I was looking to rent an apartment in Mumbai, members of a housing society asked me questions like, Do you drink? Are you sexually active?”...’¹⁸¹

9.4.3 The DFAT India 2023 report stated:

‘Being (and remaining) a single woman in India is difficult and relatively uncommon. Marriage is a central feature of social lives and, without a husband... social access is difficult. Sources told DFAT that it is difficult or impossible for single people (men or women) to rent accommodation, even in large cities. The difficulty is worse in rural areas. A woman who is uninterested in marriage would likely come under significant pressure from her family to marry, usually to a husband of her parents’ choosing, which may be for cultural reasons or out of concern for their daughter’s welfare.’¹⁸²

9.4.4 The same report stated:

‘The number of women who are single by choice or circumstance is rising, however Indian society can be very traditional and can be hostile to the unmarried, whether they are single because of divorce or widowhood. Single women can experience stigma and stereotypes, for example perceptions of

¹⁷⁹ Times of India, [Govt set to roll out 80 more pink buses as demand surges](#), 16 July 2025

¹⁸⁰ IndiaSpend, [71 Million Single Women, 39% Rise Over A Decade](#), 14 November 2015

¹⁸¹ BBC News, [The Indian women calling themselves ‘proudly single’](#), 8 December 2022

¹⁸² DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.132), 29 September 2023

being ‘choosy, morally loose or headstrong’, according to a Delhi-based sociologist who spoke to the South China Morning Post in November 2020. The Print, an Indian online newspaper, noted a ‘growing subculture’ of single women as characters in books and movies or within organisations, in July 2019 ...¹⁸³

9.4.5 In regard to single women, the DFAT report provided its assessment based on its on-the-ground knowledge and discussions with a range of sources: ‘DFAT notes that the number of single women is growing, however assesses the phenomenon is nascent. DFAT assesses that single women experience a moderate risk of societal discrimination and a low risk of official discrimination.’¹⁸⁴

9.4.6 On February 2025, the Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR), an International open access, peer-reviewed journal published an article by Rekha V, an Assistant Professor in Government Law at Pudupakkam College¹⁸⁵ which concluded:

‘The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA) has played a crucial role in ensuring economic security for women facing domestic abuse by granting them the right to maintenance and financial relief. However, the implementation gaps, procedural delays, and challenges in enforcement continue to hinder its effectiveness. The existing maintenance laws in India, spread across various statutes and personal laws, lack uniformity, leading to disparities in access to justice ...’¹⁸⁶

[Back to Contents](#)

9.5 LGBTI+ women

9.5.1 For information on LGBTI+ women, see [Country Policy and Information Note India: Sexual orientation and gender identity and/or expression](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

10. Sexual and gender-based violence

10.1 Forms of violence and prevalence

10.1.1 For a definition of gender-based violence see the Asylum Instruction [Gender issues in the asylum claim](#) and UN Women [FAQs: Types of violence against women and girls](#).

10.1.2 Gender-based violence covers a wide spectrum of behaviour. Where possible CPIT has differentiated between types of violence women and girls experience in the sections below, but there remains overlap.

10.1.3 The NFHS-5 noted that, ‘Twenty-nine percent of women age 18-49 have experienced physical violence since age 15, and 6 percent have ever experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. Three percent of ever-pregnant women age 18-49 have experienced physical violence during any pregnancy.’¹⁸⁷ The source did not provide a definition for what it categorised as physical violence, the only definition provided was for spousal physical

¹⁸³ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.135), 29 September 2023

¹⁸⁴ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.135), 29 September 2023

¹⁸⁵ Rekha, [Impact of the Protection of Women from Domestic...](#), February 2025

¹⁸⁶ Rekha, [Impact of the Protection of Women from Domestic...](#), February 2025

¹⁸⁷ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 639), March 2022

violence.

- 10.1.4 The most recent annual report on Crime in India published by the National Crime Records Bureau on 1 December 2023 covering the calendar year 2022 (NCRB annual crime report 2022) noted:

‘A total of 4,45,256 cases of crime against women were registered during 2022, showing an increase of 4.0% over 2021 (4,28,278 cases).

‘[The] [m]ajority of cases under crime against women under IPC were registered under ‘Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives’ (31.4%) followed by ‘Kidnapping & Abduction of Women’ (19.2%) , ‘Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty’ (18.7%), and ‘Rape’ (7.1%). The crime rate registered per lakh [100,000] women population was 66.4 in 2022 in comparison with 64.5 in 2021.’¹⁸⁸

- 10.1.5 The US Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) India Country Security report, published 4 October 2024, which is aimed primarily at US traveller safety abroad noted:

‘Although violent crimes are generally uncommon, crimes against women remain a top security concern. Crimes reported against women have been among local residents almost exclusively; a large portion involve domestic disputes. Occasionally, local women riding motorbikes have had jewelry snatched by passing riders. Though there has been an increase in rape and sexual harassment reports, this may be attributed to an increased willingness to report incidents, not necessarily to an increase in occurrences. Sexual assault remains a top priority and target of state and city police officials.’¹⁸⁹

- 10.1.6 The NYT August 2024 article stated: ‘For a country desperate to be seen as a global leader, repeated high-profile cases of brutal sexual assaults highlight an uncomfortable truth: India, by many measures, remains one of the world’s most unsafe places for women. Rape and domestic violence are relatively common’¹⁹⁰ The article did not specify how India was one of the world’s most unsafe places for women but provided a hyperlink to the WPS 2023 index under the term ‘many measures’.

- 10.1.7 The UNHRC September 2024 report noted:

‘...the endemic violence against women and girls, which is manifested by practices including marital and gang rape, domestic violence, acid attacks and public humiliation involving naked women being paraded through the streets. The Committee is concerned that such violence is exacerbated when directed against women and girls belonging to Indigenous, ethnic and religious minority and lower caste communities and that it is largely underreported. The Committee is concerned about information concerning certain practices, including “honour crimes”, female genital mutilation, accusations of witchcraft and child marriage.’¹⁹¹

- 10.1.8 On 17 December 2024, a Hindustan Times article reported: ‘... Across India, millions of people with disabilities, especially women and girls, face multiple barriers that prevent them from escaping gender-based violence (GBV)... In

¹⁸⁸ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) ,(page xii), 1 December 2023

¹⁸⁹ OSAC, [India Country Security Report](#) (crime), 4 October 2024

¹⁹⁰ NYT, [Is India a Safe Place for Women? Another Brutal Killing Raises the Question](#), 22 Aug 2024

¹⁹¹ UNHRC, [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report](#), (paragraph 21) 2 September 2024

India, 11.8 million women and girls with disabilities face compounded vulnerabilities... Rural areas, where many disabled women live, often lack accessible healthcare, education, and transportation, trapping vulnerable persons in abusive situations.’¹⁹²

[Back to Contents](#)

10.2 Domestic and dowry-related violence

10.2.1 The NFHS-5 noted that ‘Thirty-two percent of ever-married women age 18-49 have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional spousal violence. The most common type of spousal violence is physical violence (28%), followed by emotional violence (14%). Six percent of ever-married women age 18-49 have experienced spousal sexual violence.’¹⁹³ The same report noted that:

‘Ever-married women’s ever experience of spousal physical or sexual violence has declined from 31 percent in NFHS-4 to 29 percent in NFHS-5.

‘...One-fourth of ever-married women age 18-49 who have experienced spousal physical or sexual violence report having physical injuries, including 7 percent who have had eye injuries, sprains, dislocations, or burns and 6 percent who have had deep wounds, broken bones, broken teeth, or any other serious injury.

‘...Only 14 percent of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence by anyone have sought help to stop the violence.’¹⁹⁴

10.2.2 The NFHS-5 also noted ‘Of the acts of physical violence committed by the current or most recent husbands, the most common type is slapping, reported by 25 percent of ever-married women... The form of sexual violence most commonly reported by women is that their husband used physical force to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to (5%)...’¹⁹⁵

10.2.3 The NCRB annual crime report 2022 provided the following statistics about the number of cases of dowry and domestic violence across States and Union Territories¹⁹⁶ (UTs) (table by CPIT):

Type of Crime/Law	Total number of incidences/cases in 2022	Total number of victims
Dowry Deaths (Section 304B Indian Penal Code (IPC))	6450	6516
Cruelty by Husband or his relatives (Section 498A IPC)	140,019	144,593
Dowry Prohibition Act 1961	13,479	13,641
Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act	468	473
Total	160,416	165,223

10.2.4 In relation to the proportion of domestic violence incidences, based on

¹⁹² Hindustan Times, [United efforts required to end violence against people...](#), 17 Dec 2024

¹⁹³ NFHS-5, [India report](#), page 639

¹⁹⁴ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 639), March 2022

¹⁹⁵ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 644), March 2022

¹⁹⁶ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (pages 212, 213, 222, 223), 1 December 2023

NCRB statistics, approximately 87% of incidences/cases relating to dowry and domestic violence fall under ‘Cruelty by Husband or his relatives’ (figures by CPIT)¹⁹⁷.

10.2.5 Regarding domestic violence, the DFAT 2023 report stated:

‘Media reports and some initial academic studies point to greater rates of domestic violence during COVID-19 lockdowns based on increased calls for help to domestic violence hotlines. Support workers told Indian media outlets that victims were trapped inside with their abusers. Many women did not report abuse because of privacy concerns or fears that things would get worse if they complained, according to activists who spoke to Indian online newspaper, The Print, in February 2021.’¹⁹⁸ To note, higher levels of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence at this time were not unique to India. UN Women identified a global surge in violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly domestic violence, as lockdowns and mobility restrictions meant women remained with their abusers¹⁹⁹.

10.2.6 The same DFAT report noted: ‘The illegal yet common tradition of a bride’s family needing to pay a dowry can lead to female infanticide, sex-selective abortions and dowry-related harassment and deaths (women murdered or driven to suicide in response to the attempt to extort a higher dowry). Available data likely understates the true extent of violence against women due to underreporting of cases.’²⁰⁰

10.2.7 Regarding domestic violence, the 2023 WPS Index noted the percentage of women who experienced physical or sexual violence committed by an intimate partner in the 12 months prior to data collection in India was 18%²⁰¹. This calculation was based on statistics from the UN Global Database on Violence against women²⁰² which is based on government reporting to UN bodies, information available through official reports of UN bodies and Government statements made at the UN²⁰³.

10.2.8 The UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women India Country Profile noted the percentage of women aged 15-49 who experienced violence in the last 12 months (from the time surveyed) was 24%²⁰⁴. This source noted this calculation was based on the 2021 NFHS-5 and International Institute for Population Sciences and ICF 2021 report²⁰⁵.

10.2.9 The USSD 2023 report noted ‘...dowry disputes sometimes led to violence. Most states employed dowry prohibition officers. All trial courts were required to charge defendants in dowry death cases with murder ...’²⁰⁶ The USSD 2024 did not include information in relation to dowry-related murders or violence²⁰⁷. However, the 2024 report is notably shorter than in previous

¹⁹⁷ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (pages 212, 213, 222, 223), 1 December 2023

¹⁹⁸ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.128), 29 September 2023

¹⁹⁹ UN Women, [Violence against women during Covid-19](#), 24 November 2021

²⁰⁰ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.123), 29 September 2023

²⁰¹ GIWPS & PRIO, [WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Security), October 2023

²⁰² GIWPS & PRIO, [WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Security), October 2023

²⁰³ UN Women, [About the database](#) (Source of information), no date

²⁰⁴ UN Women, [Global Database on Violence against Women and girls: India](#), no date

²⁰⁵ UN Women, [Global Database on Violence against Women and girls: India](#), no date

²⁰⁶ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

²⁰⁷ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

years and provides less coverage of certain topics. This reduction in reporting should not be interpreted as indicating a decline dowry-related murders or violence.

10.2.10 The same USSD 2023 report noted ‘... On May 19, a woman was allegedly strangled to death by her in-laws in Jharkhand’s Palamu District. Her parents informed police she was tormented on a regular basis because her in-laws demanded rupees 500,000 (\$6,000) in dowry, which they could not afford. Police later registered a case against seven family members, including her husband.’²⁰⁸

10.2.11 The FH 2024 report stated: ‘Though the practice is criminalized, dowry demands surrounding marriage persist, sometimes resulting in violence...’²⁰⁹

10.2.12 On 2 January 2025, a Times of India article reported:

‘Violence within the confines of home continues to remain a serious concern with 24% (6,327) of the total of 25,743 complaints received by the National Commission for Women over 2024 pertaining to domestic violence. Largely keeping with trends noticed in previous years, complaints from women seeking “right to live with dignity” continue to top the list, accounting for nearly 28% of the total cases in 2024, followed by domestic violence and dowry harassment

‘Data available on the NCW website till Dec 31 [2024] showed that 17% (4,382) of the total complaints received last year were related to dowry harassment, and there were also 292 complaints of dowry deaths ...’²¹⁰

10.2.13 In regard to the prevalence of complaints in 2024 to the National Commission for Women based on location, the article noted: ‘Of the total complaints in 2024, 54% (13,868) were received from Uttar Pradesh followed by nearly 9% from Delhi (2,245), 5.1% from Maharashtra (1,317), 4.8% from Bihar (1,233), 4.2% from Madhya Pradesh (1,070), and 4.1% from Haryana (1,048)’²¹¹

See also [Rape and sexual violence](#) and [‘Honour’ crimes and femicide](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

10.3 Rape and sexual violence

10.3.1 The NFHS-5 reported that ‘Women age 18-49 were asked if they had ever experienced sexual violence by anyone as a child or as an adult. Overall, 6 percent of women report having ever experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.’²¹² The same survey showed:

‘Women’s experience of sexual violence is somewhat lower among younger women (4% each for women age 18- 19 and 20-24, 6% for women age 25-29, and 7% for women age 30 and over).

‘Experience of sexual violence decreases sharply with schooling, from 9 percent among women with no schooling to 3 percent among women with 12 or more years of schooling. Women’s experience of sexual violence declines similarly with wealth, from 10 percent among women in the lowest wealth

²⁰⁸ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

²⁰⁹ FH, [Freedom in the World 2025: India](#) (section G3), 26 February 2025

²¹⁰ ToI, [Dowry torture, domestic violence remain serious worry: NCW data](#), 2 January 2025

²¹¹ ToI, [Dowry torture, domestic violence remain serious worry: NCW data](#), 2 January 2025

²¹² NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 642), March 2022

quintile to 3 percent among women in the highest wealth quintile...'²¹³

10.3.2 The same report highlighted that:

'NFHS-5 shows that sexual violence is most often committed by individuals with whom women have an intimate relationship. Among ever-married women age 18-49 who have ever experienced sexual violence, 82 percent report their current husband and 14 percent report a former husband as perpetrators. Among never-married women who reported sexual violence, the most common perpetrators were 'other' relatives (39%), followed by a current or former boyfriend (16%) and a family friend (12%). Some never-married women mention stranger (5%), teacher, father/step-father, and brother/step-brother (4% each) as perpetrators.'²¹⁴

10.3.3 The NCRB annual crime report 2022 provided the below statistics on the number of cases of reported rape or attempted rape of women and girls across States and UTs ²¹⁵ (table by CPIT)

Type of crime	Total number of incidences / cases in 2022	Total number of victims
Rape	31,516 (of which 1004 involved girls under the age of 18)	31,982 (of which 1017 were girls under the age of 18)
Attempt to commit rape	3288 of which 91 involved girls under the age of 18)	3447 of which 96 involved girls under the age of 18)
Murder with rape/gang rape	248	250

10.3.4 The NCRB 2022 statistics reported 110 cases registered under rape on women with a 'mental or physical disability'²¹⁶.

10.3.5 The same report recorded that in 28,873 cases of rape (96.6%) the offender was known to the victim²¹⁷.

10.3.6 The DFAT 2023 report stated:

'Women experience sexual harassment and violence in the street. While the practice is sometimes known as 'eve teasing,' that term is reductive: the 'teasing' can involve serious sexual assault or homicide. There have been several high-profile cases of public rape in recent years. Occurrences of harassment or violence towards women may stem from attitudes that women are 'asking for it' because of their clothing or because they are in public unaccompanied by a male family member, for example.'²¹⁸

10.3.7 In regard to sexual harassment, the USSD 2023 India report stated: 'Widespread sexual harassment remained a serious problem. Authorities

²¹³ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 642), March 2022

²¹⁴ NFHS-5, [India report](#) (page 642), March 2022

²¹⁵ NCRB, [Crime in India 2022 Volume I](#) (pages 212, 218 & 219), 1 December 2023

²¹⁶ NCRB, [Crime in India 2022 Volume I](#) (page 263), 1 December 2023

²¹⁷ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (page 229), 1 December 2023

²¹⁸ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.118), 29 September 2023

required all state departments and institutions with more than 50 employees to operate committees to prevent and address sexual harassment, often referred to as “eve teasing.” ...²¹⁹ The USSD 2024 report did not include information on sexual harassment²²⁰.

10.3.8 The BTI 2024 India report noted: ‘Women are the social group that most visibly suffers from discrimination and violence... Sexual violence continues to be an endemic problem ...’²²¹

10.3.9 In August 2024, Stylist, a UK based magazine²²², article stated:

‘With a [rape reportedly occurring every 16 minutes](#), India has a dark reputation as one of the most dangerous places in the world for women. A new case in Kolkata has brought the issue of gender-based and sexual violence to the forefront once again. On 9 August [2024], a [31-year-old trainee doctor was found dead in a seminar room in the Kolkata hospital](#) where she worked... But the autopsy showed she had suffered severe injuries and that her body showed signs of brutal physical and sexual assault.

‘Sexual violence is rampant in India, where [90 rapes were reported on average every day in 2022](#). The issue of violence against women and girls has been ongoing in India since a 23-year-old physiotherapy intern, known as Nirbhaya, was brutally gang-raped and murdered in 2012...

‘In the twelve years since Nirbhaya’s murder, there have been countless cases of violence against women and girls. In November 2019, a [27-year-old veterinarian doctor was allegedly raped and murdered and her body set on fire](#) in Hyderabad by four drunk men on the pretext of helping her fix her scooter, which they themselves had damaged. A few weeks later, in Unnao in the Uttar Pradesh state, a [23-year-old rape victim was allegedly set on fire](#) by five men, including her rapist, as she was on her way to a court hearing of her case.’²²³

10.3.10 On 14 August 2024, Al Jazeera reported:

‘A 31-year-old trainee doctor’s dead body, bearing multiple injuries, was found on August 9 in a government teaching hospital in Kolkata.

‘The parents of the victim were initially told “by hospital authorities that their daughter had committed suicide,” lawyer and women’s rights activist Vrinda Grover told Al Jazeera. But an autopsy confirmed that the victim was raped and killed.’²²⁴

10.3.11 In response to the rape and murder of the female doctor, the same source noted:

‘Activists and doctors across India continued to protest on Wednesday to demand justice for a female doctor, who was raped and murdered while on duty in a hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata.

‘Feminist groups rallied on the streets in protests titled “Reclaim the Night” in

²¹⁹ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

²²⁰ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

²²¹ BTI, [BTI 2024 India Country Report](#) (Rule of Law), 19 March 2024

²²² Stylist, [Contact Us](#), no date

²²³ Stylist, [The death of a trainee doctor has sparked renewed conversation...](#), August 2024

²²⁴ Al Jazeera, [What happened in the Kolkata rape case that triggered doctors’...](#) 14 Aug 2024

Kolkata overnight on Wednesday – on the eve of India’s independence day – in solidarity with the victim, demanding the principal of RG Kar Medical College resign. Some feminist protesters also marched well beyond Kolkata, including in the capital Delhi.

While the protests were largely peaceful, a small mob of men stormed the medical college and vandalised property. This group was dispersed by the police.²²⁵ For more information on police response in this case see [Access to justice and state support](#)

10.3.12 The January 2025 Times of India article noted the National Commission for Women received 1,422 complaints (5.5% of the total complaints received in 2024) of rape and attempt to rape and 1,015 (4%) complaints of sexual harassment²²⁶

10.3.13 On 3 September 2024, Amnesty International reported that in response to the rape and murder of the 31 year old female doctor in Kolkata, the West Bengal government adopted the Aprajita Woman and Child (West Bengal Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill that amends the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Nyaya Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 and the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 and introduces the death penalty for the offence of rape when it results in the victim’s death or leaves them in a “vegetative state”²²⁷

See also [Domestic and dowry-related violence](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

10.4 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

10.4.1 The NCRB 2022 statistics on crime in India did not provide figures on the number of cases of FGM²²⁸.

10.4.2 The USSD 2023 report noted: ‘...Between 70 and 90 percent of Dawoodi Bohras, a religious group of approximately one million persons concentrated in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Delhi, were believed to engage in the practice of FGM/C [female genital mutilation/cutting], according to human rights groups and media reports.’²²⁹ The USSD 2024 report did not include information on FGM/C²³⁰.

10.4.3 The Orchid Project published a report on FGM in India in July 2024 based on:

‘...three surveys of female members of the Dawoodi Bohra community carried out by Indian based, international, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) advocating an end to FGC.

‘The largest (mainly quantitative) survey was undertaken by Sahiyo [a South Asian FGC advocacy group²³¹] in 2017 and involved 385 participants. The second (mainly qualitative) survey was conducted by WeSpeakOut [a Bohra

²²⁵ Al Jazeera, [What happened in the Kolkata rape case that triggered doctors’...](#) 14 Aug 2024

²²⁶ ToI, [Dowry torture, domestic violence remain serious worry: NCW data](#), 2 January 2025

²²⁷ Amnesty International, [India: Death penalty never the solution to crime and...](#), 3 Sep 2024

²²⁸ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#), 1 December 2023

²²⁹ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

²³⁰ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

²³¹ Orchid Project, [Short Report: FGC in India](#) (page 16), July 2024

women rights group²³²] and Nari Samata Manch [an Indian women rights group²³³(WSO/NSM) in 2017 and involved 94 participants, including 11 men. The report on the WSO/NSM findings is titled The Clitoral Hood: A Contested Site. The third was an online survey, carried out in 2020–2021 by Mumkin [a FGM focused tool which also undertakes research²³⁴], of 221 respondents, of whom 154 (70%) were women and 64 (29%) were men. That survey comprised a mix of quantitative and open-ended questions.²³⁵

- 10.4.4 The Orchid Project 2024 report stated: ‘The Dawoodi Bohra community is the only group in India known to carry out FGC [Female Genital Cutting] regularly. It has been suggested that FGC may be occurring on a smaller scale in other groups (such as the Sulemani Bohras and a sub-sect of Sunnis in Kerala), but no surveys of size have been conducted in these communities.’²³⁶
- 10.4.5 In regard to the location of the Bohra community who had undergone FGM/C, the same report stated: ‘Women living in small and medium-sized towns in India are more likely to experience khafd [FGM/C is referred to as khafd or khafz by Bohra women²³⁷] (79%) than those living in large cities (50%). The Sahiyo survey found that 88% of those who are cut in India undergo cutting at a private residence (the family home or that of another relative or close friend), while 12% undergo it in a health facility’²³⁸
- 10.4.6 The same report noted for 66% of women surveyed, FGM/C took place when they were 6 or 7 years old. 92% of women over 46 years old had undergone FGM/C whereas 68% of women between 18 and 25 years old had undergone FGM/C²³⁹.
- 10.4.7 In relation to the category of FGM/C, the same report noted the most common was type 1 (partial or total removal of the (external) clitoris and/or the prepuce/clitoral hood²⁴⁰), however the majority of women surveyed were unsure about the nature or extent of the cutting they experienced²⁴¹.

[Back to Contents](#)

10.5 Forced and child marriage

- 10.5.1 Girls Not Brides, a ‘... global network of more than 1,400 civil society organisations from nearly 100 countries committed to ending child marriage ...’²⁴², undated website page noted:

‘[23%](#) of girls in India marry before the age of 18 and [5%](#) marry before the age of 15. [3%](#) of boys marry before the age of 18. India has the highest absolute number of women married or in a union before the age of 18 in the world – [222,400,000](#).

‘Child marriage is more prevalent in [five states](#): Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West

²³² Orchid Project, [Short Report: FGC in India](#) (page 17), July 2024

²³³ Nari Samata Manch, [Welcome](#), no date

²³⁴ Orchid Project, [Short Report: FGC in India](#) (page 16), July 2024

²³⁵ Orchid Project, [Short Report: FGC in India](#) (page 3), July 2024

²³⁶ Orchid Project, [Short Report: FGC in India](#) (page 5), July 2024

²³⁷ Orchid Project, [Short Report: FGC in India](#) (page 4), July 2024

²³⁸ Orchid Project, [Short Report: FGC in India](#) (page 5), July 2024

²³⁹ Orchid Project, [Short Report: FGC in India](#) (pages 6&7), July 2024

²⁴⁰ WHO, [Types of female genital mutilation](#), no date

²⁴¹ Orchid Project, [Short Report: FGC in India](#) (page 7), July 2024

²⁴² Girls Not Brides, [About Us](#), no date

Bengal, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The highest rates of child marriage are found in Uttar Pradesh.²⁴³ The statistics provided by Girls Not Brides are based on figures from the NFHS in 2021.

- 10.5.2 The NFHS-5 noted that ‘The median age at first marriage is 18.8 years for women and 24.9 years for men age 25-49.’²⁴⁴
- 10.5.3 The same report also noted: ‘Early marriage has been declining over time. Marriage before the legal age of 18 is 23 percent for women age 20-24, compared with 47 percent for women age 45-49. Similarly, for men, marriage before the legal age of 21 years has dropped from 27 percent for men age 45-49 to 18 percent for men age 25-29. The median age at first marriage for women age 20-49 slightly increased from 19.0 years in 2015-16 to 19.2 years in 2019-21. For men age 25-49, the median age at first marriage slightly increased between 2015-16 and 2019-21 (from 24.5 to 24.9 years).’²⁴⁵
- 10.5.4 The NCRB 2022 report recorded 28,358 victims of ‘kidnapping & abduction of women to compel her for marriage’, of which 14,431 were above 18 years old and 13,927 were under 18 years old²⁴⁶.
- 10.5.5 The DFAT 2023 report noted ‘... Child marriage is illegal but continues, particularly in rural India.’²⁴⁷
- 10.5.6 On 10 October 2024, Global Society, an open-access and peer-reviewed journal²⁴⁸, published by Rachna R.Shetty and others on the age at marriage in Kerala and Bihar based on data from the NFHS-5 report, noted:
- ‘In Kerala 21% of rural women got married below the age of 18 years, while it is in Bihar around 65%. The majority (65%) of Hindu women from Bihar were married before the age of 18, while the largest percentage (38%) of women from Muslim religion in Kerala were married before turning 18 years compared to their counterparts. As per education level of the women majority women with primary education have got married early, while in Bihar majority women with no education (68.2%) have got married below 18 years...
- ‘In Kerala Muslim religion women have significantly higher odds of getting married before 18 then [sic -than] the Hindu women whereas in Bihar Muslim religion women has the significantly lower chance of getting married before turning 18 compared to Hindu.’²⁴⁹
- 10.5.7 The same article concluded: ‘The study discovered a consistent pattern of early marriages among women in Bihar and Kerala, especially among the less educated, lower-income, and rural populations. Early marriages were more common amongst Hindu women in Bihar and those from marginalized communities, particularly the SC/ST [Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes] social groups. Higher education did, however, seem to be a significant

²⁴³ Girls Not Brides, [India](#) (What’s the prevalence rate?), no date

²⁴⁴ NFHS-5, [India report](#), (page 207), March 2022

²⁴⁵ NFHS-5, [India report](#), (page 208), March 2022

²⁴⁶ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (page 216), 1 December 2023

²⁴⁷ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.123), 29 September 2023

²⁴⁸ Global Society, [Discover Global Society](#), no date

²⁴⁹ Shetty and others, [Age at marriage and its determinants in Kerala...](#) (pages 4 and 5), 10 Oct 2024

contributing factor in delaying marriage until after age 18 ...²⁵⁰

10.5.8 The March 2025 journal article by Premachandran found from surveys and interviews in rural villages: ‘Early marriage continues to curtail girls’ educational opportunities. Among the girls interviewed who had dropped out of school, 47% cited marriage or marriage preparations as the primary reason. The median age of marriage for these girls was 16.4 years, despite the legal age of 18²⁵¹.

10.5.9 The USSD 2024 report noted:

‘In 2023-24, there was an 81 percent drop in child marriages across the state of Assam. According to UNICEF, as of 2023, the country overall had made progress towards ending child marriage, although it noted it remained home to the largest number of child brides worldwide. One in three of the world’s child brides lived in the country. More than half of the girls and women in the country who married in childhood lived in five states: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh.’²⁵²

10.5.10 In the sources consulted, CPIT was unable to find more recent statistics on the prevalence of child marriages (most rely on NFHS-5 in 2021) (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

10.6 ‘Honour’ crimes and femicide

10.6.1 The NCRB 2022 report recorded 18 cases across India in which honour killing was the motive for murder²⁵³.

10.6.2 The NCRB 2022 report provided statistics on acid attacks against women across States and UTs²⁵⁴. It is not specified how many relate to ‘honour’ although DFAT noted that acid attacks are often a subset of ‘honour’ crimes²⁵⁵ hence they have been included here (Table by CPIT)

Type of violence	Total number of victims
Acid attack	133
Attempt to acid attack	34

10.6.3 In regard to honour killings, the DFAT 2023 stated: “Honour killings” occur when families feel that the honour of their family is jeopardised, often where a woman’s virginity or “marriageability” is “lost”, for example. Such violence may also occur when women seek to divorce or separate from an abusive husband. Honour killings can occur regardless of age, religion, social status, wealth or other factors – the risk is particular to each individual victim and their families.’²⁵⁶

10.6.4 In relation to other forms of violence, the DFAT 2023 report noted:

²⁵⁰ Shetty and others, [Age at marriage and its determinants in Kerala and Bihar](#) (page 8), 10 Oct 2024

²⁵¹ Pemachandran P, [Girls’ Education in Rural India: Barriers, Challenges...](#) (page 39), 18 March 2025

²⁵² USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 3b), 12 August 2025

²⁵³ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (page 165), 1 December 2023

²⁵⁴ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (pages xii, 213 & 220) 1 December 2023

²⁵⁵ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.125), 29 September 2023

²⁵⁶ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.124), 29 September 2023

'Acid attacks are a subset of 'honour' violence that includes assaults or homicides in which acid is thrown on a person over issues of perceived shame or honour, unrequited love or rebuffed marriage demands or dowry disputes. Both men and women can be victims, but the crime is more commonly targeted at women. Survivors can experience life-long disfigurement and sometimes pain and disability. It is difficult to comment on the prevalence of the crime; attacks are likely underreported, and some sources suggest the number of attacks might be growing, with perhaps two or three hundred reported attacks a year.'²⁵⁷

10.6.5 On 4 September 2023, a New Indian Express news article reported:

'Although honour killing cases are more prevalent in a few North Indian states, like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana, Jharkhand and Punjab [the total population of the northern region is estimated as 368 million people²⁵⁸], it is being increasingly reported in the South too, including Karnataka [total female population is 30,128,640²⁵⁹]... Honour killings have been rampant in Karnataka, including Mandya, Kolar, Tumakuru and parts of North Karnataka. From October 2022 until now, at least seven horrendous cases have been reported in the state...'²⁶⁰

10.6.6 In relation to motivations behind honour killings, the same article reported:

'According to Legal Service India e-journal, it is done to "eradicate the dishonour and shame brought by family members" – especially a woman – by marrying or seeking a life partner belonging to a "lower caste", which they feel does not "match" their social status. It is based on a fear of being 'out-casted' if such relationships are allowed, and there have been several cases where families have been humiliated for allowing a girl to marry outside, especially someone from a "lower caste ...'²⁶¹

10.6.7 In regard to perpetrators of honour killings, the same article stated:

'According to police officials who have investigated these crimes, in most cases the perpetrators do not exhibit any sense of guilt, instead, there is a degree of pride in committing honour killings. They feel they have done something credible to protect the honour and prestige of their caste, clan or religion ... Chala Venkata Reddy, a social activist from Ballari, says even educated parents and family members commit this crime to protect the honour and prestige of the clan, sub-caste, caste or religion they belong to.'²⁶²

10.6.8 In regard to acid attacks, on 11 April 2025, Article 14, an independent media organisation focussed on the Indian legal system²⁶³, report noted: '...The perpetrators include relatives—two of the four cases involved family property disputes—a spouse, and coworkers of the victims. Despite laws to regulate the sale of acid, [acid attacks](#) continue to take place... cases dropped during the pandemic years of [2020](#) and [2021](#) (142 and 155, respectively), they surged back to [296 in 2022](#), indicating the persistent nature of the

²⁵⁷ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.125), 29 September 2023

²⁵⁸ KPMG, [Northern India: Heralding the next chapter of growth and development](#) (page 1), Oct 2024

²⁵⁹ Population Census, [Karnataka Population 2025 | Sex Ratio | Literacy](#), no date

²⁶⁰ The New Indian Express, [Killing honour in the name of 'honour killings'](#), 4 September 2023

²⁶¹ The New Indian Express, [Killing honour in the name of 'honour killings'](#), 4 September 202

²⁶² The New Indian Express, [Killing honour in the name of 'honour killings'](#), 4 September 2023

²⁶³ Article 14, [About](#), no date

crime...'²⁶⁴

- 10.6.9 On 10 July 2025, Highland Post, an English daily newspaper based in Meghalaya²⁶⁵, article stated: 'The Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW) is gravely concerned by the level of gender-related violence seen in the state since the start of the year.

'Meghalaya has seen a series of femicide and other cases of violence towards women in different districts over the first six months of 2025...

'The Women's Commission has noted what it describes as a "pattern of aggression, anger and threats" in the cases that have come to the body's attention. "We note with great concern the level of fear and insecurity that is evident in cases of domestic violence at home and sexual harassment at the workplace," ...

'The commission appealed to every citizen and persons in authority to be vigilant and intervene and report against any indication of threat of violence that occurs in neighbourhoods or places of work ...'²⁶⁶

[Back to Contents](#)

10.7 Violence against Dalits and women from tribal communities

- 10.7.1 On 8 June 2022, Al Jazeera reported: '...crimes of a sexually violent nature disproportionately impact women and girls from India's less privileged castes, mainly Dalits. Dalits, previously known as the "untouchables", fall at the bottom of India's complex caste hierarchy and have been facing discrimination and persecution by privileged caste groups for centuries, despite strict Indian laws to protect the community.'²⁶⁷

- 10.7.2 The NCRB 2022 report provided the below statistics on crimes committed against women and children from Scheduled Castes across States and UTs in 2022²⁶⁸ (table by CPIT)

Crime	Number of incidences/cases in 2022
Rape of women	2839
Kidnapping & abduction of women to compel her for marriage	408
Rape of children (below 18)	1413
Sexual harassment	766
Assault or use of Criminal Force on women with intent to Disrobe	315
Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (adults & children)	4160
Assault on women	3439

²⁶⁴ Article 14, [Justice Delayed, Healing Denied: Acid Attack Survivors Battle...](#), 11 April 2025

²⁶⁵ Highland Post, [About Us](#), no date

²⁶⁶ Highland Post, [Meghalaya Women's Commission gravely concerned with level of...](#), 10 July 2025

²⁶⁷ Al Jazeera, [India: Why justice eludes many Dalit survivors of sexual violence](#), 8 June 2022

²⁶⁸ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume II](#) (pages 540 to 543 & 546 to 548), 1 December 2023

Insult to the Modesty of Women	226
Acid attack	3

10.7.3 A journal article published in the Women's Studies International Forum dated 30 May 2024 by Sundeep Mangat, an academic at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Canada and Aisha K.Gill, an academic at University of Bristol based on 28 interviews with Dalit women who had been raped by men noted in the available extracts:

'... Many of the participants described multiple ways in which their attempts to articulate their experiences had been silenced by family members speaking on their behalf, urging them to be quiet and/or ignoring them. Moreover, state agents – namely, the police – were complicit in silencing Dalit women's experiences by means of various mechanisms, such as not believing them ...'²⁶⁹ The article noted that 26 out of the 28 participants had been raped 10-20 years ago and were therefore reflecting on incidents and their experience that happened in the past one or two decades before.

10.7.4 The USSD 2023 India report stated: '... National crime statistics indicated women from marginalized, vulnerable, and tribal communities, including Dalit women, were disproportionately victimized ...'²⁷⁰ The USSD 2024 report did not include information of violence against women from tribal communities²⁷¹.

10.7.5 The same report noted: 'NGOs reported tribal women experienced disproportionate levels of sexual violence, with cases of rape among women in Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) representing 15 percent of total reported incidents despite SC/ST representing 5 percent of the population ...'²⁷²

10.7.6 The same report stated:

'There were reports women and girls in the devadasi system of symbolic marriages to Hindu deities (a form of ritual prostitution) were victims of rape or sexual abuse at the hands of priests and temple patrons, including sex trafficking. This practice was found in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, and it almost always targeted girls from SC/ST communities. NGOs suggested families exploited girls from lower castes to mitigate household financial burdens and the prospect of marriage dowries. The practice deprived girls of their education and reproductive rights and subjected them to stigma and discrimination.'²⁷³

10.7.7 The same report stated: 'On July 11 [2023], Madhya Pradesh police arrested a government official for sexually harassing tribal girl students during an unannounced inspection of their hostel in Jhabua.'²⁷⁴

10.7.8 Migrant Women Press Migrant Women Press, described a '... a migrant women-led independent media organisation ...'²⁷⁵, 1 October 2024 article

²⁶⁹ Mangat S & A K.Gill, [Negotiating between speech and silence as a form...](#), 30 May 2024

²⁷⁰ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

²⁷¹ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

²⁷² USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

²⁷³ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

²⁷⁴ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

²⁷⁵ Migrant Women Press, [About Us](#), no date

stated: ‘

‘The same week when the 31-year-old doctor was raped and murdered, a 14-year-old Dalit...girl from [Bihar](#) (Eastern part of India) was also raped and murdered. According to reports, the 14-year-old girl was kidnapped from her house on the night of August 11, and her body was recovered the next morning.

‘While the Kolkata case got a lot of attention, so many cases, especially against systematically oppressed communities and minorities, are not even covered by the mainstream Indian media. Rights groups say that women from Dalit and tribal communities are particularly [vulnerable to sexual violence](#) and other attacks.’²⁷⁶

For information on the Kolkata rape case see [Access to justice and state support](#).

10.7.9 In relation to violence faced by Dalit and tribal women, the FH 2024 report stated: ‘Rape and other sexual abuse are serious problems, and scheduled caste and tribal women are especially vulnerable ...’²⁷⁷

10.7.10 Human Rights Watch 2025 world report covering events in India during 2024 noted: ‘The [rape of a 20-year old Dalit nurse](#) by a doctor in a private hospital in Uttar Pradesh in August once again spotlighted that Dalit women and girls are at heightened risk of sexual violence.’²⁷⁸

10.7.11 On 13 January 2025 a BBC News article stated: ‘An 18-year-old Dalit woman from the southern India state of Kerala has accused 64 men of sexually abusing her since she was 13 years old... The accused, who range between 17 and 47 years of age, include the woman's neighbours, sports coaches and her father's friends... The woman reported the alleged abuse after a team of counsellors working under a government scheme visited her house ...’²⁷⁹

For information on police response to the case see [Access to justice](#)

For more information on treatment of scheduled castes see [Country Policy and Information Note: Religious minorities and scheduled castes and tribes](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

10.8 Other forms of violence, discrimination and harassment

10.8.1 Regarding women’s perception of safety, the WPS 2023 Index scored India as 58% on women’s perception of community safety (capturing percentage of women 15 and over who report feeling safe walking alone at night), decreased from 65.5% in 2017 (the lowest country percentage was 39% and the highest country percentage was 71%)²⁸⁰.

10.8.2 In relation to the treatment of women who refuse to marry, the DFAT 2023 report stated: ‘There were reports of women being attacked when they refused to marry. In May [2023], villagers physically assaulted a tribal girl, shaved her head, and paraded her with shoes around her neck on the directions of the village council in the Palamu District of Jharkhand after she

²⁷⁶ Migrant Women Press, [In India, the rise in gender-based violence leaves women...](#), 1 Oct 2024

²⁷⁷ FH, [Freedom in the World 2025: India](#) (section G3), 26 February 2025

²⁷⁸ HRW, [World Report 2025: India](#), 17 January 2025

²⁷⁹ BBC News, [Dalit woman in India alleges rape by 64 men over five years](#), 13 January 2025

²⁸⁰ GIWPS & PRIO, [WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Security), October 2023

refused to marry the man chosen by her family.²⁸¹ For more information on marriage see [Marriage, divorce and inheritance](#)

- 10.8.3 The BTI 2024 report stated: ‘... While women’s rights and gender equality are officially recognized, women are de facto still largely discriminated against. Discrimination ranges from the abortion of female fetuses (and corresponding numeric gender disparities) to intra-familial discrimination against women’s access to food and sanitation. This is mainly related to the persistence of patriarchal family structures, particularly in northern India...’²⁸²
- 10.8.4 The same BTI 2024 report noted: ‘Discrimination against women...remains a significant problem in India. Particularly in the deeply patriarchal northern regions, women often face discrimination within their own families from the earliest stages of life. For impoverished families, this translates to limited access to food and sanitation.’²⁸³
- 10.8.5 The FH 2024 report stated: ‘... Other forms of discrimination faced by women include workplace bias and sexual harassment ...’²⁸⁴
- 10.8.6 In regard to ‘witch hunts’, on 4 May 2024, VOA News article reported:
‘Rishi Kant, co-founder of Shakti Vahini, a New Delhi-based nongovernmental organization that works closely with several tribal communities, told VOA that domestic violence is “ingrained in the culture” of many tribes, and may not always look like what is conventionally understood as such. “Superstitions prevail in Jharkhand’s tribes, and women and girls often face the brunt of it. A harrowing but common way in which domestic violence manifests in such cases is through witch hunting,” he said.

“If there is a problem in the family, like an illness or unemployment, a woman of the house is blamed — a daughter-in-law, a young girl, an elderly grandmother and so on. She is deemed as ‘possessed,’ beaten up, hung by the limbs from a tree with her body being mutilated,” Kant said.

In 2022, Jharkhand recorded 11 cases of witch hunting that ended in murder, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, or NCRB. Estimates suggest that between 60 to 70 women are killed for “practicing witchcraft” in Jharkhand every year, many of them belonging to indigenous tribes.’²⁸⁵
- 10.8.7 The January 2025 Times of India article noted in regard to complaints received by the National Commission for Women there were over 600 complaints of stalking and voyeurism, 523 complaints of cyber-crime against women and 205 cases of sexual harassment at the workplace²⁸⁶.
- 10.8.8 The NCRB 2022 report provided statistics on other forms of violence and harassment against women across States and UTs²⁸⁷. In relation to kidnapping, it is not specified in the report the motivation for these offences; for example, whether they are domestic and relate to ‘honour’, forced marriage or are committed outside a domestic context. In relation to Assault

²⁸¹ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

²⁸² BTI, [BTI 2024 India Country Report](#) (Rule of Law), 19 March 2024

²⁸³ BTI, [BTI 2024 India Country Report](#) (Welfare Regime), 19 March 2024

²⁸⁴ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World Report 2025](#) (section F4), 26 February 2025

²⁸⁵ VoA News, [Activists warn about intergenerational domestic violence in Indian tribes](#), 4 May 2024

²⁸⁶ ToI, [Dowry torture, domestic violence remain serious worry: NCW data](#), 2 January 2025

²⁸⁷ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (pages xii, 213 & 220) 1 December 2023

on Women with Intent to Outrage her modesty, this offence covers a wide range of behaviours such as sexual touching in public and making lewd comments²⁸⁸ (table by CPIT):

Type of violence	Total number of victims
Kidnapping or abduction	26,762 (female adults)
Kidnapping or abduction	62,099 (female children)
Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her modesty	85,300

[Back to Contents](#)

11. State treatment and attitudes

11.1 Government statements, attitudes and policies

- 11.1.1 In regard to statements by President Modi referring to gender-based violence, on 13 September 2022 BBC News reported: 'In his address to the nation on India's 75th birthday last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a "change in the mentality" towards women and asked citizens to fight misogyny." A distortion has crept in our conduct and we at times insult women. Can we take a pledge to get rid of this in our behaviour," he suggested, urging people to "take a pledge to get rid of everything that humiliates women in everyday life".'²⁸⁹
- 11.1.2 The CEIP April 2024 article noted '[Prime Minister] Modi has exalted himself as the provider for women and their welfare. As the prime minister recently remarked, "When mother and sisters are empowered, then the entire family is empowered. Therefore, the priority of the [government] is the welfare of mothers and sisters."'²⁹⁰
- 11.1.3 In regard to schemes to tackle gender-based violence, the April 2024 IJFMR article by Kharkwhal and Khan stated: ...the aim of the [One Stop Centre] scheme [is] to facilitate access to an integrated range of services which include medical aid, police assistance, legal aid/case management, psychosocial counselling, and temporary support services for women who have been affected by violence.'²⁹¹
- 11.1.4 On 29 August 2024, CIVICUS, a '... global alliance of civil society organisations and activists'²⁹² article reported: 'Many initiatives and campaigns have helped highlight and address this issue [GBV]. But it has not been easy. A lack of consistent political will and weak implementation of policies have hindered substantial change. Feminist and social justice movements often face resistance from conservative parts of society, making it difficult to change these deeply entrenched cultural norms.'²⁹³
- 11.1.5 In regard to incidents of gender based violence, on 10 December 2024, Migrant Women Press, an independent media organisation²⁹⁴, article noted: 'Activist and founder of the NGO ANHAD, Shabnam Hashmi, said that the

²⁸⁸ IPC Laws, [IPC Section 354](#), 6 February 2024

²⁸⁹ BBC News, [Rising crimes against Indian women in five charts](#), 13 September 2022

²⁹⁰ CEIP, [What Lies Behind India's Rising Female Voter Turnout](#), 5 April 2024

²⁹¹ Kharkwal, M and Altaf, K, [Progress and Hurdles: India's Pursuit...](#) (page 3 and 4), April 2024

²⁹² CIVICUS, [About Us](#), no date

²⁹³ CIVICUS, [INDIA: 'Civil society organisations are at the forefront...](#), 29 August 2024

²⁹⁴ Migrant Women Press, [About Us](#), no date

current political scenario is one of the major reasons India is witnessing a current increase in such incidents. “What is happening is connected with the overall political atmosphere of the country. It is because violence has increased manifold. People are also realising that they can get away with whatever they do because the state is not taking any action,” she said.²⁹⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

11.2 Reporting violence and police response

11.2.1 On 5 May 2022, CBS News reported:

‘A police officer in India has been arrested after being accused of raping a 13-year-old girl who went to his station to report she had been gang-raped... The girl is also a member of India's Dalit community... According to her father, she was gang-raped by four men last month over several days.

‘But when she attempted to file a complaint last week, the station house officer in charge raped her, according to an NGO now providing her with counseling... Police said the officer was arrested on Wednesday along with four other people and the girl's aunt, who was reportedly inside the station house room when she was attacked.

‘Twenty-nine other officials present at the police station in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh at the time of the alleged assault have been suspended from duty.’²⁹⁶

11.2.2 The DFAT 2023 report noted:

‘There are women’s police desks and women’s police stations where women can report violence. These include ‘one stop’ centres throughout the country that are designed to offer a range of services to victims (legal, accommodation or medical services, for example) in addition to police assistance. These do not necessarily mean that protection is available (or even that a women’s police station will be staffed by a female officer), or that reports will be actioned by police effectively. Sources told DFAT that police sometimes tell couples to reconcile after violence and will not take any further action.’²⁹⁷

11.2.3 The same report also noted: ‘... police may not be effective in providing state protection and may take no action or may encourage the parties to reconcile...’²⁹⁸

11.2.4 In relation to the case of a woman who was victim to a violent group assault which went viral in January 2022, the DFAT 2023 report stated: ‘... Twelve people, including eight women, were arrested in connection with the rape and assault of the victim.’²⁹⁹ For information on this case see [Cultural context and societal attitudes](#)

11.2.5 In regard to gender-based violence and protection, the DFAT report provided its assessment based on its on-the-ground knowledge and discussions with a range of sources:

‘Violence against women is a significant problem in India and state

²⁹⁵ Migrant Women Press, [How gender-based violence is an ignored issue...](#), 10 December 2024

²⁹⁶ CBS News, [Indian police officer accused of raping 13-year-old girl...](#), 5 May 2022

²⁹⁷ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.127), 29 September 2023

²⁹⁸ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.126), 29 September 2023

²⁹⁹ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.122), 29 September 2023

protection is often inadequate. Sources told DFAT that police commonly refuse to register cases or investigate claims of violence, including violence that results in grievous bodily harm or death. DFAT assesses violence against women is common, and depends on several factors, including the family of the woman. Violence against women affects women of all socio-economic, caste and language distinctions. DFAT assesses that women experience a moderate risk of sexual harassment and assault in their day-to-day lives.³⁰⁰

11.2.6 The USSD 2023 report stated: 'The central government implemented programs to improve the safety and security of women while reporting violence. This included centers for reporting and accessing health support, women help desks at police stations to facilitate reporting, an emergency response support system via a mobile application for reporting emergencies, and training programs for police, prosecutors, medical officers, and the judiciary to respond to victims in compassionate and respectful ways.'³⁰¹ The USSD 2024 report did not include information on government programs which protect women reporting violence. However, the 2024 report is notably shorter than in previous years and provides less coverage of certain topics. This reduction in reporting should not be interpreted as indicating such facilities no longer exist.

11.2.7 The USSD 2023 report:

'... In June [2023], the NHRC requested the government of Rajasthan to provide a detailed report on the alleged gang rape and killing of a woman, age 21, by three individuals, including two police personnel...' ³⁰²

11.2.8 The same USSD 2023 report noted: 'In some cases, police encouraged reconciliation between rape survivors and their attackers or encouraged women rape survivors to marry their attackers.'³⁰³

11.2.9 On Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the USSD 2023 report noted the situation for women and girls in the devadasi system (ritual prostitution): 'Legislation in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra prohibited the devadasi system and provided aftercare services to women and girls affected by the practice. Enforcement of these laws was lax.'³⁰⁴ The USSD 2024 did not include information on the situation for women and girls in the devadasi system³⁰⁵.

11.2.10 On 16 August 2024, a Reuters article on rape cases in India stated: 'Senior criminal lawyer Rebecca M. John, who has represented many rape victims, says some rapists still believe they can get away with their crime... "One of the factors would be the absence of fear of the law," she told Reuters.... "There is no consistent application of the law, that's one aspect. There is very poor policing, that's another aspect." ...'³⁰⁶

11.2.11 The NYT August 2024 article stated:

'The legal protections have been ineffectual partly because the government

³⁰⁰ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.131), 29 September 2023

³⁰¹ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (Section 6), 23 April 2024

³⁰² USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 1c), 23 April 2024

³⁰³ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (Section 6), 23 April 2024

³⁰⁴ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (Section 6), 23 April 2024

³⁰⁵ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

³⁰⁶ Reuters, [India struggles with high rape cases, low conviction rates](#), 16 August 2024

has been lax about implementing the law and investing in mechanisms to properly handle cases of sexual assault, said Vrinda Grover, a lawyer and women's rights activist.

'She said that investigations she had examined were often "unprofessional, shoddy" and carried out by people with little training. The state's approach, Ms. Grover said, is colored by prejudice against women.

'If the government acts only after people organize protests, "then it is the system that has become dysfunctional and we will not see the end of sexual violence," she said.'³⁰⁷

11.2.12 On 27 September 2024, the New Indian Express article reported:

'On the night of September 14-15, a couple approached the Bharatpur Police Station in Odisha to report a road rage incident. Instead of receiving protection, the woman alleges she was brutalized — beaten, molested, and sexually assaulted by officers, including the station inspector. Her fiancé, an Army officer, was also allegedly assaulted and unlawfully detained. This appalling event reveals a disturbing truth: the very institutions designed to protect citizens often become perpetrators of violence...

'In the Odisha case, while [five officers have been suspended](#) ...'³⁰⁸

11.2.13 In relation to reporting of sexual assault and rape, the Migrant Women Press October 2024 article noted rape figures '... are likely to be higher, as many such crimes go unreported due to fear of victim shaming, retaliation, and a lack of faith in police investigations ...'³⁰⁹

11.2.14 In relation to forensic testing, the October 2024 Fair Observer article noted: '... most states do not have the forensic infrastructure to implement the kind of documentation of sexual assault claims laid out in the BNS. Forensic teams are [mandated](#) to visit a crime scene if rape is suspected (and for all crimes carrying a sentence of seven years or more.) However, at present, only 10%–12% of cases are referred to forensic labs, of which there are only seven in the country. Half of all forensic cases are [still pending](#).'³¹⁰

11.2.15 In relation to reporting gender based violence to police, the December 2024 Migrant Women Press article stated:

'Activist Shabnam Hashmi said that women are more reluctant to approach the police due to unsupportive behaviour and victim shaming along with long and tiring legal processes. Speaking about the on-ground situation, she said, "If a woman goes on her own, then nobody listens to her. A complaint is filed only after pressure is created," she said.

'According to Hashmi, it is worse for women who are not educated. "Only when an activist or someone educated intervenes does the police listen," Hashmi added.

'Many activists told Migrant Women Press that when a victim, especially of domestic violence, goes to the police station, they are not taken seriously and, in many cases, offered mediation.

³⁰⁷ NYT, [Is India a Safe Place for Women? Another Brutal Killing Raises the Question](#), 22 Aug 2024

³⁰⁸ The New Indian Express, [Who's watching the watchers? When police stations...](#), 27 Sept 2024

³⁰⁹ Migrant Women Press, [In India, the rise in gender-based violence...](#), 1 October 2024

³¹⁰ Fair Observer, [How Does Indian Law Now Treat Sexual Assault Victims...](#), 27 Oct 2024

‘Across India’s police stations, the Crime Against Women (CAW) cell is tasked with handling mediation. If a case is found to fail under appropriate sections, it may be registered. However, many victims allege that during mediation, pressure is created to not go ahead with the case.’³¹¹

11.2.16 In regard to the case of the 18-year-old Dalit women who accused 64 men of sexually abusing her, the January 2025 BBC News article stated:

‘... Police have arrested 28 people in connection with the case so far - the men are in custody and have not made any public statement... Police have registered about 18 cases under India’s various crime laws as well as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act - which is a law to prevent crimes against people belonging to lower castes and tribes in India.... Cases have also been registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, since the abuse took place when the woman was a minor... More cases are expected to be registered in the coming days as the police are still investigating the matter. A 25-member team has been set up... the woman had been shifted to a shelter associated with the CWC [Child Welfare Committee] for her protection ...’³¹²

11.2.17 In regard to police response to acid attacks, the April 2025 Article 14 report stated:

‘Article 14 spoke with four acid attack survivors—between 15 and 26 years old when they were attacked—who have been waiting for justice for an average of 10 years, including one for 16 years.

‘The reasons for delays include hold-ups in reporting the crime—due to the victims being hospitalised—late filing of chargesheets, slow investigations, witness unavailability, political influence, corruption and the backlog of cases in the courts...

‘Sija Nair, a Delhi-based lawyer with more than 15 years of experience in cases of gender-based violence, particularly acid attacks, and works at Brave Souls Foundation, said the initial delay in reporting the incident—as the victim is often in hospital—and recording a statement contributed to delays in the investigation process.

‘Nair said that investigative agencies could often be insensitive to acid attack survivors—who are immediately admitted to hospital and have to go through extensive treatment—leading to further delays.’³¹³

For more information on acid attacks see [‘Honour’ crimes and femicide](#)

11.2.18 The USSD 2024 report stated:

‘Police officers were also implicated in allegations of rape, including against victims in police custody. The government authorized the NHRC to investigate rape cases involving police officers. More than 270 cases of rape in police custody were registered between 2017 and 2022, according to NCRB data, with women’s rights activists attributing such instances to a lack of sensitization and accountability within law enforcement systems.’³¹⁴

³¹¹ Migrant Women Press, [How gender-based violence is an ignored issue...](#), 10 December 2024

³¹² BBC News, [Dalit woman in India alleges rape by 64 men over five years](#), 13 January 2025

³¹³ Article 14, [Justice Delayed, Healing Denied: Acid Attack Survivors Battle...](#), 11 April 2025

³¹⁴ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (Section 3a), 12 August 2025

11.2.19 The same report noted:

'NGOs claimed NHRC statistics undercounted the number of rapes committed in police custody, and some rape survivors were unwilling to report crimes due to social stigma and fear of retribution if the perpetrator was a police officer or official. There were claims police officials also refused to register rape cases.'³¹⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

11.3 Crime statistics

11.3.1 The NCRB 2022 report recorded the below figures on police progress in cases of crimes against women across States and UTs³¹⁶ (table by CPIT):

Crime	Cases pending from previous year	Cases reported during year	Cases pending investigation
Murder with rape/gang rape	215	248	180
Dowry deaths	3499	6450	3231
Rape	13,138	31,516	10,703
Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty	31,619	83,344	29,490
Kidnapping and abduction of women to compel her for marriage	20,350	28,656	18,354
Cruelty by husbands or his relatives	55,043	140,019	49,000
Acid attack	52	124	53

11.3.2 In regard to the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act the same report noted the total number of cases under investigation during the year as 870 (402 from the previous year and 468 in 2022). There were 323 investigations pending at the end of 2022³¹⁷.

11.3.3 In regard to cases in the court system in relation to crimes against women, the same report recorded the below figures³¹⁸ (table by CPIT)

Crime	Cases pending trial from	Cases sent for trial	Cases convicted	Cases acquitted
--------------	---------------------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

³¹⁵ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (Section 3a), 12 August 2025

³¹⁶ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (page 230) 1 December 2023

³¹⁷ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (pages 234 and 236), 1 December 2023

³¹⁸ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (pages 242 and 244), 1 December 2023

	previous year			
Murder with rape/gang rape	1093	240	43	19
Dowry deaths	54,416	6161	1231	2189
Rape	171,777	26,508	5067	12,062
Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty	476,724	71,630	8056	22,084
Kidnapping and abduction of women to compel her for marriage	114,793	3815	2445	3240
Cruelty by husbands or his relatives	729,301	123,297	8307	35998
Acid attack	585	97	17	15

11.3.4 In regard to conviction rates for crimes against women, the same report recorded the below figures³¹⁹ (table by CPIT)

Crime	Conviction rate
Murder with rape/gang rape	69.4%
Dowry deaths	33.4%
Rape	27.4%
Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty	25.6%
Kidnapping and abduction of women to compel her for marriage	41.9%
Cruelty by husbands or his relatives	17.7%
Acid attack	53.1%

11.3.5 In relation to the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, the same report recorded the below figures³²⁰

Cases pending from previous year 2021	2636
--	------

³¹⁹ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (pages 245), 1 December 2023

³²⁰ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume I](#) (pages 246-249), 1 December 2023

Total cases sent for trial 2022	3072
Cases convicted in 2022	9
Cases acquitted in 2022	41
Conviction rate in 2022	18%

11.3.6 In regard to police investigations into crimes committed against people from SCs, the same report provided the below statistics³²¹(table by CPIT)

Crime	Cases pending from previous year 2021	Cases reported during year 2022	Cases pending investigation at end of 2022
Rape of women	759	2835	733
Kidnapping & abduction of women to compel her for marriage	87	408	102
Rape of children (below 18)	310	1406	264
Sexual harassment	178	760	187
Assault or use of Criminal Force on women with intent to Disrobe	91	312	96
Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty	1008	4160	1052
Assault on women	915	3439	953
Insult to the Modesty of Women	123	226	120
Acid attack	0	3	1

11.3.7 In relation to cases in the court system involving crimes committed against persons from SCs, the same report published the below statistics³²² (table by CPIT):

Crime	Cases pending from	Cases sent for trial	Cases convicted	Cases acquitted
--------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

³²¹ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume II](#) (pages 555,558,559&562), 1 December 2023

³²² NCRB, [Crime in India Volume II](#) (pages 567,569,571&573), 1 December 2023

	previous year			
Rape of woman	12316	2346	442	591
Kidnapping & abduction of women to compel her for marriage	1852	261	65	37
Rape of children (below 18)	4125	1408	148	293
Sexual harassment	3451	588	58	124
Assault or use of Criminal Force on women with intent to disrobe	1167	240	18	26
Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty	7136	1675	339	717
Assault on women	12,791	2679	273	604
Insult to the Modesty of Women	435	156	3	66
Acid attack	10	1	0	0

11.3.8 In regard to conviction rates for crimes against SCs, the same report provided the below statistics³²³: (Table by CPIT)

Crime	Conviction rate
Rape of woman	41.5%
Kidnapping & abduction of women to compel her for marriage	56.5%
Rape of children	33.3%
Sexual harassment	31.2%
Assault or use of Criminal Force on women with intent to disrobe	40%
Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty	31.2%
Assault on women	30.1%

11.3.9 The USSD 2023 report noted:

‘... A report by the Parliament Standing Committee on Home Affairs on atrocities and crimes against women and children highlighted the poor conviction rates and high rate of pending cases related to crimes against women belonging to SC/ST communities. The report stated that while there

³²³ NCRB, [Crime in India Volume II](#) (pages 567,569,571&573), 1 December 2023

was an increase of approximately 16 percent in crimes against women and children from SC/ST communities in 2017-19, the conviction rate in the same period was as low as 27 percent, with the pending rate at 84 percent.³²⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

11.4 Prosecution, appeals and legal redress

- 11.4.1 In terms of access to justice, the 2023 WPS Index gave India a score of 2.4 out of 4, where 0 indicates the lowest level of access and 4 the highest. This score reflects the extent to which women are able to bring cases to court, receive fair trials, and obtain legal redress for rights violations³²⁵.
- 11.4.2 In relation to reporting of sexual assault and rape, the Migrant Women Press October 2024 article noted ‘for victims, it takes years to get justice and, at times, even their lives...’³²⁶
- 11.4.3 The FH 2024 report stated: ‘... The criminal justice system and prominent politicians have been repeatedly faulted for their poor handling of such matters [rape and sexual assault cases] ...’³²⁷. The report did not provide specific examples of handling of rape and sexual assault cases, or which politicians had been criticised.
- 11.4.4 The USSD 2023 report noted: ‘Law enforcement and legal recourse for rape survivors were inadequate, and the judicial system was unable to address the problem effectively. The NGO International Center for Research on Women noted low conviction rates in rape cases was one of the main reasons sexual violence continued unabated and at times unreported. NGOs observed the length of trials, lack of survivor support, and inadequate protection of witnesses and survivors were major concerns.’³²⁸ The USSD 2024 report did not include information on prosecution of rape and sexual violence³²⁹. However, the 2024 report is notably shorter than in previous years and provides less coverage of certain topics, including information related to the treatment of women.
- 11.4.5 The same 2023 report stated: ‘The government made efforts to address the length of rape trials and sought to expedite cases involving women. As of July [2023], 855 fast-track courts were functioning across the country. In addition, several high courts also directed state governments to establish more fast-track courts to promptly conclude pending rape cases..... There were reports that so-called virginity tests were employed during forensic examinations of rape survivors.’³³⁰
- 11.4.6 The same report referred to case in which the former Director General of Police in Tamil Nadu was sentenced to a prison term and fine after being found guilty of sexual abuse:

‘On June 16, former Director General of Police in Tamil Nadu Rajesh Das was found guilty of sexual abuse by a court in Villupuram and sentenced to a three-year prison term and a fine. A woman Indian Police Service officer

³²⁴ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

³²⁵ GIWPS & PRIO, [WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Justice), October 2023

³²⁶ Migrant Women Press, [In India, the rise in gender-based violence...](#), 1 October 2024

³²⁷ FH, [Freedom in the World 2025: India](#) (section G3), 26 February 2025

³²⁸ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

³²⁹ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

³³⁰ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

accused Das of the abuse in 2021.^{'331}

11.4.7 In relation to rape convictions, the same USSD report stated: 'As of October 26 [2023], the Supreme Court had not ruled on the petitions challenging the early release of 11 men serving life sentences after being convicted of gang-raping Bilkis Bano and killing 14 members of her family during the 2002 Gujarat riots, including Bano's daughter, age three. The men were released from prison in 2022 after they became eligible for parole under court sentencing guidelines.'³³²

11.4.8 Regarding the same case, on 8 January 2024 BBC News updated:

'... The two-judge Supreme Court bench, headed by Justice BV Nagarathna, ruled that the state of Gujarat was "not competent" to pass the remission order in the case since the men had been tried and convicted in a court in the neighbouring state of Maharashtra.

'The bench added that since the government's remission order had been nullified, the 11 convicts must return to prison within two weeks.

"Justice encompasses not just the rights of the convicts but also the rights of the victims" and the "primary duty" of the court is to uphold justice and rule of law, Justice Nagarathna said, adding that the "rule of law must be preserved unmindful of the ripples of the consequences".^{'333}

11.4.9 In relation to IPC Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code (now replaced) which deals with the offence of 'assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty.' IPC Laws, in an article written by Vardhaman Raj, an Indian criminal and civil rights lawyer noted:

'A real-life example of IPC Section 354 involved a case where a man inappropriately touched a woman on a public bus to outrage her modesty. The woman reported the incident to the police, and the man was arrested and charged under IPC Section 354. The court found the man guilty and sentenced him to imprisonment and a fine. This case highlighted the legal measures to protect women from acts intended to outrage their modesty and the consequences of such actions.

'In another instance, a woman was walking home when a man attempted to grab her and made lewd comments. She managed to escape and reported the incident. The man was later apprehended and charged under IPC Section 354 for his actions. This case underscored the seriousness with which the law treats [these] offences ...and the legal recourse available to victims of such offences.'³³⁴

11.4.10 In regard to the case of the murder and rape of a 31-year-old doctor in Kolkata, on 20 January 2025 Australian Broadcasting News reported:

'Civic police volunteer Sanjay Roy was convicted on Saturday of raping and murdering the 31-year-old female trainee doctor while she slept on a long shift at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital in August 2024.

'On Monday, Kolkata's Sealdah Court gave him a sentence of life

³³¹ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

³³² USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

³³³ BBC News, [Bilkis Bano: India Supreme Court cancels release of 2002 riots rapists](#), 8 Jan 2024

³³⁴ IPC Laws, [IPC Section 354](#), 6 February 2024

imprisonment for the crimes of rape, rape causing death and murder.

'The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had demanded Roy be given the death penalty, but the court deemed the matter did not meet the threshold of being 'the rarest-of-rare' cases...

'In September [2024], the CBI arrested the superintendent of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital and the officer in charge of the local police station for allegedly tampering with evidence, but no charge sheet was ever submitted for them.

'The police officer is out on bail, while the hospital superintendent, Sandip Ghosh, is in detention in connection with a separate case concerning financial irregularities at the hospital...

'The day after the doctor's body was discovered, Kolkata Police arrested Roy, but had the matter taken away from them a few days later, when Kolkata's High Court transferred the case to the CBI, criticising the local police's handling of the investigation.'³³⁵

11.4.11 In relation to the same case, the NYT August 2024 article noted:

'... Chief Justice Chandrachud identified a number of breakdowns in the official response to the rape and killing. He asked why hospital administrators and police officers had not followed protocol in reporting the crime in the hours after the victim's body, which bore signs of rape and brutal injury, was discovered at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, where she worked. The top court also set up a national task force to recommend safety measures to protect medics, who are often subject to violence and abuse.'³³⁶

11.4.12 On 26 March 2025, BBC News reported on a sexual assault case referred from the High Court to the Supreme Court:

'India's Supreme Court has put on hold a recent high court which said that "grabbing [the] breasts" of a girl and breaking off the drawstrings of her lower garment could not be considered an attempt to rape. The Allahabad high court had ruled last week that the offence could only be described as "aggravated sexual assault", which involves a lesser punishment.

'The top court judges said some of the comments in the high court order depicted "a total lack of sensitivity" on the part of the judge who wrote it. The high court ruling led to outrage in India.

'On Wednesday, the two-judge Supreme Court bench of Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine described the 17 March order as "shocking", especially since it was not delivered "on the spur of the moment" but had been well thought through after being reserved for four months...'³³⁷ In the sources consulted, CPIT could not find any further update in this case see [Bibliography](#).

11.4.13 In regard to prosecution in higher profile cases, on 1 April 2025, the Hindustan Times reported that a prolific Christian preacher Bajinder Singh was sentenced on 1 April 2025 to life imprisonment for the rape of a woman in 2018 and was convicted under Sections 376 (rape), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal

³³⁵ ABC, [Life imprisonment for Sanjay Roy in Kolkata doctor rape and murder](#), 20 January 2024

³³⁶ NYT, [Is India a Safe Place for Women? Another Brutal Killing Raises the Question](#), 22 Aug 2024

³³⁷ BBC News, [India's top court halts 'shocking' ruling on sexual assault of child](#), 26 March 2025

Code³³⁸.

11.4.14 On 11 July 2025, the Times of India reported:

‘A local court has ordered two sons to pay Rs 10,000 per month as maintenance to their mother, following her complaint under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

‘In addition to the monthly maintenance, the court directed both sons and their wives not to cause any physical or mental harassment to the 65-year-old woman. The court also ruled that “the complainant should be allotted one room in the house and she should not be evicted.” Furthermore, the sons were ordered to pay Rs 25,000 as compensation for domestic violence.’³³⁹

For more general information on access to justice see [Country Policy and Information Note India: Actors of Protection](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

11.5 State support

11.5.1 In regard to state protections for women, the Ministry of Women and Child Development website highlighted Mission Shakti which is a:

‘... scheme in mission mode aimed at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment. It seeks to realise the Government's commitment for "women-led development" by addressing issues affecting women on a life-cycle continuum basis and by making them equal partners in nation-building through convergence and citizen-ownership. It seeks to focus on proposing strategies for improving convergence across Ministries/Departments and at different levels of governance. It also seeks to promote greater participation and support of Panchayats and other local level governance bodies, apart from strengthening digital infrastructure support, last mile tracking and Jan Sahabhagita. Mission Shakti has two sub-schemes -‘Sambal’ and ‘Samarthya’.

‘The objective of the Mission Shakti is to provide to all women and girls including differently-abled, socially and economically marginalized and vulnerable groups, in need of care and protection, with short term and long-term services and information for their holistic development and empowerment.’³⁴⁰

11.5.2 An undated page on the Government of India Ministry of Women and Child Development website outlines support services for women including a free 24 hour helpline for women seeking support and information by connecting them with emergency services and One Stop Centres³⁴¹.

11.5.3 The same website highlights the Nari Adalat which is a ‘... platform providing women with an alternative Grievance Redressal Mechanism for resolving cases of harassment, subversion, curtailment of rights or entitlements faced by women at Gram Panchayat level by negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation with mutual consent for speedy, accessible, and affordable justice. It also be used as a platform for awareness of right, entitlements,

³³⁸ Hindustan Times, [Bajinder Singh, 'Yeshu Yeshu' pastor from Punjab, gets life term...](#), 1 April 2025

³³⁹ Times of India, [Two sons ordered to pay maintenance to mother...](#), 11 July 2025

³⁴⁰ MWCD, [Mission Shakti](#), no date

³⁴¹ MWCD, [Women Helpline 181](#), no date

social facilitation and hand holding of women centric organizations.’³⁴²

11.5.4 In relation to One Stop Centres, the same website stated:

‘The One Stop Centre (OSC), launched in 2015, is an under Sambal [one of the sub-schemes of Mission Shakti], aimed at providing comprehensive care to women survivors of abuse, violence, and trauma. OSCs offer a range of essential services such as medical, legal, temporary shelter, police assistance, psychological and counselling support. OSCs facilitate [sic] to aid for women in distress, ensuring prompt support and promoting long-term empowerment by providing access to government programs. OSCs also foster coordination with other initiatives to combat violence against women effectively.’³⁴³

11.5.5 An undated page on the Borgen Project, a US based non-profit organisation³⁴⁴, website noted:

‘Women’s police stations, staffed exclusively by women, provide a safer and more supportive environment for victims [of gender-based violence](#). These stations focus on helping victims rather than solely pursuing the arrest of perpetrators. Officers connect women with domestic violence helplines, provide counseling and help them escape abusive situations ... these stations offer women a space where they can seek help without fear or intimidation. Female officers handle cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse, but they also address other gender-specific issues, giving victims a sense of empowerment and agency.’³⁴⁵

11.5.6 In regard to the impact of women’s police stations, the same source noted:

‘Women’s police stations in India have led to [a 29% increase in domestic](#) violence reporting [based on statistics from a 2021 IZA Institute of Labour Economics discussion paper]... Women’s police stations not only offer support but also provide valuable information about the challenges these women face, which can shape policy changes that uplift vulnerable communities ...’³⁴⁶

11.5.7 In relation to women’s experiences in One Stop Centre’s, on 5 May 2023 IndiaSpend, a non-profit open-data journalism platform³⁴⁷, article stated:

“‘The women of the One Stop Centre gave me my life back,” says Pallavi Sharma, a survivor of domestic violence...

‘At the OSC, Sharma says she was counselled, accompanied to a hospital to establish her mental fitness (and that she did not need to be institutionalised), and provided shelter at the OSC for some days... the OSC staff supported her to restart her work as a yoga instructor by teaching yoga at the centre, and then taking on other clients when she had regained her confidence.’³⁴⁸

11.5.8 The same article noted:

‘Sharma is one of 668,139 women [assisted](#) by OSCs between 2015 and

³⁴² MWCD, [Nari Adalat](#), no date

³⁴³ MWCD, [One Stop Centre](#), no date

³⁴⁴ The Borgen Project, [About Us](#), no date

³⁴⁵ The Borgen Project, [Women’s Police Stations Combat Gender-Based Violence in India](#), no date

³⁴⁶ The Borgen Project, [Women’s Police Stations Combat Gender-Based Violence in India](#), no date

³⁴⁷ IndiaSpend, [About Us](#), no date

³⁴⁸ IndiaSpend, [One Stop, Many Challenges: Sakhi Centres Struggle To Support...](#), 5 May 2023

2022, according to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD). This is [equivalent](#) to 1 in every 1,000 women in the country...

'The Sakhi One Stop Centre scheme of the WCD ministry under the Nirbhaya Fund, aims to support and assist women facing violence in public and private spaces, [including](#) spousal violence ...'³⁴⁹

11.5.9 In regard to funding of OSCs, the same article noted:

'Some One Stop Centres also face delays in receiving funds from the Centre, which delays disbursement of staffs' salaries. Neeti Singh has been working as the counsellor in Raipur OSC, the [first](#) OSC in the country, since it became operational in 2016. She tells us that the staff's salary has not been increased since 2017. There have been delays in disbursing staff salaries on several occasions, including between October 2022 and March 2023, in 2017, and for five-six months in 2018-19. Singh says the state's department of women and child development "tells us that they have not received the funds from Delhi".'³⁵⁰

'... However, despite having the potential to help hundreds of thousands of women, and being operational for over seven years, several issues prevent the centres and the larger scheme from effectively curbing domestic violence or providing adequate support to survivors, our analysis finds.

'Less than half of the funds released by the Union Government for the Sakhi One Stop Centre scheme were utilised between 2015 and 2022. A failure to integrate other systems like the Women's Helpline impacts the value and effectiveness of this service, while a lack of awareness among stakeholders like the police reduces the reach of this service...

While over Rs 735 crore [£62.3 million GBP³⁵¹] of the Rs 868 crore [£73.5 million GBP³⁵²] [approved](#) funds have already been released to the districts, only Rs 328 crore has been [utilised](#) on the ground. Over half of the funds which have been released, and are accounted for in the Union budget as the actual expenditure, still remain in bank accounts of district collectors or magistrates'³⁵³

11.5.10 The same article further reported:

'A counsellor's role is critical, says Daruwalla [programme director at [SNEHA](#), a Mumbai-based NGO which runs the OSC in Mumbai city], as they "have to navigate through the insecurities and fears of the victim, understand her situation and make interventions tailored to her". But the payscale is particularly low for a counsellor, making it hard to hire qualified people, says Shweta Pokle, the counsellor at Mumbai's suburban OSC. "Not every OSC has a counsellor, they might have a social worker who has studied psychology [as part of Masters in Social Work course]. This can be damaging, since they might engage in giving advice, instead of understanding the victim's situation."

11.5.11 The same article noted:

³⁴⁹ IndiaSpend, [One Stop, Many Challenges: Sakhi Centres Struggle To Support...](#), 5 May 2023

³⁵⁰ IndiaSpend, [One Stop, Many Challenges: Sakhi Centres Struggle To Support...](#), 5 May 2023

³⁵¹ Xe.com, [7,350,000.000 INR to GBP - Convert Indian Rupees to British Pounds](#), 18 August 2025

³⁵² Xe.com, [8,680,000.000 INR to GBP - Convert Indian Rupees to British Pounds](#), 18 August 2025

³⁵³ IndiaSpend, [One Stop, Many Challenges: Sakhi Centres Struggle To Support...](#), 5 May 2023

‘Some One Stop Centres also face delays in receiving funds from the Centre, which delays disbursement of staffs’ salaries. Neeti Singh has been working as the counsellor in Raipur OSC, the [first](#) OSC in the country, since it became operational in 2016. She tells us that the staff’s salary has not been increased since 2017. There have been delays in disbursing staff salaries on several occasions, including between October 2022 and March 2023, in 2017, and for five-six months in 2018-19. Singh says the state’s department of women and child development “tells us that they have not received the funds from Delhi”.³⁵⁴

11.5.12 Commenting on access to legal aid through OSCs, the same article reported:

‘Coordinating with the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) for legal aid has also been challenging in some cases. Mishra, the lawyer, says that there have been instances of Paralegal Volunteers (PLVs) from the DLSA asking for legal fees from women who approach them through OSCs, even though their legal help should be free. This further discourages survivors of domestic violence, who are often already pressured by family and other institutes to compromise with the abuser, from considering legal action.’³⁵⁵

11.5.13 The same article reported:

“‘The OSC is not supposed to operate in isolation; it was intended to be a scheme that combines helplines and legal aid services, but it was segregated for funding reasons,” says Kachroo, whose organisation set up and managed 68 multiple OSCs in Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya and Assam. He has also worked with the ministry of WCD to build a [Management Information System](#) (MIS) to integrate the Women’s Helpline, OSCs and the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) Helpline, which provides free legal aid for the economically disadvantaged.

‘He explains that OSCs were not supposed to just refer women to other departments, but be a “representational system” which “brings representatives from all the institutes available in one place”. He explains, “the intent of OSCs was to allow collaboration between different stakeholders to facilitate quick and easy access to justice”, but “OSC has failed to act as the access to the justice scheme that it was originally envisioned to be”’³⁵⁶

11.5.14 Commenting on access to long-term shelters, the same article stated:

‘Besides providing legal and medical support, OSCs help women with short-term or long-term shelter as needed. “While the process of OSC recommending a shelter home and transitioning should be straightforward in theory, in most cases it is not. There are no Swadhar Grehs in Mumbai,” says Kohirkar. [Swadhar Grehs](#) are shelter homes run by the WCD ministry which provide rehabilitation and institutional support to women in need of it, including survivors of domestic violence.

‘Another challenge is long term shelters for women who need specialised care, such as the elderly and disabled women.

³⁵⁴ IndiaSpend, [One Stop, Many Challenges: Sakhi Centres Struggle To Support...](#), 5 May 2023

³⁵⁵ IndiaSpend, [One Stop, Many Challenges: Sakhi Centres Struggle To Support...](#), 5 May 2023

³⁵⁶ IndiaSpend, [One Stop, Many Challenges: Sakhi Centres Struggle To Support...](#), 5 May 2023

“Most shelter homes restrict the mobility and agency of women. There are stringent rules regarding what they are allowed to do outside the premises. They are considered the responsibility of the OSC. So if women don’t behave in compliance with the rules, they are asked to return to the OSC,” says Kohirkar [a programme coordinator for Urja, an NGO that has been managing an OSC in a Mumbai suburb]. “The state looks at women through a patriarchal lens of protection. Their autonomy is not taken into consideration. We need programmes in place to improve the sensitivity of our institutes like shelter homes.”³⁵⁷

11.5.15 In regard to women’s shelters in Dehli, on 2 January 2024, the Tribune, which describes itself as ‘... the largest selling English daily in North India ...’³⁵⁸ article stated:

‘... A ground check reveals that the 19 shelter homes for women [in Dehli], which boast of a capacity of 1,220 women, barely have 512 inmates. The lack of adequate sanitation, security, drinking water and official apathy are among the top reasons keeping women away from shelter homes.

‘At in the Gurdwara Bangla Sahib shelter home, Vaishnavi (21) says the complex was meant to protect them from harsh winter conditions, but it is marked by unhealthy living conditions.

‘The premises are dotted by 14 tents and seven porta-cabins with the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) under the Delhi Government in charge of administration.

‘I have been living here with my mother for some years now, but the conditions have not improved in even one bit,” says Vaishnavi.

“We can’t pay a rent and therefore live here. The food they send is not good. It is usually potato curry on most of the days. Many of us prefer langar at the gurdwara,” Vaishnavi says.

‘Anju (27), another inmate, says the staff at the shelter home don’t clean toilets, which are anyway not fully functional.

“The toilets have no water source and are dirty. The shelter has two assigned sweepers to clean the whole area, but only one cleans the complex outside,” rues Anju.

‘She added that during rains the area gets flooded.

“The lockers are so small, nothing fits in. We have to keep belongings on the bed or underneath it,” Anju says, adding that the provision of sanitary pads for women inmates was discontinued a while ago.

‘The situation is no better at the female shelter home in Jama Masjid’s Urdu Bazaar, which also presents safety concerns. It has two porta cabins of which only one has beds. However, in contrast to most shelters, it has 50 inmates with beds for only 20.

‘All women inmates at the Jama Masjid shelter cite safety issues with only one guard deployed — Khushnuma (23) who is filling in for her sick husband.

³⁵⁷ IndiaSpend, [One Stop, Many Challenges: Sakhi Centres Struggle To Support...](#), 5 May 2023

³⁵⁸ The Tribune, [Homepage](#), no date

‘Binu (30), an inmate, recalls recent incidents at the shelter home and says, “Recently we heard of a person’s throat being slit and a four-year-old being raped in a park adjacent to our shelter home. Some people also stole a newborn from a mentally ill mother. In these conditions, it is really tough for us to keep our daughters and ourselves safe.”’³⁵⁹

11.5.16 The Times of India noted in May 2024: ‘Under the PWDVA, victims of domestic violence have the right to seek various forms of relief and protection. These include obtaining protection orders, which restrain the abuser from committing further acts of violence; residence orders, which provide the victim with temporary accommodation; and monetary relief, which may include compensation for medical expenses and loss of earnings due to violence.’³⁶⁰

11.5.17 In regard to state support to survivors of domestic violence, the DFAT 2023 India report stated: ‘The PWDVA requires states to provide shelters, counselling services and legal aid to survivors of domestic violence; however, in practice the quality and availability of services are limited. Some shelters are relatively good, however others are overcrowded and unhygienic... One source told DFAT that shelters are a ‘place of neglect and misery’, and mentioned the use of ‘psychiatric medicines’ on residents without consent.’³⁶¹

11.5.18 In relation to the conditions of state shelters, the same report noted:

‘According to media reports from 2018, some shelters in Delhi and Bihar were investigated for their poor conditions. Allegations included claims that women were subjected to forced abortions, locked up without access to exercise and fresh air and in some cases raped. The allegations were investigated and senior government officials admitted that there may be more cases than initially reported. Whether or not conditions improved as a result of investigations is not clear.’³⁶² In the consulted, CPIT could not find reporting which indicated whether conditions in women’s shelter have remained the same or improved in recent years.

11.5.19 In relation to the availability of state-funded women’s shelters, the Times of India April 2025 reported:

‘In a move to strengthen women’s safety and empowerment, Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh govt is set to launch ‘Sakhi Niwas’ shelters in nine major districts across the state. The centre, each with a capacity to accommodate 50 women, aim to offer secure accommodation to women facing social, legal, or familial challenges, especially during times of crisis.

‘The initiative is part of the govt’s flagship scheme, Mission Shakti, which continues to provide dignity, protection and increased empowerment of women ... The districts selected for establishment of these shelters in the upcoming financial year include Lucknow, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Gorakhpur, Agra, Bareilly, Meerut, Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar. These locations were chosen based on factors such as population density, level of

³⁵⁹ The Tribune, [Women’s shelter homes in Delhi cry for attention](#), 2 February 2024

³⁶⁰ Times of India, [Domestic Violence Victims Guide: Domestic Violence: A guide for...](#), 14 May 2024

³⁶¹ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.129), 29 September 2023

³⁶² DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report India](#) (paragraph 3.130), 29 September 2023

urbanisation, and the number of women-related cases reported.’³⁶³

11.5.20 In regard to implementation of PWDVA, on 5 June 2024, the Supreme Court Observer, described as a non-partisan legal journalism platform³⁶⁴ reported:

‘On 20 May [2025], the Supreme Court directed all states and Union Territories to identify and designate Protection Officers (POs) to ensure proper implementation of the [Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005](#) (PWDVA)... The petition brings to the limelight the uneven implementation of the PWDVA across the country... The Bench directed the Chief Secretaries of all states and Union Territories, along with the Secretaries of the Departments of Women and Child Development to designate selected officers as POs. The POs must complete this process within six weeks in areas where such designation has not yet occurred... As the Court is likely to monitor whether the authorities comply with its directions it may reveal how effectively the Court’s intervention corrects the uneven implementation of the Act.’³⁶⁵

11.5.21 In regard to the Supreme Court’s directive on the implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, on 3 June 2024 NDTV, an Indian news organisation³⁶⁶ reported the seven key directions from the Supreme Court were:

1. Identify and appoint protection officers
2. Appointment of protection officers within 6 weeks
3. Awareness about provisions for victims of domestic violence
4. Ensure implementation of section 11 of domestic violence act (Section 11 mandates that protocols for various Ministries concerned with the delivery of services to women under this Act are prepared and put in place)
5. Free legal aid to victims of domestic violence
6. Role of member secretaries at state, district levels
7. Identify, notify and make shelter homes more accessible to victims within 10 weeks³⁶⁷.

11.5.22 The LAW Notes September 2024 website page highlighted issues in implementing domestic violence legislation such as:

‘While the legal framework to address domestic violence in India is comprehensive, several challenges remain:

‘... **Implementation Gaps:** Although the PWDVA provides for protection officers, shelter homes, and counseling, there are significant gaps in the implementation of these provisions, particularly in rural areas where access to legal resources is limited.

‘....**Inadequate Support Systems:** While the law mandates the establishment of shelter homes and support services for victims, in practice, these facilities are often underfunded and understaffed, leaving

³⁶³ Times of India, [Nine Uttar Pradesh districts to get sakhi niwas shelter for women](#), 21 April 2025

³⁶⁴ SCO, [About](#), no date

³⁶⁵ SCO, [Supreme Court directs implementation of Domestic Violence Act](#), 5 June 2025

³⁶⁶ NDTV, [About the Company](#), no date

³⁶⁷ NDTV, [Supreme Court's 7 Directions For Domestic Violence Act Implementation](#), 3 June 2025

many victims without adequate protection.³⁶⁸

11.5.23 The UNHRC September 2024 report noted:

‘The State party should adopt comprehensive legal and policy reform to prevent, address and eradicate violence against women and girls and other harmful practices in all their forms and manifestations. In particular, it should:

‘(a) Ensure that all cases of violence and harmful practices against women and girls are thoroughly and promptly investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence;

‘(b) Ensure that victims receive the necessary legal, medical, financial and psychological support and have access to effective remedies and means of protection;

‘(c) Establish an effective mechanism to facilitate and encourage the reporting of cases of violence and harmful practices against women and girls, in particular those belonging to Indigenous, ethnic and religious minority and lower caste communities, including by ensuring that all women have access to information about their rights and to remedies, addressing the social stigmatization of victims and raising awareness among the general public about the criminal nature of such acts...’³⁶⁹

11.5.24 In regard to women’s shelters in India, on 22 June 2024, the Times of India article reported:

‘Creating supportive communities for women fleeing domestic abuse is crucial. Safe homes and shelters, currently often unwelcoming, need restructuring and increased funding...

“One-stop centres, although present, require more funding and expert support to navigate complex relationship dynamics without bias...” Smruti [a lawyer specializing in women’s rights] suggests...’³⁷⁰

11.5.25 On 12 March 2025, the Ministry of Women and Child Development announced as of the date of publication ‘... the One Stop Centre (OSC) is a component of the Sambal vertical under the umbrella Mission Shakti. It provides integrated support and assistance under one roof to women affected by violence and those in distress, both in private and public spaces. It provides services like medical aid, legal aid and advice, temporary shelter, police assistance and psycho-social counselling to needy women ... 802 OSCs are operational across the country either in own building or pre-existing government building or rented accommodation.’³⁷¹

11.5.26 In regard to available protection orders, on 6 June 2025 a APNI Law, an information portal for law in India³⁷², article stated:

‘Section 18 of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, empowers courts to grant protection orders in favor of women facing abuse. It aims to prevent the abuser from committing further acts of domestic violence and from approaching or communicating with the aggrieved person. This provision

³⁶⁸ LAW Notes, [Domestic Abuse in India](#), 10 September 2024

³⁶⁹ UNHRC, [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report](#), (paragraph 22) 2 September 2024

³⁷⁰ Times of India, [Don't Blame Her Alone](#), 22 June 2024

³⁷¹ MWCD, [802 One-Stop Centres \(OSCs\) operational across India to Support...](#), 12 March 2025

³⁷² APNI Law, [About Us](#), no date

plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and dignity of women within their homes and relationships.³⁷³

- 11.5.27 The same article noted the Magistrate can issue a protection order under Section 18 of the Domestic Violence Act if it believes domestic violence has or may occur which can prohibit communication, restrict access to a victims location, or limit access to bank accounts or any assets.
- 11.5.28 The same article reported under Section 18 victims have the right to legal representation, access to support services, the right to oppose or modify protection orders, and in cases of non-compliance victims can seek legal remedies to enforce protection orders such as initiating contempt proceedings³⁷⁴
- 11.5.29 In relation to the consequences for violating a protection order, the same article reported breaching a protection order is a punishable offense under Section 31 of the Act with penalties of up to one year imprisonment, a fine of up to 20,000 rupees, or both. Police can also arrest without a warrant and bail is not granted as a matter of right³⁷⁵
- 11.5.30 In relation to testimonies from Sakhi shelters (One Stop Centres), on 1 July 2025 a Times of India article reported one woman who was 'saved' by a police officer when attempting to end her own life stated: "The police officer took me to Sakhi, the One-Stop Centre (OSC) for women in distress in the city. They gave me counselling and all the necessary support. I am now normal and feeling better," Suganya said.³⁷⁶
- 11.5.31 The same article reported:

'Suganya was among the more than 200 such women supported by the centre in the past three years. The district [Coimbatore] has two one-stop centres – one in the city and another in Pollachi.

'The number of cases successfully handled by these centres has increased significantly over the past three years... According to data from the social welfare department, the number of cases handled by the centres rose to 1,058 in 2024 from 651 in 2023, so far this year 679 cases have been handled by the district...

'The scheme ensures women have a safe place to stay when they are in distress. Temporary shelter is provided in a government-funded, NGO-run short-stay home at Kavundampalayam in the city. Currently, 50 women are staying in the home. "Not only women, but also their children up to five years of age are allowed to stay. For those who require rehabilitation, we provide skill training in tailoring and sanitary napkin making," Ambika [District social welfare officer] said.'³⁷⁷

[Back to Contents](#)

11.6 Social welfare schemes

- 11.6.1 Various government welfare schemes are available to women throughout India, some of which provide financial benefits, and can be found on the

³⁷³ APNI Law, [Protection Orders Under Section 18 Of Domestic Violence...](#), 6 June 2025

³⁷⁴ APNI Law, [Protection Orders Under Section 18 Of Domestic Violence...](#), 6 June 2025

³⁷⁵ APNI Law, [Protection Orders Under Section 18 Of Domestic Violence...](#), 6 June 2025

³⁷⁶ Times of India, [Over 3,000 women assisted in Coimbatore's Sakhi centres](#), 1 July 2025

³⁷⁷ Times of India, [Over 3,000 women assisted in Coimbatore's Sakhi centres](#), 1 July 2025

website for the [Government of India](#)³⁷⁸.

- 11.6.2 The website Sarkari Yojana also provided a list of over 500 central and state government welfare schemes, including programmes on education, healthcare and self-employment, which are available to women³⁷⁹.

[Back to Contents](#)

12. Non-state assistance available to women

- 12.1.1 In regard to NGOs which support women who have experienced sexual assault, the USSD 2023 report stated: 'Civil society organizations provided sexual-assault awareness and survivor-centered, non stigmatizing, confidential, and free care to survivors of violence and facilitated referrals to tertiary care, social welfare, and legal services. Some also provided short-term shelter for women and child survivors of rape. Some of these services were intended to encourage women and children to report cases.'³⁸⁰
- 12.1.2 The USSD 2024 report did not include information on NGOs which provide support to survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse³⁸¹. However, the 2024 report is notably shorter than in previous years and provides less coverage of certain topics. This reduction in reporting should not be interpreted as indicating NGOs to support survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse no longer exist.
- 12.1.3 Aks Foundation is an Indian NGO³⁸² which provides a 24/7 crisis line for victims of gender-based violence³⁸³, legal advice by a team of 10 legal volunteers³⁸⁴, and community education³⁸⁵. The Aks Foundation website states that the 24/7 crisis line currently receives over 3000 calls a year³⁸⁶
- 12.1.4 Centre for Social Research (CSR), a non-profit based in New Delhi³⁸⁷, has 4 Crisis Intervention Centre's in Delhi which provide support to families or individuals experiencing violence, and provide free, confidential services such as mediation and emergency assistance³⁸⁸.
- 12.1.5 The CSR website provides a '[Survivor Assist Kit](#)' which '... intends to bridge the gap between survivors and support systems by providing an easy to use toolkit at their disposal. The kit will assist you to navigate legal, medical, rehabilitation, mental health, counselling and other systems ...'³⁸⁹
- 12.1.6 Guria, an Indian NGO focused on ending sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children³⁹⁰, based in Uttar Pradesh provides witness protection and livelihood support for survivors of sex trafficking³⁹¹

³⁷⁸ Gol, [Schemes for women by Department of Women and Child Development](#), undated

³⁷⁹ Sarkari Yojana, [List of All Major Women Empowerment Schemes 2025...](#), 1 March 2023

³⁸⁰ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#) (section 6), 23 April 2024

³⁸¹ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025

³⁸² Aks Foundation, [About Us](#), no date

³⁸³ Aks Foundation, [24x7 Crisis Line](#), no date

³⁸⁴ Aks Foundation, [Legal Counsel](#), no date

³⁸⁵ Aks Foundation, [Community Education](#), no date

³⁸⁶ Aks Foundation, [About Us](#), no date

³⁸⁷ CSR, [About CSR](#), no date

³⁸⁸ CSR, [Crisis Intervention Centres](#), no date

³⁸⁹ CSR, [Survivor Assist Kit](#), no date

³⁹⁰ Guria, [About us](#), no date

³⁹¹ Guria, [Areas of Intervention](#), no date

- 12.1.7 Jagori is an Indian feminist NGO based in New Delhi³⁹² which provides counselling and referral services for survivors of violence, para-legal work and research on violence against women³⁹³.
- 12.1.8 My Choices Foundation, an Indian NGO focused on women, children and families experiences violence³⁹⁴, Operation Peacemaker which ‘... aims to reduce domestic violence in India through thousands of PeaceMakers who are trained in family and marriage counseling and all aspects of the Domestic Violence Act ...’³⁹⁵ providing free counselling to survivors of abuse and their families, legal aid, and educational awareness³⁹⁶.
- 12.1.9 My Choices Foundation run a domestic violence helpline and have counselling centres in Hyderabad, Secunderabad, and Warangal for in-person support. Remote support is available and referrals to similar organisations are offered across India³⁹⁷.
- 12.1.10 On March 2025, My Choices Foundation published an annual impact report covering 2024 (My Choices 2024 report), recording the following progress for Operation Peacemaker: 320 peacemakers trained, 21,036 families received counselling, 454,156 people educated on gender-based violence, 363 survivors of domestic violence received safe accommodation and financial, psychological, legal and vocational training support, and 1,761 call received through domestic violence helpline³⁹⁸.
- 12.1.11 The same report noted: ‘Our sex trafficking helpline, operated by the anti-trafficking wing of My Choices Foundation has handled over 88,000 calls to date. Unexpectedly, but 25% of callers were seeking help for domestic violence either for themselves, their friends or people in their communities... We acted fast and built an Implementing Partner – Counsellor model... w, we have 11 Counsellors located in - Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and West Bengal to provide counselling and offer critical assistance to the survivors of domestic violence and child sexual abuse. By placing our counsellors within our partner organisations across states, we ensure survivors can access the support they need within their own communities ...’³⁹⁹
- 12.1.12 In regard to women’s shelters, the same report stated: ‘... our Lotus Safe Home provides - a sanctuary of immediate safety for women and children escaping abuse with nowhere else to turn... While residing in the Safe Home, the survivors have regular appointments with our counsellors who help them to specify their needs and explore possible solutions by building emotional strength and a concrete plan of action ...’⁴⁰⁰
- 12.1.13 Swayam is an Indian feminist NGO⁴⁰¹ based with 3 locations in West Bengal which provide counselling, legal aid, police liaison and referrals to shelters

³⁹² Jagori, [Contact Us](#), no date

³⁹³ Jagori, [Work with us](#), no date

³⁹⁴ My Choices Foundation, [Our Story](#), no date

³⁹⁵ My Choices Foundation, [Operation Peacemaker](#), no date

³⁹⁶ My Choices Foundation, [Operation Peacemaker](#), no date

³⁹⁷ My Choices Foundation, [How we can help](#), no date

³⁹⁸ My Choices Foundation, [Impact Report 2024](#) (page 21), March 2025

³⁹⁹ My Choices Foundation, [Impact Report 2024](#) (page 38), March 2025

⁴⁰⁰ My Choices Foundation, [Impact Report 2024](#) (page 43), March 2025

⁴⁰¹ Swayam, [About Us](#), no date

for female domestic violence survivors⁴⁰².

12.1.14 The Swayam website provides resource directories for women who have faced violence or discrimination⁴⁰³ in [Kolkata](#), [Howrah & Hooghly](#) and [24 Parganas](#).

12.1.15 In 2023 UN Women India and the International Foundation for Crime Prevention & Victim Care compiled a [survivor support services directory](#) in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu which is ‘... aimed at aiding survivors and their families in seeking essential support ...’⁴⁰⁴

12.1.16 The Times Network, a division of ‘... India’s largest media conglomerate, the Times Group ...’⁴⁰⁵, SafeHer Times campaign which aims to draw awareness to violence against women in India and promote existing initiatives that support women⁴⁰⁶, in an article updated 12 September 2024 noted the below helpline for women experiencing gender-based violence:

‘For Immediate Help:

- ‘181/1091 Toll-Free Helpline: This number is available 24/7 for women experiencing domestic violence. You can call at any time to report abuse or seek help.

‘If Your Call Isn’t Answered:

- ‘National Commission for Women Helpline: 7827170170
- Central Social Welfare Board Police Helpline: 1091/1291, (011) 23317004
- Women Protection Committee (Nari Raksha Samiti): (011) 23973949

‘Additional Legal Assistance:

‘Lawyers Collective Women’s Rights (LC WRI): Provides free legal aid for domestic violence cases. Call (011) 24373993/24372923 for support.’⁴⁰⁷

12.1.17 GracesList, an international ‘... emergency services and humanitarian aid directory ...’⁴⁰⁸ lists shelters and services available to women in India in [Ahmedabad](#), [Bangalore](#), [Bhubaneswar](#), [Chandigarh](#), [Chennai](#), [Delhi](#), [Goa](#), [Hyderabad](#), [Indore](#), [Jaipur](#), [Kerala](#), [Kolkata](#), [Lucknow](#), [Mumbai](#), [Pune](#) and [Surat](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

⁴⁰² Swayam, [Work with Women Survivors](#), no date

⁴⁰³ Swayam, [Resource Directories for women](#), no date

⁴⁰⁴ UN Women, [Survivor Support Service Directory \(Tamil Nadu, India\)](#), 2023

⁴⁰⁵ The Times Network, [About Us](#), no date

⁴⁰⁶ ETNow, [Domestic violence helpline you can call 24X7 - See number...](#), 12 Sep 2024

⁴⁰⁷ ETNow, [Domestic violence helpline you can call 24X7 - See number...](#), 12 September 2024

⁴⁰⁸ GracesList, [About](#), no date

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal context
 - Constitution
 - Statutory provisions
 - Other measures taken by the Central Government to protect women
 - Implementation and enforcement of legislation
- Social, economic and political rights and attitudes
 - Cultural context
 - Economic participation
 - Political participation
 - Education
 - Access to health, and reproductive rights
 - Single women
 - Freedom of movement
 - LGBT women
- Sexual and gender-based violence
 - Domestic violence, and dowry-related domestic violence
 - Rape
 - Acid attacks
 - Forced and child marriage
 - 'Honour' crimes
 - Abuses against women with disabilities
 - Violence against Dalit and tribal women
 - Other forms of violence, abuse and harassment
- State treatment and attitudes
 - Implementation and enforcement of legislation
 - Access to justice and the police
- Non-governmental assistance available to women
 - Support centres and shelters
 - Social welfare

[Back to Contents](#)

Bibliography

Sources cited

Aks Foundation,

[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025,

[24x7 Crisis Line](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025,

[Legal Counsel](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025,

[Community Education](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025

Al Jazeera,

[India: Why justice eludes many Dalit survivors of sexual violence](#), 8 June 2022. Accessed: 16 June 2025

[What happened in the Kolkata rape case that triggered doctors' protests?](#), 14 August 2024. Accessed: 2 May 2025

Amnesty International,

[India: Authorities must immediately repeal repressive new criminal laws](#), 1 July 2024. Accessed: 11 June 2025

[India: Death penalty never the solution to crime and violence against women](#), 3 September 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

APNI Law,

[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Protection Orders Under Section 18 Of Domestic Violence Act: How They Help Victims](#), 6 June 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Article 14,

[About](#), no date. Accessed: 18 August 2025

[Justice Delayed, Healing Denied: Acid Attack Survivors Battle A Legal System Indifferent To Their Trauma & Suffering](#), 11 April 2025. Accessed: 18 August 2025

Australian Broadcasting Network (ABC), [Life imprisonment for Sanjay Roy in Kolkata doctor rape and murder](#), 20 January 2024. Accessed: 2 May 2025

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), [DFAT Country Information Report India](#), 29 September 2023. Accessed: 17 June 2025

BBC News,

[Bilkis Bano: India Supreme Court cancels release of 2002 riots rapists](#), 8 January 2024. Accessed: 21 May 2025

[Dalit woman in India alleges rape by 64 men over five years](#), 13 January 2025. Accessed: 17 June 2025

[India's top court halts 'shocking' ruling on sexual assault of child](#), 26 March 2025. Accessed: 18 August 2025

[Rising crimes against Indian women in five charts](#), 13 September 2022. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[The Indian women calling themselves 'proudly single'](#), 8 December 2022.
Accessed: 17 June 2025

Bertelsmann Stiftung, Transformation Index (BTI),

[BTI 2024 India Country Report](#), 19 March 2024. Accessed: 17 June 2025

[Methodology](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

The Borgen Project,

[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Women's Police Stations Combat Gender-Based Violence in India](#), no date.
Accessed: 24 July 2025

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP),

[What Lies Behind India's Rising Female Voter Turnout](#), 5 April 2024.
Accessed: 18 August 2025

[Who We Are](#), no date. Accessed: 18 August 2025

CBS News, [Indian police officer accused of raping 13-year-old girl who went to his station to report she had been gang-raped](#), 5 May 2022. Accessed: 12 June 2025

Centre for Social Research (CSR)

[About CSR](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Crisis Intervention Centres](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Survivor Assist Kit](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Changing Transport,

[About](#), no date. Accessed: 18 August 2025

[Pathways to Equality: Transforming Public Transport for Women and Transgender Communities in India](#), 9 October 2024. Accessed: 18 August 2025

CIA World Factbook, [India](#), 31 March 2025. Accessed: 17 May 2025

CIVICUS,

[About Us](#), No date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[INDIA: 'Civil society organisations are at the forefront of the fight against gender-based violence'](#), 29 August 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Drishti,

[About Drishti](#), no date Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Investing in Women and India's Prosperity](#), 28 October 2024 Accessed: 24 July 2025

ETNow,

[About us](#), no date Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Domestic violence helpline you can call 24X7 - See number | 'SafeHer Times' campaign](#), 12 Sep 2024 Accessed: 24 July 2025

[No Longer 'Till Death Do Us Part', Why More Indians Are Choosing Divorce And Reshaping The Traditional Idea Of Marriage](#), 21 March 2025 Accessed: 24 July 2025

ETV Bharat,

[About us](#), no date. Accessed: 18 August 2025

[No Longer 'Till Death Do Us Part', Why More Indians Are Choosing Divorce And Reshaping The Traditional Idea Of Marriage](#), 21 March 2025. Accessed: 18 August 2025

Fair Observer,

[About](#), no date Accessed: 24 July 2025

[How Does Indian Law Now Treat Sexual Assault Victims — and the Accused?](#), 27 October 2024 Accessed: 24 July 2025

Feminism in India, [Latest PLFS Data Presents A Complex Picture Of Women's Economic Participation In India](#), 28 May 2024. Accessed: 30 July 2024

Freedom House,

[Freedom in the World Research Methodology](#), no date. Accessed: 18 August 2025

[Freedom in the World 2025: India](#) (section G3), 26 February 2025. Accessed: 18 August 2025

Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (GIWPS & PRIO),

[WPS Index 2023/24: India Country Profile](#), (Security), October 2023. Accessed: 18 August 2025

[Women, Peace, and Security Index 2023/24: Tracking sustainable peace through inclusion, justice, and security for women](#), October 2023. Accessed: 23 May 2025

Girls Not Brides,

[About Us](#), no date Accessed: 24 July 2025

[India](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

GracesList, [About](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025

Government of India (GoI)

[Mudra Yojana](#), no date. Accessed: 30 July 2025

[PMAY-U](#), no date. Accessed: 30 July 2025

[Schemes for women by Department of Women and Child Development](#), undated. Accessed: 17 June 2025

[The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita](#), 25 December 2023. Accessed: 4 July 2025

[The Constitution of India](#), 1 May 2024. Accessed: 17 June 2025

Guria,

[About us](#), no date Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Areas of Intervention](#), no date. Accessed: 30 July 2025

Highland Post,

[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Meghalaya Women's Commission gravely concerned with level of gender](#)

[violence](#), 10 July 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Human Rights Watch (HRW), [World Report 2025: India](#), 17 January 2025.
Accessed: 17 June 2025

Hindustan Times,

[Bajinder Singh, 'Yesu Yesu' pastor from Punjab, gets life term in 2018 Zirakpur rape case](#), 1 April 2025. Accessed: 14 June 2025

[United efforts required to end violence against people with disabilities](#), 17 December 2024. Accessed: 16 June 2025

The Hindu,

[About us](#), undated. Accessed: 2 May 2025

[India has moved from women's development to women-led development: Economic Survey](#), 22 July 2024. Accessed: 18 August 2025

[Supreme Court defers hearing pleas seeking criminalisation of marital rape](#), 23 October 2024. Accessed: 2 May 2025

IAS Express, [Khap Panchayat in India- Functioning, Pros & Cons](#), 17 February 2023.
Accessed: 18 August 2025

IndiaSpend,

[71 Million Single Women, 39% Rise Over A Decade](#), 14 November 2015.
Accessed: 17 June 2025

[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 14 August 2025

[One Stop, Many Challenges: Sakhi Centres Struggle To Support Women Survivors of Violence](#), 5 May 2023. Accessed: 14 August 2025

India Times, [UN report: India's population hits 1.46 billion, fertility drops below replacement rate; experts warn of alarming urban TFR decline](#), 11 June 2025.
Accessed: 24 July 2025

India Today

[About us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Mapping India's GDB: Survey reveals how states fare in social behaviour](#), 21 March 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

India Today Group,

[About us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[India's First Civic Survey: Insights into Public Behavior, Civic Behavior, Gender Attitudes](#), 21 March 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Insights IAS,

[About Insights IAS](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Women and Men in India 2024 Report](#), 8 April 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

IPC Laws, [IPC Section 354: Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty](#), 6 February 2024. Accessed: 2 May 2025

ISPOS,

[About us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[30 country study for International Women's Day 2025](#), 8 March 2025.

Accessed: 24 July 2025

International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJMFR), [About IJFMR](#), no date.

Accessed: 24 July 2025

Jagori,

[Contact Us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Work with us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Kharkwal, M and Altaf,K, [Progress and Hurdles: India's Pursuit of Gender Equality under Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\)-5](#), April 2024 Accessed: 24 July 2025

KPMG, [Northern India: Heralding the next chapter of growth and development](#), October 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

LAW Notes,

[About Law Notes](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Domestic Abuse in India](#), 10 September 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Lawful Legal,

[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Honour Killing in India: A Legal Critique of Custom, Crime, and Constitutional Rights](#), 13 June 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Leaders in Law,

[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Understanding the Legal Process of Divorce in India](#), 24 November 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

London School of Economics (LSE), [Forced Sterilization of Disabled Women in India: A Tale of Lost Autonomy](#), 20 March 2023. Accessed: 16 June 2025

Mangat S & A K.Gill, [Negotiating between speech and silence as a form of agency: Understanding Dalit women's experiences of sexual violence in India](#), 30 May 2024. Accessed: 16 June 2025

Migrant Women Press,

[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025

[How gender-based violence is an ignored issue in India and Pakistan](#), 10 December 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[In India, the rise in gender-based violence leaves women outraged](#), 1 October 2024. Accessed: 16 June 2025

Ministry for Women and Child Development (MWCD),

[802 One-Stop Centres \(OSCs\) operational across India to Support Women in Distress](#), 12 March 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Mission Shakti](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Nari Adalat](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[One Stop Centre](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Palna](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Women Helpline 181](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

My Choices Foundation,
[How we can help](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025
[Impact Report 2024](#), March 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025
[Operation Peacemaker](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025
[Our Story](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Nari Samata Manch, [Welcome](#), no date. Accessed: 21 May 2025

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB),
[Crime in India Volume I](#), 1 December 2023. Accessed: 17 June 2025
[Crime in India Volume II](#), 1 December 2023. Accessed: 17 June 2025

National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), [India Report](#), March 2022. Accessed: 18 August 2025

NDTV,
[About the Company](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025
[Supreme Court's 7 Directions For Domestic Violence Act Implementation](#), 3 June 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

NITI Aayog, [SDG India Index](#), July 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

The New Indian Express,
[Killing honour in the name of 'honour killings'](#), 4 September 2023. Accessed: 17 June 2025
[Who's watching the watchers? When police stations themselves become crime scenes](#), 27 September 2024. Accessed: 18 August 2025

The New York Times, [Is India a Safe Place for Women? Another Brutal Killing Raises the Question](#), 22 August 2024. Accessed: 20 May 2025

Observer Research Foundation (ORF),
[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025
[The female workforce in India: Emerging trends and insights](#), 7 March 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

The Orchid Project,
[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 21 May 2025
[The Law and FGC India](#) (page 10), November 2024. Accessed: 21 May 2025
[Short Report: FGC in India](#), July 2024. Accessed: 21 May 2025

OSAC, [India Country Security Report](#), 4 October 2024. Accessed: 18 August 2025

Pemachandran P, [Girls' Education in Rural India: Barriers, Challenges, and Policy Interventions](#), 18 March 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Pew Research Centre, [How Indians View Gender Roles in Families and Society](#) 2 March 2022. Accessed: 24 July 2024

Population Census, [Karnataka Population 2025 | Sex Ratio | Literacy](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Population Matters,

[What we do](#), no date. Accessed: 11 June 2025

[Two-child policies in states of the Republic of India Submitted by: Population Matters](#), 31 July 2023. Accessed: 11 June 2025

Rekha, [Impact of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 on Maintenance Claims – A Critical Study](#), February 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Reuters,

[Breaking the glass ceiling: female CEOs and managing directors in India Inc](#), 11 July 2025. Accessed: 18 August 2025

[India struggles with high rape cases, low conviction rates](#), 16 August 2024. Accessed: 21 May 2025

Sarkari Yojana, [List of All Major Women Empowerment Schemes 2025 Being Run by Central & State Governments](#), 1 March 2023. Accessed: 2 May 2025

Shetty and others, [Age at marriage and its determinants in Kerala and Bihar](#), 10 October 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

State Bank India (SBI), [SBI Research Issue 25](#), 9 January 2025. Accessed: 13 June 2025

Stylist,

[Contact Us](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[The death of a trainee doctor has sparked renewed conversations around sexual violence in India](#), August 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

Supreme Court Observer (SCO),

[About](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025

[Supreme Court directs implementation of Domestic Violence Act](#), 5 June 2025. Accessed: 16 June 2025

Swayam,

[About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025

[Work with Women Survivors](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025

[Resource Directories for women](#), no date. Accessed: 16 June 2025

The Times Network, [About Us](#), no date. Accessed: 18 August 2025

Times of India,

[10 safest cities for women in India](#), 22 September 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Domestic Violence Victims Guide: Domestic Violence: A guide for victims in India to protect themselves](#), 14 May 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Don't Blame Her Alone](#), 22 June 2024. Accessed: 14 August 2025

[Dowry torture, domestic violence remain serious worry: NCW data](#), 2 January 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Govt set to roll out 80 more pink buses as demand surges](#), 16 July 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[‘Lucknow, Knp, Kashi most growth-friendly for women’](#), 9 July 2025.

Accessed: 24 July 2025

[More than 53k women to get permanent jobs: Nitish](#), 9 July 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Nine Uttar Pradesh districts to get Sakhi niwas shelter for women](#), 21 April 2025. Accessed: 16 June 2025

[Over 3,000 women assisted in Coimbatore’s Sakhi centres](#), 1 July 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Two sons ordered to pay maintenance to mother after she files DV case](#), 11 July 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Women in India are opting out of traditional relationship timelines like getting married or having children at a certain age, reveals a survey](#), 11 December 2023. Accessed: 24 July 2025

The Tribune,

[Homepage](#). Accessed: 14 August 2025

[Women’s shelter homes in Delhi cry for attention](#), 2 February 2024. Accessed: 14 August 2025

UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC), [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of India](#), 2 September 2024. Accessed: 24 June 2025

UN India, [Sustainable Development Goal 5](#) (Progress in the country), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

UN Women,

[About the database](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[FAQs: Types of violence against women and girls | UN Women – Headquarters](#), 27 June 2024. Accessed: 24 June 2025

[Global Database on Violence against Women and girls: India](#), no date. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Survivor Support Service Directory \(Tamil Nadu, India\)](#), 2023. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Violence against women during Covid-19](#), 24 November 2021. Accessed: 24 July 2025

US State Department (USSD),

[2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 23 April 2024. Accessed: 17 June 2025

[2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India](#), 12 August 2025. Accessed: 18 August 2025

VoA News, [Activists warn about intergenerational domestic violence in Indian tribes](#), 4 May 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

World Bank, [Literacy rate, youth female \(% of females ages 15-24\) – India](#), 23 April 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

World Economic Forum (WEF),

[Global Gender Gap Report 2021](#) 30 March 2021. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Global Gender Gap report 2022](#) 13 July 2022. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Global Gender Gap Report 2023](#) 20 June 2023. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Global Gender Gap Report 2024](#) 11 June 2024. Accessed: 24 July 2025

[Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#) 11 June 2025. Accessed: 24 July 2025

World Health Organisation (WHO), [Types of female genital mutilation](#), no date. Accessed: 21 May 2025

Xe.com, [Convert Indian Rupees to British Pounds](#), 18 August 2025. Accessed: 18 August 2025

[Back to Contents](#)

Sources consulted but not cited

Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights: April 2025](#), 28 April 2025. Accessed: 16 May 2025

Anderson, S., [The Complexity of Female Empowerment in India](#), Studies in Microeconomics, 12 April 2024. Accessed: 26 June 2025

Kurian, Oomen, C., [Gender attitudes in India: Changes in the 21st century](#), 7 March 2024. Accessed: 24 June 2025

Rosenberg, Rebecca and Jeffrey Edmeades, [Trends in Men's Gender Attitudes: Progress, Backsliding](#), 2023. DHS Comparative Reports No. 52. Accessed: 24 June 2025 or Stagnation?

Thorat A, Khalid N, Srivastav N, Hathi P, Spears D, Coffey D., [Persisting Prejudice: Measuring Attitudes and Outcomes by Caste and Gender in India](#), October 2020. Accessed: 24 June 2025

Times of India, [Women cop shunted for 'favouring' assaulters](#), 10 June 2025. Accessed: 16 June 2025

[Back to Contents](#)

Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **4.0**
- valid from **19 August 2025**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

Changes from last version of this note

- Updated country information

[Back to Contents](#)

Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information
Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration
1st Floor
Clive House
70 Petty France
London
SW1H 9EX
Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

[Back to Contents](#)