

Mumbai: 73 percent POCSO cases yet to be probed, reveals NGO report

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NGO finds pending cases surged from 1,465 in 2018 to 2,176 in 2022



As many as 73 per cent of **POCSO cases** filed are yet to be investigated, according to a recent report by an NGO. Charge sheets were filed by the police in only 27 per cent of the cases in 2022. According to the experts, the lack of awareness and training to collect the evidence can lead to pendency in the investigation of sensitive crimes against minors.

The Praja Foundation report stated, 'The status of policing and law and order in Mumbai', focuses on various aspects of policing. It revealed the sorry state of affairs regarding cases registered under the **Prevention of Children from Sexual Offenses** (POCSO) Act. As per data released by the NGO, the cases filed in the city limits pile up year after year as their investigation remains pending.

The **Praja Foundation** report revealed that in 2018, 570 cases were registered under POCSO for rape, while in 2022, 615 cases were registered for rape in POCSO. In 2018, 1465 cases were pending investigation, while in 2022, a total of 2,176 cases were pending, having piled up from previous years.

Lawyers say there is a lack of training among police personnel which is the root cause of the pending cases. “The police do not treat genuine complaints with the seriousness needed and claim to be overburdened. The training received by police officers to deal with POCSO complaints is largely inadequate, despite there being notifications and circulars in this regard,” Advocate Siddharth Chandrashekhar told mid-day.

Chandrashekhar, however, added that the **police** also have to be extremely careful as false complaints have been filed in the past. “There are a significant number of false complaints filed by families which lack even the basic conclusive ingredients of evidence,” he said.

Speaking to mid-day, Advocate Varsha Bhogle Deshmukh said, “The POCSO Act provides no limitation for the period of reporting the offences and this applies to rape cases also. The victims can approach the police station and register their complaints at any time. However, the victim's testimony has to corroborate with the circumstantial evidence to prove that the crime has occurred. However, in sensitive cases like rape, the crucial evidence disappears from the body after 24 hours and hence there is a delay in investigations.”

Meanwhile, Former Assistant Commissioner of Police **Vyankat Patil** expressed discomfort over the pendency in the investigation. “The number of investigations pending is indeed worrisome but there are many aspects to it. Many of the accused are direct relatives or live in close proximity. To avoid further embarrassment and defamation, most of the victims' families don't cooperate with the investigation. On the other hand, in some cases where there is forensic evidence, the lab takes a lot of time to submit a report leading to further delay. Another delaying aspect is the burden on investigating officials who have to do all their daily duties plus investigate cases. Separate teams for investigation and law and order will help to improve the pendency rate,” he said

Ex-IPS officer Y P Singh told mid-day that POSCO cases are taken seriously and are investigated swiftly. “But in some cases, the accused and the victim have civil disputes amongst each other and then there is less cooperation from the family's side. Hence one can expect delays.”

What NGO report states

Year Rape cases (under POCSO)

2018 570

2019 622

2020 445

2021 524

2022 615

Year Molestation cases (POCSO)

2018 548

2019 609

2020 428

2021 452

2022 489

27%

No. of cases that saw charge sheet filed in 2022

Link-; <https://www.mid-day.com/mumbai/mumbai-news/article/mumbai-73-percent-pocso-cases-yet-to-be-probed-reveals-ngo-report-23322124>