

Rape cases in city rose 235% from 2012 to '21

Nitasha.Natu
@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Registration of rape cases shot up by 235% (from 232 to 777) and molestation cases rose by 172% in Mumbai over a decade from 2012 to 2021, a white paper released by the non-profit group Praja Foundation shows. Experts said that the data could indicate more women coming forward to report, which was a positive sign, and not necessarily more crimes. On a positive note, murder cases fell by 27% and theft by 16% over the period.

Offences of kidnapping and abduction surged by more than 650% in the 10-year period. About 98% of all victims were children, with most of them in the 16-18 age group, the Praja data shows.

► **High case backlog, P 2**



Colaba
31.5°/26.4°

Santacruz
32.3°/26°

Forecast: Generally cloudy sky with light to moderate rain associated with thunderstorm towards evening/night in city and suburbs. Maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 32°C and 26°C respectively.

High backlog in serious crime cases, low convictions: Study

Nitasha.Natu@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: A Supreme Court order mandates that the police register an FIR of kidnapping whenever they receive a complaint of a missing minor. Cases of elopement of minor girls are also registered as kidnapping. This is reflected in the Praja data that shows a surge of over 650% in abductions in the city between 2012 and 2021.

In five years between 2017 and 2021, the city's north central region, which includes the Vile Parle-Bandra-Kurla belt, reported the highest number of crimes.

"One of the reasons for an increase in offences over 10 years is that complainants have better access to law enforcement agencies. The government of India has launched the 112 mobile app which can be used by a person in distress, during emer-

Vacancies in Mum police touch 28%

Vacancies in Mumbai Police increased from 22% in July 2018 to 28% as of July 2022. "Inspectors and sub-inspectors play an important role during investigation. With a rise in the crime rate, there is a need to fill up all vacant posts for police personnel. This impacts the duration and quality of investigation," said Milind Mhaske, CEO, Praja Foundation. The control room where crime surveillance and taking note of grievances through help-lines is done, had a 43% shortage of personnel as of July 2022. Former DGP Sanjeev Dayal had passed an order in 2015 separating investigation units from those looking after law and order. But Praja Foundation could not find any information on the separate units via RTI since 2020. "Proper implementation of the order on separate units will allow for speedy investigation of cases," Mhaske said. There is a 34% shortage among state railway police. **TNN**

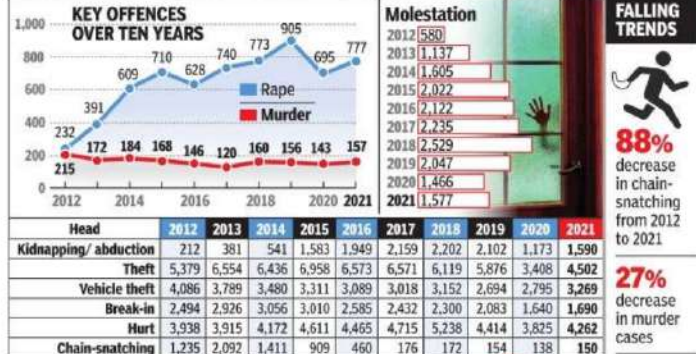
gencies, to seek the assistance of local authorities and volunteers," said former DGP Praveen Dixit.

Data with Praja Foundation shows that class II offences, which include serious crimes like murder, rape, attempted murder, culpable homicide, grievous hurt, etc., had a low conviction rate of 14% last year. In fact, at the end of every year from 2017 to 2021, pendency in trials of serious crimes was at least 95%.

"Considering the average number of judgments and withdrawals made in the past six years, our calculations show that it will take 34 years to clear all cases pending as of 2021," said Milind Mhaske, CEO, Praja Foundation.

"The Covid-19 pandemic was a key reason why trials of serious crimes had a high pendency rate in 2020 and

MURDER CASES FALL 27% OVER DECADE



FALLING TRENDS

88% decrease in chain-snatching from 2012 to 2021

27% decrease in murder cases

16% decrease in theft cases

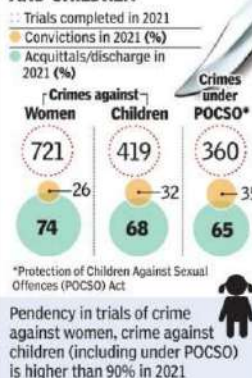
CRIME IN MUMBAI

650% increase in kidnapping/abduction cases from 2012 to 2021 (SC guidelines mandate registration of kidnapping case where missing person is a minor)

235% increase in rape cases

172% increase in molestation cases

CRIME AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN



DEATHS ON RAILWAYS



Trials pending in 90% cases of crimes against women, kids

Nitasha.Natu@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Trials in more than 90% of cases of crimes against women and children were pending at the end of each year from 2017 to 2021, data released by Praja Foundation has shown.

Trials of crimes under the POCSO Act, a special law enacted to provide speedy justice in cases of sexual crimes against children, had 93% pendency at the end of last year. Experts cite the absence of a proper witness protection programme and delays due to inter-district transfers of investigating police personnel to be key causes, besides pandemic-related delays.

"The law mandates that POCSO cases should be tried in special courts and should be completed within a year from the time of cognisance of the offence. Our analysis shows that at the end of 2021, 60% of total POCSO trial proceedings took between one year and five years to conclude. Delays occur both at the investigation stage as well as the judiciary stage," said Yogesh Mishra of Praja Foundation.

"In the absence of a proper programme to offer protection to victims or witnesses, there's an apprehension of intimidation

once they are outside court. Besides this, hearings are delayed if the investigating police officer has retired or has been transferred to another district. Lawyers may also seek adjournments if they are not prepared," said activist Jyoti Nale of the non-profit group Vipla Foundation. She added that in eight districts, an intervention was piloted where two district lawyers were nominated to assist public prosecutors and it worked out well.

Data with Praja showed that 100% perpetrators of POCSO cases registered last year were known to victims and these included family members, staffers, neighbours, friends, etc. "It is imperative to conduct widespread awareness among children in school and other stakeholders about these crimes," Mishra said. Analysis by the NGO also showed that elected representatives raised not more than 20 questions concerning crimes against women and children in the Assembly in 2021.

During his tenure in 2016, former DGP Praveen Dixit had given instructions that chargesheets in molestation cases be filed within 24 hours of registration of FIRs where evidence is clear. Activists have called for the practice to be continued.

2021. As soon as restrictions were lifted, the courts got busy attending to urgent matters like bail and liberties. It is only now, towards the end

of 2022, that older trials are coming up for hearings," said advocate Ashwin Thool. He added that in some offences like assault which could

be a consequence of an impulsive fight or animosity, the complainant may later not be keen to attend court regularly, which delays trial.