Crimes Against Women in India

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Literacy and Justice: Understanding the link between Education and Reported Crimes against women in India

- The relationship between literacy and crime reporting unravels complex societal dynamics, considering that literacy is often viewed as a tool for empowerment.

- With increasing literacy rates, post-colonialism, particularly that of females, has been evident in making women feel more empowered in reporting crimes, which apparently leads to more crime statistics in literate regions, suggesting that economic empowerment of women can significantly enhance their safety.

- Research Indicates a substantial 28% reduction in the rationalization or justification of violence among women with higher education levels, who are markedly less inclined towards justifying violence against them. Social stigma and apprehension particularly among low-income households are the main reasons for violence against women largely remain unreported, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2020) also highlights.

- Rural-urban disparities even in domestic violence cases persist and have seen a higher prevalence in rural areas than in urban, 31.6% compared to 24.2% (NFHS-5) which has significant potential of highlighting the fact that varied geographical factors and poor socio-economic constraints hedging women to move up the economic empowerment ladder by restricting their education.

- However, a study shows a lingering culture of silence still swells around such issues, estimating less than 2% of such cases being reported to the police.

- Likewise, there is an inverse relationship between men's literacy rates and crimes committed against women, potentially indicating education plays a role in reducing gender-based violence.

- However, stagnation in female workforce participation which approximately stands at 37% and economic opportunities persists, despite educational attainments among women over the past two decades.
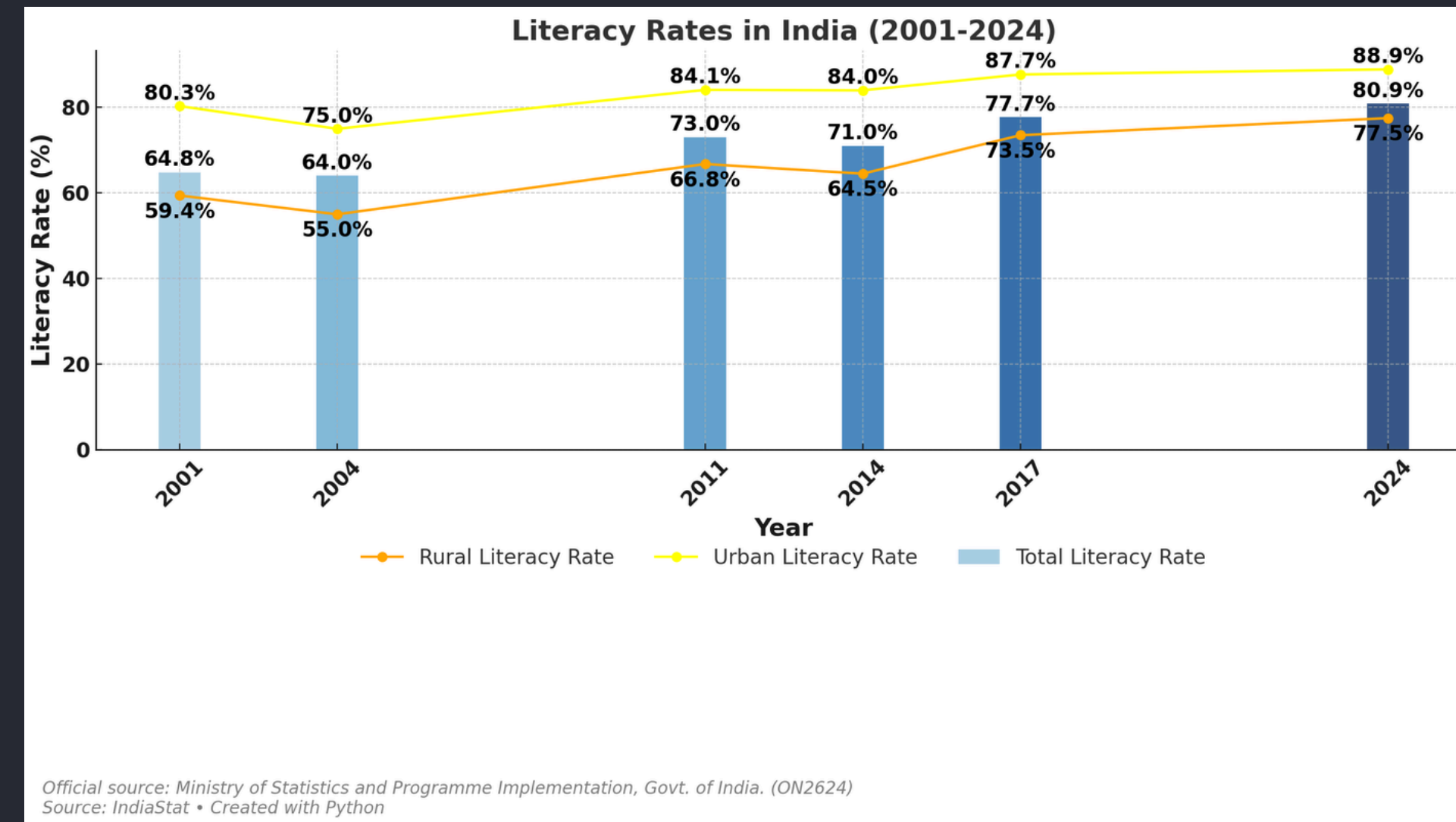

Literacy Rates in India (2001-2024)

Official source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Govt. of India. (ON2624)
Source: IndiaStat • Created with Python

Table 1. Percentage of overall literacy rates of India and it's rural-urban division over the years. **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.

- The <u>Distrcit Primary Education Programme</u> (DPEP) has played a significant role in the reduction of domestic violence incidence by accentuating eductaional access for girls. However, there is no constitutional provisions on violence against women in India.

- Despite the overarching reduction of <u>overall crimes</u> from 487.8 offenses per 100,000 populace in 2020 to 445.9 in 2021, specific categories, notably offenses <u>against women and children</u>, have exhibited an upward trajectory.

- To measure the linear relationship between the two continuous variables "LR" & "CI", a Pearson Correlation has been done.

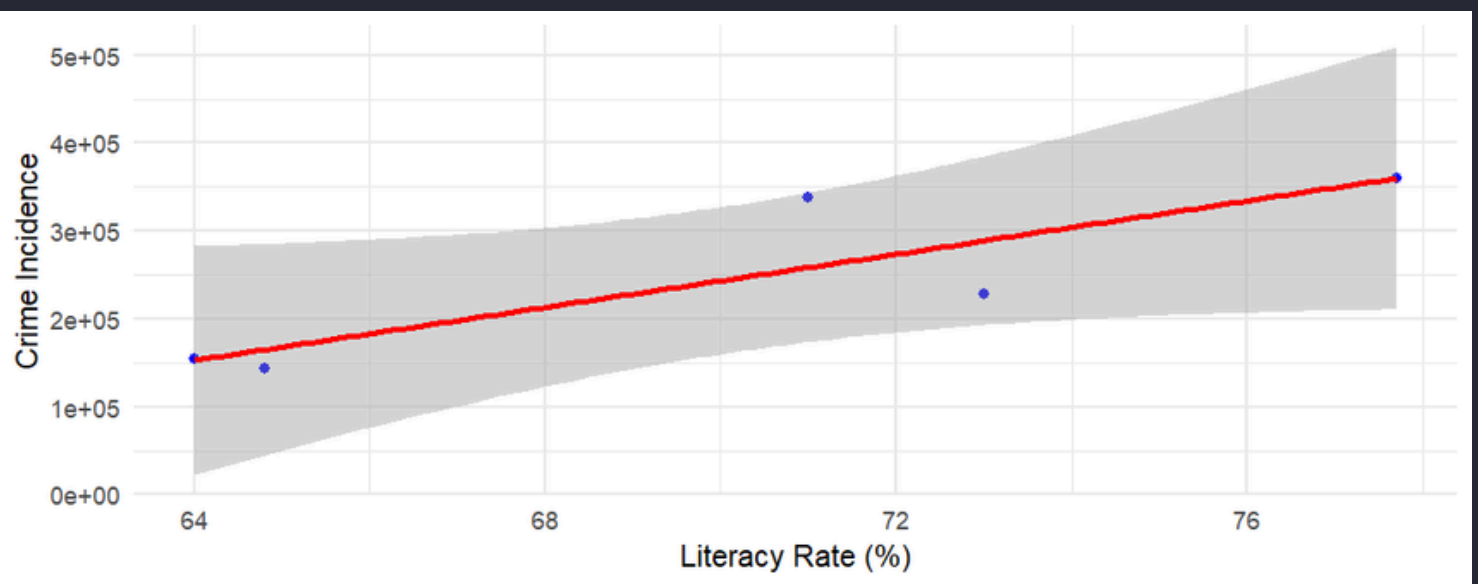Table 2. Crime incidence against women vs Literacy rates over the years

Table 2.1. Correlation test between Crime incidence and Literacy rate

- The Pearson value has been found to be 0.86 which signifies a strong positive relationship between the two which indicates a possible explanation that improved literacy rates lead to better awareness and more reporting of crimes. However, other societal factors also play a role.

Existing Policies and Recommendations

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):
- Promotes girl child education and fights gender discrimination, resulting in better enrollment and reduced dropouts. However, uneven implementation and disproportionate spending on advertising have limited its direct impact.

National Literacy Mission (NLM):
- Focuses on adult education, particularly for women, to improve literacy and awareness.

Increased literacy rates among women but struggles with sustainability due to economic and domestic constraints on learners.

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005:
- Provides a legal framework to protect women from domestic violence and ensures access to protection orders and support services.

Implementation remains weak, with survivors often facing barriers in accessing police and legal aid.

Community-Based Reporting and Support Systems
- Develop Women's Safety Cells at the community level, staffed by trained local women to provide a safe and approachable reporting mechanism. Anonymous reporting and integration with law enforcement will encourage reporting while ensuring timely action, addressing stigma and accessibility challenges.

Assessment of the POSH Act and its failures

- The objective of <u>The Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act</u>, enacted in 2013 was to protect women from sexual harassment and to provide security to the women in their work environment.
- The act mandates internal complaints committees (ICCs) in organisations with over 10 employees.
- The act creates a clear procedure for complaints, inquiries and penalties which enables women to have a structured path to justice and resolution.

Implementation and Compliance Gaps

- Regional Disparities: The act was perceived differently from organisation to organisation. <u>Companies</u> in big cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Chennai take preventing sexual harassment very seriously. In contrast, smaller towns' compliance with the act is very low.

- **Sectoral Variations:** Some smaller companies that work closely with MNCs also try to implement the act very seriously. In contrast, family-owned businesses which are small in size don't give much importance to this act.

Challenges and Criticisms of the POSH Act

- One of the <u>major reasons</u> for companies being reluctant to implement the PoSH Act is the concern over the chances of misuse.
- This act has been fraught with fear of false accusations, which can tarnish the reputation of the employees and sometimes the whole organisation.
- There also have been cases where this act was misused by targeting someone to take revenge on them, in some cases it was a way of retaliating for any kind of thing they brought upon the other person.

- Table 3 shows the data collected from the annual reports of 300 companies which showed the number of cases that were reported and resolved in each year between 2017 to 2023.
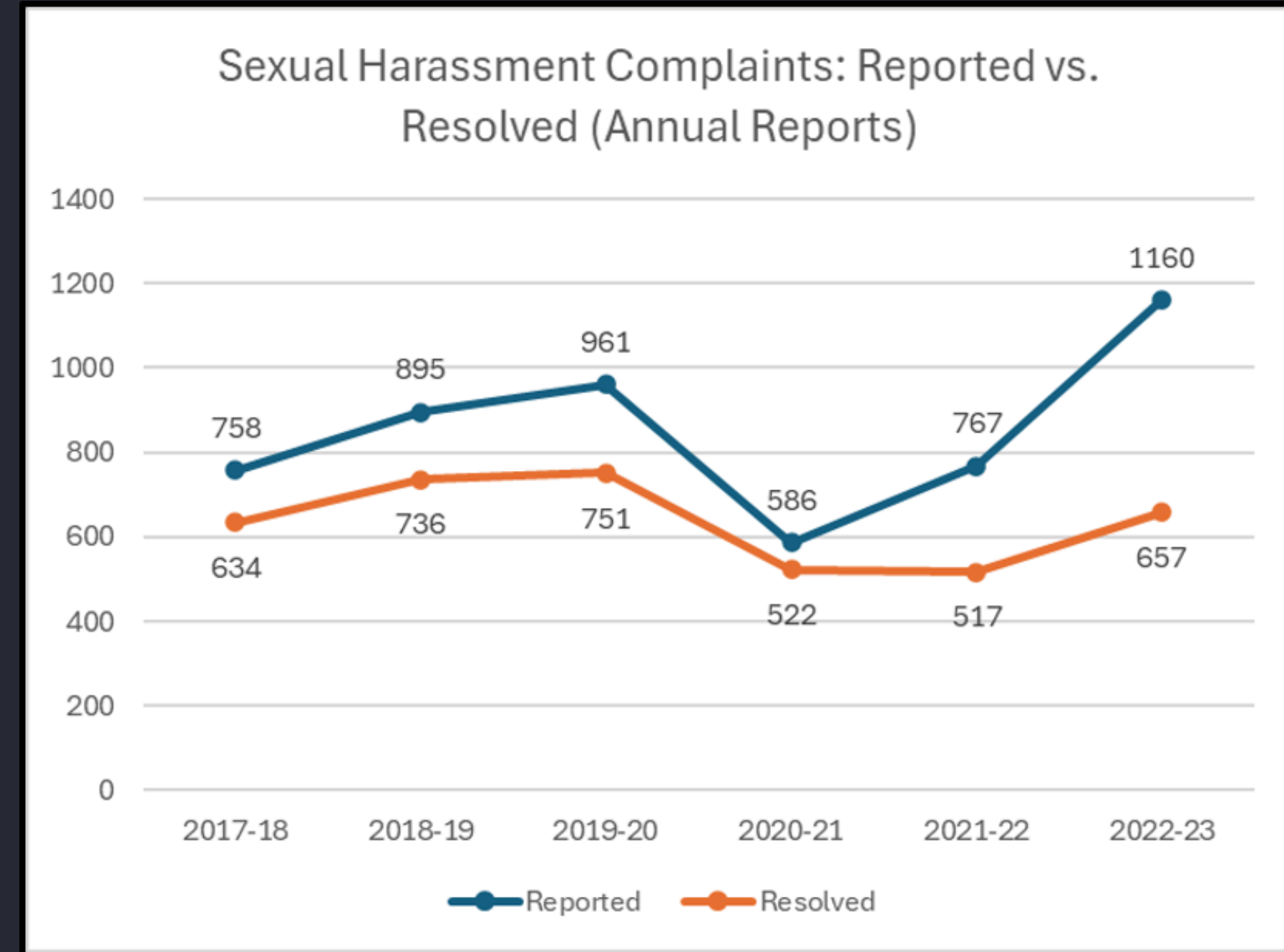

Table 3

- From the graph, it is understood that the number of resolved complaints does not align with the number of complaints reported.
- There has been a steady growth in the number of cases reported in the year 2017-18 to 2019-20 but showed a decline in the years 2020-21 and 2021-22 the period in which the country was struck with COVID and lockdown was imposed which might have been the reason for less reported case in those years.
- 2022-23 saw the highest number of reports 1,160 which implies there has been effective awareness.
- However, the resolved cases lag behind the reported cases every year. There has been a huge gap in 2022-23 as only 567 of 1160 cases were resolved which highlights the inefficiency of the grievance redressal.

The importance of PoSH compliance
- However, there is a need for <u>POSH compliance</u> in companies as this could ensure that the younger generation is safe in the work environment.
- It also contributes to employee retention as employees feel like their rights are protected and they are safe in this organisation.
- The compliance will also broadly lead to more participation of women in the workforce which could lead to a growth in the economy.

Percentage of Rape Cases on a three year average
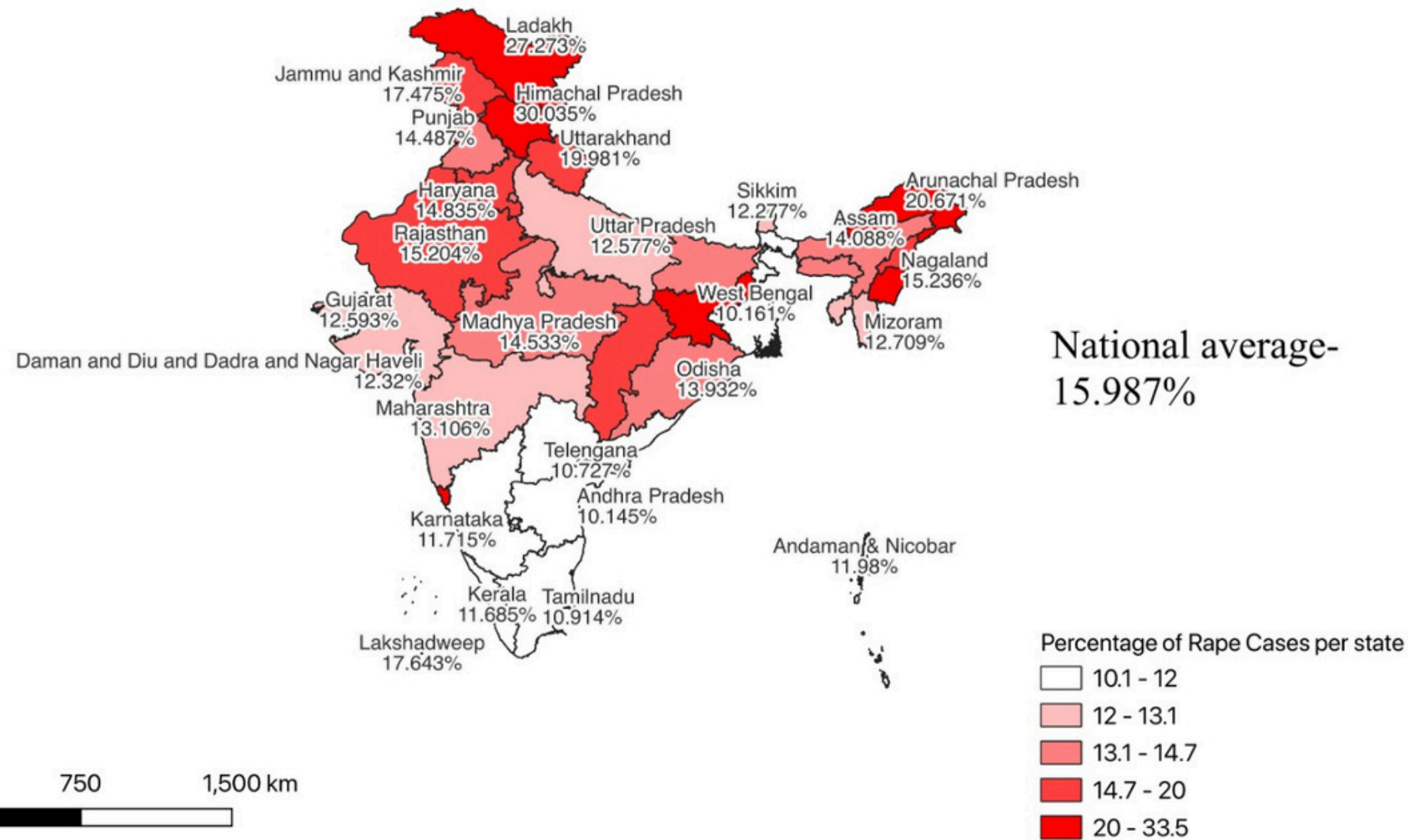
- Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Himachal Pradesh have emerged as states with some of the highest reported cases of rape in India per capita, as revealed in the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2022 data.
- For instance, Arunachal Pradesh recorded 78 cases per million population, significantly higher than the national average of 26 cases per million. This prevalence is attributed to cultural taboos around reporting sexual crimes being lower in these regions, increased awareness leading to better reporting, and challenges like inadequate law enforcement in remote areas.
- Additionally, social issues like substance abuse in some tribal areas exacerbate vulnerability.

- Conversely, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana reported comparatively lower rates of rape cases. Tamil Nadu, for example, recorded just 8 cases per million, among the lowest nationwide. These states benefit from several socio-economic factors, including strong community surveillance, progressive gender policies, and effective implementation of women-centric schemes. Moreover, the cultural emphasis on close-knit family structures and women's safety initiatives in urban and rural regions contribute to better preventive measures against sexual violence.

- Despite the discrepancies in reporting and ground realities, these statistics highlight the diverse challenges and strategies in addressing crimes against women across India's varied states.

Percentage of Crimes against Women that fall under PWDVA
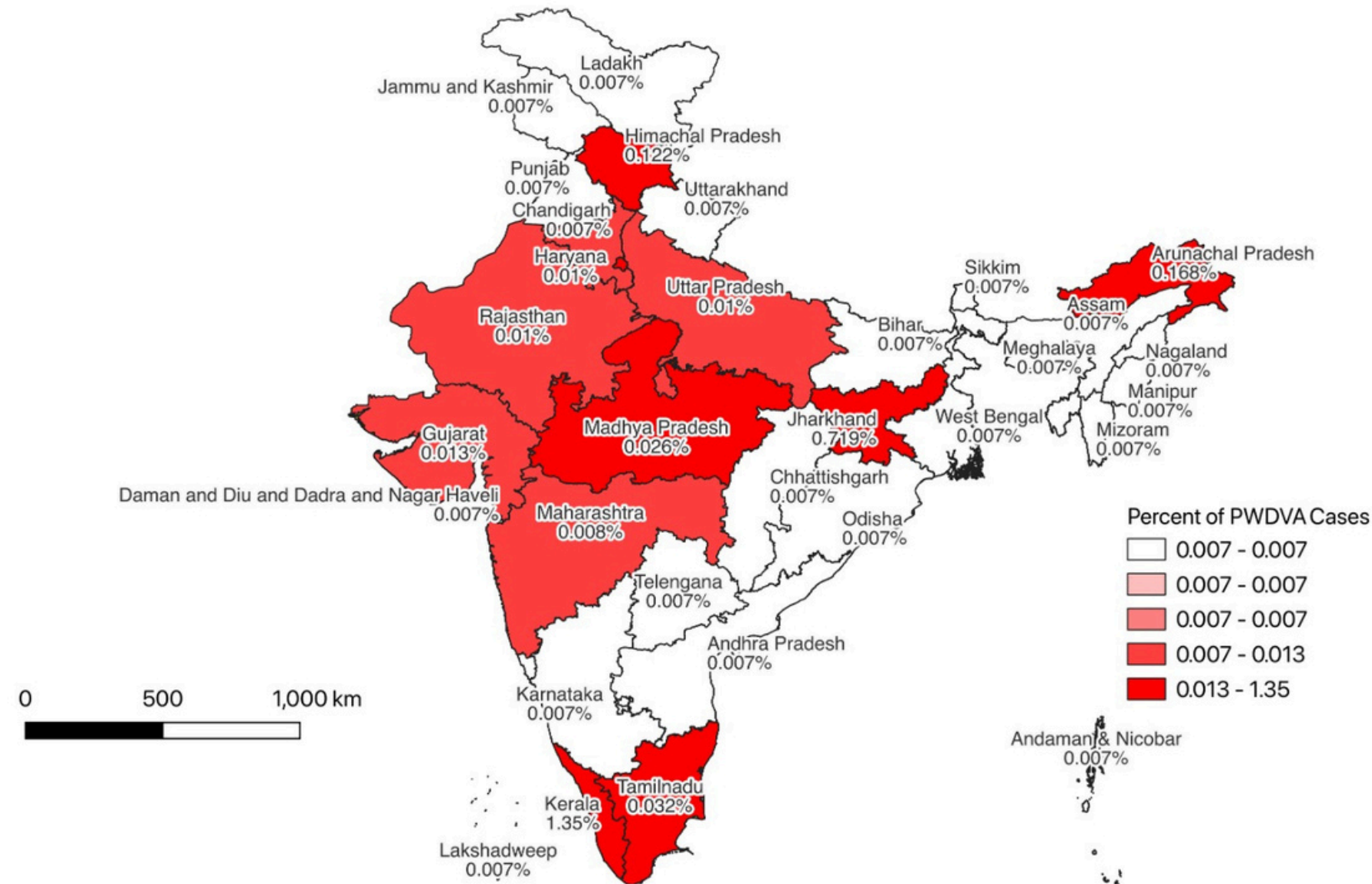
- Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, and Mizoram report the highest cases of crimes against women under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Tamil Nadu alone registered over 4,000 cases in 2022, indicating significant awareness and reporting mechanisms in the state.

- Factors contributing to higher reporting include active government programs for child protection and a well-established judicial process encouraging victims to come forward. Similarly, Meghalaya and Mizoram's high rates could stem from societal changes and a growing acknowledgment of children's rights in these regions, coupled with community-centric awareness campaigns.

- In contrast, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan show the lowest reported cases under POCSO. Himachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh's relatively low numbers could indicate robust child protection policies and proactive preventive measures.

- In Rajasthan, cultural stigma and lack of awareness might lead to underreporting despite increasing crime awareness initiatives. These discrepancies underscore the impact of socio-cultural dynamics, state-level initiatives, and public awareness on crime reporting.

- A comprehensive understanding of these trends requires evaluating the interplay between actual incidence, awareness, and societal responses to crimes against children

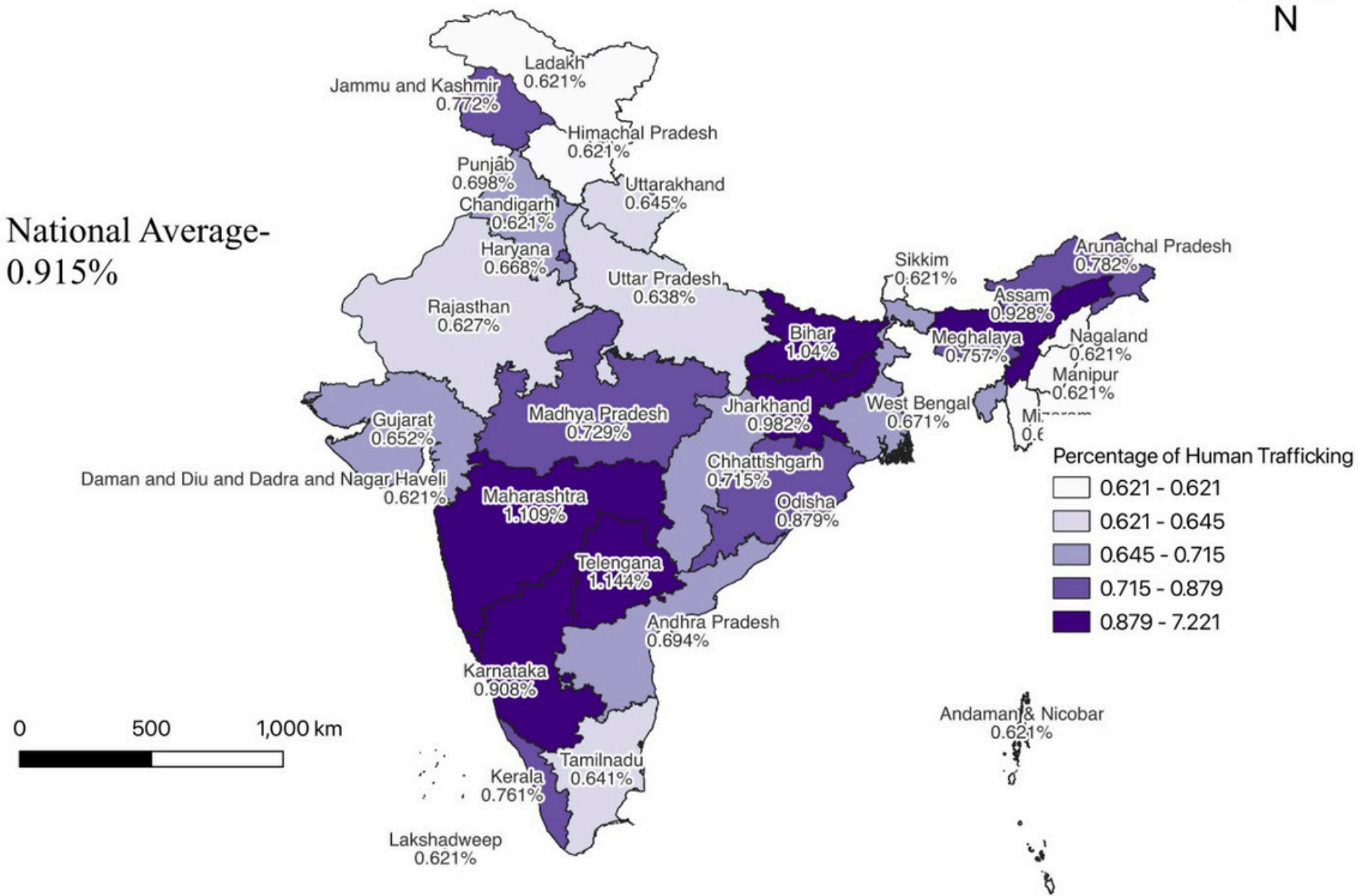Protection of women from domestic violence act (all filed)
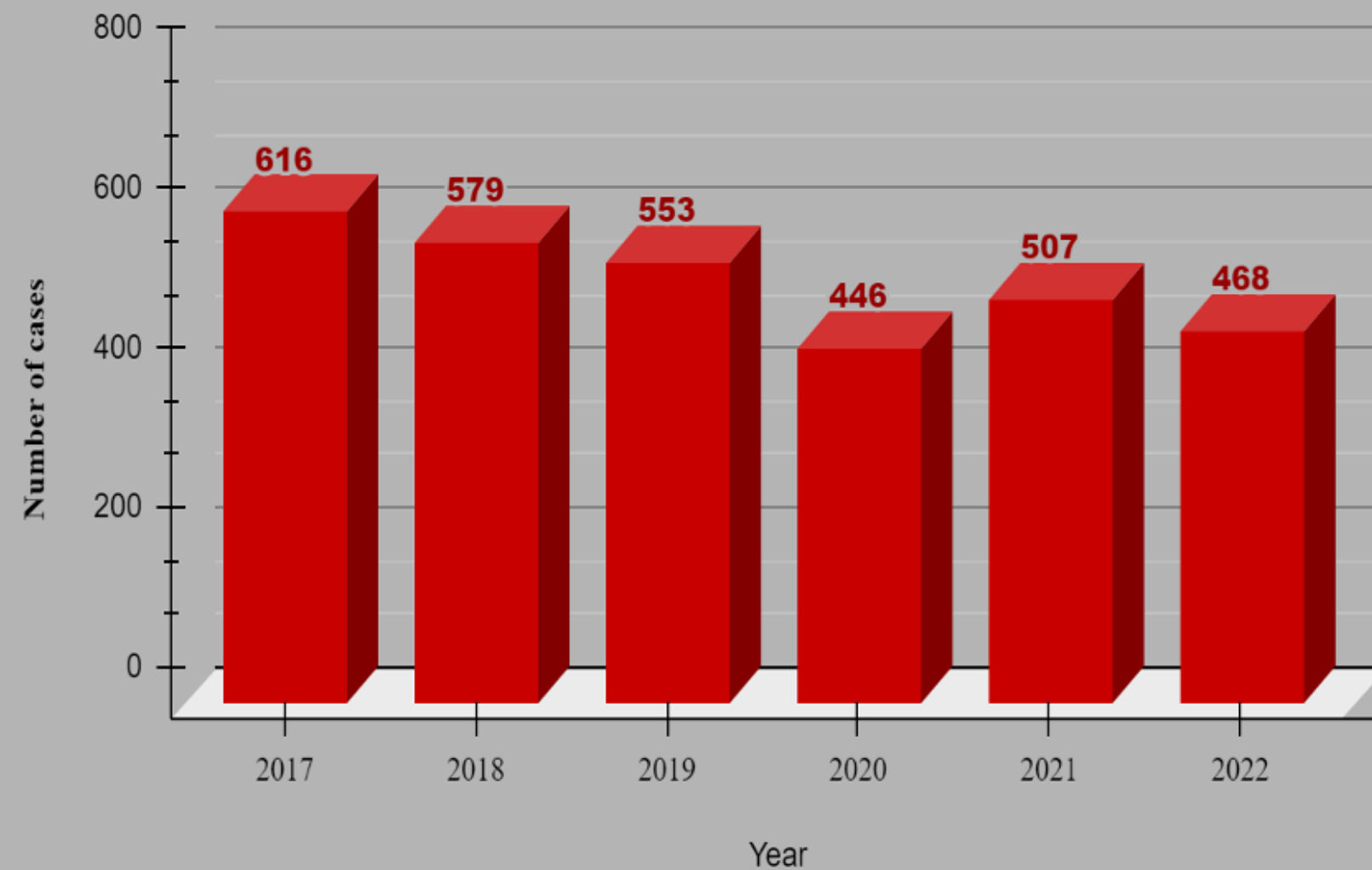
- The graph signifies a numerical charting of all filed cases from the year 2017 to 2022.

- It clearly portrays a general decline in the cases reported from 2017 to 2022 - from a high of 616 to a low of 468 cases

- There is always systemic inconsistencies to take into account like the iability to file cases as the reason for the 'nominal decline' instead of the 'real decline'

Percentage of Crimes against Women that involve Human Trafficking

National Average- 0.915%

Ladakh 0.621%
Jammu and Kashmir 0.772%
Himachal Pradesh 0.621%
Punjab 0.698%
Uttarakhand 0.645%
Chandigarh 0.621%
Haryana 0.668%
Uttar Pradesh 0.638%
Sikkim 0.621%
Arunachal Pradesh 0.782%
Assam 0.928%
Rajasthan 0.627%
Bihar 1.04%
Meghalaya 0.757%
Nagaland 0.621%
Manipur 0.621%
Gujarat 0.652%
Madhya Pradesh 0.729%
Jharkhand 0.982%
West Bengal 0.671%
Mizoram 0.6
Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli 0.621%
Chhattishgarh 0.715%
Maharashtra 1.109%
Odisha 0.879%
Telengana 1.144%
Andhra Pradesh 0.694%
Karnataka 0.908%
Andaman & Nicobar 0.621%
Tamilnadu 0.641%
Kerala 0.761%
Lakshadweep 0.621%

Percentage of Human Trafficking
0.621 - 0.621
0.621 - 0.645
0.645 - 0.715
0.715 - 0.879
0.879 - 7.221

0   500   1,000 km

- Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh report the highest cases under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), reflecting varying factors such as heightened awareness and better access to legal mechanisms. Kerala's high figures, for example, result from progressive gender rights movements and well-established reporting systems that encourage women to come forward. Arunachal Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh also demonstrate relatively higher reporting rates, which could be attributed to increasing advocacy and outreach programs targeting rural and tribal areas, ensuring access to justice for affected women.

- In contrast, most other states show lower case numbers under PWDVA, likely due to a combination of underreporting and cultural stigma around domestic violence. States with low literacy and patriarchal norms might see fewer women approaching authorities, reflecting the need for stronger awareness campaigns and legal support frameworks. This disparity highlights the importance of socio-legal structures and public sensitization in addressing domestic violence cases across India.

Percentage of Crimes against Women that fall under POCSO
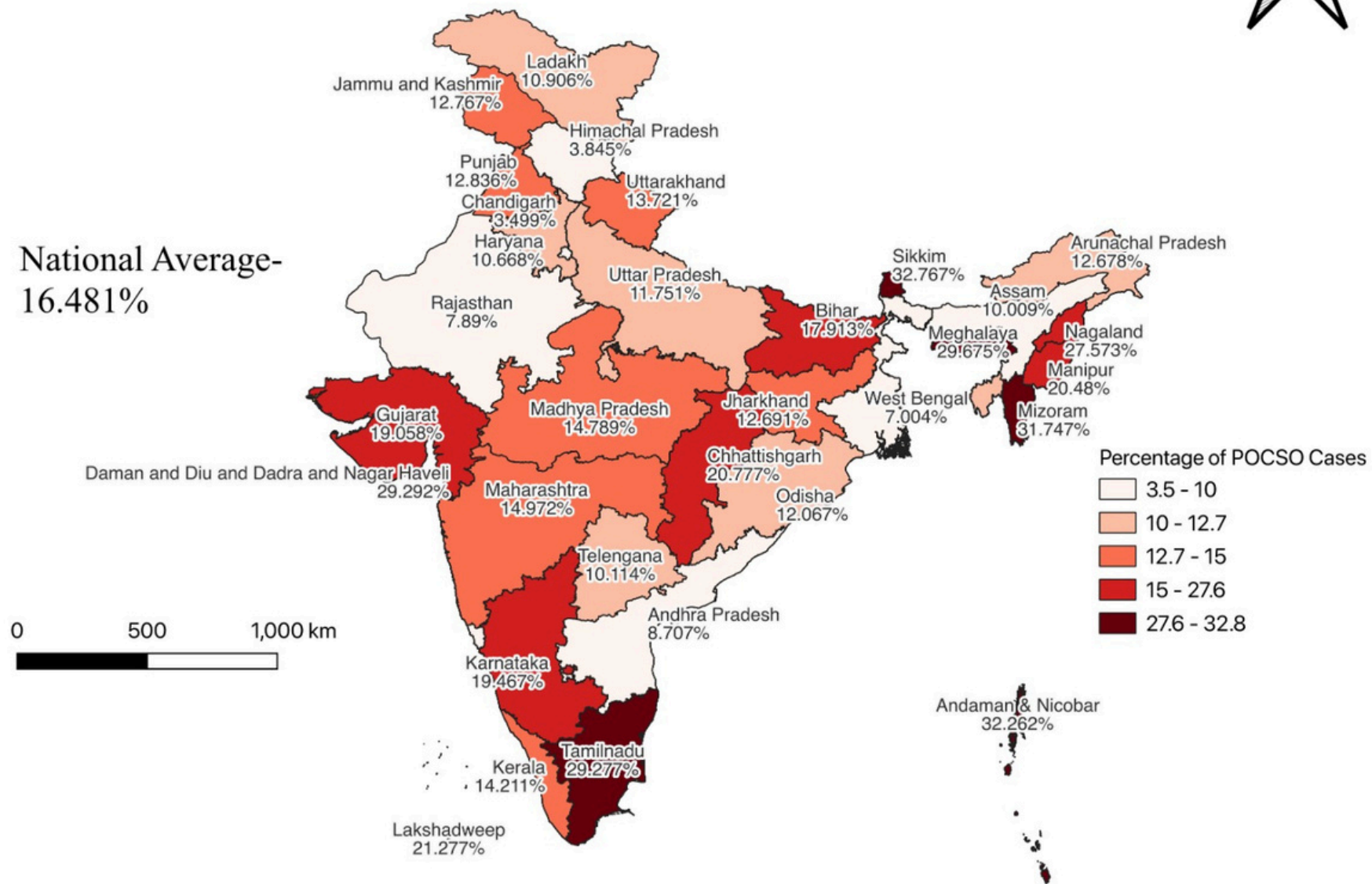
- Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka, and Bihar report the highest cases of human trafficking involving women in India, according to recent NCRB data. Maharashtra leads with over 300 reported cases in 2022, driven by its extensive urban centres like Mumbai, which serve as hubs for both internal and international trafficking. Telangana and Karnataka also rank high due to their metropolitan cities and industrial areas, which create environments conducive to trafficking. Bihar's high numbers can be linked to poverty, migration, and porous borders with neighbouring countries that facilitate trafficking routes.

- In contrast, Sikkim, Manipur, and Nagaland consistently report the lowest cases of trafficking. These states benefit from smaller populations and tight-knit community structures, which act as natural deterrents. Additionally, geographical isolation and proactive efforts by local governments and NGOs in these northeastern regions contribute to lower trafficking rates. However, lower reporting due to stigma or lack of awareness could also be a factor in these regions.

- These trends underline the critical need for robust anti-trafficking initiatives, targeted policies addressing root causes like poverty, and enhanced cross-border cooperation to combat trafficking effectively.

Cases filed under POCSO act (filtered for females)

Number of cases filed under POCSO Act 2012
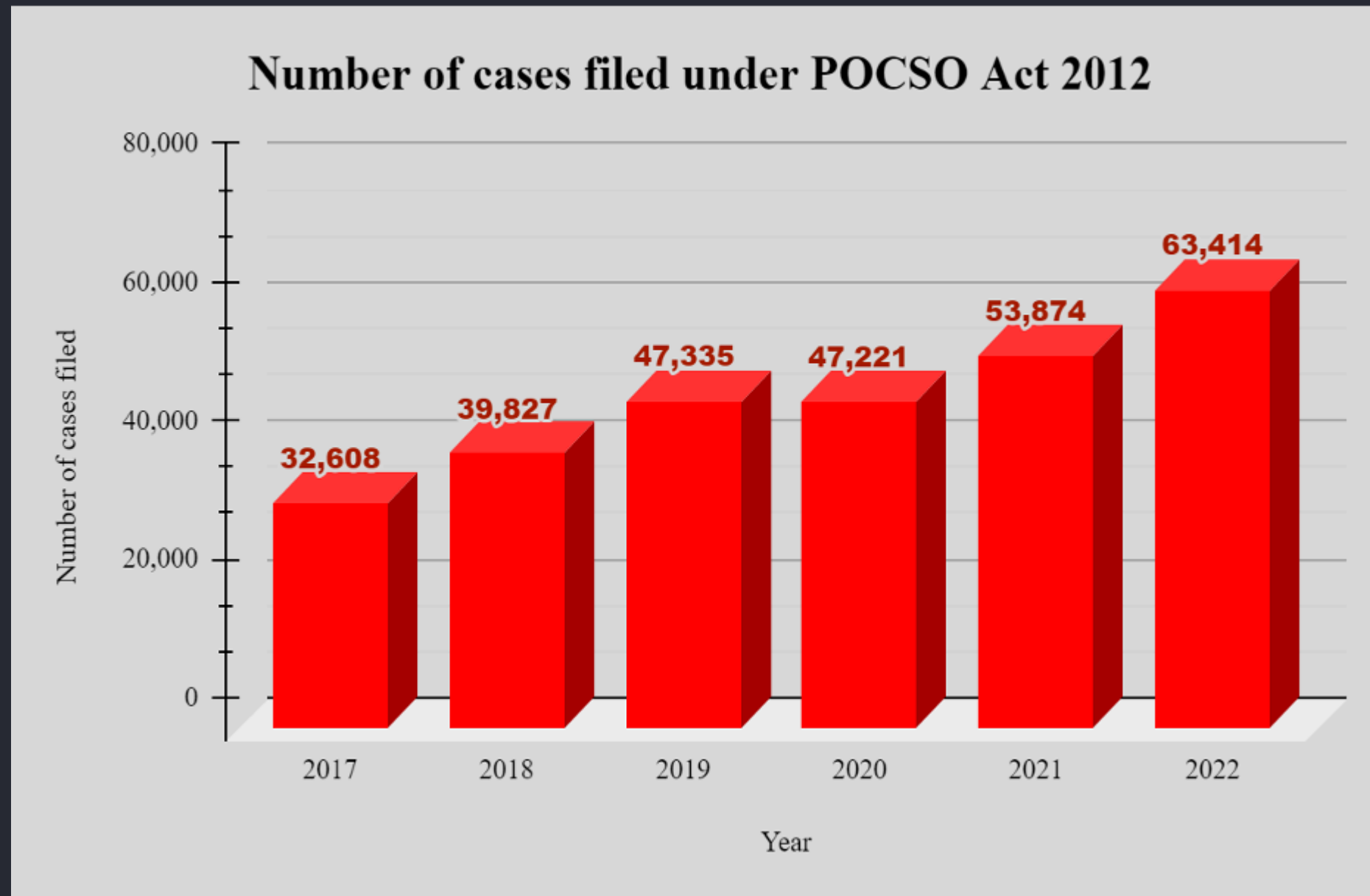
- The number of cases filed under the POCSO Act 2012, from the period between 2017-2022 is shown in the graph below. It shows that there is a consistent increase in the cases filed under the POCSO Act each year.

- The highest number of cases were reported in the years 2021 and 2022, 53874 and 63414 cases respectively, a 17.71% rise has been seen. This significant rise could be interpreted as efficient reporting of cases compared to previous years. The average annual growth of the cases reported under the POCSO Act is 14.51% per year.

- While the rise in reported cases under the POCSO Act between 2017-2022 reflects growing awareness and better reporting systems, it underscores the urgency for stricter enforcement of laws, comprehensive child protection policies, and proactive societal interventions to prevent such offenses."
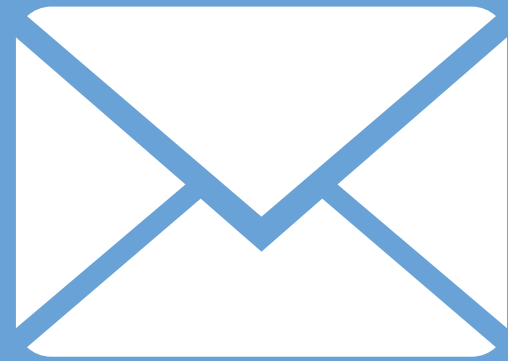
For inputs, comments or clarifications please contact The Centre for New Economics Studies at cnes@jgu.edu.in