



## Deficiencies in Indian Policing

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This editorial is based on the article "[India's police force among the world's weakest](#)" which appeared in Livemint on 20th June 2019. The article talks about the "Deficiencies in Indian Policing" and suggests a way forward.

India's existing police system suffers a series of deficiencies from problems relating to a police **organization, environment, infrastructure, and understaffing**, to obsolete weaponry and intelligence gathering techniques to a shortage of manpower to corruption, the police force in the country is not in a good shape.

### Underreporting of crime in India

- An expert committee under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has noted that there is significant **under-reporting of crimes** under the NCRB .  
The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) under the Ministry of Home Affairs annual report called Crime in India, that records crime on the basis of the FIRs registered in the police stations across the country.
- There could be suppression of data and low registration of crimes because the police know that their work is judged on the basis of this information.
- Sometimes victims of crime may decide against reporting the incident with the police because they are afraid to approach the police, or think the crime is not serious enough, etc.

### Major Deficiencies

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- **Understaffed and overburdened police force: The police-population ratio**, currently 192 policemen per lakh population, is less than what is recommended by UN i.e. **222 policemen per lakh population**.
  - There are only 144 police officers for every 100,000 citizens (the commonly used measure of police strength), making India's police force one of the weakest in the world.
  - **Policing in India is a state subject** which means there is significant variation across states.
  - Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal's police forces are all extremely understaffed with less than 100 police staff for 100,000 population.
  - The only states with police forces that meet the global standard are the insurgency-affected states in the North-East and Punjab.
  - Even as states have increased the sanctioned strength of their police forces, their populations have increased by even more -especially in states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- **Understaffing** in turn results into **overburdening** of work that not only reduces the **effectiveness and efficiency** of the police personnel (leading to poor quality of investigation) but also leads to **psychological distress** (which has been held responsible for various crimes committed by the policemen) and contributes to Pendency of cases.
 

As a result of the overburdening of work, Police personnel discharges a range of functions related to:

  - Crime prevention and response (e.g., intelligence collection, patrolling, investigation, production of witnesses in courts)
  - Maintenance of internal security and law and order (e.g., crowd control, riot control, anti-terrorist or anti-extremist operations)
  - Various miscellaneous duties (e.g., traffic management, disaster rescue and removal of encroachments).

**An overburdened police force:** A high percentage of vacancies within the police forces exacerbates an existing problem of overburdened police personnel.

- 86% of the state police comprises of the constabulary.
- Crime per lakh population has increased by 28% over the last decade (2005-2015). However, convictions have been low.
- In 2015, convictions were secured in 47% of the cases registered under the Indian Penal Code, 1860. The Law Commission has observed that one of the reasons behind this is the poor quality of investigations.
- **Pendency:** 30% of all cases filed in 2016 were pending for investigation by the end of the year (this combined with the pendency in the judiciary means securing justice in India can take a very long time). Pendency in the police is driven by lack of resources.
- **Decreased Expenditure** on police in recent years is adding to the resource crunch. Between fiscal 2011 and 2015, states spent 4.4% of their budgeted expenditure on policing on average but this has reduced to 4% over the last four years.
 

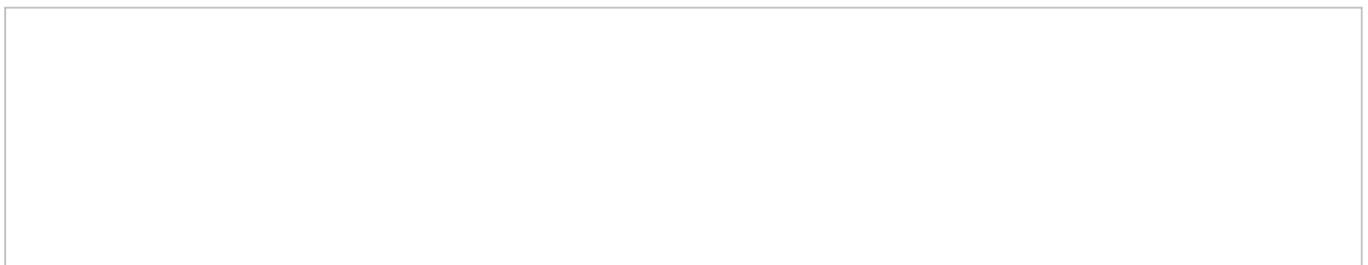
According to PRS Legislative Research, an **under-resourced**, overburdened police force means that both **core police activities** (enforcing daily law and order) and more long-term criminal investigations are compromised.

- **Police accountability:** As per the police laws, both the Central and State police forces come under the superintendence and control of political executives. Police priorities are frequently altered based on the will of political executives.
 

In this context, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission in 2007 had noted that politicians were unduly influencing police personnel to serve personal or political interests.
- **Police-Public Relations**, which is an important concern in the effective policing is suffering from the great trust deficit.
  - 2018 survey across 22 states on **perceptions about policing**, found that **less than 25%** of Indians trust the police highly (as compared to 54% for the army) and the reason for the distrust is that interactions with the police can be frustrating, time-consuming and costly.
  - The **Second Administrative Reforms Commission** has noted that police-public relations is in an unsatisfactory state because people view the police as corrupt, inefficient, politically partisan and unresponsive.
- **Criminalization of Politics:** improper implementation of police reforms could be attributed to lack of **political will**, which in turn could be linked to the growing criminalization of politics.
  - A large number of lawmakers in the Parliament with serious criminal charges imply little incentive to professionalize the police force.
  - In each successive Lok Sabha election over the past twenty years, the proportion of candidates with serious criminal charges is rising.
  - Low police salaries increases the vulnerability of police personnels to form a deep nexus with the **criminals and the politicians**.

## History of Police Reforms

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## Way Forward

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- **SMART Police:** Police reforms are needed on three fronts:
  - Improvement in capacity and infrastructure of police forces.
  - Revisiting the constitution of police forces in the country through legislative/ administrative changes.
  - Technological scaling-up.
- **Independent Complaints Authority:** The Second Administrative Reforms Commission and the Supreme Court have observed that there is a need to have an independent complaints authority to inquire into cases of police misconduct.
 

This may be because the political executive and internal police oversight mechanisms may favour law enforcement authorities, and not be able to form an independent and critical judgment.

- **Community Policing Model** can help in reducing the trust deficit between police and public as it requires the police to work with the community for prevention and detection of crime, maintenance of public order, and resolving local conflicts, with the objective of providing a better quality of life and sense of security.  
Various states have been experimenting with community policing including Kerala through '**Janamaithri Suraksha Project**', Rajasthan through '**Joint Patrolling Committees**', Assam through '**Meira Paibi**', Tamil Nadu through '**Friends of Police**', West Bengal through the '**Community Policing Project**', Andhra Pradesh through '**Maithri**' and Maharashtra through '**Mohalla Committees**'.
- Binding powers must be conferred on **State Security Commissions and the Police Establishment Boards** as many of these Commissions did not have the power to issue binding recommendations.
- Constitute **Police Complaints Authorities** at the state and district levels to inquire into allegations of serious misconduct and abuse of power by police personnel.
- The CAG and the Bureau Of Police Research And Development (BPRD) have noted that modern policing requires strong communication support, state-of-art or modern weapons, and a high degree of mobility.
- Proper utilization of center and states funds allocated for modernisation of state police forces as these funds are typically used for strengthening police infrastructure, by way of construction of police stations, purchase of weaponry, communication equipment and vehicles.

Internal security is very much a prerogative of police and efficient policing is needed in order to tackle threats arising in the form of cyber-attacks, bank frauds, and organized crimes, which need to be tackled in a more specialized manner But for that, the police system needs to be efficient, effective and technologically sound.

### ***Drishti input***

Discuss deficiencies in Indian Policing system and suggest a way forward.