



## Revamping India's Police System

*This editorial is based on “[Law and disorder: States must spend more on adequate police forces](#)” which was published in The Business Standard 18/03/2025. The article brings into picture the alarming 21% vacancy rate in India's police forces, resulting in severe understaffing that weakens law and order, endangers public safety, and hampers economic growth.*

**For Prelims:** [Police Act of 1861](#), [Malimath Committee](#), [National Police Commission](#), [Smart Policing](#), [Community Policing](#), [Model Police Act](#), Ribeiro Committee, Padmanabhaiah Committee

**For Mains:** Policing and Police Reforms in India, Key Issues Associated with Policing in India

India's security-governance architecture faces critical challenges with **over 21% vacancies in state police forces**, making it severely under-policed. This shortfall is most pronounced in states notorious for poor law and order, with **West Bengal, Mizoram, and Haryana** reporting the highest vacancy rates. The **inadequate policing** not only endangers public safety, particularly for vulnerable populations, but also impedes economic growth by creating unfavorable conditions for small and medium enterprises that constitute the backbone of India's economy.

### How has the Evolution of Policing and Police Reforms in India Taken Shape over Time?

- **Colonial Foundations and the [Police Act of 1861](#):** The modern Indian police system was established under the Police Act of 1861, designed by the British to maintain colonial control rather than serve the public.
  - It created a **centralized and hierarchical force that prioritized law and order over community service**.
  - This **framework** remains dominant today, making police forces more accountable to the government than to citizens.
- **Post-Independence Reforms (1950s-1970s):**
  - After independence, India retained the colonial policing structure, leading to inefficiencies, corruption, and public distrust.
  - The **Gore Committee (1971)** recommended a shift towards professional, service-oriented policing.
  - The **[National Police Commission \(1977-1981\)](#)** proposed key reforms like separating law and order from investigation and ensuring fixed tenures for officers.
    - However, these recommendations faced political and bureaucratic resistance, limiting their implementation.
- **1990s-2000s- Supreme Court Interventions & Major Committees:**

- With rising crime, communal violence, and political interference, calls for police reforms intensified.
- The **Ribeiro Committee (1998)** and the **Padmanabhaiah Committee (2000)** reinforced earlier recommendations, advocating for independent oversight bodies, modern training, and community policing.
- The **Malimath Committee (2002-2003)** pushed for specialized forensic capabilities and a Central Law Enforcement Agency for federal crimes, but most reforms remained unimplemented.
- The **Supreme Court's Prakash Singh judgment (2006)** directed states to implement crucial reforms, including the establishment of State Security Commissions, fixed tenures for senior officers, and the separation of investigation from law and order.
- **Recent Developments and Need for Modernization (2010s-Present)**
  - As policing challenges evolve with **cybercrime, terrorism, and organized crime, modernization efforts have gained momentum.**
  - Initiatives like **Smart Policing (2015)** leverage AI, data analytics, and community engagement.
  - The **Modernization of Police Forces (MPF) Scheme** aims to improve weaponry, forensic labs, and cybercrime units.
    - The **Model Police Act (2006)** and **NHRC recommendations (2021)** emphasize autonomy, accountability, and surveillance measures.
    - However, the absence of deep structural reforms continues to hinder policing efficiency.

## What are the Key Issues Associated with Policing in India?

- **Acute Shortage of Personnel:** India faces a severe shortage of police personnel, leading to excessive workloads and poor law enforcement.
  - The UN recommends **222 police officers per 100,000 people**, but India has only **154.84 per 100,000**, far below global standards.
  - High vacancies further exacerbate this issue—**West Bengal (39.42%), Mizoram (35.06%), and Haryana (32%)** have some of the worst vacancy rates.
  - This affects not just crime prevention but also response time, investigation quality, and public trust.
- **Overburdened and Underpaid Police Force:** The shortage of personnel forces existing officers to work **16-18 hours a day**, leading to stress, inefficiency, and compromised policing.
  - Many officers **juggle multiple roles—from law enforcement to election duties**—without adequate rest or fair compensation.
  - **Low pay** discourages professionalism and increases susceptibility to corruption, affecting public trust.
    - Also a recent survey showcased that the **majority of the police personnel had high and very high levels of stress (83.8%)**, affecting performance and mental health.
- **Politicization and External Influence:** Political interference in police operations has eroded professionalism and independence.
  - **Frequent transfers, pressure to act against political opponents**, and misuse of investigative agencies have weakened law enforcement credibility.
  - The **arbitrary use of sedition laws** and **targeted arrests of activists and journalists** highlight how policing is often dictated by political interests rather than the rule of law.
  - For instance, a **2019 report in Delhi stated that 72% of police officers have experienced political pressure** while investigating cases.
- **Militarization of the Police and Excessive Use of Force:** The police often resort to excessive force, especially in handling protests and civil unrest.
  - The use of **tear gas, rubber bullets, and baton charges** on protesters has drawn criticism, particularly during farmers' protests and CAA-NRC demonstrations.
    - This **undermines public confidence** and raises concerns over human rights violations.
  - The **2023 wrestlers' protest saw forceful removal of peaceful demonstrators**, drawing national and international condemnation.

- A total of **669 cases of death** in police custody were registered across the country in the last five years from **April, 2017, to March, 2022**, highlighting a significant issue.
- **Inadequate Training and Outdated Policing Methods:** Many police personnel lack proper training in **modern crime-solving techniques, forensic science, and cybercrime investigation**.
  - This results in poor investigations, wrongful arrests, and case backlogs. There is also insufficient training on **handling gender-sensitive cases**, affecting justice for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking.
  - According to the CAG, **most states have a very low percentage of trained police officers**.
    - The audit also noted flaws in weapon training as well as a lack of adequate training infrastructure.
    - Also, even with so many opportunities in the field of criminalistics in India, **there are only 0.33 forensic scientists per 0.1 million population whereas** the foreign countries have 20 to 50 scientists per 0.1 million population, coupled with inadequate training of police officials, make the issue even more severe.
- **Weak Community Policing and Public Trust Deficit:** There is a **lack of proactive community engagement**, making the police force seem distant, intimidating, and unapproachable.
  - Many marginalized communities—**Dalits, Adivasis, and minorities**—often **fear** rather than trust the police due to past experiences of discrimination and brutality.
  - Without stronger community ties, intelligence gathering and crime prevention remain weak.
  - Despite rising urbanization, **community policing initiatives like "Janamaithri" in Kerala or "Mohalla Committees" in Maharashtra** remain exceptions rather than norms.
- **Slow Modernization and Outdated Equipment:** Many police stations lack **basic forensic tools, surveillance technology, and cybercrime tracking mechanisms**, making it hard to tackle modern crimes.
  - Even in large cities, **outdated weapons and inadequate protective gear** make police vulnerable in critical situations, including terror threats.
  - **Many police stations** still rely on manual paperwork instead of digital case management systems.
  - A recent report found that **there was just one computer/laptop for 11 state police personnel** in the country, with some large states having just one system for 30 or more personnel in 2022.
- **Underrepresentation of Women in Police Forces:** Despite rising crimes against women, gender representation in policing remains dismal.
  - There are just **11.75% women in the police forces in the country** despite the central government's repeated efforts to enhance the strength of the women
  - This lack of representation **discourages** women from reporting crimes and leads to inadequate handling of gender-based violence cases.

# Police Reforms in India



## CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

- Police and Public Order: State subjects (7<sup>th</sup> Schedule)



## NEED FOR REFORM

- Colonial Law
- Custodial Death
- Lack of Accountability
- Political Interference
- Poor Gender Sensitivity
- Communal/Caste Bias
- No Anti-Torture Law



## RELATED DATA

- Police-People Ratio:** 153 police/100,000 people (Global benchmark: 222 police /100,000 people)
- Custodial Deaths:** 175 in 2021-2022 (as per MHA)
- Women's Share:** 10.5% of entire force (India Justice Report 2021)
- Infrastructure:** 1 in 3 police stations is equipped with CCTV (India Justice Report 2021)



## IMPORTANT COMMITTEES/COMMISSION



## RELATED INITIATIVES

- SMART Policing** (pan-India)
- Automated Multimodal Biometric Identification System (**AMBIS**) (Maharashtra)
- Real Time Visitor Monitoring System** (uses **AI and blockchain**) (Andhra Pradesh)
- CyberDome** (Tech R&D Centre) (Kerala)



## CHALLENGES WITH POLICING

- Low Police-Population Ratio
- Political Superimposition
- Unsatisfactory Police-Public Relations
- Infra Deficit
- Corruption
- Understaffed/Overburdened

## WAY FORWARD

- ↑ Police Budget, Resources
- ↑ Recruitment Process
- Implement Measures to Reduce Corruption
- ↑ Skills of Policemen
- Better Representation (Women, Minorities)



## What Measures can be Adopted to Enhance Policing in India?

- **Addressing Manpower Shortage and Workload Reduction:** The acute shortage of police personnel must be tackled through **fast-track recruitment**, better working conditions, and increased budgetary allocations.
  - Implementing a **two-year minimum tenure for police officers**, as directed in the **Prakash Singh case**, can reduce political interference and improve efficiency.
- **Depoliticization and Ensuring Police Autonomy:** Implementing the **State Security Commission (SSC)**, as recommended by the **National Police Commission (NPC)**, can insulate police forces from undue political interference.

- The **Police Establishment Board (PEB)**, as suggested by the [Ribeiro Committee](#), should be empowered to handle transfers and promotions independently.
- Amending the **Police Act, 1861**, in line with the **Model Police Act (2006)**, can legally establish these reforms.
- **Modernizing Police Infrastructure and Equipment:** Police forces must transition from **outdated weaponry and paper-based systems** to **tech-driven policing**, including AI-based predictive policing, big data analytics, and drone surveillance.
  - The **Modernization of Police Forces (MPF) scheme** should be expanded with targeted spending on **CCTV surveillance, forensic labs, body cameras, and GPS-enabled patrol vehicles**.
  - **Upgrading cybercrime cells**, in line with the **Padmanabhaiah Committee's recommendation**, is crucial to tackle increasing online frauds and digital crimes.
  - Implementing the **NHRC's 2021 directive** to install **CCTV cameras with night vision in all police stations** will enhance accountability and reduce custodial torture.
- **Specialization and Separation of Investigation from Law & Order:** In line with the **Malimath Committee's recommendations**, police stations should have **separate wings for investigation and law-and-order management** to improve efficiency.
  - The creation of a **specialized crime investigation cadre** can help officers focus on complex cases like financial frauds, organized crime, and cybercrimes.
  - Training modules should be **updated to incorporate forensic science, legal procedures, and digital investigation techniques**.
  - **Reviving the beat policing system**, as suggested by the **Padmanabhaiah Committee**, can improve grassroots intelligence gathering and crime prevention.
- **Community Policing and Public Trust Building:** Bridging the trust deficit between police and citizens requires **community policing models**, as suggested by the [Model Police Act \(2006\)](#) and **NHRC recommendations (2021)**.
  - Initiatives like **Kerala's Janamaithri Suraksha Project** and Maharashtra's **Mohalla Committees** should be expanded nationwide.
  - **Recruiting social workers and psychologists** in police stations can aid in handling sensitive cases, such as domestic violence and juvenile crimes.
  - Regular **public-police dialogues and outreach programs** can improve relations and enhance trust among marginalized communities.
- **Gender Sensitization and Increasing Women in Policing:** Enhancing **women's representation** in police forces to the **33% target**, as recommended by the **Padmanabhaiah Committee**, is critical for ensuring gender-sensitive policing.
  - Establishing **all-women police stations in every district** and mandating the presence of female officers in every police station will improve crime reporting by women.
  - **Mandatory gender sensitization training**, as suggested by the **NHRC**, should be part of police education. Providing **childcare facilities, flexible working hours, and separate restroom facilities** can improve retention rates among female officers.
- **Judicial-Police Coordination and Reducing Undertrials:** Poor coordination between police and judiciary leads to **case backlogs, delays, and wrongful detentions**.
  - In line with the **Malimath Committee's recommendations**, **digitization of FIRs, e-court integration, and fast-tracking undertrial cases** should be prioritized.
  - Establishing **police-judiciary liaison officers** in every district can facilitate better case tracking and evidence management.
  - **Expanding plea bargaining mechanisms** can help reduce undertrial populations and ensure faster justice delivery.
- **Reforming Police Training and Capacity Building:** A **national-level Police Training Advisory Council (PTAC)**, as suggested by the **Padmanabhaiah Committee**, should oversee training curricula to ensure **modern crime-fighting techniques, forensic science, human rights laws, and technology-driven policing**.
  - Police academies should incorporate **soft skills training** to improve public interaction and sensitivity towards marginalized communities.
  - **Incentivizing higher education and specialization in policing**, through **scholarships for advanced criminology and forensic courses**, can improve professional standards.
  - **Cross-agency training with CBI, NIA, and IB** can help state police improve their counterterrorism and intelligence-gathering capabilities.

## Conclusion

Addressing India's policing crisis requires urgent **structural reforms, improved recruitment, and depoliticization to ensure efficiency and public trust**. Strengthening **technological capabilities, modernizing training, and implementing community policing** can bridge gaps in law enforcement. **Gender inclusivity, accountability mechanisms, and autonomy** are critical for a people-centric policing model.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

“Police reforms in India have been a long-pending necessity, yet implementation has remained slow due to political, bureaucratic, and structural challenges”. Suggest measures to ensure a more accountable and efficient police system.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/revamping-india-s-police-system>

