



Rising Judicial Pendency in India

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Despite functioning at its full strength of **34 judges**, the [Supreme Court's \(SC\)](#) case pendency reached a **record high** of 88,417 in August 2025, with a disposal rate of 80.04%.

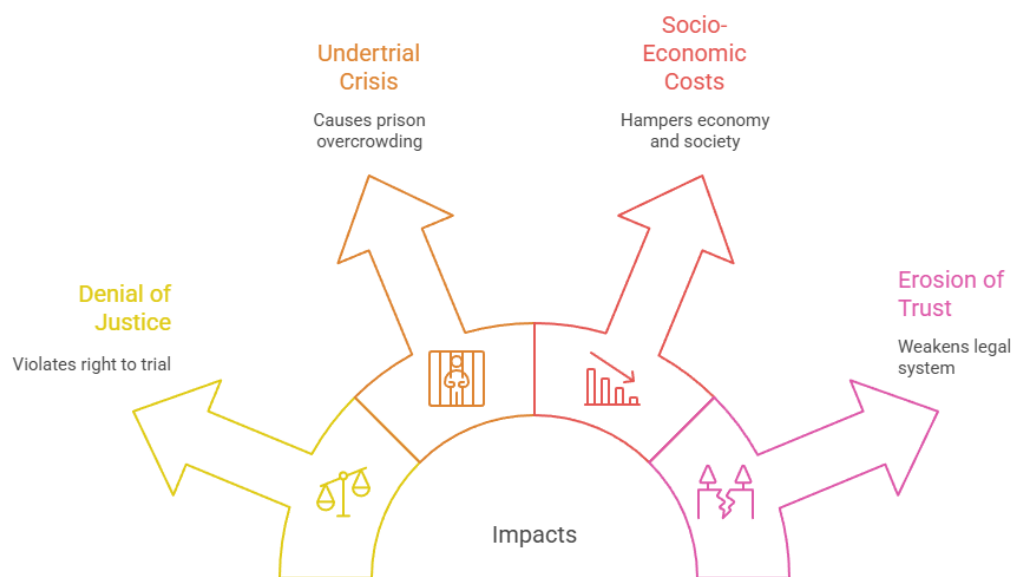
- About **63.3 lakh cases** are pending in the [High Courts \(HCs\)](#), and nearly **4.6 crore** in **district and subordinate courts**, bringing India's total **case pendency** to over **5 crore**.

What are the Key Reasons of High Case Pendency in Indian Courts?

Mnemonic - LACK

- **L- Low Judge-to-Population Ratio:** India has just **15 judges per million people**, far below the **1987 Law Commission's** recommendation of **50**.
 - In comparison, the **US** has **150 judges per million**, while **Europe** averaged **220 per million in 2022**.
- **A- Absence of Effective ADR:** **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)** mechanisms such as **mediation, arbitration, and conciliation** remain largely untapped, despite their potential to **ease judicial backlog**.
- **C- Court Vacancies & Infrastructural Laps:** The [India Justice Report 2025](#) notes that the judiciary has over **5,600 vacancies** across all levels, with **High Courts recording a 33% vacancy rate** in 2025.
 - Limited **courtrooms**, shortage of **staff**, weak **ICT systems**, absence of proper **case management** hinder timely justice.
- **K- Keen Government Litigation:** Nearly **50% of pending cases** involve **government departments**.
 - In **2018**, the **SC** criticised the **Centre** for filing **frivolous and repetitive appeals**.

Judicial Delays Erode Legal System



What Measures are Needed to Reduce Judicial Pendency in India?

Mnemonic - JUSTICE

- **J - Judge strength & Appointments:** As per the **120th Law Commission Report (1987)**, raise **judge-to-population ratio** to 50/million, fast-track **appointments** in High and District Courts, and establish **All India Judicial Service (AIJS)** for full-capacity courts.
- **U - Upgrade Infrastructure & Technology:** Expand **e-Courts Mission Mode Project** with AI-based case management.
- **S - Simplify Procedures & Laws:** **Limit adjournments**, adopt **summary trials**, **pre-trial conferences**, **fast-track procedures**, and **simplify laws** as per **Second ARC recommendations** for quicker justice.
- **T - Training & Tech Tools:** Implement AI-based case management Tools like **FASTER** and provide **staff Training**.
- **I - Institutional Reforms:** Set up **National Judicial Infrastructure Authority (NJIA)** to standardize court infrastructure.
- **C - Channel cases to ADR:** Channel suitable cases away from courts by promoting **Conciliation, mediation, and arbitration**.
- **E - Expand Access & Outreach:** Strengthen **Tele-Law, mobile clinics, and NALSA outreach** for wider access to justice.

Conclusion

Judicial pendency in India undermines **justice, economic growth, and public trust**; comprehensive **reforms** in **capacity, technology, procedures, and ADR** are essential for **timely, efficient, and accessible justice**.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the key reasons behind the rising judicial pendency in India and its socio-economic implications

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to the Indian judiciary, consider the following statements:

1. Any retired judge of the Supreme Court of India can be called back to sit and act as a Supreme Court judge by the Chief Justice of India with the prior permission of the President of India.

2. A High Court in India has the power to review its own judgement as the Supreme Court does.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (2021)

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. Discuss the desirability of greater representation to women in the higher judiciary to ensure diversity, equity and inclusiveness. (2021)

Q. Critically examine the Supreme Court's judgement on 'National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014' with reference to appointment of judges of higher judiciary in India. (2017)

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