

## **VIOLENT CRIMES BY JUVENILES – SOCIETY**

**NEWS:** Recent global and domestic incidents, have sparked concern over the sharp rise in violent crimes committed by juveniles in India.

### **WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?**

#### **Rising Trend in Juvenile Violent Crimes in India**

- **Overall Decline in Juvenile Offenders:** The total number of juveniles in conflict with the law in India decreased from **37,402 in 2017** to **33,261 in 2022**, indicating an overall reduction in juvenile delinquency cases.
- **Sharp Rise in Violent Crime Proportion:** Despite the overall decline, the **percentage of juveniles involved in violent crimes** rose significantly from **32.5% in 2016** to **49.5% in 2022**, as per **NCRB 2023** data.
- **Nature of Violent Crimes:** Violent crimes included **murder, rape, grievous hurt, assault, arson, robbery, and dacoity**. Non-violent offences like theft, cheating, or trespass were not counted in this category.
- **Geographic Distribution of Cases:**
  - **Madhya Pradesh** reported the highest share, accounting for **20%** of violent juvenile crime cases (2017–2022).
  - Followed by **Maharashtra (18%)**, **Rajasthan (9.6%)**, **Chhattisgarh (8.4%)**, **Delhi (6.8%)**, and **Tamil Nadu (5%)**.
- **Hotspot Regions Identified:** **Central and Eastern India** emerged as the primary regions of concern, with relatively higher instances of violent juvenile behaviour, though states like **Odisha** reported only **10%** of juvenile crimes as violent.

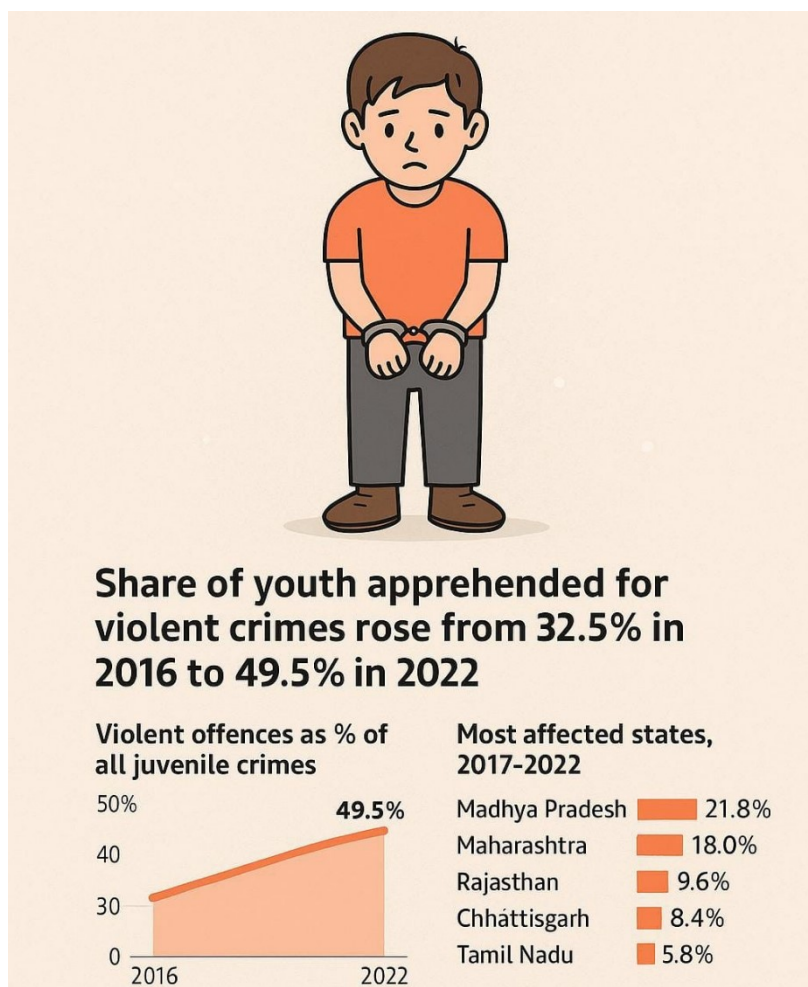
#### **Factors Contributing to the Rise in Heinous Juvenile Crimes**

- **Digital Exposure and Online Influences:**
  - Rising exposure to **graphic violent content, online abuse, and the incel subculture** can influence adolescents to adopt aggressive behaviour.
  - **Social media addiction** fosters **desensitisation**, imitation of violence, and a **decline in empathy**, particularly among adolescent boys.
- **Family and Social Neglect:**
  - Many juveniles lack **stable parental guidance and emotional support**, especially during adolescence—a period marked by identity formation and risk-taking behaviour.
- **Poverty and Socioeconomic Marginalisation:**
  - Juveniles from **economically weaker sections** often face **educational exclusion**, making them vulnerable to deviant peer groups and criminal networks.

- **Peer Pressure in Urban Slums and Informal Settlements:**
  - The **lack of structured socialisation** leads adolescents to join **gangs or criminal groups** under the influence of older peers.
- **Substance Abuse:**
  - Easy access to **alcohol, drugs, and inhalants** contributes to **impulsivity, aggression, and conflict with the law** among urban and semi-urban youth.

### Legal and Institutional Measures Taken by India

- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015:**
  - Allows **juveniles aged 16–18 years** to be tried as adults for heinous crimes based on psychological assessment.



- Emphasises **rehabilitation and reintegration** through child-friendly procedures rather than just punitive action.
- **Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS):**
  - A **centrally sponsored umbrella scheme** offering both **institutional and non-institutional care**, including **counselling, rehabilitation, and repatriation services**.
- **Cyber Safety and Digital Literacy Initiatives:**

- Awareness programs by **NCERT, CBSE, and the Ministry of Education** focus on **cyberbullying prevention, online safety, and responsible digital behaviour** among schoolchildren.

### **Key Challenges in Addressing Juvenile Crime**

- **Weak Implementation of Juvenile Justice Provisions:**
  - Despite the law, **gaps persist in rehabilitation, psychological counselling, and individualised case monitoring**, especially in Tier II and rural areas.
- **Overburdened Institutions:**
  - **Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) and Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)** often suffer from **staff shortages, resource constraints, and delayed decision-making**.
- **Post-Incarceration Stigmatisation:**
  - Young offenders, especially those tried under adult provisions, face **lifelong stigma, social alienation, and reduced prospects of rehabilitation**.
- **Gender Blindness in Policy:**
  - There is a **lack of gender-disaggregated data**, leading to **underreporting and neglect** of issues related to girls involved in juvenile offences or victimised by them.

### **Way Forward: Measures to Curb Juvenile Crimes**

- **Early Intervention Through Schools:**
  - Introduce **mandatory psychological counselling, anger management workshops, and social-emotional learning curricula** in schools.
- **Juvenile Justice System Reform:**
  - Increase **financial allocations, capacity-building programs, and standardised operating procedures** for JJBs and CWCs to ensure quality and consistency.
- **Individualised Rehabilitation Planning:**
  - Ensure **customised rehabilitation plans** involving **mental health care, vocational training, mentorship, and family therapy** to reduce recidivism.
- **Community-Based Interventions:**
  - Empower **local NGOs, youth clubs, and community mentors** to create safe environments and act as support systems for at-risk adolescents.
- **Promote Restorative Justice:**
  - Adopt **restorative approaches** that focus on **accountability, community healing, and restoring relationships** between the offender and the victim.
- **Digital Regulation and Literacy:**

- Develop **age-appropriate content filters**, and include **digital citizenship modules** in schools to promote safer internet practices.
- **Evidence-Based Policymaking:**
  - Collect and utilise **disaggregated data by age, gender, region, and type of offence** to shape targeted interventions and track policy effectiveness.

### Concluding Remarks

- The **rising proportion of violent crimes committed by juveniles** highlights the **complex interplay of digital, social, and economic vulnerabilities** facing today's youth.
- **Legal reforms and policing**, while necessary, are **not sufficient**—a **comprehensive, preventive, and rehabilitative strategy** involving families, schools, communities, and digital ecosystems is essential.
- India must shift from **retributive justice to restorative and reformative models**, prioritising **child rights, mental health, and social reintegration**.

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