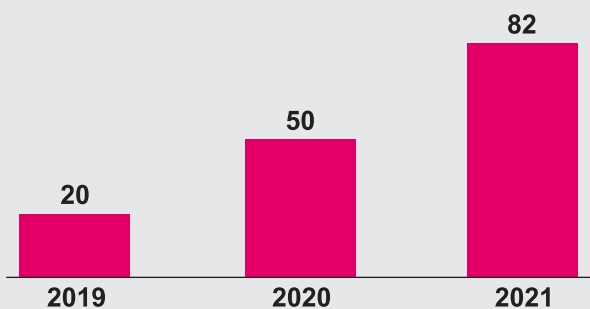


CHILD MARRIAGE AND OTHER CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN IN MAHARASHTRA

Child marriage (i.e., marriage of girls below the age of 18 and boys below the age of 21) in India is one of the most serious crimes committed against children. It is prevalent in most of the States/UTs despite a law (Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006) to root it out. Child marriage ends childhood and puts children at high risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. It also adversely impacts their rights to education, health and protection.

A total of 1,49,404 crimes against children were recorded in India in 2021, indicating an average of 409 such cases reported each day during the year. This included a total of 1,050 cases registered under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, victimising 1,062 children. Of all the registered crimes against children across the country in 2021, 12 percent were from Maharashtra (17,261). The state stands at the 2nd position, in terms of percentage share of the total crimes committed against children during 2021 in the country.

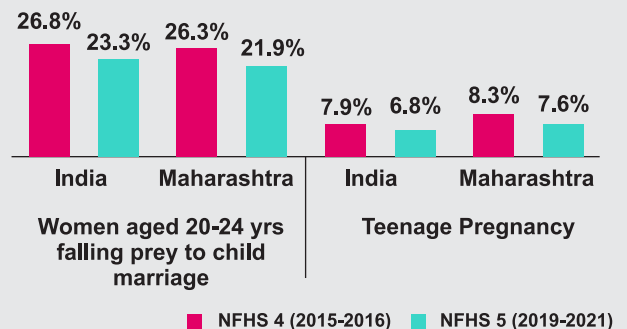
Figure1: Victims of Child Marriage in Maharashtra



Source: Crime in India (2019-2021), NCRB, Govt. of India

A comparison with last year's reported crimes in Maharashtra shows a 20 percent increase in the total number of crimes against children (from 14,371 in 2020). The number of victims of child marriage also increased by 64 percent (from 50 in 2020 to 82 in 2021) as compared to the national average of 34 percent increase (from 792 victims in 2020).

Figure 2: Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancies (%)



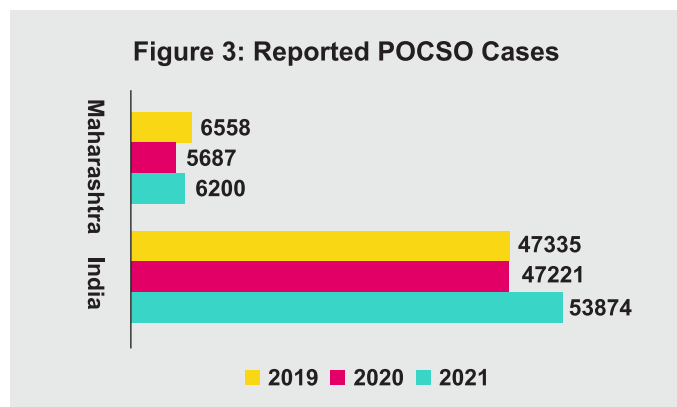
Source: NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-2021)

Child Marriage

- During the last 3 years, there has been a continuous increase in victims of child marriage in Maharashtra, from 20 in 2019 to 82 in 2021 (Figure-1).
- As against a 3.5 percentage point decrease in women aged 20-24 years falling prey to child marriage between 2015-16 and 2019-21 (from 26.8% to 23.3%) in India, the comparative decrease in Maharashtra is slightly higher at 4.4 percentage point (from 26.3% to 21.9%) during the same period.
- As per the Census 2011, in Maharashtra 11.6 lakh children were married off before the attainment of the legal age of marriage, which constituted approximately 10 percent of all married children in the country. However, NCRB data suggests that cases of only 152 children were registered in the state under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act during 2019-21.
- Court disposal of cases under Prohibition of Child Marriage Act:
 - The conviction rate in child marriage cases in India is extremely poor at a mere 10 percent, the lowest conviction rate of all types of crimes committed against children. In 2019, 2020 and 2021 the number of cases which ended with conviction was only 12 (out of 1,640), 6 (out of 2,092) and 10 (out of 2,865) respectively.
 - At the end of 2021, a mounting 96 percent child marriage cases in the country were pending trial (2761 cases pending out of 2865 cases).

Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy¹, which is primarily a consequence of child marriage, has come down from 7.9 percent in 2015-16 to 6.8 percent in 2019-21 at the all-India level. The corresponding decrease in Maharashtra has been from 8.3 percent to 7.6 percent (Figure-2).



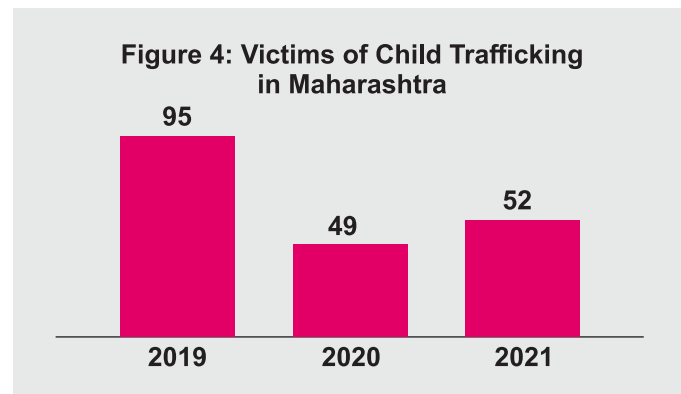
Source: Crime in India (2019-2021), NCRB, Govt. of India

Sexual Violence

- The total number of POCSO cases in the state decreased by five percent during 2019 to 2021 (from 6,558 in 2019 to 6,200 in 2021), as compared to a 14 percent increase (from 47,335 in 2019 to 53,874 in 2021) at the national level.
- The percentage share of child rape cases to the total POCSO cases stands at 62 percent at the national level in 2021. In Maharashtra, the same is marginally lower (56%) than the national average in 2021.
- Court disposal of POCSO cases:
 - The conviction in POCSO cases in terms of absolute numbers increased from 3,686 (out of 9,316 cases in which trial was completed) in 2020 to 5,156 (out of 15,989 cases in which trial was completed) in 2021.

- In Maharashtra, 308 POCSO cases reached conviction out of 1,027 cases in which trial was completed in 2020².
- At the end of January 2022, a total of 2,26,728 POCSO cases were pending trial in the country, of which 30,677 cases were from Maharashtra³.

Child Trafficking



Source: Crime in India (2019-2021), NCRB, Govt. of India

- In Maharashtra, of the total victims of trafficking, only six percent (52 out of 918) were children as compared to 44 percent (2,877 out of 6,533) at the national level in 2021.
- The total number of victims of child trafficking in Maharashtra came down from 95 in 2019 (61 girls and 34 boys) to 52 (39 girls and 13 boys) in 2021. Girls constituted 75 percent of the total trafficked children in 2021.

Missing Children

- The total number of missing children in the state decreased by 10 percent during 2019 to 2021 (from 4,562 in 2019 to 4,129 in 2021), as compared to a six percent increase at the all-India level (from 73,138 in 2019 to 77,535 in 2021).

¹ Women aged 15-19 who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the NFHS-5 survey

² State-wise information on conviction in POCSO cases is not available for 2021. Relevant information for 2020 sourced from Lok Sabha Starred Question No. *294 dt.05 Aug 2022. Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India

³ Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 3843 dt. 25th March 2022. Ministry Of Law And Justice, Government of India