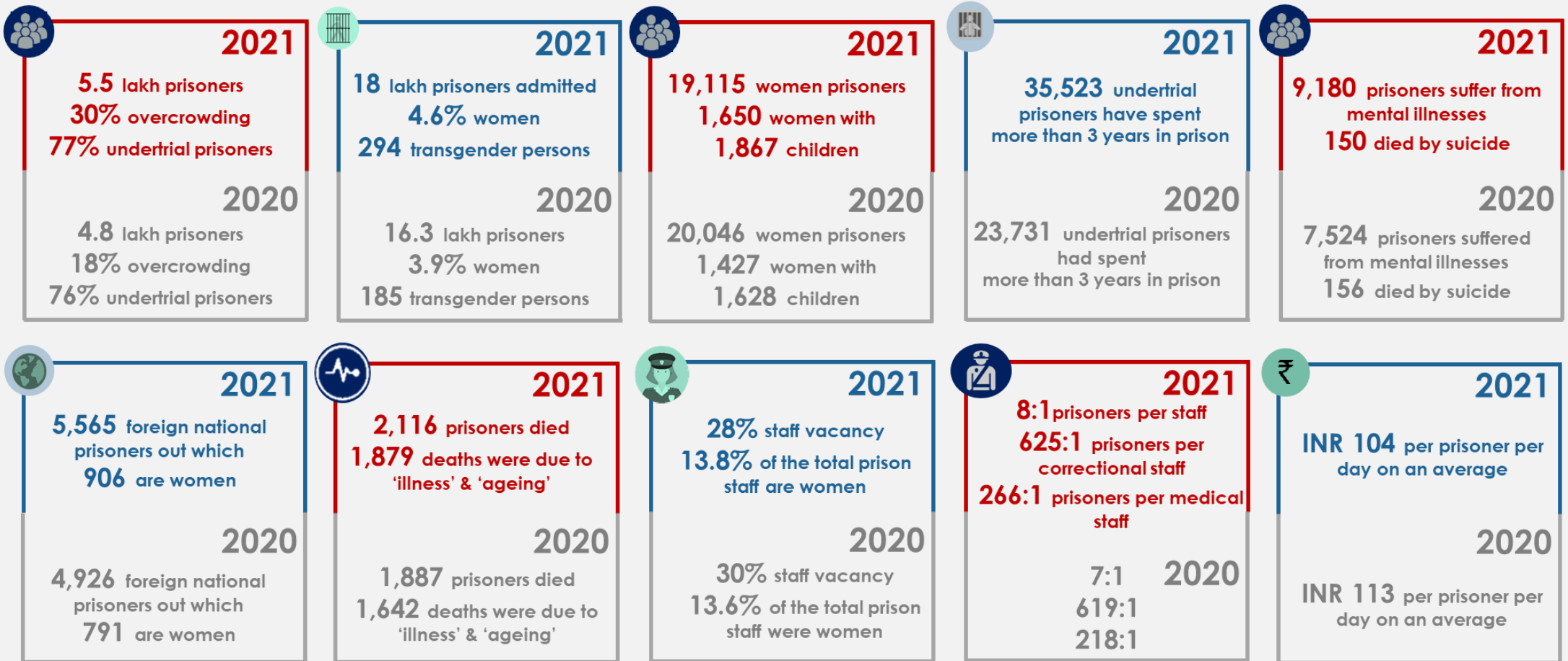
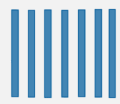




# Ten Things You Should Know About Indian Prisons

Trends and Analysis Based on NCRB's Prison Statistics India 2021





## I. PRISON POPULATION, CAPACITY AND OCCUPANCY

### Findings PSI 2021

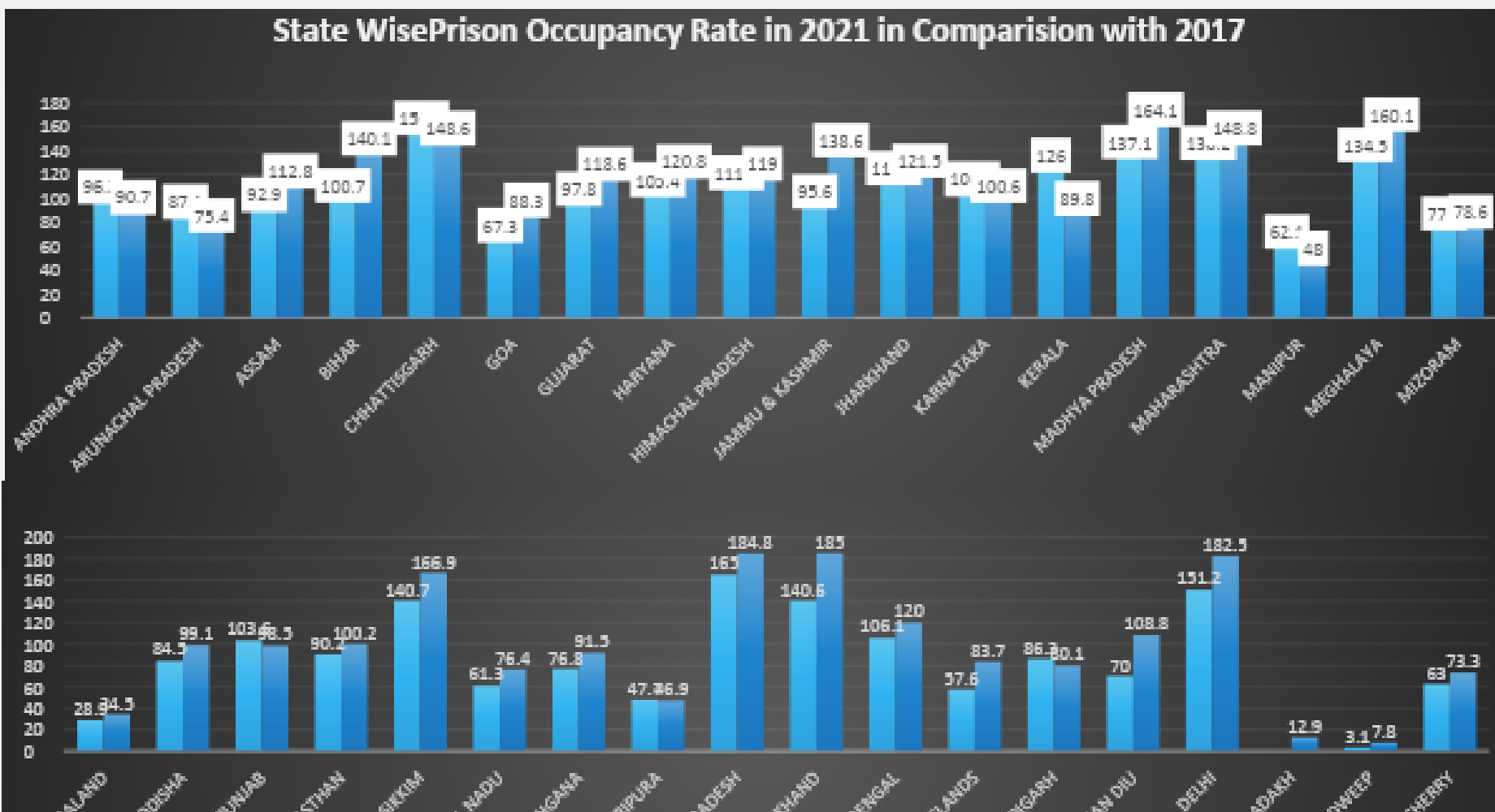
- ☞ On 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2021 **there were 5,54,034 prisoners in India, 30% more than the total capacity.**
- ☞ Total prison **capacity increased by 9%** from 2017 to 2021 whereas the prison **population has increased by 23%** in this period.
- ☞ Total **number of prisons decreased** from 1,361 in 2017 to 1,319 in 2021.
- ☞ Prison **overcrowding increased** from 15% in 2017 to **30% in 2021.**
- ☞ Among the types of prisons, highest occupancy continued to be in **District Jails (155%),** followed by **Central Jails (124%), Sub Jails (103%)** and **Women Jails (56%).**
- ☞ Among the States/UTs, **Uttarakhand has highest occupancy at 185%** followed by **Uttar Pradesh at 184.8%, Delhi at 183%,** Sikkim at 167% and Madhya Pradesh at 164%.
- ☞ **Nineteen out of total 36 States and UTs had prison overcrowding in 2021** in comparison to 16 States and UTs which has overall prison overcrowding in 2017.

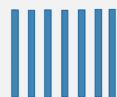


➡ **Six States in 2021 had prison occupancy above 150%** whereas in 2017 three States had more than 150% occupancy.

➡ **The occupancy rate for transgender persons stood at 212%**, followed by 134% for male and 78% for female.

### State Wise Prison Occupancy Rate in 2021 in Comparison with 2017





## CHRI's Comments

Prison overcrowding in 2021 reached an all-time high of 130%, which is roughly 13 people living in a space for 10 on an average. However, it must be read with caution that this is a national average based on total official capacity and total prison population. Individual prisons may have an occupancy which is several times more than the national average. For instance, district jails of Uttar Pradesh have 208% occupancy, sub jails of Uttarakhand have an average occupancy of 300%.

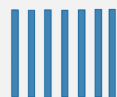
The steep increase in occupancy rate from 118% in 2020 to 130% in 2021 lays bare the ground realities of prison system in India. The March 2020 Supreme Court direction in *In Re Contagion of COVID-19 Virus in Prisons* to decongest prisons fell on deaf ears.

From 2018 to 2021, global prison population only increased by 0.25% while India's prison population exploded by 19% during the same period (Dec. 2018 to Dec. 2021). *(Last comparable data available for global prison population before 2021, is of 2018.)* No prison reform measures or efforts towards welfare of prisoners can succeed if this rate of increase of prison population is not kept in check. The facts and figures on proportion of undertrial prisoners in prisons and the distribution of total undertrial prisoners' population by their duration of confinement given below reveal some of the reasons behind this surge in prison overcrowding.

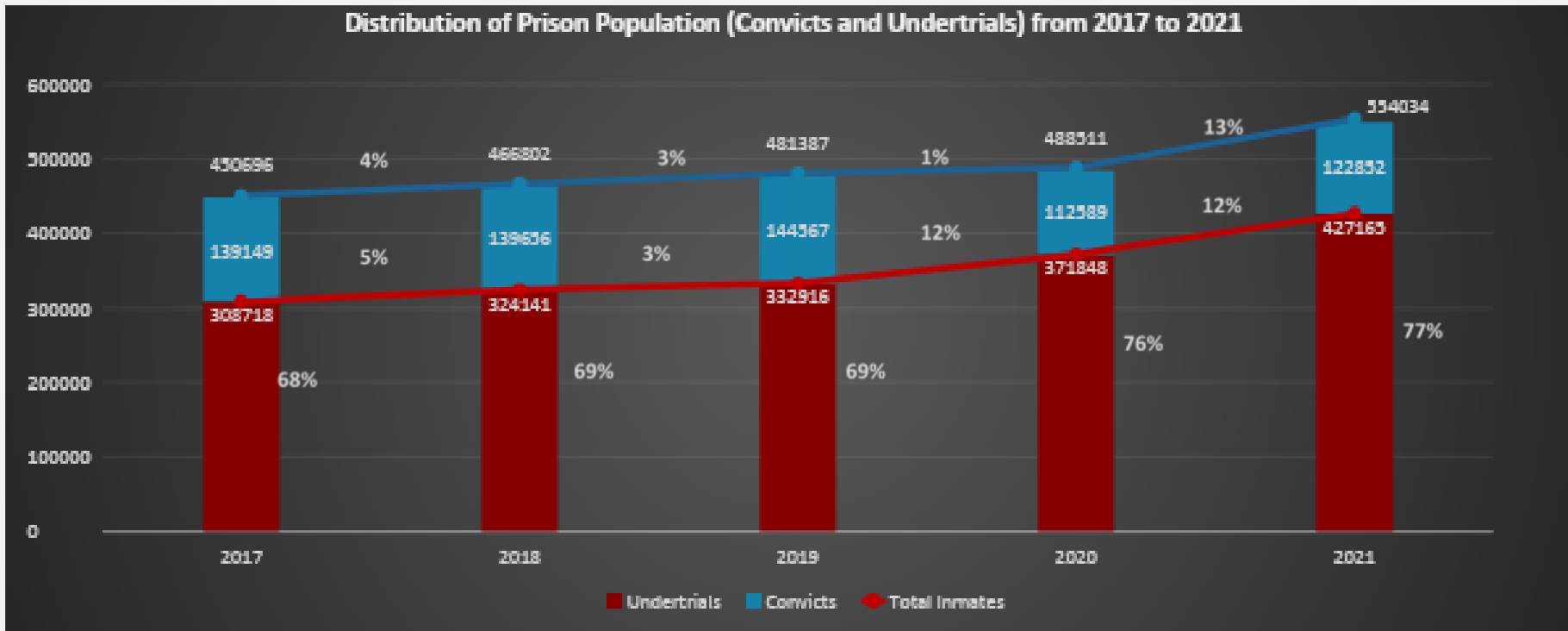
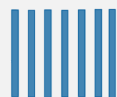
## II. ADMISSIONS, RELEASES AND PROPORTION OF UNDERTRIAL PRISONERS

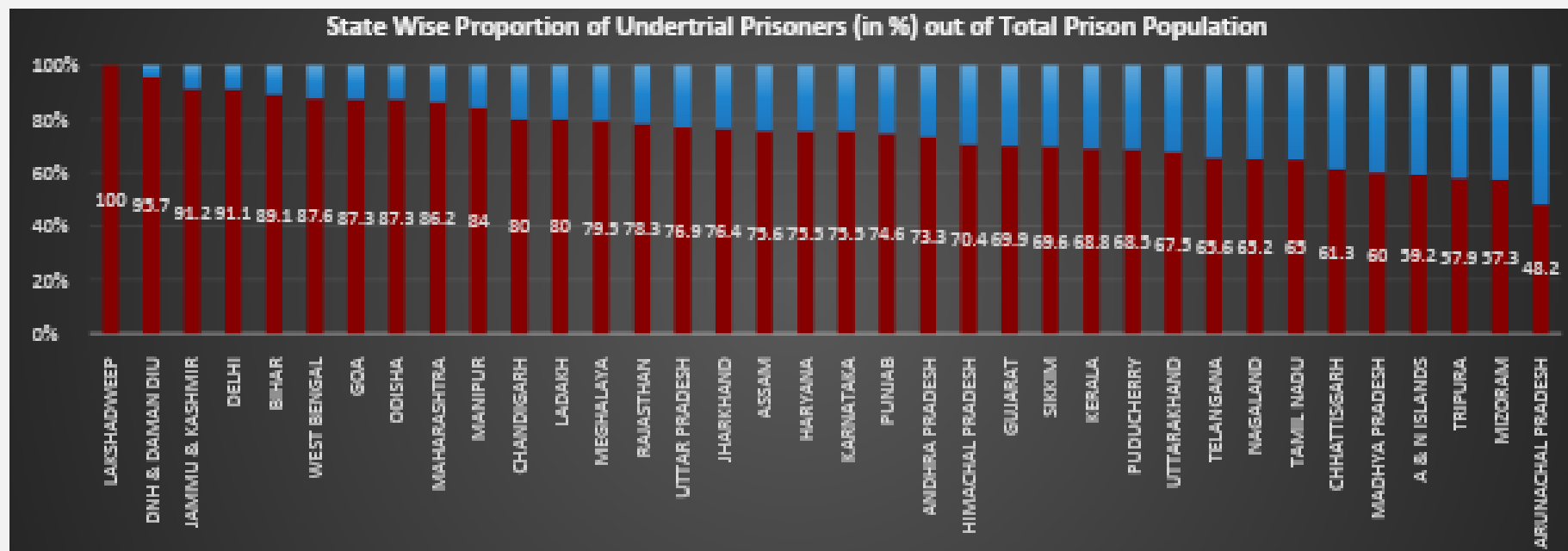
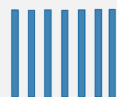
### Findings PSI 2021

- 👉 **18, 06, 823 inmates were admitted to prisons, 9% more than in 2017** (16, 55, 658).
- 👉 In 2021 the number of **convicts admitted to prisons decreased** by 47% from 1, 04, 735 in 2017 to 1, 97, 952 in 2021.
- 👉 Total number of **persons released from prisons in 2021 decreased by 5%** from 16.4 lakh in 2017 to 15.7 lakh in 2021.
- 👉 In 2021, the **number of convicts released fell by half** (53% less) from 1.92 lakh in 2017 to 91, 364 in 2021.



- ☞ The number of **undertrials released under Section 436A** (release on completion of half period of the maximum sentence prescribed for the offence charged of) **decreased by 45%, with just 591 released in 2021 in comparison to 1074 in 2017.**
- ☞ The number of **convicts released under parole also decreased by 17%** from 34, 501 in 2017 to 28, 763 in 2021.
- ☞ **Undertrial prisoners' population increased by 38%** from 2017 to 2021 whereas the convict prisoners' population decreased by 12% in this period.
- ☞ The **total prison population increased by 23%** from 2017 to 2021.
- ☞ The proportion of undertrial prisoners (**UTP ratio**) in **total prison population has exploded from 68% in 2017 to 77% in 2021.**
- ☞ Worst UTP ratio was recorded in Jammu & Kashmir (91%) followed by Delhi (91%) and Bihar (89%). This excludes Lakshadweep and DND and Dadar& Nagar Haveli which are assumed to be only having UTPs in their prisons.
- ☞ In total, **14 States and UTs had higher UTP ratio than the national average of 77%.**

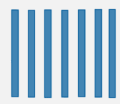




**CHRI's Comments**

A bare look at the figures of admission and releases shows that while the admissions to prison has increased rapidly the releases have reduced considerably, explaining the surge in prison overcrowding and ratio of Undertrial Prisoners. The graph above shows that the steep increase in total prison population is directly proportional to the increase in undertrial prisoners' population. A high undertrial ratio is indicative of the poor functioning of the criminal justice system: it not only overburdens the prison (or correctional) administration but also leads to inhuman conditions in prisons due to chronic overcrowding.

In 2021, with more than two thirds of prisoners awaiting completion of trial in India, its position has jumped from 16<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> out of 218 countries in terms of the proportion of undertrial prisoners in its prisons.

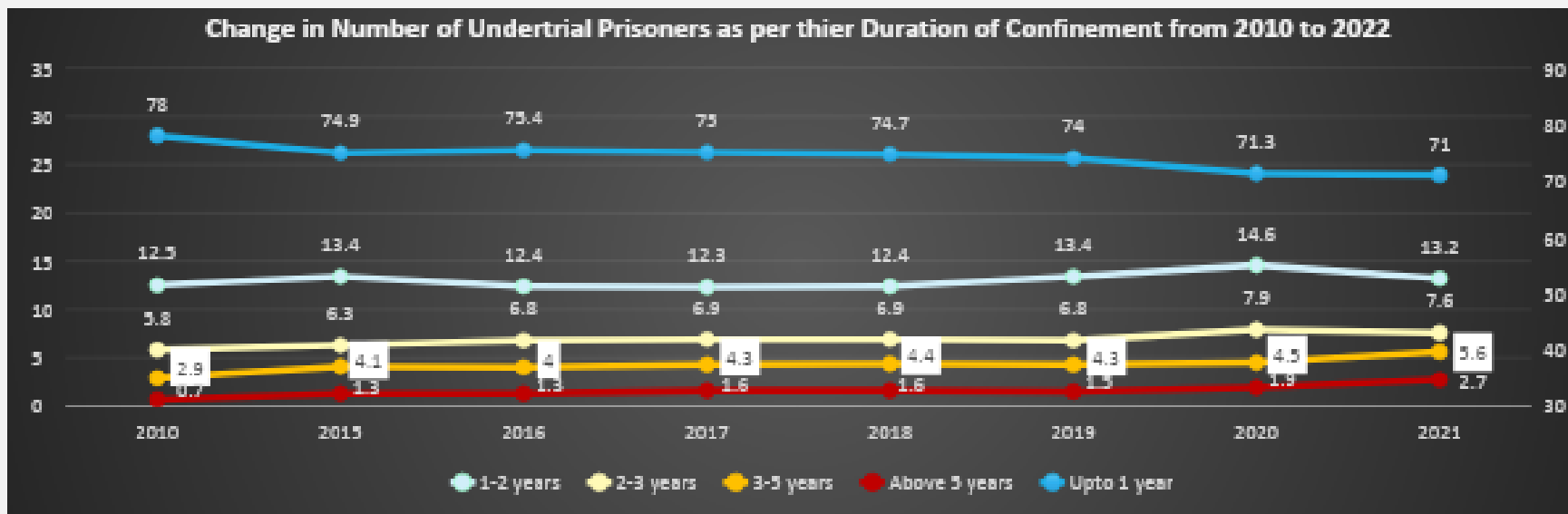


### III. PERIOD OF CONFINEMENT OF UNDERTRIAL PRISONERS

#### Findings PSI 2021

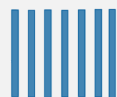
- ☞ 71% of undertrial prisoners in 2021 were confined for a period of up to 1 year, consistently declining since 2010.
- ☞ 13.2% were confined for a period between 1 to 2 years.
- ☞ 7.6% were confined for a period between 2 to 3 years.
- ☞ **5.6% were confined for a period between 3 to 5 years, highest since 2010.**
- ☞ **2.7% were confined for more than 5 years still awaiting release or completion of their trial, highest since 2010.**
- ☞ From 2010 to 2021, the proportion of undertrial prisoners confined for a period of up to 1 year has fell by 7 percentage points.
- ☞ From 2010 to 2021, **the proportion of undertrial prisoners confined for 3 to 5 years has almost doubled (1.9 times).**
- ☞ From 2010 to 2021, **the proportion of undertrial prisoners confined for more than 5 years has increased by almost (3.86) 4 times.**
- ☞ One fourth of UTPs in Ladakh have spent more than 3 years in prisons, highest among the States/UTs, followed by 20% in Lakshadweep, 15.6% in Jammu and Kashmir, 15.1% in West Bengal, 15.5% in Rajasthan, etc.





### CHRI's Comments

The graph shows that the share of prisoners confined for longer durations is increasing consistently since last ten years. Though, the data on share of prisoners by period of confinement shows that the increase in share of prisoners spending longer is slight but this must be seen in the light of a much higher rate of increase of undertrial population each year. The slight increase in percentage share of prisoners spending longer seems to be under represented. The absolute number of undertrial prisoners who have spent more than 3 years awaiting release or completion of trial, has almost doubled (increased by 97%) in last 5 years (2017 to 2021). In 2021, the number of times prisoners were taken to Courts reduced by 53% in comparison to 2020 which indicates that the cases of undertrial prisoners progressed even slower in 2021. This shows that while prisons are increasingly flooded with new undertrial prisoners, those who are already imprisoned are looking at longer confinement as undertrials.



Increase in number of prisoners spending longer durations behind bars without completion of their trial reflects the struggling state of criminal justice system. Long and delayed trials not only deny the right to a speedy trial to the accused but also deny right to timely justice to the victim. If the criminal trials were to be capped at a maximum duration of 1 year, 30% (1.24 lakh prisoners) undertrial prisoners would be released.

## IV. WOMEN AND PRISONS – INMATES AND STAFF

### Findings PSI 2021

#### Women Prisoners:

- ☞ There were **22,918 women prisoners in 2021**, comprising 4.1% of the total prison population.
- ☞ Only **15 States and UTs had women prisons in 2021**, a total of 32.
- ☞ Only **17.1% (3,803) of the total women inmates were in women prisons in 2021**. Rest of the 19,115 women inmates were living in women enclosures inside male dominated<sup>1</sup> prisons.
- ☞ There were **906 women foreign national prisoners** in 2021, 16.3% of all Foreign National Prisoners.
- ☞ There were **88 detenue** and 95 'other'<sup>2</sup> women inmates in 2021. **17% of all inmates categorized as 'others' were women in 2021**, highest among 'convicts', 'undertrials' and 'detenues'.
- ☞ **Women UTP ratio has further deteriorated** from 68% in 2017 to 77% in 2021.

<sup>1</sup> In prisons other than women prisons, there are women enclosures for women inmates. Women inmates are not generally allowed to access other areas of such prisons.

<sup>2</sup> PSI does not define who are included under this category of prisoners.

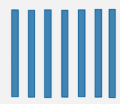


- ☞ There were 1,650 women prisoners with 1,867 children in 2021. In just one year, there were 223 more mothers with 239 children more than in 2020. Out of the 1650 mothers with their children, 1418 women prisoners were with 1601 children who were awaiting release as undertrial prisoners.
- ☞ Overall, women prisoners' occupancy rate was 78% in 2021 while **six States and UTs** namely Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand (179%), Uttar Pradesh (142%), Maharashtra (103%), Chhattisgarh (148%) and Bihar (152%) **recorded overcrowding for women inmates.**

## Women Staff:

- ☞ There are **8,881 women staff** in 2021 which is merely **13.7% of the total prison staff**. This is a marginal increase from 9.1% women in total prison staff in 2017.
- ☞ **Highest share of women in prison staff** was in **Karnataka at 32%** followed by **Mizoram at 25%** and **Sikkim at 23%**.
- ☞ **Lowest share of women in prison staff** among the states is in **Goa at 2%** followed by **Uttarakhand at 4%** and **Tripura at 5%**.
- ☞ In **16 States and UTs**, women formed **less than 10% of the total prison staff** in those States/UTs.
- ☞ In last five years, number of women staff has increased by 69% from 5248 in 2017 to 8881 in 2021. The share of women in prison staff has increased by merely 5 percentage points from 9% in 2017 to 14% in 2021.
- ☞ In the last five years, **Bihar tops the list in increasing the share of women staff** by 18 percentage points, followed by **Karnataka** with an increase of **13 percentage points** and **Mizoram** with an increase of **11 percentage points**.
- ☞ From 2017 to 2021, **9 States and UTs have recorded reduced share of women in prison staff and three recorded no change.**

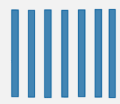




### **CHRI's Comments**

A high majority of women prisoners in India continue to be incarcerated in 'enclosures' inside prisons designed and governed for male prisoners. Building exclusive prisons for women might not address the problems faced by the women prisoners as it could increase the distance between their original place of residence and the prisons. However, it is important to ensure that women prisoners are not kept in 'enclosures' inside male dominated prisons and are allowed equal access on all levels (especially equal access to amenities and recreational measures) at par with the male prisoners.

The data on women's share in prison staff shows that women have been excluded from prison services for many decades. Goa, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, A & N Islands, Chandigarh, DNH and Daman Diu, Ladakh, Lakshadweep and Puducherry are 12 States and UTs which do not have a single women in the 'officers' category. It must be noted that the share of women in the prison staff should have no correlation with the share of



women prisoners among the total prison population. Further, the fact that one third of the States and UTs have actually reduced women's share in the prison staff shows that inclusion of women in prison services is not a priority for the State governments in India.

## V. EDUCATION, CASTE AND RELIGION PROFILE OF PRISONERS

### Findings PSI 2021

#### Education Profile

- ☞ One fourth of prisoners (25%) **in India continued to be illiterate** in 2021, with a marginal improvement from 2017 (30%).
- ☞ **40%** had **not completed Class X**.
- ☞ **24%** have passed **Class X but were below graduate standard**.
- ☞ Only **67.5%** were **graduate**, **1%** had **a technical or diploma degree** and **2%** were **post graduates**.

#### Religion Profile

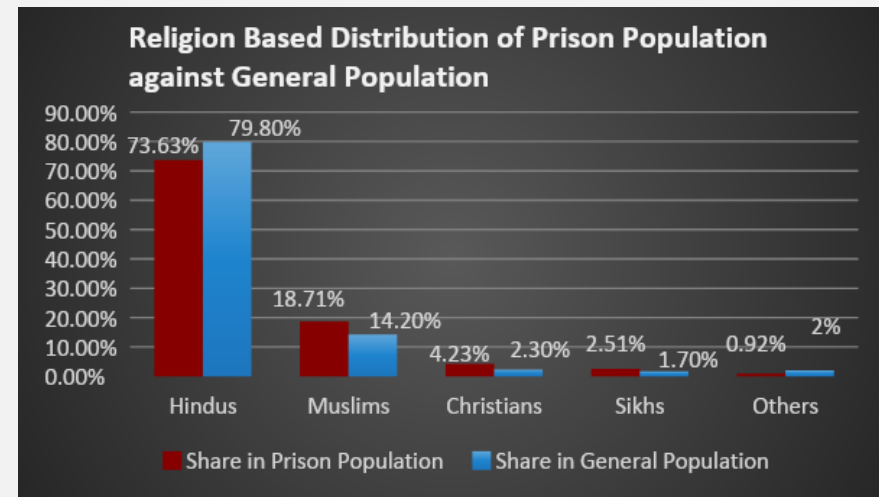
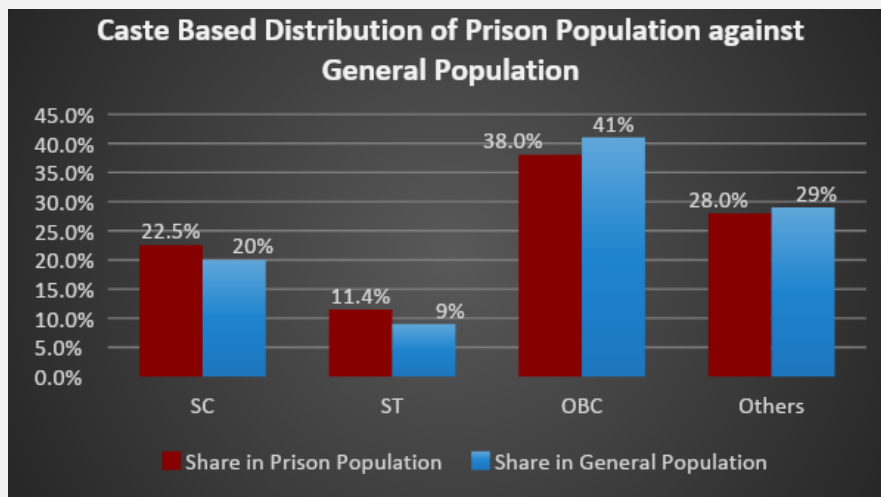
- ☞ **Hindus comprised 73.6% of the total prison population** against their share of 79.8% in the general population.
- ☞ **Muslims comprised 18.7% of the total prison population** against their share of 14.2% in the general population.
- ☞ **Christians comprised 2.5% of the total prison population** against their share of 2.3% in the general population.
- ☞ **Sikhs comprised 4.2% of the total prison population** against their share of 1.7% in the general population.
- ☞ Persons belonging to 'other' religions formed 0.9% of the total prison population.



- 👉 One out three (30%) detainees in India was a Muslim in 2021.
- 👉 42% of all prisoners categorized as 'others' were Muslims in 2021.

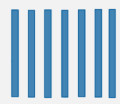
Caste Profile

- 👉 22.5% belonged to Scheduled Caste against their share of 20% in the general population.
- 👉 11.4% belonged to Scheduled Tribes against their share of 9% in the general population.
- 👉 38% belonged to Other Backward Castes (OBC) against their share of 41% in the general population.
- 👉 28% belonged to other castes against their share of 30% in the general population.



**CHRI's Comments**

A large section of prisoners in India not only come from socially vulnerable backgrounds but also lack the ability to read and understand their case documents and processes. It is indispensable for the accused or convict to understand the



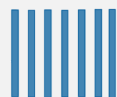
legal procedure and documentation to enable their participation in the justice process. It also calls for focused learning programmes for less educated and illiterate prisoners to ensure that they have access to information. The Legal Aid Functionaries must run programmes to ensure that lack of education does not hamper prisoner's access to their rights.

Religion and caste data of prisoners show that the marginalised communities – Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes – are overrepresented in prisons. The high overrepresentation of Muslims in the detinue population and 'others' category of prisoners is more concerning. The overrepresentation of marginalized communities reflects an objective bias in the criminal justice system. The legal aid institutions and judiciary must take cognizance of the overrepresentation and identify the systematic lacunae in the working of the CJS to address this situation.

## VI. PRISON STAFF

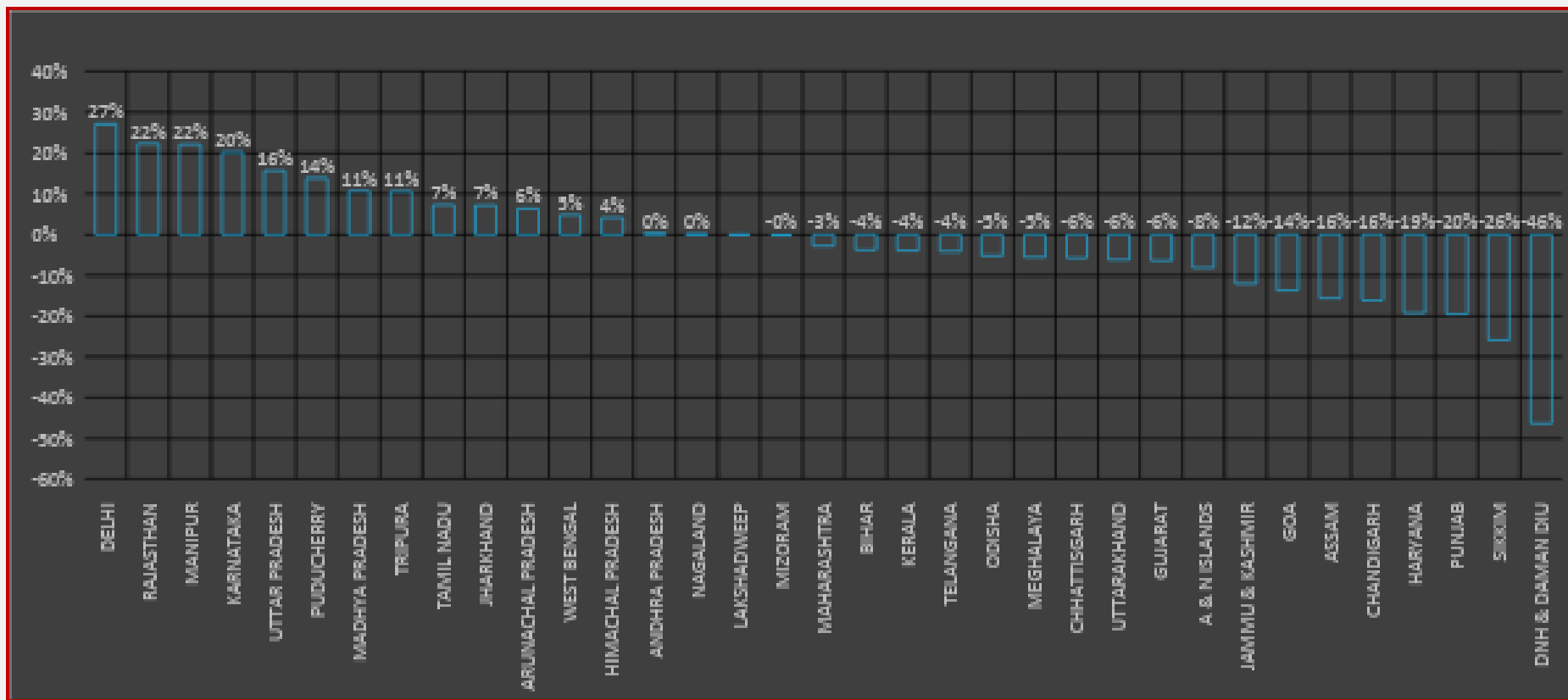
### Findings PSI 2021

- ☞ In 2021, there were **64,449 actual staff in prisons** against the **sanctioned strength of 87,479**. The **average staff vacancy** in Indian prisons has slightly reduced from **31.2% in 2017 to 26.3% in 2021**.
- ☞ **Nagaland (0.3%), Arunachal Pradesh (9.1%)** and Kerala (**11.1%**) are the top three states to have **lowest staff vacancy** in their prisons.
- ☞ **Ladakh (83.1%), Jharkhand (59.3%)** and Sikkim (**52.3%**) have **highest staff vacancy** in their prisons.
- ☞ From 2017 to 2021, **actual prison staff strength** has **increased by 12.5%** against an **increase of 7.4% in the sanctioned strength**.
- ☞ In the last five years, **Delhi tops the list in reducing staff vacancy** by 27 percentage points, followed by **Rajasthan and Manipur** which reduced it by **22 percentage points each**.



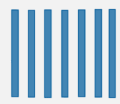
- ☞ In terms of worsening staff vacancy, from 2017 to 2021, **DND & Dadar and Nagar Haveli tops the list by worsening its staff vacancy by 46 percentage points** followed by **Sikkim which increased it by 26 percentage points** and **Punjab by 20 percentage points**.
- ☞ **20 states and UTs have no sanctioned probation or welfare officers. 24 states and UTs have no sanctioned psychologists/psychiatrists. 19 states and UTs have no sanctioned social workers.**
- ☞ In the last five years, the **inmate to staff ratio** has diminished marginally from **7:1 in 2017 to 8:1 in 2021**.
- ☞ The ratio of **inmate to correctional staff** at **625:1 in 2021** has marginally improved from **737:1 in 2017**.
- ☞ The ratio of **inmate to medical staff** at **266:1 in 2021** has worsened from **225: 1 in 2017**.





### CHRI's Comments

High vacancy in prison staff has become a norm of Indian prisons. Almost one third of the sanctioned prison staff positions lie vacant and the rest of the staff consequently is over-burdened. High staff vacancy implies security risk and far reaching implications on prison services. An overburdened staff cannot be expected to adhere to ideal statutory standards of correctional services.



The 8:1 inmate to staff ratio is not truly reflective of the actual number of staff available to tend to the prisoners. The number of actual staff includes the staff that is posted at the headquarters, trainings institutes as well as those who are suspended or on leave or deputation etc. Further, the distribution of the cadres in actual prison staff further reveal an extremely disproportionate inmate to staff ratio in correctional and medical category. The fact that there are no psychiatrists/psychologists, welfare officers, probation officers and social workers in more than half of the States lays bare the correctional capacity of prison system in India.

Of the total 886 correction staff in Indian prisons, there are 350 probation/ welfare officers and 503 social workers. In absence of any clear and robust scheme on the role of social workers and probation officers during the trial, in prisons and in aftercare services for the prisoners who are released after longer durations, the strength of Probabtion and Welfare Officers does not seem to be utilized enough.

In 2021, a meagre 20% of total prison staff received trainings which include refresher / specialised / re-orientation courses. Lack of trainings coupled with over burdening of prison staff because of high overcrowding and high vacancy is plaguing the prison system inevitably putting the prisoners at the receiving end of a struggling prison administration.

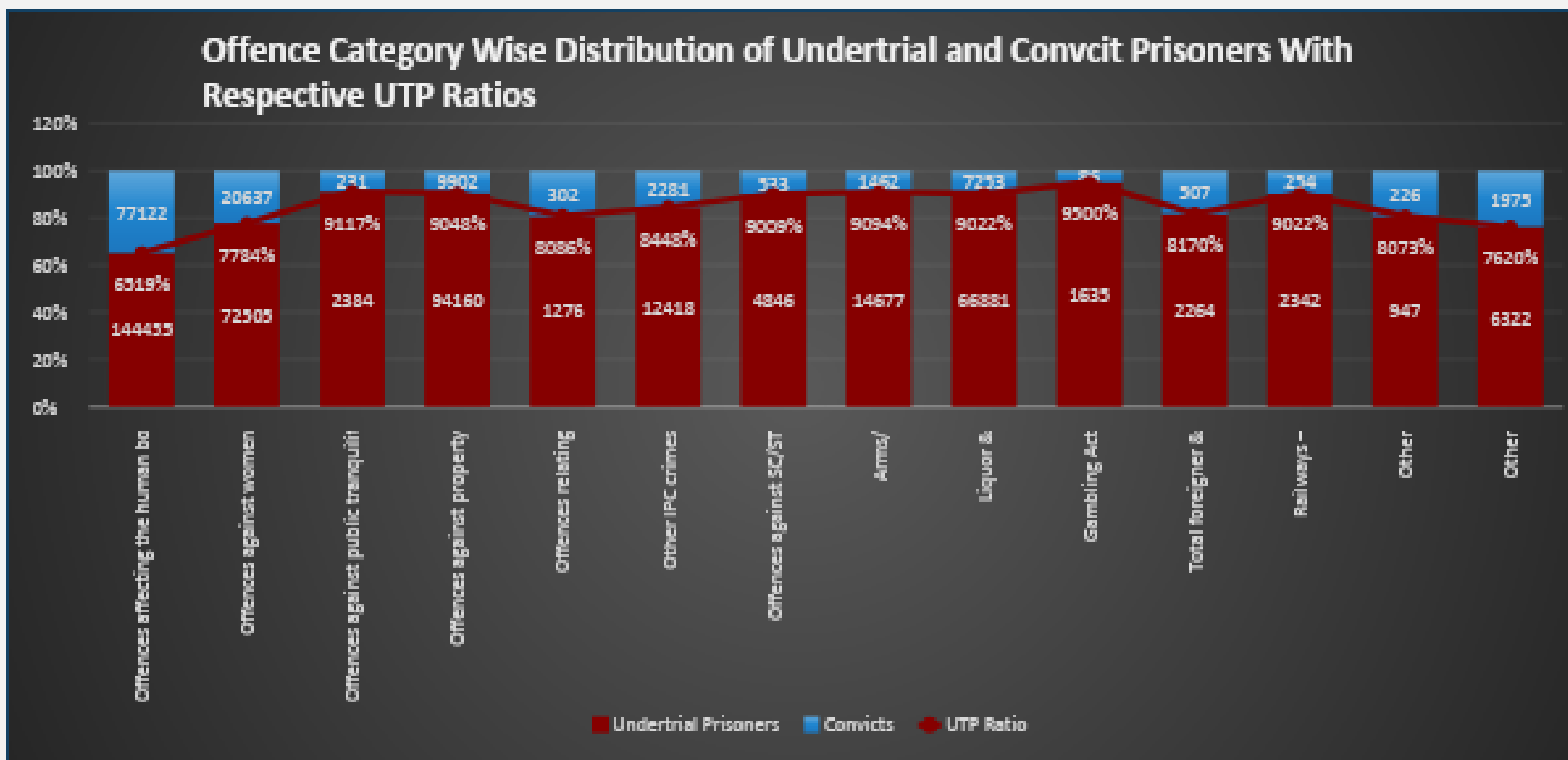
## VII. PRISON POPULATION OFFENCE WISE

### Findings PSI 2021

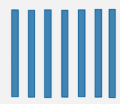
- 👉 **79% prisoners (4,34,612)** were incarcerated for **offences under Indian Penal Code (IPC)**, **75% of whom were undertrials.**
- 👉 **21% prisoners (1,15,271)** were incarcerated for **offences under Special and Local Laws (SLL)**, **89% of whom were undertrials.**



- Highest 40% prisoners were incarcerated for offences affecting human body, 19% were incarcerated for offences against property and 17% were incarcerated for offences against women.
- Within each category of offence, the highest share of undertrial prisoners (95%) was among the prisoners incarcerated for offences under 'Gambling Act' whereas the lowest share of undertrial prisoners (64%) was for IPC offences against human body (excluding offences against women).



CHRI's Comments



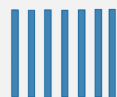
The graph above helps in identifying the category of offences under which a high majority of the prisoners are awaiting completion of their trial. This may shed light on long term measures to bring down the high undertrial prisoners' ratio which was at an all-time high in 2021. It should be matter of concern for the judiciary to investigate the reasons behind such high ratio of undertrial prisoners under specific offences such as offences under 'gambling act', 'offences against public tranquility', 'offences relating to documents and property marks', 'total crime against SC/ST', 'Arms and Espionage related acts', etc. where the UTP ratio under that particular category of offence is more than 80%.

CHRI urges stakeholders to examine the reasons behind such extremely disproportionate share of persons yet to be convicted or acquitted behind bars for offences related to Special and Local Laws. It appears that special acts and penal provisions under local laws where the police has wider discretionary powers, have extremely high undertrial proportion indicating the misuse of law to incarcerate innocent individuals.

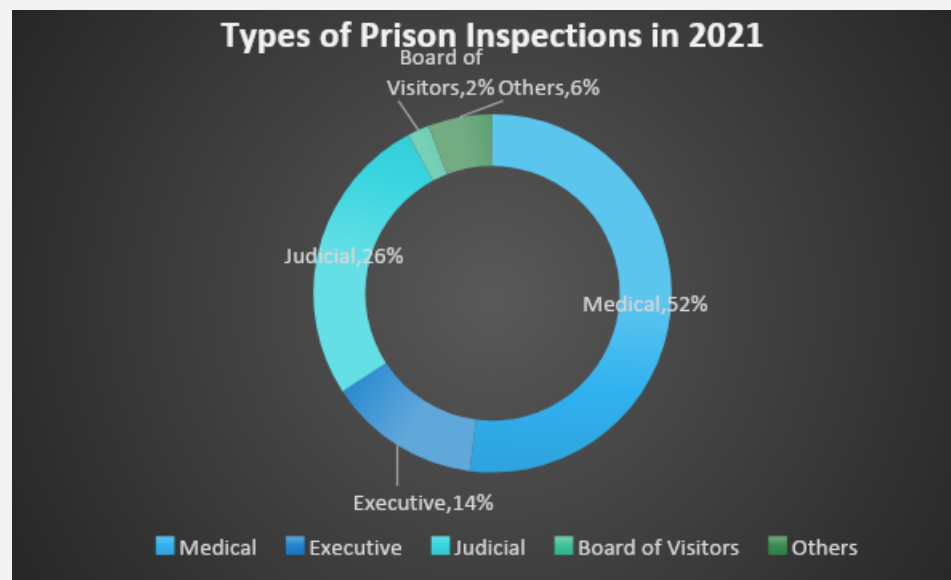
## VIII. PRISON INSPECTIONS

### Findings PSI 2021

- In 2021, there were a total of 42, 298 prison inspections in India.
- On an average, there were approximately three inspections per month on an average in India.
- **52%** of the inspections were **Medical**, **14%** were **Executive**, **26%** were **Judicial**, **2%** were by the **Board of Visitors** and **6%** were categorised as **others**.
- Haryana recorded highest average of 10 prison inspections per prison per month and lowest was recorded by Puducherry and Manipur with not even one inspection per prison per month.
- Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Ladakh and Lakshadweep had just one prison inspection per prison per month on an average.

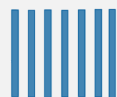


- There were no visits by Board of Visitors in the prisons of Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Jharkhand, Manipur, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Telangana, Chandigarh, Ladhak, Lakshadweep and Puducherry.



### CHRI's Comments

This year's prison inspection data released by the NCRB in its additional tables for the PSI 2021, includes information on total number of visits by Board of Visitors in each State/UT. In previous years, the categorization did not include BOVs as a separate category. The findings of PSI 2021 are a reminder and reflection of no change in the dismal functioning of BOVs recorded by CHRI in its [last report on the BOVs](#): 9 States did not have BOVs in 2018 as per the report and as per PSI 2021 11 States/UTs had no BOV prison visits in the year 2021 (Jharkhand, Chandigarh and Puducherry being common). Board of Visitors comprises official as well as non-official visitors who are required to meet regularly to discuss issues of concern and recommend solutions.



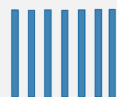
Prisons require monitoring by external and internal visitors to observe, document and address the various issues faced by the prisons and prisoners, both. Visits by external and internal visitors to prisons aid in prison administration and safeguard rights of prisoners. Prison visitors include magistrates and judges, human rights commissions, officers from public works, medical and health, social welfare departments and respected people drawn from local society. They monitor and report prison infrastructure, prison records, prisoners' living conditions, etc. and listen to grievances of the prisoners, making the prisons transparent and accountable to the society.

A poor monitoring of prisons is antithetical to the well established as well as evolving ethos of prison system in our criminal justice system. Lack of transparency in prisons can fail the entire criminal justice system by deligitimising the purpose of punishment in the criminal jurisprudence enshrined in the court judgements.

## IX. EXPENDITURE ON PRISONS

### Findings PSI 2021

- ☞ On an average **31.3% of the total budget** of prisons in India was **spent on prisoners**.
- ☞ **Rs. 104 were spent on per prisoner per day** on an average in 2021.
- ☞ **Rs. 56 per day** per prisoner was spent **on food**.
- ☞ **Rs. 5 per day** per prisoner was spent **on medical**.

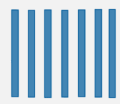


- ☞ **Rs. 3 per day per** prisoner was spent on vocational/educational activities, welfare activities and clothing combined.
- ☞ Rs. 39 per day per prisoner was spent on ‘other’ expenses of the prisoners.



### CHRI's Comments

In last five years, per prisoner per day expenditure has increased marginally from Rs. 102 to Rs. 104 in 2021. In 2019, per prisoner per day expenditure was Rs. 113. The expenses on welfare activities, medical and educational programmes are too meagre. The data also highlights the anomaly in the data recording on budget and expenditure by the States like Haryana which claim to be have spent 100% of their expenditure on the prisoners.



The other expenses which constitute second highest share of the expenditure on prisoners after food include transport for court hearings, transfers, hospital, sanitation, hygiene, etc. During the pandemic it was expected that the expenditure on sanitation, hygiene, etc. would have increased sharply however such increase is not recorded in the data.

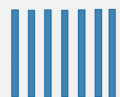
The data on expenditure on prisoners shows that the prison institutions do not have adequate funds nor do they have staff (as indicated earlier) for imparting correctional services. The extreme variation in the state wise share of expenditure on prisoners indicates lack of uniformity in resources for sustainable living conditions in prisons, which continues to be an area of concern.

## X. DEATHS IN PRISONS

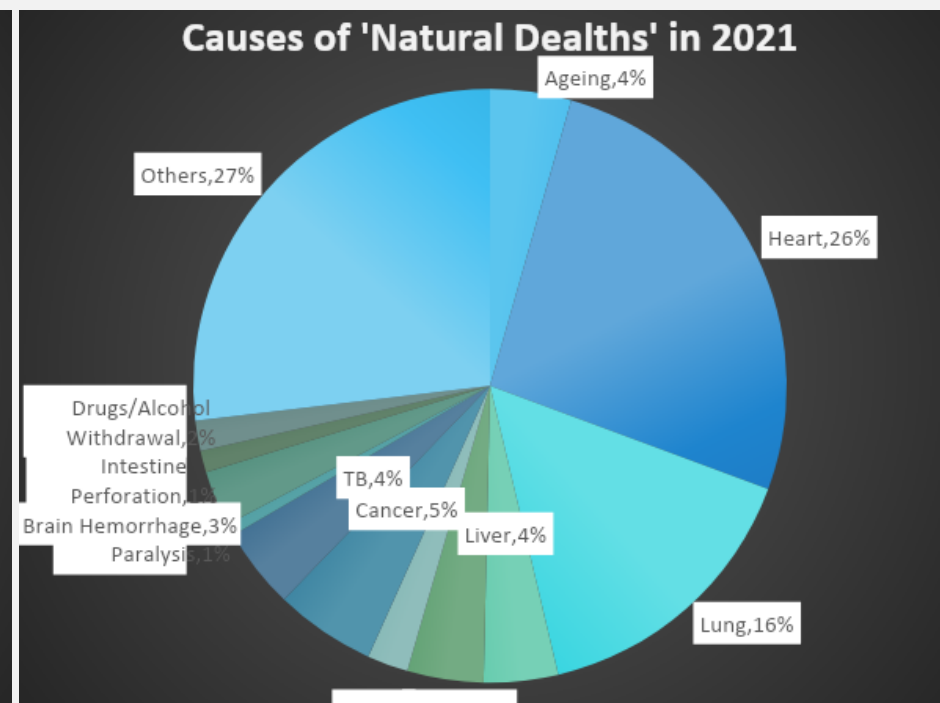
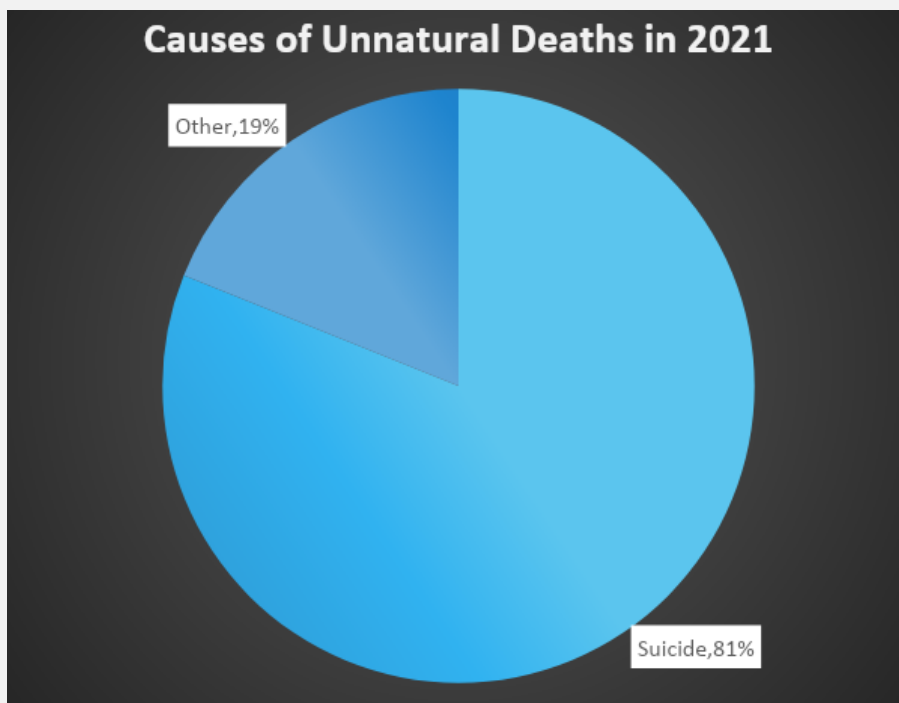
### Findings PSI 2021

- ☞ There were **2,116 deaths** in Indian prisons **in 2021**, 229 deaths more than in 2020 and 445 more than in 2017.
- ☞ **1,879 deaths** were attributed to **natural causes**, 237 more than the previous year.
- ☞ **185 deaths** were attributed to **unnatural causes**, 4 less than the previous year.
- ☞ 150 prisoners died by committing suicide in 2021.
- ☞ The **death rate** in Indian prisons in 2021 was 382 per lakh prison population which is marginally less than 386.3 per lakh population in 2020.
- ☞ **Highest death rate of 800 per lakh population** was recorded in **Nagaland**, followed by **749.1 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands** and 642.8 in **Meghalaya**.

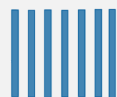




- ☞ The **rate of suicides** in Indian prisons in 2021 was at 27.07 per lakh prison population, marginally lower than **31.9 in 2020**.
- ☞ **The rate of suicides in Indian prisons in 2021 was** almost three times that in the general population (12) in the same year.



**CHRI's Comments**



Ideally no person should die in incarceration and no death of a person in the custody of the State should be called 'natural'. Nevertheless, the fact that despite the functioning of HPCs to decongest prisons during the pandemic a higher number of prisoners died of 'ageing' and due to 'lung diseases' is alarming. While ill health, comorbidities and old age were considered as eligibility for interim release during the pandemic in some States, it was not uniformly considered throughout the country as eligibility criteria.

It is a well settled principle in penal jurisprudence that the punishment must be limited to the purpose it is ought to serve and in case of confinement of undertrial prisoners it is only to ensure their presence in the court and to prevent harm to victim or destruction of evidence. The fact that people are dying in prison due to old age or terminal illnesses such as cancer, TB, HIV etc. negates the purpose of confinement. Persons suffering with such diseases and other issues of drug and alcohol addictions should not have been in prisons in the first place. It is a failure of robust prison monitoring that such persons could not be identified in time and saved from the so called 'natural death' in a prison setting.

The pandemic led to severe curbs on the rights of prisoners, particularly their communication with families and lawyers, access to courts, access to medical care, access to rehabilitation and vocational facilities, etc. These exacerbated vulnerabilities of prisoners have been recognised worldwide and has been at the center of several statements and calls upon governments to prioritise prisons during the pandemic. Respective States and UT governments, especially where the number of suicides increased in comparison to the previous year must enquire the reasons behind such high rate of suicides in prisons and must take preventive measures at the earliest. The fact that **24 states and UTs** had **no sanctioned psychologists/psychiatrists** and that there was only 1 correctional staff for 625 inmates in India on an average must be introspected in the light of the fact that the suicide rate in prisons was close to three times than that in the general population in 2021.

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