

CRIME STATISTICS - A WORD OF CAUTION!

Crime is manifestation of myriad complex factors. The causes of criminal behavior lie in the social processes and structures. People commit crimes due to the process of socialization that does not develop strong sense of right or wrong and due to the emerging opportunities, the enlarging desires that act as strong motivation for taking to crime to fulfill these desires. The genesis of crime can be traced to interplay of various social, economic, demographic, local and institutional factors. The presumption that crime occurs because of the failures of police therefore displays a complete lack of understanding of the theories of criminal behavior.

Further, these social factors along with other latent and concomitant factors vary significantly across different regions, states and societies. The differences in procedures over large geographical regions and styles of functioning inherent between organizations also create wide variances. Hence, doing comparison among States/districts/regions/social groups etc. on the basis of these published data alone will be too simplistic and is best avoided.

Further, no weightage has been assigned to the gravity or nature of the crime. All crimes have thus been treated equal in counting the total crime for a State or City. More crime registered say, in a city is, therefore, not an indicator of its being comparatively unsafe than the city where total crime may be less.

Lastly, as crime increases with population, Crime per lakh population (*Crime Rate*) may be a better indicator to assess increase or decrease in crime. However, a word of caution here! The primary presumption that the upward swing in police data indicates an increase in crime and thus a reflection of the ineffectiveness of the police is fallacious. 'Rise in crime' and 'increase in registration of crime by police' are clearly two different things, a fact which is often confused. Thus an oft-repeated expectation from certain quarters that an effective police administration will be able to keep the crime figures low is misplaced. Increase in crime numbers in a State police data may in fact be on account of certain citizen centric police initiatives, like launching of e-FIR facility or women Helpdesks, etc. The increase or decrease in crime numbers, however, does call for a professional investigation of underlying factors jointly with local communities to suitably address the issues involved.