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**CHAPTER 4**  
**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

This chapter contains analysis and interpretation of data. Since there were two sources of data collection, Primary and Secondary Data, this chapter has two sections dealing with both data sources and its analysis. The first section presents the analysis of primary data which was gathered through interviews with parents of missing children. In the second section of this chapter, quantitative Government data of reported cases from the year 2000- 2011 has been compiled, analyzed and interpreted from social work perspective. Secondary data was obtained from Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar and police officials provided additional information related to the data.

#### **A. Primary Data: Interview with Parents of Missing Children**

The researcher obtained informed consent from the key respondents before proceeding with the interview process. The sensitive nature of the study made it imperative for the researcher to follow an informal approach during the interview process. Care was taken to ensure that the respondents' feelings were respected which entailed altering the sequence of questions on several occasions.

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## 1. Background of the Missing child

**Table 1: Age of the child when missing**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-3 years	3	4.11	1	0.87	4	2.13
4-8 years	10	13.70	12	10.43	22	11.7
9-12 years	18	24.66	9	7.83	27	14.36
13-18 years	42	57.53	93	80.87	135	71.81
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 2.13% of the missing children were between 0-3 years of age, 11.7% were between 4-8 years of age, 14.36 were between 9-12 years of age and 71.81% were between 13-18 years of age at the time they went missing.

The highest number of children missing is from the age group 13-17 years, with females constituting the bulk of the missing at 80%. This finding is consistent with all studies conducted elsewhere in the world. It provides credence to the belief held by the Police that the majority of missing children listed every year are actually runaways and are not taken against their will. According to a study in the UK, the average age at which young people first go missing from both home and care is 13 years (Wade et al 1998; Graham and Bowling 1995; Rees 1993). However, a substantial minority first go missing much younger than that. The Safe on the Streets survey found that a quarter had first run away or been forced to leave home before the age of 11, while the York University survey of runaways from care found that one fifth had first gone missing (from home or care) before the age of 12 (Safe on the Streets 1999; Wade et al 1998). There is also evidence that those who first go missing at an early age are more likely to run away more often (Safe on the Streets 1999).

According to Betty-Ann Blaine, in a study done by the organization Hear the Children Cry, deterioration of family life; instability/shifting households; crippling levels of poverty; lack of adequate social support systems and heartbreaking levels of hopelessness are key factors leading to children running away from homes.

**Table 2: Occupation of respondent parents**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Service	21	28.77	42	36.52	63	33.51
Daily wager	38	52.05	50	43.48	88	46.81
Self-employed	14	19.18	23	20	37	19.68
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 33.51% of the parents are employees, 46.81% are daily wagers, 19.68% are self-employed. Majority of the missing children come from impoverished backgrounds with parents who eke out a living and live a hand to mouth existence. The parents of all the missing children at Nithari were poor, migrant labourers who settled in the Noida suburb to make a living. Poverty and the issue of missing children are interlinked. People living a hand to mouth existence are less likely to have access to safe places for their children or have adequate resources to meet the needs of their children, much less ensure their child's safety.

In Bangladesh, majority of children who go missing are children of pavement dwellers, the most vulnerable of society. UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, estimates that 400 women and children fall victim to trafficking in Bangladesh each month. Most are between the ages of 12 and 16 and are forced to work in the sex industry. Some become domestic slaves, and the boys are often taken to the Middle East and forced to be camel jockeys.

**Table 3: Total Annual Income**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1-2 lacs	52	71.23	63	54.78	115	61.17
2-3 lacs	13	17.81	33	28.70	46	24.47
More than 4 lacs	8	10.96	19	16.52	27	14.36
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 61.17% have an annual income of 1-2 lacs, 24.47% have an annual income of 2-3 lacs and 14.36% have an annual income exceeding 4 lacs.

According to a study done by a unit in the Department of Local Government in Jamaica, there is a strong link between missing children and poverty levels. The majority of children who go missing are driven from home because of poor economic circumstances which deprive them of some basic needs. The study further points out that the authorities had noticed this pattern years prior to 2009. The study confirms that the children from working-class homes are the most vulnerable in society because of the breakdown in family life. Many of the homes are single-parent households (mostly mothers only) that, unlike their upper middle-class and upper-class counterparts, lack the financial means to implement security mechanisms.

The needs brought on by the dire financial straits of lower middle-class homes often result in parents sending the children out on the streets to sell quick-cash items in a desperate bid to supplement the family's already thin disposable income. These children are put at risk and their vulnerability is further advanced with their exposure in the public domain, states the study.

**Table 4: Marital Status**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	43	58.90	61	53.04	104	55.32
Separated	11	15.07	21	18.26	32	17.02
Divorced	7	9.59	13	11.30	20	10.64
Widowed	12	16.44	20	17.39	32	17.02
Total	73	100	115	99.99	188	100

The above table shows that 55.32% of the parents interviewed are married, 17.02% are separated, 10.64% are divorced and 17.02% are widowed. While the many of the missing children have both parents present in the home, a large segment belong to single parent units, whether it is separation, divorce or death. Children with a single parent are more vulnerable as their needs might not be adequately fulfilled in a setting where a single parent is solely responsible for providing for the children as well as raising them.

Within the family setting, there are numerous issues which result in parents being alienated from their children. These include issues of parenting, of children believing that at that age they need greater independence or there might be an absence of sufficient family support. That would lead some children to actually leave the house for a period of time.

Another issue is that when single parents go to work, their children are usually left exposed, causing them to fall prey to various forms of dangers. According to The Office of national Statistics, UK, Children who grow up in one-parent homes are more likely to suffer poor health, do badly at school and fall into crime or drug abuse when they are teenagers.

**Table 5: Household description**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Both parents present, married	43	58.90	61	53.04	104	55.32
Single parent, Father only	5	6.85	12	10.43	17	9.04
Single Parent, mother only	25	34.25	42	36.52	67	35.64
Total	73	100	115	99.99	188	100

The above table shows that 55.32% of the missing children have both the parents present at home, 9.04% have only fathers and 35.64% have only mothers.

According to Kirkland who studied runaways, most of the children who run away are from single-parent households, with issues within the home proving to be a major push factor. Abuse is a common problem. A lot of them are mentally abused at home and a few of them are sexually abused. Most of them are unhappy at home. Those who runaway are unhappy as they don't feel the parent loves them, they feel neglected, they don't have money to buy necessary.

These are the factors causing them to run away as they believe there is something out there better than what they have. Kirkland also states that a lot of the cases involve women who are economically destitute leaving the older ones to take care of younger siblings, resulting in some of them leaving the household.

Kirkland believes that in order to solve the missing-children crisis, the problem of poor parenting has to be tackled. The vast majority of young people run away due to problems at home (Safe on the Streets 1999; Brennan et al 1978). The Safe on the Streets study found that, where disharmony in families is less severe, young people living in stepfamilies or with a lone parent are significantly more likely to run away than those living with both birth parents. However, where family disharmony is severe, young people are equally likely to run away from any type



of family. For those who ran away repeatedly, particularly high levels of family problems and disruption were identified.

**Table 6: General level of adjustment in the household**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very good- things are fairly harmonious at home	11	15.07	35	30.43	46	24.47
Fairly good- problems from time to time but nothing serious	19	26.03	26	22.61	45	23.94
Somewhat poor- there are problems which needs attention	27	36.99	34	29.57	61	32.45
Very poor- there are many serious issues	16	21.92	20	17.39	36	19.15
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 24.47% of the parents described the general level of adjustment in their household to be very good, 23.94% described it as fairly good, 32.45% described it as somewhat poor with some problems needing attention, while 19.15% described it as very poor, with several serious issues.

International studies have shown that breakdown in family life and the prevalence of poverty are major factors in the developing countries for the staggering statistics on missing children. A household which have many serious issues due to or arising out of poverty such as an alcoholic father can result in breakdown of the family. Children from disharmonious homes are more likely to run away or be lured away.

A report for the Children's Society in UK found one child runs away from their parents, foster family or care home every five minutes. Those from broken homes are three times more likely to run away as those who have a stable background. Arguments and other family conflict play a massive part in a child's decision to run. Poor quality family relationships and neglectful

parenting are making children and young people feel helpless. According to the survey, 70,000 children aged between 14 and 16 run away from home each year, but ‘substantial numbers’ of younger children also flee.

2. Behavior of Child

Table 7: Usual behaviour of the child at home

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very well- behaviour is not a concern	9	12.33	24	20.87	33	17.55
Fairly well- minor problem behaviour	21	28.77	30	26.09	51	27.13
Fair- Some problem behaviour need attention	11	15.07	23	20.00	34	18.09
Poor- serious problem behaviour	32	43.84	38	33.04	70	37.23
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 17.55% of parents described the usual behavior of the missing child as very well with behavior not a concern, 27.13% described it as fairly well with minor problem behavior, 18.09% described it as fair, with only some problem behavior which needed attention while 37.23% described it as poor with the missing child exhibiting serious problem behavior.

Behaviour of the child can be a useful indicator in assessing the situation when a child goes missing. Problem behaviours usually emerge on the onset of teen years and it is during this time that conflicts arise between parents and their children.

With 37% of children being classified as their parents as having had serious behavior problems, it can be interpreted that there were conflict situation at home with frequent clashes between the parents and child, ultimately resulting in the child running away. More males are reported to

have had serious problem behavior than females. However, more females are reported to have had some behavior issues.

Most runaways are older teenagers, ages 15 to 17, with only about one-quarter ages 14 and younger. Juveniles of different races run away at about the same rates and boys and girls run away in equal proportions. Although juveniles from all socioeconomic statuses run away, the majority are from working-class and lower-income homes, possibly because of the additional family stress created by a lack of income and resources (Posnor, *Hungry Hearts: Runaway and Homeless Youth in the United States*. 2000)

**Table 8: Temperament of the child**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Argues excessively with parent/parents	21	28.77	20	17.39	41	21.81
Has frequent temper tantrums	12	16.44	23	20.00	35	18.62
Fights excessively with other children	9	12.33	4	3.48	13	6.91
Has friends parents do not approve of	13	17.81	18	15.65	31	16.49
Refuses to follow rules	11	15.07	14	12.17	25	13.30
None of these traits	7	9.58	36	31.30	43	22.87
Total	73	100	115	99.99	188	100

The above table shows that 21.81% of the missing children argued excessively with their parents, 18.62% had frequent temper tantrums, 6.91% fought excessively with other children, 16.49% had friends the parents did not approve of, 13.30% refused to follow rules, while 22.87% did not possess any of these traits. More females are reported by parents that they had friends that the

parents did not approve of, and more males are reported to have had excessive arguments with parents.

In many cases involving young teenage girls, relationship with members of the opposite sex which parents disapprove of is often a cause for conflict. A high number of children are reported to have excessive arguments with their parents which requires investigation and intervention in order to prevent relationship breakdown in the family. While the temperament of the child is important for the kind of relationship a child has with his parents, it is equally important that parents have the necessary communication skills to deal with their children and relate to them in a better and more effective way in accordance with the needs of the child.

**Table 9: Academic performance at school**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Does not attend school	11	15.07	29	25.22	40	21.28
Excellent	9	12.33	16	13.91	25	13.30
Good	14	19.18	19	16.52	33	17.55
Average	27	36.99	29	25.22	56	29.79
Poor	12	16.44	22	19.13	34	18.09
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 21.28% of children did not attend school, 13.30% have been described by their parents as excellent students, 17.55% have been described as good, 29.79% as average and 18.09% were described by their parents as having poor academic performance.

The Relationship between Academic Factors and Running Away among Adolescents was a study conducted by Kimberly Thut Rogers, Elizabeth A. Segal and Michael Graham in which they explored the attitude toward school and academic competency of young people who decide to

run away from home. A two-group design was used with 26 runaway and 23 non runaway youths. Academic competency was measured using questions from a standardized achievement test. It was found that runaway youths had lower academic scores, and a link between academic performance and tendency to run away was established.

Teens with poor academic performance and other delinquent tendencies have a higher probability of going missing, and have higher chances of running away from home. Runaways have higher rates of depression, physical and sexual abuse, alcohol and drug problems, delinquency, school problems, and difficulties with peers than juveniles who do not run away.

**Table 10: Child's behaviour at school**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Does not attend school	11	15.07	29	25.22	40	21.28
Excellent	3	4.11	10	8.70	13	6.91
Good	15	20.55	16	13.91	31	16.49
Average	21	28.77	27	23.48	48	25.53
Fair	10	13.70	21	18.26	31	16.49
Poor	13	17.81	12	10.43	25	13.30
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 21.28% of the children did not attend school, 6.91% of the parents described the missing child's behavior at school as excellent, 16.49% as good, 25.53% as average, 16.49% as fair, and 13.30% as poor.

According to Biehal and Wade, 2002, there is a strong association between running away and non-attendance at school, due to exclusion from peers or bunking class. The study further state

that young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties are more likely than others to go missing repeatedly. Inability to adjust to academic routine and peer group leads to a sense of isolation and cause the child to run away from a distressing situation. Bullying at school, rejection, and feelings of inferiority might cause frustration in the child and attempt to address the situation by escaping from it would seem to be a solution to the child.

**Table 11: Activities during spare time in the day**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Does not have any spare time	9	12.33	16	13.91	25	13.30
Does homework	12	16.44	25	21.74	37	19.68
Plays with friends	29	39.73	28	24.35	57	30.32
Watches TV at home	18	24.66	39	33.91	57	30.32
None	5	6.85	7	6.09	12	6.38
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 13.30% of the missing children did not have any spare time for activities during the day, 19.68% did homework, 30.32% played with friends, 30.32% watched television at home, while 6.38% were described as doing none of these activities.

The incidence of children who watch television during the day is fairly high. Many parents are unable to monitor children as they watch unsuitable content. Such children are exposed to violence and glamour of a fast life as depicted on television, and are often unable to process what they see, resulting in picking up attitudes and behavior which are often undesirable.

**Table 12: Frequency of delinquent behaviour**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Skipping school	16	21.92	13	11.30	29	15.43
Stealing money	12	16.44	9	7.83	21	11.17
Begging	8	10.96	2	1.74	10	5.32
Consuming Alcohol/Drugs	9	12.33	0	0	9	4.79
None of these	28	38.36	91	79.13	119	63.30
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 15.43% of the missing children were described by their parents as having delinquent behavior of skipping school, 11.17% stole money, 5.32% had the habit of begging, 4.79% consumed alcohol/drugs, while 63.30% did not exhibit any of these delinquent tendencies.

The frequency of delinquent behavior is not high, which is an encouraging sign. Most children are reported not to possess any delinquent behavior, and among those who do possess such traits, majority of them prefer to skip school. Schools therefore need to monitor children who have the tendency to be absent and ensure preventive measures to curtail this problem.

### 3. Parental satisfaction with Police response

**Table 13: Initial contact with Police**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Called emergency number	12	16.44	17	14.78	29	15.43
Walked to police station	55	75.34	84	73.04	139	73.94
Approached a policeman on the street	6	8.22	14	12.17	20	10.64
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 15.43% of the parents initial contact with the police was by calling the emergency number, 73.94% walked to the police station and 10.64% approached a policeman on the street.

From this table it is known that the maximum number of parents have directly gone to the police station to report the missing child. The implication is that police need to be trained to deal with face to face interactions of parents who come to report a missing child. The approach of the police in dealing with parents who would obviously be distressed is of great importance. A sensitive attitude and courteous demeanor needs to be inculcated in the general behavior of the police officers when dealing with parents of missing children.

**Table 14: Initial response of the police**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Told you to call or come back later	18	24.66	21	18.26	39	20.74
Took basic identifying information about the incident	28	38.36	42	36.52	70	37.23
Suggested ways to look for your child	22	30.14	34	29.57	56	29.79
Did not respond	5	6.85	18	15.65	23	12.23
Total	73	100	115	100	188	99.99

The above table shows that 20.74% of the parents described the initial response of the police as asking them to call or come back later, 37.23% said the police took basic identifying information about the incident, 29.79% said the police suggested ways to look for the missing child, while 12.23% said the police did not respond.



The police officer's attitude was most commonly cited as not particularly helpful at the reporting stage. Delays in taking action were most commonly cited as the area for improvement at this stage. A number of respondents stated they believed, or were told, that police would take no action until 24 hours after the missing child was reported. As most missing children's cases are resolved with no apparent harm to the child, the police give more priority in responding to reports of crime. The police have to deal with limited resources and cannot afford to invest substantial resources in trying to locate a missing child.

It is very important for the police to be supportive and display a non-judgmental attitude. A sympathetic and sensitive approach by police can help alleviate some of the distress experienced by families when a child goes missing. This can be inculcated within the police force through frequent sensitization programmes.

**Table 15: Initial steps taken by the police**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Took basic information along with child's photo	73	100%	115	100%	188	100%
Asked for friends/relatives to contact	14	19.18 %	24	20.86%	38	20.21%
Searched house/ neighbourhood	10	13.70%	20	17.39%	30	15.95%
Put out an announcement	32	43.82%	45	39.14%	77	40.95%

The above table shows that in all the cases the police took basic information of the child along with photo, 21.21% of the police asked for friends /relatives to contact, 15.95% searched house /neighbourhood and 40.95% put out an announcement of the missing child.

The table depicts that there is a lack of a standard operating procedure when it comes to initial police response to report of a missing child. There is a crucial need for detailed, police

procedures and policies for responding to missing child cases as it would result in more proactive investigations. As well as describing the roles and responsibilities of officers or units assigned to specific investigative functions, search and rescue, and analytical functions, comprehensive policies and procedures should include directions concerning the actions to take place when a report is first received.

Actions taken by the police officers during the preliminary stages of a missing child incident are of extreme importance, especially if the case develops into a criminal matter or long term investigation.

**Table 16: Instructions given by the Police**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Suggest where to look for the child	11	15.07	12	10.43	23	12.23
Suggest you call child's friends/relatives	50	68.49	94	81.74	144	76.60
Describe investigative process	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tell you to contact about more information	12	16.43	9	7.83	21	11.17
Total	73	99.99	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 12.23% of the parents said that the police suggested ways to look for their child, 76.60% suggested them to call child's friends/relatives, 0% of the parents said that the police described the investigative process to them, while 11.17% of the parents said that they were asked to contact the police again for more information.

**Table 17: Overall satisfaction with Police response**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Extremely satisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fairly satisfied	28	38.36	19	16.52	47	25
Not satisfied	45	61.64	96	83.48	141	75
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that none of the parents expressed extreme satisfaction with the police response, 25% of the parents are fairly satisfied, while 75% of the parents are not satisfied with the response they received from the police.

According to NISMART, a study done in USA, an overwhelming 84% of parents stated that they were satisfied with the police response when they reported a missing child. This is in stark contrast to 25% of parents in this study, with 75% of parents stating that they were not satisfied that the Police handled the case adequately to trace their missing child.

There are differences in perception between the parents and the police on how aggressively the police should investigate cases. There are typical disparities in the way the parents and the police view the risks and the expected police response. The major reason for the disparity between the police and the parents is likely to rest on a parent's belief that the child is in more danger than the police think to be the case. In addition, lack of empathy and laidback attitude of the police aggravates the feeling of dissatisfaction in police response. The result is therefore an overall dissatisfaction in a significant percentage of the case.

#### 4. Parental description of the episode

**Table 18: Incident as best described**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Runaway	25	34.25	51	44.35	76	40.43
Family abduction	1	1.37	0	0	1	0.53
Stranger abduction	8	10.96	11	9.57	19	10.11
Lost	6	8.22	15	13.04	21	11.17
Unknown	33	45.2	38	33.04	71	37.77
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 40.43% of the parents described the missing child as having run away, 0.53% as a case of family abduction, 10.11% parents suspected a stranger of abducting their child, 11.17% of parents described the incident as the child getting lost, while 37.77% of parents said they do not know.

While majority of the parents are of the belief that their child ran away from home, many parents are clueless as to how and why their child went missing. The reasons could be abduction or the child simply wandering away and getting lost. With increase in crimes against children and organized gangs involved in child prostitution and child labour, there is a need for cases of missing children to be treated as a serious incident and swift response taken accordingly

**Table 19: Realisation that child is missing**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Did not return home from school	11	15.07	12	10.43	23	12.23
Did not return home by mealtime	16	21.92	13	11.30	29	15.43
Did not return home by bedtime	12	16.44	34	29.57	46	24.47
Was gone overnight	34	46.58	56	48.70	90	47.87
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

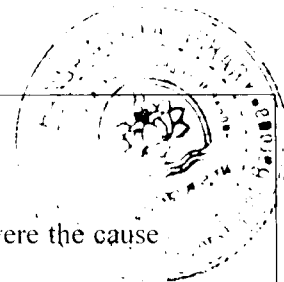
The above table shows that 12.23% of the parents realized their child was missing when he/she did not return home from school, 15.43% did not return home by mealtime, 24.47% did not return home by bedtime and 47.87% of the parents realized their child was missing when they were gone overnight.

Majority of the parents have reported that their child is missing only when they have been gone overnight. It could be interpreted that most of these children are left largely unsupervised while the parents do about their daily chores. Community centres where children are able to spend their time in productive activities would keep them engaged while their parents earn a livelihood. Such community programmes could consist of volunteers who would conduct activities for children while their parents are at work.

**Table 20: Incident leading to the child's missing episode**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Argument about money	16	21.92	13	11.30	29	15.43
Scolding by parents over watching television	12	16.44	31	26.96	43	22.87
Scolding by parent's over school performance	22	30.14	14	12.17	36	19.15
Disapproval of child's romantic relationship	10	13.70	43	37.39	53	28.19
None of the above	13	17.81	14	12.17	27	14.36
Total	73	100	115	99.99	188	100

The above table shows that 15.43% of the parents described the incident leading to the child's missing episode was argument about money, 22.87% was scolding by parents over watching television, 19.15% was scolding by parents over school performance, 28.19% was disapproval of



the child’s romantic relationship, while 14.36% of the parents said none of these were the cause of the child’s missing episode.

The majority of the children has been in conflict with their parents over a romantic relationship and is consistent with the majority of the missing children being runaways. In many instances, girls are groomed by traffickers and lured away with false promises of marriage and a better life.

In all instances, there is usually a trigger which causes the child to run away, such as scolding by parents. The reasons for the scolding are varied, such as poor performance in school, watching too much television but the result is the child feeling isolated and resentful. This results in the child trying to escape the situation at home.

5. Parental concerns

Table 21: Financial distress caused by missing episode

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Moderate- slight change in finances	26	35.62	32	27.83	58	30.85
Serious - unable to afford some necessities	29	39.73	46	40	75	39.89
Extreme- unable to afford many necessities	18	24.65	37	32.17	55	29.26
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 30.85% of the parents experienced moderate financial distress caused by the missing episode. 39.89% of the parents experienced serious financial distress – unable to afford some necessities, while 29.26% of the parents experienced extreme financial distress – being unable to afford many necessities.

According to an Australian study, families and friends (and in some cases missing children themselves) suffer significant health, work, quality of life, emotional, relationship, economic and other impacts associated with the missing person incident. For every case of a missing person, an average of at least 12 people are affected in some way, either emotionally, by health or employment related impacts, effects on quality of life or on relationships, or a combination of some or all of these.

As well as the significant individual and societal impact attached to children going missing, there are also substantial financial implications for the parents concerned. One father left his job to hunt for his missing son, resulting in loss of income and stressful living conditions. Another respondent stated that making copies of his missing child’s photographs, daily visits to the police station, making trips to places where he believed his son might be found, all required resources and for which his daily wages was grossly inadequate. Therefore, one of the major impacts of having a child go missing is an economic impact on the family, apart from emotional and psychological.

**Table 22: Psychological reactions experienced by parents**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Disturbed sleep	36	49.32	56	48.70	92	48.94
Repeated dreams of the missing child	25	34.25	38	33.04	63	33.51
Sudden feelings of anxiety	12	16.44	21	18.26	33	17.55
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 48.94% of the parents reported disturbed sleep due to the child being missing, 33.51% parents had repeated dreams of the missing child, while 17.55% experienced sudden feelings of anxiety.

The psychological literature states that the loss of a child is one of the most distressing events an adult can experience (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Klass, 1988). The loss represents a change in parents' everyday interactions, a redefinition of social roles, or, as some parents describe, a loss of a part of oneself (Conrad, 1998; Klass, 1988). Although most abduction cases are resolved without grave harm to children, the children may still suffer adverse consequences. Parents experience this trauma vicariously with their children, and parents also may struggle with their own feelings of incompetence, guilt, helplessness, or insecurity (Conrad, 1998; Klass, 1988; Rando, 1986).

**Sarah K. Spilman's** study examines how parents of family and nonfamily abducted children cope with stress due to the disappearance of their child. The results show that all parents experience distress, regardless of whether it was a family or nonfamily abduction. Associated with parental distress are factors such as prior family stress, age of the child, recovery status of the child, and measures of social support. More specifically, helpful support from friends has been found to decrease parents' levels of distress, whereas unhelpful support from family and police may increase distress.

Since little is known about how parents actually cope with the grief of their child going missing, research is required in this area so that provision of adequate support can be made for these parents.



**Table 23: Parental expectation of child's return**

Description	Males		Females		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very hopeful	38	52.05	59	51.30	97	51.60
Moderately hopeful	27	36.99	32	27.83	59	31.38
No hope at all	8	10.96	24	20.87	32	17.02
Total	73	100	115	100	188	100

The above table shows that 51.60% of the parents are very hopeful that the child will return eventually, 31.38% of the parents are moderately hopeful, while 17.02% of the parents have no hope at all.

Majority of the parents express strong hope that they will see their children again. Parents who have no expectation of their children returning home are those who have been missing for more than five years. Parents are likely to hold on to the belief that their children will return eventually as a way to cope. One parent described that keeping their hopes alive was their way of not giving up. Another parent expressed their fear of coming across their child and not recognizing him, or of their child having forgotten them.

The pain of the parents is indescribable, and losing a child without knowing what happened to the child prevents the parents from moving on. Further studies are required to study the needs of the affected families and of the other siblings who are left behind. With the loss of a child, the family dynamics undergo a tremendous change and in order to provide help and support to the affected families, it is required to understand what parents go through, how they cope, what support they require and how the rest of the siblings are affected.

## **B. Secondary Data: An analysis of Police Records 2000-2011**

A study of the police records from the period of 2000-2011 reveal interesting trends.

The number of missing children is seen to have increased in the state of Gujarat. This could be attributed to the increase in population and urbanization with upsurge of migrants from various parts of the country.

In 2000, there were 1568 children reported missing in Gujarat, out of which 935 were boys and 633 were girls. 1434 were found and 134 remain missing.

In 2001, there were 1576 children reported missing in Gujarat, out of which 908 were boys and 668 were girls. 1420 were found and 156 remain missing.

Children reported missing in 2002 were 1542 in number, with 1329 eventually found. The missing boys totaled 869, while the number of missing girls was 673. 213 remain missing. A scrutiny of the reported police cases reveals a higher number of minority children missing in this year.

In 2003, a total of 1676 children were reported missing, with 955 being boys and 721 being girls. Out of these, 869 boys and 650 girls were found while 157 remain missing.

In 2004, the police began keeping records of missing children according to the age group. In the age group 0-6 years, 129 were reported missing, while 123 were found. In the age group 7-14 years, 515 went missing with 483 being found. There were 1203 missing children in the age

group of 15-18 years, with 1088 returning eventually home. A total of 153 children of all age groups remain missing.

In 2005, a total of 2046 were reported missing. Out of these 1899 have been found, while 147 still remain missing. In the age group 0-6 years, the number of missing children was 143, 7-14 years the number was 548 while the highest number was in the age group of 15-18 years, which totaled 1355 in number.

In 2006, a total of 2264 children went missing, and 2060 was found. The highest number of missing children was in the age group of 15-18 years totaling 1515 in number, while the second highest was 7-14 years with the number being 579. The lowest number of missing children was in the age group of 0-6 years, a total of 173, out of which 17 still remain missing. 14 remain missing in the 4-14 years category while 139 remain missing in the 15-18 years category.

In 2007, there were 2438 missing children reported, out of which 1993 were found. The highest number of missing children- 1616- is seen to be in the age group of 15-18 years. The number is 652 in the age group of 7-14 years, while the lowest number is 170 in the age group of 0-6 years.

2008 has the lowest number of missing children. A total of 395 children went missing with 196 being recovered. 26 missing children were from the age group of 0-5 years, 59 from age group of 6-12 years, and 310 from the age group of 13-18 years.

The figure rose again in 2009, with 2700 children reported missing. Out of these, 1591 still remain to be found. This number of children still missing is the largest so far. An alarmingly high number of girls – 1467- went missing in the 13-18 years category, while the number of boys in the same category remained half at 754.

In 2010, the police recorded 2890 cases of missing children, out of which 1818 were girls and 1072 were boys. Out of these, 1290 girls and 896 boys were traced. 528 girls and 176 boys are still missing.

In 2011, a total of 2559 children were reported missing. 1783 of those missing were girls and 776 were boys. 797 girls and 435 boys were found. 996 girls and 347 boys still remain untraced.

A review of the 2000-2011 data shows that a total of 23501 children have been reported missing. Out of these, 18053 have been found. A total number of 5448 missing children are yet to be found. The majority of those missing are boys and girls in the age group of 15-18 years. Females in the age group of 13-18 form the major bulk of missing children.

The highest concentration of missing children cases are reported from Surat, followed by Ahmedabad, Rajkot and Vadodara. Massive urbanization with vast number of migrant children, street children and destitute children in the cities of Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and Vadodara account for children being neglected and lost, especially from impoverished households. With the majority of the missing children in the age group of 13-18 years, the main reason for them going missing is running away, as reported by police. In studies done in US and UK, the highest

number of missing children cases involves runaways.

The vast majority of young people run away due to problems at home (Safe on the Streets 1999; Brennan et al 1978). The Safe on the Streets study found that, where disharmony in families is less severe, young people living in stepfamilies or with a lone parent are significantly more likely to run away than those living with both birth parents. However, where family disharmony is severe, young people are equally likely to run away from any type of family. For those who ran away repeatedly, particularly high levels of family problems and disruption were identified.

While conflicts may most often trigger running away, these may be symptomatic of deeper seated difficulties within families. Many young runaways have been found to have experienced a high level of disruption in their lives due to relationship breakdown, conflict and violence and some have spent time in care earlier in their lives (Stein et al 1994; Newman 1989). This is consistent with the findings of research in the USA, which has indicated that persistent runaways may be attempting to escape severely abusive parents (Simons and Whitbeck 1991; Brennan et al 1978). Both British and American studies have identified physical abuse as an important factor underlying the decision to run away (Rees 1993; Johnson and Carter 1990; Newman 1989; Farber 1984), and this may be especially the case for those who first run away from home before the age of 11 (Safe on the Streets 1999).

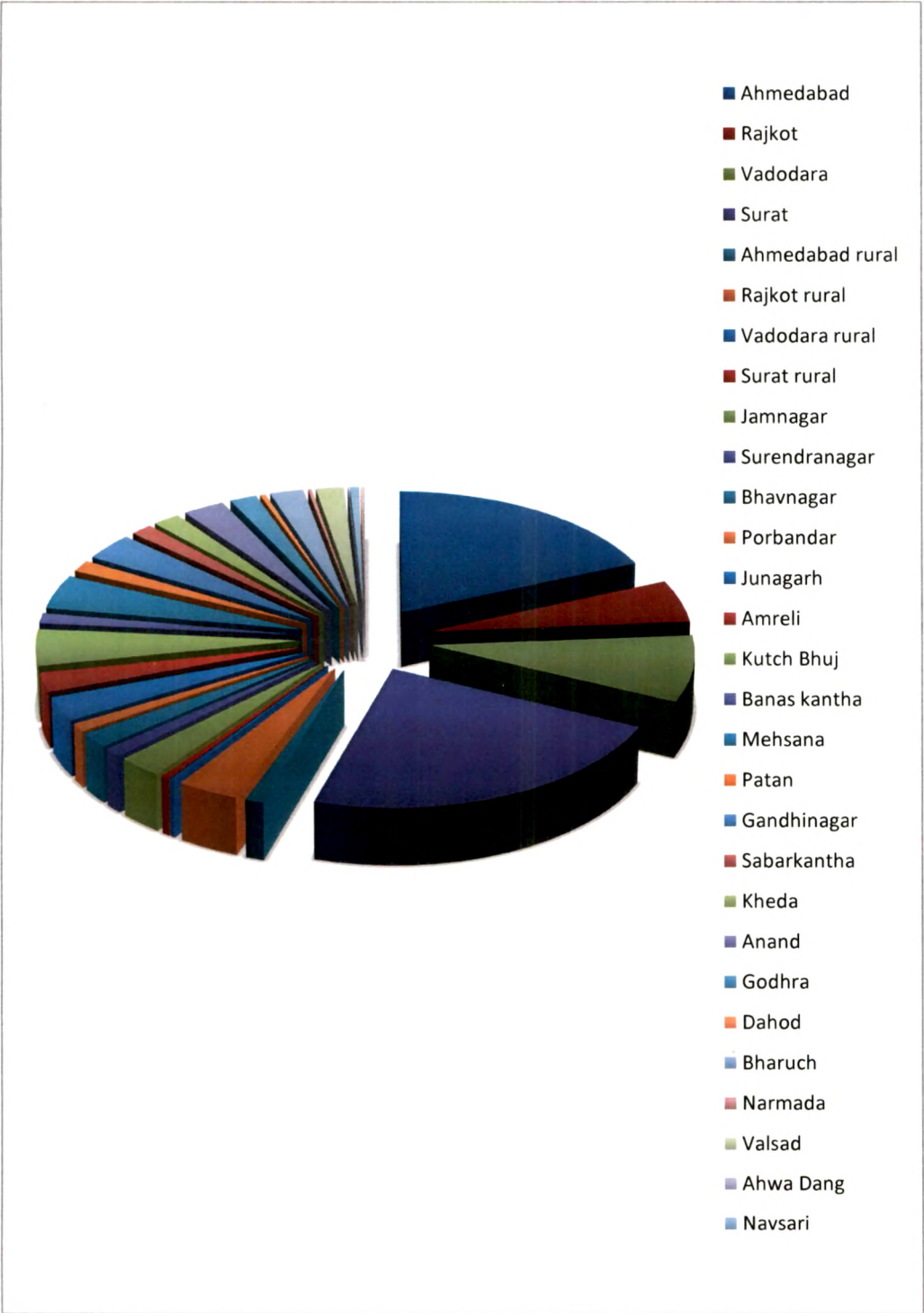
## **Police response**

Police agencies are faced with the need to make a number of decisions when they receive a report of a missing child or youth. They must make judgments about the type of case that may be reported (case clarification) and the risk of harm that may be involved (risk assessment). They must decide what kind and level of resources will be committed to the case (investigative response). Often, police must play a social service posture to respond appropriately to cases, such as by attempting to mediate family conflicts. Moreover, decisions must frequently be made with insufficient information, in the context of inadequate or inappropriate resource availability and about matters police are not formally mandated to concern themselves.

Most missing children cases are not regarded as serious by the police. Typically, they are runaways who return home safely within hours or days, are lost children who are found quickly or involve custody disputes between estranged parents that are resolved quickly without harm befalling the child. These events may be emotionally traumatic and have long term negative consequences for parents and their children. But from the police perspective they do not involve serious law violations or risk of harm and thus do not warrant the heavy commitment of police resources. These police judgments are occasionally wrong with tragic consequences as when a routine case turns out to involve serious injury or death. The typically nonserious nature of most missing children's cases however, inclines the police to a low commitment of their resources.

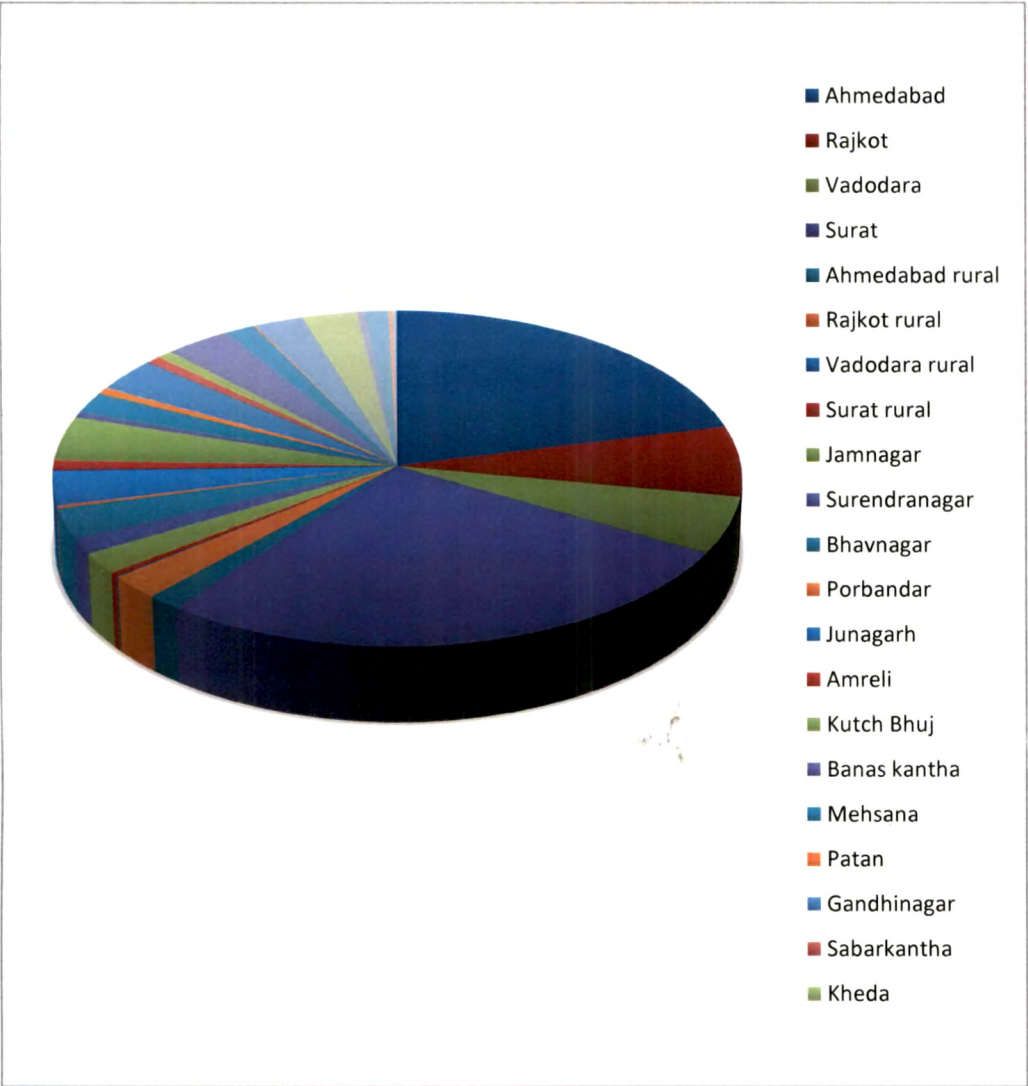
Police are also inclined towards the nonaggressive investigation of most runaway cases as they are viewed as "family" matters. Running away from home is not a violation of law, and runaway cases are seen as problems in the home that are not resolvable by police intervention, and are viewed by police as outside the scope of their authority.

**Exhibit 1: Missing Girls in 2009**



Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

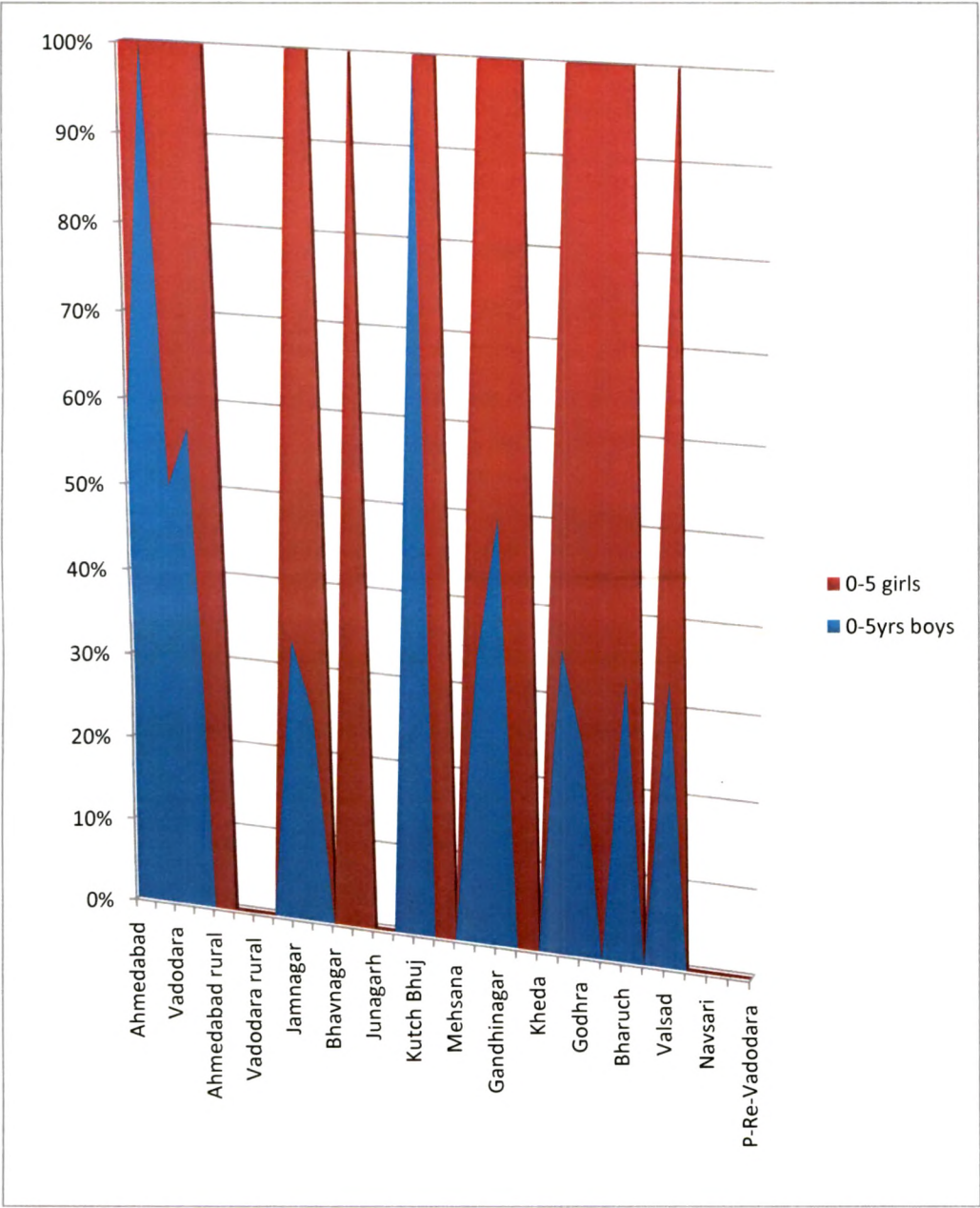
Exhibit 2: Missing Boys in 2009



Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

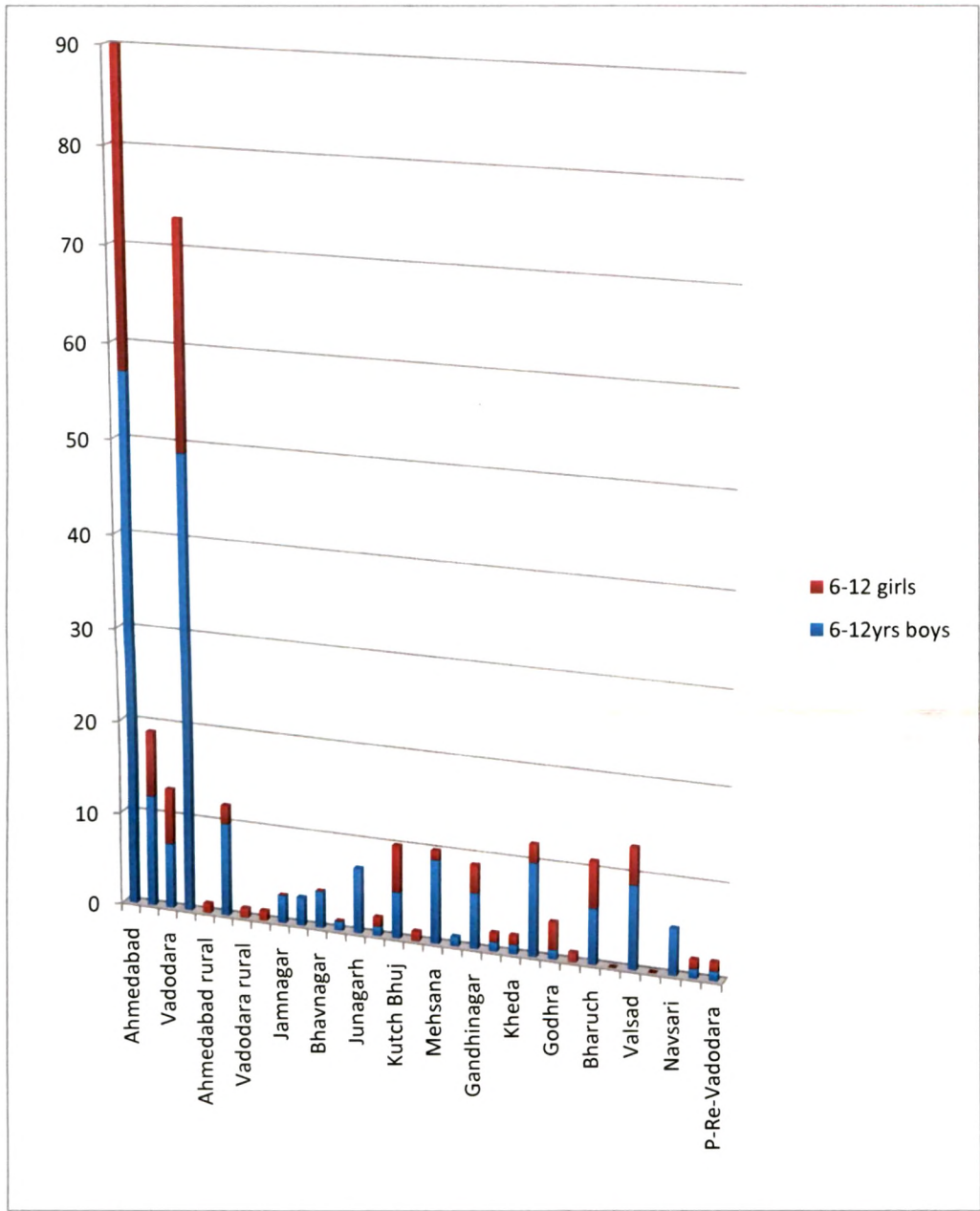


Exhibit 3: 2009- Ratio of Missing boys and girls in age group of 1-5 yrs



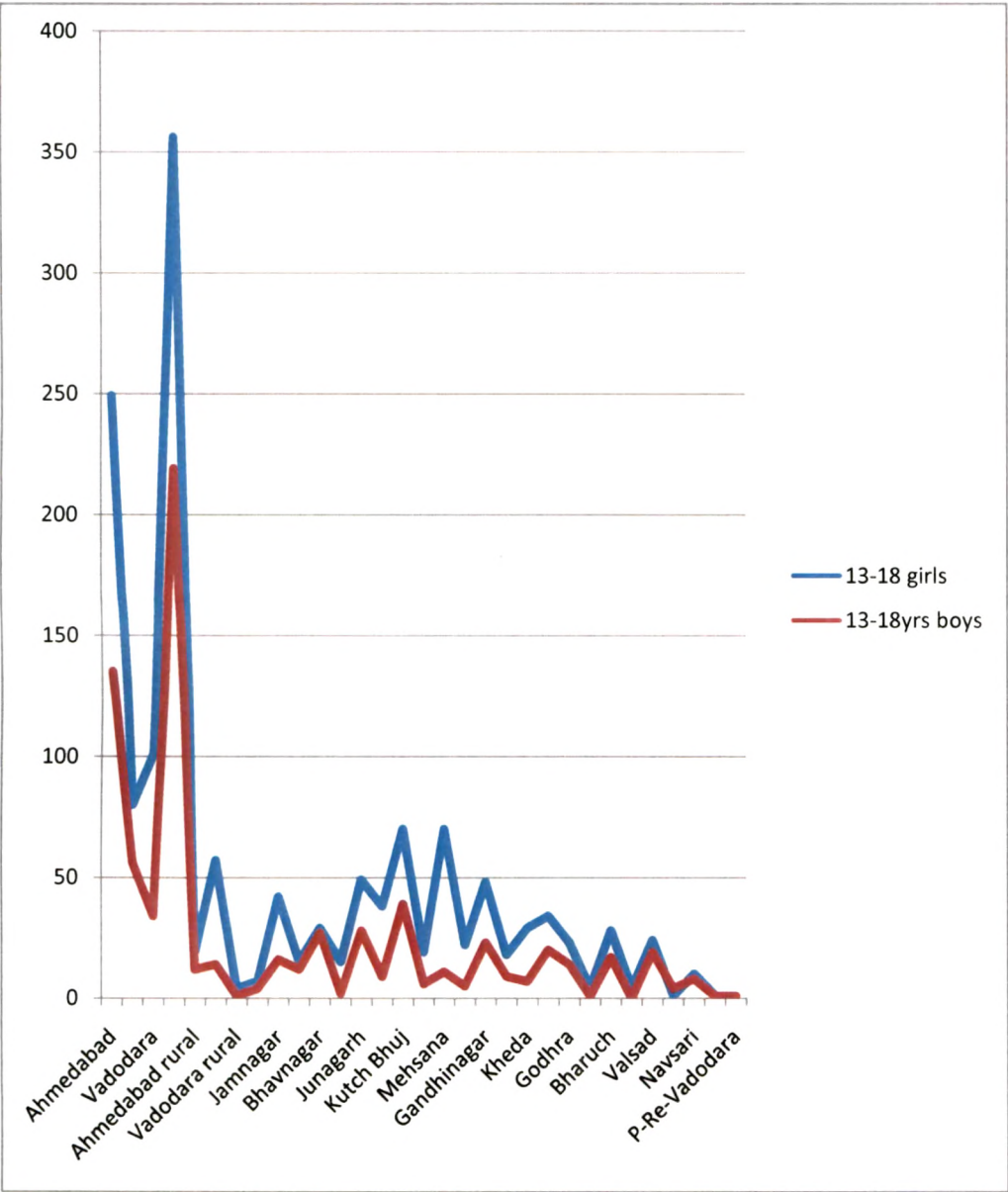
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

Exhibit 4: 2009- Ratio of Missing boys and girls in age group of 6-12 yrs



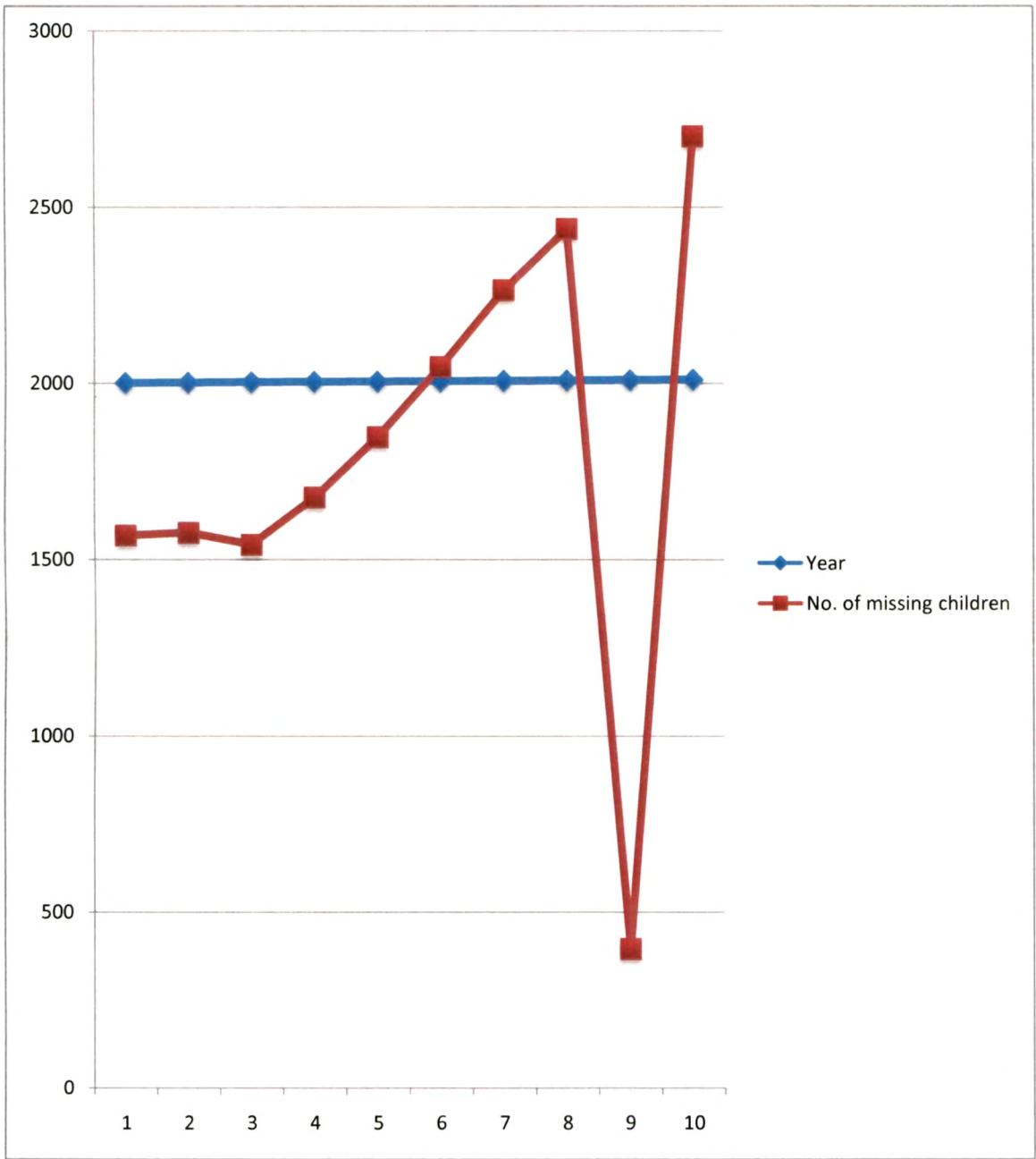
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

**Exhibit 5: Ratio of Missing boys and girls in age group of 13-18 yrs 2009**



Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

**Exhibit 6: Missing children 2000-2011**



*Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar*

## Exhibit 7: Missing children in Gujarat 2000

Name of district and city	Missing Boys	Found	Untraced	Missing Girls	Found	Untraced
Ahmedabad	182	172	10	106	101	5
Rajkot	100	100	0	65	63	2
Vadodara	40	30	10	41	33	8
Surat	190	165	25	144	117	27
Ahmedabad rural	15	15	0	14	14	0
Rajkot rural	34	31	3	12	12	0
Vadodara rural	5	4	1	2	0	2
Surat rural	13	6	7	6	4	2
Jamnagar	41	40	1	17	15	2
Surendranagar	3	3	0	11	11	0
Bhavnagar	21	18	3	14	13	1
Porbandar	6	6	0	4	4	0
Junagarh	26	26	0	11	11	0
Amreli	7	6	1	2	2	0
Kutch Bhuj	18	18	0	18	18	0
Banas kantha	21	21	0	4	5	0
Mehsana	14	14	0	25	25	0
Patan	14	14	0	5	5	0
Gandhinagar	33	32	1	27	27	0
Sabarkantha	10	8	2	8	8	0
Kheda	16	15	1	23	20	3
Anand	38	35	3	24	23	1
Godhra	21	18	3	8	6	2
Dahod	1	1	0	2	2	0
Bharuch	30	29	1	15	15	0
Narmada	7	7	0	0	0	0
Valsad	13	12	1	13	12	1
Ahwa Dang	0	0	0	0	0	0
Navsari	15	12	3	9	9	0
P-Re-Vadodara	1	0	1	2	1	1
total	935	858	77	633	576	57

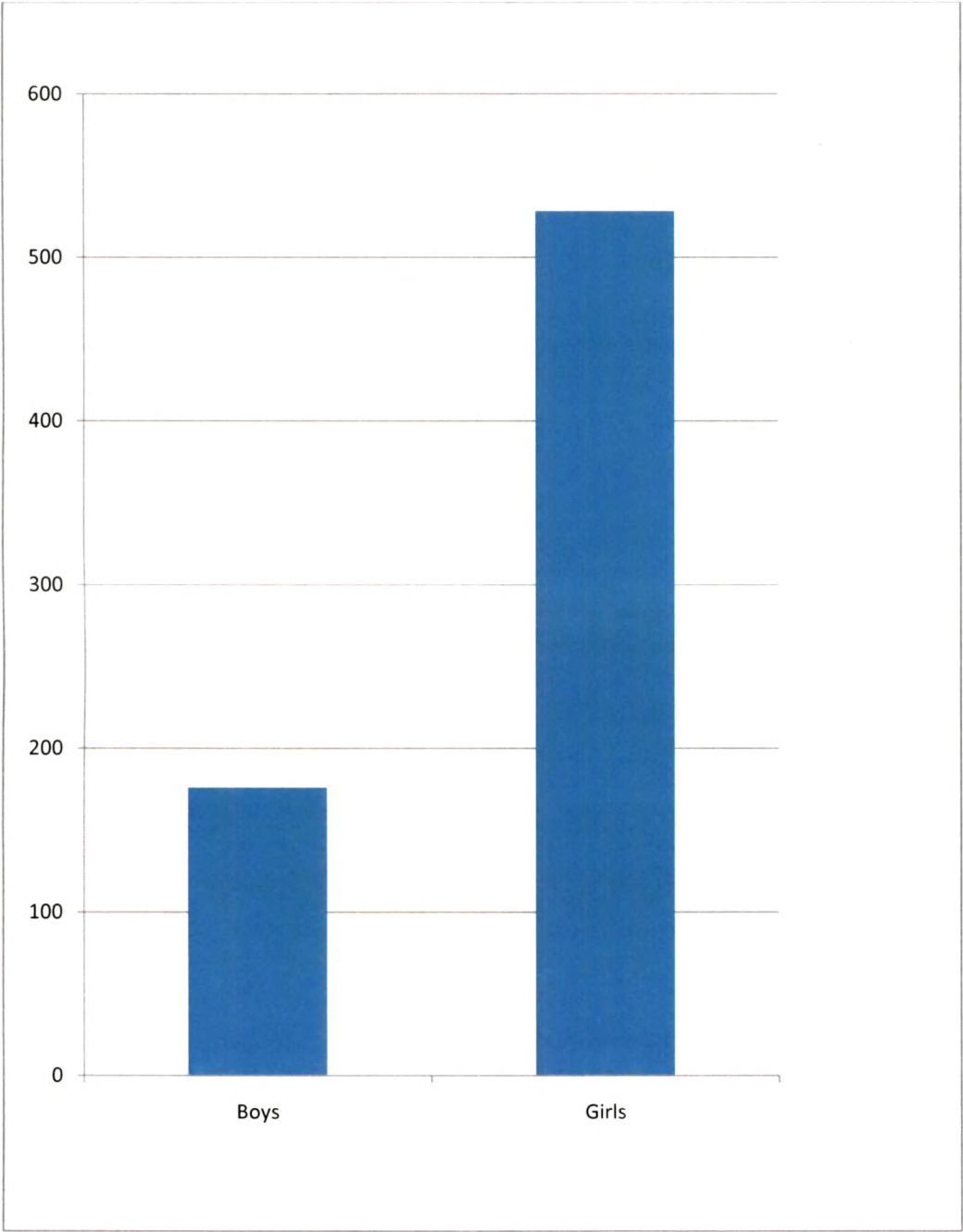
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

## Exhibit 8: Missing children in Gujarat 2009

Name of district and city	Missing boys	Found	Missing girls	Found	Total	Untraced
Ahmedabad	222	118	306	137	528	255
Rajkot	71	48	87	37	158	85
Vadodara	57	22	137	46	194	68
Surat	282	147	372	151	654	298
Ahmedabad rural	15	3	18	2	33	5
Rajkot rural	24	15	59	16	83	31
Vadodara rural	1	0	5	1	6	1
Surat rural	4	0	8	1	12	1
Jamnagar	21	2	43	5	64	7
Surendranagar	16	5	18	3	34	8
Bhavnagar	30	23	30	12	60	35
Porbandar	3	3	16	6	19	9
Junagarh	35	23	49	13	84	36
Amreli	10	8	39	16	49	24
Kutch Bhuj	45	27	75	29	120	56
Banas kantha	6	1	21	2	27	3
Mehsana	21	10	70	7	91	17
Patan	7	1	24	6	31	7
Gandhinagar	34	22	56	23	90	45
Sabarkantha	8	5	24	9	32	14
Kheda	8	3	30	7	38	10
Anand	35	14	45	15	80	29
Godhra	16	5	29	6	45	11
Dahod	1	0	6	1	7	1
Bharuch	26	16	36	13	62	29
Narmada	0	0	4	1	4	1
Valsad	29	5	30	3	59	8
Ahwa Dang	4	2	1	1	5	3
Navsari	13	5	10	3	23	8
Tapi	2	1	2	1	4	2
P-Re-Vadodara	2	1	2	1	4	2
Total	1048	535	1652	574	2700	1109

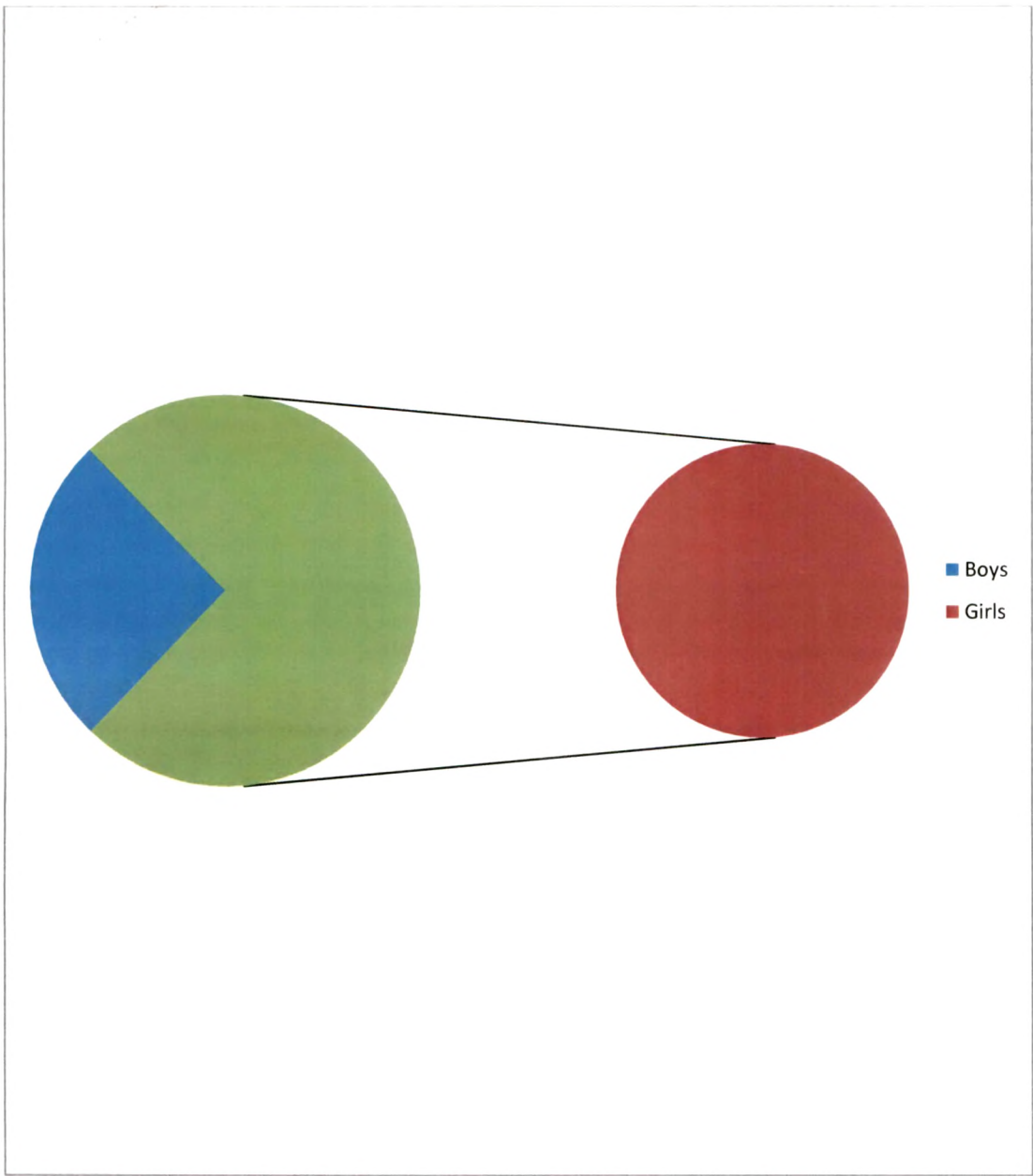
Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar

**Exhibit 9: Missing children in Gujarat 2010**



*Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar*

**Exhibit 10: Missing children in Gujarat 2011**



*Source: Missing Persons Cell, Police Bhavan, Gandhinagar*