



## Prioritizing Mental Well-being

**For Prelims:** National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences, National Mental Health Program (NMHP), Mental Health Care Act 2017, Kiran Helpline, MANAS (Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System), Poverty, Ayushman Bharat.

**For Mains:** Status of Mental Healthcare in India, Issues Associated with Mental Health, Initiatives by Government of India Related to Mental Health.

### Why in News?

According to [World Health Organisation](#), India's suicide rate in 2019, at **12.9/1,00,000**, was higher than the regional average of **10.2** and the global average of 9.0.

- Suicide has become the **leading cause of death among those aged 15-29 in India**. While every precious life lost through suicide is one too many, **it represents only the tip of the [mental health iceberg](#)** in the country, particularly among young adults. Women tend to suffer more.

### What is the Status of Mental Healthcare in India?

- **About:**
  - Mental health encompasses **emotional, psychological, and social well-being**.
    - It influences **cognition, perception, and behaviour**. It also determines how an individual handles stress, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making.
  - In India, according to [National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences data](#), more than **80% of people** do not have access to mental healthcare services for a multitude of reasons.
- **Initiatives by Government of India Related to Mental Health:**
  - **National Mental Health Program (NMHP):** The [NMHP](#) was adopted by the government in 1982 in response to a **large number of mental disorders** and shortage of mental health professionals.
  - **Mental Health Act:** As part of the [Mental Health Care Act 2017](#), every affected person has access to **mental healthcare** and treatment from government institutions.
  - **Kiran Helpline:** In 2020, the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** launched a 24/7 toll-free helpline '[Kiran](#)' to provide mental health support.
  - **MANAS Mobile App:** To promote mental wellbeing across age groups, the Government of India launched [MANAS \(Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System\)](#) in 2021.
- **Issues Associated with Mental Health:**
  - **Social Media:** Increased use of certain kinds of [social media](#) is exacerbating stress and mental ill health for young people.
    - Social media detracts from **face-to-face relationships**, which are healthier, and reduces investment in meaningful activities.
    - More importantly, it erodes **self-esteem through unfavourable social comparison**.

- **Covid-19 Pandemic:** The [Covid-19 pandemic](#) has further exacerbated the problem. Globally, it might have increased the prevalence of **depression by 28% and anxiety by 26%** in just one year between 2020 and 2021, according to a study published in **Lancet**.
  - Again, the large increases have been noted among younger age groups, **stemming from uncertainty, financial and job losses, grief, increased childcare burdens**, in addition to school closures and social isolation.
- **Poverty:** Mental health is closely linked to poverty in a vicious cycle of disadvantage. People living in [poverty](#) are at greater risk of experiencing mental health conditions.
  - On the other hand, **people experiencing severe mental health conditions are more likely to fall into poverty** through loss of employment and increased health expenditure.
- **Lack of Mental Health Infrastructure:** Currently, only **20-30% of people with mental illnesses receive adequate treatment**.
  - One major reason for such a wide treatment gap is the problem of inadequate resources. Less than 2% of the government health budget is devoted to mental health issues.
  - Also, the [list of essential medicines](#) includes only a limited number of **WHO-prescribed mental health medications**.

## How India can Reimagine Mental Health?

- There is a need for an **urgent and well-resourced “whole-of-society” approach** to **protecting, promoting and caring for the mental health** of our people. This should be based on the following four pillars:
  - **Destigmatizing Mental Health: Killing the deep stigma surrounding mental health issues** which prevents patients from seeking timely treatment and makes them feel shameful, isolated and weak.
  - **Including Mental Health in Public Health Programme: Making mental health an integral part of the [public health programme](#)** to reduce stress, promote a healthy lifestyle, screen and identify high-risk groups and strengthen mental health interventions like counselling services.
    - **Special emphasis will need to be given to schools.**
    - In addition, we should pay **special attention to groups that are highly vulnerable to mental health issues** such as **victims of domestic or sexual violence**, unemployed youth, marginal farmers, armed forces personnel and personnel working under difficult conditions.
  - **Mental Health Infrastructure:** Creating a **strong infrastructure for mental health care and treatment**. Substantial investments will be needed to address the gaps in the mental health infrastructure and human resources.
  - **Working on Affordability Aspects:** Mental health services should be made affordable for all. Improved coverage without corresponding **financial protection** will lead to inequitable service uptake and outcomes.
    - All government health assurance schemes, including [Ayushman Bharat](#), should cover the widest possible range of mental health conditions.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

**Q.** We can never obtain peace in the outer world until and unless we obtain peace within ourselves. (2021)

[Source: IE](#)

