



## Silent Crisis of Mental Health in India

**For Prelims:** [National Crime Records Bureau](#), [mental disorders](#), [WHO](#), Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), United Nations Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), [Mental Healthcare Act, 2017](#), [NIMHANS](#)

**For Mains:** [Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India 2021](#), [Mental disorders](#), Men's Mental Health in India.

[Source: DTE](#)

### Why in News?

The [Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India 2021](#), report highlighted a growing concern regarding **mental health in India**, an issue that remains significantly underexplored despite its critical implications for public health.

### What Contributes to the Crisis of Mental Health in India?

- **Alarming Statistics:**
  - **Suicide Rates:** According to this report by the [National Crime Records Bureau](#), **men account for 72.5% of suicide victims in India**, indicating a profound mental health crisis.
    - In 2021, over 73,900 more men than women died by suicide, despite research indicating women have higher rates of anxiety and depression.
  - **Disparity Across Age Groups:** A significant increase in suicides is observed among men aged 18-59, with a 170.7% rise in suicides among daily wage earners from 2014 to 2021.
- **Impact of Societal Norms:**
  - **Cultural Expectations:** Deep-rooted cultural **norms often prevent men from addressing emotional struggles**, as stoicism and resilience are valued.
    - This, combined with the stigma around mental illness, creates significant barriers to seeking help, worsening the mental health crisis among Indian men.
  - **Coping Mechanisms:** **Men tend to externalize mental health issues** through aggression or substance abuse rather than **seeking emotional support**, which is more **common among women**.
    - Women typically seek emotional support from loved ones, while men often use problem-focused strategies, distancing from their emotions.
  - **Contrast in Mental Disorders:** While men exhibit higher suicide rates, **women report more [mental disorders](#) like anxiety and depression**, highlighting men's lesser ability to cope.
- **Physiological and Psychological Factors:**
  - **Stress Responses:** Research indicates that men typically respond to stress with a **"fight or flight" reaction**, releasing stress **hormones like norepinephrine and cortisol**.
  - **Differences in Coping Strategies:** Women's **"tend and befriend"** response, influenced by **oxytocin release**, often leads them to seek social support, contrasting with men's

tendencies to distance themselves from their emotions.

//

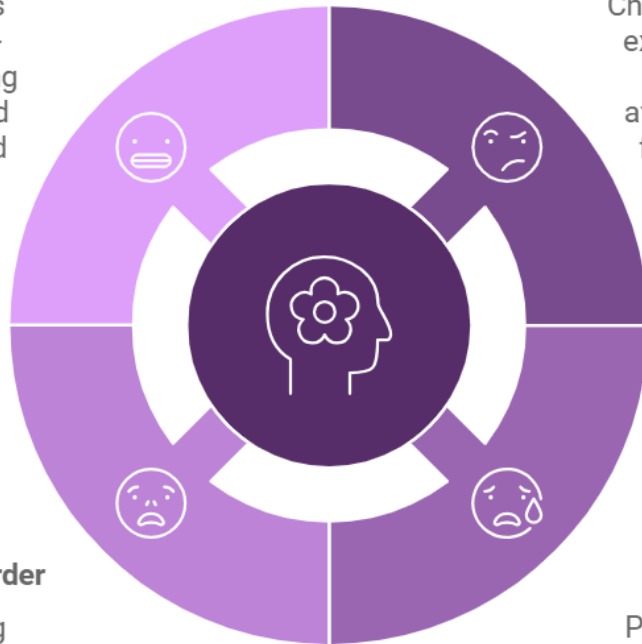
## Understanding Mental Disorders

### PTSD

Symptoms include re-experiencing trauma and heightened alertness.

### Anxiety Disorders

Characterized by excessive fear and worry, affecting daily functioning.



### Bipolar Disorder

Alternating between depressive and manic episodes, impacting mood stability.

### Depression

Persistent low mood and loss of interest, leading to significant distress.

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

- As per [WHO](#) estimates, the burden of mental health problems in India is **2443 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) per 100 00 population**; the age-adjusted suicide rate per 100,000 population is 21.1.
- In India, according to the [National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences](#) data, more than 80% of people do not have access to mental healthcare services.
- As per the [National Mental Health Survey \(NMHS\) 2015-16](#), 10.6% of adults in India suffered from mental disorders while the treatment gap for mental disorders ranged between 70% and 92% for different disorders.

### Note:

- **Disability-adjusted life Years (DALYs)** is the sum of the number of years of **life lost due to premature death** and a weighted measure of the years lived with disability due to a disease or injury. The use of DALYs to track disease burden is recommended by **India's National Health Policy of 2017**.
  - The [Mental Healthcare Act, 2017](#) provides the legal framework for providing services to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of people with mental illnesses. These are in line with the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#)

## What are the Steps taken by the Government to Address the Mental Health in India?

- **National Mental Health Program (NMHP):** To address the huge burden of mental disorders and the **shortage of qualified professionals in the field of mental health**, the government has been implementing the NMHP since 1982.
  - The Program was **re-strategised in 2003** to include two schemes, viz. **Modernisation of State Mental Hospitals** and **Up-gradation of Psychiatric Wings of Medical Colleges/General Hospitals**.
- **Mental Health Care Act 2017:** It guarantees every affected person access to mental healthcare and **treatment from services run or funded by the government**.
  - It has significantly **reduced the scope for the use of [Section 224 of the BNS](#)** and made the attempt to commit suicide punishable only as an exception.
    - The **Section** mandates that **attempting suicide to compel or restrain a public servant from their duties** is punishable by up to one year of simple imprisonment, a fine, both, or community service.
- **Kiran Helpline:** In 2020, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched a **24/7 toll-free helpline 'Kiran' to provide support to people facing anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts and other mental health concerns**.
- **MANAS Mobile App:** To promote **mental wellbeing across age groups**, the Government of India **launched MANAS (Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System) in 2021**.

## What are the Technological Innovations in Mental Health?

- **AI in Mental Health Support:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents new opportunities to address men's mental health challenges, particularly for those reluctant to seek traditional help.
  - **AI-driven Tools:** Platforms like **Fortis Healthcare's Adayu Mindfulness app** and **Manodayam** are already using AI to provide personalised mental health insights and blended treatment options.
  - **Innovative Algorithms:** The method helps identify subtle language and behavior patterns that may signal early signs of mental health issues like depression or anxiety.
  - **Tailored Treatment Strategies:** AI can analyse personal therapy responses to suggest the best treatment options, improving results.
- **Brain Stimulation:**
  - **Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS):** It is a non-invasive treatment **using magnetic pulses to target** specific brain areas, showing promise for severe depression that doesn't respond to standard medications.
  - **Closed-Loop Neurostimulation:** It uses sensors to monitor brain activity and automatically adjusts stimulation settings based on the detected brainwaves in real-time.

## What are the Recommendations for Addressing the Crisis?

- **Increasing Mental Health Literacy:** There is a critical need to **enhance awareness and understanding** of mental health issues among men to reduce stigma.
- **Innovative Approaches:** Leveraging AI and other technological solutions can facilitate access to mental health resources.
  - **AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants**, utilising natural language processing and machine learning, can provide accessible and personalised mental health support in real-time.
- **Creating Supportive Environments:** Breaking down societal barriers and fostering open conversations around mental health can **encourage people to seek help and support**.
- **Vision for the Future:** Envision a future where mental health is prioritised, and men feel empowered to seek help without stigma.
- **Ensure Proper Workforce:** There are just **0.3 psychiatrists, 0.07 psychologists and 0.07 social workers per 100,000 people in India**.
  - As compared to psychiatrists in developed countries it is 6.6 per 100,000 and the average number of mental hospitals globally is 0.04 per 100,000 while it's only 0.004 in India.

## Conclusion

The silent crisis of mental health in India necessitates a multifaceted approach that includes enhancing mental health literacy, promoting innovative technological solutions, and dismantling societal stigmas surrounding emotional vulnerability.

### **Drishti Mains Question**

Examine the socio-cultural, psychological, and systemic factors behind India's men's mental health crisis and propose measures to enhance mental healthcare accessibility and awareness.

## **Mains**

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

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/silent-crisis-of-mental-health-in-india>

