



Suicide Worldwide in 2019: WHO

Why in News

Recently, a report titled **Suicide worldwide in 2019** was published by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

- **Suicide** is defined as **death caused by self-directed injurious behavior** with intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Key Points

▪ Unmet Target:

- Reducing the **global suicide mortality rate** by a third is both, an indicator and a target (the only one for mental health) in the [United Nations](#)-mandated [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). But the world will not be able to reach this target.
 - The SDGs call on countries to **reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by a third, by 2030** through prevention and treatment and to promote mental health and well-being.
 - They ask countries to **strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse**, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol. They also call for **universal health coverage**, which mental health is part of.
- Although some countries have placed suicide prevention high on their agendas, too many countries remain uncommitted, the report said.
 - Currently, only **38 countries are known to have a national suicide prevention strategy**.

▪ Suicides in 2019:

- The [Covid-19-pandemic](#) has increased mental stress globally. However a crisis was already in place in 2019. Approximately **7,03,000 people or one in a 100**, died by suicide in 2019.
 - The **global age-standardized suicide rate was 9.0 per 1,00,000 population** for 2019.
- Many of these were **young people**. More than half of global suicides (58%) occurred before the age of 50 years. Suicide was the **fourth-leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29 globally in 2019**.
- Some **77% of global suicides in 2019 occurred in low- and middle-income countries**.

▪ Regional Data :

- Africa, Europe and South-East Asia **recorded suicide rates higher than the global average**.
 - This number was **highest in the Africa region** (11.2) followed by Europe (10.5)

and South-East Asia (10.2).

- In 20 years (2000-2019), the **global suicide rate had decreased by 36%**.
 - The decrease ranged from **17% in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to 47% in the European Region and 49% in the Western Pacific Region.**
- The Region of the **Americas recorded a substantial 17% increase** in the suicide rate during the same period and has been an exception.

▪ **Suicides in India:**

- India has the **highest suicide rate in the Southeast Asian region.**
 - A total of **1,34,516 cases of suicide were reported in 2018** in India, according to the [National Crime Records Bureau](#).
 - While the rate of suicide was **9.9 in 2017, it increased to 10.2 in 2018.**

▪ **WHO Guidelines to Reduce Suicides:**

- The WHO had published **new LIVE LIFE guidelines** to help countries reduce the global suicide mortality rate by a third by 2030. These are:
 - Limiting access to the means of suicide, such as highly hazardous pesticides and firearms.
 - Educating the media on responsible reporting of suicide.
 - Fostering socio-emotional life skills in adolescents.
 - Early identification, assessment, management and follow-up of anyone affected by suicidal thoughts and behaviour.
- These needed to go hand-in-hand with foundational pillars like situation analysis, multi-sectoral collaboration, awareness raising capacity building, financing, surveillance and monitoring and evaluation.

▪ **Legal Status of Attempted Suicide in India:**

- According to [Article 21 of the Indian constitution](#), “No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by the law”. While the constitution covers the right to life or liberty, **it does not include the ‘right to die’.**
 - The attempts at taking one's own life are not considered to fall under purview of constitutional right to life.
- **Section 309** of the [Indian Penal Code \(IPC\)](#) states whoever attempts to commit suicide and does any act towards the commission of such offence, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine or both.
 - It is to be noted that the **abetting of the commission of suicide** (but not the abetting of attempt to commit suicide) is covered under **Section 306 IPC** and the abetment of suicide of a child is covered under **Section 305 IPC.**
- Section 115 (1) of the **Mental Healthcare Act 2017** of the Act provides, “Notwithstanding anything contained in section 309 of the IPC, **any person who attempts to commit suicide shall be presumed, unless proved otherwise, to have severe stress and shall not be tried and punished under the said Code.**
 - However, this law applies only to those suffering from mental illness. There is presumption of severe stress in case of an attempt to die by suicide.

▪ **Related Indian Initiatives:**

- [Mental Healthcare Act, 2017](#)
- [KIRAN](#): The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** has launched a 24/7 toll-free helpline to provide support to people facing anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts and other mental health concerns.
- [Manodarpan Initiative](#): It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Education** under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. It is aimed to provide psychosocial support to students, family members and teachers for their mental health and well-being during the times of Covid-19.

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