



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.

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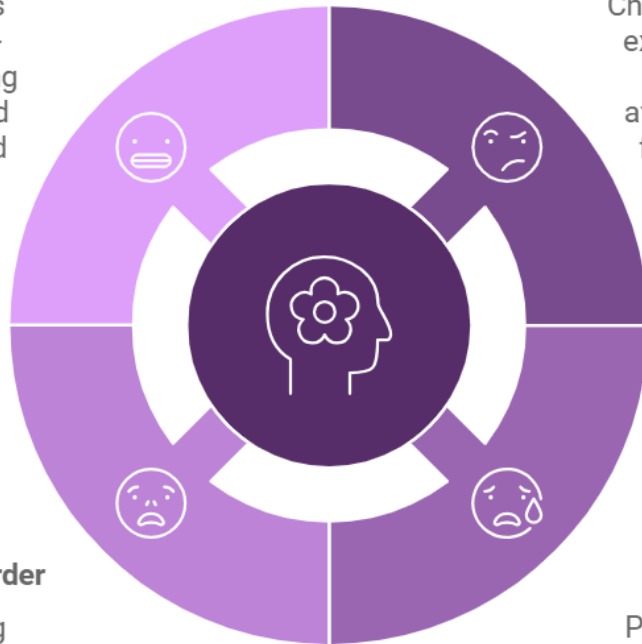
Understanding Mental Disorders

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>

