

One in 100 Deaths by Suicide: WHO Report on Global Mental Health

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WHO Report on Mental Health Latest News

- According to new WHO data, suicide caused one in every 100 deaths worldwide in 2021, claiming 727,000 lives. For every death, over 20 attempts occurred.
- The reports — **World Mental Health Today** and **Mental Health Atlas 2024** — also reveal that more than a billion people live with mental health disorders.
- Country-wise profiles will be released soon as part of the **updated Mental Health Atlas**, factoring in the pandemic's impact.

Top Mental Health Disorders: WHO Insights

- Mental health is an integral part of health; it is more than the absence of mental illnesses.
- It is the foundation for well-being and effective functioning of individuals. It includes mental well-being, prevention of mental disorders, treatment and rehabilitation.

- **Most Common Disorders** – Anxiety and depressive disorders are the most prevalent, together making up over two-thirds of all mental health conditions in 2021.
- **Rising Global Prevalence** – Between 2011 and 2021, mental disorders grew faster than population growth, raising the global age-standardized prevalence to 13.6%, a 0.9% increase in a decade.

Age-Related Trends

- **Young Adults (20–29 years):** Largest increase in prevalence (+1.8%) since 2011.
- **Children (<10 years):** Depressive disorders are rare.
- **Middle-Aged Adults (40–69 years):** Depressive disorders surpass anxiety, peaking between 50–69 years.

Gender Differences

- **Males:** More prone to attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders, and intellectual developmental disorders.
- **Females:** More affected by anxiety, depression, and eating disorders.

Prospects for Reducing Suicide Rates by 2030

- Suicide remains the leading cause of death among young people worldwide, but progress in reducing rates is insufficient to meet the **UN’s target of a one-third reduction by 2030**.
- Current trends indicate only a 12% reduction will be achieved.
- Experts stress that sustained financing, strong leadership, and effective execution of prevention programs are crucial.
- Suicide is driven by **multiple factors** — including family history, vulnerable temperament, early trauma, stressful environments, isolation, stigma, and lack of accessible mental health services.
- Tackling these risks holistically is essential for meaningful progress.

Burden of Mental Health in India

- WHO estimates that the burden of mental health problems in India is 2443 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) per 10000 population; the age-adjusted suicide rate per 100 000 population is 21.1.
- Economic loss: USD 1.03 trillion projected between 2012–2030 due to mental health conditions.

Policy and Legal Framework

- **National Mental Health Policy, 2014:** Advocates a participatory and rights-based approach.
- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** Provides legal protections and aligns with UNCRPD principles.

Government Initiatives

- **National Mental Health Programme** and **Health and Wellness Centres** provide care at the primary health level.

- **National Tele Mental Health Programme** (Tele MANAS) A 24/7 national toll-free helpline providing accessible, free mental health support in various Indian languages.
- The **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP)** – A component of the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) providing decentralized, community-based mental health services.
- **Deaddiction centres and rehabilitation services** further support treatment and recovery.

Challenges of Broad-Basing Mental Health Care in India

- **Limited Infrastructure and Custodial Approach**
 - India's mental health institutions alone are insufficient.
 - Experts stress the need for psychiatric beds in general hospitals and tertiary care centres staffed with multidisciplinary teams.
 - The focus must shift from **custodial to therapeutic models**, with larger hospitals acting as academic training hubs.
- **Poor Funding and Associated Conditions**
 - Psychiatric hospitals often face underfunding, leading to poor living conditions, neglect, and abuse.
- **Scarcity of Trained Professionals**
 - There is a severe shortage of psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors, nurses, and social workers.
 - Interior regions lack access to professionals and essential medicines, leaving families unable to afford long-distance travel for treatment.
- **Accessibility and Economic Burden**
 - Even when families want to seek help, economic hardships—loss of wages and travel costs—become barriers.
 - With 30 million Indians suffering from severe mental illnesses, the financial strain is immense as patients often become non-earning dependents.
- **Need for a Strong Chain of Care**
 - Mental healthcare requires continuity of treatment, reliable availability of medicines, and systemic support.
 - Building a robust chain of care across rural and urban India is essential for effective mental health management.

Source: IE | WHO | PAHO

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