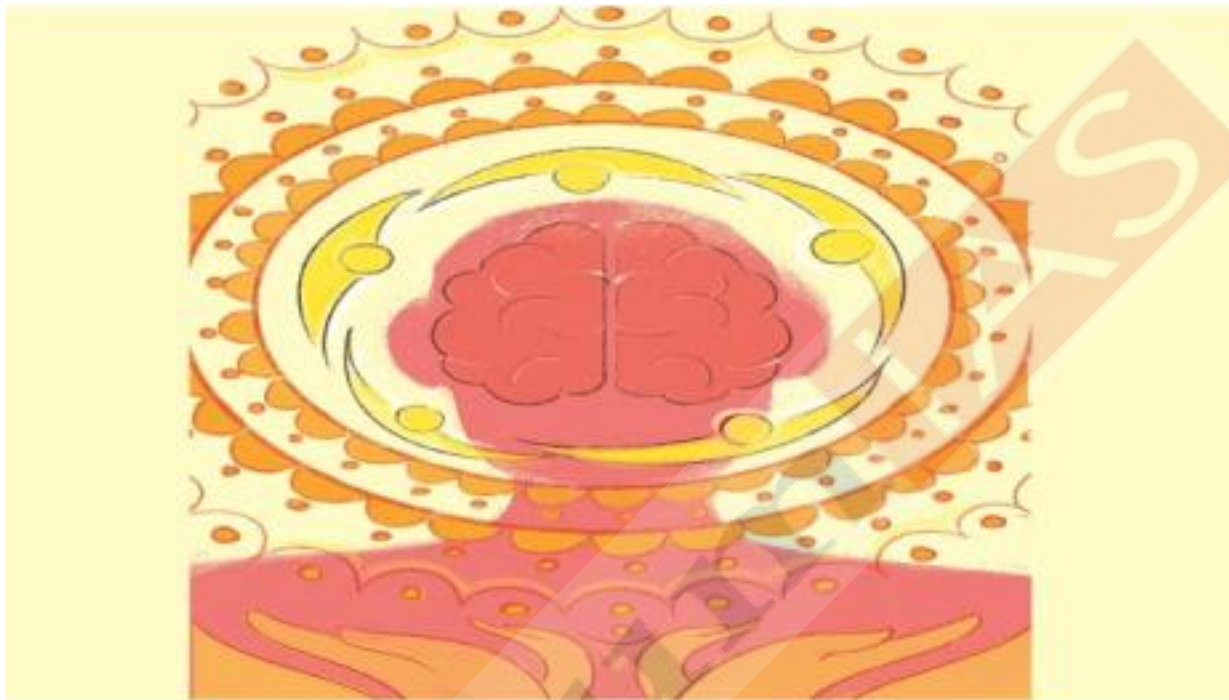


## Mental Health Crisis in India- Explained Pointwise

Rising suicides among students, farmers, and homemakers across India underline a silent yet deepening mental health crisis. Despite progressive legislation and growing awareness, mental healthcare remains underfunded, understaffed, and stigmatized.



Source- IE

### What is Mental Health?

Mental health is about how we think, feel, and connect with the world around us. It shapes our emotions, decisions, and relationships — guiding how we handle stress, face challenges, and find meaning in daily life. In essence, good mental health helps us live with balance, purpose, and resilience.

According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, mental health is a state of well-being in which individuals can cope with life's stresses, realize their potential, work productively, learn effectively, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

### Current Status of the Mental Health Scenario in India

<b>Prevalence and Burden</b>	<p>Nearly <b>230 million Indians</b> live with mental health disorders.</p> <p><b>Lifetime prevalence</b> stands at <b>13.7%</b>, while <b>WHO</b> estimates <b>16.3 suicide deaths per 1,00,000 people</b>.</p> <p><b>15% of adults</b> experience mental health issues, with higher prevalence in <b>urban areas (13.5%)</b> compared to <b>rural areas (6.9%)</b>.</p>
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	India's mental health burden equals <b>2,443 Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)</b> per 10,000 population.
<b>Suicide Statistics (NCRB 2023)</b>	<p><b>1,71,418 suicides</b> were recorded, with <b>men comprising 72.8%</b> of victims.</p> <p><b>Family problems (31.9%), illness (19%), and marital issues (10%)</b> were leading causes.</p> <p><b>Farmer suicides</b> stood at <b>10,786</b>, or <b>6.3% of total suicides</b>.</p> <p><b>Andaman &amp; Nicobar Islands, Sikkim, and Kerala</b> reported the highest suicide rates</p>
<b>Treatment Gap and Workforce Shortage</b>	<p><b>70-92% treatment gap</b>, with 85% gap in common disorders like depression.</p> <p>Only <b>0.75 psychiatrists</b> and <b>0.12 psychologists</b> per 1 lakh population, far below the <b>WHO norm of 3</b>.</p> <p>Rehabilitation services meet less than <b>15%</b> of national needs</p>
<b>Economic and Social Costs</b>	<p>Untreated mental illnesses may cost India <b>over USD 1 trillion by 2030</b>.</p> <p>Employers lose <b>₹1.1 lakh crore annually</b> due to absenteeism and burnout.</p> <p>Suicide remains the <b>leading cause of death among youth (15-29 years)</b>.</p>

### Key Drivers of India's Mental Health Crisis

- Socio-Economic and Financial Stress:** High unemployment (7.3% in 2024), rising debt, and job insecurity have triggered widespread anxiety. As per **NCRB (2023)**, **31.9% of suicides** stemmed from family and financial distress, with farmers and informal workers most affected.
- Educational and Professional Pressure:** Exam stress and fear of failure have made students vulnerable — **over 25 suicides in Kota (2023)** alone. Long working hours and workplace burnout add to adult psychological strain.
- Urbanisation and Social Isolation:** Migration, nuclear families, and digital lifestyles have eroded traditional support systems, making **urban residents twice as likely** to report loneliness as rural populations.
- Gendered and Domestic Challenges:** Nearly **29% of women** (NFHS-5) have faced domestic violence, leading to high rates of depression and anxiety linked to emotional neglect and unpaid care work.

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5. **Digital Overload:** Excessive screen time and social media exposure heighten anxiety, low self-esteem, and body-image issues. **National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), 2022** found adolescents online for **4+ hours daily** more prone to such disorders.
6. **Stigma and Cultural Misconceptions:** Over **half of Indians** still view mental illness as weakness, causing delayed diagnosis and low treatment-seeking, especially in rural areas.
7. **Systemic Deficiencies:** With just **1.05% of the health budget** for mental health and **0.75 psychiatrists per lakh people**, India faces a **70-92% treatment gap**, reflecting weak infrastructure and policy execution.

### Key Government Initiatives Related to Mental Health in India

<b>Mental Healthcare Act, 2017</b>	<p>Recognises mental health as a legal right under Article 21.</p> <p>Decriminalises suicide, mandates insurance coverage, and guarantees affordable, dignified care.</p> <p>Empowers individuals to make advance directives for treatment.</p>
<b>National Mental Health Programme (1982) and District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) (1996)</b>	<p>Aims to integrate mental healthcare into <b>primary health systems</b>.</p> <p>Now expanded to <b>767 districts</b>, though many face staff and funding shortages</p>
<b>Tele MANAS (2022)</b>	<p>A <b>24×7 tele-counselling helpline</b> for psychological support.</p> <p>Has conducted <b>over 20 lakh tele-counselling sessions</b>, improving access in underserved areas</p>
<b>National Suicide Prevention Strategy (2022)</b>	<p>Aims to reduce suicide rates by 10% by 2030 through early detection, awareness campaigns, and responsible media reporting.</p>
<b>Manodarpan Initiative</b>	<p>Provides psychosocial support to students, teachers, and families under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.</p> <p>Reached over 11 crore students through school-based awareness programmes</p>
<b>Judicial Backing</b>	<p>In <b>Sukdeb Saha vs State of Andhra Pradesh</b>, the <b>Supreme Court</b> affirmed mental health as part of the <b>Right to Life (Article 21)</b>, binding the state to ensure accessible and quality care</p>

### Way Forward to improve mental healthcare in India

- **Increase Budgetary Allocation:** Raise spending to at least 5% of total health expenditure to improve infrastructure, medicine supply, and service delivery in mental healthcare.

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- **Expand and Train Workforce:** Build a stronger pool of mental health professionals by training mid-level providers, counsellors, and community nurses, with incentives for rural postings.
- **Integrate Mental Health into Primary Care:** Embed mental health services within Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) and ensure basic counselling at every Primary Health Centre (PHC).
- **Promote Community-Based Interventions:** Strengthen peer support networks and village-level counselling through trained ASHA and Anganwadi workers to enhance accessibility at the grassroots level.
- **Address Stigma and Raise Awareness:** Launch nationwide campaigns, introduce mental health education in schools, and encourage open discussions to normalise help-seeking behaviour.
- **Ensure Digital and Regulatory Safeguards:** Regulate mental health apps and AI tools to ensure privacy, ethical standards, and professional oversight, preventing misinformation and misuse.
- **Enhance Governance and Coordination:** Establish a National Mental Health Observatory for monitoring outcomes and align inter-ministerial efforts across Health, Education, Women & Child Development, Labour, and Agriculture for an integrated approach.

### Conclusion

Mental health is vital for individual well-being and national progress. India's crisis is not just medical but also moral—each suicide or silent struggle reflects a gap in empathy and policy. With better access, funding, and awareness, mental health can become a key pillar of inclusive and humane development.

Read more- [IE](#)

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