



Suicide Worldwide in 2019: WHO

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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.

Source: DTE