



## Issue of Mental health

### Why in News

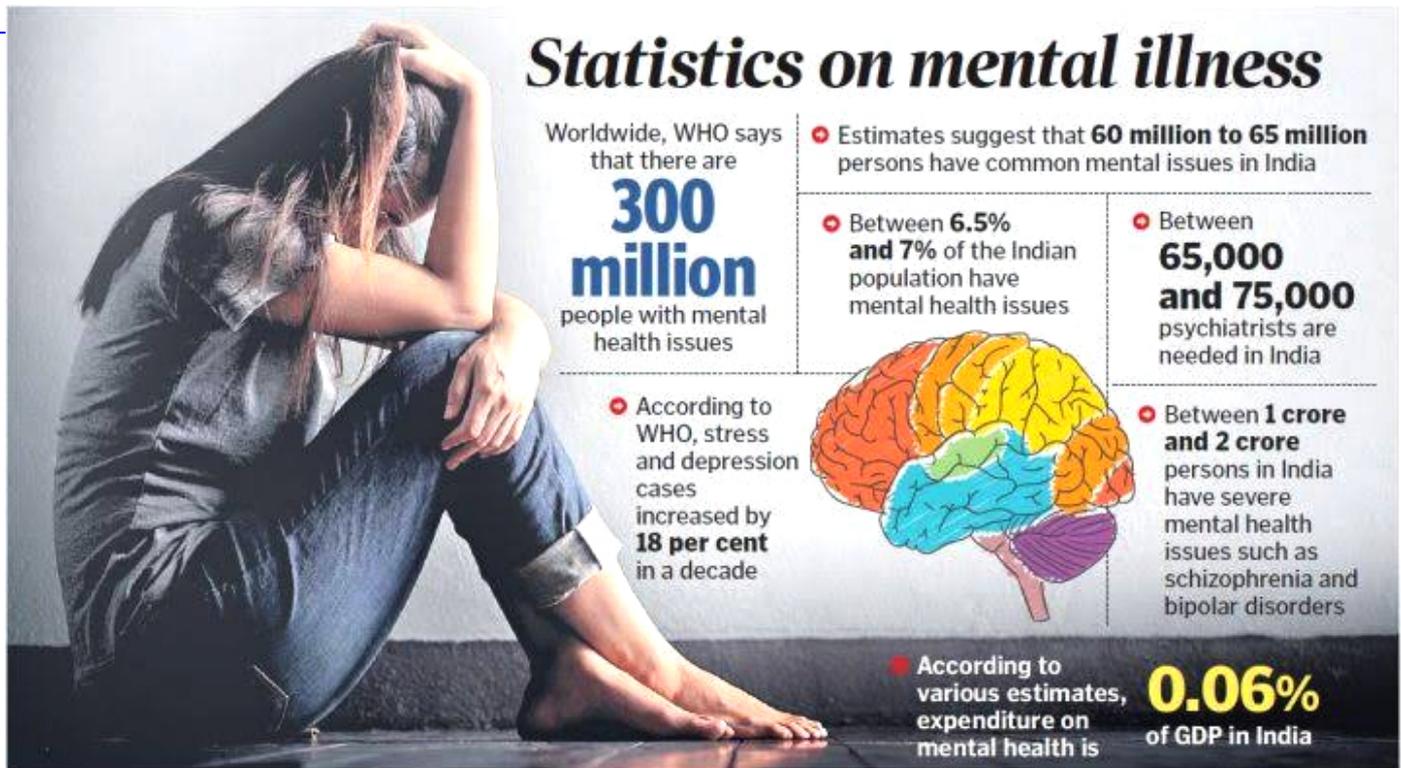
Recently, the [Supreme Court](#) has said the judiciary should not treat the mental health of a person with a **one-size-fits-all approach**, upholding the need for judges to be sensitive to the gravity of mental health issues.

- SC noted that **an individual copes with a threat** — both physical and emotional, expressing (or refraining to express) love, loss, sorrow and happiness, varies greatly in view of the **multi-faceted nature of the human mind and emotions**.
- [World Mental Health Day](#) is observed on 10<sup>th</sup> October every year

### Key Points

- **About:**
  - According to the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), mental health is a **state of well-being** in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.'
  - **Like Physical health, Mental health is also important** at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

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## ▪ Challenges:

- **High Public Health Burden:** An estimated **150 million people across India** are in need of mental health care interventions, according to India's latest **National Mental Health Survey 2015-16**.
- **Lack of Resources: Low proportion of the mental health workforce** in India (per 100,000 population) include psychiatrists (0.3), nurses (0.12), psychologists (0.07) and social workers (0.07).
  - **Low financial resource allocation** of just over a percent of **Gross Domestic Product** on healthcare has created impediments in public access to affordable mental healthcare.
- **Other Challenges: Poor awareness about the symptoms of mental illness**, social stigma and abandonment of mentally ill, especially old and destitute, leads to social isolation and reluctance on part of family members to seek treatment for the patient.
  - This has resulted in a massive **treatment gap**, which further worsens the present mental illness of a person.
- **Post-Treatment gap:** There is **need for proper rehabilitation** of the mentally ill persons post his/her treatment which is currently not present.
- **Rise in Severity:** Mental health problems tend to **increase during economic downturns**, therefore special attention is needed during times of economic distress.

## ▪ Steps Taken by the Government:

- **Constitutional Provision:** SC has held healthcare to be a fundamental right under **Article 21** of the Constitution.
- **National Mental Health Program (NMHP):** To address the huge burden of mental disorders and shortage of qualified professionals in the field of mental health, the government has been implementing the **National Mental Health Program (NMHP) since 1982**.
  - The Program was **re-strategize in 2003** to include two schemes, viz. Modernization of State Mental Hospitals and Up-gradation of Psychiatric Wings of Medical Colleges/General Hospitals.
- **Mental HealthCare 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 309 IPC and made the attempt to commit suicide punishable only as an exception.
- **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.

## Way Forward

- **Mental health situation in India** demands active policy interventions and resource allocation by the government.
- To reduce the **stigma around mental health**, we need measures to train and sensitize the community/society.
- When it **comes to providing the right care to patients** with mental illness, we need mental health care intervention to the patients, we need innovative models to deepen the penetration of services and staff.
  - One such model is **Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)** by the ministry of health and family welfare.
- India needs a **constant stream of funds for educating and creating awareness** about mental health and chronic issues around it.
- The need of the hour is to provoke masses to learn about mental health through campaigns like **Swachh Mansikta Abhiyan**.

**Source: TH**

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