



Shades of Mental Health

Men's mental health month and Pride month edition



Men's Mental Health Month

The month of June is celebrated and recognized as men's mental health month. One of the aims of the celebration is to make individuals understand that men may sometimes struggle and experience many of the same conditions and states of mind that women and individuals of other gender faces. Men's mental health concerns have often been ignored and stigmatized. In fact, men have been traditionally valued based on their physical strength and mental toughness, without a tendency to show softer emotions. Moreover, an important part of Men's Mental Health Month isn't to "normalize" weakness, but to support and confirm the fact that having a mental health condition or issue isn't a sign of weakness at all. It's just normal.

Why is men's mental health ignored?

1. Stigma surrounding mental health:-


- Mental health issues, in **general**, have historically carried a **significant stigma**.
- **Men** may face **additional challenges** due to **societal norms** that **discourage** them from **seeking help** or **expressing vulnerability**.
- The stigma surrounding mental health can **deter** men from **seeking support** or discussing their **struggles openly**.

2. Societal expectations:-

- **Traditional gender roles** often place an emphasis on **men** being **strong, stoic, and self-reliant**, which can **discourage** men from **seeking help** or **expressing their emotions**.
- This **societal expectation** may **contribute** to a **lack of awareness or conversation** around men's mental health issues.

3. Limited awareness and resources:-

- There may be a **lack of awareness or understanding** regarding the **specific mental health challenges** that men face.
- **Insufficient resources** can contribute to the **perception** that **men's mental health** is being **overlooked**.



"Jo mard hota hai, usse dard nahi hota"



Jo mard hota hai, usse bhi dard hota hai

Some symptoms of poor mental health in men

* Men and women can develop most of the same mental disorders and conditions, but they may experience different symptoms.

Men are also more likely to die by suicide than women, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/men-and-mental-health>

"Ladki jab roti hai na bahut saare reasons hote hai...par jab ladka rota hai...reason ladki hi hoti hai"



(Once Upon A Time In Mumbai Dobaara!)

- Noticeable changes in mood, energy level
- Difficulty concentrating, feeling restless, or on edge
- Engaging in high-risk activities
- Anger, irritability, or aggressiveness
- Persistent sadness or feelings of hopelessness
- Increased worry or feeling stressed
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Misuse of alcohol, drugs, or both
- Feeling flat or having trouble feeling positive emotions
- Thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts
- Unusual thinking or behaviors that concern other people
- Thoughts or behaviors - interfere with work, family, or social life
- Obsessive thinking or compulsive behavior
- Aches, headaches, or digestive problems without a clear cause

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/men-and-mental-health>

National Health Interview Survey shows that 9% of men surveyed in India experienced daily symptoms of depression and anxiety, but only 1 in 3 of them took medications for those feelings, and only 1 in 4 spoke to a medical professional.

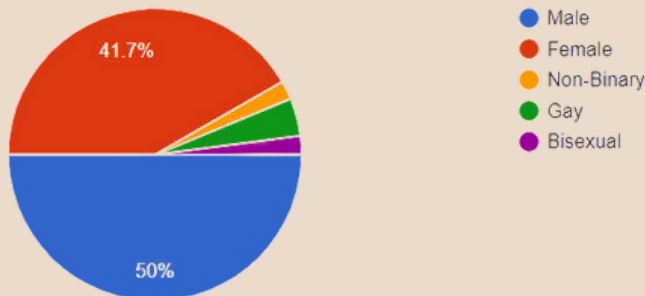
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- CDC

I think...ladko kae bhi bahut reasons hote hai rone ke

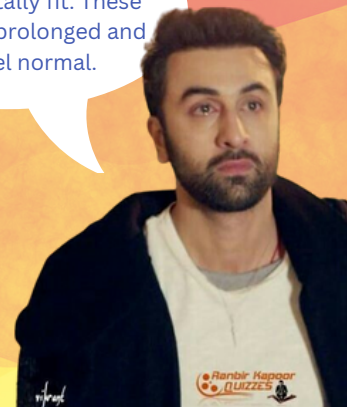


The Mental Health team at Project Mumbai circulated an online Google form to 48 individuals, to find out the perspectives of different genders on therapy. Following are the responses:-

Gender



These days, I haven't been feeling mentally fit. These feelings are prolonged and don't feel normal.

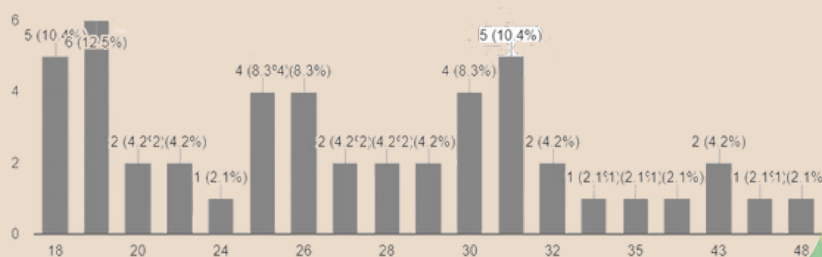


*Non-binary:- refers to individuals who do not believe that their genders fall into one of the two categories, male or female.

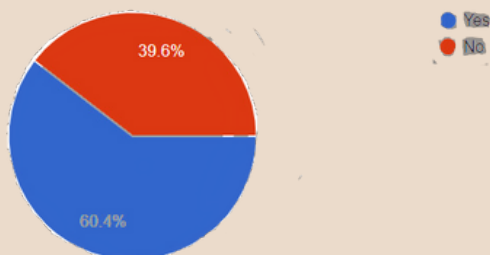
It's completely normal to seek help from mental health professionals. They are trained to help us during our tough times.



Age



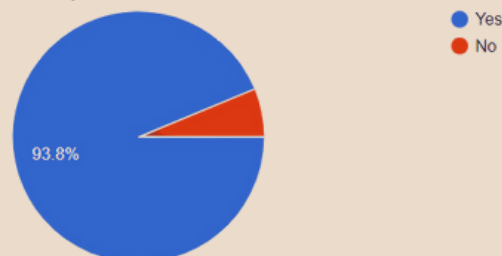
Have you ever felt the need to go for therapy?



1. Out of 26 men questioned, **half of them found the need for therapy while the other half did not.**
2. Out of 21 women, **15 women found the need for therapy and 6 women didn't find a need for therapy.**
3. The **non-binary individual** voted "Yes".

1. Out of 26 men, **25 men believed that therapy is for each and every person, irrespective of gender and only 1 believed the otherwise.**
2. Out of 21 women, **19 women believed that therapy is for each and every person, irrespective of gender and 2 believed the otherwise.**
3. The **non-binary individual** voted "Yes".

Do you think therapy is for each and every person, irrespective of any gender?

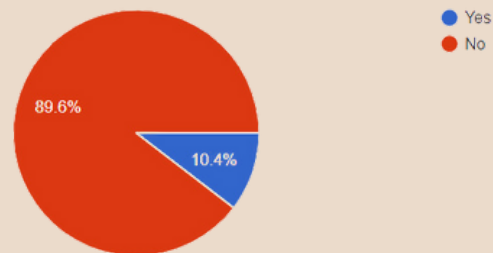


1. Out of 26 men, **4 felt ashamed of visiting a mental health professional** and **22 felt the otherwise**.

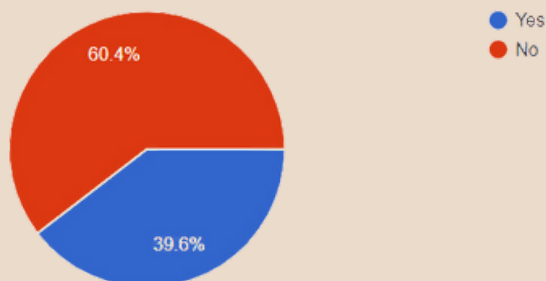
2. Out of 21 women, **none felt ashamed** of visiting a mental health professional.

3. The **non-binary individual** voted "Yes".

Do you feel ashamed of visiting a therapist/psychologist/mental health professional?



If you are visiting a therapist, do you feel the need to keep it a secret, because you are scared of being judged?



1. Out of 26 men, **14 felt scared of being judged by a society**. **12 felt the otherwise**.

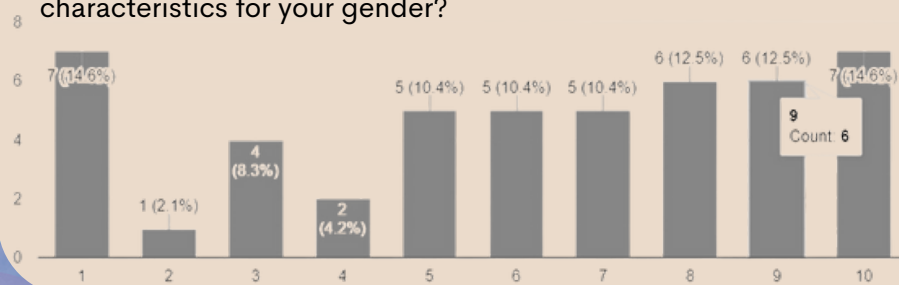
2. Out of 21 women, **5 felt scared of being judged by society**. **16 felt otherwise**.

3. The **non-binary individual** voted "Yes".

As a child, everyone told me "boys don't cry", and now they say, "men don't cry".

Crying is not a female or male behavior; it is a behavior that can be associated with variety of emotions. And, both, men and women should be free to express their emotions.

How often do you hide your emotions from your social group, in order to fit in a society's determined characteristics for your gender?

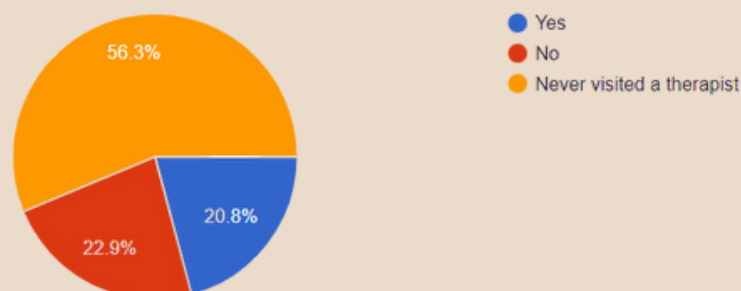


1. Out of 26 men, **6 were afraid of being judged by mental health professional**. **16 men have never been for a therapy session** and **4 voted for "No"**.

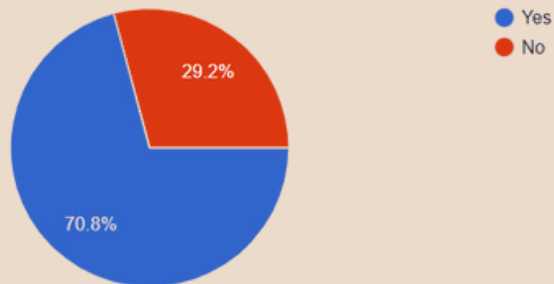
2. Out of 21 women, **3 were afraid of being judged by mental health professional**. **11 women have never been for a therapy session** and **7 voted for "No"**.

3. The **non-binary individual** voted "Yes".

When approaching therapy, were you afraid of being judged by mental health professionals?



Are you used to listening to particular comments, such as: "People of your gender don't cry", "You don't need therapy" or "this is just a phase". (Any comment which goes along the same line)



1. Out of 26 men, **19 men have listened** to these comments; whereas, **7 men didn't** hear these comments.

2. Out of 21 women, **14 women have listened** to these comments; whereas, **7 didn't** hear.

3. The **non-binary individual** voted "No".

1. **Getting plenty of exercise** - even a short walk can massively improve your mental wellbeing
2. **Talk regularly to friends and loved ones to maintain human contact** (and help each other spot when something changes.
3. **Make time for yourself even if you have a job and/or family to look after** - you can't care for anyone else if you're not first taking care of yourself.
4. **Eat and drink well** - your physical health can have a huge impact on your mental health and vice versa so looking after both is key!

How can men's mental health be looked after?

How can we support men's mental health?

1. **Learn about the challenges men face:** Go through online resources and speak to men about the challenges they face
2. **Create a safe environment:** Men are often discouraged from speaking about the challenges. Create a safe and caring environment in which the men in your life can open up to you.
3. **Encourage them to seek support:** Men are asked to 'man up' and face the challenges in their life with stride. Let them know that they do not have to struggle alone and encourage them to seek professional support.

Unpacking Masculinity

Questions for Reflection:

1. What does it mean to “man up”? In what ways is this phrase harmful or helpful?
2. How has your relationship with your family, home, and/or culture defined who you are as a man?
3. What do “masculinity” and “femininity” mean to you? What traits would you consider to be masculine/feminine?

Expert's Dialogue



Mr. Jitin Chawla
Career Counsellor &
Director
Center for career
development

Arun was a decent student at school and after studying commerce joined BBA at a private univ and on parents insistence went for MBA immediately after bachelors. He got a job in credit card sales which he hated, left it for a sales job at a top ed-tech where he was under an immense pressure to complete targets. He soon left that also and tried 3 more jobs subsequently. When he came to us for career counselling he felt his life was not going anywhere, he lost confidence, loss of energy and he had taken wrong choices etc etc. Lack of career guidance, parental misconceptions & not able to visualise careers led him to this state.

Expert's Dialogue

There are millions of Aruns around us who have similar stories to share. Men are expected to provide for the family and all the parents typically tell the growing up boy that you have to go out and earn (& not live life purposefully or follow your passion). So loads of youngsters choose career options which are seen as popular options. That results in dissatisfaction, poor health, social isolation and poor performance. Two things prevent them from taking help - Social stigma (men are told that men dont cry in front of others) and Self stigma. Typically the following are the causes of mental health issues in men :

- a) Isolated/ Solitary work : Think of an Oil rig with 2000 + workers.. its somewhere far away from the hustle and bustle of daily city life, no entertainment around, no choices for different cuisines..I am sure you get the picture..Manufacturing industry in India is male dominated and has the same picture as shared.
- b) Excessive workloads : Think of a person working in sales..the daily dose is - push yourself, go beyond, push your limits etc.. Lots of pressure and bullying too..some ed-techs have been in the news for this recently. Think of a small business owner who is fighting all odds to keep the business running. Or even an entrepreneur who has raised funds from an angel investor/VC and is now in the game of sprucing up his balance sheet. It might look exciting from outside but the pressures are immense and it results in situations where people commit suicide (V G Siddhartha, founder of Cafe Coffee Day, India's largest coffee shop chain) in 2019.
- c) Poor physical conditions : Manufacturing location are dirty, unhygienic and located far off (except for a few). In some jobs one needs to travel a lot irrespective of day/night , road conditions, transportation problems . This takes a toll on men. Most of the sales guys take to drinking/drugs as an escape mechanism.
- d) They dont seek help..Most of the time the families are blissfully unaware or it is brushed under the carpet and hence there is no early redressal.

A good solution is to first talk about these issues (few corporates have started) and provide a doorstep solution(tying up with an online counselling service or NGO). Legitimize and redefine help-seeking as a show of strength of character. Managers and senior people can share their own vulnerabilities and encourage acceptance of the fact that they have gone through pressures and its alright to talk about these issues. A positive atmosphere created by organisations can go a long way in promoting mental health amongst men and increase productivity tremendously.

LGBT+ PRIDE MONTH

The month of June, celebrated as Pride Month all over the world, is the celebration of freedom and love. The LGBT+ community, also known as the Queer community, consists of people of diverse gender and sexual identities. Some do not identify with the same gender they were assigned at birth. Some are attracted, romantically or sexually, to individuals who are not of the opposite gender. Some may experience no romantic or sexual attraction, irrespective of gender.

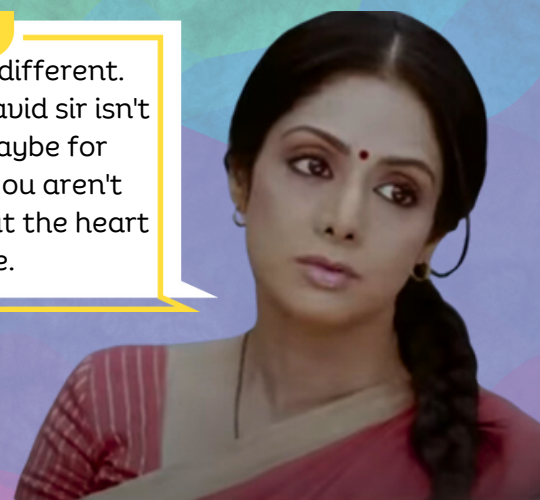
L: lesbian (a woman loving another woman)
G: gay (a man loving another man)
B: bisexual (a person who can love people of more than one gender)
T: transgender (a person who is not the gender they were given at birth)
+: denotes all the other sexualities and gender identities, such as aromantic (A), intersex (I), etc.

“17% of Indians identify as non-heterosexual
24% were unsure or did not want to share.”

SOURCE: <https://www.ipsos.com/en/lgbt-pride-2021-global-survey-points-generation-gap-around-gender-identity-and-sexual-attraction>

There are 2.5 million queer people in India -Government of India, 2012

“We are all different. For you, David sir isn't normal, maybe for David sir, you aren't normal. But the heart is the same.”



SOURCE: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-17363200>



MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS FACED BY QUEER PEOPLE



Being queer is **NOT** a mental health issue,
nor does it cause mental health issues

Queer individuals face:

- More adverse childhood experiences
- Higher rates of reported mental illness
- Higher rates of depression, suicidality and substance abuse
- Increased risk for suicidal ideation, attempts and depression
- Higher rates of mood and anxiety disorders

Amongst LGB individuals, bisexual women and lesbians face the worst mental health status

- Anxiety
- Anger
- Depressive symptoms
- Self injury
- Suicidal ideations

Gay and bisexual men face a higher risk of:

- Major depression,
- Bipolar disorder, and
- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Substance abuse
- Suicidal ideation and successful attempts

Some factors that might lead to the increase of mental health issues are:

- Internalization of negative societal views
- Discrimination or victimization
- Expectation of rejection from family and society
- Internalized homophobia

Queer people reported

- 14 times more suicide attempts
- 3.5 to 5 times higher rate of depression

SOURCE: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7876969/>

SOURCE: <https://www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/mental-health.htm>



HOW TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE AND RESPECTFUL

Your behaviours need to show that you accept the queer people around you.

Some ways of showing that are:

- wanting equal rights for all
- wanting people to be treated fairly

**BE
ACCEPTING**

**TAKE
ACTIONS**

**HAVE
HUMILITY**

Take actions to improve the climate around you. this means that you need to confront:

- Interpersonal biases: offensive comments
- Systemic biases: discrimination

- respect queer peoples pronouns (he, she, or they)
- ask for explanation if you do not understand something
- listen to queer people about their problems
- keep the focus on the queer issue when being discussed

SOURCE: <https://hbr.org/2023/04/research-how-to-be-a-better-ally-to-the-lgbtq-community>



Help is just a call away!

- **ICALL HELPLINE (GENERAL COUNSELLING)- 02225521111 (MON-SAT, 8AM-10 PM)**
- **HUMSAFAR TRUST (LGBTQIA+)- 0226673800 (MON-FRI, 10 AM-8PM)**
- **ARPAN (CSA)- +91-9819086444 (MON-FRI, 9 AM-6PM)**
- **AASRA (SUICIDE PREVENTION)- +91-9820466726 (7 DAYS A WEEK, 24 HOURS)**

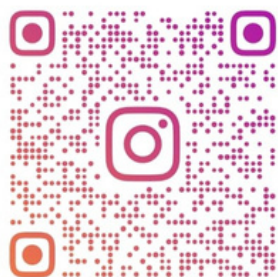
WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!

If you or someone you know is experiencing any mental or emotional distress, kindly call on our toll-free mental health helpline number:

SAMVAAD
1800-102-4040

This helpline is active from 8 am to 8 pm, seven days a week and is handled by counsellors with varied expertise.

In case of any mental health related concerns, please feel free to reach us on mentalhealth@projectmumbai.org



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Project Mumbai

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