

COUNSELING AFRICA

Nigeria's Mental Health Crisis

20 Disturbing Mental Health Stats in Nigeria

Sources: World Health Organization (WHO) | Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria | Federal Ministry of Health

THE SCALE

#01 40 million Nigerians are currently living with a mental illness.

That is roughly 1 in 5 Nigerians — equivalent to the entire population of California.

#02 7 million Nigerians have clinical depression. 4.9 million have anxiety disorders.

These are diagnosable, treatable medical conditions affecting over 12 million people, with almost no system in place to help them.

#03 Nigeria has the highest rate of depression in all of Africa.

Not one of the highest — the highest. In a continent of 54 countries.

#04 Nigeria ranks 15th in the world for suicide frequency, according to the WHO.

This figure appears in official World Health Organization reporting — not a footnote, not an estimate.

#05 Between 2020 and 2023, Nigeria's suicide rate doubled.

Three years that included COVID-19, naira devaluation, petrol subsidy removal, and deepening economic insecurity — all of which directly impact mental health.

THE TREATMENT GAP

#06 85–90% of Nigerians with a mental illness receive no professional care whatsoever.

Of every 100 Nigerians with depression, fewer than 15 will ever see a trained mental health professional.

#07 70% of mental health 'treatment' in Nigeria happens through traditional healers and prayer houses — not clinicians.

Faith is not the enemy. But faith being the only available option is a system failure.

#08 Over 60% of callers to a Lagos mental health hotline were in active crisis — suicidal, violent, or completely breaking down.

These are only the people who reached out. The majority in crisis never make that call.

#09 Nigeria has never fully implemented its own mental health policy — first drafted over 36 years ago, in 1991.

The policy sat unimplemented for over three decades. That is not negligence. That is abandonment.

THE WORKFORCE CRISIS

#10 Nigeria has approximately 250 psychiatrists for a population of 220 million people.

The WHO recommends one psychiatrist per 10,000 people. Nigeria has one per million.

#11 The United Kingdom has 4,500 psychiatrists for 56 million people. Nigeria has 250 for 220 million.

The UK has 18 times more psychiatrists for a population that is 4 times smaller.

#12 There are only 1,000 psychiatric nurses and 319 licensed clinical psychologists in the entire country.

That is one psychologist for every 690,000 Nigerians. The US ratio is one for every 3,000.

#13 Up to two-thirds of Nigerian psychiatrists are actively preparing to emigrate — every single year.

Nigeria is training mental health professionals and then watching them board planes to the UK, Canada, and the US. The brain drain has no end in sight.

#14 The Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital Yaba lost half its resident psychiatrists in just 4 years.

33 doctors and 22 consultants now handle over 5,000 patients annually at Nigeria's most prominent psychiatric hospital.

THE MONEY PROBLEM

#15 Nigeria allocates less than 4% of its health budget to mental health — and over 90% of that goes to just a handful of hospitals.

36 states and hundreds of millions of Nigerians are left with virtually no dedicated mental health funding.

#16 High-income countries spend over \$50 per person per year on mental health. Nigeria spends less than \$1.

This 50-to-1 disparity captures the gap between treating mental health as a priority and paying lip service to it.

#17 Yaba Psychiatric Hospital had an approved 2018 budget of ₦133 million. The government released less than 10% — while patient numbers surged 22%.

Approved, then abandoned. More patients. Less money. This is the story of mental health funding in Nigeria.

#18 The annual economic burden of mental illness in Nigeria exceeds ₦21 billion — paid mostly out of pocket by families.

Without mental health coverage in most insurance plans, families are absorbing a crisis the government refuses to fund.

THE HUMAN COST

#19 Among internally displaced Nigerians in Kaduna, 60% show signs of depression and 16% have definite, clinical depression.

Nigerians uprooted by conflict are being placed in camps with no mental health support, no counselors, and no clinicians.

#20 Among Nigerian adolescents, the prevalence of mental health disorders ranges between 10% and 37% — yet children's mental health receives almost zero dedicated funding.

Up to 1 in 3 Nigerian teenagers may be living with a diagnosable condition. Nigeria's response: stigma, silence, and no budget line.

Compiled by Counseling Africa. All statistics drawn from published WHO data, the Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria, the Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital Yaba, and peer-reviewed public health research. For mental health support in Nigeria, please reach out to a licensed mental health professional.