

# Are People Living in Urban Areas More Prone to Anxiety and Depression?

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**Abstract:** *Post the pandemic, the discussions around mental health became louder and the stigma around it began to wear off. This led to some startling revelations in terms of statistics. According to a 2019 WHO report 1 in every 8 people, or 970 million people around the world were living with a mental disorder, with anxiety and depressive disorders being the most common. COVID worsened the situation, and it is believed that we could already be living in a world where 1 in 4 people could be suffering with some form of mental illness. More and more studies have highlighted that urbanites are 21 percent more likely to have anxiety disorders and 39 percent more likely to have mood disorders as compared to their rural counterparts. This is alarming given the increasing urbanisation trend across the world. This paper examines why the urban population is more prone to mental illness and what are the likely remedial measures that can help prevent or minimise its debilitating impact.*

**Keywords:** Mental illness, depression, anxiety disorder, global epidemic, Health inequity

## 1. Introduction

According to the WHO – “Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in” (1). The choice of “Mental Health as a Universal Human Right” theme for the World Mental Health Day 2023 by the World Health Organisation is a public acknowledgement of how mental health can no longer be brushed aside and that countries need to address these challenges worsened by the pandemic (2). For the first time mental health has been acknowledged as a crucial pillar to human and socio economic wellbeing of nations and treated at par with basic needs of food, shelter, and healthcare.

According to the International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision (ICD-11) – “A mental disorder is characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual’s cognition, emotional regulation, or behaviour” [3]. This definition is more expansive and includes problems like anxiety and depression which in many countries was not counted as a major mental health issue. It is now widely acknowledged that Mental and substance use disorders are some of the leading causes of disability globally [4]. According to a study conducted by the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation and the WHO report “In 2019, 1 in every 8 people, or 970 million people around the world were living with a mental disorder, with anxiety and depressive disorders the most common [5]. In 2020, the number of people living with anxiety and depressive disorders rose significantly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initial estimates show a 26% and 28% increase respectively for anxiety and major depressive disorders in just one year” highlighting the devastating impact of COVID 19 on mental health of people across the world [6].

A large-scale survey in 29 countries co-led by researchers from Harvard Medical School and the University of Queensland found out that “One out of every two people in the world will develop a mental health disorder in their lifetime” [7]. This only strengthens the WHO appeal to nations to treat this issue as a medical red alert.

In all of this, the observation that urbanisation causes more mental health problems is rather significant and garnering increased consideration [8]. Coming at a time when increased urbanisation is a global phenomenon, it warrants special attention. According to a World bank report on sustainability 2023 - “Today, some 56% of the world’s population – 4.4 billion inhabitants – live in cities. This trend is expected to continue, with the urban population more than doubling its current size by 2050, at which point nearly 7 of 10 people will live in cities” [9]. with a decline in rural economies, more and more people are likely to be drawn to the cities in search of better employment prospects, education, health care, and culture. Unfortunately, most urban cities across the world are not geared to absorb this influx and rapid and often unplanned urban growth is often associated with poverty, environmental degradation and population demands that outstrip service capacity [10,11].

This paper examines the underlying reasons how urbanization impact mental health and why this needs to be given special attention, given the magnitude of the problem.

## 2. Factors that Compound Mental Problems in Urban Areas

It is ironic that although people move to the cities seeking a better life, most studies reveal that enough has not been done to mitigate the mental challenges that come along with increasing urbanisation. Studies have revealed that Urbanites are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression, and the risk of schizophrenia increases dramatically among people raised in a city. Some have inferred that children born in cities face twice, if not three times, the risk of developing a serious emotional disorder as compared with their rural and suburban peers [12]. The following factors have been identified as the principal triggers:

### 2.1 Financial pressures

The wage premium associated with big cities is not such a premium anymore [14]. The premium is being sucked up by higher urban housing costs as rents and cost of acquiring homes is increasing with the unprecedented increase in demand. The slight dip that occurred during COVID and with

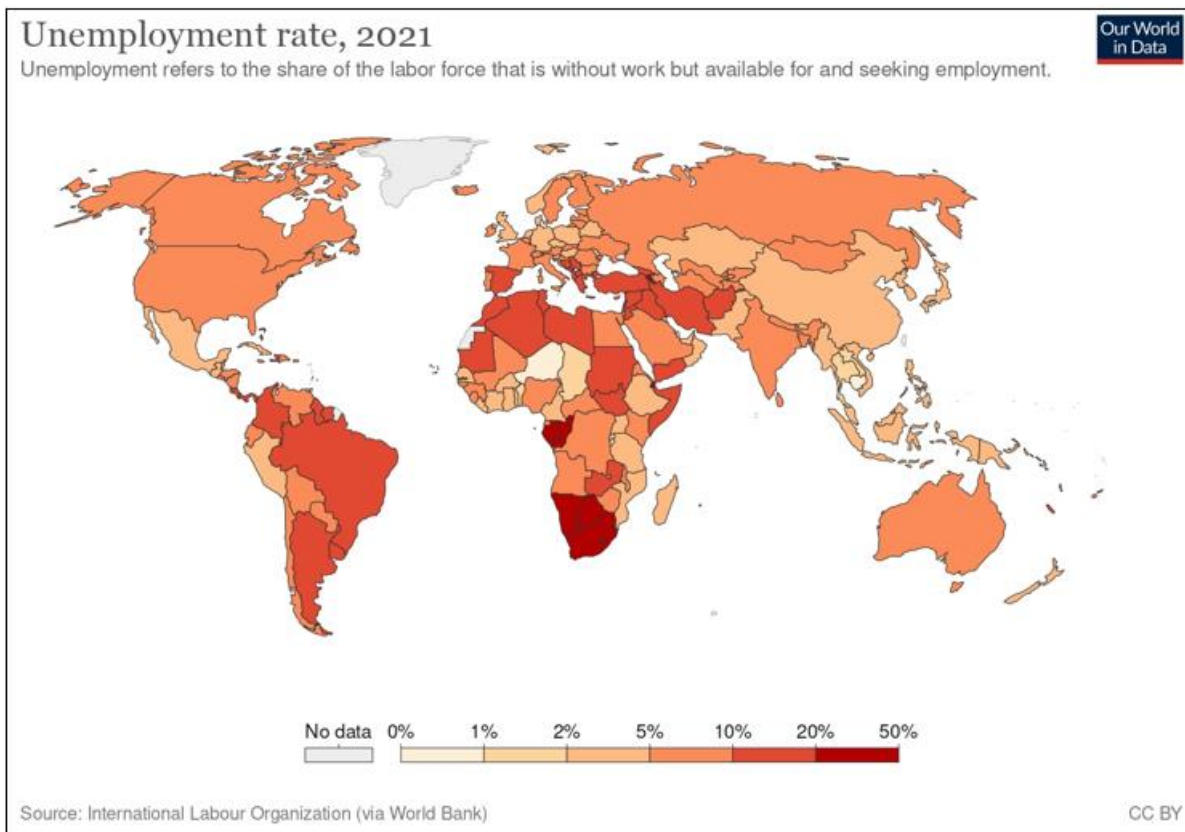
the subsequent work from home culture, soon diminished as companies started preferring a hybrid model. Mismatch between high demand limited supply, have led to an affordability crisis, forcing people to allocate a significant portion of their income toward housing costs [15]. The prices of food and other commodities are also higher in urban areas due to the large concentration of people and huge demand. Rising inflation has further worsened the situation. Most urbanites except for the upper strata find it challenging to keep pace with the rising costs, and their reduced purchasing power makes them compromise on their quality of life, which impacts mental health. As most of the income is spent on essential expenses, most do not have the capacity to build savings and investments, or to invest on leisure activities. This makes them insecure and caught in a routine which become monotonous and hard to cope with. The impact of these financial strains on human health and behaviour and overall family well-being is now well documented [16,17,18]. A Pew Research Center (2021) report shows that worries about personal health and financial security are related to higher levels of psychological distress even in a developed economy like US [19]. Although financial strains can be both objective (i.e., stressor events) and subjective (i.e., perceived stress [20] most studies have focused mainly on objective indicators. Perceived financial stress is also very high in the urban areas as the visible income disparity always makes a person feel inadequate. “Money dysmorphia is kind of like today’s version of keeping up with the Joneses,” said Courtney Alev, consumer financial advocate at Credit Karma [21]. Not surprisingly, money dysmorphia is even more prevalent among younger generations, according to Credit Karma. Roughly 43% of Gen Z and 41% of millennials struggle with comparisons to others and feel behind financially. This disconnect between perception and reality is more prevalent in the urban areas. Moreover “Legitimate financial worries like a cooling job market, student loan debt, and sky-high costs for housing and childcare may be making it harder for some younger Americans to imagine meeting the money milestones set by prior generations” [22]. This phenomenon is no longer restricted to the west and has gone global with the advent of social media that has made the world an even smaller place.

Inflation and escalating prices of the basics has increased the problem of debt. Free use of credit cards has only worsened the problem. Without debt, many people would not be able to invest in education, become homeowners, or start a small business. Failure to repay debt— “good” or “bad”—can create financial stress, ruin credit, and undermine community stability [23]. Individuals living in rural areas were more likely to own their homes and vehicles. Urban individuals were more likely to own retirement accounts, stocks, and mutual funds as buying homes is not as easy and formidably expensive. Rural finances may differ from the urban due to lower population density, infrastructure differences such as less availability of broadband, and their experiences with or exposure to various asset types [24], which are more readily available to urbanites who might indulge in impulsive spending. Studies have also shown that urban debt tends to be higher than the rural debt adding to financial stress. This constant financial strain can lead to heightened stress levels and adversely affect mental health [25].

Post the pandemic, businesses are taking time to recover. While the cost of living continues to climb, wages have not risen at a commensurate rate. Stagnant wages and income disparity exacerbate the financial strain caused by increasing expenses [26].

## 2.2 Increased competitiveness in urban areas:

More and more people are migrating to urban centres in search of jobs, not realising that the job situation in the urban areas is becoming increasingly uncertain and insecure. Most of these workers lack higher cognitive skills and have to face a lot of insecurity in the cities as new jobs in the formal sector are far fewer than the number of new migrants into cities [26]. Due to the imbalance between supply and demand, new migrants are at a disadvantage when competing for jobs and are compelled to be self-employed or informally employed and also increases the competitiveness for the original residents [27]. The following figure illustrates the employment crisis.



Ironically, the unemployment rate among the educated is not only higher compared to the uneducated, but it also increases with higher levels of education. One of the reasons for higher unemployment among the educated is that the educated are not willing to join in low-grade informal jobs, but at the same time, sufficient regular salaried jobs are also not available for them [28]. As access to education improves, this problem is further magnified. Increased population translates to increased competitiveness for each job opening. Employers too use this supply demand imbalance to exploit workers, keeping them insecure and forcing them to work longer hours with tougher deadlines and targets, which impacts the mental health of the workers, both white- and blue-collar ones. According to a recent study 15% of U.S. workers today feel at risk of losing their jobs (despite actual unemployment rates remaining at record low levels [29]. These are shocking statistics as if this is the reality in the US, a developed economy, it must be worse elsewhere. Studies have shown that many workplaces intentionally stoke fears of job loss to motivate workers and reduce costs, since job insecure workers may be less likely to demand raises and other benefits. Organizations such as Facebook and General Electric have made no secret of their strategic use of the threat of job loss to boost performance, despite the well-documented negative effects of job insecurity on employees' sense of social connection, identity, and physical and mental health [30, 31, 32]. However, highly stressful work situations are never good for long-term performance, says David Creelman, a Toronto-based HR consultant. "You shouldn't put someone in this kind of situation if you can avoid it," he says. "Highly stressed people are more likely to have mental and ethical lapses and are harder to get along with as team members, than less stressed people [33,34]."

### 2.3 Trend of Individualism & Nuclear Families and lack of a larger support system:

Ironically in urban clusters "the sheer scale of urban life" contributes greatly to feelings of isolation [35,36]. The heterogeneous nature of the urban populations coupled with an extremely fast paced life, makes it difficult for people to forge deep rooted relationships [37,38]. The culture of placing self over others is more predominant in the urban areas

As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, Georg Simmel proposed an analysis of how individuality and the urban condition are intertwined in modern times. In his famous article 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben', he argued that the big city enabled an unprecedented degree of personal freedom by providing an anonymous environment that freed individuals from social control [39]. This anonymity, however, had a downside: it reduced individuals' influence and visibility and made the cities work with a clockwork-like rationality by people with impersonal relations, they did not count for much [40]. This individualism also made nuclear families the norm. The modern nuclear family is perpetually promoting the principle of individualism or independence in contrast to the value of collectivism deep-rooted in joint family. It is, therefore, a value shift in family from collectivism to individualism. It is followed by a loyalty shift in family from lineal ties to conjugal ties [41]. Lack of a larger support system sometimes makes these relationships fragile and overburdened. This can put a lot of stress on the individuals themselves and may result in the older members being completely left out. Studies have already started warning that in most urban areas, the nuclear family has left parents burned out, anxious, lonely, and very often, alone [42]. The younger working professionals are faring no better. Alienation and anonymity, the two underlying attributes of

life in a city lead to powerlessness, increased crime rates, and Social Isolation [43]. All of this worsened during the pandemic highlighting the concept of Urban Isolation which was marked by lack of social support that led to poor compliance, depression, and stress [44].

The stress of city life and its inherent competitiveness also puts pressure on personal relationships. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is officially a thing in the 21st century. IPV has been on the rise, and its worst effects are seen in urban areas [45]. Multivariate analyses on this subject show that lack of social support has aggravated the problem. The United Nations reported a "horrifying global surge in domestic violence" during the COVID-19 pandemic [46]. Studies of the World Health Organization have shown that women who experience domestic violence physically, sexually or mentally, have double the chances of abortion and even twice the likelihood of falling into depression [47].

Children also face a unique problem. Lack of family time, unsafe environment and Cramped homes confined them to closed spaces for prolonged periods which make them physically active which in turn leads to problems like obesity, irregular sleep patterns, mood swings, dependence on electronic gadgets, poor bone health and many such issues. Lack of social activity and insufficient time outdoors impacts the mental health of the children [48].

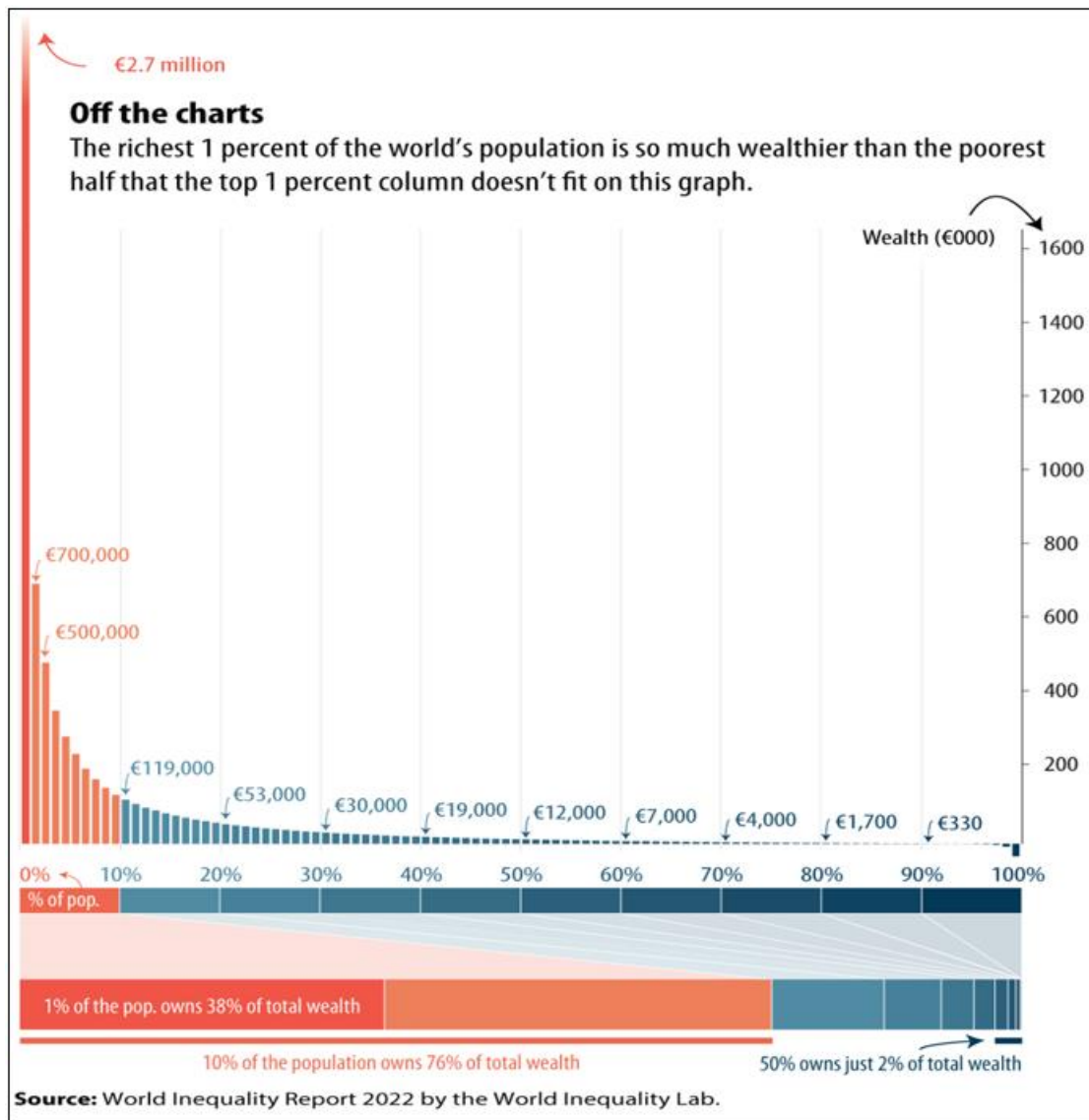
#### **2.4 Very evident social and economic disparity:**

“Whether the process of urbanization is harnessed and managed, or allowed to fuel growing divides, will largely

determine the future of inequality”, says UN DESA’s World Social Report 2020. For the first time in history, more people now live in urban than in rural areas. Unfortunately urbanisation which has the potential to become a positive transformative force for every aspect of sustainable development, including the reduction of inequality, has not been managed well and has led to unprecedented congestion, higher crime rates, pollution, increased levels of inequality and social exclusion. Economically, inequality is generally greater in urban than in rural areas: the Gini coefficient of income inequality is higher in urban areas than in rural areas [49]. This rising inequality prevent large sections of the population from accessing proper health care, good schools, sanitation, piped water, employment opportunities and adequate housing among others, creating a very visible socio-economic divide. Presently, approx 828 million, or 33% of the world’s urban population live in slums and experience challenges, deprivations with a mixture of high degrees of poverty, unemployment and crime, along with the quality of housing, deprived sanitation and inadequate access to basic amenities [50,51,52].

While the rich are getting richer, there is not much improvement in the lives of the majority. Since the affluent always prefer urban bases, this statistic is another evidence of how the socio – economic fault lines are only increasing. An Oxfam report shows that in the 10 years since the financial crisis, the number of billionaires has nearly doubled, and the fortunes of the world’s super-rich have reached record levels. In 2018, the 26 richest people in the world held as much wealth as half of the global population (the 3.8 billion poorest people), down from 43 people the year before [53].





In most urban areas the economic distinction is starkly evident by categorisation of neighbourhoods' basis the affordability. The lifestyles are also starkly different. watching the rich live a luxurious life, as most others struggle for basic amenities does have a negative impact on a person's self-worth/confidence making them more prone to depression and anxiety [54,55,56,57]. Inadequate housing with poor sanitation, light and water supplies also has a negative impact on mental health.

There is Growing evidence of the connection between economic inequality and poor mental health [58,59]. Mental health problems are particularly prominent amongst marginalised groups experiencing social exclusion, discrimination and trauma, leading to compound vulnerability and a sense of hopelessness [60]. For the lower income groups, the constant uncertainties and insecurities surrounding their basic needs cause stress and anxiety, making them more prone to mental illness [61]. The survival of the fittest syndrome may lead to violence and adversity, discrimination, and systemic injustices which can impact the mental health adversely [62, 63, 64].

Conversely, the rich have their own set of problems. The pressure on the upper crust to maintain their social status, be

successful and meet the social perception of success and perfection can lead to feelings of inadequacy, stress, and anxiety, which are risk factors for depression. Urban centres are unforgiving towards failure and the fear of losing has been documented to create mental distress among the affluent too [65]. That said, there seems to be something about extreme success that puts one at higher risk for depression – perhaps because it's so pressurized, so lonely, or so empty, it triggers depression in those you'd least expect it. In fact, some of the most successful people in history have suffered from relentless, incapacitating depression. The fear of losing wealth can also impact mental wellbeing [66]. The extreme competition to stay ahead of the others and the extreme feeling of failure if one slips are both detrimental to mental health among the affluent. Moreover, the privileges may make them less resilient to setbacks and least equipped to handle them without being negatively impacted mentally [67,68]. Amidst the stark inequality, the rich feel more isolated and fear that other people are after them only for their money [69]. In urban areas the performance pressure is a lot more and keeps everyone aspiring for more. Performance pressure in the urban areas is much higher and complicated. "This urgency to achieve high levels because performance is tied to substantial consequences" [70].

## 2.5 Trends of individualism/nuclear families:

Individualism promoting a self-directed, autonomous, and separate view of self from others is on the rise in urban areas and the collective interconnected view of the self as overlapping closely with others, such that one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are embedded in social contexts is slowly waning [71,72]. This trend makes marriage an option rather than a compulsion. Moreover, many studies have revealed that the divorce rates are higher in the urban areas as compared to the rural [73]. Even when people marry, they prefer the nuclear family model [74]. This model is no longer considered a western concept and has now become the norm in urban areas across the world.

Moreover, with the advent of the social media and the upsurge of entertainment avenues on the computer, and other related solitary pursuits, there has been a precipitous decline in membership of organizations that traditionally brought meaning, purpose, and social opportunities to people and their communities. This decline includes churches, labour unions, and fraternal organizations. In the words of Harvard Professor Robert Putnam, more and more people are 'Bowling Alone' [75]. All this has made people lonelier with no meaningful social contact that can act as a real sounding board and support in the face of an adverse stressful situation, personally or professionally, leaving the individual to cope independently, which is not ideal to handle a mental health issue. Moreover, balancing the demands of work, family and personal life with no outside support can be extremely stressful disturbing the work-life balance which can add to the stress and anxiety. Moreover, Work-life issues have come to the fore as women have entered paid employment in unprecedented numbers and there is no institutional support for working parents and private help is very costly [76]. This everyday stress could lead to more serious mental health implications.

## 2.6 Lifestyle changes compounded by social media/increased consumerism:

Sociologists and economists both, agree that that urbanism and capitalism are intrinsically linked. "The metropolis has always been the seat of money economy and the hallmarks of capitalism, industrialization and commercialization" (77,78,79). Materialism is mostly concentrated in cities forcing urbanites to work longer hours [80, 81,82]. The urban areas compound materialism as is evident from their built environment—corporate buildings, shops, advertisements—which signal wealth and material possessions [83]. People are sucked in by this visual stimulus making comparisons and one upmanship in terms of trends more likely in urban areas, as there are more people and more stimuli. Moreover, "use of social media is higher in urban areas. Both visual and social comparisons in real life and on social media can make people seek status and recognition through money, material possessions, and conspicuous consumption" [84]. Urbanites try to classify others in terms of visible attributes such as dress and other luxury symbols like cars and fancy homes. There is commodity fetishism, and the surroundings intensify conspicuous consumption: urban etiquette, sophistication, manners, and finish [85,86]. This constant pressure of consumerism and the need to acquire more possessions and

wealth as a measure of success and happiness, can have adverse impact on mental health specially when people begin to use them as an index of self-worth. One way materialism affects mental health is through the social comparison it encourages. Constantly comparing one's possessions and lifestyle to others can lead to feelings of inadequacy, envy, and dissatisfaction. This "compare and despair" cycle can contribute to anxiety and depression. Moreover, prioritizing material goals over interpersonal relationships and joy that one derives from gratitude can diminish the quality of these connections, which are vital for emotional support and happiness [87]. Constant comparison also leads to damaging emotions like envy, jealousy, and dissatisfaction, impacting mental health negatively. It doesn't end with just this, the desire to possess more and more, puts undue financial pressure/stress on people and the constant need to fit in, seek societal validation and be accepted more on material parameters can cause anxiety and continual dissatisfaction [88].

## 2.7 Increasing use of technology and the digital medium:

Many studies have revealed a problematic relationship between the increasing use of technology and digital media and mental health of users. Excessive use of technology at workplace has also led to a human disconnect and made the word '*technostress*', or the experience of stress due to an inability to adapt to new technologies, a common issue at work [89]. This can manifest in the form of exhaustion or lack of motivation as one must constantly work with and sometimes even compete with technology. Constantly sitting in front of technological devices can lead to exhaustion, loss of motivation, frustration, and burnouts [90] Increasing use of technology at the workplace now requires much higher cognitive skills and there is lesser human interface which in turn has made people more anxious and prone to replacement fear which can aggravate anxiety and depression [91]. Use of information and communications technologies (ICT), such as cell phones, voice mail, e-mail, and instant messaging, can challenge employees, who are expected to always be alert and responsive and create a range of stressors, including overload, role ambiguity, and job insecurity [92]. The concept of work from home or remote work that was necessitated by the pandemic has also isolated furthermore. A large number of people have no bonding at work and can't find the work-life balance as they can't keep the lines between their personal and professional lives from blurring. It is difficult to stay focussed and given the competitiveness of the job market in urban areas, any slackening multiples stress levels [93]. Moreover, there is reduced feeling of belongingness and being a part of a supportive team that makes people feel disconnected and lonely.

Social media which is far more commonly used in the urban areas as compared to the rural is also a mixed bag. While it helps us connect with a larger set of people from the comfort of our homes, constant virtual connections can often amplify the feeling of loneliness. "Internet-related technologies are great at giving us the perception of connectedness," says Dr. Elias Aboujaoude, a Stanford University psychiatrist who's written about the intersection of psychology and tech. according to him, the time and energy spent on social media's countless connections may be happening at the expense of

more rooted, genuinely supportive and truly close relationships [94]. This can lead to loneliness and greater anxiety as people put up a brave front on the digital media and begin to live a pretentious life. Loneliness and isolation are known to be a root cause of declining mental health [95].

## 2.8 Environmental pollution

Rapid, environmental pollution and climate change are converging at a dangerous pace and are beginning to impact quality of life and the health of the residents like never before [96]. High levels of air, water and ground pollution are also known to impact mental health. Ninety-nine per cent of the global population, majority still being urban, breathes air that exceeds World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. According to WHO, air quality is among the many environmental, social and economic determinants of mental health. Research also shows that high levels of fine inhalable particles (PM 2.5) can also hinder cognitive development in children. UNICEF's Danger in the Air report shows that exposure to high levels of air pollution could result in psychological and behavioural problems later in childhood, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety and depression. The impact on adults and veterans is no less severe [97].

Most urban centres suffer from a water crisis. Both shortage and uncertainty around water, a basic necessity can contribute to stress, anxiety and depression. Moreover, emerging scientific research also suggests that a common drinking water pollutant—lead—impacts mental health, both in adults and children [98]. Moreover, excessive ground pollution is affecting the food chain which in turn is adversely impacting both, the physical and mental health of the inhabitants [99]. Noise pollution in cities is another cause of mental distress and anxiety.

A recent WHO report highlighted that extreme weather events that have been disrupting urban life more often than ever in recorded history is also playing havoc with the mental health of inhabitants with increase in depression, anxiety and stress-related conditions [100]. A study from Australia suggests that heat waves are associated with increased rates of admissions for mental disorders and worsens anxiety disorders, dementia and anxiety related disorders among others [101]. Individuals who have been through the experience of climate related natural disaster are not only at a higher risk of developing PTSD, but also at a greater risk of developing acute stress reaction and adjustment disorder [102,103]. In fact, most studies are now showing conclusive evidence to support the increasing impact of climate change and environmental pollution on mental health.

## 2.9 Expensive medical care

Increasing influx into the urban areas and the rise of mental health issues among the residents has put unprecedented strain on the resources of health care systems in urban areas across the world. Urban health care systems are fighting the combined impact of increased demand for mental health services, and the intensification of mental health inequalities. In the absence of major government intervention to provide free medical cover in mental health care, most residents in

urban areas across the world prefer not to report a mental issue or seek advice on it fearing the cost of treatment and early diagnosis [104]. Even in the most developed economies like the US the costs are prohibitive. A depression patient can spend an average of \$10,836 a year, which makes it very tough for the middle class and lower segments of society [105]. This is another reason why mental health is often ignored and is now becoming a red alert of policy makers.

## 3. Conclusion

Increasing urbanisation is a reality and is only going to increase globally. For the first time in history, more people now live in urban than in rural areas. And over the next three decades, global population growth is expected to exceed rural growth by a reasonable high margin. With reports indicating that the total number of people living in cities is expected to grow from approximately 4.4 billion today to 6.7 billion in 2050 [106], the issue of increasing mental health problems within the urbanites is not something that can be wished away. Repeated studies have shown that while living in a metropolis has its perks, the fast pace of the city along with other limitations elaborated on above can take a heavy toll on the mental health of its residents. Compared to rural residents, researchers have found that urbanites are 21 percent more likely to have anxiety disorders and 39 percent more likely to have mood disorders, PTSD, anger management issues and generalized anxiety disorder, all of which if left unattended and can lead to much more serious health concerns [107].

Since urban centres are the drivers of economic growth, this trend can be very worrisome and can have larger social and economic ramifications. According to the US National Institutes of Health, when mental-health issues go unaddressed, they contribute to economic loss because of absenteeism from school or work, increased drop-out rates, health-care expenditure and unemployment [108]. A study highlighting mental health in countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) explains that the direct cost associated with a loss in productivity is \$3.5bn, not including treatment costs [109].

Given the magnitude of the challenge, there is no miracle solution and would need all stake holders including governments, corporations, influencers, urban planners, and the public to cooperate and make a positive difference. The first step towards the resolution of this problem is to acknowledge the reality rather than wish it away. Some of the more urgent solutions that need to be prioritized include:

- Urban areas will continue to decline in terms of citizen welfare unless they work on the urban infra structure and make cheaper and more convenient public transport available to people to ease their stress around daily commute challenges and expenses.
- Declutter the city and make cheap housing available to eventually clear the unplanned and unliveable slum clusters that have grown unchecked in most urban cities across the world and are a sad hallmark of practically all cities in the developing world.
- Create a support system for the old, children and the disabled.



- Built urban design to include green open spaces that allow people to congregate and enjoy nature and its calming influence.
- Ensure greenery in the cities. Green vegetation act as a purifying agent to help mitigate pollution.
- Create a better policing network to mitigate crime and harassment, something which adds to the anxiety and fear among residents.
- There should be a more supportive non-governmental social support system that offers help and preliminary guidance and spreads awareness on mental health and its simple solutions and the need for proper attention.
- Invest in health infra structure and ensure that it is subsidised for those who can't afford it. Right to a healthy life should be a fundamental right and the governments should be held accountable for it.
- All working places should prioritise mental health and welfare of their employees and set up help groups to nip the problem in the bud [110].

These initiatives can help make a positive difference. The world cannot afford to ignore the warnings of the WHO enumerating that in 2020, the world lost nearly 15% of disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs) to mental illness. What is even more troubling is that the burden of mental disorders is maximal in young adults, which is recognised as the most productive age of the population [111]. The numbers are worse in developing countries that have very few or negligible planned urban areas and are grappling with this new norm of rapid urbanisation. Urbanization is a natural corollary of growth. Ignoring mental health of its residents can decelerate growth, which would be detrimental to economies individually and to the global economy at large, given the interconnectedness of the modern world.

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