

Mental disorder

A mental disorder, also called a mental [illness](#), psychological disorder or psychiatric disorder, is mental or behavioral pattern that causes either suffering or a poor ability to function in ordinary life. Such features may be persistent, relapsing and remitting, or occur as a single episode. Many disorders have been described, with signs and symptoms that vary widely between specific disorders.

Typically, social norms and religious or cultural beliefs are excluded.

The causes of mental disorders are often unclear. Theories may incorporate findings from a range of fields. Mental disorders are usually defined by a combination of how a person feels, acts, thinks or perceives.

This may be associated with particular regions or functions of the brain, often in a social context. A mental disorder is one aspect of mental health. The scientific study of mental disorders is called psychopathology.

Services are based in psychiatric hospitals or in the community, and assessments are carried out by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and clinical social workers, using various methods but often relying on observation and questioning. Treatments are provided by various mental health professionals. Psychotherapy and psychiatric medication are two major treatment options. Other treatments include social interventions, peer support and self-help. In a minority of cases there might be involuntary detention or treatment. Prevention programs have been shown to reduce depression.

Common mental disorders include [depression](#), which affects about 400 million, [dementia](#) which affects about 35 million, and [schizophrenia](#), which affects about 21 million people globally.

Stigma and discrimination can add to the suffering and disability associated with mental disorders, leading to various social movements attempting to increase understanding and challenge social exclusion.

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