

# More Than A Number: The Silent Crises In West Bengal

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In 2023, an average of 35 people in West Bengal took their own lives each day, a number that hides silent struggles across the state. This figure is not just a statistic, but it represents a human tragedy that keeps repeating yearly, leaving families and their communities with gripping loss. This story tries to go beyond the raw numbers to explore the increasing trend of suicide rates in the state of West Bengal. We first looked at official data from India's National Crime Record Bureau and analyzed what these patterns say about the complex connections between social, economic, and demographic factors. Our goal is to bring light to who is most vulnerable and what social pressure might be a contributing factor to this critical public health issue.

To fully understand the scale of the issue, we can first examine the overall trend of total suicides in West Bengal. The data from 2001 to 2014 reveal that there is a fluctuating pattern, with steady increases and decreases.

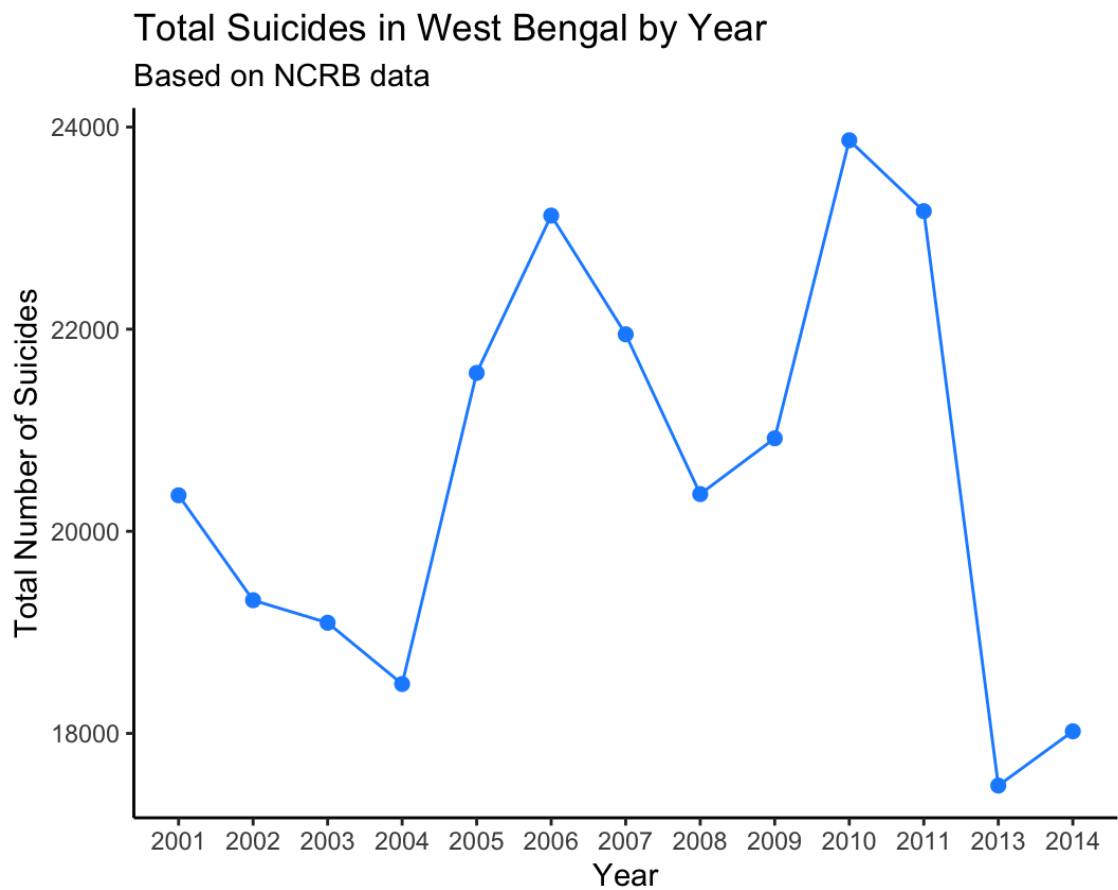
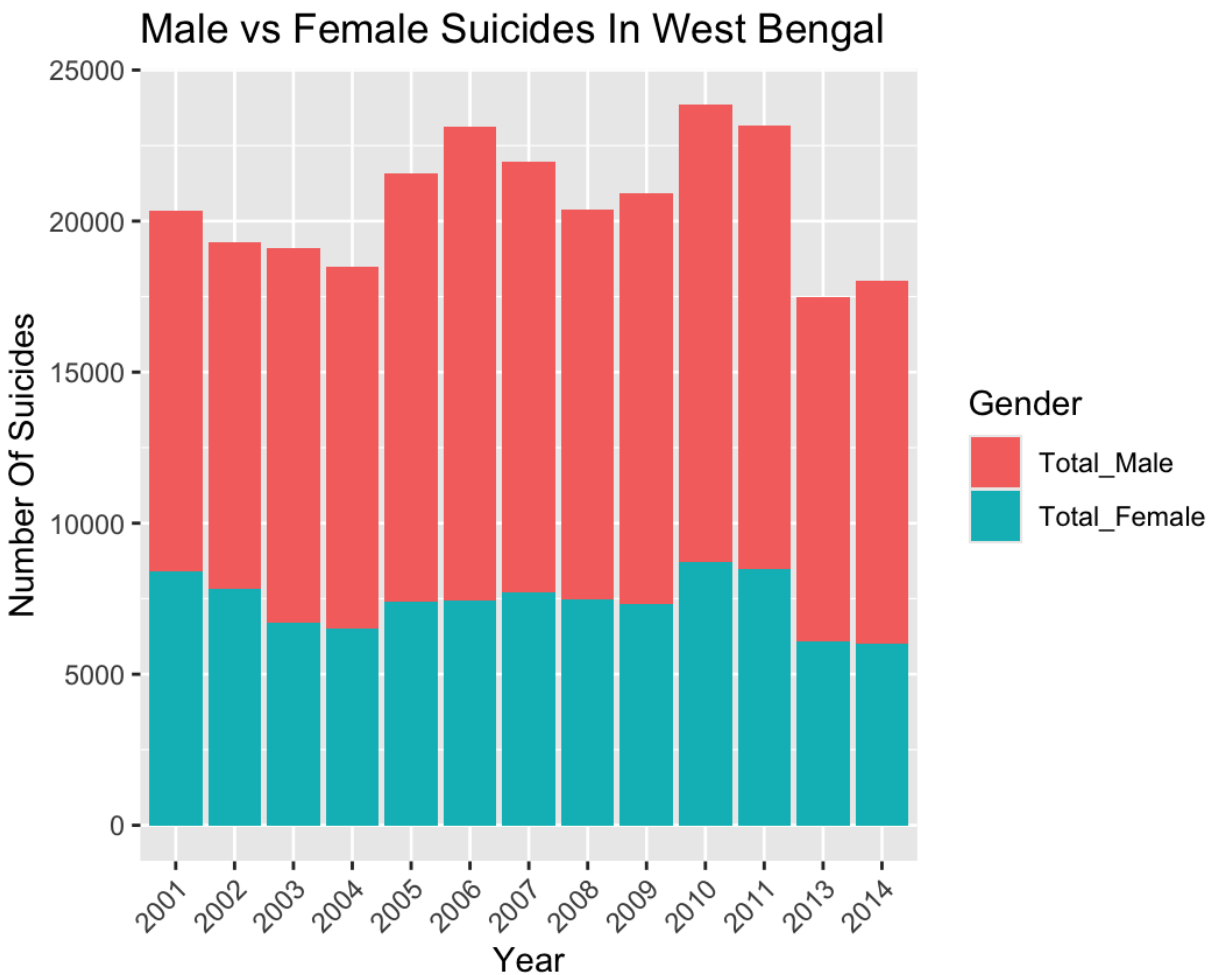


Figure 1

As we can see in *Figure 1*, the total number of suicides per year shows several peaks and troughs over the 2 decades. For example, we can see that in 2010 and 2011, the total number of suicides peaked, and then in 2013 it dropped again. These fluctuations show that the suicide rates are complex and are possibly tied to multiple short-term and long-term issues.

While the overall number highlights the overall issue, a demographic breakdown shows who is most vulnerable. A comparison between females and males shows a big disparity between them. *Figure 2* shows the stark difference between male and female suicides, where, on average, male suicides are twice those of female ones. This displays the societal pressure that men often feel more.



*Figure 2*

After computing the summary statistics between the two genders, the picture becomes clearer.

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Variance
Male	833	581	972	945592
Female	466	159	822	675402

As seen, on average, a lot more males commit suicide per year than females; however, the fact that the mean is greater than the median for both genders tells us that this is a right-skewed distribution. This means that certain years with a lot higher number of suicides bring the average up. The high standard deviation also tells us that there is great variability between the number of suicides per year.

The significant difference in suicides between the genders is often linked to complex societal factors. The traditional norms of masculinity often make exchanges of emotional vulnerability between men rare, which can lead to untreated mental health struggles, such as severe depression and suicidal thoughts. Additionally, men often face intense societal pressure to be the primary earner, which can cause additional stress to them, since issues like unemployment, debt, or financial instability can contribute to a higher chance of suicidal thoughts.

We can now look at the most popular occupations and their correlated suicide rates, which are shown in *Figure 2*. This illustrates to us that self-employed people have the highest suicide rates, directly followed by housewives. This makes sense with the theory that high societal pressure can be linked to a higher rate of suicides, as both self-employed people and housewives often have higher responsibilities, and hence higher societal pressure.



*Figure 3*

Another interesting statistic to look at is to see where West Bengal ranks among the other states in India, which will not only show if West Bengal is an outlier among other states in India, but also which state has the highest suicide burden. This is shown in *Figure 4*, and the broader state comparison is critical to contextualize the West Bengal situation. This analysis would show if the factors affecting the suicide rates in West Bengal are isolated or if they reflect a much larger, nationwide public health issue.

Rank	State	Total Suicides (2001-2014)
1	Maharashtra	563462
2	Tamil Nadu	486324
3	Andhra Pradesh	469279
4	West Bengal	456123
5	Karnataka	434604

*Figure 4*

The state-level comparison places West Bengal fourth in total suicides, while Maharashtra ranks first. Maharashtra's position as the highest-ranked state is noteworthy and could be correlated with its large overall population and the significant urban pressures concentrated in major metropolitan centers like Mumbai and Pune.

While the data shows certain trends, it does not represent the underlying social and economic pressures which people face. Critical factors such as poverty, unemployment, and debt are major contributors to distress, particularly in rural regions, where more than half the Indian population lives. Additionally, the strong social stigma prevents individuals from seeking help, and with inaccessible mental health infrastructure in rural areas, it creates a major service gap and public health issue.

However, despite these patterns, there is progress in public awareness and policy response. New initiatives such as school-based counseling and 24/7 help lines are addressing the growing issue more openly. The challenge and final goal should be to move from awareness to sustained action, which will turn these statistics into stories of support and recovery.