

Perspectives

THE STATE OF PLAY

Each month, we examine how the mental health conversation is evolving, with a focus on youth, women, and the justice system, as well as BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. Last month, we explored discussion around *mental health and gun violence*. This August, we reflect on key conversations and headlines coming out of *LGBTQ+ Pride Month and PTSD Awareness Month*.

Top trends in the national conversation are illustrated below.
Takeaways include:

National survey shows startling rates of suicide contemplation among LGBTQ+ youth.ⁱ

Each year, the Trevor Project surveys over 34,000 LGBTQ+ people aged 13-24 in the United States. This year, researchers found that **50% of respondents aged 13-17 had considered suicide in the past year, with 18% attempting**. Suicide attempts were far higher for transgender and non-binary youth, as well as youth of color. These findings come at a time when more young people identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

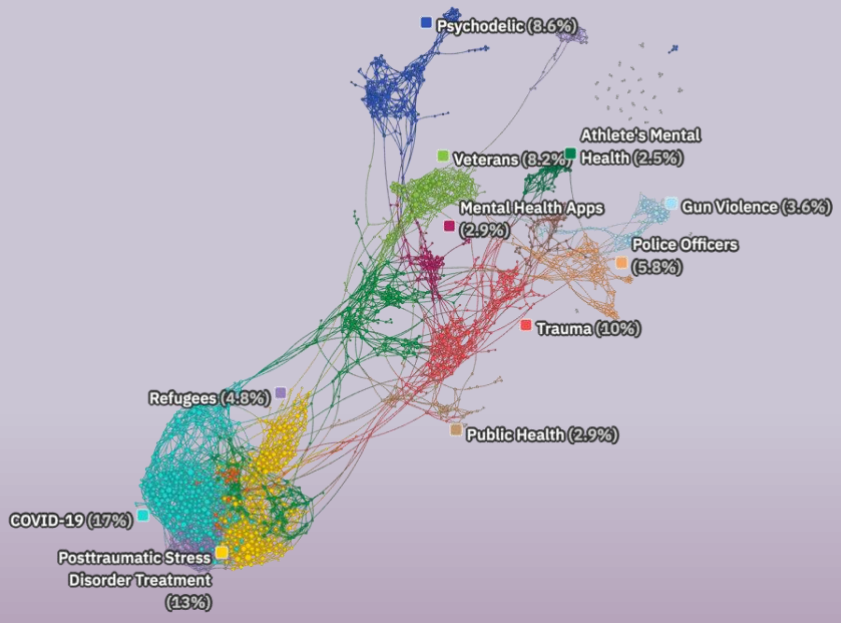
President Biden signs new order to push LGBTQ-affirming mental health support.ⁱⁱ

A new executive order aims to blunt the impact of state-level legislation against LGBTQ+ children and families. **The President's order will block federal funding for organizations that promote conversion therapy**, a practice that many experts argue subjects LGBTQ+ youth to mental pain and trauma. The Executive Order also seeks to expand healthcare, increase access to benefits, and reduce homelessness in the LGBTQ+ community.

PTSD is linked to cognitive decline in middle-aged women.ⁱⁱⁱ

A new study finds that women with a history of trauma exposure may be at higher risk for early cognitive decline, which can lead to dementia or Alzheimer's disease. At the launch of the study, **67% of the 12,000+ participants reported PTSD symptoms related to traumatic experiences**. During the two years of follow-up, when cognitive tests were administered, the pace and extent of cognitive decline increased with the number of PTSD symptoms women reported.

Analysis by Topic
July 2021 – July 2022



THOUGHT STARTERS

A roundup of thought-provoking pieces on mental health and trauma for youth, women, and the justice system.

Youth Mental Health: How anti-LGBTQ policies harm LGBTQ youth.^{iv}

Proposed anti-LGBTQ legislation can increase distress for young members of the community. From 2015 to 2019, over 200 pieces of anti-LGBTQ state legislation were proposed, ranging from banning transgender athletes to prohibiting healthcare for transgender youth. An analysis published by **Child Trends** contends that these policy proposals, even when not enacted, harm the well-being of LGBTQ+ youth:

“Proposing anti-LGBTQ legislation may increase the number of LGBTQ youth who experience a mental health crisis. The preliminary findings suggest that the negative impacts of anti-LGBTQ legislation on LGBTQ youth may be broader-reaching than previously understood and may go beyond the specific provisions of such laws once enacted. As policymakers consider introducing legislation that limits access to or participation in services and opportunities for LGBTQ people, they must also consider the potential detrimental impacts of such policy debates on the well-being of LGBTQ youth.”

Women’s Mental Health: Can music therapy help to heal trauma?^v

A study published in the *European Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* finds that group music and imagery (GrpMI) intervention was effective at treating women with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or complex posttraumatic stress disorder (CPTSD). The treatment guided women with imagery dialogues during a 30-45-minute music program to explore selves and work through inner conflicts and trauma.

“The study points to the usefulness of arts-based psychotherapies for therapeutic work in the non-verbal domain with persons suffering from severe childhood trauma that can be difficult to access and process verbally. The result of the present study suggests that the phased trauma-focused modification of the GrpMI method may be a promising treatment modality for PTSD and CPTSD. Additional studies are warranted to confirm the efficacy of the method and to investigate the specific mechanisms relevant to the treatment effect.”

The Justice System: LGBTQ+ are over-represented within the justice system.^{vi}

In a new report entitled **“Incarcerated LGBTQ+ Adults and Youth”**, representatives from The Sentencing Project examine the influx of LGBTQ+ populations in prisons, jails, and youth facilities. Poverty, violence, homelessness, discrimination, and social stigmatization all contribute to the problem – while harming mental and emotional wellbeing.

“In both adult and youth facilities, imprisoned LGBTQ+ people face physical, sexual, and verbal harassment and abuse, as well as a lack of gender-affirming housing, clothing, personal hygiene products, medical care, and mental health treatment. To help alleviate these harms, states and the federal government should repeal laws that criminalize LGBTQ+ people, limit the use of solitary confinement, mandate access to gender-affirming healthcare in correctional facilities, and invest in drug and mental health treatment and reentry programs for LGBTQ+ youth and adults.”

THE PUNCHLIST

4

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION THIS MONTH.

1

Follow:

The **Society of Valued Minds (SoVM)** is an initiative that showcases mental health experiences through the lens of artistic self-expression. Keep up to date with SoVM's upcoming collaborations to spread awareness on the use of storytelling to humanize lived experiences by following their **Instagram page**.

2

Read:

Real Life Psychology designed a **Trauma Toolkit** that both people affected by trauma and licensed professionals can use to develop knowledge of trauma, trauma-informed care and support, and self-guided exercises and skills.

3

Watch:

To commemorate Pride Month, PBS pulled together a **collection of documentaries and programs** that highlight LGBTQIA+ voices and experiences.

4

Share:

Thoughts? Questions? Interesting articles? We hope that you will consider sharing your feedback within this **Google Form**.

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nexus@highlanterngroup.com

ⁱ [Bloomberg. LGBTQ Youth & Suicide.](#)

ⁱⁱ [Mercury new. Biden Eyes Ban on Conversion Therapy.](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Everyday Health. PTSD & Cognitive Decline in Women.](#)

^{iv} [Child Trends. Legislation & LGBTQ Mental Health.](#)

^v [Psychiatry Advisor. Music Therapy & Trauma in Women.](#)

^{vi} [The Sentencing Project. LGBTQ Representation in the Justice System.](#)