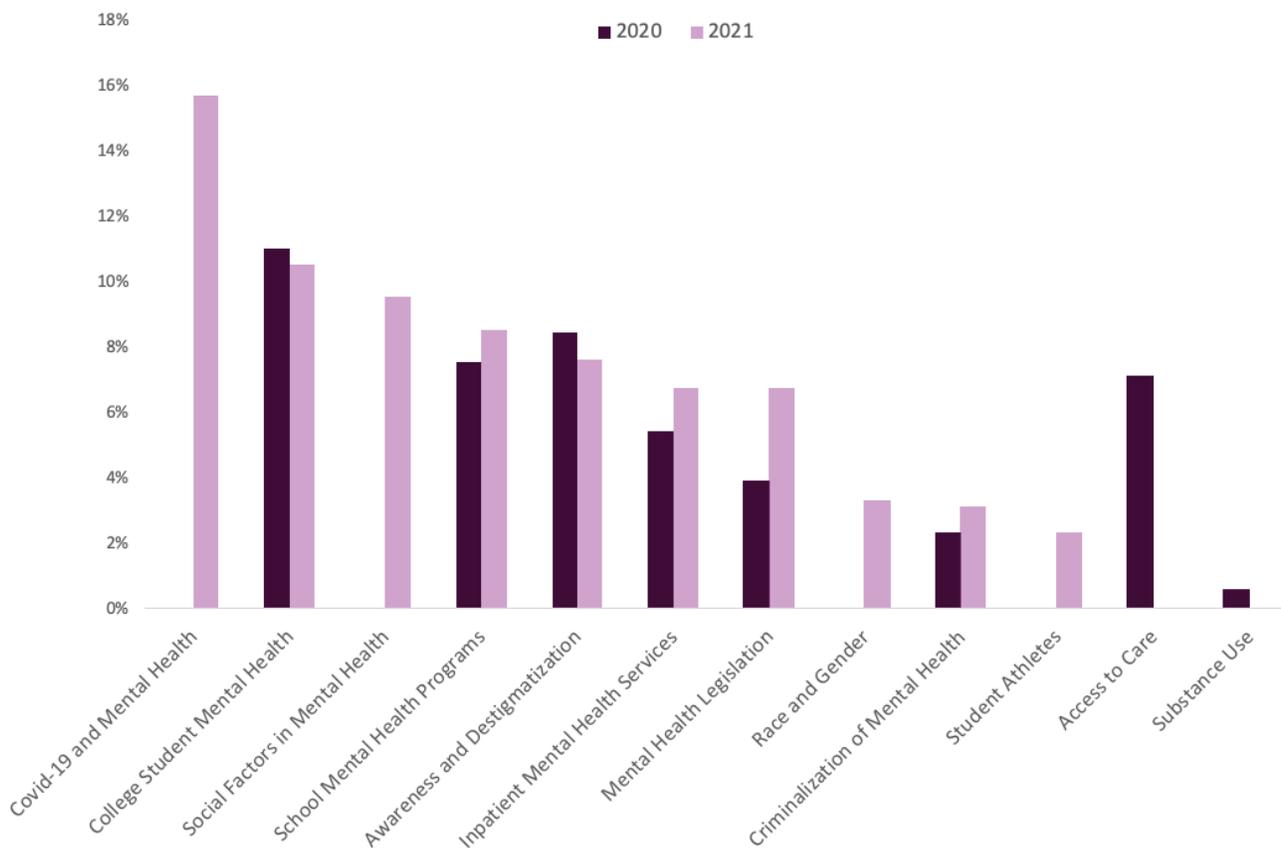


## THE STATE OF PLAY

Each month, we examine how the mental health conversation is evolving, with a focus on youth, women, and the justice system. Last month, we analyzed discussions of women’s mental health in the workplace. This month, we compare the conversation around youth mental health happening today versus that of last year, just at the start of the pandemic.

### Topics of Discussion in Youth Mental Health: 2020-2021



#### 2020 Takeaways

- Mental health services at schools and **colleges** accounted for nearly 20% of the conversation.
- Questions about **social media use** and substance abuse remained largely distinct from conversations about youth mental health.
- Significant focus was devoted to issues of support and access.

#### 2021 Takeaways

- Early in 2021, the mental health conversation has been dominated by COVID-19 and the issues it exacerbates, like socioeconomic status and **conditions at home**.
- Focus on **race** and **gender** has elevated.
- The need for **school** and college services still made up about 20% of the conversation, including a new focus on student athletes.

## THOUGHT STARTERS

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



### **Youth Mental Health: Young Immigrants Can Break Down Cultural Barriers**

Roughly **one-third** of children in the United States are either first- or second-generation immigrants. This creates opportunity to combat stigma and secure equitable access to mental healthcare for immigrant populations. If culture, language, or religion create a barrier to mental health support, youths can help overcome it. A study of Filipino Americans by U.C. Davis explains:

*“The younger generations are better at speaking up about mental health problems and demonstrating compassion for suffering. American-born Filipino youths were seen as the group that would reduce stigma in the community, since they are not as burdened with classism...[or] indigenous social norms...participants recommended empowering the younger Filipino-Americans generations, so that they feel a sense of community and take a role as agents of change.”*



### **Women’s Mental Health: Drinking to Combat Stress**

Many people have turned to alcohol to cope with the pandemic – especially women. Research from **November 2020** shows that women are more likely than men to be motivated to drink as a response to psychological distress. Recent findings published in *Preventative Medicine* further illustrate the snowball effect of pandemic-related stress, anxiety, and depression plaguing women today:

*“Even though this study observed that men were more likely than women to be drinkers, women were more likely than men to report increased alcohol use due to COVID-19. These findings are similar to those post-9/11 in New York (Vlahov et al., 2006) and one year after SARS in Hong Kong (Lau et al., 2005) where proportionally more women reported increased drinking compared to men. Such sex differences in behaviour may be explained by physiological mechanisms that make women more prone to using alcohol to regulate negative affect and stress reactivity (Peltier et al., 2019).”*



### **The Justice System: Balancing Physical and Mental Health in the Prison System**

In 2020, in response to COVID, many prison systems decreased inmates’ opportunities to engage in **“time out of cell”** activities. A literature review recently published in the *International Journal of Prisoner Health* contends that this decrease in interpersonal interactions could lead to an increase in mental health issues:

*“There was consistent evidence [across 14 studies] of an association between lower [Time Out Of Cell] and [Time In Purposeful Activity] and worse mental health and higher suicide risk...These findings highlight the importance of considering the impact of TOOC and TIPA on adverse mental outcomes for prisoners when designing prison regimes, including during urgent adaptation of such regimes in response to Covid-19.”*

## THE PUNCHLIST



### 3 ways to take action on this month.

#### 1 Read

**NPR reports** on recently passed legislation that develops a task force to explore the benefits of outdoor recreation therapy for veterans facing post-traumatic stress. Learn more about this bill and the group that pushed it through – the **Veteran’s Outdoor Advocacy Group**.

#### 2 Watch

Is your inattentiveness at work or home a diagnosable condition? Or a symptom of the “attention economy”? In a **10-minute video**, Triple-Board Certified Neuropsychologist Dr. Judy Ho explores ADHD in adulthood.

#### 3 Follow

**Time to Change** is a mental health movement in the U.K. seeking to end discrimination around mental health. Their recent campaign, #TimeToTalk, took place on February 4<sup>th</sup> and encouraged people to open up – and listen to others – about their experiences with mental health. Follow them on Twitter **@TimetoChange**.

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