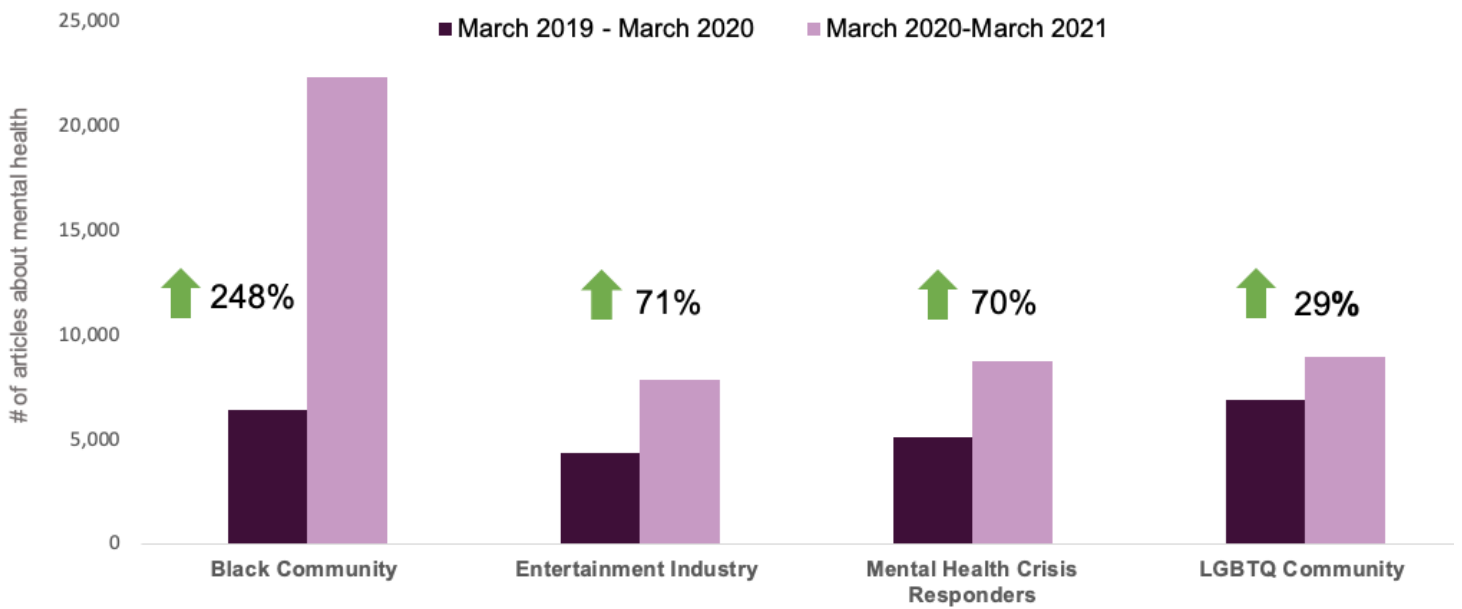


THE STATE OF PLAY

Each month, we examine how the mental health conversation is evolving, with a focus on youth, women, and the justice system. This month, we highlight four communities that have amplified critical mental health conversations over the past year.

Communities Amplifying Critical Conversations in Mental Health



Arrows indicate percent change in # of articles

Black Community

The conversation around the mental health of the Black community surged in the past year. Black leaders—including former **Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher** and media mogul **Charlamagne Tha God** – are speaking out and mobilizing resources to address **racial trauma** and the **gaps in mental healthcare** for black men and women.

Entertainment Industry

Even before COVID, Hollywood was experiencing an **epidemic of suicides**. Then the pandemic ravaged the entertainment industry, leaving **actors** and **musicians** without work and heightened levels of **depression** and **substance abuse**. The events of 2020 have catalyzed **calls for support from** within the industry.

Mental Health Crisis Responders

Across the U.S., advocacy is growing for mental health crisis intervention that avoids engaging law enforcement. One model, born in **Eugene, Oregon**, trains civilians to be first responders to mental health crisis scenarios. It has sparked a trend. **Olympia, Washington** has had early success, and cities like **Denver** and **Portland** are piloting similar programs.

LGBTQ Community

The LGBTQ community has consistently driven critical conversations around mental health, especially in regard to **suicide among youth**. The pandemic lockdowns **alienated** many LGBTQ youth, shut off avenues of support and community, and led to an uptick in **domestic abuse**.

THOUGHT STARTERS

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



Youth Mental Health: “Teen’s Mental Health Does Not Translate to Entertainment”

It is an obvious point, but also an urgent reminder: unmet needs in mental health were substantial before COVID. And while we respond to what the WHO calls “a mental health crisis” because of the pandemic, we can’t lose sight of pre-COVID gaps in care.

This challenge is particularly striking in youth mental health. A **2019 analysis** of film and television finds that when youth mental health is represented in film, it is done so with extreme negativity. The study, which was undertaken by the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, the American Society for Suicide Prevention, and the David and Lura Lovell Foundation, reports that:

“Nearly half (47%) of the characters with a mental health condition were disparaged by other characters...Disparagement manifested itself in the form of name calling, dehumanizing phrases, and stigmatizing behavior...The erroneous belief that individuals with mental health conditions are largely “dangerous” to society is one that is being reinforced in media depictions.”



Women’s Mental Health: The Ripple Effect of a Royal Disclosure

Meghan Markle’s viral interview with Oprah Winfrey revealed her alarming experiences not only with racism, but also with depression during and after pregnancy. Markle’s story set Twitter afire, with thousands of women opening up about their own experiences of depression and suicidal thoughts during and after pregnancy. A **New York Times** piece articulates the significance of this royal disclosure and why it meant so much to so many women:

“The popular image of pregnancy as something happy and straightforward, troubled only by cute problems like wanting pickles on ice cream, or brief ones like a painful natural delivery, can mean that those who have more difficult pregnancies can face stigma and dismissal if they ask for help...although some in the British news media have criticized Meghan for claiming victimhood despite her wealth and privilege, many of those with more firsthand experience saw her story as a sign that these problems could happen to anyone, no matter the circumstances.”



The Justice System: First Responders in the Last Frontier

Rates of mental illness in Alaska are higher than other states, according to Mental Health America, and behavioral healthcare, if it is even available, is often far away. The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority recently published a six-part series in the **Anchorage Daily News** describing its “**Crisis Now**” framework that involves crisis call centers, mobile crisis teams and methods of short-term stabilization designed to provide law enforcement more opportunities for warm hand-offs:

“Deputy Chief Ken McCoy of the Anchorage Police Department estimates that approximately 300 to 400 police calls every month are for behavioral health-related incidents – an average of 10 or more per day. When police respond to those calls, they have limited options available. Frequently, it comes down to a choice between taking someone to the emergency room or taking them to jail.”

THE PUNCHLIST



3 ways to take action on this month.

1 Read

When a child is diagnosed with ADHD, attention and resources are often diverted to treating the “disorder,” and contextual issues like poverty, sleep problems or relative age are overlooked. A *Scientific American* column explains how this is a result of psychiatry’s system of classification and argues for elimination of the term “disorder.”

2 Listen:

The March 13th episode of KCRW’s “Life Examined” podcast looked into the mysteries of schizophrenia from a historical and scientific perspective. In the **52-minute episode**, author Robert Kolker describes the social rhetoric around schizophrenia in the 20th century, which is contrasted with promising biological insight from Johns Hopkins psychology professor Daniel Weinburger.

3 Follow

Amy McKeown is a successful strategic consultant passionate about two things: mental health and women’s health. Follow her **blog** for insight into both – including how organizations can build strategies that support the mental and physical health of women.

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