

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 the intersections between mental health and youth. This month, we highlight the top issues related to women and Post-Traumatic Stress.

The diagram below illustrates the conversation around women’s mental health and PTS. It assesses 2,755 news articles from March to June 2021. Takeaways include:

Women and Post-Traumatic Stress

March – June 2021

Trauma can be passed from mother to child.

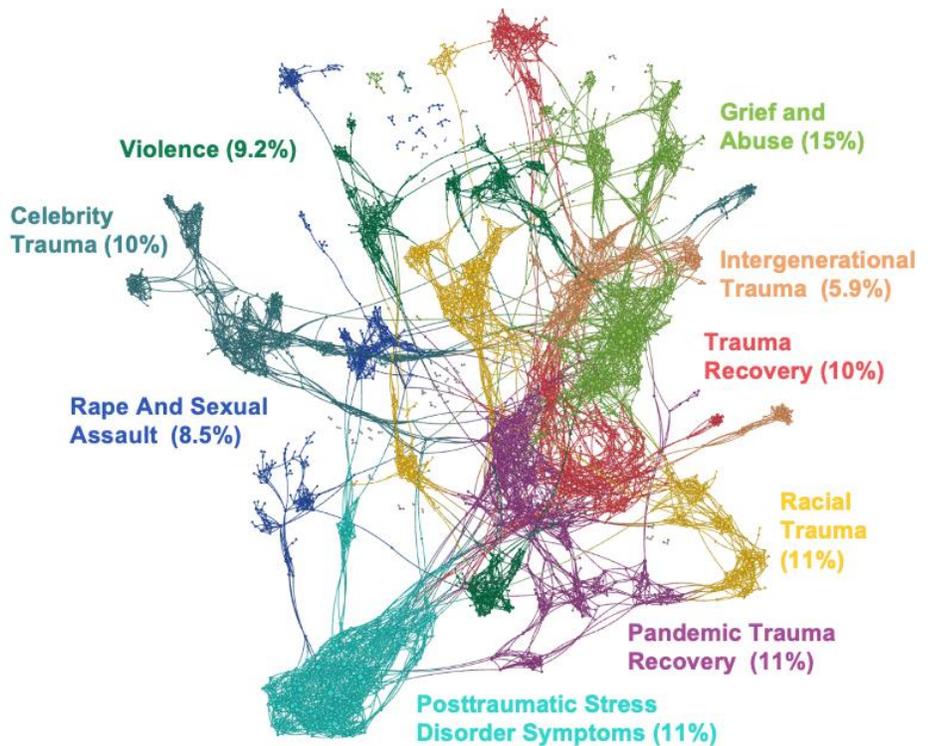
New research suggests that trauma and post-traumatic stress can be passed down through families. One study finds that a mother’s **Adverse Childhood Experiences** (ACEs) increase her child’s risk of psychopathology. In addition, there is increasing evidence to suggest that children can **inherit genes** related to unresolved trauma, particularly in persons of color who carry **historical trauma**.

Post-Traumatic Stress disrupts women’s careers.

Across industries, women who have experienced trauma confront professional difficulties. Women **nurses**, for example, must manage their own trauma while meeting patient demand. **Female journalists** face anonymous abuse and harassment online. New research from **Stanford University** suggests these traumatic experiences continue to follow women into future jobs, often resulting in physical, symptomatic responses.

Female veterans in Canada are denied peer support.

In Canada, watchdogs are calling out Canada Veteran Affairs for turning away **servicewomen** from peer support programs intended for those who have suffered **sexual trauma**. Both internally and in-combat, sexual assault has become a common experience among female veterans.



THOUGHT STARTERS

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



Youth Mental Health: BIPOC and LGBTQ+ Youth Peer Support Program Launches
Youth MOVE National has partnered with the **Upswing Fund** to launch a community-based peer support program. The **Youth MOVE Change Initiative** is designed to address the unique mental health needs of youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth. The program will feature a Youth Advisory Council, a Fellowship Program, and a relevant skills training schedule:

“This initiative is designed to mitigate systemic challenges in barriers to care, reduce stigma around mental health, and provide education to youth and families... Youth and young adults will have access to Youth MOVE’s Youth Peer Support model training, subject matter expert coaching, as well as professional development opportunities. The Youth MOVE Change Initiative offers a pathway for BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) and LGBTQIA2-S+ youth and young adults with lived experience.”



Women’s Mental Health: The Gender Disparity of Alcohol Addiction

Prior to the pandemic, women were catching up to their male peers in alcohol consumption. **New data** from 2019 and 2020 shows that women are now outpacing men when it comes to drinking, and most are not doing so for fun. They are drinking to cope with their trauma, anxiety, and depression. This trend should raise alarm, especially as researchers are beginning to understand the ways that alcohol creates “unequal damage” for women:

“Until the 1990s, most research on alcohol focused on men. Now, as women approach parity in drinking habits, scientists are uncovering more about the unequal damage that alcohol causes to their bodies...they’re at greater risk for hangovers, blackouts, liver disease, alcohol-induced cardiovascular diseases and certain cancers.”

The good news? Women experiencing alcohol addiction experience the **best outcomes** in women-only treatment groups.



The Justice System: Did Psychiatric Hospitals Divert from Prisons?

Many believe that the closure of inpatient psychiatric facilities funneled people with mental illness into prisons. **The Atlantic** disagrees, arguing that, if psychiatric facilities had remained open, they would serve middle-aged, white men and women. Whereas the prison population is mostly young men of color:

“Even in 1950, only about a third of people with mental illness were living in psychiatric hospitals and other facilities. More than half already lived in communities, with family or on their own...furthermore, the vast majority of incarcerated people with mental illness belong to a subset of the population that would never have been served by state psychiatric hospitals in the past...One study suggests that closing the state psychiatric facilities increased the incarcerated population by less than 10 percent.”

THE PUNCHLIST



3 ways to take action on this month.

1

Read:

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD published its comprehensive **overview** of the causes, symptoms, and treatments of PTSD. It is worth a read this month in recognition of National PTSD Awareness month.

2

Watch:

How does childhood trauma affect the development of the brain and our lives over the longer term? In this **short TED talk** by California Surgeon General, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris explores these questions.

3

Connect

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) hosts **discussion groups** to help people manage their PTSD recovery, find support, and access resources. The NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group is free-of-cost, peer-led, and confidential for any adult who has faced a mental health condition; it is also available in Spanish as NAMI Conexión.

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