

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 gender and PTSD. This month, we highlight the top issues related to race, mental health, and the justice system.

The diagram below illustrates the conversation around race, mental health, and the justice system. It assesses 1,182 news articles from April to July 2021. Takeaways include:

Decriminalization of mental illness on the ballot

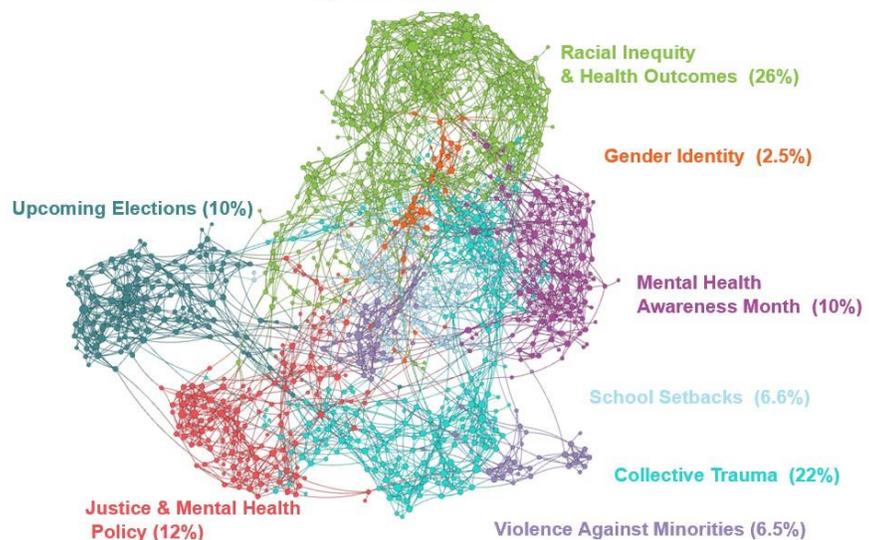
In New York City, voters have been paying close attention to mayoral candidates' **proposed policies** to address **policing** protocols across the city. New analysis shows that candidates lost significant support if their campaigns did not acknowledge **the criminalization of mental illness** amongst minority groups.

Trees for mental health

Recent research shows that **air pollution** can be linked to **declining mental health**. For communities of color, especially in the northeast US, exposure to air pollution is significantly higher than for white communities. A solution? **Planting trees** in **low-income communities of color** can reduce pollution and improve mental health in the area.

Race, the Justice System, & Mental Health

April – July 2021



“Compassionate release” from prisons

As the average age of US prisoners increases, “compassionate release” is gaining traction as a public health tool. Research has found that equipping **recently released prisoners** with **financial, housing, and healthcare support** can help **with the effects of the mass incarceration system**.

THOUGHT STARTERS

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



Youth Mental Health: LGBTQ youth's "urgent call to action"

According to a recent survey, LGBTQ youth in the US are disproportionately suffering from mental health crises. [The Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey](#) sheds light on the experiences of 35,000 LGBTQ individuals aged between 13-24. The vast majority of survey respondents reported that political events, social media, and COVID-19 negatively affected their mental health. Additionally, LGBTQ youth of color report experiencing further distress from systemic injustices. Nearly half of respondents wanted counseling from a mental health professional but were unable to receive it in the past year.

"This data underscores many of the serious challenges experienced by LGBTQ youth over the last year and should serve as an urgent call to action. But it also speaks to the diversity and resiliency of LGBTQ youth and provides valuable insights into their everyday sources of strength and positivity."



Women's Mental Health: A powerful resource for Black women in LA

The [California Black Women's Health Project's](#) Mental Health Toolkit offers a model for how a resource can connect people in need to mental health services. The helps to answer the question: *where do you turn in a time of crisis?*:

"As a result [of varying challenges that Black women disproportionately face], many are plagued by tension, anxiety, worry and fear. Because of the powerful and complex links between the mind, emotions and body, chronic states of stress and anxiety can have dangerous and sometimes fatal, health consequences. In addition, the daily struggles of coping with racism and sexism further exacerbate mental and emotional stress."



The Justice System: Trauma, punishment, and children of color

A [brief](#) published by [Georgetown Law](#), authored by [Kimberlyn Leary, Ph.D.](#), highlights how children of color experience substantially higher rates of adversity during childhood than their white peers. This exposure to trauma can significantly impact physical and mental health, as well as educational and economic outcomes. Furthermore, exposure to trauma can lead to engagement with the juvenile justice system, thereby exacerbating symptoms.

"Indeed, studies indicate that girls involved in the justice system report high rates of trauma. As indicated, some 45 percent of detained girls have experienced five or more [Adverse Childhood Experiences]. Many of the behaviors culminating in girls' being detained are also behaviors that are consequent to trauma exposure."

THE PUNCHLIST



3 ways to take action this month.

1

Read:

This recent article from the *New York Times* explores the ongoing tension between the profession of psychiatry, its exclusionary history, and its inaccessible present. Industry leaders like Dr. Danielle Hairston, President of the American Psychiatric Association's Black caucus, admits that the field "has a long way to go".

2

Watch:

What is systemic racism? How can individuals and organizations take action to combat racism? As part of their Building Mental Resiliency video series, Otsuka, in collaboration with NEXUS, hosted a **discussion** on systemic racism with the following panelists:

- **Kabir Nath**, the President and CEO of Otsuka North America Pharmaceutical Business Division
- **Dr. Altha Stewart**, Senior Associate Dean of Community Mental Health Engagement at the University of Tennessee's Health Science Center
- **Dr. Valerie Purdie Greenaway**, Associate Professor of Psychology at Columbia University

Also check out a first-of-its-kind Instagram community with the goal of celebrating the value of every mind. Their mission is to showcase that living with a mental health condition does not diminish a person's worth.

[@societyofvaluedminds](#) is a movement to create a safe space for uplifting, supporting, and joining together as a community.

3

Listen:

July is BIPOC Mental Health Awareness month. This **episode of the PsychEd podcast** discusses anti-Black racism and mental health with Dr. Kwame McKenzie. It explores how racism affects mental health and how healthcare workers, along with the healthcare system, can work together to improve the mental health of Black populations.

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