

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 race, mental health and the justice system. This month, we highlight the top issues related to mental health and trauma among youth.

The top issues in the headlines concerning youth mental health are illustrated below. Takeaways include:

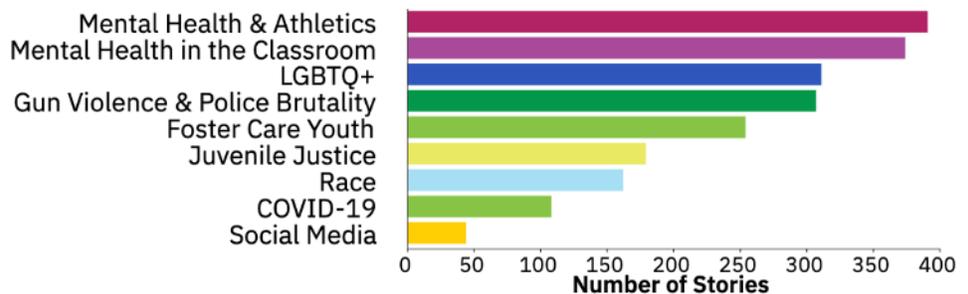
Going for gold: Advocates push for mental health programming in youth athletics.

Mental health found its spot on the podium during the Tokyo Olympics, prompting a global dialogue on mental health services in youth sports. If coaches are required to know CPR, first aid, and signs of concussion, why not mental health symptoms? **Advocates** are pushing youth programs to better support the mental health of their young athletes.

The “COVID Generation” returns to in-person schooling.

In the US, the **psychologist-to-student ratio** is **three-times lower** than recommended by The National Association of School Psychologists. After more than a year of online schooling and restrictions, educators and counselors nationwide recognize the urgency to **advance mental healthcare in the classroom**, seeking ways to better assess and confront the mental and emotional trauma of COVID-19 on students.

Youth Mental Health
May – August 2021



Mental health problems loom for LGBTQ youth.

Findings from the recent **Trevor Project National Survey** provide new insights into the **flaws in how the US healthcare system** supports the mental health of LGBTQ youth. The biggest failings: gaps in data, limited access to public-funded mental health programs, and a lack of investment in emerging technologies and digital therapeutics.

THOUGHT STARTERS

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



Youth Mental Health: LatinX youth at disproportionate risk for depressive symptoms

The US's fastest growing population – LatinX youth – will face mental health challenges that can only be understood through a cultural lens. **PsychCentral** frames the challenge:

“Research can sometimes focus on a white understanding of mental health. However, culture can influence how people talk about and describe mental health symptoms. Culture may also have a great impact on what causes these symptoms and how effective treatment is. For example, in some Latin American cultures, symptoms of depression may be seen as weakness. For many Latinos, depression may be something you should deal with privately.”



Women's Mental Health: How athletes taking a stand on mental health could help the nation's mothers

A recent study by MGH Center for Women's Mental Health finds that up to 20% of women suffer from mood or anxiety disorders during pregnancy. And 1 in 8 women report symptoms of postpartum depression, with rates growing due to COVID-19. A recent opinion piece in **The Hill**, by March of Dimes CEO and Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester (D – DE), explores how partum and postpartum mental health awareness may increase as female athletes open up about mental health at the Tokyo Olympics.

“For most people, superstar athlete or not, recognizing a mental health issue, let alone taking action to get help or treatment — even staying home from work for a mental health day — is a challenge. This is especially true for vulnerable populations, including postpartum mothers and their babies... Pregnant women — and, even more so, the people around them — very likely don't recognize the signs of mental health problems, unlike Simone Biles, her coaches, the gymnastic team's medical staff, and her teammates.”



The Justice System: California moves to phase out its state-run youth prisons

Advocates for youth criminal justice reform have long argued that children who commit crimes are better served when held closer to their homes. Now, California lawmakers are phasing out state-run youth prisons to shift the responsibility to counties. **AP News** reports:

“The state-run system has a troubled history marked by inmate suicides and brawls. The shift to local control is the final step in a lengthy reform effort driven in part by a class-action lawsuit and incentives for counties to keep youths out of the state system.”

THE PUNCHLIST



3 ways to take action on this month.

1

Read:

The World Economic Forum has launched a **Youth Recovery Plan** in response to the pandemic. It outlines concrete actions that media, governments, educational institutions and public health officials can take to improve youth mental health and wellbeing.

2

Watch:

The rise in pediatric mental health visits to the ER raises a profound question: What's going on? Columbia University's Department of Psychiatry and School of Journalism hosted a **panel discussion** with Mark Olfson, MD, MPH, Warren Y. K. Ng, MD, Richard J. Eichler, PhD, and Rory Linnane to discuss youth mental health and its acute problems.

3

Listen:

Young athletes have been making headlines as they shift their priorities from performance to mental wellbeing. A recent **episode of The Journal** discusses how one of the Olympics' biggest stars, Simone Biles, is helping to change attitudes towards mental health and physical safety.

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