

Perspectives

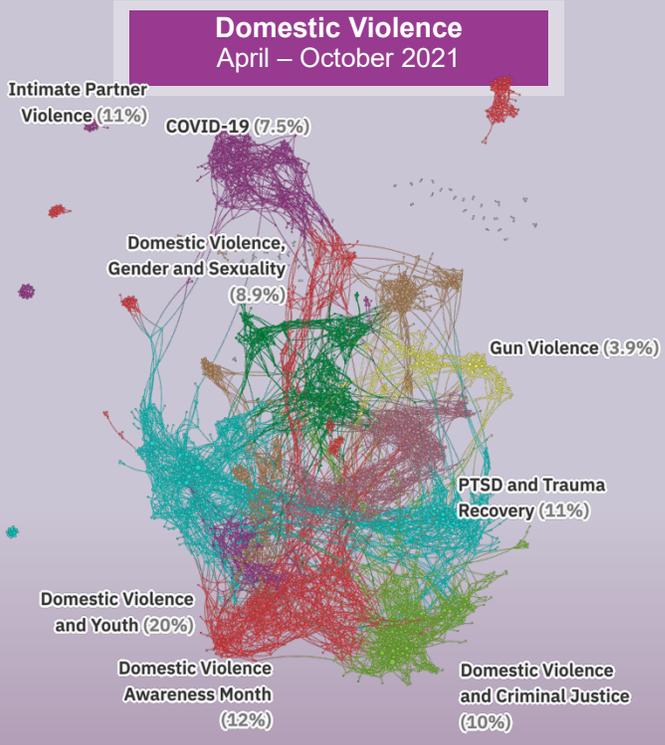
THE STATE OF PLAY

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 youth and suicide. This October, we focus on topics connected to *Domestic Violence Awareness Month*.

The top trends in the national conversation concerning domestic violence are illustrated below. Takeaways include:

Domestic violence cases spike as the pandemic persists.

Since the start of the pandemic, 911 dispatchers have reported 7.5% more calls related to domestic violence disputes. Some advocates anticipate the number of people enduring violence at home could be even higher, accounting for the many victims who do not report their abuse. This increase can be attributed to lockdowns, when victims of violence have fewer opportunities for respite or escape.



Firearms increase risk of multiple fatalities in domestic violence incidents.

A 2020 study in the *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* found that the presence of **guns increases the risk of multiple homicide victims in domestic violence incidents by 70.9%**. Children and other family members make up a large portion of these innocent bystanders. While there are laws, such as the Lautenberg Amendment, that ban people convicted of domestic violence from purchasing or possessing guns, advocates argue that courts do too little to enforce them.

The murder of Gabby Petito shines a light on strangulation in domestic violence.

22-year-old Gabby Petito's tragic death has opened up a national conversation around partner abuse, with an emphasis on the serious danger of potential strangulation in domestic violence. Since Petito's cause of death was revealed, experts in intimate partner violence have been pushing for greater awareness to the risks of strangulation. Dr. Eve Valera of Harvard Medical School reports that **a woman who has been assaulted in such a way by a partner has a sevenfold risk of being murdered by that partner.**

THOUGHT STARTERS

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

Youth Mental Health: Worldwide economies take a hit due to mental disorders among young populations.

A recent analysis from London School of Economics reveals that lost contribution to economies due to mental disorders that lead to disability or death among young people is estimated at nearly \$390 billion per year. In a [press release](#) announcing its *The State of the World's Children 2021 Report*, **UNICEF** reports that COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation – and that funding gaps persist.

“As COVID-19 heads into its third year, the impact on children and young people’s mental health and well-being continues to weigh heavily. According to the latest available data from UNICEF, globally, at least 1 in 7 children has been directly affected by lockdowns, while more than 1.6 billion children have suffered some loss of education. The disruption of routines, education, recreation, as well as concern for family income and health, is leaving many young people feeling afraid, angry, and concerned for their future.”

Women’s Mental Health: Advocates and politicians call for reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

For over two decades, the Violence Against Women Act enacted a multifaceted approach to strengthening responses at the local, state, tribal and federal levels to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. However, the future of this law is uncertain following the expiration of authorization for grants in 2019. Hearings within the Senate to discuss reauthorization for VAWA are underway. Shar Dubey, CEO of online dating conglomerate Match Group, outlines what’s at stake pending this reauthorization, and calls on both Democratic and Republican lawmakers to take action:

“While the core protections enshrined in the Violence Against Women Act remain in place, the funding for the grant programs are in jeopardy. The long delay in reauthorizing this law will result in funding shortfalls that jeopardize its ability to protect women. It is time to get this done, to ensure key initiatives such as the survivor support program remain funded and intact.”

The Justice System: Is the criminal justice system effectively preventing intimate partner violence?

Crimes of violence, particularly domestic violence, have often been exempt from criminal justice reform. However, some experts believe that treating domestic violence differently isn’t just failing to prevent intimate partner violence, but it could be making such violence worse. University of Maryland Professor of Law Leigh Goodmark outlines the argument in a [New York Times opinion piece](#):

“Intimate partner violence has many of the same characteristics that have driven criminal justice reform across other areas. Increased reliance on the criminal justice system hasn’t lowered rates of domestic violence, and has worsened conditions that spur on that violence. In some cases, it harms some of the people it was meant to benefit... Rather than continuing to rely primarily on the criminal legal system, we could provide economic support to low-income men and women. We could intervene to prevent the childhood traumas that lead to violence in adulthood... We could focus our efforts and resources on stopping violence before it starts, rather than intervening ineffectually after the fact.”

THE PUNCHLIST

3

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION ON THIS MONTH.

1

Listen:

In a **segment of NPR's All Things Considered**, host Ari Shapiro discusses how the legal system can better address the rise of domestic violence amid the pandemic with Leigh Goodmark, Director of the Gender Violence Clinic at the University of Maryland.

2

Watch:

On Tuesday, October 26, NEXUS will be holding a **Virtual Summit** entitled **Prioritizing Trauma: Perspectives and Experiences from Across the Community**. The two-hour Summit will convene advocates, people with lived experience, and new stakeholders to share ideas, explore opportunities for collaboration, and address unmet needs in responding to trauma. If you do not have an invitation and would like one, contact NEXUS@highlanterngroup.com.

3

Attend:

The **2nd Annual Sozosei Summit to Decriminalize Mental Illness** is taking place at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts from December 13-15, 2021. The Summit is a global event that brings together experts, thought-leaders, people with lived experience, medical professionals, lawyers, judges, advocates, artists and funders to collaborate, create and explore pathways to decriminalize mental illness – with a particular focus on 988, the new national mental health crisis telephone line, due to go live in July 2022.

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