

Perspectives

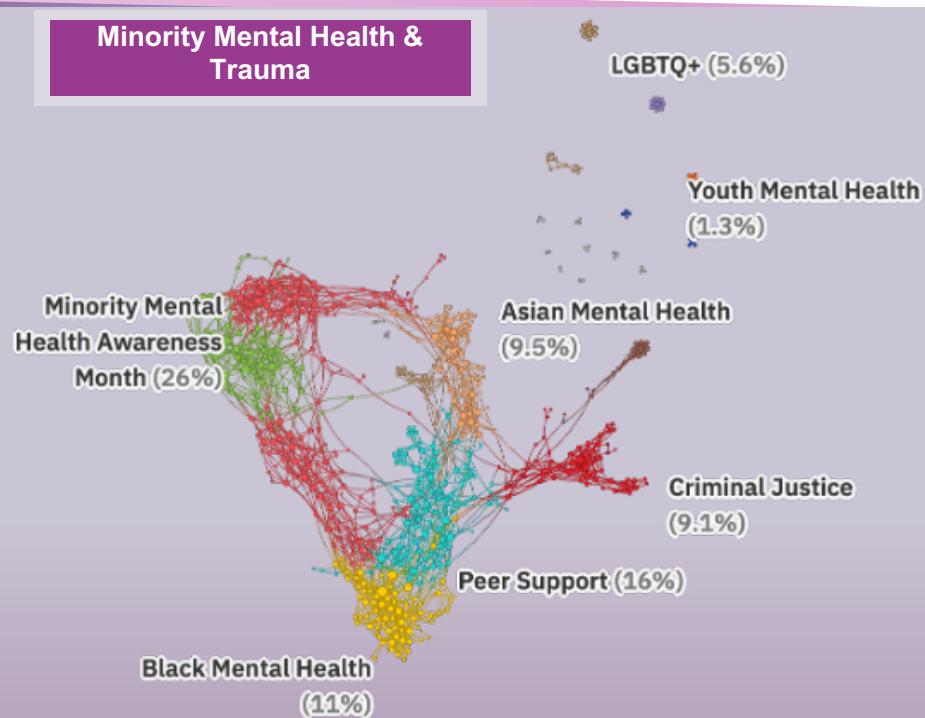
THE STATE OF PLAY

Each month, we examine how the mental health conversation is evolving, with a focus on youth, women, and the justice system.

Last month, we reflected on Black History Month, exploring the discussion around mental health and trauma within Black communities. This April, we will expand on this topic across diverse minority groups in celebration of Minority Health Month.

Top trends in the national conversation are illustrated below.

Takeaways include:



More Latino men are dying by suicide, even as the national rate declines.

In February, the CDC reported that US suicide rates fell in both 2019 and 2020 – by 3% overall. However, a stark outlier in this data was **Latino men, who experienced a 6% increase within this same timeframe**. Latino men were already disproportionately plagued by issues such as job loss, poor access to care, and substance abuse pre-pandemic, and these have only been exacerbated by COVID-19.

Florida's 'Don't Say Gay' bill threatens mental health of LGBTQ+ youth.

Signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis on March 28, the 'Parental Rights in Education Bill,' better known as 'Don't Say Gay,' prohibits instruction and discussion of any topic pertaining to gender identity and sexual orientation. **Now, experts are concerned about the consequences this bill poses on LGBTQ+ youth—such as feelings of shame, low self-worth, and hopelessness that can lead to negative mental health outcomes.**

New study reveals Asian elders receive less emotional support than their peers of other races.

A study published by the Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine found that **only 56% of Asian American elders reported usually or always receiving needed social and emotional support** – a significantly lower share than the 80% of respondents of other races and ethnicities. In addition, this group also reported significantly lower life satisfaction. According to experts, contributing factors include barriers within mental healthcare, an uptick in Asian hate incidents, and racial/generational trauma.

THOUGHT STARTERS

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

Youth Mental Health: To address the youth mental health crisis, advancing racial equity is a must.

It is no secret that young people – particularly youth of color – are confronting a mental health crisis. Policy experts, including U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, have acknowledged the specific mental health needs of minority youth require an inclusive system tailored to their multifaceted perspectives. A [Center for Law and Social Policy opinion piece](#) makes a case for advancing our mental health system to become more culturally and socially responsive:

"Though more funding seems like a simple answer, current inequities would only be exacerbated unless decisionmakers invest those funds in a more deliberate and thoughtful manner. Youth of color shouldn't be expected to assimilate their experiences into a system that wasn't created for them. Policymakers can put into place policies and practices that better support youth of color."

Women's Mental Health: Black hair racism affects mental health care.

Workplaces and educational institutions have made strides in passing laws against hair discrimination, but this topic remains overlooked by the medical field. Some treatments for mental health conditions require electrode placements on a patient's scalp. Such treatments, including electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), were not designed with Afro-textured hair in mind. A psychiatry resident at Yale School of Medicine explains how medical technologies that treat mental health conditions have historically failed Black patients:

"ECT technology was clearly not made with Black hair in mind. But it is not alone. Other medical technologies, like the electroencephalogram (EEG) to record brain activity, have also not been designed with Black hair types in mind... Psychiatry has a long history of racism, from diagnosis to restraint use. Neuropsychiatric technology should be added to the list. Denying Black patients access to a safer form of treatment is unacceptable and unjust. It's time to expand the vision of how Black hair racism shapes not only the lives of people with hair like mine, but their medical care, too."

The Justice System: Mass incarceration in the United States is a public health crisis for minorities.

Rates of mental health problems are elevated for justice-involved populations, including substance use disorders, lifetime suicide attempts, opioid use, and pain medication dependence. A [Health Affairs](#) article outlines the medical and behavioral health policies that can support the health of these vulnerable populations as they reenter communities after incarceration:

"With savings from criminal justice reforms, all levels of government should provide more accessible health care and human services for populations at risk for incarceration, including those with substance use disorders or serious mental illness and low-income communities—especially racially segregated communities of color... Given the scope of mass incarceration, training programs for health care professionals should include curricula on competencies required to provide care to justice-involved populations."

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THE PUNCHLIST

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION THIS MONTH.

Attend:

The **American Psychiatric Association** is convening its **annual meeting** from May 21-25 in New Orleans, and again from June 7-10 virtually. This year's theme, *Social Determinants in Mental Health*, will explore how factors such as racism and access to education re-conceptualize mental health.

Read:

Racial bias against BIPOC communities has a long history in medical settings, and it continues to play a role in present-day mental health care. **PsychCentral** outlines historical biases, current circumstances, and actionable solutions in a recent, **medically reviewed article**.

Watch:

Muslim mental health is overlooked in conversations around minority wellness. A **webinar** from the Yaqeen Institute explores mental health from an Islamic lens, including how to fight stigma, provide support and educate communities.

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