

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 mental health and trauma among youth. This September, in light of [Suicide Prevention Awareness Month](#), we will focus on youth and suicide.

The top trends in the national conversation concerning youth and suicide are illustrated below. Takeaways include:

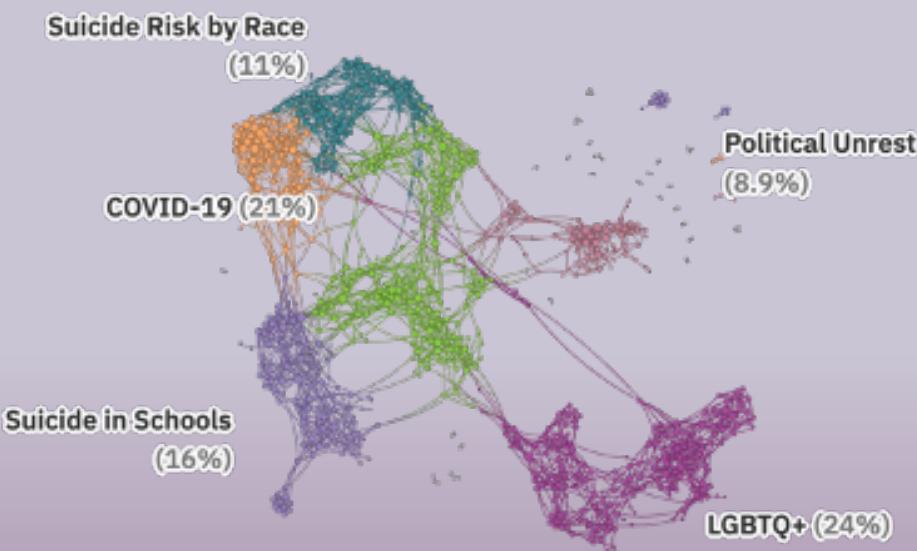
Suicide rates of Black youth are on the rise.

Black youth and Black girls are experiencing rapidly growing suicide rates in the US. A [recent study](#) from the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry found that **more than 1,800 Black children died by suicide between 2003 and 2017**. While most of those deaths were among boys, the **suicide rate of girls increased by an average of 6.6% each year**—more than double the increase of boys.

Victims of suicide are getting younger.

Healthcare providers are seeing more children under 10 years old thinking about, attempting or dying by suicide, **particularly among girls**. According to experts, girls are driving this increase because they experience depression at higher rates than boys, and they may be more likely to seek help for self-inflicted injuries. From March 2019 to March 2021, **nationwide emergency room visits following suspected suicide attempts by girls age 12 to 17 spiked 51%**.

Youth and Suicide April – September 2021



Suicide plagues LGBTQ+ youth.

Findings from the recent [Trevor Project National Survey](#) revealed **42% of nearly 35,000 LGBTQ youth respondents seriously considered suicide in 2020**. These **numbers were exacerbated among LGBTQ+ youth of color**—with 31% of Native/Indigenous youth, 21% of Black youth, 18% of LatinX youth, 21% of multiracial youth and 12% Asian American/Pacific Islander youth reporting attempts. This is in comparison to 12% of reports among their LGBTQ+ white counterparts.

THOUGHT STARTERS

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

Youth Mental Health: Youth voices are missing from the conversation around suicide

A [2020 Early Prevention in Psychiatry investigator survey](#) suggests that there are gaps when it comes to current conversations around suicide prevention. Despite the abundance of nationwide youth suicide prevention researchers, there is a lack of proven, active partnerships with young people in intervention research design.



"Ninety-seven eligible researchers were identified using a systematic literature search and invited via email to participate in an online questionnaire. Only 17 participants (17.5%) at least partially completed the questionnaire, and minimal qualitative data was provided. Analysis of the limited data together with the low response rates suggests that the rate of youth partnerships in suicide prevention intervention research is very low."

Women's Mental Health: Texas' abortion law sounds alarm on women's mental health

Following the implementation of Texas' ban on abortions after roughly six weeks of pregnancy, nationwide mental health experts are expressing concern for the impact on the mental health of women—especially those experiencing unwanted pregnancies. In an [American Psychological Association statement](#), President Jennifer F. Kelly, PhD wrote:



"The association has a long history of supporting a woman's right to choose as a basic civil right. Our position is based on scientific research showing that women who are denied abortions are more likely to experience higher levels of anxiety, lower life satisfaction and lower self-esteem compared with women who are able to obtain abortions. Laws restricting access to safe, legal abortions are most likely to affect low-income women, women of color and sexual and gender minorities, as well as those who live in rural or medically underserved areas."

The Justice System: Former State Representative calls for mental health investments within the justice system

In a recent [Atlanta Journal-Constitution opinion piece](#), Former State Representative Kevin Tanner (R-GA) calls for action within his state to address mental health challenges in the criminal justice system.

"Florida's Miami-Dade County has seen great success in addressing mental health challenges in the criminal justice system through the 11th Judicial Circuit Criminal Mental Health Project. With more than 200,000 residents experiencing serious mental illness (SMI), the initiative diverts non SMI offenders away from prosecution and into treatment and support program, which then create efficiency in procedures and cost measures. We should look into this model as a roadmap as we work to improve mental health services in Georgia."



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THE PUNCHLIST

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION ON THIS MONTH.

Read:

A recent **Psychiatric Times article** outlines new research shedding light on the reasons that drive people to suicide.

Watch:

Last June, the National Institute of Mental Health convened experts in mental health and race to explore the crisis that is Black youth and suicide. **The webinar** brought a scientific perspective to the issue in order to create momentum for further dialogue.

Listen:

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance's (DBSA) podcast series **I'm Living Proof** shares inspiring stories from adults who have found their way to wellness. The podcast is geared towards tweens and teens experiencing early signs of mood disorders. In its **most recent episode**, guest Gwenyth shares her journey from treatment and hospitalizations to becoming a mental health advocate and leader.

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