

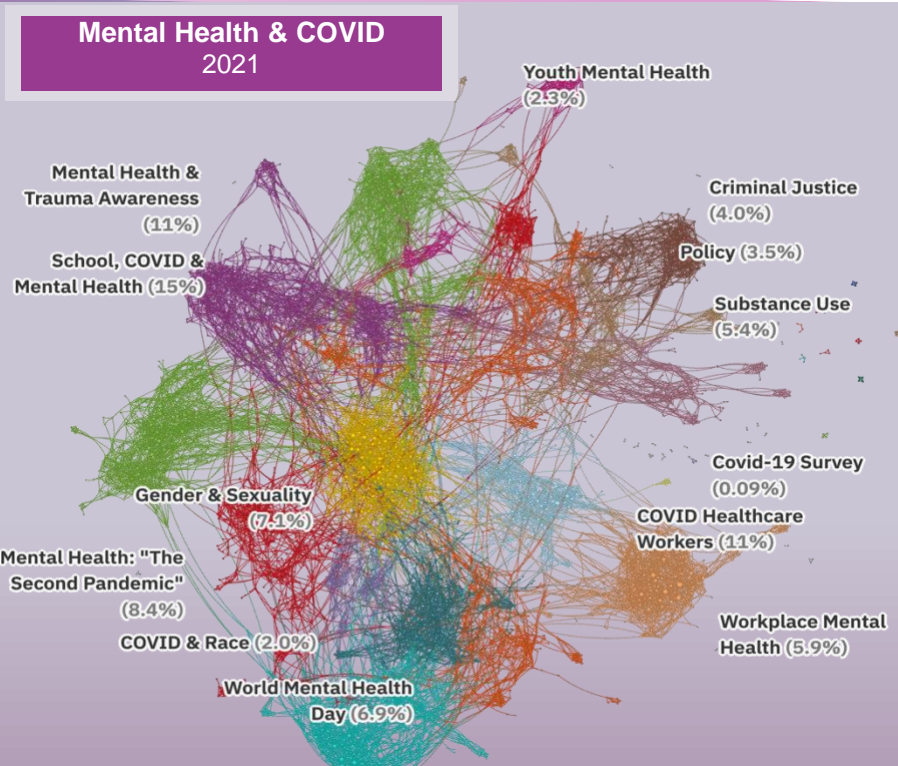
Perspectives THE STATE OF PLAY

Each month, we examine how the mental health conversation is evolving, with a focus on youth, women, and the justice system. In December, we did a *Year in Review*, reflecting on events that shaped the conversations around mental health and trauma in 2021. This February, we will explore how mental health and trauma have evolved as we approach a third year of COVID-19. Next month, we will reflect on *Black History Month*.

Top trends in the national conversation concerning COVID-19, mental health and trauma are illustrated below. Takeaways include:

Therapist burnout in the “second pandemic”.

The *New York Times* surveyed 1,320 mental health professionals to gauge the long-term mental health implications of COVID. Findings revealed that therapists, much like their patients, are struggling with burnout. **In fact, even though the survey did not ask about therapist burnout, nearly 10% raised the issue on their own. And nearly 20% reported cutting back hours because of home and life demands during the pandemic.**



PTS rates rise as COVID persists.

Since the onset of the COVID pandemic, experts have seen a sharp increase in trauma-related symptoms. Mental Health America’s recent Trauma and COVID-19 report reveals that **of the 84,000 nationwide individuals screened from January 2020 to July 2021, 92.6% scored positive or at risk of PTS.** On a daily basis, individuals are dealing with daily traumas, including the risk of contracting COVID, death of loved ones, financial hardships, housing and food insecurity and an increasingly visible race based violence.

LGBT communities are harder hit by the economic impact of COVID-19.

A 2021 Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey reveals that LGBT adults are more likely to report living in households with food and economic insecurity. Specifically:

- 36.6% of LGBT adults reported living in a household that had difficulty paying for usual household expenses in the previous seven days, compared to 26.1% of non-LGBT adults;
- 13.1% of LGBT adults reported lived in a household that experienced food insecurity in the past seven days, compared to 7.2% of non-LGBT adults.

THOUGHT STARTERS

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



Youth Mental Health: Remote learning creates challenges for youth with ADHD.

Attention-defecit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) presents added difficulty for children who are remote learning. **New research** suggests that children living with ADHD are more likely than their peers to experience sleep problems, fear and anxiety related to infection risk, difficulties with remote learning and lack of preparation during the first year of the pandemic. Dr. George DuPaul explains:

“Youth with ADHD were, and are, particularly vulnerable to interruptions to in-school learning as a function of the pandemic, particularly with respect to engagement with learning, increased anxiety and greater conflict with family members; and they are less responsive to factors that are helpful for youth without ADHD.”

Women’s Mental Health: Anxiety and depression rates spike among Latina mothers.

Latina women have long dealt with a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression in comparison to their white counterparts. COVID has compounded the disparity. A Household Pulse Survey, conducted from April to July 2021, found that Latina women with children at home were more likely to report mental health symptoms than any other group. A recent **article** co-authored by **The Fuller Project** and **THE CITY** highlights the hardships faced by mothers in New York, and measures how local governments are – and are not –mitigating the problem:

“Once [COVID] hit, mothers [in New York] dealt with job loss, remote learning, cramped living spaces, abusive partners and disproportionate deaths of family members. Due to barriers like immigration status, cost and lack of interpreters or translation – some Latina women do not speak Spanish as a first language – they didn’t know where to go or where to seek assistance... Latina mothers in New York City are suffering, and the support provided by the city isn’t cutting it.”

The Justice System: Advocates push for stronger vaccination laws in youth prisons.

Incarcerated youth remain at high-risk of COVID exposure and infection. In Illinois, criminal justice advocates and mental health experts are wondering why children outside of the justice system are being protected, but children within it are not. A recent op-ed in the **Chicago Sun Times**, written by a mother of four who was first incarcerated while pregnant at 22 years old, offers a fresh perspective:

*“Young people in youth prisons are suffering in silence. They are locked up and away from their families during a global pandemic without autonomy for their living environment or the ability to maintain social distance. Incarcerated youth also can’t control when they’re able to be vaccinated or boosted, or if the adult guards with whom they are in close contact with every day are fully vaccinated. In fact, most prison staff in Illinois still have not gotten **boosted** as Omicron surges in the country and in state prisons. Just 7% of all Illinois Department of Corrections staff have received the COVID-19 booster shot.”*



THE PUNCHLIST

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WAYS TO TAKE ACTION THIS MONTH.

1

Read:

The **Well Beings Mental Health Language Guide** was created to address stigma around mental illness and equip users with person-first language tools for discussing mental health concerns with youth. This report takes a similar tack to NEXUS's own work on the language of mental health, "**Our Greatest Success and Challenge.**"

2

Listen:

In a recent episode of **Voices of NEXUS**, emergency physician Dr. Loice Swisher shares her journey with navigating her own emotional trauma, after her daughter was diagnosed with severe neurological damage caused by a brain tumor. Dr. Swisher's story illustrates how important it is to acknowledge mental health struggles and seek help.

3

Watch:

Created by University of California, San Francisco's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Services, the **Emotional Well-Being Webinar Series** offers presentations that feature mental health and emotional wellness experts. It shows how you can reduce personal stress amid COVID-19 and other traumatic events.

4

Share:

Do you have something you'd like to share with us? Would you like to submit your work – or something interesting you've seen – to NEXUS *Perspectives*? We hope that you will consider sharing your ideas with the NEXUS community through this **Google Form**.

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