

**Oct.**

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# **The State of Mental Health**

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**2021**

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***A National Survey of Millennials and Gen Z  
2nd Edition***

**Project Healthy Minds is a  
non-profit confronting one of the  
defining issues of our generation:  
the mental health crisis.**

Learn more at [ProjectHealthyMinds.com](https://ProjectHealthyMinds.com)

# Contents

**Key Takeaways** → p 5

**The State of Mental Health** → p 6

**Mental Health at Work** → p 18

**A Mental Health Sea Change Has Arrived** → p 24

**Mental Health and Current Events** → p 37

# **We're taking the pulse of Anxious America.**

## **Methodology**

- **National survey of 1,327 respondents**
- **Young adults in the US (18-34)**
- **Fielded *May 11-12, 2021 via SurveyMonkey***

### ***Market Research Solutions***

- **MoE: +/- 3%**

# Key Takeaways

The pandemic has left young people feeling emotionally exhausted and burned out, with women and the LGBTQ+ community continuing to report deep impacts

There's a dramatic mismatch between what employees expect of their employers on mental health and what employers are actually doing, setting up mental health to be the next frontier in the talent wars

Mental health is surpassing physical health in importance for Millennials & Gen-Zers, driving profound and far-reaching consequences

# **The State of Mental Health**

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# **The State of Mental Health: *Troubled***

# Anxiety

remains nearly universal  
among young Americans,  
despite progress on  
vaccinations and the  
easing of restrictions

96%

Nearly all report experiencing anxiety in their lives today, with nearly half (46%) saying they experience it frequently or all the time.

These numbers have NOT improved since November 2020 survey results (96%, 46%)



**2-in-3 young Americans  
say they are emotionally  
exhausted or burned out**

# **Young Women Report Poorer Mental Health Than Men Across Virtually Every Issue**

Including state of mental health, anxiety, burnout,  
concern about returning to in-person activities

**Nearly 2 in 3**

young **women** rate  
their mental health as

**"fair" or "poor"**

**1 in 2**

young **men**  
say the same



**A majority of  
young women  
report feeling  
anxious  
“all the time”  
or  
“frequently”**

**54%**

*Young women report feeling anxious  
“all the time” or “frequently” at rates  
nearly 40% higher than men.*

**54%**

**Women**

**38%**

**Men**

# Young women are much more anxious about re-entry into *“normal”* life than men

Young women report anxiety about returning to work in person at rates nearly 30% higher than men (59% vs. 41%)

Young women report anxiety about returning to socializing with friends in person at rates nearly 45% higher than men (47% vs. 33%)

# **The Pandemic, Violence & Racial Injustices Have Devastated Mental Health In The LGBTQ+ Community**

# People who identify with the LGBTQ+ community are:

3X

more likely to report their mental health as **"poor"** than heterosexual/straight respondents

2X

more likely to report experiencing anxiety **"all the time"** than heterosexual/straight respondents





**Mental health is  
deeply intertwined  
with societal issues:**

**The LGBTQ+  
community is  
severely impacted  
by violence and  
systemic injustices  
against vulnerable  
communities:**

**86%**

say recent systemic racism and  
police violence against Black  
Americans make them more anxious

vs.

**51%**

of heterosexual/straight respondents

**58%**

say recent mass shootings  
makes them more anxious

vs.

**50%**

of heterosexual/straight respondents

# **A Mental Health Sea Change Has Arrived**

**Mental Health** Is  
**Surpassing**  
**Physical Health**  
**In Importance For**  
**Millennials & Gen-Z**

**86% of Millennials and Gen Z  
say mental health is as  
important or more important  
than physical health**

*Young people are 2X more likely to say their mental health is more important than their physical health*

**This prioritization of mental health has profound  
and far-reaching consequences:**



**Who we  
choose to  
work for**

**Who we  
choose to  
buy from**

**Who we  
choose to  
vote for**

**Work / financial  
security are the  
primary drivers  
of anxiety for  
young people:**



**50% cite  
these as the  
primary  
sources of  
anxiety**

# The pandemic has raised next-gen employees' expectations for mental health at work:

**2-in-3** consider  
their mental health  
when evaluating  
jobs and employers

**60%** want their employer  
to prioritize mental health  
more in the workplace  
post-pandemic

**77%** would leave a job  
if it was negatively  
impacting their  
mental health

**There's a dramatic mismatch between what employees expect of their employers on mental health and what employers are actually doing.**

**55% do not feel comfortable talking openly about mental health at work**

**Only half say their employer is supportive of their mental health**

*Young women (48%) are less likely to say their employer supports their mental health than young men (56%)*

**Only 32% say their employers have implemented new programs to support employee mental health during the pandemic.**

*Corporate movement has been slow on this — this is only +7pp higher than November 2020*



# **Conscious Capitalism Comes To Mental Health**

**Millennial & Gen-Z  
consumers care about  
worker mental health  
when making purchase  
decisions & punish  
companies who treat  
workers poorly**

**60%** say they would be more likely  
to buy from companies who are  
known to support their employees'  
mental health. → **64% of women**

**73%** say they would be less likely  
to buy from companies whose  
business practices are known to  
harm their employees' mental  
health. → **79% of women**

# **Mental Health Is Emerging As A Potent Issue For Young Voters — Regardless of Party Affiliation**

✓  
**Young voters don't believe the federal government is doing enough on mental health & expect candidates and elected officials to take action on mental health.**

**Nearly 70% of voters under 35 say the federal government is not doing enough to address Americans' mental health challenges.**

- 75% of Democrats
- 64% of Independents
- 52% of Republicans

**68% of voters under 35 would be more likely to vote for a candidate who promised to do more to address mental health.**

- 80% of Democrats,
- 64% of Independents
- 58% of Republicans

# **Young People Look To Aspirational and Relatable Role Models On Mental Health**

# Solving the mental health crisis requires a dual approach:

Tapping into aspirational role models (*celebrities*) and relatable role models (*friends*) to shatter the stigma

45%

of young people say hearing celebrities or other public figures talk about their personal mental health struggles inspires them to improve their mental health

68%

of young people say hearing friends, family members or coworkers talk about their personal mental health struggles inspires them to improve their mental health

# **Mental Health and Current Events**

# **Mass Shootings & Systemic Racism In America Are Taking A Toll On Youth Mental Health**



**A majority <sup>52%</sup> say recent mass shootings made them feel more anxious**



Women



Men

**A majority <sup>55%</sup> say recent news of systemic racism, including police violence against Black Americans, made them feel more anxious**



Women



Men

# **Social Video Gaming Has Helped Millennials & Gen-Zers Get Through The Pandemic**

60%

Nearly 2 in 3 18–34 year olds played video games during the pandemic to improve their mental health (*reduce stress, etc*)



Men



Women

54%

1 in 2 say playing video games with friends and family online helps improve their mental health



Women



Men

**Body Image** Is Driving  
**Significant Anxiety For**  
**Young People As They**  
**Face “Re-Entry”**

# Body image and mental health are closely linked

People who say the pandemic has made them feel worse about their body image and physical appearance are:

**3X** more likely to rate their overall mental health as "poor"

*and more than*

**2X** more likely to say their mental health has worsened over the last year.

**43% of Millennials and Gen-Zers  
say the pandemic has made  
them feel worse about their  
body and physical appearance**

# **Significant portions of women, men and those who identify as non-binary are struggling with mental health related to body image.**

*Nearly*

**1 in 2**

**48%**

women feel more  
anxious about their  
body and appearance

*Nearly*

**1 in 2**

**48%**

non-binary people feel  
more anxious about their  
body and appearance

*More than*

**1 in 3**

**38%**

men feel more anxious  
about their body and  
physical appearance

# Thank You