



Understanding and Supporting Minoritized Youth in the Digital Era

Aijah K. B. Goodwin, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor | Licensed Psychologist

May 21, 2026



Objectives

1. Build awareness of the mental health needs and help-seeking experiences of minoritized youth.
2. Identify barriers and facilitators that influence how minoritized youth recognize concerns and seek mental health support.
3. Apply culturally responsive and digitally informed strategies to support minoritized youth, centering youth voice, choice, and real-world help-seeking patterns.



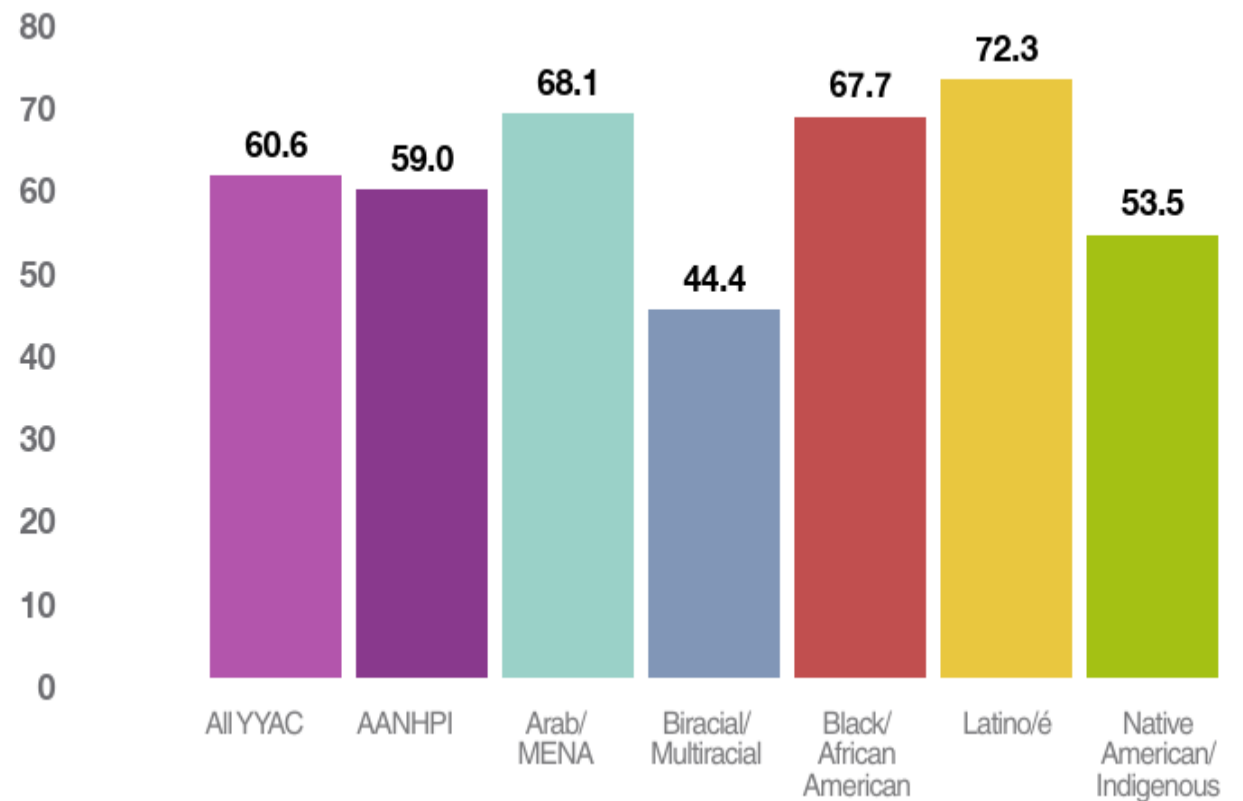
National Trends in Minoritized Youth Mental Health



Mental Health Trends Among Minoritized Youth

According to data from the
AAKOMA (2025) project:

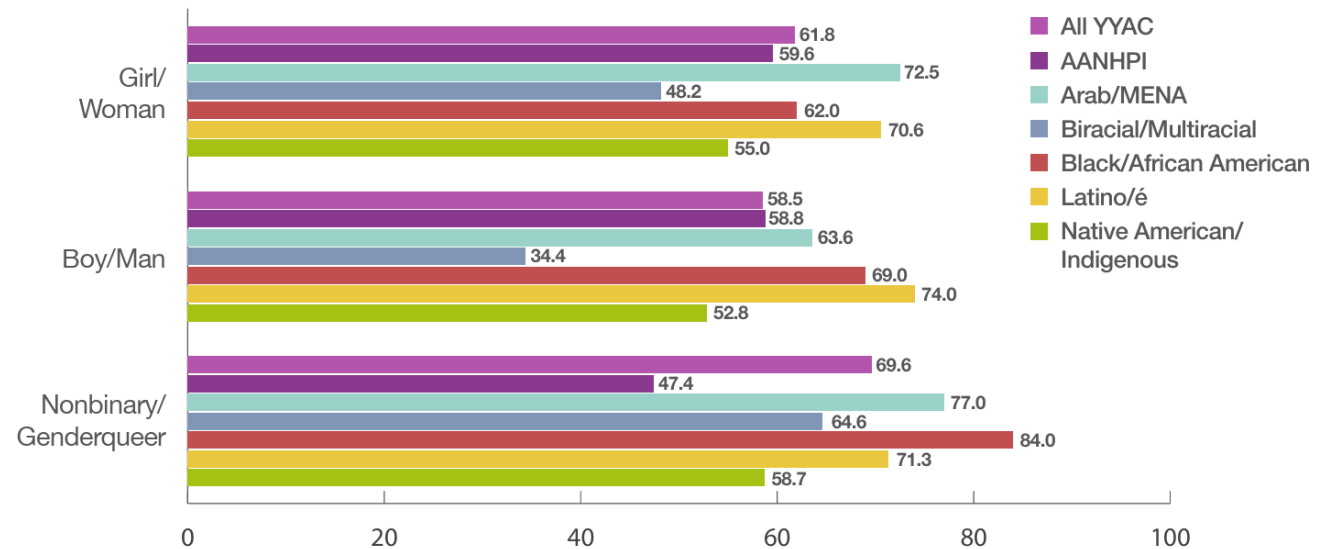
- Heightened rates of anxiety among minoritized youth with 60% of youth endorsing moderate to severe anxiety.
 - Feeling anxious, worried, or nervous
 - Putting off making decisions, or preparing for situations due to worries
 - Seeking reassurance from others
 - Moments of sudden terror/fear





Mental Health Trends Among Minoritized Youth

- “Latino/é boys/men are most likely to report moderate to severe anxiety.”
- “84% of Black nonbinary/genderqueer youth and young adults report moderate to severe anxiety.”

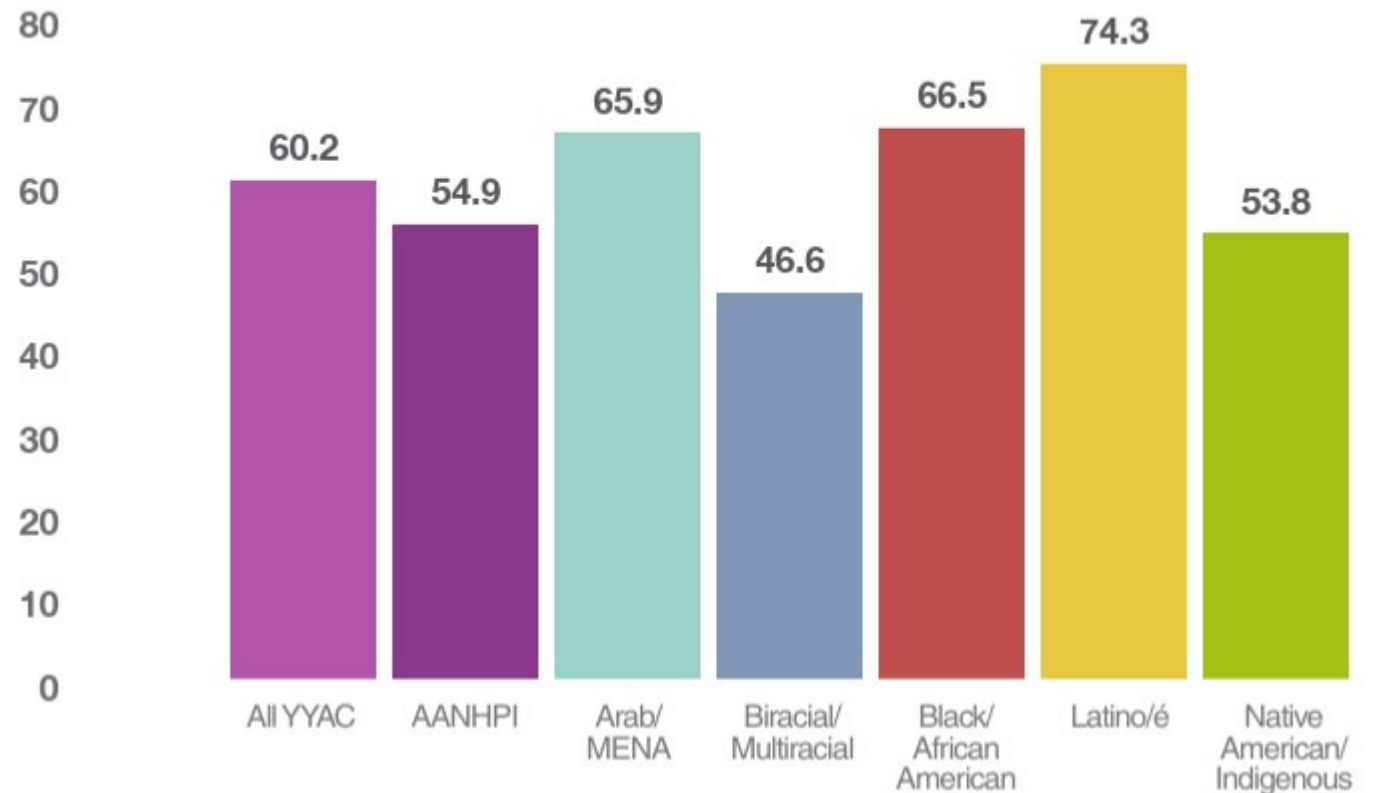




Mental Health Trends Among Minoritized Youth

According to data from the
AAKOMA project:

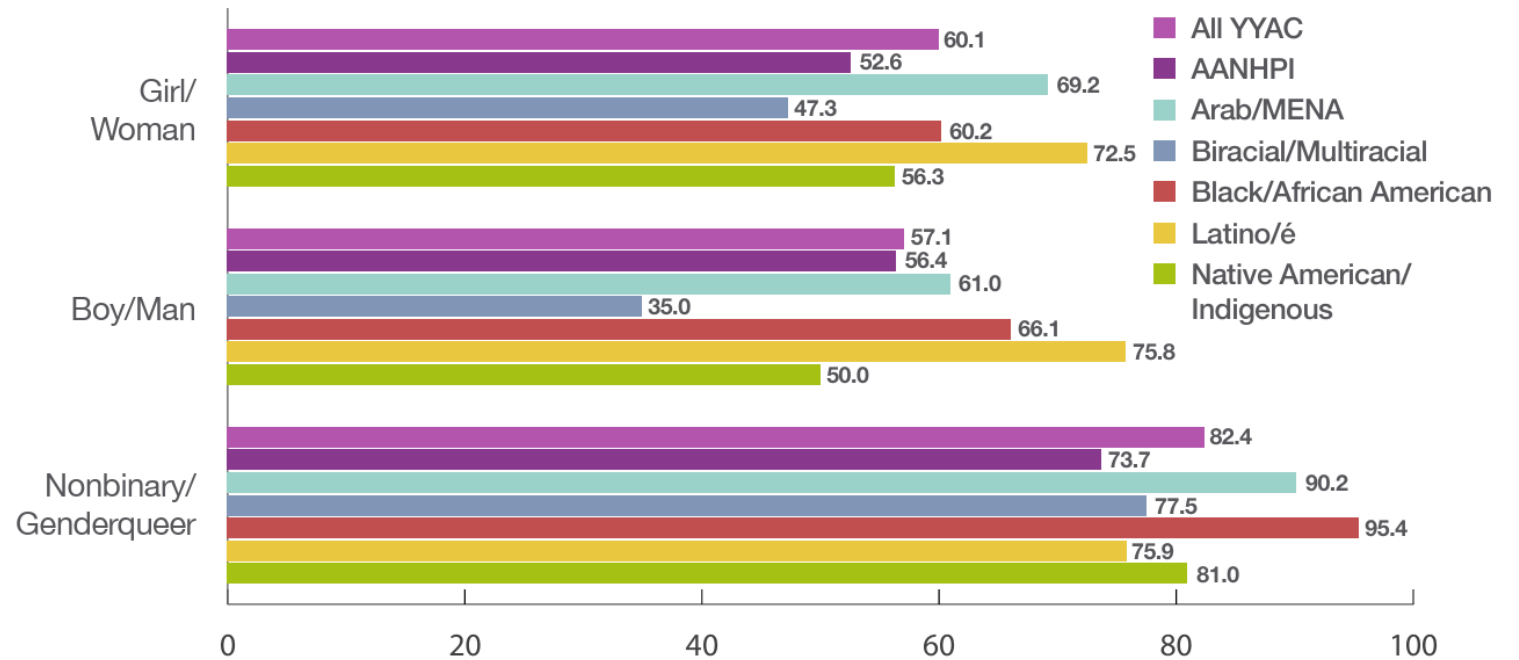
- Heightened rates of anxiety among minoritized youth with 60% of youth endorsing moderate to severe depression.
 - Feeling down, depressed, irritable, or hopeless
 - Little interest or pleasure in doing things
 - Feeling tired, of having little energy





Mental Health Trends Among Minoritized Youth

- “Latino/é girls/women report the highest percentage (72.5%) of moderate to severe depression”
- “Among nonbinary/genderqueer youth and young adults, 95.4% of Black/ African American and 90.2% of Arab/ MENA report moderate to severe depression.”

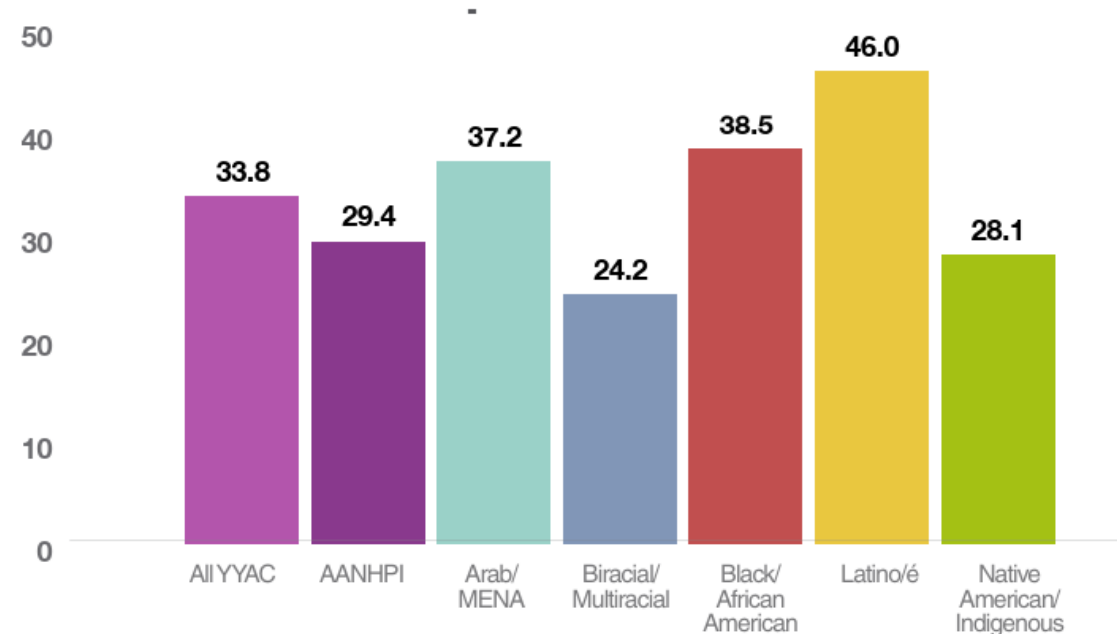




Mental Health Trends Among Minoritized Youth

According to data from the
AAKOMA project:

- Latino/é youth and young adults have significantly higher reports of non-suicidal self-injury than all other racial groups.



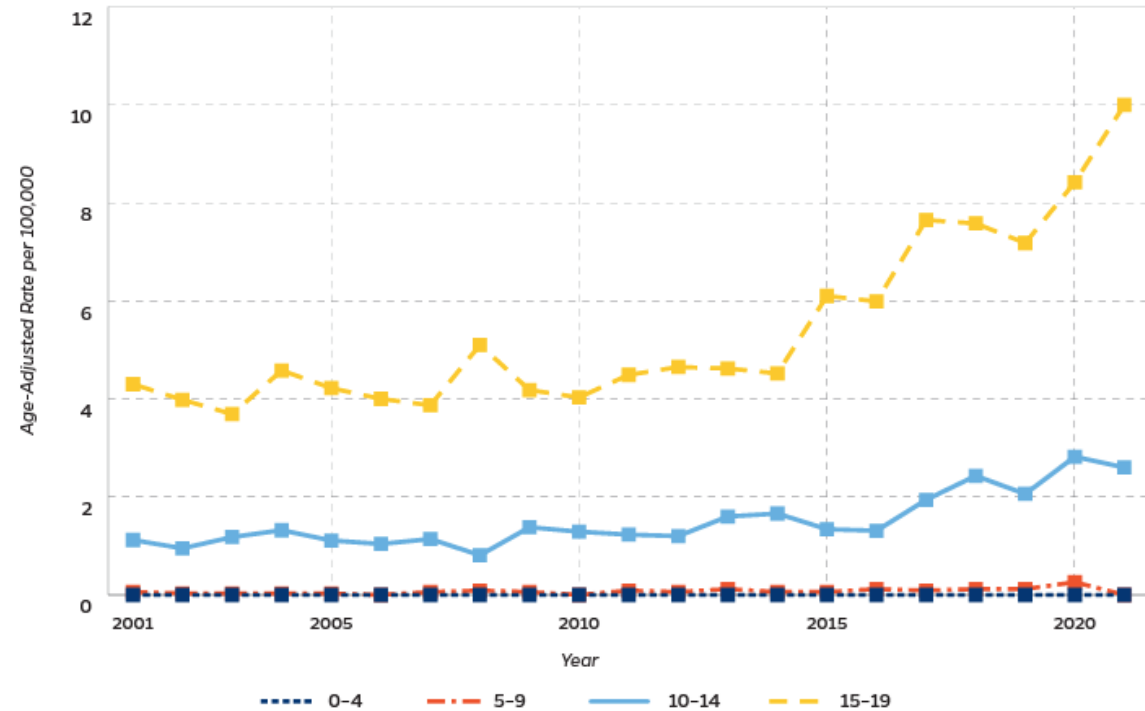
NSSI describes the intentional and deliberate injuring of one's body that occurs without suicidal intent



Rising Suicide Rates Among Black Youth

- Suicide rate increased by 144% for Black youth ages 10-17 between 2007 and 2020 (Cabbage & Adams, 2023)

FIGURE 2: Suicide Deaths Among Black Youth Ages 0-19 in the U.S. By Age Group, 2001-2021



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), CDC WONDER



Access to Mental Health Treatment

- 50 - 75% of minoritized youth and families **DO NOT** have access to traditional/formal mental health supports.

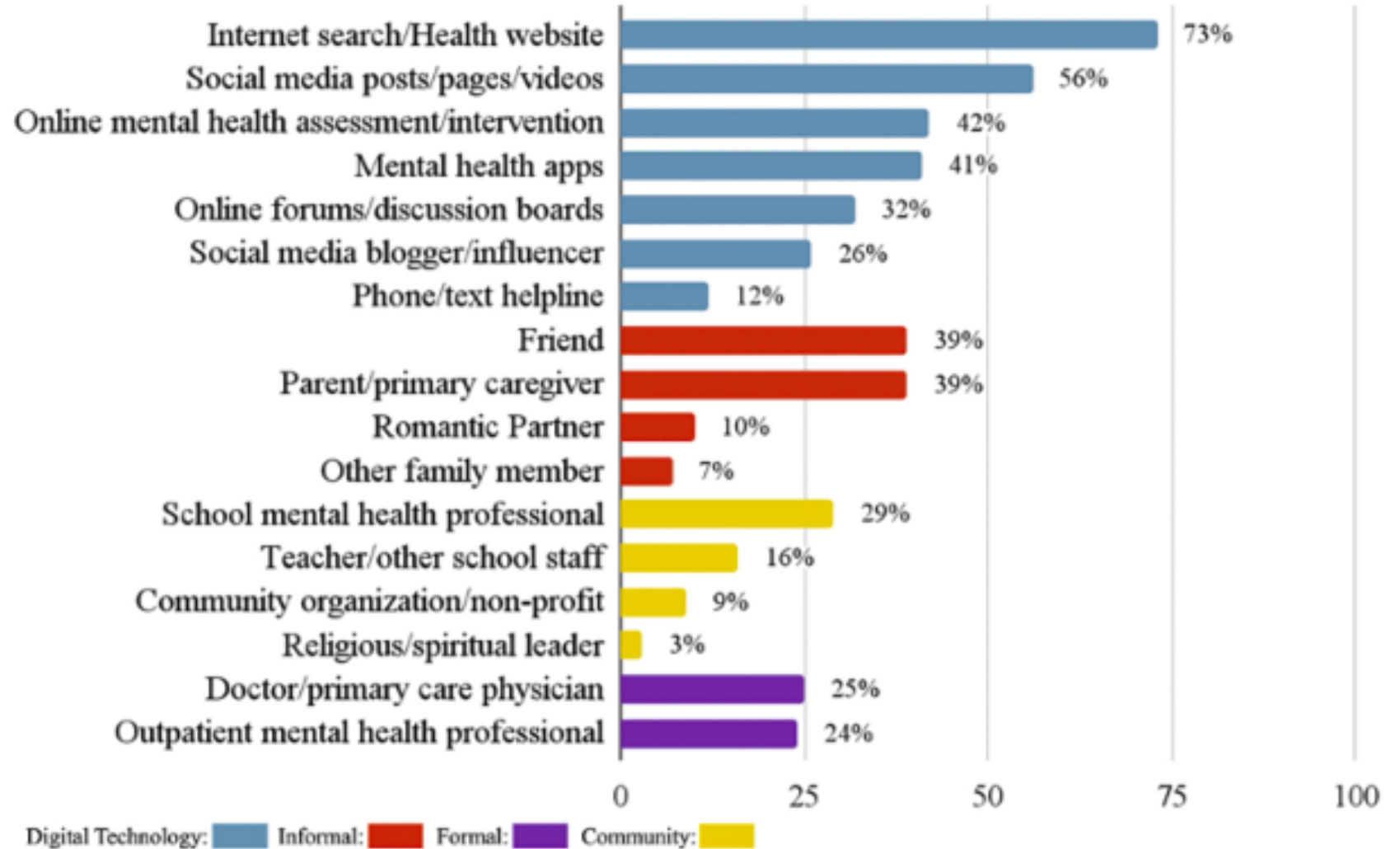


Social Media Use Among Minoritized Youth

- 95-97% of minoritized youth use social media.
- Average of first social media use was 13 years of age.



Sources of Prior and Current Mental Health Support





Barriers and Facilitators to Mental Health Help-Seeking Among Minoritized Youth



From the Voices of Youth





Let's Reflect

In the chat or out loud, please share:

- What barriers to help-seeking did you hear in the video?
- What stood out to you about how minoritized youth view mental health support?

Problem recognition/mental health literacy

Stigma

Immigration & Acculturative Stress

Prior negative experiences with mental health care

Views of treatment effectiveness

Cultural/Language Mismatch

Fear of negative consequences/lack of confidentiality

Self-reliance

Mistrust

Mental health care affordability, availability, and accessibility

Parental Barriers

Lack of social support



Barriers of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Problem
recognition/
mental health
literacy

- Inability to identify mental health problem
 - Their caregivers
 - Their primary care providers
- Varying presentation for minoritized youth
 - Somatic symptoms
 - Irritability and anger
- Youth increasingly learning about mental health from peers and digital spaces



Barriers of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Personal views
of self-reliance
and resilience

- Preference for dealing with their own mental health problems
- Feeling emotionally closed off and having difficulty trusting others with struggles
- Fear of judgment or criticism especially after past vulnerability



Barriers of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Public
stigma

- Family, friends, and peers often used stigmatizing language about mental health, such as “crazy” or “weak.”
- Families often avoided mental health conversations and minimized youths’ need for support
- Caregivers preferred youth seek help only within trusted social networks.
- Fear of blame, gossip, or negative reactions from family and community discouraged help-seeking.



Barriers of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Cultural
stigma

- Cultural messages often framed mental health as invalid, unimportant, or a sign of weakness.
- “Be strong” and “toughen up” messages discouraged help-seeking.
- Youth’s struggles were minimized due to perceived privilege or comparison to others’ hardships.
- Religious, generational, and social media views often reduced mental health



From the Voices of Youth





Let's Reflect

In the chat or out loud, please share:

- What barriers to help-seeking did you hear in the video?
- What stood out to you about how minoritized youth view mental health support?

Problem recognition/mental health literacy

Stigma

Immigration & Acculturative Stress

Prior negative experiences with mental health care

Views of treatment effectiveness

Cultural/Language Mismatch

Fear of negative consequences/lack of confidentiality

Self-reliance

Mistrust

Mental health care affordability, availability, and accessibility

Parental Barriers

Lack of social support



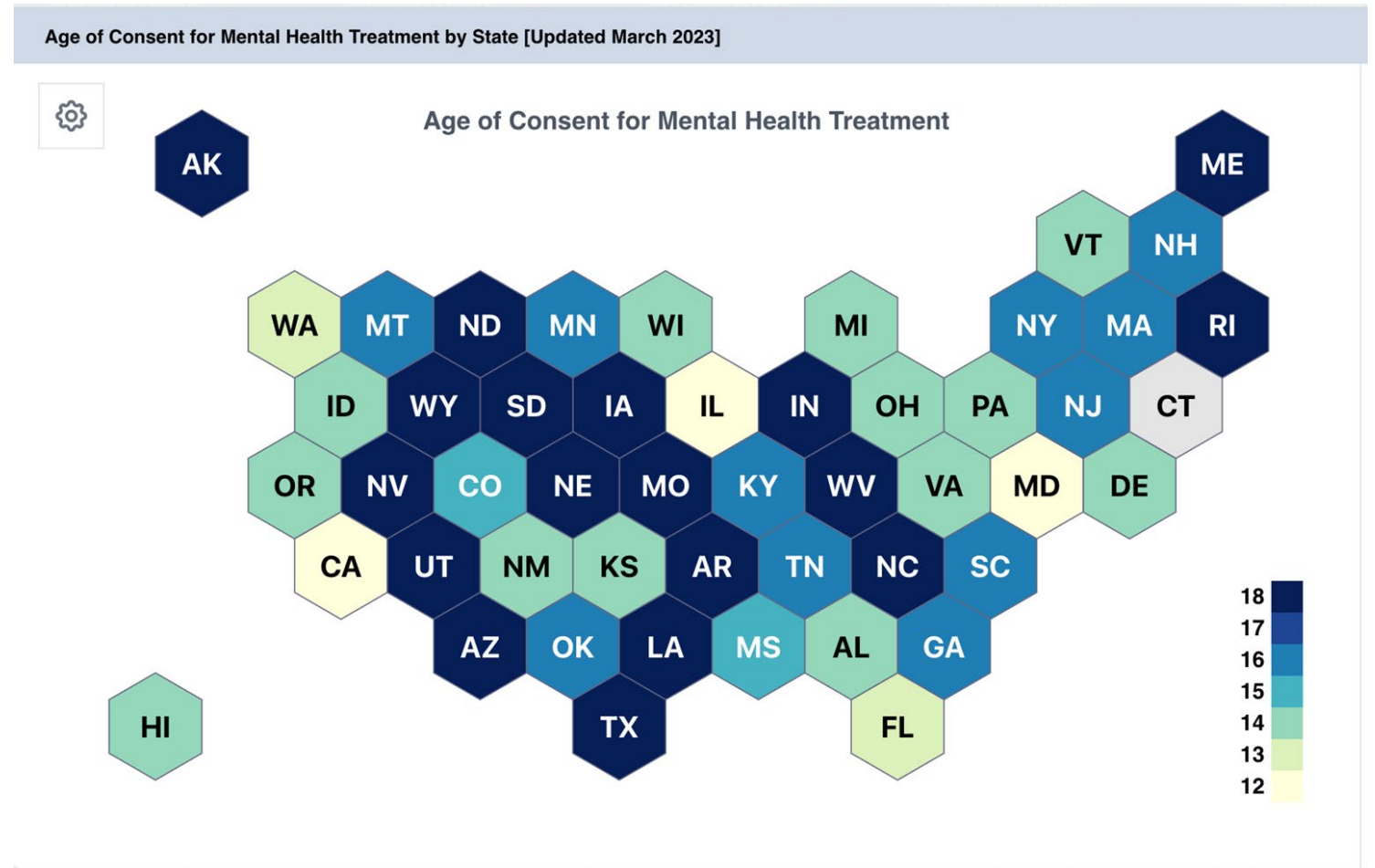
Barriers of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Parent-child
disagreements in
the need for help

- Generational differences in views and acceptance of mental health treatment
- Caregivers of Black and Asian youth are often unaware of their teens' mental health concerns in up to **80% of cases.**



- The role of parents as primary initiators of the help-seeking process may be outdated.
- **31 states** allow adolescents younger than 18 to consent to their own mental health treatment.
- Maryland's age of consent is the lowest.





Barriers of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Prior negative
experiences with
mental health care

- Prior experiences with mental health treatment including:
 - Challenges with finding the right medication
 - Lack of follow-up from the therapists
 - Mental health professionals not responding to their needs
 - Inability to connect with therapists due to background, dismissiveness, and invalidation
 - Therapists' negative attitude, care, or approach



Barriers of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Provider mistrust

- Lack of trust of therapists, doctors, and health systems
- Caregivers' fears of unfair treatment towards Black youth compared to White youth
- Historical mistrust of health care systems
- Fear of the negative consequences of seeking and using mental health services
 - Mandated reporting leading to involuntary hospitalization or removal from the home



Facilitators of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Supportive social
networks

Prior positive
experiences with
mental health
care

Cultural
responsiveness

Cultural
support

Digital Mental
Health Literacy

Successful
referrals from
parents, teachers,
etc.



Facilitators of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Digital Technology

- Digital spaces served as a first step for learning about symptoms and seeking support.
- Use of credible websites, forums, and expert articles to understand mental health.
- Social media helps normalize mental health conversations.
- Raises awareness and amplifies teens' voices around mental health.



Facilitators of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Supportive
social
networks

- Social networks who are supportive of using mental health services
- Normalize mental health and therapy
- Create safe spaces
- Encourage help-seeking and mental health support and help youth find resources.
- Supportive online communities.
- Extended family caring socialization



Facilitators of Help-Seeking for Minoritized Youth

Positive
Therapeutic
factors

- Positive therapeutic relationship
- Trust
- Genuine interest
- Welcoming services
- Rapport building in a culturally-specific way
- Treatment effectiveness



Ways to Assess Treatment Effectiveness

To consider the effectiveness of EBP, ask yourself:

- What does the research say about the effectiveness of the evidence-based practice for minoritized youth and families?
- Are you proactively monitoring for new evidence for minoritized youth and families?
- Did you collect comprehensive data to guide selection of the selection of the treatment?
- How are you involving the patients in problem and treatment psychoeducation and shared treatment planning?
 - Did you consider your patient's values, beliefs, preferences, and daily circumstances?
 - How will you measure treatment effectiveness and satisfaction?

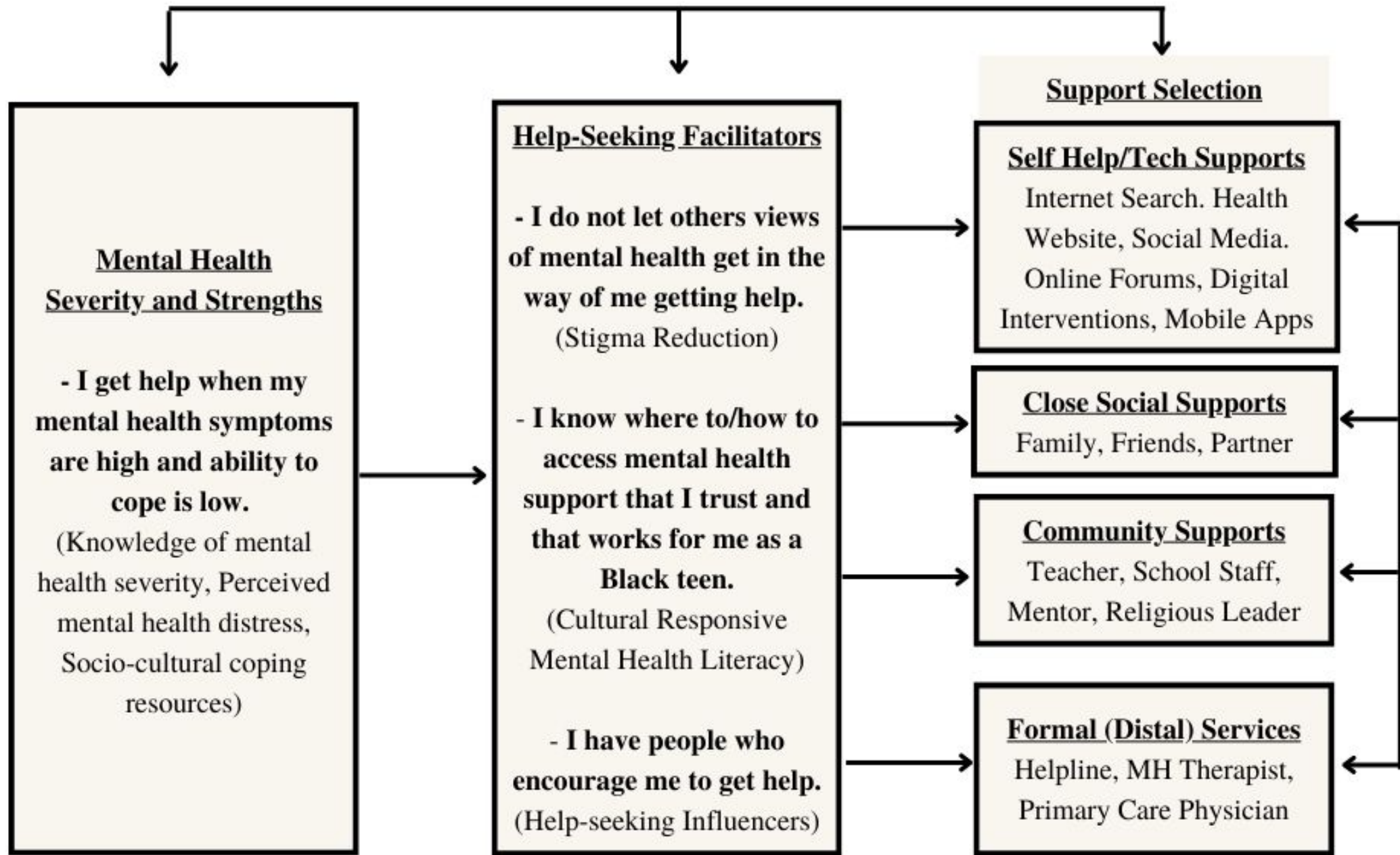


Assessing Provider and Treatment Effectiveness

- Trust in Physician Scale (TPS; Aloba et al., 2014)
- Treatment Satisfaction Questionnaire for Medication (TSQM: Atkinson et al., 2004)
- Evaluation of Client Services (ECS: Berghofer et al., 2011)
- Patient Evaluation of Care (PEC-5: Blais et al., 2002)
- Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ-8: Larsen et al., 1979)

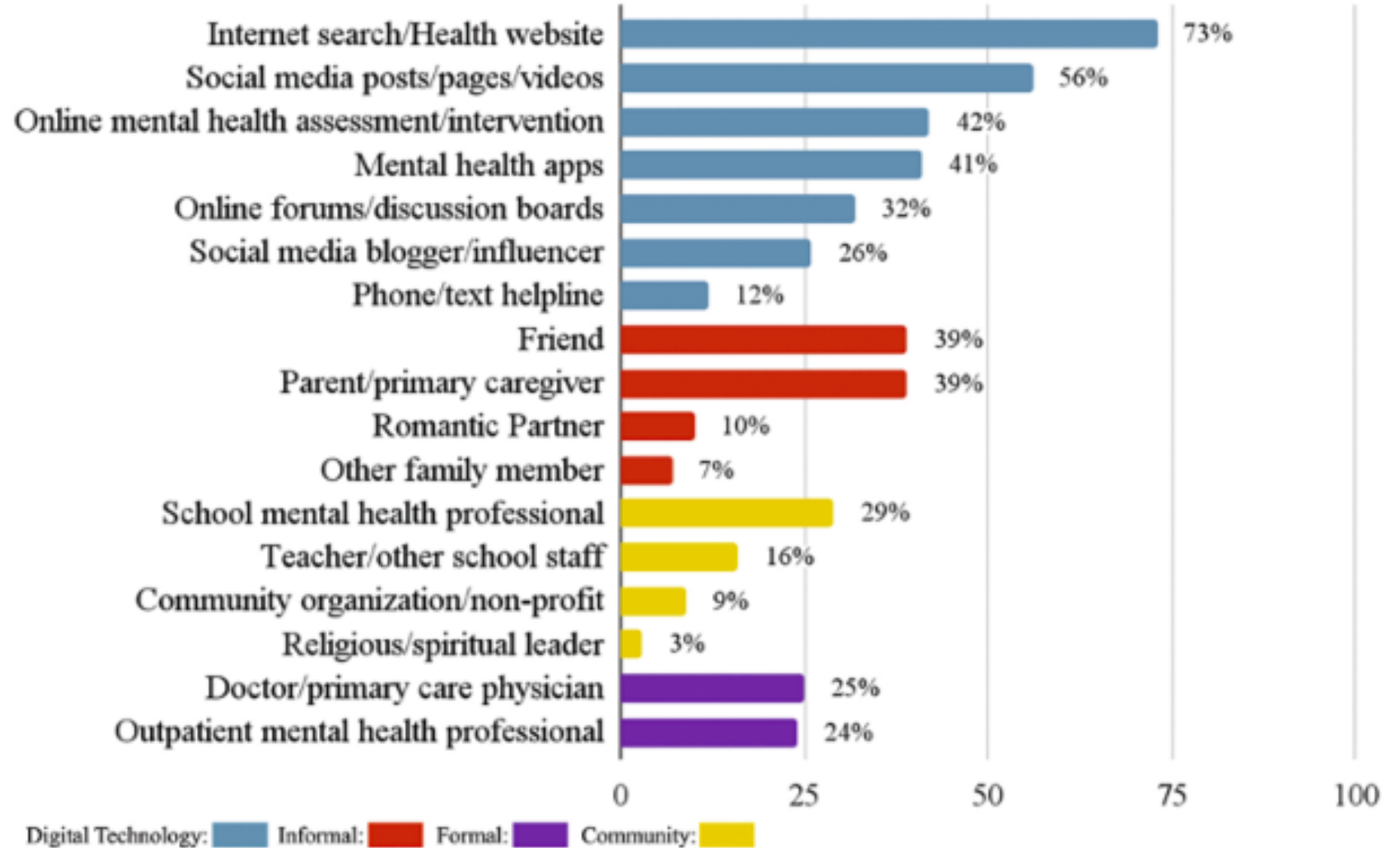


Enhancing Help-Seeking Preferences among Minoritized Youth





As a reminder!





Opening Up the Conversation

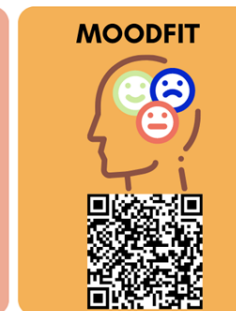
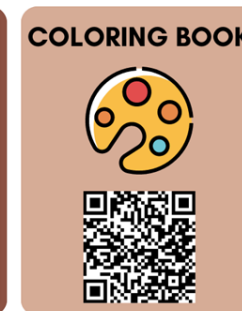
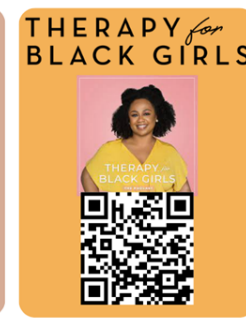
How social media
influences children
age 13-17





Integration of Digital Mental Health Resources

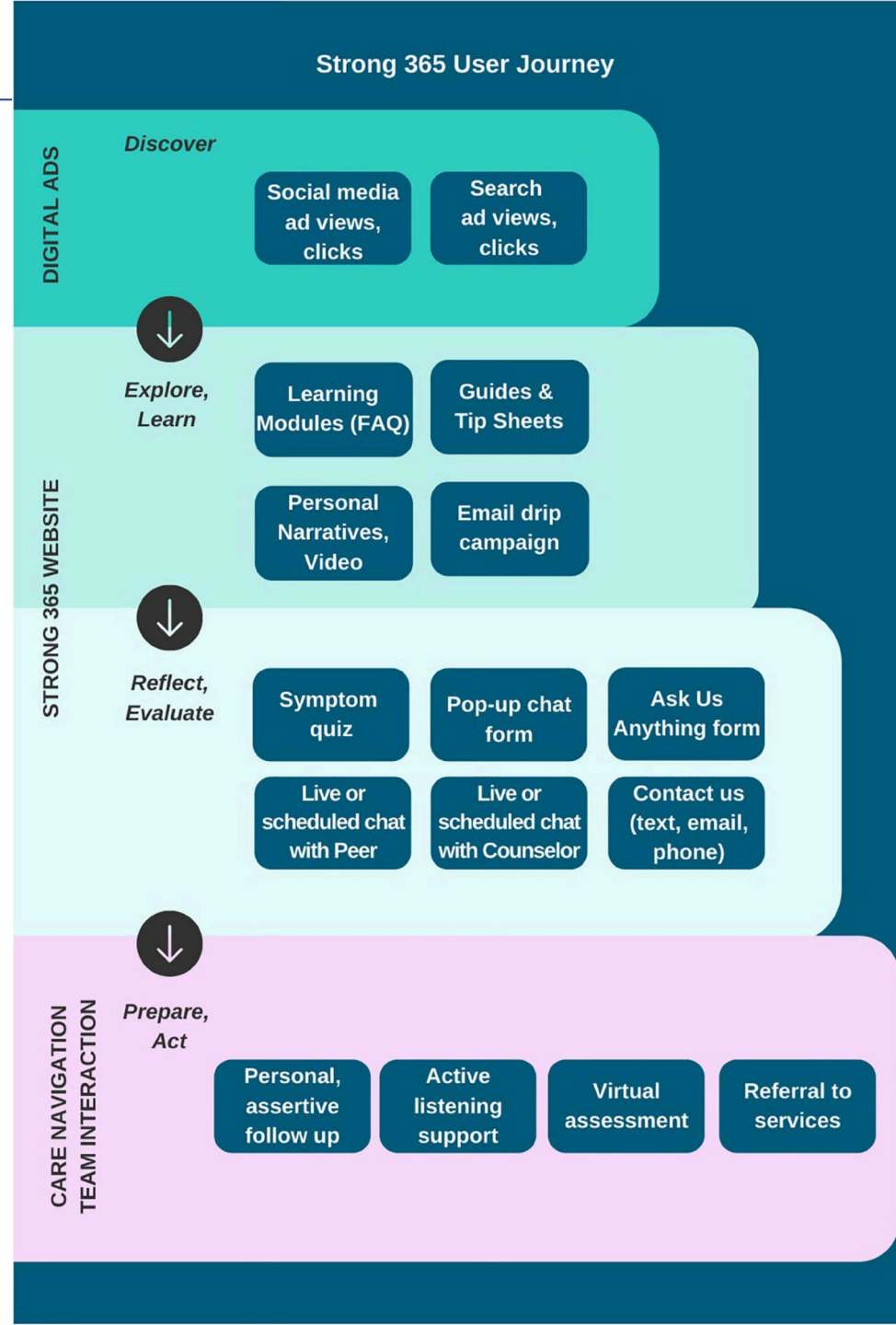
- Provides mental health information and literacy around treatment options
- Reduces mental health uncertainty
- Provides online social support to youth who do not have supportive peers or adults
- Increases agency and supports self-reliance
- Increases healthy and personalized self-care and coping strategies
- Provides a gateway to mental health help-seeking and social support





Using Social Media and Digital Websites to Facilitate Help-Seeking

(Birnbaum et al., 2022)





Finding Digital Mental Health for Black Youth

Mental Health Resources for the Black Community

- Liberate Meditation App
- Therapy for Black Girls
- Therapy for Black Men
- Black Therapists Rock
- The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation
- Therapy in Color
- The Black Mental Health Alliance
- Black Mental Wellness



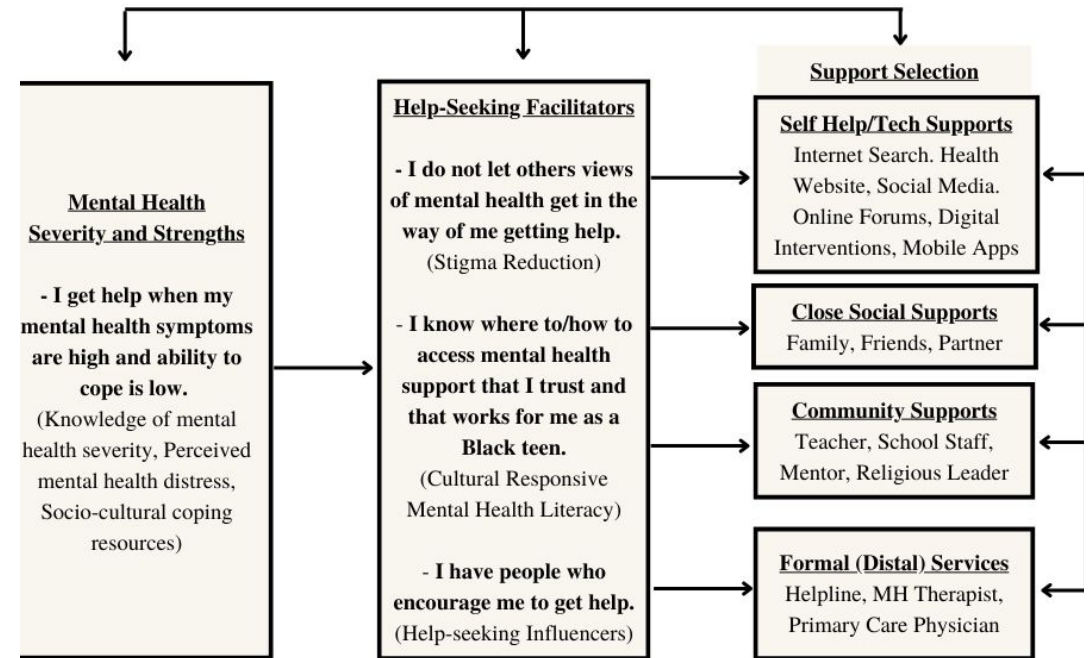


Let's Apply: One Key Takeaway

Where do the youth you work with go first when they are struggling?

How often do you ask about digital coping or support?

What part of this pathway can you consider more intentionally in your work?





Key Takeaways:

Supporting Minoritized Youth in the Digital Era



- Mental health help-seeking is already happening, just not always in the traditional ways we expect.
- Digital technology is often the first step in help-seeking, supporting mental health literacy, connection, and reducing barriers.
- Mental health support must align with youth voice and choice.
- Engagement meets youth where they are including strengths-based, culturally responsive, and trust-enhancing approaches.



Questions?





Stay in Touch!

Email

ncsmh@som.umaryland.edu

Website

schoolmentalhealth.org

Listserv

bit.ly/NCSMH_listserv

Email

abarutigoodwin@som.umaryland.edu

Website

aijahgoodwin.com

