



Health Topic Overview

According to the [World Health Organization](#), health goes beyond the absence of disease and encompasses physical, mental, and social wellness. There are many factors that come into play that can impact a person's health including environmental factors, diet, and access to health care. Not everyone has access to the same health care globally and more than [half of the world's population lacks sufficient access](#).

Social, economic, and environmental factors can negatively affect someone's overall health and life expectancy, and [many premature deaths globally could be prevented](#) with adequate health care. [Discrimination and racism have caused disparities](#) in access and quality of care. Poverty also plays a huge role in these factors, making it difficult for people to access a balanced diet, doctors, a healthy living environment, and so much more.

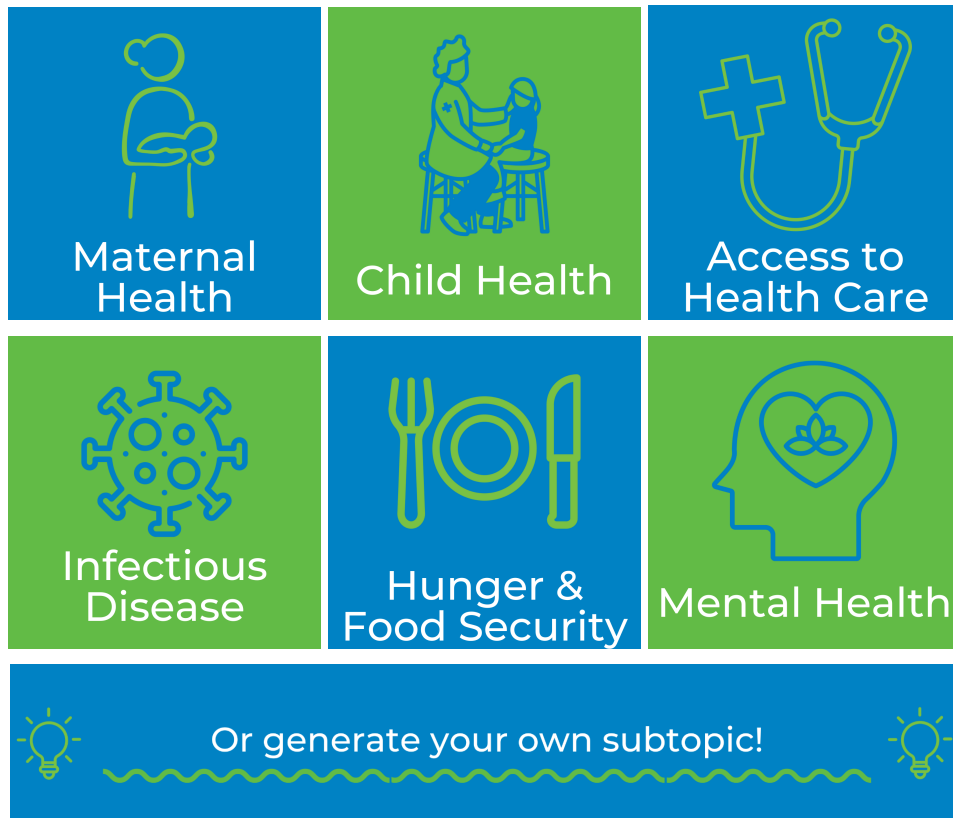
Progress on many of the [Sustainable Development Health Goals](#) have stalled or even declined because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Increasing costs for health care has taken a toll on maternal, child, and overall health globally. A nutritious, varied diet is essential for good health but the amount of [people facing food insecurity has doubled since 2020](#). Immunizations and health check-ups have been disrupted, causing an [uptick in infectious disease](#). Climate change and other environmental factors are also causing an increase in infectious disease emergence and spread.

Mental health is another component of overall health. There are many factors, including someone's environment, that can contribute to or hinder someone's well-being. For example, [access to green space or nature](#) has positive impacts on a person's mental health. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a [rise in anxiety and depression](#). Social isolation, loneliness, and overall stress have contributed to a decline in people's mental health globally, but especially among women, children, and young adults.

Possible Health Subtopics

Health is a broad topic. Rather than taking on the entire topic, consider focusing on just one part of it (a subtopic). We've put together a list of subtopic angles you could take, and linked to a variety of credible sources, below. But remember, there are many other health subtopics, and tons of other sources, so no need to limit yourself to what's included here!

Click on the colored tiles below to navigate to resources about each subtopic or a planning document to help generate your own ideas!



Maternal Health

Maternal health has improved globally since 2015 but there is still work to be done. In order to reach the [UN's "Good Health & Well-being" Sustainable Development Goal by 2030](#), equitable health care, access to skilled physicians, and family planning are needed globally.

- Equitable health care systems are needed in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of reducing the number of maternal deaths by 2030. (Source: [World Bank Blogs](#))
- The effects of climate change, COVID-19, and rising costs are amplifying vulnerabilities for women and infants worldwide. (Source: [World Health Organization](#))
- In 2020, around 800 women died each day from preventable pregnancy and childbirth complications. (Source: [World Health Organization](#))
- In 2020, the maternal mortality rate in the United States was three times that of other high income countries. For Black women, the maternal mortality rate is double the average maternal mortality rate of all women and three times higher when compared to white women. (Source: [The Commonwealth Fund](#))
- Access to family planning resources can help space out pregnancies and improve maternal and child health. (Source: [United Nations - SDG Report - Goal 3](#))

Child Health

Child health is dependent upon many things, including the environment they grow up in, pre and postnatal care, and access to adequate preventative care as a child grows older. Recently, [many children have missed vaccinations](#) that are essential to their health. As a result, many children globally are dying from preventable causes .

- Newborn deaths account for 47% of all deaths among children under five. (Source: [UNICEF](#) - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
- In 2020 the child mortality rate dropped 14% compared to 2015. Still, 5 million children died before their fifth birthdays in 2020. (Source: [United Nations](#))
- Some of the top health risks for children include climate related risks and indoor & outdoor air pollution. (Source: [World Health Organization](#))
- Children born in rural areas tend to have lower rates of asthma than those born in more urban areas. (Source: [American Academy of Allergy & Immunology](#))
- Communicable and infectious diseases continue to be main causes of under-five deaths. The leading causes of preventable deaths of children under 5 years old globally include premature birth and birth complications (such as birth asphyxia/trauma), acute respiratory infections, diarrhea and malaria. (Source: [UNICEF](#))

Access to Health Care and Health Inequities

Not everyone has the same access to health care and recent events highlighted the disparities in health care globally. Distance to a health care facility or physician, and other inequities like [discrimination, environmental degradation, and economic factors](#), can impact a person's health and life expectancy.

- In the U.S., approximately 7 million women of childbearing age were impacted by a decrease in access to maternal health care in 2022. (Source: [March of Dimes](#))
- People living in rural areas have less access to health care than their urban counterparts, and rural areas include higher percentages of people who are living in extreme poverty. (Source: [The Lancet](#))
- Approximately 9% of people globally live further than an hour drive from a health care facility, and it would take approximately 43% of people longer than an hour to walk to receive care. (Source: [Nature Medicine](#) - global maps)
- Access to health care is inequitable worldwide with more than half the world's population lacking access to adequate health care facilities and supplies. (Source: [Global Citizen](#))
- Income significantly impacts life expectancy and other health factors for people around the world. (Source: [Gapminder animated chart](#))

Infectious Disease

Infectious diseases can be [spread by people, insects, or from consuming food or water that contains a virus, bacteria, or other pathogen](#). Population movement, density, and interactions with animals can increase the spread of infectious disease and the emergence of new diseases. Environmental factors like climate change can also change how infectious diseases interact and can create environments for them to thrive.

- Some examples of common infectious diseases include: chickenpox, common cold, E.coli, influenza (flu), measles, pneumonia, sexually transmitted diseases, and tuberculosis (Source: [University of Utah](#))
- Population movement and urbanization can increase disease spread, and demographic changes, like an aging population, may increase the likelihood of infection. (Source: [Population Reference Bureau](#))
- 58% of infectious diseases that impact humans have been intensified by at least one climate change related hazard. (Source: [Medical News Today](#))

- Rates of infectious diseases like tuberculosis, measles, and malaria have increased recently because of recent drops in vaccination rates. (Source: [American Society for Microbiology](#))
- Approximately 60% of infectious diseases can be spread by animals and 75% of new infectious diseases come from animals. (Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#))

Hunger and Food Security

Many people don't have access to a healthy, balanced diet or have enough food to feed everyone in their family. Since 2020, [more than twice as many people are facing food insecurity](#). This increase in the number of people going hungry is caused by numerous factors including rising food costs, climate change, and conflict.

- The number of people suffering from hunger is increasing with approximately 161 million more people suffering in 2020 compared to 2019. (Source: [United Nations](#))
- Approximately 10% of the global population is affected by hunger. (Source: [Action Against Hunger](#))
- The Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Northern Ethiopia, Haiti, and the Sahel region are suffering the most worldwide from hunger. (Source: [World Food Program USA](#))
- Rainfall, the amount of vegetation available, food consumption, undernourishment, and more impact hunger and food security. (Source: [World Food Program - Hunger Map](#))
- Fights over food and water are central to many conflicts, and more than 85% of hungry people in the world live in countries affected by conflict. (Source: [Action Against Hunger](#))

Mental Health

Mental Health is an essential part of a person's overall health. Social, economic, and environmental factors can impact someone's mental health. Access to green space, having a network of family and friends, and being able to afford care are all things that impact overall human well-being.

- During 2020, there was roughly a 25% rise in depression and anxiety worldwide, mainly impacting women and the young. (Source: [United Nations](#))
- Not only are there physical benefits to living around nature, it can positively impact mental health too. (Source: [BBC News](#))
- A focus on mental health is needed when addressing the impacts of climate change. (Source: [World Health Organization](#))
- Isolation and physical distancing from COVID-19 impacted the mental health of an aging population. (Source: [National Council for Aging](#))
- Extended exposure to air pollution not only impacts physical health but can impact your mental health as well, according to a study. (Source: [The Washington Post](#))



Generating Your Own Subtopic

Coming up with your own subtopic can be intimidating if you don't know where to start. To help, we've created the following list of questions and reminders to help you formulate your own subtopic. Ask yourself these questions, and as you answer them, notice what stands out or find repeating trends in your answers. Those are what you should focus on to generate your subtopic!

Probing questions

1. Have you noticed anything related to this global topic in your community?
 - a. How does what is happening locally connect to challenges globally?
2. Does this topic connect to an area of interest to you?
 - a. How does it connect?
3. What does this topic first bring to mind when you think about it?
 - a. What emotions does this topic make you feel?
4. What do you already know about this topic?
 - a. What do you want to know?
5. Have you read any books or articles, or listened to podcasts about this topic?
 - a. What if anything did you learn from them?

Keep in mind that the subtopic you choose should be:

- Connected to population growth
- Focused on a single problem or issue
- Researchable using primary and/or secondary sources
- Feasible to answer within the timeframe of 60 seconds
- Specific enough to answer thoroughly