



Child Wellbeing Overview

Child wellbeing encompasses anything that makes children healthy, safe, and happy. This could be related to their education, the food they eat, what their home is like, who cares for them, and beyond. The physical, mental, and emotional state of children greatly depends on their access to resources, the safety of their communities, and the reliability of the services around them. The United Nations has developed a comprehensive set of [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG's\)](#) and many of these relate to child wellbeing including; 'Zero Hunger, No Poverty, Good Health and Wellbeing, Quality Education, and Gender Equality.'

Poverty and poorly planned child welfare programs, exacerbated by population pressures, affect children's wellbeing. A child's development can also be threatened by a lack of education, nutrition, health care, shelter or sanitation. Children struggling with hunger or a polluted environment are more susceptible to [health issues](#), such as respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, malnutrition, malaria, measles, and pneumonia.

[Without proper education](#), children are at higher risk of child marriage or becoming pregnant at an early age. Children living in low socioeconomic areas with little access to education are also more likely to be [forced to work at a young age](#). There are also mental and emotional effects associated with a lack of wellbeing. Living in an unsafe and unhealthy environment can jeopardize the mental health of children, causing them to experience high levels of depression, stress and anxiety. [Mental health conditions worsen](#) with longer exposure to poor social and economic circumstances.

Unequal wealth and resource distribution place a greater burden on the wellbeing of low-income communities. Families living in low-income countries have reduced access to child benefits like cash and tax credits compared to high-income countries, which can [lower a child's overall quality of life](#). Millions of children from marginalized communities continue to be unprotected against serious illnesses as vaccination rates in those areas worsened as an effect of [COVID-19](#). As the global population continues to rise, the gaps in child wellbeing between low-income communities and high-income ones will also grow.

Narrow Your Focus

Child wellbeing is a broad global topic and encompasses a lot of challenges, but your video can only be 60 seconds. Rather than taking on the entire topic, we recommend to focus on one part of the topic (a subtopic). **Remember to connect how human population growth impacts that challenge and offer a sustainable solution.**

We've put together a list of suggested subtopic angles (see below) you could take, and linked them to a variety of credible sources. But there are many other child wellbeing subtopics, and tons of other sources, so no need to limit yourself to what's included here!

As you conduct your [research](#), remember to keep a [works cited list](#) so you have that handy if your video is chosen as a finalist.

Click on the colored tiles below to navigate to information about each subtopic, or click the bottom rectangle for a planning document to help generate your own ideas!



Looking for more resources to help you plan your video? Check out the [full video project organizer](#) or the [abbreviated version, the video project guide](#).

Education Access

Completing more years of schooling is associated with [better life outcomes](#), including a longer lifespan, economic stability, and smaller family sizes. Unfortunately, not all children have the ability to attend school due to location, funding, cultural norms, etc. This lack of education can have long-lasting impacts on a child's wellbeing.

- While the global youth literacy rate grew to 93 percent in 2022, the number of children not in school worldwide totals 250 million. (Source: [UNESCO](#))
- 8 percent of the world's children did not attend school in 2019 for reasons that include: violence or ongoing global conflict, poverty, lack of educational funds, and needing to work to support their families. (Source: [Our World in Data](#))
- Global data shows an overall rise in public spending on education since 1870, with a stronger emphasis placed on quality of education early in life. (Source: [Our World in Data](#))
- Almost a billion children lost a year of schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving lasting effects related to mental health, declines in learning, and gaps in achievement. (Source: [WorldBank](#))
- Rural areas face challenges related to the quantity and quality of educational institutions. The majority of out-of-school children are from rural areas, where people typically have lower incomes and quality of life. (Source: [CGDEV](#))

Child Labor

When children are forced to work, it takes a toll on their intellectual, emotional, and even physical growth. In the U.S., many immigrant children are forced to take up dangerous jobs in order to make an income, often without support from family and while living in a foreign country.

- More than 1 in 5 children engage in harmful work in the world's poorest countries, with effects that are detrimental to their health and development. (Source: [UNICEF](#))
- Globally, child labor occurs more often in rural areas, especially in the agricultural sector. While girls often perform household services, boys are subjected to mining, construction and manufacturing jobs. (Source: [UNICEF](#))
- In addition to lack of education and poverty, there are also social and cultural beliefs that lead to child labor due to customs, status, discrimination, etc. (Source: [NCBI](#))
- From 2021-2023, approximately 250,000 children immigrated to the U.S. without their parents, and most have ended up working full time to sustain the cost of living. (Source: [NPR](#))
- Since 2018, there has been a 69 percent increase in the number of children that are illegally employed by companies. (Source: [USDHHS](#))

Environmental Justice

[Environmental justice](#) topics include access to clean air and water, safe homes, environmental pollution, access to food and quality of food, public transportation, etc. Low income and minority populations are often exposed to [higher levels of environmental hazards](#) and toxins, impacting the safety and livelihood of children from these communities.

- Women and children are among the most disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. (Source: [Climate Ready Schools](#))
- Children in lower income families are at higher risk of exposure to air pollutants, illnesses such as asthma, and learning disabilities. (Source: [CEHN](#))
- Children today are at risk of exposure to more than 80,000 synthetic chemicals including plastics, pesticides, motor fuels, building materials, antibiotics, chemotherapeutic agents, flame retardants, and synthetic hormones, many of which did not exist 50 years ago. (Source: [NCBI](#))
- Children have a higher absorption rate of contaminants compared to adults. Children of color and children who live in underserved communities are at the greatest risk. (Source: [APHA](#))
- Low income and people of color are at higher risk of exposure to lead and other harmful chemicals. Black children show higher levels of lead in their blood compared to other demographics. (Source: [NCBI](#))

Wealth Inequality

The distribution of wealth is unequal among, and within, countries throughout the world. While some children grow up with all their needs being met, others are lacking basic hygiene, nutrition and education, which can have major impacts on overall life outcomes.

- Children are more likely to live in poverty, with an estimated 333 million experiencing extreme poverty today and 1 billion children being 'multidimensionally poor' - meaning they "lack necessities as basic as nutritious food or clean water." (Source: [UNICEF](#))
- Around 333 million children survive on less than \$2.15 USD daily, 1.43 billion children survive on less than \$6.85 USD daily. (Source: [World Bank](#))
- A student's family background, including their economic security, is a key factor of the student's learning outcomes and success. (Source: [Transforming Society Podcast](#))
- Wealth disparities increase college education gaps and have an influence on early adulthood decisions, including family planning and marriage. (Source: [NCBI](#))
- In the U.S., wealth inequality has a strong racial component with White families holding 5-8 times more wealth than Hispanic and Black families, which has impacts on health outcomes. (Source: [NYC.gov](#))

Healthy Children

In order for our adult population to achieve levels of high health and wellbeing, communities need to invest in the health of children. This would require prioritizing physical, mental, emotional or spiritual health as it relates to resources and physical surroundings such as the environment.

- South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are home to 68 percent of the world's 181 million children living in severe food poverty. Children in poorer households are less likely to have enough nutritious food than children in non-poor households. (Source: [UNICEF](#))
- There are approximately 36 million acutely malnourished children worldwide, and 1 in 5 children are chronically malnourished to some degree. (Source: [UNICEF](#))
- 14.5 million children in 2023 had never received vaccinations. More than half are from just seven countries – Nigeria, India, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Indonesia and Yemen. (Source: [UNICEF](#))
- 10 percent of children and teenagers experience a mental disorder and don't receive any resources or care. Suicide is the 4th leading cause of death amongst middle and older-aged teenagers (15-19 years old). (Source: [WHO](#))
- 1 in 6 of the world's children live in a conflict zone, which impacts physical and mental health, access to resources and education, and economic stability. (Source: [Save The Children](#))

Teen Pregnancy and Marriage

Around the world, many young girls are not able to decide who they marry or when they get married. They are often pressured to have children, with little or no access to family planning methods, often preventing them from continuing their education.

- In 2022, an estimated 13 percent, or 1 in 6, adolescent girls gave birth before the age of 18. (Source: [UNICEF](#))
- In 2021, the number of child brides was 650 million. Early marriage often leads to early pregnancies because girls aren't able to make their own decisions on family planning and child-bearing. (Source: [WHO](#))
- Teenage mothers face increased risk of birth complications, miscarriages, stillbirths, unsafe abortions, STDs, and problems due to inadequate prenatal care. (Source: [NCBI](#))
- Teenage mothers face lower educational and financial security opportunities. (Source: [NCBI](#))
- At least 777,000 births occur each year to girls younger than 15 years old in low-income countries. (Source: [Girls Not Brides](#))



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? If so, how does what is happening locally connect to challenges globally?
2. Does this topic connect to an area of interest to you? If so, how does it connect?
3. What does this topic first bring to mind when you think about it? What emotions does this topic make you feel?
4. What do you already know about this topic? What do you want to know?
5. Have you read any books or articles, or listened to podcasts about this topic? If so, what did you learn from them?

Keep in mind that the subtopic you choose should be:

- Connected to human population growth - *how does population growth impact it?*
- 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