

Research Question Examples: Public Health

About this document

This PDF contains 54 **public health research question examples**, each quoted word for word from one of 26 completed dissertations and theses (2010–2026), grouped into 5 sections. Each question links to the thesis that asked it, so you can read how it was answered. Use them to see what a well-formed public health research question looks like, then adapt the shape to your own study.

By [Derek Jansen](#) (MBA) · Reviewed by [Eunice Rautenbach](#) (DTech) · Grad Coach · October 2026

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Descriptive questions

These questions ask what is happening: how much, how often, or what kinds. They describe a situation rather than explain it.

1. What are the experiences of academics and decision-makers participating in the first two years of an integrated knowledge translation program of research?

Asked in: [An Exploration of Experiences of Academics and Decision-Makers in a Collaborative Program of Research](#) · Spark, Rebecca · McMaster University · 2011

2. What structures and processes positively and negatively influence the engagement of partners on the collaborative research team?

Asked in: [An Exploration of Experiences of Academics and Decision-Makers in a Collaborative Program of Research](#) · Spark, Rebecca · McMaster University · 2011

3. Do the meals prepared and served to learners constitute a balanced meal?

Asked in: [Food for thought : a closer look at Ipolokeng primary schools' nutrition programme.](#) · Hlengiwe Princess Khuzwayo · University of KwaZulu-Natal · 2016

4. Do the levels of environmental hygiene at Ipolokeng primary meet the requirements prescribed by Regulation R918 of 30 July 1999?

Asked in: [Food for thought : a closer look at Ipolokeng primary schools' nutrition programme.](#) · Hlengiwe Princess Khuzwayo · University of KwaZulu-Natal · 2016

5. What community resources and barriers to mental health services exist in three Oregon high needs high schools?

Asked in: [Grant Proposal to Conduct a Needs Assessment for Community-Based Partnership Opportunities in Three Oregon High Schools to Adapt the Mobile Mental Health Community Resources](#) · Kleinfelder, Brenda · University of Oregon · 2019

6. What are the key factors for the [Mobile Mental Health Community Resources] to leverage school and community resources to develop comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated mental health service approaches to address identified barriers in three Oregon high needs high schools?

Asked in: [Grant Proposal to Conduct a Needs Assessment for Community-Based Partnership Opportunities in Three Oregon High Schools to Adapt the Mobile Mental Health Community Resources](#) · Kleinfelder, Brenda · University of Oregon · 2019

7. What is the level of [insecticide treated net] accessibility at household level?

Asked in: [Household ITN accessibility and availability in Katondo and Makululu Townships of Kabwe](#) · Mwiimbu, Christopher Kalulu · University of Zambia · 2013

8. [H]ow have Emory [Center for AIDS Research] Developmental Core awardees contributed to the global HIV knowledge base?

Asked in: [Investing in the Future. Evaluation of the Activities of the Developmental Core of Emory University Center for AIDS Research: A Case Study](#) · Galina N. Terbova · Valdosta State University · 2018

9. What are the driving forces for engaging in skin lightening practices?

Asked in: [Perceptions and experiences of skin lighteners in Cape Town](#) · Meagan Jacobs-Alfred · University of Cape Town · 2026

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10. What are the experiences and effects of using skin lightening creams?

Asked in: [Perceptions and experiences of skin lighteners in Cape Town](#) · Meagan Jacobs-Alfred · University of Cape Town · 2026

11. What are the impacts and characteristics of the regulations governing skin lightening?

Asked in: [Perceptions and experiences of skin lighteners in Cape Town](#) · Meagan Jacobs-Alfred · University of Cape Town · 2026

12. What is the prevalence of health equity issues reported in the community health assessment?

Asked in: [THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT, PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION, AND COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT IN NORTH CAROLINA: 2007-2017](#) · Kathryn Garner Dail · East Carolina University · 2019

13. What are the characteristics (interventions, outputs, and outcomes) of the most recent community health improvement plans submitted by the 100 counties and what level of progress on the health outcomes have been reported in the county health SOTCH documents?

Asked in: [THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT, PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION, AND COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT IN NORTH CAROLINA: 2007-2017](#) · Kathryn Garner Dail · East Carolina University · 2019

14. What is the level of awareness of HPV among college females?

Asked in: [The Knowledge Level of Female University Students about Human Papillomavirus](#) · Joy Annabelle Taylor · East Carolina University · 2017

15. Can social aspects and perceived risk create an understanding of which factors affect the spreading of the virus?

Asked in: [The significance of social context and risk perception in the covid-19 pandemic : A qualitative study with students, seniors, food store workers and care workers](#) · Jonathan Källbäcker · Linköping University · 2021

16. Which social media platforms and features does TFNC use to share nutrition knowledge pertaining to children under the age of five years?

Asked in: [The state of social media usage to fight malnutrition among children under the age of five years in Tanzania](#) · Debora Mbilinyi · Uppsala University · 2023

17. What kinds of nutrition knowledge pertaining to children under the age of five years does TFNC share on social media?

Asked in: [The state of social media usage to fight malnutrition among children under the age of five years in Tanzania](#) · Debora Mbilinyi · Uppsala University · 2023

18. How is nutrition knowledge pertaining to children under the age of five years posted on TFNC social media pages packaged?

Asked in: [The state of social media usage to fight malnutrition among children under the age of five years in Tanzania](#) · Debora Mbilinyi · Uppsala University · 2023

19. Given the positionality and authority of [National Public Health Institutes] in low- and middle-income countries, which essential public health functions are they best positioned to perform?

Asked in: [Transforming Capacity into Impact: New Systemic Pathways to Realizing the Vision of National Public Health Institutes](#) · Erika A. Willacy · Harvard University · 2025

- 20. Based on the essential public health functions identified, what additional capacities are needed for [National Public Health Institutes] to functionally succeed or achieve demonstrable public health impact?**

Asked in: [Transforming Capacity into Impact: New Systemic Pathways to Realizing the Vision of National Public Health Institutes](#) · Erika A. Willacy · Harvard University · 2025

- 21. What are the characteristics of studies that use social network analysis in health research?**

Asked in: [Understanding the role of networks and network actors in the implementation of practice change innovations in Ontario's long-term care homes](#) · Bashir, Kainat B · University of Toronto · 2024

- 22. What factors promote weight maintenance and loss in overweight, working women?**

Asked in: [Weighing In: Overweight, Working Women's Descriptions of Body Weight and Weight Management](#) · Fisher, Amenda Michele · University of Kansas · 2021

- 23. What weight maintenance and loss methods are preferred by overweight, working women?**

Asked in: [Weighing In: Overweight, Working Women's Descriptions of Body Weight and Weight Management](#) · Fisher, Amenda Michele · University of Kansas · 2021

- 24. What are the barriers to weight maintenance and loss for overweight, working women?**

Asked in: [Weighing In: Overweight, Working Women's Descriptions of Body Weight and Weight Management](#) · Fisher, Amenda Michele · University of Kansas · 2021

- 25. What is the attitude of students at the University of Iceland towards euthanasia and physician assisted suicide?**

Asked in: [Að lifa með reisin - Að deyja með reisin: Viðhorf nemenda við Háskóla Íslands til dánar- og sjálfsvígisaðstoðar](#) · Súsanna Reinholdt Sæbergisdóttir · University of Iceland · 2017

- 26. How is the social support perceived when it comes to stop using narcotics?**

Asked in: [Andlighet och sociala stödets betydelse för att sluta med narkotika : Upplevelser om 12 stegsprogrammet](#) · Karlsson, Annsofie · University of Gävle · 2015

Relational questions

These questions ask whether two things tend to go together, such as study time and exam results, without claiming that one causes the other.

- 27. How is the spatial variability of acute pediatric asthma related to PM2.5 concentrations and the amount of vegetated cover?**

Asked in: [Climate, environment, neighborhood, & health: Pediatric asthma in Kansas City](#) · Wesley, Elizabeth Jane · University of Kansas · 2022

- 28. Is there a statistically significant relationship between foregoing care due to cost and location and/or between foregoing care due to cost and passage of the [Affordable Care Act] (proxied by year) for residents of Georgia?**

Asked in: [Do Rural Georgians Experience Disparities in Access to Healthcare? An Assessment of the Impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act for Individuals in Rural Georgia](#) · Celia Marlene Claborn Grams · Valdosta State University · 2022

- 29.** Is there a statistically significant relationship between having a usual source of care and location and/or between having a usual source of care and passage of the [Affordable Care Act] (proxied by year) for residents of Georgia?

Asked in: [Do Rural Georgians Experience Disparities in Access to Healthcare? An Assessment of the Impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act for Individuals in Rural Georgia](#) · Celia Marlene Claborn Grams · Valdosta State University · 2022

- 30.** [A]re family sociodemographic variables (i.e., caregiver education, household income, caregiver race/ethnicity) associated with caregiver health behaviors (i.e., caregiver eating habits and physical activity)?

Asked in: [Health Behaviors Among Families of Children with Developmental Delay](#) · Halladay, Lauren · University of Oregon · 2021

- 31.** [D]oes child developmental functioning (i.e., adaptive behavior and autism symptoms) moderate the association between caregiver health behaviors and child health outcomes?

Asked in: [Health Behaviors Among Families of Children with Developmental Delay](#) · Halladay, Lauren · University of Oregon · 2021

- 32.** Are negative birth outcomes such as preterm birth, being small (SGA) or large (LGA) for gestational age related to the atrial fibrillation risk later in life (Study I)?

Asked in: [Prenatal risk factors for severe cardiovascular diseases up to middle-age : a Nordic collaborative study](#) · Fen Yang · Karolinska Institute · 2024

- 33.** Is maternal preeclampsia and its subtypes linked to increased risks of stroke and ischemic heart disease in the offspring (Study II)?

Asked in: [Prenatal risk factors for severe cardiovascular diseases up to middle-age : a Nordic collaborative study](#) · Fen Yang · Karolinska Institute · 2024

- 34.** Is maternal polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) associated with the risks of overall [cardiovascular diseases] and its major subtypes in her offspring (Study III)?

Asked in: [Prenatal risk factors for severe cardiovascular diseases up to middle-age : a Nordic collaborative study](#) · Fen Yang · Karolinska Institute · 2024

- 35.** What is the relationship between perceived gendered racism and psychosocial stress experienced by non-Hispanic Black women during pregnancy?

Asked in: [Psychosocial Stress, Perceived Gendered Racism, and Preterm Birth by Gestational Age at Birth: Associations Among Non-Hispanic Black Women During Pregnancy](#) · Lurry-Mabin, Corine · National University · 2026

- 36.** What is the relationship between perceived gendered racism, psychosocial stress, and preterm birth experienced by non-Hispanic Black women during pregnancy?

Asked in: [Psychosocial Stress, Perceived Gendered Racism, and Preterm Birth by Gestational Age at Birth: Associations Among Non-Hispanic Black Women During Pregnancy](#) · Lurry-Mabin, Corine · National University · 2026

- 37.** What socio-demographic factors are associated with Caesarean Section among child bearing women In Zambia?

Asked in: [Social determinants of caesarean section among child bearing women in Zambia.](#) · Nzumba, Faith L. · University of Zambia · 2023

38. Which socio-economic factors are associated with Caesarean Section among child bearing women in Zambia?

Asked in: [Social determinants of caesarean section among child bearing women in Zambia](#) · Nzumba, Faith L. · University of Zambia · 2023

39. Which characteristics or combination of characteristics are associated with the reporting of health equity issues?

Asked in: [THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT, PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION, AND COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT IN NORTH CAROLINA: 2007-2017](#) · Kathryn Garner Dail · East Carolina University · 2019

40. Are the previous and ongoing cognitive, physical, and social complexities of work associated with cognitive health in later life?

Asked in: [The impact of productive and leisure activities on cognitive health in later life](#) · Yeonjung Lee · Boston University · 2019

Causal questions

These questions ask whether one thing causes a change in another. Answering them usually takes an experiment or a careful design that rules out other explanations.

41. [W]hat impact have Emory [Center for AIDS Research] Developmental Core awardees had on Emory University's fiscal portfolio as it pertains to the NIH funded research base?

Asked in: [Investing in the Future. Evaluation of the Activities of the Developmental Core of Emory University Center for AIDS Research: A Case Study](#) · Galina N. Terbova · Valdosta State University · 2018

42. [H]ow have Emory [Center for AIDS Research] Developmental Core services personally impacted the professional development and funding success of early stage and new HIV investigators?

Asked in: [Investing in the Future. Evaluation of the Activities of the Developmental Core of Emory University Center for AIDS Research: A Case Study](#) · Galina N. Terbova · Valdosta State University · 2018

43. Does the effect of race/ethnicity on infant mortality change if the mother lives in a place of high disadvantage versus low disadvantage?

Asked in: [Neighborhood Level Disadvantage, Race/Ethnicity and Infant Mortality in Washington DC](#) · Amutah, Ndidi N. · University of Maryland · 2010

44. Does having an infant born preterm or low birth weight increase the risk of infant mortality?

Asked in: [Neighborhood Level Disadvantage, Race/Ethnicity and Infant Mortality in Washington DC](#) · Amutah, Ndidi N. · University of Maryland · 2010

45. Does legalization of euthanasia and/or physician assisted suicide affect the trust of individuals in the healthcare system?

Asked in: [Að lifa með reisin - Að deyja með reisin: Viðhorf nemenda við Háskóla Íslands til dánar- og sjálfsvígisaðstoðar](#) · Súsanna Reinholdt Sæbergisdóttir · University of Iceland · 2017

46. Does religion affect the attitudes of individuals towards euthanasia and physician assisted suicide?

Asked in: [Að lifa með reisin - Að deyja með reisin: Viðhorf nemenda við Háskóla Íslands til dánar- og sjálfsvígisaðstoðar](#) · Súsanna Reinholdt Sæbergisdóttir · University of Iceland · 2017

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Comparative questions

These questions compare two or more groups or settings, such as two schools or two teaching methods, to see whether they differ.

47. Is there evidence of socioeconomic disparities in acute asthma incidence?

Asked in: [Climate, environment, neighborhood, & health: Pediatric asthma in Kansas City](#) · Wesley, Elizabeth Jane · University of Kansas · 2022

48. What differences do we observe in children's [Active Transportation] and outdoor play from phase 1 to phase 2?

Asked in: [Impact of Built and Social Environment Interventions on Children's Active Transportation and Outdoor Play in Nova Scotia](#) · Emily A. Burke · Dalhousie University · 2024

49. Do women who are comparable on factors such as maternal education and marital status experience different rates of infant mortality by race?

Asked in: [Neighborhood Level Disadvantage, Race/Ethnicity and Infant Mortality in Washington DC](#) · Amutah, Nndi N. · University of Maryland · 2010

50. Do women living in areas of high disadvantage experience higher rates of infant mortality than women living in areas of low disadvantage?

Asked in: [Neighborhood Level Disadvantage, Race/Ethnicity and Infant Mortality in Washington DC](#) · Amutah, Nndi N. · University of Maryland · 2010

Exploratory questions

These questions ask how or why something happens, usually where little research exists yet. They are common in qualitative studies built on interviews or observation.

51. How do respondents perceive the identification card may affect the interaction between a person with ASD and a first responder?

Asked in: [Autism Spectrum Disorder Identification Card Programs: Public Attitude and Themes](#) · Patrick P. Davis · Valdosta State University · 2021

52. How have the national consolidated guidelines for Option B+ [prevention of mother to child transmission] affected the work of healthcare professionals?

Asked in: [EVALUATION OF THE NEW OPTION B+ PREGNANT MOTHER TO CHILD TRANSMISSION \(PMTCT\) PROGRAM FOR HIV INFECTED WOMEN AT HOSPITAL FACILITIES: CASE STUDY AT THE RAHIMA MOOSA MOTHER AND CHILD HOSPITAL, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA](#) · Bisnauth, Melanie A. · McMaster University · 2015

53. What factors underlie the observed changes in AT and outdoor play between phase 1 and phase 2, and what are the perceptions and experiences of these changes from community leaders and children?

Asked in: [Impact of Built and Social Environment Interventions on Children's Active Transportation and Outdoor Play in Nova Scotia](#) · Emily A. Burke · Dalhousie University · 2024

54. In what way do people feel they have made a change during the pandemic?

Asked in: [The significance of social context and risk perception in the covid-19 pandemic : A qualitative study with students, seniors, food store workers and care workers](#) · Jonathan Källbäcker · Linköping University · 2021

How to adapt a question to your own study

Every question here was asked by someone else, about their own setting. These four steps turn one into a question that is yours.

- 1. Pick the shape, not the wording.** Notice whether the question compares, explores, explains or measures. That shape is what transfers to your study.
Recommended reading: [How to write a research question](#)
- 2. Swap in your own population and setting.** Change who, where and when, and check the question still makes sense.
Recommended reading: [How to find a research gap](#)
- 3. Check it fits your method.** A "how" or "why" question usually points to qualitative work; "how much" or "is there a relationship" to quantitative.
Recommended reading: [Qualitative vs quantitative research](#)
- 4. Line up your aims, objectives and questions.** Your committee will check that they agree.
Recommended reading: [Research aims, objectives and questions](#)

Do this with two or three questions and compare them: the one you can actually answer with the time and access you have is usually the right one.