Reading the News Through a Public Health Lens

Almost any story you encounter in the news can be read as a story about health if you apply a public health lens. While you read, think about questions like: How do the events, decisions, or circumstances described in this story impact people’s health and wellbeing?

By answering this question, you are identifying **social determinants of health**, which the **CDC defines** as “conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality-of life-risks and outcomes.” The graphic below offers an incomplete list of social determinants of health, visualized here as the roots of a tree. If these roots are strong, health outcomes are more likely to be positive. If the roots are weak, health outcomes will suffer.

![Image of a tree with roots representing social determinants]

Courtesy of the Equity and Social Justice Initiative, King County, Washington
Activity Directions

**Step 1.** Select a story from the list below.

**Step 2. While you read,** use the graphic organizer (page 3) to record what social determinants of health you can identify the story.

**Step 3. After you read,** use your public health lens to evaluate how each story could be considered a story about health, and to brainstorm public health approaches to addressing the issues in the story.

1. [Milwaukee Evictions Spurred by COVID-19, Longstanding Racism, and Poverty](#)
   - Issues: Housing, racial justice, pandemics
2. [Portraits of Drought: Farmers Struggle To Adapt to Arid Conditions in Kunene](#)
   - Issues: Food security, environment and climate change
3. [The Future of Labor Advocacy is as Diverse as Workforce](#)
   - Issues: Workers’ rights, racial justice
4. [Looking to Women To Shape the Future of Berlin’s Transportation](#)
   - Issues: Infrastructure, gender equity, environment and climate change
5. [How Three States in the U.S. Made College Illegal for Undocumented Students](#)
   - Issues: Education, migration
6. [NYC’s Trees: A Natural Defense Against Heat, but Not Equally Shared](#)
   - Issues: Air pollution, housing, race relations, U.S.
7. [New Drone Technology Could Make It Easier To Clear Bombs, Mines in Ukraine](#) [Video]
   - Issues: Conflict, technology
8. [‘People of the Forest’: Indigenous Indonesians Stake Claim to Land](#)
   - Issues: Land rights, Indigenous rights, environment and climate change
9. [A Crisis of Connectivity: Internet Access in Rural Pennsylvania](#)
   - Issues: Technology, infrastructure
10. [Police Violence Against Dominicans in Puerto Rico Suggests Systemic Problem](#)
    - Issues: Policing, racial justice, migration
11. [Queer Lives in India: Long Shadows in the Sunset](#)
    - Issues: LGBTQIA+ rights, aging, housing
12. [How Denmark’s Welfare State Became a Surveillance Nightmare](#)
    - Issues: Technology, governance
13. [Mexican Government Vows To Continue Legal Fight Against U.S. Gun Manufacturers](#)
    - Issues: Gun violence, trade, governance
14. [In Venezuela, Women in Prison Awaiting Trial Endure Crowded Conditions](#)
    - Issues: Criminal justice
15. [The Hidden Costs of Flooding in D.C.’s Poorest Wards](#)
    - Issues: Environment and climate change, infrastructure, racial justice
**Story Notes**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Story title:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Issue(s) in this story:</strong></td>
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**What social determinants of health** can you identify in this story?

1. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

3. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

**What makes this a story about health?** (How do the events, decisions, or circumstances described in this story impact people’s health and wellbeing?)

**What public health approaches** to the issues in this story can you imagine? (Think about solutions that would prevent negative health effects for large groups of people.)