

GLOBAL ISSUE

# EDUCATION

## Education is the first step to breaking the cycle of poverty.

Currently, there are approximately 263 million children and youth around the world who are out of school. These children and their families face many different obstacles that prevent access to education, including conflict and a lack of access to clean water and opportunity. Instead of going to school, these children are forced into labor or stay home to help with household activities. But with education, children can empower themselves with the self-confidence and knowledge to lift themselves and their communities out of poverty.



### Sustainable Development Goal 4

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

For every 100 primary-aged boys out of school, there are 123 girls who are denied the right to education.

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In sub-Saharan Africa, one in three children are not in school.

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Of the 263 million children who are out of school, 61 million of those children are of primary school age.

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Almost 20 percent of all children in the world will not reach the fourth grade.

## Discussion Questions

- 1 Why do you think girls do not have the same access to education as boys? What can be done to ensure every child receives an education?
- 2 What would you do if you weren't allowed to go to school? How would your life be different?
- 3 What are some obstacles that would keep a child from school? How can we overcome or eradicate those obstacles?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to education worldwide at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.weareasilent.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Your voice is a powerful tool for social change. Use it to speak up or go silent for all of those whose voices go unheard with WE Are Silent.



GLOBAL ISSUE

# WATER

## **Water is a basic human right, yet more than 840 million people do not have access to clean water.**

Girls and women around the world spend over 200 million hours every day collecting contaminated water from distant and unsafe sources—time that could be spent in school or earning a livelihood. Without access to clean water, children miss 443 million school days every year because of preventable water-related illnesses like cholera and typhoid. But with access to clean water, children are healthy and can spend their time at school, families can harvest nutritious food and earn an income, and communities can thrive.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 6**

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Half of the world's population will live in water-stressed areas by 2025.

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One third of schools around the world do not have access to a source of clean water.

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Worldwide, 2.4 billion people do not have basic sanitation services like toilets or latrines.

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Women in sub-Saharan Africa spend approximately 40 billion hours a year collecting water.

## *Discussion Questions*

- 1** What would you do if you had to live without access to clean water?
- 2** How would it impact your family if only the women had to walk four miles for water that you needed for cooking, bathing and drinking?
- 3** What do you think needs to be done to make clean water accessible to everyone?

## **Go Deeper**

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to clean water at [WE.org/exploringissues](http://WE.org/exploringissues).

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## **Take Action**

Walk to raise awareness and provide people with access to clean water for life. Take action with WE Walk For Water.



## GLOBAL ISSUE

# FOOD

**Approximately 821 million people around the world—one in nine—go hungry every day, and the number continues to increase.**

Global hunger is an increasingly challenging problem facing our world today. Not having enough food or proper nutrition results in poor health and affects other areas of development, such as education and employment. There are many different factors that can affect the availability of food sources, including climate-related events such as droughts and conflict in the area. Often, when families around the world suffer from food insecurity, they are forced to keep their children at home to help with farming. Because of this, children cannot access education to lift themselves and their families out of poverty, continuing a vicious cycle.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 2**

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

One in three people around the world are affected by some type of malnutrition.

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More than 75 percent of chronically malnourished children in the world (122 million of 155 million) live in areas affected by conflict.

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In developing countries, one in six children—around 100 million—are underweight.

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If women farmers had the same access to resources as men, people who experience hunger in the world could be reduced by up to 150 million.

## *Discussion Questions*

- 1** Why do you think women do not have equal access to farming?  
How can farming equity be improved?
- 2** How is food insecurity related to education, health and poverty?
- 3** How do conflict and climate change affect global hunger? What can be done to reverse those effects?

## **Go Deeper**

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to food worldwide at [WE.org/exploringissues](http://WE.org/exploringissues).

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## **Take Action**

Contact your WE Schools Program Manager to learn more about how you can take action.



## GLOBAL ISSUE

# HEALTH

## Health is a key factor in the livelihood of a population, but half of the world's population still lacks access to essential health services.

Poverty and health go hand in hand. For almost 100 million people around the world, health care expenses are so costly that they are pushed into extreme poverty, forcing them to survive on just \$1.90 a day. When people live in poverty, they are often trapped in the cycle of chronic illness, as their environments and situations make them sick with a lack of shelter, clean water or proper sanitation. But by improving access to health care, millions of lives can be saved each year. When a community is healthy, they can lead more productive lives and contribute to their society.



### Sustainable Development Goal 3

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Each year, 6.6 million children under the age of five die due to a lack of access to health care, clean water and sanitation.

Around the world, three in 10 deaths are caused by cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks and stroke.

Improving access to clean water and sanitation could prevent almost 10 percent of illnesses.

Life expectancy at birth has increased by six years since 1990.

## *Discussion Questions*

- 1** How can we make health care accessible to everyone?
- 2** How would having poor health affect other parts of your life?
- 3** How would your life be affected if you did not have access to health care?

## **Go Deeper**

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to health care worldwide at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.we.org/exploringissues).

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## **Take Action**

Contact your WE Schools Program Manager to learn more about how you can take action.



## GLOBAL ISSUE

# POVERTY

**Globally, approximately 736 million people live in extreme poverty, living on less than \$1.90 a day.**

From accessing healthy food to quality education, poverty affects all aspects of life. Health care, clean water and other critical services remain out of reach for many people around the world. Poverty is more than just not having enough money to live on—it's also about not having the opportunities to improve your livelihood. When families break the cycle of poverty, children can go to school, the family's health gets better and everyone can take control of their futures. To ensure families are protected and can prosper, institutions implement social safety nets, such as universal health care, school feeding programs and homeless shelters.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 1**

End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

**Gender inequality leads to a loss of \$160 trillion in wealth per year.**

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**Approximately 36 percent of people experiencing extreme poverty who received social safety net benefits were able to escape poverty.**

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**Since 1990, there are almost 1.1 billion fewer people living in extreme poverty.**

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**Women are more likely to be unemployed than men.**

## Discussion Questions

- 1** What do you think are the causes of poverty? What are the effects of poverty?
- 2** How can social safety nets help people escape poverty? Can you think of examples of social safety nets?
- 3** Why do you think there are more men than women in the workforce globally? How can you help ensure women have equal opportunities to men?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to opportunity worldwide at [WE.org/explore/issue/](https://www.weforum.org/explore/issue/).

## Take Action

Empower female artisans in developing communities. Sell handcrafted Rafiki Bracelets and give back to the woman who made them with WE Are Rafikis.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# DISCRIMINATION

**The population of the United States is made up of many races, ethnicities, genders and backgrounds, who still face discrimination on a daily basis.**

Discrimination is the unjust treatment of others due to prejudice. From isolating people of a different gender to not giving equal opportunities based on someone's sexual orientation, discrimination comes in many different forms. In the U.S., 42 percent of African Americans have experienced racial violence. In a recent survey, 51 percent of LGBTQ Americans reported experiencing violence on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity. For many people, experiencing discrimination is a reality they face daily, but by promoting acceptance and kindness, you can help make the world a friendlier place for all.

**16** PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS



### **Sustainable Development Goal 16**

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

According to a recent survey, most LGBTQ Americans say they have experienced harassment or discrimination due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In the last five years, one in four LGBT employees reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace.

In 2018, the United States admitted 22,491 refugees—the lowest amount since 1970.

Across racial and ethnic groups there are still income gaps and, in some cases, they are wider than almost 50 years ago.

## Discussion Questions

- 1 What types of discrimination exist in your community?
- 2 How can you, your school or community promote acceptance of people of all races, ethnicities, genders and religions?
- 3 What can you do when you witness discrimination?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of discrimination at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.weare.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Your voice is a powerful tool for social change. Use it to speak up or go silent for all of those whose voices go unheard with WE Are Silent.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

**A study revealed that eight in 10 women in the U.S. have experienced harassment in their lifetime.**

Since 1998, 17,700,000 women worldwide have reported a sexual assault. The #MeToo movement, founded by Tarana Burke in 2006, and which went viral in 2017, encouraged millions of women to speak out about sexual violence and harassment. It brought important conversations into the media, helping destigmatize survivors by highlighting the impact that sexual violence has on women. The TIME'S UP movement is a unified call for change for women everywhere. It addresses systematic inequality and injustice in the workplace.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 5**

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

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American women are earning, on average, 78 cents for every dollar a man earns.

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As of 2019, women hold fewer than 24 percent of seats in the United States Congress.

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Every year that a girl spends in school can boost her future income by 10–20 percent.

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One in four American women will experience violence from an intimate partner, ranging from verbal abuse to stalking.

## Discussion Questions

- 1 Name a woman in your life who inspires you.
- 2 Why do you think it is important for both men and women to be treated equally?
- 3 How can you help support women's empowerment in your everyday life?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on women's empowerment at [WE.org/exploringissues](http://WE.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Empower female artisans in developing communities. Sell handcrafted Rafiki Bracelets and give back to the woman who made them with WE Are Rafikis.



LOCAL ISSUE

# WELLNESS

**When a community is healthy everyone can thrive, but we need to remember to take care of our bodies and our mental well-being.**

Being physically active, eating nutritious foods and sleeping enough are the keys to sustaining a healthy lifestyle. Whether you enjoy running or doing activities such as yoga and dancing, any type of physical activity is beneficial to your body and mind. When it comes to eating healthy, a balanced diet is critical for keeping you energized throughout the day. To top it all off, getting enough sleep can help reduce feelings of stress and anxiety. By taking care of our bodies, we can ensure healthy mental well-being too. And when a community is healthy, everyone can lead more productive lives and contribute to society in a positive way.



## **Sustainable Development Goal 3**

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

**Up to 80 percent of premature heart disease and strokes are preventable.**

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**Foods that have a long shelf-life often contain unnatural preservatives, additives and chemicals that are harmful to the body.**

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**Most teens need around nine hours of sleep for their bodies to function properly.**

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**Eating breakfast regularly helps keep your metabolism going.**

## Discussion Questions

- 1 How can we promote healthy lifestyles within our community?
- 2 How would an unhealthy lifestyle affect other aspects of your life?
- 3 What are the benefits of a healthy lifestyle?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of access to health care worldwide at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.wegivehealth.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Raise awareness about healthy living by practicing better habits and self-reflection with WE Give Health.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# HUNGER

## One in six children in the United States is food insecure.

Hunger is not always easy to spot but that doesn't mean it's not affecting those around you. Millions of people struggle to get by because of a lack of employment, low wages and rising costs of living, leaving little money left to buy healthy food for themselves and their families. Around 40 million Americans face food insecurity—the same number of people living in poverty. A family of four may need 36 additional meals a month because they cannot afford enough food. And when kids experience hunger, they are likely to lag behind in developing their language and motor skills and have more social and behavioral problems.



### Sustainable Development Goal 2

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

In the U.S., 40 million people regularly experience hunger, including more than 12 million children.

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Many families facing food insecurity and poverty live in areas where healthy food is unavailable or expensive.

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Children who experience hunger face a higher risk of health conditions like anemia and asthma.

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If the rate of seniors facing hunger continues to increase, there may be more than eight million by 2050.

## *Discussion Questions*

- 1** What health issues can develop as a result of hunger?
- 2** What are some factors that would lead to being food insecure?
- 3** How would your life and future be affected if you were food insecure?

## **Go Deeper**

Check out more info and stats on the issue of hunger at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.we.org/exploringissues).

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## **Take Action**

Want to help your community fight hunger? Take action with WE Scare Hunger.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# CYBERBULLYING

**Cyberbullying includes sending, posting or sharing negative, harmful content about someone else.**

With the increased use of social media over the years, cyberbullying is also on the rise. Fifty-nine percent of American teens have been bullied or harassed online. Often, victims may not know who is targeting them because bullies can hide behind the screen and bully from distant locations, making it difficult to stop the hurtful words and actions. It's easy to say something hurtful, press send and not think there are consequences, but in reality, those actions have a lasting negative impact.

**16** PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS



### **Sustainable Development Goal 16**

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Bullying laws have been passed in all 50 states, and 48 states have also included electronic harassment in these laws.

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In the U.S., 11.5 percent of students admit they have cyberbullied others.

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Eighty-seven percent of teens report witnessing cyberbullying.

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Of teens who have witnessed bullying on social networking sites, 95 percent say they have seen others ignoring the behavior while 55 percent report witnessing it often.

## Discussion Questions

- 1** How do you spot cyberbullying?  
What are some things you can do to prevent it from happening?
- 2** How would you respond to seeing someone being cyberbullied on social media?
- 3** What are some ways to encourage positivity online as an individual?  
As a group?

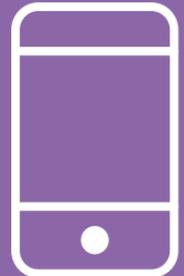
## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of cyberbullying at [WE.org/exploringissues](http://WE.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Stand up to cyberbullying by taking action with WE Rise Above.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# ACCESSIBILITY

**In the United States, almost 61 million people have a disability.**

An inclusive world where everyone can participate is possible when we use technology and design to create accessible tools, services and experiences. Disabilities aren't always visible, and inaccessible barriers aren't always noticeable either. Situations like cluttered hallways, stairs-only access and uncaptioned videos make it difficult for people with disabilities to be included. That's why it's important that our environments are accessible, so everyone can benefit. By taking part in the WE Are One campaign, you can use your skills and explore ways you can make your school and community more inclusive.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 16**

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

**The most common disability type is mobility, affecting one in seven adults.**

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**In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act was implemented, prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities.**

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**The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the UN was adopted in 2006 to protect the human rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities.**

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**More than 170 countries and organizations have signed The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**

## Discussion Questions

- 1 How can you support and include people with disabilities?
- 2 Why is inclusive design important?
- 3 What are a few examples of inclusion in your school? How could you promote inclusion?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of accessibility at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.wei.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Want to help your school and community become more inclusive? Take action with WE Are One.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# ENVIRONMENT

**Climate change, which is caused by the increasing amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, is one of today's most important issues.**

We may not realize it, but we experience the related effects of climate change every day. The increasing amount of greenhouse gases in the air results in higher temperatures, changes in precipitation, extreme weather conditions and rising sea levels. These changes endanger our health by affecting our food and water sources and the air we breathe. Once we damage our environment, it's difficult to reverse those negative impacts. In 2018, California experienced its worst wildfire season on record. There were a total of 8,527 fires that burned almost 1.8 million acres of land, the largest ever recorded.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 13**

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

In 2012, the U.S. experienced a drought that cost the government approximately \$20 billion in damages, making it the most expensive drought in the country's history.

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Sea levels are rising 3.2 millimeters per year.

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The planet's surface is getting warmer as the average temperature has increased by more than 1.6° Fahrenheit in the last 100 years.

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The U.S. is the second-highest contributor of carbon dioxide in the world.

## Discussion Questions

- 1 How has climate change affected life where you live?
- 2 What can we do every day as individuals and as a group to reduce the effects of climate change?
- 3 How can we encourage those around us and the government to take action against climate change?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of climate change at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.we.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Reduce your negative impacts and boost your positive ones with WE Go Green.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# LITERACY

**Literacy affects every aspect of our lives, which is why it's an important and necessary skill to have.**

Literacy is defined as having the ability to read, write and express critical thought through verbal, print, visual and digital formats. However, not all Americans have the literacy skills needed for today's working world, making things such as filling out job applications and reading medication labels difficult. This barrier prevents over 40 million American adults with low literacy skills from engaging with and contributing to society in a productive way. Inadequate literacy skills can lead to poor health and social isolation.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 4**

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

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**Students who cannot read at a proficient level by the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of school.**

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**One in four children in the U.S. grow up without learning how to read.**

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**One in four households is low-income with parents who lack the education and skills to improve their economic status, perpetuating the cycle of poverty within their family.**

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**One out of three Americans drops out of high school.**

## Discussion Questions

- 1** How does reading affect your daily life?  
How would not knowing how to read affect you in the long-term?
- 2** What are the factors that could prevent a child or adult from learning to read?
- 3** What are some ways that an individual and society could benefit from having a higher level of overall literacy?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of literacy at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.we.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Increase awareness about the importance of literacy with **WE Read Together**.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# HOMELESSNESS

**Homelessness is defined as the absence of a place to live—it is not a choice but the result of underlying issues.**

Homelessness can affect anyone and takes many forms, some that we cannot easily see, which is why it is difficult to fully address the issue and support those who experience it. On any given night in the U.S., more than 550,000 people experience homelessness. Of those people, 20 percent are children. Factors that can push an individual or family to be homeless include chronic health conditions, systemic inequality, violence or abuse in the home, lack of employment or income, and a shortage of affordable housing.

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Over the past decade, homelessness has increased by 82 percent.

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One third of people who experience homelessness are “unsheltered,” meaning they are living in unsuitable places such as the street.

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California has the highest rate of homelessness out of all the states.

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In 2017, thousands of people experienced homelessness because of natural disasters.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 1**

End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

## *Discussion Questions*

- 1** What are the different types of homelessness? Why are some types difficult to spot?
- 2** What steps can you take to help reduce homelessness in your city?
- 3** What circumstances could lead to someone becoming homeless? What factors could prevent someone from getting out of homelessness?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of homelessness at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.wefund.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Help fight homelessness in your community by taking action with WE Volunteer Now.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# VIOLENCE

## **Violence in the United States is largely characterized by the high rate of gun violence.**

In 2018, there were more than 57,000 incidents involving guns in the U.S. Currently, there are more than 393 million guns circulating in the country—approximately 120 guns for every 100 people. Gun violence affects more than just those involved—it touches families, friends, communities and the world. It's been proven that implementing proper laws and providing the right resources to limit gun ownership can reduce the gun homicide rate. The laws include background checks and restrictions on multiple purchases. When they're enforced, we can keep guns out of the wrong hands.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 16**

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

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Every day, 100 people are killed by guns.

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Every year, approximately 1,700 American children and teens die because of gun violence.

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Firearms are the second highest leading cause of death for American youth.

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The gun homicide rate in the U.S. is 25 times higher than that of other high-income countries.

## *Discussion Questions*

- 1** What can and should the government do to keep students safe?
- 2** March for Our Lives was one of the biggest youth protests in history. How else can youth make their voices heard?
- 3** How does gun violence affect an individual, a family and a community?

## **Go Deeper**

Check out more info and stats on the issue of violence at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.we.org/exploringissues).

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## **Take Action**

Contact your WE Schools Program Manager to learn more about how you can take action.



## LOCAL ISSUE

# MENTAL HEALTH

**Mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”**

Mental illness can affect anyone, regardless of age, culture, income-level or education. In the U.S., there are over 44 million adults who have a mental health condition, and the rate of young people who experience a mental health condition is increasing. However, the stigma attached to it may prevent them from seeking help or treatment. One way to improve our well-being is to take care of our bodies by being physically active, getting enough sleep and eating well.



### **Sustainable Development Goal 16**

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Seventy percent of mental health challenges have their onset in childhood or adolescence.

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One in five adolescents will experience a serious mental health disorder at some point in their life.

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**Mental health affects many parts of our daily lives like relationships, schoolwork, sleeping and eating.**

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**The most common mental health disorder is depression, which affects almost one in eight adolescents every year.**

## *Discussion Questions*

- 1** How can we reduce the stigma surrounding mental health?
- 2** How does regular physical activity, healthy eating and sleeping right affect mental health?
- 3** Why do you think mental well-being is important in leading a healthy life?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on the issue of mental health at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.eri.org/exploringissues).

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## Need Help

To learn more, visit [erikalegacy.com/find-help](https://erikalegacy.com/find-help).

OUR FOUNDING PARTNER:



## LOCAL ISSUE

# NUTRITION

## Healthy eating is part of an overall healthy lifestyle.

Developing healthy eating habits is important for keeping your mind and body in good health. Nutritious foods can help keep your energy levels up throughout the day, and eating a healthy breakfast regularly can improve your memory, mood and concentration, and problem-solving skills. Avoid eating too many highly processed foods like chips and frozen pizzas. These foods are altered from their original source with added ingredients like salt and sugar, and often have important nutrients, such as vitamins, removed in the process. From drinking lots of water, which helps improve cognitive function, to implementing more fruits and veggies into your meals, start building healthy eating habits today so that you can lead a healthier future.



### Sustainable Development Goal 3

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Vitamin C is needed for immune function, bone structure, iron absorption and healthy skin, and can be found in broccoli, spinach, tomatoes and other vegetables.

There are about 10 to 12 teaspoons of sugar in a 355 ml can of pop—that's approximately 150 to 180 empty calories.

Eating a raw, unpeeled apple will give you 10 times more fiber than drinking a cup of apple juice.

Our muscles need good fats for energy, which can be found in nuts, avocados and olive oil.

## Discussion Questions

- 1 How can healthy eating help you excel in school?
- 2 How does healthy eating contribute to a healthy life? How does eating excessive amounts of unhealthy foods contribute to your health?
- 3 What lifestyle changes can people make to lead a healthier, more nutrient-filled life?

## Go Deeper

Check out more info and stats on nutrition at [WE.org/exploringissues](https://www.we.org/exploringissues).

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## Take Action

Contact your WE Schools Program Manager to learn more about how you can take action.

