

CEPC 0904
Brown University
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Professor Jack Hester

Forming a Research Question Example

Here are some examples of how to narrow research topics and turn them into questions that might be helpful until I can review each of your submissions.

General topic:

COVID-19 and depression

Why?

a.) To reduce depression during COVID-19 or future public health emergencies. Or b.) more generally to understand effects of COVID on depression levels.

What?

a.) What is the effect of social isolation due to COVID-19 on depression rates? or b.) What are ways to mitigate loneliness due to social isolation?

How?

a.) Comparing depression rates in some geographic area before COVID (say in spring 2019) and during the same time during COVID-19 (in 2020). Or b.) comparing depression rates among two groups during the current COVID-19 pandemic, one group with families or friends living with them, and others living alone.

Narrowed question:

How do depression rates among individuals living alone in Providence, RI during stay at home orders compare with depression rates in the same area and same time periods during previous years when there was no stay at home order?

Note that these are crude examples and do not cover all of the methodological nuance needed to conduct an effective and unbiased study