



Vulnerable Population Inventory

This worksheet is a tool to help you discern how to focus your efforts to promote human dignity. While you may already have a population in mind or feel compassion for many different populations, first review the following pages to learn more about the different types of vulnerabilities people face in our world today.

Then complete the inventory to help you determine where God might be calling your attention. Review each set of populations and choose which one most excites you as a possibility to encounter. Use the table at the end to count up your results.

Types of Vulnerability

There are many types of vulnerability or ways in which people have increased risk and lack the resources or support to withstand particular adverse situations. In the inventory you are about to complete, four distinct types of vulnerability are highlighted:

1. **Physical Vulnerability (P)**

Increased risks posed to the body. This includes any and all bodily harm, up to and including death.

2. **Economic Vulnerability (E)**

Lacking the economic resources to support self and/or family; lacking the adequate economic fall back mechanisms.

3. **Social Vulnerability (S)**

Weak or nonexistent community relationships; weak family structures; exclusion from political participation.

4. **Environmental Vulnerability (En)**

Increased risks due to the physical environment, including the effects of climate changes, natural disasters, and pollution.

Often people experience multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities. For instance, women considering abortion often experience additional forms of vulnerability, such as poverty, intimate partner abuse, and/or lack of social and familial support.

Population Descriptions

Immigrants (E, S)

Immigrants are men, women, and children who leave their country of birth to live permanently in another country. People immigrate for many different reasons, including economic and employment opportunities, to live with family members, etc. Other immigrants are forced to leave their home countries because of violence, environmental or humanitarian crises, or other circumstances that make it impossible to lead a dignified life.

Incarcerated People on Death Row (P, S)

A man or woman on death row has been sentenced to death through the judicial process. Many death row inmates are subject to solitary confinement as they await execution, which, on average, can take upwards of 15 years. The United States is one of only a handful of developed countries to still use the death penalty. In 2019, the United States ranked sixth in the world for executions, behind countries like China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Death row inmates often experience mental health issues, which are exacerbated by social and physical isolation.

Migrant Workers (E, En, S)

A migrant worker is any person who has to travel within or outside their home country to pursue work. In North America, migrant laborers tend to be hired for farmwork, seasonally following the harvest and moving around the country. In most cases, migrant laborers come to their work because of unfavorable economic and social conditions in their home regions. They have few employment protections and depend on the farm owners for housing and meals.

Parents Experiencing Difficult Pregnancies and Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis (P, E)

Prenatal testing is now commonplace in the United States, where approximately 1 in 33 infants are born with some form of birth defect, from mild to severe. Prenatal testing can be a useful tool to help physicians determine the best possible therapeutic intervention and can help parents plan to welcome a child with special needs. However, receiving an adverse prenatal diagnosis can be an overwhelming and difficult time for parents, not least because physicians often pressure parents to terminate their pregnancy.

Parents Experiencing Miscarriage and Infant Loss (P)

10-20 percent of pregnancies end in miscarriage. Many of these are unknown to women because they happen so early in the pregnancy, yet there are many parents that have knowingly lost a child during pregnancy, labor, or shortly thereafter. It is important to recognize that no matter how early in the pregnancy a miscarriage may occur, just as we proclaim life begins at conception, we must therefore recognize that miscarriage is a loss of life. Many parents who have lost a child feel isolated and lack support for their loss. Quite often parents who have experienced a miscarriage don't share this loss with those outside their immediate family. The loss of an infant is the loss of a member of the family.

People Displaced by Natural Disaster (P, En, E)

In a natural disaster, people are displaced from their homes due to the threat or occurrence of a hazard that makes an area uninhabitable either temporarily or permanently. Tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, and mudslides can occur with little warning, while other disasters such as famine or drought develop over a longer time period but are just as destructive. Studies show that environmental crises might become more common in the next few decades. Many people will be forced to permanently leave their homes because of rising sea levels, drought, and other forms of natural disaster.

People Experiencing Homelessness (E, S, P)

Over half a million people in America are experiencing homelessness. Of those experiencing homelessness, 70 percent are individuals and the other 30 percent are families. The majority of homeless people are male. Many factors play into whether or not someone experiences homelessness, but most important is the rising cost of housing versus income, which means that more and more of those experiencing homelessness are also employed. Many women experiencing domestic violence may have to decide whether to remain in a situation of violence or become homeless. Those living in poverty and struggling to pay their bills may have a month when finances are tighter and become homeless. Roughly 16 percent of those who are homeless also have some form of mental illness.

People in Hospice Care (P, S)

A person enters hospice care when their illness is not responding to medical attempts to cure it or to slow the disease's progress. In hospice care, a team of people—nurses, doctors, social workers, spiritual advisors, and trained volunteers—work together with the person who is dying, their caregivers, and/or the family to help with physical comfort, mental and emotional needs, spiritual issues, and practical tasks. This includes treating the person dying with respect, following their end-of-life wishes, attending to spiritual needs such as finding meaning in one's life, and resolving unsettled issues with friends or family.

People Living in Poverty (E, En, S, P)

There is a strong relationship between poverty, socioeconomic status, and health outcomes including increased risk for disease and premature death. Racial and ethnic minorities are more likely than non-minority groups to experience poverty at some point in their lives. Residents of impoverished neighborhoods or communities are at increased risk for mental illness, chronic disease (such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity), higher mortality, and lower life expectancy. People with disabilities are more vulnerable to the effects of poverty than other groups.

People of Color Experiencing Racism and Discrimination (P, S, E)

In the United States, people of color may experience different forms of racial discrimination, including lack of access to resources, higher rates of incarceration, and/or as victims of violence. For instance, systemic racial discrimination means that Black Americans experience disproportionate rates of violence, incarceration, and poverty compared to white Americans. Experiences of racial discrimination can also adversely affect a person's physical and mental health.

People Struggling with Addiction (P, S)

People with a substance addiction struggle with the continued use of drugs or alcohol, even when significant problems related to their use have developed, such as failure to attend school, legal problems, strained friendships and/or family relationships, and taking risks, such as sexual risks or driving under the influence of a substance. Addictive disorders are caused by multiple factors, including genetic vulnerability, environmental stressors, social pressures, individual personality characteristics, and psychiatric problems.

People Suffering from Chronic Illness (P, S, E)

The CDC defines chronic illness as “conditions that last 1 year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities of daily living or both.” Sixty percent of Americans experience some form of chronic illness. These may include heart disease, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, obesity, tooth decay, and epilepsy. Chronic illness may cause constant pain, impact one’s ability to function throughout the day or keep a job, negatively impact relationships with others, and lead to depression. Illnesses can be exacerbated by poor nutrition or living in unhealthy environments.

People Suffering from Dementia (S, P)

Dementia is an umbrella term for loss of memory, language skills, and problem solving abilities severe enough to impact daily life. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common cause of dementia, which affects over five million Americans over the age of 65. Alzheimer’s is a progressive disease in which a person’s brain gradually deteriorates, resulting in the inability to carry on a conversation, recognize loved ones, respond to one’s environment, and ultimately death. Men and women with dementia are particularly vulnerable to neglect and abuse.

People Suffering from Mental Illness (P, S)

An estimated one in five adults (over 50 million Americans) suffer from some form of mental illness, ranging from mild to severe. Rates of mental illness are particularly high among young adults, with nearly 30 percent of 18-25 year-olds suffering with mental illness, and according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10-34 year-olds. Mental illness affects individuals across social and ethnic lines, but can increase a person’s chance of experiencing poverty and/or homelessness.

People Who Are Dying (P)

Many people facing death do so without the option of hospice care. They face the same needs for physical comfort, mental and emotional support, spiritual questions, and practical tasks, but often do so without a team of people to support them. Someone who is aware that they are near the end of life might feel depressed, anxious, fearful for the unknown, or afraid of being alone at the end.

People with Developmental Disabilities (S, P, E)

About 1 in 6 children from the ages of 3-17 have a developmental disability. Developmental disabilities can be caused by injury, infection, exposure of either the prenatal child or child to environmental toxins such as lead, or genetic conditions. Children in poverty and minorities are at the highest risk of lead exposure and the corresponding detrimental effects due in large part to the lack of safe affordable housing, many times due to housing inequity. Those experiencing developmental disabilities are at higher risk of physical violence, sexual violence, pain, depression, other secondary illnesses, emotional abuse, or neglect.

People with Physical Disabilities (P, S)

Physical disabilities may result from genetics, an accident, infection, or disease. Physical disabilities include arthritis, epilepsy, acquired brain injury, spinal cord injury, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and cerebral palsy. People with physical disabilities may experience mobility impairment, visual impairment, hearing loss, chronic fatigue, pain, or seizures.

People without Health Insurance (P, E)

Many individuals and families can no longer afford rising costs of health insurance along with other bills, including utilities and mortgages. Without health insurance, many choose to prolong doctor visits, treatments, and medication as long as possible. If their health does get bad enough to need evaluation, treatment, or medication, they are faced with huge medical expenses and the choice between paying these bills or paying for other essentials such as food and utilities. In addition to postponing medical care, there can be an increased sense of anxiety and fear of the “what if” of getting sick or having a bad accident.

Refugees (E, S, P)

A refugee is a displaced person who has been forced to cross national boundaries and who cannot return home safely. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular group.

Runaway and Unaccompanied Youth (P, S)

Facing challenging living situations, youth may run away from home or be kicked out of their home. As unaccompanied minors (meaning they are not part of a family or accompanied by a parent or guardian) they may become homeless. Living on the street, youth can become victims of violence, develop serious mental health and addiction problems, and are at greater risk of engaging in high-risk behaviors or putting themselves in unsafe or risky situations.

The Elderly (P, S)

One in 10 of those over the age of 60 experience some form of abuse at their home. The elderly are susceptible to physical or sexual abuse but also neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation. In addition to the potential for abuse, many elderly may be homebound, experience chronic illness, lack social interaction with family and friends, and struggle with a lack of independence.

The Lonely and Homebound (S, P)

Someone who is homebound is unable to leave their home without extreme difficulty due to illness, immobility, or injury, and for that reason rarely do. Being homebound can significantly impair one's emotional and social wellbeing. Many are isolated from family and friends and other forms of support.

Unborn Children (P)

An unborn child is a human being who is developing in her mother's womb. During this 40 week (approximately nine month) gestational period, an unborn baby is dependent upon her mother for nutrition, oxygen, the regulation of body temperature, and organ development and function. An unborn child has an incredibly intimate connection with her mother. In fact, scientists are just starting to discover the amazing connections between mothers and their children which begin in utero. In many states, however, unborn children have few legal protections.

Veterans (P, S, E)

There are approximately 18 million veterans in the United States. In addition to physical wounds, veterans often experience post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), as well as higher rates of poverty and mental health issues than the general population.

Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence (P, S)

Domestic abuse, which is sometimes called domestic violence or intimate partner violence, is any form of violence—physical, sexual, and/or emotional—used to gain power and control over one's partner. In the United States, approximately 1 in 4 adult women and 1 in 7 adult men have been the victim of physical abuse at the hands of an intimate partner.

Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking (P, S, E)

Victims of human trafficking, exploited for physical labor or commercial sexual acts, can be any race, age, gender, or socioeconomic status. Many times, under the promise of a job or better opportunities in another location, these men, women, and children are forced or coerced into exploitative situations. They frequently remain victims because they fear for their lives or their family, their legal identification has been stolen, or they fear law enforcement. Victims can be found across many different labor industries, sweatshops, massage parlors, agriculture, restaurants, hotels, and domestic service. They can be forced into prostitution, pornography, or other sexual acts for another's profit. Although it may not be obvious, many everyday products can be linked back to slave labor—men, women, and children who harvest raw materials used in cell phones, makeup, coffee, clothing, and many other household items.

Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence (P, S)

A victim of sexual violence is someone who was forced or manipulated into unwanted sexual activity. About 1 out of every 6 women and 1 out of every 33 men has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape. Those most at risk for sexual violence are between the ages of 12 and 34, and Native Americans are the most at-risk population to suffer sexual violence. Those who have experienced a form of sexual violence tend to experience symptoms of PTSD, have an increased use of drugs, are likely to experience severe distress, have difficulties in relationships, including work and school, and experience suicidal thoughts.

Victims and Survivors of Violence (Police Brutality, Terrorism, Gang Violence) (P, S)

People who experience violence (such as police brutality, terrorist violence, domestic abuse, gang violence) face the threat of physical, emotional, and psychological harm. Exposure to violence has been linked to a number of mental health and behavioral issues including depression, stress, fears and worries, aggression, anxiety, low self-esteem, post traumatic stress, and self-destructive behaviors. People facing violence may feel intense shock, confusion, and fear, or feel numb or overwhelmed by a host of conflicting emotions, sometimes all at once.

Women Experiencing Unplanned Pregnancies (E, P, S)

The typical woman who experiences an unplanned pregnancy may experience a lack of support from family and the conceiving partner, which may include isolation, rejection, pressure to procure an abortion, or even domestic violence. She may face serious economic and financial challenges, as well.

Youth in Detention Facilities (S, E)

Many youth in detention facilities are faced with racial disparities, poverty, and have complex histories of trauma that may include neglect, family violence, poor relationships with caregivers, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. This complex history severely impairs the development of youth; they may lack the ability to self-regulate emotions and struggle with decision-making and problem-solving. Risky and illegal behavior stems from a focus on survival that originated in a traumatic past. Most detention centers function similarly to prisons: youth are locked away behind razor fences, and can be subjected to pepper spray, mechanical restraints, and solitary confinement, and may experience sexual or physical abuse, poor relations with staff, and difficulty sleeping. Many youth are detained for minor offenses such as truancy, missed curfew, not completing community service, or neglecting to report to a probation officer. In addition, many are held in detention centers rather than with family and community while they await a trial.

Youth in the Foster Care System (E, S)

Children are in foster care because they or their families are going through a crisis. Often these children have been removed from their parents because they are unsafe, abused, or neglected, or their parents are unable to care for them. Some children are reunited with their families when deemed safe, but many stay in the system for years until they age out of foster care when they turn 18.

Population Discernment

When you look at each set of populations, think about which of the four listed most excites you as a possibility to work with or one that you hope to have an experience with that is rewarding or fruitful. One way to think about it is “Which one would you get out of bed for at 8 a.m. on a Saturday morning to serve?”

Go through each grouping and circle the one that you feel the most drawn to. Then use the table at the end to count up the number of times that you circled each population. Refer to the types of vulnerabilities and population descriptions as needed.

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|---|--|
| <p>1 People Displaced by Natural Disaster
Runaway and Unaccompanied Youth
Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence
Veterans</p> | <p>7 People Suffering from Dementia
Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence
Youth in Detention Facilities</p> |
| <p>2 Unborn Children
Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking
Women Experiencing Unplanned Pregnancies
Youth in the Foster Care System</p> | <p>8 People Struggling with Addiction
People with Developmental Disabilities
People without Health Insurance
Veterans</p> |
| <p>3 Immigrants
Parents Experiencing Miscarriage
and Infant Loss
People in Hospice Care
Incarcerated People on Death Row</p> | <p>9 People Experiencing Homelessness
People with Physical Disabilities
Runaway and Unaccompanied Youth
Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence</p> |
| <p>4 Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence
Veterans
Youth in the Foster Care System</p> | <p>10 People Living in Poverty
People Suffering from Mental Illness
Youth in Detention Facilities
Youth in the Foster Care System</p> |
| <p>5 Parents Experiencing Difficult Pregnancies
and Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis
Refugees
Victims and Survivors of Violence
(Police Brutality, Terrorism, Gang Violence)
Youth in Detention Facilities</p> | <p>11 People Displaced by Natural Disaster
People Suffering from Dementia
People without Health Insurance
The Lonely and Homebound</p> |
| <p>6 People without Health Insurance
Incarcerated People on Death Row
Victims and Survivors of Violence
(Police Brutality, Terrorism, Gang Violence)
The Lonely and Homebound</p> | <p>12 People Experiencing Homelessness
People of Color Experiencing Racism
and Discrimination
People Suffering from Dementia
The Lonely and Homebound</p> |

Vulnerable Population Inventory

- 13** People Suffering from Mental Illness
People with Developmental Disabilities
People with Developmental Disabilities
The Elderly
- 14** People Living in Poverty
People Displaced by Natural Disaster
People with Physical Disabilities
Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence
- 15** People Living in Poverty
People with Physical Disabilities
Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking
Women Experiencing Unplanned Pregnancies
- 16** Immigrants
People Displaced by Natural Disaster
People in Hospice Care
Refugees
- 17** Migrant Workers
Parents Experiencing Difficult Pregnancies and Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis
People without Health Insurance
Women Experiencing Unplanned Pregnancies
- 18** People Experiencing Homelessness
People in Hospice Care
People Suffering from Mental Illness
Unborn Children
- 19** Parents Experiencing Difficult Pregnancies and Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis
People Suffering from Dementia
People Who Are Dying
Incarcerated People on Death Row
- 20** People Suffering from Chronic Illness
People Who Are Dying
People with Developmental Disabilities
Youth in Detention Facilities
- 21** People in Hospice Care
People of Color Experiencing Racism and Discrimination
People with Physical Disabilities
Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence
- 22** People Living in Poverty
Parents Experiencing Difficult Pregnancies and Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis
The Elderly
Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking
- 23** Immigrants
People Who Are Dying
The Lonely and Homebound
Youth in the Foster Care System
- 24** Parents Experiencing Miscarriage and Infant Loss
People Displaced by Natural Disaster
Refugees
- 25** Migrant Workers
People Struggling with Addiction
Victims and Survivors of Violence (Police Brutality, Terrorism, Gang Violence)
Women Experiencing Unplanned Pregnancies
- 26** People Experiencing Homelessness
People Suffering from Dementia
Runaway and Unaccompanied Youth
Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence
- 27** Migrant Workers
People Suffering from Mental Illness
People with Developmental Disabilities
Veterans
- 28** People Suffering from Chronic Illness
People with Physical Disabilities
Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence
Unborn Children

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>29 People Living in Poverty
 People of Color Experiencing Racism and Discrimination
 Incarcerated People on Death Row
 Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking</p> | <p>36 People of Color Experiencing Racism and Discrimination
 People Struggling with Addiction
 People Suffering from Chronic Illness
 Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking</p> |
| <p>30 Immigrants
 The Elderly
 Youth in Detention Facilities</p> | <p>37 Immigrants
 People of Color Experiencing Racism and Discrimination
 Runaway and Unaccompanied Youth
 The Elderly</p> |
| <p>31 Parents Experiencing Miscarriage and Infant Loss
 People Who Are Dying
 Refugees
 Women Experiencing Unplanned Pregnancies</p> | <p>38 Refugees
 The Elderly
 The Lonely and Homebound
 Youth in the Foster Care System</p> |
| <p>32 Parents Experiencing Miscarriage and Infant Loss
 People in Hospice Care
 People without Health Insurance
 Victims and Survivors of Violence (Police Brutality, Terrorism, Gang Violence)</p> | <p>39 Migrant Workers
 People Struggling with Addiction
 Incarcerated People on Death Row
 Unborn Children</p> |
| <p>33 Parents Experiencing Difficult Pregnancies and Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis
 People Experiencing Homelessness
 Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence
 Victims and Survivors of Violence (Police Brutality, Terrorism, Gang Violence)</p> | <p>40 People Struggling with Addiction
 People Suffering from Chronic Illness
 Runaway and Unaccompanied Youth
 Unborn Children</p> |
| <p>34 People Suffering from Mental Illness
 People Who Are Dying
 Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence
 Veterans</p> | |
| <p>35 Migrant Workers
 Parents Experiencing Miscarriage and Infant Loss
 People Suffering from Chronic Illness</p> | |

Vulnerable Population Inventory

Go back through your responses and make a checkmark each time you selected the population and then total your responses in the column to the right.

Alphabetical List of Vulnerable Population	Total
Immigrants	
Incarcerated People on Death Row	
Migrant Workers	
Parents Experiencing Difficult Pregnancies and Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis	
Parents Experiencing Miscarriage and Infant Loss	
People Displaced by Natural Disaster	
People Experiencing Homelessness	
People in Hospice Care	
People Living in Poverty	
People of Color Experiencing Racism and Discrimination	
People Struggling with Addiction	
People Suffering from Chronic Illness	
People Suffering from Dementia	
People Suffering from Mental Illness	
People Who Are Dying	
People with Developmental Disabilities	
People with Physical Disabilities	
People without Health Insurance	
Refugees	
Runaway and Unaccompanied Youth	
The Elderly	
The Lonely and Homebound	
Unborn Children	
Veterans	
Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence	
Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking	
Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence	
Victims and Survivors of Violence (Police Brutality, Terrorism, Gang Violence)	
Women Experiencing Unplanned Pregnancies	
Youth in Detention Facilities	
Youth in the Foster Care System	