

Understanding Fragility

Findings from a scoping review of the global literature on 'fragility' and health

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Systems for health: gravitating between fragility and resilience?



UNRWA - Lebanon

Resilience frame

What can we do to stop this from breaking?



Why is this breaking?
Fragility frame

Scoping review methods

Aims

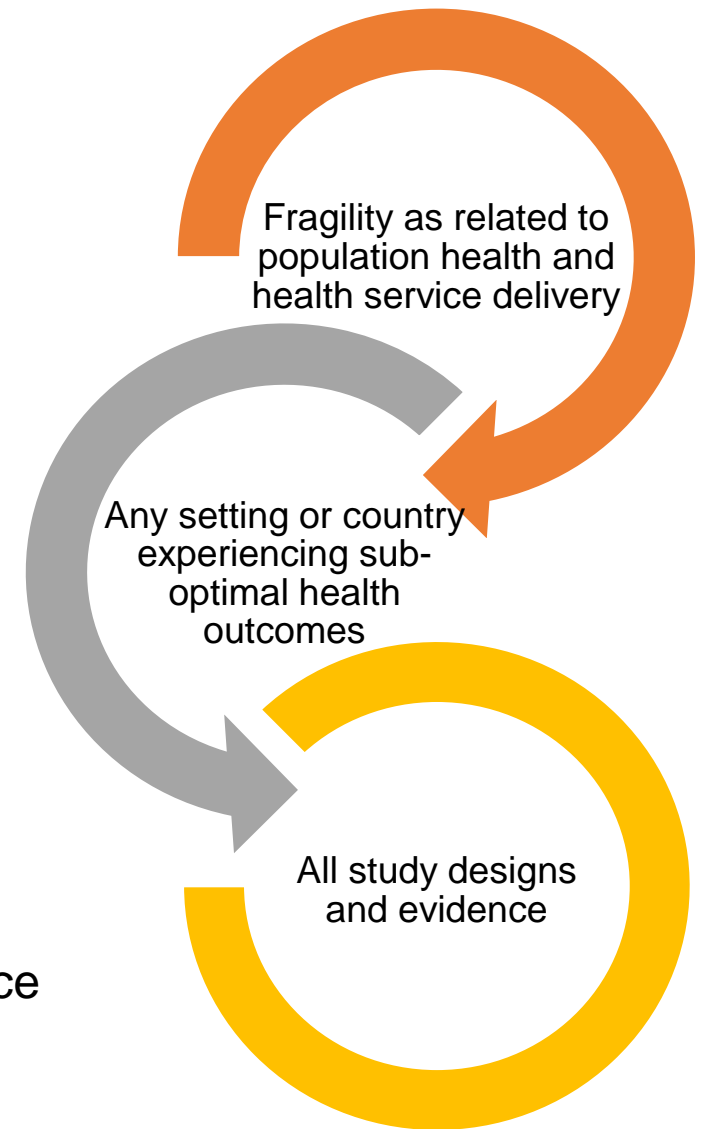
- Describe the global literature on fragility in relation to health and identify where/how the term has been applied
- Identify current and past definitions of the term
- Explore how the term has been applied to wider systems for health

Literature searches

15 sources searched, including:

- *Bibliographic databases:* Medline, Global Health Library, CINAHL
- *Grey literature:* Health Systems Global, OpenGrey, MSH, DfID Publications, World Bank, WHO IRIS
- *Journals:* Conflict and Health, Health Policy and Planning, Social Science and Medicine

Focused on 'fragility' in 'health' but excluded medical fragility.



Scoping review methods (continued)

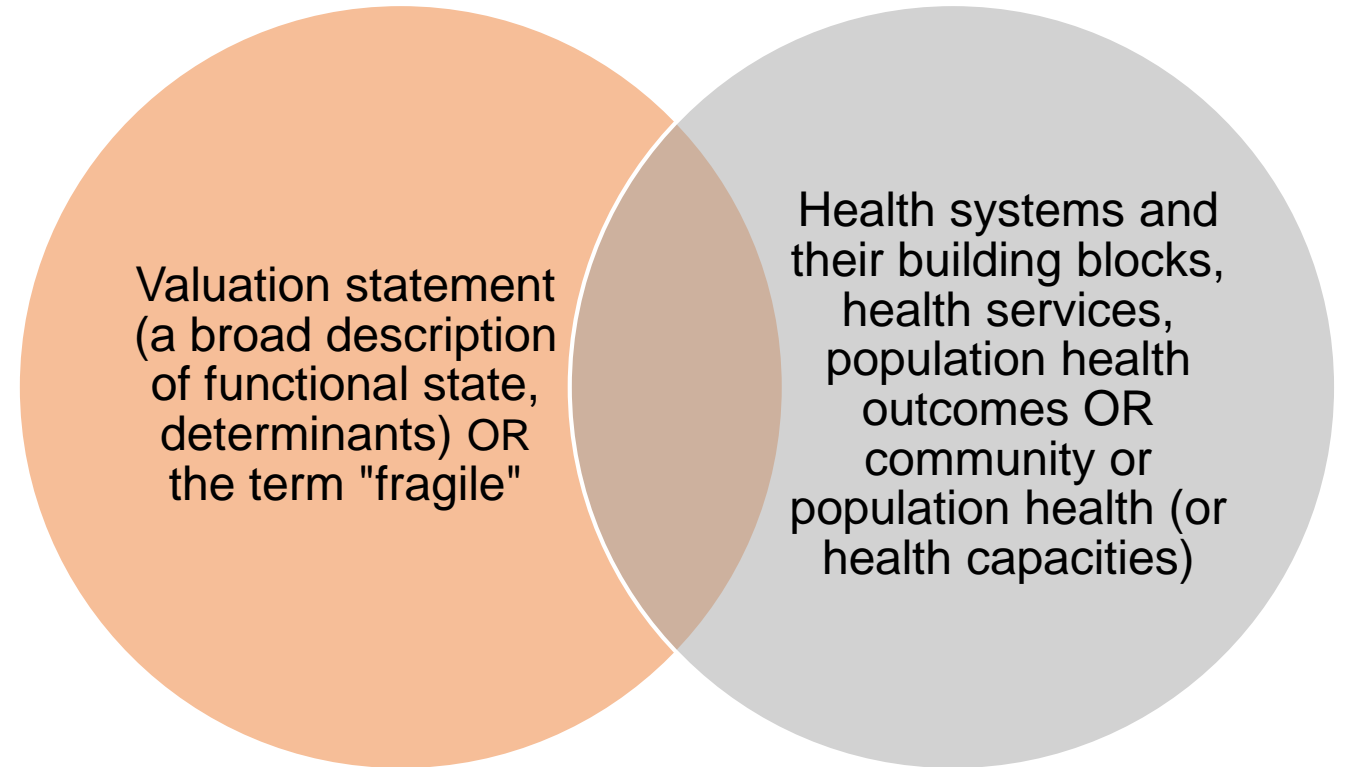
Data extraction

- Study identifiers
- Settings and populations of interest
- Methods, findings and limitations
- Conceptualizations of 'fragility': definitions, quotes, descriptions

Analysis

Iterative and interlinked, consisting of:

- Bibliometric analyses
- Narrative synthesis
- Qualitative meta-summary



Document selection

Findings: Included documents

Searches identified 4466 documents, 335 retained for extraction.

Bibliometric analyses: 335 documents

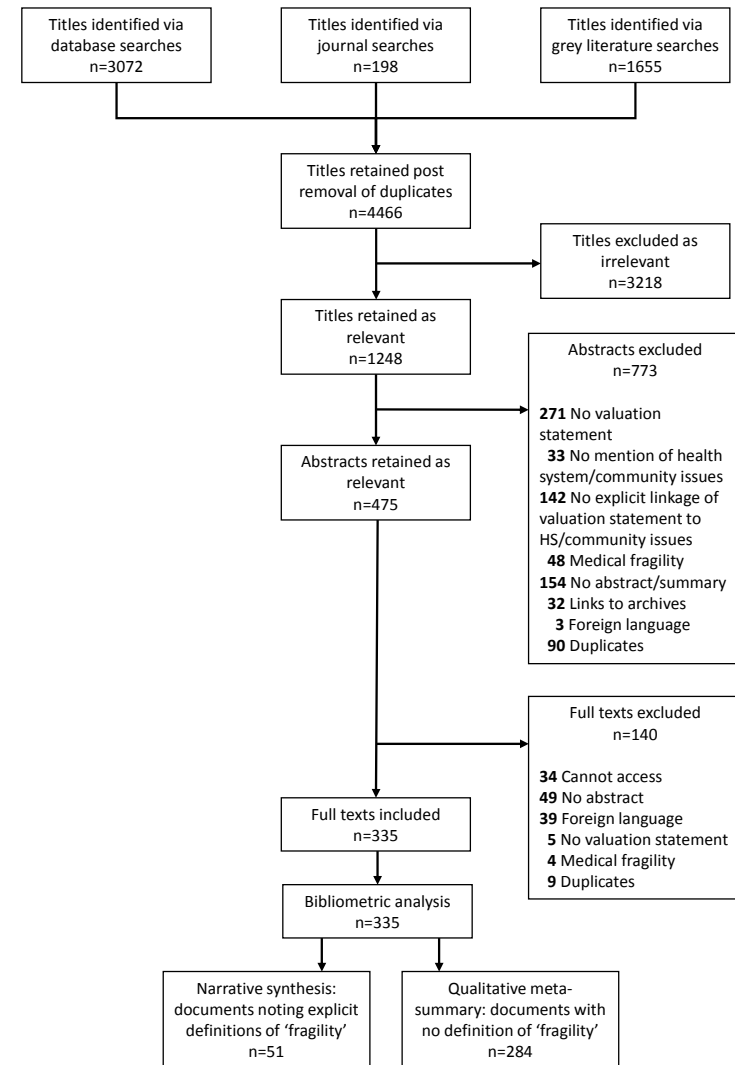
- Across what literature, settings, years has 'fragility' been discussed?

Narrative synthesis: 51 documents

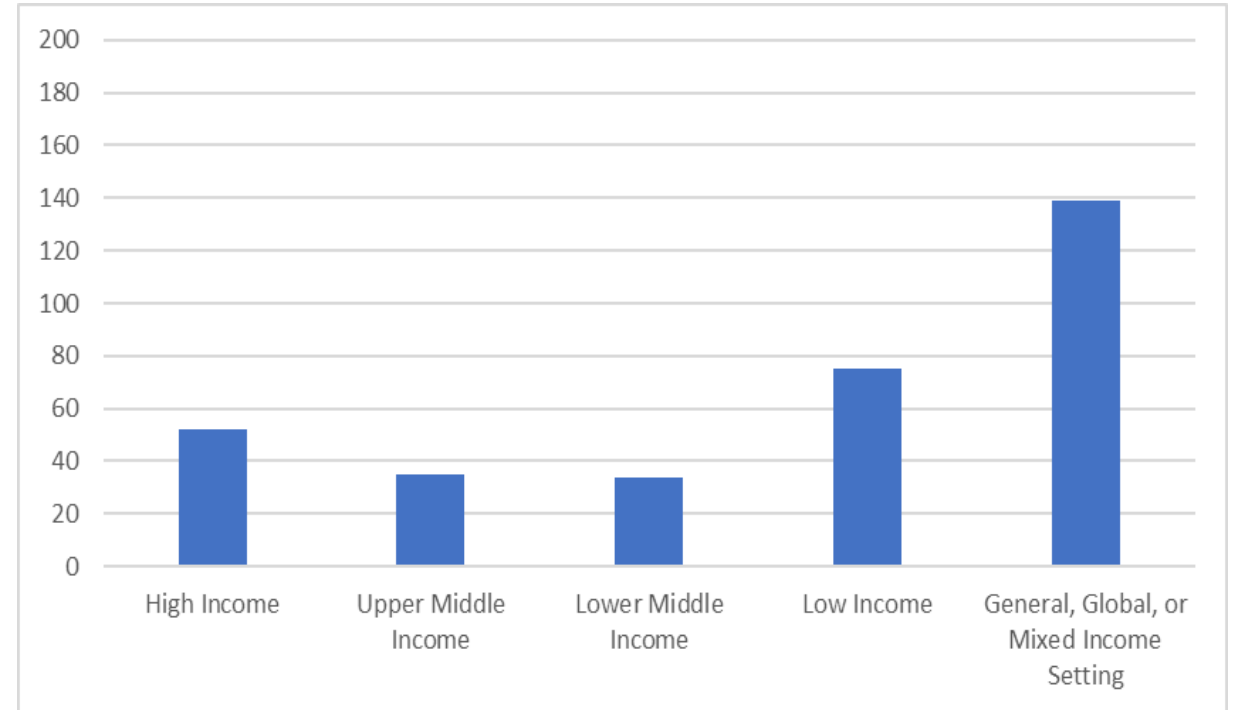
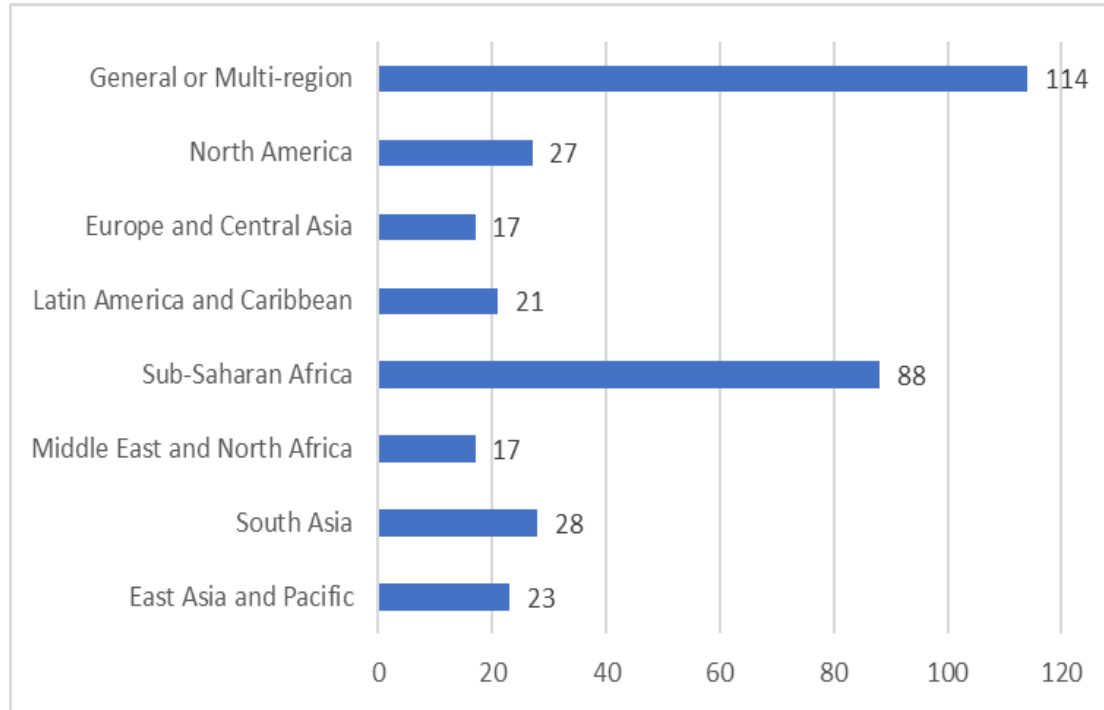
- How has fragility been defined?

Qualitative meta-summary: 284 documents

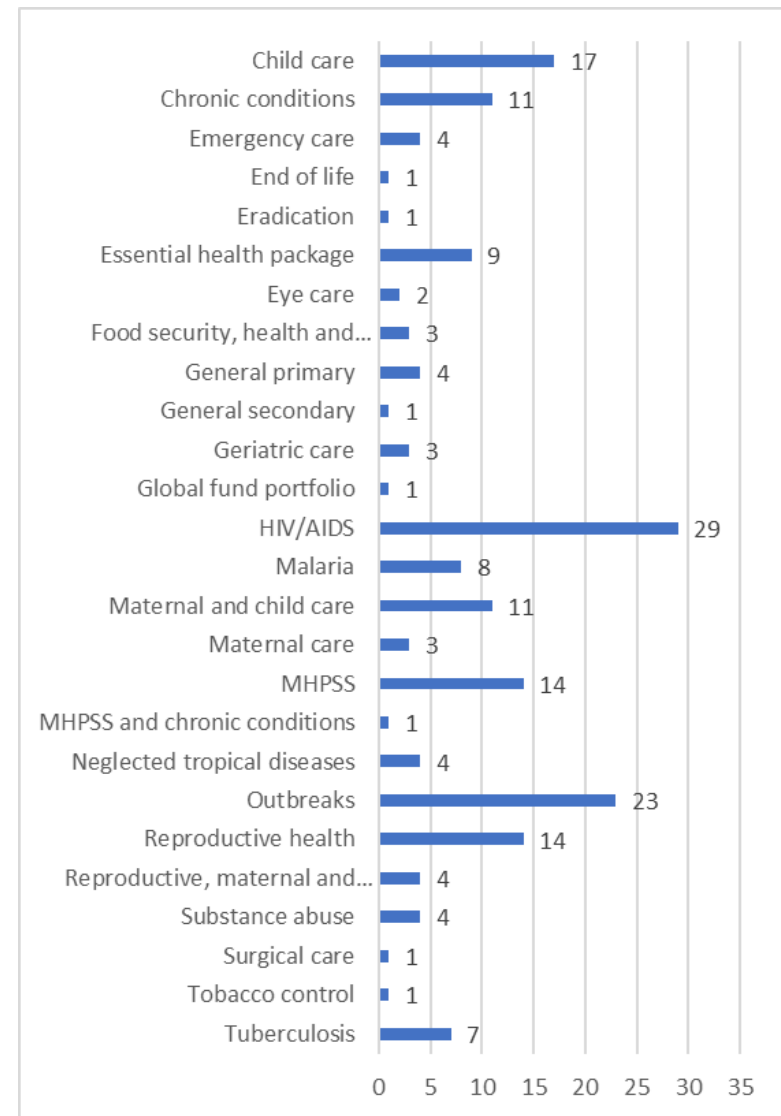
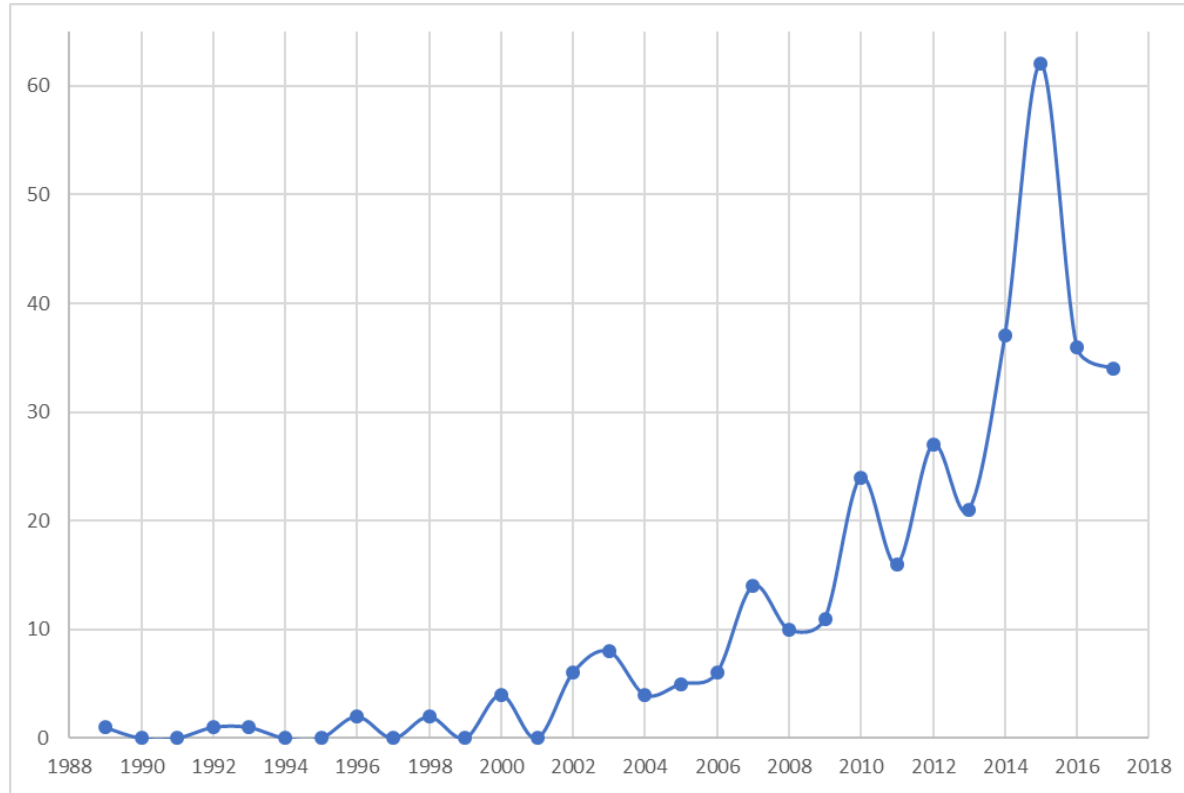
- Where and how else has 'fragility' been used and applied in global health research?



Findings: Bibliometric analyses



Findings: Bibliometric analyses



Findings: How has "fragility" been defined? (51 of 335 documents)

The World Bank describes a ***fragile state*** as a country "facing particularly severe development challenges such as weak institutional capacity, poor governance, political instability, and frequently ongoing violence or the legacy effects of past severe conflict" (International Development Association (2007) in Bruckner and Checchi (2011))

The OECD definition defines ***states as fragile*** "when states lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations" (OECD (2007) in McPake et al. (2015)).

According to the **DFID**, ***fragile states*** are "those [states] where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor" (Department for International Development: Why we need to work more effectively in fragile states (2005) in McPake et al (2015))

Findings: Further applications and uses of 'fragility' (284 of 335 documents)

OECD 2016 Fragility Dimensions	Types of dimensions recorded (shaded boxes refer) across documents in reviewed literature														
Security	[shaded]		[shaded]					[shaded]							
Social	[shaded]		[shaded]					[shaded]							
Political	[shaded]		[shaded]					[shaded]							
Economic	[shaded]		[shaded]					[shaded]							
Environmental	[shaded]		[shaded]					[shaded]							
Nr. of studies recording specific fragility dimensions	37	1	2	1	2	2	37	1	4	3	15	6	1	12	157
Inductively named setting groupings	"Fragile states" (n=37) and countries recording over 3 fragility dimensions			Settings affected by conflict and violence which may extend to other dimensions				Stable settings exposed to diverse economic, political, economic and environmental stressors							Settings not otherwise characterized as fragile
<i>Example studies (SR references in brackets)</i>	Afghanistan (147), Chad (DRC) (Djibouti) (Mali) and Pakistan (247), Sub-Saharan Africa (103)			Haiti (6), Iraq (34), Sierra Leone (3)				Urban settings of Iran (265), Nepal (42), USA (110), Peru, Mexico and Chile (283)							Caribbean (38), USA (44), Israel (47), Canada (50)

Depletion and fragmentation

Fragility as a narrative of...

Cyclical poverty, social marginalization and extreme vulnerability to environmental conditions

Difficulties when delivering complex care given resource scarcity and an increasing emphasis on integrated people-centered health services

Findings: Further applications and uses of 'fragility' (cont.)



Constrained and underperforming health systems



Barriers to the effective and legitimizing interaction between systems and communities



Vulnerable and underserved communities

Interpretation and take-home messages

1. Fragility is now in use beyond “fragile and conflict affected states”
2. The concept is vague and porous: used interchangeably with underperforming health systems or vulnerable populations; boundaries difficult to distinguish.
3. Narratives are nuanced according to setting - understanding state level fragility dimensions helps in understanding wider 'fragility'.
4. Identify a unique use of the term when applied to the interaction between health systems and communities

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