

CQ Researcher is an excellent resource for exploring topics and issues that are in the news. It's a great place to get in-depth and fact-checked background information, and an overview of major stakeholders and policy decisions or events that have shaped the debate around an issue.

There are many ways to explore topics in CQ Researcher. There is a search bar in the upper right hand corner if you have specific keywords you'd like to explore.

On the right column of the front page, you will see links to short reports of the top 20 most researched topics today. If you click on any of these short reports, you will often see a brief overview report and recent chronology of the topic. Often, you will also see options to link to longer, related reports.

You can also browse the database by topic, or use CQ Researcher's Issue Tracker to browse by issue.

For example, let's imagine that you have a vague idea that you are interested in a topic that relates to the high cost of college in the United States. You can Browse by Topic and select a broad category like Education. Within this category, there are a number of subcategories. One of them is College Financing and Funding. Notice that there are a number of reports, including several short reports. Let's focus on full-length reports, since we have already looked at a short report. Let's select the 2016 report on "Student Debt."

Each full-length report includes a navigation bar on the left side that gives you an overview of the different sections of this report. On the right side, you can explore related reports and topics.

Each report begins with an introduction and overview of the issue, often incorporating charts and graphs as well as many links to additional research in the footnotes section. The Background, Current Situation, and Outlook sections summarize the past, present, and potential future debates and policy decisions around this issue. A Pro/Con section provides an example of opposing viewpoints on one of the subtopics in the issue - in this report, you see two sides of the debate on whether there should be free tuition for public colleges. The Chronology section provides a useful timeline of this issue, and each report comes with a bibliography as well as recent research into next steps on this issue. The reports feature a handy citation formatting tool, and ways to view the article in print magazine format as a PDF.

While CQ Researcher is a valuable place to start exploring a topic, it is important to note that it is NOT a scholarly, peer-reviewed source. Rather, CQ Researcher is a tool to help you understand the context of an issue and the conversations surrounding it so that you are better prepared to look for additional popular and scholarly sources.