

CHAPTER I

Introduction

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The Healthy People Initiative

For each of the past four decades, the Healthy People initiative has established a 10-year framework for tracking and reporting on the nation's health goals and objectives. With each successive decade, the initiative has built on the previous decades' work and been guided by evidence-based advances in prevention and public health. Originally set forth in the seminal 1979 "Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention,"¹ the initiative has served as a model and framework for catalyzing progress toward improving the nation's health.

Healthy People has evolved over time to reflect the most current science. The Healthy People 2020 (HP2020) framework mirrors the evolution of public health science with goals and objectives that go well beyond the goals originally set forth in the 1979 report.

Figure I-1 provides a summary of the evolution of the Healthy People goals and objectives over the past four decades.

Figure I-1. Evolution of Healthy People

Target Year	1990	2000	2010	2020
				
Overarching Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decrease mortality in each of the five major life stages: infants, children, adolescents and young adults, adults, and older adults ■ Increase independence among older adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase the span of healthy life ■ Reduce health disparities ■ Achieve access to preventive services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase quality and years of healthy life ■ Eliminate health disparities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death ■ Achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups ■ Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all ■ Promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages
Number of Topic Areas	15	22	28	42
Number of Objectives	226	319	969	1,271*

*A total of 1,271 objectives are included in the *Healthy People 2020 Midcourse Review*. See [Chapter III: Overview of Midcourse Progress and Disparities](#), for more information.

Since its foundation, the Healthy People initiative has been concerned with tracking public health issues to help improve the health of the nation. Beginning with Healthy People 2000, there has also been an emphasis on identifying and reducing health disparities among the nation's diverse populations. This added focus was partially in response to the 1985 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary's Task Force Report on Black & Minority Health,² known as the "Heckler Report," which documented widespread racial and ethnic differences in health outcomes. In fact, Healthy People has placed an increasing emphasis on addressing disparities and promoting health equity over the past three decades. As shown in Figure I-1, the overarching goal pertaining to health disparities has progressed from "reducing health disparities," to "eliminating health disparities," to "achieving health equity, eliminating disparities, and improving the health of all groups."

Healthy People 2020

HP2020 provides a comprehensive set of 10-year national goals and objectives for improving the health of all American people. The four overarching goals for this decade are to:

- Attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death.
- Achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups.
- Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all.
- Promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

HP2020 contains 42 topic areas with more than 1,000 measurable, data-driven, science-based objectives to be achieved within the decade. HP2020 also contains Leading Health Indicators, a small focused set of 12 topics and 26 objectives identified to communicate high-priority health issues. With guidance from the HHS Secretary's Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2020, and input from the Federal Interagency Workgroup, HP2020's governing body, HP2020 was designed to reflect the most current public health priorities and issues. With the design of each decade's blueprint comes opportunities to make improvements that reflect changes in research, public health priorities, health trends, and technology.

HP2020 features several components designed to enhance prior efforts:

1. Focus on social determinants

HP2020 added Social Determinants of Health as one of the 42 topic areas, including Social Determinants as a Leading Health Indicator topic, and "Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all" as one of the four overarching goals for the decade. This emphasis is shared by the World Health Organization, whose Commission on Social Determinants of Health published the 2008 report "Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity Through Action on the Social Determinants of Health."³ HP2020's emphasis on the social determinants of health is also shared by other U.S. health initiatives, such as the National Partnership for Action to End Health Disparities⁴ and the National Prevention Strategy.⁵

2. Integrated Healthy People website

Redesigned with a user-centered focus, HealthyPeople.gov offers reliable information and tools for action. The principal components include:

- Information for all HP2020 topic areas and objectives
- Information about the Leading Health Indicator topics and objectives
- Regularly updated data for HP2020 objectives, including data details, data sources, and methods
- User-friendly features for accessing and displaying HP2020 data, including:
 - » A searchable online database
 - » Interactive tools for tabulating and graphing data, including state-level data tabulation and mapping capability
 - » Tool to assess health disparities
- Evidence-based interventions
- Infographics and national snapshots designed to communicate specific Leading Health Indicator and topic area information
- Information and registration for HP2020 webinars and events, including archives of previous webinars

3. New topic areas

As part of the evolution of public health and improvements in data resources, HP2020 includes 13 new topic areas:

- Adolescent Health (AH)
- Blood Disorders and Blood Safety (BDBS)
- Dementias, including Alzheimer's Disease (DIA)
- Early and Middle Childhood (EMC)

- Genomics (G)
- Global Health (GH)
- Health-Related Quality of Life and Well-Being (HRQOL-WB)
- Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI)
- Older Adults (OA)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health (LGBT)
- Preparedness (PREP)
- Sleep Health (SH)
- Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

In addition, vision and hearing are now separate topic areas—Vision (V) and Hearing and Other Sensory or Communication Disorders (ENT-VSL)—where they were combined as one topic area in HP2010.

4. Ability to revise, add, and archive objectives throughout the decade

HP2020 allows new objectives to be added; objectives that are no longer being monitored due to lack of data source, changes in science, or replacement with other objectives to be archived; and modifications to objective wording and data to be made throughout the decade. With the goal of catalyzing knowledge uptake and action, changes are reviewed and approved on a monthly basis by the HP2020 Federal Interagency Workgroup. In the HP2010 decade, these changes only occurred at midcourse.

5. Addition of informational objectives

HP2020 includes informational objectives, for which targets were not set. Instead, they are tracked and reported for their importance in monitoring some aspect of the nation's health.

6. New approach to setting 10-year targets for objectives

Setting baselines for objectives at the beginning of each decade and a target to reach by the decade's end is a feature of Healthy People that distinguishes it from other health indicator activities.

Methods for establishing targets have varied across the decades. For example, the default target-setting method for the HP2010 decade for population-based objectives involved identifying the racial or ethnic group with the best (i.e., most favorable, or least adverse) rate at baseline. The target rate for these objectives was set at a level that was at least one unit (e.g., one percentage point) better than the best racial or ethnic group rate.

When sufficient data, knowledge, and expertise exist, HP2020 targets are set through the application of science- or evidence-based methods, such as modeling, projection, or trend analysis. When circumstances do not permit the use of science- or evidence-based methods, targets generally are set using a projected 10% improvement relative to baseline values. The other methods used for setting HP2020 targets include:

- Maintaining baseline level
- Maintaining consistency with national programs, regulations, policies, or laws
- Minimum statistical significance
- Retention of HP2010 targets
- Fixed percentage point improvement
- Total elimination or total coverage

Applicable information on each HP2020 objective's baseline, target, target-setting method, data source, and revision history is available from HealthyPeople.gov.

7. New approaches to measuring progress and disparities and communicating findings

HP2020 includes a new, systematic approach for communicating findings about the status of progress toward target attainment and the elimination of health disparities.

- **Progress toward target attainment**—The “percentage of targeted change achieved” measures movement of objectives that are moving from their baselines toward their targets. Additionally, for objectives moving away from their baselines and targets, the “absolute value of the percent change from baseline” is used to measure movement. In contrast to HP2010, both the extent of the movement and its statistical significance (when standard errors are available) are used to determine the progress status for objectives in HP2020. The status of each measurable objective is classified as follows:
 - » TARGET MET—Target met or exceeded.
 - » IMPROVING—Objective moved toward the target, and movement was either statistically significant when measures of variability were available or 10% or more of the targeted change when measures of variability were unavailable.
 - » GETTING WORSE—Objective moved away from the baseline and target, and movement was either statistically significant when measures of

variability were available or 10% or more relative to the baseline when measures of variability were unavailable.

- » LITTLE OR NO DETECTABLE CHANGE—Target was not met or exceeded, and objective’s status was neither IMPROVING nor GETTING WORSE.
- » BASELINE ONLY—Objective had baseline data only, so progress toward the target could not be assessed.
- » INFORMATIONAL—Objective did not have a 2020 target, so progress toward the target could not be assessed.

■ Progress toward eliminating disparities—

Supporting the HP2020 overarching goal to “achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups,” HealthyPeople.gov provides data by selected population group, such as sex, race and ethnicity, education, family income, disability status, and geographic location, where available. A suite of HP2020 measures aids interested readers in identifying health disparities and tracking changes in disparities over time, including:

- » The population groups with the highest and lowest rates;
- » The absolute difference between the highest and lowest rates;
- » The ratios between the most favorable rate and other group rates, including the ratio between the highest and lowest rates; and
- » The ratio between the most favorable group rate and the average rate for the other groups, also known as the summary disparity ratio.

The *Healthy People 2020 Midcourse Review* topic area chapters with data on health disparities identify population groups with the most and least favorable rates and summarize health disparities using the summary disparity ratio.

Chapter II: Reader’s Guide provides information for understanding and interpreting data presented in the *Midcourse Review*. **Appendix A: Technical Notes** provides more information on HP2020 statistical methods and issues.

8. Increased emphasis on Leading Health Indicators

HP2020 features 26 Leading Health Indicators, a focused subset of HP2020 objectives identified to communicate high-priority health issues. The implementation of HP2020 places emphasis on the Leading Health Indicators for reporting on the health

of the nation; facilitating collaboration across sectors; and motivating action at the national, state, and community level. Monthly webinars and e-bulletins with data updates that prominently feature innovative programs from community or state- and local government-based organizations have been central components for communicating opportunities for action.

For data and more information, see [Chapter IV: Leading Health Indicators](#).

9. New conceptual framework for Foundation Health Measures

Conceptualized as the “big picture” measures that change as the result of actions and interventions aiming to achieve the HP2020 objectives and goals, the Foundation Health Measures are global, cross-cutting summary measures of population health, some of which have been included in previous iterations of Healthy People.

For data and more information, see [Chapter V: Foundation Health Measures](#).

10. New approach to the Progress Reviews

To provide greater visibility, HP2020 Progress Reviews have been presented this decade using webinars open to the public to emphasize both data and action at the federal, state, and local levels. The emphasis of these Reviews has been to identify and focus on trends in data and shed light on specific interventions designed to facilitate progress toward the HP2020 targets. Interventions may be national-, state-, or community-based, depending on the focus of a Progress Review. Each of the 42 HP2020 topic areas is featured in a webinar once within the decade. Readers may access the archive of slides from HP2020 Progress Reviews at: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/healthy_people/hp2020/hp2020_progress_reviews.htm.

11. Healthy People 2020 data and reports

The National Center for Health Statistics’ Healthy People webpage (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/healthy_people/index.htm) provides resources focused on data and methods available to Healthy People users, including access to:

- *Healthy People 2020 Midcourse Review*
- *Healthy People 2010 Final Review*
- Archive of slides from HP2020 Progress Reviews
- *Healthy People Statistical Notes* and related publications

Healthy People 2020 Midcourse Review

The *Healthy People 2020 Midcourse Review* provides a snapshot of progress toward the HP2020 goals and objectives halfway through the 10-year initiative. The *Midcourse Review* assessment provides a roadmap for the second half of the decade.

The first five chapters of the *Midcourse Review* provide cross-cutting findings and guidance:

- **Chapter II: Reader's Guide** provides a step-by-step explanation of the measures presented in the Midcourse Review and how to interpret them.
- **Chapter III: Overview of Midcourse Progress and Health Disparities** provides a summary of the status and progress of all 1,271 HP2020 objectives that are included in the Midcourse Review.
- **Chapter IV: Leading Health Indicators** focuses on the 26 Leading Health Indicator objectives for HP2020.
- **Chapter V: Foundation Health Measures** focuses on “big picture” measures, such as life expectancy, expected years of life in good or better health, and expected years of life free of activity limitation or disability.

Each of the 42 HP2020 topic areas is presented in the *Midcourse Review* in a standalone chapter. The topic area chapters include a progress table showing the status of each objective, with at least one data point. Many topic area chapters also include a health disparities table that provides a summary of health disparities by selected population group, such as sex, race and ethnicity, education, family income, disability status, and geographic location, where data are available. State- or county-level maps are presented for selected objectives.

Readers seeking additional information on the measures presented in the *Midcourse Review* may consult [Appendix A: Technical Notes](#).

The *Healthy People 2020 Midcourse Review* was written and produced by National Center for Health Statistics staff, with input from the HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, the HP2020 Federal Interagency Workgroup, and 42 topic area workgroups. A full list of contributors to the *Midcourse Review* may be found in the [Acknowledgments](#), and in [Appendix B: Midcourse Review Topic Area Chapter Contributors](#). [Appendix C: Topic Area Workgroup Coordinators](#) provides a list of Healthy People 2020 Topic Area Coordinators as of the publication of the *Midcourse Review*.

Footnotes

1. Office of the Surgeon General. Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. 1979. Available from: <https://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/access/NNBBGK.pdf>.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Black & Minority Health. Vol I: Executive Summary. 1985.
3. World Health Organization Commission on Social Determinants of Health. Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health. 2008.
4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Partnership for Action to End Health Disparities. Available from: <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/npa/>.
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Prevention Strategy. Available from: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities/prevention/strategy/>.

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