

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Progress Report

Healthy People 2000 Review, 1994" (1) is the latest report on the nation's progress in reaching—by the year 2000—the more than 300 separate objectives designed to prevent disease and promote good health in America.

The report by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shows considerable progress in many areas—eight percent of the goals had been met and progress made in another 41 percent. For 16 percent of the objectives, however, there was movement away from the goal; for seven percent, mixed results or no change; and for the rest, data are not yet available to measure change. Most of the comparisons cover the time period 1987 (baseline) to 1993.

Highlights of the report:

- There has been a slight increase in the number of adults who exercise, either moderately or vigorously, on a regular basis. The number of worksites offering employer-sponsored physical activity and fitness programs has increased substantially. Still, almost one in four American adults report a sedentary life style in the latest survey.

- Smoking continues to decline among adults. There has been an increase in the number of States restricting or regulating smoking, or both. On the rise for many years, the death rate for lung cancer declined in 1991, for the first time in at least 50 years, and dropped again in 1992. Provisional data indicate the decline may

have continued in 1993.

- Alcohol-related motor vehicle crash death rates have declined markedly in the past few years, and the year 2000 goal has been surpassed, in part due to license revocation laws passed in 37 States. Forty-eight States have passed mandatory seat belt laws and two out of three adults now use seat belts.

- Overall, occupational mortality is down slightly, but work-related injuries have increased. Cumulative trauma disorders—a third of which were attributable to carpal tunnel syndrome—increased almost four-fold from 1987 to 1992. The rate of injuries related to repetitive trauma was highest for meat product workers (one in 10) where the rate more than doubled between 1987 and 1992.

- Suicide is a leading cause of death among teenagers, ages 15–19. The suicide rate has remained stable over the past few years, but suicide attempts among teenagers are up.

- By 1993, slightly more than 10 percent of the homes in America had been tested for radon, short of the year 2000 objective of 40 percent but double the proportion in 1987. The proportion of people living in counties that meet standards for such air pollutants as ozone, carbon monoxide, and lead has gone from approximately 50 to 75 percent.

- Recent data indicate progress toward achievement of oral health objectives. The prevalence of dental caries (cavities) among adolescents has declined. Complete tooth loss is becoming less common in older adults. Dental visits are up and so is the proportion of children who have protective sealants.

- Heart disease and stroke is a priority area in "Healthy People 2000." Mortality due to heart disease and stroke is down in the population as a whole as well as among black people. However mortality for both causes is higher for black people and has

declined more slowly, increasing the disparity.

- A number of risk factors for heart disease and stroke have shown improvement—decline in cholesterol levels, smoking, and intake of dietary fat. Americans are more likely to know and take action to control their blood pressure levels. However, overweight has increased substantially. One in three American adults is overweight, up from one in four. Overweight among adolescents increased from 15 to 21 percent over the past decade.

- The 1992 death rate for colorectal cancer equaled the year 2000 target. Breast cancer death rates are down and substantial progress is being made in increasing the numbers of women receiving mammograms. The proportion of women ages 50 and older who had received a clinical breast exam and a mammogram within the preceding one to two years rose from 25 to 55 percent from 1986 to 1993, nearing the year 2000 target of 60 percent.

Infant Mortality Rate Drops to Record Low in 1994

The provisional infant mortality rate for the United States in 1994 hit a record low of 7.9 infant deaths per 1,000 live births (2). The 1994 rate was five percent lower than the rate of 8.3 for 1993. For 1994, the estimated neonatal mortality rate (infants younger than 18 days) was down seven percent from the previous year (3). Reductions were noted in two major causes of infant death: respiratory distress syndrome and sudden infant death syndrome. There were an estimated 31,400 infant deaths in 1994.

NCHS Updates U.S. Marriage Statistics

As part of the national vital statistics system, NCHS works with States to track patterns of marriage and divorce in the nation. These data are

used for demographic, population, and health research. Summary data are reported on a monthly and annual basis.

Provisional data show the marriage rate in the United States dropped to 9.0 marriages per 1,000 population in 1993, the lowest rate in 30 years. After peaking at 16.4 in 1946, the marriage rate fell dramatically over the next few decades, reaching a low of 8.5 in the period 1959–62. Between 1959–62 and 1980–82, the rate increased to 10.6 before beginning its current downward trend.

A new report provides more detailed final data on marriage patterns across the country for 1989 and 1990 (4). Data for 1990 show the Northeast has the lowest marriage rate (8.0) of any region, while the West (11.0) has the highest. The Middle Atlantic division of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania has the lowest rate (7.9) while the Mountain division of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada has the highest (18.1). Pennsylvania has the lowest marriage rate of any state (7.1), while Nevada has the highest (99.0).

The rate of women and men marrying for the first time is approximately 40 percent lower than in 1970. Marriage rates for divorced or widowed people have had similar declines since 1970. The average age of people marrying for the first time has increased over the past three decades. The average age of first-time brides was 25 in 1990, compared with an average age of 21 in 1964. For first-time grooms, the average age was 27 in 1990, compared with an average age of 24 in 1964. The average age of divorced women who remarry is 37; for men, the average age is just under 41.

Of 34 States reporting information on race, 85 percent of marriages involved white couples, 11 percent involved black couples, one percent

involved couples of other races, and three percent involved interracial couples. The marriage rate for white women was 76 percent higher than the rate for black women, while the rate for white men was 55 percent higher than the rate for black men.

Teen Birth Down in Latest Annual Report on Birth Patterns in America

Teen births are down and births to unmarried mothers may have stabilized, according to the Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1993 (5), the latest annual report on birth patterns in America. More women are getting timely prenatal care and fewer are smoking while pregnant, the annual report shows. Yet the report also shows that too many babies are still born too soon and too small—with low birth weight and preterm births actually increasing.

Although the teen birth rate is still higher than 20 years ago, it appears that the rate may be at a plateau. After increasing steadily between 1986 and 1991, the birth rate for teenagers ages 15–17 was unchanged in 1993 at 37.8 births per 1,000; the birth rate dropped two percent the previous year. The birth rate for older teens ages 18 and 19 was down three percent in 1993, to 92.1 per 1,000.

In 1993, there were more than a half-million births to teenagers, more than 200,000 to those not even 18. One in 10 teenagers becomes pregnant each year, and an estimated 95 percent of these pregnancies are unintended. The teenage population is growing, and if teen birth rates do not continue to decline, there will be a rise in the number of teen births over the next few years.

The rate of nonmarital childbearing has been essentially unchanged for three consecutive years, at 45.3 births per 1,000 unmarried women ages

15–44 in 1993, perhaps signaling an end to the 50-year rise in childbearing by unmarried women. From 1980 to 1991, the rate had increased 54 percent. Nonmarital births totaled slightly more than 1.2 million in 1993 and accounted for 31 percent of all births that year.

Overall, births in the United States declined in 1993 for the third consecutive year, to a little more than four million. The birth rate per 1,000 total population declined to 15.5, its lowest point in 15 years. Birth rates for women in their 20s, the peak child-bearing ages, declined in 1993 by 2 percent.

After rising steadily for almost two decades, birth rates for women in their 30s appear to have stabilized, recording just modest increases for the past few years. Still, there were more than 900,000 births to women in their early 30s, and the number of births to women ages 35–39—357,000—was higher than in any year since 1960.

More than 100,000 babies were born in multiple deliveries in 1993, the highest number ever reported. Live births in twin delivery increased one percent while the number of triplet and higher-order plural births rose seven percent.

The report documents maternal medical and lifestyle risk factors during pregnancy and their impact on the health of the infant. Cigarette smoking during pregnancy declined to 15.8 percent, down from 19.5 percent in 1989, the first year that information on smoking was recorded on the birth certificate. Smoking declined in all age groups, still almost a quarter of young white and American Indian women, ages 15–24, smoked during pregnancy. Smoking is a key risk factor for low birth weight and infant mortality. The most frequently-reported medical risk factors continued to be anemia, diabetes, and pregnancy-related hypertension.

Use of prenatal care improved in 1993, following more than a decade of little change, with 79 percent of mothers receiving care in the first trimester. Fewer than five percent of mothers had late or no care, the lowest level since 1969.

The rate of cesarean delivery declined again in 1993, to 21.8 percent of all births, continuing the downward trend noted in recent years following a rapid and steady increase through the late 1980s. The vaginal birth after cesarean delivery rate increased eight percent in 1993.

Other measures of maternal and infant health were not so positive, the annual report shows. The proportion of babies born preterm (prior to 37 completed weeks) increased three percent in 1993 to 11 percent of all births and almost one in five black infants.

Similarly the incidence of low birth weight increased from 7.1 to 7.2 percent, the highest level reported

since 1976. Most of the rise occurred among white births, but low birth weight is still much higher among black infants. Low birth weight contributes to three-quarters of all infant deaths.

Data in "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1993" are based on the birth certificates filed in state vital statistics offices and reported to the National Center for Health Statistics through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program.

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Home Page on the Internet; the URL address through the CDC Home Page is <http://www.cdc.gov>.

References

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