

## Picking up the Pace: 2011–2014 Changes to the Health Information National Trends Survey

The National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS) was developed more than a decade ago to track changes in the rapidly evolving health communication and information technology landscape. HINTS has enabled a growing body of research that assesses the effect of health communication, media, and health information technology on health and behavioral outcomes, health care quality, and health disparities. Processes of health communication and supportive health information technology infrastructure shape the ways in which health care professionals and the public seek, use, and understand health information. Health information seeking and health communication have a significant effect on individuals' health decisions, health-related behavior, and health outcomes. Data from HINTS have been critical in documenting and tracking these associations and trends in the U.S. population.

The fourth fielding of HINTS began in 2011 and will take place at predetermined intervals through 2014 (see HINTS timeline on following page). In addition to being used for empirical research in cancer prevention and control, HINTS 4 has been designated as the data source for tracking a number of the Healthy People 2020 objectives related to health communication and health information technology. HINTS 4 has also been designed to assess progress related to other strategic public initiatives such as those related to patient-centered outcomes research, health care reform and accountability, and a greater interest in learning about or participating in clinical trials.

To address emerging issues in the field of health communication more quickly while still maintaining the ongoing measurement of trends, HINTS 4 will include five data collection cycles over the course of 3 years. The instrument for each data collection cycle will include a core module of common items for trending in addition to special topic modules to be implemented only in some of the cycles, increasing capacity of the HINTS instruments to include a broader array of topics and measures. The combined sample size for all five cycles of HINTS 4 will be greater than 17,000 respondents, more than twice the size of previous rounds of HINTS data collections.

## Quick Facts

- Between 2011 and 2014, HINTS 4 will collect data from more than 17,000 adults in the United States.
- HINTS 4 consists of five separate data collection cycles, each including core health communication constructs in addition to special topic modules that will field only in some cycles.
- HINTS 4 has been designated as the data source for measuring progress in the Healthy People 2020 health communication and health information technology objectives.
- Population percentages for each HINTS question are displayed in numeric and chart format on [hints.cancer.gov](http://hints.cancer.gov).

## HINTS Users Meeting Scheduled for October 2013

### 2013 HINTS Users Meeting

### A Decade of *hints*

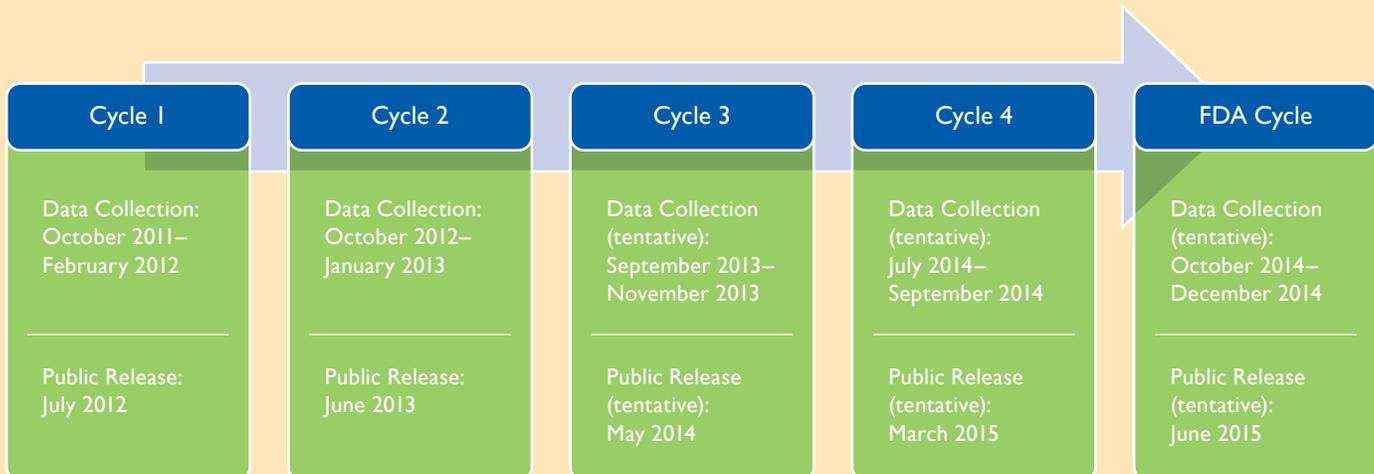
*Quantifying the Health Information Revolution  
through Data Innovation and Collaboration*

**October 2–3, 2013 | Bethesda, MD**  
Natcher Auditorium (Building 45), NIH Campus

**Register here by September 25**

## HINTS 4 Timeline and Content

The fourth iteration of HINTS is collecting data over four standard cycles and an additional (fifth) cycle sponsored by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which will ask health communication questions relevant to FDA's Center for Tobacco Products, Center for Food Science and Nutrition, and Office of the Commissioner. Planned data collection dates and public release dates are outlined here.



HINTS 4 constructs include alcohol use, breast cancer screening, cancer perceptions, cancer risk perceptions, cancer survivorship, cervical cancer screening, colorectal cancer screening, demographics, depression, dietary assessment, food security, genomics, health care, health information seeking, health information technology, health self-efficacy, health status, nutrition, patient satisfaction, patient-provider communication, physical activity, prostate cancer screening, sleep quality, sun safety, tobacco use, trust and mistrust, and use of technology.

### How Can This Inform Your Work?

- Estimated population percentages for each HINTS question are displayed on [hints.cancer.gov](http://hints.cancer.gov) in tabular and chart format. These data snapshots can be used to understand the public's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to several health promotion and cancer prevention constructs.
- Download the survey instruments, public use data sets, and supporting materials to conduct your own secondary data analyses on health communication and cancer prevention topics of interest.
- Use HINTS data as part of your grant-writing efforts.

### About HINTS

[hints.cancer.gov](http://hints.cancer.gov)

HINTS was created to monitor changes in the rapidly evolving field of health communication. The survey data can be used to understand how adults use different communication channels to obtain health information for themselves and their loved ones. It can also help to create more effective health communication strategies across populations. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) fielded the first HINTS in 2002 and 2003, surveying 6,369 Americans. Subsequent surveys followed in 2005 (5,586 Americans surveyed) and 2008 (7,674 Americans surveyed), 2011 and 2012 (3,959 Americans surveyed), and 2012–2013 (3,630 Americans surveyed).

HINTS *Briefs* provide a snapshot of noteworthy, data-driven research findings. They introduce population-level estimates for specific questions in the survey and summarize significant research findings that are a result of analyzing how certain demographic characteristics influence specific outcomes. Many *Briefs* summarize research findings from recent peer-reviewed journal articles using HINTS data.

### For More Information on Cancer

- Call the NCI Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER
- Visit <http://cancer.gov>
- Order NCI publications at <https://cissecure.nci.nih.gov/ncipubs/>
- Visit [Facebook.com/cancer.gov](https://www.facebook.com/cancer.gov) and <http://www.youtube.com/ncigov>

### References Used in This HINTS Brief

Finney Rutten LJ, Davis T, Beckjord EB, Blake K, Moser RP, Hesse BW. [Picking up the pace: Changes in method and frame for the Health Information National Trends Survey \(2011–2014\)](#). *J Health Commun.* 2012;17(8):979–89.

