

Prepare to Pivot

The Potential Outlook for Public Health Communication in 2026 & Beyond

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Let's Talk Public Health

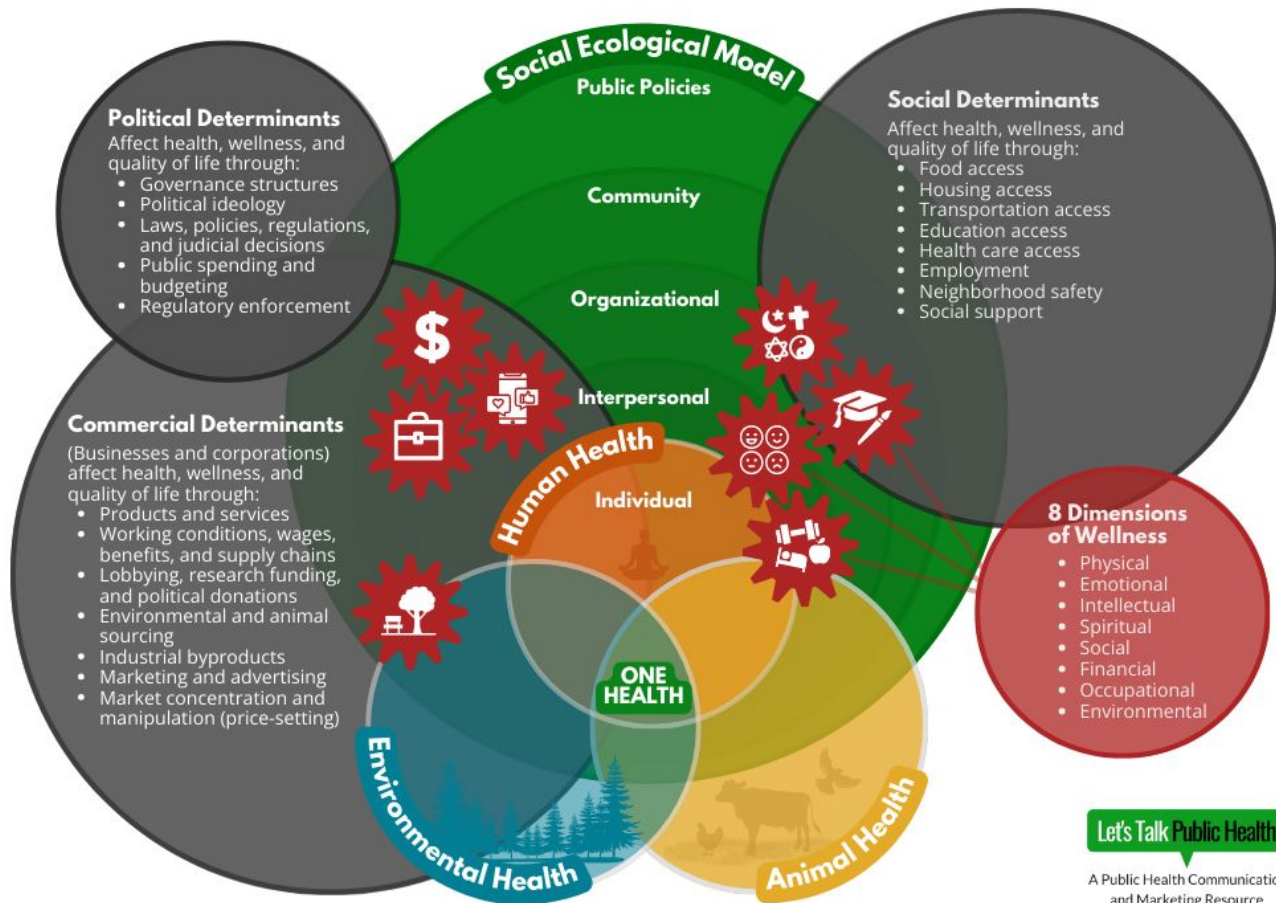
A Public Health Communication
and Marketing Resource

Learning Objectives

1. Examine the current and future state of public health and health communication.
2. Analyze the changing media and technology landscape and identify strategies for navigating upcoming shifts.
3. Introduce and apply the Let's Talk Public Health Pivot Framework as a guide for adapting communication systems.

The Current and Future State of Public Health and Health Communication

Holistic Interconnected Public Health



This is what we mean when we say “public health.”

The 2026 Public Health Outlook - Federal Funding Cuts

- **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Budget & Staffing Reductions:** Proposed 25% reduction in HHS discretionary funding; cut of ~20,000 staff across agencies.
- **Dedicated Fund Elimination:** Proposed termination of the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which directly supports state and local grants.

The 2026 Public Health Outlook - Federal Restructuring

- **Administrative Restructuring:** Creation of the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission and the Administration for a Healthy America (AHA) to focus on reversing trends in chronic childhood diseases by addressing poor diet, environmental toxins, insufficient physical activity, chronic stress, and overmedicalization.
- **Communication Centralization:** Creation of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs and Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, centralizing control over external communications.

The 2026 Public Health Outlook - Federal Refocusing

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Mission Refocus:** Proposed reorientation to focus primarily toward infectious disease, epidemics, and outbreak preparedness; over 60 chronic disease programs eliminated.
- **National Institutes of Health (NIH) Mission Refocus:** Proposed shifting research towards nutrition, metabolic health, environmental factors, and mental health; elimination/realignment of several institutes.

The 2026 Public Health Outlook - Communication Cuts

- **Withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO):** Executive Order 14155 directed U.S. withdrawal from the WHO, halts funding, and recalls personnel, reducing access to international data and coordination on global health crises.
- **Rescission of Prior Public Health Orders:** Executive Order 14148 revokes several previous directives related to climate change, immigration, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), including the Public Health Data Modernization Initiative and the federal task force on health misinformation.
- **Elimination of Federal Funding for Public Broadcasting:** Executive Order 14290 directs the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and all federal agencies to cease all direct and indirect federal funding to National Public Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

The 2026 Public Health Outlook - Other Federal Changes

We're tracking these and other federal changes affecting public health and health communication on our website.

Scan the QR code or click the photo for the link.



A screenshot of the 'Let's Talk Public Health' website's blog page. The page features a header with the site name and navigation links (ABOUT US, WHAT WE DO, WORK WITH US, RESOURCES). The main content area displays a blog post titled 'TRACKER: Major Proposed and Enacted US Federal Government Changes Impacting Public Health and Health Communication Infrastructure and Funding (2025–2026)'. The post includes a date of 10/30/2025 and a link to 0 comments. A social media sidebar on the left contains icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Email, and Pinterest. A disclaimer on the right states that the views expressed are those of individual authors and not necessarily the official policy of the organization. At the bottom right, there is an RSS Feed link and a 'Categories' section with the link 'All Best And Promising'. The background of the blog post features a photograph of the US Capitol building.

The Changing Media and Technology Landscape

The 2026 Media/Technology Outlook

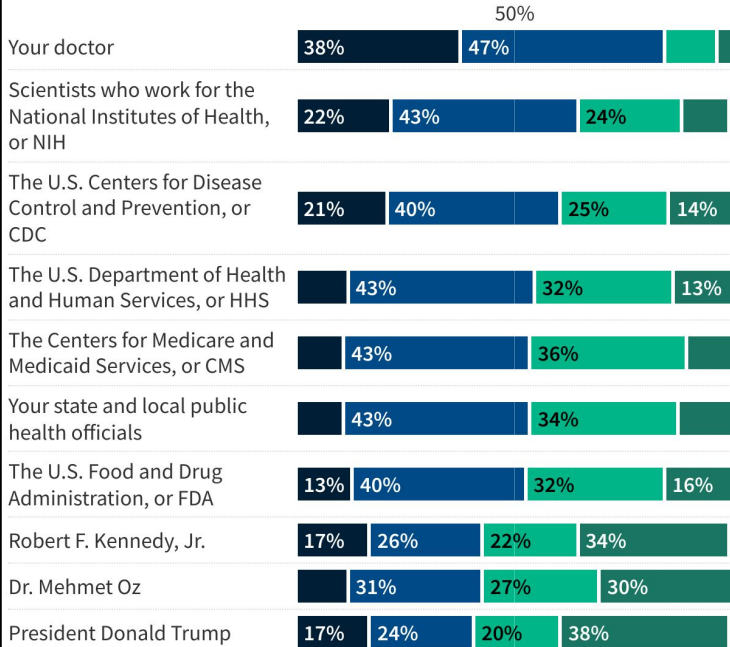
- **Consolidation:** Consolidation of media ownership into a handful of companies/private equity firms.
- **Local Loss:** Closure of local newspapers/sites; expansion of news deserts.
- **Digital Platform Dominance:** Reliance on algorithm-controlled platforms that reinforce existing beliefs, narrow exposure to diverse viewpoints, and intensify polarization.
- **AI-Generated Mis/Disinformation:** Rapid proliferation of convincingly fabricated content (e.g., deep fakes) that outpaces verification systems and erodes public trust.

Figure 2

Most Adults Trust Key Health Agencies at Least a Fair Amount, Though Fewer Than One in Four Trust Them “A Great Deal”

How much do you trust each of the following to make the right recommendations when it comes to health issues?

■ A great deal ■ A fair amount ■ Not much ■ Not at all



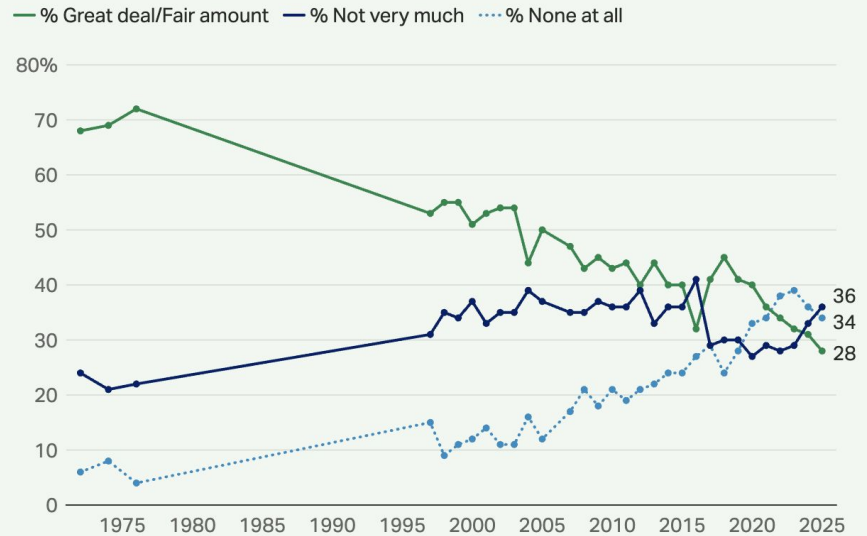
Note: See topline for full question wording.

Source: KFF Tracking Poll on Health Information and Trust (Jan. 7-14, 2025)

KFF

Americans' Trust in Mass Media, 1972-2025

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media — such as newspapers, TV and radio — when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly — a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?



Get the data • Download image

GALLUP

The LTPH Pivot Framework

The LTPH Pivot Framework - ALTEMA

- **Anticipate** → Forecast emerging risks and trends.
- **Listen** → Understand issues, monitor mis/disinformation.
- **Translate** → Convert feedback and data into meaning.
- **Engage** → Co-create with communities and partners.
- **Monitor** → Evaluate effectiveness.
- **Adapt** → Update plans rapidly from real-world signals.

Potential Strategies

- Conduct bi-weekly environmental scans.
- Establish quarterly scenario planning updates.
- Develop rapid-response, pre-bunking messaging content bank.
- Build an ambassador program for community-trusted messengers and channels.
- Tailor outreach using co-design methods.

Q&A Discussions

- We welcome your questions, reflections, and insights.
- Use Raise Hand to speak, or share your question in the Chat.
- Please unmute only when called on.
- Keep comments brief and on topic so we can hear from as many participants as possible.
- This is a space for open dialogue—thank you for engaging respectfully.