

# Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

## Assessment: Step 3 of the HIA Process - Part I

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### What is the Assessment Step of an HIA?

A typical Health Impact Assessment (HIA) contains six steps. The first two steps are Screening and Scoping. Screening helps determine whether the proposal you are considering will actually benefit from an HIA, while the Scoping stage defines the work plan for the HIA. Assessment is the third step of the HIA process. It incorporates data collection, building a profile of existing community health conditions, determinants and outcomes of the affected communities (baseline conditions) and evaluating how this baseline may be potentially impacted by the proposal or alternative scenarios being considered (Bhatia et al, 2014; CDPH, 2010). A critical appraisal of the evidence gathered is also a necessary part of the assessment process since the collated information will form the basis on which the HIA's recommendations will be eventually constructed (ACHEIA, 2004). The assessment phase also provides an opportunity to understand the policy environment in which the proposal will be implemented and to consider its implications within a wider social, economic and political context (IPHI, 2009).

### Data collection – establishing baseline conditions and building a community health profile

The Minimum Elements and Practice Standards for Health Impact Assessment (Bhatia et al, 2014) recommend that the assessment of a proposal's potential health impacts should be based on the synthesis of best evidence available. Building a community health profile is an essential step in the assessment phase of an HIA. It not only provides a current picture of the community/ies and location/s being considered in the assessment, but also serves as a baseline against which to assess your proposal's potential health impacts. A community profile will assist in identifying existing health trends (variations in health status across different population groups) as well as potential sensitivities and other health inequity concerns that may increase the vulnerability of certain populations groups to the proposal's potential impacts and that would therefore need to be taken into

Health Determinant Category	Examples
<b>Social and Economic Factors</b>	1. Poverty 2. Employment 3. Social Security & Welfare Support 4. Household income 5. Policing & Emergency Services 6. Access to educational services 7. Access to fresh food 8. Access to transportation services 9. Access to health care services
<b>Environmental and Infrastructure Factors</b>	1. Air Quality (Indoor & Outdoor) 2. Air, Water, Soil Quality 3. Noise, Odour Pollution 4. Waste Management Infrastructure 5. Traffic Safety 6. Housing 7. Parks/Natural Spaces/Public Spaces - opportunities for physical activities 8. Transportation Infrastructure
<b>Lifestyle/Quality of Life Factors</b>	1. Diet/ Nutrition 2. Physical Activity/Recreation 4. Smoking/Alcohol/Drugs 5. Sexual Behavior 6. Stress/Physical & Mental Health Well being
<b>Equality Factors</b>	1. Age 2. Gender 3. Sexual Orientation 4. Race/ ethnicity 5. Disability 6. Engagement in democratic processes

consideration during the assessment process (IPHI, 2009; Bhatia et al, 2014). Typically community profiles would include demographic data of the populations that may be impacted by the proposal (IPHI, 2009). The data required to build your community's health profile also depends on the health determinants and health outcomes of interest identified during the scoping phase of the HIA. The table below provides examples of some health determinants.

Part 2 of the Assessment step will be published in the Spring 2015 issue of *PHM*, where we will be taking a look at various data collection and research methods that may be employed during an HIA assessment, as well as potential sources of data.

#### References:

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