
Health Care and the Internet Survey

August 2000

Topline

8.22.2000

Princeton Survey Research Associates
for the Pew Internet in American Life Project

Sample: $n = 521$ Internet users who go online for health care information (re-interview)
Interviewing dates: August 3-14, 2000
Margin of error is plus or minus 5 percentage points for results based on the full sample

Note: All results presented in this survey are based on Internet users who go online for health or medical information.

[Q1 AND Q2c FOR SCREENING PURPOSES]

Q1 First, do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive email?

%	100	Yes
	--	No
	--	Don't know/Refused

Q2 Please tell me if you ever do any of the following when you go online.

Do you ever ...

	YES, DO THIS	NO, HAVE NEVER DONE THIS	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
a. Send or read email	97	3	*
b. Check weather reports and forecasts	75	25	0
c. Look for health or medical information online	100	--	--

Q3 How often do you use the Internet to look for advice or information about health or health care — about once a week, once a month, every few months, or less often?

%	29	About once a week
	30	Once a month
	19	Every few months
	22	Less often
	*	Don't know/Refused

Q4 How much, if at all, has getting health and medical information on the Internet improved the way you take care of your health — a lot, some, only a little, or not at all?

%	13	A lot
	35	Some
	34	Only a little
	18	Not at all
	0	Don't know/Refused

Q5 Here are some things people sometimes do when getting advice or information about health or health care on the Internet. Some people have done these things, but other people have not.

Have you ever...(INSERT ITEM; ROTATE ITEMS) , or haven't you ever done this?

	YES, HAVE DONE THIS	NO, HAVE NOT DONE THIS	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
a. Looked for information about a physical illness or condition that you or someone you know has	91	9	0
b. Bought medicine or vitamins online	10	90	*
c. Participated in an online support group for people who are concerned about the same health or medical issues	9	91	0
d. Used email or gone to a web site to communicate with a doctor or a doctor's office	9	91	0
e. Clicked on a health or medical web site's privacy policy to read about how the site uses personal information	24	75	1
f. Described a medical condition or problem online in order to get advice from an online doctor	10	90	*
g. Kept a health web site "bookmarked", or saved as a "favorite place", so you can go back to it regularly	42	57	1
h. Looked to see what company or organization is providing the advice or information that appears on a health web site	58	42	*
i. Looked for information about a mental health issue like depression or anxiety ¹	26	74	0

Q6 When was the LAST time you went online to look for advice or information about health or health care — within the last week, in the last month, in the last six months, or before that?

%	23	Within the last week
	35	In the last month
	31	In the last six months
	10	Before that
	1	Don't know/Refused

¹ Item (i) asked August 7-14 only [N = 269].

Q7 Was this from HOME, from WORK, or from someplace else? (**PROMPT IF NEEDED:** This LAST time you went online for health information...)

%	83	From home
	14	From work
	3	From someplace else
	*	Don't know/Refused

Q8 Were you looking for health information for yourself, for a child, for a parent, for another relative, or for someone else?

%	43	Yourself
	12	Child
	8	Parent
	15	Another relative
	18	Someone else
	4	Don't know/Refused

Q9 Did you happen to go looking for this health information BEFORE visiting a doctor or clinic for an examination or consultation, AFTER visiting a doctor or clinic, INSTEAD of visiting a doctor or clinic, or was this UNRELATED to a visit to a doctor or clinic?

Based on those who looked for health information for themselves [N = 222]

%	27	Before visiting a doctor or a clinic
	34	After visiting a doctor or a clinic
	2	Instead of visiting a doctor or a clinic
	35	Unrelated to visiting a doctor or a clinic
	2	Don't know/Refused

Q10 Did you happen to go looking for this health information BEFORE this person visited a doctor or clinic for an examination or consultation, AFTER this person visited a doctor or clinic, INSTEAD of this person visiting a doctor or clinic, or was this UNRELATED to a visit to a doctor or clinic?

Based on those who looked for health information for someone else [N = 280]

%	14	Before visiting a doctor or a clinic
	59	After visiting a doctor or a clinic
	3	Instead of visiting a doctor or a clinic
	22	Unrelated to visiting a doctor or a clinic
	2	Don't know/Refused

Q11 Now just thinking about this LAST time you went online for health information...
Which best describes the type of information you were looking for that time....(READ)
[ACCEPT UP TO 5 RESPONSES]

%	70	Information about a SPECIFIC illness or condition
	9	Information about SPECIFIC doctors, hospitals, or medicines
	11	Basic news or information about health and health care
	13	or... information about fitness and nutrition
	1	Other/None of the above
	1	Don't know/Refused

Q12 Were you looking for information about... (READ) [ACCEPT UP TO 4 RESPONSES]

Based on those looking for information about a specific illness [N = 366]

%	48	Health conditions that may be related to specific SYMPTOMS
	30	MEDICINES or TREATMENTS for an illness or condition
	29	or... what HAPPENS to people who get a specific illness or type of treatment or drug
	8	Other/None of the above
	1	Don't know/Refused

QUESTIONS 13 – 18 BASED ON ALL RESPONDENTS

Q13 About how many different web sites did you go to when you were looking for this health information? ...

%	17	One
	49	Two or Three
	18	Four or Five
	9	Six to Ten
	2	11 to 20
	2	More than 20
	3	Don't know/Refused

Q14 Did you get to these web sites by doing an Internet search, or did you find out about them some other way?

%	81	Through an Internet search
	18	Found them some other way
	1	Don't know/Refused

Q15 Had you ever heard about the web sites before, or hadn't you heard about them? (IF YES, ASK: Had you heard about them in a news article; an advertisement; a doctor or doctor's office; a health insurance company or HMO; a friend or relative; or someplace else?)

%	4	From a news article
	10	From an advertisement
	2	From a doctor or doctor's office
	1	From a health insurance company or HMO
	6	From a friend or relative
	11	Someplace else
	62	No, had NOT heard about before
	4	Don't know/Refused

Q16 Overall, how USEFUL was the health information you got online — very useful, somewhat, not too, or not at all?

%	37	Very useful
	55	Somewhat useful
	5	Not too useful
	2	Not at all useful
	1	Don't know/Refused

Q17 Did you learn anything NEW from the information you got online, or didn't you learn anything new?

%	81	Yes, learned something new
	19	No, did not
	1	Don't know/Refused

Q18 Did you later talk to a doctor or nurse about the information you got online, or didn't you happen to do this?

%	30	Talked to a doctor/nurse/medical professional
	69	Didn't talk to
	1	Don't know/Refused

Q19 Did the information you got online affect any of your decisions about health treatments or the way you take care of yourself, or didn't this information have any effect on your decisions?

Based on those who looked for health information for themselves [N = 222]

%	47	Information affected decisions about health treatments/care
	53	Didn't have any effect on decisions
	*	Don't know/Refused

Q20 Did the information you got online affect the way you eat or exercise, or not?

Based on those who sought information for themselves and said the information affected their decisions [N = 104]

%	51	Yes, information got online did this
	49	No, did not
	0	Don't know/Refused

- Q21** Did the information you got online affect any of your decisions about health treatments or the way you help care for someone, or didn't this information have any effect on your decisions?

Based on those who looked for health information for someone else [N = 280]

%	36	Information affected decisions about health treatments/care
	63	Didn't have any effect on decisions
	1	Don't know/Refused

- Q22** Did the information you got online ...(INSERT ITEM; DO **NOT** ROTATE ITEMS) , or not?

Based on those who said the health information they found online has affected their decisions [N = 204]

	YES, INFORMATION GOT ONLINE DID THIS	NO, DID NOT	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
a. Affect your decision about whether to see a doctor	28	70	2
b. Affect your decision about how to treat an illness or condition	70	28	2
c. Lead you to ask a doctor new questions, or to get a second opinion from another doctor	50	48	2

QUESTION 23 - 30 BASED ON ALL RESPONDENTS

- Q23** Now a few questions about your own health. In general, how would you rate your own health — excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

%	39	Excellent
	49	Good
	10	Only fair
	2	Poor
	*	Don't know/Refused

- Q24** Many Americans do not have health insurance. Are you personally now covered by any form of health insurance, health plan, or an HMO — including any private insurance plan or a government program such as Medicare — or don't you have health insurance at this time?

%	91	Yes, covered by health insurance
	9	No, not covered by health insurance
	*	Don't know/Refused

Q25 Thinking again about the times you have used the Internet to get advice or information about health or health care... Have you ever...(INSERT ITEM; DO NOT ROTATE) , or haven't you ever done this?

	YES, HAVE DONE THIS	NO, HAVE NOT	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
a. Provided your email address at a health web site	21	77	2
b. Provided your name or other personal information at a health web site	17	83	*
c. Provided a FAKE name, email address, or information to avoid providing your real name or personal information at a health web site	4	96	*
d. Been contacted by phone, mail or e-mail by a health care or drug company after you visited a health web site	12	87	1
e. Gone online to get information about a sensitive health topic that is difficult to talk about	16	84	0

Q26 How much of the health information you see on the Internet do you think you can believe — almost all of it, most of it, some of it, or almost none?

%	16	Almost all
	36	Most
	44	Some
	1	Almost none
	3	Don't know/Refused

Q28 Do you think health and medical web sites on the Internet should be allowed to track the activities of people who visit their web sites, or shouldn't health and medical web sites be allowed to do this?

%	18	Internet companies should be allowed to track activities
	75	Internet companies should not be allowed to track activities
	7	Don't know/Refused

Q29 Do you think there should be rules about how health and medical companies on the Internet can track the activities of people who visit their web sites, or don't you think rules are needed?

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%	87	Should be rules about how Internet companies track activities
	10	Don't think rules are needed
	3	Don't know/Refused

Q30 Suppose a health or medical company gave away or sold information about the people who visited its Internet web site, even though it said it would not. Do you think people should be able to sue this company, or don't you think people should be able to do this?

%	81	Should be able to sue an Internet company
	15	Should not be able to sue
	4	Don't know/Refused

Daily Internet Tracking Survey
July-August 2000

Topline

8.21.2000

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Princeton Survey Research Associates
for the Pew Internet in American Life Project

Sample: $n = 2,109$ adults 18 and older

Interviewing dates: July 24-August 20, 2000

Margin of error is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points for results based on the full sample

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on Internet users

- Q25** On another subject ... Here are some things people say about going online to get advice or information about HEALTH and HEALTH CARE on the Internet. Thinking about the ways that you, personally, might use the Internet to get information about health and health care, please tell me how important, if at all, each of these is to you?

Based on Internet users [N = 1,101]

	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT TOO IMPORTANT	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
a. You can get health information online anonymously, without having to talk to anyone					
July-August	38	32	12	17	1
b. You can get health information online any time, whenever it's convenient for you					
July-August	53	31	6	10	*
c. You can get more health information online than from other sources					
July-August	31	41	12	15	1

- Q26** Still thinking about the ways that you, personally, might use the Internet to get advice or information about health and health care, please tell me how concerned you are if at all, about these things.

Based on Internet users [N = 1,101]

	VERY CONCERNED	SOMEWHAT CONCERNED	NOT TOO CONCERNED	NOT AT ALL CONCERNED	DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
a. Your employer might find out what health sites you have gone to online					
July-August	37	14	12	35	2
b. Getting health information from an unreliable source online					
July-August	59	23	7	10	1
c. Other people might find out what health sites you have gone to online					

	July-August	42	22	13	22	1	
d.	A web site might sell or give away information about what you did online						
	July-August	69	17	4	9	1	10
e.	An insurance company might raise your rates or deny coverage because of the health sites you have gone to online						
	July-August	69	13	5	12	1	

Q27 If your health care provider put your medical records on a SECURE Internet web site that only you could access with a personal password, do you think that would be...

Based on Internet users [N = 1,101]

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		JULY/AUG 2000
%	33	A good thing, because you would have easy access to your health records
	60	A bad thing, because you would worry about other people seeing your health records
	7	Don't know/Refused