

Online Health Information Seekers

Highlights

A sizable majority of internet users go online for health information; this has dramatically increased over the last decade.

From:

http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=792

Additionally, one in five online consumers encounter consumer-created content – blogs, discussion boards, e-mails, etc. – that may influence health decisions, according to a study by JupiterResearch.

From: <http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=3488251>

The typical session in seeking health information starts as a search, includes multiple sites, and may be undertaken for someone else other than the person doing the search.

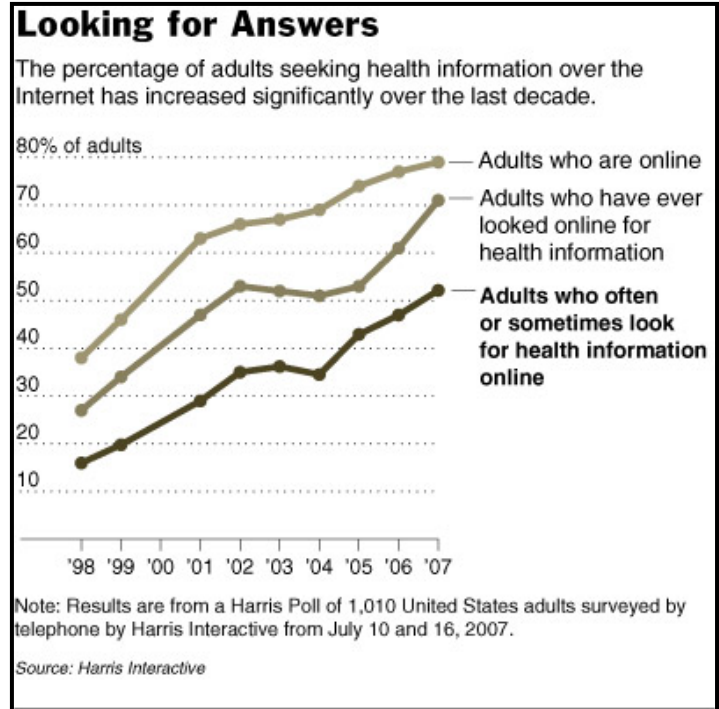
- 66% of health seekers began their last online health inquiry at a search engine; 27% began at a health-related website.
- 72% of health seekers visited two or more sites during their last health information session.
- 48% of health seekers say their quest for information was undertaken on behalf of someone else, not themselves. An additional 8% of health seekers say the search was on behalf of someone else *and* to answer their own health questions, while another 36% said their last search was in relation to their own health or medical situation.
- 53% of health seekers report that their most recent health information session had some kind of impact on how they take care of themselves or care for someone else: 42% described it as a minor impact and 11% described it as a major impact.
- The impact was most deeply felt by internet users who had received a serious diagnosis or experienced a health crisis in the past year, either their own or that of someone close to them. (Fourteen percent of these hard-hit health seekers say their last search had a major impact, compared with 7% of health seekers who had not received a diagnosis or dealt with a health crisis in the past year.)

From: http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Online_Health_2006.pdf

Three-quarters of health seekers do not consistently check the source and date of the health information they find online.

- Just 15% of health seekers say they “always” check the source and date of the health information they find online, while another 10% say they do so “most of the time.”
- Fully three-quarters of health seekers say they check the source and date “only sometimes,” “hardly ever,” or “never,” which translates to about 85 million Americans gathering health advice online without consistently examining the quality indicators of the information they find.

From: http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Online_Health_2006.pdf



Most health seekers are pleased, but some feel frustrated or confused.

- Three out of four health seekers say they felt **reassured** that they could make appropriate health decisions.
- More than half say the online health information they found on their last search made them feel **confident, relieved, comforted or eager to share**.

On the other hand:

- One in four felt **overwhelmed**.
- About one in five found they were **frustrated or confused** by a lack of information or an inability to find what they were looking for online, and
- About one out of ten said they were **frightened** by the serious or graphic nature of the information they found online.

From: http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Online_Health_2006.pdf

Health Seekers: Mostly reassured, some overwhelmed			
Feelings About Last Health Search	All Health Seekers	Health Seekers with HS Diploma or Less	Health Seekers with College Degree
Reassured that you could make appropriate health care decisions	74%	77%	72%
Confident to raise new questions or concerns about a health issue with their doctor	56	54	57
Relieved or comforted by the information they found online	56	64	53
Eager to share their new health or medical knowledge with others	51	57	45
Overwhelmed by the amount of information they found online	25	33	20
Frustrated by a lack of information or an inability to find what they were looking for online	22	27	18
Confused by the information they found online	18	24	15
Frightened by the serious or graphic nature of the information they found online	10	13	8

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project August 2006 Survey. Margin of error for health seekers (N=1,594) is +/- 3%. Margin of error for comparing education categories is +/- 6%.

Demographics

Health Seekers	
Demographic Group	Percent Who Have Looked for Health Information Online
Online women	82%
Online men	77
Internet users age 18-29	79
Internet users age 30-49	84
Internet users age 50-64	78
Internet users age 65+	68
Internet users with a high school diploma or less	71
Internet users with some college education	80
Internet users with a college degree	89
Internet users with 2-3 years of online experience	62
Internet users with 6+ years of online experience	86
Internet users with a dial-up connection at home	75
Internet users with a broadband connection at home	86

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project August 2006 Survey (N=1,990). Margin of error for the entire sample of internet users is +/- 3%. Margins of error for comparison of subgroups are higher.