

## Consumers and Health Information Technology: A National Survey

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April 2010

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### Introduction

Health care providers, government, and private industry are making multi-billion dollar investments in health information technology in the belief that it will support better health outcomes and reduce cost. This research documents that there are positive effects from using health IT, in particular personal health records (PHRs), despite currently low usage. It also explores consumers' frustrations with the management of their health care and their attitudes toward health IT more generally. The national survey was conducted by Lake Research Partners for the California HealthCare Foundation, which supports research on innovative uses of technology to improve quality of care, promote access, and reduce costs.

#### SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- About 7 percent of those surveyed say they have used a PHR—more than double the proportion identified two years earlier in separate research.
- As a result of their PHR, users cite taking steps to improve their own health, knowing more about their health care, and asking their doctors questions they would not otherwise have asked.
- Although higher-income individuals are the most likely to have used a PHR, lower-income adults, those with chronic conditions, and those without a college degree are more likely to experience positive effects of having their information accessible online.
- Two-thirds of the public remain concerned about the privacy and security of their health information, but the majority of those who are using a PHR are not very worried about the privacy of the information contained in their PHR.
- Most PHR users and non-users say we should not let privacy concerns stop us from learning how health IT can improve health care.
- More than half of adults are interested in using online applications to track health-related factors, and almost half are interested in medical devices that can be connected to the Internet. Of those who do not have a PHR, 40 percent express interest in using one.

#### **Health IT Consumer Survey**

#### CONTENTS

Background3
PHR Users5
Benefits of PHR Use
Non-PHR Users 15
Privacy 20
Jse in Doctor's Office 27
New Technologies and Devices 31
Reasons to Use More Health IT 38
Author, Acknowledgments and Methodology

### **Frustrations with the Management of Health Care**

Thinking about your health care, do you agree or disagree?

PERCENT WHO AGREE	В	BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)
I wish I knew more about my loved one's care (among caregivers)		
		63%
I wish my doctors had more time to talk to me		
		60%
I feel like I have to be my own advocate		
	55%	
I wish my doctors talked and shared more info with each other		
	55%	
I wish my doctor knew me and my health better		-
	51%	
Keeping track of all of my health info is difficult		
	50%	

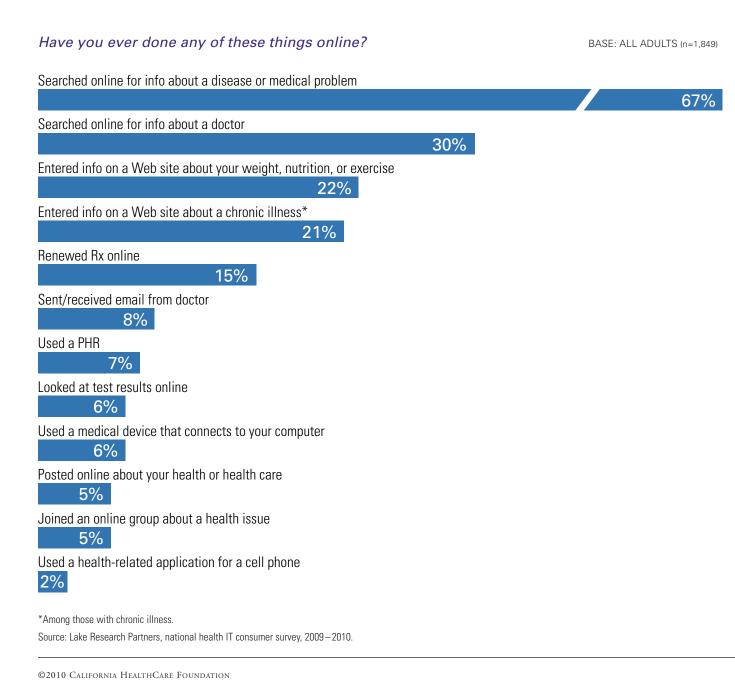
Health IT Consumer Survey Background

Many adults believe that their care is not well managed. A majority say they wish their doctor had more time to talk with them, and that their doctors talked and shared more information with each other.

Most people who take care of a loved one wish they had more information about the health care that person is receiving.

Source: Lake Research Partners, national health IT consumer survey, 2009-2010.

### **Overview of Consumers' Use of Health IT**

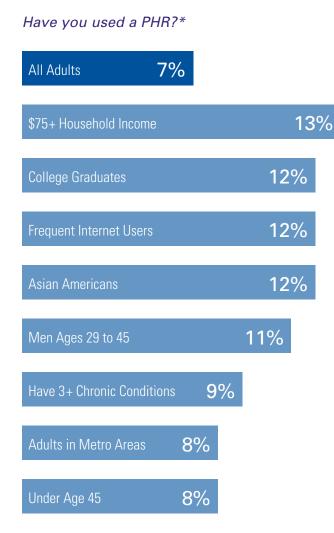


#### Health IT Consumer Survey Background

While most adults have used the Internet to search for information on a disease or medical problem, much lower proportions have gone online to review test results or email their doctors.

4

#### Use of Personal Health Records, by Demographic Group



\*For the purposes of this survey, the following question was used to identify PHR users: "Some hospitals, doctors' offices, health plans, and different companies are offering Web sites where you could get, keep, and update your health information online. This information could be lab test results, medicines, doctors' visits, or other information. You would get a user name and password so that only you could see your information on this Web site. Have you ever used one of these Web sites where you can get, keep, or update your health information?"

Source: Lake Research Partners, national health IT consumer survey, 2009–2010.

#### Health IT Consumer Survey PHR Users

BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1.849)

Seven percent of adults report having used a Web site where they could get, keep, and update their health information online—a personal health record. This is more than double the proportion identified two years earlier in separate research.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>†</sup>The Markle Foundation released a 2008 survey finding that 2.7 percent of people had used a PHR.

#### Use of PHRs, by U.S. Region

PERCENT WHO HAVE USED PHR

IOR MIDWES WEST 6% 5% 11% 15% SOUTH 5%

BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)

The West leads the nation in its early adoption of PHRs: Eleven percent have used a PHR—double the proportion of those in

Health IT Consumer Survey

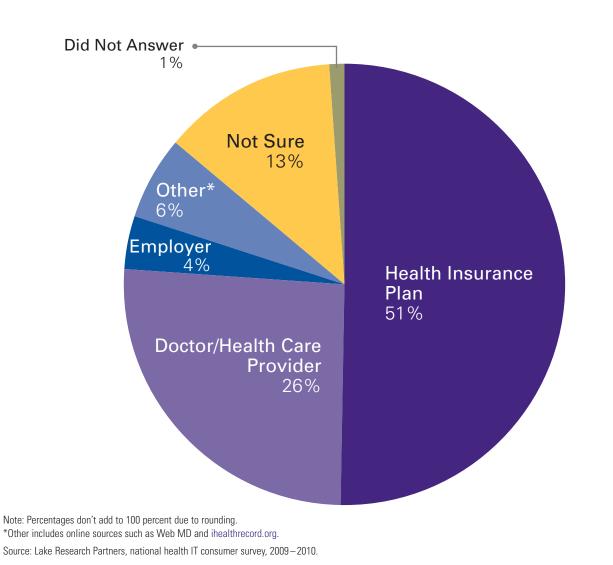
PHR Users

other regions.

An even larger share of Californians (15 percent) have used a PHR.

#### **Sources of Personal Health Records**

Is this Web site sponsored by...



BASE: PHR USERS (n=266)

#### Health IT Consumer Survey PHR Users

Users are most likely to have a PHR supplied by their health insurer, followed by their doctor/ health care provider.

### What Is Useful About a PHR?

PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "VERY" OR "SOMEWHAT USEFUL"

Thinking about the times you looked at your online medical and health info, how useful was...

Making sure info is correct Looking at test results 57% Renewing Rxs online 52% Emailing providers 50% Scheduling doctor visit 48% Managing family's health info 44% Reminders for tests 44% Keeping track of child's records\* 43% Seeing doctor's instructions 41% Sharing info with your family 38% \*Among parents who have a PHR.

Health IT Consumer Survey PHR Users

Half or more of users indicate that the ability to look at test results, renew their prescriptions online, or email their providers is somewhat or very useful.

BASE: PHR USERS (n=266)

64%

Making sure their information is correct ranks highest in terms of usefulness.

### **Effects of Using a PHR**

Using a PHR	
PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "YES"	BASE: PHR USERS (n=266
Made you feel like you know more about your health	
	56%
Made you feel like you know more about the care your doctor gives you	
	52%
Led you to ask your doctor a question you may not have asked before	
40%	
Made you feel more connected to your doctor	
38%	
Led you to do something to improve your health	
32%	
Made it easier to talk to family about your health	
31%	
Made you feel less likely to switch doctors	
25%	
Led you to find missing or incorrect info	
12%	
Source: Lake Research Partners, national health IT consumer survey, 2009–2010.	

#### Health IT Consumer Survey Benefits of PHR Use

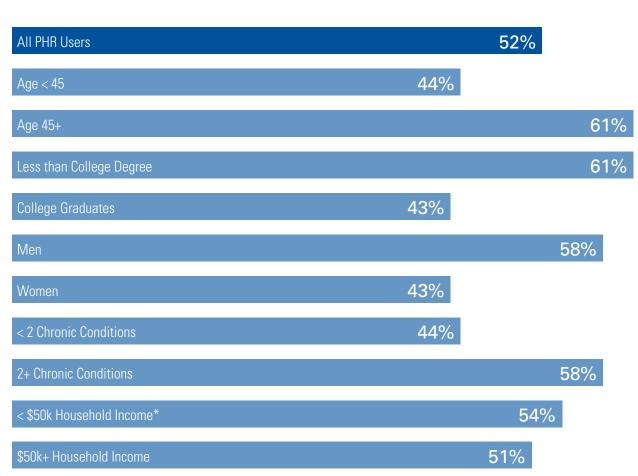
Users report several positive effects directly related to using a PHR, such as learning more about their health and health care, asking new questions, and taking steps to improve their health.

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### Users' Knowledge About Their Health Care as a Result of PHR, by Demographic Group

PHR made you feel like you know more about your health care.

PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "YES"



Health IT Consumer Survey Benefits of PHR Use

PHR users who are over 45 and those who do not have a college degree are more likely than others to say they know more about their health care as a result of using a PHR.

BASE: PHR USERS (n=266)

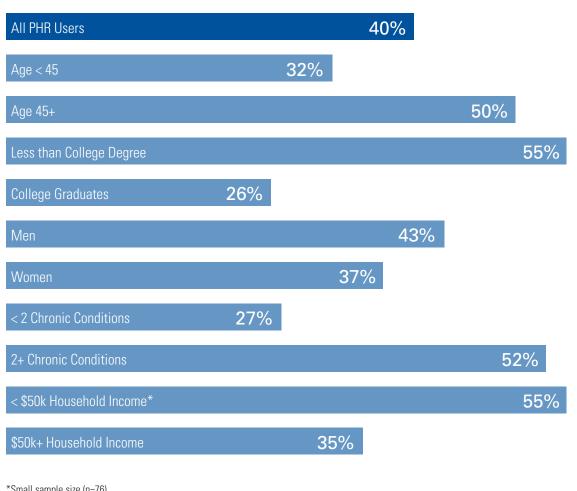
Additionally, 58 percent of PHR users with two or more chronic conditions say they know more about their health care, compared to 44 percent of those with only one or no chronic conditions.

\*Small sample size (n=76).

### Users Who Asked Their Doctor New Questions as a Result of PHR, by Demographic Group

PHR led you to ask your MD a question you may not have asked before.

PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "YES"



Health IT Consumer Survey Benefits of PHR Use

Lower-income patients and those without a college degree are most likely to say their PHR led them to ask their doctor questions they might not have otherwise asked.

BASE: PHB USERS (n=266)

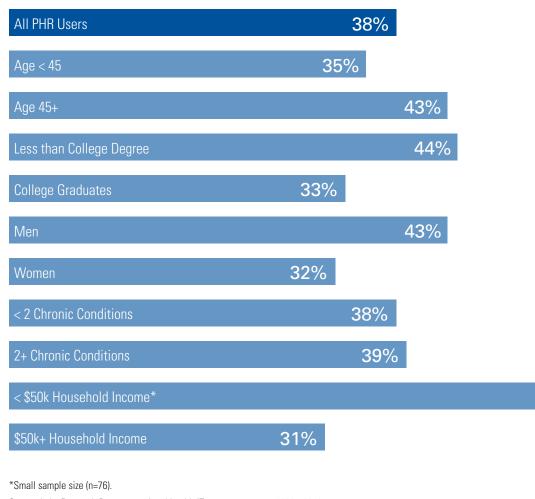
Although the benefits of using a PHR are clear, overall use among lowerincome patients and those without a college degree are low, at 4 percent and 5 percent respectively.

\*Small sample size (n=76).

### **Users' Feelings Toward Their Doctor as a Result of PHR,** by Demographic Group

#### PHR made you feel more connected to your MD.

PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "YES"



Health IT Consumer Survey Benefits of PHR Use

Fifty-eight percent of PHR users with lower incomes say they feel more connected to their doctor as a result of using their PHR compared to 31 percent of higherincome users.

BASE: PHR USERS (n=266)

58%

### Users Taking Steps to Improve Their Health as a Result of PHR, by Demographic Group

PHR led you to do something to improve your health.

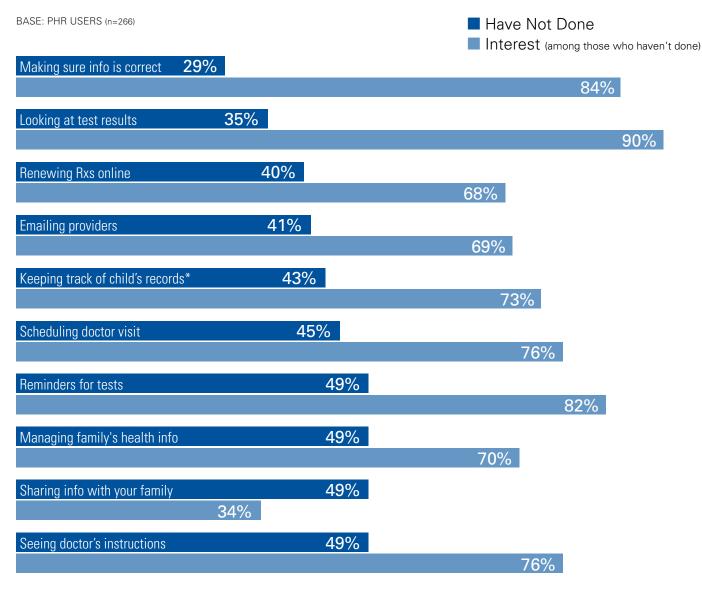
PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "YES" BASE: PHR USERS (n=266) All PHR Users 32% Age < 45 24% Age 45+ 43% 45% Less than College Degree 20% College Graduates 31% 35% 24% < 2 Chronic Conditions 2+ Chronic Conditions 40% < \$50k Household Income\* 50% 26% \$50k+ Household Income \*Small sample size (n=76).

Benefits of PHR Use

Users with two or more chronic conditions and those from lower-income households are among the most likely to say their PHR led them to do something to improve their health.

**Health IT Consumer Survey** 

### **Interest Among PHR Users in Features Not Used**



Health IT Consumer Survey Benefits of PHR Use

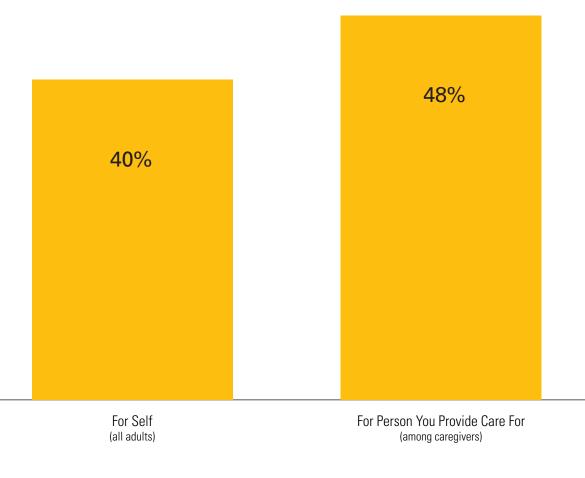
Nearly half of PHR users have not viewed their doctor's instructions online, used reminders for tests, or scheduled an office visit online.

However, majorities of those who have not done these activities are interested in doing them.

\*Among parents who have a PHR.

### Non-Users' Interest in Using a PHR

How interested are you in using a Web site where you can get, keep, or update health information? PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "VERY" OR "SOMEWHAT INTERESTED" BASE: ADULTS WITHOUT A PHR (n=1,583)

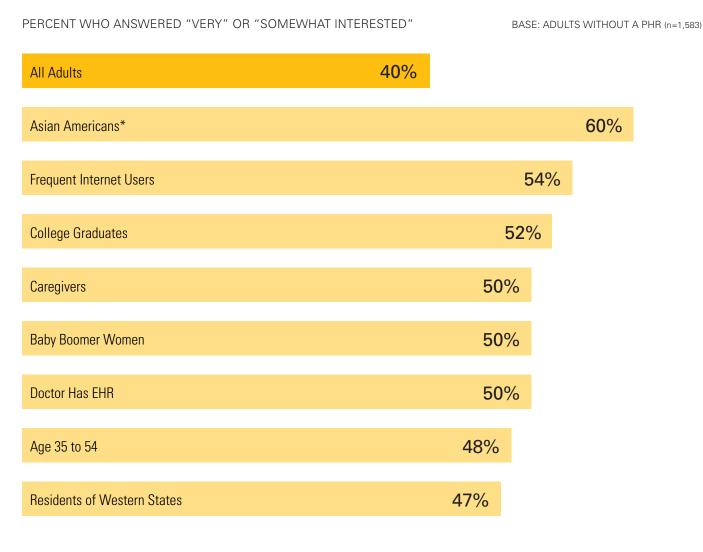


Health IT Consumer Survey Non-PHR Users

Among respondents who do not have a PHR, 40 percent express interest in using one. Nearly half of caregivers are interested in using a PHR for the person they care for.

### Non-Users' Interest in PHRs, by Demographic Group

#### Interested in using a PHR?



Health IT Consumer Survey Non-PHR Users

Asian Americans, frequent Internet users, and college graduates are among the most likely to express interest in using a PHR. Additionally, those who know their doctor has an electronic health record for them are more likely than others to be

interested in PHRs

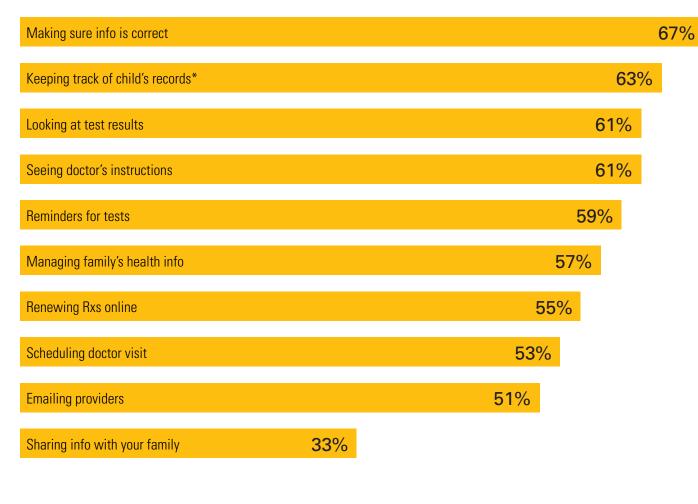
\*Small sample size (n=82).

### **Non-Users' Interest in PHR Capabilities**

Here are some ways people can use their health information online. If your health information were available on a Web site, would you be interested in...

PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "VERY" OR "SOMEWHAT INTERESTED"

BASE: ADULTS WITHOUT A PHR (n=1,583)

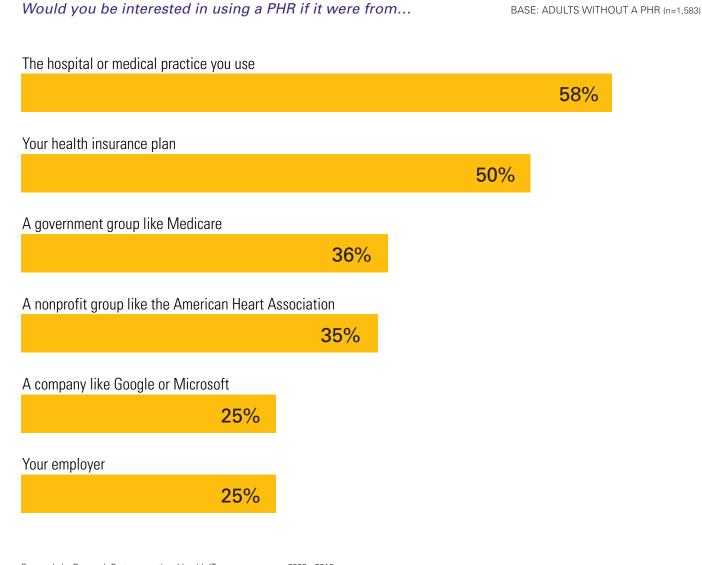


#### Health IT Consumer Survey Non-PHR Users

Non-users are similar to PHR users in the features they are most interested in, such as checking to make sure their information is correct and looking at test results.

\*Among parents.

### **Non-Users' Preferences Toward PHR Source**



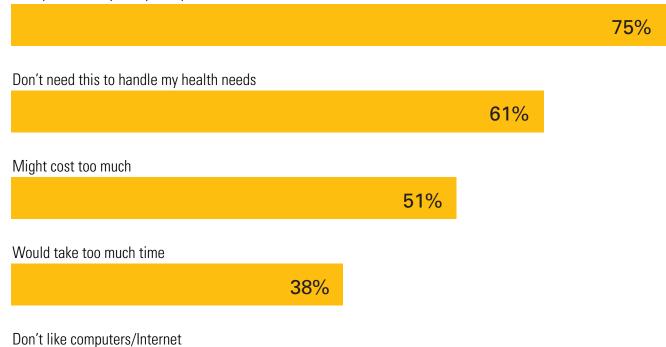
Health IT Consumer Survey Non-PHR Users

Non-users are most interested in using PHRs sponsored by their health care providers or insurance plans.

### **Potential Barriers to Using a PHR**

PERCENT OF NON-USERS WHO AGREE

Worry about the privacy of my information



Health IT Consumer Survey Non-PHR Users

Concern about privacy is a top barrier to using a PHR.

BASE: ADULTS WITHOUT A PHR (n=1,583)

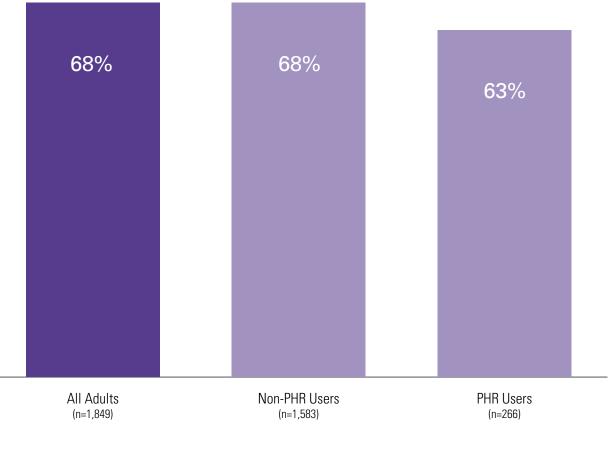
Additionally, a majority of non-users feel a PHR is not necessary to handle their health needs.

Source: Lake Research Partners, national health IT consumer survey, 2009-2010.

26%

### **Attitudes About Privacy of Medical Records**

How concerned are you with the privacy of your personal medical records? PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "VERY" OR "SOMEWHAT CONCERNED"

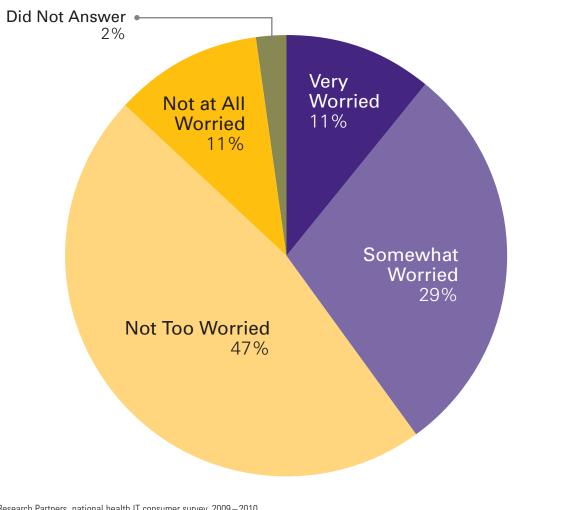


Health IT Consumer Survey Privacy

A majority of respondents say they are concerned with the privacy of their personal medical information. Those already using PHRs are slightly less concerned.

# PHR Users' Attitudes About Privacy of Information in Their PHR

Now that you have your health information online, how worried are you about the privacy and confidentiality of your information?



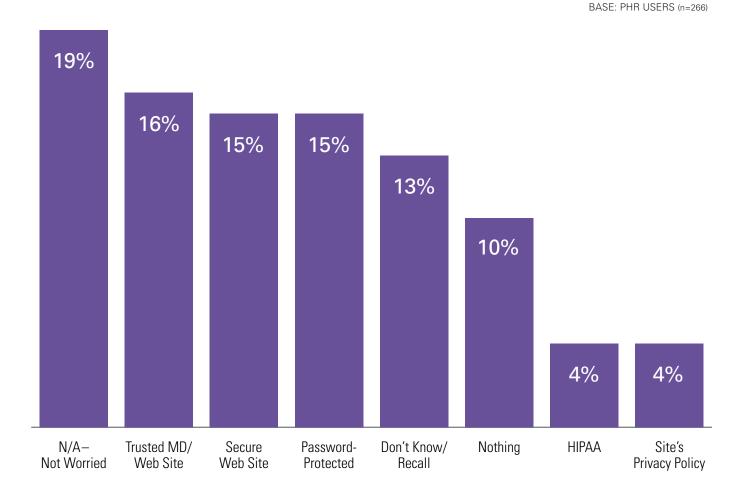
Health IT Consumer Survey Privacy

While 63 percent of PHR users are concerned generally about the privacy of their medical records, fewer than half say they worry about the privacy of the information in their PHR.

BASE: PHR USERS (n=266)

### What Reassures PHR Users About Privacy Concerns?

Think back to when you were first able to look online at your health information, like lab tests. What made you feel that information would be kept safe and private?



Health IT Consumer Survey Privacy

Trust in the provider of the PHR and indications of Web site security are important to PHR users.

Users are reassured more by passwords and the "https://" or "lock" symbol than by a Web site's privacy policy.

Note: This was an open-ended question.

### **Factors that Would Encourage Signing Up for a PHR**

PERCENT SAYING THEY WOULD OR MIGHT SIGN UP IF...

You trusted the organization 57% There were strong laws and fines for Web sites if they let others look at your info 54% Your doctor told you that your information was safe 52% Web site had detailed privacy policy 51% Your friends or families used it and said info was safe 50% Would be told if anyone looked at info who should not have 50% Seal of approval on Web site, like on banking sites 48% You learned about government privacy rules 46%

Health IT Consumer Survey Privacy

Having trust in the organization that provides the PHR is a top factor in signing up for one.

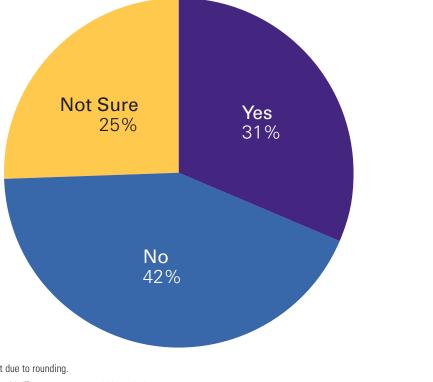
BASE: ADULTS WITHOUT A PHR (n=1,583)

More than half of non-users say they would or might sign up if their doctor expressed confidence in the safety of information in a PHR.

# **Attitudes Toward Sharing Health Information with Other Organizations**

**Introduction to question:** If your doctor had a system of electronic medical records, some information could be shared with health insurance plans, researchers, companies, and others. This information would be about your health and the type of care you receive. Your name, date of birth, address, and Social Security number would *not* be shared.

## Would you feel comfortable if your health information was shared? (While your name, address, and other personal information would not be shared.)



BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)

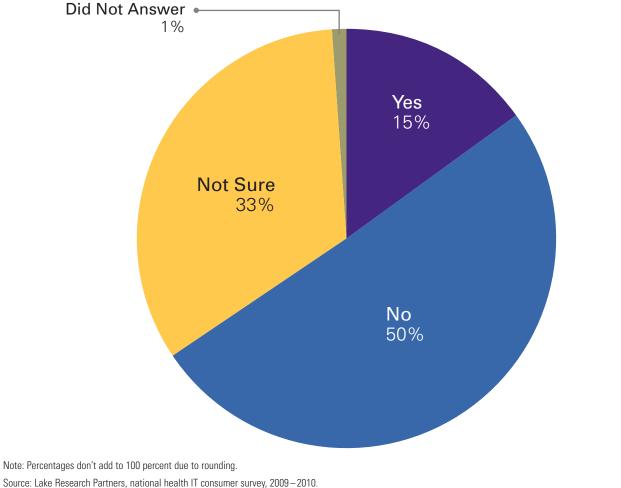
Health IT Consumer Survey Privacy

A majority of adults express discomfort (42 percent) or uncertainty (25 percent) with their health information being shared with other organizations—even if identifying information such as name, address, and other personal information were not included.

Note: Percentages don't add to 100 percent due to rounding. Source: Lake Research Partners, national health IT consumer survey, 2009–2010.

#### **Behaviors to Protect Privacy**

If your doctor had an electronic medical record system that could share your health information with other organizations (but not your name, date of birth, address, or Social Security number) would there be anything that you would not tell your doctor?



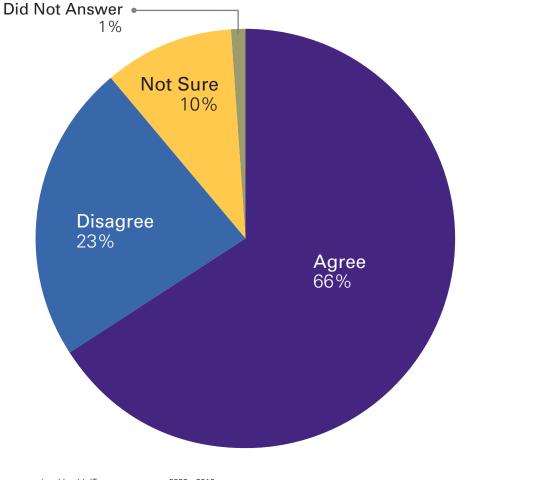
BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)

Health IT Consumer Survey Privacy

About 15 percent of adults say they would hide something from their doctor if they knew their information would be shared, and another 33 percent say they would consider hiding information.

### **Privacy Concerns in the Use of Information Technology**

Do you agree or disagree: Just like with online banking, we need to address privacy worries. But we should not let privacy concerns stop us from learning how technology can improve our health care.



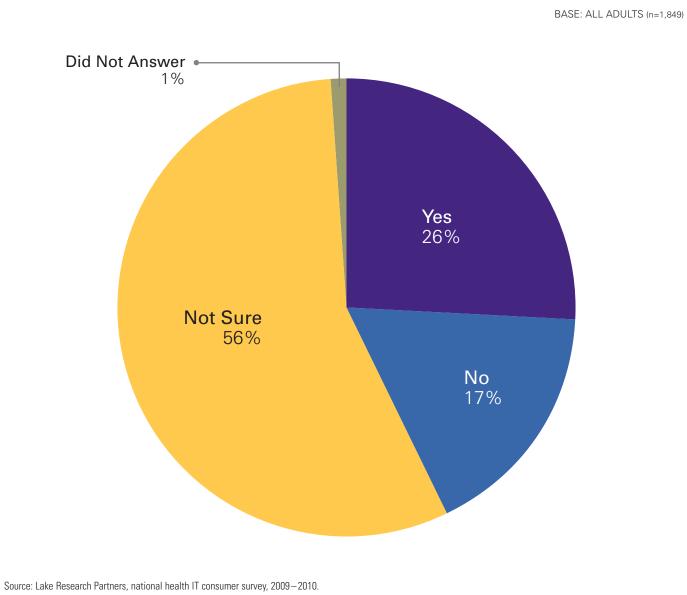
BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)

Health IT Consumer Survey Privacy

Two-thirds of respondents say we should not let privacy concerns stop us from learning how technology can improve health care.

#### **Doctor's Use of Electronic Records**

Does your doctor use an electronic medical record for you?



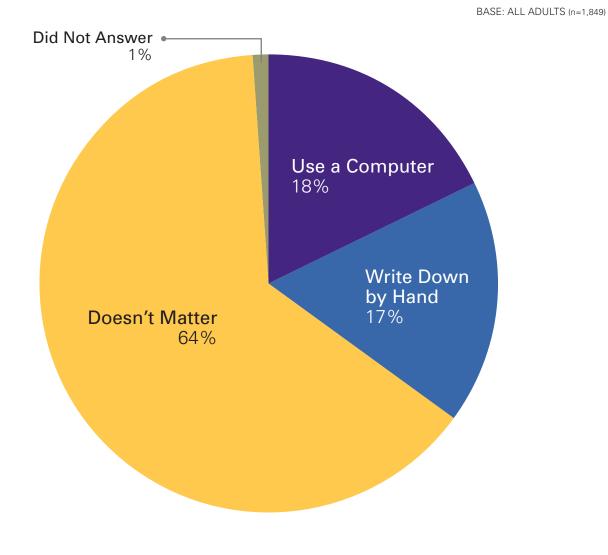
Health IT Consumer Survey Use in Doctor's Office

More than half of respondents are not sure whether their doctor uses an electronic medical record.

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### **Preferences About Heath IT Use in Doctor's Office**

When you are in a doctor's visit, do you want your doctor to use a computer or write things down by hand?



Health IT Consumer Survey Use in Doctor's Office

Most people do not care whether their doctor writes things down by hand or types into a computer during office visits.

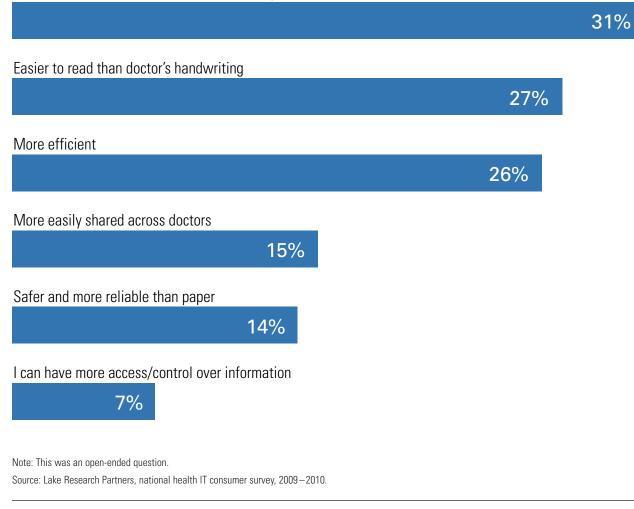
### **Reasons Why Some Prefer Doctor to Use a Computer During Visits**

Why do you want your doctor to use a computer while in an office visit?

BASE: ADULTS WHO PREFER THEIR DOCTOR TO USE A COMPUTER (n=366)

#### Info will be more accurate / doctor won't forget

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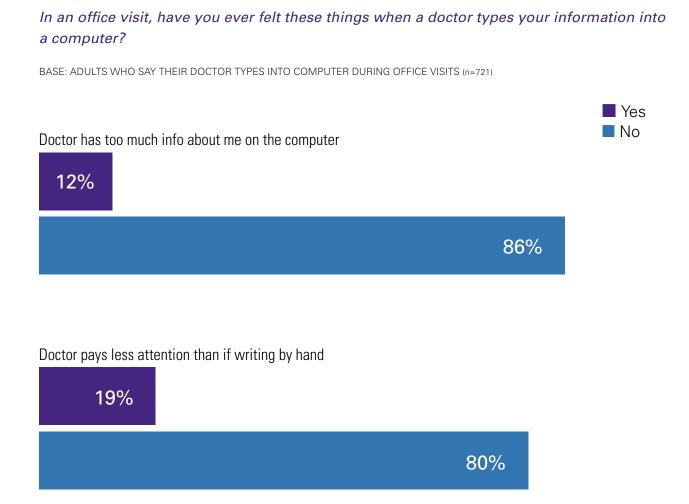


Health IT Consumer Survey Use in Doctor's Office

Accuracy is a main reason some patients prefer their doctors to use computers during their office visits.

Better legibility and efficiency are also factors mentioned by these patients.

### **Feelings About Heath IT Use in Doctor's Office**

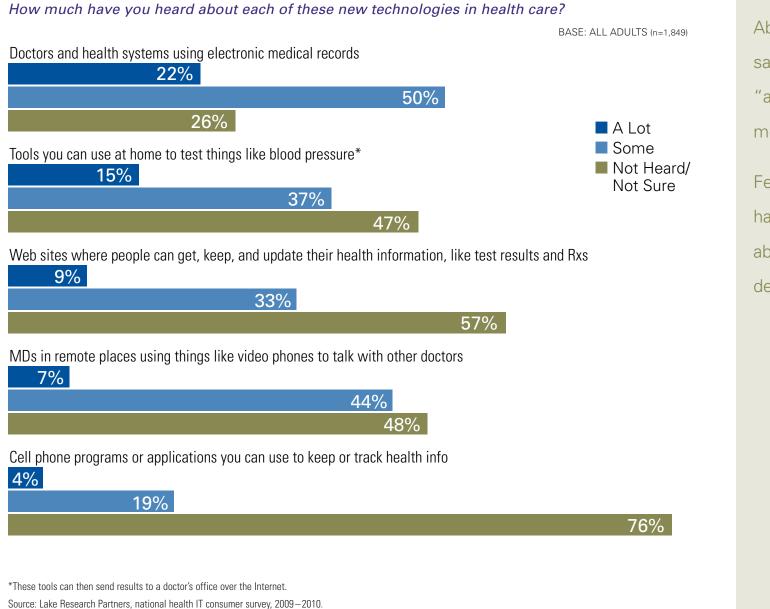


Health IT Consumer Survey Use in Doctor's Office

A large majority of patients whose doctors use a computer during office visits are not worried about too much personal information being in the record.

Further, most do not feel that their doctor pays less attention to them as a result of typing during visits.

### **Familiarity with Health IT Technologies**



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#### Health IT Consumer Survey New Technologies and Devices

About one in five people say they have heard "a lot" about electronic medical records. Fewer than one in ten has heard "a lot"

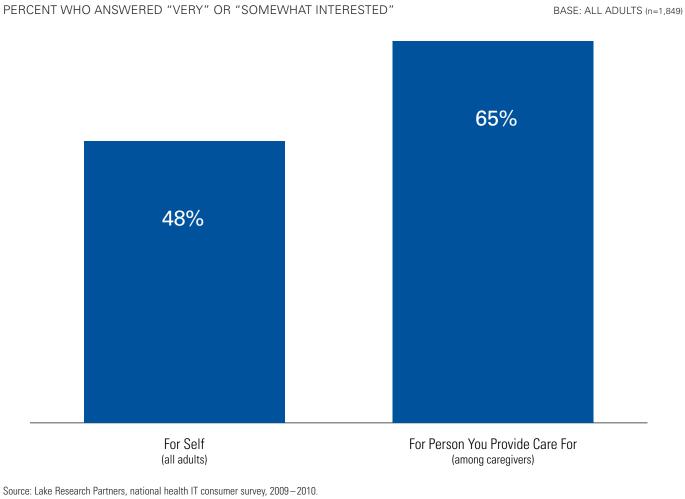
about other health IT

developments.

#### **Interest in Devices**

**Description used in survey:** "Some doctors are starting to have patients use tools or devices at home that can test things like blood sugar, blood pressure, or other health information. The tools can be plugged into your computer and you can send the results directly to the doctor's office. This can all be done from your home."

Would you be interested in learning about these different tools?



#### Health IT Consumer Survey New Technologies and Devices

Nearly half of respondents say they would be interested in learning more about devices they could use to manage their health.

Two-thirds of caregivers are interested in devices for the person they care for.

#### Interest in Devices, by Demographic Group

**Description used in survey:** "Some doctors are starting to have patients use tools or devices at home that can test things like blood sugar, blood pressure, or other health information. The tools can be plugged into your computer and you can send the results directly to the doctor's office. This can all be done from your home."

Would you be interested in learning about these different tools?

PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "VERY" OR "SOMEWHAT INTERESTED"

BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)

All Adults	48%
PHR Users	66%
4+ Chronic Conditions	63%
Caregivers	60%
Latinos	60%
Frequent Internet Users	59%
Doctor Has EHR	57%
Residents of the Western States	56%
Asian Americans	56%
African Americans	55%
Ages 45 to 54	54%

Health IT Consumer Survey New Technologies and Devices

Current PHR users and those with four or more chronic conditions are the most likely to express interest in devices.

### Interest in Health Applications, by Type of Activity

Description used in survey: There are Web sites, programs, and applications that you can use to keep track of your health. If you wanted to, you could share this information with your doctor.

How interested would you be in using a Web site, program, or application to...?

PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "VERY" OR "SOMEWHAT INTERESTED"

BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1.849)

Health IT Consumer Survey New Technologies and Devices

More than half of adults are interested in one or more types of healthrelated applications.

.. . . . .

Track info about a chronic illness*					_	
				42%		
Frack your diet and calories						
			36%			
Frack your exercise						
		339	%			
Remind you when to take Rxs						
		30%				
Frack your mood						
	23%					

### Interest in Health Applications, by Demographic Group

I ENCENT INTERECTED IN ONE ON MORE ONLINE AT EICANON		
All Adults	55%	
Has Smartphone		80%
PHR Users		78%
Frequent Internet Users	70	0%
College Graduates	67%	
Ages 29 to 45	67%	
Latinos	66%	
Parents of Child Under 18	64%	
African American Men	64%	
Caregivers	63%	
Uninsured	60%	
Doctor Has EHR	60%	
Asian Americans	59%	

PERCENT INTERESTED IN ONE OR MORE ONLINE APPLICATIONS

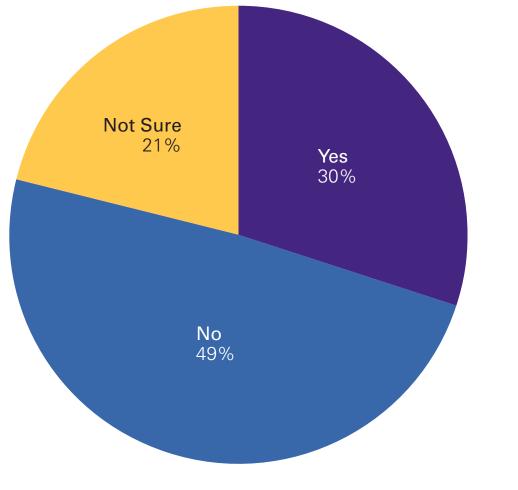
BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)

#### Health IT Consumer Survey New Technologies and Devices

Smartphone users and frequent Internet users are among the most interested in online applications.

### **Using Applications on Smartphones**

Would you be interested in using any of these programs or applications on an iPhone or other cell [smart] phone?



BASE: ADULTS WHO OWN A SMARTPHONE (n=389)

#### Health IT Consumer Survey New Technologies and Devices

While smartphone users are interested in online applications, only 30 percent want to use them on their phones.

### **Perceived Benefits of Devices and Applications**

Here are some ways that using Web sites, programs, or tools can help people. How helpful would each of these be for you?

PERCENT WHO ANSWERED "VERY" OR "SOMEWHAT HELPFUL"

BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)

60%

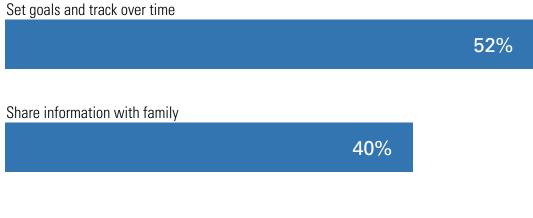
55%

Health IT Consumer Survey New Technologies and Devices

Being able to share information with doctors is a top benefit of devices and applications.

Print information to take with you to doctor's office

Send information via Internet, without going into doctor's office



#### Reasons to Use More Health IT

Some people say technology like electronic medical records, tools, and Web sites can help people and the health care system. On a scale of 1 to 7, please rate whether you personally think each of these is a reason to use more health care technology.

PERCENT WHO RATED THIS FROM 5 TO 7

BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)

• Technology can help keep all of your information in one place so all your doctors can see it. This means you would not have to tell your same medical history, illnesses, and health problems every time you see a new doctor. You would not have to ask for tests or results from other doctors, and you would not have to bring test results, information about medicines, or other information to see a doctor.

#### SCORE: 62 PERCENT

- Technology can let all of your doctors, nurses and pharmacists have the same information about you. This means fewer medical mistakes, and better chances of getting the right care. SCORE: 60 PERCENT
- Your doctors could have all of your information right there. This lets them spend less time asking the same questions and more time listening and talking with you. SCORE: 59 PERCENT
- It costs us about 35 cents of each health care dollar to run the health care system. Using more health information technology could save money and help lower health care costs for everyone. SCORE: 58 PERCENT continued on the next page...

#### **Health IT Consumer Survey**

The reasons to use health IT are consistent with the frustrations that people experience with the health care system.

Patients want to improve communication among their providers and spend more quality time with their doctor.

#### Reasons to Use More Health IT, continued

Some people say technology like electronic medical records, tools, and Web sites can help people and the health care system. On a scale of 1 to 7, please rate whether you personally think each of these is a reason to use more health care technology.

PERCENT WHO RATED THIS FROM 5 TO 7

BASE: ALL ADULTS (n=1,849)

• Technology can make it easier for you to schedule a doctor visit, look at test results, renew your medicine, and talk with your doctors.

#### SCORE: 55 PERCENT

• Technology can give your doctor more information about you and your health. This can let your doctor really get to know you better.

SCORE: 54 PERCENT

• With more technology and information, you could feel more in control of your health and the type of health care you receive.

#### SCORE: 48 PERCENT

• Things like electronic health records—even sending emails back and forth—can improve your relationship with your doctor.

SCORE: 43 PERCENT

Patients seem less interested in using health IT to increase selfempowerment than they are in using health IT to help their doctor to be more effective.

#### Health IT Consumer Survey

#### Author

Tresa Undem is vice president of Lake Research Partners, a public opinion and policy research firm with offices in Washington, D.C., Berkeley, CA, and New York, NY.

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#### Methodology

The survey was conducted December 18, 2009 through January 15, 2010 among a representative sample of 1,849 adults nationwide, using Knowledge Networks. The survey included oversamples among African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and users of online personal health records (PHRs). The margin of error is  $\pm$  3 percentage points for the total results, and  $\pm$  6 points for results among PHR users.

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