

Health Information Technology Use Among Men and Women Aged 18–64: Early Release of Estimates From the National Health Interview Survey, January–June 2009

by Robin A. Cohen, Ph.D., and Barbara Stussman, B.A., Division of Health Interview Statistics

The dynamic involvement of consumers in managing their own health care includes activities such as the use of computers (hardware and software) to access, retrieve, store, or share health care information. This may include using the Internet to look up health information, using e-mail or text messaging to communicate with health care providers or pharmacies, and having an electronic health record. As the percentage of adults in the U.S. who use the Internet continues to grow, the Internet may become increasingly important as a source of health information for consumers. Although use of the Internet has the potential to improve consumer health by facilitating communication between providers and patients, and among providers, previous research (1) has found that many consumers are concerned about security and confidentiality issues related to scheduling medical appointments or accessing personal health records online.

Health information technology (HIT) is the application of information processing—through computer hardware and software—to the storage, retrieval, sharing, and use of health care information, data, and knowledge for communication and decision making (2). Research on HIT use has shown that 74% of adults in the U.S. use the Internet, and 61% have used the Internet to search for health or medical information (3). Additionally, 49% of adults have accessed a website that provides information about a specific medical condition or problem. Adults between the ages of 18 and 49 are more likely than older adults to use HIT.

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) was the first nationally representative household survey to collect data on the use of HIT. In 2009, NHIS included five questions on HIT. This *Health E-Stat* provides preliminary estimates of HIT use among men and women aged 18–64, using NHIS data collected from January through June 2009.

From January through June 2009, 51% of adults aged 18–64 had used the Internet to look up health information during the past 12 months (Figure 1).

Over 3% of adults aged 18–64 had used an online chat group to learn about health topics in the past 12 months.

Among adults aged 18–64, women were more likely than men to look up health information on the Internet (58.0% versus 43.4%) and were also more likely to use online chat groups to learn about health topics (4.1% versus 2.5%).

From January through June 2009, almost 5% of adults aged 18–64 had communicated with a health care provider by e-mail in the past 12 months (Figure 2).



During the first 6 months of 2009, 6% of adults aged 18–64 requested a refill of a prescription on the Internet, and almost 3% had made an appointment with a health care provider in the past 12 months using the Internet.

Among adults aged 18–64, women were more likely than men to request a prescription refill on the Internet (6.6% versus 5.3%), make an appointment using the Internet (3.5% versus 1.8%), and communicate with a health care provider over e-mail (5.6% versus 4.2 %).

Survey Description

NHIS is a nationally representative survey of the civilian noninstitutionalized household population of the United States conducted throughout the year from January through December by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics. NHIS collects information on health and health care for all eligible members of the sampled households through in-person interviews. Additional information, including information on the use of HIT, is self-reported by one randomly sampled adult (the “sample adult”) within a family, except in rare cases when the selected adult is physically or mentally incapable of responding.

Data Analysis

Analyses were based on data collected from 7,192 sample adults aged 18–64 from January through June 2009. Estimates were calculated by using the NHIS survey weights, which are calibrated to census totals for sex, age, and race/ethnicity of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population. Weights for 2009 NHIS data were derived from 2000-census-based population estimates. The estimates in this report are being released prior to final data editing and final weighting, to provide access to the most recent NHIS information on HIT. The resulting estimates are generally within 0.1–0.3 percentage points of those based on the editing procedures used for the final data files. Item nonresponse on the HIT items was approximately 1%. Estimates were calculated using SUDAAN software (4), to account for the complex sample design of NHIS, and were weighted to reflect the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population. Estimates shown have less than or equal to 30% relative standard error. Estimates were compared using two-tailed significance tests at the 0.05 level.

Visit the NHIS website for more information (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>).

References

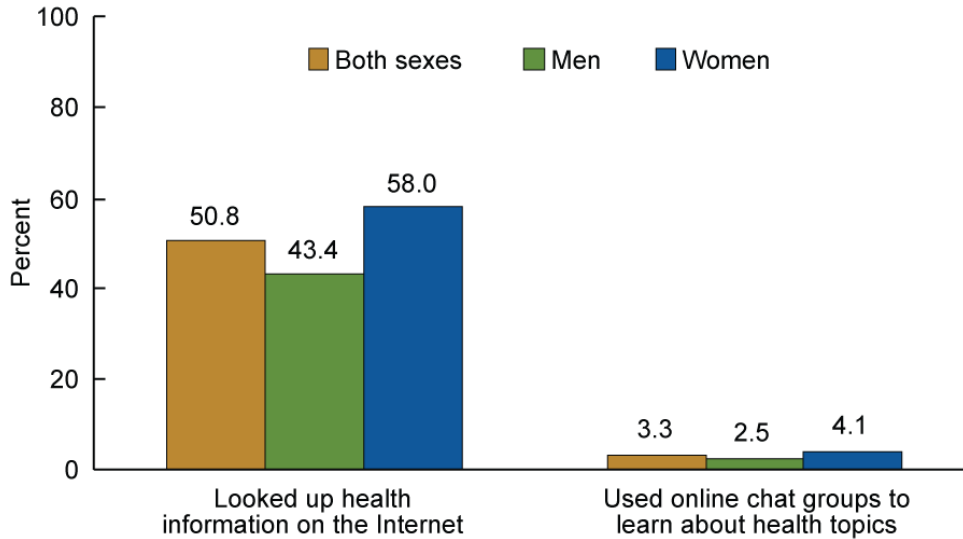
1. California HealthCare Foundation. Snapshot: The state of health information technology in California [online]. 2008. Available from: <http://www.chcf.org/documents/chronicdisease/HITSnapshot08.pdf>.
2. Brailer D, Thompson T. Health IT strategic framework. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services. 2004.
3. Fox S, Jones S. The social life of health information [online]. Pew Internet and American Life Project. 2009. Available from: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/8-The-Social-Life-of-Health-Information.aspx>.
4. Research Triangle Institute. SUDAAN [computer software]. Release 9.1. Research Triangle Park, NC. 2004.

Suggested Citation

Cohen RA, Stussman B. Health information technology use among men and women aged 18–64: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, January–June 2009. Health E-Stats. National Center for Health Statistics. February 2005.

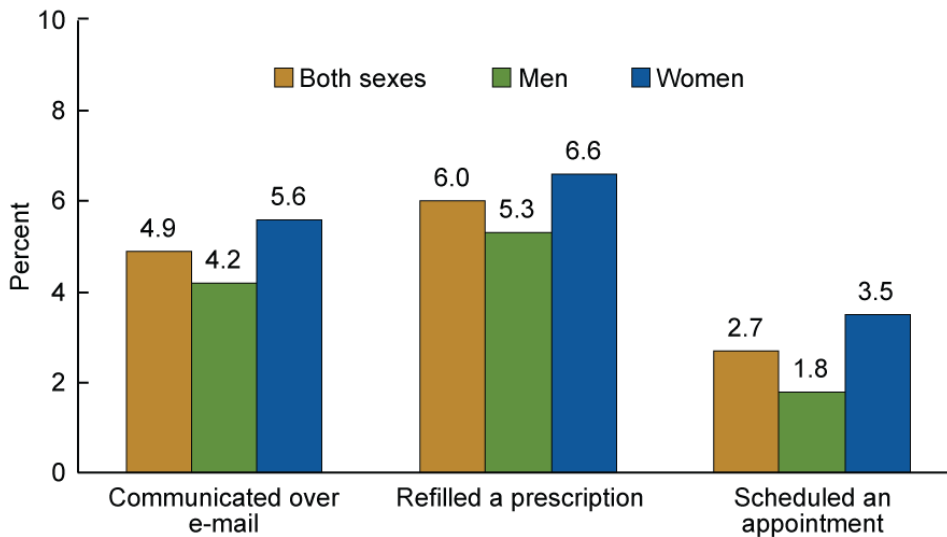
Figures

Figure 1. Percentages of adults aged 18–64 who in the past 12 months looked up health information on the Internet or used online chat groups to learn about health topics, by sex: United States, January–June 2009



SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2009 Sample Adult component. Estimates are based on data collected from January through June. Data are based on household interviews of a sample of the civilian noninstitutionalized population.

Figure 2. Percentages of adults aged 18–64 who in the past 12 months used the Internet to communicate with a health care provider over e-mail, refill a prescription, or schedule an appointment with a health care provider, by sex: United States, January–June 2009



SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2009 Sample Adult component. Estimates are based on data collected from January through June. Data are based on household interviews of a sample of the civilian noninstitutionalized population.