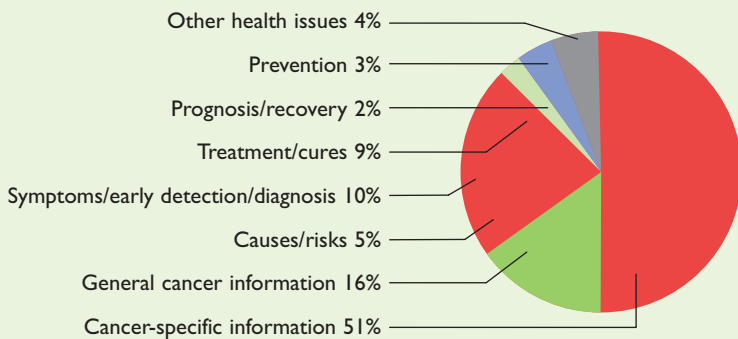
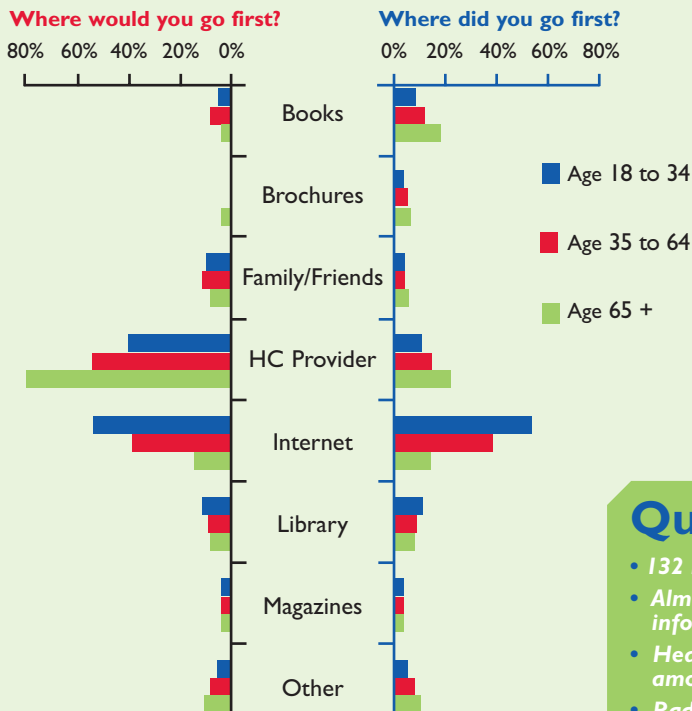


45 Percent of Americans Have Looked for Cancer Information

Almost half of all Americans have sought out information on the disease and its causes, prevention, and treatment. The charts below illustrate the cancer-related information sought by the public and the sources from which they seek such information.



The most recent time you looked for information on cancer...



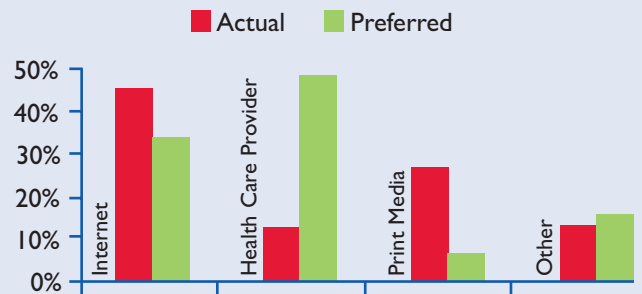
Considerations in Using HINTS Data

- The National Cancer Institute (NCI) fielded the first Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS 2003) in 2002 and 2003, surveying 6,369 Americans.
- Respondents were contacted via telephone random digit-dialing.
- Most respondents were White (75.9%), age 40 or older (63.0%), and female (60.4%) [unweighted sample percentages].

Actual and Preferred Sources of Cancer Information

There are striking differences between where people say they would go (preferred) for health information and where they actually went for health information when asked about their last search. For example, while nearly 50% of Americans report that they would go to their health care provider for health information, only 11% actually sought information from a health care provider during their last search.

Actual and preferred sources of cancer information



Quick Facts:

- 132 million Americans are online.
- Almost 64% of the online population has searched for health information on the Internet.
- Health care providers are the most trusted health information source among Americans.
- Radio is the least trusted health information source among Americans.

In this HINTS Brief, we explore patterns of health and cancer information-seeking among the American public and highlight the ways in which information seeking differs by age, race, and gender.

Health Information Seeking Preference and Practice: Differences by Age, Gender, and Race

Age

The percentage of information seekers increases with age for all sources of information except the Internet. When asked about use of the Internet to search for health information, the percentage of respondents decreases with age. That is, younger people tend to use the Internet the most for health information, while older people tend to seek health information from sources such as health care providers or books.

When seeking health information, more than 80% of people say they choose to use health care providers and the Internet first. These preferences vary among age groups, with older Americans (65 years and older) being almost ten times more likely to say they prefer going to health care providers first before going to the Internet (75.6% vs. 7.7%). People aged 18-34 and 35-64 are almost equally split between providers and the Internet, saying that the Internet would be their first choice for health information (38.9% vs. 46.6%).

Across all ages, the number of people who first went to the Internet exceeded the number who first went to health care providers. Among older Americans, 21.4% reported going to the Internet first compared with 20.9% who reported going to health care providers first. People aged 18-24 were almost nine times as likely to go to the Internet first (61% vs. 7%).

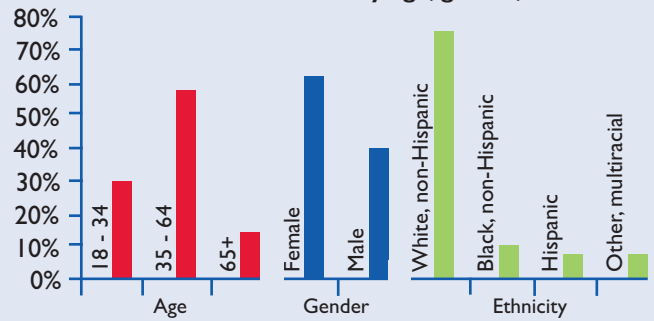
Gender

HINTS data indicate that more women than men seek information about cancer from sources other than the Internet (e.g., health care providers, magazines, books). When men seek information about cancer, a greater percentage of them look to the Internet compared with women.

Race/Ethnicity

Compared with all other racial and ethnic groups, a higher percentage of Hispanics seek information from health care providers and friends or family, and a higher percentage of African Americans seek information from printed materials. More Whites and non-Hispanic others (Asians, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and people who named multiple races) look to the Internet for health information.

Percentage of Americans who sought cancer information: Differences by age, gender, and race



How Can These Data Inform Your Work?

It is clear from these data that Americans are actively engaged in seeking health information. Key preferences for health information that may have implications for your work include:

- Increasingly, Americans are looking to the Internet.
- For African Americans, print is still a preferred source.
- Health professionals remain the most trusted source, particularly for older Americans and Hispanics.

These data suggest the need for targeted planning efforts, including formative research. One application might be to disseminate screening messages for older Americans through health care providers. An alternative would be to feature providers in photographs, quotes, or public service announcements in print or other media. For younger adults, it may be more effective to disseminate information or collect formative data via the Internet. Finally, it is always important to consider that variation in information preferences may still exist. Therefore, it is beneficial to (1) know your audience and (2) implement multiple strategies for maximum impact—particularly when seeking to reach diverse audiences.

For more expanded information on specific health information-seeking behaviors from HINTS visit <http://hints.cancer.gov> to view abstracts, datasets, and presentations.

About HINTS

HINTS was created to monitor changes in the rapidly-evolving field of health communication. The survey data can be used to understand how adults 18 years and older use different communication channels to obtain health information for themselves and their loved ones, and to create more effective health communication strategies across populations.

HINTS Briefs provide a snapshot of noteworthy, data-driven research findings. They introduce population-level estimates for specific questions in the survey and summarize significant research findings that are a result of analyzing how age, race, and gender influence specific outcomes.

For More Information on Cancer

- Call the NCI Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)
- Visit <http://cancer.gov>
- Order NCI publications at <http://www.cancer.gov/publications>

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