

Two in Five Adults Keep Personal or Family Health Records and Almost Everybody Thinks This Is a Good Idea

Electronic health records likely to grow rapidly

Two in five (42%) adults keep personal or family health records, that is “one place where you keep all your medical records with the results of all your medical tests and details about prescriptions, vaccinations, treatments, known allergies and other health care information.” Almost every one (84%) of those who do not keep health records think it would be a good idea to do so.

At the moment, only a small minority (13%) of those with health records keep them electronically but many people – 40% of all those who do not have electronic medical records – think it at least somewhat likely that they will do so.

These are a few of the results of a nationwide survey by Harris Interactive of 2,242 adults who were surveyed online between July 12 and 18, 2004.

Other interesting findings include:

- Women (45%) are slightly more likely than men (38%) to keep personal or family medical records.
- Older people are more likely than younger people to keep personal or family medical records. Fully 58% of people over 65 do so.
- Among the many “good reasons” for keeping personal or family medical records are:
 - The ability to provide doctors with useful information (78%).
 - The ability to look back and recall what care was received (78%).
 - The ability to have access to the record in case of emergency (77%).
 - To help ensure the proper use of prescription drugs (54%).

The biggest concerns people have about keeping medical records are possible threats to one’s privacy (68%), and security (66%). Many, but far fewer, people are concerned about possible errors (37%), that critical information won’t be accessible in an emergency (37%), or that they won’t be able to keep their records up to date (33%).

TABLE 1

Those Who Keep Health Records

“Do you have a personal or family health record, that is, one place where you keep all your medical records with the results of all your medical tests and details about prescriptions, vaccinations, treatments and other health care information?”

Base: All Adults

	Total
	%
All Adults	42
Sex	
Male	38
Female	45
Age	
18 – 24	32
25 – 29	29
30 – 39	41
40 – 49	46
50 – 64	38
65+	58
Education	
High school or less	41
Some college	41
College graduate	42
Post graduate	50
Income (Household)	
Less than \$15,000	33
\$15,000 - \$24,999	36
\$25,000 - \$34,999	46
\$35,000 - \$49,999	43
\$50,000 - \$74,999	42
\$75,000 or more	47

TABLE 2

Keep Health Records For Whom?

“For whom do you keep the health record?”

Base: All Who Have Health Records

	Total
	%
Myself	95
My spouse	51
My child(ren)	38
Other person/people	6

TABLE 3

Would A Health Record Be A Good Idea?

“Do you think it would be a good idea to have such a personal or family health record?”

Base: All Who Do Not Have Health Records

	Total
	%
Yes, it would be a good idea	84
No, it would not be a good idea	5
Not sure	11

TABLE 4

Good Reasons For Keeping A Health Record

“Which of the following do you think are good reasons for having a personal or family health record?”

Base: All Adults

	Total
	%
The ability to provide all of my doctors or health care providers with information about me or my family’s health and treatment	78
The ability to look back and recall exactly what treatment, prescription drugs or other care I received and have used	78
The ability to provide access to key parts of the health record in case of emergency	77
As a way to provide information to different doctors or health care professionals if I were receiving care from more than one of these	76
To help ensure the proper use of prescription drugs	54

TABLE 5

Form Of Current Health Record

“In what form do you keep your personal or family health record?”

Base: All Who Have Health Records

	Total
	%
As a file/files or in a drawer	86
In a formal health record book or journal	15
Electronic Health Record (NET)	13
On my computer using my own filing system	11
On my computer using a specific filing system that I purchased for this	2
As a health record website, such as MyDocOnline™	1
Other	6

TABLE 6

Likelihood Of Starting To Keep Electronic Records

“How likely is it that you might start a new electronic health or medical record that is either computer-based or online?”

Base: All Not Currently Using Electronic Records

	Total
	%
Somewhat/Very Likely (NET)	40
Very likely	4
Somewhat likely	36
Not At All Likely/Not Very Likely (NET)	60
Not very likely	39
Not at all likely	20

NOTE: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 7

Serious Concerns About Keeping Online Health Records

“Which of the following are serious concerns that you might have about keeping an online personal or family health record?”

Base: All Adults

	Total
	%
Privacy	68
Security	66
Errors in the records	37
Critical information won't be accessible in an emergency	37
Not being able to keep it up to date	33
Information from my doctors won't be updated or accurate	29
Not being able to transfer records to and from different doctors	26
Inability to understand or interpret items	20
Other	5
Not sure	7

Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States between July 12 and 18, 2004 among a nationwide cross section of 2,242 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a sampling error of ± 2 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (non-response), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online sample was not a probability sample.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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