AI and the Healthcare Journey: How Consumers Use, Trust, and Question AI

Findings from 200 AI-moderated in-depth interviews with consumers nationally conducted by Aha Media and Klein & Partners

October 2026

klein & partners
POWERED BY THINQINSIGHTS

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Methodology and definitions

Five takeaways from Fall 2025 and Spring 2026

What two surveys of U.S. adults (1,000 in Fall 2025, 500 in Spring 2026) told us about AI and health information

10 of 14

Comfort with AI is retreating

Fully acceptable AI fell 5 or more points in 10 of 14 healthcare interactions, led by reminders (down 13). Consumers want AI to assist, not replace.

12 of 14

Trust slipped almost everywhere

Consumers ranked 14 names on trust, from physicians to Walmart. Fewer ranked 12 in their top three. Only physicians and health insurers held or gained.

12% to 22%

Confusion is growing faster than rejection

“Don’t know enough” about hospital AI nearly doubled. “Not sure” also grew on AI Overview sources (37% to 42%) and familiar hospitals (13% to 20%).

56% vs 39%

More say they verify than feel able to spot errors

56% say they verify AI health information before acting. Only 39% feel confident they can recognize inaccurate AI health information.

66% and 63%

Trust is fragile, and blame is shared

66% would be less likely to use AI again after a bad answer. 63% hold the AI company responsible; 54% say hospitals and doctors are responsible for how they appear in AI.

Why?

What the surveys couldn’t tell us

Why trust slipped, where confusion comes from, and what would earn it back. Wave III set out to answer that.

Why Wave III looks different

From measuring what consumers do to understanding why they trust or doubt AI

1. **Two surveys measured the shift**

   Fall 2025 (1,000 U.S. adults) and Spring 2026 (500 U.S. adults) tracked how consumers search for health information and how much they trust AI.

2. **The numbers raised bigger questions**

   Trust slipped and “not sure” answers grew. The surveys showed that it happened, but not why, or what would earn trust back.

3. **Usage is everywhere; trust is the gap**

   AI usage and adoption numbers are now widely published. How consumers decide whether to trust AI with their health is the open question.

4. **Wave III lets consumers explain**

   U.S. adults describe their experiences with AI and health in their own words, with numbers and quotes side by side.

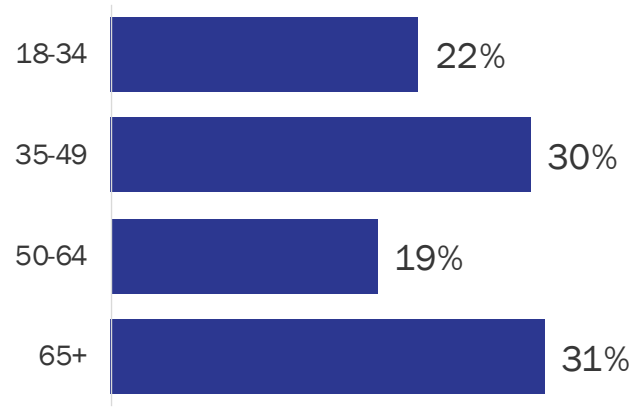
200 consumers, one in-depth conversation with each

Study overview and sample profile

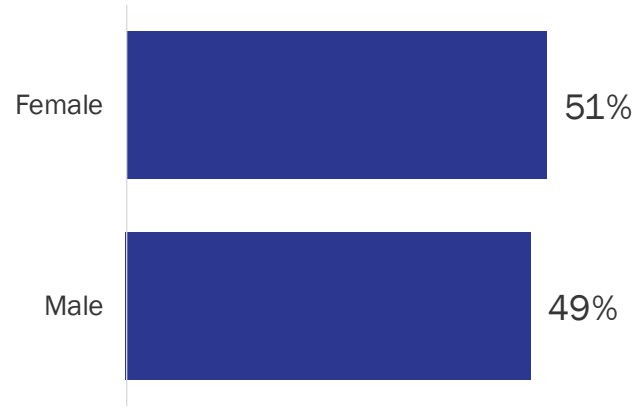
200

AI-moderated in-depth interviews fielded Oct. 3-6, 2026, covering trust in healthcare, health ads, AI-assisted health search, and AI in hospital communications and care.

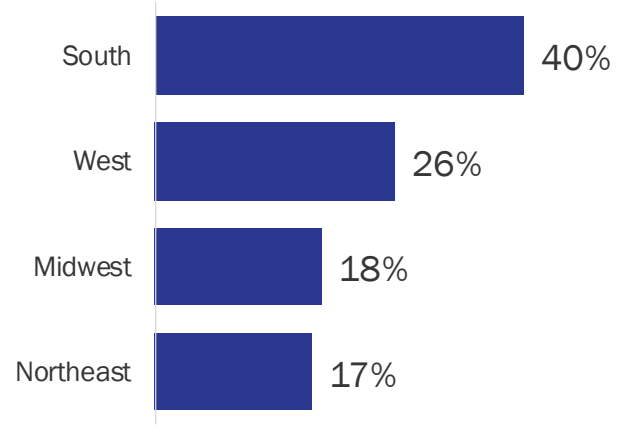
Age



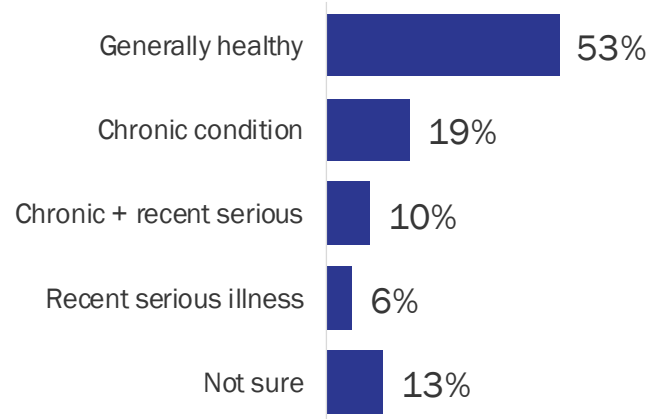
Gender



Region



Health status



Base: all respondents (n=200). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Executive Summary

What did we learn?

Consumers treat AI as a starting point, not a substitute for their doctor

What 200 consumers told us about AI in their healthcare journey

41% | 42%

trust AI for health searches (7-10) versus distrust it (0-4). The market is polarized.

57%

name doctors as the healthcare group they trust most; only 21% think AI diagnoses better than a doctor.

58%

used the AI information they found, but only 8% went on to contact a medical professional.

60%

do not look at where AI gets its information, so credibility is judged on feel, not evidence.

How consumers use AI

Symptom lookup leads (35%), followed by treatment, test or procedure research (21%). Half (49%) have not used AI for any listed health topic. Use is a one-step research aid that frames a question for a clinician.

What they fear

A plausible answer that is wrong or incomplete. 32% say false or inaccurate information would make a bad experience, and 18% name physical harm, delayed care or unsafe treatment guidance.

What earns trust

Accuracy (25%) and a way to check the answer (17%). Reliable medical sourcing and better performance are each cited by 29% as the way to regain trust after a bad answer.

Six findings that surprised us

Where the data challenged conventional wisdom about consumers and AI

57% vs 24%

The AI trust gap is about age and gender, not just attitude

Consumers under 50 are more than twice as likely to trust AI (7-10) as those 50 and older. Men under 50 (67%) sit far ahead of women under 50 (41%).

59% vs 23%

The people who trust AI most also check it most

High-trust respondents are far more likely to look at AI sources than low-trust ones. Verification is a feature of adoption, not of skepticism. Yet 41% of high-trust users never check.

66% vs 41%

Trust in healthcare does not transfer to AI

Two in three trust healthcare, but only 41% trust AI for health searches. One in five respondents (21%) trust healthcare and distrust AI at the same time.

9% vs 12%

A low bad-experience rate hides a usage gap

Just 9% report a bad AI health search, but 49% have never used AI for a listed health topic. Among those who have, about 1 in 8 has had a bad experience.

35% vs 21%

Hospitals get a pass on AI ads, not on patient information

AI-written patient information on a hospital website draws 35% negative reactions, versus 21% for AI in advertising, where 27% are simply indifferent.

57% vs 20%

Being told about an AI scribe: more favorable

Among the 14% who were told their doctor used an AI note-taker, 57% are favorable; among those not told, just 20% expect to be favorable (an expectation, not an experience.

Seven strategic recommendations for healthcare brands

How to earn trust in an AI-assisted healthcare journey

1	Be the source AI cites, and make it easy to check	Show clinician review on every health page and write citable content. 60% do not check AI sources today.
2	Write for the moment after the AI answer	Answer the questions that follow an AI answer, and end every page with a clear next step to care.
3	Keep clinicians at the center of your content	Name clinicians on health content. 57% trust doctors most; only 21% think AI out-diagnoses them.
4	Keep patient information human-written and clinician-reviewed	AI is more acceptable in ads; AI-written patient information draws 35% negative reactions.
5	Keep practical content accurate and current	Provider, location, insurance and treatment pages feed AI tools; 32% fear inaccurate information.
6	Explain how you use AI before patients encounter it	86% were never told about AI scribes, yet those who were are much more favorable.
7	Tailor how you talk about AI by audience	Trust splits by age, gender and mindset. Speak to five personas, always with a human path.

Five consumer personas

Defined by trust in AI for health search, whether they use it, and whether they check its sources

The Verified Adopter

24%

Trust, then verify

- Youngest, most male, healthiest
- Uses AI broadly and always checks sources
- 65% prefer the AI summary

The Confident Delegator

17%

"AI is smarter than me"

- Mid-age, male-leaning
- Uses AI, never checks sources
- Trusts it as "smarter than me"

The Wait-and-See Pragmatist

17%

Open, but not there yet

- Oldest of the AI users, 56% women
- 41% have tried AI for health
- Waiting for proof and a human fallback

The Human-First Holdout

33%

"Healthcare is for the living"

- Oldest, 66% women
- Has not used AI for health
- Distrust is human first, unfamiliarity second

The Disillusioned Trier

10%

Tried it, still not convinced

- Mid-age, 53% women
- Used AI, trust stayed low
- No one tells them it was checked

Trust in Healthcare

Who consumers trust, who they do not, and why

Two in three trust healthcare, but cost and profit motives temper it

Q1. Trust in healthcare in general

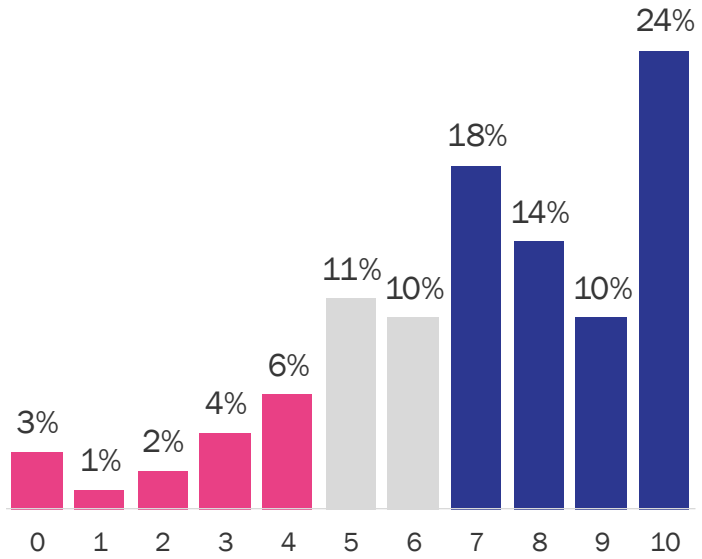
66%

rate their trust in healthcare 7-10; 21% rate it 5-6 and 16% rate it 0-4. Navy bars are positive drivers; pink bars are negative.

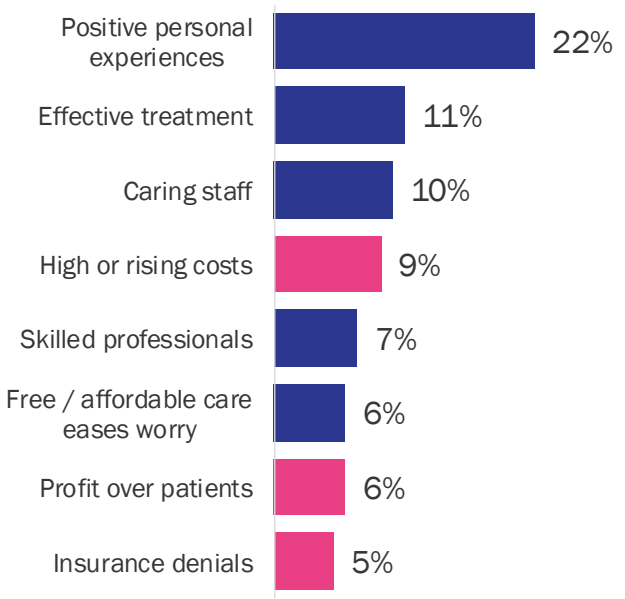
Mean rating: 7.1 on the 0-10 scale.

(6.52 trust rating in Wave II averaged across individual healthcare organization types)

Trust in healthcare 0 to 10 scale



Top reasons for the rating



> *"Doctors and nurses are well respected for treating patients, but even with insurance, healthcare still costs an arm and a leg for some people."*
>
> Female, 56

> *"I cannot afford anything regarding my insurance use because of its high deductible."*
>
> Female, 59

Base: all respondents (n=200) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Mean uses raw ratings.

Doctors are trusted most by far, with nurses a clear second — people over institutions

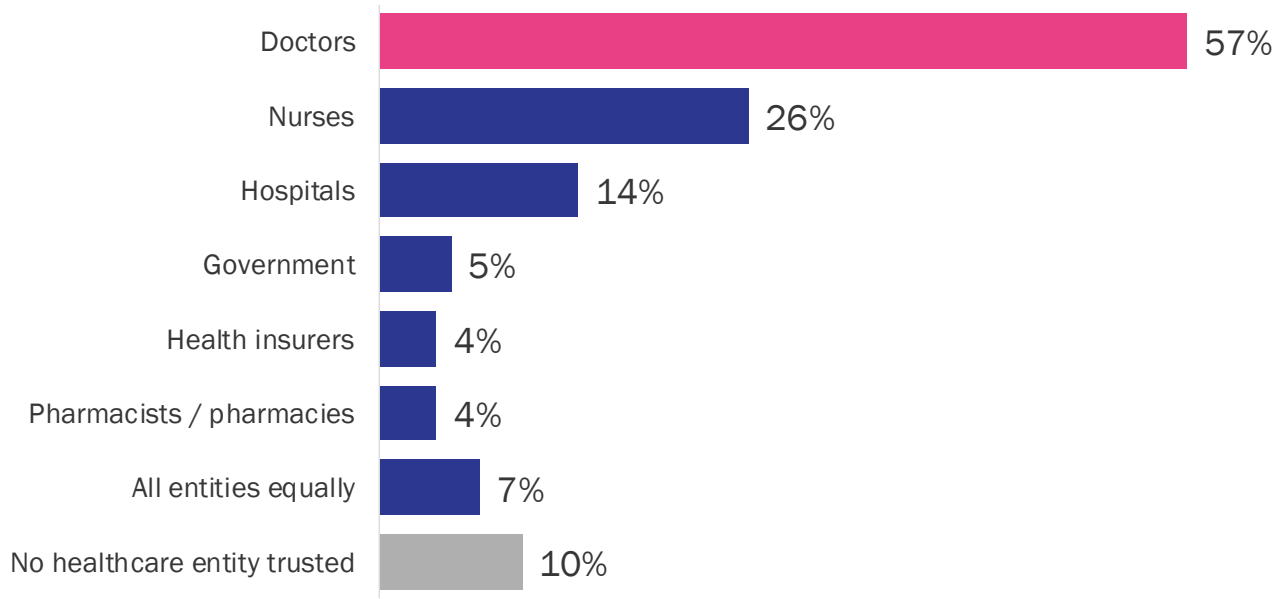
Q2. Healthcare group or entity trusted most

57%

name doctors as the healthcare group they trust most. Trust is personal: it centers on a particular clinician and a long relationship.

In the 2026 Wave II survey, physicians were rated the highest on trust (7.68)

Healthcare group trusted most



> *"My doctor has been treating me for over 20 years."*
>
> Female, 59

> *"Nurses, because they're the ones who actually spend the most time with patients and genuinely advocate for their wellbeing."*
>
> Male, 35

> *"To be honest the nurse but they can only do what they are told."*
>
> Female, 68

Base: all respondents (n=200). Multiple responses possible. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Government is the least trusted, ahead of pharma and insurers

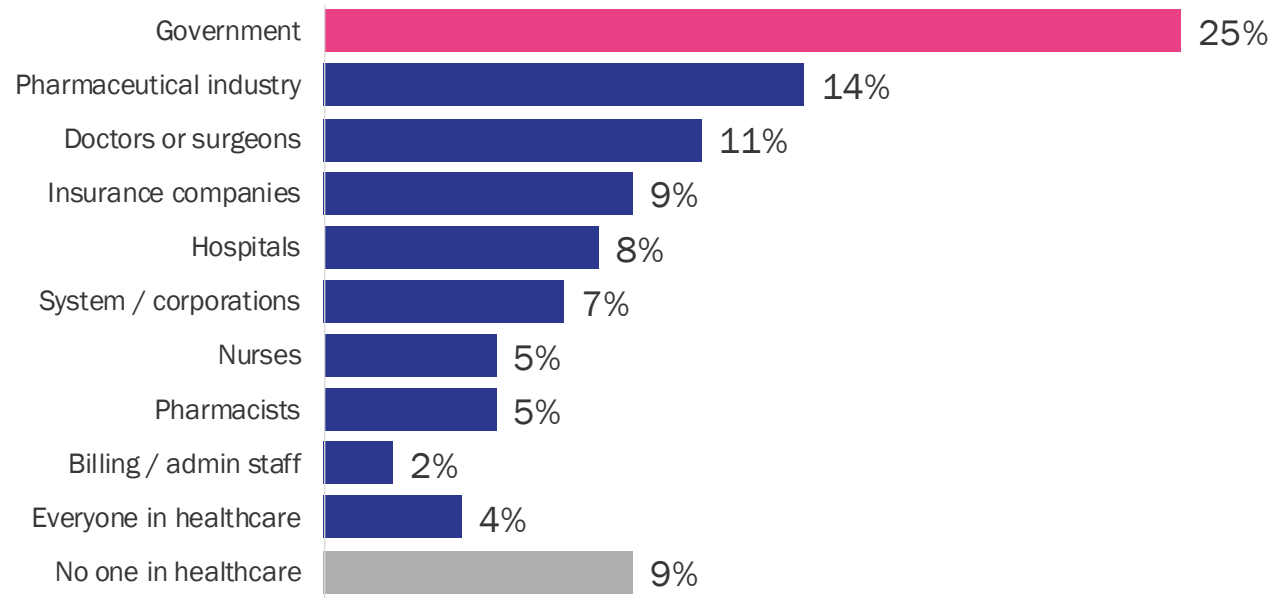
Q3. Healthcare group or entity trusted least

25%

name the government as least trusted followed by the Rx industry. One in ten name doctors or surgeons.

Note: NIH is cited by AI 27% of the time, second only to YouTube at 28%.

Healthcare group trusted least



> *"Government, because political and bureaucratic interests often seem to get in the way of what's actually best for patients."*
>
> Male, 35

> *"The recommendations from so-called experts, those recommending products or procedures from the companies funding them."*
>
> Male, 77

> *"All of them seem to be about money, only if you have the money, you get the best care."*
>
> Male, 66

Base: all respondents (n=200). Multiple responses possible. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Digital Health Ads

Whether relevant ads reach consumers, and what they do next

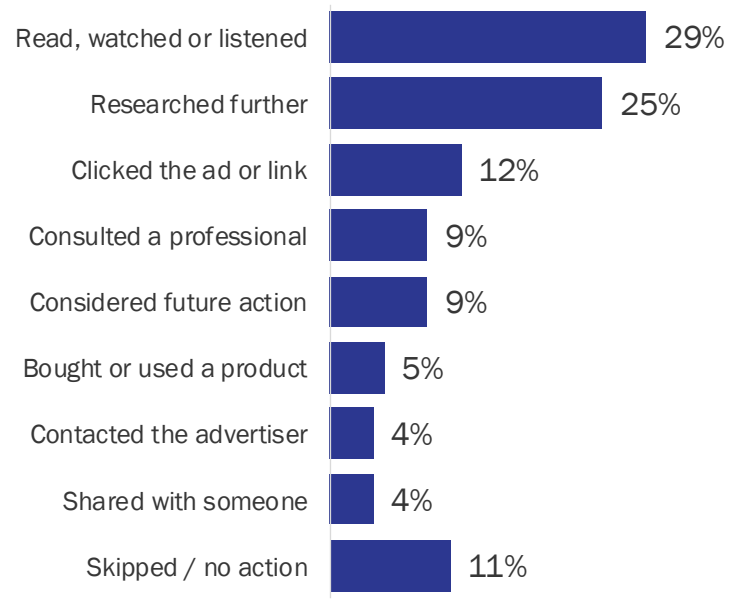
If you create an interesting and relevant digital ad during a consumer's search, six in ten will click on it for more information

Q4. Interesting digital ad about a health topic you were researching

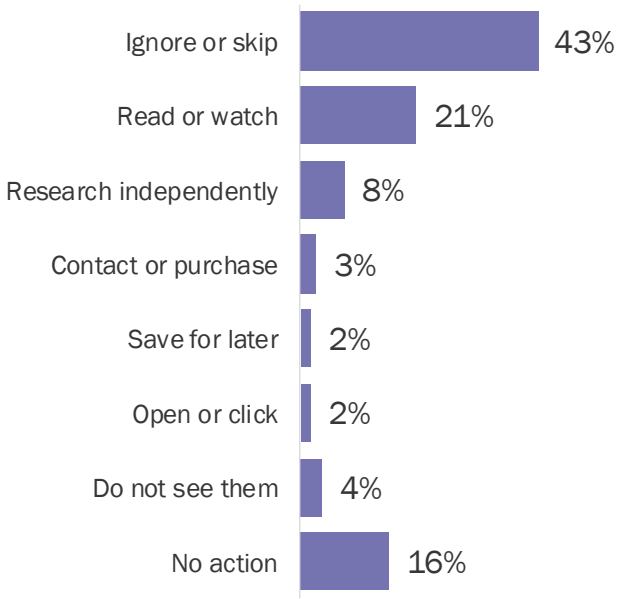
43%

saw an interesting digital ad on a health topic they were researching. Of those, 60% clicked on the ad.

Actions after seeing the ad of the 43%



Typical response to ads of the 57%



> *"I wasn't sure about it. I always like to do my own research. I don't believe everything I read."*
>
> Female, 69

> *"I prefer to get the info from a person."*
>
> Female, 62

Base: all respondents (n=200) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Curiosity and relevance drive clicks; credibility and security concerns stop them

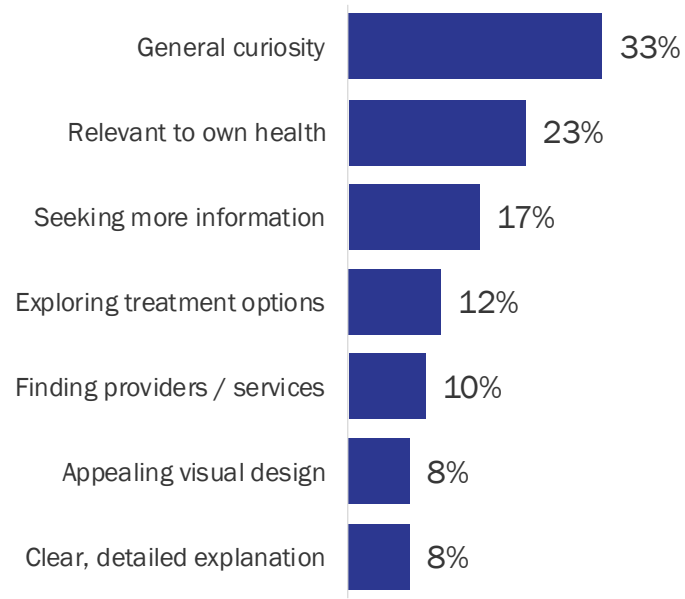
Q4. Reasons for clicking and not clicking

33%

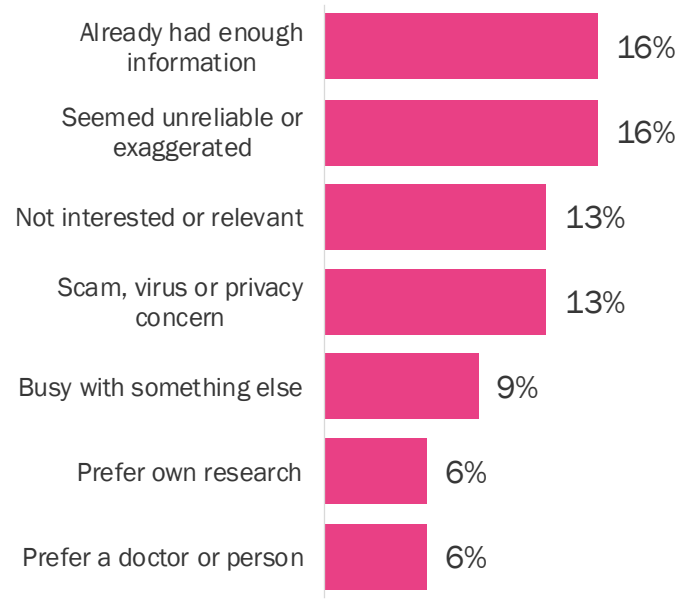
of clickers cite general curiosity. Among non-clickers, 16% found the ad unreliable or exaggerated and 13% feared scams or privacy loss.

Other Klein & Partners ad testing research shows that 'makes me curious to learn more' is a key influencer of action.

Why they clicked



Why they did not click



> *"Curiosity. I wanted to see if it was a more beneficial company than others."*
>
> Female, 27

> *"The pictures showed people just lifting off the tags, and that is not possible."*
>
> Female, 76

> *"I prefer to get the info from a person."*
>
> Female, 62

Base: respondents who answered the click question. Multiple responses possible. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

AI in Health Search

How much consumers trust it, what they ask it, and what they do next

Trust in AI for health search is polarized; what's more, 21% trust healthcare but distrust AI

Q5. Trust in using AI for healthcare searches

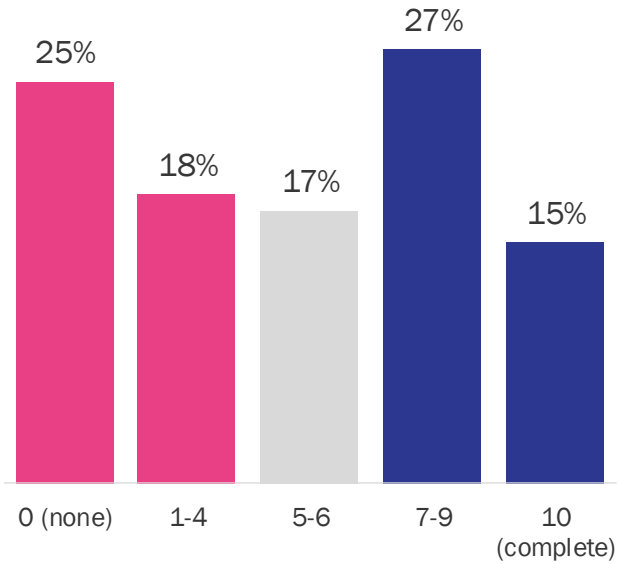
42% | 41%

distrust (0-4) versus trust (7-10) AI for healthcare searches. 17% sit in the middle (5-6). Pink reasons are concerns, navy are benefits.

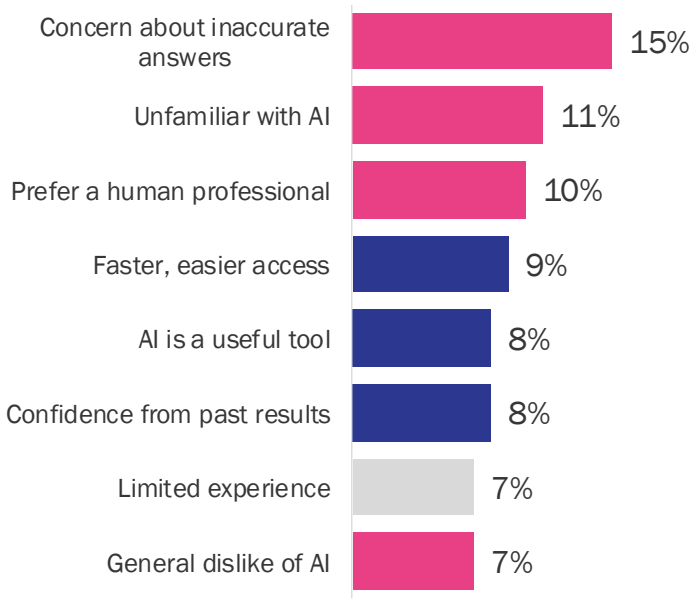
Mean rating: 5.0 on the 0-10 scale.

Wave II 2026 Survey – trust rating for Google AI Overview was just 6.62

Trust in AI for health search 0 to 10



Top reasons for the rating



> *"Healthcare is for the living, not for a tin man."*
>
> Female, 77

> *"AI can be helpful, but it can also be wrong, so I'd still check with a real doctor."*
>
> Male, 42

> *"Although if I'm going to live in this world, I guess I have to get used to it, don't I?"*
>
> Male, 76

Base: all respondents (n=200) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Mean uses raw ratings.

AI trust splits sharply by age and gender

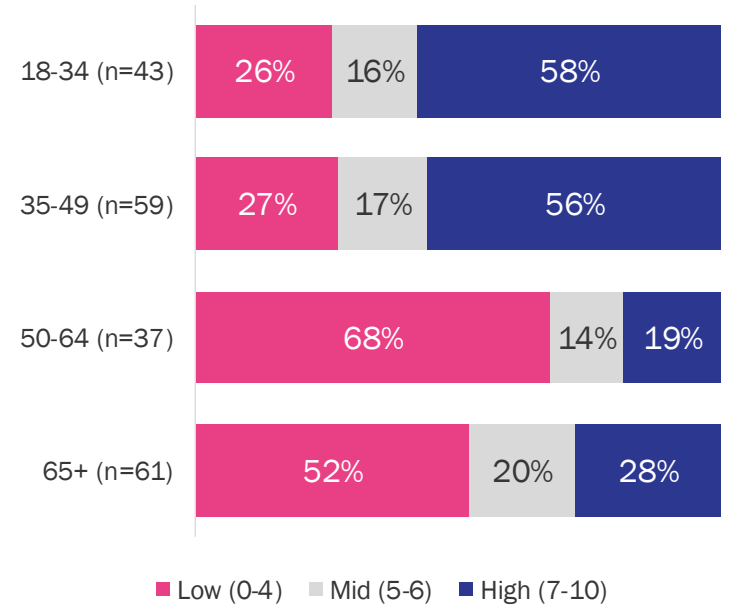
Cross-cut: AI trust (Q5) by age and gender

57% vs 24%

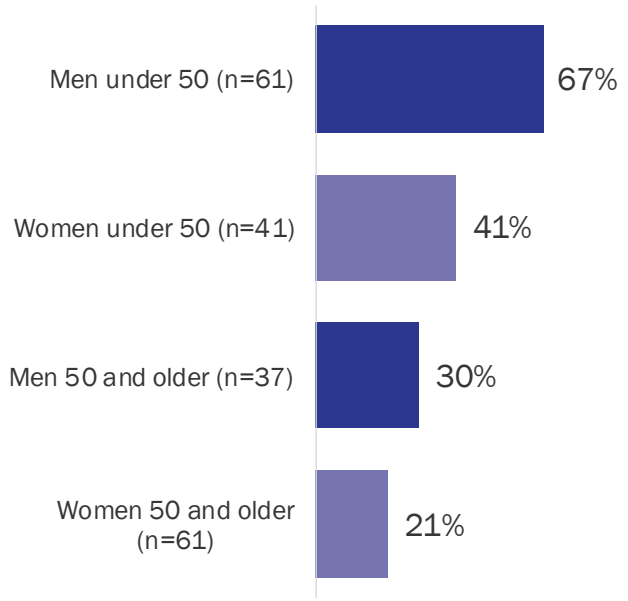
of consumers under 50 versus 50 and older rate their trust in AI for health search 7-10. Men (53%) trust AI far more than women (29%); this has been consistent across all three waves of our AI studies.

Women need much more convincing than men if they are to trust AI for healthcare searches.

AI trust by age



High trust (7-10)



> *"I've never been led astray yet."*
>
> Male, 46

> *"I'd rather talk to a human with knowledge."*
>
> Female, 31

> *"I don't see how a computer program can understand human health."*
>
> Female, 76

Base: all respondents (n=200). Subgroup bases are small, so read differences as directional. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

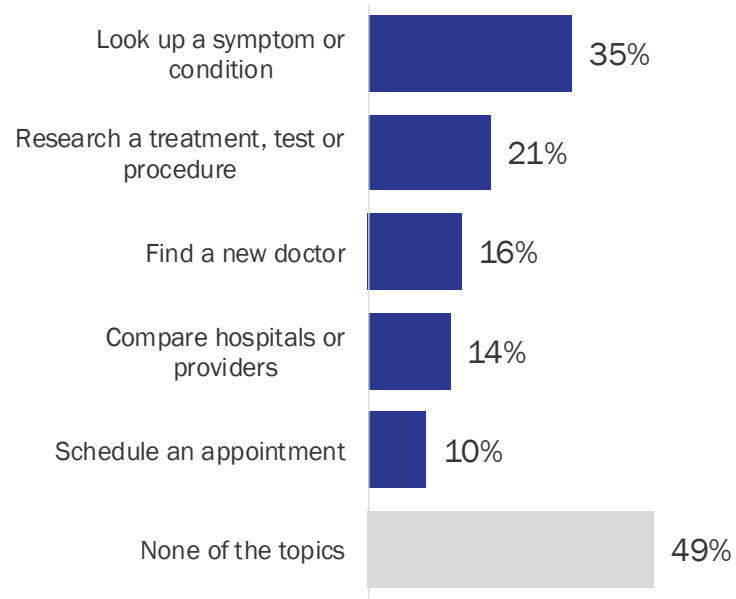
Symptom or condition lookup leads AI searching, but AI is working its way down the sales funnel to care choices

Q6. Health topics ever searched with AI

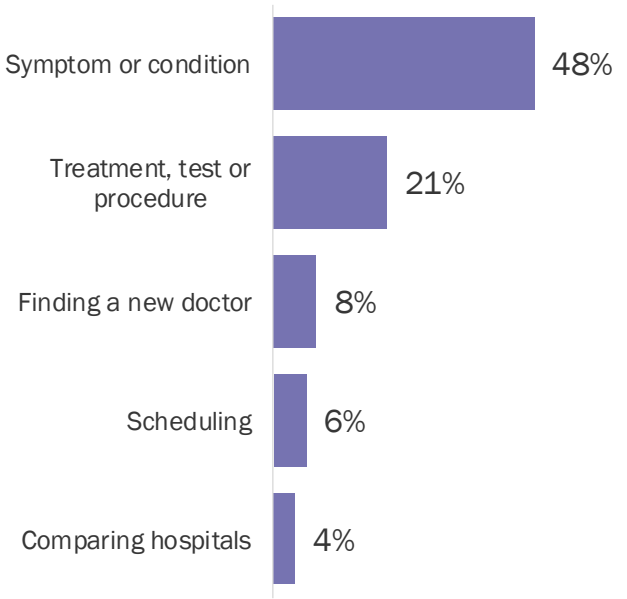
35%

have used AI to look up a symptom or condition. Care navigation is the next frontier: 21% used it to research a treatment or procedure, 16% to find a doctor and 14% to compare hospitals or providers.

Ever used AI to...



Most recent topic



> *"My psychologist left the practice, and I needed one under my insurance."*
>
> Male, 68

> *"I used it to research insulin prices."*
>
> Male, 28

Left: all respondents (n=200), multiple responses. Right: respondents who chose more than one topic (n=52). Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

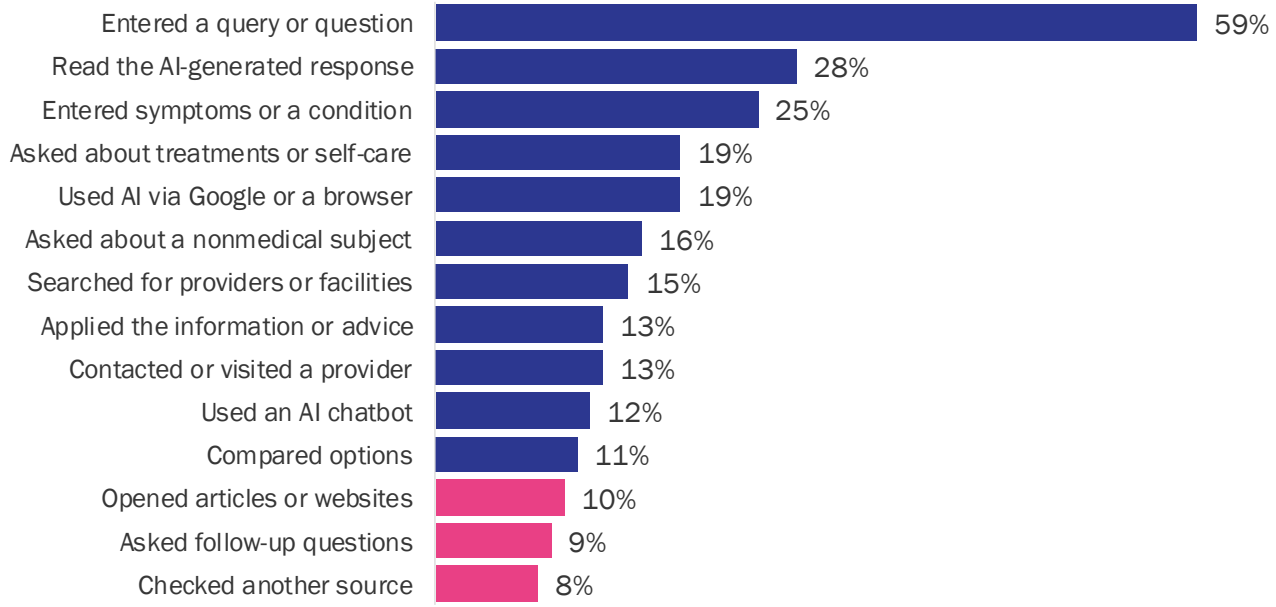
The AI health search: ask, read, then verify or act

Q7. Steps in the most recent AI-assisted search

28%

read the AI response, but only 9% asked a follow-up and 8% checked another source. Pink bars are verification behaviors.

Steps in the most recent AI-assisted search



> *"I typed in symptoms of CHF fluid overload. It told me that the pink phlegm I was coughing up was either CHF fluid overload, pneumonia or medicine. Went to the ER."*
>
> Female, 61

> *"I asked how to reduce cortisol naturally... it recommended several supplements... I searched online, saw an ad, bought one."*
>
> Male, 45

Base: all respondents (n=200) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Multiple responses accepted.

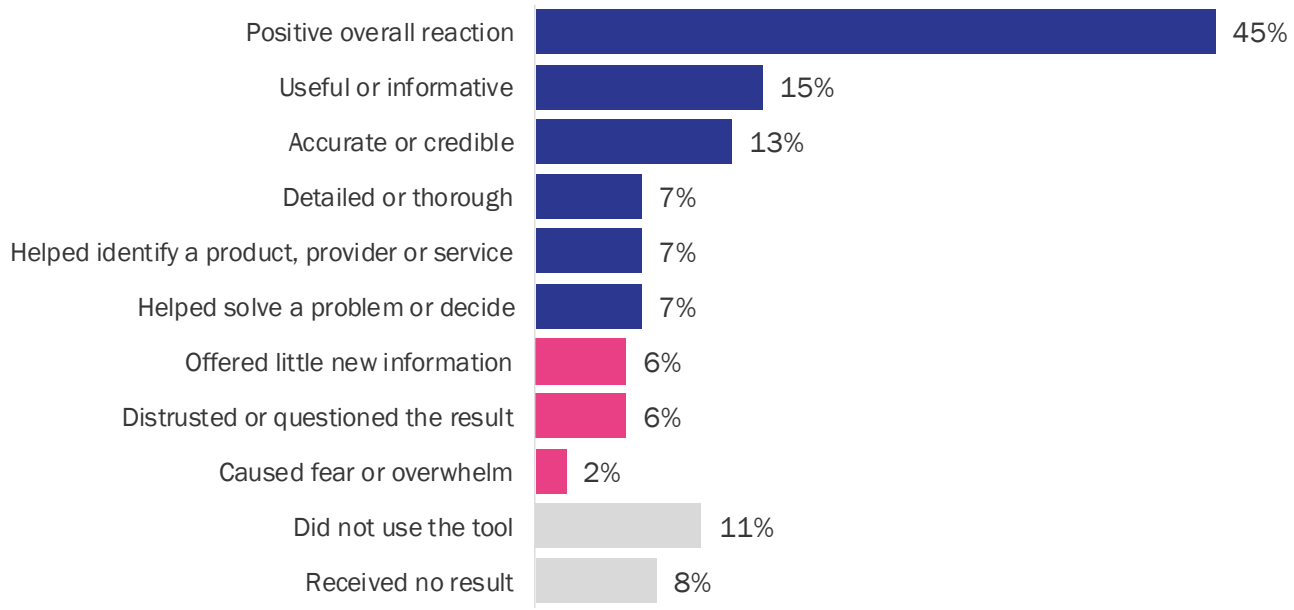
Nearly half react positively to what AI returns; only 6% outright distrust it

Q8. Reaction to the result of the AI-assisted search

45%

reacted positively overall. 15% found the answer useful and 13% found it accurate or credible; 6% distrusted it and 2% found it frightening.

Reaction to the result



> *"I was intrigued by the information provided. It made me more knowledgeable of the condition..."*
>
> Male, 34

> *"Since I am hesitant on using AI, it made me feel more secure in approaching it for more use."*
>
> Female, 80

> *"I don't believe it gave back to me anything my doctor could have given me."*
>
> Female, 85

Base: all respondents (n=200) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Multiple responses accepted.

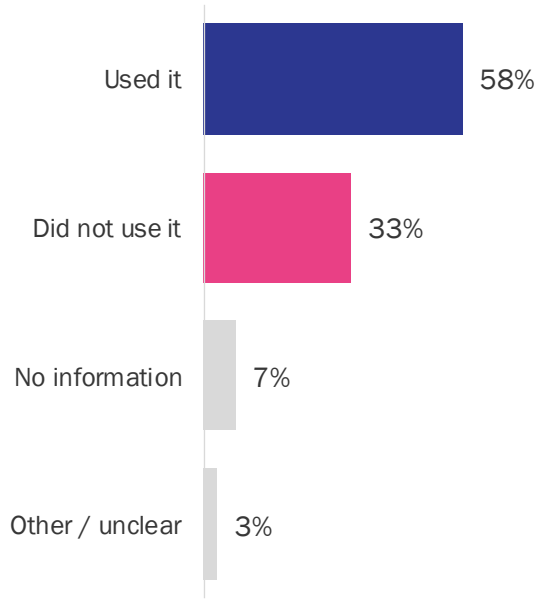
AI informs action but rarely triggers care; how can you insert your brand at the top of the sales funnel?

Q9. Use of the information and next steps

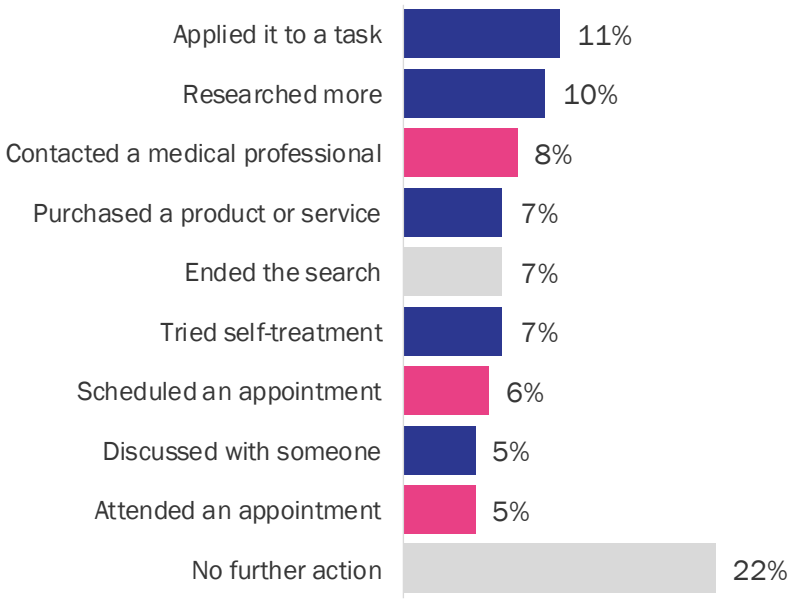
58%

of all consumers used the information they found. Pink bars show the care-seeking steps: 8% contacted a professional, 6% scheduled an appointment, 5% attended one.

Used the information?



What they did next



> *"Yes, I used it as a starting point to write down specific questions for my doctor's visit, but I didn't rely on it for any actual diagnosis or treatment decision."*
>
> Male, 35

> *"I decided not to call the doctor and to wait."*
>
> Female, 37

Base: all respondents (n=200), not limited to the 103 who used AI for a listed health topic. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Expectations and Risk

What consumers want from AI, what could go wrong, and how trust is rebuilt

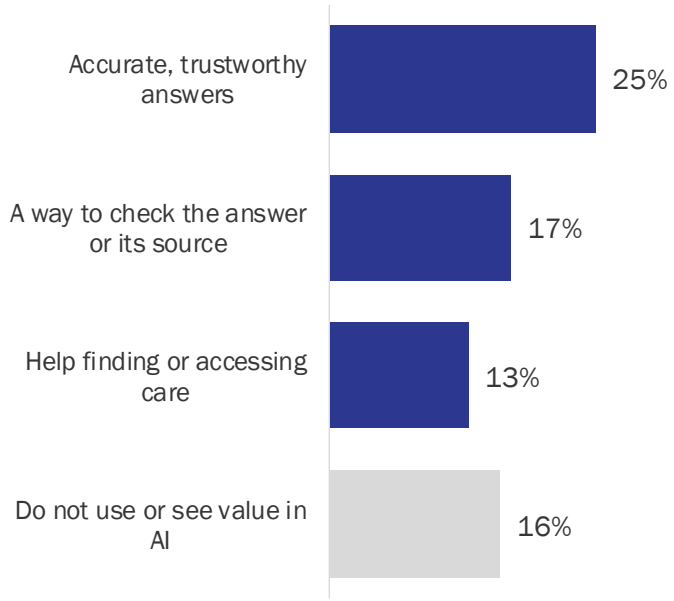
The ideal AI health search is accurate, checkable, and helps people reach care

Q10. What an ideal AI healthcare search looks like

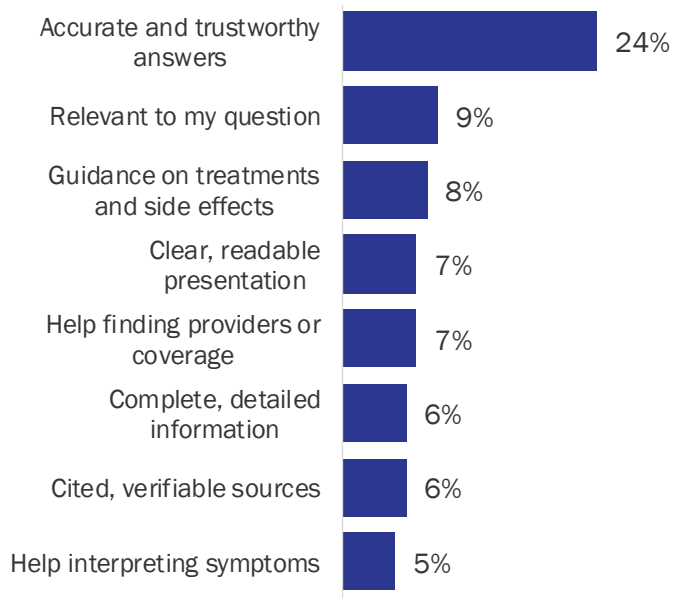
25%

expect accurate, trustworthy answers. A further 17% want a way to check the answer or its source, and 13% want help finding or accessing care.

What consumers expect



Elements of an ideal experience



> *"Which ones are covered by my insurance, and which ones have the best reviews."*
>
> Male, 39

> *"Telling me what I need to do and if it's serious."*
>
> Male, 31

> *"A straight answer without casting doubt by saying contact a medical provider."*
>
> Male, 62

Left: share of all 200 interviews (categories can overlap). Right: coded ideal-experience mentions. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

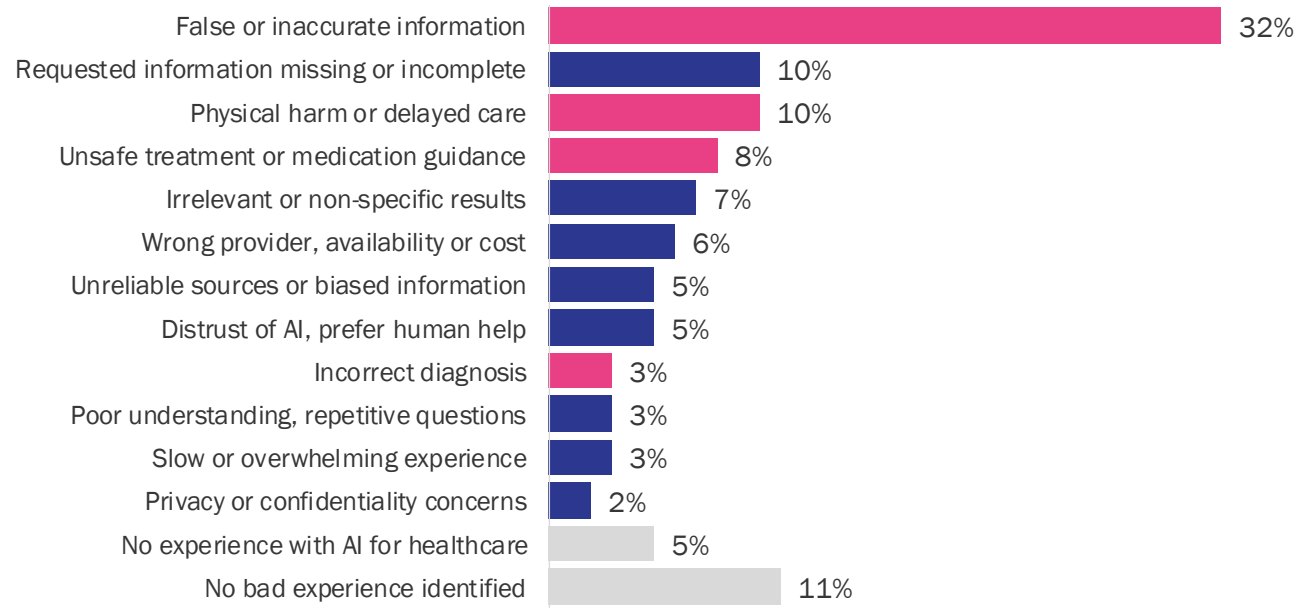
The feared failure is a plausible answer that is wrong, which could lead to adverse health consequences

Q11. What a bad AI healthcare search would look like

32%

name false or inaccurate information. A further 18% fear harm: physical harm or delayed care (10%) and unsafe treatment or medication guidance (8%). Pink bars are safety risks.

What would make an AI healthcare search a bad experience



> *"Wrong or made-up info that leads to a bad health decision."*
>
> Male, 42

> *"I might select the wrong provider, perhaps one not in my network."*
>
> Male, 80

> *"When it starts selling my information."*
>
> Male, 44

Base: all respondents (n=200) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Multiple responses accepted.

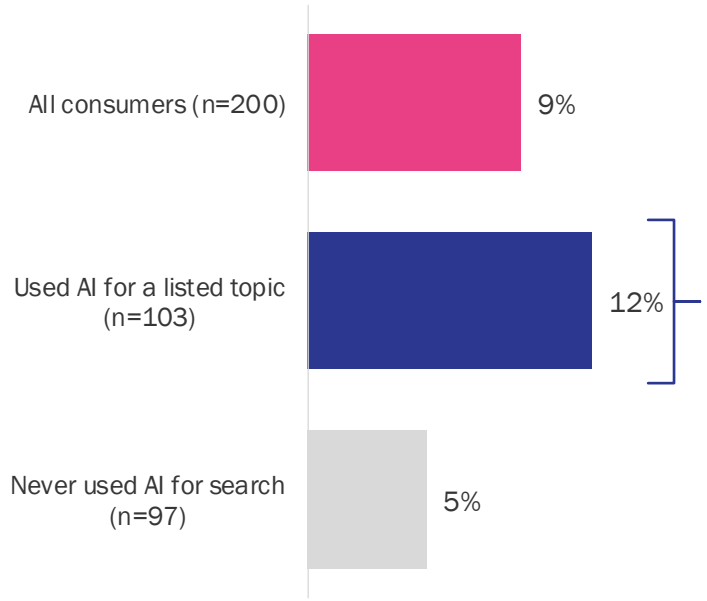
Bad experiences are rare, and trust is rebuilt with credible sources and accountability along with an apology — but who apologizes?

Q12. Bad experiences with AI during healthcare searches

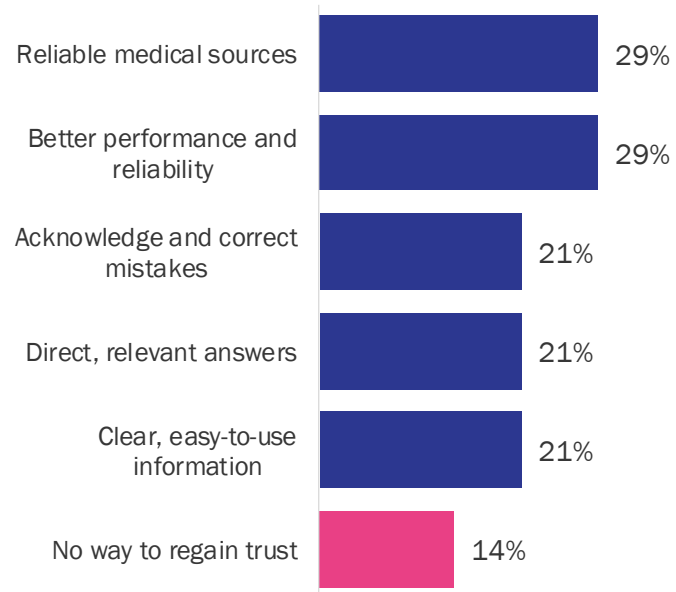
12%

report a bad AI health-search experience compared to just 5% of those searching without using AI. Of those with a bad AI search experience, 62% verified independently afterward.

Had a bad AI health-search experience



What would restore trust in AI n=14



> *"Provide corrected information, cite reliable sources, and clearly explain the limitations."*
>
> Male, 47

> *"Clearing the chat with an apology and promise to do better."*
>
> Male, 28

> *"I will never trust a computer."*
>
> Male, 47

Right chart: respondents with a bad experience (n=14). Very small base; directional only. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Multiple responses accepted.

Sources and Search Results

Whether consumers check where AI gets its answers, and how AI summaries compare with regular results

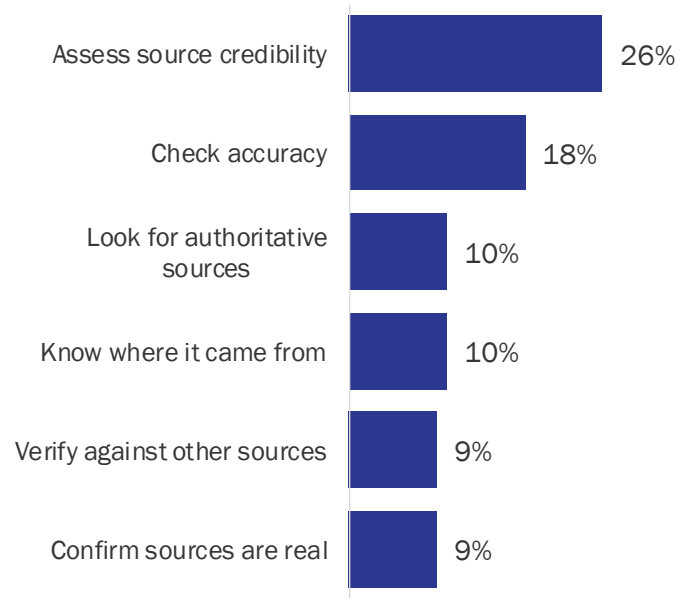
60% do not check AI's sources, and some simply never knew they could

Q13. Attention to where AI gets its information

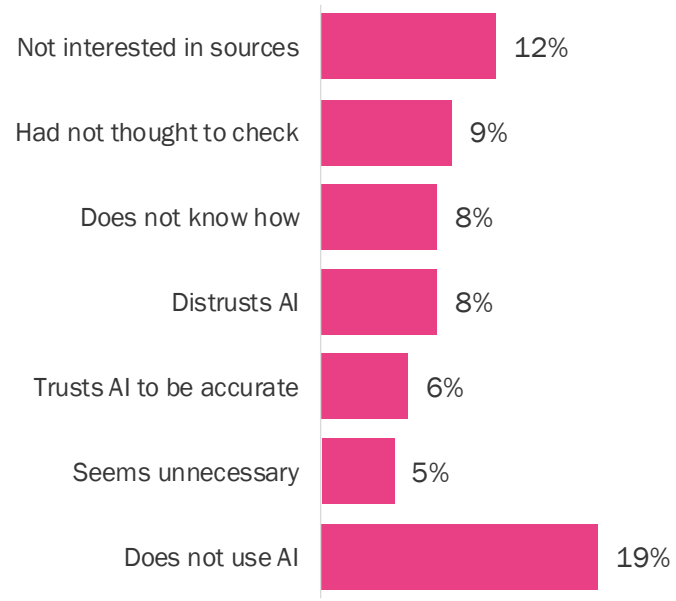
40% vs 60%

check versus do not check. Among high-trust consumers (7-10), 59% check sources; among low-trust (0-4), 23% do.

Why they check sources 40% do



Why they do not 60% do not



> *"I'm trusting in it. AI is smarter than me."*
>
> Male, 46

> *"I actually don't know how to do that. I didn't know you could even do that."*
>
> Male, 60

> *"I just never thought of doing that, but now I might give that a try now that I know. Thanks!"*
>
> Male, 31

Charts show coded reasons (% of respondents answering yes or no). Base: all respondents (n=200), including 97 not using AI for a listed topic. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Hospital search is a toss-up, and trust in AI decides the winner

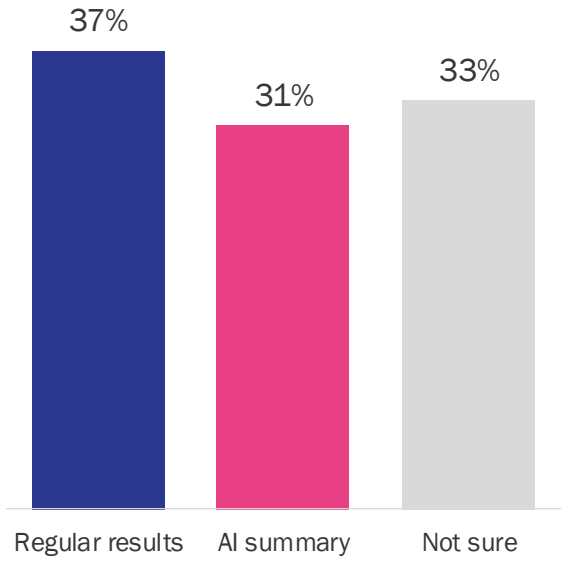
Q14. Hospital in regular Google results versus the AI summary

59% vs 6%

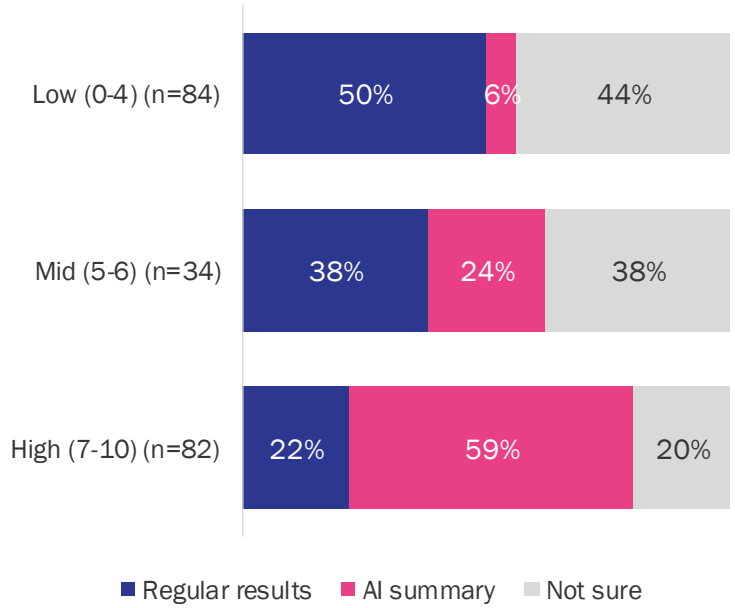
of high-trust AI users versus low-trust users would trust the hospital shown in the AI summary more. Top reasons: perceived accuracy and fear of AI errors (13% each).

In the Wave II survey, 33% trusted the AI overview vs. 18% trusting the traditional search results.

Trust more: hospital in...



By trust in AI for health search



> *"I can see exactly which websites and organizations the information is coming from and judge their credibility myself, instead of trusting a summary that doesn't clearly show its sources."*
>
> Male, 35

> *"If it had gone through a whole list of potential results and picked one, I would think it had sorted options for the best."*
>
> Male, 45

Base: all respondents (n=200) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

AI in Hospital Communications and Care

Advertising, patient information, AI note-taking, and AI versus the doctor

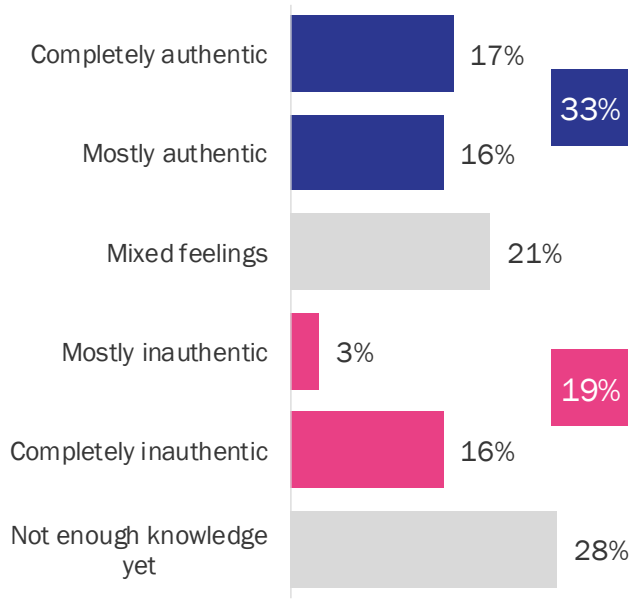
Consumers tolerate AI in hospital ads but draw a line at AI-written patient information

Q15. Authenticity of AI-assisted hospital messages

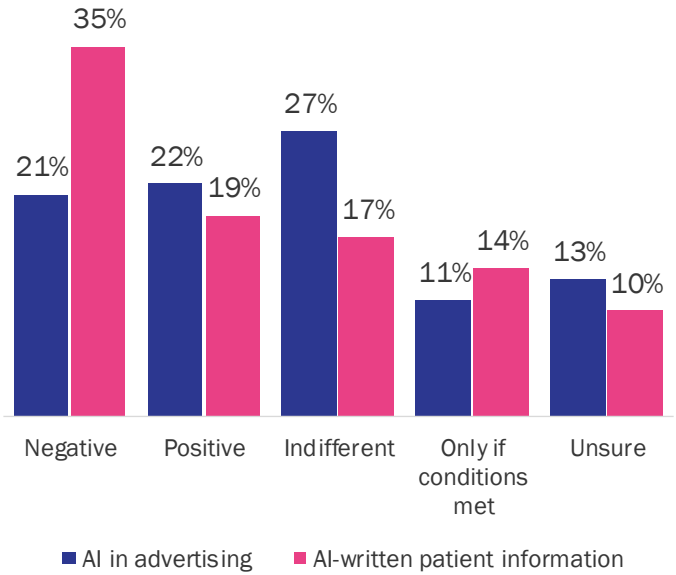
35% vs 21%

feel negative about AI-written patient information on a hospital website versus AI in the hospital's advertising. 27% are indifferent to AI used in ads.

Authenticity of AI-assisted messages



Hospital AI use: ads vs patient information



> *"Advertising is totally different from medical advice. Like politicians, they tell you what they think you want to hear in order to get elected."*
>
> Female, 67

> *"I'd be fine with it as long as the content is reviewed by real clinicians before it goes live, since accuracy matters more than who or what drafted it."*
>
> Male, 35

Base: all respondents (n=200) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The key to a favorable AI note-taking experience is good upfront communication with the patient

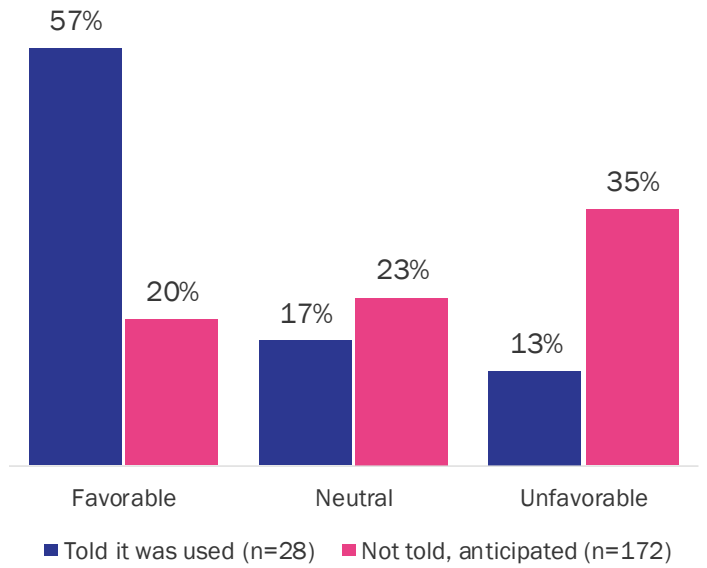
Q16. AI note-taking at doctor's appointments

86%

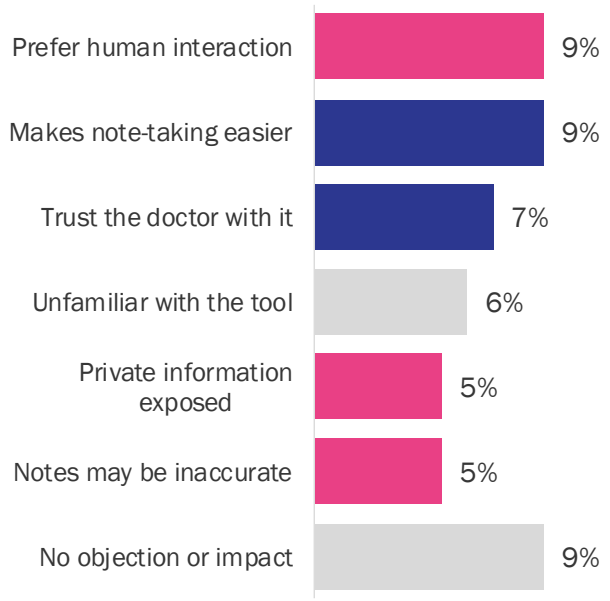
have never been told an AI tool was listening and taking notes in an appointment. Among the 14% who were, 57% are positive; those who have not been told are much less likely to be favorable (20%).

According to The New York Times (April 28, 2026), 30% of physicians use AI note taking.

View of an AI note-taking tool



Why they feel that way



> *"He told me before he did it; he showed me how it works."*
>
> Female, 71

> *"That what I tell my doctor in confidence could possibly leak into interweb."*
>
> Female, 64

> *"Disrespected. It loses the personal feeling. It would feel like he/she wasn't really listening."*
>
> Female, 66

Left: told (n=28, experienced) vs not told (n=172, expected); **unfavorable includes 9% who would refuse or leave.**
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

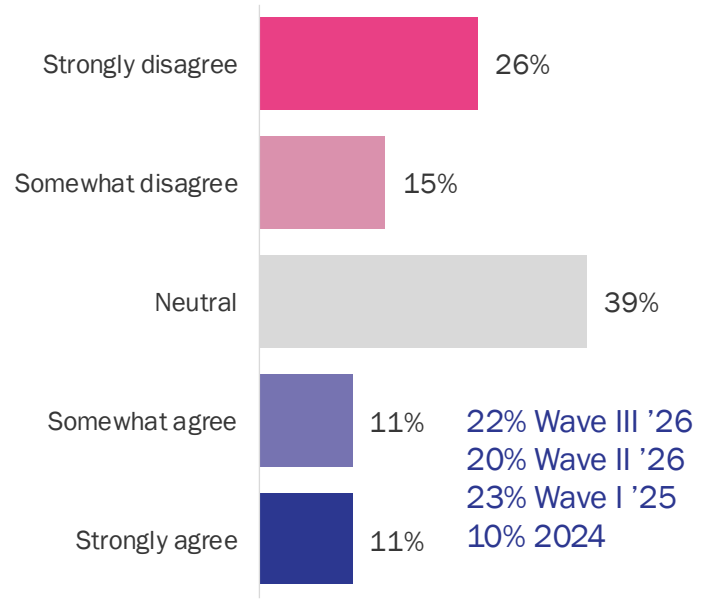
Unchanged since 2025, about one in five think AI out-diagnoses a doctor, and four in ten are neutral, not opposed

Q17. AI versus doctor on diagnostic accuracy

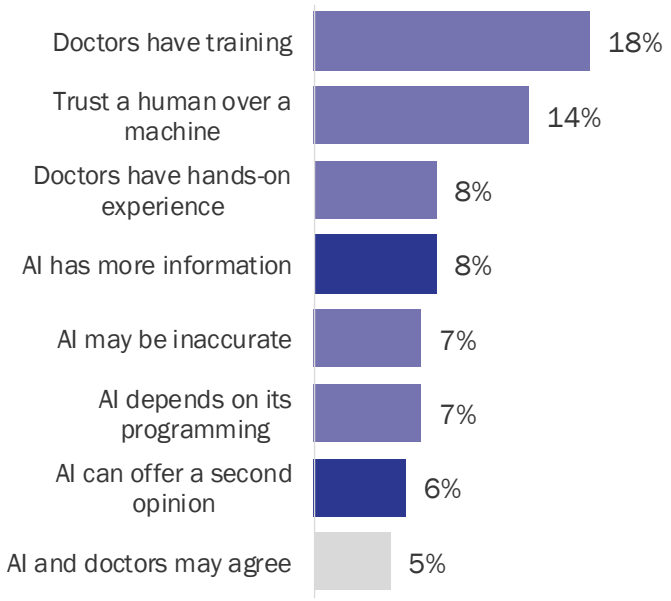
41%

disagree that AI is more accurate down from 55% in the Wave II survey earlier this year. Reasons heavily favor the 'human.'

AI is more accurate than a doctor



Reasons given



> *"Doctors can consider context, experience, and subtle symptoms that AI may miss."*
>
> Male, 47

> *"Doctors have emotions, and bad days."*
>
> Male, 68

> *"AI has more sources to draw from."*
>
> Female, 78

Base: all respondents (n=200) Combined disagree share is calculated before rounding, so may differ by a point from the bars. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Consumer personas

Five mindsets, defined by trust in AI, use of AI and source checking

Persona snapshot: five mindsets, very different starting points

Share of respondents and key behaviors by persona (all figures from respondent-level data)

Persona	Share	Avg. age	Women	Used AI for health	Checks AI sources	Prefers AI summary	Told of AI scribe
The Verified Adopter	24%	42	35%	90%	100%	65%	31%
The Confident Delegator	17%	50	38%	79%	0%	50%	3%
The Wait-and-See Pragmatist	17%	53	56%	41%	41%	24%	24%
The Human-First Holdout	33%	59	66%	0%	15%	3%	6%
The Disillusioned Trier	10%	48	53%	100%	47%	16%	0%
All respondents	100%	51	51%	52%	41%	31%	14%

Base: all respondents (n=200). Persona bases: 48, 34, 34, 65 and 19. Directional for a qualitative sample. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The Verified Adopter

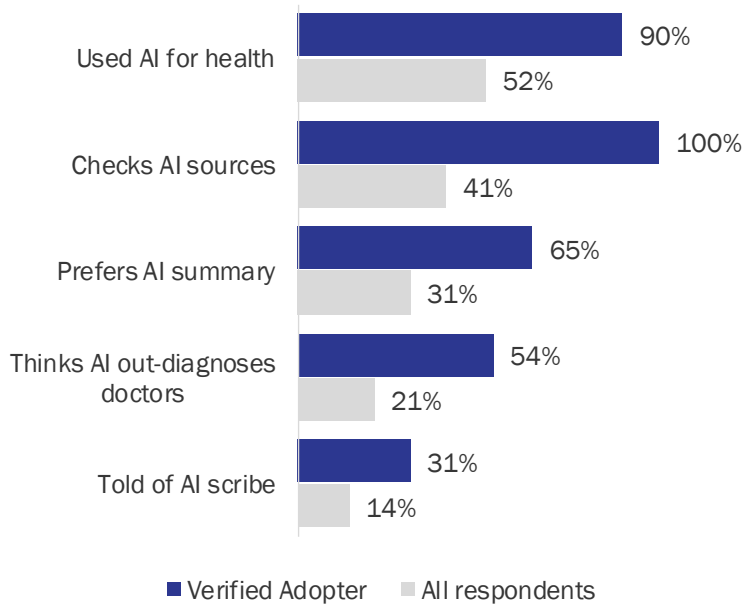
Trust, then verify

24%

of respondents (n=48)

Youngest persona (avg. 42), 65% men, 77% generally healthy. Everyone checks AI sources.

Persona vs. all respondents



What they need

Visible sources and a fast way to cross-check an answer.

How to engage

Lead with citations and clinician review. Link to the underlying guidance. They will do the verifying if you make it easy.

> *"I trust AI because it quickly provides useful information from multiple sources. I compare AI answers with trusted medical sources and professional guidance."*
>
> **Male, 47**

Base: persona (n=48) vs all (n=200). Directional only. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The Confident Delegator

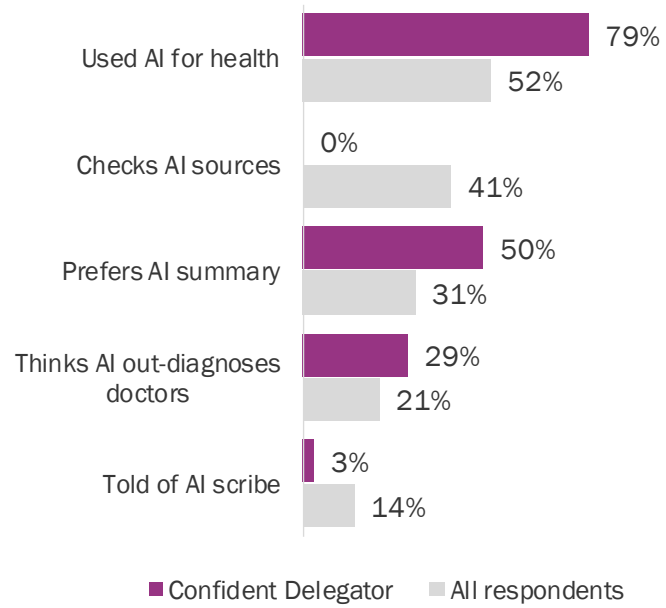
AI is smarter than me

17%

of respondents (n=34)

Mid-age (avg. 50), 62% men. Uses AI broadly, trusts it, and never checks where answers come from.

Persona vs. all respondents



What they need

Clear signals on when to see a clinician.

How to engage

Build “when to see a clinician” guidance into your health content and the content behind your chatbot. Don’t count on them to check sources.

> *“I’m trusting in it. AI is smarter than me.”*
>
> Male, 46

Base: persona (n=34) vs all (n=200). Directional only. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The Wait-and-See Pragmatist

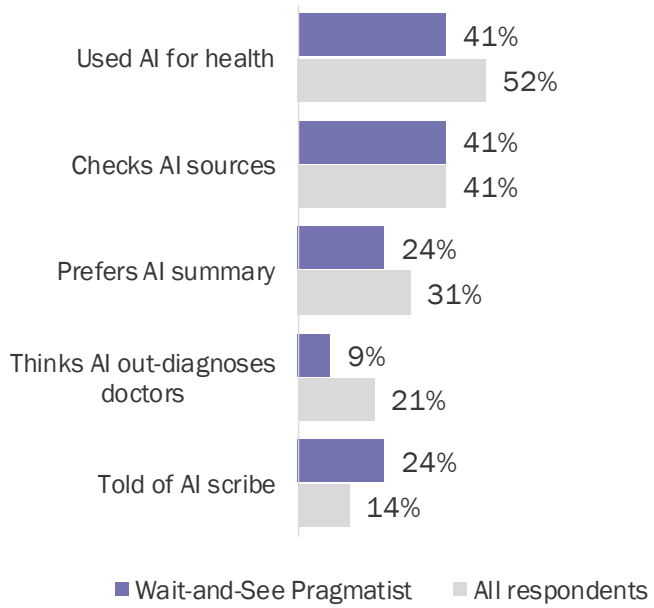
Open, but not there yet

17%

of respondents (n=34)

Oldest of the AI users (avg. 53), 56% women. 41% have used AI for health and 41% check sources.

Persona vs. all respondents



What they need

Proof that it works and a human fallback.

How to engage

Show who reviews your content and how your AI tools work, and keep a way to reach a person on every page.

> *"Although if I'm going to live in this world, I guess I have to get used to it, don't I?"*
>
> Male, 76

Base: persona (n=34) vs all (n=200). Directional only. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The Human-First Holdout

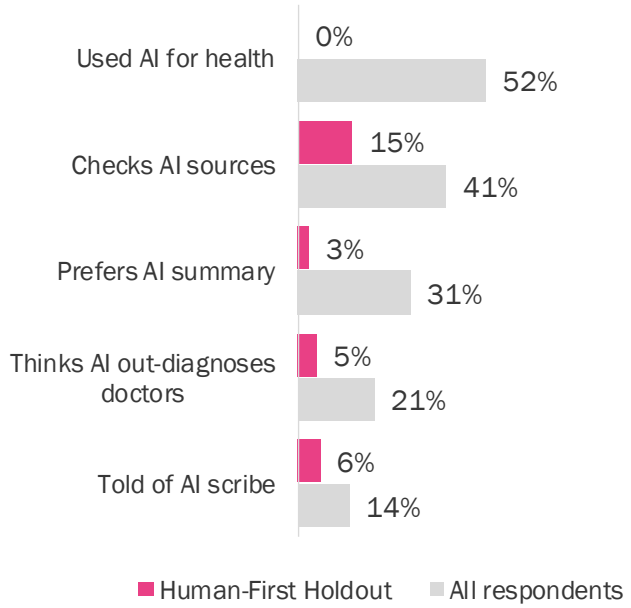
Healthcare is for the living

33%

of respondents (n=65)

Oldest persona (avg. 59), 66% women, largest group. None has used AI for a listed health topic.

Persona vs. all respondents



What they need

Reassurance that a person is in charge of their care.

How to engage

Keep a way to reach a person visible on every page. Lead with your clinicians, not the technology, and disclose AI plainly where patients will encounter it.

> *"Healthcare is for the living, not for a tin man."*
>
> Female, 77

Base: persona (n=65) vs all (n=200). Directional only. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The Disillusioned Trier

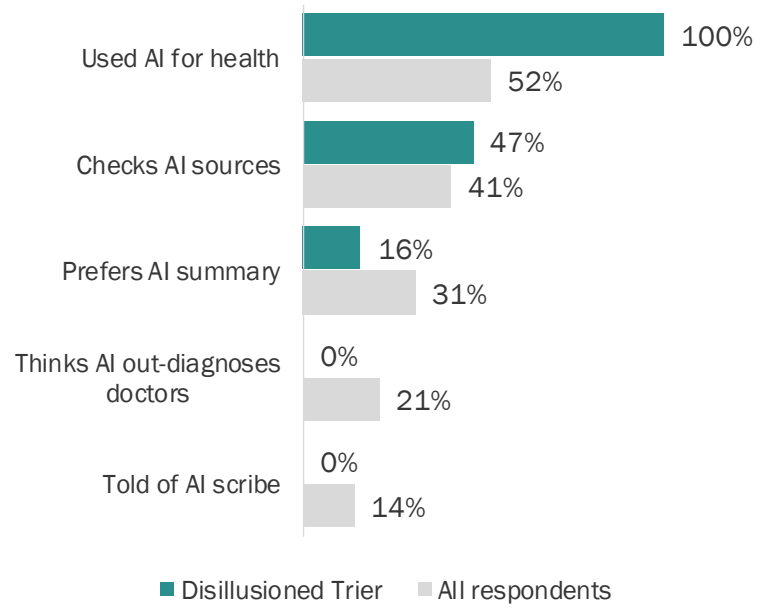
Tried it, still not convinced

10%

of respondents (n=19)

Mid-age (avg. 48), 53% women. All have used AI, and none favors AI over a doctor.

Persona vs. all respondents



What they need

Evidence that answers are checked, and a clean recovery from a bad one.

How to engage

Own mistakes openly, cite reliable medical sources and explain limitations. Small base, so treat as a signal.

> *"It can fool you in believing what they say is true, but a real person says it, you know it's true."*
>
> Female, 44

Base: persona (n=19) vs all (n=200). Directional only. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Strategic recommendations

Seven ways to earn trust in an AI-assisted healthcare journey

We separate what you control (your website and AI tools) from what you can only influence (AI search).

1. Be the source AI cites, and make it easy to check

Consumers trust what they can verify, and most never verify

60%

do not look at where AI gets its information

59% vs 23%

of high-trust vs low-trust respondents check sources

29%

say reliable medical sourcing would regain their trust after a bad answer

How to act

- **Your website:** Show the clinician reviewer, credentials and last-reviewed date on every health content page.
- **Your AI tools:** Keep the content your chatbot draws from current and clinician-reviewed, and ask that answers link back to the source page.
- **AI search:** Write clear, structured, citable content so you are more likely to be the source AI cites. You can influence this, not guarantee it.

> *"What would make AI feedback feel useful to me would be if they gave me sources."*
>
> Female, 26

> *"I don't just trust what it says. I want to know where it's coming from, who said it first, and how credible they are."*
>
> Male, 45

Base: all respondents (n=200) unless noted. Segment and persona figures are directional. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

2. Write for the moment after the AI answer

AI is often where the search starts; your content can carry people to care

35%

have used AI to look up a symptom or condition, the top use

21%

have used it to research a treatment, test or procedure

58% to 8%

used what AI told them, but only 8% contacted a medical professional

How to act

- **Your website:** Write content for the questions that follow an AI answer: what to ask the doctor, warning signs and when to seek care.
- **Your website:** End every symptom, condition and treatment page with a clear next step: find a doctor, book or call.
- **Your AI tools:** Make sure the content behind your chatbot includes those same next steps.
- **Measurement:** Track handoffs from content, such as appointments and calls, not just page views.

> *"Yes, I used it as a starting point to write down specific questions for my doctor's visit, but I didn't rely on it for any actual diagnosis or treatment decision."*
>
> Male, 35

> *"Telling me what I need to do and if it's serious."*
>
> Male, 31

Base: all respondents (n=200) unless noted. Segment and persona figures are directional. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

3. Keep clinicians at the center of your content

Consumers trust people over institutions, and doctors over AI

57%

trust doctors most among healthcare groups

21%

think AI diagnoses better than a doctor

66% vs 41%

trust healthcare vs trust AI for health searches

How to act

- **Your website:** Name the clinician, credentials and review date on health content.
- **Your messaging:** When your organization talks about AI, present it as a tool your care team uses, never a replacement for it.
- **Your messaging:** Feature nurses in stories and content; they are the relationship people name.

> *"A doctor is well-trained for this, and AI is a tool in the hand of the doctor to help him fast track his job."*
>
> Male, 29

> *"Nurses, because they're the ones who actually spend the most time with patients and genuinely advocate for their wellbeing."*
>
> Male, 35

Base: all respondents (n=200) unless noted. Segment and persona figures are directional. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

4. Keep patient information human-written and clinician-reviewed

Consumers are more accepting of AI in ads than in patient information

35%

react negatively to AI-written patient information on a hospital site

21%

react negatively to AI in advertising

27%

are simply indifferent to AI in ads

How to act

- **Your website:** Have people write patient information and clinicians review it, and say so on the page.
- **Your website:** Separate campaign content from patient information in your site structure, and label each clearly.
- **Your messaging:** AI is more acceptable to consumers in advertising than in patient information, so patient information is where human authorship matters most.

> *"More uneasy, since patients rely on that info for real decisions."*
>
> Female, 42

> *"I wouldn't care if it would support how hospitals run as a business but not really in a place of care."*
>
> Male, 34

Base: all respondents (n=200) unless noted. Segment and persona figures are directional. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

5. Keep practical content accurate and current

Consumers still trust regular results, and inaccurate information is their top fear

37% vs 31%

trust a hospital in regular Google results more than one in the AI summary

21%

have used AI to research a treatment, test or procedure

32%

say false or inaccurate information would make an AI search a bad experience

How to act

- **Your website:** Keep provider bios, location, insurance and treatment pages complete and current. AI tools pull from these pages.
- **Your website:** Define which schema types those pages need and why; implementation is a technical workstream.
- **Governance:** Set a review schedule with the teams that own network and provider data.
- **AI search:** Check what AI tools say about you and fix the content they draw from. You can't correct AI answers directly.

> *"Which ones are covered by my insurance, and which ones have the best reviews."*
>
> Male, 39

> *"I might select the wrong provider, perhaps one not in my network."*
>
> Male, 80

Base: all respondents (n=200) unless noted. Segment and persona figures are directional. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

6. Explain how you use AI before patients encounter it

Patients told about AI ahead of time are far more favorable, and bad experiences are rare

86%

were never told their doctor used an AI note-taker

57% vs 20%

favorable among those told (n=28) vs expected favorable among those not told (n=172)

12%

of AI users report a bad experience

How to act

- **Your website:** Publish a plain-language “How we use AI” page: what you use, where, who reviews it and how information stays private. Have compliance review it first.
- **Patient communications:** Write the pre-visit email and portal copy that explains AI note-taking, and give care teams the language to explain it in person.
- **Your AI tools:** Label your chatbot clearly, say what content it draws from and show how to reach a person.

> *“He told me before he did it; he showed me how it works.”*
>
> Female, 71

> *“That what I tell my doctor in confidence could possibly leak into interweb.”*
>
> Female, 64

Base: all respondents (n=200) unless noted. Segment and persona figures are directional. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

7. Tailor how you talk about AI by audience

One message won't work: trust splits by age, gender and mindset

57% vs 24%

of under-50s vs 50+ trust AI for health (7-10)

53% vs 29%

of men vs women trust AI (7-10)

33%

are Human-First Holdouts, the largest persona

How to act

- **Verified Adopters:** Talk about AI openly, and back every claim with sources.
- **Confident Delegators:** When you mention an AI tool, pair it with when to see a clinician.
- **Wait-and-See Pragmatists:** Show how your AI tools work and who reviews them, and offer a person as the alternative.
- **Human-First Holdouts and Disillusioned Triers:** Lead with your clinicians, and mention AI only where you need to disclose it.

> *"I'd rather talk to a human with knowledge."*
>
> Female, 31

> *"I haven't found one thing on AI that wasn't truthful."*
>
> Male, 74

Base: all respondents (n=200) unless noted. Segment and persona figures are directional. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Three moves to start on Monday

If you only do three things

1

Ask AI about yourself

Run your hospital name and top 10 service lines through ChatGPT, Google and Perplexity. Note what they say and which pages they cite.

2

Check your top 10 health pages

Does each one show a clinician reviewer, credentials and a review date? Does each end with a clear next step?

3

Find out where AI is already in use

Ask your digital and clinical teams where AI touches patients, such as chatbots, scribes and portal messages, and whether patients are told.

Trust, then verify

The through-line of the research

> *“I don’t just trust what it says. I want to know where it’s coming from, who said it first, and how credible they are.”*
>
> Male, 45

> *“A doctor is well-trained for this, and AI is a tool in the hand of the doctor to help him fast track his job.”*
>
> Male, 29

AI is the new front door to healthcare, but consumers still want a person behind it. The brands that make their content checkable, keep clinicians visible and tell the truth about when AI is used will earn trust from all five personas.

Appendix

Methodology and definitions

Methodology and definitions

How the data were collected and how to read the segment figures

Method

- 200 U.S. consumers, AI-moderated in-depth interviews (IDIs).
- Fielded Oct. 3-6, 2026.
- Screener demographics merged with open-ended verbatims.
- Platform summary percentages are used as published; segment figures are computed from respondent-level data.

Reading the data

- Qualitative sample: treat differences as directional, not statistically projectable.
- Small bases are flagged on slides (for example AI scribe n=28, bad-experience follow-up n=14, Disillusioned n=19).
- Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
- Quotes are verbatim from respondents, with spelling and typing errors lightly corrected.

Persona rules

- AI trust is the 0-10 rating of trust in AI for health searches.
- Disillusioned Trier: trust 0-4, has used AI.
- Human-First Holdout: trust 0-4, has not.
- Wait-and-See Pragmatist: trust 5-6.
- Verified Adopter: trust 7-10, checks sources. Confident Delegator: trust 7-10, does not.

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