

Health apps abound, but usage low, study shows

January 28 2013



File picture. US consumers are being offered a cornucopia of smartphone apps to track or manage health, but only a small number of people are using them, according to a survey.

US consumers are being offered a vast range of smartphone apps to track or manage health, but only a small number of people are using them, according to a survey.

The [Pew Research Center](#)'s study found that only about seven percent of

people surveyed used a smartphone app to track a health indicator like weight, diet, exercise routine or to monitor a chronic disease such as diabetes.

"There's still a low uptake in terms of apps and technology," said lead researcher Susannah Fox.

"It is surprising. We've been looking at health apps since 2010, and health app uptake has been essentially flat for three years."

The research suggests that consumers are slow to latch on to smartphone technology for health even in a market with hundreds of new apps coming on the market to manage weight and track blood pressure, pregnancy, [blood sugar](#), diabetes or medication.

"There's a [proliferation](#) of choices, and consumers are being faced with a [food court](#) of options," Fox told AFP.

"What we see is that consumers are losing their appetite."

Fox said her research and other studies have shown that systematic tracking for [health issues](#) is helpful.

"People are reporting that tracking as an activity is having an impact," she said.

"But I can't make a judgment on whether it's better to use paper and [pencil](#) or an app."

The researchers found that 19 percent of smartphone owners have downloaded an app related to health, although these were not necessarily used for monitoring a specific health issue.

Exercise, diet and weight features are the most popular types of health apps downloaded, the study found.

Some 38 percent of health app users track their exercise, 31 percent monitor their diet and 12 percent use an app to manage their weight.

Around one in seven adults surveyed track a health indicator like weight, diet or [exercise routine](#) for themselves or another person.

Roughly half of those tracking their health or symptoms said they keep track of progress "in their heads," with that 21 percent use some form of technology, which could include spreadsheet, medical device or app.

The study found that a third of all "trackers" share their data with someone else, most often a medical professional.

The survey found that a "notable number" of trackers with chronic conditions said they do not keep formal records."

Some 37 percent of people with two or more conditions said they memorize progress notes, as do 48 percent of those who are monitoring a single health issue.

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Citation: Health apps abound, but usage low, study shows (2013, January 28) retrieved 13 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-01-health-apps-abound-usage.html>

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