

Profiles in Trust: Health Information

Authors: Michele Salomon and Paul Johnson

Abstract

Levels of trust in health information sources is shown to influence COVID mitigation behaviors (Hanson et al., 2022). To expand on this topic in the field of health communications, The Harris Poll conducted the June 2022 Trust in Health Information Survey among a representative sample of 2,003 U.S. adults. The survey updates and expands research conducted in 2019 to assess attitudes and behaviors toward the usage of and trust in health care information sources.

The survey included: 1) a pre/post COVID measurement of trust in health care information, 2) evaluation of how different sources of health information rank against each other, and 3) a segmentation, based on these trust profiles, that will allow health care organizations to better target their information. A tournament style analysis was conducted in which respondents selected the more trusted source of information among a series of paired choices, resulting in a 'most trusted' source.

The 2022 results found changes in both reliance on and trust in most information sources examined in the survey from health professionals to internet searches. Unlike many public institutions (Mewes et al., 2021) primary care physicians and specialists still retain a great deal of trust by majorities of adults, though the proportion who feel this way has declined (PCPs: 78% vs. 83%; specialists: 76% vs. 80%). Three trust profiles were created resulting from the tournament to demonstrate how each distinct profile approaches learning about health.

Hanson BL, Finley K, Otto J, Ward NJ Role of Trusted Sources and Behavioral Beliefs in Promoting Mitigation Behaviors During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Survey Study JMIR Hum Factors 2022;9(3):e37454 doi:10.2196/37454

Mewes, J., Fairbrother, M., Giordano, G. N., Wu, C., & Wilkes, R. (2021). Experiences matter: A longitudinal study of individual-level sources of declining social trust in the United States. Social Science Research, 95, 102537.

Background and Objectives

The 2022 Health Information Trends Survey was conducted by The Harris Poll to update and expand upon research from 2019 exploring attitudes and behaviors toward the usage of and trust in healthcare information sources.

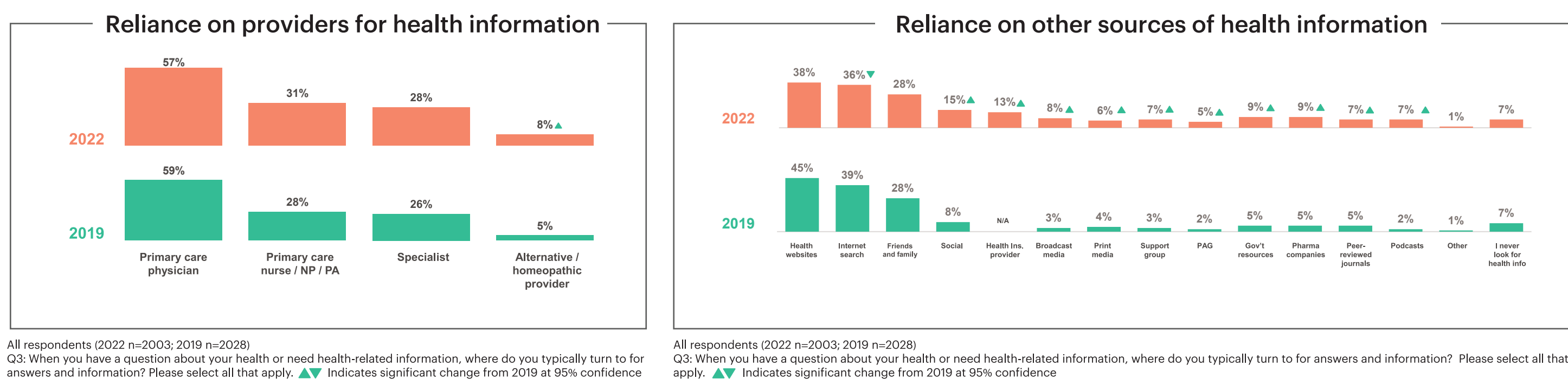
- Understand changes in usage of and trust in health information since 2019.
- Segment the public based on the sources of information they trust.
- Assess the impact on health attitudes and behaviors.

Methodology

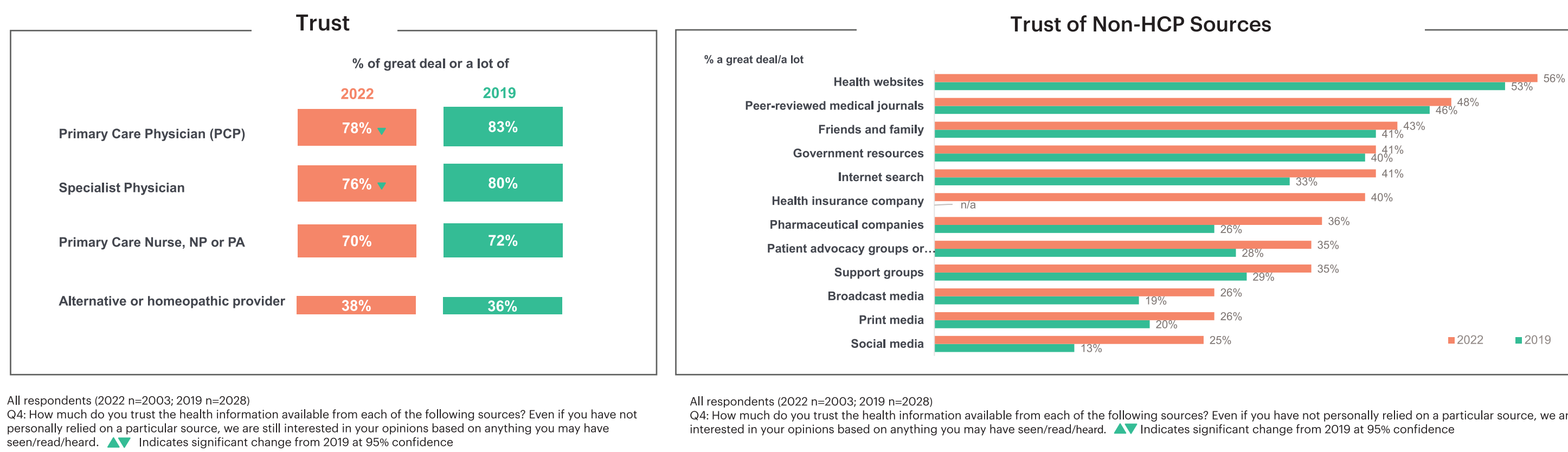
This survey was conducted online within the United States June 15-17, 2022 among 2003 adults (aged 18 and over) by The Harris Poll. Data were weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income, and propensity to be online, to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 2.8 percentage points using a 95% confidence level.

Trends in Usage of Health Information

Reliance on Sources of Health Information: 2019 vs. 2022



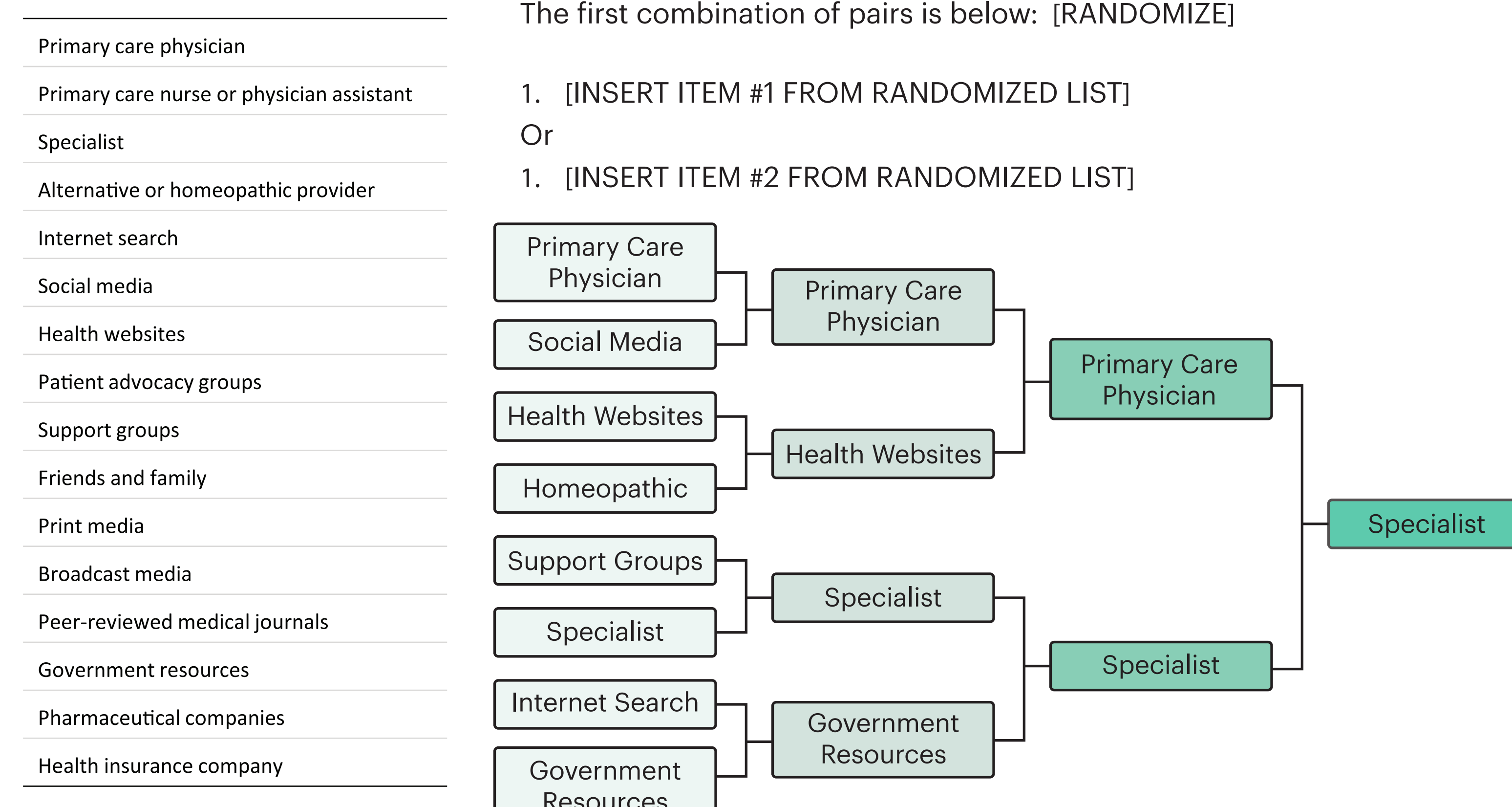
Trust in Sources of Health Information: 2019 vs. 2022



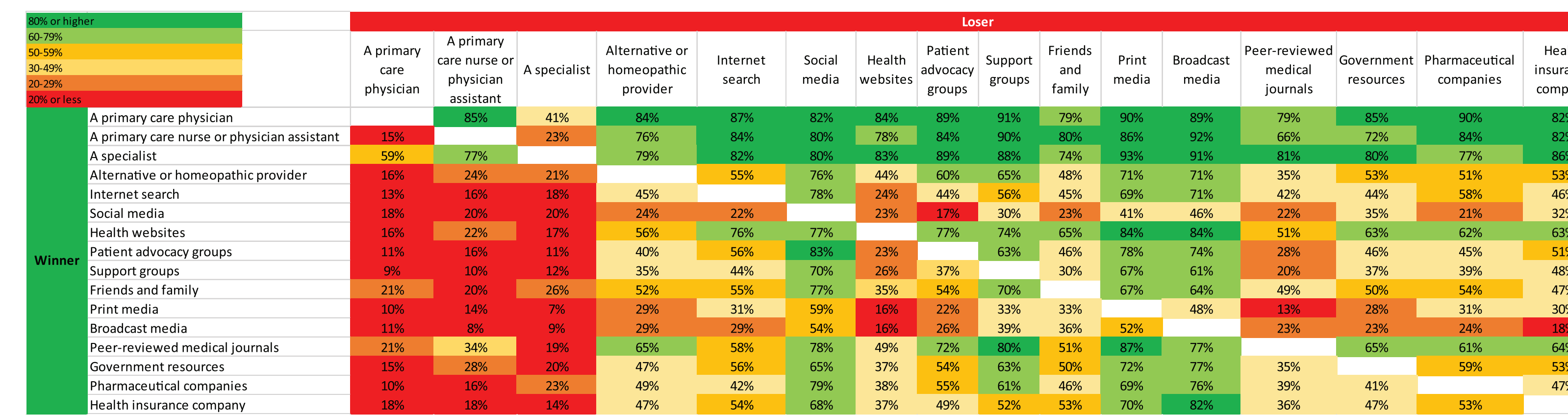
Single-elimination Tournament Style Bracket

Identifying 'most trusted' sources of health-related information

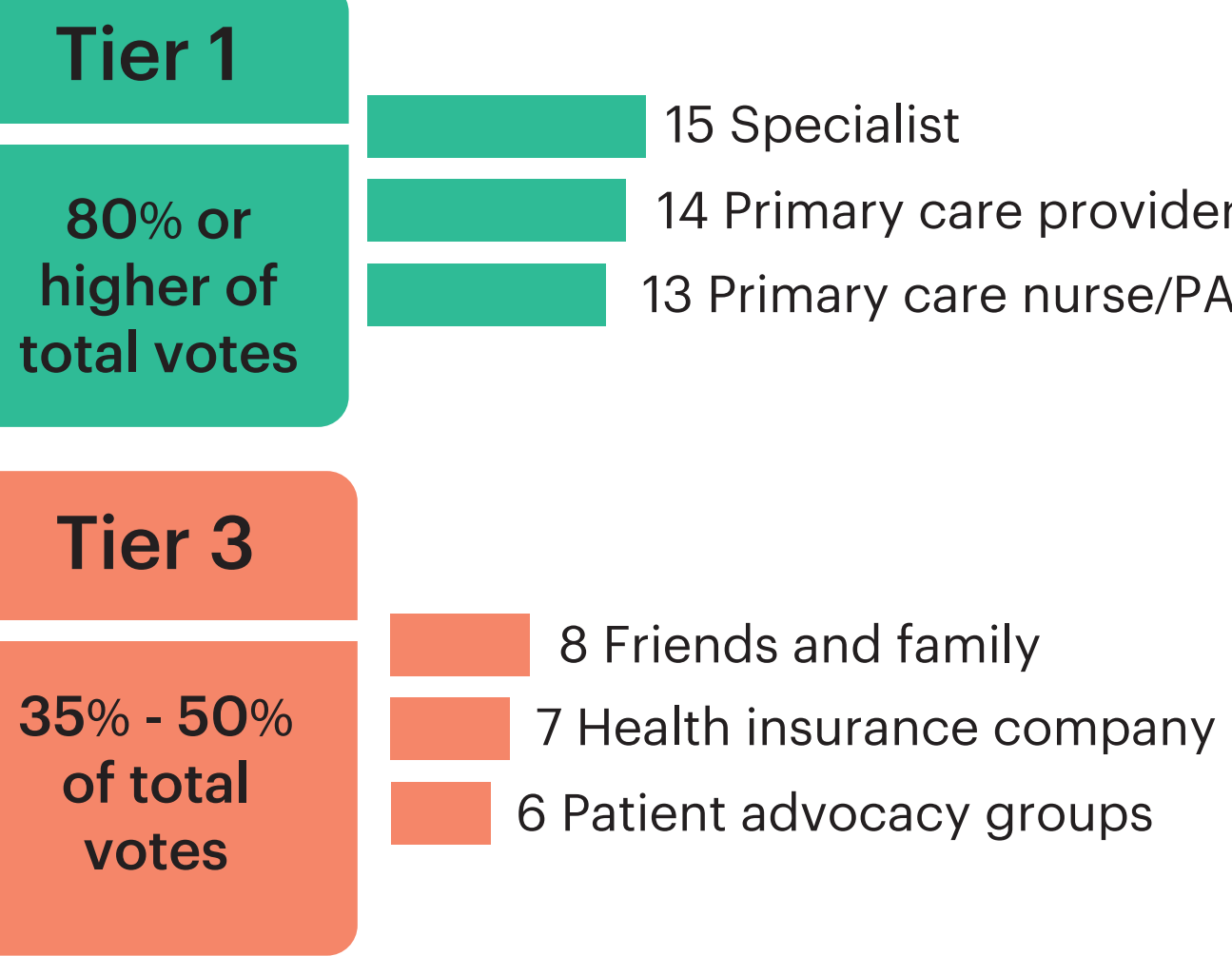
QUESTION: Next, we would like to run you through a series of questions where we will ask you to choose which source of health information you trust more. There will be 15 rounds for you to complete. (Sources of information were randomized during each round of selection.)



Tournament Results

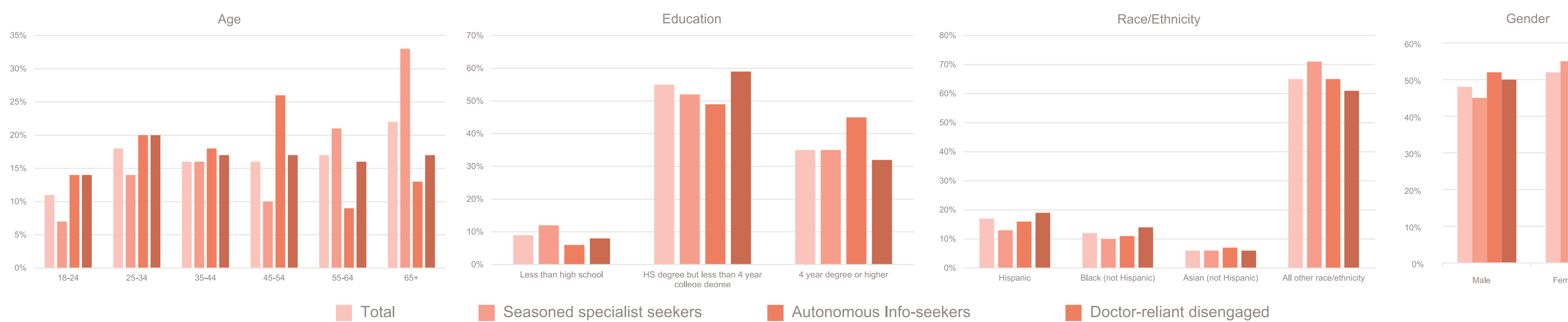


Number of wins per information source (51% or more)

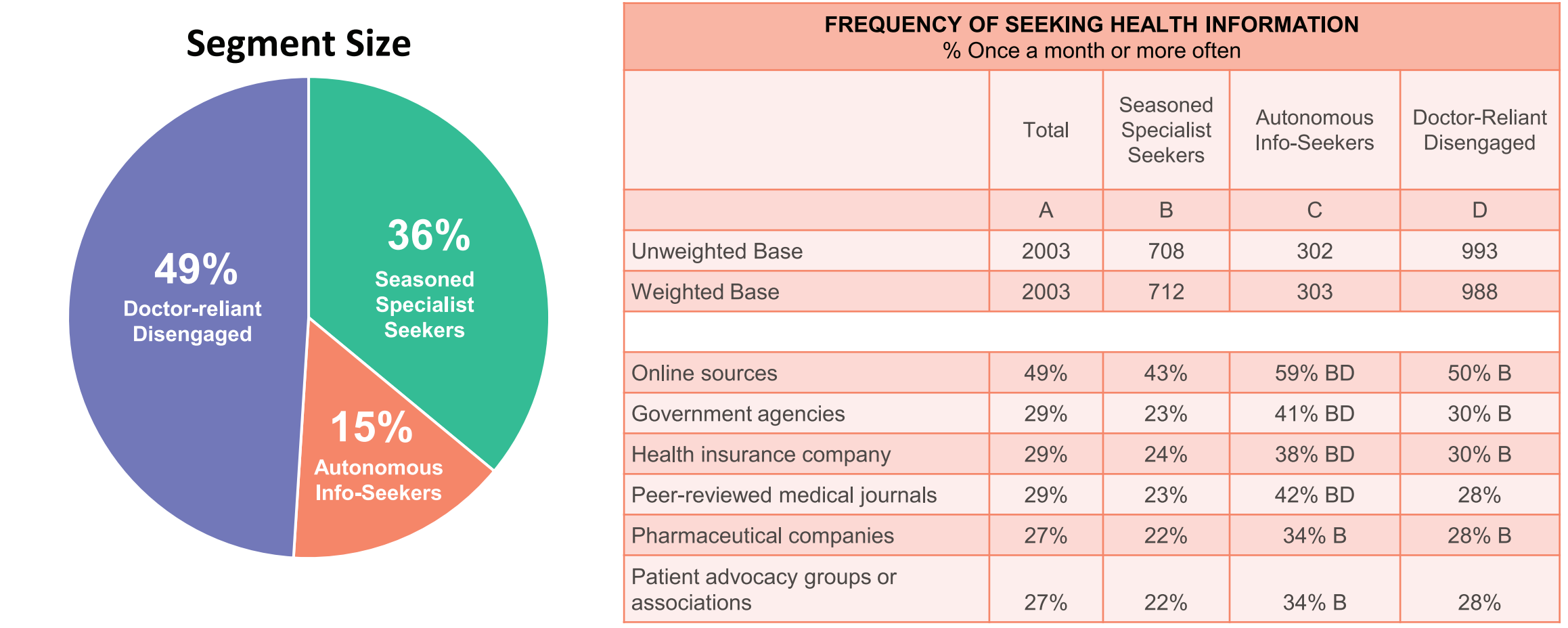


Trust-based Segments

We took the raw utility scores from the tournament analysis and put them through a factor analysis to reduce the data down to three dimensions using principal component analysis with a varimax rotation. Then, every person was scored on each dimension. We then assigned each respondent to the dimension score that was the highest and lastly profiled the characteristics and preferences of each segment.



Trust-based Segments



| | TYPES OF PROVIDERS SEEN IN PAST YEAR | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Total | Seasoned Specialist Seekers | Autonomous Info-Seekers | Doctor-Reliant Disengaged |
| Unweighted Base | 2003 | 708 | 302 | 993 |
| Weighted Base | 2003 | 712 | 303 | 988 |
| Primary care physician (e.g., general practitioner, family medicine physician, internal medicine physician, etc.) | 76% | 75% | 82% BD | 75% |
| Primary care nurse/nurse practitioner or physician assistant | 52% | 50% | 52% | 53% |
| Specialist (e.g., gastroenterologist, cardiologist, oncologist) | 46% | 52% D | 53% D | 38% |
| Mental health provider (e.g., psychiatrist, social worker, psychologist) | 29% | 24% | 35% B | 30% B |
| Alternative or homeopathic provider (e.g., osteopath, chiropractor, acupuncturist, etc.) | 22% | 22% | 25% | 20% |
| Other type of health care provider | 25% | 28% D | 28% | 22% |

Implications

The public regularly consumes information across a variety of sources. While they feel like they can find what they want, they need help making sense of what they find. The tournament results clearly demonstrate that health care providers are the most trusted source of health information, yet rating for PCPs and specialists declined since 2019. With providers at the top of the trust pyramid, this poses an opportunity to influence health and health communications by:

- Understanding the different segments of consumers based on their trust in health information to ensure information is received via the most effective channel.
- Focusing efforts on ensuring that HCPs have the most timely and accurate health information possible.
- Providing HCPs with specific health information that can be easily shared with patients, including referrals to reliable health sites.

Limitations

The tournament-style results and trust segments have not been validated or replicated in other research.

Future Research

Future research could extend these findings by exploring how these trust-based health segments influence overall health status, health behaviors and health outcomes.

Contact Information

Michele Salomon
Email: Michele.salomon@harrispoll.com
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/michele-salomon/>

Paul Johnson
Paul.johnson@harrispoll.com
Lindedln: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/edward-paul-johnson-276a30244/>

Learn More

Use the following QR code to download this poster as a pdf and view other posters presented by The Harris Poll

