



## How Do U.S. Women Use the Internet and Other Sources of Pregnancy Information? A *Listening to Mothers III*<sup>SM</sup> Data Brief

Very little is known about pregnant women's sources of information about pregnancy and childbirth, including Internet use. Existing studies have small sample sizes, survey specific populations such as women with high-risk pregnancies, or are older and do not reflect changing practice. The *Listening to Mothers*<sup>SM</sup> *III* surveys provide the most extensive and recent data on these matters among pregnant women in the United States. These nationally representative data are from an initial survey of 2400 women, 18-45, who had given birth to a single baby in U.S. hospitals from July 2011 through June 2012 and could participate in English, as well as a follow-up survey of 1072 of the initial participants carried out several months later. Childbirth Connection's *Listening to Mothers*<sup>SM</sup> *III* surveys were conducted by Harris Interactive and funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Learn more and access the initial ("Pregnancy and Birth") and follow-up ("New Mothers Speak Out") survey reports and related resources at [bit.ly/LTM-III](http://bit.ly/LTM-III).

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

**Nearly two-thirds (64%) of pregnant women use a smartphone in a typical week**, and 82% go online from a computer. Women also reported using tablet devices (35%), regular mobile phones (33%), and iPod Touch devices (21%) to get online.

**Mobile experience is less valued for accessing online pregnancy information than laptops or desktops.** Among devices, women were most likely to consider a laptop or desktop computer as the best way to access online information about pregnancy and birth.

- 64% of users said a computer is an "excellent" way to access pregnancy and birth information, compared with 46% of tablet users, 43% of smartphone users, and 42% or iPod Touch users.
- Only 22% of users rated regular mobile phones with text messaging capability and Internet access as an "excellent" way to access information.

**Women are turning to the Internet for help choosing their maternity care providers and hospitals.** Insurance coverage was the leading factor driving decisions about where and with whom to give birth, but the Internet played a significant role.

- 69% of women reported that favorable information on websites was a factor in choosing the hospital where they gave birth.
- Likewise, 69% of women reported that high ratings on websites were a factor in selecting their doctor, midwife, or group practice.

**Many, but not most, pregnant women have access to health information technology for communication with care providers and care coordination.**

- 47% of women indicated appointment scheduling was available online
- Nearly one in three (31%) had email access to their provider
- About half (49%) had access to other prenatal online services, like test results or prescription refills.

- Most considered online access to electronic maternity and health records “very important” (41%) or “somewhat important” (37%).

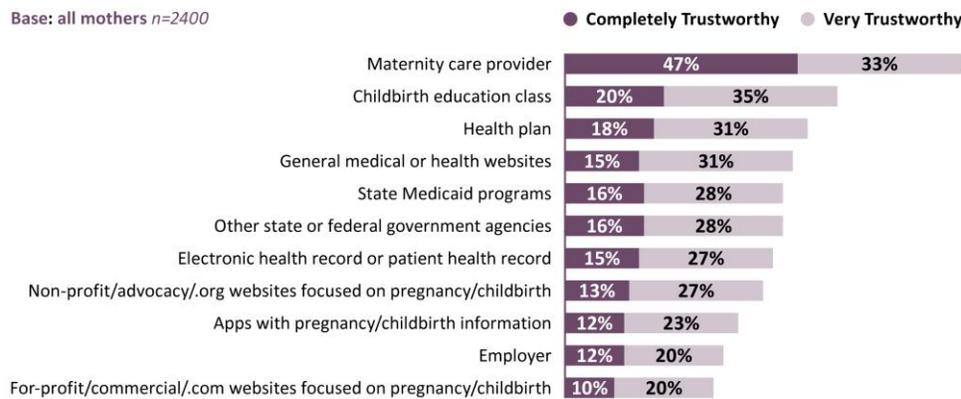
**Women’s perceptions of value and trustworthiness of online sources vary widely.** Mothers rated traditional sources of information about pregnancy and birth– maternity care providers and also childbirth education classes – as highly trustworthy, followed by health plans, general medical or health websites, state Medicaid programs, and other state or federal government agencies. Lowest ratings of trustworthiness went to apps with pregnancy and childbirth information, employers, and for-profit/commercial pregnancy and birth sites (see figure below).

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**Mothers’ ratings of trustworthiness of possible sources of pregnancy and childbirth information**

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Base: all mothers n=2400



Among those who had used specific sources of pregnancy and birth information, maternity care providers and childbirth education classes also were rated as most *valuable* sources for this purpose, followed by websites for pregnancy women, apps, and general health or medical websites. Government agencies and employers were rated as least valuable by those who had used them as sources of information about pregnancy and birth.

Women were also asked about their use of several different kinds of online resources as sources of information about pregnancy and birth, and those who used each type of resource were asked how valuable it had been for that purpose.

- Pregnancy and childbirth-related blogs were the most widely used pregnancy and birth information sources (used by 78% of women) and the most valued, with 47% finding them “very valuable” and 40% finding them “somewhat valuable.” This was followed by online forums and discussion boards, considered “somewhat” or “very” valuable by 76% of women
- Over two-thirds of women who used them for this purpose found online video sites (68%), Facebook (67%) and Wikipedia (67%) “somewhat” or “very” valuable. (See table below.)

**Online information was more likely to make women feel positive than negative.** While conducting online searches, most women “always” or “usually” felt reassured to make appropriate health care decisions (72%) and confident to raise new questions or concerns with their maternity care providers (59%). Only a small portion of women “always” or “usually” had

negative emotions such as feeling overwhelmed (27%), frightened (17%), frustrated (13%) or confused (11%) by the information they found online.

**Many women used subscription services for delivery of pregnancy and birth information.**

Many women received regular information about pregnancy and birth from a content provider:

- 67% signed up to receive weekly or so emails with this information
- 27% signed up to receive short text messages, with 17% of all mothers using text4baby.

**Just one in three mothers took childbirth education classes during her pregnancy.** Overall, 34% of the survey respondents took childbirth classes in their recent pregnancy. Whereas 59% of the first-time mothers took classes, just 17% of those who had given birth at least once before took classes. However, 32% of experienced mothers did not take them in the present pregnancy, but had done so during a previous pregnancy. Just over half (53%) of all mothers reported taking a childbirth education class at some point, while nearly half (47%) had never done so.

**Most women had watched TV shows depicting labor and birth.** During their pregnancies, most women (65%) had watched television programs created specifically to show women's labor and birth experiences, with 21% of all mothers indicating that they watched regularly. Of those who watched regularly or sometimes, 56% said that the programs helped with feeling excited about the upcoming birth, 50% that they helped to understand what it would be like to give birth, 39% that they helped her clarify her preferences for birth, 35% that they helped her learn about medical terms and technology, and 25% that it caused her to worry about her upcoming birth.