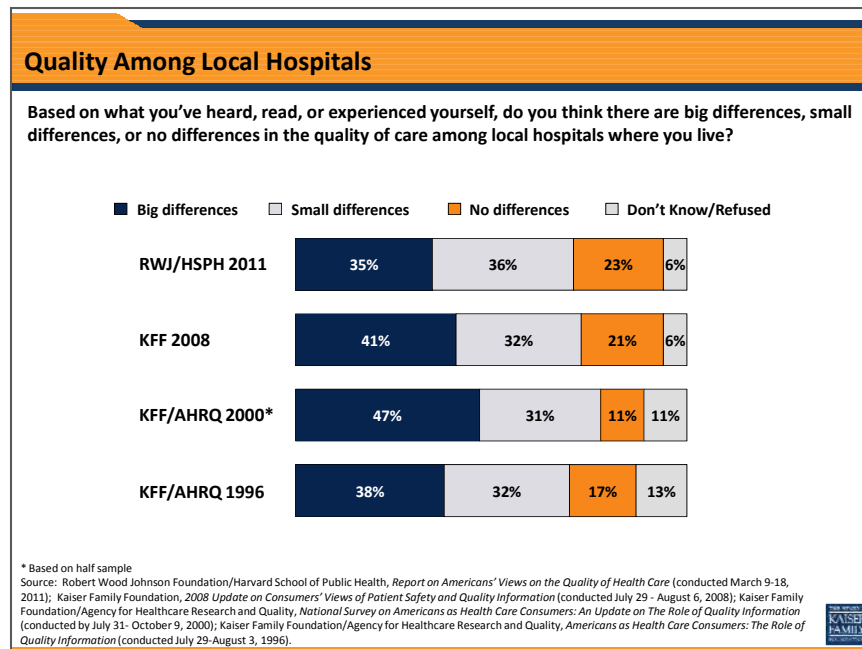


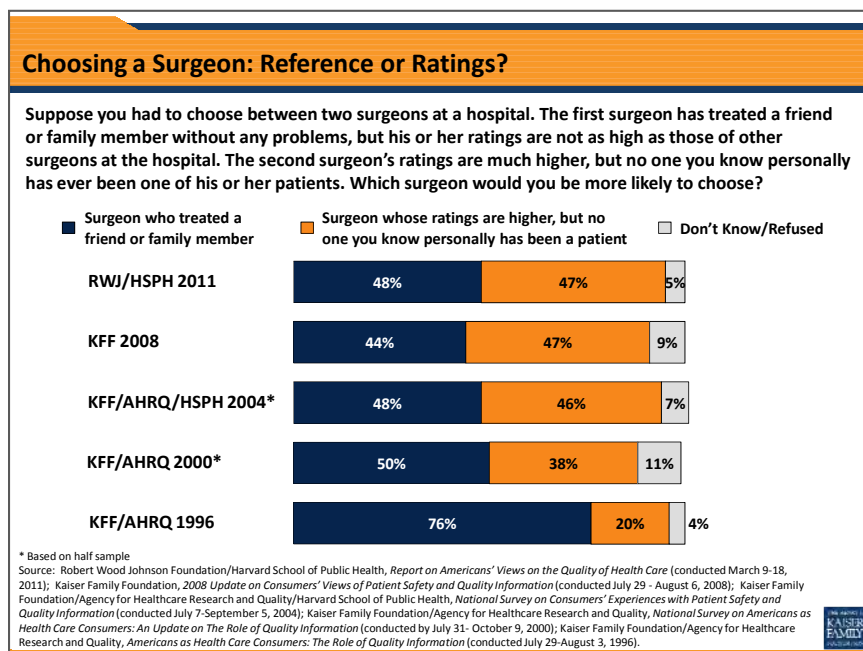
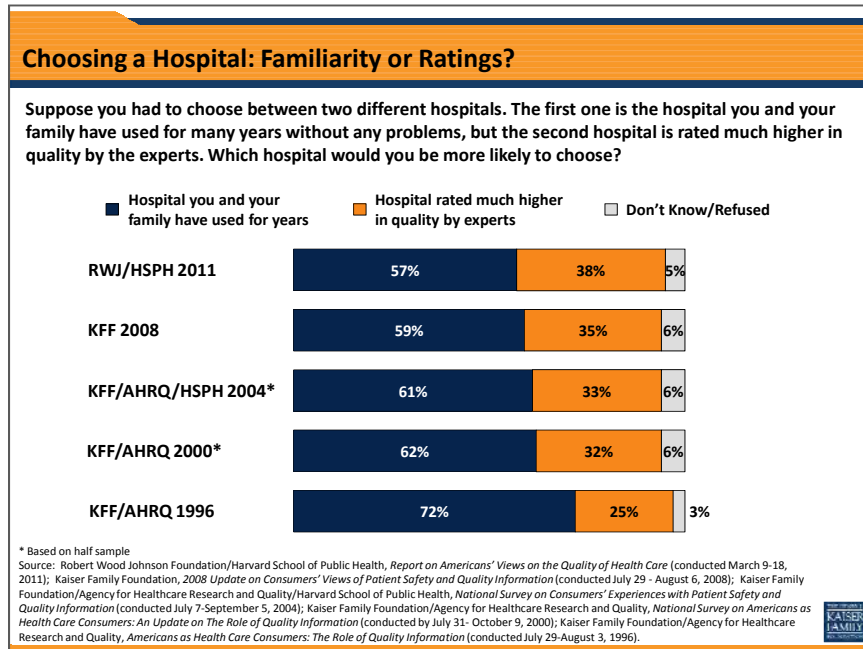
Trends in the Use of Hospital and Provider Quality Ratings

A recently released survey by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health (RWJ/HSPH) adds data points to some important trends on the public's views of health care quality. The Kaiser Family Foundation, sometimes with partner organizations including the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality in the Department of Health and Human Services and the Harvard School of Public Health, has asked similar questions as far back as 1996. With the Affordable Care Act's renewed emphasis on health care quality, it is important to examine whether Americans rely on quality ratings and how their opinions have changed over time. This Data Note examines these trends and shows that there have been only minor changes over the years in how Americans perceive hospital quality or how much they value independent ratings over familiarity in their choice of a hospital or surgeon.

The new RWJ/HSPH survey shows that Americans remain split on whether they think there are big differences (35 percent) or small differences (36 percent) in the quality of care among their local hospitals. These shares are similar to the shares reported 15 years ago. With little perception that there are differences between hospitals in their local communities, Americans may underutilize resources on hospital quality despite efforts to make this information more available.



Further, the new RWJ/HSPH survey shows that the majority of Americans (57 percent) report they would be more likely to choose a hospital they are familiar with rather than one that had high quality ratings. When it comes to choosing a surgeon, equal shares report either choosing a surgeon based on a reference from a family or friend (48 percent) or choosing a surgeon with high quality ratings (47 percent). Familiarity has ranked higher than independent ratings since the question was first asked in 1996, when roughly three quarters of Americans chose the familiar option for a hospital or a surgeon. A shift occurred in 2000, but since then the shares have remained fairly steady with a slight decline in the share choosing their family hospital. These numbers span a time when evidence-based practice and quality improvement have been widely discussed and demonstrate that despite these efforts, Americans still place a high amount of stock in personal referrals or references and suggest that any changes in these preferences will be slow.



Polls Included:

- 2011: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health, *Report on Americans' Views on the Quality of Health Care* (conducted March 9-18, 2011).
- 2008: Kaiser Family Foundation, *2008 Update on Consumers' Views of Patient Safety and Quality Information* (conducted July 29-August 6, 2008).
- 2004: Kaiser Family Foundation/Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality/Harvard School of Public Health, *National Survey on Consumers' Experiences with Patient Safety and Quality Information* (conducted July 7-Sept 5, 2004).
- 2000: Kaiser Family Foundation/Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, *National Survey on Americans as Health Care Consumers: An Update on The Role of Quality Information* (conducted by July 31 - October 9, 2000).
- 1996: Kaiser Family Foundation/Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, *Americans as Health Care Consumers: The Role of Quality Information* (conducted July 26-September 5, 1996).

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