

# Information Needs of Health Care Purchasers

## Background

Washington Health Alliance (WHA) works with employers and other organizations within the state of Washington with a mission to:

- reduce the price of health care
- minimize the overuse of health care services
- reduce the underuse of effective care.



In order to assist them in their mission, we examined the health care information needs of WHA purchaser members.

Employers are the largest purchaser of healthcare in America – over half of Americans receive health insurance through their employers (Aligning Forces for Quality, 2013). As the largest purchaser, employers are directly impacted by the rising costs of health care. Poor employee health not only means higher insurance premiums, but also lost revenue due to sick leave or the impact chronic conditions have on performance. Many employers are looking for ways to reduce the cost of health care without compromising the quality of care.

Reference:  
Aligning Forces for Quality. (2013). *Reform in action: how employers can improve value and quality in health care*. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Infographic. Retrieved from [http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/images/illustrations/2/Employer\\_Infographic\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/images/illustrations/2/Employer_Infographic_FINAL.pdf)

## Research

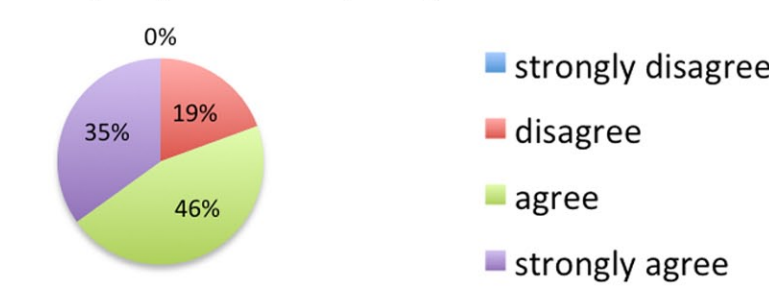
In order to assess the information needs and behavior of health care purchasers, we designed a survey which was sent to a select segment of WHA members.

- Survey sent to approximately 130 WHA members who are health care plan purchasers
- Response rate was approximately 12%
- Almost all of the respondents' health care plans cover 1000+ lives
- Half of respondents work for government agencies

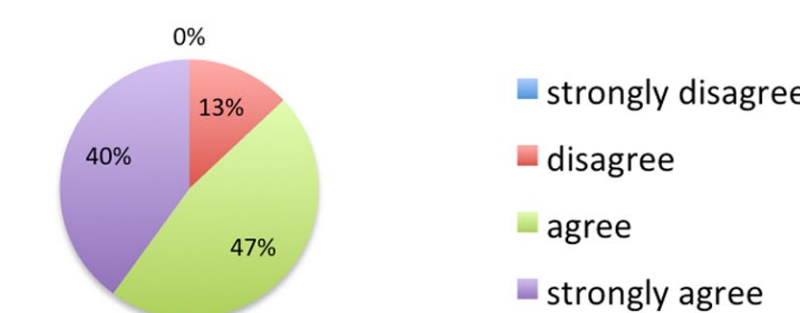


## Survey Results

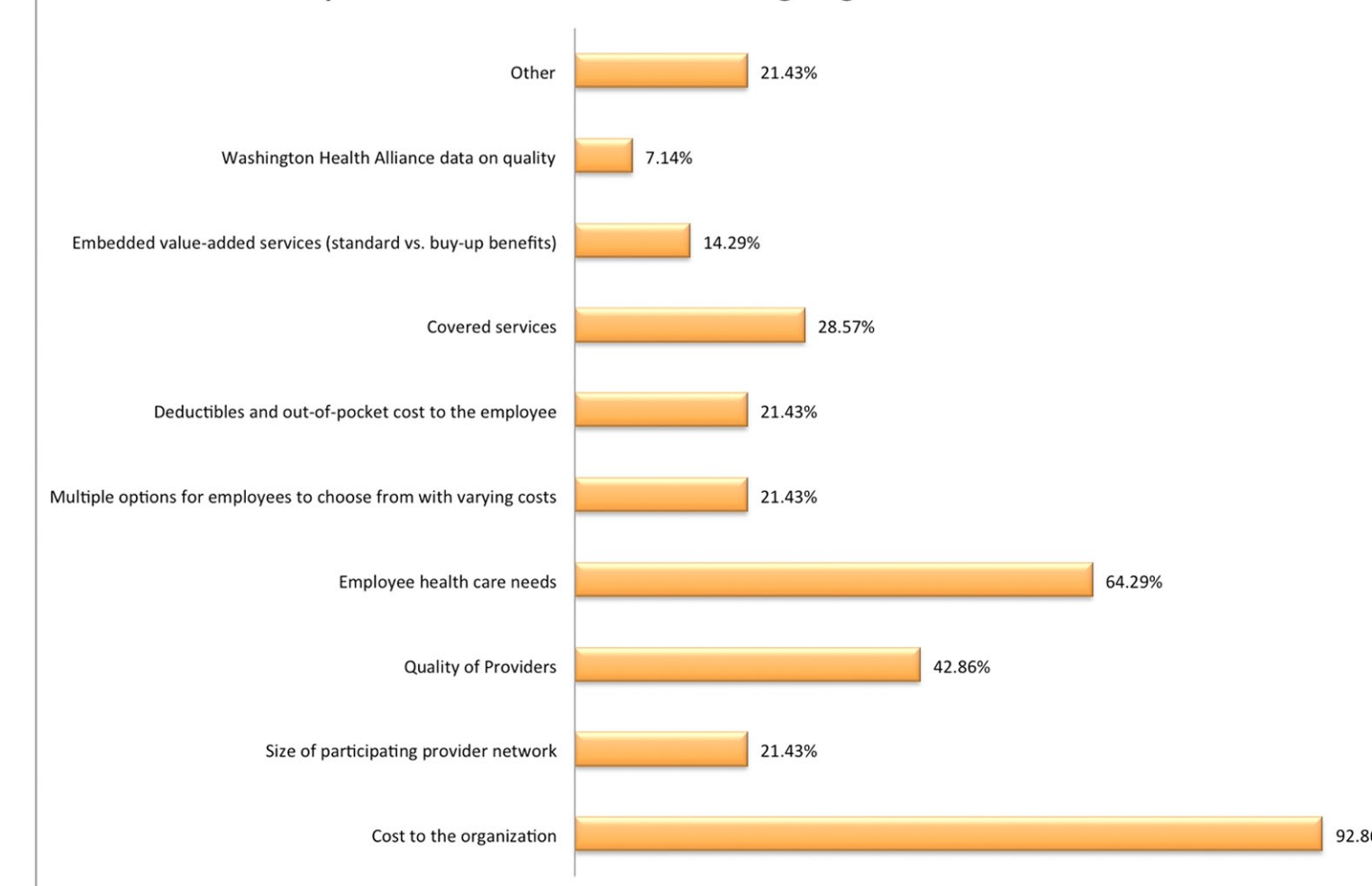
I am well informed about innovative health care strategies that my peers use and how they would benefit the employees at my organization.



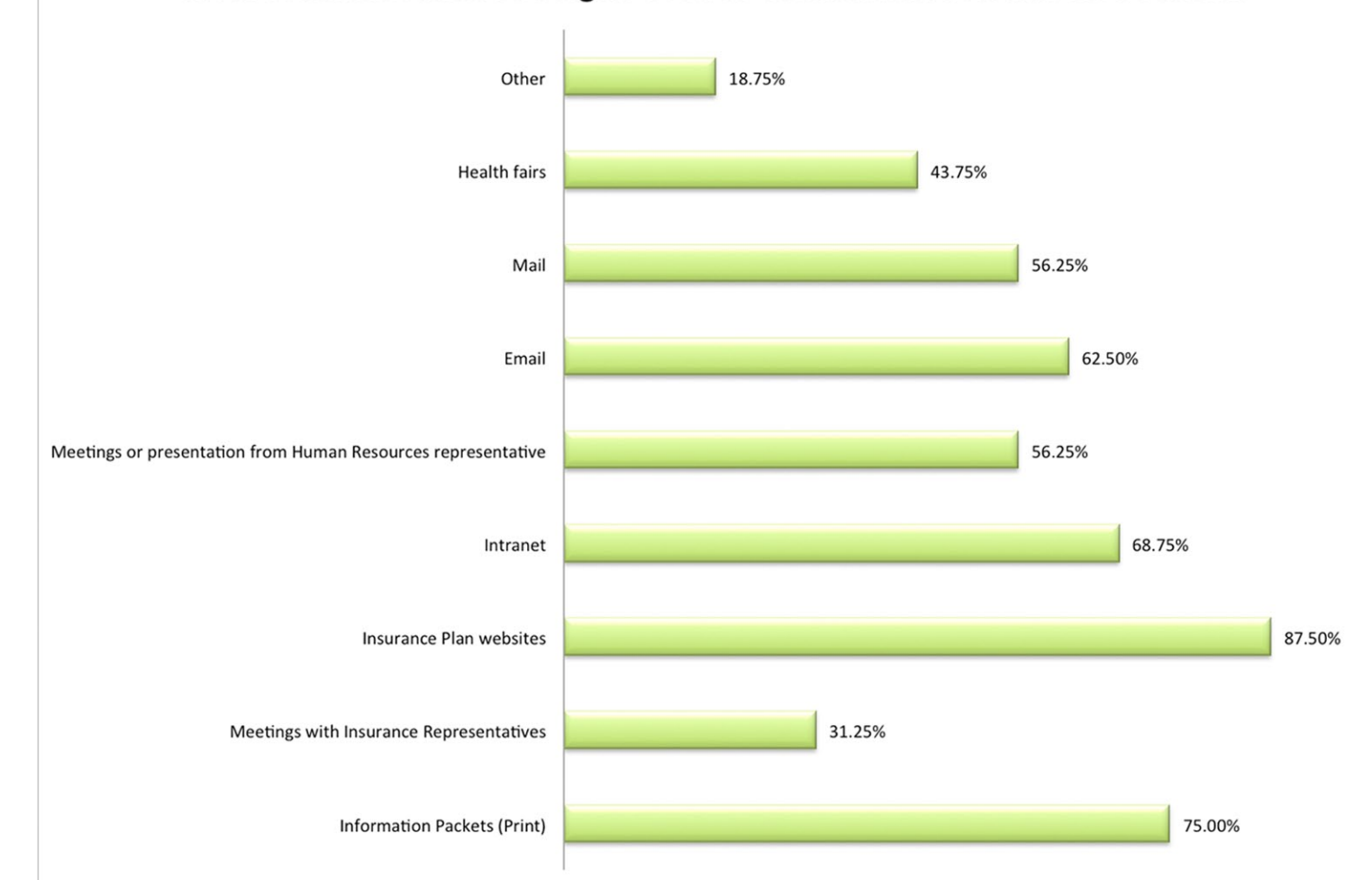
I feel confident in the decisions I have made when designing a health care benefit strategy for my organization.



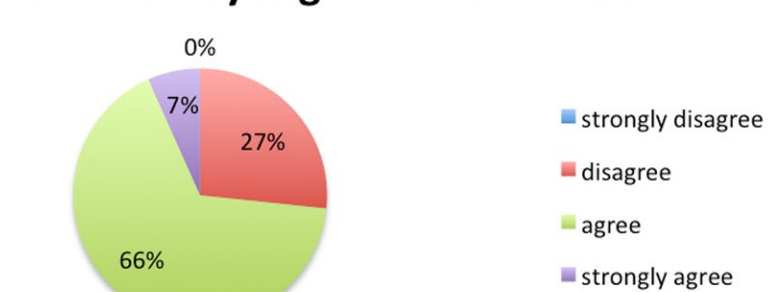
Top Factors Considered when Designing Health Benefit Plans



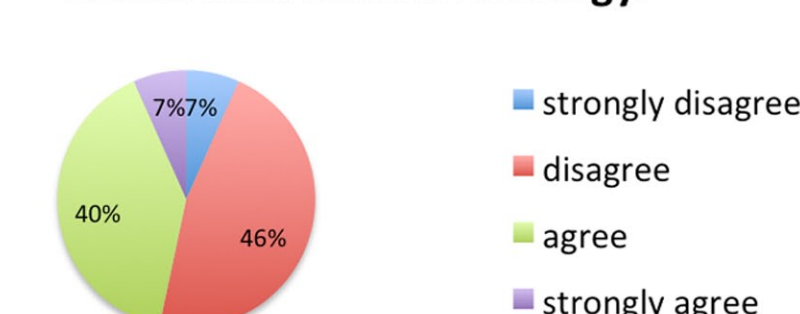
Most Communication Strategies Used to Communicate Health Care Benefits



Employees at my organization are well informed about the health care benefits my organization offers.



Employees at my organization understand our organization's overall health care benefits strategy.



## Deliverable

**Persona Profile** WHA WASHINGTON HEALTH ALLIANCE

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Type of organization: Government  
 Number of covered lives: 1000+  
 Length of time as health care program decision-maker: 3-5 years

**Janie Wilhelm**

- ✓ Broker or consultant and Washington Health Alliance are sources used to meet her information needs
- ✓ Cost and employee health care needs are the most important factors taken into account when designing health care benefits
- ✓ Employees at her organization are informed about health care benefits in these ways: Insurance plan web sites, print information packets, and via an intranet
- ✓ Feels confident in decisions made when designing a health care benefit strategy for the organization
- ✓ Does not feel that employees at the organization understand the overall health care benefits strategy

Janie feels confident in her understanding of health care benefits, but wishes her employees were better informed. Despite the multiple ways she informs her organization's employees about their health care benefits, she still feels that they do not understand the overall strategy.

"I appreciate that WHA helps me compare price and quality of local health care providers."

Janie would like assistance from WHA in developing a communication strategy to better inform employees through participating in a focus group or a round-table discussion with other purchasers.

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## Conclusion

### Impact

Washington Health Alliance may use the sample purchaser persona we created to begin a dialogue with purchasers about how they communicate their health care strategy and plan with their employees. The survey results give WHA a better understanding the needs of the members they serve. Provided with this information they can identify areas in which members need the most support and assistance when developing a health plan strategy and in helping each organization's employees better understand their health plan benefits.

### Next Steps

- Round-table discussions
- Networking opportunities for purchasers
- Additional research
  - Focus groups
    - ◆ Government vs non-government
    - ◆ Organizations with +/-1000 lives covered
  - Survey employees of member organizations
  - Assessment of communication plan between purchaser and employees

