

# 15th Annual Spok Healthcare Communications Report: Trends Shaping The Future Of Healthcare

Observations and insights about the intersection of technology, collaboration, and patient-centricity



# Executive summary and key takeaways

The latest iteration of the Spok healthcare communications report provides perspective on the different motivations, concerns, strategies, and solutions shaping and driving a new era of healthcare to help guide health systems as they plan for the future.

The questions asked—and the insights gathered—provide context around the various circumstances and challenges facing U.S. health systems, from frontline clinical workers and back-office support to IT and clinical executives, all unified by the mission to provide excellent patient care.

This year’s report details current healthcare communication challenges, including security-related issues and burnout, the evolution of devices used to communicate across teams, and what the future of healthcare will look like as AI-driven technologies continue to be embraced.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                  |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Executive summary<br/>and key takeaways</b>                   | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Healthcare communication challenges</b>                       | <b>4</b>  |
| The state of security                                            | 6         |
| Burnout is back                                                  | 9         |
| <b>The evolution of healthcare<br/>communication devices</b>     | <b>12</b> |
| Pagers: The communication<br>device holding strong               | 13        |
| <b>Looking ahead: The future<br/>of healthcare communication</b> | <b>14</b> |
| AI spotlight                                                     | 14        |
| New IT communications<br>considerations                          | 16        |
| <b>Reflections</b>                                               | <b>18</b> |
| <b>Survey demographics</b>                                       | <b>19</b> |

## Five key takeaways

### 1 IT expertise advances while effective implementation trails.

**FINDINGS:** Budget constraints remain the **#1 obstacle (a 15% increase year-over-year)** for advancing communication capabilities in health systems, followed by a lack of enterprise-wide strategy—yet there are fewer concerns around gaps in IT knowledge when adopting new solutions.

**TAKEAWAY:** Health systems possess the IT expertise to implement effective communication systems but remain trapped in a cycle where financial constraints and fragmented decision-making prevent them from realizing the comprehensive, enterprise-wide solutions they need.

### 2 Secure platforms are valued, but too many devices may undermine optimization.

**FINDINGS:** The perceived value of secure messaging apps has intensified, and more people are moving toward a more pragmatic security mindset. Though **most use two platforms**, a growing number of hospitals are using **more than four secure texting apps**.

**TAKEAWAY:** Hospitals increasingly recognize secure messaging as critical to clinical communication, but adopting too many platforms and devices may undermine the workflow optimization and workforce confidence they seek.

### 3 After promising results last year, high burnout rates have reemerged.

**FINDINGS:** Those who experienced a **great deal of burnout increased by 89%** from last year. The most significant increase in technology-driven burnout is from the burdensome or increased workload of new tools.

**TAKEAWAY:** A shift from last year's optimistic results, the healthcare workforce is back to feeling increasingly burnt out and overwhelmed. This spike in work-related stressors may have serious implications for staffing over the near- and long-term.

### 4 Both practical communication devices and modern solutions offer advantages.

**FINDINGS:** Smartwatches are finally gaining significant traction, **with an over 200% year-over-year increase**, while pagers continue to hold strong, with **82% of hospitals using pagers (a 6% increase from last year)** due to their ability for communicating with specific employee groups or departments and cost savings compared to other devices.

**TAKEAWAY:** Hands-free devices like smartwatches, known for their quick notifications and easy-to-use functionality, are finding their place in healthcare workflows. At the same time, hospitals facing budget pressures continue to rely on practical solutions over more expensive, modern devices.

### 5 AI is highly desired, but hospitals must first overcome implementation complexities.

**FINDINGS:** While every perceived obstacle to effectively implementing AI increased this year, so did every application area for how AI can benefit healthcare. **Enhanced communication tools continue to lead with the highest adoption expectation at 80%.**

**TAKEAWAY:** Healthcare organizations are starting to see the value of various AI use cases, but they're also realizing the challenges involved in expanding AI's potential utility. Regulatory approval and compliance are of particular concern as organizations become more aware of the complex regulatory landscape surrounding AI in healthcare settings.

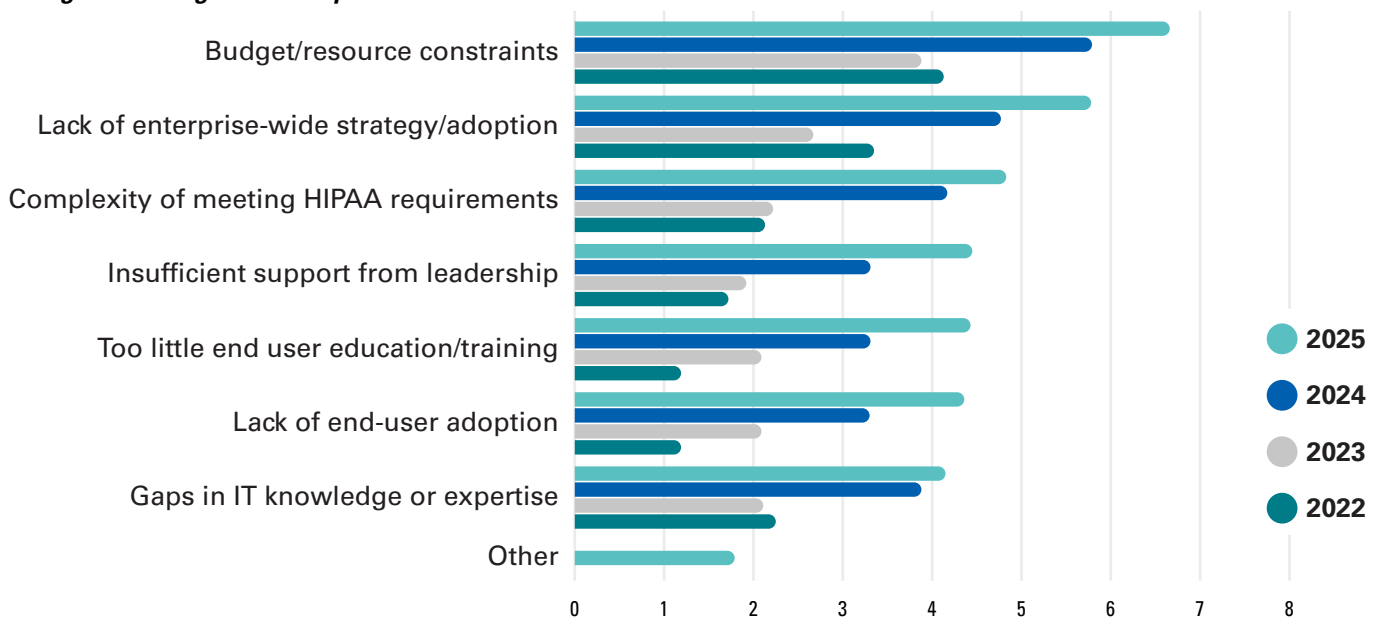
# Healthcare communication challenges

Care teams need seamless communication to improve patient outcomes, but most health systems struggle to deliver it due to consistent issues, such as budget constraints, a lack of enterprise-wide strategy, and compliance complexity. Meanwhile, fragmented systems create confusion, delays in critical updates, and increased worker stress—all of which directly impact patient care.

The technology and IT expertise exist to address these ongoing challenges. What may be missing is the strategic commitment and resources to bridge communication gaps.

## What do you perceive are the biggest obstacles to advancing your hospital communications?

*Weighted average for all responses*

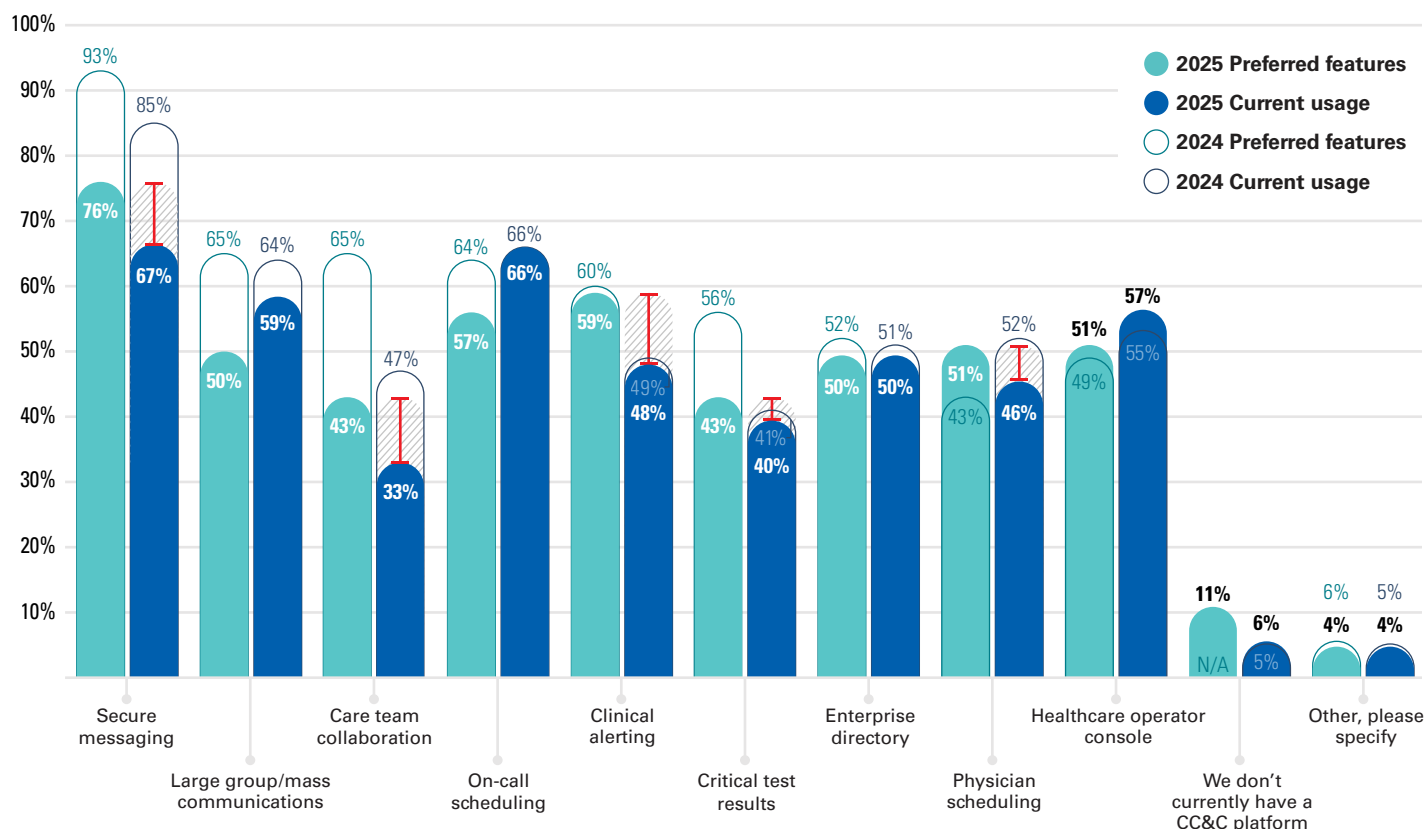


Budget constraints remaining the #1 obstacle for four consecutive years suggests hospitals are operating in a sustained financial squeeze, forcing them to delay or compromise on communication investments despite recognizing their importance.

The high ranking of a “lack of enterprise-wide strategy/adoption” may indicate hospitals are taking a fragmented, department-by-department approach rather than implementing cohesive communication systems, which can cause confusion.

The notable drop in “gaps in IT knowledge” from the fourth to seventh obstacle (only a 7% increase year-over-year) shows hospital IT departments have become more sophisticated and confident with communication technologies, which should theoretically make implementations smoother moving forward.

## ••• **Clinical communication and collaboration (CC&C) platform** ••• **feature preferences versus the features currently in use**



Aligned with last year's results, for those using a CC&C platform, the highest priority feature is secure messaging.

Clinical alerting now has the biggest gap in 2025, suggesting health systems are prioritizing immediate, actionable notifications rather than passive communication. Yet, interestingly, critical test results dropped to the fifth largest gap in those who prefer this capability but don't currently have it—potentially indicating greater implementation and use of that feature since last year.

Consistently high demand gaps in preferred vs. used features indicate that health systems are aware of what they need but may be struggling to implement solutions effectively.

## The largest gaps in preferred vs. current usage in 2025



### **CLINICAL** **ALERTING**

11 percentage points  
Moved from 3rd to 1st in 2025



### **CARE TEAM** **COLLABORATION**

10 percentage points



### **SECURE** **MESSAGING**

9 percentage points



### **PHYSICIAN** **SCHEDULING**

5 percentage points



### **CRITICAL TEST** **RESULTS**

3 percentage points  
Moved from 2nd to 5th in 2025

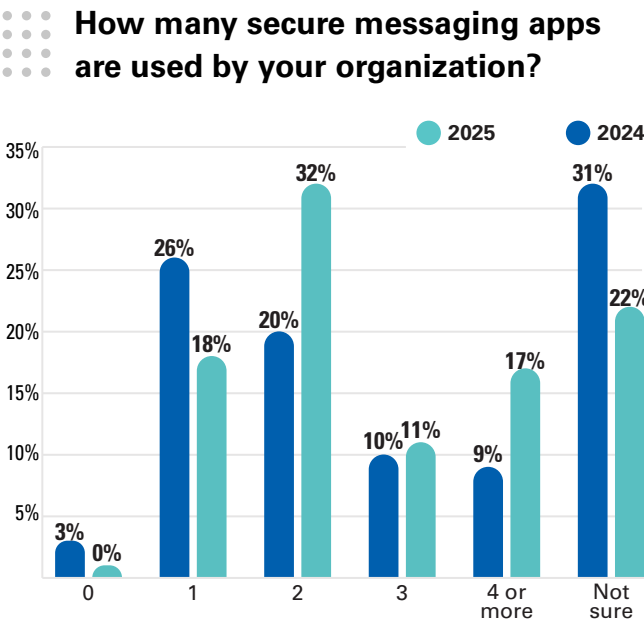
# The state of security

Healthcare workers understand the critical importance of security when managing health information—it’s fundamental to every health system’s culture. However, as organizations adopt new communication devices to improve workflows, they risk creating the opposite effect if they allow too many different platforms. An overabundance of devices can cause confusion, increase workloads, and multiply security vulnerabilities.

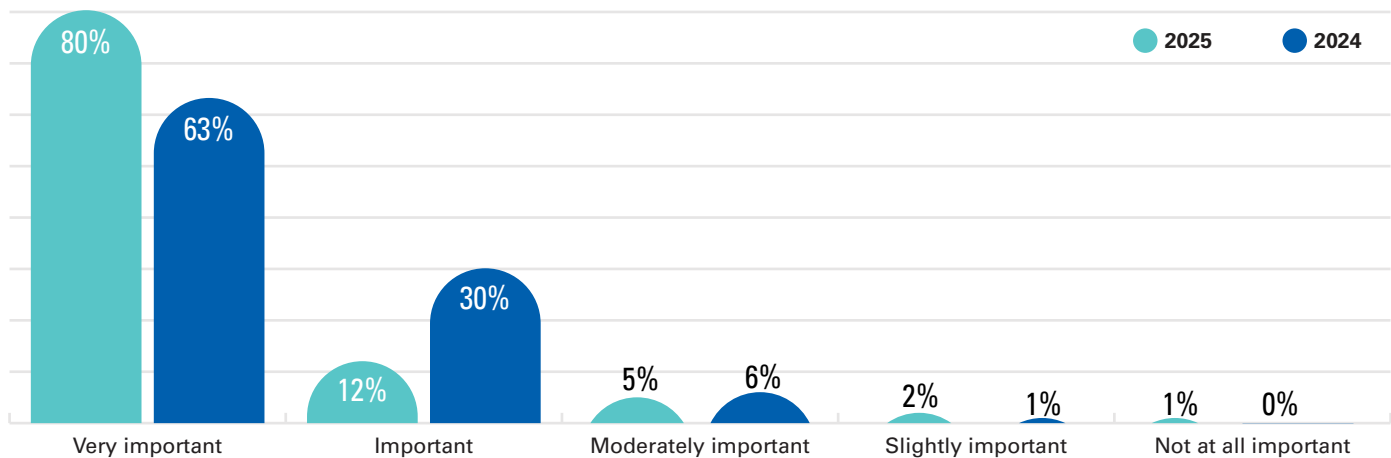
For secure messaging specifically, the right technology combined with proper training helps health systems achieve the optimal balance: everyone will feel confident using unified systems to share information and communicate effectively.

A growing number of organizations are using four or more texting apps, which could stem from hospitals using different secure texting apps for different purposes, such as one for internal staff communication, another for patient communication, and others for specific departments or use cases. This diversification likely reflects hospitals’ efforts to optimize their digital communication workflows. However, using too many texting solutions can create operational challenges, such as communication fragmentation, training and adoption burdens, integration complexities, alert fatigue, and security risks.

While those who are unsure of how many secure texting apps are in use within their health system decreased in 2025, there’s still a significant number of people unfamiliar with their organization’s systems and solutions.

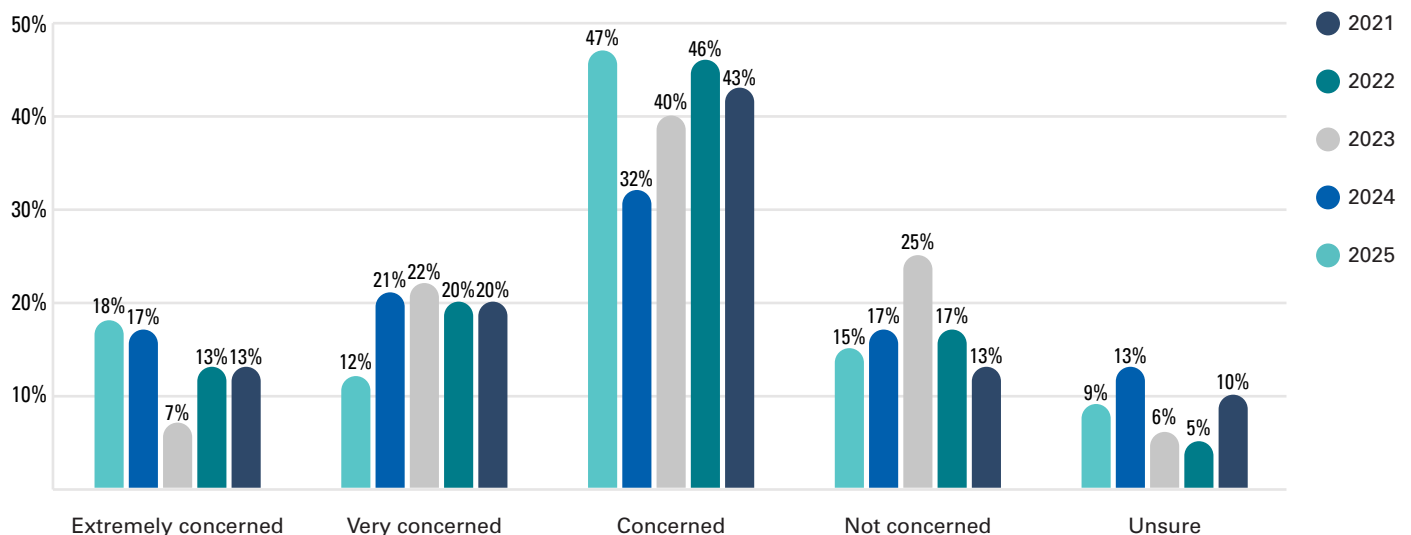


How important are secure messaging apps for managing clinical communication in your organization?



The perceived value of secure messaging apps has intensified. In 2025, there was a 27% increase in those who think secure messaging apps are “very important” to managing clinical communication in their organization, likely pulling from those who think it’s just “important,” which saw a 60% decrease.

How concerned are you that patient information and proprietary health system data are being communicated via unsecure or personal communication tools?

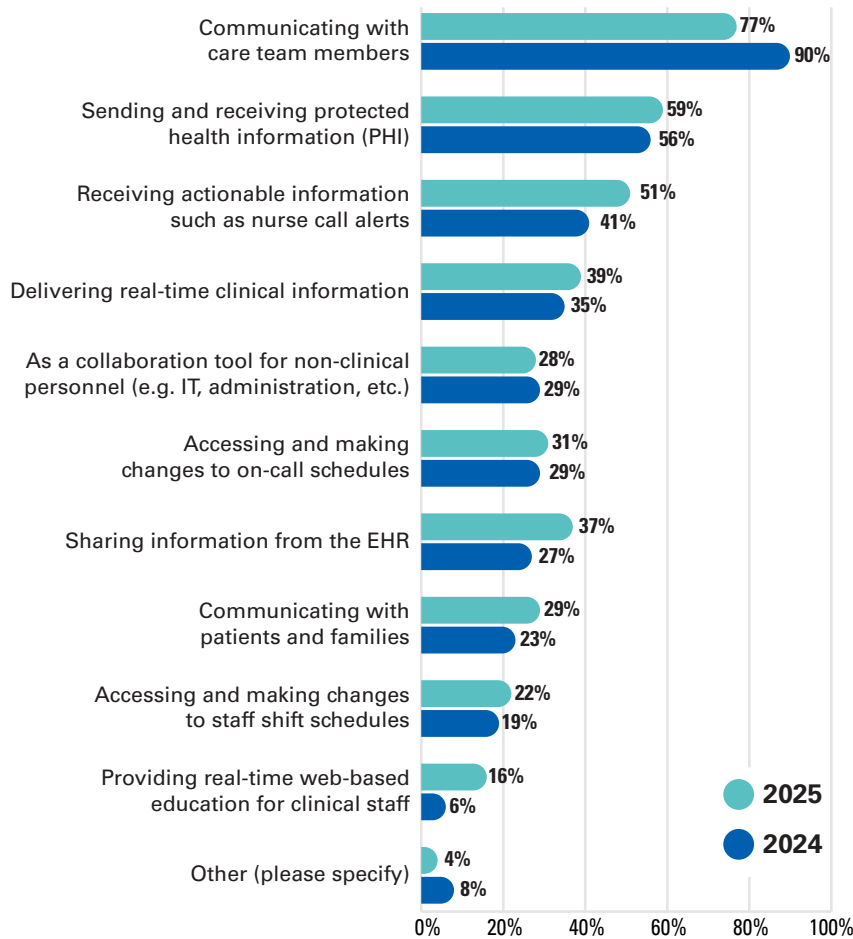


There was a significant increase in the “Concerned” category, jumping from 32% in 2024 to 47% in 2025, indicating that people are coalescing around a middle-ground level of worry rather than extreme positions.

This pattern suggests the healthcare industry at large may be moving toward a more pragmatic security mindset: acknowledging real risks without panicking. This shift toward moderate concern could also indicate that organizations are finding the right balance between security awareness and operational functionality.



## How are secure messaging apps used in your organization?



### Largest increases

**ALL INCREASED BY 10 PERCENTAGE POINTS:**



Providing real-time web-based education for clinical staff



Receiving actionable information such as nurse call alerts



Sharing information from the EHR



### Largest decrease

**DROPPED BY 13 PERCENTAGE POINTS:**



Communicating with care team members



### The takeaway:

2025 shows a notable shift from basic communication functions toward more specialized clinical information sharing and educational capabilities. While care team communication remained the most common use overall, its significant decline suggests organizations may be diversifying how they use these systems beyond just messaging.

# Burnout is back

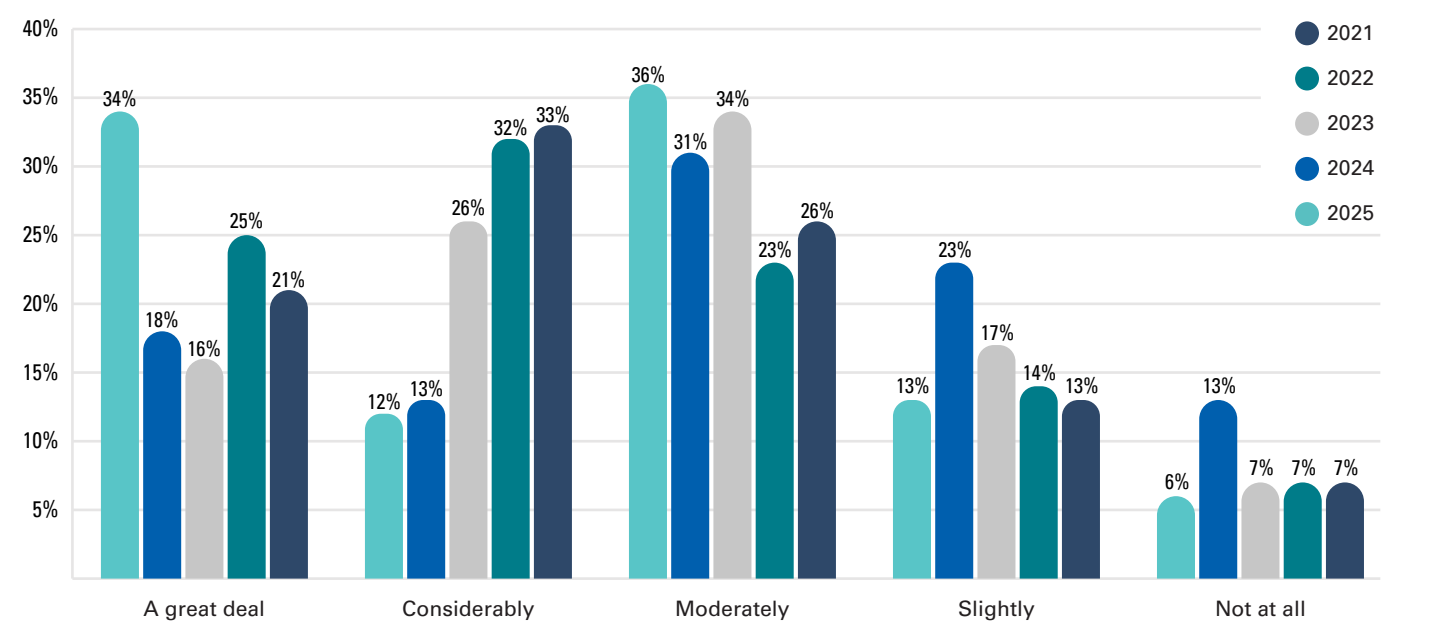
While we saw cautious optimism in 2024, the healthcare burnout crisis has reached a potential tipping point in 2025. Healthcare workers are no longer experiencing gradual stress accumulation but are instead hitting breaking points, with data showing that severe burnout cases surged and mild burnout plummeted.

To truly course correct burnout across the healthcare industry, the path forward demands immediate, comprehensive action and interventions, combining technology rationalization with sustained leadership commitment.

Due to burnout and an aging workforce, the Association of American Medical Colleges estimates the United States could face a shortage of up to 86,000 physicians by 2036.

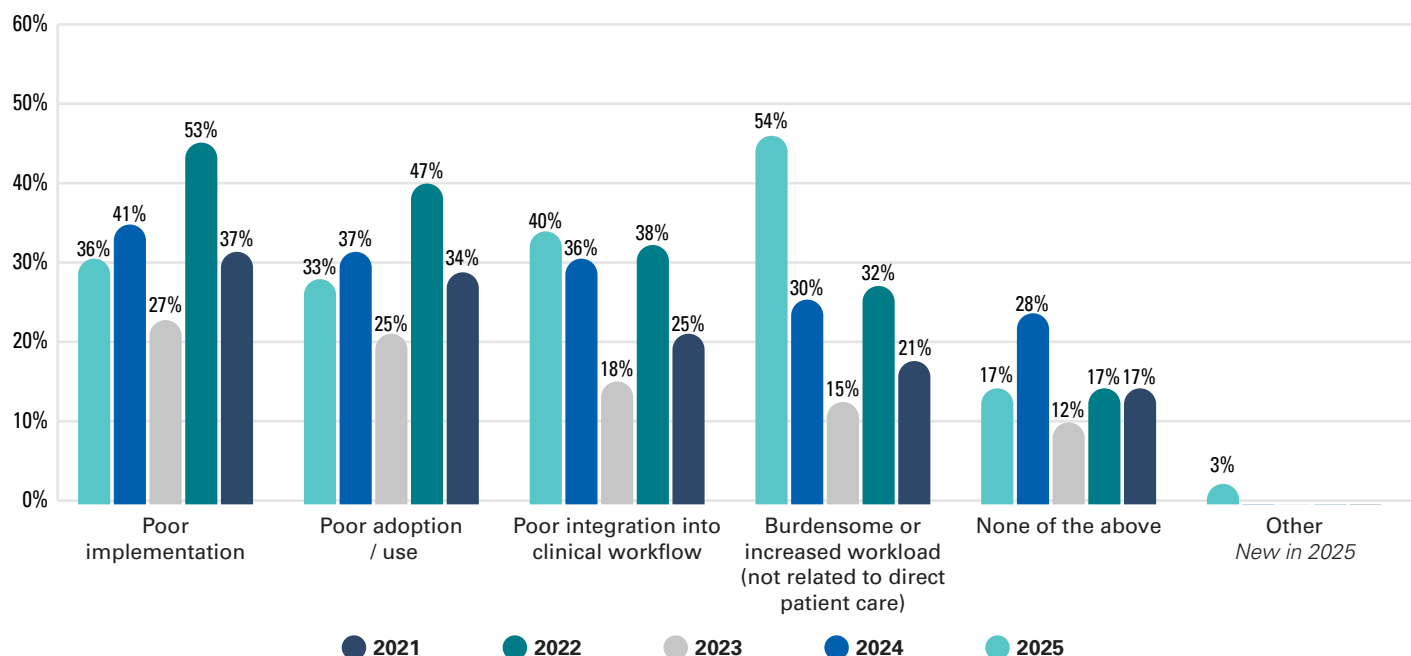
[NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION<sup>1</sup>](#)

●●●● To what degree have you personally experienced feelings of work-related stress and/or lost satisfaction/sense of efficacy that might contribute to burnout in your work?



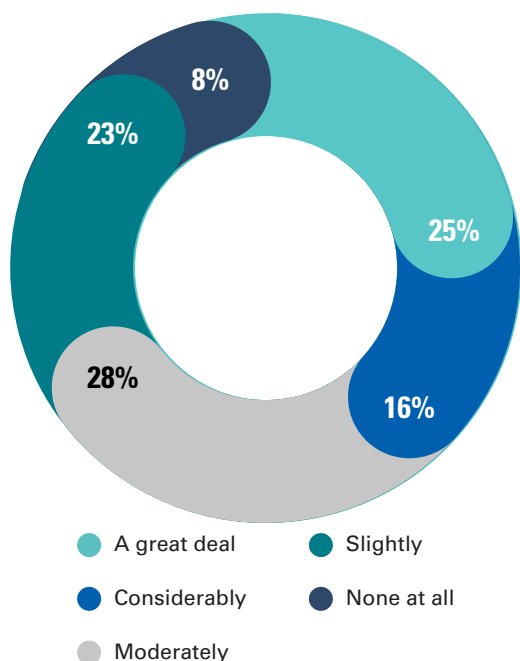
This year, those who experienced a great deal of burnout increased by 89%, and those who only felt slightly burnt out decreased by 44%. This shift toward high levels of burnout suggests health system workers are reaching a tipping point, where work-related stressors have become too overwhelming. This could have serious implications for staffing in the near- and long-term.

## Factors contributing to alert fatigue or clinician burnout related to clinical tools and technology



The most significant increase in technology-driven burnout is from the burdensome or increased workload of new tools—an 80% increase from 2024. The “Other” factor highlighted in this year’s survey was the amount of important information coming from too many devices, which makes a single source of truth difficult to discern.

## Are communication challenges contributing to work-related stress and/or burnout?\*

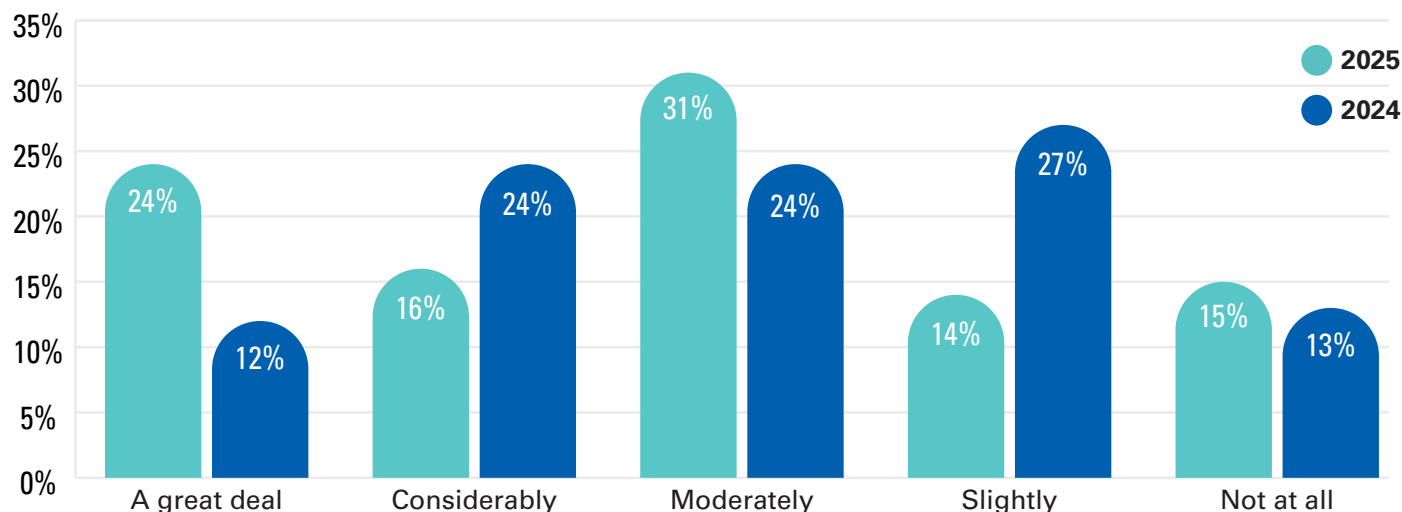


Unsurprisingly, due to the increased workload and overwhelming nature of information coming from multiple devices, people feel communication challenges contribute to burnout.



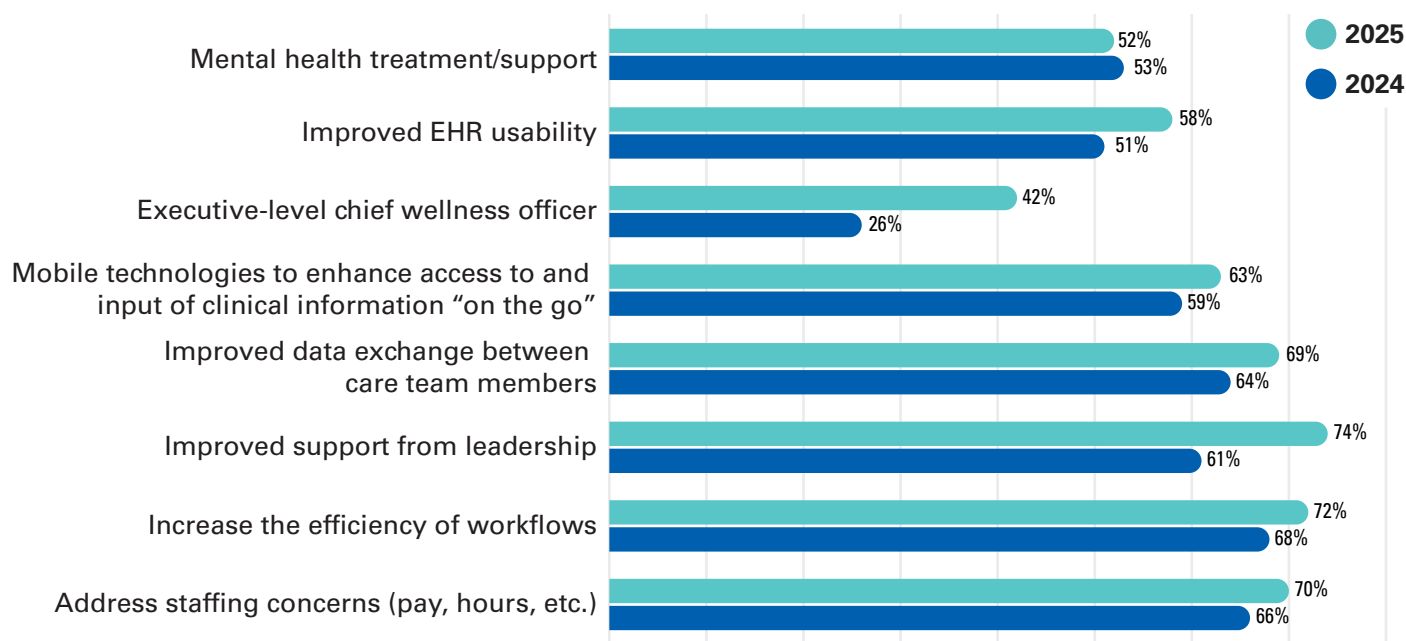
\* Newly added survey question in 2025

## Have you seen a shift in how your organization handles or approaches work-related stress and burnout?



Fortunately, there's been a significant increase in organizations putting programs and resources toward addressing and managing stress and burnout. Those who have seen a great deal of change increased by 100%, and those who experienced only a slight change significantly decreased.

## How helpful are these interventions or strategies to address the risk of burnout?



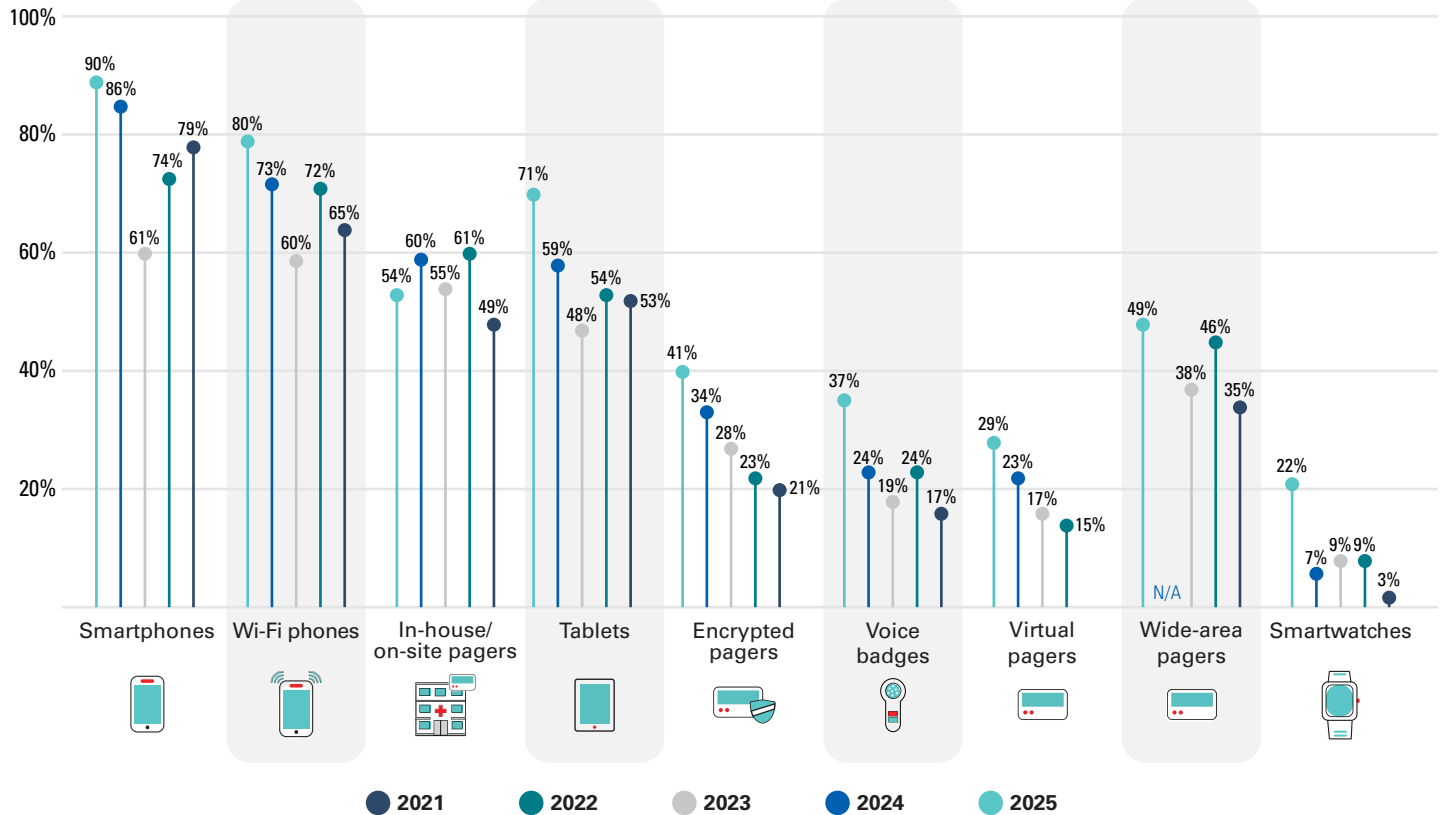
This year, having an executive-level chief wellness officer and improved support from leadership saw the biggest increases in strategies that can help mitigate burnout. Both strategies focus on leadership-driven interventions rather than individual resilience, suggesting the workforce views burnout as a systemic and cultural issue.

# The evolution of healthcare communication devices

While some healthcare communication devices appear to be reaching their peak, others are experiencing growth spurts that signal shifting organizational priorities and emerging use cases within clinical environments.

This year's data uncovers device adoption patterns, evolving cost considerations, and the persistent value of seemingly dated technologies that continue to serve critical roles in modern healthcare delivery.

## Types of mobile devices supported by your health system



**Smartphones** remain dominant but are plateauing, indicating the near-universal adoption of them is stabilizing.



**Tablets** are experiencing a strong resurgence, suggesting a renewed organizational investment in tablet-based workflows and applications.

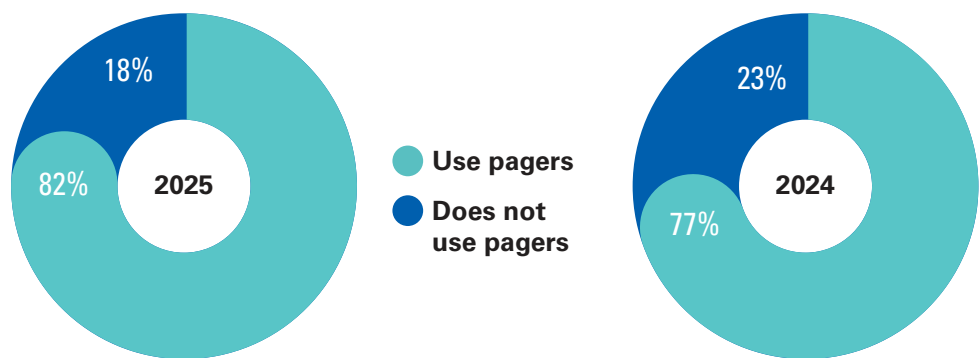


**Smartwatches** are gaining significant traction. After years of minimal adoption, smartwatch use increased over 200% year-over-year, indicating these devices may finally be finding their place in healthcare workflows, possibly for hands-free communication or quick notifications.

# Pagers: The communication device holding strong



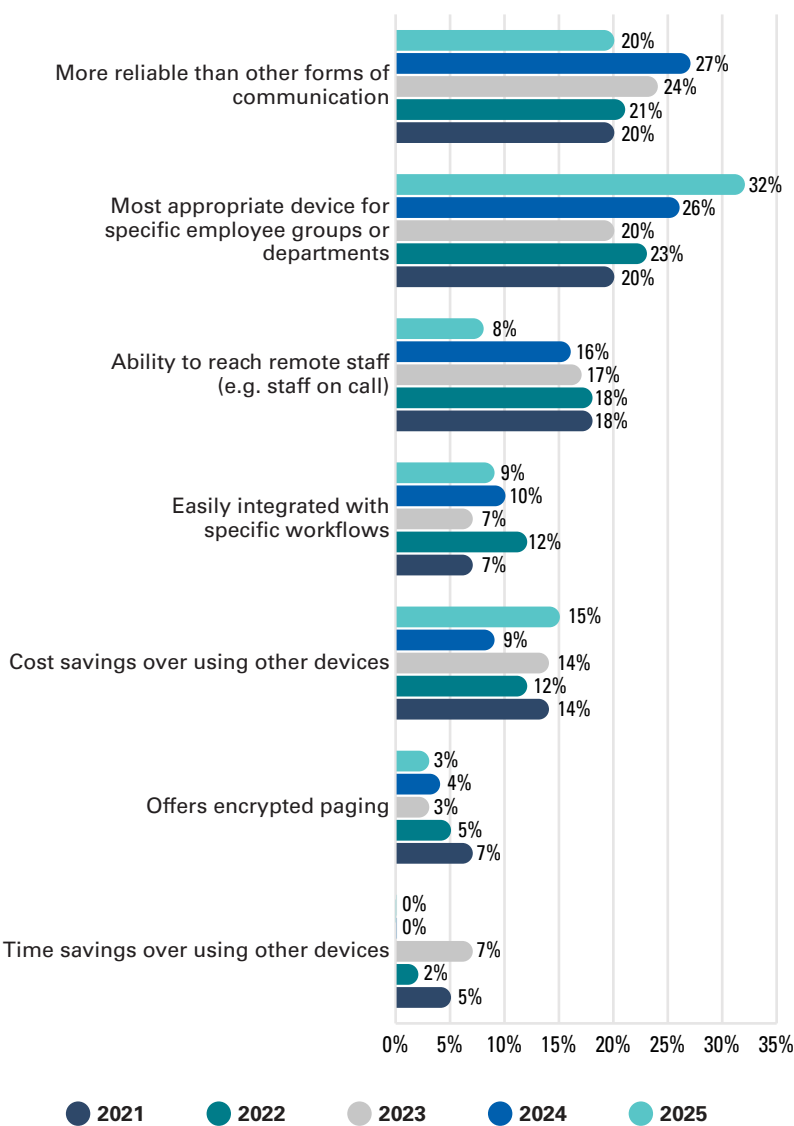
## Health systems that use pagers



As a reliable communication tool, pagers continue to deliver consistent value: 82% of surveyed health systems use pagers, up 6% from 2024.



## The primary reason pagers are still maintained



Hospitals’ dominant reason for maintaining pagers in 2025 is that they’re the most appropriate device for specific employee groups or departments—a change from their reliability over other communication methods, which was the top motivator the last two years.

“Cost savings over using other devices” also shows a substantial jump, rising from 9% to 15% in 2025, indicating that economic considerations have become significantly more important, possibly as hospitals face budget pressures or as alternative communication solutions become more expensive.

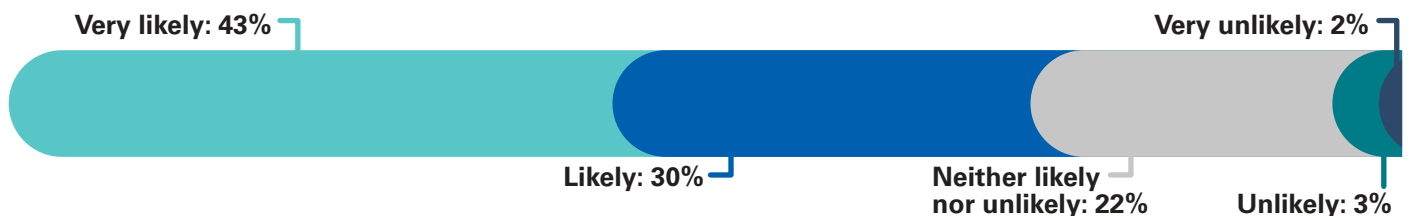
**The takeaway:**  
Don’t count out “traditional” technologies—hospitals are finding renewed strategic and economic value in pagers.

# Looking ahead: The future of healthcare communication

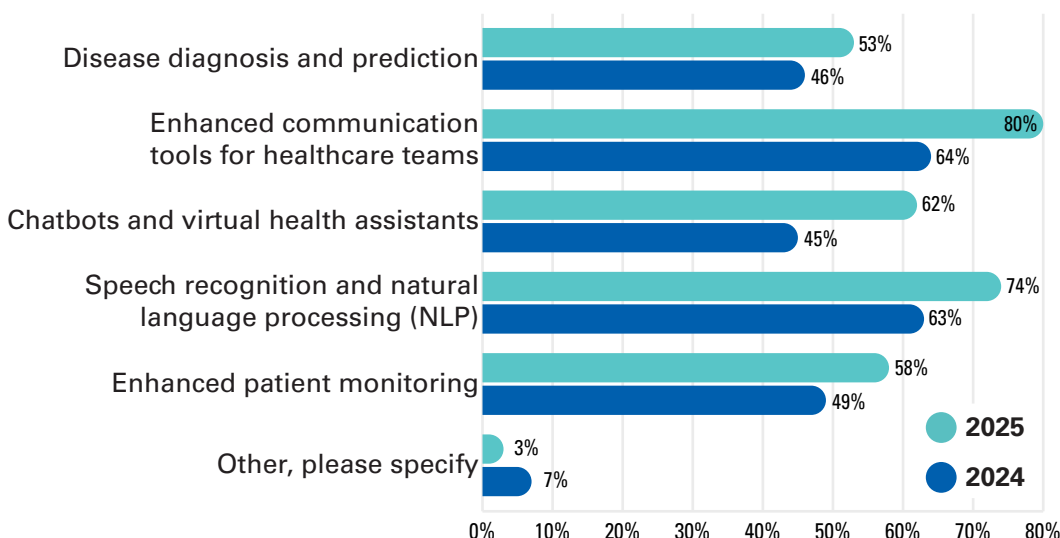
## AI spotlight

Healthcare organizations are experiencing simultaneous growth in both AI enthusiasm and implementation anxiety, particularly as they move from theoretical interest to practical planning, where real-world complexities become apparent.

How likely are you to recommend the adoption of AI in your hospital or health system?\*



Where do you think AI can benefit healthcare?



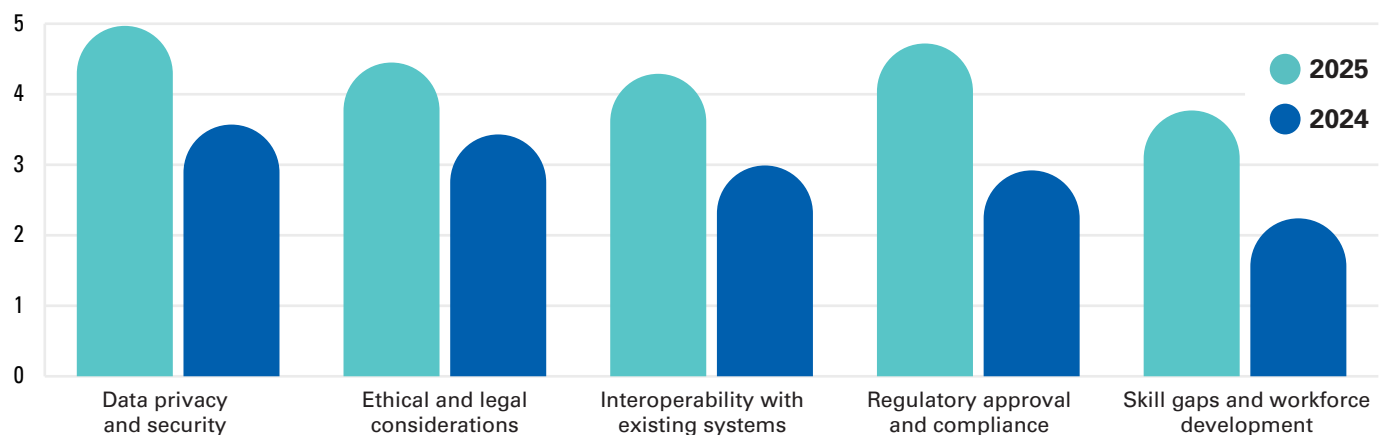
Every major AI application area shows substantial increases from 2024 to 2025, indicating that healthcare professionals are rapidly expanding their vision of AI's potential utility. Enhanced communication tools continue to lead with the highest adoption expectation at 80%.

\* Newly added survey question in 2025



## What obstacles do you perceive your organization would need to overcome in order to use AI?

*Weighted average for all responses*



Every single obstacle category shows substantial increases year-over-year, likely as healthcare organizations get closer to actual AI implementation and are becoming more aware of the real challenges involved. Regulatory approval and compliance showed one of the largest increases, which is unsurprising, given government and industry guidance and best practices for AI in healthcare settings are ever evolving.

LEARN MORE ABOUT AI IN OUR EBOOK

## The Practical Guide to AI in Healthcare

DOWNLOAD NOW

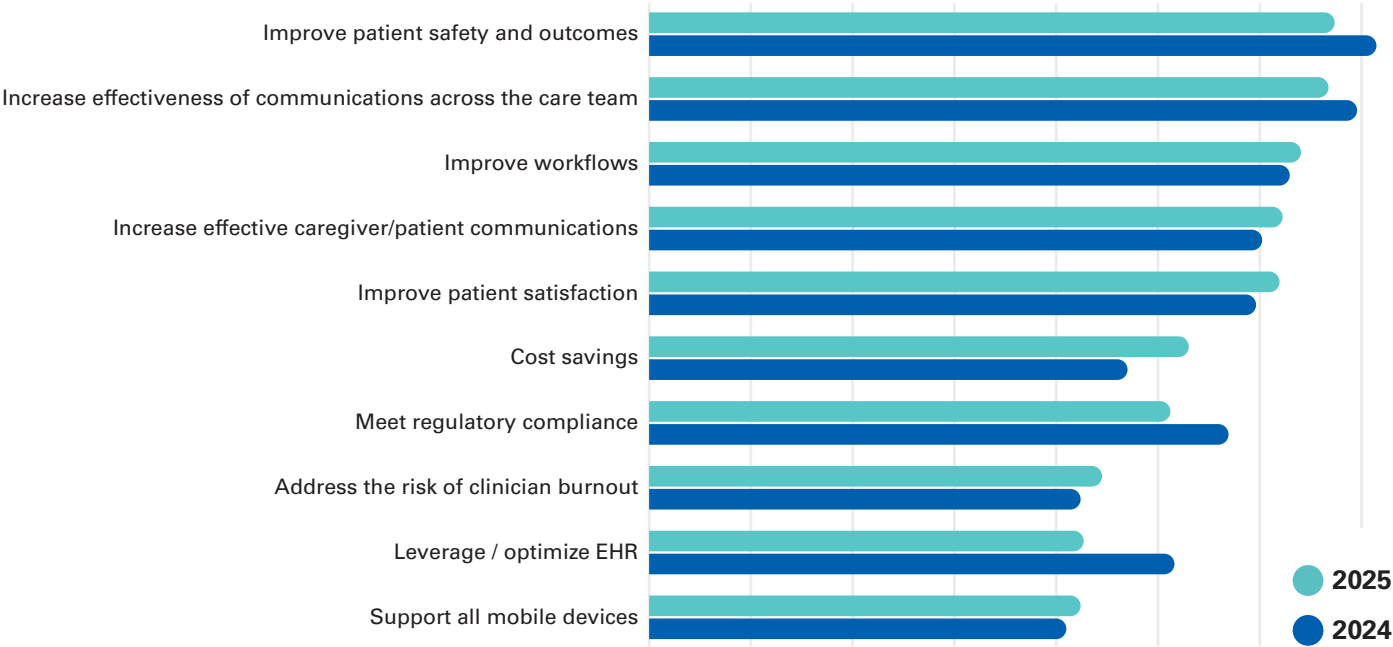


# New IT communications considerations

Results from 2025 show that healthcare organizations are becoming more sophisticated in their approach to communication technology. They understand the multifaceted benefits of new solutions and tools and have clearer project awareness and accountability, yet they're also facing intensified budget pressures.

## When considering communication technology in your hospital, what is your motivation for new technology?

Weighted average for all responses

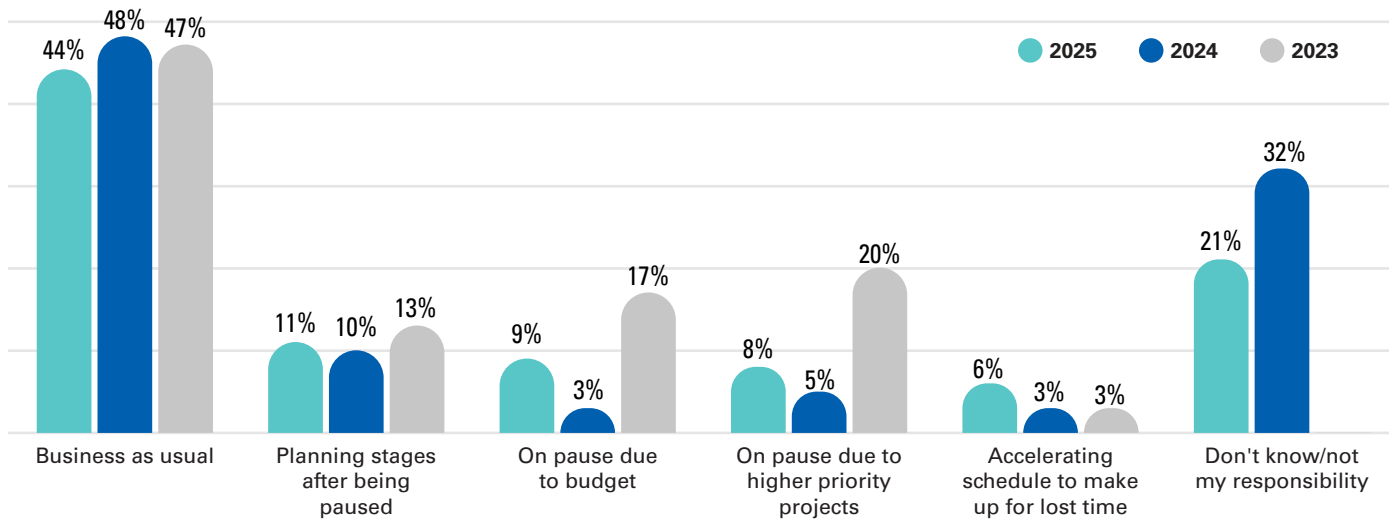


Nearly all motivations for considering new communication technology maintained high scores year-over-year, indicating that healthcare organizations have multiple compelling reasons for investing in new technology rather than a single driving factor.

The biggest increases in 2025 focus on cost savings, patient/caregiver communication effectiveness, patient satisfaction, reducing burnout, and mobile device support.



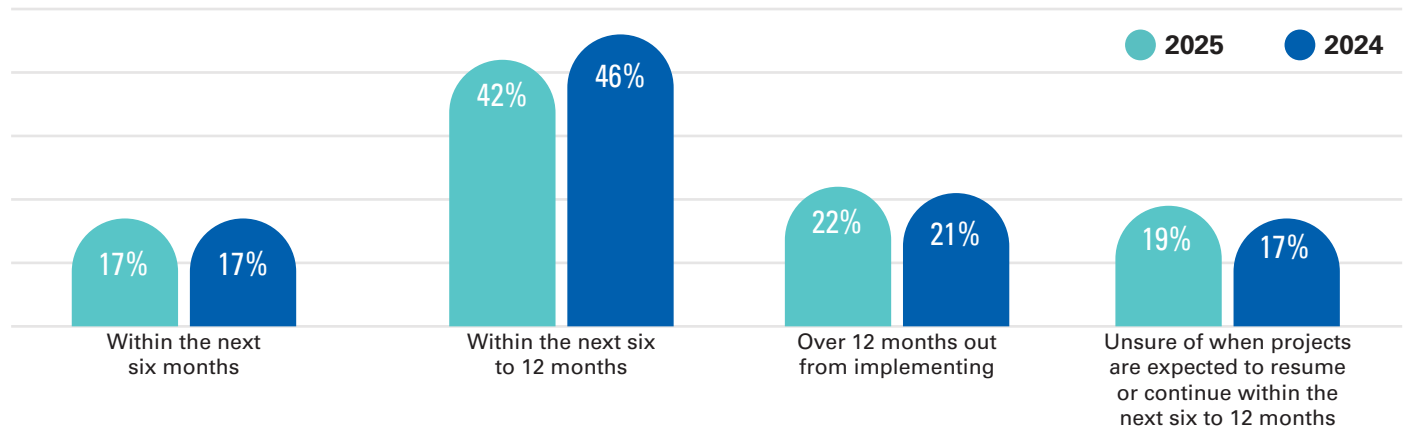
## What is the current status of IT communication projects in your hospital/health system?



The most striking trend is the decrease in “don’t know/not my responsibility” responses, falling from 32% in 2024 to 21% in 2025. This suggests much better organizational communication about project status and clearer accountability structures.

“On pause due to budget” shows an increase from 3% in 2024 to 9% in 2025. This indicates growing financial pressures are forcing organizations to delay communication technology investments.

## When do you expect to resume or continue implementing these IT communication projects?



Over 40% of respondents expect to resume or continue IT communication projects within the next 12 months, consistent with last year’s results, and there was a slight increase in resuming projects over 12 months out. This suggests that while urgency remains, a portion of healthcare organizations may be encountering delays or exercising more caution in moving projects forward.

# Reflections

Health systems are facing a unique push-pull moment, where they understand and acknowledge the value of new communication tools and technologies, including AI, but they continue to face obstacles and barriers, such as budget constraints and implementation and compliance complexities, which derail any significant advancements.

Despite these challenges, the first, most critical step in communication transformation is understanding the value in working toward a future state—one where frontline workers, IT support, administrators, and executives alike feel confident in the systems and solutions they're using to collaborate, communicate, and provide high-quality patient care and experiences.

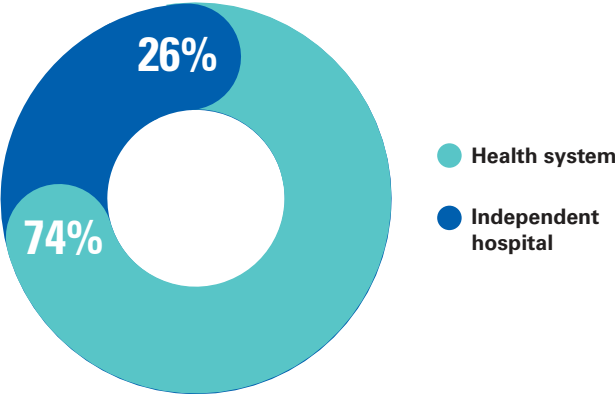
**Fortunately, this year's report indicates that most have taken that first step.**



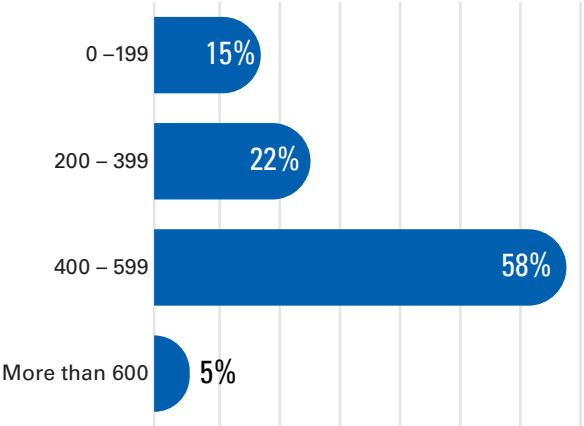
# Survey demographics

**Number of respondents\*:**  
150+ U.S.-based healthcare professionals

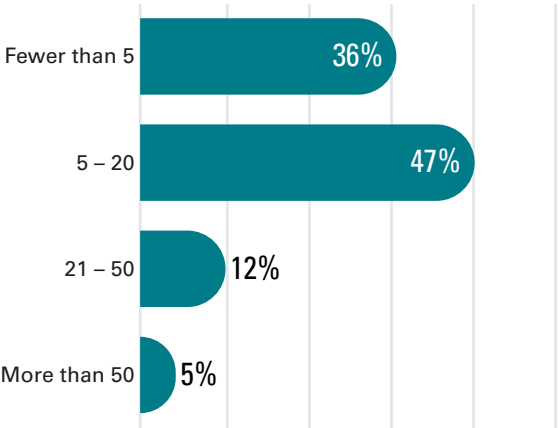
## ORGANIZATION TYPE:



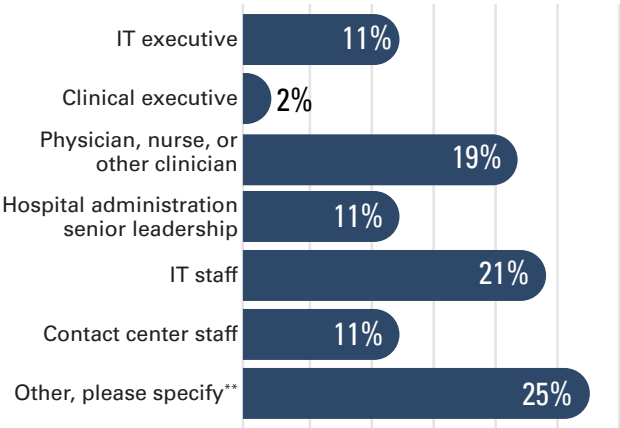
## NUMBER OF BEDS IN THE HOSPITAL OR HEALTH SYSTEM:



## NUMBER OF HOSPITALS IN HEALTH SYSTEM:



## TITLE IN ORGANIZATION:



\*2025 results combine Survey Monkey and CHIME member survey data

\*\*“Other” titles included administrative roles, pharmacy and lab specialists, and roles related to operations, communications, and patient services.

## References

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Spok, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Spok Holdings, Inc. (NASDAQ: SPOK), headquartered in Plano, Texas, is proud to be a global leader in healthcare communications. We deliver clinical information to care teams when and where it matters most to improve patient outcomes. Top hospitals rely on the Spok Care Connect® platform to enhance workflows for clinicians and support administrative compliance. Our customers send over 70 million messages each month through their Spok® solutions. Spok enables smarter, faster clinical communication. For more information, visit [spok.com](https://spok.com).

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