

5 Studies Showing the Impact of Telehealth in 2021

Laying the Groundwork for the Future of Digital Health

March 2022

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The COVID-19 pandemic upended almost every economic sector in some way, but few industries experienced the same level of disruption as healthcare did. The upheaval triggered a spike in telehealth usage, which, according to claims data analysis, had been extremely slow before the pandemic.

This whitepaper examines the impact of telehealth on the American population over the past few years and its prospects going forward.



Overview

Telehealth, including telemedicine and telepharmacy, is increasingly receiving validation as the future of the healthcare industry. The process promises enhanced satisfaction for providers and patients because it enables value-based care and improves access to care for patients.

Telehealth simultaneously reduces the risk of no-shows and cancellations, enables better continuity of care and outcomes, and helps to keep everyone safe from contagious diseases.

The case studies reviewed below analyze multiple factors to determine the impact of telehealth on different aspects of healthcare, particularly since the start of the pandemic. Four of the studies evaluated the readiness of the healthcare industry and patients to continue making telehealth an integral part of their daily lives after the pandemic relinquishes its grip.

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Study #1:

American Medical Association Telehealth Impact Study

This first phase of a [Telehealth Impact Study](#)¹ by the American Medical Association (AMA) surveyed healthcare professionals in summer 2020, while the second phase occurred in early 2021 and focused on patients.

The study aimed to determine how well telehealth served patients' needs during the pandemic and their expectations for its use after the pandemic ended. Researchers also focused on identifying the reasons why patients sought care through telehealth and the strengths and weaknesses of the medium in relation to the quality of care.

Data for this study came from responses to a 20-question survey open to users 18 years and older who had at least one telehealth consultation between March 1, 2020, and January 31, 2021. The sample was limited to users across the United States, and the survey was offered only in English.

A Notable Increase in Usage

The analysis of claims data for the two years revealed a notable increase in telehealth usage shortly after the start of the pandemic. Statistics from phase one showed a positive view of telehealth among providers. For example:

73%

of physicians used telehealth for chronic disease management.

68%

of physicians expressed personal motivation to increase telehealth use in their practice.

Phase two showed most patients who responded held a favorable opinion of telehealth, and

73%

intended to use it in the future.



83%

believed the communication between physician and patient was good.

79%

of patients were "very satisfied" with the care received.

41%

would choose telehealth over an in-person appointment, even if both required a copay.

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The use of telehealth enabled patients to overcome barriers to healthcare besides COVID-19, including transportation issues, taking time off work, and incurring extra costs for travel, parking, and childcare.

A Significant Healthcare Component

These findings showed high patient and provider satisfaction with telehealth. As Americans adapted to reduce the risk of virus transmission, telehealth usage increased for healthcare needs. A large percentage of respondents indicated they would choose telehealth over an in-person visit, or they would find a telehealth consultation equally acceptable.

This outcome shows telehealth has the potential to inform policies and procedures and become a significant healthcare component.



Study #2:

Sykes Telehealth Survey

Sykes, a member of the Sitel Group®, is a global provider of customer experience solutions that help brands build stronger relationships and meaningful connections with their customers. In March 2021, the company [asked 2,000 Americans for their opinions²](#) on telehealth, and whether they foresaw a role for virtual doctor visits once the pandemic was no longer a consideration.



The Numbers Have It

When the study was conducted, **61.05%** of respondents had participated in a telehealth appointment, compared with only **19.5%** one year earlier. Analysis of the survey results showed that most Americans had good experiences with telehealth and want to continue using the option in the future.

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Statistics showed:

88%

of Americans want to continue using telehealth for non-urgent consultations after COVID-19 has passed.

80%

said they feel it is possible to receive quality care through telehealth visits.

74%

believe telehealth/telemedicine appointments will become the norm for non-urgent medical consultations after COVID-19.

Many survey respondents reported reaping unexpected benefits from the virtual visit process. For example:

63%

of respondents who reported being afraid of going to the doctor said their fears were eased during their experience with telehealth.

86%

of respondents said telehealth made it easier for them to get the care they need.

52%

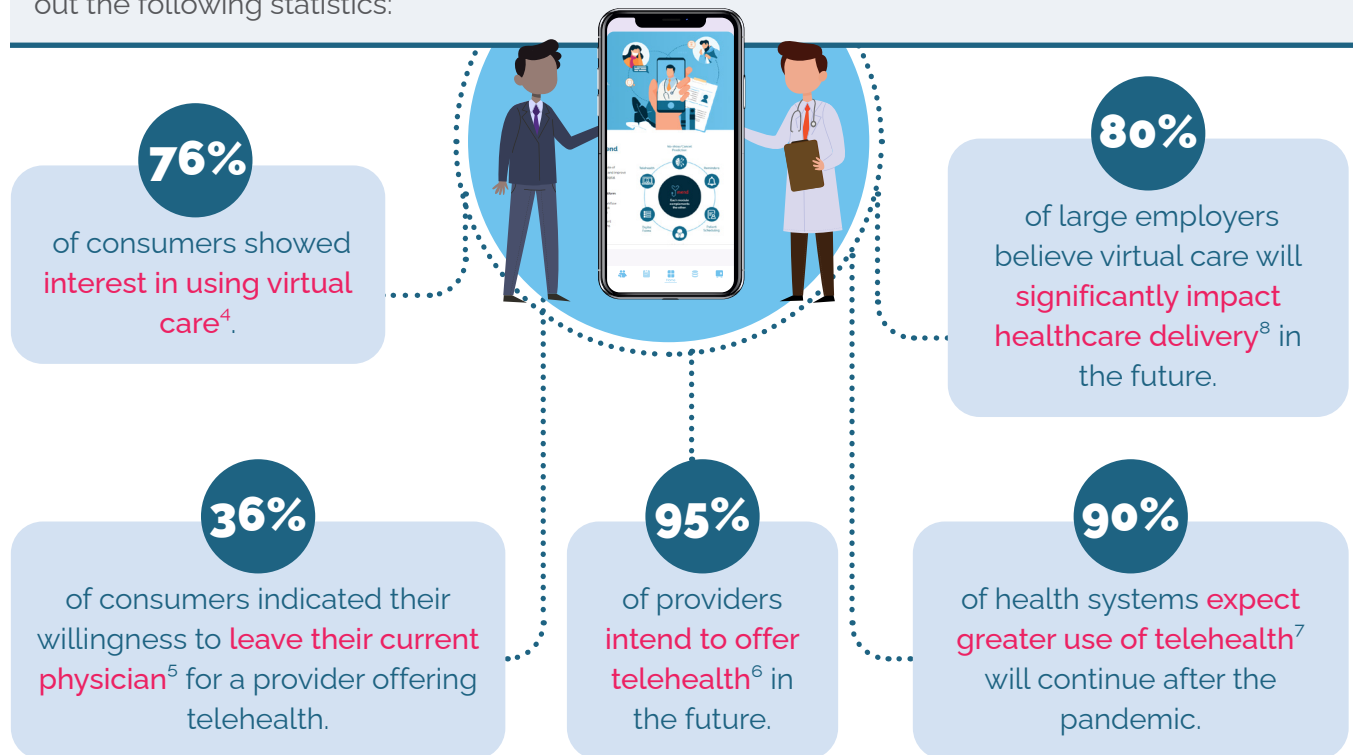
said they were able to see their doctor virtually more often than they could before.

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Study #3:

TripleTree Report - A New Era of Virtual Health

Healthcare merchant bank TripleTree invests in innovative, high-growth businesses and best-in-class companies to deliver better healthcare. In "A New Era of Virtual Health"³ a 2021 report on the importance of telehealth as a component of care in the post-COVID-19 world, TripleTree lays out the following statistics:



The report highlights the immediate opportunity to improve the patient experience by transforming care delivery using next-generation virtual and specialty care platforms.

Ideal Target Markets for Telehealth



Small to medium-sized physician practices found virtual care to be a lifeline during the pandemic. Virtual health options are vital for employers dealing with remote work environments and return-to-work safety measures.

The mental health market is ideally suited to telehealth services. Virtual technologies offer promising potential for use in clinical trials. The unique challenges experienced by government-sponsored Medicaid populations make this sector ripe for reaping the benefits associated with telehealth.

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The Senior Sentiment

According to a [report from the Better Medicare Alliance](#)⁹, senior patients were particularly well-served by telehealth services, and 98% reported a positive telehealth experience. With the [aging U.S. population projected to increase](#)¹⁰ significantly by 2030, it's vital to explore new technologies for managing seniors' healthcare.

Study #4:

HIMSS Consumer Perspective on Telehealth

An [analysis conducted by HIMSS](#)¹¹ (U.S. Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society) of Consumer Perspectives on Telehealth and Virtual Healthcare Survey Highlights shows that the COVID-19 pandemic succeeded in getting a majority of users to try telehealth consultation. The study highlighted several key trends worth noting.

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Top Emerging Trends

1. While earlier initiatives failed to drive virtual health care usage,

77%

of respondents are now willing to use some form of telehealth, and

63%

are willing to use messaging. Moreover,

61%

want this service to be available from their trusted healthcare provider.



2. Specific age groups are more open to telehealth than others, with

85%

of Boomers being primary adopters. Percentages drop as we move down the age scale, with uptake rates of

65% (Gen X),

51% (Millennials), and

44% (Gen Z).

While earlier exposure might change adoption rates among younger generations, this result shows a need to focus education efforts on the lower age groups.



3. The optimal price point for a telehealth consultation is **\$80**, but prices ranging from **\$56** to **\$92** are acceptable.



4. Security and confidentiality were the priority factors for

73%

of respondents, making these more important than convenience and easy accessibility.

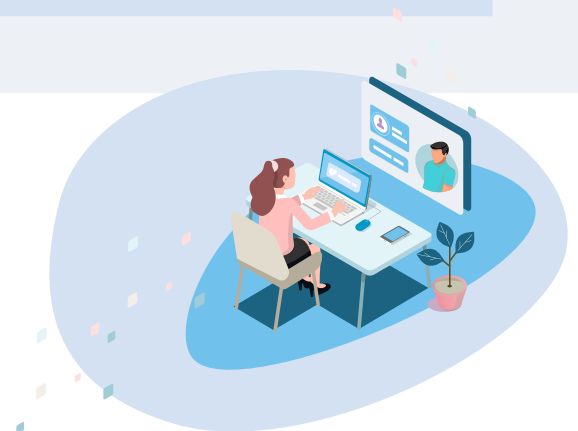


5. Respondents who indicated a preference for in-person visits typically had condition-specific needs, were unsure about their trusted provider's availability, or had a general distrust of the medium. Two of these three issues can be resolved with education and better marketing.



A Continued Legacy

We expect to see these trends continuing to drive the adoption of telehealth by physicians and specialty practices as we enter the new, post-pandemic normal. Researchers concluded the widespread increase in telehealth usage could be one of COVID-19's main legacies, along with the change in attitudes towards remote work and online education.



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Study #5:

Cleveland Clinic Study

A study¹² published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research aimed to assess the patient experience and satisfaction during telehealth consultations, including relationship-centered care measures. Researchers surveyed a diverse sample of adult patients who experienced virtual healthcare visits with family physicians, advanced practice providers, and specialists. The visits took place between June 21, 2017, and July 12, 2017, and identified recurring themes among participants.

Recurrent Themes Identified

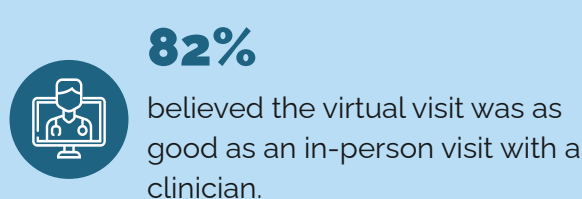
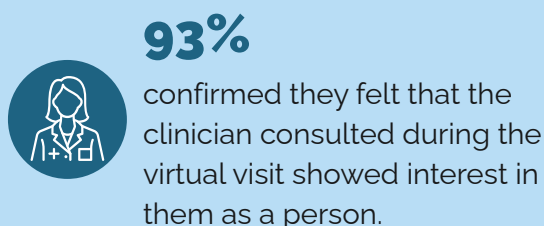
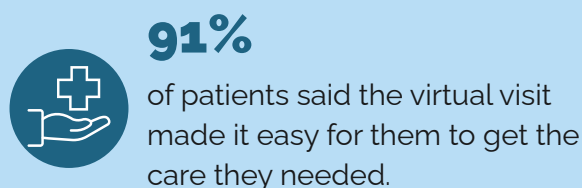
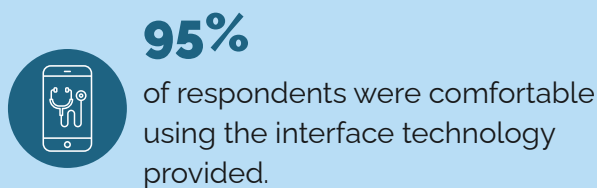
The three top themes among participants were:

- The patient's level of experience with technology.
- The quality of patient-clinician engagement.
- Overall satisfaction with the visit.



Results Comparable with In-Person Visits

Out of 426 patients who completed the survey, the following statistics were gleaned:



The Cleveland Clinic study concluded that a telehealth visit was comparable to an in-person visit among these respondents, although the technology used and the level of patient-clinician engagement could influence patient satisfaction.

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2022 – A Watershed Year for Telehealth

As the world learns to live with the shadow of COVID-19 for the foreseeable future, the results of these studies imply telehealth will continue to grow and deliver benefits over in-person visits.

Virtual or telehealth visits offer advantages for both patients and healthcare providers. Providers benefit from reduced costs, fewer no-shows, and improved work-life balance for themselves and their teams. Patients benefit from the convenience and increased access to care while staying in the comfort of their own homes without the need to travel.



Many questions remain about interfaces, regulation, compliance, and reimbursement. However, investors, technology companies, and traditional healthcare institutions are all showing interest, indicating that 2022 is likely to be a watershed year for telehealth adoption.

1. <https://c1ghcc.org/telehealth/impact-home/>
2. <https://www.sykes.com/resources/reports/how-americans-feel-about-telehealth-now/>
3. <https://www.triple-tree.com/strategic-insights/2021/april/a-new-era-of-virtual-health/>
4. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/telehealth-a-quarter-trillion-dollar-post-covid-19-reality>
5. https://blackbookmarketresearch.com/administrator/img/0188_SGP_COVID-19_Market_Pulse_r2.pdf
6. <https://www.updox.com/updox-resources/updox-report-maximizing-virtual-care-in-2021/>
7. https://investors.soctelemed.com/download/July_29_2020_Announcement_Conference_Call_Presentation.pdf
8. <https://www.businessgrouphealth.org/en/who-we-are/newsroom/press-releases/large-us-employers-accelerating-adoption-of-virtual-care-mental-health-services-for-2021>
9. <https://www.bettermedicarealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CIMA-July-2020-Telehealth-Report-FIN.pdf>
10. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/aging-population-hit-us-economy-like-ton-bricks-us-commerce-secretary-2021-07-12>
11. <https://www.himss.org/resources/consumer-perspectives-telehealth-and-virtual-healthcare-survey-highlights>
12. <https://www.jmir.org/2021/6/e18488/>

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About Mend

Mend is an enterprise-grade patient engagement and integrated telehealth solution designed to help healthcare organizations profitably scale their practice and care for more patients. Mend makes it easy for healthcare providers to securely and efficiently communicate with their patients and is 100% HIPAA compliant. Over 400K telehealth visits are facilitated through Mend's platform, providing integrated and streamlined care experiences to more than 4 million patients.

To find out more about how your practice can create new opportunities for delivering care and expanding revenue streams with Mend, [schedule a free demo](https://www.mend.com).

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