2021
Telehealth Survey Report
AMA Telehealth Survey

Survey summary: This survey of physicians aimed to gather insights on the experiences of current and expected future use to inform ongoing telehealth research and advocacy, resource development, and continued support for physicians, practices, and health systems.

Data collection: The anonymous online survey was distributed to a convenience sample via email and social media by individuals, state and specialty medical organizations, and members of the American Medical Association Telehealth Immersion Program. The survey was active for 8 weeks between November 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021. Responses described in this report represent 2,232 physician participants. Due to small sample size, responses from other participants, including nurses, physician assistants, and other practitioners, are not included.

Report limitations and considerations: The data presented in this report is based on a non-probability convenience sample. Results should be considered directional and are not intended to suggest statistical significance or applicability to the general U.S. physician and healthcare professional population.

Note: Trend comparisons made to 2020 data refer to the COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition Physician Survey.
**Telehealth Use Trends**

**CLINICAL OUTCOMES**

85% of physician respondents indicate they currently use telehealth. For those that report a decrease in use indicate now doing a mix of in-person and virtual care.

- 60% of clinicians agree or strongly agree telehealth enabled them to provide high quality care.
- Of those using telehealth, 93% (⬆ 13%) are conducting live, interactive video visits with patients and 69% are doing audio-only visits.
- 56% of respondents are motivated (agree and strongly agree) to increase telehealth use in their practices.
- 8% (⬇ 4%) of respondents said they were using remote patient monitoring technologies with patients in their homes; the commonly used tools include smartphones (camera), blood pressure cuffs, pulse oximeters, and body weight scales. 76% (⬆ 7.6%) report data is usually shared manually (e.g. verbally over the phone or via email).

**PATIENT EXPERIENCE**

- More than 80% of respondents (⬆ 12%) indicate patients have better access to care since using telehealth.
- 62% of respondents feel patients have higher satisfaction since offering telehealth.
- 63% (⬆ 12.2%) of respondents report 75% or more of virtual visits are conducted with patients they have an existing relationship with.

**PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION**

- A majority of respondents indicated that telehealth has improved the satisfaction of their work 54.2%.

**COST**

- 44% of respondents indicated that telehealth decreased the costs of care (strongly agree or agree).

Telehealth use
85% of respondents report using telehealth

Do you currently use telehealth to care for your patients?
- Yes: 85%
- No: 15%

If not, did you provide telehealth at any point during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Yes: 43%
- No: 57%

Do you currently use telehealth to care for your patients? N=2,149
Did you provide telehealth at any point during the COVID-19 pandemic? N=312
Most respondents that report a decrease in use now provide a mix of in-person and virtual care.

Has your use of telehealth decreased since you first offered telehealth services? N=1,705
If your telehealth use has decreased, why? N=879

Has your use of telehealth decreased since you first offered telehealth services? N=1,705
If your telehealth use has decreased, why? N=879
On average, how many patient visits do you have per week, including in-person and telehealth?
How many telehealth visits do you currently average per week?

The percent of telehealth compared to in-person visits varies across physicians and practices

N=1,698
63% of respondents indicate 75% or more of telehealth visits are with established patients

Currently, based on total volume of telehealth services delivered, what percent of your telehealth visits are with patients with whom you have an established patient/physician relationship?

- 0 to 25%: 16%
- 26 to 50%: 8%
- 51 to 75%: 13%
- More than 75%: 63%

N=1,724
From where have you conducted your telehealth visits? (select all that apply) N=1,678
Frequently reported “Other” locations: Office = 77

Where are your patients during their telehealth visits? (select all that apply) N=1,672
Frequently reported “Other” locations: Work = 235; Car = 218; School = 38
A deeper dive into the telehealth experience
Telehealth is currently being used across many aspects of clinical care and used to deliver a variety of services.

What aspects of care do you provide via telehealth? (select all that apply) N=1,682

- Treatment or therapy: 77%
- Screening, assessments, or diagnosis: 72%
- Follow up care (e.g., post-surgical, Chronic care, Post Hospitalization): 70%
- Continuous monitoring: 53%
- Intake or triage: 41%
- Other: 10%
- None of the above: 0.2%

What services do you or your practice/organization currently provide via telehealth? N=1,630

- Medical management (e.g., medication management): 72%
- Chronic disease management: 68%
- Specialty care: 49%
- Mental/behavioral health: 44%
- Acute care urgent care/same day: 37%
- Preventative care or Primary Care: 37%
- Care coordination: 36%
- Hospital or ED follow up care: 33%
- Acute care inpatient: 13%
- Other: 5%
- None of the above: 0.4%
Physicians shared a variety of specific use cases for telehealth across practices and specialties

What specific use cases within your specialty do you find most appropriate for telehealth?

- Management of seizure disorders including epilepsy
- Prenatal Care
- Substance Use Disorder
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Migraines & Headaches
- Stroke Care
- ADHD
- Eczema, Acne, Rashes
- Blood Pressure Management
- Family planning counseling
- Prenatal Care
- Substance Use Disorder
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Migraines & Headaches
- Stroke Care
- ADHD
- Eczema, Acne, Rashes
- Blood Pressure Management
- Family planning counseling
Most physicians feel telehealth allows them to provide *more comprehensive quality care*

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Telehealth has allowed our practice to provide more comprehensive quality care for patients. N=1,393

Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?

"As a pediatrician, it gives me an opportunity to see children and their families in a setting (home) in which they feel comfortable, and this sometimes reveals strengths of the family."

"At-home blood pressure monitoring has enabled us to diagnose more white coat and masked hypertension"
Telehealth offers access to care and convenience that contributes to improved patient satisfaction

>80% agree or strongly agree patients have better access to care since they began using telehealth

62% of physicians agree or strongly agree their patients are more satisfied since using telehealth

“Telehealth increased access for our specialty care. Reducing first visits to under 4-5 days compared to 4-5 months.”

“Telehealth has been great for my patients with disabilities that impact their mobility. Transportation is a challenge for them, and I can see how they interact with their home environment, which is crucial for my job.”

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Patients have better access to care since our practice began using telehealth. N=1,402

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Patients have higher satisfaction since our practice began using telehealth. N= 1,392

Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?
Telehealth has **increased professional satisfaction**

“I am a wife, mother, and in a dual physician partnership, and telehealth allows me to balance my professional and family obligations without leaving my profession for family reasons in the middle of my career.”

“The option of providing care via telehealth has increased my professional satisfaction and actually has delayed my decision to retire in a time when many in our field are retiring prematurely and exacerbating the physician shortage.”

Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Telehealth has increased my professional satisfaction. N=1,400
Telehealth has had a positive impact on cost of care, but investment is still needed to continue the move towards digitally enabled care.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Telehealth has decreased the cost of care. N=1337
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Most of the virtual telehealth visits I provide replace care delivered in-person care. N=1,401
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Most of the virtual telehealth visits I provide supplement in-person care. N=1,360
Most practices are measuring the value of telehealth via patient satisfaction and access to care metrics

How do you currently measure the value of telehealth in your practice or organization? N=1,558

- Patient satisfaction: 786
- Access to care: 746
- Clinical outcomes and clinical quality: 528
- Practice/operational efficiency and effectiveness: 498
- Clinician experience: 482
- Reimbursement/Payment: 445
- Cost saving: 262
- Health equity: 233
- We currently do not measure the value of telehealth: 508
- Other: 93
Most are focused on **sustaining** telehealth at their practice or organizations.

At what stage is your organization's telehealth program? (select all that apply) N=1,585

- **Implementation** = just getting started in implementing telehealth
- **Optimization** = looking to improve existing telehealth operations
- **Sustainability** = interested in continuing to offer telehealth services that seamlessly integrate with in-person care
- **Expansion** = looking to expand telehealth offerings for other services, additional locations, or more comprehensive virtual care
Looking ahead, organizations are interested in continuing to offer telehealth and increase use

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I am personally motivated to increase use of telehealth in my practice. N=1,401
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? My organization’s leadership is motivated to continue use of telehealth in my practice. N=1,322
Practices plan to offer a variety of services via telehealth in the future for a variety of reasons

What telehealth services does your practice or organization plan to offer in the future? (select all that apply) N=1,599

- Medical management: 973
- Chronic disease management: 918
- Mental/behavioral health: 694
- Specialty care: 649
- Care coordination: 633
- Preventive care or primary care: 546
- Acute care urgent care/same day: 524
- Hospital or ED follow-up care: 516
- Acute care inpatient: 222
- Other (please specify): 130
- We plan to decrease or eliminate telehealth offerings: 88
- None of the above: 134

Which of the following are reasons why you are interested in continuing to provide care via telehealth? (select all that apply) N=1,591

- Reduce patient barriers to access care: 1364
- Reduce unnecessary patient costs (travel, time off work, etc.): 1282
- Increase patient satisfaction: 1107
- Virtual care has been clinically effective: 1070
- Virtual care has proven to be operationally effective: 1001
- Increase professional satisfaction: 653
- Provide more comprehensive care: 520
- Other: 183
- I’m not interested in continuing telehealth: 85
A closer look at technology...
Most physicians use live audio-visual and telephone/audio-only technology to deliver telehealth

Which of the following telehealth modalities do you currently use to provide clinical care virtually to patients? (select all that apply) N=1,668

- Live audio-visual interactive telehealth visits: 93%
- Telephone/audio-only calls with patients: 69%
- Asynchronous telehealth: 12%
- Remote patient monitoring of a patient: 8%
- Other telehealth: 3%
- None of the above: 0%
Telephone and Zoom remain the primary platforms used to deliver virtual care; most access some or all via the EHR

Telehealth Platforms Used

- Audio-only telephone visits: 723
- Zoom: 600
- Doximity Video: 439
- EHR telehealth module or tools: 433
- Doxy.me: 344
- Telehealth vendor: 340
- FaceTime: 269
- Patient Portal: 234
- Microsoft Teams: 92
- Texting: 89
- Skype: 48
- Remote patient monitoring tools: 46
- Asynchronous messaging app: 30
- Other: 119
- None of the above: 6

*Other platforms mentioned in free text (in order of frequency) include: AmWell, Epic, Google (Duo or Meet), UpDox, WebEx, Teledoc, Bluejeans, eClinicalWorks, and a variety of other system unique platforms.

Are you able to access technology directly from your EHR?

- Yes: 45%
- No: 43%
- Some: 8%
- I do not know: 4%

Which platform(s) do you use to deliver telehealth services? (select all that apply) N=1,657

Are you able to access your telehealth technology directly from your Electronic Health Record (EHR)? N=1,656
Technology used to augment telehealth services

What type of technology are you using to support/augment your telehealth services? (Select all that apply) N=1,647

- Smartphone camera photos: 804
- Blood pressure cuffs: 530
- Pulse oximeter: 297
- Body weight scale: 199
- Thermometer: 166
- Smartphone microphone audio recordings (e.g., to record patient symptoms, document visits, etc.): 158
- Heart rate monitor: 105
- Continuous glucose monitor: 91
- Activity monitors: 80
- Portable EKG: 32
- Home spirometer: 26
- Other: 111
- None of the above: 804

Over 75% report data from support technology is not automatically transmitted

- Yes: 76%
- No: 15%
- Some: 7%
- I do not know: 2%

Do the devices you selected in the previous question automatically collect and deliver patient reported data to you? N=842
Barriers and challenges
Physicians identify the digital divide as the biggest barrier to virtual care for patients

Which of the following, if any, do you perceive as barriers to your patients using telehealth? (select all that apply) N=1,531

- Limited patient access to technology
- Limited digital literacy in patient mix
- Limited patient access to broadband internet
- Patient preferences for in-person visits
- Limited patient access to data access through their cellular plan
- Limited patient awareness or understanding of insurance coverage for telehealth
- Patient awareness of telehealth offerings
- Lack of access to language/interpretation services
- Lack of insurance
- No barriers known
- All of the above
- Limited access to community-based resources
- Other

Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?

“Reduce the digital divide that impairs many patients’ access to telehealth services.”

“Many of my patients are not that well versed in technology and telehealth is a real big challenge for them.”

“Advancing telehealth without providing patients with the appropriate technology or education to use it, leaves those patients behind and widens the gaps.”
Barriers to offering telehealth include coverage, payment, and reimbursement uncertainty

Which of the following, if any, do you anticipate being ongoing barriers or challenges to your organization offering telehealth? (select all that apply) N=1,545

- Roll back of COVID-19 waivers, coverage, and payment policies
- Lack of insurer coverage of telehealth services
- Low or no reimbursement
- Technology challenges for my patient population
- Licensure in additional states
- Liability
- Integration with the EHR
- Lack of technical support
- Telehealth-specific workflows
- Integration of additional technologies
- Lack of guidelines for clinical appropriateness in telehealth
- Low patient engagement
- Clinician dissatisfaction/lack of buy-in
- Cost of implementing or maintaining telehealth platform
- Little or no buy-in from administrators or leadership
- Lack of marketing for telehealth services
- I do not anticipate any barriers or challenges
- Other

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Physicians advocate strongly for audio-only and permanent payment coverage

“I worry about telephone visits no longer being covered! They are a large part of the care that we can provide to our patients, who have limited access to other digital technology, Wi-Fi, etc.”

“It’s incredibly important for audio-only/telephone calls to remain an option to minimize barriers for patients with low resources.”

“Both audio-only and video visits must continue to be reimbursed and done so at the same level as office visits. I provide the same care either way, so reimbursement should be the same. If I feel I can’t treat someone appropriately via Telehealth, I instruct them to come into the office.”

“Payment parity is critical for telephone-only encounters. Patients should not be penalized for access to care if they do not have the technology or cannot easily access care.”

Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?

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Physicians identify the following as opportunities to improve telehealth workflows in the practice

- Separate schedule blocks for in-person visits and telehealth visits
- A formal process for patient check-in and check-out
- Additional staffing resources to support workflows
- Telehealth-specific training for other members of the care team
- Technology that provides a digital waiting room
- Better office/exam room space to facilitate telehealth visits
- Other

Which of the below would support improved telehealth-specific workflows? (select all that apply) N=276
In summary...
1. Physician interest in continuing to use telehealth in the future remains strong.
   • 85% of physician respondents indicate they are currently using telehealth to care for patients.
   • Nearly 70% of physician respondents report their organization is motivated to continue using telehealth in their practice.
   • Many physicians foresee providing telehealth services for chronic disease management and ongoing medical management, care coordination, mental/behavioral health, and specialty care.

   Providing support and guidance in these areas would help physicians prepare for success as they expand telehealth services.

2. Lack of insurance coverage and little to no payer reimbursement persist as barriers to implementing and continuing telehealth services.
   • Payers, both public and private, should continue to evaluate and improve policies, coverage, and reimbursement rates for services provided via telehealth.
   • The majority of physician respondents indicate they anticipate low or no reimbursement to be a primary barrier or challenge to their organization offering telehealth in the future.

   Physicians advocate strongly that telehealth via audio-only/telephone remains covered in the future to ensure equitable access.

3. Less than half of respondents report being able to access their telehealth platform via their EHR and more than 75% report that their support technology does not automatically collect and deliver patient reported data.

   Improving interoperability between platforms and support technology would help improve and streamline telehealth services.
Key findings and implications

4. 95% of physicians report patients are primarily located at their home at the time of the virtual visit.

Allowing patients to be in their home is a key component of making telehealth more accessible and convenient.

- This supports the Telehealth Modernization Act of 2021 and CONNECT for Health Act which would lift the rural-only restrictions and add home as an originating site.

5. Physicians perceive technology, digital literacy, and broadband internet access to be the top 3 patient barriers to using telehealth.

The AMA will advocate for equitable access for under-resourced patient populations and communities, including but not limited to, supporting increased funding and planning for telehealth infrastructure such as broadband and internet-connected devices.

- This supports AMA policy D-480.963.

6. Our findings suggest physicians may learn from additional research on the impact of telehealth on:

- Equity
- Quality
- Costs
- Patient satisfaction
- Disparities in reimbursement
- Best practices
- Implementation science
- Clinical appropriateness

The AMA will continue to expand its research with partners to help broaden the field of knowledge in these areas and encourages other stakeholders to invest in research and development of best practices.
Physicians’ powerful ally in patient care
Physician sample

N = 2,232 Physicians (MD/DO)

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Which of the following best describes you?

Please indicate which of the following best describes your specialty.
Practice Attributes

In what setting is your main/primary practice located? N=1,694
Which of the following best describes your main practice? N=1,688
State (residence)

Please indicate the state in which you reside.
State (licensed to practice)

Please indicate the state(s) in which you are licensed to practice medicine. N=2,298
## Respondent Demographics

### Age

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### Gender

- Male: 53%
- Female: 40%
- Non-binary/third gender: 0%
- Genderqueer: 0%
- Prefer to self-describe: 6%
- Prefer not to answer: 6%

### Race/Ethnicity

- White/Caucasion: 66%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 11%
- Two or more: 11%
- Black/African American: 10%
- Hispanic/Latinx: 4%
- Other: 3%
- Native American or American Indian: 2%
- Prefer not to answer: 0%
Practice Attributes

Please indicate if you participate in any value-based care models or payment arrangements. (select all that apply) N=1,685
Which of the following payers do you accept in your practice? (select all that apply) N=1,679

Payment Models
- None of the above: 42%
- Accountable Care Organization: 27%
- Patient Centered Medical Home: 13%
- Alternative Payment Model Bundled Models: 6%
- Other: 4%
- Other Alternative Payment or Advanced APM: 3%

Payers Accepted
- Private / Commercial Payer: 86%
- Medicare: 79%
- Medicaid: 73%
- Veterans Affairs: 41%
- Free Care: 34%
- None of the above: 6%
- Not sure: 4%
Physicians feel telehealth enables them to provide high-quality care for many types of services.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Telehealth enables me to deliver high-quality care for… N=1,453
Live audio-visual technology is predominately used to see patients at home

- For a patient at home: 95.1%
- For a patient in an emergency department: 0%
- For a patient at a school or childcare facility: 15.8%
- For a hospitalized patient in acute setting (patient in hospital ward, ICU, or long-term care setting): 13.7%
- For a patient at a school or childcare facility: 10.6%
- For a patient in a post-acute setting (SNF, LTAC, Home Health etc.): 8.2%
- For a patient in the emergency department: 5.3%

For whom do you use live audio-visual interactive telehealth? N=1,544

Remote patient monitoring is mostly used to see a patients at home

- For a patient who is at another non-acute clinical site (skilled nursing facility, LTAC etc.): 89.2%
- For a patient who is at another acute clinical site (Hospital, ICU, Stroke, EMS etc.): 25.8%
- For a patient who is at another distant site: 16.4%
- For a patient who is at another non-acute clinical site: 15.6%

For whom do you use remote patient monitoring? N=128

Asynchronous telehealth is mostly used for patient e-visits using store and forward, digital check-ins via patient portals, emails, etc.

- To provide clinical care to a patient using store and forward, digital check-ins via portals and email, etc. (e-visit): 89.2%
- To provide advice to another clinician using store and forward, digital check-ins via portals and email, etc. (e-consult): 48.2%
- To receive advice from another clinician using store and forward, digital check-ins via portals and email, etc. (e-consult): 35.9%

For what purpose do you use asynchronous telehealth? N=195
Some patients are challenged with limited broadband internet coverage, digital literacy, and/or access to technology devices that are all barriers to accessing telehealth.

Setting up telehealth operations, technology, workflows, and training staff, requires an investment of time. Providing technology support to patients can be burdensome and costly.

Physicians identify the digital divide as the biggest barrier to virtual care for patients and the practice

"Reduce the digital divide that impairs many patients’ access to telehealth services. Advocate for universal broadband access."

"Many of my patients are not that well versed in technology and telehealth is a real big challenge for them."

"Advancing telehealth without providing patients with the appropriate technology or education to use it, leaves those patients behind and widens the gaps."

"I’m hearing these great stories about the integration of telehealth into practices. However, invariably, the presentations eventually reveal a staff person spent considerable time (and often effort across multiple interactions) working with the patient in advance of the telehealth visit with the actual physician/NP/PA to ensure the patient/family would be better able to use the technology during the visit. Even then, patients still often have barriers and need to switch to audio-only."

"For patients with low technology literacy, a tremendous amount of staff time and commitment is needed to assist patients in accessing the visits."

Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?