

Telemedicine Could Be More Widely Adopted Due to the Coronavirus

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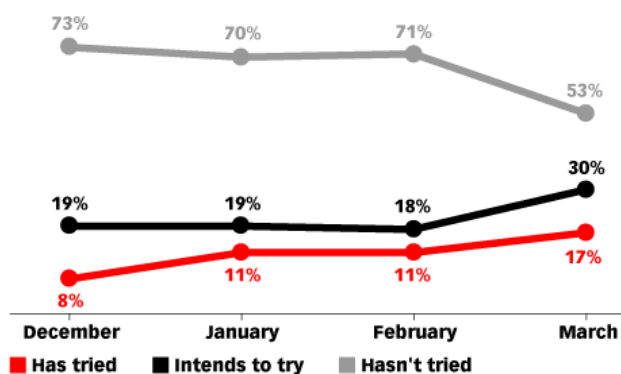
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Despite telemedicine having relatively low adoption rates in the past, interest in remote physician care has risen as the coronavirus pandemic and social distancing continue.

Between February and March 2020, the number of US adults who reported intent to use telemedicine rose from 18% to 30%, per [CivicScience](#) data. In February, about one in 10 said they had tried telemedicine, growing to 17% in March.

US Adults' Experience with Telemedicine, Dec 2019-March 2020

% of respondents



Note: n=28,607 ages 18+

Source: CivicScience as cited in company blog, March 31, 2020

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A [McKinsey & Company](#) study fielded in mid-March this year found that one in three respondents canceled upcoming medical appointments due to COVID-19. Roughly the same percentage (30%) said they would be interested in providers that offer online/video visits with a physician.

Types of Support that US Internet Users Are Interested in Receiving to Cope with the Coronavirus, by Stakeholder, March 2020

% of respondents in each group

Federal government		State government		Health insurers	
Prevent extreme financial hardship	47%	Make sure I can get food/household items if sick or quarantined	46%	Reduce or eliminate copays for treatment	41%
Make a test for COVID-19 readily available	43%	Prevent extreme financial hardship	38%	Eliminate prior authorizations for treatment	40%
Cover the cost of COVID-19 testing	37%	Make a test for COVID-19 readily available	31%	Cover the cost of COVID-19 testing	31%
Providers		Employers		Pharmacies	
Enable me to have online/video visits with a physician	30%	Allow me to work from home	24%	Provide me with items to prevent me from getting sick	21%
Make a test for COVID-19 readily available	29%	Continue to pay me while I am unable to work	24%	Make a test for COVID-19 readily available	15%
Provide better information about how to avoid getting sick	29%	Enable me to take sick leave without loss of income	24%	Provide better information about how to avoid getting sick	11%

Note: ages 18-84

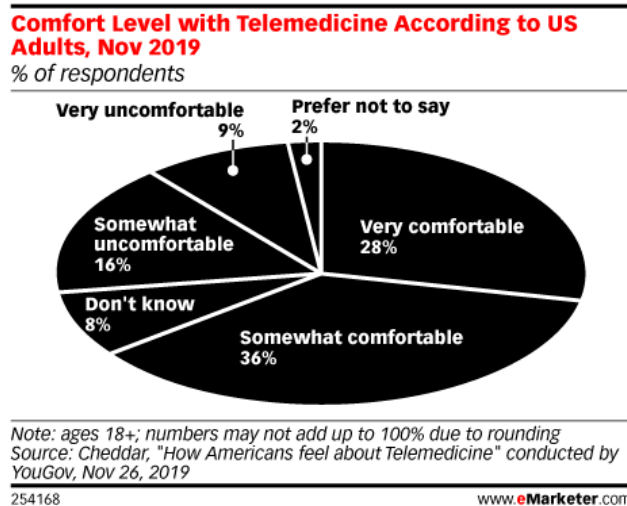
Source: McKinsey & Company, "McKinsey Consumer Healthcare Insights" as cited in press release, March 24, 2020

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Telemedicine—which connects patients to healthcare services through two-way interactive video, remote monitoring or electronic consults—has not been widely used in the US prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. According to the [American Medical Association](#) (AMA), only 28% of doctors reported using telemedicine in 2019, which was about double the figure for 2016.

On the consumer side, a November 2019 [Cheddar](#) survey conducted by [YouGov](#) found that only 12% of US adults had used a telemedicine app, and roughly the same (14%) said they had never heard of telemedicine apps or websites. But nearly two-thirds were at least somewhat comfortable with the idea of receiving medical consultation over the phone or internet, citing convenience (53%) and cost (44%) as reasons to do so.



Since then, the pandemic has rapidly changed patient attitudes. In March, the government [expanded](#) Medicare telehealth coverage, which will affect roughly 44 million people covered under the program, per [AARP](#). According to the [new guidelines](#), beneficiaries will be able to receive a wide range of services, like office visits, mental health counseling and preventive health screening without leaving their homes. Some large insurers—Aetna, Anthem, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Cigna and UnitedHealthcare—are temporarily covering or waiving telemedicine costs.

For physicians and medical professionals, telehealth can reduce exposure to those who have the coronavirus and cut down on crowding in hospitals that are facing a surge in demand. Although the service is not without limitations—doctors using telehealth cannot provide testing for COVID-19, for example—it is an effective alternative that can keep patients who are unlikely to have the virus away from hospitals. According to medical news site [STAT](#), UnitedHealthcare estimates that a telemedicine session costs less than \$50. That's a much more affordable alternative to a possibly unnecessary visit to the emergency room—which could cost more than \$2,000.

Telemedicine startups in the US (such as Amwell, Doctor on Demand, Ro and 98point6) have reported an unprecedented surge in use as patients are told to avoid going directly to the ER if they do not have severe symptoms. According to a March 2020 [SSCG Media Group](#) study, 53% of the healthcare practitioners surveyed said they were using telemedicine because of the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, but they had not used telemedicine prior to this pandemic.

Ways in Which the Coronavirus Pandemic Has Caused Disruption to US Healthcare Practitioners*, March 2020

% of respondents

Now use telemedicine because of the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, but have not used telemedicine prior to this pandemic

53%

Still see patients in the office, but overall volume is much lower

31%

See patients both virtually and in the office

24%

See patients through virtual visits only

23%

*Note: *specialties in infectious disease, pulmonology, cardiology and oncology*

Source: SSCG Media Group, "Going Straight to the Source: Understanding the Informational Needs of HCPs During the COVID-19 Pandemic," April 2, 2020

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"Now that patients and healthcare providers alike are experiencing telehealth, there will be no turning back," said Ann Mond Johnson, CEO of the [American Telemedicine Association](#) (ATA) in an [interview](#) with ABC News.

The ATA [projects](#) that 50% of healthcare services in the US will be conducted virtually by 2030. Globally, telemedicine was a \$45.5 billion market in 2019, according to data from [Global Market Insights](#). That figure is estimated to rise to \$175.5 billion by 2026.