

Telehealth is booming, but consumers still prefer in-person care—which is why hybrid in- person/virtual care models will prevail

Article

The news: Morning Consult's recent [survey](#) reveals that even though telehealth is booming, consumers are split on preferences between in-person and virtual care. The survey was conducted between October 21-23 among a sample of 2,201 US adults.

- **72% of US telehealth users** accessed virtual care through their provider or health plan—and low by comparison, **just 17%** went through a direct-to-consumer (D2C) telehealth platform.
- **53% of all respondents** (including those who've never tried telehealth) prefer in-person care over telehealth.
- **But that dropped to 45%** among US adults who have already used telehealth in the past.

How we got here: Healthcare stakeholders across the board have been molding their strategies to capture a larger share of telehealth users.

Payers are expanding their telehealth options to meet rising consumer needs for convenient healthcare.

- For example, last month alone, **UnitedHealthcare** [launched](#) a virtual-first health plan (NavigateNOW) and **Cigna** [leveraged](#) its recently acquired telehealth platform (MDLive) to do the same.
- And this week, the CMS proposed to extend telehealth flexibilities through 2023—which would allow providers to continue offering telehealth to Medicare patients without any concerns around reimbursement.

D2C virtual care companies are also branching into different specialties to cater to the diverse needs of healthcare consumers—and it's been paying off.

- For example, **Hims & Hers** expanded into dermatology (on top of its virtual mental health, reproductive health, and primary care services).
- And this past summer alone, **Ro** acquired women's health startup **Modern Fertility**, diagnostics startup **Kit**, and launched a virtual mental health services arm (**Ro Mind**).

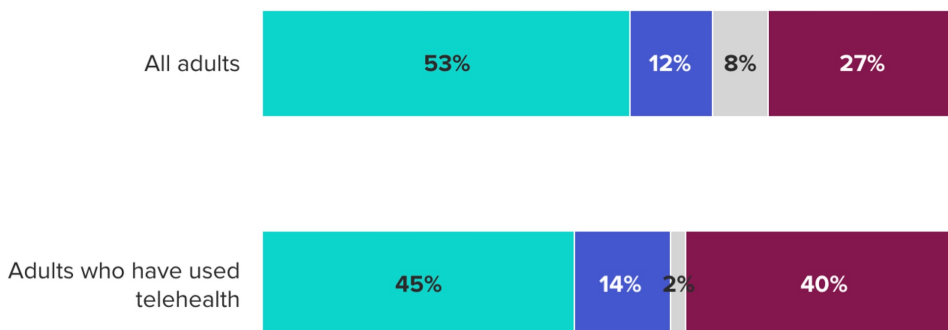
What's next? Despite efforts to reel in more telehealth users, companies can't ignore the fact that consumers value in-person care, too.

- Hybrid care models can help health plans and providers get through the growing pains of digital health transformation—particularly as telehealth finds a permanent home in healthcare.
- 40% of telehealth users preferred telehealth over in-person care compared with 27% of all respondents, per Morning Consult.
- To add, 42% of consumers said they'd prefer hybrid care post-pandemic, per a March 2021 Harris Poll.

US Consumer Preference for Telehealth vs In-Person Care

U.S. adults were asked if they'd generally prefer to see a doctor in-person or use telehealth going forward

■ Prefer in-person health care ■ No preference
■ Don't know/No opinion ■ Prefer telehealth



Source: Morning Consult Survey conducted Oct. 21-23, 2021, among 2,200 U.S. adults

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