

Physicians don't like telehealth as much as their patients due to distractions, tech barriers

Article

The data: Telehealth bookings **dropped from 33%** of all appointments in May 2020 to only **17%** by May 2022, [according to](#) a new report from Zocdoc.

Physicians don't like telehealth: At least not as much as their patients do.

- **60% of physicians said it was “more difficult” or “much more difficult”** to examine patients through telehealth than in person.
- Meanwhile, **only 15% of patients said it wasn't possible to get the same quality** of care through telehealth.

Tech issues and patient examination barriers are common physician complaints with virtual care. Providers like ENT docs, OB-GYNs, or dermatologists want to conduct procedures or exams that can't always be conducted virtually.

Plus, non-clinical factors (mainly distractions) made it difficult for some physicians to conduct their visits. Among many things making it difficult to deliver care virtually, physicians noted:

- Seeing patients' pets (14%).
- Seeing family members or roommates (6%).
- Something “funny” (3%) in the background.

Notable situations that made it difficult to deliver virtual care

According to Zocdoc's 2022 Healthcare Experience Report

- A patient plucking their eyebrows during an appointment, not realizing the video was on
- Patients taking video calls while using the restroom
- A cat jumping on a client's head during hypnosis
- A patient dialing in while rollerblading on the beach
- Kids interacting with their parents calls, from playing peekaboo, to speaking with the provider, and beyond

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Sentiment may be stronger for telemental health: Despite the drop in booked telehealth visits, telemental visits remained a bright spot.

- **In 2020, 25%** of psychiatrist appointments were handled in person.
- **By 2021 and 2022, patients conducted just 15%** of psychiatrist appointments in person.

Psychologist appointments skew toward telehealth, too.

- **In 2020, about 20%** of booked psychologist appointments were in person.
- That **fell to 13% in 2021** and **tipped back up to 18%** in 2022 (but still remained below 2020 levels).

Primary care is primarily in person: In-person primary care appointments are climbing this year versus early in the pandemic.

- **In 2020, about 58%** of patients opted to visit their primary care physician in their office.
- That steadily **increased throughout 2021 (87%)** and **dropped only slightly (83%)** in 2022.

The big takeaway: Telehealth is becoming less of a priority for patients as the urgency of COVID-19 wanes. It would be a smart bet for telehealth giants to double down on mental health offerings, though.

US adults' telehealth usage decreased 6.1% in March alone, [per](#) nonprofit Fair Health's tracking of medical claim lines. Researchers attributed the drop in telehealth adoption to the reduction of COVID-19 cases during that month.

Some companies are already renewing their focus on telemental health to keep consumer interest.

- For example, in March, **Amwell's SilverCloud Health** platform [launched](#) a program featuring video content and interactive tools to improve family mental health, including support for new parents, teens, and children.