

Views of Telehealth Services Among Hispanic Adults Ages 50 and Older

Insights from a series of focus groups and a national survey



Access to telehealth services is common for most Hispanic adults ages 50 and older...

Roughly eight in ten (79%) report that their medical provider offers telehealth, while about one in eight (13%) are not sure. When it comes to the type of service available to them, seven in ten (71%) of those who have access to telehealth through their providers say that both video and audio options are available, while one in nine (11%) say that video is available and one in eleven (9%) report only having access through the telephone.

...as is health insurance coverage for those services.

Among those with telehealth services available through their medical providers, three-quarters (76%) report that their current health insurance plan pays for these services, but one-fifth (22%) are not sure. As was noted in a series of focus groups on the topic, many said they were surprised that their copays for telehealth were comparable to an in-person visit and having health insurance doesn't preclude receiving unexpected bills for service.



Recent survey findings suggest while most midlife and older Hispanic adults see the benefits of telehealth, many also believe these services are best used for getting answers to simple questions or when needing a prescription refill.

Telehealth is seen as tops for getting answers to simple questions, for prescription refills, and when time is of the essence.

Many Hispanics ages 50 and older say they would be most likely to opt for a telehealth visit over an in-person one if they wanted to ask a simple question (62%), to get a prescription refilled (61%), or if they couldn't get a timely in-person appointment (61%). Other reasons for opting for telehealth include wanting to check on test results (58%), if the medical office is too difficult to get to (47%), if they are following up on an in-person visit (46%), if the medical office is too far away (43%), or if they wanted to discuss medication options (44%) or an existing condition (40%). However, seven percent say they will never opt for telehealth over an in-person appointment.

7%

of Hispanic adults ages 50 and older say they would never opt for a telehealth visit over an in-person one.

“Online is okay if you’re not seriously ill; if there is not some type of mysterious condition that you have.”

– (55-plus, non-tech-savvy participant)



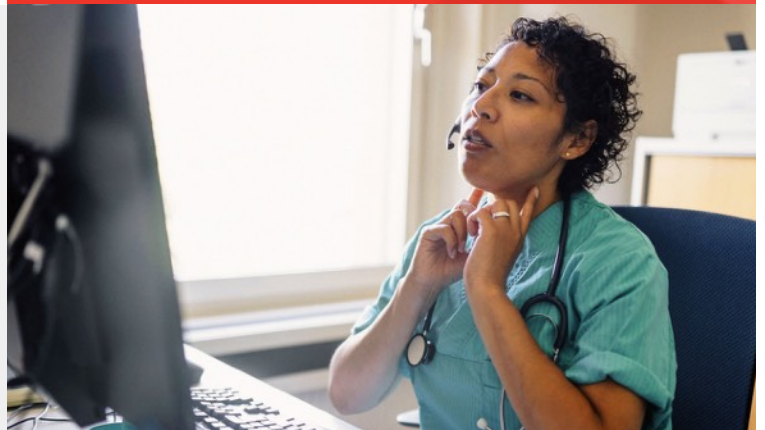
“I’d do telehealth. Yeah, it’s not an urgent issue. It’s something that can be addressed quickly, conveniently. I’d do telehealth.”

– (40-54, tech-savvy participant)

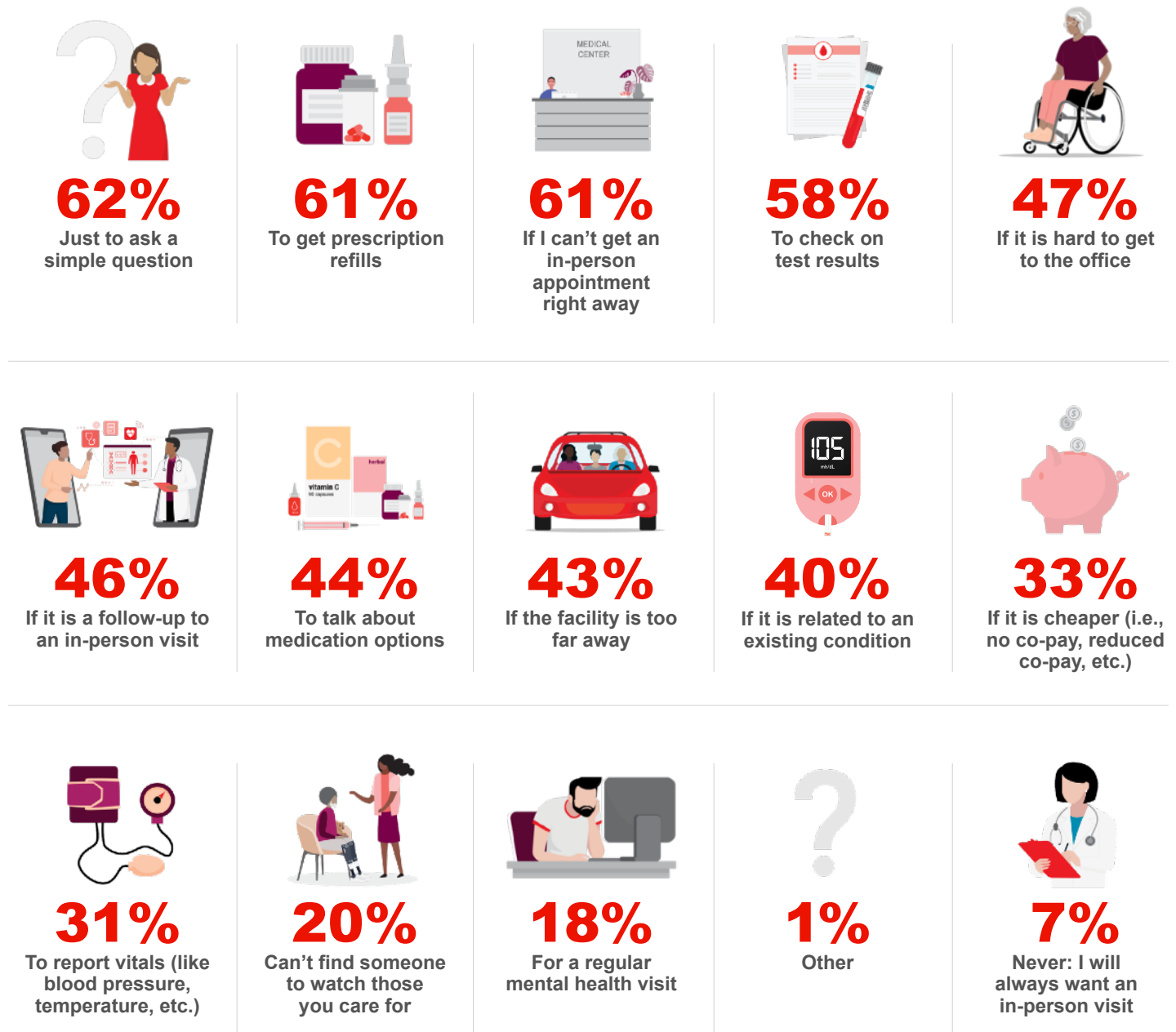


“I would do the telehealth and let them decide if I needed to come in. Between the two of us, we can decide, and they usually get you in for an urgent visit pretty quickly.”

– (55-plus, tech-savvy participant)

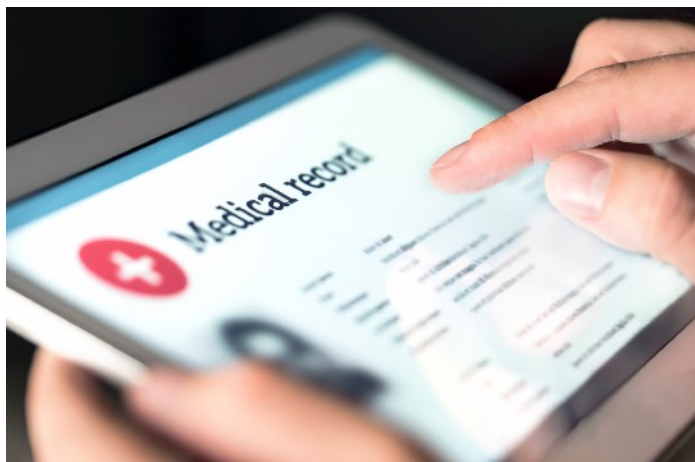


Reasons to opt for a telehealth visit over an in-person visit
Among Hispanic adults



Convenient? Yes...but what about other considerations?

Nearly six in ten (55%) Hispanics ages 50 and older say that telehealth visits are better than in-person ones when it comes to convenience, but far fewer consider telehealth visits superior when it comes to personal safety (28%), comfort (20%), or privacy (9%). Similarly, in focus groups on telehealth, reservations about the use of technology were commonly cited, with concerns primarily focused on privacy, security, and the potential of being taken advantage of. Notably, in these groups, those with the most use and comfort with technology appeared to be the least concerned about privacy, security, and the potential of being scammed.



“I still worry that my medical information could get out there when using telehealth.”

– (40-54, non-tech-savvy participant)

Providing a “personal touch,” accurate diagnoses, and thoroughness give in-person visits the edge over telehealth.

Seven in ten Hispanic adults ages 50 and older consider in-person visits superior to telehealth when it comes to providing a “personal touch” (71%) and to diagnosis accuracy (71%), while two-thirds (67%) see them superior in terms of thoroughness. Additionally, more than half of Hispanic adults ages 50 and older consider in-person visits superior to telehealth when it comes to the overall quality of care (57%), while about four in ten say the same about comfort (47%), time spent with one’s healthcare provider (41%), and privacy issues (40%). One-third give higher marks to in-person visits rather than to telehealth-based ones when it comes to keeping information safe (34%) and personal safety (32%). Only one-fifth (21%) find them more convenient.

“In-person is going to be my, especially for an initial visit, preferred method. I prefer to sit and be able to actually speak with the doctor, see emotions.”

– (55-plus, non-tech-savvy participant)



“Well, the benefits for me, having the doctor right there in front of you. You can show them where it hurts. If you have a scratch or breaking out or something. The drawbacks are getting there.”

– 55-plus, non-tech-savvy participant





Comparison of telehealth vs. in-person visits on several dimensions

Percentage who say in-person visits are better, among Hispanics respondents

72%

Providing a personal touch

71%

Diagnosis accuracy

67%

Thoroughness

57%

Overall quality of service

47%

Comfort

41%

Amount of time spent with healthcare provider

40%

Privacy

34%

Keeping your information safe

32%

Personal safety

21%

Convenience

Although telehealth has its place, the preference for ensuring a personal connection remains.

Roughly eight in ten Hispanic adults ages 50 and older agree that telehealth is best with a known provider (82%), has its place (80%), and has made it easier to seek out health care (76%). However, two-thirds also agree that there is an increased chance of misdiagnosis and misinformation with telehealth (65%) and that telehealth takes away the personal aspects of a healthcare visit (65%). More than half (53%) agree that telehealth makes sense only in a situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and more than four in ten (43%) agree that telehealth takes the focus off the patient.

Focus group participants also underscored this preference for developing and maintaining close relationships with a health care provider, with many noting that they went back to in-person, face-to-face appointments as soon as possible after the pandemic due to the trust they had in their doctor. For them, in-person visits meant enhanced communication, personalization, and (the resumption of) continuity of care.

“They (the provider) really has your best interest and not a number that’s trying to get you out of the door as a revolving thing. They listen and try to help versus prescribing something. ‘Next’ type of thing.”

– (40-54, non-tech-savvy participant)



Views on statements about telehealth Among Hispanics respondents

■ Strongly or somewhat agree ■ Strongly or somewhat disagree

82% **VS** **15%**

Telehealth is best with your known healthcare provider rather than a new healthcare provider

80% **VS** **20%**

Telehealth has its place, but it should not be the primary way to interact with their healthcare providers

76% **VS** **23%**

Telehealth has made/can make it easier for to seek out health care when you need it

65% **VS** **35%**

There is an increased chance of misdiagnosis and misinformation with telehealth

65% **VS** **34%**

Telehealth takes away the personal aspects of a healthcare visit

53% **VS** **47%**

Telehealth only makes sense when there is a situation like the pandemic

43% **VS** **56%**

Telehealth prevents providers from giving patients their undivided attention





For those with access to telehealth services, usage and satisfaction is high.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Hispanics ages 50 and older who have access to telehealth services have used them 1 to 5 times in the past year, while six percent have used them 6 or more times. Among them, half (50%) say they have been very satisfied, while four in ten (40%) say they have been somewhat satisfied. In contrast, ten percent report being somewhat or very dissatisfied with their telehealth experience.



NEARLY THREE-QUARTERS (73%)
of Hispanics ages 50 and older with access to telehealth services
have used them 1 to 5 times in the past year.

Implications

Most Hispanic adults ages 50 and older have access to telehealth services through their health care providers, with high levels of usage and satisfaction. Telehealth is seen as a convenient alternative to in-person medical visits for simple, somewhat routinized tasks such as prescription refills and quick check-ins after previous appointments, but in our qualitative work, many Hispanics mentioned wanting to be able to interact with their providers in Spanish, stressing that the commonality of language strengthens the patient—provider relationship. There persists a strong preference among Hispanics for the sense of personal connection that seems only available through face-to-face, in-person interaction with one’s health care provider.

Methodology

Focus Groups: in fall 2023, a series of 12 focus groups was held with U.S. adults ages 40 and older. Each group included 6 to 8 participants and were mixed by age (40-54 and 55-plus); self-identified race/ethnicity (Black, Hispanic, White); location (urban, suburban, and rural); health insurance (with and without access to telehealth); and other standard demographics. Six groups were done by video and six by telephone. The video groups were done with broadband users and participants comfortable with technology and telehealth. The telephone (non-tech) groups were done with those who did not use broadband and/or participants uncomfortable with technology and telehealth.

National Survey: The 2024 Telehealth survey was conducted by phone and online from January 18-23, 2024, with a total sample of 1,774 adults ages 50-plus (including oversamples of n=452 African American/Black respondents and n=440 Hispanic/Latino respondents). This survey was conducted using NORC at the University of Chicago’s Foresight 50+® Panel which is designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. All data are weighted by age, gender, and race according to the most recent Census population statistics. The margin of error for the general population survey is ± 3.43 percent. The margin of error is ± 6.08 percent for the Hispanic/Latino sample and ± 6.66 percent for the African American/Black sample.



For more information on the methodology, Teresa A. Keenan at tkeenan@aarp.org or Cheryl L. Lampkin at clampkin@aarp.org.

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