
Telehealth Use is Growing, but Satisfaction is Declining



Telehealth transformed the US healthcare landscape as many patients adopted this modality as a convenient way to access medical services over the last 20 months. The COVID-19 pandemic likely hastened adoption since its use surged to 36% in 2021 compared to 7% in 2019 and 9% in 2020. But according to the JD Power 2021 US Telehealth Satisfaction Study, patient dissatisfaction accompanies this growth. About 4,700 consumers of direct-to-consumer and payer-sponsored telehealth services were asked from June to July 2021 to rate their satisfaction over the last 12 months with customer service (42%), consultation (28%), enrollment (19%) and billing and payment (11%).

The report's main findings are:

- **Telehealth adoption surges in 2021.** Around 36% of patients accessed telehealth services during 2021, up from 9% in 2020 and 7% in 2019. Usage age demographics haven't changed from previous years, with the highest use coming from Generation Y and Pre-Boomers.
- **Convenience, speed, and safety drive telehealth adoption.** Users cite convenience (57%), quickly receiving care (47%), and safety (36%) as the main factors behind adoption.
- **Patient satisfaction declines as underlying problems surface.** Patient dissatisfaction accompanies telehealth growth driven by complaints regarding limited services (24%), lack of awareness on costs (15%), unclear technology requirements (15%), and poor information about care providers (15%).
- **Patients in poor health are less satisfied with telehealth.** Patients, who consider themselves in poor health, report lower satisfaction with services (85 points lower on a 1,000-point scale) than those with excellent health. Unlike patients in poor health, healthy patients perceive that they receive clear explanations, their visits are highly personalised, and diagnoses are high-quality.

James Beem, the firm's managing director of global healthcare intelligence, added: 'It's impossible to ignore that 36% of the healthcare customers we measure within our research have used telehealth services this year—which is four times higher than a year ago... However, digging deeper into the research, it's clear that customer satisfaction has declined during the same period, with many users citing limited access to the services they need and inconsistencies in the care they receive. As the industry grows, it is critical to address these challenges.'

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