



2021 Telehealth Survey Report

AMA Telehealth Survey

Survey summary: This survey of physicians aimed to gather insights on the experiences of current and expected future use to inform ongoing telehealth research and advocacy, resource development, and continued support for physicians, practices, and health systems.

Data collection: The anonymous online survey was distributed to a convenience sample via email and social media by individuals, state and specialty medical organizations, and members of the American Medical Association Telehealth Immersion Program. The survey was active for 8 weeks between November 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021. Responses described in this report represent 2,232 physician participants. Due to small sample size, responses from other participants, including nurses, physician assistants, and other practitioners, are not included.

Report limitations and considerations: The data presented in this report is based on a non-probability convenience sample. Results should be considered directional and are not intended to suggest statistical significance or applicability to the general U.S. physician and healthcare professional population.

Note: Trend comparisons made to 2020 data refer to the [COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition Physician Survey](#)

Telehealth Use Trends



CLINICAL OUTCOMES

85% of physician respondents indicate they currently use telehealth. For those that report a decrease in use indicate now doing a mix of in-person and virtual care.

- 60% of clinicians agree or strongly agree telehealth enabled them to provide high quality care.
- Of those using telehealth, 93% (↑ 13%) are conducting live, interactive video visits with patients and 69% are doing audio-only visits.
- 56% of respondents are motivated (agree and strongly agree) to increase telehealth use in their practices.
- 8% (↓ 4%) of respondents said they were using remote patient monitoring technologies with patients in their homes; the commonly used tools include smartphones (camera), blood pressure cuffs, pulse oximeters, and body weight scales. 76% (↑ 7.6%) report data is usually shared manually (e.g. verbally over the phone or via email).



PATIENT EXPERIENCE

- More than 80% of respondents (↑ 12%) indicate patients have better access to care since using telehealth.
- 62% of respondents feel patients have higher satisfaction since offering telehealth.
- 63% (↑ 12.2%) of respondents report 75% or more of virtual visits are conducted with patients they have an existing relationship with.



PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION

- A majority of respondents indicated that telehealth has improved the satisfaction of their work 54.2%.



COST

- 44% of respondents indicated that telehealth decreased the costs of care (strongly agree or agree)

Note: Trend comparisons refer to the [COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition Physician Survey](#) fielded in 2020.

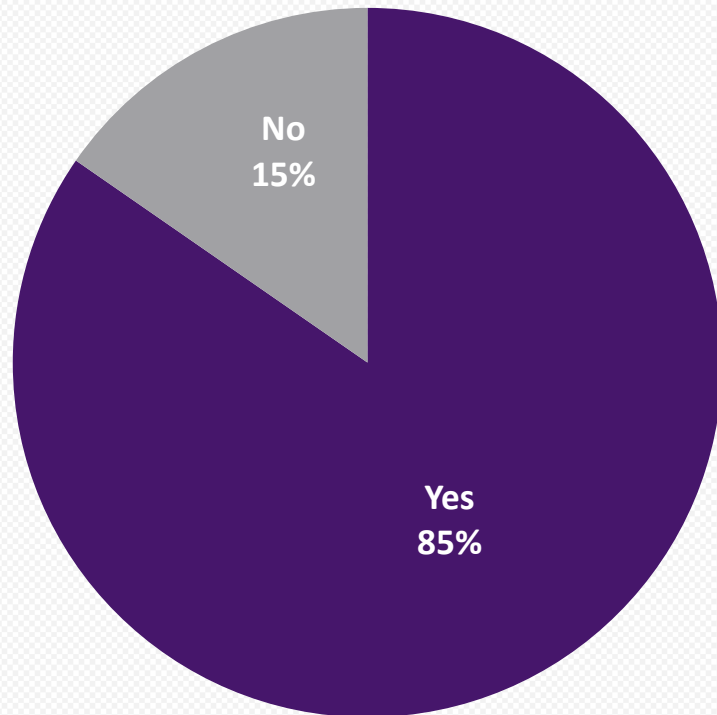
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Telehealth use

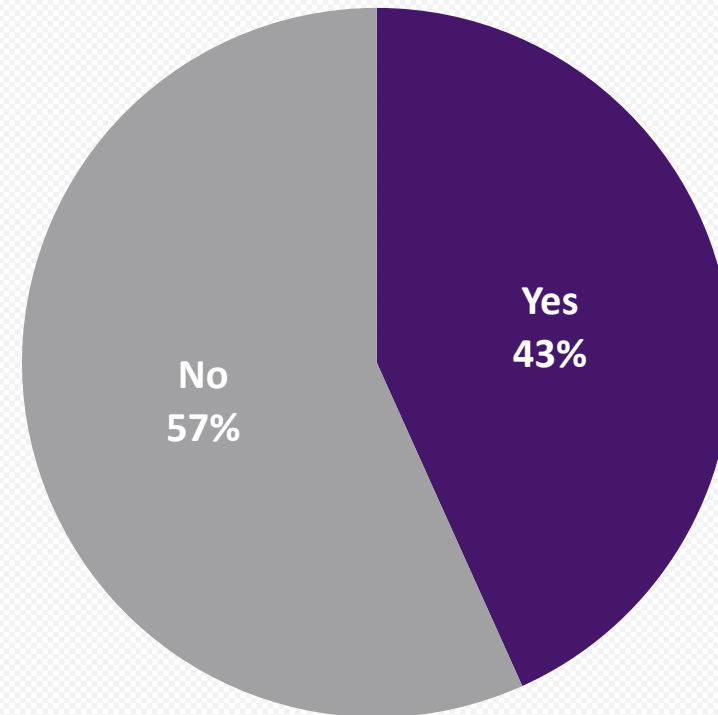


85% of respondents report using telehealth

Do you currently use telehealth to care for your patients?



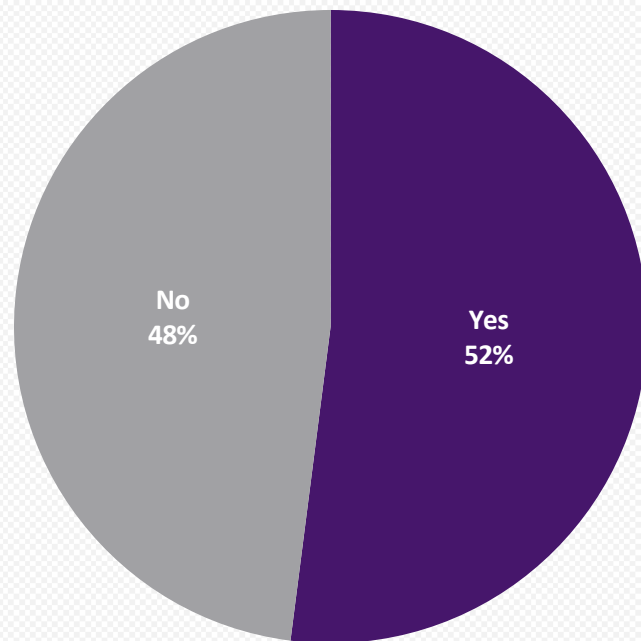
If not, did you provide telehealth at any point during the COVID-19 pandemic?



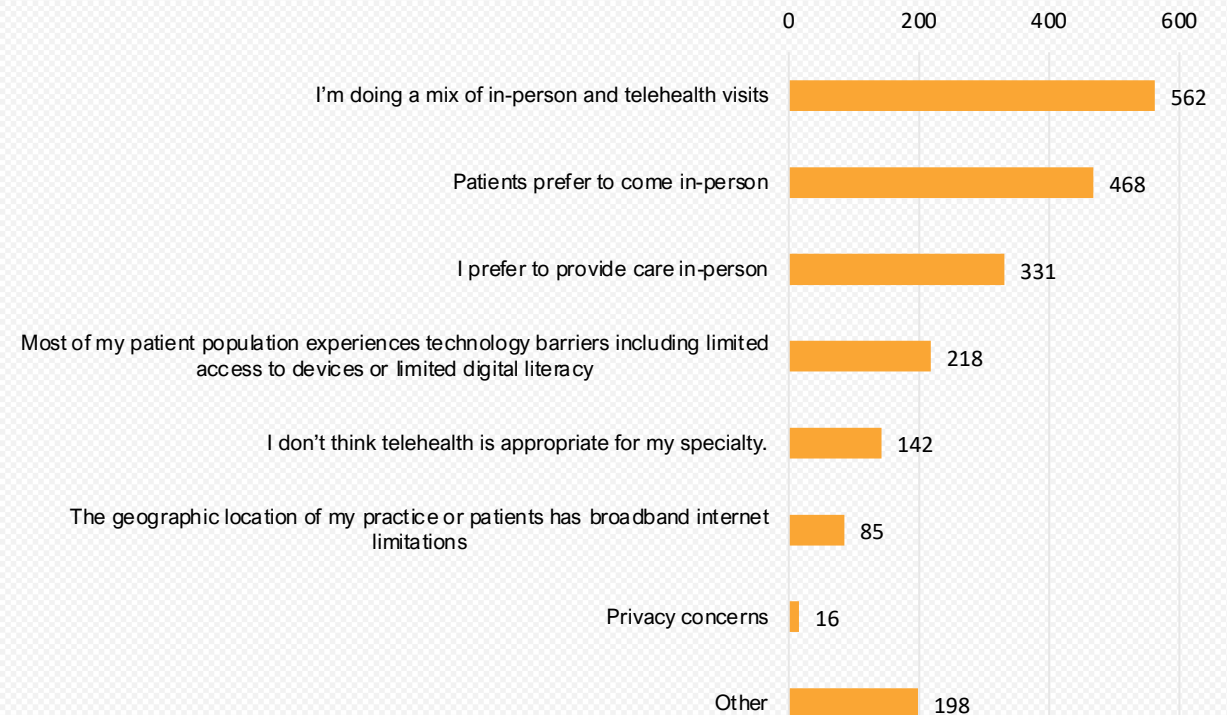
Do you currently use telehealth to care for your patients? N=2,149
Did you provide telehealth at any point during the COVID-19 pandemic? N=312

Most respondents that report a decrease in use now provide a mix of in-person and virtual care

Has your use of telehealth decreased since you first offered telehealth?

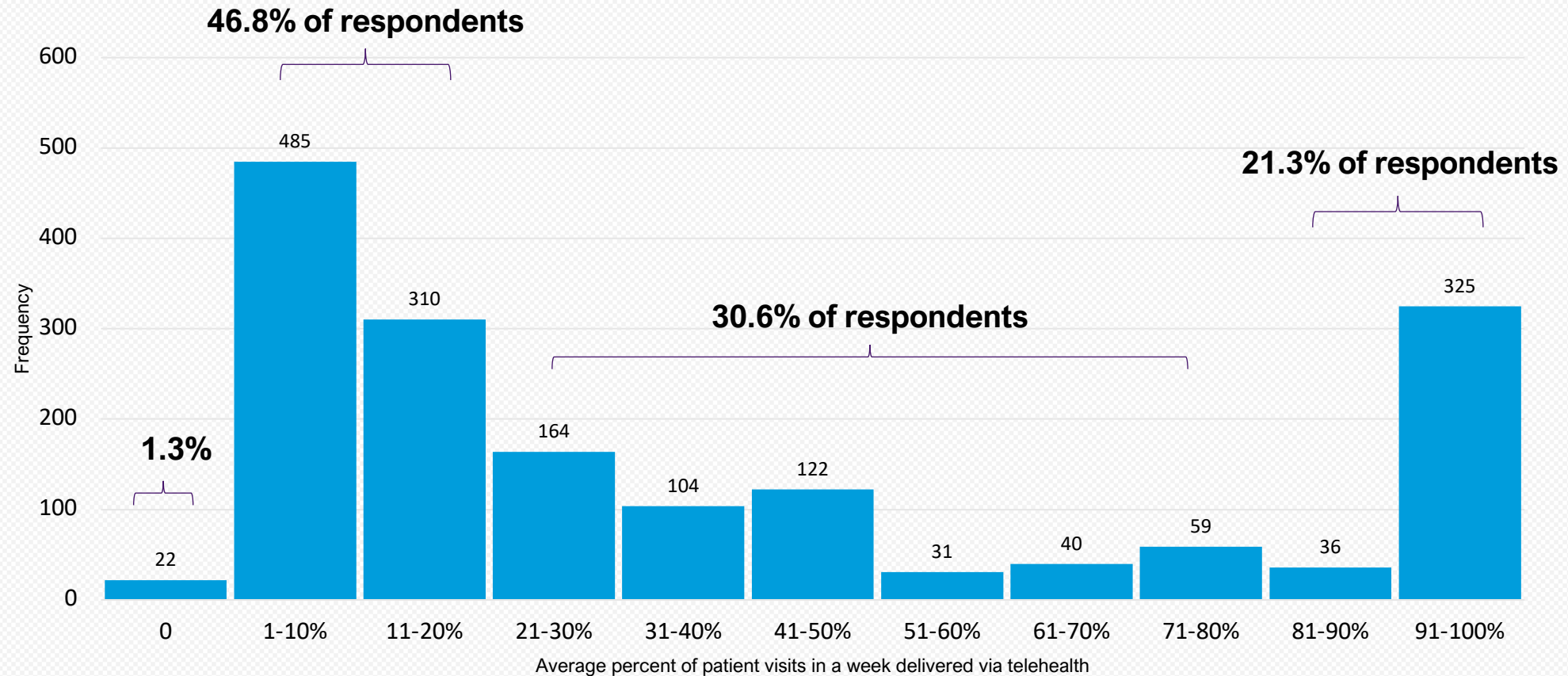


If your telehealth use has decreased, why?



Has your use of telehealth decreased since you first offered telehealth services? N=1,705
If your telehealth use has decreased, why? N=879

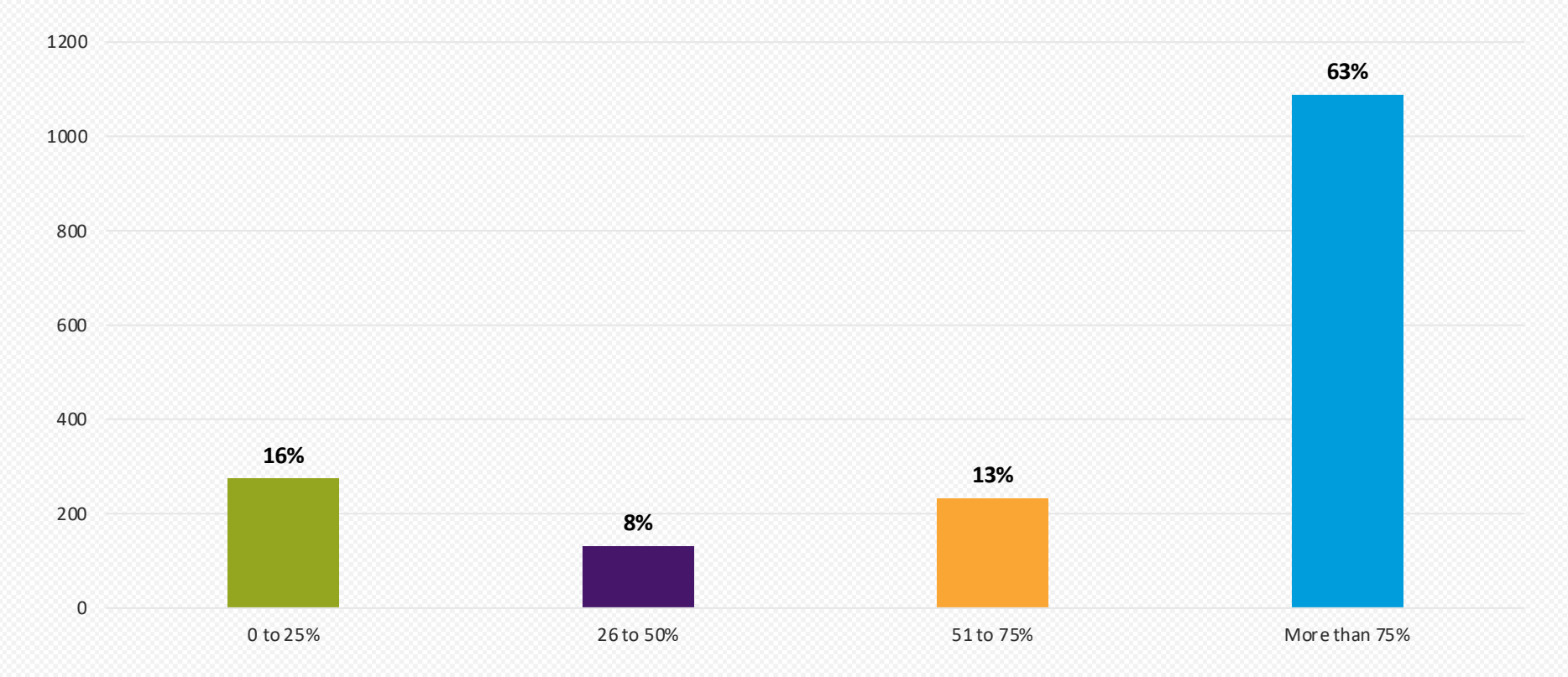
The percent of telehealth compared to in-person visits varies across physicians and practices



On average, how many patient visits do you have per week, including in-person and telehealth?
 How many telehealth visits do you currently average per week?

N=1,698

63% of respondents indicate 75% or more of telehealth visits are with established patients

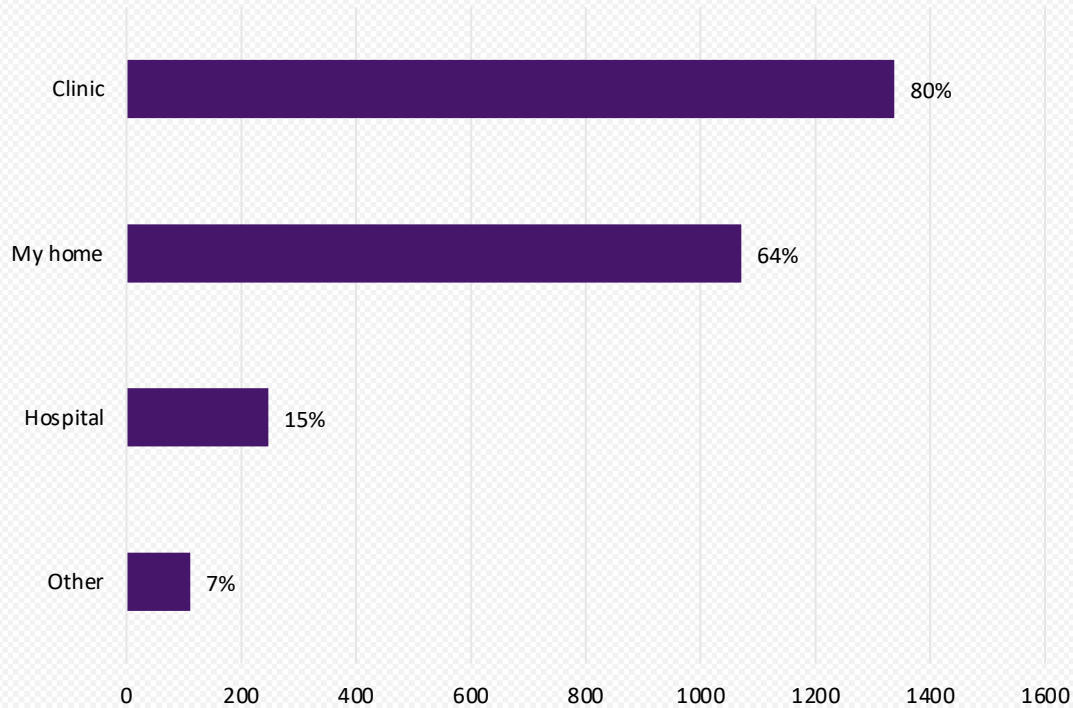


Currently, based on total volume of telehealth services delivered, what percent of your telehealth visits are with patients with whom you have an established patient/physician relationship?

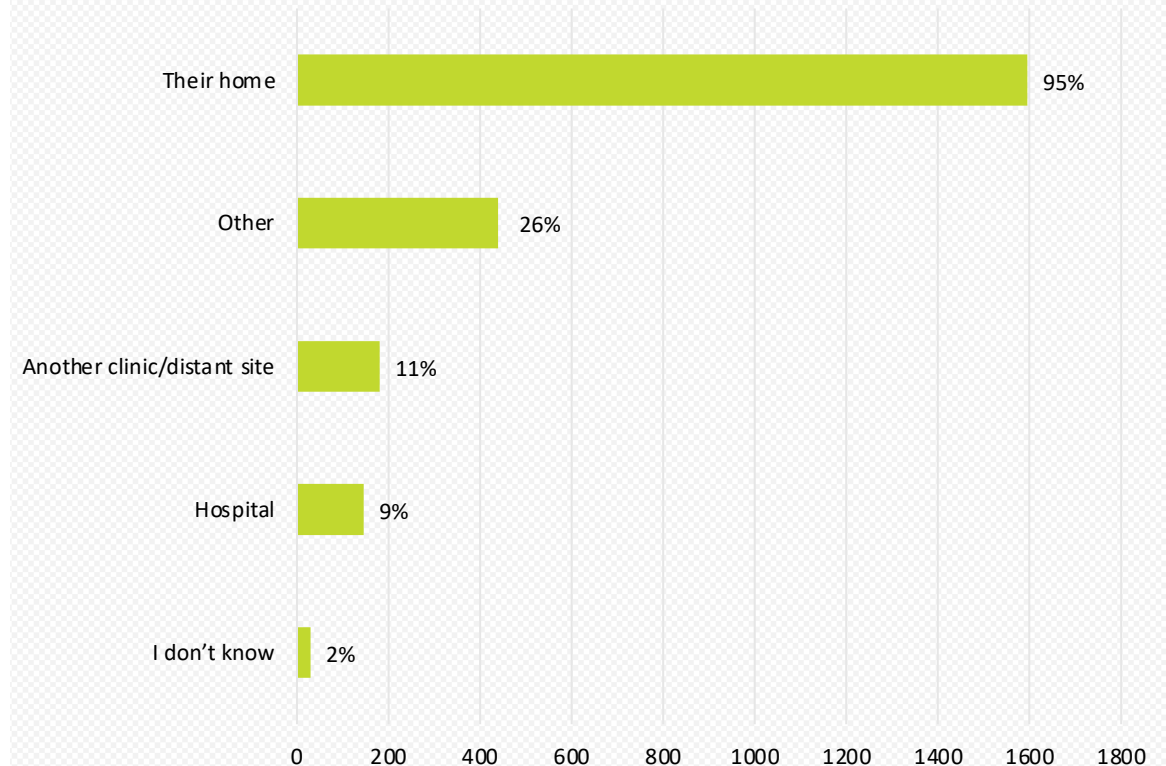
N=1,724

Where are physicians and patients located during the virtual visit?

Physicians are typically located in the clinic or home



Patients are typically located in their home



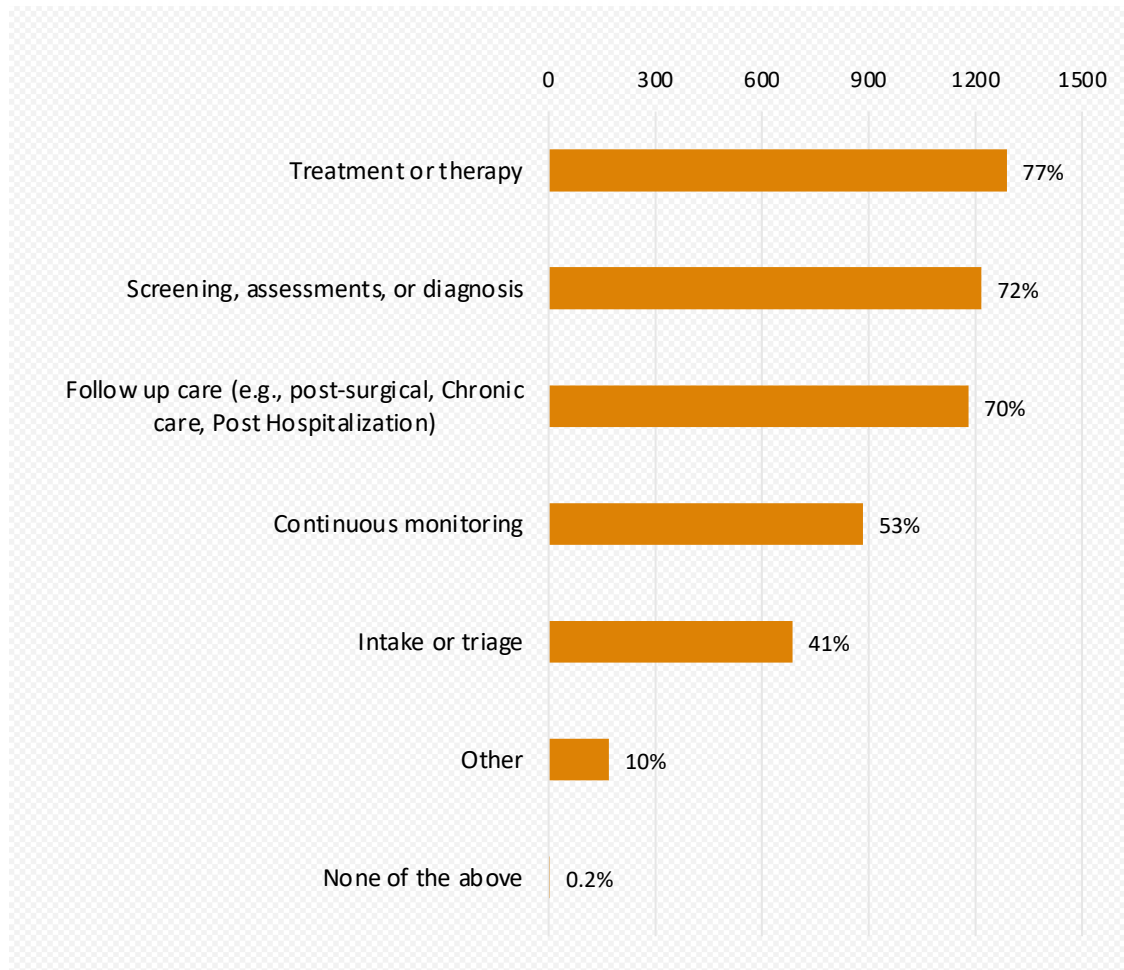
From where have you conducted your telehealth visits? (select all that apply) N=1,678
Frequently reported "Other" locations: Office = 77

Where are your patients during their telehealth visits?(select all that apply) N=1,672
Frequently reported "Other" locations: Work = 235; Car = 218; School = 38

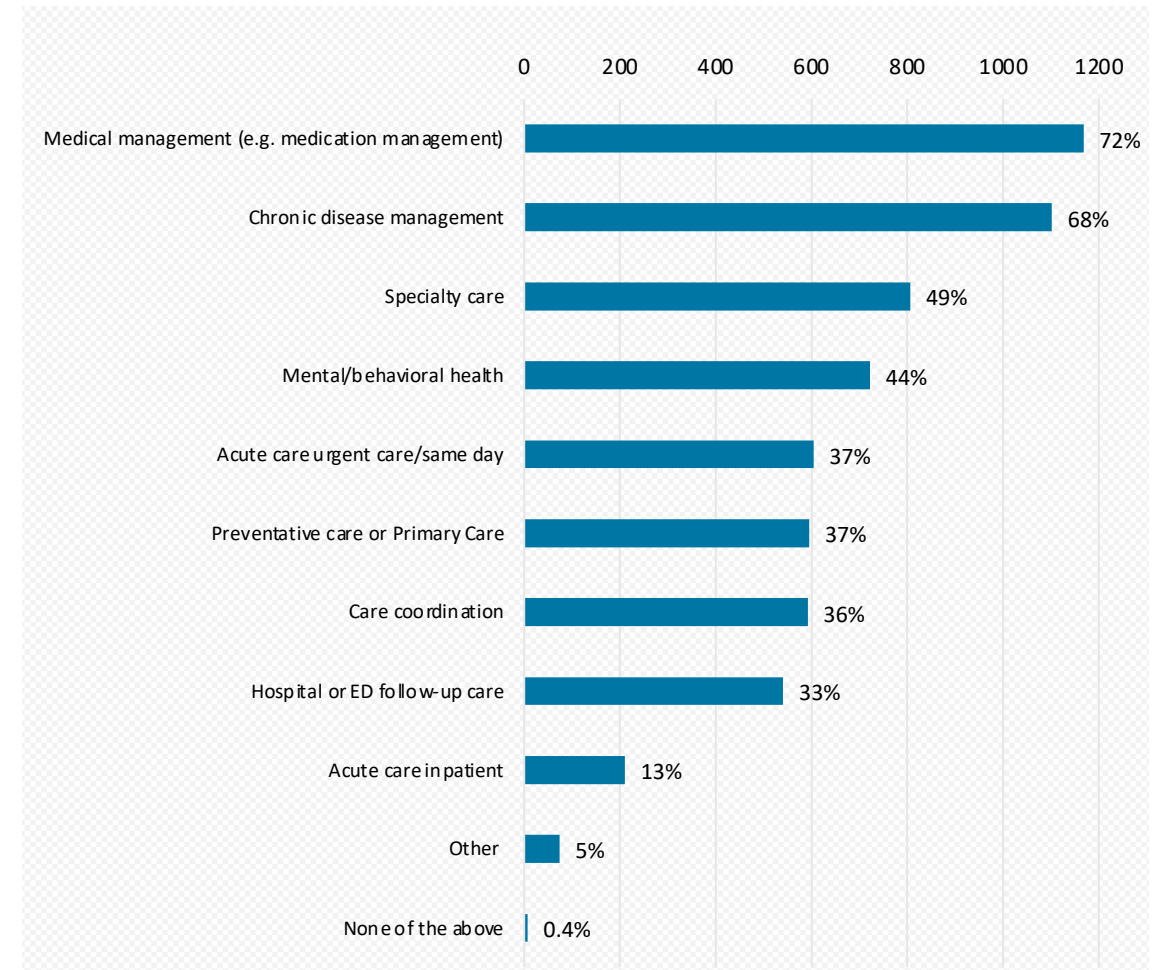
A deeper dive into the telehealth experience



Telehealth is currently being used across many aspects of clinical care and used to deliver a variety of services

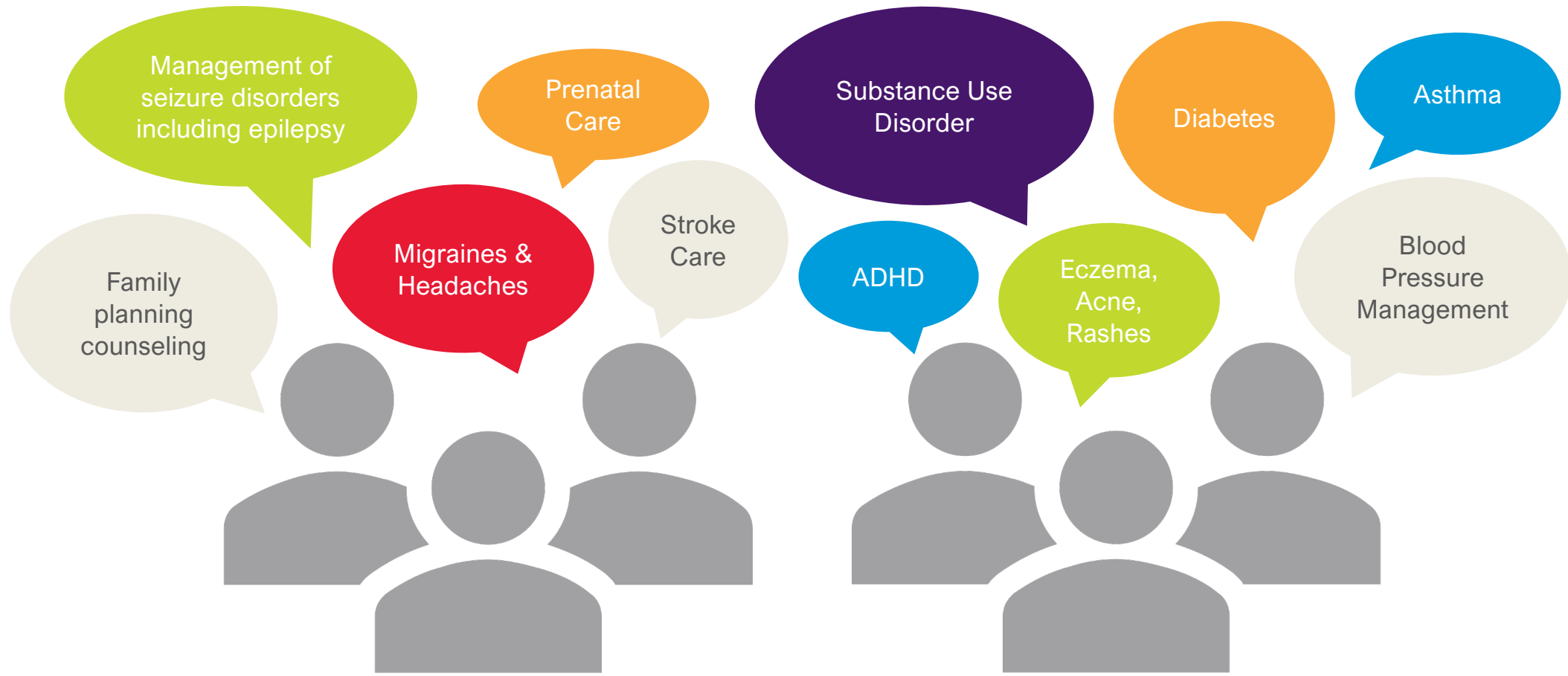


What aspects of care do you provide via telehealth? (select all that apply) N=1,682



What services do you or your practice/organization currently provide via telehealth? N=1,630

Physicians shared a variety of specific use cases for telehealth across practices and specialties



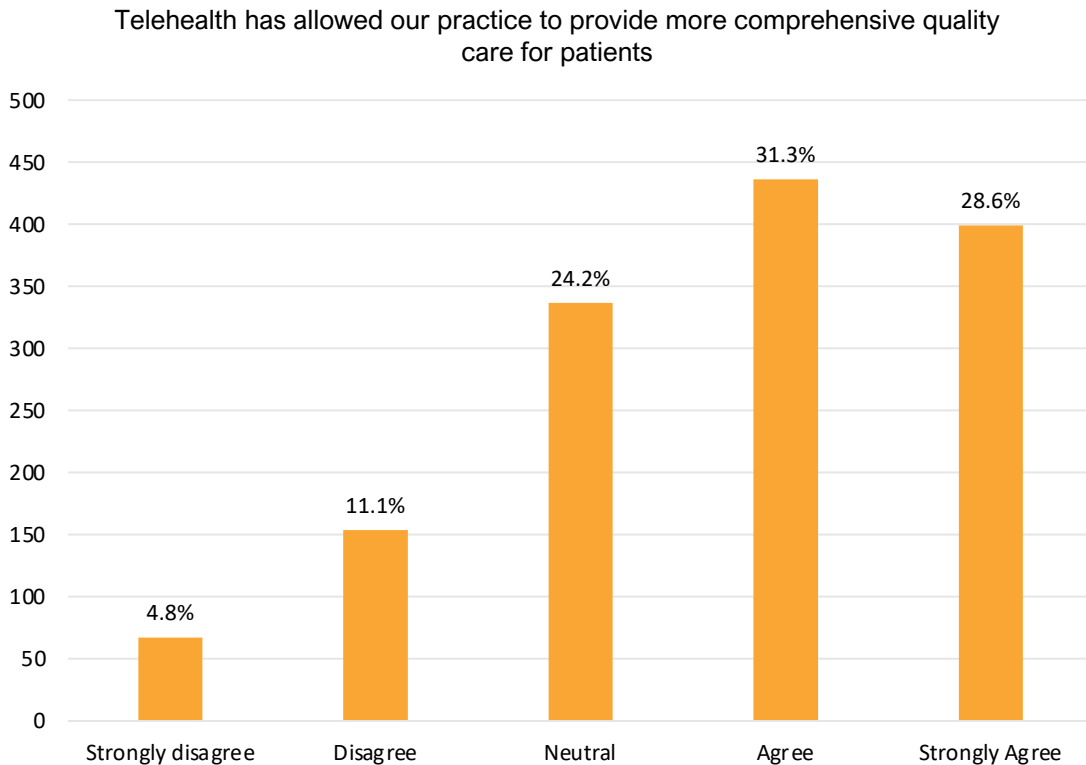
What specific use cases within your specialty do you find most appropriate for telehealth?

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Physicians' powerful ally in patient care

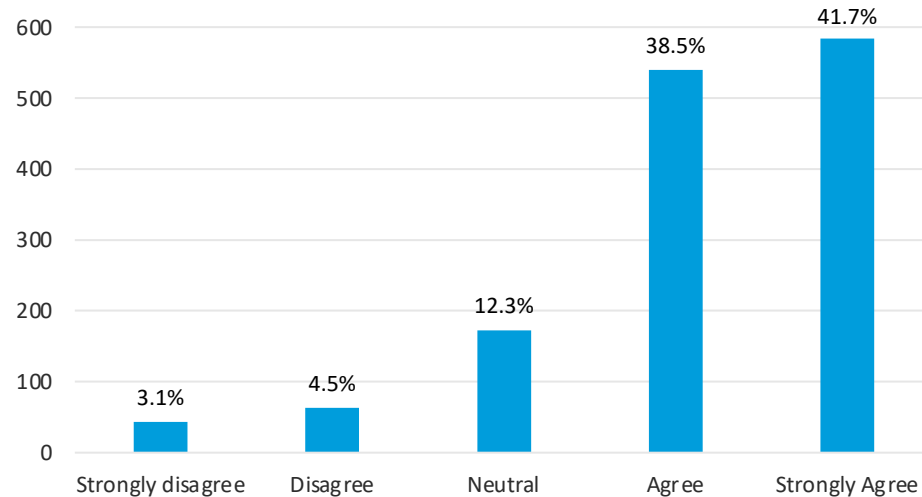
Most physicians feel telehealth allows them to provide *more comprehensive quality care*



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Telehealth has allowed our practice to provide more comprehensive quality care for patients. N=1,393
 Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?

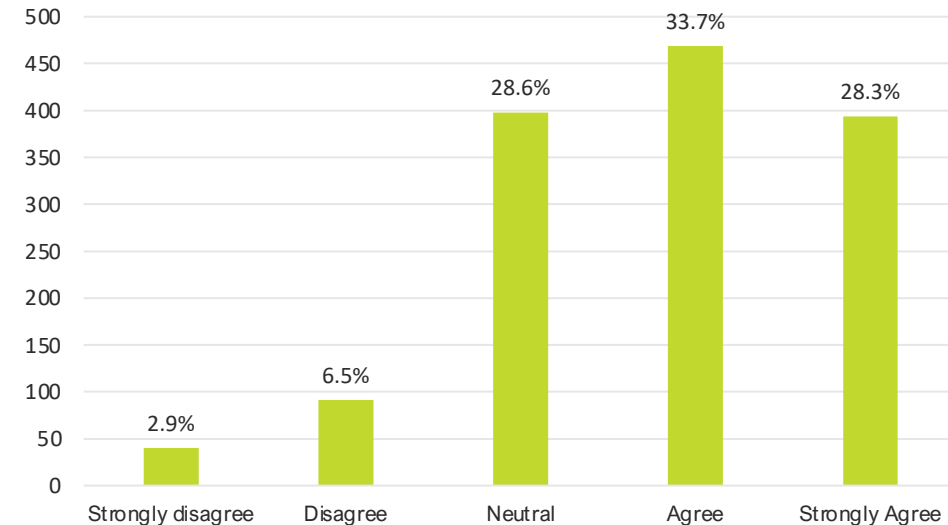
Telehealth offers *access to care* and convenience that contributes to *improved patient satisfaction*

>80% agree or strongly agree patients have better access to care since they began using telehealth



“Telehealth increased access for our specialty care. Reducing first visits to under 4-5 days compared to 4-5 months.”

62% of physicians agree or strongly agree their patients are more satisfied since using telehealth



“Telehealth has been great for my patients with disabilities that impact their mobility. Transportation is a challenge for them, and I can see how they interact with their home environment, which is crucial for my job.”

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Patients have better access to care since our practice began using telehealth. N=1,402

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Patients have higher satisfaction since our practice began using telehealth. N= 1,392

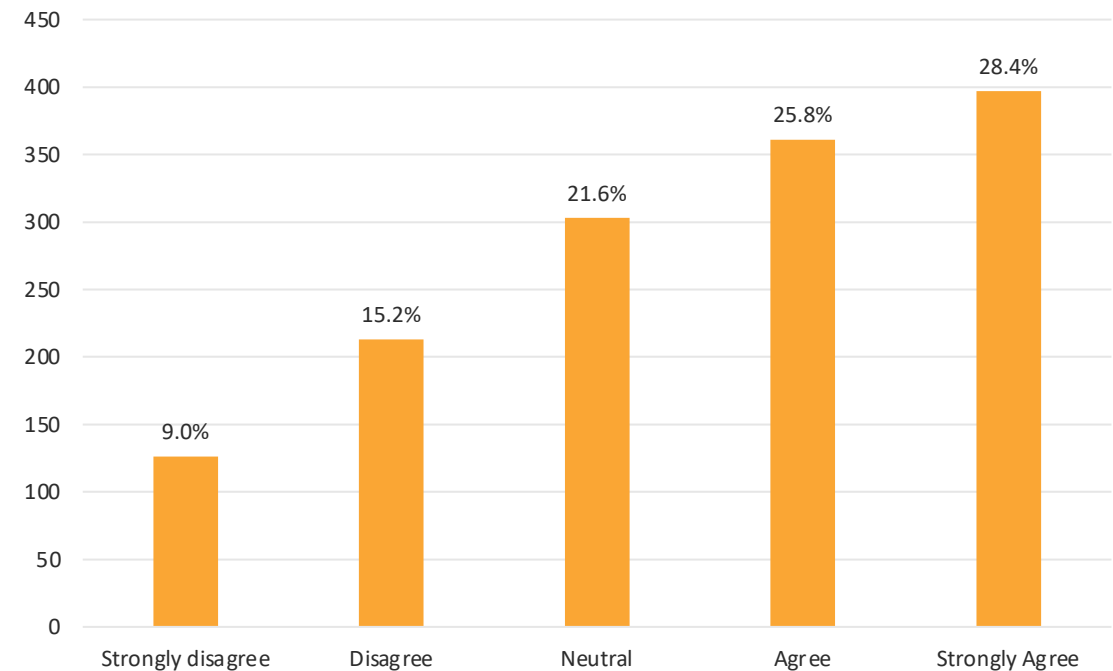
Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?

Telehealth has *increased professional satisfaction*

“I am a wife, mother, and in a dual physician partnership, and telehealth allows me to balance my professional and family obligations without leaving my profession for family reasons in the middle of my career.”

“The option of providing care via telehealth has increased my professional satisfaction and actually has delayed my decision to retire in a time when many in our field are retiring prematurely and exacerbating the physician shortage.”

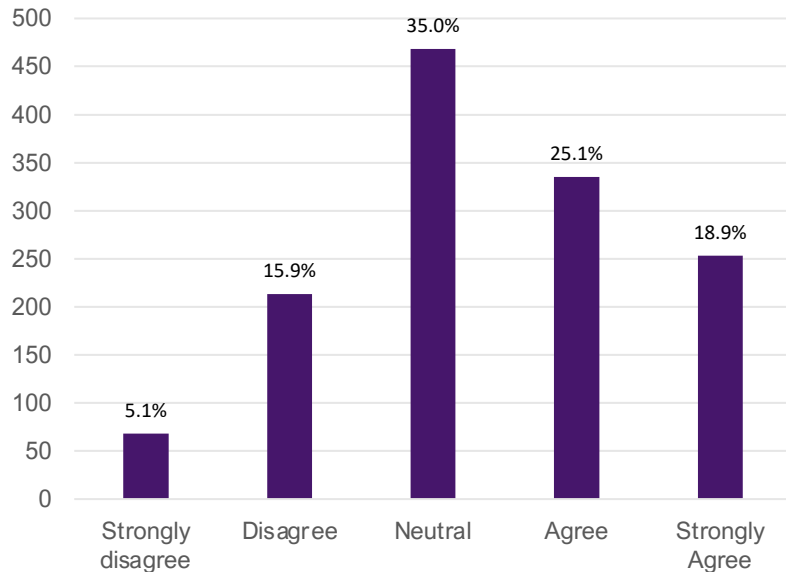
Over 50% of physicians indicate telehealth has increased their professional satisfaction



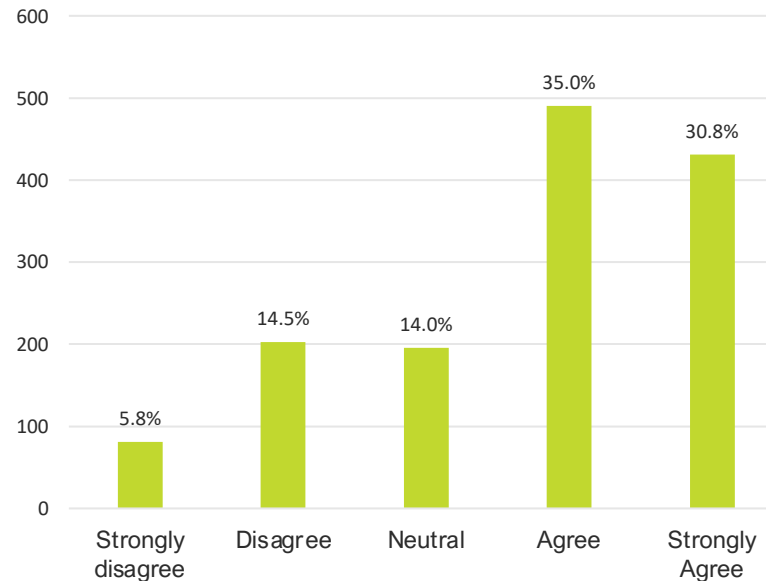
Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?
 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Telehealth has increased my professional satisfaction. N=1,400

Telehealth has had a *positive impact on cost of care*, but investment is still needed to continue the move towards digitally enabled care

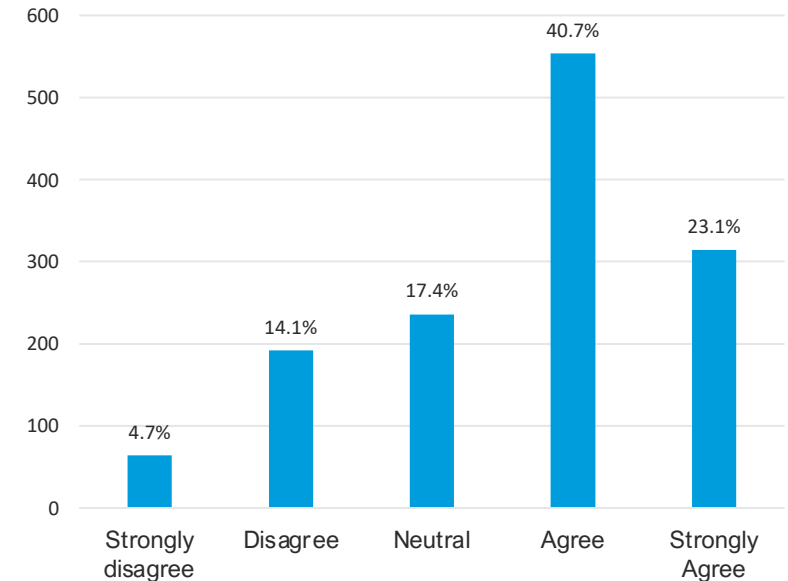
Telehealth has decreased the cost of care



65% of physicians feel most of the telehealth visits they provide replace care delivered in-person



63% of physicians feel most of the telehealth visits they provide supplement in-person care.

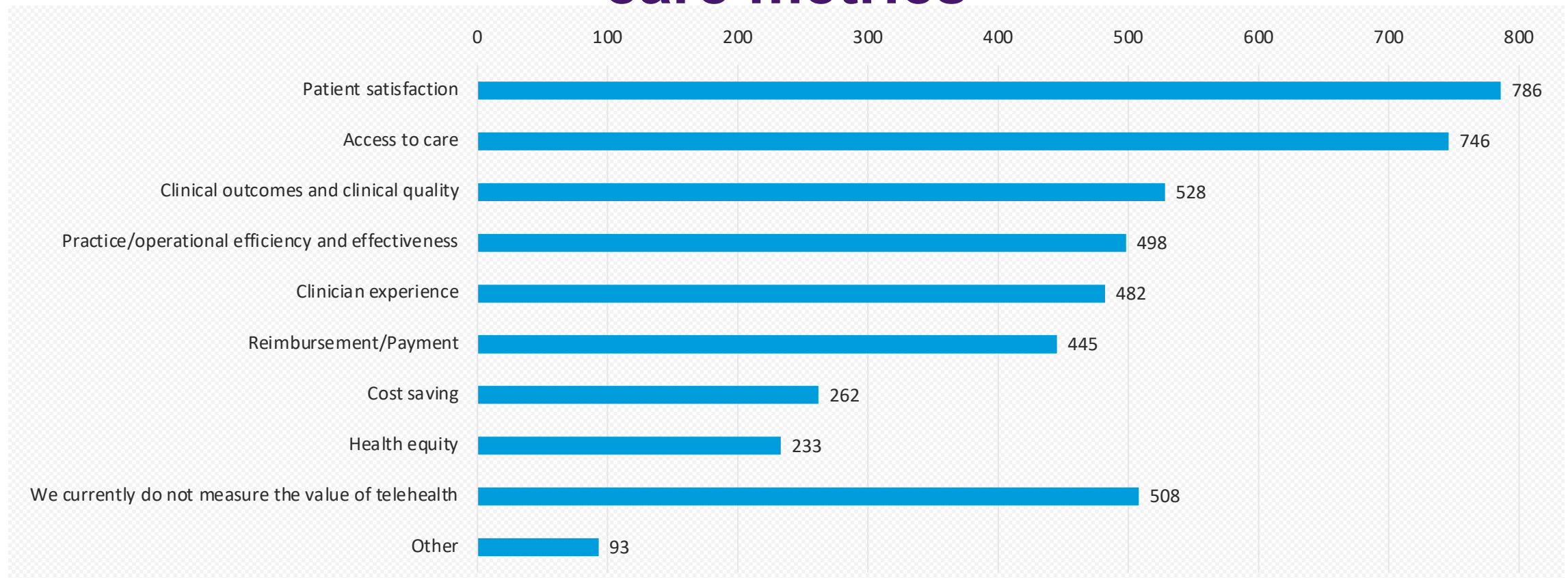


To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Telehealth has decreased the cost of care. N=1337

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Most of the virtual telehealth visits I provide replaces in-person care. N=1,401

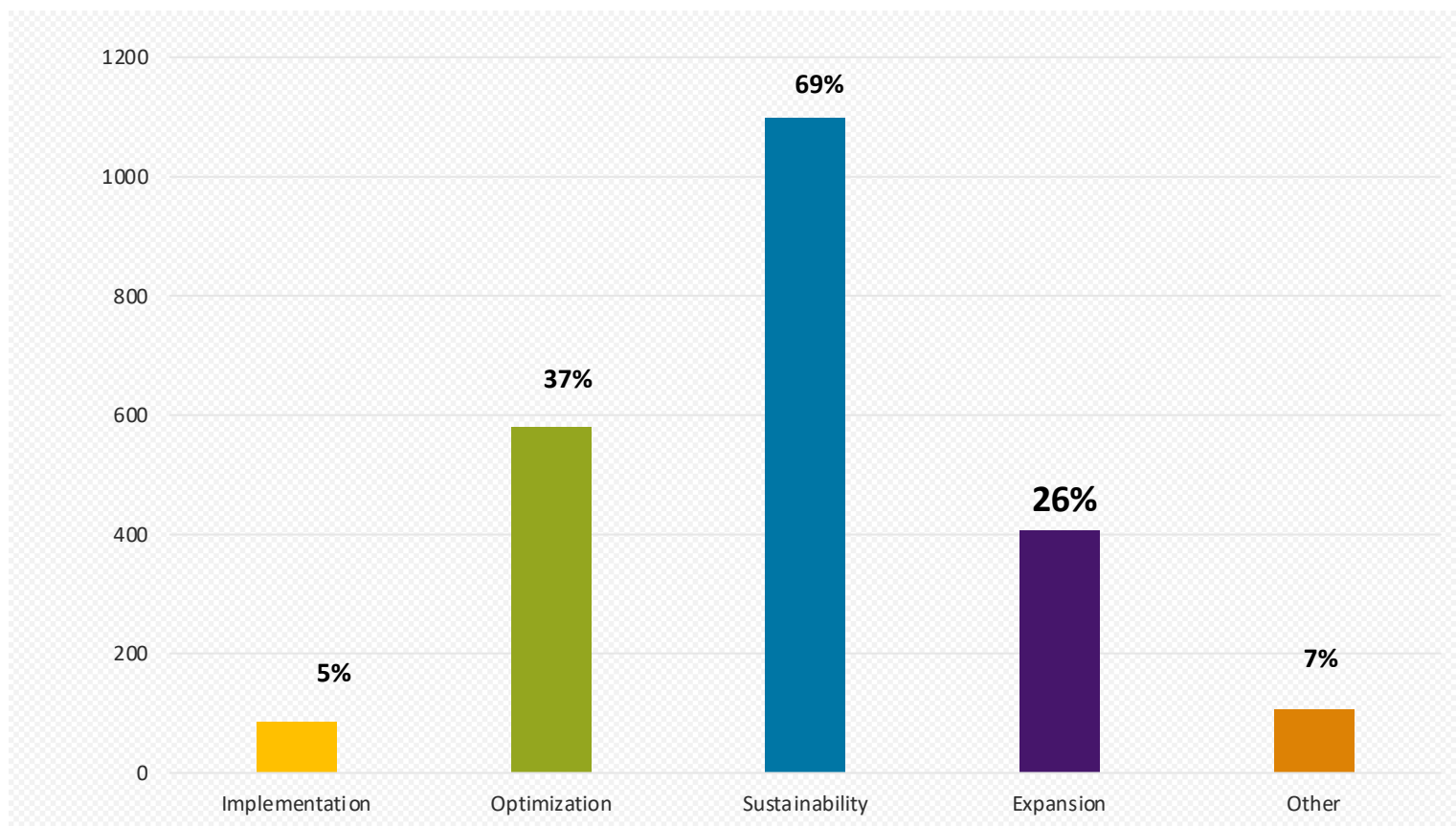
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Most of the virtual telehealth visits I provide supplements in-person care. N=1,360

Most practices are measuring the value of telehealth via patient satisfaction and access to care metrics



How do you currently measure the value of telehealth in your practice or organization? N=1,558

Most are focused on *sustaining* telehealth at their practice or organizations



Implementation = just getting started in implementing telehealth

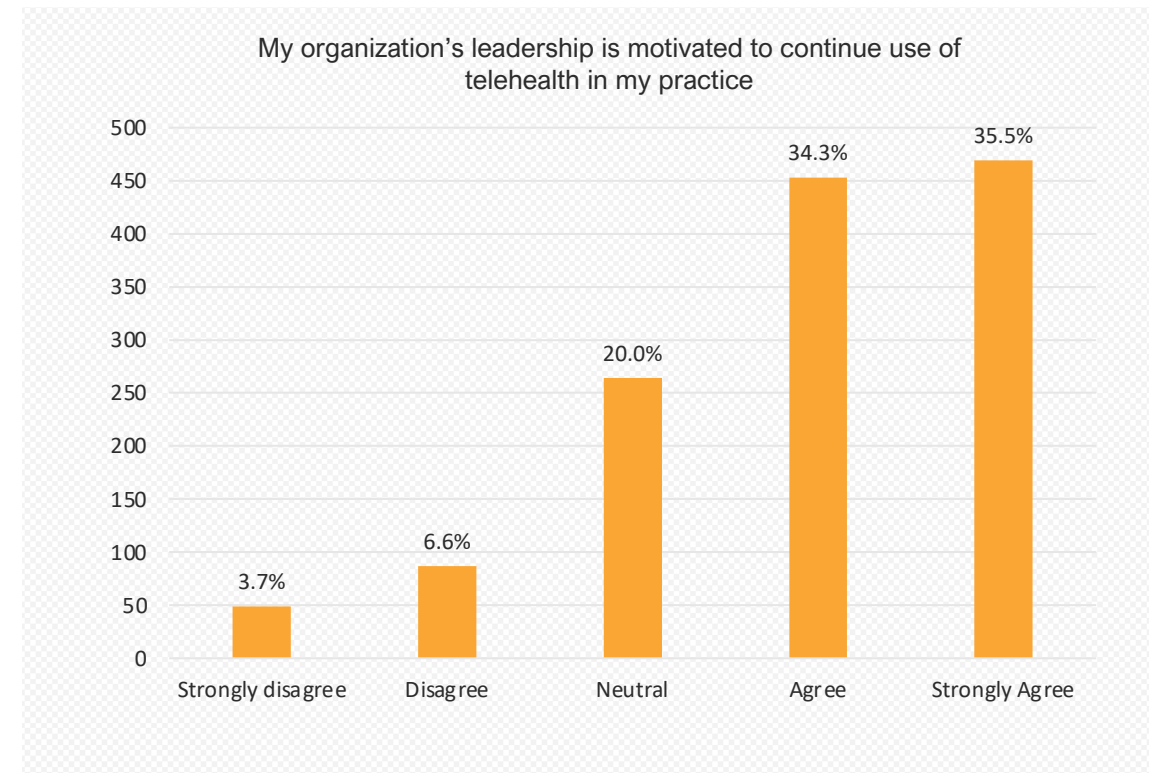
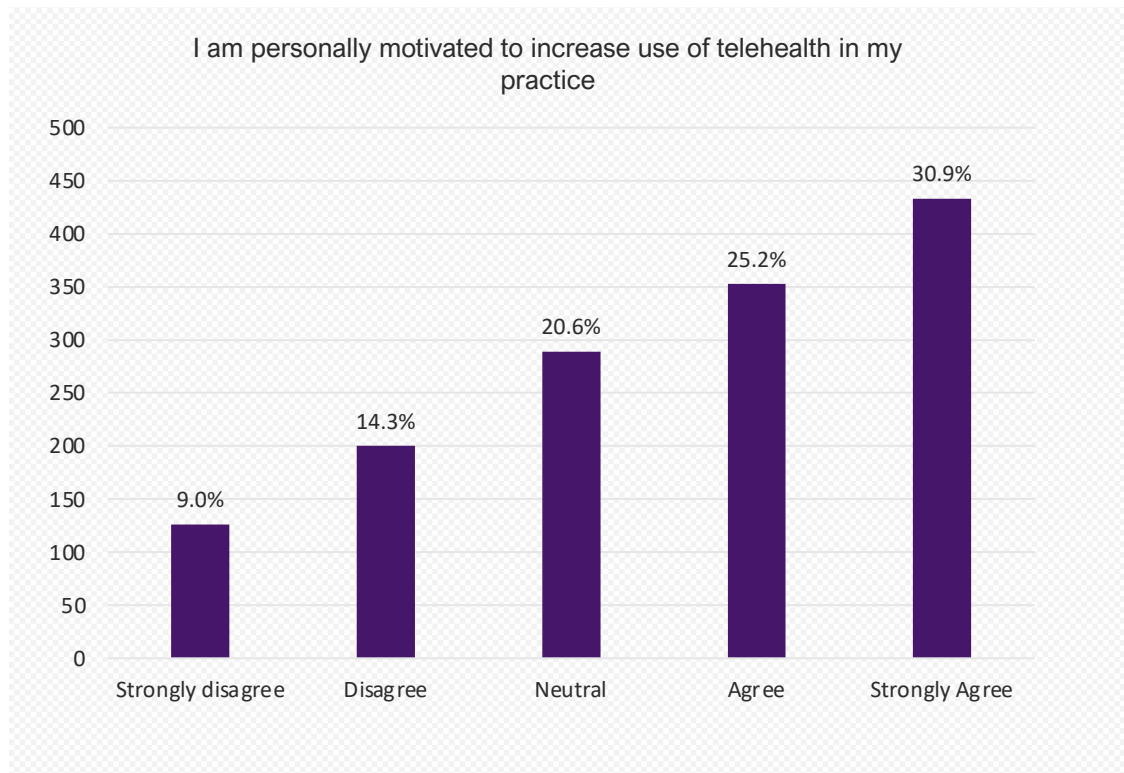
Optimization = looking to improve existing telehealth operations

Sustainability = interested in continuing to offer telehealth services that seamlessly integrate with in-person care

Expansion = looking to expand telehealth offerings for other services, additional locations, or more comprehensive virtual care

At what stage is your organization's telehealth program? (select all that apply) N=1,585

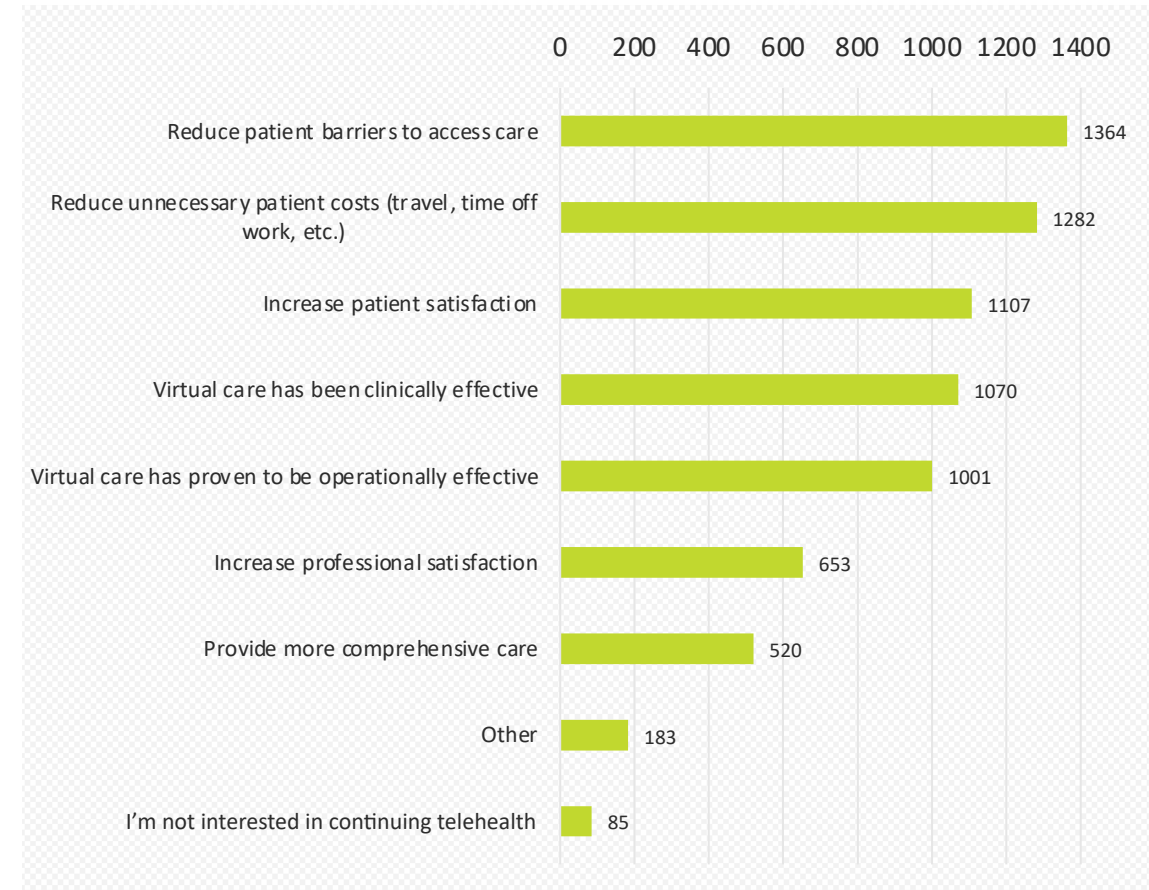
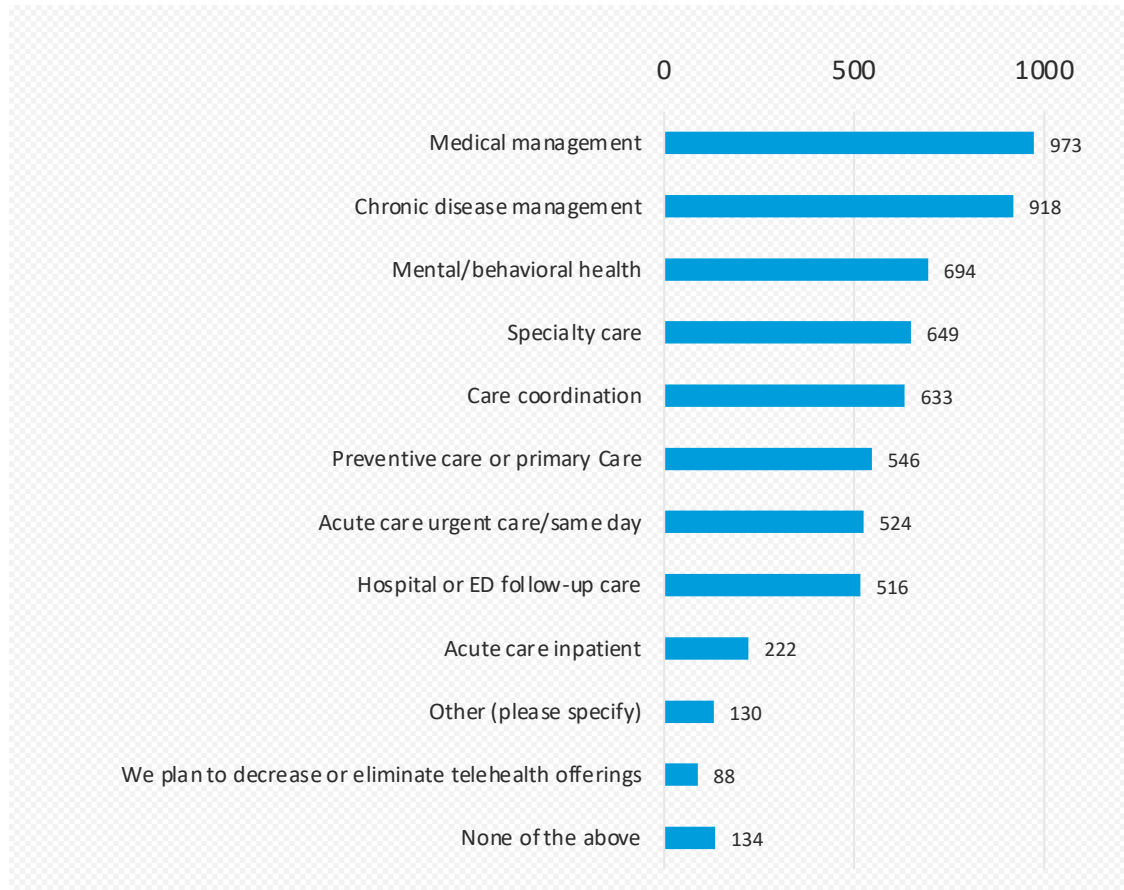
Looking ahead, organizations are interested in continuing to offer telehealth and increase use



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I am personally motivated to increase use of telehealth in my practice. N=1,401

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? My organization's leadership is motivated to continue use of telehealth in my practice. N=1,322

Practices plan to offer a variety of services via telehealth in the future for a variety of reasons



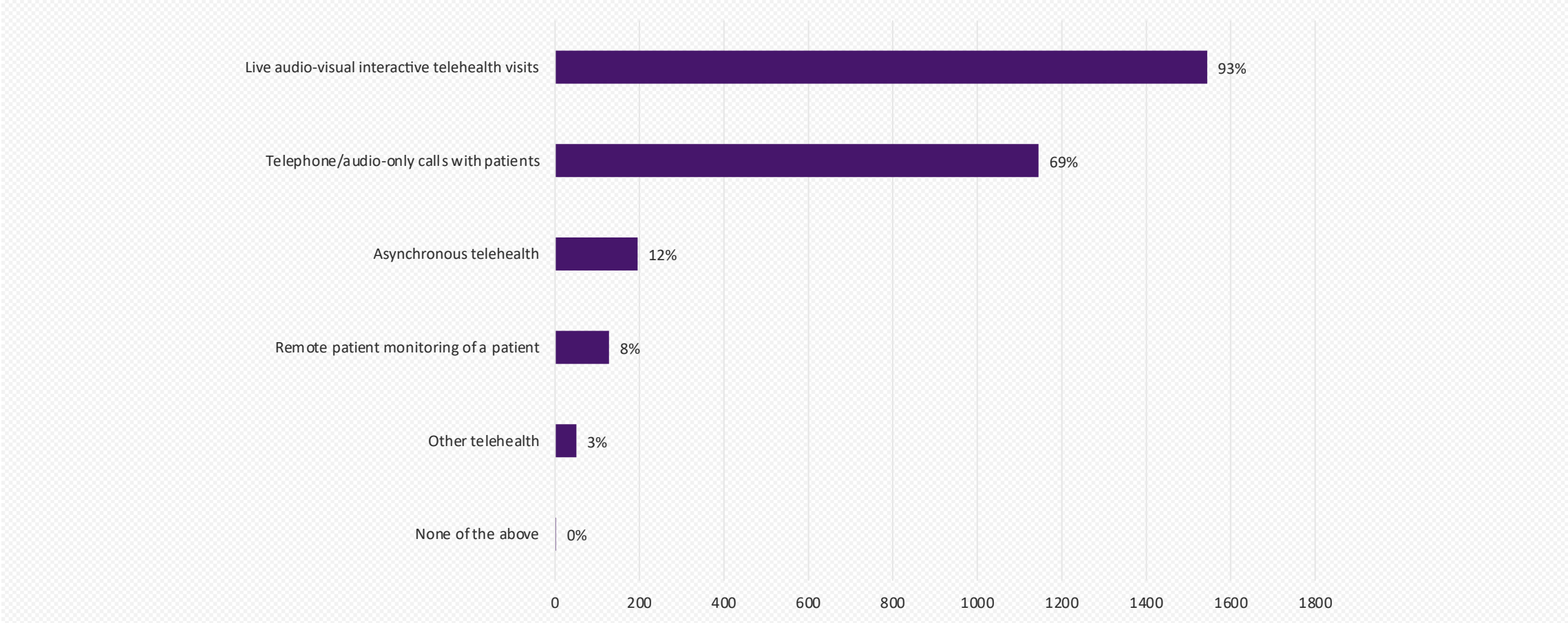
What telehealth services does your practice or organization plan to offer in the future? (select all that apply) N=1,599

Which of the following are reasons why you are interested in continuing to provide care via telehealth? (select all that apply) N=1,591

A closer look at technology...



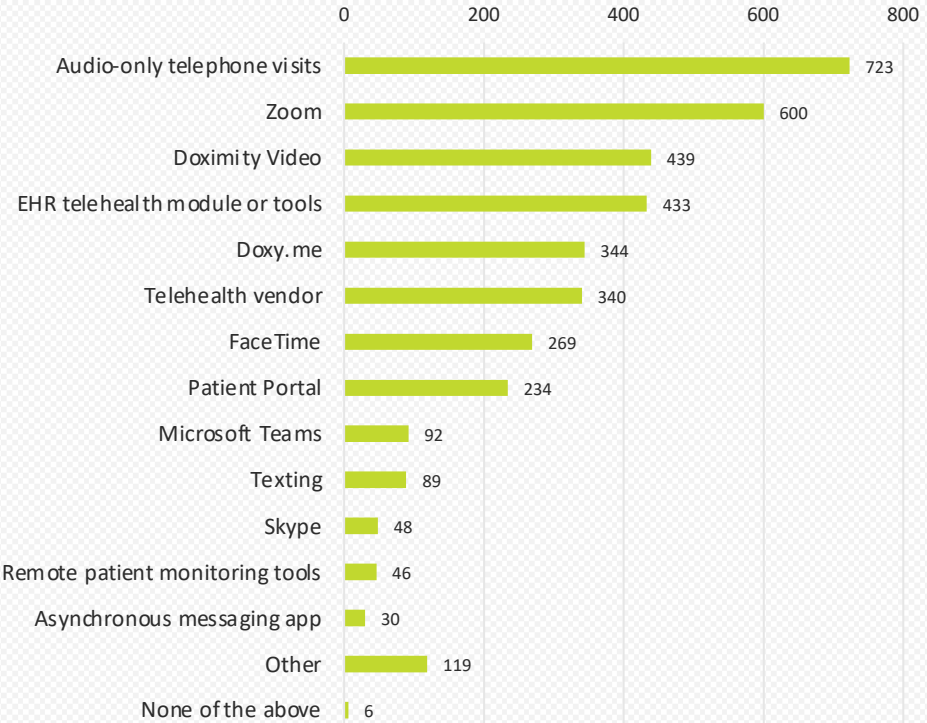
Most physicians use live audio-visual and telephone/audio-only technology to deliver telehealth



Which of the following telehealth modalities do you currently use to provide clinical care virtually to patients? (select all that apply) N=1,668

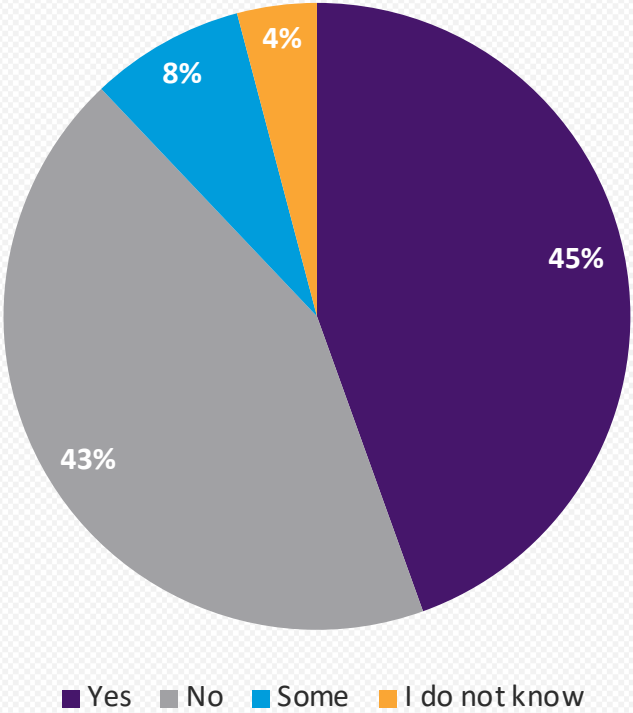
Telephone and Zoom remain the primary platforms used to deliver virtual care; most access some or all via the EHR

Telehealth Platforms Used



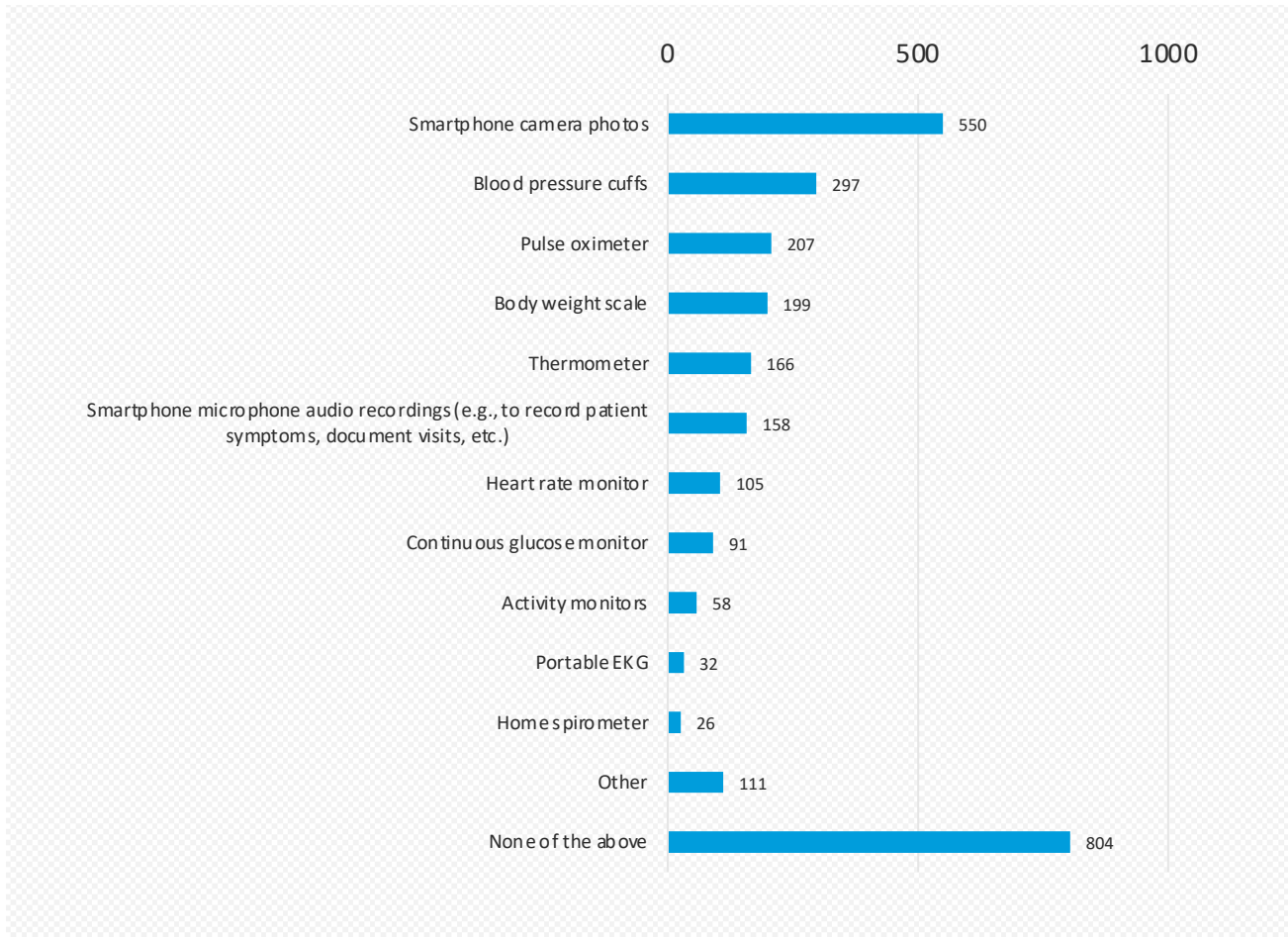
*Other platforms mentioned in free text (in order of frequency) include: AmWell, Epic, Google (Duo or Meet), UpDox, WebEx, Teledoc, Bluejeans, eClinicalWorks, and a variety of other system unique platforms.

Are you able to access technology directly from your EHR?

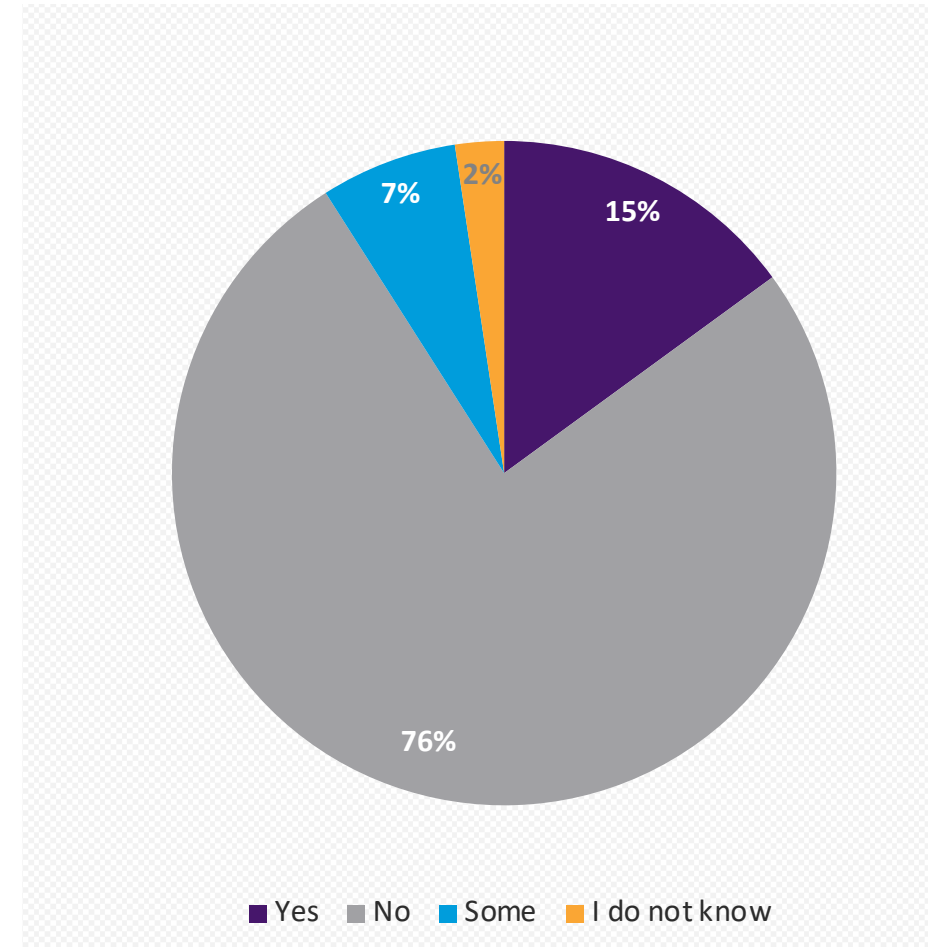


Which platform(s) do you use to deliver telehealth services? (select all that apply) N=1,657
 Are you able to access your telehealth technology directly from your Electronic Health Record (EHR)? N=1,656

Technology used to augment telehealth services



Over 75% report data from support technology is not automatically transmitted

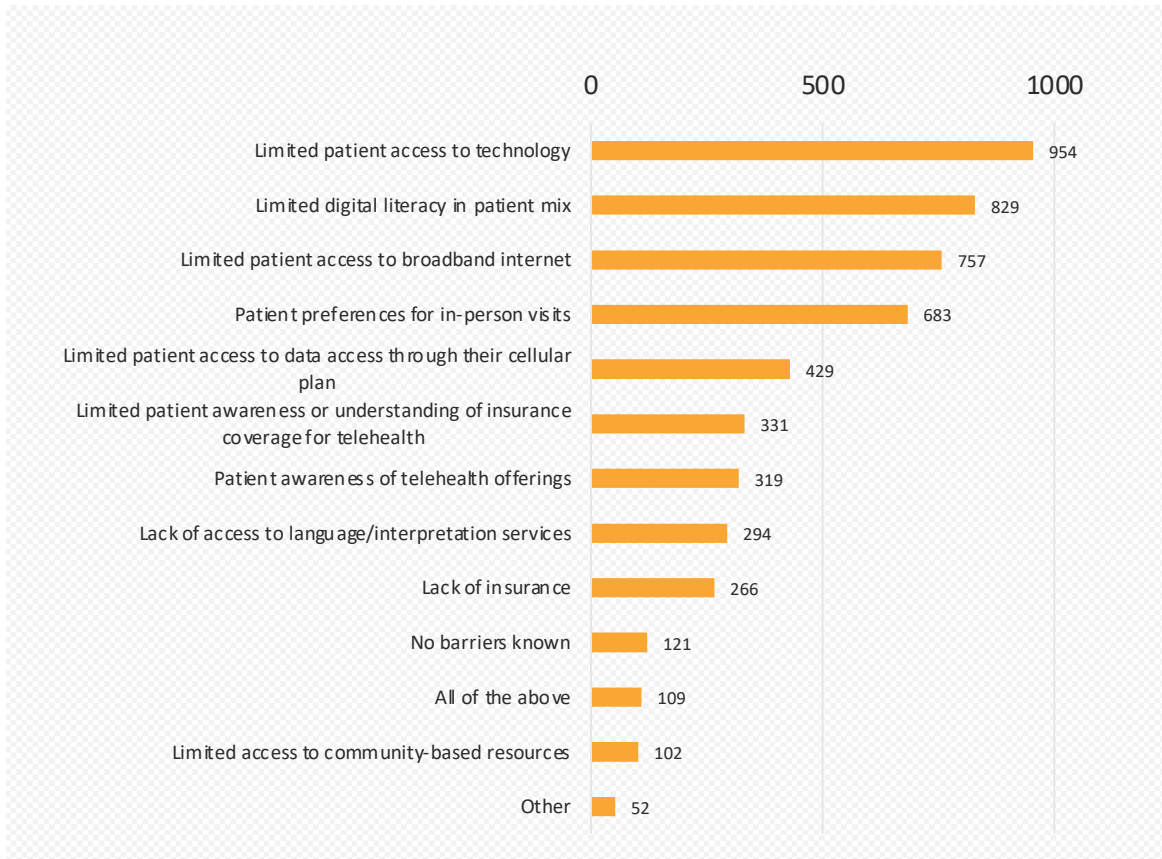


What type of technology are you using to support/augment your telehealth services? (Select all that apply) N=1,647
 Do the devices you selected in the previous question automatically collect and deliver patient reported data to you? N=842

Barriers and challenges



Physicians identify the digital divide as the biggest barrier to virtual care for patients



“Reduce the digital divide that impairs many patients’ access to telehealth services.”

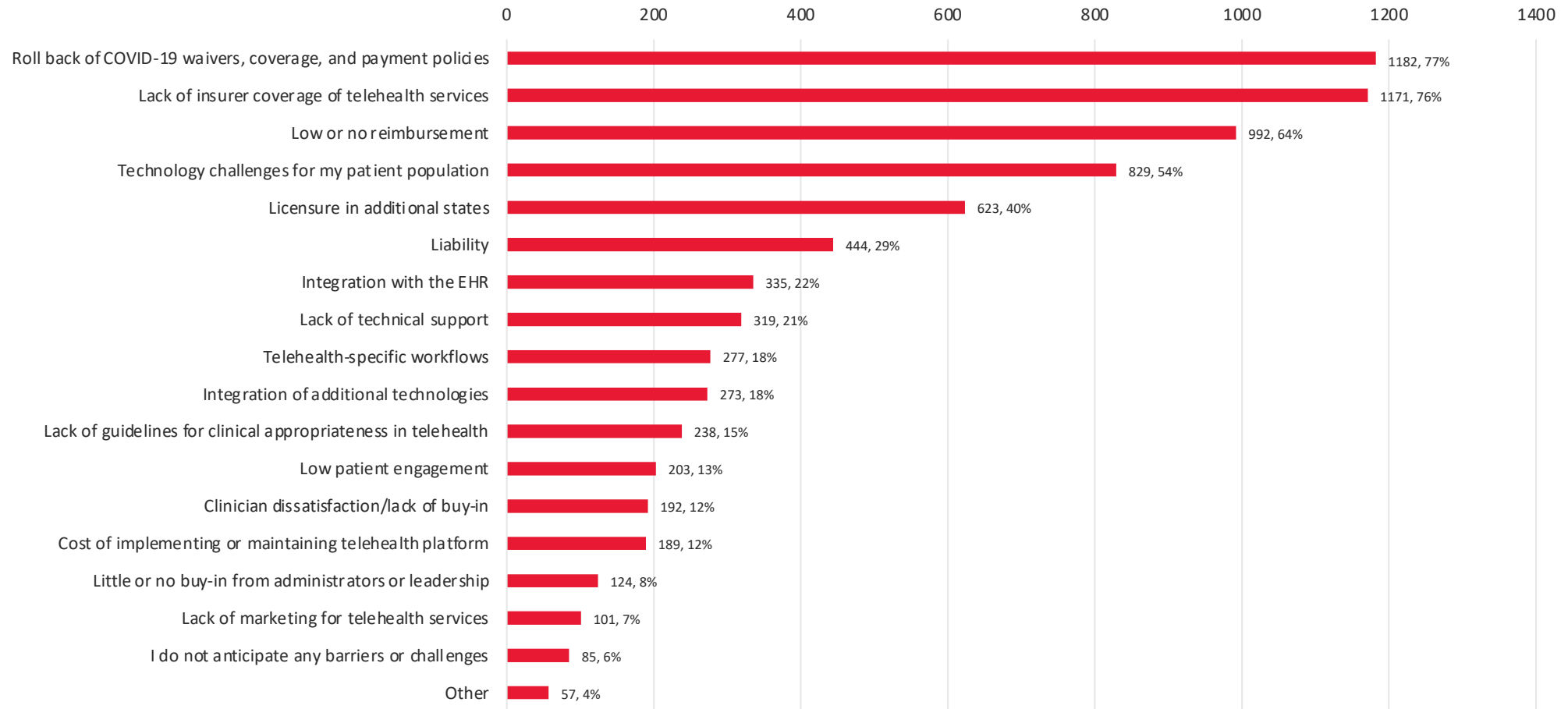
“Many of my patients are not that well versed in technology and telehealth is a real big challenge for them.”

“Advancing telehealth without providing patients with the appropriate technology or education to use it, leaves those patients behind and widens the gaps.”

Which of the following, if any, do you perceive as barriers to your patients using telehealth? (select all that apply) N=1,531

Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?

Barriers to offering telehealth include coverage, payment, and reimbursement uncertainty



Which of the following, if any, do you anticipate being ongoing barriers or challenges to your organization offering telehealth? (select all that apply) N=1,545

Physicians advocate strongly for audio-only and permanent payment coverage

"I worry about telephone visits no longer being covered! They are a large part of the care that we can provide to our patients, who have limited access to other digital technology, Wi-Fi, etc."

"Both audio-only and video visits must continue to be reimbursed and done so at the same level as office visits. I provide the same care either way, so reimbursement should be the same. If I feel I can't treat someone appropriately via Telehealth, I instruct them to come into the office."

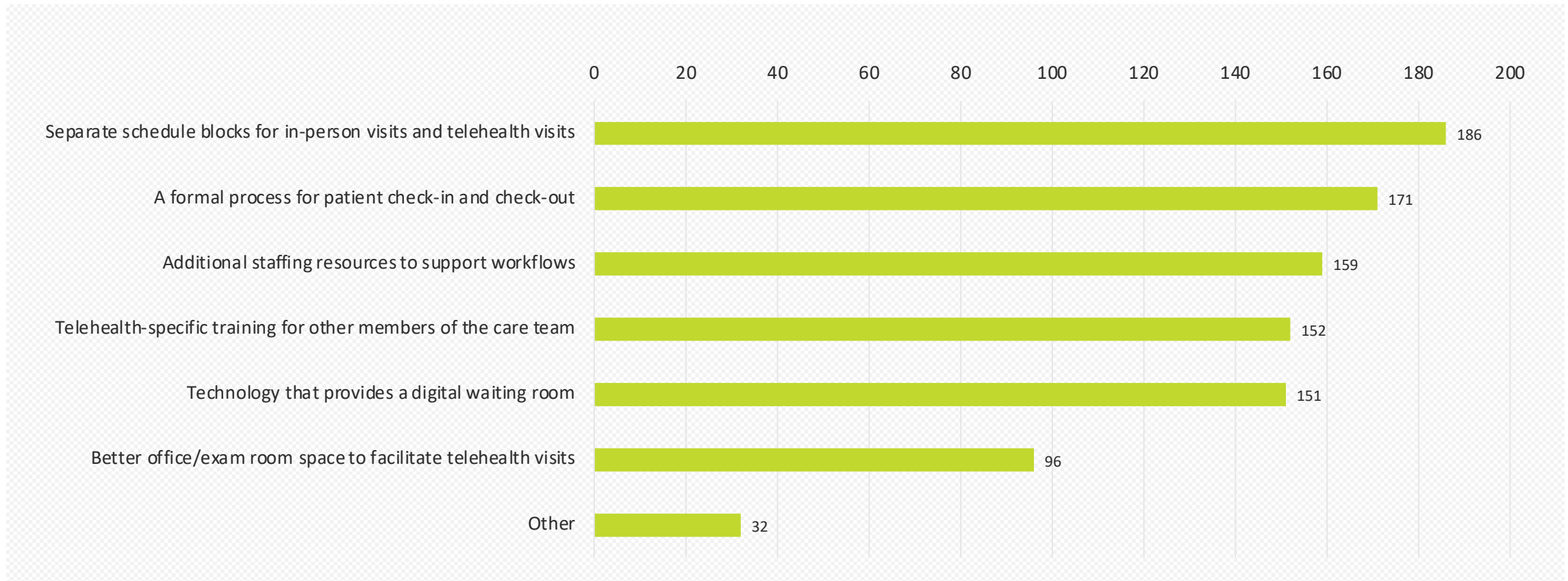
"It's incredibly important for audio-only/telephone calls to remain an option to minimize barriers for patients with low resources."



"Payment parity is critical for telephone-only encounters. Patients should not be penalized for access to care if they do not have the technology or cannot easily access care."

Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?

Physicians identify the following as opportunities to improve telehealth workflows in the practice




Which of the below would support improved telehealth-specific workflows? (select all that apply) N=276

In summary...



Key findings and implications

1. **Physician interest in continuing to use telehealth in the future remains strong.**
 - 85% of physician respondents indicate they are currently using telehealth to care for patients.
 - Nearly 70% of physician respondents report their organization is motivated to continue using telehealth in their practice.
 - Many physicians foresee providing telehealth services for chronic disease management and ongoing medical management, care coordination, mental/behavioral health, and specialty care.

 Providing support and guidance in these areas would help physicians prepare for success as they expand telehealth services.

2. **Lack of insurance coverage and little to no payer reimbursement persist as barriers to implementing and continuing telehealth services.**
 - Payers, both public and private, should continue to evaluate and improve policies, coverage, and reimbursement rates for services provided via telehealth.
 - The majority of physician respondents indicate they anticipate low or no reimbursement to be a primary barrier or challenge to their organization offering telehealth in the future.

 Physicians advocate strongly that telehealth via audio-only/telephone remains covered in the future to ensure equitable access.

3. **Less than half of respondents report being able to access their telehealth platform via their EHR and more than 75% report that their support technology does not automatically collect and deliver patient reported data.**

 Improving interoperability between platforms and support technology would help improve and streamline telehealth services.

Key findings and implications

4. 95% of physicians report patients are primarily located at their home at the time of the virtual visit.

🔑 Allowing patients to be in their home is a key component of making telehealth more accessible and convenient.

- This supports the Telehealth Modernization Act of 2021 and CONNECT for Health Act which would lift the rural-only restrictions and add home as an originating site.

5. Physicians perceive technology, digital literacy, and broadband internet access to be the top 3 patient barriers to using telehealth.

🔑 The AMA will advocate for equitable access for under-resourced patient populations and communities, including but not limited to, supporting increased funding and planning for telehealth infrastructure such as broadband and internet-connected devices

- This supports AMA policy D-480.963.

6. Our findings suggest physicians may learn from additional research on the impact of telehealth on:

- Equity
- Quality
- Costs
- Patient satisfaction
- Disparities in reimbursement
- Best practices
- Implementation science
- Clinical appropriateness

🔑 The AMA will continue to expand its research with partners to help broaden the field of knowledge in these areas and encourages other stakeholders to invest in research and development of best practices.



Physicians' powerful ally in patient care

Appendix



Physician sample

N = 2,232 Physicians (MD/DO)

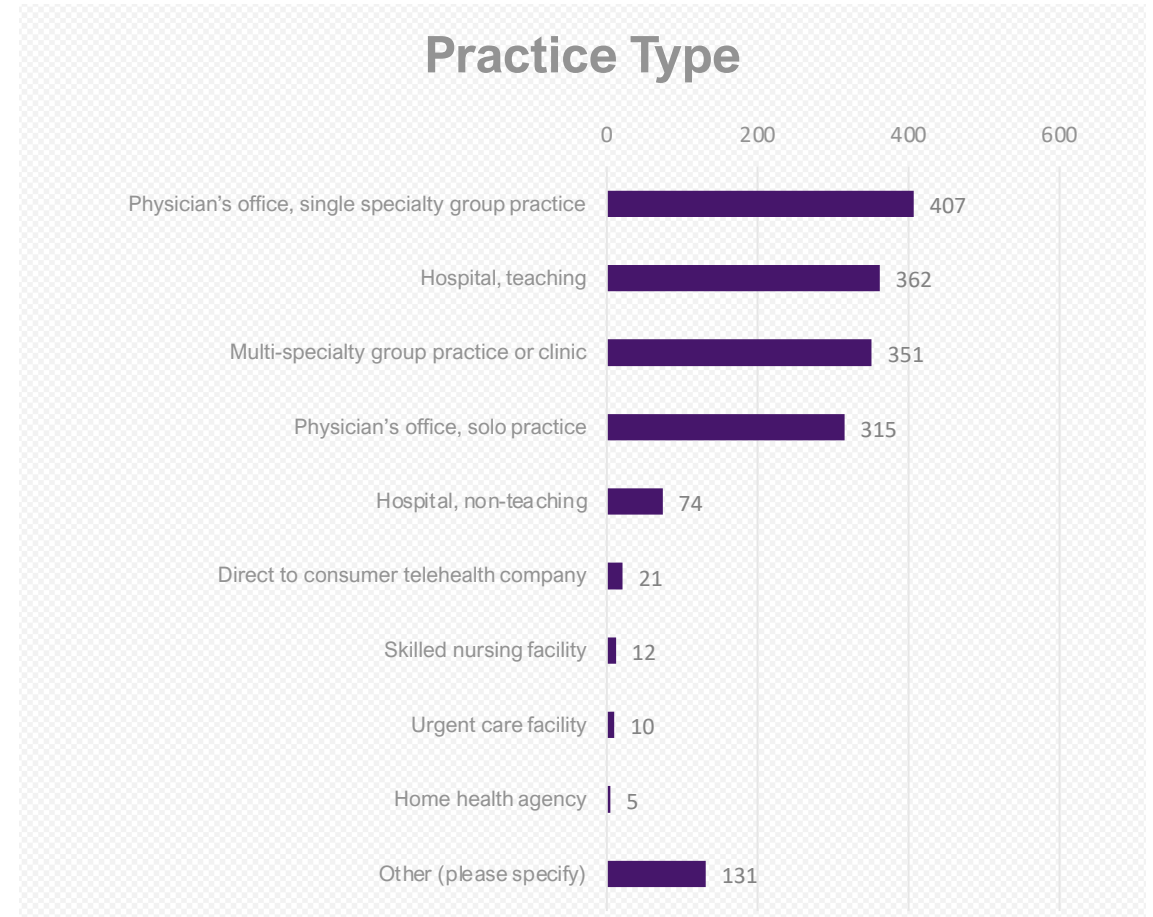
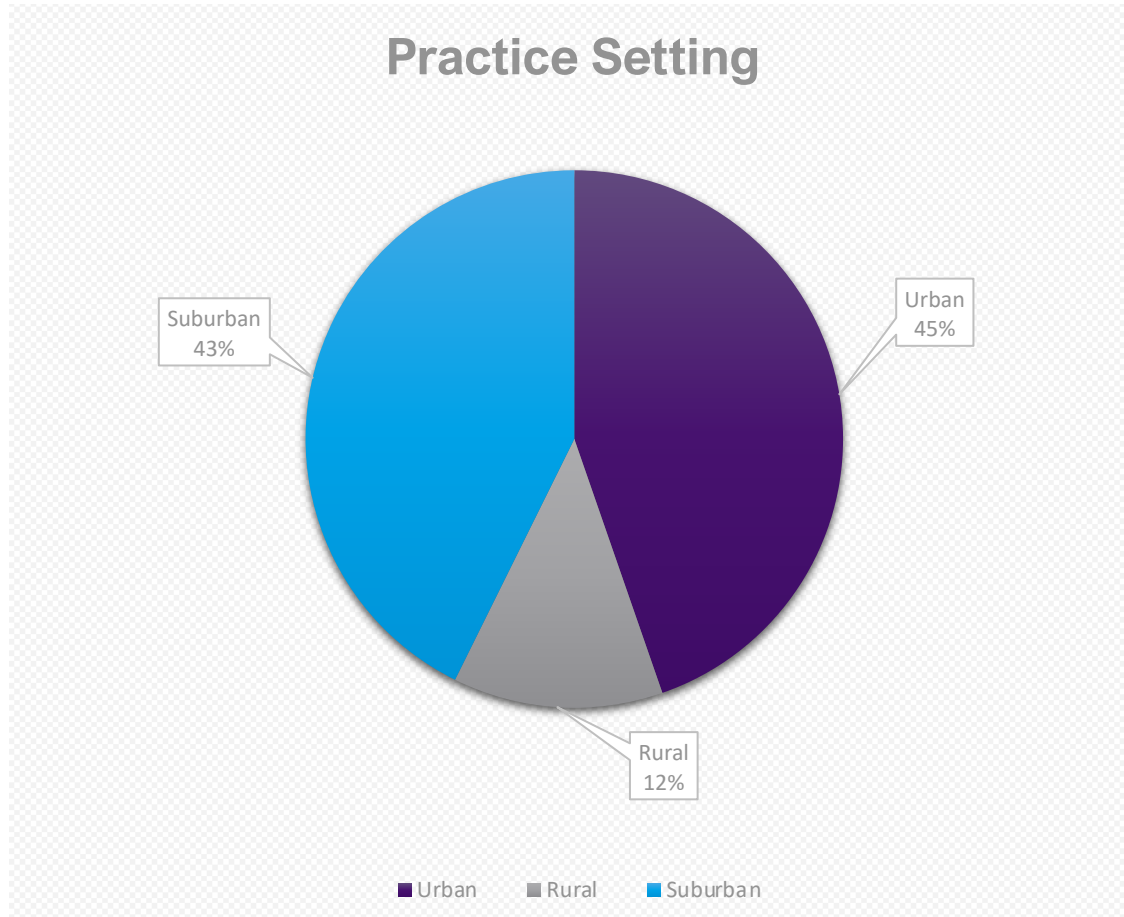
Specialty	N
Allergy / Immunology	136
Anesthesiology	35
Cardiology	48
Thoracic	3
Surgery Cardiovascular	4
Diseases Critical Care	10
Dentistry / Oral Surgery	1
Dermatology	46
Emergency Medicine	75
Endocrinology	35
Family Medicine	254
Gastroenterology	73
General Practice	20
Hematology / Oncology	23
Hospitalist	19
Infectious Disease	13
Internal Medicine, Primary Care	237
Mental/Behavioral Health	10
Nephrology	23
Neurological Surgery	13
Neurology	167
Obstetrics and Gynecology	70
Oncology	8

Specialty	N
Ophthalmology	26
Orthopedic Surgery	31
Otolaryngology	21
Palliative Care	7
Pathology	5
Pediatrics – Primary Care	111
Pediatrics – Hospitalist	4
Pediatrics – Procedural specialties	12
Pediatrics – Cognitive	17
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	199
Plastic Surgery	9
Psychiatry	280
Pulmonary Disease	21
Radiation Oncology	16
Radiology	21
Rheumatology	19
Surgery, General	20
Urological Surgery	11
Vascular Surgery	5
Other surgery-related specialty	15
Other non-surgery-related specialty	51
N/A	8
Total N =	2,232

Which of the following best describes you?

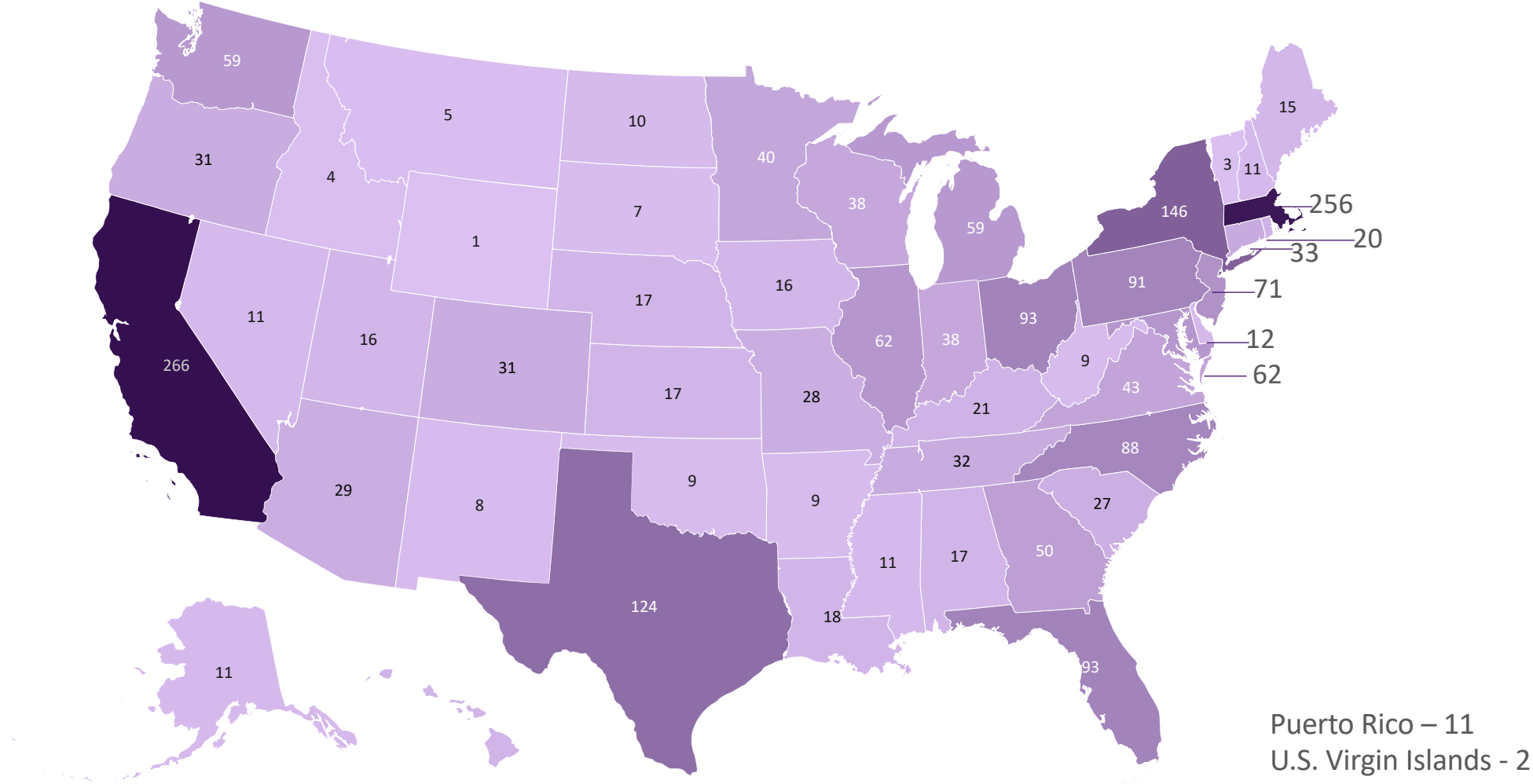
Please indicate which of the following best describes your specialty.

Practice Attributes



In what setting is your main/primary practice located? N=1,694
 Which of the following best describes your main practice? N=1,688

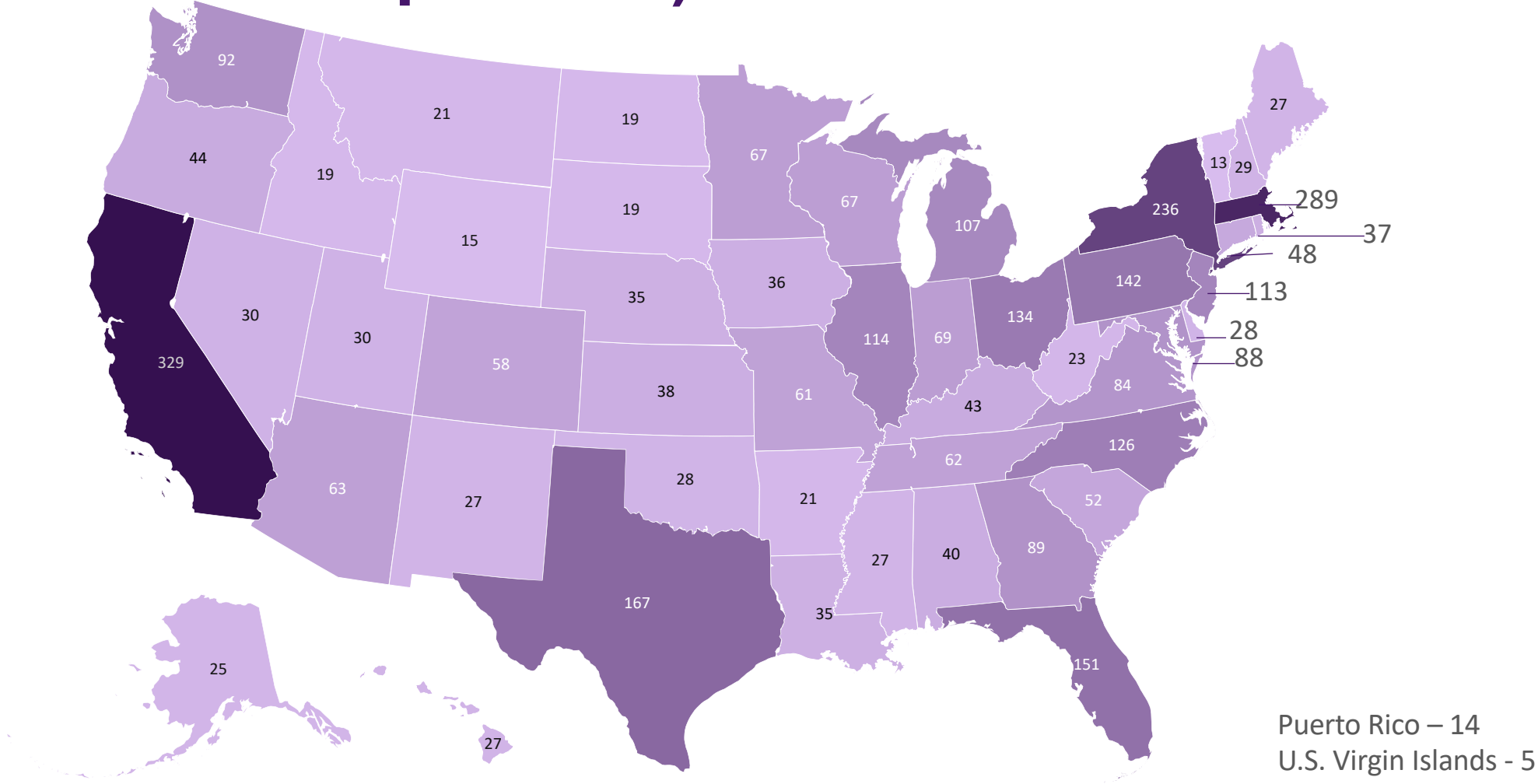
State (residence)



Please indicate the state in which you reside.

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State (licensed to practice)



Please indicate the state(s) in which you are licensed to practice medicine. N=2,298

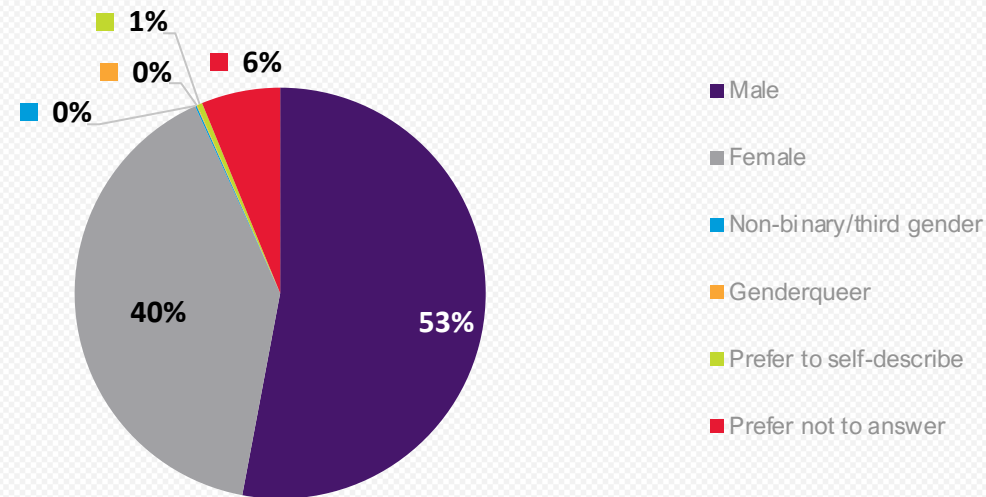
Respondent Demographics

Age

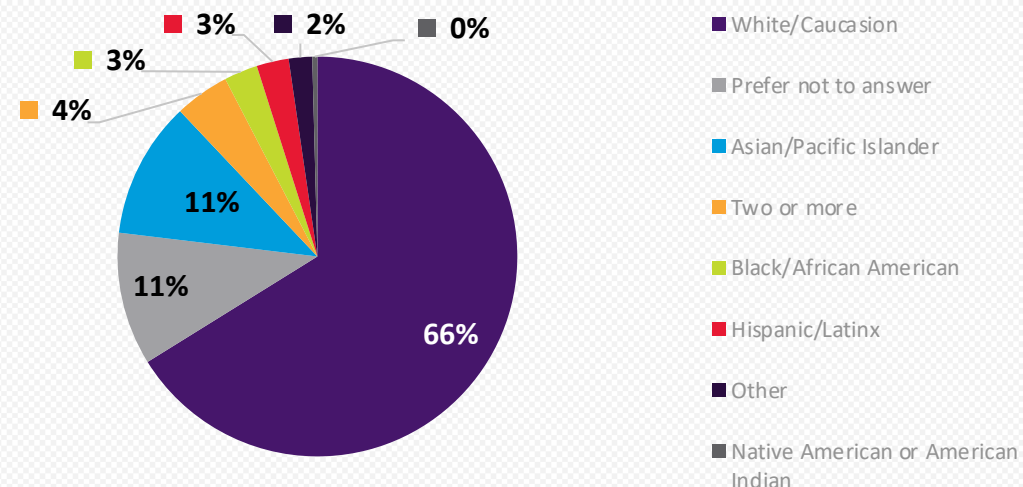
Age Group	N	%
18 to 30	7	0.4%
31 to 40	225	13%
41 to 50	322	19%
51 to 64	565	33%
65 or older	475	28%
Prefer not to answer	97	6%

Please indicate your age. N=1,691
 Please specify your gender. N=1,692
 Please indicate your race/ethnicity (select all that apply). N=1,693

Gender

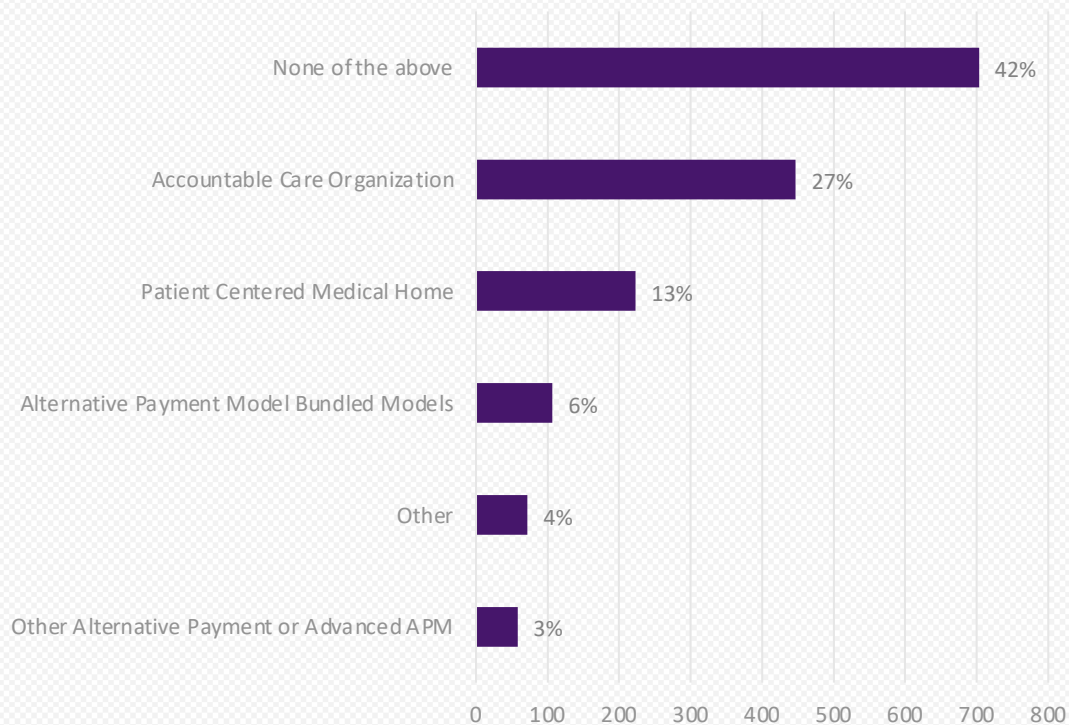


Race/Ethnicity

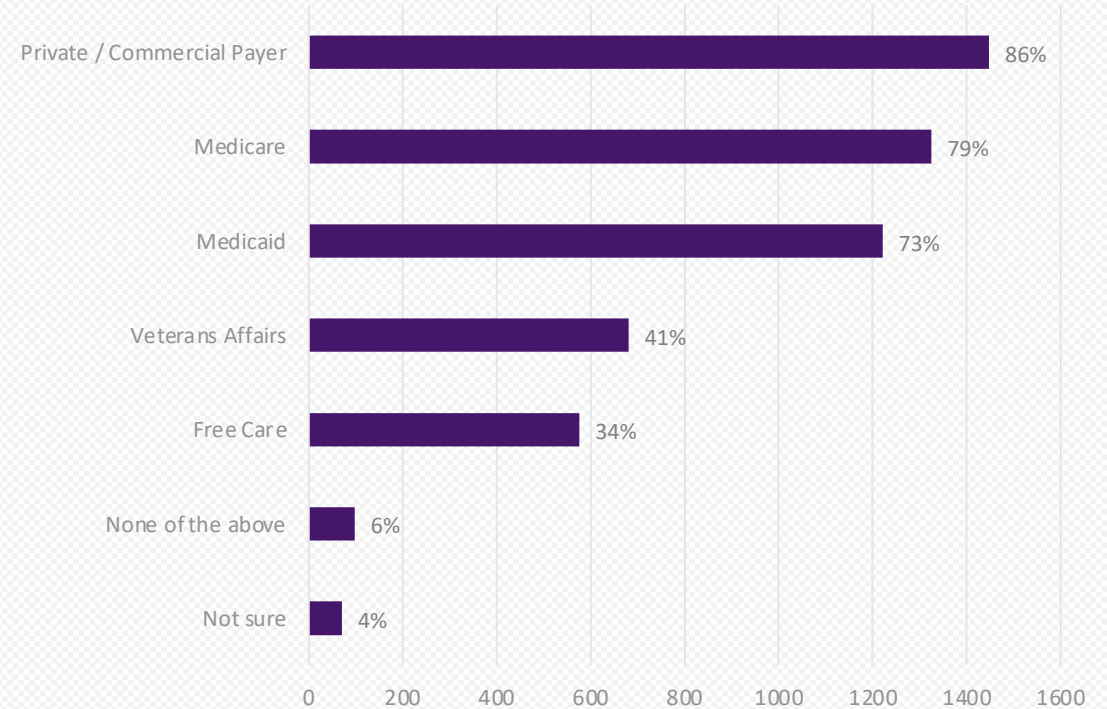


Practice Attributes

Payment Models



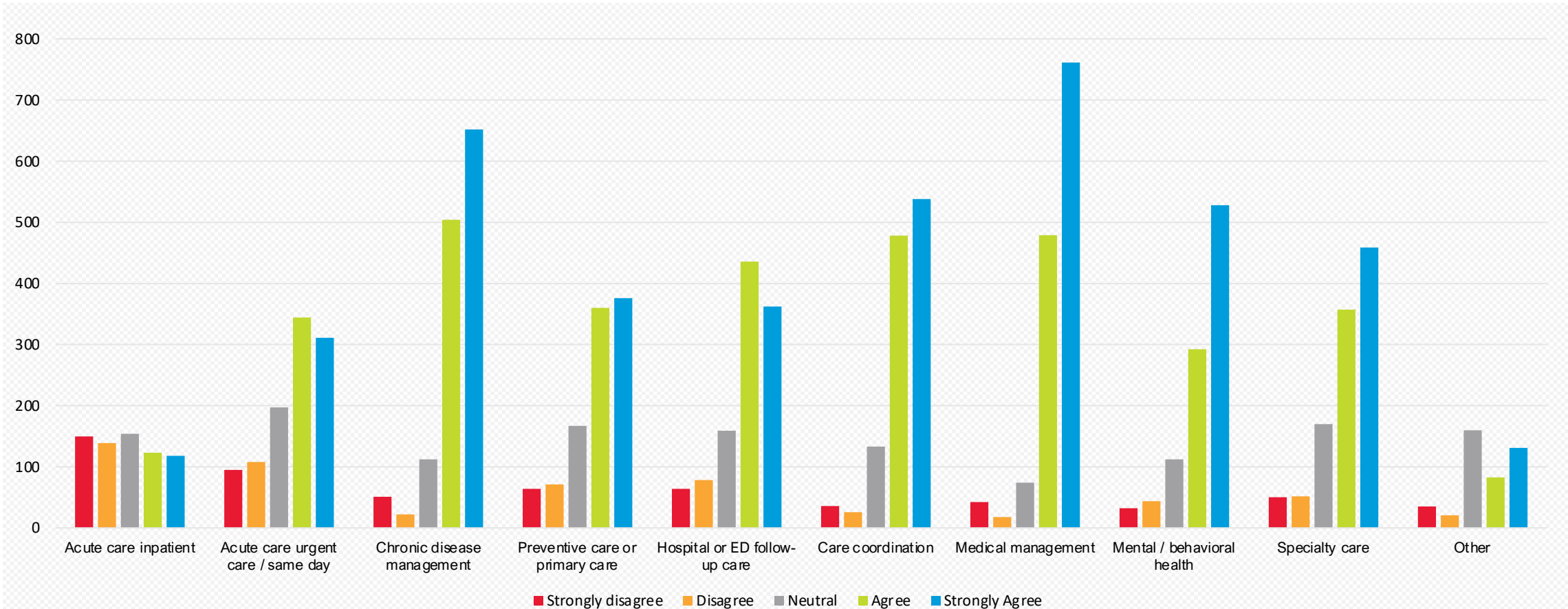
Payers Accepted



Please indicate if you participate in any value-based care models or payment arrangements. (select all that apply) N=1,685

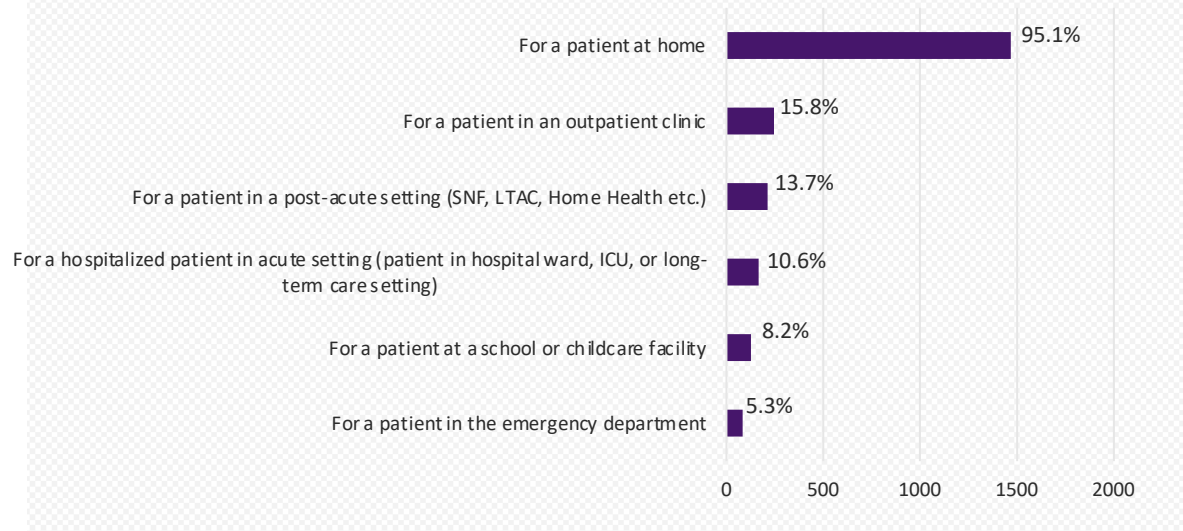
Which of the following payers do you accept in your practice? (select all that apply) N=1,679

Physicians feel telehealth enables them to provide *high-quality care* for many types of services



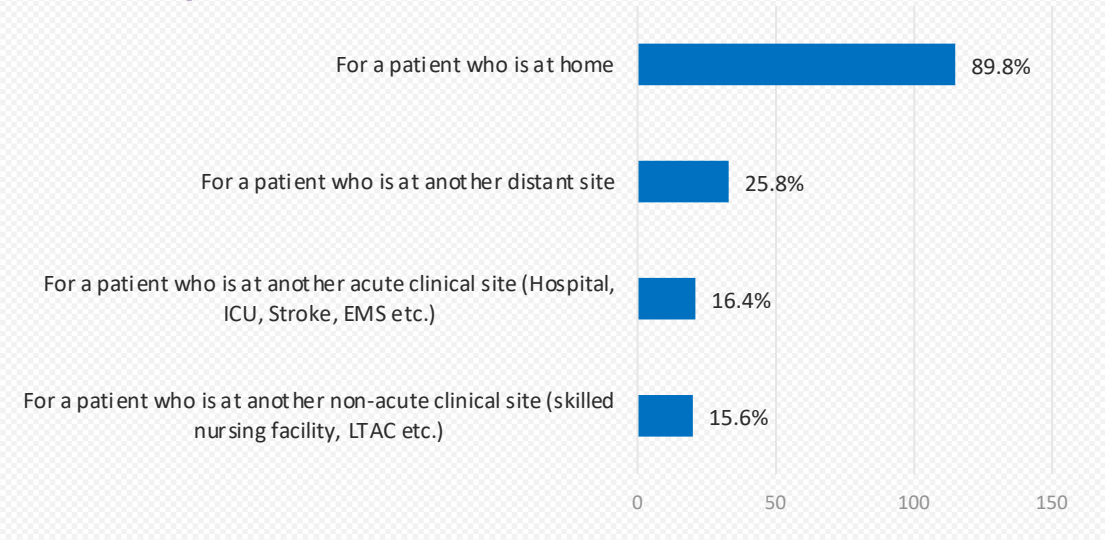
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Telehealth enables me to deliver high-quality care for... N=1,453

Live audio-visual technology is predominately used to see patients at home



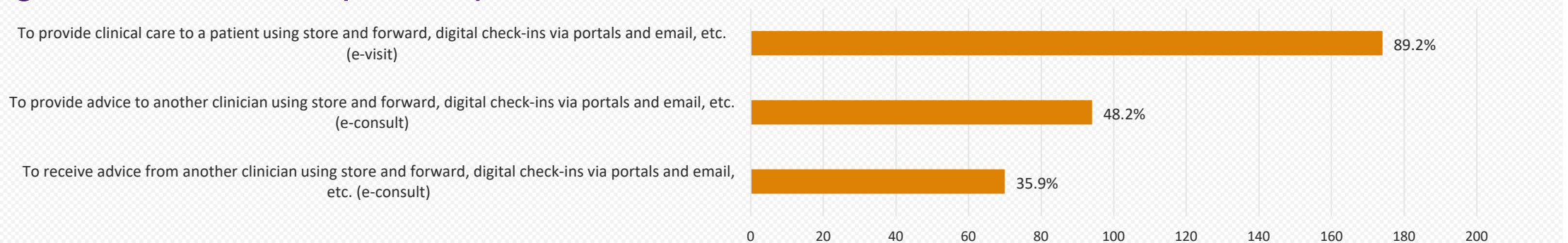
For whom do you use live audio-visual interactive telehealth? N=1,544

Remote patient monitoring is mostly used to see a patients at home



For whom do you use remote patient monitoring? N=128

Asynchronous telehealth is mostly used for patient e-visits using store and forward, digital check-ins via patient portals, emails, etc.



For what purpose do you use asynchronous telehealth? N=195

Physicians identify the digital divide as the biggest barrier to virtual care for patients and the practice

Some patients are challenged with limited broadband internet coverage, digital literacy, and/or access to technology devices that are all barriers to accessing telehealth.

“Reduce the digital divide that impairs many patients' access to telehealth services. Advocate for universal broadband access.”

“Many of my patients are not that well versed in technology and telehealth is a real big challenge for them.”

“Advancing telehealth without providing patients with the appropriate technology or education to use it, leaves those patients behind and widens the gaps.”

Setting up telehealth operations, technology, workflows, and training staff, requires an investment of time. Providing technology support to patients can be burdensome and costly.

“I'm hearing these great stories about the integration of telehealth into practices. However, invariably, the presentations eventually reveal a staff person spent considerable time (and often effort across multiple interactions) working with the patient in advance of the telehealth visit with the actual physician/NP/PA to ensure the patient/family would be better able to use the technology during the visit. Even then, patients still often have barriers and need to switch to audio-only.”

“For patients with low technology literacy, a tremendous amount of staff time and commitment is needed to assist patients in accessing the visits.”

Is there any additional insight or thoughts you would like to share regarding the impact of telehealth on you, your practice, or your organization?