

Survey finds 9.6 percent of medical visits took place via telehealth in 2021

June 4 2024, by Elana Gotkine



In 2021, 9.6 percent of medical visits took place via telehealth, with a higher percentage seen for mental health visits, according to a [research letter](#) published online June 4 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Sandra L. Decker, Ph.D., from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality in Rockville, Maryland, and colleagues describe telehealth use using the 2021 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey. Respondents were asked about health care received in-person or in real-time telehealth interactions.

The researchers found that 9.6 percent of the 232,024 visits took place via telehealth. The percentage of telehealth visits for [mental health](#) was higher than for other [clinicians](#); for example, 43.2 versus 4.5 percent of visits to psychiatrists versus other physicians occurred via telehealth. For all clinician categories, the percentage of telehealth visits decreased throughout most of 2021.

From January to December, the percentage of telehealth visits to nonphysician mental health clinicians decreased from 55.3 to 44.8 percent, while the decline for psychiatrists was similar for the year (18 percent), despite a small uptick at the end of the year. For nonpsychiatric physicians, the percentage decline in telehealth visits was 3.9 percentage points, and the decline for nonphysician, non-mental health clinicians was 2.1 percent.

"The percentage of telehealth visits declined 44 to 49 percent for non-mental health visits and 18 to 19 percent for mental health [visits](#), suggesting that use of telehealth after the PHE [COVID-19 Public Health Emergency] peak has returned closer to pre-PHE levels for non-mental health clinicians," the authors write.

More information: Sandra L. Decker et al, Use of Telehealth Among Medical Visits in the United States: Results From the 2021 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.7326/M24-0137](#)

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