



# COVID-19 PATIENT PRIMARY CARE SURVEY

SERIES 2 FIELDLED MAY 22-25, 2020



In the second weekly survey of over 1,100 patients in the US, use of primary care remains high. While 46% of the population visited primary care during the year 2019, over 50% of our sample report primary care visits in the last 8 weeks – the majority of these through digital health. Modes of contact continue to vary but appear evenly spread across video, phone, and in-person based visits. For 58% of those surveyed, ability to see their primary care team was sufficient to make them “feel better”, suggesting no further use of health care services would result. Patients sense their primary care practice is overburdened, and in an effort to be supportive, 25% of patients have stayed out of the office “so as not to be a bother.”

## Though in-person care is preferred, digital platforms provide valued access for many and comfort levels were high

- 71% were comfortable with phone-based visits during the pandemic
- 69% were comfortable with video visits, with slightly more sharing they had the technical skill required
- 14-16% continue to report obstacles related to broadband access, data plans, or lack of computer/tablets suggesting attention is required to potential inequities related to digital access
- A minority (14%) report avoiding care because they don't like digital health options

## Digital health is a current useful strategy to meet growing unaddressed, comprehensive primary health care needs

- 65% of those accessing care did so for acute needs, 47% for employment/school forms or requests for information, 34% had preventive care or chronic care visits
- 32% struggle with feeling isolated or lonely, 27% with anxiety or depression, and 10% with addiction

## Affordability was the largest obstacle to primary care access: 40% report “limiting their medical care” due to cost concerns

- In rank order, the highest financial concerns were: affording my co-pay (35%), limiting my care because I'm on a high deductible plan (33%), I have no cash left in my health savings account (24%), I have no insurance (23%)
- Only 51% were able to say cost was not a concern when considering a primary care visit
- 10% of those surveyed were insured through the marketplace; 12% were insured through Medicaid

## The value patients place on having a relationship with their doctor remained high (75%) and with the same number reporting they have a doctor they can trust

- 75% have a usual source of care that they had accessed within the last year
- 62% felt connected to their doctor, although 80% would value such a relationship
- 66% report they can ask their doctor about anything, including non-medical issues, suggesting patients continue to value the comprehensive whole person focus of primary care

**Methods** – This survey fielded by The Larry A. Green Center, in partnership with the Primary Care Collaborative and 3rd Conversation. The survey was offered through public posting on a survey website and open to people 18 or older until a minimum threshold of 1100 responses was reached. This is a convenience sample, voluntary and anonymous, with enrollment becoming limited as it filled to ensure diversity in respondent demographics. Fielded May 11, 2020.

**Sample** – 1114 respondents from a range of education levels (34% high school degree, 47% college degree, 15% graduate degree), income levels (40% less than \$50,000 household income, 9% greater than \$150,000 household income), and geographies (27% urban and 20% rural). 27% self-identify as minority. One third were 18-35 years old, one third were over 50. Level of health varied with 33% rating their health as very good and 31% saying good. 47% were male, 52% female; 44% were full time employed and 17% were part time employed. 21% lost employment during the pandemic.

## ***Open text comments from patients regarding...***

### ***... the good and bad of telehealth***

- I actually prefer telemedicine and I think it would be easier and quite frankly more convenient and comfortable when I have cold or minor cough Symptoms that might not require a visit to the doctor.
- I like the phone visit stuff, I would like to never have to go to the office again.
- I think it is a wonderful thing to have a virtual visit with your doctor it can be very comforting at this time
- Video teleded hard to connect in rural area even when you have broadband. Had to be sent a link. Could not connect through the app
- I was inspired by the high quality of image and sound

### ***... their mental health***

- I haven't been able to watch my great grandson for some time now. We are self quarantine because of my health concerns with underlying conditions. I normally watch him Tuesday thru Friday after school gets out. And all day during the summers. We miss each other. It is very important to me to be there for him. I've been caring for him for the last 4 years or so. He is six.
- Information about the virus is on the TV constantly, depending who you listen to you get different stories about the virus. It is very confusing and frustrating, it contributes to the anxiety while being isolated.
- How it affects senior citizens who rely on the companionship and friends made at their county funded senior center. Financial and physical hardship has hit many senior citizens who rely on a healthy meal that is served there Monday through Friday. Emotional stimulation through crafting, Games and parties are greatly missed by seniors. This seems to be a forgotten group of human beings. I know their faces, and it saddens me.
- I miss visiting my friends and family
- Mental health support should be available to everyone once pandemic is over
- Social distancing has been a scary thing, I trust myself, but other individuals do not follow the guidelines. For myself it can be a very scary thing, since I suffer from lung problems.
- I wish there was easier, more affordable and trustworthy access to mental health care during the pandemic
- Working from home and being teacher and mom is soooo hard
- I don't know what/who to trust about covid-19 anymore and that scares me more

### ***... their financial stress***

- It's very hard to go to doctors. I'm so scared of this virus. Plus I lost my job due to pandemic. Not a good time for lots of us right now.
- Still waiting on my stimulus check and serious issues with my living conditions. Feeling depressed and doomed lately.
- WE NEED HEALTH CARE FOR ALL! If the government can conjure up billions to bail out corporations, they should be able to provide healthcare.
- Healthcare is high and costly and assumingly it'll only increase due to the constant usage of said healthcare. It would be nice if there was a system in place to assist the primary of the working class with health services, especially during this time. I'm not as worried about myself at this point, I just need the money to make sure I can watch over my family.
- I am healthy but broke as hell so it's lack of nutrition

### ***... how they feel about their primary care doctor***

- I think health care workers are heroes
- My care has been available and much appreciated.
- My doc's office is observing all CDC, state and local guidelines and I feel comfortable going there.
- My doctor is extra caring during this time
- I feel they are taking good steps to provide safe care when I need it!
- He is sincere about my treatment
- My Doctor's office was very thorough in testing pre-visit and made me feel comfortable during the visit.