

One-year Impact of COVID-19: Surging Use of Virtual and Behavioral Health

When COVID-19 spread across the globe in 2020, it unleashed a devastating effect on people and businesses, and altered the course of health care. In one of the first nationwide aggregate COVID-19 claims studies, Cigna is exploring how extensive the first-year impact of the pandemic is shaping the future of health care.

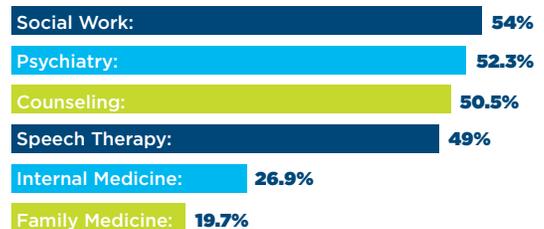
Impact on virtual health¹

Before the pandemic, virtual visits made up just over 1% of all medical and behavioral professional office visits that could be conducted virtually. Today, they make up nearly **25%**.

Primary care and behavioral services were the largest specialties utilized virtually in 2020:

- **Over 1/5** of primary care was performed virtually
- **Nearly 2/3** of behavioral care was performed virtually

Percentage of visits conducted virtually, by specialty:



Over half of Americans (58%) are comfortable with virtual consultations replacing in-person visits, especially if it²:

- Was more convenient (can remain at home/work): **47%**
- Decreased costs: **44%**
- Allowed for free virtual follow-ups: **37%**
- Allowed for long-distance care (if out of area/traveling): **35%**

Three-quarters see a future of health care at home³

76%

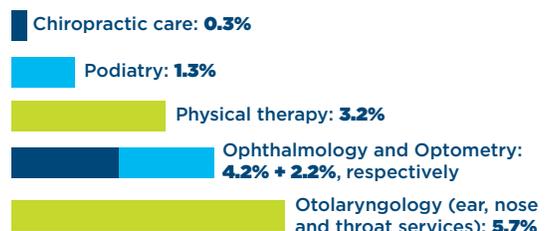
believed that more care will be delivered at home vs. in a typical health care setting in the future, with middle-aged adults among those most likely to agree (**81%** of those were aged 35-44)

HOWEVER: TELEHEALTH CANNOT REPLACE ALL IN-PERSON PROFESSIONAL OFFICE SERVICES¹

Pediatric care was largely still performed in-person.

- **Only 12.9%** of pediatric visits were conducted virtually

Specialties that had lowest rates of virtual adoption:



Impact on behavioral health⁴

There was a **27%** increase in behavioral health outpatient care compared to pre-pandemic levels. **63%** of all behavioral patients were female (vs. 48% pre-COVID), with females seeking care at higher rates than males across all age and ethnic groups. **45%** of those seeking behavioral care were under 30.

- **18%** under age 18 (18% more than pre-COVID)
- **27%** ages 18-29 (33% more than pre-COVID)

44% of human resources decision makers and 27% of health plan leaders stated increased access to mental health services will become a long-term solution for their organization.⁵

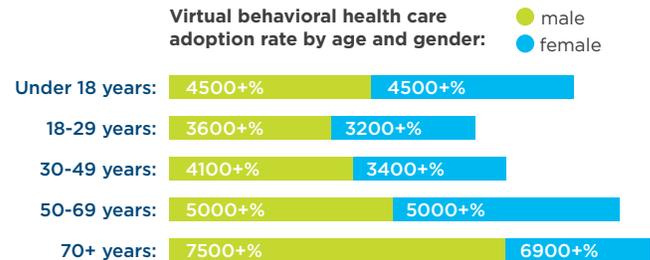
93% of Human Resources decision-makers voiced concern about employees' mental health

57% of health plan decision makers had seen the value of mental health services increase more than most other services/benefits as a result of COVID-19

THE RISE OF VIRTUAL CARE PUTS BEHAVIORAL CARE IN REACH OF MORE PEOPLE

With over **60%** of behavioral health customers now using virtual services, **97%** of the people that accessed behavioral health services during the initial stay-at-home orders (March to May 2020) **didn't have a behavioral telehealth claim prior to lockdown.**⁶

While more female adult patients utilized behavioral health care overall, **males over the age of 18 adopted virtual behavioral health care at higher rates.**⁷



Virtual behavioral health services are making a positive impact in the workplace.⁸ Almost half (49%) of behavioral telehealth users reported higher productivity at work. Behavioral telehealth users reported taking fewer sick days.

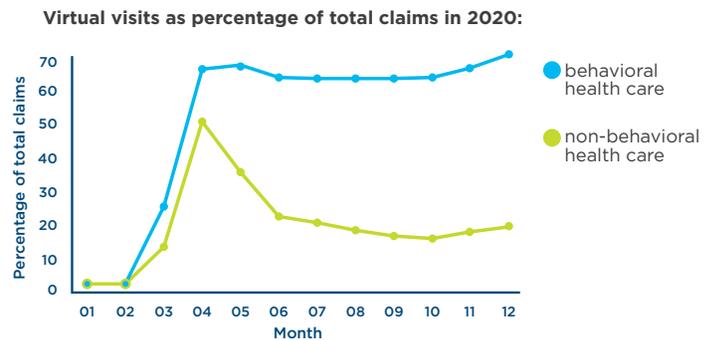
45% decrease in missed workdays of behavioral telehealth users

28% decrease in missed workdays of non-users

DID YOU KNOW?

The increased use of virtual behavioral health **remained constant through the end of 2020**, even while virtual care for other services decreased.

In April 2020, 66% of all office visit behavioral health claims were done virtually, and have remained around that level since.⁹



THERE WAS A SUSTAINED INCREASE IN USE OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS TO TREAT DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY¹⁰

7.9% increase in use of antidepressant medications in 2020 vs. 2019.

Nearly one-third (32.1%) of people taking antidepressants in 2020 had no history of use 6 months prior to their first prescription fill date.

Cigna continues to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic, and works with employers and commercial partners to help ensure employee health and safety, as well as maintain effective delivery of care to ease the immediate and long-term impacts of the disease. To find out more, please visit www.cigna.com/coronavirus.

1. Cigna Analytics, U.S. Commercial Medical claims, analysis of utilization January 2020 to January 2021.
 2. Evernorth Opinion Research survey.
 3. Evernorth, Health Care in Focus: Three Ways the market is Evolving. March 2021. <https://www.evernorth.com/health-care-in-focus>.
 4. Cigna Analysis, Behavioral claims data, analysis of utilization, March 2020 to November 2020.
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 6. Cigna Analytics, Telehealth evaluation pre and post-COVID: analysis of utilization 1/1/20 - 3/15/20 vs 3/16/20 - 6/30/20.
 7. Cigna Analysis, Behavioral claims data, analysis of utilization, March 2020 to November 2020.
 8. M/A/R/C® Research, COVID-19's Impact on Healthcare Attitudes and Practices, Wave 4, March 2021. https://www.cigna.com/static/www-cigna-com/docs/about-us/newsroom/innovation/covid-19-health-trends-marc-and-cigna-march-2021_.pdf.
 9. Cigna Analytics, U.S. Commercial Medical claims, analysis of utilization January 2020 to January 2021.
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