

Rural VIP No. 21: Virtual Health Care

The twenty-first survey for the members of the Rural Voice Information Panel (Rural VIP) was sent out on October 7, 2021 to 217 members.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Alberta Health changed the physician fee schedule to allow physicians to provide virtual health care to their patients. To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, many clinics began offering virtual health care when possible. Virtual health care may benefit rural residents beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, as they no longer have to travel for services.

For this month's survey, we asked participants about their experiences with, and opinions on, virtual health care.

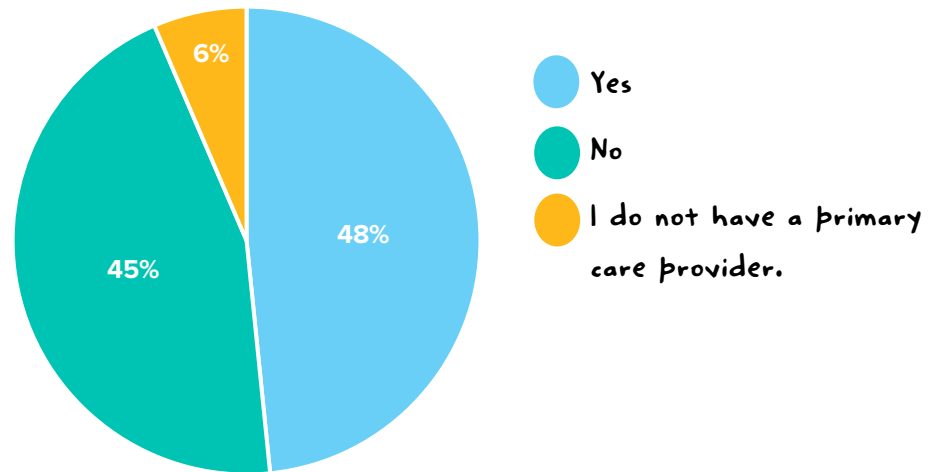
This document provides a summary of the responses.

Key Learnings

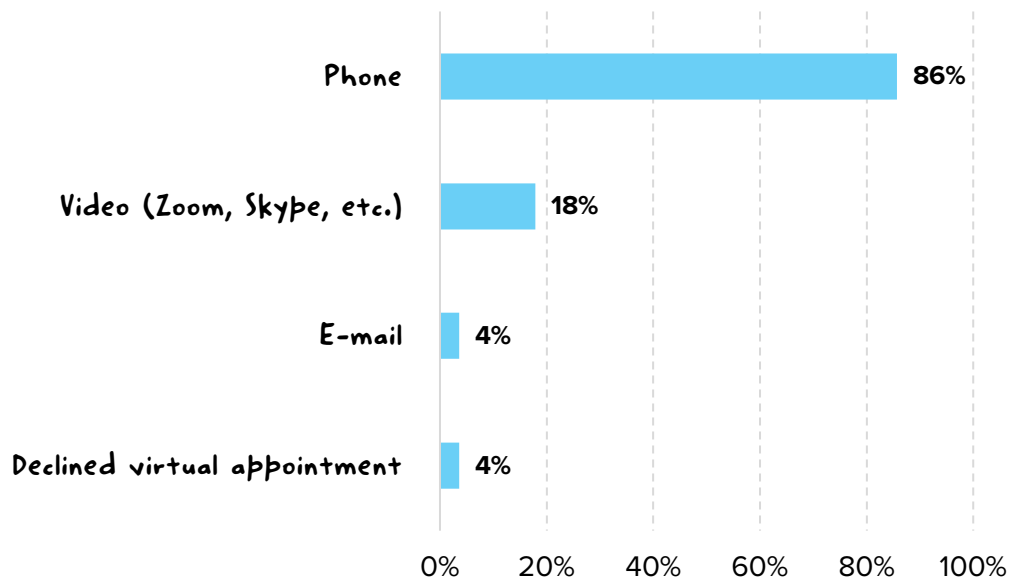


- **Q1:** Half of respondents have been offered a virtual health care appointment with their primary care provider since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
- **Q3:** If a virtual health care appointment was not an option provided by their primary care provider, one-fifth of respondents would have waited to see their provider until the pandemic situation improved.
- **Q7:** Most respondents (82 per cent) would like virtual health care appointments to remain an option beyond the COVID-10 pandemic.

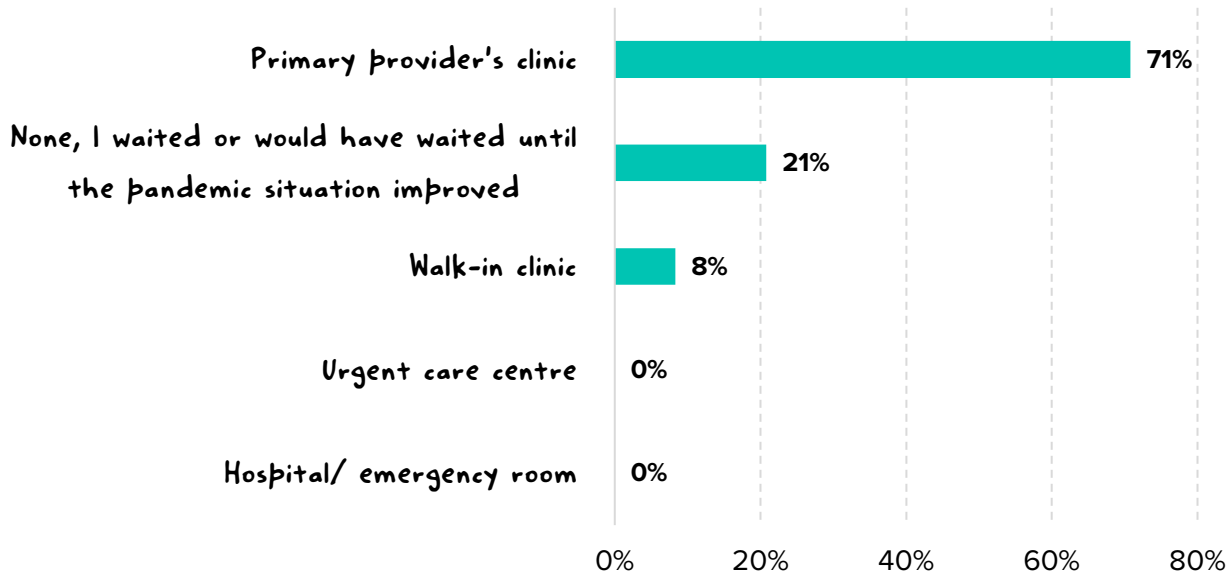
1. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, have you been offered a virtual appointment with your primary care provider (e.g., family doctor or nurse practitioner)?



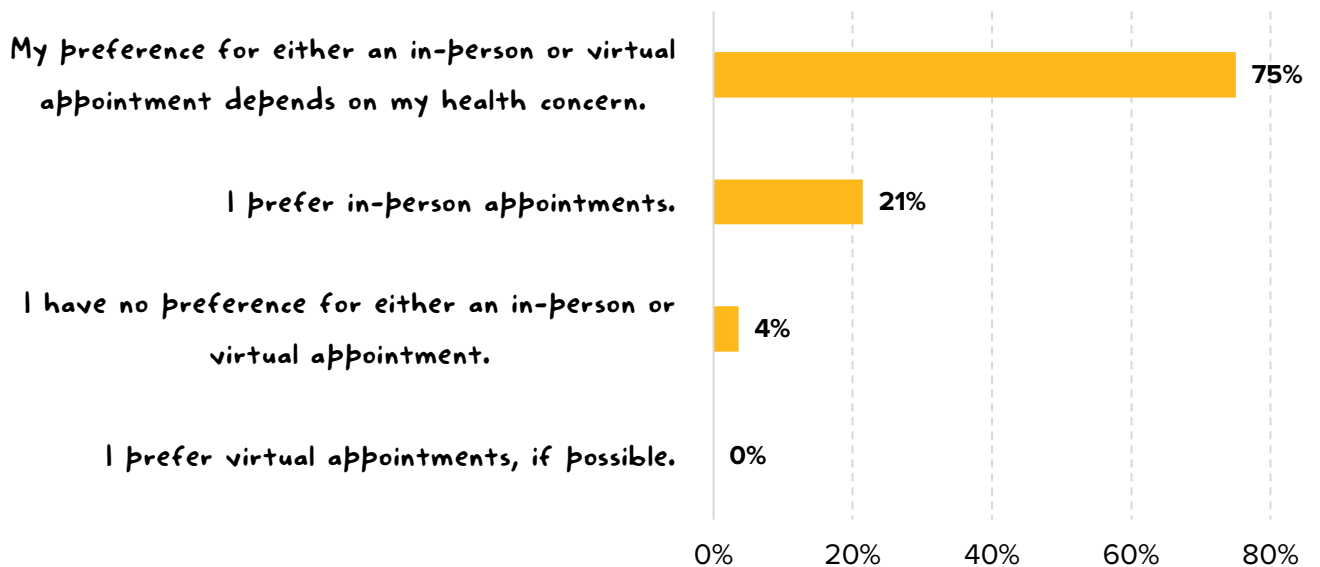
2. If you answered “Yes” to Question 1, in what format was your virtual appointment(s)? (Please select all that apply.)



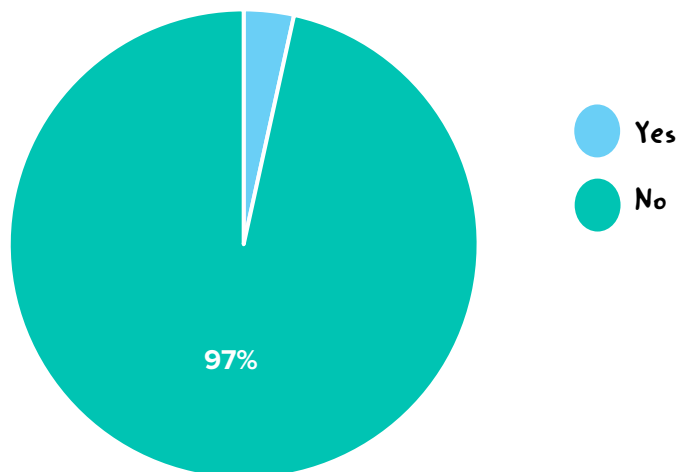
3. If you answered "Yes" to Question 1, where would or did you seek care if a virtual appointment was not an option (or was declined)?



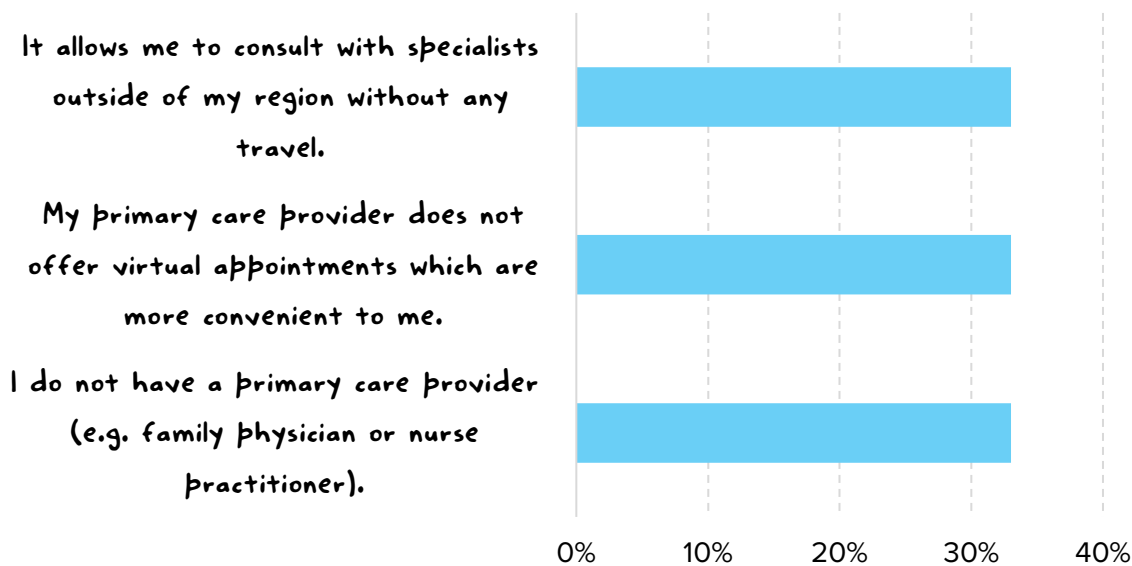
4. If you answered "Yes" to Question 1, do you prefer virtual appointments or in-person appointments?



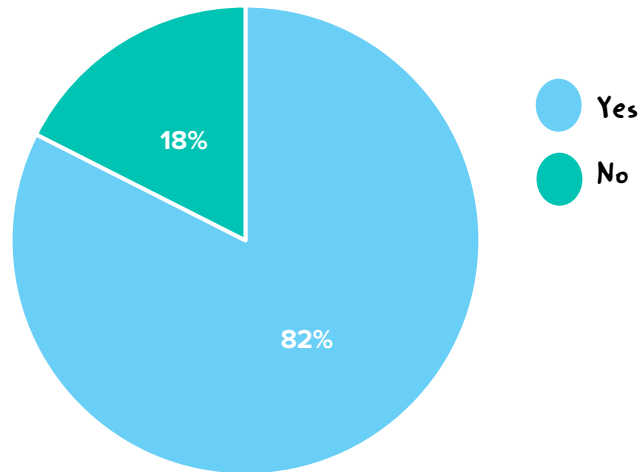
5. Have you ever had an appointment through a virtual third-party health platform (Maple, Babylon, etc.)?



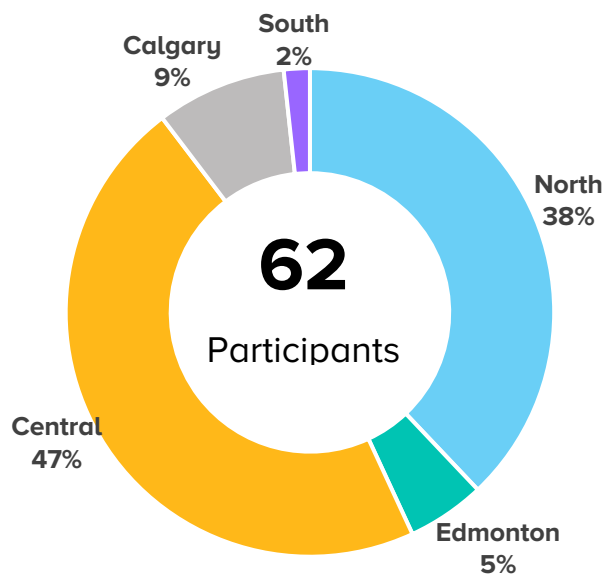
6. If you answered "Yes" to Question 5, why did you seek health services from a virtual third-party health platform?



7. Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, would you like virtual appointments to remain an option?



8. In which AHS (Alberta Health Services) zone do you live?



** Totals may not add due to rounding*

What will we do with this feedback?

Your responses and input will help us understand how rural residents feel about virtual health care, and whether there is potential to leverage virtual health care beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

RhPAP also shares learnings and feedback from the Rural VIP with health-care leaders, including Alberta Health, and the RhPAP Board of Directors, who represent the following organizations: Alberta Health Services, Alberta Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta.

To view the results of past Rural VIP surveys, click [here](#).

Questions about RhPAP's Rural Voice Information Panel?

Email us at ruralVIP@rhpap.ca