

Impact of digital healthcare on the patient experience

Research exploring patients' views on telehealth during COVID-19 and implications for future pharma digital strategies

October 2020

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[*Contact us](#) for deep dive insights on indication areas and countries

Impact of telehealth on patient experience and pharma strategies

The digital transformation in the healthcare industry was already underway pre-COVID-19, yet many pharmaceutical companies were struggling with the transition even before the pandemic.

Coronavirus triggered a massive change in behavior across the entire healthcare spectrum - putting **digital developments in a pressure cooker**.

Telehealth, during the first lockdown in particular, served as an **accelerator** to rethink and prioritize digital strategies without delay.

The most successful pharma marketing strategies today will be built on **knowing the effects of telehealth on patient care** including:

- What are **patients' needs and expectations** in a telehealth setting?
- Where can pharma **step in, to better support** as distant care becomes much more common in patient care?
- How can pharma **make a difference** for patients, HCPs, and other key stakeholders beyond 'just good products'?

Here we share our findings and implications for pharmaceutical companies.



| About the study

Sample



4 Indication areas:
*Oncology, chronic cardiac disease,
chronic lung disease, and diabetes*



United States, France, Germany, Italy, Spain,
United Kingdom and The Netherlands



n= 1541



Fielded: June 2020

See appendix for detailed information on research set up and sample

Exploring the patients' digital experience:

- How big was the shift from traditional to distant care?
- How do patients assess the quality of their care?
- How willing are patients to continue using distant care?
- What channels did patients use and which do they prefer?

Most patients had a positive experience of the transition to telehealth



Patients report a **positive experience** using (more) telehealth during COVID-19 lockdowns

Key drivers of telehealth satisfaction for patients



Feel distant care is **less time intensive**



Think they can **more quickly reach their physician** through telehealth



See a positive impact on their **budget** as a result of telehealth

However, half of patients are unwilling to continue using telehealth extensively



Patients would **NOT continue** using telehealth as extensively, if given the option in the future

Patients pinpoint concerns with continuing distant care



Feel telehealth is **less personal**



Doubt their HCP's ability to determine their physical health through telehealth



Feel their **mental health** needs gets more attention in face-to-face consultations



Feel they have **more say** in their treatment in **face-to-face consultations**



Have **privacy concerns** about telehealth

Questions to consider

How does telehealth affect the patient's voice and consultation outcomes?

For HCP decision making it is key that patients share the broad spectrum of their disease-related needs. Both patient's physical *and* emotional needs impact treatment choice and consultation outcomes.

Currently, it seems that telehealth negatively impacts the interaction during the consultation, and patients don't seem to feel empowered to share their emotional needs.

Ask yourself:

- What do my patients need in order to confidently share their disease and treatment needs with their HCPs to ensure quality outcome of HCP – Patient interaction?
- For what type of interactions is telehealth just simply not a good fit?

What information do I need to provide patients, so they feel in control of their disease?

During the first lockdown period, patients spent more time searching for health information online, versus before the global pandemic.

This behavioral shift creates an opportunity to educate patients through online sources, thereby helping them have a greater say in the treatment they receive.

Empowering patients to play an increased role in the decision-making process has become more urgent. *Why?*

The right treatment decision is more than ever based on a patient's ability to communicate their physical and mental health in a challenging non-face-to-face context.

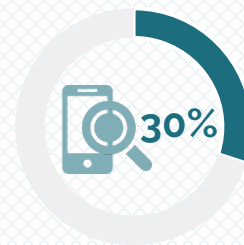
Ask yourself:

- What information do my patients need right now to feel at ease about their disease management
- Where do they wish to find this?

Patients spent more time & effort to stay informed about their health



Search for information more often on their health condition



Used **more online sources** for information on their physical health

Questions to consider

Questions to consider

How can you support healthcare providers striving to give the best possible virtual care?

Currently, half of all patients feel their HCP is unable to adequately assess their physical health through telehealth. Thus, HCPs need to be enabled to recognize and act upon patients' needs in a virtual consultation: they need to know what is required to set up a fulfilling digital consultation.

Ensuring that HCPs are well-equipped to provide a quality consultation, both in terms of content and in terms of format, is a key step in making virtual consultations a success.

Ask yourself:

- What kind of trainings, tools & information do my target HCPs need to feel empowered to provide quality care to patients?

Questions?

Contact us to deep dive into our insights, learn more about country and indication difference & discuss what this means for your patient population and future digital strategy!



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For more inspiration + more tips digital in pharma

Visit our **Decision Behavior Disruption** knowledge center for more content in this series, including **Accelerating digital pharma marketing strategies now**

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Appendix

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- Experience with care at a distance 19
- Overview of experiences across markets* 30
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Methodology & sample



Survey flow

Included topics



Screening

Establishing patient type
Establishing shift to Telehealth



Impact of COVID-19 on consultation

Size of shift to Telehealth
Used & preferred methods of Telehealth communication



Telehealth experience

Overall experience transition to Telehealth
Perceptions of quality of care in Telehealth vs traditional care*
Advantages & disadvantages of Telehealth vs traditional care



Information seeking & future expectations

Changes in information seeking behaviour
Expectations around Telehealth in the future

Sample Overview

TOTAL SAMPLE: N=1541



N = 280

Chronic lung condition: **60**
Chronic heart condition: **60**
Diabetes: **60**
Cancer: **100**



N = 154

Chronic lung condition: **55**
Chronic heart condition: **28**
Diabetes: **60**
Cancer: **11**



N = 189

Chronic lung condition: **59**
Chronic heart condition: **36**
Diabetes: **60**
Cancer: **34**



N = 192

Chronic lung condition: **60**
Chronic heart condition: **37**
Diabetes: **59**
Cancer: **34**



N = 279

Chronic lung condition: **59**
Chronic heart condition: **60**
Diabetes: **60**
Cancer: **100**



N = 205

Chronic lung condition: **55**
Chronic heart condition: **56**
Diabetes: **60**
Cancer: **34**



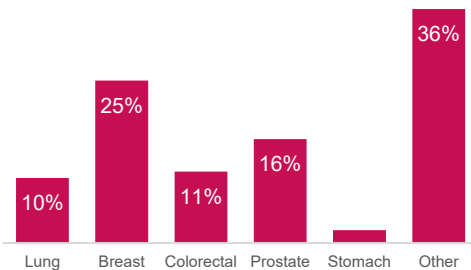
N = 242

Chronic lung condition: **60**
Chronic heart condition: **37**
Diabetes: **59**
Cancer: **36**

Sample Overview

TOTAL SAMPLE: N=1541

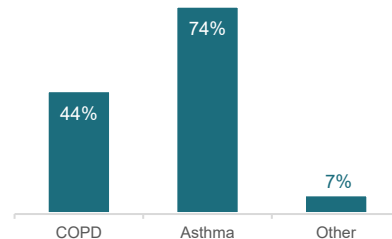
Cancer



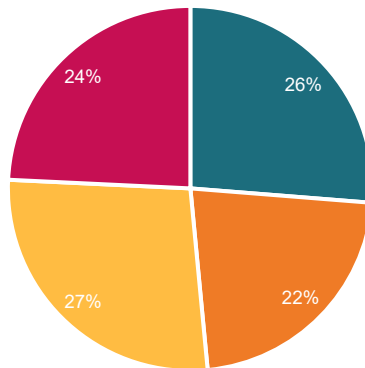
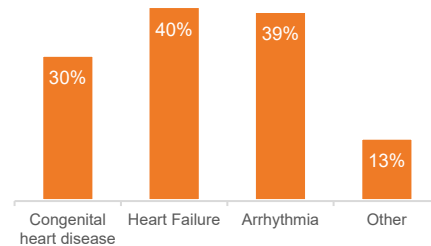
Diabetes



Chronic Lung Condition



Chronic Heart Condition



How common was
Telehealth during
COVID-19?

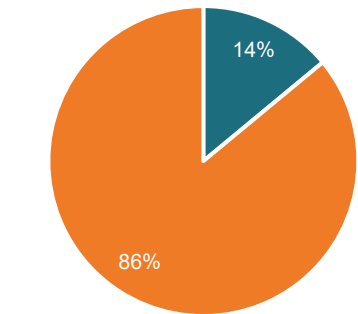


SKIM

14% of all screened patients experienced more Telehealth since COVID-19

For 19% of patients care was postponed, while for 60% nothing changed in how they received their care

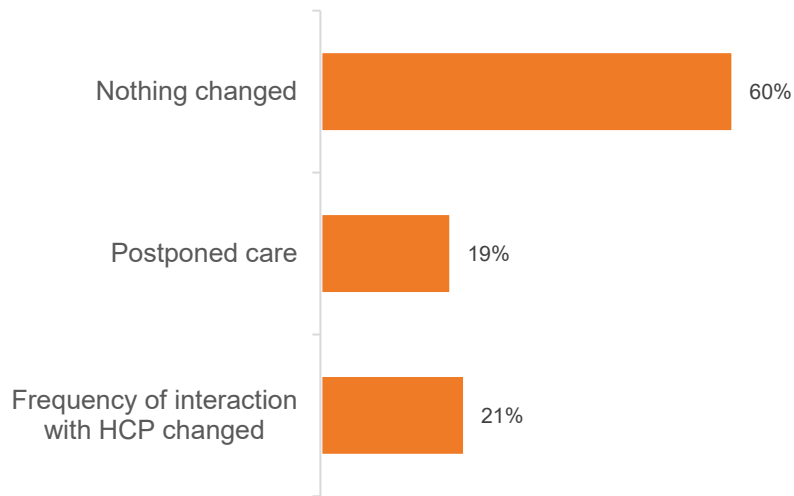
% of patients with a health condition at higher risk of COVID-19



- Experienced more Telehealth
- Did not experience more Telehealth

N= 8717*

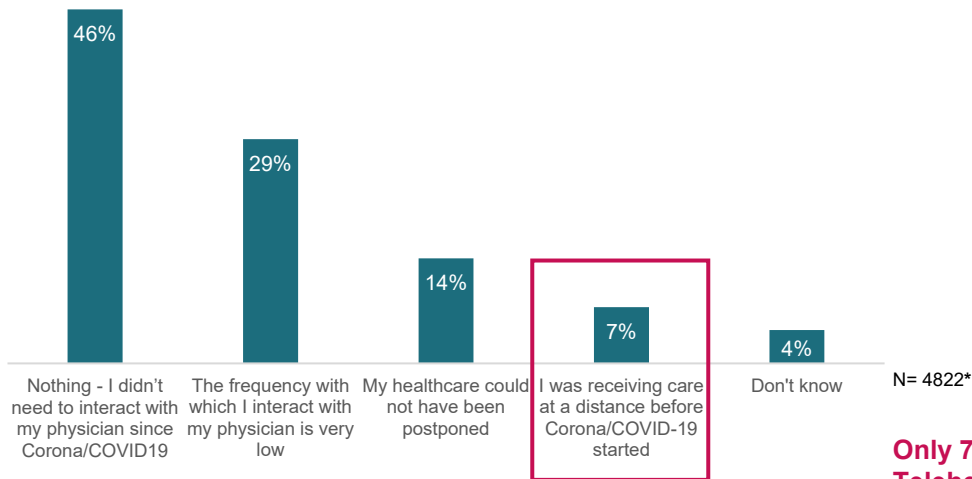
Impact of COVID-19 on patients' healthcare for those who did not experience more Telehealth



N= 7176*

For the 60% of patients whose care didn't change, this was because their health status did not require them to interact with the HCP during this time.

Reasons why patients did not experience a change in their healthcare during COVID-19



Only 7% of patients were Telehealth before COVID-19 started

Cancer patients **saw different changes** than patients with other health conditions:

35%

of cancer patients didn't need to interact with their physician.

24%

of cancer patients didn't experience a change because their health care could not be postponed

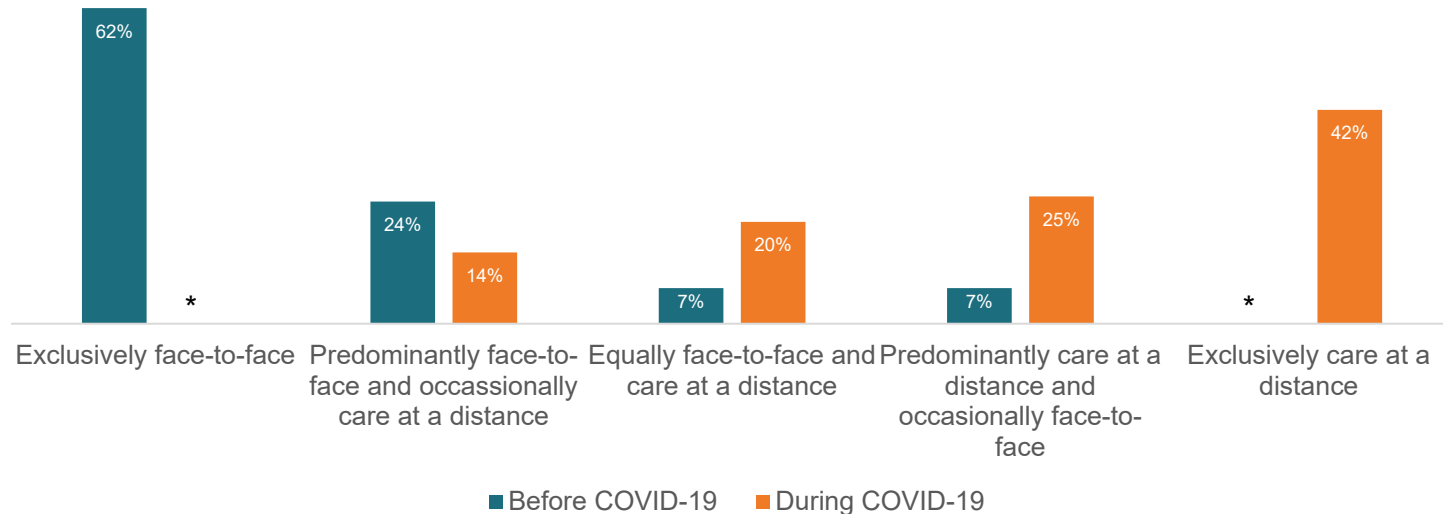
N= 1225*

Experience with
care at a distance



For those patients whose type of interaction changed during COVID-19, the shift was quite large

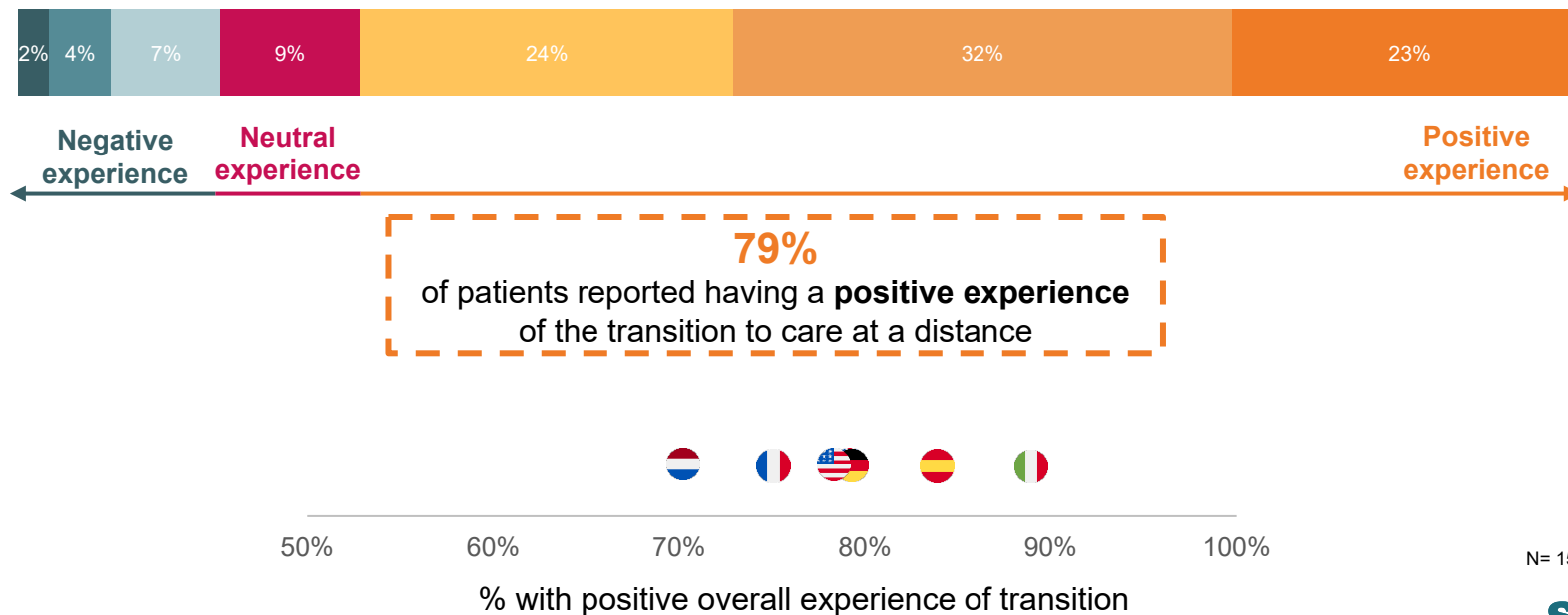
Over 60% received solely face-to-face care before COVID-19, while during COVID-19, 40% received Telehealth exclusively



On average, patients saw their care shift towards distant care by 2.3 points on a 4-point scale

An overwhelming majority of patients had a positive experience of the transition to Telehealth

Especially Italy & Spain are content with Telehealth, overall experience in Netherlands is least positive



N= 1541



Contributing to this positive experience is the time saved through Telehealth and accessibility of their healthcare provider

To the minority who sees a noticeable impact on their budget, this often outweighs the benefits of face-to-face care

76%

Think face-to-face appointments take **more time than care at a distance** because of travel and waiting times.



Out of which 68% say spending less time travelling and waiting for their appointment is important for them.

60%

Can **reach their physician more quickly** through care at a distance than face-to-face care.



Out of which 85% appreciate that they can reach their physician more quickly than before.

39%

Thinks the money they save when receiving care at a distance has a **noticeable impact on their budget**.



Out of which 72% believe the money they save receiving care at a distance **outweighs the benefits of face-to-face care**.

N= 1541



SKIM

Moreover, patients feel confident that their physical health is being treated equally well as it would have been face-to-face



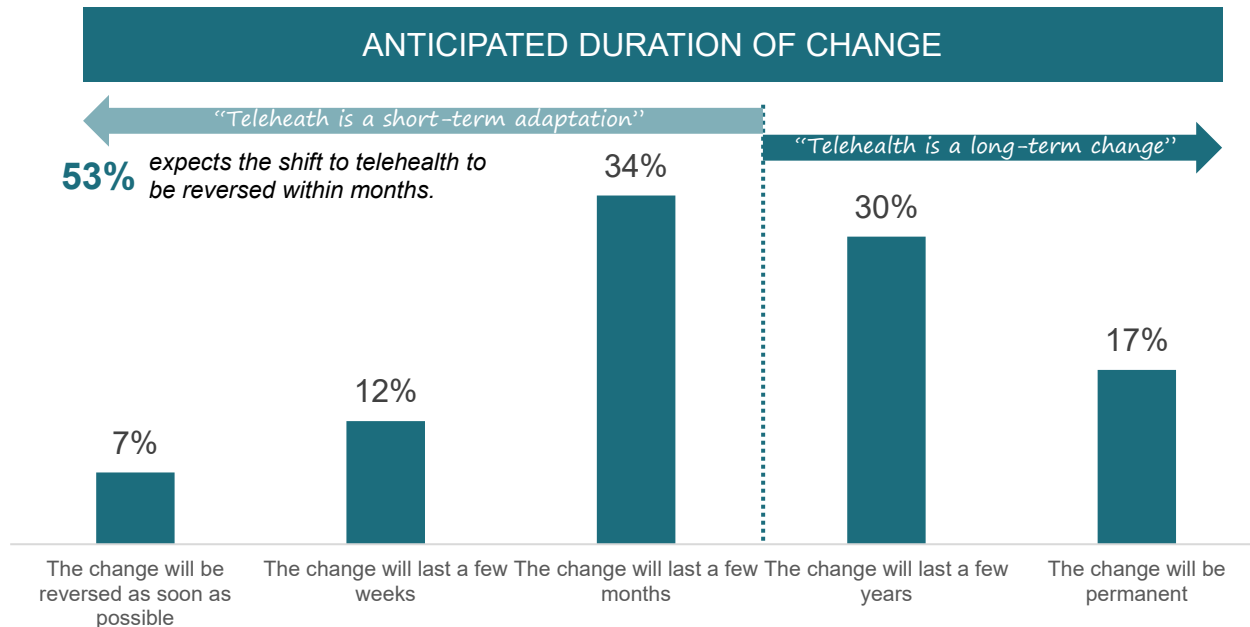
72% Don't think their physician would choose a different treatment if their care was face-to-face.

61% Think care at a distance **prevents their physical health from getting worse.**

Patients surely understand the necessity of receiving more distant care in times of a pandemic.

However, the positive evaluation of Telehealth must be considered in the context of patients not expecting this to be a lasting change

Only 17% of patients expect Telehealth to stay: over 50% expects to revert soon

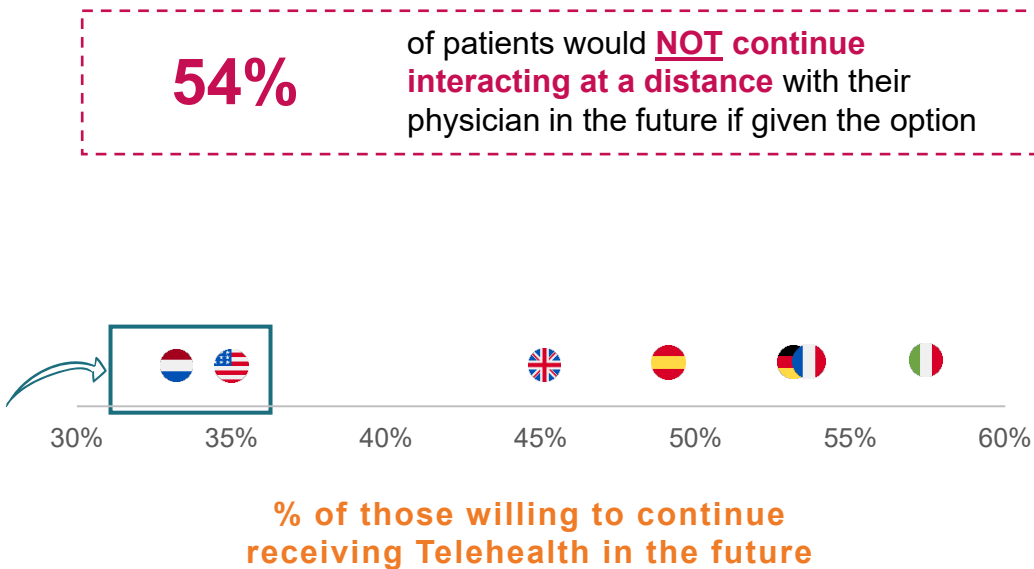


N= 1541



SKIM

This is underlined by the fact that if they had the choice, most patients **would not continue with Telehealth** in the future
Especially Dutch & American patients are unwilling to continue using Telehealth



A key pain point for patients is the feeling that Telehealth does not allow their physician to address their mental health adequately



HCPs addressing patients' **mental health needs** in care at a distance just as well as through face to face interactions is the **most important** driver in their overall experience of the transition

32%

Feel care at a distance does not allow their physician to **address their mental health needs** just as well as through face to face interactions.

36%

Believe they don't have a bigger say in **their treatment** when receiving care at a distance

N= 1541



SKIM

Moreover, 75% of patients feel Telehealth is less personal and 53% feels their physical health cannot be determined virtually

Additionally, for a quarter of patients, privacy concerns lead to a preference for face-to-face care over Telehealth

Telehealth...

... is less personal

75%

Feel face-to-face interactions with their physician are **more personal**.

Out of which **85%** enjoy face-to-face interactions with their HCP more because they are more personal.



... has inferior examinations

53%

Believe their **physician cannot determine their physical health** without seeing them face-to-face.



... is less privacy friendly

38%

Have **privacy concerns** regarding care at a distance.

Out of which **69%** would **prefer not to receive** care at a distance in order to **protect their privacy**.

Patients show more information seeking behavior, a potential indicator of dissatisfaction with information and care received



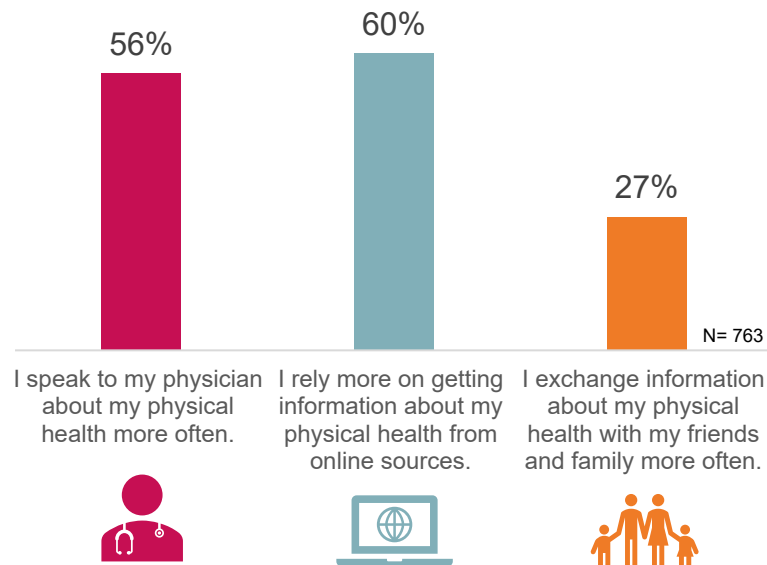
50%

Find themselves **looking for information** around their health condition **more often**

N= 1541

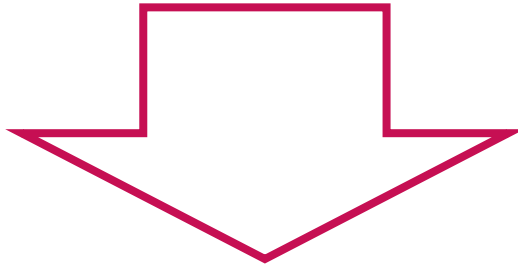


How has your information seeking behavior changed?



Patients might be going through a honeymoon phase since their positive experience is driven by its advantages

With time its disadvantages and the discrepancies between what they receive and what they want may become more pronounced



Currently, advantages outweigh drawbacks...

- Telehealth helps save time;
- Allows patients to reach their HCPs faster
- Has a positive impact on patient's budget
- Helps patients stay healthy in times of pandemic



... in the long run, disadvantages may trump benefits

- Less personal interaction with HCP
- Dissatisfaction with HCP's ability to care for mental health
- Doubts on HCP's ability to assess physical health
- Smaller say in treatment



Patient experiences across markets

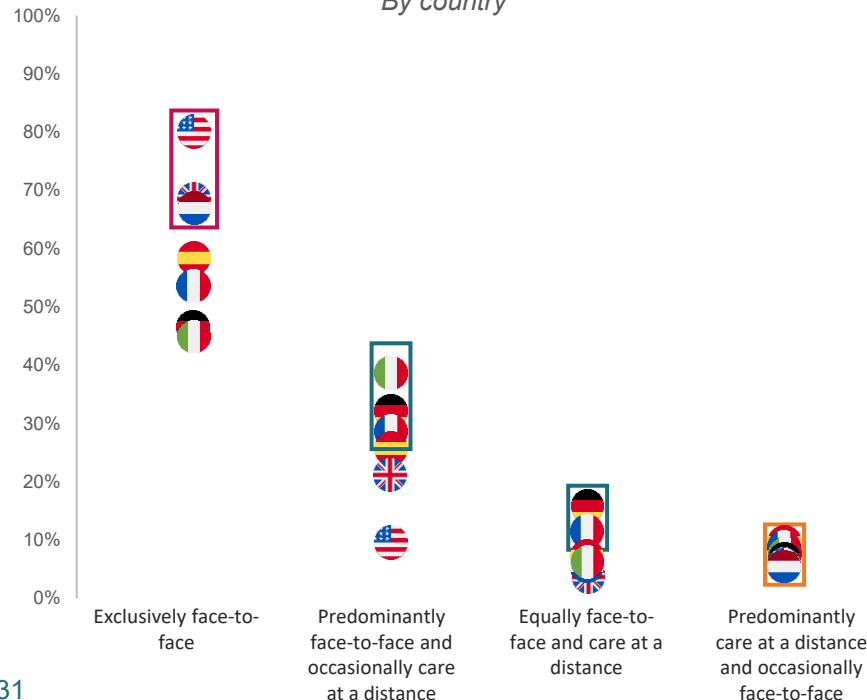


In some countries, like Germany & Italy, patients show more familiarity with Telehealth pre-COVID

In US, NL & UK, patients were used to face-to-face interaction only

Patient – HCP interaction prior to COVID-19

By country



Face-to-face most common

Across all markets, few patients connected more with their HCP via Telehealth than in person pre-COVID-19: The overwhelming majority saw their HCP face-to-face at least half of the time.



Low familiarity with Telehealth in NL, US & UK

In the US, UK & The Netherlands, the overwhelming majority of patients had never received Telehealth prior to COVID-19.



Relative familiarity with Telehealth in FR, IT, & DE

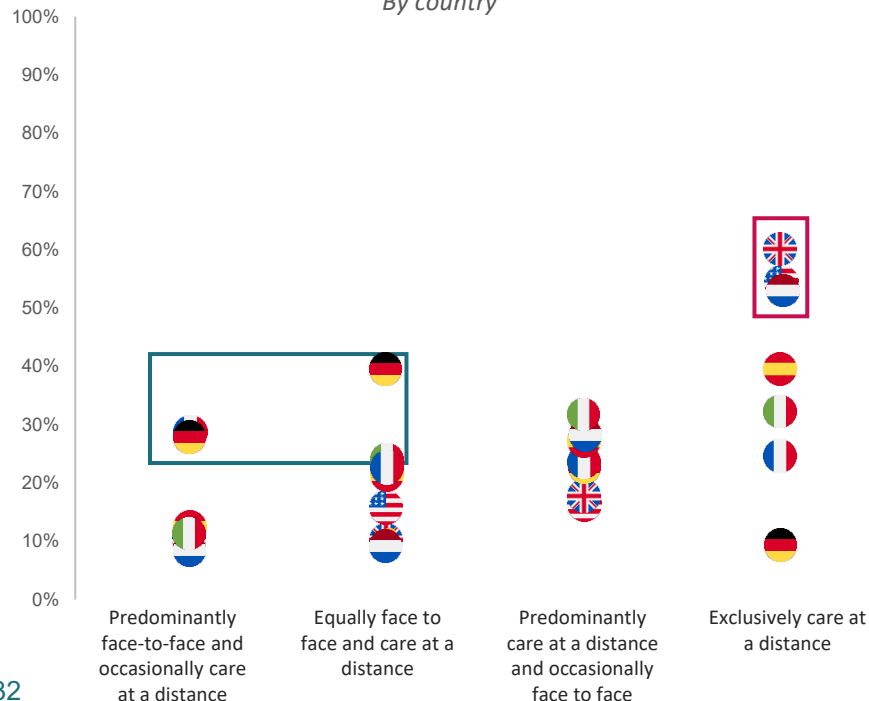
In Germany, Italy & France, it is more common for patients to have communicated through Telehealth channels before COVID-19.

During COVID-19, it differed from market to market how much face-to-face interaction with HCPs still happened

In FR & DE face-to-face interaction was still common, much less so in UK, US, NL

Patient – HCP interaction during COVID-19

By country



Only Telehealth for patients in NL, US & UK

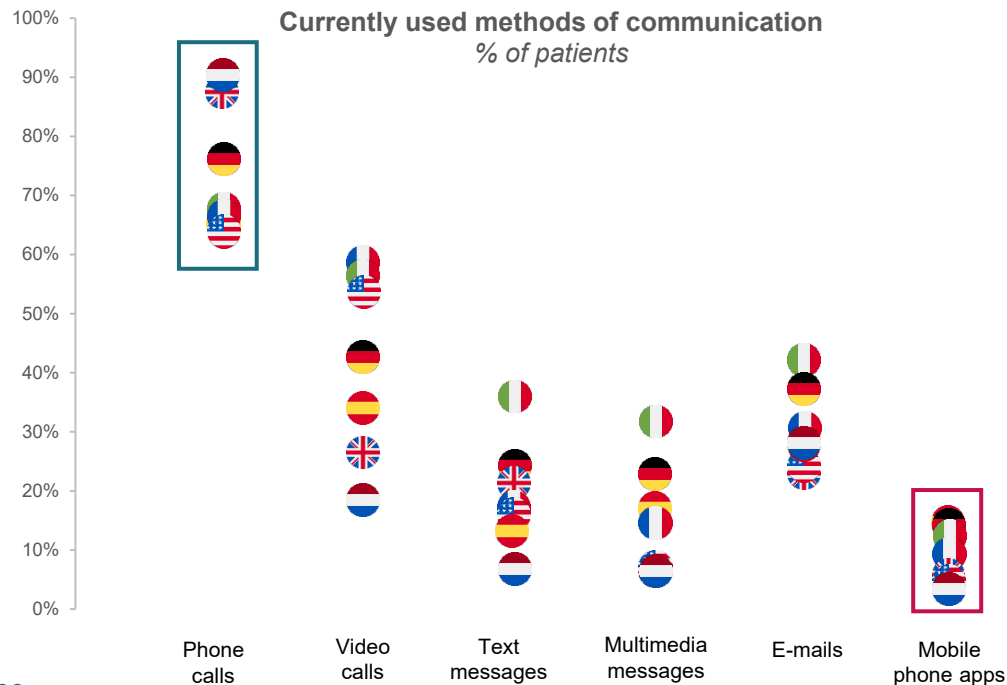
Despite the inexperience with Telehealth in these countries, the majority of patients in NL, US & UK had no face-to-face interactions with their HCP during the COVID-19 lockdown.



More mixed approach in other markets, especially FR & DE

French & German patients still saw their HCPs throughout COVID-19 lockdowns: majority of these patients still physically saw their HCP for at least half of their consultations.

Current Telehealth communication relies heavily on the use of phone calls across all countries



Phone calls are most used

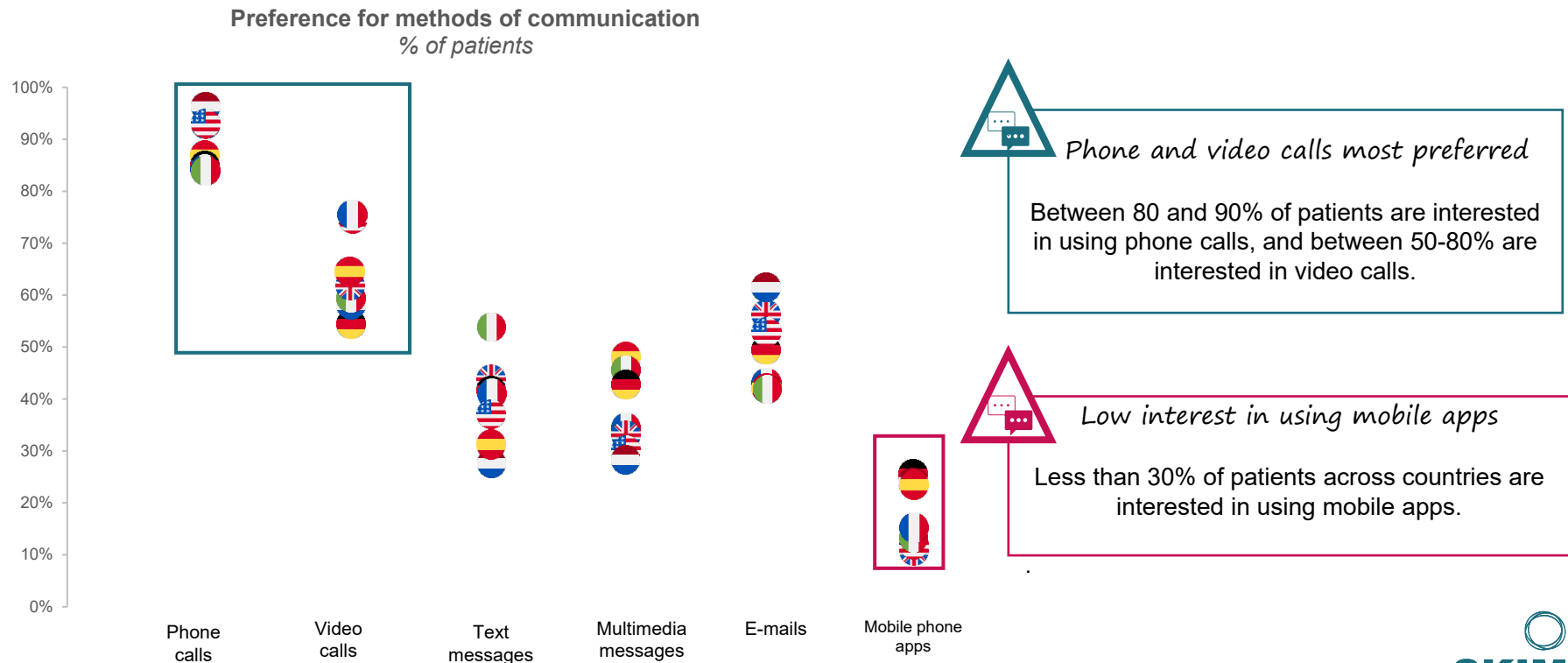
Across all countries, phone calls are the most often used method of communication, with 60% - 90% of patients across countries using this method.



Mobile apps are used by a small %

Mobile phone apps are the least used method of communication across all countries with only 2% - 14% using this method of interaction.

Interest in using phone and video calls is high while interest in using mobile apps is lower



While across countries the overall experience was positive, two clusters can be distinguished in terms of Telehealth experience

NETHERLANDS, US, UK

SPAIN, GERMANY, FRANCE,
ITALY

Extent of shift towards care at a distance from the start of COVID-19

Moderate shift

Small shift

Gap between preferred and used method of interaction when receiving care at a distance

Moderate
(21-24%)

Small
(10-19%)

Willingness to continue receiving care at a distance in the future

Low
(33-45%)

Moderate
(49-58%)

Let's zoom in on the impact of the size of shift towards Telehealth first.

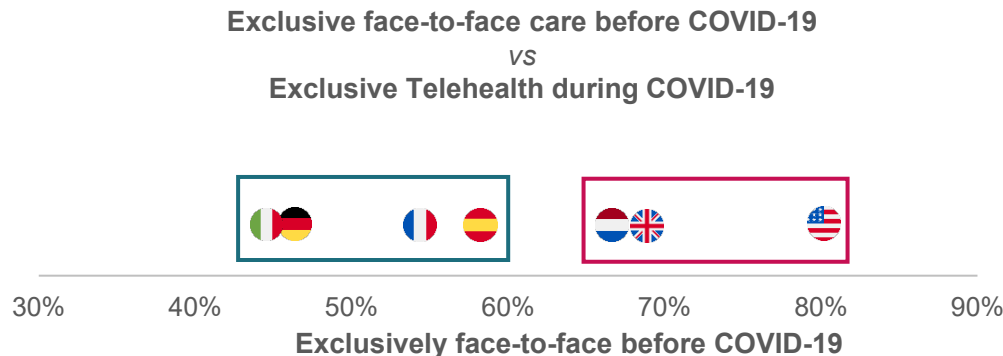
| | NETHERLANDS, US, UK | SPAIN, GERMANY, FRANCE, ITALY |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Extent of shift towards care at a distance from the start of COVID-19 | Moderate shift | Small shift |
| Gap between preferred and used method of interaction when receiving care at a distance | Moderate (21-24%) | Small (10-19%) |
| Willingness to continue receiving care at a distance in the future | Low (33-45%) | Moderate (49-58%) |

The shift from face-to-face care to Telehealth was bigger in the NL, UK & US.

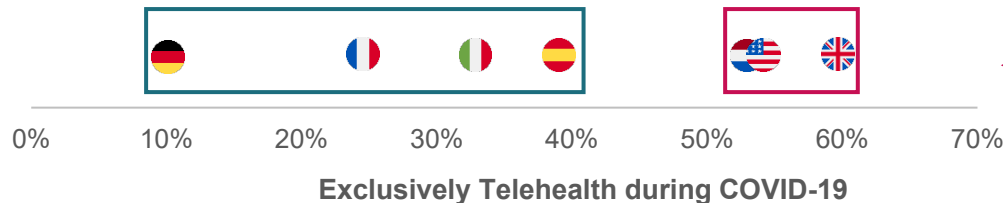
In ES, IT, FR and especially DE, the shift to Telehealth was less abrupt



For **DE, FR, IT & SP** patients were more used to Telehealth prior to COVID-19 and were less likely to have exclusive Telehealth during, making the **shift less abrupt**.



For **NL, UK & US**, the **shift was bigger**: The biggest portion received only face-to-face care pre-COVID 19, shifting to the majority receiving only Telehealth during COVID-19.



% of change

The countries that saw the biggest shift see lower willingness to continue using Telehealth

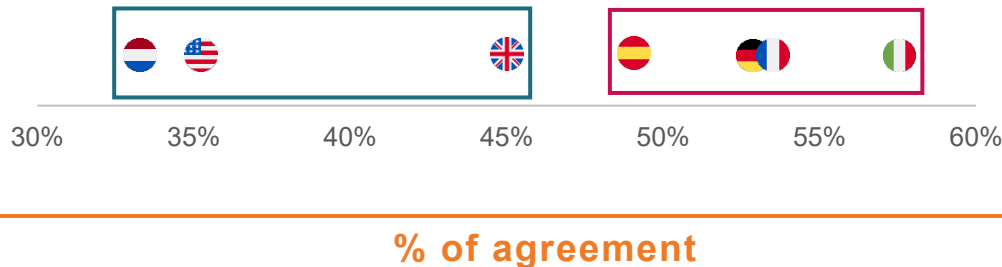
Especially US & NL patients are less likely to want to continue using Telehealth

By comparing how patients received care **before COVID-19** and **during COVID-19**, we can examine the size of the shift in care patients experienced.

Shift in the extent of care at a distance
By country



Willingness to continue
By country



Next, let's look at how patient's happiness with the method of interaction impacts their willingness to continue Telehealth

NETHERLANDS, US, UK

**SPAIN, GERMANY, FRANCE,
ITALY**

Extent of shift towards care at a distance from the start of COVID-19

Moderate shift

Small shift

Gap between preferred and used method of interaction when receiving care at a distance

Moderate
(21-24%)

Small
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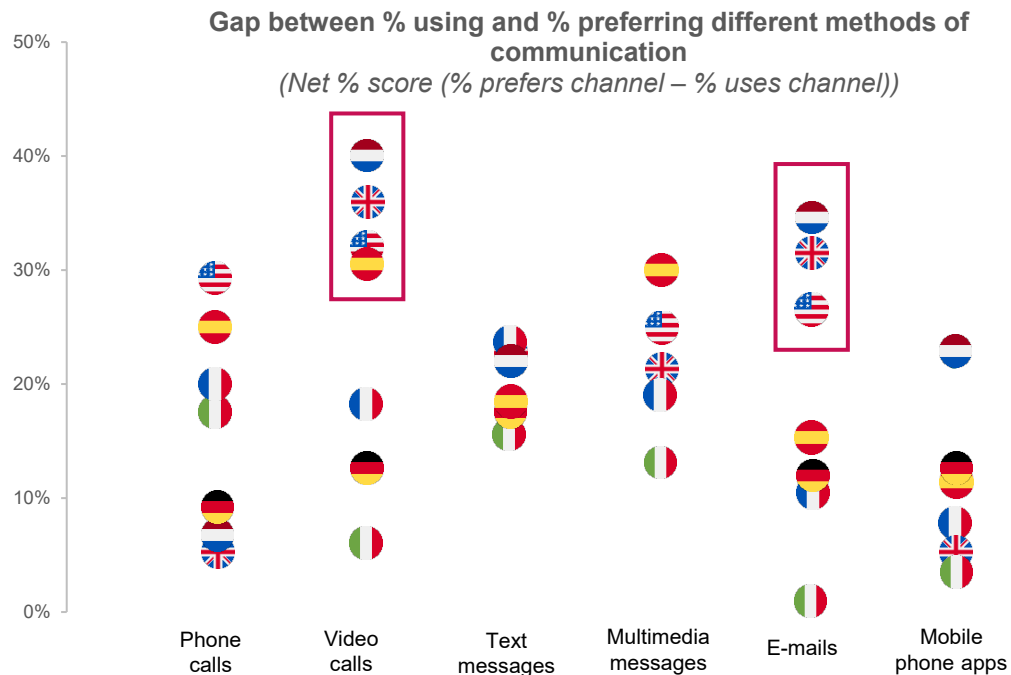
Willingness to continue receiving care at a distance in the future

Low
(33-45%)

Moderate
(49-58%)

Most methods of interaction show an unfulfilled demand, especially in US, UK and The Netherlands

Patients are especially interested in communication through video call & e-mail



NL, US, and UK have high unfulfilled demand.

Looking across methods of communication, on average between 25% and 27% of patients are not using their preferred method.

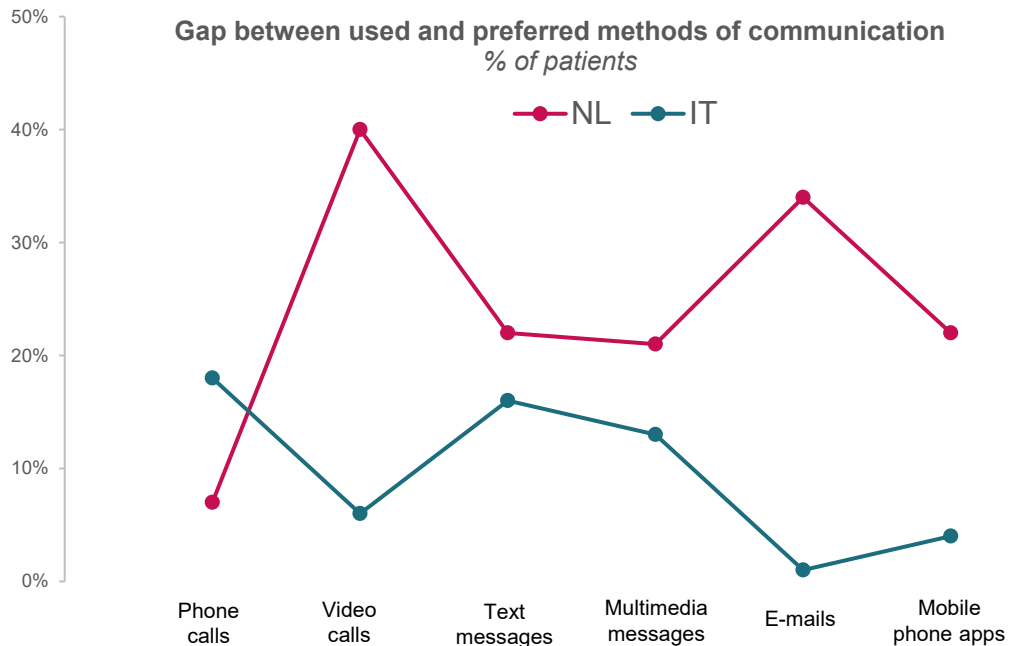


Video calls and e-mails are methods of communication with high unfulfilled demand in NL, US, and UK.

Over 30% of patients in these countries would like to use video calls while between 27% and 34% of patients would like to use emails but do not use them to communicate with their HCP.

A comparison between IT and NL underlines the different experiences across markets

In IT, used communication methods closely match the desired methods, whereas NL patients experience a gap between what they want to use and what is used

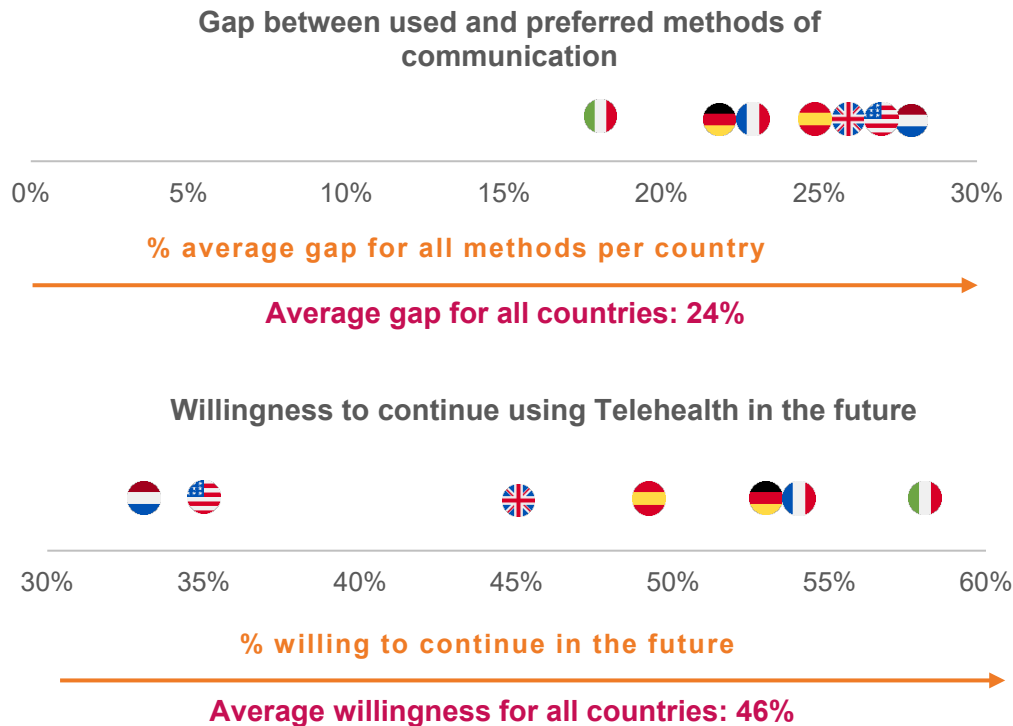


EXAMPLE

Netherlands vs. Italy

- **40% of patients want to use Video Calls and E-mails** in the Netherlands but are not using them.
- In Italy this difference is much smaller, being only around **10-15%**.
- This indicates a closer match between desired & used methods in Italy than in the Netherlands.

In countries with a bigger gap between desired & used communication methods, willingness to continue Telehealth is lower






Comparing the methods patients are using and those they want to be using shows us the underutilization of the methods patients would prefer.



Countries on average use **2 methods of interaction** with Italy using 2.5 methods of interaction on average.

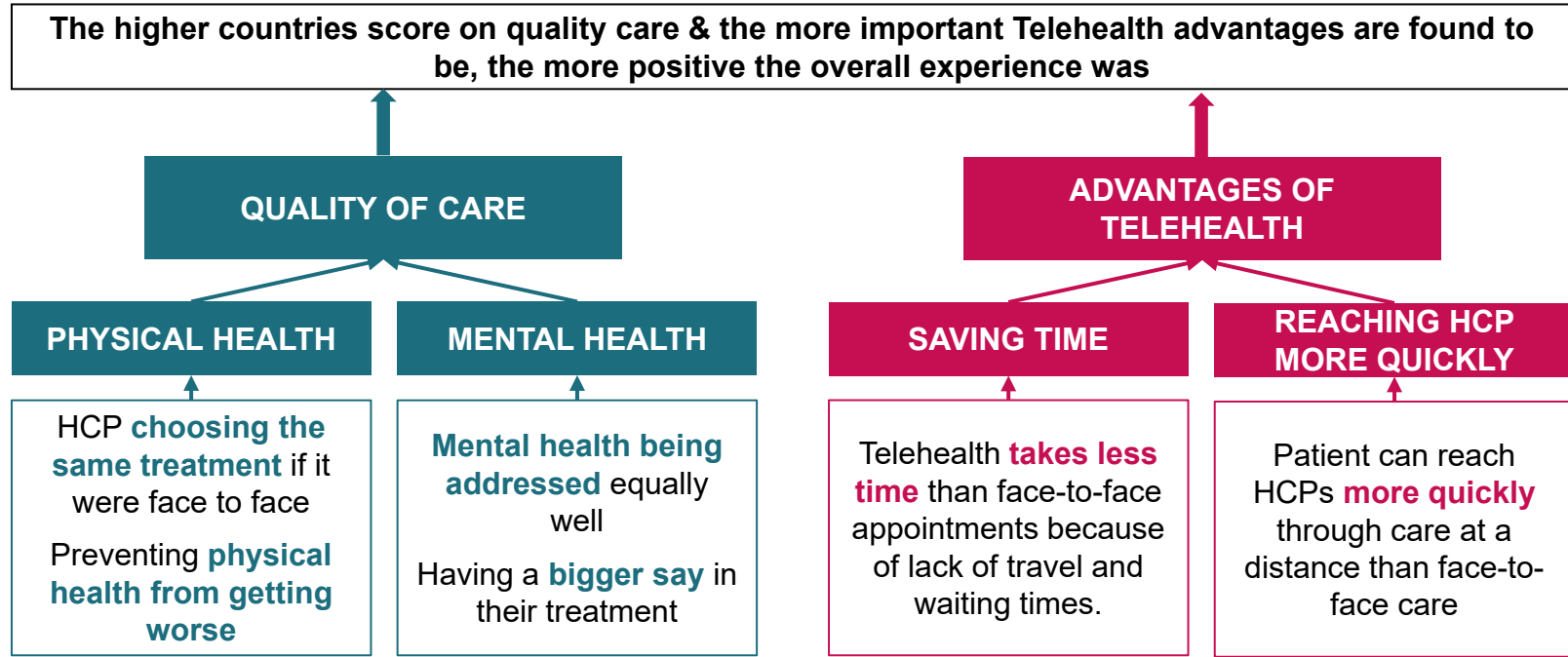
Countries with a smaller shift and gap in methods used/preferred had an overall more positive experience and were more willing to continue

↓↑ Statistically significant from the average





| |  |  |  | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---------|
| TELEHEALTH EXPERIENCE | Willingness to continue interacting at a distance in the future | 33% ↓ | 35% ↓ | 58% ↑ |
| | Positive experience of the transition to care at a distance | 70% ↓ | 78% | 89% ↑ |
| EASE OF ADJUSTMENT | Shift in type of care received | Moderate ↑ | Moderate ↑ | Small ↓ |
| | Gap between the methods patients would prefer to use and the method they actually use | 28% ↑ | 26% | 18% ↓ |



How positively Telehealth was experienced was also driven by the perceived quality of Telehealth care, especially mental health

The weight placed on the advantages of Telehealth boost positive experience too



Countries which were able to address mental health needs and allowed patients to have a bigger say in their treatment saw a higher willingness to continue with Telehealth.

| | |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| Willingness to continue interacting at a distance | | 33% | 35% | 53% | 58% |
| QUALITY OF CARE | Mental health being addressed equally well | 42% ↓ | 42% ↓ | 62% ↑ | 65% ↑ |
| | Having a bigger say in their treatment | 25% | 26% ↓ | 52% ↑ | 55% ↑ |
| | HCP choosing the same treatment if it were face to face | 72% ↓ | 78% | 67% | 69% |
| ADVANTAGES | Saving time | 67% ↓ | 79% | 76% | 76% |
| | Being able to reach HCP more quickly | 43% ↓ | 49% ↓ | 66% ↑ | 76% ↑ |


 Statistically significant from the average

A6: The following questions are about your perception on the change in your quality of care. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

A7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

A7.1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

NL: 189

US: 279

DE: 154

IT: 205



Mental health is not addressed equally well as it is face-to-face

Patients don't have a **bigger say** in the treatment they receive

Larger **gap** between preferred methods and used methods of communication

Countries with a more positive overall experience and higher willingness to continue Telehealth seem to be more **patient-centric** in the set-up of their Telehealth system



Mental health is addressed equally well as it is face-to-face

Patients have a **bigger say** in the treatment they receive

Patients are able to **reach** their HCPs faster

Smaller gap between preferred methods and used methods of communication

About SKIM

SKIM is a global insights agency helping leading companies thrive by understanding decision-making. To stay ahead in today's environment, it's critical to know how decisions are made and how the changing environment influences decisions for consumers, healthcare and B2B professionals.

To understand how decision-making has changed (and how it hasn't!), we adapt sophisticated research techniques and develop new innovations to address this new reality. *The result?* Practical brand communications, revenue management, product innovation, e-Commerce, and advanced analytics recommendations you can use to propel your business forward, both online and offline.

What sets SKIM apart is our decision behavior expertise + deep analytical and choice-modeling roots + a thorough understanding of the marketing challenges brands face. This unique combination, along with our creative thinking, is the reason why strategy consultants and leading companies, from Fortune 500 to digital disruptors, have continued to partner with us for decades.

With 9 offices around the world and 150+ enthusiastic SKIMmers ready to help crack your business case, *how can we team up with you today?*

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