

# Telemedicine use increased considerably during COVID-19

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Telemedicine use increased considerably during the COVID-19 pandemic, with lower use in communities with higher rates of poverty, according to a study published in the February issue of *Health Affairs*.

Sadiq Y. Patel, Ph.D., from Harvard Medical School in Boston, and colleagues examined variation in total outpatient visits and [telemedicine use](#) across patient demographics, specialties, and conditions among 16.7 million commercially insured and Medicare Advantage enrollees from January to June 2020.

The researchers found that 30.1 percent of all visits during the pandemic were provided via telemedicine, and there was a 23-fold increase in the weekly number of visits compared with the pre-pandemic period. Communities with higher rates of poverty had lower telemedicine use (31.9 versus 27.9 percent for lowest versus highest quartiles of poverty rate). Across specialties, there was variation in the use of any telemedicine during

the pandemic, from 68 to 9 percent for endocrinologists and ophthalmologists, respectively. Across common conditions, there was [variation](#) noted in the percentage of visits provided via telemedicine during the pandemic, from 53 to 3 percent for depression and glaucoma, respectively. For common [conditions](#), higher rates of [telemedicine](#) use were associated with smaller decreases in total weekly visits during the [pandemic](#).

"Telemedicine use during COVID-19 varied across different clinical settings and patient populations, with lower use found among insurance enrollees in disadvantaged areas," the authors write. "Future research is needed to understand the persistence of these trends over longer periods and the impact of these changes on patients' health."

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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