



DEPUTY GUIDE

# The Ultimate Guide to Growing Your Practice

**Images of overcrowded hospitals, doctor's office lines 10 or 20 people long, and hazmat-suited healthcare workers at COVID-19 testing facilities. Over the past year, the healthcare industry has received a lot of attention. But what's the story behind non-COVID health issues? And when, where, and how are Americans receiving care for these issues?**

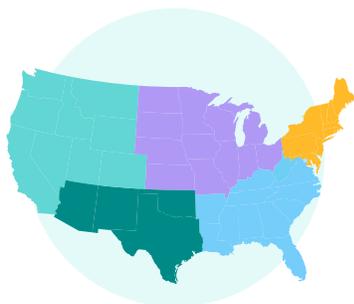
According to a new survey of more than 2,000 Americans, 69% of healthcare consumers have put off going to healthcare facilities since the start of the pandemic because of COVID-19. And for those who have sought medical attention, 62% have chosen to go to an urgent care facility over the ER for the same reason.

COVID has demonstrably changed not only how, but also where, consumers are likely to seek healthcare. And clinics have a prime opportunity to grow their practice — if they make key adjustments to address the changing patient demand.

The results of this survey are based on responses from over 2,000 Americans across the country.



**2,005**  
respondents



**5 regions**  
of the U.S.



**37 yrs**  
average age

**This ebook is for anyone looking to grow their practice when the old rules of booking appointments aren't cutting it anymore.**

From messaging to scheduling options and cultivating trust, you'll learn what today's healthcare consumers truly need to come to your practice over another one.



## **Get tips to:**

- Reframe your messaging to attract new — and returning — business
- Increase the number of appointments your practice books
- Use pricing, location, and trust factors to encourage patients to choose you as their healthcare provider



# Secure more appointments with the right messaging

It's spring and your facility is usually busy right now. From students on Spring Break to parents booking their yearly check ups, your waiting room would have been standing room only.

**But according to this recent study, nearly three in four respondents aged 39 or younger (73%) said they have put off necessary medical appointments in the past year due to concerns around COVID-19 compared to only 38% of those aged 59 or older. For the older crowd, nearly two in three (63%) said they didn't put off any appointments.**

But medical care hasn't completely stopped. Younger Americans are looking for alternatives for their medical care. Seventy percent of respondents aged 23-29 said they've chosen to go to an urgent care hospital, as opposed to the emergency room, due to concerns over contracting COVID-19. Conversely, only 11% of Baby Boomer respondents said they've done the same.

Whether you're a veterinary clinic where age doesn't matter or you're a geriatric physical therapy clinic, patients are still out there. And they're looking for your care.

With this in mind, how you position and message your practice right now can be the difference between a full day of patient care — or a disappointingly empty schedule.

## Ways to encourage more visits

- **Include a patient requirement checklist.** When someone is visiting your website or calling your office, include a checklist which includes a list of the precautions your team is taking and the requirements patients must adhere to for visits.
- **Display your vaccine status.** Has your entire staff been vaccinated? On top of your COVID checklist, add a badge to your appointment scheduler or website that denotes if your staff has been vaccinated. This can ease the concerns of some of your patients.
- **Use your social media and online channels.** Update your Google snippet or your Yelp account with your current protocols. Also, use your social media to share to your wider audience that you're doing everything you can to keep your patients safe and of sound mind about that appointment they have.



# One size **doesn't fit all** when it comes to booking appointments

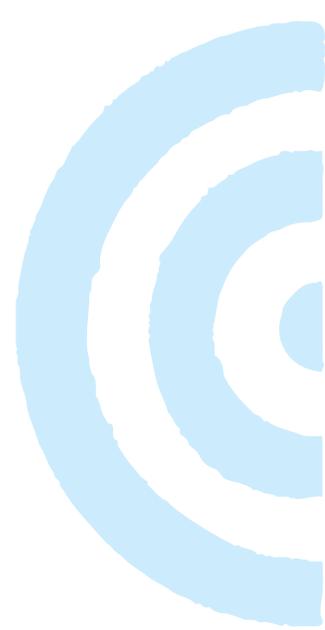
A lot has changed in 12 months. A year ago, your appointment schedule likely looked much different. For example, maybe a parent dropped in, without an appointment, because their daughter hurt her hand in gym class. A software engineer stopped by your local eye clinic to see if you could squeeze them in over lunchtime. A college freshman reached out about getting invisible braces.

You and your staff used to depend on some of those drop-ins to fill your schedule — and hit your bottom line. But as those ad hoc visits slowed, so did your appointment book.

According to the 2,000 respondents polled, less than a third say they have made a medical appointment by walking in since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

That is, if they've even succeeded with making an appointment at all. COVID-19 has taken everything and made it just a bit more difficult.

The results showed that 82% of the respondents found the process of securing a doctor appointment at least a little difficult in the past year, with 28% saying it was “very” difficult. Interestingly, only 12% said they experienced no difficulties.

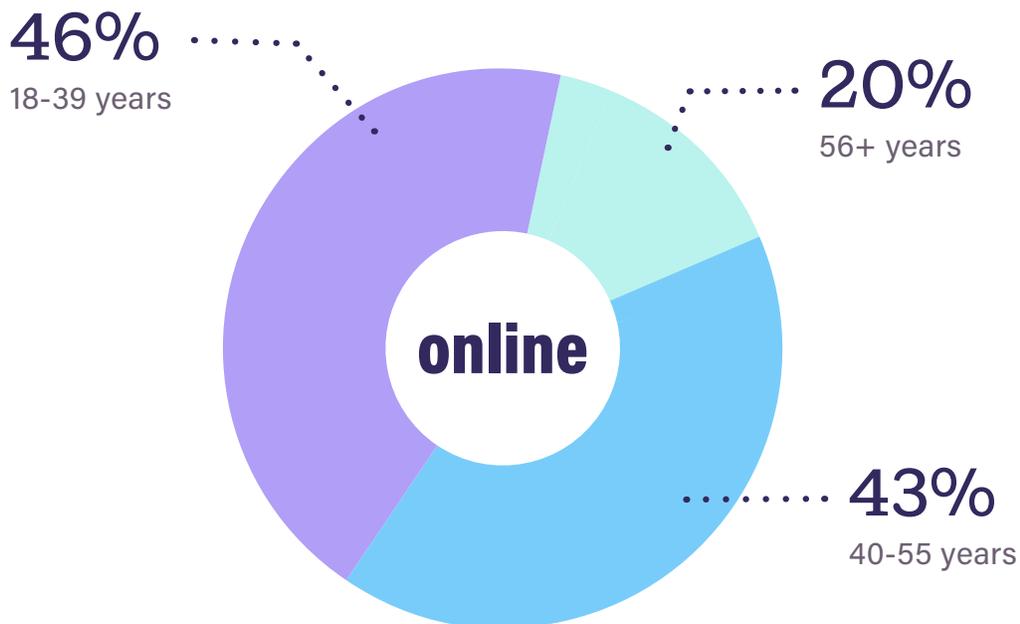


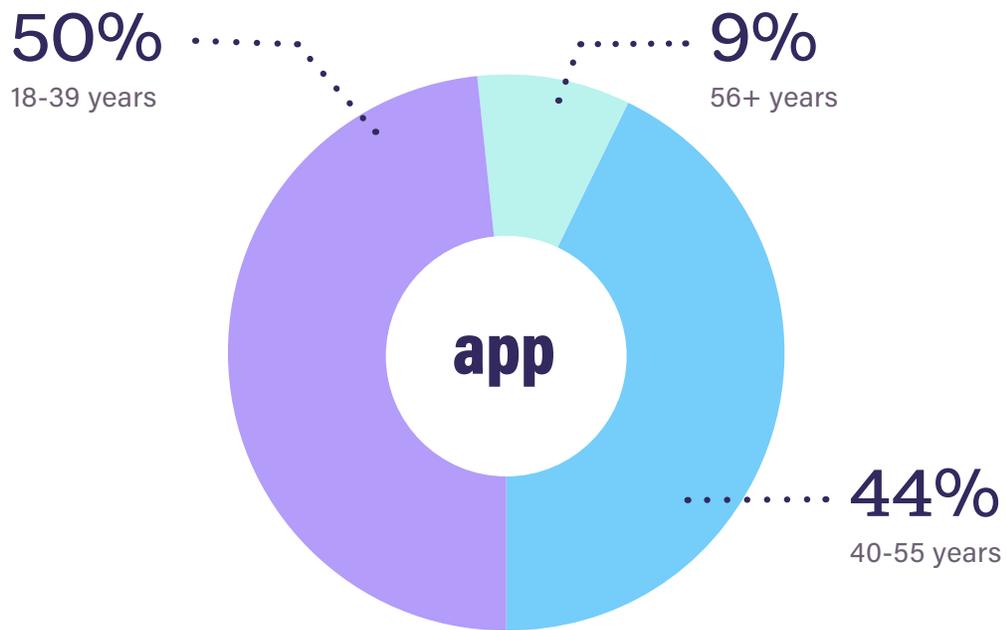
With the steep decline in walk-in appointments, patients have taken to more COVID-convenient means to make their appointments. Calling the office was found to be the most popular method (53%), while 45% opted for a smartphone app and 43% booked their appointment through a website.

When you break that down by age, you might see that your systems aren't set up to support how your patients are booking appointments. While younger people may find using tech to be a breeze when it comes to booking appointments, older generations still prefer simpler, more traditional means.

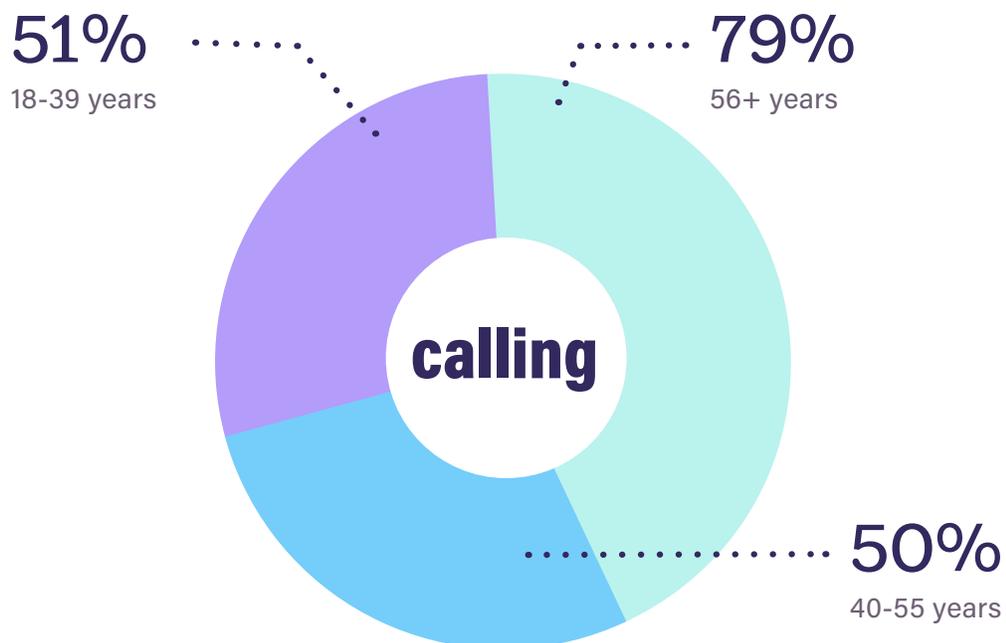
According to the poll, only 20% of respondents aged 56 or older made an appointment online, compared to 46% of respondents aged 39 or younger.

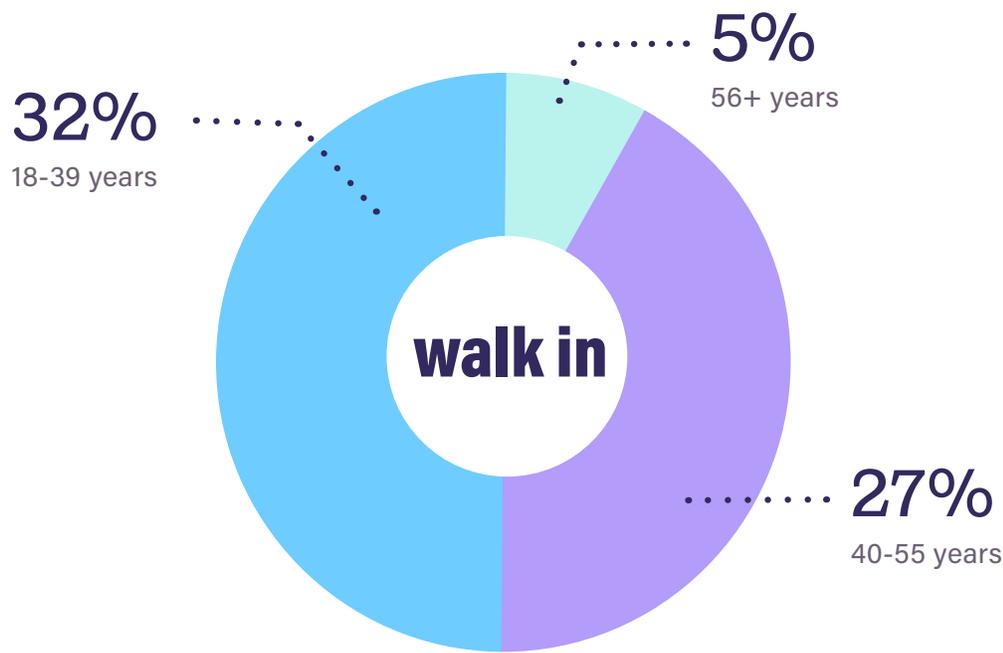
## How people are booking appointments based on age





Knowing how your clientele is making appointments is a crucial step towards growing your business. If you truly want to achieve growth, you need to act on it. Understanding how they book appointments is only half the battle. Making the process easier for them is the other half.





## Three tips on how to encourage more appointments

- **Update your phone process.** When was the last time you recorded your business's voicemail? How often is someone checking it? What's the process for calling patients back — and what's the timeline? When you think about scheduling your staff, even if you cut back how many people are in the office, make sure one of the [responsibilities](#) covered includes handling phone calls. Less voicemails = more appointments on the books.
- **Get digital.** If you don't already have an app for patients to book appointments, now is the time to invest in one. While there are many privacy complexities within healthcare, you can simplify the process by using basic app scheduling software that at least gets people in the door. You can have them securely fill out paperwork once they're in your office. If money is a factor, partner with your local university to see if they have any students who can do the technical coding for you for cheap (or even for free) to help them build their portfolio. Many people are now used to the convenience of apps and not having one is putting you behind the times.

- **Make your website accessible.** Don't have the resources to build an app? You need to at least update your website to make it more accessible. Things like adding alt text to images can help those older adults who are getting to your website but might have a slower connection or visual impairments can help improve usability. Make sure you've clearly linked to your appointment section. Remember: the key is to make it as easy and simple as possible.



## The Trust Factor

**When it comes to seeking medical care during a pandemic, trust plays a big role.**

According to the poll, urgent care facilities have become a more trusted source for medical care since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as 66% of respondents say their trust in urgent care facilities have increased over the past year. In fact, 37% say their trust has increased “significantly.”

This has led more Americans to ditch hospitals in favor of clinics when it comes to their healthcare, with 66% of respondents saying they are more likely to seek healthcare from a clinic or urgent facility than from a hospital within the next six months.

So, what influences people's choice of healthcare facility? The study revealed that the type or level of care you provide is less important than the facility's location (52%) and whether or not said facility is compatible with their insurance (44%).

Those were followed by type or level of care (43%), reputation (42%), and brand (35%). Interestingly, referrals from friends don't play much of a role when it comes to how people find their medical care, as only 11% said this was an influence for them.

# What influences choice of healthcare facility



**52%** the location



**44%** takes my insurance



**43%** the type or level of care provided (like specialists)



**42%** the reputation



**35%** the brand



**34%** the company that owns the facility



**29%** facilities



**26%** a particular practitioner or practitioners



**22%** tests or procedures offered



**11%** referral from a friend



**9%** referral from another medical facility

# Money talks

Price can have an impact on who comes to your facility, so you need to show your patients they're getting their money's worth and quality care to boot. Perhaps unsurprisingly, younger Americans are more influenced by price point than older generations.

According to the results, a whopping 86% of those aged 18-39 say price impacts their decision to visit a clinic. This number becomes more significant when you compare that to the 58% of Baby Boomers and 59% of those aged 40-55 who said the same.

Overall, however, 40% of respondents say price strongly influences their decision to visit a clinic and only 17% said price plays no role in their decision.

## Top reasons influencing people to choose a specific facility



### 18-36 YEARS

1. Location
2. Type or level of care (specialists)
3. Reputation



### 40-55 YEARS

1. Location
2. Reputation
3. Type or level of care (specialists)

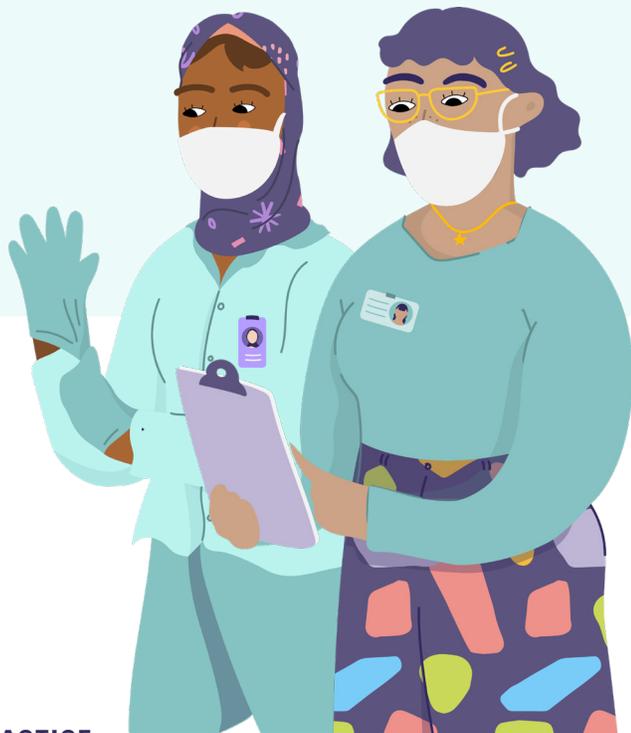


### 56+ YEARS

1. Takes my insurance
2. Location
3. Type or level of care (specialists)

## Helpful tips for influencing (and acquiring) patient trust

- **Partner with location businesses.** Location is a top motivator for how patients are choosing where to receive medical treatment. Team up with your local restaurants, grocery stores, or retail stores to drive referrals and boost your brand awareness. Consumers have said that their trust in urgent clinics have increased since the beginning of the pandemic, and you can use social proof to help double-down on that trust.
- **Create insurance cheat sheets.** For your older population, clearly showcase what insurance you accept. Remember that this group is often calling to book appointments rather than booking online or using an app, so consider including this information in your voicemail or automated message options.
- **Showcase your talent.** Your practitioners are a huge selling point. Get them to be your spokesperson and showcase their specialities.



# Opening your doors to a better patient experience

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested just about every aspect of provider-patient relationships. From uncertainty over in-person or telehealth visits and issues with appointment availability, healthcare consumers are demanding more from their carers.

**Challenges inevitably create opportunities and being aware of the patient's perspective will help you to make the most of them in attempting to grow your practice.**

Communicating your safety precautions to patients is as important as implementing them properly. Patient requirement checklists, vaccination badges, and other measures can go a long way towards helping patients to breathe that sigh of relief that will help make for a successful visit.

Desired appointment booking systems aren't one-size-fits-all, and it's crucial to make it easy for your entire patient-base to secure a slot. Improving phone process alongside ensuring smooth digital scheduling options is your best bet to meet your patients where they're at.

Finally, there's the intangible – but critical – component of trust. While location, insurance, and type or level of care provided are all significant contributors to a patient's choice of healthcare facility, continuing to strengthen patient relationships should be a priority – now more than ever.

For more insights and tools for your employees and patients at their best, [contact us](#) to learn how you can make staff scheduling the simplest part of your day. Spend less time worrying about who is working when — and more time caring for your patients.