

Patients' experiences of virtual care in 2022

In 2022, one in five (22%) of the 14.2 million outpatient services provided by NSW Health were through virtual care.

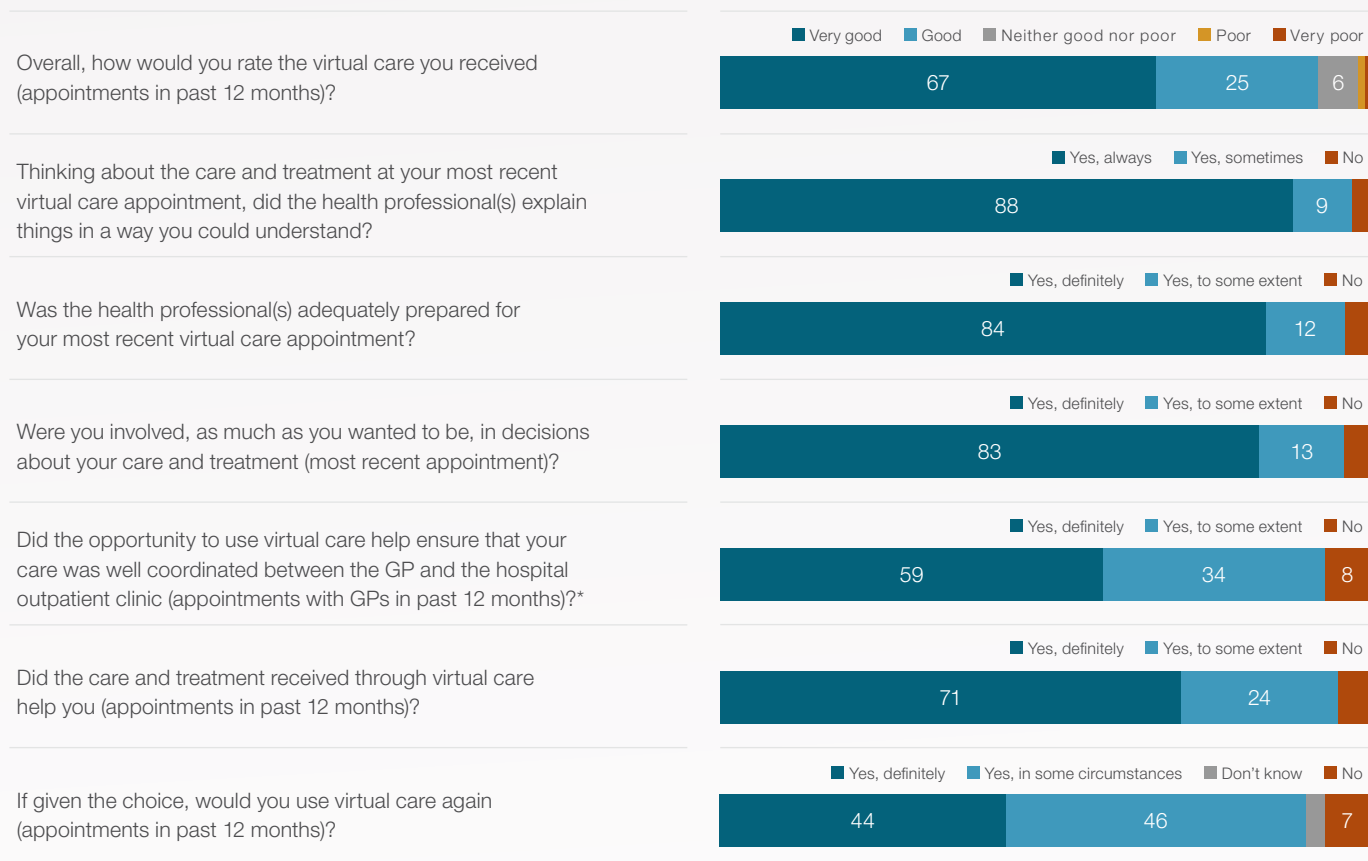
To gain insights into patients' experiences with virtual care and inform the monitoring and evaluation of the NSW Virtual Care Strategy 2021–2026, the Bureau of Health Information (BHI) collected information about adult patients' experiences of virtual care outpatient appointments with NSW public hospitals and general practitioners (GPs) in 2022. Virtual care appointments are held over the telephone or by video call.

The results of the Virtual Care Survey 2022 reflect the experiences of 2,301 patients who had at least one virtual care appointment with a public hospital outpatient clinic in November or December 2022. While this report focuses predominantly on those outpatient clinic experiences, 1,554 of those patients also had at least one virtual care appointment with a GP and provided feedback. To explore detailed results for all survey questions, with breakdowns by selected patient groups, see the **supplementary data tables**.

Most patients were very positive about their virtual care with hospital outpatient clinics

For most questions, results improved or remained stable compared with the 2021 survey. Figure 1 shows results for those questions analysed later in the report.

Figure 1 Percentage of patients in NSW who had at least one virtual care appointment with a public hospital outpatient clinic, all response options, 2022



*This question was asked of a subgroup of respondents who also had at least one virtual care appointment with a GP.

BHI undertook advanced multivariable analyses to estimate how much more or less likely it was that different patient groups responded positively to questions about their virtual care experiences (the adjusted odds ratio).

These analyses found that across most questions, patients offered similar ratings of their virtual care regardless of their age, education, location (urban/rural) or whether they had a longstanding health condition.

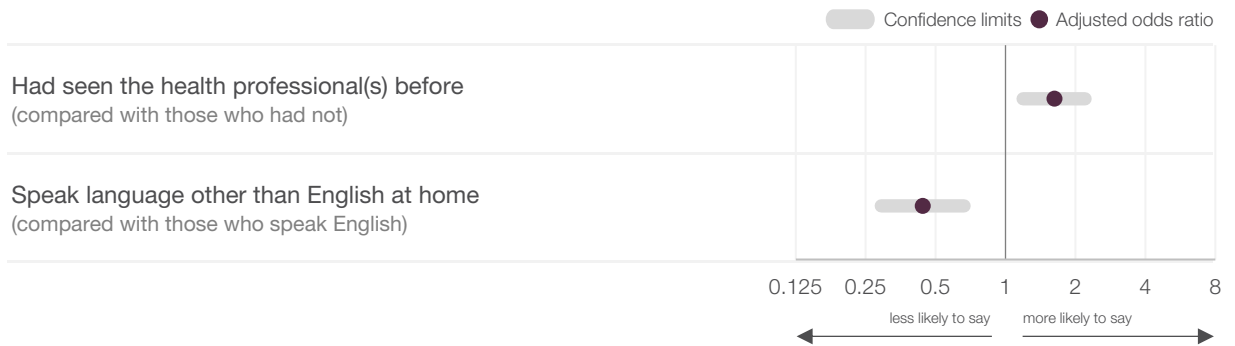
However, the analyses showed that for a range of questions, patients were significantly less positive if they had not seen the health professional(s) before, speak a language other than English at home, or had an audio-only appointment (compared with video).

This report highlights key insights from BHI's analyses of variation in results across these patient groups.

There was some variation in ratings of overall care across patient groups

BHI's analyses identified two patient groups where there were significant differences in ratings of overall care. Patients who had seen the health professional(s) before (69% of respondents) were around 1.5 times more likely to rate their overall care as 'very good' than those who hadn't; and patients who speak a language other than English at home (15% of respondents) were around half as likely to rate their care as 'very good' than those who speak English.

Figure 2 Overall, virtual care with hospital outpatient clinics in past 12 months was 'very good'



I was able to keep my specialist appointment when I was unable to leave the house due to COVID. This enabled me to stay on track with my treatment plan.

– patient

My virtual care experience was smooth. The doctor asked me good follow up questions and made sure my questions were well answered.

– patient



Patients who had seen the health professional before were more positive

Across most measures, patients were more likely to choose the most positive response option if their most recent virtual care appointment had been with the health professional(s) they had seen before. For example, these patients were more than three times more likely to say that health professionals ‘always’ explained things in a way they could understand and twice as likely to say they were ‘definitely’ involved in decisions about their care and treatment.

Patients who speak a language other than English at home, and patients who had an audio-only appointment (69% of respondents), were less likely to be positive for a range of key measures.

Figure 3 Health professional(s) ‘always’ explained things in an understandable way at most recent virtual care hospital outpatient clinic appointment

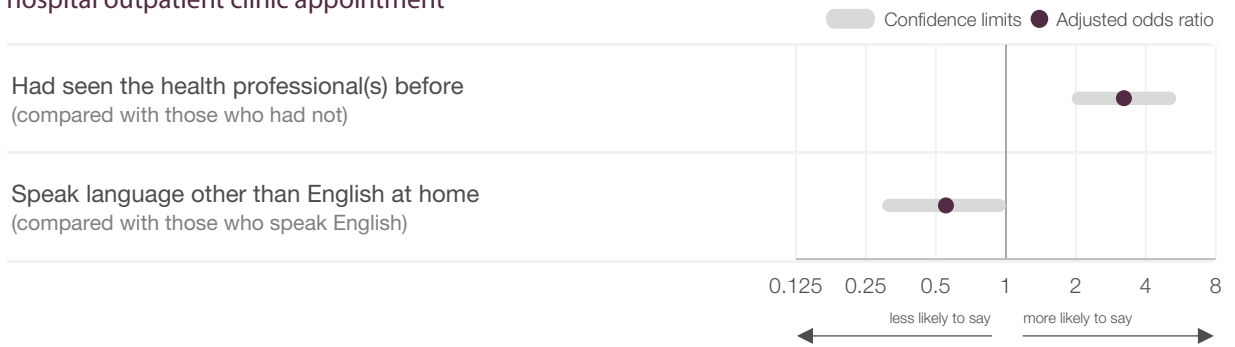


Figure 4 Health professional(s) were ‘definitely’ adequately prepared for most recent virtual care hospital outpatient clinic appointment

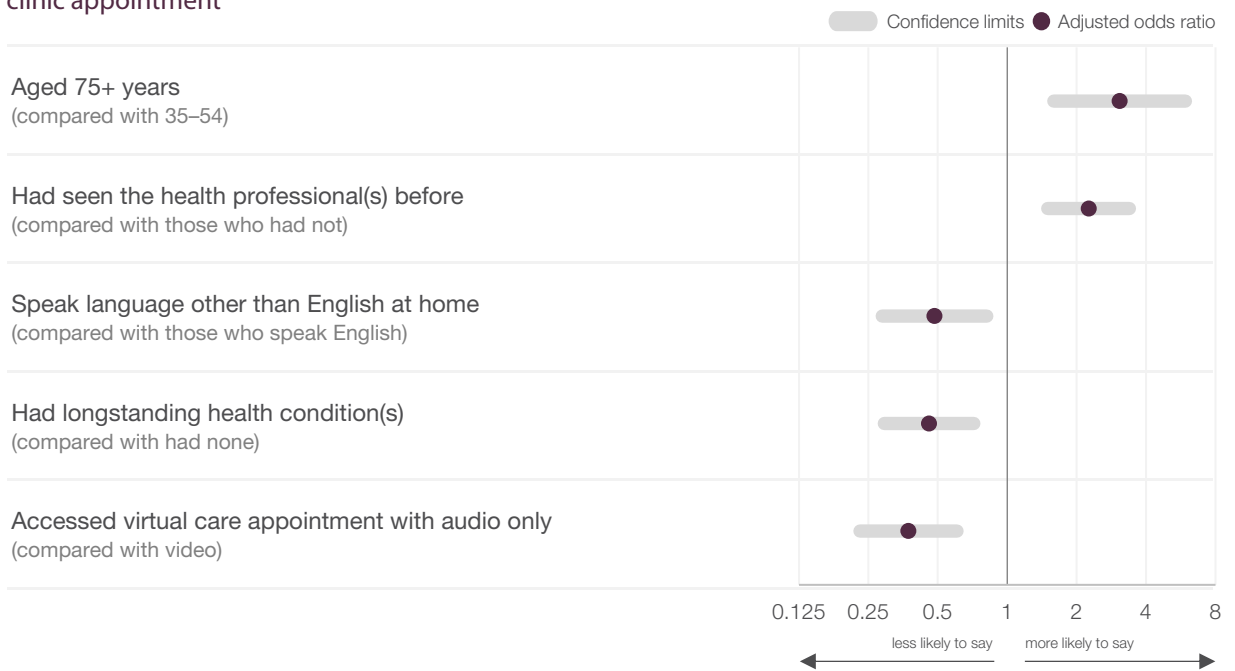
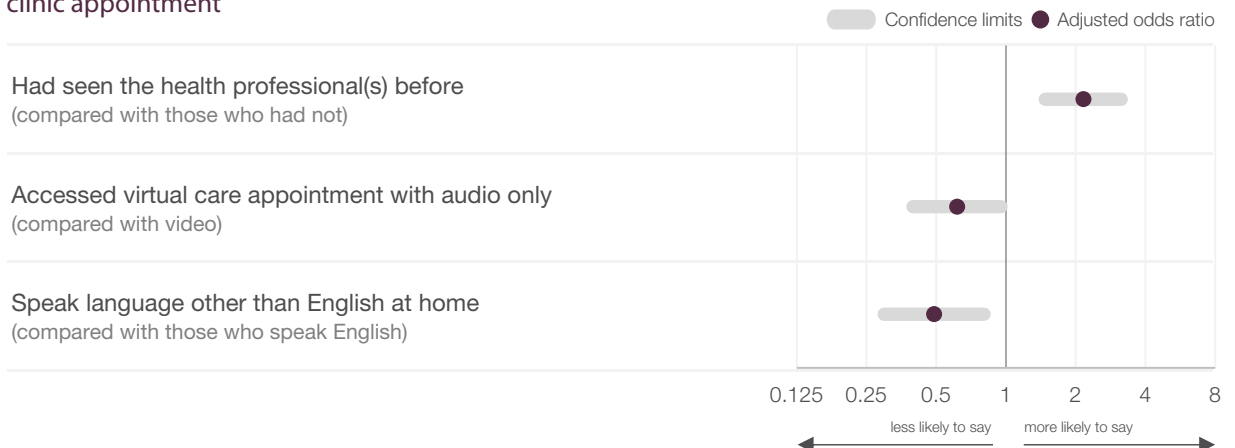


Figure 5 ‘Definitely’ involved in decisions about care and treatment at most recent virtual care hospital outpatient clinic appointment



The impact of virtual care differed across patient groups

BHI's analyses show that having seen the health professional(s) before had a significant positive impact on patients' ratings of care coordination, how likely they were to say their virtual care helped them, and their likelihood of using virtual care again. For example, patients whose most recent virtual care appointment was with their regular GP were almost twice as likely to say that the opportunity to use GP virtual care in the past 12 months 'definitely' ensured their care was well coordinated between the GP and the hospital outpatient clinic.

However, patients who had an audio-only virtual care appointment were almost half as likely to say that virtual care appointments with hospital outpatient clinics in the past 12 months 'definitely' helped them. They were also almost half as likely to say they would 'definitely' use virtual care again.

Figure 6 Opportunity to use GP virtual care in the past 12 months 'definitely' ensured care was well coordinated between the GP and the hospital outpatient clinic

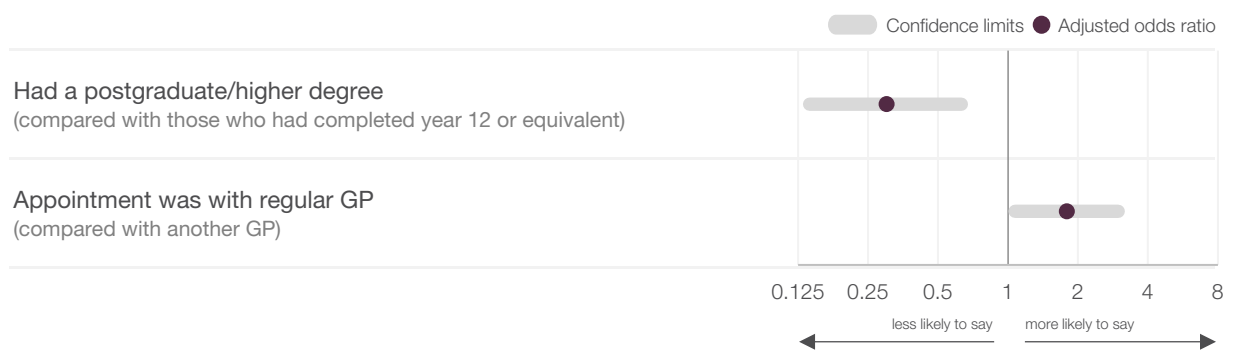


Figure 7 Care and treatment received through virtual care with a hospital outpatient clinic in past 12 months 'definitely' helped

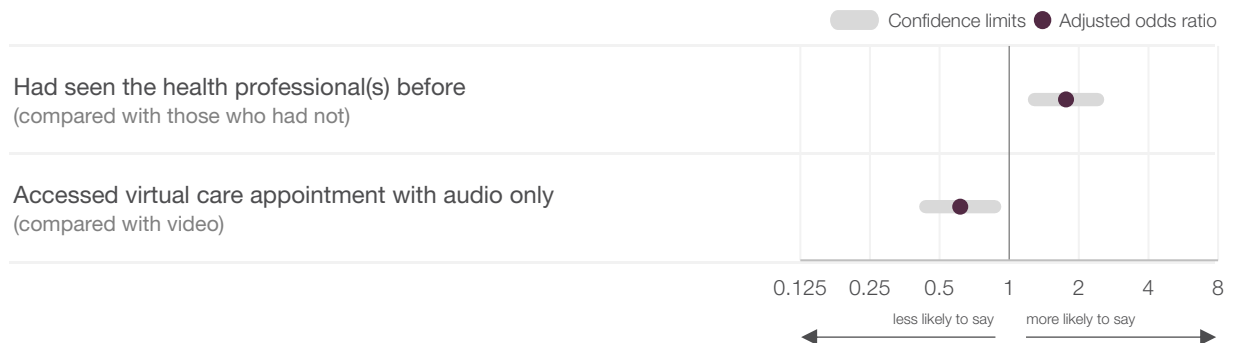
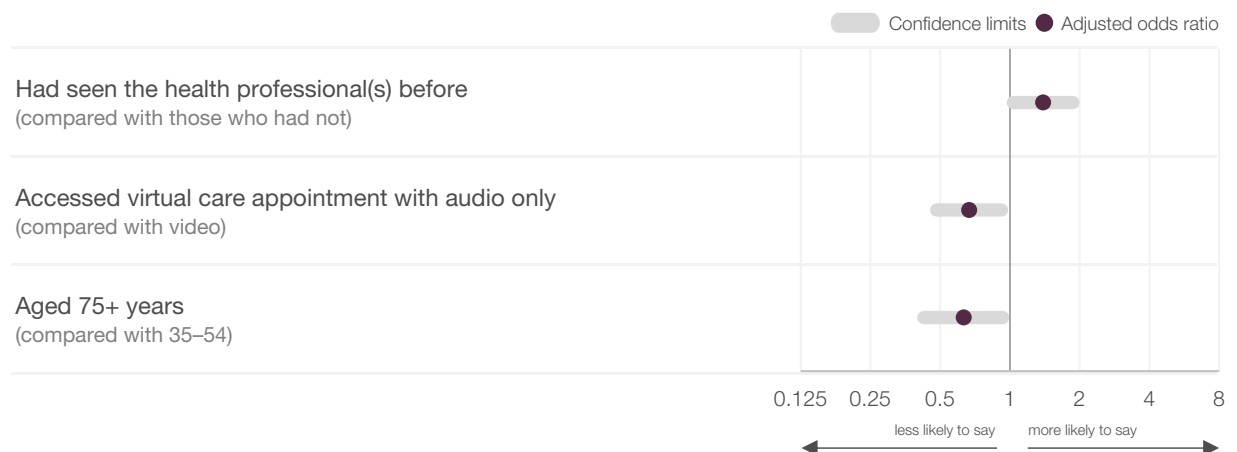
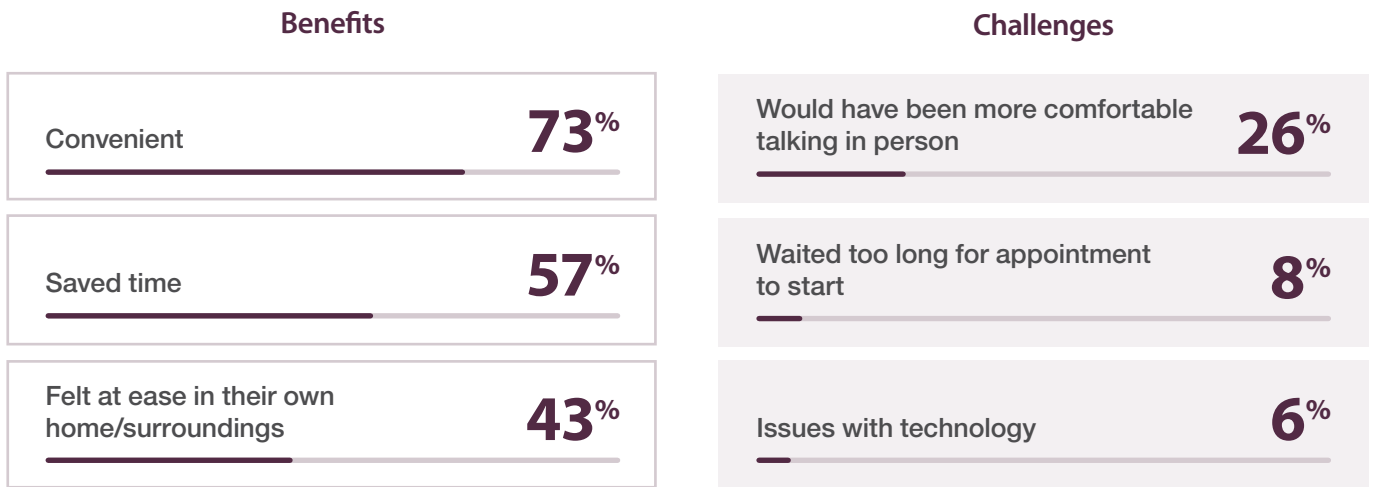


Figure 8 'Definitely' would use virtual care again if given the choice (appointments with hospital outpatient clinics in past 12 months)



Most patients cited convenience and saving time as benefits of virtual care

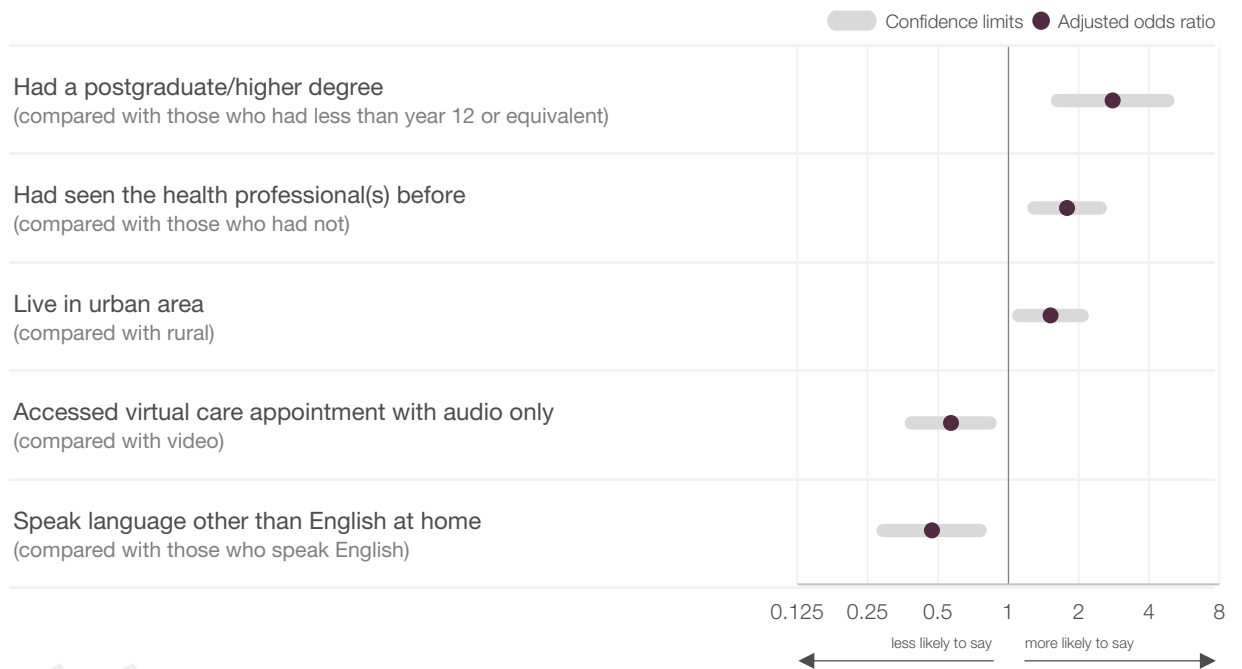
When asked to share the benefits and challenges they experienced during their virtual care experiences in the 12 months prior to completing the survey, patients most commonly cited:



BHI's analyses identified certain patient groups that were more likely to cite particular benefits and challenges.

For example, some patients (35%) said receiving safe, high quality care was a benefit of virtual care for them. Patients whose most recent appointment was with the health professional(s) they had seen before were two times more likely to say this, however, patients who had an audio-only appointment were only half as likely (Figure 10).

Figure 9 Virtual care appointments with hospital outpatient clinics in past 12 months were convenient



It was convenient as I didn't have to worry about finding care for my child and deal with the stress and costs of going to the hospital.

– patient



Figure 10 Care received via virtual care appointments with hospital outpatient clinics in past 12 months was safe and of high quality

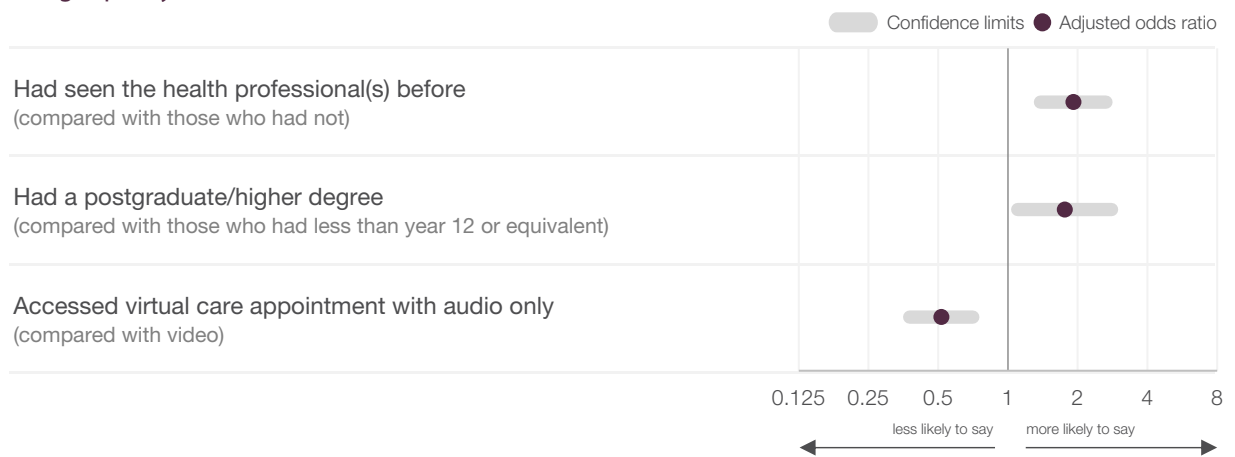


Figure 11 Would have been more comfortable talking in person than virtually with hospital outpatient clinics in past 12 months

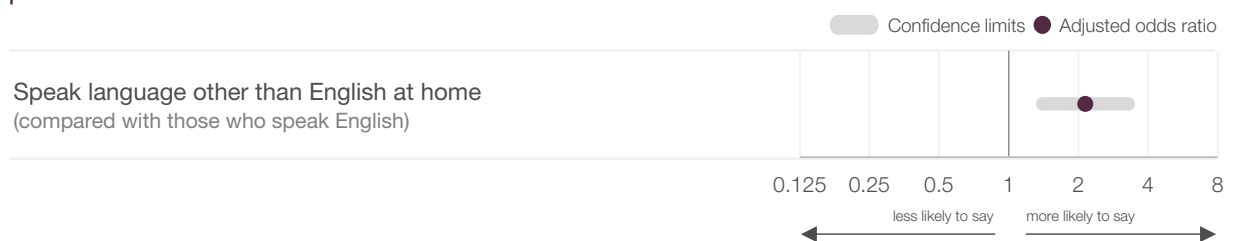
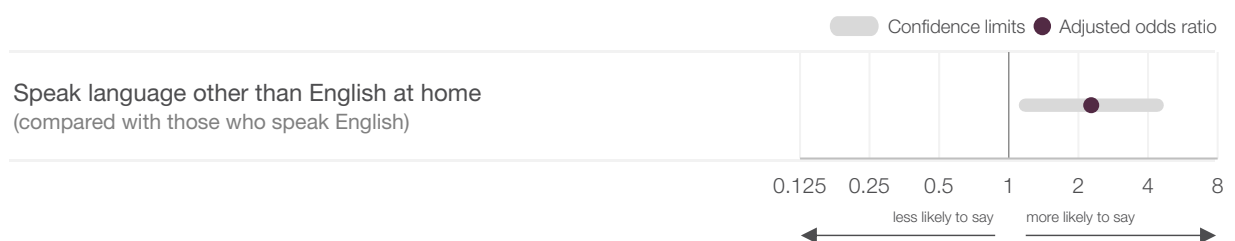


Figure 12 Had to wait too long for virtual care appointments with hospital outpatient clinics in past 12 months to start



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The waiting time was very long. I have to stand by at home waiting for the call for hours.

– patient

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To explore detailed results for all survey questions, with breakdowns by selected patient groups, see the [supplementary data tables](#). For more information on the statistical model, see the [technical supplement](#).