



# Patient Communication Preferences in 2021



## Summary

Has the pandemic changed the way patients want to interact with their providers? The simple answer is yes. The 2021 HIMSS survey, "Patient Communication Preferences in 2021," sponsored by SR Health, shows that patients do want more digital communication, especially text messaging, and that age continues to be less of a barrier to electronic forms of communication.



## Key Takeaways

**1. Since the pandemic began, more regular communication is expected from healthcare providers.**

Nearly half of patients expect more regular communication. Nearly 7-in-10 agreed that they want to receive healthcare text messages for things like appointment confirmations, appointment reminders, pre-visit instructions, and care instructions as well as notifications for test results being available in their patient portal.

**2. During the pandemic, emailing and texting healthcare providers has increased.**

Post pandemic, almost half of patients prefer to communicate with their healthcare providers via text messages. Those with a household income of \$100,000-plus, under age 50, and females prefer text messages most often.

**3. Those ages 50-plus want to receive text messages from their healthcare providers.**

Overall, the survey found that a majority of patients ages 50-plus want to receive healthcare text messages for things like appointment confirmations, appointment reminders, pre-visit instructions, and care instructions as well as notifications for test results being available in their patient portal.

**4. More than one-third would be willing to switch providers to receive more modern communication like real-time text messaging.**

Those under the age of 50 are the most likely to switch providers at 64 percent and 33 percent of those ages 50-plus are also willing to switch providers.





## Research Overview

Research for the 2021 HIMSS survey, “Patient Communication Preferences in 2021,” was conducted in March 2021 to understand how U.S. consumers:

- Expect regular communication from their healthcare providers
- Have communicated with healthcare providers before and during the pandemic
- Prefer to be communicated with post pandemic

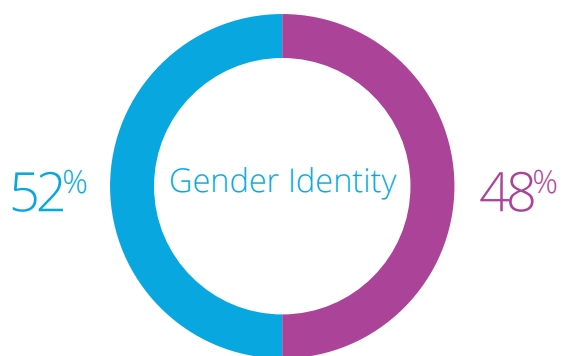
## Methodology

A total of 250 people completed the survey during March 2021.

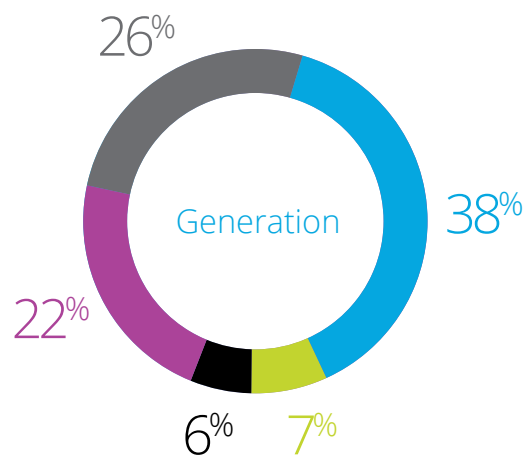
Consumers qualified for the survey by having an in-person, video, phone call, or text message communication with a healthcare provider in the past 12 months.

The survey pool represented a wide range of consumers along gender, age, and other census demographics. This was a blind data collection effort and no vendors were named.

## Demographic Profile



Male Female

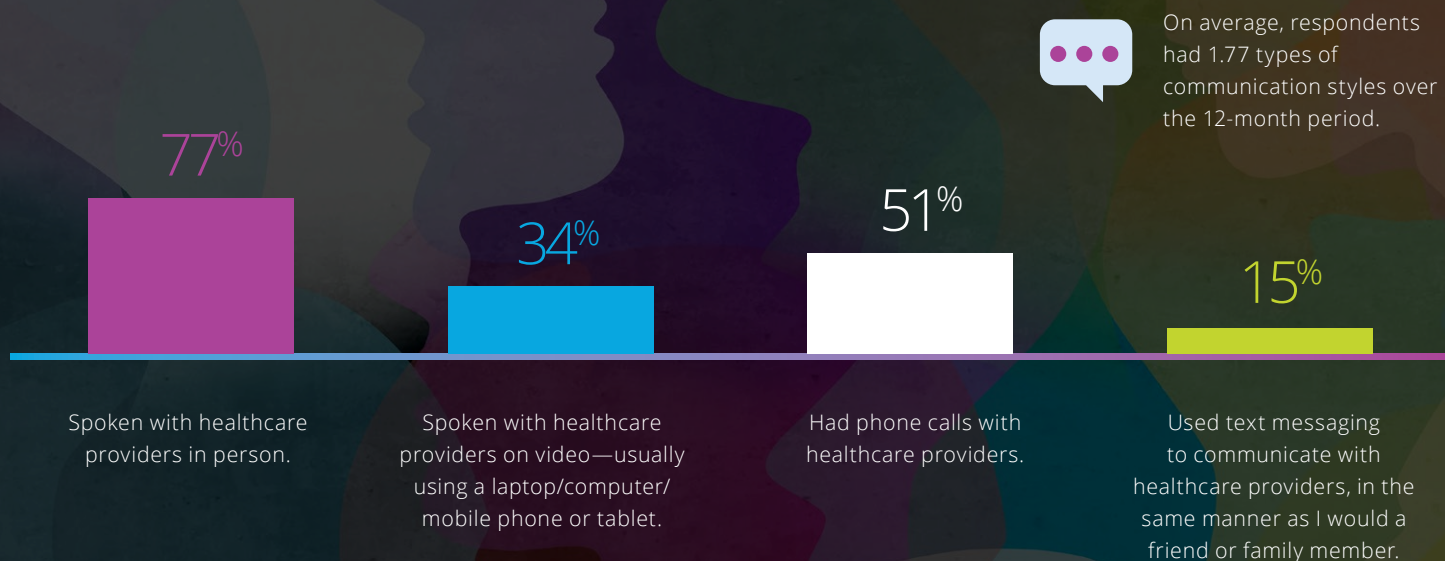


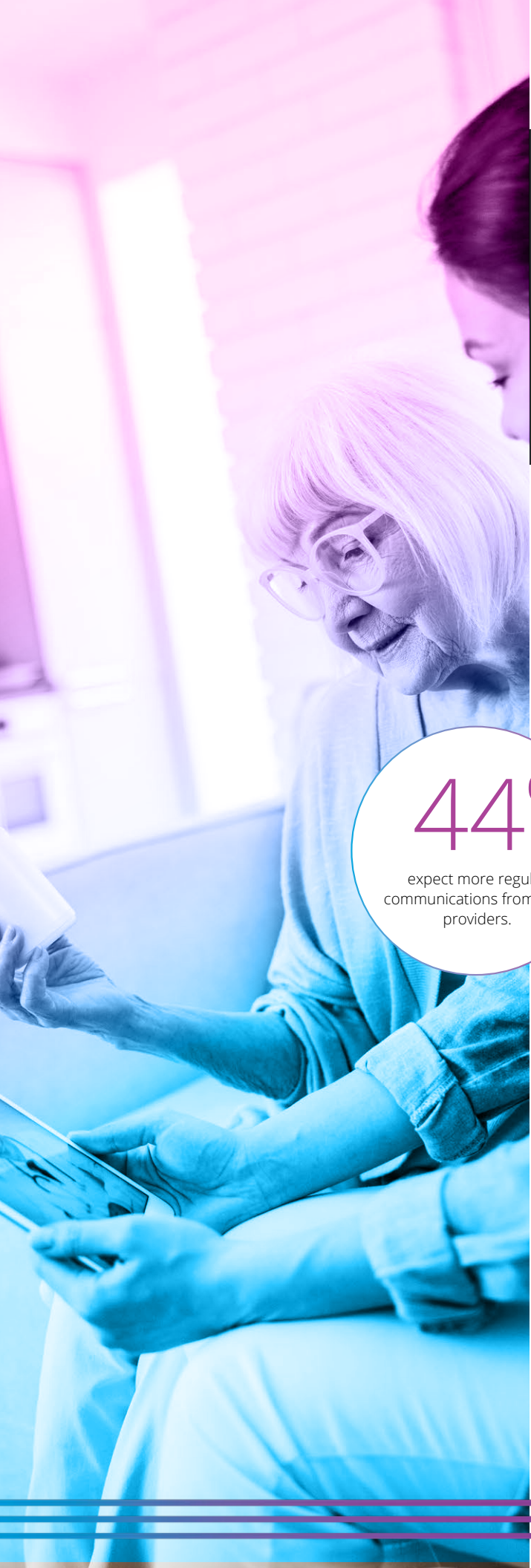
Gen Z [18-24] Millennial [25-40] Gen X [41-56]  
Boomer [57-74] Traditionalist [75-99]



## How Have Communication Preferences Changed?

Patients used a variety of communications with their healthcare provider in the first 12 months of the pandemic.

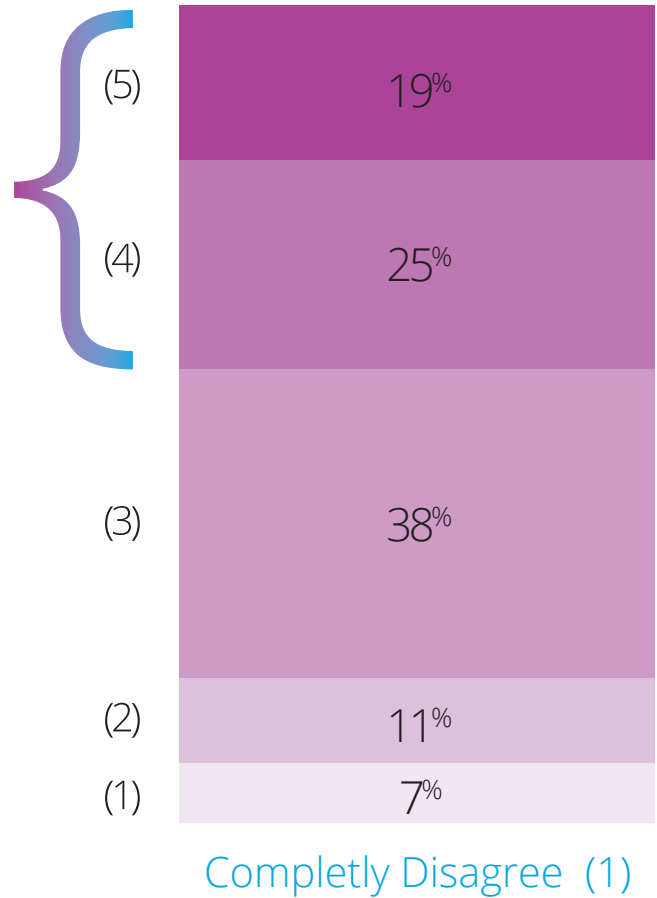




Since the pandemic, more than 4-in-10 agree that they expect more regular communication from their healthcare providers.

44%

expect more regular communications from their providers.



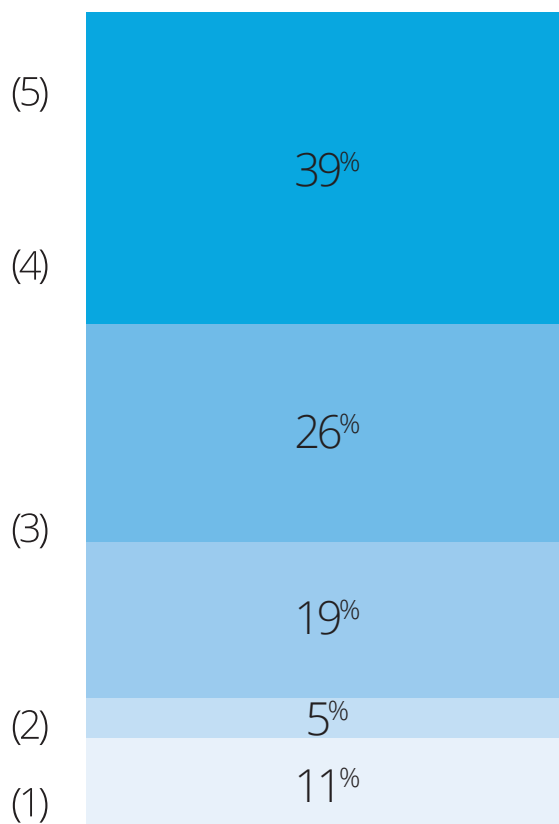


Patients want to receive text messages from their healthcare providers regarding appointment confirmations/reminders and pre-visit/care instructions or notifications.

59%

ages 50-plus want to receive healthcare text messages.

Strongly Agree (5)



65%

want to receive healthcare text messages.

Completely Disagree (1)



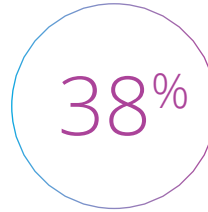
Nearly 6-in-10 of those ages 50-plus agree that they would like to receive text messages from their healthcare providers.



Approximately 1-in-2 prefer text messages post pandemic, and nearly 4-in-10 of those ages 50-plus also prefer text messages as a form of communication.



Text communication rose 14 percent during the pandemic.



Thirty-eight percent of those ages 50-plus would prefer to communicate with healthcare providers via text message, post pandemic.

Overall, the majority of patients enjoy text messages due to the convenience, specifically due to it being seen as an easier communication method that allows for quick/immediate viewing and prompt responses.

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### Easier

“Easier to keep track of than email.”

“Easy to communicate and express what you want.”

### Quick/Fast

“I can check the message immediately.”

“I can ask questions and typically receive a prompt response.”

### Convenient

“Allows communication & confirmation of appts easier than calling and being put on hold.”

“I can reply at my convenience.”

87%

said convenience was the reason they prefer text messaging with providers.

”





In order to receive more modern patient communication like text messages, over a third would be willing to switch providers.

Those under age 50 are the most likely to switch providers at 64 percent. However, one-third of those ages 50-plus are also willing to switch providers to receive more modern communication.

37%  
would be willing to switch  
healthcare providers to  
receive more modern  
communication.



(5)

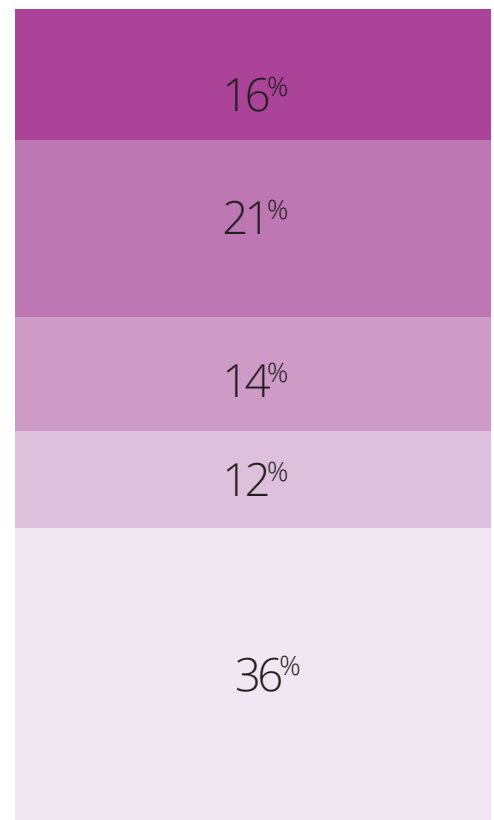
(4)

(3)

(2)

(1)

Strongly Agree (5)



Completely Disagree (1)



## Conclusion

This new research supports past studies that have shown patients have been steadily moving toward a desire for more digital communication and ongoing connection with healthcare providers. It also challenges preconceived notions that age or location reduce people's interest in options like text messaging.

All patients, regardless of age, want more convenient communication options. Many are willing to change providers to get it.



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