

Home Health Insights Study

INSIGHTS

Study Overview

The Home Health Insights (HHI) Study examines the knowledge, use and shifting mindset of consumers and licensed medical professionals regarding home healthcare. Conducted online by The Harris Poll®, Interim HealthCare commissioned this study to better understand consumer's knowledge of the scope of home healthcare services and how their sentiments may have changed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We interviewed 2,070 adults ages 18 and older, among whom 186 were licensed medical professionals.

HHI Study: A Paradigm Shift in Perspectives about Home Healthcare

Our study findings reveal that few Americans, overall, have used home healthcare services, possibly because a majority do not fully understand the spectrum of care it provides and their ability to receive it. The lack of knowledge that exists about the scope, value and expertise that home healthcare delivers to individuals at every stage of life is significant. Furthermore, there are clear disconnects about home healthcare's ability to provide care for specific health conditions ranging from chronic disease management to care for acute illnesses and long-term, complex medical care needs.



The pandemic produced a whole new set of perspectives about the way care is delivered, shining the spotlight on the value of home-based care. Consumers and medical professionals alike are beginning to see home healthcare as a choice model of care.

The study looks at the current realities of home healthcare and the factors that are leading to a paradigm shift in the way people view it:

- Users of home healthcare
- Lack of knowledge about home healthcare
- Disconnects about home healthcare for specific health conditions
- The increasing value of home healthcare
- A shift in the way we view home healthcare

Users of Home Healthcare

While home healthcare offers a cost-effective, higher quality of care to the individuals who receive it, less than a third of Americans have ever utilized it for themselves or a loved one. Comparatively, this number more than doubles for licensed medical professionals, likely due to their insight into the knowledge and value it delivers. Even more interesting is the fact that the majority of Americans would have considered it as an alternative to hospital-based care had they known it was an option.

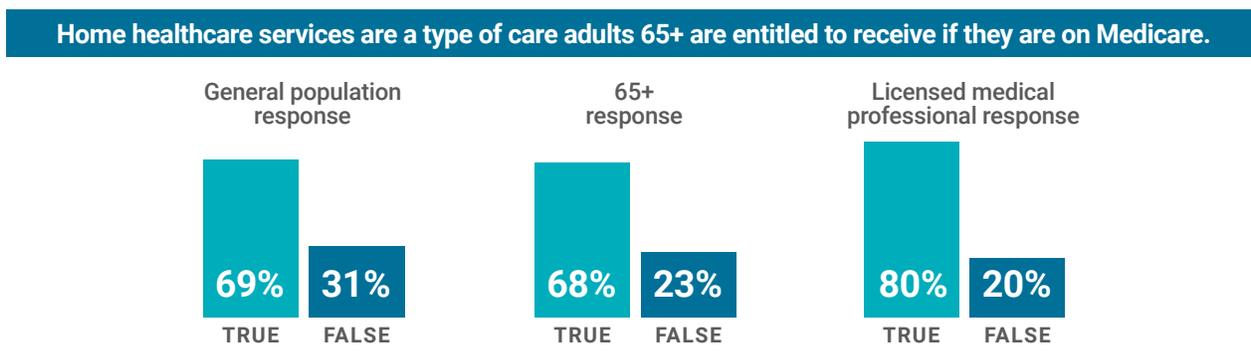
This suggests that the use of home healthcare is largely impacted by an individual's knowledge of the care it provides and who can receive it. Since the beginning of the pandemic, many Americans have assumed the role of an unpaid caregiver to family and friends, which likely has opened their eyes to the need that exists and the value that home healthcare provides.

65% of Americans would have considered home healthcare as an alternative to a hospital stay in the past if they had known it was an option.

- Only 30% of Americans have used home healthcare for themselves or a loved one, in comparison to 66% of licensed medical professionals.
- 26% of Americans have talked with a healthcare provider about home healthcare options for themselves or a loved one, versus 64% of licensed medical professionals who have done so.
- 19% of Americans have been an unpaid caregiver (i.e., provided care for a loved one who is sick or injured, or requires extra support at home) to a friend/family member at least once since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic; 48% of licensed medical professionals have done the same.

Lack of Knowledge About Home Healthcare

In the past two years, the pandemic has shifted the spotlight to home healthcare as a means to keep loved ones safe, but there is still a clear lack of knowledge about the scope of care it delivers and the eligibility of those who receive it. Often, people don't know it's an option until a physician prescribes it. Many believe home healthcare is just for seniors, and remain unaware of its ability to treat medical needs across a full continuum of care. Moreover, only a fraction of Medicare recipients 65+ realize they are entitled to these services. There are also huge misconceptions about hospice and its ability to treat a person who is not facing imminent death or the quality of life it offers patients in the comfort of home. This deficit of knowledge has likely led many to miss out on the benefits home healthcare delivers.



- Nearly one third of Americans (29%) believe home healthcare services are only intended for seniors/aging adults
- 74% of Americans believe that hospice care is brought in only when a patient has reached end-of-life stage and death is inevitable.

Disconnects About Home Healthcare for Specific Health Conditions

While home healthcare is often associated with senior care, it extends to so many other facets of care—from care for acute illnesses like COVID-19 to complex, medical care for children to specialized care for chronic diseases, dementia and hospice. In fact, nearly all of the technology and clinical excellence of the hospital is available at home, offering individuals one-on-one, quality care in the place they want to be. And, it is achieving remarkable results. In a study of 1,400 COVID-19 patients discharged from a hospital to home health services, 94 percent had significant improvements in symptom burden and outcomes.¹ Moreover, home healthcare is lowering readmission rates through patient education, early detection of issues and ensuring care plans are followed. The expertise it delivers to the full continuum of care is unrivaled—yet many just don't know.

**ONLY
28%**

of Americans believe home healthcare can provide care for acute illness like COVID-19, flu and pneumonia.

- More than 1 in 4 Americans (28%) are not aware that home healthcare is an option for caring for those with various chronic health conditions.
- Many Americans don't know that home healthcare is an option for the medically complex, such as those with ALS or spinal cord injuries (62% each).
- Only 44% of Americans, and 45% of licensed medical professionals, believe care for those with long-term pediatric care needs can be provided through home healthcare.

The Increasing Value of Home Healthcare

Study findings reveal the majority of seniors believe home healthcare would allow them to live a higher quality of life. This is a key factor in the decision-making process for where care is delivered. The pandemic has solidified this belief even further, enabling seniors to stay safe at home, where family and friends can visit and care is personalized. In choosing a home health provider, there is a definite preference for companies that provide the full continuum of care, which allows care to be adapted to an individual's changing health needs. As the need for home-based care grows, the majority of licensed medical professionals say they consider it as an option for patient care and recovery—especially those age 65 and older.

79%

of seniors ages 65+ say their quality of life would be significantly better if they could receive healthcare at home as opposed to at a hospital or nursing facility if they needed it.

- 90% of licensed medical professionals say they always consider home healthcare services as an option for their patients' care or recovery.
- 82% of Americans say if they needed medical and non-medical support services at home, they would prefer to receive services from a single company equipped to provide both versus multiple companies.

¹ <https://www.nursing.upenn.edu/details/news.php?id=1784>

A Shift in the Way We View Home Healthcare

The way consumers and medical professionals view home healthcare has shifted significantly since the onset of the pandemic. Those admitted into hospitals and nursing facilities received good care, but it came with barriers. They were isolated from family and friends and the fear of dying alone gripped many seniors. Medical professionals stood on the frontline, putting their own lives at risk for the good of others. And, many of them held the hands of patients during their final hours of life, reinforcing the importance of their role and reminding them of why they pursued this career in the first place. It tugged at the hearts of many in different ways and changed the way we think about home healthcare. For some, it opened the door to a new location for care, and for others, it opened their mind to a new career path where they could provide one-on-one, patient-centered care at home and make a difference every day.

74%

of licensed medical professionals have considered a career shift to home healthcare at one point in their medical career.

71%

of licensed medical professionals report that the COVID-19 pandemic has led them to consider a career shift to home healthcare as a way to reconnect with why they got into healthcare in the first place.

- 67% of Americans agree the pandemic has led them to think differently about their own healthcare options or those of a loved one.
- A majority of Americans agree the pandemic has changed their preferences, with 82% saying when thinking about end-of-life care plans, they would prefer to pass away at home versus in a hospital more now than they did prior to the pandemic.
- 61% of Americans fear dying alone more now than they did prior to the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Home is quickly become the center of our healthcare system. There are so many benefits to be gained, from one-on-one patient care and improved health outcomes to reduced hospital readmission rates and a higher quality of care in the place people want to be. This study sheds light on the value of home healthcare for individuals at various stages of life and health—from pediatric care and adult nursing to home health, senior care and hospice. As the knowledge of home healthcare and its value increases, we are likely to see an even greater number of consumers and medical professionals embracing it as a choice model of care.

Survey Method:

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Interim HealthCare from September 14-16, 2021 among 2,070 U.S. adults ages 18 and older, among whom 186 are licensed medical professionals. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact marketing@interimhealthcare.com.