



Virtual Care in Manitoba and Canada

August 19, 2021



Summary

Virtual visits by phone or video were approved in March 2020 by the Manitoba government to help continue medical care as COVID-19 entered the province, but they were only approved for use during the pandemic. Additional types of visits were approved for virtual care as the second wave approached, following advocacy from Doctors Manitoba. Since March 2020, there have been over 3.1 million virtual visits with physicians in Manitoba.

New research confirms the rapid adoption of virtual care, a high degree of satisfaction with virtual visits, and overwhelming support among physicians and the public for virtual options to remain in a post-pandemic health system.

This research includes a report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), a study from Canada Health Infoway, and a Probe Research public survey commissioned by Doctors Manitoba earlier this year.

The key findings across this research include:

- About 86% of physicians in Manitoba offered virtual visits during the pandemic (CIHI).
- There is strong satisfaction with virtual care, including 90% of Manitobans (Probe Research) and 79% of Manitoba physicians (Infoway)
- There is overwhelming support to see virtual care continue as an option after the pandemic, including 99% of Manitoba physicians (Infoway) and 90% of patients (Probe)

Research & Methods

This report relies on extensive research:

- [CIHI Report on virtual care adoption](#) (August 19, 2021)
- [Canada Health Infoway National Physician Survey report on virtual care](#) (August 12, 2021)
2,071 responses including 114 responses from Manitoba
- Probe Research survey of Manitoba adults
Conducted April 5 to 14, 2021
1,000 respon
- Analysis of Virtual Care Use in Manitoba

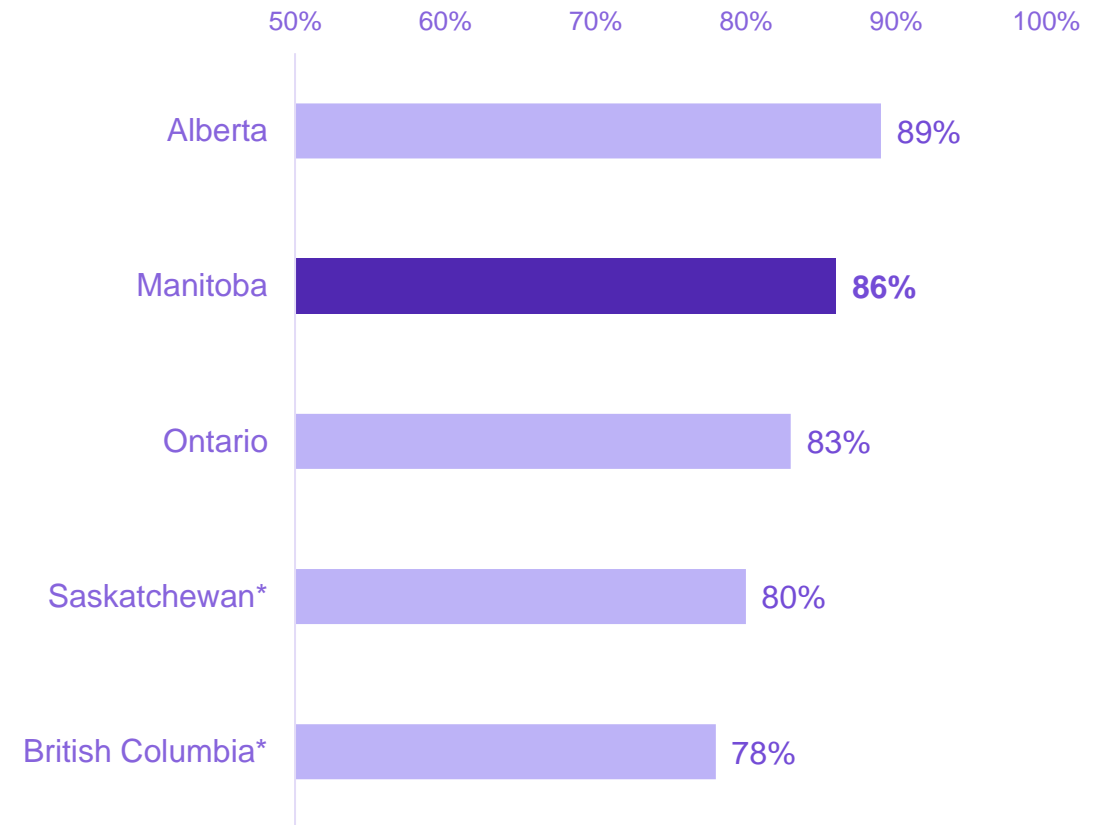


Virtual Care Adoption

CIHI reports that between 86% and 88% of Manitoba physicians offered virtual care services between April and December, 2020. Among the five provinces included, this was the second highest level of uptake.

This is consistent with the National Physician Survey released by Canada Health Infoway, which found 89% of doctors in Manitoba currently offer virtual care, though they found the average across Canada to be much higher at 94%.

Percentage of Physicians Offering Virtual Visits
(Average from April to December 2020)



Source: CIHI. Note: The average of monthly totals is reported above.

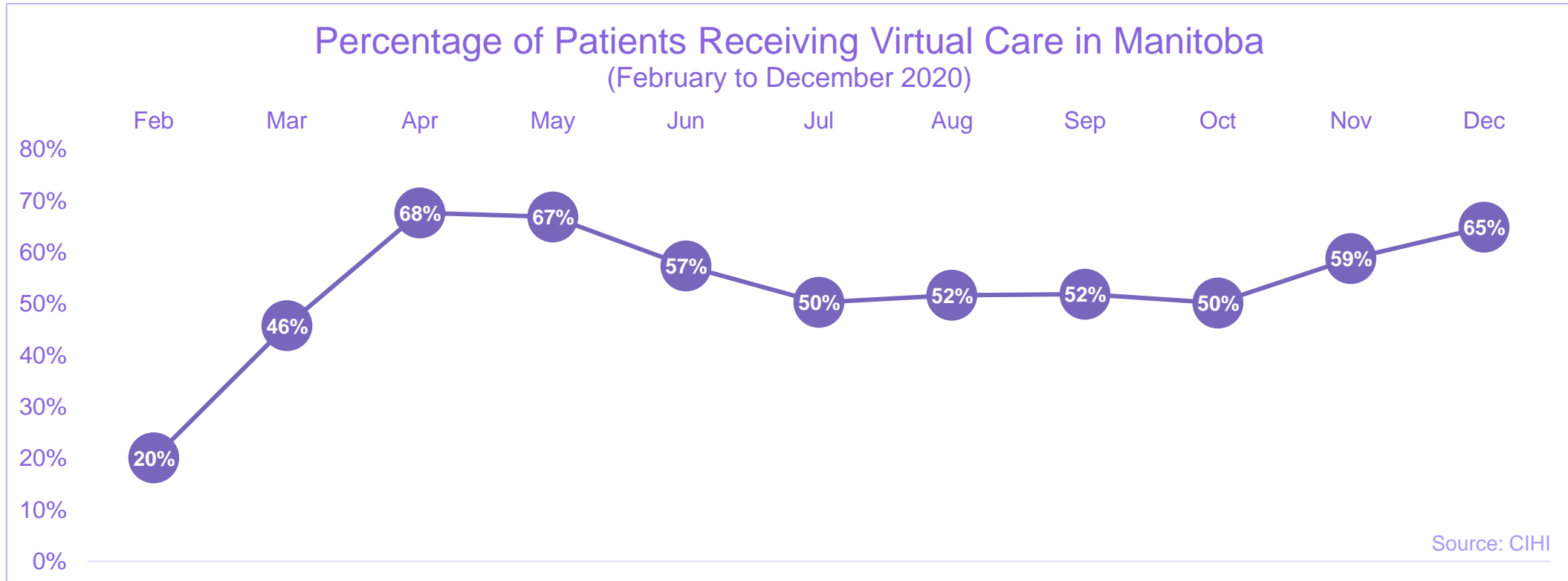
* Data for Saskatchewan only reported to October 2020. Data for BC only reported to September 2020.



Virtual Care Use During Pandemic

Virtual Care was approved for widespread use in March 2020 as COVID-19 arrived in Manitoba. During the first wave and beginning of the second wave, about two thirds of patients received at least some of their care virtually. Even between the two waves, about half of patients received at least care virtually.

CIHI found that between half and two thirds of patients had a virtual visit during the pandemic last year. This is consistent with the Probe survey of Manitobans, which found 63% had a virtual visit with a doctor.



Modes of Virtual Care

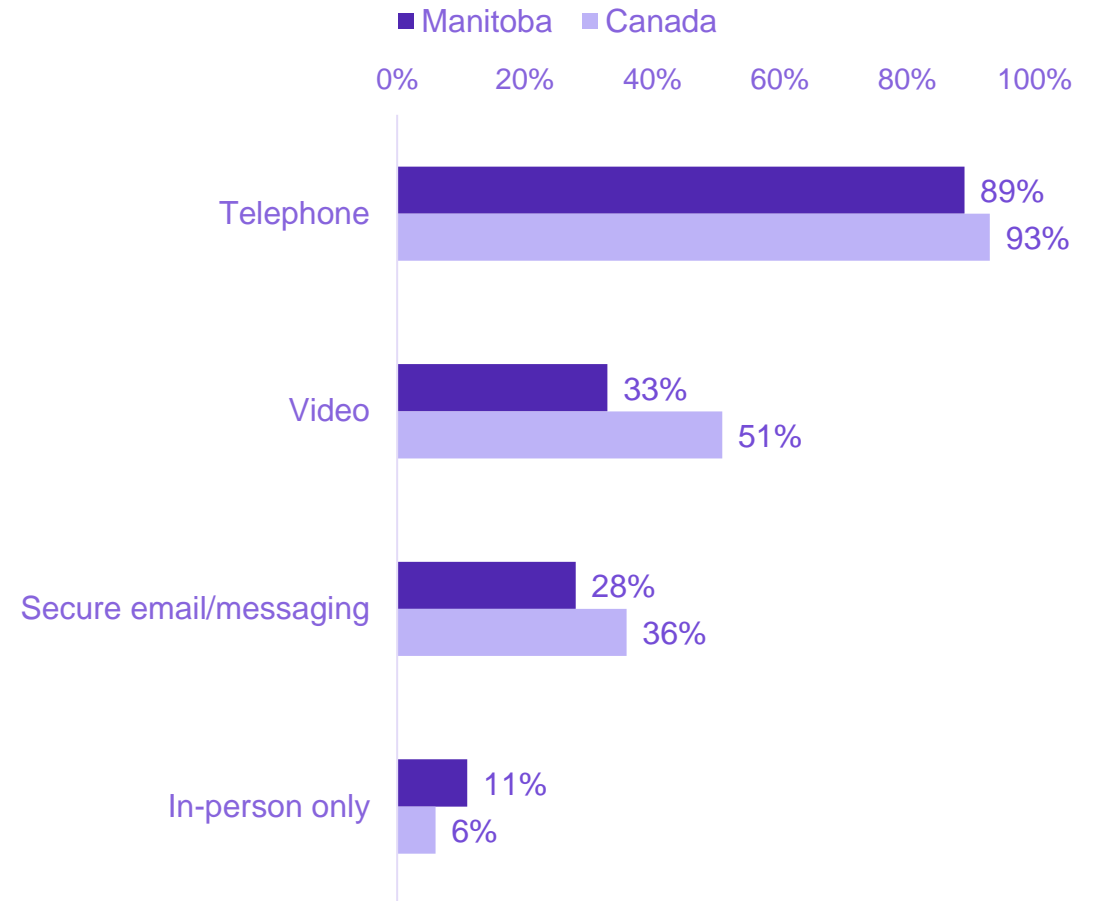
Telephone visits were most common, used by 89% of physicians in Manitoba, compared to 93% across Canada.

One third of Manitoba physicians used video visits, far fewer than their peers across Canada. This could be because of stronger support in other provinces, such as in BC, to provide licenses and support for the rapid introduction of secure video visits.

There is a strong interest across Canada to use secure email/messaging more often. Physicians estimate that 13% of their phone/video visits could be handled equally well by email or messaging.

The Probe Survey of Manitobans found that 66% would find email an acceptable option for virtual interaction with a physician, with 51% for text messages.

Types of virtual care offered by physicians (Manitoba and Canada)



Source: Canada Health Infoway

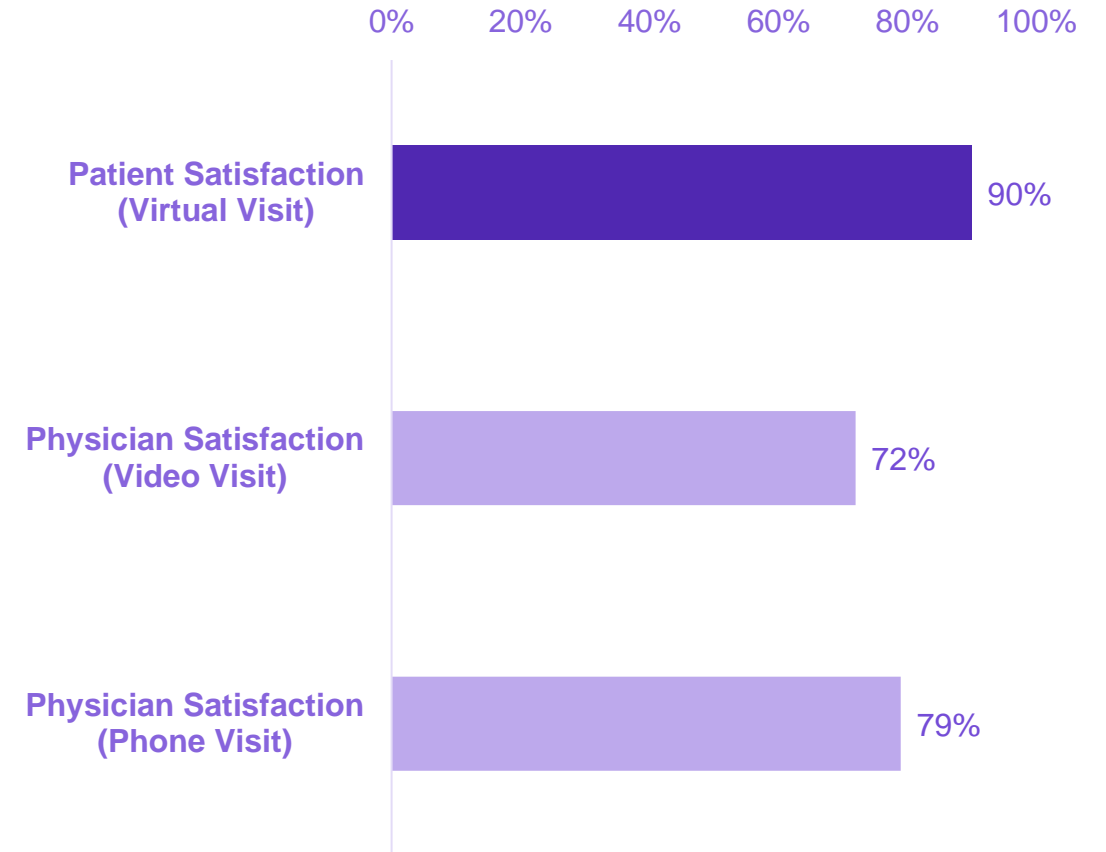
Satisfaction with Virtual Care

Both patients and physicians have been strongly satisfied with virtual care so far:

- 90% of patients are very or somewhat satisfied with virtual doctor visit (Probe Research)
- 79% of Manitoba physicians are very or somewhat satisfied with telephone visits and 72% with video visits (Infoway)

Physicians identified several challenges or barriers to virtual care use, including the need for in-person examination in some cases, communication challenges, and some technical challenges for video visits.

Patient and Physicians Satisfaction with Virtual Care



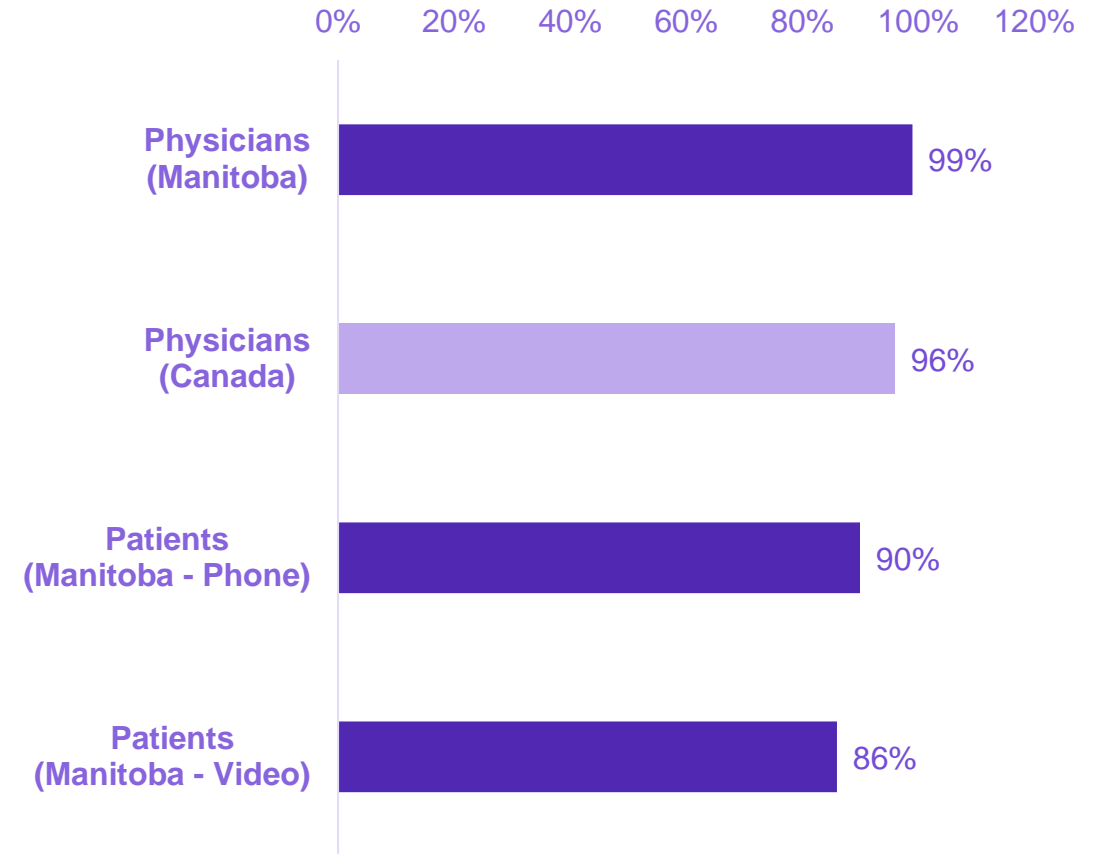
Source: Manitoba Physician Satisfaction from Canada Health Infoway
Patient Satisfaction from Probe Research

Support for Virtual Care after Pandemic

Both patients and physicians overwhelmingly support virtual care as an option after the pandemic:

- 99% of physicians in Manitoba indicated they anticipate using virtual care after the pandemic, with 22% anticipating increasing its use and 42% planning to maintain its level of use (Infoway).
- 90% of patients indicated phone visits would be an acceptable option after the pandemic, with 86% seeing video visits as acceptable (Probe)

Patient and Physicians Support for Virtual Care after Pandemic



Source: Physician views from Canada Health Infoway, indicating anticipated use of virtual care after pandemic. Patient views from Probe Research survey, indicating phone or virtual visits as acceptable options.

Methodological Notes

The Canadian Institute for Health Information Report, released August 19, 2021, uses physician billing claims submitted to each province's ministry of health for insured services under the provincial medical care plan.

The report can be accessed at <https://www.cihi.ca/en/health-workforce-in-canada-highlights-of-the-impact-of-covid-19/increase-in-virtual-care-services>.

The Canada Health Infoway report is based on a National Physician Survey, which was conducted online in April and May with 2,071 responses from family physicians, specialists and medical residents. Manitoba physicians accounted for 5% (114) of the responses. A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey. For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size would have a margin of error $\pm 2.12\%$, 19 times out of 20. Breakouts of Manitoba results would have a larger margin of error.

The report can be accessed at <https://www.infoway-inforoute.ca/en/component/edocman/resources/reports/benefits-evaluation/3935-2021-national-survey-of-canadian-physicians>.

The Probe Research survey was commissioned by Doctors Manitoba and was conducted online from April 5 to 14, 2021. The survey included a sample of 1,000 adults using Probe's panel, and included other questions already released about vaccination. An online survey is not random, so no margin-of-error can be ascribed. However, a random and representative non-convenience sample of 1,000 adults would have a margin of error of ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.