

Doctor Dodgers

Reconnecting People with Primary Care



mower

Primary care is the cornerstone of healthcare.

It's where small issues are identified before they become big problems, and where patients are truly known on a personal level. Primary care doctors become experts in their patients' health in ways that aren't always possible in the high-stakes environment of acute care.

However, there's a significant population that has drifted away from primary care. However, there's a significant population that has drifted away from primary care—**doctor dodgers***. These individuals likely had a primary care doctor at some point, most certainly during their childhood. But, for various reasons, they've become disconnected from regular care.

We wanted to find out why. So, in Spring 2024, Mower conducted a survey of more than 1,000 commercially-insured adults ages 27+. Our research aims to shed light on who they are, so you can better serve them.

Survey at a glance:

1,053
total respondents

784
have a regular doctor (74%)

289
do not have a regular doctor (26%)

Understanding Doctor Dodgers

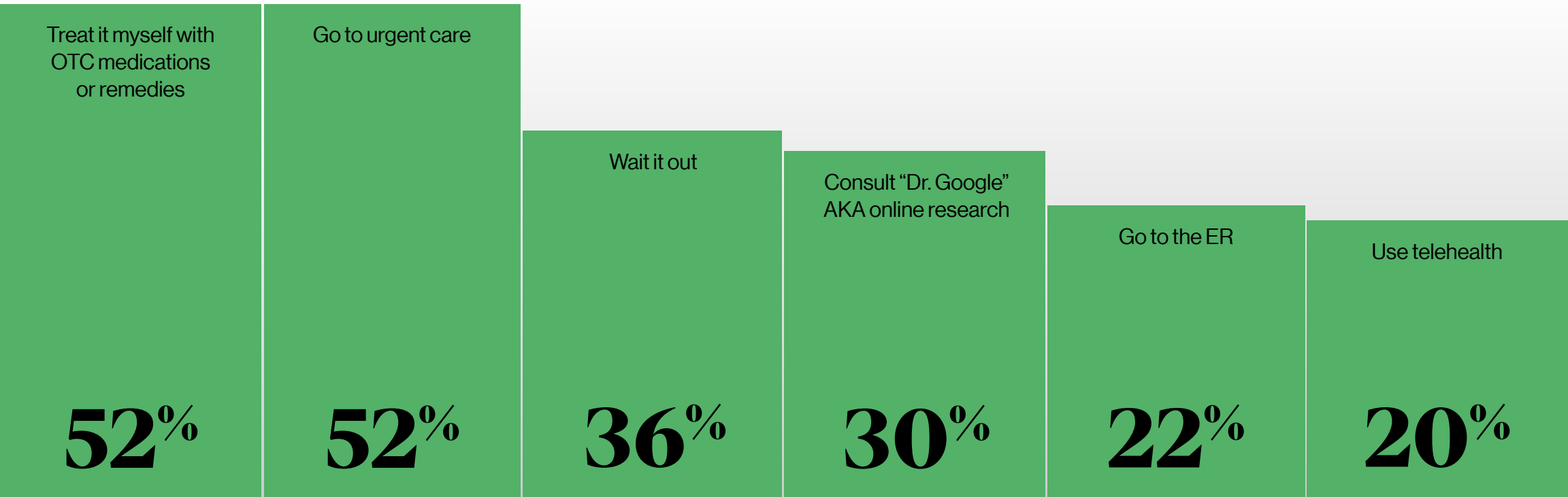
Of the 26% of adults surveyed without a regular doctor, we wanted to get to know them a bit more.

So we asked them questions like ...



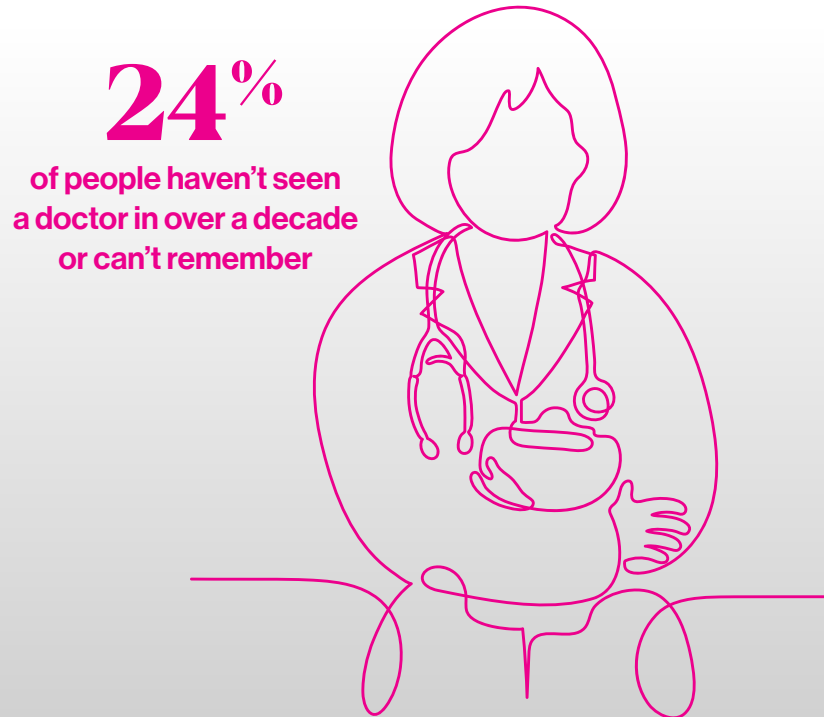
What do you do when you get sick or injured?

Most people we surveyed without a regular doctor end up becoming their own doctor when they get sick or injured—with over half reporting they treat it themselves with over-the-counter (OTC) options. If that isn't enough, they head to urgent care or tough it out.



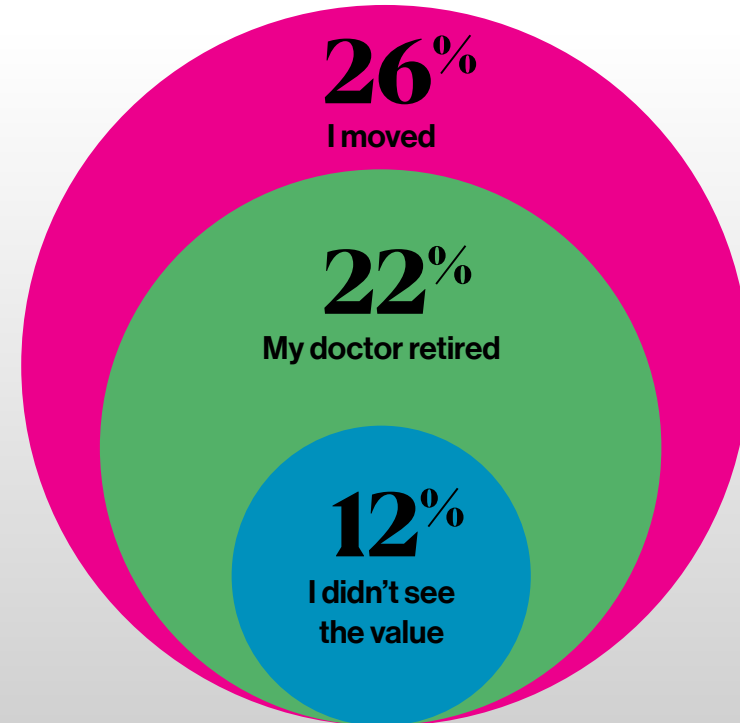
Did you ever have a regular doctor?

74% of adults we asked had a regular doctor at some point in their lives, and 50% have seen a regular doctor in the past 3 years.



If you used to have a regular doctor, what happened?

Those who stopped seeing a doctor most often cited moving as a reason for the last relationship to end. Some people didn't see the value in having a regular doctor. (Insurance was only cited as an issue in 9% of cases.)



Why don't you have a regular doctor?

Among reasons cited, the top choices were “I don't like going to the doctor,” “I don't need one,” and “It's too expensive.” Accessibility concerns were also a factor for some respondents, including the difficulty of finding a doctor.

35%

I'm healthy,
I don't need one

27%

It's too expensive

23%

I'm too busy or haven't
made time to find one

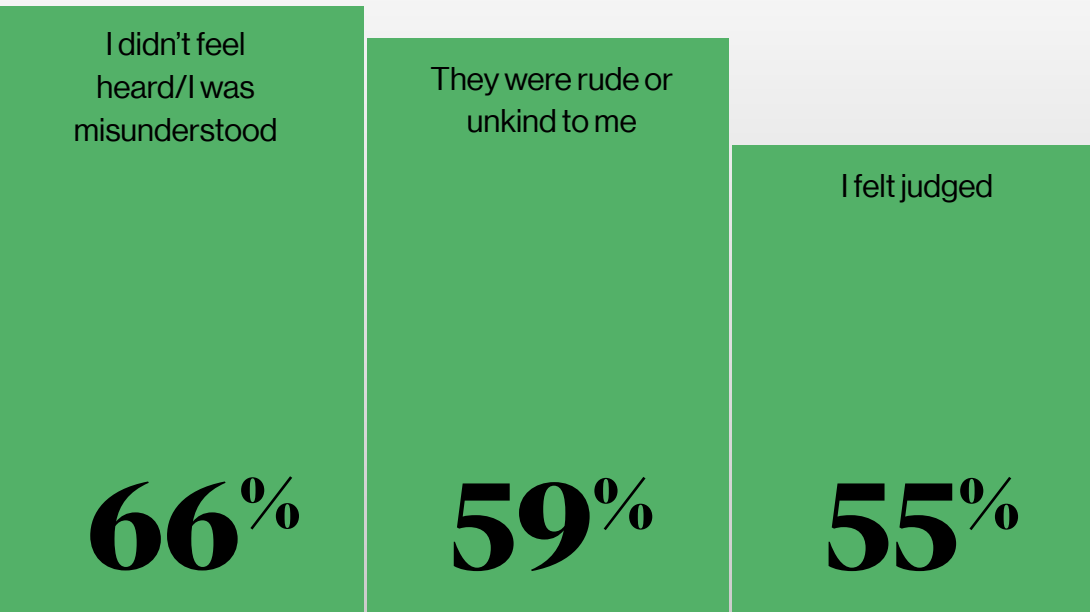
19%

It's difficult to know a good
doctor from a bad one



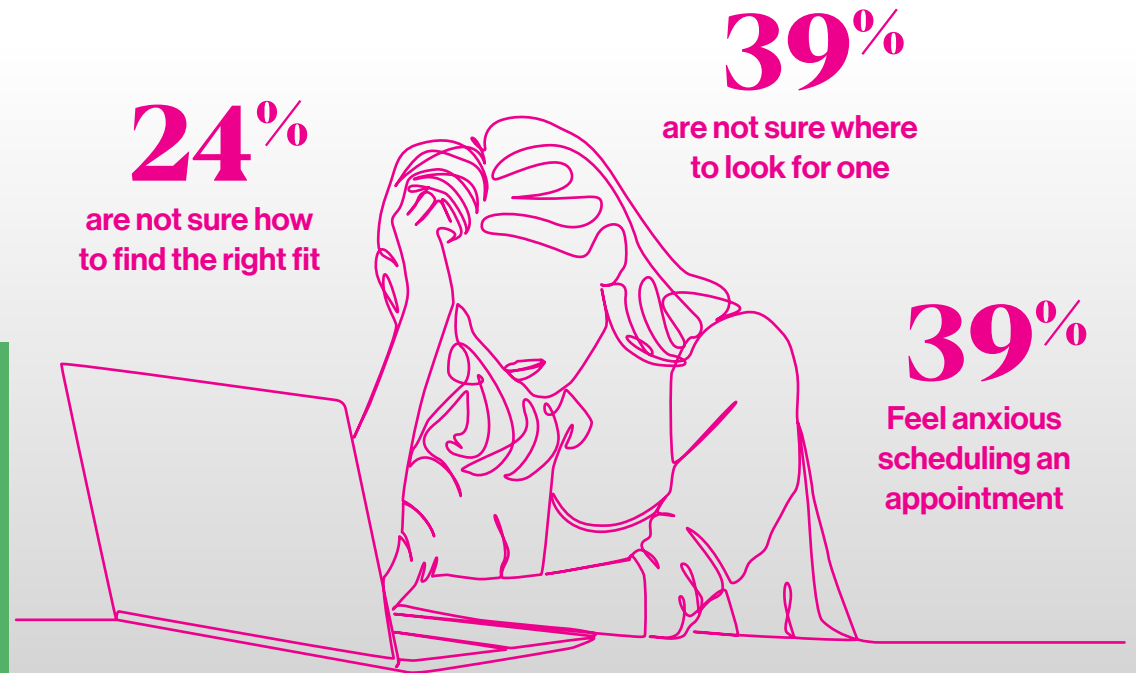
What negative experiences have you had in the past?

While it was a relatively uncommon reason to cite not having a regular doctor, those who had negative experiences relate feeling unheard or judged, or feeling that their doctor was rude or unkind.



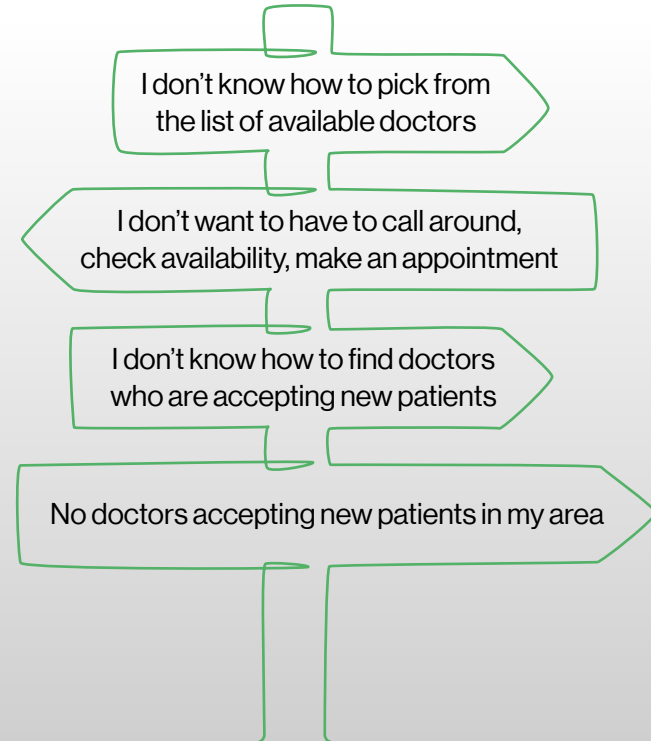
What other difficulties are you having?

Overwhelmingly, those who found it difficult to find a doctor or make an appointment said they didn't know how to find a good doctor that's the right fit for them.



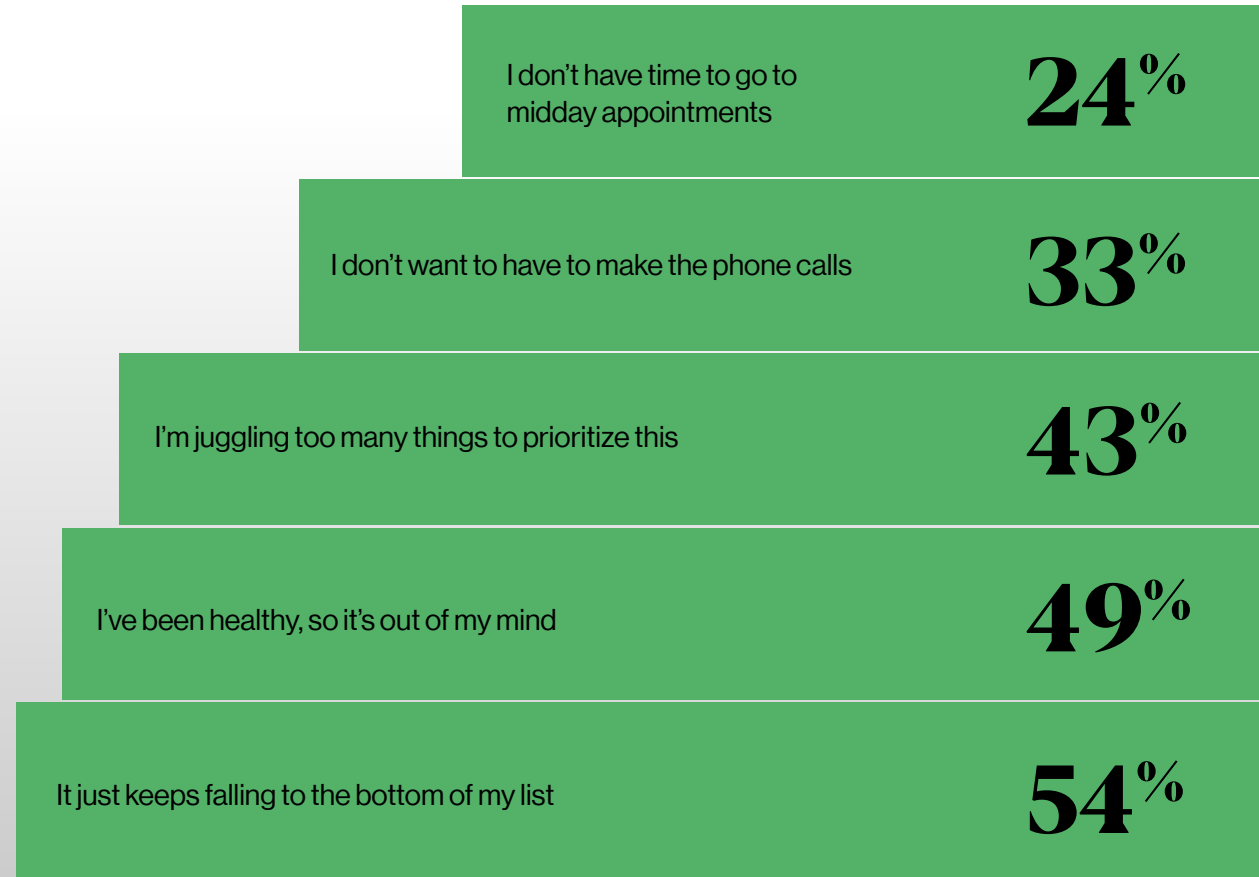
Why are you having trouble finding a doctor?

Half of people are having trouble finding a regular doctor because there aren't any accepting new patients in their area. Overall, they cite the hassle of finding primary care.



What's keeping you from making time to find a doctor?

Among adults who said they were too busy to find a doctor, most cite scheduling conflicts as key factors.



Do you feel it's important to have a regular doctor?

7 in 10 adults without a current doctor somewhat or strongly agree that having a regular doctor would make it easier for them to manage future health conditions and allow them to develop a relationship with someone who knows their medical history.



Make it easier for me to manage any future medical conditions



Make it easier for me to manage chronic or ongoing health conditions



Allow me to develop a relationship with someone who is familiar with my medical history



If you said you don't like going to the doctor, why's that?

Out of the choices we provided, one simple response rose to the top: fear. Other top responses include long wait times and too much paperwork to fill out.

It makes me nervous or anxious

I'm worried they'll judge me or they're too impersonal

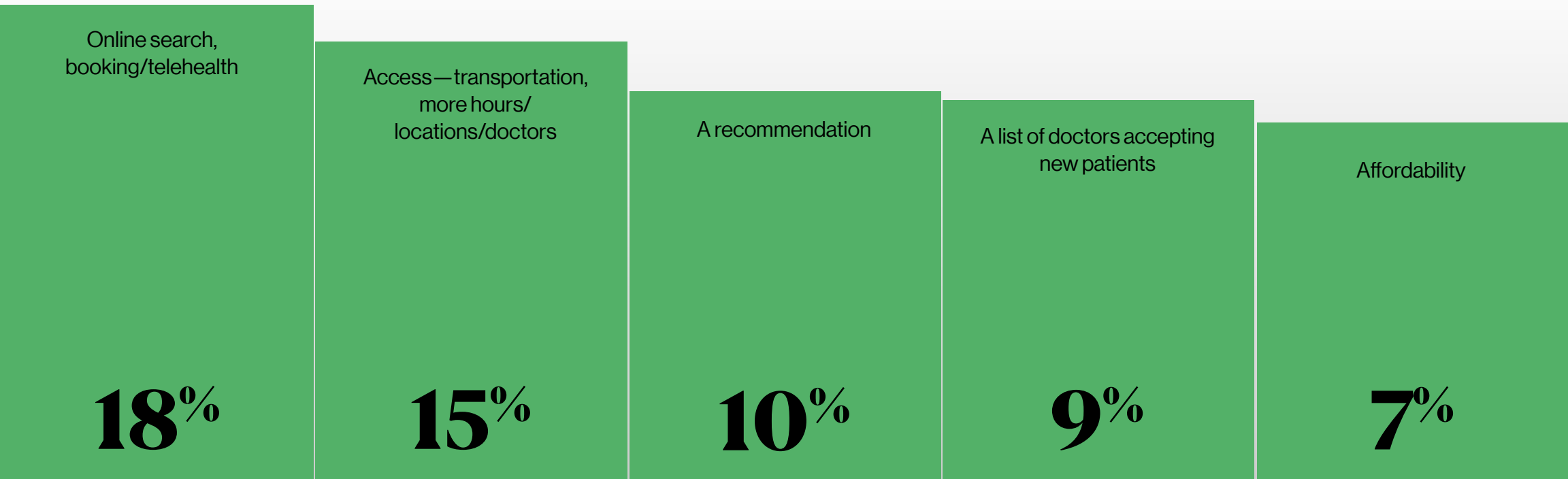
I have to wait too long to be seen

I don't like the paperwork and answering the same questions over and over

I don't feel like anything ever gets answered

What would make it easier for you to find a doctor and schedule an appointment?

Accessibility was a key theme of these responses, with things like the ability to search and book online as well as more convenient hours and more doctor options.



Reconnecting with Doctor Dodgers

Our Prescription:

There's a perceived burden associated with care.

While sifting through our results, one thing became clear — care doesn't feel much like “care” to doctor dodgers. The solution? It all comes down to removing the burden. Specifically, we've identified three key areas to help alleviate the pain points and reconnect people with primary care.

Rx#1 Better articulate the benefits

Rx#2 Address appointment anxiety

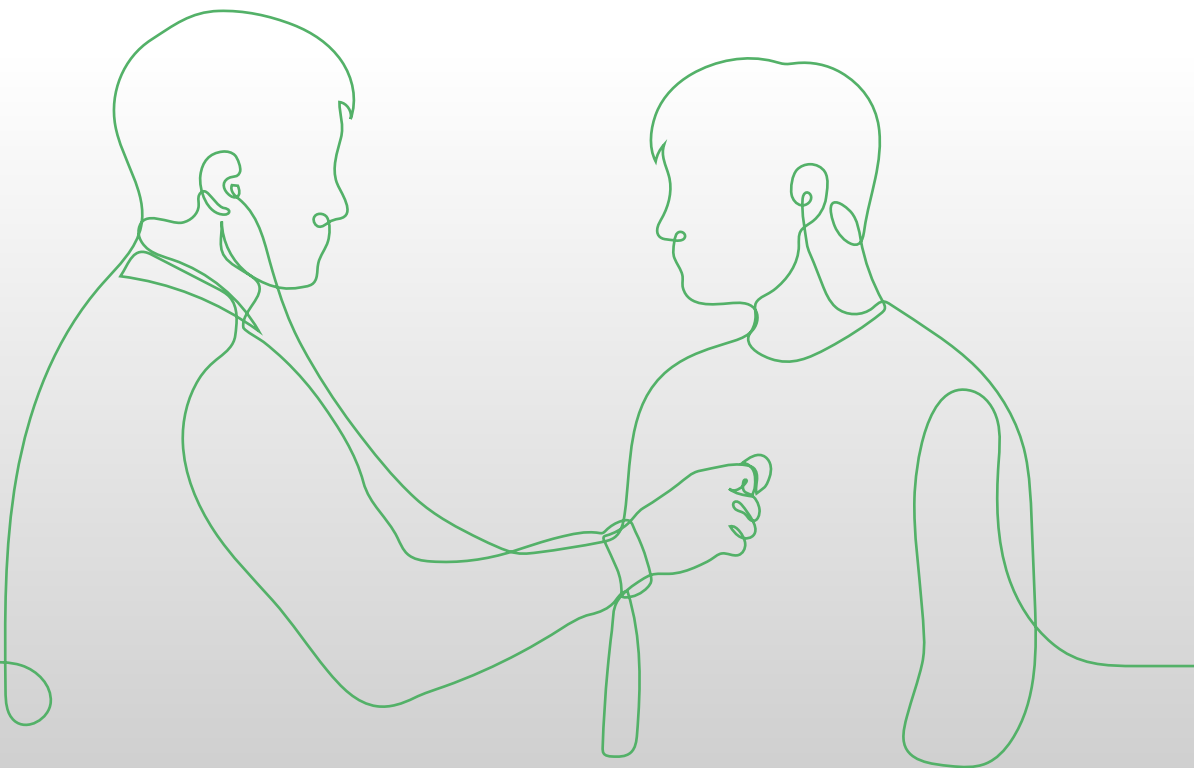
Rx#3 Make it all easier

Rx#1 **Better articulate the benefits of a regular doctor**

Most doctor dodgers in our survey agree there are benefits to having a regular doctor—which means underscoring these benefits and positive outcomes can drive more adults to seek a regular doctor relationship.

Consider:

- Sharing the benefits of a regular doctor understanding their health over time
- Educating on the added cost of an urgent care/ ED visit versus having a regular doctor
- Framing a regular doctor relationship as an investment in their current and future selves
- Reinforcing that many insurance companies now require a PCP listed (and may reward their members for having one)

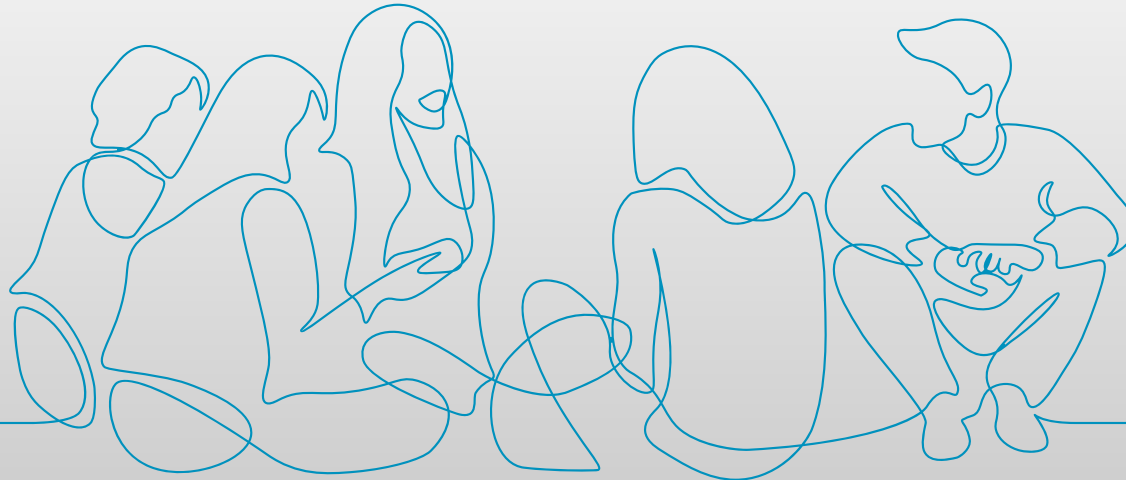


Rx#2 Address “Appointment Anxiety”

Anxiety and nervousness around scheduling and attending appointments is a primary driver of not having a current doctor, so identifying ways to alleviate that anxiety could help to encourage more effort and outreach.

Consider:

- Maximizing online resources and self-serve tools around locating doctors and scheduling appointments
- Approachable content during the consideration phase, such as brief written or video introductions
- Services that aim to match patients with appropriate doctors based on their personal needs and preferences
- Ensuring waiting areas and other patient-facing areas are welcoming spaces



Some respondents express frustration with finding doctors, identifying those accepting new patients, and successfully booking appointments. Others note that life's demands often interfere, making the process even more difficult. Streamlining this experience can make a real difference. Opportunities to improve access include partnering with real estate agents to assist people new to an area, ensuring insurance companies are aware when you're accepting new patients, and establishing clear policies for accommodating patients when their provider retires.

Furthermore, telehealth remains a natural expansion opportunity. In our survey, respondents strongly favored telehealth services.

Expanding telehealth opportunities

80%

of adults said they've had a positive experience with telehealth

46%

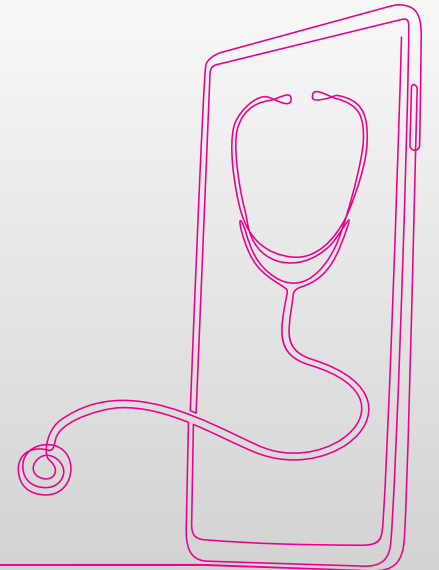
said they would use it again for simple questions about common illnesses

31%

would use for medical advice outside regular office hours

23%

would be willing to use it for most visits



We're here to connect

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