



Healthy living at your fingertips: How willingly are Europeans embracing digital healthcare solutions?

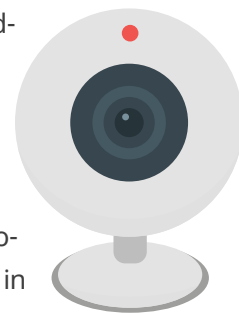
- Approval for remote treatment on the rise after dip during Covid
- Roughly 2 in 3 Europeans (64 percent) can now imagine availing themselves of treatment via webcam
- Readiness to embrace online consultations correlates heavily with level of urbanisation
- Most popular uses of health apps include cooking, monitoring quality of sleep and mental health

“The doctor will see you now” – soon to be a statement of the past? Perhaps, if it was up to Europeans. Today, 64 percent of them can imagine being treated remotely, e. g. via webcam, for a minor disease or secondary illness. A major argument in favour of such online consultations? The possibility to save time otherwise spent traveling or waiting for an appointment, which factors in heavily for 32 percent of Europeans. An identically large share say they can imagine giving treatment via webcam a go depending on the type of condition they are suffering from. In spite of their acceptance, reservations against such digital healthcare solutions prevail, with over one third of European adults (36 percent) rejecting the idea of only connecting with their doctor through a screen.

Through the years, approval for remote treatment has oscillated. Before Covid spread across Europe in the spring of 2020, 70 percent of adults were willing to connect with their doctor digitally for a consultation.

In the following year, a certain digital fatigue became evident on the continent, with willingness for remote treatment plummeting to 57 percent. One possible explanation: after an entire year of organising and living their professional and social lives online due to the pandemic, personal interaction with healthcare providers had become more important for Europeans.

Despite this year’s overall increase in readiness to give online consultations a go, there are considerable differences in attitude on a national level. Portugal (86 percent), Romania (79 percent) and Spain (78 percent) are the strongest proponents of webcam treatment. In Italy, seven in ten adults (71 percent) could imagine giving it a try, of whom two in five (39 percent) would decide depending on the condition they require treatment for. Austrians and Germans (55 percent each) as well as Czechs (54 percent) are among the more reluctant participants, with Belgium bringing up the rear: they are the only one of the 15 participating countries in which less than half of the population (47 percent) are open to this treatment option.



64 % of Europeans consider digital treatment via webcam or the internet.

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Desire for personal interaction major stumbling block for concept of remote treatment

The strongest argument against remote treatment is the lack of personal interaction with a doctor: for 20 percent of Europeans, this is reason enough to decline the idea altogether. This attitude is felt most strongly in Belgium, where more than three in ten adults (31 percent), would subscribe to the importance of personal interaction with their doctor. The same applies to well over one in four adults in the Czech Republic, Germany and the Netherlands (all 27 percent). Another driver for the importance of personal contact with doctors is location of residence. Face to face appointments are most valued in precisely those regions where it perhaps most difficult – rural settings. Here, more than one in four (26 percent) European adults cite such interaction as a reason not to use webcam consultations, compared to one in five (20 percent) of all Europeans. The 44 percent of rural dwellers generally not willing to use online consultations is considerably higher than the 32 percent in urban areas (36 percent overall).

Health apps not suitable for the masses

Digital applications allow for tracking of all kinds of health-related habits like working out, balanced cooking or to track sleeping patterns. With the wide variety that is available comes to question who uses such applications – and for what purposes? Just under one in five Europeans report they regularly get inspiration for healthy recipes or track their eating habits by means of an app. In Romania, this applies to 28 percent of adults, compared to only 13 percent of Germans. Also, women tend to turn to cooking apps slightly more frequently (22 percent) than men (17 percent). The second most popular use of health apps is monitoring sleep quality – a habit that 17 percent of Europeans regularly indulge in, most of whom live in Spain (23 percent). In Kazakhstan, only 11 percent bother to keep track of their nightly slumber. Finally, 16 percent of adults on the continent keep a digital log of their mental wellbeing or stress levels. Such apps are particularly popular in Italy and Portugal (25 percent). Just over one in ten Europeans (13 percent) use an app to either stay on top of relevant health alerts, like air quality, or to share relevant health information with their doctor (11 percent).

Overall – and perhaps unsurprisingly – use of health-related apps is more popular with digital natives aged 18 to 34. Among this age group, 28 percent say they regularly use cooking apps, and one in four monitor quality of sleep and mental wellbeing through apps. 37 percent of Europeans do not care for any type of health-related app, and 18 percent say they did not even know such apps existed.

