



Zocdoc

# What Patients Want

z.

A look at patient preferences, behaviors, and sentiments in 2025.

# Contents

## Section 1

---

Who is accessing care? 4

## Section 2

---

What do patients value in a provider? 8

## Section 3

---

Why are patients seeking care? 16

## Section 4

---

When do patients want to see the doctor? 22

## Section 5

---

Where are patients seeking care? 26

## Section 6

---

2025 Patient Empowerment Index 30

## Section 7

---

2026 Predictions 33

# Foreword

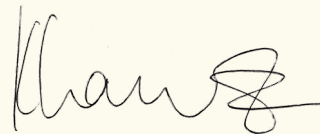
In 2007, Zocdoc began with a simple but ambitious mission: to give power to the patient. Eighteen years later, that mission feels more urgent—and more possible—than ever. Each month, millions of people use Zocdoc to find and book care across states, specialties, and insurance plans. Each click is a signal pointing to what patients want.

This year's report is full of those signals: patients are seeking more control amid rising costs. Women are doing the unseen work of family "healthkeeping." Self-pay is becoming the new self-care, with a rise of aesthetic treatments like Botox. Patients want to be seen quickly, book easily, and are increasingly turning to AI as a starting point.

But amid all of the shifts, and underneath all of the clicks, one theme stands out: even as healthcare becomes increasingly tech-enabled, **what matters most to patients is still the connection they feel with their doctor.** Americans overwhelmingly say "connection" is their top priority. And the word cloud from five-star reviews told the same story: "comfortable," "safe," "caring," "loving," even "great hands" all rose to the top.

My takeaway? Patients view connection as essential, and I find that heartening. As a former physician, from a 300-year family tradition of doctors, I know firsthand that a strong patient-provider relationship is essential. And while technology is reshaping patients' access, it's a pathway to care, not a proxy for care.

Inside this report, you will see that patients want convenience. They want fast access. They want to stay in-network. They want to book appointments 24/7. And they want to be seen in-person. Because underneath it all, they're seeking a connection with the right provider. Because when patients find that, something powerful happens: they feel seen, heard, and cared for. And that is what patients want, most of all.



Oliver Kharraz, MD  
Zocdoc founder & CEO

# Who is accessing care?

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Section 6

Section 7

An inside look at who booked  
and managed care in 2025.

# Young women have become healthcare's power users.

Millennials and Gen Z made up 76% of bookers—these generations expect convenience everywhere, and healthcare is no exception.

## Share of bookers by generation

Gen Z  
(15-28)

30%

Millennials  
(29-44)

46%

Gen X  
(45-60)

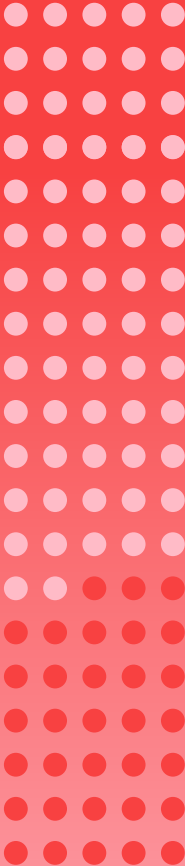
16%

Boomers & Up  
(61+)

8%

67%

of bookers are **women**



33%

of bookers are **men**



# Women are doing the "healthkeeping" work.

Women were family "healthkeepers," taking on the bulk of scheduling for themselves and others.



**3** in **4**  
appointments  
booked for  
others were  
made by women

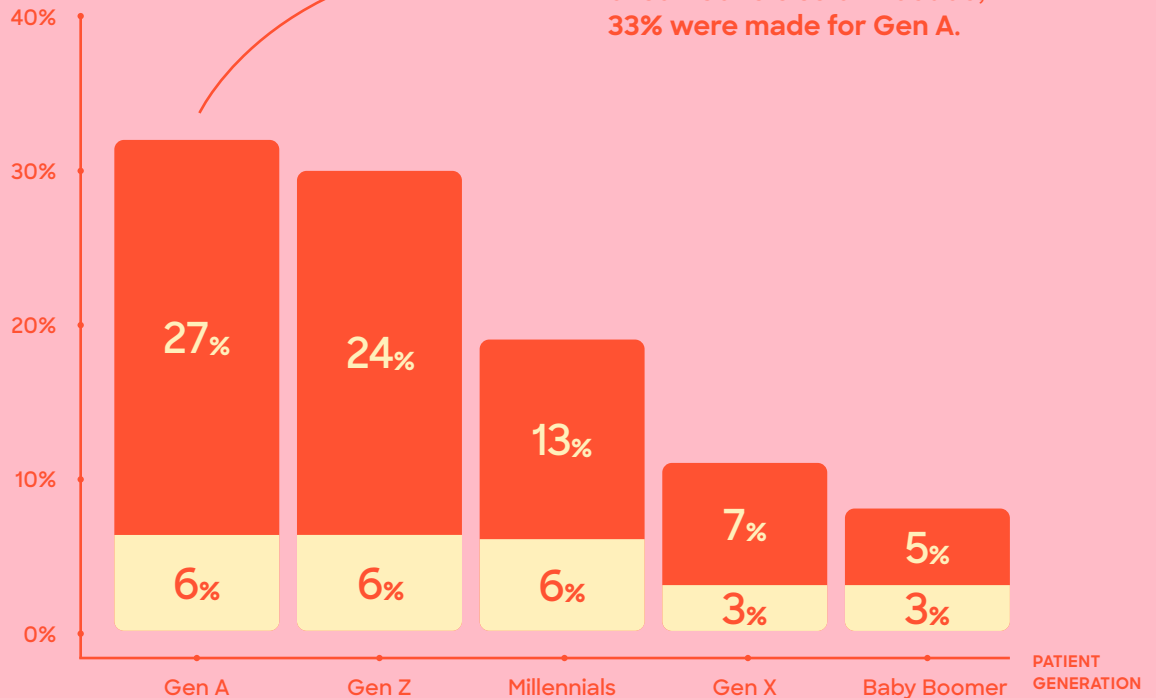
**76%**  
Female  
Bookers

**24%**  
Male  
Bookers

More than half of women (52%) managed care for others, and **nearly a third (29%) juggled it for 3 or more people.<sup>2</sup>**

## Who handled healthcare bookings for others: a view across genders & generations

PERCENTAGE OF BOOKINGS MADE FOR OTHERS



“It feels like I’m constantly scheduling something for myself or my two young kids. There’s always another check-up, sick visit, or school form to handle. I try to fit it in after school drop-off, between meetings, or at night when the kids go to bed—usually while I’m doing something else at the same time. I’m a real multitasker, so booking on the go is essential.”

Zoe R.  
Brooklyn, NY

82%

of appointments booked for men were made by women.

63%

of appointments booked for someone else were made for children and young adults.

# What do patients value in a provider?

Patients were discerning when picking a doctor, but stayed loyal when they found one they loved.

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

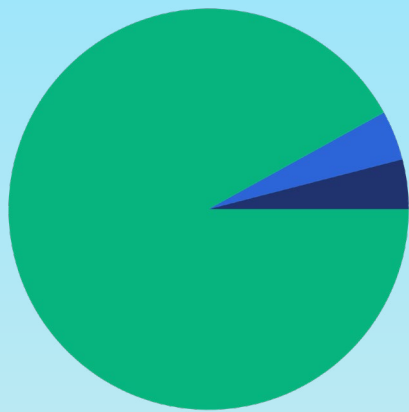
Section 5

Section 6

Section 7

# As concerns about costs continued to rise, budget-conscious bookings dominated in 2025 as patients stayed in-network.

**In-network care** remained the norm for the vast majority of patients

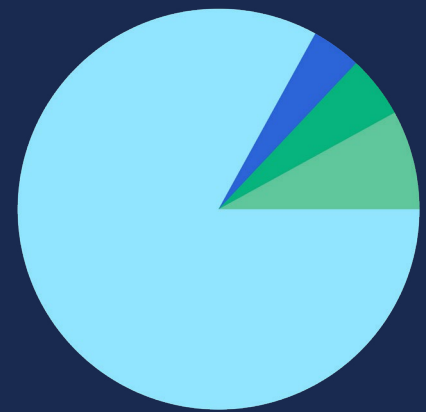


- In Network 92%
- Out of Network 4%
- Self Pay 4%

**The top 10 booked insurance carriers**



**Nearly 5 in 6 bookings were made using commercial insurance**



- Commercial Coverage 83%
- Medicaid 8%
- Medicare 5%
- Self Pay 4%

# 70%

of Americans were **more concerned** about healthcare costs in 2025 than in 2024.<sup>2</sup>

Over **1 in 3** indicated they were **significantly concerned**.<sup>2</sup>

# Filler, Botox, and anti-aging treatments defined the rise of “Self-Pay Care.”



Patients largely preferred to stay in-network, but were willing to go out of network or pay out of pocket for aesthetics, wellness, and elective treatments.



## Top 10 out-of-network and self-pay procedures booked

The most disproportionately booked visit reasons, compared to average.

PROCEDURE	YOY Δ
Aesthetician Consultation	—
Department of Transportation Physical Exam	↑
Filler Treatment	↑
Immigration Medical Examination	↑
Sports Physical	↑
Botox Treatment	↓
Plastic Surgery Consultation	↑
Psychiatry Follow Up	↓
Anti-Aging Treatment	↑
Pre-Travel Consultation	↓

# In a digital-first world, patients still craved human connection.

Even as technology continued to transform every part of our lives, patients still preferred in-person care.

## Care chemistry: the words defining 5-star reviews



# 24%

of women said a good doctor's appointment was **more satisfying than good sex.**<sup>2</sup>

**1 in 5** ranked a good doctor's appointment nearly as satisfying as good sex.<sup>2</sup>


## Top factors patients care about when finding a doctor

- 1 Positive connection with doctor
- 2 Proximity to home or work
- 3 A highly-rated doctor

# 2x

A positive connection mattered **twice as much** as practical considerations.<sup>2</sup>

# Patient Choice Rankings 2025

The  Patient Choice program spotlights providers who consistently deliver outstanding patient experiences.

To earn—and keep—the Patient Choice badge, providers must meet criteria that reflect what matters most to patients: high ratings, low cancellation rates, and an integrated calendar with real-time availability.

# +8%

Average increase in bookings for providers with the **Patient Choice badge**.

# 1 in 13

providers nationwide earned the Patient Choice designation on Zocdoc.



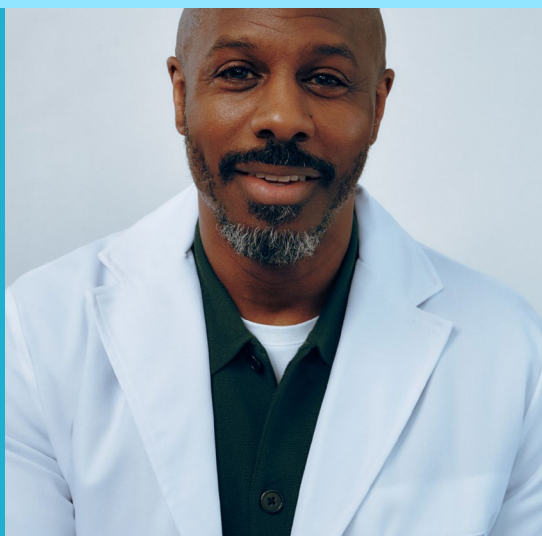
Generational bookends, Gen Z and Boomers share one thing in common: once they find a provider they like, they stay

Gen Z

Boomers

## Top 3 specialties with standout Patient Choice performance

- 1 Primary Care
- 2 Dermatology
- 3 Dentistry



## Top 3 markets with standout Patient Choice performance

- 1 New York City
- 2 Chicago
- 3 Washington, DC

# Patients shopped around at first, but stayed loyal once they found the right fit.

Patients compared an average of 21 providers before booking, yet **4 in 5** returned to the same provider for future visits.

## Patients compared before they committed

### The Power Browser

**Women** browsed 8% more providers than men, viewing 22+ profiles before settling on one.

### The Researcher

**Gen X** was the most selective, checking 4% more providers than other generations.

### The Deep Diver

**Psychology seekers** explored the widest range, checking over 31 providers before choosing one.

### The Fast Tracker

**Urgent Care bookers** were all about speed, comparing 16 providers before booking.

"Being able to see ratings and feedback in the same place where I can search and book has decreased my medical anxiety so much that I'm finally feeling confident in my path to good health."

Tags L.  
Seattle, WA

# 84%

of patients stuck with the same provider once they **found the one**.

## Top 10 highest-loyalty specialties

Allergist

Chiropractor

Ophthalmologist

Urologist

Gastroenterologist

Podiatrist

Urgent Care

Physical Therapist

Ear, Nose, & Throat Doctor

Optometrist

Psychologist

# In a system that often makes them wait, patients prize speed.

Zocdoc patients were seen 4x faster than the 2025 national average of 31 days<sup>3</sup>, getting care when they actually needed it.

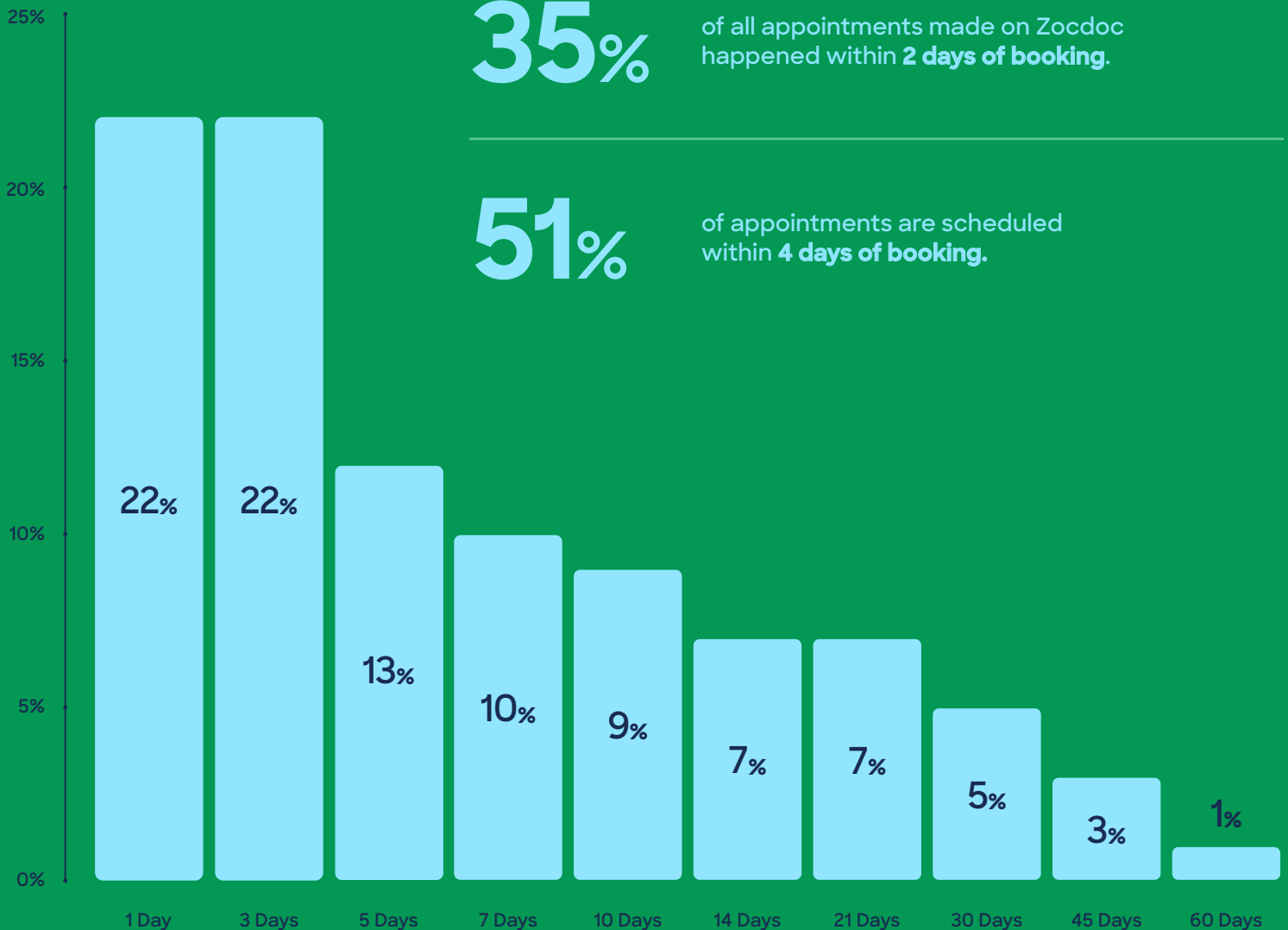
More than

# 1 in 3

Zocdoc patients were seen within 48 hours.

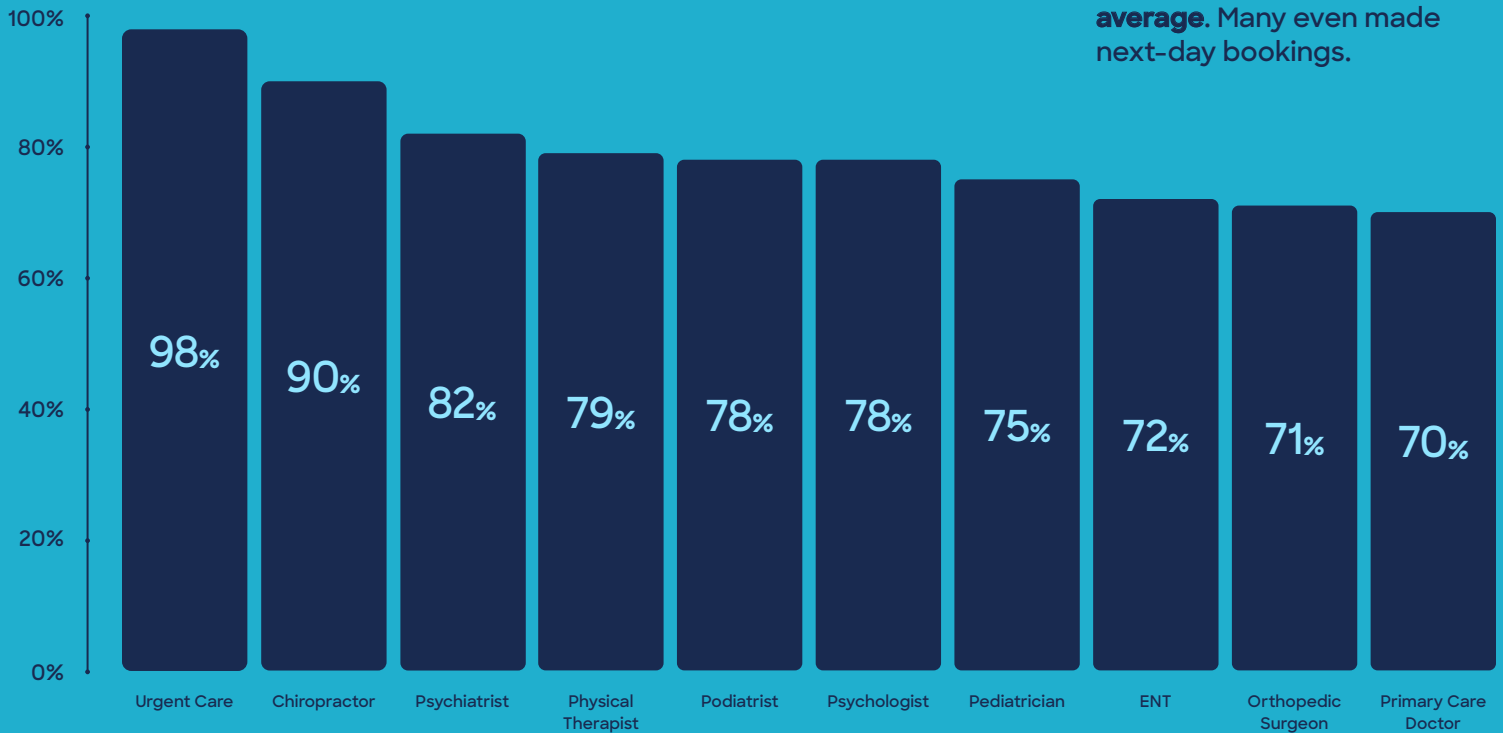
## Seen in days, not weeks

Patients weren't waiting around, they were getting care when they needed it most.



## Percentage of appointments that occurred within 8 days of booking, by specialty

Even in highly specialized fields like Neurology, Gastroenterology, or Cardiology, **Zocdoc patients got appointments roughly 2.5x faster than the national average.** Many even made next-day bookings.



## Preference for near-term bookings held true across demographics, however:

**37%**

of appointments booked by Gen Z (the fastest-moving generation when seeking care) **occurred within 2 days of booking**—well above Baby Boomers at 29%.

**Gen Z led the race to care** for both men and women, while older generations moved more slowly—though everyone converged by the two-week mark.

**10%**

For mental health visits, the pace accelerated even more: **Gen Z booked 10% more** appointments within 48 hours **than their own average.**

**2x**

Men had a slight preference for speed, with appointments occurring about **2 days faster than women on average.**



# Why are patients seeking care?

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Section 6

Section 7

From preventive health to mental health,  
patients prioritized their well-being in 2025.

# Patients' booking patterns reflected the mental and physical toll of 2025.

As more Americans reported strain from the year's events, therapy and acne-related visits saw a sharp climb.

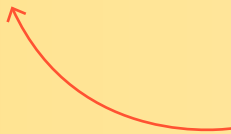
# 57%

of Americans said this year's world events have negatively affected their physical or mental health, and nearly one-third claimed both their physical and mental health have been affected.<sup>2</sup>

## Top 10 visit reasons of 2025

VISIT REASON	YOY Δ
Annual Physical	—
Dermatology Consultation	↑
Annual Pap Smear / GYN Exam	↓
Illness	—
Routine Dental Exam	↑
Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	↓
Anxiety	↑
Acne	↑
Routine Eye Exam	↓
Therapy	↑

Therapy moved up four slots since 2024, breaking into the top 10.



Therapy became a top-growing visit reason for men, increasing

# +46%

since last year.



# Healthcare in the headlines.

From Serena's weight-loss reveal to Biden's cancer diagnosis, healthcare headlines were mirrored in booking behavior, sparking jumps in related appointments.

## The Whitening Zoom Boom

**+43%**

Increase in **teeth whitening** appointments.

**+38%**

Increase in **Invisalign** consultations.

## Screen Queens (and Kings)

**+54%**

YoY increase in mammogram screenings amid PSAs from celebs like Olivia Munn.

**+44%**

YoY rise in skin cancer screenings among men as John Cena and Gordon Ramsay raised awareness.

## Biden Booking Bump

**+436%**

Surge in **prostate cancer-related searches** in 1 day on Zocdoc, following President Biden's diagnosis being made public.

## Stars, they're just like us! Ozempic Edition

**+42%**

YoY growth in weight loss appointments, with spikes within the 72 hours following a celebrity GLP-1 announcement:

**+29%**

Whoopie Goldberg's March 19, 2024 announcement

**+27%**

Serena Williams' Aug 21, 2025 announcement

**+18%**

Oprah's Dec 13, 2023 announcement

**+7%**

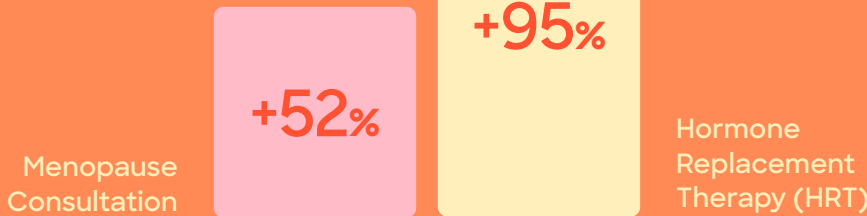
Kelly Clarkson's May 13, 2024 announcement

This correlated to a **16.6% jump in urology bookings** in the days right after.

# Menopause and mental health entered the cultural mainstream.

In 2025, taboos were broken across gender divides as women sought menopause treatment and men got proactive about mental health and skincare.

Top growing visit reasons for women included:



Top growing visit reasons for men included:



## Secret Lives of EMDR Wives

# +80%

Increase in EMDR therapy bookings among women, as discussed on Secret Lives of Mormon Wives.

## Adult Autism on the Rise

# +38%

YoY increase in adult Autism-related bookings.

“Menopause seems to be having a moment, thanks in part to some of the high-profile women—Drew Barrymore, Naomi Watts, and Michelle Obama, to name a few—speaking frankly and openly about their experiences navigating the hormonal transition.”

Rebecca Mead  
*The New Yorker*

# Care patterns across America were as unique as each state.



State Superlatives		
BEST BOTOX Minnesota	STATE OF STRESS California	MOST ANXIOUS Louisiana

# Stand-out visit reasons by state

From Botox in the Northeast to ADHD in Louisiana, patients sought care for everything, everywhere.



HOLISTIC HQ  
Washington

SUPER SNEEZY  
Kentucky

FAMILY FRIENDLY  
Colorado

# When do patients want to see the doctor?

From holiday lulls to post-weekend appointments, patients booked care around life's rhythms.

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Section 6

Section 7

# Bookings and appointments follow life's cyclical rhythms.

Bookings dipped on major holidays and then quickly rebounded, with the days following New Year's Eve, Labor Day, and the 4th of July seeing spikes in activity.

Bookings peak right after major holidays, including January 6th and September 2nd.

## The week's busiest day for appointments

Tuesday was the most popular appointment day of 2025, accounting for ~20% of total bookings. Appointments tended to start strong early in the week and would taper off leading into the weekend.



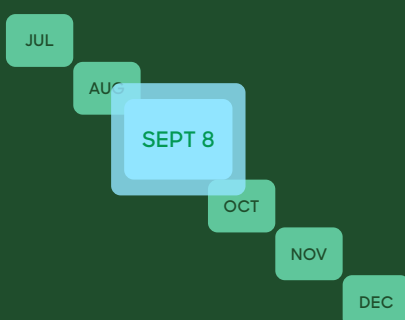
## The quietest day of the year for appointments

The best day to fit in a last-minute work week appointment? **Friday, March 28** was the least busy non-holiday weekday for appointments in 2025.



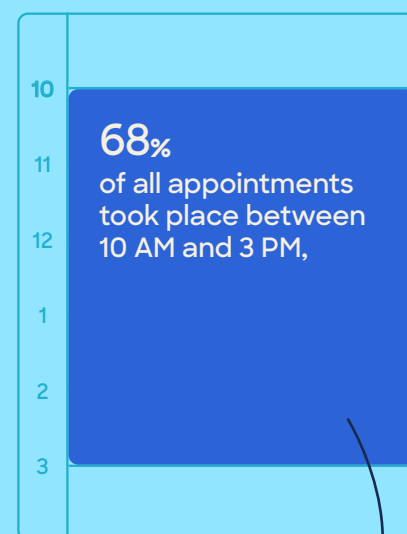
## The busiest week of the year for appointments

The **week of September 8, 2025** saw 11% more appointments than average, reflecting a sustained post-Labor Day surge as patients caught up on delayed visits and back-to-school or fall wellness care.



## The day's most in-demand appointment time

Appointment activity continued to cluster around traditional working hours—peaking at 10 AM.



More than **1 in 5** patients admitted to sneaking in a doctor's visit during work hours.<sup>2</sup>

# Patients wanted booking access 24/7, when it was most convenient for them.

In an on-demand age, patients wanted their appointment booking like their Uber: fast, digital, and available at all hours.

## Share of appointments booked during office hours vs. after hours

### 12 AM – 8 AM

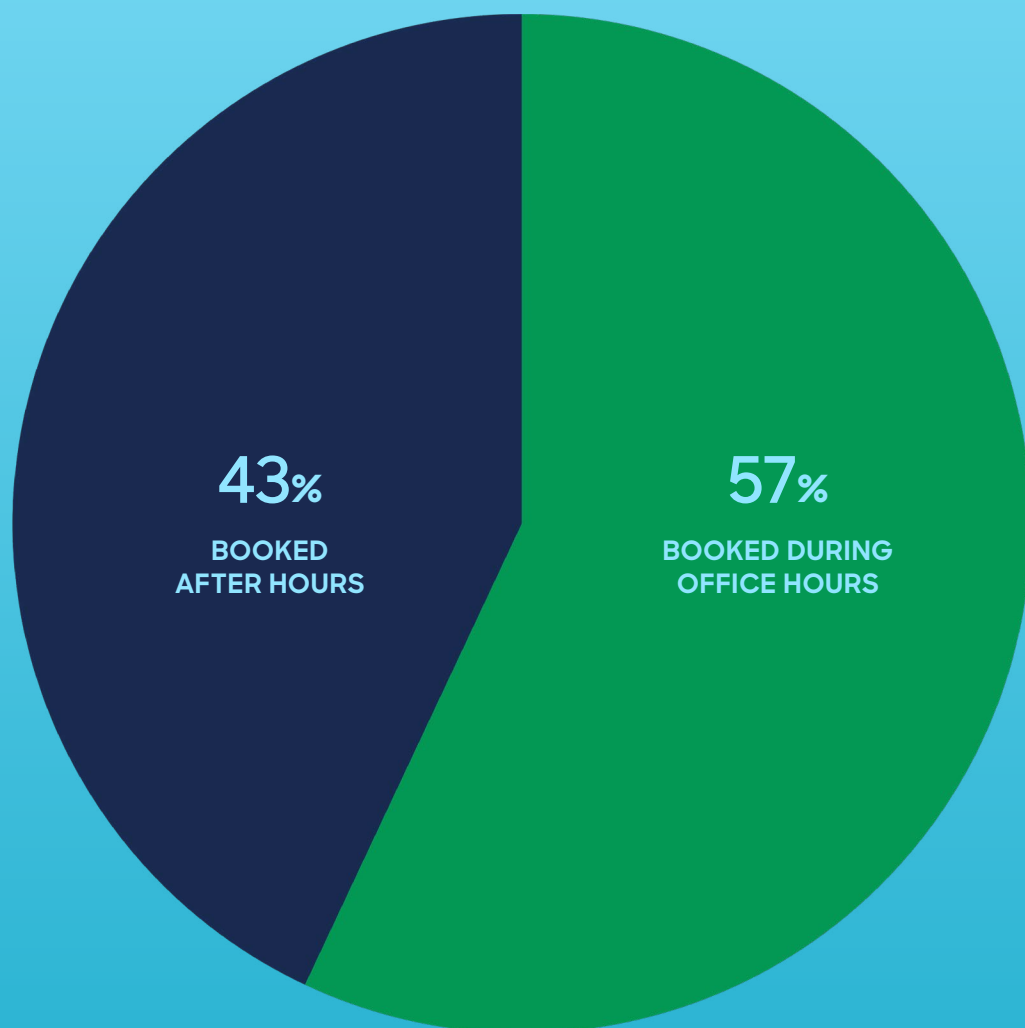
Overnight activity represented about **14% of bookings.**

Between 5–8 AM, **Urgent Care, Pediatrics, and Chiropractic** all saw elevated booking shares, indicating day-of planning tendencies.

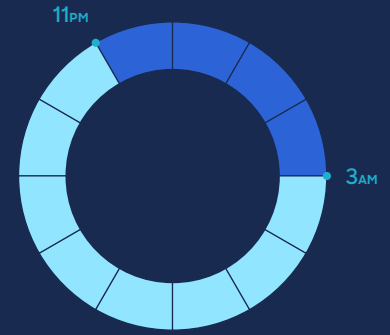
### 5 PM – 11 PM

The evening hours drew a steady share of appointments, accounting for roughly **28% of bookings.**

Late-night booking patterns were most pronounced in a few specialties, with the highest activity for, **Urology, Podiatry, and Dermatology.**



# From early risers to late-night scrollers, booking habits varied across generations.

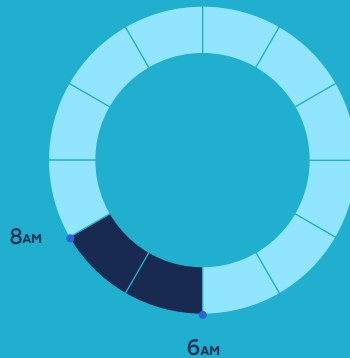


## Gen Z were night owls

They were **30% more likely** to book between 11 PM and 3 AM compared to the average booker.

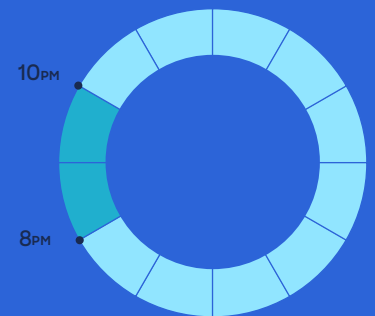
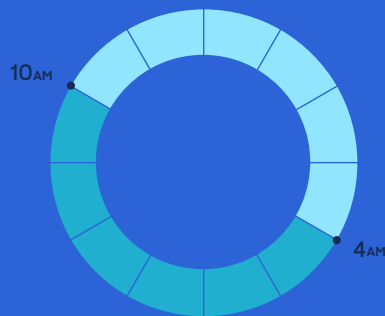
## Gen X were early risers

Gen X peaked in the early morning, booking appointments at rates **24% above average at 6 AM** and **22% above average at 7 AM**, before falling back in line with typical daytime patterns. This suggested that many Gen X patients handled scheduling at the start of their day or before work.



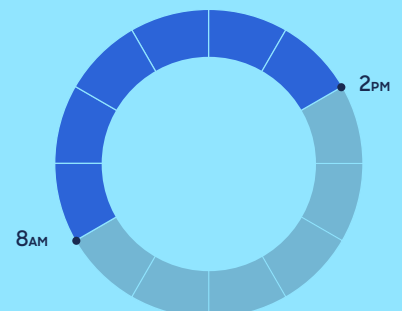
## Millennials booked around work

The side-hustle generation booked steadily across the day, but remained slightly more likely to schedule appointments before and after work—between 4-10 AM and 8-10 PM.



## Baby Boomers stayed within workday hours

Boomers followed a consistent daytime rhythm, booking appointments **13% more often than average between 8 AM and 2 PM**. They were also more than **40% less likely to book late at night** (0.53x index vs. the average between 11 PM and 3 AM).



# Where are patients seeking care?

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Section 6

Section 7

The places patients sought care  
may have evolved, but IRL still won.

# Return to (Doctor's) Office: In a post-COVID world, people largely preferred to go to the office— the doctor's office, that is.

Providers offering both virtual and in-person care got 72% more bookings than providers offering in-person only, yet the vast majority of appointments still happened in the exam room.

## Top 10 in-person specialties

Imaging

Optometrist

Dentist

Chiropractor

Ear, Nose, & Throat

Ophthalmologist

Urgent Care

Physical Therapist

Orthopedic Surgeon

Podiatrist

OB-GYN

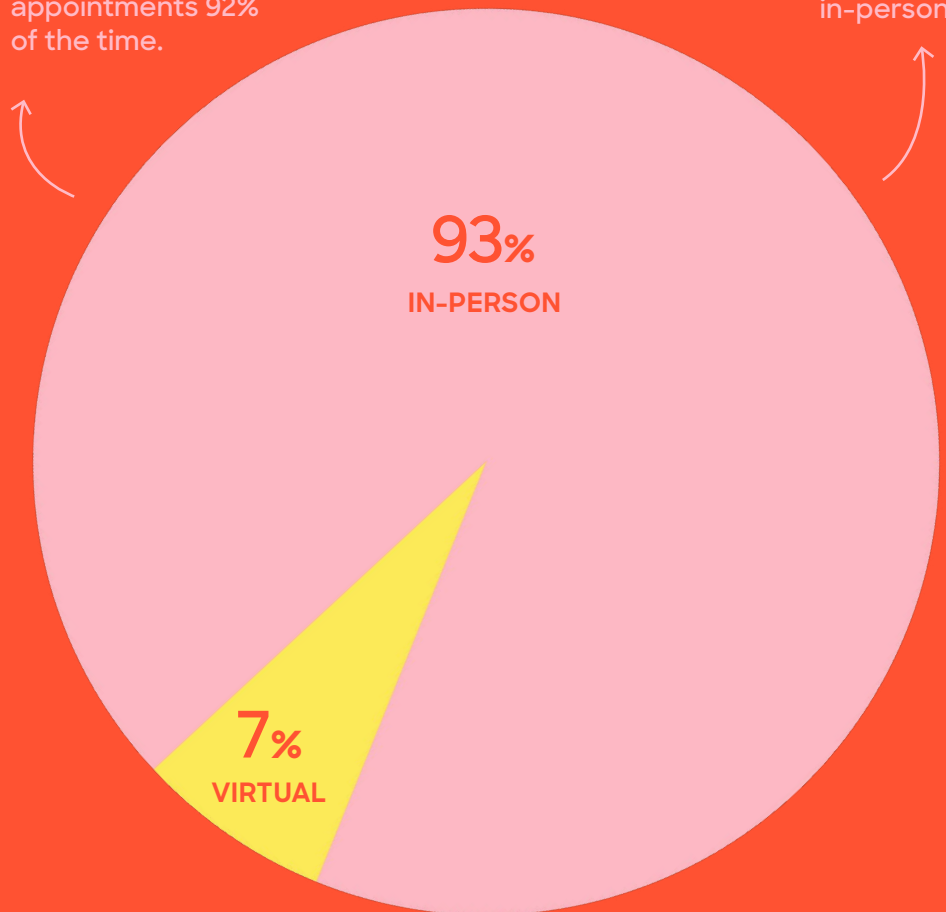
## Share of virtual vs. in-person appointments\*

In-person visits rose YoY, with 2025 seeing the highest share of in-person appointments since 2020.

\*excluding mental health

Even digital-first Gen Z booked in-person appointments 92% of the time.

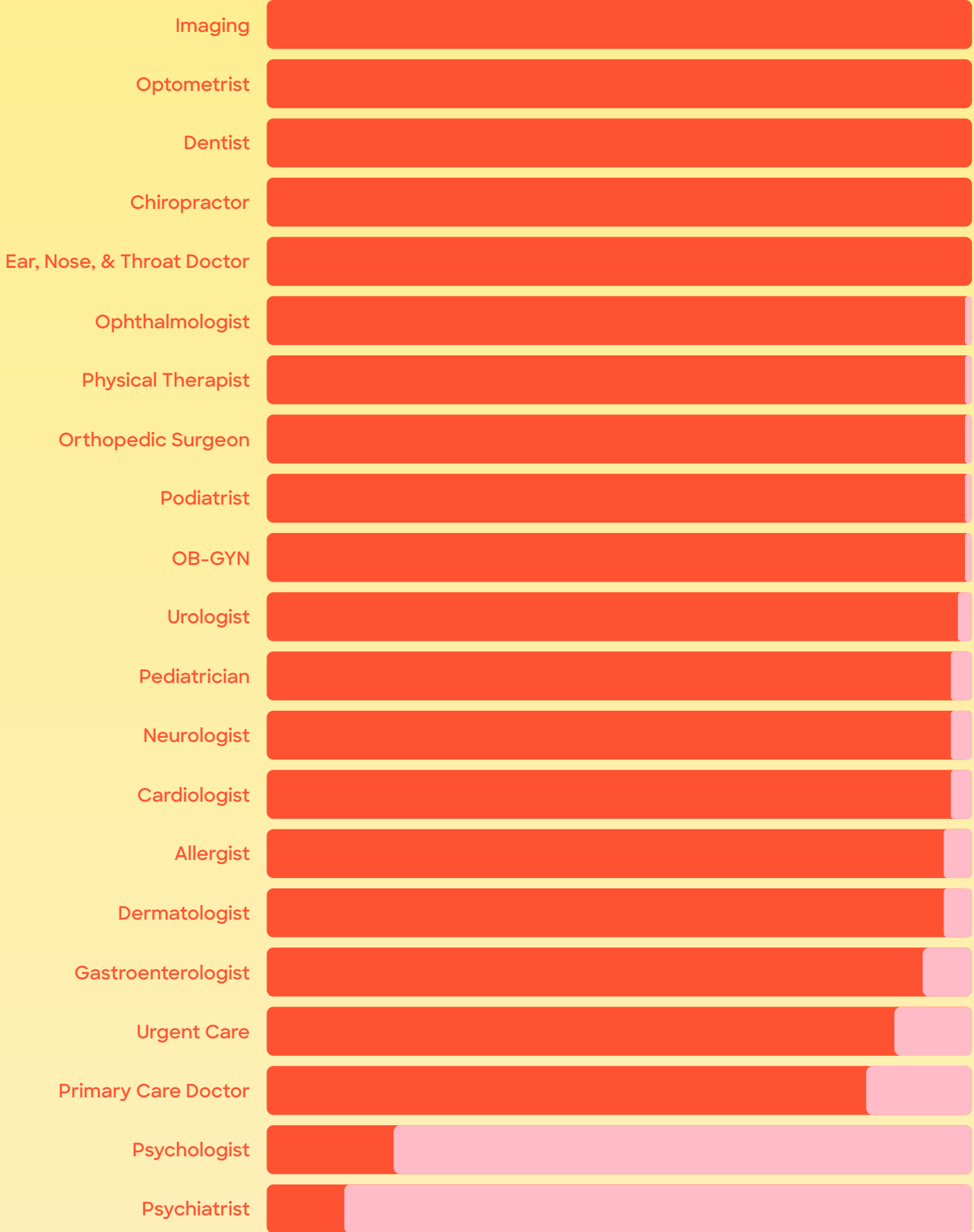
Hands-on specialties like ENT, Chiropractic, Imaging, Optometry, & Dentistry were 100% in-person.



Mental health-related bookings (e.g. psychology, psychiatry) were the only specialties where virtual care took the lead.

# Share of virtual vs. in-person appointments, by specialty

In-Person ●  
Virtual ●

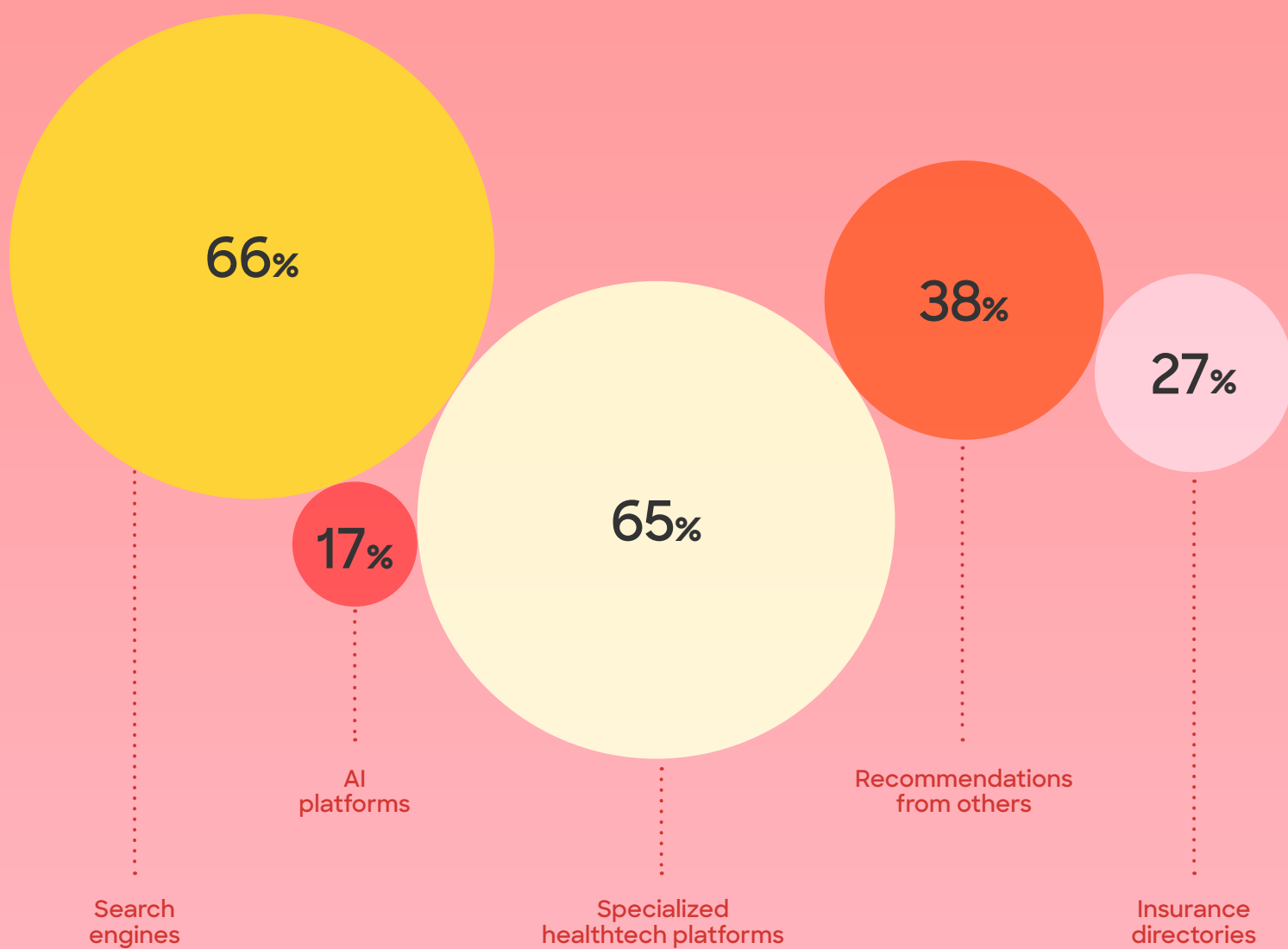


# Patients and providers still met in-person—but the front door was digital.

Even though face-to-face visits remained the norm, the path to care increasingly began with a digital search.



## A snapshot of where patients sought care in 2025



Move over, Dr. Google—  
Dr. AI is in session.

**1 in 3** Americans turned to  
ChatGPT or other AI tools for  
health advice every week.<sup>2</sup>

**1 in 10** asked chatbots  
health-related  
questions every day.<sup>2</sup>

# 2025 Patient Empowerment Index

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Section 6

Section 7

“We are emerging as more active, vocal participants in the healthcare system, demanding transparency, affordability, and a say in healthcare spending.”

Halle Tecco, Author of *Massively Better Healthcare*

# The Zocdoc Patient Empowerment Index is an annual report that represents three core elements of patients' healthcare experience:



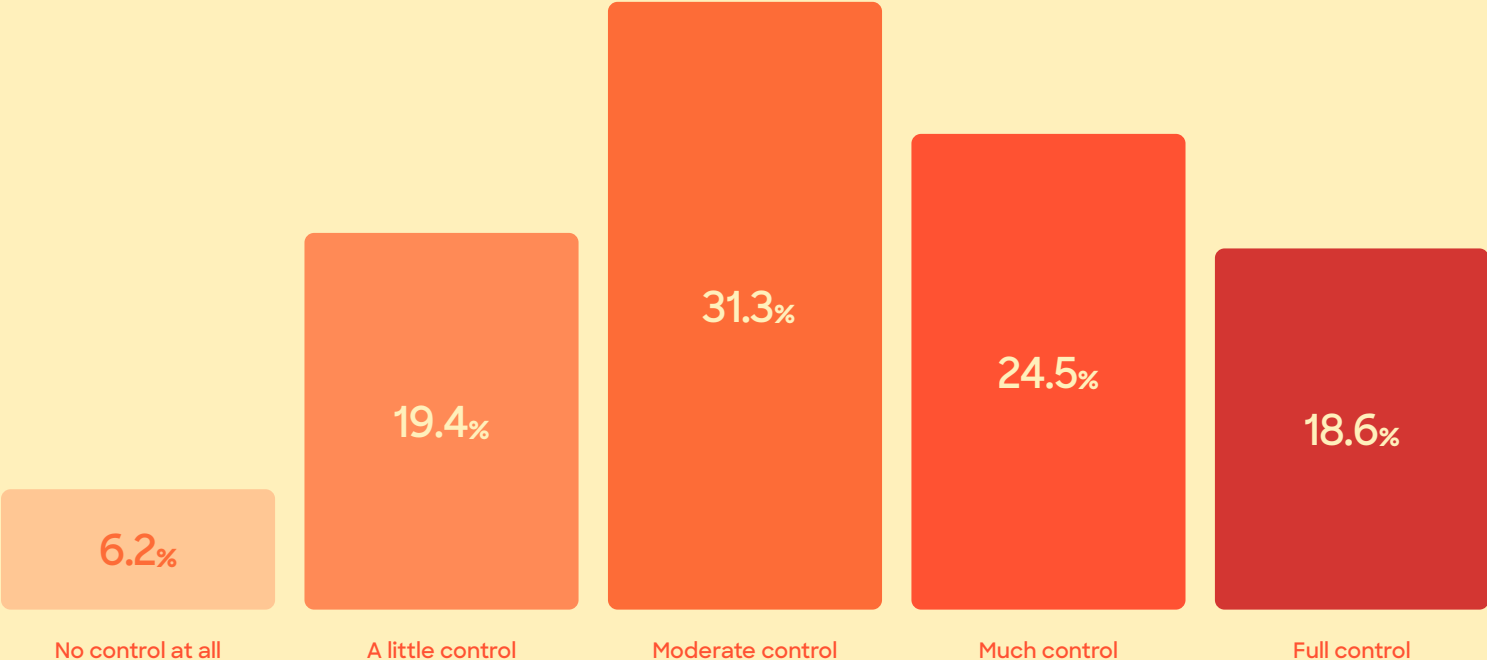
The Patient Empowerment Index reached a three-year low in 2025.

- 1 Access to care
- 2 Comfort with providers
- 3 Control over their healthcare

Respondents were assigned scores based on their answers to the following three questions. These scores were then averaged to find the Patient Empowerment Index number, ranging from -80 to 120.

## How much control, if any, do you feel you have over your own healthcare?

- Young adults (18-24) are most likely to say they have no control at all (13%).
- Men are more likely (46%) to say they have much or full control, versus women (40%).



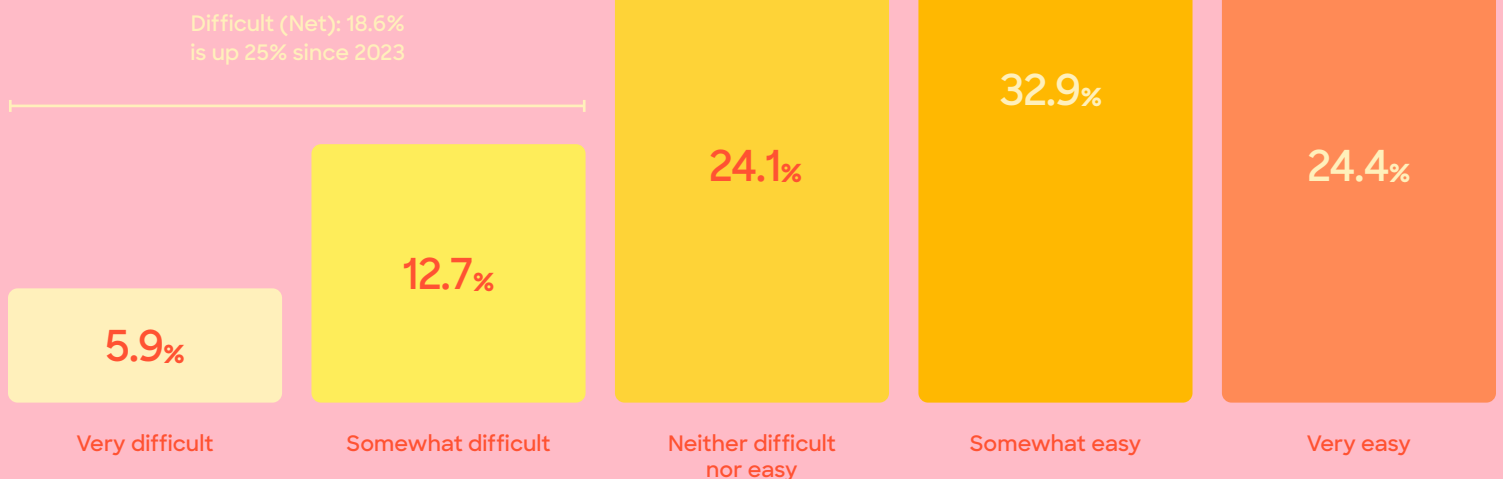
## How comfortable or uncomfortable do you feel with your doctor(s) in terms of overall relationship, communication, and trust?

- Men (70%) are on average more comfortable with their doctors than women (62%).
- Seniors (55+) are most likely to report being comfortable with their doctor (75%).



## How easy or difficult is it for you to access healthcare?

- People living in either the south or west are most likely (21%) to face difficulty accessing care.
- Men (63%) are more likely than women (52%) to say it's easy to access care.



# 2026 Predictions

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Section 6

Section 7

Patient and industry predictions from  
Zocdoc founder and CEO, Oliver Kharraz, MD.

# Patient Predictions



Zocdoc founder and CEO, Oliver Kharraz, MD

## **Patients will replace Dr. Google with AI for care guidance and navigation.**

Patients will increasingly rely on AI to begin their healthcare journeys. AI will become the go-to tool for pre-care needs like symptom checking, triage, and navigation, as well as for routine tasks like refills and screenings—which will include a human in the loop. But as AI takes on more of the “low end” of care, patients will recognize that it is no substitute for the vast majority of healthcare interactions, especially those that require human judgment, empathy, or complex decision-making.

## **As premiums rise, patients will be savvier about maximizing plan value.**

As premiums and out-of-pocket costs climb, patients will look for tools and guidance to help them maximize the value and utilization of their increasingly expensive health insurance. In-network status will become an increasingly hard filter; if a provider is not covered, they are effectively invisible. But patients will not rely on assumptions. They will demand certainty, and expect clear, plan-specific verification before they book.

## **Supply of “fast food” healthcare offerings will outpace patient demand.**

Despite ample offerings, most patients will not opt for one-turn, transactional “fast food” healthcare—at least not outside of prescriptions. These care models are built for speed and volume: short or asynchronous visits, minimal continuity, little context, and a new provider each time. They are often cash-pay, meaning patients must layer additional costs on top of their already rising premiums. While these businesses may succeed in standing up supply, they will struggle to find real, lasting patient demand. Healthcare is not like ordering food; it is personal, relational, and often existential. Outside of low-stakes needs, patients want trust and continuity, not just convenience.

# Industry Predictions

## **AI's healthcare race: offer the best patient experience or fall behind.**

As AI platforms race to manage everyday tasks—from ordering groceries to booking travel—they will need trusted, domain-specific partners for high-stakes transactions like healthcare. Rather than building bespoke services, leading AI players will look to plug into best-in-class infrastructure. Healthcare access is too complex to improvise and too important to get wrong. We will see a wave of strategic partnerships, where general-purpose AI agents outsource healthcare navigation to trusted experts.

## **Broken insurance directories are on borrowed time.**

The collapse of ghost networks will accelerate. After years of patient frustration and policy inertia, regulators are increasing pressure and enforcement. Payors will be forced to abandon static, error-prone directories in favor of modern infrastructure with real-time data, dynamic scheduling, and feedback loops. Patients will no longer tolerate calling down a list of doctors just to hear “we do not take your insurance.” They will expect—and increasingly receive—accurate, actionable information at the very start of their care journey.

## **A financial reckoning is coming for hospitals and health systems.**

In 2026, hospitals and health systems will be forced to confront growing financial strain as Medicaid policy shifts widen the gap between reimbursement rates and the true cost of care. With uncompensated care on the rise, many systems will face mounting losses; to address this, they must move quickly to diversify their patient panels, strengthen their payor mix, and expand access. This is not just a growth strategy; it is a financial imperative to preserve care for all patients, regardless of insurance. No margin, no mission.

As financial pressure increases, systems will grapple with an internal bottleneck of their own making: the accumulation of software, decision trees, and workflow customization that promised to increase provider efficiency but has actually strangled provider access and throughput. The result? Highly paid clinical resources underutilized and operational inefficiency baked into care delivery. In 2026, hospitals will need to dismantle this throughput bottleneck and re-optimize efficient use of their most valuable asset—a provider's time—or risk letting margins erode past the point of recovery.

# About Zocdoc

Zocdoc is the leading healthcare platform that connects patients to great care. Each month, Zocdoc connects millions of patients with providers across specialties—helping people find quality, in-network doctors, see their real-time availability, and instantly book appointments for in-person or virtual care. Zocdoc doesn't just streamline healthcare, it simplifies access—for patients searching for care and providers ready to deliver it—with the typical appointment happening within 24 to 72 hours of booking.

The company supports healthcare providers across states, specialties, and segments—from solo practitioners to large hospitals and health systems. With Zocdoc, practices can reach patients who are actively looking for care and replace friction with seamless scheduling. And now, partners can use Zocdoc's platform to power real-time booking anywhere patients are seeking care. Overall, Zocdoc delivers patient growth practices can count on, and the seamless, modern healthcare experience patients deserve.

## Sources

1. Zocdoc Booking Data  
(Jan - Sept 2025)
2. Censuswide Survey of 1,000 U.S. Adults  
(Nov 2025)
3. AMN Healthcare 2025 Survey of  
Physician Appointment Wait Times

 **Zocdoc**