

## KEY FINDINGS

Across demographics, people have a clear vision that primary care in the U.S. should be: **1) affordable, 2) accessible, and 3) convenient.** However, **the health care system is not realizing that vision.**

Although a majority of adults (80%) say that accessing primary care is easy, **gaps in accessing primary care still exist, particularly for young adults, people living in rural communities, and people of color.**

**Primary care is being underutilized to address chronic disease in the U.S.** Among adults who have recently received primary care, only 27% used it to manage a chronic condition.



While people understand the importance of having a regular primary care clinician and receiving primary care services – 83% of poll respondents said they highly prioritize having a regular primary care clinician and over half (52%) say it's a top priority. However, **cost and access are the most cited barriers to accessing primary care across all demographics.**

**People prioritize choosing a primary care clinician (PCC) who is in-network (57%).**



However, once they establish a patient-clinician relationship, people believe that the ability of the clinician to **1) listen, 2) communicate effectively, and be 3) culturally responsive is very important** when receiving primary care – particularly for adults of color.

## Introduction

Amidst a growing national clinician shortage and a greater reliance on virtual care coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, the landscape of primary care in the U.S. is rapidly changing. With this in mind, United States of Care (USofCare) sought to better understand people's current perceptions and priorities regarding primary care, and how everyday people experience challenges in accessing primary care. With these findings<sup>1</sup>, interested stakeholders, including researchers and policymakers, can further advance policy discussions on the patient perspective and strengthen the nation's primary health care infrastructure to improve care for patients.

## Profiles in Primary Care: Rural Voters

While 93% of rural adults were satisfied with their insurance coverage of primary care, rural adults are significantly more likely (32%) than urban (21%) and suburban (24%) adults to report not seeking out primary care because they **are unable to afford it.**



Rural adults are more likely to choose their PCC based on if they are **in-network** (57%) over other factors like reasonable wait times (28%) or positive reviews (23%).

Rural adults reported **experiencing lower wait times** to receive primary care. Among rural residents, 46% of adults stated that they could get a primary care appointment in less than a week, compared to 38% of urban adults and 36% of suburban adults.

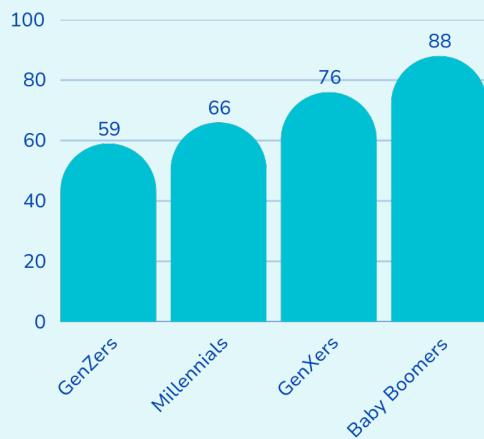
Rural populations greatly **value quality time** with their PCCs. In fact, the top reasons for dissatisfaction with primary care for rural adults were **feeling rushed** by their PCC (26%) and **not spending enough time** with their PCC (24%).

Half of rural adults (50%) cite **attentive listening** as a highly desired trait in their PCC, in addition to transparency and honesty (39%).

30% of rural adults sought out primary care in the last two years to **manage a chronic condition**, compared to 25% of urban adults and 26% of suburban adults.

<sup>1</sup>While the policies listed above have been proven to lower out-of-pocket costs for people, the list is by no means exhaustive. Implementing additional policies, such as ground ambulance billing protections and greater oversight of hospital acquisitions boards, can increase out-of-pocket cost savings for people and ultimately improve health care access and affordability.

## Profiles in Primary Care: By Generation

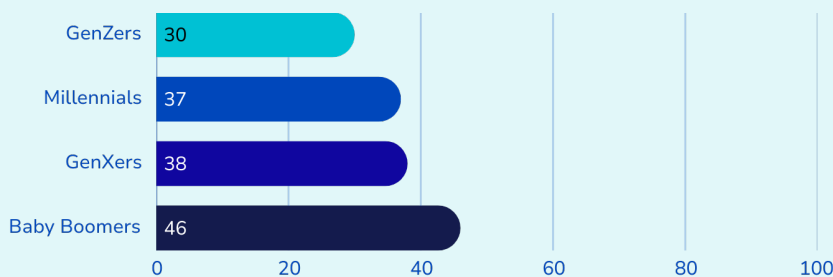


GenZers (59%) are **less likely** than their peers (66% of Millennials, 76% of GenXers, and 88% of Baby Boomers) to report having **received primary care services** in the past two years.

GenZers (18%) are around 3x more likely than Baby Boomers (6%) and 1.5x more likely than Millennials (12%) and GenXers (13%) to **report difficulties** in accessing primary care.

GenZers are **generally satisfied** with their primary care experiences (87%) and their insurance coverage of primary care (86%), although to a slightly lesser degree than Millennials, GenXers, and Baby Boomers.

GenZers report having to **wait longer periods of time** to receive appointments for primary care visits, with only 30% being able to get an appointment in less than a week, compared to 37% of Millennials, 38% of GenXers, and 46% of Baby Boomers.



GenZers are more likely to **prioritize doctors of the same gender** (23%) than other age cohorts (16% of Millennials, 14% of GenXers, and 16% of Baby Boomers).

Only 12% of GenZers who used primary care in the past two years did so to **manage a chronic condition**, compared to 16% of Millennials, 30% of GenXers, and 40% of Baby Boomers.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR REFORMS:

### Improving the Primary Care Experience

People have a clear vision of how primary care in the U.S. should be: affordable, accessible, and convenient. However, our research demonstrates that the health care system is not realizing that vision:

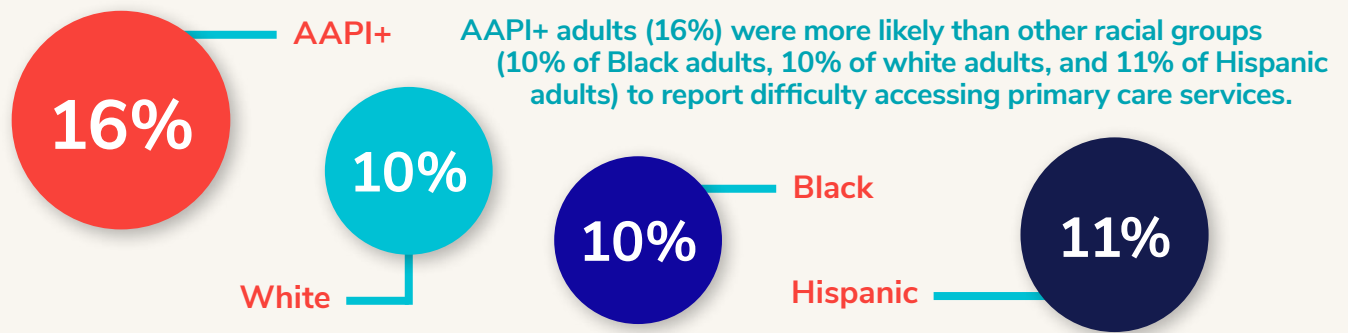
- ✓ Improving access to primary care means addressing affordability and rising health care costs. It's the biggest barrier, particularly in rural areas.
  - ✓ Policymakers should eliminate out-of-pocket costs when people seek preventive care, preserve access to high quality health insurance coverage that enables greater access to primary care, and be mindful of policies that will leave people underinsured or uninsured.
  - ✓ Patients want more accessible clinician and convenient care, with better and more frequent communication with providers, shorter wait times for appointments, and having more options overall.
- ✓ Reforms ought to support transition from a fee-for-service health care model to patient-first (aka value-based care) models which will allow clinicians to spend more time with patients and give people the experience they desire from their health care system.
  - ✓ Policymakers can facilitate the more convenient care that people desire by continuing to enable the use of digital health technology like telehealth.



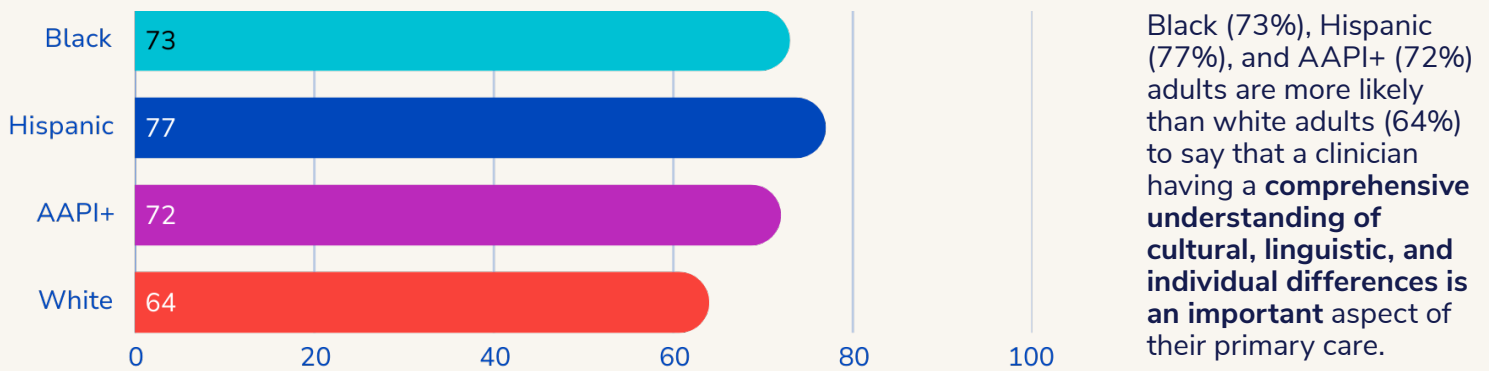


## Profiles in Primary Care: By Race

Among people of color, 68% of Black adults, 62% of Hispanic adults, and 65% of AAPI+ adults, were significantly less likely than white adults (78%) to **utilize primary care services** in the past 3 years.



Black adults (18%), Hispanic adults (29%), AAPI+ adults (29%), and White adults (28%) reported that they have **avoided seeking primary care because they can't afford it**.



White adults (30%) were more likely to **seek out primary care to treat chronic conditions** compared to Black (23%), Hispanic (21%), and AAPI+ adults (20%).

## ABOUT UNITED STATES OF CARE

United States of Care (USofCare) is a non-partisan non-profit working to ensure everyone has access to quality, affordable health care regardless of health status, social need, or income. By putting the needs of people at the forefront of our research and policy solutions, we can create a health care system that works to meet their needs.