# Leveraging Digital Health Tools to Advance Health Equity

# KENTUCKY

To address gaps in technology adoption that impact underserved communities, the National Center for Primary Care (NCPC) at Morehouse School of Medicine is examining the adoption and use of digital health tools by primary care clinicians in four southeastern states:
Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

## Digital health tools (DHT) include:

- telemedicine
- home/remote monitoring
- patient portal
- health information exchange
- electronic health records
- prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP)
- wearable devices
- mobile applications, and other technologies used in healthcare settings

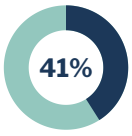
## Kentucky Demographics

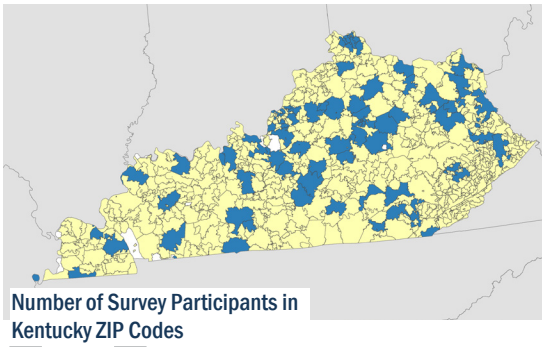
**Total Population: 4.5 million+**

2% Asian | 9% Black | 2% Other | 88% White

Hispanic Ethnicity

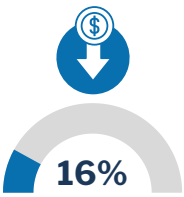
Live in Rural Area



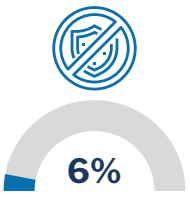

More than 180 clinicians in Kentucky have completed the survey, highlighting the challenges and opportunities they have experienced using digital health tools.

## Social Determinants of Health in Kentucky



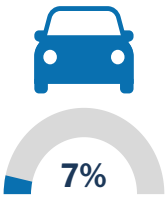

16% Living in Poverty

102 Medically Underserved Areas




6% Living without Health Insurance

0 Living within the Medicaid Coverage Gap




7% Households without a car

93 Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas

www.msm.edu/ncpc | @NCPC_Policy

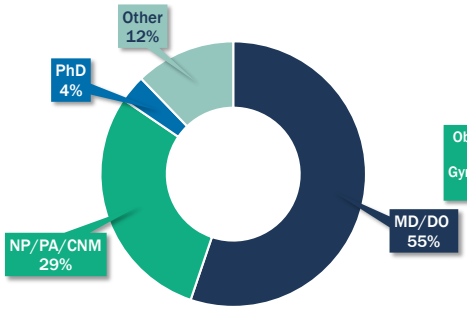
This project was funded in partnership with the United Health Foundation, grant number 6479.

NCPC
National Center for Primary Care

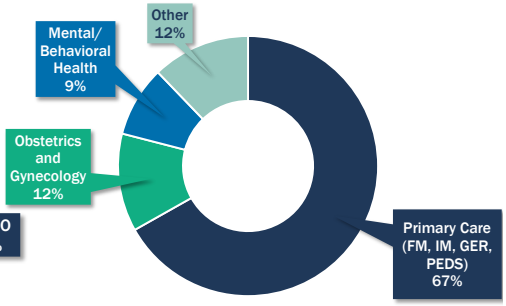
# Survey Participants Demographics

The majority of the 181 clinicians from Kentucky who participated in the survey held MD or DO credentials, specialized in primary care, and practiced in urban areas. They reported being satisfied with existing DHT.

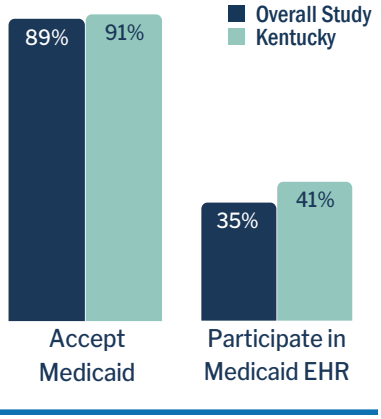
## Credentials




## Specialties




## Medicaid Participation



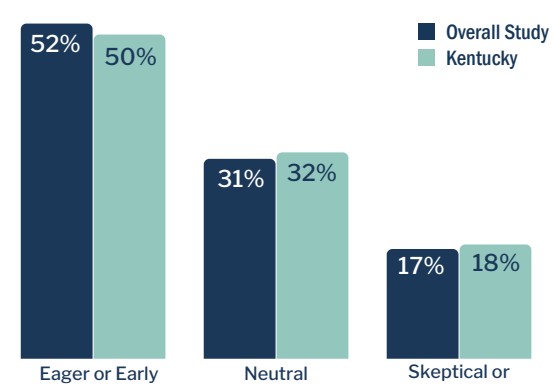
**89.6%**
of all survey participants practice in urban areas

**9%**
practice in rural areas

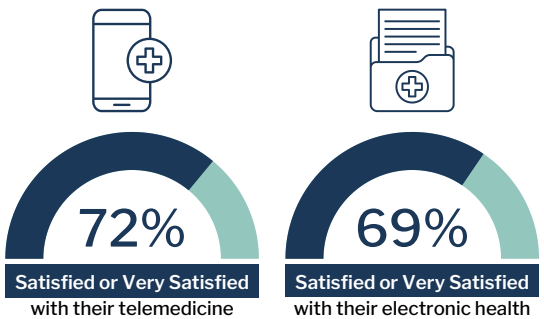
**84%**
of survey participants in Kentucky practice in urban areas

**15.4%**
practice in rural areas

## Technology Enthusiasm




## Reported Levels of Satisfaction



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# Current Digital Health Tool Use

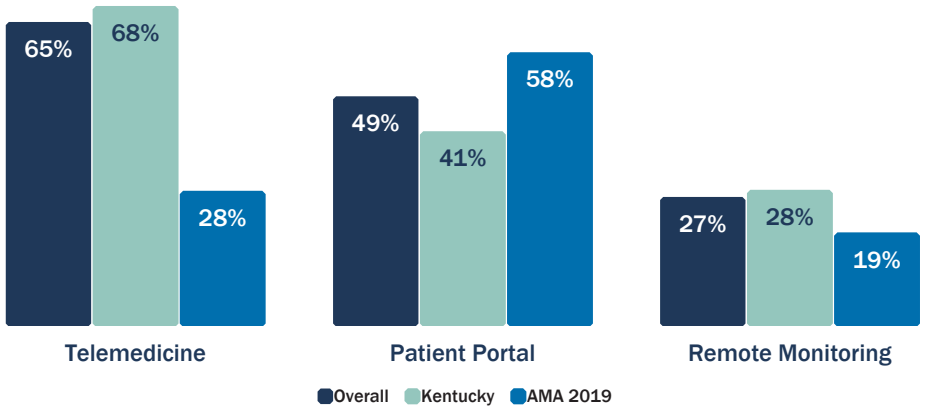
76.2% of respondents were connected to the State HIE

41.9% of respondents were using the State HIE

**More than 7 in 10 providers reported being connected to the Health Information Exchange (HIE), but less than half reported using it.**

## Reported Digital Health Tool Use

Nearly 99% of all providers who participated in the survey use digital health tools. Kentucky providers reported similar usage rates.




## Digital Health Tool Use and COVID-19

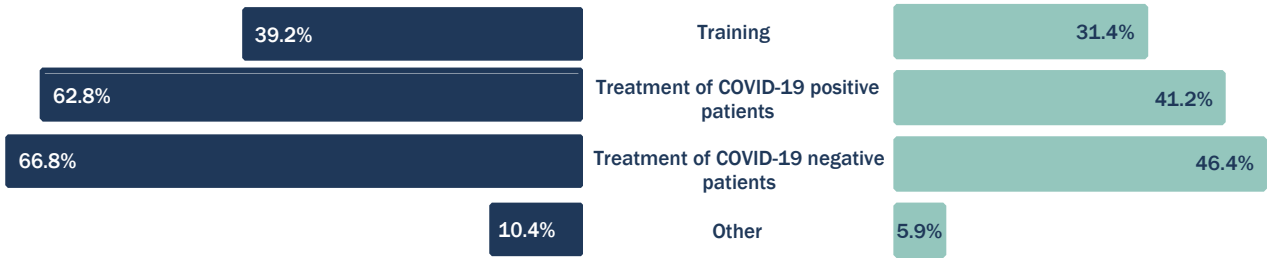
**90%** of all survey participants reported using DHT because of COVID-19

**54%** of respondents who used telehealth because of COVID-19 reported it was their first time

**90%** of survey participants in Kentucky reported using DHT because of COVID-19

**47%** of respondents who used telehealth because of COVID-19 reported it was their first time

## Reasons for Using Digital Health Tools during COVID-19



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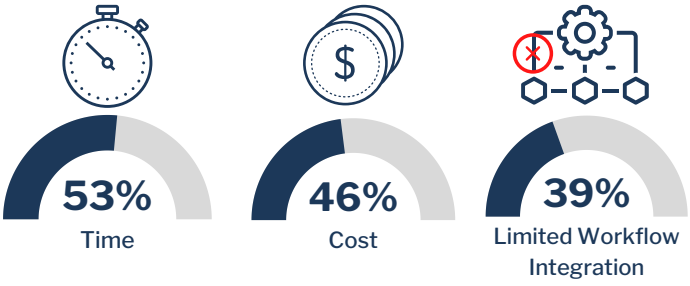
NCPC
National Center for Primary Care

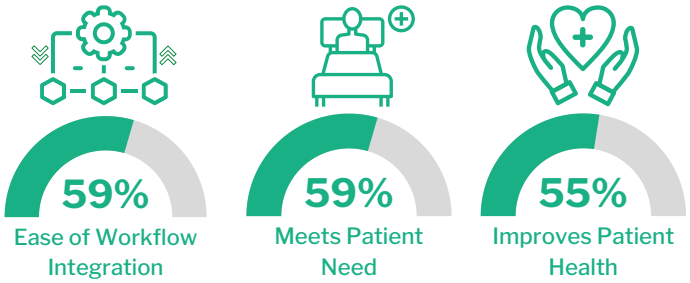
# Factors that Support and Impede Digital Health Tool Adoption

## Top Barriers to Adopting Digital Health Tools

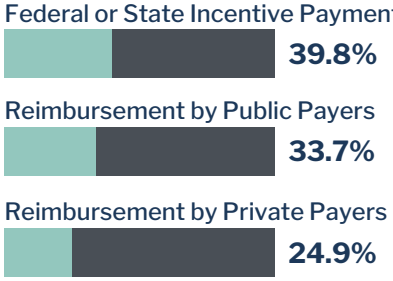



> Telehealth is something that can't just be for everybody, it has to be shaped and formed for different people individually, as well as culturally.
>
> -Focus Group Participant

## Top Factors Supporting Digital Health Tool Adoption

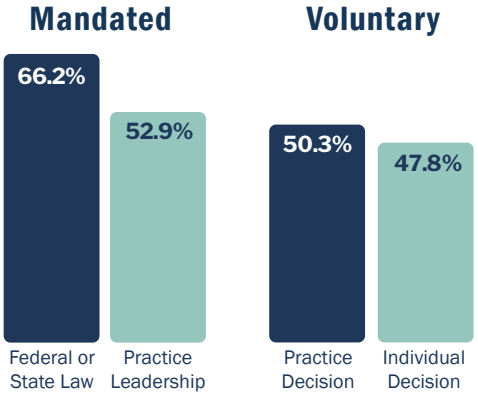



## Reimbursement as a Support for Digital Health Tool Adoption




> Traditionally, if [telehealth] is done well, families feel like if I call, they will help me and not if I call, I will be put on hold for two hours and be given an appointment in two weeks. So, it's not so much the technology, but what's happening when that phone is picked up, that's important as well...
>
> -Focus Group Participant

## Reasons for Adopting Digital Health Tools




## Reasons for Digital Health Tool Use after COVID-19

**Reducing**
barriers to access to care

**Providing**
access to substance use and mental health therapy

**Continuity**
of care for patients with or without COVID-19

> It's really not always the technology, it's who's on the receiving end, how well that relationship is, how well it works, and what families get.
>
> -Focus Group Participant

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