



PAN Rapid Poll

Keeping it Rural:

Patient Healthcare Access Barriers

Among U.S. adults living in rural areas

Harris on Demand Platform

March 2026

Background and Objectives

The PAN Foundation is a national charitable foundation and healthcare organization committed to accelerating access to affordable, equitable healthcare through financial assistance, advocacy and education.

PAN regularly commissions research to better understand patient experience as well as challenges faced when accessing care. This poll examines how living in rural areas are affecting Americans' healthcare experiences— including barriers to care in their area, length of travel to receive care, receiving delayed care, and hit-or-miss usage of telehealth as a way to bridge better accessibility.

Methodology

**Audience:**

2,095 U.S. adults 18+ including 372 who live in a rural area

**Field Timing:**

February 25-27, 2026

**Mode:**

5-minute online survey via Harris on Demand (HOD) omnibus platform

**Weighting:**

Data are weighted to ensure results are projectable to the population of U.S. adults age 18+

Method Statement *(to be included in all press materials):*

This survey was conducted online within the United States between February 25 - 27, 2026, among 2,095 adults (aged 18 and over), including 372 who live in a rural area. The survey was administered by The Harris Poll on behalf of PAN Foundation via its Harris On Demand omnibus product. Data were weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income, and political party affiliation, to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within ± 2.7 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Notation Guide

Please refer to this slide for explanations of the various notation and formatting used throughout this deck:

In Tables and Charts:

- Percentages may not add up to 100% due to weighting and/or computer rounding.
- Results based on small samples ($n < 100$) should be interpreted as directional only.
- An asterisk (*) indicates a percentage greater than zero but less than 1%; a “ – ” indicates a value of zero.

Base Notes:

- Each slide includes a base note that displays the full question text as shown to the survey respondents as well as the number of respondents who answered each question, for reference.
- Some response labels on slides are shortened for brevity; see notes section for full description provided.

Executive Summary

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Access barriers remain common for rural patients — and often stem from cost and provider availability.

- More than half of rural adults (54%) report experiencing at least one barrier to getting healthcare where they live.
- High costs (27%) and difficulty finding nearby providers (24%) are the most frequently cited challenges.

These barriers translate into meaningful disruptions to care.

- Among those experiencing barriers, about 1 in 4 rural adults (26%) say they often delay or go without needed healthcare.
- Even when care is available, logistical challenges such as distance and limited local services can disrupt access - over a quarter (27%) travel more than 30 miles on average for medical care.
- Nearly 1 in 5 rural adults (18%) say limited insurance plan options or network restrictions greatly affect their ability to get care.

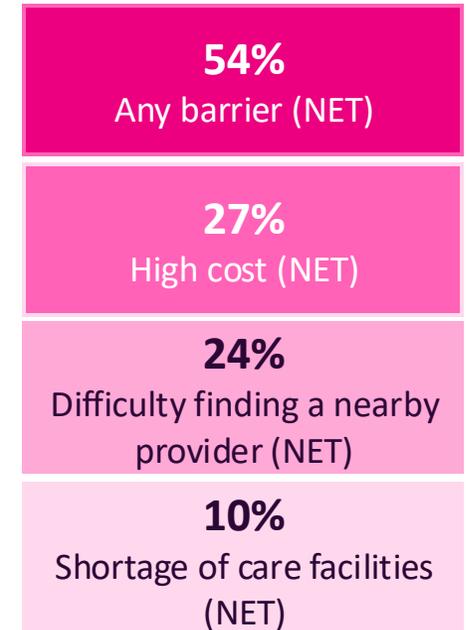
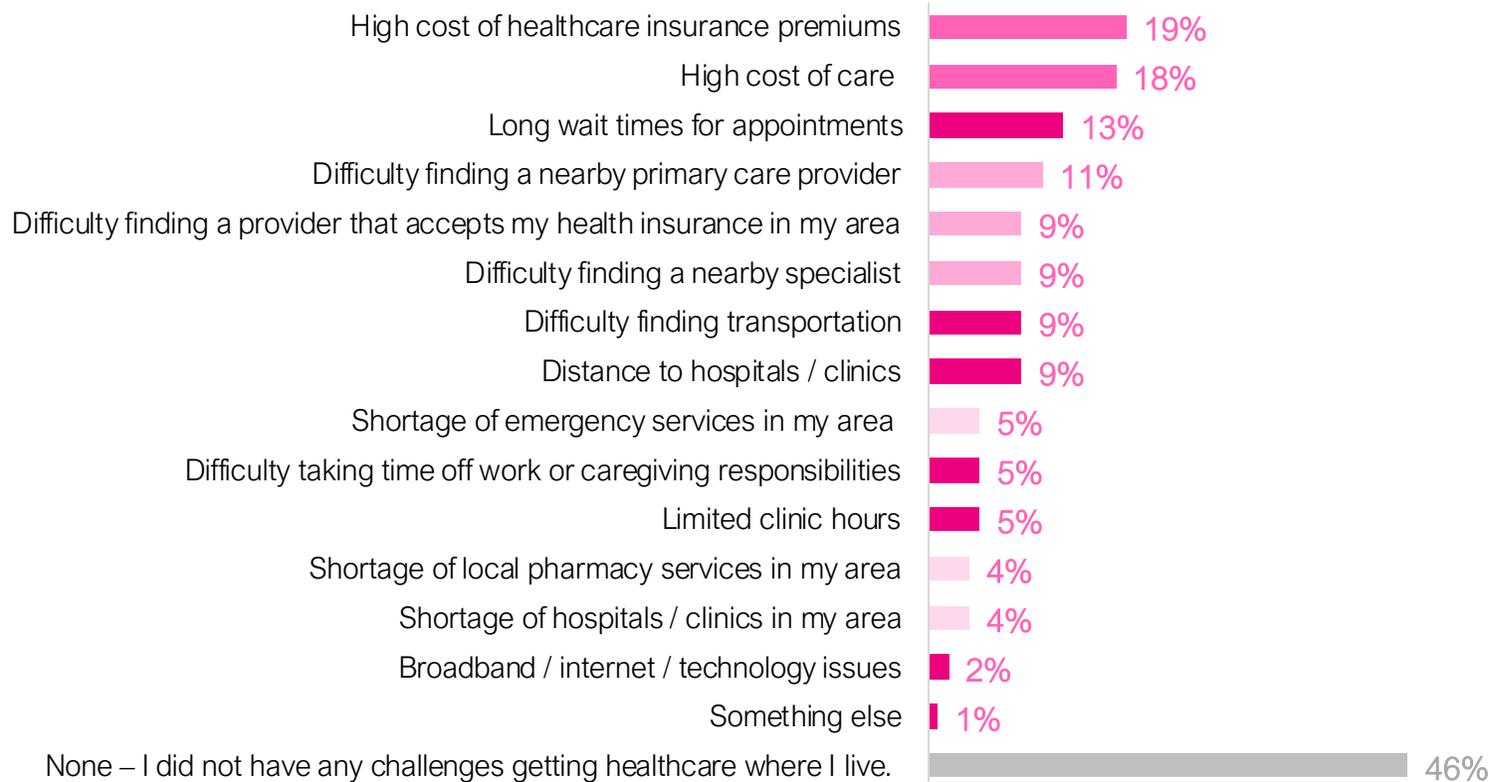
Telehealth shows a divided experience among rural patients.

- 45% say they have reliable internet and feel comfortable using telehealth, while 36% rely only on in-person care and 19% report internet or access reliability challenges.

Detailed Findings

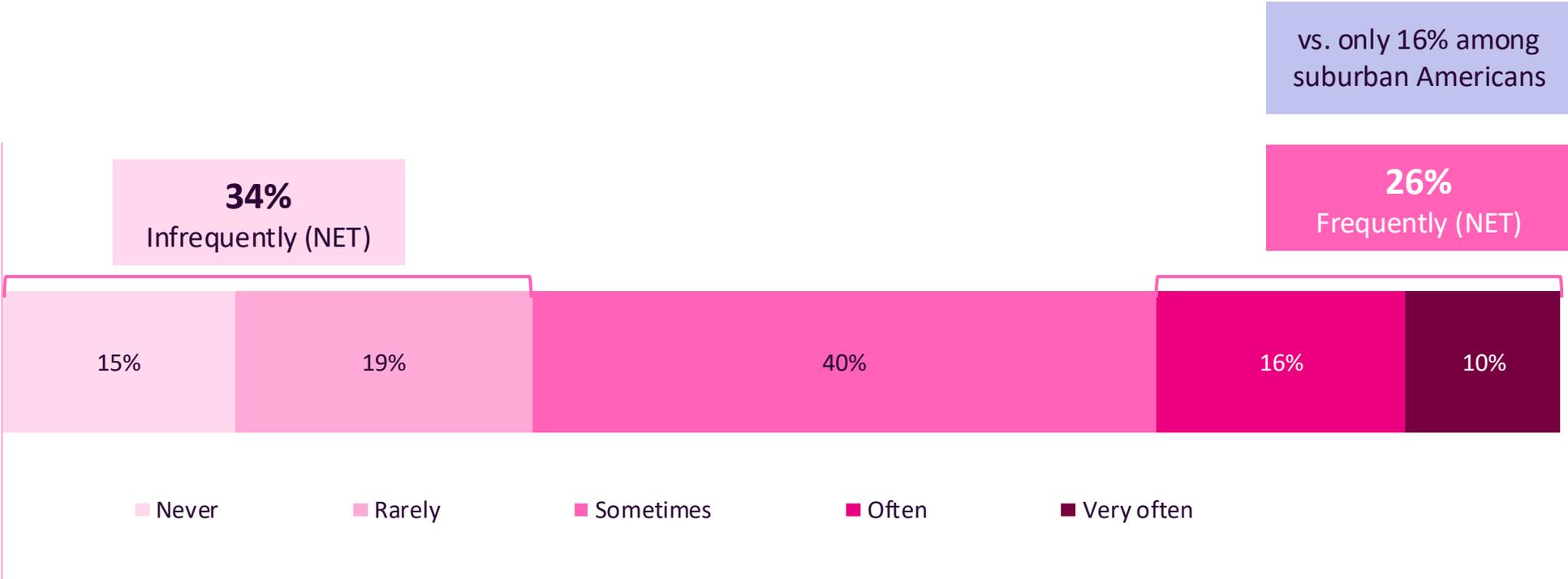
Over half of rural Americans experience barriers to healthcare, most commonly high cost and difficulty finding nearby providers

Top Barriers to Care For Rural Americans
(Among rural adults)



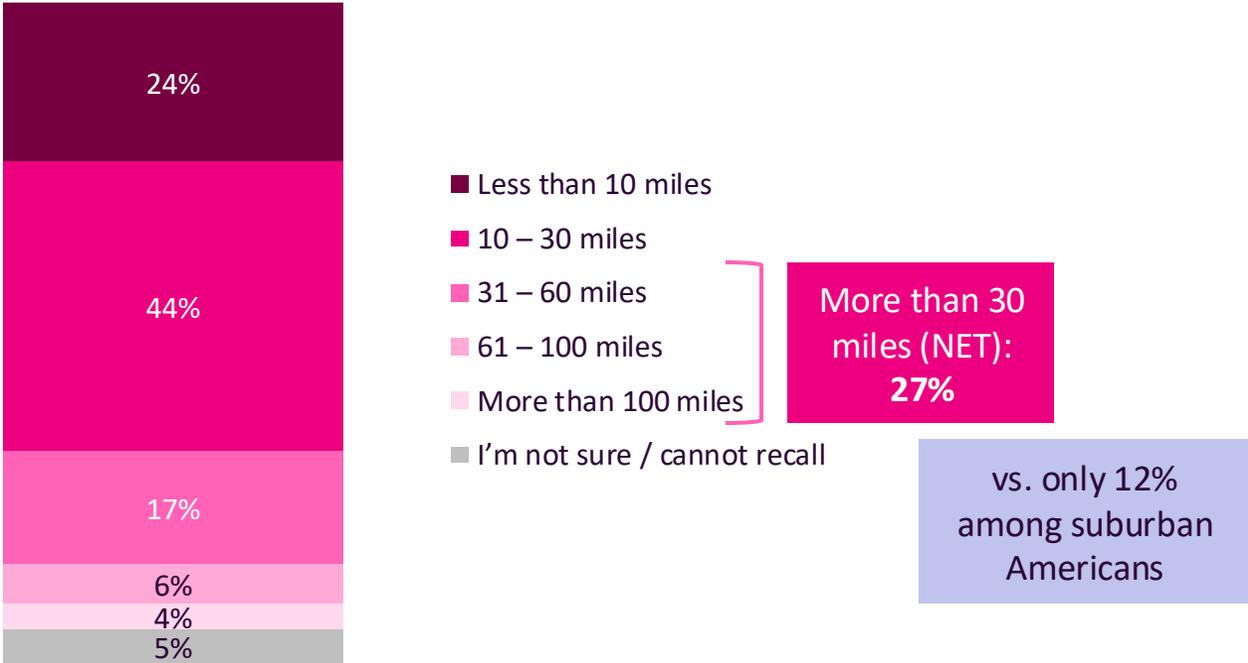
Barriers to care lead many rural Americans to forgo treatment: 1 in 4 patients frequently delay or skip care

Number of Times in Past Year That Barriers to Care Caused Patients to Delay or Skip Care
(Among rural adults who experienced challenges getting healthcare where they live)



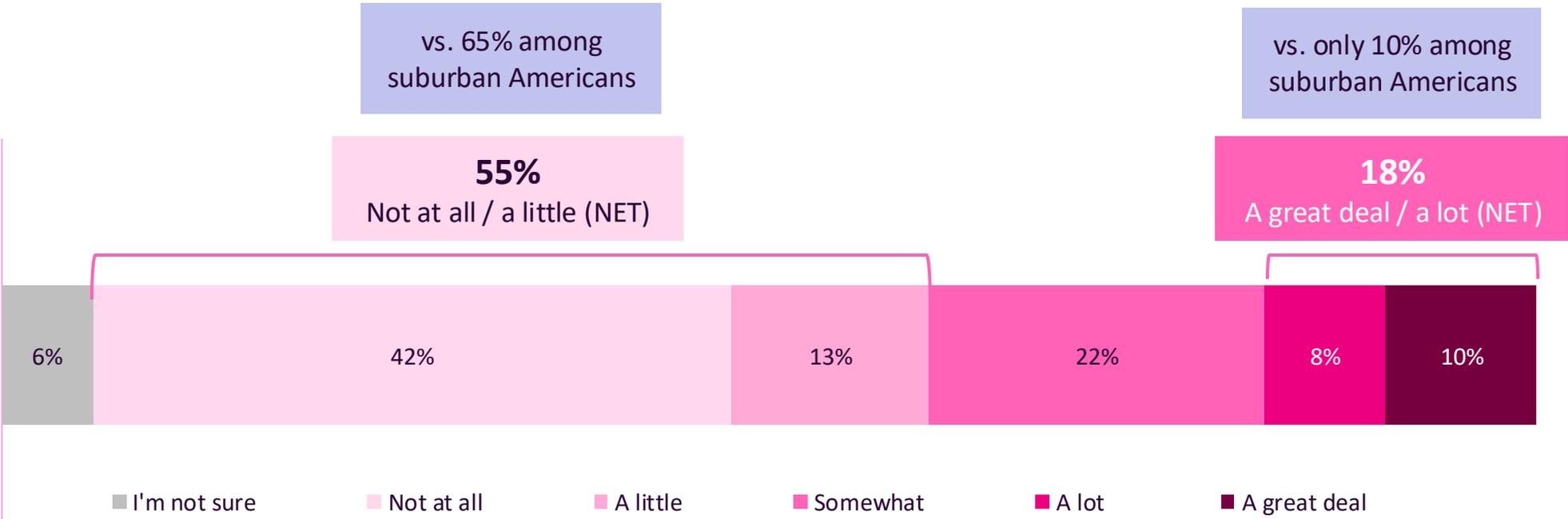
Over two thirds of rural Americans traveled over 10 miles on average one way to see a provider, with over a quarter traveling 30+ miles

Average Distance Traveled to See Providers
(Among rural adults)



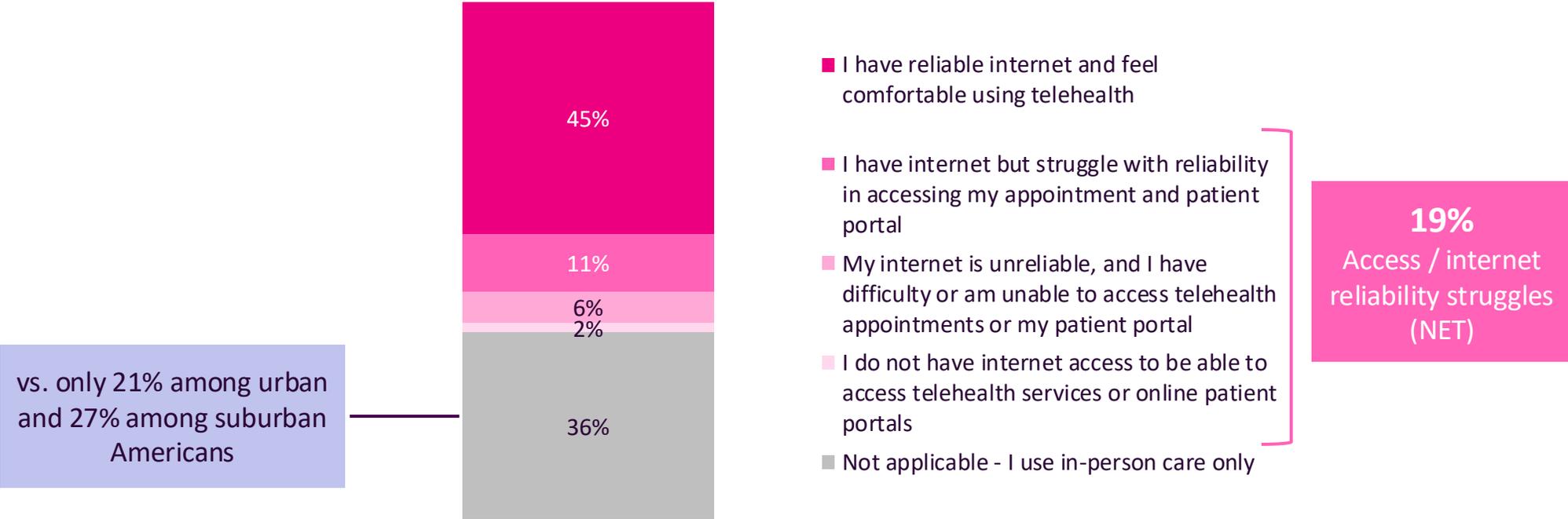
For 1 in 5 rural patients, insurance limitations make accessing needed care significantly harder

Impact of Limited Plan Options and Network Restrictions on Access to Needed Care
(Among rural adults)



Telehealth access is polarized: rural adults tend to either rely on it comfortably or not use it at all

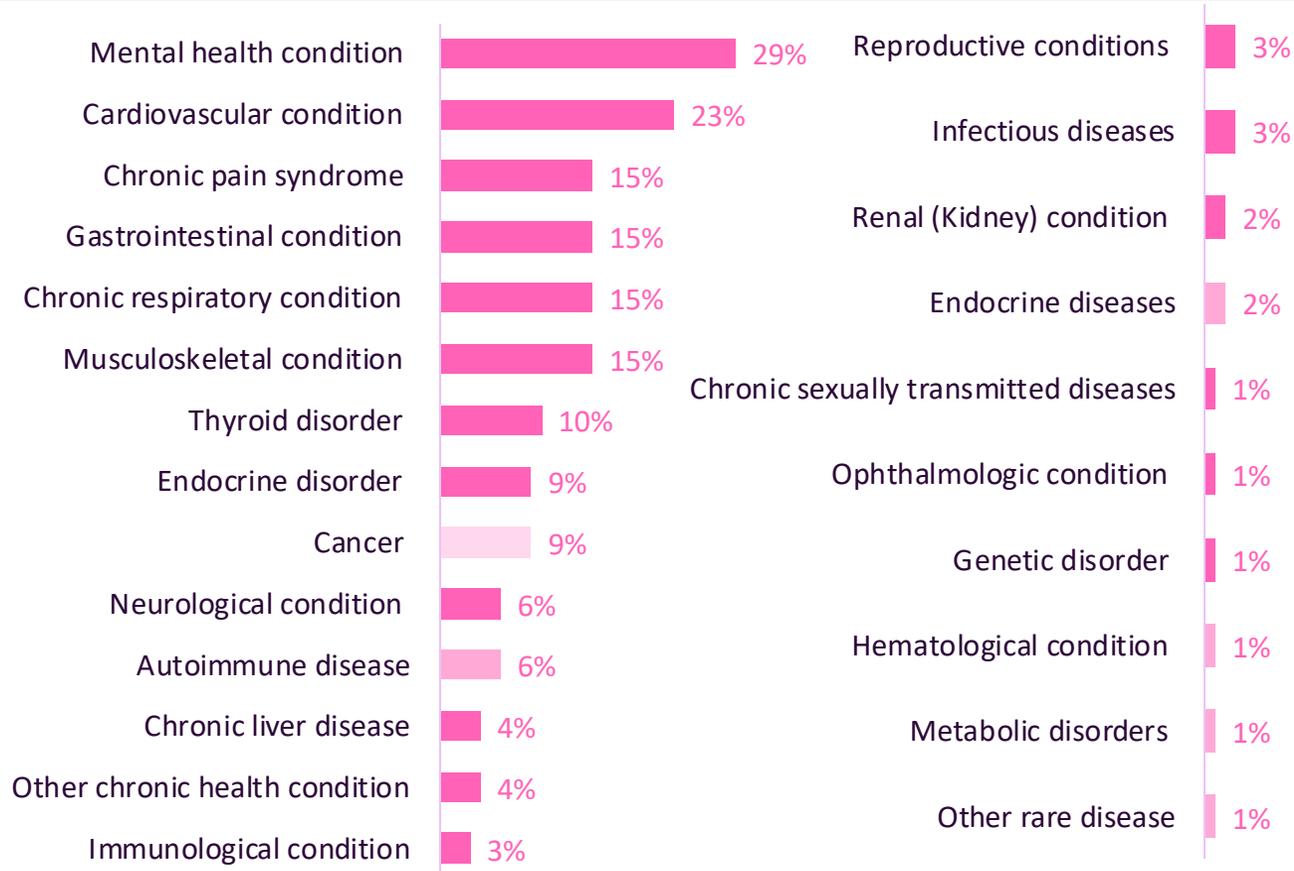
Ability to Access Healthcare Through Telehealth Services in Past 12 Months
(Among rural adults)



Demographics

Chronic Condition Status

Ever Diagnosed by a Healthcare Professional With a Chronic Health Condition
(Among rural adults)

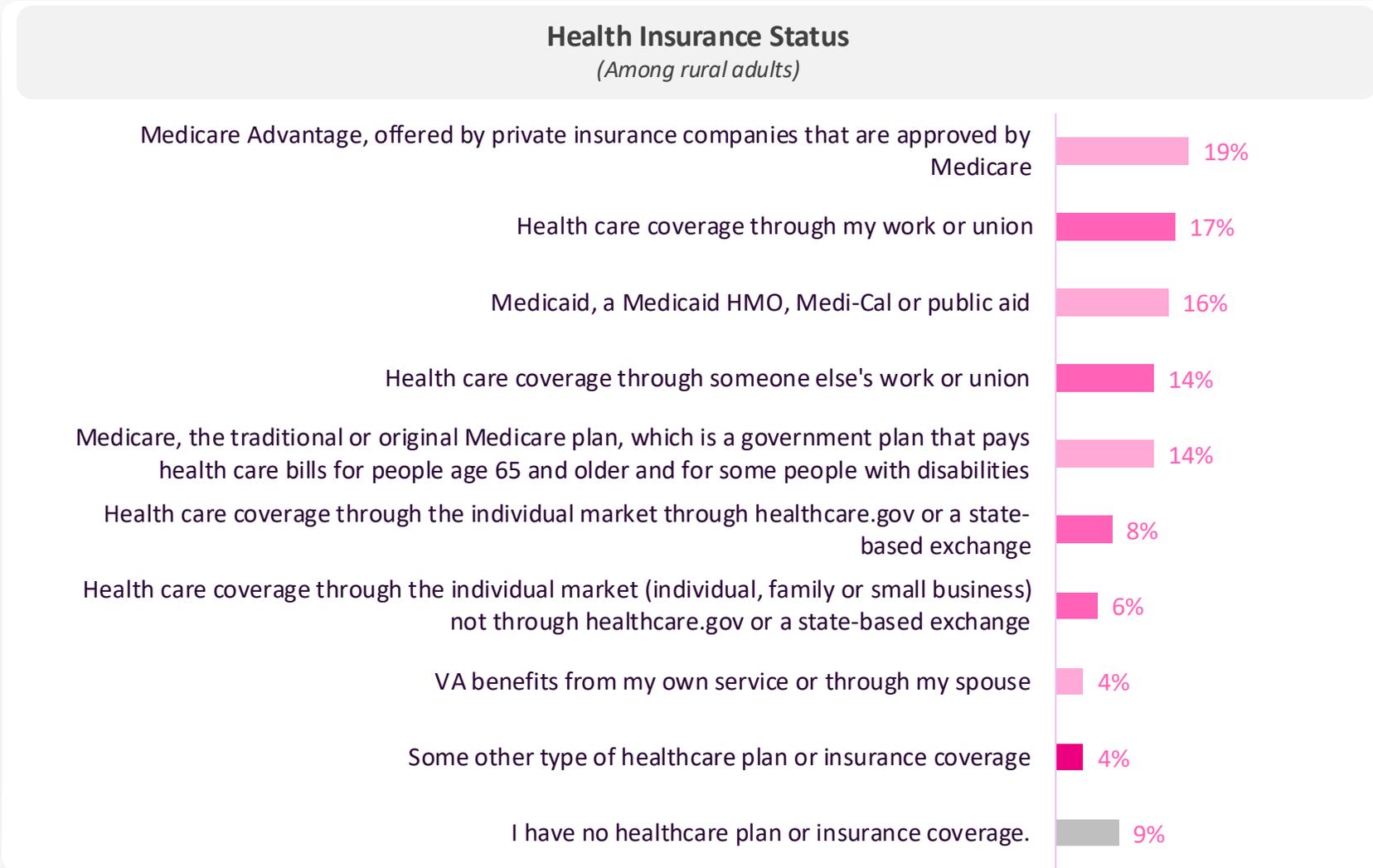


Chronic Conditions (NET): 65%

Rare Conditions (NET): 8%

Cancer: 9%

Health Insurance Status



**Any (NET):
91%**

**Private (NET):
43%**

**Public (NET):
50%**



^Some response labels shortened for brevity; see notes section for full description provided

Demographics

	Rural adults N=372		Rural adults N=372		Rural adults N=372
Gender		Region		Urbanicity	
Man	40%	Northeast	11%	Urban	-
Woman	58%	Midwest	30%	Suburban	-
Other/prefer not to answer	2%	South	41%	Rural	100%
Age		West		Race/Ethnicity	
18-34	25%	Education		White (not Hispanic)	74%
35-44	15%	HS or less	35%	Hispanic	12%
45-54	15%	Some college	42%	Black (not Hispanic)	8%
55-64	17%	College grad+	23%	Asian (not Hispanic)	2%
65+	28%	Employment Status		Other (not Hispanic)	4%
Mean	51	Employed (FT, PT, self)	49%	Primary Residence	
Household income		Not employed	14%	Homeowner	72%
<\$50k	31%	Retired	27%	Renter	23%
\$50k - \$74.9k	20%	Other	18%	None of these	4%
\$75k – \$99.9k	14%	Marital Status		Children under 18 in HH	
\$100k+	34%	Married	43%	Yes	31%
Decline to answer	1%	Not married	57%	No	69%