WASHINGTON STATE HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH PROJECT

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How Long and How Far Do Adults Travel and Will Adults Travel for Primary Care?

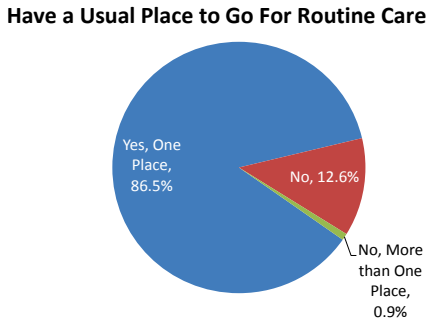
By Wei Yen
The Health Care Research Group

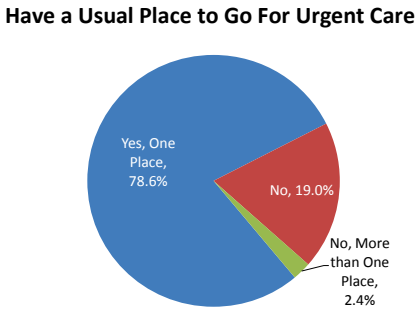
Introduction

In 2012, the Office of Financial Management (OFM) conducted a health care consumer survey to assess Washington residents' current interaction with primary care services and how they might interact in the future.[1] More than 5,000 Washington adults responded to the survey. In this brief, we present results from the survey on people's current travel and their expectations for future travel to receive primary care. For the purpose of the survey, primary care includes both routine care and urgent care. Routine care refers to preventive care or routine follow-up care for medical management of diagnosed health conditions. Urgent care refers to care for health conditions that are not life-threatening but require evaluation and treatment within 24 hours. For travel to primary care, our analysis focuses on travel time and distance.

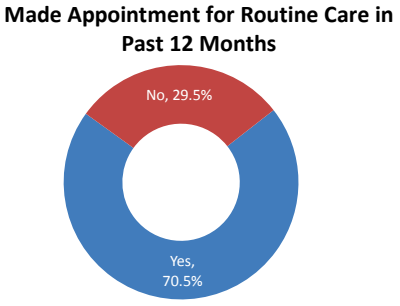
Results

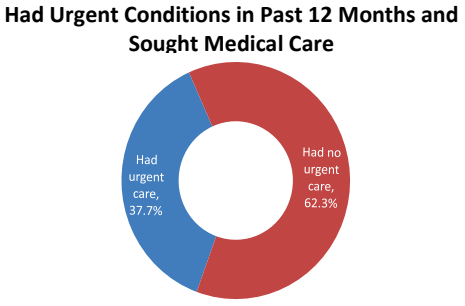
- According to the survey, currently, 12.5 percent of Washington's adults do not have a usual place to go to for routine care; a larger share, 19 percent, does not have a usual place to go for urgent care.





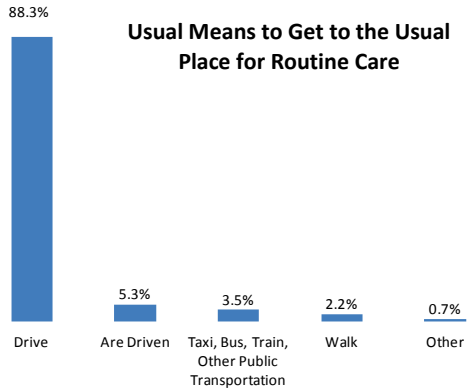
- In a 12-month period, 70 percent of adults sought routine care while 38 percent sought urgent care.

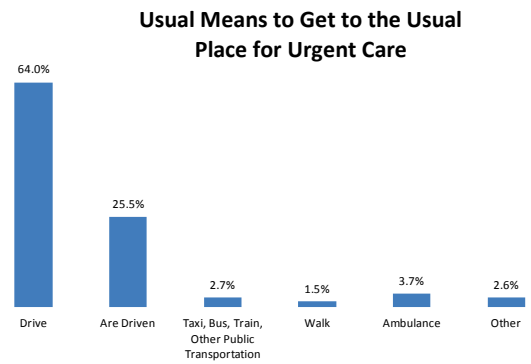




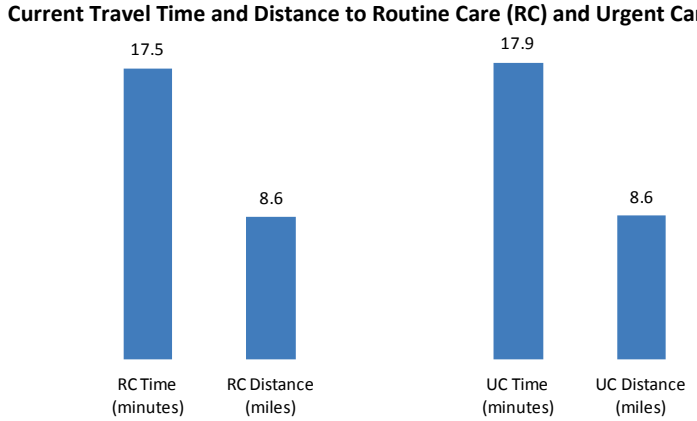
- Eighty-eight (88) percent of those adults who sought routine care drove and an additional 5 percent rode in private vehicles to their appointments, with the remainder traveling to their providers by some other means. Of those who sought urgent care, 64 percent drove and 26 percent took rides in private vehicles to see their providers, with the remainder traveling to care by some other means.

[1] Learn more about the survey at: http://www.ofm.wa.gov/healthcare/health_care_data_report.pdf.

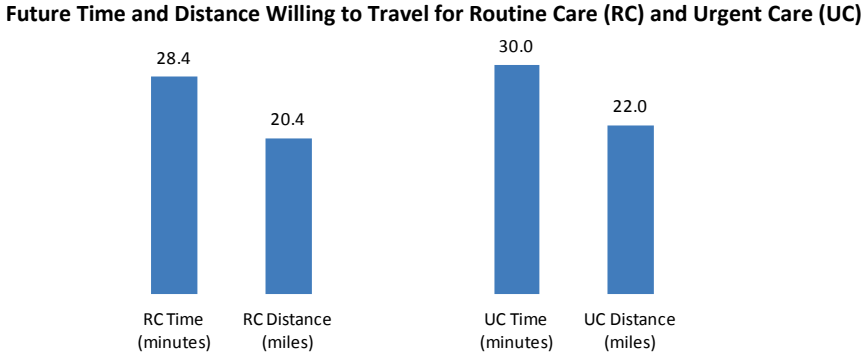




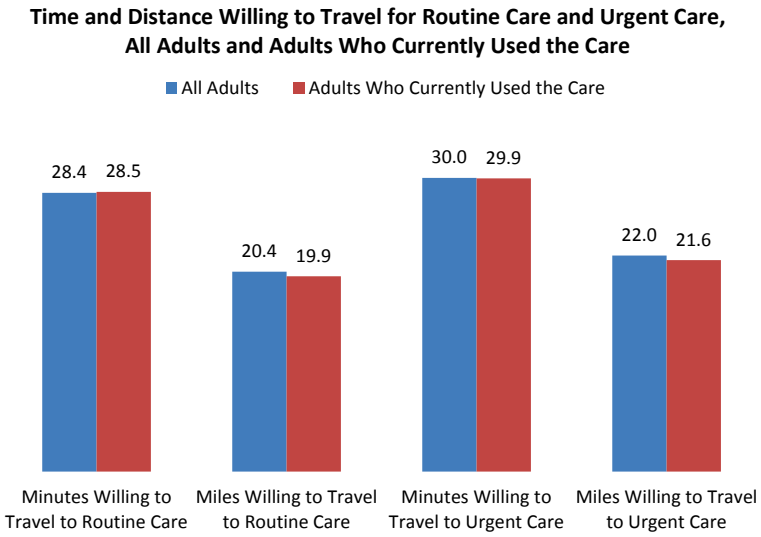
- Current trips to routine care took an average of 17.5 minutes and an average distance of 8.6 miles; current trips to urgent care took about the same time (17.9 minutes) and distance (8.6 miles).



- For future routine care, adults are willing to spend 28.4 minutes and travel a distance of 20.4 miles; for future urgent care, they are willing to spend even more time (30 minutes) and go farther (22 miles).



- Whether people currently used care does not seem to have any impact on the time and distance they are willing to take for future care. The comparison of time and distance people are willing to travel for future care between those who currently used care and all adults in Washington produces very comparable, if not identical, results:
    - Time for going to routine care: care-use adults - 28.4 minutes; all adults – 28.5 minutes
    - Distance for going to routine care: care-use adults – 20.4 miles; all adults – 19.9 miles
    - Time for going to urgent care: care-use adults – 30 minutes; all adults – 29.9 minutes
    - Distance for going to urgent care: care-use adults – 22 miles; all adults – 21.6 miles



- When groups of adults with various population characteristics are compared with the overall adult population in their current travels and the travels they are willing to take for future health care, the results show that most of the population groups have travel patterns conforming to those of the overall adult population. The comparison yields the following few statistically significant differences between some of the population groups and the overall adult population (for a complete list, see Table 1):

  - Current travel time to routine care (all adults = 17.5 minutes) – adults of Hispanic origin and those with children under 18 living the households spent less trip time (14.7 and 15.3 minutes, respectively); adults with no children living in household spent more in trip time (18.8 minutes).
  - Travel time willing to spend for future routine care visits (all adults = 28.4 minutes) – adults with children reported less time (26.3 minutes); adults in poor health and those in non-urban areas are willing to spend more time than the average for all adults (32.1 and 30.5 minutes, respectively).
  - Current travel distance for routine care (all adults = 8.6 miles) – adults of Hispanic origin and those living urban areas traveled a shorter distance to routine care (6.6 and 7.6 miles, respectively); adults in non-urban areas traveled a longer distance of 10.2 miles.
  - Travel distance willing to take for future routine care visits (all adults = 20.4 miles) – non-urban residents are willing to go farther (25.3 miles) than the average of all adults; adults of age 65 plus, Hispanic origin, non-Hispanic non-white heritage, and urban residency reported shorter willing-to-take distances than the all-adult average (18.1, 17.9, 17.8, and 17.6 miles, respectively).
  - Current travel time to urgent care (all adults = 17.9 minutes) – none of the population groups had a travel time that is statistically different from the all-adult average.
  - Travel time willing to spend for future urgent care visits (all adults = 30 minutes) – men, uninsured adults, and non-urban residents are willing to spend more travel time to get urgent care than the all-adult average (32.8, 34.1, and 34.8 minutes, respectively); the elderly group (ages 65 plus) are willing to spend less time (26.4 minutes) than all adults.
  - Current travel distance for urgent care (all adults = 8.6 miles) – adults in the age group of 35-49 years traveled an average of 7.3 miles to urgent care, about 1.3 miles less than the all-adult average.
  - Travel distance willing to take for future urgent care visits (all adults = 22 miles) – men and non-urban residents are willing to travel farther than the all-adult average distance for future urgent care (24.2 and 28.6 miles, respectively); elderly adults and urban adults are willing to take a distance that is shorter than the all-adult average (17.7 and 18.5 miles, respectively).

Table 1: Current Travel Time And Distance And Future Travel Time And Distance People Are Willing To Take For Routine Health Care And Urgent Health Care, By Demographic Characteristics

	Routine Care				Urgent Care			
	Travel Time (Minutes)		Travel Distance (Miles)		Travel Time (Minutes)		Travel Distance (Miles)	
	Current Trips	*Willing to Travel*	*Current Trips*	*Willing to Travel*	*Current Trips*	*Willing to Travel*	*Current Trips*	*Willing to Travel*
All Adults	**17.5**	**28.4**	**8.6**	**20.4**	**17.9**	**30.0**	**8.6**	**22.0**
Male	17.9	28.8	8.6	20.8	17.8	32.8*	8.2	24.2*
Female	17.1	28.1	8.5	20.0	17.9	27.2	9.0	19.9
18-34	16.6	28.7	8.5	21.0	18.0	33.4	10.0	24.3
35-49	16.9	27.8	8.4	19.9	16.1	28.0	7.3*	22.5
50-64	18.5	29.3	9.1	21.6	19.8	30.2	8.9	21.8
65+	17.9	27.5	8.1	18.1*	17.1	26.4*	7.7	17.7*
Non-Hispanic White	17.7	28.9	8.9	21.0	18.2	29.4	8.9	22.3
Non-Hispanic Other	17.6	26.2	7.7	17.8*	17.7	28.0	7.8	19.3
Hispanic	14.7*	27.9	6.6*	17.9*	14.4	39.8	6.5	24.4
Good Health	17.1	27.8	8.5	20.2	17.2	29.3	8.6	21.8
Poor Health	19.6	32.1*	9.1	21.5	20.7	33.7	8.7	23.6
Has DHAH[1]	18.0	29.4	8.5	20.5	18.3	28.8	8.2	21.6
No DHAH	17.1	27.9	8.6	20.3	17.6	30.7	8.9	22.3
Insured	17.4	28.2	8.6	20.1	17.6	29.1	8.4	21.5
Uninsured	18.2	29.9	8.6	22.2	19.6	34.1*	10.4	25.1
Not Married	18.3	29.4	8.4	20.1	19.2	31.5	9.0	22.5
Married	16.8	27.8	8.7	20.7	16.9	29.1	8.4	22.0
No Children in Household	18.8*	29.8	8.9	20.5	19.0	30.0	8.5	21.5
Children in Household	15.3*	26.3*	8.0	20.3	16.0	29.8	8.7	22.9
Non-Urban	17.9	30.5*	10.2*	25.3*	18.7	34.8*	9.7	28.6*
Urban	17.1	27.3	7.6*	17.6*	17.2	27.3	7.9	18.5*
At or Below 300% FPL	17.6	28.6	8.4	20.6	18.3	31.3	8.7	22.8
Above 300% FPL	17.3	28.3	8.8	20.2	17.3	28.3	8.6	21.0
No College	17.5	29.0	8.3	21.5	18.2	32.6	9.1	24.4
Any College	17.4	28.2	8.7	19.9	17.7	28.8	8.4	21.0

[1]DHAH= diagnosis of diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, and/or heart disease

*Statistically different from All Adults at the 95-percent confidence level.

Note 2: Figures under "Current Trips" are average of those reporting current use of routine care or urgent care.