



hyro⁺

Pixel Health 

2026 State of Patient Communications

Growing digital adoption, rising patient expectations, and rapid advancements in AI are reshaping how healthcare organizations deliver and coordinate care

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Executive Summary

For 2026, those in the healthcare sector are optimistic about improving patient experiences and operational efficiency as organizations continue to adopt new technologies and expand patient access. To find out more about where there are gaps and alignment between patients and providers, Hyro and Pixel Health, in partnership with Wakefield Research, surveyed 800 U.S. patients 18 and older who have recently interacted with the healthcare system and 200 U.S. digital and IT executives at hospitals and health systems. **While 100% of providers consider helping patients overcome barriers to accessing care a priority, nearly three-quarters of patients (72%) have put off seeing a healthcare provider.** This reveals a meaningful gap between what providers believe they are addressing and what patients are actually experiencing when needing to access care. Even well-intentioned efforts may not be reaching patients in ways that effectively reduce the obstacles they face. And less than half of patients (48%) feel like a provider has been proactive with helping them access care in the past 12 months.

Meanwhile, artificial intelligence — including emerging agentic AI systems— is increasingly shaping healthcare systems. **A significant 91% of providers report using AI in some capacity, and those who use it largely believe voice AI agents have been a helpful tool for patient communication (91%).** Providers anticipate that AI will free up clinicians' time to engage more with patients (58%), enhance preventive care (54%), and improve diagnostic accuracy (48%). Overall, patients are acclimating to AI — 69% are comfortable with agentic AI handling tasks like scheduling, while 62% are OK with AI sharing test results.

The challenge for healthcare organizations will be balancing technological adoption with human oversight and patient trust. **While nearly all providers (97%) believe AI used in healthcare is designed with patients' best interests in mind, 60% still trust humans more than AI (40%) to protect health data. Patients are even more wary – they trust humans (82%) more than AI (19%) to keep their data safe.** Nevertheless, the trend toward digital and AI-enabled healthcare points to a future where providers can dedicate more time to patients and deliver more personalized care.

Key Findings

72%



of patients put off seeing a healthcare provider

51%



put off seeing a doctor because it was too difficult to make an appointment

64%

of providers believe this occurs with frequency at their organization

93%



of providers view patients as comfortable with digital tools to manage their healthcare

86%



of patients feel at ease using these options

60%

of providers believe patients would be comfortable receiving test results from AI



And patients are aligned

62%

would be OK with getting results this way

97%

of providers believe AI systems in healthcare are designed with patients' best interests in mind



Whereas only

69%

of patients feel this way

98%

of providers expect patients to be comfortable with agentic AI scheduling



While just

69%

of patients are amenable to this

87%



of providers consider their patient-facing technology up to date

But patients have some misgivings

57%



of them believe AI is not at the level where healthcare professionals should trust it

Digital and AI Readiness in Healthcare

Healthcare organizations are prioritizing digital tools and AI, including emerging agentic AI systems, but there are still ongoing patient challenges. While patients may be able to access their records, they are not yet fully satisfied with their experiences interacting with AI. And data security is a real concern for both patients and providers who hope to reap the benefits of automation and technology while keeping patients' records safe – and keeping their trust.

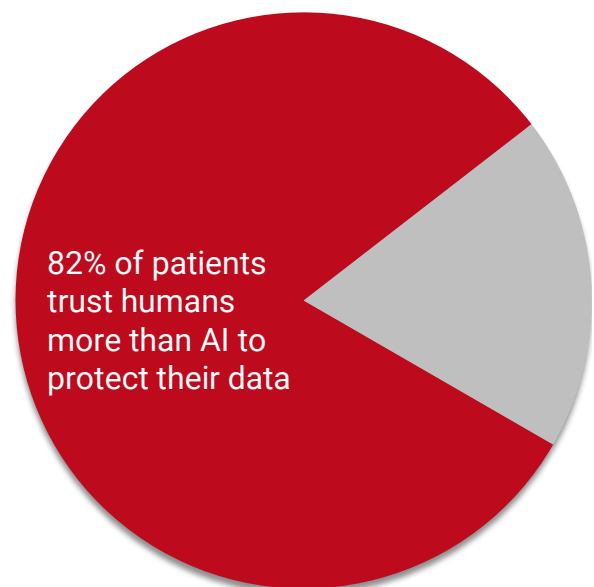
Providers largely believe patients are comfortable using digital tools to manage their care. In fact, 93% of providers expect patients to be at ease with portals, apps, or telehealth platforms, and patient responses confirm this: 86% feel comfortable with these tools. Nearly all providers (90%) offer 24/7 electronic access to health records, supporting continuous engagement. Yet only 71% of patients have 24/7 access to most or all of their records from their recent providers, indicating a gap between provider capabilities and patient experience.

93% of providers expect patients to be at ease with portals, apps, or telehealth platforms and patients confirm this – 86% feel comfortable with these tools

Although providers see their patient-facing technology as current — with 87% rating it up-to-date — patients perceive room for improvement. More than half (51%) believe they would be in better health if their providers were more proactive in sending notifications, such as appointment reminders or summaries from their visits.

Artificial intelligence adoption is widespread, with 91% of providers reporting AI use in at least some capacity. However, patients are cautious: only 69% are comfortable with agentic AI scheduling appointments. Similarly, while 97% of providers agree that AI systems in healthcare are designed with patients' best interests in mind, a strong majority of patients (82%) still trust humans more than AI (19%) to protect their health data.

AI adoption among providers is broad and growing despite specific concerns from patients



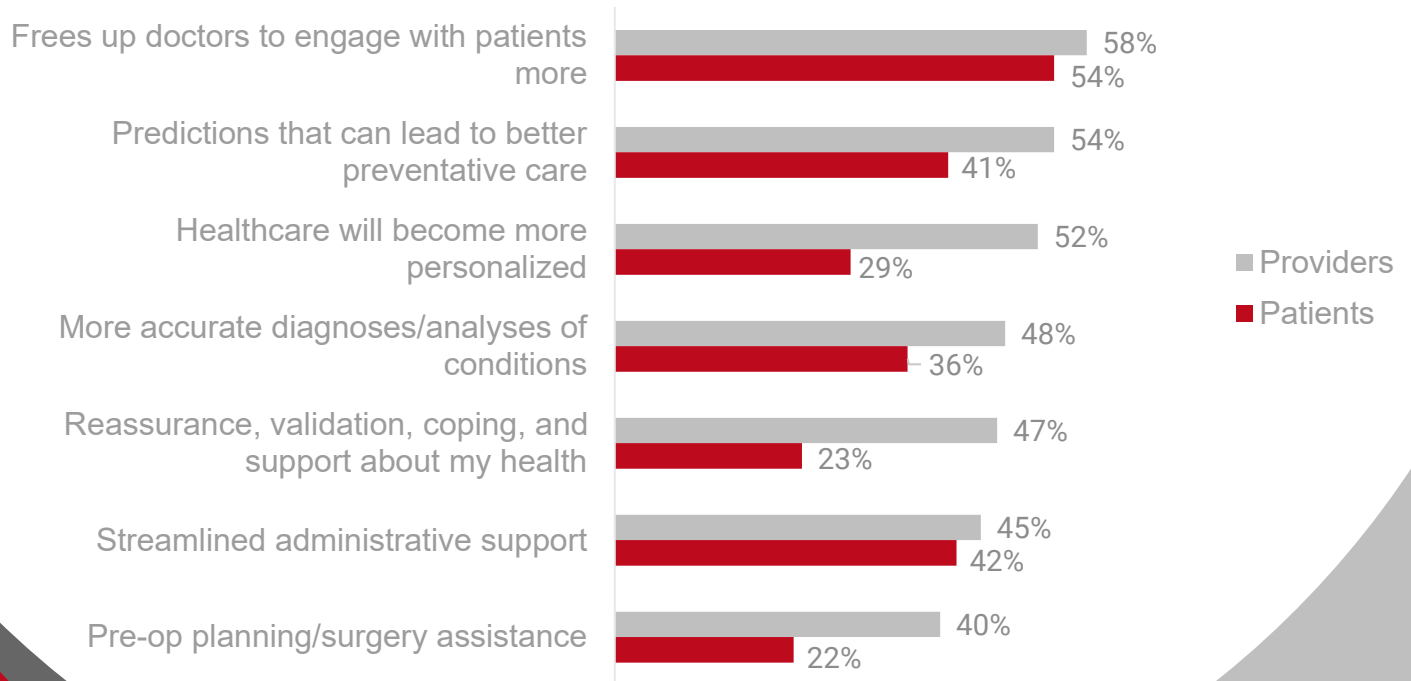
Spotlight

Human Touch

Providers anticipate that AI can enhance patient care, with 58% highlighting its potential to free clinicians to spend more time directly engaging with patients. Yet patients remain concerned about the potential loss of personal interaction, with 69% worried that AI could erode the human element in healthcare.

This tension underscores that while technology can streamline processes, maintaining trust and meaningful human connections will be essential for successful AI adoption.

Patients and providers diverge on how they think about AI's impact on personalization and the human element in healthcare



Barriers to Patient Access

Healthcare organizations are investing heavily in digital tools and AI to streamline care, yet meaningful gaps remain in how patients actually access services. While providers believe they are reducing barriers through outreach, technology, and support, patients report a very different experience. Many still struggle to get appointments, receive follow-ups, or navigate digital solutions intended to make care easier. Understanding where provider assumptions diverge from patient realities is critical to closing the access gap and ensuring technology truly improves care delivery.

All healthcare providers (100%) consider it a priority to help patients overcome barriers to accessing care. Yet less than half of patients (48%) report that their providers have taken proactive steps to help them access care in the past 12 months. While 56% of providers proactively follow up to make sure patients get the care they need, just 25% of patients had a provider proactively reach out to help them overcome obstacles to care multiple times in the past year.

Preventive care outreach also highlights this misalignment. While 67% of providers conduct multiple outreaches to remind patients about preventive appointments, only 36% of patients prefer to be contacted more than once. The majority of patients (55%) prefer a single outreach, showing a disconnect between provider efforts and patient preferences.

AI tools are helping bridge some gaps, but adoption challenges remain. Among providers who use AI, 91% report that voice AI agents are helpful for patient communication, while just 7% do not use them. Just over half of patients are content, with 51% expressing satisfaction with voice AI agents through their healthcare provider(s), while 36% have not interacted with them.

Providers use AI, find it helpful, and want to use it more, despite patient concerns

89%

of providers believe they should use AI more



57%

of patients feel AI is not yet at a level where it can be trusted



Despite these positive signals, trust remains a barrier: 89% of providers believe healthcare professionals should use AI more so they can dedicate time they save to patients, but 57% of patients feel AI is not yet at a level where it can be trusted.

Spotlight

Hanging on the Telephone

How patients prefer their health provider communicate with them

The majority of providers (56%) believe the biggest obstacle to AI adoption in healthcare is patient skepticism. And they may be right — even though patients have access to digital tools, the phone (33%) is still the preferred way they want to be contacted, much more so than a chatbot or virtual assistant (5%). This highlights that, while technology adoption is accelerating, traditional communication channels remain critical to maintaining patient engagement and trust.



Phone call – 33%



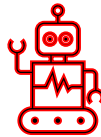
Text message – 21%



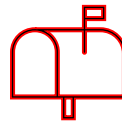
Email – 19%



Patient portal – 19%



Chatbot/virtual assistant – 5%



Written communication by mail – 4%

The Future of AI in Healthcare

AI— particularly agentic AI that can autonomously manage routine interactions —is accelerating in healthcare, and both providers and patients see the potential to improve efficiency, access, and outcomes. Providers are optimistic that AI can free up clinicians' time, improve preventative care, and deliver more personalized healthcare experiences. Patients show openness to AI for administrative tasks, but are slightly more cautious when it comes to AI handling sensitive health information, highlighting trust as a key factor for future adoption.

Looking ahead, 58% of providers expect AI to free up clinicians' time for patient care, which aligns closely with 54% of patients who believe it will allow doctors to interact with them more. While AI presents clear advantages, concerns remain: providers' top worry is data security (58%), and more than half of patients (52%) share this concern. Additionally, 61% of patients are apprehensive about algorithms making healthcare decisions that aren't what's best for them, and nearly as many providers (57%) have the same worry.

Data security is a top worry about AI in healthcare

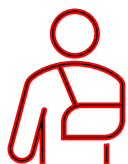
58%

Providers



52%

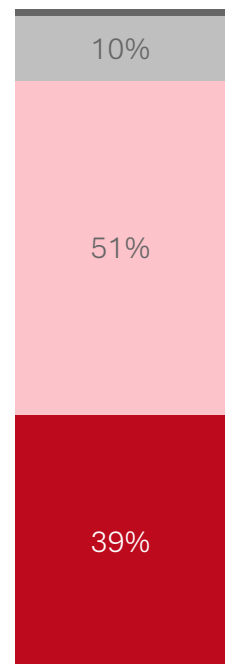
Patients



When it comes to technology readiness, 33% of providers feel most or all of their processes are too outdated to integrate with AI, whereas 89% of patients believe the provider they see most is up to date on current technology. This gap highlights how hard it can be to align internal capabilities with patient expectations, since patient-facing technology is only part of the picture.

89% of patients believe the provider they see the most is up to date on current technology

- Very outdated
- Somewhat outdated
- Somewhat up-to-date
- Very up-to date

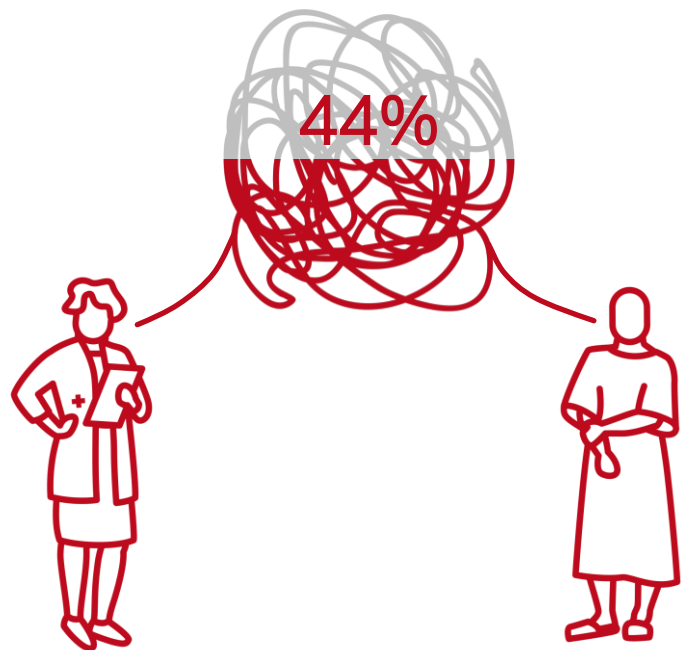


Spotlight

Communication Breakdown

As AI adoption grows, human interactions remain fallible. A notable 44% of patients have experienced a miscommunication with their healthcare provider about their health, demonstrating that both technological and human processes require vigilance. Ensuring clarity and trust in both AI-enabled and human communications will be important as healthcare organizations continue to innovate.

Nearly half of patients have experienced a miscommunication with their healthcare provider



Conclusion

As healthcare organizations continue to invest in technology, streamline patient access, and adopt AI, they are positioning themselves to improve both operational efficiency and patient experiences. But progress won't come without challenges. Providers will need to prioritize patient trust as they implement AI and other emerging tools.

AI will remain a key driver of change, from automating administrative tasks to supporting clinical decision making, but investments in patient-facing technology, security, and care navigation will be equally important to ensuring that both patients and providers benefit from these innovations.

The greatest opportunity lies in closing the gaps between patient expectations and provider perceptions, ensuring that technology adoption translates into real improvements in care access, convenience, and satisfaction. Healthcare organizations are in a period of transformational change, and those that navigate this carefully will be best positioned for positive outcomes — for both their patients and their teams.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The Hyro & Pixel Health Providers Survey was conducted by [Wakefield Research](#) among 200 U.S. Providers: Digital and IT executives at hospitals and health systems in the U.S., between November 7th and November 26th, 2025, using an email invitation and an online survey.

The Hyro & Pixel Health Patients Survey was conducted by [Wakefield Research](#) among 800 U.S. patients 18+ who have recently interacted with the healthcare system, between November 7th and November 26th, 2025, using an email invitation and an online survey.

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. For the interviews conducted in this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 6.9 percentage points for the providers sample and by more than 3.5 percentage points for the patient sample from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

All decimals are rounded to the nearest percentage point, which may result in numeric totals that sum to slightly more or slightly less than 100%.

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ABOUT PIXEL HEALTH

Pixel Health enables healthcare organizations to improve patient, clinician, and staff experiences by making technology and clinical systems work better together. As experts in all aspects of healthcare technology, we take a holistic, customized approach to strategy, design, implementation and optimization services. Our capabilities extend from large-scale IT and telecom implementations to contact center operations, digital front door optimization, and change management. At Pixel Health, visionaries, consultants, clinicians, and frontline team members work together to bring simplicity and efficiency to IT, patient access, and connected care objectives. As a result, we create high-value solutions that produce desired, sustainable outcomes and revenue improvements. www.pixelhealth.com

ABOUT HYRO

Hyro, the leading Responsible AI Agent Platform for healthcare, enables health systems to safely automate workflows and conversations across their most valuable platforms, services, and channels – including call centers, websites, SMS, mobile apps, and more. Hyro's clients, which include Intermountain Health, Baptist Health, and Hackensack Meridian Health, benefit from AI agents that are fully HIPAA-compliant, fast to deploy, easy to maintain, and simple to scale – generating better conversations, successful patient outcomes, and revenue-driving insights. Hyro was founded in 2018 by Israel Krush and Rom Cohen. Learn more at www.hyro.ai.

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Wakefield Research is a leading, independent provider of quantitative, qualitative and hybrid market research for thought leadership and strategic insights. Wakefield Research is a partner to the world's leading brands and agencies, including 50 of the Fortune 100. We conduct research in nearly 100 countries and our surveys appear regularly in top-tier media. Learn more at www.wakefieldresearch.com.

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