

Broadband in Kansas: A super social driver of health

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United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

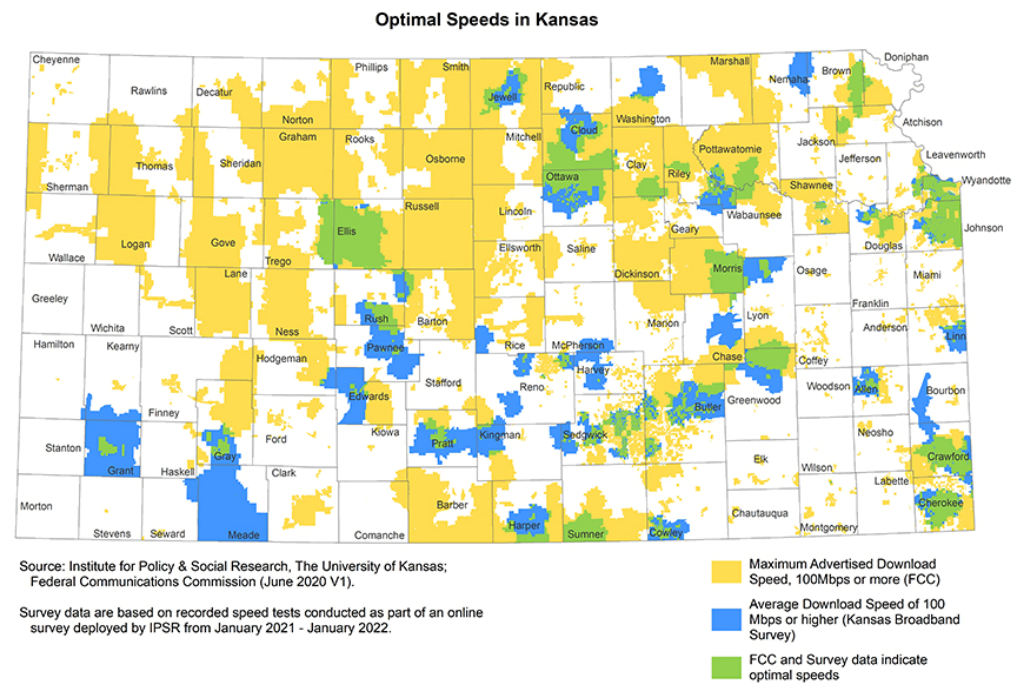
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The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund is a 37-year-old, \$60-million health philanthropy located in Hutchinson. Our mission is to improve the health of Kansans. We focus on three strategic areas—**access to care, Thriving Children, and Engaged Congregations and Communities**, a program aimed at addressing community health by engaging churches throughout Kansas.

Broadband Access in Kansas – Today's Statistics

- In a recent University of Kansas study, it was found that only 44% of Kansans live in areas with adequate broadband speeds.
- Kansans who are non-Hispanic Black or Hispanic, Any Race, were more likely to lack adequate internet access than were non-Hispanic White Kansans (45.6 percent, 39.8 percent and 28.5 percent, respectively). – Kansas Institute of Health
- University of Kansas researchers found that up to 1 million Kansans live in regions that lack access to high-speed broadband services at adequate speeds.



Broadband Access in Kansas – Three major challenge areas

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Broadband access requires more than just high internet speeds.

Major Challenge Areas:

- Access to broadband
- Access to appropriate devices
- Ability to navigate technology

Broadband Access & Health Fund's Work

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Addressing broadband access challenges can improve health, which is why the Health Fund prioritized access to broadband, including work to:

- Expand and enhance telehealth access (2 survey results to share)
- Support a workforce to help Kansans access services and utilizing devices
- Convene partners to advance policy and funding priorities

Review of Study Phases

**Provider/
Administrator Survey**
247 responses

**86.1% from
outpatient orgs**

**60.6% were
physicians**

Consumer Poll

869 respondents

**(600 likely voters
269 oversample of
voters of color)**

**Provider/
Administrator
Interviews**

14 interviewees

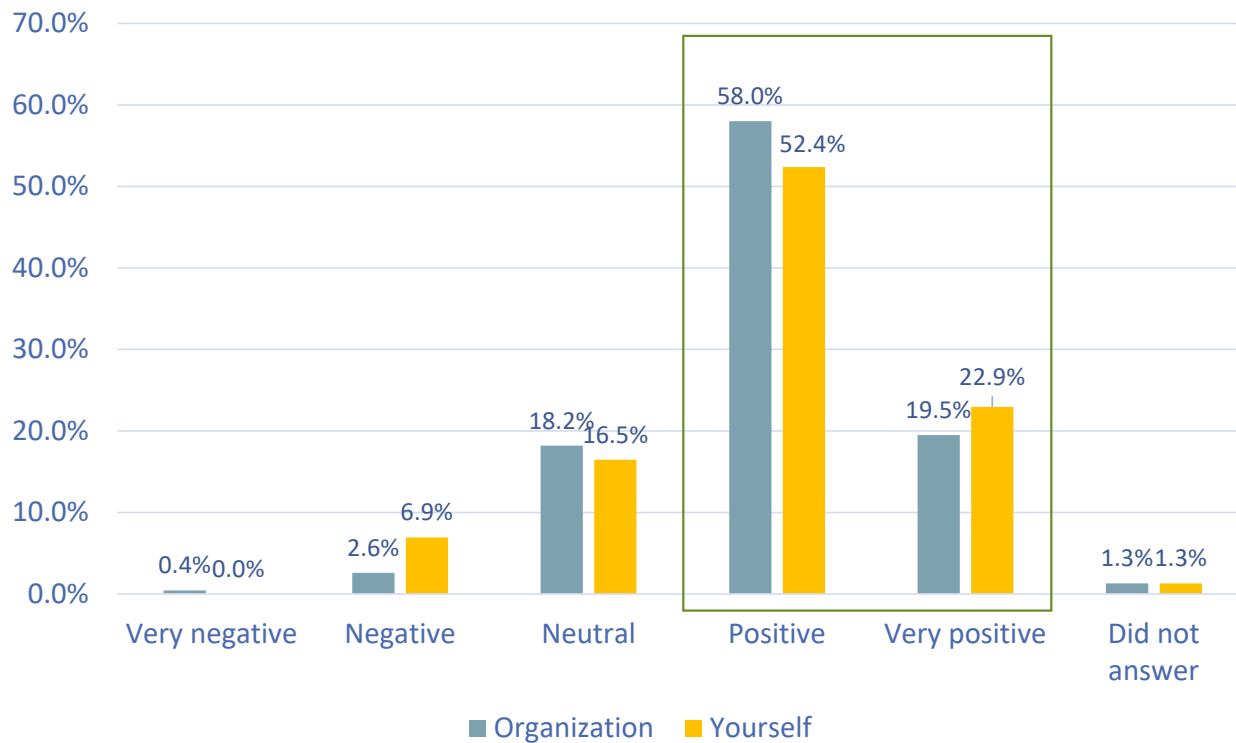
**7 administrators/ 7
providers**

7 men/7 women

**Consumer Focus
Groups**

**60 consumers
17 groups
(3 groups in Spanish)**

How would you characterize your organization's and your experiences with telehealth?



Totals:

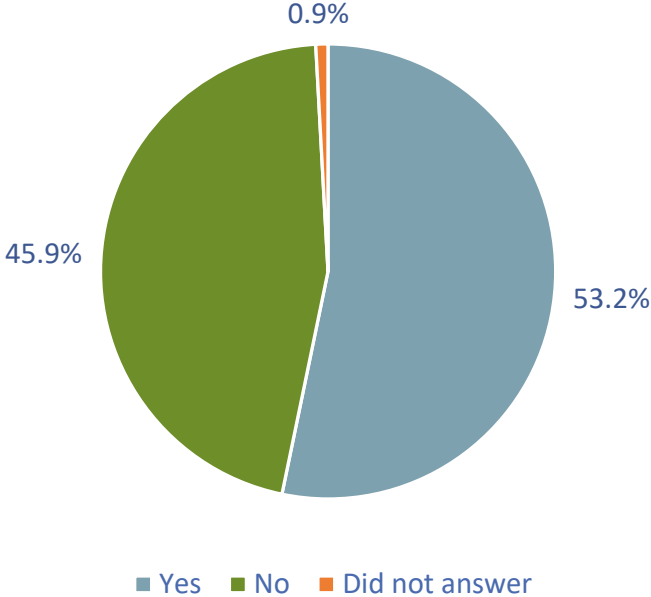
Positive or Very Positive
(Organization):
77.5%

Positive or Very Positive (Self):
75.3%

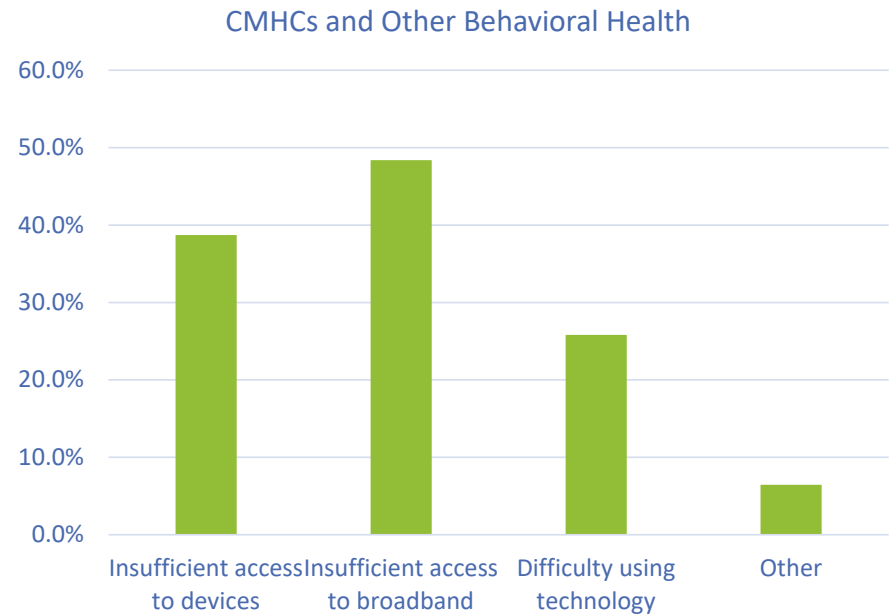
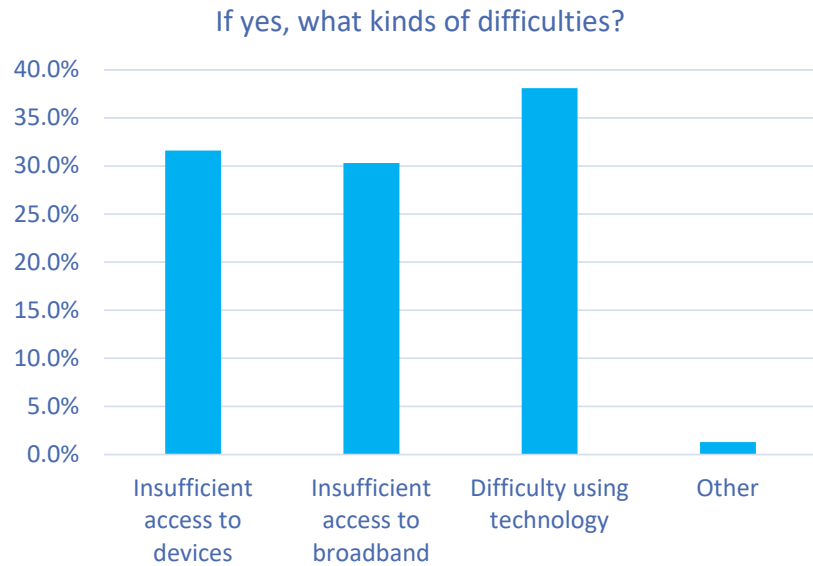
The Telehealth Experience: Provider Survey



Do you think your patients have difficulty accessing telehealth?



The Telehealth Experience: Provider Survey



Statewide Voter Poll Key Takeaways

In February 2021, REACH Health Care Foundation and the Health Fund funded a poll on Kansans experience with telehealth. GS Strategy Group conducted a survey of N=600 likely voters in Kansas plus an oversample of N=200 non-white voters in Kansas on their feelings around telehealth.

- The poll found that 48% of Kansans have utilized telehealth. Nationally, prior to the pandemic, just 11% were using telehealth.
- A majority of voters said that telehealth can help to drive down health care costs without negatively impacting quality of care. Voters cited personal safety from COVID-19, access to doctors and specialists, elimination of travel, and time savings as the top reasons to use telehealth.

Statewide Voter Poll Key Takeaways

- 86% of Kansans say they support expanding or maintaining telehealth options in Kansas.
- 85% of Kansans believe that the ability to see a provider from your home and on the platform and device of your choice should continue.
- 85% of Kansans find telehealth services like virtual meetings with a health care provider to be helpful.
- 93% of rural Kansans think that telehealth is a good way to give patients who live far from major hospitals and specialists access to healthcare.

Statewide Voter Poll Key Takeaways



- 90% of rural Kansans believe that telehealth must remain an option for patients after the pandemic is over.
- 95% of non-white Kansans believe that telehealth must remain an option for patients after the pandemic is over.
- 90% of Kansans feel that expanding broadband access in Kansas would better allow Kansans to access care.
- 90% of Kansans think telehealth is a good way to access care without taking time away from work or family.

Statewide Voter Poll Key Takeaways

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- Kansans are accessing telehealth from a wide variety of places – smart phone video, computers, tablets and phone calls – and want to have the freedom to access telehealth at home and with their own devices.
- Kansans understand the importance of broadband internet to allowing access for telehealth expansion in rural Kansas, and 71% of voters say that rural access to high-speed internet is worse.

Care Coordination, Consumer Assistance & Technology Navigators

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- Navigating the health care system, applications for assistance programs – like Affordable Connectivity Program, and technology set-up requires consumer assistance
- Care Coordinators like community health workers (CHWs) can reduce barriers to technology and affordable program
- CHWs often are a trusted member of the communities they serve and are leveraged to assist others in accessing services, applying for programs and utilizing access options.
- Broadband access also enables CHWs to meet with their patients when appropriate.
- CHWs are often in the same communities experiencing the same broadband challenges which may impact their ability to obtain training.
- Funding and payment (Medicaid, Medicare, and private payor reimbursement) are critical to supporting care coordination and consumer assistance/outreach efforts

Convening and Policy Efforts

- Convening partners to advance broadband policy, program and planning is critical
- For example, we participated in and support Governor Kelly's Kansas Digital Equity (DE) Plan for high-speed internet connectivity.
 - The DE Plan outlines digital skills training, affordable service plans, and the availability of broadband-ready devices as top priorities. Areas that we agree are the key components of digital equity.
 - We support additional plans from Governor Kelly and the Kansas Office of Broadband like the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Five-Year Action Plan (FYAP).
- Governor's Commission on Racial Equity and Justice report included recommendations on telehealth and broadband access
 - Payment policy
 - Funding for broadband
 - Funding for Consumer Assistance

Together, we can reduce the digital divide and improve access to broadband, which will improve access to telehealth and improve health.

Links

- <https://healthfund.org/a/kansas-telehealth/>
- <https://governor.kansas.gov/governors-commission-on-racial-equity-and-justice/>
- <https://healthfund.org/a/kansas-crej/>

Thank you!

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