

Older Canadians Are Embracing Virtual Care—But Gaps in Access and Experience Persist

TORONTO, June 10, 2026 — A new report from the National Institute on Ageing (NIA) at Toronto Metropolitan University finds that while older Canadians report using virtual care and are satisfied with it, significant gaps remain, particularly among those with lower incomes and more complex health needs.

In [Older, Online and Open to Virtual Care: Insights from the 2024 NIA Ageing in Canada Survey](#), findings show that more than half (51%) of Canadians aged 50 and older have used virtual care at least once, challenging long-standing assumptions about older adults and technology. Usage also increases with age, with those 80 and older among the most likely to report using it. While this points to strong uptake among older Canadians, the report notes that the survey was conducted online, which may have captured a group more comfortable with digital tools.

Overall, experiences are largely positive. Among those who have used virtual care, 93% say their needs were fully or mostly met, indicating high levels of satisfaction. However, interest among those who have never used virtual care remains mixed, with only 37% saying they would be likely to use it in the future, highlighting ongoing hesitation and persistent barriers to broader adoption.

“What we’re seeing is that older Canadians are not only capable of using virtual care, they’re already doing so and in many cases, benefiting from it,” said Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Health Policy Research of the NIA. “But these findings also make it clear that virtual care is not working equally well for everyone, particularly for those with more complex health needs or fewer resources.”

Key Findings

- **Older Canadians are engaging with virtual care:** Usage increases with age, with Canadians aged 80+ the most likely to report using these services.
- **Experiences are largely positive:** Among those who used virtual care, 93% said their needs were fully or mostly met, indicating strong overall satisfaction.
- **Interest among non-users remains mixed:** Only 37% of those who have never used virtual care say they are likely to use it in the future, suggesting ongoing hesitation and barriers.
- **Equity gaps persist:** Canadians with lower incomes are less likely to use virtual care, less satisfied when they do and are more hesitant to try it in the future.
- **Virtual care is not a one-size-fits-all solution:** Many older adults report limitations, including difficulty communicating symptoms and the inability to receive physical examinations, highlighting the need for hybrid models of care.

Toward More Inclusive, Hybrid Care

The findings highlight the need for a more coordinated and equitable approach to virtual care in Canada, including:

- Expanding digital access and literacy supports
- Improving communication and patient experience
- Ensuring care models are responsive to complex health needs
- Advancing hybrid care models that combine virtual and in-person services

“Without meaningful improvements, older Canadians’ experiences with virtual care will continue to depend more on where they live and their personal circumstances than on consistent, high-quality care standards,” said Alyssa Brierley, Executive Director of the NIA. “For virtual care to truly meet the needs of an ageing population, we must address gaps in digital access, strengthen communication between patients and providers and ensure the availability of in-person care models that reflect the realities of those with more complex needs. A more consistent, hybrid approach will be key to delivering equitable, high-quality care across the country.”

About The National Institute on Ageing

Founded in 2016, the National Institute on Ageing (NIA) is celebrating a decade of impact in our mission to improve the lives of older adults and the systems that support them. Over the past 10 years, the NIA has become Canada’s leading voice on ageing policy — convening stakeholders, conducting research, advancing policy solutions and practice innovations, sharing information and shifting attitudes. Our vision remains clear: a Canada where older adults feel valued, included, supported and better prepared to age with confidence.

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