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## Video consultations in the UK fell during COVID-19

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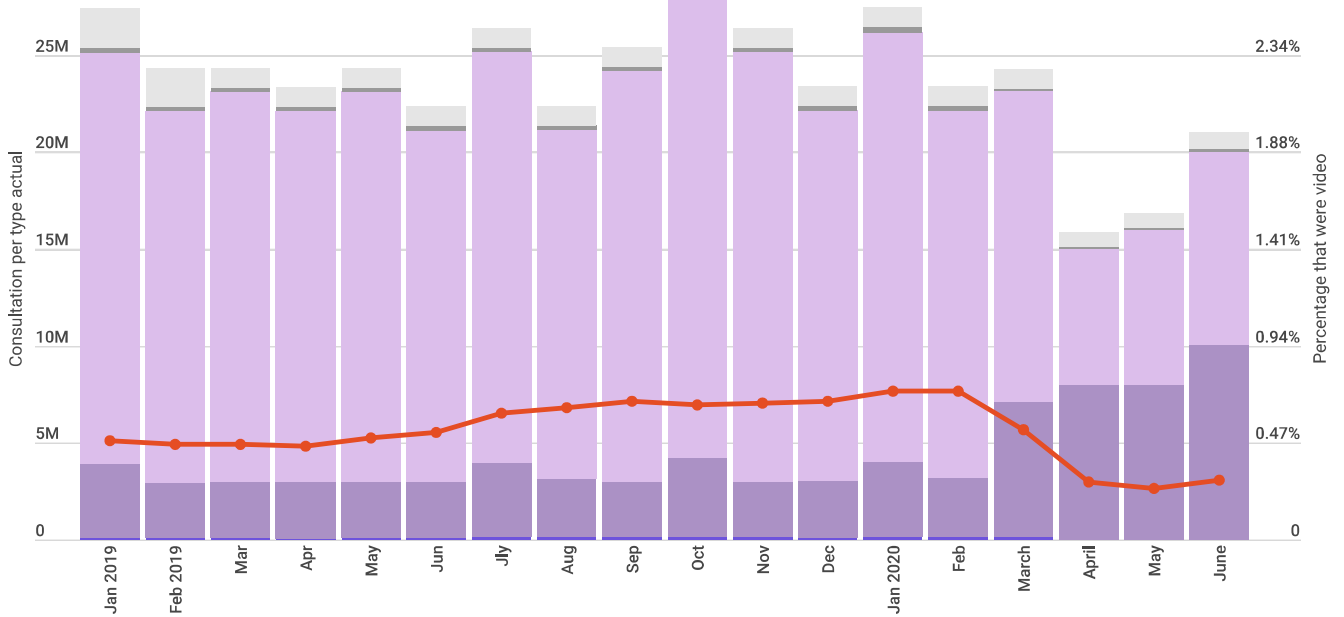
For all the talk of COVID-19 pushing ahead the digitalisation of healthcare, the use of video consultations in both actual numbers and as a percentage of consultations in primary care fell during the pandemic's peak. Recent headlines talk about 48% of primary care being delivered digitally, but most of these were telephone calls.

Data from NHS Digital, which looks at how GP consultations were delivered by modality, shows that video has never reached 1% of how primary care is delivered but the month's of the pandemic saw it reach a recent low of around 0.3% through April to June. Compare that to the beginning of the year when 0.72% of GP consultations were delivered by video.

The use of video in actual numbers peaked in January (albeit there will be more appointments over the winter) at 194,000 to the lowest point in the data available at 44,000 in April.

## The use of video consultations in the UK went down during the pandemic

2.81%



c. HBI 2020. Source: NHS Digital

Instead, it appears that telephone picked up the bulk of appointments that didn't happen face-to-face, with the modality being used for 30-45% of primary care.

A telehealth player working in the UK tells HBI that there are some discrepancies in the definitions used by the NHS because the data on show doesn't reflect the use of digital triage. "So even though video consultations are quite low we are still seeing a lot on the patient pathway be digitalized more.

We've also been having roundtables with other providers and can see that after this initial Wild West approach where doctors are using tools like Skype or Zoom, which much like telephone calls don't offer any security, that now many are starting to consider more formal solutions."

**We would welcome your thoughts on this story. Email your views to [Rachel Lewis](#) or call 0207 183 3779.**



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