

The role of telemedicine in prescribing medication in Spain: findings from a physicians' prescription panel

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OBJECTIVES

- To explore the role of telemedicine in Spain through data on real-world prescriptions.

METHODS

- Prescription data from IQVIA's EPM (*Estudio de Prescripciones Médicas*) from July 2021 to June 2024 were analysed.
- The EPM is a study conducted on a quarterly basis with a sample of 965 physicians, representing 0.5% of the universe (Table 1). Prescription data are then extrapolated to the whole universe.
- The survey collects anonymized data on retail product prescriptions made by physicians to their patients, including data on the patient's characteristics, type of consultation, prescribing physician, posology, and associated diagnosis.
- This study compares prescriptions from in-person medical consultations to those from virtual medical consultations (telehealth).

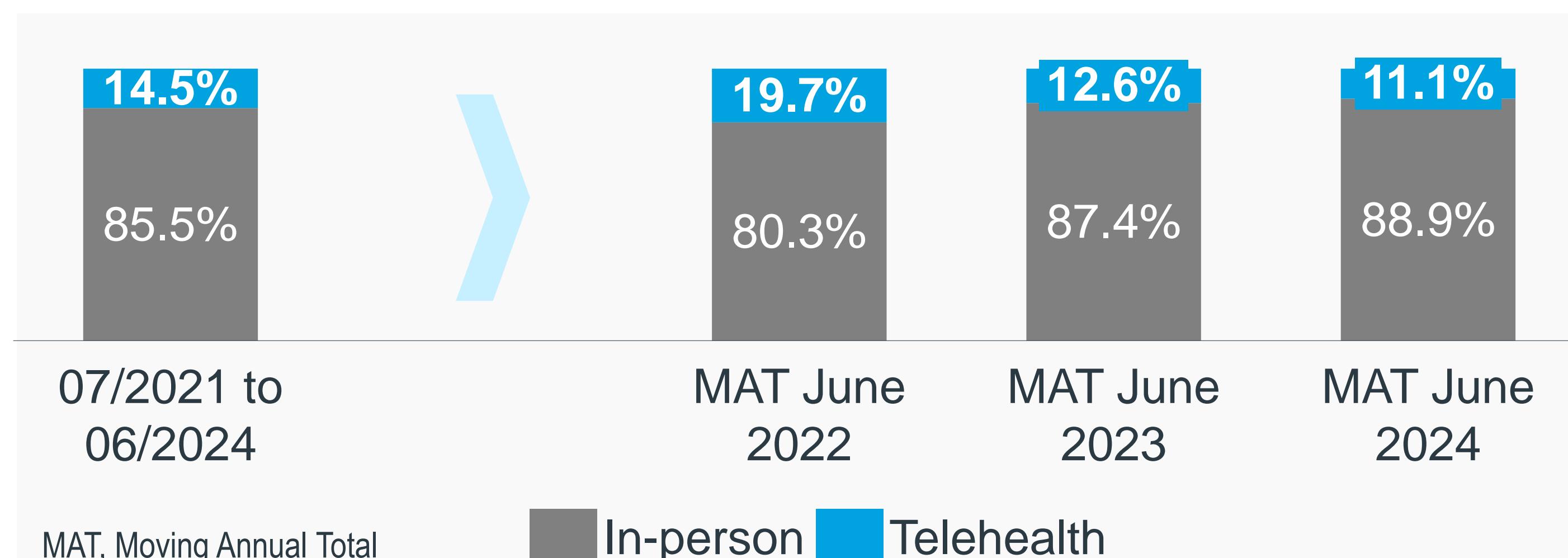
Table 1 EPM Sample in 2024 per specialty (nº physicians reporting data)

Speciality	Sample	Universe	Speciality	Sample	Universe
Primary Care	325	61,998	Cardiology	30	5,041
Odonto-Stomatology	67	23,835	Surgery	30	10,775
Pediatrics	65	14,989	Dermatology	30	3,092
Gynecology	45	9,363	Ophthalmology	30	6,122
Traumatology	39	8,565	Otorhino-laryngology	30	2,956
Internal Medicine	31	9,630	Urology	30	3,128
Digestive System	31	4,377	Respiratory System	30	2,977
Endocrinology	31	2,259	Psychiatry	30	7,486
Neurology	31	3,438	Nephrology	30	2,393
Rheumatology	30	1,651			
Total physicians sample	965		Patients treated by the physicians	424,000	
					Prescriptions in last year
					443,000

RESULTS

- From July 2021 to June 2024, 14.5% of the prescriptions were made through telehealth. The share of telehealth prescriptions was the highest between 07/2021-06/2022, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Fig.1).

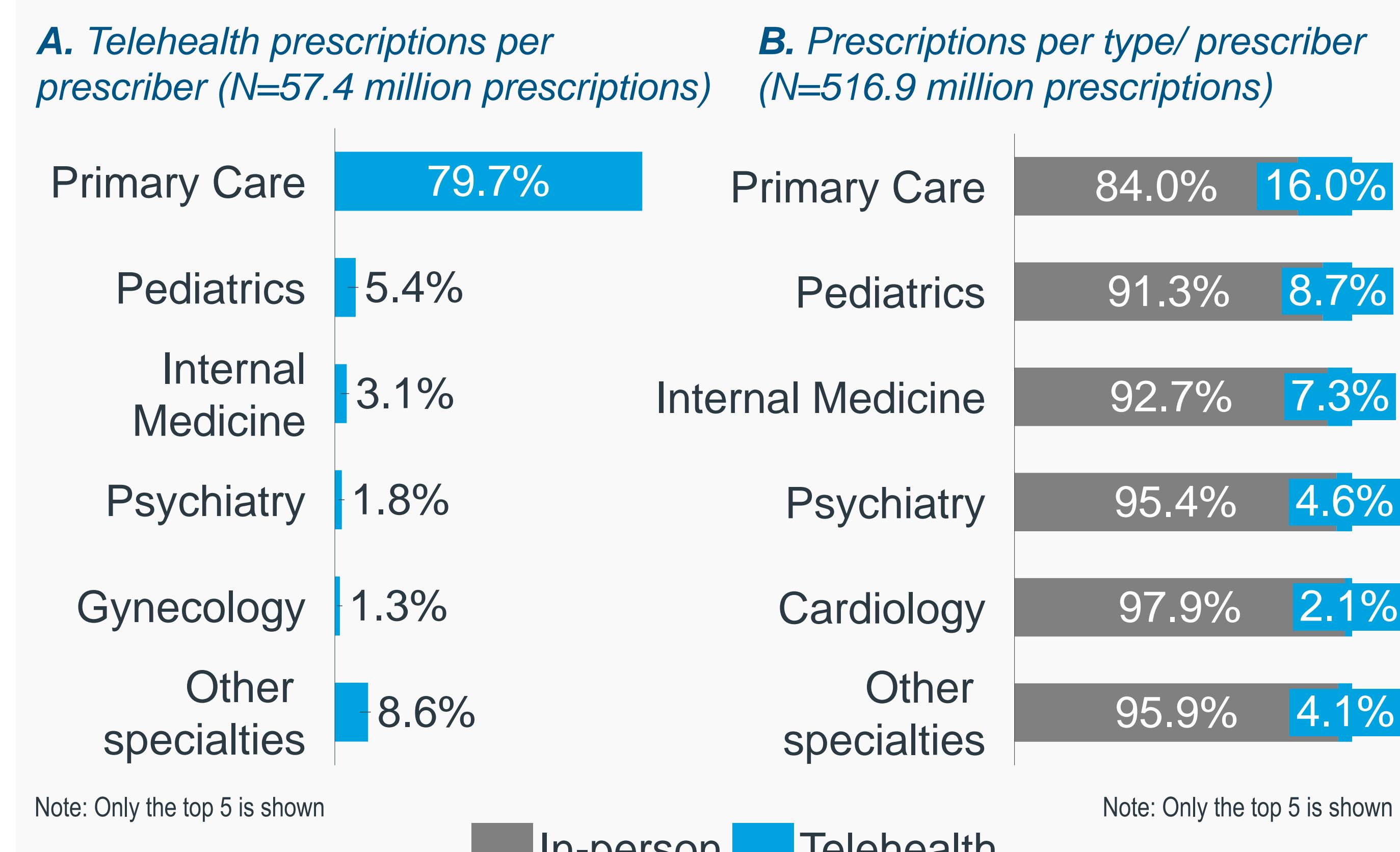
Fig. 1 In-person vs. telehealth prescriptions per year (7/21-6/24)



CONCLUSION

In Spain, one in ten prescriptions for retail medication is made during virtual medical consultations. Primary care physicians' resort to telehealth the most, mainly for populations with chronic conditions.

Fig. 2 In-person vs. telehealth prescriptions per specialty (7/23-6/24)



- Focusing on the past 12 months analyzed (July 2023 – June 2024):

- Most telehealth prescriptions (79.7%) were issued in the primary care setting (Fig. 2A).
- Primary care had the highest proportion of telehealth prescriptions relative to total prescriptions (16.0%), followed by pediatrics and internal medicine (Fig. 2B).
- The share of telehealth prescriptions was comparable between male (9.9%) and female patients (12.1%), as well as between male (10.8%) and female prescribers (11.7%).
- Around 15.5% of chronic and 5.4% of acute condition prescriptions were issued during virtual consultations.
- Telehealth prescriptions were more prevalent among patients aged 40 and older (Fig. 3), largely due to the higher share of chronic conditions prescriptions in this age group (Fig. 4).

Fig. 3 In-person vs. telehealth prescription per patients' age (7/23-6/24)

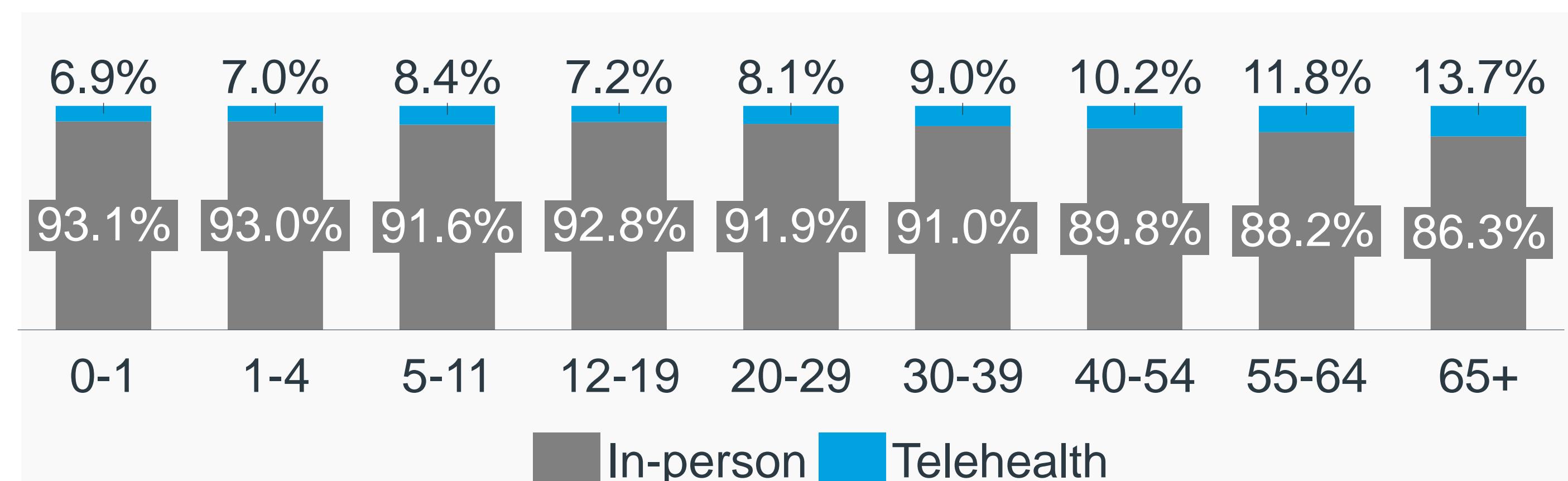


Fig. 4 Prescription per patients' age and kind of therapy (7/23-6/24)

