

**Research Space**

Conference poster

**Telephone or video? A review of telemedicine consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic in a spinal MSK service**

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# Telephone or Video?

## A Review of Telemedicine Consultations during the COVID-19 Pandemic in a Spinal MSK Service

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### Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a rapid move to virtual appointments in MSK physiotherapy, with no time for public and patient consultation.

The COVID-19 restrictions will be in place for many more months and as some MSK patients are high risk (1) they may only be able to seek advice through virtual appointments.

It is thought that a video appointment is more beneficial than a telephone appointment for establishing a rapport or visual cues for improved clinical reasoning (2) however, connecting via video requires equipment, internet connection and IT skills.

### Method

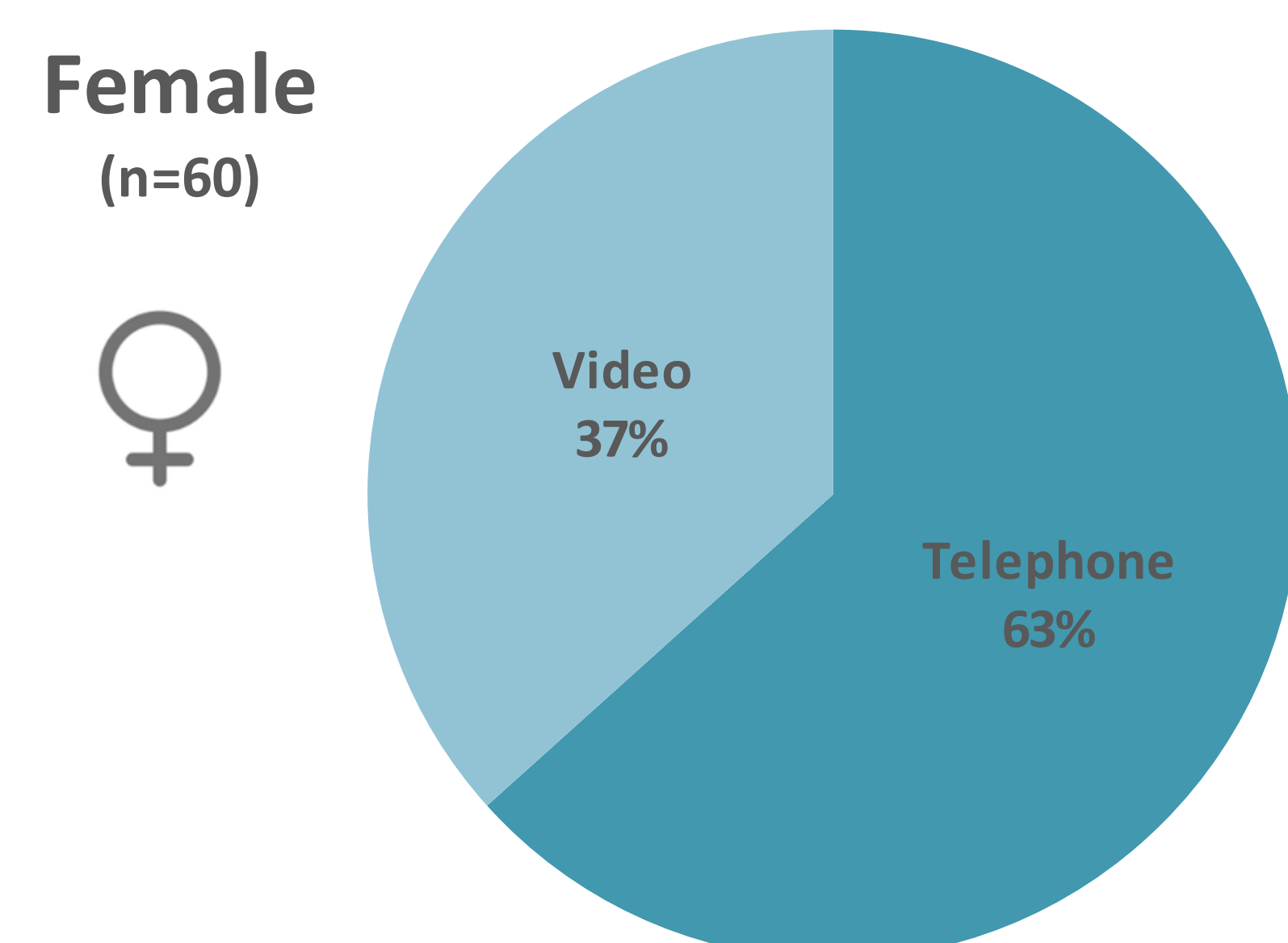
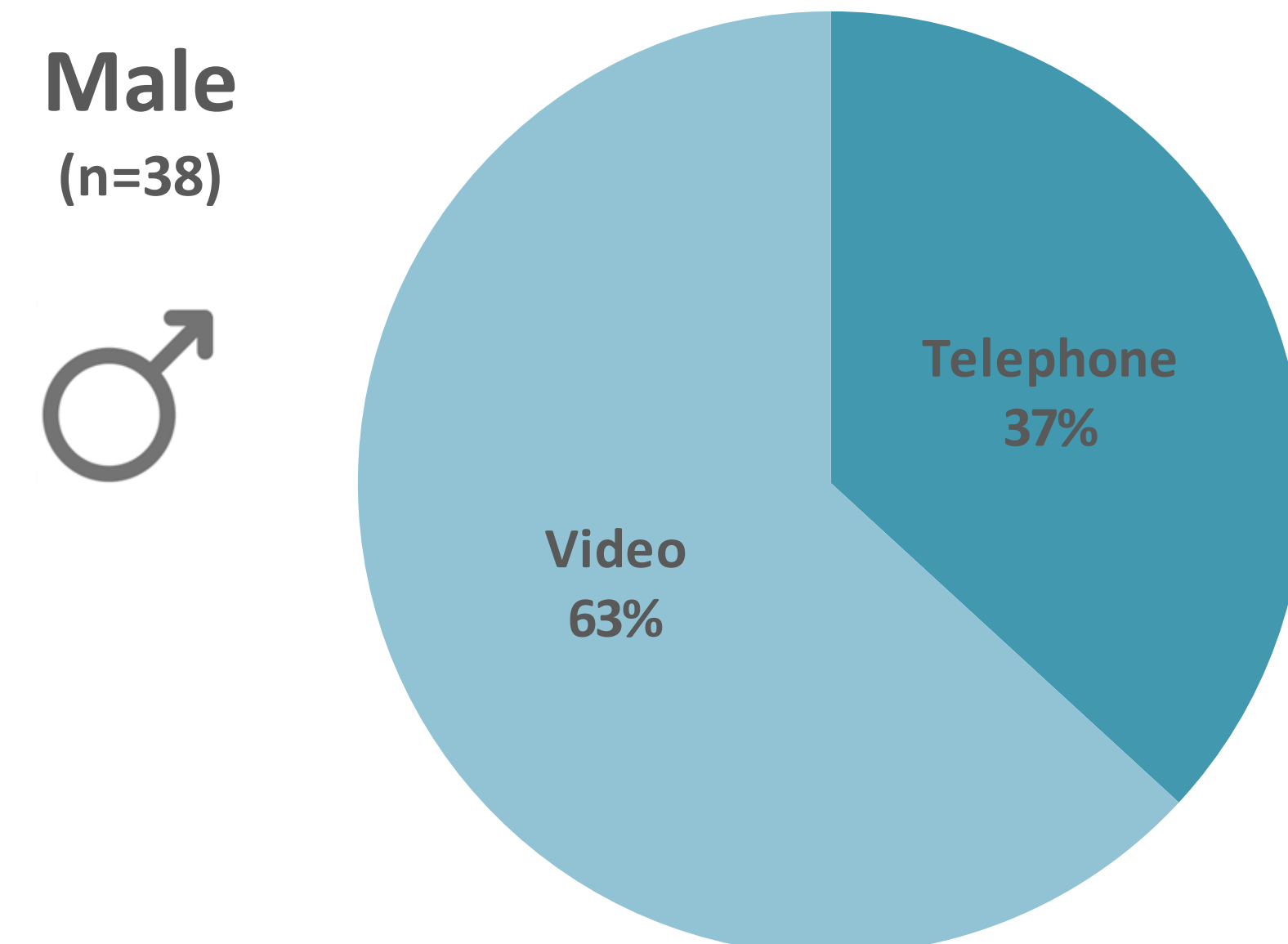
Data was collected during the lockdown period by the Spinal Advanced Practice Physiotherapists (APPs) at East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.

It was determined how many new patients were able to or wished to connect via video (**group 1**) and how many opted to have their appointment via telephone (**group 2**) following being given the options verbally.

The data was analysed to compare these two groups to see whether there were any differences with respect to age bands and gender.

### Gender

Significantly more ( $p < 0.05$ ) male patients (63%) opted to have a video appointment compared to female patients (37%)

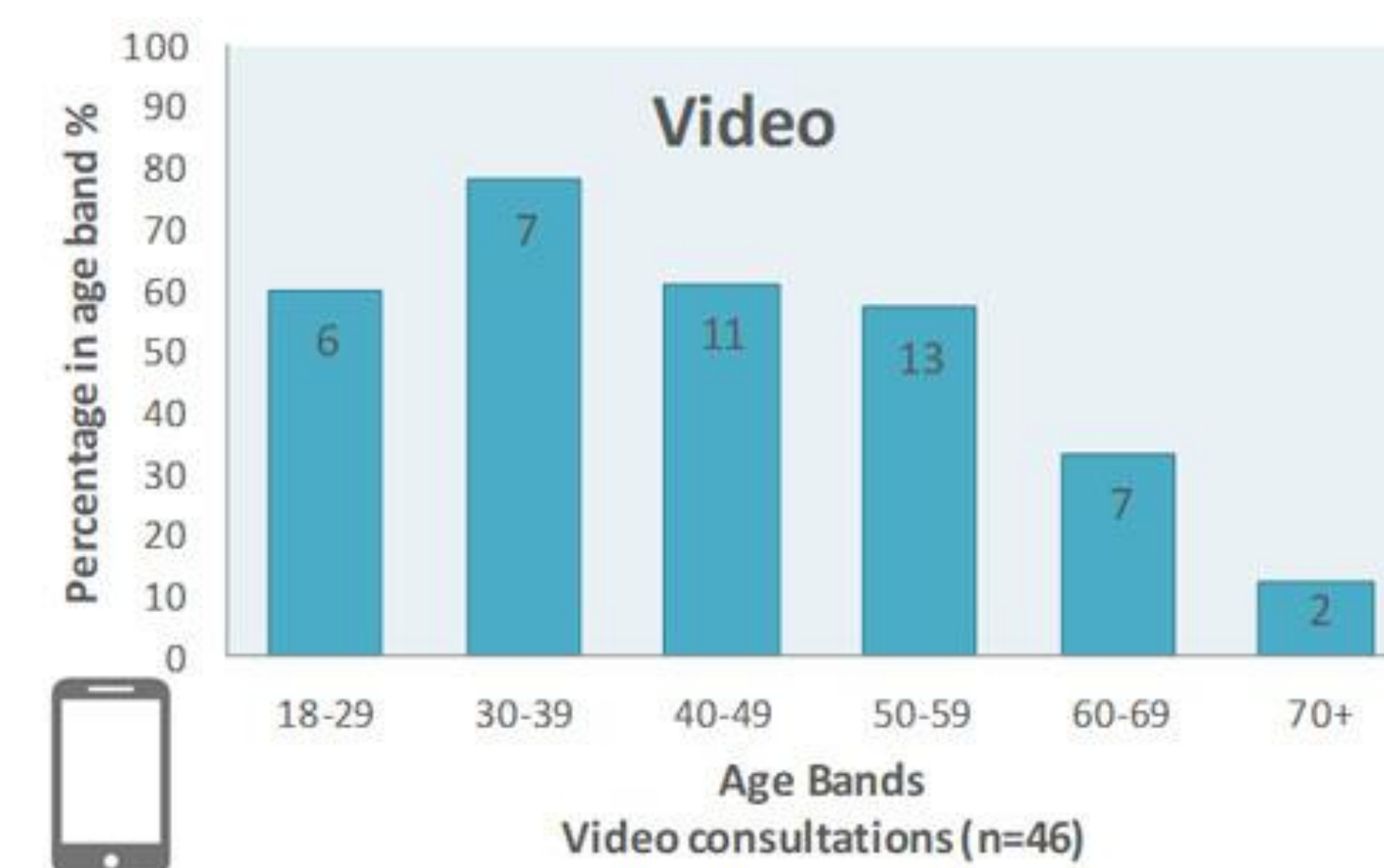
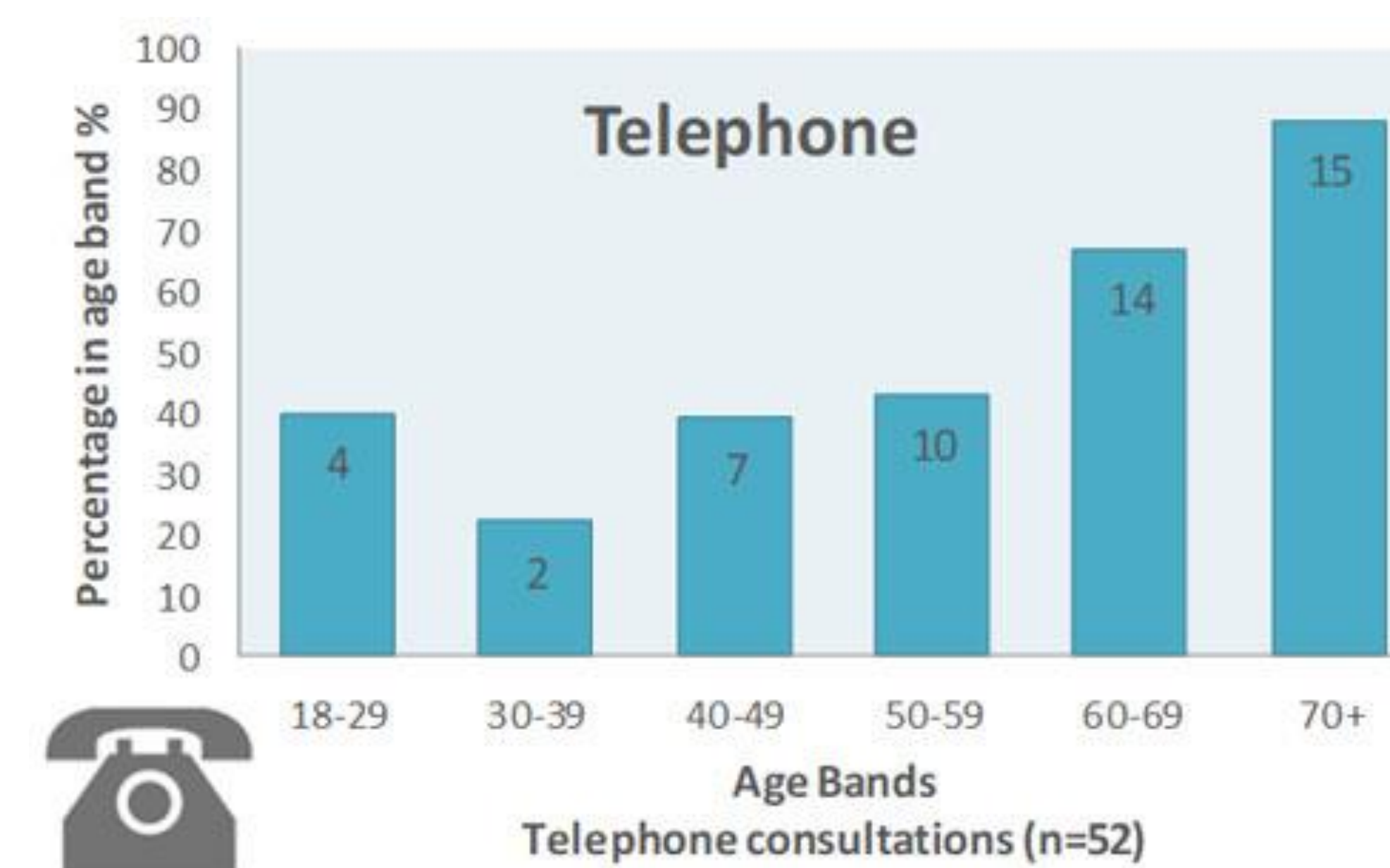


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### Age

The median age of a patient choosing a video appointment was 49 years compared to 63 years for telephone appointments.



### References

[1] Greenhalgh et al. (2020) *Musculoskeletal Science and Practice*, (48) 102179, [2] Donaghy et al. (2019) *British Journal of General Practice* 586, [3] Gilbert et al, (2003) *European Journal of Innovation Management* (6) 253, [4] Zhang et al, (2013) *Telemedicine and e-Health* 1(20) 39, [5] Age UK, 2018, [6] Gilbert et al, (2020) *British Medical Journal*

### Discussion

98 new patients were assessed by the APP spinal service over the course of 8 weeks.

The results showed that older adults and females were less likely to choose or be able to have their appointment via video.

A possible reason for this disparity is the finding that females, in particular, are more likely to be anxious about mobile technology (3) and males have a higher level of intention to adopt health services through mobile devices (4).

The data for age reflects research which indicates that although an increasing numbers of older adults are using technology, less are using it compared to younger adults.

A report published by Age UK reported that 36% of older adults (65+) are offline (5). Barriers to technology can include cost, internet connection, education and mistrust of new technology.

Older adults may also suffer from conditions that make it harder to use a smart phone, tablet or computer including changes to eye sight, dexterity, cognitive ability and memory. Telephone consultation has been shown to be more popular in patient groups, compared with video consultation (6), which was reflected in this evaluation.

### Changes and Future Plans

Following this evaluation more time and support has been provided to women and older people, including calling back later. Further evaluation of this service is required to explore barriers to connecting via video.