



## Online Appointment Scheduling: A Missed Chance to Boost Patient Satisfaction

### Why providers need to invest more in online scheduling, and recommendations on where to start.

Online appointment scheduling is rapidly becoming a standard across multiple industries. Whether consumers need to schedule car repairs or salon visits, most are comfortable using online booking services and appreciate the 24/7 convenience.

Healthcare consumers have started to expect similar self-service scheduling tools from their medical providers. Patients want an “OpenTable” experience in healthcare where they can book their appointments online, confirm their reservations via email or text, and receive reminders as the appointment date approaches.

A recent survey by [Eliciting Insights](#) indicates that online scheduling needs more prominence in healthcare providers’ digital strategies. With innovative competitors flooding the market, health systems must prioritize consumer-focused technology, like online scheduling, to stay competitive.

## HEALTHCARE CONSUMERS SHARE THEIR SCHEDULING EXPERIENCES

The independent healthcare research company surveyed 384 U.S. healthcare consumers to learn about their self-service scheduling experiences with their providers.

The survey asked consumers over age 18 – who had seen a healthcare provider in the past 12 months – if they used or would use an online scheduling tool to book a medical appointment, and how likely they were to use it again. It also asked respondents to measure the ease of tools and asked for recommendations to improve the online scheduling experience.

When the data was segmented by gender, age, race, and household income, it became clear that the demand for online scheduling transcends all consumers.

## HEALTHCARE CONSUMER ONLINE SCHEDULING SURVEY: TOP TRENDS

Across all industries, Americans typically schedule 60% of their appointments with businesses online and 33% via telephone calls. Eliciting Insights' research data shows that the demand for self-service scheduling outpaces its availability in the healthcare market. Patients see the value in online scheduling and want providers to offer more services, more appointment times, and better functionality.

## IF PROVIDERS OFFER SELF-SERVICE SCHEDULING, THEIR PATIENTS WILL USE IT

Ninety-five percent of survey respondents have either booked a medical appointment online, or would, if it were available. And, while online scheduling experiences varied across generations, the survey found a demand of over 90% for all ages.

Not surprisingly, almost all of the Millennial (99%) and Gen X (97%) respondents would use self-service scheduling if offered. Some providers should also realize that an overwhelming percentage (92%) of Baby Boomers would also use self-service scheduling if available.

If providers want to improve overall patient satisfaction, self-service scheduling could be the key.



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## Make an Appointment

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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

8 To Do ...

### **BABY BOOMERS HAVE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEMAND GAP**

Thirty-two percent of Baby Boomer respondents want self-service scheduling, but do not perceive it as an option. All three generations have gaps between their online scheduling demands and availability. However, the research suggests that Baby Boomers and Gen X consumers are most likely to think their providers do not offer online scheduling.

- **80% of Millennials have used online scheduling; another 19% haven't booked an online appointment, but would if it were offered.**
- **69% of Gen Xers have used online scheduling; another 28% haven't booked online, but would if it were offered.**
- **55% of Baby Boomers have used online scheduling, and another 32% haven't used it, but would if it were offered.**

What's clear is that low online scheduling utilization is due to a perceived lack of availability, not patient buy-in.

## MILLENNIALS PRIORITIZE SELF-SERVICE SCHEDULING WHEN CHOOSING A NEW PROVIDER

Seventy-six percent of Millennial respondents would be more likely to choose a new healthcare provider who offers online scheduling. Millennials and Gen Zers comprise 42% of the U.S. population. It is only a matter of time before Millennials and Gen Zers consumers dominate the healthcare marketplace. If Millennial and Gen Z consumers can find faster, cheaper, and similar-quality healthcare, they are more likely than Baby Boomers to switch providers.

Millennials have been labeled the most “health-conscious generation” that heavily relies on technology and social media to address their healthcare needs. So, it seems natural that Millennials would proactively look for providers who offer online scheduling.

The study found that Millennials place significant value on self-service technology, with 76% being more likely to choose a new healthcare provider who offers online scheduling than their Gen X (55%) and Baby Boomer (36%) counterparts.

The research suggests that self-service scheduling is a crucial differentiator for healthcare providers who want to attract Millennials as new patients. While Millennials have always been viewed as a young generation, the oldest Millennials are now in their 40s, and providers can no longer overlook Millennials.

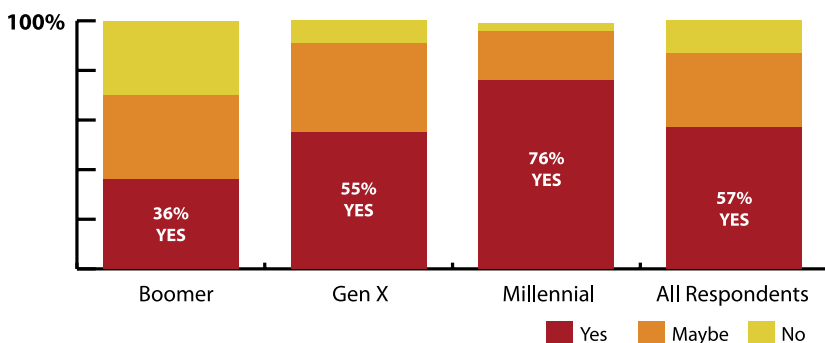
Cost-conscious Millennials grew up with self-service technology and now leverage social media and web searches to find and schedule medical care. They trust online resources to help them make medical decisions.

As a result, healthcare providers must attract Millennial consumers via online scheduling to sustain their practices with new patients.



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**Are You More Likely to Select a Provider if They Offer Online Scheduling?**





*A robust online scheduling tool will bring repeat user traffic. Providers should enable online scheduling within their portals to increase portal usage.*

## ONLINE SCHEDULING COULD INCREASE PATIENT PORTAL UTILIZATION

Ninety-two percent of the respondents who have booked online plan to do it again. Healthcare consumers have an ongoing need for online scheduling tools.

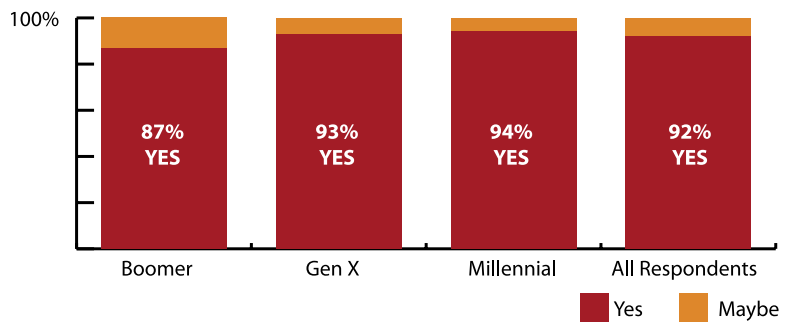
- **94% of Millennials plan to schedule online again.**
- **93% of Gen Xers plan to schedule online again.**
- **87% of Baby Boomers plan to schedule online again.**

Making it easier for individuals to access and use electronic health information is a national priority. [The ONC Cures Act Final Rule](#) seeks to make health information from electronic health records more easily accessible to patients through secure technology, like patient portals.

In 2020, 59% of healthcare providers [offered their patients access to a portal](#), but only 38% of individuals nationwide accessed a patient portal. When asked why patients did not access their providers' portals, a perceived lack of need was the second-most common reason given.

A robust online scheduling tool will bring repeat user traffic. Providers should [enable online scheduling within their portals](#) to increase portal usage.

### Would You Schedule a Healthcare Appointment Online Again in the Future?



## PATIENTS THINK SELF-SERVICE SCHEDULING IS EASY, BUT WANT PROVIDERS TO DO BETTER

Sixty-seven percent of respondents find their providers' online booking experiences "very easy." At first glance, healthcare systems appear to perform well in self-scheduling – 78% of health systems have adopted some form of self-service scheduling. Yet only three out of 10 consumers who try to book a healthcare appointment online will succeed.

72% of respondents with online booking experience offered recommendations on how their providers could improve the process.

The five most common recommendations include:

- ✓ **Make the login process more accessible.** Many respondents can't find the login screen. They want a more straightforward way to navigate their providers' online scheduling tools.
- ✓ **Offer more appointments.** Several respondents need more available time slots. They also wish more providers within a health system offered online appointments. Some do, and some don't.
- ✓ **Streamline the process.** It takes too many steps to set up an appointment. Many respondents want a more efficient process.
- ✓ **Eliminate the need for a patient to follow up with a phone call.** Respondents communicated that many providers require phone calls after booking an online appointment. This frustrates patients since they expect to book appointments without making calls or completing additional follow-up paperwork.
- ✓ **Send confirmation emails and text messages.** Many respondents requested better communication to confirm their online appointment bookings.



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*Most healthcare consumers want their providers to offer online scheduling – they think it’s simple, and they quickly become repeat users. But launching an online scheduling tool isn’t enough.*



### **THE BIG TAKEAWAY**

If healthcare providers want to provide stellar patient experiences, they can no longer ignore consumer online scheduling preferences. While results slightly varied across generations, the data indicate that providers significantly underestimate the market demand and opportunity for self-service scheduling.

Patient buy-in plays a critical role in a healthcare provider’s success. Patients expect providers to offer robust self-service digital tools, especially when booking online appointments. These expectations are consistent across all demographics, and Millennials want online scheduling, but so do Gen X and Baby Boomers.

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