

# Urgent Care Quarterly

An Analysis of the Impact of Radiology  
in the Urgent Care Industry

# About the Urgent Care Quarterly

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Data drives today's business decision-making. On-demand healthcare is no exception. Urgent care organizations and providers increasingly rely on data and analytics to inform their practice, improve care, and lower costs, to deliver a value-based, patient-focused, and cost-effective urgent care experience. It's not the future—it's today.

## **Experity provides reliable urgent care data.**

Much of the available data has a small sample size, is self-reported, or is not relevant to the urgent care industry. This is where we come in. With urgent cares partnering with Experity more than any other EMR/PM solution—combined with our software's capabilities to look at data in powerful ways—we can present discrete, aggregated data specifically as it relates to urgent care. Our goal with *Urgent Care Quarterly* is to support the industry with data-rich articles and to explain it in meaningful ways that help you make smart business decisions.

When DocuTAP and Practice Velocity merged to become Experity, we doubled the size of our dataset, giving us more accuracy than ever before, and the confidence that our reporting will provide precise insights that will help us advance the practice of urgent care one clinic at a time.

In this issue, we take a look at the utilization of radiology in an urgent care setting. Urgent care has distinguished itself from walk-in retail health clinics by offering patients onsite radiology and lab services—upping the level of service available to patients with non-life-threatening illnesses or injuries.

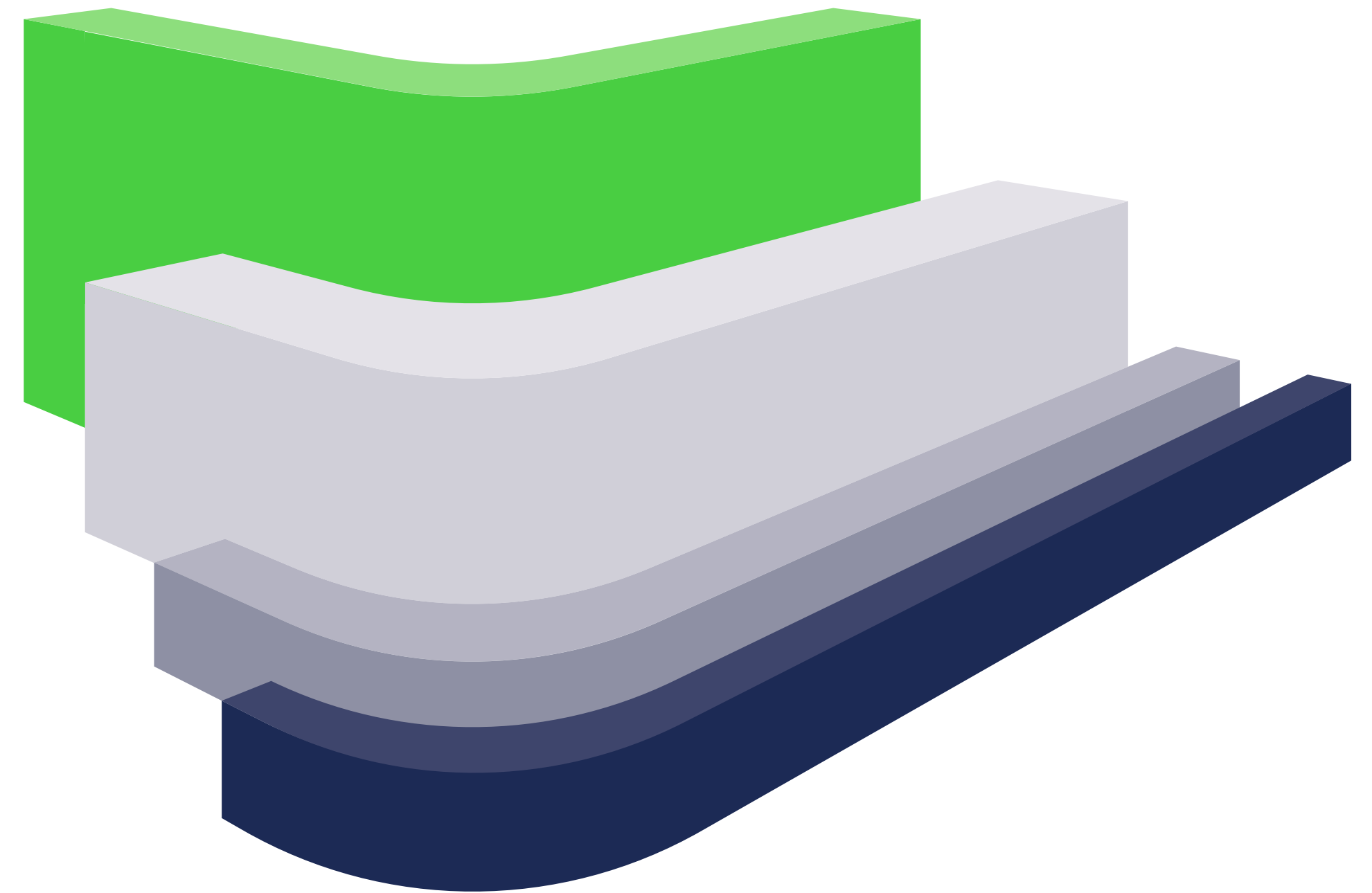
This analysis of radiology in urgent care will provide insights into patient profiles, common injuries or illness indicating radiology, seasonality, and the most common radiologic modalities utilized by clinics. Informed by this data, you can use real-world benchmarks to assess your radiology program and adjust your practice and optimize your operations.

Trends in Urgent Care Radiology

# An Analysis of the Impact of Radiology in the Urgent Care Industry

July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

Before we dive into the radiology data, we wanted to paint you a picture of your patients at a glance. With access to more urgent care data than ever before, we can easily identify the common characteristics of urgent care patients.

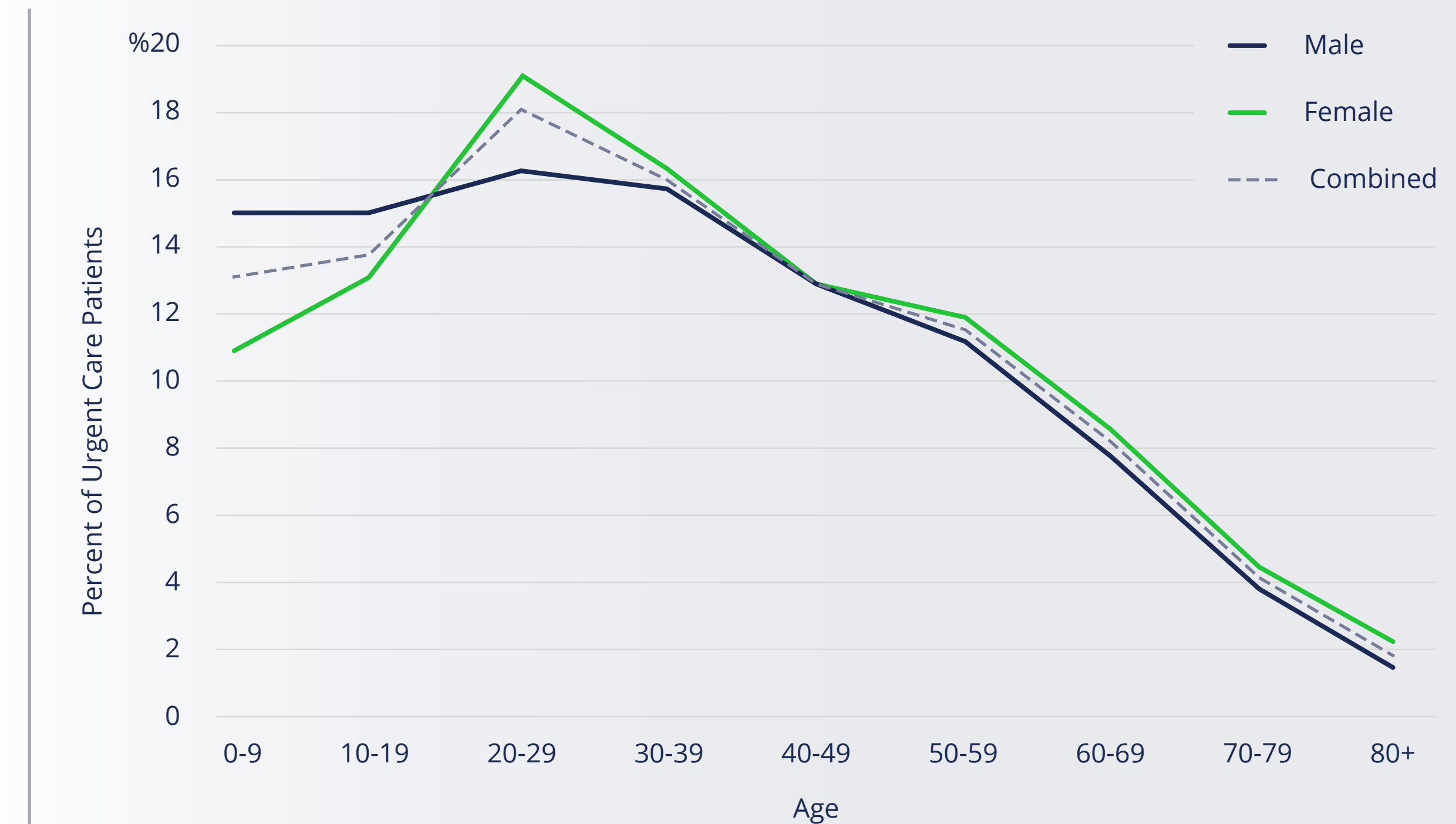


## The Urgent Care Patient at a Glance

According to our data, women visit urgent care centers more often than men—56 percent of patients were women and 44 percent were men. While volumes for males and females under 20 are very similar, they seem low due to the very high volume of urgent care visits by females between 20 and 39. *(See Figure A.)*

FIGURE A.

### Percent of Urgent Care Patients by Age Group and Gender



*Fifty-six percent of patients visiting urgent care centers from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019 were women.*

## Radiology's Role in the Urgent Care Industry

Not all walk-in healthcare clinics are created equal. Urgent care centers have differentiated themselves from retail clinics by offering patients a broader spectrum of services that, in most cases, include radiology services.

As an alternative to a visit to the emergency room, urgent care centers often provide the following diagnostic radiology exams:

- X-ray
- CT (Computed tomography)
- EKG (Electrocardiogram)
- MA (Mammography)
- MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)
- NM (Nuclear Medicine)
- US (Ultrasound)

While urgent care clinics generally offer these services, we thought it would be interesting to find out what percent of our client base actually performed radiology services for their patients during the year covered by this report. We looked at urgent care visits only and included only customers that were live for the entire time period. We found that 92 percent of these clinics, a significant majority, documented a radiology CPT code.

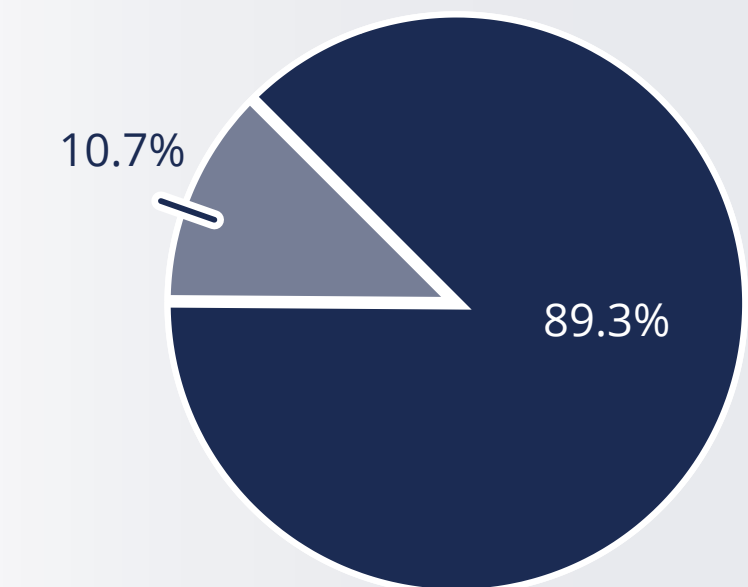
This confirms that urgent care clinics are indeed seeing patients in need of radiology services—services traditionally performed in a hospital or emergency department setting.

To find out just how often radiology is included in urgent care visits, we looked at total urgent care visits from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. Of these visits, a radiology exam was performed in 10.7 percent of the time.

*(See Figure B.)*

**FIGURE B.**

### Urgent Care Visits With a Radiology Code



- Visits without Radiology CPT Code
- Visits with Radiology CPT Code

*10.7 percent of all urgent care visits included a radiology CPT code from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019.*

Breakdown of Urgent Care Radiology Visits by Age and Gender

When we look only at urgent care visits by gender and age for that same time period, a few things stand out:

- Teenage boys had the majority of x-rays for the upper extremities.
- Females had more x-rays for lower extremities across all ages.
- Females had more chest x-rays than males at most every age.
- Teens of both genders had spikes in the number of x-rays for upper and lower extremities, which is somewhat expected due to activity.

(Figure C) compares all x-rays by gender and age.

FIGURE C.

Urgent Care Visits with X-rays by Gender and Age



Females have more urgent care radiology visits than males across most ages.



## Breakdown of Urgent Care Radiology Visits by Modality

Of all modalities, x-rays were by far the most widely utilized by urgent care providers. Of all visits with a radiology code, x-rays accounted for 88 percent. When we take out all visits with EKGs, the number of radiology visits with an X-ray code increases to 97 percent. (See Figure D.)

## Seasonal Radiology Trends

We were interested in identifying any radiology trends based on seasonality. When we looked at the data month over month, we found that chest x-rays accounted for a larger portion of x-rays during flu season for all age groups. The most significant seasonal increase in chest x-rays—from 30 to 52 percent—was noted in patients ages 40 to 64. (See Figure E.)

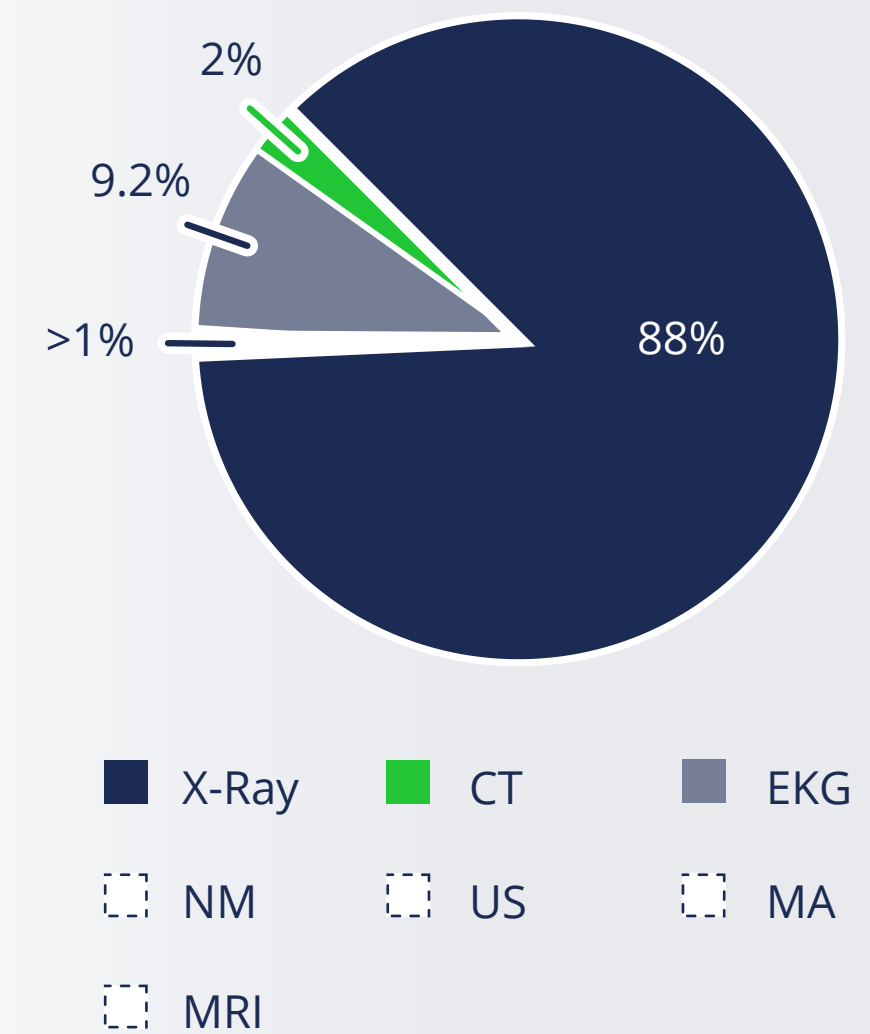
The spike in chest x-rays during flu season is similar to the general spike in urgent care visits during flu season. Clinics can expect a spike in chest x-rays similar in proportion to their flu season visits spike. It's interesting to note that overall, the percent of visits with an x-ray is lower during flu season, despite the fact that chest x-rays spike, which is likely due to a significant decline in x-rays of the upper and lower extremities.

## Casts, Splints and Straps

When we looked at the data for x-rays only, we found that only 3.29 percent had a cast, split, or strap procedure associated with the x-ray. While there is no reason to be certain why so many of these x-ray visits were not coded with an additional procedure, it could indicate that many x-ray patients were referred to other providers, or that x-rays are often used to rule out the need for additional procedures.

FIGURE D.

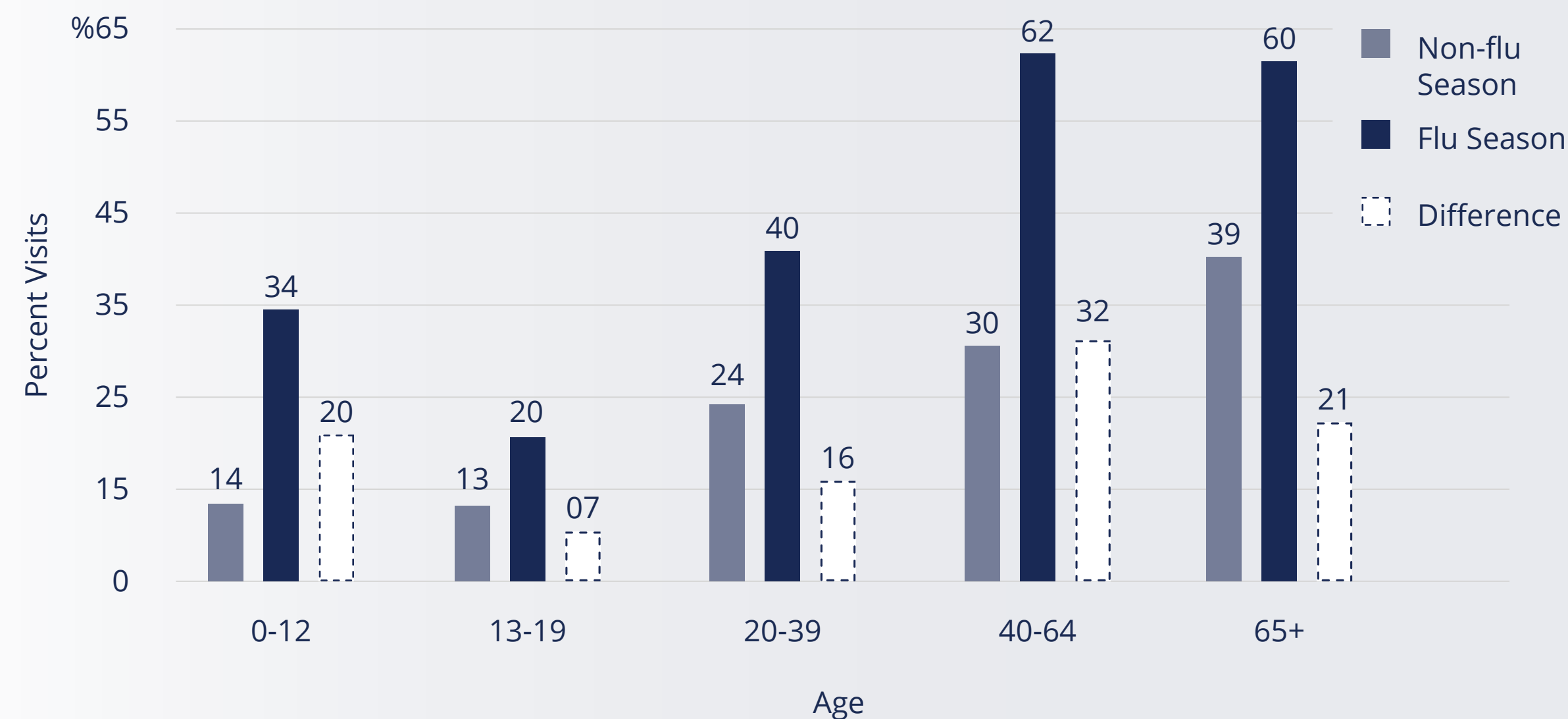
### Radiology Visits by Modality



*The most common radiology procedure by far was x-ray. The second most common was EKG.*

FIGURE E.

### Seasonal Increase in Chest X-Rays by Age Group



Chest x-rays for patients ages 40 to 64 showed a significant increase (22%) during flu season. Although x-rays for teenagers also increase, there was only a seven percent rise in percent of visits with x-rays during flu season.

### Radiology Procedure Based on Body Part by Age and Gender

Chest and rib x-rays were by far the most common radiology procedure for both genders across all age groups when we look at all urgent care visits with a radiology code. It's interesting to note that the second most common body parts x-ray for females of all ages was for the foot or ankle, and for males over 19, the most common x-ray was the spine and abdomen.

Some other interesting statistics that came out of the research are:

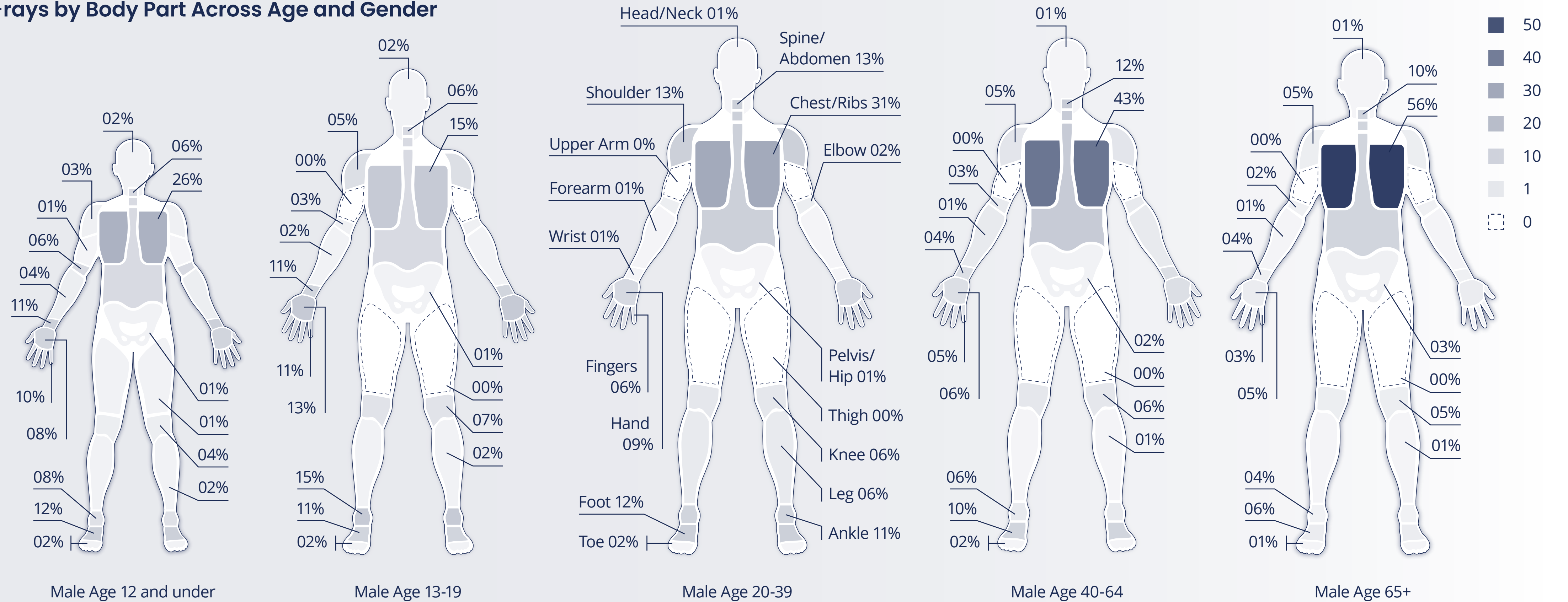
- Children from ages zero to 12 had a significantly higher number of radiology procedures on the wrist (13.07%) than any other group.
- Ankle x-rays were most common in teens (ages 13-19).
- Teens were the only age group for which chest x-rays are not the most common radiology procedure.
- For senior patients (65 and older), chest x-rays were the most common radiology procedure.

The charts below break down x-rays by body part across age and gender. (See Figure F.)



FIGURE F.

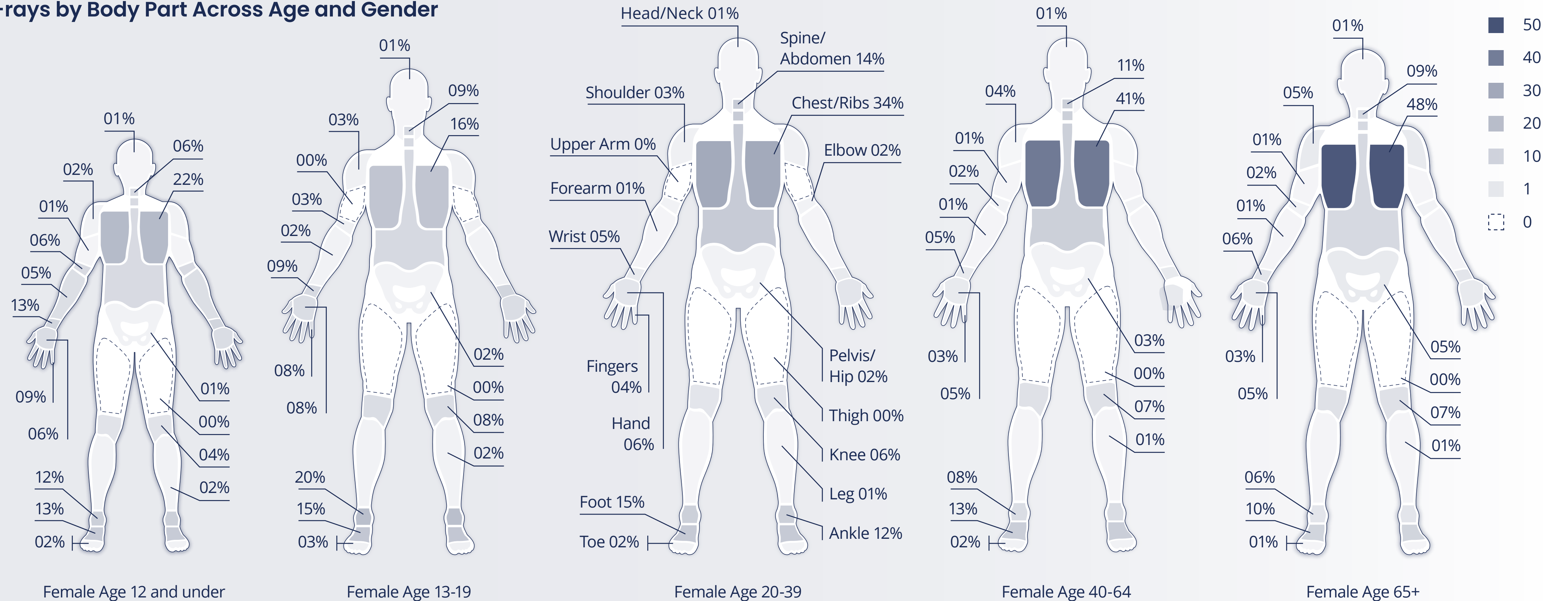
## X-rays by Body Part Across Age and Gender



Percentage of visits may total more than 100 percent due to X-rays on multiple body parts per visit.

FIGURE F.

## X-rays by Body Part Across Age and Gender





## The Takeaway

As on-demand healthcare becomes an increasingly important component of healthcare in America, urgent care organizations must continue to observe the treatments and trends that arise to improve patient care. The data suggests that patients are turning to the on-demand healthcare industry for radiology as an alternative to emergency rooms and primary care.

It's interesting to note that x-rays are the most common radiology procedures suggesting there is space for urgent care businesses to grow around other available modalities. In fact, according to a [recent article](#) in the *Journal of Urgent Care Medicine (JUCM)*, urgent care clinics are more frequently turning to ultrasound as a go-to diagnostic resource. Urgent care clinics should also consider ways to promote their radiology business throughout the year, appealing to the families of young athletes and active kids. Are you marketing your radiology services?

At Experity, our goal has always been to power the patient-centered healthcare revolution. Experity Teleradiology is specifically focused on improving the patient experience through fast and accurate teleradiology reads.

By using this service, urgent care clinics and their patients get timely answers allowing them to deliver the right care on-demand and living up to our mission. We stand behind our software and services, but more importantly, are committed to urgent care clinics as a trusted business partner. By sharing urgent care data based on the biggest urgent care specific data set, we further our goal and support urgent care clinics nationwide.

# Top 6 Benefits of Teleradiology Services

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With the proliferation of x-ray and other radiology services in the urgent care industry, owners and operators have a variety of options about the processes they put in place to make this segment of their business run smoothly and efficiently.

If your clinic does lots of x-rays, it may be prudent to consider a full-time radiologist. The data reported in this issue of the Urgent Care Quarterly suggests that less than 11 percent of all urgent care visits include a radiology code.

## Ask yourself the following questions:

Does the quantity of x-rays done at your clinic justify the need for a full-time radiologist?

If your clinic is part of a chain, are there enough visits across clinics to make hiring a full-time specialist cost effective?

Will one radiologist be readily available to handle reads for multiple clinics?

Who do you rely on for consultations and second opinions?

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The best solution for many urgent care clinics is working with a reputable provider of teleradiology services for so many reasons, like our top six listed here.

## **1 Lower Cost**

When you work with an expert team of contracted radiologists, there is no need to pay the salary and benefits for a full-time radiologist and no training is required. Your contracted teleradiology services provider that is always available is like having a full-time expert on your staff who is always available, never takes sick days or vacations, and already has the training needed to respond quickly and with authority to your needs.

## **2 Improves Medical Decision-making**

When patients present with an injury or conditions that require a radiology procedure, clinicians need radiology reads right away to determine the most appropriate treatment. The confidence of knowing that a licensed radiologist with relevant experience is reading a patients' x-rays on their schedule helps clinicians move forward with the right treatment quickly.

## **3 Fast Results**

Because teleradiology services providers have plenty of experts available all the time, you don't have to wait—or make a patient wait—on a busy, on-call, or off-site radiologist for answers. Good teleradiology services providers provide a quick turnaround time because they work with a large pool of radiologists from coast to coast. They send all reports securely, quickly, electronically, and are easy to reach when you have follow-up questions or need more information. You get answers; patients get treatment; and everyone is happier.

## **4 Improved Consultations**

Every clinician needs another opinion sometimes. Urgent care clinics that have a contract with a teleradiology service company can have an expert on the line in minutes to collaborate and land on the best treatment method for a patient without having to call in another practitioner or colleague that's not on site.



## **5 Improved Patient Satisfaction**

As healthcare consumers, patients increasingly expect better service from their care providers. Contracting with the right teleradiology services company can help meet these expectations by allowing clinics to quickly diagnose conditions and start treatment, simplify the patient experience, and consolidate billing so patients don't receive multiple statements after an urgent care visit with a radiology code.

It's simpler for patients, which is why they opted of urgent care in the first place. When clinics provide great service and expert care, they lay the foundation for lifetime relationships with their patients. Improved satisfaction means more referrals—and more business for your clinic.

## **6 Reduced Professional Liability**

An over-read by a consulting radiologist can reduce professional liability for the urgent care provider, who sees such a wide variety of injuries and symptoms that require a radiology procedure. Many centers choose to send all images for over-read to protect themselves and their business.

No matter what the volume, urgent care clinics should identify and contract with a teleradiology services company (like Experity Teleradiology) as a go-to over-read resource to call on as needed. These services add value to and serve as an extension your urgent care business. And with the right partner, you can improve your radiology reputation and leave a lasting—positive—impression.

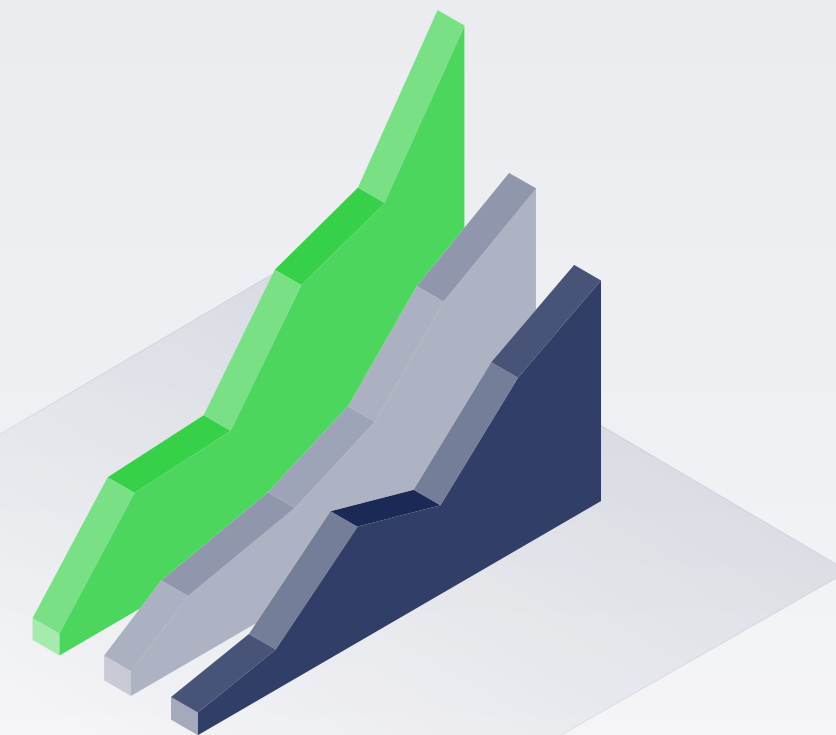
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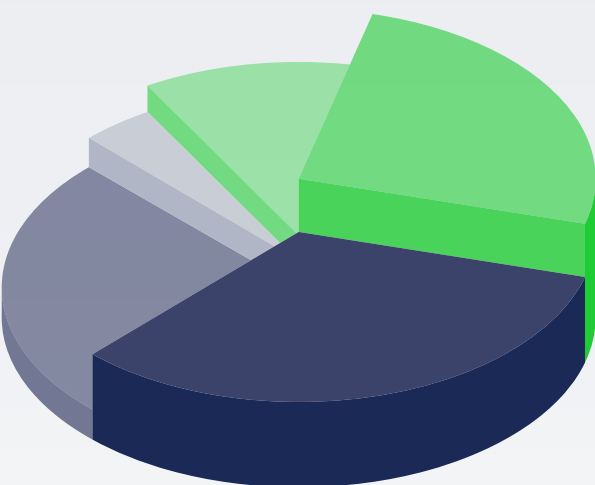
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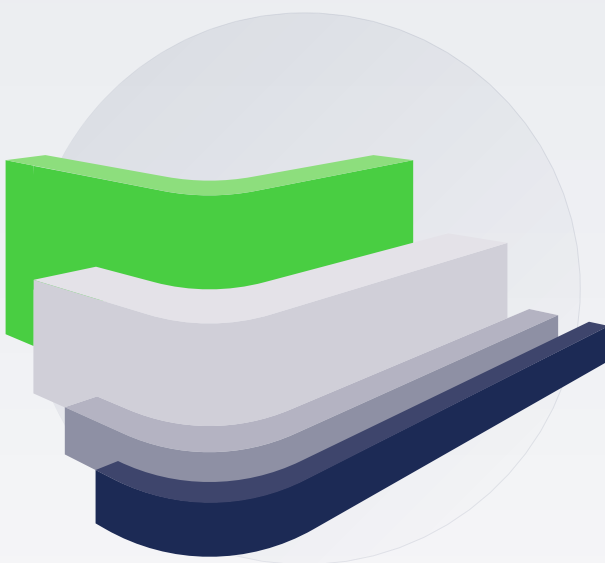
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## Trends in Urgent Care Radiology



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# About Experity

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Experity is a dynamic HIT company that provides integrated technology solutions to more than 4,000 on-demand healthcare practices, primary care clinics, diagnostic testing centers, and health systems nationwide. With a mission to power patient-centered care, the company's focus is all urgent care, all the time. Its complete suite of software and services includes EMR and PM, patient engagement, teleradiology, business intelligence, consulting, and billing solutions. The company was formed through the merger of the leaders in urgent care technology, DocuTAP and Practice Velocity. A Warburg Pincus portfolio company, Experity is a fast-paced, high-growth company committed to improving on-demand healthcare for everyone.