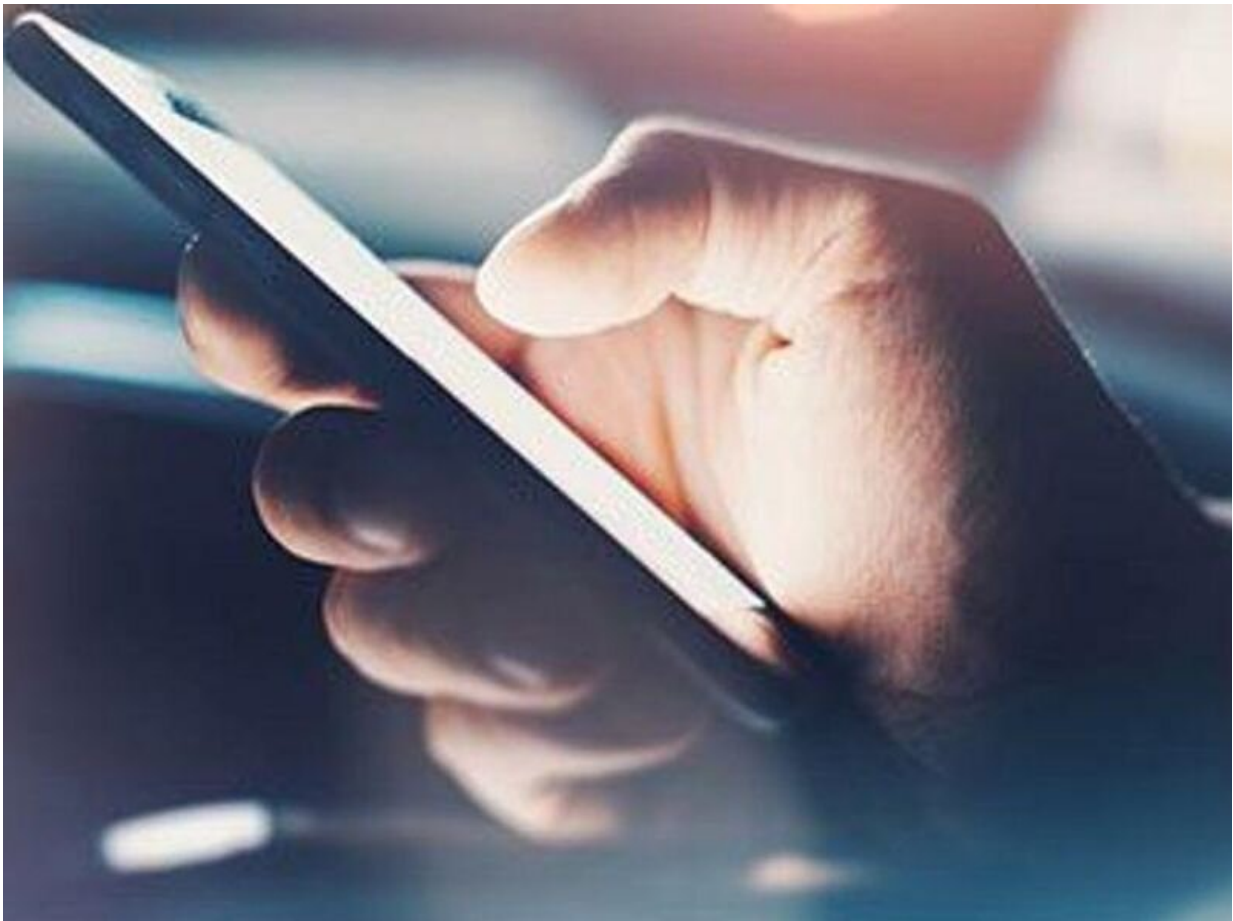


Mental health apps offer basic features, privacy challenges common

December 29 2022, by Elana Gotkine HealthDay Reporter



Mental health apps offer basic features and privacy challenges are

common, according to a study published online Dec. 28 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Erica Camacho, from the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, and colleagues examined the current state of mental health apps and the opportunities and challenges facing the commercial app landscape in a cross-sectional study. A total of 578 mental health apps were assessed and rated across 105 dimensions. Each app was rated across six categories: app origin and accessibility; privacy and security; clinical foundation; features and engagement; inputs and outputs; and interoperability. Privacy scores were determined based on five M-Health Index and Navigation Database criteria.

The researchers found that the top app features included psychoeducation, [goal setting](#), and mindfulness. Overall, 77 percent of the apps analyzed had a [privacy policy](#). No significant association was seen between privacy scores and Apple App Store or Google Play Store star ratings in an analysis of apps with a privacy policy. There was a weak association observed between the number of app downloads on the Google Play Store and privacy scores.

"The findings of this cross-sectional study suggest that the current app marketplaces lack diversity in their offerings and fail to implement potentially high-impact features," the authors write. "Another challenge to the app space is that easily accessible metrics like star ratings fail to consider privacy capabilities. Thus, [clinicians](#) and patients must discern apps beyond such measures to ensure the discovery of apps that both fit their unique needs and protect their privacy."

One author is a stockholder in Precision Mental Wellness.

More information: Erica Camacho et al, Assessment of Mental Health Services Available Through Smartphone Apps, *JAMA Network*

Open (2022). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.48784](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.48784)

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