

One in three telehealth users have privacy concerns, finds Finnish study

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Privacy concerns are common among users of Finland's national patient portal OmaKanta, a recent study by the University of Eastern Finland and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare shows. As many as one in three users had concerns about the security of their personal data.

People aged 50 to 59 years and people with [financial difficulties](#)

especially had privacy concerns. However, portal users who had good digital skills and did not need guidance on the use of telehealth services had fewer privacy concerns. In addition, people who found the use of telehealth services to be beneficial had fewer concerns.

Parties processing our data play a key role in dispelling privacy concerns

The study identified two factors that were associated with fewer privacy concerns.

"It seems that people's privacy concerns can be alleviated by investing in the quality and ability of digital services to meet client needs. Privacy concerns are so common that all means should be employed to ensure that no one has to fear for their privacy.

"For example, clients should be given understandable information about how their privacy is protected and what kind of influence they have over the use of their data. Privacy choices should also be transparent and easy to make," says Doctoral Researcher Maiju Kyytsönen of the University of Eastern Finland.

The study constitutes part of Kyytsönen's [doctoral dissertation](#), and is [published](#) in the *International Journal of Medical Informatics*.

Modern health care involves processing large amounts of digital health data, which are accessed and archived in secure systems via the internet. The purpose of health data is to support [patient care](#) and its continuity; however, privacy must also increasingly be considered against the needs of secondary use of data.

"It is important to keep up with the [digital transformation](#), so that we can

understand how our data are being used, and how our privacy is protected. Based on our findings, we encourage everyone to learn and maintain digital skills, because everyone's [health data](#) are digital regardless of whether they themselves use any [digital services](#)," Kyytsönen says.

The results are based on the cross-sectional FinSote National Survey conducted by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare from September 2020 to February 2021. The survey was aimed at adults aged 20 and older living in Finland. The present study examined [privacy concerns](#) by using population weights in a sub-sample of respondents who were asked more detailed questions about digitalization. The results represent the experiences of 3,731 users of Finland's national patient portal, aged 20–99.

More information: Maiju Kyytsönen et al, Privacy concerns among the users of a national patient portal: A cross-sectional population survey study, *International Journal of Medical Informatics* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ijmedinf.2023.105336](#)

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