

Press release

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Despite rising healthcare costs: 45% of people in Switzerland do not want their personal health data to be stored or shared digitally

People in Switzerland are sceptical towards their health data being digitally stored and shared. Almost one in two are against it. These are the findings of the new Deloitte survey '[Digitalising health data: great opportunities amid widespread scepticism](#)'. However, this lack of trust could be countered by education and transparency, and by raising awareness of how digital health data can benefit individuals and the healthcare ecosystem as a whole. On the one hand, policymakers are called upon to stimulate public debate about a unified, properly safeguarded and monitored digitised healthcare system and to create the necessary conditions at federal level for its sustainable and coherent realisation. On the other hand, digital solution providers, healthcare organisations and healthcare professionals must play a critical role in generating trust among patients, as well as highlighting the benefits of digitisation. Key benefits of systematic digitisation include the potential for significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness, especially with regard to patient outcomes and the reduction of complexity, which has been rising exponentially for a long time.

Experiences in other countries and initial measures in Switzerland confirm that a systematically digitised healthcare system offers many benefits for everyone. Recording, storing and sharing health data and related information in a standardised way – be it data for blood levels, laboratory results, treatment outcomes, dispensed medications, invoices or costs – offers enormous potential. For example, patients could receive more effective treatment, the overall quality of healthcare could be improved, and better interconnectivity could lead to greater operational efficiency and thus potentially lower costs.

However, Switzerland is still lagging far behind some other countries when it comes to digitisation. To narrow this gap, patients need to gain more trust in digital technology and data sharing. 'All players involved in the healthcare ecosystem need to show patients how digital solutions can improve their health and simplify processes in the healthcare system. Another critical aspect is the need to demonstrate that data privacy would be respected. This will create greater trust in the ecosystem,' says Kishwar Chishty, Partner, Risk Advisory Life Sciences and Global Industry Cyber at Deloitte Switzerland.

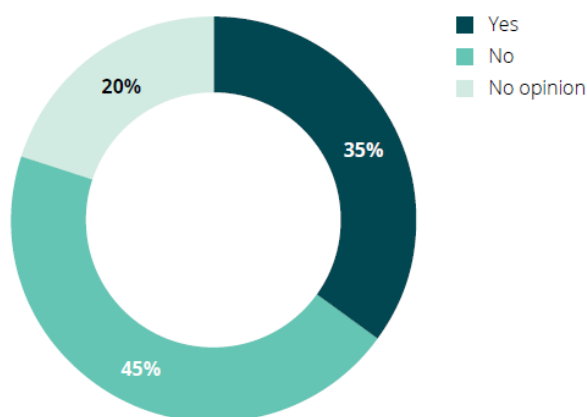


Fig. 1: Would you want your personal health data to be digitally recorded and shared?

Widespread scepticism towards digitised health data

To digitise the Swiss healthcare system, the public would have to consent to a significant part of their relevant health data being recorded and shared between various stakeholders in a suitable form. But are they willing to do so? The latest survey by the auditing and consulting organisation Deloitte Switzerland provides some answers. According to the representative survey among 1,500 participants, almost half (45%) do not want their health data to be digitally stored or shared. Reluctance is even higher among women (48% against). 'Our survey leads us to conclude that many people in Switzerland fear losing control over their health data,' says Chishty.

However, the high proportion of people who are undecided (20%) offers some hope. Transparent, secure and understandable solutions that take into account valid concerns and offer specific benefits for patients could help to reduce the level of scepticism. 'To me, the survey results are an appeal to the representatives of the Swiss healthcare system to be more committed to digitisation,' says Annieck de Vocht, Head of Healthcare at Deloitte Switzerland.

Transparency helps

Our survey shows that people's attitudes are influenced more by the risks than the benefits. This suggests that there is not yet enough awareness of the specific benefits among the public. 'The risks and opportunities associated with a digitised healthcare system must be communicated openly and transparently. All stakeholders must play their part in this. After all, sharing health data would benefit the entire healthcare system,' says De Vocht. Patients could be helped more quickly, diagnoses would be more accurate, and many diseases could be detected at an earlier stage. 'In the future, we will have a situation whereby the number of patients is rising but the number of healthcare professionals to treat them is stagnating. It is therefore essential that we make the healthcare system more efficient. Without digitisation, we won't be able to maintain our current high standard of healthcare in the long term,' warns De Vocht.

The lack of trust in healthcare providers and the fear of data misuse are largely attributable to the fact that patients don't know when and how their health data is being digitally recorded or who has access to it. For example, only around a third of the respondents think that digital healthcare data benefits medical research. However, the respondents' willingness to share their own personal health data would be much greater if they had a chance to share it in an anonymised way, so that they can't be identified at a later point in time.

Less reluctance if the recipient is known

People are more confident sharing their health data with someone they know in person, such as their attending physician or a pharmacist. Unrestricted access to personal health data is indeed mostly granted to attending physicians (58%). If consent is obtained in advance, the willingness to share health data even rises to 94%.

As individuals in a position of trust, healthcare professionals would make perfect 'digitisation ambassadors' for educating patients and driving the digitisation of the Swiss healthcare ecosystem. However, to manage this challenging task, they would need the necessary support structures, expertise and networks. Plus: 'Trusted opinion leaders from science, politics and business must communicate the benefits of a digitised healthcare system by providing specific and relatable real-world examples,' says Patricia Gee, Life Sciences Partner and director of the Future of Health Initiative at Deloitte Switzerland.

Personal benefits could make a difference

Individuals are more willing to make their personal health data available in digital form if they have a clearer understanding of the use case or the benefits to them. For example, one respondent in three would have no reservations about sharing data if it improved their own healthcare and facilitated personalised care.

Recommended actions for stakeholders

One obstacle standing in the way of systematically digitising the Swiss healthcare system is the federal decision-making system. However, this could be overcome with political will and the readiness of all stakeholders in the healthcare sector to support joint solutions and be accountable for them. 'Successfully digitising the system in Switzerland would require hospitals and other healthcare providers to become more compatible when recording and sharing data. At the same time, hospitals would need to work more closely with health insurers and the industry, as well as with the cantonal actors that are central to the healthcare system. At the same time, certain governance requirements would need to be imposed by the federal government,' says De Vocht.

'In a highly quality-focused healthcare system like in Switzerland, the first step would be to emphasise the potential benefits of digitisation,' says Patricia Gee. She advises the industry to keep dealing with the topic in a transparent way and maintaining open dialogue with all stakeholders.



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Contact: Michael Wiget
Head of External Communications
Phone: +41 58 279 70 50
Email: mwiget@deloitte.ch

Contact: Adrian Zebib
External Communications Specialist
Phone: +41 58 279 61 42
Email: azebib@deloitte.ch

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