

Privacy concerns: Mental health apps may be selling your data to third parties, including Google, Facebook

Apps spell big business in the healthcare industry: Dozens of apps are marketed to people with conditions including depression, anxiety and autism.

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But many app developers sell users' data, including their name, medical status and sex, to third parties such as Facebook and Google, researchers warn. And most consumers are unaware that their data can be used against them.

For instance, the U.S. [government has investigated Facebook](#) for allowing housing ads to filter out individuals based on several categories protected under the Fair Housing Act, including disability status.

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[One] study, published in April in JAMA Network Open, found that 33 of 36 top-ranked depression and smoking cessation apps the investigators looked at sent user data to a third [party](#). Of them, 29 shared the data with Google, Facebook or both, and 12 of those did not disclose that use to the consumer.

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Even when apps disclose their policies, the risks involved are not always clear to consumers, says [John Torous](#), director of digital psychiatry at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Massachusetts and co-lead investigator on the April study. "It is clear that most privacy policies are nearly impossible to read and understand," Torous says.

Read full, original post: [Privacy concerns about mental health apps highlight need for regulation](#)