

Walmart is in on COVID-19 digital vaccine passports—here's why these apps won't work

Article

Walmart is [collaborating](#) with nonprofit Commons Project Foundation and identity management platform Clear to let patients easily access a digital version of their COVID-19

vaccine records.

Here's how it works: Customers who get vaccinated at **Walmart** or **Sam's Club** stores can sign into the store app and agree to share their vaccine information with a third-party verification app—either the **Commons Project Foundation's** apps (CommonPass or Common Health) or **Clear's** app (Health Pass by Clear). From there, a patient logs in to the CommonPass app, for instance, to authenticate and obtain their digital vaccine status, which they can share with employers, schools, sports arenas, airports etc.

Virtual COVID-19 passes have become integral components in reopening businesses across the globe, especially travel. For example, last week, **Singapore Airlines** **launched** a pilot version of its COVID-19 passport system, and France recently **embarked** a month-long pilot of its digital vaccine certification app for **Air France** passengers. Both Singapore and France are still experimenting with their apps, so it's unclear yet whether the countries will require individuals to use it.

However, there are conflicting views about whether digital vaccine passports should be required or optional:

- **33%** of US consumers **say** vaccine passports are a good idea, and it should be required when traveling—while **32%** indicated it's also a good idea, but the digital passports should be optional.
- On the other hand, **16%** of consumers believe digital vaccine passports are a bad idea, and it should be a choice, **per** the J.D. Power's March 2021 Power Passenger View survey.

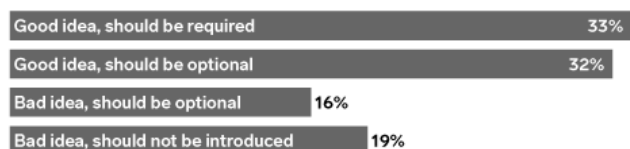
Beyond consumer sentiment, there are two core issues that come along with COVID-19 passports—here's why they shouldn't be required in reopening business:

1. **There are already inequities with vaccination rollout in the US—so, requiring proof of vaccination will only marginalize certain groups further.** From December to February, US counties with high social vulnerabilities (like lower socioeconomic status) received **fewer** COVID-19 vaccines than counties with low social vulnerabilities, according to newly released data from the CDC. Requiring digital vaccine passports to enter facilities or travel could further marginalize these groups, especially if they also don't have access to the tech that powers such apps: In 2019, nearly **30%** of US adults with household incomes below \$30,000 still didn't own a smartphone, for instance.

2. **Privacy concerns could dissuade some consumers from adopting vaccine confirmation apps.** New York is teaming up with **IBM** to pilot its own vaccine verification app, dubbed [Excelsior Pass](#), to help accelerate reopening of theaters and arenas like Madison Square Garden. But apps like these require individuals to input personal information like workplace and phone number. And similar to government-based contact tracing apps, privacy concerns could hold consumers back from using it on a wide-scale: Only **23%** of consumers reported they'd share their health data with a government organization, [per](#) Rock Health's 2020 Consumer Adoption Report.

US Air Travelers' Views of Digital Vaccine Passports, Feb 2021

% of respondents



Note: 94% domestic travelers from the US; ages 21+ (92%)
Source: J.D. Power, "J.D. Power Passenger View," March 2, 2021

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