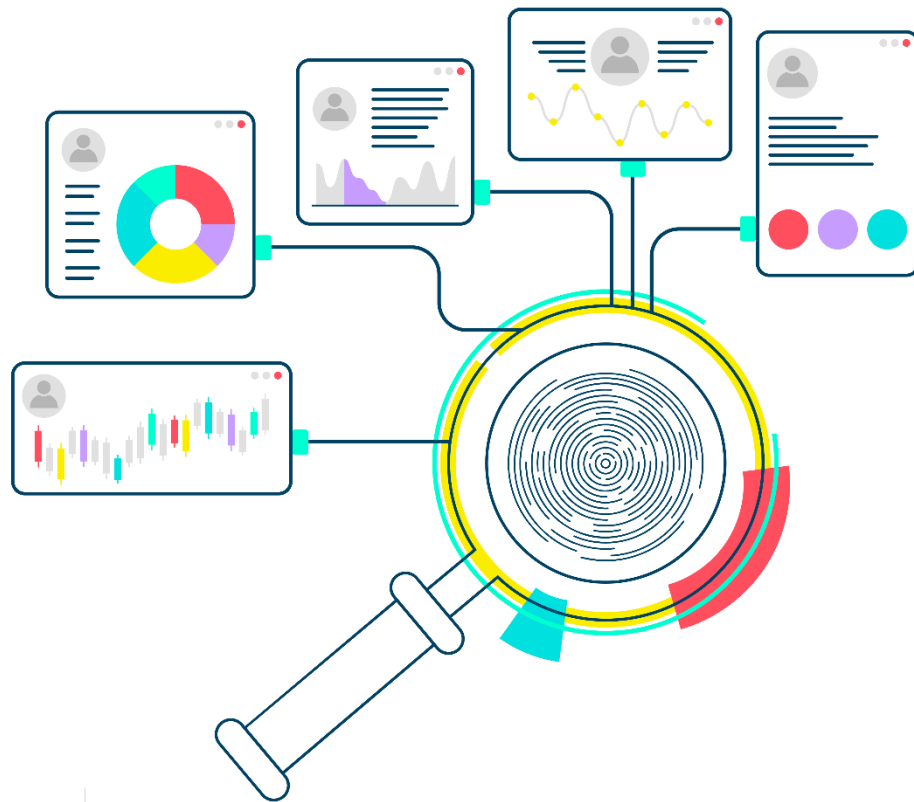




Understanding Patient Data

UK Patient Data Sentiment Tracker

Wave 4 Findings – Executive Summary
September 2026





About the UK Patient Data Sentiment Tracker

The UK Patient Data Sentiment Tracker monitors public awareness, confidence and support regarding the use of patient data across the UK.

This report presents findings from Wave 4 of the UK Patient Data Sentiment Tracker.

- Fieldwork: 3–7 September 2026
- Nationally representative sample of 1,280 UK adults aged 16+
- Survey conducted by Kantar for Understanding Patient Data
- Percentages are rounded; differences highlighted in this report are statistically significant unless otherwise stated.

Where applicable, we include comparisons with previous waves: Wave 1 in July 2025, Wave 2 in February–March 2026 and Wave 3 in May 2026.

Public support remains broad, but confidence is increasingly fragile

- Awareness and support declined across all three core uses of patient data (planning, medical research and using health data to develop digital tools), while uncertainty increased.
- Confidence in NHS data security has fallen below half. Confidence in the accuracy of people's records is higher and remains stable.
- Comfort with personal data use remains high but conditional, with inappropriate access and cyber security the leading concerns.
- Support for NHS partnerships with external organisations has weakened, particularly for technology companies (including AI and data analytics firms).
- Support for specific national initiatives is more stable, with a Single Patient Record receiving the strongest support.

49%

confident in NHS data
security

72%

confident in data
accuracy

90%

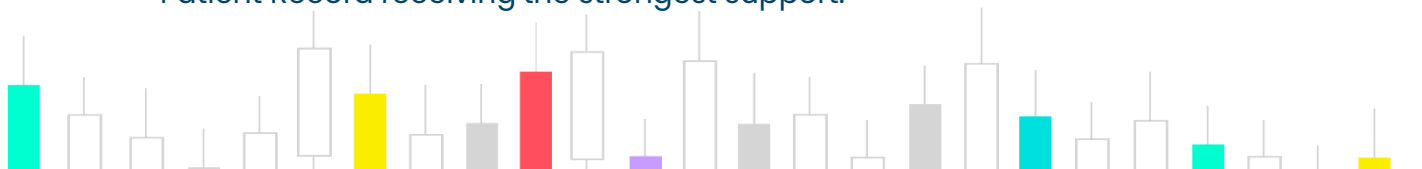
comfortable with their
own data being used,
including 48% whose
comfort depends on the
situation

57%

supported a single joined-
up NHS patient record
(**14%** did not)

28%

reported opting out



Awareness of and support for health data use has declined

Awareness fell for all three use cases since May 2026, with more people expressing uncertainty.

Percentage of people feeling supportive has fallen for all three use cases since March 2026.

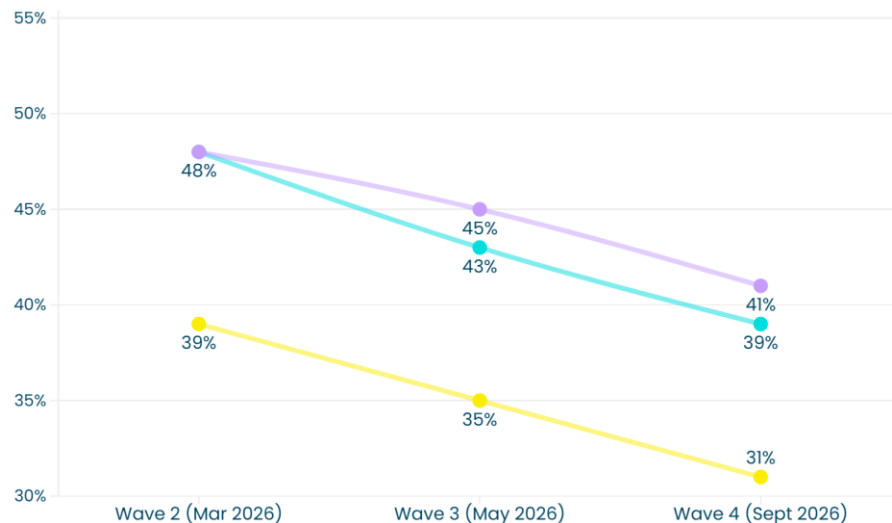
- For planning and improving services: from 48% to 39%
- For medical research: from 48% to 41%
- For developing and improving digital tools: from 39% to 31%

What this suggests: The decline is broad rather than confined to one type of data use, indicating a more general weakening in public awareness and support. The consistency of the decline across all three uses makes this an important trend to continue monitoring.

Support for uses of patient data

■ Planning and improving services ■ Medical research ■ Developing and improving digital tools

Responses (%)



Source: Kantar, commissioned by UPD

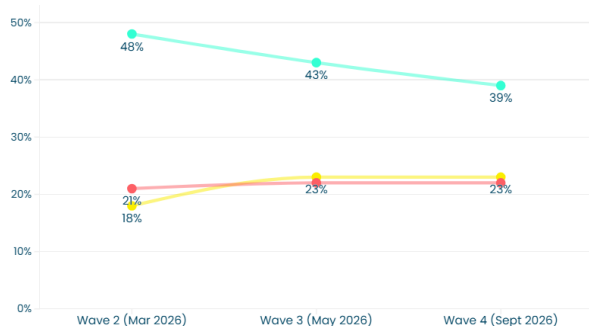
Response options included: "Supportive"; "Uncertain"; "Cautious"; "Sceptical"; "Distrustful"; "Passive"

While support for health data use has declined, uncertainty has risen

Support has declined across all three use cases. Uncertainty has increased for planning and medical research; caution remains relatively high but stable at around one in four.

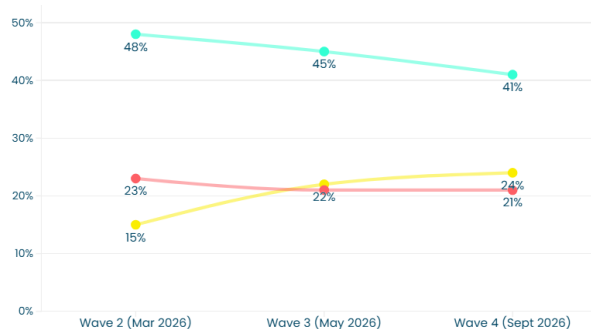
What this suggests: The fall in support appears to reflect growing uncertainty more than a substantial movement towards opposition.

How do people feel about patient data being used to **plan and improve services?**



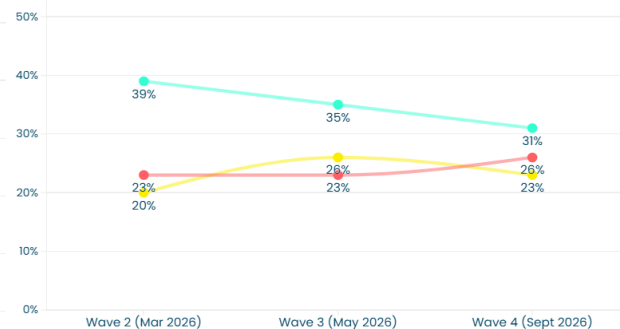
Source: Kantar, commissioned by UPD
Other response options included: Sceptical, Distrustful, and Passive (all under 8%)

How do people feel about patient data being used for **medical research?**



Source: Kantar, commissioned by UPD
Other response options included: Sceptical, Distrustful, and Passive (all under 6%)

How do people feel about patient data being used to **develop and improve digital tools that support patient care?**



Source: Kantar, commissioned by UPD
Other response options included: Sceptical, Distrustful, and Passive (all under 8%)

 **Supportive**  **Uncertain**  **Cautious**

Confidence in data security has dropped below half

49% are confident in NHS data security.

Only 12% are very confident that the NHS has strong protections in place to keep their data safe, down from 16% in March 2026.

- Confidence in data security is lower among women (vs. men), disabled (vs. non-disabled) and people from White backgrounds (vs. ethnic minority backgrounds).

72% are confident that the NHS health record held about them is accurate and complete.

- Confidence in data accuracy is lower among women (vs. men), non-parents (vs. parents), people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds – C2DE (vs. ABC1)

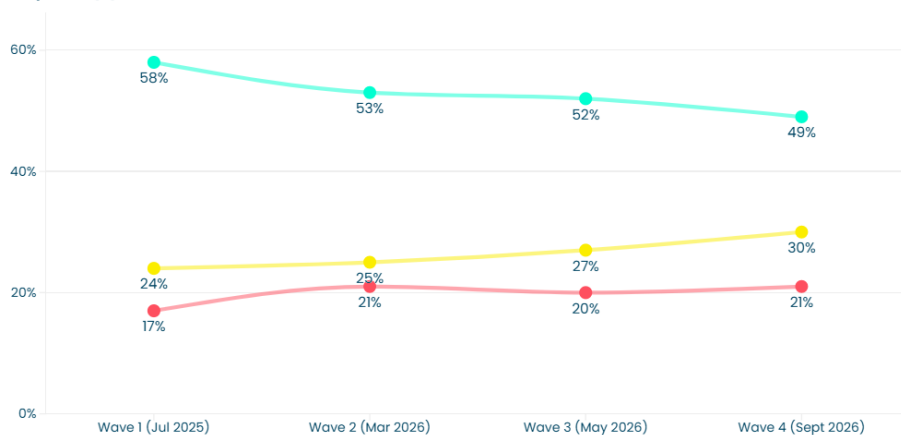
What this suggests: People appear more confident in the information held in their records than in the systems protecting that information.

Confidence in data security

The percentage of people confident in data security has fallen under half (49%).

Confident Not sure Not confident

Responses (%)



Source: Kantar, commissioned by UPD

People remain comfortable with their own data being used, but their comfort is conditional

90% are comfortable with their personal health data being used. For 48%, comfort depends on the situation.

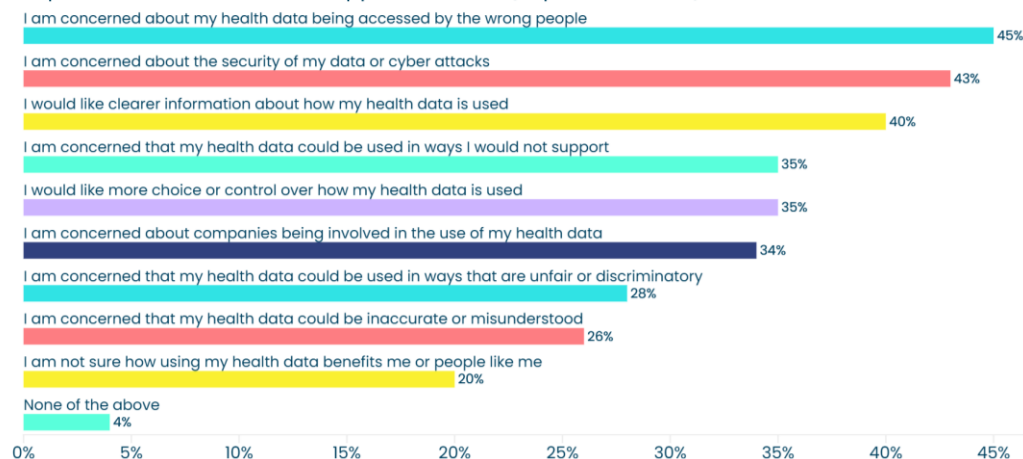
Leading concerns are:

- Data being accessed by the wrong people (45%)
- Data security and cyber attacks (43%)

What this suggests: High overall comfort should not be interpreted as blanket permission: who accesses data, for what purpose and with what protections remain central.

Concerns about health data use

Respondents selected all that applied. Wave 4 (September 2026)



Source: Kantar, commissioned by UPD. Only asked of those who responded "My comfort with my own personal health data being used depends on the situation" or "I am not comfortable with my own health data being used"

Support for NHS partnerships has weakened

Support has declined across all external organisation types since March 2026. Since May 2026, support has fallen particularly for:

- Technology companies: 35% to 29% support, down from since May 2026
- Other public-sector organisations: 38% to 33%,
- Support is around four in ten for universities, charities, research organisations and pharmaceutical companies

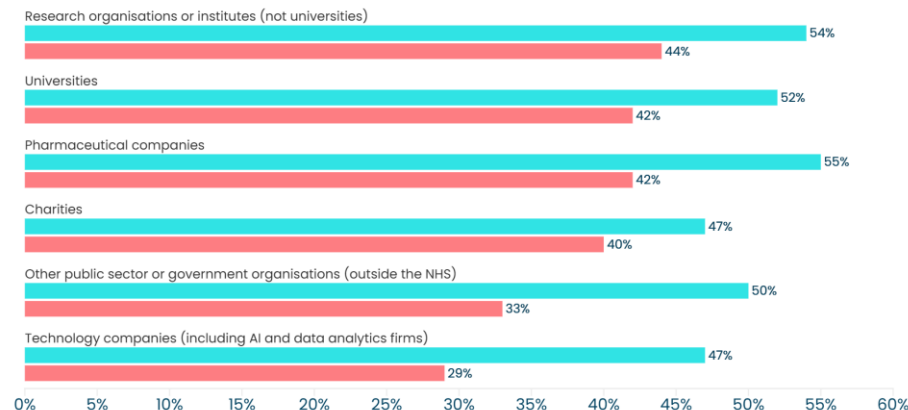
Awareness declined for most organisation types, but not for technology companies.

What this suggests: Technology partnerships face a distinctive confidence challenge. Their role, public benefit and safeguards need to be made more visible and understandable.

Awareness of, and support for, NHS working with other organisations to understand and make better use of patient data

Wave 4 (September 2026), ordered by % supportive

■ Awareness ■ Support



Source: Kantar, commissioned by UPD

Response options included: "Yes, aware and I support this"; "Yes, aware but don't know how I feel"; "Yes, aware and I do not support this"; "No, not aware but I support this"; "No, not aware and don't know how I feel"; "No, not aware and I do not support this"

Support for national initiatives is comparatively stable

A single joined-up NHS patient record (Single Patient Record) received the strongest support.

There was a decline in support for software that connects IT systems (Federated Data Platform), from 58% in March to 50%. Support remains stable for other initiatives.

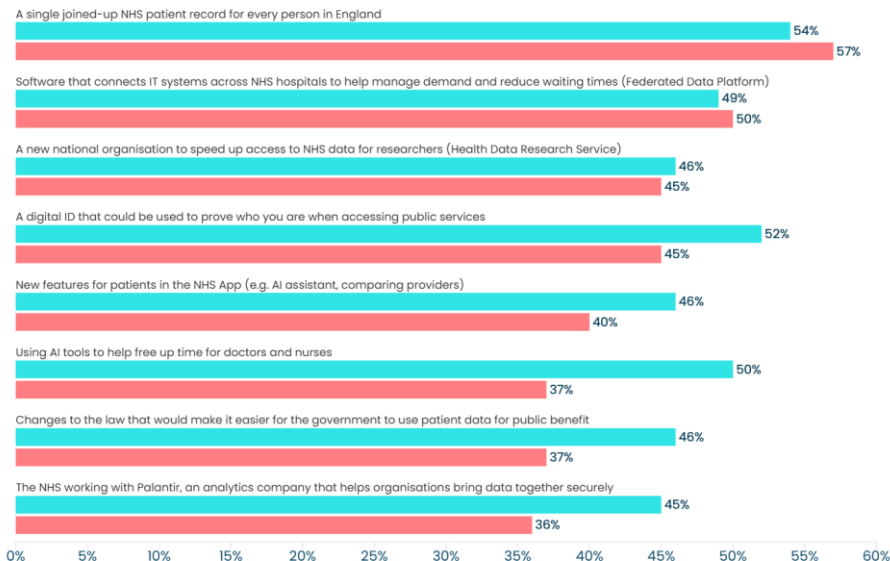
Lowest support, at 36% to 37%, was for:

- Using AI tools
- The NHS working with Palantir
- Changes to the law that would make it easier for government to use patient data for public benefit.

What this suggests: Declining support for patient data use in general has not produced an equivalent decline across all named initiatives. Public responses appear sensitive to the specific purpose and proposition.

Awareness and support of data initiatives

Awareness Support



Source: Kantar, commissioned by UPD

Response options included: "Yes, aware and I support this"; "Yes, aware but don't know how I feel"; "Yes, aware and I do not support this"; "No, not aware but I support this"; "No, not aware and don't know how I feel"; "No, not aware and I do not support this"

Self-reported opt-out remains much higher than the official rate

28% reported opting out ([National Data Opt-out](#) was 5.72%; last updated 22/9/2026). While the overall percentage of people reporting opt-out has remained fairly stable, results show notable changes in other responses:

- 26% are unsure whether they have opted out, up from 21% in May 2026
- 33% didn't know they could opt out, down from 38% in March 2026
- Only 13% said they knew they could opt out but chose not to, down from 17% in March 2026

Half of those reporting an opt-out said they used NHS.uk or the NHS App.

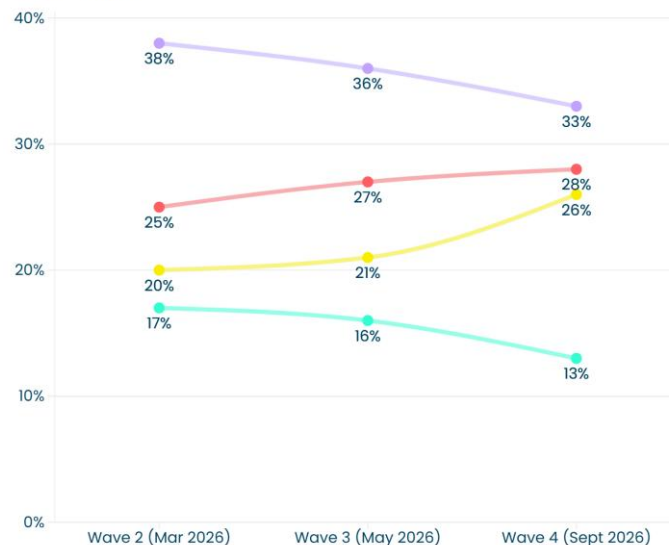
More likely to opt out: men (vs. women), parents (vs. non-parents), ethnic minority participants (vs. White), London residents (vs. outside London), more digitally engaged (using NHS App and viewing health records)

What this suggests: The large gap between self-reported and official opt-out rates, together with increasing uncertainty about opt-out status, indicates continuing confusion about what counts as an opt-out. Reported opt-out should therefore not be treated as a simple measure of opposition to health data use.

Self-reported opt-out

■ I am not sure whether I have or haven't
 ■ No - I didn't know I could
 ■ No - I knew I could, but chose not to
 ■ Yes

Responses (%)



Source: UPD, 2026 • "Yes" combines two responses: "Yes - and I would not consider opting back in" which remains stable at 10-11%, and "Yes - but I would consider opting back in", which remains stable at 15-17%.

Uncertainty about future opt-out is growing

Among people who have not already opted out, the proportion who are unsure about doing so in future has increased, while the proportion saying they are unlikely to opt out has declined.

More likely to opt out in the future: parents (vs. non-parents) and participants from ethnic minority backgrounds (vs. White)

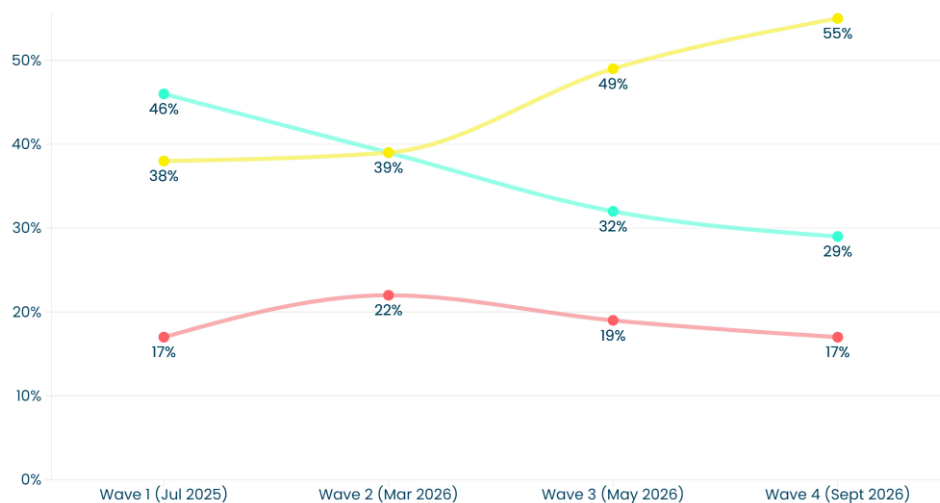
What this suggests: The future opt-out picture is becoming less settled, rather than showing a clear movement towards opting out.

Likelihood to opt-out in the future

Only asked of those who have not already opted out. The proportion who say they are unlikely to opt out is decreasing and proportion who are not sure is increasing.

Unlikely Not sure Likely

Responses (%)



Source: UPD, 2026

Differences between groups reinforce the need for tailored engagement

Awareness, support, confidence, digital engagement and opt-out do not move together in a simple way.

- **Women** were generally less aware and supportive of health data use, and less confident in data security and accuracy, than men. Women were also less likely to report having opted out, although the official [National Data Opt-Out](#) rate was higher among women: 6.4%, compared with 5.0% among men on 22/9/2026.
- **Parents, young adults (16–24)** and **participants from ethnic minority backgrounds** were generally more digitally engaged, aware and supportive than their respective comparison groups, but were also more likely to report having opted out.
- **There were important exceptions.** Young adults were less supportive of a Single Patient Record and the Federated Data Platform than older adults.

The survey identifies population-level patterns but cannot explain the underlying reasons or fully examine intersecting experiences.

What this suggests:

Public attitudes cannot be understood on a single spectrum from supportive to opposed. Greater awareness, support and digital engagement do not necessarily translate into lower reported opt-out. Engagement should respond to the particular combination of experiences and concerns within different groups.



Preferred citation: Understanding Patient Data (2026) *UK Patient Data Sentiment Tracker: Wave 4 Findings (September 2026)*.

Please get in touch for further details about the data and analysis.



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