



**DATA T RANSFER INITIATIVE**

# **The potential of data portability**



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## About DTI

The Data Transfer Initiative (DTI) is a non-profit organization of policy experts and technologists working with the tech industry, governments, and other stakeholders to enhance data portability. Our mission is to empower people through simple, secure data transfers that expand choices and opportunities in the digital economy.

## Vision

Data portability empowers individuals, boosts market competition, and drives innovation. When people are able to easily and securely move their personal data, they can benefit from new opportunities and downstream innovations that would otherwise not be possible. This reorients markets to the benefit of users, new entrants, and the broader online ecosystem.

### The Many Surprising Benefits of Data Portability

Portability has its roots in privacy, but today, it contributes to the most critical tech policy challenges:

- **Competition:** Data portability can lower barriers to entry, allowing new entrants to compete with incumbents. It breaks down the “walled gardens” by enabling users to transfer data between platforms, giving smaller companies access to the data needed to innovate and grow.
- **Innovation:** Data portability encourages both startups and established companies to innovate. Entrepreneurs can develop new products and services that integrate with or improve upon existing technologies, while established companies retain the freedom to innovate themselves, and to compete on the quality of their services.
- **User Agency:** Portability allows individuals to decide where their data resides and how it is used. This not only empowers people but also builds trust between consumers and companies, leading to healthier digital ecosystems.
- **Online Safety:** Through portability, people are able to move their data, and themselves, away from platforms that do not adhere to their expectations of user safety, privacy, or security. Portability promotes safer digital environments by enabling users to switch to platforms with practices that best align with their needs, leading to an overall improvement in the security and trustworthiness of the digital economy.
- **AI:** AI systems rely on personalized user data to provide optimal experiences. Portability lets individuals transfer their personalized data—complete with their unique preferences and history—across platforms without needing to start from scratch, ensuring continuity and a seamless user experience while avoiding monopolization and encouraging transparent and fair use of AI through market forces.

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## Leadership From Many Corners

Portability, alongside interoperability, is a key element of the internet's success and economic impact. However, significant challenges remain in its implementation. Investing in portability will unlock substantial untapped potential for growth and innovation.

Some countries have adopted legislation with specific provisions for portability. But all countries have technology users and businesses that benefit from portability. Leadership is needed, from all types of stakeholders in all regions of the world, to address the biggest challenges for the vision that data portability offers.

## Core Policy Principles

DTI grounds its work in the following policy principles, which we believe are necessary to a vibrant ecosystem of safe and secure data transfers. We see these principles not only as important guideposts for drafting legislative and regulatory proposals, but as a guide to help businesses implement data portability practices and inform policymakers who wish to foster incentives for portability.

- **Empower Users:** Data portability policy should center on empowering users to move their data to the products and services of their choice. User intent and action should be involved rather than assumed, and should not require tradeoffs such as disabling end-to-end encryption in order to allow portability.
- **Define the Proper Scope of Data:** Data transfers should be scoped appropriately based on specific contexts and use cases. Portability tools and policies should apply to user-created content and should not extend to data that negatively impacts the privacy of others or is used primarily to improve a service.
- **Ensure Reciprocity:** Services that accept incoming data transfers should also support outgoing transfers. This two-way obligation, or "reciprocity," enables users to freely move their data to another provider or platform without lock-in or feeling "stuck."
- **Protect Privacy and Security:** Platforms should not be required to put the privacy and security of their users at risk when putting data portability into practice. Platforms may require effective privacy and security as a condition of enabling data transfer.
- **Clarify Liability:** Data recipients should not be liable for accessing data in good faith through a legitimate transfer mechanism, once they have a valid legal basis to do so. However, they should be held accountable for how they handle data once it is in their system.

## Roadmap

The following activities, which can be led by government or other stakeholders, would help maximize the benefits of data portability for the internet and its businesses and users:

1. **Raise Public Awareness:** Launch educational campaigns and issue policy statements to help establish portability as a public expectation.
2. **Invest in Innovation:** Allocate funding and incentives to drive entrepreneurship and technological advancements in data portability.
3. **Collaborate Globally:** Partner with multinational stakeholders to align on and co-lead the development of global data portability standards.
4. **Regulate Responsibly:** Ensure that legislation and regulations do not hinder user-driven data transfers and, where possible, promote them.
5. **Develop Metrics:** Design comprehensive metrics, including through international collaboration, to measure the health and user impact of data portability.