

Glitches in Japan's unpopular MyNumber digital ID cards draw a flood of complaints

July 6 2023, by Yuri Kageyama



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

The minister charged with an overhaul of Japan's digitized system to assign a number to everyone living in the country has apologized, as doctors protested glitches with health insurance and local governments

begged Thursday for clarity on how to handle the problems.

The MyNumber, or "MaiNa" for short, system has clearly gone afoul.

The government has ordered a total rechecking of MyNumber data, one by one, "mechanically," as the digital agency put it. The goal is to complete it by the fall, which could be anytime from September to November.

Local governments have to deal with much of the checking work. Officials have met with Digital Minister Taro Kono demanding help. Costs for the review have not been announced, but are expected to total trillions of yen (tens of billions of dollars).

Under MyNumber, launched in 2016, people get a card with a photo and embedded IC chip. Officials already are talking about issuing totally new cards in 2026, apparently to start afresh.

After thousands of complaints about mistaken identities related to MyNumber this year alone, Kono's suggestion that the system be renamed set off an uproar.

"We are extremely sorry," Kono told a special committee in parliament, where opposition lawmakers slammed his efforts as inept. "We will do our best to speedily check the system and win back people's trust," he said.

With the system already in trouble, a plan to phase out existing [health care](#) insurance cards and replace them with MyNumber cards by next year has drawn a still shriller level of protests.

Japan has widespread and relatively [affordable health care](#) and an insurance payment system, now being used by more than 100 million

Japanese.

The Japanese Medical and Dental Practitioners for the Improvement of Medical Care, or Hodanren, a major grouping of doctors and dentists, is opposing the MyNumber plan.

"The dangers are clear, and the government has done nothing to take responsibility," Dr. Kenyu Sumie, who heads Hodanren, told reporters. "To use MyNumber in [medical care](#) is dangerous and impractical."

A study by the industry group estimated that more than 1 million people were affected by MyNumber troubles at [medical facilities](#) between May 23 and June 19.

No major financial losses or crimes using stolen identities have been reported. But the confusion has severely undermined [government efforts](#) to promote the system.

"Dealing with the glitches that keep popping up is turning into wack-a-mole," said Hideya Sugio, an opposition lawmaker and journalist.

MyNumber problems have been aggravated by the fact that many Japanese names that sound the same may be written using different characters. Some fear this could cause lapses at hospitals that might lead to leaks or inadvertent mishandling of personal medical histories, the Hodanren says.

The Digital Agency has not explained clearly how the government plans to rechecking the MyNumber IDs. It's an undertaking involving the prime minister's office, [health ministry](#), communications ministry and [local governments](#).

Many Japanese, never having had to get national IDs, were leery about

the system to begin with and many have never gotten MyNumber cards. The most recent estimates are that about 77% of all Japanese have one.

Japan's reputation for attention to detail and quality technology also has been cast into question by cybersecurity lapses and failures in [online banking](#) and stock trading systems.

Despite the tide of public opposition, the [government](#) is eager to push ahead with MyNumber.

It allocated 2 trillion yen (\$14 billion) in [public money](#) as bonus "points" or shopping discounts for people who get MyNumber cards. The big push for its use in health care is aimed at compelling the last holdouts to get them.

© 2023 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Glitches in Japan's unpopular MyNumber digital ID cards draw a flood of complaints (2023, July 6) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2023-07-glitches-japan-unpopular-mynumber-digital.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--