

Survey among Welsh citizens on contact tracing apps for COVID-19

The purpose of the survey was to gain views among members of the Welsh public on the use of contact tracing apps for COVID-19. This is a brief summary report to provide the main findings of the survey.

The survey was distributed among 4,000 Healthwise Wales participants, targeted to correctively weight for responses among men, and ethnic groups other than White. The survey was open from 22-28 May 2020 and a total of 976 responses were received during that period. At the time of the survey the NHSX app was being trialled on the Isle of Wight and there was no predicted launch date. Shortly following the survey, that version of the app was shelved and the current NHS app launched on 24th September 2020.

Who responded?

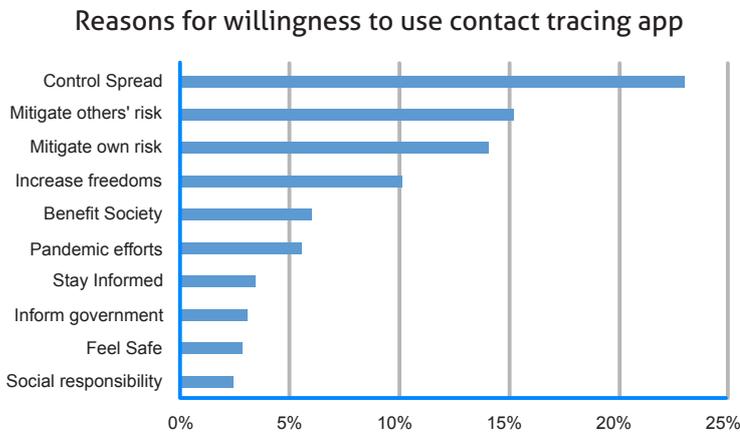
There were 95.5% who stated they were white and 4.5% from a mix of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. There was an almost even split between male and female, with a small number (3 of 976) identifying as other. Almost 30% of respondents considered themselves to be

at high risk for Coronavirus. Almost all were aware of contact tracing apps (97%) and about two thirds felt they had enough information to make a decision about using an app. This high level of awareness and information may be due in part to the make-up of the HealthWise Wales cohort.

What did they say?

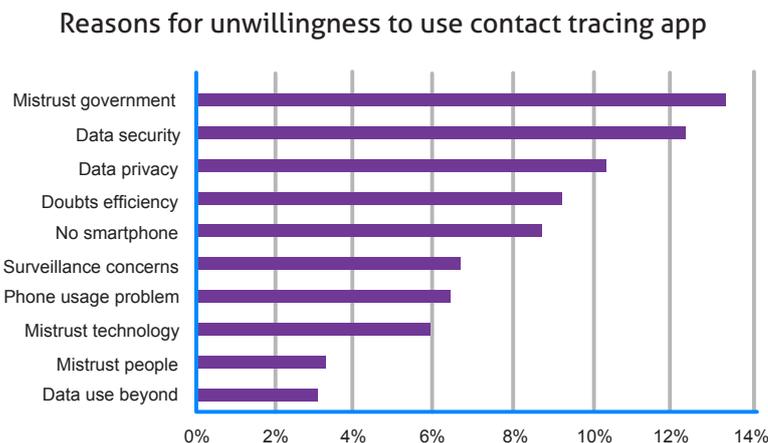
Over half (56%) of respondents indicated they planned to use a contact tracing app if one were introduced. About a quarter of respondents planned not to use one and the rest were unsure. Reasons for willingness or unwillingness to use an app are illustrated below:

Top 10 reasons for using a contact tracing app, by percentage of overall response.



Controlling spread of the virus, mitigating risks for self and for others and increasing freedoms were the top four reasons given for willingness to use an app.

Top 10 reasons against using a contact tracing app, by percentage of overall response.



Among those unwilling to use a contact tracing app, the four most frequent reasons were mistrusting the government, concerns about data security, privacy concerns and doubts about app efficacy.

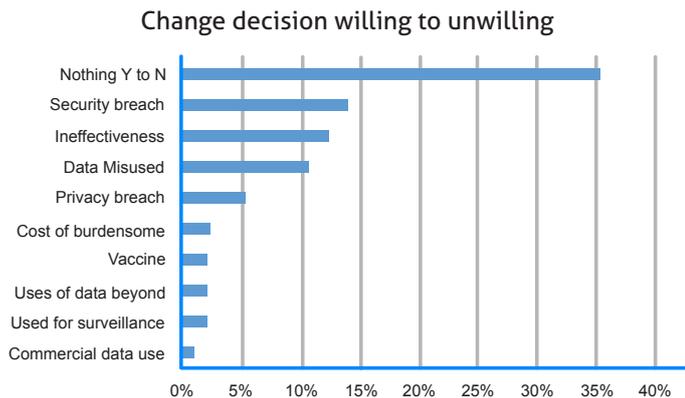


WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON CONTACT TRACING APPS FOR COVID-19?

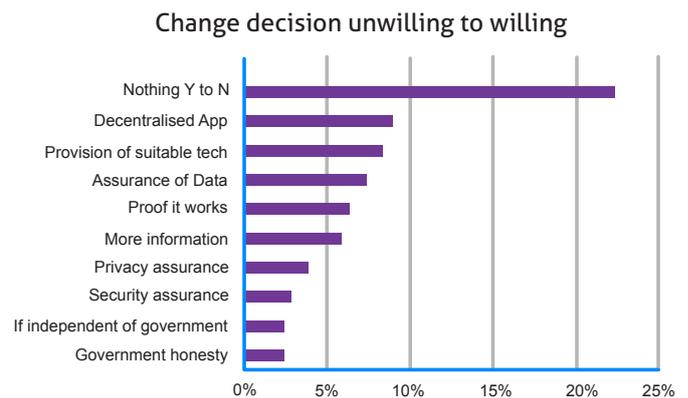
Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

People were also asked what could change their mind. With over 35% of the responses, the most frequently given response to the question of what would make a person change their mind to being unwilling to use an app was 'nothing'. The next three most popular reasons were if there were a security breach, if the app proved ineffective and if the data were misused.

Top 10 reasons to change from yes to no



Top 10 reasons to change from no to yes



In terms of changing from being unwilling to willing to use an app, 'nothing' was again the most frequently given response (23%). The next three reasons were the use of a decentralised app, if they could be provided with suitable technology and support to use it (referring to a smartphone and/or network connection), and assurances of data safety. We note that the app being trialled at the time of survey was based on a centralised data system, whereas the NHS app that is now in use is based on the Google/Apple model and decentralised data. This means the data processing is done on the phone not on a central database.

Discussion and recommendations

1. The level of public awareness regarding contact tracing apps is high and people have strong views on their use. There should be more engagement with the public on the use of a contact tracing app both because it is the ethical thing to do when implementing a new public health measure of this nature, and it would be of practical benefit to decision makers and policy planners.
2. Digital inclusion is a known challenge, with some groups such as older people, being less likely to have access to a smartphone. Other groups that are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and highly impacted by measures such as lockdown also report lower smartphone access. Access to technology and the means to sustain it among different socio-economic groups should be evaluated and the ways in which multiple factors intersect to give rise to new, or exacerbate existing, inequalities must be at the front of such work. Collaborative efforts to improve access have begun in Wales and should be supported longer term.
3. The reasons people gave for being willing to use a contact tracing app demonstrate a keenness to help themselves, others, society and the government to avoid the virus and to control its spread. However, the reasons they might change their mind, notably, the need to safeguard against security breaches and data misuse, and to be able to demonstrate app effectiveness are more heavily weighted to the individual. Understanding not just views but the values that underpin them is critical to gaining trust and ensuring the app is successful.
4. The reasons people gave for their unwillingness to use an app were topped by mistrust in the government, followed by concerns about data security and privacy and the efficacy of the app. Policy and decision makers must address these issues and proactively demonstrate trustworthiness if members of the public are to be confident their data are safe and that using an app is worthwhile.

Reporting

This is a 'snapshot' of the work so far. Initial findings have been shared with Welsh Government (WG) and Public Health Wales (PHW) with the aim of supporting policy development and decision-making. In July-August 2020 we facilitated online deliberative discussions with a group of Welsh citizens. The survey findings were used to inform the design that work. Those discussions are currently being analysed and will be reported upon to WG and PHW, as well via academic journals, now the NHS app has been launched.

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact Kerina or Rachel at k.h.jones@swansea.ac.uk or rachel.thompson@swansea.ac.uk

We are very grateful to Healthwise Wales for collaborating with us and facilitating the survey. And to everyone who took the time to respond, thank you. The work was supported by the SAIL Databank and Administrative Data Research Wales.