

Covid-19 contract-tracing apps are less trusted by those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd

Wednesday, 27 October 2021

People who are mistrusting, socially disadvantaged, or have less digital access, are generally more negative towards the idea of using digital contract tracing apps to control COVID-19.

This research, a review article regarding the public acceptance of COVID-19 contact tracing apps, conducted by Yanqing Lin from Aalto University School of Business and co-authors My Villius Zetterholm and Päivi Jokela from Linnaeus University, Sweden, found that public acceptance of digital contact tracing applications varied across national cultures and sociodemographic classes.

They found that it was often less accepted among individuals with lower income, lower education levels, and those with a lower level of trust in authorities.

Furthermore, privacy concerns and fear of surveillance are common barriers to acceptance. Some people do not believe their data will be kept safe or only used for infection control.

Those with greater access to technology and higher education and income are often more accepting of digital contact tracing apps, but trust is generally the most important thing, the research confirms.

Another critical finding involves the misconceptions surrounding these technologies and their role in contact tracing. For example, some people believe that it will protect them by providing immediate warnings when they are near someone who is infected.

The researchers say misconceptions like these are serious and are in need of further investigations, since they might lead to a false sense of safety or unnecessary risk-taking.

They add that we have to make sure that users understand these technologies so that they use them in a safe way.

“A better understanding of human-centered perspectives is critical for this type of emergent technology to be designed and used in an ethical, fair, and effective way”, the researchers conclude.

This research was published in the special issue “Managing the Consequences of COVID-19 in the Every-Day Working, Learning, and Interacting Life” of the journal Informatics.

25 studies from four continents across the globe were compiled, and critical topics were identified and discussed.

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