The Health Foundation COVID-19 Survey

A report of survey findings on public attitudes towards a potential smartphone app to 'track and trace' Coronavirus outbreaks

Ipsos MORI, Public Affairs

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1. Background, context and methodology

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Background, context and methodology

The Health Foundation commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct a representative poll of the general public in Great Britain to understand opinion on a range of issues. This report focuses on **public attitudes towards a potential smartphone app to 'track and trace' Coronavirus outbreaks**.
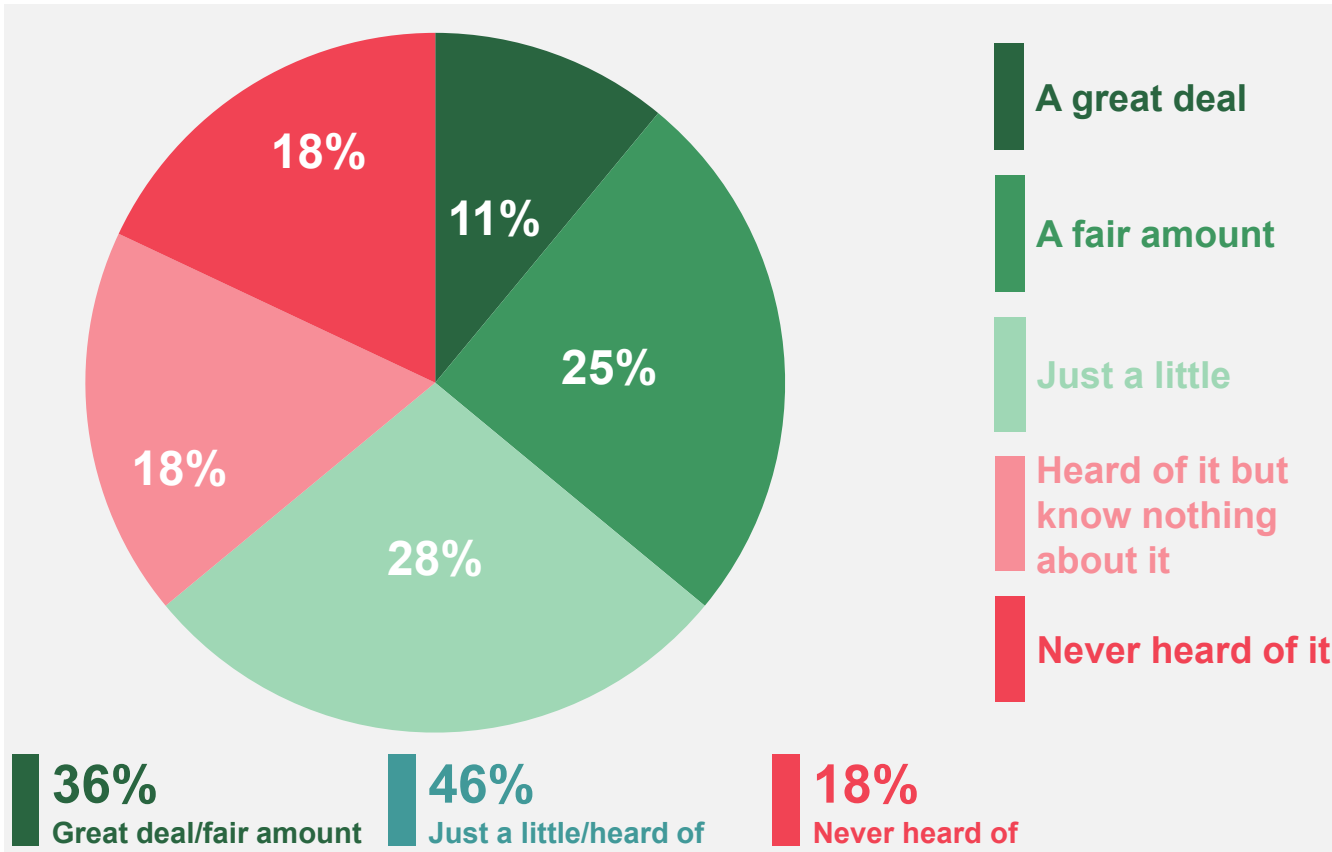
The survey was conducted by telephone on the Ipsos MORI CATI Omnibus survey, a weekly telephone omnibus survey of a representative sample of people aged 18 and over in Great Britain. Fieldwork took place between 1 and 10 May 2020. A total of 1983 people were interviewed. Quotas were set on age, gender, government office region, working status and education. Data has been weighted to the known offline population proportions for age within gender, government office region and working status and social grade. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

Throughout the report findings will highlight, and make reference to, different sub-groups based on responses to certain questions. When interpreting the survey findings, it is important to remember that the results are based on a sample of the population, not the entire population. Consequently, results are subject to margins of error, and not all differences between sub-groups are statistically significant (i.e. a real difference).

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2. Summary of key insights

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A majority of the public have at least heard of plans to launch a smartphone app, although not a great deal is known about it at the moment

Q. The government has recently announced plans to introduce a smartphone app to identify people who have reported Coronavirus symptoms and alert others who have been near them. You may have heard this referred to as 'contact tracing'. The smartphone app could use mobile phone data, which would be anonymised. Before now, how much did you know about the government plans to use a smartphone app in this way?

A great deal

A fair amount

Just a little

Heard of it but know nothing about it

Never heard of it

11%
25%
28%
18%
18%

36% Great deal/fair amount
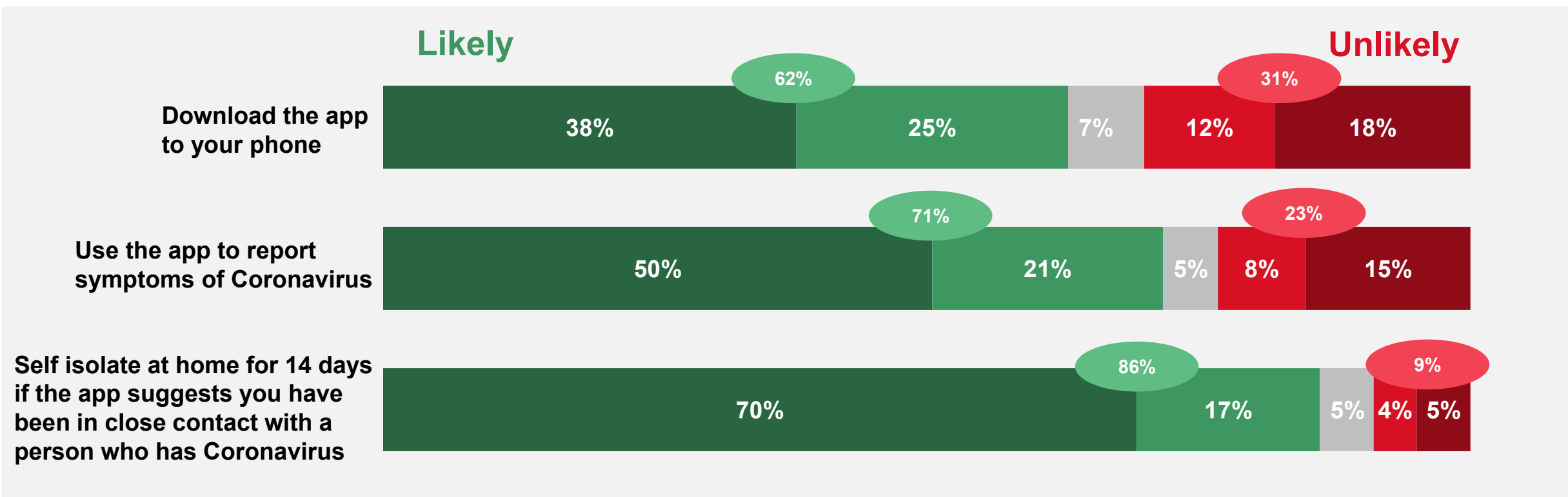**46%** Just a little/heard of
18% Never heard of

Over four in five of the public (82%) have heard at least a fair amount about the app, although only around one-third (36%) say they know a great deal or fair amount about it.

- **Gender:** Two in five men (40%) say they have heard a great deal or fair amount about plans to use an app;
- **Age:** Young people are least likely to have heard about the app – two in five 18-24 year olds (41%) and three in ten 25-34 year olds (28%) have never heard of it (compared with 18% overall);
- **Socio-economic group:** A similar proportion (28%) of routine and manual workers, state pensioners and the unemployed have also not heard about the app. Contrast this with those working in managerial, administrative or professional jobs, who are more likely to know something about the plans (43% say they have heard a great deal or a fair amount).

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Base: All participants (1983). 1-10th May 2020

Most say they would self isolate if the smartphone app informed them of close contact with coronavirus, although not everyone would download the app

Over three in five **(62%) indicate they would be likely to download a smartphone app**, which is in line with what analysts have said would be necessary to make it effective. Encouragingly, nearly nine in ten **(86%) say they would self isolate if the app advised them** they had been in contact with an infected person, while **71% would be likely to use the app to report symptoms of coronavirus**.

Q. How likely or unlikely would you be to…?

Likely

Unlikely

Download the app to your phone — 62% likely — 38% | 25% | 7% | 12% | 18% — 31% unlikely

Use the app to report symptoms of Coronavirus — 71% likely — 50% | 21% | 5% | 8% | 15% — 23% unlikely

Self isolate at home for 14 days if the app suggests you have been in close contact with a person who has Coronavirus — 86% likely — 70% | 17% | 5% | 4% | 5% — 9% unlikely

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*Base: All participants (1983) * Don't know, it depends and NA I haven't got a smart phone are included in central bar. 1-10th May 2020*

Overall, three in five say they would be likely to download a smartphone app, but this varies among different groups within the population

By age
Only just over half (55%) of those aged 65 and over say they would be likely to download the app (compared with 62% overall). Smartphone ownership is an issue for this age group, with nearly one in five 65+ year olds (17%) not being in a position to download it because they do not have a device (compared with 5% overall).

By socio-economic group
When it comes to downloading the smartphone app, those among the routine and manual workers, state pensioners and the unemployed are significantly less likely to say they would download it (50% say they are likely to). In contrast, people in managerial, administrative or professional jobs are much more likely to say they would download it (73%).
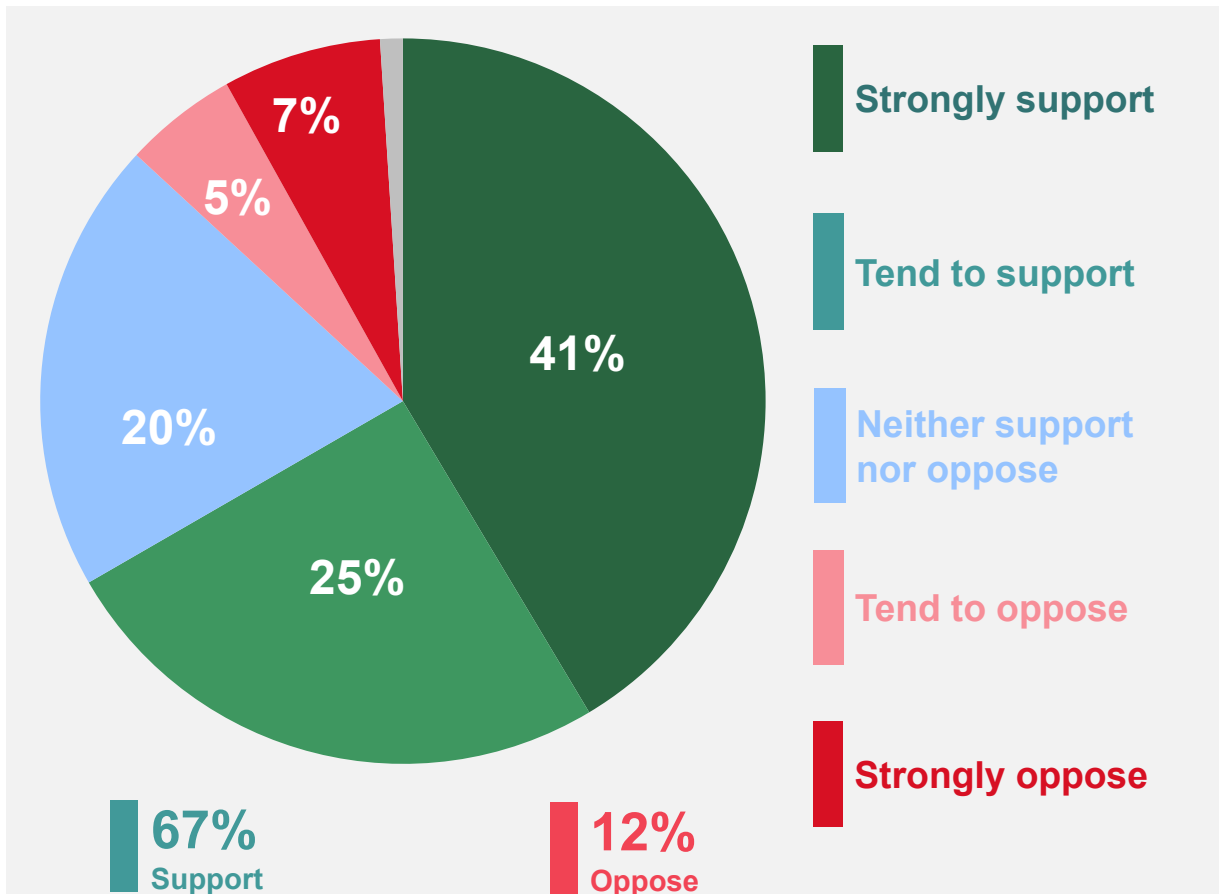
By education
People with a degree, Masters or PhD are particularly likely to say they would download the app (71%). This falls to 63% among those with A Levels or equivalent and 59% among those with GCSEs or equivalent.

In contrast, only 38% of people with no formal qualifications say they would download the app – with one-quarter (25%) saying they do not have a smartphone.

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Base: All participants (1983) * Don't know, it depends and NA I haven't got a smart phone are included in central bar. 1-10th May 2020

Two-thirds support government plans to use a smartphone app although one in five do not have a view either way at the moment

Q. To what extent do you support or oppose government plans to use a smartphone app in this way?

Pie chart segments:
- **Strongly support** — 41%
- **Tend to support** — 25%
- **Neither support nor oppose** — 20%
- **Tend to oppose** — 5%
- **Strongly oppose** — 7%

67% Support

12% Oppose

Two-thirds (67%) of people support government plans to use a smartphone app to track and trace new cases of Coronavirus, with a majority of these 'strongly' supporting it. Only 12% oppose it. However, **one in five (20%) are 'on the fence'**, which suggests that some may need convincing as to the merits of the plan.
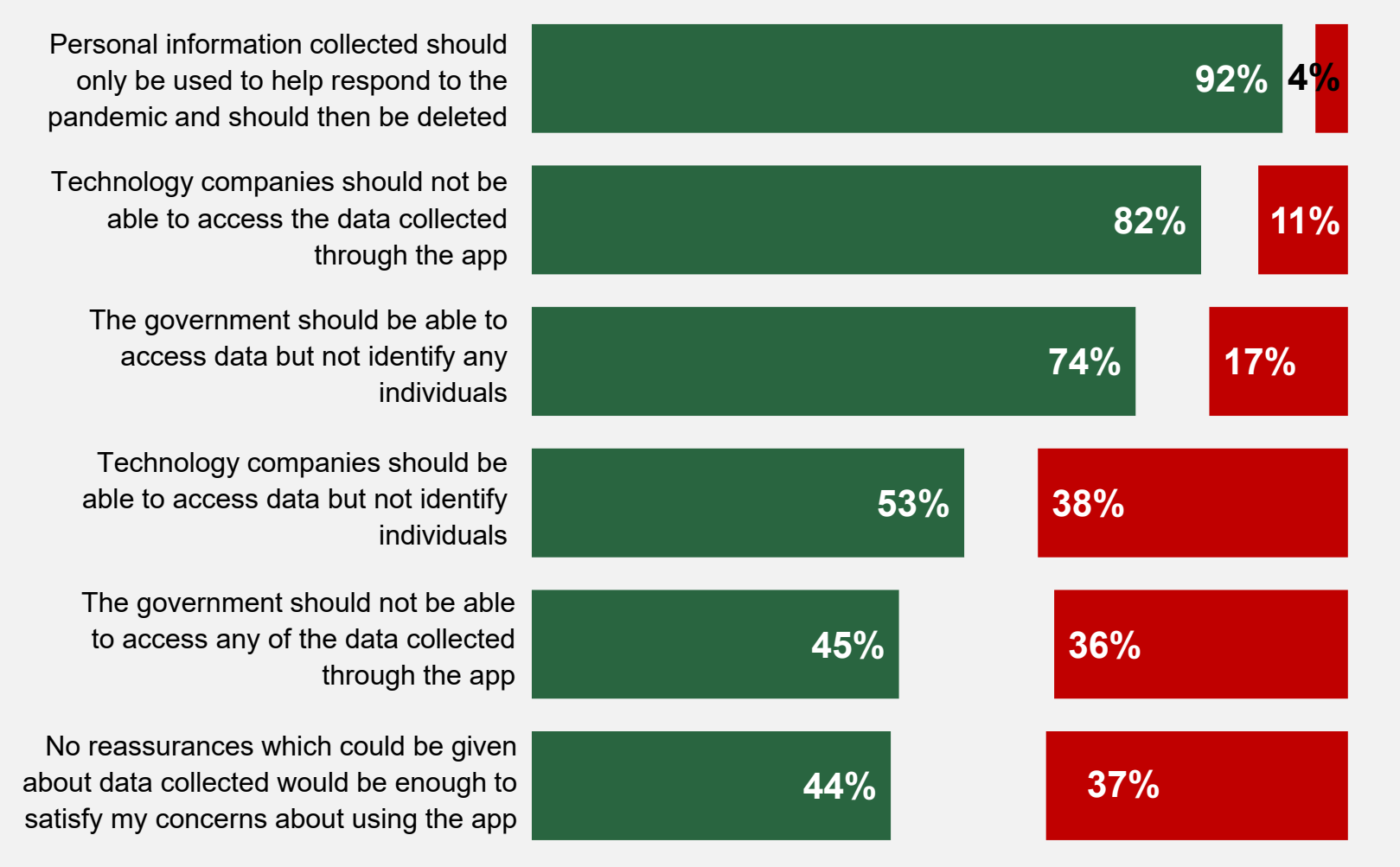
- **Gender:** Men are significantly more opposed to plans to use a smartphone app in this way (14% compared to 10% of women);
- **Age:** Older people aged 55 and over are more supportive (71%, compared with 67% overall), while younger people aged 18-34 are more likely to neither support nor oppose it (27%, compared with 20% overall);
- **Socio-economic group:** Those in managerial, administrative or professional jobs are significantly more supportive of the plan (74%, compared with 59% of skilled, routine and manual workers, state pensioners and the unemployed);
- **Education:** People who have a degree are more supportive (72%, compared with 67% overall);
- **Political persuasion:** Three-quarters (73%) of Conservative voters support the plan (compared with 67% overall).

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Concern exists about access to personal information collected via the smartphone app

Q. Continuing to think about the smartphone app we have just been talking about, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

Strongly/tend to agree   **Tend to/strongly disagree**

There is a clear expectation for safeguards over the data collected via the app. Nearly all (92%) think **personal information collected should only be used to respond to the pandemic and then deleted**. There is acceptance of the government **accessing de-personalised data** (74%), though the public is **less comfortable about technology companies** accessing it. Four in five (82%) think they should not be able to access any data, while around half (53%) think they should be able to access de-personalised data (with a significant minority of 38% disagreeing). More than two in five (44%) say **no reassurances would satisfy their concerns about the app**.

Statement	Agree	Disagree
Personal information collected should only be used to help respond to the pandemic and should then be deleted	92%	4%
Technology companies should not be able to access the data collected through the app	82%	11%
The government should be able to access data but not identify any individuals	74%	17%
Technology companies should be able to access data but not identify individuals	53%	38%
The government should not be able to access any of the data collected through the app	45%	36%
No reassurances which could be given about data collected would be enough to satisfy my concerns about using the app	44%	37%

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Base: All participants. 1-10th May 2020

However, there were some differences, particularly for those with a long-term condition

No reassurances which could be given about data collected would be enough to satisfy my concerns about using the app: Those working as supervisor or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional staff are more likely to not be satisfied when it comes to data collection (54%) as are over half of those living in London (52%) and have no formal qualifications (57%).

Technology companies should not be able to access the data collected through the app: Those working in managerial, administrative or professional jobs (87%) are more likely to agree technology companies should not have access, as are those working full time (85%) and those with A level qualifications, a degree or more (85%).

The government should be able to access data but not identify any individuals: Women are more likely than men to agree with this (77% compared to only 71% of men). Those working in routine and manual jobs, state pensioners and the unemployed are more likely to disagree (22%, compared with 17% overall).

Technology companies should be able to access data but not identify individuals: Those aged 65+ are more likely to agree that tech companies should be able to access data without individuals being identified (57%, compared with 51% overall). Those currently working full time are more likely to disagree (40% compared with 38% overall).

The government should not be able to access any of the data collected through the app: Men are more likely to hold this view (49%). Those living in London and Scotland are also significantly more likely to agree with the limits of what the government should be able to access (54% in London and 53% in Scotland). People with no formal qualifications are also less likely to think the government should be able to access data (56% think it should not).

Personal information collected should only be used to help respond to the pandemic and should then be deleted: Women are more concerned about deleting personal information – 95% think it should be deleted, as do those aged 45+ (95%). Conservative voters are also more likely to agree (94%).

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Thank you

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