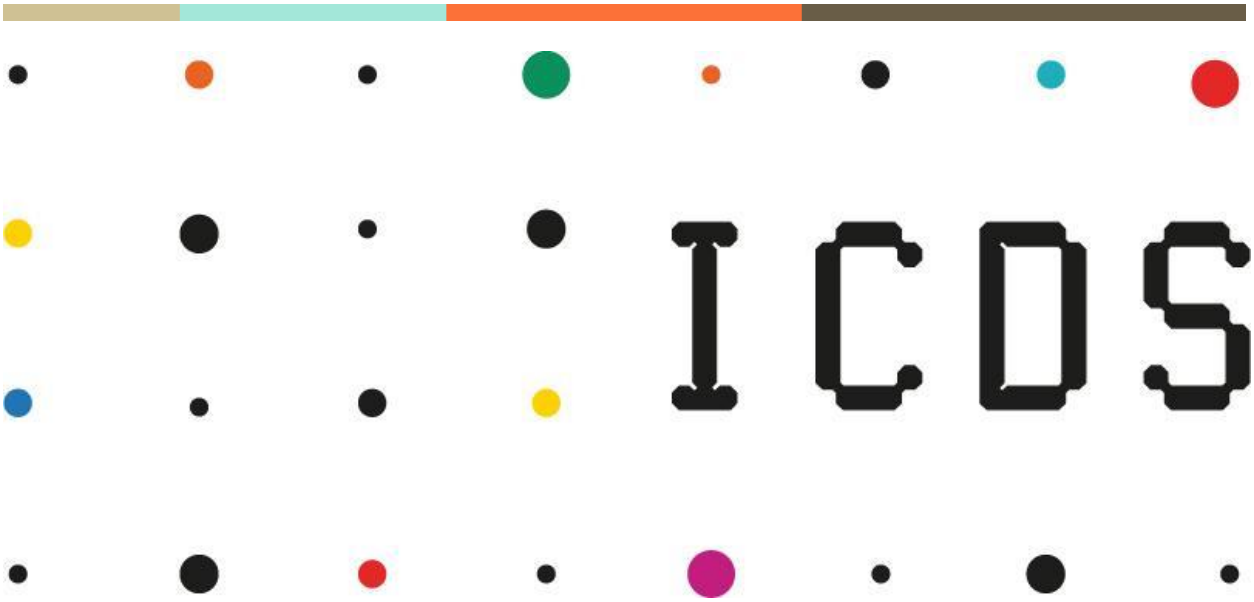

Dutch people's perceptions of the use of tracking technology in times of Covid-19

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Brahim Zarouali
Joanna Strycharz
Natali Helberger
Claes de Vreese

Information, Communication and the Data Society
University of Amsterdam
ASCoR and IViR

Executive summary

Purpose

In the light of the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak, members of the Dutch government announced the use of tracking technologies as a solution to reduce the rate of spread of the COVID-19 virus. In this whitepaper, survey results are reported on the extent to which the Dutch population supports the use of such technology.

This survey was commissioned by **Information, Communication & the Data Society** (ICDS), a joint research initiative of the Amsterdam School of Communication Research and the Institute for Information Law at the University of Amsterdam, led by Prof. dr. Natali Helberger and Prof. dr. Claes de Vreese. Its aim is to investigate the ways in which AI and algorithms affect the role, impact and regulation of information and communication in the data-driven society.

Sample

The fieldwork was carried out by IPSOS. In total, the sample consisted of **907 Dutch respondents** from all regions of the Netherlands. A closer inspection shows that:

I. **54%** were men, and 46% women
II. **20%** was 18-34 years old, **40%** 35-54 years old, and **40%** 55+ years old
III. **26%** had a short education level, **50%** medium length education, and **24%** long education

The project is funded by the University of Amsterdam, by the Research Priority Area ICDS.

Main findings

The findings show that a majority of respondents remain *undecided* in the light of the current crisis. There is *no clear trust or distrust* towards data handling by the government and related risks.

Regarding technologies used by the government for managing the crisis, respondents are largely positive about application of *AI for medical purposes* and about different *digital communication channels* that the government has at hand.

The widely discussed tracking technologies that could be used for disease spread and quarantine monitoring evoke ambivalent reactions among the respondents. While 20% supports the use of such technology for *quarantine monitoring*, 28% opposes such measures and more than half remains undecided. Similarly, in case of technology use for *monitoring of disease spread*, 24% supports such measures, while 22% oppose it and the majority remains undecided.

The results also point at important conditions that the respondents see as prerequisites for the use of such location tracking technologies by the government. Almost 40% supports use of a tracking app if this measure is *temporary*. Similarly, 40% sees *privacy protection* as a prerequisite. Quarter of the respondents lends support to the use of the app as it has to meet the *GDPR requirements*. At the same time, almost third of the respondents fear that the app could be used for other purposes (so called *function creep*). Finally, it is important to note that for 34% of respondents the support depends on *benefits of the app for public health*.

The findings do not show major differences in attitudes and opinions between genders, respondents of different ages, and with different educational backgrounds.

Methodology

General info

I. Sample characteristics

The study population for this study consisted of people living in The Netherlands above the age of 18. The sample is representative for the Dutch population. The online survey ran from **April 9** to **April 20** (11 days) and was distributed by **IPSOS**. The total sample size was ***N* = 907**. Below, a detailed breakdown is offered from the sample:

I. **54%** were men, and 46% women.
II. **20%** was 18-34 years old, **40%** 35-54 years old, and **40%** 55+ years old
III. **26%** had a low education level, **50%** moderate education, and **24%** high education

Age was measured as a continuous variable, but was re-coded into three groups. The variable **educational level** was re-coded as well to form a smaller set of options (low-moderate-high). The initial education variable consisted of:

A. Geen onderwijs/ basisonderwijs/ cursus inburgering/ cursus Nederlandse taal
B. LBO/ VBO/ VMBO (kader- en beroepsgerichte leerweg)/ MBO 1 (assistentenopleiding)
C. MAVO, HAVO of VWO (eerste drie jaar)/ ULO/ MULO/ VMBO (theoretische of gemengde leerweg)/ voortgezet speciaal onderwijs
D. MBO 2, 3, 4 (basisberoeps-, vak-, middenkader- of specialistenopleiding) of MBO oude structuur (vóór 1998)
E. HAVO of VWO (overgegaan naar de 4e klas) / HBS / MMS
F. HBO propedeuse of WO propedeuse / HBO (behalve HBO-master) / WO-kandidaats of WO-bachelor
G. WO-doctoraal of WO-master of HBO-master/ postdoctoraal onderwijs

II. Measurements

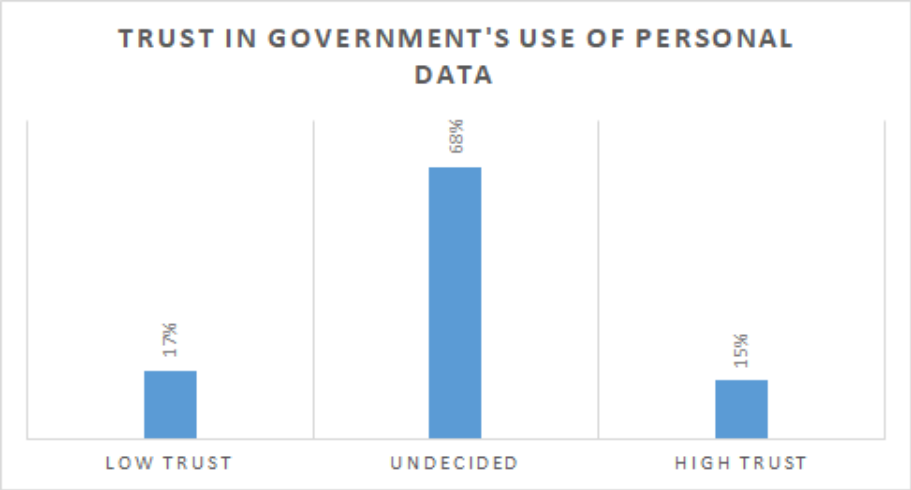
To measure **trust perceptions & risk perceptions** regarding the government's decision to collect personal data in the fight against corona, we used validated instruments from Malhotra et al. (2004). Both variables consist of 5 items, and are measured on a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Both variables were found to be reliable constructs. All the other variables consist of single item questions, and were developed by the researchers involved in the survey (all with 7-point answer options).

IMPORTANT NOTE: all the reported results in this whitepaper consist of re-coded scores, with all the 7-point ratings being changed to 3-point ratings (1-2 -> 1 / 3-5 -> 2 / 6-7 -> 3) for the sake of clarity and brevity.

Results

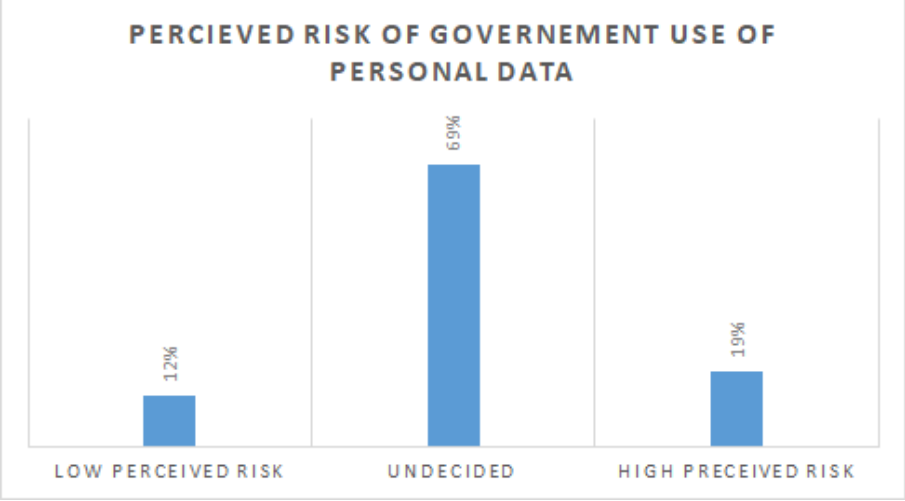
General perceived trust

This finding refers to Dutch people's level of trust in the government to collect and use their personal mobile data in the fight against the virus.



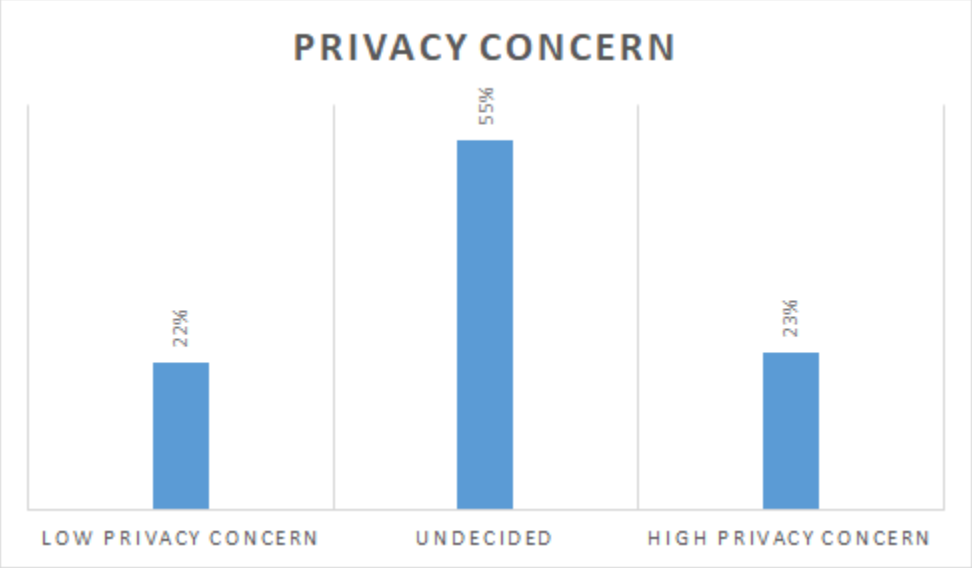
Perceived risk

This question refers to Dutch people's risk perception toward the government collecting and using their personal mobile data in the fight against the virus.



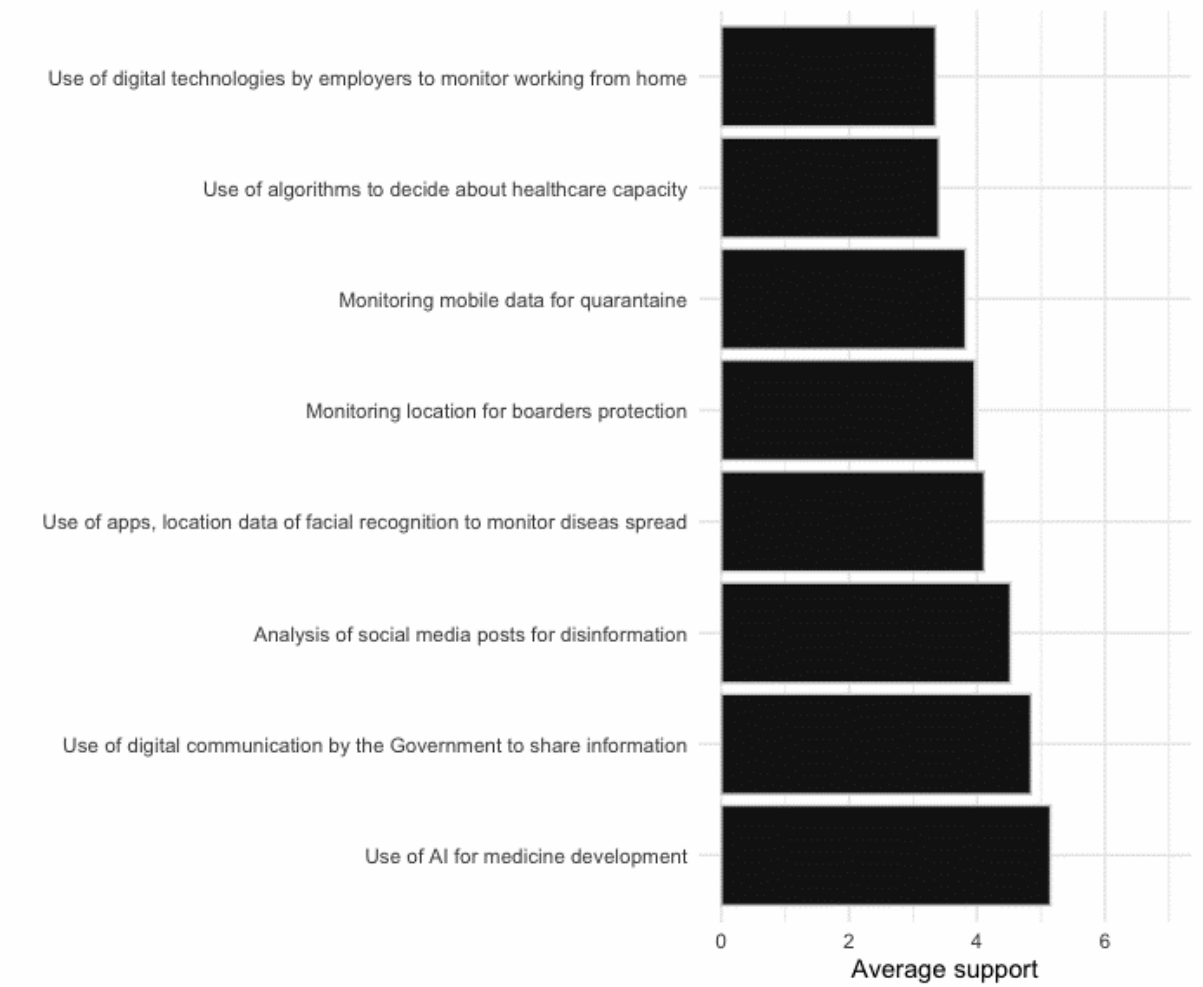
Privacy concerns

This question asked people how concerned they are with their online privacy when the government collects and uses your personal data in the fight against corona.



Support for using technologies for fighting Covid-19

This figure shows the extent to which people support technological solutions in the fight against the covid-19 virus. *(Scores range from 0-6, with 6 indicating strong support for the solution)*



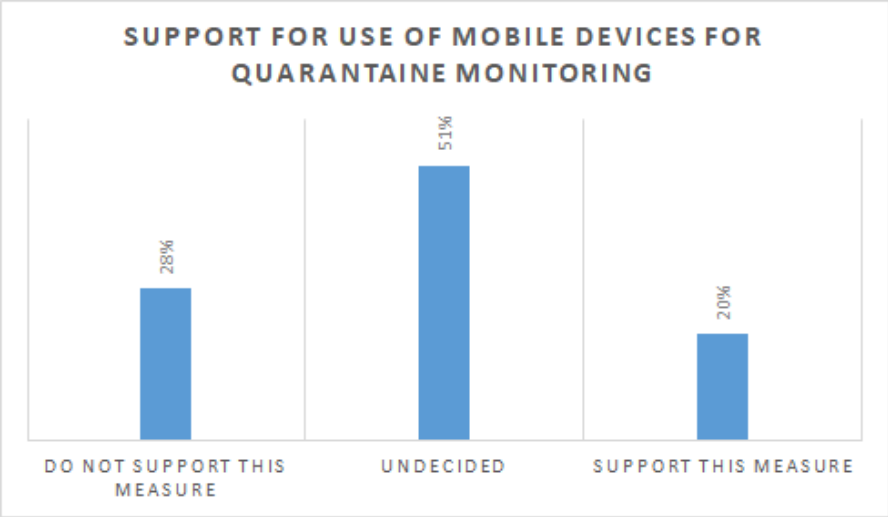
This is how the solutions were formulated in the survey:

- The use of digital technologies (zoom, skype, etc.) by your employer to monitor whether people continue to work at home
- Use algorithms to determine which patients will or will not be helped in case of a shortage of healthcare capacity
- Monitoring the use of mobile phones of citizens to check whether people are complying with the mandatory quarantine
- Collecting and tracking location data from mobile phones to check whether people cross Dutch borders without permission
- Using digital technologies (for example, through apps, location data, or facial recognition) to track people who may be infected or who may infect others
- Prevention of spreading disinformation about the coronavirus by means of the automated analysis of social media posts
- The use of digital communication services such as WhatsApp by the government to quickly share information with the population.
- Using Artificial Intelligence to find a drug/medicine against the coronavirus

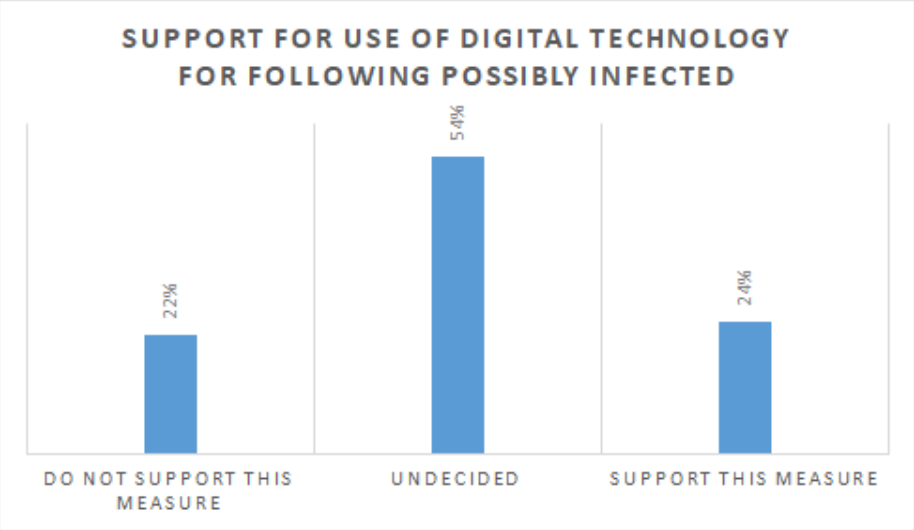
Digital tracking in the fights against covid-19

Below are two statements regarding mobile tracking to fight covid-19. People had to indicate to which extent they support these technological solutions.

Solution 1: Monitoring the use of mobile phones of citizens to check whether people are complying with the mandatory quarantine



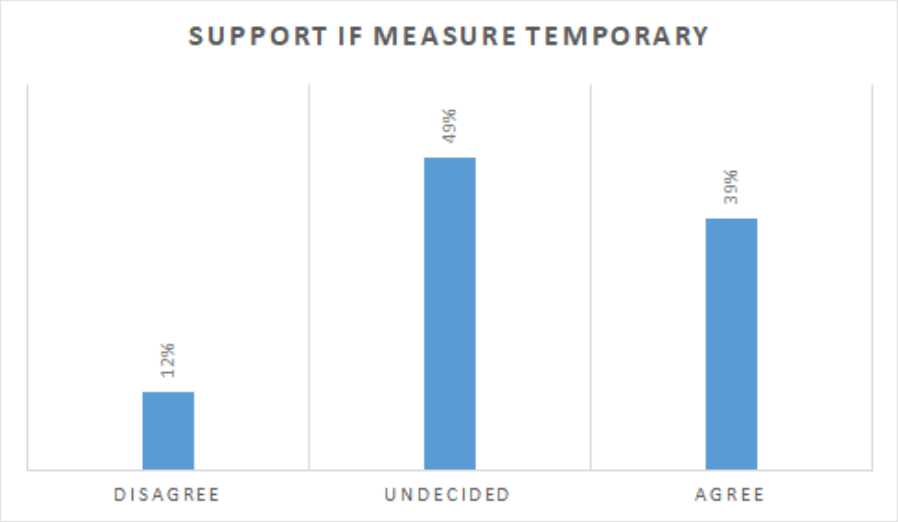
Solution 2: Using digital technology (for example, through apps, location data, or facial recognition) to track people who may be infected or who may infect others



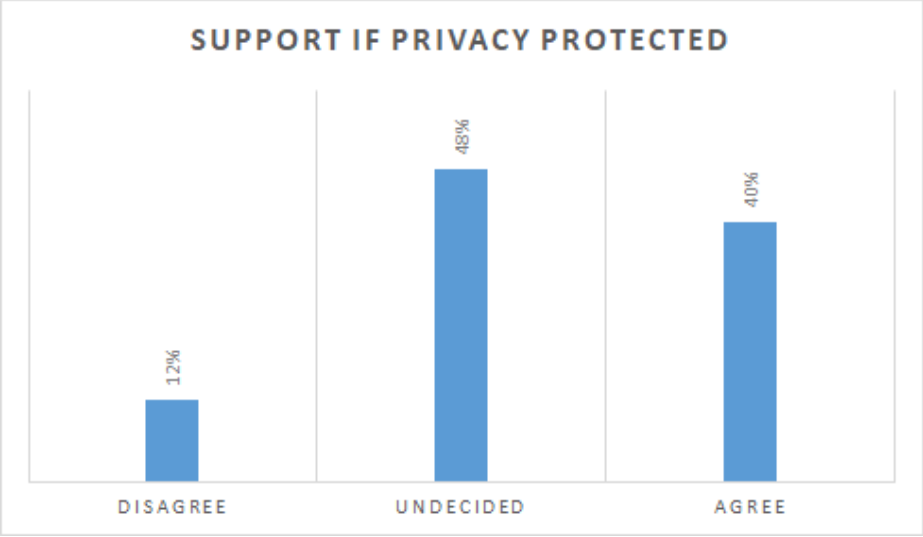
Conditions for using technology in times of Covid-19

In this section, we discuss a couple of statements that make technological solutions more or less acceptable. People had to indicate to which extent they agree with these conditions.

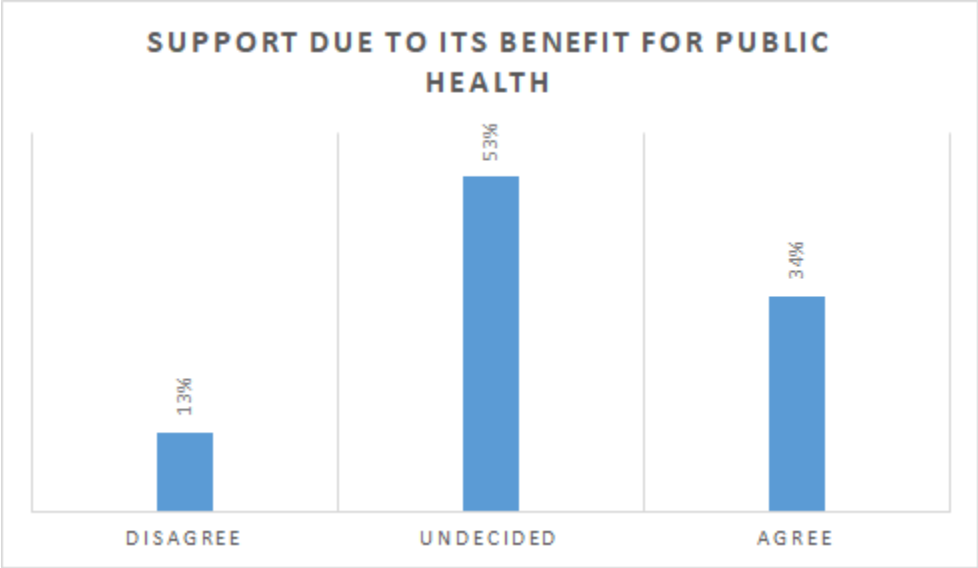
Statement 1: I don't mind the usage of my location data, provided it is a temporary measure



Statement 2: I don't mind the usage of my location data, provided there are good safeguards for privacy



Statement 3: I don't mind the usage of my location data because the importance of public health is more important



Statement 4: I don't mind the usage of location data because the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) ensures that my privacy is guaranteed