Department
of Health &
Social Care

NHS COVID-19 app: Isle of Wight pilot evaluation report

NHS Test and Trace programme

8 April 2021

Age had an impact on the percentage of smartphone owners who said they downloaded the app, falling from 87% for those aged 55 to 69 to 79% for those aged 70+. Similarly, fewer smartphone owners with no qualifications downloaded the app (78%) than smartphone owners with GCSEs or equivalent (85%). Ethnicity also had an impact, with 87% of white smartphone owners saying that they downloaded the app compared with only 77% of smartphone owners of non-white ethnicity. Uptake was similar for keyworkers (90%) and non-key workers (86%) and between genders (86% for male, compared to 87% for female).
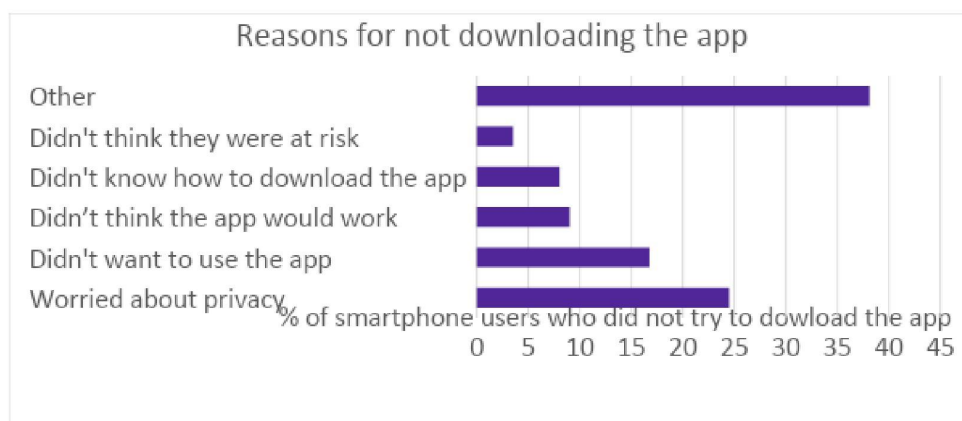
Overall, older people, those with no qualifications and people of non-white ethnicity were less likely to have downloaded the app. However, those with no qualifications are over-represented in the 70+ category in the Isle of Wight population.

What are the reasons given for not downloading the app?

In the survey, those who said that they had not downloaded the app were asked to give their reasons for not downloading it. The chart below gives the percentage of smartphone users who had not downloaded the app and the reasons why. The primary reason for not downloading the app was concerns around privacy (24%).

For those who selected 'other', the most commonly cited reason was not having the appropriate equipment. Many did not have the correct operating system or were using phones that they did not think would be compatible with the app. Additionally, those who did not have mobile data or were on pay-as-you-go contracts were not keen to download the app or did not think it would be useful. Another commonly cited problem was not having enough space on the phone to be able to download the app. Some respondents were casual phone users, who either do not take their phones out with them or who use their phones only for emergencies so they did not feel that they would benefit from the app, given their current habits.

Additionally, some respondents stated that they were not leaving their homes or seeing people. Some were shielding and said that they had no intention of leaving their homes so would not benefit from the app, while others said that they always maintained the 2 metres distance when outside.

Reasons for not downloading the app

Summary

The Isle of Wight pilot set out to test operational feasibility of the app rather than an attempt to reach a specific uptake rate or assess it against specific criteria. The uptake achieved for the app, however, is encouraging when compared with international equivalents.

When a new version of the app had been developed, it suggests that national uptake is likely to support a reduction in the number of new infections. When this happens, the data also indicates that additional support will need to be targeted at those populations who were less likely to download the app, including older people, those with no qualifications and people of non-white ethnicity. Additionally, the service will need to ensure that those who do not have the equipment, such as compatible phones or mobile data, have equal access to NHS Test and Trace and can thereby play their part in reducing the spread of the virus. Finally, concerns around data privacy will need to be communicated to build trust among app users and encourage uptake.

What feedback has the app received from users?

How easy is it to download and use the app?

Most people found it very easy to use the app and enter their details.

Survey data shows that 82% of people found the app very easy to download. Just 1% of people found it not at all easy to download. Of those aged 70+, 71% found it very easy to download, 25% found it fairly easy and 4% found it not at all easy. In total, 84% of