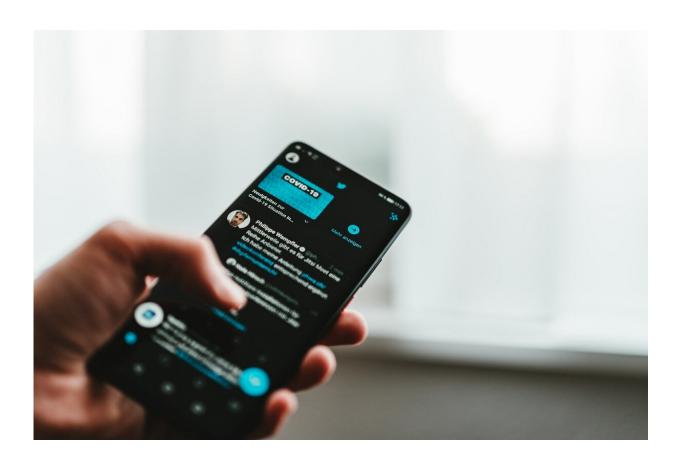# Researchers launch COVID-19 Global Pandemic App Watch

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The Global Pandemic App Watch, an AI + Society Initiative at the University of Ottawa, will track the uptake of COVID-19 contact-tracing and exposure-notification apps around the world. Credit: University of Ottawa

Contact-tracing and exposure-notification apps are a new technology

rapidly developed and launched to respond to the COVID-19 global health crisis. The development of such applications is placing governments, corporations, and citizens around the world into an ongoing ethical design experiment resulting in potentially life-saving outcomes but also potential risks. During the summer of 2020, design teams and technology corporations presented governments with a variety of technological solutions in the form of those apps. Government leaders and ordinary citizens have needed to make decisions about which options to endorse and how to govern their use.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, as discussions swirled around the adoption of exposure notification or contact-tracing apps, Dr. Teresa Scassa, Dr. Jason Millar, and Dr. Kelly Bronson, and Scotiabank AI + Society Fellows, Tommy Friedlich and Ryan Mosoff, began to explore the privacy and socio-ethical implications related to the creation, adoption and deployment of these apps. As part of this research they gathered data about contact-tracing and exposure-notification apps-and decision-making-around the world.

The website, which was launched today, hosts three main maps; each focuses on different issues: app classification; uptake; voluntariness. There is also a series of country pages providing additional information about contact-tracing and exposure-notification apps adopted in different countries.

The maps are part of a broader research project on the law, policy and socio-ethics aspects of technological response to the pandemic.

App developers and governments need to determine the minimum amount of information to make publicly available regarding app uptake, use and efficacy; such information will influence research like this website but also everyday decisions about downloading and using apps. Considerations include the privacy-preserving aspects of the app, which

have technical, legal, and socio-ethical dimensions.

More information: craiedl.ca/gpaw/

Provided by University of Ottawa

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