

Designed Big Data

Digital trace data collection using apps, wearables, and data donation

Bella Struminskaya



Can anonymized data from mobile phone networks predict poverty and wealth?

- Anonymized call records (1.5 mil)
- Telephone survey (n=856)

RESEARCH | REPORTS

ECONOMICS

Predicting poverty and wealth from mobile phone metadata

Joshua Blumenstock,^{1,*} Gabriel Cadamuro,² Robert On³

Accurate and timely estimates of population characteristics are a critical input to social and economic research and policy. In industrialized economies, novel sources of data enabling new approaches to demographic profiling, but in developing countries, fewer sources of data exist. We show how mobile phone metadata can be used to infer an individual's socioeconomic status. Furthermore, we demonstrate that the predicted attributes of millions of individuals can, in turn, accurately reconstruct the distribution of wealth of an entire nation or to infer the asset distribution of micreregions composed of just a few households. In resource-constrained environments where censuses and household surveys are rare, this approach creates an option for gathering localized and timely information at a fraction of the cost of traditional methods.

Reliable, quantitative data on the economic characteristics of a country's population are essential for sound economic policy and research. In particular, accurate poverty and wealth is used to make decisions about resource allocation and provides a foundation for the study of inequality and the determinants of economic growth (*1, 2*). In developing countries, however, the scarcity of reliable quantitative data represents a major challenge to policy-makers and researchers. In much of Africa, for instance, national statistics on economic production may be off by as much as 4.4 billion individuals worldwide and are becoming increasingly ubiquitous in developing regions (*3*).

Here we examine the extent to which anonymized data from mobile phone networks can be used to predict the poverty and wealth of individual subscribers, as well as to create high-resolution maps of the geographic distribution of wealth. That this may prove fruitful is motivated by the fact that mobile phone data capture rich information, not only on the frequency and timing of calls, but also on the intricate structure of an individual's social network (*13, 14*), patterns of travel and location choice (*15–17*), and histories of consumption and expenditure. Regionally aggregated measures of phone penetration and use have also been shown to correlate with regionally aggregated population statistics from censuses and household surveys (*8, 18, 19*).

In wealthy nations, novel sources of passively collected data are enabling new approaches to demographic modeling and measurement (*6–8*). Data from social media and the "Internet of Things," for instance, have been used to measure

unemployment (*9*), electoral outcomes (*10*), and economic development (*8*). Although most comparable sources of big data are scarce in the developing world, mobile phones are notable exception. They are used by 4.4 billion individuals worldwide and are becoming increasingly ubiquitous in developing regions (*3*).

Here we examine the extent to which anonymized data from mobile phone networks can be used to predict the poverty and wealth of individual subscribers, as well as to create high-resolution maps of the geographic distribution of wealth. That this may prove fruitful is motivated by the fact that mobile phone data capture rich information, not only on the frequency and timing of calls, but also on the intricate structure of an individual's social network (*13, 14*), patterns of travel and location choice (*15–17*), and histories of consumption and expenditure. Regionally aggregated measures of phone penetration and use have also been shown to correlate with regionally aggregated population statistics from censuses and household surveys (*8, 18, 19*).

Our approach is different from prior work that has examined the relation between regional wealth and regional phone use, as we focus on understanding how the digital footprints of a single individual can be used to accurately predict that same

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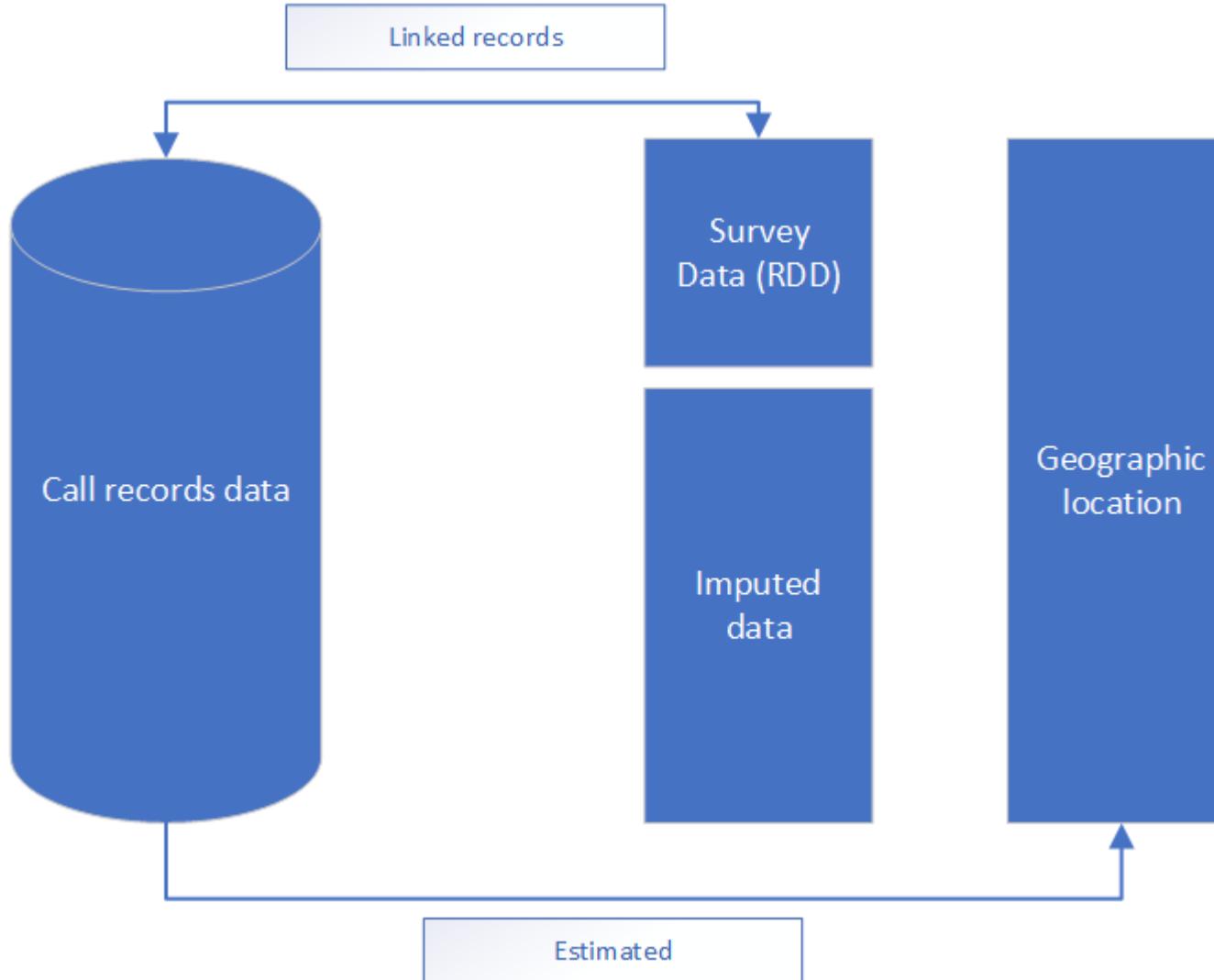
Table 1. Summary statistics for primary data sets. Phone survey data were collected by the authors in Kigali, in collaboration with the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology. Call detail records were collected by the primary mobile phone operator in Rwanda at the time of the phone survey. Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data were collected by the Rwandan National Institute of Statistics. N/A, not applicable.

Summary statistic	Phone survey	Call detail records	DHS (2007)	DHS (2010)
Number of unique individuals	856	15 million	7377	12,792
Data collection period	July 2009	May 2008–May 2009	Dec. 2007–Apr. 2008	Sept. 2010–Mar. 2011
Number of questions in survey	75	N/A	1615	3396
Primary geographic units	30 districts	30 districts	30 districts	30 districts
Secondary geographic units	300 cell towers	300 cell towers	247 clusters	492 clusters

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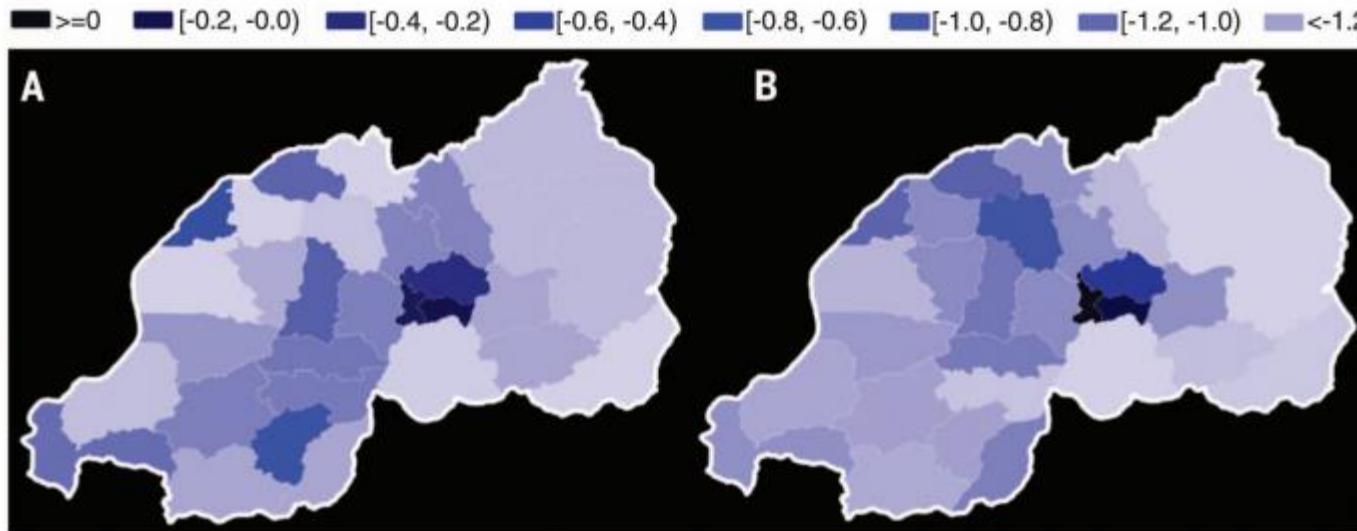
Can anonymized data from mobile phone networks predict poverty and wealth?



- Call activity
- SMS activity
- International communications
- Network structure
- Movement
- etc.

Can anonymized data from mobile phone networks predict poverty and wealth?

- Anonymized call records (1.5 mil)
- Telephone survey (n=856)
- ‘Gold standard’ f2f Demographic and Health Survey (n=12792)

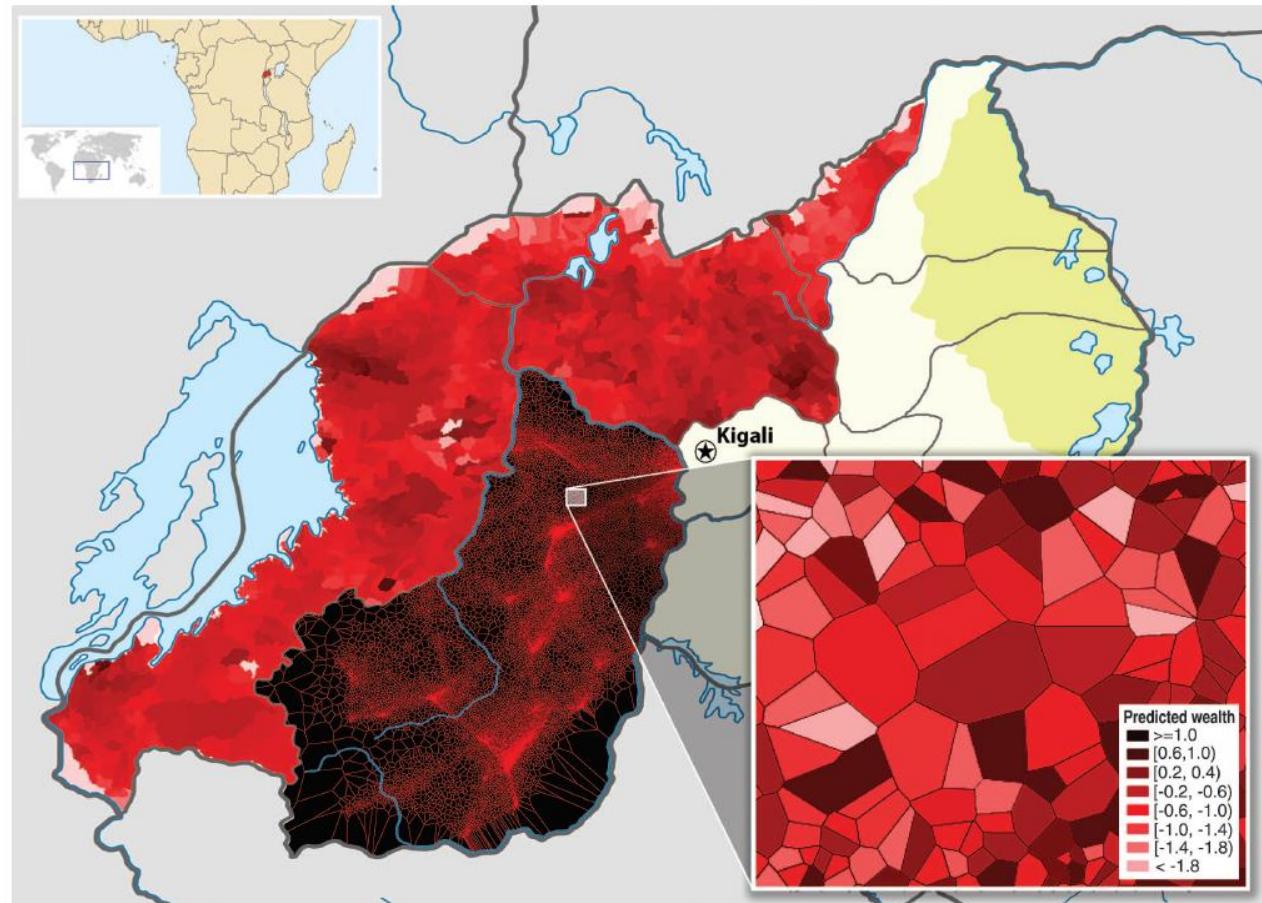


Composite wealth index: A – predicted from call data, B – actual from DHS, $r=0.79$

(Blumenstock et al. 2015)

Added value

- High-resolution maps of poverty and wealth
- Small area estimation: survey provided estimates on cluster level, call records much richer
- Timely data
- Costs (12,000 vs. 1 Mil)



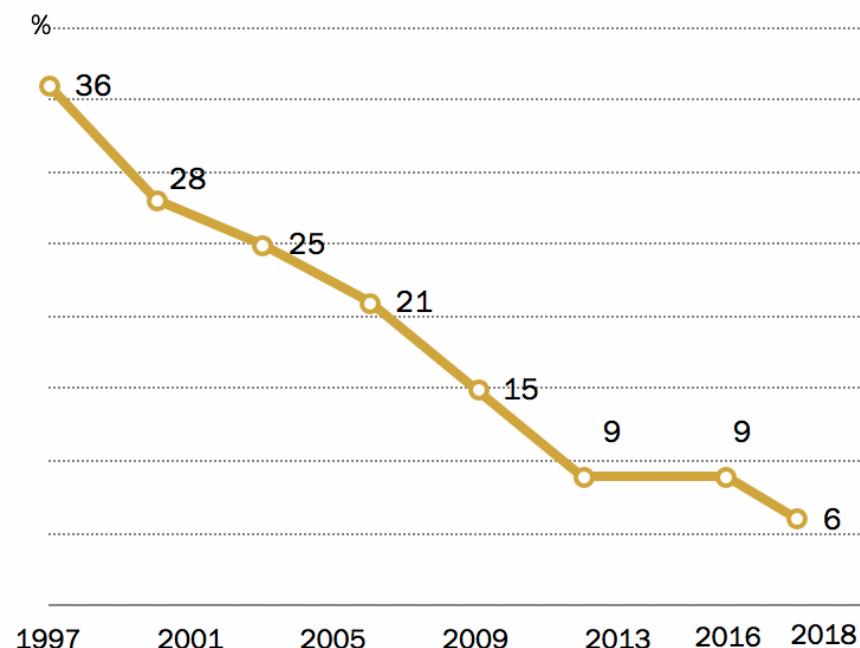
Decreasing response rates

The New York Times

Get Ho

After brief plateau, telephone survey response rates have fallen again

Response rate by year (%)



Note: Response rate is AAPOR RR3. Only landlines sampled 1997-2006. Rates are typical for surveys conducted in each year.

Source: Pew Research Center telephone surveys conducted 1997-2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

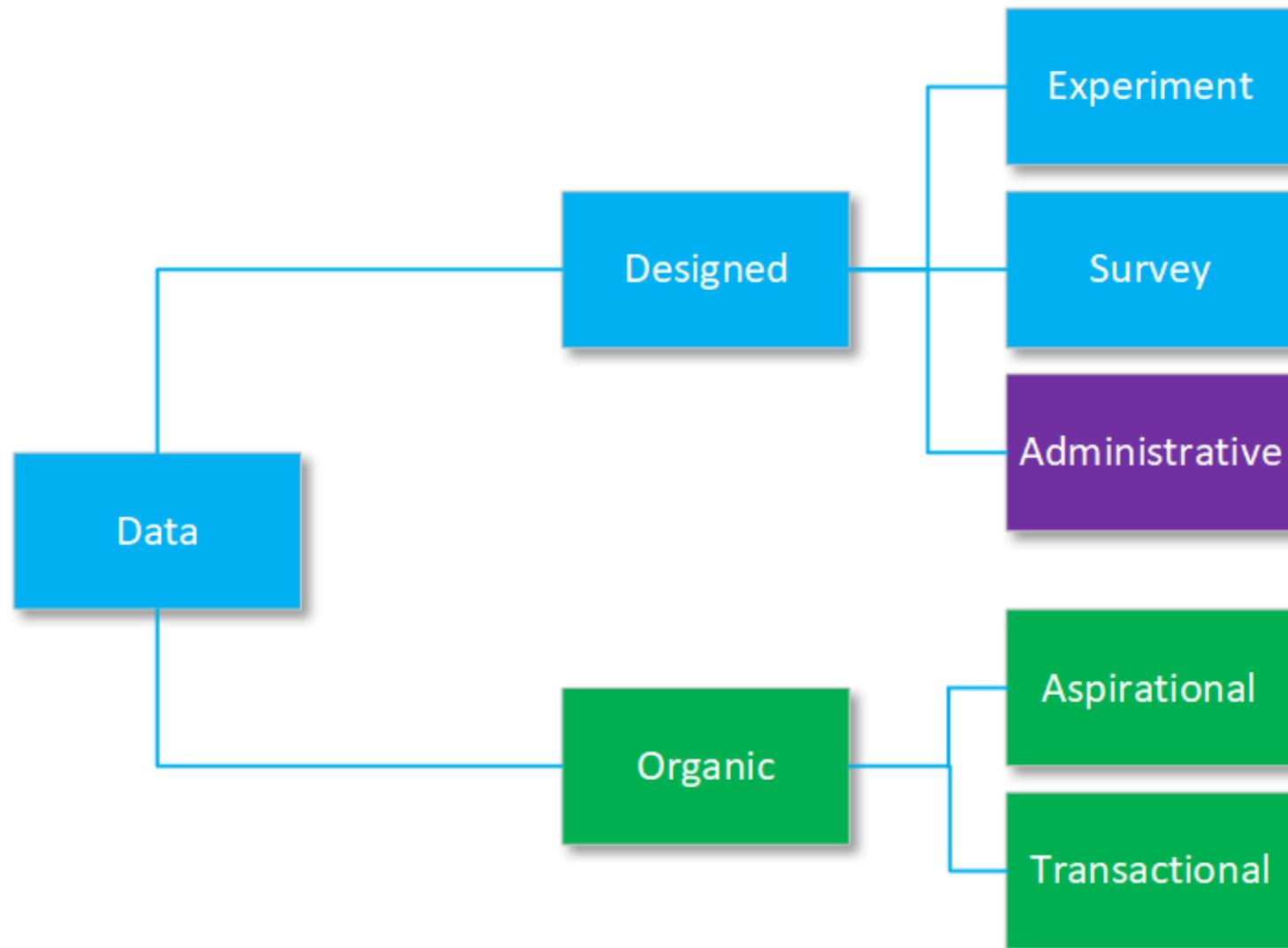
Surprising Poll Results: People Are Now Happy to Pick Up the Phone

Pollsters are used to having their calls screened. But when everyone is stuck at home, a stranger with some survey questions can be a lifeline.



<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/27/response-rates-in-telephone-surveys-have-resumed-their-decline/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/17/us/politics/polling-coronavirus.html>



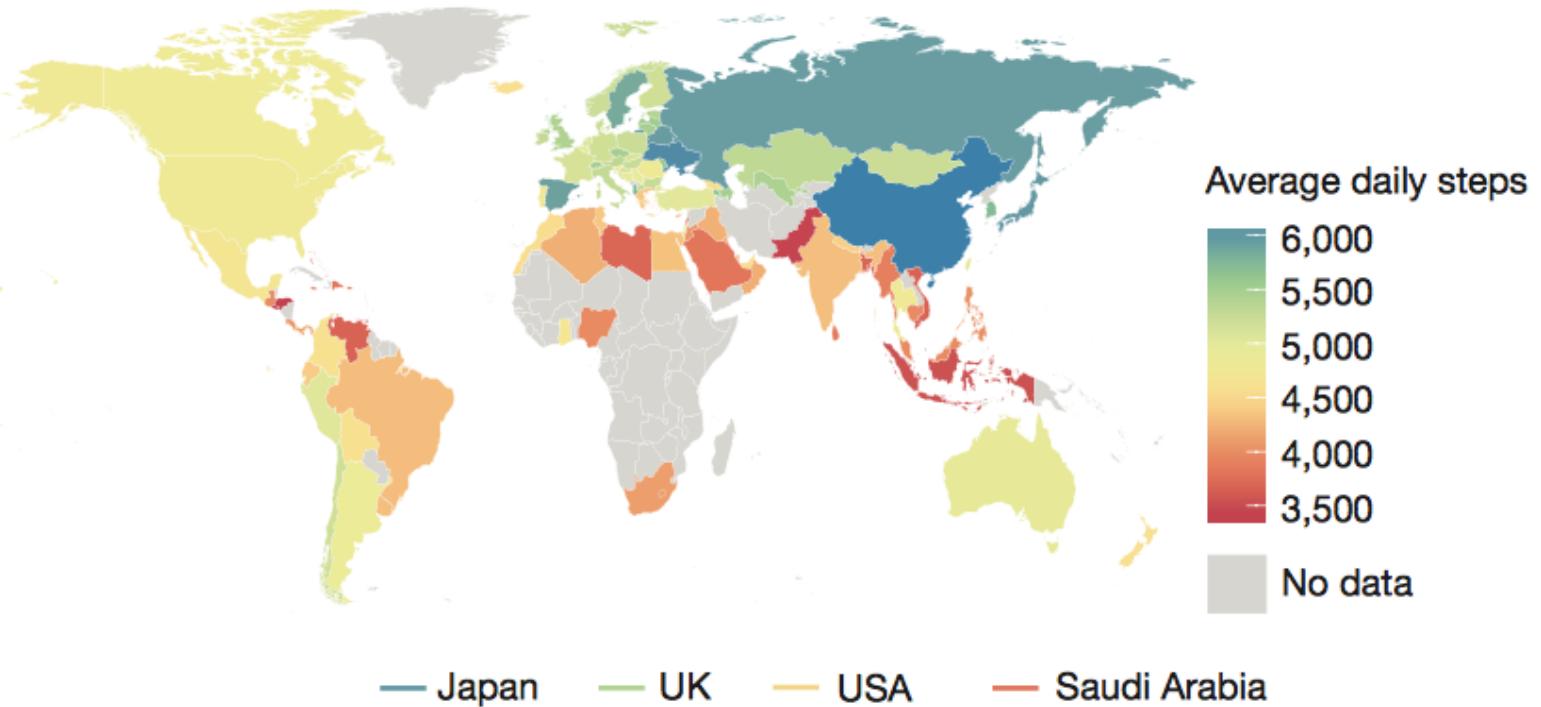
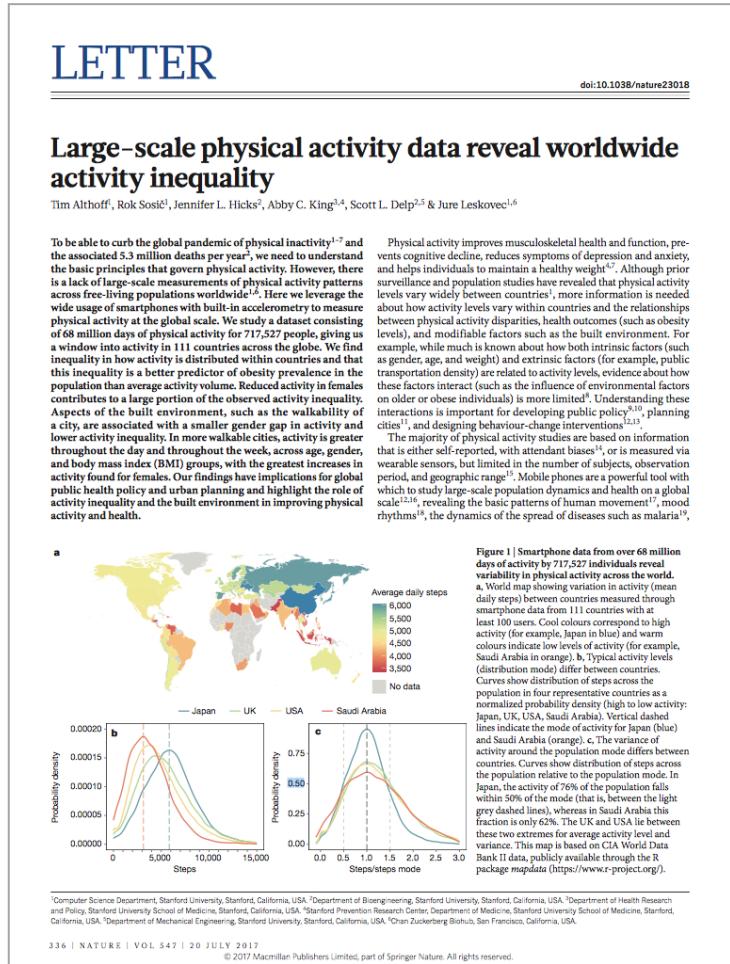
(Source: Kreuter 2018)

Surveys & Big data

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Designed” data: Collected for the research purposes• Researcher control over content• Large number of covariates• Detailed documentation of the data generating process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Organic” data: Collected for purposes other than research• No control over content• Limited number of covariates• No / little documentation• Access issues• (Missingness & coverage)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High nonresponse• Small N• Measurement error (recall, social desirability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large N• No measurement error due to self-report

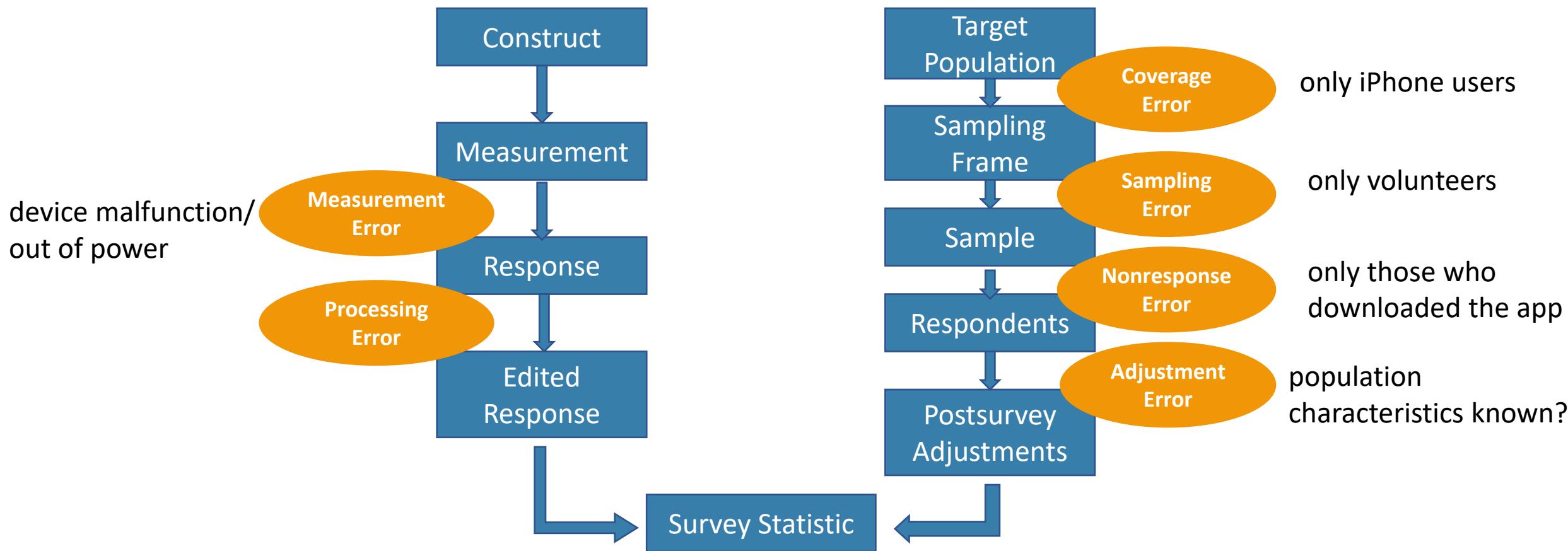
(based on Baker 2018, Groves 2011, Sakshaug 2015, Salganik 2018)

Example: Althoff et al. (2017)



Althoff, T., Hicks, J. L., King, A. C., Delp, S. L., & Leskovec, J. (2017). Large-scale physical activity data reveal worldwide activity inequality. *Nature*, 547 (7663), 336-339

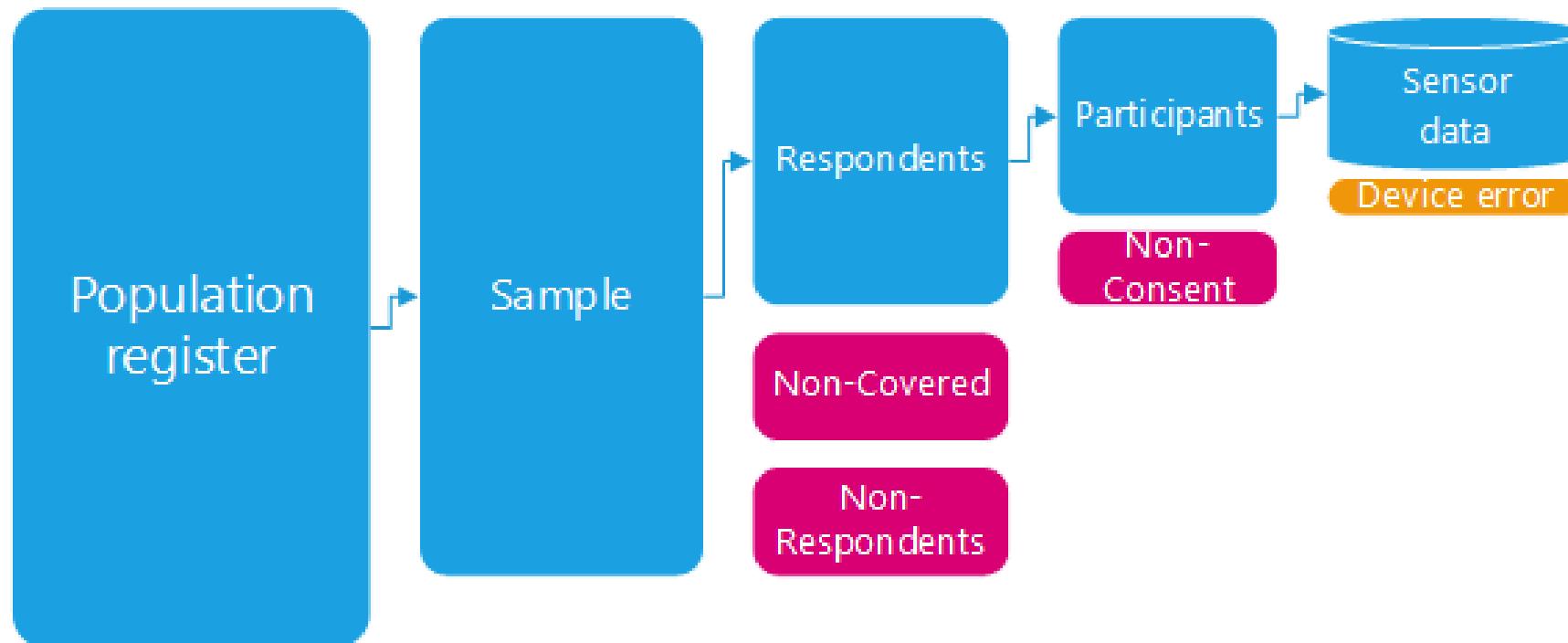
Total Survey Error & Althoff et al.



(Groves et al. 2004: 48)

Introducing “design” to Big Data

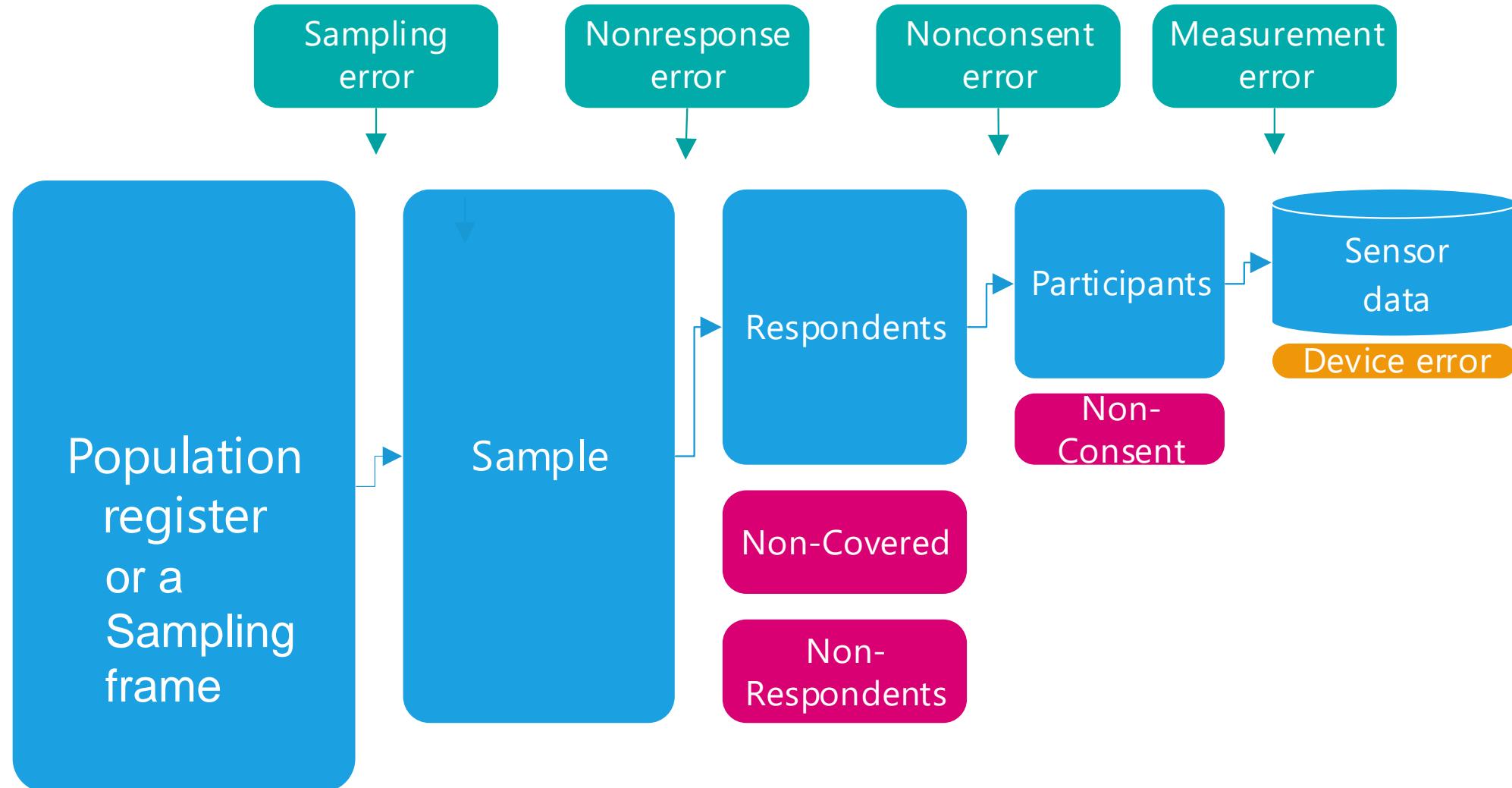
- Smartphone sensor data have many characteristics of Big Data
 - Large volume, high velocity, variety of data formats
- Combining passive smartphone data collection with self-reports through surveys introduces “design” to Big Data



Big data particularly useful for

- Replace surveys/most survey questions
 - Travel
 - Budget
 - User groups/online communities
 - administration
- Increase survey data quality
 - Adding administrative data
 - Adding sensor data
 - Using social media data as a qualitative/pilot study
 - Transaction data? As an explanatory variable?

“Designed Big Data”



Definition of digital traces

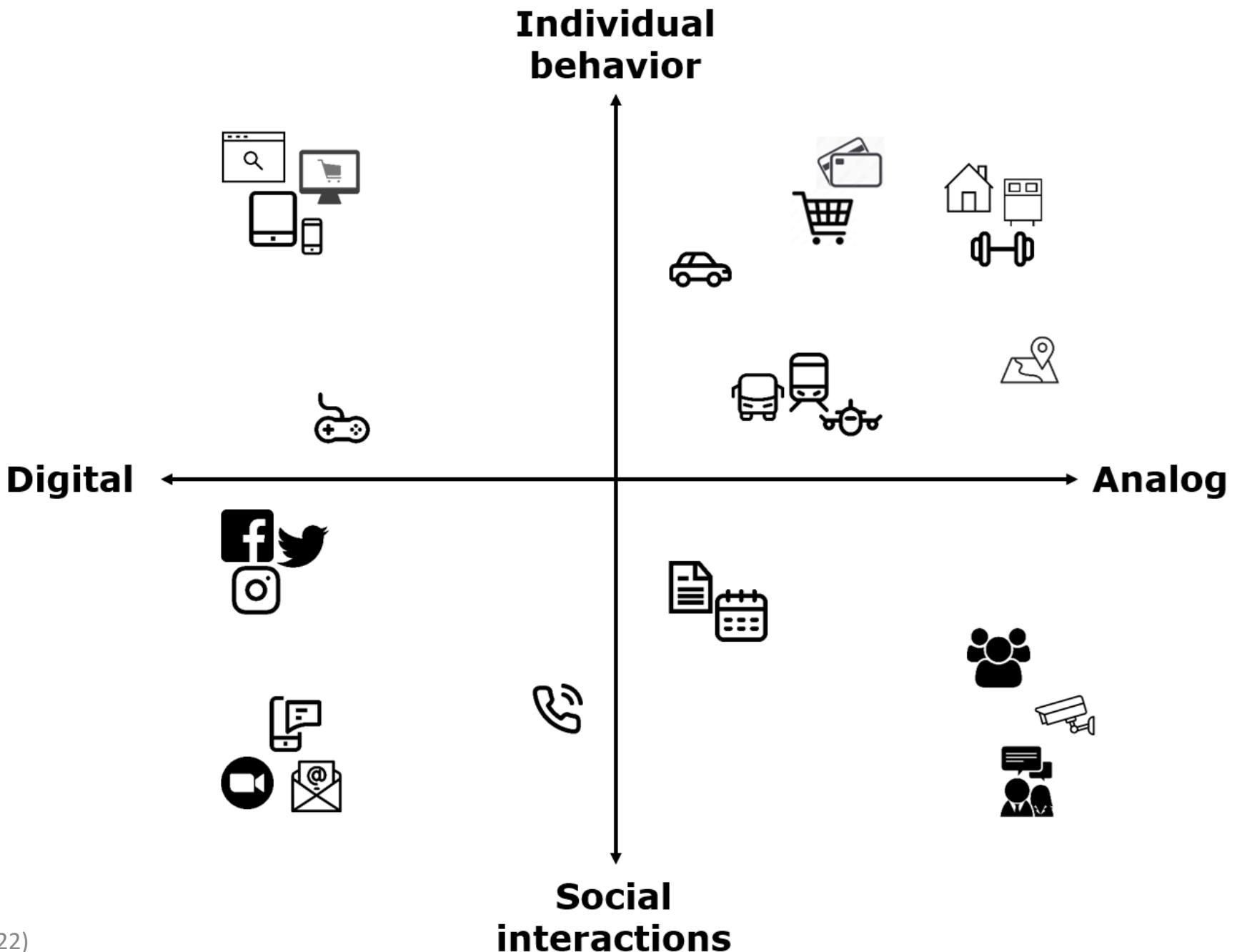
“Records of activity (trace data) undertaken through an online information system (thus, digital)”

(Howison et al. 2011:769)

“Behavioral residue [individuals leave] when they interact online”

(Hinds & Joinson 2018:2)

Exercise: Where and when do you leave digital traces?



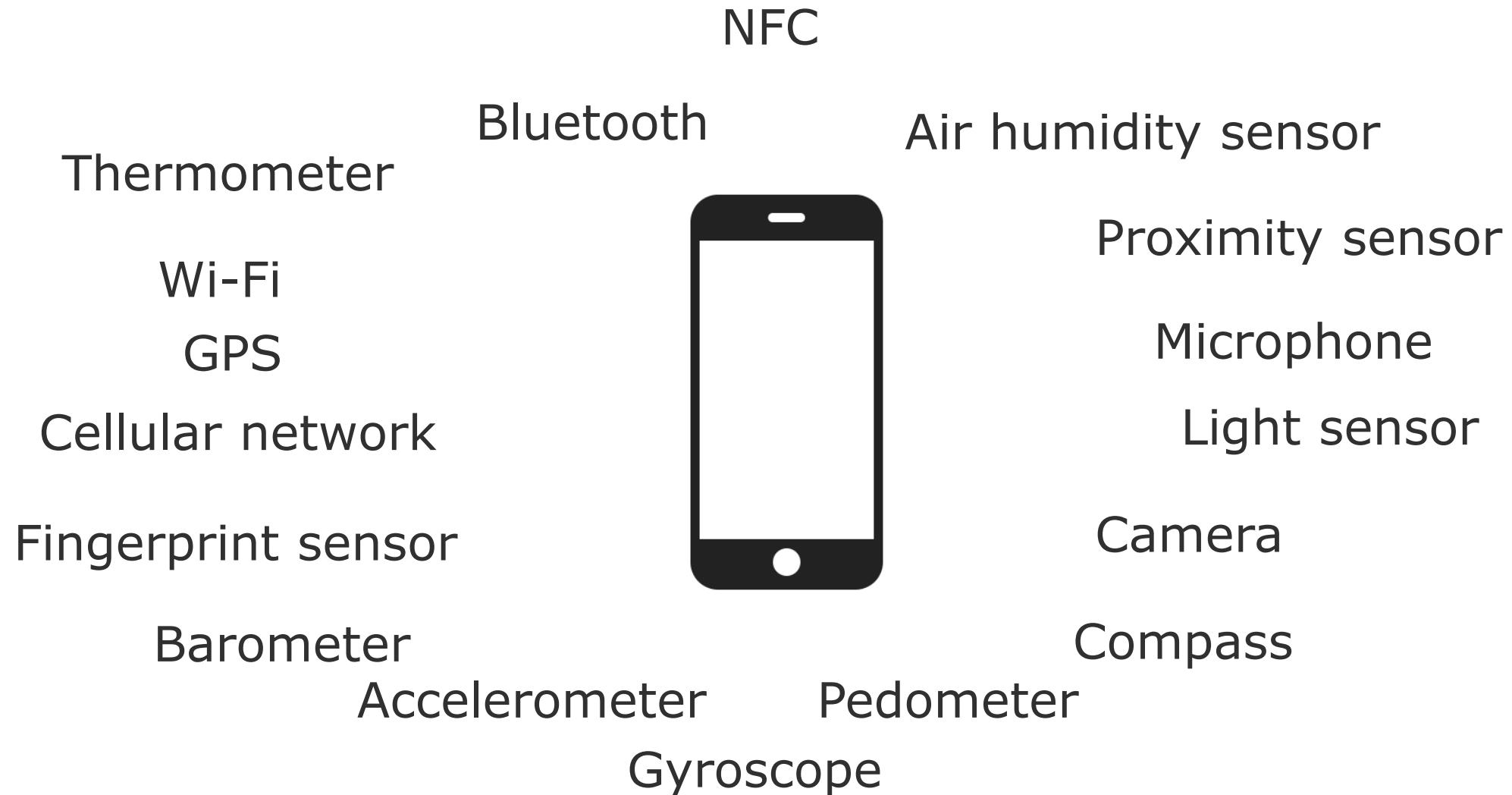
Passive data collection using smartphone sensors

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with thanks to Florian Keusch

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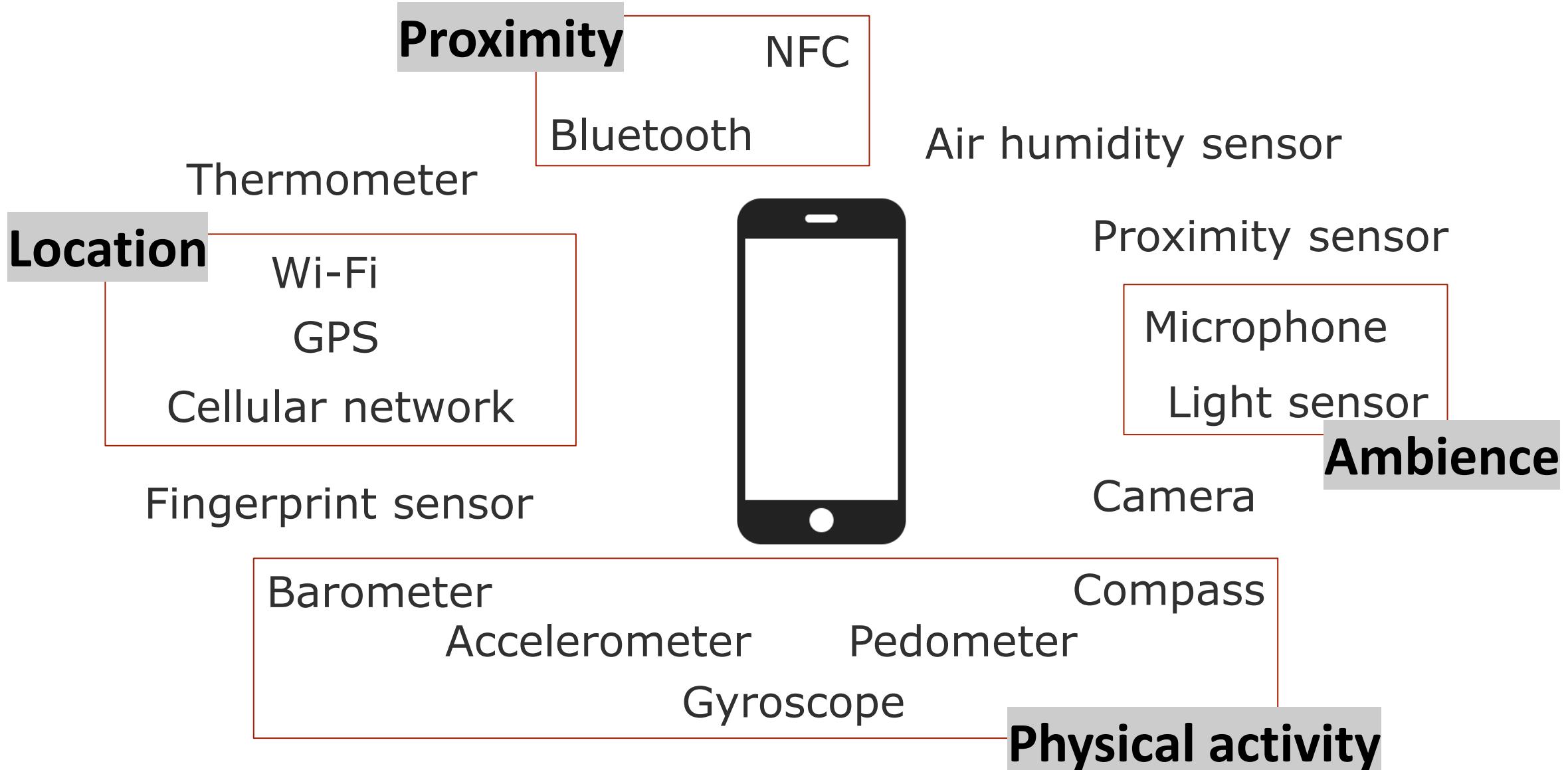
Copyright: Struminskaya, Keusch

Native smartphone sensors



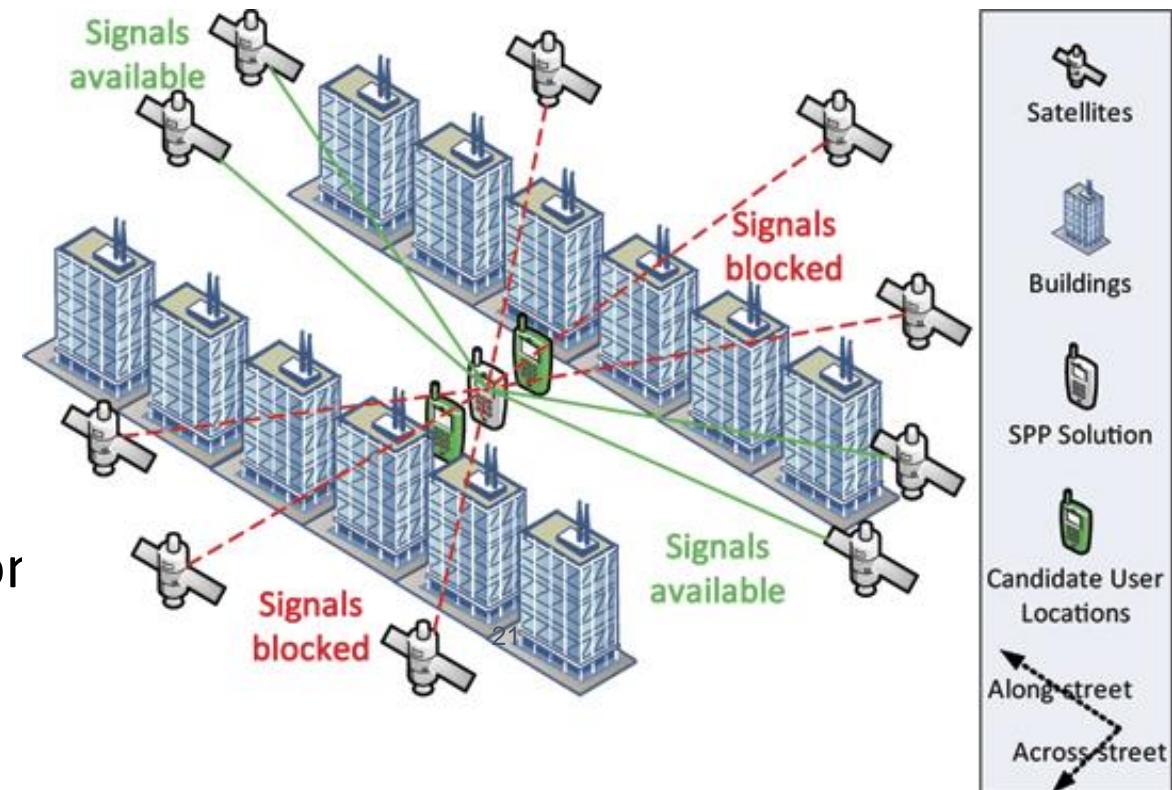
What can you measure with these sensors?

Native smartphone sensors



Geolocation

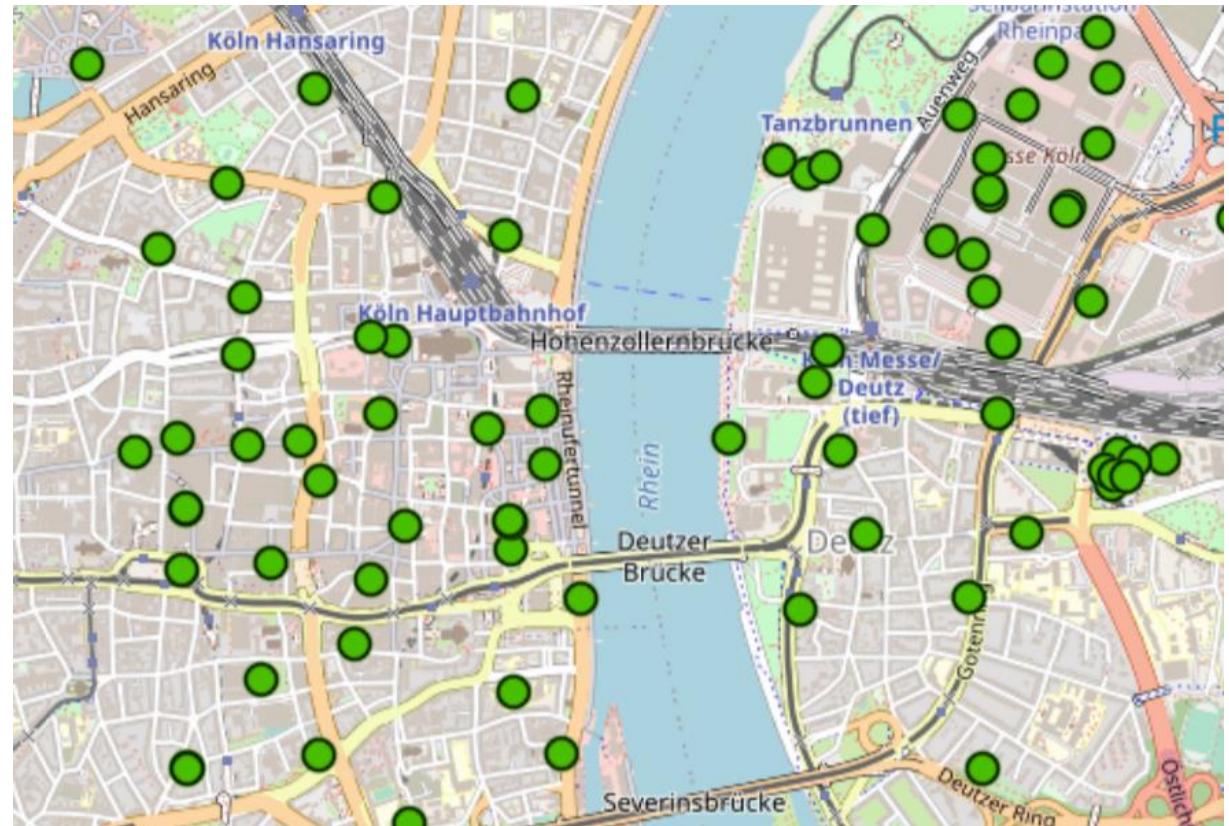
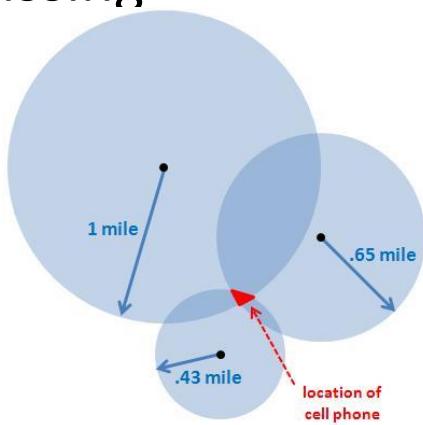
- GPS
 - Provides coordinates in longitude & Latitude
 - Based on distance (= rate x time) to at least 4 satellites
 - Newest generation has accuracy within 30 centimeters
 - Works without cell/Internet connection
 - Performs worse in ‘urban canyons’, indoors, & underground
 - Constant tracking is very battery-draining



Source: <https://www.gpsworld.com/wirelesspersonal-navigationshadow-matching-12550/>

Geolocation

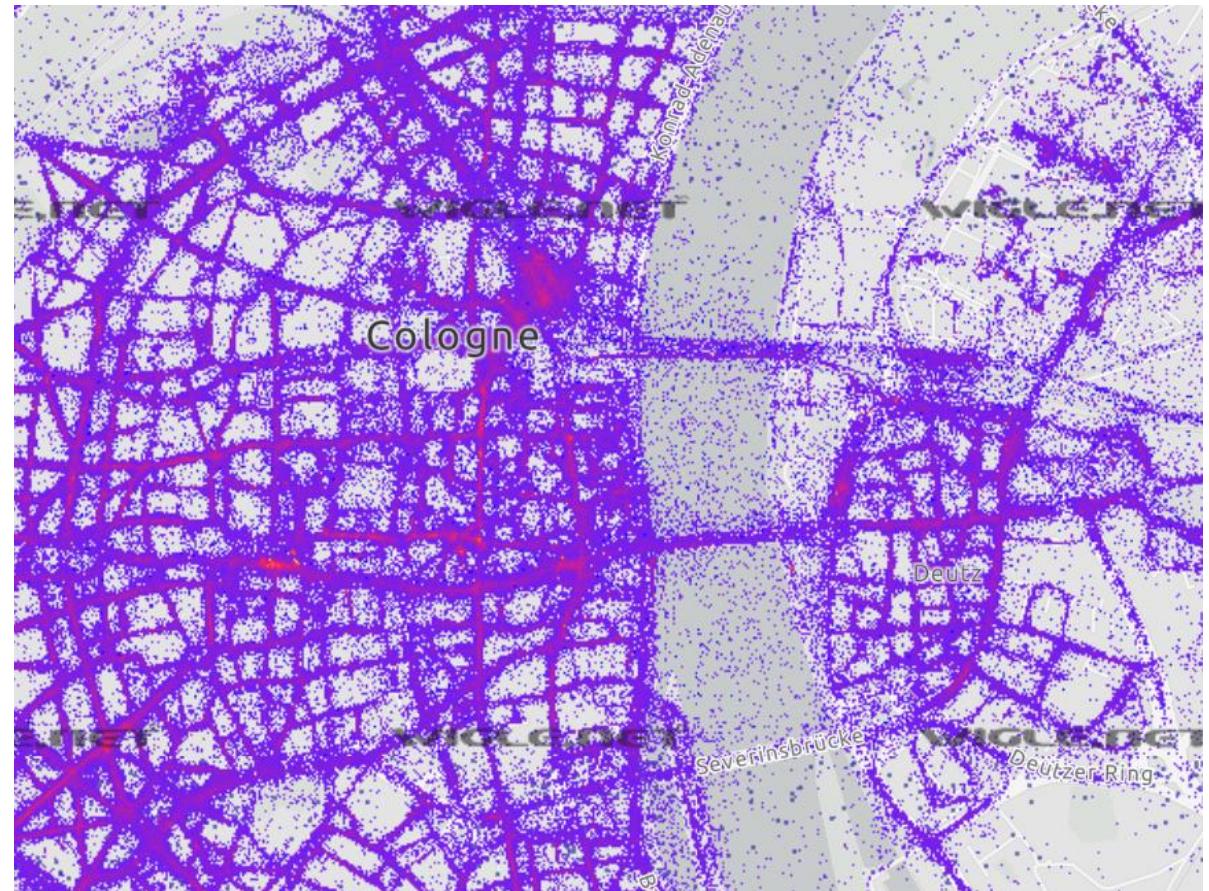
- GPS
- Cellular network
 - Multilateration of radio signals between (several) cell towers
 - Works even if GPS is turned off
 - If there is no signal then location information will be missing



Source: <https://www.cellmapper.net>

Geolocation

- GPS
- Cellular network
- Wi-Fi
 - Inferring location from Wi-Fi access points (AP)
 - Can overcome problem of ‘urban canyons’ and indoor tracing



Source: <https://www.wigle.net>

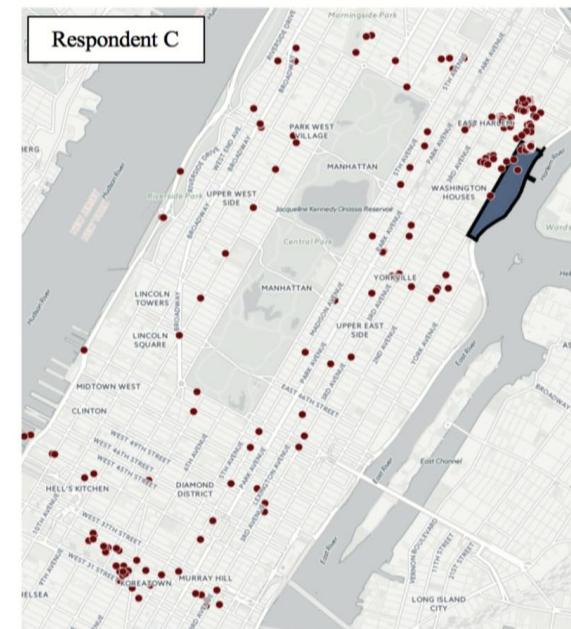
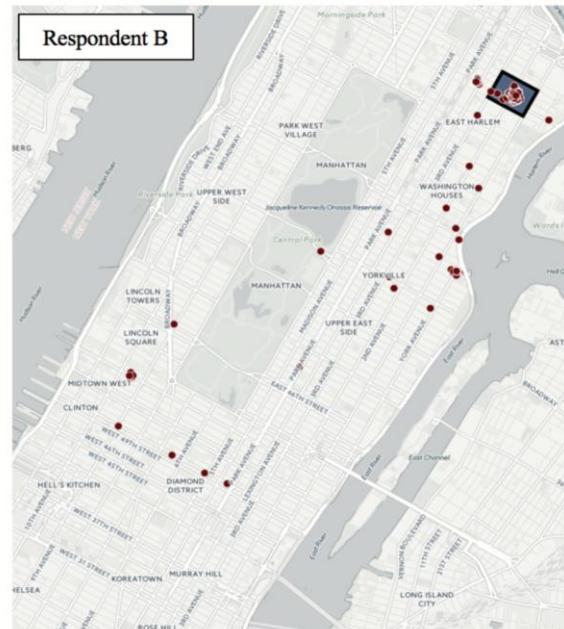
Geolocation

- GPS
- Cellular network
- Wi-Fi
- Hybrid positioning systems
 - Uses combination of systems to make location more accurate (assisted GPS - AGPS)
 - E.g., fall-back on X if Y is not available

Example: Aging in activity space

(York Cornwell & Cagney 2017, 2020)

- *Real-time Neighborhoods and Social Life Study (RNSL)*
- 60 participants aged 55+ in NYC provided with iPhones to carry for 7 days
- GPS-tracking (every 5 min) from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and four EMAs per day



Example: Aging in activity space

(York Cornwell & Cagney 2017, 2020)

- Activity spaces vary considerably in size
- Participants spent ~40% of their time outside their residential tracts
 - On average >10 min in 9+ tracts
- Activity spaces larger among younger and more advantaged social groups (i.e., whites, those with college degree, car owners)
- Participants with less education and lower incomes spend more time outside of their residential tracts
- Four main activities outside of residential tracts
 - Shopping, exercising, socializing, participating in social groups or activities
- Poverty rates in nonresidential tracts lower than in residential tracts
- Higher concentrated disadvantage in an area associated with higher odds of self-reporting pain

Example: How do people find work after prison?

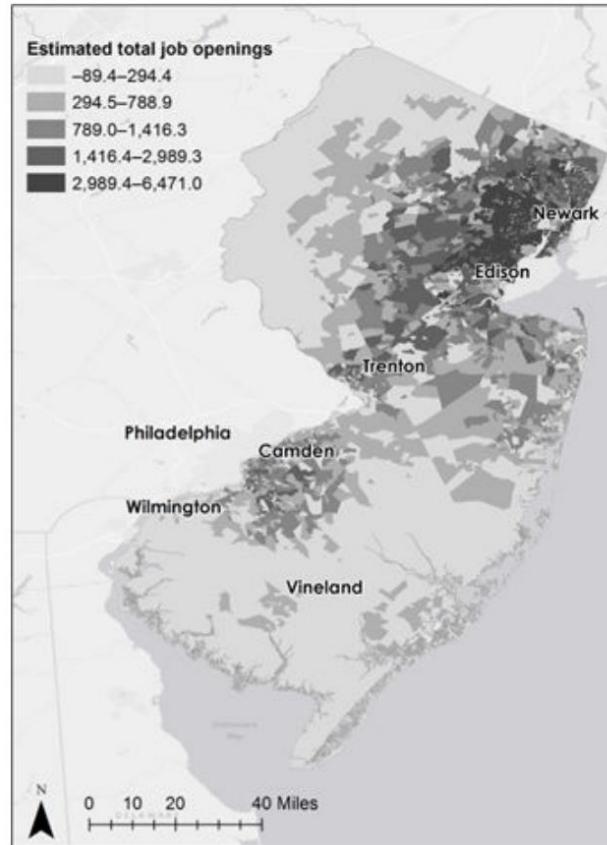
(Sugie 2018; Sugie and Lens 2017)

- Newark Smartphone Reentry Project (NSRP) 2012-2013
 - N = 133 with 8,000 daily observations (89% response, 1.5% noncompliance)
 - 3 months of data collection
- Men recently released from prison
 - Difficult group to follow due to unstable circumstances
- Loaner smartphones (Android)
- Surveys twice a day (EMA) about social interaction, job search & work, and emotional well-being
- Sensing
 - GPS location
 - Calls and messaging (encrypted)
- Survey triggered by calls/messages from new telephone numbers

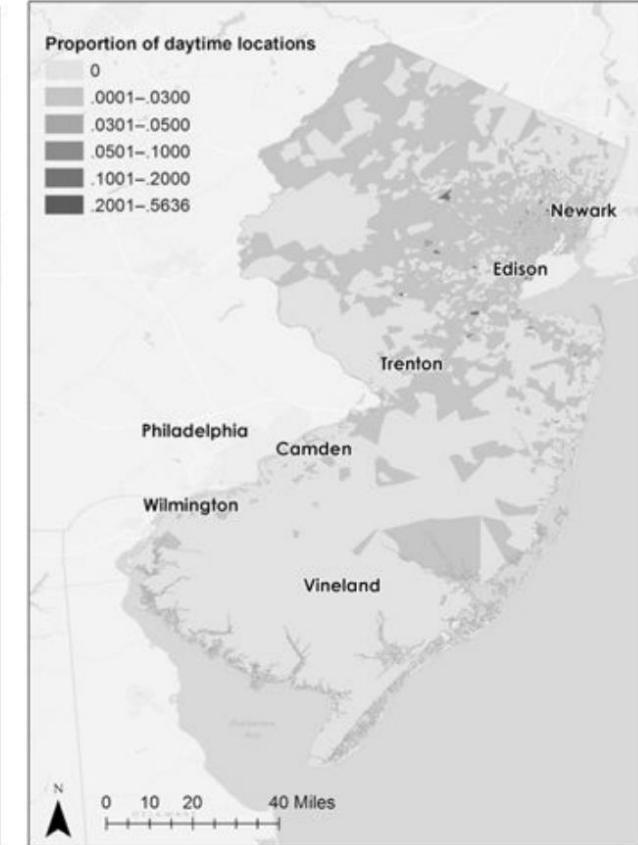
Example: How do people find work after prison?

(Sugie 2018; Sugie and Lens 2017)

- Spatial mismatch
 - Low-skilled, nonwhite job seekers within central cities, job opportunities in outlying areas
- Hypothesis
 - Parolees lack info on job openings are geographically restricted, unable to travel to find work
- Findings
 - Residential mismatch lengthens time to employment
 - But mobility can compensate for residential deficits



Job openings



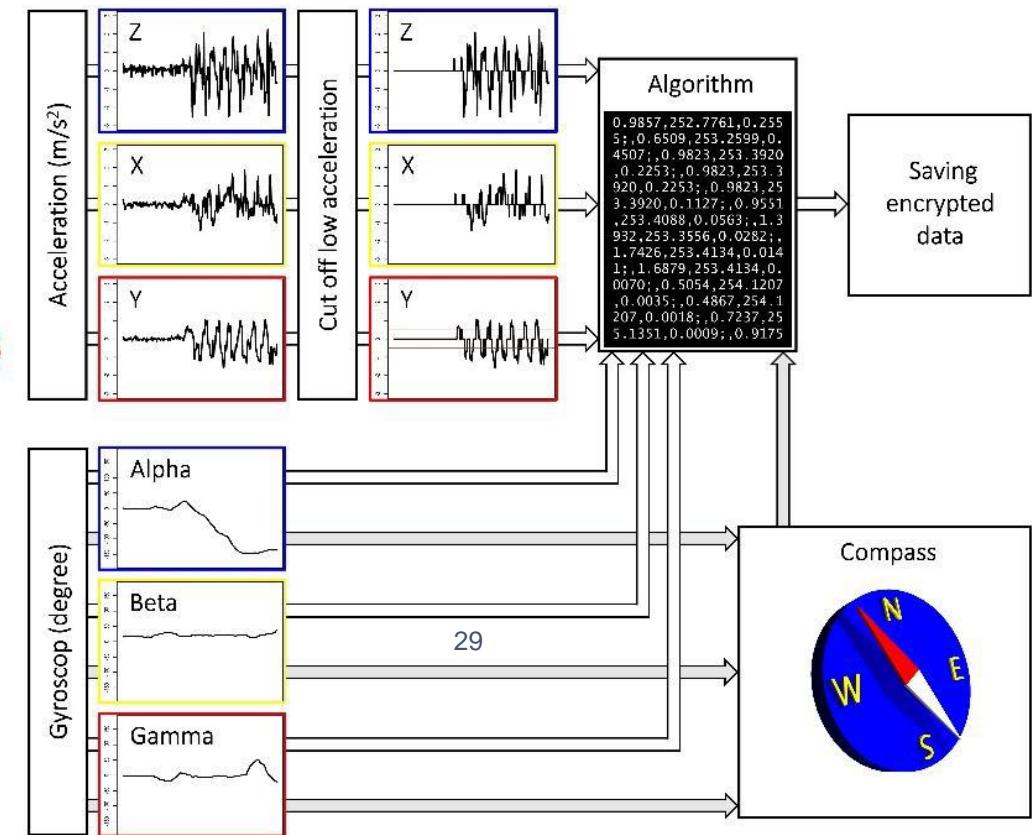
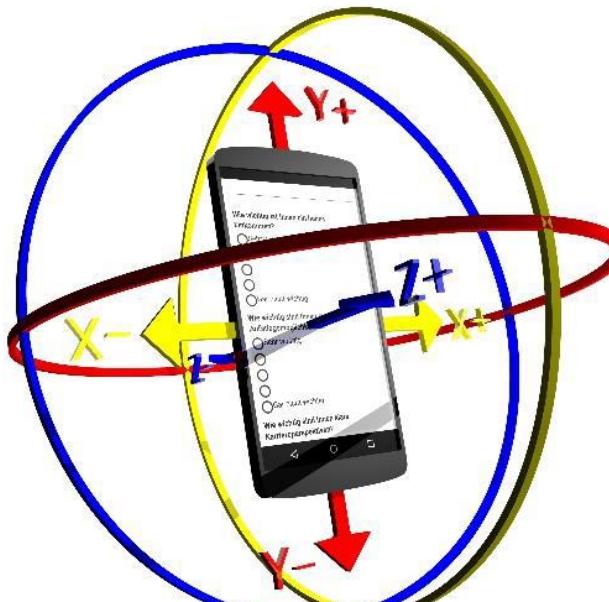
Daytime locations of parolees

Physical activity

- Accelerometer
- Gyroscope



Source: <https://www.techradar.com/news/wearables/10-best-fitness-trackers-1277905>

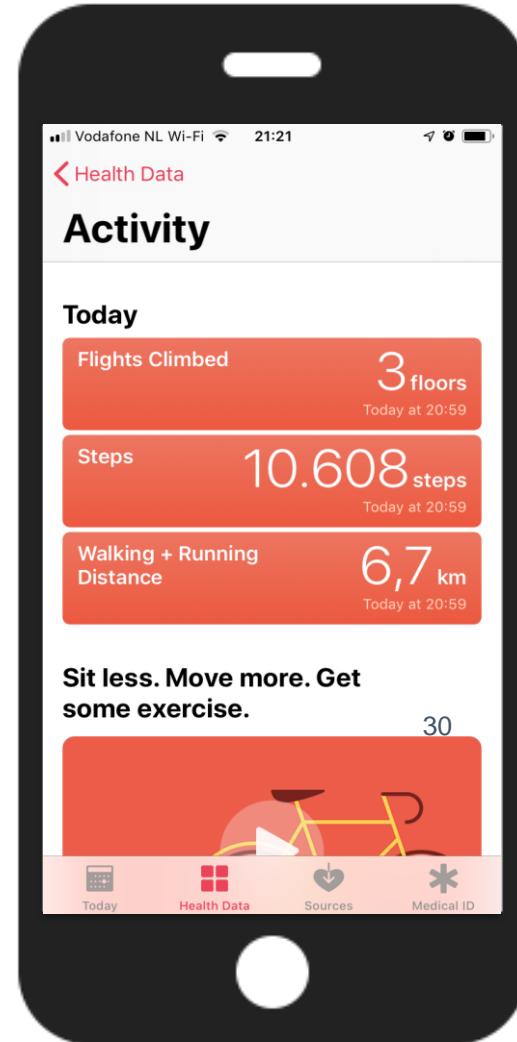


Schlosser et al. (2019)

Sources: <https://www.actigraphcorp.com/actigraph-wgt3x-bt/>,
<https://www.activinsights.com/products/geneactiv/>

Physical activity

- Accelerometer
 - Gyroscope
- and
- Magnetometer
 - Serves as compass
 - Barometer
 - Allows to track changes in elevation



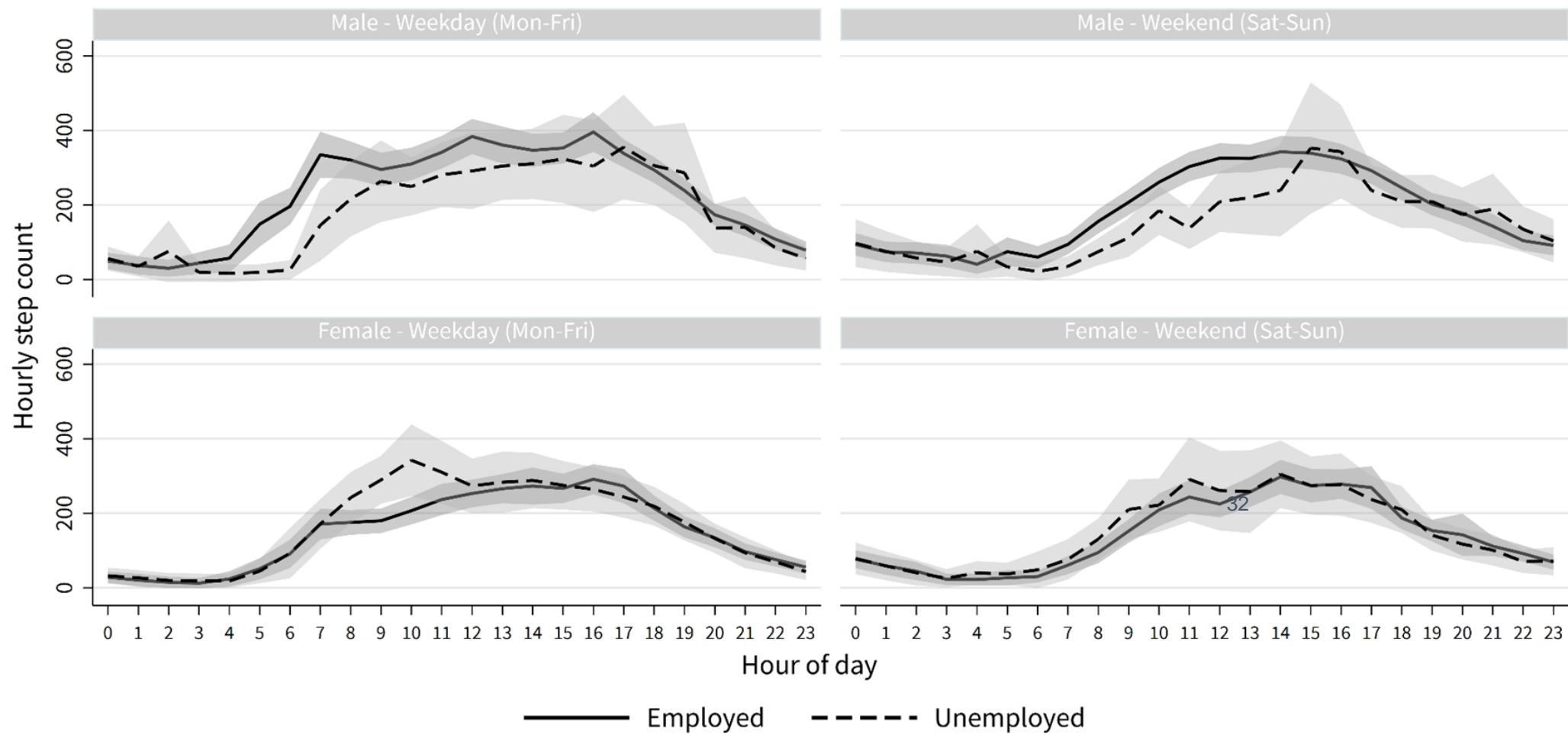
Example: What are the effects of unemployment?

(Kreuter et al. 2020)

- ~650 Android smartphone owners from German panel study “Labour Market and Social Security” (PASS) downloaded *IAB-SMART* app for 6 months
- Survey questions triggered by...
 - Schedule: Qs about affective impact of daily smartphone use, Big 5 personality, employment and job search activities, use of smartphones in everyday life, etc.
 - Geolocation: 400 job centers - Qs about visit to job center
- Five passive data collection modules:
 - Location using GPS, Wi-Fi, and cellular sensors every 30 min
 - Activity and means of transportation (e.g., walking, biking³¹, riding in/on a motorized vehicle) using accelerometer and pedometer every 2 min
 - Call and texting behavior using phone and SMS logs
 - Use of apps installed on smartphone
 - Social network characteristics from contact lists

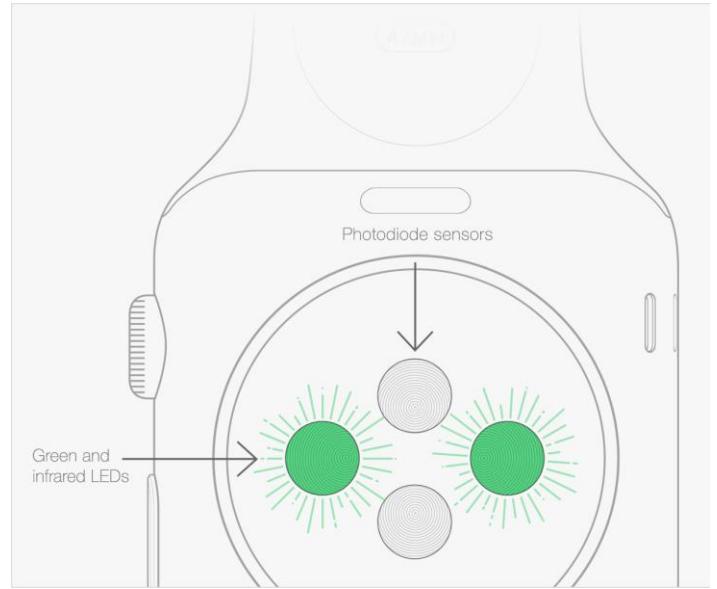
Example: What are the effects of unemployment?

(Bähr et al. in preparation)

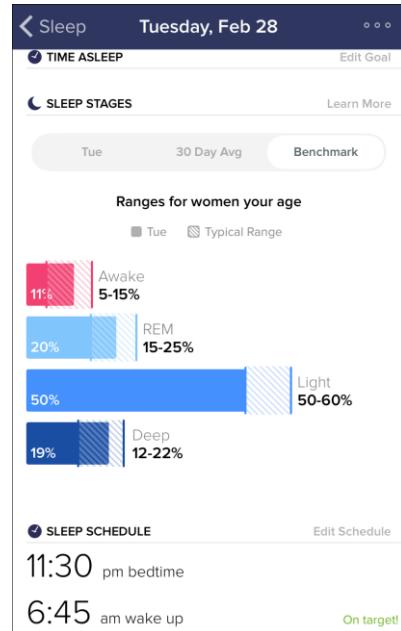


Heart-rate

- Most wristbands use LED-based system
 - Light “shines” onto skin, sensor detects blood volume changes
 - “... finely-tuned algorithms are applied to measure heart rate automatically and continuously...”
(https://help.fitbit.com/articles/en_US/Help_article/1565)
 - Samsung Galaxy S uses similar system
- Used in combination with accelerometer to determine sleep phases (e.g., on Fitbit)



Source: <https://exist.io/blog/fitness-trackers-heart-rate/>



Source: https://help.fitbit.com/articles/en_US/Help_article/2163

Sound & light

- Microphone
 - “Actively” records answers to survey questions
 - “Passively” measures ambient noise (e.g., clutter), music, and conversations
 - To preserve privacy, classifiers determine that participant is, for example, “around conversation” but not able to reconstruct content or to identify individual speakers
- Light sensor
 - Used to adjust display brightness
 - In combination with other sensors (e.g., accelerometer, microphone) infers idle state of phone/user & sleep

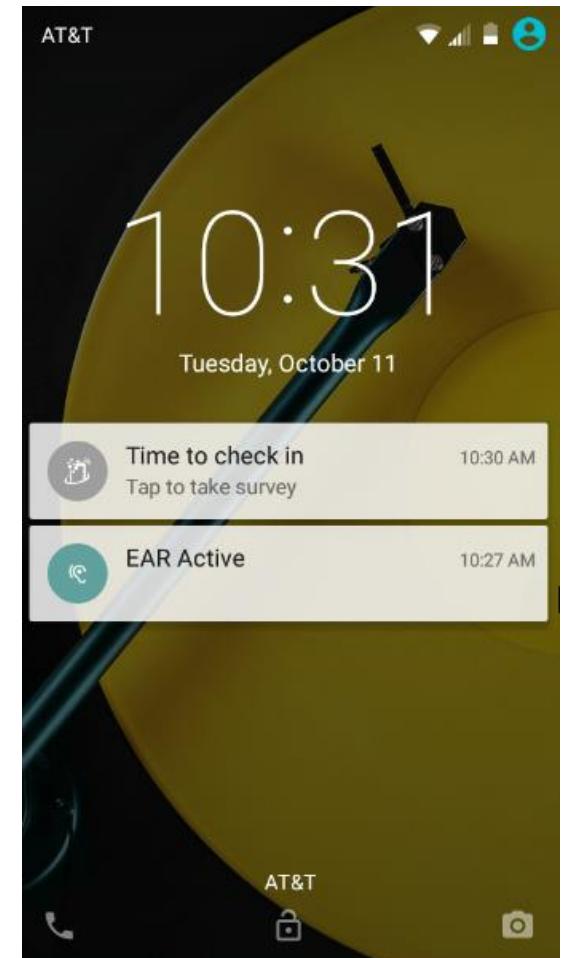


Source: [https://www.theverge.com/circuitbreaker/2017/9/15/16307802/
apple-iphone-x-features-specs-best-worst](https://www.theverge.com/circuitbreaker/2017/9/15/16307802/apple-iphone-x-features-specs-best-worst)

Example: *Daily Experiences and Well-being* Study

(Fingerman et al. 2020)

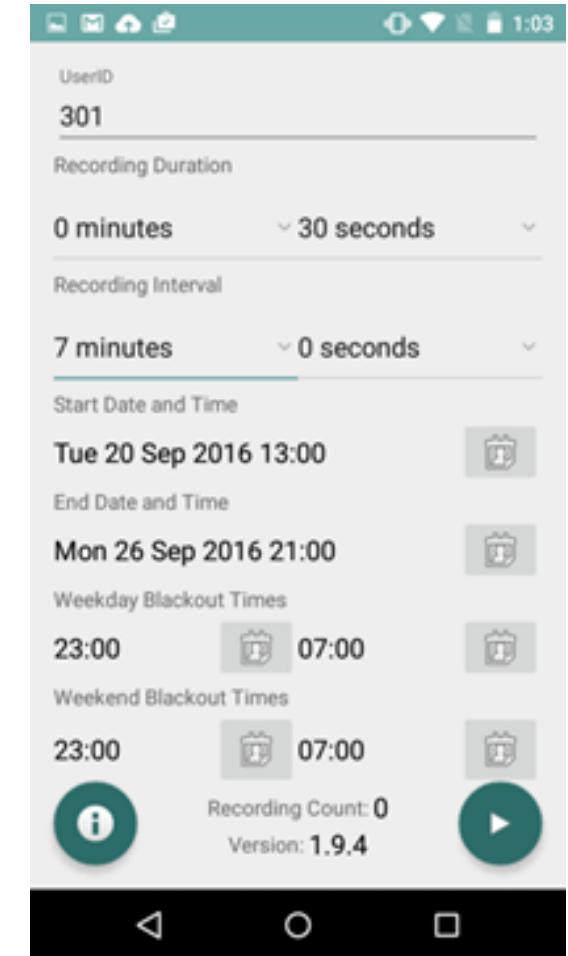
- Telephone screening to identify home-dwelling aged 65+ in Austin, TX (n=333)
 - Oversample of Blacks and Hispanics
 - Without cognitive impairment, not working full-time
- Goal: Study influence of social engagement on physical activity, health, and cognitive status
- In-home interview followed by 5 days of:
 - Actigraphy
 - Loaner Android device with apps to record sound and prompt for ecological momentary assessment (EMA) - no other smartphone functionality
- Daily reminder phone calls & in-home assistance



Example: Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR)

(Fingerman et al. 2022)

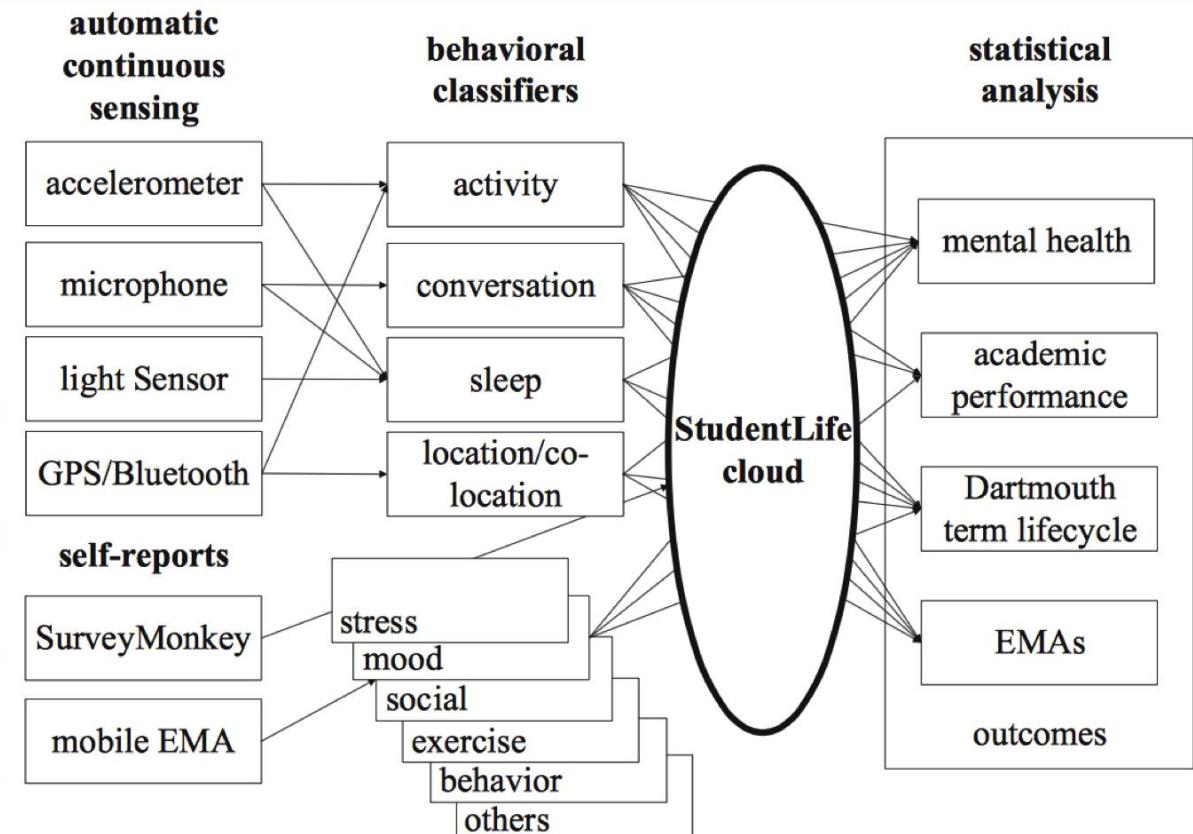
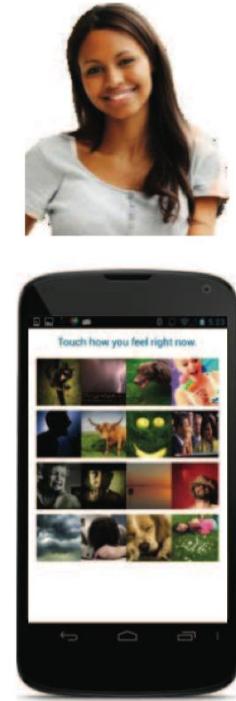
- During in-home interview, interviewers entered settings in *EAR* app on phone
 - 30s of recordings every 7 min during waking hours
 - Total of 135,078 audio files
- Devices obtained by interviewer on day 5
- Interviewers responsible for upload and transfer of all data from various devices
- Coders rated each file containing sound for presence of television
- Findings:
 - More TV watching when alone
 - More loneliness reported during periods of TV watching



Does mental health of students change over the course of a term?

(Wang et al. 2014)

- 48 students (U.S. college)
- 10 weeks
- Android phones (37 provided, 11 own)
- EMA 8 times a day
- Pre- and post-survey



Does mental health of students change over the course of a term? (Wang et al. 2014)

- Students who sleep less, interact less with other students, have fewer co-locations with others more likely to be depressed
- Students around more conversation and students who move around less while on campus do better academically

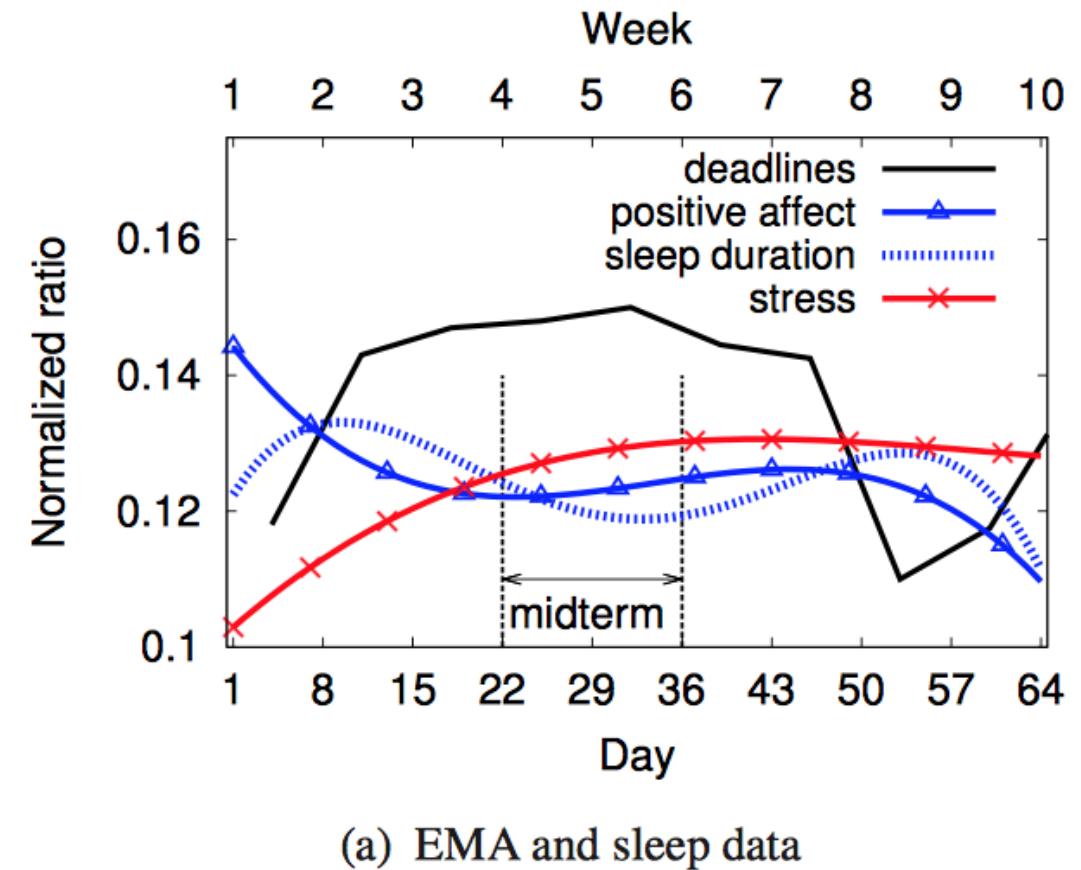
Correlation with depression			
automatic sensing data	r	p-value	
sleep duration (pre)	-0.360	0.025	
sleep duration (post)	-0.382	0.020	
conversation frequency during day (pre)	-0.403	0.010	
conversation frequency during day (post)	-0.387	0.016	
conversation frequency during evening (post)	-0.345	0.034	
conversation duration during day (post)	-0.328	0.044	
number of co-locations (post)	-0.362	0.025	

Correlation with academic performance			
academic performance	Sensing Data	r	p-value
spring GPA	conversation duration (day)	0.356	0.033
spring GPA	conversation frequency (day)	0.334	0.046
spring GPA	indoor mobility	-0.361	0.031
spring GPA	indoor mobility during (day)	-0.352	0.036
spring GPA	indoor mobility during (night)	-0.359	0.032
overall GPA	activity duration	-0.360	0.030
overall GPA	activity duration std deviation	-0.479	0.004
overall GPA	indoor mobility	-0.413	0.014
overall GPA	indoor mobility during (day)	-0.376	0.026
overall GPA	indoor mobility during (night)	-0.508	0.002
overall GPA	number of co-locations	0.447	0.013

Does mental health of students change over the course of a term?

(Wang et al. 2014)

- Start of term: high positive affect and conversation levels, low health, healthy sleep, and daily activity patterns
- As term progresses: stress rises; activity, sleep, conversation, and positive affect, visits to the gym and attendance drop



Proximity - Bluetooth

- Short-range communication between devices up to 30
 - e.g., hands-free devices, audio speakers, printers
- Enabled healthcare devices can connect to smartphones or other hubs to transmit data
 - e.g., weight, blood pressure, temperature, heart rate, etc.
- Beacons = small Bluetooth transmitters
 - Need to be dispatched by researcher
 - Bluetooth needs to be activated on receiving device
 - Great for indoor tracking



Source: Silvana Jud



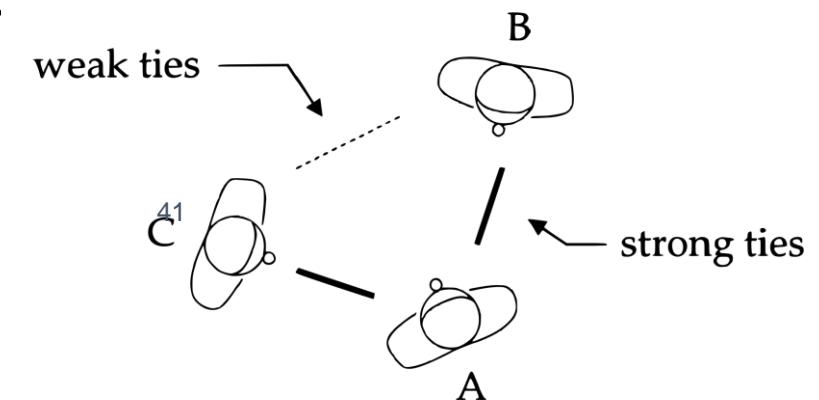
Source: <https://www.renesas.com/jp/en/solutions/proposal/bluetooth-low-energy.html>



Source
<http://www.fenc.com/dynafeed/>

Proximity - RFID & NFC

- Radio-frequency identification (RFID): electromagnetic fields to automatically identify and track tags attached to objects ~1 meter (3 feet)
 - e.g., assembly lines, merchandise in warehouses, livestock
- Near-field communication (NFC): communication between devices by bringing them within 4 cm (1.6 in) of each other
 - More secure than RFID
 - e.g., contactless payment, data transfer, key cards
- All of them (incl. Bluetooth) can be used to track “social ties”



Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2a/Weak-strong-ties.svg>

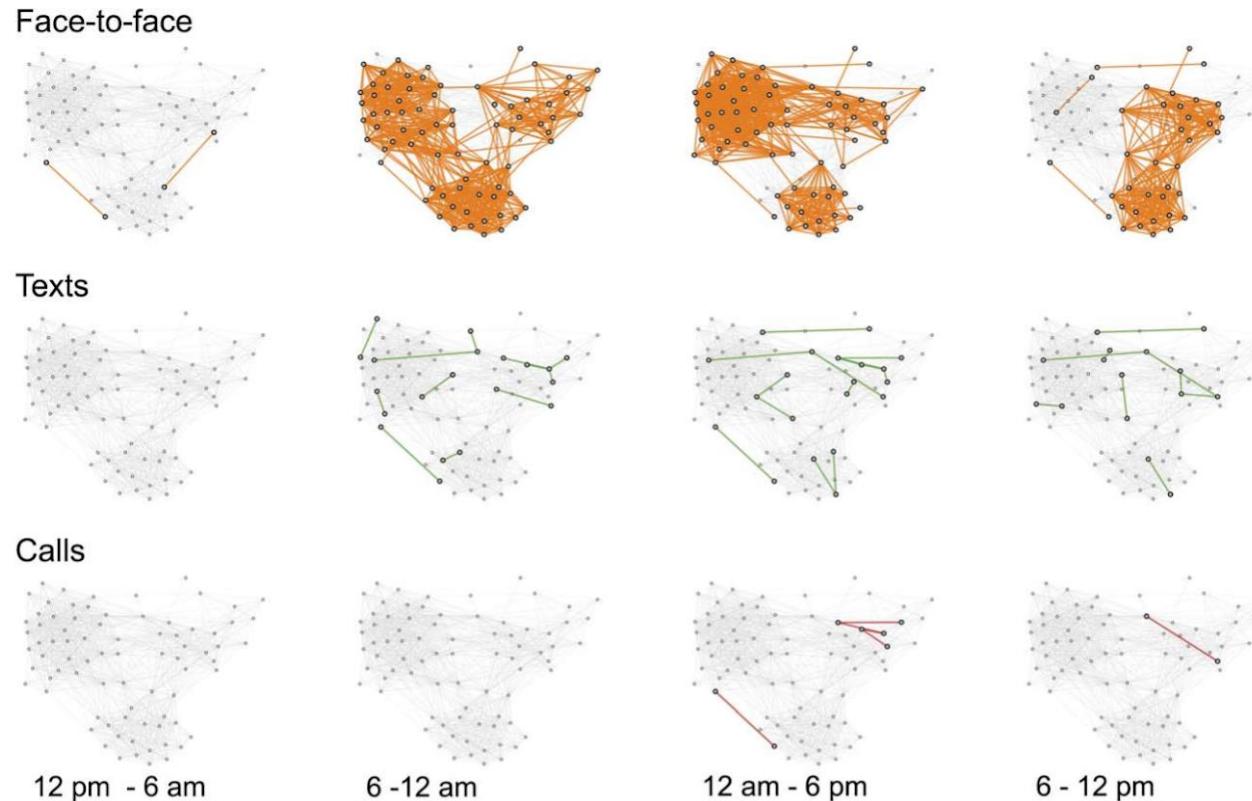
Example: How do people interact in large social networks?

(Stopczynski et al. 2014)

- *Copenhagen Networks Study*: 1,000 smartphones handed out to Danish students
- Extensive questionnaire upon enrollment: 310 questions on topics from public health, psychology, anthropology, and economics
- Combination of Bluetooth and Wi-Fi networks to collect information about absolute location and relative location to each other
 - Additional data sources: call and text logs, social media data

Example: How do people interact in large social networks?

(Stopczynski et al. 2014)

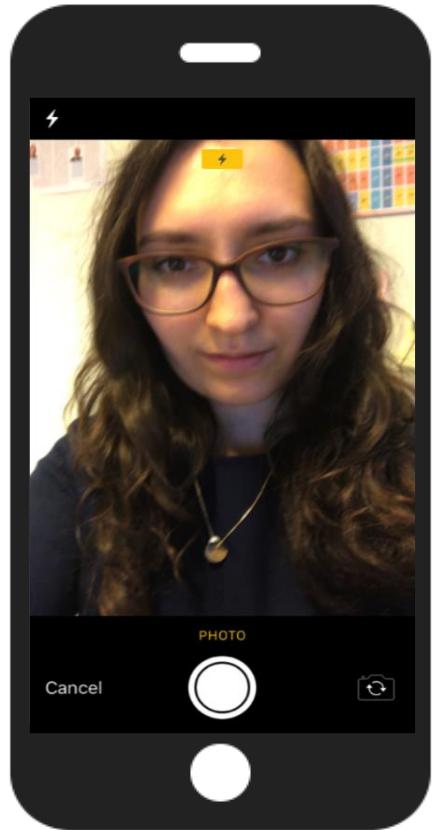


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Figure 11. Daily activations in three networks. One day (Friday) in a network showing how different views are produced by observing different channels.

Images

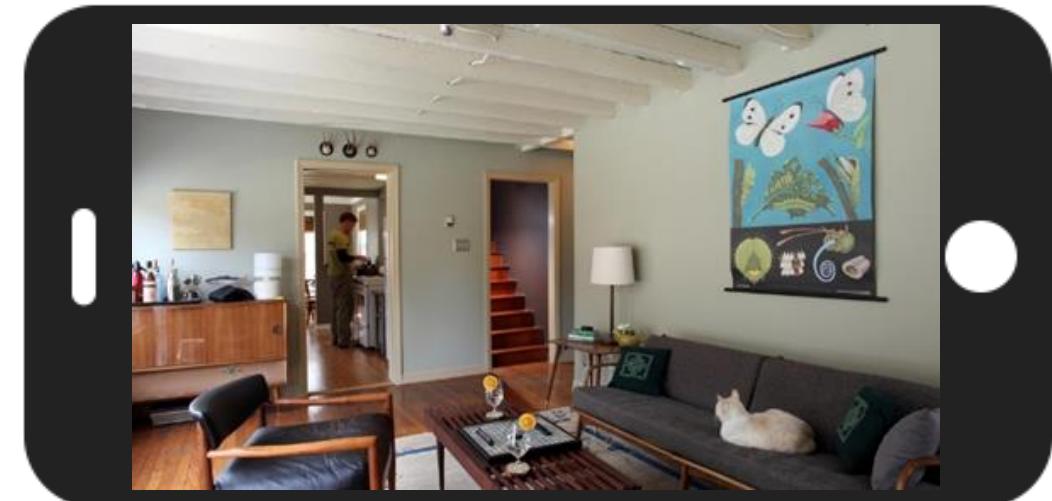
- Photos
 - Food, receipts, physical surroundings, etc.
- Video
- Barcodes
- Linear distance (iPhone Measure app)



Jäckle et al. (2018)

Example: Taking pictures of surrounding

- *Daily Experiences and Well-being Study* (Fingerman et al. 2020)
- Interviewers used phone app when returning to pick device up (day 5)
- After completing all other activities, asked participant for consent to take picture of room they spend most time in
 - Up to 3 photos
 - Careful selection of motive to avoid recording any PII
- Environmental conditions of room hand-coded
 - Lighting, conditions, etc.



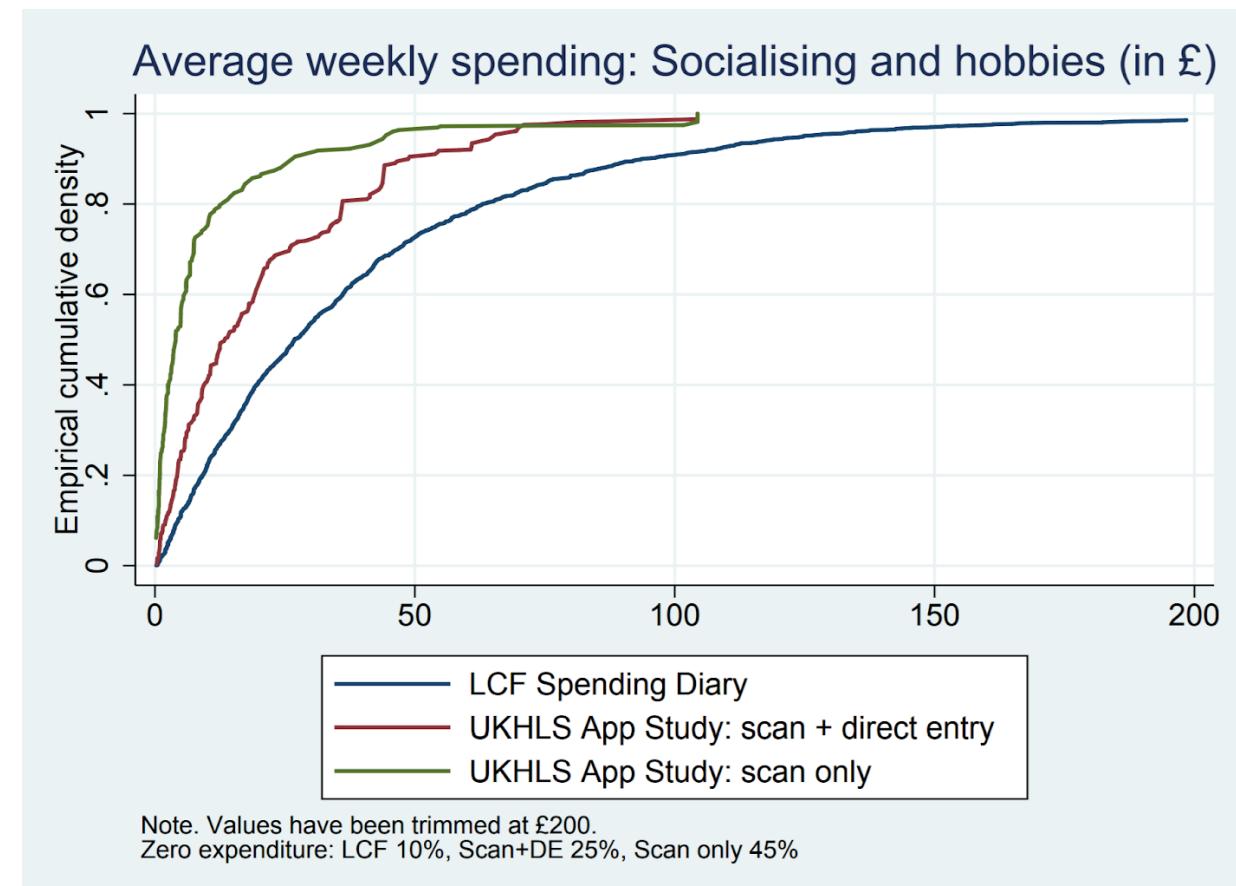
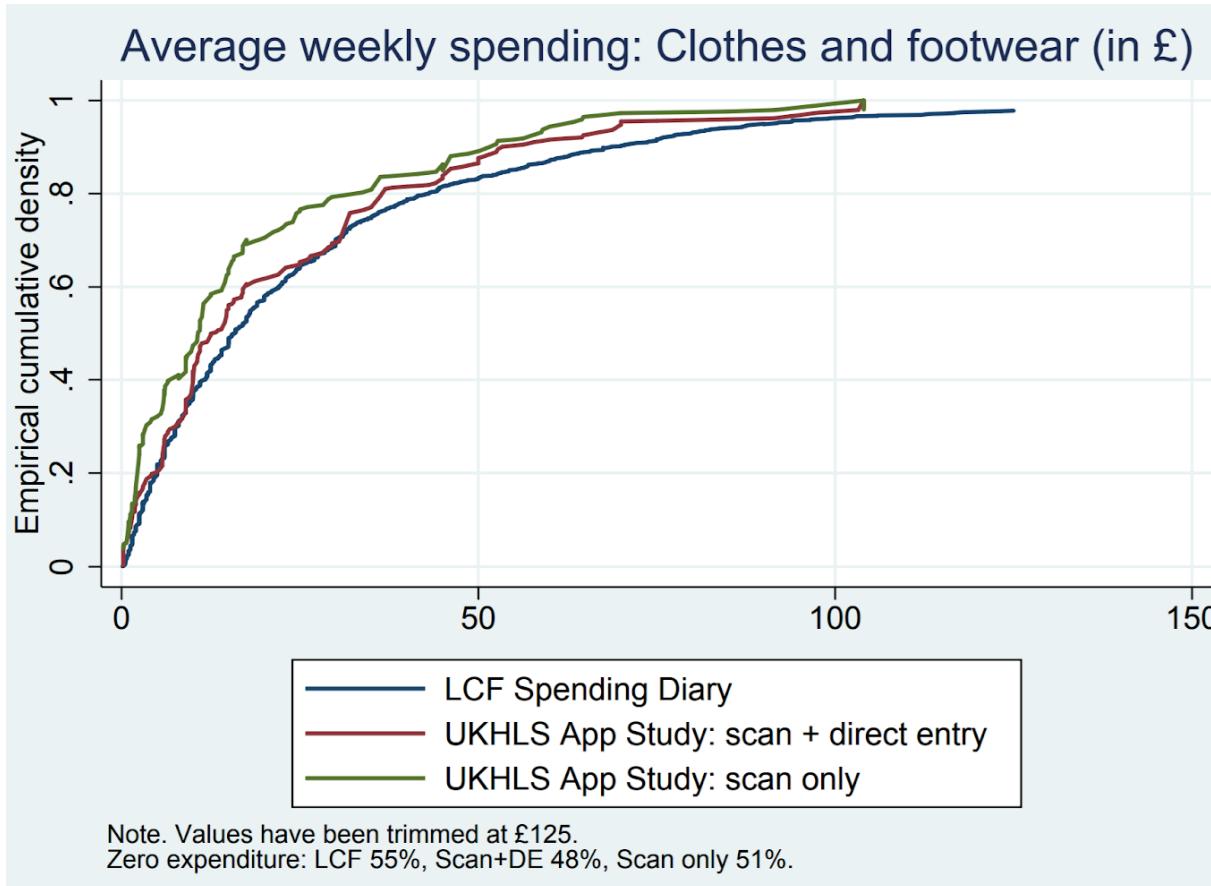
Example: How much do households spend on goods and services?

(Jäckle et al. 2019; Wenz et al. 2018)

- UK Innovation Panel Wave 9 participants invited to download app (iOS & Android) to smartphone or tablet and use it to report purchases of goods and services for 1 month
 - 270 participants (13%) used app at least once
- Participant could scan and upload receipts, record purchase without receipt, report day without purchases
 - App sent push notifications once a day
- Scanned receipts hand coded
- Total expenditure (scan + direct entry) comparable to benchmark (LCF)
 - Expenditure more comparable for some categories than for others

Example: How much do households spend on goods and services?

(Jäckle et al. 2019; Wenz et al. 2018)



Self-reports on smartphones

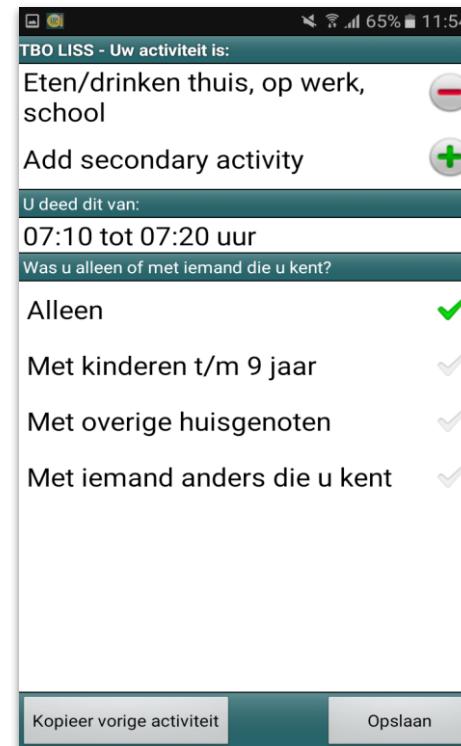
- Diary studies
 - e.g., time use, expenditure, food consumption via app or web browser



Daily overview



Adding activities



Adding activity information

Self-reports on smartphones

- Diary studies (e.g., time use, food consumption) via app or web browser
- Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA)/Experience Sampling Method (ESM) via app
 - Collecting data several times a day on several days per week allows tracking of change within individuals in much detail
 - Immediate reporting increases ecological validity
 - Participants “pinged” to report about current circumstances
 - Objective situation: e.g., “What are you doing?”
 - Subjective state: e.g., “How anxious are you right now?”
 - Time-based vs. geolocation-based vs. event-based

Example time-based EMA: How do environmental factors affect happiness?

(MacKerron & Mourato 2013)

- *Mappiness* app installed by ~22,000 self-selected iPhone users and used up to 6 months
- EMA questions: how happy, relaxed, and awake users feel and whom they were with at two or more random points during the day
- Physical setting measured by GPS, appended with information from objective spatial data (broad habitat and land cover type, weather conditions, and daylight status)
- On average, participants significantly and substantially happier outdoors in all green or natural habitat types than in urban environments

Example time-based EMA: How does physical activity affect happiness?

(Lathia et al. 2017)

- *Mood-Tracking Application* on smartphones of 12,000 volunteer Android users for up to 17 months
- EMA questions: affect two or more times during the day
- Physical activity for immediately preceding fifteen minute period measured both by self-report (EMA) and passively by accelerometer

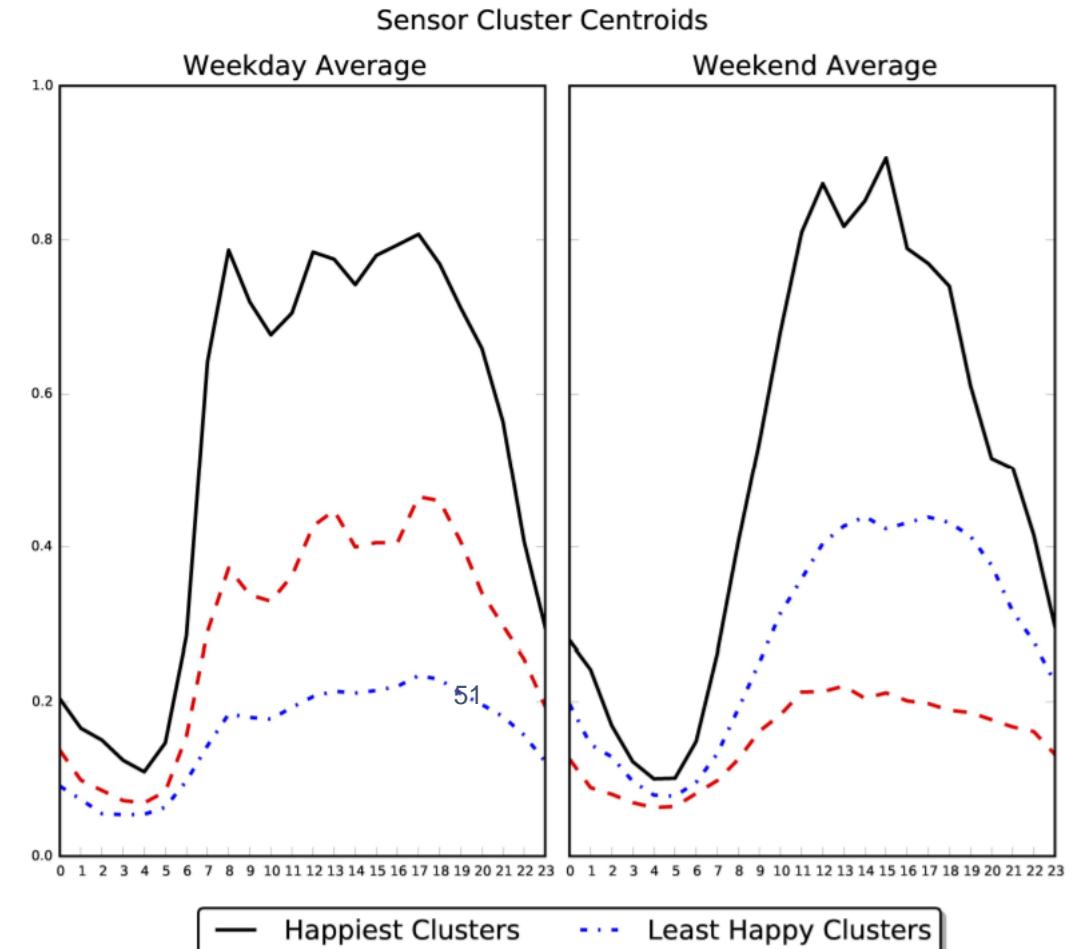
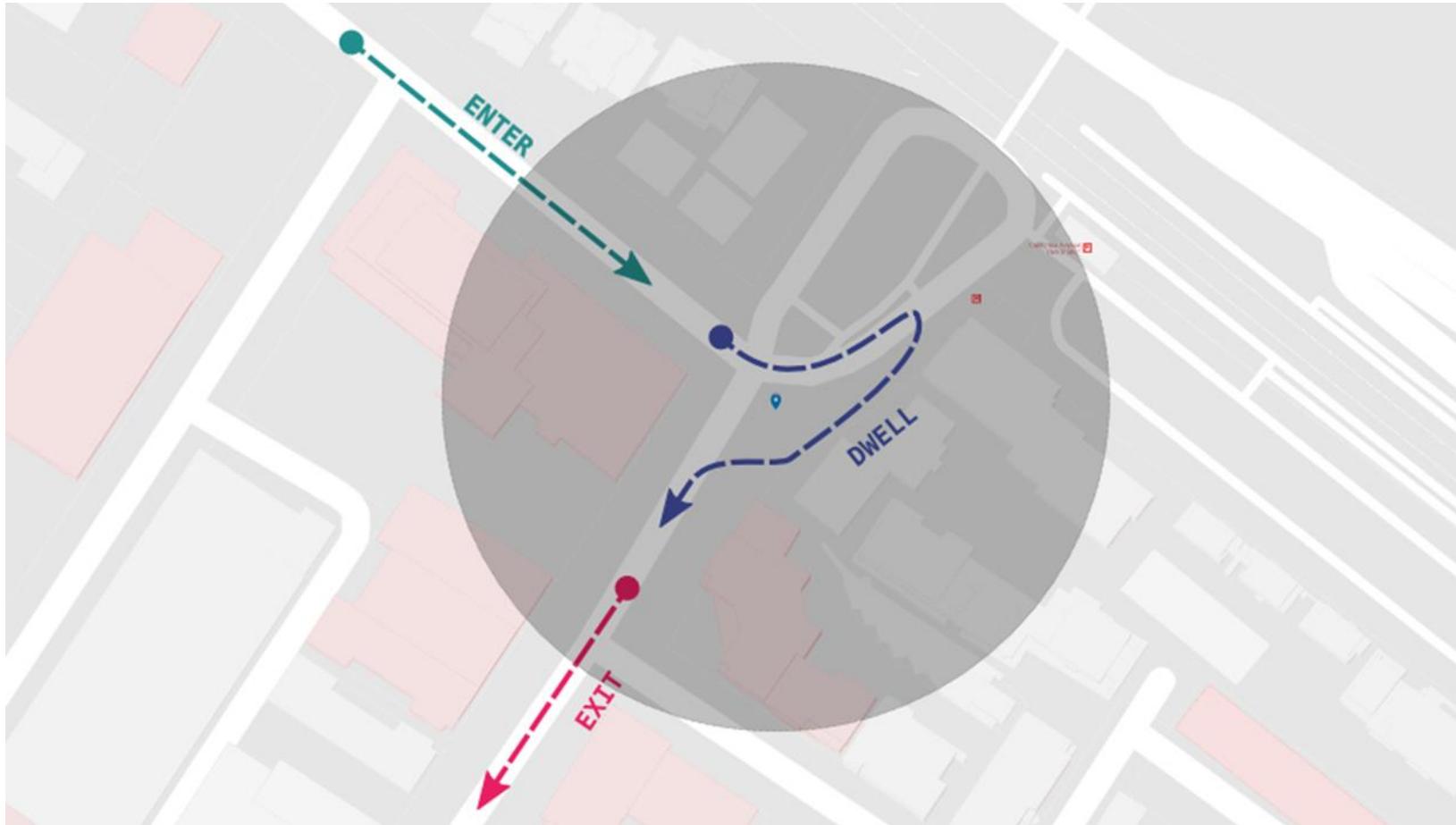


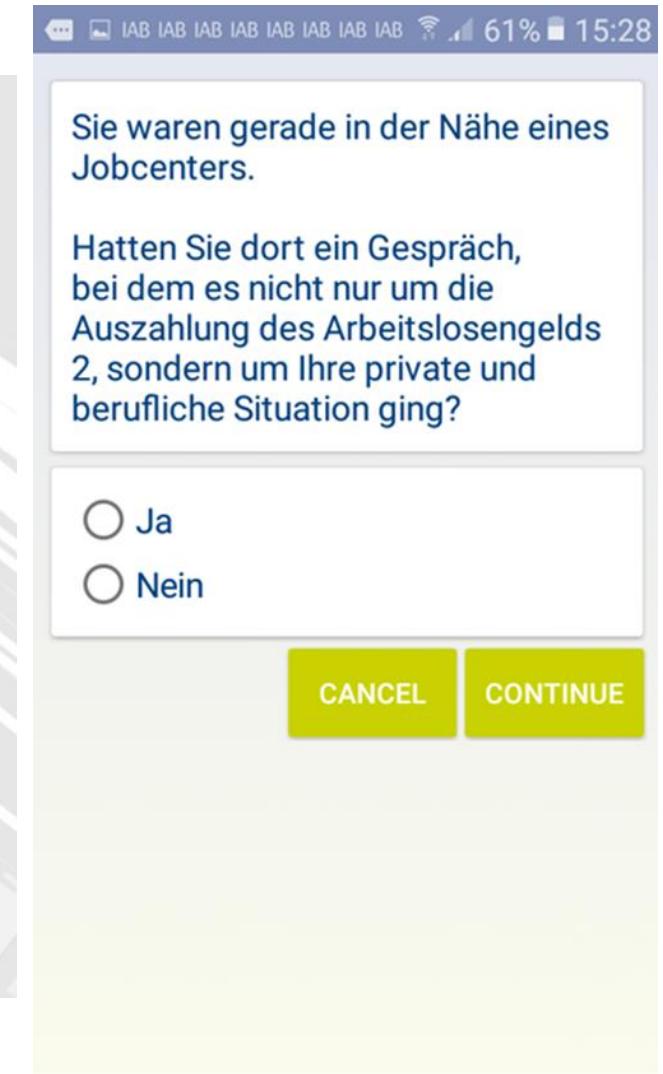
Fig 3. Centroids for the clusters generated from (left) weekday and (right) weekend activity profiles.

doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0160589.g003

Example geolocation-based EMA (“Geofencing”): Visits to job centers (Haas et al. 2020)

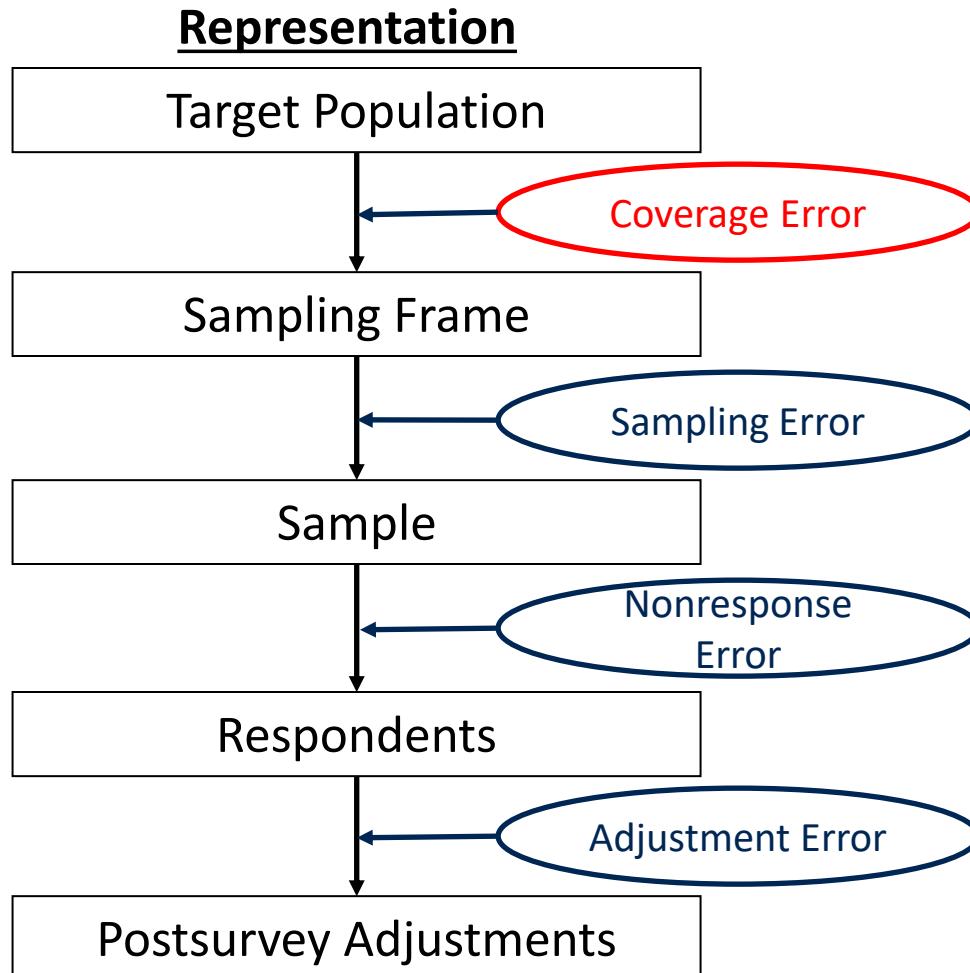


Source: <https://developers.google.com/location-context/geofencing/>



Practical implementation

Representation error in app, sensor & wearables data collection

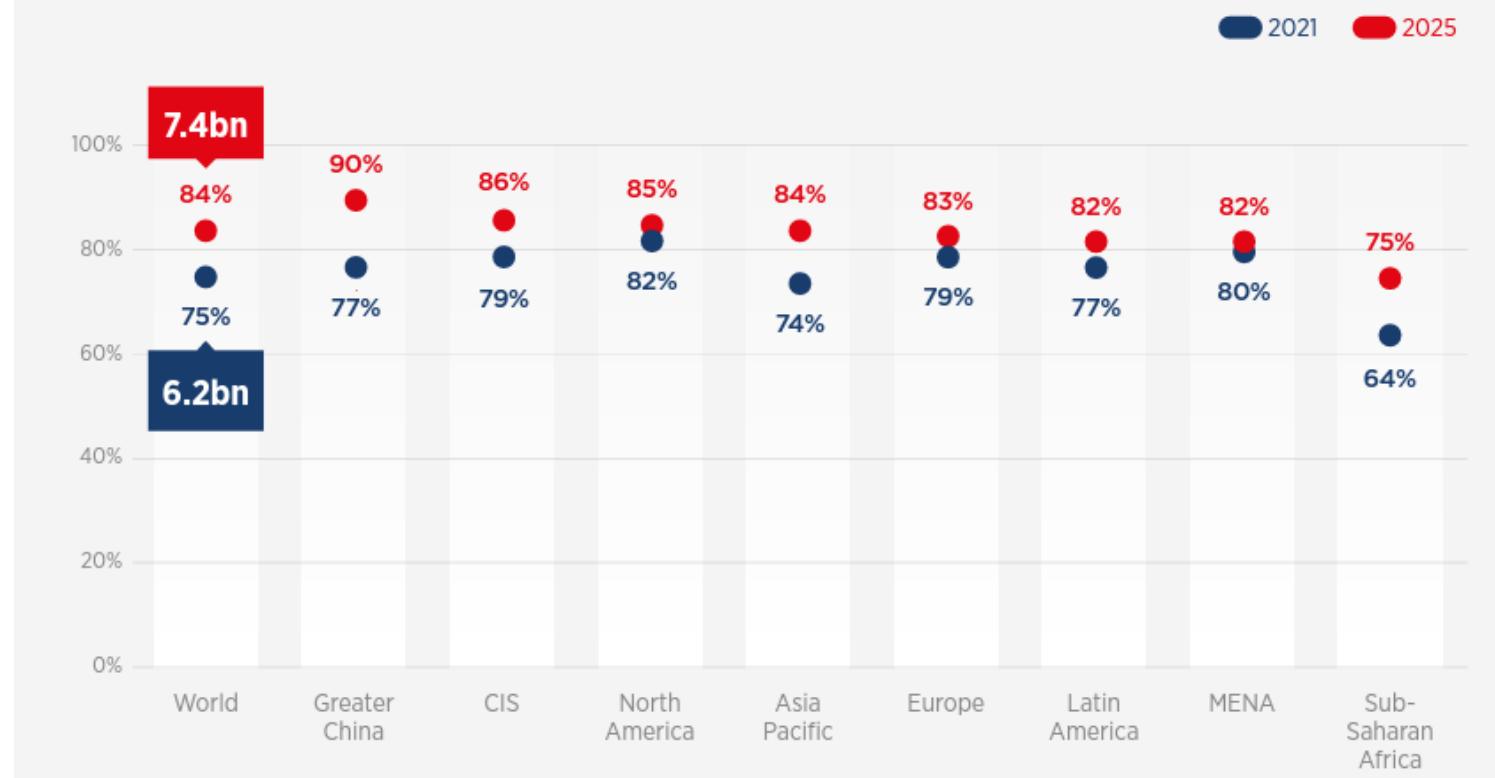


- **Coverage error:** A study relies on participants to share data from their fitness wristbands to analyze weekend vs. weekday activity by race & ethnicity. The rate of ownership of these devices is lower in the study population than in the general population.

BYOD: Coverage smartphones

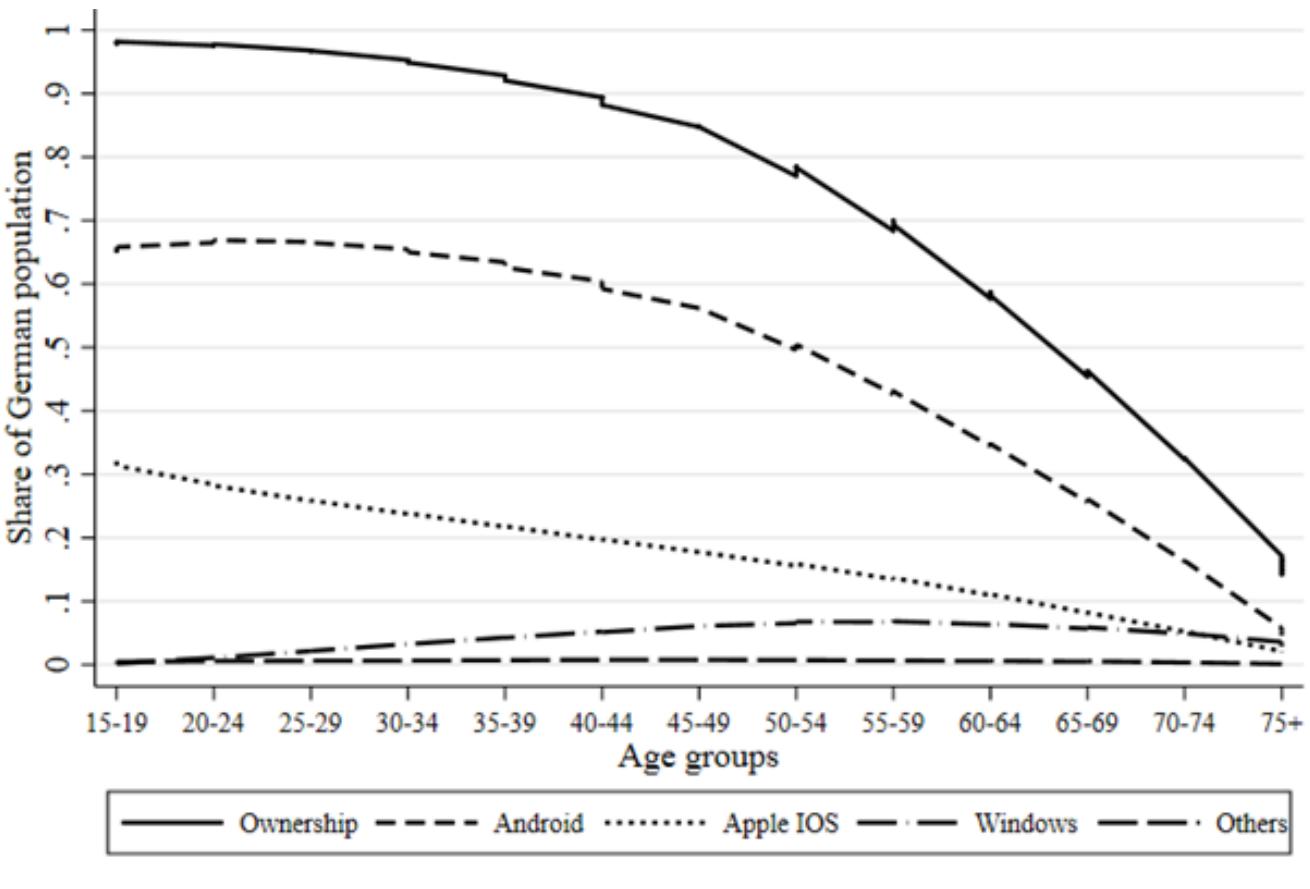
There will be nearly 7.5 billion smartphone connections by 2025, accounting for over four in five mobile connections

Percentage of connections (excluding licensed cellular IoT)



BYOD: Smartphone coverage bias in Germany

(Keusch et al. 2020)



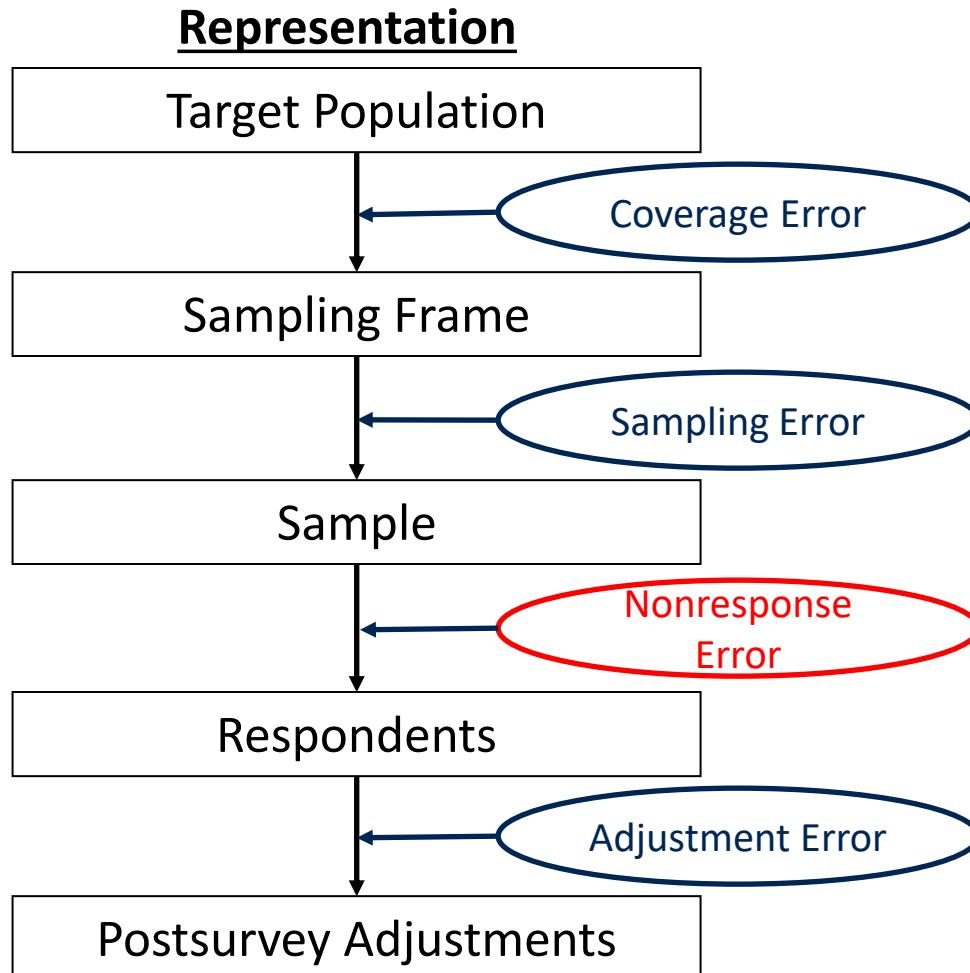
- Smartphone ownership higher among...
 - ...younger
 - ...male
 - ...higher educated
 - ...people in New States
 - ...people living in larger communities
- Digital Divide

BYOD: Smartphone coverage bias in Germany

(Keusch et al. 2020)

- *Overall smartphone coverage bias* in many substantive estimates relatively small; especially once adjusting for sociodemographic differences between general population and smartphone owners
 - High social inclusion: +2.8 p.p.
 - Size of personal network: n.s.
- Comparable *Android smartphone coverage bias* after sociodemographic adjustment
 - High social inclusion: +1.6 p.p.
 - Size of personal network: n.s.
- Much larger *iPhone coverage bias*, even after adjusting for sociodemographics (up to 11 p.p.)

Representation error in app, sensor & wearables data collection



- **Nonparticipation error:** Participants are provided with actigraphs to measure sleep patterns for a week.
Those who do not sleep well remove the device at night because it disturbs their sleep.⁵⁸

Nonparticipation: Willingness to participate (WTP) & actual participation

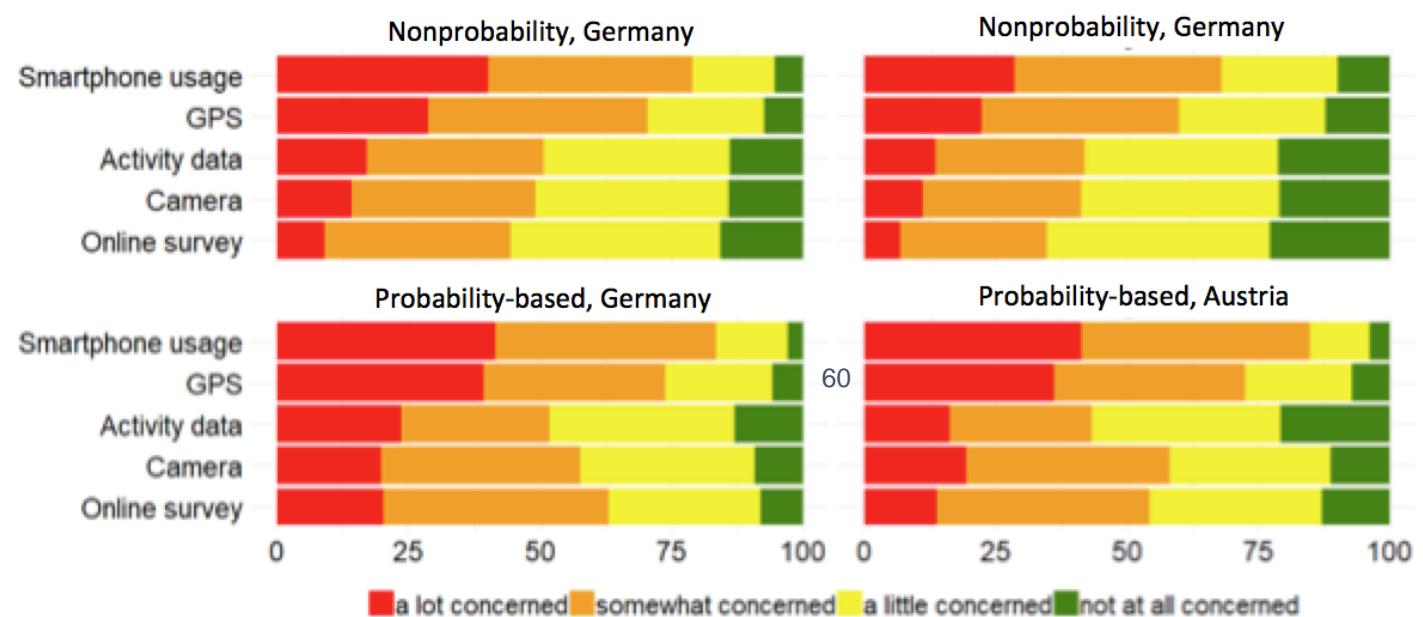
- Many studies work with self-selected volunteer samples
- General willingness varies by sensor and task
 - 29% (Spain) - 52% (Mexico) for taking pictures, 19 (Portugal) - 37% (Chile) for sharing GPS location (Revilla et al. 2016)
 - Mobility (GPS, accelerometer): 37% willing (81% participate) (Scherpenzeel 2017)
 - Physical activity (wearables): 57% willing (90% participate) (Scherpenzeel 2017)
- Willingness/Downloading research app in general population usually rel. low
 - 35% downloaded & registered CBS Travel app (McCool et al. 2021)
59
 - 24% registered in the Household Budget app (Rodenburg et al. 2022)
 - 18% would install app to track URLs of visited websites (Revilla et al. 2019)
 - 17% downloaded UK Understanding Society IP budget app (Jäckle et al. 2019)
 - 15% downloaded IAB-SMART app (Keusch et al. 2022a)

Mechanisms of (non-)participation: Privacy concern

- Participants might have concerns about potential risks related to sensor data
 - Data streams could be intercepted by unauthorized party
 - Connecting multiple streams of data could re-identify previously anonymous users
 - Information could be used to impact credit, employment, or insurability

- Higher privacy & security concerns correlate with lower WTP

(Keusch, et al. 2019; Revilla et al. 2019;
Struminskaya et al. 2020; 2021; Wenz
et al. 2019; Wenz & Keusch in press)



No Effect of Emphasizing Privacy



n=1883, Dutch smartphone & tablet users

"The data you provide will be treated confidentially. It will only be available to researchers conducting this study and your personal information will not be shared with third parties. The results of the survey will only be made available in the anonymized form. Your data is safe in all of our surveys. From the statistical information by CBS personal information can never be inferred."

- No significant differences

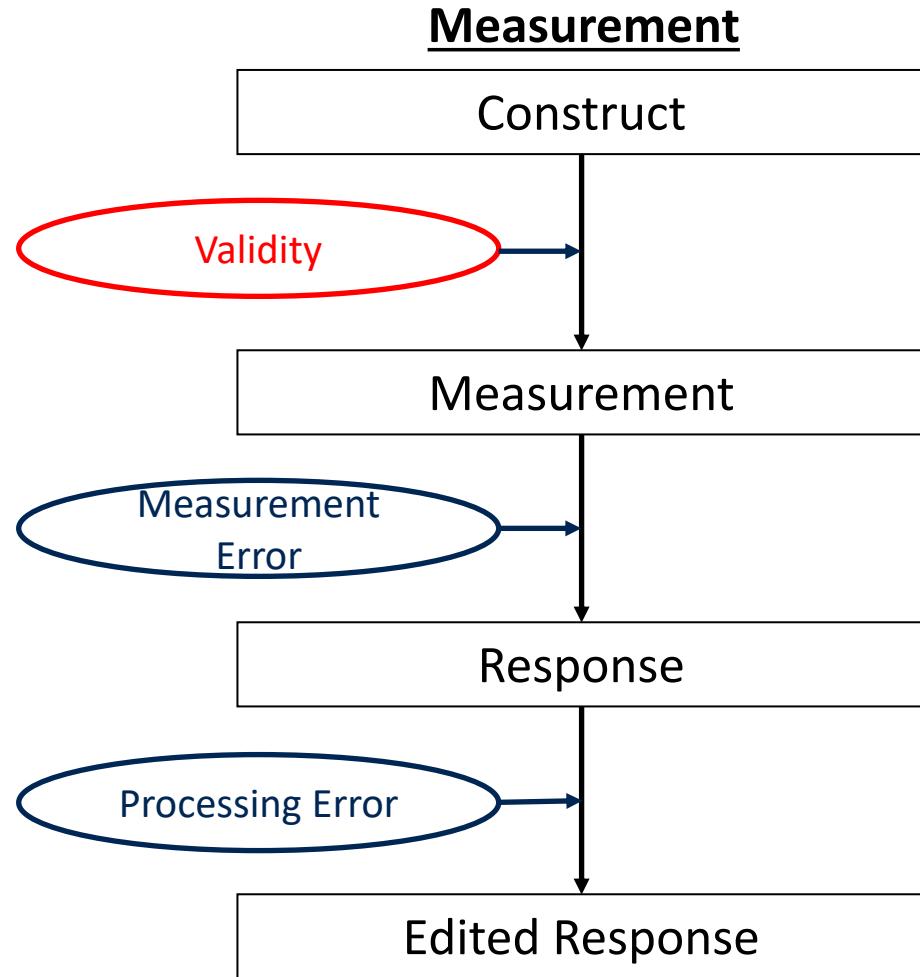
Mechanisms of (non-)participation: Incentives

- Inconsistent findings of effect of **incentives** on participation
- Hypothetical WTP increases with incentives for downloading app and staying until end of study (Keusch et al. 2019; Wenz & Keusch in press)
- IAB-SMART, Germany (Haas et al. 2021)
 - 20€ for installation increase installation rate over 10€ (16% vs. 13%)
 - Bonus incentive for consenting to all 5 data collection functions no effect
- Statistics Netherlands Travel App (McCool et al. 2021)
 - 5€ unconditional + 5€ Registration + 5€ after 7 days: 30%
 - 5€ unconditional + 10€ after 7 days: 36%
 - 5€ unconditional + 20€ after 7 days: 40%
- UK IP Spending Study (Jäckle et al. 2019)
 - £6 incentive for installation does not increase installation rate over £2

Other Mechanisms on (non-)participation

- **Agency:** WTP higher for tasks where participants have agency over data collection (Revilla et al. 2019; Keusch et al. 2019; Struminskaya et al. 2020; 2021; Wenz & Keusch in press)
- **Sponsor:** WTP higher for university sponsor vs. market research and statistical office (Keusch et al. 2019; Struminskaya et al. 2020)
- **Framing:** emphasizing benefits does not influence WTP (Struminskaya et al. 2020; 2021)
- **Smartphone skills:** more activities on smartphone (e.g., using GPS, taking pictures, online banking, etc.) correlates with higher WTP (Keusch et al. 2019; Struminskaya et al. 2020; 2021; Wenz et al. 2019; Wenz & Keusch in press)
- **Experience:** prior research app download increases WTP⁶³ (Keusch et al. 2019; Struminskaya et al. 2020; 2021)
- **Sociodemographics:** educational attainment (Jäckle et al. 2019; Keusch et al. 2021, 2022; McCool et al. 2021; Wenz & Keusch in press) and age (Jäckle et al. 2019; McCool et al. 2021; Keusch et al. 2022; Wenz & Keusch in press) correlated with WTP

Measurement error in app, sensor & wearables data collection



- **Validity:** You are using actigraphy to detect intensity of physical activity in a sample of older adults. Your study population is very sedentary and it is difficult to identify physical activity versus usual activity.

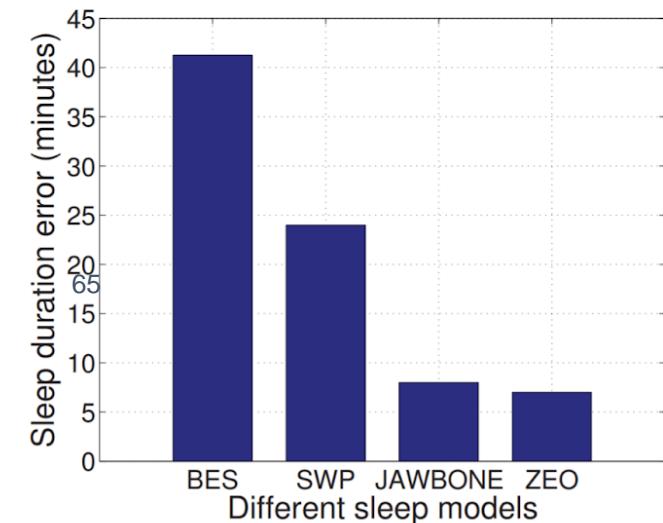
Can you really measure sleep using sensors?

- Does physical inactivity and low heart-rate equal sleep?

Percent of time that self report differs from accelerometer	
Self_report: asleep; Accelerometer: not in bed	6.8%
Self_report: not asleep; Accelerometer: in bed	14.9%
Self_report: asleep; Accelerometer: not asleep	14.0%
Self_report: not asleep; Accelerometer: asleep	10.5%

Kapteyn et al. (2019)

- Does absence of light, sound, and activity measured by a smartphone equal sleep?
- But for some phenomena, sensors seem to be provide highly valid data



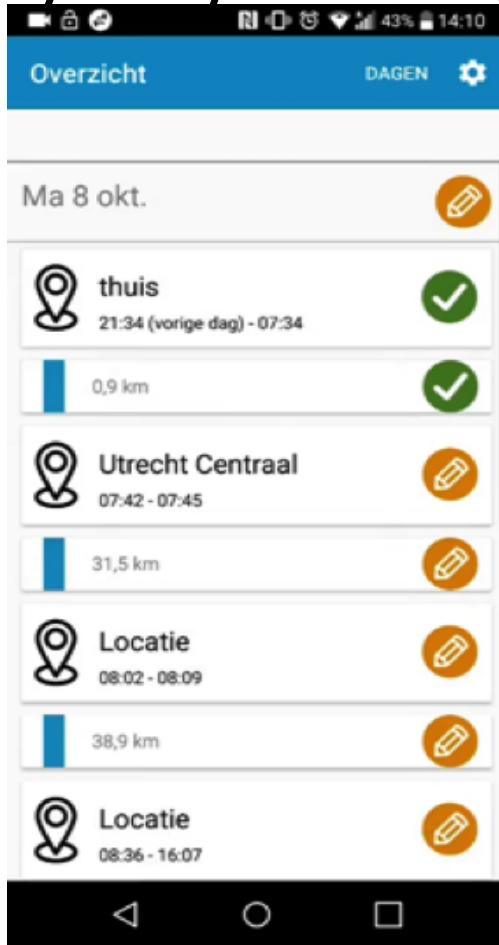
Chen et al. (2013)

Example: How do people move around in everyday life? (McCool et al. 2021)

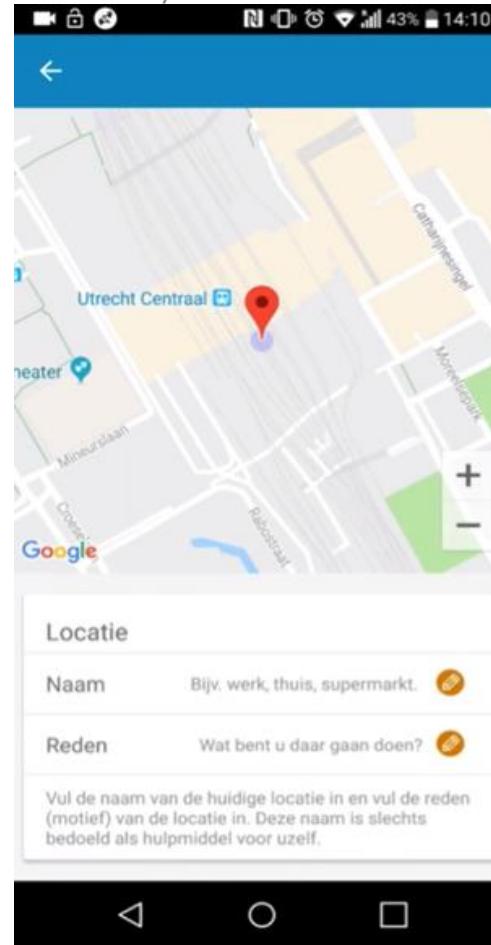
- Everyday mobility field test in Dutch general population (Nov-Dec 2018)
 - Statistics Netherlands Travel App (Android & iPhone) [\[Code for back end & front end\]](#)
 - Data collection for 7 days per participant
 - N = 1,902 invited, 674 registered (35.4%)
- Sensing location per second (when moving) & per minute (when still):
 - OS-specific location API implementation (iOS = Core Location, Android = Google Location Services API, fallback: native Android location API)
 - Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), local Wi-Fi, Cell towers (for Android ‘high-accuracy mode’ available: including Bluetooth as well)
 - Raw data & processed data stored locally on mobile device
- User annotation: participants provide additional information that helps understand travel behavior (label stops and motives for travel)

Example: How do people move around in everyday life?

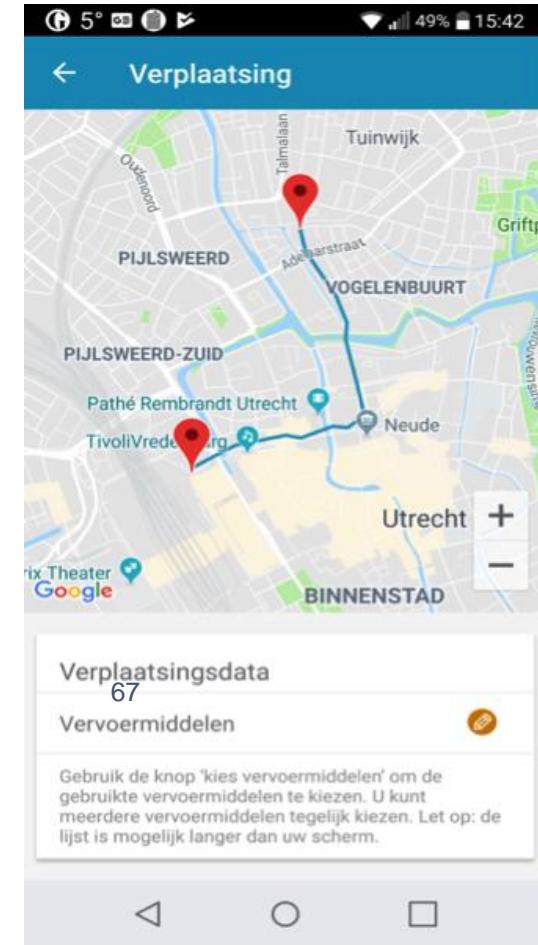
(McCool et al. 2021)



Daily overview

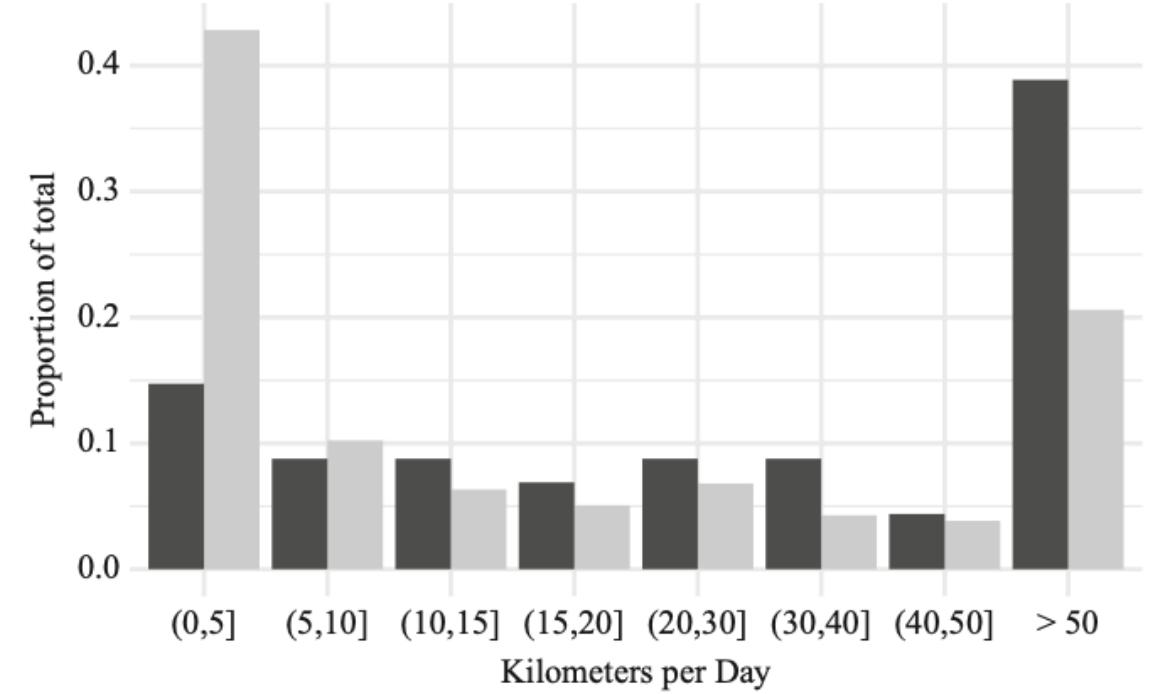
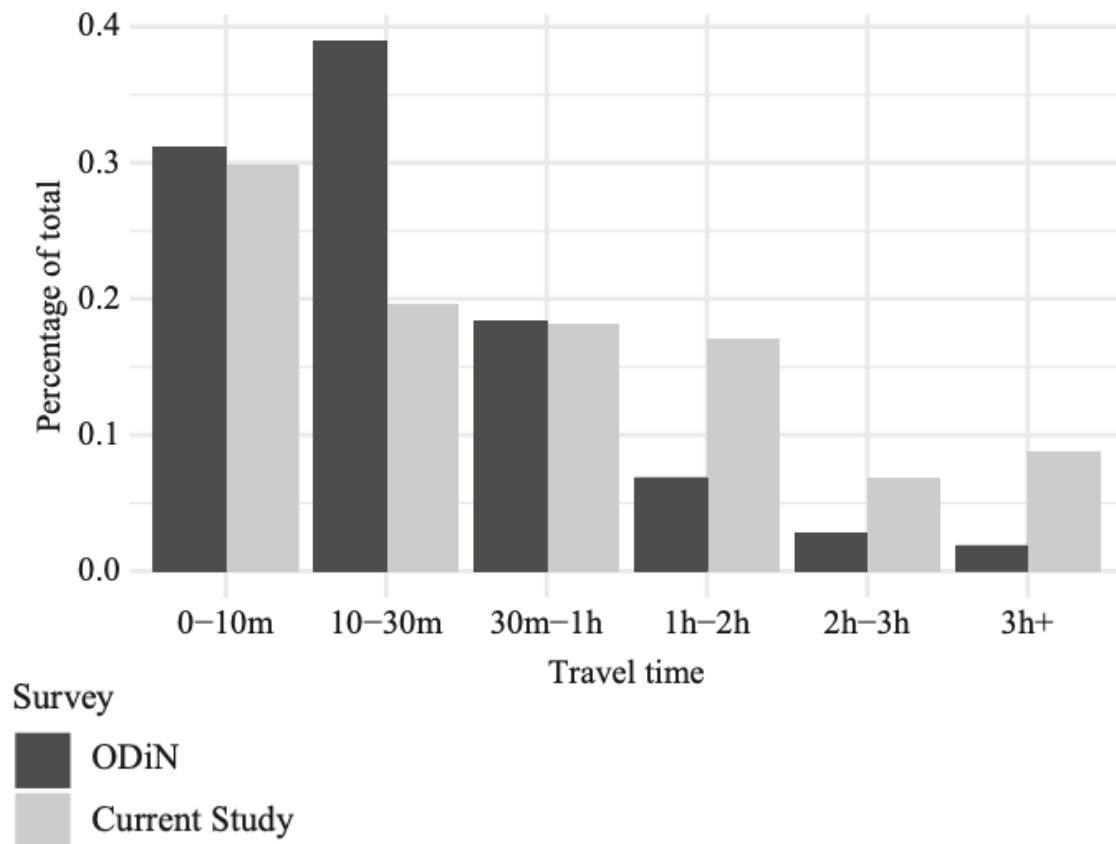


Questions about stops

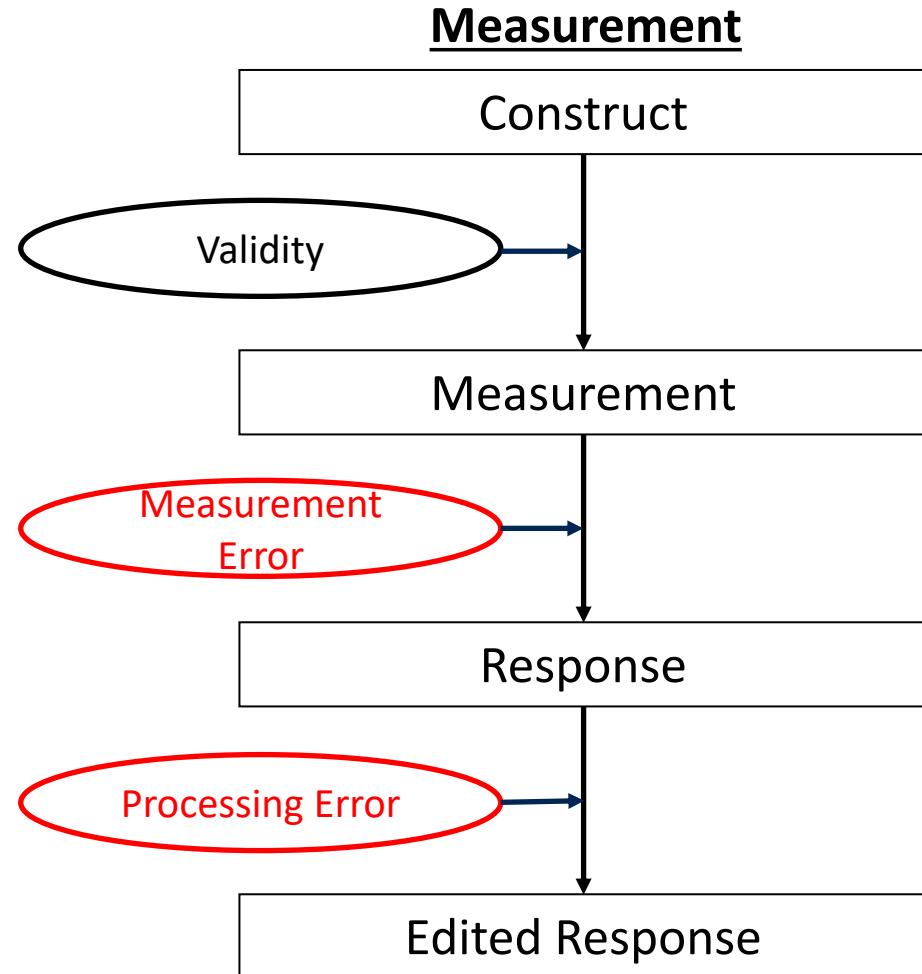


Questions about trips

Example: How do people move around in everyday life?



Measurement error in app, sensor & wearables data collection

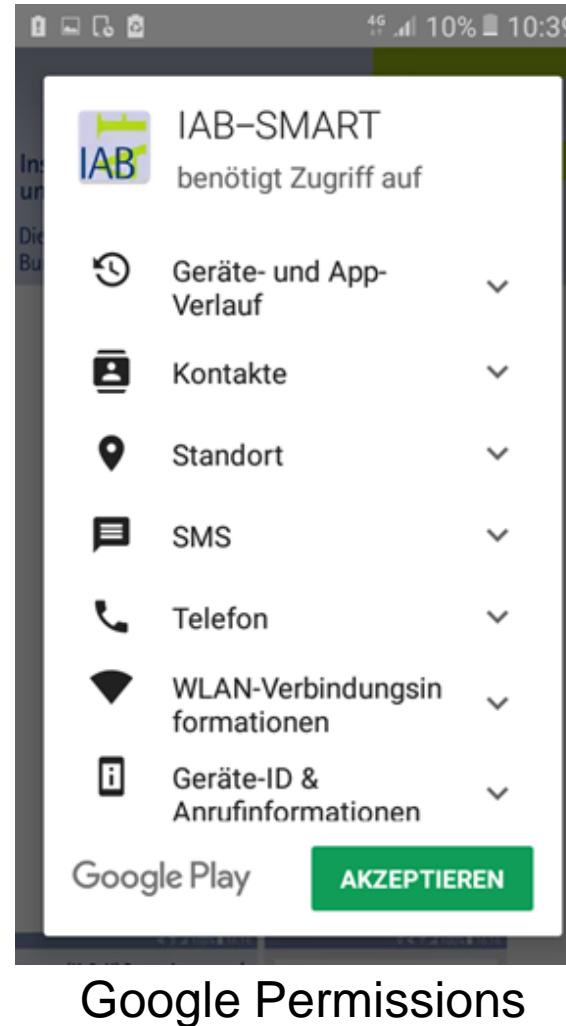


- **Measurement error:** GPS is less precise in urban areas where there are many large buildings.
- **Processing error:** Raw accelerometer data is classified as different types of activity based on where sensor/phone is located (e.g., pocket vs. purse).

Practical implementations and operational considerations

Example consent: IAB-SMART

(Kreuter et al. 2020)



Google Permissions

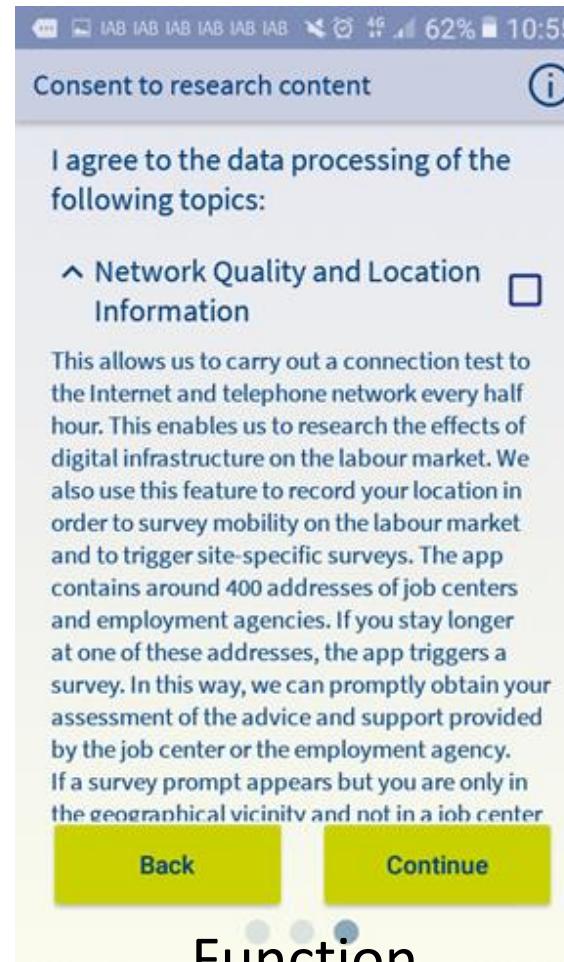


App installed

Example for consent: IAB-SMART (Kreuter et al. 2020)



Individual consent screen



Function explanation

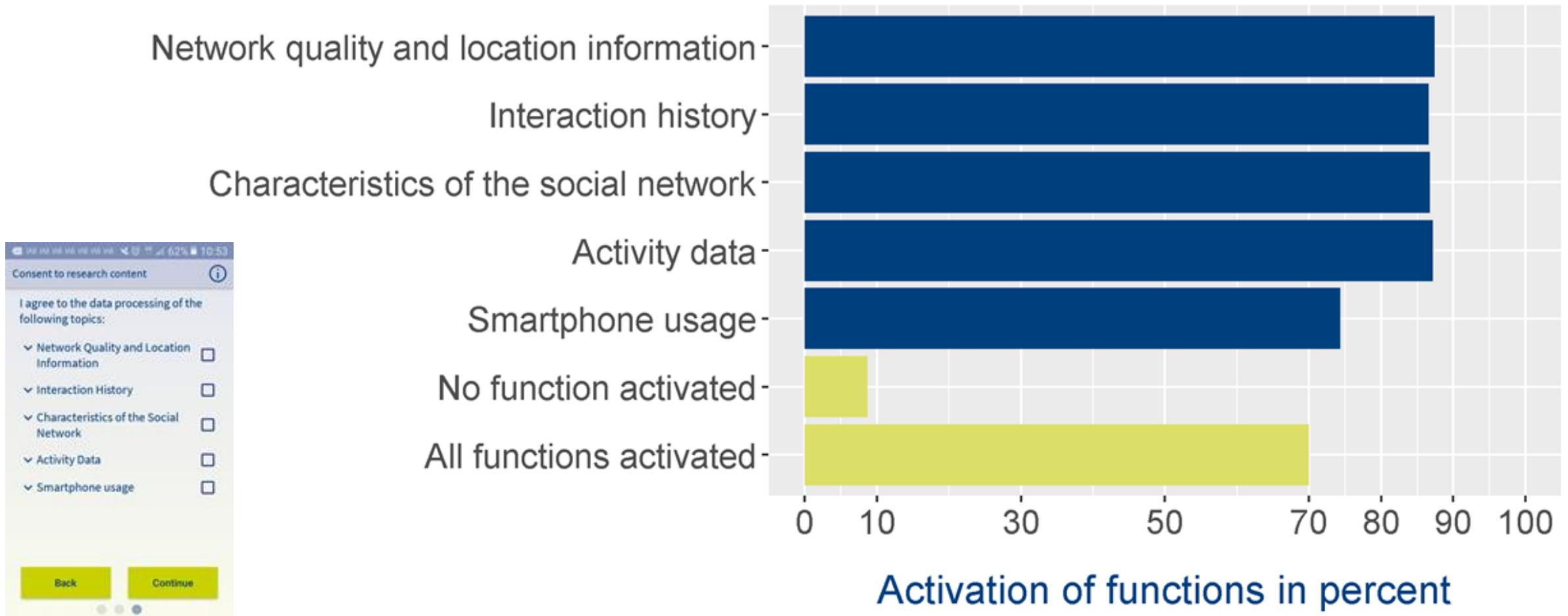


Full consent

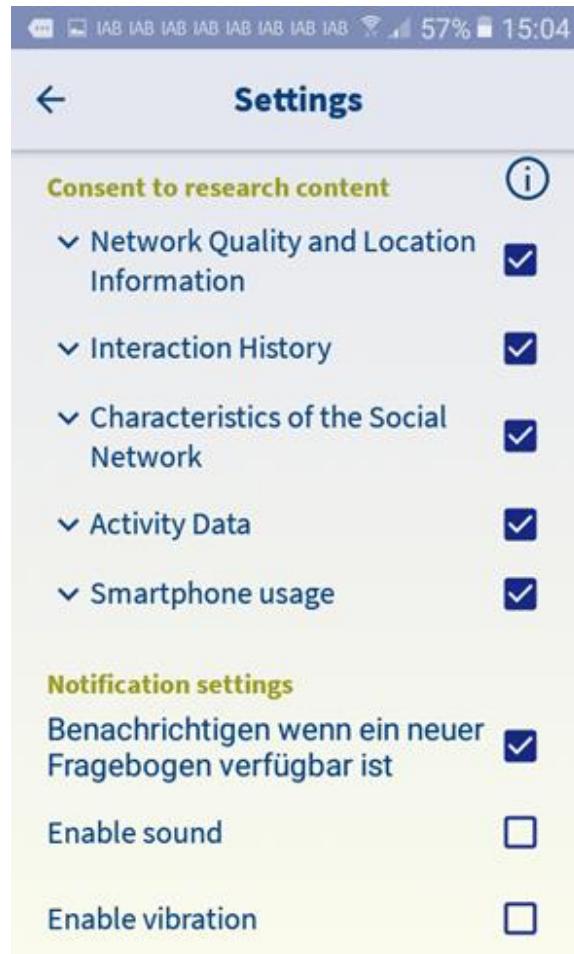


App home screen

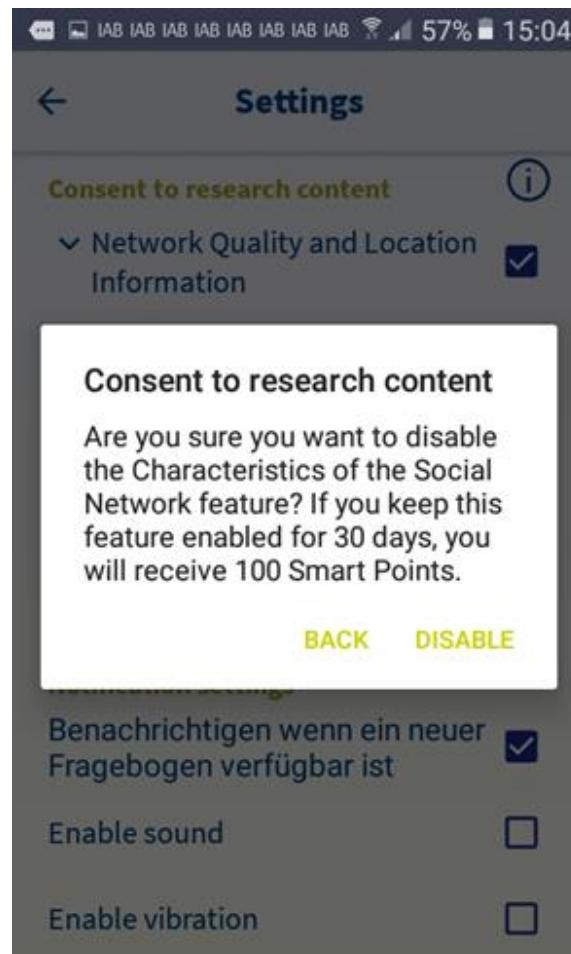
Example for consent: IAB-SMART (Kreuter et al. 2020)



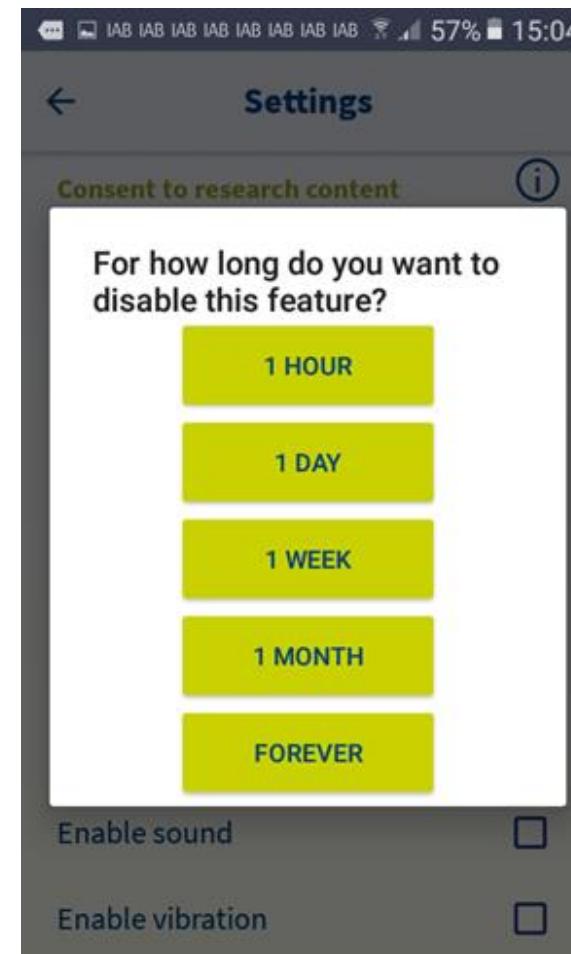
Example for consent: IAB-SMART (Kreuter et al. 2020)



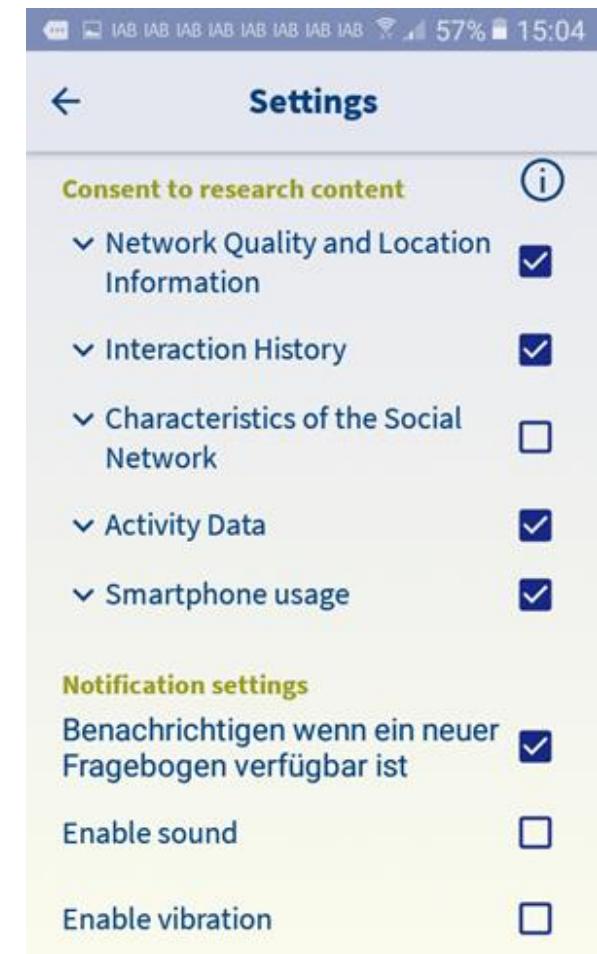
App settings



Withdrawing
consent



Withdrawing
consent



App settings

Example consent: One-time GPS (Struminskaya et al. 2021)



General consent



Framing, agency, privacy explanation



GPS measurement

Frequency of sensor measurement

- *Sampling rate* defines frequency of measurement (usually in Hz)
- Realized frequency depends on various factors
 - Sensor's technical capabilities (max. sampling rate)
 - Outside factors (e.g., sleep/battery saving mode, technical failure)
 - Design decisions by researcher
- In practice, there seem to be four groups of measurement frequencies
 - Contingent
 - Discrete
 - Continuous
 - Combination

Frequency of sensor measurement

- Contingent
 - Measurement only at specific times, adding individual data points to survey, as if additional question was asked
 - e.g., GPS location whenever EMA is answered (MacKerron & Mourato 2013)

Frequency of sensor measurement

- Contingent
- Discrete
 - Usually to conserve battery and storage and/or to protect privacy
 - In case of GPS, allows to calculate activity radius but not specific traces
 - e.g., GPS every 5 min from 9 am to 9 pm ([York Cornwell & Cagney 2017](#)), every 15 minutes ([Sugie 2018](#)), every 30 minutes ([Kreuter et al. 2020](#))
 - e.g., audio recordings for 30s every 7 min during waking hours ([Fingerman et al. 2020, 2022](#))

Frequency of sensor measurement

- Contingent
- Discrete
- Continuous
 - Tracking of smartphone-mediated behavior usually always on (e.g., Kreuter et al. 2020; Stachl et al. 2020; Sugie 2018)
 - Accelerometer & gyroscope usually always on to detect movement
 - Actual frequency depends on device, model, etc.
 - GPS collected at high frequency allows measurement of exact route
 - But may have negative effect on phone performance
 - Microphone always on (e.g., Wang et al. 2014)
 - But data pre-processed on device to save storage and preserve privacy

Frequency of sensor measurement

- Contingent
- Discrete
- Continuous
- Combination
 - Combining fine grained tracking with saving battery and reducing invasiveness
 - e.g., measure activity (accelerometer) only at specific times during the day
 - 15 min twice a day (Lathia et al. 2017)
 - e.g., reduce sampling rate of GPS if idle, based on accelerometer measures
 - once every second when in motion but only every minute when still (McCool et al. 2021)

Battery life

- High sampling rates might reduce battery
 - Especially for GPS tracking
- Newer models might go to sleep mode and/or turn off data collection when reaching low battery level

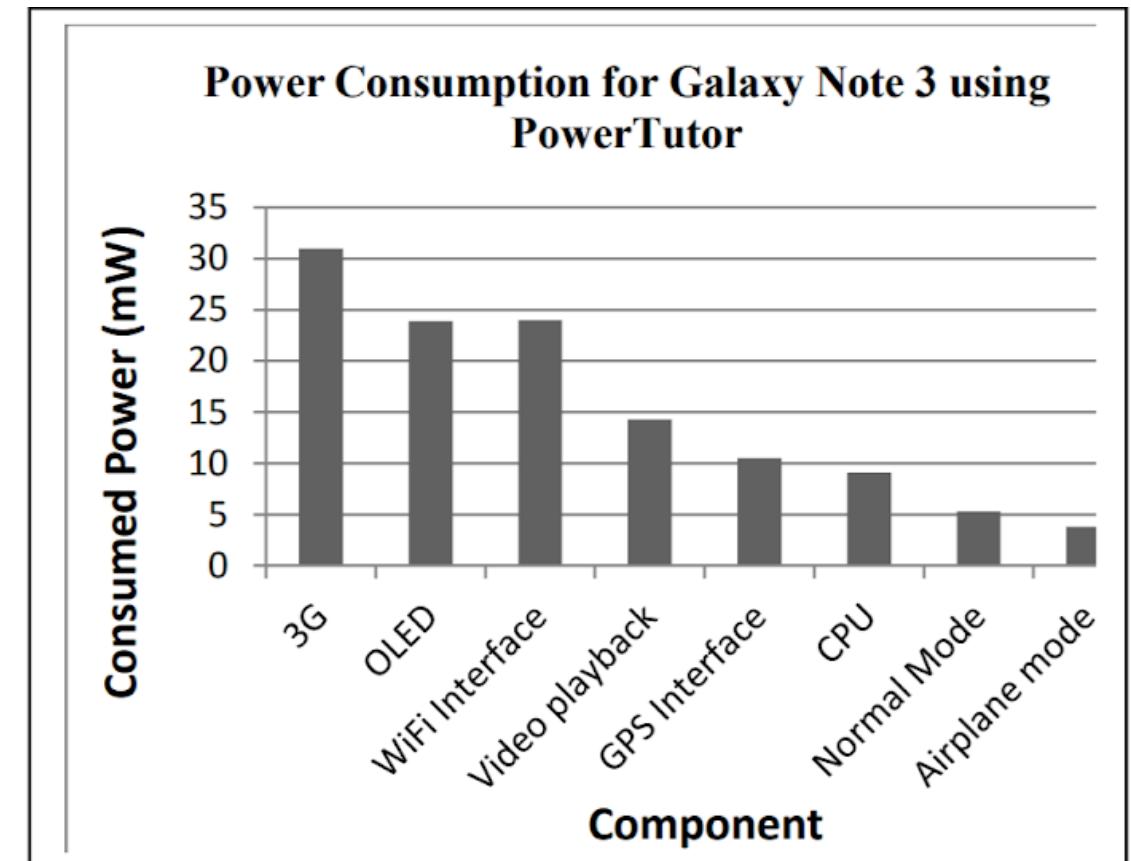
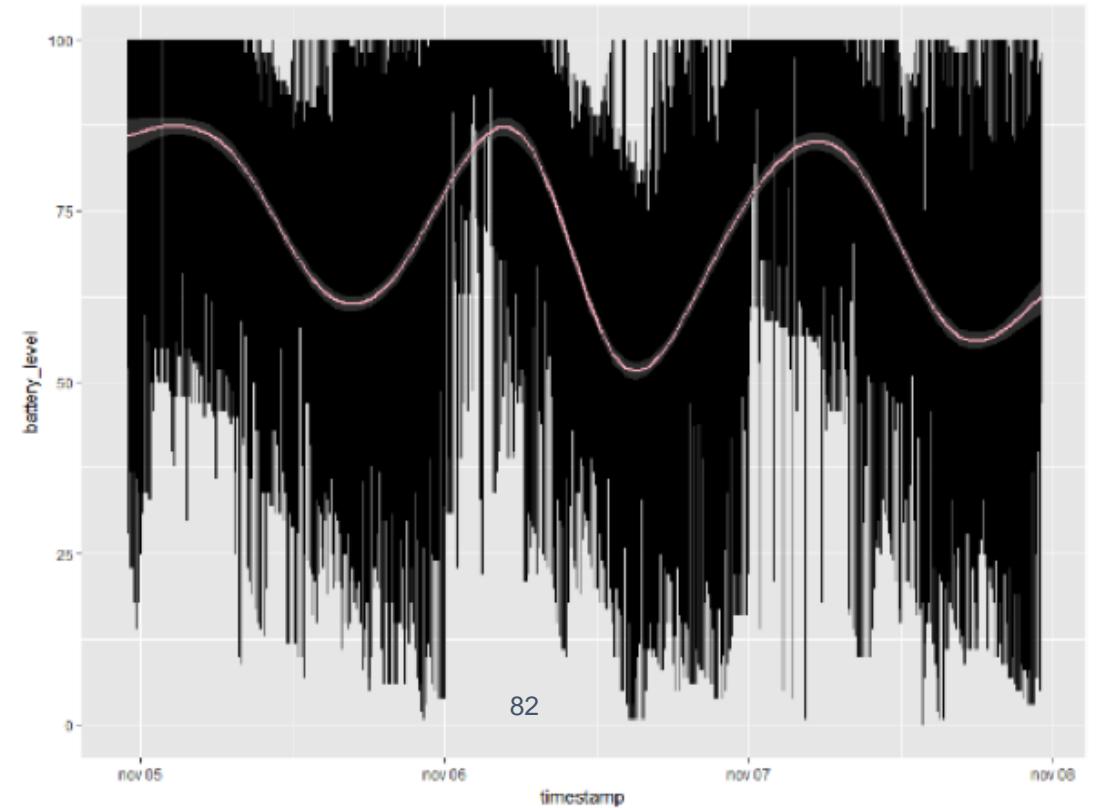


Fig. 5. Power measurements for Galaxy Note3 using PowerTutor.

Battery life example: Statistics Netherlands Travel App

(McCool et al. 2019)

- Battery levels for all participants Nov 5-8, 2018
 - Battery levels follow circadian pattern
 - Very few batteries run empty over course of four days
- For loander devices, participants need to be reminded to charge battery

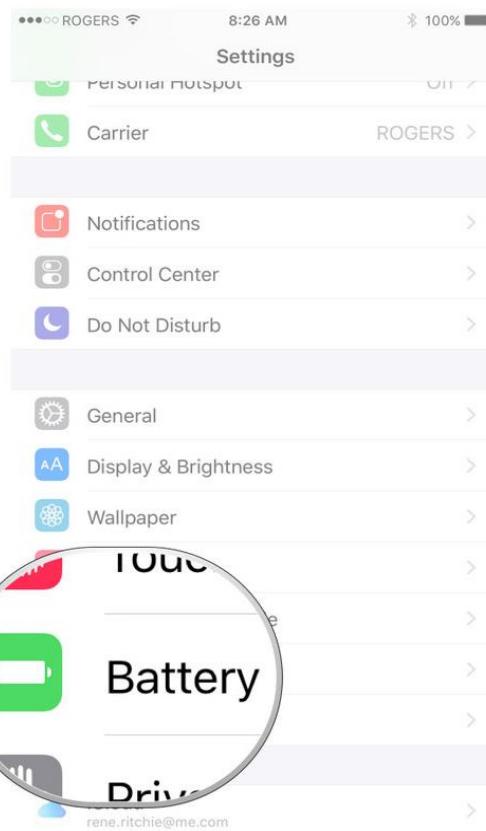


Exercise

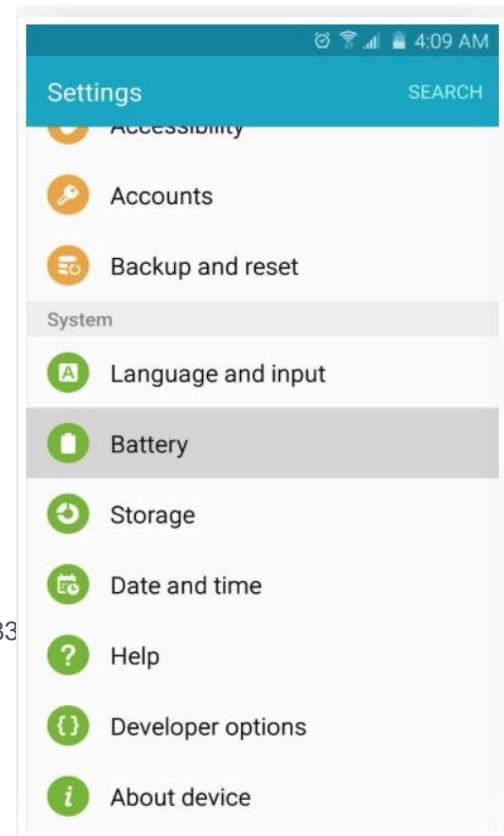
Find out what drains your battery!

- Settings → Battery

iPhone



Android



83

Source: <https://www.imoore.com/how-see-whats-using-battery-life-your-iphone-or-ipad>

Source: <https://android.gadgethacks.com/how-to/whats-draining-your-androids-battery-find-out-fix-for-good-0162267/>

Data transfer

- Some systems store data first on device and then transmit them to server at predefined intervals or once connected to Wi-Fi
 - e.g., for smartphones, if no Wi-Fi connection available for longer time, more expensive cell connection is used
- Other systems require researcher to collect device and download data manually
 - e.g., research-grade accelerometers

Storage

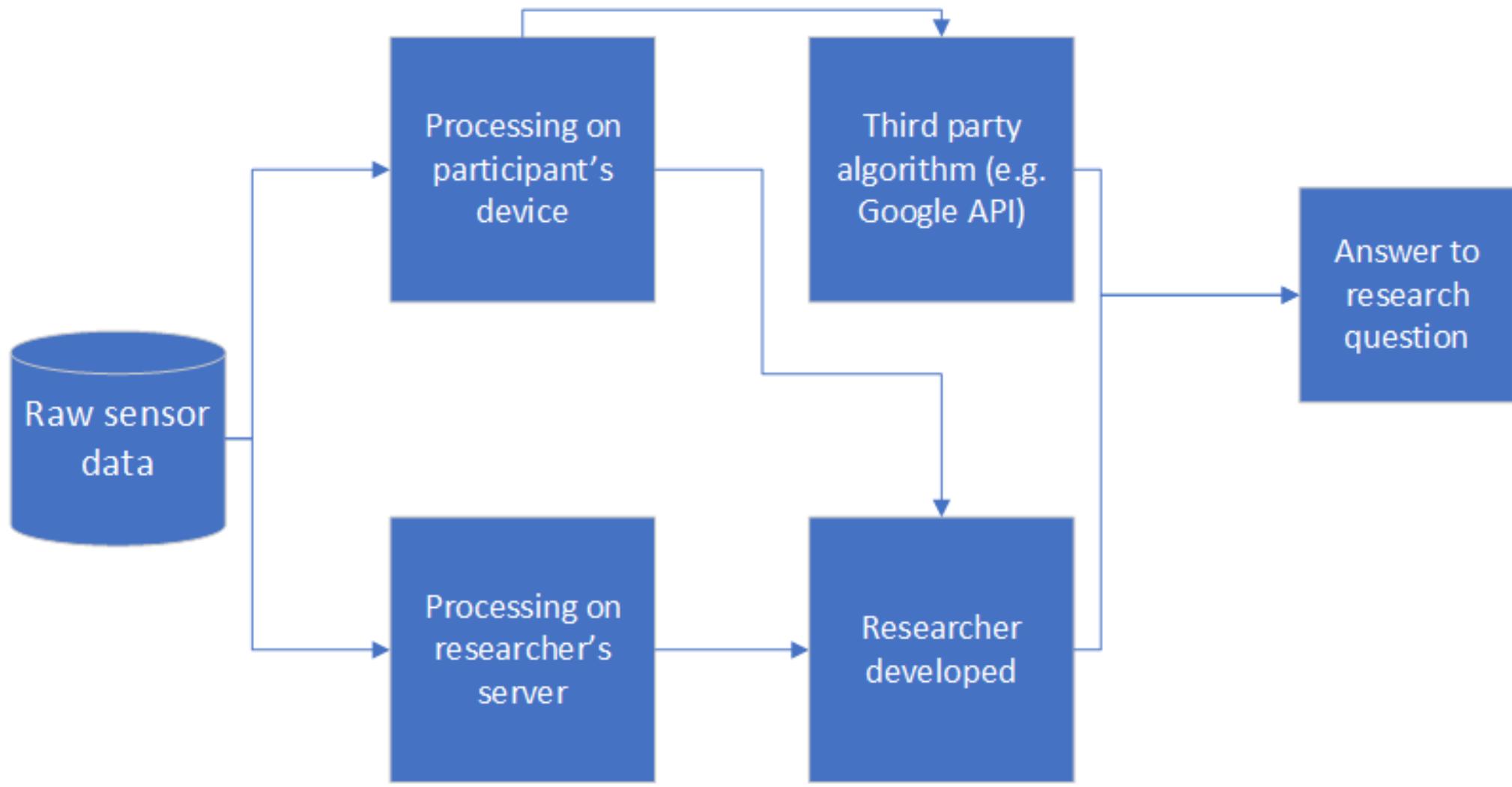
- Size of data = Sampling rate * Field period
 - Even small samples, might produce “*Big Data*”
 - e.g., accelerometer data (three coordinates) collected at 60 Hz (i.e., 60 measurements per sec) for 10 min creates 108,000 data points per participant
- ...think whether you really need this amount of data and if so, have the appropriate infrastructure ready
- Processing data on device and only transmitting processed/aggregated data saves storage for researchers
 - e.g., using Google API to automatically classify accelerometer data into transportation modes
 - e.g., OCR for receipt scanning

Costs

- Sensor measurement might seem relatively inexpensive because of small/no marginal costs of additional data
- Costs come from various sources
 - App development & maintenance (potentially for multiple OS)
 - Loaner devices
 - Incentives for participants
 - Technical support (e.g., hotline)
 - Storage infrastructure
 - Data handling & analytical skills (e.g., data wrangling, working with machine learning algorithms, data linkage, etc.)
 - Data visualization skills (e.g., GIS expertise)

Data from sensors, apps, and wearables

From raw data to insights



Examples of sensor data: Accelerometer

Examples of sensor data: GPS and trip motives

	device_id	latitude	longitude	accuracy	speed	altitude	timestamp
1:	23	52.09460	5.134593	15.204	0	54.7	2018-10-31 22:53:22
2:	23	52.09460	5.134593	15.204	0	54.7	2018-10-31 22:54:22
3:	23	52.09460	5.134593	15.204	0	54.7	2018-10-31 22:56:40
4:	23	52.09460	5.134593	15.204	0	54.7	2018-10-31 22:57:40
5:	23	52.09460	5.134593	15.204	0	54.7	2018-10-31 22:59:05

38524:		23	52.09464	5.134572	15.175	0	54.7 2018-11-12 00:00:33
38525:		23	52.09464	5.134572	15.175	0	54.7 2018-11-12 00:00:33

	device_id	local_stop_id	begin_timestamp	end_timestamp
1:	23	7	2018-10-31 17:05:47	2018-10-31 17:11:51
2:	23	11	2018-10-31 17:26:56	2018-10-31 17:31:39
3:	23	5	2018-10-31 17:32:51	2018-10-31 17:40:09
4:	23	4	2018-10-31 17:45:13	2018-10-31 19:03:58
5:	23	8	2018-10-31 19:04:08	2018-11-01 12:53:08
6:	23	9	2018-11-01 13:00:52	2018-11-01 15:47:21
7:	23	10	2018-11-01 15:58:42	2018-11-02 02:00:10

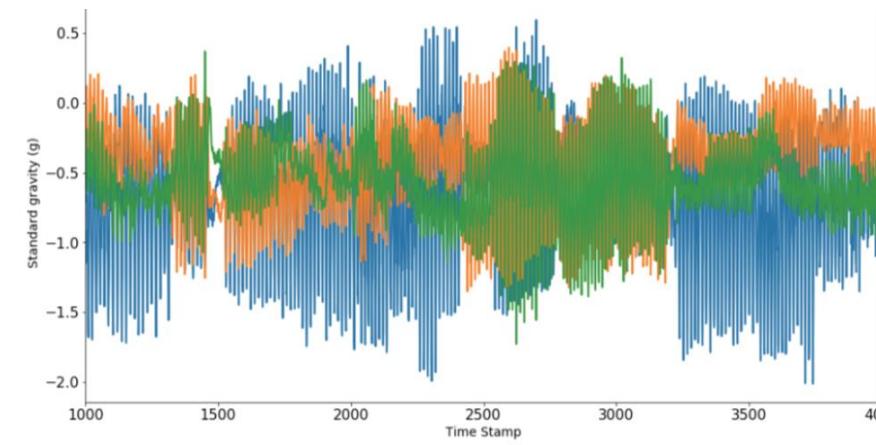
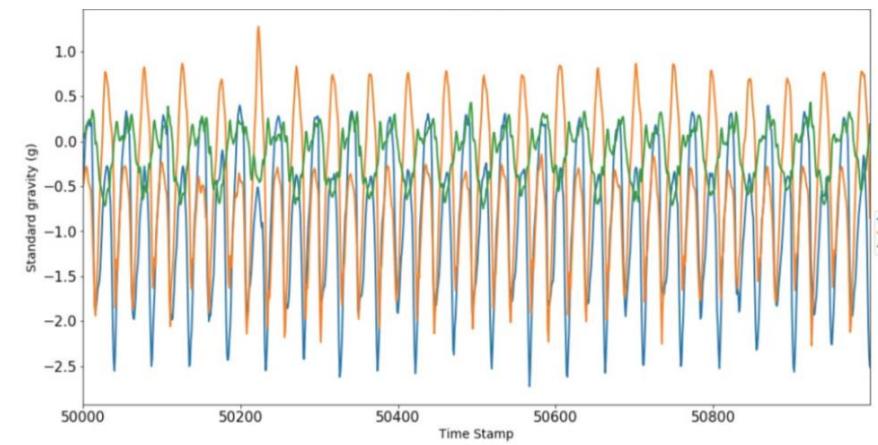
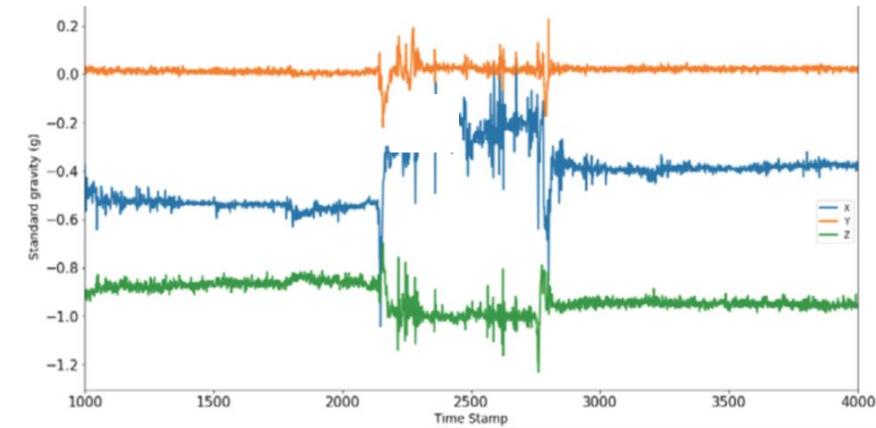
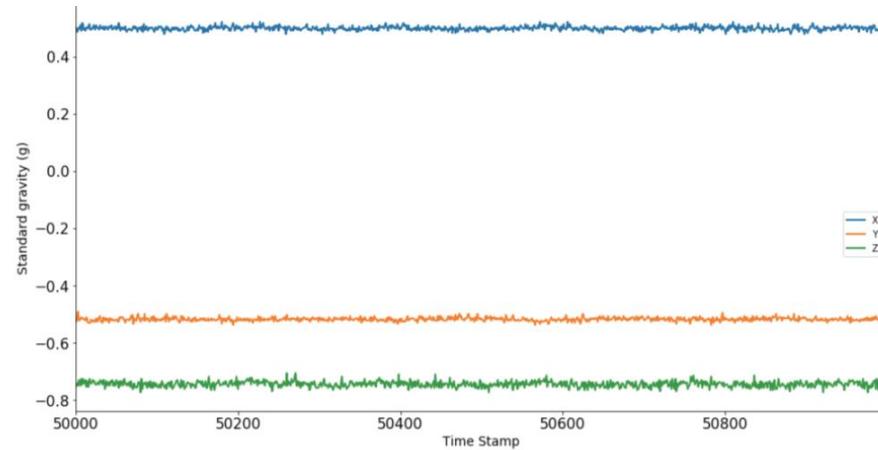
	device_id	local_stop_visit_id	motive
1:	23	3	Home
2:	23	2	Paidwork
3:	23	1	Home
4:	23	7	Transfer
5:	23	6	Transfer
6:	23	4	Home

Processing raw data

- Data needs to be cleaned and processed before analysis (*Data wrangling/munging*)
 - This usually takes much longer than data analysis (80/20 rule)
- Aggregation of raw data to meaningful data point level
 - What is “meaningful” depends on research and use of data
- Processing of raw data can happen on
 - User’s device using (built-in) third party or researcher-developed algorithm
 - Preserves storage and protects privacy
 - No access to raw data
 - Researcher’s server
 - Full control over data processing
 - All data needs to be transferred

Exercise: Detect types of activity

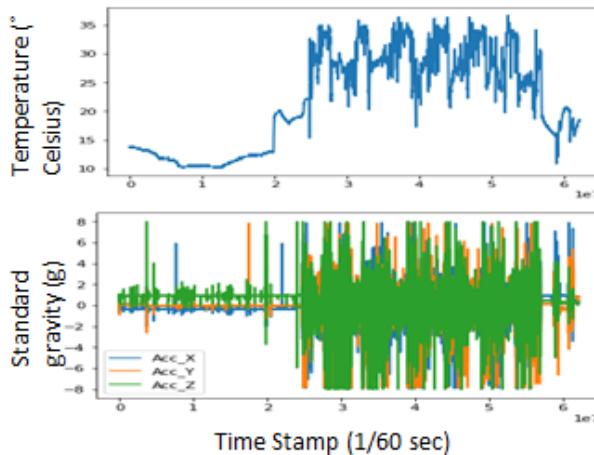
Match:
Brushing teeth
Jogging
Sleep
Sitting



Model building pipeline

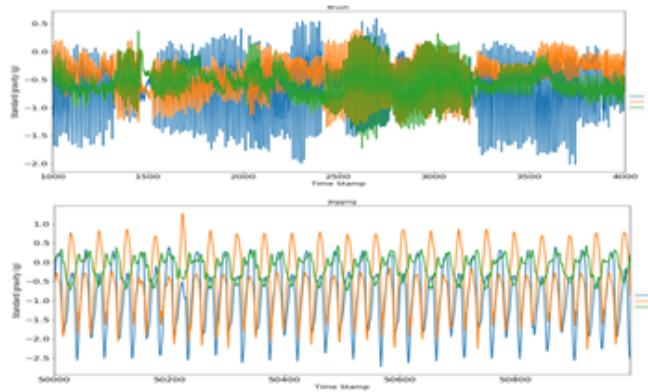
Data Cleaning & pre-processing

- Removal non-wear time
- Removal of high frequency (frequency higher than 15 Hz)
- Data with wear time less than 7 days discarded



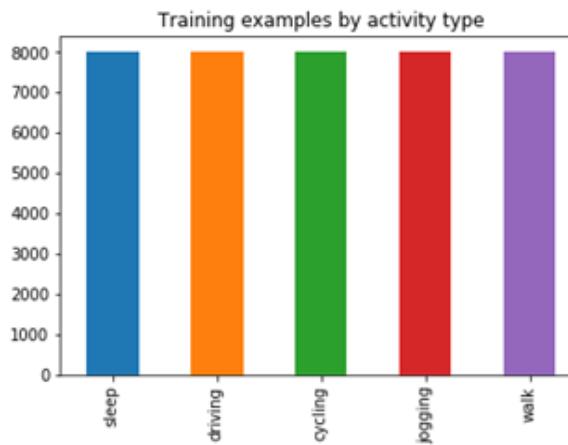
Feature Engineering

- **Time domain:** X, Y, Z, temperature, mean, median, standard deviation, RMS, percentile distribution
- **Frequency domain:** FT, dominant frequency selection, power of signal



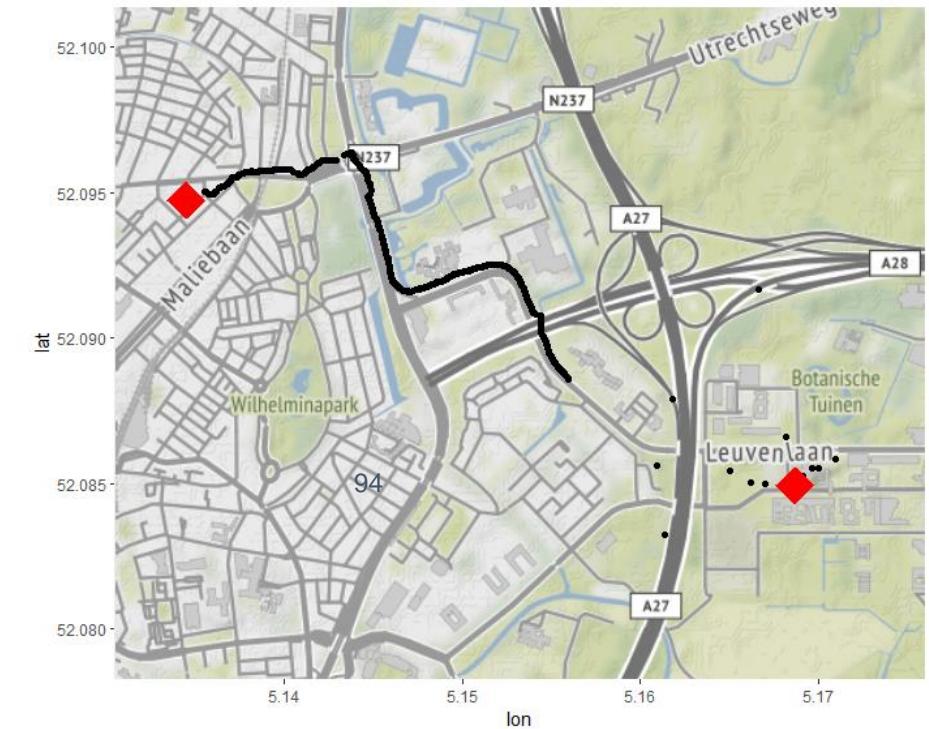
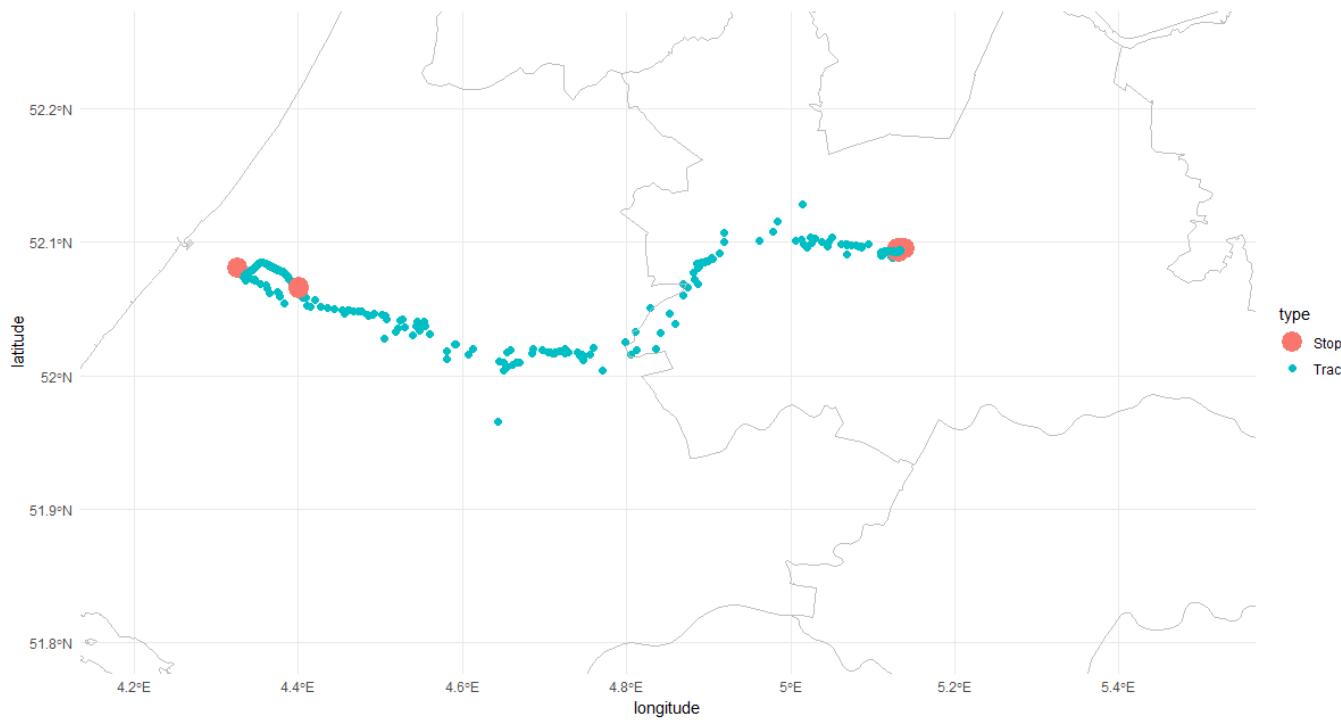
Model building & validation

- Optimizing the epoch time
- Preparing balanced dataset
- Train/test splitting of 80%/20%
- Training and validation of the model (SVM, RF, and LR model)



Example: GPS tracks and stop detection (McCool et al. 2019)

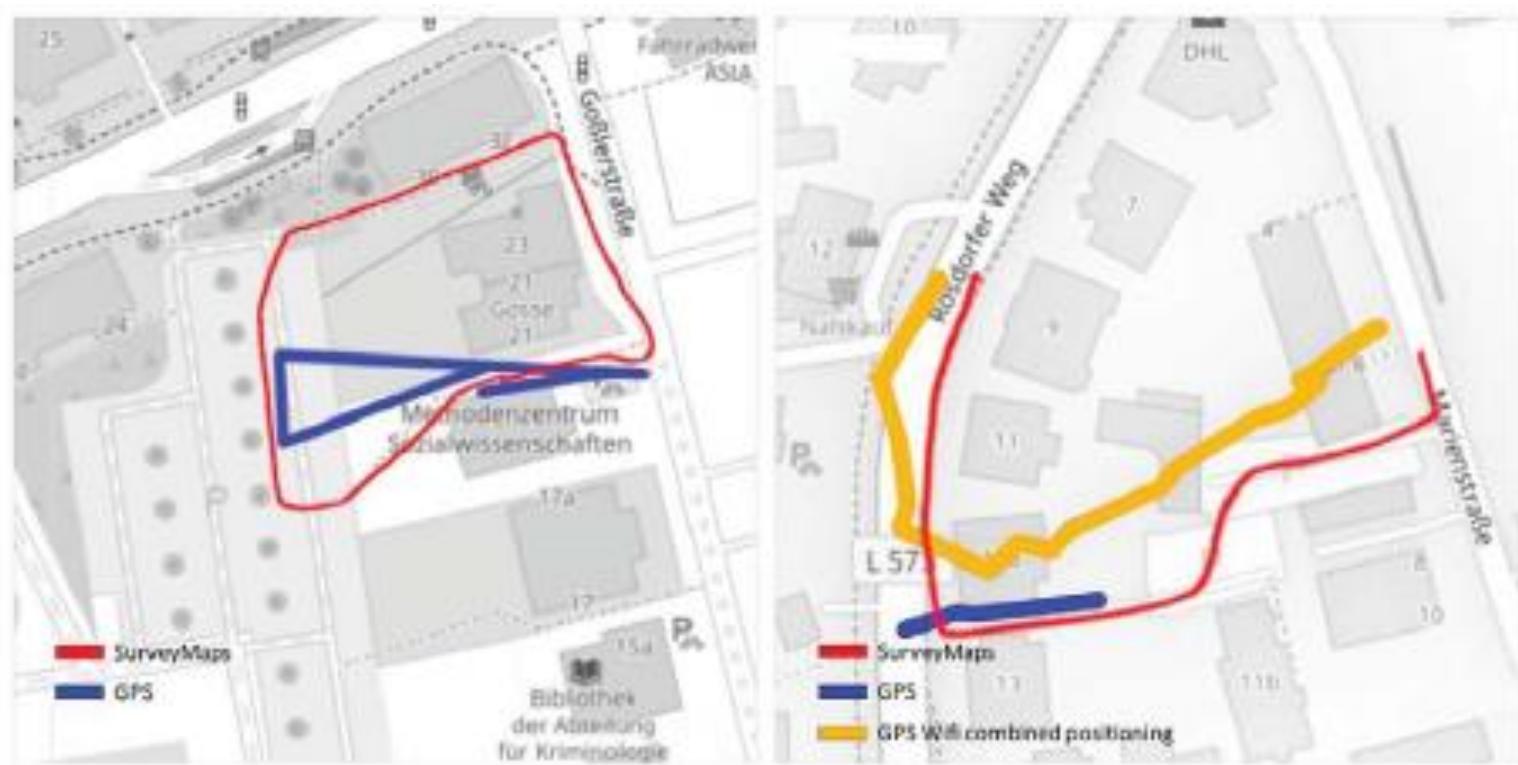
- Stops defined based on “static” location: radius has to be (pre)defined by researcher



Errors when collecting, processing, and interpreting sensor data

Errors during data collection

- Sensor-based errors/differences
 - Differences between types of sensors as well as brands and models of devices
 - Not one sensor/device per se better than others, depends on what should be measured under what circumstances



Schlosser et al. (2019)

Errors during data collection

- Sensor-based errors/differences
- Device handling
 - Measurement might differ depending on where/
how sensor/device is worn
 - e.g., differences in how men and women carry around smartphones



Sztyler et al. (2017)

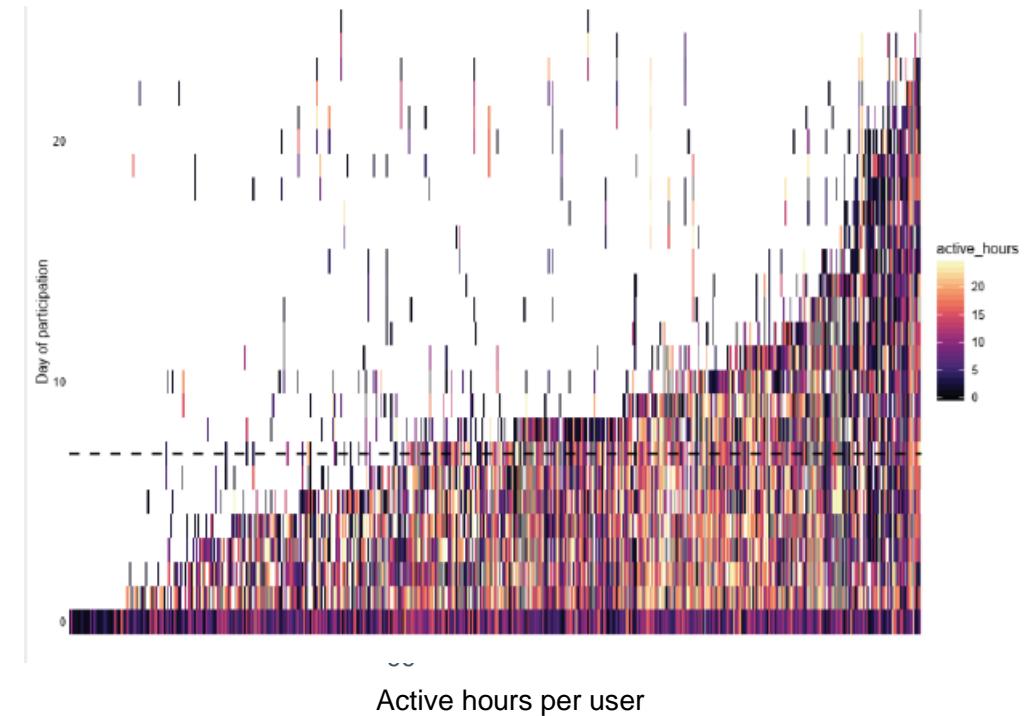
Errors during data collection

(Keusch et al. 2022)

Behavioral barriers – Smartphone...	Sample 1	Sample 2
...shared with another person	2%	1%
...not always on	32%	44%
...left at home	17%	14%
...carried in purse/backpack/bag when not at home	46%	30%
...left stationary when at home and not asleep	66%	47%
...turned off or in other room at night	49%	34%
<i>n</i>	3,956	2,525

Errors during data collection

- Sensor-based errors
- Device handling
- Missing data
 - Technical issues:
 - Urban canyons, underground, etc. when collecting GPS
 - Device out of power or sleep mode
 - iOS blocks collection of location in background
 - ...
 - Noncompliance:
 - Leaving device at home
 - Deliberately turning device off at certain locations or times
 - Forgetting to turn device back on again
 - Missing permissions
 - ...



Errors during data collection

- Sensor-based errors
- Device handling
- Missing data
- Erroneous/Invalid data
 - e.g., fake GPS apps, VPN



Source: Sebastian Bähr

Errors during data collection

- Sensor-based errors
- Device handling
- Missing data
- Erroneous data
- Providing feedback & measurement reactivity
 - e.g., participants show 7% more physical activity when wearing Fitbit (with feedback) compared to when wearing GENEActive (no feedback) (Darling et al. 2021)



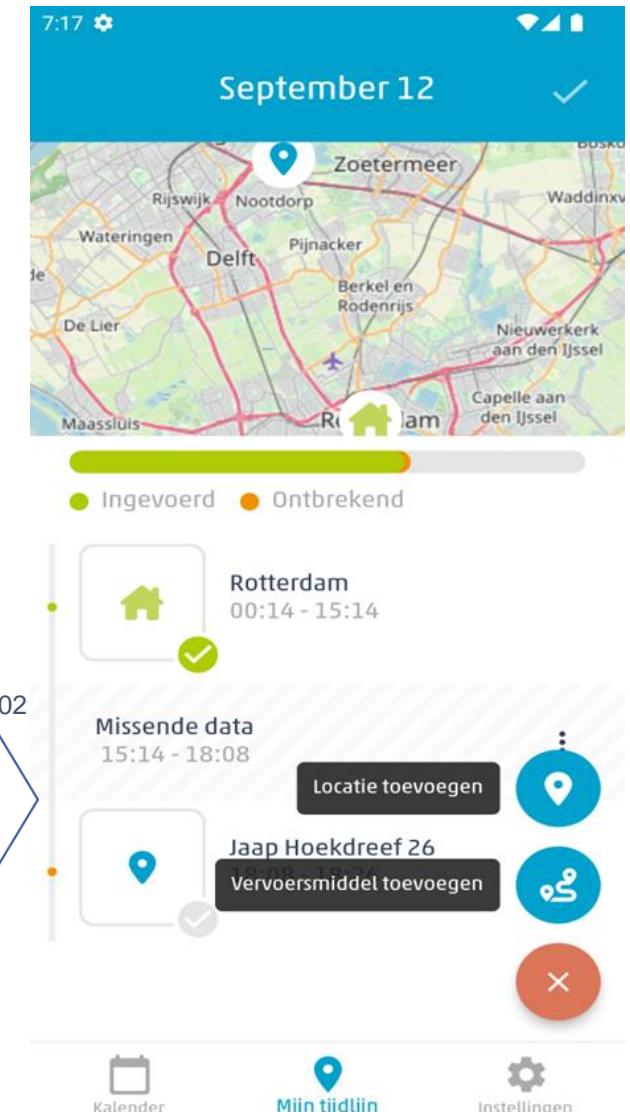
Source: <https://twitter.com/mbrennanchina/status/1128201958962032641>

Providing feedback to participants



Household Budget Survey (HBS)
fall 2021,
NL, ES, LU
N=3916,
Completion = 16%
No influence of feedback on representativeness, data quality

Travel app possibility to provide context to passive data, add data

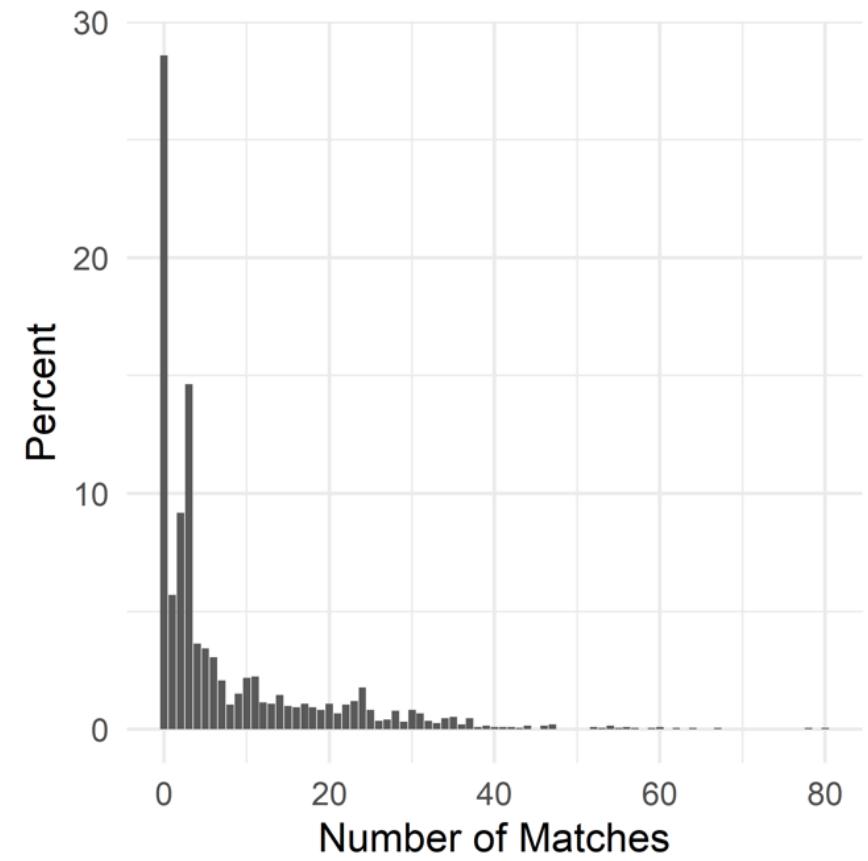


Errors during inference & interpretation

- Raw sensor data must be processed and classified to infer behavior
- “Black box” approach when using third-party algorithm to classify data on device
 - What looks like raw data to researcher is actually (heavily) pre-processed
 - e.g., activity classification was trained based on data from young adults (“WEIRDOS” ©Mick P. Couper) → used to classify behavior of general population
 - e.g., smartphone forgotten at home in a bag → respondent is asleep
- Self-report still needed for validation

Errors during inference & interpretation

- Errors can also arise when using third-party reference databases
- Challenges in matching places to points of interest (Eckman et al. 2020)
 - Data from multiple bases agreed only on 53 of 1,928 collected coordinates
 - Disagreement between data sources
 - “Strip mall problem”: grocery store on Google, liquor store on Foursquare, dentist’s office on Yelp
 - Agreement for very big stores, airports, etc.
 - Sometimes, too many matches
 - Sometimes, no matches at all



Eckman et al. (2020)

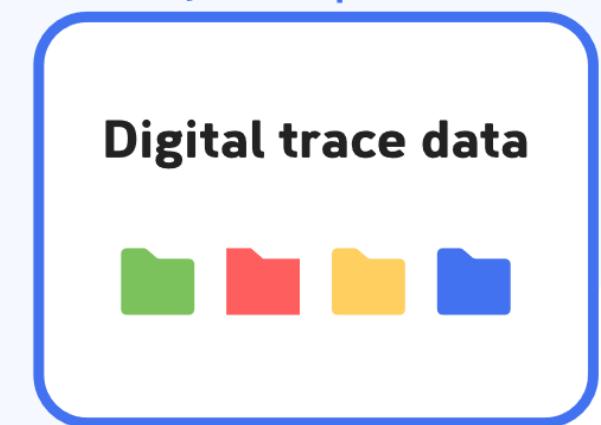
Data donation

Data donation

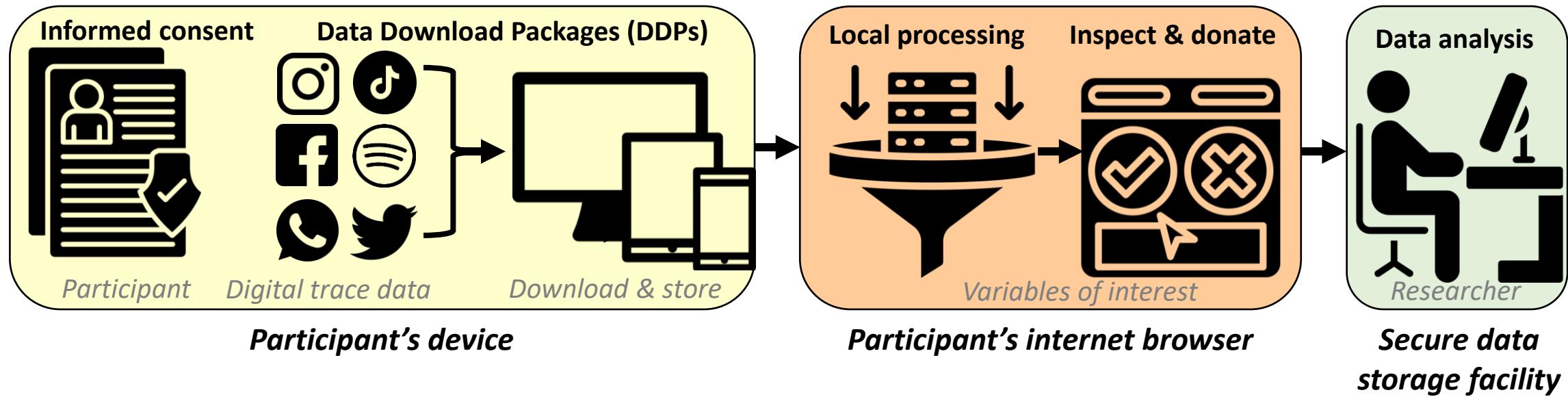


GDPR Art. 15 (Right of access) and 20 (Right to data portability)

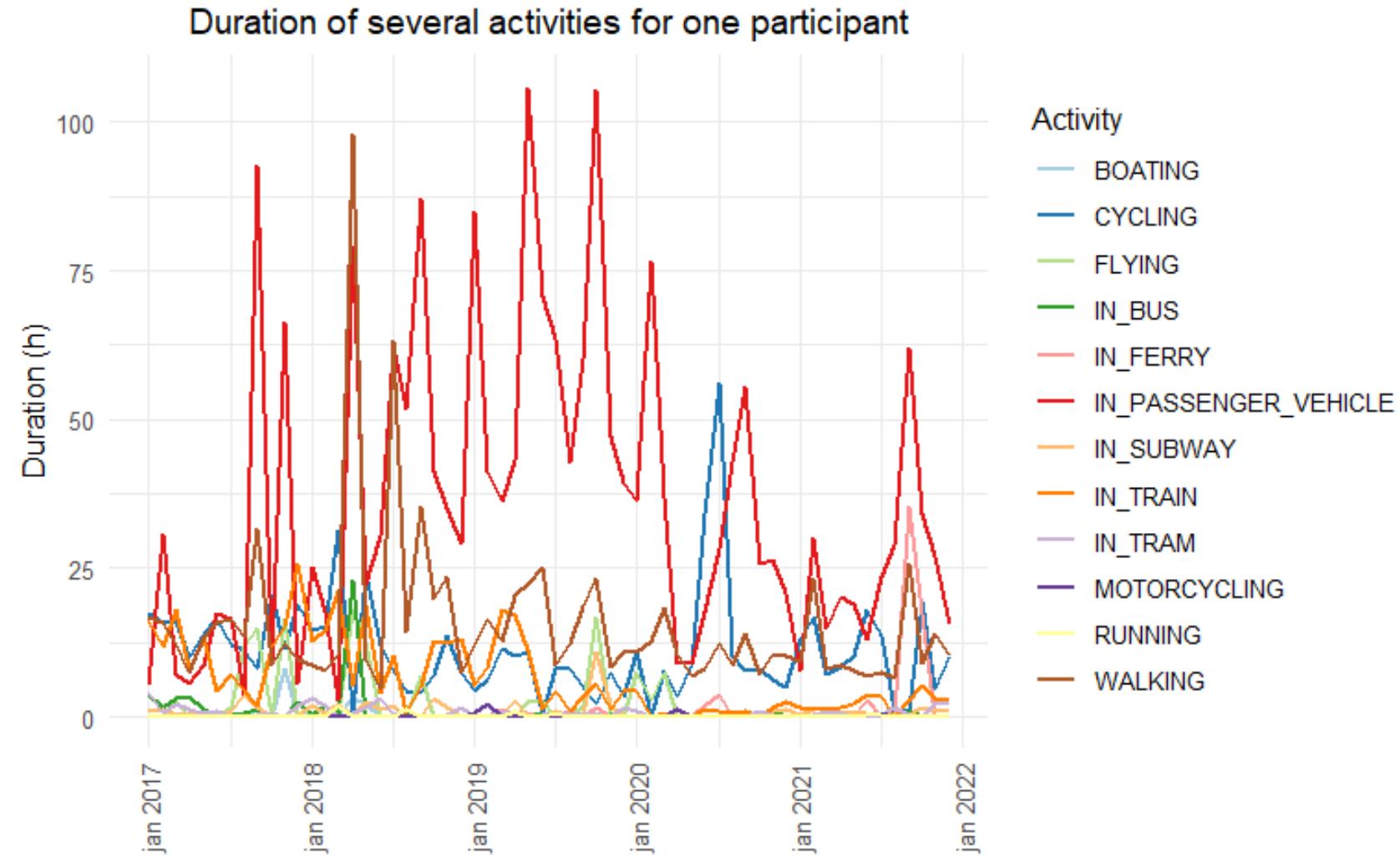
- Receive personal data in structured, commonly used machine-readable format (“Data Download Package”; DDP)
- Transmit data to another data controller



Local processing



Google Location History Data Donation



Data donation

Advantages

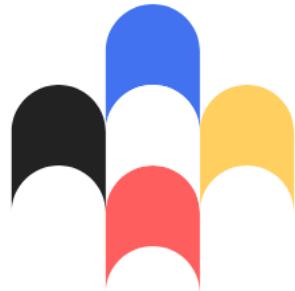
- Allows access to data from digital platforms that cannot be collected otherwise
- Works for many platforms
 - Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Google, YouTube, Netflix, Apple Health, Fitbit, ...
- User retains control over what data are donated

Challenges

- Data donation process rather cumbersome for users (willingness/participation)
- Linking between donated data and other data (e.g., from survey) not well implemented yet
- Technical know-how needed

Software (Port) to build a complete study flow

- Consent form
- Privacy policy
- Support
- Send out invites
- Monitor progress



Researcher perspective:

1 Settings 2 Privacy 3 Flow 4 Support 5 Invite 6 Monitor | Publish Preview

Participant flow

Add items from the library to build a custom flow for your participants.

Use the arrows to order the flow

Questionnaire ▼ Expand Delete

Request manual ▼ Expand Delete

Download manual ▼ Expand Delete

Donate ▼ Expand Delete

Library

Choose which items to add to your flow.

Questionnaire

Redirects participants to an online questionnaire.

Add

Request manual

Instructs participants on how to request digital trace data.

Add

Download manual

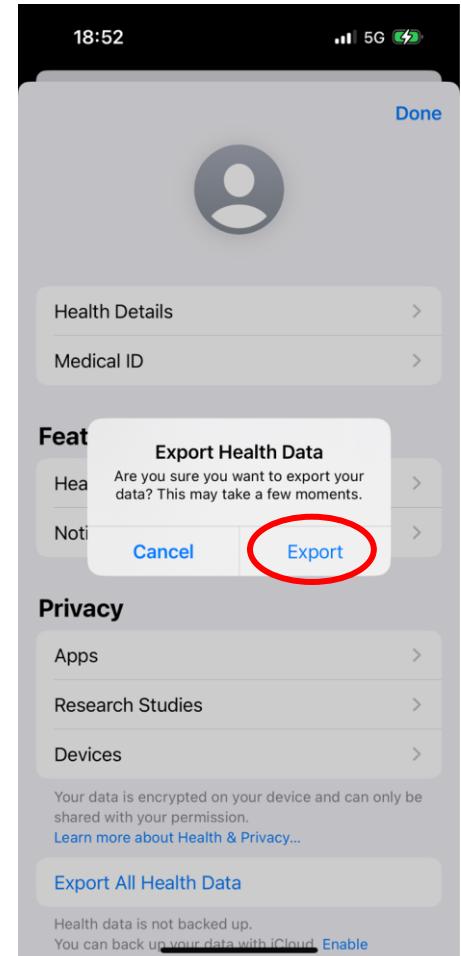
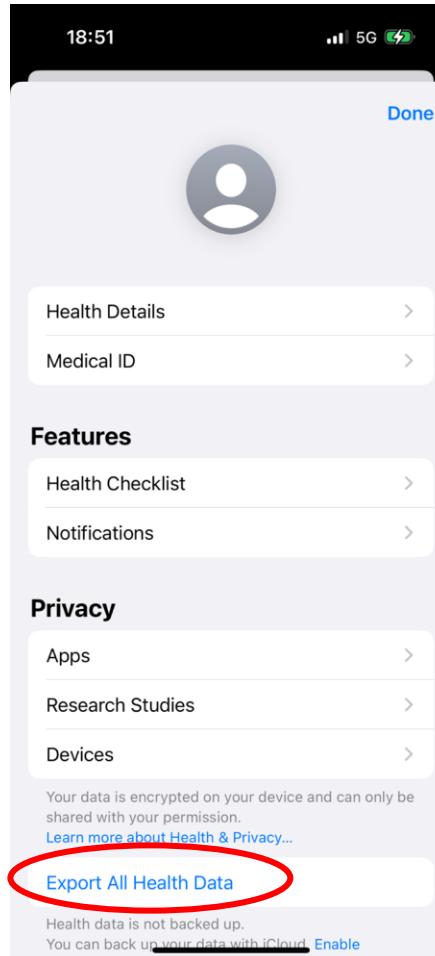
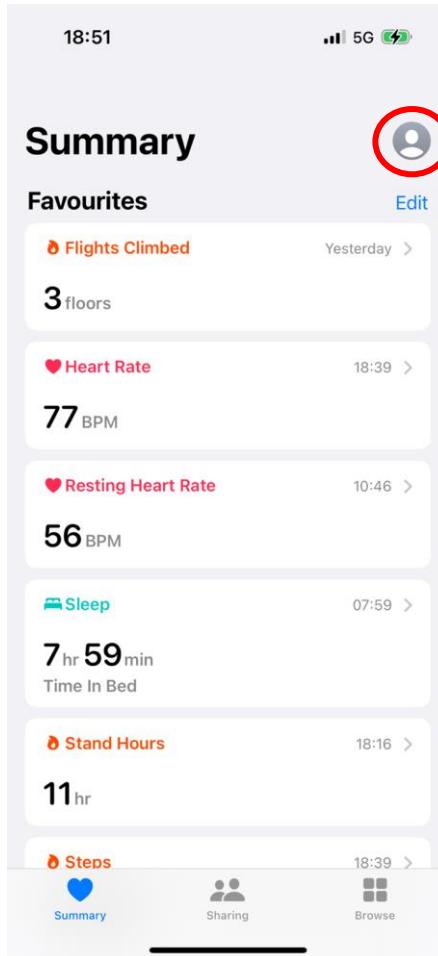
Instructs participants on how to download digital trace data.

Add

See Boeschoten et al. 2023 article for description of the software

Exercise: Request your DDP

Download DDP from iHealth



Request DDP from Google (with location history)

Walk-through as shown to study participants on the following slides

- Step 1: Navigate to <https://takeout.google.com> and log in
- Step 2: Click "Deselect all"
- Step 3: Find "Location History"
- Step 4: Check "Your locations and settings from Location History"
- Step 5: Scroll to bottom of page
- Step 6: Click "Next step"
- Step 7: Scroll to bottom of page
- Step 8: Click "Create export" button
- Step 9: Check email for message from Google

← Google Takeout

Your account, your data.

Export a copy of content in your Google Account to back it up or use it with a service outside of Google.

CREATE A NEW EXPORT

1

Select data to include

46 of 47 selected

Products

[Deselect all](#)



"Hold for Me", "Direct My Call" and "Call Screen" shared audio
Calls donated after using "Assistive Phone Calls" services. [More info](#)

114



ZIP format



Access Log Activity
Collection of account activity logs



[← Google Takeout](#)

Your account, your data.

Export a copy of content in your Google Account to back it up or use it with a service outside of Google.

CREATE A NEW EXPORT

1

Select data to include

46 of 47 selected

Products



"Hold for Me", "Direct My Call" and "Call Screen" shared audio
Calls donated after using "Assistive Phone Calls" services. [More info](#)



[Deselect all](#)

ZIP format



Access Log Activity
Collection of account activity logs



[← Google Takeout](#)

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CREATE A NEW EXPORT

1

Select data to include

0 of 47 selected

Products

Select all



"Hold for Me", "Direct My Call" and "Call Screen" shared audio
Calls donated after using "Assistive Phone Calls" services. [More info](#)



ZIP format



Access Log Activity

Collection of account activity logs



Scroll
down

[← Google Takeout](#)

1

Select data to include

0 of 47 selected



Keep

Notes and media attachments stored in Google Keep. [More info](#)

Multiple formats



Location History

Your locations and settings from Location History.



Multiple formats



Mail

Messages and attachments in your Gmail account in MBOX format. User settings from your Gmail account in JSON format. [More info](#)

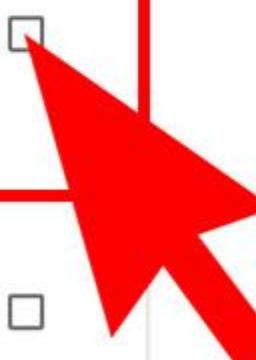
Multiple formats

≡ All Mail data included



Maps

Your preferences and personal places in Maps



← Google Takeout

Device, room, home and history information from the Home App. [More info](#)

1

Select data to include

1 of 47 selected



Keep

Notes and media attachments stored in Google Keep. [More info](#)

Multiple formats



Location History

Your locations and settings from Location History.

Multiple formats



Mail

Messages and attachments in your Gmail account in MBOX format. User settings from your Gmail account in JSON format. [More info](#)

Multiple formats

All Mail data included



Maps

Your preferences and personal places in Maps



Scroll
down



Street View

Images and videos you have uploaded to Google Street View



← Google Takeout

1

Select data to include

1 of 47 selected

Tasks

Data for your open and completed tasks. [More info](#)[JSON format](#)

YouTube and YouTube Music

Watch and search history, videos, comments and other content you've created

on YouTube and YouTube Music [More info](#)[Multiple formats](#)[All YouTube data included](#)[Next step](#)

2

Choose file type, frequency & destination

Export progress

← Google Takeout

Your account, your data.

Export a copy of content in your Google Account to back it up or use it with a service outside of Google.

CREATE A NEW EXPORT



Select data to include

1 of 47 selected



Choose file type, frequency & destination

Destination

Transfer to:

Send download link via email

When your files are ready, you'll get an email with a download link. You'll have one week to download your files.

Frequency

Export once



Scroll
down

Export once

← Google Takeout

 Export every 2 months for 1 year

Choose file type, frequency & destination

6 exports

File type & size

File type:

Zip files can be opened on almost any computer.

File size:

Exports larger than this size will be split into multiple files.

Export progress

Your account, your data.

[← Google Takeout](#)

or use it with a service outside of Google.

CREATE A NEW EXPORT



Select data to include

1 of 47 selected



Choose file type, frequency & destination

Export progress

Google is creating a copy of files from Location History

 This process can take a long time (possibly hours or days) to complete. You'll receive an email when your export is done.

Created: April 28, 2023, 4:34 PM

 Cancel export Create another export

Demo: Data Donation

Try out the Port software

- If you have requested a package, try out the software
- **No data will be stored or sent anywhere, this is just a demo!**

iHealth (step extraction):

<https://eyra.github.io/port-activity-pilot-ihealth/>

Google Location History (walking and biking extraction):

<https://eyra.github.io/port-activity-google-location-history/>

Additional resources

Selected resources for app development

- Commercial/Off-the-shelf existing platforms
 - Movisens: <https://www.movisens.com/en/>
 - MOTUS: <https://www.motusresearch.io/en>
 - Murmuras: <https://murmuras.com/>
- Commercial app builders (usually no special knowledge required)
 - Appypie <https://www.appypie.com>
 - Ethica Data: <https://ethicadata.com/>

Selected resources for app development

- App builders for specific OSs (require some programming knowledge)
 - Apple Research Kit: <http://researchkit.org/>
 - ResearchStack for Android: <http://researchstack.org/>
- Open source platforms/frameworks (require programming knowledge)
 - AWARE: <https://awareframework.com/>
 - Beiwe Research Platform: <https://www.beiwe.org/>
 - PACO: <https://pacoapp.com/>

Selected resources for EMA/ESM

- Specific EMA/ESM software
 - mEMA: <https://ilumivu.com>
 - ExpiWell: <https://www.expiwell.com/>
 - LifeData: <https://www.lifedatacorp.com/ecological-momentary-assessment-app-2/>
 - SEMA3: <https://sema3.com/>
 - Other online survey software, such as Blaise5 (<https://blaise.com/products/blaise-5>), can be used as sample management system that can send surveys at specific time
- Myin-Germeys, Inez, and Peter Kuppens. (Eds.). 2022.¹²⁸ [*The open handbook of experience sampling methodology: A step-by-step guide to designing, conducting, and analyzing ESM studies.*](#) (2nd ed.) Leuven: Center for Research on Experience Sampling and Ambulatory Methods Leuven

Other resources

- For visualization of location data:
 - Shiny app Utrecht University (R code): <https://github.com/sobradob/shinyapp>
- For data processing:
 - R package for log data analysis (Stachl): <https://osf.io/ut42y/>

Our book...

Keusch, Florian, Bella Struminskaya, Stephanie Eckman, and Heidi Guyer.
forthcoming. *Data Collection with Wearables, Apps, and Sensors.*

https://bookdown.org/wasbook_feedback/was/

Exercise: Apple Health Data

- If you have an iPhone or an Apple watch (or your new course-friend with an iPhone graciously shares data with you)
- Download your data, prepare it for analysis and find out something about yourself (see Blackboard for code)
 - Go to Health on your iPhone
 - Click on the icon ‘Personalize’
 - Click on Export All Health Data
- Hand in the finished exercise per email to b.struminskaya@uu.nl

