Attitudes towards Client-Side Scanning for CSAM, Terrorism, Drug Trafficking, Drug Use and Tax Evasion in Germany

Lisa Geierhaas (University of Bonn, geierhaa@cs.uni-bonn.de), Fabian Otto (OmniQuest, mailfabianotto@web.de),
Maximilian Häring(University of Bonn, haering@cs.uni-bonn.de), Matthew Smith (University of Bonn, Fraunhofer FKIE, smith@cs.uni-bonn.de)

UNIVERSITÄT BONN

Client-Side Scanning (CSS):

Scanning for known content, e.g., Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), **on end-users' devices**.

Mass surveillance · Abuse and feature creep · False positives · Crypto Wars · Necessary measure · Protect children online · Prevent serious crimes

We want what's best for the people!

Previous Work:

ECPAT (NGO, fighting the sexual exploitation of children):
- Survey in 2021, representative samples of 8 European countries
- Question: Agree to scanning measures to fight CSA online at the expense of personal privacy?
- High support for scanning measures
- 68% support overall
- 65% support in their German sample
- Our worry: results may have been influenced by
  - the framing of the questions
  - a possible general lack of knowledge about negative consequences

Asking "the people": Research Questions

RQ 1: Is the move from **cloud-side** to **client-side** scanning as salient to the general public as it seems to be to the S&P community?

RQ 2: Does **priming** participants with either positive or negative information about CSS influence their support or opposition?

RQ 3: What are the levels of support and opposition to client-side or cloud-side scanning for **different criminal activities**: CSAM, terrorism, drug trafficking, drug use and tax evasion?

RQ 4: Does it make a difference if **law enforcement agencies** or **private companies** are in charge of the scanning and analysis?

Survey Design:

High-level explanation of CSS, followed by
- Primer:
  - Negative (mass surveillance, too easily abused, mistakes are too costly)
  - Positive (solve or prevent serious crime like CSA)
  - No primer
- Rate acceptance for CSS for different crimes (CSAM, Terrorism, Drug Trafficking, Drug Use, Tax Evasion)

Survey Distribution:

- German population
- 1062 participants
- Representative distribution in:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Region
- Online panel (OmniQuest)


Survey Results:

Analysis:
- Ordinal logistic regression analysis (RQ1, RQ3, RQ4)
- Spearman's rank correlation (RQ2)

Legend:
"Would you approve or disapprove of this [scanning] measure [under the presented circumstances]?"
- I approve
- I somewhat approve
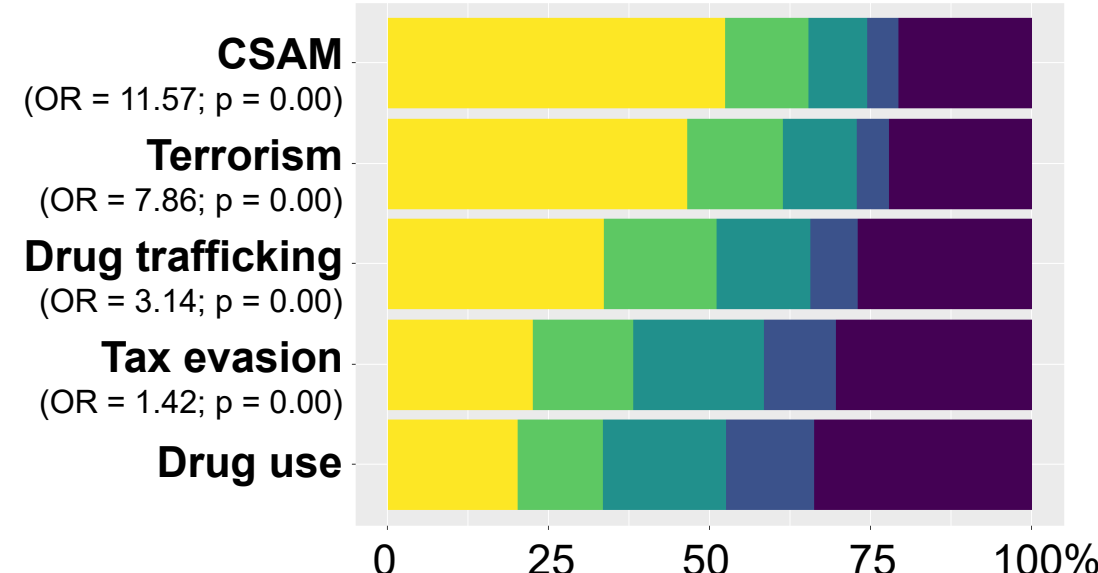- Neither
- I somewhat disapprove
- I disapprove

RQ1: No. Participants were just as likely to approve of scanning measures client-side as cloud-side.


Client-Side (OR = 1.06; p = 0.02)
Cloud-Side
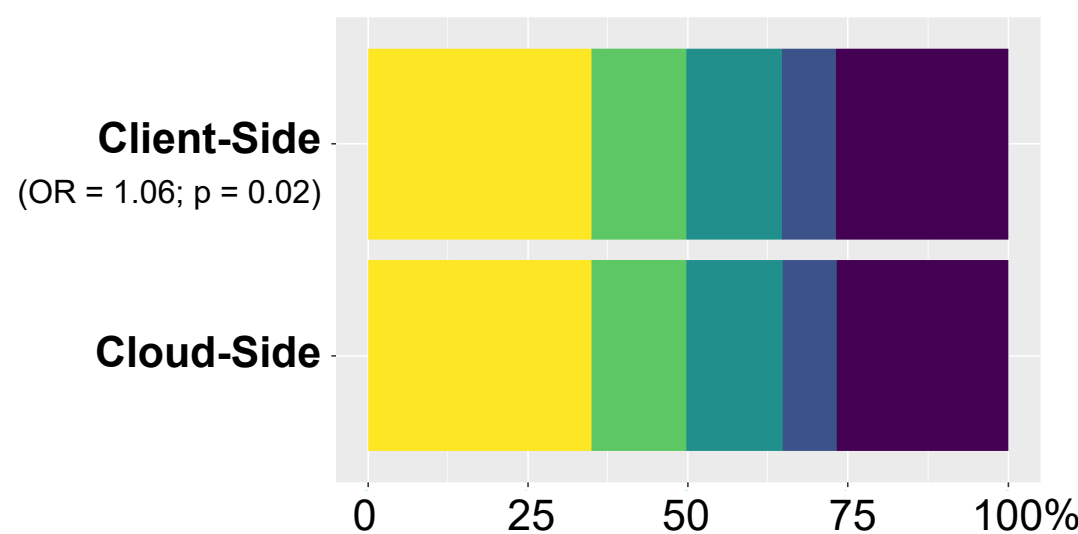
RQ2: The results were independent of priming.

Spearman's ρ = −0.037; p = 0.23

Negative
No Priming
Positive
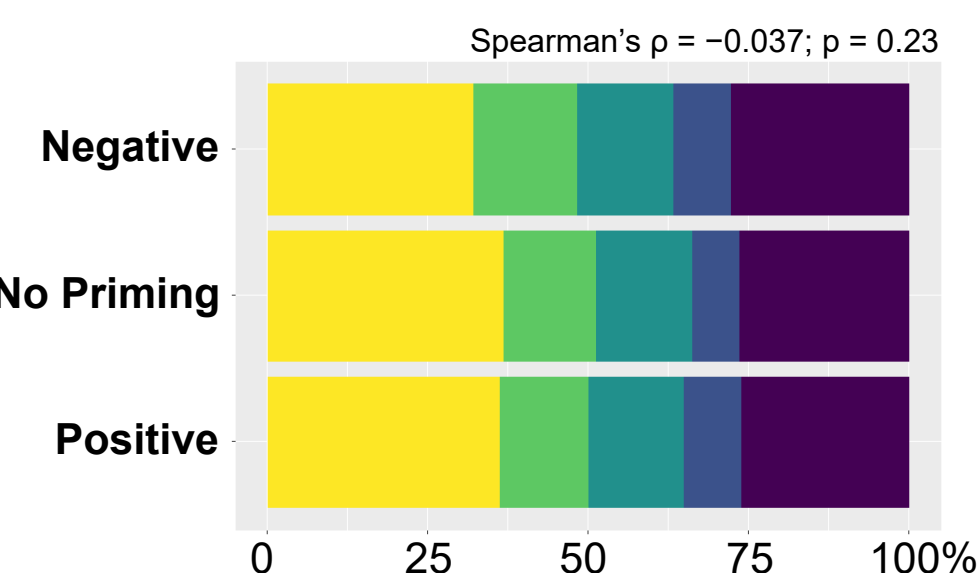
RQ3: Participants were significantly less likely to agree to scanning for less severe criminal activity, like drug use or tax evasion.

CSAM (OR = 11.57; p = 0.00)
Terrorism (OR = 7.86; p = 0.00)
Drug trafficking (OR = 3.14; p = 0.00)
Tax evasion (OR = 1.42; p = 0.00)
Drug use

RQ4: Participants were more likely to agree to scanning by a government agency than a private company.

Private company
L.E. agency (OR = 1.87; p = 0.00)
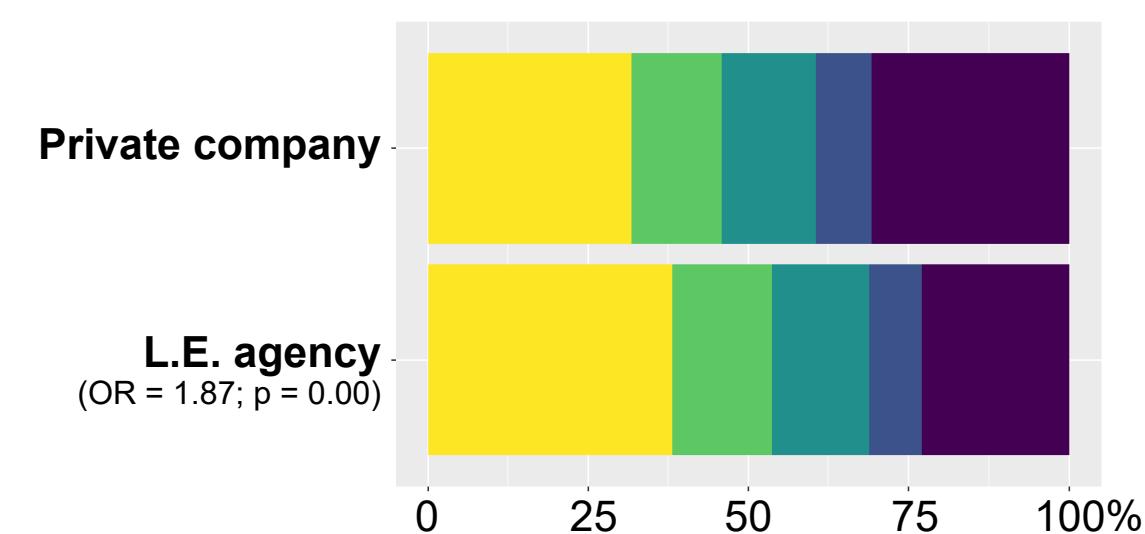
This may be related to trust - the reported level of trust in the government had a statistically significant positive correlation with the level of agreement to scanning.

Concluding Thoughts:

Broad support for surveillance measures to fight serious crimes, independent of framing, makes a strong argument that we should not delude ourselves into thinking that this support solely comes from people being unaware of the risks associated with this kind of technology.
Many people are are at least willing to accept CSS as a solution to a serious problem.

This is not a carte blanche for surveillance!

The majority opinion is not necessarily what's best - but still of significance, inasmuch as we live in a democratic society.
Declining support for "lesser" crimes underlines risks of feature creep.

Both sides of the crypto wars can benefit from acknowledging the nuances of support in the general population.

Future Work: Your Voice

- We have a representative sample from Germany
- A US sample is in progress

We would be grateful for your expert opinion!

Join here:
https://usecap.fra1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1ZEiXPRNK12