

# To what extent can the effects of increasing healthier food availability on food selection be explained by individual food preferences?

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<b>Registration date</b> 03/12/2019	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 27/10/2022	<b>Condition category</b> Nutritional, Metabolic, Endocrine	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Increasing the availability of healthier or more plant-based foods increases their selection. One possible mechanism that might underlie these effects is individuals' prior preferences, whereby selections reflect individuals' most-preferred option from the available range. The aim of the study is to investigate the role of prior preferences in the effectiveness of availability interventions.

### Who can participate?

Adults over the age of 18 with no dietary restrictions

### What does the study involve?

The study will be conducted online. First, the study will establish each participant's baseline relative preferences between all the food options used in the study. To do so, participants are asked to choose which option they would prefer to eat right now from pairs of food options. These pairs represent every possible pairing of food options used in the study. This allows each food option to subsequently be ranked in terms of each participant's preferences. Participants are then shown four images, with four options displayed in each, and asked to again select the option they would most like to eat right now. These images will show either predominantly-less-healthy branded snacks, predominantly-healthier branded snacks, predominantly-less-healthy unbranded main meals, or predominantly-healthier unbranded main meals. Each predominantly-less-healthy set will contain three options defined as less-healthy and one healthier option; vice versa for the predominantly-healthier sets. Participants will see each of these four images in a random order. The data from the study will be used to assess the extent to which increasing the availability of healthier options alters the healthiness of participants' most-preferred option and the extent to which the option selected by participants corresponds to their most-preferred option.

### What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants will be paid standard market research panel rates for participating in this study. There are no known risks of participating in the study.

Where is the study run from?  
Behaviour and Health Research Unit, University of Cambridge (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?  
October 2019 to July 2020

Who is funding the study?  
Wellcome Trust (UK)

Who is the main contact?  
Dr Rachel Pechey, rachel.pechey@phc.ox.ac.uk  
(updated 07/01/2021, previously: rachel.pechey@medschl.cam.ac.uk)

## Contact information

**Type(s)**  
Scientific

**Contact name**  
Dr Rachel Pechey

**ORCID ID**  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6558-388X>

**Contact details**  
Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences  
University of Oxford  
Radcliffe Primary Care Building  
Radcliffe Observatory Quarter  
Woodstock Rd  
Oxford  
United Kingdom  
OX22 6GG  
-  
rachel.pechey@phc.ox.ac.uk

## Additional identifiers

**Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)**  
Nil known

**ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)**  
Nil known

**Protocol serial number**  
RG77630

## Study information

## **Scientific Title**

Increasing the relative availability of healthier vs. less healthy food: Can impact be explained in terms of prior preferences?

## **Study objectives**

1. Reducing less healthy options and increasing healthier options increases the likelihood of participants' most-preferred option being a healthier option
  - 1.1. Reducing less healthy options and increasing healthier options increases the likelihood of participants' most-preferred option being a healthier option to a greater extent for those with higher education (vs. lower education)
2. Participants' most-preferred option within the offered range of products will often, but not always, correspond to the option that participants select
  - 2.1. Participants' most-preferred option within the offered range of products is more likely to correspond to the option that participants select when the option selected is less healthy (vs. healthier)
  - 2.2. Participants' most-preferred option within the offered range of products is more likely to correspond to the option that participants select when the options offered are branded snacks (vs. unbranded main meals)

## **Ethics approval required**

Old ethics approval format

## **Ethics approval(s)**

Approved 05/11/2019, Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee (School of the Biological Sciences, University of Cambridge, 17 Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RX; +44 (0)1223 766894; Cheryl.Torbett@admin.cam.ac.uk), ref: PRE.2019.087

## **Study design**

2x2 within-subjects randomized crossover study

## **Primary study design**

Interventional

## **Study type(s)**

Other

## **Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Unhealthy diet

## **Interventions**

Participants are randomly allocated to the order in which they complete four conditions as part of the online study. The four conditions will vary in terms of the mix of healthier and less healthy foods offered and the type of food offered:

Condition 1: Selection contains 1 healthier and 3 less healthy branded snacks.

Condition 2: Selection contains 3 healthier and 1 less healthy branded snacks.

Condition 3: Selection contains 1 healthier and 3 less healthy unbranded main meals.

Condition 4: Selection contains 3 healthier and 1 less healthy unbranded main meals.

Participants will be shown an image of a set of options representing each condition, in a random order. For each image, participants will be asked to select which option they would prefer to eat right now.

The food options assigned to each condition will be randomly selected from a pool of available healthier vs. less-healthy options. The position of selected food options in each image will also be randomised. Randomisation will be performed by the Qualtrics survey platform.

### **Intervention Type**

Behavioural

### **Primary outcome(s)**

1. Healthiness (healthier vs. less-healthy) of participants' most-preferred option (measured via rankings determined from selections between each possible item pair in the first part of the study) in each of the four conditions in the online selection task
2. Correspondence between participants' selections in each of the four conditions in the online selection task and their most-preferred options (measured via rankings determined from selections between each possible item pair in the first part of the study)

### **Key secondary outcome(s)**

Selection of a healthier (vs. less healthy) food option in the online selection task for each of the four conditions

### **Completion date**

31/01/2020

## **Eligibility**

### **Key inclusion criteria**

1. Adults aged over 18 years
2. Participants currently residing within the UK

### **Participant type(s)**

Healthy volunteer

### **Healthy volunteers allowed**

No

### **Age group**

Adult

### **Lower age limit**

18 years

### **Sex**

All

### **Total final enrolment**

1976

### **Key exclusion criteria**

Dietary restrictions

**Date of first enrolment**

09/12/2019

**Date of final enrolment**

20/12/2019

## Locations

**Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

England

**Study participating centre****Behaviour and Health Research Unit**

University of Cambridge

Institute of Public Health

Forvie Site, Robinson Way

Cambridge

United Kingdom

CB2 0SR

## Sponsor information

**Organisation**

University of Cambridge

**ROR**

<https://ror.org/013meh722>

## Funder(s)

**Funder type**

Research organisation

**Funder Name**

Wellcome Trust

**Alternative Name(s)****Funding Body Type**

Private sector organisation

## Funding Body Subtype

International organizations

## Location

United Kingdom

# Results and Publications

## Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The data sharing plans for the current study are unknown and will be made available at a later date.

## IPD sharing plan summary

Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

## Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Results article</a>		30/04/2022	27/10/2022	Yes	No