

# To what extent can the effects of increasing healthier food availability on food selection be explained by individual food preferences? A follow-up pilot study

<b>Submission date</b> 08/04/2020	<b>Recruitment status</b> No longer recruiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
<b>Registration date</b> 14/04/2020	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 12/06/2023	<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 first exploration – to the researchers' knowledge – of the role of prior preferences as a possible mechanism underlying the effects of manipulating the relative availability of healthier and less healthy options suggested that a large majority of selections reflect the most-preferred option. However, only small differences were observed in preferences by option healthiness in this initial study. This study aims to further explore role of preferences by identifying high vs. low preference options for use in an extension of the previous study, as well as exploring the extent to which preferences vary depending on whether options are meat-based or vegetarian.

### Who can participate?

Adults over the age of 18 with no dietary restrictions

### What does the study involve?

The study will be conducted online. Participants will all see meat-based less-healthy meal options, but will be randomly assigned to also see images of either meat-based healthier meal options or vegetarian healthier meal options. The study will establish each participant's baseline relative preferences between all the food options they have been assigned to 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 assigned in the study. This allows each food option to subsequently be ranked in terms of each participant's preferences. The data from the study will be used to identify main meal options that represent high vs. low preference options for use in a subsequent extension study, and to examine the extent to which preferences are altered depending on whether options are meat-based or vegetarian.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?  
Participants will be paid the equivalent of UK minimum wage for participating in the study.  
There are no known risks of participating.

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?  
February 2020 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

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## Additional identifiers

**Protocol serial number**  
Pre.2020.030

## Study information

**Scientific Title**

Increasing the relative availability of healthier vs. less healthy food: Can impact be explained in terms of prior preferences? A follow-up pilot study

### **Study objectives**

Vegetarian options are less likely to be selected than comparable meat-based options.

### **Ethics approval required**

Old ethics approval format

### **Ethics approval(s)**

Approved 30/03/2020, Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee (School of the Biological Sciences, 17 Mill Lane, Cambridge, CB2 1RX, UK; +44 (0)1223 766894; Cheryl.torbett@admin.cam.ac.uk), ref: Pre.2020.030

### **Study design**

Single-centre two-group between-subjects design

### **Primary study design**

Interventional

### **Study type(s)**

Other

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

Unhealthy diet

### **Interventions**

The study will be conducted online. Participants will all see meat-based less-healthy meal options, but will be randomly assigned to also see images of either meat-based healthier meal options or vegetarian healthier meal options. The study will establish each participant's baseline relative preferences between all the food options they have been assigned to 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 assigned in the study. This allows each food option to subsequently be ranked in terms of each participant's preferences. The data from the study will be used to (1) identify main meal options that represent high vs. low preference options for use in a subsequent extension study, and (2) to examine the extent to which preferences are altered depending on whether options are meat-based or vegetarian.

### **Intervention Type**

Behavioural

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

The ranking score calculated for each meal option following completion of the online survey (single timepoint)

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

There are no secondary outcome measures

### **Completion date**

31/07/2020

## 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

540

### Key exclusion criteria

Dietary restrictions

### Date of first enrolment

15/04/2020

### Date of final enrolment

30/04/2020

## Locations

### Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

### Study participating centre

#### Behaviour and Health Research Unit

University of Cambridge  
Institute of Public Health  
University 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?
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[Results article](#)

26/01/2021

12/06/2023

Yes

No