

Participant Information Sheet

Special offers on High Fat, Salt and Sugar Foods in UK Supermarkets - Interview

Summary

Unhealthy diets are a leading cause of disease in the United Kingdom. Excessive consumption of foods high in fat, salt, and sugar (HFSS) are a major contributing factor. In 2021, the UK government passed legislation to restrict specific forms of price promotions, often referred to as special offers (e.g. “BOGOF” or “2-for-1”) and extra-volume promotions (e.g. “50% extra free”), on HFSS foods. The legislation came into force in October 2025. Before the implementation of this legislation, some UK Supermarkets took voluntary action. Sainsbury’s implemented a voluntary ban on HFSS price promotions in February 2016, and Tesco did the same in October 2022.

This study attempts to understand how members of the public use special offers when shopping, and how bans on special offers in supermarkets impact them and their shopping habits. These interviews will form part of the *Supermarket HFSS Optional price Promotion bans Study* (SHOPS), a public health evaluation of the voluntary bans on special offers on HFSS foods in UK supermarkets.

To understand how members of the public use special offers when shopping, and how bans on special offers in supermarkets impact shoppers and their shopping habits, we are inviting you to take part in an **interview in January – July 2026**. We are inviting you to take part as you are over 16 years of age and an active shopper in UK supermarkets.

Please take the time to read the following information before deciding whether you wish to take part.

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How to contact us

If you have any questions about this study, please talk to:

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1 Why we are doing this study

What are we studying?

We aim to understand how members of the public who regularly shop in supermarkets use special offers, and how bans on special offers impact on shopping habits.

2 Why am I being asked to take part?

We are inviting you to take part because you are above the age of 16, and you regularly shop in supermarkets in the UK.

3 What will happen if I decide to take part?

We will conduct **one-to-one interviews** in January – July 2026.

Each interview will take place on Microsoft Teams and will last between 30-60 minutes. In the interviews, we will ask whether and how you use special offers during your supermarket shopping. We will also ask whether, and how, bans on special offers in supermarkets impacts you and your shopping habits.

If you are willing to take part, you will be asked to complete an online eligibility form. If you are selected for interview, you will then be sent an online consent form (e-consent).

If you agree, your interview will be audio-recorded; the recording will then be sent for transcription by a trusted company. Information

transferred between us and the transcription team will be subject to established data management and security protocols to ensure confidentiality. Apart from the research and transcription team, no one will have access to the recording. We will only share the full interview transcriptions within our research team.

Data collected in these interviews will not be used for any future studies and all names and quotes will be anonymised to anyone outside of the research team. We may share selected, anonymised quotes from your interview with our patient representatives. These are members of the public who we consult with to guide our research process. We may also share anonymised quotes in dissemination materials, such as policy briefings.

The researcher has the right to withdraw the participant if they feel the participant is not able to comply with the protocol.

4 Possible benefits and disadvantages of taking part

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You will help us to understand how members of the public engage and interact with price promotions on HFSS foods when doing supermarket shopping. Additionally, you will help us understand how bans on price promotions on HFSS foods impact supermarket shoppers, and their shopping habits. This information will inform Government policymaking in the future, helping to improve health and fairness across the population.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Taking part in this study will involve sacrificing some of your time.

You may be asked questions about your financial situation that could be considered personal. You won't be required to answer any question you are uncomfortable with.

5 Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Who is organising and funding the study?

This study is organised by the Institute for Metabolic Science (IMS) Epidemiology Unit at the University of Cambridge. It is funded by an NIHR Grant: 167794

Do I have to take part?

No, it is up to you to decide whether to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Will I receive any payment for taking part?

After the interview you will receive a £25 supermarket shopping voucher. You can choose to have a voucher for Sainsburys, Tesco, or ASDA.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study you should ask to speak to the research team who will do their best to answer your

questions. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, the normal University of Cambridge complaints process is available to you through the University of Cambridge Clinical School Secretary: telephone: 01223 333543 or email: SchoolSec@medschl.cam.ac.uk.

What will happen to information about me collected during the study?

Information we collect during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you will have your name and personal details removed so that you cannot be recognised from it, and it will not be used or made available for any purpose other than for research.

With your permission, information will be stored anonymously at the IMS Epidemiology Unit on a secure research drive. Codes connecting your individual identity to the stored data records will be kept separately. The database containing personal information is on a secured network drive on computers in the IMS Epidemiology Unit, University of Cambridge.

Occasionally our studies may be monitored by our Sponsors. This is to ensure our research is conducted soundly. In this case, the University of Cambridge is the sponsor of this study. This is routine and carried out by fully qualified personnel and data anonymity will be adhered to at all times. At the end of the study the confidential records will be kept for a minimum of 20 years and then destroyed. Data from these interviews will not be used in any further studies.

The information you give to us when participating in this study will be controlled by us. Your rights

to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study before our analysis has begun, we will destroy your data and it will not be included in the study. Once analysis has begun, we may not be able to destroy and exclude all of your data from the study. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally identifiable information possible.

You can find out more about how we use your information at:

www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/research-participant-data

What will happen to the results of the study?

When the study is completed, the results will be published in academic journals and other scholarly publications. The results may also be shared with the public in non-scholarly publications, such as blog posts or press releases. We may also present the results orally at scientific meetings and to interested stakeholders. If published or presented, your identity and personal details will be kept confidential. No information that could identify you, such as your name, will be published in any report about this study. Anonymised quotations from our interviews may appear in reports and publications. We will also send you a copy of any such publications if you would like them.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect your safety, rights, wellbeing, and dignity. The study has been approved by the University of Cambridge Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. You can contact the Committee by quoting the ethics reference number 25.424 by email: HSSREC@admin.cam.ac.uk

6 Contact for further information

If you have any further questions regarding the study, contact information can be found below.

Local researcher

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Thank you for taking the time to consider taking part in this study.