

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS V1

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: MRM-24/25-51498



YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Title of study

Are knowledge and behaviours related to food purchase, storage and cooking in the domestic context affected by the current cost of living crisis? A Focus Group Discussions Study

Invitation Paragraph

We would like to invite you to participate in this research around cooking, food practices and knowledge during the cost-of-living crisis. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. This project is in collaboration with Atlantic Technological University St. Angela's and Ulster University.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study explores consumers' cooking and food behaviours, food security, and resource management strategies during the cost-of-living crisis. It also examines food safety and storage practices, particularly fridge management, and assesses consumers' knowledge of food safety.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are 18 years or older and a food behaviour expert in the Republic of Ireland and/or Northern Ireland.

What will happen if I take part?

If you choose to participate, you will be provided with this information sheet and will need to complete and return the consent form before proceeding. Participation involves completing a demographic survey and taking part in an online focus group discussion with other experts. The focus group discussion will explore your perceptions of consumer meal planning, food purchasing, food storage practices, cooking behaviours and how the cost-of-living crisis has impacted on these.

If you participate, you will need to consent to the recording and verbatim transcription of the focus group discussion by a third-party transcriber bound by a confidentiality agreement. Only the researchers will have access to the original audio recording. Anonymised illustrative quotes from the transcription may be used in research outputs and publications, with pseudonyms assigned to ensure confidentiality.

The focus group discussion will take approximately one hour. You will receive a £25/30euro token of thanks.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. You should only take part if you wish to, and choosing not to participate will not disadvantage you in any way. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to provide your consent by confirming that you have read and understood the information provided and that you agree to your anonymous data being used for the purposes outlined. You are free to withdraw at any point during the survey or interview without providing a reason, and withdrawing will not affect you in any way. However, if you withdraw during or after a focus group discussion it will not be possible to remove your data from the recording, but your responses will be anonymised and processed, meaning they can no longer be identified or removed.

What are benefits of taking part?

There are no direct benefits to taking part, however, your contribution to research indirectly supports the wider community by helping the research team develop evidence-based recommendations for food resource management strategies for those affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

What are the risks?

There are no anticipated risks with participation. This study involves taking part in a focus group discussion, so you will only be asked to share your perspectives and insights voluntarily. Participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. All responses will remain anonymous and will not be identifiable in any research outputs.

How is the project being funded?

This study is being funded by Safefood, the food safety promotions board Ireland (<https://www.safefood.net/>). Safefood is the data controller for this project, and KCL are acting as the data processor. Safefood provided an overall outline of the research project and the research team (KCL, ATU, and UU) designed the specific research.

Data handling and confidentiality

This research is not fully anonymous, as some indirect identifiers (e.g., name, age, contact details and biographical data) will be collected. However, strict measures will ensure that individual participants cannot be identified when this data is combined. All data will be presented in an aggregated format, with no individual data points reported or interpreted in isolation. Your responses will be treated confidentially, and you will not be identifiable in any research outputs or publications.

If you participate in a focus group discussion, your contributions will be recorded only after obtaining your written and verbal consent. Access to the recording will be restricted to the research team, and the audio will be deleted once transcription is complete. Personally identifiable information will be anonymised during transcription, and participant reference numbers or letters (e.g. Participant 1 or A) will be used for illustrative quotes in future outputs and publications. Any details in these quotes that could identify you will be removed. A complete transcript will be shared only with research team members, contingent on your prior consent.

Your data will be securely stored on a password-protected, restricted-access server, accessible only by the research team. All information will be retained until the project's completion and for five years thereafter, after which it will be securely destroyed by the Principal Investigator.

For more information on how your data will be processed under UK data protection laws, please visit the link below:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/research-ethics/kings-college-london-statement-on-use-of-personal-data-in-research>
<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/research-ethics/kings-college-london-statement-on-use-of-personal-data-in-research>

What if I change my mind about taking part?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point during the focus group discussion without providing a reason. Withdrawing will not affect you in any way. However, once data collection starts your responses will be anonymised and processed, meaning they can no longer be identified, accessed, changed, or removed. This is necessary to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the research. All data will be retained using the minimum personally identifiable information necessary to safeguard your rights.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results will be published in scientific journals and/or presented at conferences. They may be submitted as part of relevant reports, professional articles and/or student dissertations. Safefood will be provided with a report of the results from the overall project and any publications. You will not be identifiable in any outputs from the project.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact

Dr Fiona Lavelle (fiona.lavelle@kcl.ac.uk), 02078484380.

Department of Nutritional Sciences

Franklin Wilkins building

King's College London.

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

The Chair, Biomedical Sciences, Dentistry, Medicine and Natural & Mathematical Sciences Research Ethics Sub-Committee, rec@kcl.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research.