

FRESHER: Consumer Survey

Dear Potential Participant:

Dr. Jason Gilliland and the FRESHER team from the Human Environments Analysis Lab at Western University invite you to participate in a study exploring the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food retail and hospitality sector.

Why is this study being done?

This study will explore the effects of COVID-19 on the retail food environment across urban, suburban, and rural contexts. Understanding how consumers interact with local businesses and the infrastructure that supports them, will allow for the industry and Ontario communities to better serve local shoppers, and create an environment for recovery and resiliency. This evidence will be useful for business owners and policymakers to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on consumer preferences and adjust policies and programs to ensure Ontario's food security during future pandemics and emergency situations.

What will happen in this study?

We are asking that you participate in a survey lasting approximately 15 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions related to your consumer attitudes and habits since the pandemic started. These questions will focus on your experience and feelings towards food retail and the methods in which you access it. If you happen to be employed or recently employed in the food retail sector, you may be contacted for opportunities to contribute more to the FRESHER study. This is an additional activity, where you will receive a separate Letter of Information and Consent form.

What are the risks and benefits of participating in this study?

The possible risks and harms to you include emotional upset or distress when discussing the COVID-19 pandemic situation. You may not directly benefit from participating in this study but information gathered may provide benefits to society as a whole which include improving the resiliency of the food sector to future pandemics and large-scale emergencies, and informing governments on how to better support, and aid in the recovery of, the food sector.

Can I choose to leave this study?

You can leave the study at any time and ask that your data be destroyed by contacting one of the researchers quoting the unique survey code provided to you at the end of the survey. While it is not possible to withdraw your data from a report that has been already submitted for publication, you may withdraw your data from being used in all future reports. You can contact the research team directly at fresher@uwo.ca.

How will my information be kept confidential?

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. Data will be kept until the conclusion of data analysis and publications from this study are completed. The results of this study will only be presented for groups so that participants will never be individually identifiable. While we do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to this consent form. You will be using a third-party online service when participating in this study. When information is transmitted or stored on the internet, privacy cannot be guaranteed. There is always a risk your responses may be intercepted by a third party (e.g., government agencies, hackers). Your survey responses will be collected through a third party, secure online survey platform called Qualtrics. Qualtrics uses encryption technology and restricted access authorizations to protect the privacy and security of all data collected and retained, including personal information. In addition, Western's Qualtrics server is in Ireland, where privacy standards are maintained under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which is consistent with Canada's privacy legislation. Please refer to Qualtrics' Privacy Policy (<https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>) for more details about Qualtrics' information management practices. The data will then be exported from Qualtrics and securely stored on Western University's server

The only potentially identifiable information collected from the survey during this study is your 6-digit postal code, and other demographic data. You have the option to not report any of this information in your survey response. Postal codes represent groups of addresses which can cover an entire city block, a single high-rise building, or an entire small rural community. We will use the postal code information to characterize where respondents reside and to evaluate the built environment and local economic factors. There is some risk that providing your postal code along with other identifying information, such as age, gender, and income level, could be used to identify you. To minimize this risk, the data will immediately be separated into three separate datasets containing (1) consent information, (2) survey data, and (3) postal codes to maximize confidentiality and anonymity upon receiving the survey results by the researchers. Additionally, postal codes will only be presented as aggregate (group) data in any research reports. The researchers will not be able to link your survey responses to your email address or other contact information that is associated with the draw. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Only researchers associated with this study will have access to the study records through an encrypted connection on a password-protected server with two factor authentication. All data is de-identified and aggregated prior to publication. The data will be stored on a secure server at Western University. Any potentially identifiable information will be retained for a minimum of 7 years upon study completion, after which it will be destroyed based on institutional policies. Non-identifiable aggregated data may be retained indefinitely and could be used for future research purposes (e.g., to answer a new research question). By consenting to participate in this study, you are agreeing that your data can be used beyond the purposes of this present study by either the current or other researchers.

How am I compensated for this study?

You will be entered into a draw to win a \$500 or one of ten \$50 gift cards to a retail food outlet, or local shopping district of your choice. It is expected that there will be 1000 participants in the draw. If you win the draw, you will be notified via the email address you provided after the end of the survey and will be able to claim your prize by contacting the researchers.

What are my rights as a participant in this study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on you, your employment, your business, or eligibility for government programs. You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study. You may request a copy of data pertaining to you as a participant in the study by contacting the researchers directly, quoting the unique confirmation code presented to you at the end of the survey.

Who can I contact if I have more questions?

If you have questions about this study please contact the study team via fresher@uwo.ca or calling 519-661-2111 x80963. The project lead, Dr. Jason Gilliland can be reached at jgillila@uwo.ca or (519) 661-2111 x81239. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, 1-844-720-9816, email: ethics@uwo.ca. This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.