

Airwave Survey 2026 - Frequently Asked Questions

General

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this online survey because you are a member of the Airwave health monitoring study. Police officers and staff joined Airwave between 2004 and 2015 by completing a questionnaire, and most people took part in a free comprehensive health screening, which we provided results for.

Since 2015 we have been following up the Airwave cohort with further health screenings and online surveys, such as this one we have invited you to. It doesn't matter if you are no longer employed by the police, we want to hear from as many people as possible. Everyone's experience is valuable.

Is this a scam?

I can assure you that this is a genuine study being run by Imperial College London. If you would like to find out more, please visit: [Airwave Health Monitoring Study](#).

What does taking part involve?

Taking part involves completing a follow-up online survey at home which includes a questionnaire, a cognitive test, a hearing test and a 7-day food diary. You will receive results on completion of the tests and feedback on the food diary entries.

Will I receive my results?

Yes, we will provide you with results of the cognitive test and hearing test. We will provide feedback on your entries from the food diary.

Will you share my information with my GP?

We will not share any information with your GP. No results will go on your NHS records. You are welcome to discuss these results with your GP but you will have to take a copy with you.

Who has reviewed the Airwave Study?

To protect your interests, all research at Imperial College London is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Research Ethics Committee. This study has been reviewed and granted approval by the North West - Haydock Research Ethics Committee.

Do I have to take part?

No. Whether you take part is entirely up to you. Even if you do decide to take part, you can change your mind at any time without giving a reason.

What if I decide I don't want to take part anymore?

You can stop participating in the follow-up survey at any time without giving a reason, we may send you reminders to finish the survey if it is incomplete unless you ask us not to.

You can also withdraw from the Airwave Study entirely at any time without giving reasons. You will have to inform the study team of your wish by email. The withdrawal form and further information is available on our website [withdrawal](#).

What are the possible side effects or risks of taking part?

During the survey we will ask you to take some tests. Sometimes, these can make you feel a little tired. If you do feel tired, you can take a break. You return to the survey and will pick up from where you left off.

Can you advise me on a medical issue?

Unfortunately, we are unable to provide medical advice. If you have any concerns please seek advice from a healthcare professional, such as your GP.

Can my friend join Airwave?

Airwave isn't open for new participants to join at the moment.

What happens if I complete the online questionnaire but don't complete the tests?

You will still be a member of Airwave, and your responses will be recorded. Please complete as much of the survey as you are comfortable with. We may send you reminders to finish the survey if it is incomplete, unless you ask us not to.

I can't take part right now, what is the cut-off date to take part?

The end date hasn't been decided yet, we expect that the survey will be available up to the end of 2026.

I can't remember being taking part in Airwave, what did I do?

Police officers and staff joined Airwave between 2004 and 2015 by completing a questionnaire, and most people took part in a free comprehensive health screening, which we provided results for. This was a comprehensive ~1 hour assessment including a blood test and ECG.

Since 2015 we have been following up the Airwave cohort with further health screenings and online surveys, such as this one we have invited you to.

I have a chronic condition should I still take part?

Yes please! Your participation is extremely valuable. We aim to gather insights from as many people as possible, including individuals with existing health conditions. The survey includes questions on medical history and an open-text box at the end if there are additional details you think may be relevant.

Data

How will you protect my privacy?

Your personal identifiers such as your name, address and email will be kept separate from your study data and only linkable by your unique code. This is in case the Study team need to contact you. Your contact details will never be passed to another organisation without your permission and will not be visible to the investigators performing the analysis. The results of any research that is published will never identify you.

The data we hold will only be accessed by bona fide researchers for use by ethically approved (normally by an NHS Research Ethics Committee) health and care research which is in the public interest. All studies must also be approved by the Airwave Data Access Committee, which includes members of the public.

We will never share your personal (name and contact) details with any other study; we only make de-identified data available to researchers.

Will the information I provide online be anonymous?

The information is pseudonymised rather than anonymised. Your personal identifiers such as your name, address and email will be kept separate from your study data and only linkable by your unique code. This is in case the Airwave team need to contact you. Your contact details will never be passed to another organisation without your permission and will not be visible to the investigators performing the analysis. The results of any research that is published will never identify you.

How do you link to NHS data?

The main linkage is through your NHS Number where we have this, otherwise it is through name, address and date of birth. We send the data securely to the NHS and they try to match on the information we have provided.

In order to access your health data we have to apply to NHS England specifying not just the data we are requesting but considerable further information including the purposes for which it will be used, how it will be stored, who will have access etc. If the application is successful then the data, is securely transferred to the Imperial Secure Research Environment. The data does not include identifiers, just a unique study code provided by us to enable us to link it to the rest of your data.

Where is the data stored?

The data is held within a Secure Research Environment designed and managed for this purpose, which is a highly secured set of systems segregated from the main Imperial networks and with additional access and data transfer controls. Our systems are certified to both ISO27001 and NHS DSPT requirements. The systems and procedures are audited annually on the security and Information governance aspects. Your identifiable data is kept separately from the research data and is not accessible to researchers. Only to a very limited number of people who need to know it in order, for instance, to contact you.

How do you use NHS data and who has access to it?

NHS England, the main provider of health data to us, are very strict on the terms of use of the data and the security of the systems within which we store it. We are not allowed to pass the NHS data on to any other parties.

The data we hold will only be accessed by bona fide researchers for use by ethically approved (normally by an NHS Research Ethics Committee) health and care research which is in the public interest. All studies must also be approved by the Airwave Data Access Committee, which includes members of the public.

We will never share your personal (name and contact) details with any other study; we only make de-identified data available to researchers.

Will you share my information with others?

Imperial and other research institutions may conduct research using your data and samples that requires us to share your personal data with them under a data sharing agreement. Recipients of your data are under a legal obligation to keep your data secure in accordance with this privacy notice; and must not attempt to discover your identity.

There are no circumstances in which we will transfer identifiable data such as name or address outside of Imperial's control without your explicit consent.

You can read more about privacy information on our website: [Participant Privacy Information](#).

Cognitive test & Hearing test

Why am I being asked to do a cognitive test?

Cognitive tests help researchers understand how thinking skills such as memory, attention, and reasoning may change over time. These tests provide valuable information about brain health and can show how factors like lifestyle, work environment, and general health might influence cognitive function.

Why am I being asked to do a hearing test?

Hearing loss and symptoms such as tinnitus (the perception of sound, like ringing, buzzing, or hissing, in your ears or head without an external source) is common and can affect communication, wellbeing, and even cognitive health. Research shows that reduced hearing may be linked to memory and thinking decline. By taking part in this test, you help researchers understand these connections and support work to improve long-term health.

A separate sub-study was carried out to investigate hearing and personal radio use in the Airwave cohort; you can read the publication [here](#).

What is a cognitive test?

The term cognition refers to the set of psychological process that enable people to perform complicated or novel tasks. When assessing cognitive function, we measure things like how long a person can focus on a task without making mistakes, how much information they hold in memory, and whether they solve logical problems.

What is a hearing test?

A hearing test measures a person's ability to hear across a range of frequencies and sound levels. The test uses headphones to present sounds, and the person responds by indicating when they hear something, the results are recorded and can check for hearing loss.

Can someone help me take the tests?

It is your performance that we are trying to assess. If you are having trouble accessing the assessment, then you can ask for help at that point. However, you should not ask for help when undertaking the tests that comprise the assessment.

Can someone else take the tests for me?

It is important that you take the tests yourself without help as we are trying to assess how well you perform the tests.

I did the cognitive or hearing test wrong, what should I do?

If you think that you performed a test incorrectly then you can email us to let us know: airwave@imperial.ac.uk.

Can I do the cognitive test again?

You cannot retake the cognitive function assessment straight away. However, we are intending to recontact people in the future so that we can see how their performance changes across time.

The tests wouldn't run on my device, what should I do?

Try to open the web link in a different browser (e.g. Microsoft Edge instead of Google Chrome). If you have the option, you can switch to a different device at any time. Alternatively, please contact us for help: airwave@imperial.ac.uk.

What should I do if the tasks appear too small on my phone screen?

You can switch to using a different device at any time. Your responses are recorded and when you log in from a different device they will pick up from where you left off.

The test stopped part way through, what should I do?

The assessment might stop part way through if, for example, your internet connection is briefly interrupted. If this has happened, then you can click refresh in your browser or use the same link to navigate back into the assessment website. The software will start from where it left off, so you will not have to retake all the tests. This will also work from a different device to the one that you started the assessment on.

Will the session time out if I take too long?

No, sessions do not time out, however, please do try to complete the task as fast and accurately as you can.

What If I lose my internet connection, power or accidentally close my browser?

Do not worry, you should be able to get back to the assessment by clicking on the same web link we sent you and continue the assessment from the point you reached.

What should I do if I start to feel unwell or fatigued?

You can take a break and return later. Please use your login details or link to resume from where you left off.

I am visually impaired; can I take part in the cognitive test?

The cognitive assessment is comprised of visual tasks which some people may struggle to complete. We are looking into the inclusion of accessible tasks. The rest of the online process should work well with screen readers.

Will I get the results of the tests?

Yes, your cognitive and hearing test results will be available as soon as you complete the tests.

My cognitive test score was low, what does this mean?

Please try not to worry. The cognitive test is not intended to diagnose cognitive problems or conditions in individuals. Many factors can affect cognitive performance including

distractions, tiredness, stress and not being familiar with the tests. This is why the tests are most useful when done in large studies with a big population, or when the same person completes the same test several times.

Of course, if you have any symptoms that you are concerned about, you may want to see your GP, but please do not consider the results of these tests an indicator of any illness.

My hearing test score was low, what does this mean?

The hearing test is not diagnostic, however if your result is outside the typical range, it might indicate a hearing issue. Online tests are much less precise than in-person hearing tests. If you have concerns about your hearing in day-to-day life, contact your doctor or hearing healthcare provider to arrange a hearing assessment.

I was distracted during the test, and it looked like I performed poorly. I'm worried the research data will be skewed. What should I do?

Please don't worry, we are able to detect such issues and adjust them in the analysis.

4-day food diary

Why am I being asked to complete a food diary?

What we eat and drink can affect long-term health, including risks for conditions like heart disease and diabetes. Diet may also play a role in memory and cognitive decline. By keeping a food diary, you help researchers understand how nutrition influences health and wellbeing.

Airwave food diaries collected at the time of your past health screenings have been analysed. You can read about how they have been used in this [example paper](#). More nutrition and diet publication can be found at [Nutrition and Diet](#).

What is a food diary?

A food diary is a log of everything you eat and drink over a set period (4 consecutive days for Airwave). We are using a platform called Intake24 which is online, there are many items preloaded to search and select, you can scan the barcode of food and drink packaging to locate them too.

Will I receive feedback on my food diary?

Yes, you will receive feedback on your nutritional intake on completion of the 4 days. The feedback will be based on the final day of the diary, and you can view an example [here](#).

I can't complete the food diary for 4 consecutive days what should I do?

If you're still willing to complete the diary, please try to do so as soon as possible. If you miss a day, please resume the following day.

My food diary isn't representative of my usual diet, what should I do?

Please don't worry. Please record as accurately as possible what you have consumed for the 4 days, we recognise that nutritional intake varies.

Can I record all 4 days at the same time?

The diet questionnaire is an online daily food diary. We ask you to complete the diary for at least 4 days (including one weekend day). Completing the diary should take about 10-15 minutes per day. Please complete the diary at the end of the day you are recording. If you miss a day, do not enter two or more days at once – just resume with the most recent day.