

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

UK COSMOS · 2nd Follow-Up Survey · 2026

Thank you for your ongoing participation in the COSMOS study, which is the world's largest research asking questions about the possible health effects of long-term mobile phone use. Your contribution is greatly valued.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

105,000+

UK adult
participants

310,000+

participants
across Europe

6

European
countries

20–30 yrs

participant
follow-up

What is COSMOS?

COSMOS (**CO**hort **S**tudy of **MO**bile phone **U**se and health) is an international cohort study, originally set up to investigate possible health effects related to long-term use of mobile phones and other wireless technologies. The UK cohort is made up of approximately 105,000 adult mobile phone users.

In total, the international study includes more than 310,000 mobile phone users across six European countries.

Participants in the study are being followed up for 20 to 30 years.

More information is available at www.ukcosmos.org

What is the purpose of UK COSMOS?

UK COSMOS continues to have a focus on mobile phone and health research. However, the data collected in UK COSMOS can also answer a wider range of health-related questions. To maximise the value of UK COSMOS it is now expanded to support wider health-related research of public-health importance.

What is a cohort study?

In a cohort study, the health of a select group of people (the cohort) are followed over an extended period, often years. The aim of a cohort study is to determine whether suspected risk factors are linked to certain illnesses. This type of study can answer many valuable health-related research questions.

What health outcomes are we investigating?

We are looking at a large number of health outcomes, including:



Brain diseases



Heart disease



Cancer & stroke



Fertility & births



Sleep & headaches



Mental health

Who is conducting this study?

In the UK, this research is being conducted by Imperial College London. Internationally, the COSMOS study is coordinated by the international COSMOS consortium, a group of medical and university research centres across Denmark, France, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK.

Who is funding this study?

UK COSMOS is independent research currently funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Policy Research Programme and the NIHR Health Protection Research Unit (HPRU) for Radiation Threats and Hazards. It was originally funded by the Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research (MTHR) Programme (an independent programme of research into mobile phones and health).

Who has reviewed the study?

This study was given a favourable ethical opinion by North West – Haydock REC (IRAS reference number 145713).

Why is this research important?

Why is research into mobile phones and health still important? Exposure to radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (RF-EMF) is part of our daily lives, particularly as we are reliant on sources of RF-EMF such as mobile phones and other wireless technologies.

There has been much public concern about possible health effects of RF-EMFs from mobile phones. Overall, the currently available scientific evidence suggests that mobile phone technology operating within recommended guidelines are unlikely to be associated with negative health effects (see the summary by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection).

However, mobile phone technology, and the way we use our phones, is constantly changing. More recently, public concern has focused on possible health effects of newer 5G technology, light at night from phone screens, screentime, and social media. It is essential to continue monitoring possible effects of long-term and changing mobile phone technology and behaviours, to protect public health.

RF-EMF & Mobile Technology

Mobile phones, 5G, and wireless devices emit radiofrequency electromagnetic fields. COSMOS tracks long-term exposure across 100,000+ UK participants to build robust, independent evidence.

Why Long-Term Monitoring Matters

Some health conditions take decades to develop. Continued follow-up is essential — for cancers and neurological conditions, effects may only emerge after many years of exposure.

INFORMATION BEING COLLECTED

As part of our ongoing research, up-to-date information is being periodically collected about you.

A. Information From You

Follow-Up Surveys

The second follow-up survey provides us with vital information about:

- 1 Your current use of mobile phones and other wireless technologies, including social media use and night-time phone habits.
- 2 Your health and medical history, and hearing and cognitive performance.
- 3 Your home environment (e.g. indoor air quality and noise), your lifestyle (e.g. alcohol, smoking, diet, and exercise), your employment and shift work — as these are all relevant to your long-term health.

Your Contact Details

The follow-up survey will ask for up to date contact details, so we can stay in touch with you, send future surveys, and continue to follow your health and mobile phone use through routinely collected records.

If you move address, or change your name, email address, or phone number in the future, please let us know by visiting our website.

B. Information From Routinely Collected Records

Record Linkage

Participants' health and environmental records are linked to the survey data you provided directly. Your identifiers are shared with the data providers to achieve this purpose. Your address data are geo-coded to enable place-based data linkage.

Medical & Health-related Records

If you previously gave consent, the information you provide about your health through the surveys will be supplemented through NHS who will link data such as hospital data, GP data, cancers, deaths, births and prescribing information, mental health.

In order to link your data, information such as your name, sex, date of birth, address and NHS number may be sent to the data providers, as required, who will then link the information on our behalf and return it to us. The above examples are not intended to be definitive – as other health datasets become available, we may apply to access those if they can help us to answer important research questions.

Network Operator Data

If you previously gave consent, information about your phone usage is being supplemented with mobile phone records from your network operator(s), including the frequency and duration of phone calls.

This information will not include any details identifying phone numbers that you contact nor those of people who contact you, nor the content of messages or addresses of websites you visit.

DATA PROTECTION

When you joined the study, you gave us your consent. This gives Imperial College your permission to a) hold and use information that identifies you and b) follow up on any changes to your health and obtain information from your mobile network operator(s) on your mobile phone use, in compliance with Data Protection laws.

How is my information being kept confidential?

Your privacy and the appropriate use and protection of your data are paramount. Imperial College London will ensure the research complies fully with the current data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

All individually identifiable data (such as name and address) will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. Your individually identifiable data will be separated from health and mobile phone use information to preserve confidentiality. All your data will be stored in a dedicated secure ISO 27001 certified environment at Imperial College. Access to this environment is tightly controlled and monitored by the College.

The results of this study will be published after independent review, but no individually identifiable data will be included.

Apart from Imperial College, who will be able to access my information?

Data may be shared with researchers of the international COSMOS consortium, a group of medical and university research centres in Denmark, France, Finland, The Netherlands and Sweden, and other approved researchers. However, no individually identifying data (such as your name, address, phone number etc.) will ever be passed onto these research groups.

Imperial College may share limited information (such as your name and postal address) with contracted service providers for specific purposes related to the study, such as mailing out reminders and other official COSMOS correspondence. These service providers will be legally bound by non-disclosure agreements and strict data security requirements and will only be able to use these data for the purposes of the COSMOS Study.

UK LONGITUDINAL LINKAGE COLLABORATION (UK LLC)

The UK COSMOS study is partnering with UK LLC, a national research resource aimed at making new research to improve public health and NHS practice. UK LLC has been built and is run by a collaboration of UK Universities, including University of Bristol and University of Edinburgh, University of Swansea, the NHS, the Office for National Statistics, and government service providers.

UK LLC brings together de-identified (meaning information cannot directly identify you) study data from research projects (including UK COSMOS) to provide a rich source of data to investigate environmental and genetic influences on health, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, COVID-19, dementia, and mental health. This data may be updated over time using NHS records, where UK COSMOS participants have previously given consent.

Protecting participants' data is a priority. UK LLC does not hold information that could be used to identify you. Identifying details such as names, addresses and so on remain securely held by Imperial College London and trusted third party organizations such as NHS Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW), who are honest brokers to enable data linkage. Through a split process, NHS DHCW can only see your personal identifiers and Secure eResearch Platform (SeRP) UK and UK

LLC can only see de-identified data about you. SeRP UK is a leader in providing this type of secure research server in the UK and internationally.

Data within UK LLC are held in a secure Trusted Research Environment (TRE) hosted by SeRP UK at Swansea University and controlled by the University of Bristol. A TRE is a secure system where approved researchers, including those outside of the immediate study team from other organisations, can access and analyse data. All data remain within the UK, and the system is subject to strict security controls including NHS and ISO 27001 standards. UK LLC provides a secure mechanism for UK COSMOS to share de-identified data with approved researchers under contract and subject to controlled and audited conditions.

However, UK COSMOS retain control over access to UK COSMOS data, whether within the UK LLC or elsewhere. Approval for UK COSMOS data is controlled by the UK COSMOS Data Access Committee (DAC) and is limited to approved research projects, in line with the consent you have given.

Opting Out

If you do not want your data to be shared with UK LLC, you can opt out at any time by contacting the team at ukcosmos@imperial.ac.uk.

Further Information

Further information about how data are accessed and used within UK LLC is provided in the Privacy Notice on the study website www.ukcosmos.org. In addition, you can also find out more about UK LLC on their Frequently Asked Questions page at <https://ukllc.ac.uk/faq/> or their Privacy Notice at <https://ukllc.ac.uk/safeguards>. There is an explanatory infographic diagram about the legal principles involved, and a longer piece of research about public engagement.

WITHDRAWAL FROM UK COSMOS

You have the right to withdraw from the UK COSMOS study at any time, without giving a reason. If you are considering withdrawing from the study, please contact the UK COSMOS team at ukcosmos@imperial.ac.uk.

If you decide to withdraw, you must choose one of the following options concerning future contact and use of your data:

Option 1 — No Further Contact

UK COSMOS would no longer contact you directly but would still have your permission to retain and use information provided previously and to obtain and use further information from your health records.

Option 2 — No Further Access

UK COSMOS would no longer contact you or obtain further information via record linkage in the future but would still have your permission to use the information provided previously.

If you do not specify an option when you withdraw, we will apply the no further contact option by default. Please note that we cannot remove data already used in completed analyses.

CONTACT US

To find more details about how your data are used, please visit the Participant Privacy Notice at:

www.ukcosmos.org

For any queries about your data, please contact:



UK COSMOS Team

ukcosmos@imperial.ac.uk
info@ukcosmos.imperial.ac.uk



Data Protection Officer

Imperial College London
dpo@imperial.ac.uk



Information Commissioner's Office

ico.org.uk/global/contact-us
casework@ico.org.uk

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe your data is being used unlawfully, you may contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Visit <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us> or email: casework@ico.org.uk

Postal Address

UK COSMOS Study

Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics

School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine

Imperial College London, White City Campus

90 Wood Lane, London W12 0BZ

Email: ukcosmos@imperial.ac.uk

About the Study

Title: COSMOS Cohort Study of Mobile Phone Use and Health

IRAS registration number: 145713