



Navigating food allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease in langar: The official national survey of UK Sikhs



Sikhs in Academia Conference
7th June 2026

Dr Amrit Daffu-O'Reilly
Dr Kuldip K Bharj
Mr Mandip S Sohal

Presentation Overview

- Background to the survey
- Understanding allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease
- Purpose of the survey
- Survey development



Background to the survey

- Allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease concerns were raised in Phase 1 of our langar research (Daffu-O'Reilly et al., 2024)
- Participants noted that accommodating dietary needs within the langar setting was not always straightforward
- Thanks to Gurnam Singh Daffu ji (no relation – I think – though I hope so!) who found me on LinkedIn and has an interest in this area for galvanising this work
- We talked about inclusivity and safety – langar is for everyone and we would love for everyone to be able to enjoy it safely
- We want to support Gurdwaras with their allergen awareness and have safe and inclusive environments for those with dietary needs



Allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease – what's the difference?

Food allergy is an immune system reaction that happens soon after eating a certain food. Even a tiny amount of the allergy-causing food can trigger symptoms such as hives, swollen airways and digestive problems. In some people, a food allergy can cause severe symptoms or even a life-threatening reaction known as anaphylaxis (foodallergy.org)

Food intolerances are not life threatening but can cause unpleasant symptoms. Usually caused by an absence of a particular enzyme to fully digest a food, irritable bowel syndrome or sensitivity to foods/additives in foods ([NHS, 2022](#))

Coeliac disease is a medical condition - where eating gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye (including foods like roti, bread and pasta), causes the body's immune system to damage the gut. This can cause serious symptoms and long-term harm to health. This condition is more like an allergy because of immune system involvement ([NHS, 2023](#))



Understanding allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease – the UK context

- It is estimated that approximately 6% (2.4 million people) of the UK population have a clinically confirmed allergy
- At least 30% of UK adults have a food intolerance
- At least 1 in 100 people have coeliac disease, though as estimated 500,000 people remain undiagnosed
- The only way to manage allergies and intolerances is to carefully avoid exposure to harmful foods and to use appropriate medication when needed
- For coeliac disease, the only way to manage this condition is to follow a lifelong gluten free diet

Purpose of the survey

- Our earlier work identified a research and knowledge gap in this area
- There are around 535,000 Sikhs in the UK – many of whom are likely to eat langar
- Currently, we do not know much about:
 - Prevalence data relating to allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease among Sikhs
 - The experiences of people navigating their dietary needs when consuming langar
 - The behaviours of those navigating their dietary needs when consuming langar
 - How safe the sangat with dietary needs feel when consuming langar
- The survey will help to answer these lines of enquiry



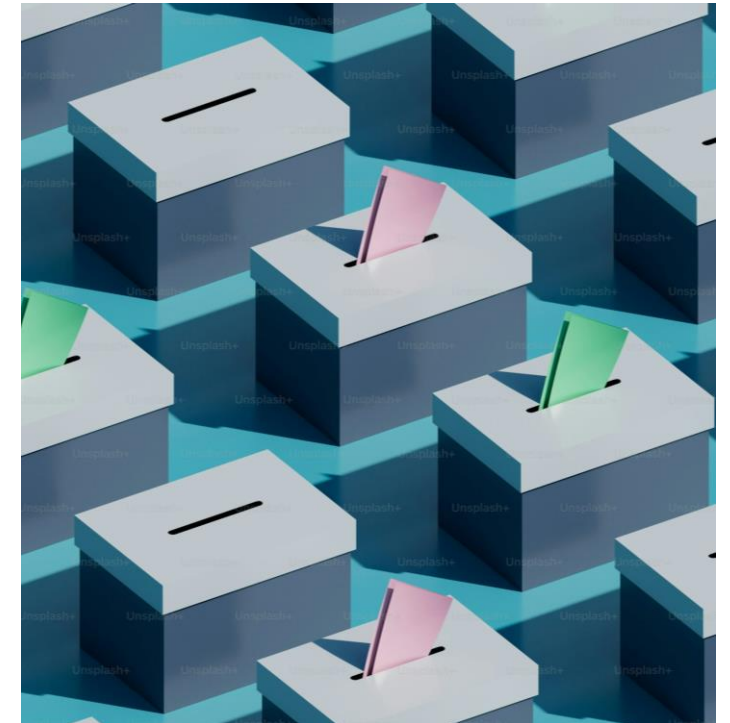
Survey Development – the Delphi Technique

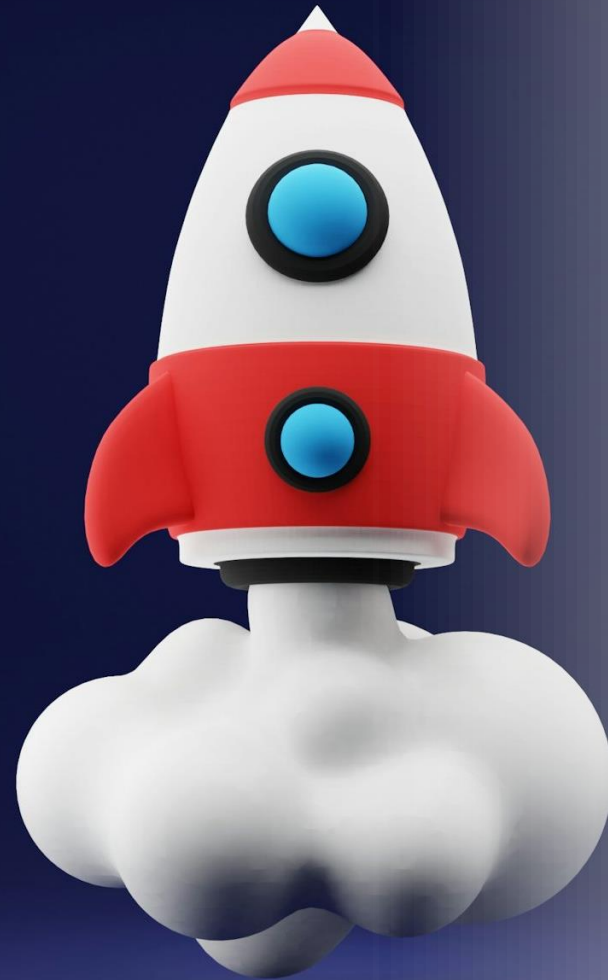
- The Delphi Technique can be used when developing a new survey, instrument, core outcome set etc.
- Especially helpful when there is no existing data on which to base a new survey or instrument
- Consists of brain-storming questions/concepts and then a voting system to keep questions in or to discard them
- Agreement is usually set at around $\geq 70\%$



Survey Development – the Delphi Technique

- Creation of the Delphi Panel – interested people came forward and were selected on their suitability to contribute to the Delphi
- The panel included 17 members including those who are involved in and work with Gurdwaras, academics, a dietician and Sikh people who have dietary needs
- **Delphi Round 1** – generation of questions = 109 questions put forward (anonymous and online)
 - Similarly worded questions/irrelevant questions removed = 68
- **Delphi Round 2** – voting to keep or discard 68 questions (anonymous and online, agreement set at $\geq 70\%$)
- **Delphi Round 3** – presentation of Round 2 results, panel discussion (rewording/phrasing/removal) and consensus decisions ($\geq 70\%$; virtual online meeting)
 - 38 questions go through to final Delphi Round
- **Delphi Round 4** – voting for final 38 questions (anonymous and online)
- Statistical consultation and planning
- Finalisation and pilot testing (current phase)





Survey Launch

July 2026

Scan the QR code below to register your interest in the survey – either to participate or promote!

Feel free to share the link with family and friends in the UK



Thank you!

Connect with me on LinkedIn

- Happy to make new connections
- Always keen to develop new collaborations
- Follow me to complete/promote the survey when it is released

Email: a.k.daffuoreilly@keele.ac.uk

