



## Our Research Ethics Policy

### [MAPPS II \(Management & Advocacy for Providers, Patients and Systems\)](#)

The World Obesity Federation is committed to conducting MAPPS II with integrity, transparency, and respect for all participants. MAPPS II is a global research and advocacy initiative exploring experiences of obesity prevention, treatment and management across health systems through surveys, interviews, roundtables and national-level 'deep dives'. This policy summarises the ethical framework governing MAPPS II and outlines our commitment to internationally accepted research standards.

#### 1. Ethical Principles

MAPPS II adheres to the following core principles, building on the ESRC principles:

1. Research aims to maximise benefit for participants and minimise harm.
2. The rights and dignity of individuals and groups are respected.
3. Participation is voluntary and appropriately informed.
4. Research is conducted with integrity and transparency.
5. Roles, responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined.
6. Research independence is maintained and any conflicts of interest are declared.
7. Anonymity is preserved where feasible and appropriate.
8. Findings are made publicly available

MAPPS II has undergone an internal ethics review process, including the completion of a research ethics proforma, data management plan and safeguarding plan, all reviewed and signed off by senior WOF staff and external peer review. Where feasible, formal ethics approval has been sought in deep dive countries in accordance with national governance requirements.

#### 2. Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent

Participation in MAPPS II is entirely voluntary. All participants must be aged 18 or over and provide informed consent prior to participation. For surveys, participants must confirm consent before proceeding and participants may exit at any time. For interviews, written or verbal consent is obtained in advance. Participants may withdraw at any time before or during participation. Clear [participant information sheets](#) are provided, explaining the purpose of the study, how data will be used, and contact details for further questions.

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### **3. Data Protection, GDPR and Confidentiality**

MAPPS II complies with the UK Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR, EU GDPR (where applicable), UK Government Data Ethics Framework, and relevant local data protection laws in participating countries. The project does not collect special category data (e.g. biological samples or identifiable personal data). All data is stored in encrypted, password-protected environments with restricted access. No raw identifiable data is shared externally or placed in public repositories, and only anonymised, aggregated findings are published.

### **4. Safeguarding and Participant Wellbeing**

MAPPS II includes a structured safeguarding framework with measures including carefully designed surveys and topic guides to minimise distress, provision of relevant support resources where needed, researchers trained in handling sensitive discussions and clear escalation procedures for safeguarding concerns.

### **5. Independence and Transparency**

MAPPS II maintains independence in research design, conduct and analysis. Funding sources are transparently declared in all research outputs.

### **6. Publication and Responsible Use of Data**

Findings from MAPPS II may be used in peer-reviewed publications (open access where possible), public reports, policy briefs, training and education materials and advocacy outputs. Further information is available in our [Data Protection and Privacy Policy](#).

### **7. Accountability and Governance**

The MAPPS team meets regularly to review responsibilities and progress. Country-based working groups operate under clear Terms of Reference outlining roles and expectations. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted for data-related concerns, and the MAPPS team can be contacted regarding research participation.

#### **Commitment to Rigorous and Ethical Research**

MAPPS II is conducted under a structured ethical framework, with formal internal review, safeguarding procedures, GDPR-compliant data governance, and transparent conflict of interest management. This public statement summarises our ethical commitments. Full documentation, including the detailed Data Management Plan and Safeguarding Framework, is available upon request.

Please contact us at [health\\_systems@worldobesity.org](mailto:health_systems@worldobesity.org)

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