

C1-C2 Worksheet: Healthy Habits Reshape UK Shopping - 19 March 2026

Article

This week's changes to the UK inflation basket offered a surprisingly revealing snapshot of how ordinary habits are being recalibrated. The Office for National Statistics added alcohol-free beer and houmous to the basket, arguing that both now occupy enough shelf space and consumer attention to count as representative purchases rather than niche novelties. On one level, that is a dry statistical update. On another, it suggests that moderation and convenience have filtered through into everyday shopping in ways that would have seemed less plausible a decade ago. What people put in their trolley is still shaped by price, but it is increasingly also shaped by image, routine and the wish to appear measured rather than excessive.

The shift does not point to a health revolution so much as a subtler renegotiation of what counts as normal. Shoppers have not necessarily given up indulgence, yet many appear to have moved away from older markers of excess and towards products that signal balance, flexibility and self-management. That broader tendency is borne out by the prominence now given to categories that once sat at the margins of supermarket culture. Even the language of consumption has changed: restraint is marketed as aspirational, and products that were once sidelined are being brought into the mainstream. In that sense, the revised basket functions as a cultural proxy as well as an economic tool.

The methodological change matters too. Scanner data from supermarkets is being folded into the index on a far more granular scale, which should make the basket less volatile and more responsive to what people actually buy. Yet the larger significance may lie elsewhere. Consumer baskets are never neutral lists; they speak to how a society imagines itself at a particular moment. When more shelf space is given over to low-alcohol drinks and long-established items are edged out, the message is not simply nutritional. It suggests that healthier habits, once treated as worthy but faintly joyless, may finally have taken hold as durable features of mainstream life.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The article argues that alcohol-free beer and houmous remain too marginal to represent mainstream shopping habits.
2. The writer suggests that shopping choices are influenced by social image as well as price.
3. The article claims that British consumers have completely abandoned indulgence in favour of strict self-discipline.
4. The revised basket is presented as both an economic measure and a cultural signal.
5. Scanner data is described as likely to make the index more responsive to real shopping behaviour.
6. The article suggests that consumer baskets are neutral lists with no wider social meaning.
7. The final paragraph implies that healthier habits may now be embedded in mainstream life.
8. The writer says that the main message of the basket is purely nutritional.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. filtered through	A. to become established or influential
2. point to	B. to indicate or suggest
3. moved away from	C. to be incorporated into something larger
4. brought into	D. to be devoted or allocated to a purpose
5. borne out	E. to relate directly to or address something
6. folded into	F. to gradually become noticeable in a wider context
7. given over to	G. to be confirmed by evidence
8. edged out	H. to be gradually replaced by something else
9. speak to	I. to shift away from a previous preference or habit
10. taken hold	J. to be included within something

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. moderation	A. unstable or subject to sudden change
2. prominence	B. serving as a substitute measure for something else
3. representative	C. concerned with fine detail
4. volatile	D. typical of a larger group
5. granular	E. long-lasting or able to endure
6. discretionary	F. accepted by most people
7. habitual	G. based on routine or repeated behaviour
8. mainstream	H. involving self-restraint
9. proxy	I. optional rather than essential
10. durable	J. importance or visibility

Use the new language

Please choose 5 words or phrases and make your own sentence using the new word or phrase.

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. Have your own shopping habits moved away from anything in recent years?
2. Do products such as alcohol-free beer speak to a real lifestyle shift, or just clever marketing?
3. What kinds of healthy habits have taken hold most strongly where you live?
4. Do you notice more shelf space being given over to health-focused products now than before?
5. Which everyday purchases best point to changes in modern lifestyles?
6. Are there any products that seem to have been edged out in your country?
7. Do you think moderation has become more fashionable in recent years?
8. How much do image and identity influence what people buy?

Student B

1. To what extent can shopping baskets function as cultural proxies rather than merely economic tools?
2. Does the mainstreaming of health-conscious products reflect conviction, aspiration or social pressure?
3. Why do some lifestyle shifts filter through gradually while others fail to take hold?
4. Is moderation genuinely becoming a durable value, or is it simply being repackaged for commercial use?
5. Should statisticians treat changing shelf space as representative of deeper social change?
6. Can scanner data give a more truthful picture of society than opinion polls or interviews?
7. What does it mean when previously marginal products are brought into the mainstream?
8. Are consumer choices better understood as personal preferences or as responses to broader cultural narratives?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=F, 2=T, 3=F, 4=T, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=F

Phrase Match: 1=F, 2=B, 3=I, 4=J, 5=G, 6=C, 7=D, 8=H, 9=E, 10=A

Synonym Match: 1=H, 2=J, 3=D, 4=A, 5=C, 6=I, 7=G, 8=F, 9=B, 10=E

Example sentences with the phrases

1. New attitudes to work have gradually filtered through into office culture.
2. Falling cinema audiences may point to a wider change in how people spend their evenings.
3. Many consumers have moved away from fast fashion in favour of better-made clothes.
4. Smaller local brands are now being brought into major supermarket chains.
5. Her fears about the project were borne out when the costs doubled.
6. The new system was folded into the existing timetable with very little disruption.
7. Too much public funding is given over to short-term fixes rather than lasting reform.
8. Printed menus have been edged out by QR codes in many restaurants.
9. His speech did not really speak to the concerns of younger voters.
10. Remote working has clearly taken hold in sectors that once resisted it.