



# INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SEMI-ANNUAL FOLLOW-UP GENERAL INTERVIEW WITH PARTICIPANT (01/05/2026) (GNL, VERSION 1, 11/24/2025)

## I. General Instructions

The semi-annual follow-up general interview questions (GNL) are completed with participants during the semi-annual follow-up interview, following the administration of the semi-annual follow-up core questions (SAF). The GNL is used when ARIC participants complete the SAF interview, while the proxy version of the form (GLX) is used when a proxy respondent or contact completes the SAF interview on behalf of a living participant. Neither form is administered if consent for the SAF interview is not obtained.

## II. Detailed Instructions for Each Item

- 0a. Enter the date of the interview. This date should fall between the scheduling windows on the Semi-Annual (Participant) Tracing Report.
- 0b. Enter the staff ID for the telephone follow-up interviewer ID.

### A. Physical Activity

- 1. In general, this question is trying to assess the participant's current physical activity levels with a single question. This single question was selected from the ARIC/Baecke Physical Activity Questionnaire, collected at Visits 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7 to quantify participant physical activity levels.

**Read the question as listed:** “During leisure time, how often would you say you play sports or exercise?”

The focus of this question is to determine the participant’s current levels of physical activity. The five possible response options range from “never” to “very often”.

This question pertains to usual leisure time physical activity. Walking and other light physical activities would be included in sports or exercise.

***[QUESTIONS 2, 3, 4 AND 5 DISCONTINUED IN GNL VERSION 1.0]***

### B. Falls

**Script:** “Next, I will ask you about falls you may have experienced during the past 12 months.”

A fall is a sudden, unintentional change in position that causes landing at a lower level, on an object, the floor, or the ground. Do not include reported falls that occurred due to sudden paralysis, a seizure, a stroke, syncope or fainting, or being pushed.

6. Ask the participant if they have fallen in the past 12 months.

***[QUESTION 7 DISCONTINUED IN GNL VERSION 1.0]***

**C. Traumatic Brain Injury**

**Script:** “Next, I will ask you about any head injuries you may have experienced in the past 12 months which led you to seek medical care. A head injury may also be referred to as a concussion or traumatic brain injury. Head injuries may happen from a fall, motor vehicle crash, or being hit by something or someone.”

8. Ask the participant if they have experienced a head injury (also referred to as a concussion or traumatic brain injury) which led them to see a physician or seek emergency room or hospital care in the past 12 months. If they answer “Yes”, proceed to question 8a. If they answer “No”, proceed to the question 12a.

8a. Ask the participant “In the past 12 months, how many times did you have a head injury which led you to seek medical care?” The answers are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or more, or “Do not remember”.

***[QUESTION 9 MOVED TO GNLA VERSION 1.0]***

***[QUESTION 10 DISCONTINUED IN GNL VERSION 1.0]***

**D. Digital Access**

**Script:** “Next, I will ask you a few questions about your internet use in the past month and year.”

***[QUESTIONS 11a, 11b, 11c AND 12 DISCONTINUED IN GNL VERSION 1.0]***

If sites feel that Questions 12a-12c are confusing for respondents, sites may choose to adapt the wording to clarify or explain the meaning of “the Internet”. For example, Question 12a may be read as, “In the last month, have you used a device, such as a smartphone, computer, tablet, to access the Internet for household activities (e.g., shopping, paying bills)?” Wording adaptations may also be applied to Questions 12b and 12c, as needed.

12a. Record whether the participant has used the Internet for any household activities in the last month. Participants who state they have not done this, but that a family member, friend, or caregiver has done this for them, should be marked as “No.”

Internet use for conducting household activities includes shopping for groceries or personal items (e.g., toiletries that you can buy at the grocery or drug store) and paying bills or doing banking.

12b. Record whether the participant has used the Internet for any connecting with others in the last month. Internet use for connecting with others includes use of social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) and video calls with family or friends (e.g., Zoom, FaceTime).

- 12c. Record whether the participant has used the Internet to manage any health-related tasks in the last year. Emphasize that Q12c is asking about “the last year,” in contrast to the previous two questions, which asked about “the last month.”

Participants who state they have not done this, but that a family member, friend, or caregiver has done this for them, should be marked as “No.”

Internet use to manage health-related tasks including having a telehealth visit, refilling prescriptions, changing medical appointments, getting test results, requesting referrals or prescriptions, contacting your healthcare provider, learning about a health condition, or handling health insurance matters (e.g., finding out what is covered, comparing plans or providers, finding out about bills, filing a claim).

If the participant does not know the answer to question 12a, 12b, or 12c, assign a special missing value for that question.

## **E. Alcohol Consumption**

**Script:** “Next, I am going to ask you about your consumption of wine, beer and drinks made with hard liquor.”

13. Current alcohol consumption (yes/no). If the participant asks, or if the answer is not explicit, “presently” is defined as within the last 6 months.

***[QUESTION 14 DISCONTINUED IN GNL VERSION 1.0]***

## **F. Arthritis**

**Script:** “The next questions are about arthritis.”

15. For the question about arthritis, read the script in Question 15. If the participant responds “No”, record the response and go to Question 16a.

If the participant responds with indirect responses, such as “They said I have rheumatoid”, include this as a “Yes” response to being told they had “arthritis”. If the participant responds “Yes”, proceed to 15a and read the script regarding location of arthritis.

- 15a-g. For 15a-15g, read each joint location and pause for the response. Do not read all locations at once. Record each response before proceeding with the next question. If the participant provides a location without being prompted, respond “Yes” to the location indicated then ask if they were told they had arthritis in each of the other locations. It is acceptable to repeat the stem of the question (“Has a doctor or healthcare professional ever told you that you have arthritis or osteoarthritis in your [joint location]”) regarding the joint involved, if needed. Rephrasing this stem is also acceptable to redirect the interview. For example, if the participant answers 15a-c, then provides additional information that is not part of the form, the interviewer could say, “You said you were told you had arthritis in your hip; has a doctor or other healthcare professional ever told you that you have arthritis or osteoarthritis in your back?”

If the participant avoids the yes/no response or respond with “I don’t know”, probing is permitted. The interviewer could ask, “Do you recall seeing a doctor or other healthcare provide for pain in your joints that was not from an acute event such as a fall or injury?” If the participant reports this occurred or may have occurred, repeat the question or rephrase it. For example, the interviewer could say “Do you recall if they said you had arthritis in the joint?”

If they respond with “I don’t know” or they avoid answering the question, set special missing value for the question.

## **G. Unintentional Weight Loss**

**Script:** “I would like to ask you a few questions about weight loss to track potential changes.”

If there are concerns that some of these questions about weight loss have been asked previously, the interviewer can respond by saying, **“You may have been asked some of these questions before, but it is important to make sure we have accurate information and to track potential changes that could have occurred since you were last asked these questions.”**

16a. Read the question as written. If the response to question 16a is “Yes,” go to question 16c. If the response to question 16a is “No,” go to question 20. If the participant does not know if more than 10 pounds have been lost during the last 12 months, enter ‘Unknown’ for question 16a and go to question 16c to determine if the participant was trying to lose weight. This will be informative when combined with objective measures of weight from the clinic exams.

***[QUESTION 16b DISCONTINUED IN GNL VERSION 1.0]***

16c. Read the question, recording whether the participant was trying to lose weight or not.

***[QUESTIONS 17, 18 AND 19 DISCONTINUED IN GNL VERSION 1.0]***

## **H. Physical Ability**

**Script:** “These next few questions ask about how well you typically function on your own. Do not include difficulties due to a temporary condition like a broken limb. Can you do the following activities without help from another person or special equipment, such as a cane or walker?”

20-31. Examples of special equipment include canes, walkers, lift chairs, and motorized beds. If a device is used to aid in physical mobility (e.g. walking, balance, transferring in and out of bed or chairs) it is considered special equipment.

If a participant reports using special equipment or assistance, ask whether they can perform the activity without that equipment or assistance. If the participant says they use equipment but do not truly need it (e.g., “I keep a cane with me, but I don’t need it”), ask **“Would you be able to do this without the cane/equipment?”**

The available response categories are “Yes”, “No”, and “Do not do”. The option “Do not do” must NOT be read aloud and should only be selected if the participant volunteers that they do not do the activity.

If participant responds, “I don’t do that,” the interviewer should probe to determine if this is due to a health or physical problem. For example...

- For preparing meals (Question 25) or managing money (Question 26), if the participant responds, “My wife does that,” ask, **“Is that because you are not able to (prepare meals or manage the bills/bill paying)?”** If the answer is “No, I just don’t do it and have never done it,” choose “Do not do.” However, if s/he says, “I can’t keep up with that anymore,” or “My arthritis is so bad my daughter started doing it,” choose “No.”
- For standing up from an armless chair (Question 30), if someone says they are in a wheelchair or paralyzed or they are bedbound so they don’t do this, the answer would be “No” they cannot do this. If they say, “All my chairs have arms, so I haven’t tried,” probe to ask if they use the arms of the chair to push themselves up. If they use the chair, a person, or other support to stand, choose “No” they cannot do without help or equipment. If they only have chairs with arms and they stand from the chair without using the chair to push themselves up, then choose “Yes” they can do it. If they don’t do it, it should generally be due to a physical problem, meaning there are few, if any, reasons to choose “Do not do”.
- For stooping, crouching, or kneeling (Question 31), if the participant says they don’t do, probe to ask “Is there a reason you do not do [task]? If they are afraid they would not be able to get back up if they get on the floor, the response should be “No”, not able to do.

**Script:** “The following three questions are about bathing, using the toilet, and incontinence. Although these are normal, everyday activities and functions, we understand these may be sensitive topics. Please let me know if you prefer not to answer any of these questions.”

32-33. The available response categories are “Yes,” “No,” and “Do not do”. The option “Do not do” must NOT be read aloud and should only be selected if the participant volunteers that they do not do the activity.

If the participant volunteers **“I don’t do that,”** probe to determine whether this is due to a health or physical problem. For example, if they say they don’t bathe, the interviewer could ask “Does someone help you bathe or shower, including sponge baths?”

If the participant indicates they use assistance or equipment (e.g., grab bars, shower chairs, adult briefs) or reports completing the activity only with help from another person, clarify their ability to perform the activity on their own: **“Would you be able to do this on your own without help from another person/without the grab bar/equipment?”** Record “Yes” only if they can perform the activity independently.

32. Note that sponge-bathing counts as bathing as long as the participant completes it independently.

Examples:

- If the participant says, “*My spouse helps me with bathing now,*” ask: “**Is that because you are not able to bathe yourself, or is it just something your spouse helps with?**”
  - If the participant indicates they **cannot** perform the activity due to a physical or health limitation, record “**No.**”
  - If the participant indicates they **do not perform** the activity for reasons unrelated to ability (e.g., “I’ve never bathed myself, but not because I can’t”), record “**Do not do.**”

#### L. Incontinence Question

34. The question pertains to an average day. You may want to acknowledge that this may be a sensitive question to ask, but incontinence is something that many adults have to manage, although this can cause embarrassment and distress and is difficult to discuss. According to the CDC, approximately 50% of non-institutionalized adults 65 years or older report either bladder or bowel incontinence.

Lack of bladder control is understood as urgent urination/inability to get to the bathroom in time or inability to hold the urine during the day or at night. There are many types of incontinence, including stress incontinence (e.g., bladder leakage when coughing), urge incontinence (i.e., an urgent, and often frequent, need to urinate), or persistent urine leakage due to incomplete bladder emptying. Lack of bowel control is understood as accidentally passing stool or not being aware of the need to pass stool.

If the participant does not answer “Yes” or “No” and instead says they use Depends or a similar product, set special missing value for the question and record in the notelog the word “Depends.” Similarly, if the participant answers “Yes” or “No,” but also volunteers that they use Depends or a similar product, record the Yes/No response and also record in the notelog the word “Depends.”

If the participant refuses to respond to this question, please assign a special missing value for this question to prevent the blank field from being flagged in the missing fields report.

#### M. Administrative Information

35. sAFU general interview questions completion status. Enter the code that describes whether or not the sAFU general interview questions were completed.
- A. **Complete**: Direct contact was made within the given time frame. The contact provided all the questionnaire information they could offer. The contact is not required to answer every questionnaire item to have completed the interview.
  - B. **Partially complete, contact again within window (interruptions)**: Direct contact was made, but the questionnaire could not be fully administered due to an interruption – not because of a refusal. This status is not a final status, as the interviewer will be attempting another contact to continue the interview. The final sAFU General Interview Questions Completion Status for the given time frame must be a. Complete, or c. Partially complete; unable to complete within window (done).
  - C. **Partially complete, unable to complete within window (done)**: Direct contact was made, but the questionnaire could not be fully administered in the given time frame.