
FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Focus Groups with International Travelers Visiting Friends and Relatives

July 2024

A. Background and Privacy Policy

10 minutes

1. Welcome! Thank you for joining today's discussion. My name is **NAME**. I'm an independent moderator with KRC Research. I will be your facilitator today.
2. The sole sponsor of today's focus group discussion is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—CDC. Our conversation today will focus on general health topics.
3. I'm a professional researcher, not a CDC employee or a health expert. My role is to facilitate our conversation for the next 90 minutes. Let me tell you about it.
 - Your participation is voluntary—you do not have to answer anything you do not want to answer. You can choose to end your participation and leave the group at any time.
 - There are no wrong answers. You may have different opinions. That's OK—all of your experiences and opinions are important, and we want to hear them.
 - Since we are having these groups online, we will need to talk one at a time and let everyone have time to speak. Not everyone has to answer each question, but it's important that everyone participates throughout this conversation.
 - If at any time you can't see the screen well or have difficulty hearing, let me know. We have a technician here who can help us.
 - Please silence your cell phones and put away portable devices.
 - If you need to step away from our discussion for any reason, you don't have to ask for my permission—just step away and come back when you finish.
4. Because privacy is important, I'm going to share our Privacy Policy.
 - We will protect your privacy for today's discussion, and nothing you say will be reported in association with your name. We will use first names only during the conversation. You can use a nickname or any other name you prefer.
 - Like our technician who is with us today virtually but who you do not see, a few colleagues are also with me virtually today to watch quietly and take notes.
 - We are audio- and videorecording today's discussion. Because we are speaking with many groups like this one, it is important for me to have an accurate record of today's conversation. We will use the recording to make a written record of the conversation. Once we have done that and the project is complete, we will destroy the recording.
 - We ask that you not share participants' comments or participants' identities with others outside of this group.
5. Do anyone have a questions about what I've shared so far?
6. Does everyone agree to these policies and still want to participate?

Public reporting burden of this collection of information is estimated to average 90 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to CDC/ATSDR Reports Clearance Officer, 1600 Clifton Road NE, MS H21-8, Atlanta, Georgia 30333; ATTN: PRA 0920-1154.

B. Participant Introductions

5 minutes

1. Your first or preferred name.
2. Where you are located.

One thing this group has in common is that you all have relatives or friends living in **[SOUTH ASIA / CENTRAL AMERICA OR MEXICO]**, and you all travel to visit these relatives or friends from time to time. Is that right? **CONFIRM**

I'd like to go around the room and hear from everyone:

3. What relatives or friends you have in **[SOUTH ASIA / CENTRAL AMERICA OR MEXICO]**—parents, kids, cousins, friends, etc.
4. What country they live in.
5. What types of activities you do when you visit.

C. Pre-Travel Planning

10 minutes

In our conversation today, we're going to talk about your travel to see these relatives or friends.

6. How often do you visit these relatives or friends?
 - How long do you typically stay?
7. Do you typically stay at a hotel, family or friends' home, or another arrangement?
8. **FOR CENTRAL AMERICA OR MEXICO:** How do you typically travel to get there? **PROBE AS NEEDED:** Plane, bus, car, train, walking across the US-Mexico border, etc.
9. Imagine you're planning your next trip to see these relatives or friends, and your trip is a month away.
 - What are you doing to prepare? What's on your to-do list at this time?
10. Now imagine you're a week away from your trip.
 - What are you doing to prepare? What's on your to-do list at this time?
11. In the weeks or days before your trip, are you doing any *health-related* preparations?
 - What are you doing to be sure you protect your health?
 - Are you looking for health-related information? What information? Where?
 - Are you making health-related preparations? **IF NEEDED, PROBE:** stocking up or gathering things at home to take with, visiting a healthcare provider for certain needs, making plans, etc.
12. Does the attention you pay to your health differ when you are traveling to this country compared to when you're here in the U.S.? How so?
 - Do you have different health concerns when traveling to this country than you do when traveling in the U.S.?

D. Pre-Travel Health Information Sources

15 minutes

13. Where have you found or learned any *information* about how to stay healthy when traveling

to the country where you visit friends or relatives? **PROBE FOR SPECIFIC SOURCES (SPECIFIC WEBSITES, PEOPLE, PUBLICATIONS, HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS, SOCIAL PLATFORMS, ETC.)**

- What language was it in?
- Was it useful information?

14. Did you intentionally look for that information, or did you come across it another way?

- **IF LOOKED FOR:** What did you look for?

15. If you wanted to get good health information related to traveling to the country where you visit friends or relatives, where would you look, or who would you turn to? **SAME PROBES AS PREVIOUS Q**

- Which sources would you trust most? Why is that trustworthy?

16. How would you most prefer to get that health information related to traveling to the country you visit? **PROBE FOR WEBSITE INFORMATION, WEB VIDEOS, SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS, POSTERS OR FLYERS, CONVERSATION, ETC.—AND SPECIFIC PLATFORMS, SITES, ETC.**

- What *language* would you prefer to receive the health information we've been talking about?

17. Have any of you come across information from the CDC about healthy behaviors related to travel?

- What did you see?
- What format was it? A website, social media, sign at an airport or border crossing, or something else? **IF SOCIAL MEDIA:** What social media platform?
- Was it useful?
- Did you look for this, or did someone share it with you?

18. Have you consulted or relied on relatives or friends in the country you're traveling to for travel health information?

- What have you talked about, and what have they shared?
- Have they shared any health *precautions* with you related to your travel?

19. How much influence do these relatives and friends have over your health-related decisions related to traveling to the country you visit? A lot? A little? None? Why?

- Is it useful information?
- How do family and friends compare to other information sources?

20. How does travel health information from relatives and friends in the country you're traveling to compare to the travel health information shared by those here in the U.S.?

21. Have any of you found travel health information from online personalities or influencers? (Social media figures, YouTubers, travel bloggers, etc.)

- Who was that person?
- What did they share?
- What did you think about hearing from them?
- Did it cause you to act in a certain way—to look into that information, for example?
- Are there any online personalities or influencers you think would have good information?

22. Sometimes cultural beliefs or traditions, including family traditions or religious traditions, can influence the things people do to protect their health. Is that the case for anyone here?
- o What cultural beliefs or traditions can you think of?

E. Pre-Travel Health Insurance, Vaccines, and Medications

18 minutes

Let's keep thinking about the period before you travel to the country where you visit family or relatives.

23. Have any of you or your family traveling with you purchased **travel health insurance** beforehand? Why or why not?
- What did that insurance cover?
 - Did anyone recommend it, or did you decide to do that yourself?
24. Have any of you been **vaccinated** before traveling to the country you visit? If so, which vaccines did you receive?
25. For those who **did** get vaccinated, what were the factors involved in making that decision?
- Did anyone recommend it to you? Who?
 - Did you see a general practitioner, a travel medicine specialist, or someone else?
26. Where did you get vaccinated?
- How was that process? **PROBE:** Easy? Complicated? Frustrating? Expensive? Confusing?
 - What questions did you have about the vaccine when you went to get it? Did you get your questions answered?
27. For those of you who did **not** get a vaccine, why not?
- Did you consider getting vaccinated? Tell me about that decision.
 - Did anyone simply not think about vaccines at all, meaning it didn't cross your mind?
28. Under what circumstances would any of you consider getting vaccinated for travel?
- What would need to be true, or what would you need to see or hear?
29. How would you describe the benefit of a travel vaccine, in your own words?
30. Have any of you received **travel-specific medications** before traveling to the country you visit, like malaria medication, drugs to treat traveler's diarrhea, or drugs to treat altitude sickness? Which medications? **CLARIFY IF PRESCRIBED BY AN HCP OR OVER-THE-COUNTER.**
- Which specific medications did you receive? **PROBE:** What was it for? Do you remember the specific name?
31. For those of you who **did** get travel-specific medications, why did you make that decision?
- Did anyone recommend it to you? Who?
 - Did you see a general practitioner, a travel medicine specialist, or someone else?
32. Where did you get the travel-specific medications?
- How was that process? **PROBE:** Easy? Complicated? Frustrating? Expensive? Confusing?

33. For those of you who did **not** get any travel-specific medications, why not?
- Did you consider it and decide against it? Tell me about that.
 - Did anyone not think about medications at all, meaning it didn't cross your mind?
34. Did any of you visit a healthcare professional for anything else prior to travel? What can you share about that?

F. Health During Travel

17 minutes

Let's talk about health experiences and needs *during* your travel to the country where you visit family or relatives.

35. What health issues do you or other travelers need to be mindful of when traveling to the country you visit?
- Are these concerning to you personally? How so?
36. When you're in that country, what health practices or actions do *you* take?
37. What health practices or actions do any of you take related to...
- *Preventing* an infectious disease?
 - *Treating* an infectious disease?
 - Sexually transmitted infections?
 - Hand hygiene?
 - Food safety?
 - Water safety?
 - Anything around the home, or outside the home?
38. Where have you learned about the health practices or actions you've shared?
39. Are any of you aware of diseases that can be spread by mosquitos or other insects? Which diseases?
40. Do any of you take any precautions to prevent diseases spread by mosquito bites or other insects? What?
- Where have you learned about those precautions?
 - Is it easy to take these precautions, or is it challenging or frustrating? Why?
41. How many of you have sought medical care while traveling to the country you visit? For what?
- How many of you have purchased medicines while traveling to the country you visit? For what?
42. Have you or anyone you have traveled with been sick during travel to the country you visit?
- Where did you (or they) go to get medical care? Why?
 - How did you (or they) find out about where to go?
 - Did that experience cause *you* to think or do anything different now?
43. Is there anything that is *more challenging* about managing your health in the country you visit compared to managing your health in the U.S.? Tell me about that.
- **PROBE AS NEEDED:** Access to health information?
 - **PROBE AS NEEDED:** Access to medical care and health care professionals?

- **PROBE AS NEEDED:** Access to prescriptions or over-the-counter products?
- **PROBE AS NEEDED:** Quality of care, medicines, or health products?

44. How about the opposite: what's *easier* about managing your health in the country you visit compared to in the U.S.? Why?

G. Health After Travel

10 minutes

In the remainder of our time, let's talk about health after you return from your travel to the country where you visit family or relatives.

45. Do you take any health actions or precautions after you return to the U.S. from the country where you visit family or relatives? What?
46. Do you monitor for any particular symptoms of travel-related illness? Tell me about that.
- What would you monitor for?
47. Have you or anyone you traveled with had specific symptoms of illness after returning from the country you visit? Tell me about that.
- What did you (or they) do in response?
 - Did you (or they) visit a healthcare professional?
 - What did you learn from that experience?
 - Is there anything you'd do differently next time, either during your travel or after?
48. Have any of you had specific symptoms of illness after returning from the country you visit but did *not* visit a healthcare professional?
- Why did you decide on that? What did you do instead?
49. What factors would make you feel it was important to visit a healthcare professional shortly after returning from the country you visit?

H. Wrap-Up

5 minutes

We're near the end of our time. Just a couple closing questions.

50. What advice would you give to someone planning to spend a few weeks in the country where you visit family and friends about how to stay healthy during their trip?
51. What advice would you give to the CDC as it works on communicating important health-related information to those who travel internationally to visit friends and relatives?