

## **Annex A: Topic guide (English)**

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I would like to talk to you about your experiences of being categorized as “at risk” during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interview should take less than two hours and it is going to be recorded. No-one apart from me and my supervisor will have access to the recording. I will also be taking some notes during the session to remind myself of important thoughts and ideas.

All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses will only be shared with my supervisor, and I will ensure that any information I include in my report or any subsequent publication of the results does not identify you as the respondent. You don't have to talk about anything you don't want to share, and you may end the interview at any time.

Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this interview and give consent to it being recorded as well as to the use and publication of anonymised information?

### **Warm-up questions:**

- How are you at the moment?
- How old are you?
- Where and with whom do you live? Since when have you been living there/in this constellation?
- When did you first hear about the pandemic?
- What is your main source of information?
  
- When did you first hear about its differential impact on the population?
- Have you received any guidance from your GP or the NHS?

### **Behaviour changes, how did life change**

- Can you describe any changes to your life after the pandemic reached the UK?
- After you heard about the risk-categories – where there any further changes in your life? Please specify.
- Please describe your experiences of the last weeks since these changes occurred.
- Please describe your experiences of (self)isolation. {if applicable}
  
- Have there been any positive changes? If yes, can you describe them.

### **Perceptions of containment and protection measures**

- What changes in your environment did you notice following the employment of containment measures (such as social distancing, procedures in supermarkets, wearing masks? Can you describe how you felt about these changes?
- What is your opinion about the containment measures employed by the government? Do you think they are justified? Do you think they should be maintained for longer?
- {In German guide: How do you feel about the differential measures in the German federal states?}
- Have you heard of other people's/countries strategies with regard to containment and protection?
- {if yes, what is your opinion about differences/similarities?}
- Have you heard of herd immunity? {If not, describe and if understood/remembered: Can you describe any thoughts or feelings that you had when the establishment of herd immunity was discussed?}

### **Conceptualization of personal and collective risk posed by COVID-19**

- Please describe what being "at risk" for something means to you.
- According to you, what specifically are you "at risk" for during the pandemic and why?
- Are you aware of any other things you are at risk for/have been at risk for before the pandemic? Please describe.
- What risks have been part of your lived experience so far?
- How is the new risk different to other risks that are part of your lived experience?
- Apart from the direct health risks, what other consequences could COVID-19 and the measures employed have on you?
- What other consequences could COVID-19 and the measures employed have on society as a whole?
- How do you feel about being part of a group of people who have been labelled at risk?

### **Effects of being labelled "at risk" on self-identity**

- How do you feel about being in the "at risk" group? Can you explain if and how these feelings changed over time since the pandemic started?
- Has this made you feel differently about yourself?
- Can you explain how you feel about aging in general?
- Has this (being "at risk") made you feel differently about your age?
- Do you think any of this has affected the way you feel about yourself and who you are?
- What would your perceptions of yourself be like if the age threshold was higher/lower?

- How will it be when this is all over? Do you think you might feel or behave differently than before/maintain behaviours?
- According to you, what impacts does the division of society into at risk and not at risk groups according to age have on people's perceptions of older people and ageing?
- Does the labelling affect your feeling of self-worth in any way?

Is there anything you would like to add?

We will be analysing the data and you will be informed of the results of the study in due course. Thank you very much for your time.