

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q. What kinds of permissions are required to use the VFQ-25 in a research study?

The VFQ-25 is a public document available without charge for all researchers to use provided they identify the measure as such in all publications and cite the appropriate developmental papers. Users do not need to notify the developers or the NEI that they intend to use the measure. However, there are some specific permissions for using the VFQ-25 that are detailed on the cover page of the questionnaire itself. These include acknowledging in all publications that the VFQ-25 was developed by RAND and funded by the NEI, and that any changes made to the measure for your particular study will be identified as such.

Q. Can I change the format of the VFQ-25 to suit my study?

Any change to the wording or order of the items would constitute a change to the measure and should be specified as such in any published papers. Other than this, it is expected that researchers may need to change the format or appearance of items to suit their purposes.

As of August 2000, to our knowledge no studies have reported on the effect of item order on responses to VFQ-25 or other similar vision-targeted surveys. That is, whether responses change depending where particular items appear in the questionnaire. However, to ensure the comparability of scores across studies, it is our position that the order of items should not be changed.

Q. Has the VFQ-25 been translated into any other languages?

The cost of distribution, a Spanish language version for Mexican-American populations is available from the UCLA and RAND based developers. Should researchers wish to translate the VFQ-25, the same permissions apply, with the additional requirement that all publications specify responsibility for the translation along with instructions for obtaining a copy of the translated version.

Q. Do you have any additional normative information for specific populations?

The developers currently are not conducting studies for the express purpose of further investigating the psychometric properties of the VFQ-25 or producing normative data. However, many researchers are currently using the VFQ-25 as an endpoint or outcome in a number of health services and clinical studies. It is likely that as these studies are completed, results that are relevant to better understanding the performance of the VFQ-25 will accompany the main results of each study. The developers and staff at the NEI are aware of other researchers who are collecting condition-specific normative data on population-based samples with the VFQ-25 and when possible will provide contact information for these investigators to new users.

Q. How relevant are the normative data provided in the scoring manual to my sample?

The means, standard deviations, and statistical power values shown in this document were estimated using cross-sectional data from the Field Test Study. Participants recruited for the Field Test were not randomly sampled, but rather were identified for enrollment based on clinical criteria biased towards persons with moderate to severe forms of each target disease. Further, because it was our desire to enroll a broad spectrum of patients based on disease severity, we did not take into consideration treatment status. Please see references #3 for a full description of the NEI-VFQ field test study sample.

Q. Why is a single-item general health item included in the VFQ-25?

During the developmental phase of the NEI-VFQ, vision-targeted health-related quality of life (HRQOL) was a relatively new concept. For this reason, we included this question to insure that researchers had a minimal amount of information about a person's general health status to use as a benchmark against other published samples or cohorts.

This general health rating question has been widely used in studies and is a robust predictor of future health and mortality. However, to fully measure generic HRQOL, many quality of life measurement experts recommend including a separate generic measure of HRQOL such as the SF-36 or SF-12.⁹ In such a situation the single-item VFQ-25 general health rating question is not needed because the identical question is asked as part of these surveys.^{10, 11}

Q. Should we be looking at the sub-scales or the composite score?

The VFQ-25 sub-scales are grouped by theme or domain. So, for example, items having to do with near vision are differentiated from items having to do with other vision activities like distance vision or ocular pain. This does not mean that the items are not highly correlated or that they are psychometrically distinct. What it does mean is that researchers should beforehand carefully consider which vision-specific domains are most likely to be influenced by a particular disease and/or treatment and then focus on the results from those sub-scales to support their findings.

The composite score is best used in situations where an overall measure of vision-targeted health related quality of life is desired. For example, in studies where it is not clear what the specific impact of ocular disease or a new treatment might be. Also, in situations where differences can be hypothesized between groups beforehand across multiple sub-scales but the overall sample size of the study is relatively small, because it is likely that the error term for the composite score is likely to be smaller than for any given sub-scale, it may be more efficient to represent these differences as a single score.

Q. What benefit is there to using the VFQ-25 over a measure more specific to a particular disease, like the Activity of Daily Vision Scale (ADVS)¹⁰ for persons with age-related cataracts?

The VFQ-25 contains items that are very similar to items found in other vision-targeted measure like the ADVS that are more task oriented. However, whereas the ADVS was designed specifically to assess a set of activities most relevant to patients undergoing cataract surgery, the VFQ-25 expands the range of activities to measure the impact of ocular disease on broader domains of health such as social and emotional well-being. Serious ocular diseases that lead to irreversible loss of vision are likely to impact dimensions of a person's life beyond simple tasks such as driving or reading the newspaper, and similarly, by preserving vision, many successful interventions also will impact persons' lives at this more global level. Especially in these situations, use of the VFQ-25 should be considered.

Q. Why does the response to item 15b, "stopped driving due to vision and other reasons", generate a missing score for the subsequent driving items?

Driving items 15, 15a, and 15b are filter questions designed to specify whether a person has ever driven a car, and if so, whether they are currently driving or if they have stopped. If people have never driven a car, then, of course, their answers should be set to missing for all driving items. Similarly, this also applies to people who have stopped driving for other reasons not due to vision. However, in the course of pilot testing the field test participants wanted this additional mixed response option. It was our decision that although persons did indeed report not driving due to vision, it was not clear how much of a role the "other" reason also played in this decision. Therefore, we set the scoring criteria for this response to be missing for all subsequent driving items to be absolutely sure that all driving responses reflected only problems with vision. Should researchers wish to change this response option to allow persons to answer subsequent driving items (currently there is a skip to item #17), this change should be noted in subsequent publications.