

# Testing the efficacy of coronavirus messaging

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Experiment: 'How to wash your hands'  
March 2020



In partnership with



Cabinet Office



# Executive Summary

## *The Top 3*

1. We tested 7 'how to wash your hands' infographics on an online sample of 2,629 UK adults.
2. Designs by the **Taiwan CDC**, **Singapore Ministry of Health**, and **NHS** did best in terms of recall and positive sentiment.
3. To encourage thorough handwashing in the global fight against coronavirus, we recommend **bright infographics with the step-by-step procedure prominently displayed without too much accompanying text.**

## BEST PERFORMERS

### Taiwan CDC



Singapore  
Ministry of Health

NHS



# Overview

We tested 7 different 'how to wash your hands' posters, made by organisations around the world, on an online sample of 2,629 UK adults on 12-17 March 2020.

Participants were randomly assigned to see one type of poster, then asked a series of questions about it.

## Sample of 2,629 UK adults

Gender	
% female	51%
Age	
18-24	29%
25-54	49%
55+	22%

Region	
South & East	28%
North	25%
Midlands	17%
Scot/NI/Wales	13%
London	17%

Median time spent completing survey = 5 min 13s

*Also collected data for all respondents on education, income, smoking status, urban/rural, baseline hand washing frequency.*

# The 7 tested posters

Original poster  
available here

**A**  
([NHS](#))

## Hand-washing technique with soap and water



**B**  
([WHO](#))



We removed identifying  
poster logos and  
branding for the  
experiment



# The 7 tested posters

C

([Singapore](#)  
Ministry of Health)



D

([Italy](#)  
Ministry of Health)



Translated into  
English

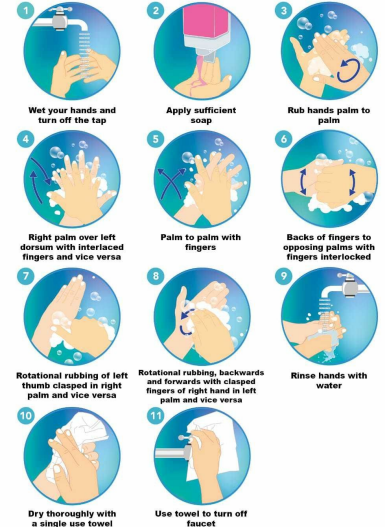
E

([Spain](#)  
Ministry of Health)

## How to wash hands

DURATION REQUIRED: 30 SECONDS

SING HAPPY BIRTHDAY TWICE WHILE SCRUBBING YOUR HANDS



## 8 STEPS TO CLEAN YOUR HANDS





# The 7 tested posters

**F**  
(Taiwan CDC)

*Translated into  
English*

**G**  
(South Korea CDC)





# Key findings I

1 Participants were randomly assigned to see one type of poster, then asked these questions

2 Shading indicates top 2 highest scores on each question

3 The 3 key steps reported in the first row are those explicitly mentioned in all 7 posters

4 Red boxes highlight overall top performers

Finding	NHS	WHO	Sing. (MOH)	Italy (MOH)	Spain (MOH)	Taiwan (CDC)	Korea (CDC)
<b>recalled all 3 key hand washing steps</b> <i>(palm to palm, interlaced fingers, thumbs)</i>	66%	62%	62%	59%	61%	67%	61%
<b>recalled 'wash palm to palm'</b>	79%	84%	83%	80%	83%	86%	80%
<b>recalled 'wash interlaced fingers'</b>	80%	80%	76%	79%	77%	81%	76%
<b>recalled 'wash thumbs'</b>	79%	73%	78%	72%	74%	77%	77%
<b>recalled 'wash wrists'</b>	67%	56%	72%	62%	54%	54%	57%
<b>recalled 'wash fingernails'</b>	68%	66%	79%	69%	68%	68%	71%



# Key findings II

Finding	NHS	WHO	Sing. (MOH)	Italy (MOH)	Spain (MOH)	Taiwan (CDC)	Korea (CDC)
% saying they <b>better understand how to thoroughly wash hands</b> after seeing poster	91%	93%	94%	91%	93%	94%	94%
# times per day people <b>intend to thoroughly wash hands</b> after seeing poster	8.1	8.5	8.7	8.3	8.2	8.5	8.6

1 Participants were randomly assigned to see one type of poster, then asked these questions

2 Shading indicates top 2 highest scores on each question

3 Values for '# times per day' are top coded at 95th percentile

4 Red boxes highlight overall top performers





# Key findings III

Finding	NHS	WHO	Sing. (MOH)	Italy (MOH)	Spain (MOH)	Taiwan (CDC)	Korea (CDC)
% saying poster is 'somewhat/very' effective at explaining how to thoroughly wash hands	88%	86%	88%	73%	89%	89%	83%

1 For this question, participants were shown all 7 posters together and were asked to rate each one

2 Shading indicates top 2 highest scores



# Key findings IV

% saying the poster...	NHS	WHO	Sing. (MOH)	Italy (MOH)	Spain (MOH)	Taiwan (CDC)	Korea (CDC)
...is easy to understand	87%	88%	96%	81%	87%	92%	93%
...is credible	86%	88%	92%	81%	82%	87%	89%
...has 'the right amount of information'	80%	80%	82%	68%	78%	82%	84%

1 Participants were randomly assigned to see one type of poster, then asked these questions

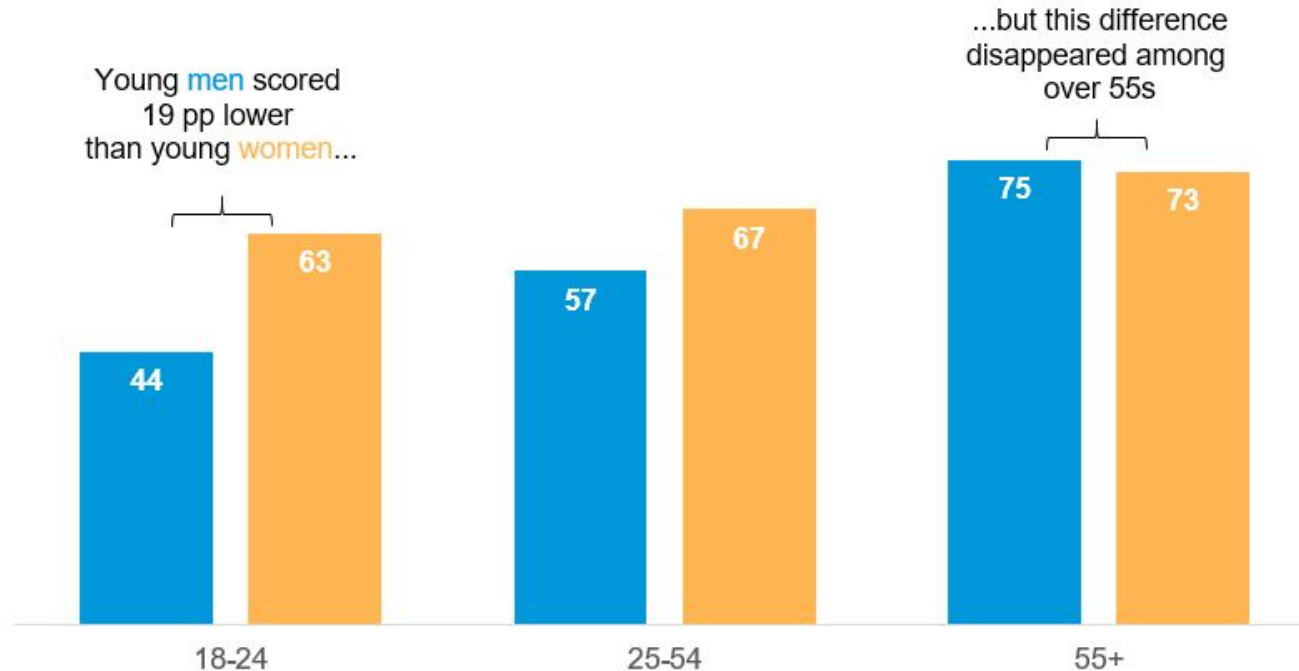
2 Shading indicates top 2 highest scores on each question

# Segmentation analysis

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# Young men did poorly on recall of the key handwashing steps

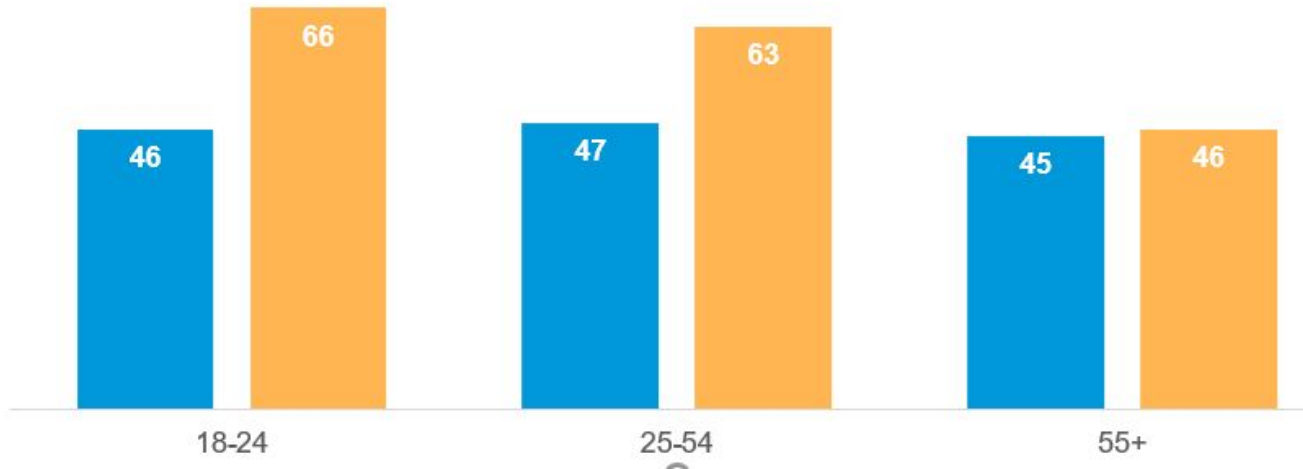
% recalling all 3 key handwashing steps  
(palm to palm, interlaced fingers, thumbs)





## A majority of only young and middle aged women knew *not* to wash their hands under continuously running water\*

% correctly saying one should *not* wash hands  
under continuously running water





# Qualitative findings

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# Qualitative feedback

## Positive feedback

“Simple and clear to follow”

“Perfect”

“Very helpful and easy to understand”

“Clear layout helps to follow the steps”

“Very informative for all ages”

“Everyone should see this”

## A (NHS)

### Hand-washing technique with soap and water



## Constructive feedback

“It should say how long to wash hands for”

“It’s too busy and diagram heavy- the design should be clearer”

“Needs more description on how to close taps without touching them”

*Free-text feedback was 67% positive / 33% negative  
(based on feedback from 138 participants)*



# Qualitative feedback

## Positive feedback

“Very clear and informative”

“good sensible, easy to understand advice. should be posted everywhere.”

“Good poster with a thorough explanation”

“It is very useful and helpful”

“It taught me something new. I always wondered how to turn the tap off without dirtying your hands again”

## B (WHO)



## Constructive feedback

“Too many steps to the point of losing the attention of a random observer”

“Use simpler terminology, eg faucet. Why not say tap?”

“It is awful, instead of telling how to wash hands, it should say what with, how long, hot or cold water”

“Too dull on the eyes, does not catch the attention of many people”

*Free-text feedback was 57% positive / 43% negative  
(based on feedback from 114 participants)*





# Qualitative feedback

## C (Singapore Ministry of Health)

### Positive feedback

“Brilliant poster”

“Easy to follow and eye catching”

“It sends the message out clearly”

“Nice to see it in pictures so children can easily understand it”

“Good, informative and easy to understand”



### 8 STEPS TO CLEAN YOUR HANDS



### Constructive feedback

“want to know more about how long I should wash my hands for”

“Too busy. Circles are too small. Top box is far too large in relation to the rest of the poster.”

“It is missing information on the most important times to wash your hands”

“provide information regarding how long to wash for, what type of soap to use and what to use when soap and water are not available.”

*Free-text feedback was 67% positive / 33% negative  
(based on feedback from 168 participants)*



# Qualitative feedback

## Positive feedback

“Very informative and fun”

“Good poster, easy to understand”

“Perfectly structured and easy to understand, can’t fault it”

“Good on the eye and is clear and concise”

## D (Italy Ministry of Health)



## Constructive feedback

“Very busy, too many words”

“Too complicated, people will not read it, let alone remember it”

“patronising”

“This advice is for vegetables, not human beings”

*Free-text feedback was 52% positive / 48% negative  
(based on feedback from 179 participants)*



# Qualitative feedback

## Positive feedback

“Good, clear, well explained instructions”

“very comprehensive and easy to understand”

“very informative and engaging”

“Good diagrams”

## E (Spain Ministry of Health)



## Constructive feedback

“no idea what a dorsum is, too wordy and lots of places where it could be simplified”

“too much for most people to bother reading”

“should include how long you should wash your hands for and how many times a day”

“Larger text would help”

*Free-text feedback was 53% positive / 47% negative  
(based on feedback from 119 participants)*

# Qualitative feedback

## F (Taiwan CDC)

### Positive feedback

“very helpful”

“clear and concise”

“very simple to look at and easy to understand”

“very eye catching”

“useful to show pictures, ideal for schools and doctors surgeries”

“simple and friendly”



### Constructive feedback

“should be simpler and to the point”

“very childish and a little patronising”

“don’t think the poster is good at emphasising the right things, why do we need most of the poster taken up by a person at a sink”

“Make the font larger”

*Free-text feedback was 68% positive / 32% negative  
(based on feedback from 150 participants)*



# Qualitative feedback

## Positive feedback

“Very clear and informative”

“Straight to the point”

“Good use of images”

“easy to understand even for children”

“Working in healthcare, this poster is simpler than most handwashing guides and covers enough detail to be effective.”

## G

(South Korea CDC)



## Constructive feedback

“looks complicated. I think a lot of people won't read it”

“The font for the six steps is too small”

“Doesn't make it clear when to wash your hands”

“A lot of wasted space, critical info could be larger”

*Free-text feedback was 64% positive / 36% negative  
(based on feedback from 121 participants)*

# Get in touch

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