**handwashing behaviours**

DHSC Tracker Surveys, Wave 10, 30 March – 1 April 2020 (n=2012)

### 9th April 2020

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Summary:

* Reach of government campaigns is high, with 96% of participants reporting having seen or heard advice on how to protect oneself and others from coronavirus, 97% reporting having seen or heard advice on handwashing, and 94% reporting having seen or heard advice on not touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Fewer people (85%) reported having seen or heard recommendations to “Catch it, Bin it, Kill it”.
* Perceived effectiveness of hand washing, and confidence that you could wash your hands thoroughly and regularly if you wanted to, was high (94%+).
* As the vast majority of people had seen campaigns about handwashing, agreed that handwashing was an effective way to prevent the spread of coronavirus, and that they could wash their hands thoroughly and regularly with soap and water if they wanted to, we could not draw any meaningful associations from these analyses.
* Analyses for this report compared those who reported washing their hands “more than usual” to those who reported washing their hands “as much as usual” or “not [doing] this”. We cannot quantify what “usual” behaviour is.
* Younger age (16 to 24 years) was associated with decreased likelihood of hand washing more than usual after blowing your nose, sneezing and coughing, and before eating or preparing food.
* No other socio-demographic characteristics were associated with handwashing behaviours.
* Agreeing that you were concerned about spreading coronavirus to someone at risk was associated with completing all hand washing behaviours “more than usual”. Agreeing that someone could spread coronavirus even if they were asymptomatic was associated only with washing your hands “more than usual” when getting home or into work.
* Worry and increased perceived risk (in particular to other people in the UK) were associated with multiple handwashing behaviours. Increased severity of coronavirus and likelihood of catching coronavirus were associated with completing some handwashing behaviours “more than usual” but not others.
* There is little evidence that satisfaction with the Government and perceived credibility of the Government was associated with handwashing behaviours.

Recommendations:

* Campaigns encouraging hand hygiene behaviours should emphasise the risk of coronavirus to people in the UK and oneself. Other risk factors, such as severity of coronavirus and likelihood of catching coronavirus, should also be included.
* Messages should emphasise that people can spread coronavirus even if they are asymptomatic.
* Messages should continue to state that hand washing is a simple and effective way of preventing the spread of coronavirus that can be easily carried out and incorporated into daily life.
* Communications encouraging people to wash their hands before eating or preparing food and after blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing should target those aged 16 to 24 years.

*Please note that this work has been conducted rapidly, and has not been peer reviewed or subject to normal quality control measures.*

Table 1. Percentage of participants washing their hands.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Washed your hands when you got home, n (%) | Washed your hands when you got into work, n (%) | Washed your hands before eating or preparing food, n (%) | Washed your hands after blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing, n (%) |
| Done this, same amount as usual | 446 (22.2) | 280 (13.9) | 826 (41.1) | 608 (30.2) |
| Done this, more than usual | 1356 (67.4) | 659 (32.8) | 1094 (54.4) | 1167 (58.0) |
| Not done this | 59 (2.9) | 66 (3.3) | 67 (3.3) | 132 (6.6) |
| Not applicable | 151 (7.5) | 1007 (50.0) | 25 (1.2) | 105 (5.2) |

Table 2. Associations between sociodemographic characteristics, employment characteristics and washing hands more than usual.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Washing hands when arrive home more than usual | Washing hands when arrive at work more than usual | Washing hands before eating or preparing food more than usual | Washing hands after blowing nose more than usual |
| Strong positive association | Agreeing that people can spread coronavirus even if they are asymptomatic | Worry, satisfaction with Government response, credibility of Government, agreeing that people can spread coronavirus even if they are asymptomatic | Worry |  |
| Positive association | Worry, perceived risk (people in the UK), perceived severity of coronavirus, concern about passing coronavirus to someone who is at risk | Perceived risk (people in the UK), perceived severity of coronavirus, concern about passing coronavirus to someone who is at risk | Perceived risk (self and to people in the UK), perceived severity of coronavirus, likelihood of catching coronavirus, concern about passing coronavirus to someone who is at risk | Worry, likelihood of catching coronavirus, concern about passing coronavirus to someone who is at risk |
| Not associated | Gender, age, dependent children, coronavirus-relevant chronic illness– self, any chronic illness –household member, working status, family member is NHS worker, friend is NHS worker, more deprived (Index of Multiple Deprivation), ethnicity, education, having a permanent job, being self-employed, being a key worker, socioeconomic group, perceived risk (self), likelihood of catching coronavirus, satisfaction with Government response, credibility of Government | Gender, age, dependent children, coronavirus-relevant chronic illness– self, any chronic illness –household member, working status, family member is NHS worker, friend is NHS worker, more deprived (Index of Multiple Deprivation), ethnicity, education, previous coronavirus (think have had it, or confirmed), having a permanent job, being self-employed, being a key worker, socioeconomic group, perceived risk (self), likelihood of catching coronavirus | Gender, age, dependent children, coronavirus-relevant chronic illness– self, any chronic illness –household member, working status, NHS worker, family member is NHS worker, friend is NHS worker, more deprived (Index of Multiple Deprivation), ethnicity, education, previous coronavirus (think have had it, or confirmed), having a permanent job, being self-employed, being a key worker, socioeconomic group, satisfaction with Government response, credibility of Government, agreeing that people can spread coronavirus even if they are asymptomatic | Gender, dependent children, coronavirus-relevant chronic illness– self, any chronic illness –household member, working status, NHS worker, family member is NHS worker, friend is NHS worker, more deprived (Index of Multiple Deprivation), ethnicity, education, previous coronavirus (think have had it, or confirmed), having a permanent job, being self-employed, being a key worker, socioeconomic group, perceived risk (self and people in UK), perceived severity of coronavirus, satisfaction with Government response, credibility of Government, agreeing that people can spread coronavirus even if they are asymptomatic |
| Negative association | Previous coronavirus (think have had it, or confirmed) |  |  |  |
| Strong negative association | NHS worker | NHS worker |  | Younger age (16 to 24 years vs 45+ years) |

Datasets used:

* Department of Health and Social Care weekly tracker
  + Tracking DHSC marketing, coronavirus attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, reported behaviour, satisfaction with Government response, credibility of Government.
  + Data collected weekly (Monday to Wednesday) since late January.
  + N~2000 per wave.
  + Market research company commissioned: BMG Research.
  + *This survey is not designed to collect the views of NHS workers and respondents in this sample working in the NHS are not representative of the wider NHS workers in general. In particular, the sample in the survey is of NHS staff who have time to participate in on-line polls. In the context of a major public health crisis this poses very substantial limitations.*

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