

Selecting Participants



Why are the recommended Wash'Em sample sizes so small?

The Wash'Em Rapid Assessment Tools are qualitative rather than quantitative, meaning that they focus on stories and opinions rather than numbers. The data obtained from the Rapid Assessment Tools is designed to provide insights that can guide program design, but you should not make generalizations about the data or think it summarizes the behaviour of the whole community.

We have tested the recommended sample sizes in lots of contexts and find that even though the sample sizes are small, they still allow us to reach a point of saturation. The saturation point is where we start to see similar patterns in the data across participants or observe that the handwashing facilities all look relatively similar. When we reach the saturation point, we normally have enough data to make basic program decisions.

The sample sizes recommended are also small because we want these tools to be suitable for use even in the acute phase of a crisis. In an emergency, tools that provide a quick indication of behaviour are more useful to program design than tools that take several months to provide a detailed understanding of target population's behaviour.

How should you select people to use the Wash'Em Rapid Assessment Tools?

For each of the Wash'Em Rapid Assessment tools, a diverse sample of the community is required. Before you start selecting people, try to get a map of the community. You could draw a map with the village or camp leader or get a map from a nongovernmental organization (for example, [the REACH Initiative](#)) or an online mapping service like [Google Maps](#) or [OpenStreetMap](#). If you are going to support WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) activities throughout a whole community, it is important that you sample people living in different geographic regions of the community. Keep track of who participates by marking households on a map.

The second thing to do is consider different types of characteristics that might lead to people having different opinions or behaviours. For example, if people have different religions in the community, it would be important to include people from each religion as hygiene behaviour can be influenced by religious practices. Other characteristics to consider are listed in the box on the right. The goal should be to make your sample of participants as diverse as your population and to make sure no groups are left out.

Key points

- The Wash'Em tools are qualitative.
- They are designed to generate enough data to inform programs but will not tell you everything about community members' behaviour.
- Sample sizes are small enough to be suitable for use in the acute phase of a crisis.
- Data from Wash'Em is not representative of the population.

Characteristics to consider

- Gender
- Age
- Ability or disability
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Wealth
- Access to water and other resources
- Duration since displacement
- Family size
- Exposure to disease



The whole population

The image to the left shows a diverse population living in a community. Each colour represents people of a different ethnicity.

If you were planning to select six people to create a diverse sample from this population, we would want to make sure that they were a mix of genders and ethnicities.



Your sample

How should you arrange the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)?

Three of the Wash'Em Rapid Assessment tools require you to set up FGDs. We recommend that you do a minimum of two FGDs for each tool. You can also combine two tools within one FGD, which will normally result in a one-hour discussion. If you conduct two FGDs and you notice that the opinions between the two groups are quite different, then we recommend that you conduct additional FGDs so that you can see clearer patterns in the data. In the table below, we provide an outline of how you can combine the tools.

FGD1	FGD2	FGD3
Motives Tool	Motives Tool	Disease Perceptions Tool
Touchpoint Tool	Disease Perceptions Tool	Touchpoint Tool

We recommend that you invite seven people to each FGD. This way there are enough opinions to create a lively discussion and the group is still small enough that everyone can contribute. Also, having an odd number of people can be useful if you need people to make a consensus decision.

Is diversity always a good thing in FGDs?

Three of the Wash'Em Rapid Assessment Tools require you to organize FGDs. The purpose of any FGD is to bring like-minded people together in order to gain a better understanding of common opinions or to have members reach agreement on a topic. A focus group that is too diverse may prevent some people from feeling comfortable enough to speak up. To avoid this problem, we recommend placing men in separate FGDs from women and separating young people from older people. How many FGDs you decide to set up will depend on the diversity in your community and whether you want to learn from lots of different opinions.

What if I am working in an outbreak?

In an outbreak, we recommend that all the people you select to be part of the Personal Histories Tool have been directly affected by the outbreak. Being directly affected could mean that they themselves had the disease or a member of their family did. If you are selecting such participants, you should work in partnership with a health centre. Make sure to act respectfully and in a non-stigmatizing way with such participants. For all the other Wash'Em tools, you can select anyone within the community.



If I am working in multiple areas, what should I do?

The first question to ask yourself is does my organization have the capacity and budget to potentially deliver different programs in different areas. If the answer is no, then treat your population as one. If you do have the ability to adapt your programs, then consider using the Wash'Em Rapid Assessment Tools separately in each area.

The second question to ask is how different the populations in these regions are. You can gauge this by thinking about whether there are differences in religion, culture, people's experiences of the crisis, their day-to-day routines, and the types of houses they live. If the differences are minimal, then the results from Wash'Em in one area could possibly be applied to the other areas. If you are unsure or the differences are more substantial, then you may need to use the Wash'Em tools in each area and enter the results into the software separately. You can then compare findings and tailor your hygiene program based on the different circumstances.

How can I involve people with disabilities in Wash'Em?

We encourage you to involve people with disabilities for all the Rapid Assessment Tools. When you are using the Handwashing Demonstrations tool or the Personal Histories tool make sure to include at least one person with disability. Generally, we would recommend that you include some people with disabilities in your main FGD rather than creating a special FGD just for people with special needs. An inclusive approach will help others in the community view people with disabilities as equals. Take time to discuss with your team members how you could adjust the activities to enable people with disabilities to take part.

Being inclusive can be challenging because each person with a disability has different needs. Position people with disabilities near to the facilitator. You may need to provide additional descriptions to people with disabilities. For example, describe what the cards show if you are working with people with visual impairments.

Ways to make Wash'Em more inclusive

- **Invitations to friends:** Invite people with disabilities to come along with a caregiver or a friend. Having someone with them will give them more confidence, and the caregiver can help explain the activity to them if necessary. You may want to meet with the person and their caregiver before the FGD to understand their needs and see if there are other issues facing people with disabilities in your area.
- **Location choice:** Make sure the location you select for FGDs is close by and easily accessed by anyone with special needs.
- **Explaining the activity:** Position people with disabilities near to the facilitator. Explain things loudly (if working with people with hearing limitations) and clearly. Describe what the cards show if you are working with people with visual impairments.
- **Encouraging sharing:** Actively ask for the opinion of people with disabilities.

Wash'Em

