

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Assessing the Usability of Coronavirus.gov

Cathy Hu and Sydnei Mayers

Mercer University



01. OVERVIEW

02. METHODOLOGY

03. FINDINGS

04. RECOMMENDATIONS

05. CONCLUSION



**We evaluated Coronavirus.gov
with 9 members of the general
population.**

**The majority of the
participants thought the
website was organized and
informative.**

**We determined three main
areas of frustration for the
users:**

- **Design**
- **Findability**
- **Missing Information**

The following methods supported our research:



PRE-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Gauge participant expectations



INTERACTIVE INTERVIEW

Understand participant's thoughts on the site



SUS EVALUATION

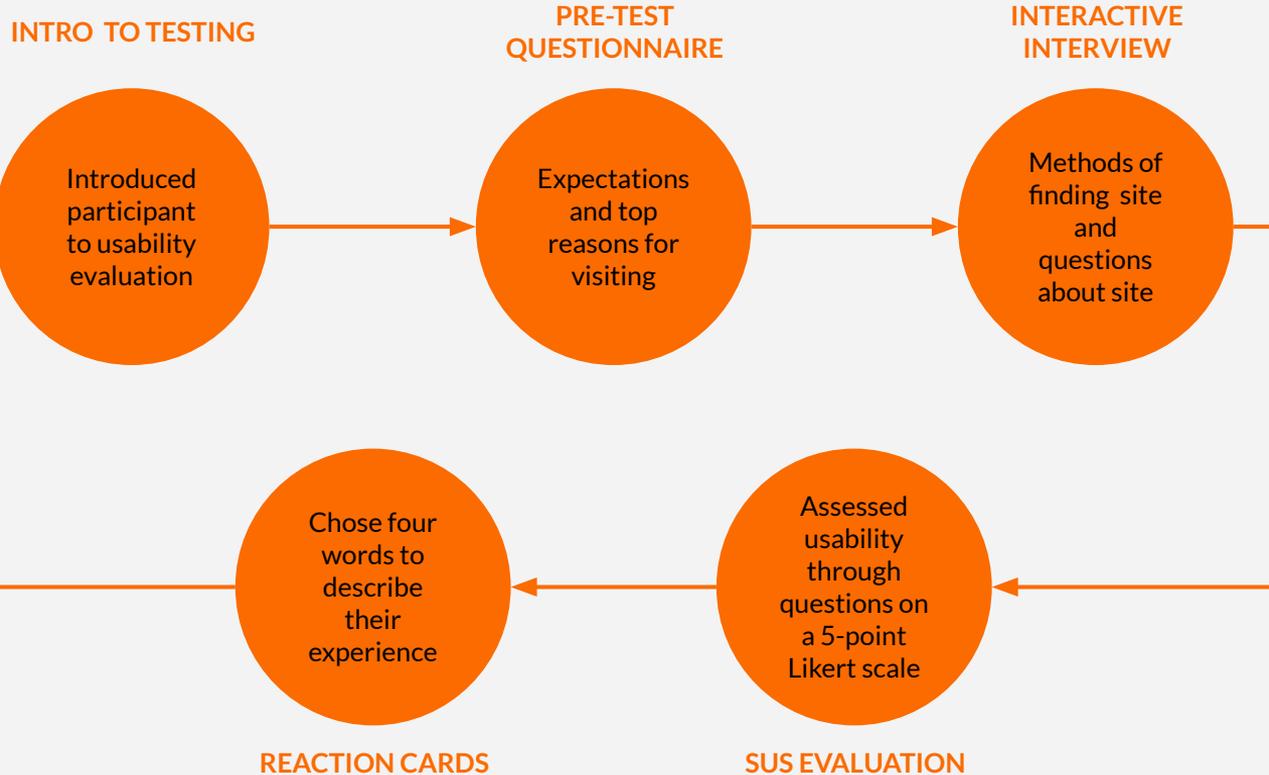
Discern usability of the site through quantitative means



REACTION CARDS

Determine summary of user's experience

Our test procedure was as follows:



The majority of participants described Coronavirus.gov favorably.

FINDINGS

8 out of 9 Participants

Organized

“The website had certain info clumped together.”

-Participant 7, 51+

7 out of 9 Participants

Professional

“The government logos at the top, make the website look official. The picture at the bottom is nice.”

-Participant 2, 18-30

5 out of 9 Participants

Easy to Use

“You don’t have to sign up for memberships or give your email. You can search for everything you need.”

-Participant 6, 31-50

4 out of 9 Participants

Clear

“Everything is very well organized, concise, and easy to use.”

-Participant 1, 18-30

4 out of 9 Participants

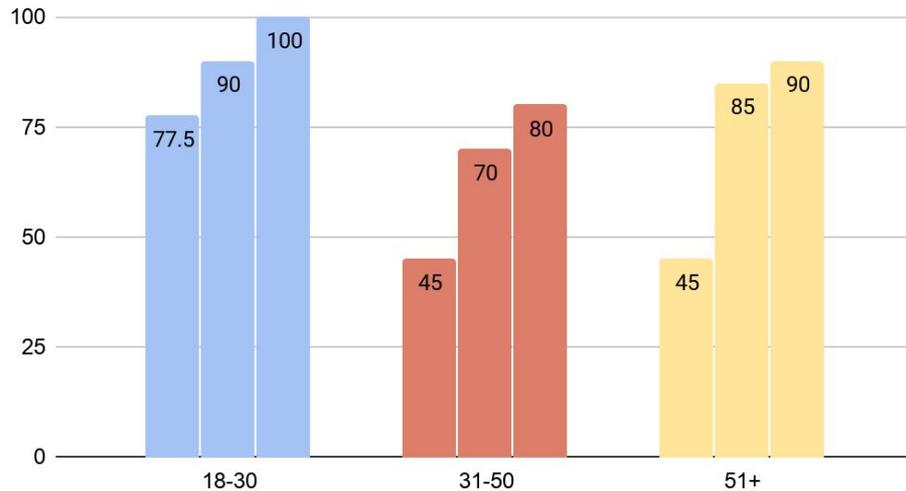
Convenient

“Everything is there [on the website].”

-Participant 4, 31-50

The average SUS score was a 75.8.

System Usability Scale Scores (By Age Group)



- Standard average score is a 68
- Coronavirus.gov has a higher than average usability level

We identified three problems that frustrated users.

| Category | Problem | Description | # Affected | Priority |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---|------------|----------|
| Findability | Finding Coronavirus.gov | Most participants did not choose Coronavirus.gov when asked to find a government site related to coronavirus. | 7/9 | 1 |
| Missing Information | Data, Statistics, and Map | Most participants expected to see data, statistics, and/or a map. | 6/9 | 2 |
| Design | Search Bar Location | Participants were disappointed that there was no search bar. | 2/9 | 3 |

Priority #1

Seven out of nine participants did not choose Coronavirus.gov when asked to find a government site related to coronavirus.



- Four participants navigated to CDC.gov
- Two participants (18-30 and 51+) successfully navigated to Coronavirus.gov by searching “Federal Coronavirus website” and “US government information Coronavirus”
- All three participants who searched “Coronavirus” did not find the site

Priority #2

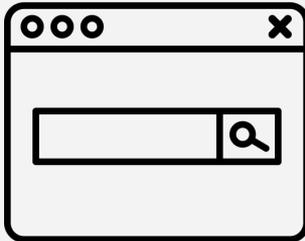
Six out of nine participants expected to see “data, statistics, maps and/or graphs” on a government site related to coronavirus.



- “Maps showing updated numbers of confirmed cases and graphs showing changes in numbers” (Participant 5, 31-50, and Participant 8, 51+)
- All three 51+ participants expected to see data and statistics

Priority #3

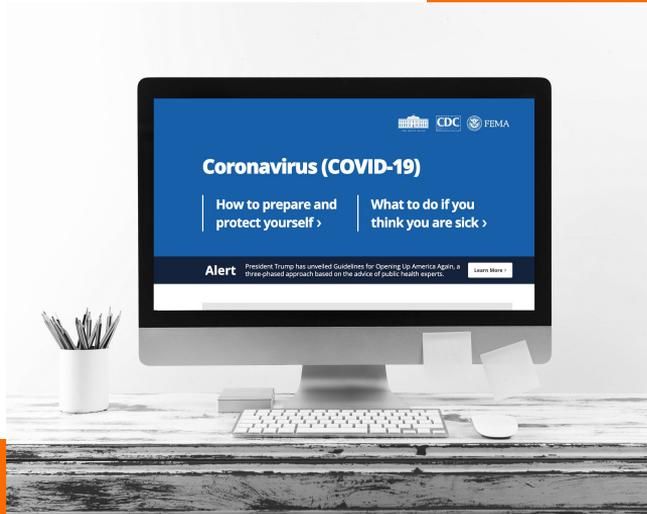
Two participants recommended the search bar be placed near the top of the homepage.



- Current location of search bar is on the FAQ page
- The expectation is to have a search bar on the homepage

We recommend the following:

1. Make Coronavirus.gov the top search in Google for general keywords
2. Add data and statistics to the homepage
3. Add interactive maps to the homepage
4. Add search bar to homepage



1. Make Coronavirus.gov the top search in Google for general keywords

- Adjust the SEO of Coronavirus.gov
- Consider using browser location permissions to detect if user is searching from the U.S.



The screenshot shows the top portion of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) homepage. At the top right, logos for the White House, CDC, and FEMA are displayed. The main heading is "Coronavirus (COVID-19)". Below it are two navigation links: "How to prepare and protect yourself >" and "What to do if you think you are sick >". A dark blue alert banner contains the text: "Alert President Trump has unveiled Guidelines for Opening Up America Again, a three-phased approach based on the advice of public health experts." with a "Learn More >" button. Below the alert are two data cards: "TOTAL CASES 1,827,425 24,955 New Cases*" and "TOTAL DEATHS 106,202 1,045 New Deaths*", with a note "*Compared to yesterday's data". Below these are three buttons: "Check for symptoms >", "Who is at highest risk? >", and "What is social distancing? >". At the bottom, the start of a "Frequently Asked Questions" section is visible. Orange boxes highlight the "How to prepare and protect yourself >" link, the "Alert" banner, the "TOTAL CASES" and "TOTAL DEATHS" cards, and the "Check for symptoms >" button.

White House CDC FEMA

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

How to prepare and protect yourself >

What to do if you think you are sick >

Alert President Trump has unveiled Guidelines for Opening Up America Again, a three-phased approach based on the advice of public health experts. [Learn More >](#)

| | |
|--|---|
| TOTAL CASES 1,827,425 24,955 New Cases* | TOTAL DEATHS 106,202 1,045 New Deaths* |
|--|---|

*Compared to yesterday's data

[Check for symptoms >](#)

[Who is at highest risk? >](#)

[What is social distancing? >](#)

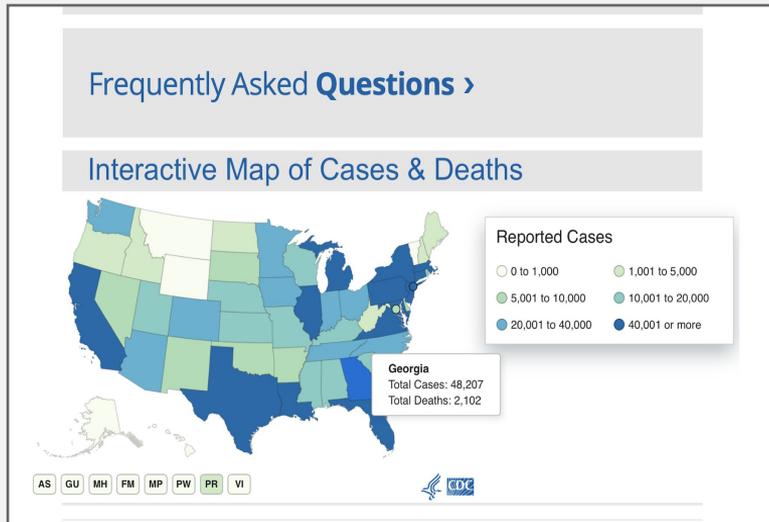
[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

2. Add data and statistics to the homepage

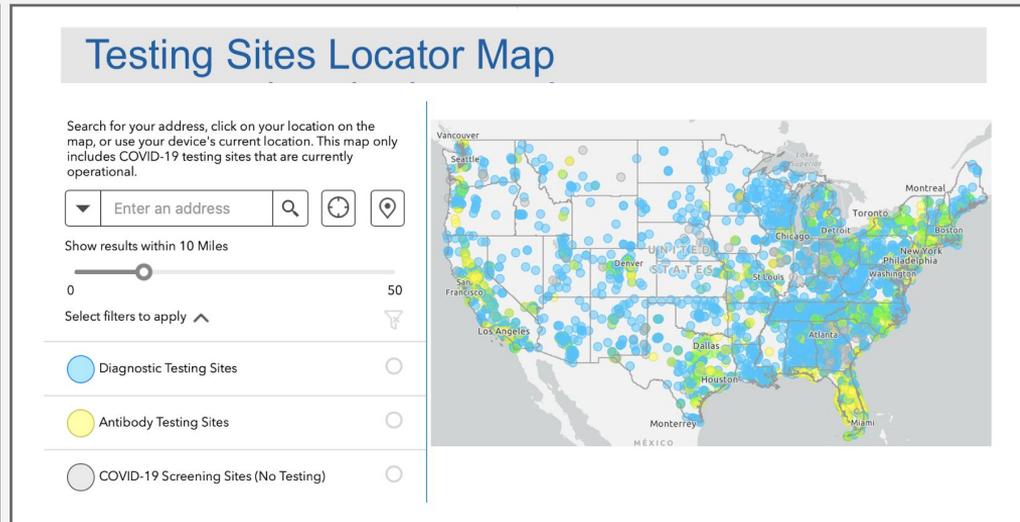
- Total confirmed cases in the U.S.
- Total coronavirus deaths in the U.S.

3. Add interactive maps to the homepage

The user should be able to see the reported number of coronavirus cases and deaths for each state on one map



An additional map could show coronavirus testing locations



4. Add search bar to homepage

- Convenient for users with specific questions
- Take less time for users to locate a search bar



The DHS should consider the following recommendations to improve the usability of Coronavirus.gov.

| Category | Problem | Recommendation |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Findability | Finding Coronavirus.gov | Make Coronavirus.gov the top search for general keywords |
| Missing Information | Data, Statistics, and Map | Add data, statistics, and interactive maps to the homepage |
| Design | Search Bar Location | Add search bar to homepage |