

# A Survey of Hand Washing Behavior (2005 Findings)

Prepared for



September 2005

# Research Objectives

- The American Society for Microbiology and the Soap and Detergent Association are interested in continuing to monitor hand washing habits of people in public restrooms.
- The objective of the research is to compare the actual observed number of U.S. adults who wash their hands after using a public restroom against the percentage who self-report that they wash their hands in several situations:
  - After petting a dog or cat
  - Before handling or eating food
  - After coughing or sneezing
  - After using a public restroom
  - After handling money
  - After changing a diaper
  - After using the bathroom in their home
- The purpose of this research is to increase public awareness of the importance of hand washing.

# Methodology – Telephone Survey

- Harris Interactive conducted 1,013 telephone interviews between August 19<sup>th</sup> and August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2005.
- The data are nationally representative and are stratified by census region and weighted by gender, education and ethnicity composure to represent the U.S. population.
  - This method assures a valid national probability sample.

# Methodology – Public Attractions Observations

- Harris Interactive observed the behavior of 6,336 individuals in public restrooms located at major public attractions in the U.S. and recorded whether or not they washed their hands after using the facilities. The research was conducted in four cities and at six different locations:
  - Atlanta – Turner Field
  - Chicago – Museum of Science and Industry and Shedd Aquarium
  - New York City – Penn Station and Grand Central Station
  - San Francisco – Ferry Terminal Farmers Market
- Observers discreetly watched and recorded whether or not adults using public restrooms washed their hands. Observers were instructed to groom themselves (comb their hair, put on make-up, etc.) while observing and to rotate bathrooms every hour or so to avoid counting repeat users more than once. Observers were also instructed to wash their hands no more than 10% of the time.

# 2005 Methodology – Public Attractions Observations

<i><b>City and Location</b></i>	<i><b>Male Washers</b></i>	<i><b>Male Non-Washers</b></i>	<i><b>Female Washers</b></i>	<i><b>Female Non-Washers</b></i>	<i><b>TOTAL</b></i>
Atlanta: Turner Field	493	285	682	128	1,588
Chicago: Museum of Science and Industry	304	71	353	27	755
Chicago: Shedd Aquarium	318	57	354	25	754
New York City: Grand Central Station	273	137	411	50	871
New York City: Penn Station	218	124	268	22	632
San Francisco: Ferry Terminal Farmers Market	787	139	734	76	1,736
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,393</b>	<b>813</b>	<b>2,802</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>6,336</b>

# Executive Summary

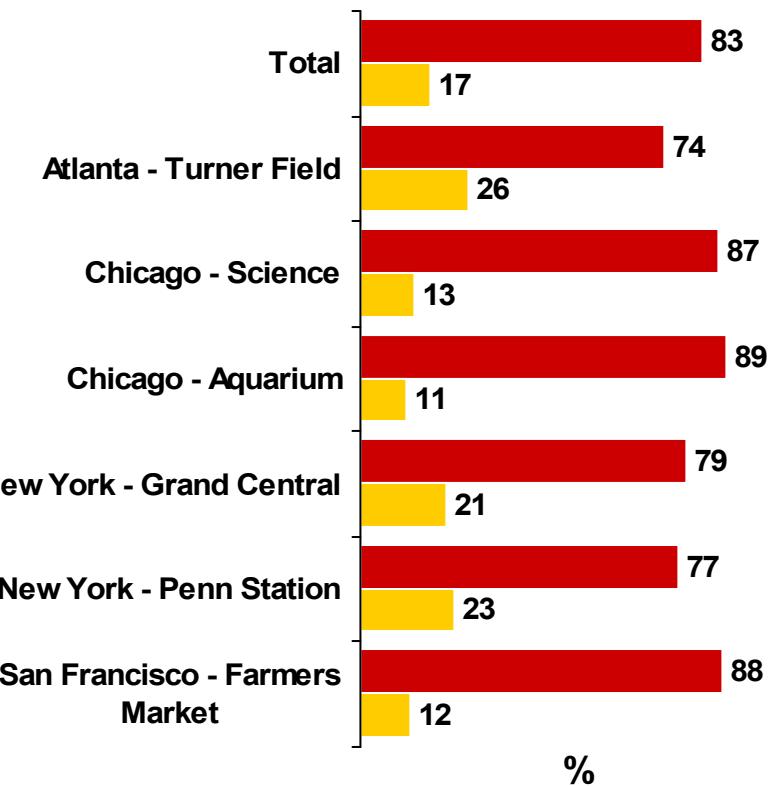
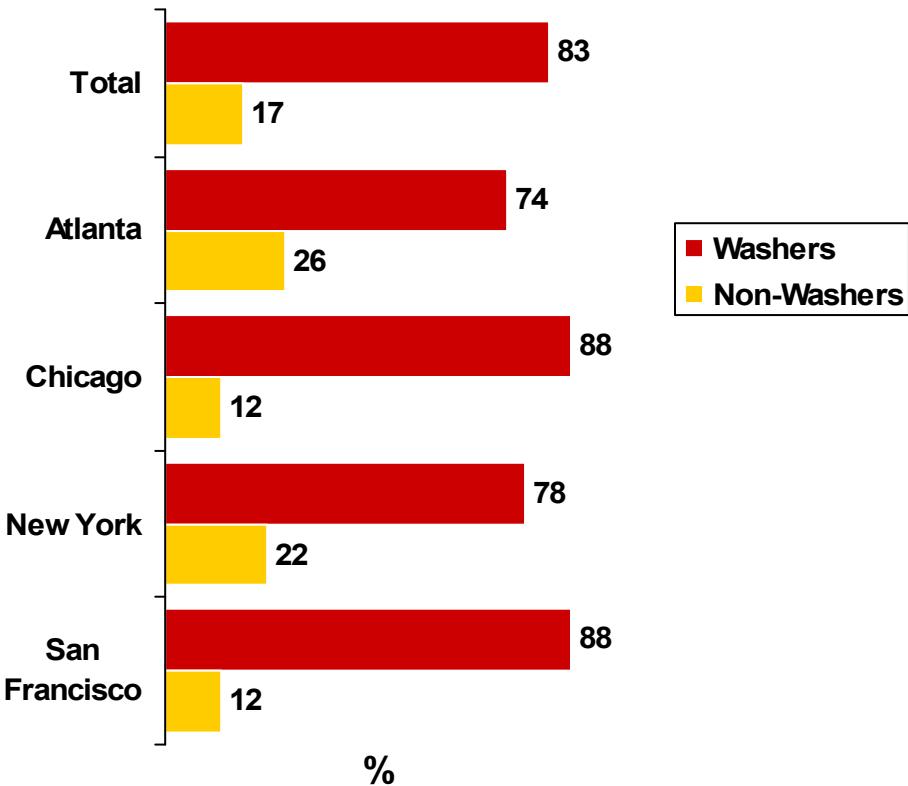
- Ninety-one percent of adults say they *always* wash their hands after using public restrooms; however just 83% were observed doing so.
- Among observational findings from public attractions in four major cities, the dirtiest hands were in Atlanta. One-quarter (26%) of people using restrooms in Atlanta at Turner Field did not wash their hands after using the facilities.
- Across all locations, women washed their hands more than men (90% vs. 75%).
  - This disparity was most pronounced in New York City where 92% of women traveling through Penn Station washed their hands, compared to only 64% of men.
- Americans also say they are likely to wash their hands after using the bathroom at home (83%), before handling or eating foods (77%) and after changing a diaper (73%). However, many do not wash after petting a dog or cat or after coughing or sneezing.



# 2005 Detailed Findings

# Public Attractions Observations

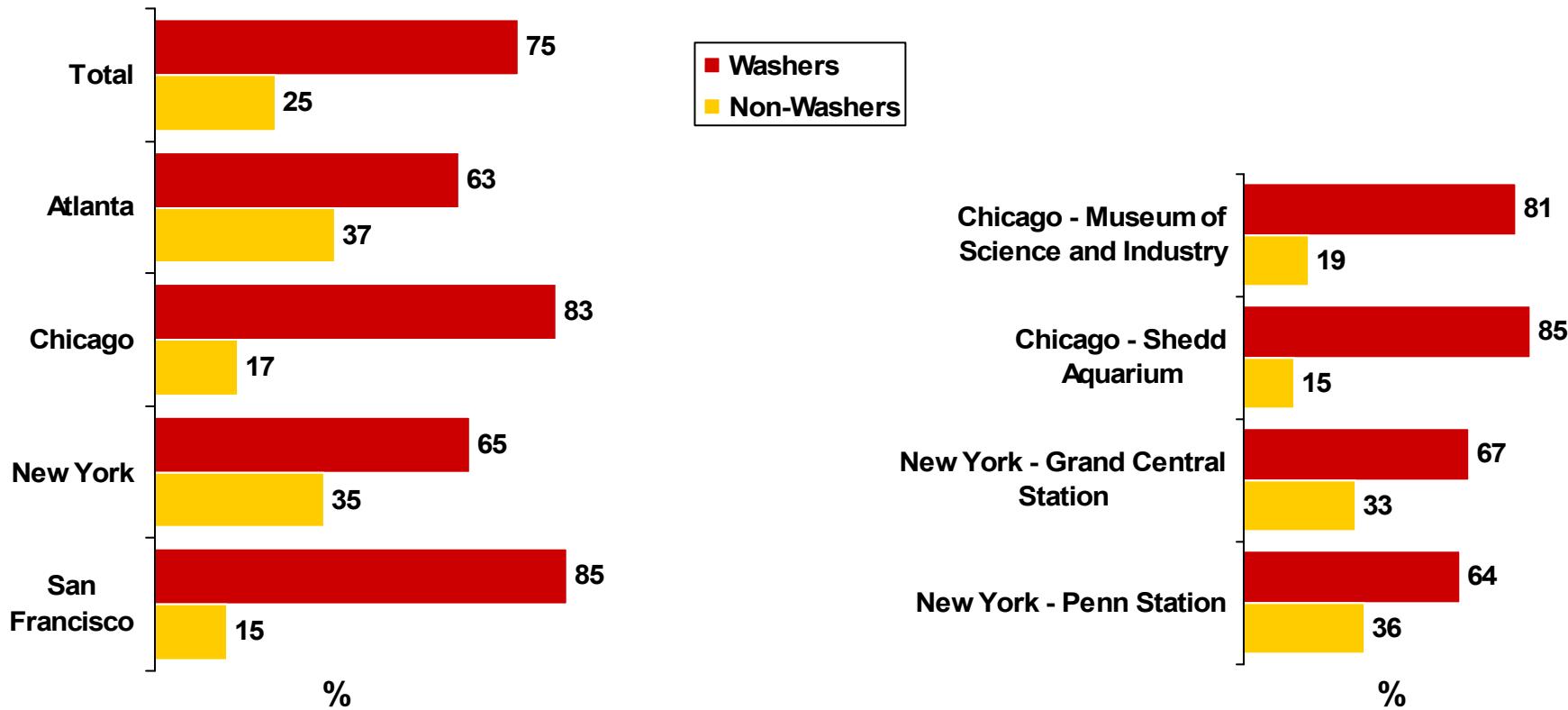
– Among Complete Sample –



Based on the observation of 6,336 individuals in public restrooms located at major public attractions

# Public Attractions Observations

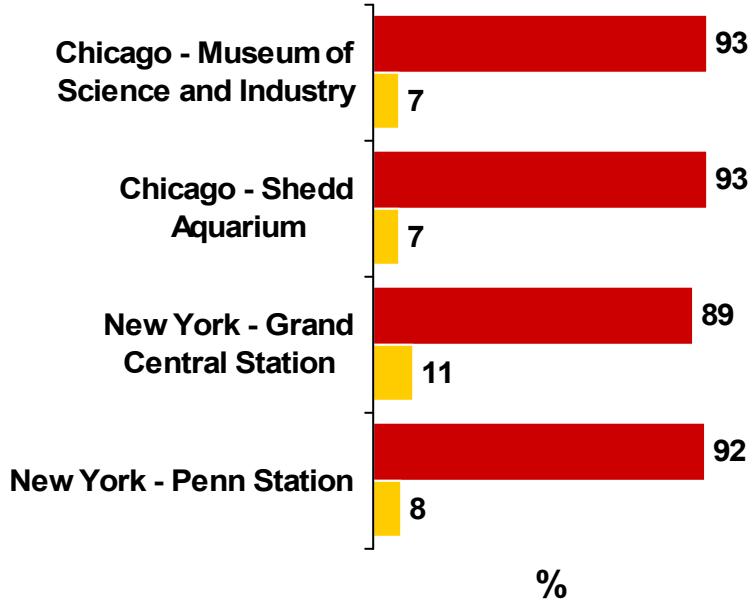
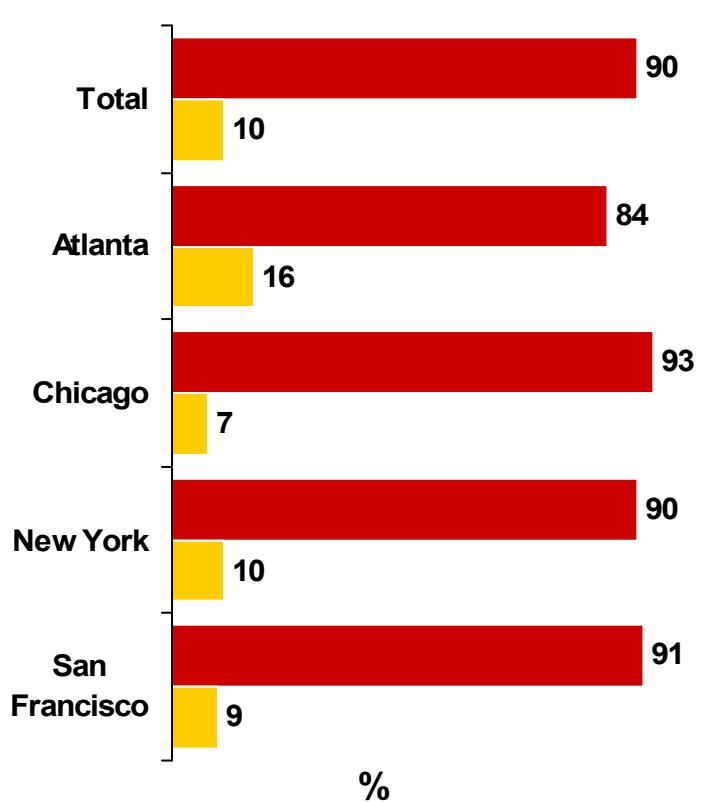
– Among Males –



Based on the observation of 3,206 males

# Public Attractions Observations

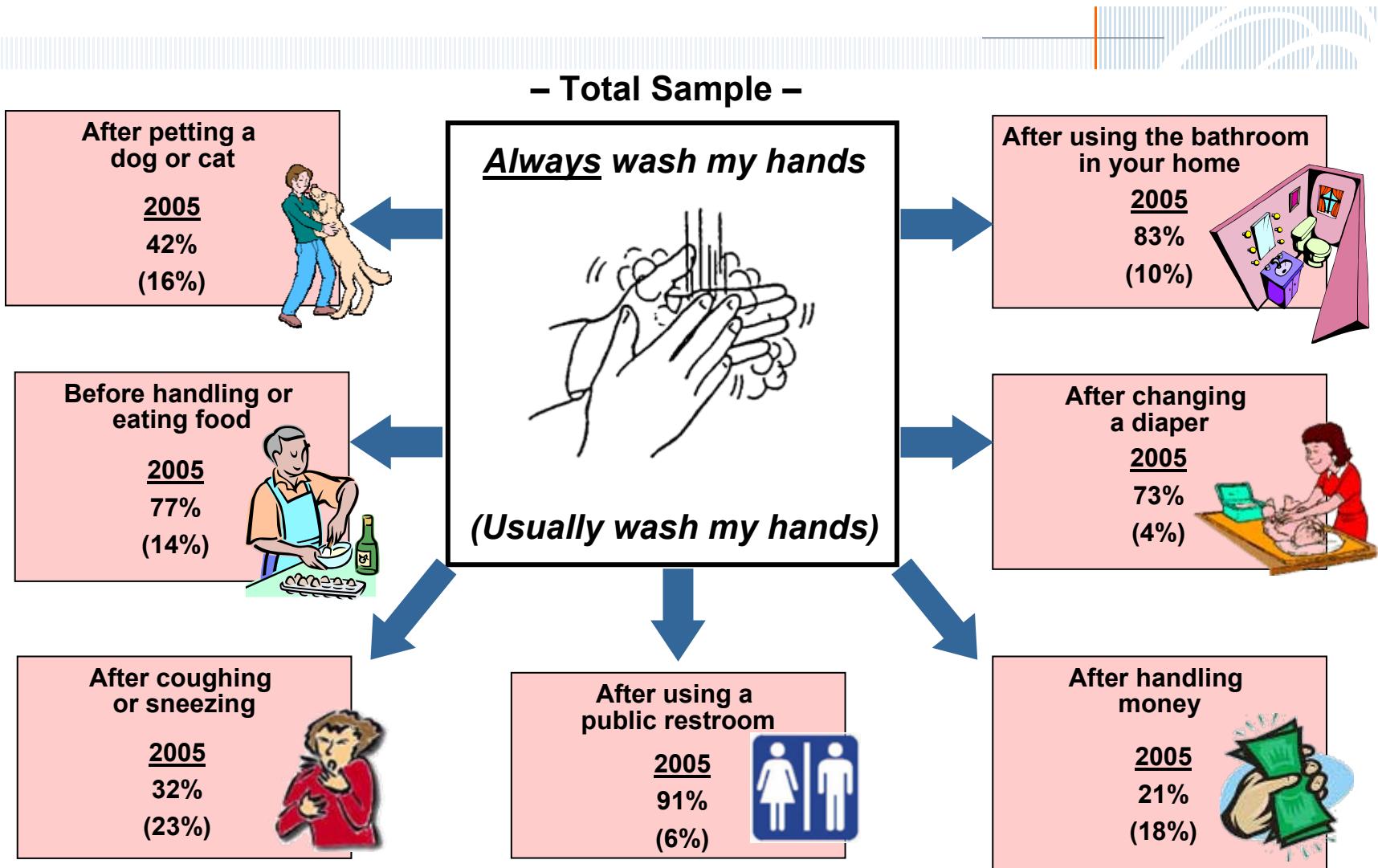
– Among Females –



Based on the observation of 3,130 females

# Hand Washing Habits

## How Frequently Do Americans Say They Are Washing Their Hands?



Q: I am going to read you a list of activities and I'd like you to tell me how often you make it a practice of washing your hands. How often do you wash your hands after...

**Men and women alike are least likely to wash their hands after coughing or sneezing or after handling money. Men, however, are generally less likely than women to wash their hands regardless of activity.**

**– Men vs. Women –**

		Petting a Dog or Cat	Handling/Eating Food	Coughing/Sneezing	Using a Public Restroom	Handling Money	Changing Diapers	Using Bathroom at Home
Women	Always/Usually	65%	93%	66%	97%	47%	87%	96%
	Always	50%	82%	39%	94%	27%	82%	88%
Men	Always/Usually	50%	87%	44%	96%	30%	68%	90%
	Always	34%	71%	24%	88%	14%	64%	78%

Q: I am going to read you a list of activities and I'd like you to tell me how often you make it a practice of washing your hands. How often do you wash your hands after...

Younger adults tend to wash their hands more frequently than older adults when it comes to petting a dog/cat, coughing/sneezing, using a public restroom or changing diapers. Older adults tend to wash their hands more frequently when handling/eating food, handing money or using the bathroom at home, compared to younger adults.

**– By Age –**

		Petting a Dog or Cat	Handling/Eating Food	Coughing/Sneezing	Using a Public Restroom	Handling Money	Changing Diapers	Using Bathroom at Home
Age <35	Always/Usually	61%	85%	56%	98%	37%	76%	91%
	Always	47%	72%	35%	94%	20%	72%	82%
Age 35-54	Always/Usually	58%	93%	58%	98%	37%	85%	93%
	Always	39%	77%	32%	93%	21%	80%	83%
Age 55+	Always/Usually	57%	92%	53%	95%	40%	73%	94%
	Always	43%	80%	30%	88%	20%	68%	84%

Q: I am going to read you a list of activities and I'd like you to tell me how often you make it a practice of washing your hands. How often do you wash your hands after...

Those with *higher education* are more diligent about washing their hands after using a public restroom or changing diapers; those with *lower incomes* are more likely to wash after petting a dog/cat, before handling/eating food, after coughing/sneezing, and after handling money.

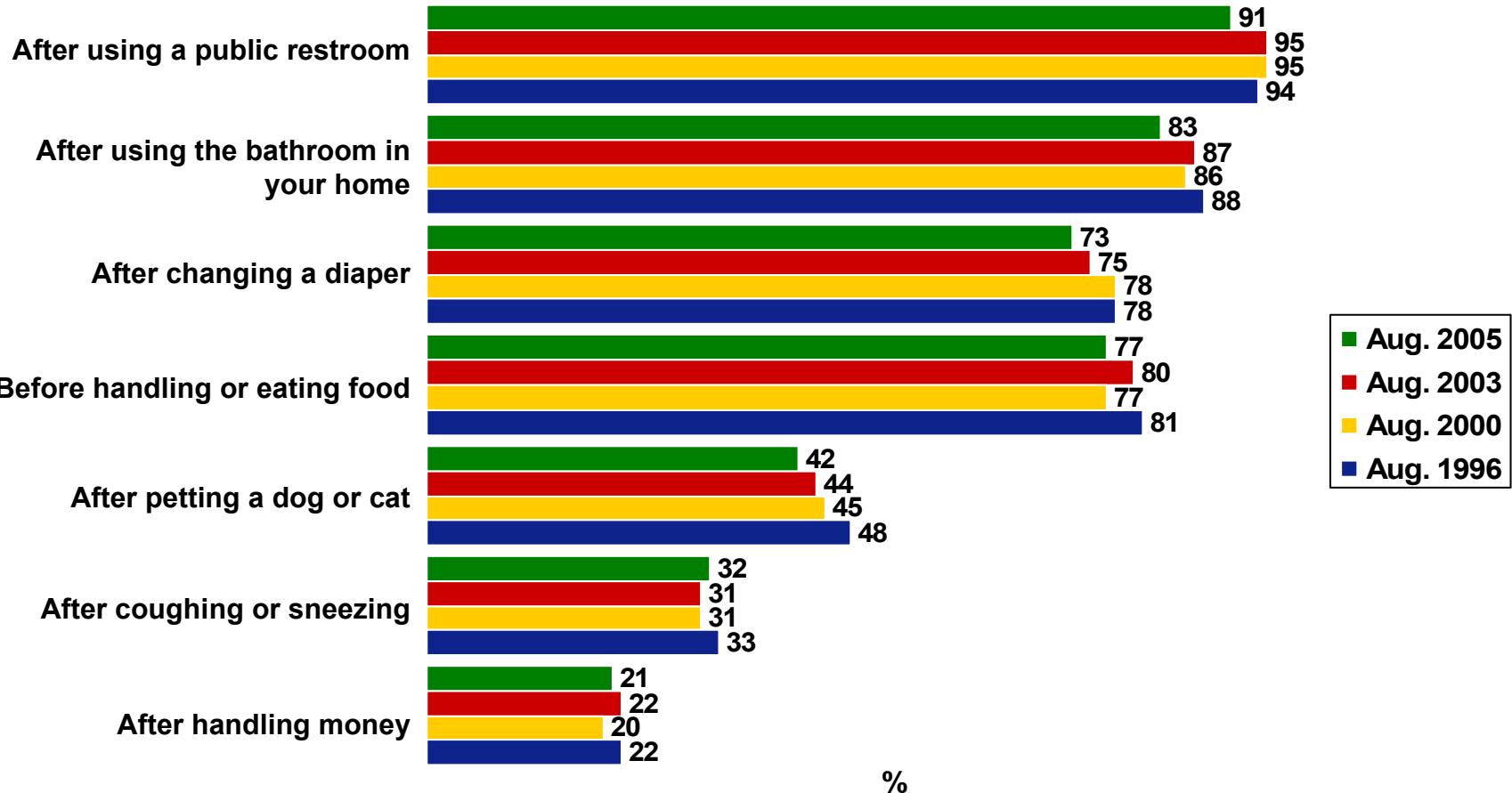
**– By Education and Income Level–**

		Petting a Dog or Cat	Handling/Eating Food	Coughing/Sneezing	Using a Public Restroom	Handling Money	Changing Diapers	Using Bathroom at Home
Education: High School or Less	Always	45%	80%	32%	88%	21%	69%	83%
Some College/College	Always	42%	76%	32%	94%	21%	77%	84%
<b>Income Level:</b>								
Annual Income \$40K+	Always	47%	82%	36%	93%	24%	74%	83%
Annual Income \$40K+	Always	37%	72%	27%	92%	18%	76%	84%

Q: I am going to read you a list of activities and I'd like you to tell me how often you make it a practice of washing your hands. How often do you wash your hands after...

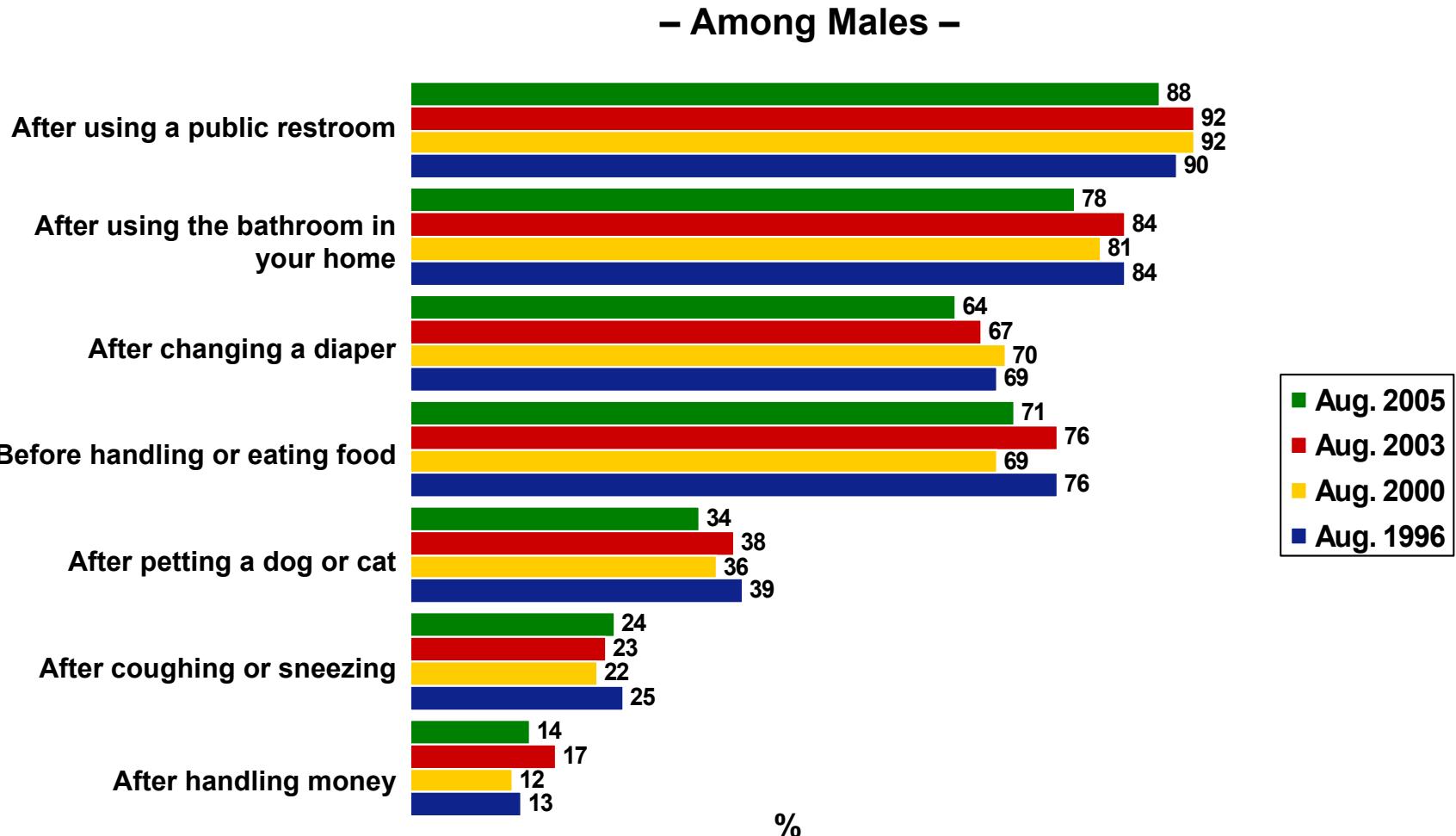
# Less than half of adults state that they *always* wash their hands after petting a dog or cat, coughing or sneezing or handling money

– Among U.S. Adults –



Q: I am going to read you a list of activities and I'd like you to tell me how often you make it a practice of washing your hands. How often do you wash your hands after...

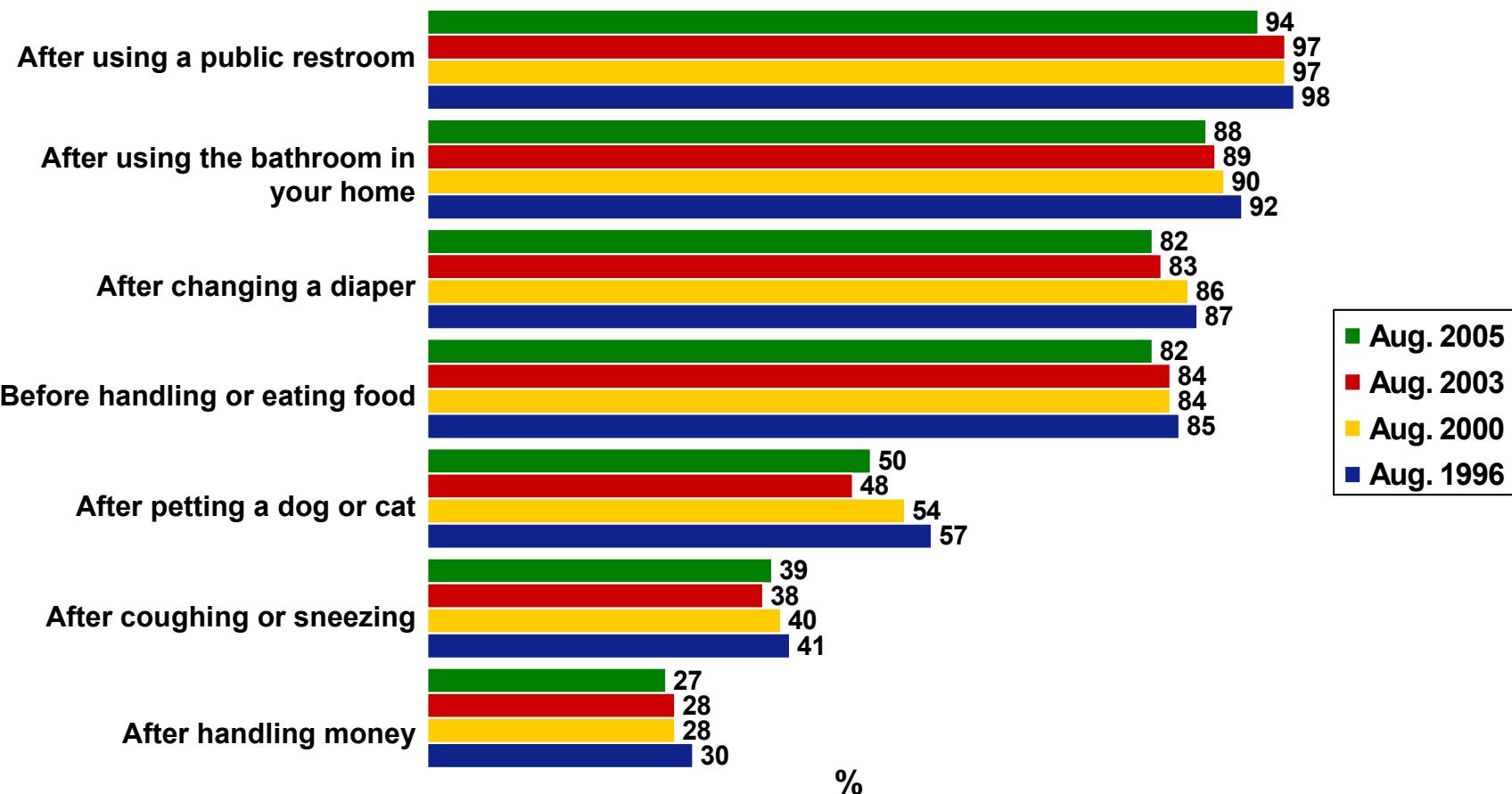
Over the past seven years, men's admitted hand washing habits have declined slightly when it comes to washing their hands after using the bathroom at home, changing a diaper and before handling food



Q: I am going to read you a list of activities and I'd like you to tell me how often you make it a practice of washing your hands. How often do you wash your hands after...

# In 2005, fewer women admit to washing their hands after using a public restroom

– Among Females –



Q: I am going to read you a list of activities and I'd like you to tell me how often you make it a practice of washing your hands. How often do you wash your hands after...

# 2005 Demographics

## – Among U.S. Adults –

### Gender

48% Male

52% Female

### Age

24% Younger than 35

37% 35-54

36% 55 or older

### Household Income

23% Less than \$20,000

12% \$20,000 to \$30,000

11% \$30,000 to \$40,000

7% \$40,000 to \$50,000

30% \$50,000 or more

### Education

17% Some high school

30% High school grad

27% Some College

16% College grad

8% Post grad