

# A Survey of Hand Washing Behavior (Trended)

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

- This analysis compares the two most recent waves of this study.
  - 1,013 telephone interviews were conducted between August 19-22, 2005.
  - 1,000 telephone interviews were conducted between August 22-26, 2003.
- The data are nationally representative and are stratified by census region and weighted by gender, education and ethnicity composition to represent the U.S. population.
  - This method assures a valid national probability sample.

# 2005 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.
- Previously in 2003, Harris Interactive observed the behavior of 7,541 individuals in public restrooms located in major metropolitan airports in the U.S. and Canada, specifically: New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, Miami and Toronto.

# 2005 Methodology – Public Attractions Observations



<i>City and Location</i>	<i>Male Washers</i>	<i>Male Non-Washers</i>	<i>Female Washers</i>	<i>Female Non-Washers</i>	<i>TOTAL</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

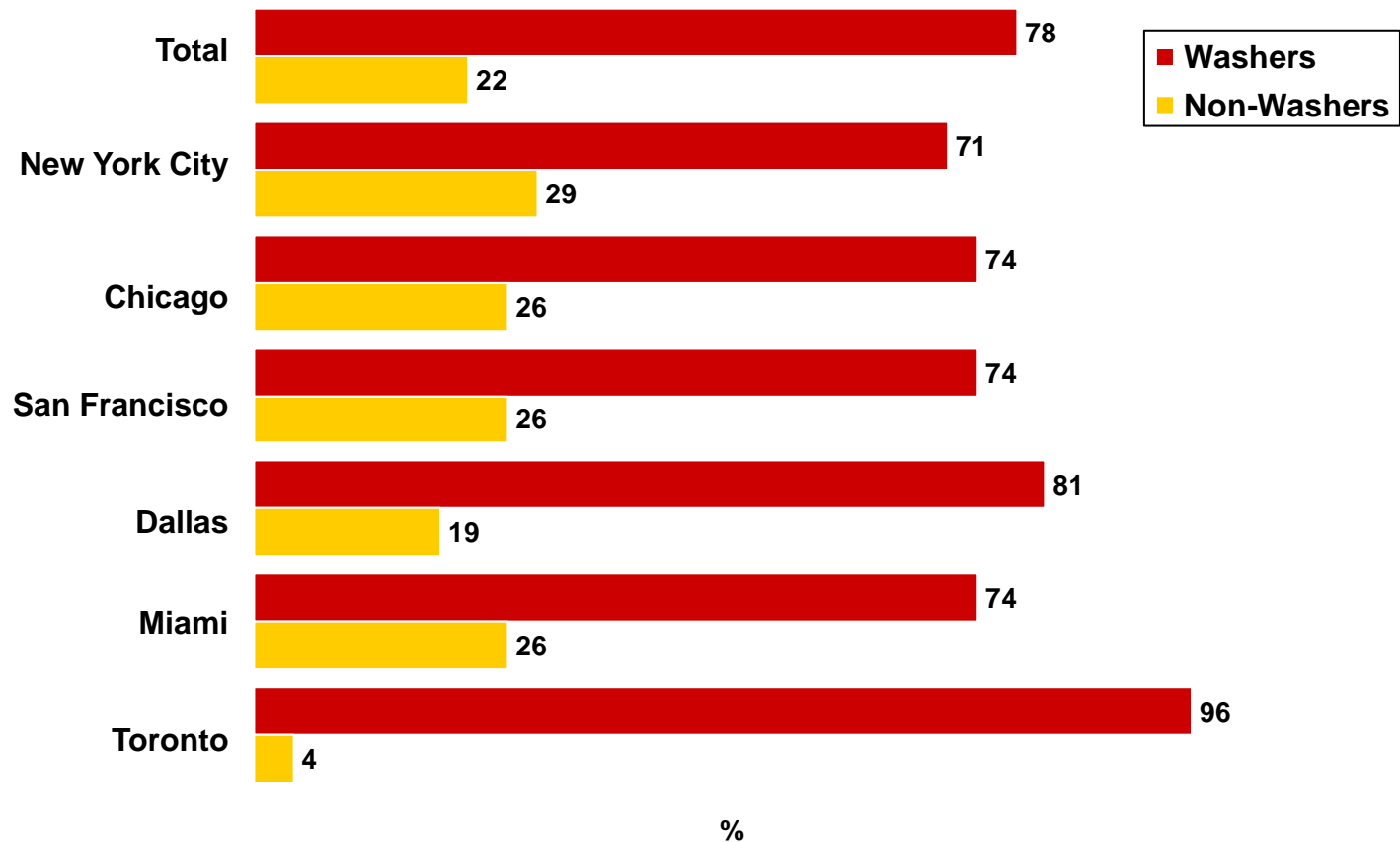
- Ninety-one percent of adults say they *always* wash their hands after using public restrooms; however just 83% were observed doing so.
  - The percentage of people observed washing their hands rose slightly from 78% in 2003 primarily due to an increase among female washers (83% to 90%) compared to male washers (74% to 75%).
- 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.



# 2003 Detailed Findings

# Airport Observations

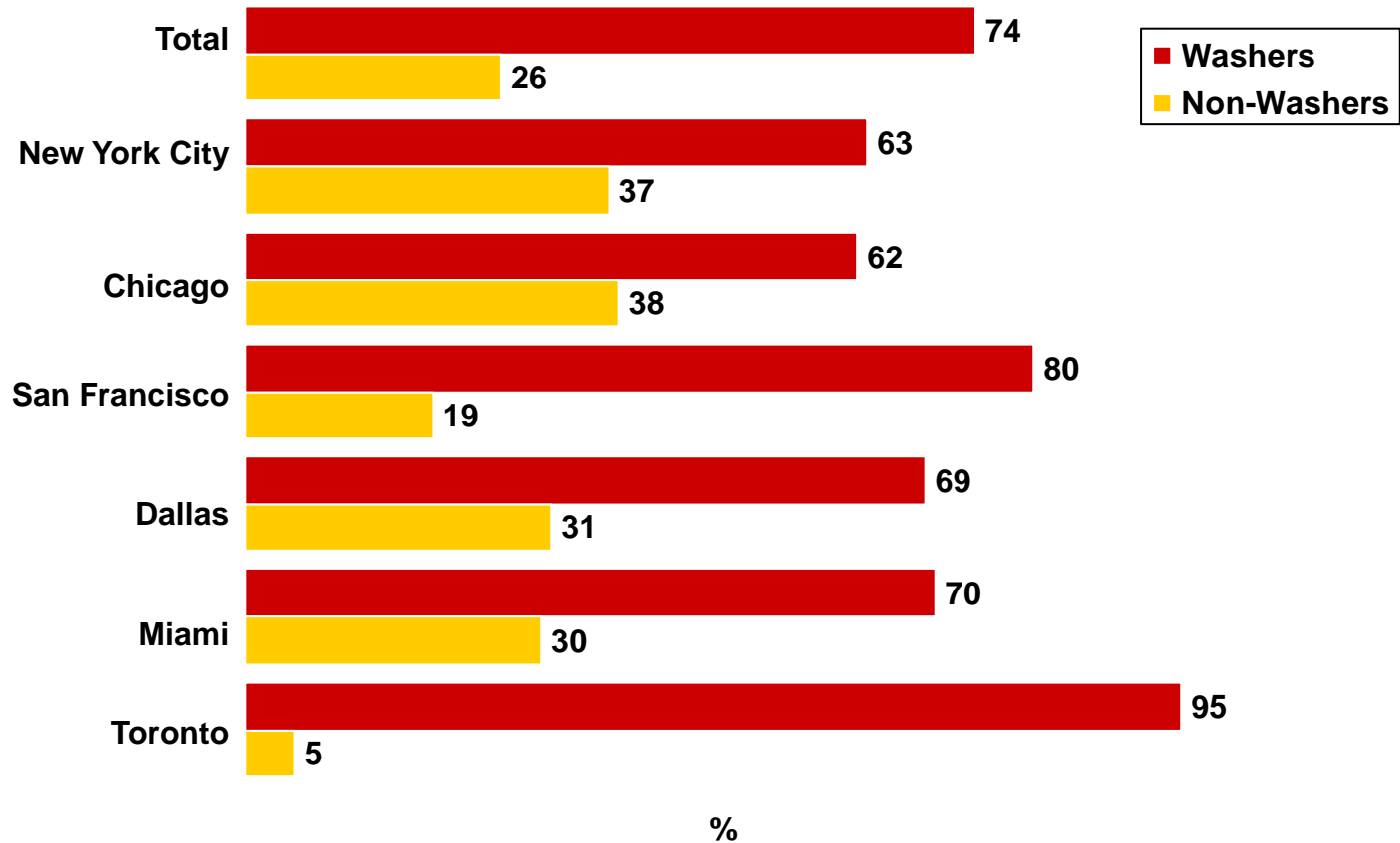
– Among Complete Sample –



Based on the observation of 7,541 individuals in public restrooms located in major airports

# Airport Observations

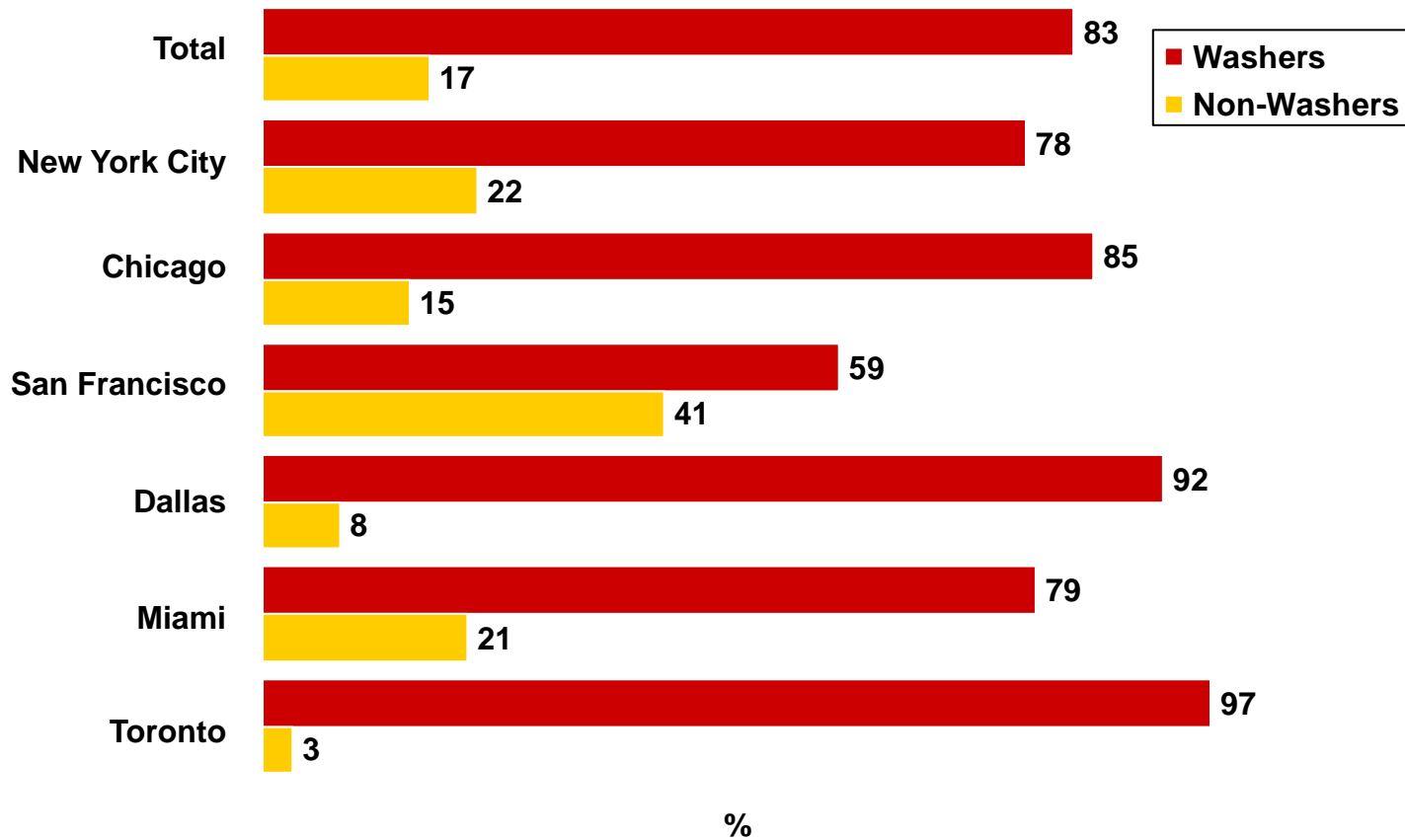
– Among Males –



Based on the observation of 4,046 males

# Airport Observations

– Among Females –



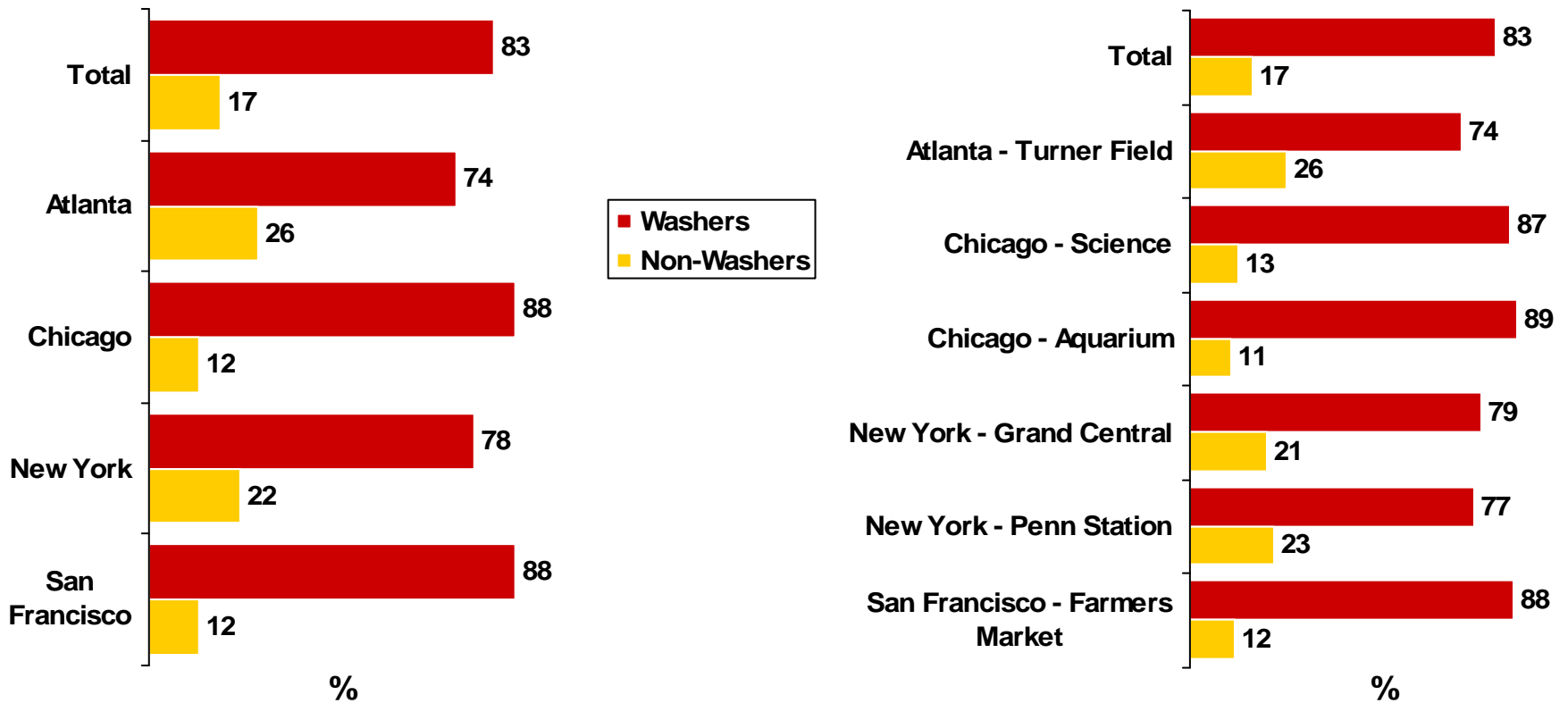
Based on the observation of 3,495 females



# 2005 Detailed Findings

# Public Attractions Observations

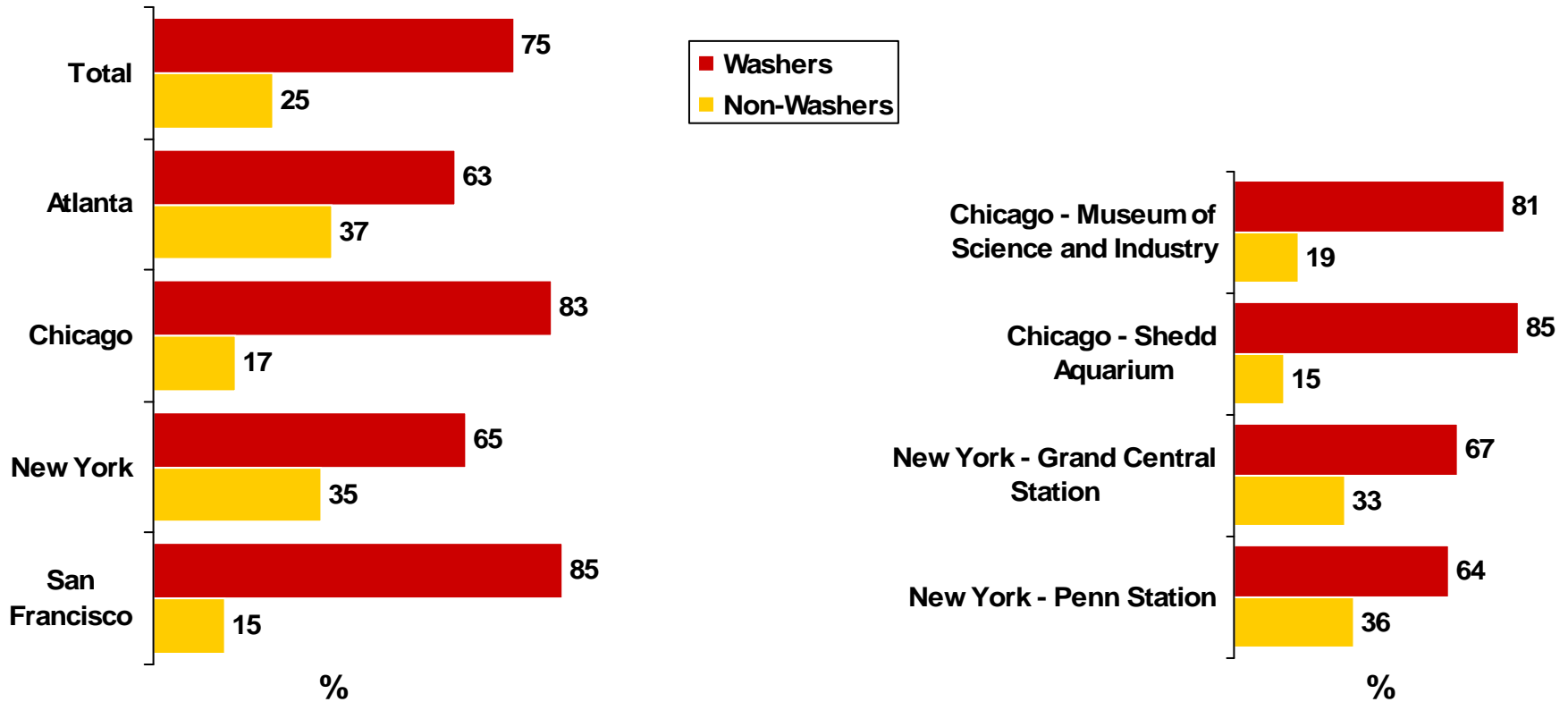
– Among Complete Sample –



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

# Public Attractions Observations

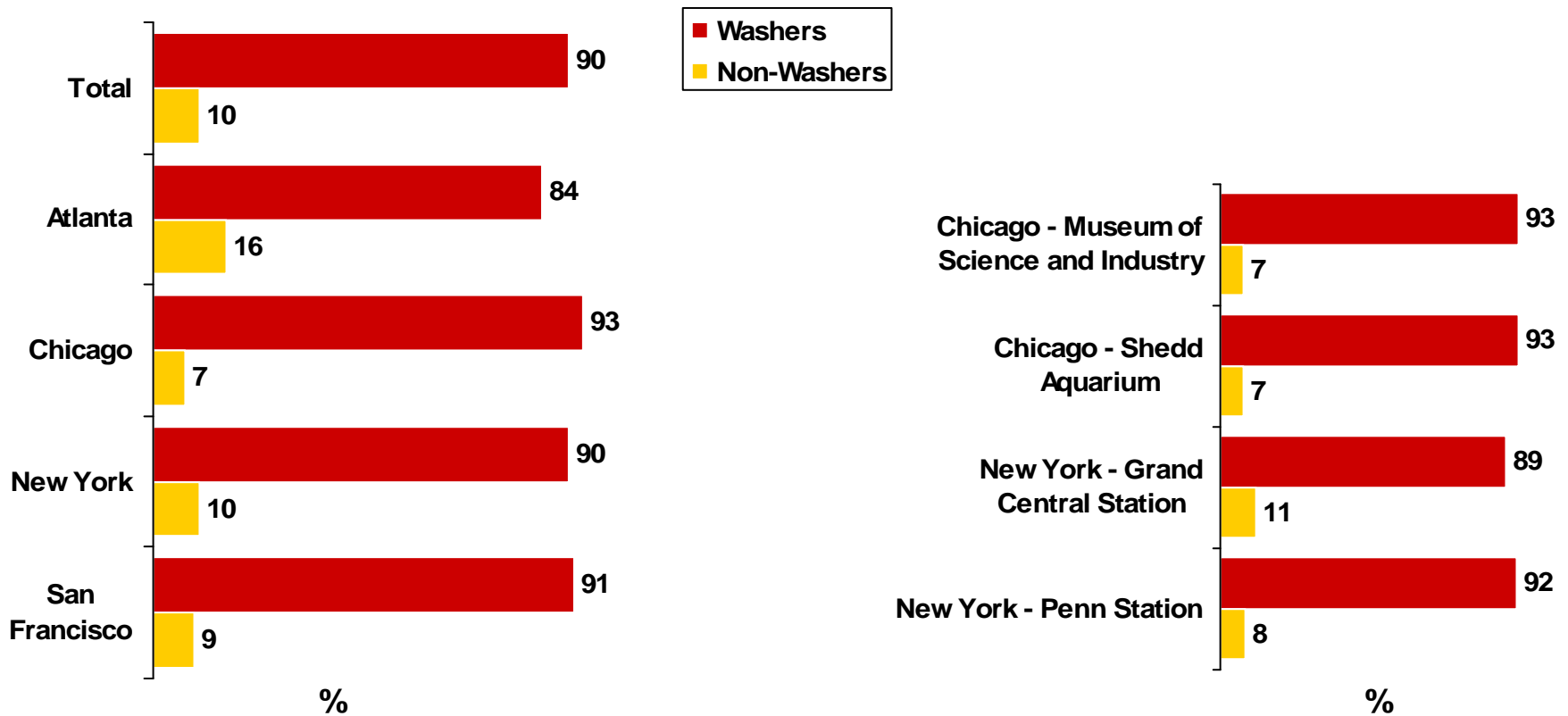
– Among Males –



Based on the observation of 3,206 males

# Public Attractions Observations

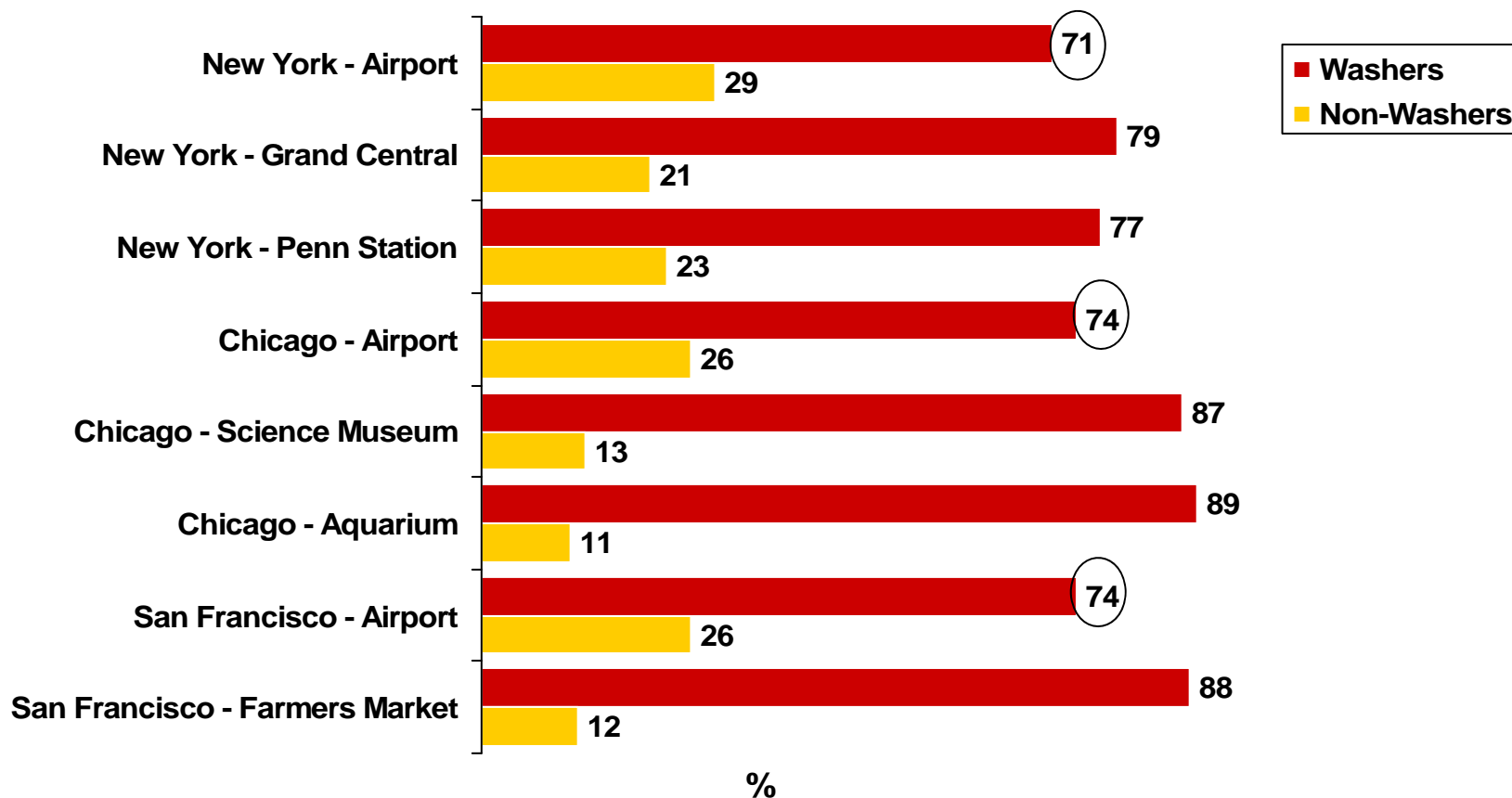
– Among Females –



Based on the observation of 3,130 females

# Likelihood to wash hands was consistently lower at airports across New York, Chicago and San Francisco

– Among Complete Sample –

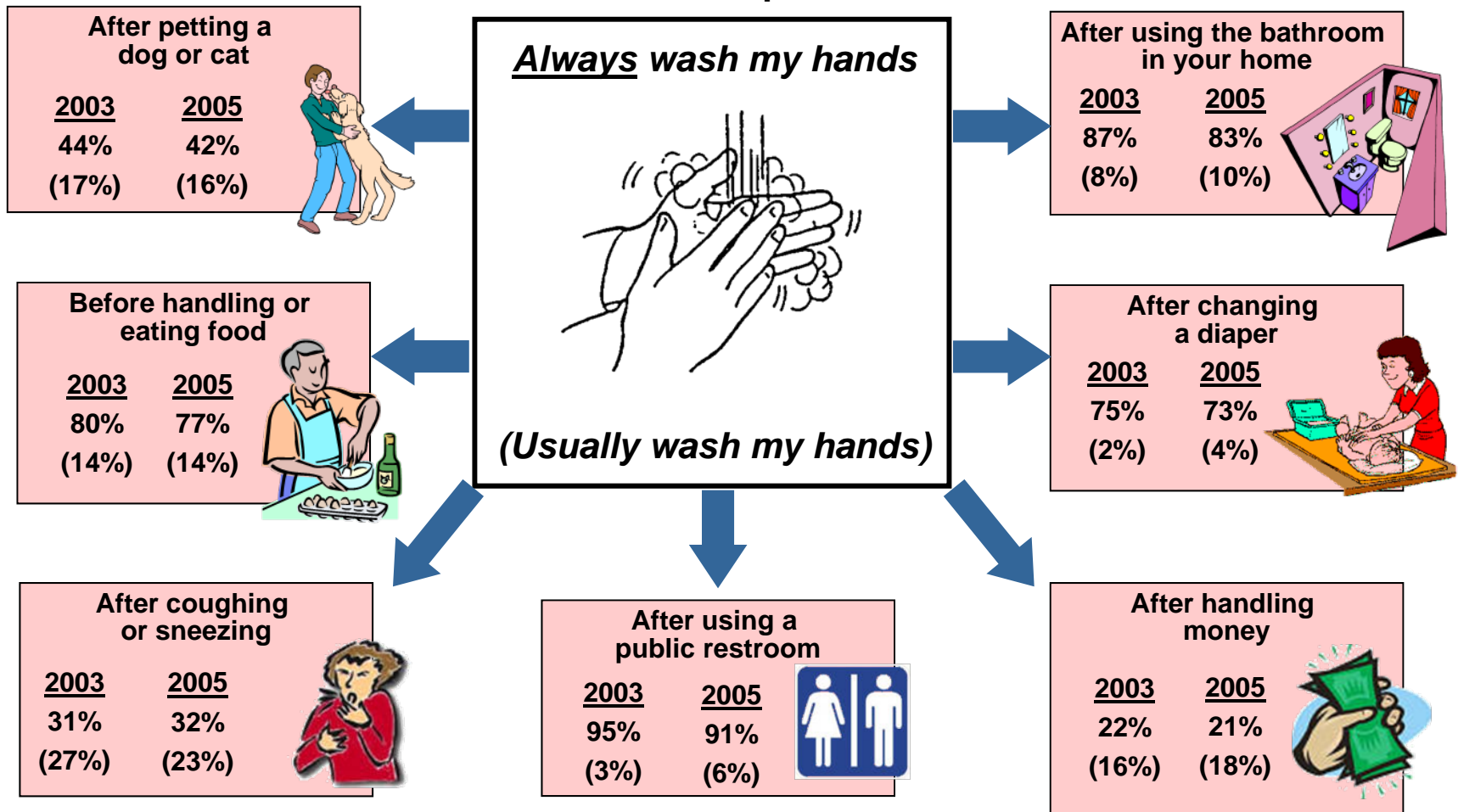


Based on the observation of 7,541 individuals in public restrooms in major airports (2003 data) and 6,336 individuals in public restrooms located at major public attractions (2005 data)

# Hand Washing Habits

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



– Total Sample –



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	
		2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005
<b>Women</b> 	Always/Usually	66	65	96	93	69	66	99	97	47	47	85	87	95	96
	Always	48	50	84	82	38	39	97	94	28	27	83	82	89	88
<b>Men</b> 	Always/Usually	54	50	91	87	45	44	97	96	28	30	70	68	94	90
	Always	38	34	76	71	23	24	92	88	17	14	67	64	84	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...

Whereas the oldest age group reported a greater tendency to wash their hands after most activities in 2003 compared to the younger age groups, 2005 results indicated a reversal of this trend, specifically related to petting a dog/cat and coughing/sneezing.

– By Age –

		Petting a Dog or Cat		Handling/Eating Food		Coughing/Sneezing		Using a Public Restroom		Handling Money		Changing Diapers		Using Bathroom at Home	
		2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005
Age <35	Always/Usually	58	61	90	85	55	56	99	98	30	37	76	76	92	91
	Always	43	47	74	72	26	35	96	94	17	20	72	72	79	82
Age 35-54	Always/Usually	57	58	96	93	57	58	99	98	34	37	85	85	95	93
	Always	38	39	82	77	31	32	94	93	19	21	82	80	88	83
Age 55+	Always/Usually	65	57	95	92	60	53	97	95	47	40	73	73	95	94
	Always	49	43	82	80	33	30	94	88	29	20	72	68	89	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.

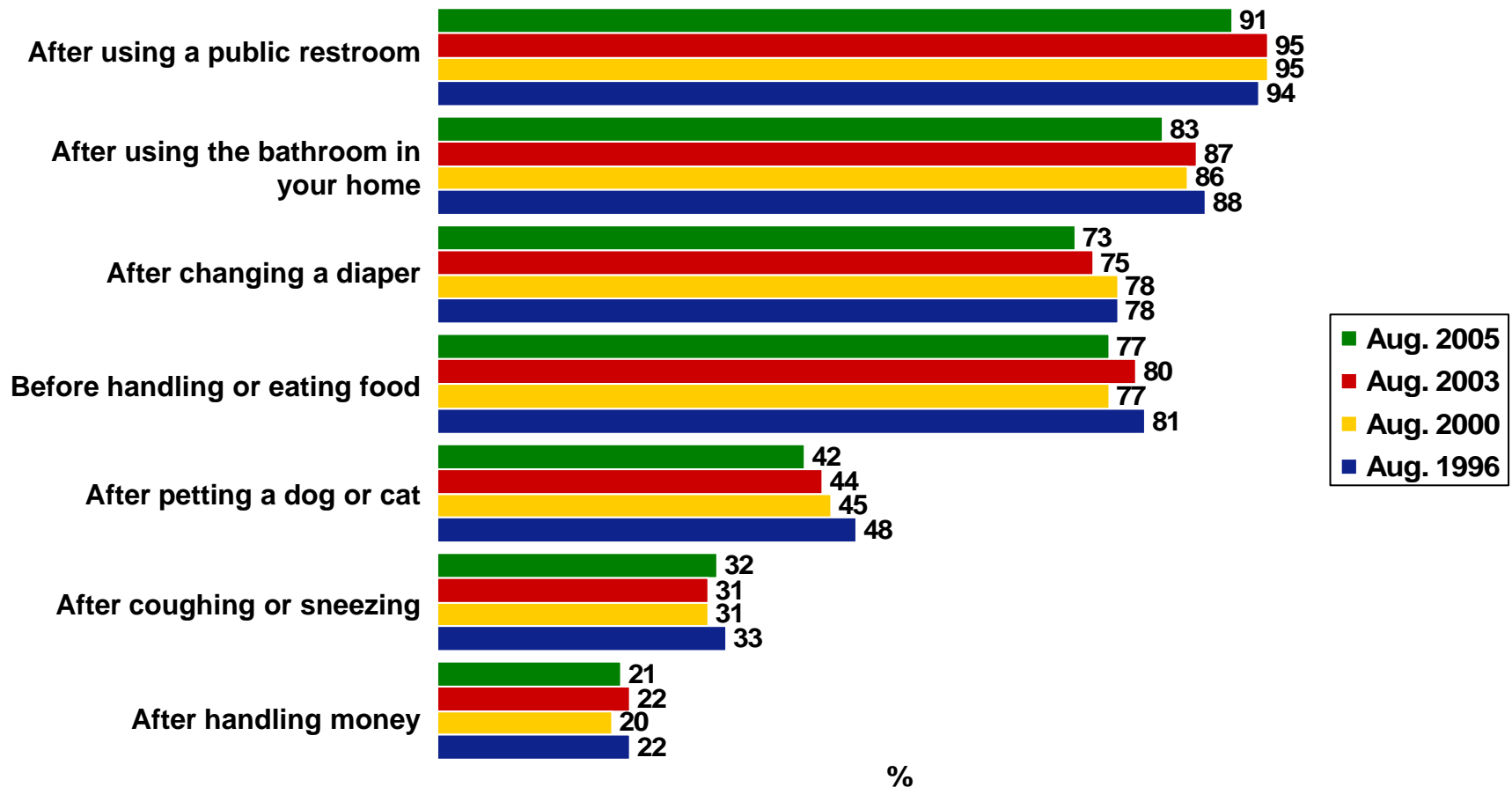
– By Education and Income Level–

	%	Petting a Dog or Cat		Handling/Eating Food		Coughing/Sneezing		Using a Public Restroom		Handling Money		Changing Diapers		Using Bathroom at Home	
		2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005
<b>Education:</b> High School or Less	Always	52	45	86	80	33	32	96	88	27	21	77	69	88	83
Some College/ College	Always	36	42	75	76	28	32	93	94	18	21	75	77	86	84
<b>Income Level:</b> Annual Income <\$40K	Always	49	47	81	82	33	36	94	93	24	24	74	74	85	83
Annual Income \$40K+	Always	38	37	78	72	23	27	95	92	15	18	78	76	86	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 –

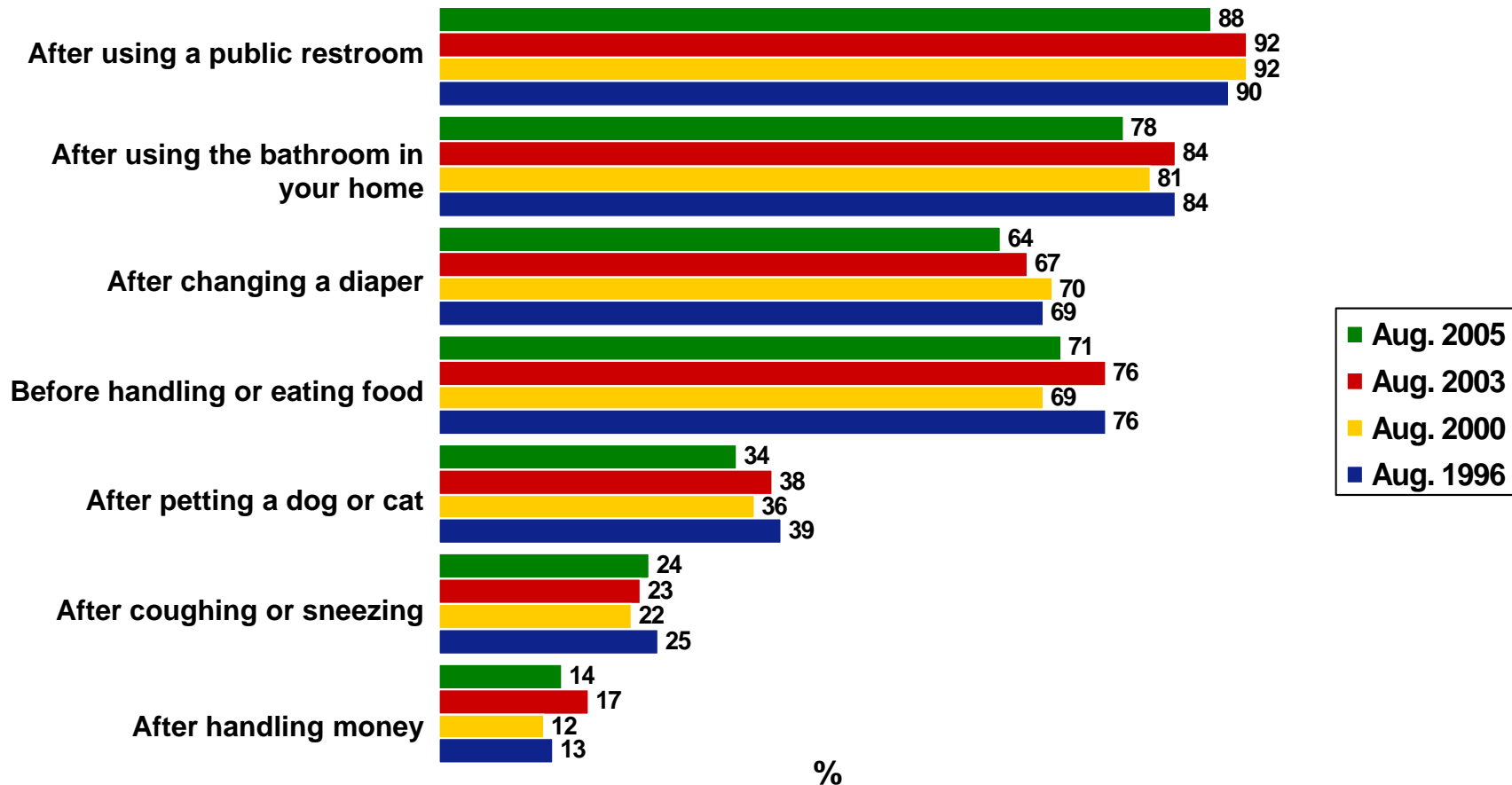


%

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

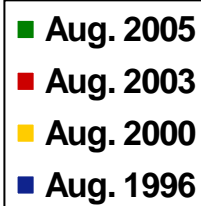
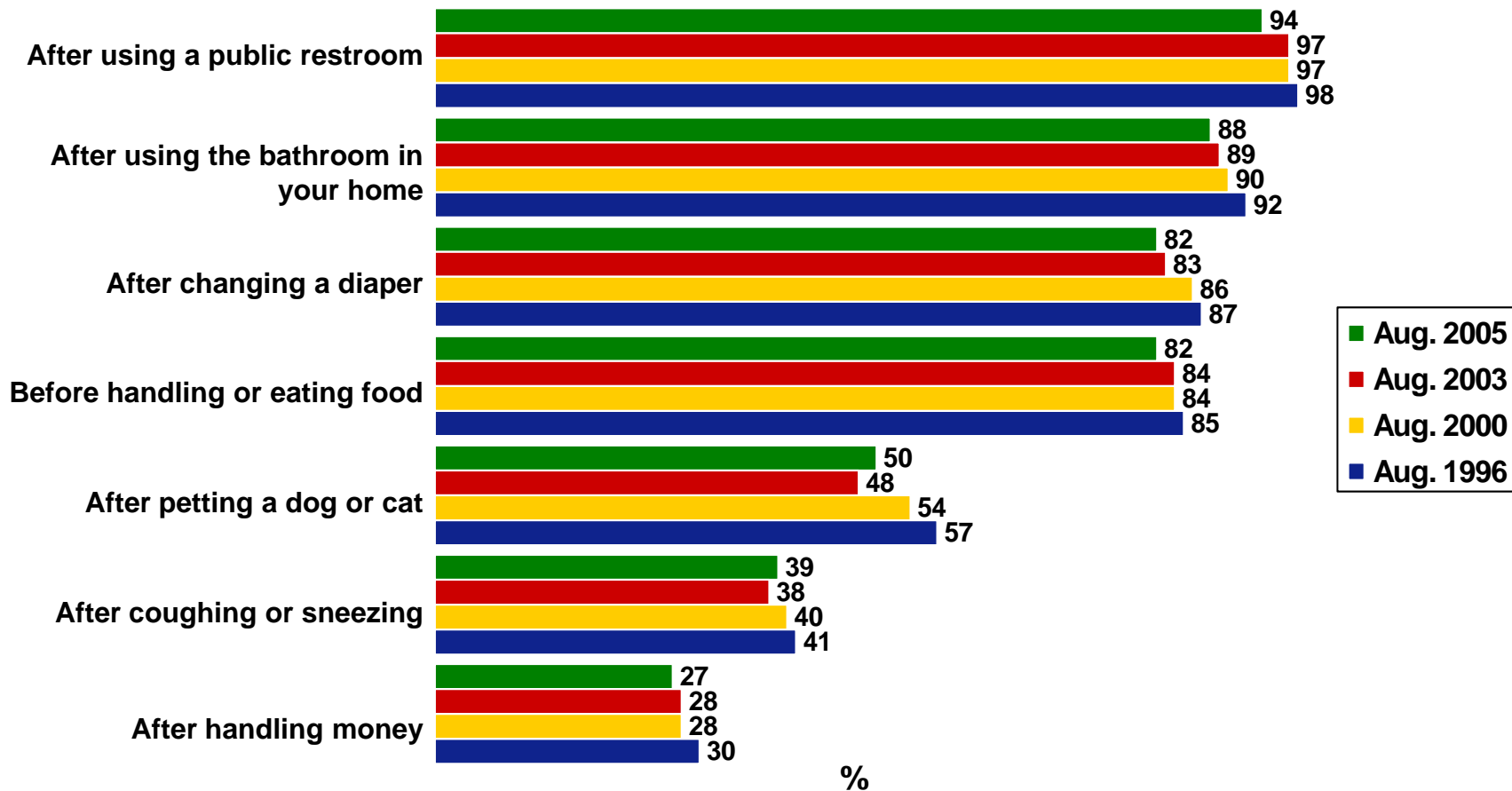
– Among Males –



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