



Hand Washing Survey Fact Sheet

Survey Findings

- Ninety-one percent of adults say they always wash their hands after using public restrooms; however just 83 percent were observed doing so.
- Among observational findings from public restrooms, the dirtiest hands were observed at Turner Field during an Atlanta Braves baseball game. More than one-quarter of the adults observed using the restrooms at Turner Field did not wash their hands after using the facilities.
- In contrast to hand washing habits exhibited during a professional baseball game, the best hand washing habits were observed at the San Francisco Ferry Terminal Farmers Market and the Museum of Science and Industry and Shedd Aquarium, both in Chicago.
- Across all cities, women washed their hands more than men (90 percent vs. 75 percent). This disparity was most pronounced in New York's Penn Station where 92 percent of women washed their hands, compared to only 64 percent of men.
- Americans also say they always wash their hands after using the bathroom in their home (83%) and before handling or eating foods (77 percent). However, smaller percentages of Americans always wash after petting a dog or cat (42%), after coughing or sneezing (32%), or after handling money (21%).

Survey Methodology

Part I: Observational Survey

- Harris Interactive observed the behavior of 6,336 adults (3,206 males and 3,130 females) in public restrooms at six locations in four major U.S. cities (sufficiently equipped with soap, running water and towels) and recorded whether or not they washed their hands after using the facilities.
- 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 percent of the time.

- The research was conducted from August 18 – August 21, 2005 in public restrooms at Turner Field in Atlanta during an Atlanta Braves baseball game, the Museum of Science and Industry and the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, Penn Station and Grand Central Station in New York City, and the Ferry Terminal Farmers Market in San Francisco.

Part II: Telephone Survey

- Harris Interactive conducted 1,013 telephone interviews with adult Americans. To assure a nationally representative sample of the U.S. population, the data have been stratified by census region and weighted by gender, education and ethnicity.

- The research was conducted between August 19-22, 2005.