

# Germ Survey Summary of Findings

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## 1. Germ Awareness – Key Findings

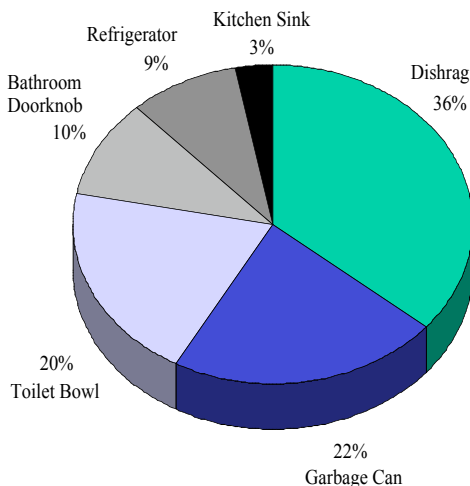
Most people don't know where germs are, but are more aware of where they are at home than out in public.

### At Home

- ♣ **Most people are unaware that the kitchen sink is one of the germiest places in the house.** Studies have shown that a household kitchen is more heavily contaminated with bacteria than a household bathroom. These same studies have also demonstrated that the most contaminated sites are those that tend to remain moist, making a dishrag and a kitchen sink among the most contaminated. However, in our national survey, just over one in three (36%) Americans correctly identified a dishrag as having the most germs among a list of other common household items. In addition, the kitchen sink, which is the second germiest item, was the least common guess.

### What the Public Thinks is the Germiest

*(Percentage of respondents who guess that each item has the MOST germs among all items in the list)*



### What Studies Have Shown to be the Germiest

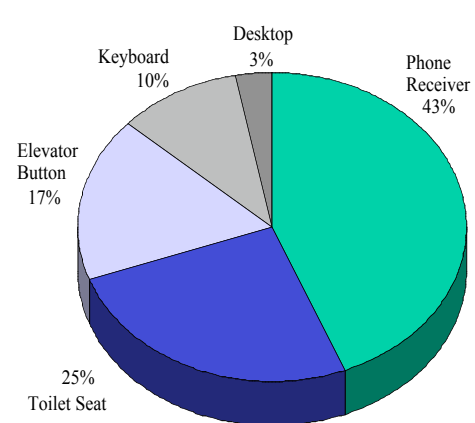
*(Ranked in order of most germy based on studies conducted by Dr. Charles E. Gerba)*

1. Dishrag
2. **Kitchen sink**
3. Toilet bowl
4. Garbage Can
5. Refrigerator
6. Bathroom doorknob

- ♣ We paired several household items to determine which were believed to have the most germs. One in two people guessed incorrectly that the toilet seat is dirtier than the kitchen sink (47%).

### In the Workplace

- ♣ **While most people are aware that the phone receiver is the germiest place in the workplace, they are generally unaware desktops and keyboards can also be very dirty.** People are slightly more familiar with where germs are likely to be in a workplace, with two in five (43%) correctly guessing that a phone receiver has the most germs in a list of common workplace items. But, the second most common belief for the germiest workplace item were the toilet seat (25%) and the elevator button (17%), which are in fact the least germiest items in the list.

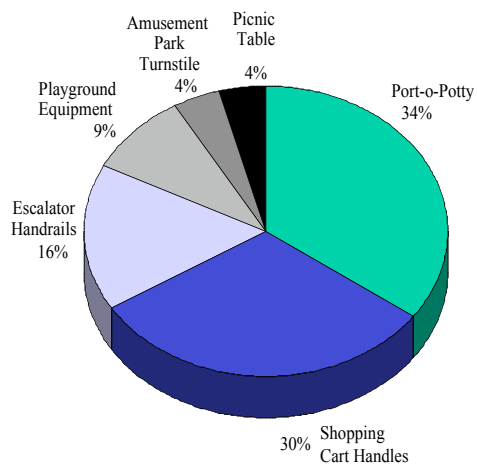
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>What the Public Thinks is the Germiest</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Percentage of respondents who guess that each item has the MOST germs among all items in the list)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>What Studies Have Proven to be the Germiest</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Ranked in order of most germiest based on studies conducted by Dr. Charles E. Gerba)</i></p>												
 <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Public Perception of Germiest Items</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Item</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Phone Receiver</td> <td>43%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Toilet Seat</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Elevator Button</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Keyboard</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Desktop</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Item	Percentage	Phone Receiver	43%	Toilet Seat	25%	Elevator Button	17%	Keyboard	10%	Desktop	3%	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Phone receiver</li> <li>2. Desktop</li> <li>3. Keyboard</li> <li>4. Elevator button</li> <li>5. Toilet seat</li> </ol>
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Phone Receiver	43%												
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### Outdoors and in Public

- ♣ **People are far less aware of where germs lurk when it comes to the items they come into contact when out in public.** For example, the greatest proportion of respondents (34%) think that a Port-o-Potty has the most germs among a list of items commonly found out in public, which is actually the least germiest of the items presented. Only one in ten (9%) correctly identify that playground equipment is the germiest.

### What the Public Thinks is the Germiest

*(Percentage of respondents who guess that each item has the MOST germs among all items in the list)*



### What Studies Have Proven to be the Germiest

*(Ranked in order of most germiness based on studies conducted by Dr. Charles E. Gerba)*

1. **Playground equipment**
2. Escalator handrails
3. Shopping cart handles
4. Picnic table
5. **Port-o-Potty**

*(Data is not available for an amusement park turnstile.)*

- ♣ When choosing only among two items commonly found out in public, most people still don't know where germs are most likely to be.

### Which has the most germs between...

*An ATM and a public restroom doorknob*

- ♣ Sixty-four percent of the public guessed that a public restroom doorknob has more germs, but a typical ATM has been proven to have more. The key difference in this situation is the number of clean versus dirty hands that touch each of these items.

*A toilet seat in a fast food restaurant and a toilet seat on an airplane*

- ♣ Seventy-five percent of the public guessed that a toilet seat in a fast food restaurant has more germs, when in fact, a toilet seat on an airplane has more. (According to Dr. Gerba, this can be attributed in part to the frequency with which each are cleaned on a daily basis.)

*A Port-o-Potty and a picnic table*

- ♣ Similarly, 76% of the public guessed that a Port-o-Potty has more germs, but studies have shown that a picnic table has more. (According to Dr. Gerba, this may be related to the frequency with which each is cleaned.)

## Perceived Importance of Cleaning Hands

People are least likely to clean their hands after shaking someone's hand or using public transportation.

- ♣ Virtually all (98%) say they *always* wash their hands or do so *most of the time* after using the bathroom, and three in four (73%) say the same about washing their hands before eating in a restaurant.
- ♣ In addition, just over one in two say they *always* wash their hands or do so *most of the time* after coming in from being outside (55%), or after sneezing or coughing (51%).
- ♣ But when it comes to cleaning hands after using public transportation or shaking someone's hand, only one in three (33%) and one in five (17%) respectively say they *always* wash their hands or do so *most of the time*.
- ♣ Across all occasions, women are significantly more likely than men to report cleaning their hands, as are those who regularly use instant hand sanitizer as compared to those who use instant hand sanitizer less regularly.

## Personal Expectations Versus Expectations of Others

People are more likely to believe that "most people" don't clean their hands as often as they do.

- ♣ Most people believe that others don't clean their hands as often as they should. Approximately three in five (61%) *strongly* agree that most people don't clean their hands as often as they should, with three in ten (30%) *somewhat* agreeing (total agree: 91%).
- ♣ When it comes to their own behavior, however, only one in three (34%) *strongly* agree that they should clean their hands more often than they do, and another one in three (36%) *somewhat* agree (total agree: 70%).

## Questionnaire and Response Frequencies

1. Thinking about the following common household items, which ONE do you think has the MOST germs?

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
Dishrag	36	28	42
Garbage can	22	24	19
Toilet bowl	20	21	18
Bathroom doorknob	10	10	11
Refrigerator	9	11	7
Kitchen sink	3	4	2
Other	-	-	1
Don't know/None	1	1	1

2. And of the following items that might be found in a typical workplace, which ONE do you think has the MOST germs?

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
Phone receiver	43	41	44
Toilet seat	25	24	26
Elevator button	17	18	16
Keyboard	10	11	8
Desktop	3	3	4
Other	1	-	1
Don't know/None	2	2	1

3. Now thinking about different items that you come into contact with in public, which ONE do you think has the MOST germs?

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
Port-o-Potty	34	36	32
Shopping cart handles	30	23	37
Escalator handrails	16	18	15
Playground equipment	9	12	6
Turnstile at an amusement park	4	4	4
Picnic table	4	5	3
Other	1	1	1
Don't know/None	2	2	2

4a-f. Now I'm going to read you a list of items that you might come into contact with at home, out in public, or in an office environment. For each pair I read you, please tell me which ONE of the two you think has the most germs.

Which has the MOST germs between . . . ?

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
The kitchen sink in your home	50	52	49
A toilet seat in your home	43	41	44
Both about equal (vol)	6	6	6
Don't know/None	1	1	1

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
A public restroom doorknob	64	64	65
An ATM	28	29	28
Both about equal (vol)	7	6	7
Don't know/None	1	1	1

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
A telephone receiver in an office	61	60	61
A doorknob in an office	33	34	33
Both about equal (vol)	5	5	6
Don't know/None	1	1	-

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
A Port-o-Potty	76	74	78
A picnic table	20	22	17
Both about equal (vol)	3	3	4
Don't know/None	1	1	-

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
An office drinking water fountain	49	51	48
A pen in an office	47	45	48
Both about equal (vol)	3	3	4
Don't know/None	1	1	-

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
A toilet seat in a fast food restaurant	75	76	75
A toilet seat on an airplane	15	14	15
Both about equal (vol)	9	8	9
Don't know/None	1	2	1

5a-f. How often would you say you clean your hands in each of the following situations? Would you say always, most of the time, about half of the time, less than half the time, or never?

a. After you use the bathroom

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
Always	86	78	93
Most of the time	12	18	6
About half of the time	2	3	-
Less than half of the time	1	1	1
Never	-	-	-
Don't know	-	-	-

b. Before you eat in a restaurant

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
Always	49	44	52
Most of the time	24	26	22
About half of the time	11	11	12
Less than half of the time	9	11	6
Never	7	8	6
Don't know	-	-	-

c. After coming in from being outside

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
Always	29	20	38
Most of the time	26	26	27
About half of the time	19	21	17
Less than half of the time	16	21	12
Never	8	12	5
Don't know	-	1	-

d. After you sneeze or cough

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
Always	24	17	31
Most of the time	27	24	31
About half of the time	23	24	22
Less than half of the time	15	20	11
Never	10	15	6
Don't know	-	1	-

e. After using public transportation

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
Always	18	11	25
Most of the time	15	15	14
About half of the time	13	13	13
Less than half of the time	16	19	13
Never	27	32	22
Don't know	11	9	13

f. After shaking someone's hand

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 480)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 520)</b>
Always	6	4	7
Most of the time	11	9	13
About half of the time	13	11	16
Less than half of the time	29	32	26
Never	41	45	37
Don't know	1	1	1

6a-d. Now I'm going to read you a list of statements with which you may or may not agree. Please tell me if you personally strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement.

a. Most people don't clean their hands as often as they should

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 478)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 522)</b>
Strongly agree	61	54	67
Somewhat agree	30	34	27
Neither agree nor disagree	4	6	3
Somewhat disagree	3	3	2
Strongly disagree	1	2	-
Don't know / refused	1	1	1

b. I should clean my hands more often than I do

	<b>Total % (N = 1000)</b>	<b>Men % (n = 478)</b>	<b>Women % (n = 522)</b>
Strongly agree	34	33	34
Somewhat agree	36	39	34
Neither agree nor disagree	6	7	5
Somewhat disagree	13	11	14
Strongly disagree	11	9	12
Don't know / refused	-	-	-

## Methodology

Sampling Design: This survey was conducted for GOJO by using Opinion Research Corporation's CARAVAN National Omnibus. Telephone interviews were completed from May 6, 2004 through May 9, 2004, with 1000 adults comprising 480 men and 520 women 18 years of age and older, living in the contiguous United States. The sample is based on a representative sample of the U.S. adult population.

Margin of error: The results achieved from all sample surveys are subject to sampling error. Sampling error is defined as the difference between the results obtained from the sample and those that would have been obtained had the entire relevant population been surveyed. The sampling error for the total sample of this survey (n = 1000) is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points (n = 500, sampling error 4.4 percentage points). Please note that when comparing smaller subgroups, such as respondents divided by gender categories, or income, the margin of error increases.