

Richer nations have cleaner banknotes

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The richer, more developed and more economically free a country, the fewer bacteria its banknotes carry. Also the material and the age of the banknotes - or the money has a lot wrinkled - is of influence on the degree of clogging of the money. Nowhere in the world were alarming concentrations of unhealthy bacteria on money found. That becomes clear from a study by ten universities and institutes in 10 countries. Research workers of Wageningen University, part of Wageningen UR, looked at the paper money in the Netherlands.

A total of 1,280 banknotes were collected at food-retail locations from stores to cafeterias. Afterwards they were subject to research on the prevention of [bacteria](#). The countries where the research has been done were Australia, Burkina Faso, China, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the United States. The research in the Netherlands was guided by Wageningen University food microbiologist dr. Rijkelt Beumer. The study was recently published in the journal *Foodborne Pathogens and Disease*.

Wrinkled

From the research became clear that old age of bank notes plays a role. The older banknotes are the more wrinkled they are, which means dirt and bacteria can more easily settle into the folds of the bills. The material from which banknotes are made also plays a role in their cleanliness, and polymer-based bills such as euro notes contain a quarter of the bacteria on the cotton-based banknotes used by most countries.

Also researchers found a strong correlation between the amount of bacteria per square centimeter on banknotes and a country's ranking on the Index of Economic Freedom. The lower a country scores, the more bacteria were found on its banknotes. Countries that rank lower on the economic freedom index presumably have older banknotes to which bacteria more easily cling.

Not unhealthy

Concentrations of illness-causing bacteria were low and in no case alarming. For all certainty the researchers nevertheless recommend the issue of food and receiving and changing of money to take place by several persons. Or issue the food with one hand, with a glove, and the money with the other hand. On markets for example that will not happen fast. If everyone washes their hands before eating or preparing a meal, the chances to get ill are not very big.

Source: Wageningen UR

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