

**National Sun Survey**  
Highlights Report  
July 10, 2008



Ultraviolet radiation (UVR) in the sun's rays or from other sources, such as tanning equipment, can be harmful to the skin.

UVR is the major cause of skin cancer.

Malignant melanoma, one type of skin cancer, can be fatal.

Excessive exposure to UVR can also cause sunburn, suntan and premature ageing of the skin.

Although many people feel that a suntan looks healthy, sun exposure is harmful to the skin. This is because the sun's rays include ultraviolet radiation (UVR), which is the major cause of skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Canadians. One type of skin cancer, melanoma, can be fatal.

Like the sun, tanning equipment also emits UVR. Too much exposure to UVR, whether from the sun or artificial sources, can also cause other types of skin damage, such as sunburn, suntan and premature ageing, as well as eye cataracts.

Sun exposure in moderation can also have health benefits. It enables us to make vitamin D, a vitamin essential to good health.

In order to advise Canadians on how to enjoy the sun safely, information on their sun exposure habits is needed. The National Sun Survey was carried out across Canada from August to November 2006. More than 7,000 adults were surveyed about:

- > their time in the sun, tanning and sunburn;
- > how they protect themselves from overexposure to the sun, and;
- > their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about tanning, sun exposure and sun protection.

Parents with children aged 1-12 (about 1,400) were also asked to report about time in the sun, sun protection and sunburns for one of their children.

The survey provides health groups and policy makers with information to help them develop effective programs to minimize people's overexposure to ultraviolet radiation.

The primary funder of the survey is the Canadian Cancer Society. Additional funding is provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Production of the National Sun Survey was made possible, in part, through support from the National Skin Cancer Prevention Committee of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, an independent organization funded by the federal government through Health Canada.

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Dr. Shirley Huchcroft, Erin Pichora and Greg Kennedy prepared the materials in this report.



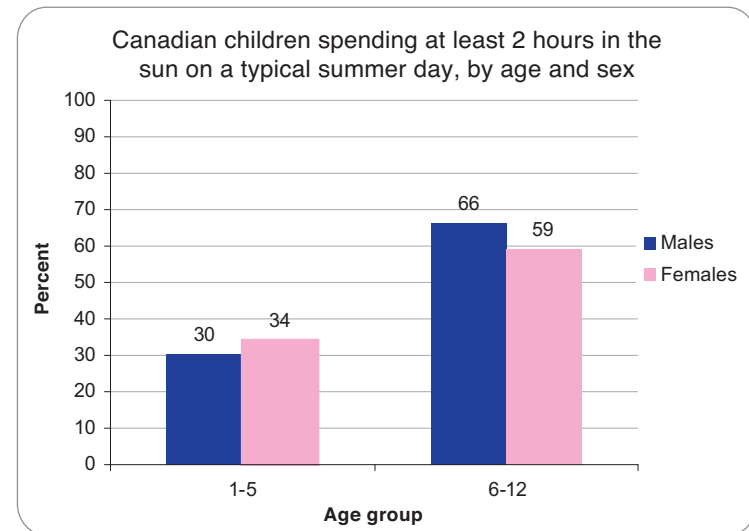
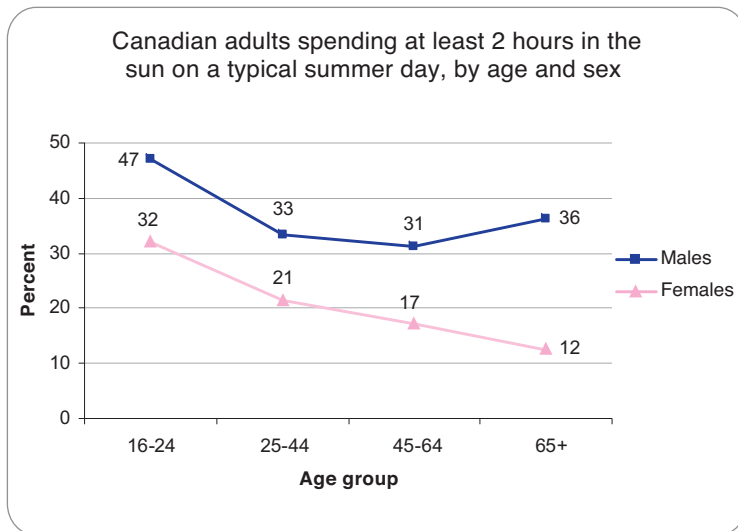
## Sun exposure is greatest in older children and young adults.

On a typical summer day, approximately 28% of Canadian adults spend at least two hours in the sun.

Sun exposure is greatest in young adults (ages 16-24), with 47% of young men and 32% of young women spending at least two hours in the sun on a typical summer day.

Sun exposure on a typical summer day is greater for children than for adults, with over 50% of children spending at least two hours in the sun.

Older children (ages 6-12) are more likely to spend at least two hours in the sun on a typical summer day than younger children (ages 1-5).





## Among adults, young adults are the most likely to try to get a tan, either from the sun or by using tanning equipment.

A tan is one indicator of skin damage from ultraviolet radiation (UVR).

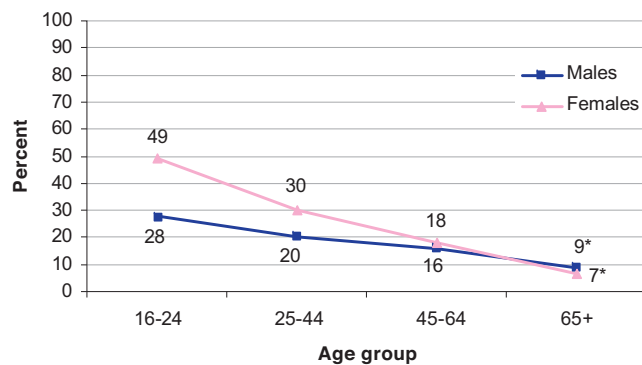
Twenty-one per cent of Canadian adults try to get a tan from the sun.

Forty-nine per cent of young women (ages 16-24) and 28% of young men actively try to get a tan from the sun, while seniors aged 65+ rarely do.

Use of tanning equipment is more common among young women than among young men or older adults.

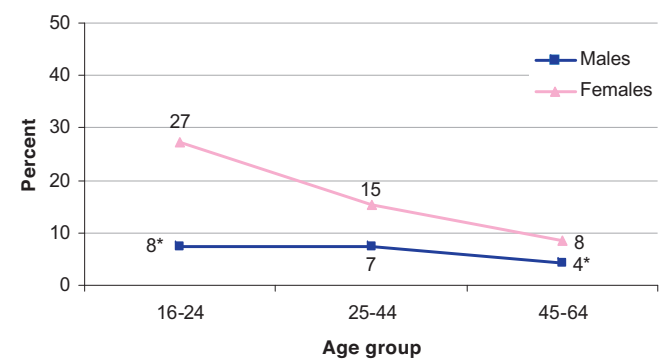
Twenty-seven per cent of young women (ages 16-24) use tanning equipment, compared to 15% of women aged 25-44 and 8% of women aged 45-64.

Canadian adults seeking a tan from the sun in the past year, by age and sex



\* Figures should be interpreted with caution:  $N \geq 10$  but coefficient of variation 16.6% - 33.3%.

Canadian adults who used tanning equipment in the past 12 months, by age and sex



\* Figures should be interpreted with caution:  $N \geq 10$  but coefficient of variation 16.6% - 33.3%.



Young adults not only spend more time in the sun than older adults, but also are least likely to practise sun protection.

Older children are less likely to be protected from the sun than younger children.

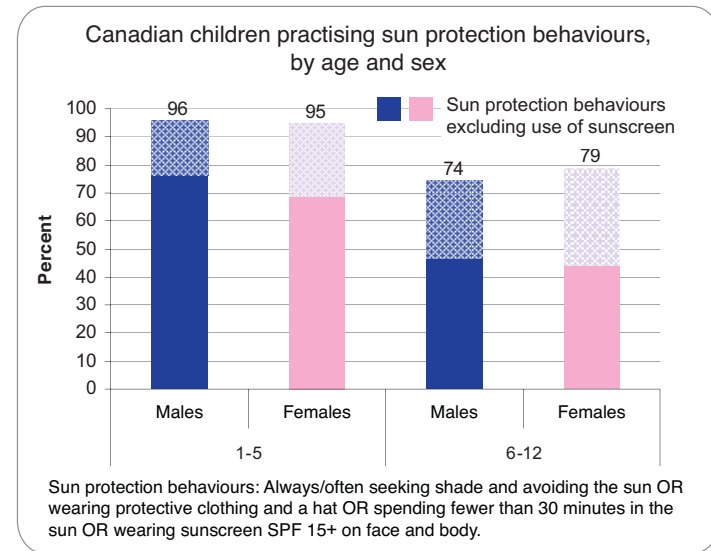
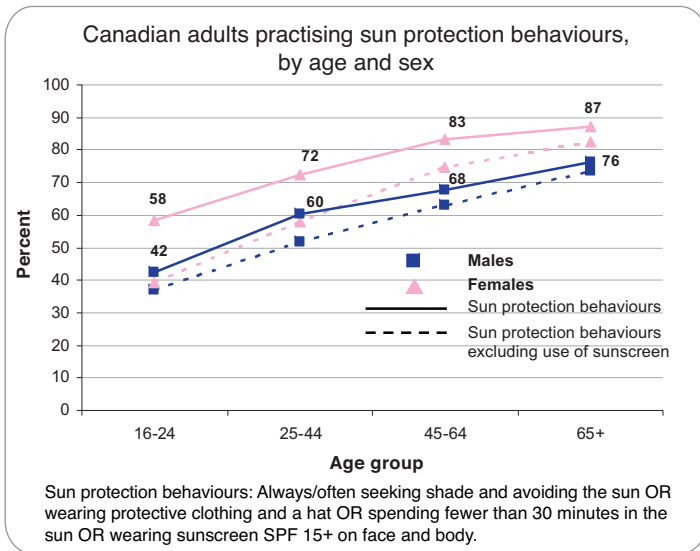
Young children and seniors are the most likely to practise sun protection.

Among adults, those aged 16-24 not only get the most sun exposure but are also the least likely to protect themselves from the sun. Compared to young children, older children (ages 6-12) not only spend more time in the sun but are also less likely to be protected from the sun.

Seniors (65+) and young children (ages 1-5) have good sun protection habits. Over 95% of children aged 1-5 are sun-protected. Eighty-seven per cent of women and 76% of men aged 65 and over practise sun protection.

Fifty-eight per cent of young women and 42% of young men protect themselves from the sun, although nearly 20% of young women and 5% of young men rely solely on sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater. Although 76% of children aged 6-12 are protected from the sun, over 30% use sunscreen only.

Sunscreen alone may be less effective than other methods of sun protection if it is not applied as thickly or as often as recommended. Also, sunscreen was developed to reduce the risk of sunburn and may not be as effective at reducing the risk of skin cancer.





Younger adults and older children, the age groups experiencing the greatest sun exposure and the least protection, are the most likely to get a sunburn.

Young children and seniors are the groups least likely to get a sunburn.

Canadians generally get their worst sunburn while taking part in and/or watching recreational activities.

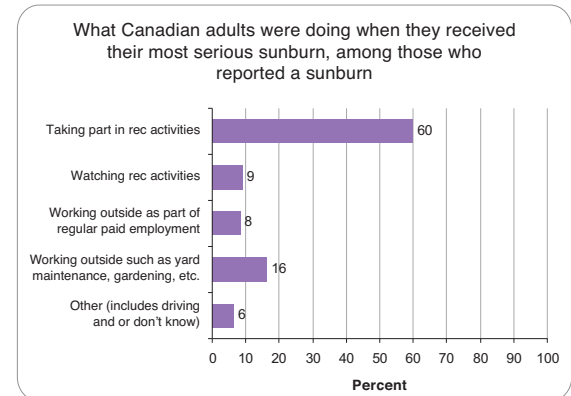
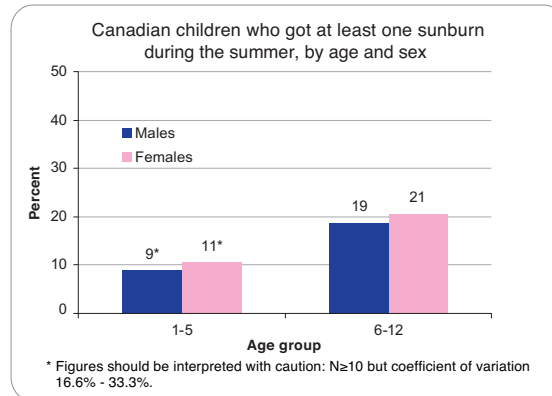
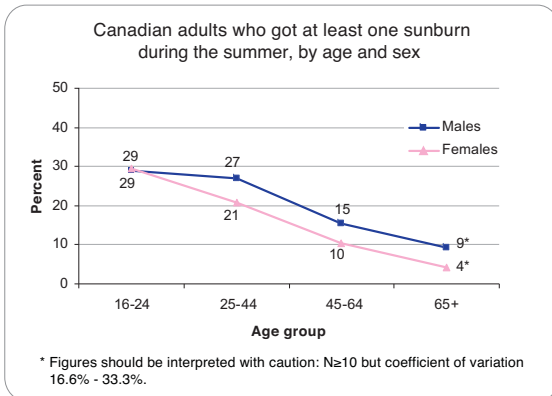
Sunburn is an indicator of skin damage.

The risk of sunburn is highest in younger adults (ages 16-44) and older children (ages 6-12) and lowest in seniors (65+) and young children (ages 1-5).

Twenty per cent or more of children aged 6-12 and of adults aged 16-44 get at least one sunburn during the summer.

Ten per cent or fewer seniors and young children get a sunburn.

Most adults get their worst sunburn while taking part in outdoor recreational activities. Over 50% of children also get their worst sunburn while watching or participating in outdoor recreational activities.





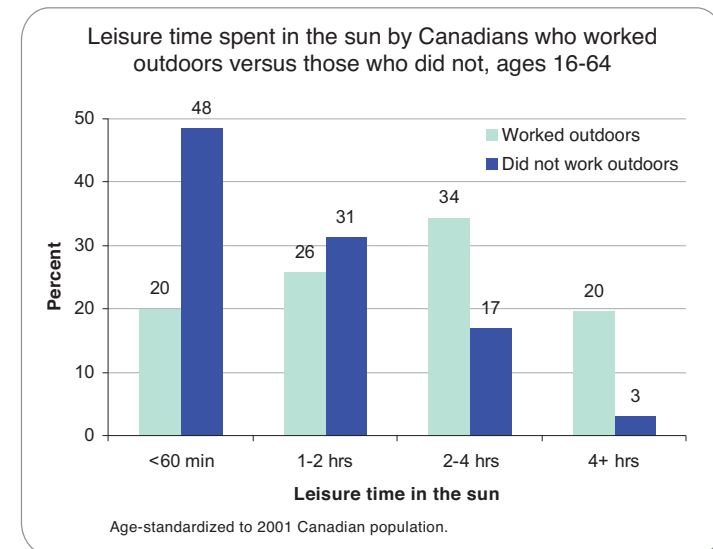
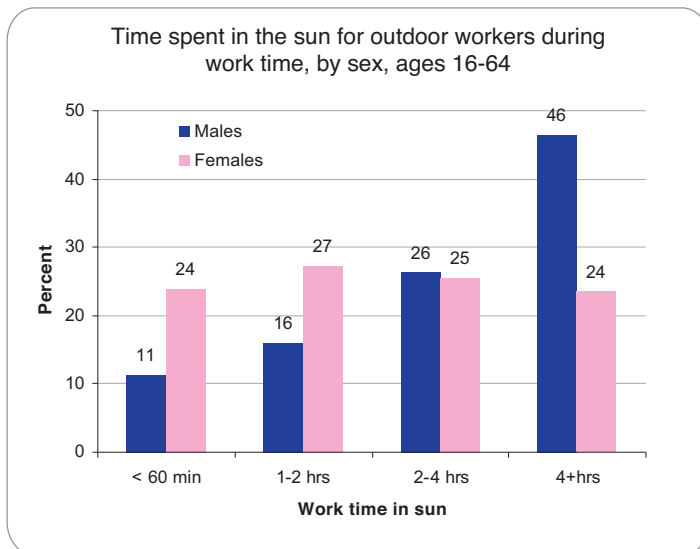
## Outdoor workers, one quarter of whom are young adults, have much greater sun exposure, both at work and at leisure, than the average Canadian aged 16-64.

Outdoor workers are a subset of Canadians aged 16-64. Young adults (ages 16-24) represent one quarter of outdoor workers.

Outdoor workers have much greater sun exposure than the average Canadian aged 16-64 years.

Sixty-seven per cent of outdoor workers spend two or more hours per day of work time in the sun, and 54% spend at least two hours per day of leisure time in the sun.

Male outdoor workers are almost twice as likely as female outdoor workers to spend four or more hours in the sun during work time.





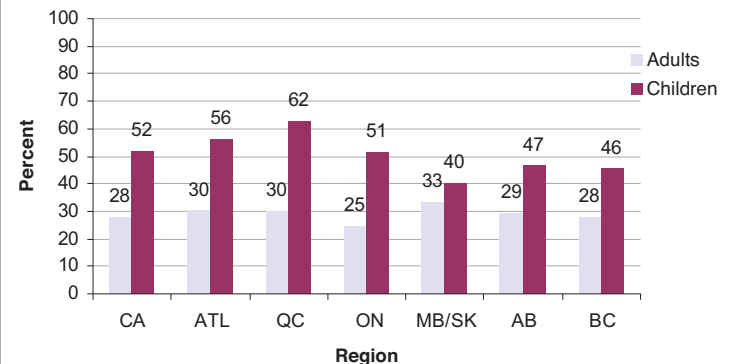
## Regional patterns in sun-related behaviours of Canadians

	Canadians most likely to	Canadians least likely to
<b>Spend time in the sun</b>	Adults in Manitoba and Saskatchewan; children in Quebec and Atlantic Canada	Adults in Ontario; children in Manitoba and Saskatchewan
<b>Seek a tan</b>	Adults in Alberta	Adults in Ontario and British Columbia
<b>Protect themselves from the sun</b>	Adults in Ontario and British Columbia; children in Atlantic Canada	Adults in Manitoba and Saskatchewan
<b>Get a sunburn</b>	Adults in western Canada; children in Quebec	Adults and children in Ontario
<b>Be an outdoor worker</b>	In Manitoba and Saskatchewan and British Columbia	In Quebec and Ontario

**Time in the sun:** adults in Manitoba and Saskatchewan combined are the most likely, and those in Ontario the least likely, to spend two or more hours in the sun while at leisure on a typical summer day.

Children in Manitoba and Saskatchewan spend the least time in the sun on a typical summer day; children in Quebec, followed by Atlantic Canada are most likely to spend two or more hours in the sun.

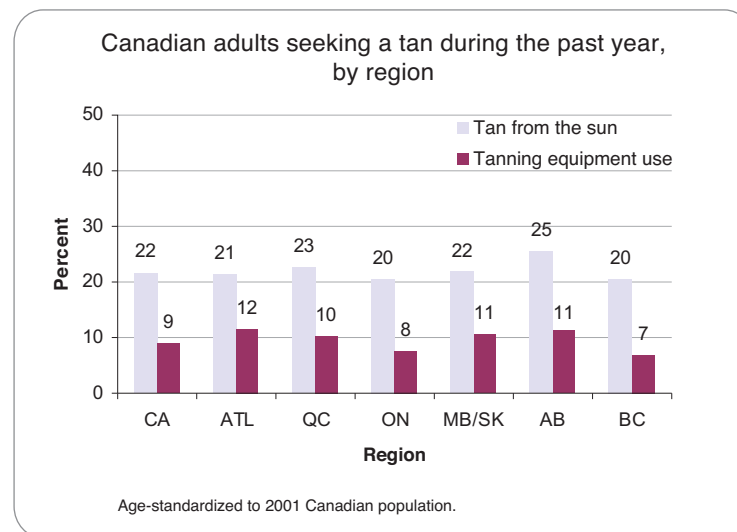
Canadians spending at least 2 hours in the sun on a typical summer day, by region



Adult estimates age-standardized to 2001 Canadian population.

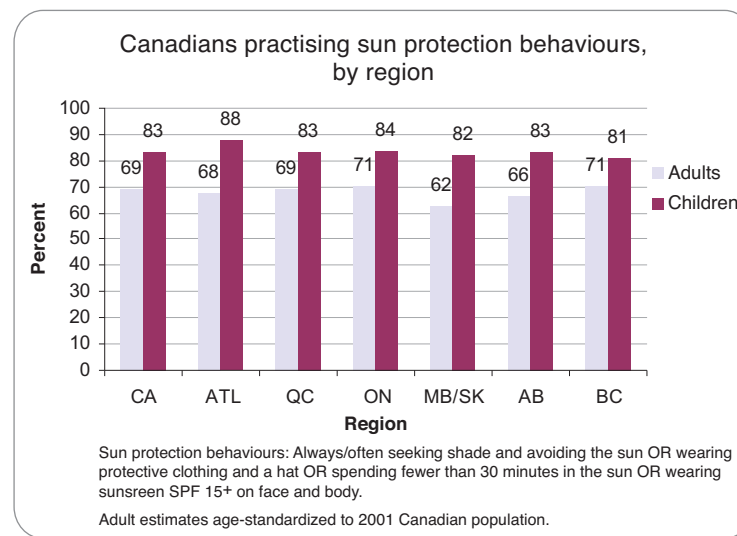
**Seeking a tan:** Alberta has the highest proportion of adults who seek a tan from the sun. Also, along with adults in Atlantic Canada and Manitoba/Saskatchewan, Albertans are slightly more likely to use tanning equipment than other Canadians.

Those living in Ontario and British Columbia are least likely to seek a tan either from the sun or by using tanning equipment.



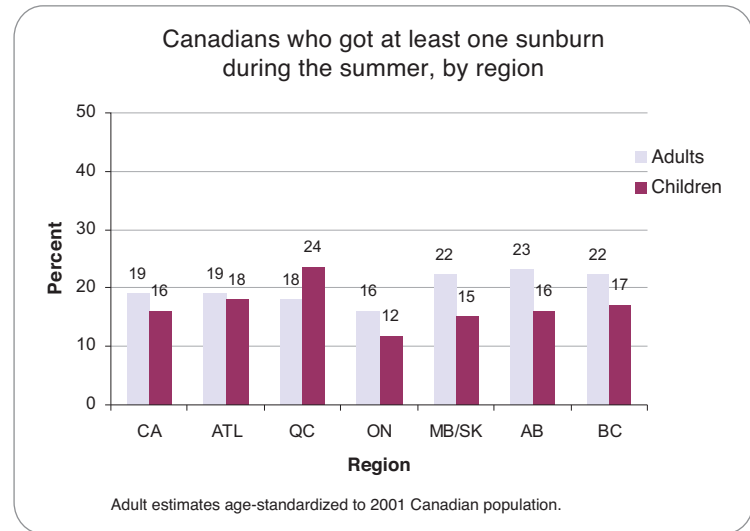
**Sun protection:** adults in Manitoba/Saskatchewan are the least likely to practise any form of sun protection, while adults in Ontario and British Columbia are the best protectors. Atlantic Canadians are somewhat more likely to rely solely on sunscreen.

Children in Atlantic Canada are most likely to be protected during peak hours.



**Sunburn:** adults in western Canada – Manitoba/Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia – are most likely to get a sunburn, while Ontarians are least likely.

Ontario's children are least likely and Quebec's children most likely to be sunburned.



**Outdoor work:** Manitoba and Saskatchewan, combined, have the highest proportion of outdoor workers, followed by British Columbia. Quebec and Ontario have the fewest outdoor workers.

