

SunSmart Sun Protection Survey 2003 (ONS)

Background:

Cancer Research UK commissioned the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to carry out a sun protection survey in March 2003. The survey was designed to measure:

- knowledge about skin cancer prevention measures
- attitudes to tanning and the dangers of the sun
- self-reported sun protection behaviour

Sample

- Face-to-face interviews were conducted among 1848 people in their homes by trained interviewers.
- The response rate was 67% of eligible addresses.
- 48% of the sample were men.
- Respondents were aged between 16 and 96, with a mean age of 46 years.

[Note: In the analyses presented, data are weighted to take account of the number of adults in the household where the respondent lives. People living in large households have a smaller chance of being selected for interview, because only one adult per household is interviewed. The weighting corrects for this.]

Knowledge:

Prevention of skin cancer (Table one)

- Almost 80% of people questioned mentioned using sunscreen to reduce the risk of skin cancer, however, less than half (44%) of those questioned specified the use of high factor (SPF 15+) sunscreen.
- Women are significantly more knowledgeable than men about skin cancer prevention measures.
- Older people are more likely to mention staying in the shade as a way of protecting against skin cancer.
- Knowledge of how to prevent skin cancer increases the older a person is when they leave full time education.
- Despite children being most vulnerable to UV damage from the sun, only 5% of people mentioned protecting children as a way of reducing the risk of skin cancer.
- People of parenting age are the most likely to mention the importance of protecting children in the prevention of skin cancer.

Table One: Sun protection knowledge by age and sex

What actions should you take to reduce the risk of skin cancer? (unprompted responses)
(Respondents were able to mention more than one action)

Action	Age group				
	16-24 yrs (n=263)	25-44 yrs (n=652)	45-64 yrs (n=573)	65+ yrs (n=360)	All ages (n=1848)
Use sunscreen					
% Men	52	36	28	28	34
(SPF unspecified)					
% Women	53	31	33	32	35

	% All	53	33	31	30	35
Use SPF 15+	% Men	31	47	47	27	41
	% Women	34	58	49	29	47
	% All	33	53	48	28	44
Stay in the shade	% Men	45	60	67	62	60
	% Women	48	70	67	73	67
	% All	47	65	67	68	64
Cover up	% Men	47	54	46	49	50
	% Women	34	57	54	40	50
	% All	41	56	50	44	50
Protect children	% Men	1	6	4	2	4
	% Women	4	11	3	5	7
	% All	3	8	4	4	5
Avoid burning	% Men	4	5	7	4	5
	% Women	8	7	5	3	6
	% All	6	6	6	3	5
Don't know	% Men	6	5	3	7	5
	% Women	7	1	3	7	4
	% All	7	3	3	7	4

Causes of skin cancer (Table two)

- While 9 out of 10 people know that sunbathing without sunscreen increases risk of skin cancer, only 6 out of 10 think sunbathing with sunscreen can also be damaging.
- 7 out of 10 people are aware that using a sunbed can increase the risk of skin cancer.
- 8 out of 10 people are aware that sunburn in adulthood is an important factor in increasing the risk of skin cancer. However, only 7 out of 10 are aware that sunburn in childhood is an important skin cancer risk.
- Women attribute significantly greater importance to several risk factors than men.
- Young people attribute significantly less importance to various risk factors than older people.

Table Two: Knowledge of the causes of skin cancer by sex

How important do you think the following are in increasing the risk of skin cancer?

		Not at all important	Not very important	Quite important	Very important
Sun bathing without sunscreen	% Men	3	5	20	72
	% Women	2	3	17	78
	% All	2	4	18	75
Fair skin with freckles that burns easily	% Men	3	6	37	54
	% Women	3	5	34	59
	% All	3	5	35	57
Getting sunburnt as an adult	% Men	4	11	50	34
	% Women	3	7	48	43
	% All	3	9	49	39
Having a large number of moles	% Men	4	12	38	46
	% Women	5	8	32	55

	% All	4	10	35	51
Using sunbeds	% Men	8	15	36	41
	% Women	4	9	32	54
	% All	6	12	34	48
Getting sunburnt as a child	% Men	6	18	42	34
	% Women	4	10	40	46
	% All	5	13	41	41
Sun bathing with sunscreen	% Men	13	27	38	22
	% Women	11	25	38	25
	% All	12	26	38	24

Attitudes:

Attitudes towards tanning and sun exposure (Table three)

- While most people (75%) are concerned that sun exposure may cause skin cancer, around half feel that a tan makes them look more attractive, and two thirds that it makes them look healthier.
- Women are significantly more likely than men to believe that a sun tan makes them more attractive, but are also more likely to be concerned about skin cancer from sun exposure.

Table three: People's views on sun exposure and tanning

Percentage who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with each statement

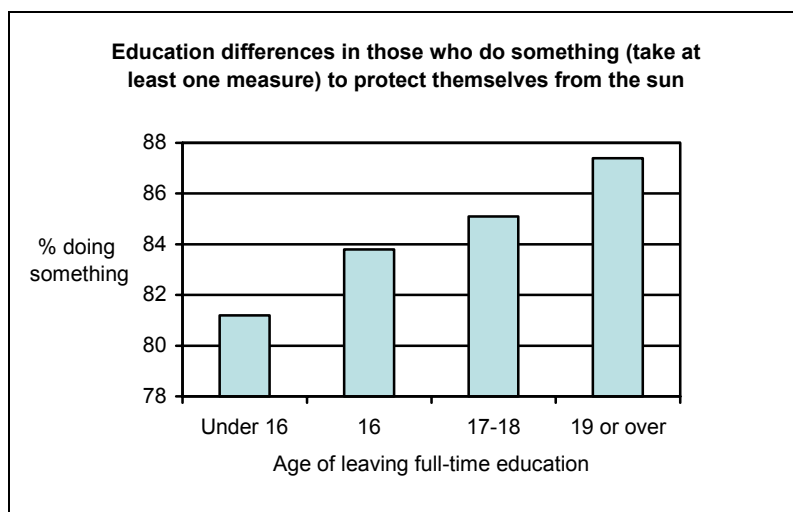
		Age group				
		16-24 yrs (n=263)	25-44 yrs (n=652)	45-64 yrs (n=573)	65+ yrs (n=360)	All ages (n=1848)
A sun tan makes me look more attractive	% Men	46	48	46	52	48
	% Women	54	53	52	50	52
	% All	49	50	49	51	50
A sun tan makes me look healthier	% Men	55	68	68	71	66
	% Women	60	70	68	62	66
	% All	57	69	68	66	66
My skin will age more quickly if I spend time in the sun	% Men	68	88	88	84	84
	% Women	88	95	92	91	92
	% All	77	92	90	88	88
I am concerned that exposure to the sun/UV may give me skin cancer	% Men	72	74	73	80	74
	% Women	76	80	79	79	79
	% All	74	77	76	79	77

Behaviour:

Sun protection behaviour (Table four)

- Most people (84%) do something (take at least one measure) to protect themselves from the sun/skin cancer.
- Women are significantly more likely to do something to protect themselves than men.

- Sun protective behaviours increase with increasing age at leaving full time education. For example, only 30% of people leaving school before age 16 reported using a high SPF sunscreen compared with 46% of those leaving education after age 18.



- Young people (aged 16–24) use sunscreen as their primary method of sun protection. However, only around a quarter of this group report using sunscreen with a high factor (SPF15+).
- While 45% of young men (aged 16-24) are aware that staying in the shade can help to prevent skin cancer, only 7% actually do.

Table Four: Sun protection behaviour by age and sex

Do you personally do anything to protect yourself from the sun? (Yes/No)

If so, what do you do? (unprompted)

(Respondents were able to mention more than one action)

		Age group				
		16-24 yrs (n=263)	25-44 yrs (n=652)	45-64 yrs (n=573)	65+ yrs (n=360)	All ages (n=1848)
Anything (% yes)	% Men	80	79	79	73	78
	% Women	89	91	93	83	90
	% All	84	85	86	79	84
Use sunscreen (SPF unspecified)	% Men	48	33	28	22	32
	% Women	50	35	35	26	35
	% All	49	34	31	24	33
Use SPF 15+	% Men	23	37	36	24	32
	% Women	30	52	47	25	42
	% All	26	45	42	24	37
Stay in the shade	% Men	7	21	28	29	23
	% Women	20	31	37	52	35
	% All	13	26	33	41	29
Cover up	% Men	33	40	39	44	39
	% Women	34	38	44	32	38
	% All	34	39	42	38	39

Limit time in the sun	% Men	5	8	13	4	8
	% Women	3	12	11	7	10
	% All	5	10	11	6	9
Avoid the midday sun	% Men	4	4	4	5	4
	% Women	5	10	9	4	8
	% All	5	7	7	5	6
Avoid sunbeds	% Men	0	0	1	0	0
	% Women	3	3	1	1	2
	% All	1	2	1	0	1
Nothing	% Men	20	22	21	26	22
	% Women	11	9	7	17	10
	% All	16	15	14	21	16