



Sun-smart behaviours of young Australians (12–17 year-olds)

Sun protection

Sun exposure during childhood and adolescence is considered to be the most significant risk factor for developing the most serious type of skin cancer—melanoma—as well as other types of skin cancer in adulthood. The reason for the high incidence of skin cancer among young people in Australia is attributable to poor sun-protection behaviours. The following tables show the sun-protection behaviours for adolescents aged 12–17 years

Table 1. Trends in adolescents' weekend sun-protection behaviours 2003–04 to 2013–14

Sun-protection behaviours of 12–17 year-olds, listed in order of most commonly used	% 2003/04	% 2010/11	% 2013/14
Applied SPF15+ sunscreen	37	37	38
Wore headwear (hat, cap or visor)	38	23	27
Wore ¾-length- or long leg-cover	37	28	25
Wore sunglasses	23	24	25
Stayed mostly in the shade	19	21	22
Wore ¾-length- or long-sleeved top	11	11	8
Wore a broad-brimmed hat		6	8

Table 1 shows that:

- Approximately two thirds 12–17 year-olds did not use sunscreen
- Approximately three quarters or more of 12–17 year-olds did not do one or more of the following: wear sun-protective clothing, wear a hat or wear sunglasses.



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Table 2. Use of sun-protective behaviours of 12–17 year-old males and females on summer weekends, 2013–14

Sun-protection behaviours	% of Females	% of Males	% of all 12–17 year-olds 2013–14
Applied SPF15+ sunscreen	40	36	38
Wore headwear (hat, cap or visor)	22	32	27
Wore ¾-length- or long leg-cover	24	25	25
Wore sunglasses	33	19	25
Stayed mostly in the shade	25	20	22
Wore ¾-length- or long-sleeved top	7	9	8
Wore a broad-brimmed hat	9	7	8

Table 2 shows that:

- more female than male 12–17 year-olds:
 - applied sunscreen, wore sunglasses and stayed mostly in the shade
- more male than female 12–17 year-olds:
 - wore a hat, cap or visor.

Table 3. Adolescents' weekend sun-protection behaviours 2013–14 for 12–14 year-olds and 15–17 year-olds

Sun-protection behaviours	12–14 yr olds	15–17 yr olds
Applied SPF15+ sunscreen	44	32
Wore ¾-length- or long leg-cover	21	28
Wore headwear (hat, cap or visor)	28	26
Wore sunglasses	21	30
Stayed mostly in the shade	24	20
Wore ¾-length- or long-sleeved top	7	10
Wore a broad-brimmed hat	6	9

Table 3 shows that:

- more 12–14 year-olds applied sunscreen and stayed in the shade than 15–17 year-olds
- more 15–17 year-olds wore ¾ or long leg cover and wore sunglasses than 12–14 year-olds.

Sources: Cancer Council of Australia's 2013–2014 National Sun Protection Survey.

Cancer Council of Australia's 2010–2011 National Sun Protection Survey.

Volkov, A., Dobbinson, S., Wakefield, M., & Slevin, T. [2013]. Seven-year trends in sun protection and sunburn among Australian adolescents and adults. *Australian And New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 37 (1), 63–69.