

CRUK analysis brief

Sun safety knowledge,
attitudes and behaviours in
the UK: Selected items from
a 2025 survey

August 2026

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About this document

Reference

This report should be referred to as follows:

Cancer Research UK, 2026 CRUK analysis brief: Sun safety knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in the UK: Selected items from a 2025 survey.

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Acknowledgements

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About Cancer Research UK

We're the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving and improving lives through research. We fund research into the prevention, detection and treatment of more than 200 types of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses. In the last 50 years, we've helped double cancer survival in the UK and our research has played a role in around half of the world's essential cancer drugs. Our vision is a world where everybody lives longer, better lives, free from the fear of cancer.



Cancer Research UK is a registered charity England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666), the Isle of Man (1103) and Jersey (247).

Executive summary

Melanoma skin cancer is largely preventable through avoiding excessive UV exposure. However, major gaps remain in public knowledge and behaviour.

A survey of over 4,000 UK adults in Spring 2025 indicates more than 4 in 10 had been sunburned in the previous year. It also identifies misconceptions about the need for high levels of sun exposure for vitamin D. The survey suggests limited knowledge about UV index level at which sun protection is needed, and about suncream star ratings.

Introduction

Most melanoma cases in the UK are preventable through avoiding overexposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun and sunbeds. Understanding public awareness, beliefs and behaviours is important for informing effective prevention activity and reducing future skin cancer burden.

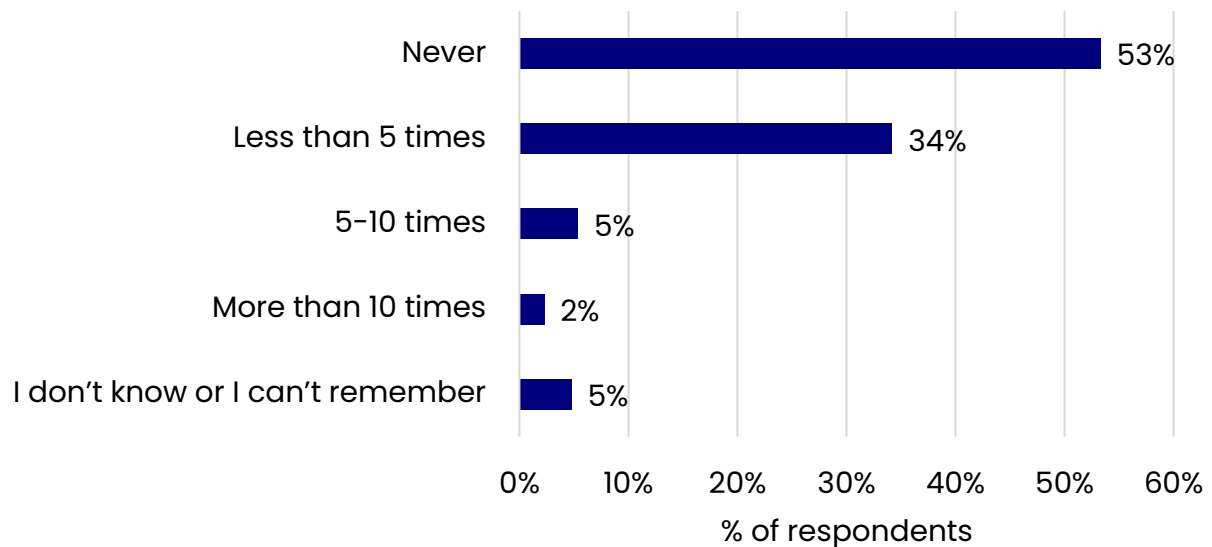
Methods

Findings are based on an online survey of 4,200 UK adults, commissioned by CRUK and conducted by Ipsos UK between 22 April and 6 May 2025. Data were weighted to be representative of the UK adult population. For this survey, quotas were set for age, gender, region, ethnicity, sexuality, and social grade. Recruitment boosts were provided to those living in Northern Ireland, people from Black and Mixed ethnic groups, and people who identify as non-heterosexual, to ensure as representative a sample as possible. Data were weighted by the same groups as the quotas, to ensure the resulting final sample is nationally representative.

Results

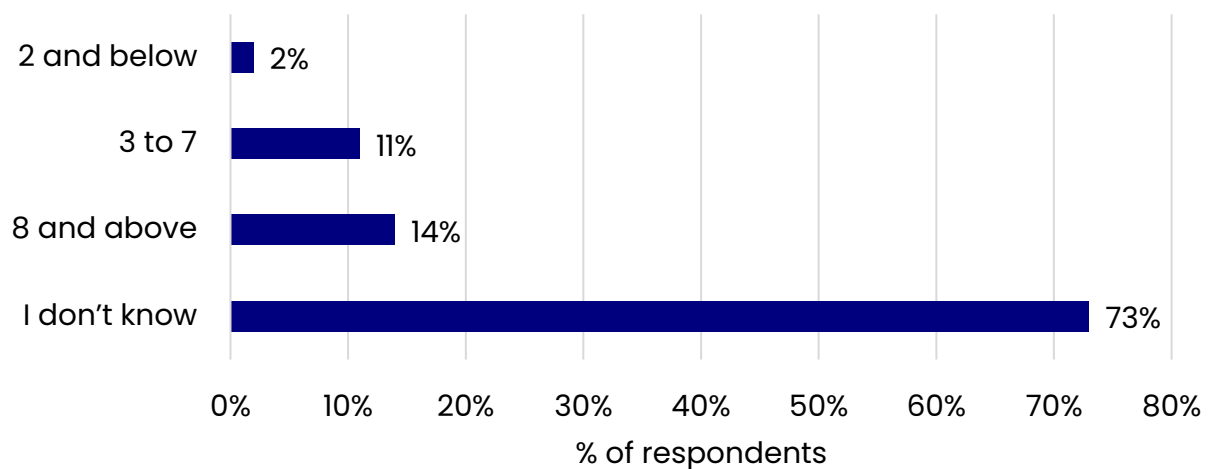
42% have been sunburned in the last year

Question: How many times can you remember being sunburnt in the last year?



73% say they don't know the UV level at which they need to protect themselves from the sun

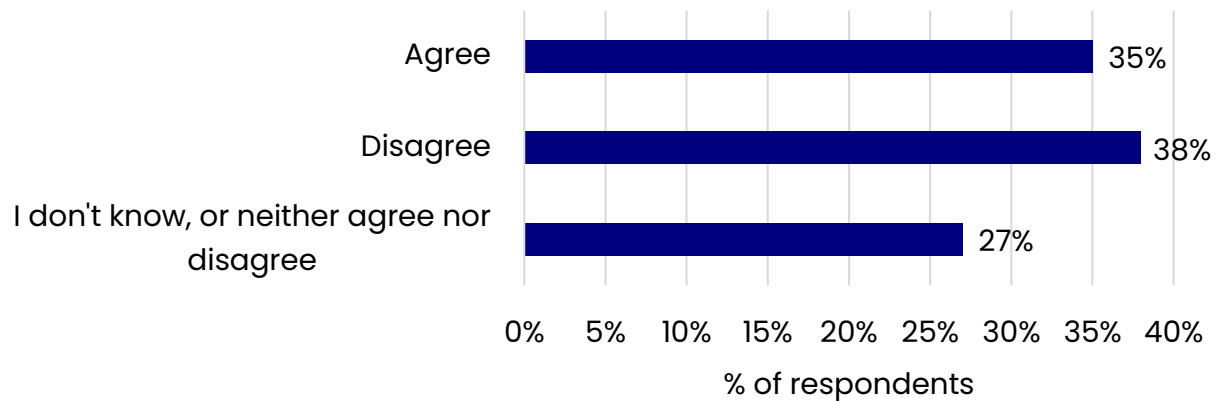
Question: The UV Index ranges from zero upwards. As far as you know, at what UV Index value do you need to protect yourself from the sun?



NB respondents were asked to enter one specific numerical value, responses are aggregated in this chart

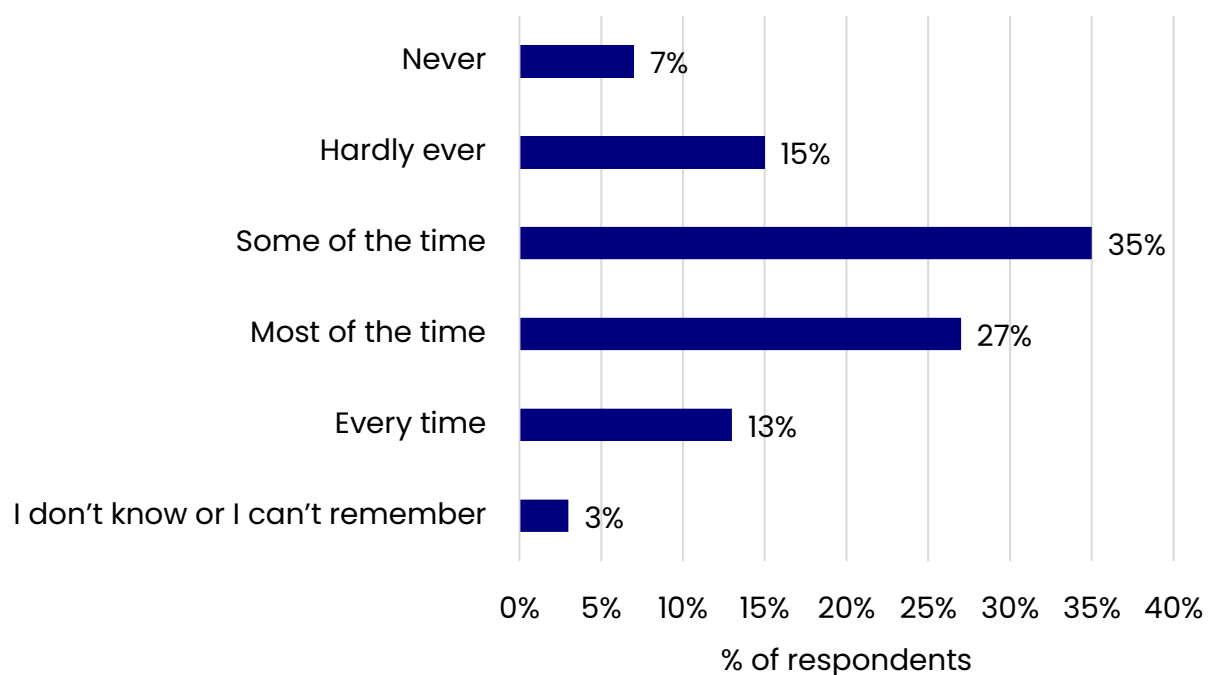
35% incorrectly believe they need as much sun as possible for vitamin D

Question: [Do you agree or disagree with the statement] I need to get as much sun as possible to get enough vitamin D



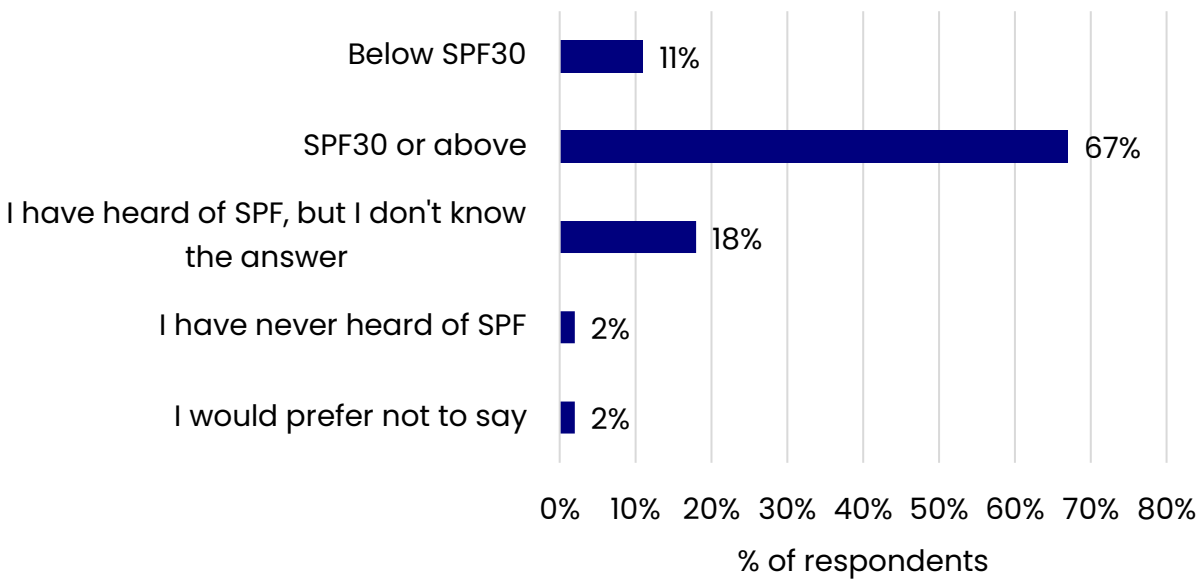
40% apply sunscreen most or every time when outside in the sun in the UK

Question: When you are in the UK and outside in the sun, how often, if at all, do you [apply sunscreen] to protect yourself?



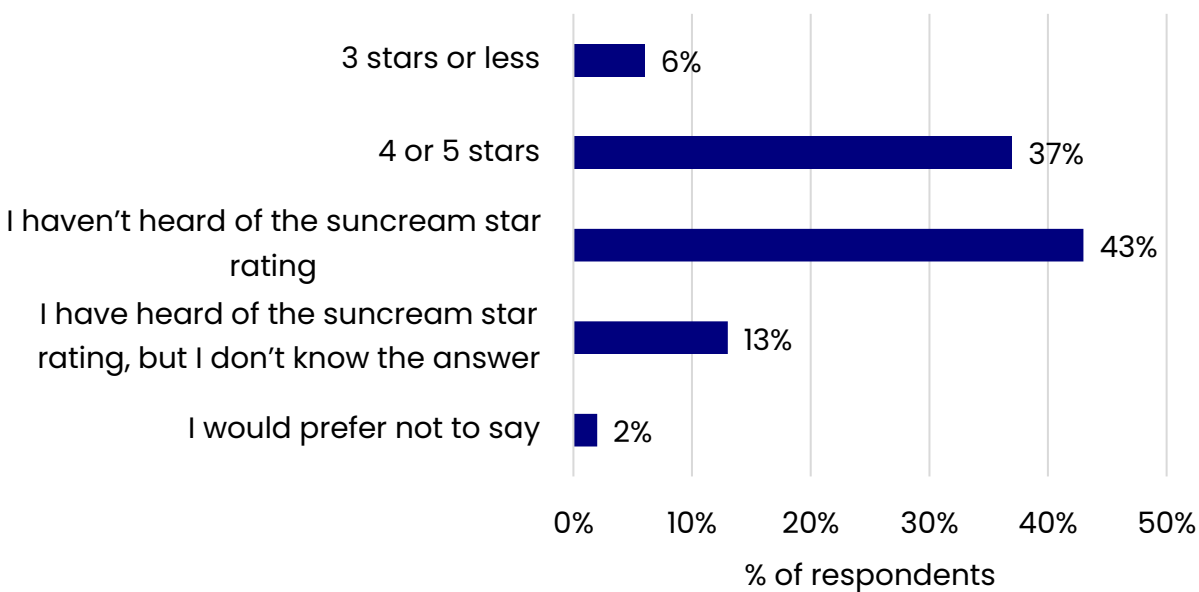
67% know the NHS recommends SPF30+ sunscreen

Question: Do you know what the NHS recommended SPF (Sun Protection Factor) is in sunscreen to help protect yourself from sunburn?



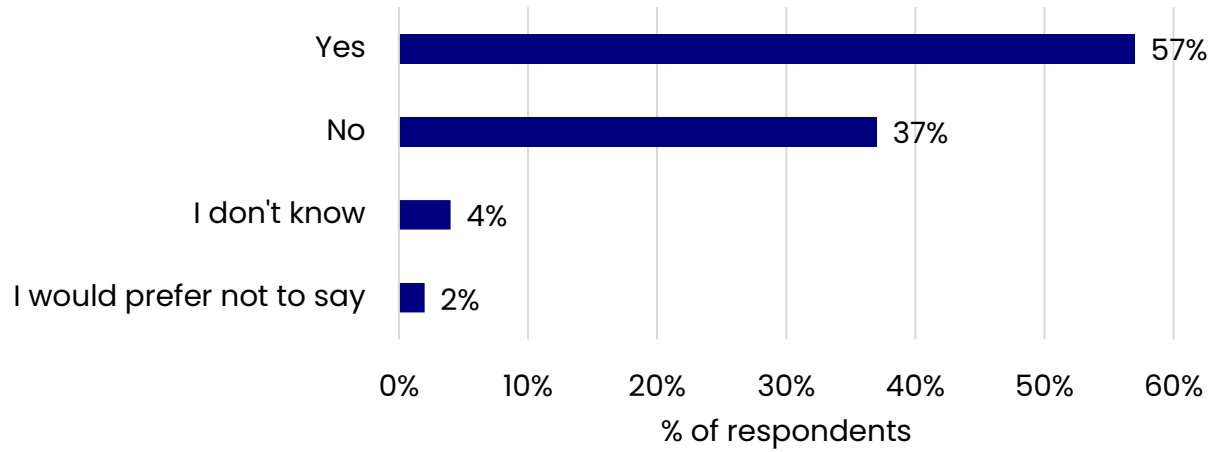
37% know the NHS recommends 4- or 5-star rated sunscreen

Question: Do you know what the NHS recommended minimum star rating is that you should look for on a bottle of sunscreen?



37% do not monitor moles on their bodies

Question: Do you monitor moles on your body for abnormalities or signs of potential skin cancer?



For all questions reported here, the base is all UK adults, and the sample size is 4,200. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.