

SUN EXPOSURE AND PHOTOPROTECTION: PARENTS' HABITS, KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Cumulative sun exposure and sunburn in childhood are the major causes of most skin cancers. Indeed, 50-80% of cumulative exposure occurs during early childhood. This exposure of children can be voluntary or involuntary, such as during outdoor leisure activities. In this context, it appeared absolutely necessary to develop strategies to control and manage children's exposure to the sun. This study sought to describe the photoprotection and photoexposure habits and knowledge of parents or grandparents towards the children they look after during the summer.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

As grandparents play a major role in the care of small children, the survey was conducted via the Internet among national samples of parents of children aged 12 or under or grandparents who care for their grandchildren for at least 2 weeks during the summer holidays. To take into account the summer period, the survey was conducted from the end of August in the 5 countries of the Northern Hemisphere: France, Germany, Spain, Italy and the United States.

RESULTS

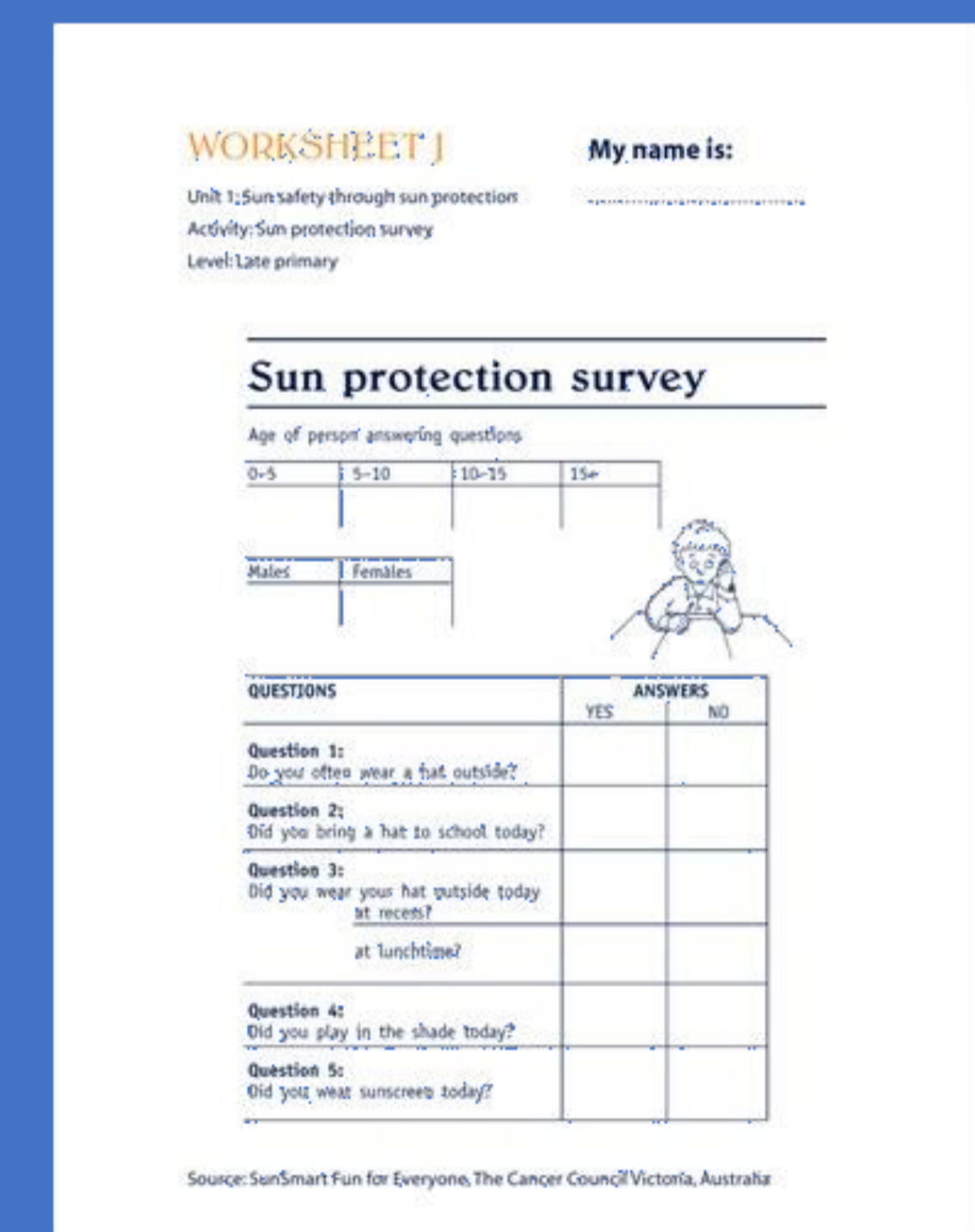
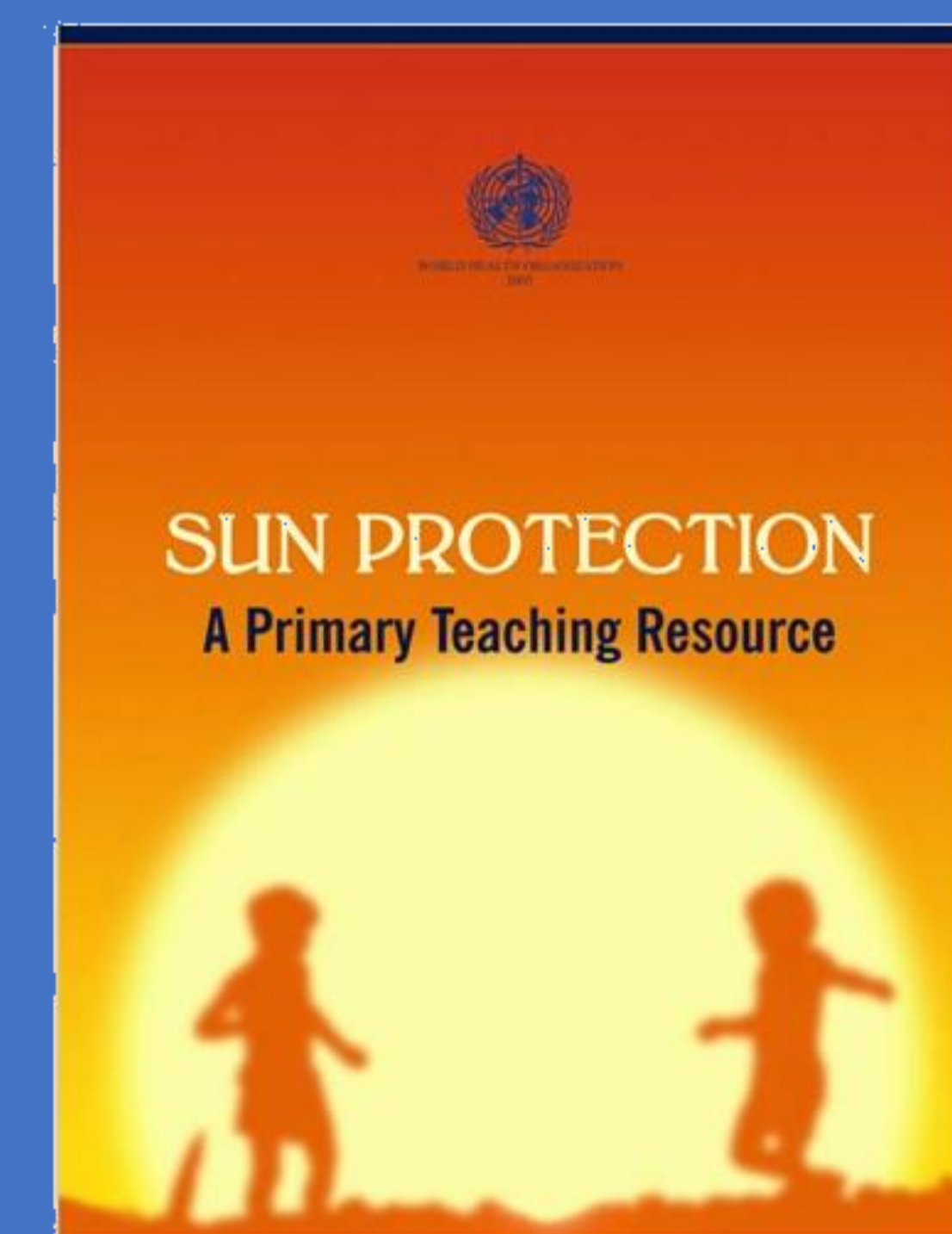
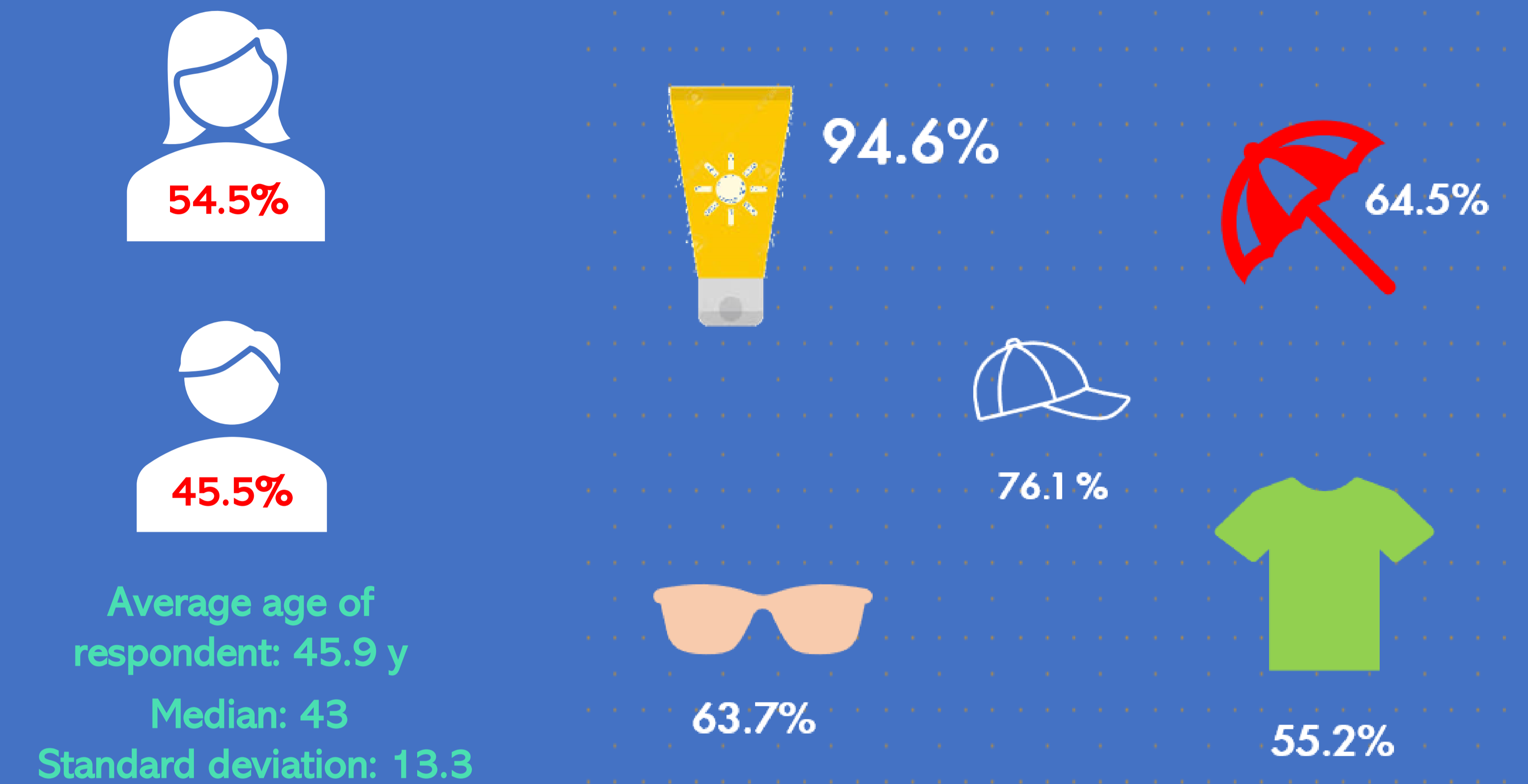
The overall population is 6190 individuals (5104 parents and 1086 grandparents). If 98.1% of the children were exposed to the sun during the summer of 2021, 74.5% acknowledged that it was between 11 am and 5 pm. The exposure was gradual for 71% of them and for more than two hours a day for 38%. Thirty-one percent of the children were only protected at the time of exposure, and 99.7% claimed to use a means of protection: 95% used sun cream, 76% covered their heads, 63.7% protected their eyes, and 55% used covering clothing. The use of a sunshade is favored by 63.7%. Regarding photoprotection, 86.8% said they used specific products for children. The use of photoprotection is motivated by the desire to avoid sunburn or by the risk of skin cancer for 80.6 and 55.5%, respectively.

A total of 29.2% were motivated by the prevention of skin ageing, and 39.5% expressed a desire for prolonged sun exposure. Sixty-four percent of parents or grandparents consider that in their time, sun protection was not a concern or not at all. A total of 31.1% of the children had at least one sunburn during the summer, and the average number of sunburns was 1.93±1.58 [median to 2]. Of these, 43% reported that the skin had peeled.

According to parents, 70.8% of children understood the importance of applying sun protection.

DISCUSSION

Despite the prevention, information and education messages that have been intensified for over 30 years, the battle has not been won. Two-thirds of parents or grandparents admit to exposing their children to the sun between 11 am and 5 pm, and 31% of children are only protected when they are exposed to the sun. There is a need to continue with prevention messages and information dissemination..



Example of documents made available to children by WHO
Sun protection in schools: An educational package to protect children from ultraviolet radiation <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241590629>