

# Outdoor workers face increased cancer risk

February 5 2014, by Carolyn Monaghan

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(Medical Xpress)—Perth researchers have completed a comprehensive study into Australian workers and their exposure to ultraviolet radiation - a known human carcinogen.

The team from The University of Western Australia - affiliated with the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research - found workers at particular risk of [skin cancer](#) were farmers, trades and construction workers, and drivers.

"Solar UV exposure is the leading cause of melanomas, [basal cell carcinomas](#) and [squamous cell carcinomas](#) and the workplace is a significant setting for exposure for many Australians," Winthrop Professor Lin Fritschi said.

The new study has provided comprehensive information about the extent of exposure among workers in a cross-section of industries, compared with previous studies that concentrated on one industry or job title.

The research found that overall, about 37 per cent of males and eight per cent of females are exposed to solar radiation at work. This is about two million workers in Australia. Exposure to [solar radiation](#) was more likely among males in lower socio-economic and regional areas.

"Although 95 per cent of the people we spoke to said they used sun protection, the level of protection varied and in reality, less than nine per cent were fully protected from UV radiation," Professor Fritschi said.

"Workers also need to be aware that reflective surfaces can also create significant levels of UVR, which is why tradespeople on roofs, near water or next to a glass window in a vehicle are exposed."

She said the exposure information gathered during the study would be crucial for the future planning and prioritisation of strategies to reduce skin cancer risks in the workplace.

The paper was published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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