

Households and the Environment: Radon awareness and testing, 2021

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Radon is a naturally occurring, colourless, odourless, tasteless gas that tends to accumulate in basements and crawlspaces. After smoking, it is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in Canada. In 2021, 56% of Canadian households reported that they had heard of radon, up slightly from 54% in 2019. Of these, 69% were able to identify the correct description of radon when asked to pick from a list of possibilities, while 13% chose an incorrect description, down from 18% in 2019. The remainder had only heard of the term.

In 2021, 9% of non-apartment households that had heard of radon indicated that they had tested for radon at some point in the past. Of these households, 86% had tested within the previous 10 years. About 10% of households that had tested their home reported that a problem had been found.

Note to readers

The Households and the Environment Survey (HES) asks Canadian households about their activities and behaviours with respect to the environment. It covers a wide variety of topics including water and energy consumption and conservation, hazardous products used in the home and the household's interactions with nature. Data from the survey are used by governments to guide policies and programs, by researchers to learn more about Canadians and by individuals to see how they compare with the rest of the country.

In 2021, the HES surveyed approximately 38,000 households.

The target population of the 2021 HES consisted of households in Canada, excluding: households located in Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut; households located on reserves and in other Indigenous settlements in the provinces; and households located on Canadian Forces Bases. Institutions, collectives and households in certain remote regions were also excluded.

First conducted in 1991, the HES was subsequently conducted in 1994, 2006 and every second year starting with 2007. Some of the environmental variables from the first cycle continue to be measured, but many new topics have been introduced over the years.

About radon

Radon is a radioactive gas found naturally in the environment. It is produced by the breakdown of uranium found in soil, rock or water. Radon is invisible, odourless and tasteless and emits ionizing radiation.

Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. Exposure to high levels of radon in indoor air results in an increased risk of developing lung cancer. The risk of cancer depends on the level of radon and how long a person is exposed to those levels. Exposure to radon and tobacco use together can significantly increase the risk of lung cancer.

For more information about radon, visit the [Health Canada website](#).

Available tables: [38-10-0086-01](#) and [38-10-0281-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3881](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).

