

Environment Fact Sheets

Outdoor Water Use, 2015

by Environment, Energy and Transportation Statistics Division

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Outdoor Water Use, 2015

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Watering lawns and gardens accounts for much of the residential water used outside the home. In 2013, Canadians used an average of 223 L of water at home every day, which included both indoor and outdoor water use.¹ Various strategies exist to help reduce the amount of water used on lawns and gardens, including using rain barrels and cisterns, and different types of sprinkler systems.

Barrels and cisterns

Barrels and cisterns allow households to collect rainwater for use on their lawns and gardens. In 2015, 15% of Canadian households had a barrel or cistern. They were most frequently reported by households in the Prairie provinces (Manitoba (22%), Saskatchewan (28%) and Alberta (25%)) compared to the rest of Canada.

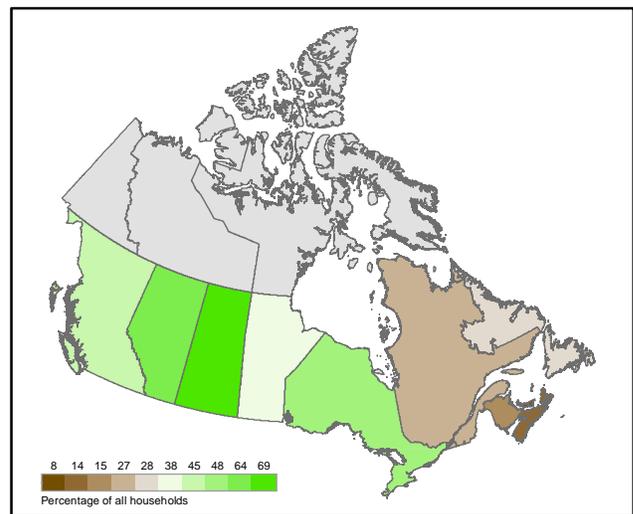
Households in census metropolitan areas (CMAs)² were less likely to have a barrel or cistern compared to those not in CMAs (13% and 22%, respectively). Of households located in CMAs, households in Kingston were the most likely to have a barrel or cistern, while those in Vancouver were least likely to have one (34% and 5%^E, respectively).

Barrels and cisterns were more frequently reported by households in single-detached dwellings (22%) than by households in other types of dwellings.

Owning vs renting

There is a correlation between whether a household owns its dwelling and whether it has a barrel or cistern. In 2015, households that owned the dwelling they lived in were almost five times as likely to have a barrel or cistern compared to those that did not own their home (19% compared to 4%).

Map 1
Households that reported watering their lawn in 2015



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM 153-0171

Watering lawns

Sprinklers and sprinkler systems

There are many types of sprinklers that homeowners can use to water their lawns and gardens. Stand-alone sprinklers attached to the end of a hose are quite common. Another option consists of sprinkler systems that are composed of in-ground pipes, multiple sprinkler heads and often timers to control when and how much water is applied. Properly used, sprinkler systems can allow water to be applied more efficiently, however the most efficient method may be watering by hand as water is only applied where it's needed.

1. Statistics Canada. Table 153-0127 - Potable water use by sector and average daily use for Canada, provinces and territories, occasional. CANSIM (database). (accessed: 22 June 2017)

2. Area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a core. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core.

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Not everyone waters their lawn, however. In 2015, only 43% of Canadian households that had a lawn reported that they had watered it. Of those that did, 63% used some sort of sprinkler or sprinkler system. Nineteen percent of households that watered their lawn used a standalone lawn sprinkler, compared to 45% that used a standalone lawn sprinkler. The remainder watered their lawns by hand using a hose or watering can.

Households in Saskatchewan (69%) were most likely to have watered their lawn, followed by those in Alberta (64%), while those in Prince Edward Island (8%^F), Nova Scotia (14%) and New Brunswick (15%^F) were least likely to have watered their lawn in 2015.

Standalone sprinklers

Standalone sprinklers were most frequently used by households in Newfoundland and Labrador (58%) and Alberta (58%), while households in Quebec (30%) were least likely to have used one.

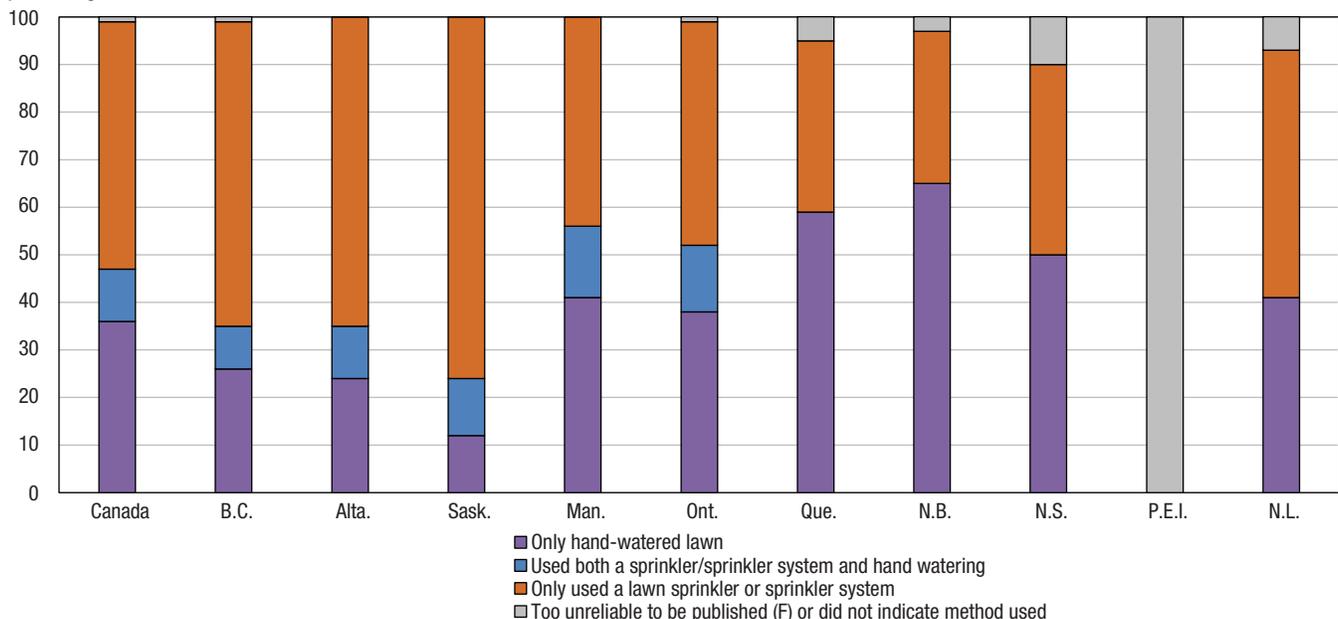
Sprinkler systems

While sprinkler systems can allow households to water their lawns without having to drag hoses and standalone sprinklers around, they do require regular maintenance as pipes may leak, resulting in water being wasted. Of the households that reported using a sprinkler system, half (51%) indicated that their sprinkler systems were at least 8 years old.

Sprinkler systems were most frequently reported by households in Saskatchewan (48%) and British Columbia (39%), while households in the other provinces were in line with the national average. The usage of sprinkler systems in Atlantic Canada is so low that the estimates are too unreliable to be published.

Chart 1
How Canadian households watered their lawns

percentage of households that watered their lawn



Source: Statistics Canada, Households and the Environment Survey, 2015.

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Timers

By controlling the time of day and duration of watering sessions, households can optimize the amount of water they need to apply to their lawns. In recent years, some jurisdictions have implemented restrictions on the time of day and frequency that households can apply water to help conserve water and reduce wastage.³

Overall, 32% of households that used a stand-alone sprinkler or sprinkler system used one in conjunction with a timer. Twelve percent of stand alone sprinklers were used with a timer, while 81% of sprinkler systems included a timer.

Watering gardens

In 2015, 61% of all households in Canada reported that they had a garden or an outside area with trees, shrubs, flowers or vegetables. Of these, 77% of households reported they watered these areas during the summer. The likelihood that a household had done so increased across the country; from Newfoundland and Labrador (59%) in the east to British Columbia (86%) in the west.

About one-quarter of households (24%) that watered their garden used a sprinkler or sprinkler system, 36% of which had a timer.

About the Households and the Environment Survey

The Households and the Environment Survey 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 government to guide policies and programs, by researchers to learn more about Canadians and by individuals to see how they compare to the rest of the country.

The target population of the 2015 Households and the Environment Survey consisted of households in Canada, excluding households located in Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, households located on reserves and in other Aboriginal settlements in the provinces; and households consisting entirely of full-time members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Institutions and households in certain remote regions were also excluded.

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

Available in CANSIM: table 153-0171.

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3. For example, the City of Vancouver (<http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/understanding-watering-restrictions.aspx>). (accessed 22 June 2017)