

2016

Winter Tire Report

*Winter Tires Continue to Gain
Traction with Canadians*



Tire and Rubber
Association
of Canada

L'Association
canadienne du pneu
et du caoutchouc

Winter Tires Continue to Gain Traction with Canadians

Introduction

Winter defines Canada as a nation. Most Canadians see the winter from behind the steering wheel, driving through the dark mornings and evenings, relentless cold and inclement weather. That's why preparing for winter driving conditions is paramount to safe driving in Canada.

The 2016/2017 winter forecasts predict yet another cold Canadian winter. The Weather Network expects that after mild winter 2015, this year will see the return of a more classic Canadian winter season from the Rocky Mountains to Atlantic Canada, with only B.C. expected to see above normal temperatures for the winter as a whole. *The Canadian Farmer's Almanac*, with claims of 80 per cent accuracy, predicts cold winter for most of the country, with below-normal temperatures, with above-normal precipitation and snowfall; with the coldest periods in early to mid-January, late January, and late February, and the snowiest periods in mid- and late December, early January, and mid-February.

There is simply nothing like classic Canadian winter. Based on the Tire and Rubber Association of Canada (TRAC) 2016 national survey, we see continuous improvement in the usage of winter tires. And while some Canadian drivers still resist using winter tires, our 2016 consumer survey shows that the positive perception and utilization of winter tires continues to climb across the provinces, and Canadians continue to embrace the improved handling and safety provided by winter tires.

"Canadians are clearly receiving and reacting to the winter tire safety message. While it remains nothing close to Quebec, where the winter tires are mandatory, TRAC embraces the fact that the Canadian drivers are choosing to make Canadian roads safer through usage of winter tires."

– Glenn Maidment, President,
TRAC

It is TRAC's belief that the best way to promote safe winter driving is a partnership between government, industry and stakeholders to educate consumers about the potentially life-saving benefits of winter tires.

About This Report

TRAC's *2016 Winter Tire Report* is an information tool for government bodies, industry, media and other stakeholders such as car makers, tire retailers and road safety advocacy groups to build understanding of the value of winter tires to consumers, individuals and society.

TRAC reviewed a broad range of market research, data and consumer perceptions related to winter tires available to the association. TRAC analyzed the information in order to provide recommendations on educating Canadian motorists about the safety and performance benefits of winter tires.

About TRAC's 2016 National Survey Instrument

A survey of 1518 Canadians was completed online between October 17th to October 20th 2016 using Leger's online panel, *LegerWeb*. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of +/-2.5%, 19 times out of 20.

TRAC's *2016 Winter Tire Report* data has been compared with TRAC's independent research survey executed in 2014. **The difference between the 2014 and 2016 shows a significant improvement in the winter tire usage!**

Road Safety—The Case for Winter Tires

Winter tires play a measurable role in increasing road safety and protecting drivers and traffic participants. The use of winter tires contributes to:

- preventing collisions, injuries and fatalities,
- reducing health and hospital emergency costs,
- reducing the number of police and ambulance emergency responses during winter,
- lowering the frequency and size of insurance payouts,
- reducing traffic congestion.

Quebec—Saving Lives and Reducing Collisions

The superior traction and braking capabilities of winter tires are proven to save lives and reduce personal injury. The Quebec experience with its mandatory winter tire usage and full data represents the best example.

A 2011 study by the ministère des Transports du Québec demonstrates the road safety benefits of legislating winter tires. After the first two seasons of enforcement (winter 2008-2009/2009-2010):

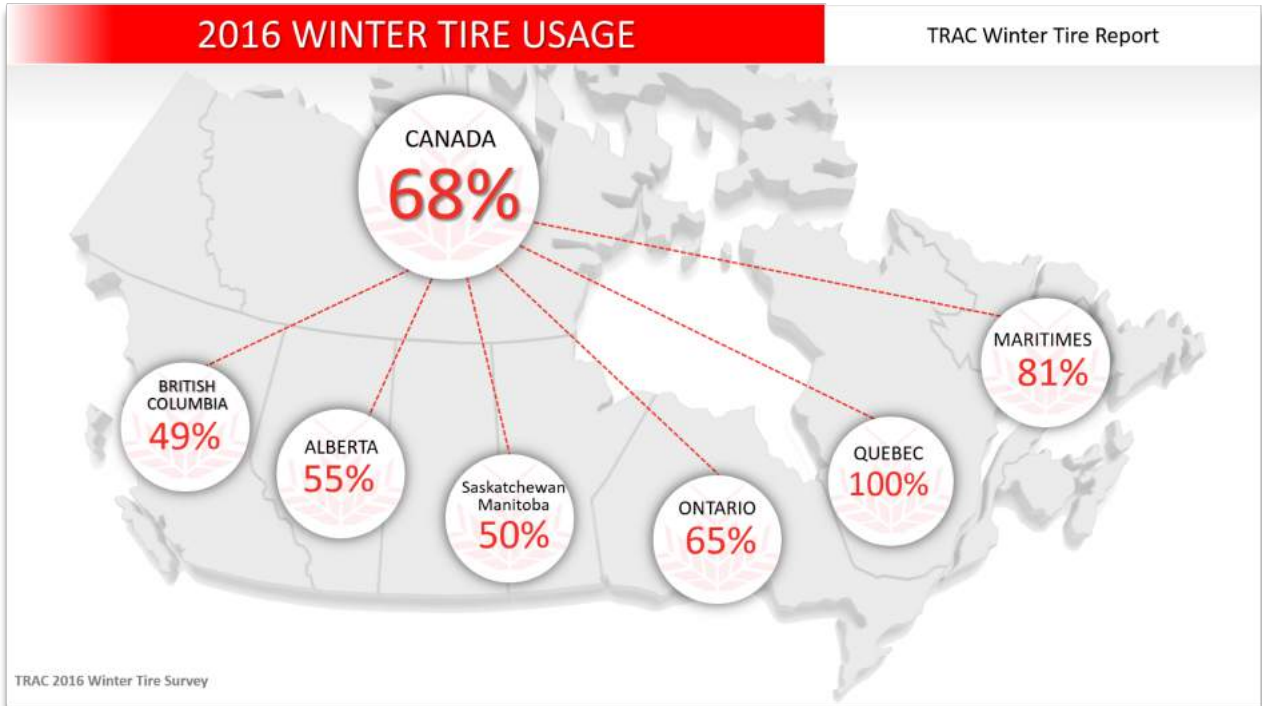
- road collisions in winter decreased by five per cent,
- 574 fewer people were injured annually in winter road collisions,
- deaths and serious injuries due to winter road collisions decreased by three per cent.

These findings are supported by a report from the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) that cites a range of studies that show conclusively that winter tires provide superior traction, braking and cornering in all cold-weather driving conditions, whether the road surface is dry, wet, icy or snow-covered.

Considering the impact of 100 per cent usage of winter tires across Canada, we would see a significant decline in winter road collisions, thousands would be spared the trauma of injury, and the serious injury and fatality rates would decrease.

Winter Tire Usage in Canada

Winter tire utilization has nearly doubled since 1998. At that time, 35 per cent of Canadian drivers used winter tires. By 2016, national usage had grown to 67.9 per cent. TRAC’s 2016 national survey reveals that, outside Quebec, 61 per cent of the Canadian drivers are currently using winter tires, showing a very positive growth in the recent years.



Winter Tire Use by Region (Source: TRAC 2016 Canadian Consumer Tire Attitudinal Study):

Province	Utilization 2016 (%)	Utilization 2014 (%)	Change (%)
Atlantic Canada	81	73	+ 8
Quebec*	100	100	0
Ontario	65	56	+ 9
Manitoba/Saskatchewan	50	39	+ 11
Alberta	55	45	+ 10
British Columbia	49	38	+ 11

* Mandatory winter tire usage since 2008

Besides these encouraging increases in adoption of winter tires nationwide, 36 per cent of all respondents are also considering purchase of winter tires.

While we are seeing an absolute surge in the adoption of winter tires by Canadian consumers, the survey also demonstrates that 30 per cent of all drivers do not own winter tires. Among those that reported not needing winter tires:

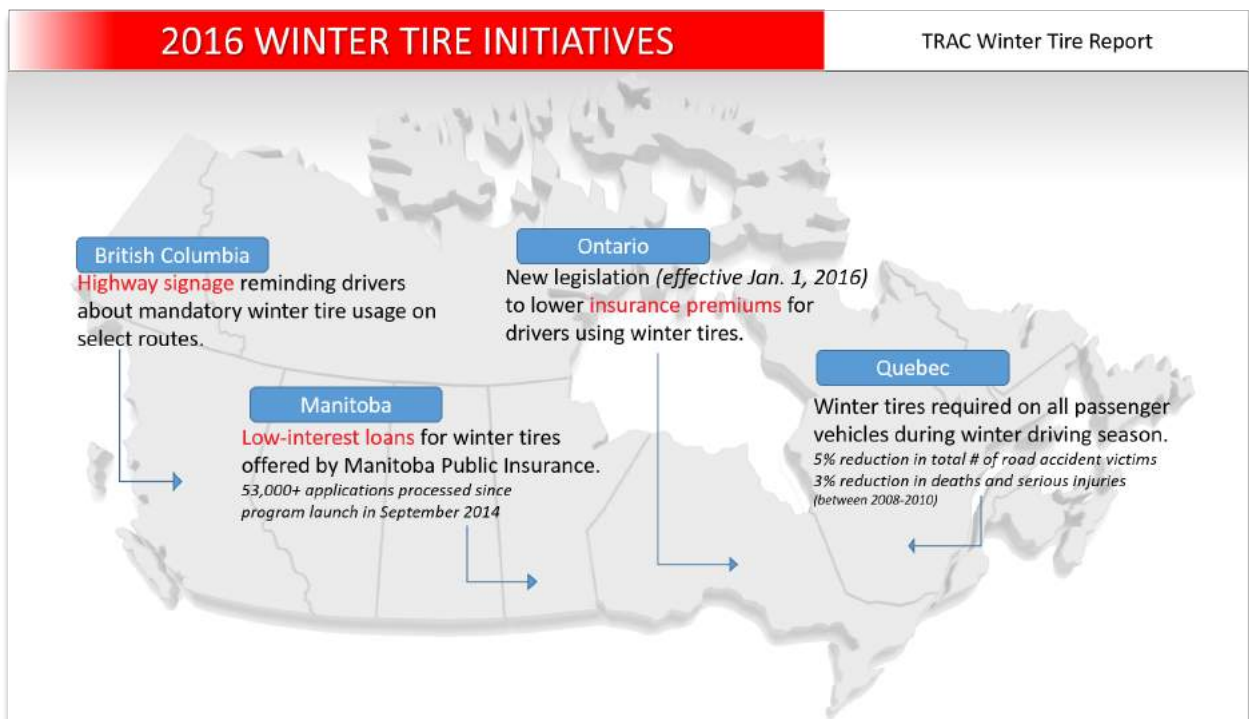
- 48 per cent said that all-season tires are “good enough” for winter driving,
- 23 per cent cited cost as a barrier for not using winter tires,
- 21 per cent said they don’t drive enough in cold-weather months to merit winter tires,
- 8 per cent stated other reasons.

“These numbers point to a significant improvement in consumer understanding of the importance of the winter tires as a safety feature. It’s rewarding to know that the educational work done by road safety groups are paying off. We are glad to see that Canadians are attuned to the message.”

– Jack Smith, President, Canada Safety Council

Winter Tire Incentives by Region

Government actions to achieve greater utilization of winter tires are integral to improving winter road safety. The following is a summary of current provincial initiatives:



Province	Initiative
British Columbia	<p>British Columbia recently updated the language on signage for certain mountainous highways, indicating the need to use tires marked with the Three-Peak Mountain Snowflake Symbol. In addition, B.C.'s provincial initiative "Shift into Winter", a provincial winter driving safety alliance, is committed to improving the safety of drivers during the winter months.</p>
Manitoba	<p>An innovative program from the government of Manitoba and administered by Manitoba Public Insurance offers low-interest loans for the purchase and installation of qualified winter tires. The program was first launched in September 2014. Since then, more than 53,000 applications have been processed. This program provides loans to a maximum of \$2,000 per vehicle, for up to 48 months at the rate of prime, plus two per cent. More information on this low-cost loan program can be found at www.mpi.mb.ca.</p>
Ontario	<p>Effective January 1, 2016, the government of Ontario implemented new legislation which requires all insurance providers to reduce auto insurance premiums to drivers who have four winter tires installed on their personal passenger vehicles. Motorists are advised to ask their insurer how to qualify.</p>
Quebec	<p>Since 2008, the Province of Quebec mandates winter tires on all passenger vehicles. Winter tires are required from Dec. 15th, to Mar. 15th.</p>

Government and Industry Leadership

Government leaders, tire industry and other stakeholders play a key role in encouraging winter tire usage. The issue requires a coordinated effort to give drivers the facts about winter tires and encourage them to carefully consider the safety and performance benefits of winter tires. Wider advocacy would contribute to an important reduction in winter road collisions and reduce injury and costs for thousands of Canadian motorists and their families each year.

There are many effective ways provinces can further promote road safety and increase usage of winter tires. Initiatives could involve providing more educational resources to drivers, offering special incentives, or restricting access to roads that are potentially too dangerous due to harsh winter conditions.

“The Tire Dealers Association of Canada (TDAC) encourages all provinces to engage in winter tire safety messaging and TDAC is ready to help support such programs nationwide.”

– Bob Bignell, Executive Director, TDAC

TRAC’s role focuses on educating government leaders, public and stakeholders on the safety and performance benefits of winter tires. We provide education, leadership and guidance on ways government, industry and interest groups can encourage increased winter tire usage nationwide. Some examples of measures taken by the tire industry include:

- promoting the safety benefits of winter tires through educational resources, websites, campaigns,
- promoting winter tire usage on government fleet vehicles,
- winter tire messaging on highway signage,
- incorporating winter tire messaging into driver training and handbooks.

Shopping for Winter Tires

Canadians have many choices when it comes to winter tires. Below you can find the basics on winter tire shopping, but choosing the right winter tire may still be a daunting task. Winter driving differs from one driver to the next, and so does the tire choice. So we encourage drivers to further their due diligence online, speak with local tire dealer or repair facility, and make the right decision according to individual driving needs.

Additional information and resources about the safety, performance characteristics, and the list of the winter tires for the 2016 winter season can be found at <http://www.tracanada.ca/>.

Identifying a Winter Tire

A winter tire features the **Three-Peak Mountain Snowflake Symbol** (also referred to as the 'Alpine Symbol') on its sidewall. The tire carrying this symbol meets the industry snow traction performance requirements.



Winter tire testing is rigorous, reliable and sophisticated. Winter tires that are marked with this symbol must follow the ASTM F-1805 tire test on medium-packed snow in standardized testing conditions. These tires are required to meet or exceed minimum industry snow traction requirements. Each year, TRAC prepares an up-to-date list of winter tires manufactured by its members that meet these standards.

Dedicated Winter Tires Versus All-Weather Tires

Advances in rubber compounding and tire design now offer more choice for consumers when it comes to tires for winter driving. Some winter tires are designed to perform better in snow while others are designed to perform better on ice. Consumers have been also introduced to “all-weather” tires, which also display the Three-Peak Mountain Snowflake Symbol. These tires meet the snow traction performance requirements, but – unlike a dedicated winter tire designed specifically for winter conditions – are made to be driven in warmer months as well. Consumers should

research the range of winter tire options available and choose the kind best suited to their winter driving needs.

For the very best performance and safety in winter driving TRAC recommends tires manufactured specifically for winter road conditions. These tires are designed only for use during the winter months and should be removed during the non-winter seasons as the tread compound is much too soft for summer driving.

All-Season and M+S Tires

As noted earlier, almost half of drivers currently not using winter tires believe that all-season tires offer sufficient traction for winter road conditions. This is a misconception.

While an all-season tire may suggest that it performs in “all” weather conditions, these tires do not carry the Three-Peak Mountain Snowflake Symbol. This means that these tires do not meet the necessary snow traction requirements to be considered a winter tire, and therefore represent a compromise when it comes to tire choice for the winter months.

“All-season tires are primarily designed for driving conditions above 7°C. This is not the Canadian winter we all know. TRAC takes the position that winter tires are a far superior option because the traction and braking capabilities of a tire designed specifically for winter far exceeds that of an all-season tire.”

– Barry Yutronkie, Director of Operations, TRAC

Winter Tire Safety and Performance Benefits

Winter tires provide superior traction and braking on all road surfaces. The superior grip of today’s high-tech winter tires is the result of more flexible rubber compounds that provide superior traction even at extremely cold temperatures. These specialized rubber compounds coupled with sophisticated tread designs allow for greater control and braking capability on cold-weather road surfaces—whether they be dry, snow-covered, icy or slushy.

Shorter stopping distances in emergency situations represent the primary safety feature of the advanced technology in today’s winter tires. Research detailed in the TIRF study shows that:

- at temperatures just below freezing, stopping distances for vehicles with winter tires are as much as 30 per cent shorter than for vehicles with all-season tires,
- winter tires deliver better traction on an ice or snow-covered road surface at -30°C than all-season tires at 4°C.

Temperature is everything when it comes to winter tires. At temperatures of 7°C or lower, winter tires outperform all-season and conventional summer tires, as all-season tires start to harden and lose traction once temperatures fall below this threshold.

Monitoring tire pressure in winter months is particularly critical since tires can lose 1 psi for every 5-degree Celsius drop in temperature. During the cold-weather months, TRAC advises to measure tire pressure at least once a month using a reliable tire gauge.

About the Tire and Rubber Association of Canada

The Tire and Rubber Association of Canada (TRAC; www.tracanada.ca) is the national trade association representing tire makers, rubber products manufacturers and importers as well as rubber recyclers and suppliers of goods and services related to the industry. TRAC is committed to educating drivers about proper tire care and maintenance. A key advocacy goal in the cold-weather months is to raise awareness about safe winter driving and the safety and performance benefits of winter tires.