Protection for the Naked Eye: Sunglasses as a Health Necessity

Report Findings At-a-Glance

Americans are Leaving Their Eyes Exposed

- 1 in 4 Americans rarely or never wear sunglasses, leaving eyes at risk
- 2 in 3 Americans leave eyes unguarded on cloudy or rainy days
- 3 in 10 Americans don’t protect their eyes in the winter, when UV rays are still present

Most Adults are Outside when UV is Harshest on Eyes

- 58% of Americans spend the most time outdoors from 2PM-6PM, a peak UV time for eyes. Eyes are most at risk from 8AM-10AM and 2PM-4PM.

The dangers of unprotected UV exposure are underrecognized

- Sunburned eyes (58% don’t identify connection)
- Cataracts (65% don’t identify connection)
- Age-related macular degeneration (65% don’t identify connection)

More than 1/3 of Children’s Eyes Unprotected

- 33.7% Rarely/Never
- 24.8% Always/Often
- 41.5% Sometimes

33.7% of parents of children under 13 said their kids rarely or never wear shades. This is dangerous since children receive 3X the annual adult dose of UV and eyes are at risk with larger pupils and clearer lenses setting the stage for serious vision damage later in life.

Sunglass Use By Generation

- Millennials (born 1981-1996)
  - Least likely to report wearing sunglasses always or often (43%).
  - Less likely to use sunglasses for UV protection and more likely to use them to look good vs. GenXers or Boomers

- Generation X (born 1965-1980)
  - Majority often or always wear sunglasses, but habits are led by Gen X women (62% always/often wear shades)
  - 33% of Gen X men never wear shades

- Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964)
  - Half of all baby boomers always or often practice sun safe eye health (53%), but nearly 23% report rarely or never wearing shades
  - Boomers are more likely to know sources of reflected UV exposure (asphalt, snow, water)

- Beyond Boomers (born 1945 or earlier)
  - 58% state they often or always wear sunglasses.

Adults’ Use of Eye Protection Depends on the Activity

Most Often:
- Driving
- Walking
- Going to the Beach or Pool

Least Often:
- Running and Biking
- Gardening
- Team Sports

Most people choose shades for comfort over protection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comfort</th>
<th>UV Protection</th>
<th>Affordability</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Athletic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>89%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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Adults

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sunglasses</th>
<th>Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunglasses</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No UV Eye Protection</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reflected UV light is just as damaging as direct UV

- Water reflects up to 100%
- Snow reflects up to 85%
- Dry sand and concrete reflect up to 25%
- Grass reflects up to 3%

Source: Harris Poll on behalf of The Vision Council