

Research: Survey Shows Only 58 percent of Americans Are Protecting Their Eyes During Outdoor Sports and Activities

As spring approaches, more Americans take part in their favorite outdoor sports and activities. However, many are not taking easy steps to protect their eyes. In fact, almost half are not wearing sunglasses, which can lead to serious eye problems, including macular degeneration, sports injuries and even some cancers.

According to a national survey completed by [N3L](#), while 85 percent of Americans feel eye protection is a major component of their overall good health, less than two thirds are wearing eye protection consistently while outdoors, and only about a third of those age 18-24 do so.

The survey also found that one in 10 American adults has experienced an eye injury while participating in outdoor sports and activities. Men are twice as likely to have an eye injury than women. April is "Sports Eye Safety Month" and, according to the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#) (AAO), nearly 90 percent of sports eye injuries can be prevented.

Most people would never go out in the sun for an extended period of time without sunscreen and don't realize that their eyes need that same kind of UV protection. Sunglasses are the best way to prevent serious damage. The majority of those surveyed report worrying about their eye health, but nearly one in four do not know that sun exposure can cause eye cancer or cataracts.

Outdoor Activities and Use of Sunglasses

Survey respondents considered themselves to be active, with 76 percent walking for fitness, followed by participation in water sports (37%), hiking (35%), camping (33%), outdoor team sports (27%), and cycling (26%). Participation in outdoor activities was similar to a year ago, showing little impact due to the economy.

Of concern in some key sports categories, the survey found that more than 40 percent of runners and 35 percent of water sports participants do not consistently wear sunglasses during these activities, exposing their eyes to potential damage. Only 50 percent of men make it a priority to have the right sunglasses for their sport and for women, it's even less (33%).

Why don't more Americans Wear Sunglasses During Sports?

Clarity and fit and are the main reasons why many people don't wear sunglasses during their sport. Many people also have no idea there are frames and lenses out there that will enhance their outdoor experience while protecting their eyes. Advancements in sunglass technology have corrected these concerns, and there are now many sunglasses to choose from that don't slip, fog or impair vision outdoors.

Americans Feel Good in Sunglasses

Though safety and outdoor conditions are factors in choosing the right sunglasses, Americans definitely like to look and feel good as well. The survey found that 45 percent feel "confident" with their sunglasses on, and 42 percent feel "cool." More than a third feel "sporty" or "safe," and nearly that many feel "healthy."

Confidence peaked in New York, where more than half feel “confident” in their sunglasses. Coolness peaked in the southwest, where 57 percent feel “cool” in their sunglasses. “Sporty” was one of the top three feelings while wearing sunglasses in the northeast, southeast, and west.

Almost a third of women feel “glamorous” in sunglasses compared to only 10 percent of men, and more women feel “classic.” Men feel more “masculine,” “serious” and “rugged.”

Many associate sunglasses with iconic sports moments, and nearly 30 percent recalled Lance Armstrong winning the Tour de France as the most notable sunglass moment in sports.

About the Survey

In 2012, N3L Optics conducted a nationwide survey of adults to better understand behaviors and beliefs relating to sunglasses. The survey examined areas such as participation in outdoor sports and activities, use of sunglasses, health knowledge, and injury rates. The subject group was made up of 1,080 respondents from across the country between the ages of 18-54 years old. All respondents had purchased at least one pair of sunglasses during the last 24 months, and had participated in an outdoor activity within the past year. Additional data is available by gender, age group and sport.