

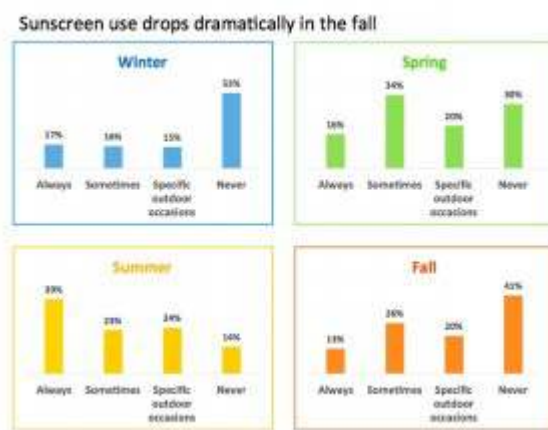
Perception a Key Factor in Sunscreen Habits: *IMPACT Melanoma Survey Finds Sharp Drop in Fall, Lower Use in South and Among African Americans*

A recent survey on sunscreen habits reveals that September is when most Americans put the sunscreen bottles away, a troubling statistic for organizations fighting the country's most common cancer – skin cancer.

[IMPACT Melanoma](#), a non-profit aimed at reducing the incidence of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, recently conducted an independent national survey of 1,016 adults inquiring about frequency of sunscreen application by season, sunscreen preference and opinions about free public sunscreen.

The poll was conducted to establish a deeper understanding of where education and awareness programs are most needed and to better inform IMPACT about public desire for and opinions about its [Practice Safe Skin](#) free public sunscreen dispenser program.

The results were in some ways anticipated with 86 percent of participants using sunscreen “always” or “sometimes” in the summer months. However, there were also some surprising findings, including a near complete reversal of use between summer and fall, lower use of sunscreen in Southern states despite the warmer climates, and a concerning lack of use among African Americans, even in summer months. Between summer and fall there was a drastic change in sunscreen use with participants reporting application rates of 39 percent “always” in summer and 41 percent “never” in fall, showing a misperception about the need for sun protection beyond June, July and August. This result is of particular significance as the City of New York recently launched a fall pilot program offering [free public sunscreen on Randall's Island](#).



In Southern States, where they receive as many as 246^[1] days of sun each year, only 35 percent of respondents said they use sunscreen “always” in the summer months, dropping to just 14 percent in winter months.

Summer sunscreen use is lower in the South and Midwest



The response from African Americans was of particular concern because a July 2016 [study](#) in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* showed it is more deadly in people of color. African American patients were most likely to be diagnosed with melanoma in its later stages than any other group in the study, and they also had the worst prognosis and the lowest overall survival rate. In contrast to the national response of just 14 percent “never” using sunscreen in summer, 32 percent of African American respondents chose “never” to using sunscreen in summer and 67 percent “never” in the winter. In response to why they would not use free public sunscreen, 9 African American respondents cited a lack of need specifically because of their race as a reason. African Americans accounted for 36 percent of those who said they don’t need sunscreen.

African Americans report less sunscreen use in all seasons*



* Participants who report at least some sunscreen use (“Always,” “Sometimes,” “For specific outdoor occasions”)

Other notable findings include:

- Men using sunscreen “always” in the winter shows a slight increase over fall, from 12 percent to 20 percent, whereas women remain the same at 13%.
- While the overall percentage of people who report “always” using sunscreen year-round is small (6 percent), women are twice as likely as men to report doing so (8 percent of women vs. 4 percent of men).
- 51 percent of survey participants said they would use free public sunscreen if it were available to them.

- Participants overall preferred a sport or water-resistant sunscreen (36 percent, on average) or a major brand (22 percent). Those in the Northeast and West were somewhat more likely to prefer an all-natural or organic sunscreen than those in the Midwest and South.

“This survey revealed a lot about Americans as it relates to the high rate of melanoma in this country. For IMPACT Melanoma, it is a call to action, showing where our education and awareness programs can be most effective and demonstrating desire for free public sunscreen throughout the country,” said Executive Director, IMPACT Melanoma, Deb Girard.

**For raw data, survey questions and methodology,
contact PracticeSafeSkin@impactmelanoma.org.**