

**News Release**

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**Survey Reveals Most Americans Know a Lot Less About Eye Health Than They Think They Do: Here’s Why That’s a Problem**

**#YearOfTheEye**

*[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] and the American Academy of Ophthalmology urge people to get smart about eye health in 2020*

**[INSERT CITY, STATE]** — **[INSERT DATE]** — A survey conducted by The Harris Poll has uncovered key gaps in American’s knowledge of eye health, and what they don’t know is putting them at risk of vision loss. With the number of people affected by potentially blinding eye diseases expected to double in the years ahead1, it’s critical that people better understand eye health. As the new year begins and people rededicate themselves to their health, [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] joins the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](https://www.aao.org) in urging Americans to get smart about eye health in 2020.

This survey was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in August 2019 among more than 3,500 U.S. adults age 18 and older. Here are some of the key findings:

* + While 81% of adults say they are knowledgeable about eye/vision health, less than 1 in 5 (19%) were able to correctly identify the three main causes of blindness in the U.S., which are [glaucoma](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-glaucoma), [age-related macular degeneration](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/amd-macular-degeneration) (AMD) and [diabetic eye disease](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/diabetic-eye-disease).
	+ Less than half (47%) are aware that vision loss and blindness does not affect all people equally.
	+ Only around one-third of adults (37%) know you do not always experience symptoms before you lose vision to eye diseases.
	+ Less than half (47%) are aware your brain can make it difficult to know if you are losing your vision by adapting to vision loss.

“Far too often, we witness the consequences of patients entering the ophthalmologist’s office too late to avoid severe vision loss,” said Anne L. Coleman, M.D., Ph.D., president of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. “In 2020, we want all Americans to have clear vision when it comes to eye health. That starts with educating yourself about eye diseases and visiting an ophthalmologist.”

[INSERT YOUR SPOKESPERSON’S QUOTE HERE]

Ophthalmologists are medical and surgical physicians trained to recognize all the potential threats to vision, which is why the Academy recommends that healthy adults see an ophthalmologist for a comprehensive, baseline eye exam by age 40 and have their eyes checked every year or two at age 65 or older.

The impacts of vision loss are also underappreciated. Another key finding showed that people are unaware that vision loss can also amplify the adverse effects of other chronic illnesses. Although the majority of adults (57%) are aware that vision loss in adults increases the risk for injury or death, only 1 in 4 (24%) know that vision loss in adults is associated with psychological problems such as social isolation and depression.

Study after study has shown that people fear vision loss more than they fear cancer, stroke, heart disease and other serious health problems. What this new study shows is that Americans are scared about an issue they know very little about. The year 2020, with all its symbolism with clear vision, is the year to change that.

For ophthalmologist-reviewed information about eye diseases and treatments, eye health news, and tools to locate an ophthalmologist, visit [AAO.org/EyeSmart](https://www.aao.org/eye-health).

**EyeCare America® Can Help**

If you are concerned about the cost of the exam, the American Academy of Ophthalmology’s EyeCare America® program may be able to help. This national public service program provides eye care through volunteer ophthalmologists for eligible seniors 65 and older; and those at increased risk for eye disease. To see if you or your loved ones are eligible, visit [www.aao.org/eyecareamerica](http://www.aao.org/eyecareamerica).

**About the Survey**

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Academy of Ophthalmology among 3,512 U.S. adults ages 18 and over between August 8 and 27, 2019. Data by race/ethnicity were weighted where necessary by gender, age, region, income, education, household size, marital status, employment, and specific eye conditions of interest to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. The data for each race/ethnicity group was then combined into a grand total to reflect the proportions of each race/ethnicity within the U.S. adult population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

**About the American Academy of Ophthalmology**

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is the world’s largest association of eye physicians and surgeons. A global community of 32,000 medical doctors, we protect sight and empower lives by setting the standards for ophthalmic education and advocating for our patients and the public. We innovate to advance our profession and to ensure the delivery of the highest-quality eye care. Our EyeSmart® program provides the public with the most trusted information about eye health. For more information, visit [aao.org](https://www.aao.org/).

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­­­US Eye Disease Statistics. American Academy of Ophthalmology. Retrieved December 3, 2019, from <https://www.aao.org/eye-disease-statistics>

 The Future of Vision: Forecasting the Prevalence and Cost of Vision Problems. Prevent Blindness. Retrieved December 3, 2019, from <https://www.preventblindness.org/sites/default/files/national/documents/Future_of_Vision_final_0.pdf>