



365 DAYS of SPF

2025 REPORT

Face the Future, the UK's fastest growing online skincare retailer, are back with their second annual '365 Days of SPF' Report, with a mission to highlight the importance of daily sun protection usage against skin cancer, but also from preventable accelerated signs of aging.

The report findings fuel Face the Future's '365 Days of SPF' campaign, which aims to share education on daily SPF usage, given the UKs current views on SPF.

The '365 Days of SPF' report showcases the UK's attitudes towards sun safety and protection - from everyday skincare habits, to what influences SPF purchases, to views on sun protection as we age.

The following report highlights findings from an independent YouGov survey of 2,081 people, commissioned by Face the Future in January 2025.



Face the Future Campaign

Julia Barcoe Thompson, Owner and Director, Face the Future, says:

"We started our 365 Days of SPF Campaign in 2024, to highlight the importance of wearing SPF in our everyday lives. As skincare educators in the industry, we saw that as our duty.

Previously, we found that from the 40% of the UK who wear SPF, they only buy it to wear when they go on holiday, that almost half of the UK (48%) were not familiar with the symptoms of skin cancer, and that shockingly only 22% of the UK apply SPF at least once daily.

After seeing these sobering results, it has furthered our desire to bring awareness to the masses about the importance of wearing sun protection 365 days of the year.

SPF is the most important step in any skincare routine, which is why we feel that continuing our campaign will help bring further education surrounding UVA/UVB protection to the UK and will hopefully promote a positive change in attitudes towards sun health. We strive to help the public understand how preventable sun damage can be.

As part of our annual campaign, we will be bringing back our 'Burn the VAT' initiative from April 2025. This will see Face The Future removing 20% from all products marked as SPF. This will include brands like Hello Sunday, Heliocare, Ultrasun, Bondi Sands, Saltee and more. Consumer feedback and sales showed that our 2024 SPF campaign influenced purchasing habits, as SPF sales increased significantly, with over 40,500 units sold in 2024 alone.

SPF is not a luxury, and we strongly believe that it is an essential item that should be VAT exempt. Since our 365 Days of SPF campaign first launched, I became a Trustee for the British Skin Foundation to support in making a difference to people's skin health and overall wellbeing. As a UK retailer, Face the Future continue to urge the government to consider VAT removal on SPF, as part of the fight against skin cancer."

The 365 Days of SPF campaign is backed by Jessica Zbinden-Wesbter, who was diagnosed with melanoma when she was just 26.

Jessica is now advocating for the removal of the 20% VAT on SPF products in the UK, as part of her #AxeTheSPFTax campaign.

Jessica says: "I've chosen to take what happened to me and to channel it into something greater than just being another statistic or another person who has had skin cancer, and I think, it's helpful to look in the mirror every day and see my scar. Skin cancer, melanoma is preventable in 9 out of 10 cases yet is also the most common form of cancer in the UK. When I found out that sunscreen was taxed as a luxury or cosmetic product it irked me to say the least because it makes it more expensive, but also because of the principle when I know that skin cancer prevention is not a luxurious act or a cosmetic pursuit, it is essential healthcare prevention."

JESSICA
ZBINDEN-WESBTER

JULIA
BARCOE THOMPSON



The Importance of SPF

Key UK Findings

Our 2025 survey has found that the most used step in the UK's skincare routine is a moisturiser over a solo sun protection product, with people more inclined to wear SPF if it's already in their skincare products or cosmetics.

There's still a shockingly high amount of the UK not applying SPF daily at all, and despite GP knowledge and TikTok creators sprouting information on skincare every day, people say they learn more from beauty brands and retailers about the importance of SPF.

This re-enforces our position to use our platform to educate and to also understand consumer behaviour.

- More of the UK prioritise moisturiser (32%) over the use of sunscreen (23%) as the most important step in their skincare routine.
- Almost half of the UK (45%) do not apply SPF daily/most days. 70% of the UK feel that VAT should be removed from sun protection products.
- Only 55% of the UK are aware that UVA rays are the leading cause of premature skin ageing, with only 20% strongly agreeing.
- The number one way to encourage daily use of sun protection is through SPF included in make-up/skincare products.
- Over two thirds of the UK (69%) say their opinion on SPF has become more important than when they were younger.
- The UK learn more about SPF from beauty brands (17%) and retailers (13%) over social media such as TikTok (8%).
- Most of the UK learn about sun protection from family (25%) and friends (20%) over GPs (14%).

Kimberley Medd, Head of Clinic, Face the Future:

"SPF is the one non-negotiable skincare step that everyone should be incorporating into their regime regardless of age, skin type or skin colour. No one is completely safe or protected against UVA/B damage without daily SPF use.

The sun emits harmful rays year-round, even on cloudy days. The UK's climate, which is often cloudy, and damp might suggest less sun exposure, and therefore the attitude of wearing sunscreen frequently is overlooked, leading to cumulative UV damage over time.

There are two types of sun rays that can damage your skin in different ways. UVB rays are responsible for sunburn while UVA rays can lead to premature ageing and the development of skin cancer.

Not everyone realises that while we're at low risk of sunburn in the UK most of the year, UVA rays are present year-round and are the main UV aggressor that we should be protecting our skin against daily, to help reduce accelerated fine lines and wrinkles (collagen depletion), protect against pigmentation/sunspots, discoloration and heightened skin sensitivity.

To ensure the face is fully protected, 2mg of product should be applied for every cm² of skin. This roughly equates to a full finger length. Failing to apply enough product can dramatically reduce the protection from your sunscreen.

The key to keeping skin protected and staying sun safe is re-application, with 2 hours offering the best efficacy. There is no substitute for the re-application of sunscreen, no matter how much a brand may try to convince you that their formula only needs a 'once a day' application."





Encouraging SPF Daily Wear

To encourage SPF as part of the UK's everyday skincare routine, we have found that multi-functional skincare products (e.g. having a SPF within a skincare product and/or make-up), broad-spectrum formulas and product affordability are the most influential factors in consumer behaviour.

- 70% of the UK feel that **VAT should be removed from SPF products**.
- The UK feel most encouraged to wear SPF daily is if it's included in **make-up/skincare products** (24%).
- 18% of the UK feel that a **government nationwide education campaign around the benefits of SPF** would encourage daily wear of SPF.
- Only 2% of the UK find **influencer recommendations** encourage daily SPF wear.
- 70% of the UK want SPF to have a **high sun protection factor** (e.g., SPF50).
- The UK's influence to purchase SPF is deemed in order of **affordability** (23%), **broad-spectrum protection** (e.g., SPF 50) (21%) followed by if it was endorsed by medical experts (17%).

Kimberley Medd, Head of Clinic, Face the Future:

"Many people in the UK favour wearing SPF daily if it's in their skincare or make-up products, to create multifunctional use. There are many sophisticated multi-purpose skincare products out there, but what's key is picking products that will have sufficient sun protection within, meaning no less than SPF 30, and ensuring that it is broad-spectrum."

UVA protection in the UK is the key understanding to protect the skin from premature fine lines and wrinkles, which we are more at risk of throughout all seasons, whereas summer is more closely tied to UVB protection (protecting against sunburn).

SPF should be a considered purchase, and Face the Future offer a wide range of SPF's at every price point utilising the many sophisticated formulations available today - from texture through to added ingredient benefits. It's important that consumers move away from type-casting SPF products to being too thick, leaving a cast on the skin and seeing them as not having added skin benefits."

UK Attitudes Towards SPF Benefits

The number one benefit of SPF is seen as reducing the risk of cancer, and just under half of the UK understand the importance of SPF as they age.

More of the UK want their SPF to provide hydration, which could suggest that they are more inclined to use an SPF if it's a hybrid skincare product. The point of hydration is more of a want over the anti-ageing benefits of SPF, showing there is education needed on how SPF and the signs of early on-set ageing go hand-in-hand.

- The number one benefit of sun protection wear in the UK is seen as **reducing the risk of skin cancer (72%)**.
- More of the UK are influenced to buy an SPF if it is **multi-functional** (e.g., included in make-up) (13%), over whether the sun protection is sustainable / ethically formulated (8%).
- 77% of the UK believe it's **important for people aged over 40 to wear sun protection**.
- Almost half of the UK (42%) say that **their opinion of SPF has become much more important than when they were younger**.
- More people in the UK **want their sun protection to provide hydration (40%)** over anti-ageing benefits (32%).
- 56% of the UK feel **sun protection should be cost-effective**, while 40% feel **formula consistency is important**, 32% feel it should **provide anti-ageing benefits**, and 22% feel it should have **anti-pigmentation benefits**.

Kimberley Medd, Head of Clinic, Face the Future:

"Whilst skin cancer is rightly still the number one reason to wear SPF, there are a multitude of protective benefits to wearing sunscreen that go beyond sunburn.

This includes minimising and protecting the skin from hyperpigmentation, sunspots, fine lines and wrinkles, accelerated collagen depletion, drier skin from no barrier protection and maintaining an even skin tone.

As we age, SPF doesn't become less important. In fact, many people tend to prioritise SPF more as they age, especially as they become more aware of the long-term effects of sun exposure.

As skin gets thinner and less resilient with age, it becomes more vulnerable to UV damage. When we're younger, we might not think too much about sun protection, but as we age, the consequences of not using SPF regularly—like wrinkles, age spots, and an increased risk of skin cancer—become more evident."





SPF Application

There is still work to be done in educating the UK's attitude on SPF application. In 2024, our results found that only 22% of the UK apply SPF daily, whilst a year later in 2025, almost half of the UK (48%) are applying sunscreen to their face daily.

Whilst this is a huge uplift with twice as many SPF daily wearers, there is still less than half of the UK wearing sunscreen every day.

Not even half of the UK are wearing SPF on their face most days, and more of the UK care for hydration over premature anti-ageing benefits of SPF, which could be a big reason why moisturiser is seen as the most important skincare item to apply.

- Almost half of the UK (45%) do not apply SPF daily/most days.
- Almost half of the UK (48%) do apply SPF to their face daily/most days.
- More people in the UK want their sun protection to provide hydration (40%) over anti-ageing benefits (32%).
- Almost twice as many people in the UK want lightweight/invisible formulas of sun protection (40%) over sun protection to reduce pigmentation (22%).
- Almost half of the UK (40%) want their SPF to provide hydration. Only 22% of the UK are looking at SPF for reducing pigmentation.
- Only 18% of the UK apply SPF to their hands daily/most days.
- People in the UK are applying SPF to their neck (26%) more than they are to their hands (18%) daily/most days.
- Only 12% of the UK apply SPF to their chest daily/most days.
- 70% of the UK want SPF to have a high sun protection factor.

Director and Co-Owner at Face the Future, Julia Barcoe-Thompson, says:

"Sun protection products come in many forms including lotions, creams, sticks, gels, oils, butters, pastes and sprays, so there is a wide variety of options when it comes to choosing an SPF product that works for you.

Sunscreen should be applied to all exposed skin including the face, neck and ears, and head if you have thinning or no hair. A lot of the frequently forgotten areas of application include the ears, nose, lips, back of the neck, hands, tops of feet, along the hairline and exposed scalp.

Sunscreen needs to be reapplied liberally and frequently, however, there is still a challenge to change the UK's SPF application to daily wear. Fair-skinned people are likely to absorb more solar energy than dark-skinned people under the same conditions and may be more likely to burn.

Sunscreens are made in a wide range of SPF (sun protection factor) levels, and the higher the SPF value (e.g., SPF 50), the greater the UV protection provided. Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen which protects against both UVB/UVA with at least an SPF of 30. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, applying SPF 30+ protects you from 97% of UV rays, while SPF 50+ from 98%. UVA rays can cause skin cells to age, linked to increase in wrinkles, and can cause some indirect damage to cells' DNA. UVA emitted in tanning beds emit three times more intensity than the UVA in natural sunlight."

SPF Intelligence

The importance of SPF in our daily lives is still lacking nationwide, and while there are many ways we absorb information, it seems that the UK listen and learn from their friends and family first.

Shockingly, more people learn about sun protection from retailers than they do social media – and this could perhaps come down to trust of information and authority from where they are making their SPF purchases.

There are hundreds of misleading influences online from celebrities and influencers sharing their spray tans, to influencers sharing their skincare routines missing SPF, to influxes of holiday vanity content where getting a tan is admired. Whilst SPF is not ignored when it comes to summertime and going on holiday, the messaging is not as present throughout the whole year.

- The UK learn more about SPF from beauty brands (17%) and retailers (13%) over social media such as TikTok (8%).
- Most of the UK learn about sun protection from family (25%) and friends (20%) over GPs (14%).
- The same percentage of the UK (8%) learn about SPF through Facebook as they do TikTok, with Instagram being the leading social media platform (11%).
- More of the UK learn about SPF from their friends (20%) than they do Dermatologists (17%).

Clinic Lead at Face the Future, Kimberley Medd:

"There are 5 W's of sun protection everyone should follow:

Who: All skin types and tones should wear SPF.

What: Wear a minimum of SPF 30 or higher.

When: SPF should be worn every day, even indoors, and reapplied every few hours depending on factors such as excess perspiration, UV exposure, physical activities/sports and post swimming and sauna use.

Where: all skin that is exposed or uncovered should have SPF applied – this includes the back of your ears, your hands, your neck and face as a minimum.

Why: SPF protects against skin damage and reduces your risk of skin cancer, a largely preventable form of cancer."





Burn The SPF VAT

Sun protection products are not a cosmetic or luxury pursuit, but an essential healthcare prevention necessity. Whilst most of the UK would be more likely to purchase SPF if it was more affordable and VAT was removed, there are still people who are unaware that VAT is even applicable to their SPF buys.

- 12% of the UK are unaware that SPF products are subject to VAT.
- 70% of the UK feel that VAT should be removed from SPF products.
- 39% of the UK feel they would be encouraged or influenced to buy SPF if it was more affordable.
- The UK's influence to purchase SPF is deemed in order of **affordability (23%)**, **broad-spectrum protection (e.g., SPF 50) (21%)** followed by if it was endorsed by medical experts (17%).

Kimberley Medd, Head of Clinic, Face the Future:

"As an overlooked essential part of your daily skincare routine, sunscreen keeps your skin shielded against the harmful effects of the sun, protecting against sun damage that can lead to skin cancer, however, it's still classed as a luxury item within the UK.

Currently, sunscreen is taxed as a cosmetic item in the UK, making it more expensive than it should be considered for its health and safety purpose. With keeping skin safe year-round important, removing VAT permanently from sunscreen is a step in the right direction to supporting affordability of the product and daily wear."

Julia Barcoe Thompson, Director at Face the Future, says:

"We believe that everyone in the UK has the right to sun safety and skin health education. Skin cancer and premature ageing that are caused by UV rays can be prevented if action is taken in. At Face the Future, we have SPF and sun care products at all price points, to ensure that we remain accessible to everyone.

However, to further support consumers in their choices, as part of the 365 Days of SPF campaign, we will be cutting VAT on all SPF products from April. We hope that this additional 20% saving will encourage UK consumers to begin or continue their SPF journey."

Contact Us

For further information or commentary from Face the Future about their 365 Days of SPF Campaign, please contact:

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