

# What Drives the Aesthetic Journey? A Survey of the Cosmetic Concerns for African-American Women

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## INTRODUCTION

The number of aesthetic procedures performed among African-American (AA) patients in the United States increased 43% between 2012 and 2019.<sup>1,2</sup> Although there has been a recent focus on understanding the motivations for aesthetic procedures among AA patients,<sup>3,4</sup> data specifically addressing the concerns of AA women remain limited. To better characterize the factors that prompt AA women to seek dermatologic consultation and pursue aesthetic procedures, we conducted a survey through a dermatology practice with a substantial AA patient population.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The IRB-approved, single-center survey included women of color, 20 to 80 years of age (Table 1), who were able to read and understand English and resided in Maryland and Washington, DC. Data were collected between September 13, 2021, and January 8, 2022, using a questionnaire administered via QuestionPro. Survey domains included demographics, beauty and skincare concerns, sunscreen usage, perceptions of skin aging, history of aesthetic procedures, and definitions of "natural" aesthetic results. Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel to assess frequency distributions, central tendencies, and variability.

## RESULTS

A total of 144 AA women completed the survey, with 53.5% between the ages of 41 and 60 years old. Among respondents, 65.3% reported a history of dermatologic or cosmetic procedures, while 24.0% of those who had not previously undergone a procedure indicated willingness to pursue one. Primary motivations for seeking aesthetic procedures included reducing signs of aging (62.5%), maintaining appearance as part of their lifestyle (50.0%), and enhancing self-confidence (43.8%). External influences, such as suggestions from others (14.6%) or social media/influencers (2.8%), were reported less frequently.

Regarding the responders' current facial and cosmetic concerns, the most frequently selected was hair loss (54.2%), followed by dark spots (51.4%), unwanted facial hair (49.3%), dark circles under the eyes (45.1%), and blotchy or uneven skin tone/color (43.8%) (Figure 1).

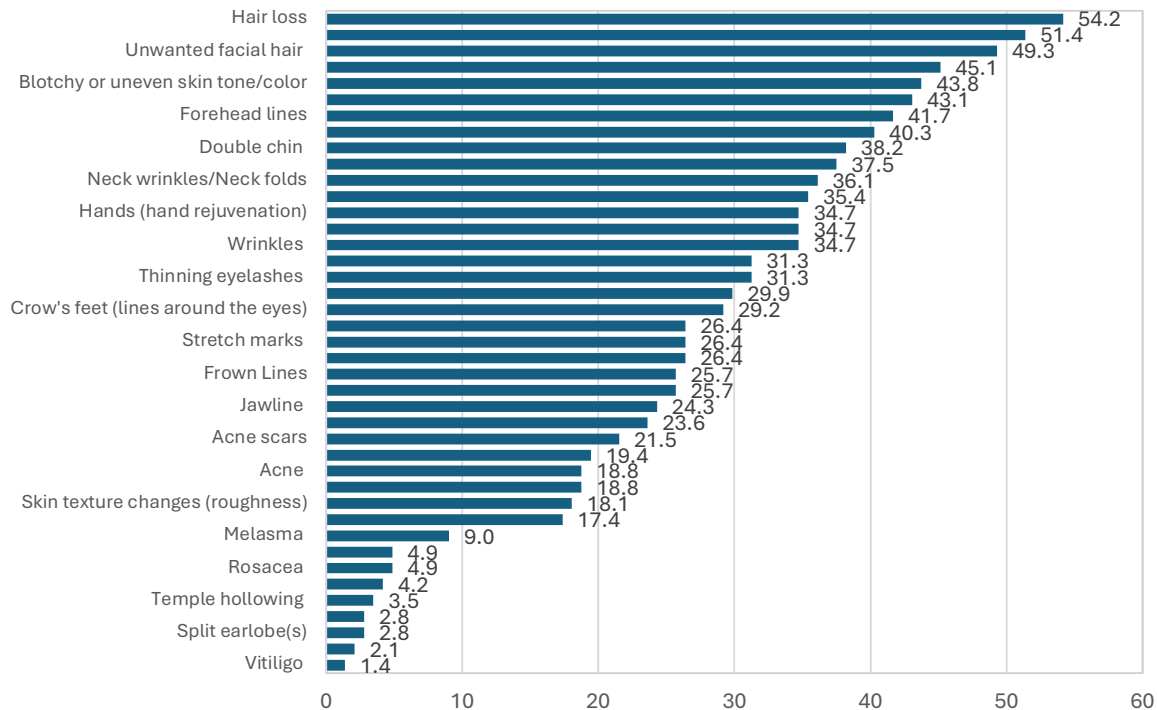
TABLE 1.

Demographics of Survey Respondents. (N=200).

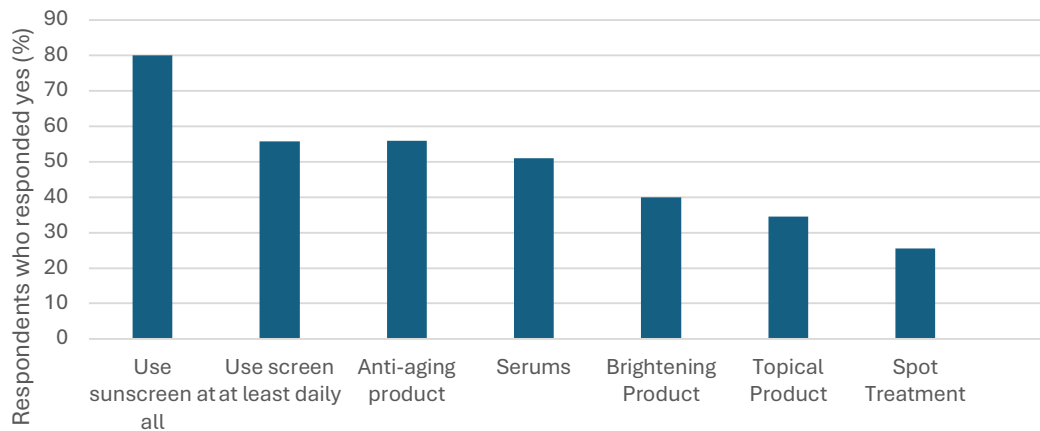
Ethnicity	No. (%)
Black/African-American	144 (100%)
Age Range	No. (%)
20-30	22 (15.3)
31-40	5 (3.5)
41-50	34 (23.6)
51-60	43 (29.9)
61-70	24 (16.7)
70-80	16 (11.1)
Marital Status	
Single (Never Married)	53 (36.8)
Married	53 (36.8)
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	38 (26.4)
Level of Education	
High school diploma or GED	4 (2.8)
Some college or 2-yr degree	21 (14.6)
Bachelor's degree	51 (35.4)
Graduate degree	68 (47.2)
Annual Household Income	
Less than \$50,000	10 (6.9)
\$50,000 - \$100,000	45 (31.3)
\$100,000 - \$150,000	42 (29.2)
\$150,000 or more	47 (32.6)
Current Residential Location	
Rural	1 (0.7)
Suburb	117 (81.3)
Urban	26 (18.1)

Notably, 59.0% of respondents reported current use of an anti-aging product in their skin care routine (Figure 2), and 50% of respondents believed that anti-aging products should be included in a regimen prior to the age of thirty. Most of the women (61.8%) were using or planning to use skincare products to maintain or boost a cosmetic procedure. Sunscreen use

**FIGURE 1.** Current facial and cosmetic concerns of respondents (N=144); x axis is percentage of respondents who selected item.



**FIGURE 2.** Skincare products included in the beauty routine of respondents (N=144).



was reported by 80% of participants, with 76% selecting SPF 30 or higher and 71% applying sunscreen multiple times per week. However, 34.7% expressed dissatisfaction with skincare products due to challenges in shade matching, citing issues such as a white cast from sunscreens.

**DISCUSSION**

While prior studies have identified acne and dermatitis as common reasons for dermatologic consultation among AA patients,<sup>5</sup> our findings suggest that hair loss and facial hyperpigmentation are primary concerns among AA women

seeking dermatologic and cosmetic care. These concerns may represent an entry point into the AA woman's aesthetic journey.

Findings from our study highlight that AA women are interested in treatments for hair loss and report it as their number one cosmetic concern. While there have been advancements in treatment options for hair loss, there is a lack of consensus data on the cosmetic procedures available for hair loss when medical management has not been successful. Hair restoration techniques also differ for this population given the clinical characteristics of curly or coily hair.<sup>6,7</sup> Our study elucidates the

utility of increased research and development of available and future cosmetic hair procedures.

Additionally, the principal motivations for these women to undergo an aesthetic procedure were based on their own desires to maintain a more youthful appearance and increase their self-confidence, with societal pressures having limited influence. This finding aligns with previous studies, which have found that patients undergoing cosmetic procedures are motivated by internal factors such as wanting to be more attractive and look younger for themselves rather than for other people.<sup>8</sup> Definitions of "natural" results emphasized maintaining authenticity and aging gracefully, with common responses being a need to "not look fake," and "look like myself," and "look the best I can look at my age."

Additionally, findings of this study underscore that, for AA women, proper skincare is an important factor in their aesthetic routine, with an understanding that skincare products are an essential pairing to complement an aesthetic or cosmetic procedure.

Furthermore, results from our study also illustrate that AA women want to use skincare products like sunscreen, but finding a matching tone has been a barrier to creating an ideal skincare regimen.<sup>9</sup> Recent published data emphasize the superiority of tinted mineral sunscreen for patients with skin of color, as iron oxides can decrease post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation by blocking visible light. Tint in mineral sunscreens also provides some protection against visible light, but also makes mineral sunscreens more cosmetically elegant by decreasing the appearance of a "white cast" on the face, which our study found is a barrier to some AA women being able to wear sunscreen.<sup>10</sup> This further supports the importance of continuing to offer a wide range of tones for sunscreen products.

While some results from this study support previous conclusions about motivations for and goals of obtaining a cosmetic procedure, the results of this study highlight the differences in cosmetic concerns in AA women compared with other ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup> These differences present an untapped market for innovation in cosmetic procedures that can be offered to AA female patients.

Limitations to the study include the small number of participants, the majority being from a single site and already under the care of a dermatologist, and fewer women represented in the younger age groups.

## DISCLOSURES

Janet Wangari Olivero, Ying Chen, and Qian Zheng are employees of L'Oreal Research & Innovation, USA. Dr. Callender disclosures: Advisory Board: Beiersdorf, Juenes Aesthetics, L'Oreal, Ortho Derm, SkinCeuticals; Consultant: Estee Lauder, LaRoche Posay;

Investigator: AbbVie, Avava, Eli Lilly, Eirion Therapeutics, Incyte, Janssen, Pfizer, Prolenium, Regeneron, Symatase, Teoxane; Speaker: Aerolase, Arcutis, Cutera, L'Oreal, Pfizer; Author and Royalties: UpToDate; Honorarium: Aerolase, Arcutis, Beiersdorf, Cutera, Juenes Aesthetics, LaRoche Posay, L'Oreal, Ortho Derm, Pfizer, SkinCeuticals, Estee lauder; Research Funding: AbbVie, Avava, Eli Lilly, Eirion Therapeutics, Janssen, Pfizer, Prolenium, Symatase, Teoxane, Regeneron. The remaining authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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**Data sharing statement:** Data are available upon request to the corresponding author.

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