

Quarter of partially-sighted have unmet needs

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Almost a quarter of people with severe sight loss in the UK are going without the treatment they need, according to a new study being presented at the World Congress on Public Health today.

Researchers examined data from a survey of more than 300,000 people aged 15 and over in 28 countries in Europe for the study, published in the journal *Acta Ophthalmologica*.

The study found that 26% of people across Europe reporting either blindness or severe [vision loss](#) had an unmet need for eye care—with this figure at approximately 23% for the UK.

The paper reports significant differences among EU countries in terms of the prevalence of overall severe sight loss amongst the general pop. These range from 0.86% experiencing vision loss in Ireland and Malta, to 6.48% in Belgium.

There was a generally higher prevalence of severe vision problems in Eastern Europe, with around 2.43% of the [general population](#) experiencing issues when compared to 1.25% in Northern

Europe, which includes the UK. The discrepancy widens when examining figures for the over 60s, where 6.34% of people in Eastern Europe reported severe vision loss, compared to 2.50% of the Western European population.

A total of 1.11% of the UK's general population self-reported severe vision loss issues, rising to 2.15% among the over 60s.

Poor health, [social isolation](#), smoking and poverty were associated with higher levels of self-reported severe vision loss.

Lead author, Professor Rupert Bourne of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) said: "We found self-reported severe vision problems in Europe were more frequently observed in the elderly, women, smokers and in those reporting greater social isolation.

"The higher prevalence in Eastern European countries could be partially explained by economic restrictions limiting access to eye care.

"Given that this study reports 26% of people with an unmet need for optical correction in Europe, efforts should be increased to address this requirement.

"While we had access to Europe-wide data, it is crucial that countries survey their population thoroughly to establish where the problems lie, and ensure people have access to the right care."

More information: Nicolas Leveziel et al, Self-reported visual difficulties in Europe and related factors: a European population-based cross-sectional survey, *Acta Ophthalmologica* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/aos.14643](https://doi.org/10.1111/aos.14643)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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