



# EYE HEALTH REPORT

20

23



CITY OF LONDON AND HACKNEY

**PHIT**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Timely vision care can prevent around half of blindness and sight loss cases and reduce health inequalities among different groups.
- Vision loss can impact a person's quality of life, mental health, educational attainment, mobility, level of independence, and cause difficulty when finding or keeping a job.
- In 2021/22, Hackney recorded lower incidence rates than the national average for all preventable sight loss indicators, except for glaucoma.
- In 2021/22, Hackney recorded 18 new Certifications of Visual Impairment due to glaucoma in populations aged 40 and over.
- In March 2020, around 3% of Hackney's population aged 65 and older were blind or partially sighted.
- Women, black and east Asian communities, individuals with learning difficulties, low-income households, and those residing in deprived areas are less likely to attend sight tests and more likely to experience sight problems compared to the broader population.
- Targeting some of the risk factors that are known to contribute to sight loss, such as staying physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, and quitting smoking, can help people maintain good vision into old age.
- Treating any eye condition as early as possible and taking steps to stop the disease progressing is very important in maintaining good eye health for longer.

# SIGHT LOSS IS PREVENTABLE

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Catching and treating vision problems in time could prevent 50% of all blindness and serious sight loss cases. (1) Losing sight can lead to a reduction in overall quality of life, poorer mental health, poorer educational attainment, loss of independence and mobility as well as difficulty in finding or keeping a job. (2) It can also worsen existing inequalities and widen the gap in health outcomes and quality of life between different population groups.

Targeting some of the risk factors that are known to contribute to sight loss can help people maintain good vision into old age - this is known as primary prevention. Public health prevention programmes targeted at reducing obesity, increasing exercise and stopping smoking can contribute to preventing or delaying the onset of eye diseases that lead to loss of eyesight. (2)

Improving access to eye screening tests and reducing inequities in testing and treatment can also reduce avoidable sight loss and enhance overall health and well-being outcomes for all. Treating any eye condition as early as possible and taking steps to stop the disease progression is very important in maintaining good eye health for longer - this is known as secondary prevention.



**Timely vision care can prevent 50% of blindness and sight loss cases**

# SIGHT LOSS IN HACKNEY

Local-level data on blindness and preventable sight loss in Hackney has been provided by the Office for Health Improvements and Disparities (OHID). (2) However, regrettably, data for the City of London is unavailable due to the City's small population size. As a result, we could not include data for the City in the below report. However, City of London values have been factored into England averages

## PREVENTABLE SIGHT LOSS

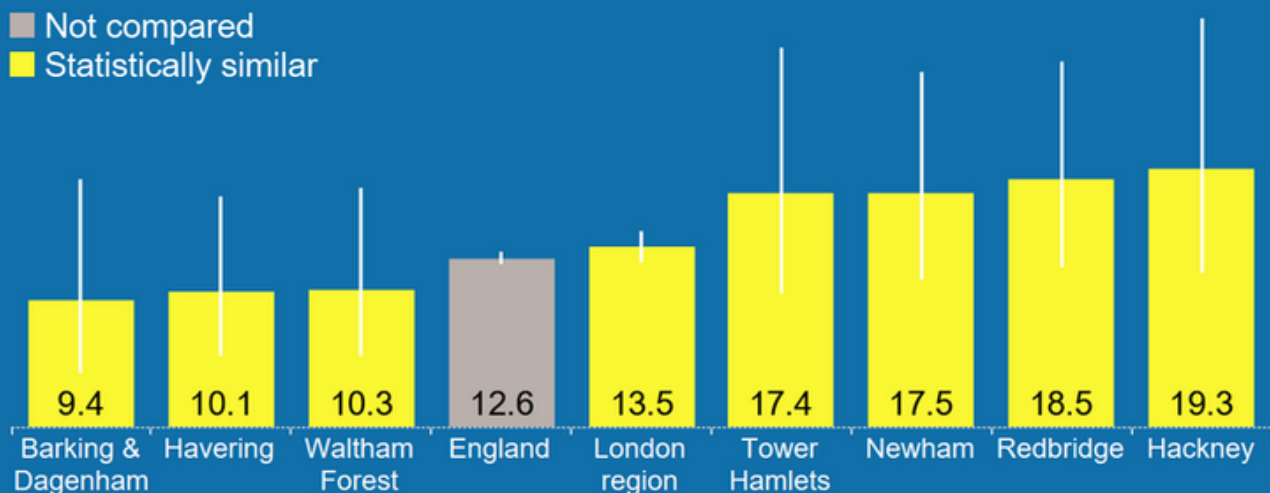
In 2021/22 period, Hackney recorded lower incidence rates than the national average for all preventable sight loss indicators, except for glaucoma:

**39** cases per 100,000 **Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)**  
Significantly lower than the national average of 122 per 100,000

**22** cases per 100,000 **Sight loss certifications**  
Significantly lower than the national average of 40 per 100,000

**2.7** cases per 100,000 **Diabetic eye disease**  
Slightly lower than the national average of 2.8 per 100,000

Rate of preventable sight loss from Glaucoma per 100,000 residents aged 40+ in Hackney, North East London Boroughs, London region and England, 2021/22



# PREVENTABLE SIGHT LOSS

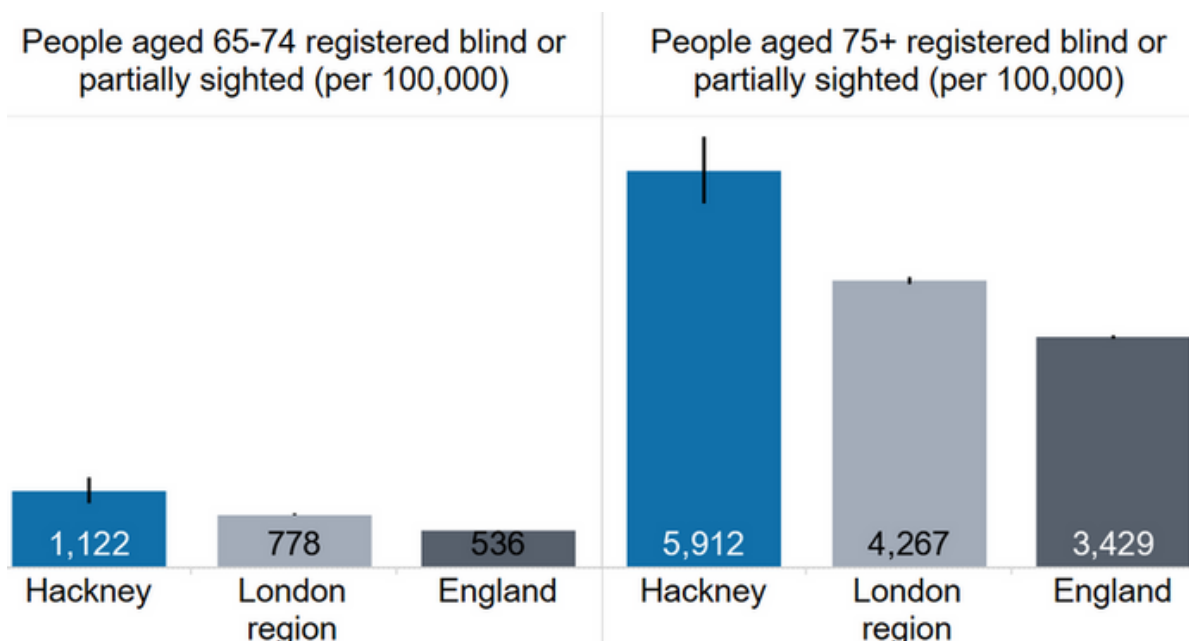
In 2021/22, Hackney recorded 18 new Certifications of Visual Impairment due to glaucoma in populations aged 40 and over. This translated to a rate of 19 cases per 100,000 population, which was higher than all other North East London (NEL) boroughs, and compared to a rate of 14 per 100,000 in London and 13 per 100,000 in England. However, these differences were not statistically significant.

It's important to note that the preventable sight loss rates shown have not been adjusted for age differences. Therefore, some of the variations seen in these measures compared to other areas may be due, at least in part, to differences in the age makeup of the population: in 2021 around 8% of Hackney's residents were under 65, compared to 12% in London and 18% nationally. (3) Other causes of differences include the socio-demographic makeup of the local population or the prevalence of different risk factors associated with glaucoma.

# REGISTERED BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED

As of March 2020, there were 685 blind or partially sighted people aged 65 and over living in Hackney, accounting for about 3% of the population aged 65 and older. This was statistically significantly higher than the regional and national averages.

**Number of people per 100,000 population registered blind or partially sighted by area, March 2020.**



# RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

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Adopting a healthy lifestyle by staying physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, and quitting smoking, for example, can play a crucial role in preventing or delaying sight loss.

## 01 — Physical activity



In 2021/22, Hackney had the highest rates of physical activity in the NEL region, while the City of London had the lowest. These rates were significantly above and below the national averages for England, respectively

Physical activity promotes eye health by enhancing blood circulation, reducing the risk of eye-related conditions linked to diabetes and hypertension, and decreasing the likelihood of age-related eye diseases, all while contributing to overall cardiovascular wellness. (2)

## 02 — Healthy weight



In 2021/22, the rates of overweight and obesity among adults in Hackney were the lowest in the NEL region and notably lower than the averages for London and England. The City of London had a similar obesity rate to the rest of London. However, childhood obesity in Hackney and the City was significantly higher compared to the national average.

Maintaining a healthy weight lowers the risk of conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure, which can harm the eyes. Obesity also leads to inflammation and oxidative stress, negatively impacting eye health. (2)

## 03 — Quitting smoking



In 2021/22, Hackney recorded slightly higher smoking rates than the average for NEL and London, at 14% compared to 12% and 13%, respectively.

Quitting smoking is essential for maintaining and improving eye health because it lowers the risk of various eye conditions and promotes better blood circulation and oxygen delivery to the eyes. (2)

# INEQUALITIES IN EYE DISEASE AND SIGHT LOSS

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Low take up of sight tests can lead to delayed detection of preventable conditions and increased sight loss due to late intervention. (2) Generally, it is recommended that people under the age of 16 undergo annual vision tests, while those over 16 should have them biennially, with some variability based on specific health conditions. (4) However, research shows lower-than-expected uptake of vision tests, with certain factors linked to reduced use and heightened risk of sight loss:

- About 1 in 5 people face the risk of permanent sight loss or blindness in their lifetime. For **women**, this risk is even higher, affecting nearly 1 in 4, compared to 1 in 8 men. (5)
- People from **black** and **east Asian communities** are at higher risk of developing glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, diabetic retinopathy and macular oedema. Language barriers and social isolation contribute to poorer health outcomes in these communities. (5)
- Adults with **learning disabilities** (LD) are ten times more likely to experience sight loss than the general population, and children with LD are 28 times more likely to have serious sight issues. Despite this, about 50% of adults with LD haven't had a sight test every two years (the recommended period), and 4 in 10 children in special schools have never had one. There is a high prevalence of risk factors like smoking, diet, physical activity, hypertension, and obesity in this group (5)
- People with low vision are more likely to be on a **lower income**, with studies showing that 48% of those with sight loss have a household income under £300 per week, compared to 19% without sight loss.
- In areas with **high level of deprivation**, there are higher rates of AMD, late presentation of glaucomas, diabetes and diabetic retinopathy, and lower rates of retinal screening. These issues may be attributed to funding structures, limited awareness about the benefits of eye exams, and negative perceptions of optometry related to glasses sales.

The lack of good quality data for primary care eye services makes evidence of links between access to eye services and deprivation difficult to analyse.

# USEFUL RESOURCES ON EYE HEALTH

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- [Hackney's Adult Social Care Services Sensory Team](#)
- [OHID Vision Profile](#) - includes data on outpatient indicators, procedures, sight loss outcomes and risk factors
- [ONS Vision profile statistical commentary, September 2023](#)
- [OHID Atlas of Variation online data tool](#)
- [NHS, Blindness and Vision Loss](#) - information sheet
- [National eye health week, September 2023](#) - includes eye health calculator and sight loss simulator
- [World Sight Day 2023](#)

## CITATIONS

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4. The College of Optometrists [Internet]. [cited 2023 Sep 19]. The routine eye examination ('sight test'). Available from: <https://www.college-optometrists.org/clinical-guidance/guidance/knowledge,-skills-and-performance/the-routine-eye-examination#Frequencyofeyeexaminations>
5. Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Atlas of variation in risk factors and healthcare for vision in England [Internet]. 2021. Available from: [https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/documents/VisionAtlas\\_v1.1\\_20210817.pdf](https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/documents/VisionAtlas_v1.1_20210817.pdf)