



**VISION OF  
BRITAIN**



by Optegra Eye Health Care

An insight to the nation's eye health







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# Introduction

By Rory Passmore  
UK Managing Director, Optegra Eye Health Care



Eyesight has long been regarded as one of the most vital human senses, a key to happiness, independence and opportunity. A key to living a fuller life.

So, it makes sense that new research has revealed nationwide concerns about protecting our sight. In fact, it is a worry for 81 per cent of British adults.

The Vision of Britain research, of which this report is a summary, has been commissioned to review the state of the nation's eye health and ensure we are taking the greatest care of this asset, as well as exposing any issues that will help improve the nation's vision.

As the UK's leading specialist eye hospital group, with over 100 consultants across seven hospitals, all dedicated purely to eye health, Optegra is well placed to commission and analyse this in-depth research. It includes input from our specialist ophthalmic surgeons, Eye Sciences research division, and third party supporters from the healthcare industry.

The Vision of Britain research has answered some important questions:

- Why are eyesight problems on the increase? A shocking 90 per cent of opticians say they see more eye health problems now compared to five years ago
- How do different age groups and UK regions care for and think about their eyesight?
- What role do GPs and opticians play in educating patients and treating eyesight?
- How does the well-documented demand on busy GPs impact on the medical or surgical response to eye problems? Two in five (40 per cent) GPs say they need more, or refresher, training on all eye conditions
- How do British attitudes to life – age, technology and expectations – impact on our vital senses?

This report also unveils specific concerns, particularly amongst the medical community, regarding eyesight in the working environment.

From treatment pathways and knowledge around particular conditions, to everyday care of our eyes and the impact of modern lifestyle, this report exposes the truth about British vision.

The answers to these questions and exploration of the surrounding views are both insightful and thought provoking. But the real question remains – is the state of our nation's vision and the deficit of knowledge around our eyes preventing the UK population from securing the best possible eyesight and truly living a fuller life?

# Welcome

By Dr. Sarah Jarvis  
General Practitioner and Medical Broadcaster



It was all going so well. And then, almost overnight, I found myself squinting at the small print. I could ignore the wrinkles or the odd grey hair – but I couldn't ignore the fact that my eyesight wasn't quite what it was.

As a doctor, I am only too well aware of the need for regular eye checks – if nothing else, I plan to make quite certain I don't become a casualty of glaucoma. This condition causes raised pressure inside the eyeball, and untreated can lead to sight-threatening damage to your eyes. But without regular eye checks, you might not know you have it until it's too late.

I also know how few of my patients understand the importance of regular eye checks. More than two thirds of opticians in this report said they have heard patients say they don't need to go for an eye test unless they are experiencing problems with their eyes.

But as a GP, I'm also only too well aware of how little training I had in dealing with eye problems. I learnt about the 'red flags' – double vision, flashing lights, floaters, the painful red eye. I know that wearing glasses doesn't weaken your eyes; that excess sunlight contributes to eye disorders like macular degeneration; that spending long periods in front of a computer won't damage your vision, but it can cause headaches and eye strain.

But I learnt far less about the everyday problems that affect so many patients – dry, gritty eyes, short or long sight. I don't have special equipment in my practice to measure the pressure inside the eyeball, or a slit lamp to get a really detailed view of every part of the eye. **In fact, I probably fall into the same category as the 38 per cent of GPs who said eyes are the most difficult part of the body to diagnose.** This compares to 10 per cent stating ears are most difficult, eight per cent stating the heart and four per cent saying lungs. That's why I, and all my GP colleagues, rely so heavily on the expertise of our optician and specialist eye surgeon colleagues.

We only have one pair of eyes, and as this fascinating survey shows, we worry dreadfully about losing our eyesight. But all too many of us don't worry enough to take simple steps like getting regular eye checks even when we don't have symptoms.

**More than three in five opticians said the nation has a serious lack of knowledge around eye health, while 25 per cent said their patients generally delay coming to see them with eye problems.**

Our eyes are precious, but good eye care can help prevent sight-threatening problems, or pick them up at an early stage when complications can be prevented by treatment.

We should learn from the findings of this important report, and put the healthy eye tips it promotes into practice – wearing sunglasses to protect our eyes, taking regular breaks from focused work and, most importantly, getting our eyes checked at least every two years.

Let's stop neglecting one of the most important parts of our body and give our eyes the priority they deserve.

## Executive summary

Optegra Eye Health Care commissioned the **Vision of Britain report with independent research conducted in July 2015 by Censuswide. The aim was to quantify the nation's eye health and highlight ways of improving our vision.**

Interviews were conducted online with 2,016 adults aged 16 or over throughout the UK, 50 GPs and more than 50 opticians.

**The Vision of Britain report reveals that many GPs lack confidence in diagnosing eye conditions.**

The new research shows that over a quarter of British adults would first seek medical help from their GP if they had a sudden eyesight problem. Yet two in five GPs feel less confident in diagnosing eye conditions than any other part of the body.

### Did you know?

**An eye is composed of more than two million working parts.**

**Alarmingly, more than three in 10 GPs feel 'de-skilled' in diagnosing eye conditions, indicative of the workload strain on GPs.**

Where does this leave the British patients who rely on their GP for treatment?

**Vision of Britain has also provoked food for thought across all the ages.**

Only half of young people aged 16–24 years know that those under 18, or in full time education, are entitled to a free eye test.

For those in their working years, the pressure to commit to long hours and the reliance on technology is taking its toll.

Furthermore, three in 10 UK adults don't even know if they are eligible for their employer to pay for their eye test.

In retirement, 91 per cent of Britons said that having an active life makes them feel younger. Yet one in five retirees said deteriorating vision has stopped them from leading a full and active life.

As our expectations rise and our years in retirement increase, there is a demand for our eyes to keep up.

**Overall, eye problems are on the increase in the UK.**

Almost three quarters of GPs and opticians said they see more eye health problems now compared to 10 years ago.

The importance of regular eye tests cannot be emphasised enough. Both GPs (24 per cent) and opticians (22 per cent) cite lack of regular eye tests as one of the biggest causes of eye health problems.

And one in five GPs consider technology to be one of the biggest causes of eye health problems.

Along with an ageing population, wider health issues are having an impact on sight.

One optician says people are reluctant to pay for eye check-ups until something goes wrong and another says it is because people have poorer diets and lifestyles.

Almost all – 99 per cent of GPs and opticians – agreed that the alarming increase in obesity and diabetes is likely to cause more eye problems in the future.

**A shocking lack of knowledge amongst the general public also means Brits are putting up with poor eyesight on a daily basis.**

Indeed, 77 per cent of opticians said they have heard patients incorrectly say you have to wait for a cataract to be 'ripe' to remove it.

Optegra's report, Vision of Britain, aims to correct these myths as well as present new findings on eyesight when considering the home and work environments, demands on different age groups as well as the impact of technology.

## Eye health facts

**Almost two million people in the UK live with sight loss and it is estimated that by 2020, the following numbers will live with serious sight-threatening conditions<sup>1</sup>:**

Cataract	731,682
Wet Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)	468,741
Dry AMD	226,952
Early stage AMD	2,928,172
Diabetic retinopathy	1,185,778
Diabetic maculopathy	4,234,920
Glaucoma	618,403

Source: RNIB Sight Loss Data Tool 2014

Vision of Britain has discovered that while short and long sight are less serious, they are of great concern:

- One in seven British adults (14 per cent) worry about their eye health all the time
- Four in 10 adults (39 per cent) and almost half of 45–54 year olds describe their poor vision as annoying
- One in 10 men who wear glasses would go so far as to describe their poor vision as a 'disability'
- 69 per cent of people in the UK wear glasses and 13 per cent wear contact lenses<sup>ii</sup>

Despite statistics showing cataracts will affect one in three British adults in their lifetime<sup>iii</sup> 22 per cent of GPs interviewed did not know that patients can reduce their reliance on glasses or contact lenses in one procedure, whilst having their cataract removed.

**Take action: In all instances, from a sudden change in vision to natural age-related degeneration, action rather than avoidance is the best route forward. Visit your optician to discuss any concerns.**

**What are the most commonly presented eye problems?**

Dry eyes	62%
Infection	52%
Red eyes	36%
Diabetes-related eye conditions	35%
Short or long sight	34%
Itchy eyes	24%
AMD	24%
Glaucoma	16%
Other	4%
Foreign body in eye	2%

Base: GPs and opticians

Vision of Britain reports that, according to opticians and GPs, the four main vision changes that people should be most concerned about are:

- Sudden loss of vision (92 per cent)
- Double vision (79 per cent)
- Flashes and floaters (72 per cent)
- Distorted vision (65 per cent)

**Dolores Conroy, Director of Research for UK charity Fight For Sight, said:**

"This survey highlights the wide range of eye conditions that can severely affect people's sight. Unfortunately, as this data shows, that number is only set to grow. With so many people at risk of losing their sight it is vital that we continue to fund the medical research to prevent sight loss and develop new treatments."



# Hard working eyes

**Vision of Britain can reveal that one in ten GPs believe long working hours is the biggest cause of eye health problems, while 20 per cent say over-use of technology is to blame.**

Research combining both full-time and part-time figures reveals that British adults work on average 32 hours and 48 minutes a week. And on average men work six hours longer than women.

Full time figures from the TUC state adults work an average 43.6 hours a week.

## Worst industries

(longest working hours per week):

IT & Telecoms work an average

**38 hours 12 minutes**

HR works on average **38 hours**

Manufacturing industry records average

**37 hours 42 minutes**

## Best industries

(shortest working hours per week):

Arts & Culture **28 hours**

Retail & Catering **28 hours 48 minutes**

Education **30 hours**

**Do these long working hours affect our vision?**

**Leading ophthalmic surgeon and Optegra Medical Director, Mr. Robert Morris says:**

“This many hours in a work environment can cause challenges to eye health from a reduced rate of blinking when using computer screens, to air conditioning drying out eyes, to bright strip lighting causing headaches; and simply not taking breaks from close-distance focusing. Eyes need a rest!

“If you have difficulties with your vision at work it is important you see an eye care professional, which in the first instance will usually be your optician.”

On average in the UK only 50 per cent of employees are encouraged to take short breaks. The IT and telecoms sector sets a strong example as 67 per cent are being encouraged to take regular breaks.

## Did you know?

**Seeing is such a big part of everyday life that it requires about half of the brain to get involved.**

## A nation suffering work-related eye strain

Mr. Morris continues: “By far the greatest challenge at work is eye strain from too many hours focused on computer screens, tablets and smartphones. Vision of Britain has identified that **over three quarters (77 per cent) of UK adults say their eyes feel strained after a long day at work.**

“The IT and telecoms industry is most at risk as more than 90 per cent of adults working in that industry say their eyes feel strained after a long day at work. And six in 10 GPs and opticians think working in the IT and telecoms industry is more likely to lead to eye health problems.

“It is concerning that so many younger people are suffering; four out of five 25–34 year olds say their eyes feel strained after a long day at work.”

Worryingly, the research shows that despite their eyes showing signs of strain, only a quarter of Britons (27 per cent) would go for an eye test straight away.

Experts state that symptoms can be more apparent in those wearing contact lenses.

Also people in their mid 40s who do not yet need reading glasses may be helped by computer glasses and should see their optician for advice.

## When time's short, your eyes suffer

Vision of Britain reveals that 17 per cent of UK adults do not have regular eye tests due to lack of time; while 23 per cent simply forget or never think about it.

The worst culprits are those working in retail & catering – 32 per cent say they do not have time for eye tests, closely followed by 30 per cent of those working in education.

## GP Dr. Sarah Jarvis says:

“With busy working lives, I find that many patients say it's hard to find time to look after their health. Regular exercise and healthy eating are early casualties of a pressured lifestyle. But so are routine health checks – and that includes regular eye checks, which are vital to detecting early signs of potential problems.

“Damage for a number of eye conditions is irreversible if left untreated, so it is important to keep up with regular tests.”

## Brits missing out on free eye checks

**TOP TIP: UK Health and Safety Regulations state employees should have free eye tests if they regularly use display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal work i.e. daily, for continuous periods of an hour or more.**

Vision of Britain reveals poor awareness of this.

Three in 10 (28 per cent) UK adults simply don't know if they are eligible for their employer to pay for their eye test.

Awareness varies greatly around the country. Almost half (47 per cent) in Portsmouth, while only a fifth (20 per cent) in Sheffield do not know if they are eligible.

A further eight per cent of UK adults say they are eligible for their employer to pay for their eye test, but their employer does not pay. This rises to more than a fifth (21 per cent) in the IT and telecoms industry and more than a third (38 per cent) in the finance industry.

More should be done to ensure these vital eye checks are taking place.

**Take action: Don't delay – find out today if you are eligible for a free eye check through your employment. Be proactive as employers may not offer to pay for an eye test unless you ask.**



# Home and family

The new Vision of Britain research shows 79 per cent of men worry about their eyes, as do 83 per cent of women.

Another recent study<sup>iv</sup> has found that 85 per cent of people said they would rather lose their sense of taste or hearing than go blind.

Furthermore, 67 per cent said they would rather reduce their life expectancy by 10 years than lose their eyesight.<sup>v</sup>

So how does this worry translate through to behaviour?

## Brits could do more to protect their eyes

Despite sight being so precious, we do not care for our eyes as well as we could:

- 44 per cent of UK adults do not go for an eye test at least every two years, as recommended by The College of Optometrists
- 66 per cent do not always wear sunglasses to protect eyes in bright sunlight
- Over half (52 per cent) of women do not always remove eye makeup at the end of the day
- Seven in 10 UK adults do not take regular breaks from focused work such as using a computer or driving
- Only a quarter of people wash their hands after travelling on public transport

And if we are neglecting our own eye health, what about our children? Are we failing – through lack of time or awareness – to take advantage of the free eye tests that all children under 18 are entitled to in the UK?

## Richard Walsh, resident optometrist at Optegra Eye Hospital London, says:

“It is easy with our busy lifestyles to let things slip. But sleeping in contact lenses or not cleaning eye make-up off before bed can lead to eye infections.

“It is so important to practise good hygiene and take good care of your eyes, and young people especially need to set good habits now. Amongst 16–24 year olds who wear contacts, 22 per cent sometimes wear them to bed, 23 per cent of this age group admit to wearing make-up to bed, over half (53 per cent) share make-up and 78 per cent read in poor light.

“This poor practice could be why we see such a high level of eye infections in this age group, and 90 per cent of my fellow opticians agree we see more patients overall now than just five years ago. We really want young adults to break these bad habits now.

“More than two thirds (65 per cent) of opticians said they have heard patients say they don’t need to go for an eye test unless they are experiencing problems with their eyes.

“However, the earlier changes are detected, generally the better placed we are to prevent further degradation. By the time a patient is aware of a problem, quite often significant damage has been done. Opticians are perfectly placed to detect changes before this occurs and take the necessary action to treat it promptly.”

**TOP TIP:** A post-it note on your bathroom mirror can remind you to remove make-up when you clean your teeth.

## Struggling to see?

According to Vision of Britain research, daily life highlights when we have vision problems.

British adults are struggling to see:

Food packaging details	27%
Text messages	18%
Newspaper print	17%
TV	12%
Sign posts when driving	11%
Screen reader when paying with card	10%
Prices in the supermarket	10%
The car in front when driving	5%
The cinema screen	5%

## Mr. Robert Morris, Medical Director for Optegra, says:

“So many patients come to us with these types of problems and explain how poor vision affects their day to day activity, and how life is transformed once their treatment is complete.

“At Optegra we are committed to providing the right course of action for each individual, be it prevention of eye disease, a specific eye treatment, improving sight or preventing deterioration of eye disease.”

## Where British adults seek help

When looking into where British adults turn if they have an eyesight problem, only a third of adults (34 per cent) let their optician know of any changes to their vision.

Asked where they would go if they had an urgent sight problem, the top three places UK adults would visit are: their optician (39 per cent); a GP (26 per cent) and A&E (23 per cent).

One in 20 British adults (5 per cent) said that if they had a sudden eyesight problem, they would phone NHS Direct.

While a quarter of adults go to their GP first with an eye problem, in fact 40 per cent of GPs feel they need refresher training and 38 per cent say the eyes are the hardest part of the body to diagnose.

When selecting a location for eye surgery or treatment, over a half of UK adults (59 per cent) said the most important thing when choosing a clinic to have eye surgery or treatment is the ability to solve multiple problems. In effect, any other eye issues uncovered would be dealt with immediately and not get worse over time.

## General Practitioner, Dr. Sarah Jarvis, responds:

“It is typical for people to panic and go straight to A&E, but in fact they cannot directly help. Instead they refer to their resident ophthalmologist. Rather than a quarter of the nation rushing to A&E, they would be better to go straight to an eye hospital or optician.”

**Take action:**  
Give your eyes the attention they deserve – keep them clean, rest them and protect them from bright sunlight.



## Eyes: the windows to the soul

Vision of Britain examined the deep-rooted link between how we see ourselves and our self-confidence, with interesting results connecting the two.

A substantial 72 per cent of all UK adults felt that a change in image could lead to increased confidence.

And eyes are particularly highly regarded by British women; 48 per cent say eyes are important for expressing yourself and 41 per cent think eyes are the windows to the soul.

### Beauty in the eye of the beholder?

Across the UK, Vision of Britain revealed three in 10 adults feel judged on how they look; particularly within the 16–24 year old age group, where 49 per cent feel judged.

More than a third (36 per cent) of women said they feel judged on how they look compared to 22 per cent of men.

Furthermore, the research found that one in six Brits (16 per cent) said wearing glasses would make them lose confidence. This rose to a quarter (26 per cent) amongst 16–24 year olds.

As a result, a fifth of UK adults (21 per cent) have improved their confidence by changing their image.

When examining how, twice as many UK adults (18 per cent) selected surgery to be free of glasses over cosmetic surgery (nine per cent).

This figure rises to almost a quarter (22 per cent) of British adults aged 25–34 saying they would consider eye surgery to improve their image.

Cosmetic eyelid surgery, or eyelid lift, is one of the most popular surgical treatments for both men and women.

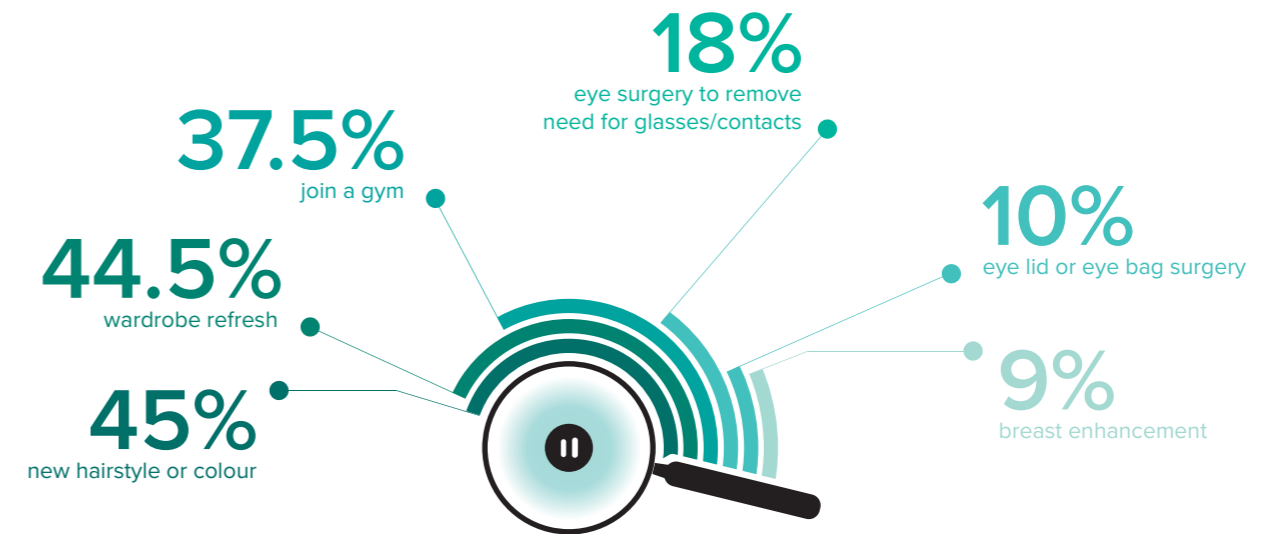
Tatler magazine wrote in their Beauty and Cosmetic Surgery Guide, “If you only have one anti-ageing operation, an eyelid lift is the one to choose.”

A heavy skin fold on the upper eyelid can also contribute to the sensation of feeling tired and wanting to close your eyes.

**Mr. Richard Caesar, oculoplastic surgeon at Optegra Eye Hospital London, and voted “best for eyes” by Tatler magazine Beauty and Cosmetic Surgery Guide, says:**

“When I see my patients following a cosmetic eyelid lift, while they are delighted with the appearance, they can be equally delighted with the removal of the tired, heavy, dragging sensation.”

## The top ways UK adults choose to improve their image:



### GP Dr. Sarah Jarvis, says:

“First impressions count, and many of my patients who wear spectacles tell me that they feel pigeonholed by their glasses. Of course, these days glasses can be a fashion statement, but the vast majority of people don’t have to wear them if they really affect their confidence.”

“The plethora of versions of contact lenses can suit most people, and laser eye surgery, positively routine today, is something we couldn’t have dreamed of just a couple of decades ago.”



## Debunking the myths

There are many myths and misconceptions around eyes, some of which are holding people back from having potential life-changing treatment.

- **MYTH:** Wearing someone else's glasses will damage your eyesight; but 53 per cent of UK adults think this is true
- **MYTH:** Sitting too close to the TV will damage your eyes; yet nearly half (48 per cent) of UK adults think this is true
- **MYTH:** The eye is full size from birth; a fifth (22 per cent) of adults mistakenly believe this
- **MYTH:** Wearing glasses too much will make your eyes dependent on them; however a third (32 per cent) of 16–24 year olds think this is true

Of even greater concern are the myths heard by opticians across the UK:

- **MYTH:** More than two in five (41 per cent) opticians have heard patients say cataracts are removed by taking the whole eye out. Again, this is wrong

**Sundeep Kheterpal, consultant ophthalmic surgeon for Optegra, says:**

“We feel it is important to set the record straight: a cataract can be removed at any stage if it significantly impairs vision or a person's lifestyle. Historically, and potentially to help with waiting lists, patients are told it is ‘too early’ or that their cataract is ‘not ready’ or that it has to be ‘ripe’; but this is a disservice.

“The cataract can be removed and treated as soon as diagnosed if the individual wishes and by removing it the surgeon feels that the improvement in vision will be of benefit.”

**Take action:**

Don't let the myths hold you back from seeking treatment. Speak to an optician or visit [www.optegra.com](http://www.optegra.com) to read the facts about treatments and surgery options using the latest technologies.

# 53%

of opticians and GPs have patients who think children will have bad eyesight if their parents do





## Age and expectation

The Vision of Britain research captures how adults are challenging the boundaries of age. No longer are 50 year olds or 80 year olds boxed into particular lifestyles and expectations. Personal ambition and determination are dictating behaviours, and there is a demand on our bodies to physically 'keep up'.

**Across all age groups, the majority of British adults (68 per cent) feel younger than their actual years. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of over 65s feel six to 10 years younger than their age.**

In fact one fifth (20 per cent) of over 65s feel 11–15 years younger than their age.

### Active lifestyles – can our eyes keep up?

In line with this younger attitude and expectation, the new Optegra research indicates a trend to make the most out of life, particularly in our older years. This is reflected in our enthusiasm for new hobbies:

- Amongst retired people, 92 per cent state that having an active life makes them feel younger
- Two in five (41 per cent) have taken up at least one new hobby since retiring

- Just under two in five (43 per cent) British adults aged 65 plus said they would consider travelling in their retirement, while one in five (20 per cent) would consider swimming and 14 per cent would consider taking up dance
- Of those who have not taken up new hobbies, one in five (21 per cent) said it is because they do not have the time and 54 per cent said it is because they already have too many hobbies

So life does not appear to get any less busy as we age.

However, one in five (21 per cent) retired British adults said that deteriorating vision has stopped them from leading a full and active life. And this finding is supported in the medical community:

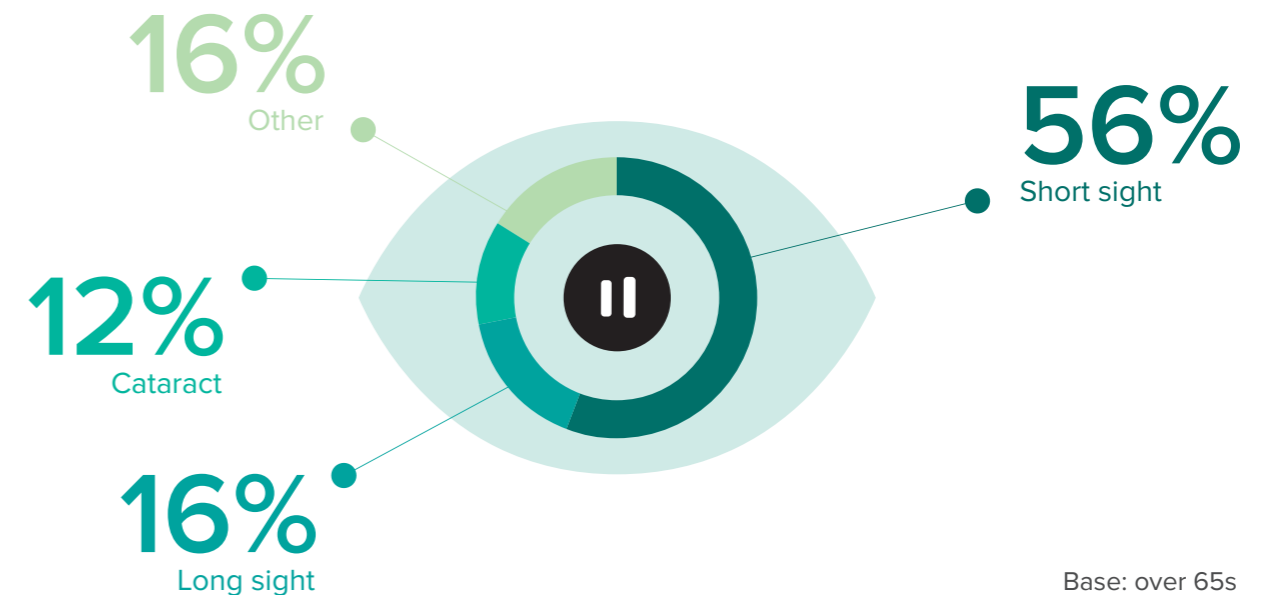
**An overwhelming 94 per cent of GPs felt that deteriorating vision has stopped their retired patients from leading a full and active life. Nine in 10 (93 per cent) opticians agree.**

Yet when Vision of Britain explored which specific vision problems were causing this detrimental effect on lifestyle, it was not the serious, medical eye conditions such as glaucoma (cited by seven per cent), retinal problems (seven per cent) or Age-related Macular Degeneration (one per cent); but rather it is caused by regular long or short sight.

### Take action:

**If you are over 60, you qualify for free eye tests. Book an appointment today to get professional advice on all the options available to get the most out of your sight. Also, get familiar with the symptoms of cataracts as this can affect vision for one in three over 65s.**

## Amongst the over 65s, the key conditions stopping them living a full life were:



### Mr. Robert Morris, Medical Director for Optegra Eye Health Care, says:

“It is with a mixture of relief and frustration that Vision of Britain has revealed this trend – that such a high percentage of people interviewed are letting long and short sight stop them in their tracks.

“With so many vision correction solutions, patients should wear appropriate spectacles or contact lenses but also be aware that there are excellent vision correction solutions from laser eye surgery to lens replacement or cataract surgery – these issues can be remedied quickly and life can be lived to the full again.

“For people over 50 who may also be starting to suffer with cataracts, as one in three in the UK is expected to do, lens replacement can resolve all of these issues – long or short sight plus cataracts in just one procedure. Yet two thirds (62 per cent) in this age group are not familiar with this operation.”

### Naturally ageing eyes

GPs and opticians interviewed by Optegra stated that healthy vision naturally starts to deteriorate on average just before people turn 47 years old.

With increasing life expectancy, this can lead to many years with less than perfect vision.

And with 37 per cent of over 65s saying they struggle to read food packaging and 16 per cent finding both newspaper and text messages hard to read...perhaps the time to test is now?



## Tech trouble

Vision of Britain research reveals that two thirds (63 per cent) of opticians and 28 per cent of GPs have seen an increase in eye problems over the past five to 10 years.

The core lifestyle change in that period is technology, creating a level of demand on our eyes both at home and at work beyond anything previously experienced.

Indeed one in five (19 per cent) GPs and opticians see technology as the one of the biggest causes of vision problems.

We have gone from barely any computer and small screen contact in the early 1990s to British adults now spending on average three hours a day looking at a smartphone, and six hours a day looking at a computer screen or tablet.

**Three quarters (75%) of UK adults think that an increased reliance on technology has a damaging effect on eyes.**

Despite this, **85 per cent** spend between one and nine hours a day on a computer screen or tablet.

Women spend more time on smartphones than men; 3 hours 18 minutes a day compared to 2 hours 24 minutes.

One in 10 (12 per cent) of 16–24 year olds state they spend 12+ hours looking at a smartphone every day.

**Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon for Optegra Eye Health Care, Mr. Robert Morris, says:**

“It is a myth that tablets, PlayStations and computers damage eyes – they don’t. But because we are concentrating on the screens we only blink three or four times a minute, rather than the normal 20 to 30. This means eyes are at risk of drying.

“We often hear complaints that vision is disturbed after long periods of screen time – it is just that the surface of the eye is dry. This can be exacerbated with air con. The remedy is to take breaks and try to blink frequently.”

Computer Vision Syndrome is now recognised as a valid eye condition. Overuse of computer screens is leading to headaches, blurred vision, red eyes, eye strain, dry eyes, double vision and dizziness. It can affect about 90 per cent of people who spend three or more hours a day at a computer.<sup>vii</sup>

### The gaming generation

Even for our youngest UK residents, there is concern for their vision as parents are allowing their children to spend hours every day on small screen technology.

According to Vision of Britain research, children aged 3–18 are spending an average of 2 hours 54 minutes a day playing on their games console, computer or iPad.

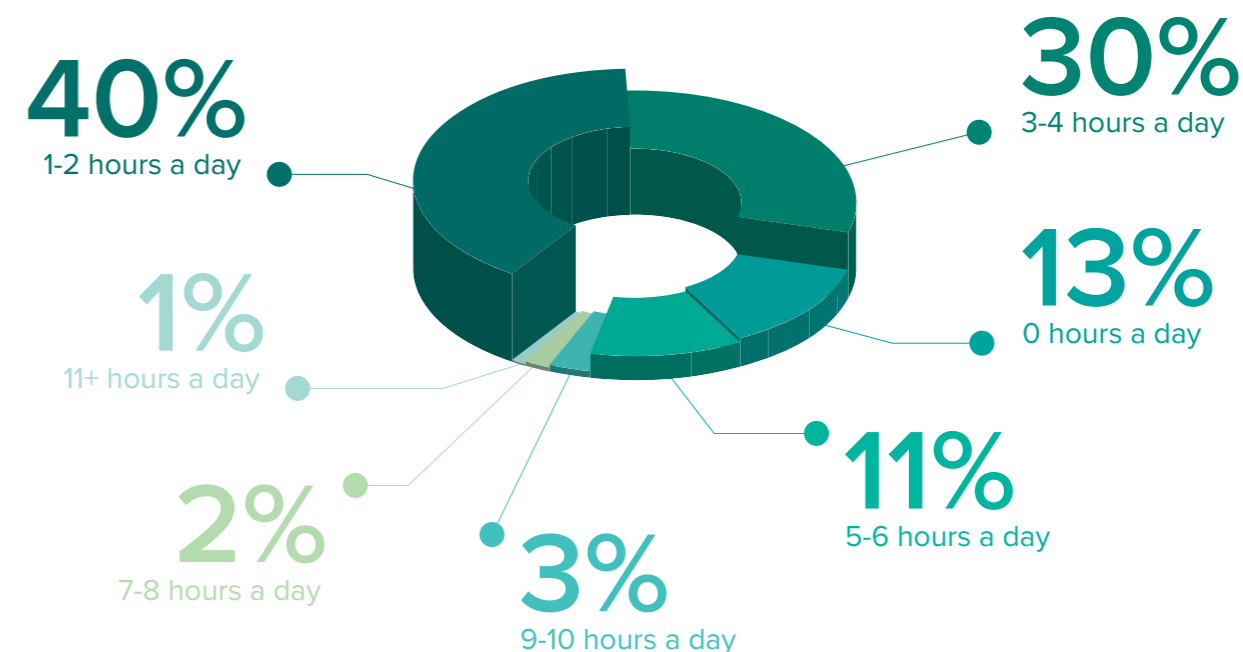
Eight in 10 (80 per cent) 16–24 year olds think that an increased reliance on technology has a damaging effect on their eyes.

This is backed up by one in six 16–24 year olds (17 per cent) saying they struggle to see the television, compared to only seven per cent of 55–64 year olds.

### Did you know?

Out of all the muscles in your body, the muscles that control your eyes are the most active

## UK adults with children aged 3–18 years let them use technology for:



**Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon for Optegra Eye Health Care, Mr. Sundeep Kheterpal, says:**

“Advances in technology have resulted in an increasing dependence on looking at gadgets and devices up close for much of the day.

“The effort on the eyes for this close focusing on smaller and smaller objects which may be moving around, and when staring for long periods, can result in eye strain, headaches, blurred vision and soreness.

“Regular eye checks are important to maintain eye health and to ensure spectacle and contact lenses remain up to date with their prescription.

“For our children, it is important that, as parents, we supervise and limit the time that they spend each day looking at small screens.

“As we get older and we use these devices we may rely more and more on optical aids. Optegra and its specialist expert eye surgeons have laser and surgical solutions to reduce dependence on spectacles and contact lenses and continue to research into the latest techniques.”

### Take action:

Try to reduce the time you spend on small screen devices. If your eyes are aching or dry, take a break. Check that you have a high resolution display and try to reduce any glare around your screen.



## Conclusions

Globally, there will be one billion people over the age of 60 by 2020.<sup>viii</sup>

However, huge advances in life expectancy come hand-in-hand with an increase in natural degenerative eye conditions and diseases.

One in three British adults is expected to suffer a cataract and half a million people have end stage AMD (Age-related Macular Degeneration) in the UK.

Yet both patients and some GPs are unclear about the treatments available for these and other conditions; treatments that in many cases are straightforward and painless procedures.

This lack of knowledge means that the British public is unnecessarily putting up with poor eye sight every day.

Furthermore, despite the fear of blindness, there is a shocking neglect of regular eye health and checks by the UK population. Whether this is down to lack of understanding or fear of costs, it must be addressed by the government, the NHS and the eye health community.

Education and communication has to be at the forefront of the battle to restore the Vision of Britain to where it should and can be.

To this end Optegra is leading the way with:

- Support through regular seminars for GPs on the frontline
- Support for the optician community, whom healthcare professionals agree are best placed to diagnose eye conditions
- Better promotion of eye health and the importance of regular eye tests to the British public
- Access to accurate information on the newest eye treatments and surgeries available

**To support these four ambitions, Optegra Eye Health Care is touring a number of major UK cities in 2016 offering free eye health checks to the local community.**

To find out more, visit [optegra.com/VOB](http://optegra.com/VOB)

## About Optegra Eye Health Care

Optegra Eye Health Care is a specialist provider of eye health services in the UK, China, Czech Republic, Poland and Germany.

Optegra operates 23 eye hospitals and clinics, bringing together leading edge research, medical expertise and state-of-the-art surgical equipment. With over 100 NHS-trained Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeons, renowned for their areas of expertise, Optegra offers excellent clinical outcomes for the A to Z of eye health care.

**Optegra offers treatment for all medical eye conditions in its five star facilities, including:**

- age-related macular degeneration (AMD)
- diabetic-related eye conditions
- floaters
- glaucoma
- keratoconus
- retinal detachment
- cataract and cataract refractive surgery
- dry eyes
- watery eyes
- vision correction to correct long and short sight i.e. laser eye surgery and lens replacement (Clarivu™)
- cosmetic eyelid surgery

To maintain Optegra's five star standard of patient care and safety, its specialist eye hospitals draw on the expertise of its Medical Advisory Committees (MAC), headed by consultant level ophthalmic surgeons who all report in to the corporate MAC. This is managed by Medical Director, Mr. Robert Morris, the renowned refractive expert who advises on Optegra's policies and procedures.

Looking to the future, Optegra is a leader in eye science research, pioneering new innovations such as the first telescopic lens implanted in the UK. An evolving partnership with leading UK charity Fight for Sight keeps Optegra at the forefront of new techniques – advancing eye care for all.

**Optegra Eye Health Care operates seven UK eye hospitals:**

- Optegra Eye Hospital Birmingham
- Optegra Eye Hospital Hampshire
- Optegra Eye Hospital London
- Optegra Eye Hospital Manchester
- Optegra Eye Hospital North London
- Optegra Eye Hospital Surrey
- Optegra Eye Hospital Yorkshire

For more information please call 0800 652 5769 or visit [optegra.com/VOB](http://optegra.com/VOB)

Optegra has been voted UK's most trusted eye care specialist, rated number 1 in category for eye treatments on Trustpilot, an independent review site.



## References

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