

# Summarising the evidence for eye health inequities in Aotearoa

From 1960 to 2022

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## Plain language Summary

### Inequities in eye health

Health inequities are common in Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, Māori people experience poorer access to services and subsequently poorer health compared to other population groups in New Zealand.

However, we don't know if this is the case for eye health services, and **eye health has received little attention by policy makers.**

To improve eye health, policy makers need to know the number of people and the population groups who are most in need eye health services.

While further research may be needed to answer these questions, some of the information could be identified from existing evidence.



### Key messages

**New Zealand has very little evidence describing vision impairment or access to eye care services.**

**Reassuringly, recent studies often compare their findings between Māori and Pacific People and other ethnic groups.**

**The evidence we do have consistently reports that eye care services are less accessible to Māori and Pacific People compared to other ethnic groups.**

## Why did we do this research?

We wanted to identify and summarise all the existing evidence of inequities in eye health between different population groups – particularly between Māori and other ethnic groups.

This will help us identify what types of research is still needed.

## What did we do?

We looked for all published studies about eye health in New Zealand. Studies were eligible if they reported the number of people with impaired vision, or access to an eye care service (such as the number of people attending a vision screening service).

We did this in a systematic way, by searching databases for published evidence and carefully screening the results using pre-defined criteria.

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## What did we find?

New Zealand has very little published evidence describing the prevalence of vision impairment or access to eye health services. We found 47 relevant studies published since 1960.

Almost all this evidence comes from data collected from health facilities (e.g. hospitals), which means the information is not relevant to everyone in the population.

Many studies were about diabetic retinopathy (an eye condition resulting from diabetes), or cataract.

Since the year 2000, studies have consistently compared their findings between Māori or Pacific People and one or more other ethnic groups. These studies reported that Māori and Pacific People experienced worse access to services compared to other groups.

## What's next?

Future eye health services need to address barriers and enablers to eye care services experienced by Māori and Pacific People. In addition, we need more evidence describing the number of people with vision impairment in the general population, and access to services for all major eye conditions.