

Underserved groups could be better considered in eye health surveys

Everyone counts

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Plain language Summary

Why do a population-based eye health survey?

Eye health surveys are used to gather information about the number of people in a population who have eye health conditions and to identify any groups of people who have unmet need for eye health services.

This evidence can be used to develop more equitable eye care services.

Why did we do this research?

Our aim was to summarise the different ways that previous eye health surveys have included underserved groups.

This information can be used in future eye health surveys that wish to better include these groups.



Key messages

Eye health surveys generate essential information for planning new services.

Some surveys specifically target underserved groups (e.g. people living in rural areas), while many exclude some groups (e.g. those without housing).

In future, researchers can consider ways they can better consider underserved groups when planning their survey.

What did we do?

We identified all eye health surveys published globally since the year 2000 that estimated the number of people with impaired vision.

Underserved groups were defined according to pre-determined criteria (examples included women, people living in rural areas, and unemployed people).

We summarised the different ways that underserved groups were considered in the way the survey was designed, conducted, or how the results were reported.

What did we find?

Almost all surveys considered underserved groups in some way, and the number of groups considered within each survey has increased over this time.

Most surveys considered groups **retrospectively**, such as by comparing prevalence estimates between different groups.

Very few surveys **prospectively** considered underserved groups when designing the survey (e.g. by using recruitment strategies that enabled underserved groups to participate).

Some underserved groups were actively excluded from surveys, particularly those without stable housing.



What are the implications of these findings?

Some population groups with large unmet eye health needs are rendered invisible by commonly used survey methods.

Small surveys of specific underserved groups are needed to supplement large national-level surveys, so that policy makers have information about the eye health needs of everyone in the population.

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