



Key Findings: National Indigenous Eye Health Survey

Adults

- **Blindness rates in Indigenous adults** (1.9%) are **6.2 times the rate in mainstream**
- Low vision occurs in Indigenous adults (9.4%) at 2.8 times the rate of mainstream
- **Major causes of blindness** in Indigenous adults are cataract (32%), optic atrophy (14%), refractive error (14%), diabetic eye disease (9%) and trachoma (9%)
- **Regional variation** – Indigenous adults in very remote areas have more cataract and are less likely to have glasses but diabetic eye disease, unoperated cataract and poor reading vision are problems across the whole country

“Overall, 94% of vision loss is preventable or treatable but 35% of adults have never had an eye examination”

Children

- Indigenous children especially in remote areas have better vision than their mainstream peers
- Overall, low vision occurs in 1.4% of Indigenous children (age standardised)
- Vision loss in Indigenous children is five times less common than in mainstream children
- **Regional variation** – Indigenous children in very remote areas have better vision and less refractive error but still suffer from trachoma

Refractive Error

- **Half of vision loss** in both adults and children is due to Refractive Error
- **39% of adults cannot see normal print**
- Services to provide distance and reading glasses are needed in every Indigenous community

Cataract

- Overall, 3.1% of Indigenous adults suffer vision loss from cataract
- **Blinding cataract is 12 times more common in Indigenous adults**
- Only 65% of those needing cataract surgery have been operated on
- Regular cataract surgery services with adequate capacity are required

Diabetes

- Diabetic eye disease is the equal third cause of blindness
- Indigenous people with diabetes:
 - **36% have diabetic eye disease**
 - **Only 20% have had a recent eye examination**
 - Only 39% have received the laser surgery they need

Trachoma

- Trachoma still occurs in people across Australia and still causes blindness
- **60% of very remote communities have endemic trachoma** (defined as a prevalence of active trachoma in 5 – 9 year olds greater than 5%, the highest was 28%)

- Overall trachoma affects 7% of children (5 – 15 years) in very remote regions
- Adults with scarring and in-turned eyelashes from trachoma were found across Australia
- In 2009 The Australian Government has committed to use the SAFE strategy to eliminate trachoma

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