

BRFSS Fact Sheet

Vision Impairment



Tennessee
Department of Health

Cordell Hull Bldg.
425 5th Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37243

<http://state.tn.us/health>

In the United States an estimated 80 million people have potentially blinding eye diseases, 3 million have low vision and 1.1 million are legally blind.¹ More than two-thirds of visually impaired adults are over the age of 65, and as the population ages the number of people with visual impairment is expected to increase.¹ The leading causes of visual impairment are diabetic retinopathy, cataract, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration.¹ Blindness and visual impairment from most eye diseases can be reduced with early detection and treatment.¹ Most eye diseases, however, lack symptoms until vision is lost.¹ Early intervention through regular eye exams is therefore important for maintaining healthy vision and for increasing the quality and years of healthy life for all Tennesseans.

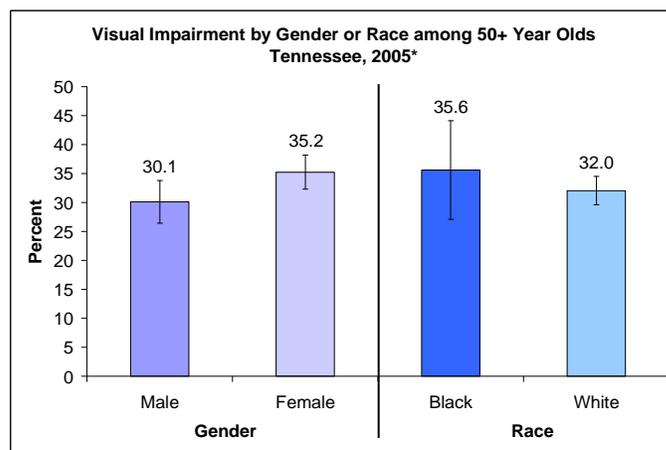
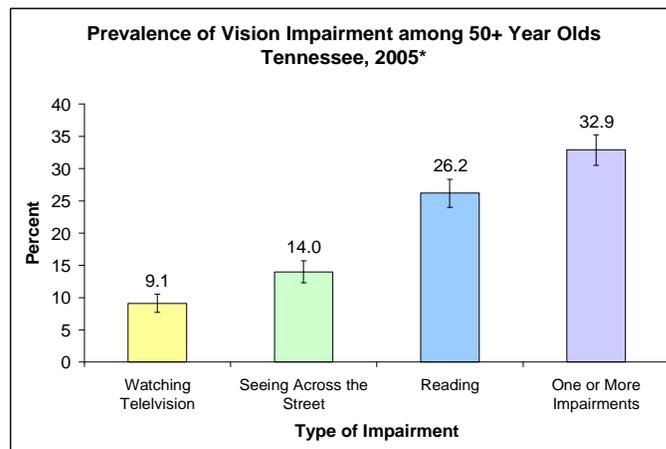
- In 2005, 32.9% of Tennesseans aged 50 and older reported that they had one or more visual impairments (i.e. they were unable to or had some difficulty reading, watching television and/or seeing a friend across the street because of eyesight).[†]
- 9.1% reported difficulty watching television, 14.0% reported difficulty seeing a friend across the street and 26.2% reported difficulty reading.

- A slightly higher percentage of females (35.2%) had visual impairments than did males (30.1%).

- A slightly higher percentage of blacks (35.6%) had visual impairments than did whites (32.0%).

- The prevalence of visual impairments decreased with increasing education, from 48.2% among those with less than a high school degree to 26.0% among college graduates.

- 31.2% (± 2.4)* of adults aged 50 and older had not had an eye exam in the past 12 months. 42.7% (± 2.8) had not had a *dilated* eye exam in the past 12 months.



Reference:

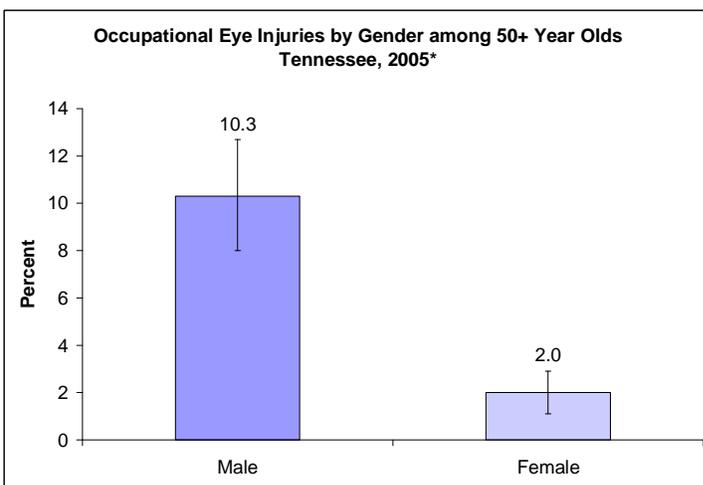
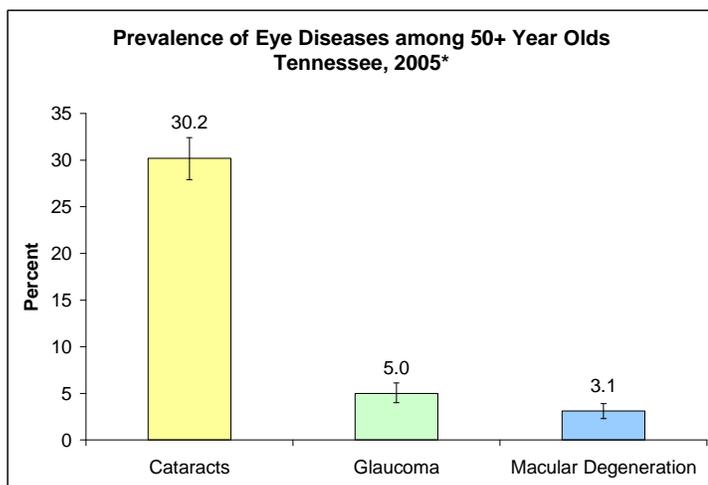
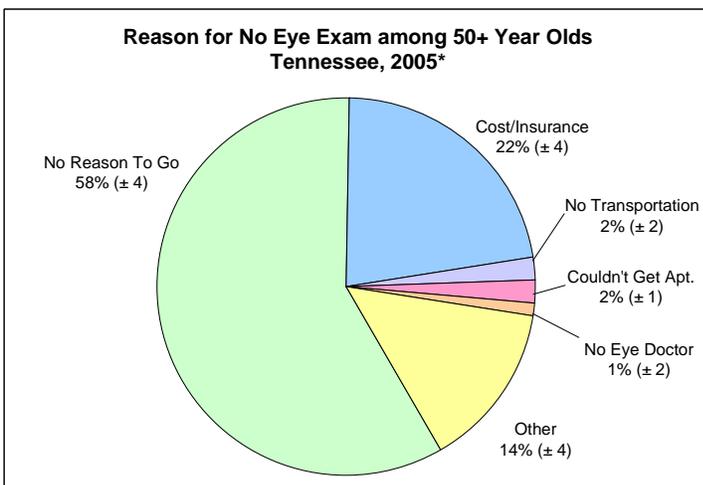
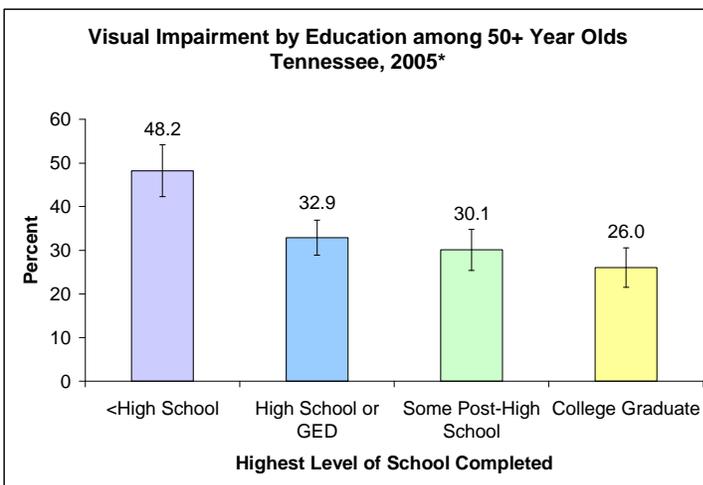
1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2000.

Prepared by the Tennessee Department of Health; Office of Policy, Planning and Assessment; Surveillance, Epidemiology and Evaluation section based on 2005 TN Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data.

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- The most common reason given for not having had an eye exam in the past 12 months was not having a reason to go or not thinking of going (58.0%). 22.1% reported they had not had an exam because of cost or lack of insurance.
- 55.0% (± 2.6) of adults aged 50 and older reported that they did not have insurance coverage for eye care.
- The prevalence of cataracts was 30.2%, that of glaucoma was 5.0% and that of macular degeneration was 3.1%. 23.0% of diabetics reported a history of diabetic retinopathy.
- 41.3% (± 4.3) of persons with a history of cataracts reported they had had their cataracts removed.
- The prevalence of occupational eye injuries was 5.8% (± 1.2). Males (10.3%) had a higher prevalence of occupational eye injuries than females (2.0%). 49.6% did not miss work as a result of their injuries. 32.7% missed 1-3 days of work and 17.7% missed greater than 3 days.



*The number above each column indicates the percent value for that column. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, as do ranges for percentages given in the text and charts.

† All data presented are for persons 50 years and older.