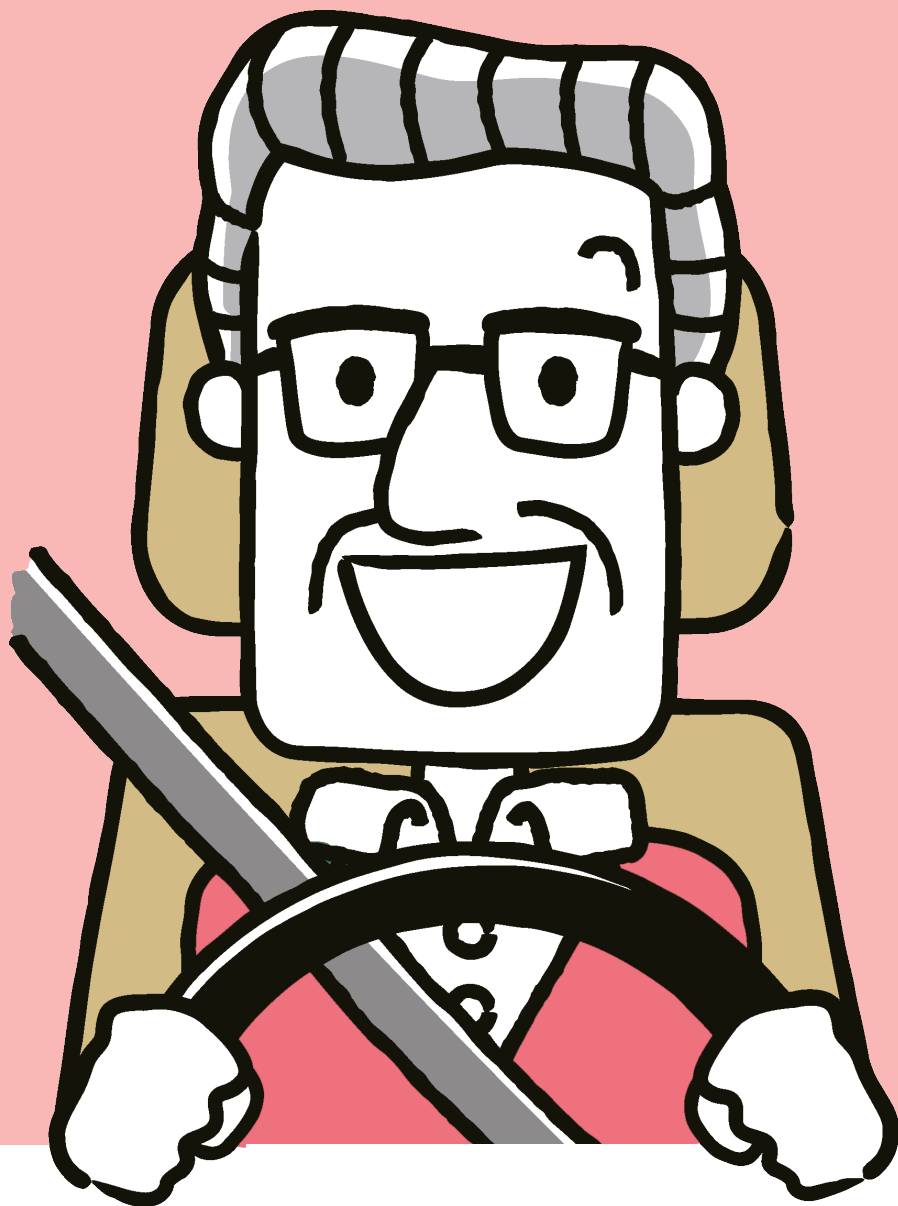


Is Your Vision Roadworthy?



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NATIONAL ROADS POLICING OPERATIONS
INTELLIGENCE & INVESTIGATION

Is Your Vision Roadworthy? is a collaboration between the Older Drivers Forum, Eye Health UK and University of Warwick/CARGY Research. This study has been made possible thanks to the kind support of the National Roads Policing Operations, Intelligence & Investigations (NRPOII).

This report has been written by Dr Carol Hawley, University of Warwick and CARGY Research.

For more information about the campaign visit VisionAndDriving.info or email info@visionmatters.org.uk

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Safe driving starts with good vision



Ninety per cent of information needed to drive is visual.¹

Eyesight is an issue affecting every single one of Britain's 42 million+ motorists.

Even a minor reduction in vision can slow reaction times and impair your ability to recognise hazards or judge speed. It can also cause fatigue and affect contrast sensitivity – essential for adjusting to glare and driving in low light conditions.

Legal eyesight standards state every driver must...

be able to read (with glasses or contact lenses, if necessary) a car number plate made after 1 September 2001 from 20 metres.

have a visual acuity of at least decimal 0.5 (6/12) measured on the Snellen Scale (with glasses or contact lenses, if necessary) using both eyes together or, if you have sight in one eye only, in that eye.

and, have an adequate field of vision.

There are more stringent standards for people who drive buses and lorries etc.

Uncorrected defective eyesight is punishable with a fine of up to £1,000, three penalty point and possible disqualification.

Six people lost their lives on UK roads in 2023 and around 3,000 are seriously injured every year due to drivers or riders with uncorrected or defective eyesight.^{2,3}

¹ Honavar, 2019

² Department for Transport (DfT), Road Safety Statistics: Data Tables. Accessed Nov 2024.

³ Brake Road Safety Charity, Risky Business Report 4 Accessed Nov 2024.



Is your vision roadworthy?

report summary

As part of the Is Your Vision Roadworthy? (IYVR) initiative all Police Forces in England, Scotland and Wales were invited to raise awareness of the importance of good vision for safe driving during the National Police Chief Council's (NPCC) Operation Dark Night (ODN) campaign which ran from Monday 28th October and Sunday 10th November 2024.

Police officers were asked to take part in this campaign by undertaking a roadside 20m number plate test at every opportunity, either specifically for the ODNIYVR campaign or when a driver is suspected as having defective vision, after committing a traffic offence, or following a road traffic collision.

Twenty-seven police forces across England and Wales submitted data: Three of the four police forces in Wales (75%) and 24 of the 39 forces in England (61.5%).

A total of 3010 drivers' eyesight tests were included in the following data analysis.



- The majority of drivers took the roadside eyesight test voluntarily (1700 drivers, 56.5%). This was either specifically because of Operation Dark Night (1253, 41.6%) or another voluntary roadside test (447, 14.9%). However, over a third (1100, 36.5%) were tested after committing a traffic offence and 133 (4.4%) following a road traffic collision.
- The most frequently stopped vehicles were a car (2505 drivers, 83.2%), or van (318 drivers, 10.6%).
- Almost two thirds of the drivers stopped during the campaign were male (1938, 64.4%). Drivers' age ranged from under 25 years, to over 90 years of age.
- Of the 3010 drivers tested, 2960 (98.3%) passed but 50 (1.7%) failed to meet the eyesight standards for driving. There are currently 42,390,720 people holding a driving licence in Great Britain.

Therefore 1.7% means that potentially 720,642 motorists could be driving on our roads with defective vision.

- Over a third (38%) of sight test failures were discovered as a result of drivers taking the test voluntarily. This was either specifically due to Operation Dark Night (28%) or 'other voluntary roadside test' (10%). Just under a third (32%) were detected as a result of the driver committing a traffic offence.
- Almost two thirds of the drivers stopped during the campaign were male (1938, 64.4%). Females had a failure rate of 1.9%, and males 1.5%.
- The age of drivers tested ranged from under 25 years, to over 90 years. Vision generally deteriorates with age and drivers aged over 40 are more likely to experience changes to their vision.



Image supplied by Merseyside Police

- Drivers aged over 41 represented 62.7% of those stopped for an eyesight check (1883 drivers).
- The eyesight test failure rate was highest among the 81 to 90 year olds at 10.2%. The lowest failure rate was observed among the 25 to 40 year olds at 0.4%.
- Forty per cent of drivers stopped had not taken an eyesight test with an optician/optometrist in the past two years. More females than males had taken a recent eyesight test. Older drivers were significantly more likely to have taken a recent eyesight test than younger drivers.

• Notably, 48% of drivers who failed the eyesight test had not had a sight test in last two years.

It is recommended that all drivers have a sight test every two years. Eyesight can deteriorate without us being aware.

- Police officers gave eyesight-related advice to 96 drivers. This was often advice about getting an up-to-date sight test with an optometrist due to the length of time since their last test.
- One third of drivers had been prescribed corrective lenses for driving but not all were wearing these when stopped by police. Importantly, half of the drivers who failed the roadside sight test were not wearing their required glasses.

It is strongly recommended that drivers are reminded of the importance of wearing their prescribed glasses or lenses when driving.

- Of the 50 drivers who failed the roadside sight test 42 drivers (1.4% of all drivers stopped) had their driving licence revoked during the ODNIYVR campaign. Thirty-eight revocations were immediate, and six were pending, awaiting action from DVLA.

• There was no difference in the incidence of licence revocations between male and female drivers.

• The incidence of licence revocations differed significantly by age group. Drivers aged 81 to 90 years had the highest incidence of licence revocations at 10.2%, followed by the over 90 year olds at 5.9%. Older drivers account for 17% of all licences held and 11% of all miles driven, and 23% of all fatalities.

• There are currently 1,523,073 driving licence holders aged 81 and over (Department for Transport, 2024a). The revocation rate of 10.2% equates to 155,353 drivers potentially driving with eyesight below current standards.

• Forty per cent of driving licence revocations were as a result of drivers taking a voluntary sight test for Operation Dark Night or other 'voluntary roadside test'. Just under a third of revocations (31%) were for drivers who had been stopped after committing a traffic offence and found to have defective eyesight

An important outcome of the campaign is that over a two-week period 50 drivers were found to have been driving with eyesight which did not meet current standards, and 42 of them had their driving licences revoked to ensure that they do not continue to pose a risk to other road users.

This campaign serves as a reminder to drivers that eyesight should not be taken for granted, and drivers must ensure that their sight meets driving standards.

Regular eyesight checks are recommended for all drivers as is the importance of wearing the correct glasses or lenses at all times when driving.

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a complex multi-level highway interchange. The roads are dark asphalt with white lane markings. Several vehicles, including a white truck and several cars, are captured in motion, appearing as blurred streaks. The perspective is from directly above, looking down at the various levels and ramps of the interchange. The surrounding landscape includes some greenery and trees. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the bottom right of the image, containing white text.

**4,250
journeys are
made on the
M25 every
day by
drivers
with
defective
eyesight**

Introduction

methodology, data handling and analysis

The National Eyesight Campaign - Is Your Vision Roadworthy? supported the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC) Operation Dark Night campaign which took place after the clocks went back one hour at the end of British Summer Time. The main focus of Operation Dark Night was pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. National Roads Policing Operations, Intelligence & Investigations (NRPOII) invited 'Is Your Vision Roadworthy?' to assist with this campaign by looking at drivers' eyesight.

The Operation Dark Night and Is Your Vision Roadworthy? (ODNIYVR) campaign ran from Monday 28th October and Sunday 10th November 2024. All police forces in England, Scotland and Wales were notified of the campaign by NRPOII and invited to participate. This was a follow-up to previous 'Is Your Vision Roadworthy?' campaigns. The first ran in 2018 with three police forces taking part. The second was run nationally alongside the NPCC Mobile Phone campaign which took place between Monday 27th February to Sunday 12th March 2023.

Preparation for Is Your Vision Roadworthy? campaign

In preparation for the 2024 campaign, it was widely promoted among police forces. This included presentations to the UKROEd / NPCC 'Taking Risks off our Roads' conference and the National Road Safety Conference 2024 organised by Road Safety GB. Most police forces have representation at these events.

The presentations explained the campaign and how to submit results. They also introduced the concept of submitting test results via the QR code. The message was also distributed via a Is Your Vision Roadworthy? toolkit and instructions for taking part which were sent directly to forces via NRPOII.

This toolkit included posters, leaflets, website copy, press releases and social media assets. These were also translated into Welsh. See right for examples.



Methods

Instructions provided to police forces

Between Monday 28th October and Sunday 10th November 2024 all Police Forces were asked to take part in this campaign by undertaking a roadside 20m number plate test at every opportunity, this might be:

1) When an officer suspects a driver may have defective vision. Suspicion may arise following:

- Road Traffic Collision
- Moving traffic offence
- Careless or Dangerous Driving allegation or offence
- Allegation about the persons driving from a third party
- Driver fails to stop or delayed in stopping when requested
- Failure to see or abide by a road traffic sign.

2) Voluntary roadside eyesight testing operation such as Operation Dark Night.

The majority of roadside sight tests were undertaken within the two-week period, but one force carried out an additional 30 roadside tests on 22nd November. These were included in the overall study sample.

Materials and Methods

There are considerable pressures on police officers' time, and we wished to minimise the effort required to record test results. To this end we trialled two methods for police officers to use for submitting data gathered from the campaign.

The first method was to use an Excel spreadsheet to submit data, similar to that used in the previous two campaigns.

This entails the individually collected data being collated by each police force and added to

a single spreadsheet which is submitted to the project lead at the end of the campaign. The deadline for the submission of spreadsheet data was 18th November 2024. Most forces submitted their returns by the deadline with only two submitting a few days later.

The second method used a QR code which allows officers to submit anonymous returns at the roadside via an online form which they submit for each driver stopped.

An important advantage was that the individual submissions by officers are automatically recorded to a single spreadsheet in real time. Although data are collected anonymously, individual police forces are identifiable for the purpose of analysis.

Both methods collected the same information. There were 14 data fields, and for ease of use, most had drop-down boxes with options to choose from. Data fields were:

- Police force
- Date of eyesight test
- Country
- Reason for conducting test
- Driver gender
- Type of vehicle
- Driver age (age bands: under 25, 25-40, 41-60, 61-70, 71-80, 81-90, over 90)
- Is driver required to wear glasses/ lenses for driving?
- Was driver wearing required glasses/ lenses when stopped?
- Has the driver had an eyesight test in the last two years?
- Result of 20m number plate test
- Action taken in relation to eyesight check
- Was driver licence revoked?
- Any other information

Data Handling and Analysis

For data collected via spreadsheets, each participating police force returned their completed spreadsheets to a central person who then passed these to Rob Heard who forwarded these to the data analyst, Dr Hawley.

Data collected via QR code were ready to use as soon as the campaign ended. Data collected via individual spreadsheets were inspected, checked for duplicates, and merged.

Some police forces used a combination of data recording methods (QR code and Excel spreadsheets). These were checked carefully in case of duplication.

The data were cleaned, and all returns merged into a master spreadsheet which was imported into a statistical package for analysis (SPSS Version 27).

A total of 3107 roadside eyesight checks were recorded either via the QR code or via a traditional spreadsheet. There were 757 eyesight checks recorded via QR code, and 2253 recorded by spreadsheet. Data recorded by QR code was more complete and required less cleaning as the software restricted data input to given data fields and specific content.

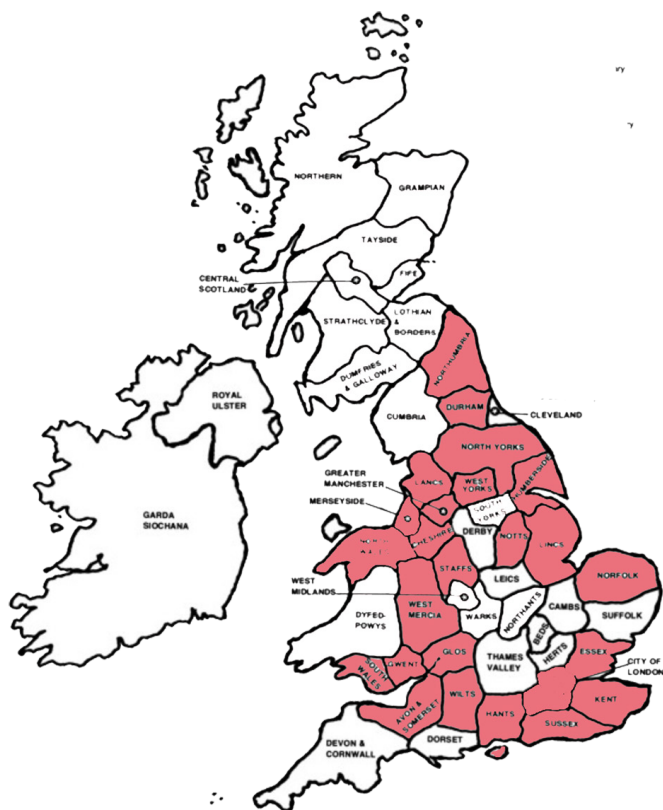
For the spreadsheet data there were missing data for several fields: driver age; driver gender; type of vehicle; whether the driver had a prescription for corrective lenses; whether the driver was wearing their prescription when they were stopped by police;

and if the driver had an eyesight test within 2 years. There were also 97 returns which contained no data except the for date of the test and name of police force. The latter were excluded from the main dataset used in the analysis as unfortunately they contained no useful data.

A 28th police force, Cleveland, submitted additional data via spreadsheet for 212 drivers, two of these failed the eyesight test and their licence was revoked. Unfortunately, we were unable to include these data in the analysis due to a) missing core data and b) missing the deadline for submissions.

A total of 3010 drivers' eyesight tests were included in the full analysis.

The data collected did not permit any complex statistical analysis, so the results presented below are descriptive, showing frequencies and cross-tabulations.



Map illustrates locations of participating police forces



Fortunately, the majority of drivers passed the test, but 96 drivers needed eyesight-related advice from officers. A third of all drivers stopped needed corrective glasses or lenses for driving, but worryingly 40% of drivers had not had their eyesight checked for over two years.

Dr Carol Hawley, report author



Results

participation, testing and actions

Participation

Country Participation

Police forces in England and Wales took part in the ODNIYVR campaign. Police Scotland were unable to participate due to other roads policing priorities during the period. English police forces contributed 1597 returns (53.1% of the total), and Wales 1413 returns (46.9% of the total).

Police Force Participation

Participation from different police forces was variable, with some forces carrying out eyesight checks with hundreds of drivers and others checking fewer than 10 drivers.

In total, 27 police forces submitted data following the ODNIYVR campaign, three more than in 2023.

England has 39 police forces, and 24 (61.5%) submitted data after taking part in the campaign.

Wales has four police forces, and three of these (75%) took part in the ODNIYVR campaign. The total of 1413 roadside eyesight checks over a two-week period from three police forces was exceptional. Table 1 shows the number of drivers checked per police force.

Reason for conducting a roadside eyesight test

Police were asked to indicate the reason for stopping the driver and conducting an eyesight test. They were asked to choose one of six reasons as shown in table 2 below. Operation Dark Night was the most frequently cited reason for conducting the eyesight test, and 1253 drivers were tested because of this campaign (41.6% of all recorded tests).

THE NUMBER PLATE TEST

During the roadside vision screening motorists were asked to read a number plate from a distance of 20 metres.

All tests were conducted in good daylight conditions, using a registration plate affixed to a vehicle at the correct measured distance (20m), with the driver wearing any eyesight correction (eg: spectacles) worn at the time of driving.

Table 1.

Police Force	Number of Roadside Screenings	Percent of Total
Avon and Somerset Constabulary	9	0.3
Cheshire Constabulary	1	0.0
City of London Police	43	1.4
Durham Constabulary	102	3.4
Essex Police	208	6.9
Gloucestershire Constabulary	9	0.3
Greater Manchester Police	25	0.8
Gwent	133	4.4
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary	135	4.5
Humberside Police	13	0.4
Kent police	20	0.7
Lancashire Constabulary	48	1.6
Lincolnshire Police	34	1.1
Merseyside Police	633	21.0
Metropolitan Police Service	2	0.1
Norfolk Constabulary	9	0.3
North Wales Police	472	15.7
North Yorkshire Police	1	0.0
Northumbria Police	29	1.0
Nottinghamshire Police	15	0.5
South Wales Police	808	26.80
Staffordshire Police	3	0.1
Surrey Police	6	0.2
Sussex Police	10	0.3
West Mercia Police	197	6.5
West Yorkshire Police	25	0.8
Wiltshire Police	20	0.7
TOTAL	3010	100.0

This is a significantly greater number of tests than those carried out in 2023 as a result of the Is your Vision Roadworthy? campaign, when only 62 drivers were tested specifically because of the campaign (7% of all recorded tests).

The next most common reasons were because a traffic offence had been committed (37% of drivers); officers conducting a voluntary roadside test (14.7%); and following a road traffic collision (4.4%).

Table 2. Reason for conducting eyesight test

Reason for conducting eyesight test	Frequency	Percent
Operation Dark Night Campaign	1253	41.6
Road Traffic Collision	133	4.4
Suspicion of Defective Eyesight	65	2.2
Traffic Offence Committed	1100	36.5
Voluntary Roadside Test	447	14.9
Other Reason	12	0.4
TOTAL	3010	100.0

Vehicle Type

Vehicle type was available for 2949 drivers and not recorded for 61 drivers. The most frequently stopped vehicles were a car (2505 drivers, 83.2%), or a van (318 drivers, 10.6%). Nineteen vehicles were recorded as 'other', many of these were taxis. Table 3 shows the types of vehicles involved.

Table 3. Vehicle type stopped at roadside

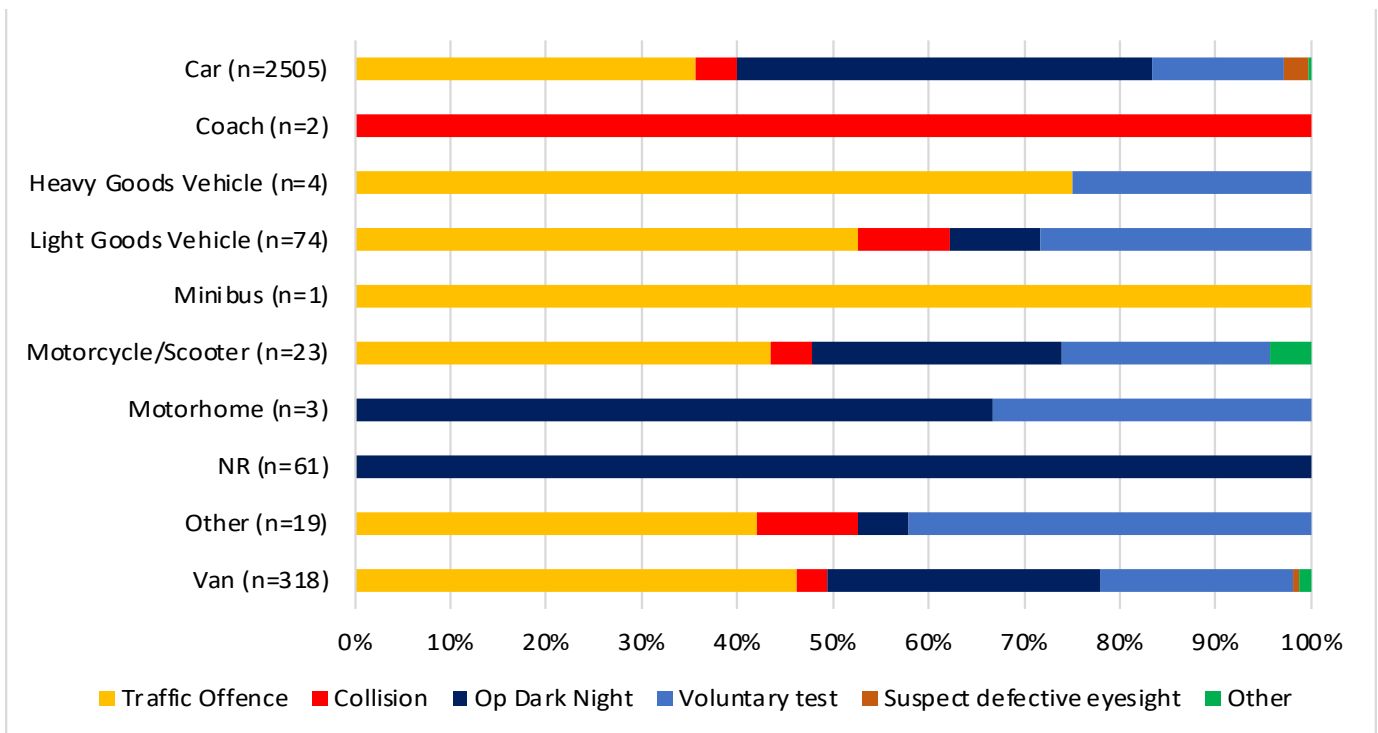
Vehicle type	Frequency	Percent
Car	2505	83.2
Coach	2	0.1
Heavy Goods Vehicle	4	0.1
light Goods Vehicle	74	2.5
Minibus	1	0.0
Motorcycle	18	0.6
Motorcycle/Scooter	5	0.2
Motorhome	3	0.1
NR	61	2.0
Other	19	0.6
Van	318	10.6
TOTAL	3010	100.0

When analysed by the reason for the roadside test, although in relatively small numbers, certain vehicle types were more associated with a traffic offence than others, particularly heavy and light goods vehicles, and vans. One minibus was also stopped for a traffic offence.

Car drivers (2505) were most likely to be tested because of Operation Dark Night (1085, 43.3%); committing a traffic offence (892, 35.6%); or a voluntary roadside test (347, 13.9%). A further 111 cars (4.4%) were tested following a road traffic collision (RTC), and 63 (2.5%) tested due to suspicion of defective eyesight, with 7 (0.3%) tested for unspecified other reasons.

Vans were the second largest group of vehicles (318). Van drivers were most likely to be tested following a traffic offence (147, 46.2%); Operation Dark Night (91, 28.6%); or voluntary roadside test (64, 20.1%). Ten van drivers were tested following a RTC (3.1%); two (0.6%) due to suspicion of defective eyesight, and 4 (1.3%) for unspecified other reasons.

Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of vehicle types by reason for the eyesight test.



Terry Cunningham

Son of woman killed by a driver who had defective eyesight

Terry’s mother and her friend were tragically killed by a motorist with vision so poor he ‘would not have managed to see the steering wheel of his vehicle clearly’, welcomes this new report and hopes raising awareness of motorists’ legal responsibility to ensure their vision is fit to drive will prevent further unnecessary casualties caused by situations where “the car is safe and the driver isn’t”.

Driver Characteristics

Almost two thirds of the drivers stopped during the campaign were male (1938, 64.4%), 35.5% (1068) were female, and four drivers preferred not to declare their gender. The gender split differed from the 2023 campaign when only 20% of drivers stopped were females. A possible factor influencing this may have been because in 2023, the majority of eyesight checks were carried out following a traffic offence whereas in 2024 there were more voluntary roadside checks, in particular for Operation Dark Night.

Driver age was recorded in age bands for convenience. These ranged from under 25 years, to over 90 years of age. Vision generally deteriorates with age and drivers aged 41 and over are more likely to experience changes to their vision. This is reflected in the choice of age bands. Drivers aged over 41 represented 62.7% of those stopped for an eyesight check (1883 drivers). Drivers aged over 71 represented 13.3% of those stopped (401 drivers). Table 4 shows the age groups.

Table 4. Driver Age Groups (n = 3010)

Driver Age Group	Frequency	Percent
Under 25 years	194	6.4
25 to 40 years	928	30.8
41 to 60 years	992	33.0
61 to 70 years	490	16.3
71 to 80 years	257	8.5
81 to 90 years	127	4.2
90 years and above	17	0.6
Not Recorded	5	0.2
TOTAL	3010	100.0

Eyesight

Of the 3010 drivers, 992 (33%) told police officers that they had been prescribed corrective lenses for driving, 1956 (65%) had not, and data were missing for 62 drivers (2%). Of the 992 prescribed corrective lenses for driving, 933 (94.1%) were wearing these when stopped by police, 52 (5.2%) were not wearing them and for 7 drivers (0.7%) this was not recorded. Older drivers were significantly more likely to be prescribed corrective lenses for driving than younger drivers.

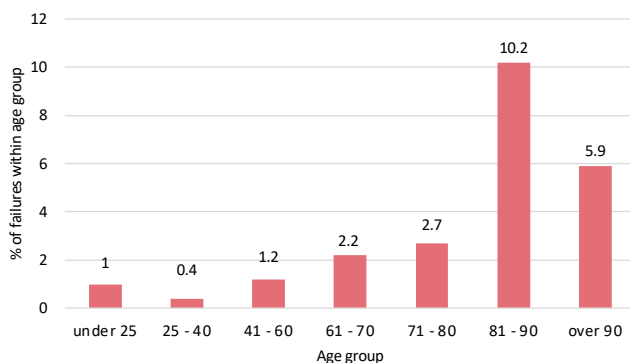
Police officers asked 2834 drivers if they had taken an eyesight test with an optician/optometrist in the past two years. Of these, over half (1697, 59.9%) said that they had, but 40.1% (1137) had not. Data on this question were not recorded for 176 drivers.

Older drivers were significantly more likely to have taken a recent eyesight test than younger drivers. Women were significantly more likely than men to say they have had an eyesight test within two years (59.6% compared to 54.7% men) ($X^2 = 91.43$, $p = 0.001$).

Police Roadside Eyesight Test

A 20 metre eyesight test was carried out at the roadside with 3010 drivers. Of these, 2960 (98.3%) passed; 50 (1.7%) failed. The failure rate was highest among the 81 to 90 year olds at 10.2% (13 failures out of 127 tests). The lowest failure rate was observed among the 25 to 40 year olds at only 0.4% (4 failures out of 928 tests). Older age groups had significantly higher failure rates than younger age groups ($X^2 = 72.21$, $p = 0.001$).

Figure 2 shows the failure rate across age groups



There was a very slight difference in failure rates for male and female drivers. Females had a failure rate of 1.9%, and males 1.5%.

For the 50 drivers who failed the eyesight test, just over half (26, 52%) said they had taken an eyesight test with an optometrist in the past two years but 24 (48%) had not.

Twenty-two drivers (44%) said they had not been prescribed corrective lenses or glasses for driving, and 28 (56%) said they had. Of those prescribed corrective lenses only half of the drivers (14, 50%) were wearing them when stopped by police.

In some of these cases, the driver was reported for an eyesight offence with words of advice rather than a licence revocation due to various circumstances. These included the driver having the prescribed glasses in the car, but not wearing them.

These drivers passed the eyesight test when they wore their glasses, so the licence was not revoked. In one case the driver's wife brought his glasses from home, in another case the driver himself went home to collect his glasses.

Following these actions the drivers passed the number plate test.

Half of those who failed the eyesight test and were prescribed corrective lenses for driving were not wearing them at the time they were stopped.

Action Taken by Police and Licence Revocations

Police officers were asked to state if they had taken any action after the eyesight test. No further action was taken for 2868 drivers (95.3%). For 96 drivers (3.2%) police officers gave advice relating to eyesight; 4 drivers (0.1%) were reported for an eyesight offence, and for 42 drivers (1.4%) the licence revocation form D751E was submitted.

Police officers gave eyesight-related advice to 96 drivers, of these 92 passed the roadside sight test. This was often advice about getting an up-to-date sight test with an optician/optometrist due to the length of time since their last test. For some drivers, advice was given because they only just read the numberplate at 20m or got one character on the number plate incorrect.

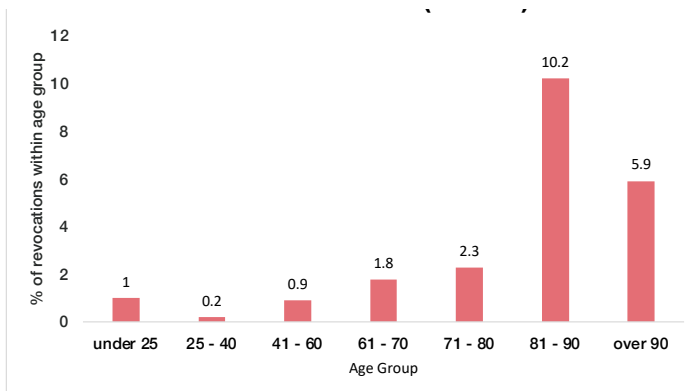
Four drivers were given advice rather than a revocation even though they failed the roadside sight test. Two of these drivers were not wearing their driving glasses when tested but had them in the vehicle and passed the test when they re-took the roadside test wearing their correct prescription.

In total 42 drivers (1.4% of all drivers stopped) had their driving licence revoked during the ODNIYVR campaign. Thirty-eight revocations were immediate, and six were pending, awaiting action from DVLA.

There was no difference in the incidence of licence revocations between male and female drivers. This differs from the 2023 campaign when male drivers were significantly over-represented for licence revocations.

The incidence of licence revocations differed significantly by age group ($X^2 = 88.34, p=0.001$). Drivers aged 81 to 90 years had the highest incidence of 10.2% (13 of the 127 in that age group), followed by the over 90 year olds at 5.9% (1 of the 17 in that age group). Figure 3 shows the distribution of licence revocations by age.

Figure 3 Driving licence revocations by age group (n = 3010)



Sight test failures and driving licence revocations: reason for testing

The reasons given by police officers for conducting the roadside eyesight test were

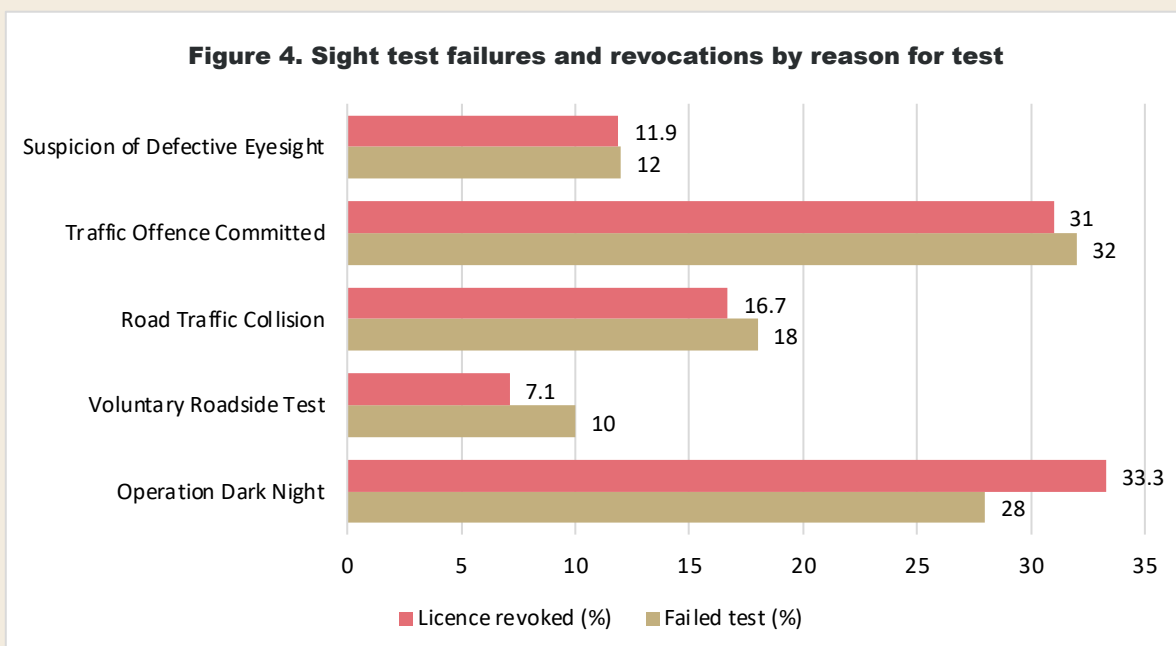
examined in relation to sight test failures and licence revocations.

For the 50 sight test failures, of the five reasons for carrying out the roadside test, the most frequently reported single reason was due to a traffic offence being committed (16, 32%). The second most reported reason was Operation Dark Night (14, 28%). However, when Operation Dark Night and ‘voluntary roadside test’ are combined (19 drivers), 38% of sight test failures were detected as a result of drivers taking the test voluntarily.

For the 42 driving licence revocations, a third (14 drivers) resulted from a voluntary sight test for Operation Dark Night. When combined with ‘other voluntary roadside test’, voluntary sight tests accounted for 40% of licence revocations (17 drivers).

Figure 4 below shows a breakdown of sight test failures and licence revocations by reason for undertaking the roadside eyesight test.

Figure 4. Sight test failures and revocations by reason for test



Roadside vision screening in action

Image supplied by Merseyside Police





Summary

discussion, and study limitations

Summary and discussion

The Operation Dark Night and Is Your Vision Roadworthy campaign was very successful with twenty-seven police forces in England and Wales taking part.

Over the two-week period a total of 3107 drivers were stopped and undertook a roadside eyesight test in which they attempted to read a vehicle number plate at a distance of 20 metres. The twenty-seven forces collected and submitted data, and from this detailed data were collected for 3010 drivers. Data for these drivers were used in this analysis.

This campaign achieved good coverage, particularly in Wales, where three of the four police forces submitted data. The current campaign involved three times as many drivers as those in 2023 which produced data for just 898 drivers. There are several reasons for this.

The current campaign was well publicised among police forces, and it was a good fit with the Operation Dark Night campaign which promoted the need to look and see hazards such as cyclists, horses, and pedestrians during the darker months of the year.

In 2023 the Is Your Vision Roadworthy? campaign was linked to a campaign on mobile phone usage whilst driving, which was less suitable for voluntary roadside checks,

unlike Operation Dark Night. This resulted in most of the drivers being stopped for traffic offences, which made the sample of drivers less representative of ordinary drivers than the current campaign.

Data collection via QR Code

Police forces welcomed the opportunity to have the two methods to use for submitting eyesight returns. However, due to most officers using a Police issued phone, some were not able to access an outside Microsoft Form due to data restrictions on their devices. To circumvent this problem, many officers used their own mobile phone devices instead. Some Forces also created their own Microsoft Form through their own secure Intranet which officers could use safely and the at the end of the campaign this was then submitted to Rob Heard as a spreadsheet.

For the data analysis, data submitted via QR code had greater accuracy and required less data cleaning when received. Consequently, this method of recording and submitting data was very successful.

Study limitations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, not all police forces took part in the campaign, so it is not possible to extrapolate data across the whole of Great Britain.

Secondly, some police forces submitted data for only a small number of drivers. However, other forces carried out hundreds of eyesight tests, so overall this goes some way to mitigate this limitation. Thirdly, there were low numbers of drivers aged 81 and over, so the results showing high levels of failed eyesight tests and licence revocations in these age groups should be treated with caution.



Emma Damen

Daughter of a cyclist killed by a driver who had defective eyesight

Regular eyesight checks should be a legal requirement in order to drive, my Dad was killed by a driver who could not see more than 2 metres ahead, the legal requirement is 20 metres.

This driver knew his eyesight was defective yet still chose to drive resulting in indescribable devastation to me and my family. I urge anyone who has concerns regarding their own eyesight or another driver, please get an eyesight test to confirm you are safe to drive.



Conclusions

including recommendations for action

The Operation Dark Night and Is Your Vision Roadworthy campaign has resulted in the collection of data for 3010 drivers in England and Wales who took a police eyesight test at the roadside. Twenty-seven police forces submitted data for analysis.

The quality of the data received for this campaign was higher than for the previous campaign and there were fewer missing data, making the findings more robust.

Over half the drivers taking the police eyesight test had been stopped due to the Operation Dark Night campaign or other voluntary roadside test.

Of the drivers tested, 2926 (98.5%) passed, but 50 failed. The failure rate was highest among the 81 to 90 year olds at 10.2% and the lowest failure rate was observed among the 25 to 40 year olds at 0.4%.

Of the 50 drivers who failed the eyesight test, 42 had their driving licence revoked. The highest revocation rate was again in the 81 to 90 year old age group (10.2%).

it is recommended that drivers over 80, and those approaching that age, should be targeted to raise awareness of the dangers of driving with impaired or uncorrected eyesight.

There are currently 1,523,073 driving licence holders aged 81 and over (Department for Transport, 2024a), therefore the revocation rate of 10.2% equates to 155,353 drivers at risk of driving with eyesight which does not meet current standards.

Older drivers account for 17% of all licences held in Great Britain (Department for Transport, 2024a), and 11% of all miles driven (Department for Transport, 2024b). Reported road casualties in Great Britain show that in 2022, around a quarter of all car drivers killed were aged 70 and over, and 11% of all casualties in car collisions were in collisions involving older drivers (Department for Transport, 2022).

A concerning finding was that half of the drivers who failed the eyesight test and were prescribed corrective lenses were not wearing them for driving at the time they were stopped.

It is recommended that drivers are reminded of the importance of wearing their prescribed glasses or lenses when driving.

For driving licence revocations, a third were detected specifically due to a voluntary sight test for Operation Dark Night. When combined with 'other voluntary roadside test', voluntary sight tests accounted for 40% of licence revocations.

An important outcome of the campaign is that over a two-week period 50 drivers were found to have been driving with eyesight which did not meet current standards, and 42 of them had their driving licences revoked to ensure that they do not continue to pose a risk to other road users.

The overall failure rate was 1.7%, and the licence revocation rate was 1.4% of the 3010 drivers tested.

It is recommended that all drivers have regular eyesight checks to ensure their vision is fit to drive.



Margaret Filley

Older driver diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration - the UK's leading cause of sight loss

My love of driving has allowed me the privilege of driving Jaguars, MG sports cars, Mercedes SLKs, Porsches and even briefly a Rolls Royce! Wonderful memories. But I have also witnessed and attended Coroner's court proceedings for a fatal car crash a few years ago. These experiences significantly influenced my life and as my eyesight deteriorated I knew I must monitor it and my fitness to drive.

Follow Margaret's journey as she actively prepared to retire from the road.

youtube.com/watch?v=fWozn3wDKq8

Final thoughts

comments from campaign partners



Rob Heard MBE
Founder Older Drivers Forum

Having good vision allows us to see, react and avoid hazard situations early. This campaign has really highlighted that many people are still taking the risk to drive without knowing they have suitable vision for driving and failing to have an eyesight test every 2 years. People's sight deteriorates gradually, often without them being aware and often without them realising their sight may have fallen below the legal limit.

Regular sight tests with an optometrist are an effective way of not only making sure we are safe to drive on the road, but also detecting medical conditions early so they can be treated early, potentially extending a person's driving career.

I was extremely disappointed to see that over 50% of those who failed the roadside eyesight test during the campaign were required to wear glasses for driving, but failed to wear the glasses.

During my 30 year career as a Police Officer I dealt with multiple fatalities on the roads and saw the devastation it caused to not only the driver at fault, but also the lives of many others which were destroyed by the consequences. One the biggest reasons for collisions in Great Britain, is failing to look and failing to see. I truly believe many of these are potentially down to drivers who sight is below the legal limit.

Being able to drive is a privilege and a gift not a right. A car is a lethal weapon if it is not maintained and serviced regularly, equally the driver of a potential lethal weapon needs to be fit and healthy and have good eyesight. Having a regular eyesight test with an optometrist at least every two years is one of the simple steps in making sure we, as drivers, are all safe on the road to protect ourselves and others.

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Chief Constable Jo Shiner
NPCC Lead for Roads Policing

Personal responsibility is the starting point for safer drivers. Making sure your eyesight meets the standards of vision for driving is really important and something only you can do. If you have any doubts whatsoever about your sight please see an optician, this will keep you and all other road users safe while you are driving..



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David Cartwright
Optometrist and chair of
Eye Health UK

Ninety per cent of information needed for driving is visual. Even a minor reduction in vision can slow reaction times and impair your ability to recognise hazards or judge speed. It can also cause fatigue and affect contrast sensitivity – essential for adjusting to glare and driving in low light conditions.

Having regular eye tests, every two years or sooner if you notice a change in your vision is essential to keep you and other road users safe.

It's also vital to wear any vision correction prescribed for driving very time you get behind the wheel - even if you're just 'popping to the shops'.

Keeping your vision roadworthy

Essential advice for keeping your vision roadworthy:

- Have regular sight tests, at least every two years.
- Make an appointment at your local opticians right away if you notice any of the following: decreased or blurred vision; trouble with glare (this can be a symptom of conditions such as cataracts or glaucoma, which if left untreated can affect your ability to comply with DVLA regulations) or, dark spots in your central or peripheral vision.
- If you've been prescribed vision correction for driving – WEAR IT.
- Be 'eye aware' and consider how well you can see whenever you drive.
- Listen to advice given by your eyecare practitioner and act on it.

(There are a number of eye conditions that you are required to notify the DVLA or the DVA in Northern Ireland of).

[gov.uk/driving-eyesight-rules](https://www.gov.uk/driving-eyesight-rules)

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