



**IS YOUR VISION
ROADWORTHY?**

**Is Your Vision
Roadworthy?**

2026 Report

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 Police Chiefs Council (NPCC).

For more information about the campaign:

w. [IsYourVisionRoadworthy.org.uk](https://www.IsYourVisionRoadworthy.org.uk)

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EYEHEALTHUK



**OLDER
DRIVERS
FORUM**


WARWICK
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Safe driving starts with good vision



As much as ninety per cent of the information needed to drive is visual.

Eyesight is an issue that affects every single driving licence holder in the UK.

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.

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

Thirteen people lost their lives on UK roads in 2024 and around 3,000 are seriously injured every year due to drivers or riders with uncorrected or defective eyesight.^{1,2}

¹ Department for Transport (DfT)

² Brake Road Safety Charity



Is your vision roadworthy?

report summary

The National Police Chief Council's (NPCC) Operation Dark Night (ODN) campaign ran between Monday 27th October and Sunday 9th November 2025. The 'Is Your Vision Roadworthy?' (IYVR) initiative ran alongside the ODN campaign. The National Roads Policing Operations, Intelligence & Investigations (NRPOII) team supported and coordinated the IYVR campaign to coincide with the NPCC Operation Dark Night. All police forces in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland were invited to raise awareness of the importance of good vision for safe driving during both the ODN and IYVR campaigns (ODNIYVR).

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.

Thirty-two police forces across England, Scotland and Wales submitted data: Three of the four police forces in Wales (75%) 28 of the 39 forces in England (72%). Police Scotland represents the whole of Scotland. A total of 3778 drivers' eyesight tests were included in the following data analysis. Key results are presented below.

- The majority of drivers took the roadside eyesight test voluntarily (2982 drivers, 78.9%). This was either specifically because of Operation Dark Night (2576, 68.2%) or another voluntary roadside test (406, 10.7%). However, 636 (16.8%) were tested after committing a traffic offence and 118 (3.1%) following a road traffic collision.
- The most frequently stopped vehicles were a car (3313 drivers, 87.7%), or a van (286 drivers, 7.6%).
- Two thirds of the drivers stopped during the campaign were male (2527, 66.9%). Drivers' age ranged from under 25 years, to over 90 years of age.
- Of the 3788 drivers tested, 3719 (98.4%) passed but 59 (1.6%) failed to meet the eyesight standards for driving.
- When eyesight test failures were analysed by Nation: 2.6% of drivers tested in England failed; 3.2% of drivers tested in Scotland; and 0.5% of drivers tested in Wales.
- In England, a 2.6% eyesight test failure rate equates to approximately 1.2 million English drivers who do not meet current visual standards for driving.

– Across all three nations, two-thirds of (67.8%) of sight test failures were discovered as a result of drivers taking the test voluntarily. This was either specifically due to Operation Dark Night (56%) or ‘other voluntary roadside test’ (12%). Eleven drivers failed the eyesight test after committing a traffic offence (18.6%), and a further eight drivers failed following a road traffic collision (13.6%).

– Three-quarters of drivers who failed the eyesight test were male (45, 76.3%). Male drivers had a failure rate of 1.8%, and females just 0.9%.

– 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. Drivers aged over 41 represented two-thirds (65.3%) of those stopped for an eyesight check (2467 drivers).

– Across all three nations, the eyesight test failure rate was highest among drivers aged over 70 (20 drivers, 3.8%). In England alone the failure rate for this age group was 5.9%. In January 2026 there were 5,502,552 English drivers in this age group*, this equates to 324,650 drivers over 70 who may not meet the legal visual standards for driving.

– The lowest failure rate was observed among the 594 drivers aged 61-70 years, with no eyesight failures in this group.

– A small number of drivers were identified as aged over 80, for this group the eyesight test failure rate was 7.3% (9 failures out of 123 drivers).

– Almost a third of all drivers tested had not taken an eyesight test with an optometrist in the past two years (1189, 31.5%). More females than males had taken a recent eyesight test.



Drivers aged over 60 were significantly more likely to have taken a recent eyesight test than younger drivers.

- In Wales, drivers from all age groups were more likely to have taken a recent eyesight test than equivalent age groups in England and Scotland. This may have contributed to the low failure rate for eyesight in Wales.

- Notably, 42.4% 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 105 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 (1248, 33%) had been prescribed corrective lenses for driving but not all were wearing these when stopped by police. Importantly, almost two-thirds 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.

- For 50 of the 59 drivers who failed the roadside sight test, police officers submitted a D751E to DVLA for subsequent revocation of their driving licence. Twenty-three revocations were immediate, and twenty-seven were pending, awaiting action from DVLA.

- The number of licence revocations differed significantly by age group. A third of revocations were for drivers aged over 70 years. In 2025, older drivers accounted for 15% of all licences held, 11% of all miles driven, and 24% of all fatalities (Department for Transport, 2025a).

- Three-quarters (74%) of driving licence revocations resulted from drivers taking a voluntary sight test for Operation Dark Night or other 'voluntary roadside test'. A quarter of revocations (26%) were for drivers who had been stopped after a road traffic collision or a traffic offence.

An important outcome of the campaign is that over a two-week period 59 drivers were found to have been driving with eyesight which did not meet current visual standards, and 50 of them had their driving licences revoked to ensure that they do not continue to pose a risk to other road users.

For England, the eyesight test failure rate of 2.6% suggests that over 1.2 million drivers may be driving with eyesight which does not meet legal visual standards thus jeopardising the safety of themselves and other road users. In addition, this police campaign showed that the highest eyesight failure rate was among drivers aged over 70. These findings reinforce the recommendation made in the 2026 Road Safety Strategy for mandatory eyesight testing for older drivers. This recommendation was under consultation until 11th May 2026 and the results are currently being analysed.

The results of this campaign serve as a reminder to drivers that eyesight should not be taken for granted, and drivers must ensure that their sight meets the current visual standards for driving. Regular eyesight checks are recommended for all drivers as is the importance of wearing the correct glasses or lenses at all times when driving.



**6,500
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?’ (IYVR) supported the National Police Chiefs’ Council’s (NPCC) Operation Dark Night (ODN) 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. The National Roads Policing Operations, Intelligence & Investigations (NRPOII) team coordinated the IYVR eyesight campaign to coincide with ODN.

The 2025 Operation Dark Night and Is Your Vision Roadworthy (ODNIYVR) campaign ran from Monday 27th October and Sunday 9th November 2025. All police forces in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland were notified of the campaign by the 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 (Hawley, 2023). The third campaign ran as Operation Dark Night which took place between Monday 28th October and Sunday 10th November 2024 (Hawley, 2024).

Preparation for Is Your Vision Roadworthy? campaign

In preparation for the 2025 campaign, it was widely promoted among police forces. This included presentations by Rob Heard at conferences (the UKROEd/NPCC Roads Policing Conference 2024, and the National Road Safety Conference 2024) and via a NPCC Webinar. 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 eyesight test results via the QR code. The message was also distributed via Toolkit and instructions for taking part were sent directly to forces by NRPOII.

The Is Your Vision Roadworthy? campaign also prepared promotional materials including posters and leaflets. These were also translated into Welsh for the use of police forces in Wales. See right for examples.



Methods

Instructions provided to police forces

Between Monday 27th October and Sunday 9th November 2025 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.

Data collection methods

There are considerable pressures on police officers' time, and we wished to minimise the effort required to record test results. Following on the success of the 2024 campaign we offered two methods by which police officers could submit data gathered from the campaign.

The first method was to use an Excel spreadsheet to submit data, similar to that used in the previous three campaigns. This entails the individually collected data being collated by each police force and added to a single spreadsheet which submitted to the project lead (Rob Heard) at the end of the campaign. The deadline for the submission of spreadsheet data was 21st November 2025. Most forces submitted their returns by the deadline with a few 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 2 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 the campaign QR code were ready to use as soon as the campaign ended. Data collected via individual spreadsheets were

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

A small number of police forces created a slightly different version of the spreadsheet, and a few created their own local QR code which omitted some of the 14 data fields and added different fields. Two forces submitted data via scanned paper copies which were subsequently transcribed into spreadsheets.

For the spreadsheet returns there were missing data for several fields. Often this was 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 two years.

These variations in data were managed by checking and cleaning the data, then merging all compatible data returns merged into a master dataset.

Submitted returns were included in the master dataset if they included the following core information:

- Police force
- Date of eyesight test
- Country
- Reason for conducting test
- Driver gender
- Driver age
- Result of 20m number plate test
- Action taken in relation to eyesight check
- Was driver licence revoked?
- Any other information

In total, 5107 eyesight checks were carried out by police forces. However, some forces did not submit data either by spreadsheet or QR code and instead gave an overview their results in an email or an Infographic. Although a significant number of eyesight checks had been carried

out, these results were excluded from the main dataset used for the analysis as unfortunately they contained no valid data.

A total of 3778 roadside eyesight checks were included in the full analysis, recorded either via a QR code or spreadsheet. There were 698 eyesight checks recorded via the campaign QR code with the remainder recorded by spreadsheet or local QR code.

The 3778 returns were merged into a master spreadsheet which was imported into a statistical package for analysis (SPSS).

Some forces used different age bands to those required by the campaign and these were incorporated within the official age bands where possible. For the analysis, drivers aged over 60 were grouped together to represent all those entitled to receive a free eyesight test with an optometrist, and drivers aged over 70 were grouped to represent those for whom mandatory eyesight testing is currently being considered by the Department for Transport.

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

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.



“

Fortunately, the majority of drivers passed the test, but 105 drivers needed eyesight-related advice from officers. A third of all drivers stopped needed corrective glasses or lenses for driving, but worryingly many weren't wearing them when stopped.

Dr Carol Hawley, report author

participation, testing and actions

Participation

Country Participation

Police forces in England, Wales and Scotland took part in the ODNIYVR 2025 campaign and together contributed 3778 returns. English police forces contributed 1597 returns (53.1% of the total), Wales 1413 returns (46.9), and Police Scotland contributed 157 returns (4.2%). The Police Service of Northern Ireland were unable to participate in 2025 as it was a new operation for them but intend to do so in future years.

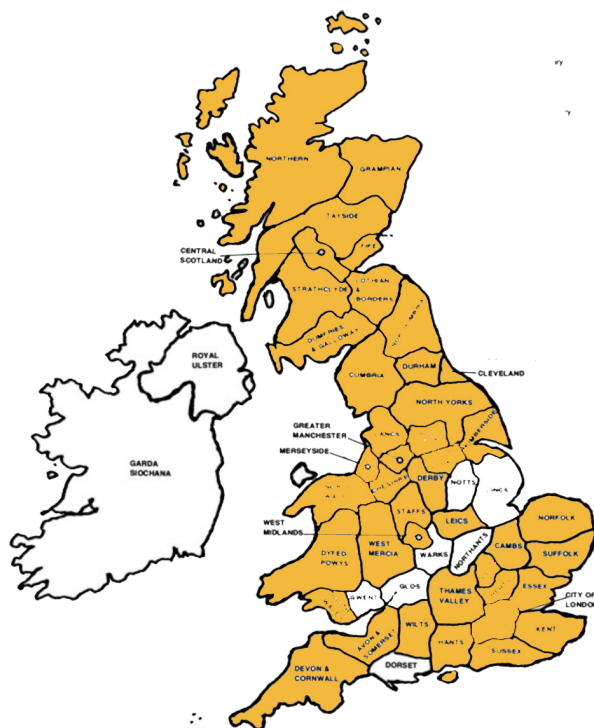
Police Force Participation

Participation from different police forces was variable, with some forces carrying out eyesight checks with hundreds of drivers and others checking fewer than ten drivers. Nine forces provided data for less than five drivers. Table 1 below shows the participating forces. It should be noted that some police forces carried out hundreds of eyesight checks but did not submit core data for all these so figures shown represent only those checks for which core data were provided.

In total, 32 police forces submitted data following the 2025 ODNIYVR campaign, five more than in 2024.

England has 39 police forces, and 28 (72%)

submitted data after taking part in the campaign. Scotland has one police force: Police Scotland which took part. Wales has four police forces, and three of these (75%) took part in the ODNIYVR campaign. The total of 1875 roadside eyesight checks over a two-week period from three Welsh police forces was exceptional. South Wales police carried out 1010 eyesight checks which represents over a quarter of all checks carried out for this campaign.



Map illustrates locations of participating police forces

Table 1. Participating Police Forces: Eyesight data included in analysis

Police Force	Frequency	Percent of total
Avon and Somerset Constabulary	23	0.6
BCH Roads Policing Unit	12	0.3
Cheshire Constabulary	1	0
Cleveland Police	13	0.3
Derbyshire Constabulary	21	0.6
Devon & Cornwall Police*	1	0
Durham Constabulary	292	7.7
Dyfed-Powys Police	139	3.7
Essex Police	1	0
Greater Manchester Police	112	3
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary	40	1.1
Humberside Police*	78	2.1
Kent Police	92	2.4
Lancashire Constabulary*	3	0.1
Leicestershire Police	19	0.5
Merseyside Police	486	12.9
Norfolk Constabulary	3	0.1
North Wales	729	19.3
North Yorkshire Police	12	0.3
Police Scotland	156	4.1
South Wales	1010	26.7
South Yorkshire Police	9	0.2
Staffordshire Police	78	2.1
Suffolk Constabulary	2	0.1
Surrey Police	2	0.1
Sussex	3	0.1
Sussex Police	16	0.4
Thames Valley Police	96	2.5
West Mercia Police	142	3.8
West Midlands Police	30	0.8
West Yorkshire Police	155	4.1
Wiltshire Police	2	0.1
Total	3778	100

**Forces where further eyesight checks were carried out, but core data were not provided.*



Figure 1. Photograph courtesy of Merseyside Police

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 2576 drivers were tested because of this campaign (68.2% of all recorded tests). This is more than twice the number of tests carried out in 2024 specifically for the 'Is your Vision Roadworthy?' campaign, when 1253 drivers were tested because of the campaign (41.6% of all recorded tests).

The next most common reasons were because a traffic offence had been committed (16.8% of drivers); officers conducting a voluntary roadside test (10.7%); and following a road traffic collision (3.1%).

Some police forces conducted eyesight tests for Operation Dark Night in supermarket car parks. For example, Humberside Police as illustrated in figures 2 and 3.

Table 2. Reason for conducting eyesight test

Reason for conducting eyesight test	Frequency	Percent
Operation Dark Night Campaign	2576	68.2
Road Traffic Collision	118	3.1
Suspicion of defective eyesight	29	0.8
Traffic Offence Committed	636	16.8
Voluntary Roadside test	406	10.7
Other reason	13	0.3
Total	3778	100



Figure 2. Photograph courtesy of Humberside Police



Figure 3. Photograph courtesy of Humberside Police

Vehicle type

The type of vehicle stopped was available for 3690 drivers and not recorded for 88 drivers. The most frequently stopped vehicles were a car (3313 drivers, 87.7%), or a van (286 drivers, 7.6%). In 2025 slightly more cars and fewer vans were stopped compared to 2024. Twenty-two 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 for eyesight check

Vehicle type	Frequency	Percent
Car	3313	87.7
Coach	3	0.1
Heavy Goods Vehicle	3	0.1
Light Goods Vehicle	26	0.7
Minibus	2	0.1
Motorcycle	32	0.8
Motorhome	3	0.1
Not Recorded	88	2.3
Other	22	0.6
Van	286	7.6
Total	3778	100

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 goods vehicles, and vans. One minibus was also stopped for a traffic offence.

Of the 3313 car drivers tested, over two-thirds were tested because of Operation Dark Night (2297, 69.3%) and a further 342 following a voluntary roadside test (10.3%). A further 541 car drivers were tested after committing a traffic offence (16.3%). This is a much lower proportion of drivers than in the 2024 campaign when over a third (35.6%) were tested for this reason. One hundred cars (3%) were tested following a road traffic collision (RTC), and 27 (0.8%) tested due to suspicion of defective eyesight, with six (0.2%) tested for unspecified other reasons.

Vans were the second largest group of vehicles (286). Over half the van drivers were tested because of Operation Dark Night (155, 54.2%). This is a significantly higher proportion than during the 2024 campaign when 28.6% were tested for this reason. In 2024, almost half the van drivers were stopped following a traffic offence (46.2%) whereas in 2025 just 28% (80 drivers) were stopped for this reason. Ten van drivers were tested following a RTC (3.5%); two (0.7%) due to suspicion of defective eye-sight, 38 (13.3%) following a voluntary roadside test and one (0.3%) for an unspecified other reason.

Driver Characteristics

Two thirds of the drivers stopped during the campaign were male (2527, 66.9%), and one third (32.9%, 1242, 33%) were female. Three drivers preferred not to declare their gender, and gender was not recorded for 6 drivers. The gender split was similar to that found in the 2024 campaign.

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. However, as not all police forces used the age categories provided in the campaign materials, the data contained a wide range of age bands. To overcome this, the age bands were adjusted to use just five categories not eight. For this reason, it is not possible to accurately identify the number of drivers aged over 80 and over 90 as in previous campaign years. Table 4 shows the revised age groups.

Table 4. Driver Age Groups (n = 3778)

Age group	Frequency	Percent
Under 25 years	255	6.7
25 to 40 years	1053	27.9
41 to 60 years	1342	35.5
61 to 70 Years	594	15.7
Over 70	531	14.1
NR	3	0.1
Total	3778	100

Figure 4 shows the age groups as a percent-age of all drivers tested. Drivers aged over 40 represented 65.4% of those stopped for an eyesight check (2467 drivers). The percentage of drivers aged 70 and over undertaking eye-sight checks (14.1%) was similar to that found in 2024 (13.3%).

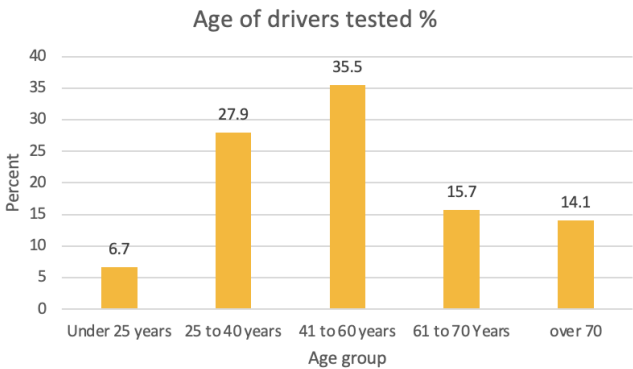


Figure 4. Age of drivers included in the 2025 campaign

Eyesight test within the last two years

Of the 3778 drivers, 1248 (33%) told police of-ficers that they had been prescribed corrective lenses for driving, 2434 (64.4%) had not, and data were missing for 96 drivers (2.5%). Of the 1248 prescribed corrective lenses for driving, 1188 (95.2%) were wearing these when stopped by police, 52 (4.2%) were not wearing them and for 8 drivers (0.6%) this was not recorded. Older drivers were significantly more likely to be prescribed corrective lenses for driving than younger drivers.

Police officers asked 3681 drivers if they had taken an eyesight test with an optometrist in the past two years. Of these, two thirds (2492, 66%) said that they had, but almost a third (1189 drivers, 31.5%) had not. Data on this question were not recorded for 97 drivers (2.6%). These results are an improvement from those of the 2024 campaign, where 60% said they had taken a recent sight test and 40% had not.

Older drivers were significantly more likely to have taken a recent eyesight test than younger drivers ($X^2 = 433.35$, $p = 0.001$). Most drivers aged over 60 had taken a recent eyesight test (937 drivers, 83.3%) and two-thirds of drivers aged 41-60 years had done so (904, 67.4%). Table 5 shows the results.

Almost three-quarters of those saying they had not had a recent eyesight test were men (72.6%, 863 drivers). Significantly more men than wom-en said that they had not had an eyesight test within two years ($X^2 = 258.41$, $p = 0.001$).

Women were significantly more likely than men to say they have had an eyesight test with-in two years (72% compared to 63.2% men) ($X^2 = 91.43$, $p = 0.001$). These figures show an improvement in the take-up of eyesight tests than in 2024 which were (59.6% for women and 54.7% for men).

Table 5. Eyesight test in last two years by age group (n = 3778)

Age group	Eyesight test last 2 years N (% within age group)	No eyesight test N (% within age group)	Not recorded N (% within age group)
Under 25 years	111 (43.5%)	132 (51.8%)	12 (4.7%)
25 to 40 years	540 (51.3%)	485 (46.1%)	28 (2.7%)
41 to 60 years	904 (67.4%)	409 (30.5%)	29 (2.2%)
61 to 70 Years	463 (77.9%)	113 (19%)	18 (3%)
Over 70	474 (89.3%)	50 (9.4%)	7 (1.3%)
NR	0	0	3 (100%)
Total	2492	1189	97

Eyesight tests by nation

There was a significant difference between the three nations of England, Scotland, and Wales regarding the proportion of drivers who had taken an eyesight test within the last two years ($X^2 = 178.47$, $p = 0.001$). In Wales, almost three-quarters of drivers tested by police officers said they had a recent eyesight test (1380, 73.6%). In Scotland this was 70.1% (110 drivers) and in England 57.4% (1002 drivers).

Prescribed corrective lenses for driving

Of the 3778 drivers, 1248 (33%) told police officers that they had been prescribed corrective lenses for driving, 2434 (64.4%) had not, and data were missing for 96 drivers (2.5%). Of the 1248 prescribed corrective lenses for driving, 1188 (95.2%) were wearing these when stopped by police, 52 (4.2%) were not wearing them and for 8 drivers (0.6%) this was not recorded. Older drivers were significantly more likely to be prescribed corrective lenses for driving than younger drivers.

Police Roadside Eyesight Test

A 20 metre eyesight test was carried out with 3778 drivers. Of these, 3719 (98.4%) passed; 59 (1.6%) failed. The failure rate was lowest for drivers aged 61 to 70 years, with no failures in this group. The failure rate was highest among drivers aged over 70 at 3.8% (20 failures out of 531 tests).

In 2024, it was possible to identify all drivers aged 81 to 90 years, and this group of 127 drivers had the highest failure rate (10.2%). In 2025, it was possible to identify 123 drivers aged over 80. Of these, nine failed the roadside eyesight test which is a failure rate of 7.3%. Figure 5 shows the failure rate across known age bands. Unfortunately, age was not recorded for three drivers who failed the eyesight test.

Male drivers had double the failure rate of female drivers: 1.8% and 0.9% respectively.

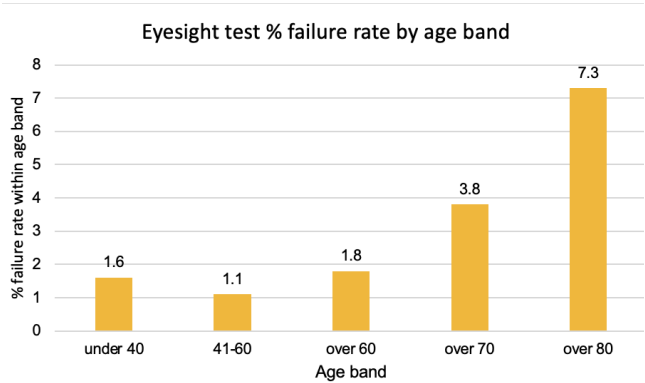


Figure 5. Roadside eyesight test failures by age band (n = 3778)

Failure rates by nation

When analysed by nation, Scotland had the highest failure rate at 3.2% of the 157 drivers tested. For England the failure rate was 2.6% and for Wales it was 0.5%.

Relationship between police eyesight test failures and wearing corrective lenses for driving

For the 59 drivers who failed the eyesight test, half (29, 49.2%) said they had taken an eyesight test with an optometrist in the past two years but 25 (42.4%) had not, for the remaining 5 drivers (8.5%) this information was missing. Half the drivers who failed (30, 50.8%) said they had not been prescribed corrective lenses or glasses for driving, and 24 (40.7%) said they had, for 5 drivers this information was not recorded.

Of the drivers who failed and had been prescribed corrective lenses, almost two-thirds (15, 62.5%) were not wearing these when stopped and tested 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 their prescribed glasses in the vehicle, but not wearing them, for example a driver failed then 'eventually found glasses in car, passed when wearing, but reported for driving otherwise than in accordance'. Such drivers often passed

the eyesight test when they wore their glasses, so the licence was not revoked. One driver reported for an eyesight offence failed the number plate test at 7.4 metres, but later passed when wearing his glasses.

Some drivers who failed the number plate test were not reported and instead eyesight related advice was given by the police officer. For example, one driver failed test initially due to 'wearing dark reading glasses when stopped' but 'passed just when removed glasses'. Some drivers were given advice if they failed to read a number plate at the full 20 metres: 'Driver only able to read 18 metres without glasses on. With glasses on able to see, so advice given to keep wearing them when driving.'

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 3619 drivers (95.8%). For 105 drivers (2.8%) police officers gave advice relating to eyesight; 7 drivers (0.2%) were reported for an eyesight offence, and for 48 drivers (1.3%) the licence revocation form D751E was submitted. For each of the above categories, the percentages are very similar to those found in the 2024 campaign. Examples of the comments from police officers who reported a driver for an eyesight offence rather than a licence revocation are as follows:

"The driver could read a number plate at 19 metres with correct glasses."

"Driver eventually found glasses in car, passed when wearing, but reported for driving otherwise than in accordance."

"Driver failed at 7.4 metres. Later took with glasses and passed."

"Driver should be wearing glasses but failed to do so. Bike seized male reported."

Police officers gave eyesight-related advice to 105 drivers, of these 101 (96.2%) 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 or a reminder to wear their correct prescription when driving.

For some drivers, advice was given because they only just read the numberplate at 20m or got one character on the numberplate 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 50 drivers (1.3% of all drivers stopped) had their driving licence revoked during the ODNIYVR campaign. Twenty-three revocations were immediate (46%), and 27 were pending (54%), awaiting action from DVLA. This finding differs from that for the 2024 campaign when the majority of revocations (90%) were immediate by utilising Cassie's Law.

There was a significant difference in the incidence of licence revocations between male and female drivers ($X^2 = 115.69$, $p=0.001$): 80% of revocations were for male drivers, 14% for female drivers and for three drivers (6%) their gender was not recorded. This finding is similar to that found in the 2023 campaign but differs from the 2024 campaign when there was no difference in allocation of revocations by gender.

The incidence of licence revocations differed significantly by age group ($X^2 = 247.93$, $p=0.001$). Overall, the revocation rate was 1.3%. However, drivers aged over 70 had the highest rate of 3.2% (17 of the 531 in that age group). Within this group, 123 drivers were identified as being aged over 80, for these the revocation rate was 6.5% (8 of the 123 drivers).

In the 2024 campaign, drivers aged 81 to 90 years had the highest rate of 10.2% followed by the over 90 year olds at 5.9%. However, from the data received in 2025 direct comparisons were not possible as drivers in these particular age groups could not be identified. Figure 6 shows the distribution of licence revocations by age.

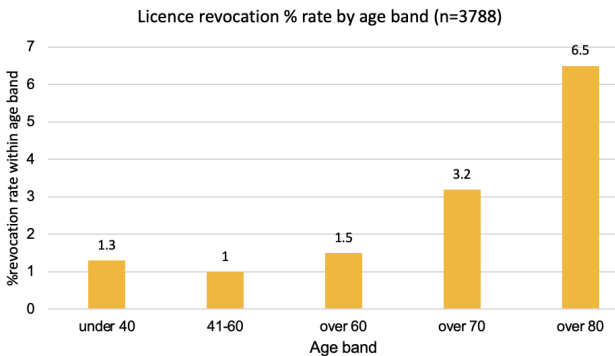


Figure 6. Driving licence revocations by age band (n = 3778)

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 59 sight test failures, of the five reasons for carrying out the roadside test, the most

frequently reported single reason was due to Operation Dark Night (33, 55.9% of failures). The second most reported reason was due to a traffic offence being committed (11, 18.6%). When Operation Dark Night and ‘voluntary roadside test’ are combined (40 drivers), over two-thirds (67.8%) of sight test failures were detected following drivers taking the test voluntarily. Eight drivers failed the eyesight test following a road traffic collision (13.6% of failures).

These figures differ from the 2024 campaign where almost a third of failures were detected following a traffic offence (32%) and only 38% were detected as a result of drivers taking the test voluntarily.

For the 50 driving licence revocations, almost two-thirds (32 drivers, 64%) resulted from a voluntary sight test for Operation Dark Night. When combined with ‘other voluntary roadside test’, voluntary sight tests accounted for almost three-quarters (74%) of licence revocations (37 drivers). Again, this differs significantly from the 2024 campaign when voluntary tests accounted for just 40% of revocations.

Figure 7 shows a breakdown of sight test failures and licence revocations by reason for undertaking the roadside eyesight test.

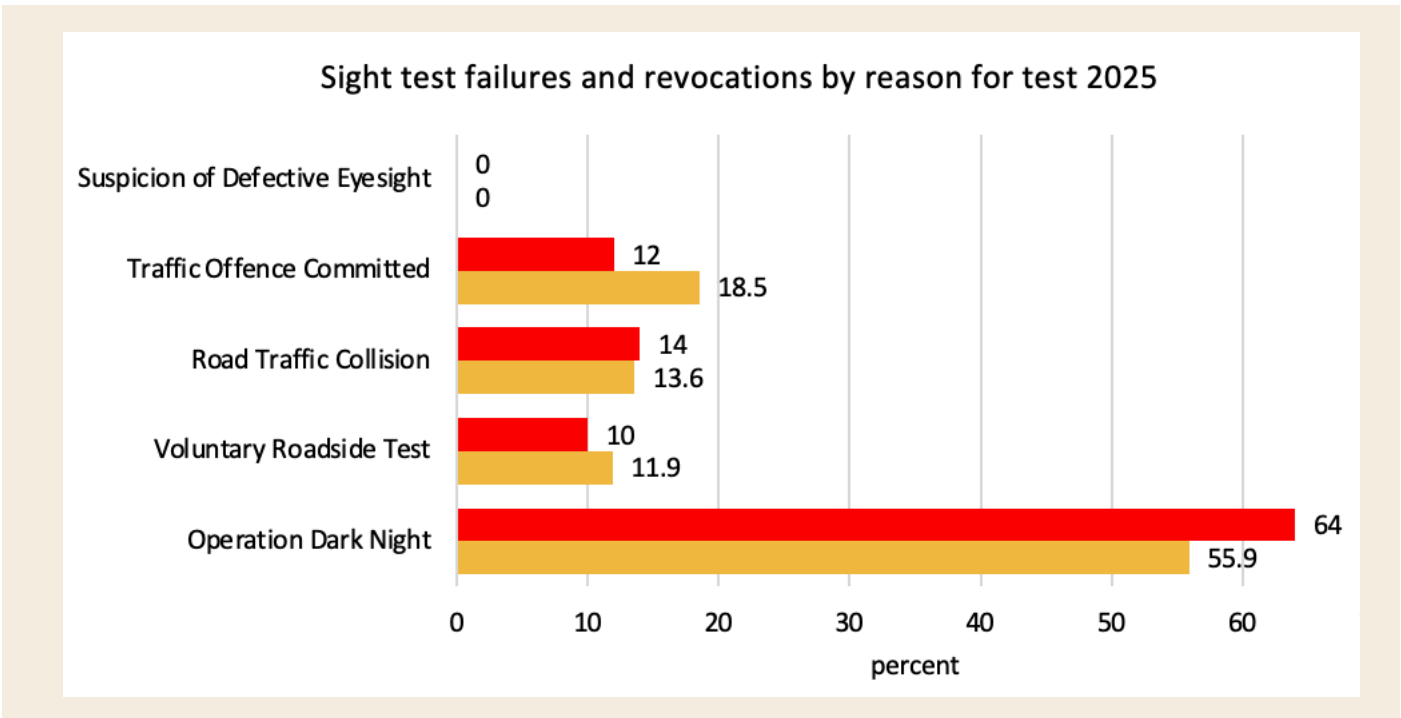


Figure 7. Sight test failures and licence revocations by reason for test (n = 3778)

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 thirty-two police forces in England, Scotland and Wales taking part. This means that almost three-quarters (73%) of the 44 police forces in England, Wales and Scotland participated in the campaign. In Wales, three of the four police forces submitted data. In England almost three-quarters of police forces took part.

Over the two-week period, over 5000 eyesight checks were carried out by police forces. Drivers were stopped and asked to take a roadside eyesight test in which they attempted to read a vehicle number plate at a distance of 20 metres. The thirty-two forces collected and submitted data, resulting in detailed data for 3778 drivers. Data for these drivers were used in the analysis.

Most of the drivers tested were driving a car (88%) and two-thirds of all drivers were male (67%). Almost three-quarters of drivers who took the number plate test did so voluntarily, either specifically for Operation Dark Night, or another voluntary test. Another 636 drivers took the test after committing a traffic offence (17%) and a further 118 following a collision (3%). This means that the results are more representative of typical drivers than in previous campaigns where higher proportions of drivers took the eyesight test following a traffic offence or collision.

Almost a third of all drivers tested had not taken an eyesight test with an optometrist in

the past two years. More females than males had taken a recent eyesight test. Drivers aged over 60 were significantly more likely to have taken a recent eyesight test with an optometrist than younger drivers, which may be linked to the availability of free sight tests from age 60 in England and Wales. Scotland has free sight tests for all age groups.

Of all drivers tested in 2025, most passed the eyesight test, but 59 drivers failed. Male drivers had double the failure rate of female drivers: 1.8% and 0.9% respectively. The overall failure rate was 1.6%, similar to that found in 2024 when the failure rate was 1.7%. For the 2023 campaign the failure rate was 2.2%, but almost three-quarters of tests were carried out following either a traffic offence or collision and only 22% were carried out voluntarily. This suggests that a failure rate of around 1.6% is likely to be realistic.

When analysed by age, older drivers had a higher failure rate than the average, with a rate of 3.8% for drivers aged over 70. For the 123 drivers aged over 80, the failure rate was 7.3%.

Drivers aged 70 or over account for approximately 15% of all licences held in Great Britain (Department for Transport, 2025a), and 11% of all miles driven (Department for Transport, 2024b). Older people are at high risk of injury on our roads, in 2024, 24% of all car driver fatalities were older car drivers aged 70 or over (Department for Transport, 2025a). The most recent government statistics show that 22% of fatalities and 8% of casualties

were aged 70 years old and over (Department for Transport, 2025c). The figures show a 12% increase in the number of fatalities for males aged 70 and over since 2014. Conversely, the figures for females in this age group have decreased by 16% over the same period (Department for Transport, 2025c).

Whilst data collected through voluntary eyesight testing of drivers is likely to lead to results more representative of the wider driver population, it should be noted that drivers are under no obligation to comply with a request from a police officer to undertake an eyesight check. For example, as part of the 2025 campaign, during one operation 68 motorists were stopped and voluntarily invited to complete a 20-metre roadside number plate test. Of those tested, 64 successfully met the required standard, one driver failed as a result of wearing inappropriate corrective eyewear, and three drivers declined to participate in the eyesight test.

Current legislation states that a police officer who stops a driver, or attends a road traffic collision, may require the driver to undertake an eyesight test if the officer has reasonable grounds to suspect that the individual does not meet the legal visual standards required to drive on a public road. This requirement is set out under Section 96 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, which allows officers to mandate a 20-metre number plate test under such circumstances. However, where no suspicion exists and the check forms part of a routine stop or voluntary operation, drivers retain the right to refuse an eyesight assessment. This may allow individuals who are aware, or have reason to believe, that their vision is impaired to opt out of testing, thereby continuing to drive without appropriate scrutiny. This illustrates that voluntary testing has limitations and may still miss visually impaired drivers who refuse to be tested.

Data quality

Police forces welcomed the opportunity to have the two methods to use for submitting eyesight

returns, via Excel spreadsheets or QR code. For each of these methods the standardised data collection fields were specific as were the drop-down options for each field. However, some forces diverged from the standardised data collection fields and used their own. In the 2025 campaign, this was especially the case for driver age. Instead of using our specified age groups, some forces used different age groupings which compromised the analysis of data in relation to driver age and prevented direct comparisons with results from previous years.

Study Limitations

Although over 5000 eyesight checks were carried out by police forces during the campaign, the results of these were not always recorded and submitted to the study team. Some forces carried out hundreds of tests with drivers but unfortunately without any data on these, we could not include them in the analysis. To overcome this in future, additional support and training is recommended to ensure that all results are correctly recorded.

Although many of the eyesight checks were carried out with drivers at the roadside, in some cases these were carried out in a convenient central location such as a supermarket car park. Details of the location of the test (roadside or other) is currently not routinely recorded by officers and therefore the proportion of eyesight checks carried out at the roadside is unknown. It is recommended that this is recorded in future police eyesight campaigns so that meaningful comparisons can be made.

As in previous campaigns, there was significant variation between police forces for the number of eyesight tests carried out. One force carried out over 1000 checks over the two-week period, whereas nine forces carried out fewer than 5 eyesight checks during the same period. The reasons for this variation are unclear. Such variation means that the data may not show the true extent of driving with impaired eyesight in Great Britain.



Conclusions

including recommendations for action

The Operation Dark Night and Is Your Vision Roadworthy campaign has resulted in the collection of data for 3778 drivers in England, Scotland and Wales who took a police eyesight test at the roadside. Thirty-two police forces submitted data for analysis. The proportion of drivers who took the eyesight test voluntarily was higher than for previous campaigns, making the findings more robust.

Of the drivers tested, 3719 (98.4%) passed, but 59 failed (1.6%). The failure rate was highest among older drivers, with a rate of 7.3% among drivers aged over 80. There are currently 1,615,103 driving licence holders aged over 80 (Department for Transport, 2025b), so a failure rate of 7.3% equates to almost 118,000 drivers at risk of driving with eyesight which does not meet the legal visual standards.

Many of the drivers (42.4%) of drivers who failed the eyesight test had not had a sight test with an optometrist within the last two years. Most of the drivers who failed the eyesight test and had been 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.

Of the 59 drivers who failed the eyesight test, 50 had their driving licence revoked. The highest revocation rates were for older drivers, at 3.2% for the over 70s and 6.5% for those aged over 80.

It is recommended that these drivers are made aware of the dangers of driving with impaired or uncorrected eyesight through media campaigns.

There was a significant difference in the incidence of licence revocations between male and female drivers with 80% of revocations for male drivers. This finding differs from the 2024 campaign which found no difference in allocation of revocations by gender.

An important outcome of the campaign is that over a two-week period 59 drivers were found to have been driving with eyesight which did not meet current standards, and 50 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 1.6%, and the licence revocation rate was 1.3% of the 3788 drivers tested. These figures are consistent with those found in 2024.

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

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.

“

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

- 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

Case Study North Wales Police



Officers were out in Holyhead and Bangor where 320 vehicles were stopped and drivers were asked to read a number plate from a distance of 20 metres – the primary legal vision standard for driving in the UK.

Unfortunately, seven drivers failed the eyesight test and were taken home by officers – including individuals who failed to read the number plate at 4, 8, 10.5 and 13 metres. The DVLA will now be informed of all those who failed as part of Cassie's Law.

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IsYourVisionRoadworthy.org.uk