

# Key Data on Older Adults with Vision Loss in Wisconsin



The information in this document was extracted from *Wisconsin's Older Population and Vision Loss: A Briefing*, prepared by The Ohio State University College of Optometry and published by VisionServe Alliance in 2022.

The briefing was created to help policy makers and service providers better understand the characteristics and circumstances of older adults with vision loss as they make critical budget, policy and operational decisions that impact the well-being of this population.

## OVERVIEW

- An estimated 4.2% of older people in Wisconsin report severe vision impairment or blindness.
- Women over 65 in Wisconsin (4.5%) are more likely than men (3.7%) to experience vision impairment. Women comprise 59% of the state's older population.
- The prevalence of vision impairment among African Americans over 65 in Wisconsin is more than triple that of their White peers, 12.1% compared to 3.6%.
- The prevalence of vision impairment among older people varies widely across Wisconsin counties, ranging from 3% to 13%, with high rates found among both urban and rural counties.
- Only about 3% of older people with vision impairment nationally receive vision rehabilitation services.

## VISION LOSS AND HEALTH

- Older people with vision impairment report higher prevalence of chronic conditions such as stroke, arthritis, diabetes and kidney disease, and are twice as likely to suffer from depression.
- 55% of older people with vision impairment in Wisconsin report fair or poor health, compared to 20% of older people without vision impairment.

- 37% of older people with vision impairment in Wisconsin report 14 or more days of poor physical health in the past 30 days compared to 13% of those without vision impairment.
- 13% of people with vision impairment in Wisconsin report 14 or more days of poor mental health in the past 30 days compared to 6% of those without vision loss.

## **VISION LOSS AND SOCIOECONOMIC WELL-BEING**

- Older people with vision impairment have lower levels of education and are poorer than older people without vision loss.
- 28% of older people with vision impairment in Wisconsin did not graduate from high school, compared to 8% of those without vision impairment.
- 30% of older people with vision impairment in Wisconsin have annual incomes below \$20,000, compared to 12% among those without vision impairment.

We encourage advocates to incorporate this data into their communication with policy makers and with other organizations who serve older adults to build their awareness of this population's needs. Moving forward, we expect to work with our partners to produce a similar report focused on working-age adults with vision loss to provide insights about employment barriers and other obstacles facing that population.