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Prevalence of Vision Impairment in Older adults in Rural China In 2014 and Comparisons with the 2006 China Nine-Province Survey

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** Estimate the prevalence of vision impairment and blindness in 2014 among older adults in rural China with comparisons with the 2006 Nine-Province Survey.

**Design**: Population-based, cross-sectional study.

**Methods:** Geographical cluster sampling was used in randomly selecting residents from a rural county or semi-rural district within nine provinces: Beijing, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Heilongjiang, Jiangsi, Hebei, Ningxia, Chongqing and Yunnan. Persons 50 years of age or older were enumerated through household visits and invited to examination sites for visual acuity testing and examination. Vision impairment and blindness in 2014 was compared with data from the 2006 survey.

Results: Among 51,310 examined persons, the prevalence of presenting vision impairment (<20/63 to ≥20/400) in the better-seeing eye ranged from 6.05% to 15.3% across the nine study sites, with presenting blindness (<20/400) ranging from 0.66% to 5.35%. With best-corrected visual acuity, the prevalence of vision impairment ranged from 1.96% to 8.74%, and blindness from 0.47% to 5.01%. Vision impairment was associated with older age, female gender, and little or no education. The overall prevalence of presenting vision impairment and blindness decreased during the 2006-2014 interval by 6.31% and 29.0%, respectively; and by 16.1% and 38.0%, respectively, after standardization of 2006 prevalence rates to the 2014 population.

Conclusions: Substantial progress has been made in the reduction of vision impairment in rural China. Nevertheless, it remains an important public health problem with substantial geographic disparities and with older age, female gender and illiteracy as risk factors.

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