

Visual component of UK driving test needs modernising

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Researchers from City University London have found that the visual component of the UK driving test is outdated.

Using the latest technology, the study - which is published in the *British Journal of Ophthalmology* - shows that the current test used to assess fitness to drive is likely not assessing the right areas of the [visual field](#). The findings might prompt the design of a fairer eye sight test ensuring with greater accuracy that only those safe to drive are present on the roads.

To measure the effects of different [visual impairments](#) the researchers developed a novel computer setup. This technology gave people with normal vision 'simulated' sight loss in different areas of their vision whilst they tried to detect hazards in movies of driving scenes.

The team found that a loss of the upper part of someone's visual field had a larger impact on their ability to detect driving hazards than those with a loss in the lower part. Unfortunately the current test used by DSA (Driving Standards Agency) to assess patients with [eye disease](#) tends to test more areas in the lower part of the visual field.

David Crabb, lead author on the study and Professor of Statistics and Vision Research at City University London, said:

"The current test used to examine the visual field component for legal fitness to drive in patients with eye disease in the UK is far from ideal. Our study goes some little way to highlight this.

"The visual component of fitness to drive is a very tricky to assess. Yet, at the moment some people are losing or retaining their driving licence on a far from perfect test. We need more research in this area, especially on what parts of vision are needed for safe driving."

Russell Young, CEO of International Glaucoma Association, which provided a research award to fund this work said:

"These are important early findings which begin to question the suitability of the Esterman visual field test that is currently being used to assess a person's fitness and safety to drive. People with glaucoma in both eyes are required by the DSA to take this test; they are often worried about what to expect, and stressed about the impact on their quality of life if they have to relinquish their licence.

"The current test developed over 30 years ago, was not designed with driving in mind and, as this new research highlights, it probably doesn't test the important parts of the visual field well enough. Further investment is needed to fund the design and development of improved tests and technology for assessing the visual field component of fitness

to drive."

"It is vital that people with glaucoma and other visual impairments as well as the [driving](#) authorities are confident in the tests and equipment being used."

Provided by City University London

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