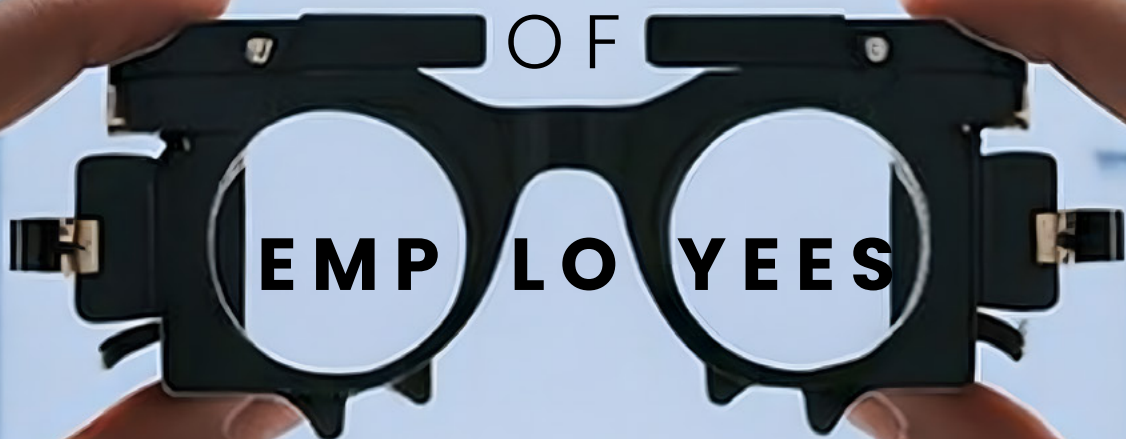
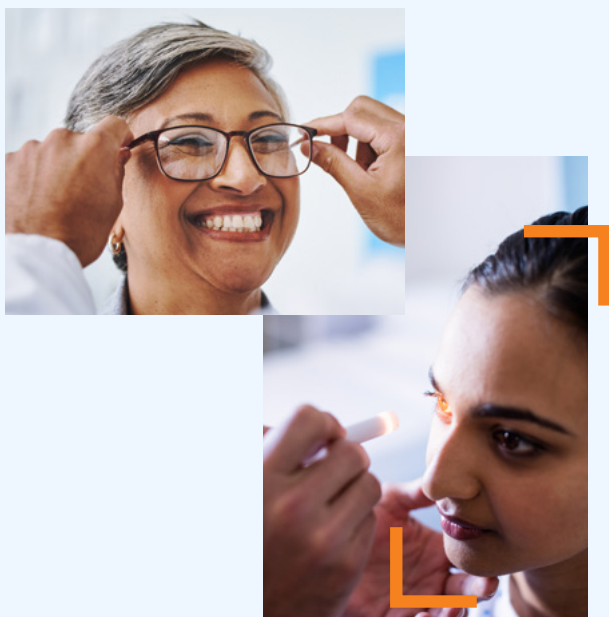


EYE HEALTH



A Perspective for
Organizations

A data-driven exploration of vision
health in Corporate India.



Vision, or the sense of sight, is the most dominant among the five senses that allow us to perceive, learn, live and grow. A clear vision is integral for us to live productive, fulfilling lives.

However, despite its importance, eye health is one of the most frequently overlooked yet remarkably common health problems. At least one billion people worldwide are living with vision impairments that are either preventable or yet to be diagnosed. ⁽¹⁾

Neglecting eye health could affect overall health outcomes over time for individuals, businesses and the broader economy.

Eye on **India**

With **68%** of the country's population being of working age,⁽²⁾ India currently stands at a special juncture in its economic journey. However, good health is a prerequisite for making the most of this demographic advantage. Corporate India is already affected by a rapidly burgeoning incidence of lifestyle diseases and significant gaps in healthcare access.

Employers in India are in a unique position to drive transformation in building a healthier, more resilient workforce by adopting a proactive healthcare mindset, especially when it comes to eye health.

There is an urgent need to integrate eye health into health systems to improve the quality of lives and drive productivity and workforce participation upwards.

Considering these insights, **HCL Healthcare** decided to proactively address the vision health of its employees.

An analysis of year-long eye-screening camps, which included **34,585** employees, revealed that a significant proportion of employees of working-age people do not prioritize their vision health and live with vision impairments that are yet to be addressed.

This report emphasizes the importance of addressing vision health in the corporate context and taking a proactive approach to employee wellbeing.



Key Findings

17%

of the employees tested were prescribed their first corrective glasses.

1,594

employees suspected to have glaucoma

1,052

employees had other retinal abnormalities

47

employees had diabetic retinopathy

8%

of employees had never had an eye checkup before, and **16%** of them turned out to have vision impairment.

Vision Health: An Overlooked Crisis

One of the health concerns that can seem subtle until it becomes apparent and begins to greatly impact employee wellbeing and their productivity, is eye health.

As employers and employees navigate a world of increasingly more remote work, behind digital screens and with constant connectivity, vision health should no longer be a problem that is put on the back burner.

HCL Healthcare decided to take proactive action and screened 34,585 employees for vision impairments between April 2024 and March 2025.

Our analysis revealed some findings that highlight opportunities for early intervention and reinforced the urgent need to adopt a proactive healthcare mindset.

8% of the employees surveyed had never had an eye exam in their lives.

Among employees who participated in eye checkups for the very first time, 16% were diagnosed with vision impairment and were found to require corrective glasses.



These statistics highlight a notable gap in proactive healthcare within the workplace. The ramifications extend far beyond just the individuals affected.

Vision problems that get brushed under the rug can lead to reduced productivity, more eye fatigue and strain, and even impact long-term health. All these factors can severely diminish employees' overall performance and quality of life.

Prioritizing your employees' vision health can thus also pave the way for a more engaged, healthy and productive workforce.

Eye Health: A Key Component of Employee Wellbeing

Vision impairment is both common and under-diagnosed. HCL's findings point to the urgent need for regular and structured eye health programmes across the Indian corporate ecosystem that safeguards the eye health of employees.

Only **15,401 employees** had normal vision. A total of 3,166 were advised to begin using corrective glasses, while **16,018** were recommended to continue using their existing prescription.

Additionally, 2006 employees were referred to hospitals for further evaluation due to their vision not improving to standard levels. While **33,048 employees** had normal retinal findings, there were 47 cases of diabetic retinopathy, **1,594 glaucoma** suspects, **33 cataract** cases, and **1,052** with other retinal abnormalities requiring specialist intervention.



Glaucoma is a condition in which the eye's optic nerve gets damaged. It can lead to vision loss.



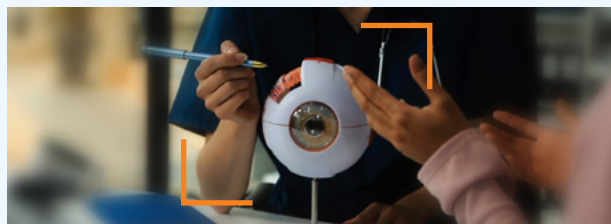
Cataract, currently the leading cause of blindness worldwide, is when clouding forms the eye's lens.



Diabetes retinopathy, a complication associated with diabetes, is caused by damage to the blood vessels in the retina.

Early intervention is crucial for all of these ocular conditions. India is currently facing a diabetes epidemic of sorts, making diabetic retinopathy a pressing concern among eye specialists. One study has pegged the national prevalence of diabetic retinopathy among diabetics in the country at 12.5 %. ⁽³⁾

Key Findings



34,585 employees were tested.

8% of employees had not got their eyes checked even once in their lives.

Among these employees who underwent an eye checkup for the first time, **16%** required corrective glasses.

3,166 employees were advised to wear glasses, **1,594** were suspected to have glaucoma, and **33** to have cataract.

2,052 were meanwhile found to have retinal abnormalities that required a visit to an ophthalmologist.

2,006 were referred to hospitals as their vision was not improving to 6/6, also known as perfect vision.

33,048 employees were found to have a normal retina in both eyes.

47 employees were, meanwhile, found to have diabetic retinopathy.

Expert Insights

Dr Rohit Shetty, director of Narayana Nethralaya, Bangalore and a practicing ophthalmologist, refractive surgeon and clinician scientist with special focus on corneal biomechanics, keratoconus (thinning and bulging out of cornea like a cone) and refractive surgery, reviewed the HCL study.

Dr Shetty, who has published multiple research papers on the issue of dry eyes and how to manage it holistically, says **“These findings are deeply concerning.”**

Many individuals were found to require corrective glasses and 17% of employees were given their first glass prescription. Some individuals were diagnosed with serious underlying ocular conditions such as glaucoma, cataract, and diabetic retinopathy.

“Developing diabetic retinopathy at the age of 40-45 years is often a signal that damage has already begun in other critical organs — such as the kidneys, liver and lungs. This means that these individuals in particular are unfortunately already on a trajectory of systemic health decline.”

Dr Shetty stresses that vision health is connected to your whole body.

Symptoms such as dry eyes, headaches, blurred vision and eye fatigue are especially prevalent among those who work in a digital-intensive role, such as IT professionals.

“Vision problems carry broader psychosocial implications, including irritability, impaired concentration and an overall reduced quality of life,” he adds.

There is an urgent need for both employers and healthcare providers to collaborate and integrate basic eye-care practices into workplace health programmes, Dr Shetty says.

Failure to do so doesn't just affect individual well-being — it directly impacts workforce productivity and, by extension, economic output.

The focus, he says, should be on routine and comprehensive eye examinations and not just basic tests.

While the available data is valuable, he cautions that it likely represents only the surface of a much larger issue. **“There may be additional undetected conditions due to limited screening frequency.”** he says.

Prolonged screen usage can come with **symptoms**



Dry eyes



Headaches



Eye fatigue



Blurred vision



Sleep issues



Head and neck pain



Vision problems and cognitive decline:

What's the link?

Untreated vision problems can have effects that go beyond eye health. Dr Rupak B Chaudhary, an eye specialist with the Centre for Sight, highlights a significant and well-documented link between neglected vision problems and cognitive decline. He points to a 2024 study by researchers at the LV Prasad Eyes Institute in Hyderabad, which found that older adults with vision loss were four times more likely to experience cognitive impairment compared to those without vision loss.

“Since the most common causes of vision impairment are treatable, addressing eyesight negligence is a powerful preventative measure against cognitive decline,” says Dr Chaudhary. He explains that vision loss reduces mental stimulation and eventually affects brain health by causing the following problems:

→ **Sensory deprivation**

The brain relies on visual input for about 80% of its information about the environment. When one's vision degrades, this critical flow of sensory information reduces, causing structural and functional changes in the brain over time, leading to cognitive decline.

→ **Reduced engagement**

Untreated vision problems can hinder one's ability to take part in cognitively stimulating activities, such as reading and solving puzzles. Lower engagement in such activities reduces mental stimulation, increasing the risk of cognitive decline.

→ **Social isolation**

Vision loss can make social interactions more difficult. It also comes with increased anxiety about potential falls and hampers mobility. Over time, it can lead to social isolation, another significant risk factor for cognitive decline.

→ **Cognitive overload**

Poor vision can lead to 'cognitive compensation', wherein the brain uses up cognitive resources that would otherwise be available for higher-level functions like memory and attention as eyesight worsens, and has to work harder to interpret distorted or incomplete visual information.

→ **Complication of chronic conditions**

Vision impairment can make it harder to manage other chronic conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension, which are also linked to cognitive decline. It may be harder for someone with vision loss to read medication bottles or administer insulin to themselves.

In the light of these findings, Dr Chaudhary strongly recommends regular visits to the ophthalmologist, wearing corrective lenses, and staying mentally and socially active by engaging in activities like reading, solving puzzles and socializing to keep the brain engaged and healthy.

Rise of the **screens**

Vision decline is a gradual, irreversible process, and larger global studies are now showing how everyday habits accelerate the risk. A meta-analysis of 45 studies involving over 335,000 participants, published in JAMA Network Open, found that each additional hour of daily screen time increases the risk of myopia by 21% ([Health](#)). Once developed, myopia cannot be reversed and can progressively deteriorate vision. For a workforce already navigating long hours of screen exposure, the implications are serious. Employers, with their unique reach and influence, are in a critical position to raise awareness and normalise preventive eye care as part of employee well-being.

The risks extend beyond just vision sharpness. Analysis from the UK Biobank study has shown that increased recreational screen time correlates with thinning in critical retinal layers, such as the ganglion cell–inner plexiform layer (GC-IPL) and the macula ([PubMed Central](#)). These structural changes are troubling because they may not reverse over time and have even been linked to cognitive decline in related research. Incorporating vision care into the preventive health portfolio—alongside regular screenings—can help detect these issues earlier, reducing long-term health risks.

For employees, it protects the quality of life. For employers, it safeguards productivity and builds a healthier, more resilient workforce.

According to Dr Shetty, excess screen time in the evenings can end up disrupting your body's circadian rhythm, causing sleep

disturbances and impacting long-term health and wellbeing.

There is a general lack of awareness about the short-term and long-term impacts of excessive screen time, he adds. But a few simple steps can go a long way in ensuring that eye health is not compromised.

→ Adopt and maintain eye-healthy habits

Employers can play a critical role here by encouraging employees to adopt eye-healthy habits like remembering to blink, periodically looking away from the screen and taking screen breaks.

→ Use artificial lubricants

Dr Shetty recommends consulting an ophthalmologist who will prescribe artificial lubricants you can put to use in case the eyes feel dry. “We use moisturisers and lotions every day to keep the body moisturised, but what about our eyes?” he says.

→ Undergo eye checkups

Routine eye examinations can help detect underlying problems early, thereby allowing for better prognosis. Ensure your employees know that keeping ophthalmologists' appointments is non-negotiable and neglecting eye health could affect overall health outcomes over time.

Conclusion

Vision loss causes a significant economic burden in India, with one 2022 study pointing out that the potential loss of productivity due to vision impairment stands at **INR 646 billion**.⁽⁴⁾

A 2021 report ⁽⁵⁾ on the economic impact of blindness in India stated that while preventable blindness cut down the probability of working by **30%**, those who are employed become **20%** less productive.

Investing in employee eye health programmes can not only benefit their personal health and wellbeing but can also boost productivity and hold immense economic benefits.

Moving beyond a reactive care approach is especially pertinent for maintaining vision health and preventing complications. Employers must implement vision care policies such as the following at the workplace:

→ Regular eye screenings

HCL's analysis revealed that employees and their can greatly benefit from routine eye screenings. Such screenings are the mainstay of maintaining eye health and preventing complications, and can play a crucial role in detecting eye health issues early. Employers can play a big role in facilitating earlier intervention and, thereby, better prognosis by investing in regular eye examinations. It can not only help your employees thrive but also boost their productivity by addressing any underlying vision problems.

→ Awareness about avoiding eye strain

It is important to make employee awareness an integral part of the corporate wellness strategy. Scheduling routine awareness initiatives centred on eye health and the effects of prolonged screen use can not only help employees identify the common as well as lesser-noticed signs of eye strain. but also equip them with the tools to handle the problem.

→ Screen breaks and ergonomic-friendly work setups

Investing in your employees' long-term eye health and overall well-being also includes making regular screen breaks and designing ergonomically friendly work environments a part of the work culture. This will go a long way in boosting employee wellbeing and engagement. Educate employees about poor eye health habits and encourage them to adopt best practices.

→ Integrated wellness programmes

HCL's analysis has revealed that it is imperative that eye health is well embedded into broader corporate wellness programmes. Ensure that eye health is not neglected in annual health checkups and corporate wellness programmes. A unified wellness strategy works best, even when it comes to fulfilling productivity and sustainability goals.

References

1. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>
2. <https://www.unfpa.org/swp2025>
3. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(22\)00411-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(22)00411-9/fulltext)
4. [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35648000/#:~:text=The%20potential%20loss%20of%20productivity,\(Int%24%2029.4%20billion\).](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35648000/#:~:text=The%20potential%20loss%20of%20productivity,(Int%24%2029.4%20billion).)
5. https://www.seva.org/site/DocServer/Seva_Cost_of_Visual_Impairment_in_India.pdf



HCL HEALTHCARE

Making Corporate India Healthier

corpsales@hclhealthcare.in | www.hclhealthcare.in