

## Vision issues while driving

### A study in Germany, Spain and the UK

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According to the EU Statistical Office (Eurostat)<sup>1</sup>, there are almost 500 cars per thousand inhabitants in the EU. Therefore the majority of adult Europeans are likely to be drivers. Consequently, many of them must also be clients of opticians. This large target group was the focus of a market research study commissioned by Hoya in early 2017.

One objective of the study was to find out when and in which situations driver's vision is impaired and also how drivers deal with this. In addition, the level of interest of drivers in special glasses for driving was investigated. In total 3,060 drivers took part in the survey from Germany, Spain and the UK, approximately 1000 from each country

#### Project description

##### Method:

- Online survey with approximately 1.000 respondents in each country: Germany, the UK and Spain;
- Respondents representatively screened by age (18 and older), gender, and region in the country;
- Respondents reported driving at least once a week;
- People who work in the optics industry/business or who have such conflicts of interests were excluded from the survey.

##### Composition of the sample:

- 52% men, 48% women;
- Average age: 47.3 years (women 45.9, men 48.6);
- 57% use prescription glasses and / or contact lenses while driving.

### Driving is a daily routine for the majority

60% of the respondents say that they drive daily from Monday to Friday. Drivers aged between 40 and 60 are the most active ones (over 70% drive daily). Respondents aged between 30 and 50 drive the longest distances with one third of them driving more than 15.000 kilometers annually. Distances travelled become shorter around retirement age, nevertheless almost two thirds of drivers over 60 use their car at least three to four times per week, but primarily for local private trips. The need to drive is maintained until old age. Only 4% of those who are over seventy say that they consider abandoning driving for age reasons.

Germans are the ones who feel the most dependent on their car – 57%, in Great Britain 44%, Spain even less 31%. Germans are also the most enthusiastic drivers: 78% of them

like driving; in Spain and the UK, this figure is below 70%. Overall, women drive a little less frequently and for shorter distances compared to men. Only two-thirds of the women said that they like driving compared to three quarters of the men.

In all three countries respondents aged between 20 and 60 are regularly and routinely on the road.

### **Sunglasses - popular vision aids while driving**

55% of both Spaniards and Britons wear glasses or contact lenses while driving, in Germany this percentage is higher - 62%. 77% of the respondents wear sunglasses at least occasionally. Here the Spaniards lead with 85%. 63% of eyeglass or contact lens wearers use sunglasses with correction. But what is notable is that 28% of single-vision and 17% of the of progressive lenses users are at least occasionally on the road wearing **non-prescription** sunglasses. Younger drivers and frequent drivers use sunglasses significantly more frequently than older and occasional drivers.

### **Everyone is talking about the weather...**

The fact that sunglasses are so popular while driving is not surprising. Driving towards the sun is one of the most unpleasant driving experiences on the road. Two-thirds of respondents confirm that, at least occasionally, they cannot see well in this situation. Most drivers claim that they don't have any or only minor visual problems in urban traffic, at high speeds or in traffic, but they agree that difficult weather conditions lead to eye fatigue. Between 6% and 14% of the respondents answered that they would not see well in the rain, on wet roads, in snow, twilight or fog. All problems intensify at night. 34% of those who have night time visual problems either avoid night trips or let others drive them (see Fig. 2, red and orange bars). Women and older drivers feel more uncomfortable driving in the dark compared to others.

## The most common causes of vision problems while driving...

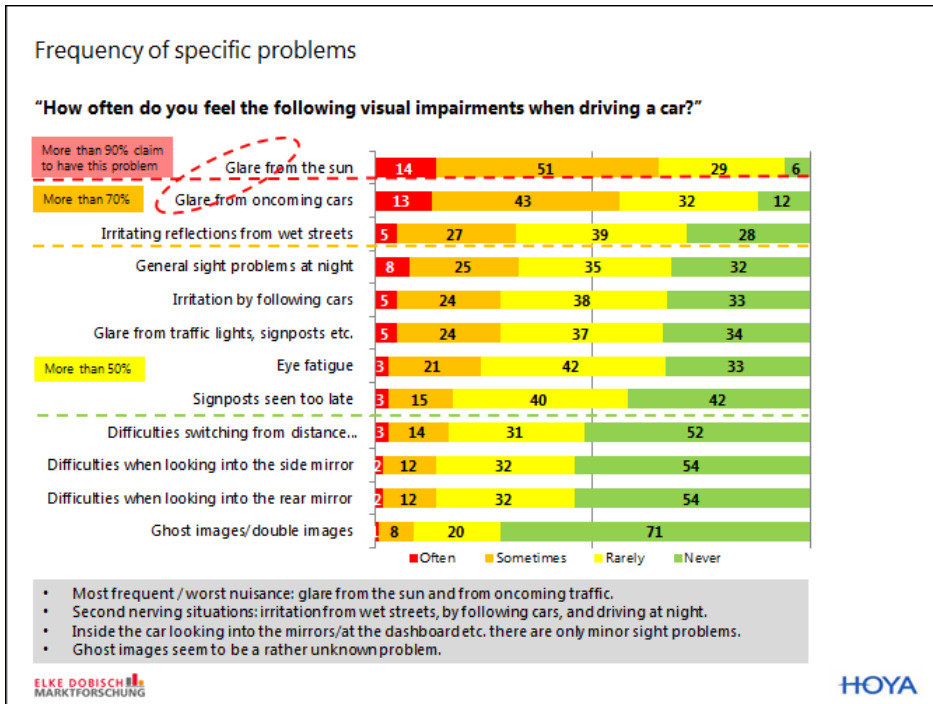


Fig. 1: All respondents in Germany, the UK and Spain.

## ... and how the drivers deal with it:

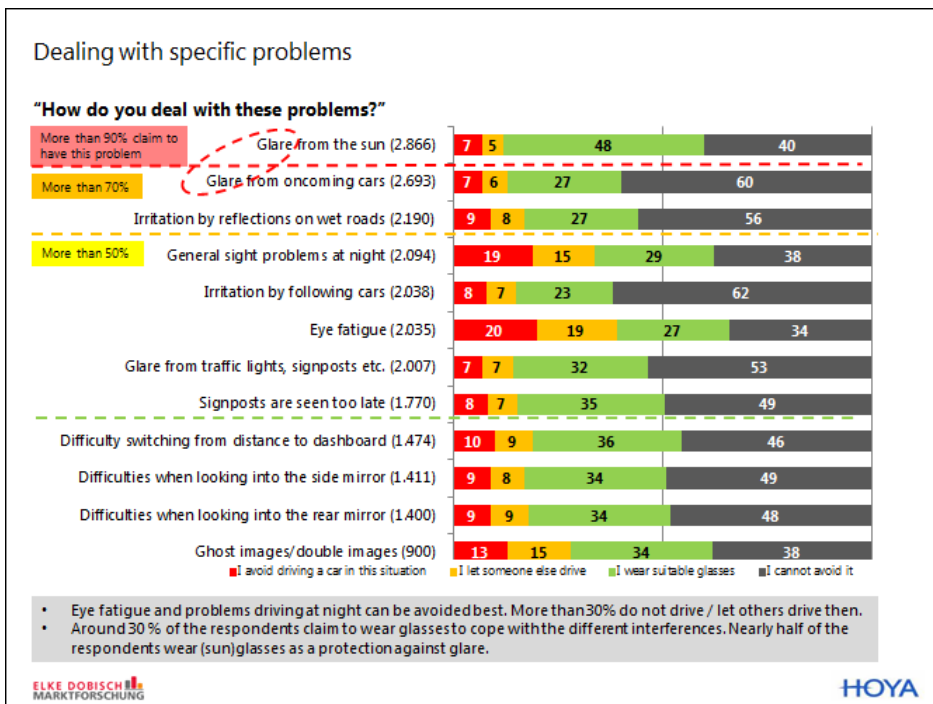


Fig. 2: All respondents who have encountered the respective problems (number of respondents in brackets)

## The figures speak for themselves

Apart from "ghost images", all other visual issues are experienced by half of the drivers. Over 90% confirm that they have been affected by glare in road traffic. What is striking is the high percentage of those who just simply accept the problems and do not do anything to solve them (see Fig. 2, gray bar). This is also reflected by the fact that more than 40% report that they never talked to others about their vision problems experienced while driving (UK 60%). Less than half of the drivers having these visual problems talked to their optician or ECP about such issues. In Germany and Spain the Ophthalmologist is the first person respondents talk to regarding visual issues while driving but surprisingly, three quarters of those who ever talked to a practitioner say they had taken the initiative themselves, only 16% remember that the issue was raised by the practitioner. Women, who are more concerned about their visual problems, talk to specialists more often than men and frequent drivers do so more often than occasional drivers. Drivers who do not wear glasses or contact lenses rarely talked to eye specialists about their visual problems while driving.

### **Interest in special lenses for driving is high**

30% of respondents already know that there are special lenses for drivers. Highest level of awareness: Germany (36%), followed by Spain (29%) and Great Britain (26%).

Regardless of whether they already heard about them, 55% of respondents spontaneously appear to be very or quite interested in such lenses. Only 18% express little or no interest. Spanish respondents are the most open-minded (78% are very / fairly interested), while the British respond with a rather restrained 43%.

More than half are curious about lenses for drivers and perceive these as a new offering. In all three countries women, spectacles wearers, and contact lens wearers, as well as frequent drivers, show the greatest interest in this type of visual solution. The respondents expect, above all, greater safety in traffic and more visual comfort – especially at night and for glare reduction. Around 40% expect improved vision in bad weather conditions (rain, snow and fog). However, about a quarter are skeptical about the anticipated price.

### **Conclusion**

- EU drivers are a large target group
- While driving, they perceive vision problems
- However, these problems are largely considered as inevitable - without remedy and rarely discussed
- Special lenses for drivers are still largely unknown
- If they were offered, special lenses would be met with great interest
- Potential users would expect greater safety while driving, more visual comfort and enhanced visual support in difficult weather conditions

From the market research perspective this product shows great potential for meaningful additional sales.

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## References

1. Eurostat:

[http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=road\\_eqs\\_carhab&lang=de](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=road_eqs_carhab&lang=de)