

# Building capacity: A global perspective on the need for occupational therapy in vision rehabilitation for older adults

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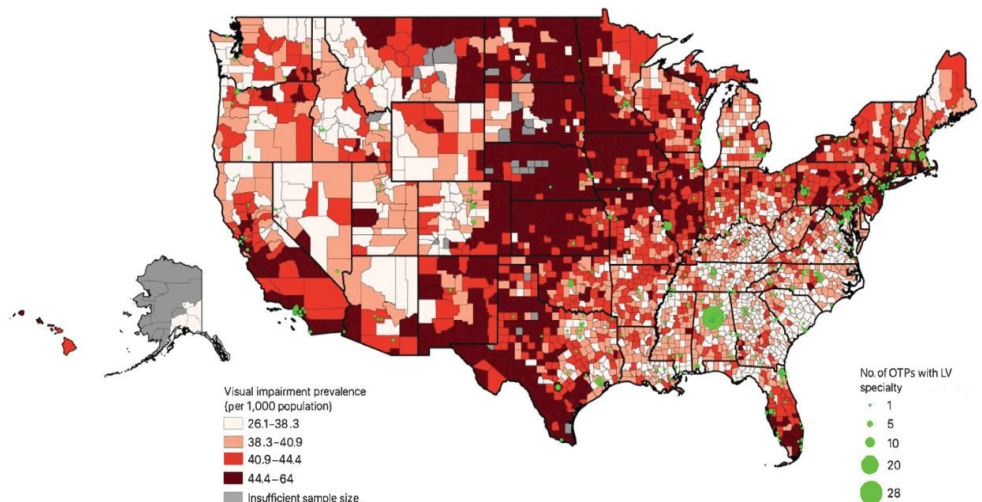
## Purpose

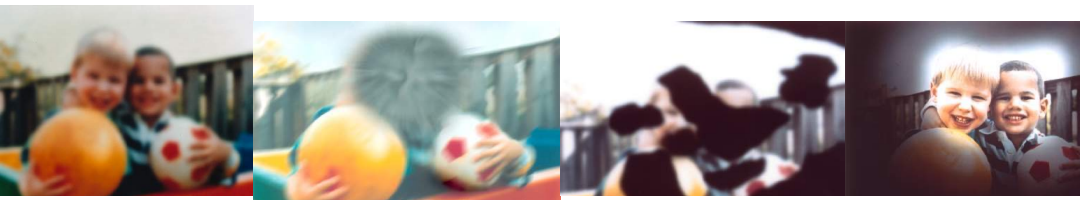
Understand the current state of vision impairment and the need for occupational therapy services, a workforce analysis. Highest rates of visual impairment in the US is in older adults, with highest prevalence rates found in the center of the US, while the distribution of OTs with specialty training in vision rehabilitation were concentrated primarily on the east coast of the U.S., in selected cities in Texas and California, Pennsylvania, and Alabama. Worldwide data show Southeast Asia, East Asia & Oceania and South Asia with highest rates of VI for all ages (14-22%); while US rates for all ages was 4.6%. Visual impairment can impact all aspects of daily occupation and OT can bridge the gap.

# Methods

- Synthetic estimation was used to calculate prevalence of visual impairment of those  $\geq 65$  in the U.S. by county.
  - We used a two-step process to generate synthetic estimates of VI by U.S. county.
    - First, we created an Excel spreadsheet; population  $\geq 65$  years old by racial and age subgroups of each U.S. county using data from the U.S. Census Bureau County Population Characteristics dataset (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).
    - Then we used NEI estimates of the prevalence of VI for each demographic subpopulation.
- GIS mapping was used for prevalence of visual impairment and availability of OTs with training in vision rehabilitation by US town.
- Data from the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness was used to estimate worldwide prevalence for all ages.
- OTs working in vision rehabilitation worldwide is unknown.

## Prevalence of VI in adults over 65 in the US and # of OTs with specialty training





## Conclusion

- Worldwide data show Southeast Asia, East Asia & Oceania and South Asia with highest rates of VI for all ages (14-22%); while US rates for all ages was 4.6%.
  - Suggests even greater gap worldwide as compared to U.S.
- There is a significant need to:
  - Expand the number of OTs trained in vision rehabilitation globally
  - Develop strategies to ensure trained therapists are matched to geographical areas of greatest need
- Communities in the U.S. with high concentrations of older adults with visual impairment were more prevalent in the Central Plains, the distribution of OTs with specialty training in vision rehabilitation were concentrated primarily on the east coast of the U.S., Florida coasts, in selected cities in Texas and California, western Pennsylvania, and Alabama.
- Worldwide data show Southeast Asia, East Asia & Oceania and South Asia with highest rates of visual impairment for all ages (14-22%); while US rates for all ages was 4.6%.
- There is a significant need for OTs to expand reach into the area of vision rehabilitation to meet the needs of society.