

# Economic Inequality in Eye-Care Utilization and Its Determinants: a Blinder–Oaxaca Decomposition

## Background

The current study aimed to determine eye care utilization, to assess the role of economic inequality in the utilization of eye care services, and to identify its determinants in Shahroud, North of Iran.

## Methods

Of the 6,311 invited people, 2,190 (82.24%) individuals aged 10 to 74 years old participated in the study. A history of a visit by an ophthalmologist or optometrist was considered as eye care utilization. The gap between low- and high-economic groups was decomposed into its determinants using the Oaxaca decomposition method.

## Results

Among the participants, 16.32% [95% Confidence Intervals (CI)= 15.31–17.33%] had never been examined by an ophthalmologist or optometrist, and 30.94% (95% CI= 29.69–32.20%) had not undergone an eye examination in the past 5 years. This negative history was significantly higher among female subjects [Odds Ratio (OR)= 1.79, 95% CI= 1.51–2.14], the low-economic group (OR= 2.33, 95% CI= 1.90–2.87), the visually impaired (OR= 1.41, 95% CI= 1.05–1.90), and the uninsured (OR= 1.93, 95% CI= 1.45–2.58). The negative history of eye examination decreased with increasing in age (OR= 0.94, 95% CI= 0.93–0.96) and education (OR= 0.94, 95% CI= 0.92–0.96). In this study, 24.72% (95% CI= 22.30–27.14) of the low-economic group and 9.94% (95% CI= 8.75–11.14) of the high-economic group had no history of eye examination. Decomposition of the gap between the two economic groups showed that education and gender were the most important determinants of inequality.

## Conclusion

A considerable percentage of adults, even those with visual impairment, do not receive appropriate eye care. There is a definite economic inequality in the community for which poverty per se could be the major cause