

Numbers of people newly certified and registered with sight loss in England – April 2010 to March 2011

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Background

Access to support from sensory teams at Social Service Departments (SSDs) in England is often initiated by receipt of a Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI). Upon completion of a CVI by an ophthalmologist, a copy is sent to the relevant local SSD to initiate the process of registering the person as blind or partially sighted. A second copy of the CVI is sent to the Certifications Office, London, for analysis of anonymous epidemiological data. SSDs have been mandated to maintain a register of blind and partially sighted people, and during recent years have submitted a triennial return (the SSDA 902) to the NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care (the IC) which compiles reports of the numbers of people on and newly added to the register.

Aim

To compare certification and registration figures in England for the year ending 31 March 2011.

Methods

The Database for Epidemiological data on Visual Impairment Certificates (DEVICE) was queried for all certificates with a certification date during the year 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011. A small proportion of forms lacked a date of certification; if they arrived at the Certification Office during the study period they were included. The number of certificates was then compared with the IC figures for new registrations in total, by visual impairment status (severely sight impaired, SSI (blind); sight impaired, SI (partial sight) or not stated) and by unitary authority. A correlation coefficient was computed to examine whether there was an association between the IC and CVI figures.

Key results and outcomes

- Table 1 shows that during the year ending 31 March 2011, the total number of people newly certified in England was 22,501 and the number of people newly registered during the same period was 20,960.
- Figures 1 and 2 show that there was a strong association between CVI and IC registration figures; correlation of 0.905 in total, 0.893 for SSI and 0.894 for SI.
- Despite this, there were some unitary authorities where disagreements were more marked than others.

Discussion

These data indicate that CVI figures map well to registration figures. There were some areas where disagreement was moderate and reasons for these disparities are under investigation. It should be noted that an exact match is not expected because there is often a time lag between certification and registration.

Certification figures were slightly higher overall than registration figures – reasons for this might be that not all CVIs reach the relevant local SSD, people refuse registration having been certified, or that deaths occur in the interim.

An indicator for preventable sight loss has recently been included in the Public Health Outcomes framework. The proposal is that the indicator will be based on CVI figures. Whilst CVI figures are hospital based, IC figures are social care based and we believe that there is merit in collecting both until differences between them are resolved.

Acknowledgements

The collection and analysis of the CVI data was conducted by the Certifications Office which operates under the auspices of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, at Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, supported by a grant from RNIB.

The views expressed in this poster are the views of the authors and not necessarily any funding body or the Department of Health. The data captured by the CVI are DH copyright and this work was made possible by collaboration with the Royal College of Ophthalmologists.

Table 1.

Number of people certified as severely sight impaired and sight impaired, compared with the number of people newly on the register of blind and partially sighted people for the year ending 31 March 2011

Number of CVIs		Number of registrations		Total	
SSI	SI	Blind	Partially sighted	CVIs [a]	Registrations
9,964	11,938	9,110	11,850	22,501	20,960

Abbreviations: SSI, severely sight impaired; SI, sight impaired. CVI, Certificate of Vision Impairment

[a] total includes visual status not stated

Figure 1.

Scatter graph comparing new registrations against new certifications for severe sight impairment (blindness) for the year ending 31 March 2011

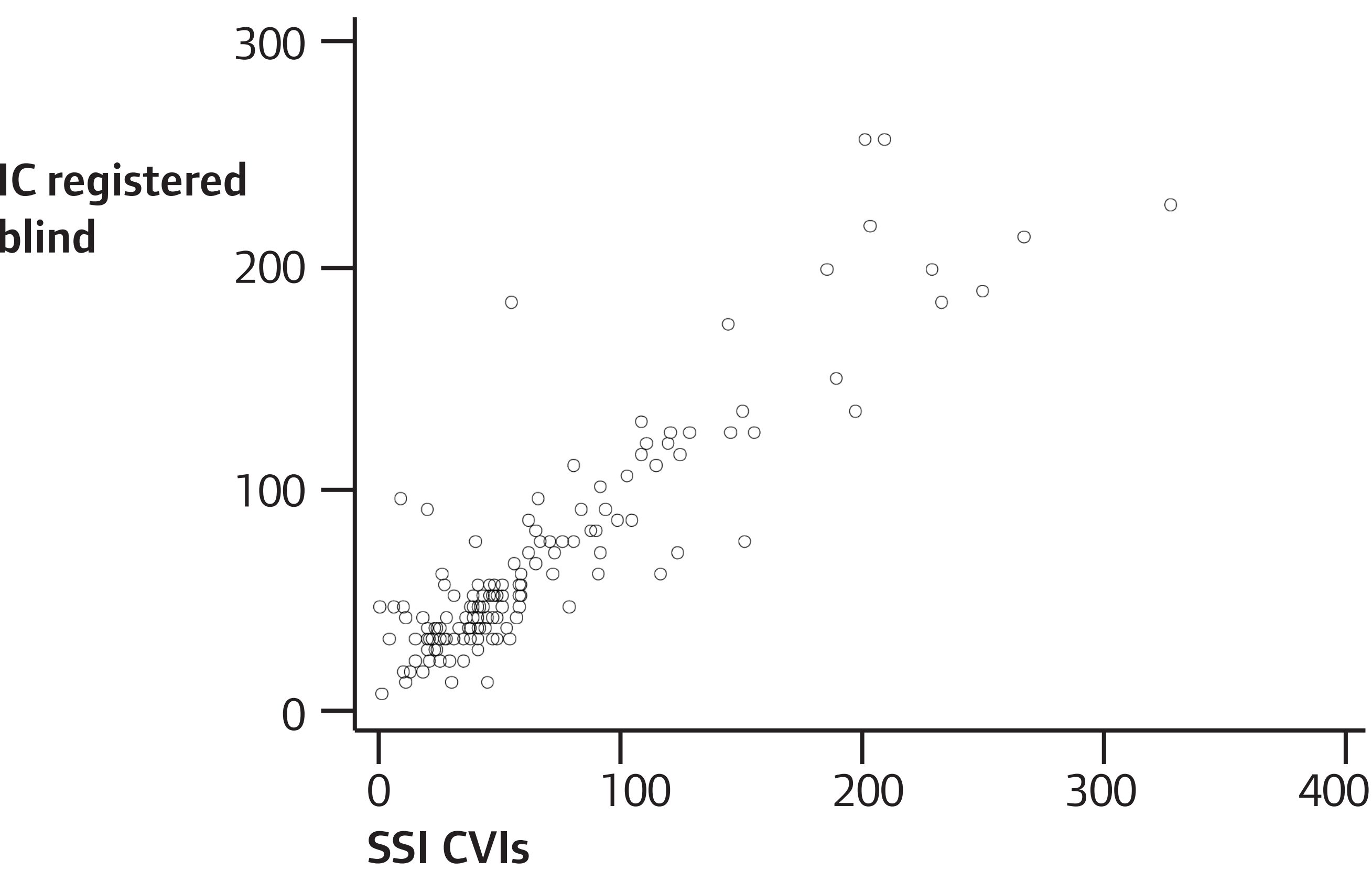
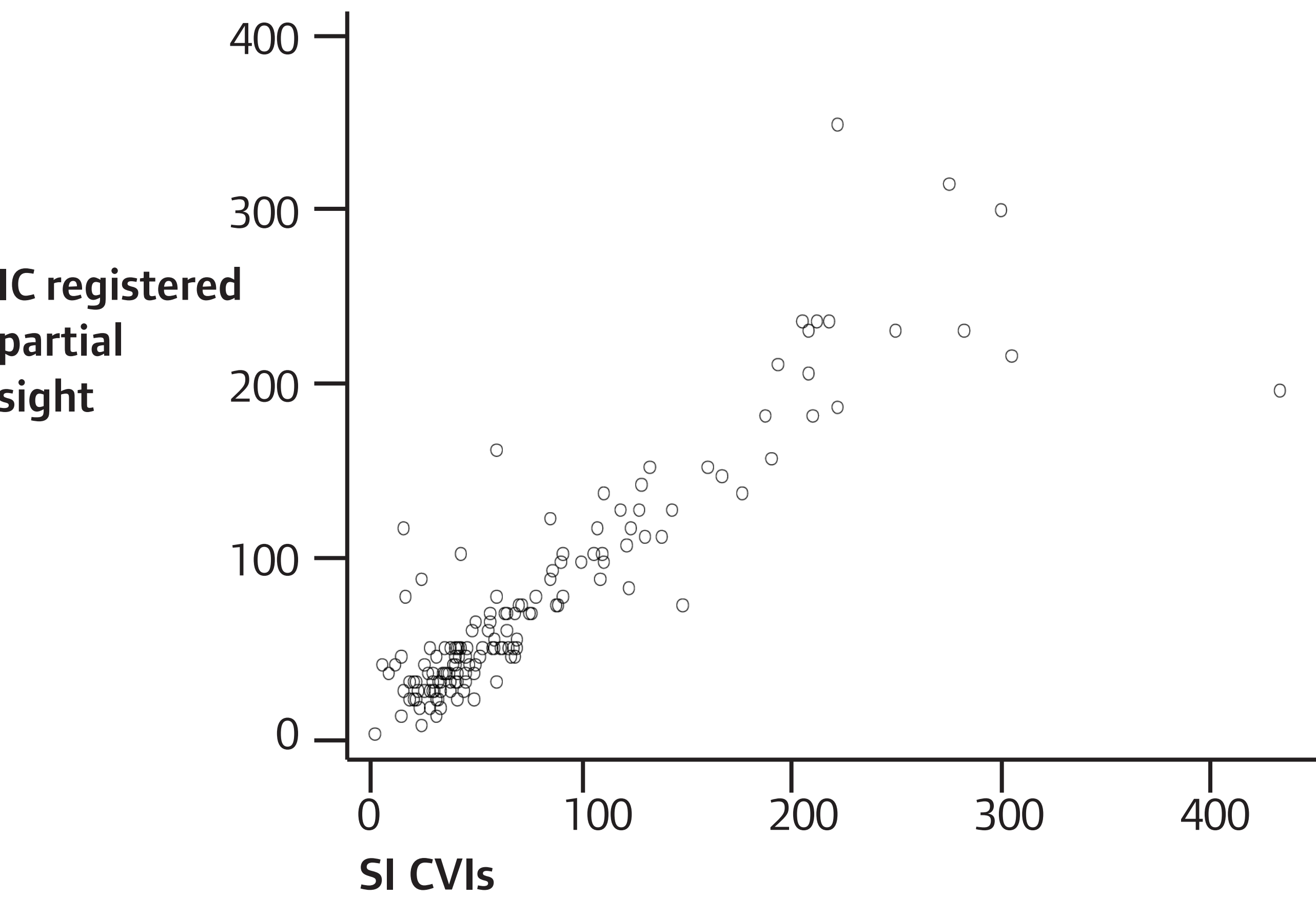


Figure 2.

Scatter graph comparing new registrations against new certifications for sight impairment (partial sight) for the year ending 31 March 2011



Abbreviations: IC, NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care. SSI, severely sight impaired; SI, sight impaired. CVI, Certificate of Vision Impairment

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