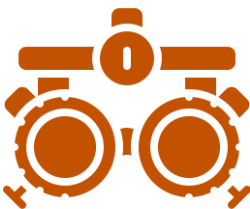


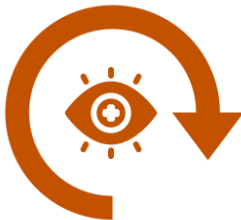
Profile of an optometrist

This profile of an optometrist is based on findings from the **General Optical Council (GOC) Registrant and Workforce Perceptions Survey 2026**. The results presented aim to highlight what the current optometrist workforce looks like, how optometrists feel about working in the profession, experiences of commercial pressures, and attitudes towards artificial intelligence (AI). To read the full survey report, please visit the [GOC's website](#).

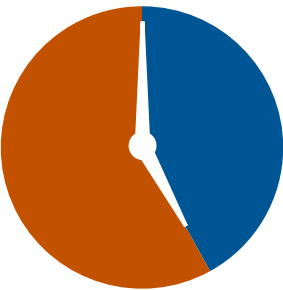
Workforce



19,300
registered
optometrists

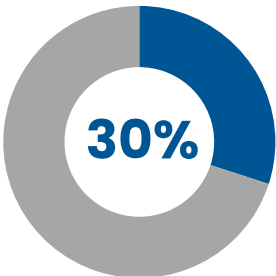


There are approximately
15,054
working full time
equivalent optometrists



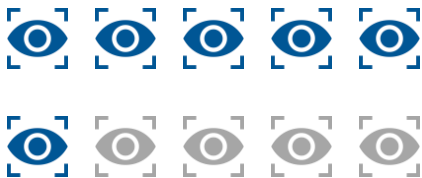
42%
Work **full time**

58%
Work **part time**



work as **locums**

60% are involved in the
delivery of **enhanced
eye care services**



15%

Plan to **leave the
profession** in the
next 12 months



26% hold some **management responsibilities**
and/or a **supervision role** in their current role



Job satisfaction

Six in ten have felt **satisfied** in their job/role over the last 12 months



58%
Satisfied



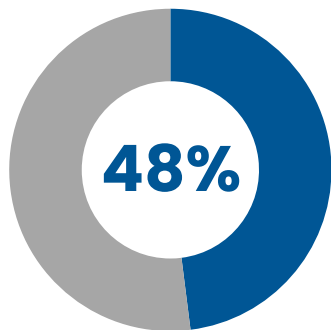
16%
Neither satisfied
nor dissatisfied



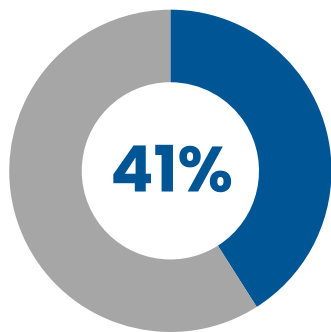
26%
Dissatisfied

Commercial pressures

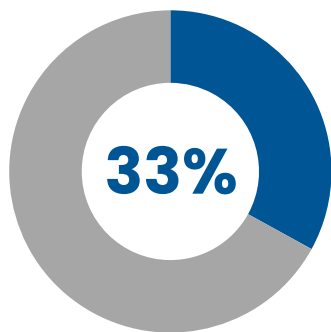
Reports of feeling the following commercial pressures **sometimes** or **frequently**...



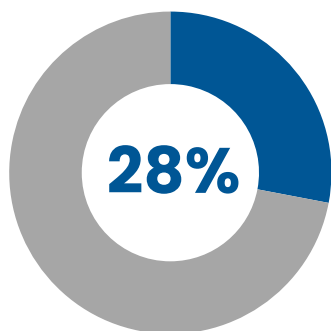
"The standard time allocated to me for conducting a sight test has been insufficient to provide safe patient care"



"I have felt under pressure to see a high number of patients every day which has impacted on my ability to provide safe patient care"



"I have felt under pressure to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care"



"I have been asked to overbook clinics"

Those who reported that they had experienced commercial pressures were asked *"When you experienced pressure of this kind, what did you do?"* *



Raised concerns informally with colleagues



Did nothing



Reported it to my line manager/supervisor



Reported it to senior/practice management



Raised concerns through a formal process



*Main **concerns** about **commercial practice** in terms of its potential impact on patient care include...



"Allotted time for the exam, when there are more clinical things to check than ever."

Appointment times/reduced testing time



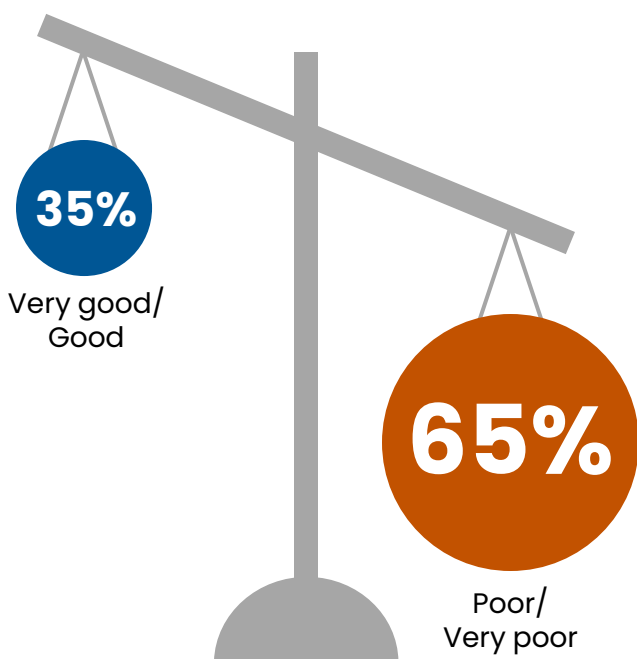
"Conversion is more important than patient care where I work."

Conversion/sales targets

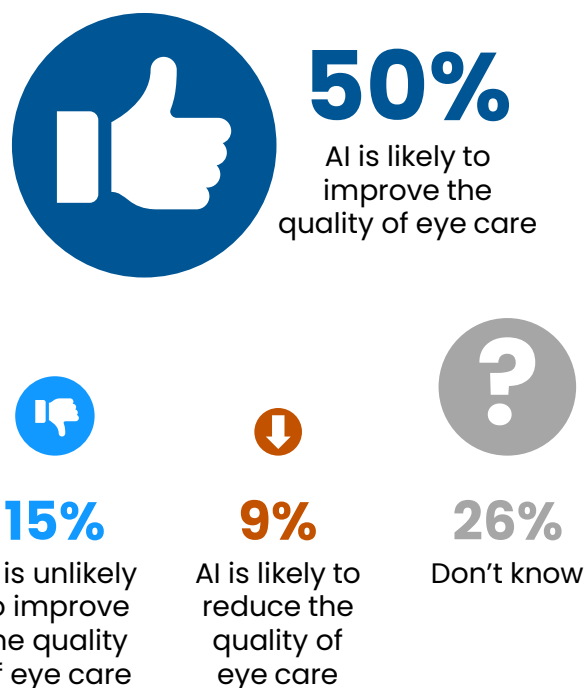
*New questions for 2026

Artificial intelligence (AI)*

Two thirds would describe their **knowledge** and **understanding** of AI in relation to optical care and professional practice as **poor**



Half think that AI is likely to **improve** the quality of eye care



At least **half** are **concerned** about the following in relation to the **use of AI in eye care...**

 **76%**
were concerned about the **AI making errors**

 **76%**
were concerned about their **legal responsibility** if something goes wrong

 **68%**
were concerned about the **AI internal decision-making process not being transparent to users**

 **61%**
were concerned about **data security and patient confidentiality**

 **61%**
were concerned about the **impact on the clinician-patient relationship**

 **60%**
were concerned about their **ability to challenge/ disagree with AI recommendations**

 **53%**
were concerned about **obtaining informed patient consent**

 **52%**
were concerned that **AI over time will replace their role**

 **50%**
were concerned about **bias towards certain patient groups**