



General Optical Council Registrant Survey 2021

Research Report

May 2021

Thornhill Brigg Mill, Thornhill Beck Lane, Brighouse, West Yorkshire, HD6 4AH

T: 01484 404797

W: www.enventure.co.uk

Report prepared by:

Matt Thurman
matt@enventure.co.uk

Report reviewed by:

Andrew Cameron
andrew@enventure.co.uk

Kayleigh Pickles
kayleigh@enventure.co.uk

Enventure Research

Head Office:

Thornhill Brigg Mill, Thornhill Beck Lane, Brighouse, West Yorkshire, HD6 4AH
T: 01484 404797

London Office:

Smithfield Business Centre, 5 St John's Lane, London, EC1M 4BH
T: 0207 549 1616

W: www.enventure.co.uk E: info@enventure.co.uk

Reg no: 4693096
VAT no: 816927894



Contents

Executive Summary	5
The Research Programme	10
Introduction	10
Methodology	10
Interpretation of the findings	11
Research Findings	12
Survey respondent profile	12
Registration	12
Workplace setting and working status.....	13
Location.....	15
Perspectives of the General Optical Council	16
Meeting strategic objectives.....	17
The roles and responsibilities of the GOC.....	21
Standards of Practice and guidance	24
Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians	25
Standards of Practice for Optical Students	28
Disclosing confidential information guidance.....	30
Raising concerns with the GOC guidance.....	32
The Standards for Optical Businesses	34
The registration process	35
MyGOC	36
The annual retention process	37
Communication	38
Frequency of communication.....	39
Keeping up to date.....	40
Email bulletins	41
The COVID-19 pandemic	44
Impact of the pandemic	45
Support during the pandemic.....	54
Continuing Education and Training	58
Workplace challenges	61
Pressure to sell unneeded products or services.....	62
Pressure to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care	63
Speaking up	66
Patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant	67
Patient safety concerning an employer	69

The Optical Consumer Complaints Service.....	71
Discrimination	73
Satisfaction and the future	77
Satisfaction.....	78
The future	79
Conclusions and recommendations	81

Appendix A – Demographic respondent profile

Appendix B – Questionnaire

Executive Summary

Introduction

The General Optical Council (GOC) commissioned Enventure Research, an independent research agency, to conduct a survey of its individual registrants. The last registrant survey was conducted in 2016. The survey aimed to track registrants' views and perceptions of the GOC and their experiences of working in clinical practice.

This report details the findings of this research.

Methodology

A questionnaire was designed, including a mix of previously used questions to allow for benchmarking and new questions to cover new topics such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey was delivered online. All GOC registrants with a valid email address were invited by email to take part in the survey. Targeted reminders were sent to those yet to take part to encourage them to respond, and the survey was also promoted by the GOC in email newsletters and via social media. Between 9 March and 12 April 2021, 4,880 responses were received, representing a 17% response rate.

For a more detailed description of the methodology, please see the methodology section in the main body of this report.

Key findings

Perspectives of the General Optical Council

Meeting strategic objectives

- 65% agreed that the GOC is *building a culture of continuous improvement* and 62% agreed that it is *delivering world-class regulatory practice*
- 49% agreed that the GOC is *transforming customer service*. However, a significant proportion (21%) answered 'don't know' in response to this statement
- A wide range of priorities for the GOC to achieve over the course of its Strategic Plan 2020-25 were suggested. The most common suggestions were to support, protect or represent registrants (16%) and to regulate online sales and tackle illegal supply (11%)

The roles and responsibilities of the GOC

- Large proportions of respondents agreed that the GOC *sets fair standards for the profession* (77%) and *ensures the quality of optical education* (74%)
- There was almost an equal split between those who agreed that the GOC *charges registration fees which are reasonable* (48%) and those who disagreed (46%)
- Just 46% agreed that the GOC *is fair to registrants when taking action through the fitness to practise process*, but over a third answered 'don't know' in response to this statement (36%)
- Dispensing opticians were far less likely to agree that the GOC *charges registration fees which are reasonable* when compared with other registration types
- This year's results are very similar to those found in 2016

Standards of practice and guidance

Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians

- 43% of respondents described their understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians as *very good* or *excellent*, in line with the 2016 survey results (41%)
- 52% described their understanding as *good*, also in line with 2016 (50%)

Standards of Practice for Optical Students

- 55% of student respondents rated their understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optical Students as *very good* or *excellent*, and a further 39% rated their understanding as *good*
- 91% felt confident in their ability to meet these standards

Disclosing confidential information guidance

- 45% of respondents rated their understanding of the disclosing confidential information guidance as *very good* or *excellent*. The same proportion rated their understanding as *good* (44%)
- 85% felt confident in their ability to meet this guidance

Raising concerns with the GOC guidance

- 40% of respondents rated their understanding of the raising concerns with the GOC guidance as *good* and 28% rated it as *very good* or *excellent*
- 58% felt confident in their ability to meet this guidance, but 29% did not feel confident

Standards for Optical Businesses

- 50% of those in a position of responsibility, seniority or management rated their understanding of the Standards for Optical Businesses as *very good* or *excellent*. A further 41% rated their understanding as *good*
- 90% felt confident in their ability to meet these standards

The registration process

The annual retention process

- 92% of those who had been through the annual retention process in the last 12 months rated their experience as positive, including 58% who rated it as *good* and 34% as *excellent*
- Again, this result is very similar to the 2016 results, where 94% rated their experience positively

Communication

Frequency of communication

- The majority of respondents described the frequency of communication from the GOC as *about right* (80%). Just 5% thought it was *too often* and 11% *not often enough*
- This result is in line with the findings of the 2016 registrant survey, where 82% thought the frequency of communication was *about right*

Keeping up to date

- The most popular way of keeping up to date with GOC news was via email (89%)
- A third kept up to date with GOC news via the GOC website (33%) and 8% via the eBulletin
- Keeping up to date via email was more commonplace amongst younger respondents aged 44 and under, whereas older respondents were more likely to keep up to date via the GOC website
- Only small proportions of respondents kept up to date via LinkedIn (4%) and Twitter (4%)

Email bulletins

- 83% of respondents read the GOC eBulletin (13% *in detail* and 70% *scan*), compared with 49% who read the FTP Focus learning bulletin (8% *in detail* and 41% *scan*)
- 18% of respondents said that they did not receive the FTP Focus learning bulletin
- Readership of the GOC eBulletin has increased by five percentage points since 2016
- Readership of the GOC eBulletin was higher amongst optometrists and dispensing opticians when compared with student optometrists and student dispensing opticians
- Readership of the FTP Focus learning bulletin was higher amongst optometrists when compared with all other registration types
- 83% of respondents said they found the GOC eBulletin informative, in line with the result in the 2016 survey
- 87% of respondents said they found the FTP Focus learning bulletin informative
- Despite being less likely to read it, student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were more likely to find the GOC eBulletin informative when compared with optometrists and dispensing opticians
- A larger proportion of student optometrists found the FTP Focus learning bulletin informative when compared with other registration types

The COVID-19 pandemic

Impact of the pandemic

- The most common way that respondents reported their day to day work had changed as a result of the pandemic was wearing or having issues with personal protective equipment (PPE) (40%), followed by 31% who mentioned the additional cleaning and hygiene requirements
- 52% of respondents had either been furloughed by their employer or had their educational course suspended over the last 12 months. This was more common amongst dispensing opticians and student dispensing opticians, and those who worked for a multiple optician
- 26% of respondents said the pandemic has had a *significant impact* on their mental health and wellbeing, and a further 52% said it has had *some impact*
- The reported impact on mental health and wellbeing is more significant amongst student optometrists and student dispensing opticians, female respondents, and younger respondents
- The following impacts of the pandemic over the last 12 months were reported by respondents:
 - 40% had worked beyond their hours
 - 37% had felt unable to cope with their workload
 - 28% had found it difficult to provide patients with the sufficient level of care they need
 - 33% had experienced a lack of social distancing with patients or the public
 - 26% had experienced a lack of social distancing with other staff
 - 25% had experienced ineffective triaging of patients based on risk
 - 23% had felt they were not given enough time to adequately clean equipment
 - 9% reported a lack of PPE
- Those who reported any of the negative experiences listed above were more likely to have indicated that the pandemic has had a *significant impact* on their mental health and wellbeing

Support during the pandemic

- Respondents felt most supported over the last few months by their employer (76%) or their education provider (78% of students), followed by their professional association/representative body (67%). By comparison, just 48% had felt supported by the GOC
- Respondents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were more likely to have felt supported by the GOC when compared with those in England

- The most common suggestions for how the GOC could support registrants as the pandemic continues were to provide clear guidance and rules and ensure no ambiguity (27%), regulate minimum test times (13%), support, protect and represent registrants (12%), ensure better communication and regular updates (11%), and enforce the rules and ensure compliance, potentially via increased penalties (11%)

Continuing Education and Training (CET)

- 70% of respondents found the GOC's statement on CET during the COVID-19 pandemic to be helpful
- 78% agreed that the GOC allowed registrants enough flexibility to complete their CET points during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 22% of respondents had concerns about completing their CET cycle as a result of the pandemic, including a larger proportion of dispensing opticians (33%)

Workplace challenges

Pressure to sell unneeded products or services

- 23% of respondents said that they had felt under pressure by an employer or a business they have worked for to sell a product or service which they knew was not needed by the patient in the last 12 months
- This result represents a significant decrease of 18 percentage points when compared with the proportion who felt under this pressure in 2016 (41%)

Pressure to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care

- 29% of respondents said that they had felt under pressure by an employer or a business they have worked for to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care in the last 12 months
- This result also represents a significant decrease of 16 percentage points when compared with the proportion who felt under this pressure in 2016 (45%)

Analysis of reported commercial pressures

- Reports of experiencing commercial pressure from employers/businesses were more commonplace amongst:
 - Optometrists, student optometrists, and student dispensing opticians
 - Locums
 - Those who worked for a multiple optician or in domiciliary care
 - Those in England
 - Those who have been registered with the GOC for a shorter period of time

Speaking up

Patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant

- The majority of respondents would feel comfortable speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant to their manager or tutor (70%), followed by their employer/education provider (67%) or professional association (61%)
- In contrast, only 47% said they would feel comfortable speaking up to the GOC

Patient safety concerning an employer

- Large proportions of respondents would feel comfortable speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant to their manager or tutor (65%), their employer/education provider (59%) or professional association (62%)

- Again, a smaller proportion said they would feel comfortable speaking up to the GOC (49%)

The Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS)

- A large proportion were unaware of the OCCS (41%)

Discrimination

- 10% of respondents had experienced discrimination in their role at work or study in the last 12 months
- Experience of discrimination was more common amongst those who worked for a multiple optician, in a hospital, in education/academia, and also amongst those in England
- Of those who had experienced discrimination, 52% of this was related to race, 28% to sex, 26% to age, and 18% to religion or belief

Satisfaction and the future

Satisfaction

- 58% of respondents said that they were satisfied with their role or job over the last 12 months, but 20% were dissatisfied
- Job satisfaction was higher amongst those who worked full-time, for an independent optician, in a hospital, in education/academia, in Wales and Northern Ireland, and those aged 55+
- Job dissatisfaction was higher amongst optometrists, locums, those who worked for a multiple optician or in domiciliary care, and those registered with the GOC for 6-20 years

The future

- Over the next 12-24 months:
 - 43% of respondents planned to gain additional qualifications/skills. This included larger proportions of student optometrists, student dispensing opticians, and those working for a multiple optician or hospital
 - 36% planned to reduce their hours. This was more likely amongst optometrists
 - 26% planned to leave the profession. This was more likely amongst dispensing opticians and those working in domiciliary care
 - 13% planned to retire
 - 12% planned to switch to locum work, including a larger proportion who worked for a multiple optician
 - 11% planned to take a career break

The Research Programme

Introduction

The GOC is the regulator for the optical professions of optometry and dispensing optics in the UK, with the overarching statutory purpose to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public. The GOC currently registers approximately 29,300 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student optometrists, and student dispensing opticians.

To help track registrants' views and perceptions of the GOC, and their experiences of working in clinical practice, a registrant survey was delivered in early 2021. A registrant survey was last carried out in 2016. This year's survey had the following aims:

- Compare with results from the 2016 survey to help identify any trends and changes over time
- Ask new questions based on topical areas, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the day to day experiences and challenges faced by registrants working in clinical practice
- Achieve a robust and representative response to the survey to provide a confident level of analysis

Enventure Research, an independent research agency, was appointed to deliver this survey. This report details the findings of this research.

Methodology

Questionnaire design

A questionnaire was designed by the GOC and Enventure Research, including a mix of previously used questions to allow for benchmarking and new questions to cover new topics, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes for registrants to complete. For reference, a copy of the questionnaire can be found in **Appendix A**.

Promotion of the survey

The survey was securely hosted online and personalised invitations to take part were emailed to all GOC registrants with a valid email address. In total, 29,275 registrants were invited to take part. Those who did not respond received up to four reminder emails encouraging them to take part.

An open-access link to the survey was also promoted by the GOC via email newsletters and social media. Respondents who took part via the open-access link were asked to provide their registration number to access the survey to verify their registration and ensure no duplicate responses were received.

Survey response

The survey was live between 9 March and 12 April 2021. During this time, 4,880 responses were received, representing a 17% response rate. This marks a large increase of 741 responses compared with the last registrant survey conducted in 2016 (4,139 responses were received in 2016) and a one percentage point increase in the response rate.

Interpretation of the findings

Weighting

As the survey was completed by a sample of GOC registrants, and not the entire population of registered optical professionals, the data has been weighted to ensure that certain subgroups are not over or under represented and that the data is as close to the GOC registrant profile as possible. Weighting adjusts the proportions of certain groups within a sample to match more closely to the proportions in the target population.

The sample has been weighted by registrant type (optometrist, dispensing optician, student optometrist, student dispensing optician), based on an up to date version of the GOC register. All survey results presented within this report are based on the weighted data.

Sampling confidence interval

As the online survey was completed by a sample of GOC registrants and not the entire registrant population, all results are subject to sampling tolerances. However, as a large number of responses were received, the confidence interval for analysis (also known as the margin of error) is narrow.

Based on a total population of approximately 29,300 registrants and 4,880 survey responses, when interpreting the results to a question which all respondents answered, with a response of 50% there is a 95% chance that this result would not vary by more than +/- 1.3 percentage points (48.7% to 51.3%) had the result been obtained from the entire registrant population.

Interpretation of survey data

This report contains various tables and charts. In some instances, the responses may not add up to 100%. There are several reasons why this might happen:

- The question may have allowed each respondent to give more than one answer
- Only the most common responses may be shown in the table or chart
- Individual percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number so the total may come to 99% or 101%
- A response of between 0% and 0.4% will be shown as 0%

Subgroup analysis has been undertaken to explore the results provided by different groups, such as registrant type, role, length of registration, workplace setting, location, and key demographics. This analysis has only been carried out where the sample size is seen to be sufficient for comment. Where sample sizes were not large enough, subgroups have been combined to create larger groups.

For the analysis of certain questions, response options have been grouped together to provide an overall level. For example, in some instances 'strongly agree' and 'agree' have been grouped and shown as 'total agree'. Where these combined percentages do not equal the overall level reported (being 1% higher or lower), this is due to percentages being rounded to the nearest whole number.

For the analysis of open-ended (free-text) responses, verbatim comments were read in detail and a coding frame was developed for each question based on themes emerging. This then allowed for categorisation of the themes emerging in the comments. Where relevant, these are presented as analysis, with anonymised verbatim comments provided as examples.

Throughout this report, those who took part in the survey are referred to as 'respondents'.

Research Findings

Survey respondent profile

The following charts present the weighted profile of survey respondents, including their role, workplace setting, working status, involvement in the delivery of enhanced eye care services, length of time on the GOC register, and location.

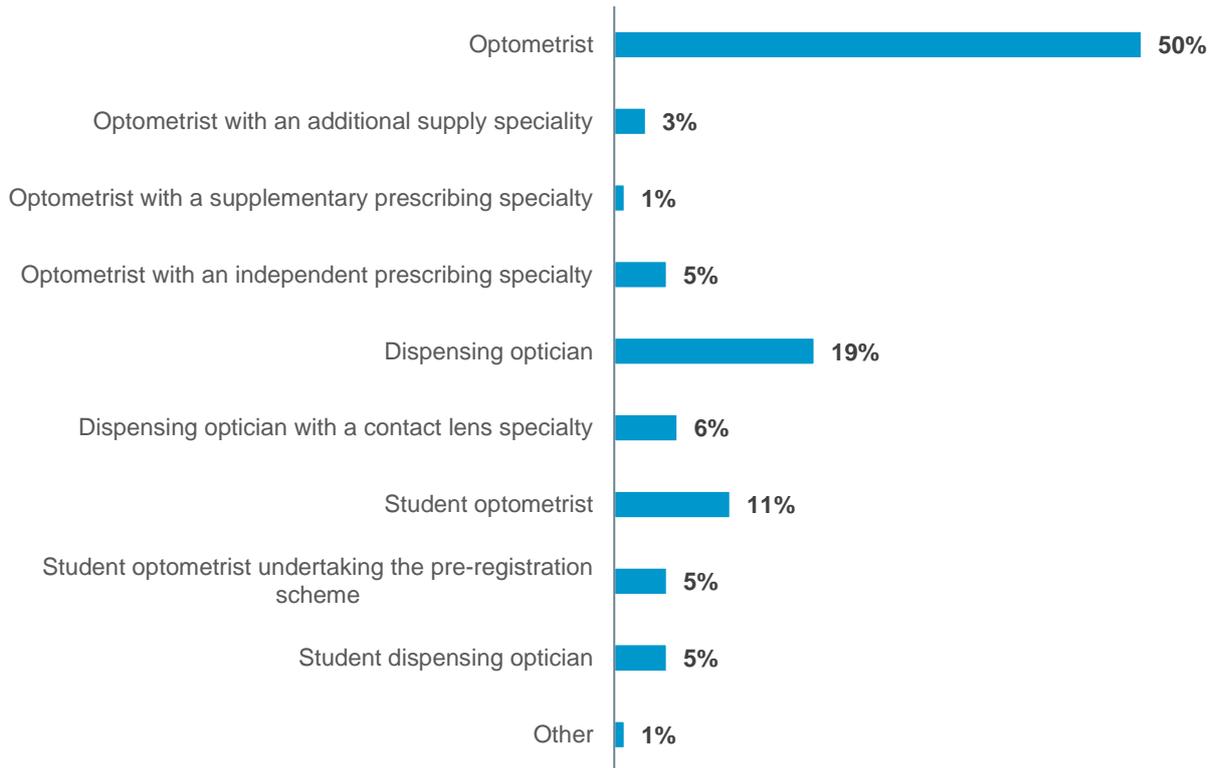
Registration

Respondents were able to select the role or roles that applied to them. A total of 56% were in optometrist roles, including optometrists (50%), optometrists with an additional supply specialty (3%), optometrist with a supplementary prescribing specialty (1%) and optometrists with an independent prescribing specialty (5%). A quarter of respondents were registered as dispensing opticians (25%), including 19% who selected dispensing optician and 6% who had a contact lens specialty.

A total of 16% indicated that they were student optometrists and a further 5% were student dispensing opticians.

Figure 1 – Role

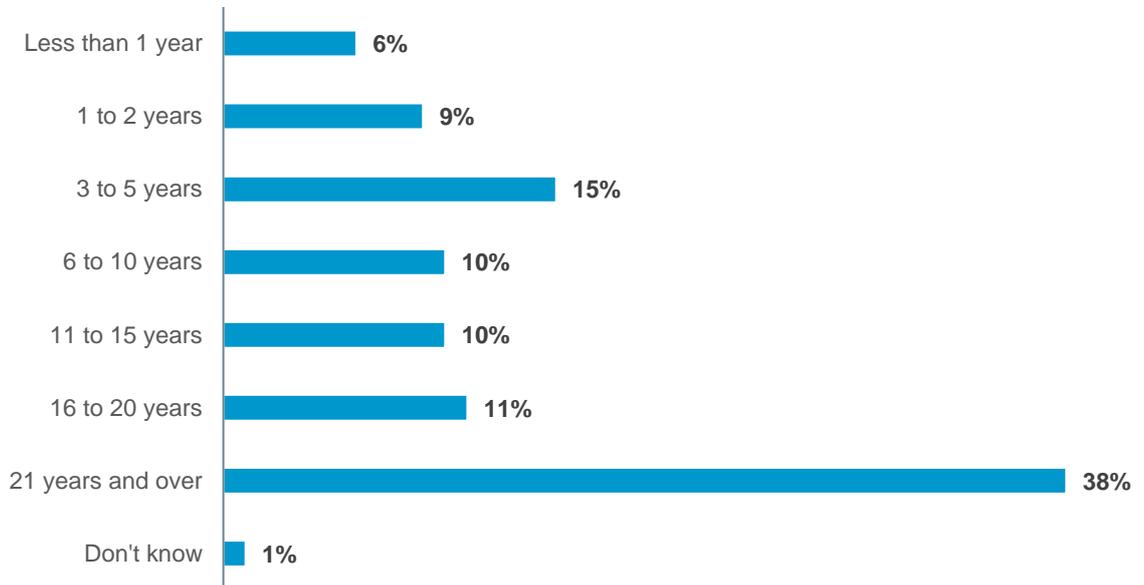
Base: All respondents (4,880)



Although a mix of length of time on the GOC register was represented across survey respondents, the largest proportion had been registered for 21 years and over (38%).

Figure 2 – Approximately how long have you been on the GOC register?

Base: All respondents (4,880)

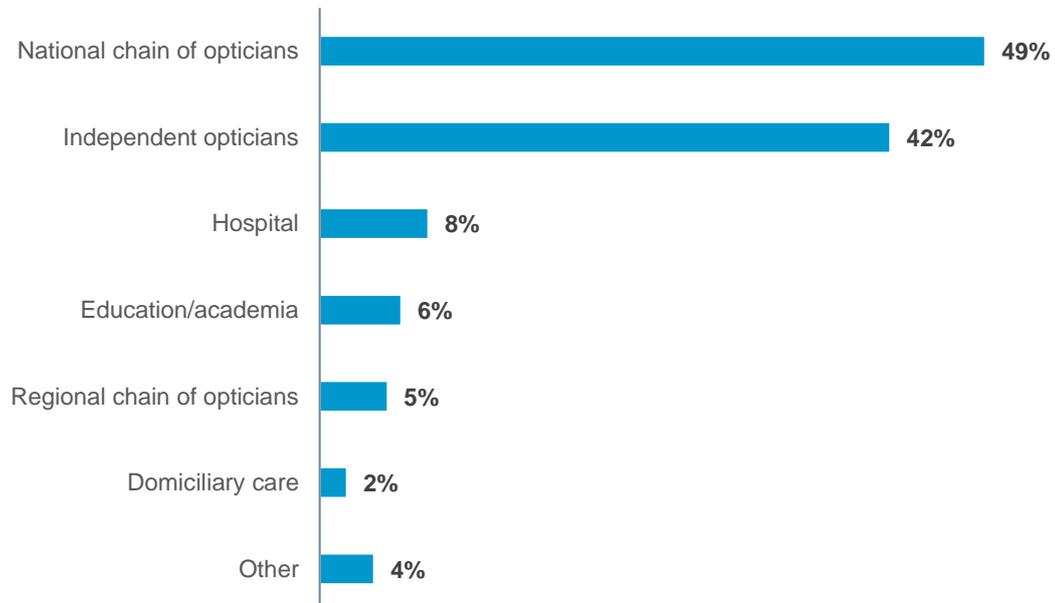


Workplace setting and working status

Almost half of working respondents worked for a national chain optician (49%), closely followed by 41% who worked for an independent optician (42%).

Figure 3 – Where do you currently work?

Base: Those currently working (4,363)

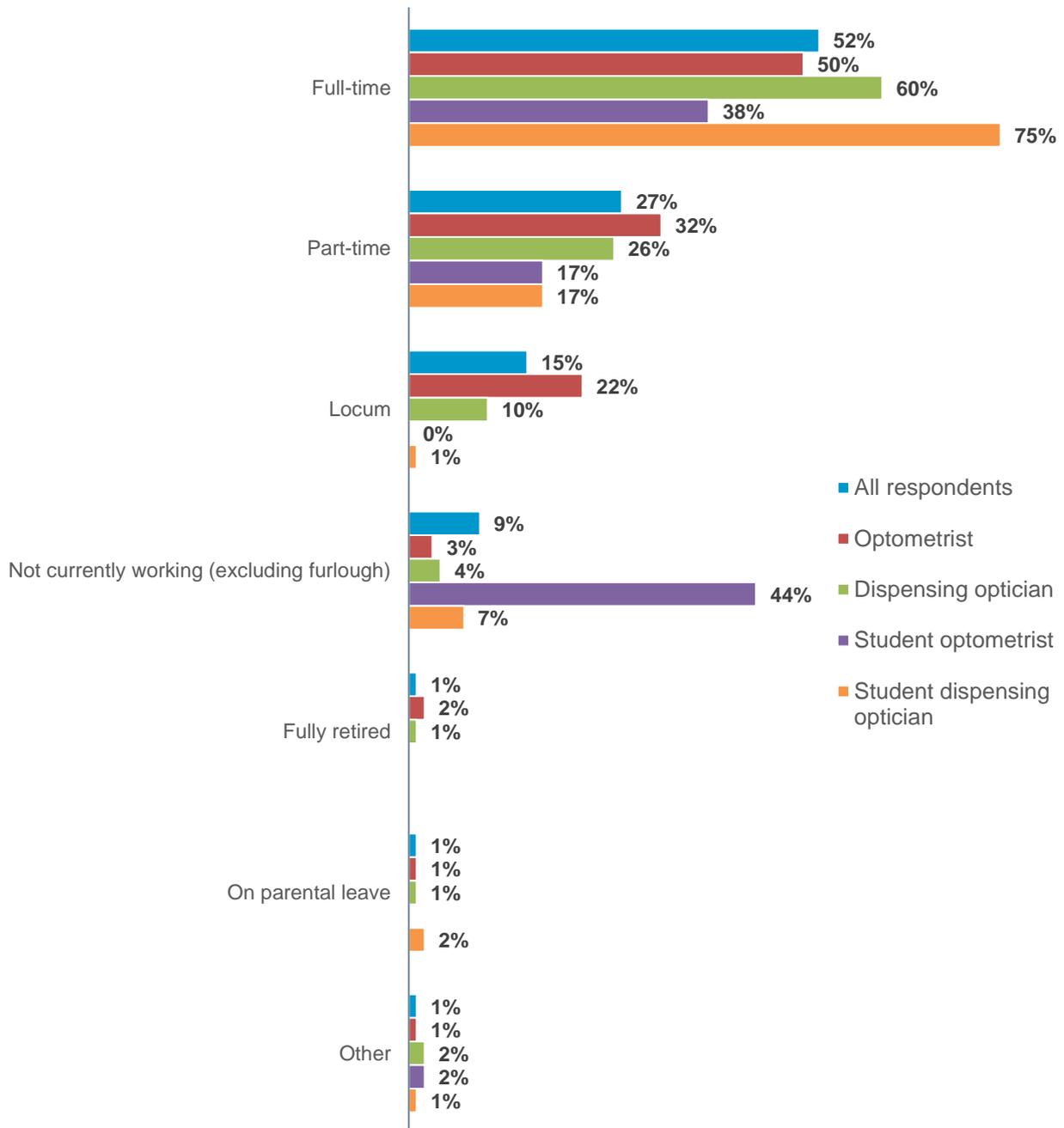


Half of respondents worked full-time (52%) and a further 27% part-time. Part-time work was more common amongst optometrists (32%), whereas dispensing opticians and student dispensing opticians were more likely to work full-time (60% and 75% respectively).

Overall, 15% of respondents described their current work as locum, which was more common amongst optometrists (22%) when compared with dispensing opticians (10%).

Figure 4 – Which of these best describes your current work / practice?

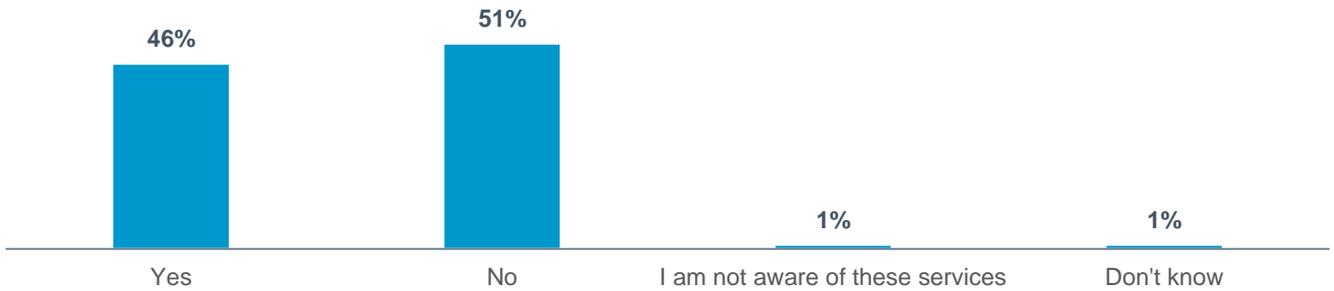
Base: All respondents (4,880); optometrists (2,736); dispensing opticians (1,200); student optometrists (767); student dispensing opticians (228)



Almost half of respondents were involved in delivering enhanced eyecare services (46%). This was more common amongst optometrists (57%) when compared with dispensing opticians (31%).

Figure 5 – Are you currently involved in delivering enhanced eye care services (e.g. providing patients with care beyond the remit of a routine sight test, such as Minor Eye Conditions Service (MECS) or Low Vision Service Wales (LVSU))?

Base: Those currently working (4,363)



Location

The map below shows where survey respondents were located across the UK. In total, 77% were in England, with 9% in Scotland, 5% in Wales and 3% in Northern Ireland. A further 2% indicated that they were based outside the UK.

Figure 6 – Location by UK region

Base: All respondents (4,880)



Perspectives of the General Optical Council

Key findings

Meeting strategic objectives

- 65% agreed that the GOC is *building a culture of continuous improvement* and 62% agreed that it is *delivering world-class regulatory practice*
- 49% agreed that the GOC is *transforming customer service*. However, a significant proportion (21%) answered ‘don’t know’ in response to this statement
- Student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were more likely to agree that the GOC was meeting each of its strategic objectives when compared with optometrists and dispensing opticians, as were those based in Scotland and Wales when compared with those based in England
- A wide range of priorities for the GOC to achieve over the course of its Strategic Plan 2020-25 were suggested. The most common suggestions were to support, protect or represent registrants (16%) and to regulate online sales and tackle illegal supply (11%)

The roles and responsibilities of the GOC

- Large proportions of respondents agreed that the GOC *sets fair standards for the profession* (77%) and *ensures the quality of optical education* (74%)
- 48% agreed that the GOC *charges registration fees which are reasonable*, and almost the same proportion disagreed with this statement (46%)
- Just 46% agreed that the GOC *is fair to registrants when taking action through the fitness to practise process*, but over a third answered ‘don’t know’ in response to this statement (36%)
- Dispensing opticians were far less likely to agree that the GOC *charges registration fees which are reasonable* when compared with other registration types
- This year’s results are very similar to those found in 2016

Meeting strategic objectives

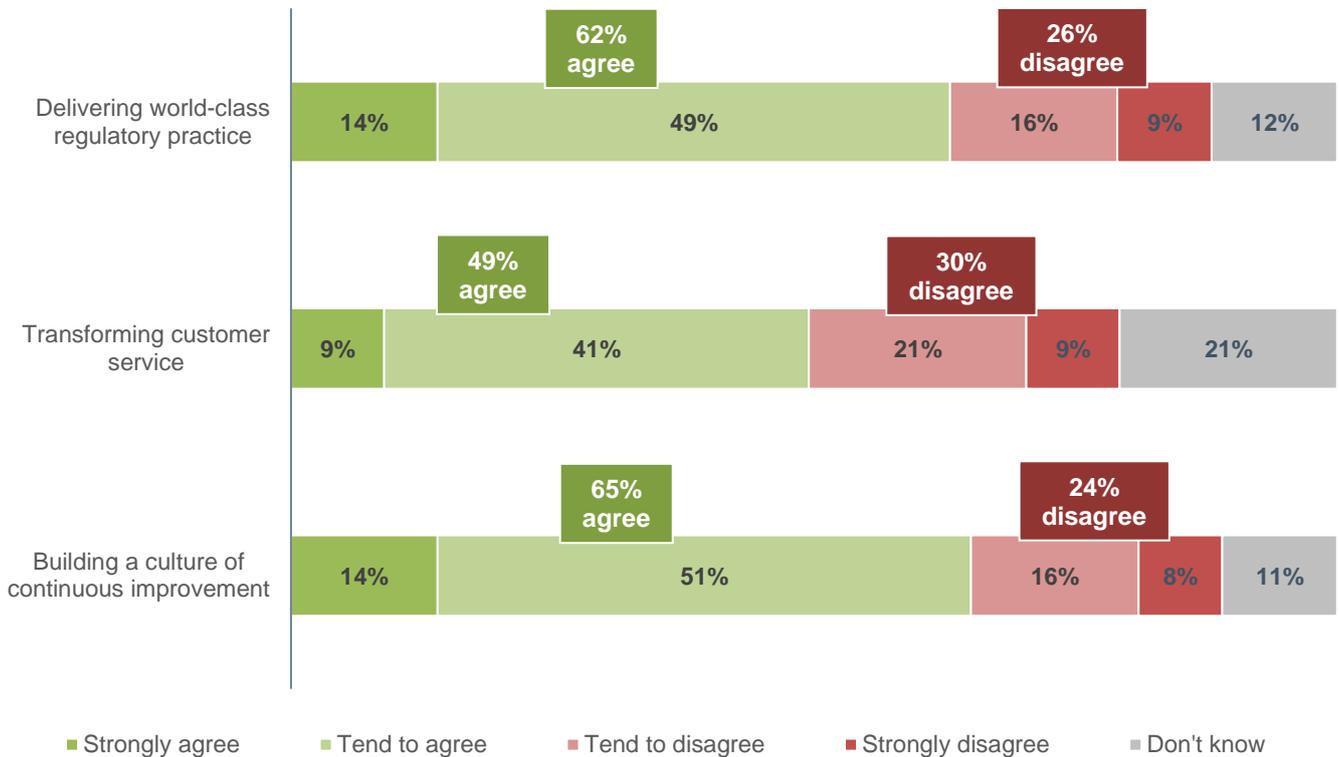
Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the GOC is meeting its three strategic objectives set out in its Strategic Plan 2020-25.

Two thirds agreed that the GOC is *building a culture of continuous development* (65%), closely followed by 62% who agreed that it is *delivering world-class regulatory practice*.

By comparison, only half of respondents agreed that the GOC is *transforming customer service* (49%). A larger proportion of respondents indicated that they did not know whether the GOC was meeting this strategic objective (21%).

Figure 7 – For each of the aims below, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the GOC is meeting its three strategic objectives outlined in its Strategic Plan 2020-25?

Base: All respondents (4,880)

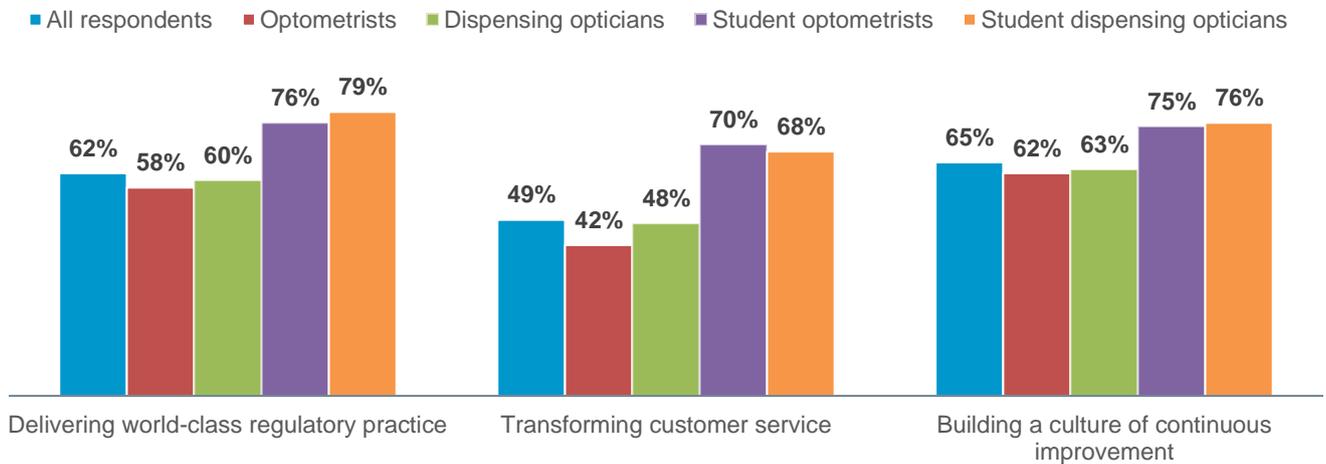


Subgroup analysis by registration type

Student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were more likely to agree that the GOC is meeting all three of its strategic objectives when compared with optometrists and dispensing opticians.

Figure 8 – Agreement that the GOC is meeting its strategic objectives by registration type

Base: All respondents (4,880); optometrists (2,736); dispensing opticians (1,200); student optometrists (767); student dispensing opticians (228)



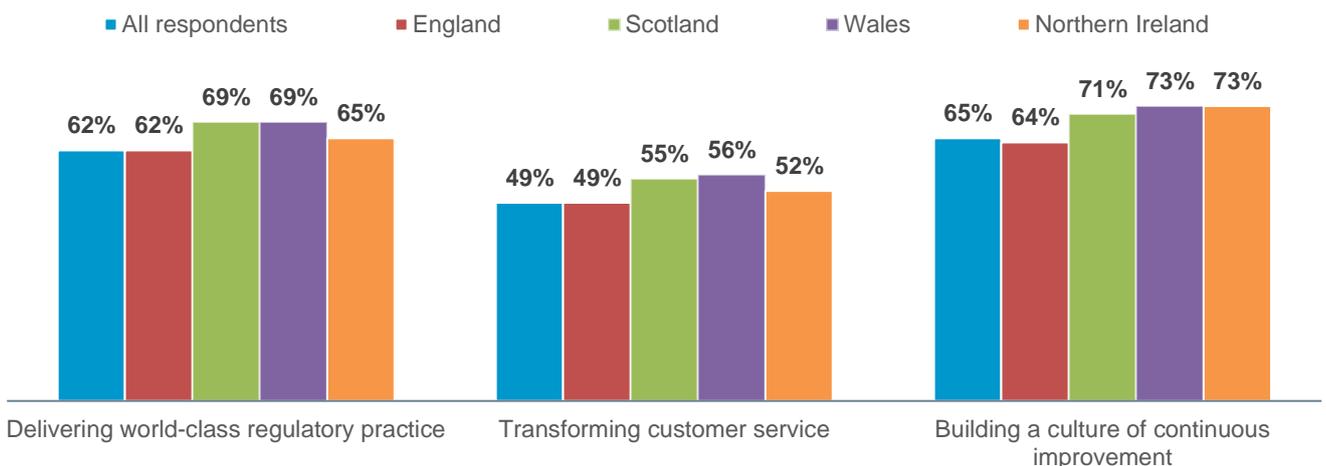
Linked to registration type, a similar pattern can be seen when looking at length of time on the GOC register, where respondents who had been on the register for a shorter length of time more likely to agree that the GOC is meeting its strategic objectives.

Subgroup analysis by location

Respondents in Scotland and Wales were more likely to agree that the GOC is meeting its strategic objectives when compared with those in England. Respondents in Northern Ireland were also more likely to agree that the GOC is meeting its objective of *building a culture of continuous improvement* when compared with those in England.

Figure 9 – Agreement that the GOC is meeting its strategic objectives by location

Base: All respondents (4,880); England (3,760); Scotland (250); Wales (417); Northern Ireland (132)



Respondents were asked to suggest one priority they would like to see the GOC achieve over the course of its Strategic Plan 2020-25. Free-text responses have been thematically coded for analysis and are presented below.

A wide range of suggestions were made, but the most common was that the GOC's priority should be to support, protect or represent its registrants (16%), followed by 11% who focused on regulating online sales and tackling illegal supply.

Figure 10 – What is the one priority you would like to see the GOC achieve over the course of its Strategic Plan 2020-25? Coded responses

Base: Those who provided a response (2,232)

Suggestion for priority	Number	%
Support/protect/represent registrants	352	16%
Regulate online sales/tackle illegal supply	250	11%
Improve/maintain quality in education/rethink ESR	203	9%
Reduce the influence of/less bias towards multiples	187	8%
Prioritise public safety/reduce commercial pressure	174	8%
Improve communication with/listen to registrants	158	7%
Building a culture of continuous improvement	146	7%
Promote the profession/educate the public	140	6%
Provide clear guidance to registrants/businesses	120	5%
Don't introduce apprenticeships	117	5%
Treat all fairly/equally	115	5%
Delivering world-class regulatory practice	113	5%
More support for/recognition of DOs/dispensing	107	5%
Negotiate/lobby for fairer fees/protect salaries	104	5%
Maintain/don't reduce/raise standards	100	4%
Enforce regulations/penalise those breaking the rules	95	4%
Upskill the profession/encourage development	91	4%
Improve/streamline the FTP process	88	4%
Modernise/support changing work practice	84	4%
Improve CET/move towards CPD	76	3%
Regulate minimum test times	75	3%
More student/pre-reg support	72	3%
Increase scope of practice/greater role in healthcare	66	3%
Reduce fees/more value for money/allow direct debit	56	3%
Transforming customer service	53	2%
Standardise service provision – more consistency	37	2%
More accessible/online CET opportunities	31	1%
Support independent practice	30	1%
CET funding for all registrants	29	1%
Streamline/clearer focus/reorganise	23	1%
More transparency	20	1%
Prevent optometrist oversupply/fewer courses	17	1%

Below is a selection of verbatim comments from some of the most common response themes to this question.

Support/protect/represent registrants

To support optometrists rather than only the public.
Optometrist

Support for registrants. We pay for the service and we benefit the least.
Dispensing optician

Protect optometrists like GMC does for its practitioners.
Optometrist

To support registrants more and become a helpful governing body and less critical.
Optometrist

Regulate online sales/tackle illegal supply

Would like the GOC to clamp down heavier on online contact lens sellers supplying lenses to out of date prescriptions and under 16s.
Dispensing optician

To regulate internet suppliers who flout current regulations.
Dispensing optician

Protect public by ensuring online glasses and contact lens sales are more regulated
Optometrist

Look after high street optometrists by ensuring online retailers are following the rules.
Optometrist

Improve/maintain quality in education/rethink ESR

To keep standards for dispensing training at diploma level or higher to protect the services for patients.
Dispensing optician

Come up with a better plan for future newly qualified optometrists. The new ESR doesn't seem like a great plan moving forward.
Optometrist

Continue to support the new members of our profession by ensuring they qualify with the most appropriate & current skills.
Optometrist

Reduce the influence of/less bias towards multiples

To prevent the monopoly of corporations deciding on the future of this profession for their benefit only.
Optometrist

Hold multiples/corporates more accountable. practitioners do not have control over their own clinics which endangers patient safety.
Optometrist

Not allowing itself to be influenced by any particular sector of the industry.
Dispensing optician

Prioritise public safety/reduce commercial pressure

Reduce the pressure on optometrists to prescribe new glasses.
Optometrist

Prioritise public safety over the profits of retailers.
Optometrist

Ensure time pressures aren't put on optometrists at high street opticians.
Optometrist

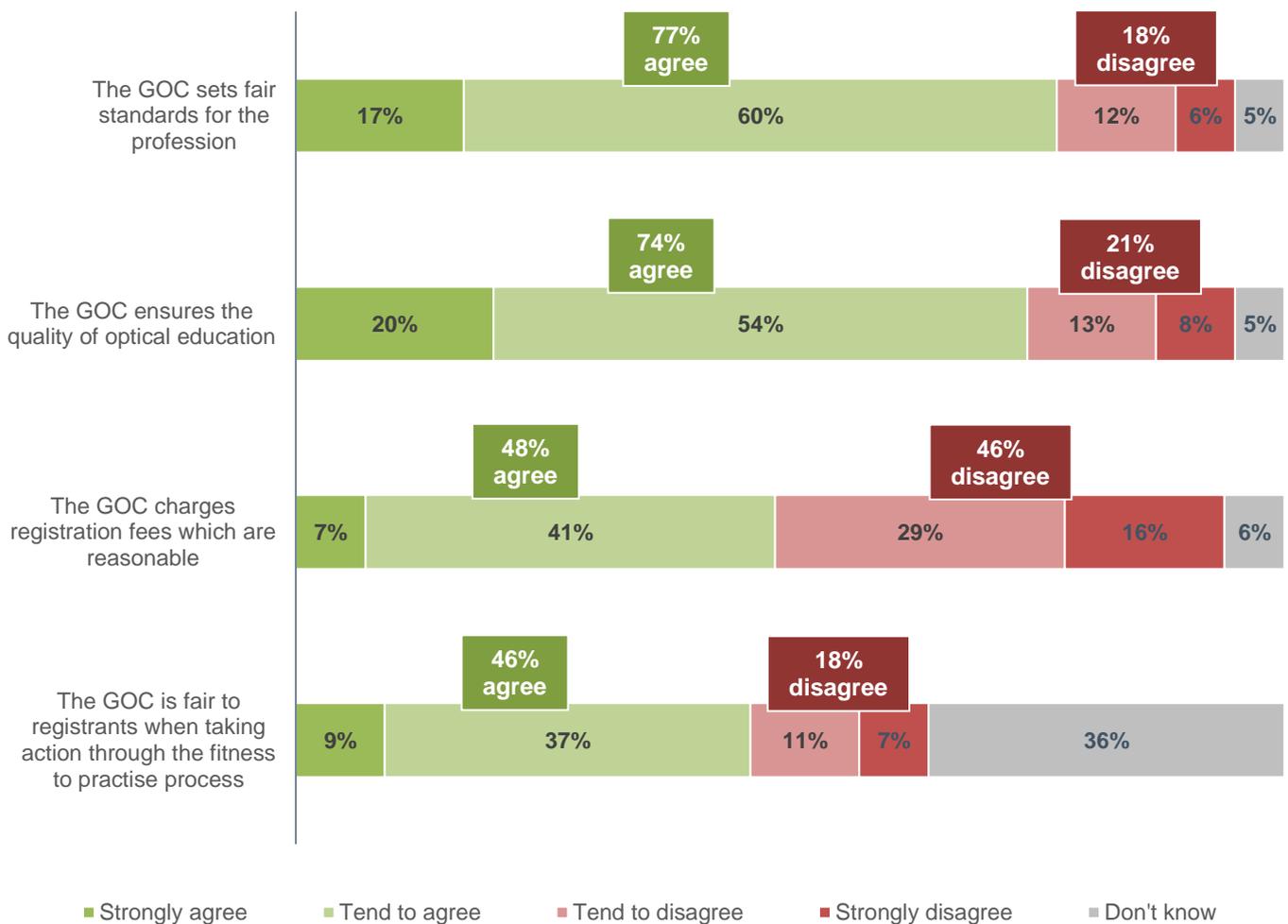
The roles and responsibilities of the GOC

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the GOC. The largest level of agreement was recorded in response to the statement *the GOC sets fair standards for the profession* (77%), followed by three quarters who agreed that *the GOC ensures the quality of optical education* (74%).

In contrast, agreement was much lower for the statement *the GOC charges registration fees which are reasonable* (48%), to which almost the same proportion disagreed (46%).

Whilst only 46% agreed that *the GOC is fair to registrants when taking action through fitness to practise*, over a third answered that they did not know in response to this statement (36%), a much larger proportion when compared with the other statements.

Figure 11 – For each of the following statements please say to what extent you agree or disagree
 Base: All respondents (4,880)

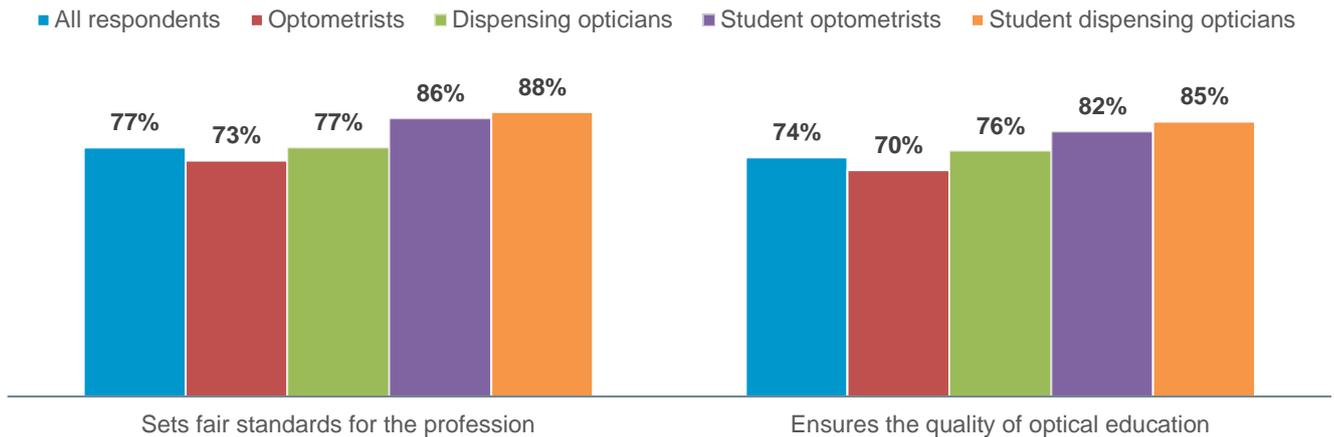


Subgroup analysis by registration type

Dispensing opticians were more likely to agree that *the GOC sets fair standards for the profession* (77%) and *ensures the quality of optical education* (76%) when compared with optometrists (73% and 70% respectively). However, larger proportions of student optometrists and student dispensing opticians agreed with both these statements when compared with both optometrists and dispensing opticians.

Figure 12 – Agreement that the GOC sets fair standards for the profession / ensures the quality of optical education by registrant type

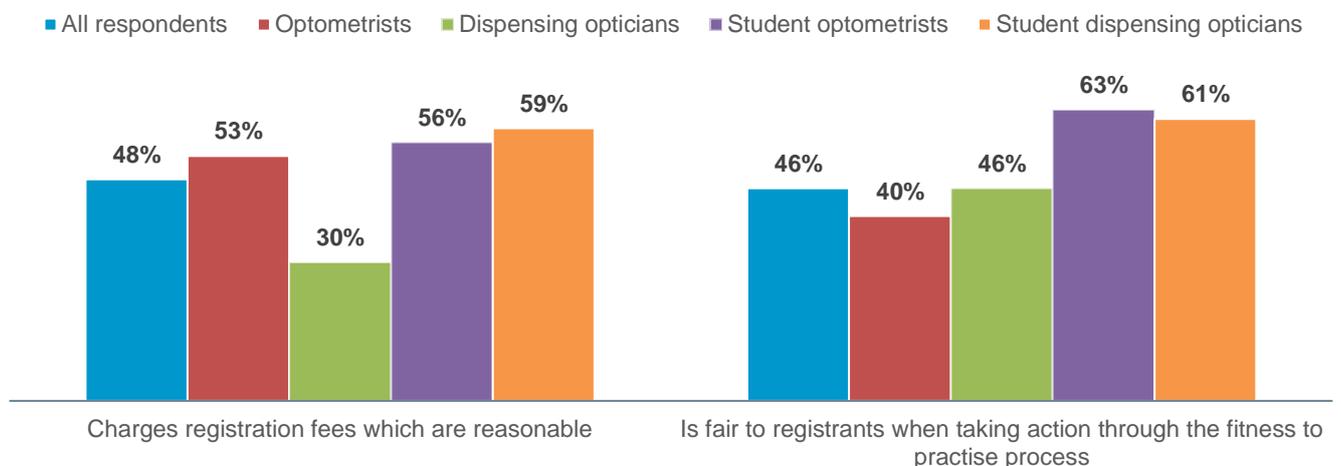
Base: All respondents (4,880); optometrists (2,736); dispensing opticians (1,200); student optometrists (767); student dispensing opticians (228)



Dispensing opticians were much less likely to agree that *the GOC charges registration fees which are reasonable* (30%) when compared with all other registration types. Optometrists were less likely to agree that *the GOC is fair to registrants when taking action through the fitness to practise process* (40%), particularly when compared with student optometrists (63%) and student dispensing opticians (61%).

Figure 13 – Agreement that the GOC charges registration fees which are reasonable / is fair to registrants when taking action through the fitness to practise process by registrant type

Base: All respondents (4,880); optometrists (2,736); dispensing opticians (1,200); student optometrists (767); student dispensing opticians (228)



2016/2021 comparison

When compared with the 2016 survey results, the level of agreement with the statement *the GOC sets fair standards for the profession* has fallen by six percentage points from 83% in 2016 to 77% in 2021. Agreement has also fallen slightly for other statements, but by negligible levels.

Figure 14 – Perspectives of the GOC – 2016/2021 comparison (% agree)

Base: All respondents 2016 (4,139); 2021 (4,880)

Statement	2016 (% agree)	2021 (% agree)	Difference in percentage points
Sets fair standards for the profession	83%	77%	-6
Charges registration fees which are reasonable	52%	48%	-4
Is fair to registrants when taking action through the fitness to practise process	48%	46%	-2

Standards of practice and guidance

Key findings

Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians

- 43% of respondents described their understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians as *very good* or *excellent*, in line with the 2016 survey results (41%)
- Those working full-time, for a multiple optician, in education/academia, and with fewer years on the GOC register were more likely to rate their understanding as *very good* or *excellent*
- 95% of respondents felt confident in their ability to meet these standards, representing a very small increase in confidence when compared with the 2016 survey results (92%)

Standards of Practice for Optical Students

- 55% of student respondents rated their understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optical Students as *very good* or *excellent*
- 91% felt confident in their ability to meet these standards
- A larger proportion of student dispensing opticians felt confident (96%) when compared with student optometrists (89%)

Disclosing confidential information guidance

- 45% of respondents rated their understanding of the disclosing confidential information guidance as *very good* or *excellent*. The same proportion rated their understanding as *good* (44%)
- 85% felt confident in their ability to meet this guidance
- Student dispensing opticians were more likely to describe their understanding of this guidance as *very good* or *excellent*, and were more likely to feel confident in their ability to meet this guidance, particularly when compared with optometrists

Raising concerns with the GOC guidance

- 40% of respondents rated their understanding of the raising concerns with the GOC guidance as *good* and 28% rated it as *very good* or *excellent*
- 58% felt confident in their ability to meet this guidance, but 29% did not feel confident
- Student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were more likely to describe their understanding of this guidance as *very good* or *excellent*, and student dispensing opticians were more likely to feel confident in their ability to meet this guidance, particularly when compared with optometrists

Standards for Optical Businesses

- 50% of those in a position of responsibility, seniority or management rated their understanding of the Standards for Optical Businesses as *very good* or *excellent*
- 90% felt confident in their ability to meet these standards

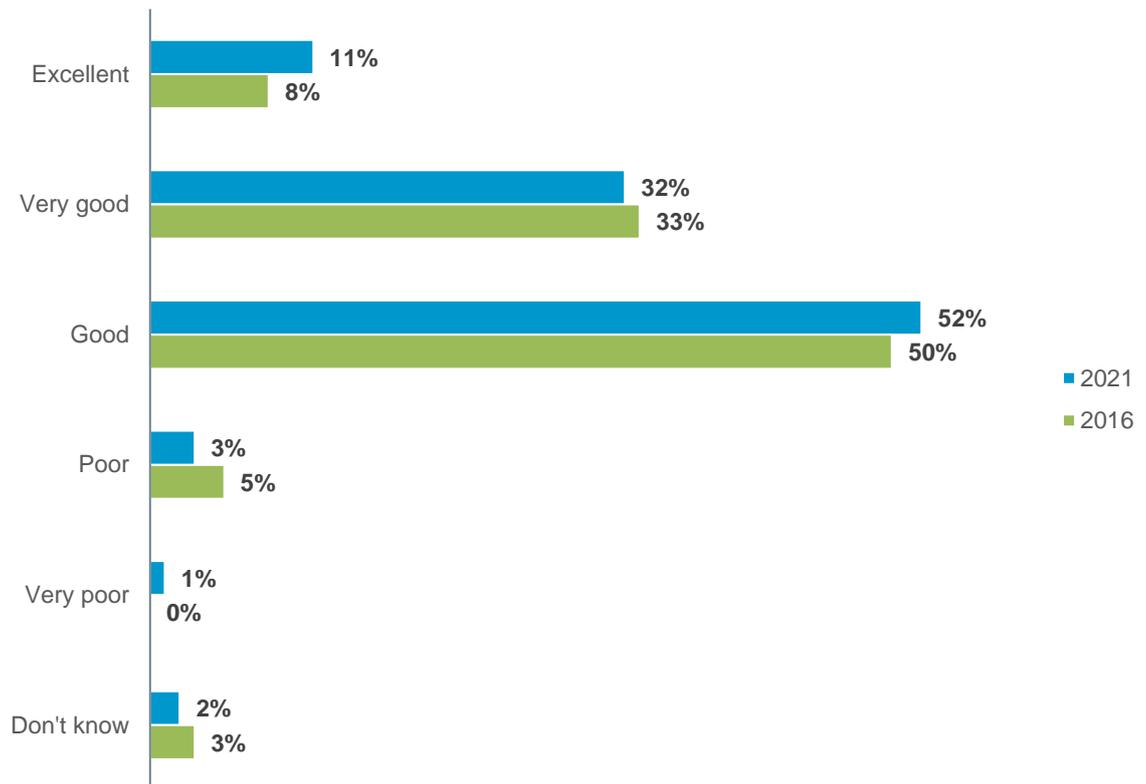
Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians

In total, 43% of respondents rated their understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians as *very good*, or *excellent*. The largest proportion of respondents described their understanding as *good* (52%).

Results are broadly similar to those found in 2016, with a small increase in the proportion who rate their understanding as *excellent* (up three percentage points).

Figure 15 – How would you rate your understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians?

Base: 2021 – All respondents excluding students and those who answered ‘not aware’ or ‘not applicable’ (3,917); 2016 – All respondents who were aware of and had read the ‘new’ standards (3,873)



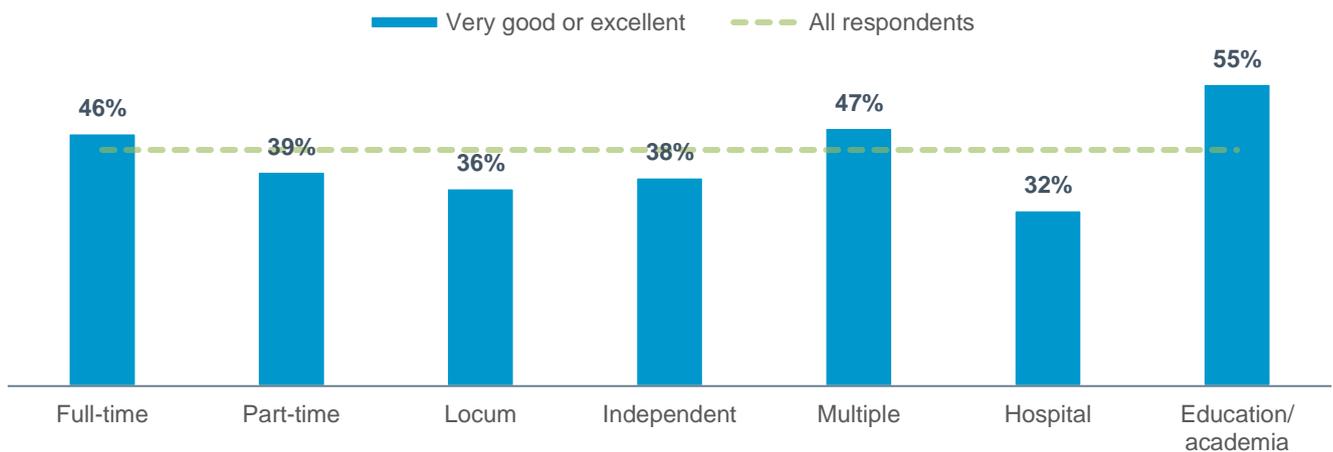
Subgroup analysis by working status and workplace setting

Those working full-time were more likely to rate their understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians as *very good* or *excellent* (46%) when compared with those working part-time (39%) or as a locum (36%).

Those working for a multiple optician or in education/academia were also more likely to rate their understanding as *very good* or *excellent* (47% and 55% respectively) when compared with those who worked for an independent optician (38%) or in a hospital (32%).

Figure 16 – Rating understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians as very good or excellent by working status and workplace setting

Base: Full-time (2,069); part-time (1,178); locum (702); independent (1,718); multiple (1,890); hospital (335); education/academia (200)

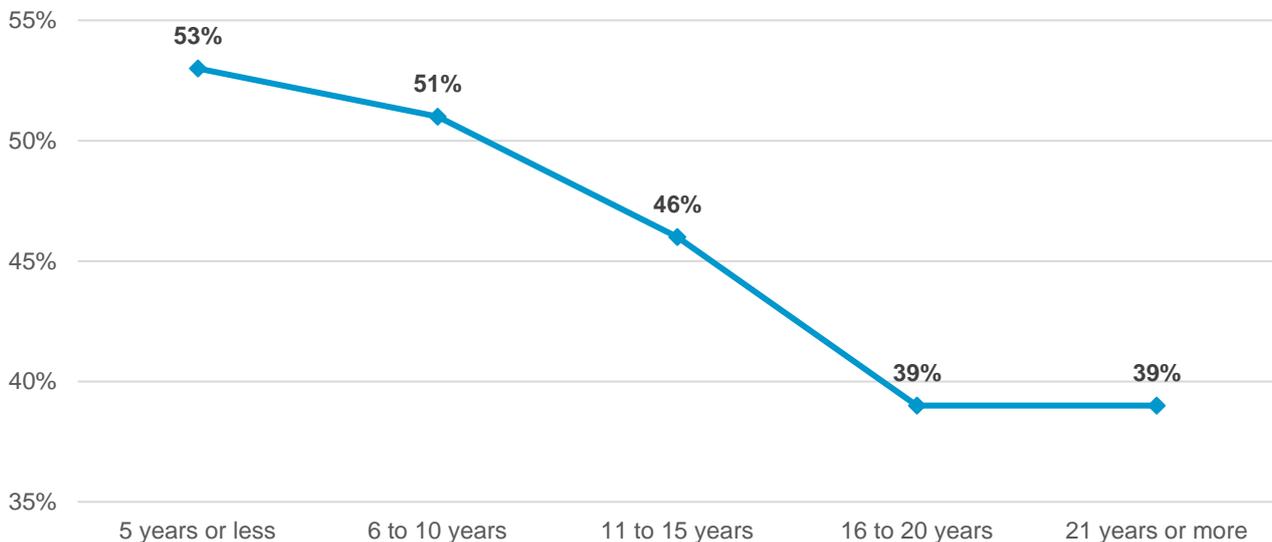


Subgroup analysis by length of time on the register

A clear trend can be seen when looking at the level of understanding by length of time on the GOC register. The proportion of those who rate their understanding as *very good* or *excellent* falls steadily from 53% for those who had been on the register for five years or less to 39% for those who have been on the register for 16 years or more.

Figure 17 – Rating understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians as very good or excellent by length of time on the register

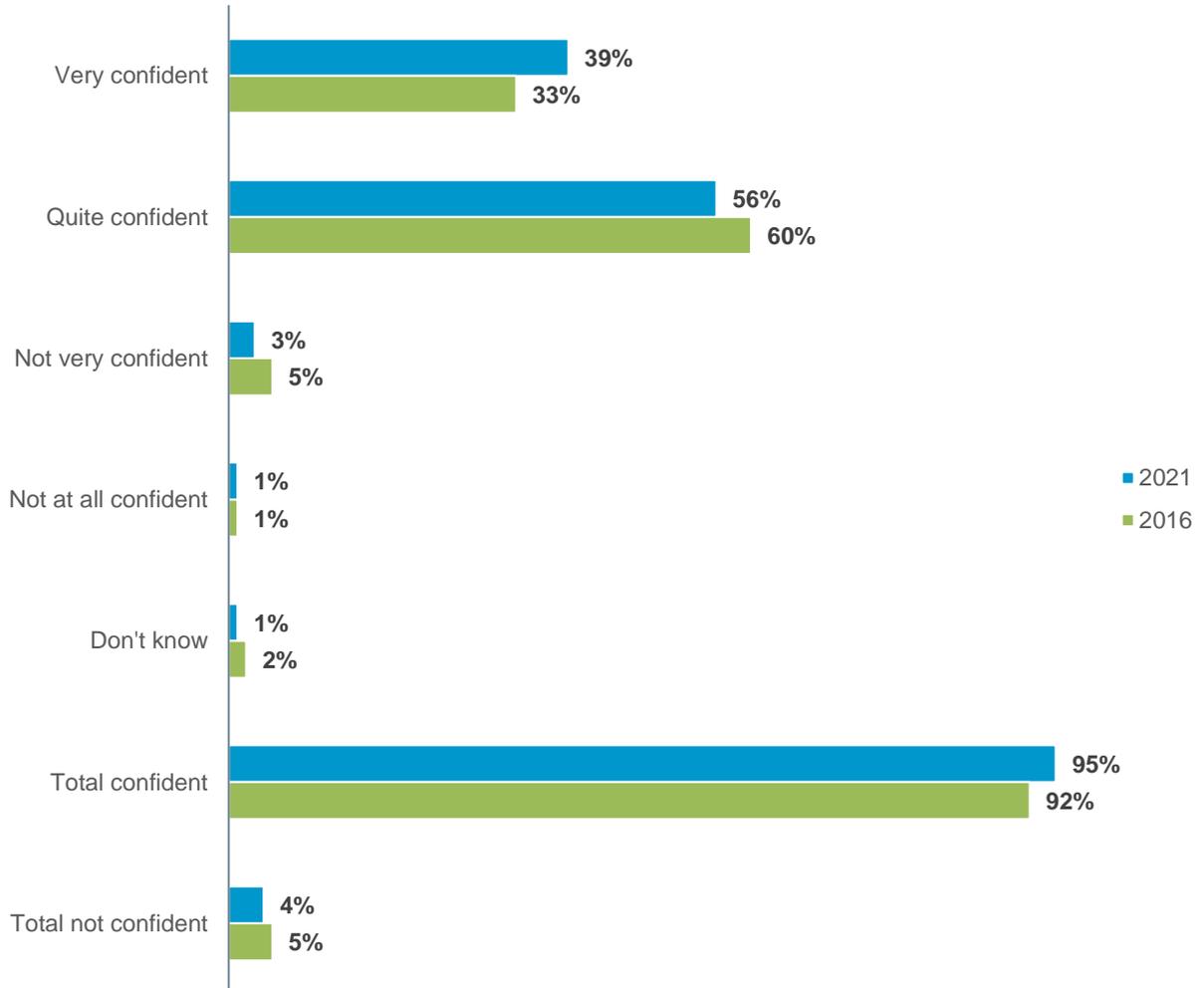
Base: 5 years or less (534); 6-10 (464); 11-15 (509); 16-20 (534); 21 years or more (1,862)



Almost all respondents felt confident (*very confident* or *quite confident*) in their ability to meet the Standards of Practice for Optometrist and Dispensing Opticians (95%), representing a small increase in confidence when compared with the results from 2016 (up three percentage points). An increase of six percentage points can be seen for those who felt *very confident* from 33% in 2016 to 39% in 2021.

Figure 18 – How confident are you in your ability to meet the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians?

Base: 2021 – All respondents excluding students and those who answered ‘not aware’ or ‘not applicable’ (3,910); 2016 – All respondents who were aware of and had read the ‘new’ standards (3,873)



Analysis highlights that confidence in meeting these standards was high across all subgroups (92% or above), with little difference recorded.

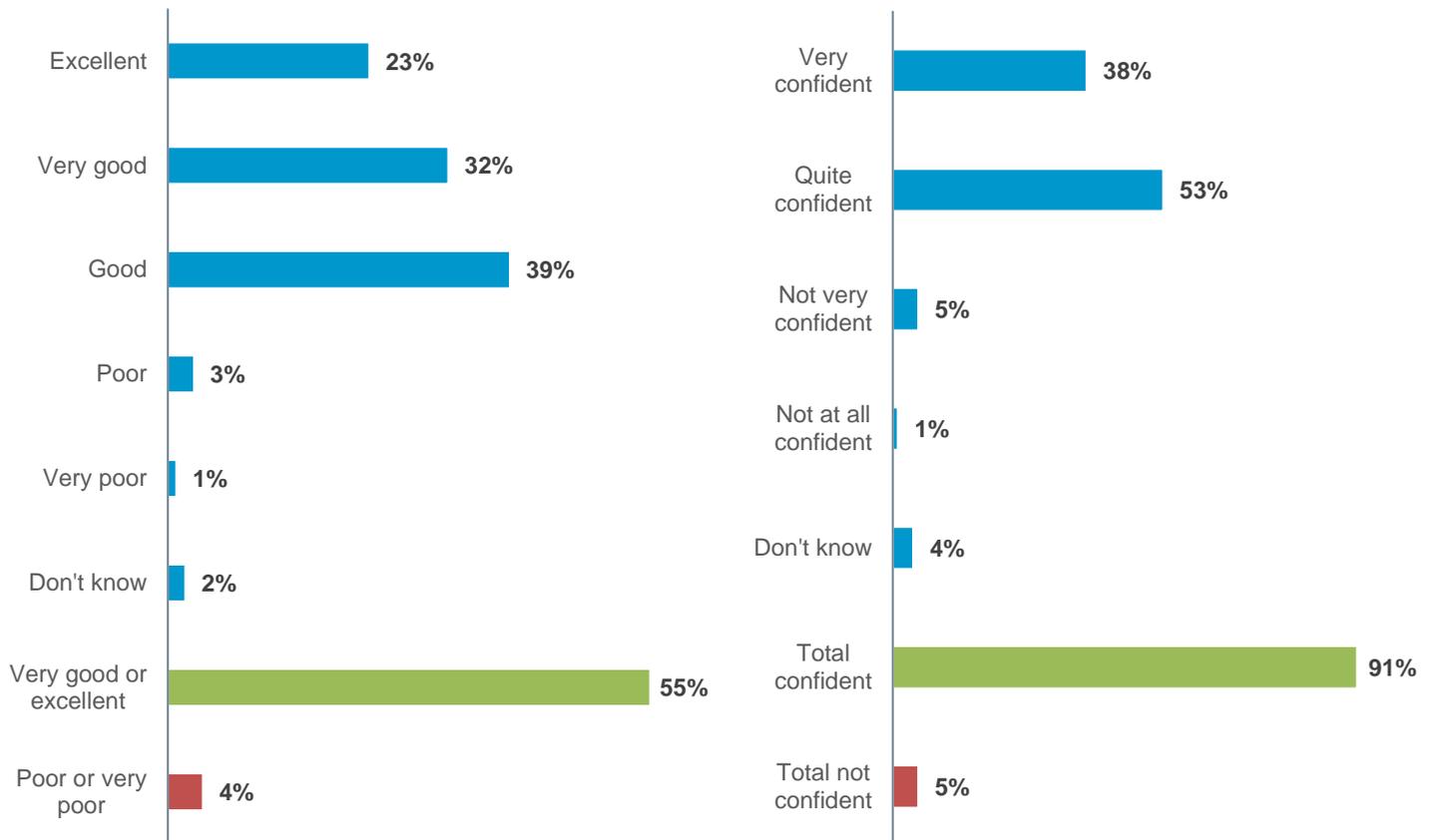
Standards of Practice for Optical Students

Student respondents were asked to rate their understanding of and confidence in their ability to meet the Standards of Practice for Optical Students.

Over half rated their understanding as *very good* or *excellent* (55%) and a further 39% rated it as *good*. Nine in ten student respondents were confident in their ability to meet these Standards (91%), including 38% who were *very confident* and 53% who were *quite confident*.

Figure 19 – How would you rate your understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optical Students? / How confident are you in your ability to meet the Standards of Practice for Optical Students?

Base: Student respondents excluding those who answered 'not aware' or 'not applicable' (974)

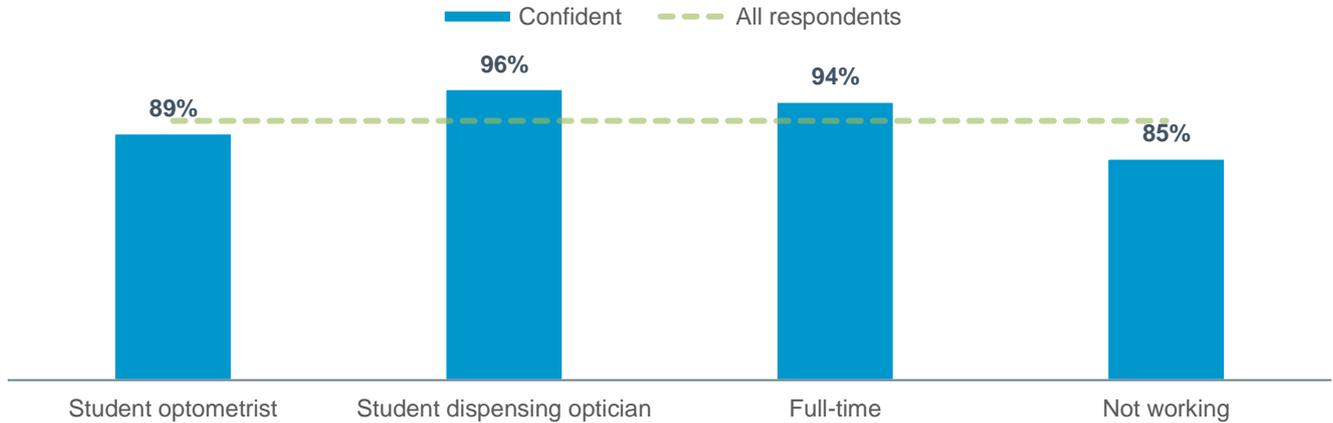


Subgroup analysis by student registration type and working status

Student dispensing opticians were more likely to feel confident in their ability to meet the Standards of Practice for Optical Students (96%) when compared with student optometrists (89%). Additionally, students who work full-time were more likely to feel confident (94%) when compared with those who did not work (85%).

Figure 20 – Confidence in meeting the Standards of Practice for Optical Students by student registration type and working status

Base: Student optometrist (753); student dispensing optician (227); full-time (460); part-time (350)



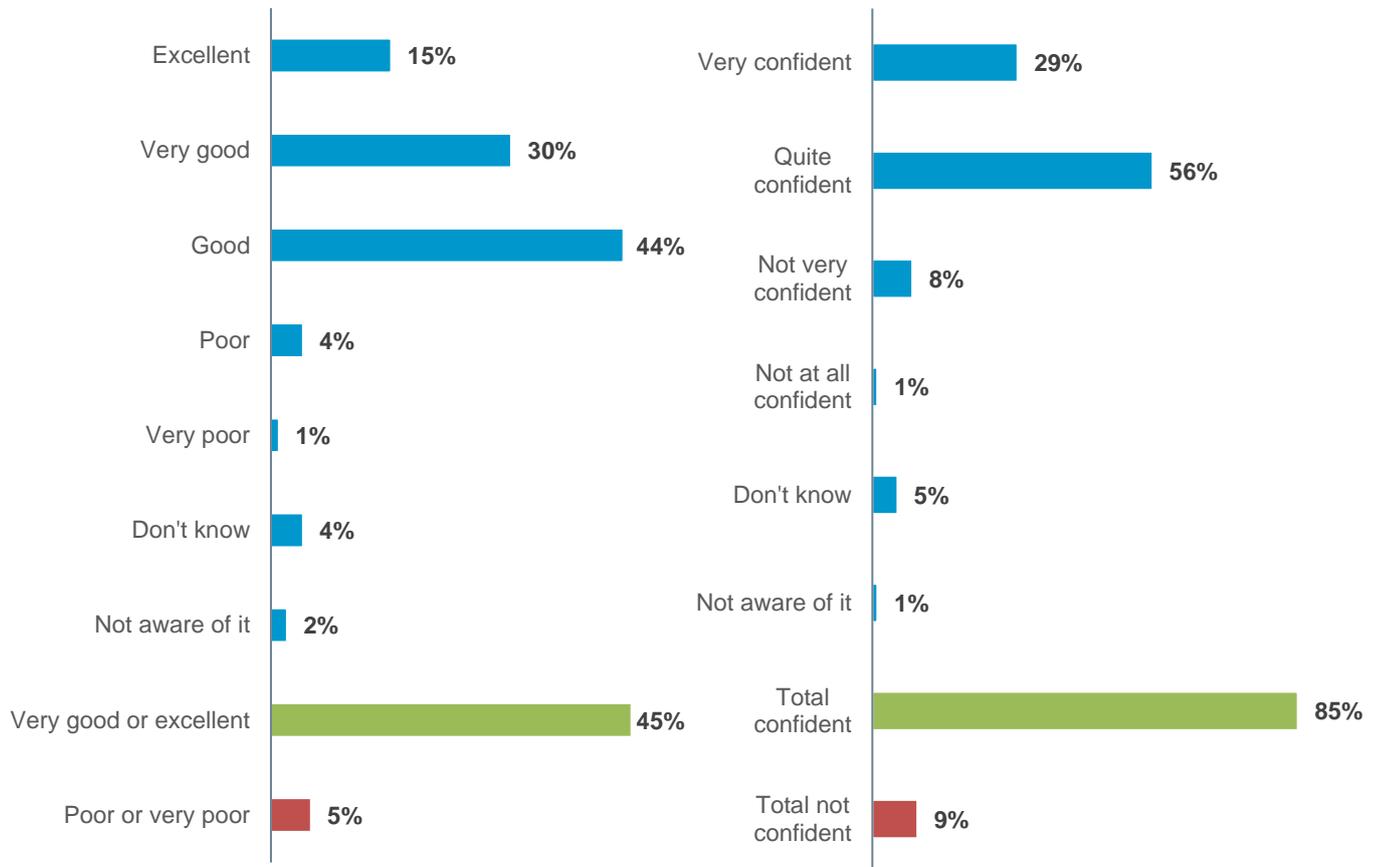
Disclosing confidential information guidance

Although the largest proportion of respondents rated their understanding of the disclosing confidential information guidance as *good* (44%), in total the same proportion rated their understanding as *very good* or *excellent* (45%). Just 5% rated their understanding as *poor* or *very poor*, and a further 2% were unaware of this guidance.

Over four in five respondents said that they are confident in their ability to meet the disclosing confidential information guidance (85%), including 56% who were *quite confident* and 29% who were *very confident*. Just 9% in total said they did not feel confident.

Figure 21 – How would you rate your understanding of the disclosing confidential information guidance? / How confident are you in your ability to meet the disclosing confidential information guidance?

Base: All respondents excluding those who answered 'not applicable' (4,862)



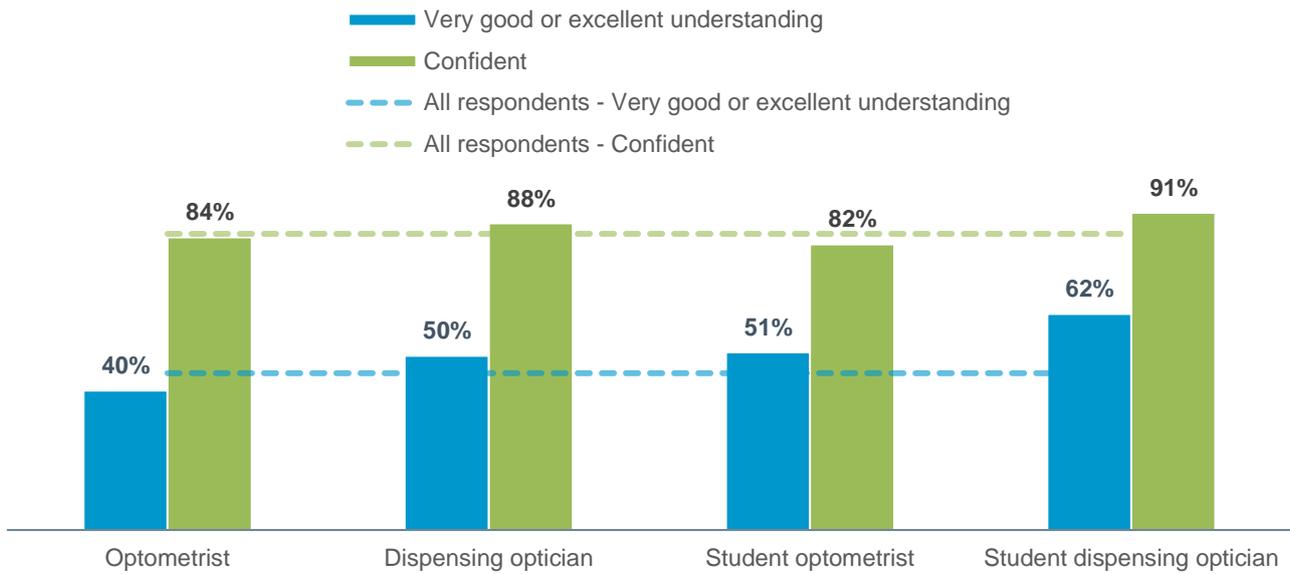
Subgroup analysis by registration type

Student dispensing opticians were more likely to describe their understanding of the disclosing confidential information guidance as *very good* or *excellent* (62%), particularly when compared with optometrists (40%).

Subgroup analysis also highlights that student dispensing opticians were also more likely to feel confident in their ability to meet this guidance (91%) when compared with optometrists (84%).

Figure 22 – Understanding of and confidence in ability to meet the disclosing confidential information guidance by registration type

Base: Optometrist (2,714); dispensing optician (1,183); student optometrist (760); student dispensing optician (224)



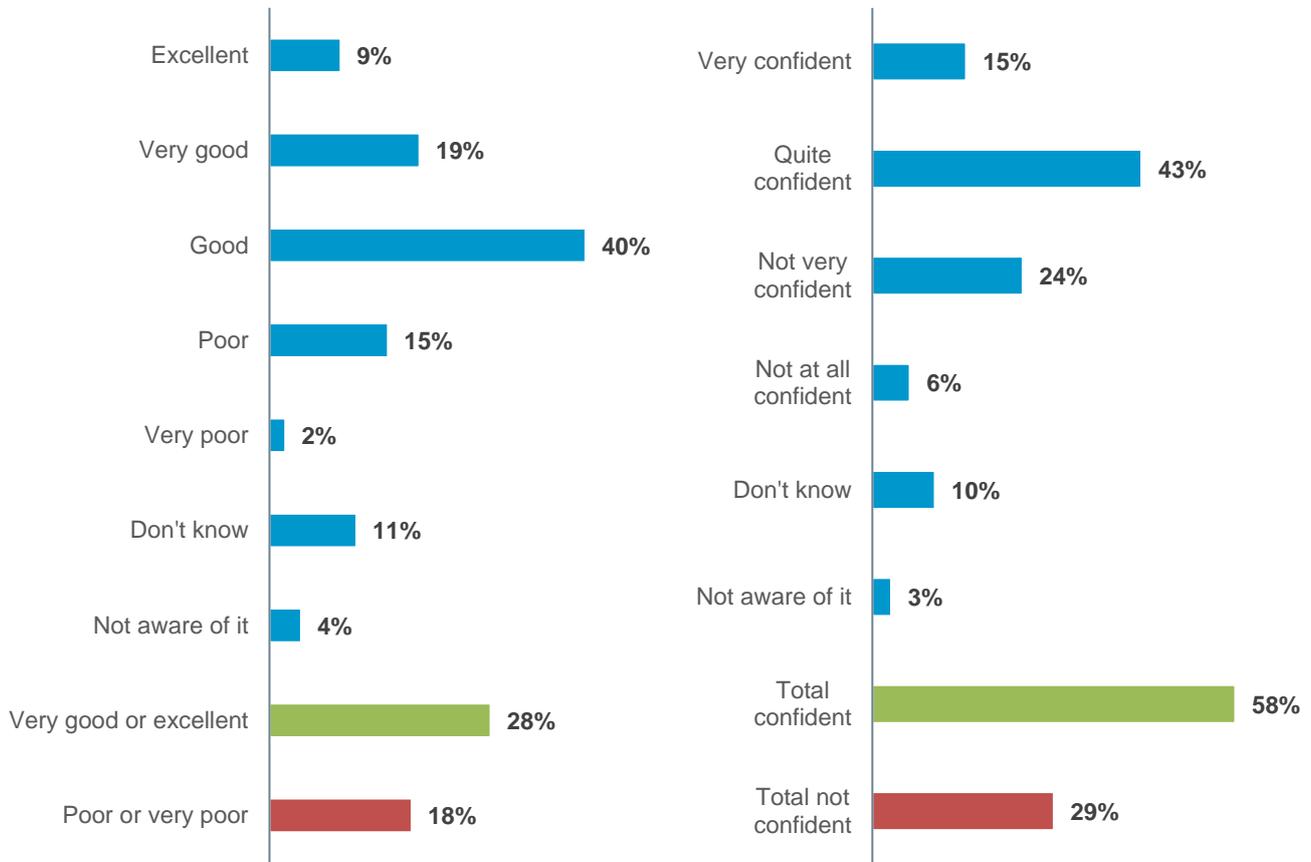
Raising concerns with the GOC guidance

The largest proportion of respondents rated their understanding of the raising concerns with the GOC guidance as *good* (40%). In total, 28% rated their understanding as *very good* or *excellent*. However, almost one in five rated their understanding as *poor* or *very poor* (18%), and a further 4% were unaware of this guidance.

Almost three in five respondents said that they are confident in their ability to meet the raising concerns with the GOC guidance (58%), including 43% who were *quite confident* and 15% who were *very confident*. However, a total of 29% of respondents said they did not feel confident.

Figure 23 – How would you rate your understanding of the raising concerns with the GOC guidance? / How confident are you in your ability to meet the raising concerns with the GOC guidance?

Base: All respondents excluding those who answered 'not applicable' (4,830)



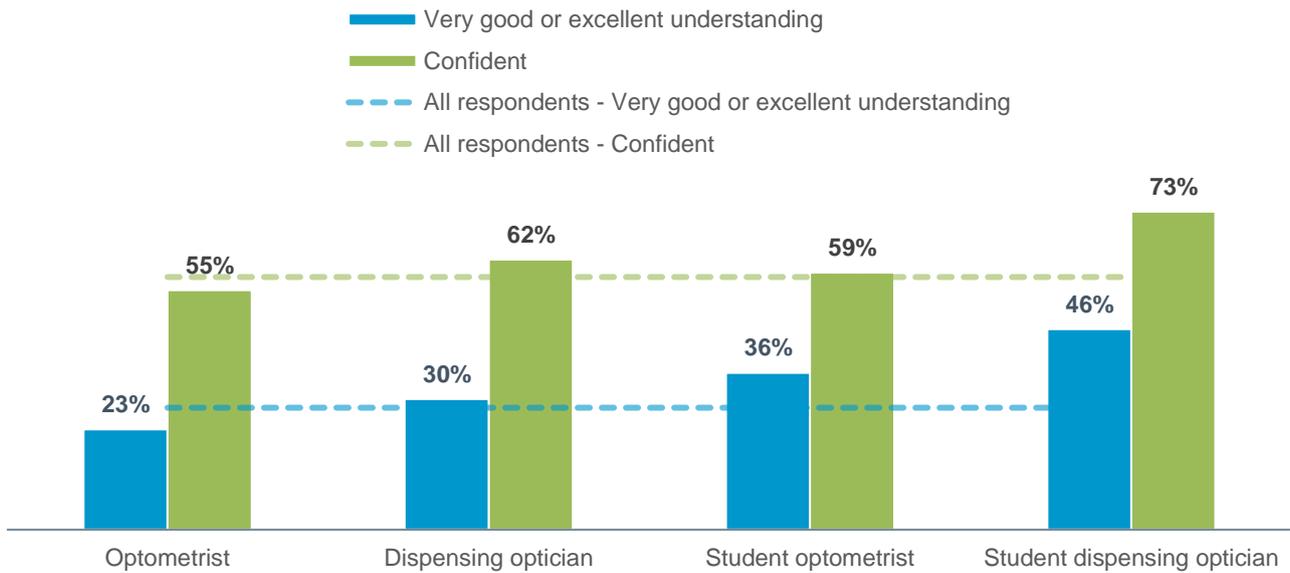
Subgroup analysis by registration type

Student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were more likely to describe their understanding of the raising concerns with the GOC guidance as *very good* or *excellent* (36% and 46% respectively) when compared with optometrists and dispensing opticians (23% and 30% respectively).

The sample also shows that a larger proportion of student dispensing opticians felt confident in their ability to meet this guidance (73%) when compared with other registration types, particularly optometrists (55%).

Figure 24 – Understanding of and confidence in ability to meet the raising concerns with the GOC guidance by registration type

Base: Optometrist (2,714); dispensing optician (1,183); student optometrist (760); student dispensing optician (224)



Standards for Optical Businesses

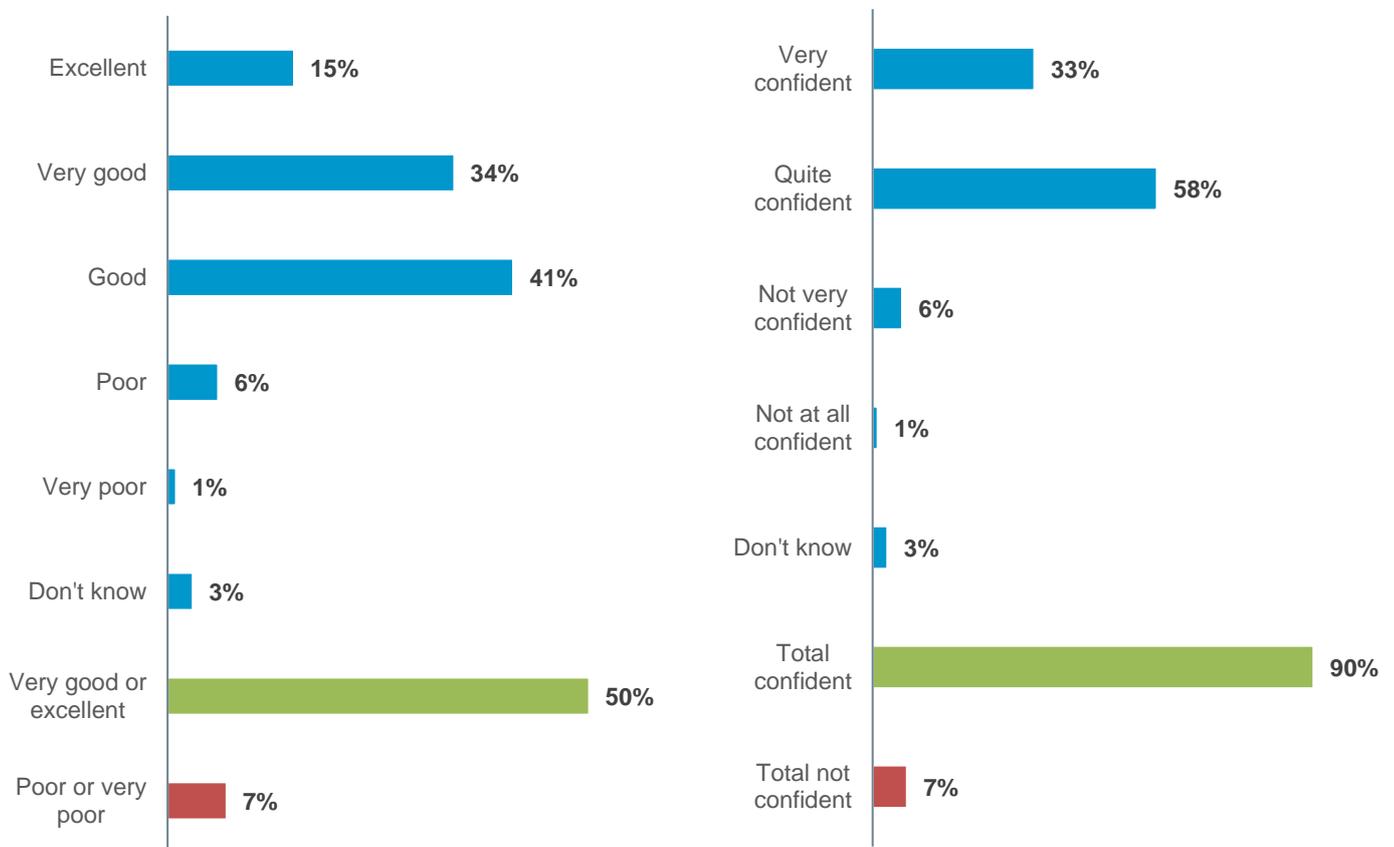
Just over a quarter of working respondents indicated that they were in a position of responsibility, seniority or management within a business, such as a store manager, regional manager or director (27%).

These respondents were asked to indicate their level of understanding and confidence in their ability to meet the Standards for Optical Businesses. Half of these respondents rated their understanding as *very good* or *excellent* (50%), and a further 41% rated it as *good*. Just 7% felt their understanding was *poor* or *very poor* (7%).

Nine in ten respondents felt confident in their ability to meet the Standards for Optical Businesses (90%), including 58% who felt *quite confident* and 33% who felt *very confident*.

Figure 25 – How would you rate your understanding of the Standards for Optical Businesses? / How confident are you in your ability to meet the Standards for Optical Businesses?

Base: Those in a position of responsibility, seniority or management excluding those who answered 'not applicable' (1,175)



Analysis highlights that understanding and confidence levels in relation to the Standards for Optical Businesses were consistent across the subgroups, with little difference noted.

The registration process

Key findings

MyGOC

- 90% of respondents rated their experience of using the MyGOC area of the GOC's website positively, including 60% who rated it as *good* and 30% who rated it as *excellent*
- This result represents continuity with the results found in 2016, where 93% rated their experience positively

The annual retention process

- 92% of those who had been through the annual retention process in the last 12 months rated their experience as positive, including 58% who rated it as *good* and 34% as *excellent*
- Again, this result is very similar to the 2016 results, where 94% rated their experience positively

MyGOC

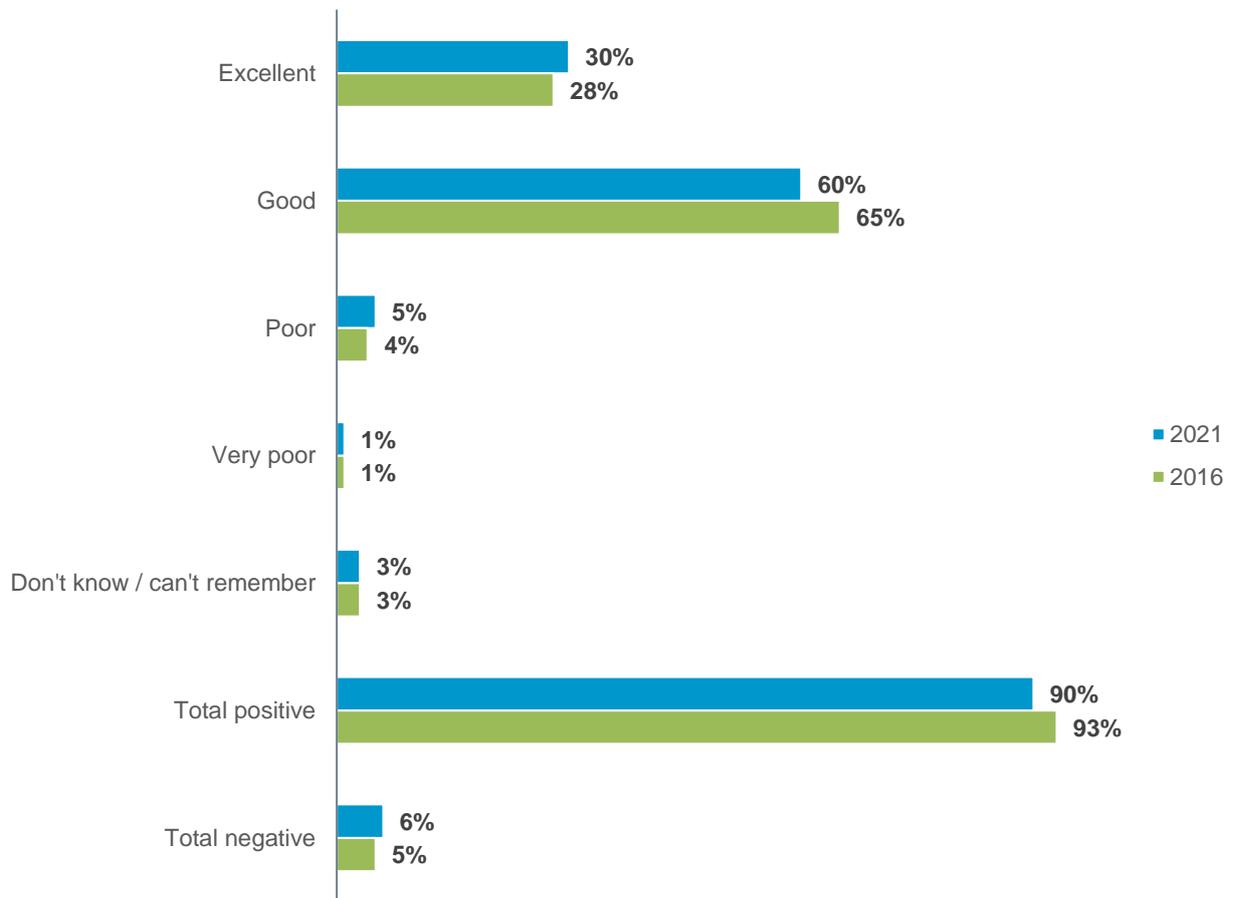
The MyGOC area is used by registrants to update their details and complete their retention applications.

Nine in ten respondents rated their experience of using the MyGOC area of the website positively (90%), with 60% rating it as *good* and 30% as *excellent*. Just 6% in total rated their experience negatively.

This year’s survey results are broadly similar to those found in 2016, with only a small decrease in the proportion of respondents who rated their experience as positive (down three percentage points).

Figure 26 – How would you rate your experience of using the MyGOC area of the website?

Base: All respondents – 2021 (4,880); 2016 (4,139)



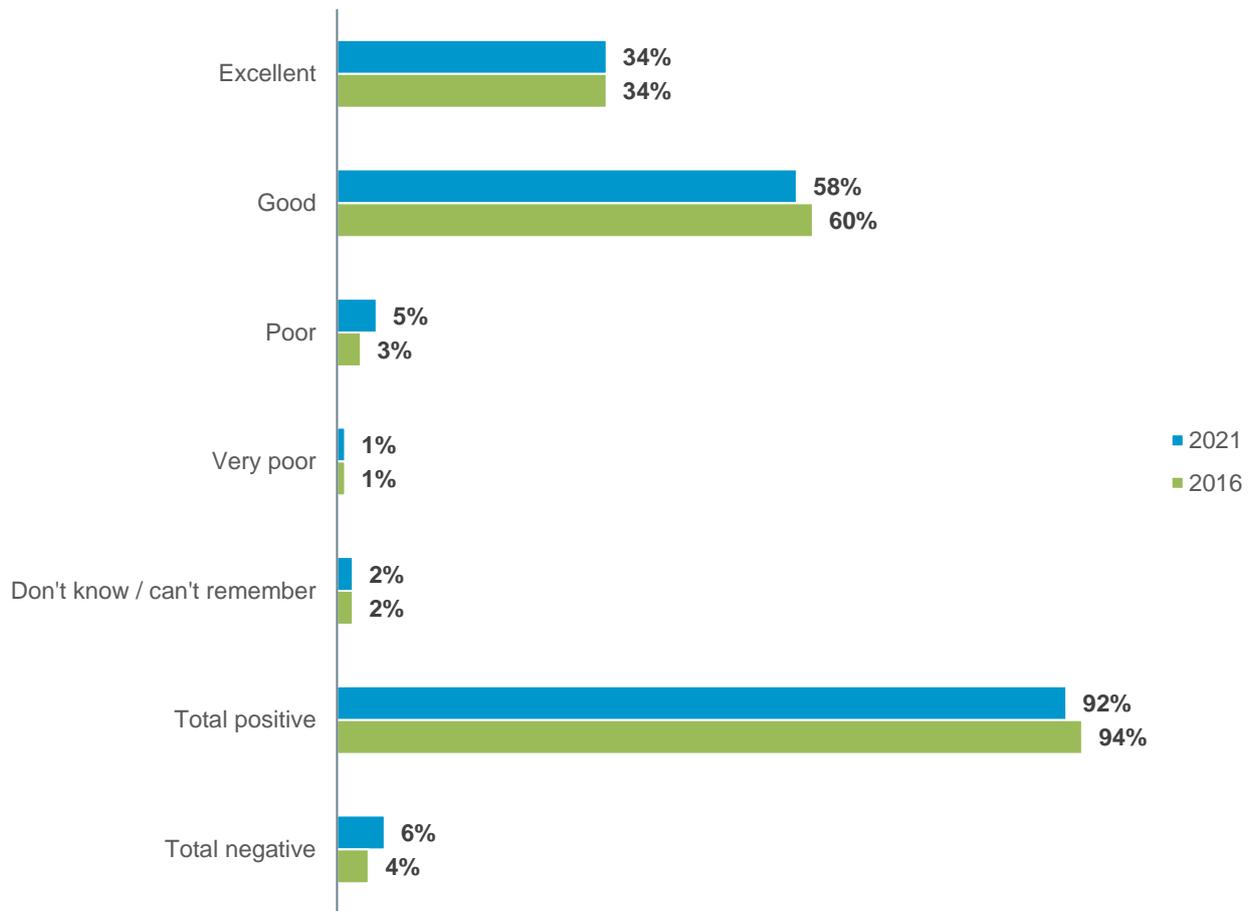
The annual retention process

Of those who had been through the annual retention process in the last 12 months, almost all rated their experience as positive (92%). The largest proportion rated their experience as *good* (58%) and a further 34% as *excellent*. Just 6% rated their experience as negative.

When compared with the survey results from 2016, the results are broadly similar, showing no significant change.

Figure 27 – If you have gone through the annual retention process (applying and paying the fee) in the last 12 months, how would you rate your experience?

Base: Those who had gone through the annual retention process in the last 12 months 2021 (4,691); 2016 (4,106)



It is interesting to note that respondents who indicated that they had a disability were more likely to rate their experience of the annual retention process as negative (10%) when compared with those without a disability (5%).

Communication

Key findings

Frequency of communication

- The majority of respondents described the frequency of communication from the GOC as *about right* (80%). Just 5% thought it was *too often* and 11% *not often enough*
- This result is in line with the findings of the 2016 registrant survey, where 82% thought the frequency of communication was *about right*

Keeping up to date

- The most popular way of keeping up to date with GOC news was via email (89%)
- A third kept up to date with GOC news via the GOC website (33%) and 8% via the eBulletin
- Keeping up to date via email was more commonplace amongst younger respondents aged 44 and under, whereas older respondents were more likely to keep up to date via the GOC website
- Only small proportions of respondents kept up to date via LinkedIn (4%) and Twitter (4%)

Email bulletins

- 83% of respondents read the GOC eBulletin (13% *in detail* and 70% *scan*), compared with 49% who read the FTP Focus learning bulletin (8% *in detail* and 41% *scan*)
- 18% of respondents said that they did not receive the FTP Focus learning bulletin
- Readership of the GOC eBulletin has increased by five percentage points since 2016
- Readership of the GOC eBulletin was higher amongst optometrists and dispensing opticians when compared with student optometrists and student dispensing opticians
- Readership of the FTP Focus learning bulletin was higher amongst optometrists when compared with all other registration types
- 83% of respondents said they found the GOC eBulletin informative, in line with the result in the 2016 survey
- 87% of respondents said they found the FTP Focus learning bulletin informative
- Despite being less likely to read it, student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were more likely to find the GOC eBulletin informative when compared with optometrists and dispensing opticians
- A larger proportion of student optometrists found the FTP Focus learning bulletin informative when compared with other registration types

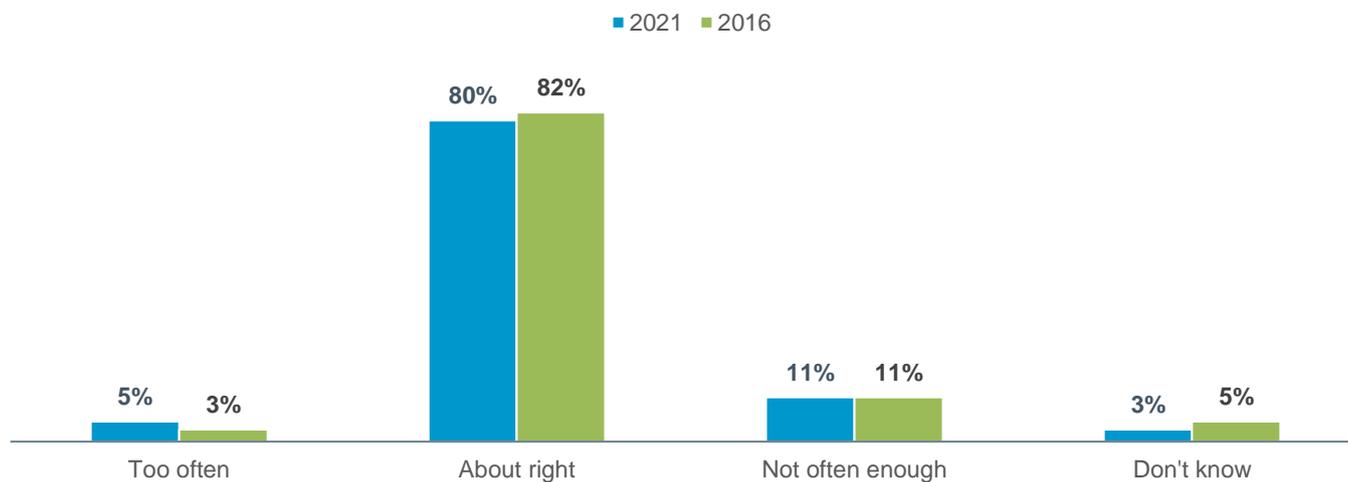
Frequency of communication

The vast majority of respondents described the frequency of communication from the GOC as *about right* (80%). One in nine felt that the frequency was *not enough* (11%), and just 5% that it was *too often*.

This year’s results are broadly similar to those found in 2016, with only minimal changes noted.

Figure 28 – How would you describe the frequency that the GOC communicates with you?

Base: All respondents - 2021 (4,880); 2016 (4,139)



Subgroup analysis

The following subgroups were more likely to describe the frequency of GOC communication as *too often*:

- Student optometrists (9%)
- Those who have been on the GOC register for five years or less (8%)

The following subgroups were more likely to describe the frequency of GOC communication as *not often enough*:

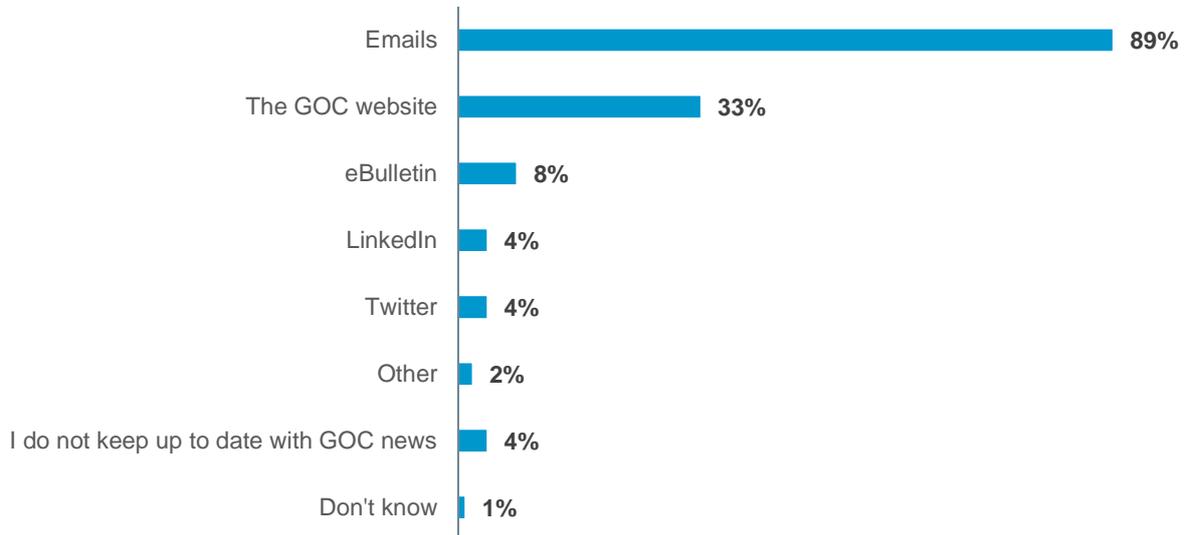
- Dispensing opticians (14%)
- Locums (15%)
- Those working in domiciliary care (19%)

Keeping up to date

By far the most popular way of keeping up to date with GOC news was via emails (89%). A third suggested that they kept up to date via the GOC website (33%). Smaller proportions said that they kept up to date via the eBulletin (8%), LinkedIn (4%) and Twitter (4%). Just 4% said that they do not keep up to date with GOC news.

Figure 29 – How do you keep up to date with GOC news?

Base: All respondents (4,880)



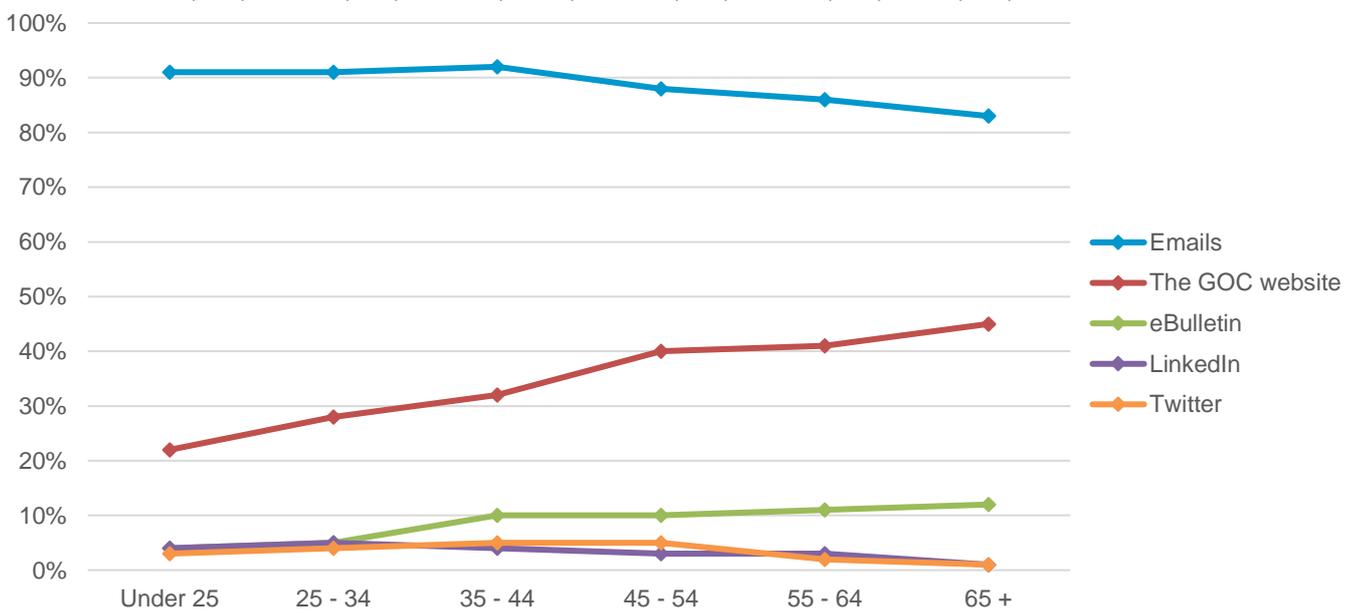
Subgroup analysis by age group

The use of emails to keep up to date with GOC news falls with age, from as high as 92% for those aged 34-44 to 83% for those aged 65+. Conversely, the use of the GOC website increases with age, from 22% for those aged under 25 to 45% for those aged 65+. A similar pattern can be seen for the eBulletin, to a lesser degree.

Although still low, keeping up to date with GOC news via LinkedIn and Twitter is more commonplace amongst those in younger age groups when compared with those aged 55+.

Figure 30 – Keeping up to date with GOC news by age group

Base: Under 25 (763); 25-34 (906); 34-44 (1,029); 45-54 (967); 55-64 (857); 65+ (226)



Email bulletins

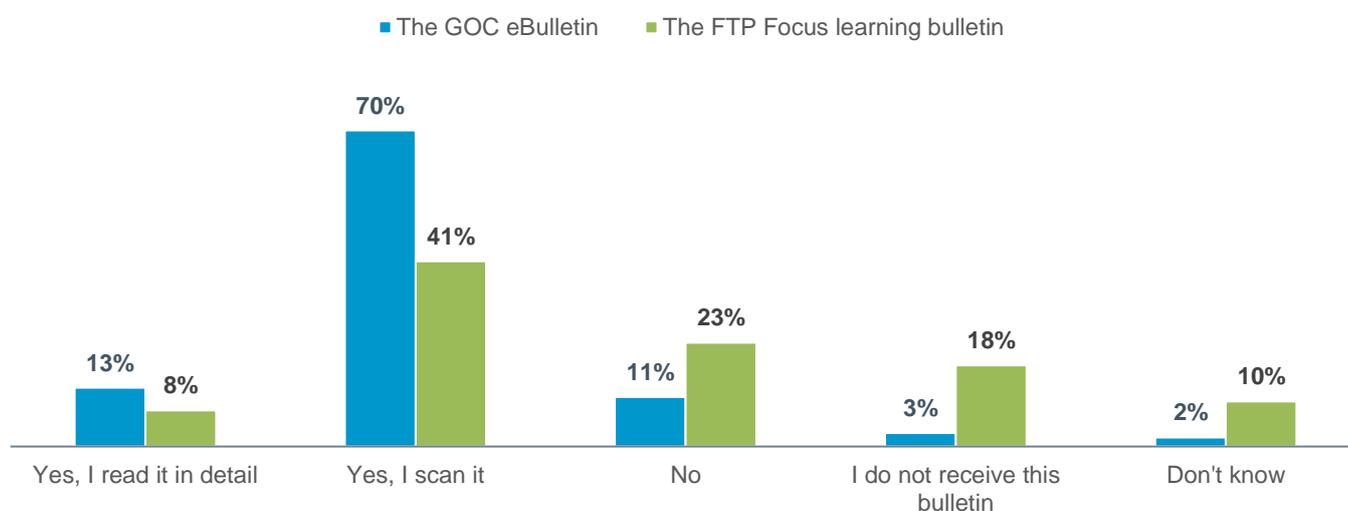
All respondents were asked to indicate whether they read the GOC eBulletin and the FTP Focus learning bulletin.

In total, 83% of respondents said that they read the GOC eBulletin, including 70% who said they *scan it* and a 13% who *read it in detail*.

A smaller proportion of respondents said that they read the FTP Focus learning bulletin (49%), comprising of 41% who said they *scan it* and 8% who *read it in detail*. In comparison with the GOC eBulletin, respondents were more likely to answer that they did not receive the FTP Focus learning bulletin (18%).

Figure 31 – Do you read the following GOC bulletins sent by email?

Base: All respondents (4,880)



Readership of the GOC eBulletin has increased by five percentage points since the registrant survey was last conducted, from 78% in 2016 to 83% in 2021. This increase comes specifically from a larger proportion of respondents who indicated that they read the eBulletin in detail.

Figure 32 – Reading the GOC eBulletin – 2016/2021 comparison

Base: All respondents 2016 (4,139); 2021 (4,880)

Do you read the GOC eBulletin?	2016	2021	Difference in percentage points
Yes, I read it in detail	8%	13%	+5
Yes, I scan it	70%	70%	-
No	16%	11%	-5
I do not receive this bulletin	4%	3%	-1
Don't know	2%	2%	-

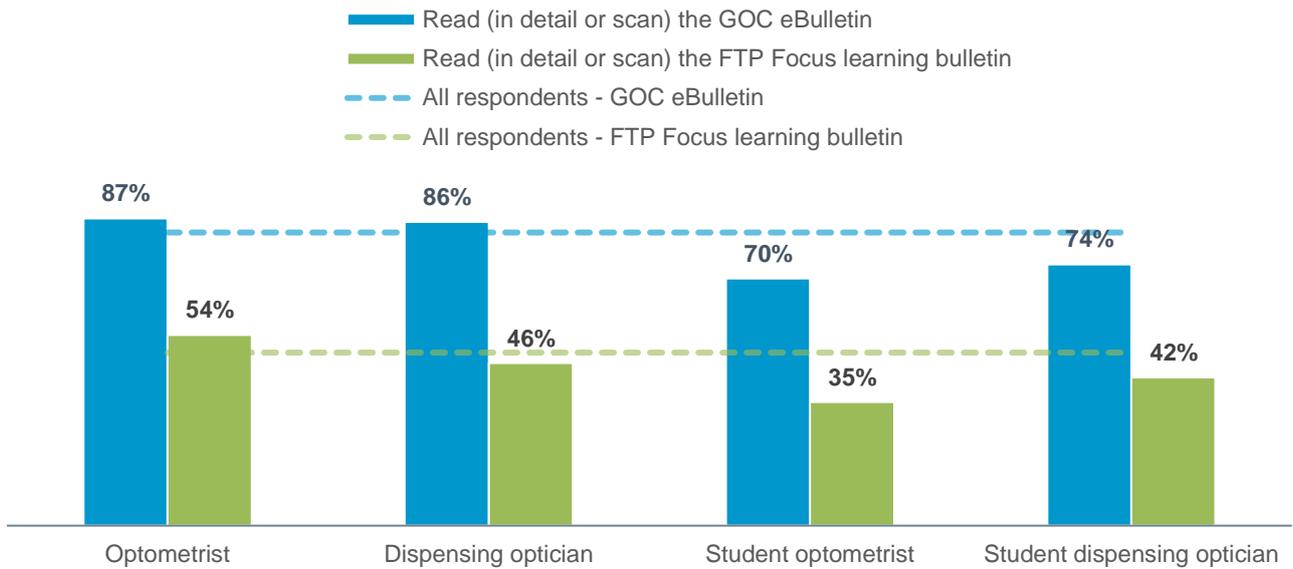
Subgroup analysis by registration type

Optometrists and dispensing opticians were more likely to read (either in detail or scan) the GOC eBulletin (87% and 86% respectively) when compared with student optometrists (70%) and student dispensing opticians (74%).

Optometrists were more likely to read (either in detail or scan) the FTP Focus learning bulletin (54%) when compared with other registration types, particularly student optometrists (35%).

Figure 33 – Readership (in detail or scan) of GOC bulletins by registration type

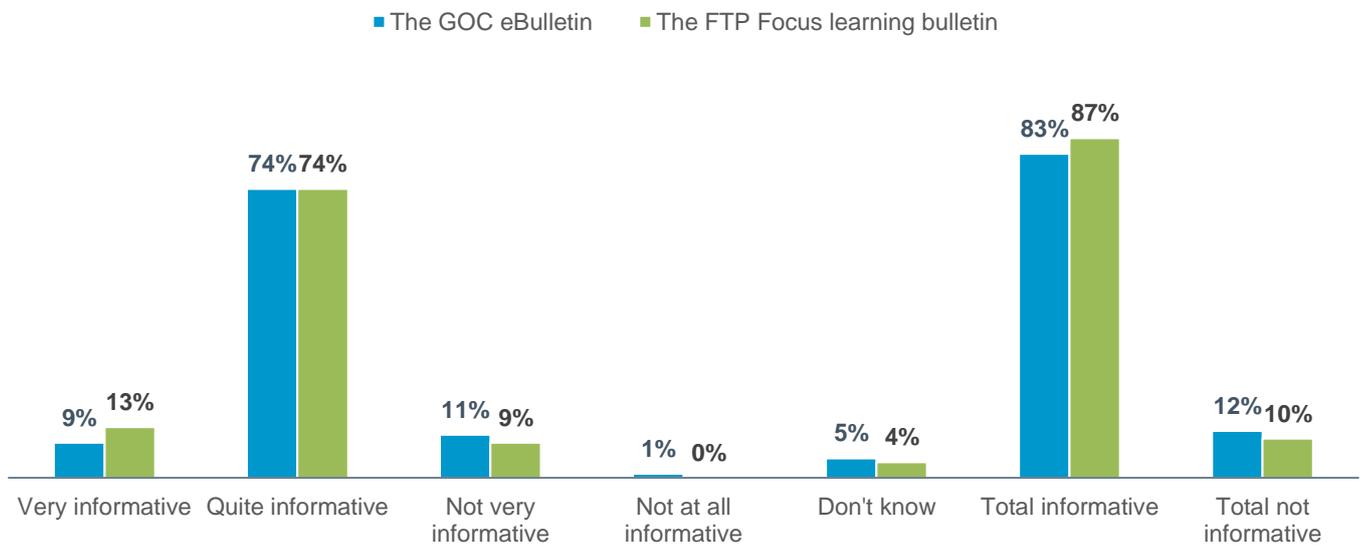
Base: Optometrist (2,736); dispensing optician (1,200); student optometrist (767); student dispensing optician (228)



A total of 83% said they found the GOC eBulletin informative and 87% found the FTP focus learning bulletin informative, with the majority of respondents specifying that they found each publication *quite informative* (74% for both bulletins).

Figure 34 – How informative do you find the following GOC bulletins?

Base: Those who read the GOC eBulletin (4,069) / the FTP Focus learning bulletin (2,367)



The proportion of respondents who found the GOC eBulletin informative in 2016 and 2021 has remained generally consistent, recorded at 89% in 2016 and 87% in 2021.

Figure 35 – Rating of the GOC eBulletin – 2016/2021 comparison

Base: All respondents 2016 (4,139); 2021 excluding ‘don’t know’ responses to allow for comparison (3,876)

How informative do you find the GOC eBulletin?	2016	2021	Difference in percentage points
Very informative	8%	10%	+2
Quite informative	81%	78%	-3
Not very informative	11%	12%	+1
Not at all informative	0%	1%	+1
<i>Total informative</i>	<i>89%</i>	<i>87%</i>	<i>-2</i>
<i>Total not informative</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>+2</i>

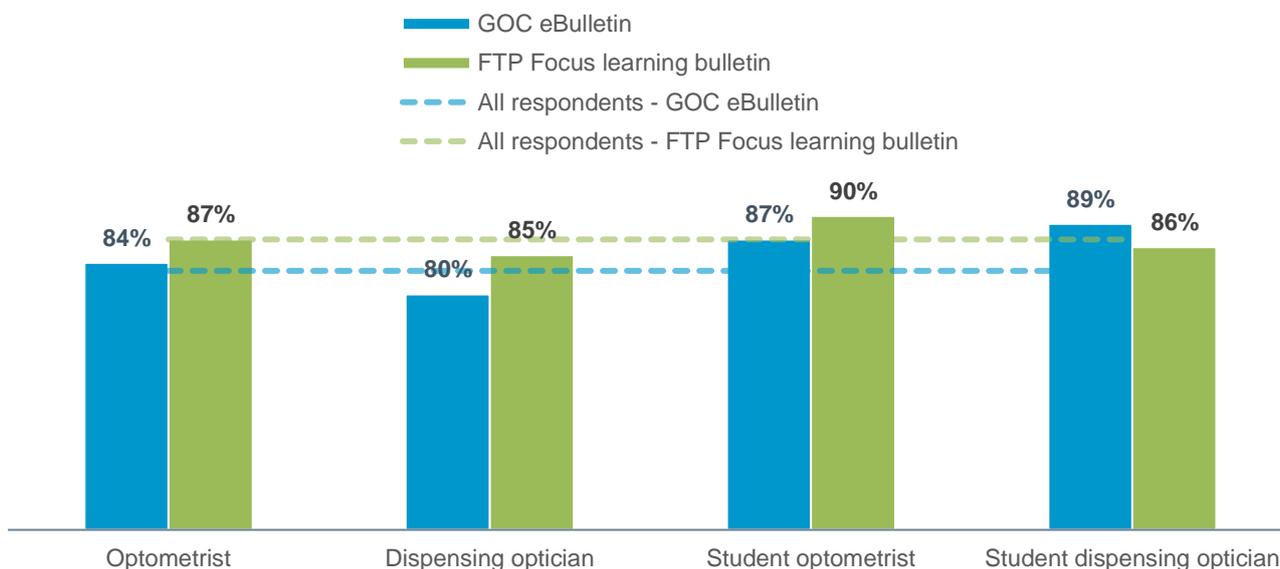
Subgroup analysis by registration type

Despite being less likely to read the GOC eBulletin, student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were more likely to find it informative (87% and 89%) when compared with optometrists and dispensing opticians (84% and 80% respectively).

Student optometrists were the registrant group most likely to indicate that the FTP Focus learning bulletin was informative (90%), particularly when compared with dispensing opticians (85%).

Figure 36 – Rating of GOC bulletins as informative by registration type

Base: Optometrist (2,375 / 1,484); dispensing optician (1,037 / 549); student optometrist (536 / 269); student dispensing optician (168 / 95)



The COVID-19 pandemic

Key findings

Impact of the pandemic

- The most common way that respondents reported their day to day work had changed as a result of the pandemic was wearing or having issues with PPE (40%), followed by 31% who mentioned the additional cleaning and hygiene requirements
- 52% of respondents had either been furloughed by their employer or had their educational course suspended over the last 12 months. This was more common amongst dispensing opticians and student dispensing opticians, and those who worked for a multiple optician
- 26% of respondents said the pandemic has had a *significant impact* on their mental health and wellbeing, and a further 52% said it has had *some impact*
- The reported impact on mental health and wellbeing is more significant amongst student optometrists and student dispensing opticians, female respondents, and younger respondents
- The following impacts of the pandemic over the last 12 months were reported by respondents:
 - 40% had worked beyond their hours
 - 37% had felt unable to cope with their workload
 - 28% had found it difficult to provide patients with the sufficient level of care they need
 - 33% had experienced a lack of social distancing with patients or the public
 - 26% had experienced a lack of social distancing with other staff
 - 25% had experienced ineffective triaging of patients based on risk
 - 23% had felt they were not given enough time to adequately clean equipment
 - 9% reported a lack of PPE
- Those who reported any of the negative experiences listed above were more likely to have indicated that the pandemic has had a *significant impact* on their mental health and wellbeing

Support during the pandemic

- Respondents felt most supported over the last few months by their employer (76%) or their education provider (78% of students), followed by their professional association/representative body (67%). By comparison, just 48% had felt supported by the GOC
- Respondents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were more likely to have felt supported by the GOC when compared with those in England
- The most common suggestions for how the GOC could support registrants as the pandemic continues were to provide clear guidance and rules and ensure no ambiguity (27%), regulate minimum test times (13%), support, protect and represent registrants (12%), ensure better communication and regular updates (11%), and enforce the rules and ensure compliance, potentially via increased penalties (11%)

Continuing Education and Training (CET)

- 70% of respondents found the GOC's statement on CET during the COVID-19 pandemic to be helpful
- 78% agreed that the GOC allowed registrants enough flexibility to complete their CET points during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Dispensing opticians were more likely to disagree that the GOC provided enough flexibility when compared with optometrists
- 22% of respondents had concerns about completing their CET cycle as a result of the pandemic, including a larger proportion of dispensing opticians (33%)

Impact of the pandemic

Working respondents were asked to explain the main way their day to day work has changed over the last 12 months during the COVID-19 pandemic. Free-text responses have been thematically coded for analysis and are presented below. The two most common response themes related to wearing PPE and issues associated with PPE (40%) and the additional cleaning and hygiene requirements (31%). Other changes suggested by large proportions of respondents included seeing fewer patients or having fewer appointments/clinics (14%) and carrying out longer appointments (12%).

Figure 37 – In the last 12 months during the COVID-19 pandemic, what is the main way your day to day work has changed? Coded responses

Base: Working respondents who provided a response (3,108)

Change to day to day work	Number	%
Wearing PPE/PPE issues	1231	40%
Additional cleaning/hygiene requirements	974	31%
Fewer patients/appointments/clinics	427	14%
Longer appointments	372	12%
Increased time/commercial pressure	261	8%
Busier/increased workload	260	8%
Less work/limited locum work	253	8%
Increased stress/anxiety/fatigue	252	8%
Remote consultations/appointments	203	7%
Furloughed/unable to work	201	6%
Social distancing/limited numbers allowed in practice	197	6%
New protocols/altered ways of working	192	6%
Lack of support/ambiguous guidance	185	6%
Reduced patient contact/no routine appointments/prioritisation	170	5%
Reduced income/financial challenges	167	5%
More pathology/urgent appointments/emergencies	133	4%
Adapting/streamlining tests	125	4%
No walk ins/appointments only	124	4%
Working from home	102	3%
Online learning/teaching	102	3%
More medical management/decision making	98	3%
Triaging/pre-screening patients	98	3%
Longer hours/fewer breaks/staying late	93	3%
Difficult examinations/equipment fogging	89	3%
Risk to health/feeling unsafe	87	3%
Staffing pressures/reduced staff/working in isolation	82	3%
Challenging patients/managing expectations	81	3%
Constant change/uncertainty	80	3%
Made redundant/closed practice	57	2%
No change/impact	53	2%
Anxious/emotional patients	45	1%
Changed job/redeployed	40	1%
Communication issues with patients	38	1%
Career delays	33	1%
Not in practice/working outside profession/retired	24	1%
Managing childcare/caring responsibilities	20	1%
Travel restrictions	8	0%

Below is a selection of verbatim comments from some of the most common response themes.

Wearing PPE/PPE issues

I wear a mask and PPE. Everything else is pretty much the same now.
Optometrist

Wearing PPE which I find distracting whilst dispensing.
Dispensing optician

PPE'd up and hating it.
Optometrist

Nothing has changed besides I wear a mask at work. My patient volume and testing routine are the same.
Optometrist

Additional cleaning/hygiene requirements

Infection control measures have been a priority in all daily tasks.
Student dispensing optician

Cleaning, cleaning, cleaning!
Optometrist

The main way things have changed is having to clean down between patients every time. Absolutely essential but time consuming and costly in terms of efficiency.
Optometrist

Fewer patients/appointments/clinics

Testing fewer people so that the covid guidelines can be followed.
Optometrist

Closed more than open, don't see many patients.
Dispensing optician

Footfall is greatly reduced.
Optometrist

Only slightly fewer patients.
Optometrist

Increased time/commercial pressure

Pressure on maintaining standards on top of COVID.
Student dispensing optician

Constant battle between safety of staff vs financial requirements.
Optometrist

Busier/increased workload

Immensely busy as all patients are coming in to buy glasses rather than just browse.
Dispensing optician

Working far more.
Optometrist

Less work/limited locum work

Self-employed locum - not worked since last March.
Optometrist

Have gone down from 4-5 days locum work per week to 1-2 days.
Optometrist

Increased stress/anxiety/fatigue

It's been stressful and not at all enjoyable, I'm thinking of leaving the profession.
Optometrist

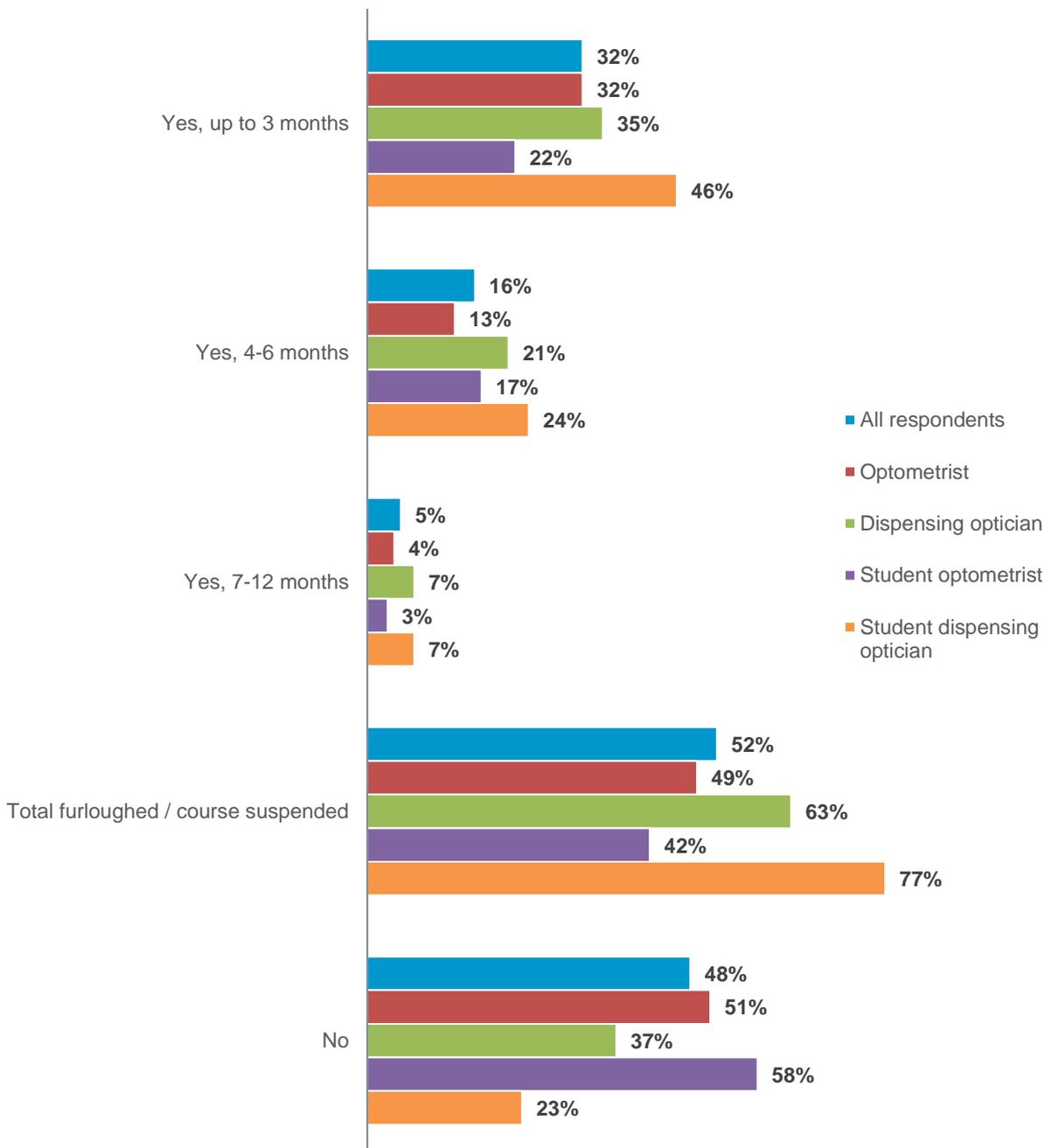
It's more stressful.
Dispensing optician

Just over half of respondents indicated that either they had been furloughed by their employer or their educational course had been suspended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (52%). A third indicated that this was for up to three months (32%), followed by 16% who said it was for four to six months, and 5% for seven to 12 months.

Dispensing opticians were more likely to indicate that they had been furloughed by their employer (63%) when compared with optometrists (49%), and student dispensing opticians were more likely to indicate that they had been furloughed or had their educational course suspended (77%) when compared with student optometrists (42%).

Figure 38 – In the last 12 months, have you been furloughed by your employer or had your educational course suspended?

Base: All respondents excluding retired registrants (4,823); optometrists (2,695); dispensing opticians (1,185); student optometrist (767); student dispensing optician (228)

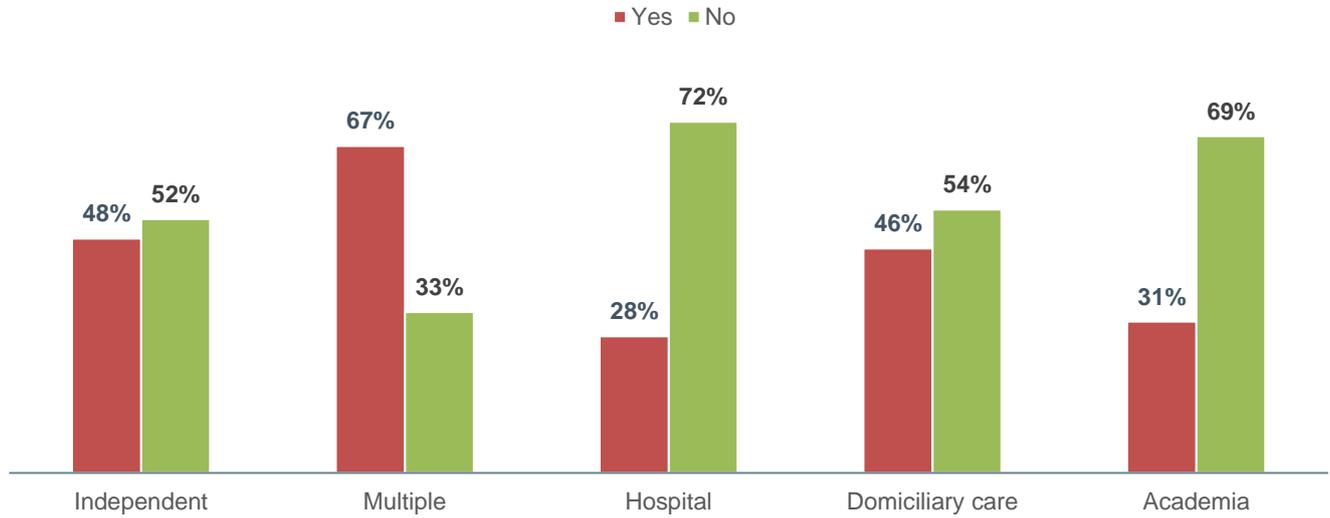


Subgroup analysis by workplace setting

Those working for a multiple optician were more likely to indicate that they had been furloughed by their employer (67%) when compared with those working in other settings, particularly in a hospital setting (28%).

Figure 39 – Furloughed by employer by workplace setting

Base: Independent (1,835); multiple (2,310); hospital (340); domiciliary care (87); education/academia (258)



A quarter of respondents said that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a *significant impact* on their mental health and wellbeing (26%), and a further 52% said it has had *some impact*. Just 19% said that the pandemic has had no impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

Subgroup analysis by registration type

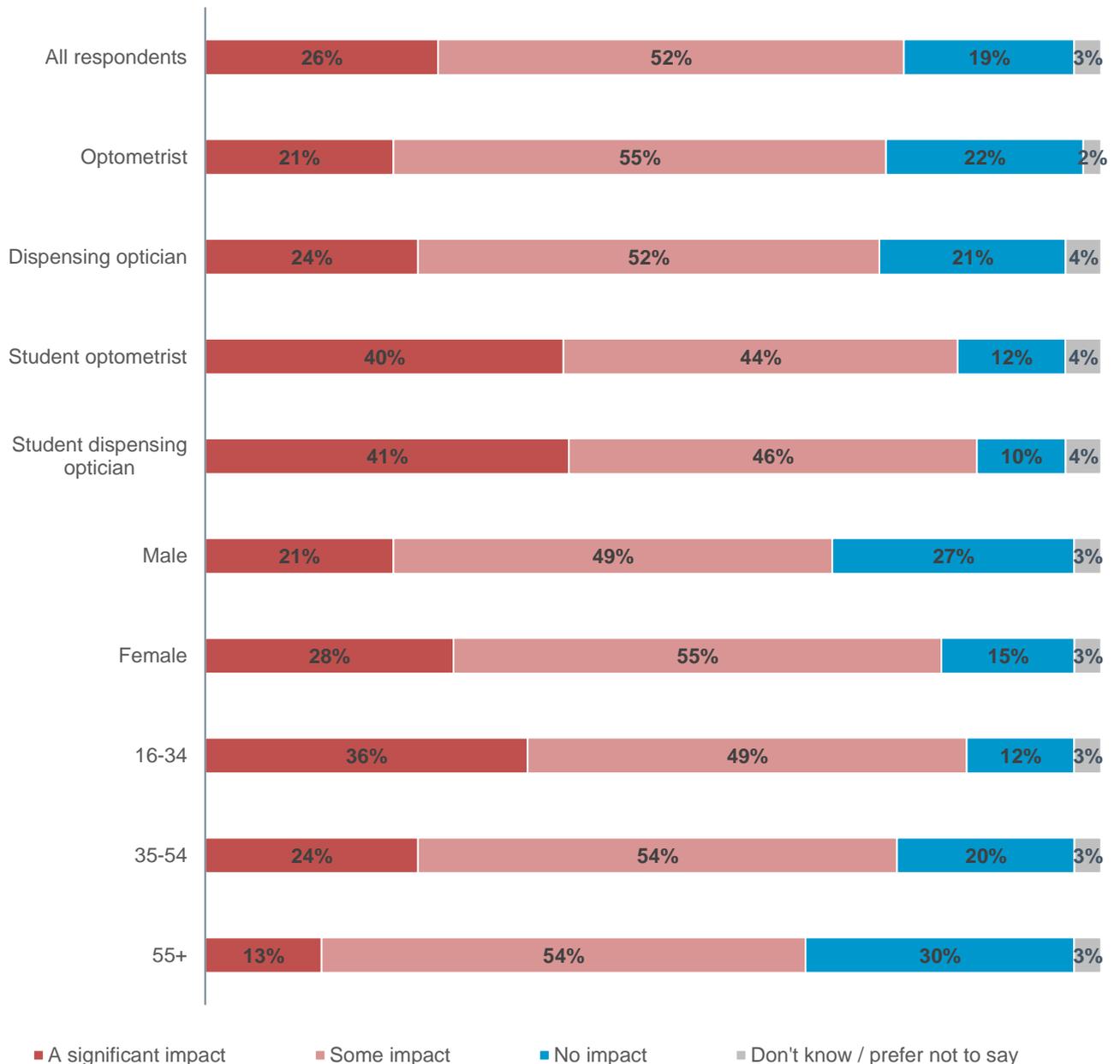
Both student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were more likely to think that the pandemic has had a *significant impact* on their mental health and wellbeing (40% and 41% respectively) when compared with optometrists (21%) and dispensing opticians (24%).

Subgroup analysis by gender and age group

A larger proportion of female respondents said that the pandemic has had a *significant impact* on their mental health and wellbeing (28%) when compared with male respondents (21%). Younger respondents aged 16-34 were also more likely to answer in this way (36%), especially when compared with those aged 55+ (13%).

Figure 40 – What impact, if any, do you think the COVID-19 pandemic has had on your mental health and wellbeing?

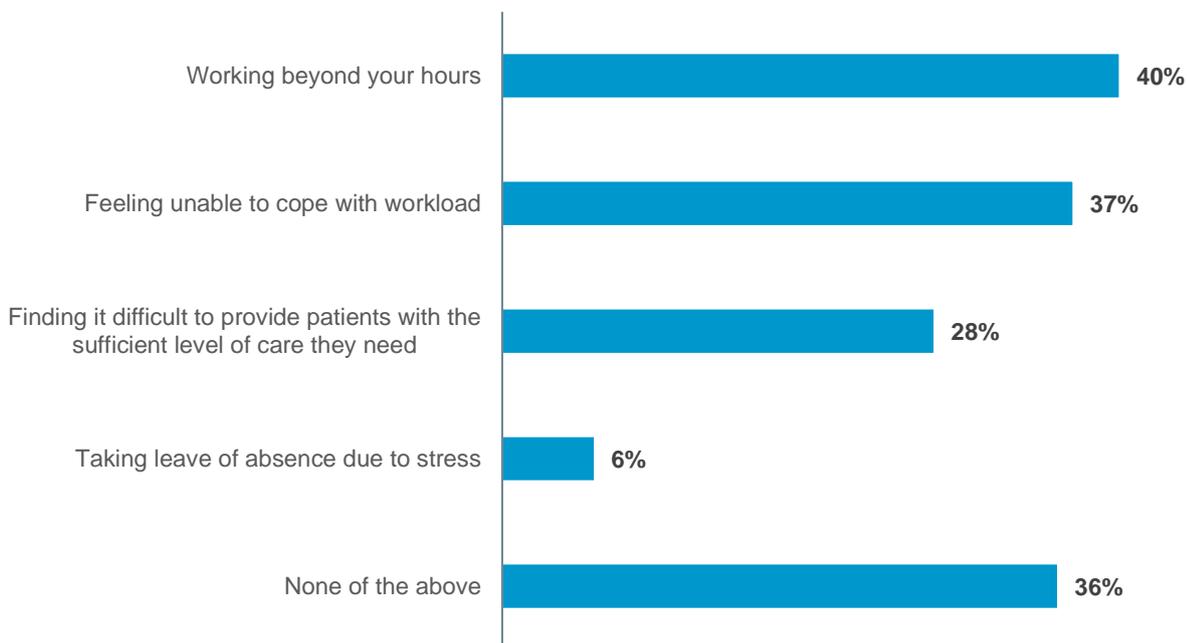
Base: All respondents (4,880); optometrists (2,736); dispensing opticians (1,200); student optometrists (767); student dispensing opticians (228); male (1,741); female (2,970); 16-34 (1,669); 35-54 (1,996); 55+ (1,123)



Over the last 12 months (approximately March 2020 to March 2021), during the COVID-19 pandemic, two in five respondents indicated that they had been working beyond their hours (40%), and a similar proportion said that they had felt unable to cope with their workload (37%). Almost three in ten said that they had found it difficult to provide patients with the sufficient level of care they need (28%), and 6% had taken a leave of absence due to stress.

Figure 41 – In the last 12 months, have you experienced any of the following?

Base: All working respondents (4,479)



Subgroup analysis by impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing

A clear link between negative experiences at work over the last 12 months and the pandemic having a *significant impact* on mental health and wellbeing can be seen when comparing the results to the two previous questions. For example, 63% of those who thought the pandemic has had a *significant impact* on their mental health and wellbeing had felt unable to cope with their workload over the last 12 months, compared with just 12% for those who thought it has had no impact.

Figure 42 – Negative experiences at work in the last 12 months by impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing

Base: A significant impact (1,092); some impact (2,366); no impact (894)

Negative experience at work in the last 12 months	Impact on mental health and wellbeing		
	Significant impact	Some impact	No impact
Working beyond your hours	51%	41%	27%
Feeling unable to cope with workload	63%	36%	12%
Finding it difficult to provide patients with the sufficient level of care they need	38%	28%	16%
Taking leave of absence due to stress	16%	4%	1%

Subgroup analysis by workplace setting

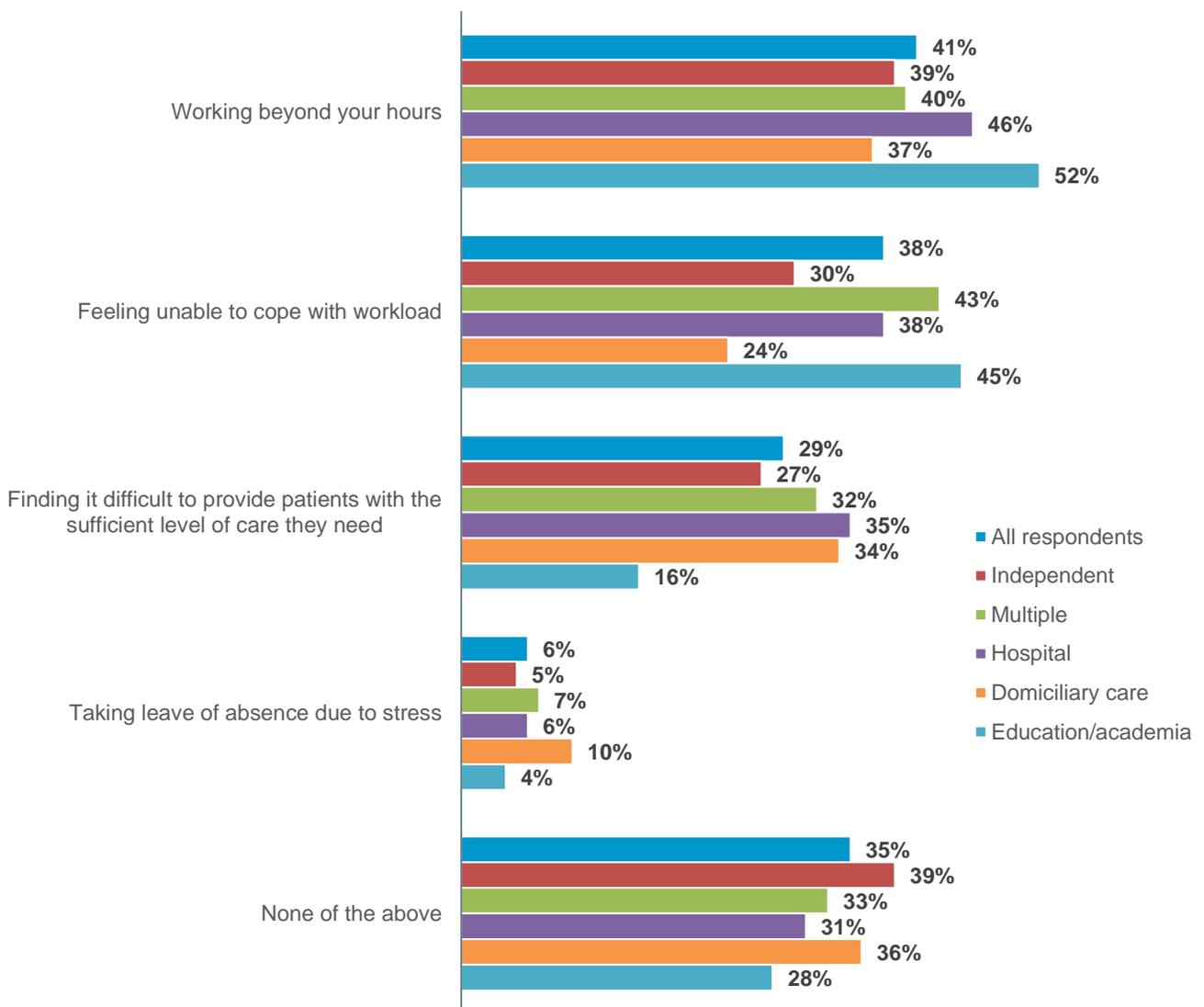
A number of differences in experiences over the last 12 months can be seen by workplace setting. Those who worked in a hospital setting or in education/academia were more likely to indicate that they had been working beyond their hours (46% and 52% respectively) when compared with those working in other settings.

Those who worked for a multiple optician or in education/academia were more likely to answer that they had felt unable to cope with their workload (43% and 45% respectively) when compared with those working in other settings. With the exception of those working in education/academia, large proportions of respondents in all settings indicated that they had found it difficult to provide patients with the sufficient level of care they needed.

Those who worked for an independent optician were more likely to answer *none of the above* (39%) when compared with those in other workplace settings, indicating that they had not experienced any of these negative consequences of the pandemic over the last 12 months.

Figure 43 – Negative experiences at work in the last 12 months by workplace setting

Base: Independent (1,835); multiple (2,310); hospital (340); domiciliary care (87); education/academia (258)



Subgroup analysis by registration type

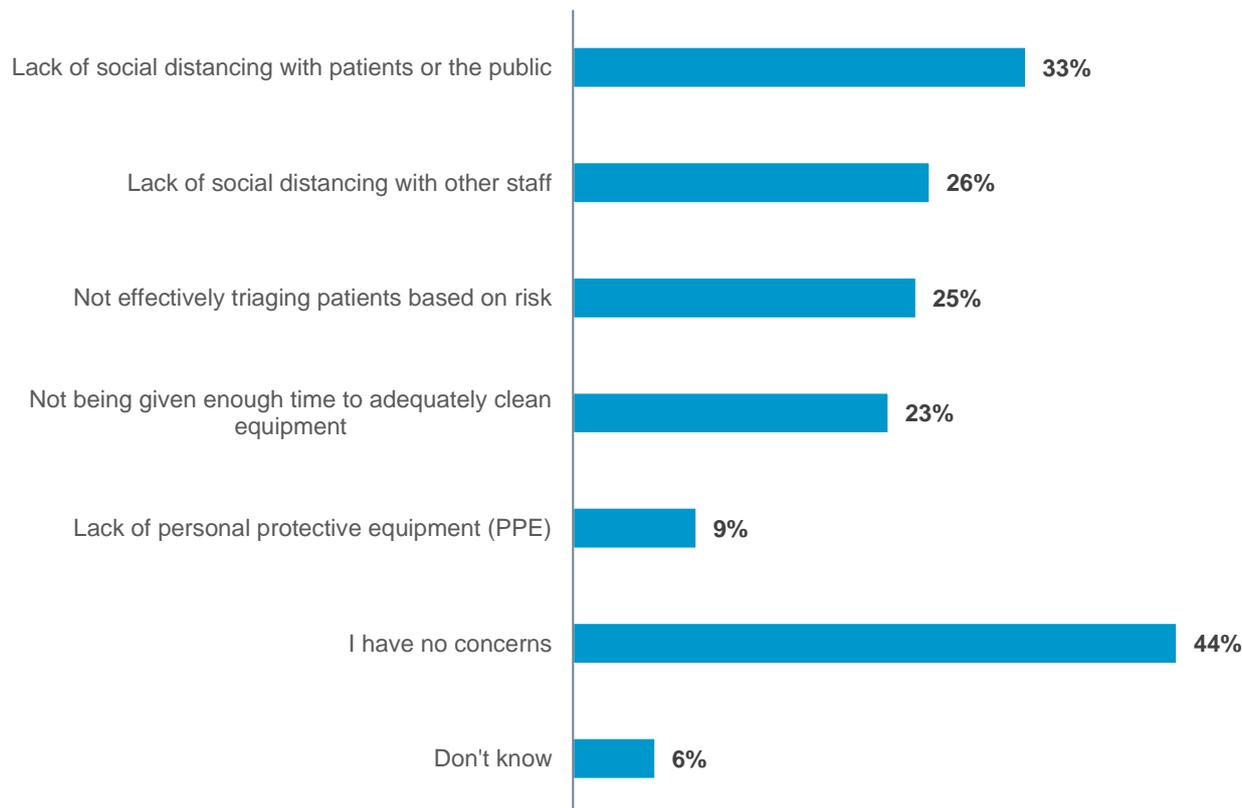
Optometrist respondents were more likely to indicate that they had found it difficult to provide patients with the sufficient level of care they need (33%) when compared with dispensing opticians (20%).

As the GOC was aware of pressures being faced in the workplace and as part of education and training courses, respondents were asked whether they had experienced patients or staff being put at risk over the last 12 months (approximately March 2020 to March 2021).

A third had experienced a lack of social distancing with patients or the public (33%), followed by similar proportions who had experienced a lack of social distancing with staff (26%), ineffective triaging of patients based on risk (25%), and not being given enough time to adequately clean equipment (23%). In comparison, a smaller proportion of respondents had experienced a lack of PPE (9%).

Figure 44 – In the last 12 months have you experienced patients or staff being put at risk through any of the following?

Base: All respondents excluding retired (4,823)



Subgroup analysis by registration type

Optometrist respondents were more likely to indicate that they had experienced ineffective triaging of patients based on risk (32%) and not being given enough time to adequately clean equipment (28%) when compared with dispensing opticians (16% and 19% respectively).

Subgroup analysis by location

A significantly larger proportion of respondents in Wales answered that they had no concerns in relation to patients or staff being put at risk over the last 12 months (58%) when compared with those in England (43%), Scotland (42%) and Northern Ireland (49%).

Subgroup analysis by workplace setting

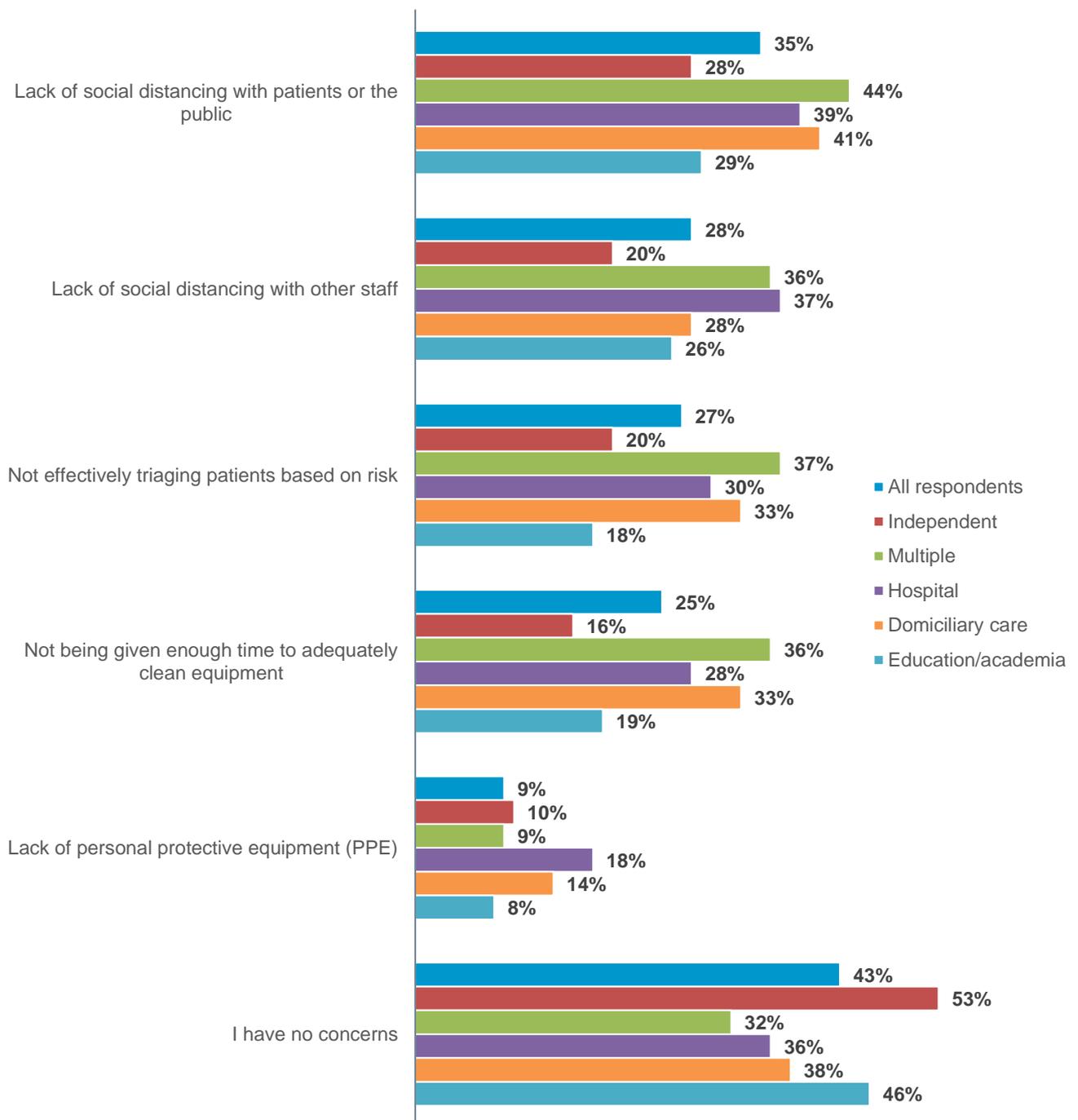
Those who worked for a multiple optician were more likely to have selected each listed experience, highlighted by just 32% of these respondents answering that they had no concerns.

Similar results can be seen for those who worked in a hospital setting, where large proportions indicated that they had experienced a lack of social distancing with other staff (37%) and a lack of PPE (18%) when compared with some other settings.

Each listed experience was selected by a smaller proportion of those who worked for an independent optician, and these respondents were more likely to indicate that they had no concerns (53%) when compared with those working in other settings.

Figure 45 – Experiences of patients or staff being put at risk in the last 12 months by workplace setting

Base: Independent (1,835); multiple (2,310); hospital (340); domiciliary care (87); education/academia (258)



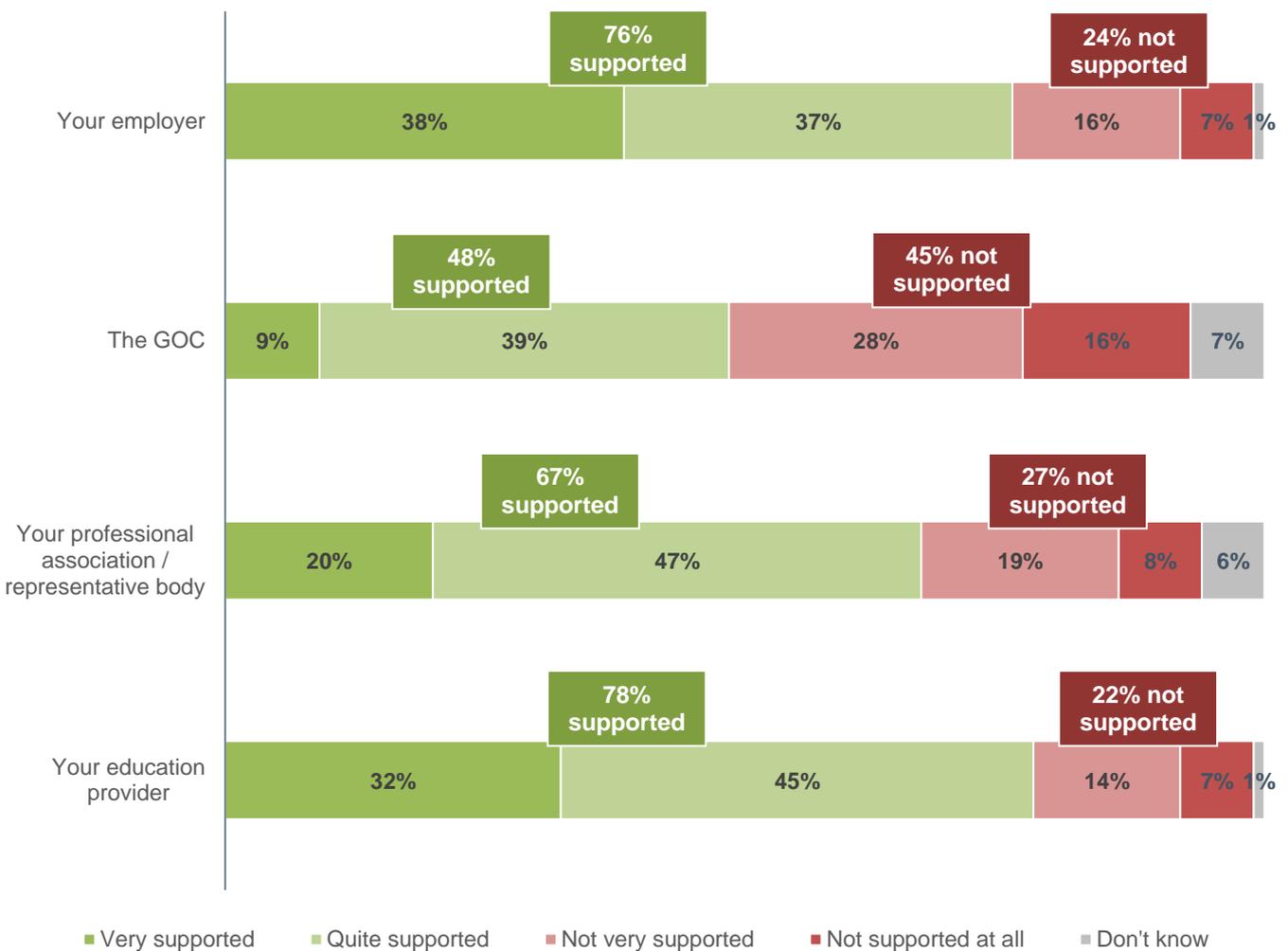
Support during the pandemic

To understand levels of support during the pandemic, respondents were asked to indicate how supported they had felt in the last few months (approximately December 2020 to March 2021) by their employer, the GOC, their professional association/representative body, or their educational provider, where relevant.

Almost half of respondents said they had felt supported by the GOC in the last few months (48%), including 39% who felt *quite supported* and 9% who felt *very supported*. However, much larger proportions of respondents indicated that they felt supported by their employer (76%), their professional association/representative body (67%) or their education provider (78%) during this time.

Figure 46 – In the last few months, how supported have you felt by...?

Base: All 'not applicable' responses excluded – Your employer – Those currently working (3,771); The GOC – All respondents (4,697); Your professional association/representative body (4,606); Your education provider – Student respondents (910)

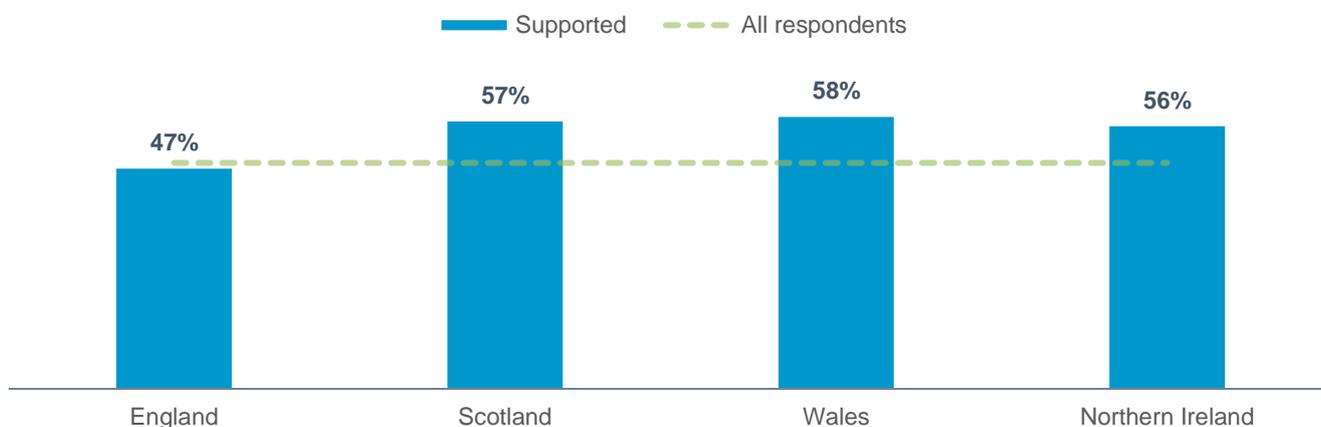


Subgroup analysis by location and age group

Respondents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were more likely to have felt supported by the GOC in the last few months (57%, 58% and 56% respectively) when compared with those in England (47%).

Figure 47 – Feeling supported by the GOC in the last few months by UK location

Base: England (3,618); Scotland (402); Wales (241); Northern Ireland (128)



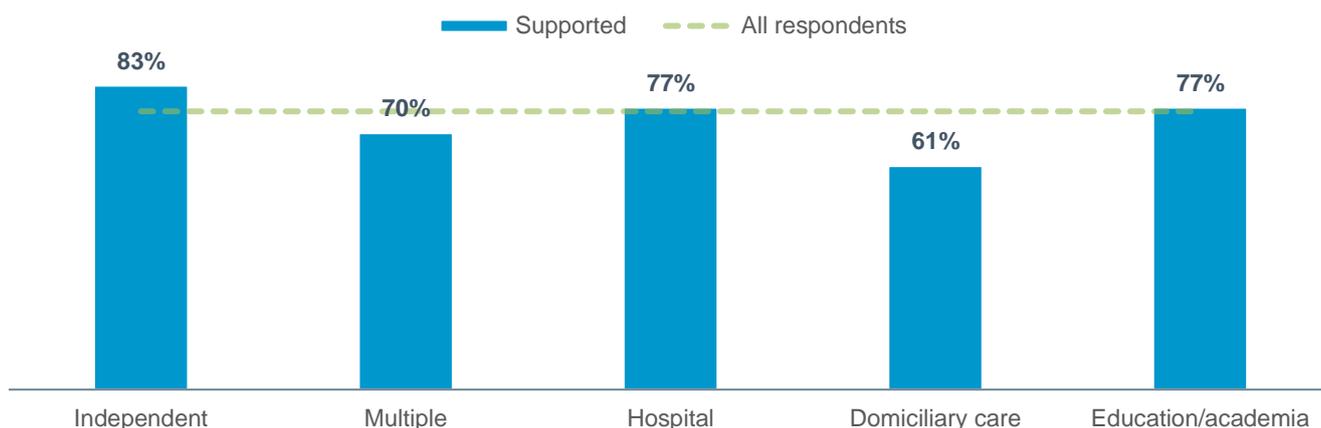
Subgroup analysis also highlights that those aged 55+ were more likely to have felt supported by the GOC in the last few months (55%) when compared with those aged 54 and under (46%).

Subgroup analysis by workplace setting

Those who worked for an independent optician were more likely to have felt supported by their employer in the last few months (83%) when compared with those who worked for a multiple optician (70%) or in domiciliary care (61%).

Figure 48 – Feeling supported by your employer in the last few months by workplace setting

Base: Independent (1,397); multiple (2,136); hospital (311); domiciliary care (77); education/academia (243)



Subgroup analysis by working status and registration type

Those working as locums were less likely to feel supported by their employer (67%) when compared with those working full-time (79%) or part-time (73%).

A larger proportion of dispensing opticians indicated that they felt supported by their employer (80%) when compared with optometrists (74%).

Respondents were asked to suggest what the GOC could do to support them now as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. A wide range of suggestions were made. The most common suggestion was that the GOC should provide clear guidance and rules and ensure no ambiguity (27%). Other popular suggestions included that the GOC should regulate minimum test times (13%), support, protect and represent registrants (12%), ensure better communication and regular updates (11%), and enforce the rules and ensure compliance, potentially via increased penalties (11%).

**Figure 49 – What could the GOC do to support you now as the COVID-19 pandemic continues?
Coded responses**

Base: Those who provided a response (1,969)

Support from the GOC	Number	%
Clear guidance/rules/no ambiguity	524	27%
Regulate minimum test times	253	13%
Support/protect/represent registrants	233	12%
Better communication/regular updates	212	11%
Enforce the rules/ensure compliance/more penalties	211	11%
Adjust CET expectations/more flexibility	174	9%
Reduce the influence of/less bias towards multiples	141	7%
Reduce/refund/waive fees	132	7%
Routine eye test should be/should have been limited	124	6%
Prioritise public safety/reduce commercial pressure	117	6%
Lobby for fairer payment/working conditions	99	5%
Too late/support needed earlier	90	5%
More student/pre-reg support	77	4%
Issue more public/patient information	72	4%
Make employers aware of their responsibilities	71	4%
Treat all equally/ensure all working to same standards	63	3%
Listen to registrants/address concerns	63	3%
Ensure mask wearing/allow refusal to those not wearing masks	52	3%
Already done enough/continue as before	42	2%
Allow more flexibility/more realistic expectations	42	2%
Conduct inspections/spot checks	39	2%
Limit patient numbers/number of appointments	36	2%
Maintain quality in education/rethink ESR	34	2%
Ensure PPE provision/provide PPE	32	2%
Financial support/guidance	30	1%
More accessible/online CET opportunities	28	1%
Ban ghost clinics	23	1%
Regulate online sales/tackle illegal supply	22	1%
Strong leadership/transparency	21	1%
Continue with adaptations to practice post-COVID	18	1%
More support for/recognition of DOs	16	1%
Allow monthly/direct debit payment for fees	14	1%

Below is a selection of verbatim comments from some of the most common response themes to this question.

Clear guidance/rules/no ambiguity

Give clear and concise guidance across the board on what they feel is acceptable changes to daily practice that doesn't leave the registrant feeling vulnerable to litigation.
Optometrist

A strong statement without any ambiguity so every optician in the country follow the same rule.
Dispensing optician

Stricter guidelines if continuing to practice during pandemic.
Optometrist

Set out guidance and rules to ensure we have enough time to safely care for our patients and ourselves.
Optometrist

Regulate minimum test times

GOC needs to rule time of appointments need to be at least 40 minutes, to allow time for clean equipment, change PPE, keep the record keeping in good detail with findings and deliver good service to the patients.
Optometrist

Make it a requirement for all companies to give all optoms 30-45 mins testing, and no less
Optometrist

Set sight test times at 30 mins during the pandemic across the board.
Optometrist

Support/protect/represent registrants

Ensure we do not suffer from complaints/legal action due to less than ideal patient care - due to being unable to get very close to patients to carry out certain ocular health checks.
Optometrist

Continue to provide support of practitioners who are doing as best as they can for each patient in light of current climate, support their decision making.
Optometrist

Be more involved making sure people are okay and given a chance to speak.
Student optometrist

Better communication/regular updates

Continuing with regular updates on any changes with regard to advice as hopefully restrictions start to ease.
Dispensing optician

Update guidance more frequently, perhaps on regular monthly/fortnightly basis, even if this means just saying that nothing has changed. There have been many occasions where information has been put out on news media but it has taken GOC weeks to notify us on a professional level.
Optometrist

Tell us about changes or opportunities earlier as we often miss out on them due to not knowing.
Student optometrist

Enforce the rules/ensure compliance/more penalties

Ensuring that all practices adhere to rules to reduce covid risk. I.e. using PPE properly, appointment times, prioritizing patients in need.
Optometrist

Hold those employers accountable when appropriate safety measures are not put in place.
Optometrist

Make employers uphold their responsibility for ensuring staff safety. Onus should be on employer not on employee to speak out.
Dispensing optician

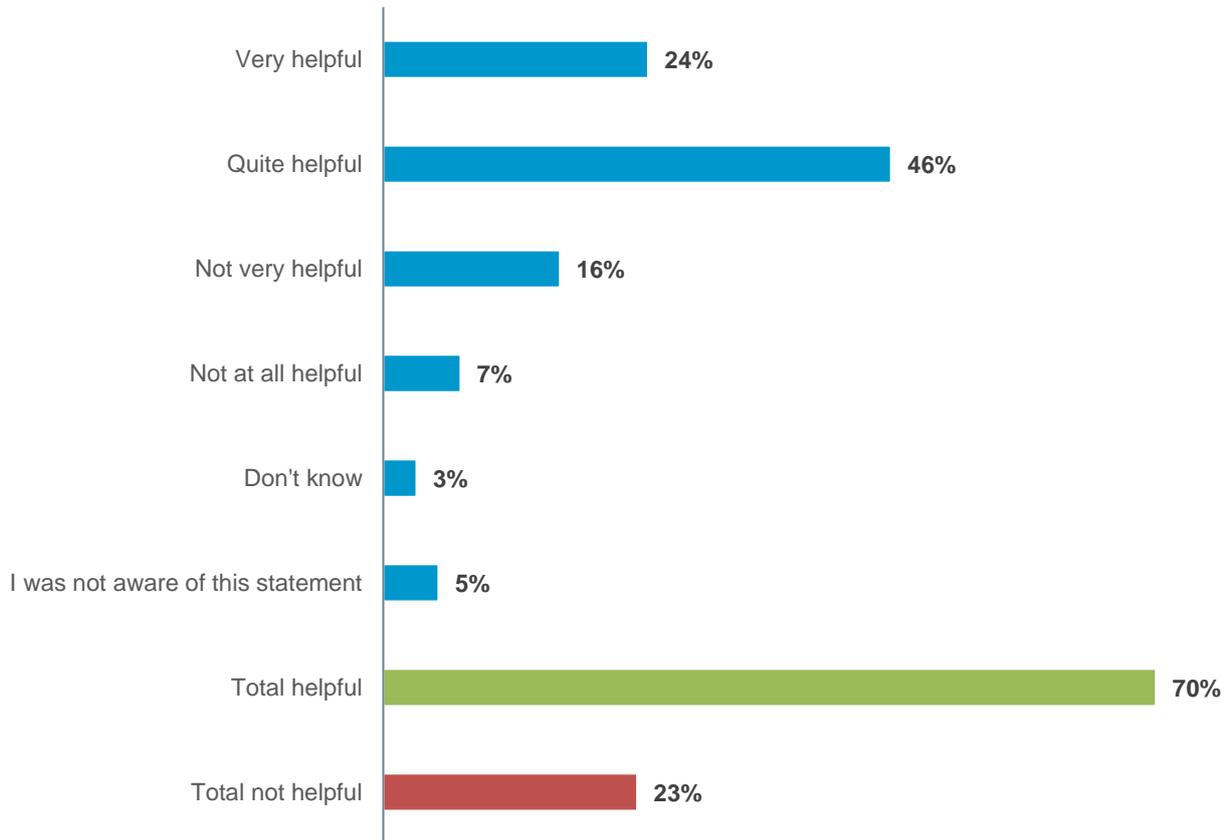
Continuing Education and Training (CET)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the GOC issued a statement on CET to help support registrants. In this statement the GOC acknowledged the difficulty that registrants will experience in achieving the annual expectation of six CET points and said it would waive this for 2020.

In total, 70% of respondents found this statement helpful, including 46% who found it *quite helpful* and 24% who found it *very helpful*. Just under a quarter indicated that the statement was not helpful (23%), and 5% were unaware of the statement.

Figure 50 – How helpful or otherwise did you find this statement?

Base: All respondents excluding students (3,935)



Subgroup analysis

The following subgroups were more likely to indicate that they did not find the GOC’s statement on CET during the COVID-19 pandemic helpful (23% overall):

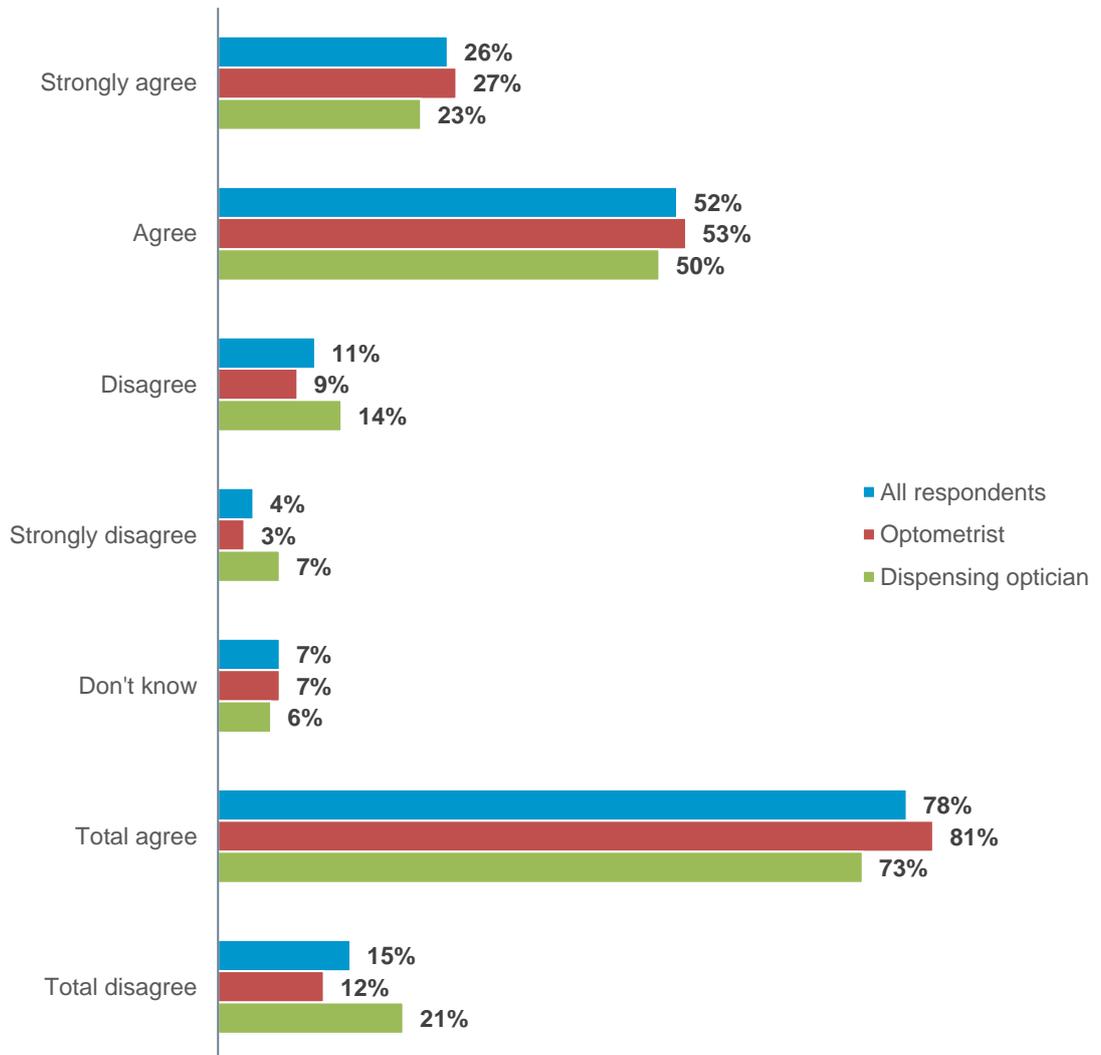
- Optometrists (24%) when compared with dispensing opticians (20%)
- Those who worked for an independent optician (25%) when compared with those who worked for a multiple optician (22%)
- Those in the North (25%) and Midlands/East (25%) when compared with those in London (18%) and the South (22%)

Almost four in five respondents agreed that the GOC had allowed registrants enough flexibility to complete their CET points during the COVID-19 pandemic (78%), including 52% who *agreed* and 26% who *strongly agreed*.

Dispensing opticians were more likely to disagree (21%) when compared with optometrists (12%).

Figure 51 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the GOC has allowed registrants enough flexibility to complete their CET points during the COVID-19 pandemic?

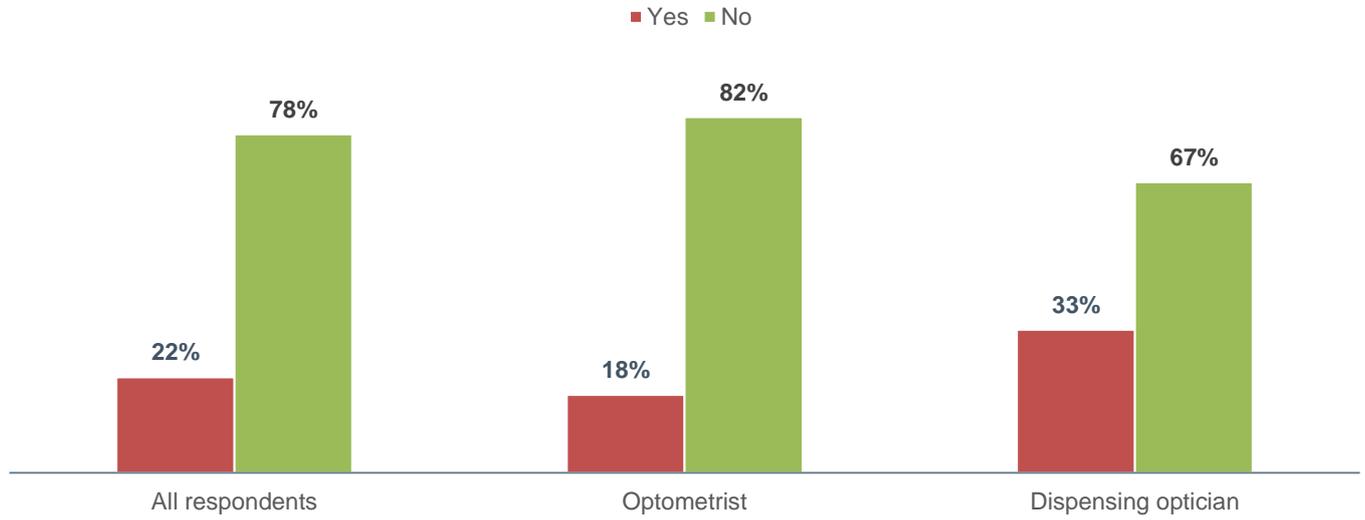
Base: All respondents excluding students (3,935); optometrists (2,736); dispensing opticians (1,200)



The majority of respondents did not have any concerns around completing their CET cycle as a result of COVID-19 (78%). However, 22% did have concerns, including a larger proportion of dispensing opticians (33%) when compared with optometrists (18%).

Figure 52 – Do you have any concerns around completing your CET cycle as a result of COVID-19?

Base: All respondents excluding students (3,935); optometrists (2,736); dispensing opticians (1,200)



Workplace challenges

Key findings

Pressure to sell unneeded products or services

- 23% of respondents said that they had felt under pressure by an employer or a business they have worked for to sell a product or service which they knew was not needed by the patient in the last 12 months
- This result represents a significant decrease of 18 percentage points when compared with the proportion who felt under this pressure in 2016 (41%)

Pressure to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care

- 29% of respondents said that they had felt under pressure by an employer or a business they have worked for to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care in the last 12 months
- This result also represents a significant decrease of 16 percentage points when compared with the proportion who felt under this pressure in 2016 (45%)

Analysis of reported commercial pressures

- Reports of experiencing commercial pressure from employers/businesses were more commonplace amongst:
 - Optometrists, student optometrists, and student dispensing opticians
 - Locums
 - Those who worked for a multiple optician or in domiciliary care
 - Those in England
 - Those who have been registered with the GOC for a shorter period of time

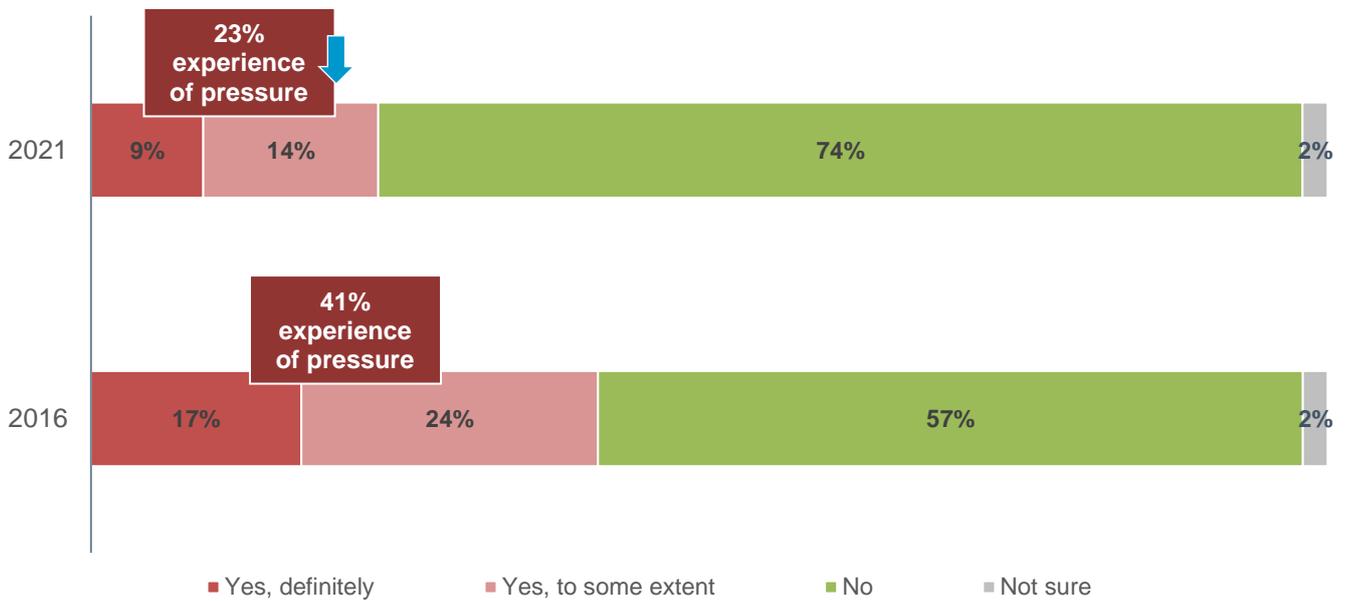
Pressure to sell unneeded products or services

Almost a quarter of respondents said that they had felt under pressure by an employer or a business they have worked for to sell a product or provide a service which they knew was not needed by the patient in the last 12 months (23%). This included 9% who indicated they had *definitely* felt under pressure and 14% who had felt under pressure *to some extent*.

When comparing this finding with the 2016 survey results, this represents a significant decrease in the proportion of respondents who felt under pressure to knowingly provide unnecessary products or services to patients, falling from 41% in 2016 to 23% in 2021 (down 18 percentage points).

Figure 53 – In the last 12 months, have you felt under pressure by an employer or a business you have worked for to sell a product or provide a service which you know is not needed by the patient?

Base: 2021 – All working respondents (4,479); 2016 – All respondents (4,139)



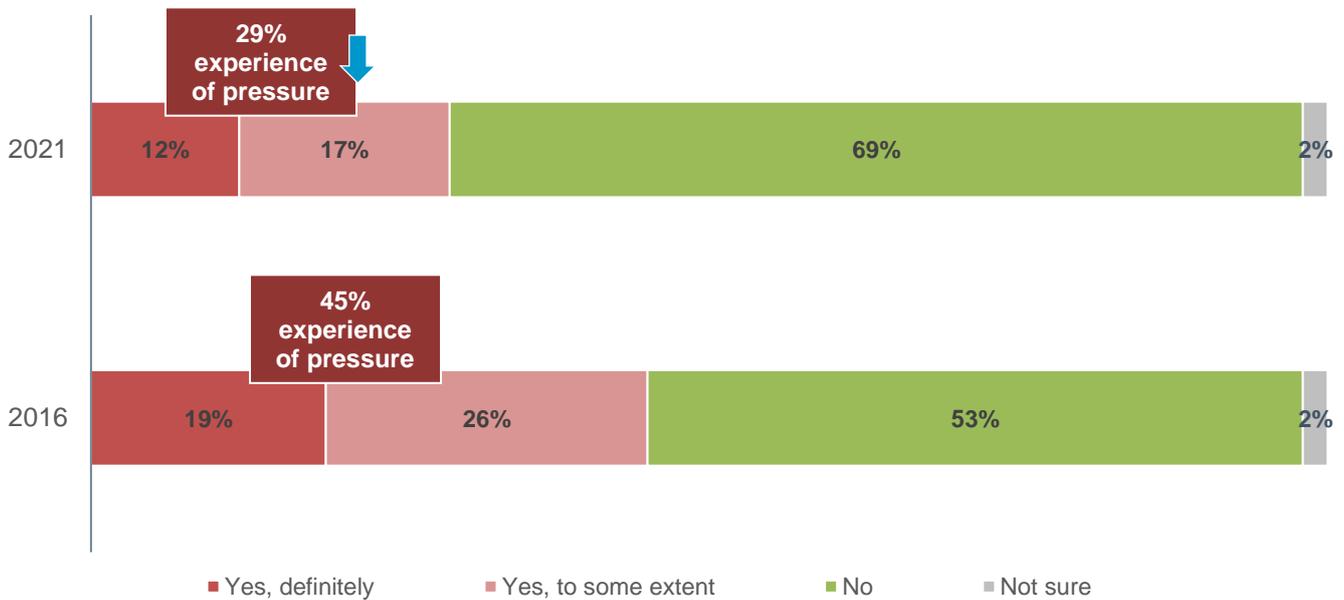
Pressure to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care

Three in ten respondents said that they had felt under pressure by an employer or a business they have worked for to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care in the last 12 months (29%). This included 12% who indicated they had *definitely* felt under pressure and 16% who had felt under pressure *to some extent*.

As seen with pressure to sell unneeded products or services, this result represents a significant decrease in the proportion of respondents who felt under pressure to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care, falling from 45% in 2016 to 29% in 2021 (down 16 percentage points).

Figure 54 – In the last 12 months, have you felt under pressure by an employer or a business you have worked for to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care?

Base: 2021 – All working respondents (4,479); 2016 – All respondents (4,139)

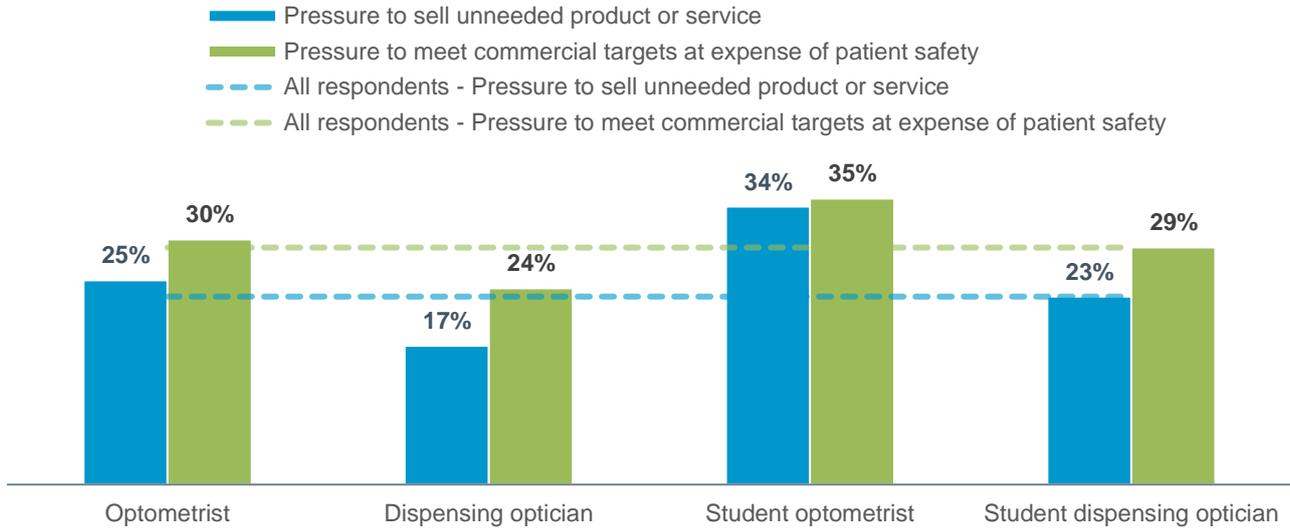


Subgroup analysis by registration type

Optometrists were more likely to have felt under pressure to sell unneeded products or services (25%) and to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient safety (30%) when compared with dispensing opticians (17% and 24% respectively). However, a larger proportion of student optometrists indicated that they had felt under pressure in both these ways (34% and 35% respectively).

Figure 55 – Pressure from employer/business by registration type

Base: Optometrist (2,695); dispensing optician (1,185); student optometrist (439); student dispensing optician (212)

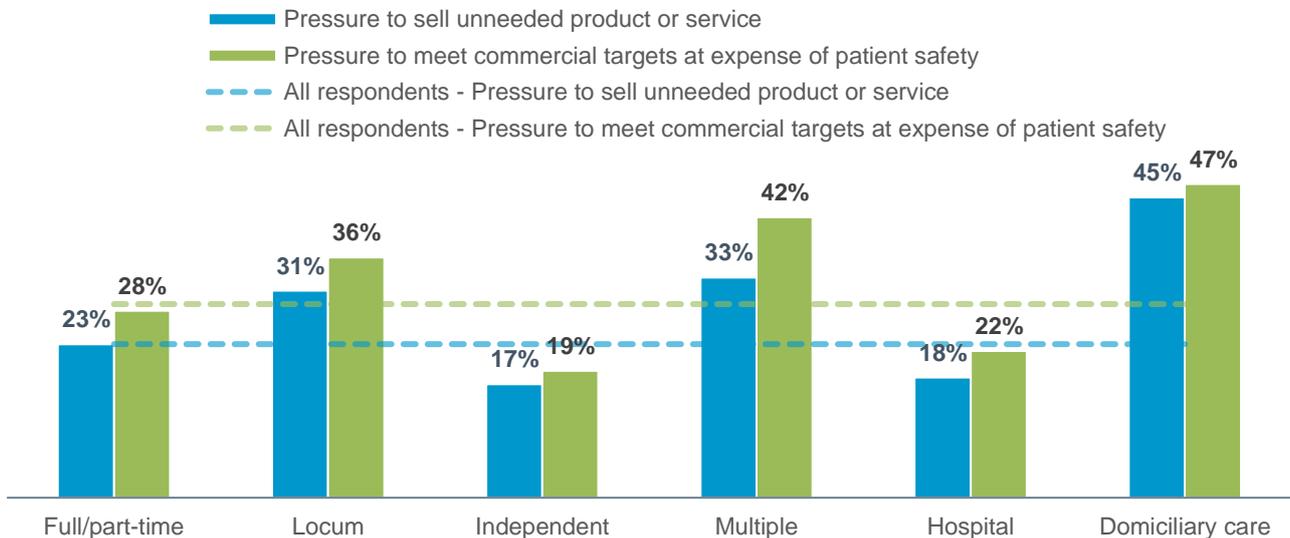


Subgroup analysis by working status and workplace setting

Those working as locums were more likely to have felt under pressure to sell unneeded products or services (31%) and to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient safety (36%) when compared with those working full or part-time (23% and 28% respectively). In relation to workplace setting, larger proportions of respondents who worked for a multiple optician (33% and 42%) or in domiciliary care (45% and 47%) felt under pressure in both these ways when compared with those working for independent optician (17% and 19%) or in a hospital setting (18% and 22%).

Figure 56 – Pressure from employer/business by working status and workplace setting

Base: Full/part-time (3,853); locum (710); independent (1,835); multiple (2,310); hospital (340); domiciliary care (87)

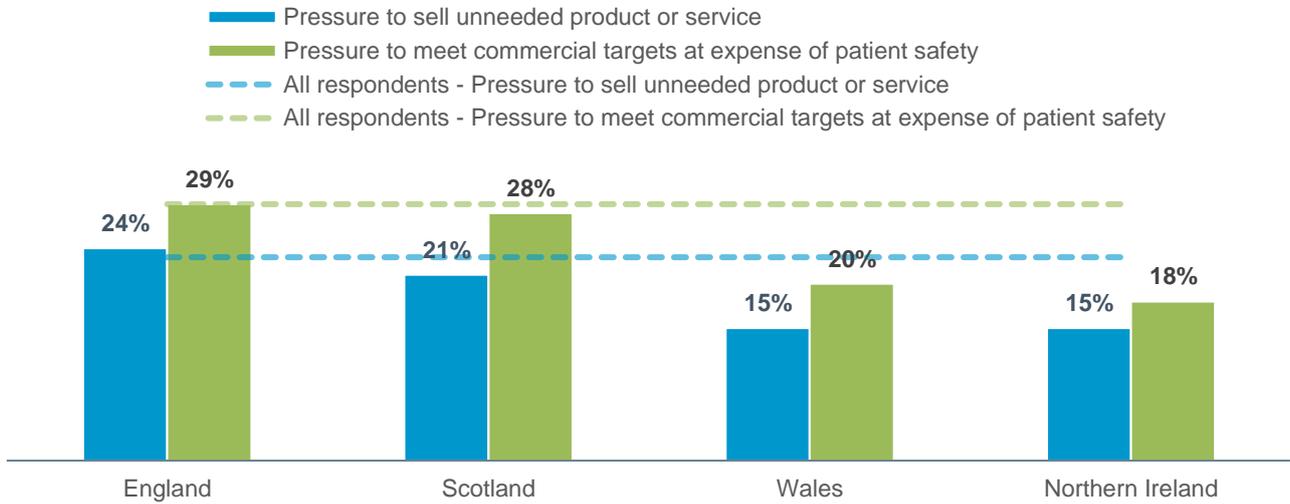


Subgroup analysis by location

Those based in Wales and Northern Ireland were less likely to have felt under pressure to sell unneeded products or services (both at 15%) and to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient safety (20% and 18% respectively), particularly when compared with those based in England (24% and 29%).

Figure 57 – Pressure from employer/business by UK location

Base: England (3,446); Scotland (397); Wales (208); Northern Ireland (121)

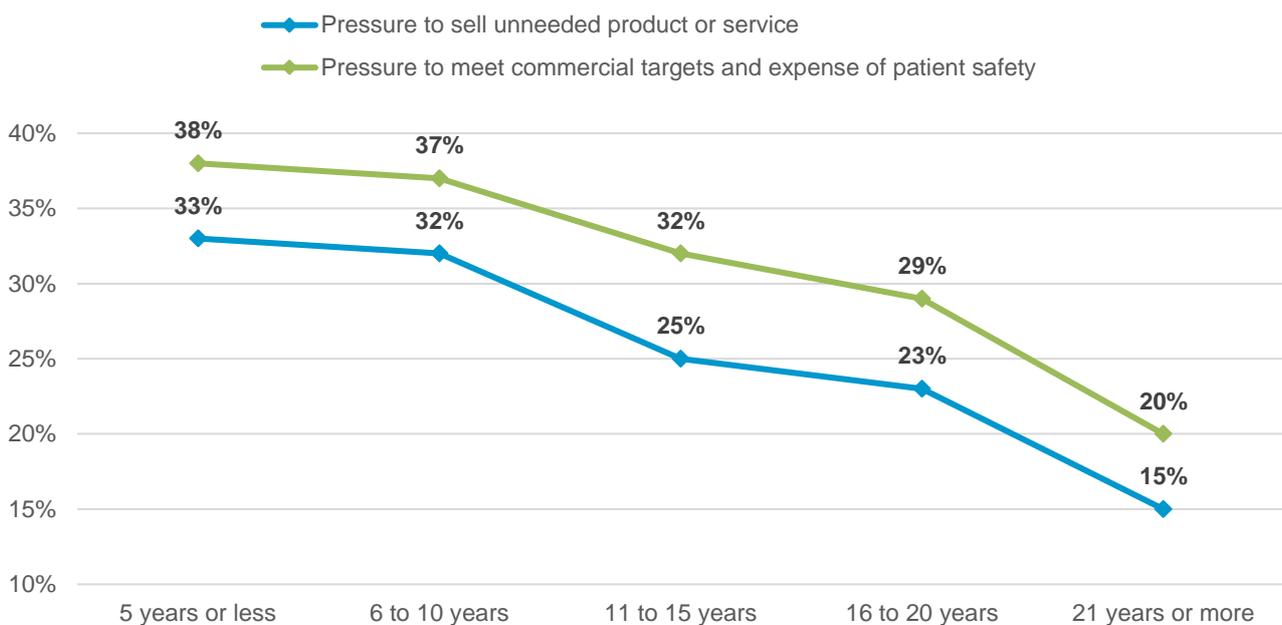


Subgroup analysis by length of time on the register

A clear trend can be seen when looking at the experience of pressure by length of time on the GOC register. Experiencing pressure for both selling unneeded products or services and meeting commercial targets at the expense of patient safety falls as the number of years on the GOC register increases.

Figure 58 – Pressure from employer/business by length of time on the register

Base: 5 years or less (534); 6-10 (479); 11-15 (510); 16-20 (536); 21 years or more (1,822)



Speaking up

Key findings

Patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant

- The majority of respondents would feel comfortable speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant to their manager or tutor (70%), followed by their employer/education provider (67%) or professional association (61%)
- In contrast, only 47% said they would feel comfortable speaking up to the GOC
- Optometrists were more likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up to any authority concerning an individual GOC registrant when compared with other registration types
- Those who worked in domiciliary care or in a hospital were also more likely to feel uncomfortable about this, particularly when compared with those working for an independent optician or in education/academia
- Respondents with *very good* or *excellent* understanding of the Raising Concerns with the GOC guidance were more likely to feel comfortable speaking up to the GOC

Patient safety concerning an employer

- Large proportions of respondents would feel comfortable speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant to their manager or tutor (65%), their employer/education provider (59%) or professional association (62%)
- Again, a smaller proportion said they would feel comfortable speaking up to the GOC (49%)
- Optometrists were more likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up to any authority concerning an employer when compared with other registration types
- Those who worked in a hospital were more likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up to the GOC when compared with those in other workplace settings
- Respondents with *very good* or *excellent* understanding of the Raising Concerns with the GOC guidance were more likely to feel comfortable speaking up to the GOC

The Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS)

- A large proportion were unaware of the OCCS (41%)
- Student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were more likely to be unaware of the OCCS when compared with optometrists and dispensing opticians
- Awareness of the OCCS was also lower amongst those who worked for a multiple optician and those who had been registered with the GOC for less time

Discrimination

- 10% of respondents had experienced discrimination in their role at work or study in the last 12 months
- Experience of discrimination was more common amongst those who worked for a multiple optician, in a hospital, in education/academia, and also amongst those in England
- Of those who had experienced discrimination, 52% of this was related to race, 28% to sex, 26% to age, and 18% to religion or belief
- Reports of racial discrimination were more likely amongst student optometrists, locums, those who worked for a multiple optician, those based in London, younger respondents aged 16-34, male respondents, and those of non-White ethnicity
- Age discrimination was more common amongst the youngest (under 25) and oldest (55+) age groups

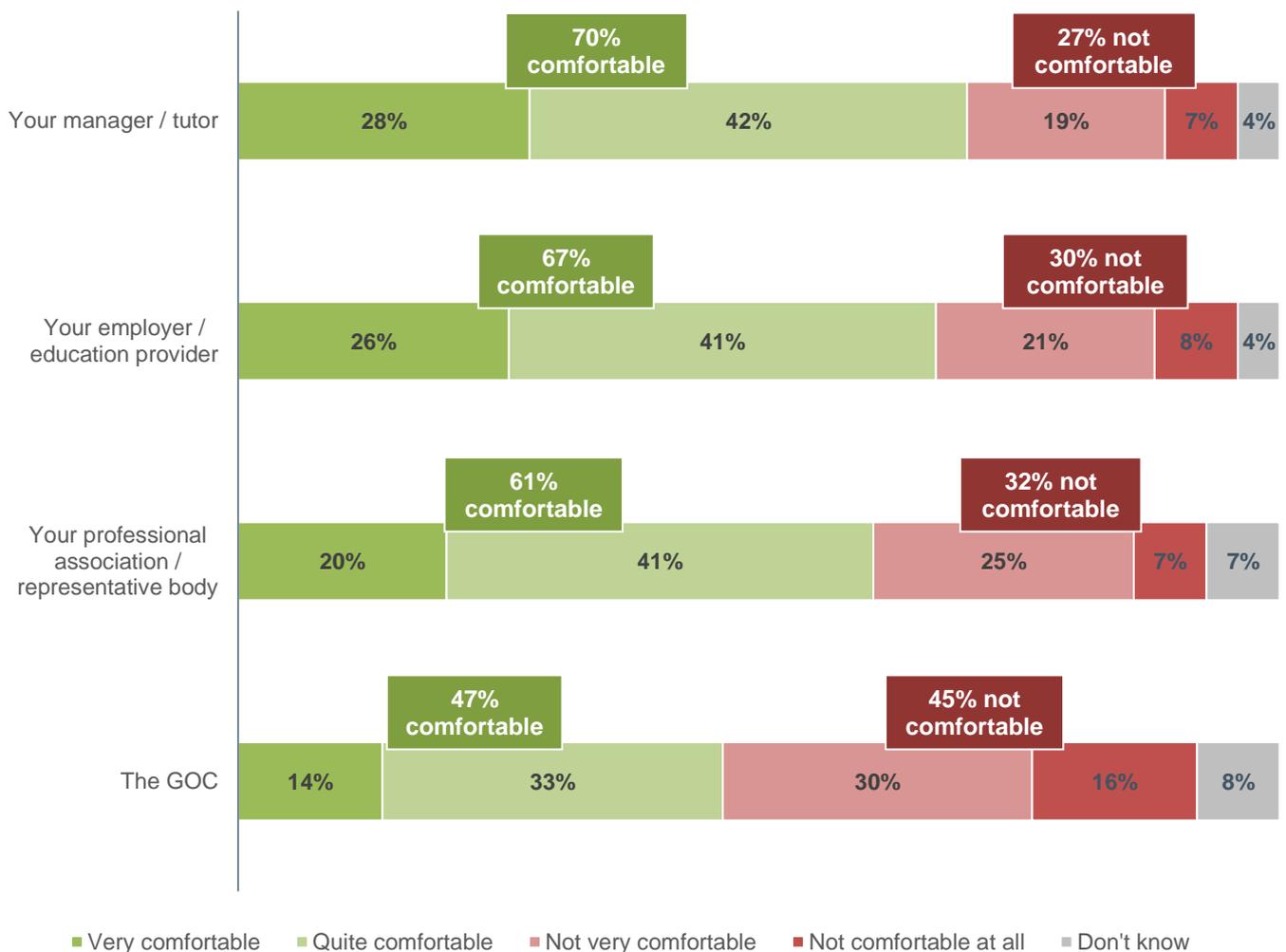
Patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant

Respondents were asked how comfortable they would feel speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant with different authorities. Respondents would feel most comfortable speaking up to their manager or tutor if they were a student (70%), closely followed by their employer or education provider (67%) and their professional association or representative body (61%).

In contrast, a smaller proportion of respondents said they would feel comfortable speaking up about this to the GOC (47%), with almost the same proportion indicating that they would not feel comfortable (45%).

Figure 59 – How comfortable would you feel speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant with the following...?

Base: All respondents excluding retired and all 'not applicable' responses – Your manager/tutor (4,130); Your employer/education provider (4,227); Your professional association/representative body (4,587); the GOC (4,672)



Subgroup analysis by understanding of the Raising Concerns with the GOC guidance

Respondents who, earlier in the survey, indicated that they had *very good* or *excellent* understanding of the Raising Concerns with the GOC guidance were more likely to feel comfortable about speaking up to the GOC about patient safety concerning an individual registrant (68%), when compared with those who described their understanding as *poor* or *very poor* (23%).

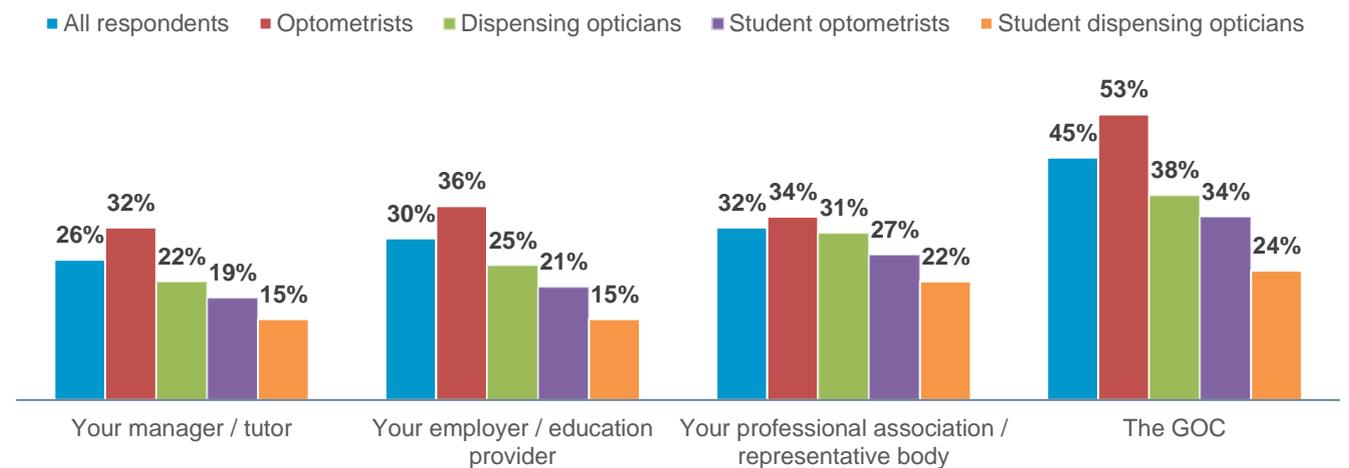
Subgroup analysis by registration type

Optometrists were more likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up about patient safety concerning individual GOC registrants to all authorities when compared with dispensing opticians. For example, 53% of optometrists said they would feel uncomfortable speaking up to the GOC, compared with 38% of dispensing opticians.

In comparison to both optometrists and dispensing opticians, student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were less likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up about patient safety concerning individual GOC registrants.

Figure 60 – Discomfort if speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant by registrant type

Base: All respondents excluding 'not applicable' responses (various)



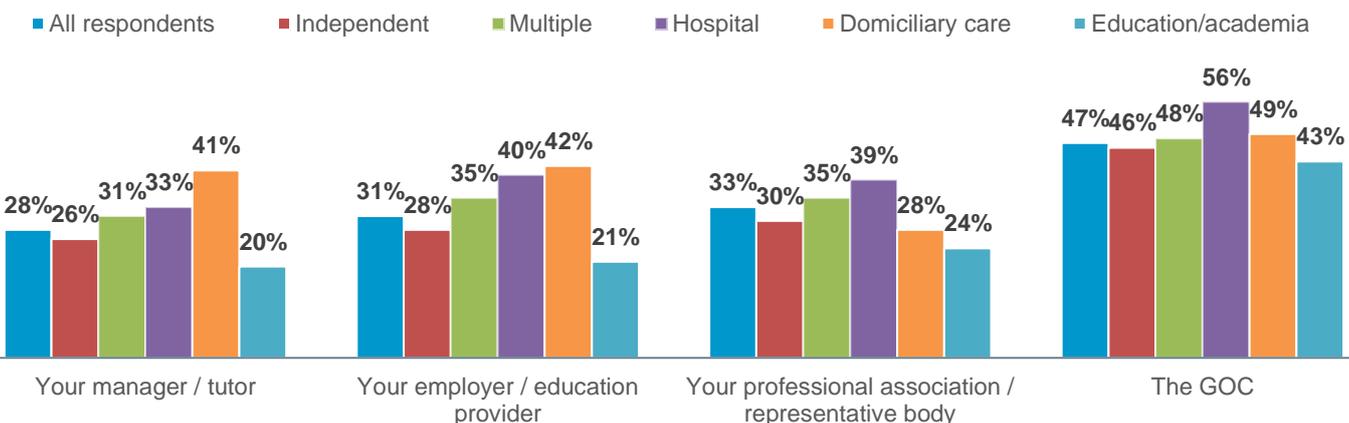
Subgroup analysis by workplace setting

Respondents who worked in domiciliary care or in a hospital were generally more likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant when compared with other workplace settings. Those who worked in a hospital setting reported particularly high levels of discomfort if speaking up to the GOC (56%), and those who worked in domiciliary care reported particularly high levels of discomfort if speaking up to their manager (41%).

In contrast, levels of discomfort were generally lower for those who worked for an independent optician and in education/academia.

Figure 61 – Discomfort if speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant by workplace setting

Base: All respondents excluding 'not applicable' responses (various)



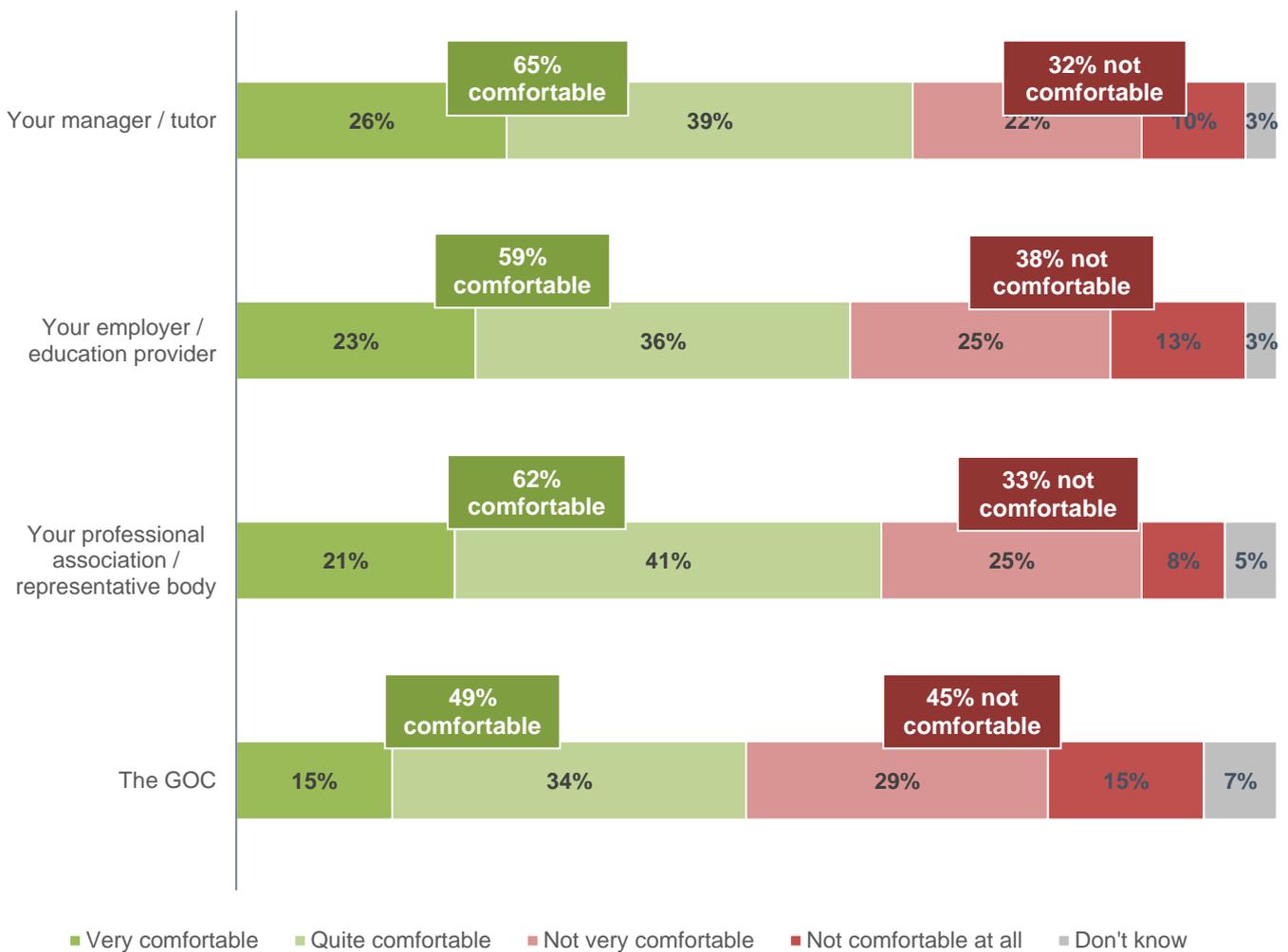
Patient safety concerning an employer

Respondents were also asked how comfortable they would feel speaking up about patient safety concerning their employer. As with speaking up about an individual GOC registrant, respondents would feel most comfortable speaking up to their manager or tutor (65%) or their professional association or representative body (62%).

Again, a smaller proportion said they would feel comfortable speaking up to the GOC about this (49%). In contrast to the previous question, respondents were less likely to feel comfortable speaking up about their employer to their employer or education provider (59%).

Figure 62 – How comfortable would you feel speaking up about patient safety concerning your employer with the following...?

Base: All respondents excluding retired and all 'not applicable' responses – Your manager/tutor (3,783); Your employer/education provider (3,896); Your professional association/representative body (4,066); the GOC (4,110)



Subgroup analysis by understanding of the Raising Concerns with the GOC guidance

As seen with the previous question, respondents who felt they had *very good* or *excellent* understanding of the Raising Concerns with the GOC guidance were more likely to feel comfortable about speaking up to the GOC about patient safety concerning an employer (69%), when compared with those who described their understanding as *poor* or *very poor* (26%).

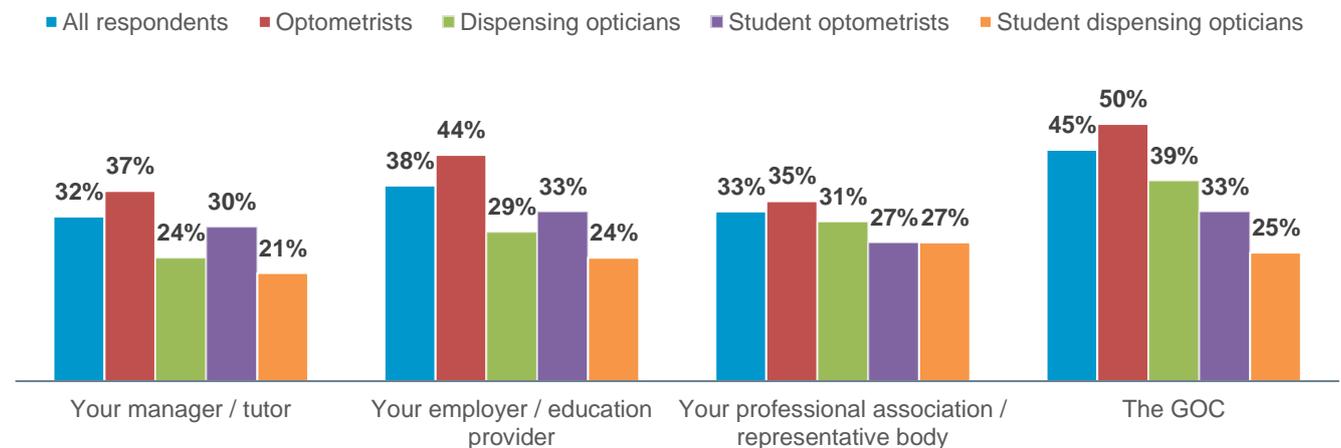
Subgroup analysis by registration type

As seen in relation to speaking up about an individual GOC registrant, subgroup analysis by registration type again highlights that optometrists are more likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up about patient safety concerning their employer to all authorities when compared with dispensing opticians. For example, 44% of optometrists said they would feel uncomfortable speaking up to their employer, compared with 29% of dispensing opticians.

This analysis also highlights that, again, student optometrists and student dispensing opticians were less likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up about patient safety concerning their employer. However, it is noteworthy that student optometrists generally felt more uncomfortable when compared with student dispensing opticians.

Figure 63 – Discomfort if speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant by registrant type

Base: All respondents excluding ‘not applicable’ responses (various)



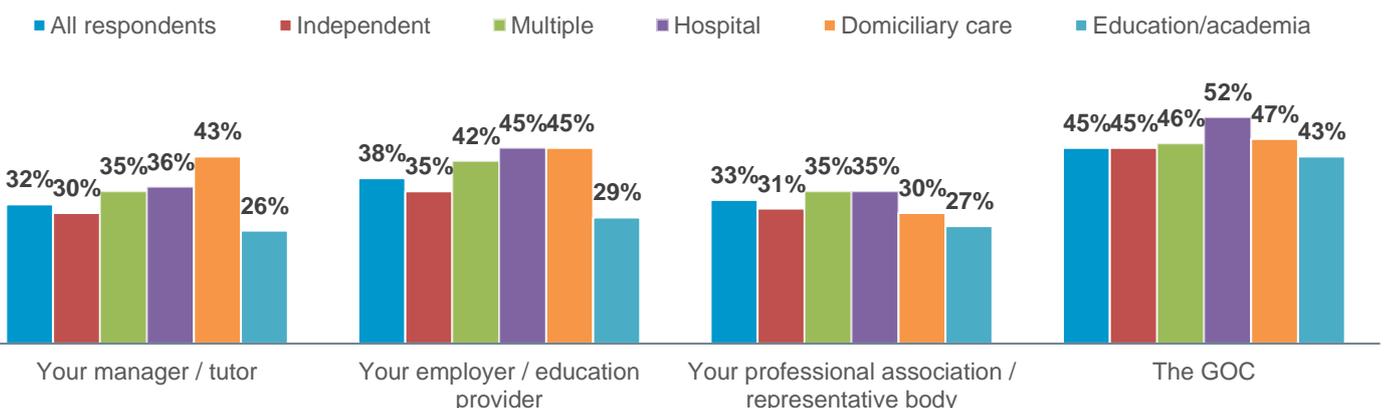
Subgroup analysis by workplace setting

Analysis by workplace setting highlights that respondents who worked for an independent optician were less likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up about patient safety concerning their employer when compared with other workplace settings. In contrast, levels of discomfort were higher amongst those who worked in domiciliary care if speaking up to their manager (43%) or their employer (45%). Similarly, those who worked in a hospital were more likely to feel uncomfortable about speaking up to their manager (36%) and their employer (45%).

High levels of discomfort about speaking up about an employer to the GOC were recorded for all workplace settings, but were particularly high for those working in a hospital setting (52%).

Figure 64 – Discomfort if speaking up about patient safety concerning your employer by workplace setting

Base: All respondents excluding ‘not applicable’ responses (various)

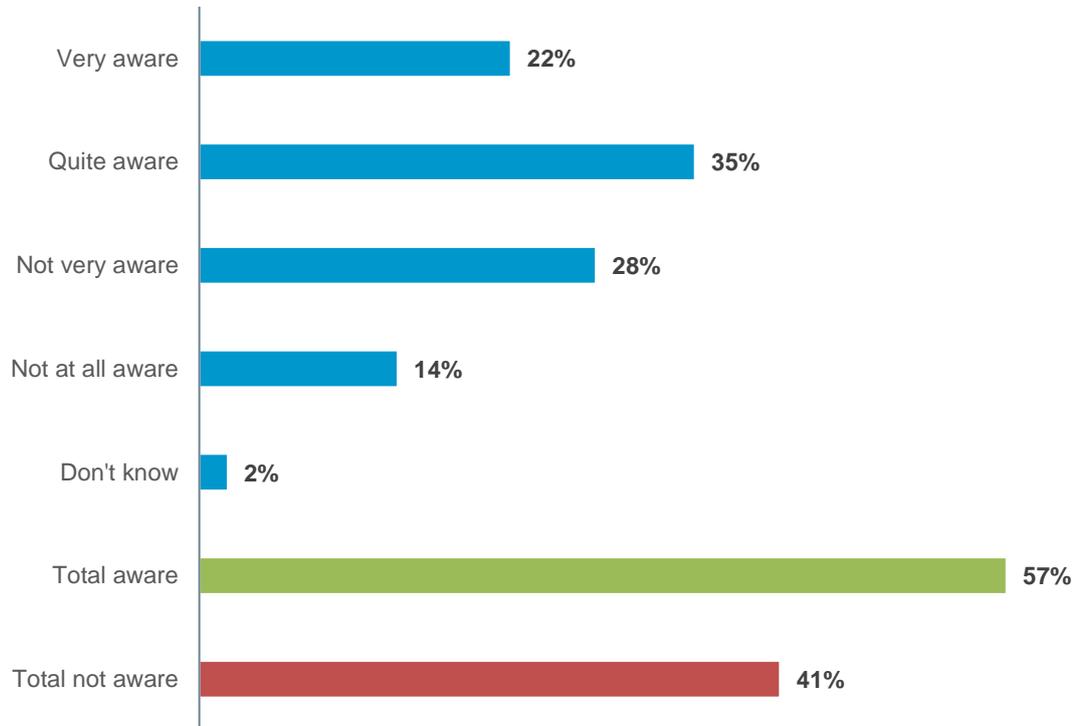


The Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS)

Whilst the majority of respondents were aware of the OCCS (57%), a large proportion were unaware (41%). This included 28% who described themselves as *not very aware* and 14% who were *not at all aware*.

Figure 65 – How aware are you of the role of the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) in providing a free mediation service to help resolve consumer complaints?

Base: All respondents (4,880)



Subgroup analysis by registration type

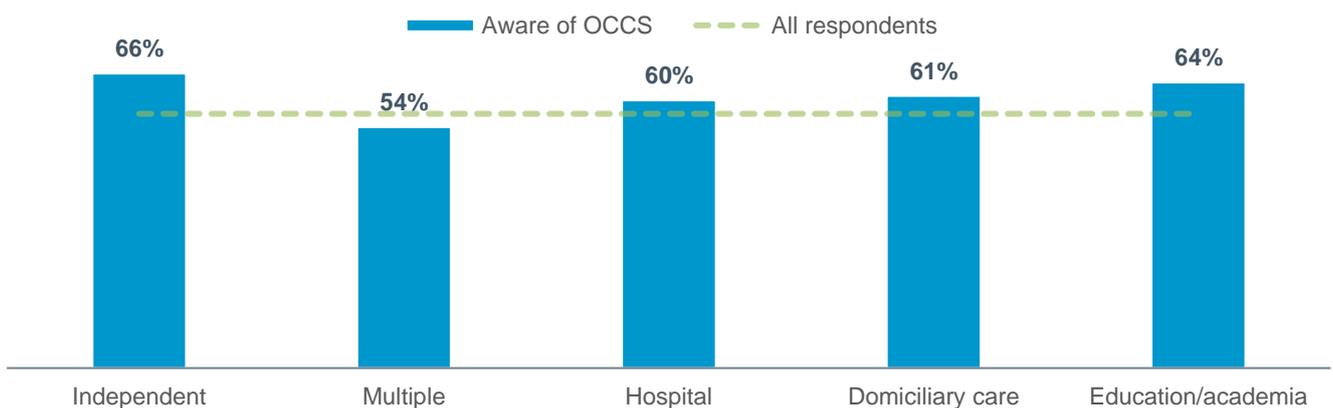
Optometrists and dispensing opticians were much more likely to be aware of the OCCS (61% and 67% respectively) when compared with student optometrists (29%) and, to a lesser extent, student dispensing opticians (48%).

Subgroup analysis by workplace setting

Those who worked for a multiple optician were less likely to be aware of the OCCS (54%) when compared with all other workplace settings, particularly those who worked for an independent optician (66%).

Figure 66 – Awareness of the OCCS by workplace setting

Base: Independent (1,835); multiple (2,310); hospital (340); domiciliary care (87); education/academia (258)

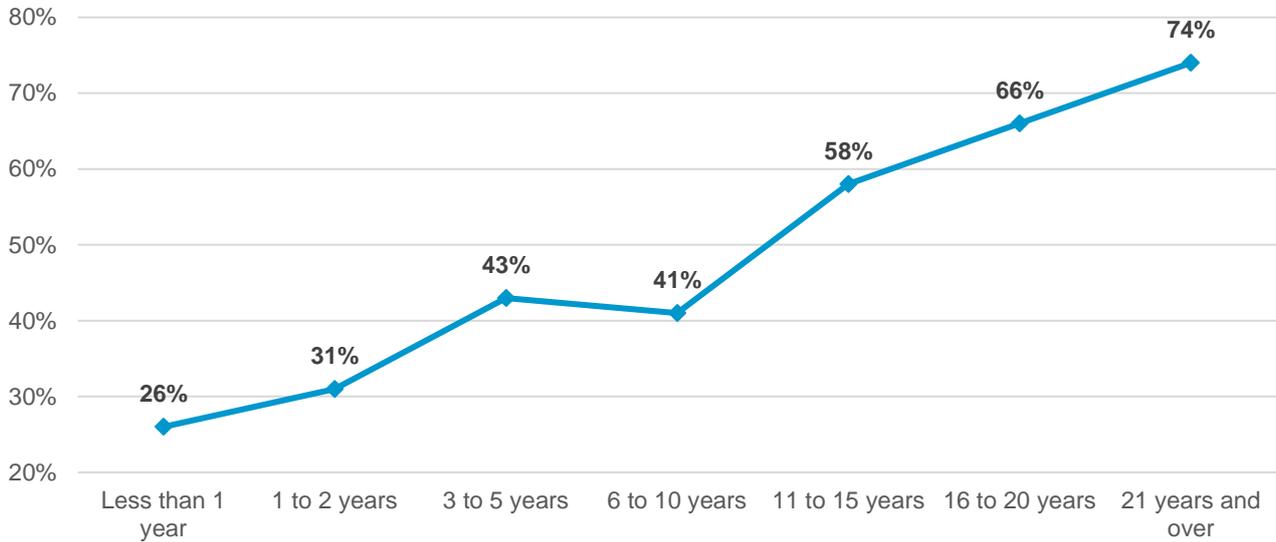


Subgroup analysis by length of time on the register

Awareness of the OCCS increases in line with length of time on the GOC register. Just a quarter of respondents with less than a year on the register were aware of the OCCS (26%), increasing to three quarters for those who have been on the register for 21 years and over (74%).

Figure 67 – Awareness of the OCCS by length of time on the register

Base: Less than 1 year (285); 1-2 (419); 3-5 (743); 6-10 (483); 11-15 (511); 16-20 (537); 21 years or over (1,877)

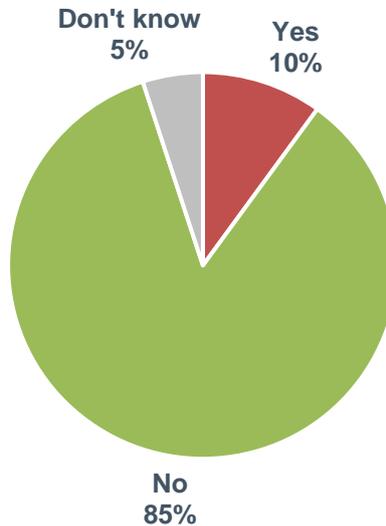


Discrimination

One in ten respondents had experienced discrimination in their role at work or study (10%).

Figure 68 – In the last 12 months, have you experienced any discrimination in your role at work or study?

Base: All respondents excluding those fully retired (4,823)

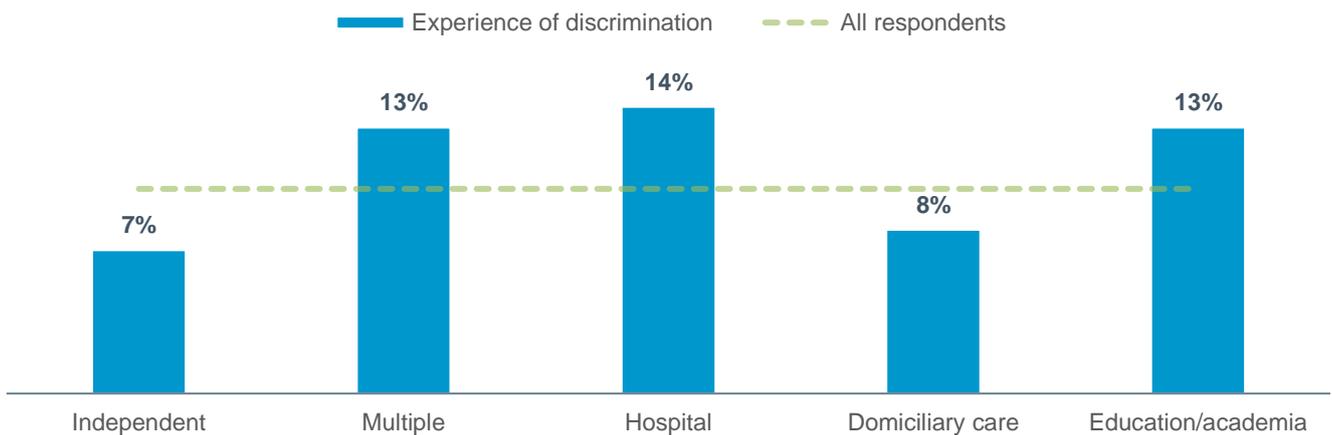


Subgroup analysis by workplace setting

Those who worked for a multiple optician, in a hospital, or in education/academia were more likely to indicate that they had experienced discrimination in the last 12 months (13%, 14% and 13% respectively). Recorded experience of discrimination was lower amongst those who worked for an independent optician (7%) or in domiciliary care (8%).

Figure 69 – Experience of discrimination in the last 12 months by workplace setting

Base: Independent (1,835); multiple (2,310); hospital (340); domiciliary care (87); education/academia (258)



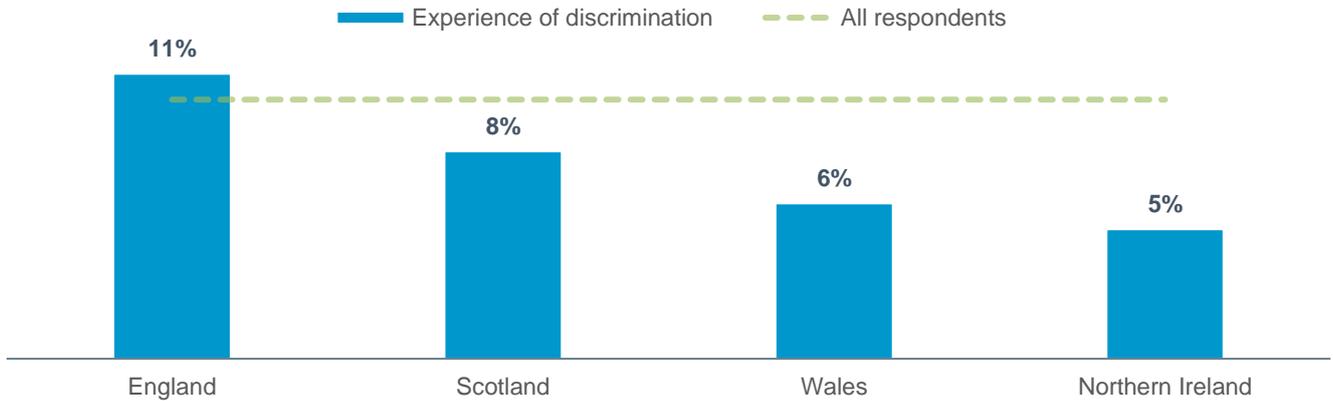
Subgroup analysis by location

Experience of discrimination was more common amongst those from England (11%) when compared with those from Scotland (8%), Wales (6%) and Northern Ireland (5%).

Looking across the English regions, this experience was more prevalent in the East Midlands (12%), West Midlands (13%), East of England (12%) and London (12%).

Figure 70 – Experience of discrimination in the last 12 months by location

Base: England (3,712); Scotland (414); Wales (248); Northern Ireland (130)

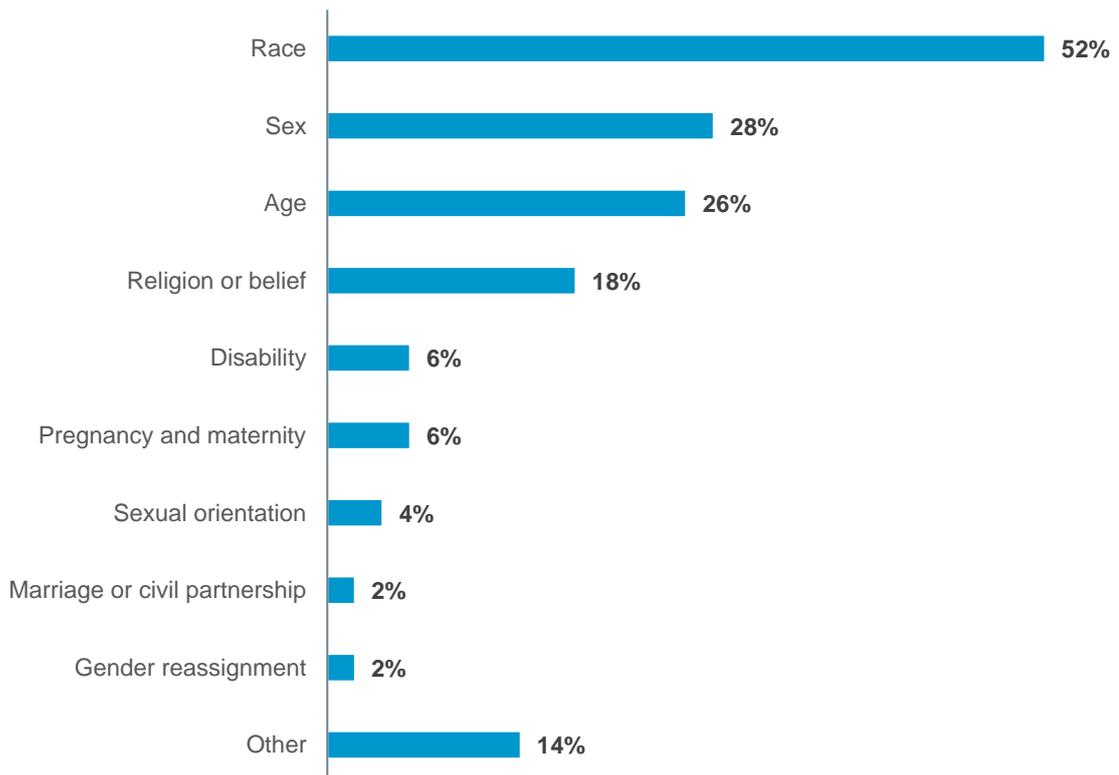


Those who had experienced discrimination in their role at work or study in the last 12 months were additionally asked to specify what type of discrimination this was. Just over half of these respondents said that they had experienced discrimination related to race (52%). Over a quarter had experienced discrimination related to sex (28%) or age (26%).

The most common ‘other’ responses (14%) focused on discrimination related nationality and being a parent.

Figure 71 – What type of discrimination have you experienced?

Base: Those who indicated they had experienced discrimination in their role in the last 12 months (496)



Subgroup analysis of racial discrimination

A number of subgroups were more likely to indicate that they had experienced racial discrimination in their role in the last 12 months, most commonly amongst those of non-White ethnic groups (78%) when compared with those of White British ethnicity (13%). Additionally, this type of discrimination was more prevalent amongst student optometrists (69%), locums (63%), those who worked for a multiple optician (57%), those in London (66%), and male respondents (63%).

Figure 72 – Experience of racial discrimination in the last 12 months by various subgroups
 Base: Those who had experienced discrimination in the last 12 months – student optometrists (91); locums (82); multiple (299); London (70); aged 16-34 (241); male (140); non-White ethnic groups (255)



Subgroup analysis of sexual discrimination

Female respondents were far more likely to indicate that they had experienced sexual discrimination in their role in the last 12 months (35%) when compared with male respondents (11%). Subgroup analysis also highlights that White British respondents were more likely to indicate that they had experienced this kind of discrimination (39%) when compared with those of a non-White ethnic group (21%).

Figure 73 – Experience of sexual discrimination in the last 12 months by gender and ethnicity
 Base: Those who had experienced discrimination in the last 12 months – male (140); female (334); White (173); non-White ethnic groups (255)

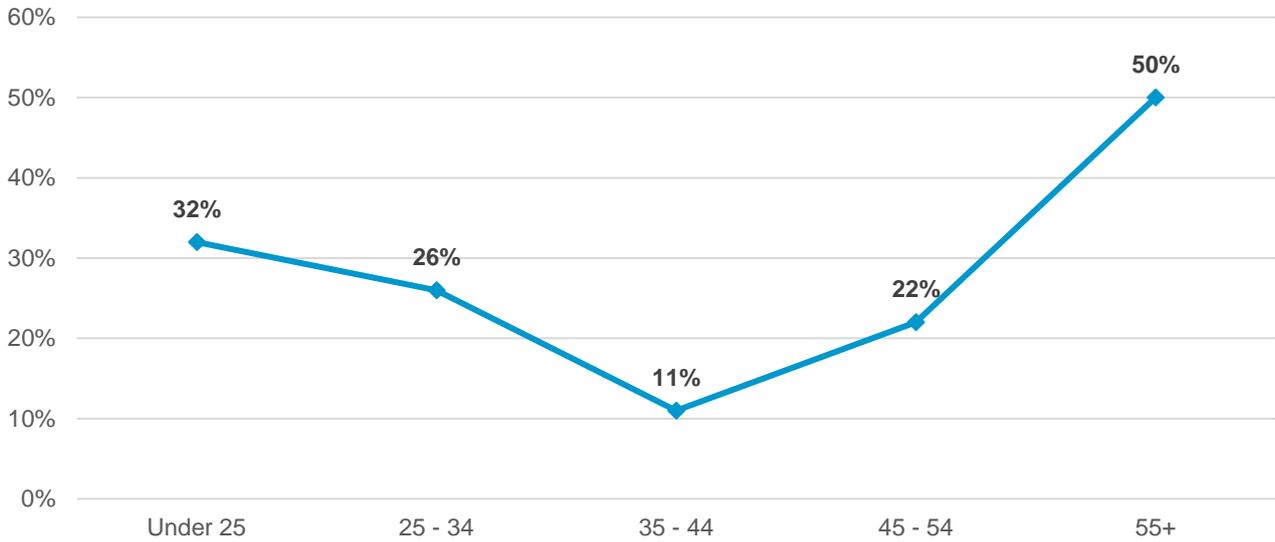


Subgroup analysis of age discrimination

Age discrimination was reported by both younger and older respondents. For example, 32% of those aged under 25 and 50% of those aged 55 and above indicated that they had experienced age discrimination in their role in the last 12 months, compared with just 11% for those aged 35 to 44.

Figure 74 – Experience of age discrimination in the last 12 months by age group

Base: Under 25 (98); 25-34 (143); 35-44 (117); 45-54 (76); 55+ (49)



Satisfaction and the future

Key findings

Satisfaction

- 58% of respondents said that they were satisfied with their role or job over the last 12 months, but 20% were dissatisfied
- Job satisfaction was higher amongst those who worked full-time, for an independent optician, in a hospital, in education/academia, in Wales and Northern Ireland, and those aged 55+
- Job dissatisfaction was higher amongst optometrists, locums, those who worked for a multiple optician or in domiciliary care, and those registered with the GOC for 6-20 years

The future

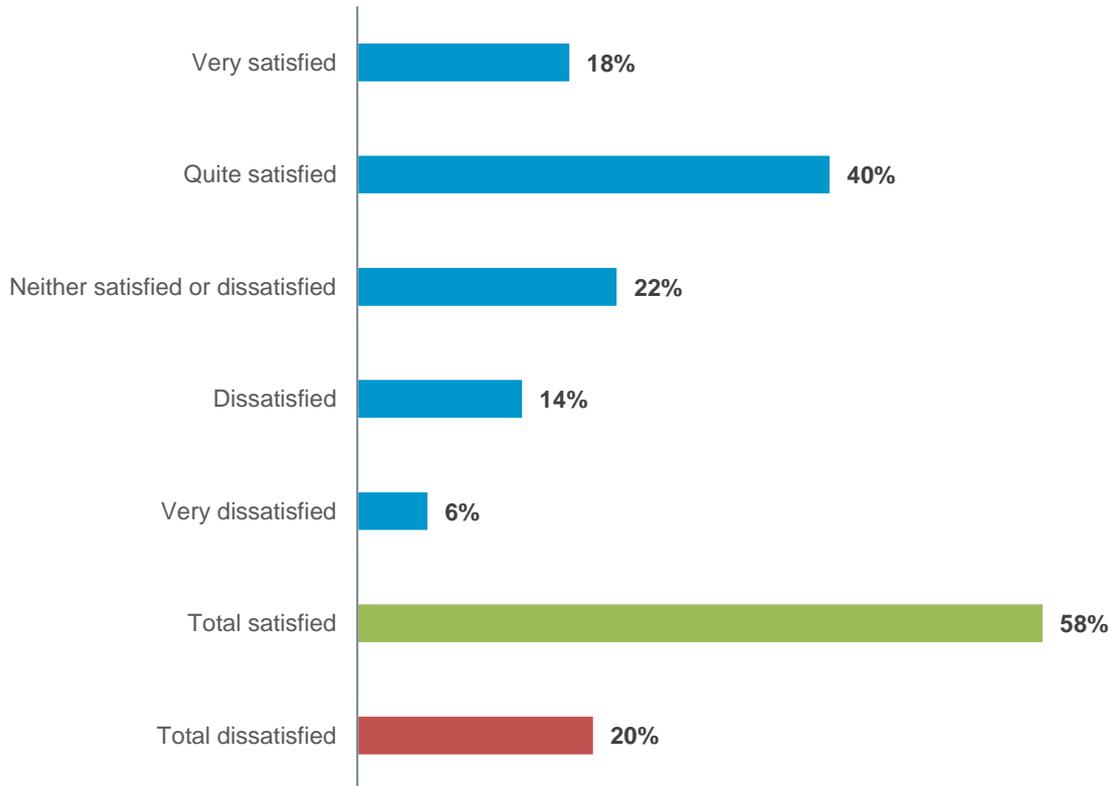
- Over the next 12-24 months:
 - 43% of respondents planned to gain additional qualifications/skills. This included larger proportions of student optometrists, student dispensing opticians, and those working for a multiple optician or in a hospital
 - 36% planned to reduce their hours. This was more likely amongst optometrists
 - 26% planned to leave the profession. This was more likely amongst dispensing opticians and those working in domiciliary care
 - 13% planned to retire
 - 12% planned to switch to locum work, including a larger proportion who worked for a multiple optician
 - 11% planned to take a career break

Satisfaction

In total, 58% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their role or job over the last 12 months, including 40% who were *quite satisfied* and 18% who were *very satisfied*. One in five respondents, however, were dissatisfied (20%, and a further 22% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).

Figure 75 – Thinking about the last 12 months, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your role/job?

Base: All respondents excluding those fully retired and ‘not applicable’ responses (4,378)

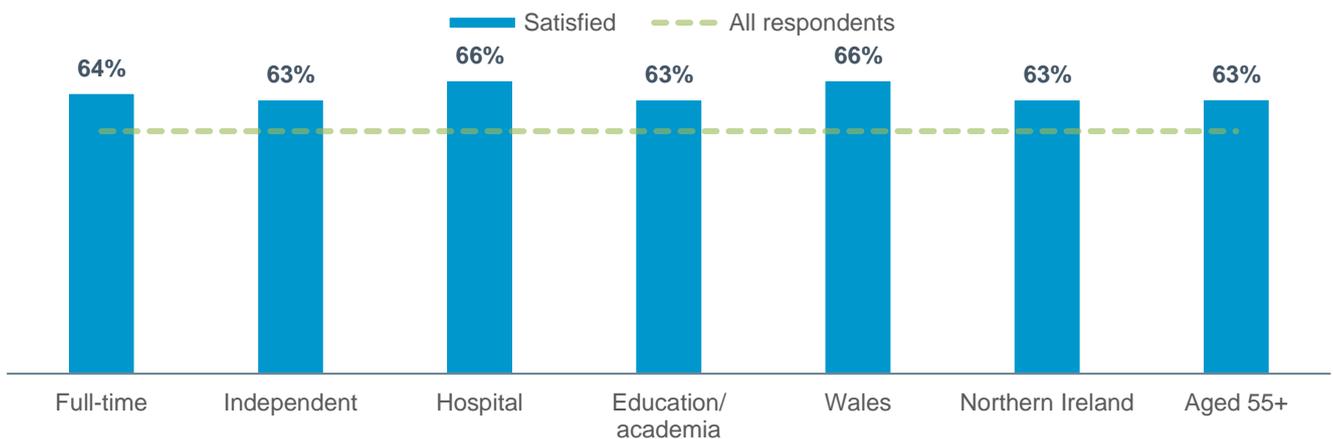


Subgroup analysis of job satisfaction

A number of subgroups were more likely to be satisfied with their job or role, including those who worked full time (64%), those working for an independent optician (63%), in a hospital (66%) or in education/academia (63%), those in Wales (66%) and Northern Ireland (63%), and those aged 55 and above (63%).

Figure 76 – Job satisfaction by various subgroups

Base: Full-time (2,496); independent (1,807); hospital (335); education/academia (251); Wales (204); Northern Ireland (120); aged 55+ (1,022)

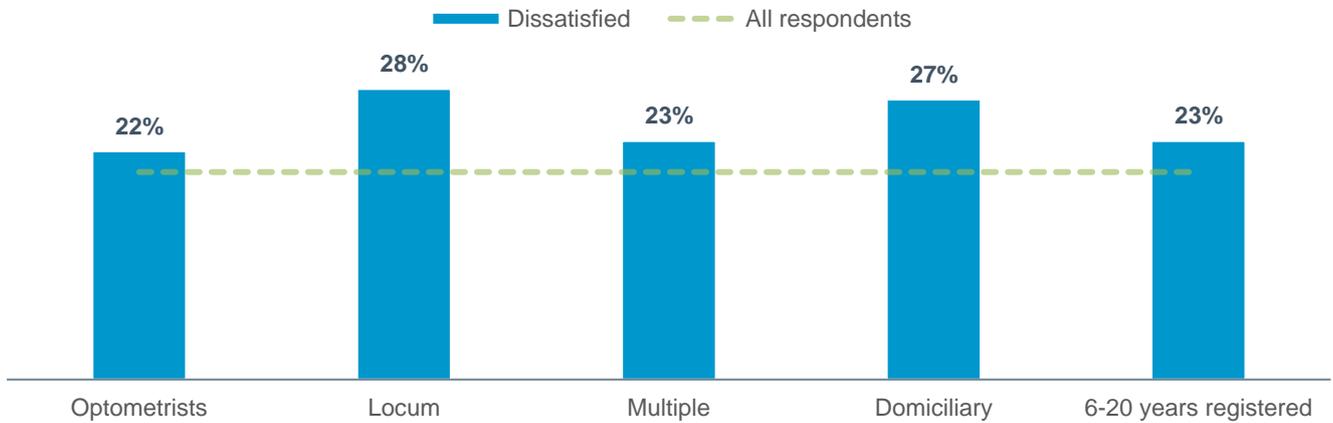


Subgroup analysis of job dissatisfaction

Subgroups more likely to be dissatisfied with their job or role included optometrists (22%), those working as locums (28%), those working for a multiple optician (23%), those working in domiciliary care (27%) and those who had been registered for between six and 20 years (23%).

Figure 77 – Job dissatisfaction by various subgroups

Base: Optometrists (2,637); locum (690); multiple (2,292); domiciliary (86); 6-20 years registered (1,503)

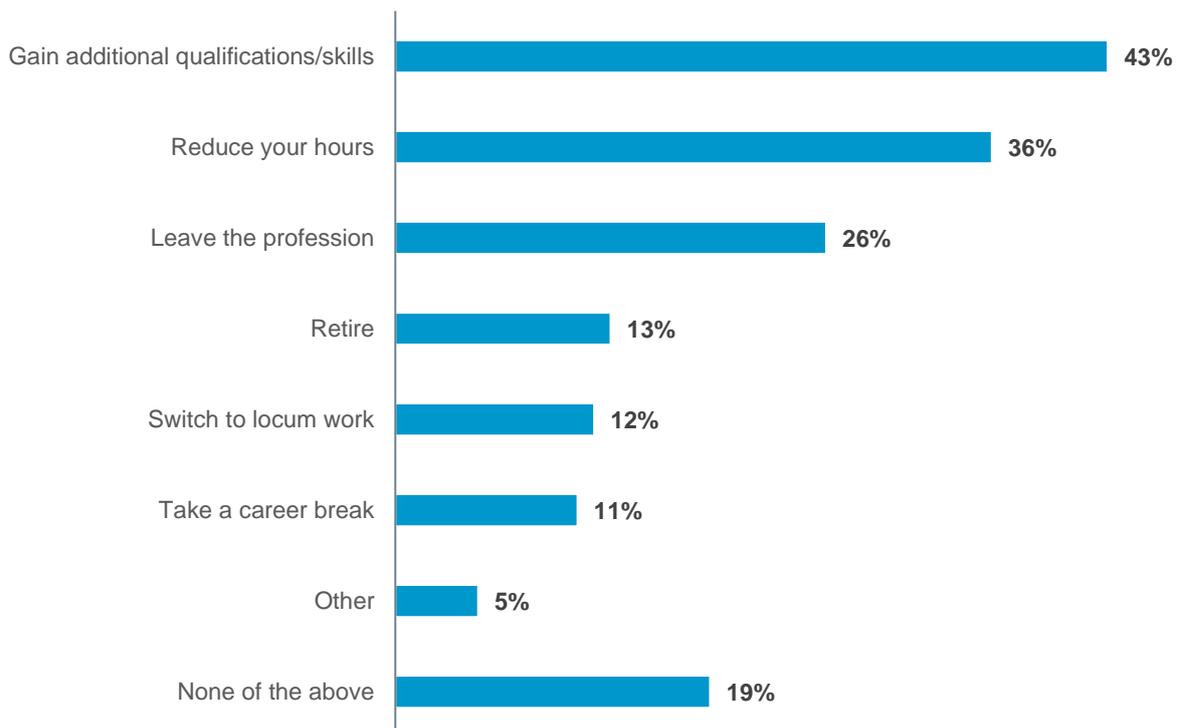


The future

When asked to consider making changes to their career over the next 12 to 24 months, the largest proportion of respondents said that they planned to gain additional qualifications or skills (43%), followed by 36% who planned to reduce their hours (36%). A quarter of respondents said that they planned to leave the profession (26%).

Figure 78 – Have you considered making any of the following changes to your career over the next 12-24 months?

Base: All respondents excluding those fully retired (4,479)

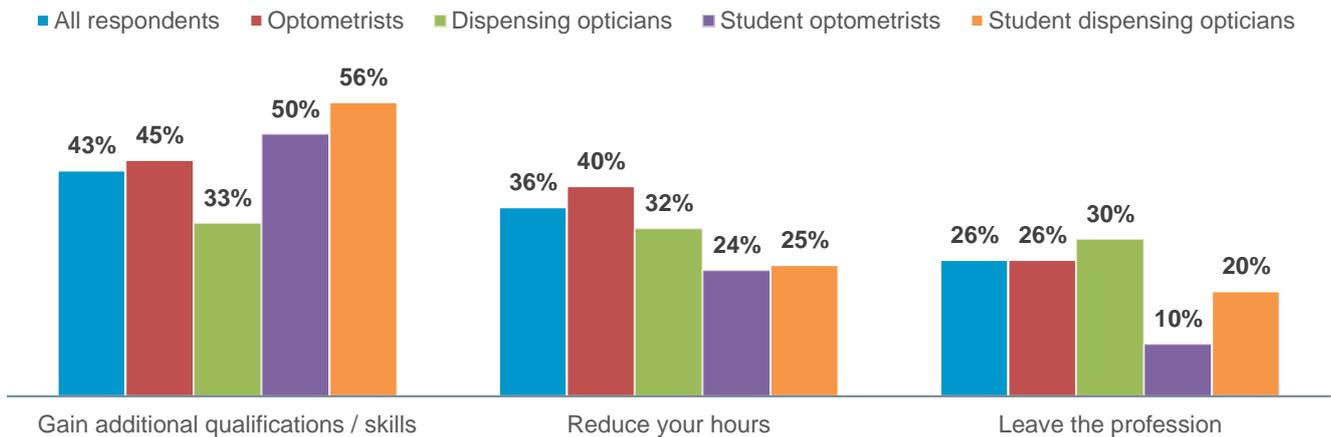


Subgroup analysis by registration type

Larger proportions of student optometrists and student dispensing opticians indicated that they planned to gain additional qualifications or skills (50% and 56% respectively) when compared with dispensing opticians (33%). Optometrists were more likely to state that they planned to reduce their hours (40%) when compared with dispensing opticians (32%), whereas dispensing opticians were more likely to answer that they plan to leave the profession (30%) when compared with optometrists (26%).

Figure 79 – Considerations for changes to career over next 12-24 months by registrant type

Base: All respondents excluding those fully retired (4,479); optometrists (2,695); dispensing opticians (1,195); student optometrists (439); student dispensing opticians (212)



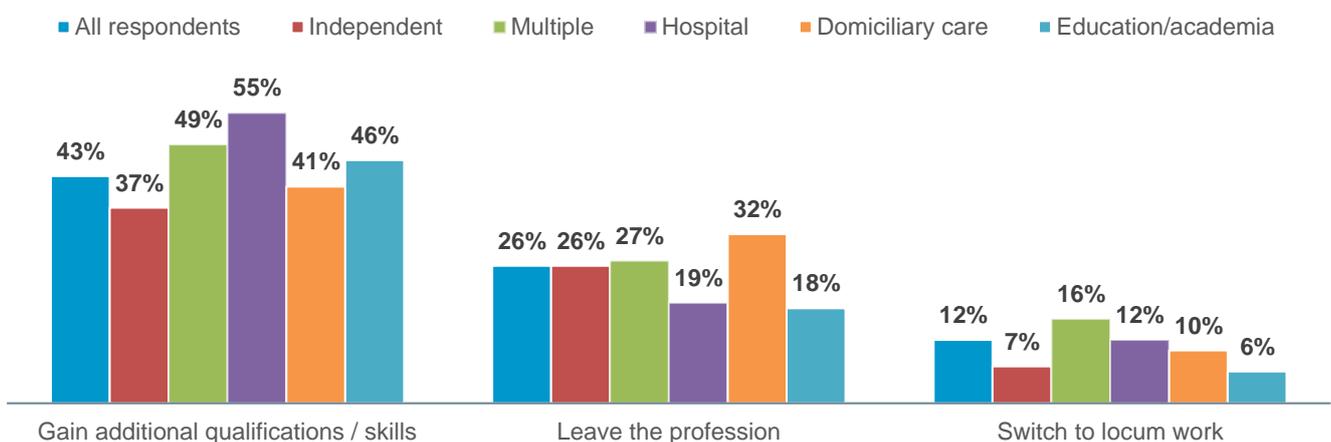
Subgroup analysis by workplace setting

Analysis by workplace setting shows that those who worked in a hospital (55%) and those who worked for a multiple optician (49%) were more likely to answer that they planned to *gain additional qualifications/skills* when compared with those who worked for an independent optician (37%) or in domiciliary care (41%).

Those who worked in domiciliary care were more likely to indicate that they planned to *leave the profession* (32%) when compared with respondents in other workplace settings. Larger proportions of those who worked for a multiple optician said that they planned to *switch to locum work* (16%) when compared with those who worked in other settings.

Figure 80 – Considerations for changes to career over next 12-24 months by working status and workplace setting

Base: All respondents excluding those fully retired (4,479); optometrists (2,695); dispensing opticians (1,195); student optometrists (439); student dispensing opticians (212)



Conclusions and recommendations

Generally positive perceptions the GOC's performance towards its strategic objectives

This year's survey results show that large proportions of registrants feel that the GOC is meeting the objectives set out in its Strategic Plan 2020-25, including delivering world-class regulatory practice and building a culture of continuous improvement.

Although a smaller proportion of registrants agree that the GOC is transforming customer service, it is important to note that registrants are not more likely to disagree, but instead were more likely to be unaware of its performance in this area.

A diverse range of suggestions for future GOC priorities

A wide range of suggestions were made when registrants were asked what one priority they would like to see the GOC achieve over the course of its Strategic Plan 2020-25, highlighting the diversity of perceptions and experiences amongst the registrant population. The results show that, to satisfy registrants, key areas of focus for the future could include regulation of online sales, the future of education, and tackling commercial pressures and the potential influence of large multiple chains.

Mixed perspectives of the GOC roles and responsibilities

In relation to its roles and responsibilities, it is positive to see that the majority of registrants think that the GOC sets fair standards for the profession and ensures the quality of optical education. However, as with awareness of the GOC's role in transforming customer service, a large proportion of registrants are unaware of the GOC's role in being fair to registrants via the fitness to practise process.

The most critical perspective of the GOC was recorded for the charging of registration fees, where opinion was almost equally divided between those who thought they were reasonable and those who thought they were not. This latter group included a larger proportion of dispensing opticians.

Continued confusion as to the GOC's role from some registrants

As highlighted in previous research conducted with GOC registrants, there is still a commonly held perception that the GOC's role involves, or should involve, supporting, protecting and representing optical professionals, in line with the role of a professional association or representative body. This view was present when survey respondents were asked what priority the GOC should achieve over the course of its Strategic Plan 2020-25, and also when they were asked how the GOC could best support registrants as the pandemic continues. Although aware that the GOC's primary role is to protect patients and the public by regulating the optical professions, a number of verbatim comments related to the need for the GOC to better support and protect registrants as well.

Levels of confidence in ability to meet Standards of Practice are higher than levels of understanding

Although large proportions of registrants described their understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians (or the Standards for Optical Students) as *very good* or *excellent*, the most common rating of understanding was *good*. When comparing the levels of those who felt they had *very good* or *excellent* understanding with the levels of confidence, a significant gap can be seen, with registrants more likely to be confident in their ability to meet the standards. The same result was found for the Standards for Optical Businesses, and the guidance relating to disclosing confidential information and raising concerns with the GOC.

Positive experiences recorded in relation to the registration process

Nearly all registrants reported positive experiences when using the MyGOC area of the GOC's website and when applying and paying their registration fee as part of the annual registration process in the last 12 months.

Frequency of communication from the GOC is about right

The vast majority of registrants keep up to date with GOC news via email or the GOC website. When asked about the frequency of communication from the GOC, the majority felt it was *about right*, with only small proportions indicating it was too frequent or infrequent.

Readership of the GOC eBulletin is much higher than the FTP Focus learning bulletin

Results highlight that a greater proportion of registrants read the GOC eBulletin than the FTP Focus learning bulletin. Readership of the GOC eBulletin has also increased slightly since 2016. However, registrants are more likely to scan-read both communications than read them in detail. It is positive to note that the majority of registrants who read these communications find them informative.

Most registrants have felt supported by the GOC in relation to CET during the pandemic

The majority of registrants have felt supported by the GOC in relation to their CET during the COVID-19 pandemic, with most indicating that the GOC's statement on CET was helpful and agreeing that the GOC had allowed flexibility to complete their CET points.

However, it is important to note that a significant minority of registrants still have concerns about completing their CET cycle as a result of the pandemic.

The main reported impacts of the pandemic and the impact on mental health and wellbeing of registrants

Wearing PPE and additional cleaning and hygiene requirements were the most commonly reported main ways in which the pandemic has changed the day to day work of registrants. Additionally, large proportions of registrants reported that they had been furloughed by their employer, or had worked beyond their hours or found it difficult to cope with their workload.

Large proportions of registrants reported that the pandemic has had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing, with considerable numbers reporting that this impact has been *significant*. In particular, the impact appears to have been more significant on students and younger registrants.

This impact can be linked to experiences during the pandemic. Those who reported that they had been working beyond their hours, feeling unable to cope with their workload, finding it difficult to provide patients with the sufficient level of care they need, or taking a leave of absence due to stress were more likely to report that the pandemic has had a *significant impact* on their mental health and wellbeing.

Lack of social distancing has been experienced by some registrants

Over the last 12 months, significant proportions of registrants have reported a lack of social distancing with both patients/the public and with other staff. Other issues reported by some registrants included ineffective triaging of patients based on risk and not being given enough time to adequately clean equipment. However, it is positive to note that only a small percentage of registrants had experienced a lack of PPE over the last 12 months.

Mixed perceptions of support from the GOC during the pandemic

Despite positive feedback in relation to support regarding CET during the pandemic, over the last few months, registrants are more likely to have felt supported by their employer or professional association/representative body (or education provider if relevant) when compared with the GOC. Opinion was almost equally split between those who had felt supported by the GOC and those who felt they had not.

The most common suggestions for continued support from the GOC in relation to the pandemic were to provide clear guidance and rules with no ambiguity or room for interpretation, and to ensure the regulation of minimum test times.

A significant fall in commercial pressure

When compared with the survey results from 2016, this year's results show that there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of respondents who have felt under commercial pressure by an

employer or business they have worked for. This includes a decrease in those who felt under pressure to sell unneeded products or services and pressure to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care. However, it is important to note that experience of this pressure is more likely amongst certain groups, including locums, those who worked for a multiple optician or in domiciliary care, and student optometrists.

Registrants feel more comfortable speaking up about concerns to authorities other than the GOC

When speaking up about patient safety concerning either an individual registrant or an employer, registrants are considerably more likely to feel comfortable doing so to their manager, their employer, or their professional association/representative body, rather than the GOC.

It is interesting to note that registrants are more likely to feel comfortable speaking up to the GOC about patient safety if they rate their understanding of the Raising Concerns with the GOC guidance as *very good* or *excellent*, highlighting the link between understanding and feeling comfortable enough to take action in these circumstances.

Awareness of the OCCS is mixed

Although the majority of registrants are aware of the OCCS, a large proportion indicated that they were unaware. Awareness varies across the subgroups, with students, those who had been registered for less time, and those who worked for a multiple optician less likely to be aware.

One in ten registrants have experience of discrimination in their role

One in ten registrants have experienced some form of discrimination in their role at work or study in the last 12 months. This was more likely to occur amongst registrants working in a multiple optician, a hospital, or in education/academia, and also amongst those in England when compared with other devolved UK nations. Discrimination by race, sex and age are most prevalent.

The majority of registrants are satisfied in their role

The majority of registrants reported that, over the last 12 months, they have been satisfied in their role or job. Satisfaction is more commonplace amongst a number of groups, including those working in a hospital, in education/academia, or for an independent optician, those in Northern Ireland, and those aged 55+. However, a significant minority reported that they were dissatisfied, including a larger proportion of locums, and those who worked for a multiple optician or in domiciliary care.

A significant proportion of registrants plan to leave the profession

When asked about their future plans over the next 12 to 24 months, a quarter of registrants said they plan to leave the profession. This included a larger proportion of dispensing opticians, and those who worked for a multiple optician or in domiciliary care. This finding is important, particularly when combined with the result that large proportions of registrants also planned to reduce their hours or retire.

Continuity of perceptions and experiences since 2016

Where it has been possible to compare results with the last registrant survey conducted in 2016, in most cases there has been little change, highlighting consistency of perceptions and experiences. This includes awareness and understanding of the Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians, satisfaction with the registration process, opinion on the frequency of GOC communication, and attitudes towards the GOC in relation to registration fees and actions taken through the fitness to practise process.

Small changes have been recorded for some repeating questions, including the perception that the GOC sets fair standards for the profession, where agreement has fallen slightly, and readership of the GOC eBulletin, which has increased slightly.

The most significant change was found in relation to the experience of commercial pressure, which has fallen significantly between 2016 and 2021.

Appendix A – Demographic profile

The table below shows the demographic makeup of survey respondents, where the sample has been weighted by registration type to accurately reflect the overall GOC registrant population.

Demographic profile of survey respondents

Base: All respondents (4,880)

Demographic	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	1,741	36%
Female	2,970	61%
Intersex	4	0%
Non-Binary	5	0%
Prefer not to say	160	3%
Is your gender identity different from the gender that you were assigned at birth?		
Yes	641	13%
No	3,997	82%
Prefer not to say	242	5%
Age group		
Under 25	763	16%
25-34	906	19%
35-44	1,029	21%
45-54	967	20%
55-64	857	18%
65+	266	5%
Prefer not to say	92	2%
Ethnic group		
White British	2,653	54%
White other	373	8%
Black/Black British	95	2%
Mixed/Multiple	63	1%
Asian/Asian British	1,253	26%
Any other ethnic group	56	1%
Prefer not to say	388	8%
Sexuality		
Heterosexual/Straight	4,247	87%
Gay/Lesbian	100	2%
Bisexual	62	1%
Prefer not to say	470	10%
Marital status		
Civil partnership	125	3%
Divorced or civil partnership dissolved	217	4%
Married	2,507	51%
Separated	56	1%
Single	1,465	30%
Widowed	39	1%
Prefer not to say	470	10%
Religion or belief		
No religion or belief	1,373	28%
Buddhist	31	1%
Christian	1,718	35%
Hindu	360	7%
Jewish	65	1%

Demographic	Number	Percentage
Muslim	592	12%
Sikh	139	3%
Other	73	2%
Prefer not to say	528	11%
Do you consider yourself to have a disability?		
Yes	138	3%
No	4,459	91%
Prefer not to say	282	6%
Are you pregnant, on maternity leave, or returning from maternity leave?		
Yes	137	3%
No	4,528	93%
Prefer not to say	215	4%
Do you perform the role of a carer?		
Yes	469	10%
No	4,150	85%
Prefer not to say	260	5%

Appendix B – Questionnaire



Registrant Survey 2021

Welcome to the General Optical Council (GOC)'s Registrant Survey 2021. The findings from this survey will help the GOC gain valuable insights into the professions and will be used to help improve the way it regulates.

Completing the survey

To navigate through this questionnaire, use the arrow buttons at the bottom of each page. DO NOT use the back/forward options in your browser. To remove your answers to a question, click on the reset button.

You can save your answers at any point and return to them later. To do this, you will need to use the link in your email invitation or reminder again.

The survey should take around 15 minutes to complete.

To encourage participation in the survey, we are conducting a prize draw to win a £100 gift card that can be used at a range of outlets. You will be asked at the end of the survey if you would like to take part in the prize draw. The winner will be selected at random following the close of the survey.

How Enventure Research will use your information

The GOC has invited an independent organisation, Enventure Research, to conduct this survey so that your responses remain confidential. The GOC will receive a report on the findings and anonymised data from the survey.

Your name and email address were securely passed to Enventure Research by the GOC. They will only be used by Enventure Research for the purposes of carrying out this survey and will not be disclosed to any third parties.

Your rights

Under data protection law, you may ask for a copy of your response to this survey or other information we hold about you. You may also ask us to delete your response. Please email helpline@enventure.co.uk

If you would prefer not to receive any further communication from Enventure Research about this survey you can unsubscribe from the email sent to you about the survey.

For more information about your rights and who to contact please read our privacy policies:

Enventure Research's privacy policy can be found [here](#).
The GOC's privacy policy can be found [here](#).

Questions or help

For help completing the survey or if you have a question, please call the survey helpline on 0800 0092 117 or email helpline@enventure.co.uk

How to take part

To take part in the survey, please read the statement below, tick to say you agree and click the arrow button.

QA Enventure Research will use the information you give in your survey response as described above. Your data will be processed in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

I agree to take part in the survey and share my information with Enventure Research

Your role

The first set of questions are about your role and where you work.

Q1 **Please tell us which of the following roles apply to you (if you are retired, please select the most appropriate role before you retired) Please select as many as apply**

- Optometrist
- Optometrist with an additional supply speciality
- Optometrist with a supplementary prescribing speciality
- Optometrist with an independent prescribing speciality
- Dispensing optician
- Dispensing optician with a contact lens speciality
- Student optometrist
- Student optometrist undertaking the pre-registration scheme
- Student dispensing optician
- Other

Other *Please specify*

Q2 Which of the these best describes your current work / practice? Please select as many as apply

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Locum
- Not currently working (excluding furlough - if furloughed please select your usual work/practice)
- Fully retired
- On parental leave
- Other

Other Please specify

Q3 Where do you currently work? Please select as many as apply

- Independent opticians
- National chain of opticians
- Regional chain of opticians
- Hospital
- Domiciliary care
- Education/academia
- Other

Other Please specify

Q4 Are you currently involved in delivering enhanced eye care services (e.g. providing patients with care beyond the remit of a routine sight test, such as Minor Eye Conditions Service (MECS) or Low Vision Service Wales (LVSW))?

- Yes
- No
- I am not aware of these services
- Don't know

Q5 Approximately how long have you been on the GOC register?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- 16 to 20 years
- 21 years and over
- Don't know

Raising Concerns with the GOC guidance?

Q10 How confident are you in your ability to meet the...

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know	Not applicable	Not aware of it
Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians?	<input type="radio"/>						
Standards of Practice for Optical Students?	<input type="radio"/>						
Disclosing confidential information guidance?	<input type="radio"/>						
Raising Concerns with the GOC guidance?	<input type="radio"/>						

The Standards for Optical Businesses define the standards that the GOC expects of optical businesses to protect the public and promote high standards of care. These standards were launched in October 2019.

Q11 Are you in a position of responsibility, seniority or management within a business (e.g. store manager, regional manager, director)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not applicable

Q12 How would you rate your understanding of the Standards for Optical Businesses?

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Poor
- Very poor
- Don't know
- Not applicable

Q13 How confident are you in your ability to meet the Standards for Optical Businesses?

- Very confident
- Quite confident
- Not very confident
- Not at all confident
- Don't know
- Not applicable

The GOC would like to know more about the registration process to help improve the service it offers to registrants.

Q14 The MyGOC area of the website is used by registrants to update their details and complete their retention applications.

How would you rate your experience of using the MyGOC area of the website?

- Excellent
- Good
- Poor
- Very poor
- Don't know / can't remember

Q15 If you have gone through the annual retention process (applying and paying the fee) in the last 12 months, how would you rate your experience?

- Excellent
- Good
- Poor
- Very poor
- I have not gone through the process in the last 12 months
- Don't know / can't remember

How the GOC communicates with you

The GOC would like to know more about how it currently communicates with registrants to help improve the customer service it provides.

Q16 How would you describe the frequency that the GOC communicates with you?

- Too often
- About right
- Not often enough
- Don't know

Q17 How do you keep up to date with GOC news? *Please select as many as apply*

- Emails
- The GOC website
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- eBulletin
- Other
- I do not keep up to date with GOC news
- Don't know

Other *Please specify*

Q18 **Do you read the following GOC bulletins sent by email?**

	Yes, I read it in detail	Yes, I scan it	No	I do not receive this GOC bulletin	Don't know
The GOC eBulletin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The FTP Focus learning bulletin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q19 **How informative do you find the following GOC bulletins?**

	Very informative	Quite informative	Not very informative	Not at all informative	Don't know
The GOC eBulletin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The FTP Focus learning bulletin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the GOC issued a statement on Continuing Education and Training to help support registrants. In this statement the GOC acknowledged the difficulty that registrants will experience in achieving the annual expectation of six CET points and said it would waive this for 2020.

Q20 **How helpful or otherwise did you find this statement?**

- Very helpful
- Quite helpful
- Not very helpful
- Not at all helpful
- Don't know
- I was not aware of this statement

Q21 **To what extent do you agree or disagree that the GOC has allowed registrants enough flexibility to complete their CET points during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Q22 **Do you have any concerns around completing your CET cycle as a result of COVID-19?**

- Yes
- No

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the GOC along with professional associations, representative bodies, and education providers have tried to support registrants by issuing guidance and statements on their websites. The GOC are interested to know how effective this support has been.

Q23 In the last few months, how supported have you felt by...

	Very supported	Quite supported	Not very supported	Not supported at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Your employer?	<input type="radio"/>					
The GOC?	<input type="radio"/>					
Your professional association / representative body?	<input type="radio"/>					
Your education provider (e.g. university or college you attend to study)?	<input type="radio"/>					

Q24 In the last 12 months during the COVID-19 pandemic, what is the main way your day to day work has changed? Please summarise in the box below

Q25 In the last 12 months, have you been furloughed by your employer or had your educational course suspended?

- Yes, for up to 3 months
- Yes, between 4-6 months
- Yes, between 7-12 months
- No

Q26 What impact, if any, do you think the COVID-19 pandemic has had on your mental health and wellbeing?

- A significant impact
- Some impact
- No impact
- Don't know / prefer not to say

Q27 In the last 12 months, have you experienced any of the following? Please select as many as apply

- Working beyond your hours
- Feeling unable to cope with workload
- Taking leave of absence due to stress
- Finding it difficult to provide patients with the sufficient level of care they need
- None of the above

The GOC is interested to find out about any infection prevention and control procedures put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic to help protect patients and staff working in clinical practice or education settings.

Q28 In the last 12 months have you experienced patients or staff being put at risk through any of the following? Please select as many as apply

- Lack of social distancing with other staff
- Lack of social distancing with patients or the public
- Not being given enough time to adequately clean equipment
- Lack of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Not effectively triaging patients based on risk
- Other
- I have no concerns
- Don't know

Other *Please specify*

Q29 What could the GOC do to support you now as the COVID-19 pandemic continues? Please summarise in the box below

Challenges faced by registrants in the workplace

The GOC has previously been informed by some registrants about pressures faced in the workplace (including as part of education and training courses), and would like to find out more about these potential challenges.

Q30 In the last 12 months, have you felt under pressure by an employer or a business you have worked for to sell a product or provide a service which you know is not needed by the patient?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No
- Not sure

Q31 In the last 12 months, have you felt under pressure by an employer or a business you have worked for to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No
- Not sure

Speaking up

The GOC is interested in registrants' views about speaking up about poor practice in the workplace.

Q32 How comfortable would you feel speaking up about patient safety concerning an individual GOC registrant with the following...

	Very comfo rtable	Quite comf ortable	Not very co mfortable	Not comfor table at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Your manager / tutor?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your employer / education provider?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your professional association / representative body?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The GOC?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q33 How comfortable would you feel speaking up about patient safety concerning your employer with the following...

	Very comfo rtable	Quite comf ortable	Not very co mfortable	Not comfor table at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Your manager / tutor?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your employer / education provider?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your professional association / representative body?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The GOC?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q34 How aware are you of the role of the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) in providing a free mediation service to help resolve consumer complaints?

- Very aware
- Quite aware
- Not very aware
- Not at all aware
- Don't know

Speaking up

As part of the GOC's Strategic Plan 2020-2025, it also launched its equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy and as part of this it is keen to collect data on experiences relating to EDI.

Q35 In the last 12 months, have you experienced any discrimination in your role at work or study?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q36 What type of discrimination have you experienced? Please select as many as apply

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Other

Other Please specify

Your job/career

The GOC would like to find out a bit more about satisfaction levels and career prospects in the professions.

Q37 Thinking about the last 12 months, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your role/job?

- Very satisfied
- Quite satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Not applicable

Q38 Have you considered making any of the following changes to your career over the next 12-24 months? *Please select as many as apply*

- Gain additional qualifications/skills
- Switch to locum work
- Reduce your hours
- Leave the profession
- Take a career break
- Retire
- Other
- None of the above

Other *Please specify*

About you

Finally, please could you answer the following questions about yourself so that we can ensure we hear from a wide range of people and identify any differences in results between different groups of registrants. Please remember you will not be individually identified in your survey response.

Q39 Your age group:

- Under 25
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 +
- Prefer not to say

Q40 Your gender:

- Male
- Female
- Intersex
- Non-Binary
- Prefer not to say

Q41 Is your gender identity different from the gender that you were assigned at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q42 Your Sexual Orientation:

- Heterosexual/Straight
- Gay/Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Prefer not to say

Q43 Your Marital Status:

- Civil partnership
- Divorced or civil partnership dissolved
- Married
- Separated
- Single
- Widowed
- Prefer not to say

Q44 Your Ethnicity:

- White: Irish
- White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British
- White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Other White background
- Black or Black British - Caribbean
- Black or Black British - African
- Other Black background
- Asian or Asian British - Indian
- Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British - Chinese
- Other Asian background
- Mixed - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed - White and Black African
- Mixed - White and Asian
- Other mixed background
- Other - Arab
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

Other *Please specify*

Q45 Your Religion or Belief:

- No religion or belief
- Buddhist
- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Other *Please specify*

Q46 Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q47 Are you pregnant, on maternity leave, or returning from maternity leave?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q48 Do you perform the role of a carer?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q49 In which of the following regions do you live?

- North East
- North West
- Yorkshire and Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South East
- South West
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Outside the UK
- Prefer not to say

Prize draw

As a thank you for your time today, we are offering you the opportunity to enter our prize draw to win a £100 gift card that can be used at a range of outlets. The winner will be randomly selected when the survey closes.

Q50 Do you want to be entered into our prize draw?

By answering yes you are agreeing to be contacted by Enventure Research if you are selected as the winner.

- Yes
- No

So that we can contact you if you are selected as the winner, please provide your name, contact number, and email address in the boxes below. *Any details you provide will only be used to contact you if you are selected as the winner of our prize draw. Your details will not be passed on to any third parties and will be kept separate from your survey answers, meaning that you will not be identified in any way. Your contact details will be kept securely for a maximum of three months, after which they will be confidentially deleted.*

Q51 **Name**

Q52 **Contact number**

Q53 **Email address**

Thank you for taking the time to take part in this survey. Your views are greatly appreciated.

Please click the tick button below to send your response.