



# Little Aussie Eyes Report | 2020 |

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# Little Aussies Eyes Report

A report on the experiences of parents with kids that wear glasses and patch.

At the beginning of 2020 Kids Eye Gear surveyed 450 Australian parents of children with vision issues. These are kids that wear prescription glasses, contact lenses or patch for a variety of medical reasons. The goal was to provide some useful insights into the world of kids that wear glasses and have to patch.



## BACKGROUND

In Australia, there are more than 400,000 children with long-term eye disorders.

These can include

- Myopia (short sightedness)
- Hyperopia (long sightedness)
- Astigmatism
- Cataract
- Glaucoma, and
- Blindness.<sup>1</sup>

But it is estimated that 1 in 5 children has an undetected vision problem.<sup>2</sup> This is important to know because it's not always obvious that a child cannot see properly. According to Optometry Australia, babies and younger children will learn more about the world from vision than from all their other senses combined.

**“It is estimated that 1 in 5 children has an undetected vision problem.”**

For this reason, early and regular vision tests for kids are absolutely imperative. With good vision, kids will have the greatest opportunity to develop physical, social and educational skills.

Here at Kids Eye Gear we hope to contribute to education about vision screening and eye testing for children, as well as long term eye safety and health.

**Children's vision is precious.**



# CHILDREN'S GLASSES



## PRESCRIBING CHILDREN'S GLASSES

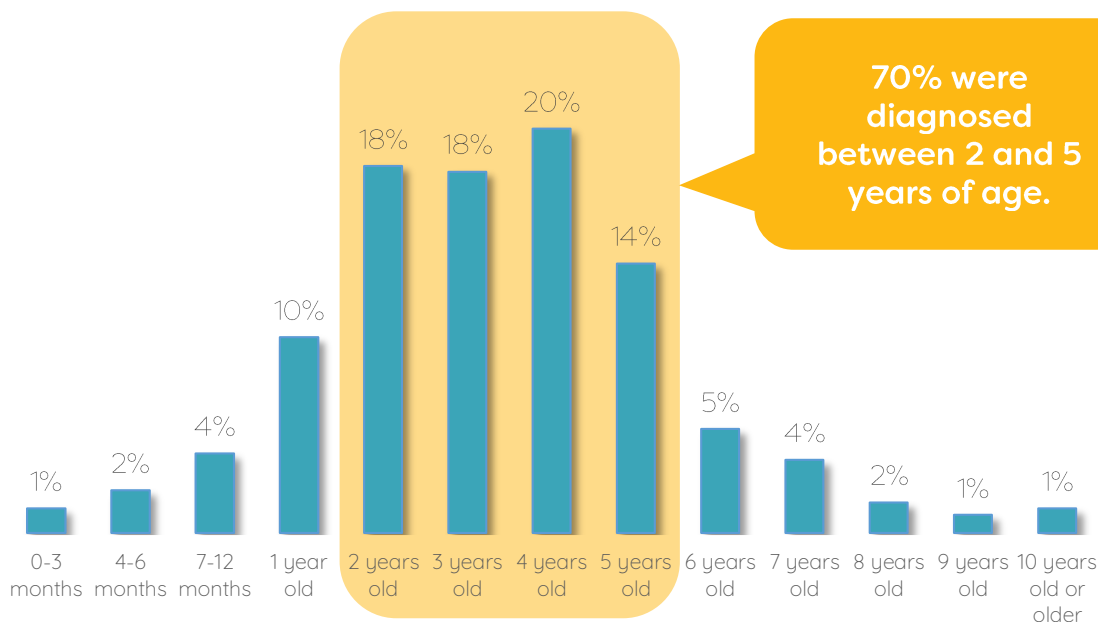
The majority of parents surveyed had children who wore prescription glasses (81%), while 10% wore contact lenses. It is possible that children can wear both glasses and contact lenses, although not the majority.

Children had typically been prescribed glasses between the ages of 1-5 years. National research indicates that less than 5% of children in this age bracket wear glasses, suggesting that respondents came from a very niche group.



Given respondents' children had been diagnosed at such an early age, this indicates that they had more serious eye conditions.

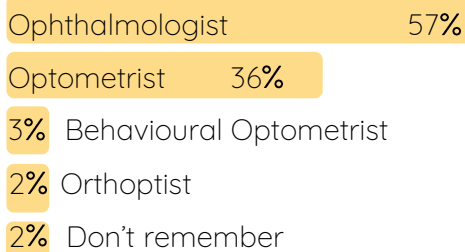
### AGE CHILDREN PRESCRIBED GLASSES



### Incidence rate of children wearing glasses<sup>1</sup>

|             |                                      |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 0-4 years   | Anecdotally reported at less than 5% |
| 5-9 years   | 6.9%                                 |
| 10-14 years | 15.7% (girls 18.3% boys 13.2%)       |

Diagnosis largely comes from ophthalmologists (57%) and optometrists (36%).



## PARENTS' REACTIONS TO THE DIAGNOSIS



As a parent, we all want our babies to be healthy and problem-free. However, life is rarely that simple. No matter what issues our child might be faced with, being told there's something not quite right with our child can be confronting.

Noticing that your child has a vision problem is not always easy. Kids don't know that what they see isn't 'normal'. They learn to adapt with the sight they have and parents can be completely unaware that there is an underlying issue.

So for many parents, it's a surprise and even a shock when their young child is diagnosed with an eye condition.

I was shocked because my son didn't show any sign that he couldn't see. But he's almost blind in one eye.

I was surprised, but glad we had some sort of answer for some focus and concentration problems that had been flagged.

We weren't surprised to learn that our daughter needed glasses, as we had noticed her left eye starting to turn inwards intermittently. What we weren't expecting though was to be referred to a Paediatric Ophthalmologist straight away.

I was quite shocked & upset to hear the news, she was so little at the time and although it wasn't "life threatening" it simply was glasses + patching I remember feeling heartbroken at the time.

I was shocked because I didn't realise how bad my son's eyesight was. They explained the condition to me but I felt like the worst mother in the world that I hadn't picked it up myself and it was noticed in a kindy health check.

Initially I was told she needed to patch for 6mths before glasses. I remember sitting a McDonald's playground being gutted I didn't realise she needed help before that.

Extremely shocked as there was no obvious indications of short sightedness - let alone a prescription of +7.5 in one eye!

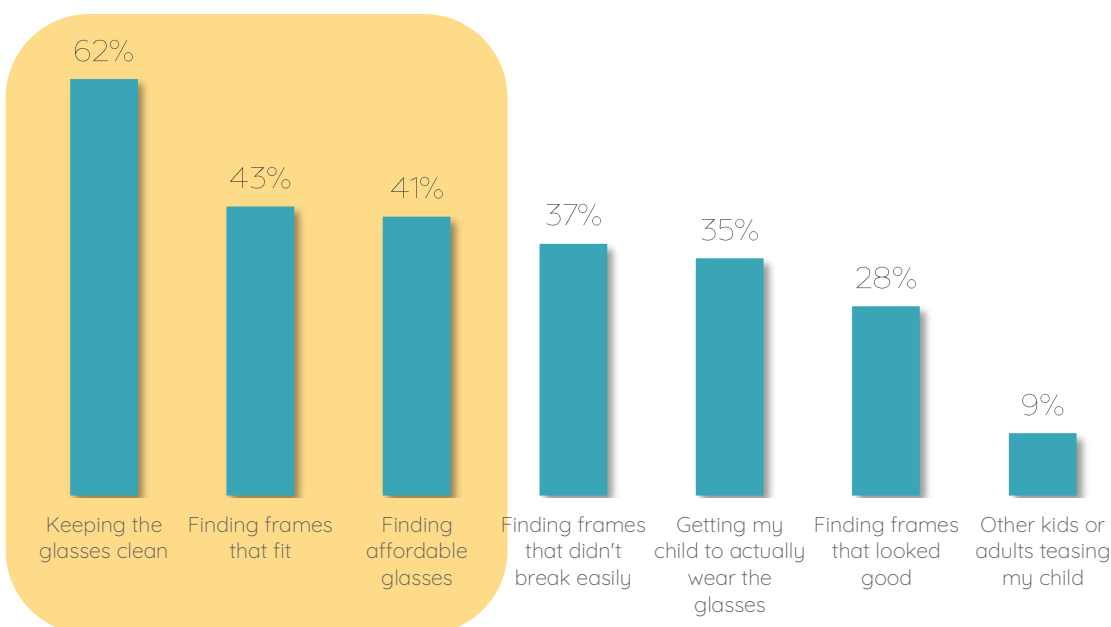
I was actually very sad and emotional. Think I came home and cried!

## CHALLENGES WITH WEARING GLASSES

Any parent with a young child in glasses will tell you it's not always easy. Young kids are not necessarily compliant with wearing their glasses and may not know how to look after them properly. In fact, the parents surveyed said that the greatest challenge they have is keeping their child's glasses clean.

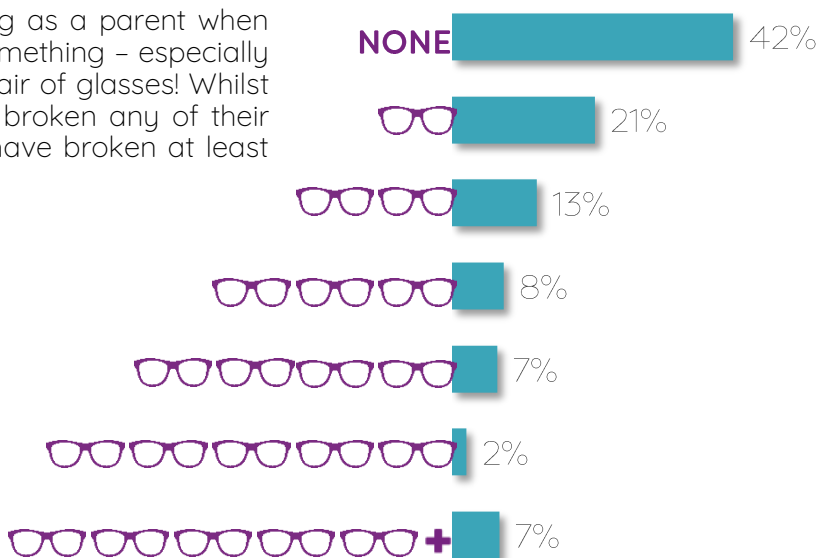


### CHALLENGES WITH KIDS WEARING GLASSES



### HOW MANY PAIRS OF GLASSES BROKEN

It's always frustrating as a parent when your child breaks something – especially if it's an expensive pair of glasses! Whilst 42% of kids haven't broken any of their glasses (yet!), 58% have broken at least one pair.





## CHILDREN'S PATCHING



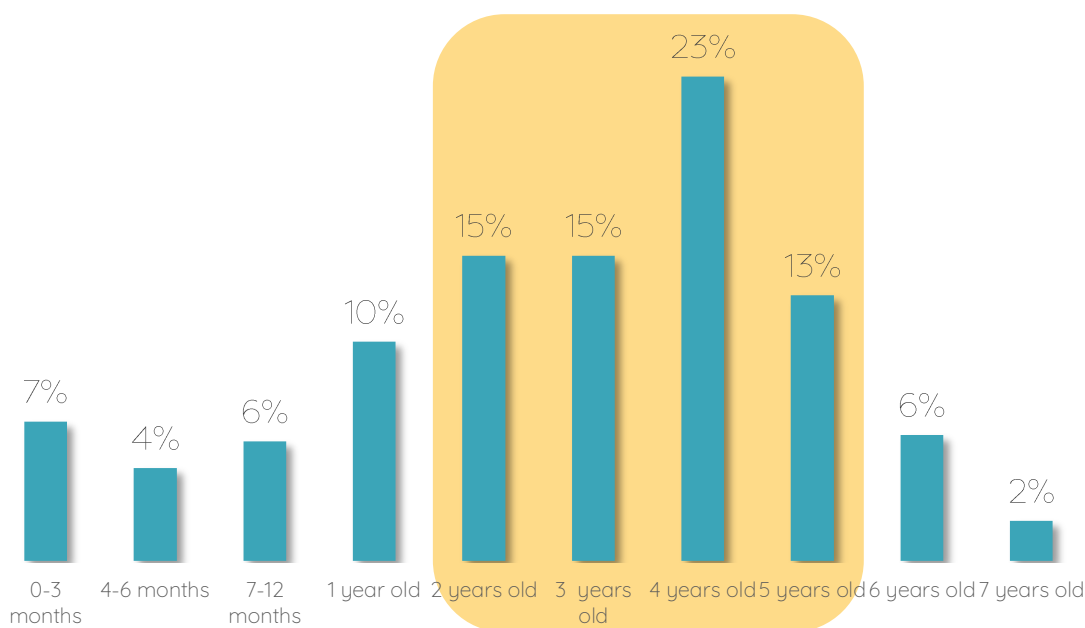


## PRESCRIBING PATCHING

82% of the parents surveyed had children that currently or had previously patched. Almost one in four children had been prescribed patching at the age of four – with just over half (53%) having been prescribed between the ages of two and five. When it came to those that had patched in the past, the majority had to do so for at least one year.



### AGE CHILDREN PRESCRIBED PATCHING



Diagnosis largely comes from ophthalmologists (80%) and optometrists (15%).

Ophthalmologist 80%

Optometrist 15%

7% Orthoptist

3% Behavioural Optometrist

2% Don't remember

### REASONS FOR PATCHING

Amblyopia 60%

Strabismus 16%

Congenital cataract% 15%

Other 7%

Injury/trauma 1%

Astigmatism 1%

## PARENTS' REACTIONS TO THE PRESCRIPTION



Any patching parent will tell you that patching your child is typically not great fun. Many people are not even aware that patching a child's eye is a common therapy to improve their vision, so it may not even be on their radar of possibilities when they attend an appointment.

For these parents, it's a mix of shock and surprise when their child is prescribed patching.

However, there are also parents who have had eye conditions themselves who are prepared for similar therapies to be prescribed to their children.

All was explained but we were in absolute shock and everything happened too fast. We had no idea she had any issues and it was bad.

My child was excited because another child in her class was patching so I was relieved she wasn't upset.

I was surprised, shocked because I just wasn't expecting to be told just how bad her vision/eye turn was. But at the same time I felt accepting and felt that we'd just get on with it and hope that it would allow her to avoid possible surgery.

Yes I was really upset that my little boy has to go through this. He is a very healthy boy and no complications but he has weak eye but I am sure we are doing right thing for him.

Yes I was shocked and upset but I had the chance to improve his long term vision by patching. Of course I'm going to make sure he patches even though it's stressful. Long term it will make the difference to his life.

I wasn't surprised but I was a bit sad. I knew it wouldn't be something she would want to do. But I was happy it was only for a short time per day.

Shocked, confused, worried and overwhelmed, more so about the news of having a cataract at 18months.

Being told to patch a 3 month old baby was a bit confronting, but we quickly fell into the swing of things.

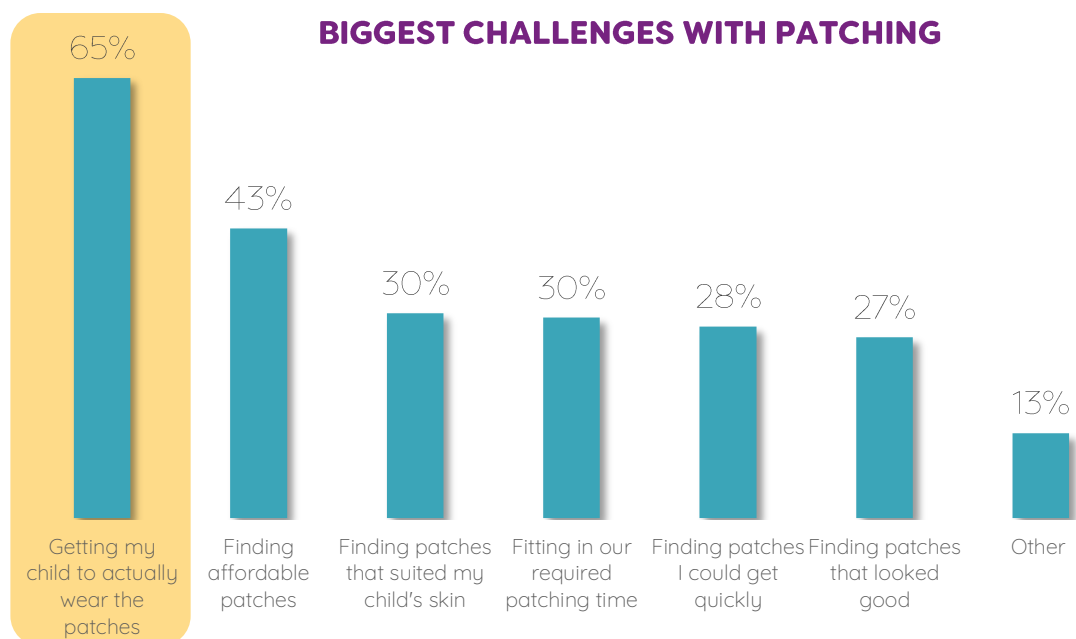
## CHALLENGES WITH PATCHING

For all patching parents, the challenge of getting a child to wear an eye patch for hours each day is very real. It's just not fun!

Some kids are quite compliant – but will have their off days – while some kids just won't tolerate it at all. In fact, 58% of patching parents say that it is stressful having to patch their child.

Patching parents surveyed said that the greatest challenge they have is getting their child to actually wear the patch.

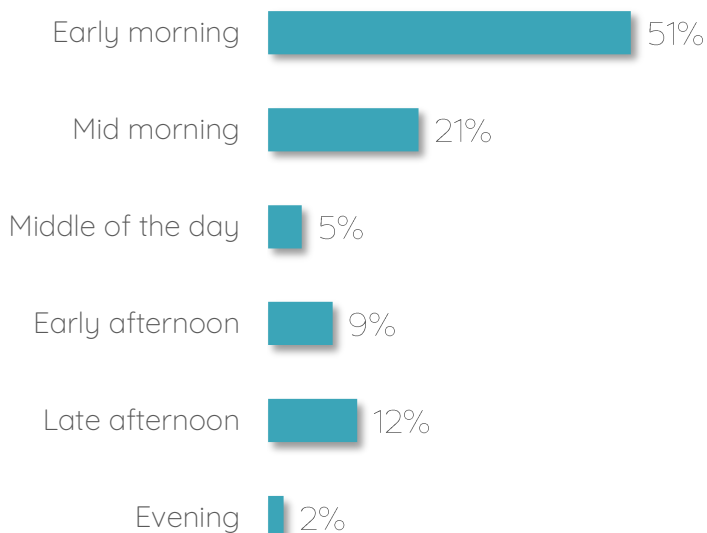
Almost one in three parents said that fitting in their required patching time was a challenge. With our kids' busy lives these days, this is no surprise.



### BEST TIME TO PATCH

Parents will find a patching routine that suits their family but for half of patching families, the early morning is the best time to patch.

Given that most parents (72%) are advised to do one long block of patching rather than multiple short stints, it makes sense that getting it done straight up would work best for most young kids.





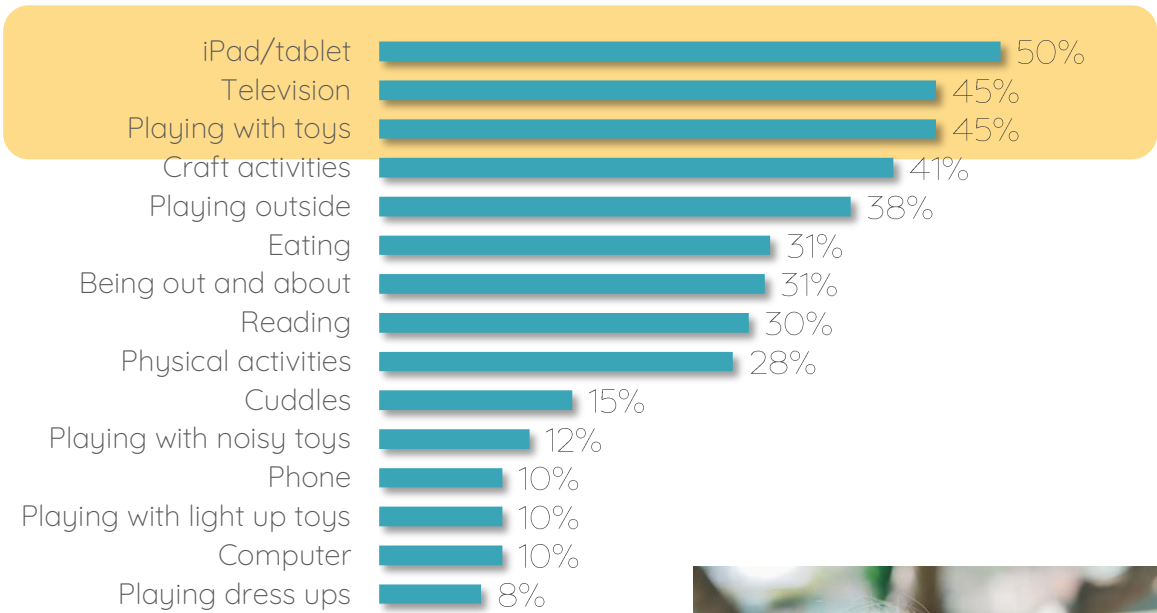
**ACTIVITIES WHILE PATCHING**



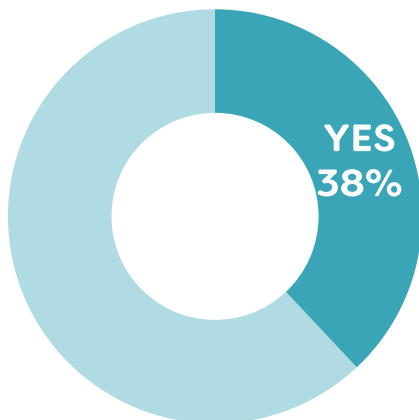
Distraction can be a key way to get kids to comply with patching therapy. Every parent will find what works best for their child. Additionally, it's important to encourage activities that require kids to do close-up work whilst patched.

Tablet devices are extremely popular for patching kids – with half of patching parents saying devices keep them most engaged while patching.

**ACTIVITIES THAT KEEP KIDS ENGAGED WHILE PATCHING**



**USE APPS WHILE PATCHING**



38% of patchers will use apps on a device while patching. Popular choices include ABC for Kids, Youtube, and Reading Eggs.

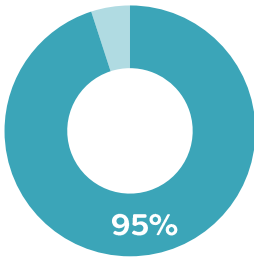


## PARENTS' THOUGHTS ON PATCHING

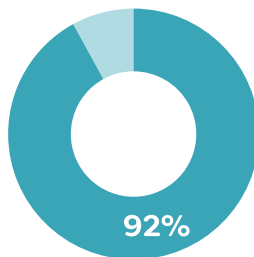


Patching parents seem to take a very pragmatic view of the task, with 95% saying that patching is just something that has to be done so they just get on with it. The majority also say they are very vigilant with patching because they know it will improve their child's vision.

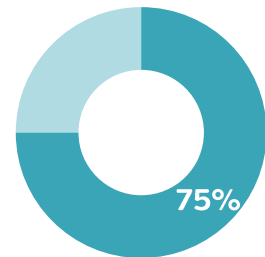
When it comes to whether parents are happy to patch in public, 75% are happy to do so.



Patching is just something that has to be done so we just get on with it.

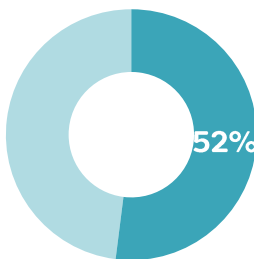


I am vigilant with patching my child because I know it will improve their vision.

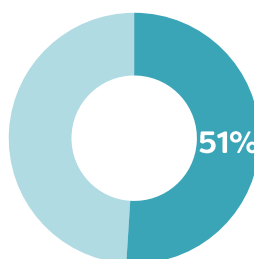


I am happy to take my child out in public when they're patching.

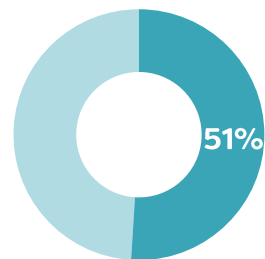
## KIDS' THOUGHTS ON PATCHING



My child doesn't mind about being patched and just gets on with it.



My child is happy to be out in public when they're patching.



My child hates patching.

It appears to be split on whether kids hate patching – with half of parents saying their kids hate it while the other half say their kids don't mind being patched.

Additionally, half of patching kids are pretty happy to be patched while out in public. This seems to be related to age though with younger kids more comfortable patching in public than older kids are.





“

They deserve to see ALL the beauty the world has to offer in all its splendour.

”





## LOOKING AHEAD

There's no doubt that as parents we want to do the best for our children. Vision is such an important part of a child's development so ensuring all kids have vision screenings and tests from an early age is imperative for their success. So many eye conditions can be improved if they're treated early enough.

This report covered parents' experiences with their children being prescribed glasses and/or patching and how that impacted on their families. It is hoped that future studies will address broader vision issues in the community to assist in greater education and outcomes.



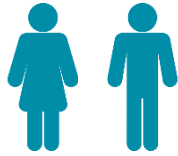




## METHODOLOGY



N=450



96%

4%



2-15 March  
2020



Online

This report was compiled from research conducted with 450 Australian parents in March 2020. The aim of the research was to understand how children are being diagnosed with vision conditions and how this has impacted on their families.

It's important to note that the respondents to this survey were largely part of a community of children with high care vision problems. For this reason, they were diagnosed at an earlier age with their condition.

The survey was live from 2-15 March 2020. The survey was conducted online. Participants were invited to complete the survey via email and social media links (pages and groups).

Respondents completed the survey online and were incentivised by being placed in a game of skill competition to win prizes.

In excess of 600 people completed the survey. All respondents had children with a vision issue. The results for this survey have been filtered by Australian residents only.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nicola Rivett founded Kids Eye Gear in 2013 after experiencing first hand a child with a rare eye condition.

In addition to running Kids Eye Gear, Nicola still works as a Senior Research Analyst for one of Australia's largest media companies. She has in excess of 10 years experience conducting research projects for hundreds of clients in a vast range of industries.

Her enthusiasm for research and desire to better understand other parents' journeys with their kids' eye conditions drove her to conduct this research project and create the first Little Aussie Eyes Report.



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