



# Little Aussie Eyes Report | 2021 |

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# Little Aussies Eyes Report

A report on kids' vision.

In 2020 Kids Eye Gear surveyed 450 Australian parents of children with vision issues. These were 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.

In 2021, the Little Aussie Eyes Report was extended to survey 860 Australian parents in order to gain a broader understanding of kids' vision in the community. The purpose of this was to ascertain attitudes towards vision testing, identify any blockages that parents had when it came to vision testing for their children, and revisit some behaviours when it came to kids wearing glasses and patching.

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

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.



## 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>

More importantly, it is estimated that 1 in 5 children has an undetected vision problem.<sup>2</sup>

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.

**Children's vision is precious.**

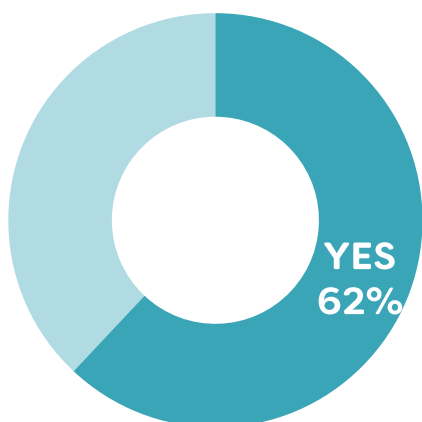


CHILDREN'S VISION TESTING



## INITIAL VISION TESTING

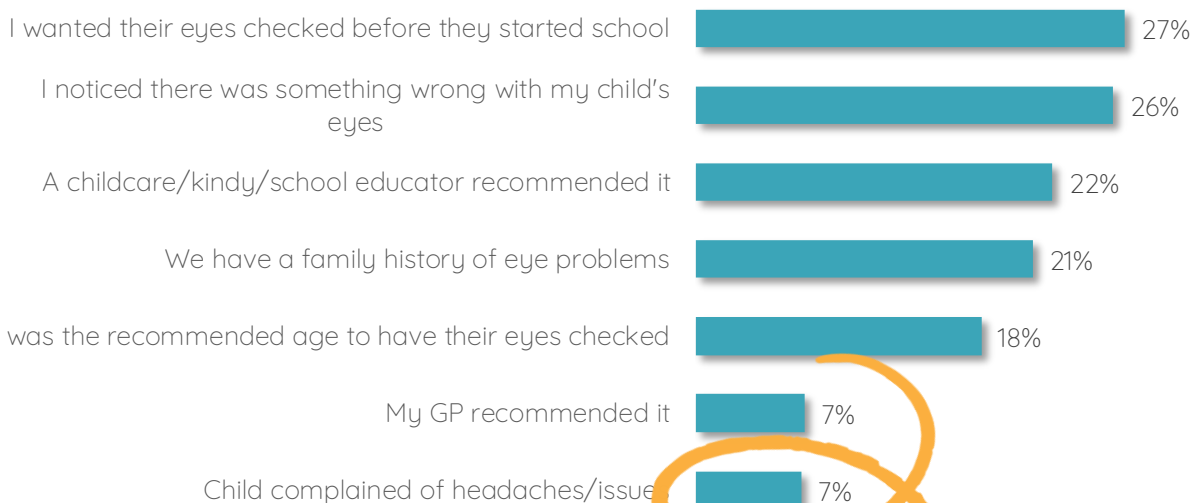
### HAVE VISITED AN OPTOMETRIST



Fewer than 2 in 3 parents (62%) indicated that they had taken their child to see an optometrist. Whilst 1 in 4 said the trigger for the visit was noticing something wrong with their child's eyes – 1 in 4 also said they wanted their child's eyes checked before starting school. This is interesting because the recommended age for an initial vision examination is 6 months of age according to ACBO,<sup>1</sup> and prior to starting school according to Optometry Australia<sup>2</sup>, yet only 18% said this was the reason for the first visit. This suggests that there remains a shortfall in awareness of the need to have a child's eyes tested from as early as 6 months of age.

Interesting to note was that more than 1 in 5 children (27%) did not have their first visit to the optometrist until the age of at least 10 – with more than 1 in 10 older than 12 years of age.

### REASONS FOR INITIAL VISIT TO OPTOMETRIST

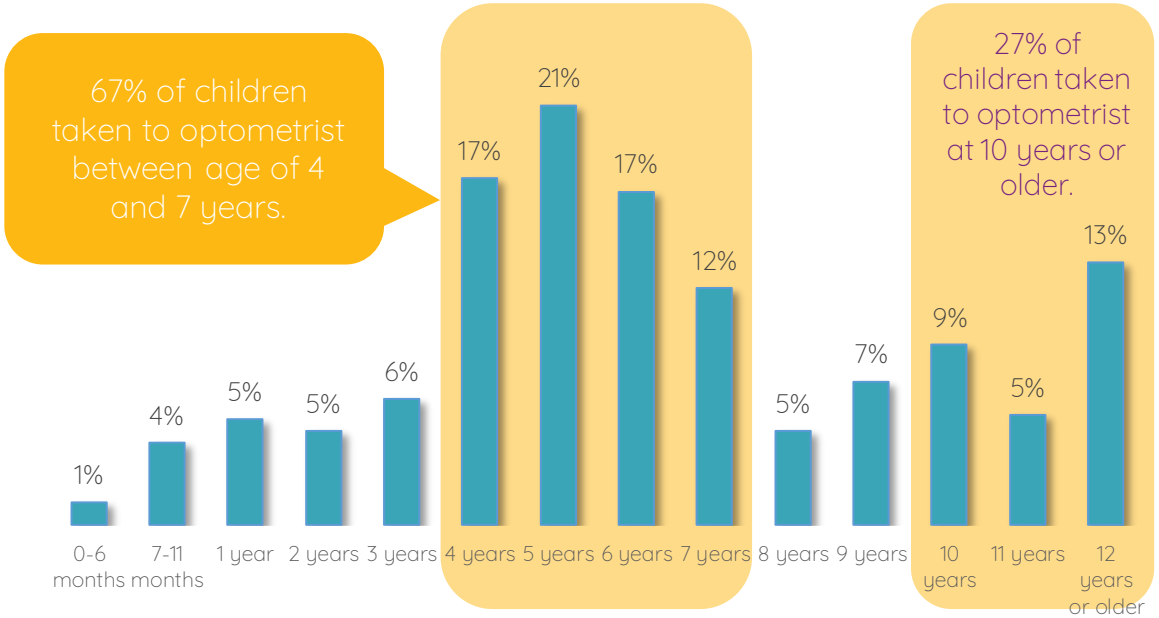


Of interest here is that a child complaining about headaches or other issues was an instigator for an optometrist visit for only 7% of respondents.

The 2020 Little Aussie Eyes Report showed that many parents were shocked that their child had a vision problem, indicating that children may not always be aware that they are having trouble seeing properly.

## INITIAL VISION TESTING

### AGE CHILDREN FIRST TAKEN TO OPTOMETRIST

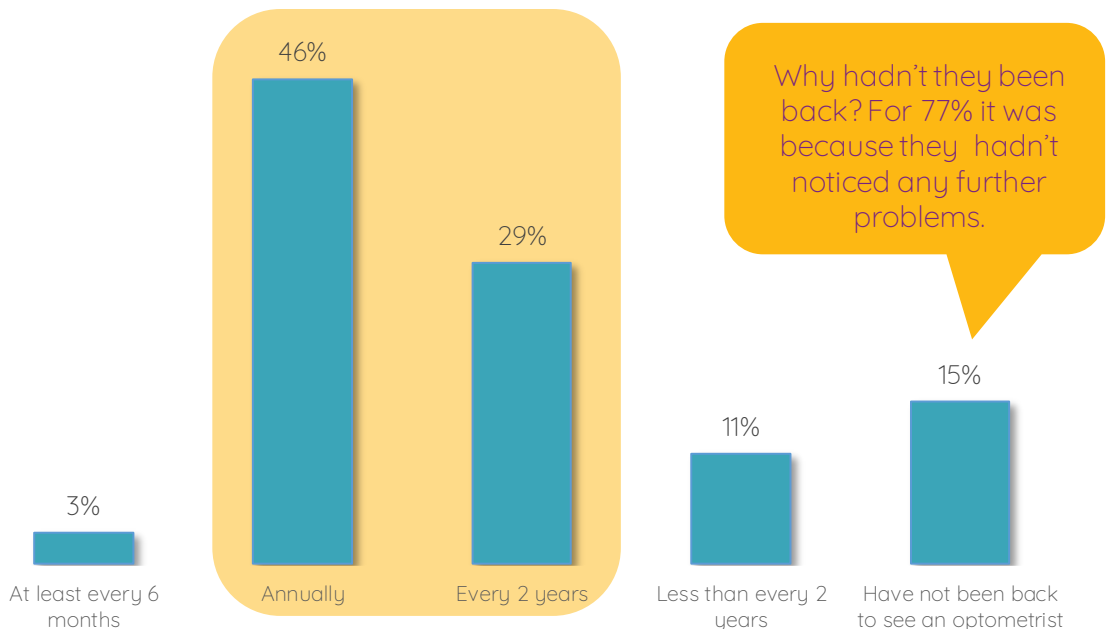


We can see here that school is a significant trigger for an initial visit to an optometrist. 67% of children were first taken between the ages of 4 and 7 years of age.

However, what is disappointing to see is that more than 1 in 4 children did not have their first visit to the optometrist until at least the age of 10 years – with more than 1 in 10 older than 12 years of age.

## SUBSEQUENT VISION TESTING

### REGULARITY OF OPTOMETRIST VISIT

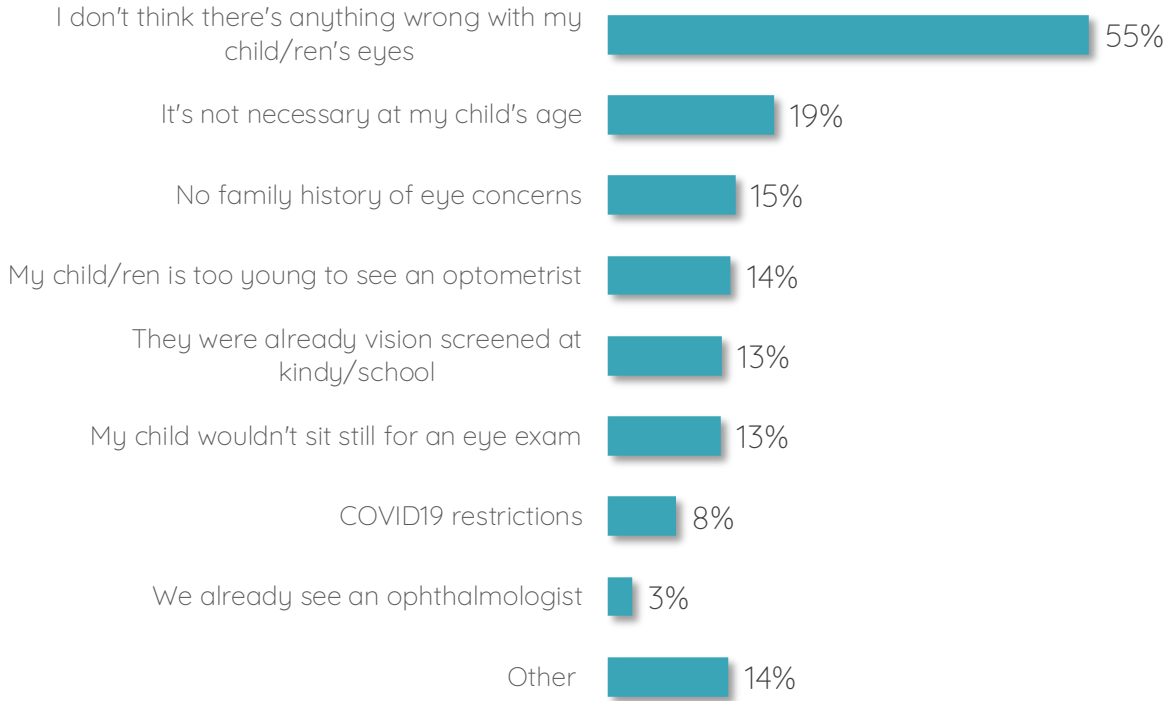


NOTE: Respondents could select multiple responses to represent multiple children



# OBJECTIONS TO VISION TESTING

## WHY NOT TAKEN TO OPTOMETRIST



More than half of parents said they have never taken their child to an optometrist because they don't think there's anything wrong with their eyes. This is cause for concern because children may exhibit no symptoms or signs of a vision problem. It is not until they are examined by a professional that any issues can be ruled out.



NOTE: Respondents could select multiple responses to represent multiple children

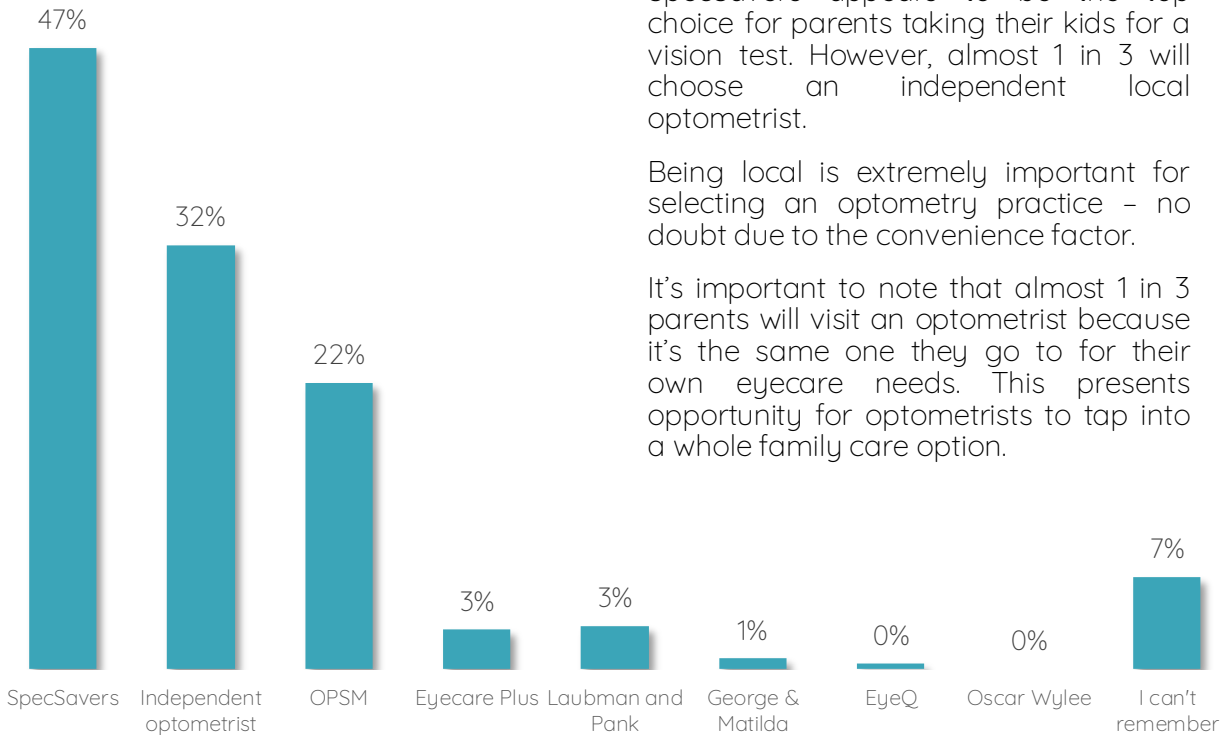
CHILDREN'S OPTOMETRY SERVICES





## OPTOMETRY SERVICES

### OPTOMETRY PRACTICE ATTENDED

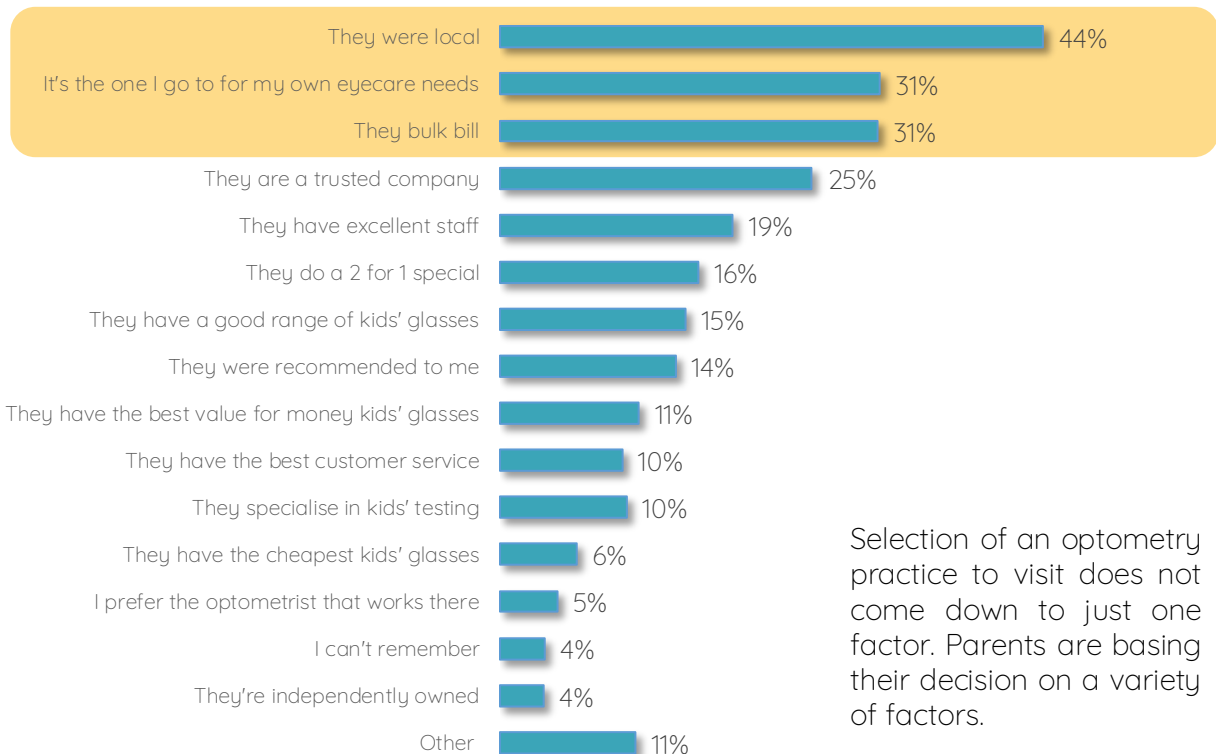


SpecSavers appears to be the top choice for parents taking their kids for a vision test. However, almost 1 in 3 will choose an independent local optometrist.

Being local is extremely important for selecting an optometry practice – no doubt due to the convenience factor.

It's important to note that almost 1 in 3 parents will visit an optometrist because it's the same one they go to for their own eyecare needs. This presents opportunity for optometrists to tap into a whole family care option.

### WHY CHOOSE PARTICULAR OPTOMETRY PRACTICE



Selection of an optometry practice to visit does not come down to just one factor. Parents are basing their decision on a variety of factors.

CHILDREN'S GLASSES INCIDENCE & PRESCRIPTION



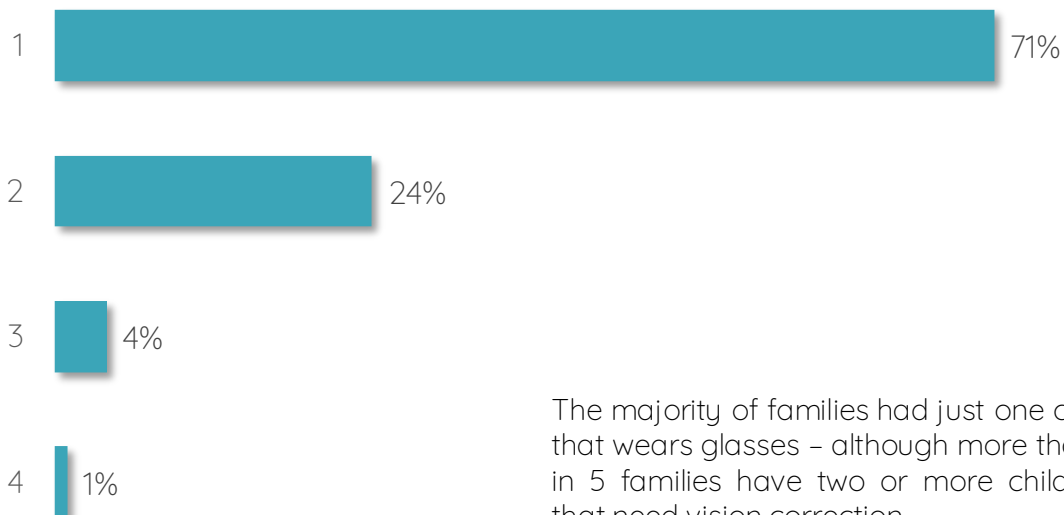
## INCIDENCE RATE OF PRESCRIPTION GLASSES

34% of parents indicated that they had one or more children that wear prescription glasses. This is on par with Optometry Australia's 2020 Vision Index Report, which indicated of those children that had visited an optometrist, 35% required prescription lenses.<sup>1</sup>



**34%**  
had one or more  
children  
that wears  
prescription glasses.

### HOW MANY OF THEIR KIDS WEAR GLASSES



The majority of families had just one child that wears glasses – although more than 1 in 5 families have two or more children that need vision correction.





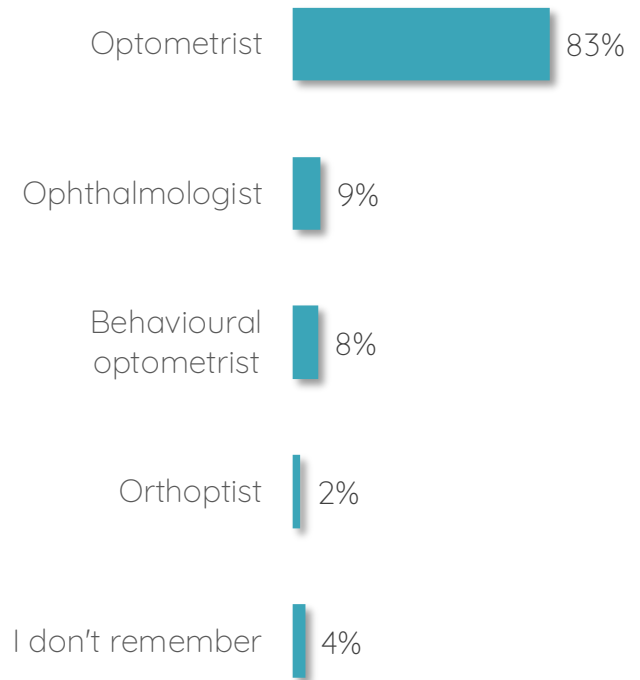
## GLASSES PRESCRIPTIONS – OVERALL

When it came to who prescribed the child glasses, this was largely optometrists. However, for those children with more serious eye conditions, an ophthalmologist prescribed in 63% of cases.

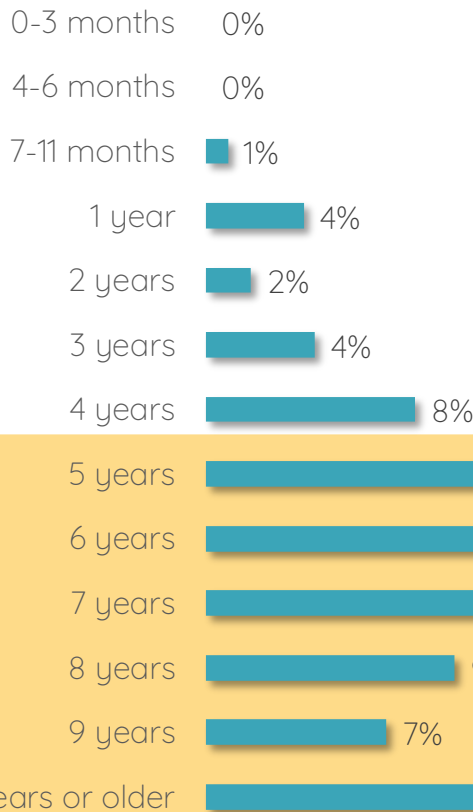
Prescription of glasses unsurprisingly coincides with the ages children were first taken to the optometrist. Most prescriptions were made between 5 and 7 years – with more than 1 in 4 (28%) being diagnosed at 10 years or older.

Children with more serious eye conditions were diagnosed at an earlier age – 91% were diagnosed between 1 and 5 years of age. These are children that have issues such as amblyopia, strabismus, cataracts and myopia, hyperopia and astigmatism.

### WHO PRESCRIBED GLASSES



### AGE PRESCRIBED GLASSES

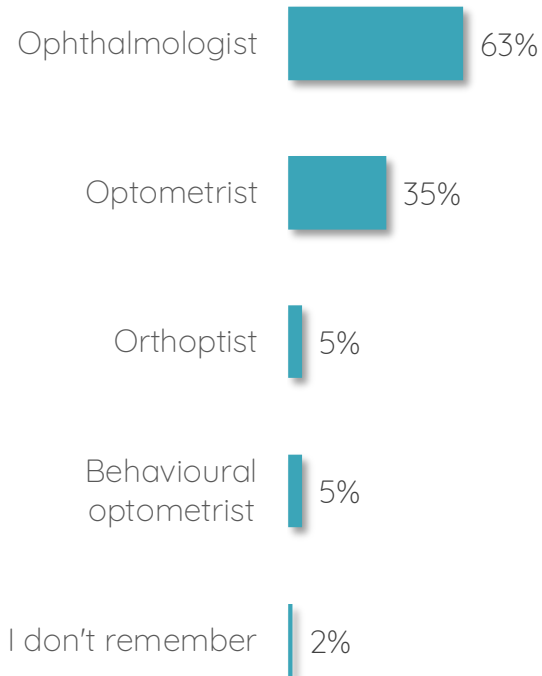


NOTE: Respondents could select multiple responses to represent multiple children

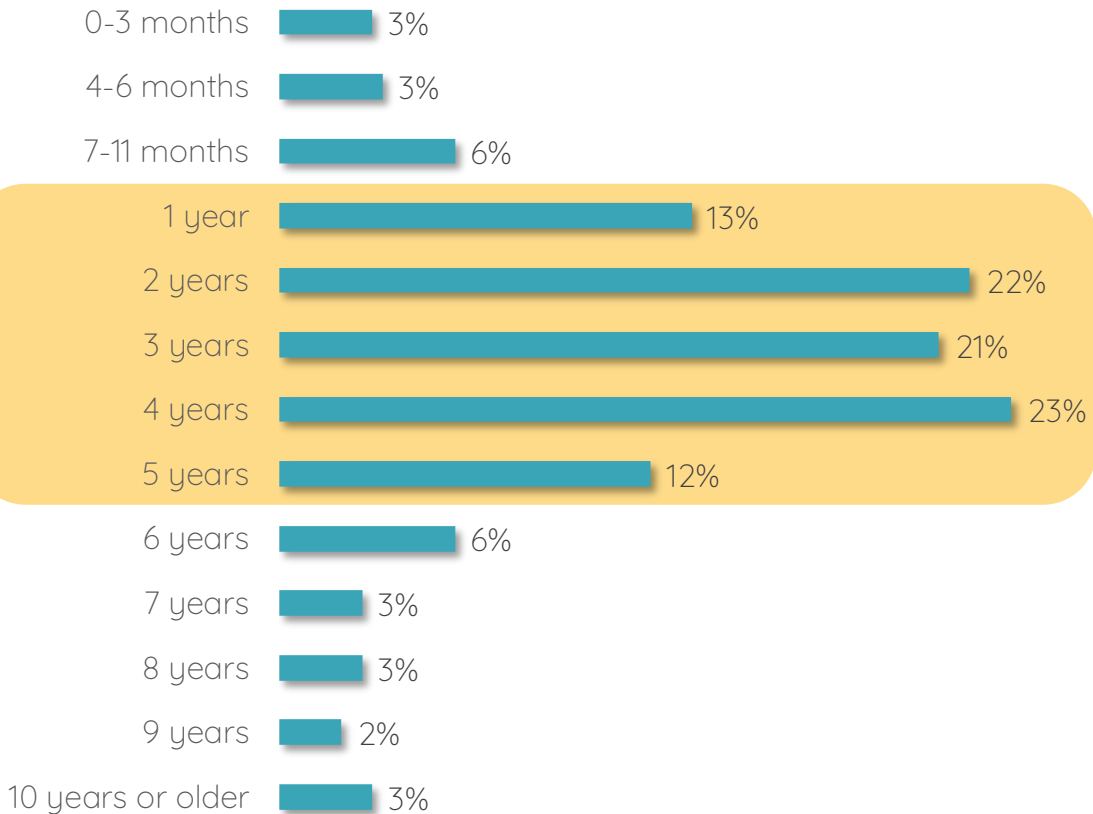
# GLASSES PRESCRIPTIONS – SERIOUS EYE CONDITIONS



## WHO PRESCRIBED GLASSES - KIDS WITH MORE SERIOUS EYE CONDITIONS



## AGE PRESCRIBED GLASSES - KIDS WITH MORE SERIOUS EYE CONDITIONS



CHILDREN'S GLASSES PURCHASING





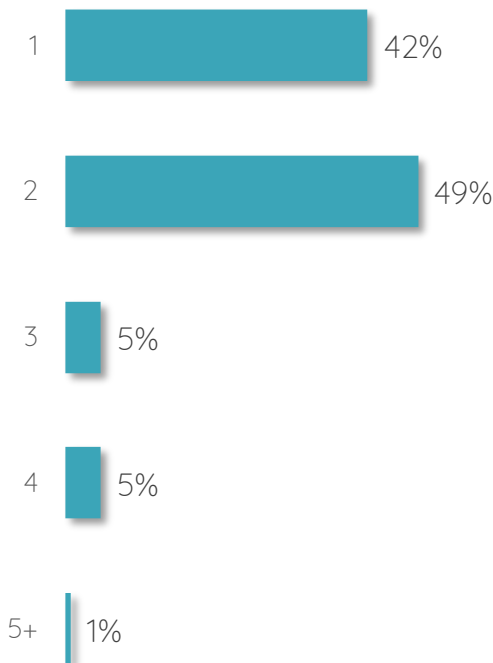
## PURCHASING KIDS' GLASSES



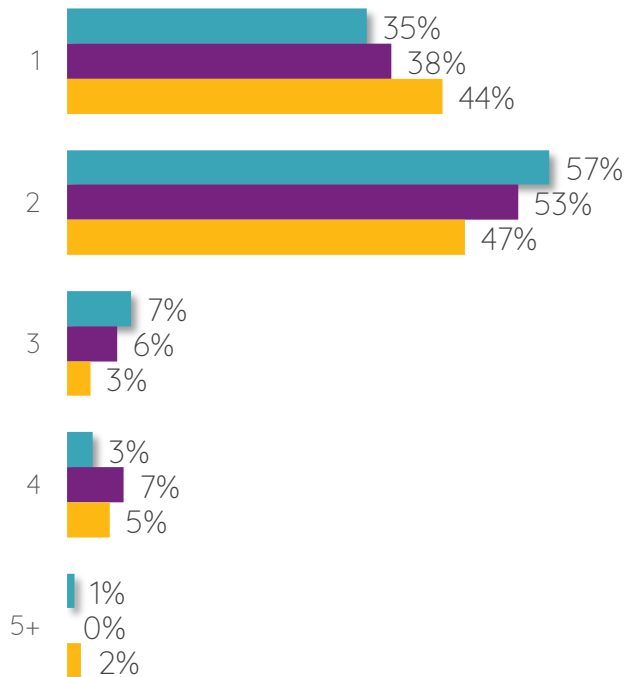
More than half of kids that wear glasses will have 2 or more pairs in their current prescription – suggesting the ‘back up pair’ is quite prevalent.

0-9 year-olds are more likely than the other age groups to have 2 or more pairs. The 13-17 year-olds are more likely than other ages to have just the one pair – perhaps they are less likely to break or lose their glasses by this age.

### HOW MANY PAIRS IN CURRENT PRESCRIPTION



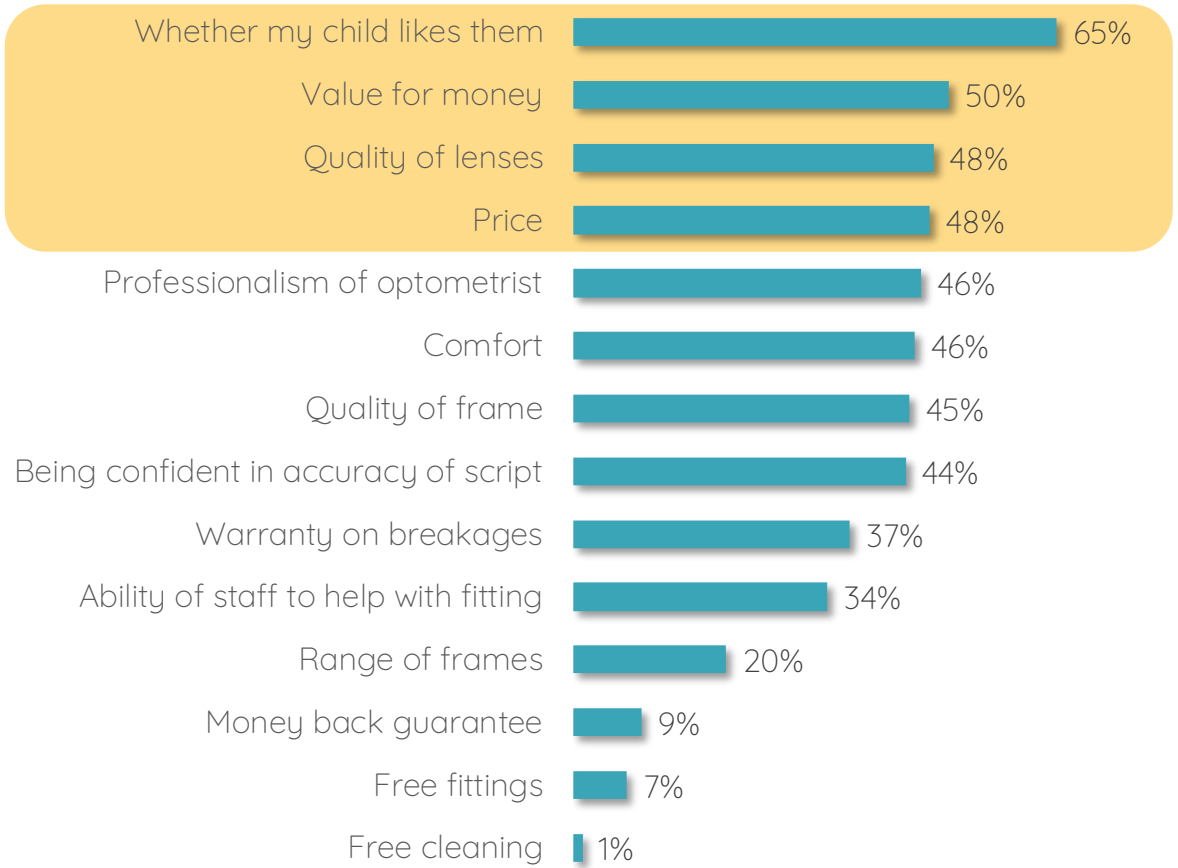
### HOW MANY PAIRS IN CURRENT PRESCRIPTION



■ 0-9years ■ 10-12years ■ 13-17years

**PURCHASE CONSIDERATIONS**

**GLASSES PURCHASING  
TOP CONSIDERATIONS  
(OVERALL)**

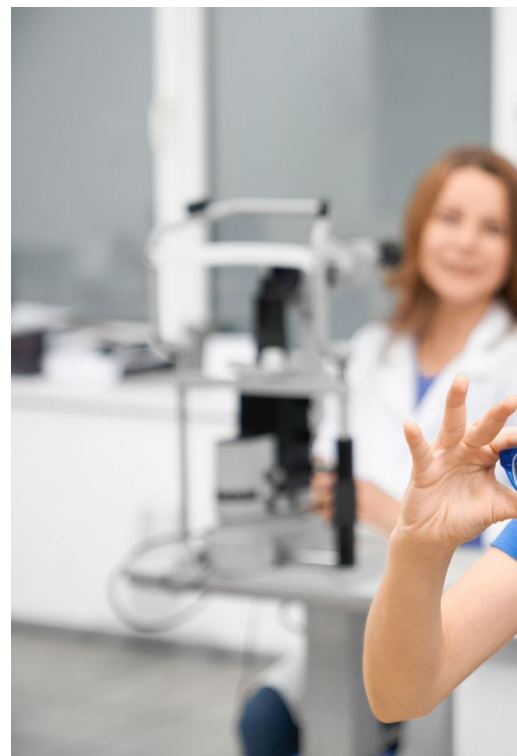


Respondents were asked to rank their top 5 considerations when it came to purchasing kids' glasses. This graph shows the combined 1-5 score in order of highest to lowest score.

**GLASSES PURCHASING  
TOP CONSIDERATIONS  
(NUMBER 1 REASON)**



Respondents were asked to rank their top 5 considerations when it came to purchasing kids' glasses. This graph shows the highest three scores for the number 1 ranked consideration.



## PURCHASE CONSIDERATIONS

Many factors are taken into consideration when purchasing glasses for children. Just like a lot of consumer products, a decision is not made on just one factor. For the most part though, a decision on glasses will come down to whether or not the child likes the glasses, value for money, quality of the lenses and price.

Parents of children with more serious eye issues are also concerned with whether their children like the glasses – but comfort, quality of frame and being confident in the accuracy of the script are more important when comparing them with general parents.

The consideration selected as the most important, is the professionalism of the optometrist. Parents need to know and be assured that their eyecare professional is providing the correct treatment and prescription – and also that the script is correct when they collect the glasses.

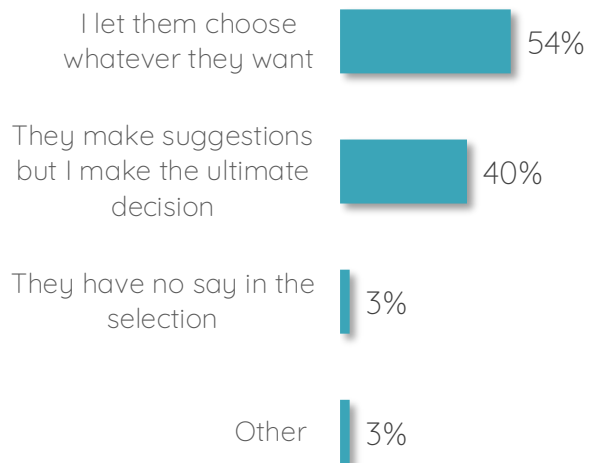
Price and value for money are always key considerations for purchases, no matter the category.



## PURCHASE INFLUENCES



### HOW INVOLVED ARE KIDS IN CHOOSING THEIR GLASSES



Children appear to have considerable input into the choice of glasses that are purchased. More than half of parents said that they let their child choose whatever glasses they want.

Interestingly this is actually stronger for the 0-9 year-old age group – where 61% of parents will let the child make the decision. It's possible this is due to the parents wanting to do all they can to encourage compliance. When it comes to 13-17 year-olds, 49% of children are making the decision, while 46% allow the child to make suggestions but the ultimate decision being made by the parent. It's possible this comes down to pricing.



## PURCHASE LOCATIONS



86% of parents will purchase their child's glasses from the same optometrist that performed the vision test. Largely this is due to convenience and good deals.

Those that have more serious eye conditions are more likely to purchase their glasses elsewhere. In fact, only 45% of parents of children with more serious eye conditions purchased their child's glasses from the same practitioner they saw for testing. This is primarily because many see an ophthalmologist, who wouldn't typically sell glasses.

Easier in my area with only one optometrist within an hour drive

I didn't know I didn't have to

They did the eye test so it was easier to just order through them

Because we know and trust them and have developed a relationship with them

**86%**  
**PURCHASE FROM  
SAME OPTOMETRIST  
THEY HAD VISION  
CHECK WITH**

Because it was easier and they offered an excellent deal

Just easier to do all at one place

Much easier to deal with one place oppose to two different places for all the kids

Because they offer great customer service, and they know us all by name. small business

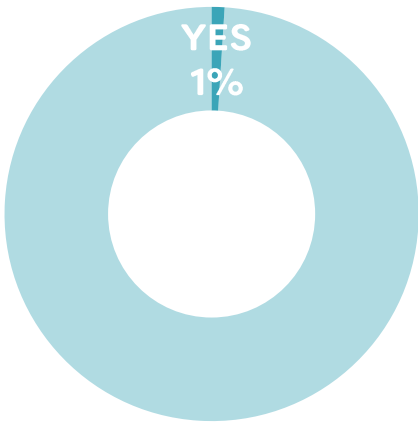
So they have family history as well as their last prescription on file

Because they had a two for one deal

As it was convenient to have the eye test and select glasses at same time

# PURCHASING GLASSES ONLINE

## PURCHASED GLASSES ONLINE



Online purchasing of kids' glasses appears to be in its infancy, with only 1% of parents saying they had purchased their child's glasses online. However, those with more serious eye conditions were more likely to have done so. In fact, 10% of those respondents had purchased online. This may be impacted by the fact that they are sent off with a script from their ophthalmologist, their prescriptions are pricier so they're looking for good deals, or they are looking for specific frames, particularly for younger children.

When it comes to consideration of online purchasing, just over 1 in 10 (11%) parents said they would consider purchasing in this way. Those with more serious eye conditions are much more likely to consider purchasing online (23%). This came down to better pricing and a wider range of frames to choose from.

## WHY DID PEOPLE PURCHASE ONLINE

Cost is lower and more range

I bought my child's second pair of glasses from USA as they had a simple styles than what was available locally at the time. More recently I've bought them locally

We bought a cheaper backup pair just in case the main pair were out of service

Couldn't find any good looking frame for my daughter

At the time, cheaper option. child was going through 7-10 pairs of glasses a year

## 11% WOULD CONSIDER PURCHASING ONLINE

- Cheaper pricing
- Better range
- Convenience
- Good option for spare pair

*Why?*

## 67% WOULD NOT CONSIDER PURCHASING ONLINE

- Can't get correct fit
- Need to try them on
- Couldn't get adjusted
- Would be unsure what to get

*Why?*

## 24% MIGHT CONSIDER PURCHASING ONLINE

- Concerns about quality & fit
- Would need recommendations
- Unsure how to order correct prescription

*Why?*





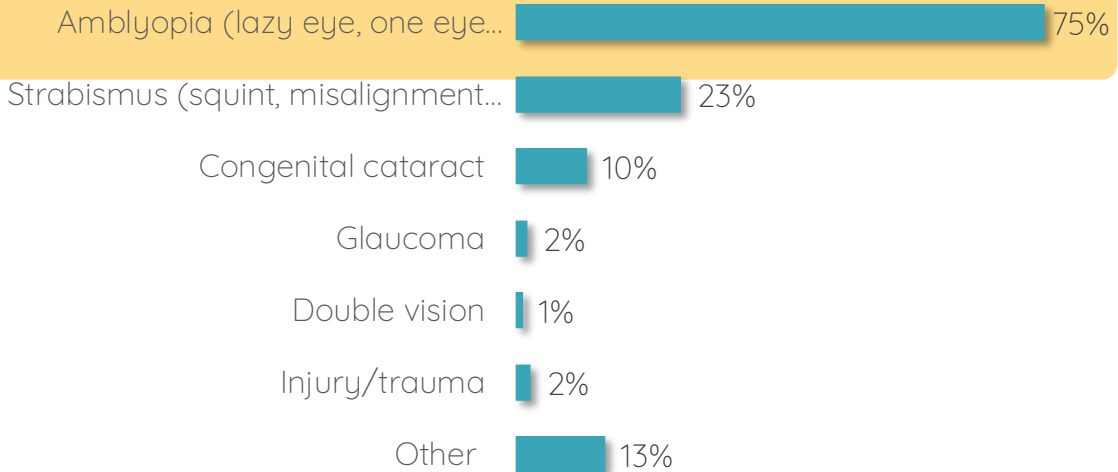
## WHY KIDS PATCH



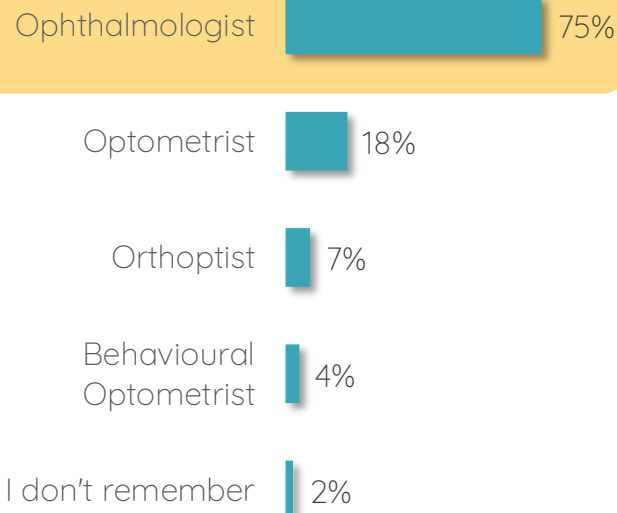
The most common reason for childhood patching is Amblyopia. For those children who patch, Amblyopia is the diagnosis for 75%.

Patching is largely prescribed by ophthalmologists, although just under 1 in 5 parents (18%) said that an optometrist had prescribed their child's patching.

### REASON FOR PATCHING



### WHO PRESCRIBED PATCHING

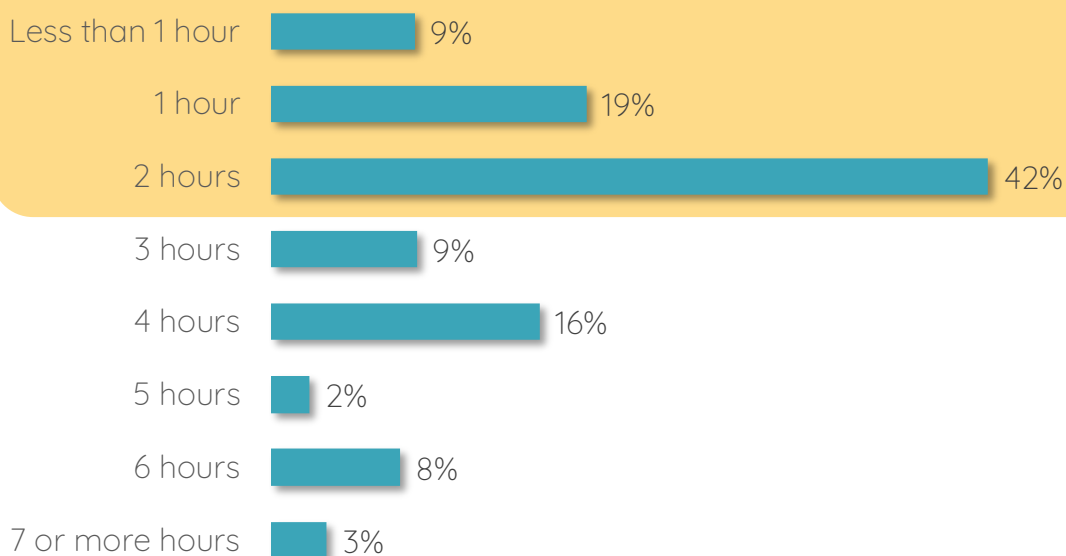


## PATCHING TIME

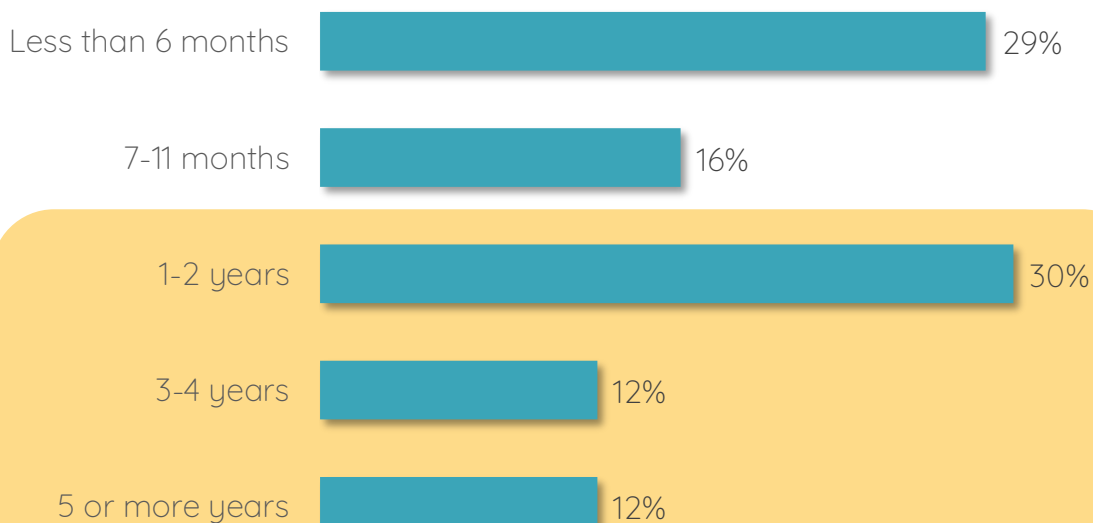
There is no standard amount of time that patching is prescribed for. The majority of patchers will spend up to 2 hours per day wearing their patch.

Over 1 in 4 kids will patch for less than 6 months – whilst the majority will patch for a few years. This is largely impacted by the child's condition and whether patching is having an impact.

### HOW MANY HOURS CHILDREN PATCH FOR



### FOR THOSE THAT HAVE FINISHED THEIR PATCHING TREATMENT, DURATION THEY PATCHED FOR



“ I want my kids to see clearly so they can enjoy all aspects of life. ”





## SUMMARY

The second instalment of the Little Aussie Eyes Report presented some interesting findings.

Although around two thirds of parents have taken their children to see an optometrist, there are still a large portion that have not had their child screened.

Of those that had taken their child/ren to an optometrist, 34% had at least one child that wears prescription glasses.

The majority of children will have more than one pair of glasses in their current prescription. This is presumably driven by large retailers such as SpecSavers offering 2 for 1 deals on children's glasses.

For the most part, parents will purchase their child's glasses from the same optometrist they had their eyes tested. However, for those parents whose children see an ophthalmologist, they will shop around – including online. Online kids' glasses purchasing appears to be in its infancy in Australia but consideration is fair.

There are many factors that are considered when it comes to purchasing kids' glasses. Parents want to know they can trust the optometrist and that the script they're receiving is accurate – but this is then balanced by finding a frame that their child will like and will also offer value for money.

Children have considerable voice when it comes to glasses selection, with the child's feelings towards the frames being a key driver for selection.

Amblyopia is the key reason for childhood patching, with 75% of those that patch, doing so for this reason. Patching children will typically patch for up to 2 hours per day, for 1 or more years.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Educating parents on the importance of having their children's eyes tested from as young as 6 months of age – or at least prior to starting school – is a vital step in improving childhood vision.

Parents appear to predominantly wait until their child is starting school – or until symptoms or signs present – before taking their child for an initial assessment. It is important to help parents understand that children may not always have visible symptoms of an underlying vision issue – so early screening is a must.

We look forward to continuing the Little Aussie Eyes Report in 2022 to further identify broader vision issues in the community, so we can assist with encouraging greater education and outcomes.



## METHODOLOGY



**N=860**



**2-14 February  
2021**



**Online**

This report was compiled from research conducted with 860 Australian parents in February 2021. The aim of the research was to understand more about the incidence rate of children's vision testing, diagnosis of vision issues, spectacle purchasing behaviour and patching.

The data was filtered to construct various demographic segments in the following ways:

### **General Parents N=484**

Included parents from the SCA iQ Community.

Data was weighted by gender to achieve a 50/50 male/female ratio, with an 83% weighting efficiency.

### **Parents of Kids with Serious Vision Issues N=376**

Included parents from the Kids Eye Gear and Augie Eyewear databases.

This data was heavily female skewed so was weighted to achieve a 20/80 male/female ratio, with an 84% weighting efficiency. It is unlikely that this female skew will impact results.

The survey was live from 2-14 February 2021. The survey was conducted online. Participants were invited to complete the survey via email and social media links (pages and groups).

Participants came from the following sources:

- SCA iQ Community, comprised of members of the Triple M and Hit networks.
- Kids Eye Gear database.
- Kids Eye Gear social media channels.
- Augie Eyewear database.

This enabled the data to be viewed as objectively as possible, whilst also providing adequate sample of kids with vision issues.

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

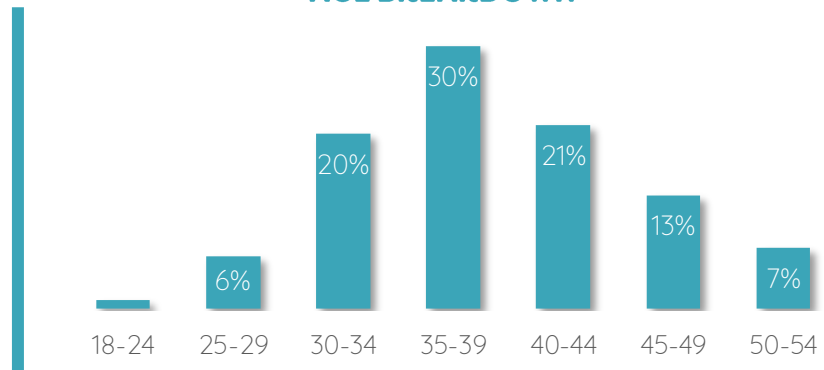


## RESPONDENT BREAKDOWN

### GENDER



### AGE BREAKDOWN



### LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS



## 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 works as a Senior Research Analyst for one of Australia's largest media companies. She has more than 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 create the first Little Aussie Eyes Report. Excited by the findings and value it presented to the optical industry and parents, she embarked on the second instalment of the project in 2021.



**KidsEye  
Gear**

[www.kidseyegear.com.au](http://www.kidseyegear.com.au)