



Little Aussie Eyes Report | 2022 |

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Little Aussies Eyes Report

A report on kids' vision.

BACKGROUND

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.

In 2022, the Little Aussie Eyes survey focused again on Australian parents, surveying more than 500 about their child's vision and eyecare. The impacts of COVID19 on children's vision was investigated, as well as a focus on perceptions of children's eyecare and eyecare professionals.



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

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

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.

We hope this research highlights the understanding and perception that Australian parents have of their child's vision.

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





THE IMPACT OF COVID19 ON CHILDREN'S VISION

IMPACT OF COVID19

COVID19 has impacted the eyecare of more than 1 in 4 Australian children that see an eyecare professional.

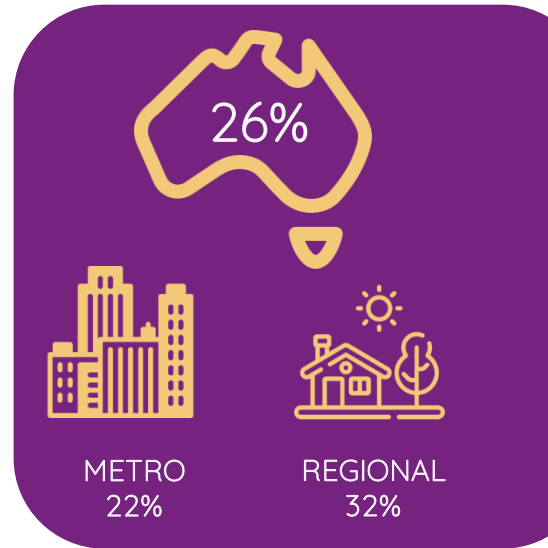


According to parents, COVID19 has impacted the eyecare of more than 1 in 4 (26%) Australian children who have vision issues and see an eyecare professional. This was largely the result of delayed and cancelled appointments and the impacts of lockdowns and restrictions. Children in regional areas were harder hit.

While 22% of kids in the five capital cities were impacted, this balloons out to 32% for their regional counterparts.

Parents in regional areas had appointments delayed by professionals, did not feel safe attending appointments and were unable to travel to appointments due to lockdowns and travel restrictions. Parents in capital cities had their appointments delayed or cancelled and to a lesser degree felt unsafe attending appointments.

COVID19 IMPACTED CHILD'S EYECARE



“

My son was due to see a surgeon in Port Macquarie last year but because of covid it was cancelled now he's back on the waiting list.

”

“

Our little princess has her eye appointments down at Westmead children's hospital. We have not been able to see the specialist down there for two years.

”

“

It was hard to get my child into see someone and let alone them trying to communicate with the masks.

”

Children with serious eye conditions were impacted even more so.



COVID19 IMPACTED CHILD'S EYECARE

SEES
OPHTHALMOLOGIST
36%



SEES OPTOMETRIST
26%

Children with more serious eye conditions - typically those that see ophthalmologists - were more impacted by COVID19 than those children with more standard vision problems (so those that see optometrists).

More than 1 in 3 children (36%) that see an ophthalmologist had their eyecare impacted by COVID19, compared with 1 in 4 (26%) that see an optometrist.

Often families have to travel fair distances to see eye specialists, with it not being uncommon to cross state borders to access children's hospitals. Lockdowns, closed borders and travel restrictions impacted those families needing to travel for care. Appointments were delayed and cancelled, resulting in children not maintaining continuity of appointments with their specialists.

“

Only having 1 parent allowed to visits and also to the hospital when Bub had surgery was upsetting. It is often information overload and helps to have support with you.

”

“

My sons appts went from 3 months to not being able to go for 8 months and it affected his progress.

”

“

My daughter is due to get surgery to realign her eye muscles in hopes to straighten her eye. Because of Covid lockdowns her surgery is constantly getting delayed.

”

BARRIERS TO EYECARE APPOINTMENTS

46% of parents said they had barriers to attend appointments



HAD BARRIERS TO ATTEND APPOINTMENTS IN PAST 2 YEARS

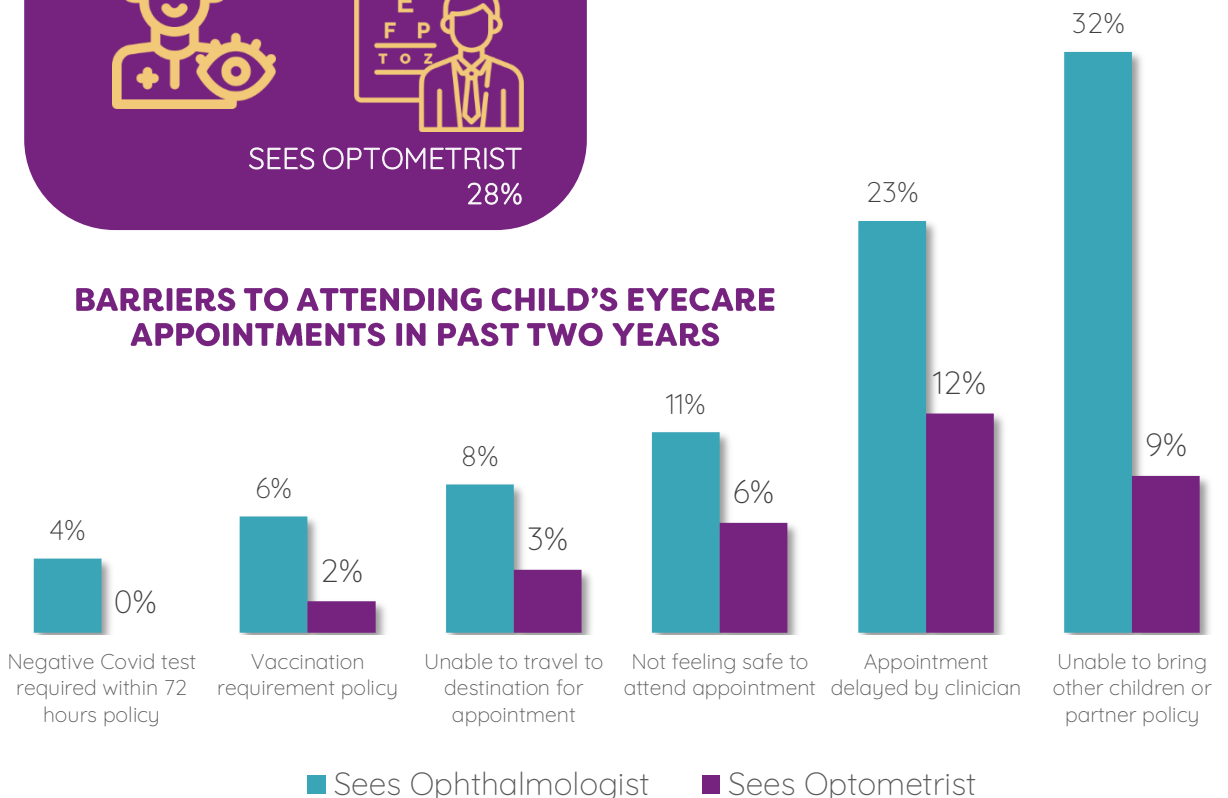
SEES OPHTHALMOLOGIST
66%



SEES OPTOMETRIST
28%

When it came to specific barriers to attending eyecare appointments in the past two years, the main issues for these families were not being able to bring children or partners to appointments due to appointment restrictions, appointments being delayed by the clinician, and not feeling safe to attend appointments.

BARRIERS TO ATTENDING CHILD'S EYECARE APPOINTMENTS IN PAST TWO YEARS



Source: Parents of children that see ophthalmologists + Parents of children that see optometrists

TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENTS

Overall, 11% were offered telehealth appointments when restrictions were in place

OFFERED TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENTS

SEES
OPHTHALMOLOGIST
13%



SEES OPTOMETRIST
4%

Just over 1 in 10 parents were offered a telehealth appointment for their child, in the absence of face-to-face appointments. This was considerably higher for those that see ophthalmologists (at 13%) compared with those that see optometrists (at 4%).

Overall, parents do not see value in telehealth appointments and much prefer face-to-face appointments. This may have contributed to delays with appointments, with parents preferring to wait for in-person appointments rather than take a telehealth appointment.

“

I feel like they are pointless.

”

“

My child was slightly less engaged in Telehealth part of process as she is autistic and isn't a big fan of video calls.

”

“

Ok but not the same as face to face.

”

PERCEPTIONS OF EYECARE TREATMENT



PERCEPTION OF EYECARE TREATMENT

Overall, parents feel supported in their child's eyecare treatment, and feel well informed about their child's eye condition and treatment.

Interestingly, those that see optometrists are more inclined to feel supported and feel well informed about their child's eye condition than those that see ophthalmologists.

It's possible that this is due to the likelihood that the children needing to see specialists will have more complex eye conditions, and may feel confused about their child's condition and treatment.



89%

of parents feel supported in their child's eyecare treatment.

87% [see Ophthalmologist]

91% [see Optometrist]

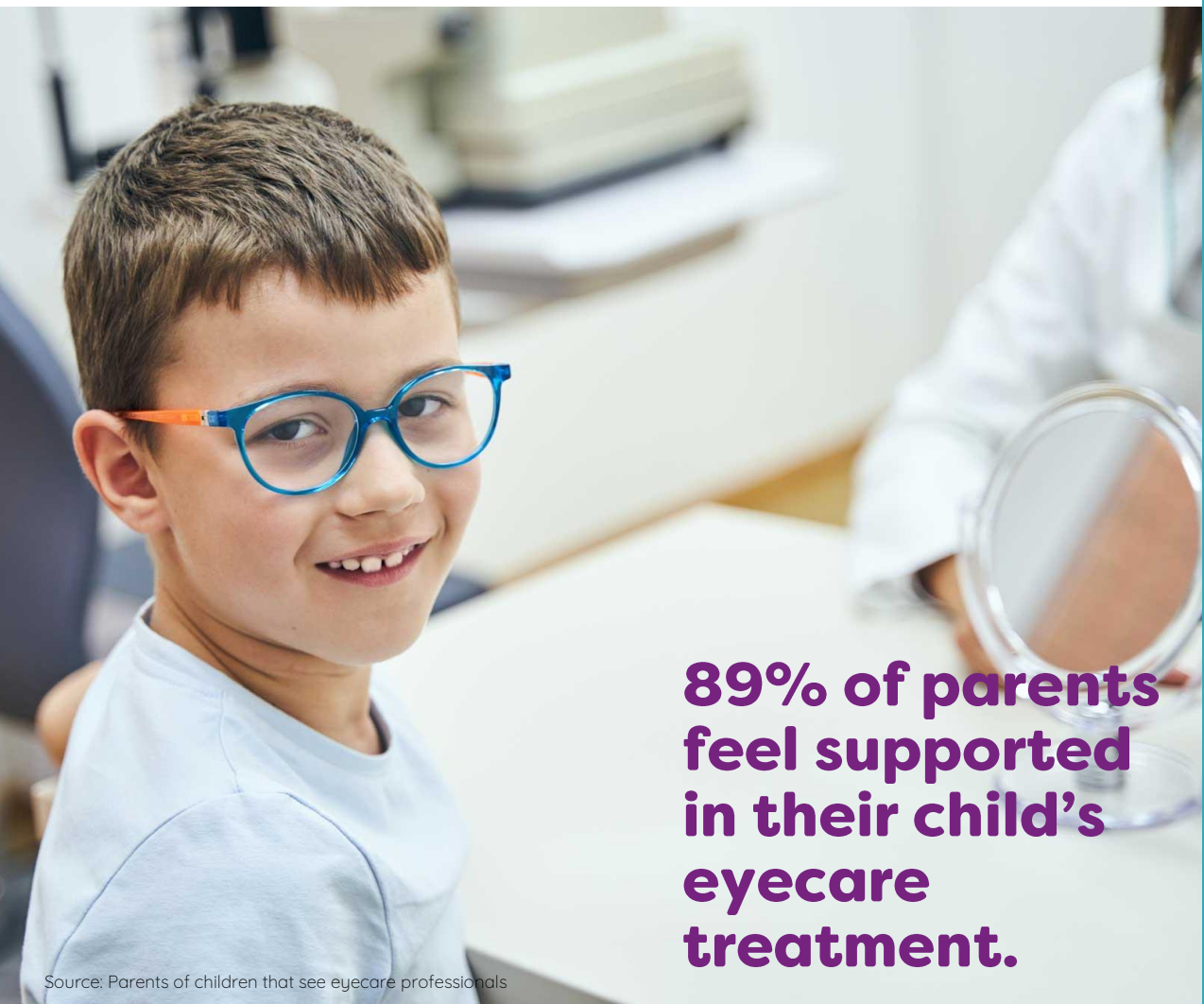


89%

of parents feel well informed about their child's eyecare condition and treatment.

84% [see Ophthalmologist]

93% [see Optometrist]



89% of parents feel supported in their child's eyecare treatment.

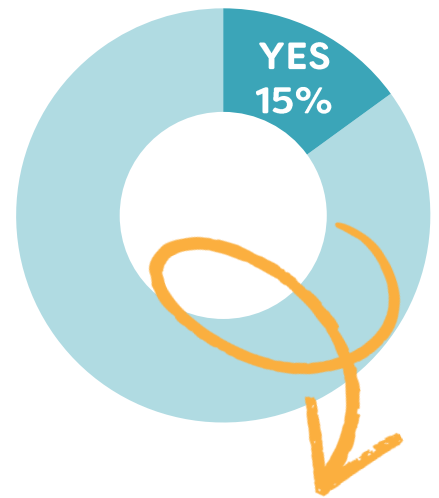
SEEKING SECOND OPINIONS

The majority of parents were happy with the eyecare professional's diagnosis and treatment – and this primarily came down to the trust they have for the professional.

However, 15% of parents have taken their child for a second opinion from another eyecare professional after their child's initial diagnosis.

There were a variety of reasons for seeking a second opinion but it largely came down to being referred on to a different type of eyecare professional, poor rapport with the eyecare professional, not trusting the initial diagnosis to be correct, for 'peace of mind' in the diagnosis and treatment, wanting to pursue care in the private system, and the child still struggling with vision even after correction.

SOUGHT SECOND OPINION FROM EYECARE PROFESSIONAL



WHY PARENTS SOUGHT A SECOND OPINION

- Poor rapport with professional
- Lack of trust in diagnosis
- 'Peace of mind'
- Child still struggling or complaining about vision problems
- Referred to a different type of eyecare professional
- Sought care in private system



“

Took my daughter to private ophthalmologist as very little time to talk to doctors in public hospital system.

”

“

Given the age, it must be hard to initially diagnose an issue.

”

“

First ophthalmologist sent us to our current one as the eye issues were extensive and she wanted to be sure.

”



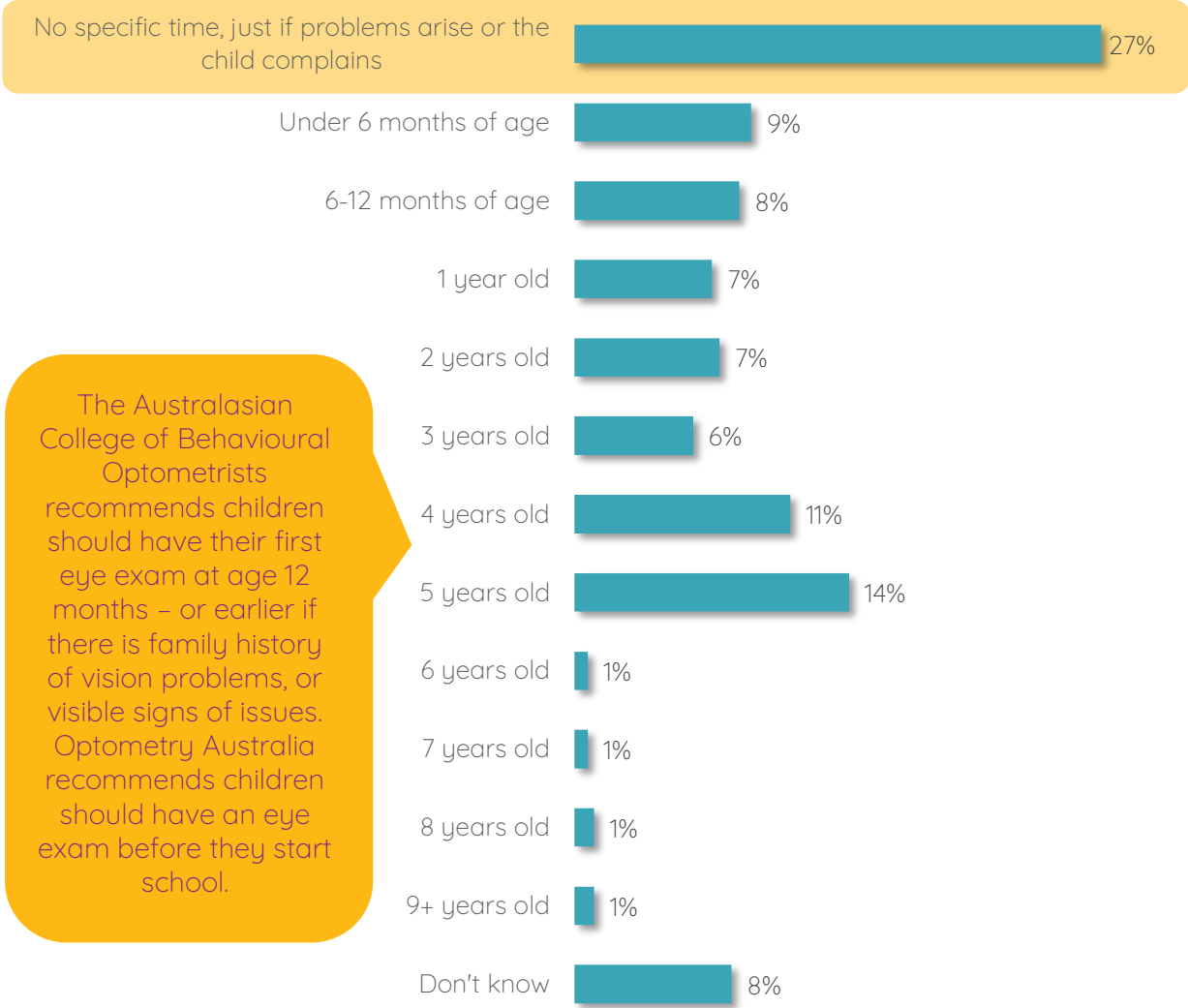
PERCEPTIONS AROUND CHILDREN'S VISION TESTING

INITIAL VISION TESTING

More than 1 in 4 Australian parents believe there is no recommended age for children to have their first eye test. Rather, parents believe they should only be tested if problems arise or the child complains. This is clearly an issue given our 2021 Little Aussie Eyes Report showed that a child complaining about headaches or other issues was an instigator for an optometrist visit for only 7% of respondents. As Optometry Australia also says, 'children often assume that how they see is normal', meaning waiting for signs and symptoms of vision issues may be fruitless. This is further reinforced by the 2020 Little Aussie Eyes Report which showed many parents were shocked that their child had a vision problem when they were taken for routine check ups. – proving that symptoms or signs aren't always evident.



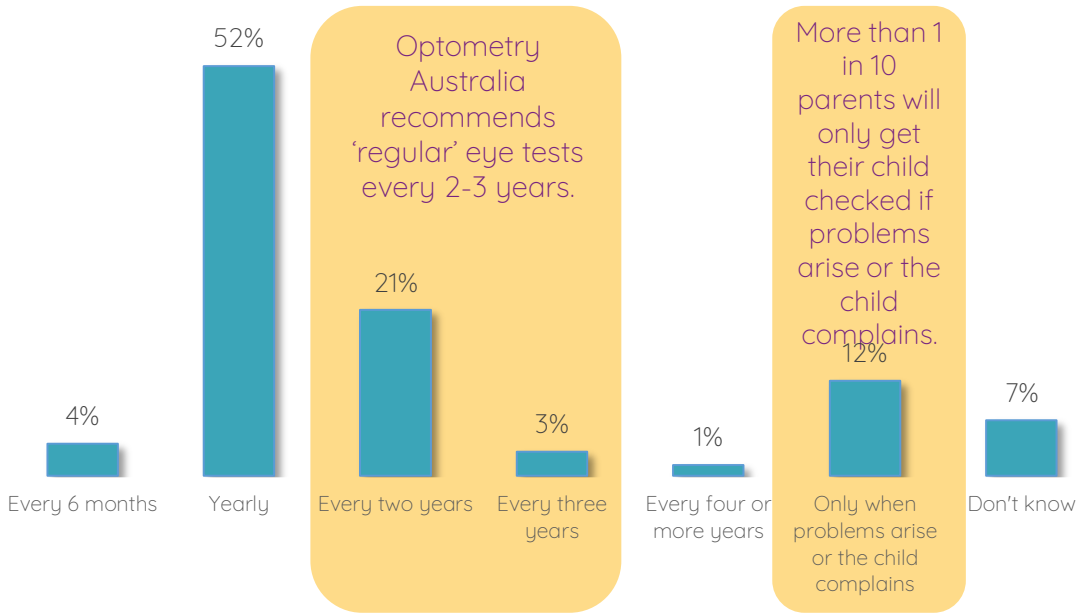
AGE PARENTS BELIEVE CHILDREN SHOULD GET THEIR FIRST EYE TEST



The Australasian College of Behavioural Optometrists recommends children should have their first eye exam at age 12 months – or earlier if there is family history of vision problems, or visible signs of issues. Optometry Australia recommends children should have an eye exam before they start school.

SUBSEQUENT VISION TESTING

FREQUENCY OF EYE TESTS FOR CHILDREN



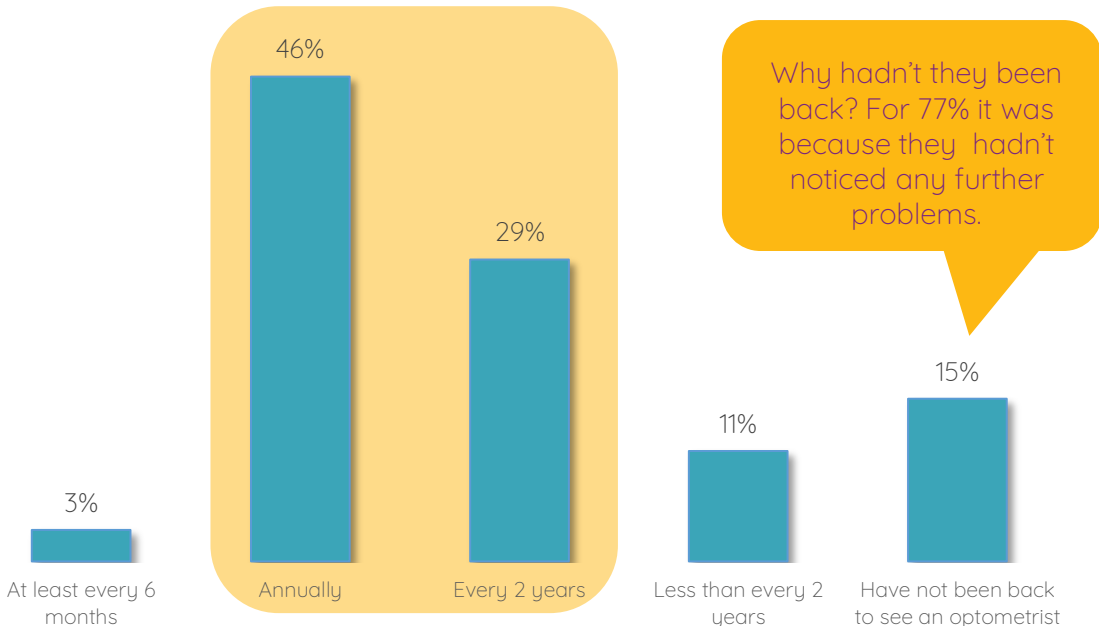
More than half of parents believe yearly eye tests are recommended for children, which exceeds the recommendation by Optometry Australia of every 2-3 years.

Results from the 2021 Little Aussie Eyes Report indicated that 46% of parents were returning for check ups annually, while 29% visited every 2 years. This shows us that actual behaviour is almost on par with the perceived correct behaviour for children's eye testing.

Of concern though, remains the more than 1 in 10 parents who believe children should only return to the optometrist should a problem arise or the child complains.

In fact, the 2021 Little Aussie Eyes Report showed that 15% of parents hadn't returned for subsequent check-ups with the majority stating it was because they hadn't noticed any further problems.

REGULARITY OF OPTOMETRIST VISIT (2021)



NOTE : Respondents could select multiple responses to represent multiple children
Source: General Parents

BARRIERS TO APPOINTMENTS

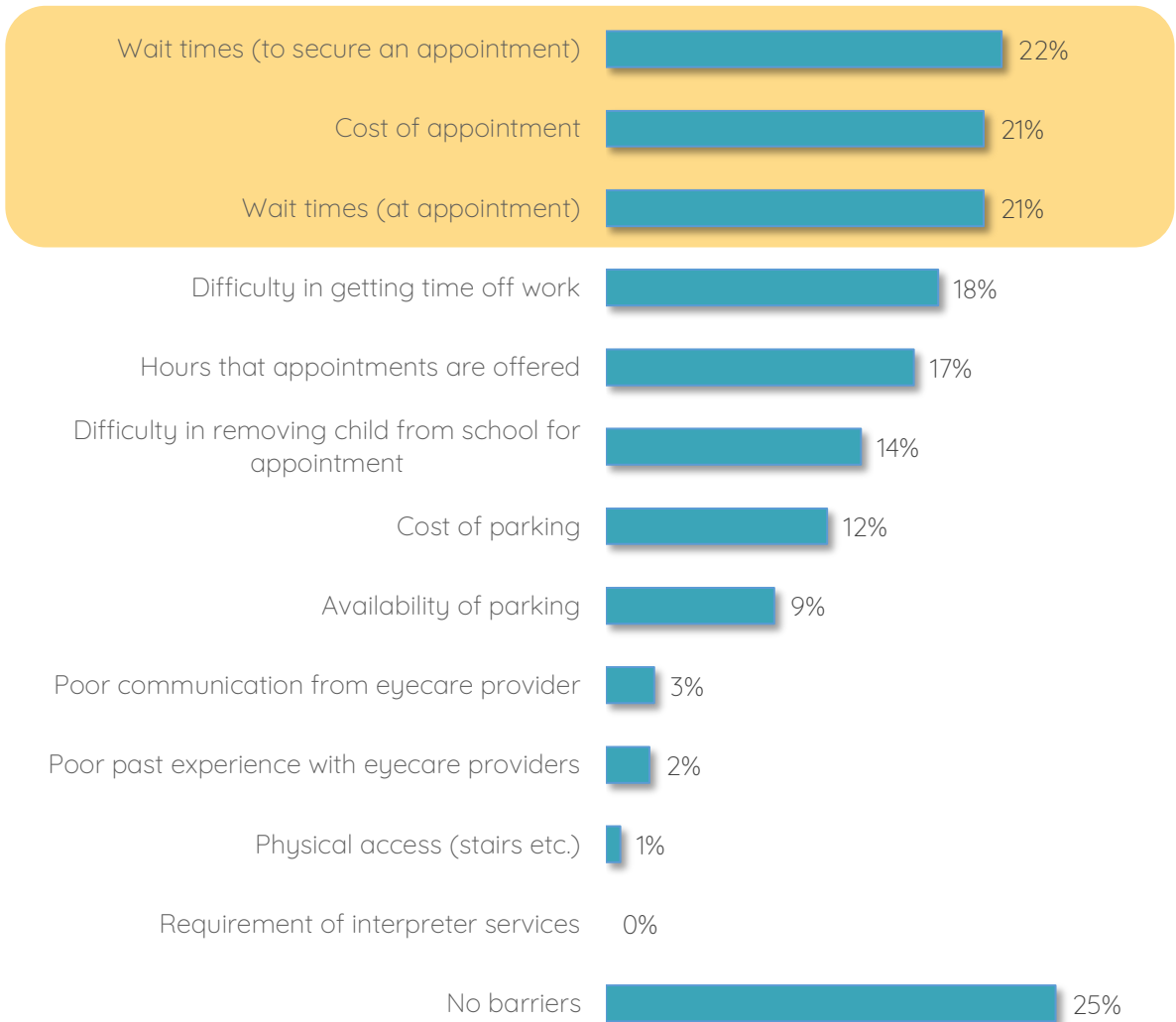
75% of parents find there are barriers to attending face-to-face eyecare appointments.

Three in four parents find that there are barriers to attending face-to-face eyecare appointments – which largely comes down to availability and cost.

The main pain points are wait times to secure appointments, the cost of appointments, and wait times at the appointment.

For those seeing an ophthalmologist, wait times to secure an appointment, wait times at the appointment, costs of appointment and the hours that appointments are available, were even larger issues, compared with those seeing an optometrist.

BARRIERS TO ATTENDING FACE-TO-FACE APPOINTMENTS





PERCEPTION OF OPTOMETRISTS

When we look into the perceptions parents have of optometrists, we can see that there is a discrepancy between those that believe all optometrists provide an equal standard of expertise and care – and those that don't. In fact, parents seem to be quite polarised.

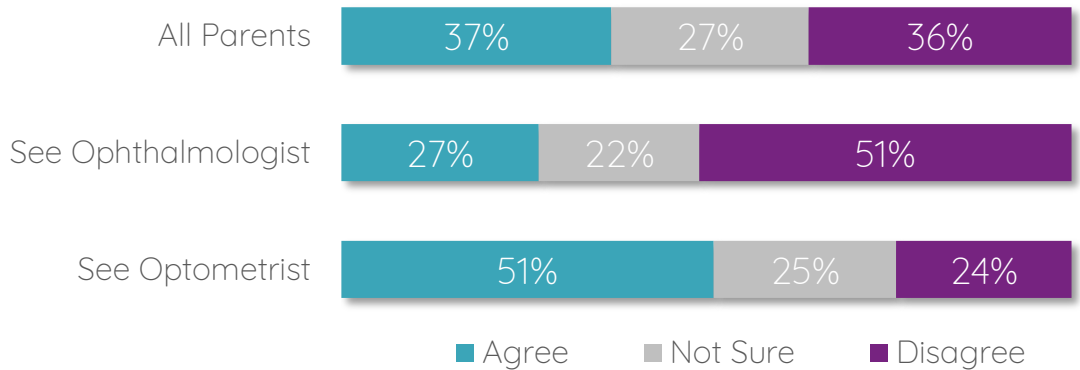
For those that see optometrists, roughly one third believe all optometrists are equal, while one third believe they're not, and the remainder are not sure.

Differences arise when comparing parents of kids that see ophthalmologists and those that see optometrists. It's possible to assume that as a child's eye condition becomes more complex, and thus requiring a specialist, parents seem to be more aware of differences between the expertise optometrists can offer.

More than 1 in 3 parents believe all optometrists provide an equal standard of expertise & care – but the same number believe they don't.



ALL OPTOMETRISTS PROVIDE AN EQUAL STANDARD OF EXPERTISE & CARE



Source: All parents + Parents of children that see ophthalmologists + Parents of children that see optometrists

PERCEPTION OF OPTOMETRISTS

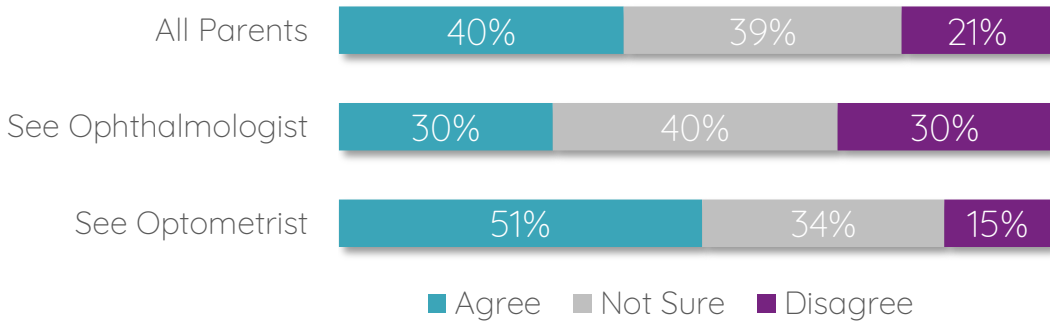
40% of parents believe large chain store optometry practices offer the same level of expertise & care as independent optometry practices.



When looking more specifically at optometry practices, the majority of parents (40%) believe that large chain store optometry practices offer the same level of expertise and care as independent optometry practices. There does appear to be a degree of confusion though, with more than 1 in 3 not sure that this is the case.

Again when we compare those that see ophthalmologists and those that see optometrists, we see that the parents that visit specialists are twice as likely to disagree that all practices are the same.

LARGE CHAIN STORE OPTOMETRY PRACTICES OFFER THE SAME LEVEL OF EXPERTISE & CARE AS INDEPENDENT OPTOMETRY PRACTICES



CHILDREN'S GLASSES



QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S GLASSES

89% of parents were confident the optometrist correctly prescribed glasses for their child.

83% of parents were confident the optometrist gave them the most appropriately sized glasses frame for their child.

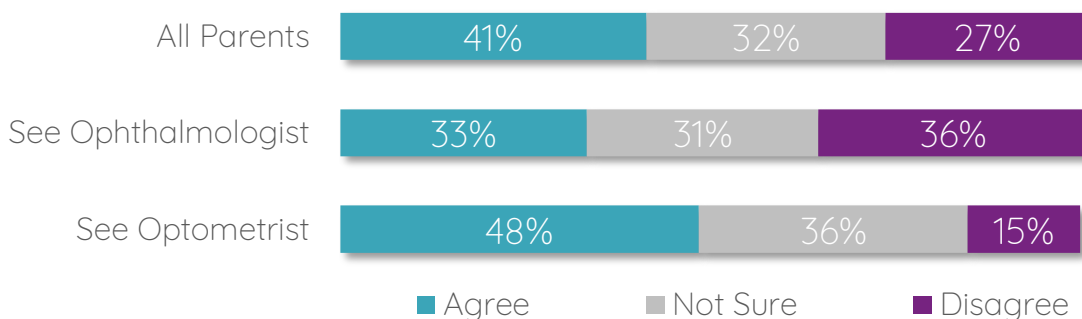
As we saw earlier, only a small percentage of parents will seek a second opinion for their child's eyecare. So it's little surprise that 89% of parents were confident that their optometrist correctly prescribed glasses for their child.

That trust is extended to the frame sizing that is recommended by the optometrist for their child.

However, where we start to see differences is in perceptions of the quality of children's eyeglasses. Whilst the majority (41%) believe quality is equal across all optometry practices, 1 in 3 aren't sure, and more than 1 in 4 disagree.

This is particularly the case for those parents whose children see ophthalmologists – with 1 in 3 agreeing to the statement, just under 1 in 3 unsure and more than 1 in 3 disagreeing. This may indicate that children with more complex eyecare needs have more complex glasses that require special care and attention.

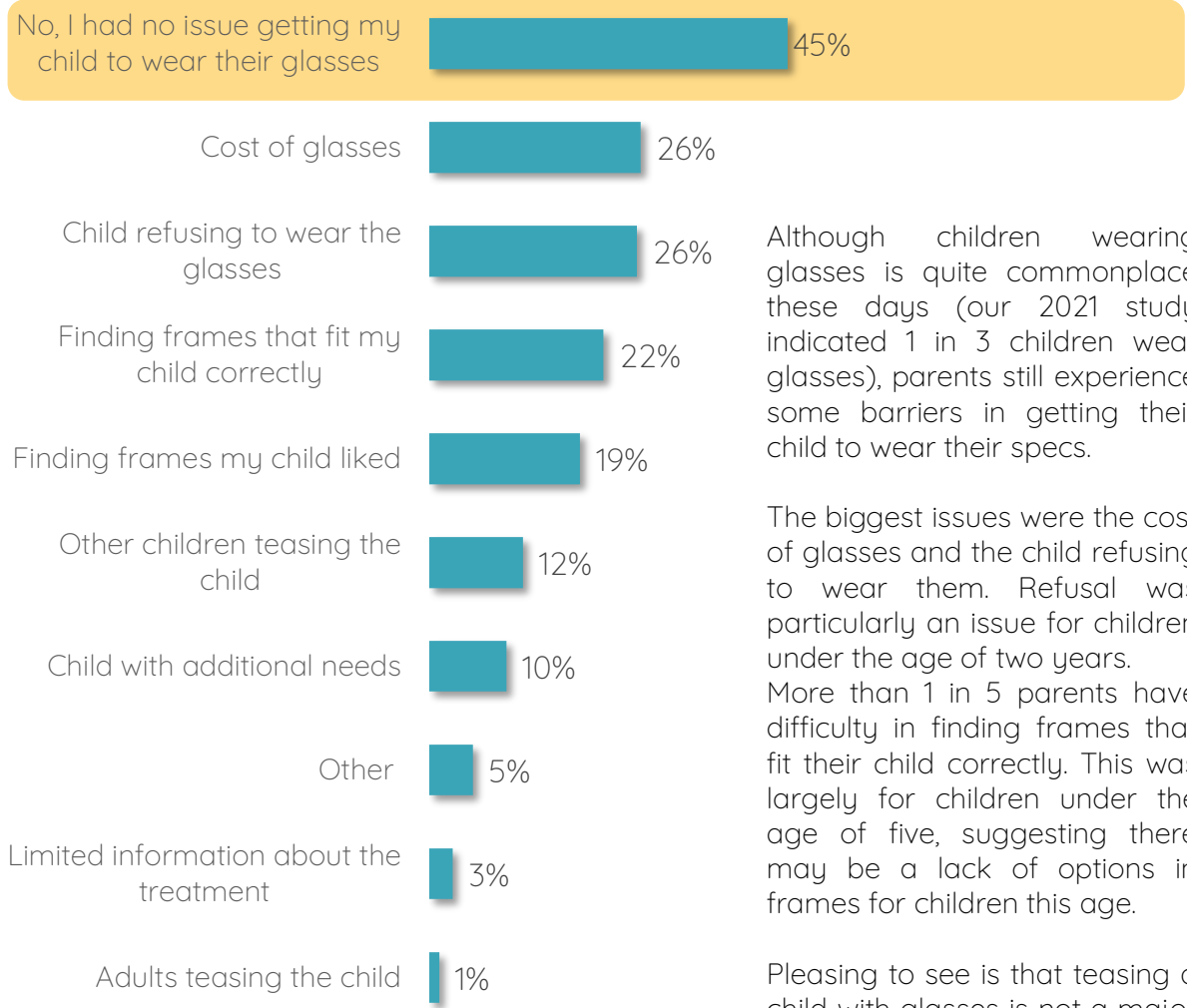
QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S EYEGLASSES ARE THE SAME REGARDLESS OF WHICH OPTOMETRIST YOU PURCHASE FROM



BARRIERS TO WEARING GLASSES



55%
of parents
had barriers
getting their
child to wear
their glasses



Although children wearing glasses is quite commonplace these days (our 2021 study indicated 1 in 3 children wear glasses), parents still experience some barriers in getting their child to wear their specs.

The biggest issues were the cost of glasses and the child refusing to wear them. Refusal was particularly an issue for children under the age of two years. More than 1 in 5 parents have difficulty in finding frames that fit their child correctly. This was largely for children under the age of five, suggesting there may be a lack of options in frames for children this age.

Pleasing to see is that teasing a child with glasses is not a major barrier in children wearing their spectacles.



BARRIERS TO PATCHING

BARRIERS TO PATCHING

Patching can be a real challenge – for both parents and children. So it wasn't surprising to see that 78% of parents said they had some challenges getting their child to patch.

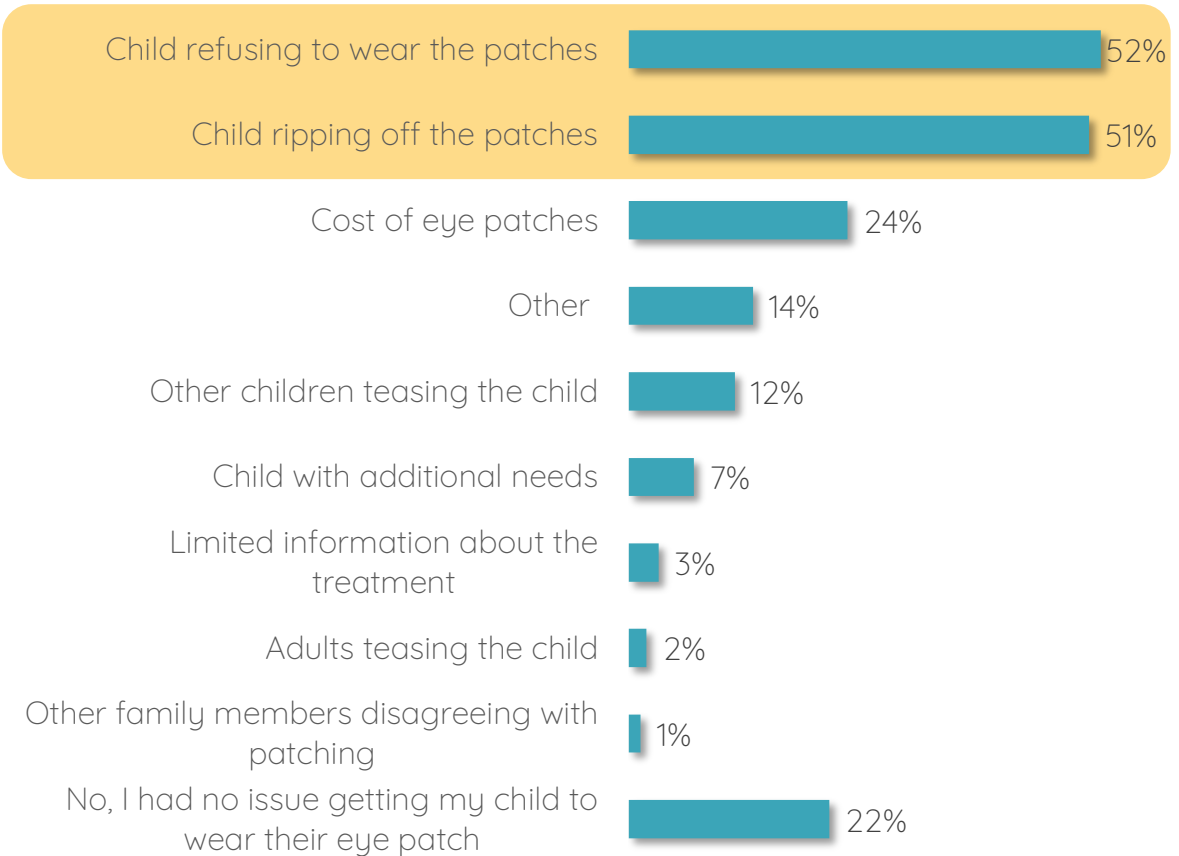
This was largely behaviour of the child – with the child refusing to wear the patches or ripping them off.

Costs associated with patching was an issue for almost 1 in 4 parents.

Although it would be great to see patching children supported by their peers, still more than 1 in 9 kids experienced teasing, which impacted on their compliance with the treatment.



BARRIERS TO GETTING CHILD TO PATCH



Source: Parents of children that wear eye patches

“

I want them to enjoy seeing the world,
learning, and having the same
opportunities as kids with perfect vision.

”



SUMMARY

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

The COVID19 pandemic – and the lockdowns and restrictions that came with it – have had considerable impacts in the community. Looking specifically at children’s vision care, it’s clear that the pandemic has impacted children’s vision care – particularly impacting appointment delays. The flow-on effect of this is likely delayed treatments that may impact vision outcomes, and potentially missed diagnoses.

When it came to parents’ understanding of eyecare treatment, it is disappointing to see that more than 1 in 4 believe that children should only have an eye test if problems arise or the child complains. This suggests that continued education on preventative testing may be required.

Looking specifically at perceptions of optometrists, there does seem to be some confusion around standards of expertise and care offered. More than 1 in 3 parents believe all optometrists are equal – while the same believe they’re not. There may be opportunity here for optometrists to position themselves as experts with children. Some key points here may be the ability to correctly prescribe glasses, selection of appropriately sized glasses, and the quality of children’s eyeglasses.

For those parents that do take their children to see eyecare professionals, the majority feel supported in, and well informed about, their child’s eyecare treatment. This was fantastic to see and shows the high level of trust parents have with their eyecare professional.

LOOKING AHEAD

Unfortunately there still persists the opinion that children should only have their eyes tested if problems or symptoms arise.

As the country emerges from two years of lockdowns and restrictions, now is the perfect opportunity to educate parents about the importance of having their child's eyes tested - at least before they start school and regularly after that. Ensuring children's vision issues are not missed is a vital step in improving childhood vision.

We look forward to continuing the Little Aussie Eyes Report in 2023 to further identify broader vision issues in the community, so we can assist with encouraging greater education and outcomes.



METHODOLOGY



N=526



**7-20 February
2022**



Online

This report was compiled from research conducted with 526 Australian parents in February 2022. The aim of the research was to understand more about the perceptions of children's vision testing, the impact of COVID19 on children's vision care, and perceptions of optical professionals.

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

General Parents N=301

Included parents from the SCA iQ Community.

Data was weighted by gender to achieve a 40/60 male/female ratio, with an 83% weighting efficiency.

Parents of Kids with Serious Vision Issues N=200

Included parents from the Kids Eye Gear databases.

This data was heavily female skewed so was weighted to achieve a 20/80 male/female ratio, with a 74% weighting efficiency. It is unlikely that this female skew will impact results.

The survey was live from 7-20 February 2022. 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.

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

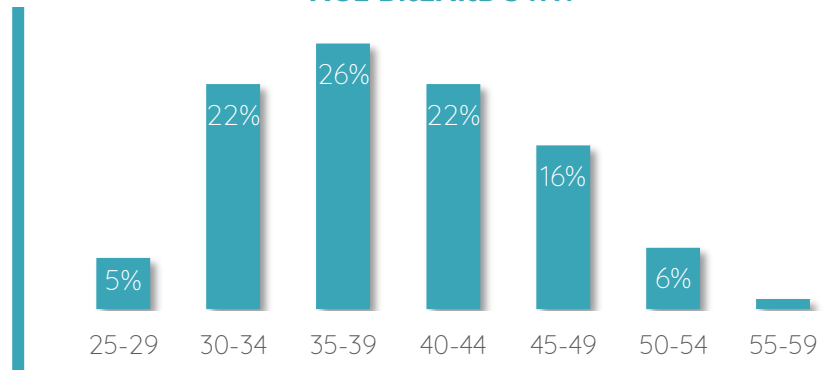
Respondents completed the survey online and were incentivised by being placed in a game of skill competition to win prizes.

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 12 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 in 2020. Excited by the findings and value it presented to the optical industry and parents, the project is now its third year.



**Kids Eye
Gear**

www.kidseyegear.com.au