

Findings from the omnibus survey: Business regulation consultation

We commissioned Impact Health to carry out a short survey for us. We asked ten bespoke questions on a national omnibus survey. The survey was administered to a sample of 2,205 individuals, providing a robust, nationally representative view of the UK public segmented by gender, age, social grade (SEG), and region. The fieldwork took place on 22-23 February 2025.

Key findings

78% of respondents said that if a business is carrying out a sight test or eye examination then it should be overseen by an industry regulator.

- Support was higher amongst older respondents (aged 55+).
- Support was also higher amongst those who had been for a sight test / eye examination in the last two years (82%) compared to those who had never been (66%).

60% of respondents said that all optician businesses are regulated, only 32% correctly said some are and 8% said none are regulated.

- Those in the older age group (aged 55+) were more likely to think all optician businesses were regulated compared to younger age groups (16-24%).
- Those who had been for a sight test in the last two years and those who were confident in receiving a high standard of care from an optician business were more likely to think that all businesses were regulated.
- Those in Northern Ireland were more likely to think that all optician businesses are regulated (74%) compared to Scotland (65%), England (59%), and Wales (57%).

69% agreed that all optician businesses should be overseen by an industry regulator.

- Support was higher amongst older respondents (aged 55+).
- Those who had been for a sight test and those who were confident in receiving a high standard of care from an optician business were more likely to think optician businesses should be overseen by an industry regulator.

The main benefits of regulation were seen as:

- Ensuring eye care professionals are well trained (61%).
- Maintaining high standards of performance and conduct (56%).
- Providing accountability for those who fail to meet the required standards (48%).

69% agreed that if something goes wrong with a service they receive from an optician business, they should have access to an independent organisation to help resolve their complaint.

- Support was higher amongst older respondents (aged 55+).
- Those who had been for a sight test in the last two years and those who were confident in receiving a high standard of care from an optician business were more likely to think that they should have access to an independent organisation to help resolve their complaint.
- Those with a physical disability were even more likely to agree (73%).

69% agreed that all optician businesses should be required to take part in an independent consumer complaints scheme.

- Support was higher amongst older respondents (aged 55+).
- Those who had been for a sight test in the last two years and those who were confident in receiving a high standard of care from an optician business were more likely to agree that all optician businesses should be required to take part in an independent consumer complaints scheme.

When asked which consumer redress option respondents preferred:

- 61% favoured a system in which the business had to comply with the outcome, even if this was a slower and more formal process.
- 39% favoured a faster and more informal process, where the business would **not** have to comply with the outcome.

Reflections

The findings from this survey show that the current system does not match public expectations about the protections they have when getting a sight test. The vast majority of respondents (78%) expect businesses carrying out sight tests to be subject to industry regulation but only a third (32%) realise the true picture that only some businesses are regulated.

Support for closing this regulatory gap is strong with 7 in 10 respondents (69%) agreeing that all optician businesses should be regulated.

The main benefits of regulation are ensuring eye care professionals are well trained and high standards are in place, as well as the ability to hold those accountable when they fail to meet these standards.

In terms of consumer redress over two-thirds of respondents (69%) think optician businesses should be required to participate in an independent consumer complaints scheme. On balance more respondents favour access to a complaints scheme that can make binding decisions, even if this means a slower and more formal process.

Support for many of the reforms in regulation and introducing a consumer redress scheme are higher amongst older respondents (aged 55+), those who have been for a sight test in the last two years, and those who are confident in receiving a high standard of care from an optician business.