General Optical Council

Public perceptions research 2019

July 2019

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1. Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

As the regulator of the optical professions, we have carried out public perceptions surveys in 2015, 2016, 2017 and now in 2019. We want to understand the views and experiences of members of the public across the UK and how these are changing over time. We aim to carry out public perceptions research to help us to better understand how we can improve as a regulator and to fulfil our statutory role in protecting and promoting the public's health and safety.

Enventure Research, an independent research agency, was commissioned to carry out the fieldwork for the 2019 survey. We have analysed the findings and drafted the report, with the majority of the charts being produced by Enventure Research.

The key objectives of our public perceptions surveys are to:

- conduct a survey with a robust and representative sample of the UK adult population (16+);
- measure and track trends in perceptions, behaviours, experience and levels of awareness over time, comparing results to previous years;
- include a mix of both patients and non-patients within the survey; and
- thoroughly analyse the survey results and highlight key findings.

1.2 Methodology

A quantitative approach was taken whereby 2,000 UK adults (aged 16+) were interviewed in May 2019 using an online consumer panel.

Interlocking quotas were set to ensure a representative sample was achieved based on gender and age within each UK nation. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were over-sampled to ensure that confident statistical analysis could be undertaken at this level.

Results are not directly comparable to surveys undertaken in previous years because of changes in sample sizes and how the data was obtained, but a number of common themes have continued to emerge and these are highlighted in the report.

1.3 Key findings

Public perceptions about the role of opticians

- The majority of respondents (32%) would still go to a GP if they woke up with an eye problem, with 25% saying they would go to an optician.
- There is a continued small increase in the percentage who would go to an optician if they had an eye problem since 2015 (as well as for pharmacists) and a decrease in the percentage who would go to a GP.
- A significantly higher proportion of respondents in Northern Ireland (28%), Scotland (34%) and Wales (33%) would go to an optician with an eye health problem than those in England (20%).
- Those that would choose not to go to an optician if they woke up with an eye health problem were most likely to cite reasons that they might not be seen by an optician on the same day, that an optician could not prescribe the right medication or that they would not be able to treat those kinds of problems.
- Respondents are significantly more likely to see opticians primarily as a combination of a healthcare service and a retailer (46%) than solely a healthcare service (31%) or a retailer (20%).
- There has been a small increase in the proportion who see opticians as a retailer (from 16% in 2017 to 20% in 2019).

Visiting an optician

- A strong majority of the population (69%) have visited an optician in the last two years, similar to previous years' results, with higher proportions of females, older age groups and those living in Northern Ireland and Wales.
- Those who have visited an optician in the last two to five years has doubled since 2015 (8% in 2015 up to 16% in 2019).
- More than half of the public (59%) continues to feel comfortable when visiting an optician but a significant minority do feel uncomfortable about the pressure to buy glasses or contact lenses (15%).
- Patients are more likely to feel comfortable visiting an optician than non-patients, as are older age groups. Results in this area have changed very little since the last survey in 2017.

Continued high levels of satisfaction

- Patients' satisfaction and confidence levels in opticians remains very high, with 96% of patients indicating that they were fairly or very satisfied with the optician who had carried out their eye test and 94% being satisfied with the overall experience of the opticians.

Continued low level of complaints

- There continues to be a low level of complaints, with a very small percentage of the population (6%) having complained about an experience with an optician.
- The proportion who have not complained (83%) has slightly decreased since 2015 (92%), and the proportion of those who have considered complaining has increased from 2% in 2015 to 8% in 2019.
- Those who had not complained were more likely to be in the older age groups and more likely to be living in Northern Ireland than England.

When something goes wrong

- Only just over a tenth of respondents (13%) had experienced anything going wrong with the care that they received, with the younger age groups being more likely to do so.
- Of those that did experience something going wrong, around three fifths (58%) had received an apology and two fifths (41%) had not. These numbers have been increasing since we first asked this question in our 2016 survey (up by 16 percentage points).
- Those that had received an apology were more likely to be patients, male and in the younger age groups.

Confidence in receiving a high standard of care

- Confidence levels in receiving a high standard of care from opticians remains very high (90%), alongside the other healthcare professions that we asked about. The levels for opticians have remained consistently high since our first survey in 2015.

2. About this research

2.1 Introduction

The General Optical Council (GOC) is the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. Our mission is to protect and promote the health and safety of the public. We currently register around 30,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses.

We have a research programme to help understand the views and experiences of members of the public across the UK. In doing so, we aim to carry out public perceptions research to help us to better understand how we can improve as a regulator and to fulfil our statutory role in protecting and promoting the public's health and safety.

Enventure Research, an independent research agency, was commissioned to carry out the fieldwork for the 2019 survey. They had previously been commissioned to carry out the 2016 and 2017 public perceptions surveys and had produced the reports in those years.

The key objectives of our public perceptions surveys are to:

- conduct a survey with a robust and representative sample of the UK adult population (16+);
- measure and track trends in perceptions and levels of awareness over time, comparing results to previous years;
- include a mix of both patients and non-patients within the survey; and
- thoroughly analyse the survey results and highlight key findings.

2.2 Methodology

There questions were designed by Enventure Research and the GOC as part of previous research, which took respondents between no more than five minutes to complete. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in **Appendix A**.

Interlocking quotas were set to ensure a representative sample was achieved based on gender and age within each UK nation based on the latest census data. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were over-sampled to ensure that confident statistical analysis could be undertaken at this level.

The survey was hosted online and distributed to a UK consumer panel, which includes members of the public who have signed up to take part in online research on a wide number of topics.

The survey was live from 15-28 May 2019. During this time, 2,000 responses were received.

A change in methodology between the 2015 and 2016/17/19 surveys

The GOC has previously commissioned public perceptions surveys in 2015, 2016 and 2017. There were different approaches between the surveys as follows:

- the public perceptions survey in 2015 with a sample size of 2,250 was undertaken by ComRes, who delivered the survey using telephone interviews;
- the 2016 survey undertaken by Enventure Research was a sample size of 3,252 and included a mixture of interviewing techniques (2,858 online, 110 telephone interviews and 284 face-to-face interviews); and
- the 2017 survey was also undertaken by Enventure Research and included 3,025 interviews conducted online via a consumer panel (as in 2019).

The 2019 sample size is smaller than the previous surveys at 2,000 UK adults (16+). Therefore, because of the change in methodology and sample sizes, the results between surveys are not directly comparable. However, a number of common themes have continued to emerge, despite the different methodologies and sample sizes, and these have been highlighted throughout the report. This is a good indication that the changes in methodology and sample sizes have not had a significant impact on the results.

It is also important to note that, whilst still administered online, the 2017 and 2019 surveys utilised a consumer panel, which ensures interlocking quotas are met, meaning that no additional face-to-face or telephone interviews were required as in 2016. This, therefore, represents a small difference in methodology from the surveys undertaken prior to these, but one which is unlikely to have had a significant impact on the results. As the methodology for the 2017 and 2019 surveys is exactly the same, it means that the results are more comparable than with earlier versions of the survey. In future years of the survey, we intend to keep the same methodology and sample size so that the results are directly comparable going forward and any limitations in comparisons can be removed.

2.3 Interpretation of the survey findings

Weighting

In previous years, weights have been applied to the returned data to ensure that certain subgroups are not over or under represented within the data and that the data is as close to the demographic profile of the UK as possible in terms of gender and age. Weighting adjusts the proportions of certain groups within a sample to match more closely to the proportions in the target population. However, as this year's survey and the survey in 2017 was administered to a UK consumer panel, it has been possible to meet interlocking quotas for gender, age and country, which has meant that weighting of the data has not been necessary.

When setting the survey quotas, it was decided that the nations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should be over-sampled to allow for confident data analysis at a nation-specific level and also confident analysis between countries. Therefore, the data has not been weighted to adjust the number of responses by UK nation to be truly representative of the UK.

Use of the term 'optician'

The term 'optician' has been used rather than the two distinct optical professions we regulate – optometrists and dispensing opticians. This term was used throughout the research to avoid confusion as the majority of the public do not distinguish between the two professions (as highlighted in the 2015 and 2016 research).

Interpretation of the survey data

This report contains 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%; and
- a response of between 0% and 1% will be shown as 0%.

As the online survey was undertaken with a sample of the general public, all results are subject to sampling tolerances. For example, when interpreting the results to a survey question which all respondents answered, where 50% responded with a particular answer, there is a 95% chance that this result would not vary by more than +/- 2.2 percentage points had the result been obtained from the entire UK population (16+). Sampling tolerances are higher for the smaller subgroup populations such as Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (each of these nations has a 95% confidence interval level of +/- 6.1 percentage points with England having a 95% confidence interval level of +/- 2.8 percentage points), or where only a subset of the survey were asked questions, which means care should be taken when considering the results.

Subgroup analysis has been undertaken to explore the results provided by different demographic groups, such as gender or age group. 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 a larger group.

Throughout this report, those who took part in the survey are referred to as ‘respondents’. For the purpose of this report, those who reported visiting an optician in the last two years are referred to as ‘patients’. Those who reported visiting an optician more than two years ago or never are referred to as ‘non-patients’.

Comparisons between 2015, 2016 and 2017 survey results

Where possible, comparative analysis has been undertaken between the 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019 public perceptions survey results to allow perceptions to be tracked over time. This analysis is included where appropriate throughout the report, including details of any limitations of the comparison such as changes in methodology or wording of a question.

For reference, the 2015, 2016 and 2017 public perceptions survey reports can be found online at: https://www.optical.org/en/news_publications/Publications/policy-and-research-papers.cfm

2.4 Acknowledgements

The GOC would like to thank Matt Thurman, Research Director at Enventure Research, for carrying out the fieldwork and producing some of the graphs used in this report.

3. Public perceptions of opticians

3.1 The role of opticians in treating eye problems

When asked where they would go or who they would see if they woke up tomorrow with an eye problem, approximately a third (32%) of respondents said that they would go to a GP, followed by 25% who would go to an optician and 17% who would go to a pharmacist. Figure 1 shows that since 2015, the percentage of people who would go to a GP has been steadily decreasing (down 18 percentage points from 2015), with the percentage who would go to see an optician or pharmacist steadily increasing (up 7 and 6 percentage points respectively from 2015).

Results differ by UK nations, with respondents from Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland being significantly more likely to go to an optician than respondents from England (see figure 2). This is demonstrated by 20% of respondents in England saying they would go to an optician, compared with 28% of respondents in Northern Ireland, 34% of respondents in Scotland and 33% of respondents in Wales. Results were very similar in 2017.

Respondents who said that they would not go to see an optician first were asked why this was the case. Figure 3 shows that the three most common reasons were as follows: 24% of respondents said that it was because they might not be seen by an optician on the same day, 18% said an optician cannot prescribe the right medication to treat the problem and a further 18% said it was because an optician would not be able to treat these kinds of problems. Results have remained similar since this question was first asked in 2016 and do not differ significantly by nation.

Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely to say they would **visit an optician first** (25% overall) included those who were:

- patients (28%) compared to non-patients (17%)
- in the age group 65-74 (35%) compared to the age group 45-54 (19%)
- from nations other than England (see figure 2).

Figure 1 – If you woke up tomorrow with an eye problem, such as something in your eye, a red eye or blurred vision, where would you go or who would you speak to first?
Compared with previous years
Base: All respondents 2019 (2,000) / 2017 (3,025) / 2016 (3,252) / 2015 (2,250)

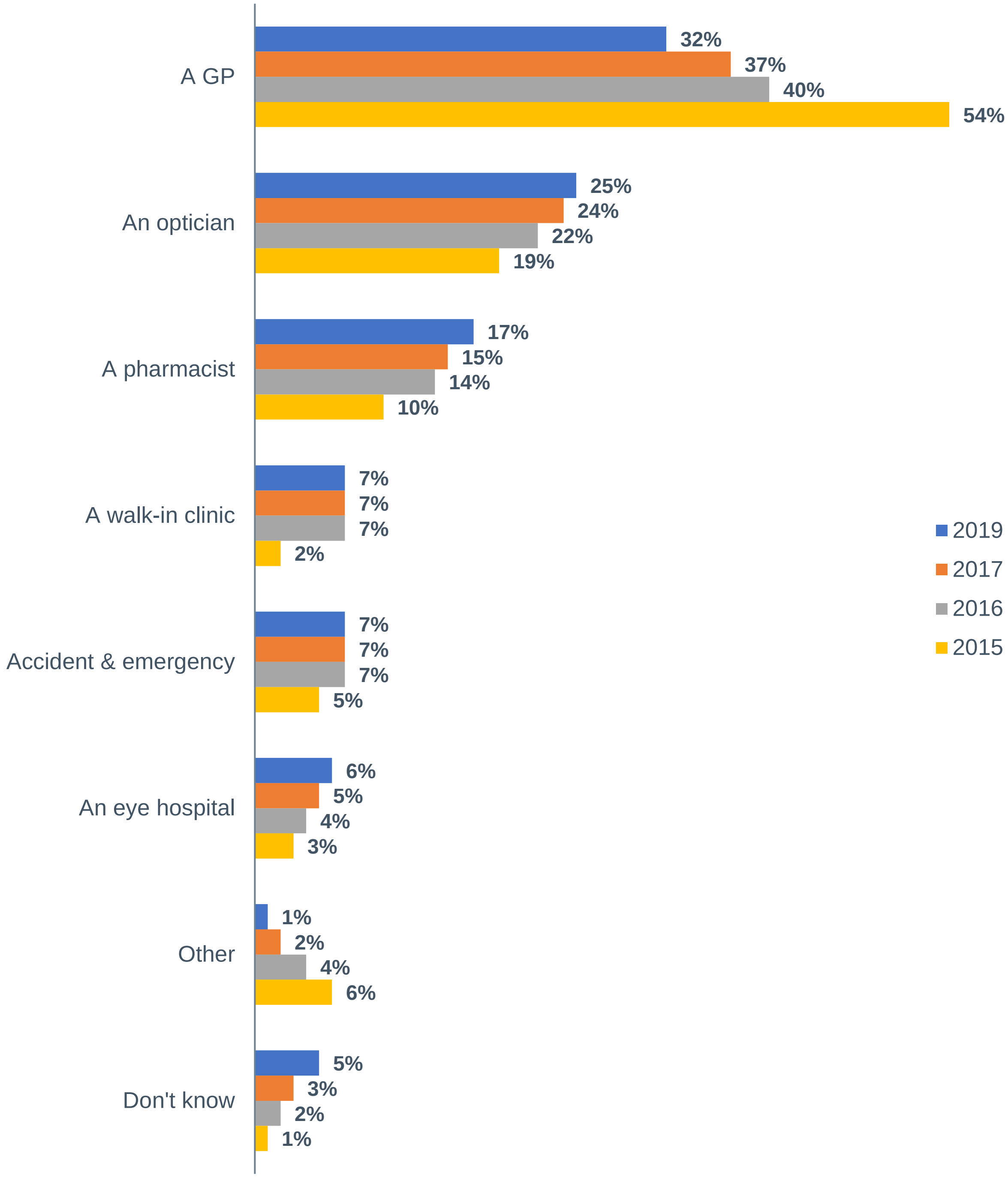


Figure 2 – Percentage of respondents by nation who would choose to go to an optician first if they woke up tomorrow with an eye problem
Base: 493 respondents

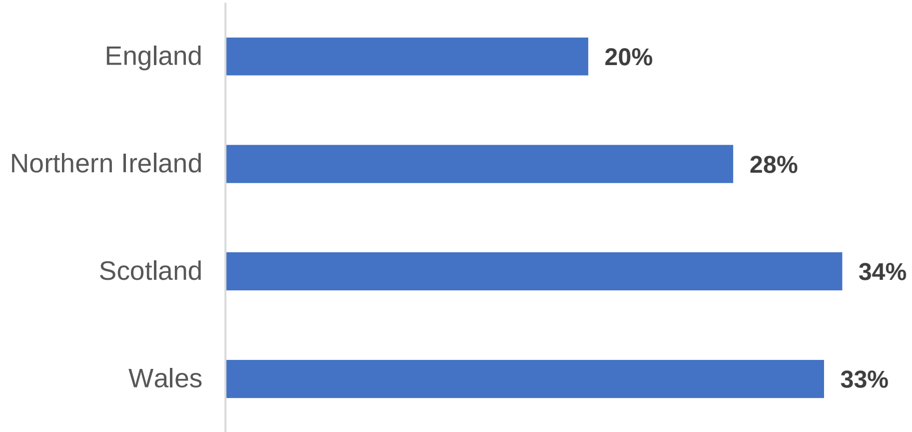
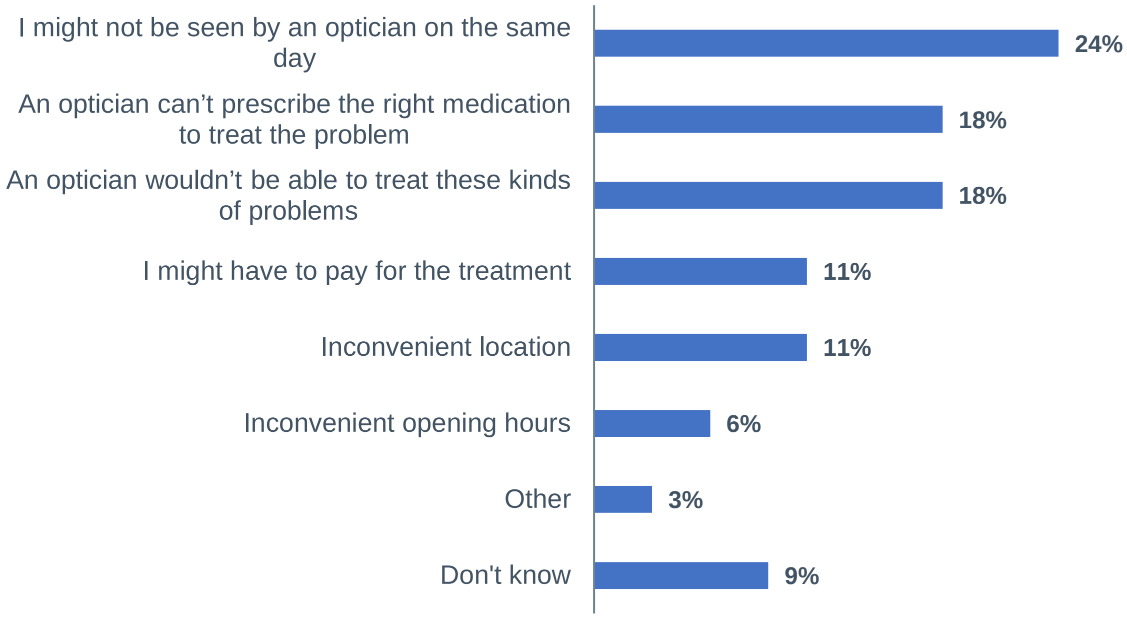


Figure 3 – Why would you choose *not* to go to an optician first in this situation?
Base: Those who would not choose to go to an optician first (1,379)



3.2 Healthcare service or retailer?

When asked to think about whether they viewed opticians and other healthcare professions primarily as a healthcare service, a retailer or a combination of both, the vast majority of respondents thought that GPs and dentists were primarily a healthcare service (88% and 75% respectively), while almost half of respondents saw opticians and pharmacists as primarily a combination of a healthcare service and a retailer (46% and 47%). Less than a third of respondents (31%) saw opticians primarily as a healthcare service and 1 in 5 patients (20%) saw them primarily as a retailer. Figure 4 shows the results in more detail. Results across the nations did not differ significantly for those viewing opticians primarily as a healthcare service and there were slight differences in those viewing opticians as a retailer or as a combination of a healthcare service and a retailer, as can be seen from figure 5.

When making comparisons with previous years, there had been a small increase in respondents who saw opticians as a retailer (16% in 2017 compared with 20% in 2019) (see figure 6).

Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely to **view opticians as a healthcare service** (31% overall) included those who were patients (33%) compared to non-patients (25%).

Subgroups more likely to **view opticians as a retailer** (20% overall) included those who were:

- patients (16%) compared to non-patients (26%)
- male (23%) compared to female (16%).

Figure 4 – When you think about the following, do you think of them primarily as a healthcare service, a retailer or a combination of both?
Base: All respondents (2,000)

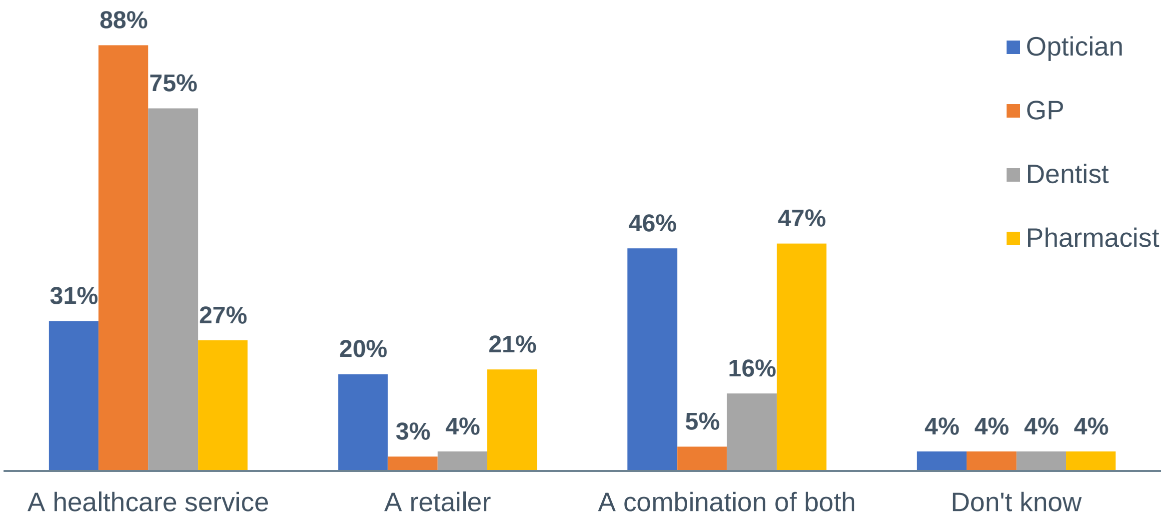


Figure 5 – When you think about <u>an optician</u>, do you think of them primarily as a healthcare service, a retailer or a combination of both? *Comparisons across the nations*

Base: All respondents (2,000) (England: 1,220; Northern Ireland: 260; Wales: 260; Scotland: 260)

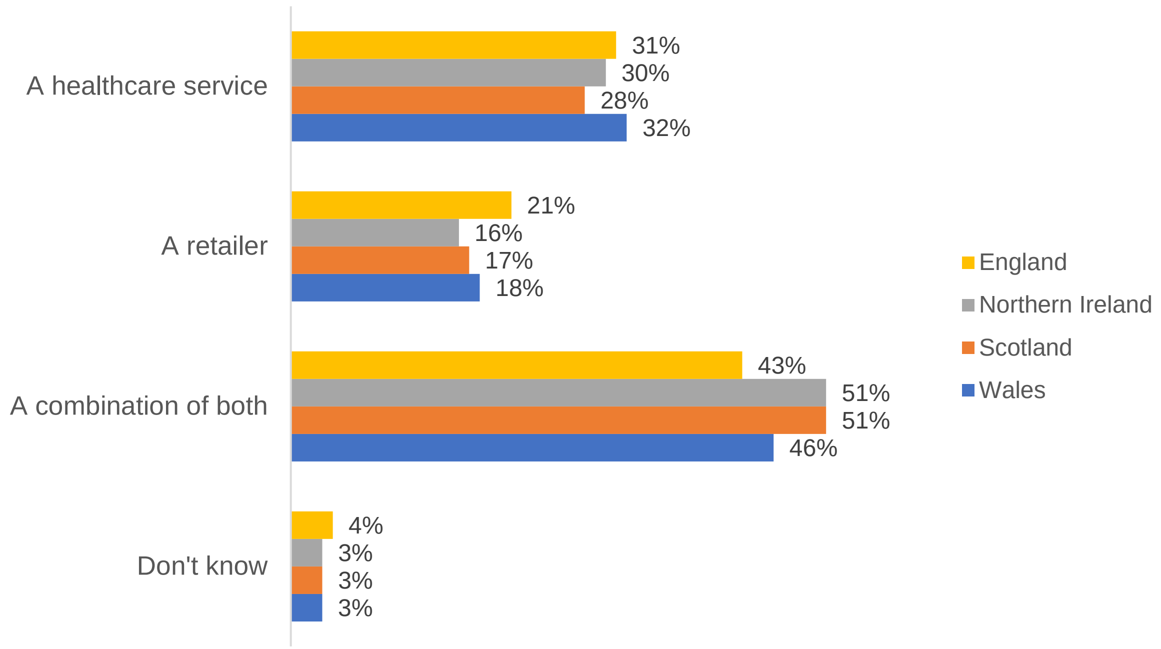
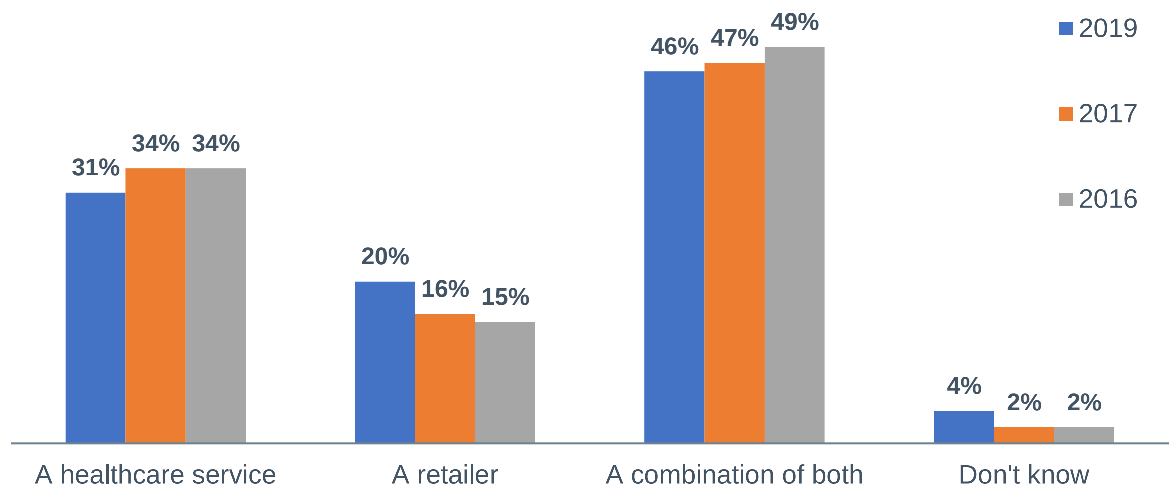


Figure 6 – When you think about <u>an optician</u>, do you think of them primarily as a healthcare service, a retailer or a combination of both? *Compared with previous years*

Base: All respondents 2019 (2,000) / 2017 (3,025) / 2016 (3,252)



4. Visiting an optician

4.1 Last reported visit to an optician

The results of the survey show that 69% of the population reported visiting an optician in the last two years (see figure 7), which is similar to the results of last year's survey at 72%. This does not necessarily mean that respondents had had an eye test at that visit but it is likely that if they are visiting an optician to purchase spectacles or contact lenses that they would have recently had an eye test. As with last year, those who had been to the optician in the last two years were more likely to be female and older.

The proportion that have been to the optician more than two years ago but less than five years ago has been steadily increasing since 2015 (8% in 2015 compared to 16% in 2019). Further details can be found in figure 8.

Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely to have **visited an optician in the last two years** (69% overall) included those who were:

- living in Northern Ireland (74%) and Wales (72%) compared to those living in England and Scotland (both 67%)
- female (73%) compared to male (64%)
- in the older age groups 65-74 and 75+ (both 85%) compared to the younger age groups 16-24 (59%) and 25-34 (58%).

Figure 7 – When was the last time you went to an optician?
Base: All respondents (2,000)

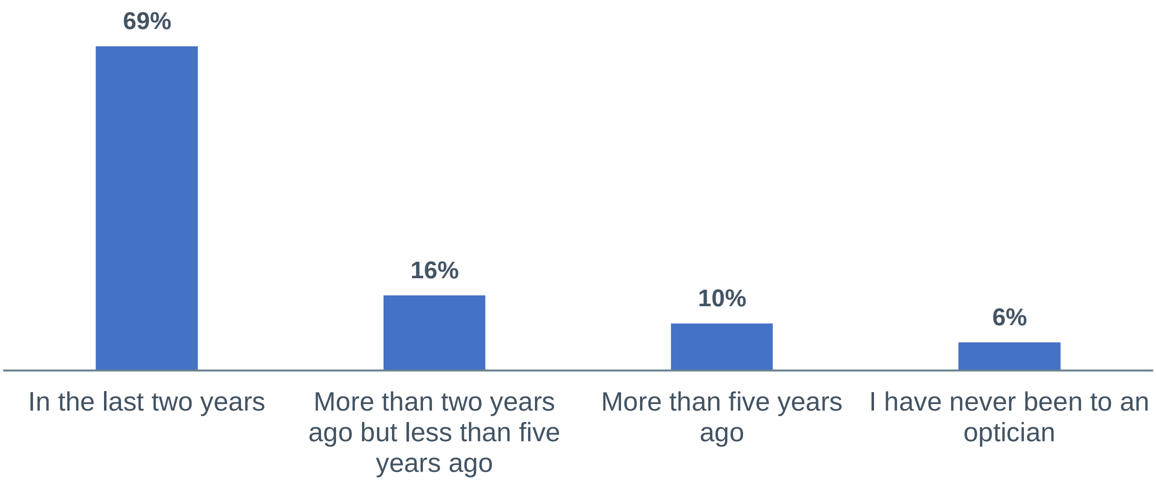
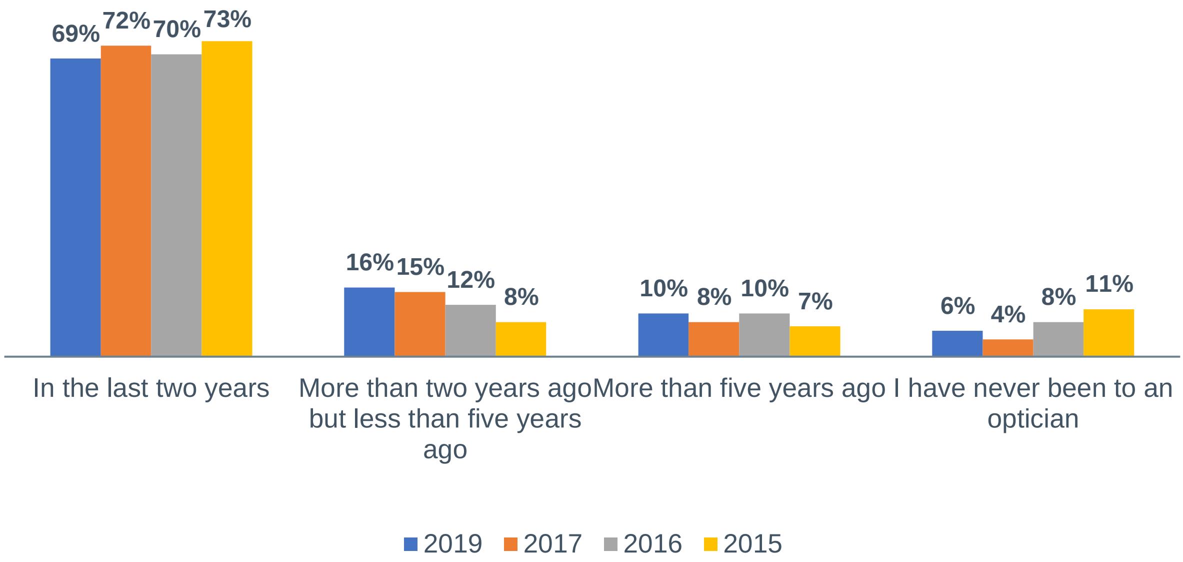


Figure 8 – When was the last time you went to an optician? *Compared with previous years*
Base: All respondents 2019 (2,000) / 2017 (3,025) / 2016 (3,252) / 2015 (2,250)



4.2 Comfort in visiting an optician

When asked if they ever felt uncomfortable about visiting an optician, more than half of respondents (59%) had either not felt uncomfortable about the list of options provided or had never felt uncomfortable (see figure 9). Of those respondents who did feel uncomfortable, these were small proportions, with the highest being 15% who had felt uncomfortable for the reason of pressure to buy glasses or contact lenses. Figure 10 shows that results have changed very little since the last survey in 2017.

Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely to have **never felt uncomfortable about visiting an optician** included those who were:

- patients (65%) compared to non-patients (46%)
- living in Northern Ireland (62%), Scotland (67%) and Wales (65%) compared to living in England (55%)
- in the older age groups 55-64 (74%), 65-74 (83%) and 75+ (85%) compared to the younger age groups 16-24 (35%) and 25-34 (39%).

Figure 9 – Have you ever felt uncomfortable about visiting an optician for any of the following reasons?
Base: All respondents (2,000)

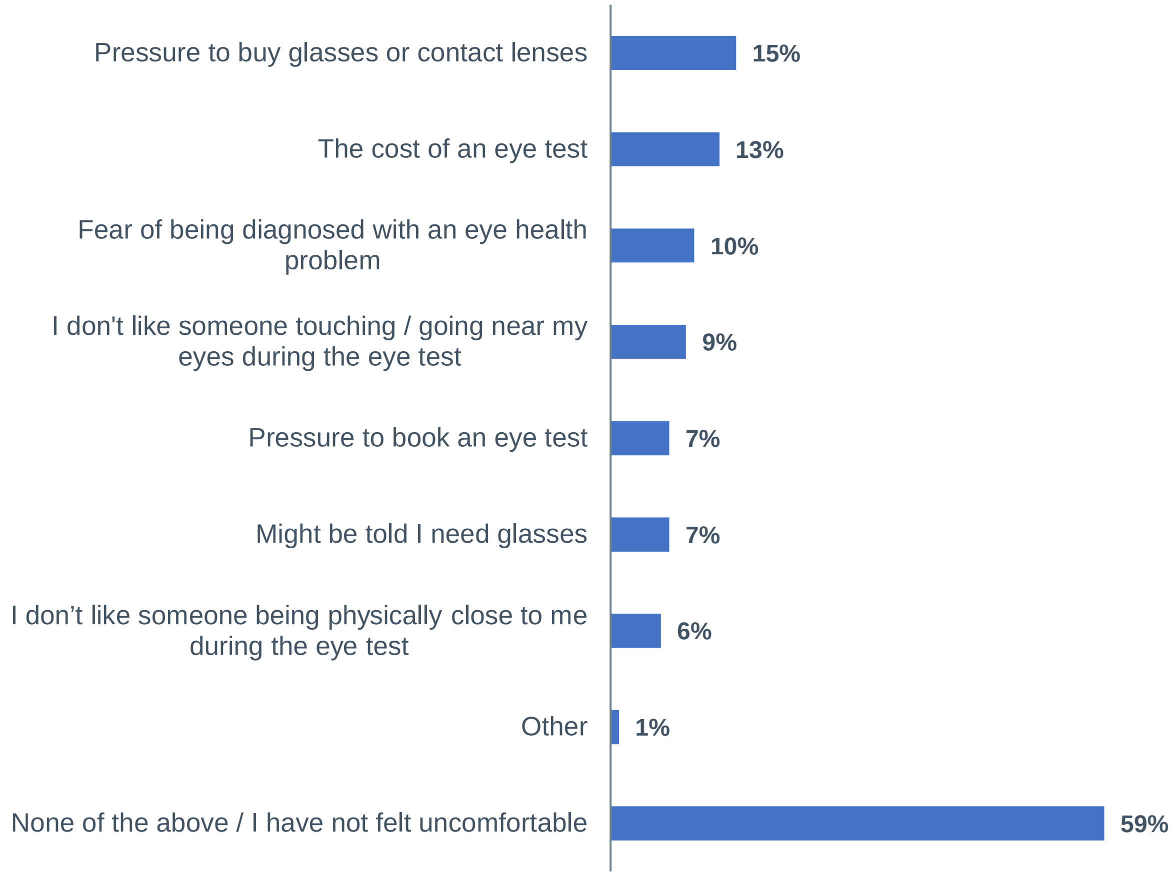
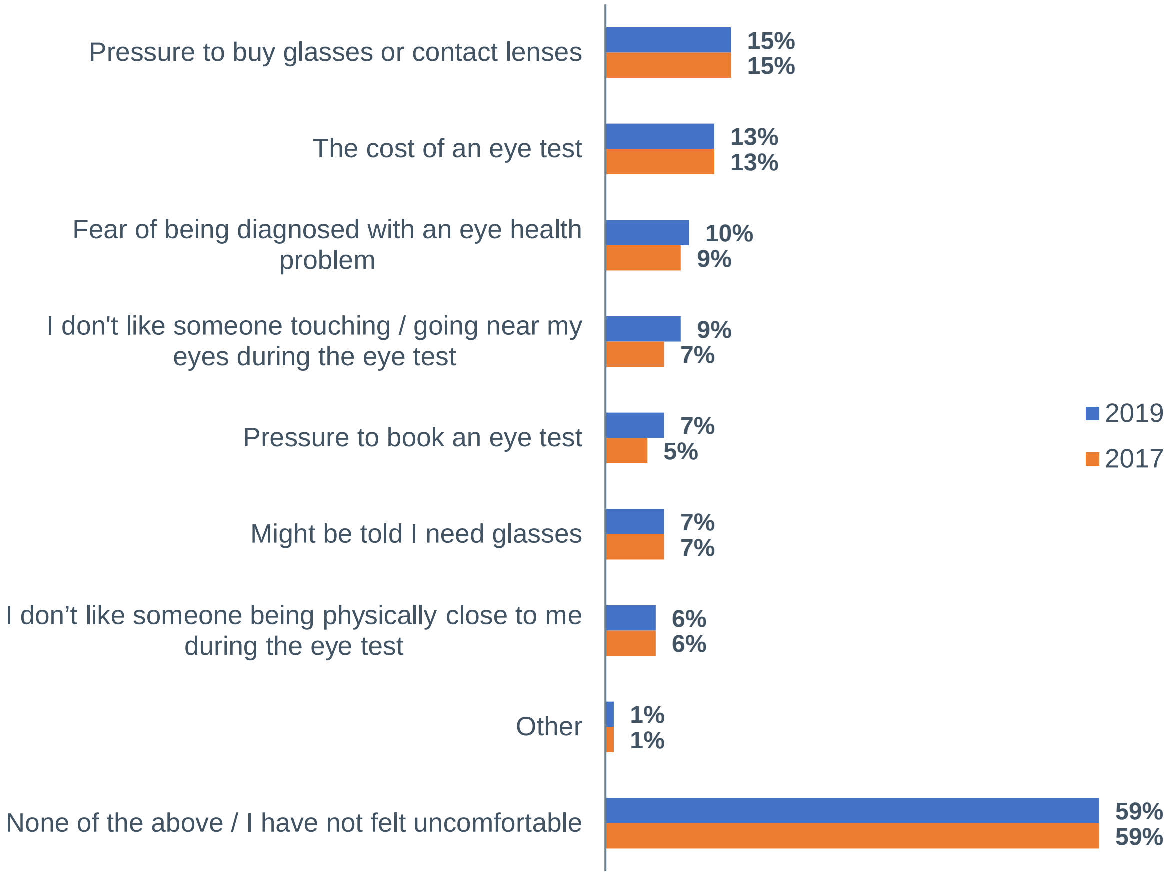


Figure 10 – Have you ever felt uncomfortable about visiting an optician for any of the following reasons? ***Compared with previous years***

Base: All respondents 2019 (2,000) / 2017 (3,025)



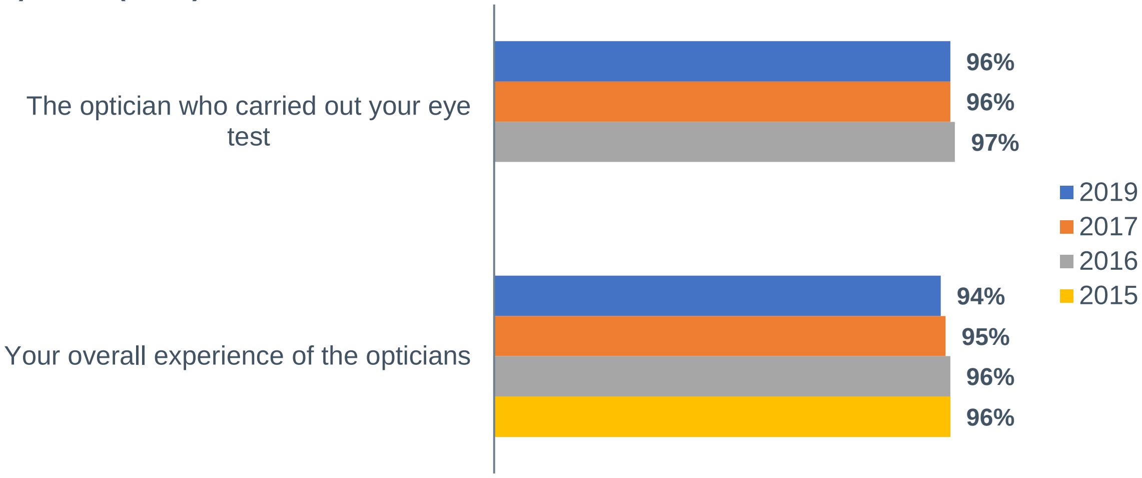
5. Satisfaction with most recent visit to an optician

The question about satisfaction was only asked to those who had visited an optician in the last two years (defined as patients). Satisfaction levels remain very high (see figure 11), with 96% of patients indicating that they were fairly or very satisfied with the optician who had carried out their eye test and 94% being satisfied with the overall experience of the opticians. Satisfaction levels have been at a similar level since our first public perceptions survey in 2015 (see figure 12).

Subgroup analysis Satisfaction levels with the **optician who carried out the eye test** (96% overall) and **overall experience of the opticians** (94% overall) were slightly higher amongst those who were 75+ (99%) compared to 16-24 (94%).

Figure 11 – How satisfied were you with the optician who carried out your eye test / your overall experience of the opticians? (% satisfied)
Base: Those who had visited an optician in the last two years (1,372)

Figure 12 – How satisfied were you with the optician who carried out your eye test / your overall experience of the opticians? (% satisfied) ***Compared with previous years***
Base: Those who had visited an optician in the last two years 2019 (1,372) / 2017 (2,184) / 2016 (2,274) / 2015 (1,653)



6. Complaints

Questions about complaints were only asked to those who had ever visited an optician. More than four in five (83%) respondents had not complained about an experience with an optician, with 6% having complained and 8% having considered complaining (see figure 13). The percentage of those who have complained has not varied significantly since our 2015 survey (see figure 14), but the percentage who have *not* complained has gone down from 92% in 2015 and 2016 to 83% in 2019. The percentage of those who have considered complaining has increased (from 2% in 2015 to 8% in 2019).

Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely ***not*** **to have complained** (83% in total) included those who were:

- living in Northern Ireland (93%) compared to England (80%)
- in the 55-64 (92%) and 65-74 (91%) age groups compared to the 16-24 age group (70%) and 25-34 age group (74%).

Figure 13 – Have you ever complained or considered complaining about an experience with an optician?
Base: Those who had ever visited an optician (1,886)

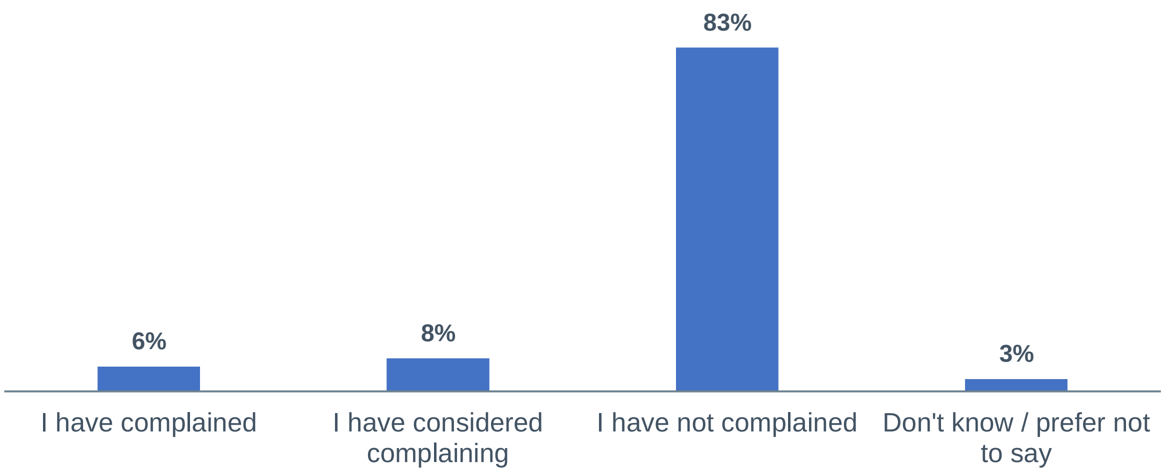
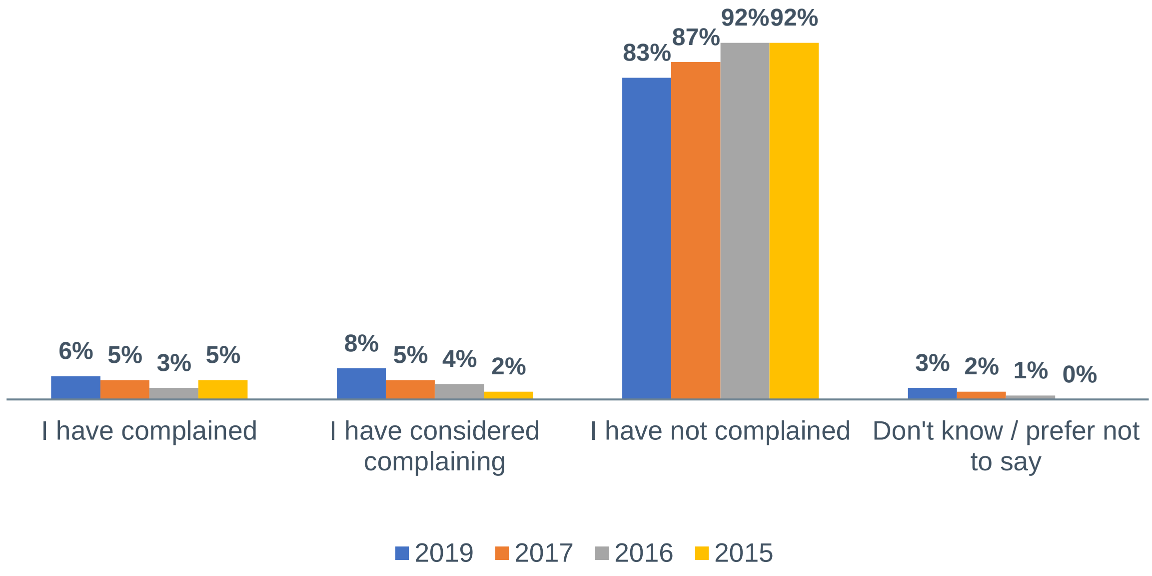


Figure 14 – Have you ever complained or considered complaining about an experience with an optician? ***Compared with previous years***

Base: Those who had ever visited an optician 2019 (1,886) / 2017 (2,895) / 2016 (2,983) / 2015 (1,994)



7. When something goes wrong

In April 2016 we introduced new *Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians* and *Standards for Optical Students* which requires optical professionals to be candid to patients and customers when something goes wrong and to provide an apology. We are therefore interested in how frequently something goes wrong for patients and whether they receive an apology when this happens.

These survey questions were asked to anyone who had ever visited an optician. Respondents were asked if they had ever experienced a situation where something had gone wrong with the care/service they received from an optician. Over four in five respondents (85%) indicated that they had not experienced this, with 13% indicating that they had (see figure 15). Figure 16 shows the comparison with previous surveys. Results have changed very little since 2017, but there has been a slight increase (from 9% in 2016 to 13% in 2019) of those who have experienced something going wrong, although a corresponding decrease of those who have not experienced something going wrong (90% in 2016 down to 85% in 2019).

Of those who had experienced a situation where something had gone wrong, 58% had received an apology and 41% had not. There has been a significant increase in those receiving an apology from when the question was first asked, rising from 42% in 2016, 56% in 2017 to a slight increase to 58% in 2019.

Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely **to have experienced a situation where something has gone wrong with the care/service they received from an optician** (13% overall) included those who were in the younger age groups 16-24 and 25-34 (both 19%) compared to the age groups 45-54 (9%), 55-64 (10%) and 65-74 (9%).

Subgroups more likely **to have received an apology from the optician as a result of something going wrong** (58% overall) included those who were:

- patients (60%) compared to non-patients (51%)
- male (65%) compared to female (50%)
- in the younger age groups 16-24 (68%) and 25-34 (69%) compared to the older age groups 65-74 (38%) and 75+ (35%)

NB Base sample sizes in these areas were particularly small so care should be taken when considering the subgroup analysis.

Figure 15 – Have you ever experienced a situation where something has gone wrong with the care/service you received from an optician?
Base: Those who had ever visited an optician (1,886)

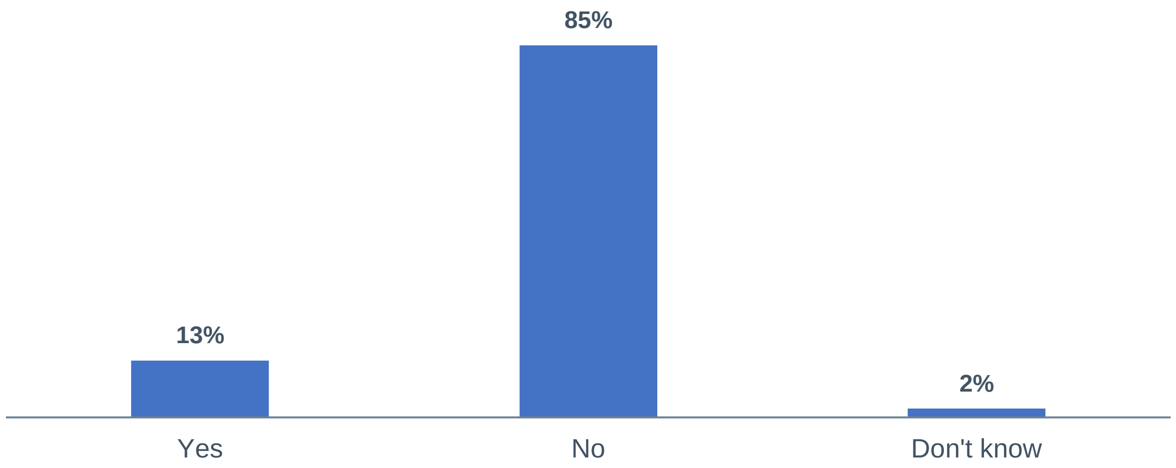


Figure 16 – Have you ever experienced a situation where something has gone wrong with the care/service you received from an optician? *Compared with previous years*
Base: Those who had ever visited an optician 2019 (1,886) / 2017 (2,895) / 2016 (2,983)

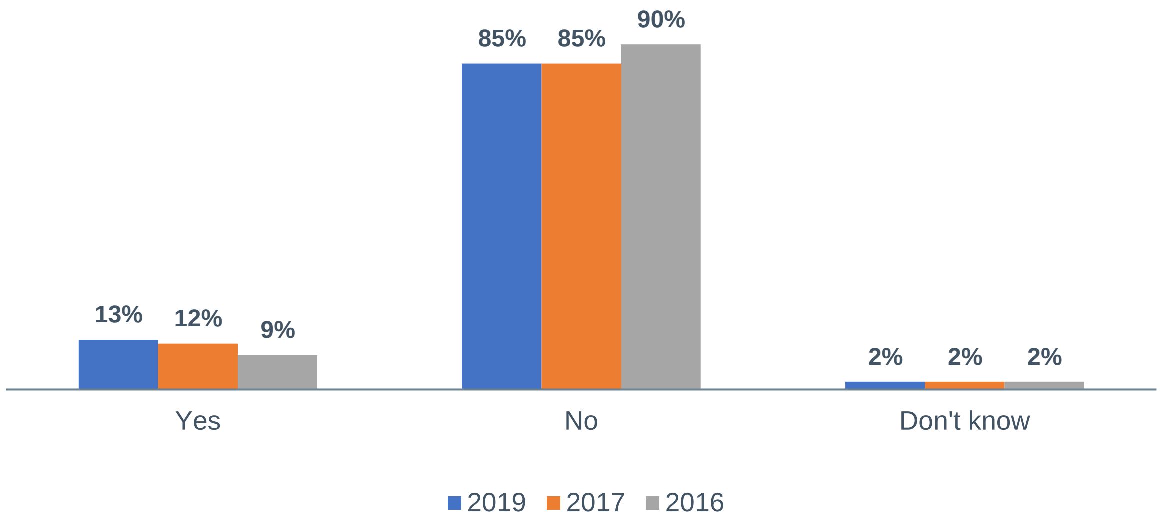
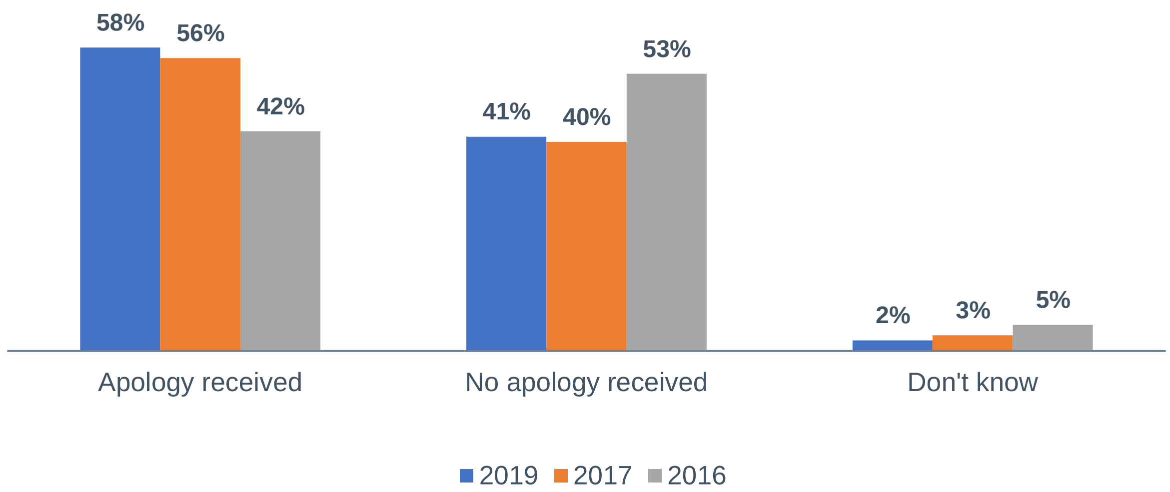


Figure 17 – Did you receive an apology as a result?
Base: Those who experience of something going wrong (249)

Figure 18 – Did you receive an apology as a result? *Compared with previous years*
Base: Those who experience of something going wrong 2019 (249) / 2017 (356) / 2016 (254)



8. Confidence in receiving a high standard of care

Respondents were asked how confident they were in receiving a high standard of care from GPs, dentists, opticians and pharmacists. Confidence levels were high in each of the four professions with 90% confidence in opticians, 88% confidence in GPs and pharmacists and 87% confidence in dentists (see figure 19). Confidence levels have not varied significantly since our first survey in 2015, with levels for GPs and dentists remaining the same for 2015 and 2019, and decreasing slightly for opticians (2 percentage points) and pharmacists (6 percentage points) (see figure 20).

Subgroup analysis

Subgroups more likely **to have confidence in receiving a high standard of care from an optician** (90% overall) included those who were:

- patients (95%) compared to non-patients (80%)
- female (92%) compared to male (88%)
- in the 65-74 age group (95%) compared to the 16-24 age group (86%).

Figure 19 – How confident or otherwise are you of receiving a high standard of care from each of the following healthcare professionals? (Total confident)
Base: All respondents (2,000)

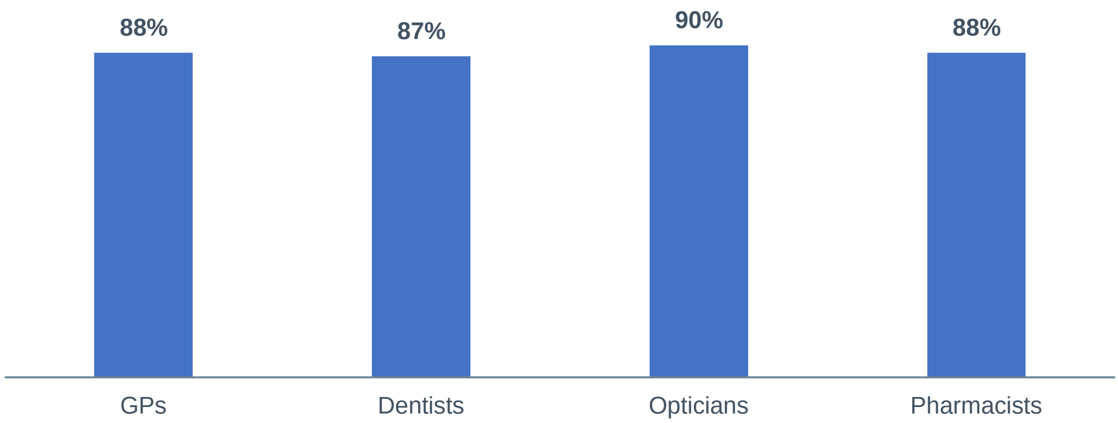
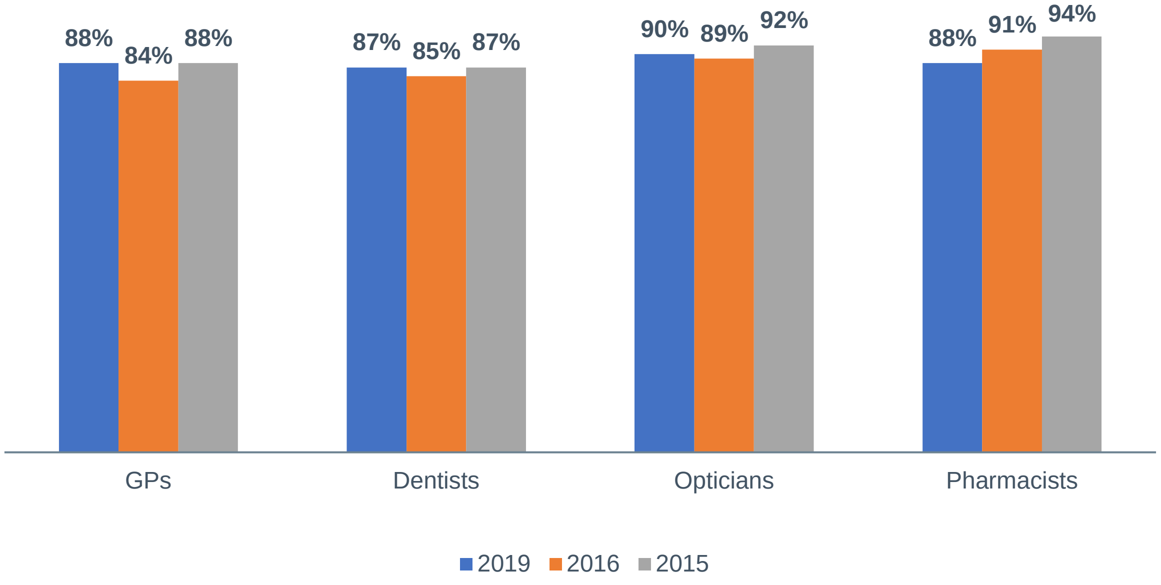


Figure 20 – How confident or otherwise are you of receiving a high standard of care from each of the following healthcare professionals? (Total confident)
Base: All respondents 2019 (2,000) / 2016 (3,252) / 2015 (2,250)



9. Conclusions

Public perceptions about the role of opticians

Public perceptions about the role of opticians do appear to have been changing at a slow but steady rate since 2015, with a quarter of respondents indicating that they would go to an optician if they woke up tomorrow with an eye health problem. The majority of respondents would still go to a GP but this decreased significantly over the last four years. The percentage of those would who go to a pharmacist has also been steadily increasing at a similar rate to those who would go to an optician.

Differences among the four UK nations are more prominent in relation to this question, with a significantly higher proportion of those in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales advising that they would go to an optician with an eye health problem. This is perhaps not surprising when considering the differences in commissioning eye health services in these nations compared with England.

Those that would choose not to go to an optician if they woke up with an eye health problem were most likely to cite reasons that they might not be seen by an optician on the same day, that an optician could not prescribe the right medication or that they would not be able to treat those kinds of problems.

The public continues to view opticians primarily as a combination of a healthcare service and a retailer (similar to pharmacists). Results in this area have not differed significantly over the last three years.

Visiting an optician

A strong majority of the population continue to visit an optician regularly, with higher proportions of females and older age groups. Most of the public continues not to feel uncomfortable when visiting an optician but a significant minority do feel uncomfortable about the pressure to buy glasses or contact lenses. Patients are more likely to feel comfortable visiting an optician than non-patients, as are older age groups. Results in this area have changed very little since the last survey in 2017.

Continued high levels of satisfaction

There continues to be very high levels of satisfaction with both individual opticians and the overall experience of going to the opticians, with very little variation in results since the 2015 survey.

Continued low level of complaints

There continues to be a low level of complaints, with a very small percentage of the population having complained. This has not changed since our first survey in 2015, although the proportion who have not complained has slightly decreased. It is interesting to note that although the proportion of those considering complaining has increased, this had not led to a proportional increase in those complaining. Those who had not complained were more likely to be in the older age groups and more likely to be living in Northern Ireland than England.

When something goes wrong

Only just over a tenth of respondents had experienced anything going wrong with the care that they received, which has risen slightly since we first asked the question in 2016. Those who had experienced something going wrong were more likely to be in the younger age groups. We need to be careful when considering the results in this area as it is a small sample size.

Of those that did experience something going wrong, around three fifths had received an apology and two fifths had not. These numbers have been increasing since we first asked this question in our 2016 survey. Those that had received an apology were more likely to be male, in the younger age groups and living in Scotland. It is interesting to note that patients (i.e. those who had visited an optician in the last two years) were more likely to have received an apology than non-patients. This finding, together with the increase in the number of apologies, may indicate that our duty of candour set out in our standards introduced in 2016 could be having an impact on the profession.

Confidence in receiving a high standard of care

Confidence levels in opticians remains very high, alongside the other healthcare professions that we asked about. The levels for opticians have not varied significantly from our first survey in 2015.

Appendix A – Survey questions

1. Please confirm your gender

☐ Male
☐ Female

2. What age range do you fall into?

☐ 16 - 24
☐ 25 - 34
☐ 35 - 44
☐ 45 - 54
☐ 55 - 64
☐ 65 - 74
☐ 75 +

3. In which region do you live?

☐ North East
☐ Yorkshire and Humber
☐ West Midlands
☐ London
☐ South West
☐ Scotland
☐ North West
☐ East Midlands
☐ East of England
☐ South East
☐ Wales
☐ Northern Ireland

4. To which of these groups do you consider you belong?

☐ White (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Other)
☐ Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other)
☐ Black or Black British (Caribbean, African, Other)
☐ Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
☐ Other ethnic group (please describe)
☐ Prefer not to say

5. If you woke up tomorrow with an eye problem, such as something in your eye, a red eye or blurred vision, where would you go or who would you speak to first? *Please select one option only*

☐ A GP
☐ Accident & Emergency
☐ A walk-in clinic
☐ An optician
☐ Other *Please specify*
☐ An eye hospital
☐ A pharmacist
☐ Other
☐ Don’t know

6. Why would you choose not to go to an optician first in this situation? *Please select one option only* [ONLY ASK IF DOES NOT ANSWER ‘AN OPTICIAN’ TO Q5]

☐ An optician wouldn't be able to treat these kinds of problems
☐ I might have to pay for the treatment
☐ Inconvenient location
☐ Inconvenient opening hours
☐ I might not be seen by an optician on the same day
☐ An optician can't prescribe the right medication to treat the problem
☐ Other
☐ Don't know

7. Have you ever felt uncomfortable about visiting an optician for any of the following reasons? *Please select all that apply*

☐ Pressure to buy glasses or contact lenses
☐ Might be told I need glasses
☐ Fear of being diagnosed with an eye health problem (such as glaucoma or macular degeneration)
☐ The cost of an eye test
☐ Pressure to book an eye test
☐ I don't like someone touching/going near my eyes during the eye test
☐ I don't like someone being physically close to me during the eye test
☐ Other
☐ None of the above / I have not felt uncomfortable

8. When was the last time you went to an optician?

☐ In the last two years
☐ More than two years ago but less than five years ago
☐ More than five years ago
☐ I have never been to an optician

9. How satisfied or otherwise were you with the following? [ASK IF Q8 = LAST TWO YEARS]

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Don't know *I* can't remember
The optician who carried out your eye test	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your overall experience of the opticians	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. When you think about the following, do you think of them primarily as a healthcare service, a retailer or a combination of both?

	A healthcare service	A retailer	A combination of both	Don't know
An optician	☐	☐	☐	☐
A GP	☐	☐	☐	☐
A dentist	☐	☐	☐	☐
A pharmacist	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. Have you ever complained or considered complaining about an experience with an optician? [ASK IF Q8 = EVER VISITED AN OPTICIAN]

☐ Yes, I complained
☐ Yes, I considered complaining
☐ No
☐ Don't know
☐ Prefer not to say

12. Have you ever experienced a situation where something has gone wrong with the care/service you received from an optician? [ASK IF Q8 = EVER VISITED AN OPTICIAN]

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

13. Did you receive an apology from the optician as a result? [ASK IF Q12 = YES]

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

14. How confident or otherwise are you of receiving a high standard of care from each of the following healthcare professions?

	Very confident	Fairly confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know
An optician	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A GP	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A dentist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A pharmacist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix B – Respondent profile

Demographic	Count	Percentage
Gender		
Male	999	50%
Female	1,001	50%
Age		
16 – 24	271	14%
25 – 34	318	16%
35 – 44	340	17%
45 – 54	359	18%
55 – 64	310	16%
65 – 74	231	12%
75 +	168	8%
UK Nation		
England	1,220	61%
Wales	260	13%
Scotland	260	13%
Northern Ireland	260	13%
English region		
North East	80	7%
North West	148	12%
Yorkshire and Humber	100	8%
East Midlands	119	10%
West Midlands	145	12%
East of England	108	9%
London	209	17%
South East	207	17%
South West	104	9%
Ethnicity		
White (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Other)	1,775	89%
Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other)	102	5%
Black or Black British (Caribbean, African, Other)	48	2%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	26	1%
Other ethnic group	13	1%
Prefer not to say	36	2%