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***Optometrists And Opticians Board***  
***Annual Report 2013***

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## 1. OPTOMETRISTS AND OPTICIANS BOARD MEMBERS

Position	Name	Designation
Chairman	Dr. Khoo Chong Yew	<b>Ophthalmologist</b> Raffles Eye Centre
Director-General of Education (Representative)	Mr. K. Govindan	<b>Senior Quality Assessor</b> School Appraisal Branch Schools Division Ministry of Education
Registrar	Dr. Harold Tan	<b>Registrar (OOB)</b> Ministry of Health
Members	Dr. Anna Yeo	<b>Optometrist</b> Essilor Asia
	Mr. Anthony Tay	<b>Optometrist</b> Western Eyecare Pte Ltd
	Mr. Chandra Mohan K Nair	<b>Advocate &amp; Solicitor</b> Tan Rajah & Cheah
	Ms. Caroline Lau	<b>Optician (Refraction &amp; Dispensing)</b> Yi Eyecare Pte Ltd
	Ms. Jacqueline Tay	<b>Optometrist</b> Singapore National Eye Centre
	Dr. Lim Boon Ang	<b>Ophthalmologist</b> Department of Ophthalmology Tan Tock Seng Hospital
	Mr. Peter Koh	<b>Optician (Contact Lens Practitioner)</b> The Lens Men and The Eye Site
	Mr. Roland J Izaac	<b>Optometrist</b> Philip D Izaac Pte Ltd
	Dr. Yvonne Ling	<b>Ophthalmologist</b> Singapore National Eye Centre

## 2. CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

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A key function of the Board is to review applications for registration and maintain an updated register. This year, the Ministry of Health developed a new Professional Registration System ("PRS") for all healthcare professional boards under the ministry. In the past, practitioners submitted manual applications for registration and updating of particulars. With the new PRS, practitioners could submit all applications online. The functions of the system have been continuously reviewed and upgraded and more functions will be integrated into the new PRS in the near future.

Together with the launch of PRS, all practitioners were issued with a new registration number. This is also in line with the common practice with other healthcare professionals, where all practitioners were assigned a unique permanent registration number. The Registration Certificate (RC) would therefore need to be replaced. All practitioners would be notified to do the RC exchange upon their next renewal of Practising Certificate by 2014.

In the past two years, the Board has taken a more active role in refining its course accreditation framework to ensure the quality of local opticianry and optometry course. As the industry grows, many experienced opticians had expressed keen interest to pursue further in their career as an Optometrist. Parkway College has since developed a part-time diploma in optometry and submitted its course curriculum to the Board for review. We are pleased to announce that the new Diploma in Optometry (Part-time) by Parkway College Board was granted provisional accreditation.

Together with my committed Board and Committee members, we look forward to review and develop new operational policies necessary to fulfill our functions under the Optometrists and Opticians Act.

Dr Khoo Chong Yew  
Chairman  
Optometrists and Opticians Board

### 3. INTRODUCTION

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The Optometrists and Opticians Board (the “Board”) is a professional Board established under the Optometrists & Opticians Act (Chapter 213A) (the “Act”) that was passed in parliament in July 2007. The Act serves to ensure that those who provide eye care services in Singapore are qualified and properly trained so as to assure the public receives safe and quality eye care services.

The Board sets the standards required for registration, approves registration, and practising certificates for optometrists and opticians, and regulates the conduct and practice of optometrists and opticians. As at 31 Dec 2013, the Board has in the register, a total of 2,461 registered optometrists and opticians.

Table 1- No. of registrants in each category from 2008 to 2013

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Optometrists</b>	588	729	754	820	893	981
<b>Optician (R + D)</b>	1,335	1,325	1,293	1,280	1,289	1294
<b>Optician (D)</b>	177	175	222	204	140	162
<b>Optician (CLP)</b>	65	27	27	27	26	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,165</b>	<b>2,256</b>	<b>2,296</b>	<b>2,331</b>	<b>2,348</b>	<b>2,461</b>

Under the Optometrists and Opticians Act (Chapter 213A), the Minister can appoint between 10 to 12 members to establish the Board. The current Board members are made up of three Ophthalmologists, four Optometrists and two Opticians from both private and public sectors. The remaining three members are the Registrar of the Optometrists and Opticians Board, a representative from the Ministry of Education and a Lay Member to represent the interest of persons receiving optometry and opticianry service.

The functions of the Board as prescribed by the Act are:

- a) To approve or reject applications for registration under the Act and to approve any such applications subject to such restrictions as it may think fit;
- b) To accredit courses in the practice of optometry and opticianry in Singapore for the purposes of registration;
- c) To issue guidelines on the standards for the practice of optometry and opticianry;
- d) To make recommendations to the appropriate authorities for the training and education of optometrists and opticians;
- e) To determine and regulate the conduct and ethics of optometrists and opticians; and
- f) Generally to do all such acts, matters and things as are necessary to be carried out under or for the purpose of the Act.

## 4. KEY HIGHLIGHTS

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### 4.1 COURSE ACCREDITATION

One of the Board's functions is to accredit courses in the practice of optometry and opticianry in Singapore for the purposes of registration. To maintain the education and practice standards, the Board has set up an accreditation framework to recognize local optometry and opticianry courses.

In 2010, Parkway College approached the Board and applied for accreditation for its Diploma in Optometry (Part-time) course. The main aim of the course was to be able to provide a pathway for opticians who are keen to start their career as an optometrist.

As it was the first part-time course, the Board's Accreditation Committee worked closely with Parkway College on setting up the course. This year, the Board is pleased to announce that the part-time diploma was granted provisional accreditation. The course had successfully completed its enrollment and the class commenced in Oct 2013. The duration of the course is 3 years, and graduated students would be eligible to apply as provisional Optometrist.

The part-time diploma course would be expected to undergo a course audit by the Board to ensure consistency of standard and quality of graduates. To date, the Diploma in Optometry, Ngee Ann Polytechnic and NITEC in Opticianry, ITE, were also granted provisional accreditation.

### 4.2 NEW PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The Ministry of Health developed a new Professional Registration System ("PRS") for all healthcare professional boards under the Ministry, sharing a common platform for handling all registration matters for the professionals.

The implementation of this system was completed by 2013, and the new PRS for Optometrists and Opticians Board ("OOB") was launched in Aug 2013. The functions in the PRS include registration, renewal of practicing certificates, finance and administration functions and professional searches etc.

All active practitioners were given a set of login ID and password. With the launch of PRS, practitioners could submit and monitor applications online. Online payment methods were also made available to practitioners for ease of applications.

The Board would continue to review the system to improve user experience.

### 4.3 REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE EXCHANGE

With the launch of the new system, all OOB registrants were issued a new Registration Number starting with the prefix "E". All registrants were informed of the new PRS launch and their new OOB login ID and password to access the online system.

With the change of Registration Number, the information on all existing Registration Certificate (RC) and Practising Certificate (PC) would need to be updated. Registrants were

informed that the replacement would only take place at their next point of PC renewal or new application.

The first batch of registrants whose PC expiry was 31 Dec 2013 had started the exchange process. To date, 30% had come forward for the exchange. All registrants are to be reminded that their RC with old registration number would not be valid after 31 December 2014.

#### 4.4 REGISTRATIONS

Since the Board started regulating the industry in 2008, there has been a steady supply of optometrists and opticians

Table 2- New registrants from 2008 to 2013

Register Type	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Optometrists	77	117	176	135	166
Optician (Dispensing)	6	26	51	27	25
Optician (Refraction + Dispensing)	23	72	81	74	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>246</b>

## 5. COMPLAINTS

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### 5.1 COMPLAINTS AGAINST OPTOMETRISTS AND OPTICIANS

The Board received a total of three complaints against registered optometrists and opticians in 2013. These are summarized below:

#### **Complaint 1**

In June 2013, the Board received a complaint against an optician for professional misconduct. Complainant had bought a spectacle frame and visited an optical shop to have his lenses made. However, upon collection, complainant claimed that his vision with new lenses had worsened.

As the optician knew that the complainant would be seeing an ophthalmologist in two months, the optician held on to the new spectacle and the deposit, and suggested to replace new lenses after for complainant returns with a new prescription from the ophthalmologist.

Complainant felt that the practitioner did not handle his feedback professionally and had unethically held his frames and deposit. Complainant also provided feedback that the refraction room did not meet professional standards.

The Board concurred to inquire further into the complaint. Inquiry is currently ongoing.

#### **Complaint 2**

The Board was informed that OOB practitioners were involved in endorsements of contact lens in Acuvue advertorials. In each advertorial, the registered person was invited to provide professional views on wearing contact lens and related topics. However, there were many direct endorsements to the product.

The Board investigated and deemed that they have contravened Article 7 (Advertising and publicity) of the Code of Professional Conduct and Professional Practice Guidelines. After considering their explanations, all seven practitioners were issued with letter of advice in lieu of disciplinary actions.

All registrants are hereby reminded to be aware of regulations and practice guidelines issued by the Board at all times.

#### **Complaint 3**

In 2013, the MOH received a complaint on possible patient mismanagement and misalignment in practices at an optometry clinic. Investigations had been completed and the reports are now being reviewed.

The Board is currently inquiring into the practice of the registered persons involved.

## 5.2 CONVICTIONS

### **Case 1 - Neo Teck Soon**

The Board was informed that an optometrist, Neo Teck Soon (“Neo”), was convicted of sales of counterfeit contact lenses.

The optometrist, who worked at optical shop H2Hub at the time of the offences, had regularly purchased Freshlook Colorblends contact lenses on behalf of his store. However, another optometrist, Koh Peng Kiat (“Koh”) later told him he knew someone with many boxes of lenses bearing this trademark. Koh then helped to arrange for the other person to supply 100 boxes of these lenses to Neo.

Neo later sold these boxes to another optical shop. Two customers later exchanged 82 boxes with CIBA Vision Singapore with different lens power and colors. Ciba Vision Singapore detected anomalies and samples analyzed were later found to be counterfeit.

Neo was aware of the disparity between the price which he bought from CIBA Vision Singapore and those he bought through Koh. The Board considered that Neo ought to have suspected, and could have taken reasonable precaution and diligence to ascertain the genuineness of the trade mark.

Neo pleaded guilty to contravening the Trade Marks Act by selling 100 pairs of contact lenses that falsely bore the registered trademark of Freshlook Colorblends and to five charges of supplying counterfeit health products in April 2012. Neo was fined \$30,000 in Dec 2012.

### **Case 2 - Seow Wee Chai and Wong Sok Fong**

In March 2012, MOH enforcement Branch was informed that there was evidence that contact lenses were being sold at Vision 768, an optical shop which did not have any optometrists who could dispense contact lenses.

Officers from MOH conducted an inspection and investigation revealed that Ms Wong Sok Fong, an optician (dispensing and refraction) had been dispensing various brands and types of contact lenses (both cosmetic and prescription lenses) to customers.

Under the Optometrists and Opticians Act (OO Act), only registered optometrists and opticians (contact lens practitioners) could dispense any type of contact lens. Wong committed an offence under Section 25(1) and hence punishable for dispensing contact lenses when she was registered as a qualified person to do so.

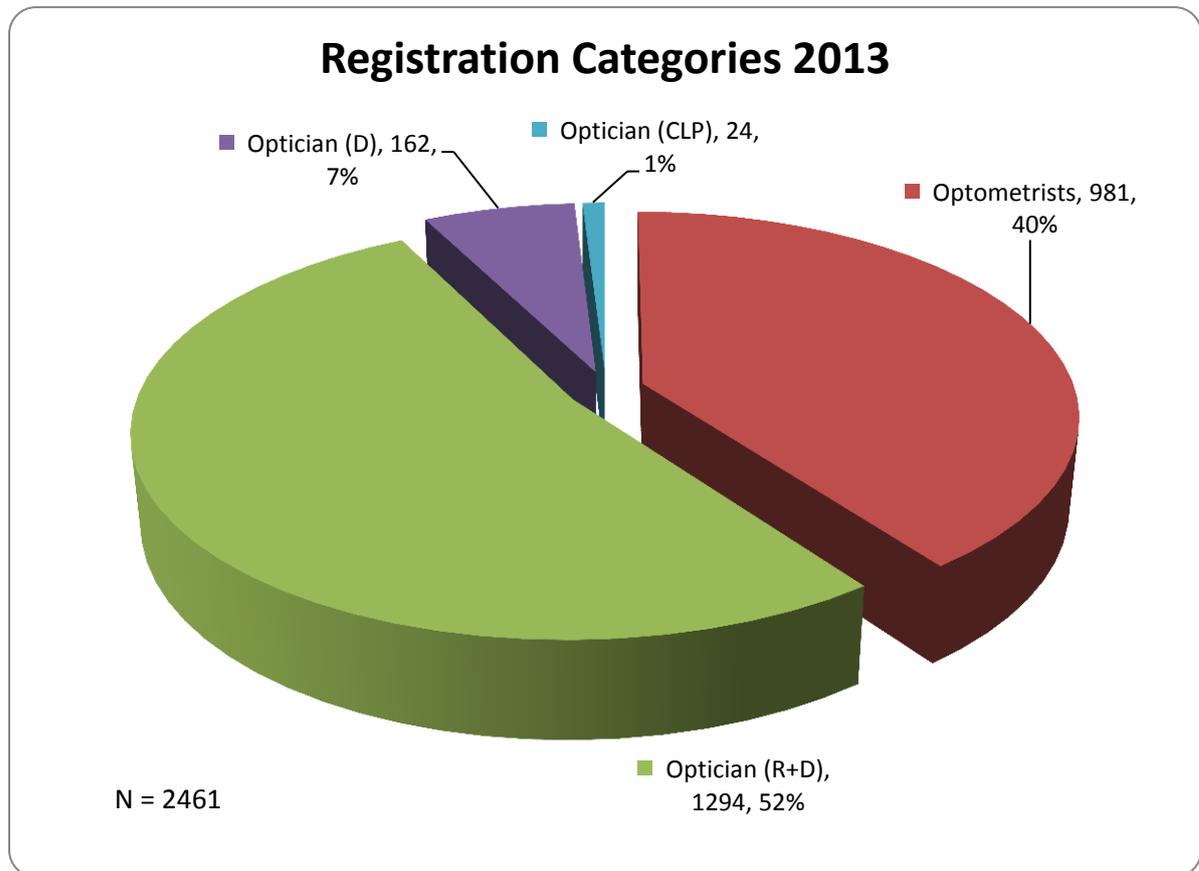
Wong was charged in court for unlawful engagement in optometry, under Sec 25(1)(a) of the OOA (Cap 213A). She was fined \$3,000, in-default of 12 days imprisonment.

The employer, Seow Wee Chai, was charged in court for employing unqualified person to carry out the practice of optometry, under Sec 25(2) of the OO Act. He was fined \$9,000 in-default of 25 days imprisonment.

## APPENDIX I:

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### 1. Chart 1 : Registration Categories 2013



## 2. Profiles of Optometrists 2013

Chart 2.1 No. Of Optometrists By Registration Type

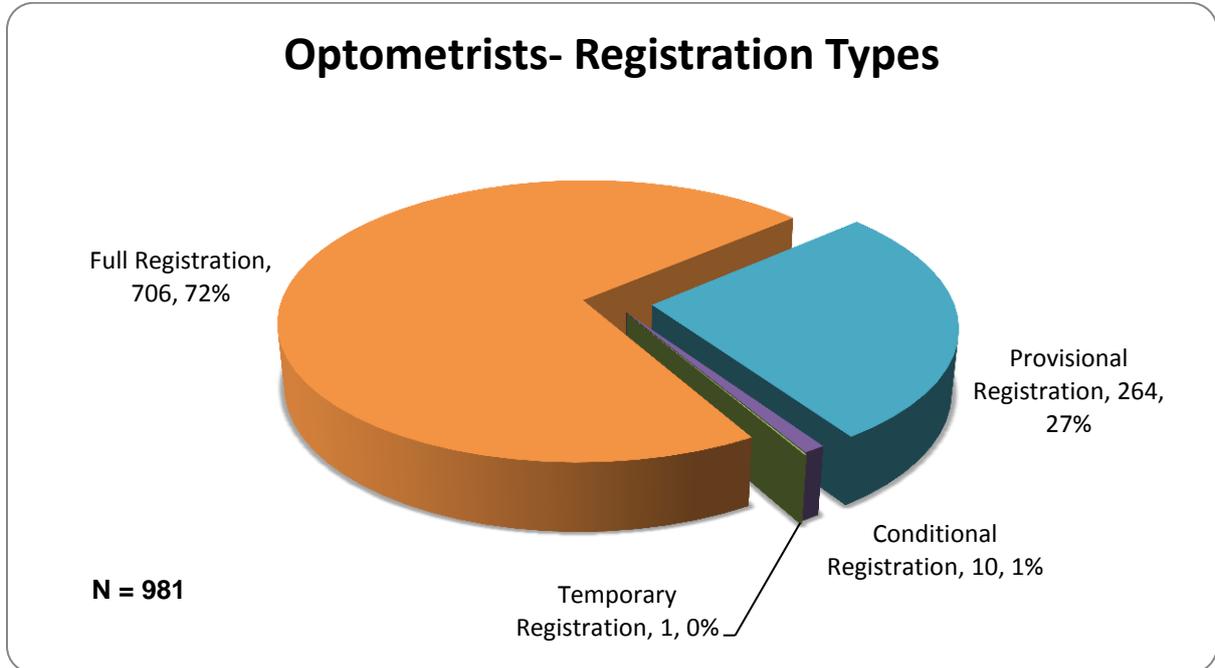


Chart 2.2- No. Of Optometrist By Age Group

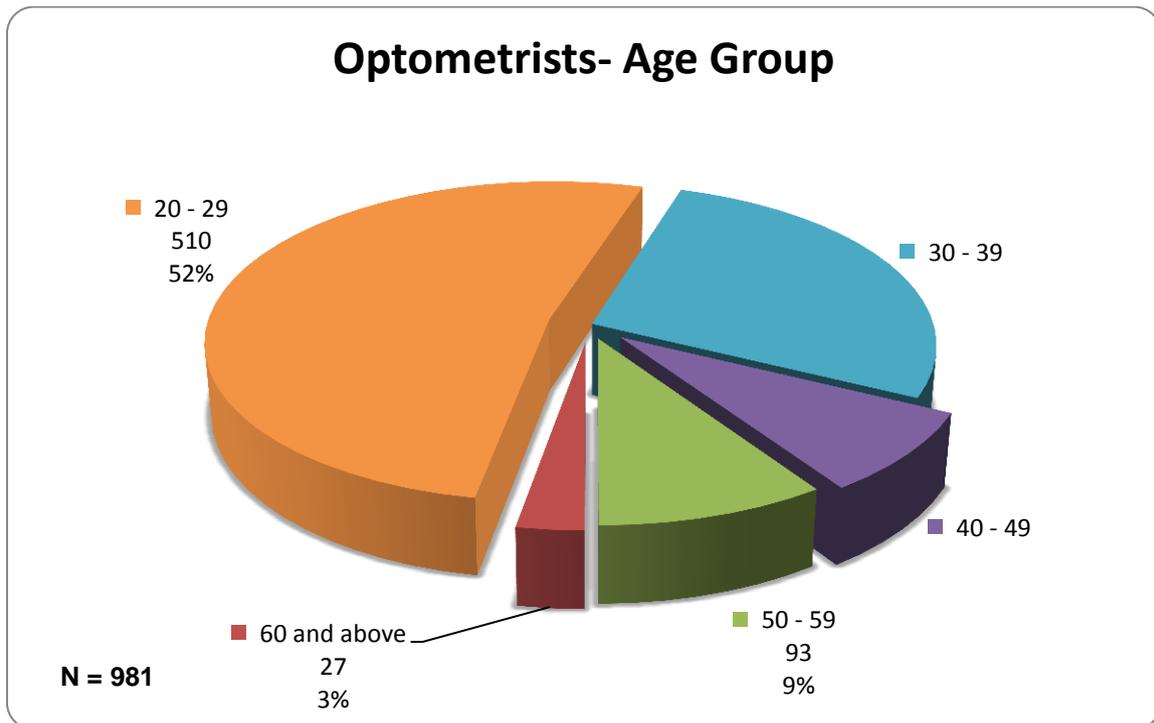


Chart 2.3- No. Of Optometrist By Nationality

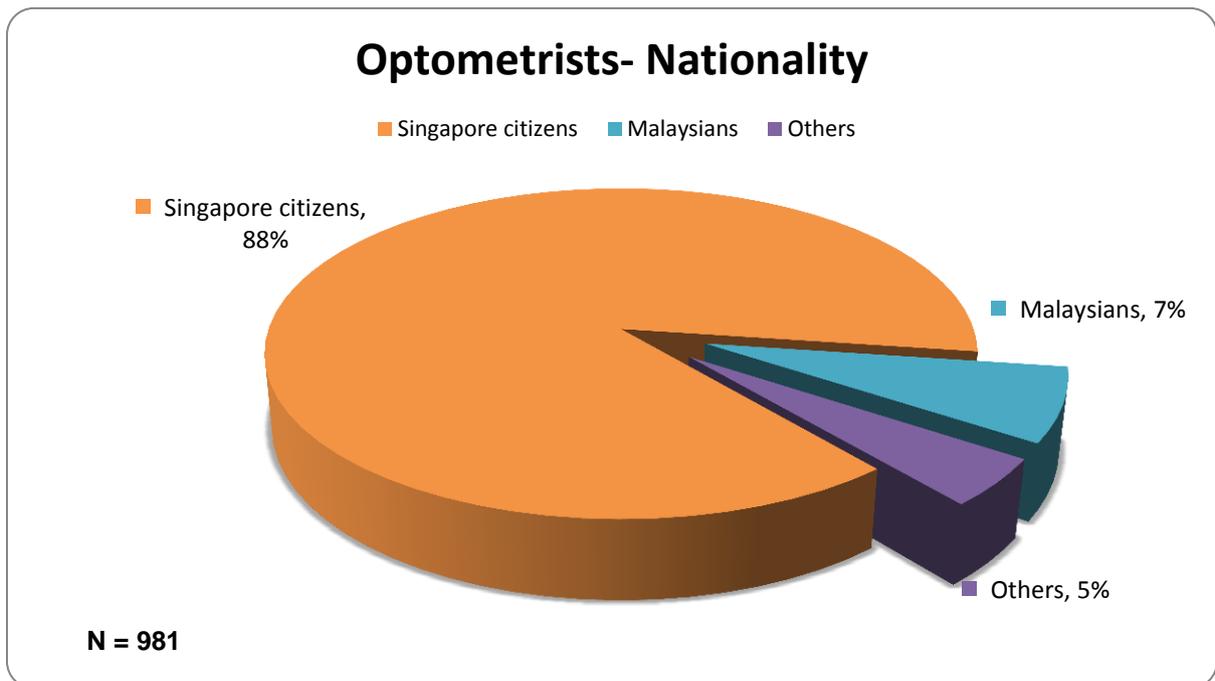
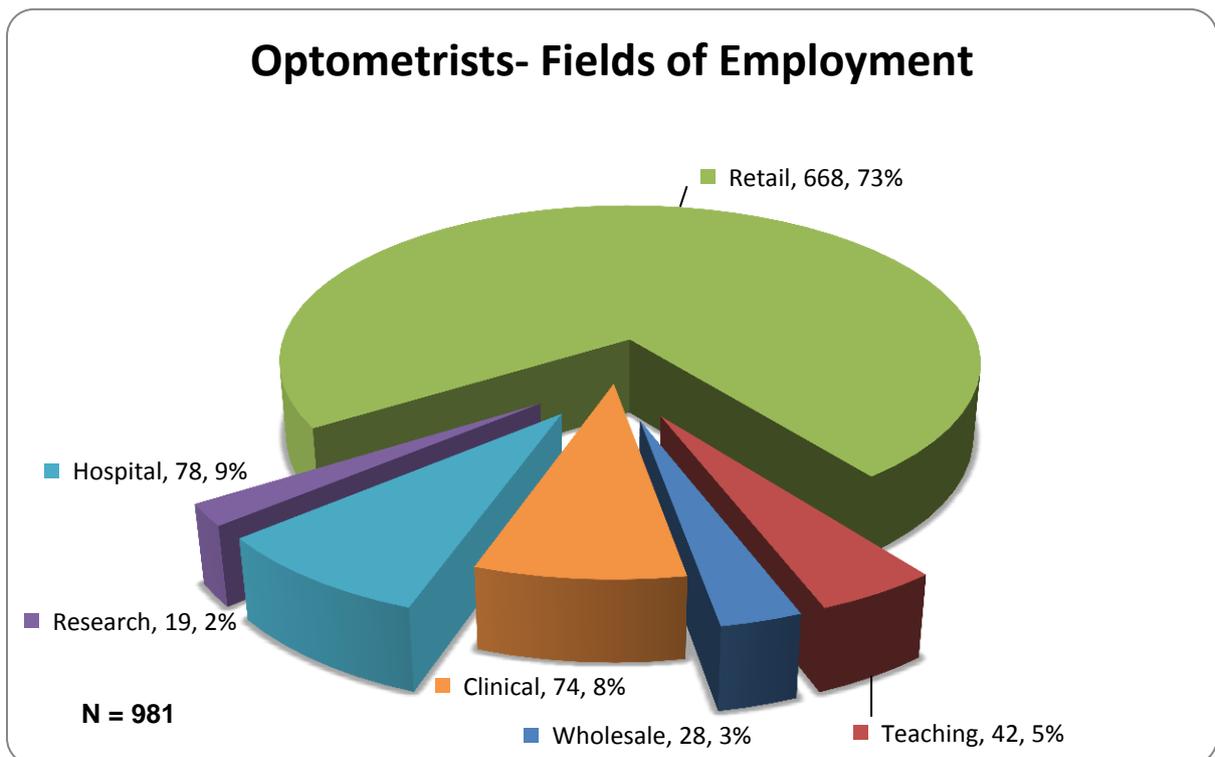


Chart 2.4- Optometrists By Fields Of Employment



### 3. Profiles of Opticians (Refraction & Dispensing) 2013

Chart 3.1 - Opticians (R+D) By Registration Types

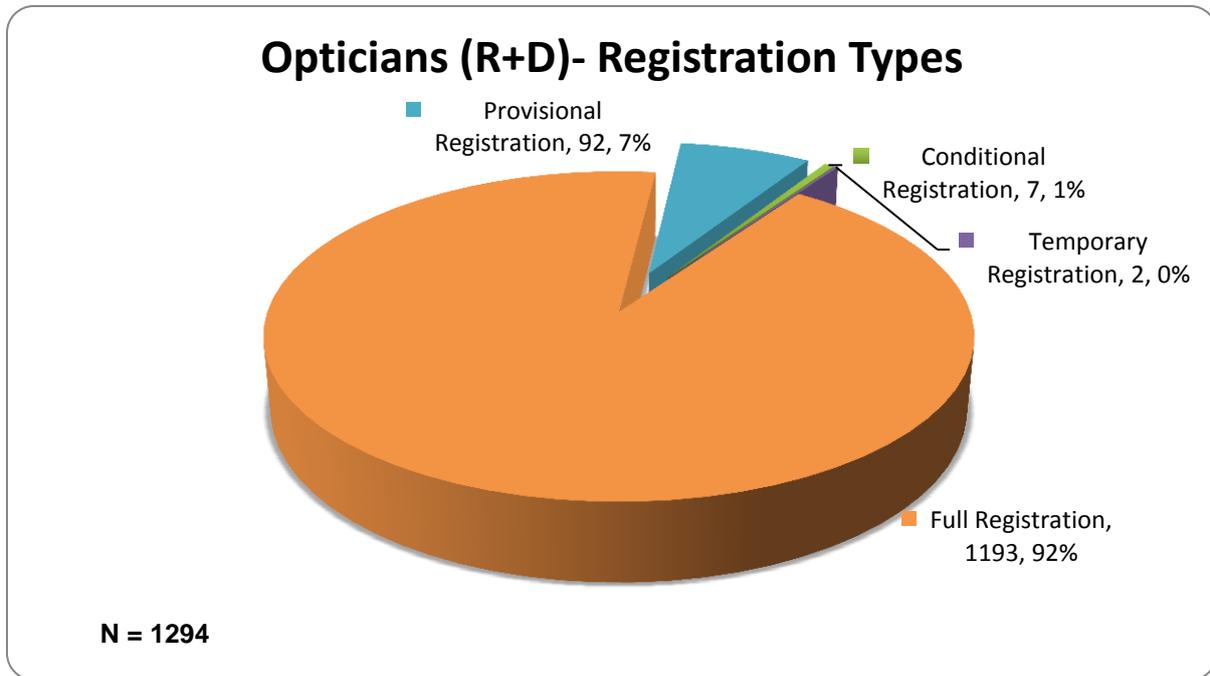


Chart 3.2 - Opticians (R+D) By Age Group

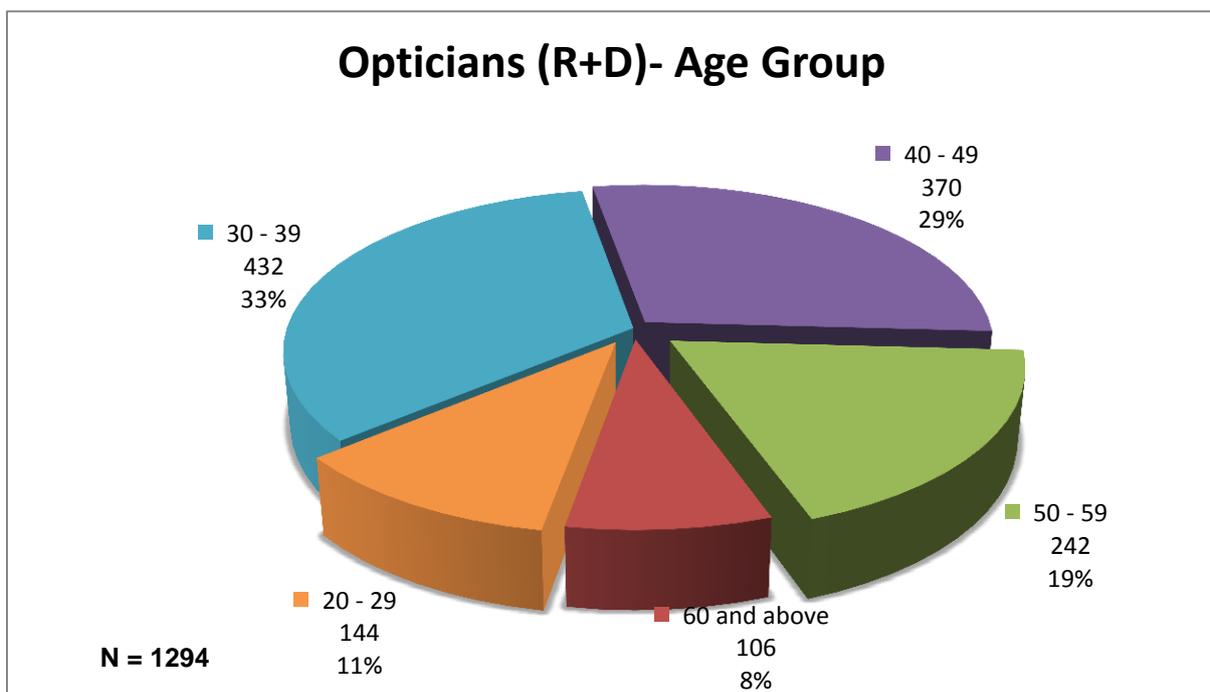


Chart 3.3 - Opticians (R+D) By Nationality

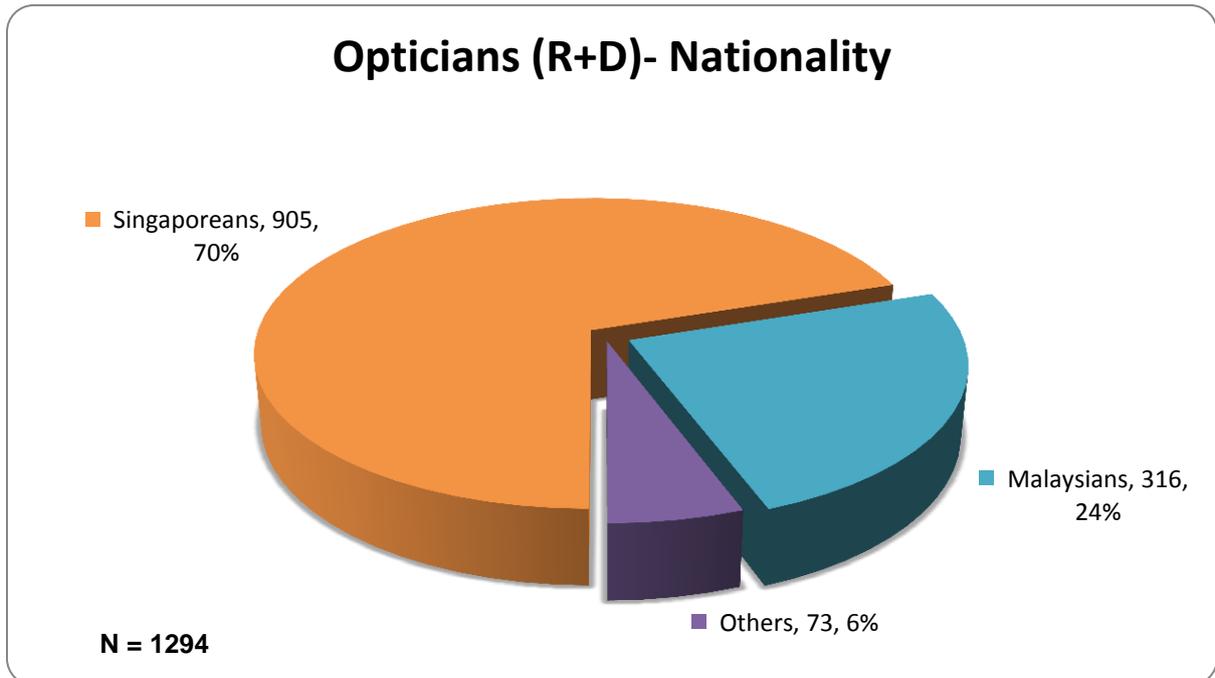
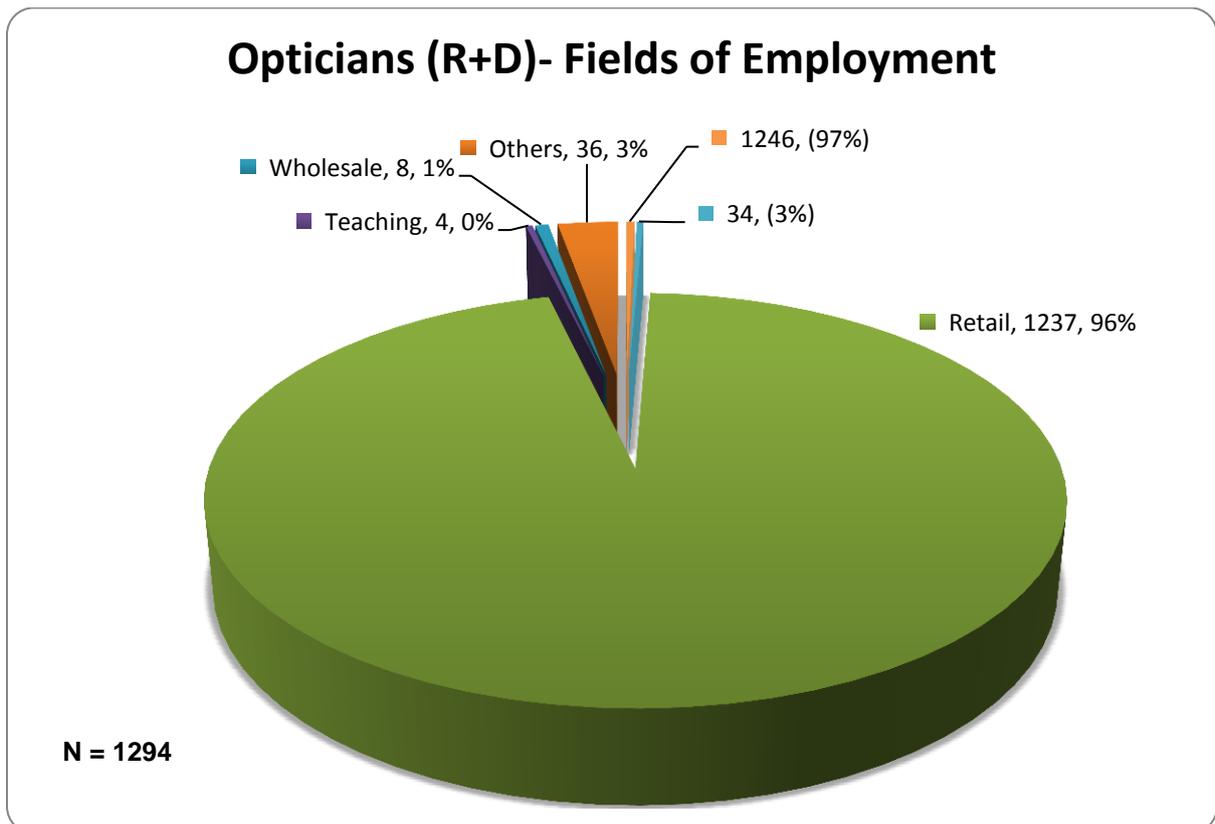


Chart 3.4 - Opticians By Fields Of Employment



#### 4. Profiles of Opticians (Dispensing) 2013

Chart 4.1- Opticians (D) By Registration Type

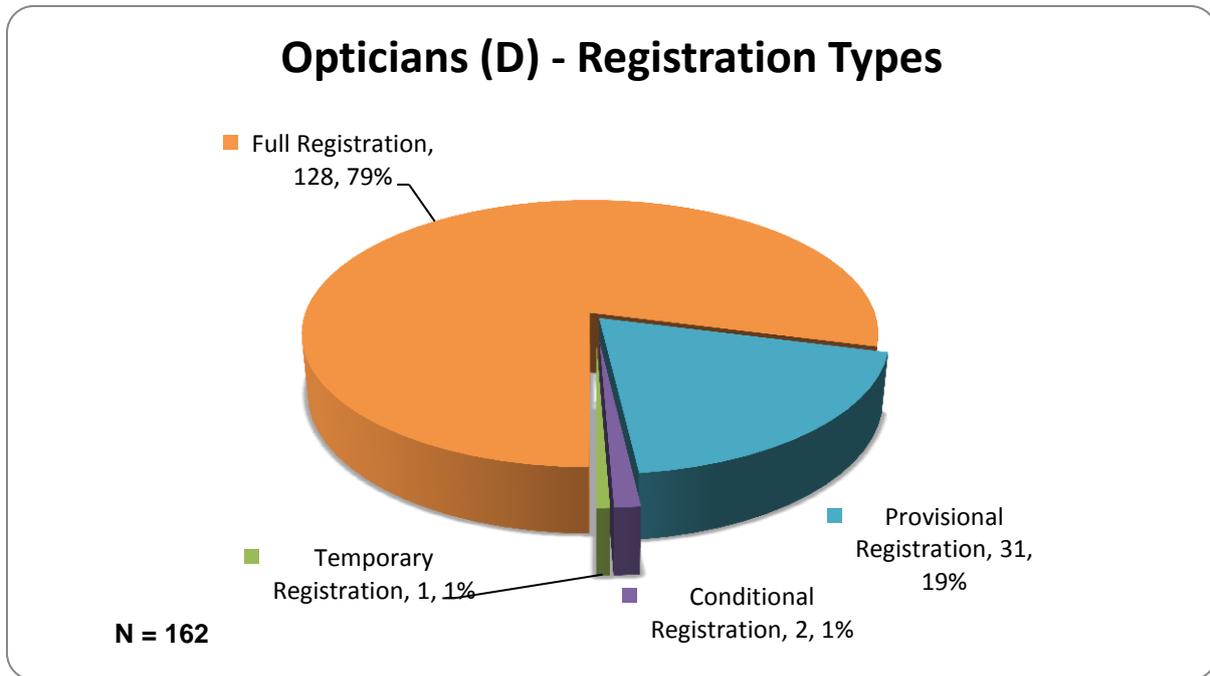


Chart 4.2- Opticians (D) By Age Group

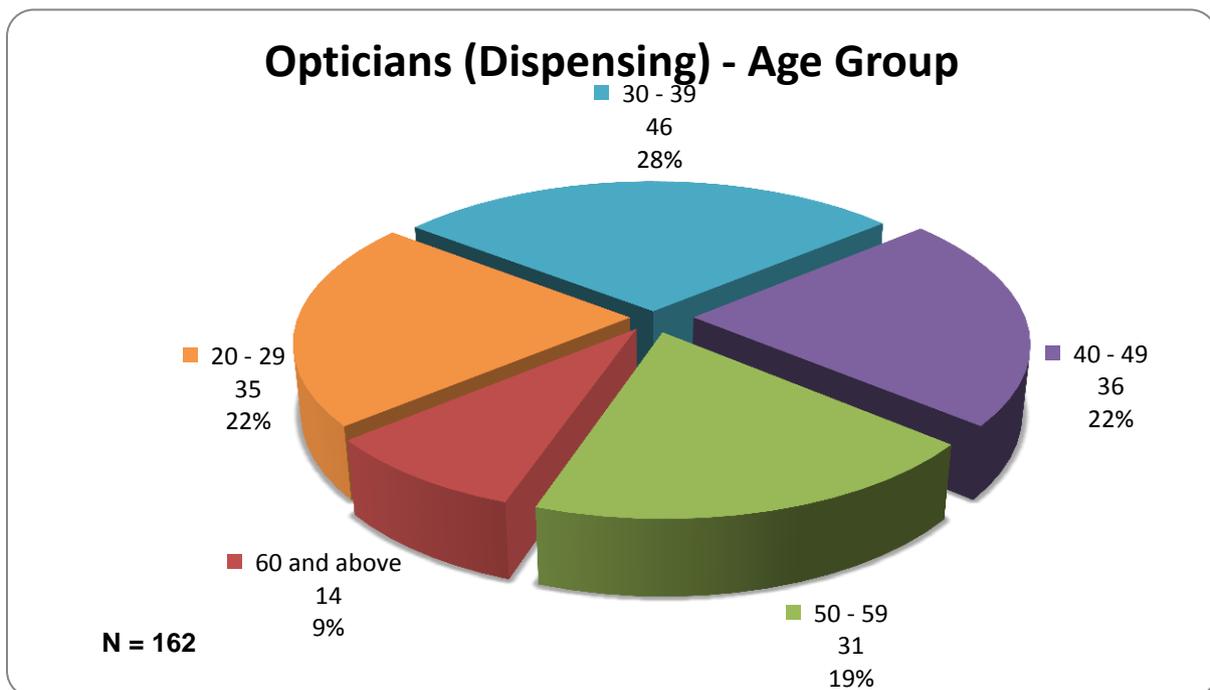


Chart 4.3 - Opticians (D) By Nationality

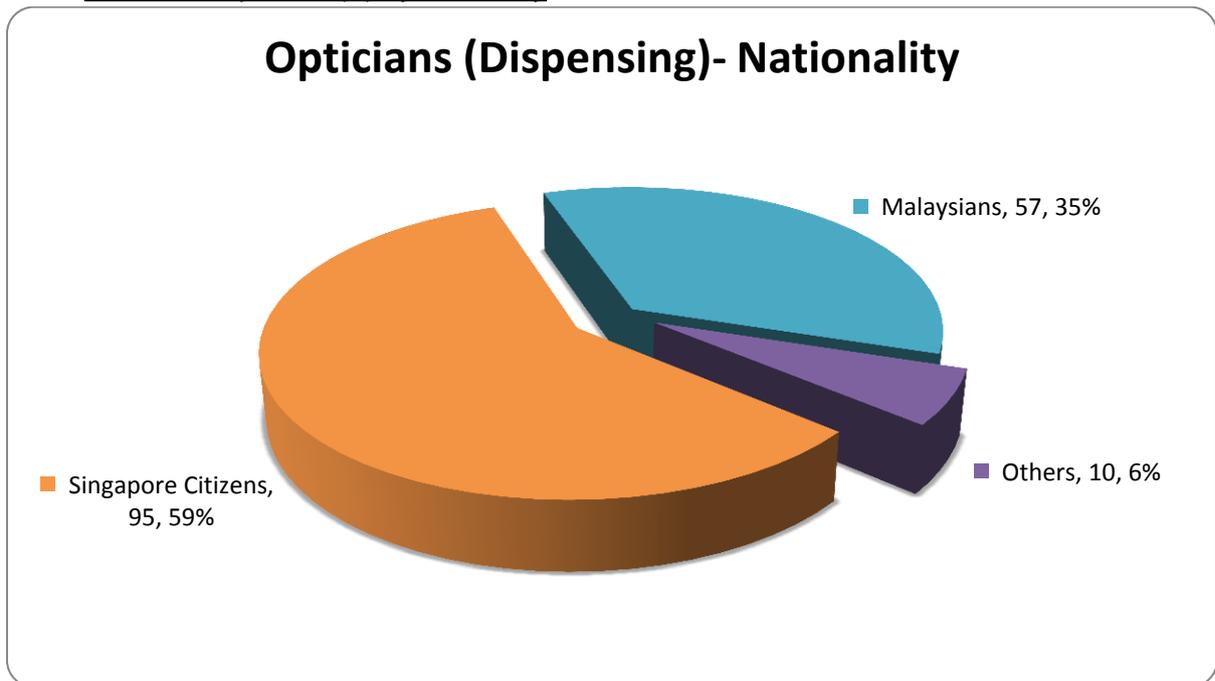
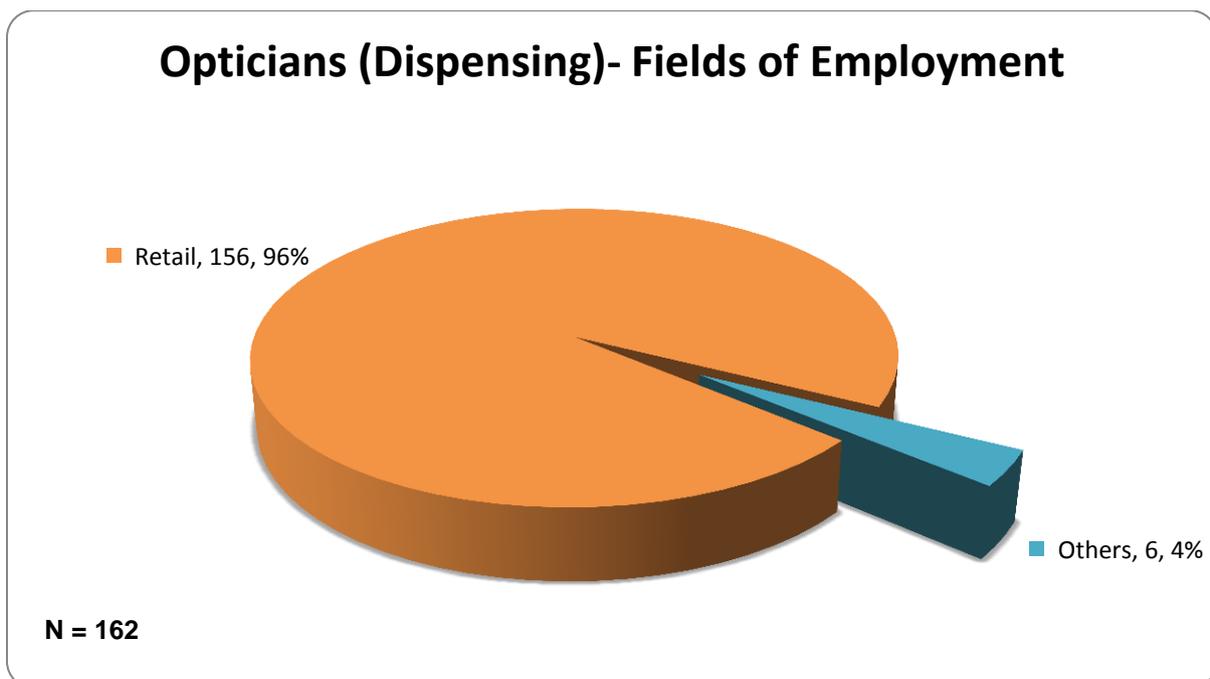


Chart 4.4 - Opticians (D) By Fields Of Employment



## 5. Profiles of Opticians (Contact Lens Practitioner) 2013

There are a total of 24 opticians (CLP) and all are fully registered. All opticians (CLP) are Singaporeans.

Chart 5.1 - Opticians (CLP) By Age Group

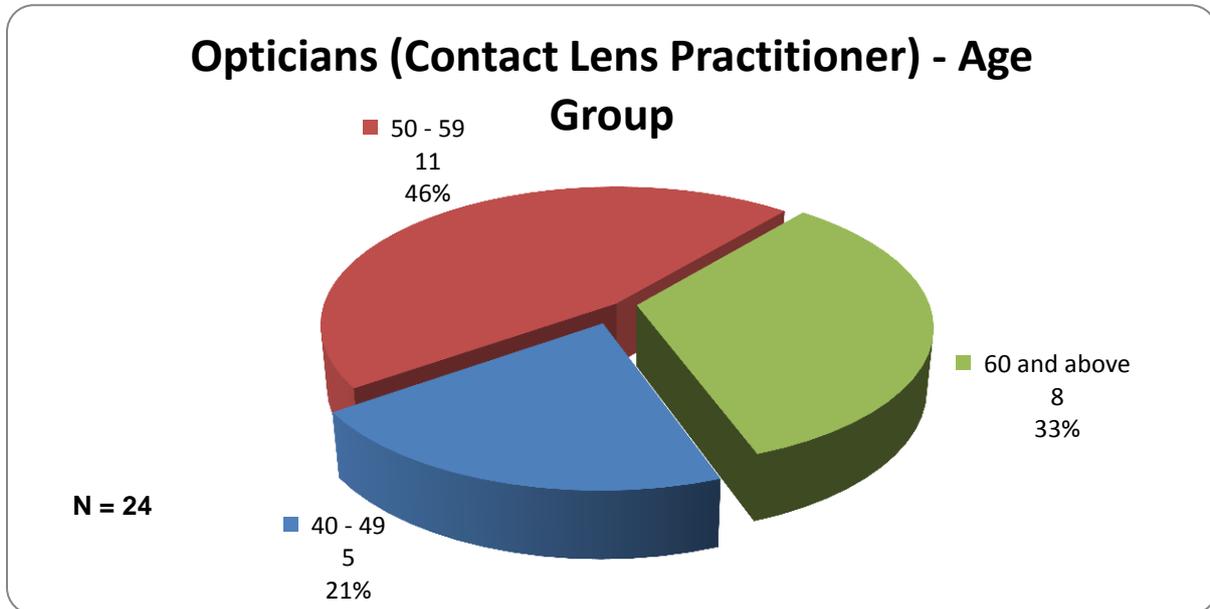
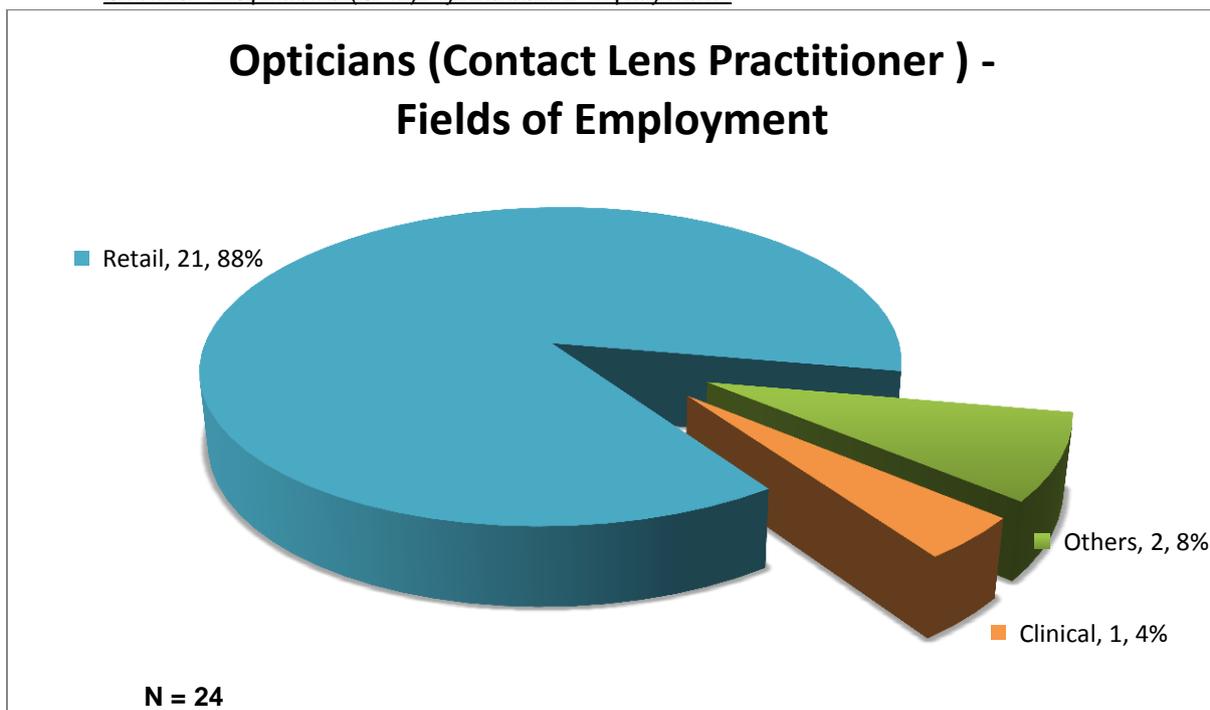


Chart 5.2- Opticians (CLP) By Fields of Employment.



## APPENDIX II (A)

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### CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR OPTOMETRISTS

In order to meet the Board's objectives in regulating the optometrists and opticians in Singapore, the Board has established and commissioned the Practice Ethics and Conduct Committee to develop a Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) for optometrists.

Patients and the public must be able to trust optometrists with their visual and ocular well-being. To justify this trust, optometrists have to maintain a good standard of care, conduct and behaviour. Optometrists are expected to uphold the principles dictated by this Code. Adherence to this Code will also enable public trust and confidence in the profession.

The Code of Professional Conduct constitutes a yardstick for conduct, behaviour and professional ethics for Optometrists. It can be referenced should ethical issues be raised.

Disregarding or failure to meet the standards of the code can potentially harm patients or bring disrepute to the optometric profession. Breaches of any article in this Code could lead to optometrists being asked to explain their actions and face disciplinary proceedings for professional misconduct.

This Code can be periodically updated to cover areas that were not previously dealt with, including issues arising from advances in optometry, and statutory or regulatory requirements.

- a) An optometrist must conduct himself or herself in his or her professional duties in accordance with the Optometrists and Opticians Act 2007 and Regulations and in accordance with this Code. The Code does not over-ride obligations that may be imposed on the practice of optometry by the Optometrists and Opticians Act and Regulations and any other Act or Regulation relating to the practice of optometry.
- b) An optometrist must maintain his or her knowledge and practise at a competent level and participate in continuing professional education activities.
- c) An optometrist must only perform or participate in those procedures that are within his or her competence and for which he or she is appropriately qualified, and refer those patients whose needs or requests are outside his or her competence, and where necessary follow up the referral.
- d) An optometrist must ensure privacy and confidentiality for his or her patients and for their ophthalmic records unless disclosure is necessary in the course of referral to a colleague in his or another healthcare profession or he/she is required to by the Board or the Law. Information contained in any patient's ophthalmic record should be made available to that patient if requested.
- e) An optometrist must not exploit his or her professional relationship with a patient or any other person in the conduct of his or her practice sexually, emotionally or financially or otherwise in any way.
- f) An optometrist should take reasonable steps to ensure his or her patients understand at the commencement of any test, procedure or treatment the risks, complications, possible reactions, nature, purpose, cost of and alternatives to the procedure or treatment.

- g) An optometrist must treat patients without prejudice of race, religion, creed, social standing, disability or financial status.
- h) An optometrist must respect the wish of a patient for a second opinion and, if requested, help the patient obtain the appropriate second opinion.
- i) If an optometrist has reason to believe that a colleague is behaving in an unprofessional manner, or that his standard of practice falls substantially below acceptable standards, he should report the conduct to the Optometrists and Opticians Board.
- j) An optometrist must not attend to a patient whilst his ability to do so is impaired by the influence of alcohol, drugs or physical or mental illness.
- k) An optometrist must maintain professionalism in informing the public about his or her services, ensuring that information projected is factual and does not self aggrandise. An optometrist shall not advertise his or her services in a way that is not consistent with the Optometrists and Opticians (Practice, Conduct, Ethics and Publicity) Regulations or any guidelines promulgated by the Board relating to publicity.

## APPENDIX II (B)

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### CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR OPTICIANS

The Board has similarly established and commissioned the Practice Ethics and Conduct Committee to develop this Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) for opticians.

Patients and the public must be able to trust opticians implicitly with their visual and ocular well-being. To justify this trust, opticians have to maintain a good standard of care, conduct and behaviour. Opticians are expected to uphold the principles dictated by their Code. Adherence to a Code of Professional Conduct will enable public trust and confidence in the profession.

The Code of Professional Conduct constitutes a yardstick for conduct, behaviour professional ethics. It can be referenced should ethical issues be raised.

The Board is of the view that disregarding or failure to meet an agreed code of standards amounting to professional misconduct can potentially harm patients or cause disrepute to the opticianry profession. Professional misconduct may be judged through disciplinary proceedings.

This Code can be periodically updated to cover areas that were not previously dealt with, including issues arising from advances in opticianry, and statutory or regulatory requirements.

- a) An optician must conduct himself or herself in his or her professional duties in accordance with the Optometrists and Opticians Act 2007 and Regulations and in accordance with this Code. This Code does not over-ride obligations imposed in the practice of opticianry by the Optometrists and Opticians Act and Regulations and any other Act or Regulation relating to the practice of opticianry.
- b) An optician must maintain his or her knowledge and practise at a competent level and participate in continuing professional education activities.
- c) An optician must only perform or participate in those procedures that are within his or her level of competency and for which he or she is appropriately qualified, and refer those patients whose conditions are outside his or her level of competence.
- d) An optician must ensure privacy and confidentiality for his or her patients and their ophthalmic records unless disclosure is necessary in the course of referral to another profession or is required by the Board or the law. Information contained in any patient's ophthalmic record should be made available to that patient if requested.
- e) An optician must not exploit his or her professional relationship with a patient or any other person in the conduct of his or her practice sexually, emotionally, financially or otherwise in any way.
- f) An optician should take reasonable steps to ensure his or her patients understand any procedure or prescription, risks and complications if any as well as the costs to the patient.
- g) An optician must manage his patients without bias or regard for race, religion, creed, social standing, disability or financial status.
- h) An optician must respect the wish of a patient for a second opinion and, if requested, help the patient obtain an appropriate second opinion.

- i) If an optician has reason to believe that a colleague is behaving in an unprofessional manner, or that his standard of practice falls substantially below acceptable standards, he should report the conduct to the Optometrists and Opticians Board.
- j) An optician must not attend to a patient when his ability to do so is impaired by the influence of alcohol, drugs, physical or mental illness.
- k) An optician must maintain professionalism in informing the public about his or her services, ensuring that information projected is purely factual and devoid of any attempt at self aggrandisement. An optician shall not advertise his or her services in a way that is not consistent with the Optometrists and Opticians (Practice, Conduct, Ethics and Publicity) Regulations or any guidelines promulgated by the Board relating to publicity.

## I) APPENDIX III

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### Schedule of Fees

<b>Application Fee</b>	\$50
<b>Registration Fee</b>	\$200
<b>Practising Certificate Renewal Fees (2 years):</b>	
- Optometrists	\$300
- Opticians (CLP)	\$280
- Opticians (Refraction & Dispensing)	\$280
- Opticians (Dispensing)	\$200
<b>Late application fee for the renewal of a practising certificate:</b>	
where the application is made less than 30 days before the expiry of the practising certificate	\$50
where the application is made after the expiry of the practising certificate	\$100
<b>Registration of any additional qualification</b>	\$50
<b>Restoration Fee</b>	\$300
<b>Certified True Copy of Certificate Fee</b>	\$50
<b>Certificate of Good Standing Fee</b>	\$60