

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Optometrists & Opticians Board

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## 1. Chairman's Message

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It has been another challenging year since the COVID-19 pandemic swept across nations globally from early 2020. The emergence of the Omicron variant in late 2021 affected Singapore's transition to a new normal. Our healthcare colleagues continued to fight this battle against COVID-19. The practice of Optometry and Opticianry was affected by reduced foot-fall. Throughout the pandemic period, Optometrists and Opticians supported the implementation of Safe Management Measures, and stepped up disinfection routines. Most practitioners were still able to adapt to the changes and continue to provide quality care for their patients and customers by doing referrals or transferring them to other outlets temporarily.

In December 2021, all healthcare professional boards (PBs), including OOB launched the e-Certs comprising electronic registration certificates (e-RC) and electronic Practising Certificates (e-PC) in the Professional Registration System. This was a milestone in the PBs' ongoing digital transformation journey. Newly registered Optometrists and Opticians were issued with both e-RC and e-PC, while existing practitioners received their e-PC upon the approval of their renewal applications.

Looking ahead, the Board will be working with its appointed Committees to review some of its existing frameworks and guidelines to improve the assessment models for provisional training and Continuous Professional Education for existing practitioners.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Board and Committee members for your time and hard work in supporting the OOB's functions and much appreciation to all practitioners and stakeholders in upholding the high standards of practice and ethics of an eye-care professional. My appreciation also goes out to staff of Secretariat of healthcare Professional Boards (SPB) for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the OOB.

Please stay safe as we continue to strive to deliver and promote excellence in eye care services to the public.

Prof Lim Tock Han  
Chairman  
Optometrists and Opticians Board

## 2. Optometrists and Opticians Board

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|   |   |
|---|---|
| Chairman  | Prof LIM Tock Han<br>Ophthalmologist, National Healthcare Group                                     |
| Registrar   | Dr Harold TAN<br>Director, Home Recovery Task Group, Ministry of Health                             |
| Representative for<br>Director-General of Education | Ms Ruby TAN<br>Pedagogical Excellence Branch, Ministry of Education                                 |
| Members   | Mr CHEONG Lip Keong<br>Optometrist, Ming Optique  |
|   | Ms CHNG Shih Yun Olivia<br>Optometrist, Eyecare People Pte Ltd                                      |
|   | Ms Vivien CHIANG Su Wun<br>Optometrist, Johnson & Johnson Pte Ltd                                   |
|   | Mr KOH Lian Buck<br>Optometrist, Pearl's Visioncare Pte Ltd (City Gate)                             |
|   | Ms KWOK Siet Yuen, Shirley<br>Optician (Refraction and Dispensing),<br>Eye Design Optics (Bedok 59) |
|   | Dr KOH Liang Hwee<br>Optometrist, Pearl's Optical Co Pte Ltd (People's Park)                        |
|   | Mr Simon NG Chin Kwee<br>Optician (Refraction and Dispensing), Yi Eyecare                           |
|   | Dr SETHURAMAN Rama<br>Medical Devices Branch, Health Sciences Authority                             |
|   | Ms TAN Choy Hong<br>Optometrist, Ngee Ann Polytechnic Optometry Centre                              |

### 3. Committees of the Board

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#### Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee is responsible for accrediting courses of instruction related to optometry and opticianry for the purpose of registration and recommending acceptable displayable higher qualifications.

#### Assessment Committee

The Assessment Committee is responsible for developing competencies for opticians and optometrists and determining the structure and content of qualifying examinations.

#### Credentials Committee

The Credentials Committee is responsible for conducting reviews and providing recommendations on all registration matters, including conditions for different types of registration.

#### Continuing Education Committee

The Continuing Education Committee is responsible for setting and reviewing policies and standards for continuing professional education (CPE), accrediting CPE programmes and approving applications for CPE claims.

#### Practice, Ethics & Conduct Committee

The Practice, Ethics and Conduct Committee is responsible for determining standards and guidelines for the professional conduct and practice of optometrists and opticians.

## 4. Introduction

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The Optometrists & Opticians Act (Chapter 213A) (the “Act”) was passed in Parliament in July 2007. The Act empowers the Optometrists and Opticians Board (the “Board”) to register and regulate all Optometrists and Opticians and their practices in Singapore.

The Board sets the standards required for registration, approves the registration, issues Practising Certificates (PC) as well as regulates the conduct and practice of Optometrists and Opticians. These functions ensure that registered practitioners are qualified and properly trained so that members of the public receive safe and quality eye-care services.

As of 31 December 2021, the Board has in its Registers, a total of 2,689 registered Optometrists and Opticians.

**Table 1- No. of registrants in each category from 2017 to 2021**

| Register Type                             | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Optometrists                              | 1,159 | 1,198 | 1,249 | 1,263 | 1,325 |
| Opticians (Refraction & Dispensing/ R&D)  | 1,316 | 1,322 | 1,288 | 1,271 | 1,280 |
| Opticians (Dispensing/D)                  | 109   | 92    | 82    | 102   | 68    |
| Opticians (Contact Lens Practitioner/CLP) | 21    | 21    | 17    | 17    | 16    |
| Grand Total                               | 2,605 | 2,633 | 2,636 | 2,653 | 2,689 |

### **Who Are Optometrists?**

Optometrists are primary eye-care providers who specialise in performing vision assessment and eye examinations. Through these examinations, Optometrists can detect important eye conditions such as cataract and contact lens complications.

In general, Optometrists are qualified to:

1. Perform refraction on adults, children or adolescents;
2. Prescribe optical appliances such as glasses and contact lenses to correct vision problems such as short-sightedness, long-sightedness and astigmatism;
3. Perform eye examinations and refer patients to other healthcare practitioners such as Ophthalmologists for further management if any eye conditions are detected; and
4. Provide other forms of eye-care which are part of opticianry (e.g. dispensing and fitting of glasses and contact lenses).

### **Who Are Opticians?**

Opticians are eye care providers equipped with the skills to dispense and fit glasses based on prescriptions from Optometrists or Ophthalmologists.

Opticians are registered in the following categories:

1. Opticians (Dispensing only) – these Opticians are only qualified to dispense and fit glasses.
2. Opticians (Refraction and Dispensing) – these Opticians are qualified to:
  - a. Perform refraction on patients who are 8 years of age or older; and
  - b. Dispense and fit glasses to correct vision problems such as short-sightedness, long-sightedness, and astigmatism.
3. Opticians (Contact Lens Practice) – these Opticians are qualified to:
  - a. Perform refraction on patients who are 8 years of age or older;
  - b. Dispense and fit glasses and contact lenses to correct vision problems such as short-sightedness, long-sightedness and astigmatism; and
  - c. Provide aftercare to patients, including monitoring to detect, prevent and manage problems or complications arising from the use of contact lenses.

## 5. Key Highlights

### 5.1 Launch of e-Certs

The 11 healthcare Professional Boards including the Optometrists and Opticians Board (OOB) had launched two digital initiatives to provide greater convenience and a secure system to the healthcare professionals (HCPs) and users of Government Services.

The digital initiatives were spearheaded by the Secretariat of healthcare Professional Boards, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and GovTech. The first digital initiative is the electronic Registration Certificate (e-RC) and electronic Practising Certificates (e-PC), collectively known as “e-Certs”, which was launched via the Professional Registration System (PRS) in December 2021. The second digital initiative is the digital Practising Certificate (“digital PC”) in the Singpass app, which was launched in January 2022.

A total of 603 e-PCs were issued in December 2021 to optometrists and opticians upon successful renewal of their PC for January 2022, and an estimated 1,800 e-PCs would be issued at the next PC renewal in December 2022.

With the implementation of e-Certs, OOB had stopped issuing hardcopy certificates. All past hardcopy certificates remain valid and recognised by OOB if they are not expired, cancelled, or removed. These hardcopy certificates will however not be available in the electronic form in the PRS.

### 5.2 Continuing Professional Education (CPE)

Under the Board’s Code of Professional Conduct and Professional Practice Guidelines (article 5.4 and 6.4), all registered optometrists and opticians are expected to participate in CPE activities to ensure that their optometry and opticianry knowledge and skills remain current and relevant and a reasonable level of competence is maintained.

Each qualifying period (QP) extends from 1 October to 30 September in the following year; a fully registered practitioner will go through a two-year cycle. The targeted number of points within the QP of two years is 40 points for Opticians and 50 points for Optometrists.

For QP ending September 2021, only 40% of the practitioners managed to achieve the minimum CPE points required. This was due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation where many practices and practitioners were affected.

|   | QP ending 2017 | QP ending 2018 | QP ending 2019 | QP ending 2020 | QP ending 2021 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Percentage of practitioners who met min. CPE points | 74%            | 87%            | 96%            | 92%            | 40%            |

#### CPE Events

As physical events and seminars were not possible during the pandemic period, the Board started to recognise virtual events organised by local providers as part of CPE activities. In



2021, there was total of 144 events accredited under Category 1A (Local events) while 70% were conducted virtually.

|             | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Category 1A | 139  | 145  | 126  | 74   | 144  |

### 5.3 Supervisory Framework Briefing

Under the OOB's Supervisory Framework, all provisionally and conditionally registered Optometrists and Opticians ("Supervisees") are required to practise under the guidance of qualified fully registered Optometrists and Opticians ("Supervisors") and fulfil the Supervisory Framework and/or prescribed conditions during the entire period of their registration.

To ensure that Supervisors carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively, the OOB has been conducting Supervisory Framework briefings for Supervisors annually since 2014. The OOB requires each Supervisor to attend at least one briefing session before or during the period of undertaking. Selected practitioners on provisional registration are also invited to attend.

Each briefing is normally conducted over two half-day sessions, with the first session for Supervisors of provisionally-registered Optometrists and the second session for Supervisors of provisionally-registered Opticians.

During the sessions, the Supervisors would be briefed on the requirements of the Supervisory Framework and the prescribed conditions for case submissions. To enable Supervisors to better understand and apply the case review criteria, attendees would break out into workgroups for discussions using real case records from past logbook submissions by Supervisees. So far, the feedback received from the Supervisors who had attended the sessions had been positive and encouraging.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last two briefing sessions were conducted virtually on 23 and 24 September 2020 and 29 Supervisors attended. A total of 621 Supervisors had attended the annual briefings since it started in 2014.

The sessions intended for 2021 were rescheduled to 2022 so that more new Supervisors could attend the briefing.

## 5.4 Complaints and Disciplinary

The Board had received a total of 7 complaints since 2017 and three cases were pending investigation as at 31 December 2021.

| Complaints received | 2017     | 2018     | 2019     | 2020     | 2021     | Total    |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Opticians (D)       | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        |
| Opticians (R&D)     | 1        | 1        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 3        |
| Optometrists        | 0        | 2        | 2        | 0        | 0        | 4        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>  | <b>1</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> |

## 6. Registration Data

The data in this section is based on practitioners who are on register with valid Practising Certificates.

### 6.1 New Registrations

Since the Board started regulating the professions in 2008, there has been a steady increase in the number of Optometrists and Opticians. The figures provided in the table below represent new registrants each year for all registration types (full, provisional, conditional and temporary registration).

| Register Type      | 2017       | 2018       | 2019       | 2020       | 2021       |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Opticians (D)      | 34         | 21         | 27         | 22         | 19         |
| Opticians (R&D)    | 44         | 50         | 64         | 41         | 63         |
| Optometrists       | 127        | 141        | 162        | 126        | 165        |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>205</b> | <b>212</b> | <b>253</b> | <b>189</b> | <b>247</b> |

### 6.2 Practising Certificate Renewal 2021

A total of 634 registered Optometrists and Opticians were required to renew their PCs which were valid till 31 December 2021. Among these, 602 (95%) practitioners submitted their applications and successfully renewed their PCs for two years from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023.

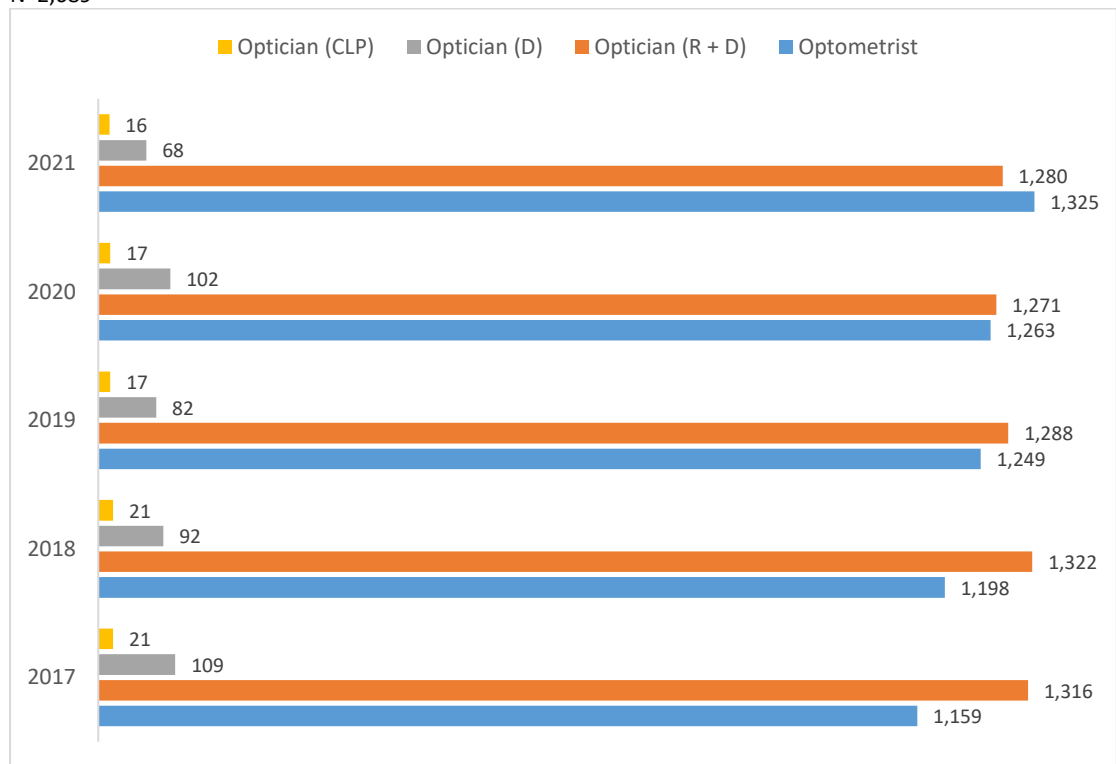
#### Number of PCs renewed

| Register Type      | 2017       | 2018         | 2019       | 2020         | 2021       |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Opticians (D)      | 6          | 70           | 5          | 61           | 5          |
| Opticians (R&D)    | 80         | 1,004        | 113        | 997          | 154        |
| Opticians (CLP)    | 2          | 15           | 2          | 14           | 2          |
| Optometrists       | 323        | 535          | 386        | 594          | 441        |
| <b>Grand total</b> | <b>414</b> | <b>1,624</b> | <b>526</b> | <b>1,666</b> | <b>602</b> |

\* Optician (CLP) is a closed registration category

### 6.3 Registration by Categories

N=2,689

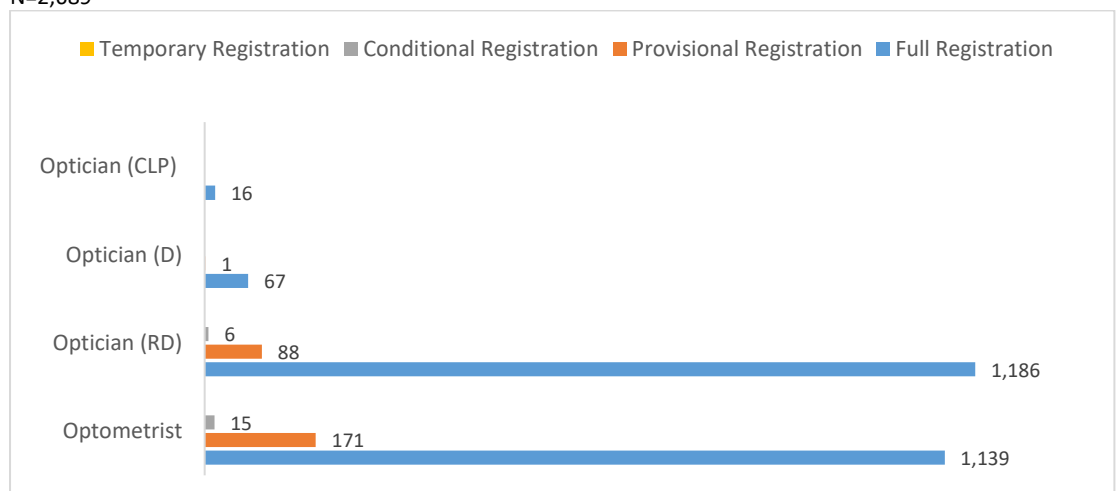


| Register Type      | 2017         | 2018         | 2019         | 2020         | 2021         |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Optometrists       | 1,159        | 1,198        | 1,249        | 1,263        | 1,325        |
| Opticians (R&D)    | 1,316        | 1,322        | 1,288        | 1,271        | 1,280        |
| Opticians (D)      | 109          | 92           | 82           | 102          | 68           |
| Opticians (CLP)    | 21           | 21           | 17           | 17           | 16           |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>2,605</b> | <b>2,633</b> | <b>2,636</b> | <b>2,653</b> | <b>2,689</b> |

\* Optician (CLP) is a closed registration category

### 6.4 Registration by Type

N=2,689

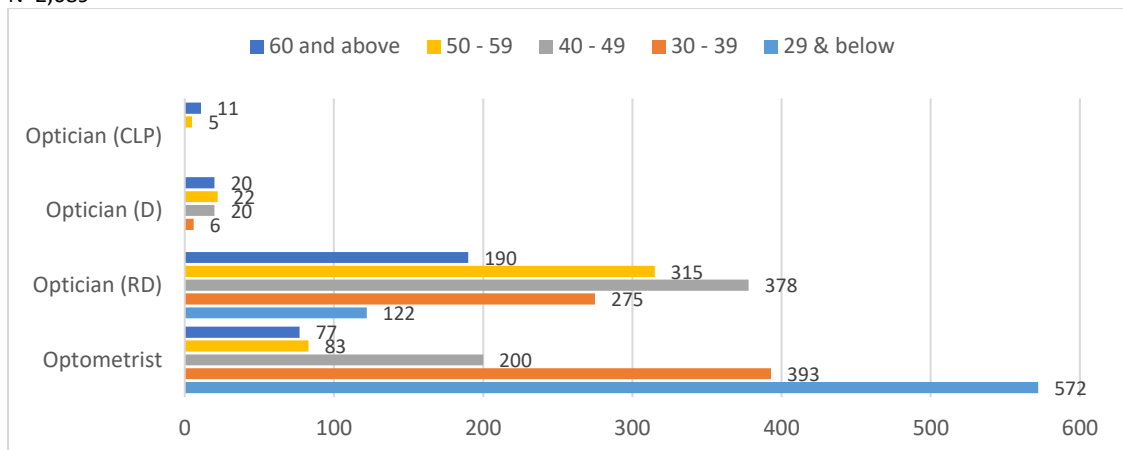


| Register Type            | Optometrist  | Optician (RD) | Optician (D) | Optician (CLP) |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Full Registration        | 1,139        | 1,186         | 67           | 16             |
| Provisional Registration | 171          | 88            | 1            | 0              |
| Conditional Registration | 15           | 6             | 0            | 0              |
| Temporary Registration   | 0            | 0             | 0            | 0              |
| <b>Grand Total</b>       | <b>1,325</b> | <b>1,280</b>  | <b>68</b>    | <b>16</b>      |

\* Optician (CLP) is a closed registration category

## 6.5 Practitioners by Age Group

N=2,689

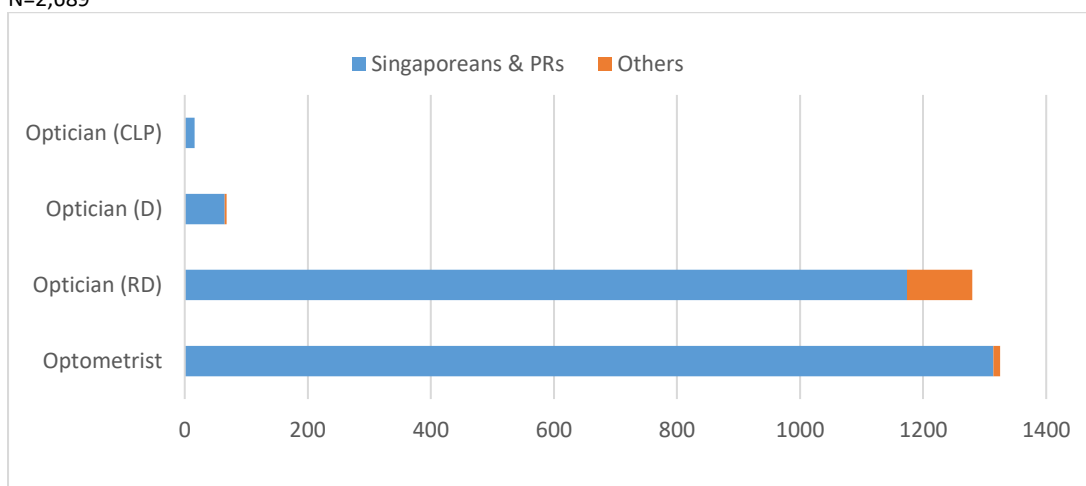


| Age Group          | Optometrist  | Optician (RD) | Optician (D) | Optician (CLP)* |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 29 & below         | 572          | 122           | 0            | 0               |
| 30 – 39            | 393          | 275           | 6            | 0               |
| 40 – 49            | 200          | 378           | 20           | 0               |
| 50 – 59            | 83           | 315           | 22           | 5               |
| 60 and above       | 77           | 190           | 20           | 11              |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>1,325</b> | <b>1,280</b>  | <b>68</b>    | <b>16</b>       |

\* Optician (CLP) is a closed registration category

## 6.6 Practitioners by Nationality

N=2,689

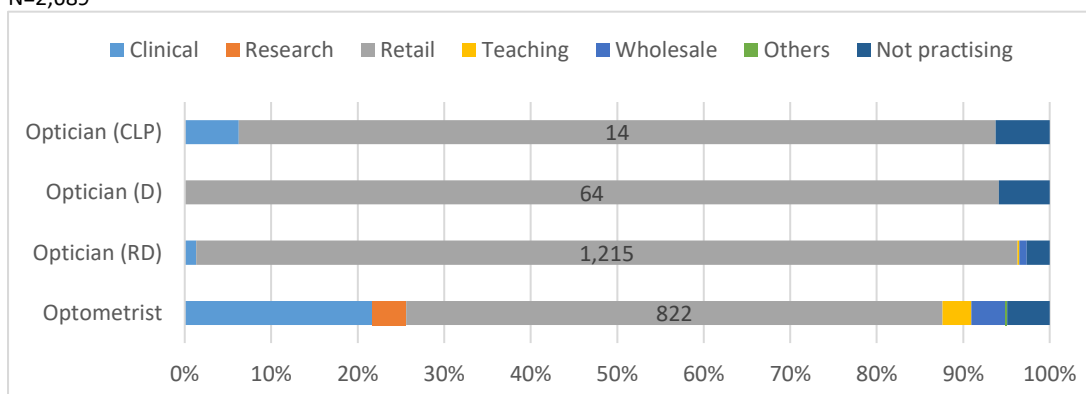


| Nationality        | Optometrist  | Optician (RD) | Optician (D) | Optician (CLP)* |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Singaporeans & PRs | 1,314        | 1,174         | 65           | 16              |
| Others             | 11           | 106           | 3            | 0               |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>1,325</b> | <b>1,280</b>  | <b>68</b>    | <b>16</b>       |

\* Optician (CLP) is a closed registration category

## 6.7 Practitioners by Fields of Employment

N=2,689



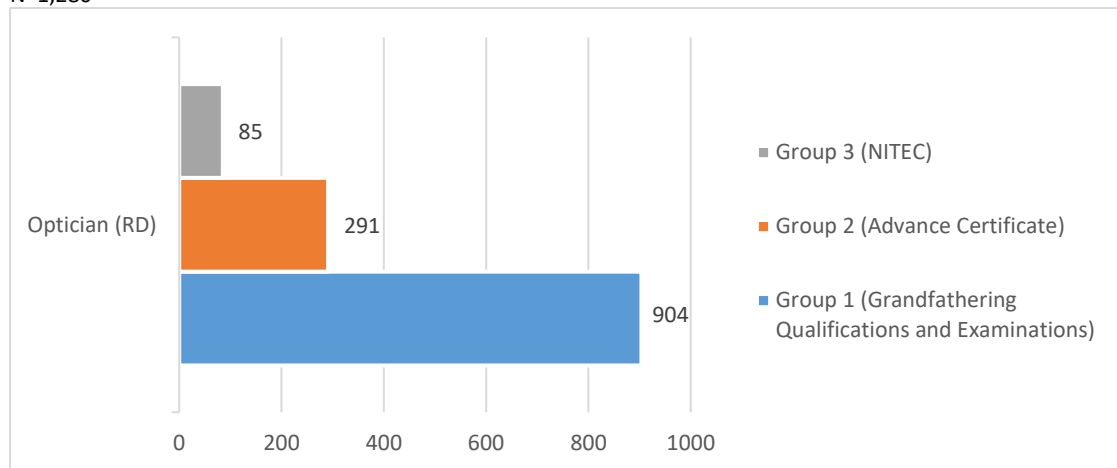
| Employment Type    | Optometrist  | Optician (RD) | Optician (D) | Optician (CLP)* |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Clinical           | 287          | 17            | 0            | 1               |
| Research           | 52           | 0             | 0            | 0               |
| Retail             | 822          | 1,215         | 64           | 14              |
| Teaching           | 44           | 3             | 0            | 0               |
| Wholesale          | 52           | 11            | 0            | 0               |
| Others             | 3            | 0             | 0            | 0               |
| Not practising     | 65           | 34            | 4            | 1               |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>1,325</b> | <b>1,280</b>  | <b>68</b>    | <b>16</b>       |

\* Optician (CLP) is a closed registration category

## 6.8 Practitioners by Basic Qualifications

### Qualification Type for Opticians (RD)

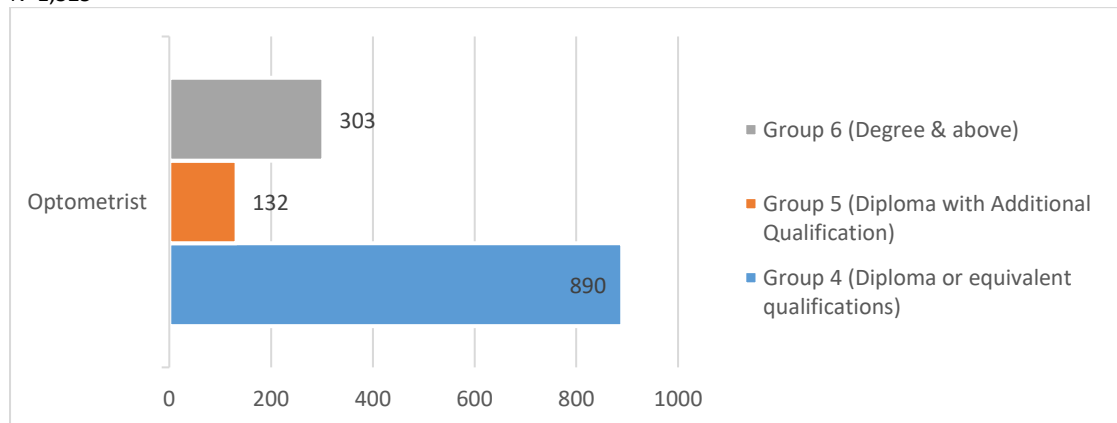
N=1,280



| Qualification Type for Opticians (RD)                    | Optician (RD) |
|--|---------------|
| Group 1 (Grandfathering Qualifications and Examinations) | 904           |
| Group 2 (Advance Certificate)                            | 291           |
| Group 3 (NITEC)  | 85            |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                                       | <b>1,280</b>  |

### Qualification Type for Optometrists

N=1,325



| Qualification Type for Optometrists               | Optometrist  |
|---|--------------|
| Group 4 (Diploma or equivalent qualifications)    | 890          |
| Group 5 (Diploma with additional qualification) * | 132          |
| Group 6 (Degree and above)                        | 303          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                                | <b>1,325</b> |

\*Additional qualification refers to any other qualifications that are recognised for display in practice but not for the purpose of registration by the Optometrists and Opticians (Registration and Practising Certificates) Regulations, and may be diplomas, degrees or higher qualifications



**Optometrists & Opticians Board**

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