

February 2026

Pay and Reward SURVEY

Association of British Dispensing Opticians



INTRODUCTION

The ABDO Pay and Reward Survey was developed in response to feedback from our members, many of whom expressed concerns that their expertise as qualified dispensing opticians (DOs) and contact lens opticians (CLOs) is not sufficiently valued. As your professional body, ABDO is committed to addressing these concerns and advocating for fair recognition and reward across the profession.

This report provides a comprehensive benchmark for salaries and benefits for our members. It highlights variations in pay by region and employer type, explores the impact of additional responsibilities and qualifications, and examines the benefits offered by employers.

By sharing these findings, we aim to increase transparency, support our members in career development, and encourage employers to ensure a fair approach to pay and reward and to support our members with their development.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Pay varies significantly by employer type, region and additional responsibilities**
- **Gaining qualifications and expanding your role can positively influence pay**
- **With nearly 70% of respondents feeling that their pay and benefits do not reflect their responsibilities, there is a clear need for improved recognition and reward across the sector**



ABDO Pay and Reward Survey



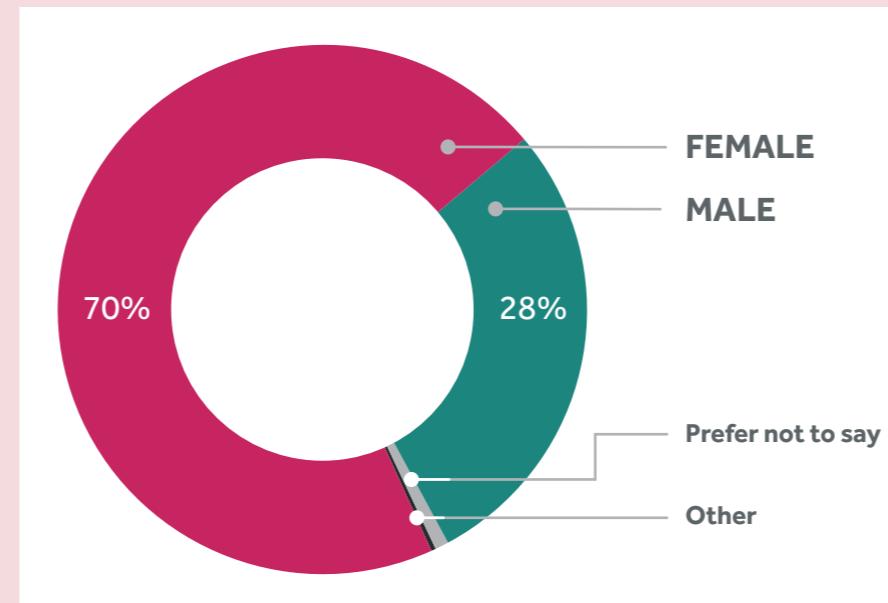
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SURVEY RESULTS

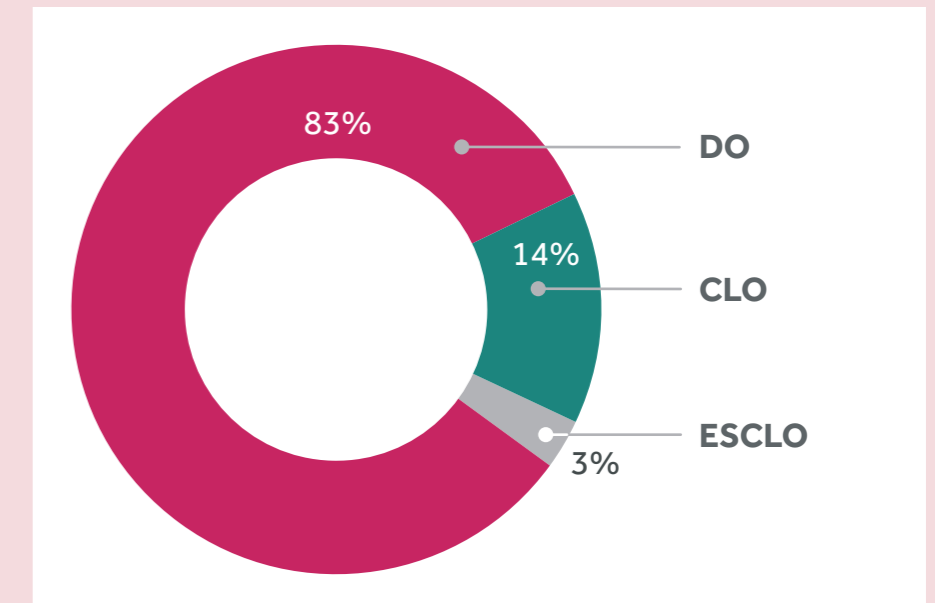
The survey, conducted in October 2025, achieved a strong response rate of 27%, with 1,403 members participating out of 5,133 contacted. This robust level of engagement provides confidence in the credibility of the findings and ensures they are reflective of DOs in the UK.

Key demographics show that **56% of respondents have worked in the profession for over 20 years**, and **40% have been qualified as DOs for more than two decades**. This depth of experience underscores the importance of fair pay and recognition for long-serving professionals.

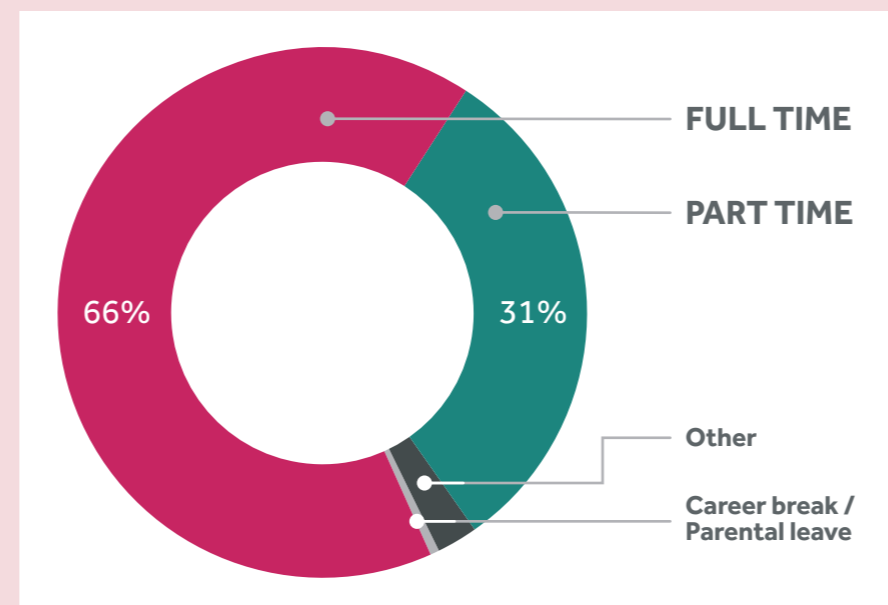
By gender



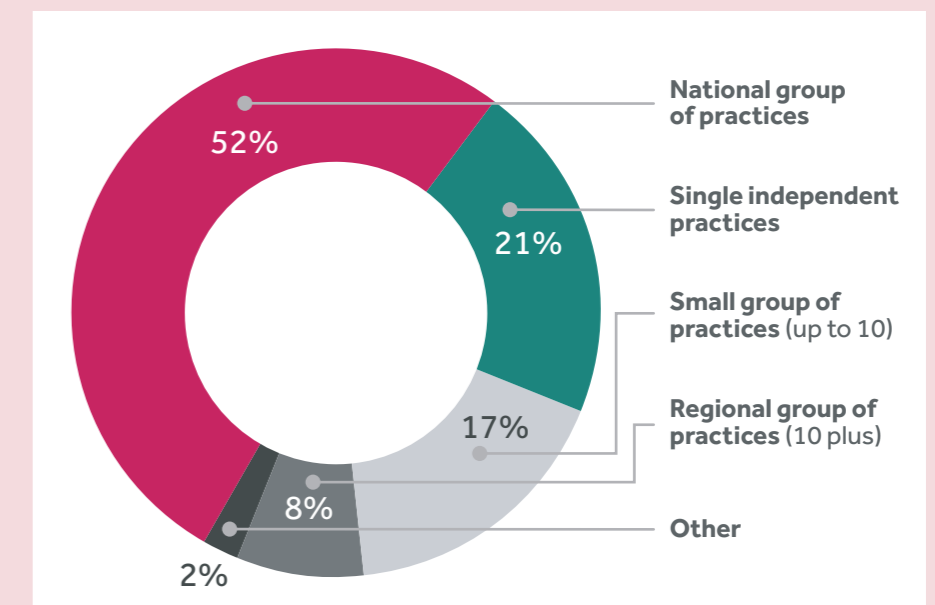
By qualification type



Employment status



Employer type



Overview of all our members completing the survey, including DOs, CLOs and extended services contact lens opticians (ESCLOs)

SALARIES AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS INFLUENCING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PAY

We found that salaries are mainly in the £28k–34k range, with the average calculated at £31,262. This includes all respondents working both full and part-time.

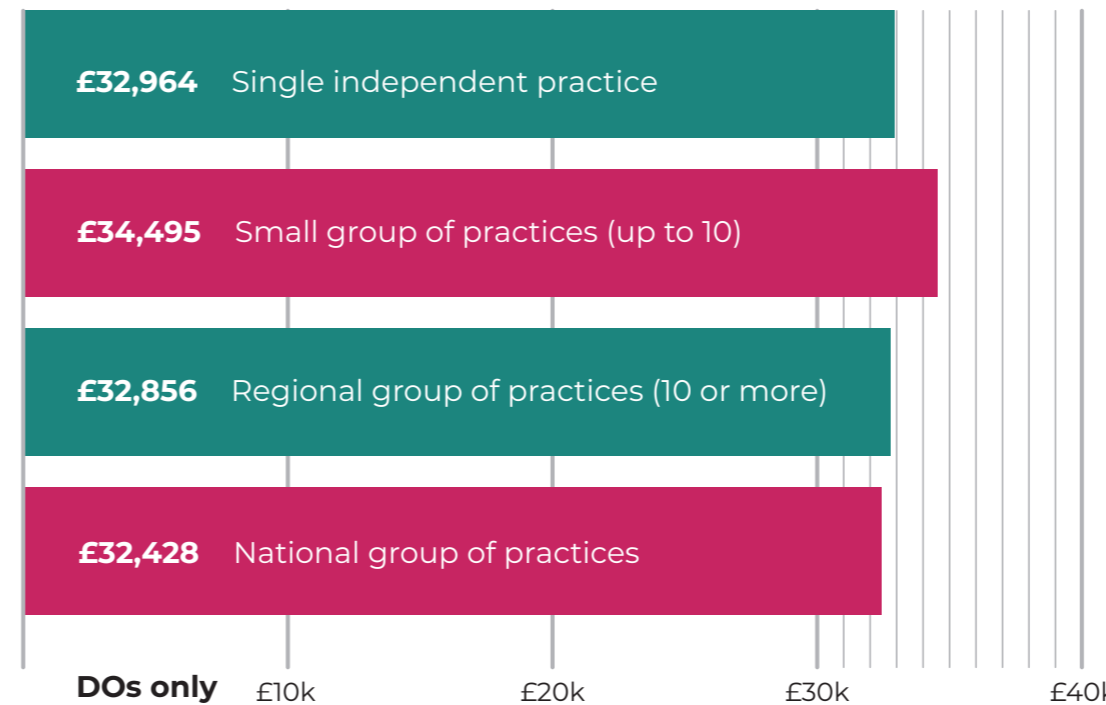
Average for a DO (full-time) is £33,056 and a CLO (full-time) is £36,952

Average salary for DO (full-time) with no additional responsibilities is £30,247

The survey shows that a gender pay gap exists. This is a significant finding and raises important questions about equity and progression opportunities within the profession.

Males in full-time roles earn an average salary of £35,352 compared with £32,690 for females

Employer type also influences pay: smaller groups and independents tend to offer slightly higher salaries than national chains.



Variances in pay for a full time DO across different employer types

Region	Average Salary (£)	
England	London	£36,178
England	South East	£35,200
England	East of England	£35,067
England	North East	£34,177
England	South West	£33,816
England	East Midlands	£33,667
England	North West	£33,475
Scotland		£32,076
England	Yorkshire and the Humber	£32,034
England	West Midlands	£31,950
Wales		£31,402
Northern Ireland		£29,833

There are variances in average pay for people working in different regions in the UK.

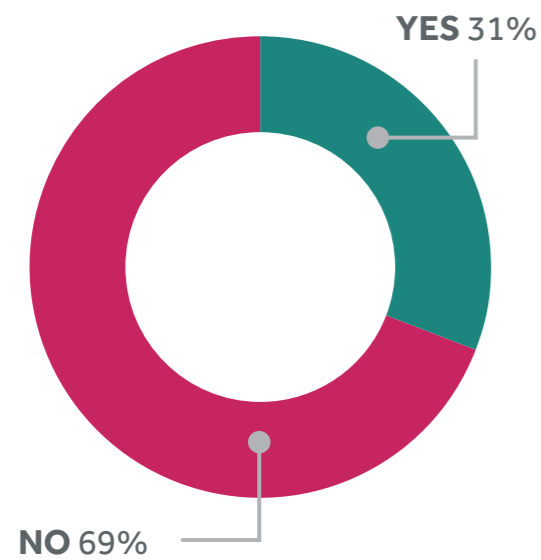
There are notable differences in pay across regions, which may reflect local cost of living and market dynamics.

Members should consider these factors when negotiating roles or relocating.

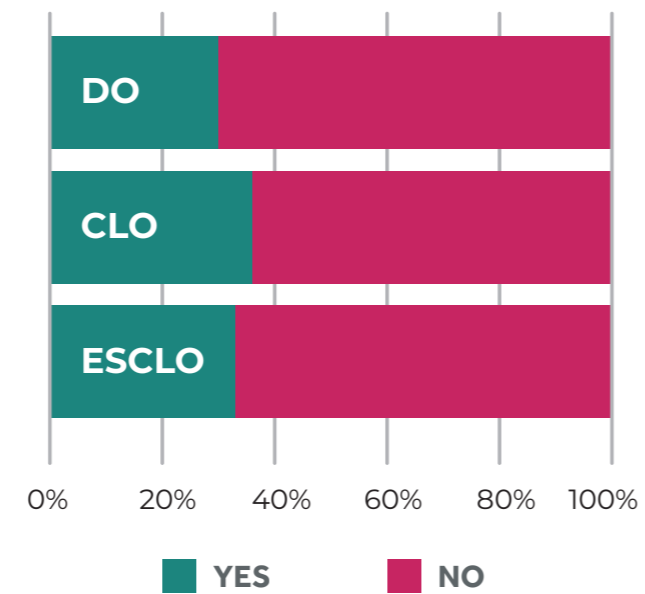
Regions by average annual salary - full time employees only.

RECOGNITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Do you feel your salary and benefits reflect your job responsibilities?



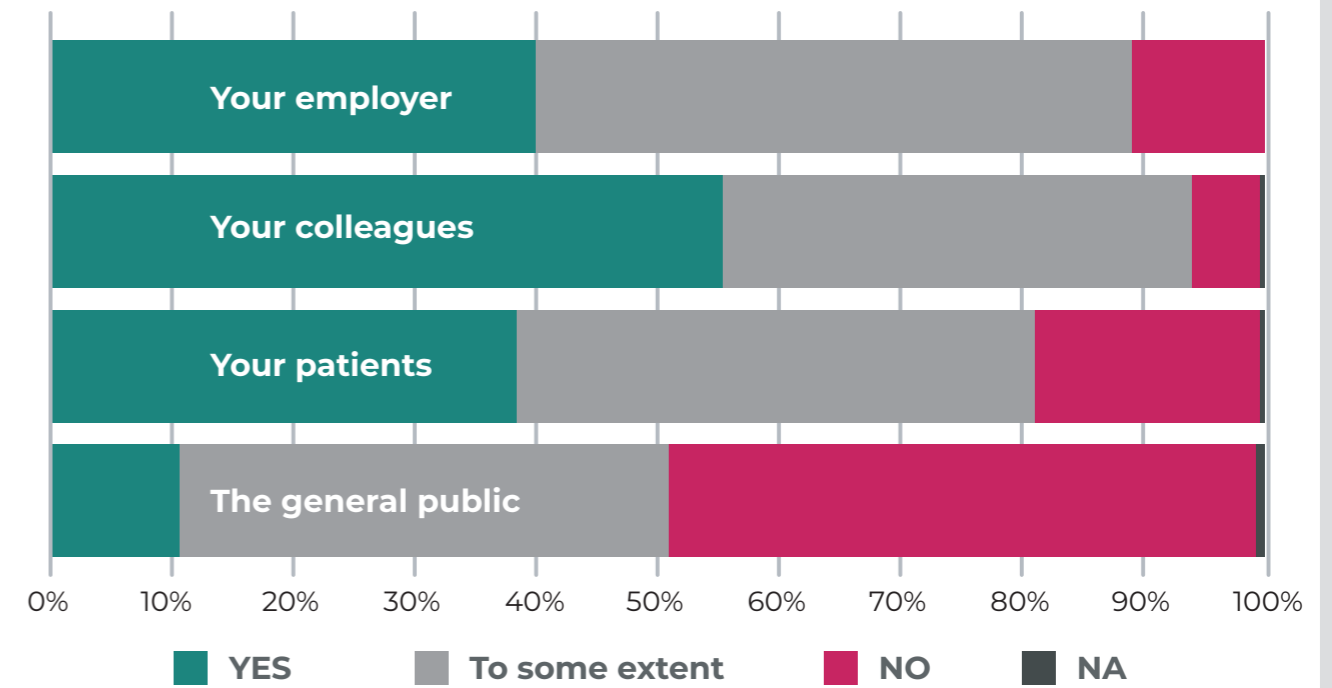
Do you feel your salary and benefits reflect your job responsibilities - by qualification?



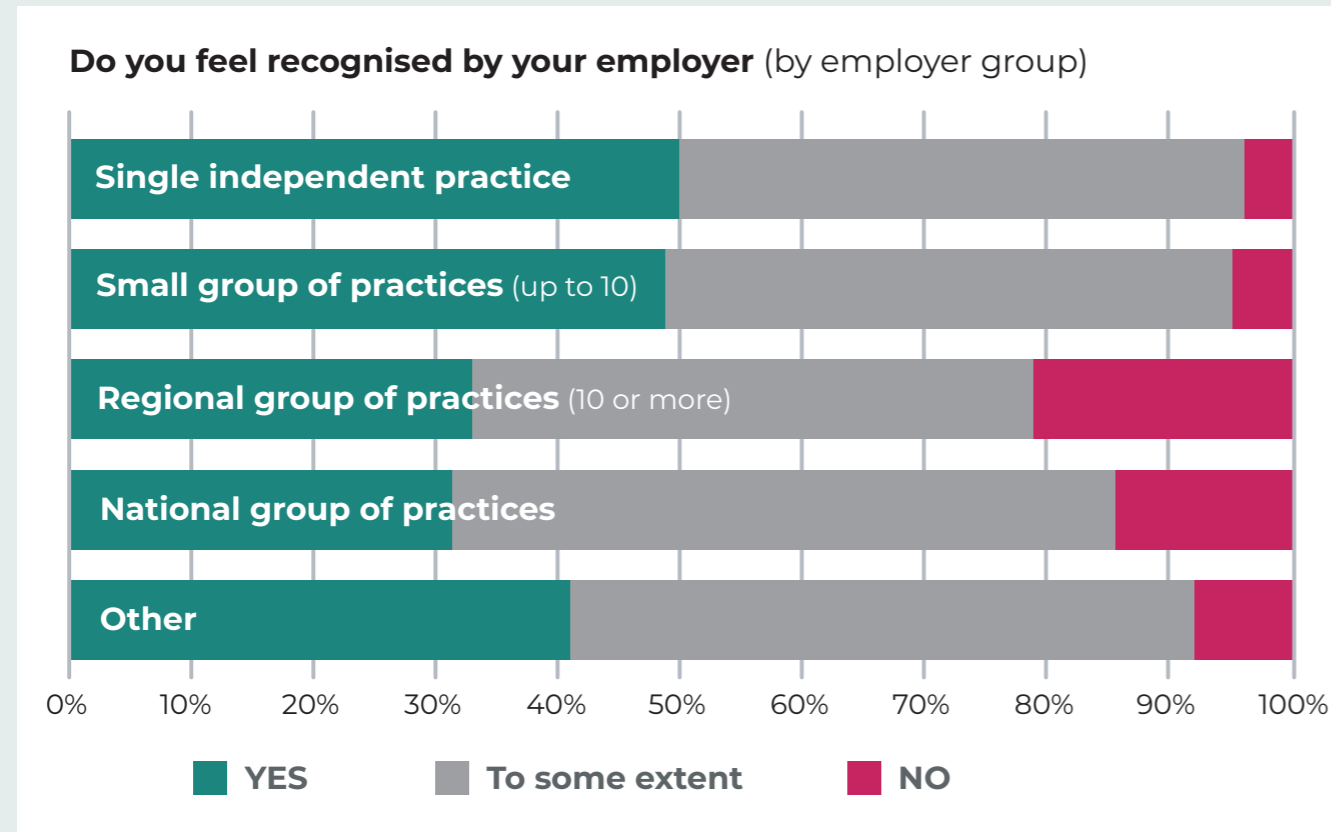
A significant **69% of respondents do not feel their pay and benefits reflect their responsibilities.**

While many members feel valued by colleagues and patients, recognition from employers is inconsistent. CLOs and ESCLOs report slightly higher levels of recognition than DOs.

Do you feel your professional status and expertise are recognised by:



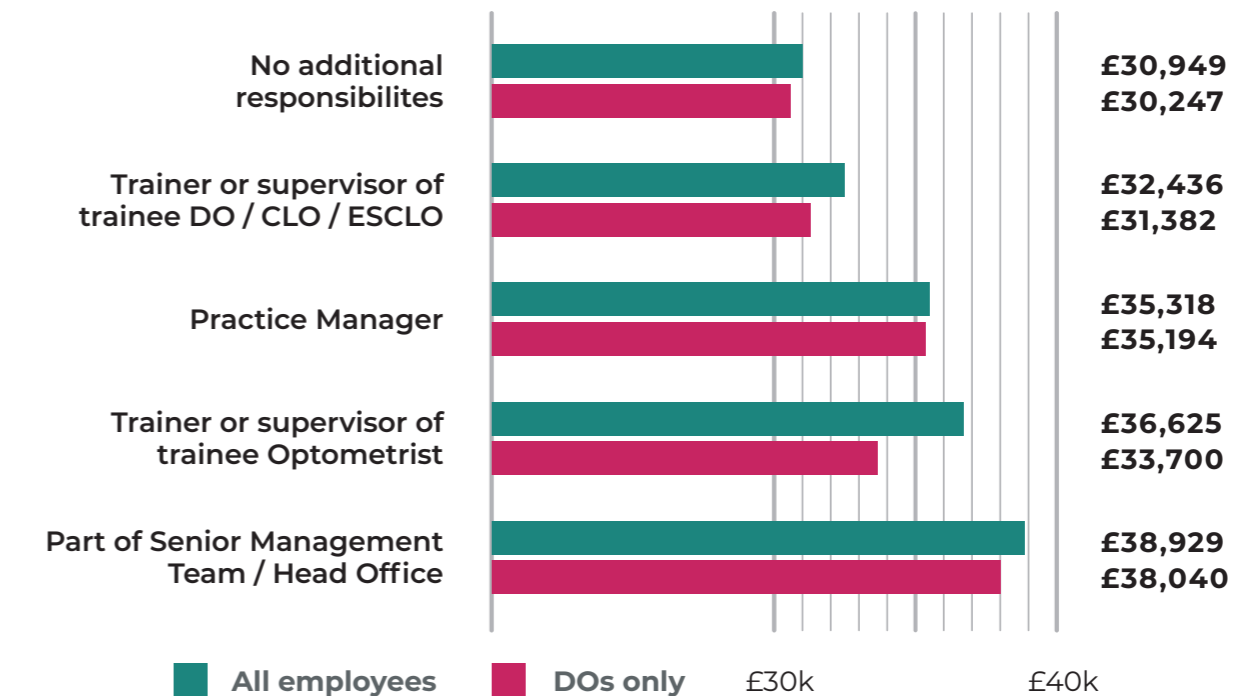
RECOGNITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES



Although marginal, more of those who worked for single independent practices and small groups felt they received employer recognition compared with those in national groups

Primary additional responsibility

(by average full time annual salary)



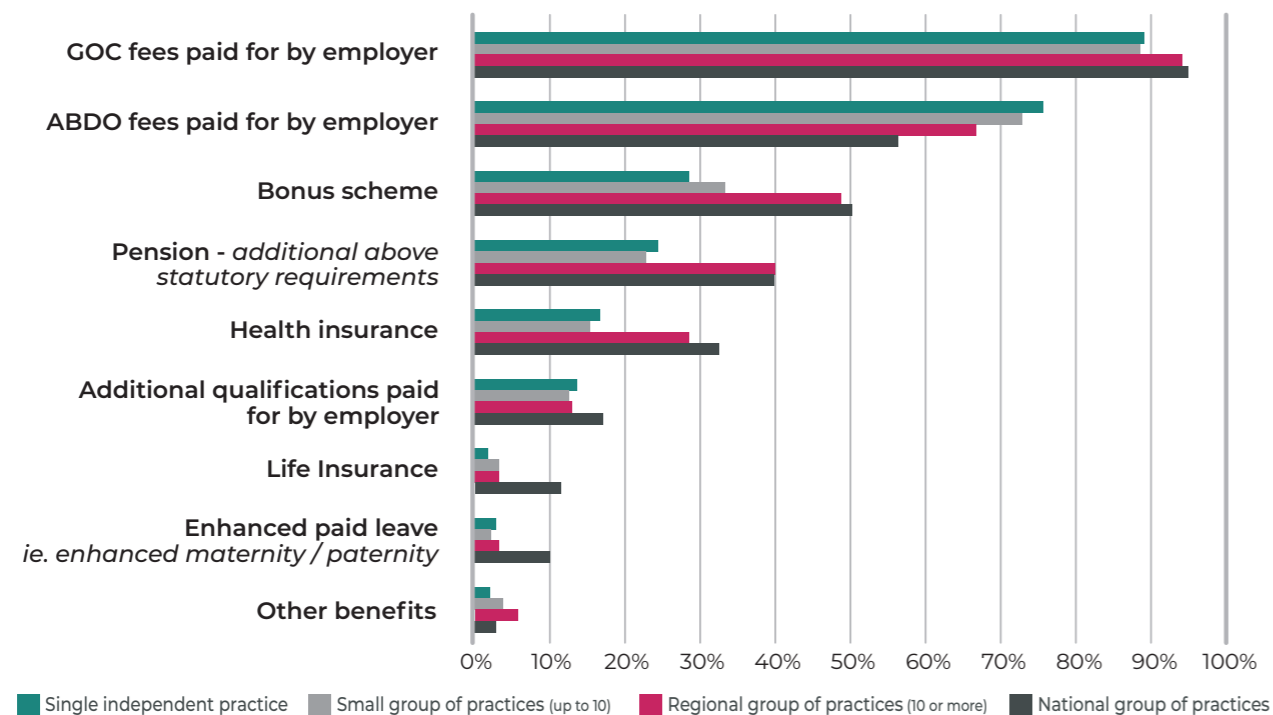
Respondents were also asked if they had any additional responsibilities attached to their role, and **38% of employees said that they did not**. **28% were practice managers** and **23% trainers/supervisors of trainee DOs**.

In addition to these key responsibilities, some also said:

- assistant manager
- low vision practitioner
- in-house trainer

BENEFITS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Additional employment benefits (by employer group)

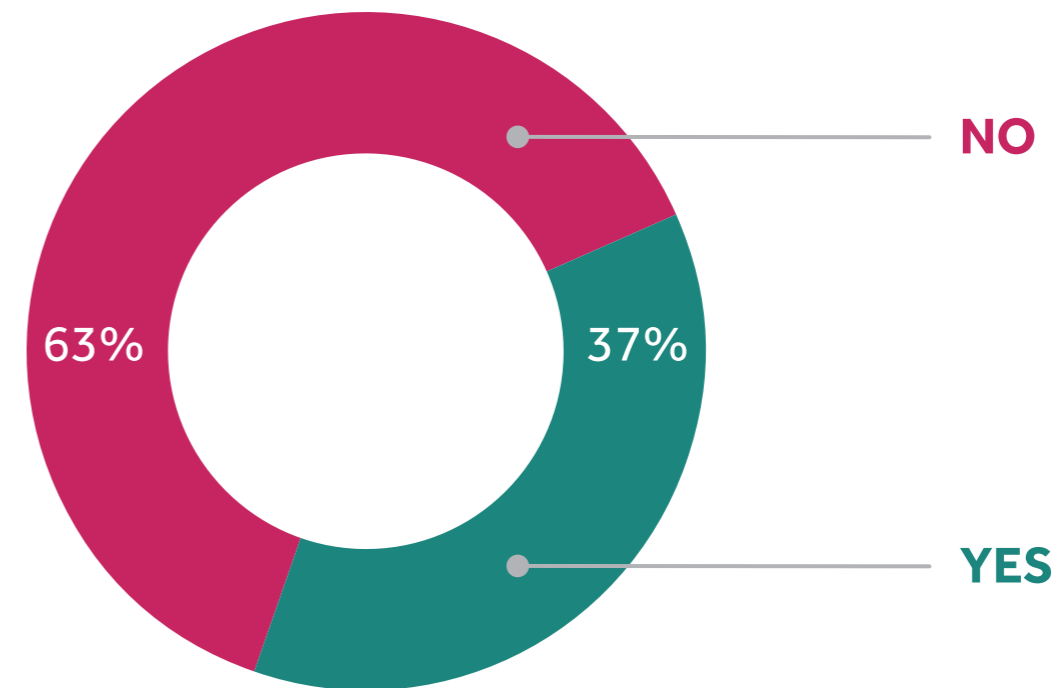


Employers most commonly contribute to General Optical Council (GOC) and ABDO membership fees, alongside offering bonus schemes, health insurance and enhanced pensions.

National and regional groups are more likely to provide structured benefits packages.

However, the majority of members report a lack of formal development plan, underscoring the need for greater investment in career progression.

Do you have a professional development plan for your DOs & CLOs / ESCLOs



The majority of members are not likely to have career development plans with their employers in place.

WHAT NEXT?

This report establishes a valuable benchmark to track progress over time. ABDO will use these insights to support members in understanding how their salaries compare across the sector and which factors influence pay and recognition.

We will share these findings with employers to encourage action that benefits both members and the profession, ultimately improving patient outcomes.

Additionally, ABDO will develop tools and resources exclusively to help our members prepare for pay discussions and plan their learning and development journeys.





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