

The 2020 Vision Index

Taking a closer look at Australia's eye health



Good vision for life[®]
An Optometry Australia initiative

With 2020 now upon us, Optometry Australia is focusing its efforts on encouraging Australians to visit an optometrist and place a greater emphasis on the health of their eyes.

The 2020 Vision Index report gives an overview of Australia's current perceptions and behaviours towards eye health.

It explores six key themes:

- 1: A closer look at Australia's general eye health
- 2: Little Australians
- 3: Australians and optometrists
- 4: Australia's knowledge of eye conditions and diseases
- 5: Glasses, contacts and sunglasses
- 6: Lifestyle - the workplace, driving, exercise and makeup

The front section of the report highlights some of the prominent data, while the appendix at the back contains more detail for those interested in drilling down further.

The 2020 Vision Index was commissioned by leading professional body, Optometry Australia and conducted by research agency, Empirica Research with a survey sample size of 1,000 Australians.



Section 1:

A closer look at Australia's general eye health

Good vision is a key factor for living a healthy, happy life. The earlier we start looking after the health of our eyes, the better the chance of maintaining good vision throughout our lives.

It seems most Australians support this notion, with 76% of all Australians considering their eyesight to be their most important sense, and 59% stating they're worried about the quality of their eyesight.

77% of Australians accurately believe that eye examinations may uncover issues with their general health, and 70% agree that a balanced diet can support eye health. However, 31% of Australians believe that eating carrots will improve their eyesight when in fact, a variety of different nutrients may contribute to healthier eyes.



1: A closer look at Australia's general eye health

59%

of Australians worry about the quality of their eyesight

76%

of Australians stated that vision was their most important sense

77%

of Australians agree that eye examinations may uncover issues with their general health

68%

of Australian parents have taken their kids to an optometrist for an eye examination

60%

of Australians have found their eyesight has decreased as they age

31%

of adult Australians still believe eating carrots significantly improves your eyesight

Section 2:

Little Australians

Almost four in five (79%) Australian parents believe their children have great eyesight. However, only 68% of Australian parents have actually taken their children to have their eyes examined by an optometrist.

Of those children who have visited an optometrist, 35% have required prescription glasses - contradicting most parents' belief that there is nothing wrong with their child's vision.

Parents who take their kids to the optometrist often do so as part of their routine health check or because they failed a vision screening at school.



2: Little Australians



72%

of Australians correctly believe children should have an eye examination with an optometrist before starting school

45%

of Australian parents who have not had their children's eyes examined, haven't done so because they believe there is nothing wrong with their kids' vision

68%

of Australian parents have taken their kids to an optometrist for an eye examination

and

35%

of children who have visited an optometrist required prescription glasses

79%

of Australian parents believe their kids have good eyesight

44%

of Australian parents aged 18-34 are worried about the effects of screen time on their children's eyesight, compared to

28%

of older Australian parents (55+)

55%

of Australian kids don't have a pair of UV-protective sunglasses

Section 3:

Australians and optometrists

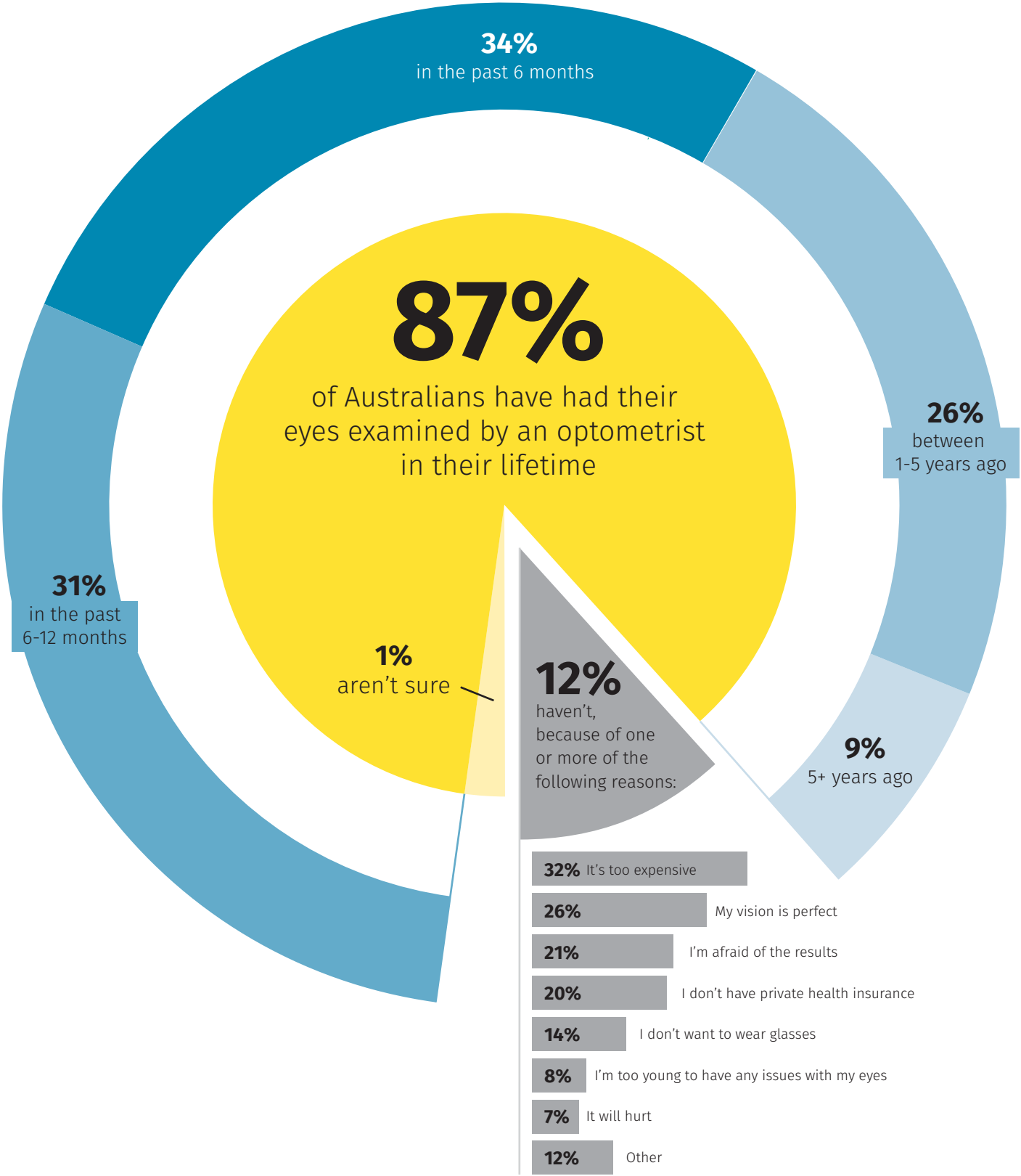
The good news is that 87% of Australians have had their eyes examined at least once by an optometrist in their lifetime, but it's alarming that 12% have never been to one at all.

More than a third (35%) have not undergone regular eye examinations, thereby increasing their risk of eye disease remaining undiagnosed.

Over three quarters (77%) of Australians are aware that eye examinations can also help uncover broader issues about their general health, with the biggest trigger for a visit to an optometrist resulting from people citing poor long distance vision (82%), poor short distance vision (81%), floating dots in vision (58%) and light sensitivity (47%).

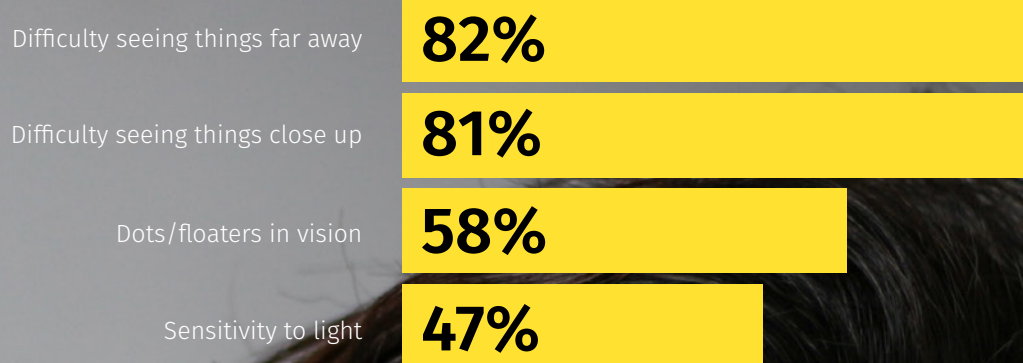


3: Australians and optometrists



3: Australians and optometrists

Top conditions for which Australians seek advice from optometrists:



57%

of Australians understand the benefits of a regular eye examination

43%

of Australians believing the appropriate frequency for someone to get their eyes examined is annually

and

14%

of Australians believing eye examinations should be done more often than annually

26%

of Australians haven't had an eye examination because they believed their vision was perfect

9%

of Australians haven't had their eyes examined in over 5 years, increasing their risk of undiagnosed eye disease

32%

of Australians who haven't had an eye examination believed it was too expensive

36%

of Australians believe an optometrist can detect certain types of cancer

while

48%

of Australians are unsure if this is true

Section 4:

Australia's knowledge of eye conditions and diseases

Despite the global epidemic of myopia, or short-sightedness, 33% of Australians have never heard of this. This is concerning as it is estimated that by 2050, more than 50% of the world's population will have myopia. There are, however, ways to slow progression of the condition, so awareness is crucial.

69% of Australians have never heard of presbyopia (a Greek word meaning 'old eye'), as it's more often understood as "when you reach middle-age, you'll probably need reading glasses".

Other little-known eye conditions include pterygium (74% of Aussies have never heard of it), which is an eye condition caused by sun exposure, and diabetic retinopathy (49% have never heard of it), which is a serious complication of diabetes that can cause blindness.

Dry eye is a big issue with Australians and is increasing with our ageing population, yet only 26% have seen an optometrist about the plethora of new treatment options available.



4: Australia's knowledge of eye conditions and diseases

33%

of Australians have never heard of myopia, currently the world's most widespread health epidemic

74%

of Australians have never heard of pterygium, an eye condition caused by sun exposure

69%

of Australians have never heard of presbyopia, the leading cause of age-related vision deterioration

77%

of Australians have experienced dry eye

though only

26%

have seen an optometrist about it

49%

of Australians have never heard of diabetic retinopathy, a serious complication of diabetes that can cause blindness

Section 5:

Glasses, contacts and sunglasses

Two thirds of Australians surveyed wear prescription glasses, 13% wear prescription contact lenses and 31% wear prescription sunglasses.

However, those who wear prescription glasses do not necessarily wear them regularly. This could be due to a quarter of glasses wearers not liking them or the way they look on their face or getting annoyed when they have to carry them around; or it could simply be because not everyone needs refractive correction full-time. Nearly half of glasses wearers do like their glasses, with the top reason unsurprisingly being because they help them to see.

The main barrier for people wearing contact lenses seems to be the idea of putting something on their eye and a perceived difficulty in application. Those who wear contacts choose to because they prefer their appearance without glasses and find activities such as sports and grooming easier with them. A quarter of Australians will accidentally leave their contacts in overnight at least once every two weeks, placing them at an increased risk of eye ulcers and serious, sight threatening infection.

When asked about their priorities for choosing their sunglasses, it was positive to find that Aussies are conscious of their eyes in the sun, with the survey finding UV protection to be the top consideration for the majority of Australians when choosing a pair of sunnies. However, 76% of Australians don't believe it's necessary to wear UV protective sunnies in the winter months, which is untrue.



5: Glasses, contacts and sunglasses

66%

of Australians report wearing prescription glasses

38%

of Australians who wear prescription glasses wear them for everything - both close and distance vision

\$243

is the average amount Australians are prepared to spend on prescription glasses

and

37%

of Australians who wear prescription glasses wear them all the time

10%

of Australians who wear prescription contacts rarely wash their hands before putting them on their eyes

19%

of Australians who wear prescription contacts often or always leave them in for longer than advised by an optometrist

and

24%

of Australians who wear prescription contacts leave them in overnight at least once every two weeks

12

hours

is the average maximum time Australians are prepared to leave their contacts in

5: Glasses, contacts and sunglasses

76%

of Australians don't believe it's necessary to wear UV protective sunglasses during the winter months

51%

of Australians place a lot of importance on the UV protection level of their sunglasses

while

36%

of Australians place a little importance on the UV protection level of their sunglasses

and

\$179

is the average amount Australians are prepared to spend on prescription sunglasses

13%

of Australians place no importance on the UV protection level of their sunglasses

Section 6:

Lifestyle

This section explores the workplace, eye injuries, sport & exercise, driving and makeup hygiene.

Most Australians believe too much screen time can impact their eye sight, with 78% having experienced eye strain while using a computer, tablet or smartphone.

Young Australians (18-34) are more worried about the impact of blue light on their eyesight, compared to those aged 55+, which may be due to the higher usage of screens by young people.

When completing DIY projects around the house, 21% of Australians have acquired an eye injury. Unsurprisingly only 12% of Australians always wear protective eye-wear when completing projects, and 9% never do, showcasing a need for making sure more safety procedures are in place in the home.

When playing sport, 41% of Australians would prefer to wear contact lenses over glasses. And when it comes to makeup, there are some concerning habits relating to makeup hygiene, which can impact eye health.



6: Lifestyle - the workplace and injuries

32%

of young Australians (18-34) believe blue light from computers and smartphones is an issue for their eyesight

9%

of Australians never wear eye protection when working on DIY projects at home

43%

of Australians are worried about developing or worsening short-sightedness (myopia) from too much screen time

21%

of Australians have acquired an eye injury while working on a DIY project at home

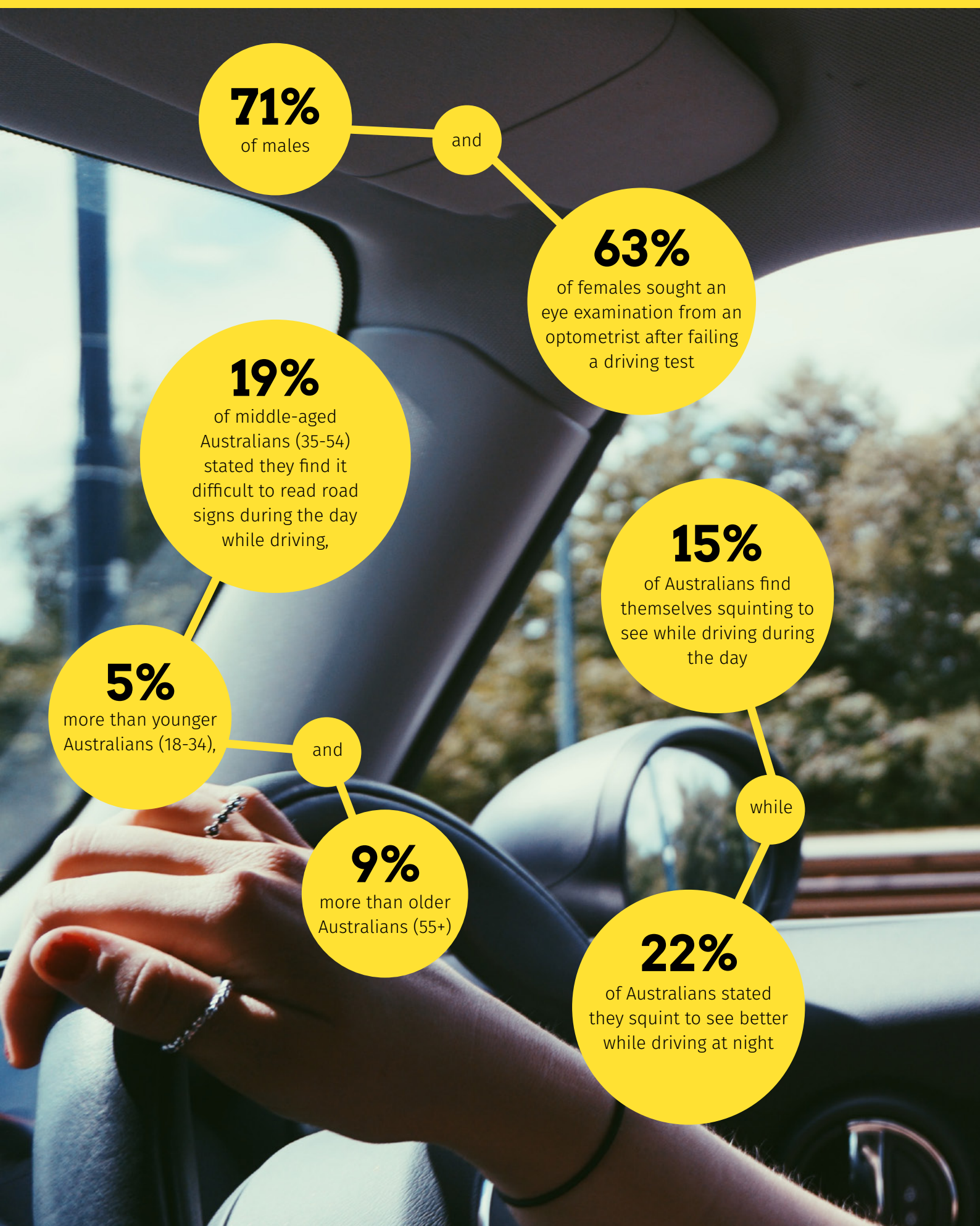
22%

of Australians believe it's unnecessary to visit an optometrist about eye strain from computers, tablets or smartphones

36%

of Australians stated dry eye makes it difficult for them to concentrate at work

6: Lifestyle - driving



6: Lifestyle - sport & exercise

13%

of Australians have had to stop participating in physical activity because of issues with their eyesight, due to one or more of the following reasons:

34%

Can't wear contact lenses and activity can't be done with glasses

43%

Even with corrective eyewear, my vision deteriorated

17%

Other

24%

of Australians always wear prescription contact lenses while exercising or playing sport

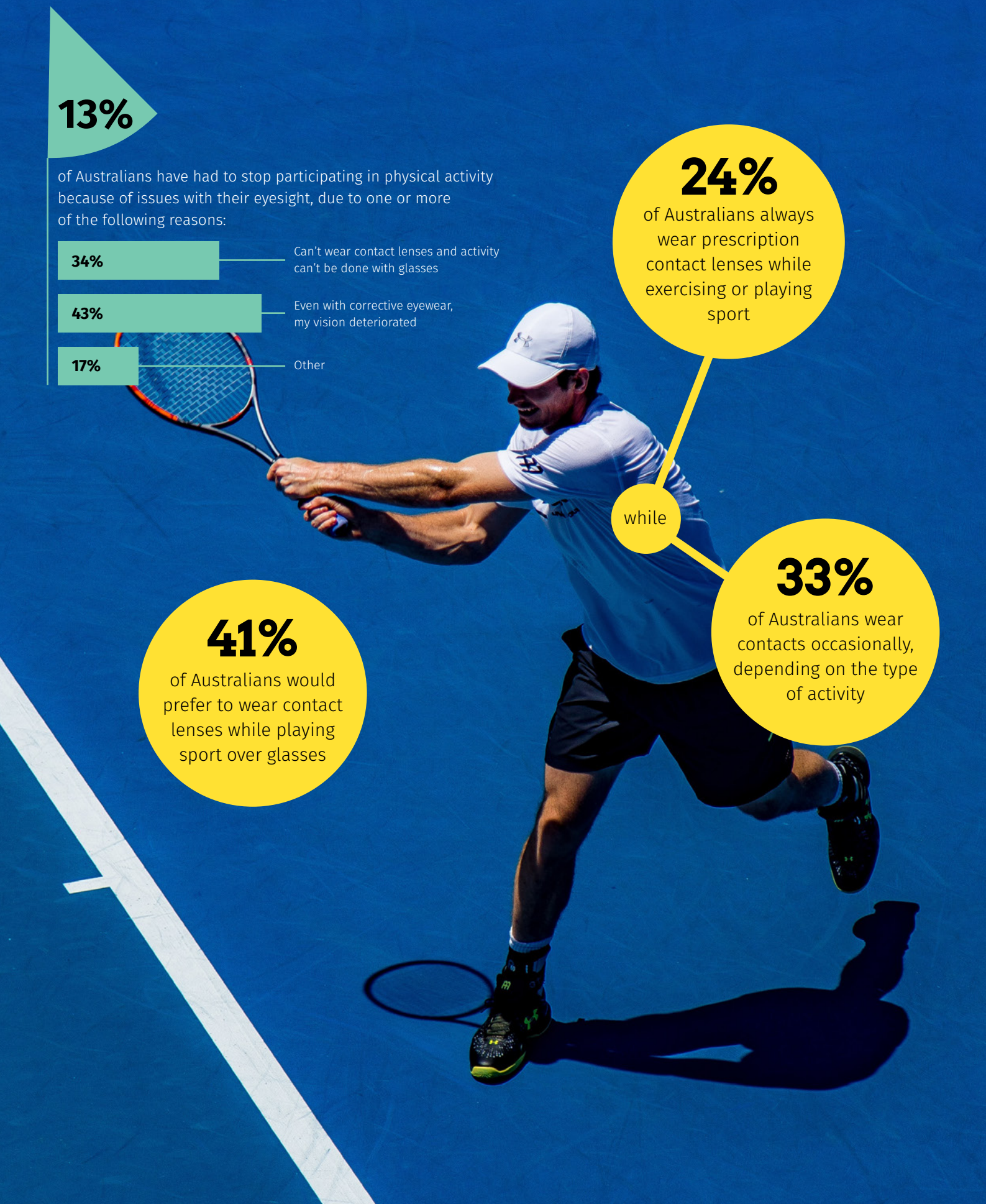
while

41%

of Australians would prefer to wear contact lenses while playing sport over glasses

33%

of Australians wear contacts occasionally, depending on the type of activity



6: Lifestyle - makeup hygiene

40%

of Australians clean their makeup tools less than twice a year

50%

of Australians who have used false eyelashes replace them more frequently than once a month

3%

of Australians have worn cosmetic contact lenses to change their appearance

and

35%

of Australians who have had cosmetic injectables around or under the eyes contracted an eye infection every time

33%

of Australians who have worn cosmetic contact lenses have experienced negative side effects as a result of wearing decorative lenses

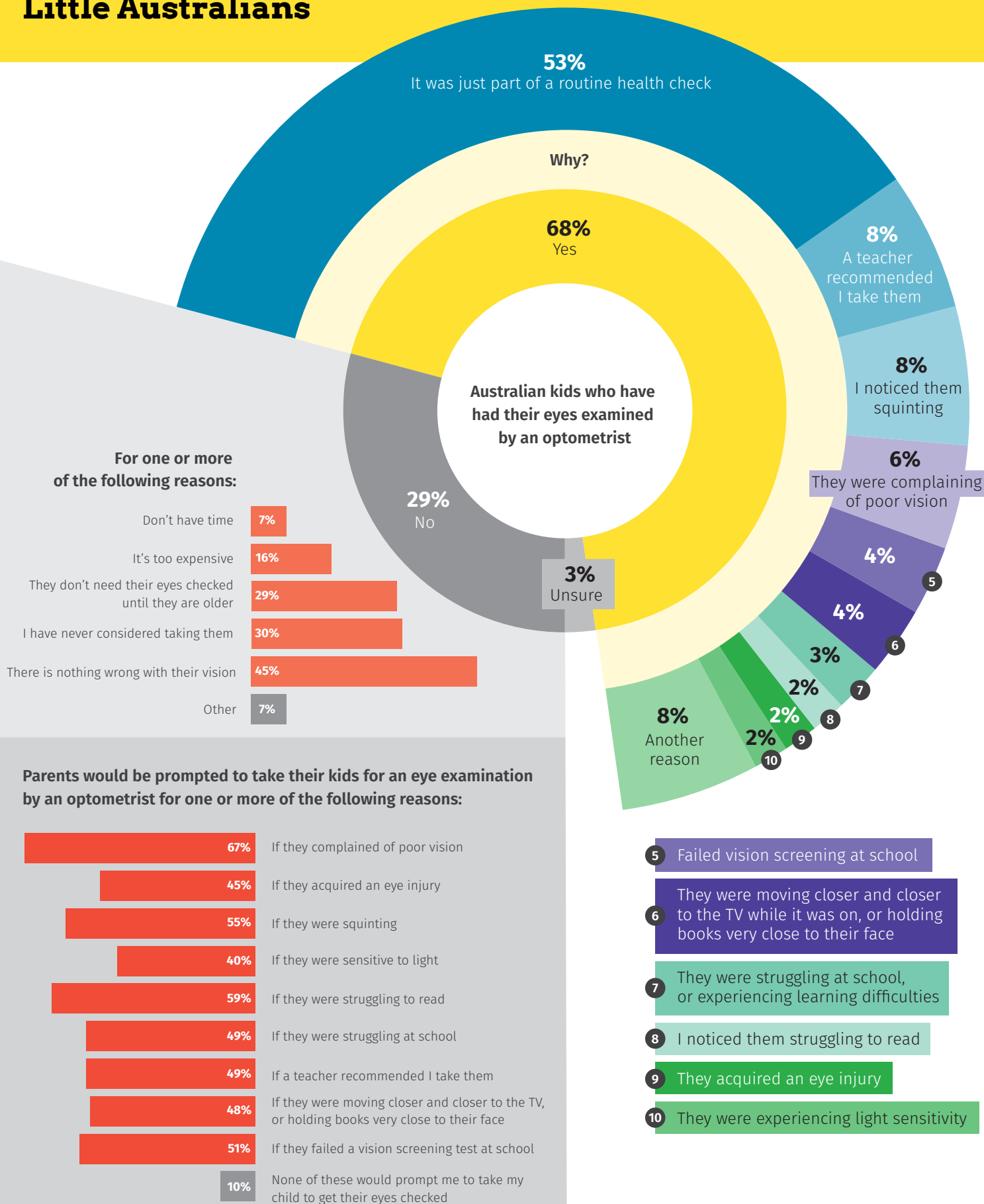
Appendix

Detailed data and infographics for:

Little Australians	20
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Glasses, contacts and sunglasses	24
Lifestyle - the workplace, driving, sport & exercise and makeup hygiene	29

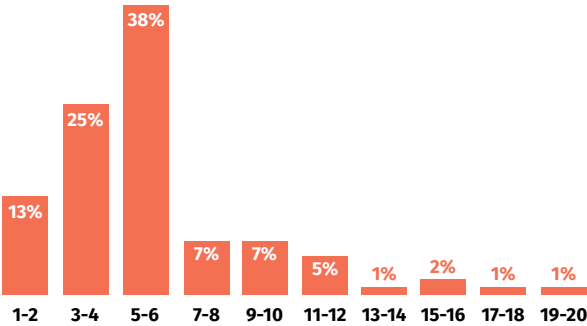


Little Australians



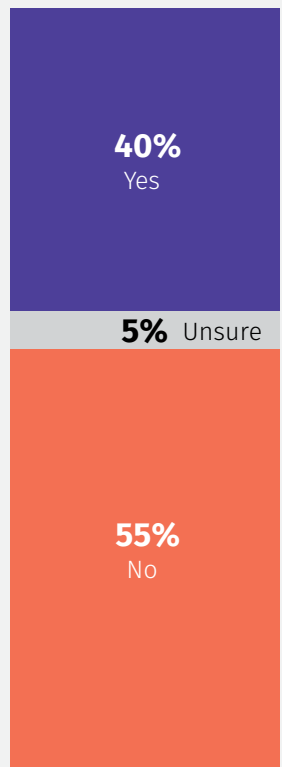
Little Australians

What age do parents think they should take their kids for an eye exam?

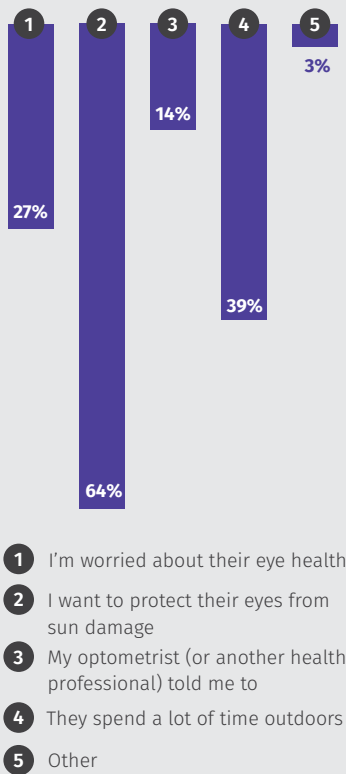


The majority of parents do not buy UV protective sunglasses for their children, mostly because they’re worried about the children breaking or losing them.

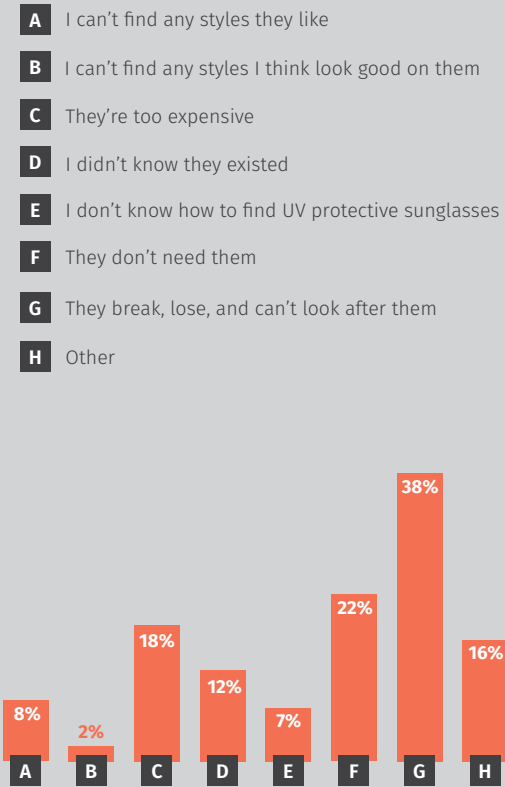
Australian kids who have UV-protective sunglasses



Reasons why parents buy sunnies for their kids (respondents could select more than one)



Reasons why not (respondents could select more than one)



Australia's knowledge of eye conditions and diseases

Awareness of eye conditions amongst Australians varies wildly. We've listed a few of the more common conditions and asked Australians what they know about them. To get you up to speed, here are some quick primers on the conditions we collected data on for this report.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a form of eye disease that affects the optic nerve connecting the eye to the brain, resulting in blurred vision, loss of peripheral vision and difficulty adjusting to low light. Glaucoma impacts about 1 in 20 Australians, with 88% of the population aware of the condition.

Amblyopia

Amblyopia, commonly known as 'lazy eye', is a vision development disorder that occurs when an eye fails to achieve normal visual acuity. Amblyopia typically begins during infancy and early childhood and impacts 3% of Australians.

Myopia

Myopia (also known as short-sightedness) is a common vision condition where distant objects are hard to see clearly. 67% of Australians have heard of the condition, with 49% able to identify any symptoms.

Presbyopia

Presbyopia is the gradual loss of the ability to focus on things up close. While presbyopia is a normal change that occurs with age, few Australians know about the condition and its symptoms.

Astigmatism

Astigmatism is a refractive error generally caused by irregularities in the shape of the cornea, resulting in blurred or distorted vision. A relatively common condition, experienced by 12% of Australians, that often occurs with myopia and hyperopia (long-sightedness).

Cataract

Cataract is a widely known eye issue where the clear lens of the eye becomes cloudy and lets less light pass through. It impacts 10% of all Australians and usually develops in old age.

Diabetic retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy occurs when the blood vessels inside the retina at the back of the eye are damaged as a result of diabetes. It creates blurred or distorted vision and, in some cases, blindness.

Age-related macular degeneration

Age-related macular degeneration impacts the region of the retina used for our central vision and causes severe vision impairment. 79% of Australians are aware of the condition, which commonly affects people over 50.

Pterygium

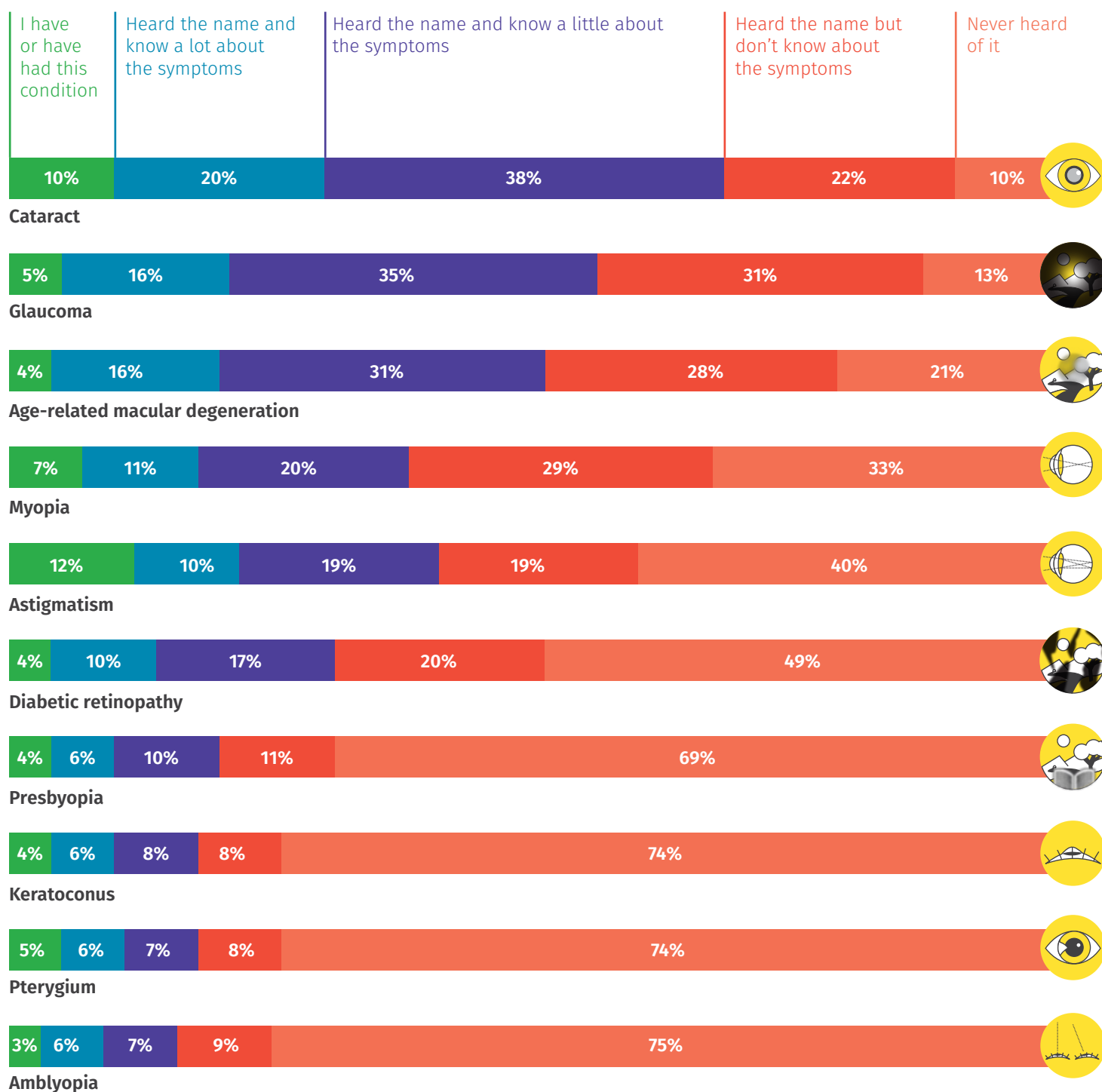
Pterygium, commonly known as 'surfers eye', is a condition consisting of one or more benign growths over the eye that can invade the cornea and disfigure the eye, and is caused by being exposed to bright sunlight and UV rays for long hours. The vast majority of Australians are not aware of this condition.

Keratoconus

Most Australians have never heard of Keratoconus, a progressive eye disease that causes the cornea to thin and bulge forward in a cone shape. The disease often begins in adolescence and causes distorted vision.

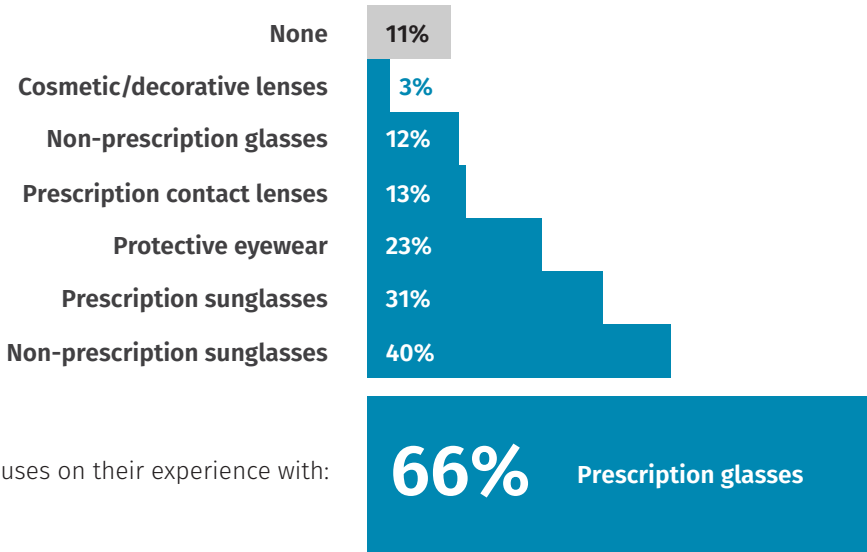
Australia's knowledge of eye conditions and diseases

Awareness of eye conditions amongst Australians:



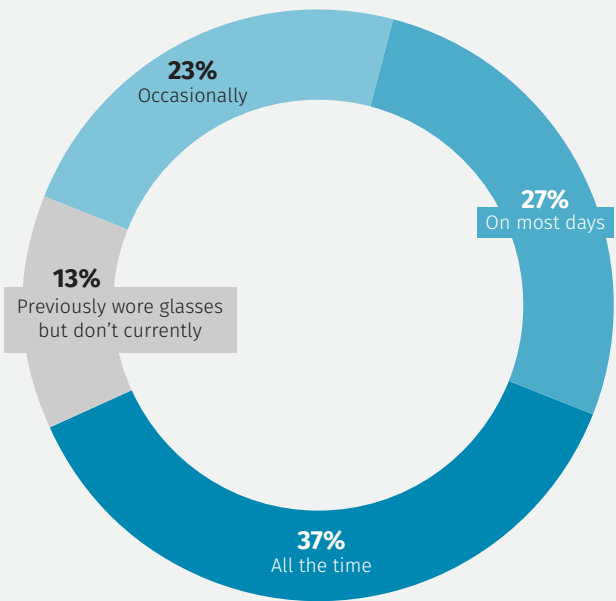
Glasses, contacts and sunglasses

Australians report having worn a wide variety of eyewear.

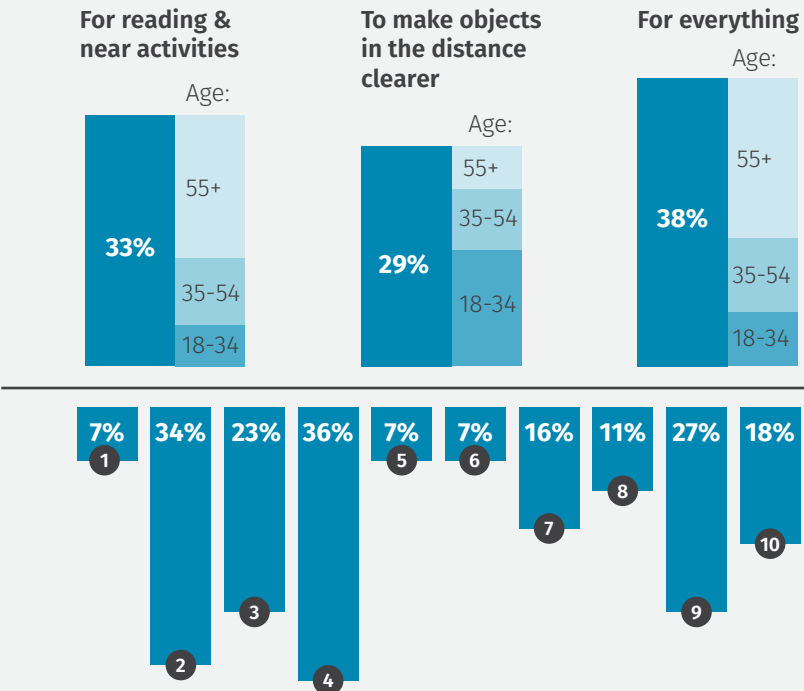


This section focuses on their experience with:

How often are Australians wearing their glasses?



Why do Australians wear glasses?



Australians wear glasses instead of contact lenses for one or more of the following reasons:

- 1

My optometrist said contacts were no longer suitable for me
- 2

Contacts were too difficult to put in and take out
- 3

I didn't like putting something on my eye
- 4

Contacts were uncomfortable
- 5

I got an eye infection while using contact lenses
- 6

I scratched my eye while using contact lenses
- 7

Contacts were too expensive
- 8

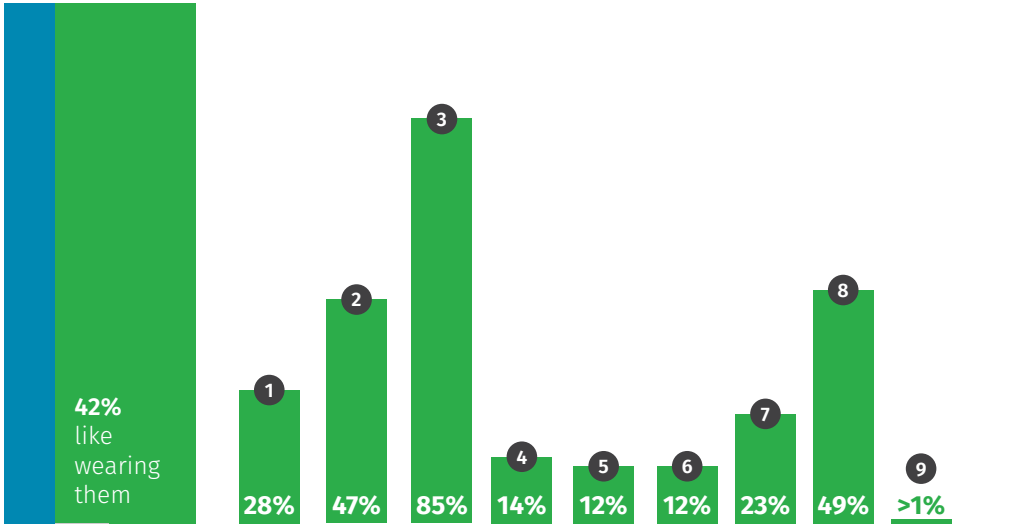
I needed correction for near and distance vision, and contacts couldn't provide clear vision for me
- 9

I was happy with my glasses
- 10

Other

Glasses, contacts and sunglasses

Of the 66% of Australians wearing prescription glasses...



This 42% like wearing glasses for one or more of the following reasons:

- 1

I like the way they look on my face
- 2

They are comfortable
- 3

They help me see
- 4

They aren't too expensive
- 5

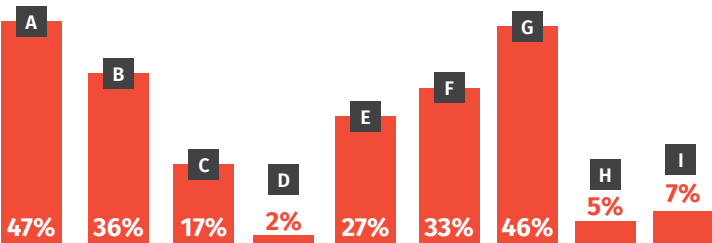
They make me look or feel smarter
- 6

I can have different styles for different occasions or moods
- 7

It's part of my identity
- 8

They stop my eyes straining and/or stop me getting headaches
- 9

Other



This 14% dislike wearing glasses for one or more of the following reasons:

- A

I don't like the way they look on my face
- B

They are uncomfortable
- C

They limit my peripheral vision
- D

The prescription isn't right for me and/or they don't improve my vision
- E

They are too expensive
- F

They fog up while doing everyday tasks
- G

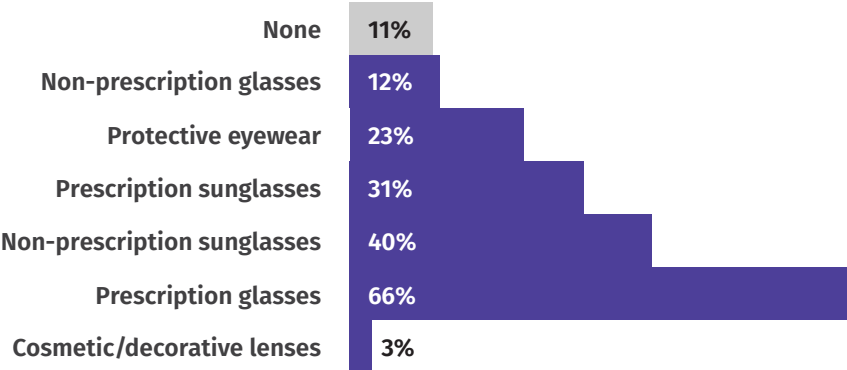
I don't like having to carry them around with me and risk losing them
- H

I can't wear makeup with my glasses
- I

Other

Glasses, contacts and sunglasses

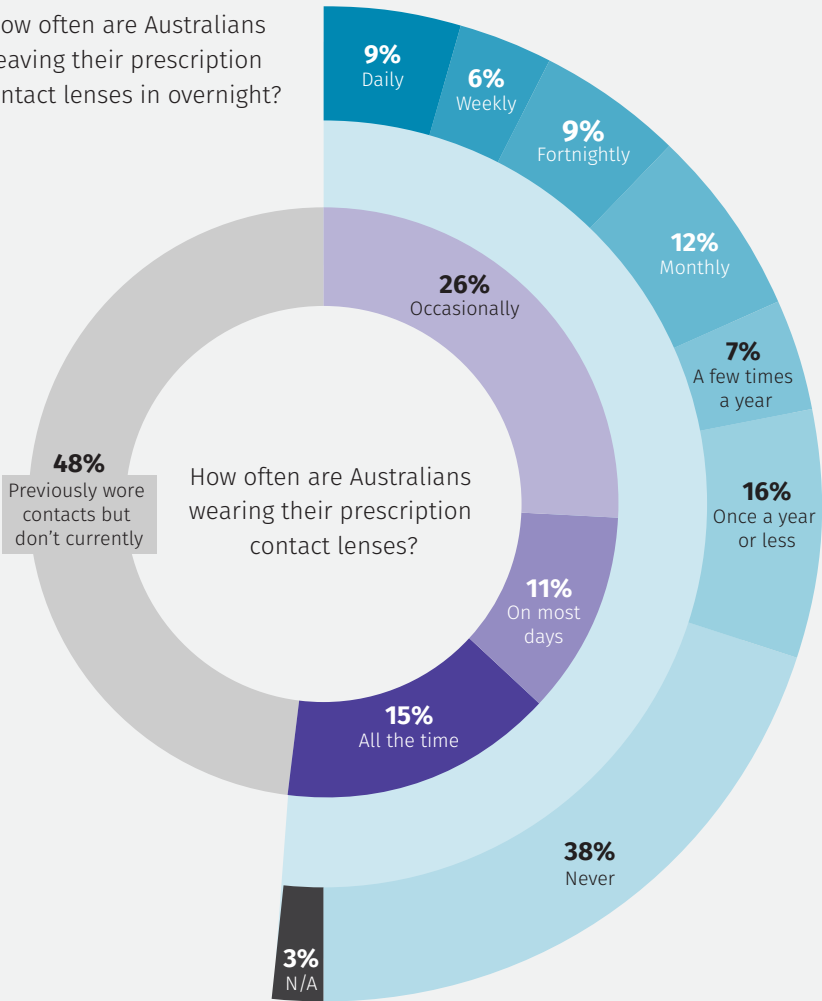
Australians report having worn a wide variety of eyewear.



This section focuses on their experience with:

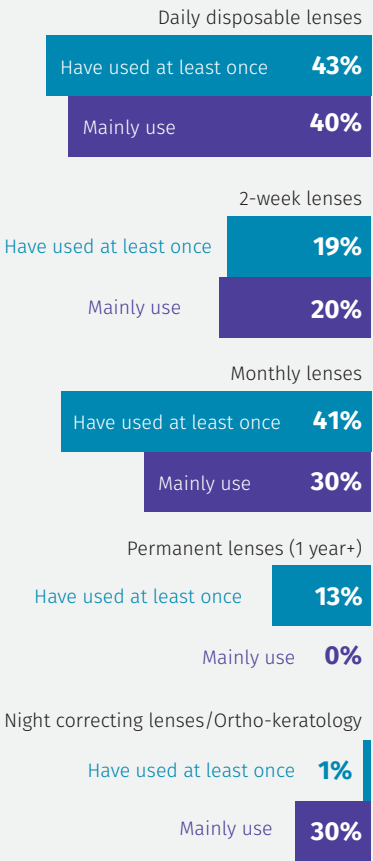


How often are Australians leaving their prescription contact lenses in overnight?



How often are Australians wearing their prescription contact lenses?

What types of contact lenses have Australians used, and what types do they mainly use?



Glasses, contacts and sunglasses

Of the 13% of Australians wearing prescription contact lenses - this is why:

For reading & near activities

12%

Age:

18-34
35-54

55+

To make objects in the distance clearer

58%

Age:

18-34

35-54

55+

For everything

30%

Age:

18-34

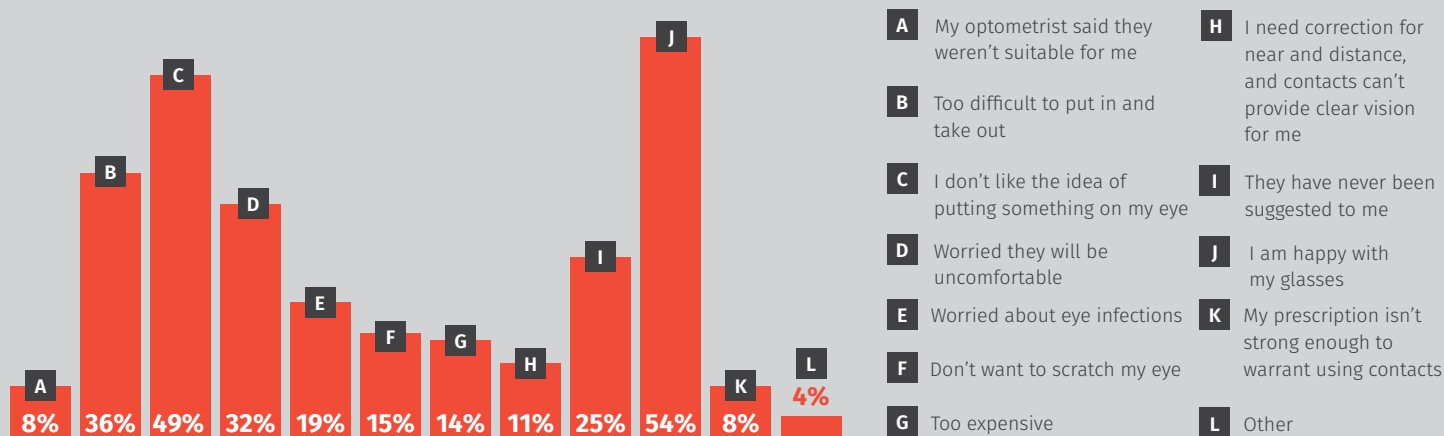
35-54

55+

Australians wear prescription contact lenses instead of glasses for one or more of the following reasons:



Australians consider one or more of the following reasons barriers to wearing contact lenses:

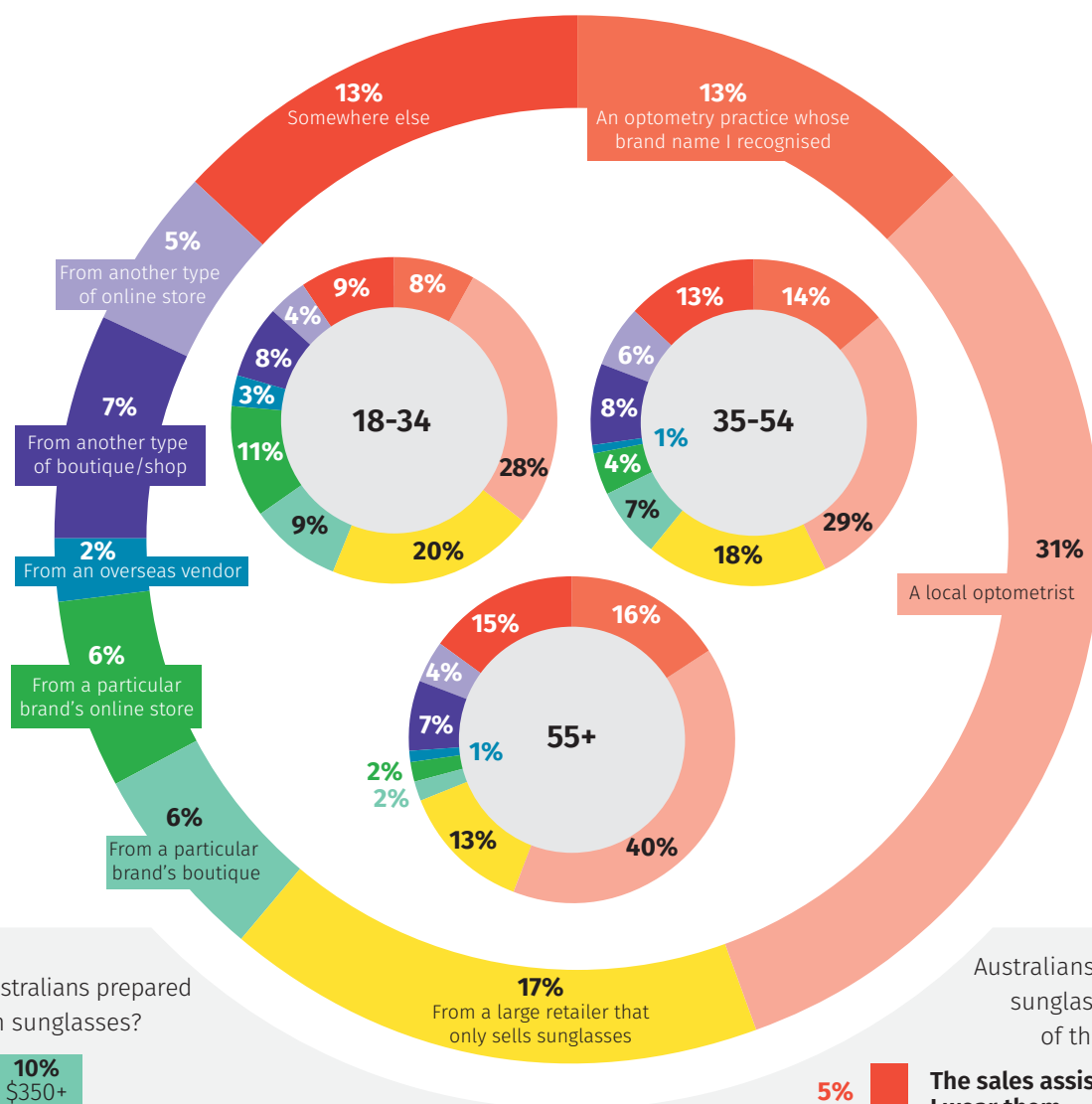


Glasses, contacts and sunglasses

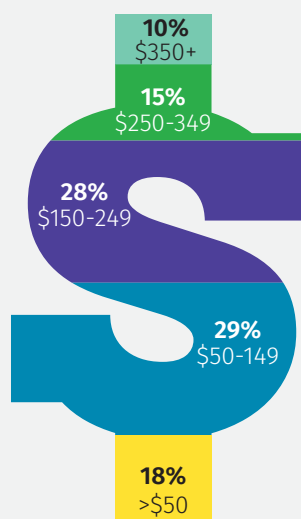
31% of Australians wear prescription sunglasses. Here are the top places Australians are buying their sunglasses from, and why they buy them.

Where do Australians purchase their sunglasses?

Combined



What are Australians prepared to spend on sunglasses?



Australians wear UV-protective sunglasses for one or more of the following reasons:



Lifestyle - the workplace and injuries

73% of Australians believe too much screen time will impact their eyesight. The graphic below details how Australians experience and minimise eye strain when using electronic devices.

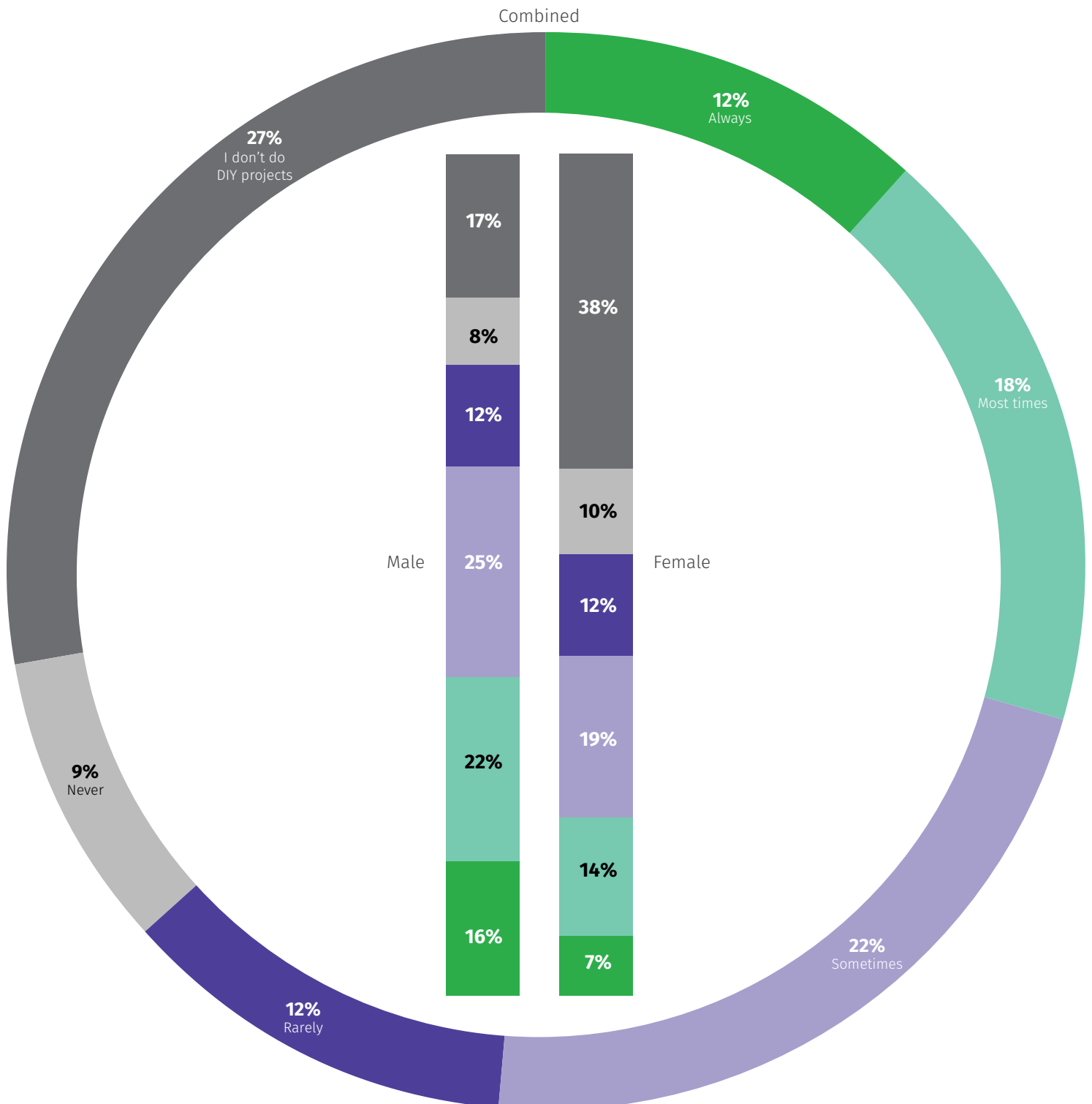
How often do Australians take breaks to avoid eye strain?



Lifestyle - the workplace and injuries

Not all work happens at work, and 21% of Australians have acquired an eye injury from a DIY project at home.

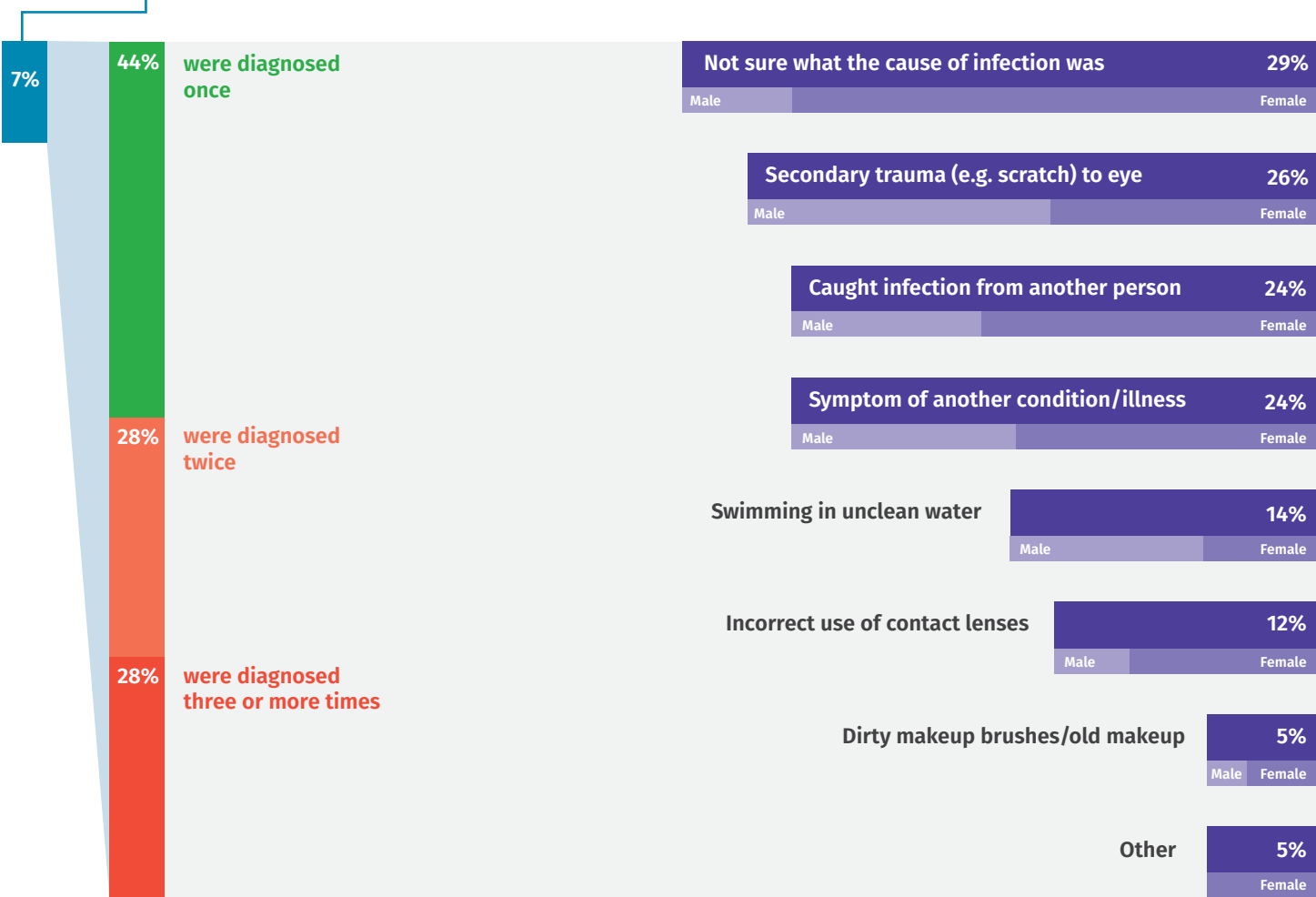
How often do Australians wear eye protection during DIY projects?



Lifestyle - the workplace and injuries

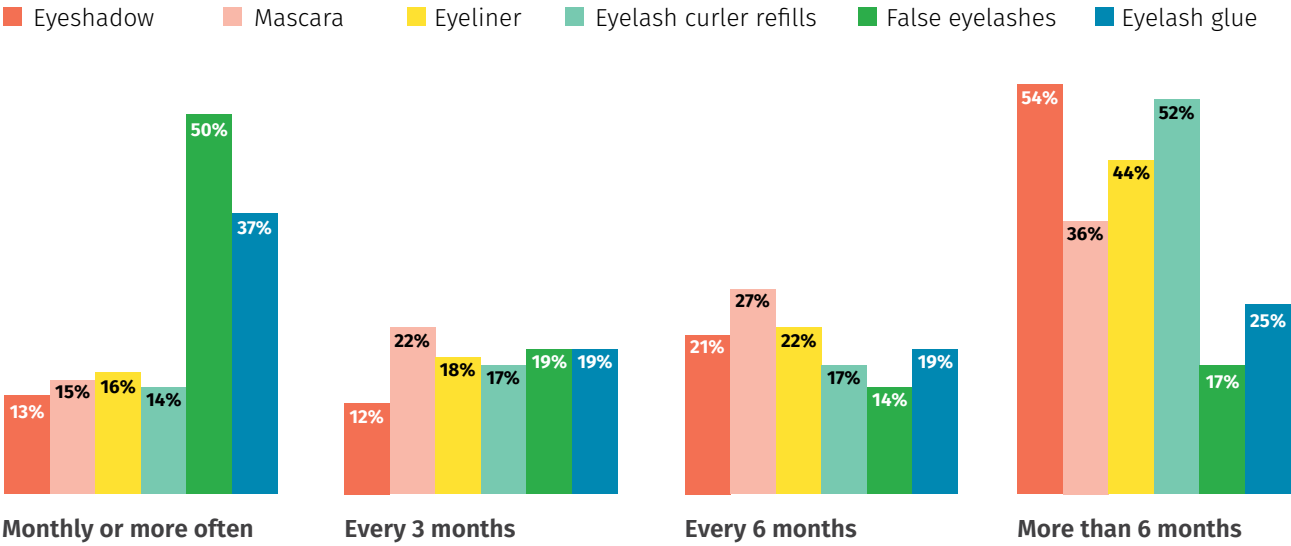
7% of Australians have been diagnosed with an eye infection in their lifetime.

Of this 7%:

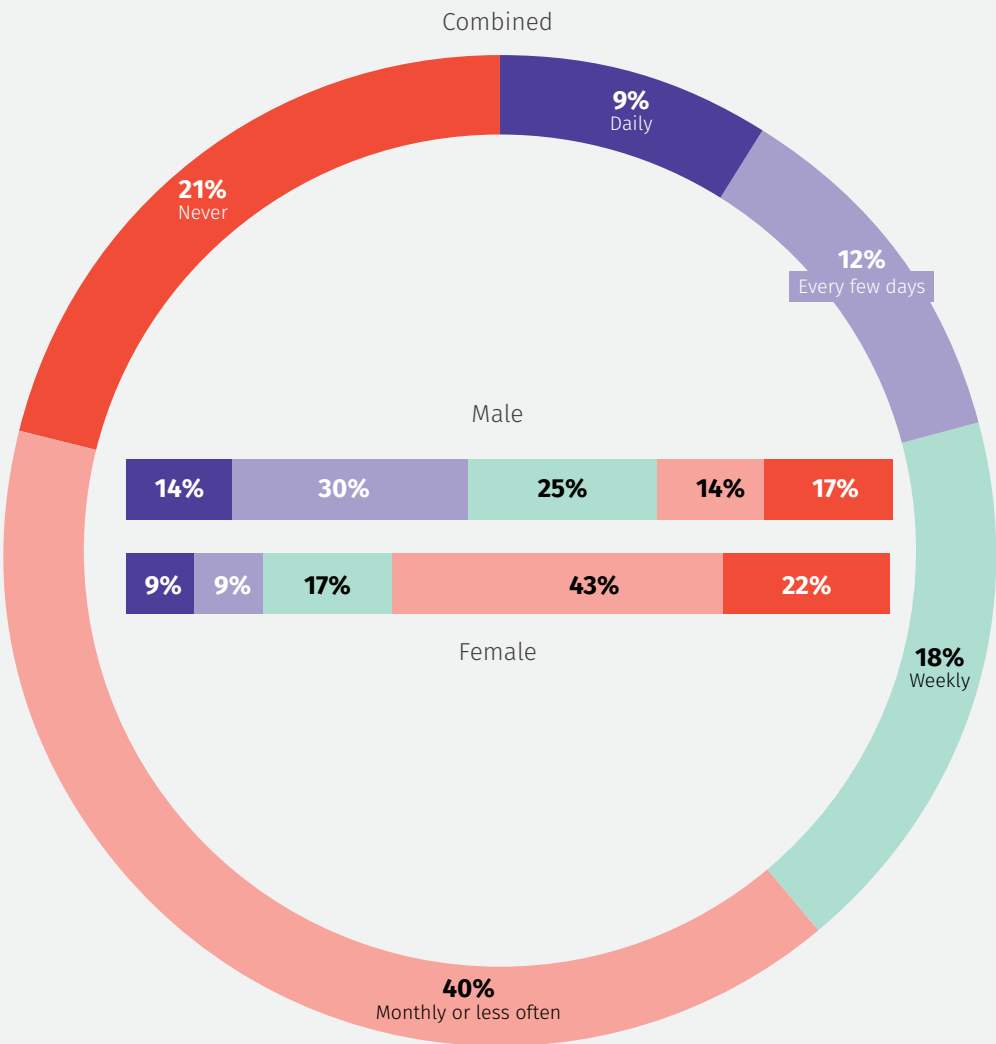


Lifestyle - makeup hygiene

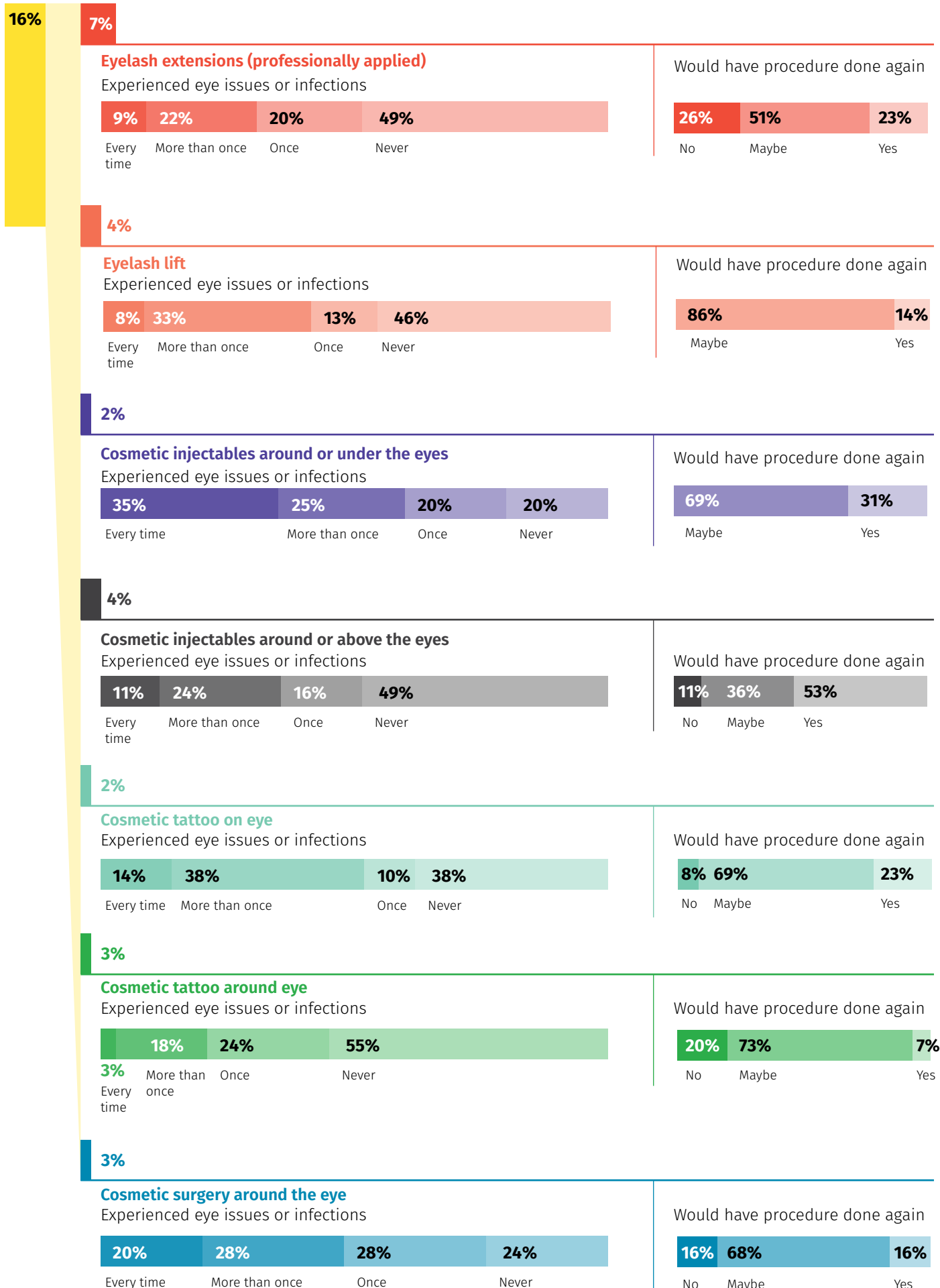
How often Australians are replacing their makeup



How often Australians are cleaning their makeup tools



Of the 16% of Australians who have ever received cosmetic eye enhancements:





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