



# **COVID-19**

## Member survey results



# Introduction

In May 2020, Optometry Australia undertook an initiative<sup>1</sup> to find out how members were faring and to determine the impact the COVID-19 pandemic was having on them personally and on their practices. This was to ensure that we were providing the most relevant support and resources.

To commence the process 30 members joined us to call members nation-wide to learn how they were travelling under lockdown conditions and to encourage them to complete the survey. With the majority of practices forced to close throughout mid-March and April, we knew that members would likely be struggling. Not only were the members that we spoke to grateful for the call, their resilience shone through with the majority saying that they were travelling okay.

This was an enormous relief to us however we were committed to doing even more by delivering an enhanced range of services created specifically to support members through the pandemic. This commitment has received overwhelming endorsement from members.

With the majority of members saying they were travelling okay, their resilience shone through

The insights that the survey provide – although not surprising – showed that very few of our members escaped

the impact of the pandemic lockdown and we can't shy away from these bleak hard facts. We do appreciate that the results provide a snapshot of the optometry sector in April 2020 and that for many, business has improved in subsequent months.

We must use this type of disruption to drive the necessary change needed to take control of our future

There remains a level of anxiety however, amongst optometrists about the future. This anxiety is not new but the pandemic has heightened it. Concerns about optometry's future has existed for some time which was the catalyst to launch Optometry 2040, our long-term strategy to shape our sector over the next 20 years, and our subsequent 'Leading you to Leverage Disruption' initiative.

What the survey results have highlighted is the significant, and serious impact that can be caused by an unplanned

disruptive event such as a pandemic. It strengthens our resolve that we must use this type of disruption to drive the necessary change needed to take control of our future.

We appreciate that the pandemic is a long way from being over and that COVID-19 is on the rise again in parts of Australia. We will continue to be here to support our members and to provide the services and the information they need to make informed decisions. We are incredibly appreciative of their input into this survey.

1: Quantum Market Research conducted the survey in mid to late May 2020

# Key findings

In May, Optometry Australia employed 30 members to call as many members as possible in all states and territories to see how they were doing in these challenging times and to encourage them to complete a survey.



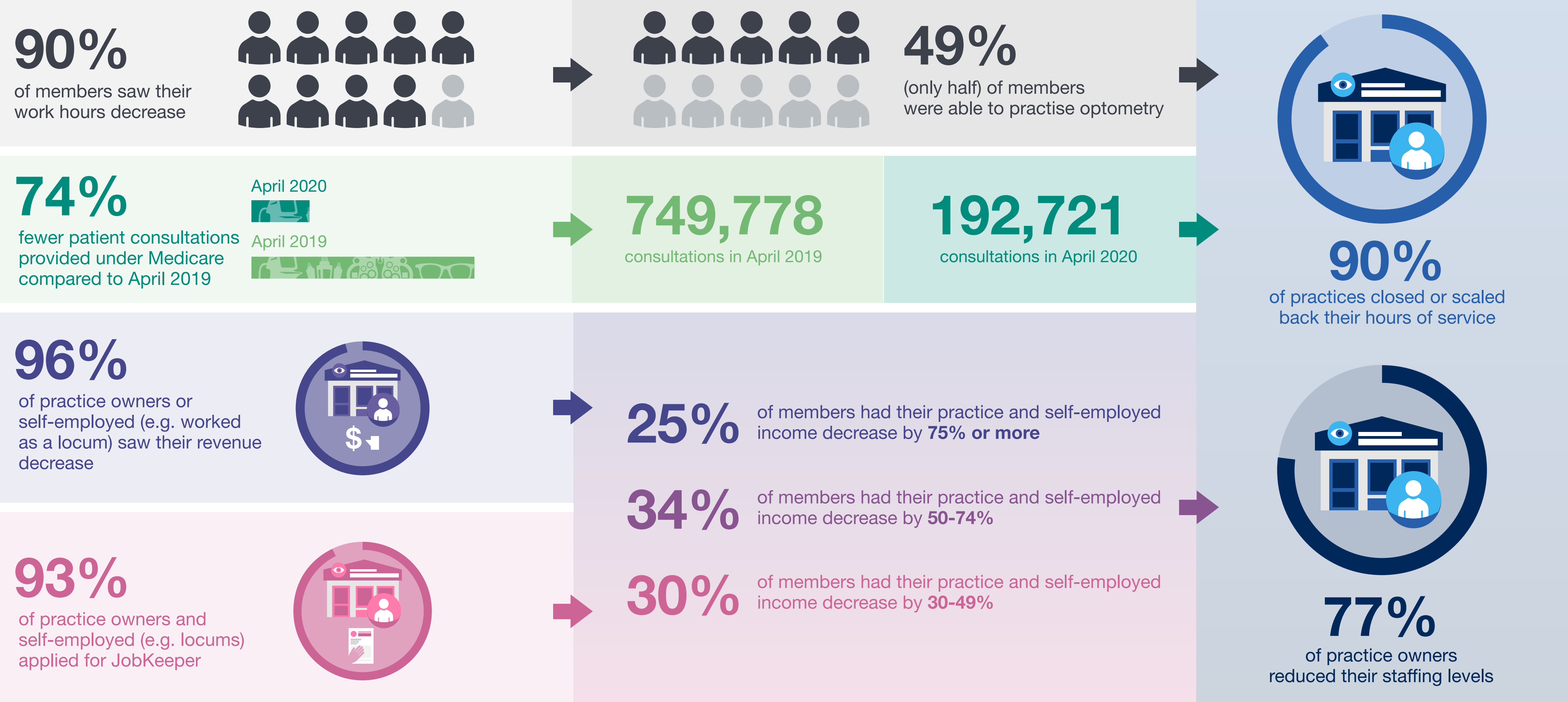


**This resilience came  
in the face of...**



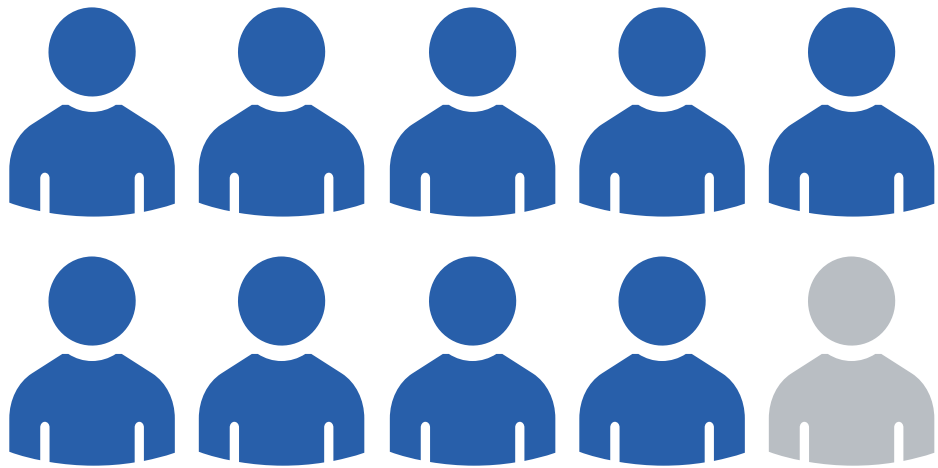
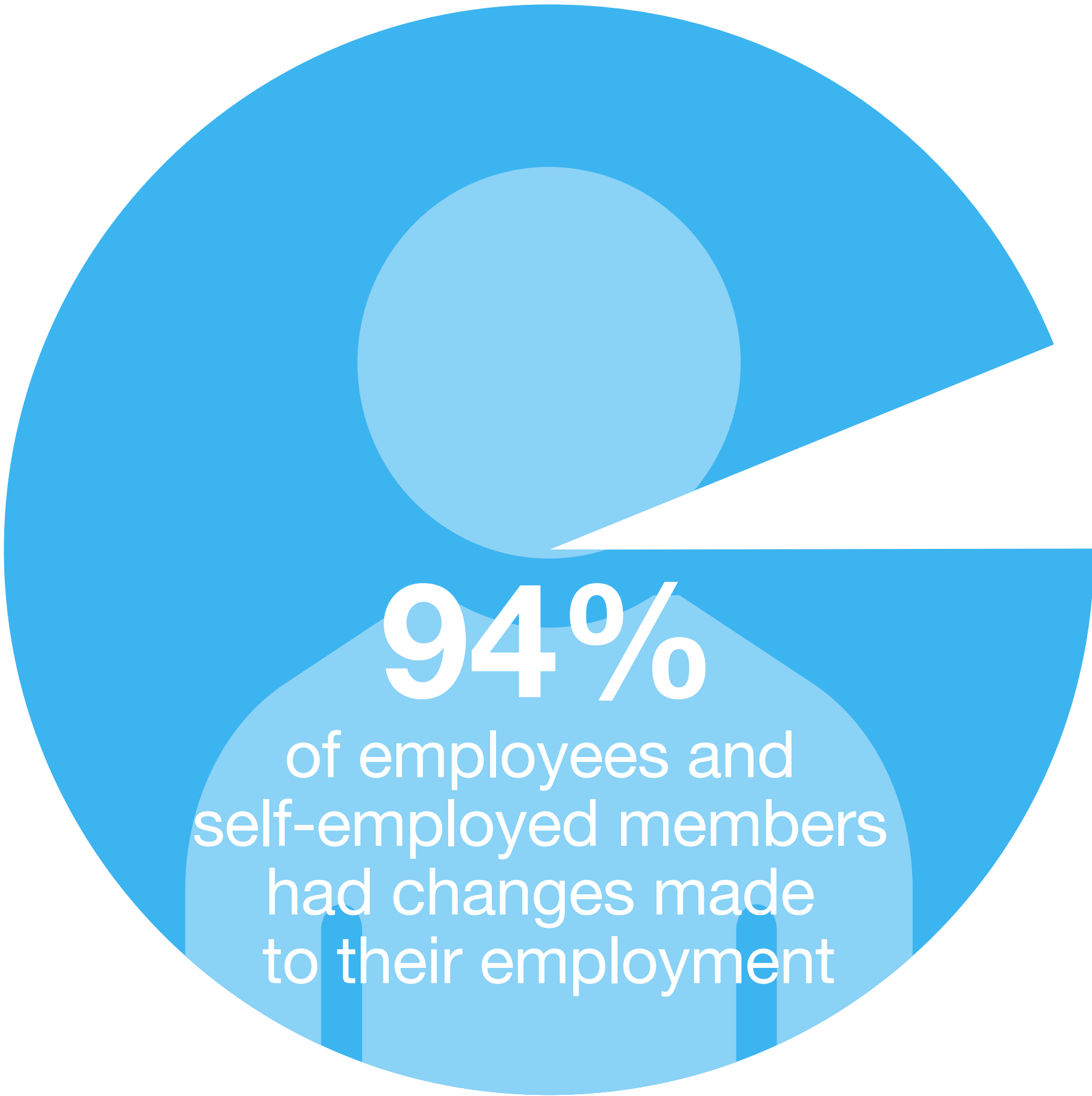


# April 2020: Challenging working conditions





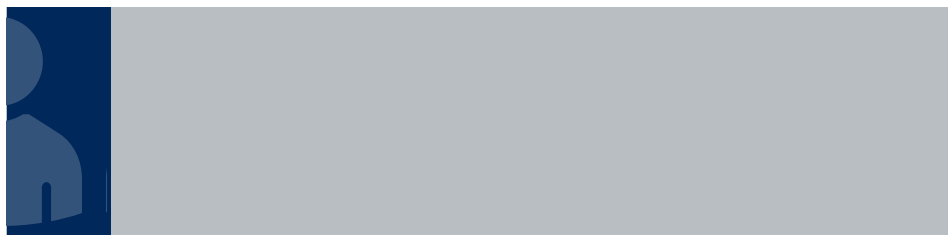
# April 2020: Changing working conditions



**Almost  
nine out of 10**  
members were benefiting from some form  
of COVID-specific Government support



**79%**  
of employees were covered by JobKeeper



**11%**  
of members were on JobSeeker

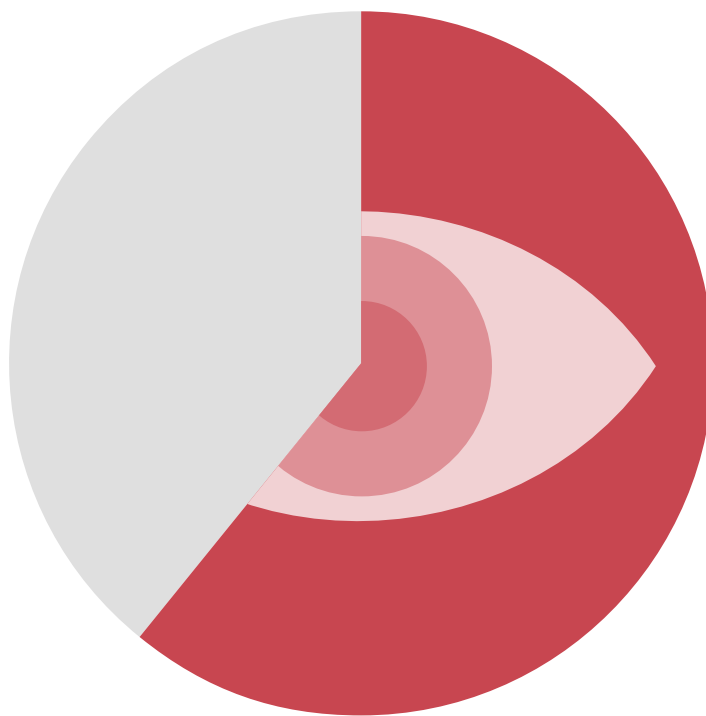
...highlighting the financial shock  
of the pandemic



# April 2020: Increased anxiety about the future



**46%** of members were anxious about their future



**61%** of members believed it would become increasingly difficult to find employment as an optometrist



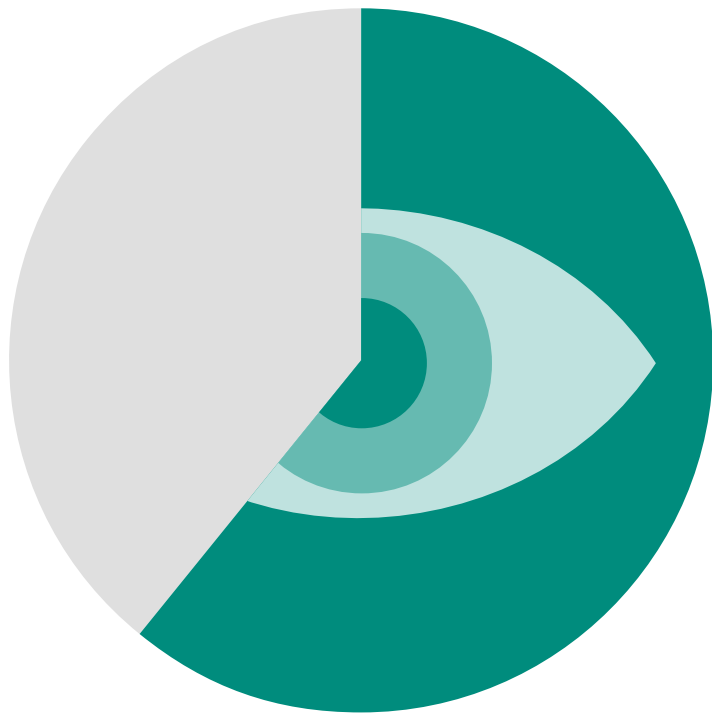
**76%** of members believed salaries would be compromised due to over-supply



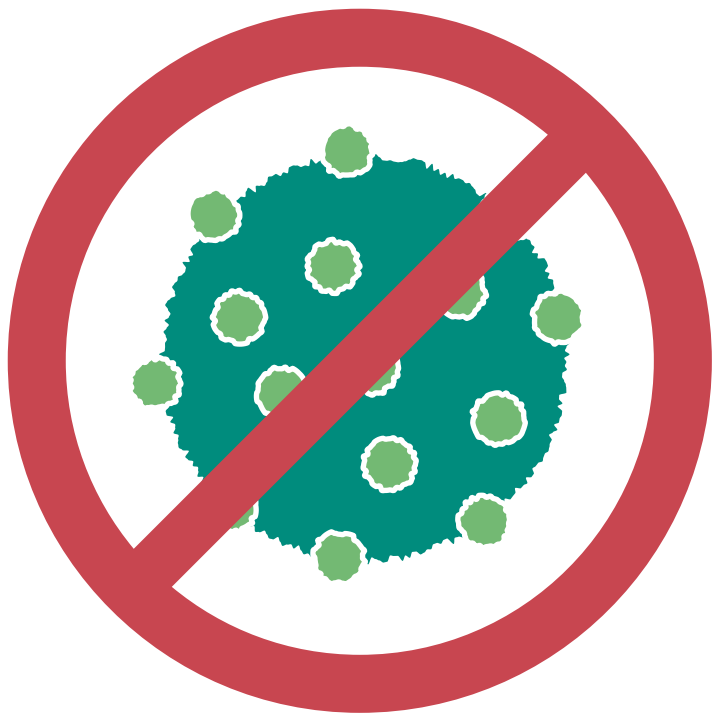
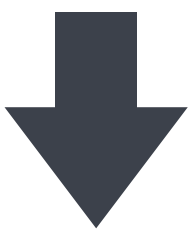
# April 2020: Evolved practice delivery



**78%** of members felt that optometry is a respected profession



**61%** of members have reassessed the way they will deliver optometry services in the future



Infection control and increased personal hygiene would be paramount.  
**More than half** of all members have read Optometry Australia’s Infection Control Guidelines



# April 2020: Consumer presentations



**Almost 50%**  
of members who were able to  
practise noticed a change in  
patient issues:

77% saw more acute red eye presentations

72% saw more acute vision change presentations

67% saw more digital eye strain presentations

According to Roy Morgan, in early May over 10.5 million Australians (68% of working Australians) reported being forced into an employment change because of COVID-19 with a large number being forced to work from home<sup>2</sup>.

2: <http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/8401-coronavirus-working-from-home-may-2020-202005050514>



# Optometry Australia's response to COVID-19

As Australia geared up to go into its first lockdown in mid-March 2020, Optometry Australia diverted its attention to providing critical support to members to assist them through the pandemic.





# Our top three most valued services offered to members in April 2020:

## #1: 50% fee discount



**92%**  
of members  
nominated this offer  
as highly valuable

We understood that the pandemic would have a significant impact on members’ financial wellbeing. We worked with all state divisions to offer a discount on FY20/21 membership fees with no payment required until October 2020 and a promise that no member services would be impacted as a result of federation’s reduced income.



# Our top three most valued services offered to members in April 2020:

## #2: Access to our webcasts



**79%**  
of members nominated these webcasts as highly valuable




**73%**  
of members cited a level of anxiety about not achieving their CPD commitments in line with OBA regulations

We set ourselves a goal to ensure members had access to quality accredited face-to-face education during the lockdown and beyond by ramping up delivery of our popular webcasts. Normally offered every 6-8 weeks, we delivered four in April and have followed up every 10-15 days since.




# Our top three most valued services offered to members in April 2020:

## #3: Regular communications




**73%**  
of members positively endorsed our communications as highly valuable



**26**  
COVID-19 specific electronic newsletters were distributed, achieving an average **70% open rate**

**3,020**  
members visited the COVID-19 hub

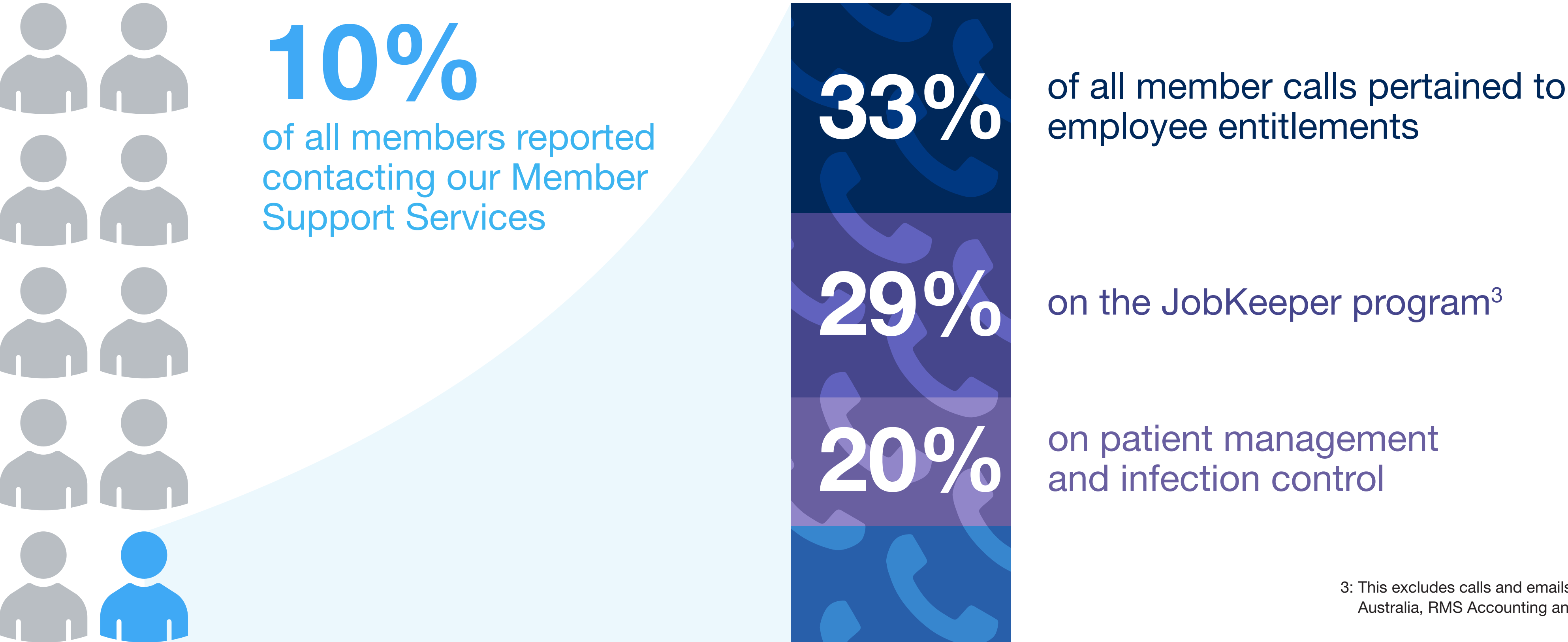


Central to Optometry Australia’s support was providing accessible and regular information so that members could make informed decisions. This included frequent e-newsletters, a new COVID-hub embedded in our website, video messages, ongoing social media posts and patient communication tools. We focused on providing timely information on managing the pandemic from a clinical, patient and practice management perspective as well as circulating Australian and world-health authority advice and news on Government assistance programs.



# One-on-one member support

In addition to these initiatives, Optometry Australia’s member support team was available to provide one-on-one advice to members. We also coopted the services of Optometry Finance Australia and RMS Accounting which also supported members with advice on JobKeeper, JobSeeker, tax, rental assistance and business continuity as well as Industry Legal Group who provided human resources advice for employees and employers.



3: This excludes calls and emails to our support services, Optometry Finance Australia, RMS Accounting and Legal Industry Group.



**Members positively endorsed the support provided by Optometry Australia in April 2020.**

**90% of all members** cited that they felt highly supported by Optometry Australia.

**63% of members** had no further recommendations on what services were missing to better support them.





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## Social media

**Facebook members:** [facebook.com/Optometry Australia/](https://facebook.com/OptometryAustralia/)

**Facebook consumers:** [facebook.com/goodvisionforlife](https://facebook.com/goodvisionforlife)

**Twitter:** [twitter.com/OptometryAus](https://twitter.com/OptometryAus) or [@OptometryAus](https://twitter.com/OptometryAus)

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/company/optometrists-association-australia/](https://linkedin.com/company/optometrists-association-australia/)

Optometry Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we conduct our business.

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