

A Survey of Michigan Optometrists and Their Satisfaction with the Optometric Profession

by

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AND THEIR SATISFACTION
WITH THE OPTOMETRIC PROFESSION

by
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ABSTRACT

Background: This investigation consists of a survey of Michigan optometrists in the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan. The first component of the survey explores each participant's satisfaction with his or her career in optometry. The second component of the survey analyzes how each participant believes his or her career in optometry could be enhanced, and what, if any, obstacles he or she faces in achieving career satisfaction. The purpose of the survey is to determine if Michigan optometrists are personally and professionally satisfied with their career in optometry and to obtain valuable information concerning the growth and expansion of the optometric profession in Michigan.

Methods: Two-hundred (200) mail surveys were distributed randomly via the United States Postal Service. Addresses were obtained from the Michigan Optometric Association's (MOA) mailing list. Surveys were completed voluntarily and anonymously by Michigan optometrists. One-hundred-and-five (105) surveys were collected, resulting in a fifty-two-and-a-half percent (52.5%) response rate. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents were male and thirty-two percent (32%) of respondents were female. The majority of respondents, thirty-nine percent (39%) work in a partnership between optometrists (OD/OD) mode of practice, and fifty-two percent (52%) of all respondents have been in practice twenty years or more.

Results: The majority of Michigan optometrists, regardless of gender, years in practice, or mode of practice, are very satisfied with their career in optometry. The majority of male Michigan optometrists cited patient interaction as the most important factor contributing to career satisfaction, whereas the majority of female optometrists cited job flexibility as the most important factor contributing to career satisfaction. The least important factors contributing to career satisfaction are the scope of practice and working hours. The majority of Michigan optometrists, regardless of gender, years in practice, or mode of practice, refer less than ten percent (<10%) of their patients to other practitioners. The patients requiring a referral are most commonly referred to a general ophthalmologist, followed by a retina specialist and then an anterior segment specialist. Patients are least commonly referred to their primary care physician or to another optometrist. While the majority of Michigan optometrists believe that more diagnostic equipment would help them to better serve their patients, respondents who are sole proprietors or those who are commercially employed feel that more efficient staff would help them to better serve their patients. The majority of male respondents believe that insurance parity is the most important area in need of growth and expansion within the optometric profession; however, females and those practicing less than 9 years believe that public awareness is the most important area in need of growth and expansion within the optometric profession.

Conclusions: The vast majority of Michigan optometrists are very satisfied and/or satisfied with the optometric profession. Although female Michigan optometrists do not seem to be as satisfied with the optometric profession as males, it appears that the longer optometrists are in practice, the more satisfied they are with their career. Mode of practice does not seem to be a factor in overall career satisfaction. The most important factor contributing to career satisfaction among male Michigan optometrists is patient interaction, whereas for females it is job flexibility. Regarding growth and expansion of the optometric profession, the majority feel that insurance parity is most important, which is followed by increasing public awareness.

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INTRODUCTION

Career satisfaction can be defined as the level of overall happiness experienced through one's choice of occupations. For each individual optometrist, attaining career satisfaction may mean different things. This survey attempts to determine the overall career satisfaction of Michigan optometrists and how each respondent believes his or her career in optometry could be enhanced, and what, if any, obstacles he or she faces in achieving career satisfaction. This survey also groups similarities and differences based on the gender, years in practice, and current mode of practice of the Michigan optometrists surveyed. It is our hope to collect valuable information and to gain insight into many different areas that pertain to the overall career satisfaction of Michigan optometrists. It is also our hope to gain information concerning the growth and expansion of the optometric profession within Michigan.

METHODS

Phase 1: Data Collection

- a. Obtain addresses of Michigan optometrists from the Michigan Optometric Association (MOA).
- b. Randomly select 200 Michigan optometrists from the Michigan Optometric Association mailing list.
- c. Mail a survey, including the purpose of the survey, survey consent, general information, and returning procedure, to each of the selected 200 Michigan optometrists.
- d. When fifty (50) or more surveys have been returned, equaling a return rate of twenty-five percent (25%) or more, the data collection phase will be complete.

Phase 2: Data Analysis

1. Tally survey results according to gender, current mode of practice, and years in practice of respondents.
2. Analyze data to determine overall satisfaction of Michigan optometrists.
3. Analyze data by determining how each participant believes his or her career in optometry could be enhanced, and what, if any, obstacles he or she faces in achieving career satisfaction.
4. Compare data of respondents based on gender, current mode of practice, and years in practice of respondents.
5. Draw conclusions as to the overall satisfaction of Michigan optometrists.
6. Draw conclusions as to the overall satisfaction of Michigan optometrists based on gender, mode of practice, and years in practice of respondents.
7. Draw conclusions as to how Michigan optometrists believe their career in optometry could be enhanced, and what, if any, obstacles they face in achieving career satisfaction.
8. Draw conclusions as to how Michigan optometrists desire growth and expansion of the optometric profession.

RESULTS

105 out of 200 Michigan optometrists surveyed, responded to our survey, giving an overall return rate of 52.5%. Out of the 105 Michigan optometrists surveyed, 68% consisted of males and 32% females. (See Figure 1).

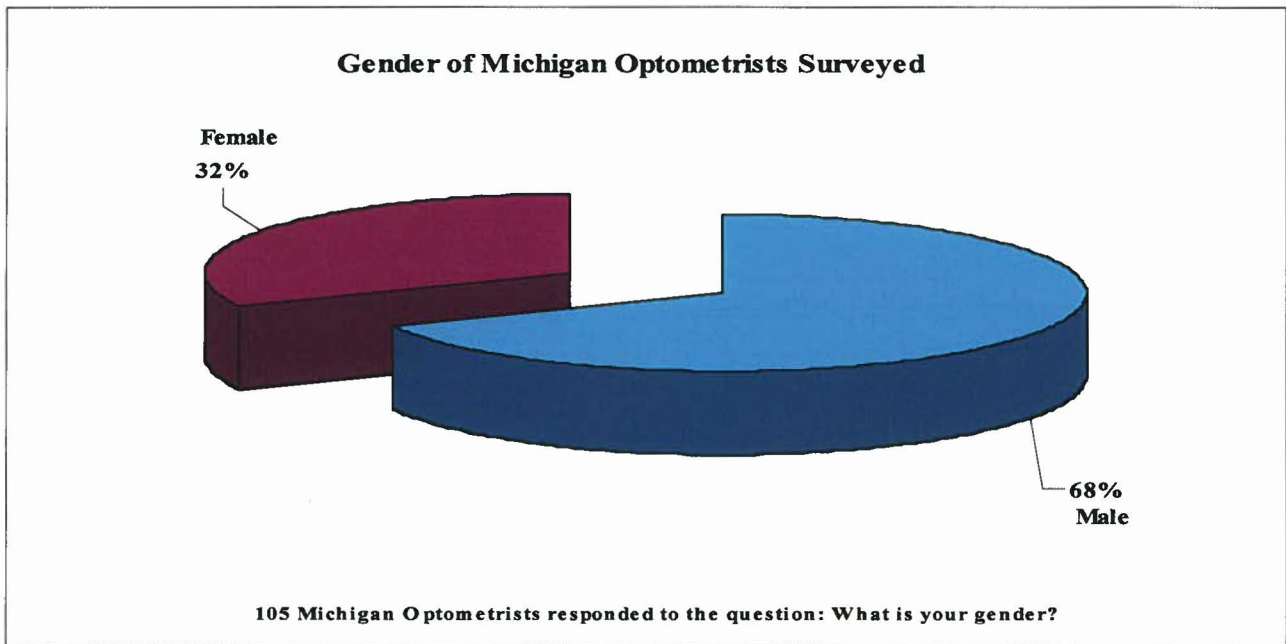


Figure 1

The majority of optometrists replying to our survey (52%) have been practicing optometry 20 years or more. The remaining optometrists surveyed (37%) have been in practice for 10 to 19 years, while only 11% of respondents have been practicing for 1 to 9 years. (See Figure 2).

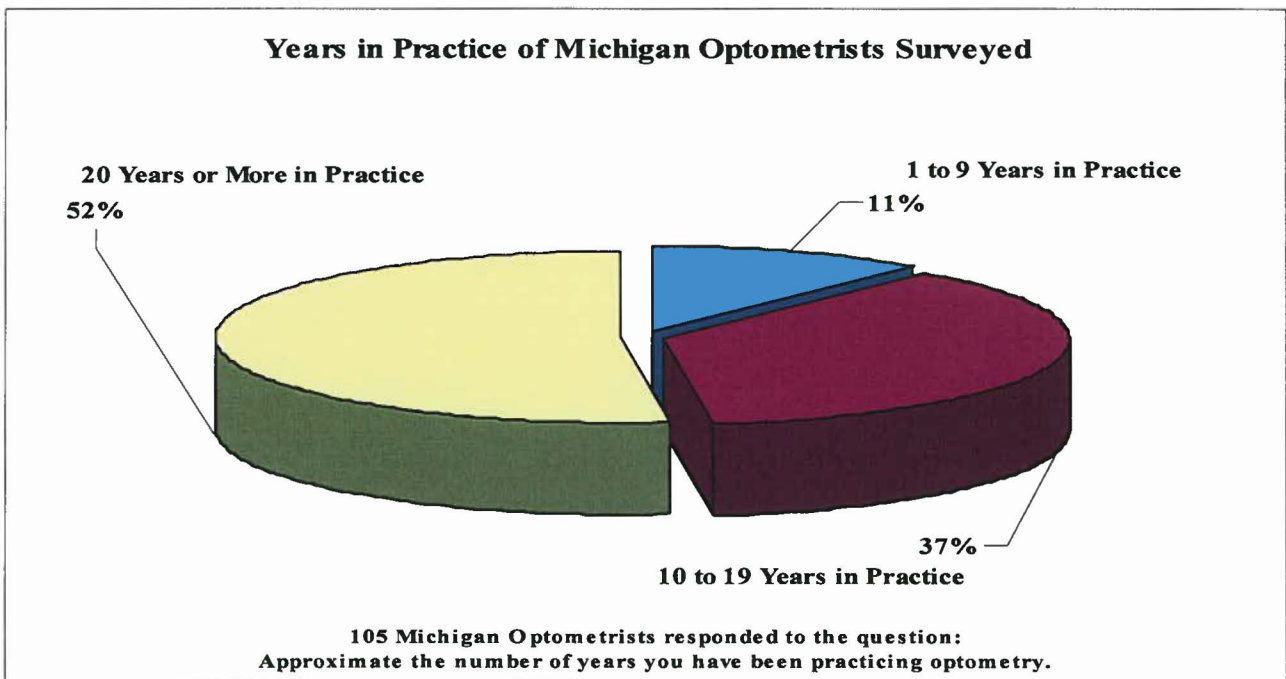


Figure 2

The most common mode of practice of the Michigan optometrists who responded is a partnership between optometrists (OD/OD partnership) (39%), followed by a sole proprietorship (31%), and then a commercial setting (19%). The minority of Michigan optometrists surveyed work in an optometrist/medical doctor (OD/MD) setting (7%). The remaining 4% work in a setting other than those listed above. (See Figure 3).

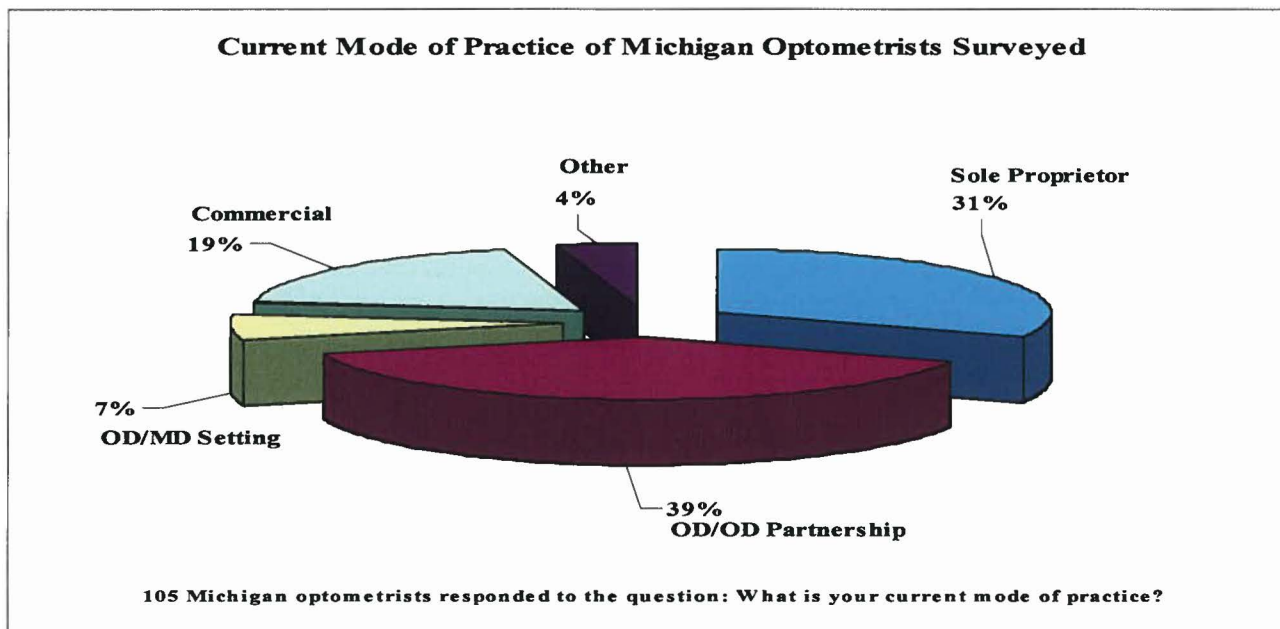


Figure 3

When asked about their overall career satisfaction in optometry, 48% of Michigan optometrists are very satisfied, followed by 30% who are satisfied. 19% are somewhat satisfied. The remaining responses in regards to career satisfaction are in the vast minority, with 1% being somewhat dissatisfied and 2% being dissatisfied. (See Figure 4).

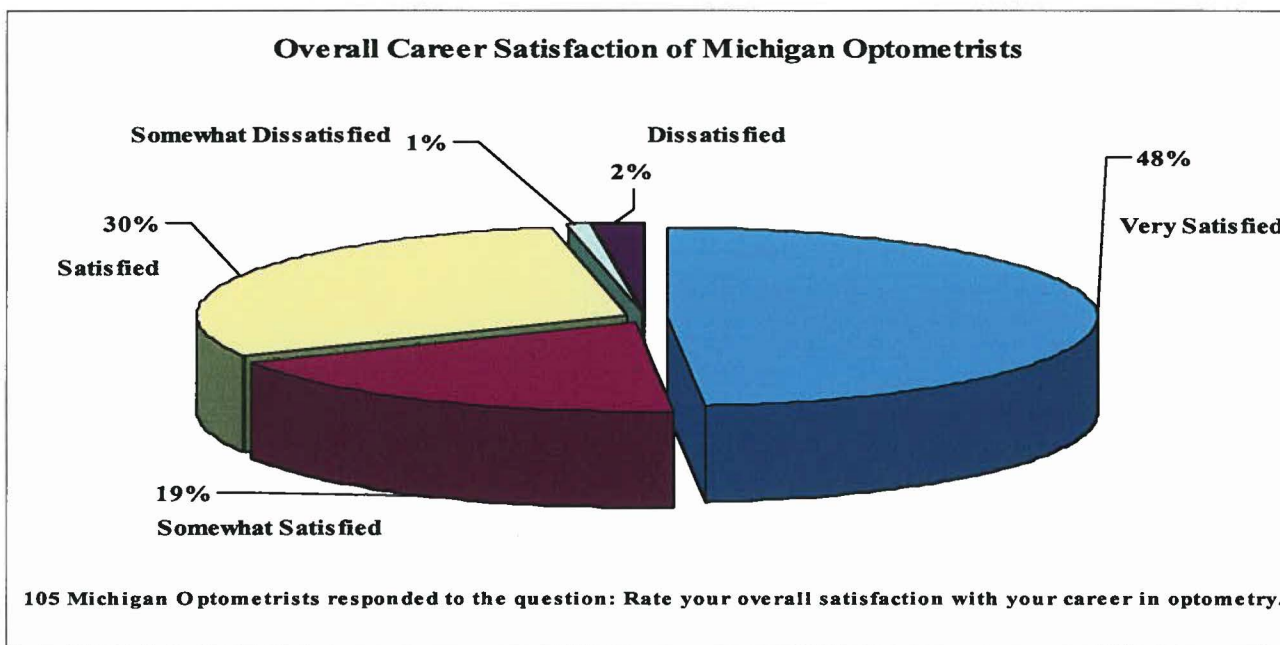


Figure 4

When asked about the most important factor contributing to career satisfaction of Michigan optometrists, the majority (46%) feel that patient interaction is most important while 25% feel job flexibility is most important. Only 12% believe income is the most important factor and 10% feel that scope of practice is most important in contributing to career satisfaction. Working hours (5%) and other factors (2%) are in the minority. (See Figure 5).

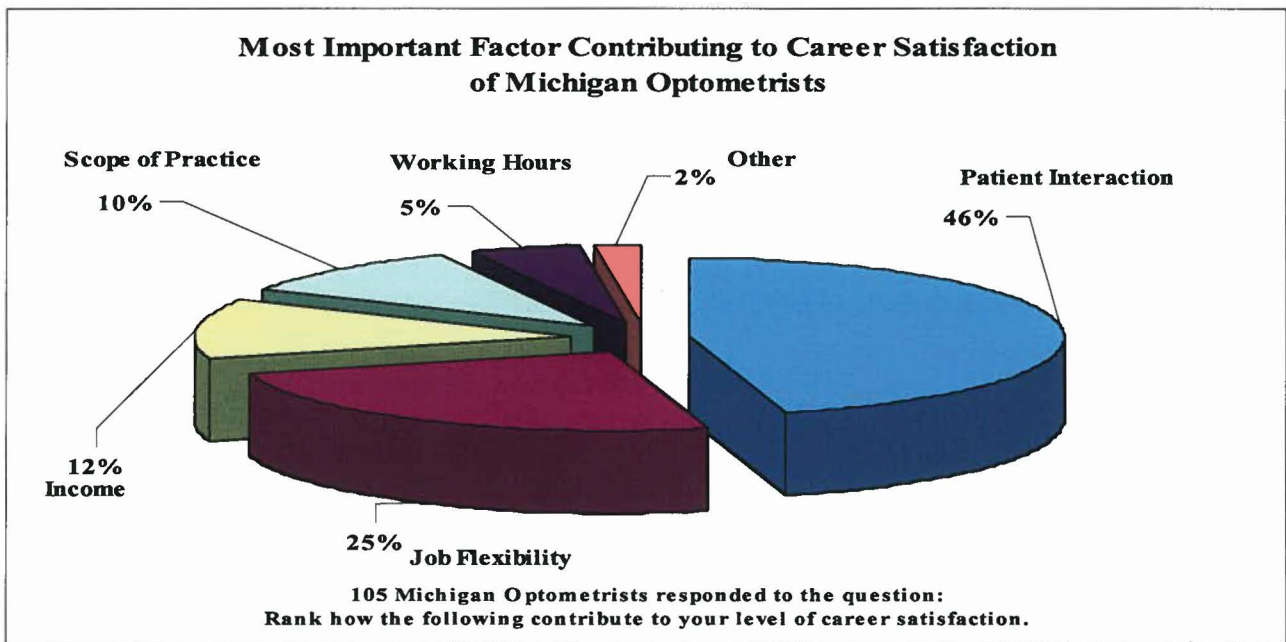


Figure 5

When asked about the least important factor contributing to career satisfaction of Michigan optometrists, the majority feel scope of practice and working hours are least important and had almost equal responses; 34% and 30% respectively. This is followed by job flexibility and income; 16% and 15% respectively. (See Figure 6).

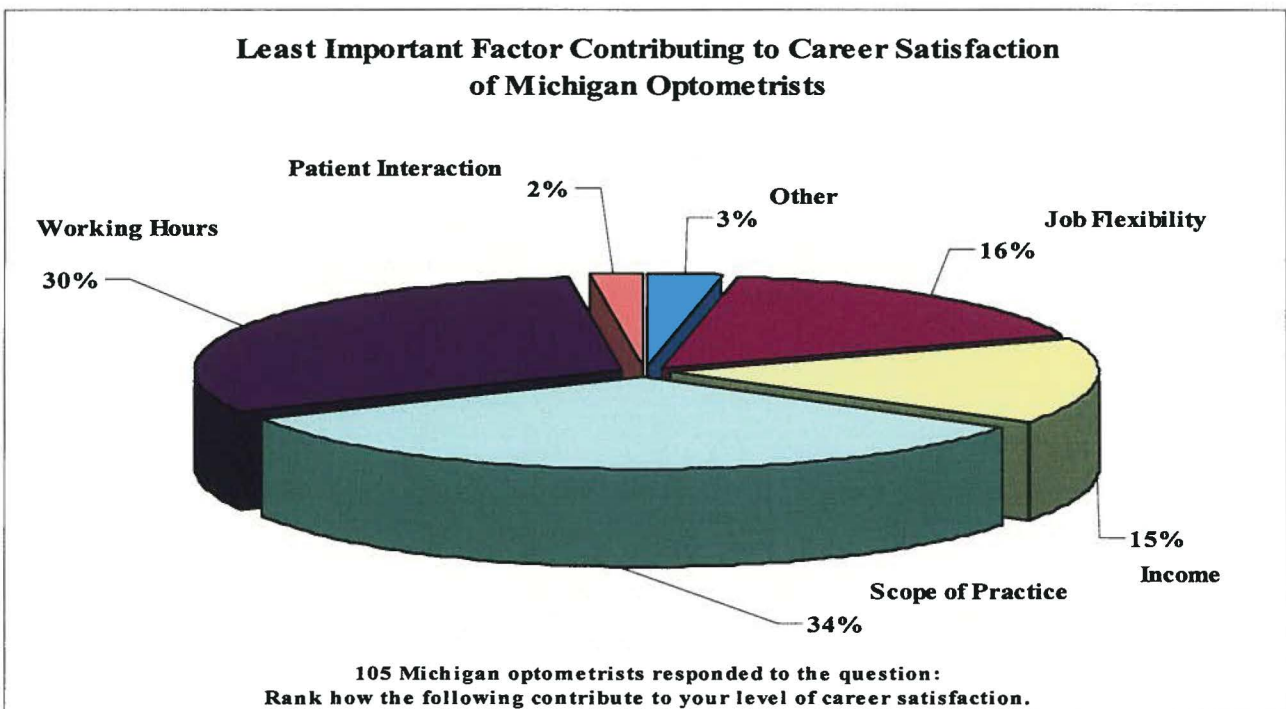


Figure 6

When asked which type of practitioner they most commonly refer their patients to, the vast majority of Michigan optometrists (55%) most commonly refer their patients to a general ophthalmologist, followed by 35% who most commonly refer their patients to a retina specialist. The remaining 10% most commonly refer their patients to anterior segment specialists. None of the respondents refer most commonly to a primary care physician, another optometrist, or another type of practitioner. (See Figure 7).

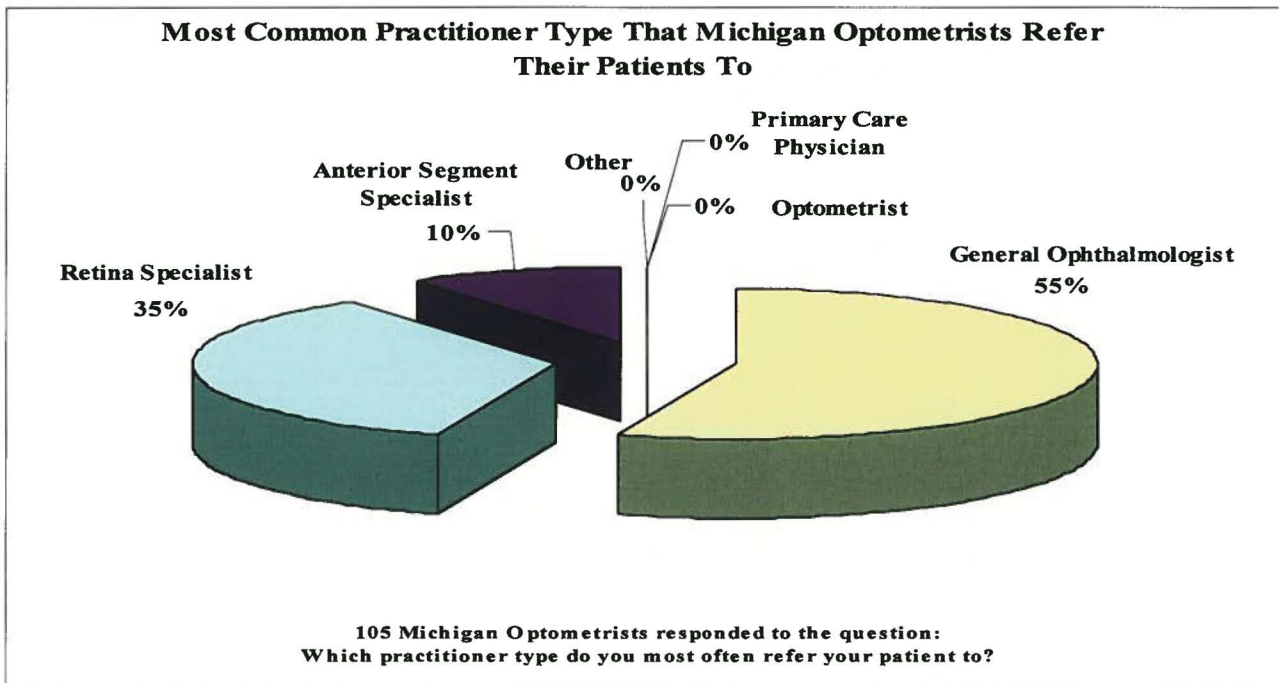


Figure 7

43% of Michigan optometrists refer 5% or less of their patients to other practitioners, while another 43% refer 6% to 10% of their patients. 9% of Michigan optometrists surveyed refer 11% to 15% of their patients while only 5% refer 16% to 20% of their patients. (See Figure 8).

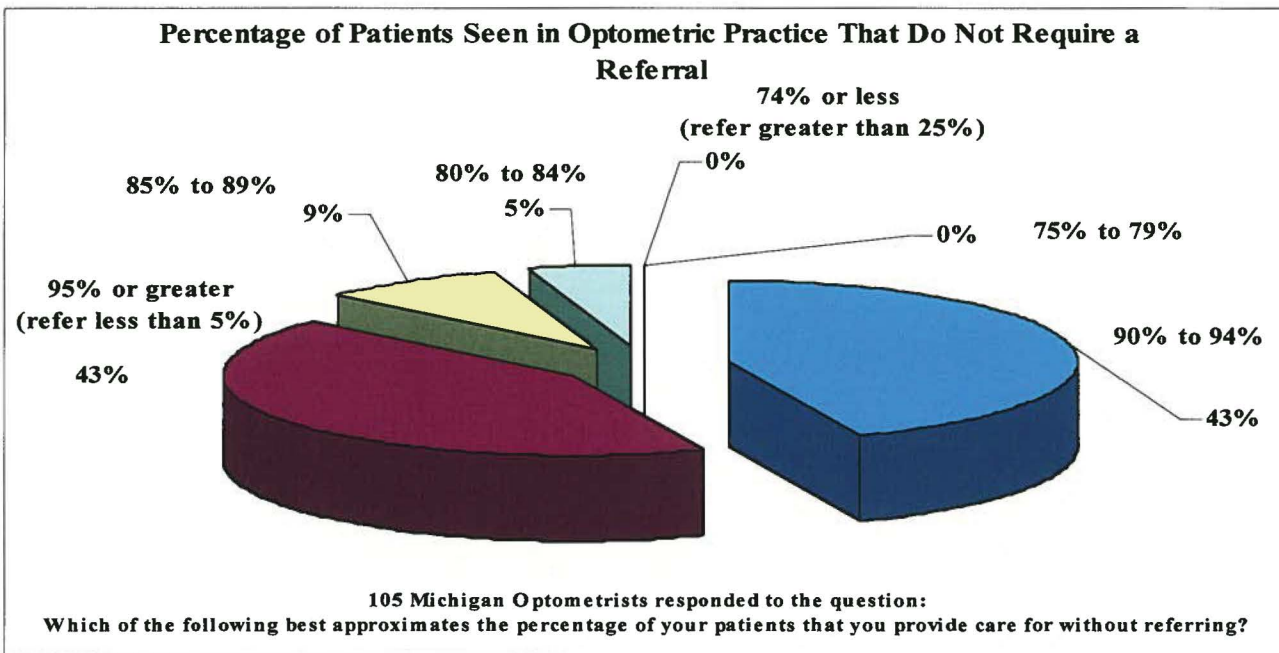


Figure 8

When asked how Michigan optometrists could better serve their patients, 40% feel that more diagnostic equipment would best serve this purpose, whereas 24% believe more efficient staff would better serve their patients. 19% feel that patients could be better served with third party payment. 7% of Michigan optometrists responded with expanding the scope of practice, while another 7% responded with continuing education. 3% of optometrists feel that other factors would better help them serve their patients. (See Figure 9).

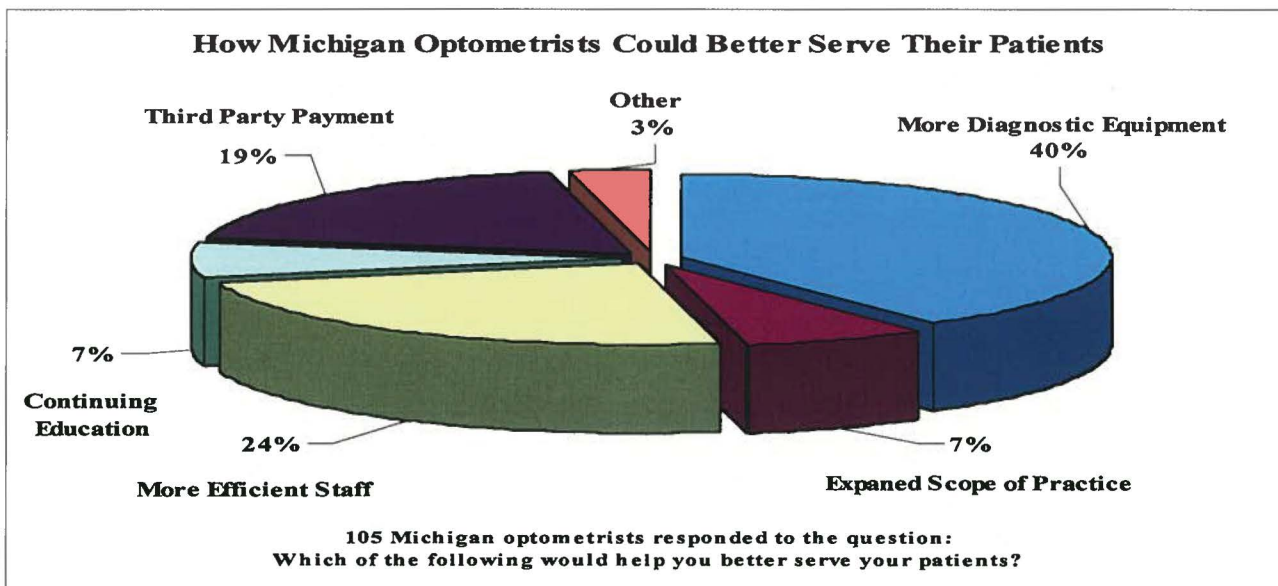


Figure 9

Michigan optometrists were asked to respond to the most important area in which they feel need growth and expansion within the optometric profession. The vast majority (52%) feel that insurance parity needs expansion, followed by 38% who feel increasing public awareness is most important. 7% feel that there are other factors within the optometric profession that need to expand, while only 3% believe that expanding the scope of practice is an area that needs to grow. (See Figure 10).

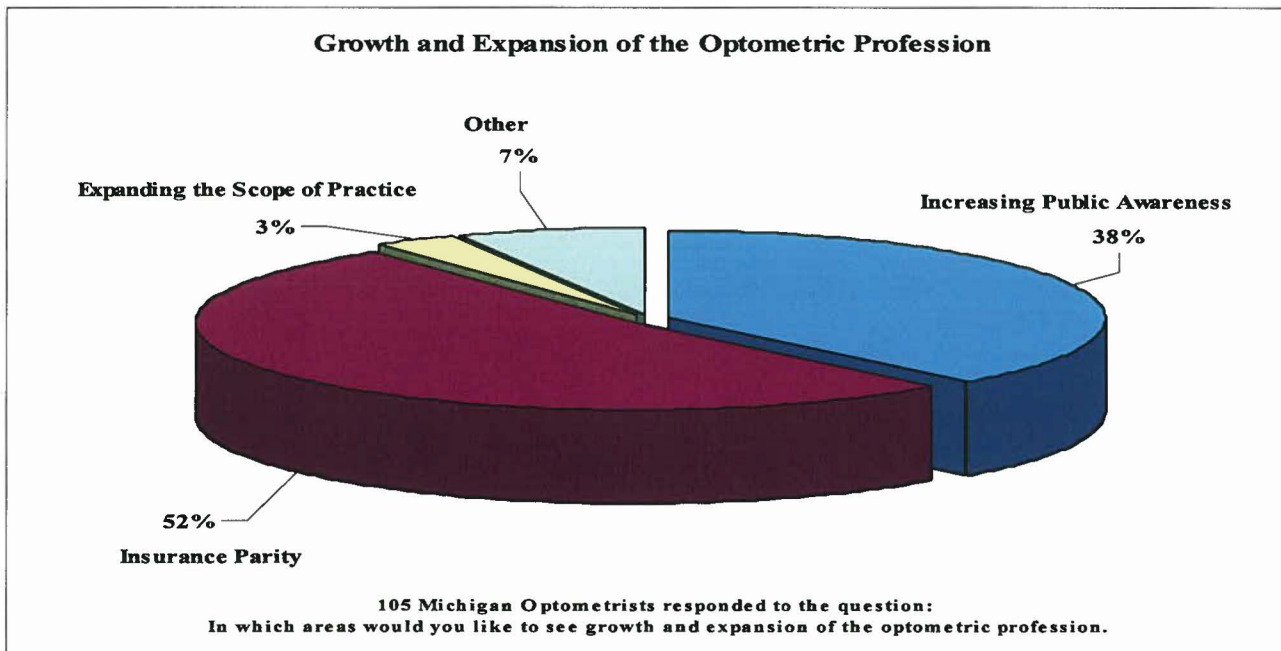


Figure 10

DISCUSSION

Our survey involved 200 Michigan optometrists, who were randomly selected from the Michigan Optometric Association (MOA) mailing list. Surveys were mailed via the United States Postal Service. 105 of the 200 surveyed responded via the United States Postal Service, giving a 52.5% response rate.

32% of the respondents were females while 68% were males (See Figure 1). 52% of the Michigan optometrists surveyed have been in practice at least 20 years, while 37% have been in practice 10 to 19 years. Only 11% of the respondents have been in practice 1 to 9 years (See Figure 2). Thus, the majority of respondents have been practicing optometry for 10 or more years and the minority of respondents have been practicing less than 10 years. The majority of Michigan optometrists surveyed work in an OD/OD partnership (39%) or a sole proprietorship (31%). 19% of our respondents work in a commercial setting and only 7% work in an OD/MD setting. The remaining 4% work in another setting, which was not specified. (See Figure 3).

The majority of Michigan optometrists are either very satisfied (48%) or satisfied (30%) with the optometric profession. Within the minority, 19% are somewhat satisfied, 1% are somewhat dissatisfied, and 2% are dissatisfied with the profession (See Figure 4). In conclusion, the vast majority of Michigan optometrists (78%) appear to be very satisfied and/or satisfied with the optometric profession. (See Figure 4).

This can be evaluated by looking at male and female respondents individually. 54% of males are very satisfied, 28% satisfied, 15% somewhat satisfied, 1.5% somewhat dissatisfied, and the remaining 1.5% are dissatisfied with the optometric profession. 38% of females surveyed are very satisfied, 26% satisfied, 30% somewhat satisfied, 6% somewhat dissatisfied, and none dissatisfied with the optometric profession. (See Figure 11).

Overall, female Michigan optometrists do not seem to be as satisfied with the optometric profession as males are. (See Figure 11).

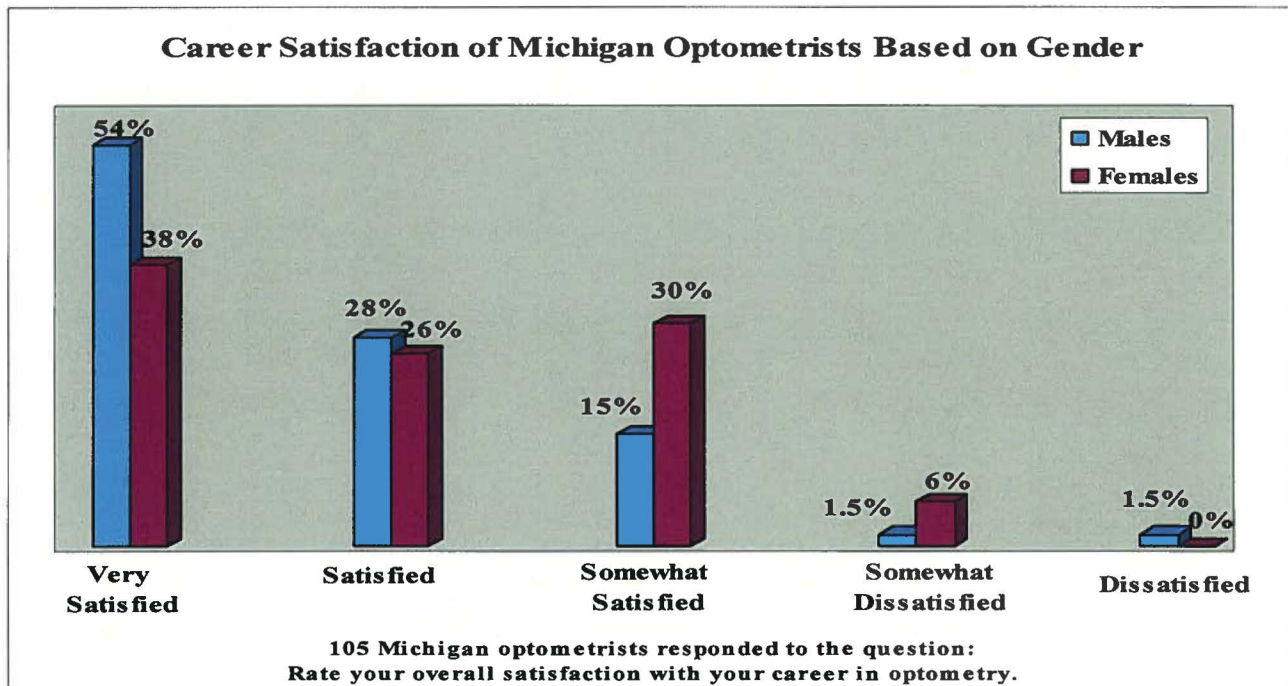


Figure 11

This can also be evaluated by looking at career satisfaction of Michigan optometrists based on years in practice. 59% of those in practice 20 years or more are very satisfied, 28% satisfied, 11% somewhat satisfied, and 2% dissatisfied. (See Figure 12).

38.5% of Michigan optometrists that have been in practice 10 to 19 years are very satisfied, 33% are satisfied, 26% somewhat satisfied, and 2.5% somewhat dissatisfied. (See Figure 12).

33.3% of the optometrists that have been in practice 1 to 9 years are very satisfied, 25% are satisfied, 33.4% are somewhat satisfied, and 8.3% are somewhat dissatisfied with the optometric profession. (See Figure 12).

The vast majority of optometrists, regardless of their years in practice, appear to be very satisfied with the profession. Those who have been in practice for only 1 to 9 years do not seem to be as satisfied as the optometrists who have been in practice 10 years or more. The majority of optometrists who are somewhat dissatisfied with the profession are those who have only been working 1 to 9 years as optometrists. It appears the longer optometrists are in practice, the more satisfied they are with their career. (See Figure 12).

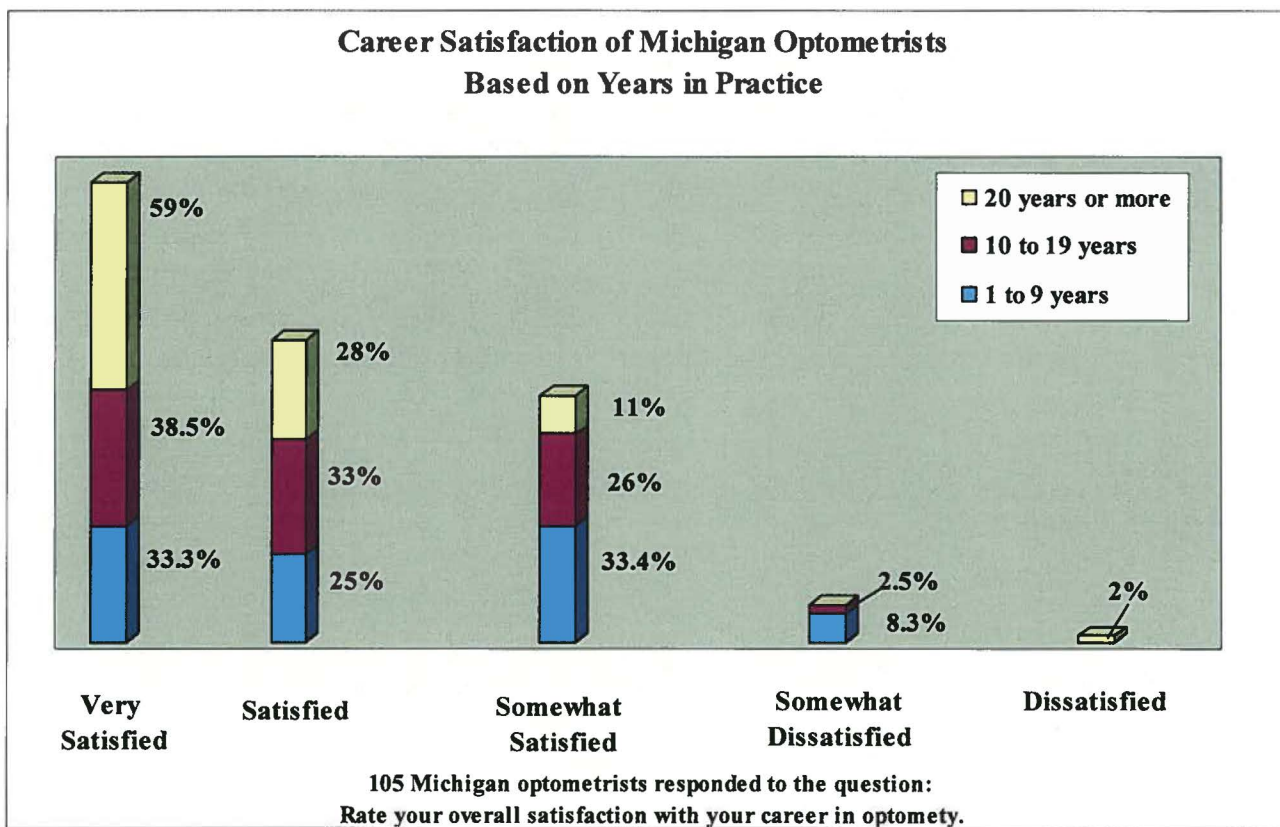


Figure 12

When analyzing career satisfaction based on mode of practice, 62.5% of optometrists working in an OD/MD setting are very satisfied, 25% are satisfied, 12.5% are somewhat satisfied, and none are dissatisfied in any way. (See Figure 13).

45% of those in and OD/OD partnership are very satisfied, 30% are satisfied, 39% are somewhat satisfied, and 3% are dissatisfied. (See Figure 13).

50% of those in a sole proprietorship are very satisfied, 33% are satisfied, 11% somewhat satisfied, 3% somewhat dissatisfied, and 2.5% dissatisfied with the optometric profession. (See Figure 13).

26% of optometrists in a commercial setting are very satisfied, 31% are satisfied, 22.5% are somewhat satisfied, and 4% are somewhat dissatisfied with the profession. (See Figure 13).

75% of Michigan optometrists who work in a mode of practice other than those specified above are very satisfied, and 25% are satisfied. (See Figure 13).

In conclusion, the majority of optometrists are very satisfied or satisfied, no matter what their mode of practice is. Commercial optometrists, sole proprietors, and OD/OD partnerships are the only modes or practice where Michigan optometrists are either somewhat dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the optometric profession. (See Figure 13).

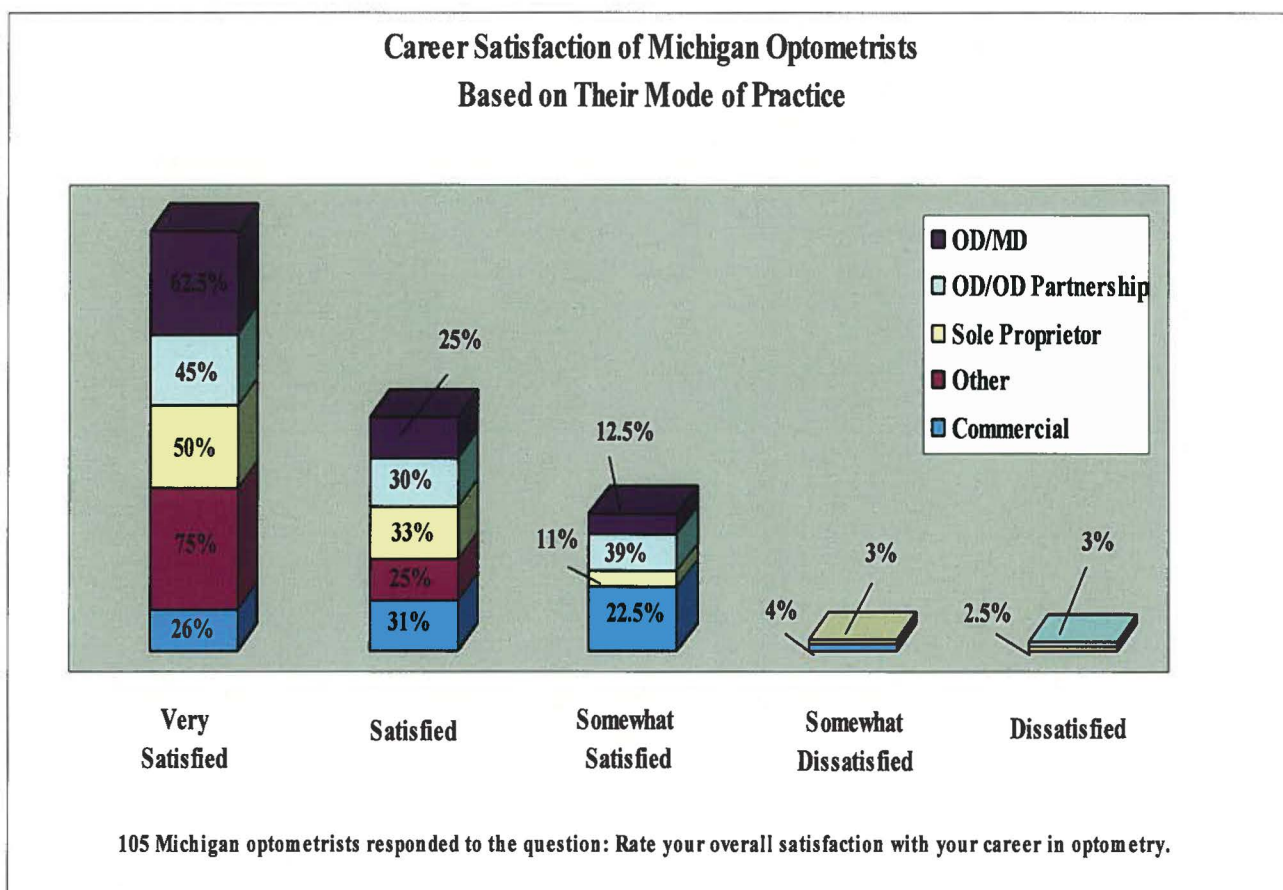


Figure 13

The most important factors contributing to career satisfaction among Michigan optometrists appear to be patient interaction (46%) and job flexibility (25%). Income (12%), scope of practice (10%), and working hours (5%) do not appear to be as important of factors contributing to career satisfaction (Figure 5). The least important factors contributing to career satisfaction among Michigan optometrists are scope of practice and working hours. Job flexibility, income and patient interaction are more important factors contributing to overall career satisfaction. (See Figure 6).

In regards to most important factor contributing to career satisfaction based on gender, the majority of male optometrists (50%) feel patient interaction falls into this category, followed by 19% who feel job flexibility is most important. 15% feel income is most important in contributing to career satisfaction, while 9.5% believe scope of practice contributes most. Only 5% of males feel working hours are the most important factor in contributing to career satisfaction.

The majority of female optometrists feel patient interaction (32%) and job flexibility (42%) are the most important factors contributing to career satisfaction. 6.5% feel income is most important whereas 13% feel scope of practice is most important. Only 3.2% of females feel working hours are the most important factor. (See Figure 14).

The common trend here appears to be that the majority of male Michigan optometrists feel patient interaction is the most important factor contributing to career satisfaction whereas female optometrists feel job flexibility is the most important factor. Male Michigan optometrists feel income is a more important factor while females feel scope of practice is a more important factor in contributing to career satisfaction. Both males and females feel working hours are the least important in contributing to overall career satisfaction. (See Figure 14).

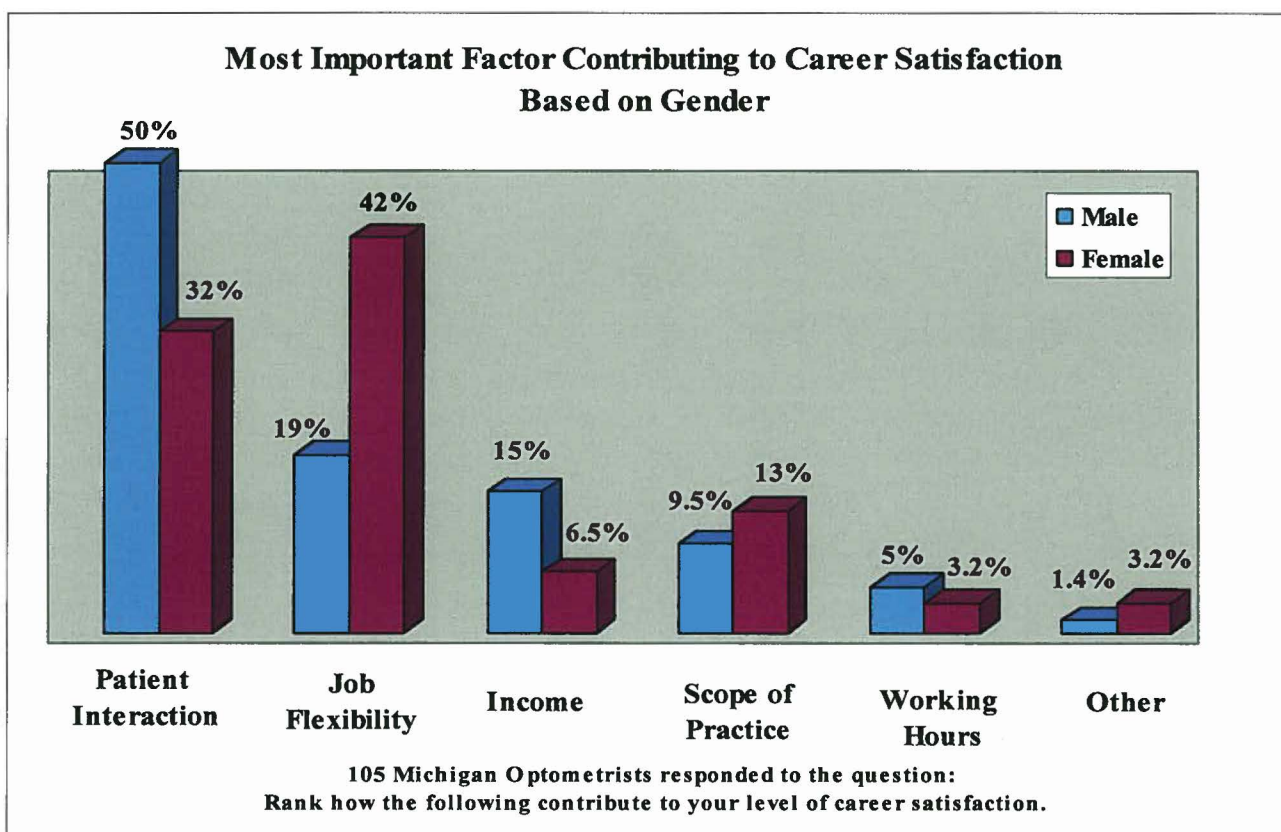


Figure 14

When it comes to the most common factor contributing to career satisfaction based on years in practice, Michigan optometrists working 20 years or more (53%) feel patient interaction is the most common factor contributing to career satisfaction, followed by 17% who feel job flexibility is the most common factor. 11% chose income, 7.5% scope of practice, and 9.5% working hours. (See Figure 15).

39% of Michigan optometrists working 10 to 19 years chose patient interaction as the most important factor, followed by 36% who chose job flexibility. Only 13% feel income is the most important factor, followed by 10% who believe income is most important. (See Figure 15).

39% of optometrists who have been working 1 to 9 years believe patient interaction is most important, followed by 23% who chose job flexibility. Another 23% chose scope of practice as the most common factor contributing to career satisfaction, whereas only 15% chose income as the most common factor. (See Figure 15).

Overall, the trend appears to be that, no matter how many years in practice, the vast majority of Michigan optometrists feel patient interaction is the most common factor contributing to career satisfaction, followed by job flexibility. After job flexibility, Michigan optometrists who have been working 10 or more years feel income is the most common factor, while optometrists who have been working less than 10 years feel scope of practice is a more common factor contributing to career satisfaction. The only optometrists who feel working hours are the most common factor, following patient interaction and job flexibility, are optometrists who have been working 20 years or more. (See Figure 15).

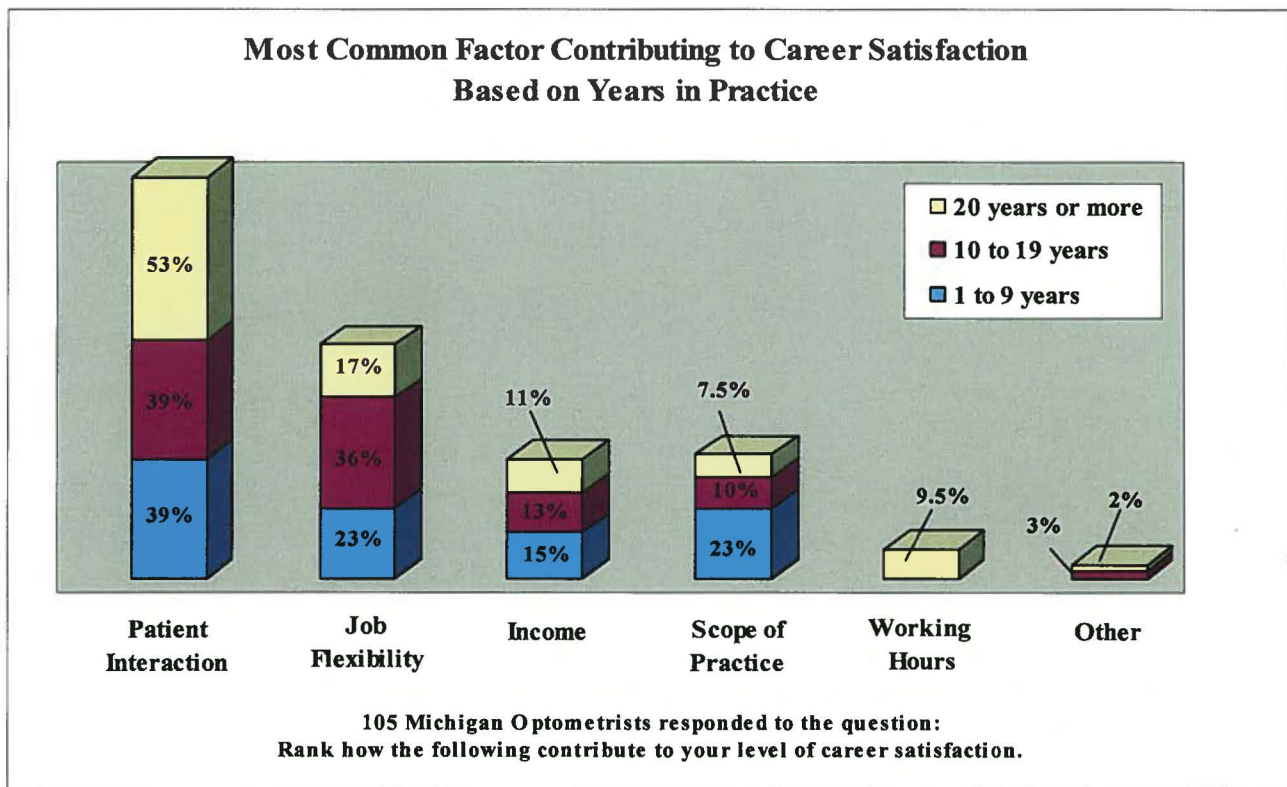


Figure 15

When analyzing the most common factor contributing to career satisfaction based on mode of practice, 29% of Michigan optometrists working in an OD/MD setting chose patient interaction, followed by 28% who chose job flexibility. 14% feel scope of practice is the most common factor and the minority (9%) chose income as the most common factor contributing to career satisfaction. (See Figure 16).

46% of Michigan optometrists working in an OD/OD partnership also feel patient interaction is the most common factor, followed by 35% who responded with job flexibility. The minority feel that income (7%), scope of practice (7%), and working hours (5%) are most common in contributing to overall career satisfaction. (See Figure 16).

The majority of Michigan optometrists working as sole proprietors chose patient interaction (48%), followed by 22% who responded with job flexibility. Only 9% responded with income, another 9% chose scope of practice, while another 9% responded with working hours. (See Figure 16).

The vast majority (50%) of optometrists working in a commercial setting feel patient interaction is the most common factor while the minority feel job flexibility (15%) is most important. 20% responded with income. Only 10% responded with scope of practice. (See Figure 16).

The majority (50%) of Michigan optometrists working in a setting, other than those listed above, feel that scope of practice is the most common factor contributing to career satisfaction, with patient interaction (25%) and income (25%) being of equal importance. (See Figure 16).

It can be concluded that Michigan optometrists who work in an OD/MD setting, an OD/OD partnership, a sole proprietorship, or a commercial setting feel that patient interaction is most important. After patient interaction, job flexibility is the most common factor contributing to career satisfaction for OD/MD settings, OD/OD partnerships, and sole proprietorships. After patient interaction, income is the most common factor for those working in a commercial setting followed by job flexibility. Those who chose “other” as their mode of practice feel scope of practice is most important, followed by patient interaction and income. (See Figure 16).

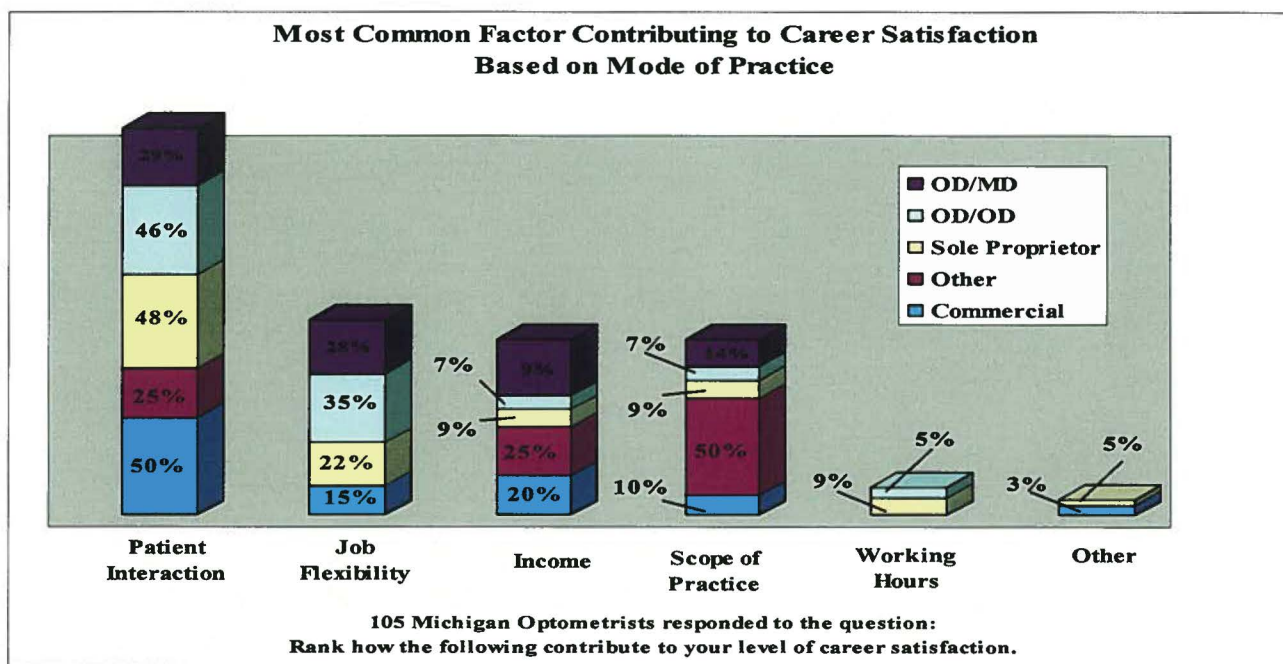


Figure 16

Michigan optometrists most commonly refer patients to general ophthalmologists (55%) followed by retina specialists (35%). Michigan optometrists refer least to anterior segment specialists (10%). None of the optometrists surveyed most commonly refer their patients to a primary care physician or other optometrists. (See Figure 7).

When breaking this down by analyzing the most common practitioner type that optometrists refer their patients to based on gender of the optometrist, 0% of males and females most commonly refer to primary care physicians or other optometrists. (See Figure 17).

The vast majority (58%) of male optometrists refer their patients to a general ophthalmologist and 32% refer to a retina specialist. The remaining 10% refer to an anterior segment specialist. (See Figure 17).

With respect to female optometrists, the majority (46%) most commonly refer to a general ophthalmologist, followed by a retina specialist (42%). 12% most commonly refer to an anterior segment specialist. (See Figure 17).

In conclusion, both male and female Michigan optometrists most commonly refer their patients to general ophthalmologists, followed retina specialists, and then anterior segment specialists. (See Figure 17).

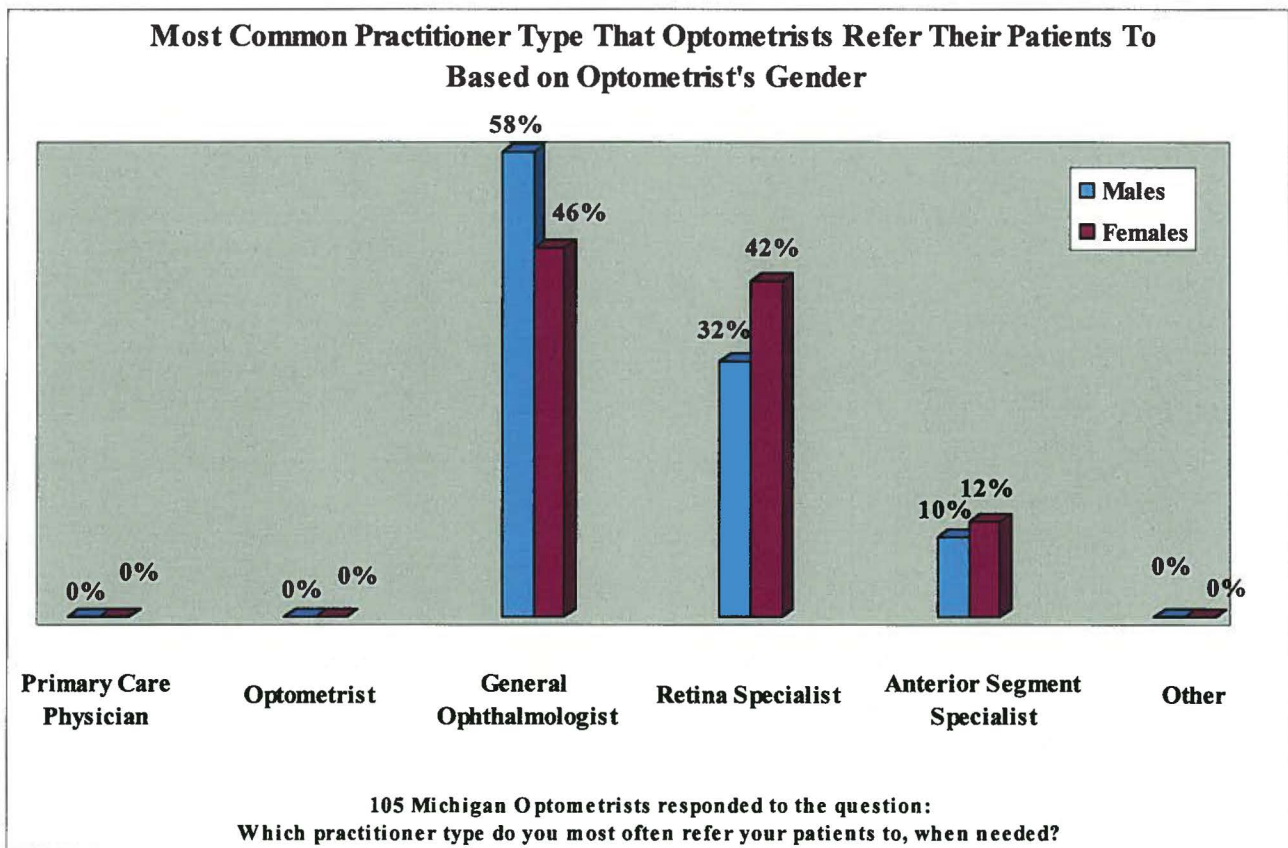


Figure 17

Looking at the most common practitioner type that Michigan optometrists refer their patients to, based on the optometrist's years in practice, 52% in practice 20 years or more, most commonly refer to a general ophthalmologist, followed by 38% who refer to a retina specialist. The remaining 10% refer most commonly to an anterior segment specialist. (See Figure 18).

58% of Michigan optometrists who have been working 10 to 19 years refer most commonly to a general ophthalmologist followed by a retina specialist (36%) and then to an anterior segment specialist (6%). (See Figure 18).

The vast majority (62%) of Michigan optometrists, who have been working 1 to 9 years, refer most commonly to a general ophthalmologist. 23% refer most commonly to a retina specialist and the remaining 15% refer most commonly to an anterior segment specialist. (See Figure 18).

Overall, no matter how long Michigan optometrists have been in practice, the vast majority most commonly refer their patients to a general ophthalmologist, followed by a retina specialist. The minority of Michigan optometrists refer most commonly to an anterior segment specialist. (See Figure 18).

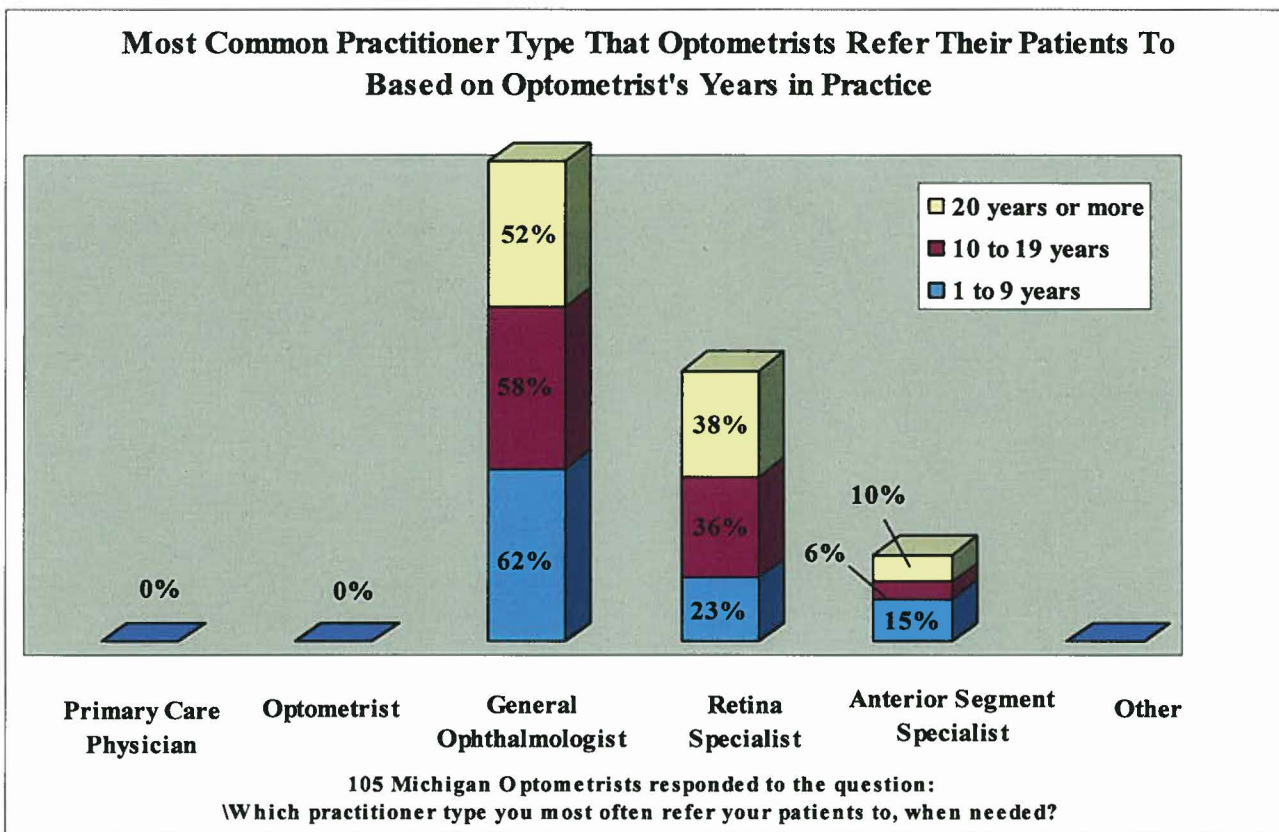


Figure 18

This can also be analyzed by looking at the most common practitioner type that optometrists refer their patients to based on the optometrist's mode of practice. 57% of those working in an OD/MD setting most commonly refer patients to a general ophthalmologist, while 43% refer to a retina specialist. None refer to an anterior segment specialist. (See Figure 19).

Michigan optometrists working in an OD/OD partnership refer most commonly to a retina specialist (44%) and to a general ophthalmologist (42%). The minority (14%) refer to an anterior segment specialist. (See Figure 19).

Optometrists in sole proprietorships most commonly refer to a general ophthalmologist (49%) followed by a retina specialist (45%). Only 6% refer most commonly to an anterior segment specialist. (See Figure 19).

The vast majority of Michigan optometrists working in a commercial setting refer most commonly to general ophthalmologists (55%) followed by retina specialists (35%) and then to anterior segment specialists (10%). (See Figure 19).

50% of Michigan optometrists, working in a setting other than those specified above, refer most commonly to retina specialists (50%) and then to general ophthalmologists (25%) and anterior segment specialists (25%). (See Figure 19).

The common trend appears to be that the majority of Michigan optometrists, no matter what their mode of practice, most commonly refer their patients to a general ophthalmologist or retina specialist. The minority, on the other hand, most commonly refer patients to an anterior segment specialist. None of the Michigan optometrists most commonly refer to primary care doctors, other optometrists, or other types of specialists. (See Figure 19).

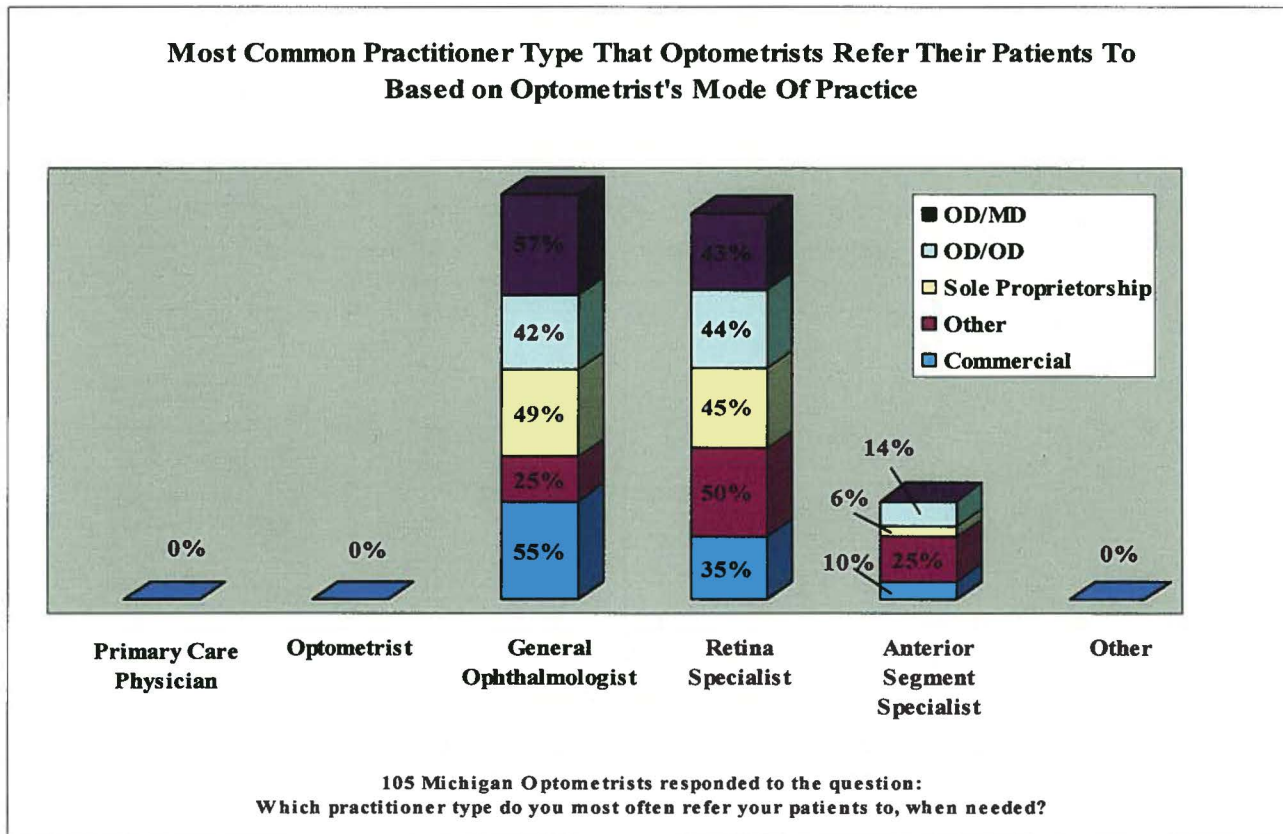


Figure 19

About 43% of Michigan optometrists refer about 5% or less of their patients to other practitioners, while another 43% refer 6% to 10% of their patients. 9% of Michigan optometrists surveyed refer 11% to 15% of their patients while only 5% refer 16% to 20% of their patients. (See Figure 8).

This can be broken down even further by analyzing the percentage of patients seen in optometric practice that require a referral based on the practitioner's gender. 53% of males refer 5% or less of their patients, while 39% refer 6% to 10%. Only 4% of males refer 11% to 15% of their patients while the remaining 4% refer 16% to 20%. (See Figure 20)

21% of female optometrists refer 5% or less of their patients while 55% (the vast majority) refer 6% to 10%. 18% refer 11% to 15% of their patients and the remaining females (6%) refer 16% to 20%. (See Figure 20).

In conclusion the majority of males refer 5% or less of their patients while the majority of females refer 6% to 10% of their patients. Thus, it appears that Michigan female optometrists refer their patients more often than do Michigan males optometrists. (See Figure 20).

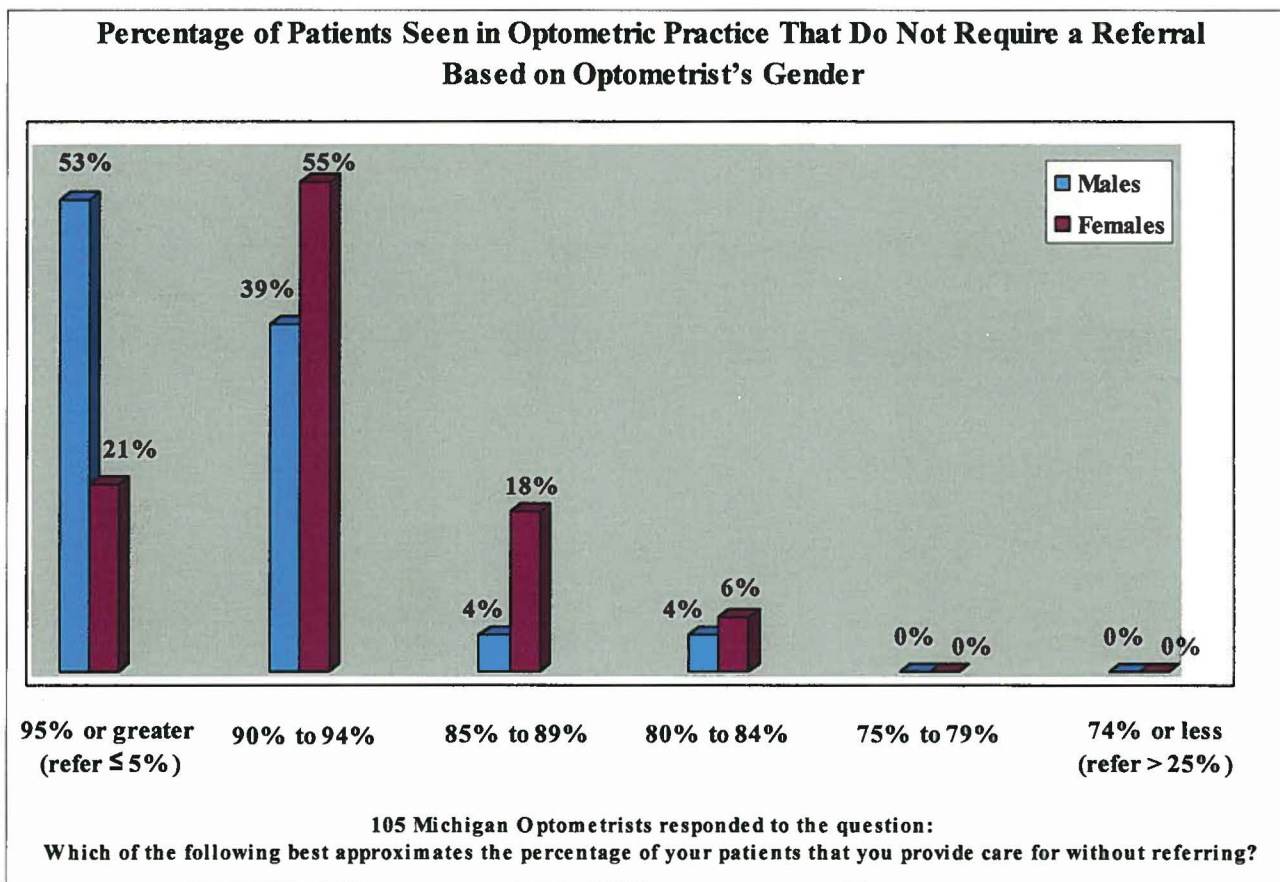


Figure 20

This can also be broken down by analyzing the percentage of patients seen in optometric practice that require a referral based on the practitioner's years in practice. 57.4% of optometrists that have been in practice 20 years or more refer 5% or less of their patients, while 37% refer 6% to 10%. Only 3.7% refer 11% to 15% of their patients and 1.9% refer 16% to 20%.

The majority (48.7%) of optometrists who have been in practice 10 to 19 years refer 6% to 10% of their patients, followed by 25.6% who refer 5% or less of their patients. 15.4% refer 11% to 15% of their patients while the minority (1.9%) refer 16% to 20% of their patients.

The majority (50%) of optometrists who have been in practice 1 to 9 years refer 6% to 10% of their patients, followed by 41.7% who refer 5% or less. Only 8.3% refer 11% to 15% of their patients.

The overall trend is that Michigan optometrists who have been in practice 20 years or more refer their patients the least (5% or less) when compared to those who have been practicing less than 20 years. Those working less than 20 years refer 6% to 10% of their patients. The minority of optometrists, no matter how long they have been in practice, refer 11% to 20% of their patients. (See Figure 21).

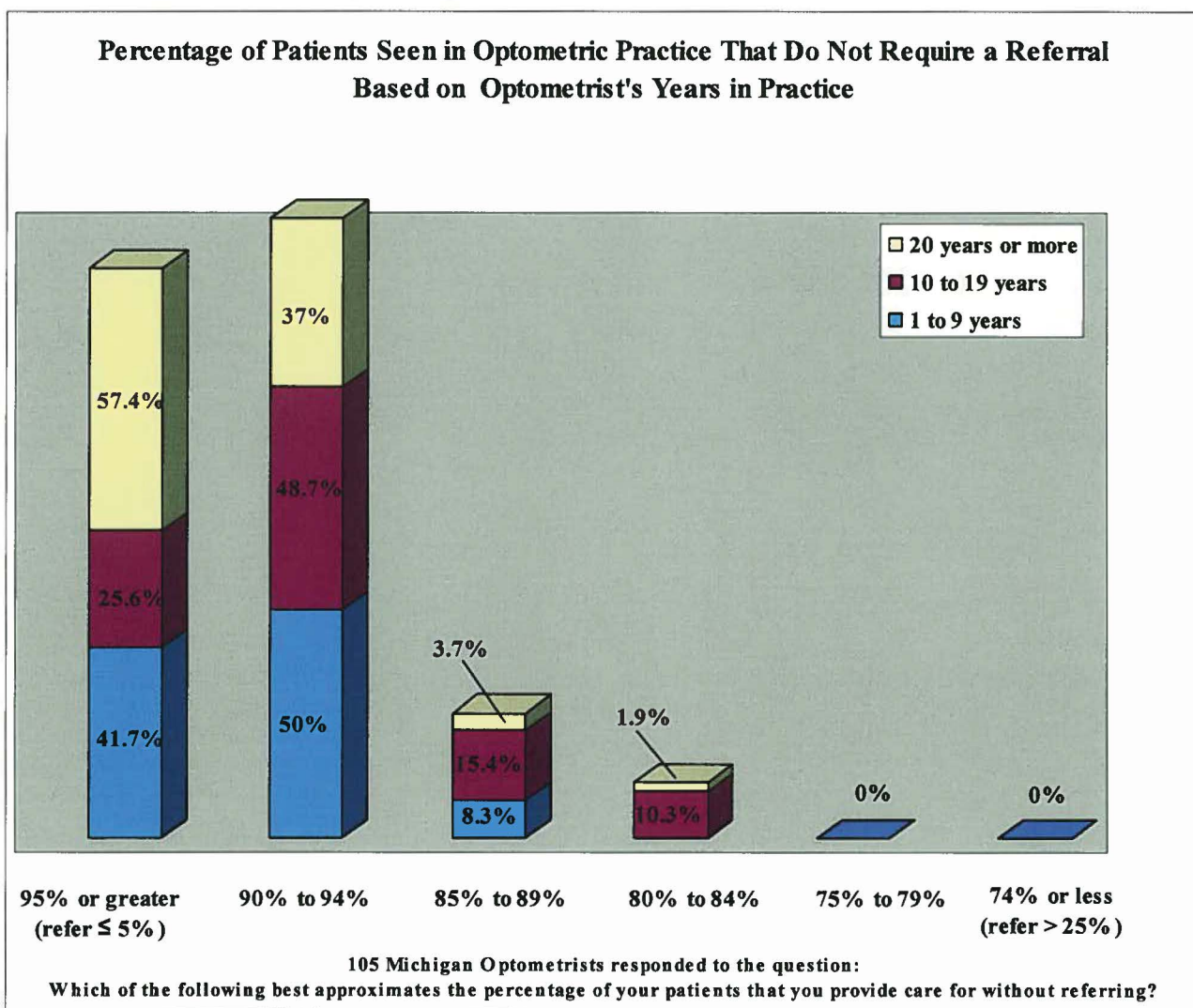


Figure 21

When breaking this down in regards to percentage of patients seen in optometric practice that require a referral based on the practitioner's mode of practice, the majority (57.1%) of optometrists in an OD/MD setting refer 6% to 10% of their patients, followed by 42.9% who refer 5% or less. (See Figure 22).

43.9% of Michigan optometrists in an OD/OD partnership refer 5% or less of their patients while 41.5% refer 11% to 15%. Only 12.2% refer 16% to 20% of their patients with the minority (2.4%) referring 21% to 25%. (See Figure 22).

49% of sole proprietors refer 5% or less of their patients, followed by 36% who refer 6% to 10%. 6% refer 11% to 15% of their patients and 9% refer 16% to 20% of their patients. (See Figure 22).

The majority (55%) of optometrists in a commercial setting refer 6% to 10% of their patients, followed by 35% who refer 5% or less. Only 10% refer 11% to 15% of their patients. (See Figure 22).

50% of optometrists who chose a setting other than those listed above refer 16% to 20% of their patients. Another 25% refer 5% or less and the remaining 25% refer 6% to 10% of their patients. (See Figure 22).

In conclusion, Michigan optometrists in an OD/OD, OD/MD, sole proprietorship, or commercial setting refer 10% or less of their patients while those who are in a setting other than those listed above refer 16% to 20% of their patients. (See Figure 22).

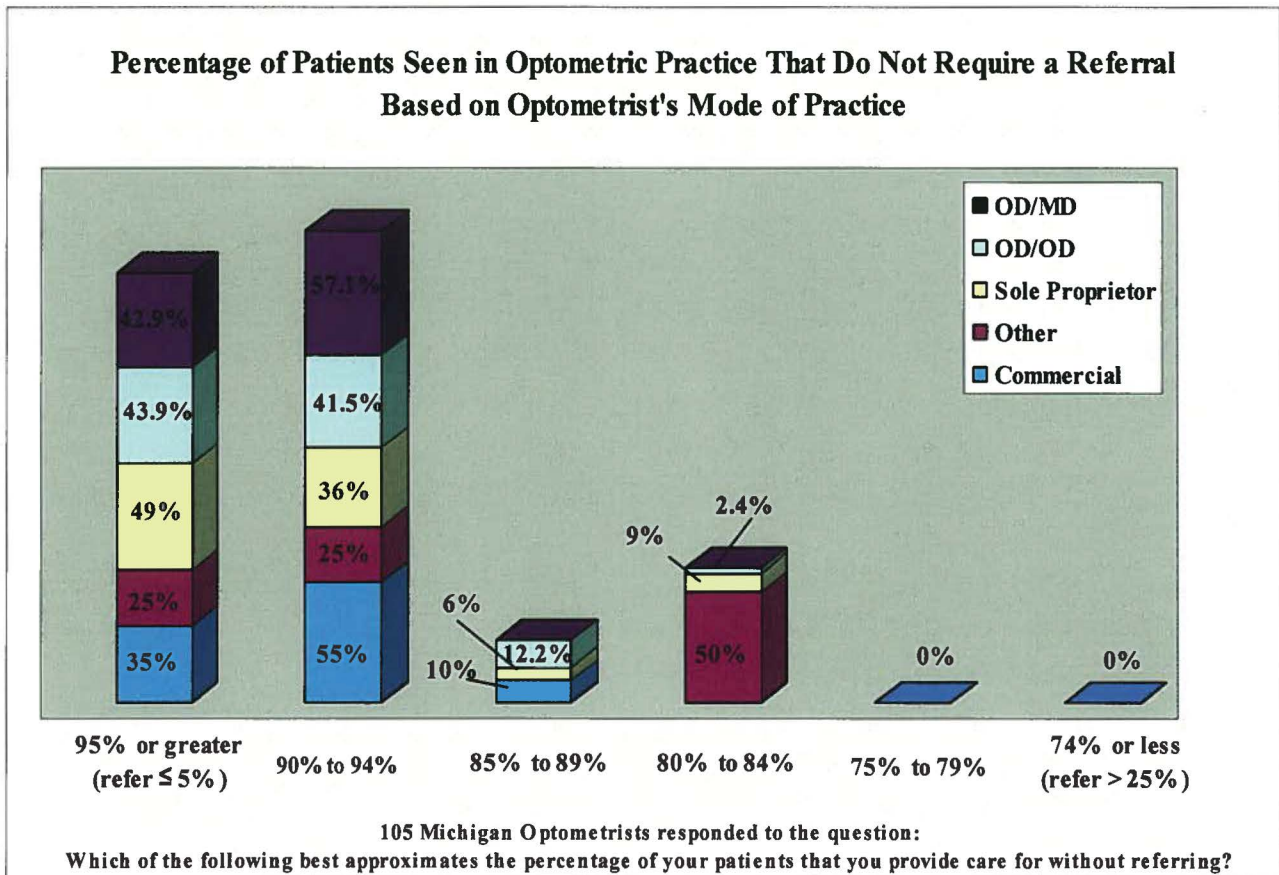


Figure 22

40% of Michigan optometrists feel they could better serve their patients by having more diagnostic equipment while 24% feel having more efficient staff would better serve their patients. The minority feel third party payment (19%), continuing education (7%), and expanding the scope of practice (7%) would better serve their patients (Figure 9).

When analyzing this, one can look at how Michigan optometrists could better serve their patients based on the gender of the optometrists surveyed. The majority (41%) of males feel that patients could be better served by having more diagnostic equipment, followed by 22% who chose third party payment and 21% who chose more efficient staff. Only 9% chose expansion of the scope of practice while 4% chose continuing education. (See Figure 23).

The majority (35%) of females feel more diagnostic equipment would better help them serve their patients, followed by more efficient staff (32%). 15% chose third party payment while 12% chose continuing education. None chose expanding the scope of practice. (See Figure 23).

In conclusion, the majority of male and female Michigan optometrists feel that more diagnostic equipment would allow them to better serve their patients. Following this, male optometrists feel equally about having more efficient staff and expanding in the area of third party payment. Females, on the other hand, feel having more efficient staff is more important in providing better service to their patients than third party payment. More females feel continuing education would better help them serve their patients than males. While some males (9%) feel expanding the scope of practice within optometry would better serve their patients none of the females feel this would better serve their patients. (See Figure 23).

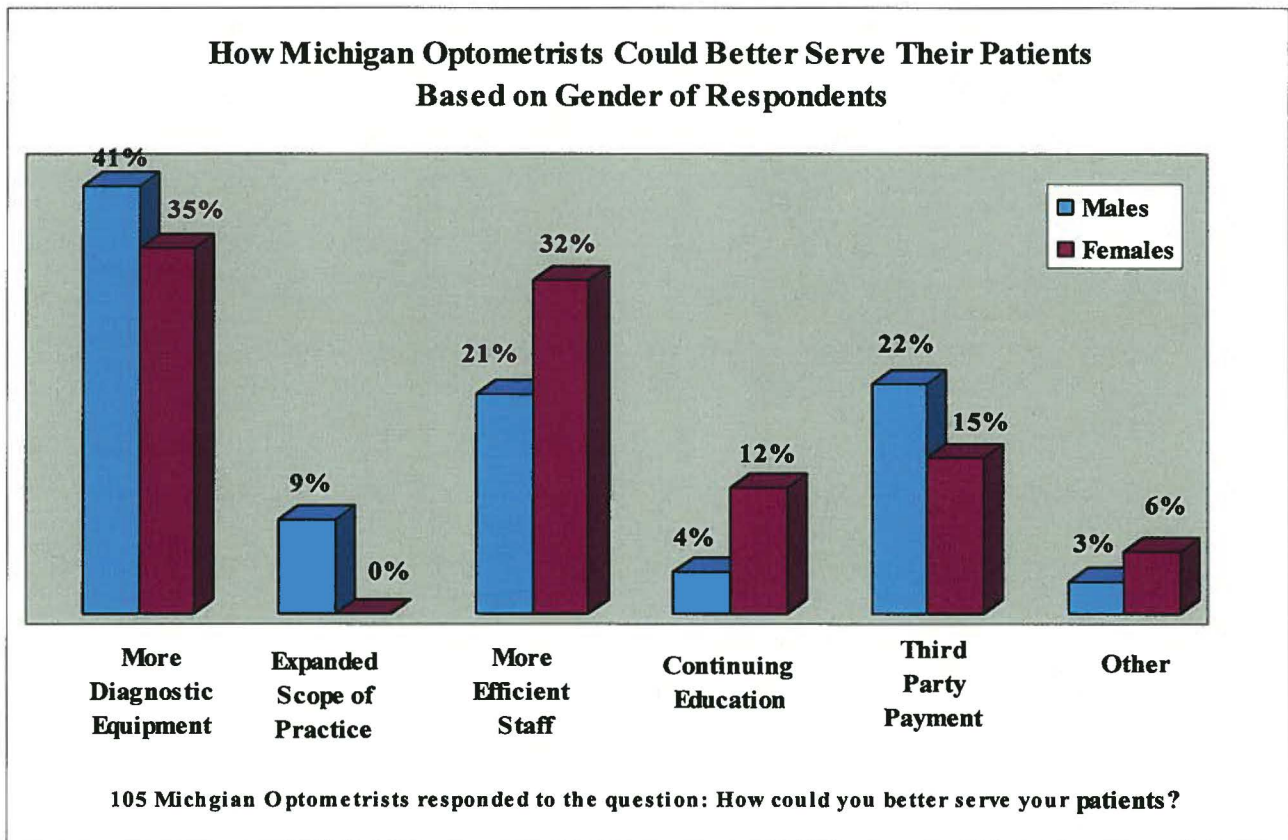


Figure 23

This can also be analyzed by looking at how Michigan optometrists could better serve their patients based on years in practice. The majority (41%) of optometrists who have been in practice 20 years or more feel more diagnostic equipment would help them to better serve their patients, followed by 22% who chose more efficient staff. 15% chose third party payment and 9% chose expanding the scope of practice. 7% feel continuing education would better help them to serve their patients. (See Figure 24).

The majority (36%) of optometrists working 10 to 19 years chose more diagnostic equipment, followed by 31% who chose third party payment. 25% chose more efficient staff while only 3% chose expanding the scope of practice. 5% chose continuing education. (See Figure 24).

The vast majority (50%) of optometrists working 1 to 9 years feel more diagnostic equipment would better help them serve their patients, followed by 33% who chose more efficient staff. The minority (8%) chose third party payment. (See Figure 24).

It can be concluded that, no matter how long Michigan optometrists have been in practice, the majority feel more diagnostic equipment would help them to better serve their patients. The minority feel expanding the scope of practice and continuing education would best help to serve their patients. (See Figure 24).

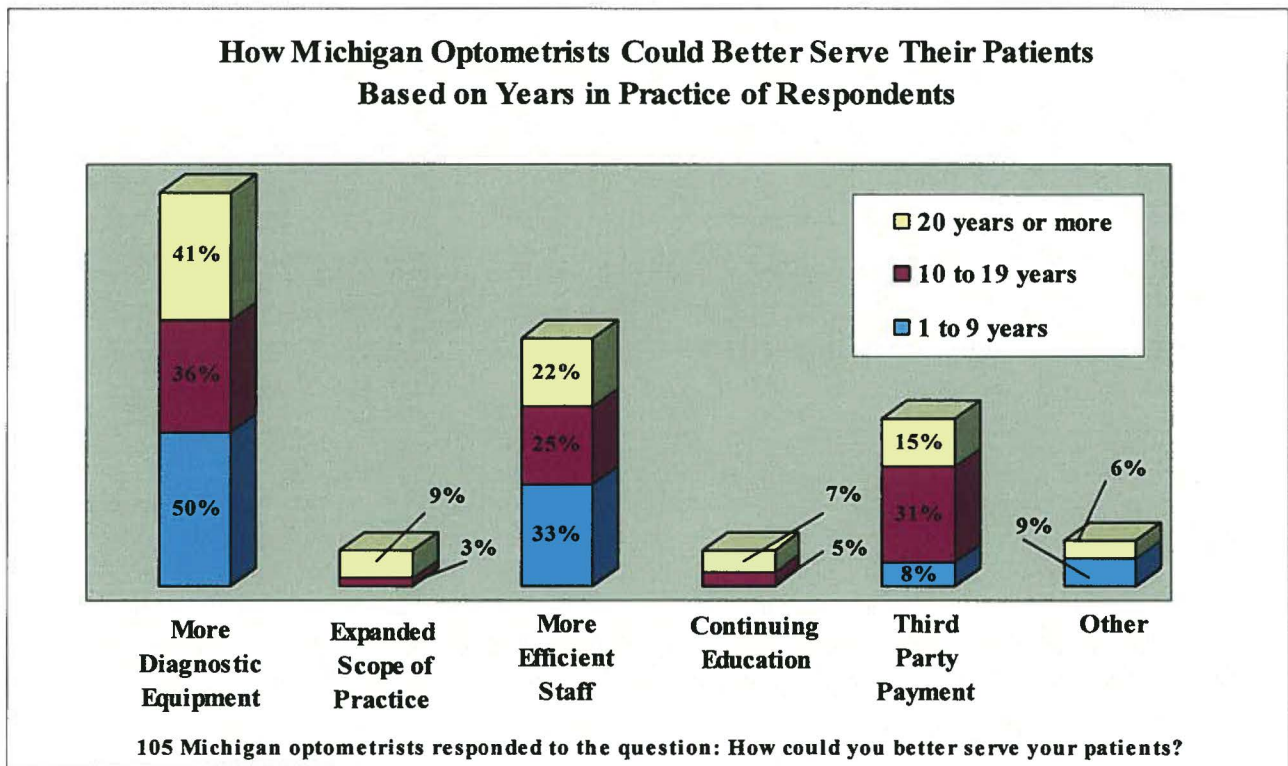


Figure 24

We also looked at how Michigan optometrists could better serve their patients based on mode of practice. 29% of optometrists working in an OD/MD setting feel that more diagnostic equipment would better help them to serve their patients, while 29% chose more efficient staff; 14% chose expanding the scope of practice; another 14% chose continuing education, whereas another 14% chose third party payment. (See Figure 25).

33% of optometrists in an OD/OD partnership chose having more efficient staff, followed by 26% who chose more diagnostic equipment. Another 26% feel third party payment would better help them serve their patients. Only 7% chose continuing education and 5% chose expanded scope of practice. (See Figure 25).

The majority of sole proprietors (43%) chose more diagnostic equipment, followed by 26% who chose more efficient staff. 20% chose third party payment whereas only 9% chose expanding the scope of practice. (See Figure 25).

The vast majority (75%) in a commercial setting feel more diagnostic equipment would better allow them to serve their patients, followed by 10% who chose expanding the scope of practice. Only 5% chose a more efficient staff and another 5% chose third party payment. (See Figure 25).

50% of optometrists who are in a practice setting other than those listed above, feel continuing education would better help them serve their patients, followed by more diagnostic equipment (25%) and other items not listed (25%). (See Figure 25).

It can be concluded that the vast majority of Michigan optometrists working in a commercial setting or sole proprietorship feel more diagnostic equipment would better help to them serve their patients. Michigan optometrists in and OD/MD setting feel more diagnostic equipment and more efficient staff are of equal importance, followed by continuing education, expanded scope of practice, and expansion in the area of third party payment being of equal importance. Optometrists in an OD/OD partnership feel more efficient staff would best help them serve their patients followed by more diagnostic equipment and third party payment being of equal importance. The minority of optometrists feel that expanding the scope of practice and continuing education would best help them to serve their patients. (See Figure 25).

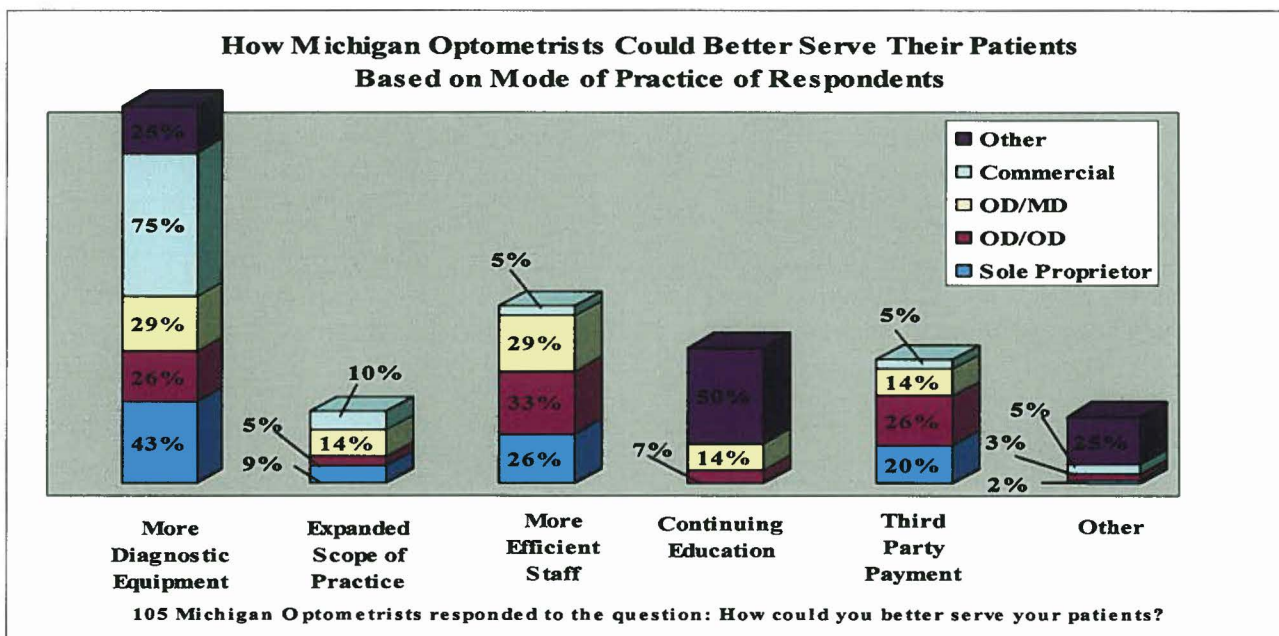


Figure 25

When it comes to desired areas of growth and expansion within the optometric profession, the majority (52%) feel that insurance parity is most important, followed by increasing public awareness (38%). Expanding the scope of practice is least important (3%) among Michigan optometrists surveyed. (See Figure 10).

The desired areas of growth and expansion of the optometric profession based on gender is as follows: The majority of males (58%) desire growth and expansion in the area of insurance parity, followed by 35% who desire more expansion in increasing public awareness. Only 4% desire expansion of the scope of practice. (See Figure 26).

The majority of females (50%) desire expansion in the area of increasing public awareness, followed by 33% who desire expansion in the area of insurance parity. 3% desire expansion of the scope of practice. The remaining 14% desire growth in other areas than those stated above. (See Figure 26).

It can be concluded that the majority of Michigan female optometrists desire expansion in the area of increasing public awareness whereas the majority of male optometrists desire expansion in the area of insurance parity. The majority of both males and females desire increasing public awareness and expansion of insurance parity. A very minimal amount desire expansion in the area of the scope of practice. (See Figure 26).

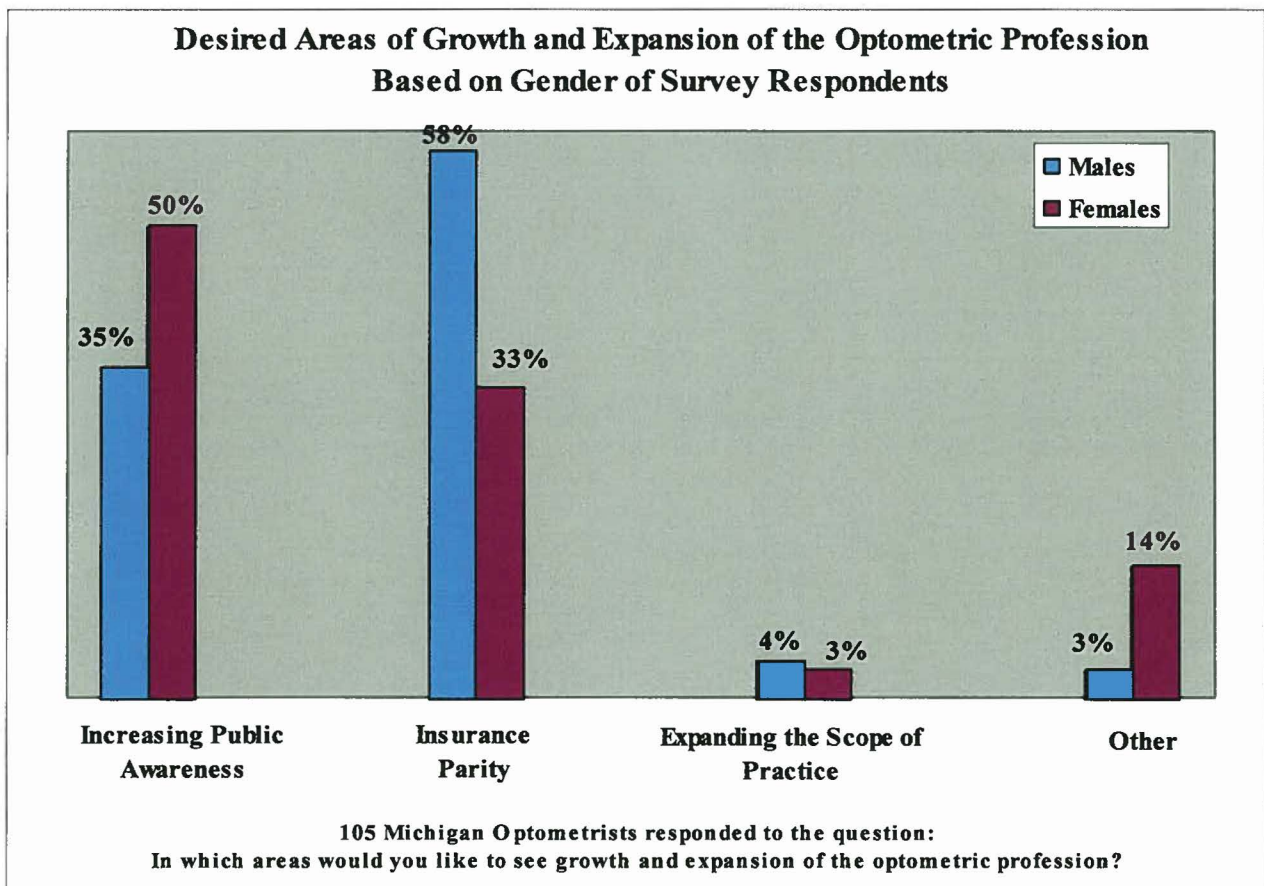


Figure 26

Desired areas of growth and expansion of the optometric profession can also be broken down based on years in practice of the optometrists surveyed. The majority (56%) of optometrists who have been practicing 20 years or more desire expansion in the area of insurance parity, followed by 33% who desire increasing public awareness. Only 4% desire expansion of the scope of practice. The remaining 7% desire expansion in areas other than those listed above. (See Figure 27).

The majority (54%) of Michigan optometrists who have been in practice 10 to 19 years desire expansion in the area of insurance parity, followed by 33% who desire increasing public awareness. Only 5% desire expansion in the scope of practice while 8% desire expansion in different areas not listed above. (See Figure 27).

The vast majority (75%) of Michigan optometrists who have been practicing 1 to 9 years desire expansion in increasing public awareness and the remaining 25% desire growth in the area of insurance parity. None desire expansion in the scope of practice. (See Figure 27).

Overall, it can be concluded the majority of Michigan optometrists working 10 or more years desire expansion in the area of insurance parity followed by increasing public awareness, whereas the majority who have been in practice less than 10 years desire expansion in the area of increasing public awareness, which is followed by an expansion of insurance parity. The minority of optometrists, who have been in practice 10 or more years, desire expansion of the scope of practice, while those who have been in practice less than 10 years do not desire expansion of the scope of practice. (See Figure 27).

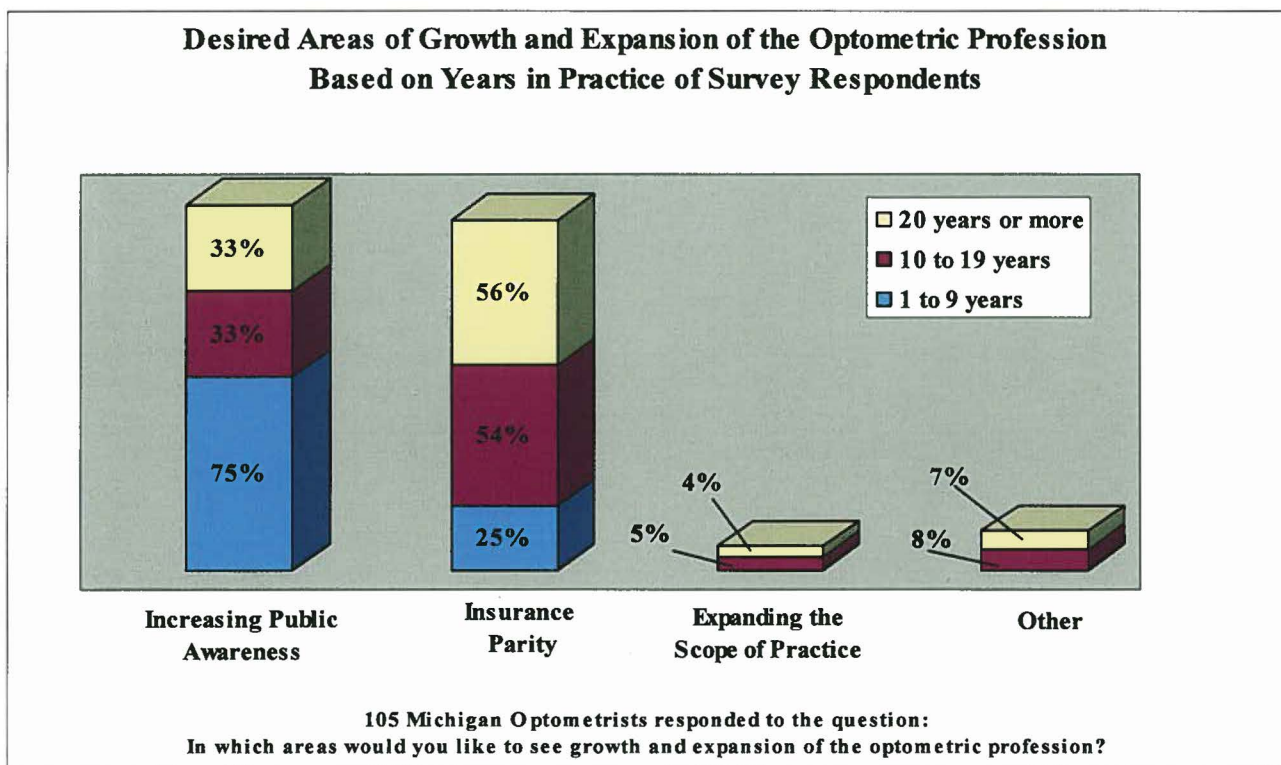


Figure 27

Desired areas of growth and expansion of the optometric profession can also be analyzed by the optometrist's mode of practice. The majority (57%) of optometrists working in an OD/MD setting desire expansion in the area of insurance parity and the remaining 43% desire increasing public awareness. (See Figure 28).

The vast majority (70%) of those working in an OD/OD partnership desire expansion in insurance parity, followed by 27% who desire increasing public awareness. (See Figure 28).

44% of sole proprietors desire expansion in the area of increased public awareness while 41% desire expansion in the area of insurance parity. (See Figure 28).

The majority (55%) of optometrists working in a commercial setting desire increased public awareness while 40% desire expansion in the area of insurance parity. (See Figure 28).

The vast majority (50%) of optometrists who are practicing in modes other than those specified above, desire increased public awareness, while 25% desire expansion of the scope of practice. The remaining 25% desire expansion in other areas, which were not included in the survey. (See Figure 28).

In conclusion, the vast majority of optometrists working in an OD/OD partnership desire expansion in the area of insurance parity. Those working in an OD/MD setting, commercial setting, or sole proprietorship feel that both increasing public awareness and expansion in the area of insurance parity are both of almost equal importance. Expanding the scope of practice is in the minority of desired areas of growth and expansion for Michigan optometrists. (See Figure 28).

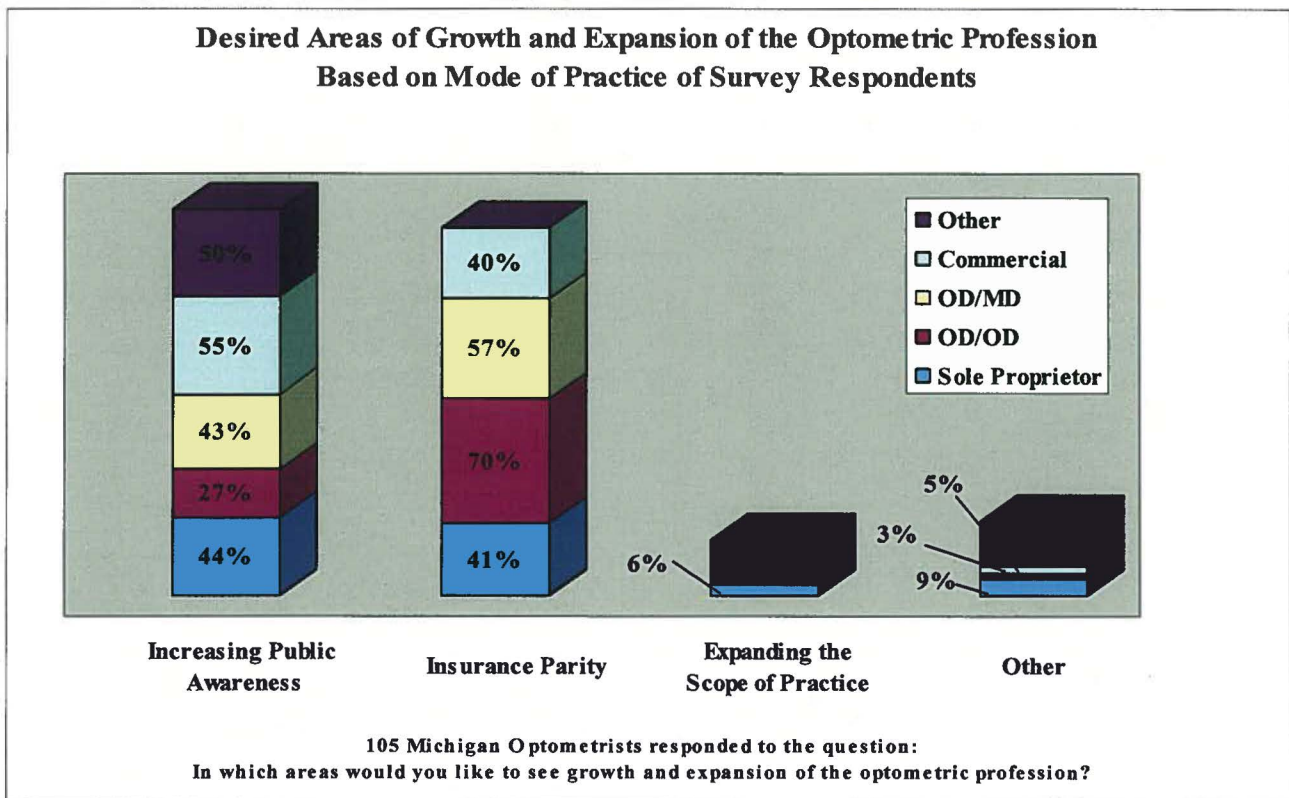


Figure 28

CONCLUSION

Our survey involved 200 Michigan optometrists, who were randomly selected using a mail survey via the U.S. Postal Service. 105 of the 200 surveyed responded via the U.S. Postal Service.

32% of the respondents were females while 68% were males (Figure 1). 52% of the Michigan optometrists surveyed have been in practice at least 20 years, while 37% have been in practice 10 to 19 years. Only 11% of the respondents have been in practice 1 to 9 years (Figure 2). Thus, the majority of respondents have been practicing optometry for 10 or more years and the minority of respondents have been practicing less than 10 years. The majority of Michigan optometrists surveyed work in an OD/OD partnership (39%) or a sole proprietorship (31%). 19% of our respondents work in a commercial setting and only 7% work in an OD/MD setting. The remaining 4% work in another setting, which was not specified. (See Figure 3).

The vast majority of Michigan optometrists (78%) appear to be very satisfied and/or satisfied with the optometric profession. (See Figure 4). Overall, female Michigan optometrists do not seem to be as satisfied with the optometric profession as males are. (See Figure 11). The vast majority of optometrists, regardless of their years in practice, appear to be very satisfied with the profession. Those who have been in practice for only 1 to 9 years do not seem to be as satisfied as the optometrists who have been in practice 10 years or more. The majority of optometrists who are somewhat dissatisfied with the profession are those who have only been working 1 to 9 years as optometrists. It appears the longer optometrists are in practice, the more satisfied they are with their career. (See Figure 12). The majority of optometrists are very satisfied or satisfied, no matter what their mode of practice is. Commercial optometrists, sole proprietors, and OD/OD partnerships are the only modes or practice where Michigan optometrists are either somewhat dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the optometric profession. (See Figure 13).

The majority of male Michigan optometrists feel patient interaction is the most important factor contributing to career satisfaction whereas female optometrists feel job flexibility is the most important factor. Male Michigan optometrists feel income is a more important factor while females feel scope of practice is a more important factor in contributing to career satisfaction. Both males and females feel working hours are the least important in contributing to overall career satisfaction. (See Figure 14). The trend appears to be that, no matter how many years in practice, the vast majority of Michigan optometrists feel patient interaction is the most important factor contributing to career satisfaction, followed by job flexibility. After job flexibility, Michigan optometrists who have been working 10 or more years feel income is more important while optometrists who have been working less than 10 years feel scope of practice is a more common factor contributing to career satisfaction. The only optometrists who feel working hours are the most common factor, following patient interaction and job flexibility, are optometrists who have been working 20 years or more. (See Figure 15). In addition, Michigan optometrists who work in an OD/MD setting, an OD/OD partnership, a sole proprietorship, or a commercial setting feel that patient interaction is most important. After patient interaction, job flexibility is the most common factor contributing to career satisfaction for OD/MD settings, OD/OD partnerships, and sole proprietorships. After patient interaction, income is the most common factor for those working in a commercial setting followed by job flexibility. Those who chose "other" as their mode of practice feel scope of practice is most important, followed by patient interaction and income. (See Figure 16).

Both male and female Michigan optometrists most commonly refer their patients to general ophthalmologists, followed retina specialists, and then anterior segment specialists. (See Figure 17). No matter how long Michigan optometrists have been in practice, the vast majority most

commonly refer their patients to a general ophthalmologist, followed by a retina specialist. The minority of Michigan optometrists refer most commonly to an anterior segment specialist. (See Figure 18). The common trend appears to be that the majority of Michigan optometrists, no matter what their mode of practice, most commonly refer their patients to a general ophthalmologist or retina specialist. The minority, on the other hand, most commonly refer patients to an anterior segment specialist. None of the Michigan optometrists most commonly refer to primary care doctors, other optometrists, or other types of specialists. (See Figure 19).

The majority of males refer 5% or less of their patients while the majority of females refer 6% to 10% of their patients. Thus, it appears that Michigan female optometrists refer their patients more often than do Michigan male optometrists. (See Figure 20). The overall trend is that Michigan optometrists who have been in practice 20 years or more refer their patients the least (5% or less) when compared to those who have been practicing less than 20 years. Those working less than 20 years refer 6% to 10% of their patients. The minority of optometrists, no matter how long they have been in practice, refer 11% to 20% of their patients. (See Figure 21). It can also be concluded that Michigan optometrists in an OD/OD, OD/MD, sole proprietorship, or commercial setting refer 10% or less of their patients while those who are in a setting other than those listed above refer 16% to 20% of their patients. (See Figure 22).

When it comes to better serving their patients, the majority of male and female Michigan optometrists feel that more diagnostic equipment would allow them to better serve their patients. Following this, male optometrists feel equally about having more efficient staff and expanding in the area of third party payment. Females, on the other hand, feel having more efficient staff is more important in providing better service to their patients than third party payment. More females feel continuing education would better help them serve their patients than males. While some males feel expanding the scope of optometry would better serve their patients none of the females feel this would better serve their patients. (See Figure 23). No matter how long Michigan optometrists have been in practice, the majority feel more diagnostic equipment would help them to better serve their patients. The minority feel expanding the scope of practice and continuing education would best help to serve their patients. (See Figure 24). In addition, the vast majority of Michigan optometrists working in a commercial setting or sole proprietorship feel more diagnostic equipment would better help them serve their patients. Michigan optometrists in an OD/MD setting feel more diagnostic equipment and more efficient staff are of equal importance, followed by continuing education, expanded scope of practice, and expansion in the area of third party payment being of equal importance. Optometrists in an OD/OD partnership feel more efficient staff would best help them serve their patients followed by more diagnostic equipment and third party payment being of equal importance. The minority of optometrists feel that expanding the scope of practice and continuing education would best help them serve their patients. (See Figure 25).

The majority of Michigan female optometrists desire expansion in the area of increasing public awareness whereas the majority of male optometrists desire expansion in the area of insurance parity. The majority of both males and females desire increasing public awareness and expansion of insurance parity. A very minimal amount desire expansion in the area of the scope of practice. (See Figure 26). The vast majority of Michigan optometrists working 10 or more years desire expansion in the area of insurance parity followed by increasing public awareness, whereas the majority who have been in practice less than 10 years desire expansion in the area of increasing public awareness, which is followed by an expansion of insurance parity. The minority of optometrists, who have been in practice 10 or more years, desire expansion of the scope of practice, while those who have been in practice less than 10 years do not desire expansion of the scope of practice. (See Figure 27). The vast majority of optometrists working in an OD/OD partnership desire expansion in the area of insurance parity. Those working in an OD/MD setting, commercial

setting, or sole proprietorship feel that both increasing public awareness and expansion in the area of insurance parity are both of almost equal importance. Expanding the scope of practice is in the minority of desired areas of growth and expansion for Michigan optometrists. (See Figure 28).

Overall, Michigan optometrists are satisfied with their career in optometry. As our survey has found, there are areas within the optometric profession which could be enhanced to increase overall career satisfaction, which were discussed in detail above. There are also areas that need to expand and obstacles that need to be overcome, especially in the areas of insurance parity and third party payment. As seen in our survey there are many similarities in responses amongst male and female Michigan optometrists, with some minor differences. Overall, years in optometric practice and mode of practice influence career satisfaction within different areas. This survey has given much insight into many different areas that pertain to the overall career satisfaction of Michigan optometrists.

APPENDIX I

Career Satisfaction Survey

Career Satisfaction Survey

*This survey will take
approximately five minutes to
complete.*

*No identifying information
will be collected.*

*Please return in the
pre-addressed, postage paid
envelope provided.*



**MICHIGAN COLLEGE
OF OPTOMETRY**

Study results will be available

4-1-07 by contacting:

Tatjana Ratzenberger

Email: tratzenberger@yahoo.com

Marianne Moayer

Email: mkmoayer@yahoo.com

Questions or Concerns? Contact:

Dr. Connie Meinholdt

Human Subjects Research Committee

Email: ConnieMeinholdt@ferris.edu

Tel. 231.591.2759

You are being asked to participate in a study
to collect data regarding the personal and professional
career satisfaction of Michigan optometrists.

The results will provide a better understanding of the projected
growth and expansion of the optometric profession.

Thank you for your participation.

1.) Please rate your overall satisfaction with your career in optometry.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied | |

2.) Rank in order, from highest to lowest, how each of the following contribute to your level of career satisfaction.

- Patient Interaction
- Job Flexibility
- Income
- Scope of Practice
- Working Hours
- Other _____

3.) Which of the following best approximates the percentage of your patients that you provide care for without a need to refer?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 95% or greater (refer <5%) | <input type="checkbox"/> 80% to 84% (refer 15-19%) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 90% to 94% (refer 5-9%) | <input type="checkbox"/> 75% to 79% (refer 20-24%) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 85% to 89% (refer 10-14%) | <input type="checkbox"/> 74% or less (refer >25%) |

4.) Rank in order, from most often to least often, which practitioner type you most often refer your patients to, when needed?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Care Physician | <input type="checkbox"/> Retinal Specialist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Optometrist | <input type="checkbox"/> Anterior Segment Specialist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Ophthalmologist | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

5.) Rank in order, from most helpful to least helpful, which of the following would help you better care for your patients.

- More Diagnostic Equipment
- Expanded Scope of Practice
- More Efficient Staff
- Continuing Education
- Third Party Payment
- Other _____

6.) Rank in order, of most important to least important, which of the following areas you would like to see growth and expansion of the optometric profession.

- Increasing Public Awareness of the Optometric Profession
- Insurance Parity
- Expanding the Scope of Practice
- Other _____

7.) What is your current mode of practice?

- Sole Proprietor
- OD/OD Partnership or Group Practice
- OD/MD
- Interdisciplinary
- Other _____
- Government (Military, VA)
- HMO
- Commercial

8.) How many years have you been practicing optometry?

- 1 to 4 years
- 5 to 9 years
- 10 to 14 years
- 15 to 19 years
- 20 to 25 years
- 26 years or more

9.) What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Thank you for completing the survey. We greatly appreciate your participation.

Please return the completed survey in the pre-addressed, postage paid envelope provided.