

Commission on Paraoptometric Certification

2013 Year in Review





COMMITTED

PROUD

CERTIFIED

= GROWTH



Purpose and Summary

With the passage of the new Affordable Care Act, the need for trained and experienced paraoptometric professionals will likely increase. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the healthcare industry will be providing the greatest number of jobs over the next ten years. Medicine is evolving into more of a team approach where doctors and assistants work together to provide all types of care. Is your practice ready to handle the influx of new patients? There is no better time than now to get certified and stay certified.

The Commission on Paraoptometric Certification (CPC) is pleased to report that we have completed another successful year of providing certifications to paraoptometric professionals. The examinations are developed in cooperation with Professional Testing Corporation (PTC) who provides professional organizations of all sizes with quality psychometric services. The CPO, CPOA, and CPOT programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). The NCCA helps to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of the public through the accreditation of a variety of certification programs/organizations that assess professional competency. In order to receive this accreditation, the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification completed an application for each certification demonstrating compliance with the NCCA's Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs, which were the first standards for professional certification programs developed by the industry. NCCA uses a peer review process to: establish accreditation standards; evaluate compliance with the standards; recognize organizations/programs which demonstrate compliance; and serve as a resource on quality certification.

The purpose of this Year-in-Review report is two-fold. First, it assures that the examinations are compliant with NCCA standards and assists the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification in identifying trends, targeting audiences, and ensuring that the examinations are reliable. Second, these metrics are valuable to stakeholders as they identify potential training opportunities that are lacking, personal development needs that are not being met, and identify target demographic audiences for marketing purposes. The information in this report is derived from candidate responses on the examination applications and the stringent review of score reports. All documentation regarding these reports is kept on file for 5 years. Only through extensive task analysis studies can CPC determine the body of knowledge. Task analyses assess how a task is accomplished, including a detailed description of both manual and mental activities, task and element durations, task frequency, task allocation, task complexity, necessary equipment and precautions, and any other unique factors involved in or required for one or more people to perform a given task. The CPC conducts these analyses every three years. In between these studies, test reviews and item performance reviews are conducted annually. Test specifications are updated frequently according to the environmental scan of the optometric practice.



Executive Summary

The Commission on Paraoptometric Certification program continues to offer the only certification available for paraoptometrics and seeks to make this experience valuable and desirable for all interested participants. The CPC Certified population now represents more than 6,000 participants throughout the United States, Canada, and the Armed Forces. Ongoing efforts are in place to continue to improve the quality and integrity of the program. The success of these efforts has been documented through studies and testimonials that confirm the positive perception of the program within the optometric community.

RELIABILITY

VALIDITY

EXPERIENCE

= SUCCESS

Background

The Commission on Paraoptometric Certification, formerly known as the National Council on Paraoptometric Certification, was established in 2000 by the American Optometric Association. This program replaced the National Paraoptometric Registry which was established by the American Optometric Association in 1978.

Certification focuses specifically on the individual and is an indication of current proficiency in a specialized field. Certification is highly valued and provides formal acknowledgement of knowledge and skills in a particular area of practice. A goal of the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification is to develop and maintain a consistent and ongoing process for paraoptometric certification that grants certification to qualified candidates. The marketing goal is to grow the number of certifications by successfully communicating the value of the program. The plan is to identify communication tactics to reach different audiences and promote the virtues of certification.

The paraoptometric certification program consists of three levels of certification. Each level consists of a recommended self-study program, optional review course and written examination. Paraoptometric certification provides a formal declaration of education and skill achievement in the profession of optometric assisting by:

- Recognizing formally those individuals who meet all requirements of the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification of the American Optometric Association
- Encouraging continued professional growth of the paraoptometric
- Establishing and measuring the level of knowledge required for certification of paraoptometrics
- Promoting a standard of requisite knowledge required for certification; thereby assisting the employer, public, and members of the health professions in the assessment of paraoptometrics





In addition to initial recognition, the CPC provides a recertification mechanism to ensure its certificants remain current in their optometric assisting skills and knowledge by way of continuing educational activities. The need for lifelong education is validated and enhanced by information that attributes long-term value to participants in this program. Continuing education and professional development is a critical component of CPC recertification. In emphasizing this, the CPC has a newly established committee that reviews applications from organizations and sponsors offering continuing education opportunities for paraoptometric. This process is comprised of experienced and knowledgeable volunteers that review courses to ensure the programs are quality and that the level of difficulty is appropriate for a certified paraoptometric. Our research indicates the economic, social and personal value of investing in training for personnel is a positive and constructive manner to avoid costly staff turnover. To meet this need the CPC offers an experience that serves as a value and benefit to optometry. These important benefits continue to validate the purpose of the CPC examinations.

COMPETENCY

ASSURANCE

= SATISFIED

Certification is a voluntary process instituted by a nongovernmental agency in which individuals are recognized for advanced knowledge, competence and skill. Certification requires assessment, testing, and evaluation of one's education and/or experience. A certification organization conducts a program to evaluate the competence of optometric assistants. The competent optometric assistant performs work accurately and interacts with other professionals and patients effectively. Competence must be demonstrated and maintained.

Program Overview

The Certified Paraoptometric Examinations are prepared and administered by the CPC with the assistance of Professional Testing Corporation. The purpose of the examinations is to ensure a level of knowledge to perform the functions of a Certified Paraoptometric at each appropriate level. Those who have successfully completed the appropriate examination will be certified with the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification as a Certified Paraoptometric (CPO), Certified Paraoptometric Assistant (CPOA), Certified Paraoptometric Coder (CPOC), or Certified Paraoptometric Technician (CPOT).

The passing score for the all examinations is set at the time each new form is reviewed for currency, appropriateness, and accuracy by an appointed committee responsible for examination development. During the process, this committee meets with a psychometrician who serves as a consultant to the committee to guide deliberations and to help ensure psychometric soundness of the decisions reached.

The primary consideration in this process is to represent the basic body of knowledge required for practice. A second consideration is to maintain the equivalent difficulty level of successive examinations. Based on Standard 4.21 of the AERA, APA, and NCME Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, the passing scores are established so that the test review committee can bring their knowledge and experience to bear in a reasonable way.

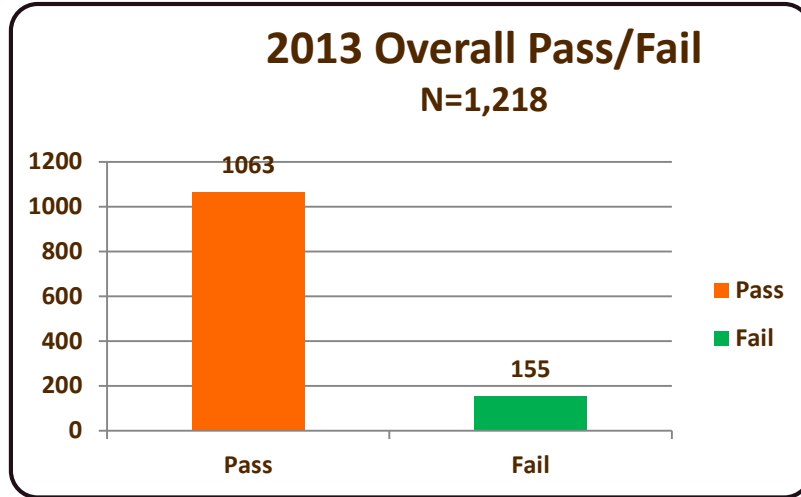


Year-In-Review

All examinations (with the exception of the CPOT Practical) were offered during four two-week testing periods as a computer-based examination. The highlights are as follows:

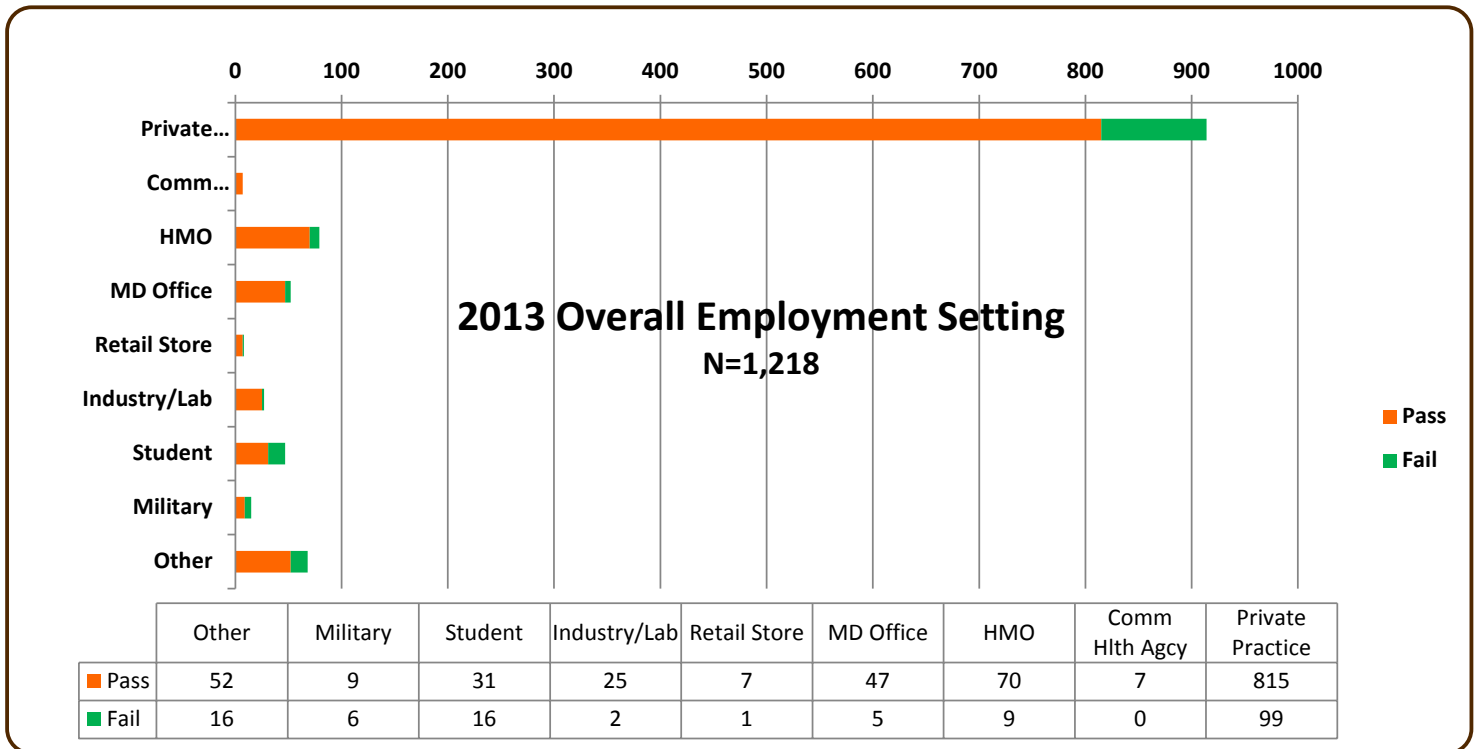
Overall Pass/Fail

In 2013, there were 1,218 candidates for the CPO, CPOA, CPOC, or CPOT examinations. 87% of candidates passed an examination on the first or second attempt.



Practice Setting

Overall, 75% of examination candidates are employed by a private practice. Of the 914 candidates in this category, 89% or 815 passed the CPO, CPOA, CPOC, or CPOT examinations on the first or second attempt.

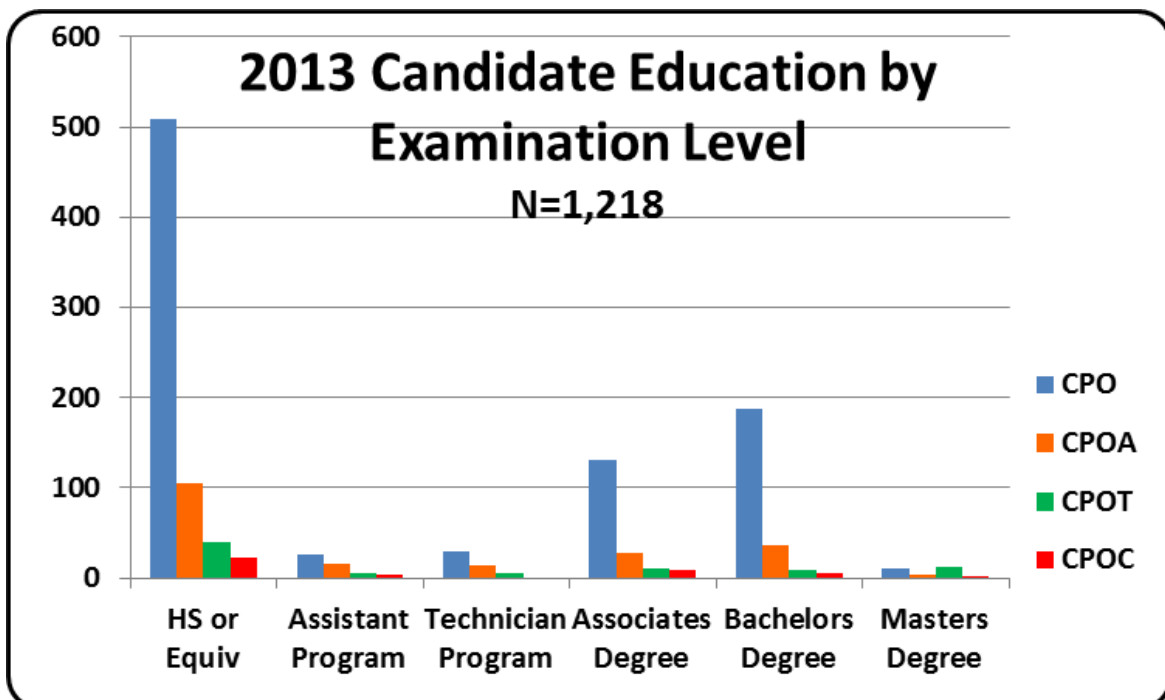
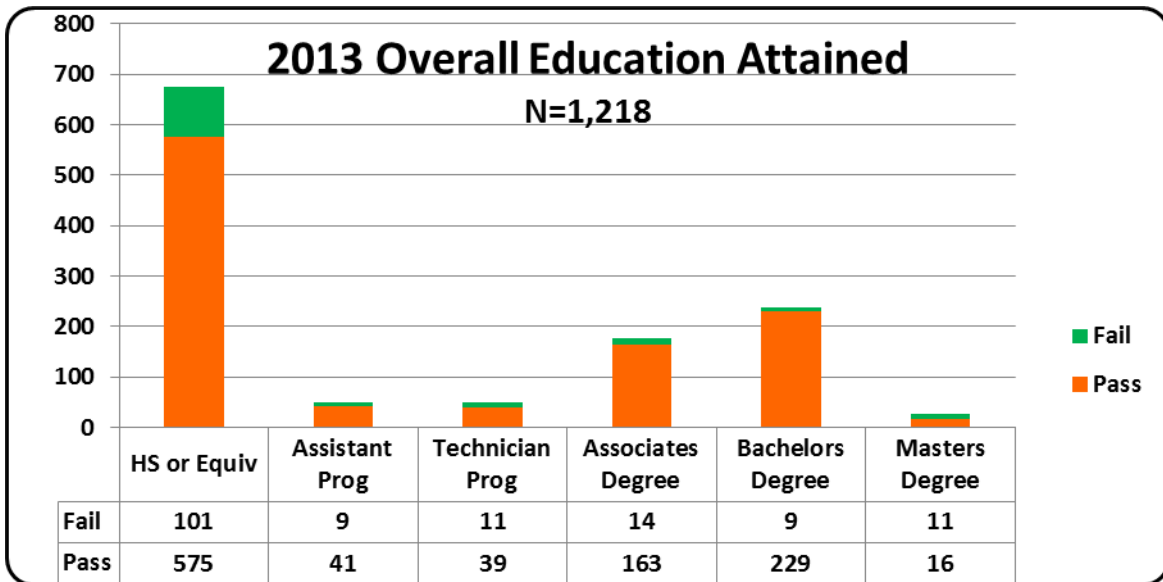


Noted changes from 2012 to 2013 include the 97.5% increase of HMO employed candidates. 1% of candidates are employed in a branch of the military while just over 3% are students or graduates of a CPC or ACOE approved assistant or technician program.

Education Level

The majority of candidates (55%) hold a minimum of a high school diploma or its' equivalent. 36% of candidates hold an Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's degree, and 8% of candidates are enrolled or are graduates of a CPC or ACOE approved assistant or technician program.

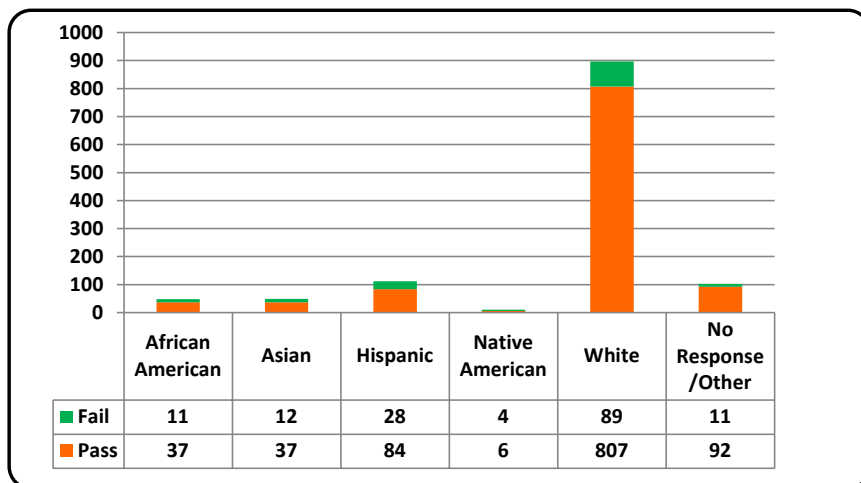
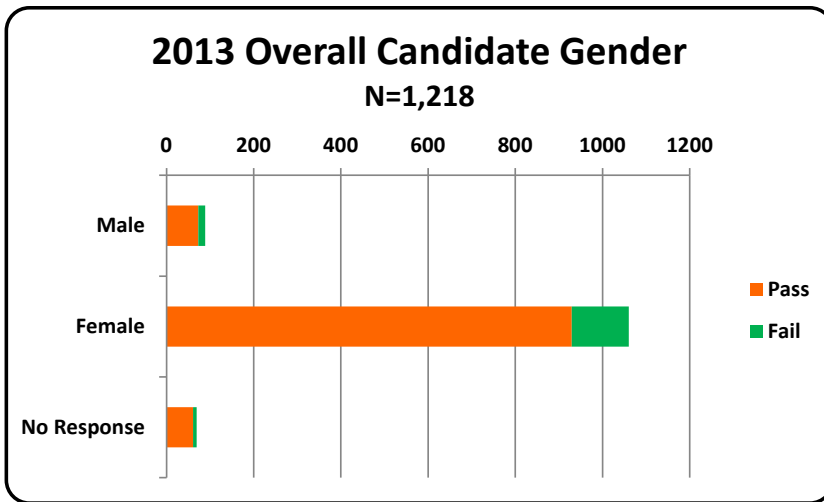
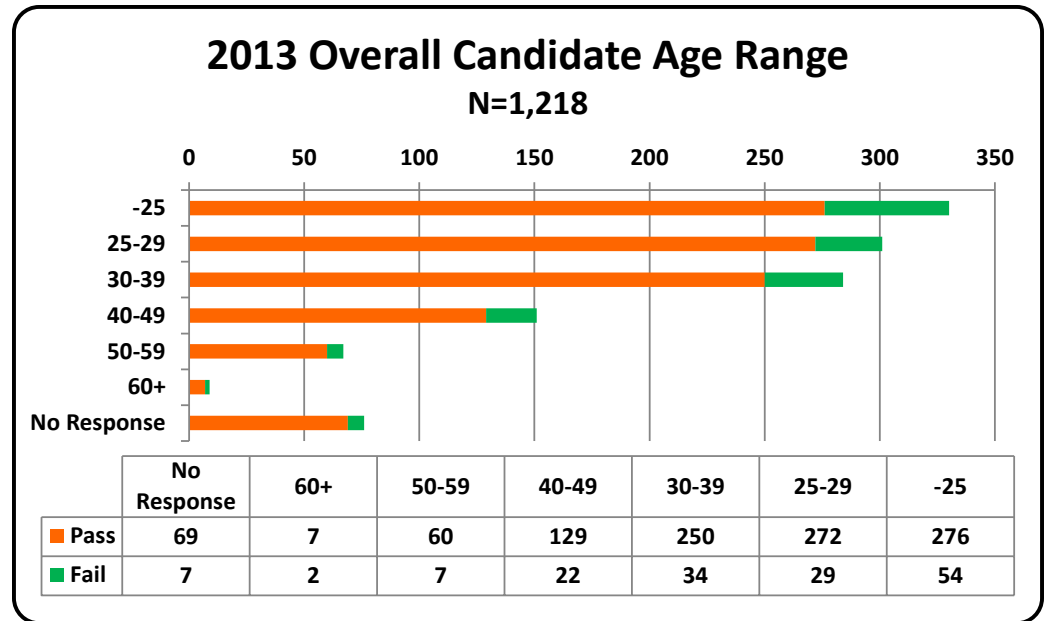
36% of candidates hold or are pursuing a college degree.



Candidate Age, Gender, and Race

The majority of examination candidates are white, female, and between the ages of 25-29. 27% of the candidates are under the age of 25, and 6% are 60 years of age or older. Previous years indicate that the majority of candidates were less than 25 years of age.

87% of examination candidates are female which is consistent with previous years.



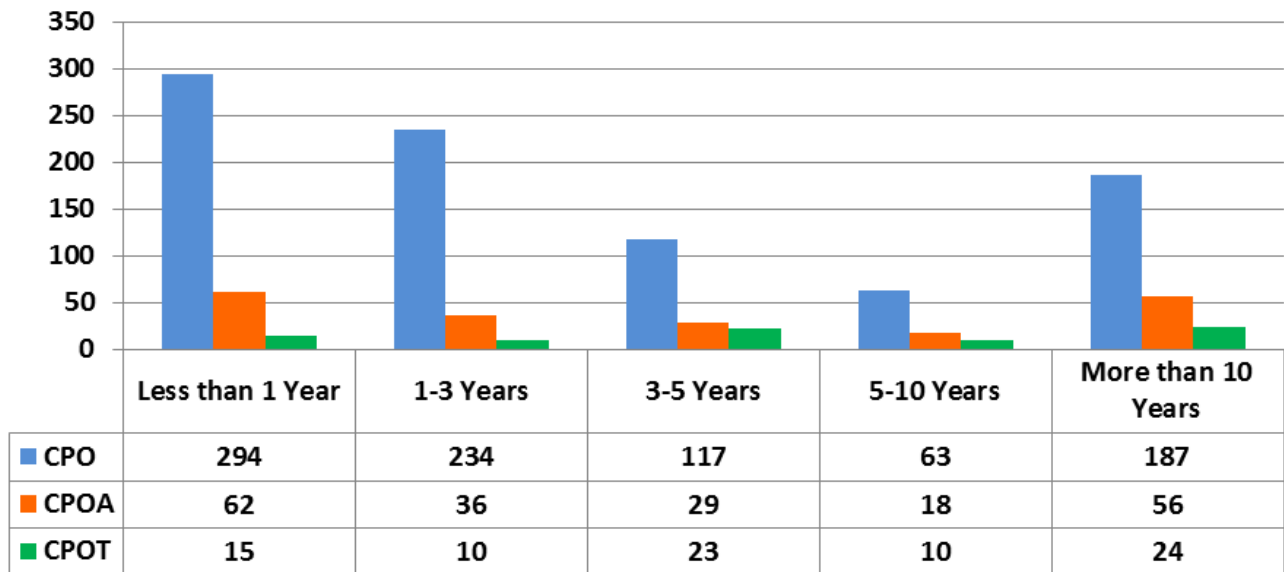
2013 Overall Candidate Race
N=1,218

Candidate Level of Experience

Candidate experience level is relative to the particular examination criteria. For example, a criterion for the CPO examination indicates that candidates must have a minimum of six months experience in the eye care field. The CPOA examination criterion states there are three ways in which one can meet the eligibility requirements, and there are two ways in which one can meet the eligibility requirements to sit for the CPOT examination. And, the CPOC examination requires that candidates have a minimum of two years of experience in coding and billing. The majority (31%) of the combined candidates (excluding CPOC) have less than 1 year of experience.

All candidates for the CPO examination have a minimum of six months experience and 33% have met this criteria by having less than 1 year of experience. Typically, the majority of combined candidates falls into the 3-5 year experience category. Eligibility is verified, particularly for those who did not indicate a response to the number of years experience held to qualify for the CPO examination.

2013 Candidate Level of Experience by Examination Level
(excludes CPOC - N=1,178)



45% of CPOC candidates have more than 5 years of experience.

Candidate State

For the 7th consecutive year, **North Carolina** has produced the greatest number of candidates.



2013 Candidate Resident

State

N=1,218

Highlights Specific to the Certified Paraoptometric (CPO)

The CPO examination is comprised of 100 multiple choice questions and there are two forms of the examination. A minimum score of 75% is required to pass. A total of 895 candidates sat for the CPO examination in 2013; 92 percent passed the examination on the first or second attempt. The annual high and low scores were as follows:

100% - High Score 34% - Low Score

Test Date Results

| Month | Total Candidates | | High Score | Low Score | Avg % Correct | Repeat Candidates | |
|------------------|------------------|------|------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------|------|
| | Pass | Fail | | | | Pass | Fail |
| February | 101 | 6 | 99% | 65% | 88% | 11 | 0 |
| May/June | 273 | 20 | 100% | 50% | 88% | 14 | 3 |
| August/September | 185 | 19 | 100% | 51% | 88% | 13 | 3 |
| November | 262 | 29 | 99% | 34% | 87% | 10 | 5 |

There were 59 individuals who were repeat candidates that attempted the examination a minimum of one time prior. Of the 59 repeat candidates, 49 passed on the most recent attempt while 11 were again unsuccessful.

Subject Matter

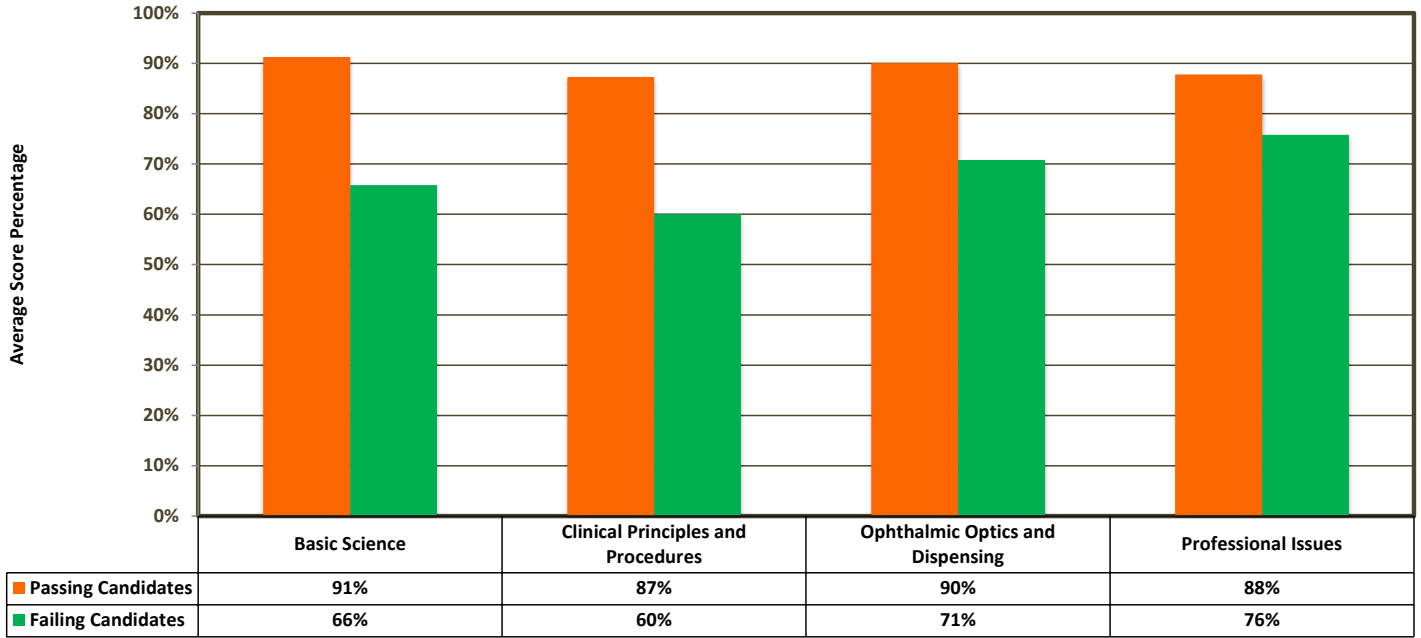
The examination is divided into four main domains as follows:

- I. Basic Science (29%)
- II. Clinical Principles and Procedures (37%)
- III. Ophthalmic Optics and Dispensing (22%)
- IV. Professional Issues (12%)

Within these four content areas is expanded content. Each item (question) on the examination is coded and linked to a particular content area of the study outline (see appropriate candidate handbook for full outline). For example, an item pertaining to soft contact lens would be coded as II. C. 1. When referring to the study outline, that item is appropriately located in the Clinical Principles and Procedures – Contact Lenses – Soft area of the outline.

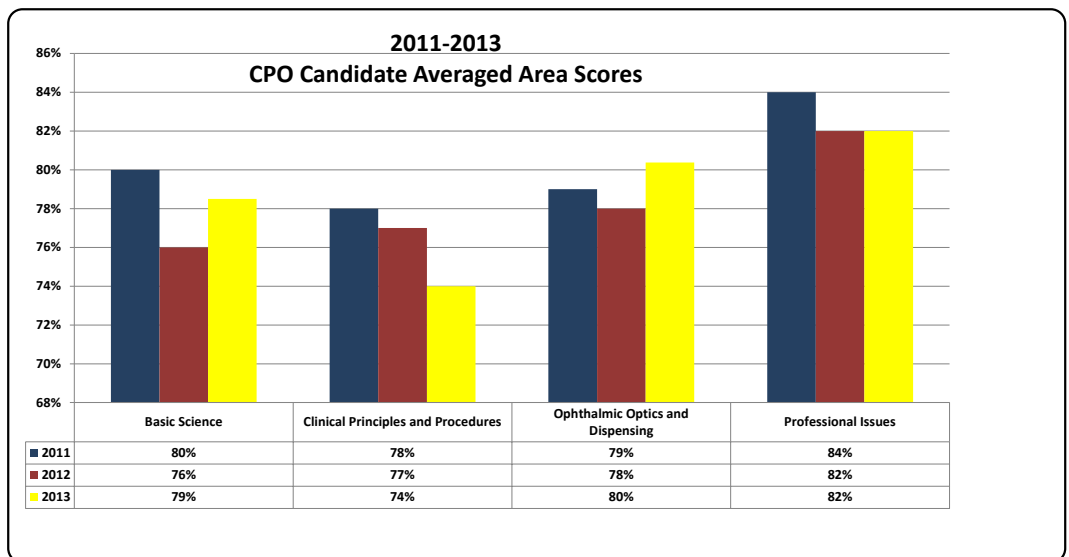
Based on an overall analysis of content area, 8% (74) of the candidates in 2013 failed the examination. Those candidates who failed, scored lowest in the clinical principles and procedures (60%) subject matter area.

2013 Certified Paraoptometric (CPO) Candidate Area Scores by Pass/Fail Status



Comparison of 2011, 2012, and 2013 CPO Candidates Area Scores

Area scores are stable - When comparing content area scores over the past three years, some scores have slightly decreased in 2013.



Highlights Specific to the Certified Paraoptometric Assistant (CPOA)

The CPOA examination includes 200 multiple choice questions and a minimum score of 67.5 percent is required to pass. A total of 201 candidates sat for the CPOA examination in 2013; 80 percent passed the examination on the first or second attempt. The annual high and low scores were as follows:

93% -High Score 49% -Low Score

Test Date Results

| Month | Total Candidates | | High Score | Low Score | Avg % Correct | Repeat Candidates | |
|----------|------------------|------|------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------|------|
| | Pass | Fail | | | | Pass | Fail |
| February | 11 | 0 | 90% | 73% | 78% | 4 | 0 |
| May | 59 | 22 | 93% | 49% | 73% | 3 | 0 |
| August | 30 | 11 | 91% | 56% | 76% | 1 | 4 |
| November | 61 | 7 | 91% | 59% | 79% | 5 | 0 |

Subject Matter

The examination is divided into six main content areas as follows:

- I. Office Operations (13%)
- II. Ophthalmic Optics and Dispensing (20%)
- III. Testing and Procedures (20%)
- IV. Special Procedures (17%)
- V. Refractive Status of the Eye and Binocularity (13%)
- VI. Basic Ocular Anatomy and Physiology (17%)

Within these six content areas are expanded content. Each item (question) on the examination is coded and linked to a particular content area of the study outline (see appropriate candidate handbook for full outline). For example, an item pertaining to HIPAA Regulations would be coded as I. B. 2. When referring to the study outline, that item is appropriately located in the Office Operations-Records Management-Confidential / Safeguards area of the outline.

Based on an overall analysis of content area, 20% (41) of the candidates in 2013 failed the examination. Those candidates who failed scored lowest in the Basic Ocular Anatomy and Physiology (53%) subject matter area.

Comparison of 2011, 2012, and 2013 Candidate Area Scores

For the most part, area scores
Are stable with the exception of
Refractive Status of the Eye and
Binocularity and Ophthalmic
Optics and Dispensing areas.

Highlights Specific to the Certified Paraoptometric Technician (CPOT)

The CPOT examination includes 225 multiple choice questions and a minimum score of 67.5 percent is required to pass. A total of 70 candidates sat for the CPOT examination in 2013; 63 percent passed the examination on the first or second attempt. The annual high and low scores were as follows:

86% -High Score 44% -Low Score

Test Date Results

| Month | Total Candidates | | High Score | Low Score | Avg % Correct | Repeat Candidates | |
|----------|------------------|------|------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------|------|
| | Pass | Fail | | | | Pass | Fail |
| February | 6 | 0 | 86% | 68% | 73% | 0 | 0 |
| May | 18 | 3 | 86% | 56% | 75% | 0 | 0 |
| June | 2 | 1 | 81% | 61% | 70% | 0 | 0 |
| August | 3 | 5 | 77% | 59% | 67% | 0 | 0 |
| November | 15 | 17 | 83% | 44% | 66% | 3 | 2 |

Subject Matter

The examination is divided into six main content areas as follows:

- I. Pre-Testing Procedures (20%)
- II. Clinical Procedures (28%)
- III. Ophthalmic Optics and Dispensing (20%)
- IV. Refractive Status of the Eye and Binocularity (12%)
- V. Anatomy and Physiology (15%)
- VI. Practice Management (5%)

Within these six content areas are expanded content. Each item (question) on the examination is coded and linked to a particular content area of the study outline (see appropriate candidate handbook for full outline). For example, an item pertaining to optical crosses would be coded as III. B. 3. When referring to the study outline, that item is appropriately located in the Ophthalmic Optics and Dispensing – Prescriptions – Optical Crosses area of the outline.

Based on an overall analysis of content area, 37% (26) of the candidates in 2013 failed the examination. Those candidates who failed scored lowest in the Ophthalmic Optics and Dispensing (52%) subject matter area.

Comparison of 2011, 2012, and 2013 Candidate Area Scores

For the most part, area scores are stable with the exception of Pre-Testing Procedures and Ophthalmic Optics and Dispensing subject matter areas.

Based on an overall analysis of content area, 37% (26) of the candidates in 2013 failed the examination. Those candidates who failed scored lowest in the Ophthalmic Optics and Dispensing (52%) subject matter area.

Comparison of 2011, 2012, and 2013 Candidate Area Scores

For the most part, area scores are stable with the exception of Pre-Testing Procedures and Ophthalmic Optics and Dispensing subject matter areas.