Employment of Optometric Staff is derived from the *Survey of Optometric Practice*. The intent of this survey is to gather key information about optometric practice characteristics such as hours worked by optometrists and paraoptometrics, number and frequency of patient visits, income, gross billings, and practice expenses. The 2015 Survey of Optometric Practice: Employment of Optometric Staff report presents statistics and analysis of employment of non-optometric staff in optometry practices in 2014. Data is presented for optometric staff by positions. These include: clinical staff, optical dispensing staff, optical laboratory staff, coding & billing personnel, secretary/receptionist positions, office managers and financial coordinators. This executive summary provides a general overview of survey results for by owner optometrists (includes solo and non-solo owners) and employed optometrists across all practice settings who were asked to report on their 2014 staff employment. The full report, 2015 Survey of Optometric Practice: Employment of Optometric Staff, can be obtained by contacting the American Optometric Association Research and Information Center. Please send requests for this report via email to: ric@aoa.org.

OPTOMETRY PRACTICES & OPTOMETRIC STAFF POSITIONS

The majority of practices (88%) reported employment of optometric staff in 2014, either on a full-time or a part-time basis. Across all practice types, the average number of optometric staff per optometrist is 2.2. For only those practices that employed optometric staff in 2014, the average was 2.5 staff per optometrist. Private practices reported an average of 2.6 staff per optometrist; corporate practices reported 2.3 staff per optometrist. Optometrists who were members of the AOA reported employing, on average, 2.2 staff per optometrist, while non-members employed 2.1 staff per optometrist.

88% of practices employ optometric staff

The most commonly employed optometric staff positions among all practices were secretary/receptionist staff, followed by optical dispensing staff and clinical staff. Sixty-nine percent of responding optometry practices employed secretarial or reception personnel; 68% employed optical dispensing staff. Sixty-one percent of practices employed clinical staff. Financial coordinator positions remained the least employed staff positions across all practice types, as seen in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Optometric Staff Position Employment in Optometric Practices by Percentage](image_url)

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Employment of Optometric Staff

OPTOMETRIC STAFF: CLINICAL

61% of offices employ clinical staff

$16.55 average hourly wage

1.1 clinical staff per optometrist

Optometric staff employed in clinical positions include non-optometrists who perform clinical duties such as obtaining patient histories, pretesting patients, measuring visual acuity, and glaucoma screening. In 2014, 61% of responding optometric practices reported having at least one clinical position on staff, up from 49% in 2013. Most optometric practices in 2014 reported having a full-time clinical staff position (32 hours/week). The average hourly wage for all clinical staff was $16.55. For full-time clinical staff, the average hourly wage reported was $15.88, an 11% increase from $14.29 in 2013. In terms of employment numbers, the average number of clinical staff employed in all practices in 2014 was 1.1 staff per optometrist.

OPTOMETRIC STAFF: OPTICAL DISPENSING

68% of offices employ optical dispensing staff

$18.91 average hourly wage

0.9 optical dispensing staff per optometrist

Optometric staff employed in optical dispensing positions play an essential part in ensuring that the optometrist’s recommendations and specifications are met by explaining the many lens and coating options available for improving visual comfort and/or adding protection and helping patients make the best choices in frames and lenses for their prescriptions, lifestyles and overall needs. In 2014, 68% of responding optometric practices reported having at least one optical dispensing position on staff. Most optometric practices reported having full-time optical dispensing positions (32 hours/week). The average hourly salary for all optical dispensing staff was $18.91, a decrease of 8.3% from 2013. For full-time clinical staff, the average hourly salary was $18.62, down 12% from $21.27 in 2013. In terms of employment numbers, the average number of optical dispensing staff employed in all practices in 2014 was 0.9 staff per optometrist.

OPTOMETRIC STAFF: OPTICAL LABORATORY

25% of offices employ optical laboratory staff

$20.24 average hourly wage

0.2 optical laboratory staff per optometrist

Optical laboratory staff may perform duties such as frame repairs, lens finishing, surfacing and coating. Optical laboratory positions were the second least employed staff position in optometry practices in 2014; a majority of responding practices (75%) did not employ this position at all. Of the practices that did employ optical laboratory staff, 22% had at least one optical laboratory staff position. This position was more likely to be full-time (32 hours/week). In 2014, the average hourly salary for all optical laboratory staff was $20.24. For full-time optical dispensing staff, the average hourly salary was $19.34, an increase of 8.5% from $17.83 in 2013. In terms of employment numbers, the average number of optical laboratory staff employed in all practices in 2014 was 0.2 staff per optometrist.
OPTOMETRIC STAFF: ADMINISTRATION & GENERAL OFFICE

Optometric staff employed in administration and general office positions provide a variety of services, including coding & billing, secretarial/reception service, general office management and financial coordinators.

CODING & BILLING

In 2014, fifty-one percent of all responding optometric practices reported employing coding & billing staff. Of these, 46% employed at least one or more full-time coding & billing staff positions (32 hours/week). The average hourly wage for all coding & billing staff was $18.65. For full-time coding & billing staff, the average hourly wage reported was $19.36, an increase of 24% from $15.65 in 2013. In terms of employment numbers, the average number of coding & billing staff employed in all practices in 2014 was 0.4 staff per optometrist.

FINANCIAL COORDINATOR

The financial coordinator position continues to be the least employed optometric administrative position. Only 21% of all responding optometric practices reported employing a financial coordinator. In terms of employment numbers, the average number of financial coordinator staff employed in all practices in 2014 was 0.1 staff per optometrist.

OFFICE MANAGER

In 2014, forty-five percent of all responding optometric practices reported employing a dedicated office manager. Of these, 37% employed at least one or more full-time office manager positions (32 hours/week). The average hourly wage for all office managers was $22.15. In terms of employment numbers, the average number of office managers employed in all practices in 2014 was 0.3 staff per optometrist.

SECRETARY/RECEPTIONIST

The secretary/receptionist position was the most commonly reported optometric staff position in 2014. The majority of optometric practices (69%) reported employing a secretary/receptionist staff position. Of these, 52% employed at least one or more secretary/receptionist positions full-time (32 hours/week). The average hourly wage for all secretary/receptionist staff was $15.45. In terms of employment numbers, the average number of office managers employed in all practices in 2014 was 0.7 staff per optometrist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Average Hourly Wage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary/Receptionist</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>$15.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding &amp; Billing</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>$18.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Manager</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>$22.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Coordinator</td>
<td>21%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff per Optometrist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary/Receptionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding &amp; Billing Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Coordinators</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
OPTOMETRIC STAFF POSITIONS BY U.S. CENSUS REGION & CPC CERTIFICATION

Optometry practices in the West employed the most optometric staff in 2014 with an average of 2.4 staff per optometrist. The Midwest employed the second highest number of optometric staff with an average of 2.3 staff per optometrist. Practices in the Northeast employed the fewest staff, averaging 1.6 staff per optometrist.

Figure 2: Optometric Staff Employment and CPC Certification by U.S. Census Region, 2014

Optometrists in the Northeast and West reported the highest percentage of AOA paraoptometric section members among their staff at 27% each. The Northeast reported the highest percentage of paraoptometrics certified by the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification (CPC) (12%) in 2014. By staff position, optical dispensing staff were reported as the highest AOA Paraoptometric membership at 29%. The lowest membership (13%) was administrative/general office staff. The highest reported percentage of CPC certification (39%) was for clinical staff. The lowest certification percentage was for administrative/general office staff at 2%. Of responding optometrists, twenty percent believe that CPC certified staff improve patient care. Nineteen percent believe that CPC certified employees should receive higher salaries, and a further 18% believe that CPC certified staff improve patient education.

About the 2015 Survey of Optometric Practice:

The 2015 Survey of Optometric Practice was conducted by the American Optometric Association (AOA) Research and Information Center in July 2015. Results from the survey are being released in three volumes: 1) Income from Optometry, 2) Employment of Optometric Staff, and 3) Practicing Optometrists and their Patients. The Employment of Optometric Staff Detailed Analysis Report focuses on employment of non-optometrist staff in optometry practices and uses limited narrative with cross tabulation for further analysis.

Several limitations of this study should be noted: (1) optometrists were invited to complete a paper survey which was distributed by the U.S. Postal Service. Incorrect addresses or delays in delivering the survey instrument may have excluded doctors from participating in, or receiving, the survey. (2) Optometrists who chose to participate in this survey were self-selected, which may mean that the survey attracted responses from optometrists whose practices were doing exceptionally well.

For questions about this or other surveys conducted by the AOA, please contact the Research & Information Center at ric@aoa.org.