



The South East

The latest part of the Optician salary survey looks at the South East region

The South East region includes counties like Surrey, Sussex, Kent and Oxfordshire but is dominated in economic terms by London. It is hard to overemphasise the effect of the UK's capital with a large proportion of the population commuting to the city for work. With the attractions of London so close on hand, what does the South East offer to optical professionals in terms of salary and benefits?

The survey found that the average optical professional's salary in the South East is £37,673. This is the highest of any region and is well above the average salary across the country of £35,367. Being able to offer the highest level of salary is a big boost for any recruiters or practice owners in the South East area.

People working in the South East are also fortunate that, in order to earn their higher salaries, they actually work fewer hours than any other region. The average working week for optical professionals in the South East is 33 hours, which compares favourably to a 34-hour working week in nearby London and 37 hours (the highest in the country) in the North.

Fringe benefits

In addition to salary, many practices offer benefits to staff. The most commonly received benefit in the South East region is the payment of professional fees by employers, which is enjoyed by 44 per cent of the respondents, followed by staff discount (43 per cent) and contributory pension (35 per cent). Thirty per cent of respondents in the South East

did not receive any of the benefits listed, which compares to 24 per cent across the whole country.

Asked which benefits are most important when considering a new job, respondents in the South East identify professional fees as most important, with 44 per cent considering this very important. Other sought-after benefits include training course (41 per cent) and staff discount (34 per cent).

When searching for a new job, 48 per cent of respondents in the South East found one within a month of beginning their search. Thirty-two per cent had never changed employer and only 4 per cent took over six months to find a new job.

The most important factor in choosing a new job is location; 71 per cent said that this was very important. Other significant factors are salary, which was identified by 68 per cent as very important, and job description, which was highlighted as very important or fairly important by 71 per cent.

The survey spoke to 102 people from the South East area, of whom 59 per cent work full time. This is the lowest amount of any area covered by the survey and compares to an overall average of 64 per cent. The remaining 41 per cent work fewer than five full days per week.

Over half the respondents from the South East said they are qualified as optometrists, with 33 per cent as dispensing opticians and 15 per cent as contact lens opticians.

Half the respondents work for independent practices, with 25 per cent working for multiples.

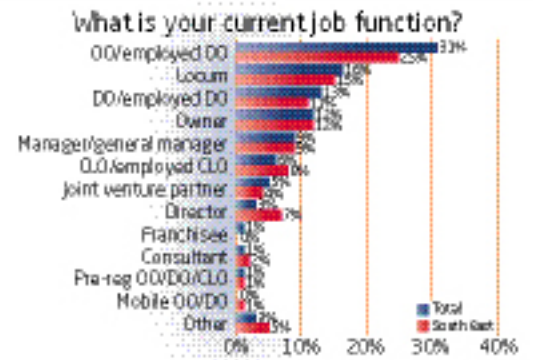


Figure 1 What is your current job function?



Figure 2 What type of organisation do you work for?

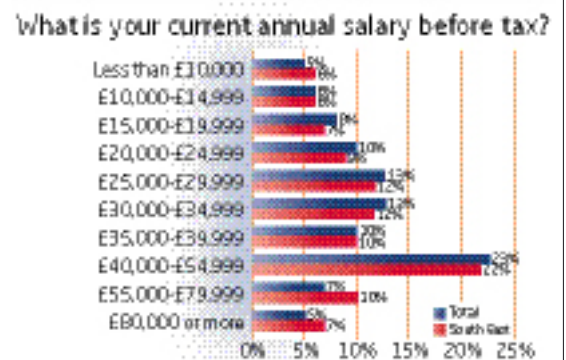


Figure 3 In which of the following bands is your current annual salary before tax? (excluding all benefits such as car, bonus etc)



Figure 4 On average how many hours do you work per week? (excluding lunch breaks)