

# INTERNATIONAL CONTACT LENS PRESCRIBING IN 2016

Our 16th report in *Contact Lens Spectrum* outlines the latest trends in contact lens prescribing around the world.

PHILIP B. MORGAN, PHD, MCOPTOM; CRAIG A. WOODS, PHD, MCOPTOM, DIPCLP; IOANNIS G. TRANOUDIS, DO, MSC, PHD; MAGNE HELLAND, BSC, MSCOPTOM; NATHAN EFRON, AC, DSC (DIPCLRT); LYNDON JONES, PHD, FCOPTOM, DIPCLP, DIPORTH; MARCO VAN BEUSEKOM, BOPTOM; CHRISTINA N. GRUPCHEVA, MD, PHD, FEBO FICO (HON); DEBORAH JONES, BSC, FCOPTOM, DIPCLP; MARION BEELER-KAUPKE, DIPL. ING. (FH) AUGENOPTIK; POLO QI; KAH-OOI TAN, BOPTOM (HONS), PHD, MBA; JITKA KRASNANSKA, PHD; HEIKO PULT, MSC, PHD; OLE RAVN, MSCOPTOM; JACINTO SANTODOMINGO-RUBIDO, OD(EC), MSC, PHD, MCOPTOM; MIHÁLY VÉGH, PHD, FEBO; CHI SHING FAN, PHD; NIR ERDINEST, BOPTOM, PHD; ALI REZA JAFARI, BSC, MSC OPTOMETRY; GIANCARLO MONTANI, DIPOPTOM; MOTOZUMI ITOI, MD, PHD; BYOUNG SUN CHU, MOPTOM, PHD; JOLANTA BENDORIENE, MD, PHD; VERONICA ZIZIUCHIN; EEF VAN DER WORP, BSC, PHD; WANDA LAM, OD, BSC, PGCERT CLINED; JEANETTE ROMUALDEZ-OO, OD; CARMEN ABESAMIS-DICHOSO, OD, MAT; JOSÉ MANUEL GONZÁLEZ-MÉIJOME, OD, PHD; VADIM BELOUSOV; PETER GIEROW, PHD; MIRNA STABUC SILIH, MD, PHD, FEBO; JOHN HSIAO, BA, OD; & JASON J. NICHOLS, OD, MPH, PHD

**E**very year since 2001, we have reported on the nature of contact lens markets around the world by collecting fitting information from optometrists, ophthalmologists, and opticians at the time of contact lens prescribing. The database of prospectively collected details of 335,000 lens fits is a powerful bank of clinical information, reflecting changes in both available lens types, as well as practitioner attitudes, since the turn of the century. In this article, we present our report for 2016, which covers 20,000 contact lens fits in 33 markets.

A strength of our work is its consistent methodology, which allows for meaningful year-on-year comparisons. In 2016, as previously, the study authors each organized survey form distribution to qualified practitioners in their country or region. Each form was then completed to provide generic information about the first 10 patients fit with lenses after receipt. Generic patient details were captured as well as lens material, design, replacement, and wearing modality information; weekly wearing frequency; and care system type. Each fit was weighted to reflect activity of each practitioner. All study data were processed at the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom and the University of Waterloo in Canada.

## CONTACT LENS WEARER DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1 provides the main demographic information collected in the survey. The average age of the patients

at fitting was 31.5 years, although there is great variation in this measurement. Some markets in northern Europe, in addition to Australia and New Zealand, report a mean age at fitting of close to 40 years. This signifies the maturity of the contact lens market in these countries. On the other hand, some emerging markets in eastern Europe, as well as Iran and Korea, report average fitting ages between 25 and 27 years.

Less variation is seen in terms of gender distribution in lens fits. Overall, 65% of fits were to females, ranging from 49% in Greece to 90% in Korea. Thirty percent of lenses were prescribed as “new” fits, indicating that most patients presenting for contact lens fitting are existing wearers. Only 12% of lenses were prescribed for part-time use. These values are in line with recent years.

## GP LENSES

Overall, standard GP lenses accounted for 7% of all lens fits, with a further 2% of fits for orthokeratology (Table 2), a slight decrease from 2015. Orthokeratology now represents 10% or more of all lens fits in Switzerland, Hong Kong, and the Netherlands and also accounts for high proportions of GP lens fits in Spain, Italy, and Taiwan (Table 3).

In addition to orthokeratology lenses, scleral lenses have seen an increase in use over recent years. Although the absolute numbers of such lenses are relatively small worldwide, there is a clear increase in the use of these lenses over the past decade or more (Figure 1).

Overall, high-Dk lenses ( $\geq 90$  Dk) account for more than half of GPs prescribed. Spherical designs account for about 50% of fits, with only modest amounts of toric, multifocal, and monovision lenses prescribed. Half of GP lenses are prescribed on a planned replacement basis.

**SOFT LENSES**

Soft lenses account for 91% of new fits and refits, slightly up from last year (Table 4). Silicone hydrogel materials were prescribed to 55% of soft lens patients. It seems that the use of these materials is settling down at about this level after a significant increase during the first decade after those materials entered the market.

It is interesting to consider the use of these higher-oxygen materials in daily disposable versus reusable lenses (Figure 2). Silicone hydrogels are prescribed much more widely for reusable lenses (in 28 of the 33 countries studied) than for daily disposable use. The reason for this is

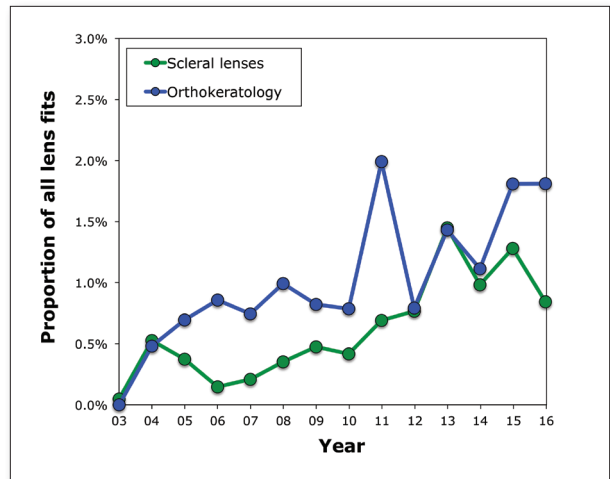


Figure 1. Increase in the use of scleral and orthokeratology lenses.

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR THE 33 COUNTRIES SURVEYED**

TABLE 1

Country	Total fits	Mean ( $\pm$ SD) age	% female	% new fits	% part time ( $\leq 3$ days)
Australia (AU)	353	36.3 $\pm$ 16.5	61%	42%	28%
Belgium (BE)	214	34.2 $\pm$ 13.6	60%	41%	12%
Bulgaria (BG)	560	26.9 $\pm$ 8.7	71%	59%	10%
Canada (CA)	783	36.4 $\pm$ 15.9	67%	27%	24%
Switzerland (CH)	167	37.3 $\pm$ 16.8	65%	41%	13%
China (CN)	248	25.5 $\pm$ 8.5	68%	31%	19%
Czech Republic (CZ)	247	31.4 $\pm$ 13.7	68%	38%	25%
Germany (DE)	220	37.5 $\pm$ 14.7	58%	37%	10%
Denmark (DK)	407	38.4 $\pm$ 15.9	63%	39%	0%
Spain (ES)	770	34.0 $\pm$ 15.1	65%	38%	10%
Greece (GR)	452	29.6 $\pm$ 9.8	49%	23%	10%
Hong Kong (HK)	266	29.1 $\pm$ 14.7	70%	14%	9%
Hungary (HU)	275	30.8 $\pm$ 12.7	65%	55%	12%
Indonesia (ID)	520	28.0 $\pm$ 9.0	77%	37%	19%
Israel (IL)	649	30.2 $\pm$ 11.6	66%	23%	9%
Iran (IR)	765	26.3 $\pm$ 4.6	70%	49%	34%
Italy (IT)	550	31.8 $\pm$ 14.2	59%	54%	7%
Japan (JP)	4115	30.0 $\pm$ 15.1	67%	44%	18%
Korea (KR)	320	27.1 $\pm$ 8.1	90%	6%	36%
Lithuania (LT)	691	29.0 $\pm$ 10.5	65%	22%	20%
Moldova (MD)	150	25.5 $\pm$ 10.0	68%	78%	4%
Netherlands (NL)	922	37.6 $\pm$ 17.1	62%	26%	5%
Norway (NO)	654	36.2 $\pm$ 16.7	59%	33%	12%
New Zealand (NZ)	446	39.5 $\pm$ 17.5	63%	28%	18%
Philippines (PH)	2259	28.4 $\pm$ 8.8	70%	22%	3%
Portugal (PT)	172	31.1 $\pm$ 13.1	65%	64%	18%
Russia (RU)	671	27.2 $\pm$ 9.9	63%	30%	6%
Sweden (SE)	351	38.3 $\pm$ 15.0	63%	23%	9%
Slovenia (SI)	137	38.0 $\pm$ 15.4	57%	34%	5%
Thailand (TH)	330	29.6 $\pm$ 8.6	58%	36%	1%
Taiwan (TW)	647	30.1 $\pm$ 10.9	75%	6%	0%
United Kingdom (UK)	603	37.9 $\pm$ 16.7	61%	45%	23%
United States (US)	138	35.3 $\pm$ 16.9	61%	32%	3%
Overall	20052	31.5 $\pm$ 13.9	65%	30%	12%

likely to be a combination of cost, the greater range of reusable silicone hydrogel brands compared with daily disposable silicone hydrogels, and a perception that the need for this material type is greater when lenses are reused rather than when they are discarded each day.

The use of daily disposables is extremely varied. In 10 countries, they account for more than half of all soft lenses prescribed; in some others, their use is in the single digits (Figure 3). Worldwide, the use of monthly replaced lenses (42%) was slightly greater compared to that of daily disposables (38%).

A key finding in 2016 was the continued increase in the prescribing of multifocal and monovision soft lenses in some markets. For example, these designs now account for more than 30% of soft lens fits in Canada, Switzerland, and Germany. Such popularity, in addition

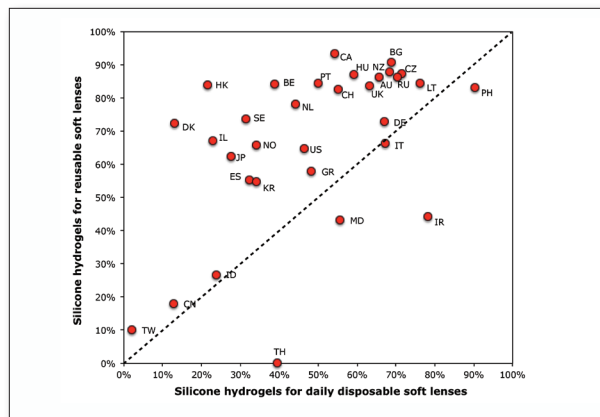


Figure 2. Soft lens materials for daily disposable and reusable lenses.

BREAKDOWN OF ALL LENS FITS INTO SEVEN KEY CATEGORIES OF LENSES

TABLE 2

Country	Rigid (non OK)	OK	DD hydrogel	DD SiHy	Other DW hydrogel	Other DW SiHy	Soft EW
AU	4%	2%	19%	36%	5%	31%	4%
BE	7%	0%	9%	5%	12%	66%	1%
BG	11%	0%	2%	4%	7%	69%	7%
CA	5%	1%	18%	22%	3%	48%	3%
CH	22%	10%	10%	12%	8%	36%	2%
CN	1%	1%	26%	4%	39%	9%	20%
CZ	0%	0%	9%	23%	7%	49%	11%
DE	50%	3%	4%	9%	9%	24%	0%
DK	9%	1%	45%	7%	9%	23%	6%
ES	6%	7%	10%	5%	31%	39%	2%
GR	1%	0%	9%	8%	34%	47%	1%
HK	2%	15%	46%	13%	4%	19%	2%
HU	2%	0%	12%	17%	9%	60%	1%
ID	2%	0%	36%	11%	36%	13%	2%
IL	3%	0%	38%	11%	16%	32%	0%
IR	6%	0%	0%	1%	42%	33%	16%
IT	12%	6%	15%	32%	12%	23%	0%
JP	15%	0%	33%	13%	15%	24%	0%
KR	1%	0%	31%	16%	23%	28%	0%
LT	2%	0%	7%	22%	7%	36%	25%
MD	3%	8%	2%	3%	42%	32%	9%
NL	16%	10%	6%	5%	12%	44%	6%
NO	8%	2%	33%	17%	11%	20%	9%
NZ	3%	1%	17%	36%	6%	37%	2%
PH	2%	0%	0%	3%	10%	52%	32%
PT	2%	0%	17%	17%	10%	53%	0%
RU	0%	0%	8%	19%	9%	58%	6%
SE	7%	2%	26%	12%	12%	33%	7%
SI	64%	0%	3%	5%	1%	27%	0%
TH	0%	0%	2%	1%	97%	0%	0%
TW	4%	3%	51%	1%	36%	4%	0%
UK	12%	1%	18%	32%	6%	29%	2%
US	6%	0%	8%	7%	25%	46%	8%
Overall	7%	2%	19%	12%	18%	33%	9%

SEE TABLE 1 for country abbreviations. OK = ortho-k DD = daily disposable DW = daily wear EW = extended wear

to toric lens prescribing, pushes spherical lenses down to less than 40% of fits in many markets. When considering presbyopes, multifocals are now the preferred option over monovision. There is still considerable room for growth in this sector, however, as only half of presbyopes overall receive a multifocal or monovision lens option. **CLS**

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**Professor Morgan** is director of Eurolens Research at The University of Manchester, United Kingdom. **Professor Woods** is Head of Clinical Partnerships in the School of Medicine (Optometry) at the University of Deakin, Australia. **Dr. Tranoudis** is senior director, Professional Affairs

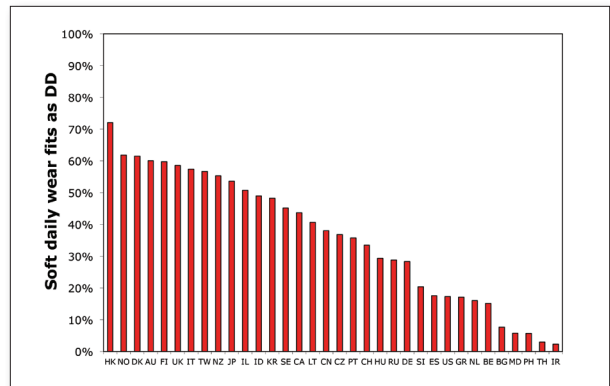


Figure 3. Daily disposable prescribing in 2016.

Europe Middle East Africa & Latin America, Johnson & Johnson Vision Care. **Magne Helland** is an associate professor at the Department of Optometry and Visual Science, University College of Southeast Norway, Kongsberg, Norway. **Professor Efron** is emeritus professor from the School of Optometry and Vision Science, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. **Dr. Jones** is director of the Centre for Contact Lens Research at the University of Waterloo, Canada. **Marco van Beusekom** is Professional Affairs Manager Benelux, Johnson & Johnson Vision Care. **Dr. Grupcheva** is a professor and head of Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science and Vice Rector for Innovations and Translational Research at the Medical University-Varna, Bulgaria. **Deborah Jones** is a clinical professor at the School of Optometry and Vision Science, University of Waterloo,

**DETAILED INFORMATION FOR ALL PRESCRIBED GP LENSES ONLY FOR MARKETS REPORTING > 35 GP LENS FITS**

TABLE 3

MATERIALS DESIGN

	BG	CH	DE	DK	ES	HK	IR	IT	JP	NL	NO	NZ	SI	TW	UK	Overall
Rigid lenses for new fits	8%	28%	54%	16%	16%	17%	3%	16%	7%	32%	12%	5%	44%	30%	10%	9%
Rigid lenses for refits	21%	34%	53%	6%	14%	17%	9%	22%	22%	24%	10%	16%	76%	6%	15%	9%
Low-Dk (<40)	0%	6%	24%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%	11%	6%	17%	1%	0%	0%	21%	10%
Mid-Dk (40-90)	25%	27%	51%	42%	26%	12%	6%	27%	28%	39%	17%	13%	17%	62%	15%	32%
High-Dk (>90)	75%	68%	26%	57%	72%	88%	94%	72%	61%	55%	66%	87%	83%	38%	65%	58%
Sphere	52%	24%	40%	37%	27%	8%	27%	19%	81%	22%	51%	69%	50%	62%	47%	47%
Toric	41%	19%	18%	29%	9%	2%	0%	11%	2%	15%	10%	4%	45%	0%	7%	11%
Multifocal/monovision	7%	14%	7%	14%	5%	2%	7%	6%	11%	18%	8%	6%	1%	0%	9%	11%
Ortho-k	0%	30%	6%	11%	54%	86%	0%	32%	1%	38%	22%	22%	0%	38%	9%	19%
Anti-myopia	0%	13%	11%	5%	1%	0%	0%	6%	0%	3%	7%	0%	2%	0%	0%	3%
Other	0%	0%	17%	4%	5%	1%	66%	26%	6%	5%	2%	0%	2%	0%	28%	9%
Planned replacement	100%	68%	35%	84%	62%	99%	59%	54%	13%	55%	76%	11%	85%	62%	76%	50%
New fits into EW	20%	49%	19%	0%	23%	100%	0%	0%	0%	44%	27%	0%	26%	50%	0%	21%
Refits into EW	17%	18%	0%	3%	14%	22%	0%	0%	0%	28%	5%	4%	0%	34%	4%	9%

SEE TABLE 1 for country abbreviations. **EW** = extended wear

Canada. **Marion Beeler-Kaupke**, Schweizerischer Berufsverband für Augenoptik und Optometrie SBAO, Switzerland. **Polo Qi** is chairman of the Education Committee, China Optometric and Optical Association. **Dr. Tan** is CEO of Brien Holden Vision Institute, China. **Dr. Krasnanska** is with the Czech Association of Contactology, Prague, Czech Republic. **Dr. Pult** is the owner of Optometry and Vision Research in Weinheim, Germany. **Ole Ravn** is with the Danish College of Optometry and Visual Science, Randers, Denmark. **Dr. Santodomingo-Rubido** is Clinical Affairs Manager & Senior Research Scientist, Menicon Co., Ltd. **Dr. Végh** is an associate professor in the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary; professor in the School of Optometry at Semmelweis University, Budapest; and head of the Hungarian Contactologic Society. **Dr. Fan** is Professional Services Director for CooperVision Asia Pacific. **Dr. Erdinest** is with Hadassah Hebrew University Medical Center, Jerusalem. **Ali Reza Jafari** is a contact lens researcher at the Basir Eye Health Research Center in Tehran, Iran. **Giancarlo Montani** works at the University of Salento, Lecce, Italy. **Dr. Itoi** is an associate professor in the Department of Ophthalmology at the Juntendo University,

Tokyo. **Dr. Chu** is in the Department of Optometry & Vision Science at the Catholic University of Daegu, Korea. **Dr. Bendoriene** works at the Siauliai University, Lithuania. **Veronica Ziziuchin** is a resident at Nicolae Testemițanu State University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Chișinău, Moldova. **Dr. van der Worp** is with the Eye Research Institute, Maastricht, the Netherlands. **Dr. Lam** works in the School of Optometry and Vision Science at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. **Dr. Romualdez-Oo** is based in Manila, Philippines. **Dr. Abesamis-Dichoso** is based in Manila, Philippines. **Dr. González-Méijome** is with the Clinical and Experimental Optometry Research Laboratory at University of Minho, Portugal. **Vadim Belousov** is editor of the *Journal of Optometry*, Moscow. **Dr. Gierow** is a professor in the department of Medicine and Optometry at Linnaeus University, Kalmar, Sweden. **Dr. Silih** is assistant professor at the Eye Hospital, University Medical Centre, Ljubljana, Slovenia. **Dr. Hsiao** is an associate professor in the Department of Optometry at Chung Shan Medical University, Taichung, Taiwan. **Dr. Nichols** is an assistant vice president for industry research development and professor at UAB, editor-in-chief of *Contact Lens Spectrum*, and editor of *Contact Lenses Today*.

## DETAILED INFORMATION FOR ALL PRESCRIBED SOFT LENSES FOR MARKETS REPORTING >100 SOFT LENS FITS

	AU	BE	BG	CA	CH	CN	CZ	DE	DK	ES	GR	HK	HU	ID	IL
Soft lenses for new fits	95%	94%	92%	98%	72%	97%	100%	46%	84%	84%	100%	83%	99%	98%	95%
Soft lenses for refits	94%	92%	79%	93%	66%	99%	100%	47%	94%	86%	99%	83%	97%	97%	98%
Low water content (<40%)	8%	7%	3%	1%	0%	16%	0%	0%	1%	15%	0%	32%	2%	2%	0%
Mid water content (40-60%)	8%	5%	2%	11%	11%	15%	9%	14%	23%	8%	4%	5%	10%	9%	3%
High water content (>60%)	10%	10%	6%	12%	16%	53%	9%	13%	41%	25%	40%	24%	9%	64%	52%
Silicone hydrogel	74%	77%	89%	76%	73%	16%	81%	72%	36%	51%	56%	39%	79%	25%	45%
Sphere	52%	50%	85%	38%	35%	72%	62%	31%	34%	46%	62%	37%	48%	74%	50%
Toric	22%	32%	12%	31%	25%	11%	23%	35%	36%	33%	29%	34%	35%	15%	41%
Cosmetic tint	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	16%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%	0%	12%	4%
Multifocal/monovision	23%	18%	2%	30%	40%	1%	14%	34%	28%	19%	8%	17%	17%	0%	5%
Anti-myopia	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%
Other	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Daily	60%	15%	8%	44%	34%	39%	37%	27%	61%	18%	17%	72%	29%	49%	51%
1-2 weekly	6%	4%	3%	12%	16%	12%	20%	10%	7%	2%	25%	3%	8%	9%	19%
Monthly	31%	79%	80%	44%	43%	32%	42%	48%	29%	71%	57%	24%	62%	26%	29%
3-6 monthly	2%	1%	9%	0%	3%	5%	0%	3%	2%	5%	0%	1%	0%	15%	0%
Annually	1%	0%	0%	0%	4%	11%	1%	9%	1%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Unplanned	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
New fits into EW	3%	2%	7%	1%	0%	16%	7%	0%	14%	1%	0%	2%	0%	4%	0%
Refits into EW	6%	0%	9%	5%	5%	23%	13%	1%	3%	3%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%
EW with silicone hydrogels	100%	100%	100%	88%	100%	24%	100%	100%	90%	30%	80%	70%	68%	39%	40%
MPS	91%	82%	100%	81%	51%	98%	87%	43%	91%	88%	99%	72%	97%	100%	92%
Presbyopes multi/mono	44%/19%	59%/0%	42%/4%	60%/12%	79%/8%	0%/0%	61%/0%	65%/10%	43%/20%	61%/8%	55%/0%	39%/9%	57%/5%	0%/0%	37%/3%

See Table 1 for country abbreviations. MPS = multipurpose solution

## EXTREME MARKETS

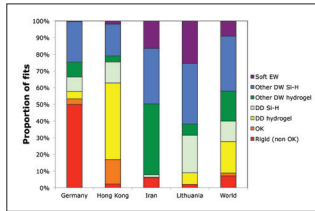
**P**atients around the world want the same performance characteristics from their contact lenses—safe, comfortable wear and clear vision. Differences between markets must be principally explained by the diverse range of contact lens education and training, local commercial supply logistics, and practitioner attitudes. It would be inappropriate to label a market as being “right” or “wrong,” but it is informative to consider the diversity of the global situation.

### Germany

Germany has long been considered a center of GP fitting excellence, and our 2016 survey found that half of all lenses prescribed fell into this category. In fact, neighboring markets also demonstrate a similar trait, with both the Netherlands and Switzerland reporting more than 25% of lenses as standard GP or orthokeratology fits.

### Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a unique contact lens market. In 2016, we found that the great majority of GP fits in this market were for



**Figure 4. Some international markets report higher or lower than average statistics.**

orthokeratology rather than conventional fitting. This probably relates to the success of this modality for myopia control, which is widely prescribed there. Indeed, a majority of the orthokeratology fits were prescribed to patients under 18 years old, supporting this contention.

### Iran

The number of GP lenses prescribed in Iran is close to the global average, but the distribution of soft lens replacement intervals is significantly different. We found very little daily disposable lens prescribing here, and most soft lenses are replaced less frequently than monthly. Specifically, 56% of soft lenses are prescribed to be replaced on a three- to six-month basis, and 4% of fits are for annual replacement.

### Lithuania

In common with previous years, the defining feature of the Lithuanian market is the high number of extended wear lenses prescribed. One-quarter of all lenses prescribed are for this modality, comfortably the highest proportion in this year’s survey. In contrast, GP fitting at 2% of fits is much lower compared to most other markets.

IR	IT	JP	KR	LT	MD	NL	NO	NZ	PH	PT	RU	SE	TH	TW	UK	US	Overall
97%	84%	93%	100%	96%	89%	68%	88%	95%	98%	97%	100%	87%	100%	70%	90%	90%	91%
91%	78%	78%	98%	99%	100%	76%	90%	84%	99%	96%	100%	91%	100%	94%	85%	95%	91%
13%	0%	8%	35%	0%	9%	2%	1%	0%	9%	1%	4%	8%	44%	58%	1%	3%	11%
14%	19%	13%	7%	12%	5%	11%	24%	14%	3%	18%	4%	19%	0%	3%	10%	20%	10%
28%	14%	36%	13%	7%	42%	14%	29%	9%	5%	9%	11%	18%	55%	34%	18%	16%	24%
45%	67%	43%	45%	81%	44%	73%	46%	77%	84%	72%	82%	55%	1%	6%	72%	62%	55%
56%	48%	79%	36%	71%	48%	42%	39%	52%	44%	29%	80%	40%	74%	36%	39%	54%	55%
23%	28%	14%	19%	10%	4%	39%	35%	34%	20%	51%	12%	31%	26%	5%	32%	25%	22%
20%	0%	2%	41%	10%	2%	0%	0%	1%	19%	0%	3%	0%	0%	58%	0%	4%	11%
0%	24%	5%	4%	5%	11%	18%	26%	14%	17%	21%	3%	29%	0%	1%	27%	16%	11%
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	36%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
2%	57%	54%	48%	41%	6%	16%	62%	55%	6%	35%	29%	45%	3%	57%	59%	17%	38%
3%	4%	43%	13%	3%	1%	11%	5%	5%	0%	1%	23%	4%	0%	8%	5%	22%	14%
35%	35%	2%	29%	55%	84%	64%	29%	37%	87%	63%	44%	50%	96%	34%	35%	60%	42%
56%	3%	0%	9%	1%	8%	9%	3%	1%	5%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	4%
4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
13%	0%	0%	0%	25%	11%	5%	9%	1%	40%	0%	2%	5%	0%	0%	3%	0%	9%
21%	1%	0%	0%	26%	6%	10%	10%	2%	31%	0%	7%	9%	0%	0%	3%	13%	11%
99%	50%	50%	•	93%	100%	86%	96%	100%	21%	100%	100%	97%	•	•	100%	100%	49%
98%	86%	81%	100%	84%	100%	88%	93%	86%	98%	92%	99%	89%	100%	92%	87%	90%	92%
•	79%/6%	31%/1%	31%/0%	42%/0%	0%/8%	37%/10%	51%/9%	36%/3%	40%/2%	87%/0%	27%/0%	52%/21%	1%/0%	7%/0%	42%/20%	20%/13%	42%/8%

The final row indicates the proportion of multifocal and monovision lenses prescribed when patients were over 45 years of age.