

# The Healthcare Path to Purchase:

Consumer Research Update\*

Optometry / optical



 **CareCredit**<sup>®</sup>  
Making care possible...today.

\*CareCredit Path to Purchase Research 2018.



## Optometry / optical

(e.g., contact lenses,  
eyeglasses)

n=455



## Overview

Synchrony greatly values consumer opinions, and we periodically conduct large-scale research to capture consumer input and insights directly. In 2014, CareCredit, a Synchrony solution, completed a Path to Purchase study to understand how consumers think about, select, and purchase a wide range of healthcare services and products for themselves, their family members, and even their pets. The findings from this groundbreaking study proved so useful that we decided to repeat it every two years to monitor trends over time. This white paper presents key findings from the third wave of the study, completed in 2018.

### Methodology

**Research instrument:**  
Online survey

**Timeframe:**  
June 6 - 21, 2018

**Respondents:**  
2,762 U.S. consumers who had purchased healthcare services or products in the past 12 months and/or expected to do so in the next 12 months.

**455 survey participants had made, or planned to make, optometry / optical purchases.**

The process to purchase optometry / optical and related products is **generally long and complex**. Consumers tend to seek ample information, consider many factors, and take weeks or months to make decisions for healthcare purchases.

## Driven by need

The majority of consumers (56 percent) saw optometry / optical purchases as necessary, rather than discretionary (“needs,” not “wants”).

## A relatively straightforward process

On average, optometry / optical purchase decisions take just 56 days and involve five distinct stages. In comparison, only veterinary care decisions take less time (28 days, on average), and all other specialties included in the survey involve more steps (5.3 to 7.5, on average).

## Importance of research

Consumers tend to do extensive research before making a purchase, and 60 percent of optometry / optical patients surveyed said they always research healthcare providers online before selecting a provider.

## The Internet is key, but conversation still matters

Not surprisingly, the Internet is a key source of information, with half of consumers reporting use of one or more web resources (e.g, search engines, provider websites, social media) when researching healthcare purchases. However, consumers who are considering optometry / optical tend to rely more heavily on word of mouth (73 percent), including referrals from healthcare providers and input from friends and family.

## Cost is a concern

Affordability remains a key concern for many and is an important factor in choosing a provider. In fact nearly one-third of respondents (31 percent) reported having declined optometry / optical purchases due to cost.

## Consumers may be unaware of—but open to—financing

Relatively few consumers (29 percent) were aware of options to finance healthcare-related purchases. However, 58 percent were aware that providers can offer financing options, and 49 percent would consider financing if it meant they could move forward with a purchase right away.



The decision to move forward with care typically involves multiple steps, with specific actions occurring at different points and sometimes repeating multiple times as consumers move toward a purchase. At various points in their decision-making process, consumers may research treatments, products, providers, and payment options; visit provider offices; consult with family and friends; contact their insurance company; and consider their personal finances.

Decisions about optometry and optical purchases tend to be simpler and more straightforward than many other healthcare purchases. Only decisions about veterinary care tend to take less time, on average, and dental and veterinary tend to involve a similar number of steps (5.4 and 5.3, respectively, on average, vs. 5.0 for optometry / optical).



Compared to 2016, optometry / optical decisions have grown notably longer and more complex. The average timeframe for a purchase decision increased by 17 days (from 39 in 2016 to 56 in 2018), while the average number of steps in the decision-making process grew from 4.3 to 5.0. The additional time and thinking may be driven by a desire to research available options given that high percentages of consumers reporting they research potential optometry / opticals, providers, or both.

## How long and complicated are optometry / optical purchase decisions?

Average # of Decision Steps	Average # of Days to Purchase	Average Spend
5.0	56	\$725



**What percentage of optometry / optical consumers research purchases and payments before making a decision?**

**62%**  
Research Purchase

**69%**  
Research Payment



Most optometry / optical consumers used search engines in their online research (60 percent). Provider websites and rating/review sites were also popular, while medical advice sites like WebMD, social media platforms, apps, and other channels were used less often.

When researching a purchase, optometry / optical consumers often turn to family members or friends for advice. In fact, consumers consult with those close to them (or make a decision without any outside input) far more often than they turn to relevant healthcare professionals.

### ***Among optometry / optical consumers who research purchases online, what sources do they use?***

	Optometry / optical
A search engine (e.g., Google, Yahoo)	60%
Provider Website	49%
Medical advice website	21%
Website that compares or provides ratings/reviews of providers	36%
Social media, mobile app, message board, blog, other	≤7%

### ***Where do optometry / optical consumers turn when researching purchases offline?***

	Optometry / optical
Key healthcare professionals	Optometrist/Ophthalmologist 13%
Family/friends overall	40%

### ***When optometry / optical consumers don't consult healthcare professionals, where do they turn?***

	Optometry / optical
Spouse	35%
Other family members or friends	7%
No one else	51%



Consumers use a wide variety of resources to learn about potential optometry / optical providers. A primary care physician is the top offline resource for optometry / optical purchases, although input from family members and friends is also common.

When researching providers online, the top resource tends to be health insurance websites in all cases. This makes sense, given that the vast majority of optometry / optical consumers report only choosing providers, regardless of specialty, who accept their insurance. Only a minority of optometry / optical consumers look for provider information using search engines or doctor rating sites.

### ***What percentage of optometry / optical consumers ask others for input when researching providers, (and whom do they ask)?***

	Optometry / optical
Ask for input overall	73%
Ask a primary care physician or vet	53%
Ask a family member or friend	36%
Ask someone who needed the same treatment	22%
Ask a co-worker	11%

### ***What percentage of optometry / optical consumers research providers online (and where do they look)?***

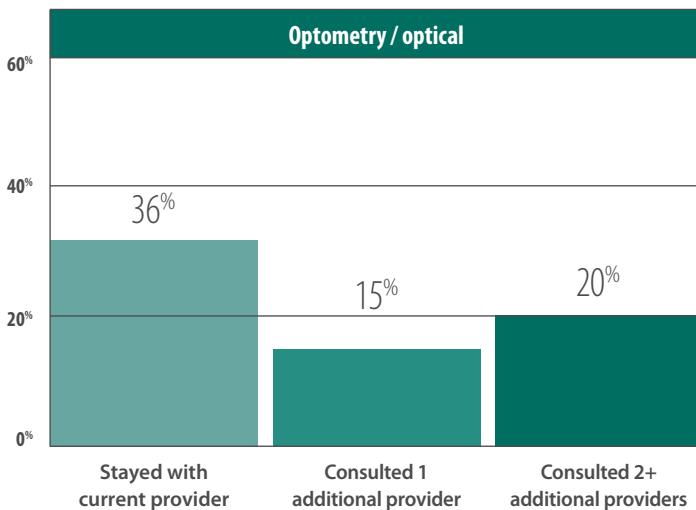
	Optometry / optical
Research providers online overall	59%
Health insurance website	44%
Search engine (Google, Yahoo, Bing)	19%
Doctor rating websites	16%

**82%** of optometry / optical consumers only use optometry / optical providers who accept their insurance.

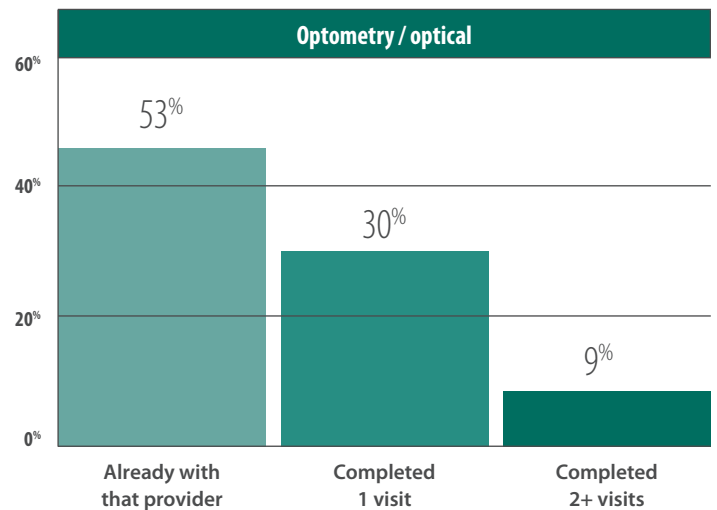


When choosing a provider for optometry / optical purchases, consumers are often inclined to stay with a current provider rather than looking for new options. Even when consumers consider additional options, they seldom need more than one office visit to choose a provider.

**How many providers do optometry / optical consumers consider before choosing one?**



**How many times do optometry / optical consumers visit a provider before choosing him or her?**





Cost can be a significant barrier to moving forward with with an optometry or optical purchase. More than a quarter of consumers reported that they have declined a optometry / optical purchase in the past due to concerns about cost.

**31%** *of optometry / optical consumers have declined an optometry / optical purchase due to concerns about cost.*

### Covering the Cost

Optometry / optical consumers tend to strongly prefer providers who accept their insurance, with 82% saying they only choose providers who accept their insurance. However, most would also move forward with treatment if insurance did not cover the cost (58 percent), or when they cannot use credit to pay over time (54 percent).

#### How likely are optometry / optical consumers to proceed with the purchase if insurance does not cover it?

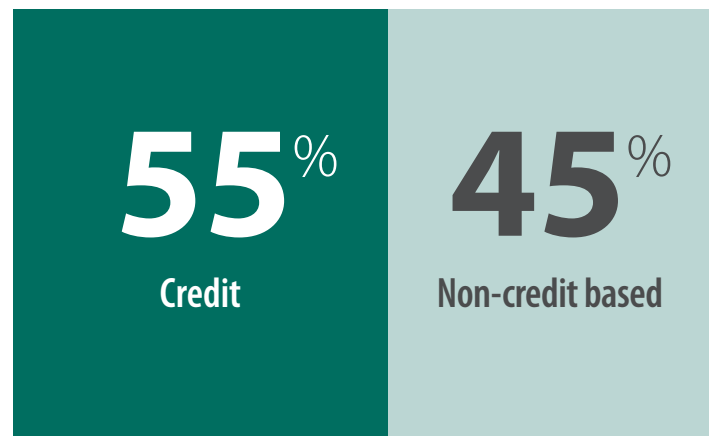
	Optometry / optical
Extremely or very likely	58%
Somewhat likely	25%
Extremely or very unlikely	17%

#### How likely are optometry / optical consumers to proceed with the purchase if they cannot use credit or pay over time?

	Optometry / optical
Extremely or very likely	54%
Somewhat likely	27%
Extremely or very unlikely	20%

Overall, consumers use credit-based tender to pay for out-of-pocket optometry / optical costs somewhat more often than cash-based tender. Notably, this represents a significant change compared to 2016, when just 40 percent of optometry / optical consumers paid using credit, and most (60 percent) paid with cash-based tender.

#### How do consumers pay for optometry / optical purchases?



#### What percentage of optometry / optical consumers pay with a credit-based tender in general, and with bank credit cards in particular?

	Optometry / optical	
	2016	2018
Credit-based tender overall	40%	55%
Bank credit card	37%	33%

#### What percentage of optometry / optical consumers pay with cash-based tenders in general, and with key payment methods in particular?

	Optometry / optical	
	2016	2018
Cash-based tender overall	60%	45%
HSA or FSA	19%	12%
Cash/check or prepaid card	18%	18%
Debit card	26%	18%



## *Are consumers aware of key financing options that could help them manage costs?*

Despite strong interest in credit-based tender, awareness of financing tools and credit cards dedicated to healthcare purchases remains low, with just 29 percent of consumers familiar with these resources. More consumers are aware that healthcare providers may be able to offer financing (58 percent), however.

**29%** are aware of financing tools credit cards specifically for healthcare expenses

**58%** are aware that providers may be able to offer financing options

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## *What do consumers think about healthcare financing options, and how does this affect their choices?*

While awareness of financing options is low, interest in financing options is fairly strong, with nearly half of consumers who do not have a CareCredit credit card (49 percent) willing to consider financing in order to get treatment immediately. Many report always looking into financing for large purchases (39 percent), and two out of five consumers would welcome financing offered by a healthcare provider.

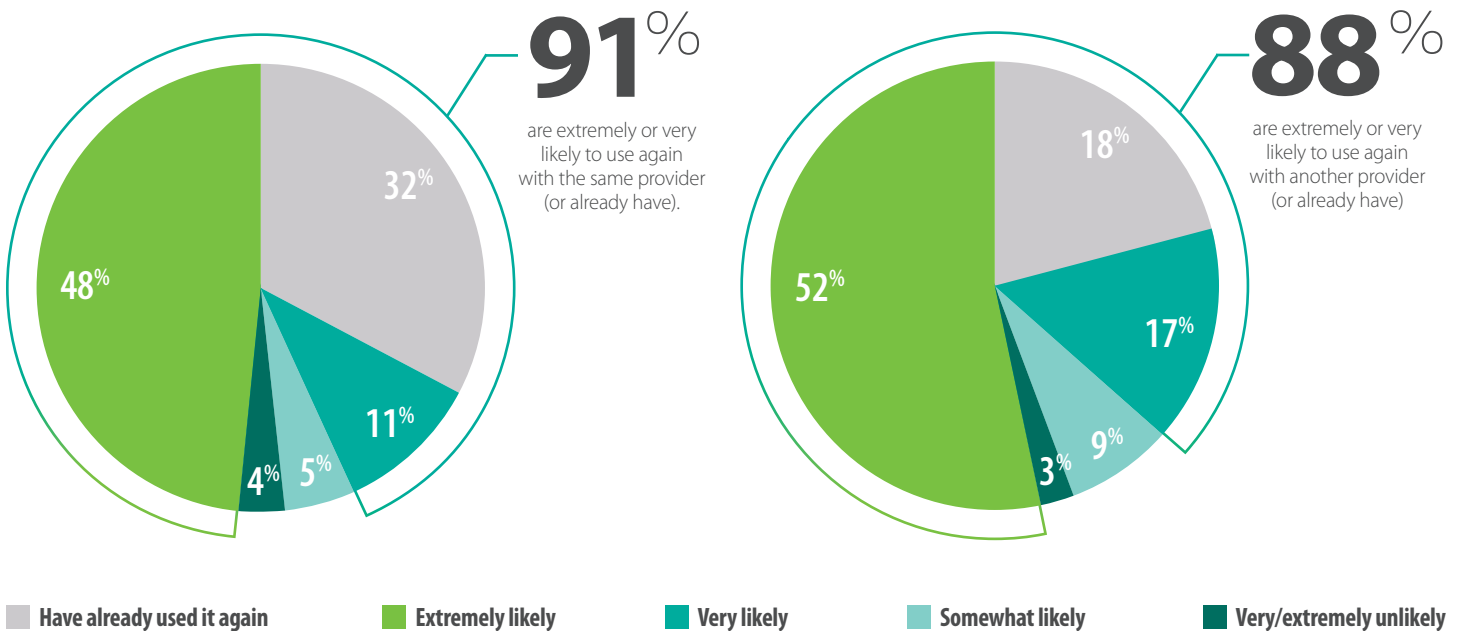
**49%** would consider a financing option if it meant they could move forward with a purchase right away

**39%** always seek financing options when making large purchases

**40%** would be comfortable with financing available through a healthcare provider

While a large or urgent purchase may be the impetus for many consumers to apply for healthcare financing, the vast majority expect to use financing for more than the initial purchase. Among consumers who have a CareCredit credit card, 91 percent either have or definitely plan to use the card again with the same healthcare provider, and nearly as many (88 percent) have or will do so with additional providers.

## When consumers have a CareCredit credit card, how likely do they say they are to use it again (with the same provider or another provider)?



## Financing Provider Snapshot

A pioneer in healthcare financing for more than 30 years, CareCredit is a leader in providing patients with valuable promotional financing options for treatments and procedures not covered fully by insurance.

More than 210,000 locations around the country, offering care in dozens of specialty areas, accept CareCredit to help patients and clients get the health, wellness, and personal care they need. CareCredit helps providers increase cash flow while decreasing billing and collections. The process to add CareCredit as a payment option is easy and quick.

CareCredit currently has over 11 million cardholders, and every day, more than 14,000 individuals apply for a CareCredit card to help them pay for care. Cardholders have more than \$35 billion in available credit, and they use it almost 60,000 times per week, on average, to pay for their healthcare expenses. What's more, cardholders have extraordinarily positive opinions about CareCredit; 94 percent report being highly satisfied, 97 percent rate CareCredit a good to excellent value, and 97 percent say they would recommend it to a friend.\*

CareCredit is a Synchrony solution. Synchrony has been offering financing solutions for leaders in diverse industries for more than 80 years.

\*Cardholder Engagement Study, Q2 2016, conducted for CareCredit by Chadwick Martin Bailey.



Understanding consumers' attitudes, expectations, and habits helps optometry / optical providers to **better serve current and prospective patients, and achieve their practice goals.**

- The lengthy decision-making process presents many **opportunities to communicate** with consumers and offer information and input that **consumers welcome and value.**
- Consumers often have a strong preference and likelihood to purchase from their current providers, underlining the **importance of supporting existing patients** during their decision-making process.
- Because consumers may consider multiple providers, the **opportunity to attract new patients** is also significant, particularly by providing the **information, access, and payment options** consumers are seeking.
- An **informative website** is important for providers, as are listings on **insurance company sites.** Strong search engine performance can be helpful, while social media, message boards, and other digital channels are less of a priority.
- **Personal referrals are powerful**, so encouraging current patients and other healthcare providers to refer new patients could have a strong impact.
- Many consumers expressed interest in **credit-based financing options** and/or indicated they have derived lasting value from such options. However, many consumers may not be aware that such options are available. Offering a financing solution like a healthcare credit card and prominently promoting it could help **differentiate vs. other providers, attract new patients, and increase satisfaction and loyalty** among current patients.

**CareCredit can be used at enrolled provider and select retail locations for:**

- Ambulatory Surgery Centers
- Anesthesiology
- Audiology
- Bariatric Surgery/ Weight Management
- Chiropractic Care
- Cosmetic Surgery
- Dentistry
- Dermatology
- Durable Medical Equipment
- Gastroenterology
- Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Ophthalmology
- Optometry
- Orthopedic Surgery
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Urgent Care
- Urology
- Veterinary Care
- And More!

CareCredit currently has over 11 million cardholders, and every day more than 14,000 individuals apply for a CareCredit card to help them pay for care.