
Ahpra

Practitioner and community perceptions of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and the National Boards: 2019

A Social Research Project

November 2019

Supplementary report prepared for:
The Physiotherapy Board of Australia

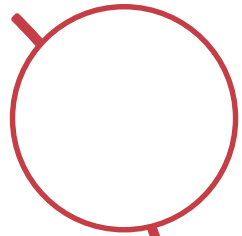
Truly[®]
Deeply



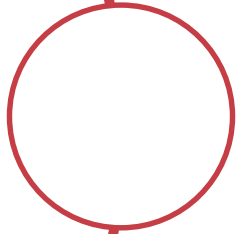
Introduction

- Truly Deeply was first engaged in 2018 by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) to assess the perception and sentiment towards Ahpra and the National Boards.
- The review was intended to help National Boards and Ahpra better understand what stakeholders think and feel about the organisation and to identify how to facilitate ongoing confidence and trust in the work performed by Ahpra and the National Boards.
- The benchmark 2018 study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, specifically extended interviews (face to face and via the telephone), focus groups and online surveys.
- Given the value of the insights delivered through the 2018 benchmark study to Ahpra and National Boards, the decision was taken to update the quantitative measures by conducting the online survey with practitioners and the general public in November 2019.
- A single, integrated report has been provided to Ahpra documenting the key themes and results.
- A separate summary has been provided for each of the National Boards based on the results of the online survey with practitioners.
- The purpose of this report is to present a subset of findings specifically for **the Physiotherapy Board of Australia**.

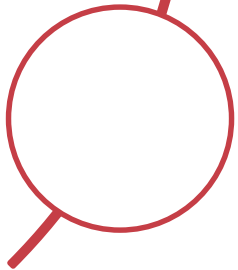
An overview of the methodology



A **two stage** approach using online surveys has been used.



Stage 1 consisted of an online survey with practitioners from all 15 registered professions. This survey was conducted between October 30-November 8, 2019.

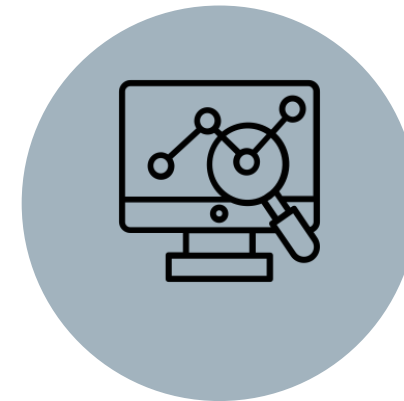


Stage 2 consisted of an online survey with a representative sample of the Australian general public. This survey was conducted between November 1– 6, 2019.

Quantitative approach

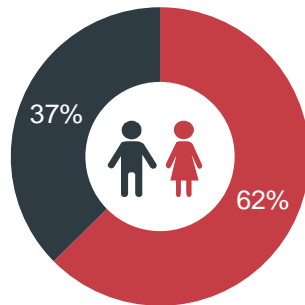
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community following the qualitative investigation.
- The 2019 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 questionnaires, with only a small number of additions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider. Quotas were placed on the sample for gender, age and location to ensure a nationally representative sample was achieved.
- Participants in the Practitioner Survey were sourced by Ahpra (using software that allowed the survey to be deployed to a random sample of practitioners in each profession).
- The practitioner sample has been weighted to ensure an equal ‘voice’ within the total sample of registered health practitioners (with the sample of ‘nurses’ and ‘midwives’ further separated). This has been done to ensure that the views of professions with larger numbers of practitioners do not outweigh the views of professions with much smaller numbers of practitioners.
- For comparison between the sub-analysis groups, chi square or independent tests were conducted as appropriate, with significant differences at the 95% confidence interval indicated where applicable.

| | Community Survey | Practitioner Survey |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Fieldwork dates | Nov 1-6 | Oct 30 to Nov 8 |
| Responses | 2,048 | 5,944 |
| Email invitations sent | na | 109,625 |
| Response rate | na | 5.4% |

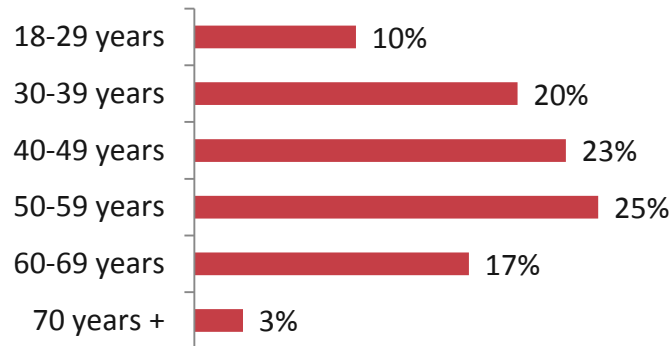


2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

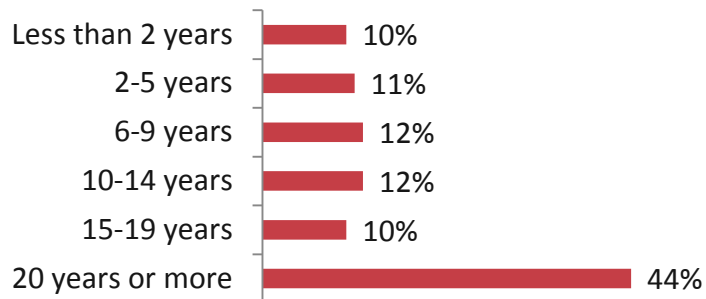
Gender



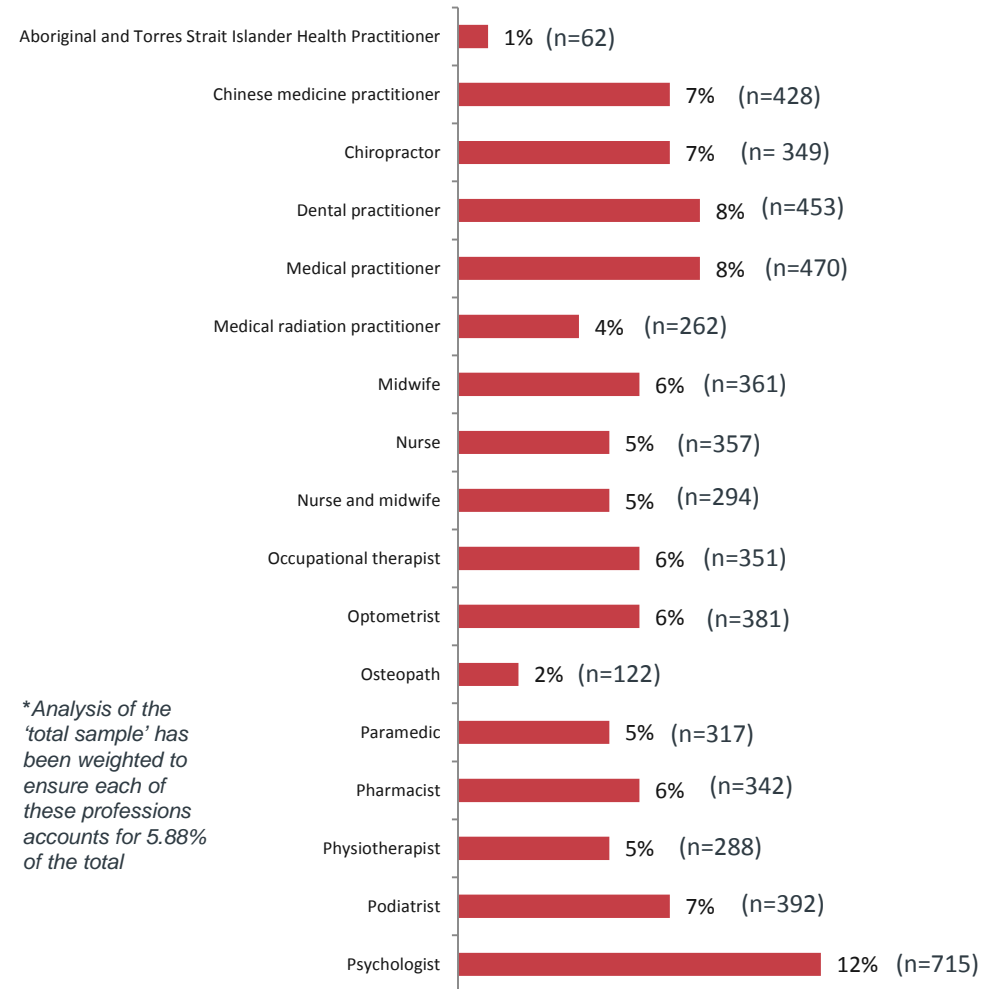
Age



Years in practice



Practitioner type*

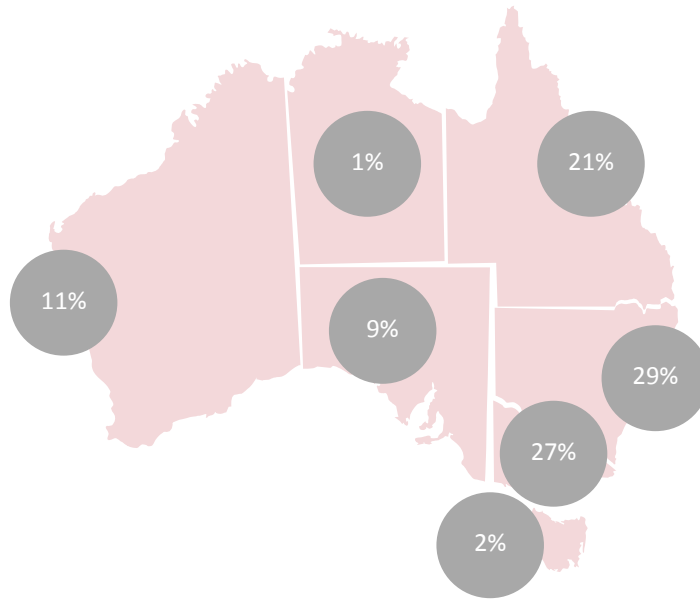


*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

* Figures may not add to 100%. Missing figures accounted for by 'prefer not to say'

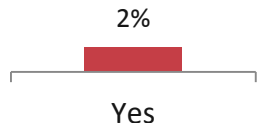
2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

Location

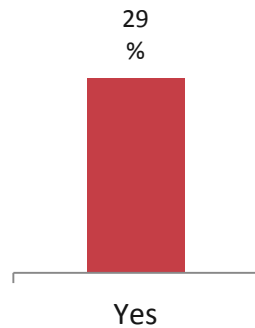


Metro: **64%**
Regional: **36%**

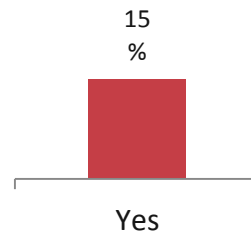
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



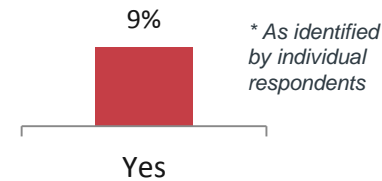
% who were born a country other than Australia



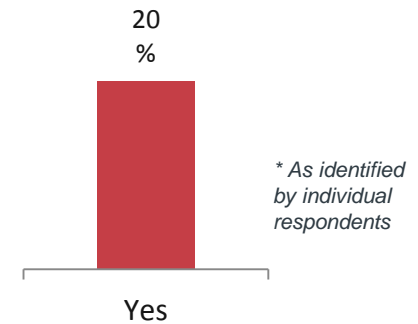
% who speak a language other than English at home



% who have had a complaint about them made to Ahpra or their National Board*



% who have been audited to check their compliance with the mandatory registration standards*

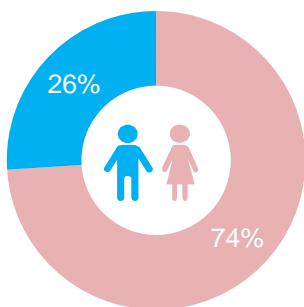


Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners.

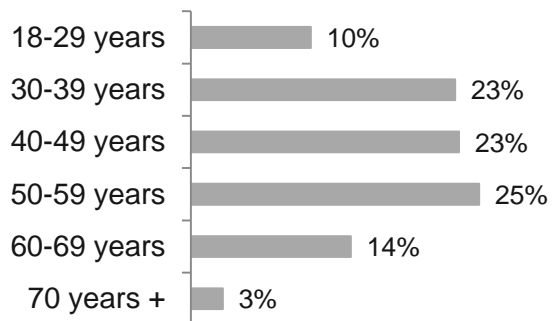
Specific insights into the responses from:
Physiotherapists

Sample of physiotherapists (n=288)

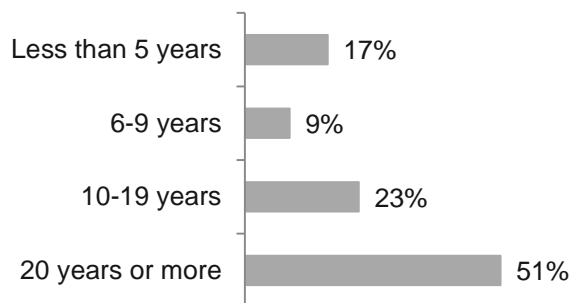
Gender:



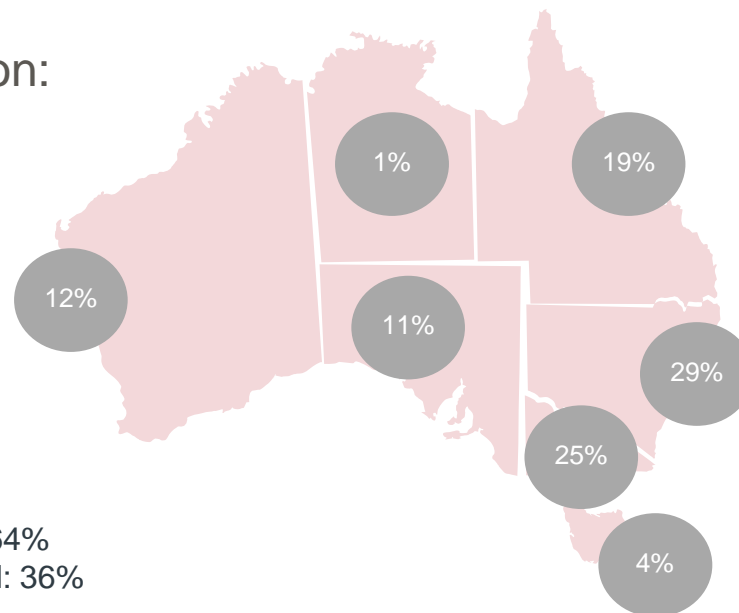
Age:



Years in practice:

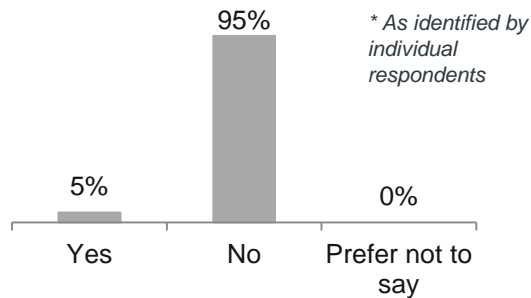


Location:

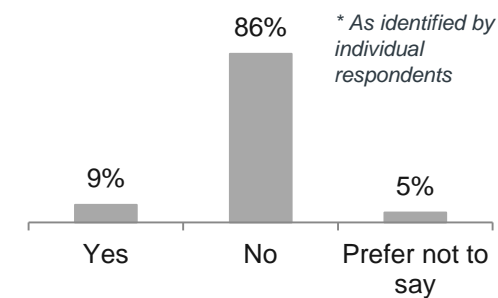


Metro: 64%
Regional: 36%

% who have had a complaint about them made to Ahpra or their National Board*



% who have been audited to check their compliance with the mandatory registration standards*



2019: Perceptions of the physiotherapy profession among practitioners*

(Top 20 Associations)

Q. Which of the following words do you strongly associate with **your profession**?

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board (n=288)

| Perceptions in 2019 | % of practitioners with that perception | Difference compared to the average across all professions |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Professional | 62% | (+15%) |
| Knowledgeable | 44% | (+14%) |
| Respected | 34% | (+15%) |
| Competent | 27% | (+5%) |
| Hard working | 24% | (-6%) |
| Trusted | 22% | (-) |
| Responsible | 22% | (+3%) |
| Reputable | 21% | (+11%) |
| Compassionate | 20% | (-4%) |
| Dedicated | 20% | (-1%) |

| Perceptions in 2019 | % of practitioners with that perception | Difference compared to the average across all professions |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Caring | 19% | (-8%) |
| Empathetic | 18% | (-3%) |
| Passionate | 14% | (-) |
| Committed | 12% | (-4%) |
| Approachable | 12% | (+1%) |
| Innovative | 12% | (+6%) |
| Team oriented | 10% | (+2%) |
| Community minded | 9% | (-4%) |
| Honest | 8% | (-1%) |
| Friendly | 5% | (-1%) |

Green indicates a result *significantly higher in 2019* than the average across all professions.

Orange indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019* than the average across all professions.

* *New question for 2019*

2019: Perceptions of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia (Top 20 associations)

Q. Which of the following words or statements, if any, do you strongly associate with the (National Board)?

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board (n=288)

| Perception | % of practitioners with that perception of the Board | Difference compared to the average across all professions |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Regulators | 42% | (+2%) |
| For practitioners | 38% | (+6%) |
| Necessary | 37% | (+5%) |
| Administrators | 34% | (-) |
| Advocates | 26% | (+9%) |
| Decision makers | 25% | (+1%) |
| Competent | 19% | (+5%) |
| Bureaucratic | 15% | (-12%) |
| For the public | 15% | (-7%) |
| Shows leadership | 13% | (-) |

| Perception | % of practitioners with that perception of the Board | Difference compared to the average across all professions |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Trustworthy | 13% | (+2%) |
| Fair | 11% | (+1%) |
| Supportive | 11% | (-1%) |
| Helpful | 10% | (-) |
| Responsive | 9% | (+1%) |
| Good communicators | 9% | (-) |
| Approachable | 9% | (-1%) |
| Out of touch | 8% | (-5%) |
| Accessible | 7% | (-3%) |
| Honest | 7% | (+1%) |

Green indicates a result *significantly higher* than the average across all professions.

Orange indicates a result *significantly lower* than the average across all professions.

Summary of changes 2018-19:

Perceptions of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia

Q. Which of the following words or statements, if any, do you strongly associate with the **(National Board)**?

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

| % of practitioners with that perception of the Board | 2018 N=380 | 2019 N=288 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Regulators | 34% | 42% |
| For practitioners | 44% | 38% |
| Necessary | 39% | 37% |
| Administrators | 37% | 34% |
| Advocates | 24% | 26% |
| Decision makers | 31% | 25% |
| Competent | 22% | 19% |
| Bureaucratic | 20% | 15% |
| For the public | 20% | 15% |
| Shows leadership | 17% | 13% |

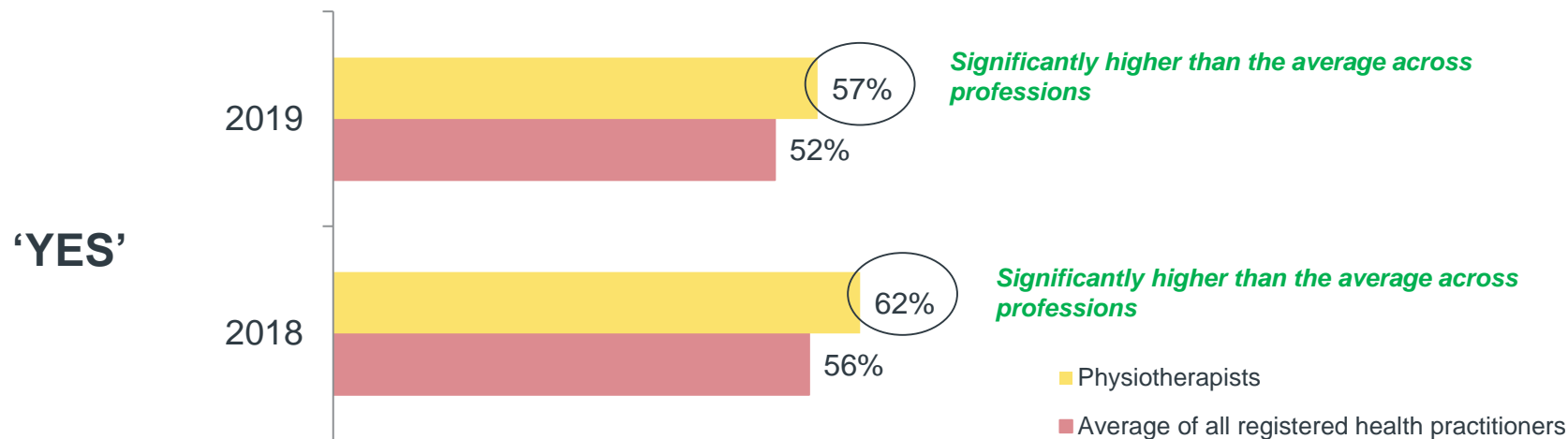
| % of practitioners with that perception of the Board | 2018 N=380 | 2019 N=288 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Trustworthy | 15% | 13% |
| Fair | 12% | 11% |
| Supportive | 12% | 11% |
| Helpful | 10% | 10% |
| Responsive | 10% | 9% |
| Good communicators | 13% | 9% |
| Approachable | 10% | 9% |
| Out of touch | 8% | 8% |
| Accessible | 13% | 7% |
| Honest | 7% | 7% |

Green indicates a result *significantly higher in 2019* compared with the 2018 result.

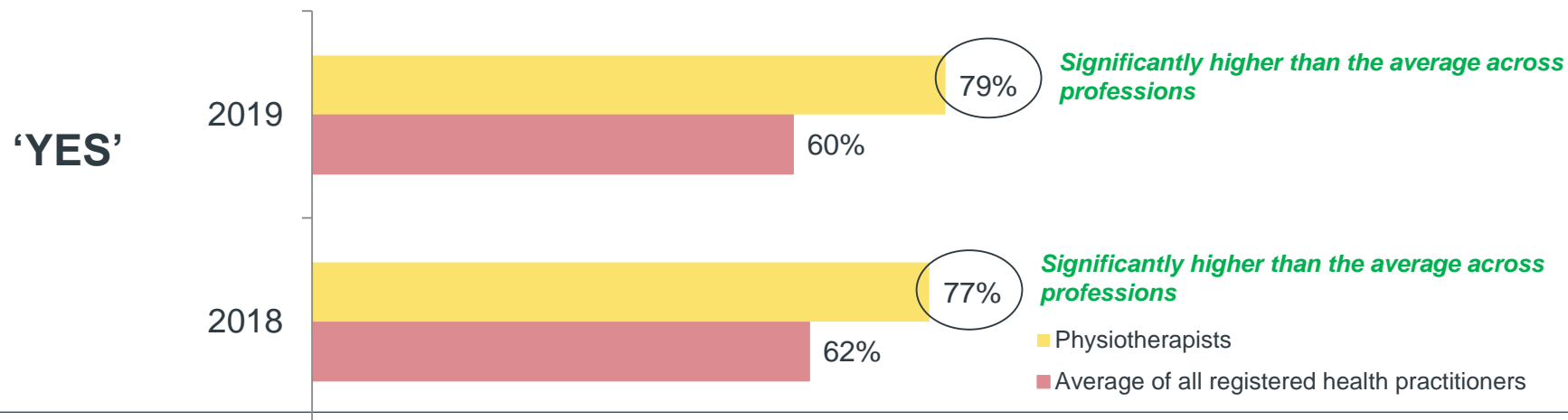
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

Levels of confidence and trust in the Physiotherapy Board of Australia

Q. Do you feel confident that your National Board is doing everything it can to keep the public safe?



Q. Do you trust your National Board?



What are the indicators of trust and barriers to trust in the Physiotherapy Board of Australia

Indicators of trust: 79% trust the Board

I have no reason not to trust a professional organisation.

They have both the member and public's best interest at hand. They are involved on federal level campaigning for its members and support its members in various aspects of the profession.

They have a broad knowledge base about our profession, and they act in the interests of their members.

It is well represented by physiotherapists and has been shown to support the majority of therapists in most areas of the profession. Its sets and expects high standards of practice and competency.

They will support me, as a practitioner, in case of false accusations and patient complaints which aren't backed up by any valid evidence. Eg grudge complaints. They will definitely prosecute those practitioners and there will be serious implications for fraudulent and indecent practitioners.

I have met different members of the Board over the years and have always found them to be of impeccable character, with the best interest of the profession at heart.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: 4% DO NOT trust the Board

APA is the biggest money spinning useless organisation in healthcare instead of advocating for the profession they only care about the bottom line. I might not be a big fan of Ahpra but the APA I have an actual disdain for not only are they useless I actually feel the profession would be better if they didn't exist.

Punitive of practitioners rather than consultative.

I feel they are out of touch, very expensive for part timers and too exclusive.

I don't trust all the people who make up the Board. Megalomaniacs are often attracted to these roles which may explain why the Board has an image that is authoritarian, regulatory and intimidating. The Board has a history of using intimidation to scare practitioners to do the right thing. It has named and shamed others in the past. I do not trust a Board which operates like that.

2019: Perceptions of Ahpra among physiotherapists (Top 20 associations)

Q. Which of the following words or statements, if any, do you strongly associate with Ahpra?

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board (n=288)

| Perception | % of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra | Difference compared to the average across all professions |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Regulators | 60% | (+6%) |
| Administrators | 54% | (+8%) |
| Necessary | 48% | (+12%) |
| For the public | 38% | (+3%) |
| For practitioners | 35% | (+9%) |
| Bureaucratic | 29% | (-11%) |
| Decision makers | 19% | (-2%) |
| Competent | 18% | (+7%) |
| Accessible | 12% | (+1%) |
| Advocates | 12% | (+3%) |

| Perception | % of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra | Difference compared to the average across all professions |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Fair | 11% | (+2%) |
| Rigid | 11% | (-5%) |
| Trustworthy | 11% | (+2%) |
| Supportive | 9% | (+1%) |
| Poor communicators | 8% | (-7%) |
| Good communicators | 8% | (+1%) |
| Approachable | 8% | (+1%) |
| Intimidating | 7% | (-8%) |
| Transparent | 7% | (+1%) |
| Controlling | 7% | (-8%) |

Green indicates a result *significantly higher* than the average across all professions.

Orange indicates a result *significantly lower* than the average across all professions.

Summary of changes 2018-19:

Perceptions of Ahpra among physiotherapists

Q. Which of the following words or statements, if any, do you strongly associate with Ahpra?

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

| % of practitioners with that perception of the Ahpra | 2018 N=380 | 2019 N=288 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Regulators | 59% | 60% |
| Administrators | 58% | 54% |
| Necessary | 51% | 48% |
| For the public | 43% | 38% |
| For practitioners | 35% | 35% |
| Bureaucratic | 32% | 29% |
| Decision makers | 24% | 19% |
| Competent | 22% | 18% |
| Accessible | 17% | 12% |
| Advocates | 11% | 12% |

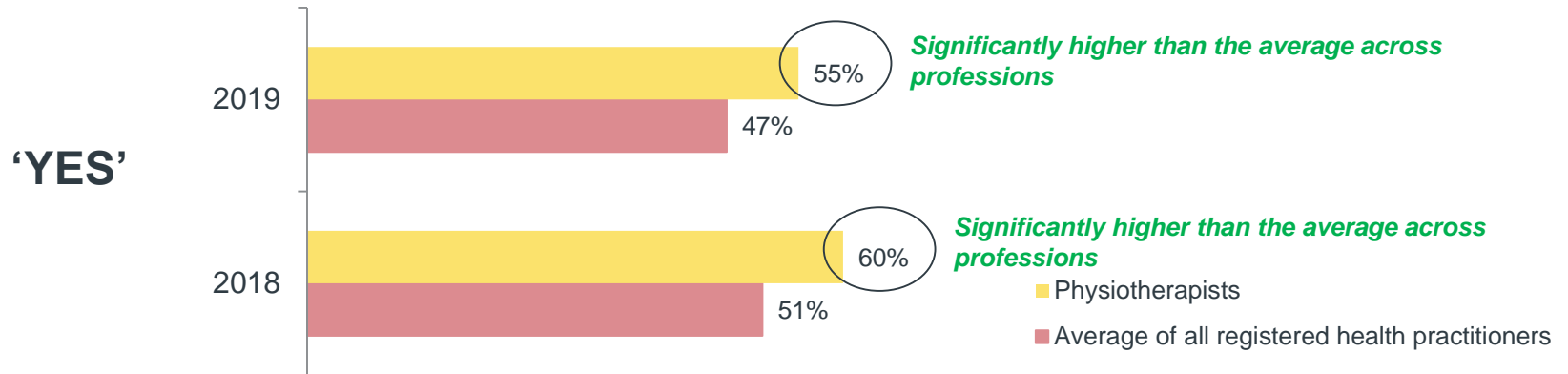
| % of practitioners with that perception of the Ahpra | 2018 N=380 | 2019 N=288 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Fair | 11% | 11% |
| Rigid | 13% | 11% |
| Trustworthy | 14% | 11% |
| Supportive | 6% | 9% |
| Poor communicators | 9% | 8% |
| Good communicators | 9% | 8% |
| Approachable | 8% | 8% |
| Intimidating | 8% | 7% |
| Transparent | 9% | 7% |
| Controlling | 9% | 7% |

Green indicates a result *significantly higher in 2019* compared with the 2018 result.

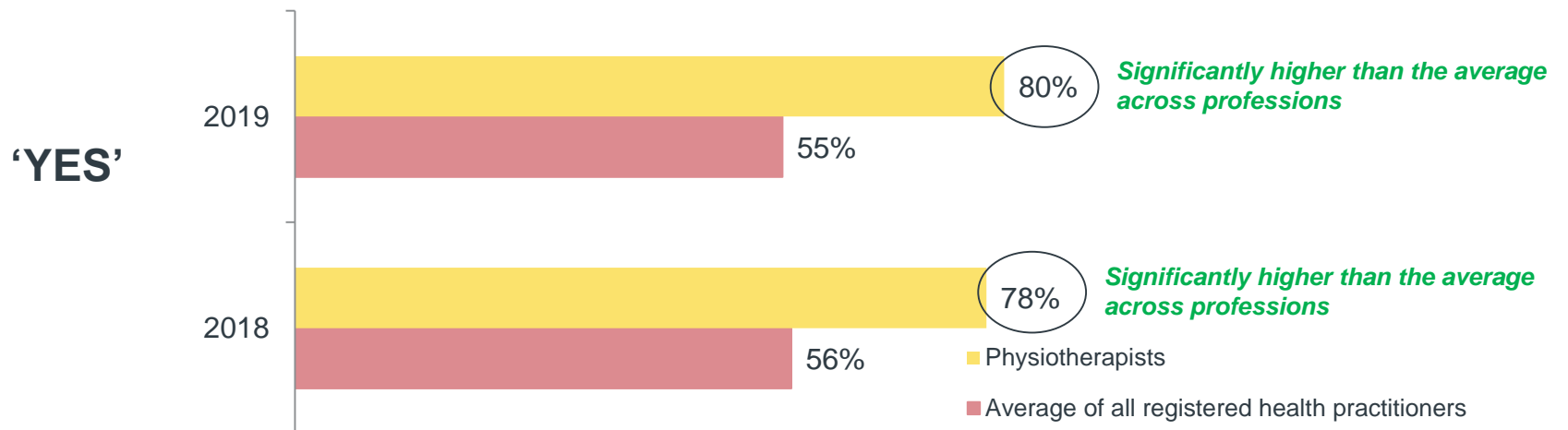
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among physiotherapists

Q. Do you feel confident that **Ahpra** is doing everything it can to keep the public safe?



Q. Do you trust **Ahpra**?



What are the indicators of trust and barriers to trust in Ahpra among physiotherapists

Indicators of trust: 80% trust Ahpra

No reason not to. Have only had dealings with Ahpra for registration renewals.

Because it is constantly reviewing and updating its policies and practices.

Supporting its members and making sure the public are safe when receiving medical care.

I've had dealings with Ahpra before and they were positive, efficient and professional. A professional body run by professionals for professionals. Confidence inspiring.

In my experience with Ahpra, I have found them to be objective, fair, and advocates for both clinicians and patients, which effectively makes them strong regulators.

I have had no reason not to trust them. They have managed annual registrations and new registrations for the past 10 years efficiently. I personally have had no problems with their administrative functions. The information they provide about types of registration, CPD and approved courses is usually up to date and helpful. When I have had to contact about issues, they have responded in a timely manner.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: 6% DO NOT trust Ahpra

Chiropractors are scientifically out-dated and actually have harmful or ineffective practice, Ahpra doesn't really care about anything but making money.

The ongoing protection of and creditability afforded to alternative health practitioners is utterly disgraceful in a modern society such as Australia.

I feel they don't police the industry well enough.

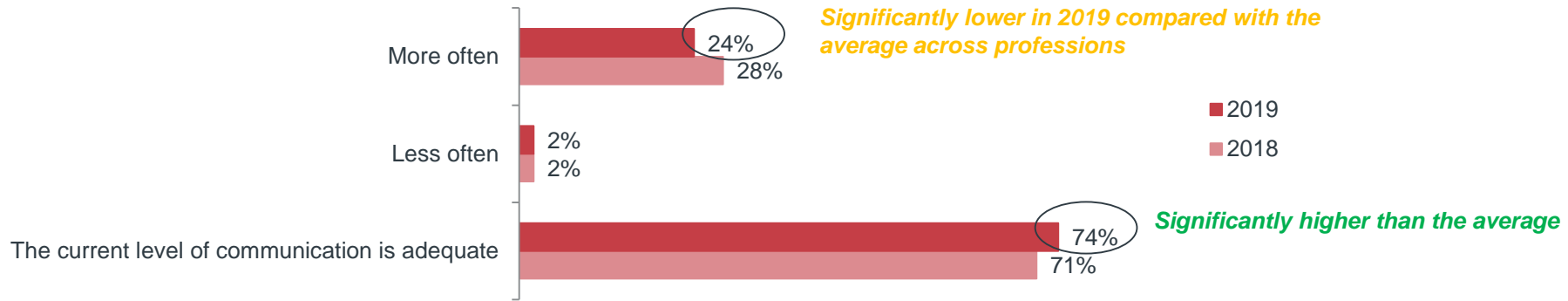
Due to the opaque nature of their rules and the over-bearing power they yield. For example, if they warn you about a marketing issue, they don't actually tell you exactly what you can or can't do. Therefore you have to pay expensive lawyers to try to interpret what they are saying. All while under the serious stress of getting it wrong where Ahpra can come in and whack you for not following their opaque rules.

Very poor action to a straightforward breach of regulations by another practitioner. Slow, unsupportive response to me allowing breaches to continue.

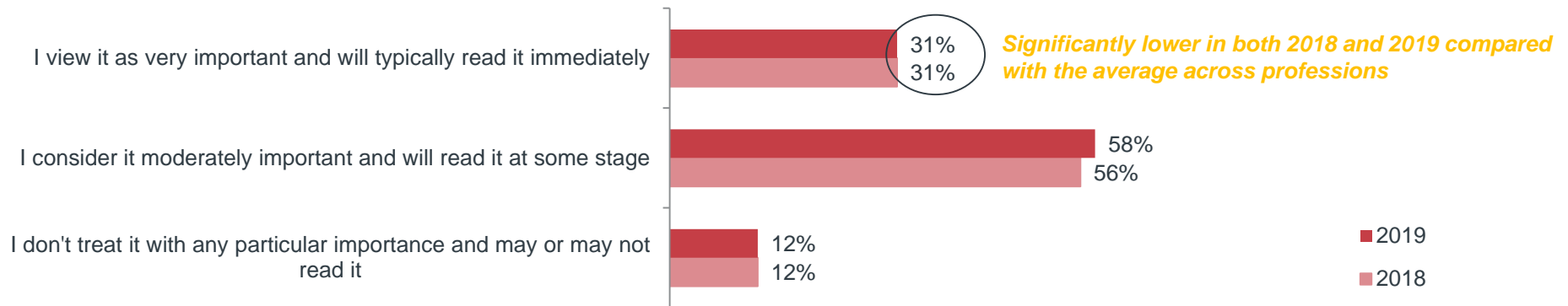
Amazing amount of red tape and bureaucracy They protect public but fail to protect health practitioners all together.

Response to communication by the Physiotherapy Board of Australia

Q. Would you like (National Board) to communicate with you.....?



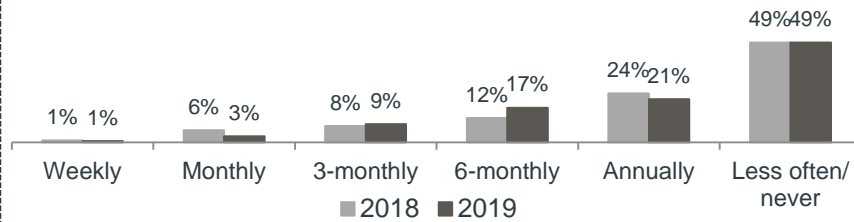
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

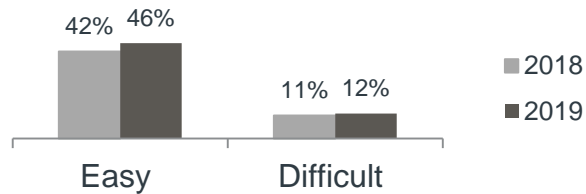
Use of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia website

Q. How often do you visit the website of (your National Board)??



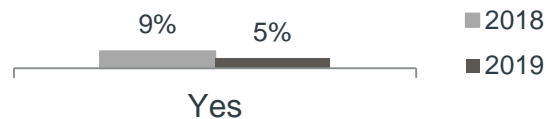
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this board

Q. How easy or difficult is it to find the information you were looking for on the (National Board) website?



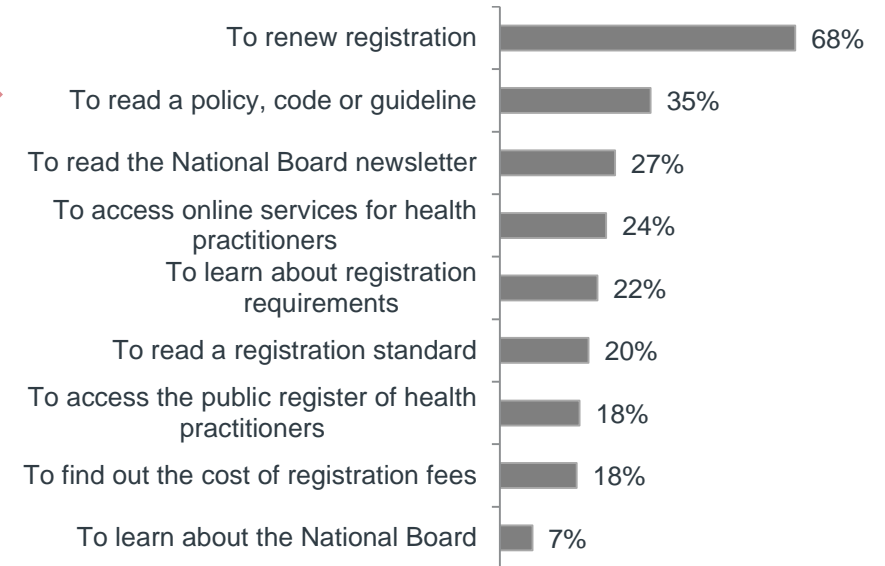
Base: Practitioners who have visited that board's website

Q. Is there any information you have looked for on the website of (National Board) but not been able to find?



Base: People who have visited that board's website

2019: Reasons for visiting the National Board website



Additional information sought by practitioners included (but was not limited to)...

- *Registration information.*
- *Eligibility of supervisor physiotherapist.*
- *Discount information.*

Additional feedback from physiotherapists

Sample of open-ended responses when invited to comment about overall perception of Ahpra and/or the National Board *(full list of responses provided separately)*

What is the difference between Ahpra and the National Board? Is National Board just a section of Ahpra which is profession specific? My answers may not be very accurate because I don't know who does what. The website does not explain this either - it looks like they do the same thing. Where does the Australian Physiotherapy Council sit with Ahpra and National Board? - what are all their functions as they all seem to be the same?

Needs to be tougher on alternative medicine.

I am a busy clinician - I am relying on these bodies to maintain a professional and safe standard for physiotherapy and maintain the good reputation of other hard-working clinicians like myself. I have little interest in the running of these bodies but appreciate that they are working to maintain a high standard and hope they will continue to do so.

Time to respond and review the advertising guidelines to protect the community better. They should be updated.

When I made a complaint to Ahpra about a health practitioner I was not advised on the process and was never contacted by Ahpra but rather by both the HCCC and the Physiotherapist Board of Australia neither of which I was aware would be handling the claim. In the addition to this, the separate handling of the claim was confusing and yet the practitioner is still currently practising and potentially victimizing his patients.

My perception is that the Board can be overly strict and heavy handed in granting overseas physios the right to practise here, potentially missing out on some good therapists. I understand the need for high standards, but if you put many practising Australian physios through the same process, they would no doubt also fail.

The emails are too long winded. Life is busy. They would be better shorter, more often, if necessary and to the point. I probably miss important information because I speed read through the seemingly unnecessary wordage.

There is an unfair playing field when it comes to competing with non-regulated professions such as Exercise physiologists with regards to advertising/ testimonials etc. They have Medicare billing rights so should be regulated as well.

Both organizations are essential however I find Ahpra very inefficient and poor in communication. The time frames in processing applications varies greatly for no apparent or communicated reason.

