

Ahpra

Practitioner and community perceptions of the Australian Health
Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and the National Boards: 2020

A Social Research Project

November 2020

Supplementary report prepared for:

The Pharmacy 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 them and to identify how to facilitate ongoing confidence and trust in the work performed by Ahpra and the National Boards.

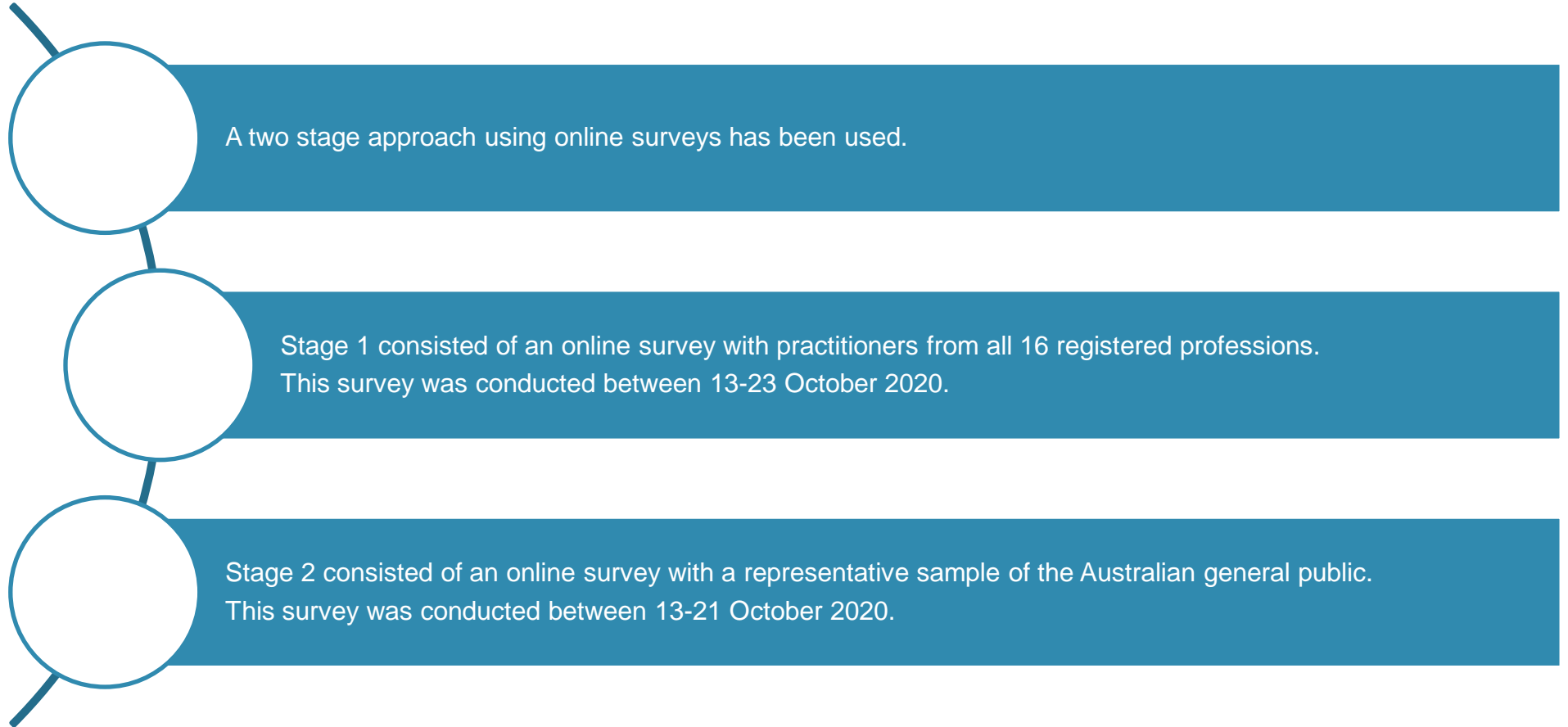
The benchmark 2018 study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, specifically extended interviews (face-to-face and via the telephone), focus groups and online surveys.

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 and most recently in October 2020.

The purpose of this report is to present, discuss and consolidate the findings and insights from the 2020 surveys and to make comparisons, where appropriate, with the 2018 and 2019 results.

- 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 **Pharmacy Board of Australia**.

An overview of the methodology



Quantitative approach

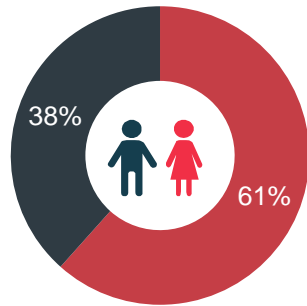
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community.
- The 2020 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 and 2019 questionnaires, with two additional questions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider. Quotas were placed 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	13-21 October	13-23 October
Responses	2,020	10,228
Email invitations sent	na	138,453
Response rate	na	7.4%

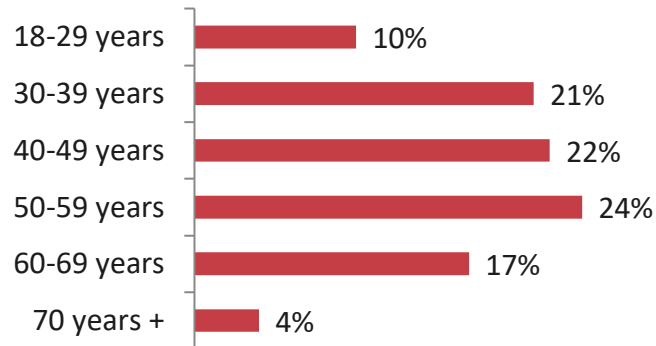


2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

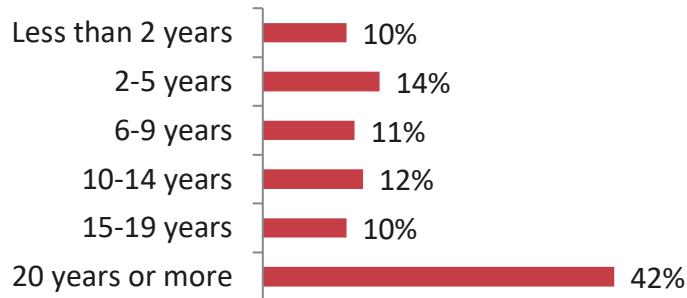
Gender



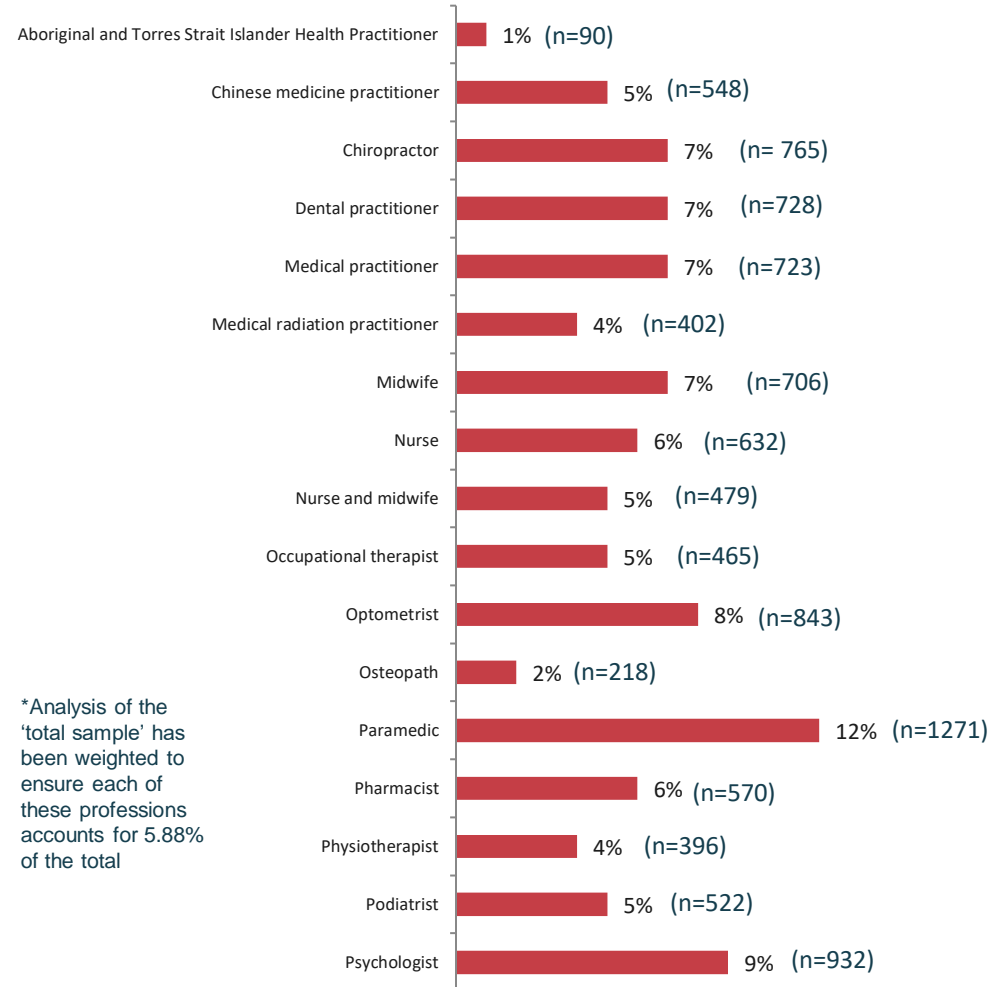
Age



Years in practice



Practitioner type*

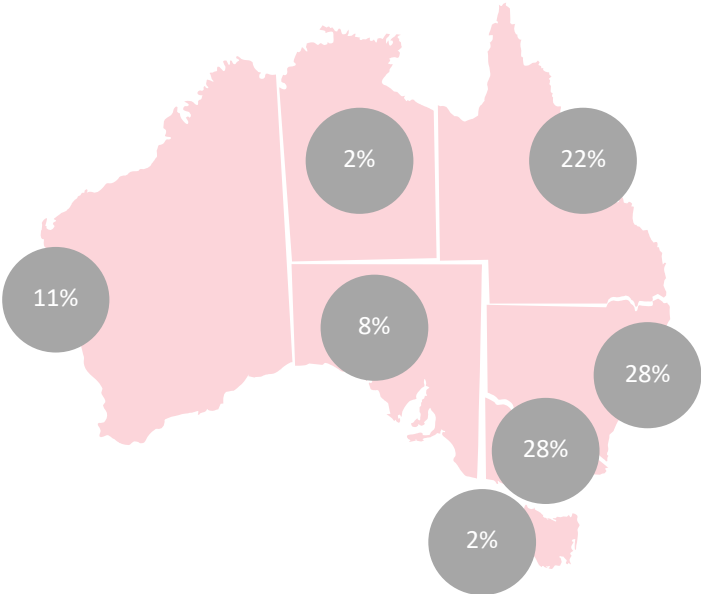


*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

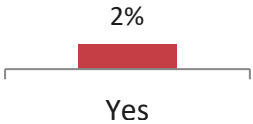
2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

Location

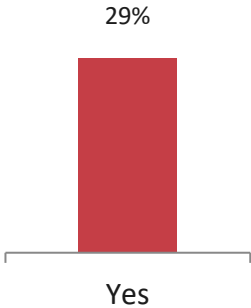


Metro: **63%**
Regional: **30%**
Rural: **7%**

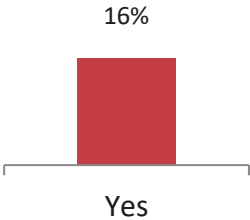
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



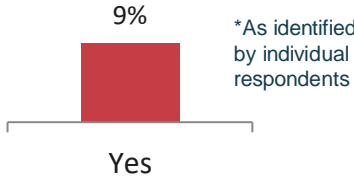
% who were born in a country other than Australia



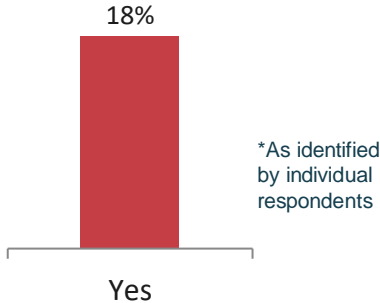
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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*

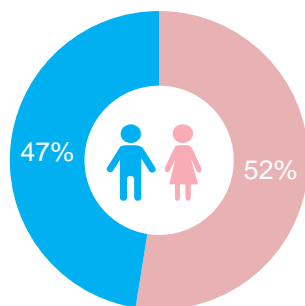


Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners

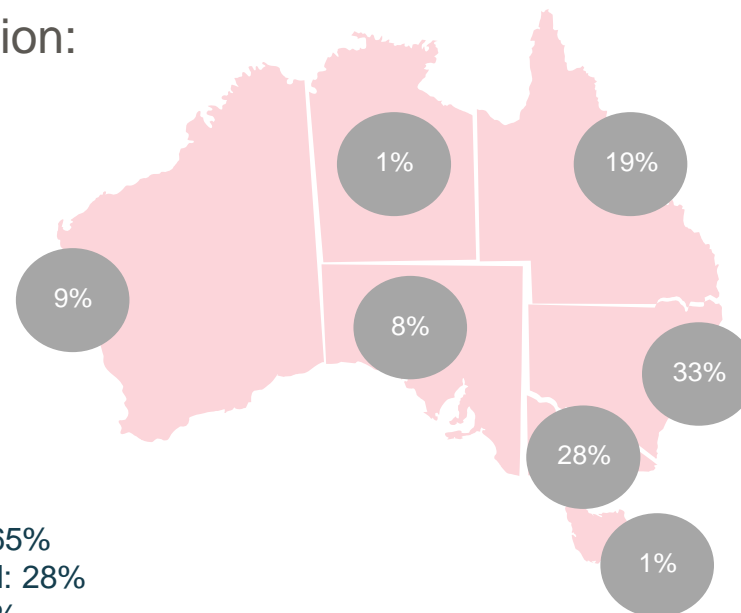
Specific insights into the responses from:
Pharmacists

Sample of pharmacists (n=570)

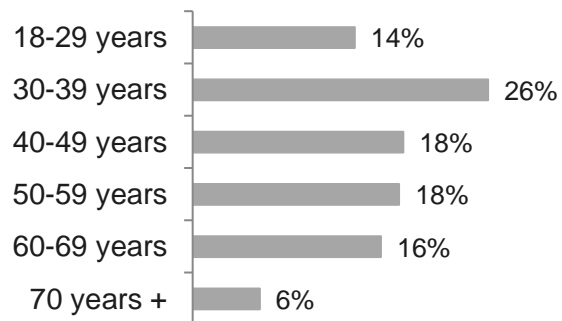
Gender:



Location:

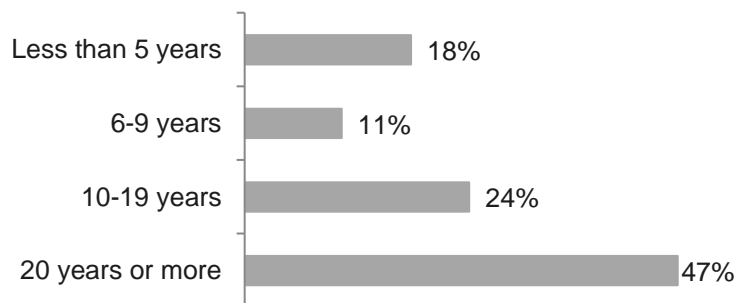


Age:

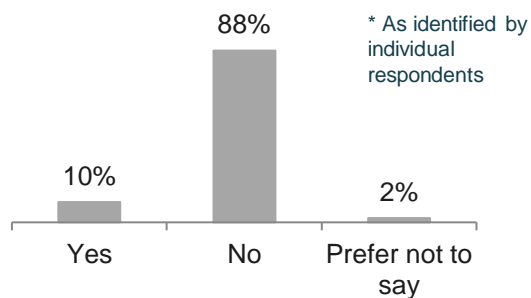


Metro: 65%
Regional: 28%
Rural: 7%

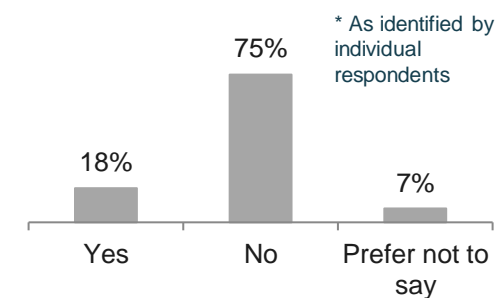
Years in practice:



% 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*



2020: Perceptions of the pharmacist 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=570)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	44%	(-2%)
Trusted	40%	(+16%)
Knowledgeable	40%	(+9%)
Community minded	39%	(+24%)
Approachable	38%	(+26%)
Hard working	34%	(+5%)
Responsible	26%	(+7%)
Respected	25%	(+5%)
Caring	21%	(-7%)
Dedicated	15%	(-6%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Competent	14%	(-6%)
Committed	13%	(-4%)
Empathetic	13%	(-8%)
Honest	13%	(+3%)
Reputable	12%	(+2%)
Compassionate	12%	(-11%)
Friendly	11%	(+3%)
Efficient	6%	(-)
Team oriented	4%	(-5%)
Passionate	4%	(-10%)

Green indicates a result significantly higher in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Orange indicates a result significantly lower in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Summary of changes 2019-20:

Perceptions of the pharmacist profession among practitioners

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

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=342	2020 N=570
Professional	41%	44%
Trusted	44%	40%
Knowledgeable	40%	40%
Community minded	35%	39%
Approachable	39%	38%
Hard working	39%	34%
Responsible	20%	26%
Respected	24%	25%
Caring	22%	21%
Dedicated	13%	15%

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=342	2020 N=570
Competent	13%	14%
Committed	10%	13%
Empathetic	11%	13%
Honest	15%	13%
Reputable	12%	12%
Compassionate	14%	12%
Friendly	9%	11%
Efficient	9%	6%
Team oriented	4%	4%
Passionate	3%	4%

Green indicates a result significantly higher result in 2020 compared with the 2019 result.

Orange indicates a result significantly lower result in 2020 compared with the 2019 result.

2020: Perceptions of the Pharmacy 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=570)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	50%	(+12%)
Administrators	36%	(+3%)
Necessary	34%	(+3%)
Bureaucratic	34%	(+8%)
For practitioners	24%	(-7%)
For the public	24%	(+3%)
Decision-makers	22%	(-1%)
Rigid	15%	(+6%)
Competent	15%	(-)
Out of touch	15%	(+4%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Trustworthy	12%	(+1%)
Intimidating	11%	(+3%)
Controlling	11%	(+3%)
Supportive	10%	(-4%)
Fair	10%	(-)
Advocates	10%	(-7%)
Poor communicators	9%	(-)
Aloof	9%	(+2%)
Shows leadership	9%	(-4%)
Antiquated	8%	(+3%)

Green indicates a result significantly higher in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Orange indicates a result significantly lower in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Summary of changes 2018-20: Perceptions of the Pharmacy 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

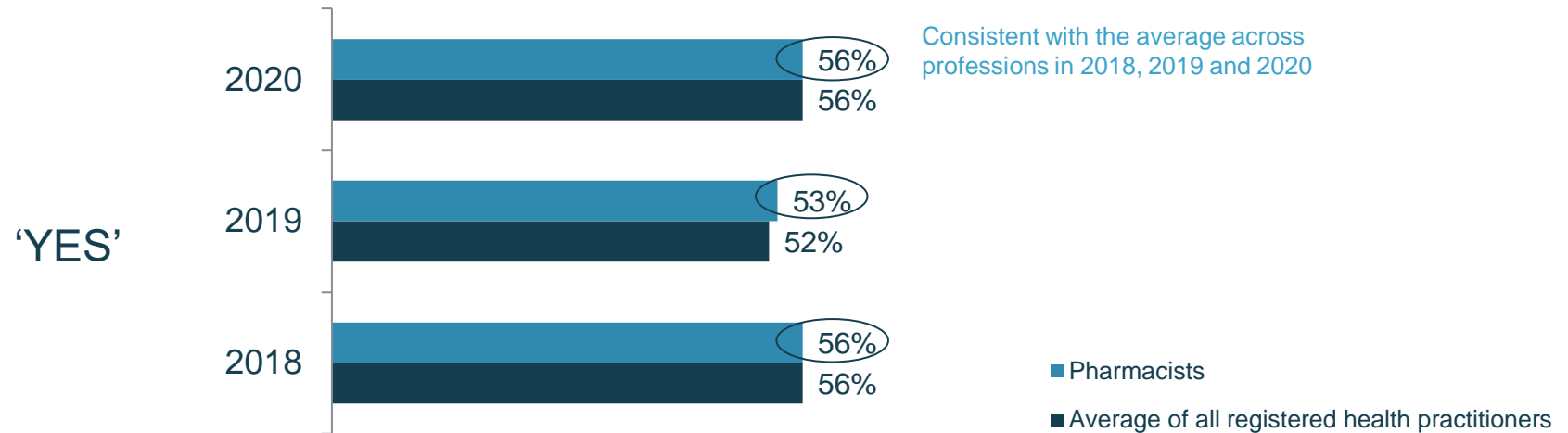
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=355	2019 N=342	2020 N=570	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=355	2019 N=342	2020 N=570
Regulators	45%	50%	50%	Trustworthy	17%	11%	12%
Administrators	35%	39%	36%	Intimidating	12%	11%	11%
Necessary	37%	37%	34%	Controlling	16%	12%	11%
Bureaucratic	29%	30%	34%	Supportive	10%	9%	10%
For practitioners	31%	29%	24%	Fair	12%	15%	10%
For the public	24%	28%	24%	Advocates	11%	9%	10%
Decision-makers	25%	25%	22%	Poor communicators	10%	9%	9%
Rigid	15%	13%	15%	Aloof	10%	7%	9%
Competent	14%	16%	15%	Shows leadership	10%	11%	9%
Out of touch	15%	13%	15%	Antiquated	7%	6%	8%

Green indicates a result significantly higher compared with the previous year.

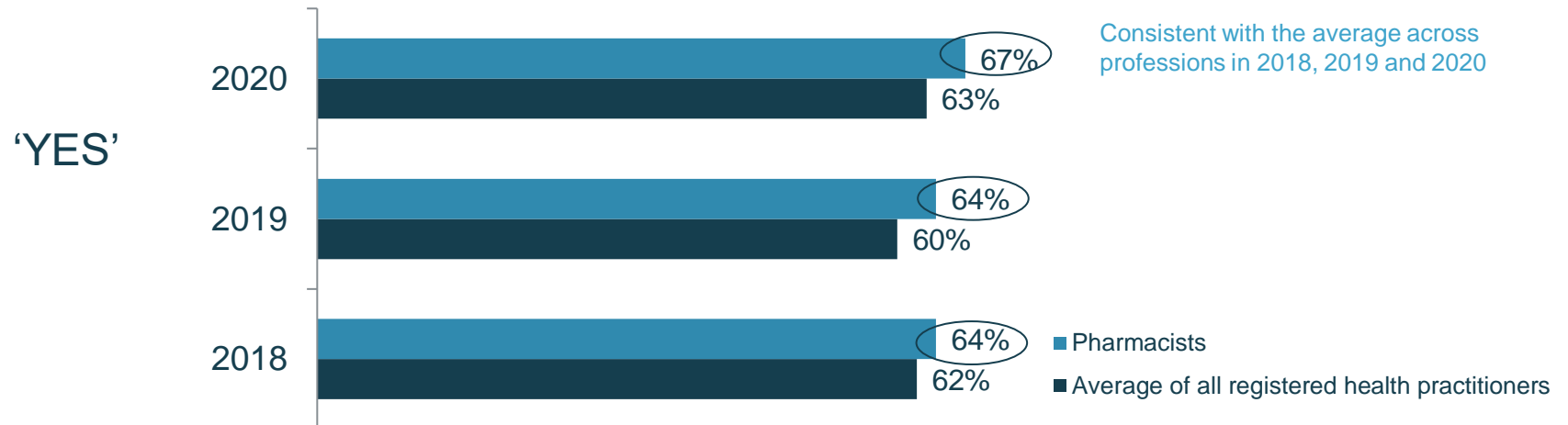
Orange indicates a result significantly lower compared with the previous year.

Levels of confidence and trust in the Pharmacy 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?



The indicators of trust and barriers to trust in the Pharmacy Board of Australia

Indicators of trust: **67% trust the Board**

In my experience I have always felt that the Pharmacy Board have had my best interests at heart.

Just have to believe they're doing the best for health professionals and the community.

They have provided valuable support and advice in the past.

I have faith that it is a properly established institution and have no reason to doubt their integrity.

My experience with them has been very positive, they have helped me through my registration, step by step, they communicated with me patiently about the mistakes I have made during my renewal of registration.

Leaders have a genuine interest in keeping the public safe and ensuring effective and quality access to medicines.

I have no reason not too. Reading some of the cases that they try, it is reassuring to know that they are keeping our profession accountable.

Decisions on whole are consistent and fair but they need greater resources to protect pharmacy from negative franchise influence and indirect ownership.

I feel they have strict adherence to professional and legislated pharmacy guidelines.

Barriers to trust: **9% DO NOT trust the Board**

Little communication with the profession.

I believe that the level of regulation, especially with regards to CPD, for pharmacists is completely over the top when compared with other professions. The expectations on pharmacists with respect to documentation for CPD planning, and CPD requirements is not commensurate with a profession that sit so low in the pecking order of health professionals.

I don't know or understand how they make their decisions. Their decisions often don't fit with what consumers and associates tell me.

Have allowed professional standards and the profession to be taken to the bottom, big pharmacy chain was found to be rorting the system and no action from the board was taken.

Not entirely sure on there role and why registrations cost \$420 when I've seen no return on that money. More transparency into there expenditure is needed.

Out of touch with contemporary practical issues that pharmacists are dealing with. Frustratingly slow to deal with individual pharmacist issues and issues affecting the profession.

Full list of responses provided separately

2020: Perceptions of Ahpra among pharmacists (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=570)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	55%	(+2%)
Administrators	51%	(+6%)
Bureaucratic	39%	(+3%)
Necessary	34%	(-2%)
For the public	30%	(-3%)
For practitioners	28%	(-1%)
Decision-makers	15%	(-7%)
Rigid	15%	(-)
Out of touch	14%	(+2%)
Competent	13%	(-)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Poor communicators	12%	(-1%)
Controlling	12%	(-3%)
Intimidating	11%	(-4%)
Accessible	8%	(-1%)
Fair	8%	(-2%)
Trustworthy	7%	(-3%)
Aloof	6%	(-1%)
Secretive	5%	(-1%)
Helpful	5%	(-3%)
Antiquated	5%	(+1%)

Green indicates a result significantly higher in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Orange indicates a result significantly lower in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Summary of changes 2018-20:

Perceptions of Ahpra among pharmacists

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 Ahpra	2018 N=355	2019 N=342	2020 N=570
Regulators	52%	54%	55%
Administrators	54%	49%	51%
Bureaucratic	39%	34%	39%
Necessary	41%	37%	34%
For the public	33%	30%	30%
For practitioners	31%	26%	28%
Decision-makers	18%	16%	15%
Rigid	18%	16%	15%
Out of touch	13%	17%	14%
Competent	10%	11%	13%

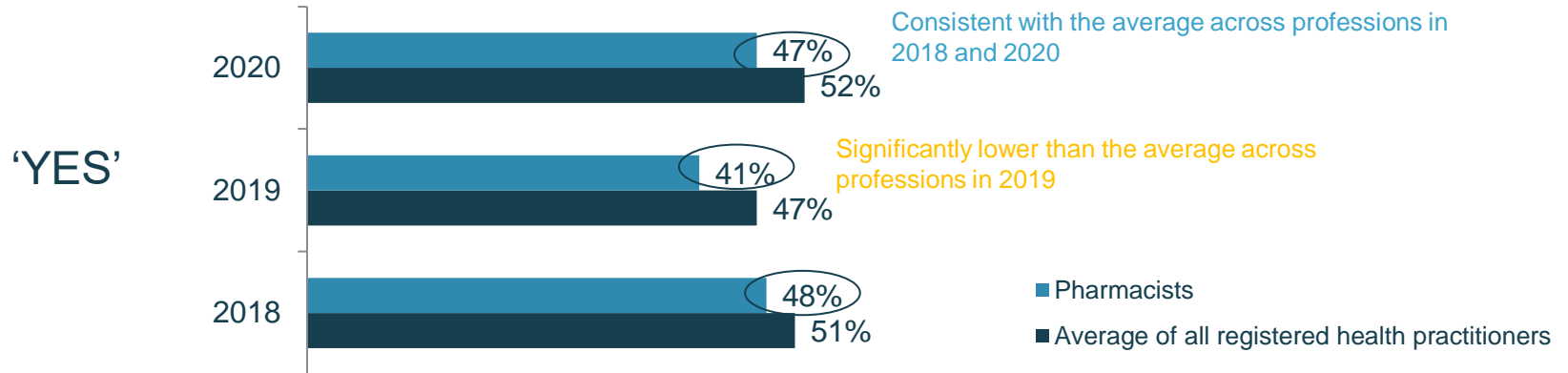
% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2018 N=355	2019 N=342	2020 N=570
Poor communicators	17%	19%	12%
Controlling	15%	14%	12%
Intimidating	13%	13%	11%
Accessible	8%	8%	8%
Fair	8%	8%	8%
Trustworthy	8%	8%	7%
Aloof	10%	9%	6%
Secretive	13%	10%	5%
Helpful	5%	4%	5%
Antiquated	3%	3%	5%

Green indicates a result significantly higher compared with the previous year.

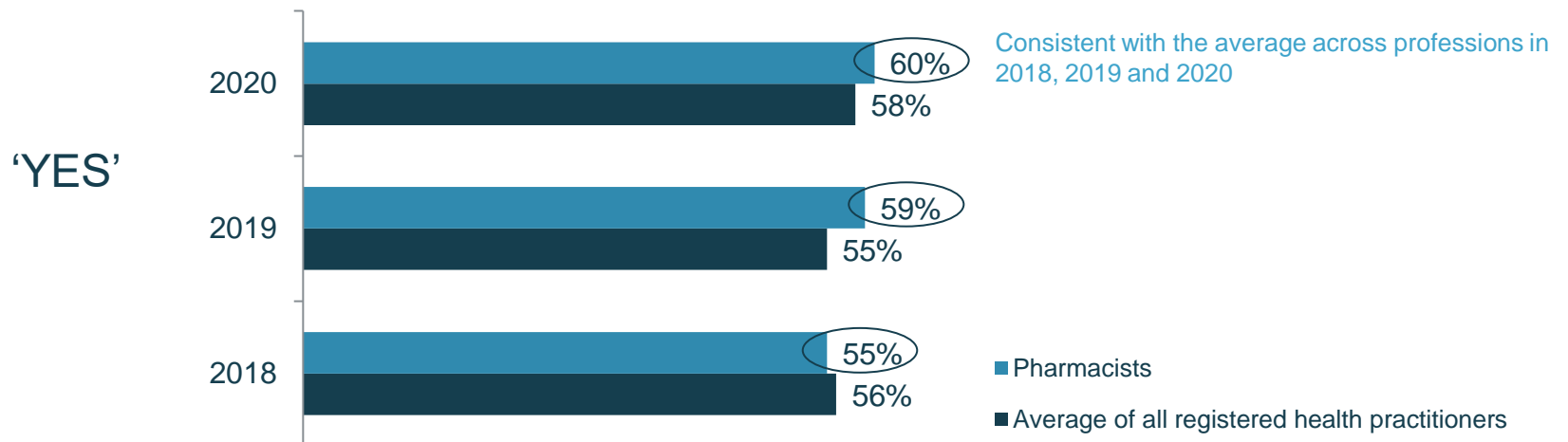
Orange indicates a result significantly lower compared with the previous year.

Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among pharmacists

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



Q. Do you trust Ahpra?



The indicators of trust and barriers to trust in Ahpra among pharmacists

Indicators of trust: 60% trust Ahpra

I have no reason to doubt that they perform the function they have been asked to do.

Haven't heard of any negative reports to challenge my trust.

From reading the cases that go through for practitioner malpractice. It seems they do a good job to protect the public.

The regulatory body that help to maintain the standard pharmacy practice nationwide and help to safe public life.

The regulations in place ensures all practitioners meet the required standards and the public can be confident that they are dealing with someone they can trust.

As the accreditation body it helps keep clinicians appropriate in their knowledge via CPD requirements and allows us to know our fellow clinicians are registered to an appropriate standard.

I believe it is a responsible organization staffed by ex-professional practitioners.

They are guided by principles that protect the public and protect the profession. I don't doubt the sincerity of those that work in these positions.

Because Ahpra is accountable for health practitioners so they are designed to be trustworthy.

Barriers to trust: 12% DO NOT trust Ahpra

I have no idea who they are or who they report to.

I think they're overwhelmed and short staffed to manage an entire regulatory authority over all health professionals.

Inconsistencies with punishment. A doctor was financially punished for helping someone where he received no gain and risked no life, meanwhile a paramedic who was switching drugs because he was a drug addict was allowed to maintain his registration.

Inability to regulate medical practitioners who have made multiple professional integrity and legal breaches.

It is very slow to act in terms of dealing with registrations and notifications and is not responsive.

Too bureaucratic and removed from both the pharmacy profession and consumers/patients.

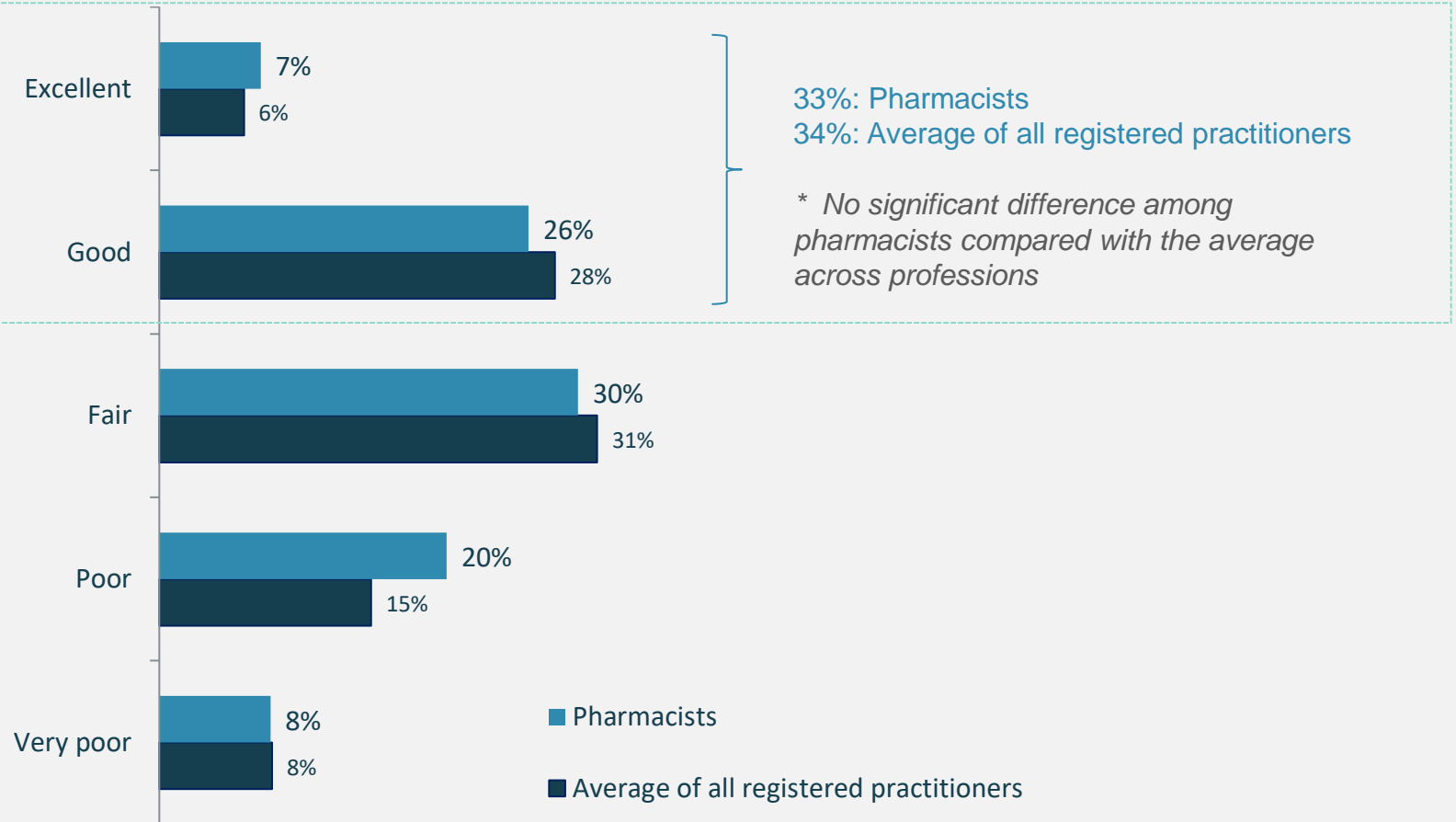
Never keep their word. Do what they want, constantly change the bar.

I have no idea what they actually do except taking my money each year for registration and taking forever to lodge paperwork.

Assessment of the level of support provided to practitioners from Ahpra and National Boards to maintain their professional practice

Q. How would you rate the level of support provided by National Boards and Ahpra for you to maintain or improve your professional practice?

Pharmacists



Additional activities or support practitioners would have liked to see from Ahpra and/or the National Boards during the pandemic

Practitioners were asked what additional activities or support, if any, they would have liked to see from Ahpra and/or their National Board during the pandemic? Below is a sample of the open-ended responses provided.

(Full list of responses provided separately).

Maybe not increasing my registration fee again. I think quite a bit of work has become constrained for fellow pharmacists and thus still having to fork out and even more for registration seems unjust. Offer 50% discount on it, maybe just for 1 year.

Lobbying government for equal access to PPE.

Prompt registration of new graduates and pharmacists to assist pharmacy workforce numbers.

Increased training on legislation changes. Crack down on practitioners doing the wrong thing - seems like most get away with doing whatever they want despite being reported.

Clearer guidelines for pharmacists about what was changing for them. The information felt like it was coming from 50 different places, working already long hours with even more customers and queries than usual it was difficult to keep on top of all the changes. A weekly bulletin with all the relevant information and a clear website with all the relevant rule changes and resources would have been brilliant. Something that also held weight with pharmacy owners as they were often needing to be convinced of safety changes (especially if there was a cost involved).

Maintain standards and get rid of any practitioners who are doing the wrong thing. COVID has opened up all sorts of new ways to abuse the system.

Subsidized fees. I think every health practitioner has dedicated themselves to the public this year and have had very little support in doing so.

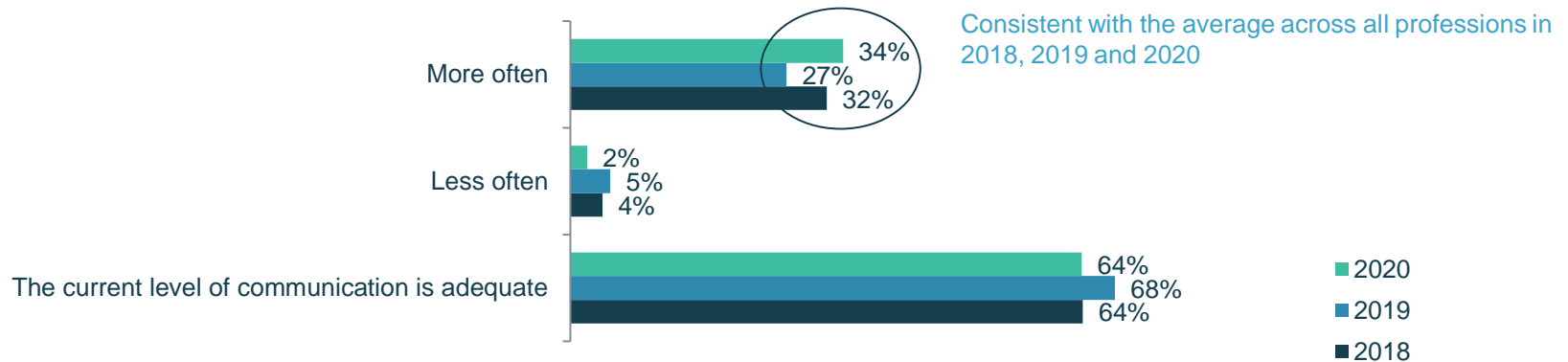
I provided feedback to the board that they needed to review the CPD requirements on pharmacists during the pandemic. The board was reactive on this issue when it should have been proactive.

Would have liked the Boards or their representatives to make more public comment on the wide variations in how individual states/jurisdictions have handled the COVID-19 pandemic.

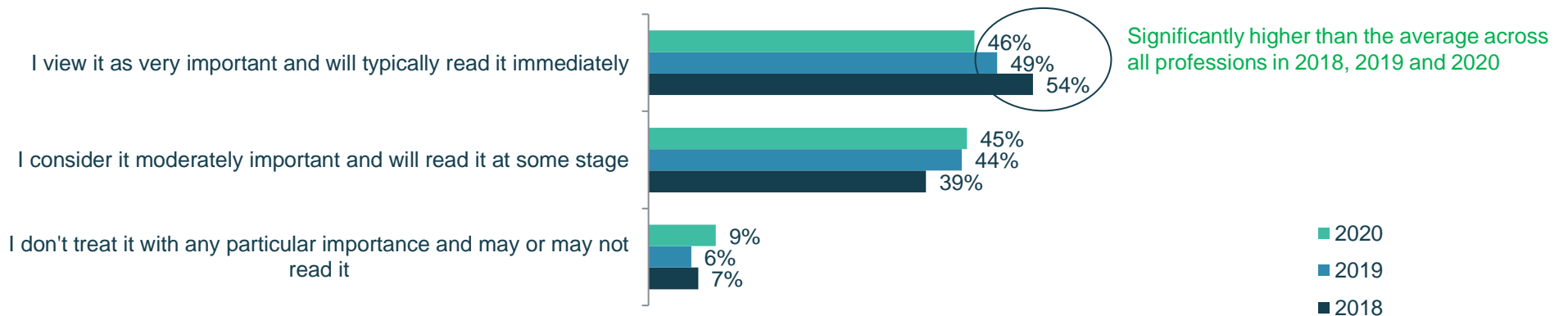
Full list of responses provided separately

Response to communication by the Pharmacy Board of Australia

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



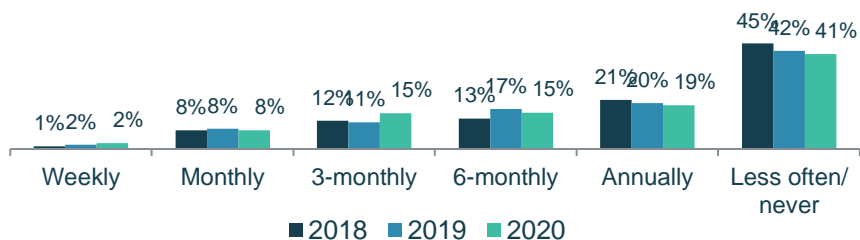
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

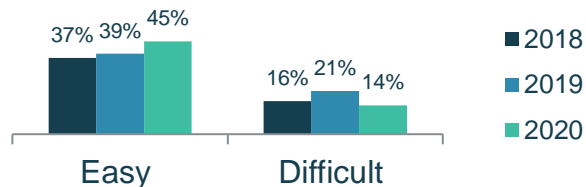
Use of the Pharmacy Board of Australia website

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



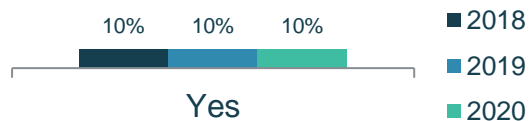
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this Board

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



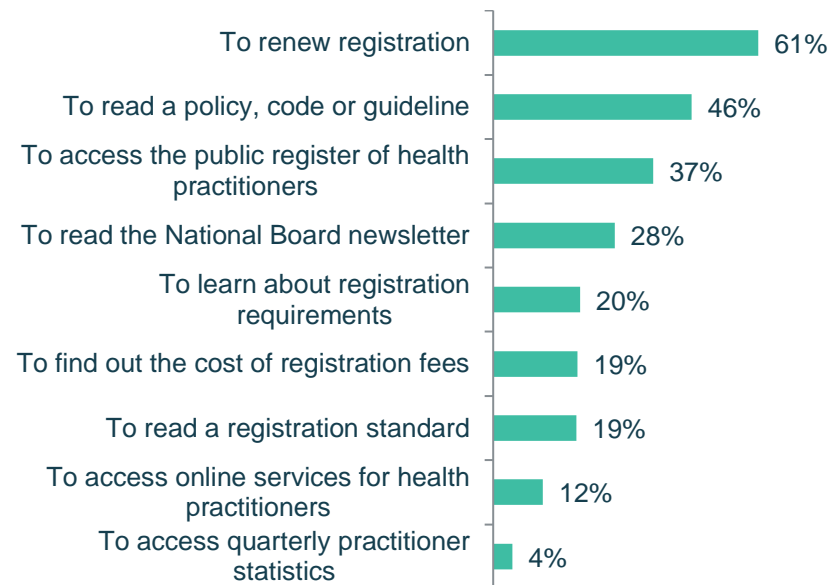
Base: Practitioners who have visited that Board's website

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

2020: Reasons for visiting the National Board website



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

- Internship information.
- COVID-19 specific requirements.
- Clear and easy to access CPD requirements.
- Updates on pandemic sub-register.
- Registration information.
- Standard equipment required for a dispensary.

Contact details

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Truly Deeply