
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 Osteopathy Board of Australia

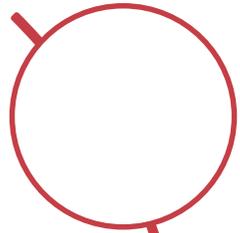
Truly[®]
Deeply



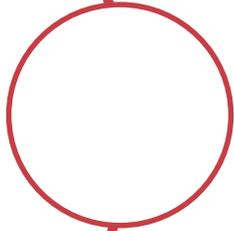
Introduction

- 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 Osteopathy Board of Australia**.

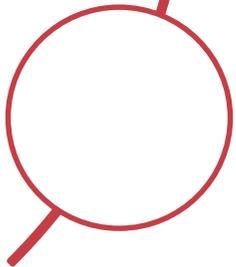
An overview of the methodology



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.

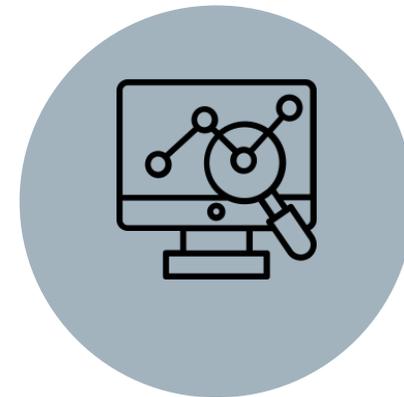


Stage 2 consisted of an online survey with a representative sample of the Australian general public. This survey was conducted between November 1– 6, 2019.

Quantitative approach

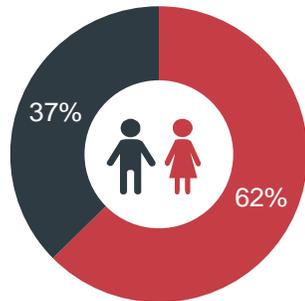
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community following the qualitative investigation.
- The 2019 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 questionnaires, with only a small number of additions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external 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%

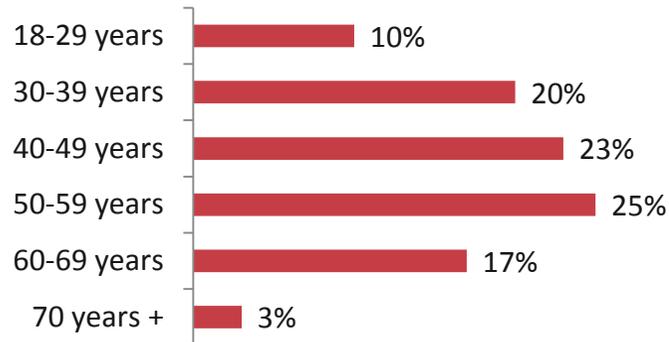


2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

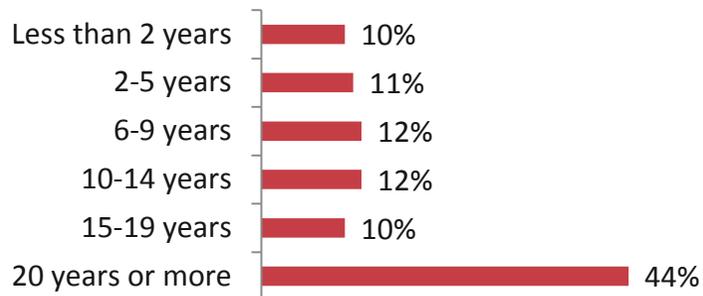
Gender



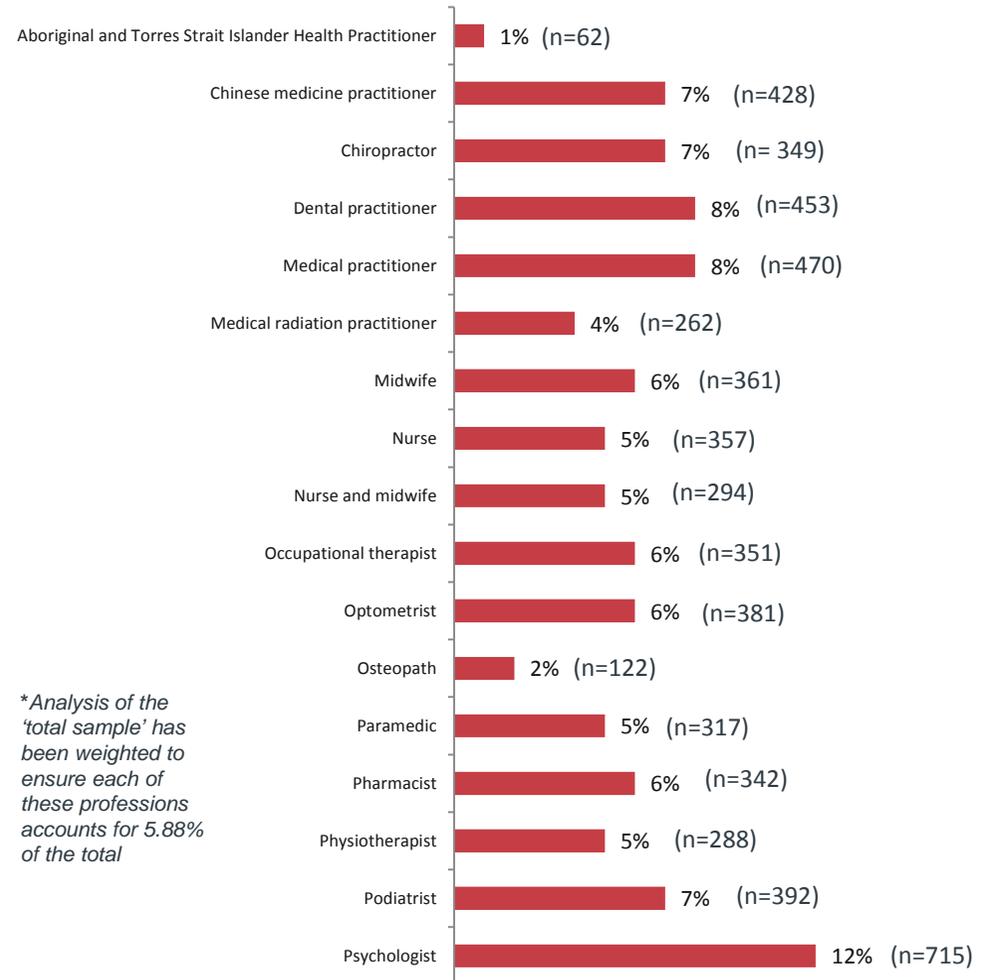
Age



Years in practice



Practitioner type*

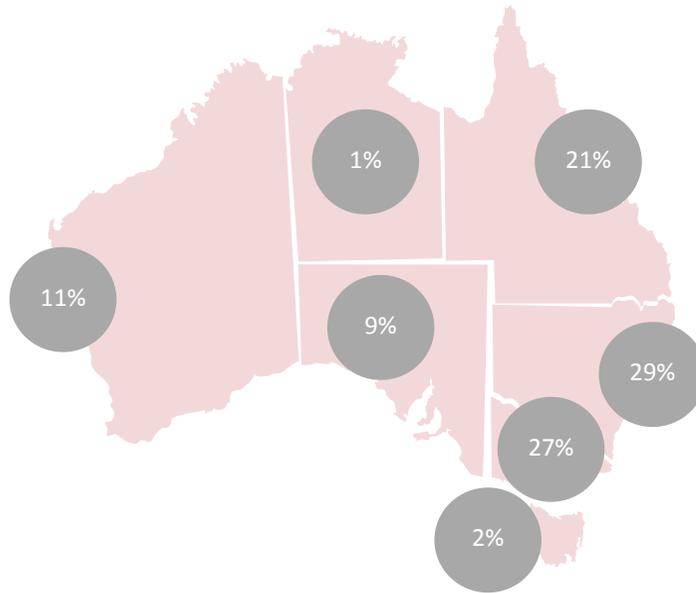


*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

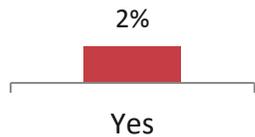
2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

Location

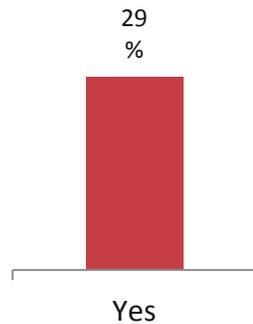


Metro: **64%**
Regional: **36%**

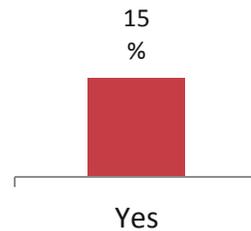
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



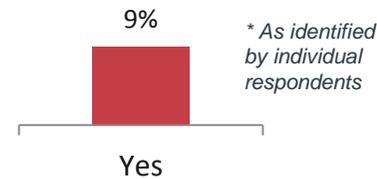
% who were born a country other than Australia



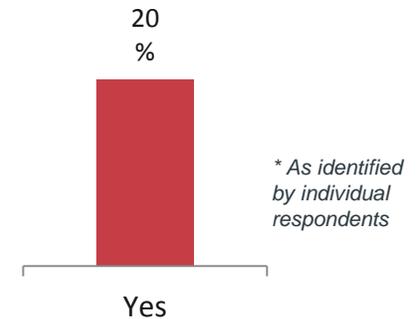
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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*

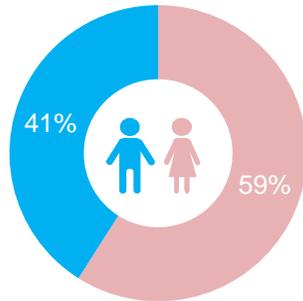


Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners.

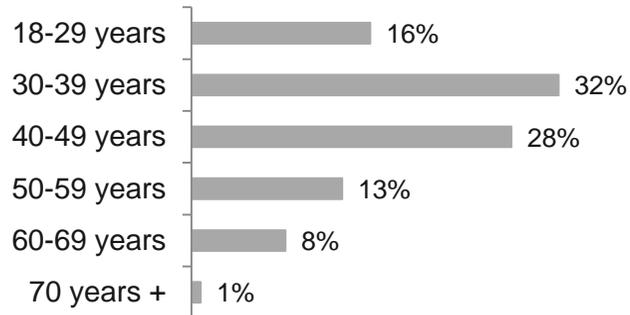
Specific insights into the responses from:
Osteopaths

Sample of osteopaths (n=122)

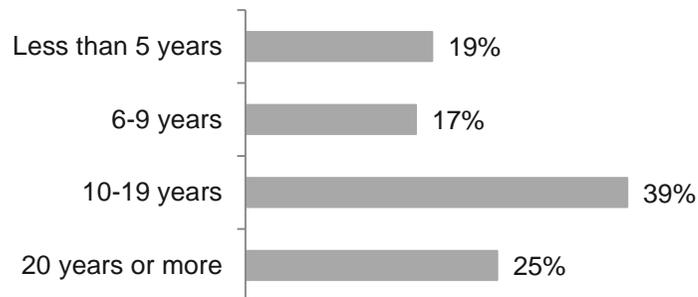
Gender:



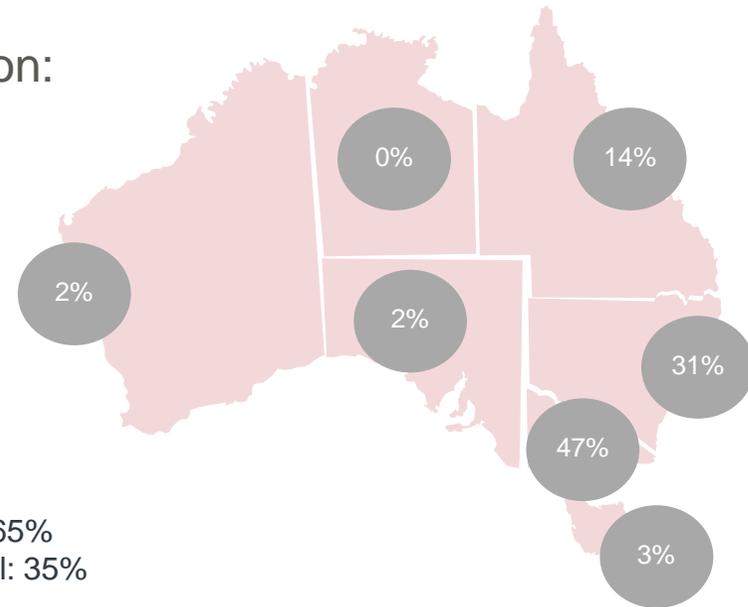
Age:



Years in practice:

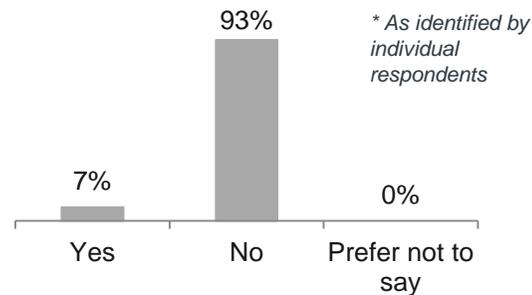


Location:

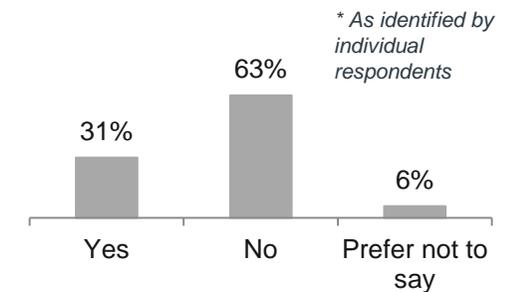


Metro: 65%
Regional: 35%

% 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 osteopathy 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=122)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	52%	(+5%)
Knowledgeable	43%	(+13%)
Caring	33%	(+5%)
Empathetic	29%	(+7%)
Competent	27%	(+5%)
Compassionate	27%	(+3%)
Hard working	23%	(-7%)
Passionate	21%	(+8%)
Dedicated	19%	(-2%)
Independent	17%	(+10%)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Trusted	16%	(-6%)
Responsible	14%	(-6%)
Honest	14%	(+5%)
Committed	13%	(-3%)
Nurturing	13%	(+7%)
Approachable	12%	(+2%)
Open minded	12%	(+6%)
Reputable	11%	(-%)
Community minded	10%	(-2%)
Respected	9%	(-10%)

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 Osteopathy 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=122)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	41%	(+1%)
Necessary	41%	(+8%)
Administrators	40%	(+6%)
For practitioners	35%	(+4%)
Supportive	29%	(+16%)
Decision makers	28%	(+4%)
For the public	27%	(+4%)
Bureaucratic	25%	(-3%)
Advocates	22%	(+5%)
Helpful	20%	(+10%)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Good communicators	20%	(+10%)
Competent	19%	(+4%)
Fair	19%	(+8%)
Trustworthy	18%	(+7%)
Approachable	18%	(+9%)
Responsive	18%	(+9%)
Accessible	16%	(+7%)
Shows leadership	13%	(+1%)
In touch	13%	(+8%)
Transparent	13%	(+7%)

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 Osteopathy 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=112	2019 N=122
Regulators	39%	41%
Necessary	43%	41%
Administrators	42%	40%
For practitioners	44%	35%
Supportive	22%	29%
Decision makers	35%	28%
For the public	25%	27%
Bureaucratic	26%	25%
Advocates	30%	22%
Helpful	23%	20%

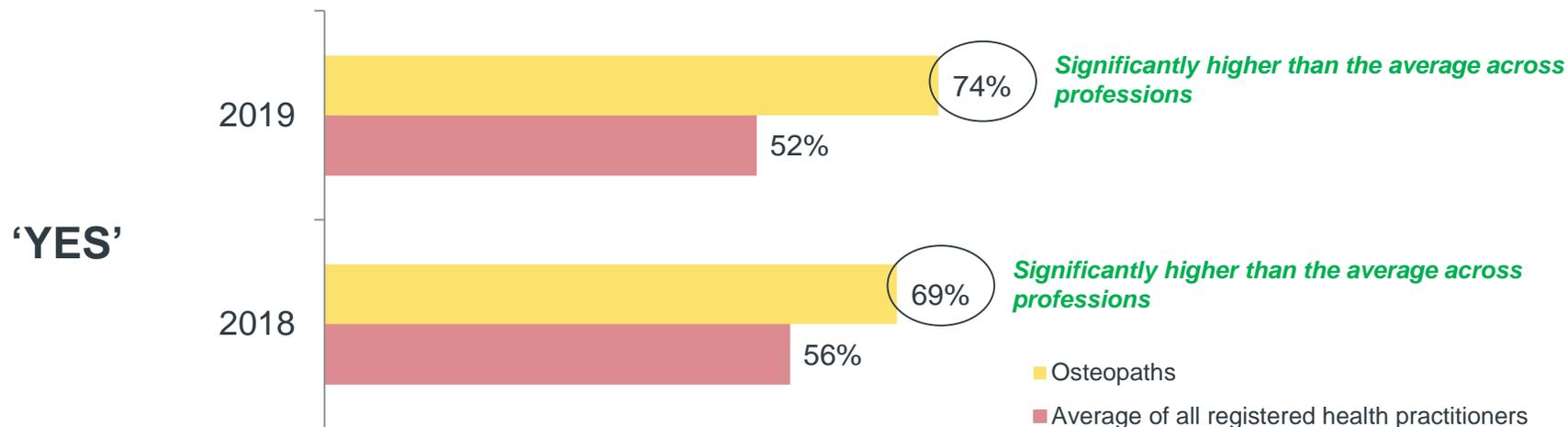
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=112	2019 N=122
Good communicators	21%	20%
Competent	25%	19%
Fair	13%	19%
Trustworthy	20%	18%
Approachable	17%	18%
Responsive	17%	18%
Accessible	18%	16%
Shows leadership	15%	13%
In touch	4%	13%
Transparent	10%	13%

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

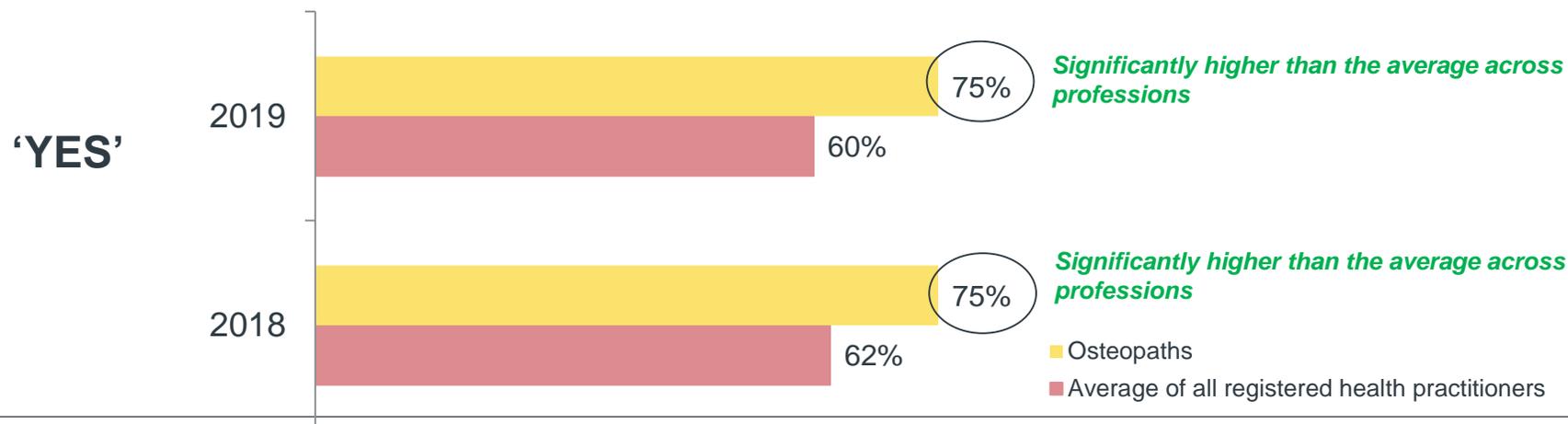
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

Levels of confidence and trust in the Osteopathy 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 Osteopathy Board of Australia

Indicators of trust: **75% trust the Board**

From a historical point of view, they have always had the good of the profession in mind and have followed through on promises and objectives.

The Osteopathy Board, together with Ahpra are both professional organisations and I expect that they will do everything in their power to uphold public protection and make it clear to practitioners, the standards which are expected.

There are good community members on the board and the practitioner members are highly regarded and educated in the osteopath profession. The members understand the governance and the NRAS. The board members manage the registrant funds very well so as not to increase the fees unnecessarily.

All businesses need leadership and the board tries hard to achieve this (never perfect of course).

They keep continual communication with us about their roles and actions.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: **7% DO NOT trust the Board**

I feel that the focus is on an adversarial approach to practitioner communication. There is general presumption of guilt in any query or complaint rather than a genuine desire for the truth. I do not trust OBA or Ahpra to have my interests at heart - only what looks good to the public eye.

I think that Ahpra has weeded out people on the OBA who would represent the profession and patients and replaced them with people who would be compliant with Ahpra.

I have concerns that the board is not doing enough to encourage practitioners to stay up to date with current best practice. Namely modern pain science and exercise prescription/ rehabilitation.

They do not advocate for practitioners within different agencies; i.e.: workers compensation, DVA, etc. We pay a fee (\$300) to go onto the workers comp registrar, and have to do a mountain of extra paperwork, only to paid below our normal fees for our services.

2019: Perceptions of Ahpra among osteopaths (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=122)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	66%	(+12%)
For the public	55%	(+19%)
Administrators	49%	(+3%)
Bureaucratic	48%	(+9%)
Necessary	42%	(+6%)
Decision makers	25%	(+3%)
Rigid	24%	(+8%)
Intimidating	21%	(+6%)
For practitioners	19%	(-8%)
Competent	18%	(+7%)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Poor communicators	16%	(+1%)
Trustworthy	16%	(+6%)
Fair	15%	(+5%)
Accessible	14%	(+4%)
Helpful	13%	(+6%)
Controlling	12%	(-2%)
Out of touch	11%	(-2%)
Shows leadership	11%	(+5%)
Approachable	11%	(+4%)
Advocates	9%	(-)

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 osteopaths

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=112	2019 N=122
Regulators	65%	66%
For the public	46%	55%
Administrators	58%	49%
Bureaucratic	49%	48%
Necessary	40%	42%
Decision makers	33%	25%
Rigid	22%	24%
Intimidating	23%	21%
For practitioners	29%	19%
Competent	12%	18%

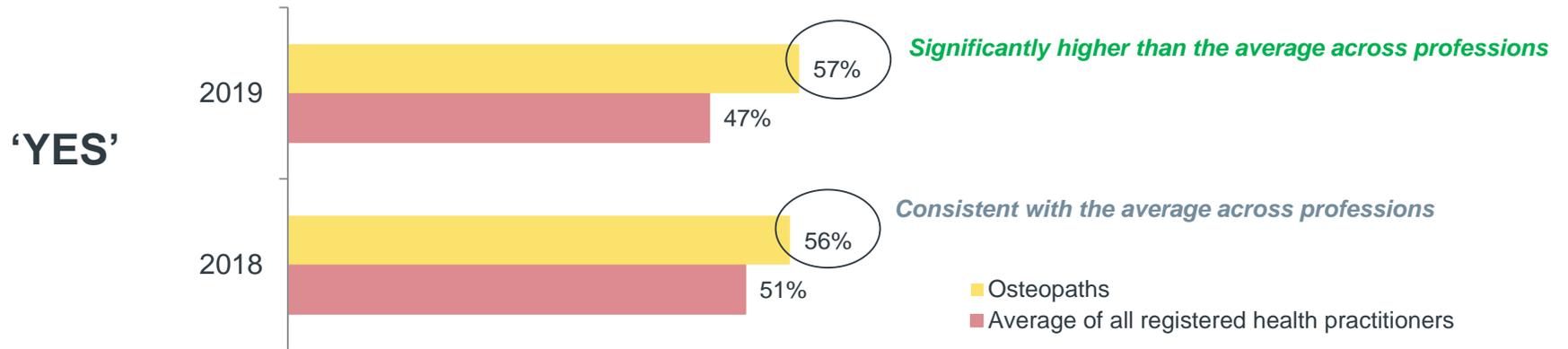
% of practitioners with that perception of the Ahpra	2018 N=112	2019 N=122
Poor communicators	15%	16%
Trustworthy	11%	16%
Fair	11%	15%
Accessible	10%	14%
Helpful	9%	13%
Controlling	25%	12%
Out of touch	14%	11%
Shows leadership	4%	11%
Approachable	9%	11%
Advocates	6%	9%

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

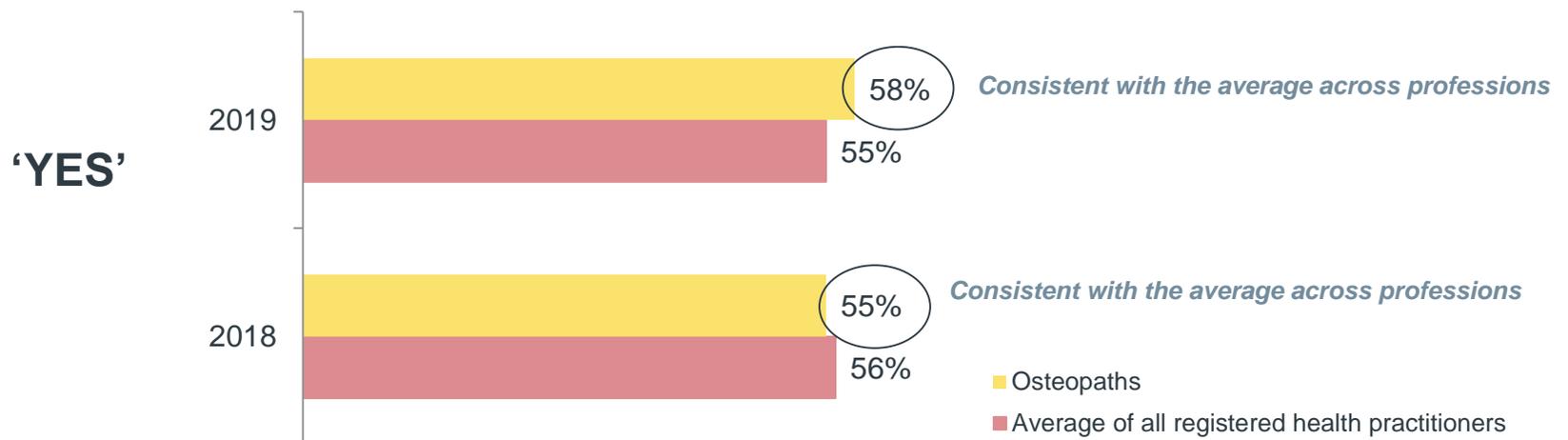
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among osteopaths

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 osteopaths

Indicators of trust: **58% trust Ahpra**

They're trusted by default. They haven't done anything to make me not trust them.

They are committed to ensuring that health practitioners who have met the qualifications to practice are the only ones entitled to registration.

They are there to protect the public and I feel confident they are also there to help the health professions maintain a genuine standard in a positive way. I really do not believe they are in place to make it difficult for bona fide practitioners.

A national board, that I've found to be transparent in their working and involving professionals from various sectors as well as public members to work towards outcomes.

They are a reputable governing body encompassing a wide variety of health professions, working towards regulation within healthcare.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: **18% DO NOT trust Ahpra**

I perceive they are slow to react to complaints from the public, driven by administrative & bureaucratic red tape & dictate policy to the Boards rather than act to support the work of the Boards.

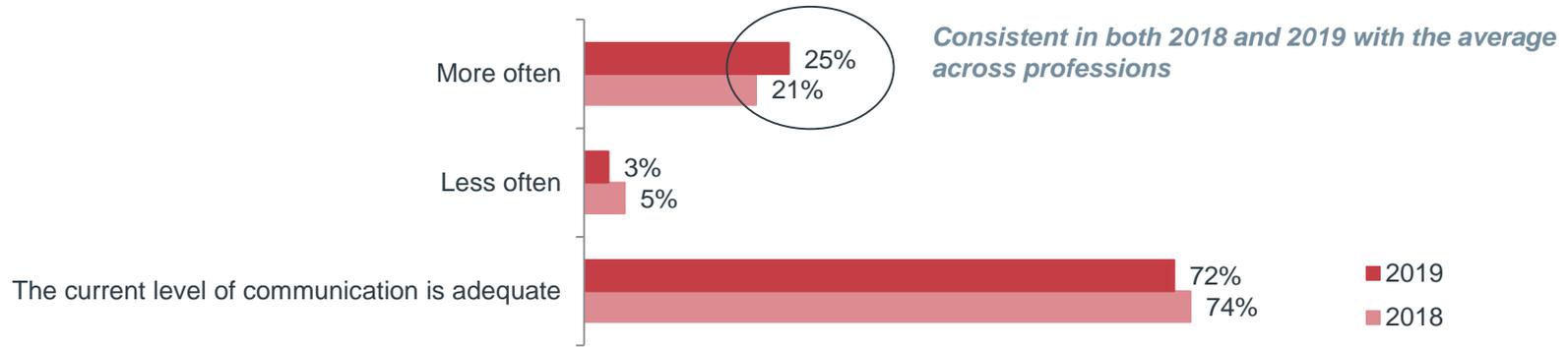
They seem more concerned with advertising standards and such, rather than actually being a helpful regulator. They allow far too many nuisance complaints from organisations such as Friends of Science in Medicine.

Are more reactive to what the media and strong lobbying groups push rather than considering each situation on a case by case basis from both sides. Treat smaller and weaker groups (associations) very aggressively and rigid with their short sighted and poorly investigated decision process.

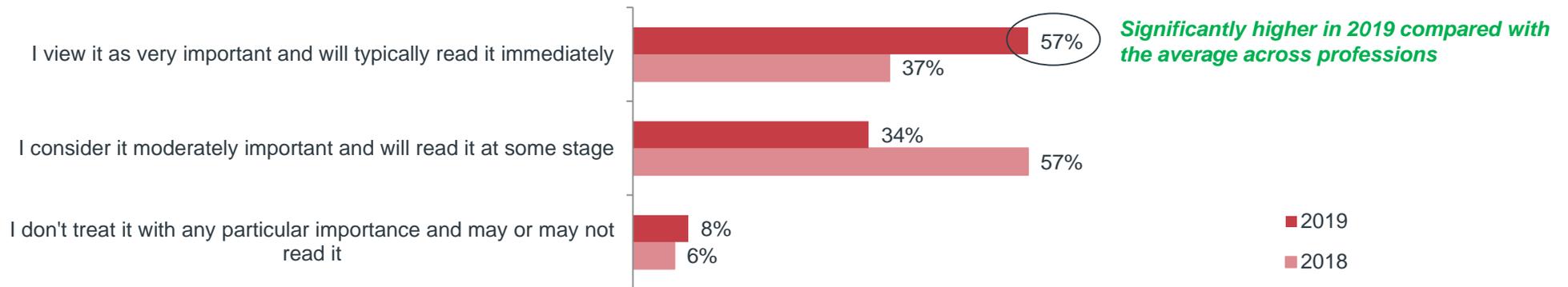
Whenever I have contacted Ahpra regarding my registration or any other queries, their answers differ and no one can ever put me in contact with someone who is able to effectively answer my questions. I have been waiting nearly a year about a question to them, I have had so much contact with them, everyone gives me different answers. It is still unresolved. Staffing is such a huge issue with them.

Response to communication by the Osteopathy 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

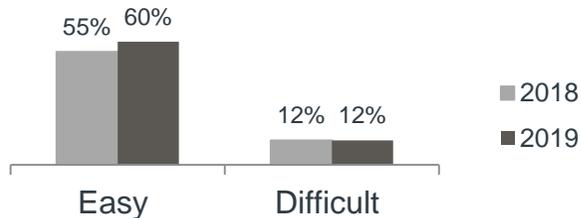
Use of the Osteopathy Board of Australia website

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?



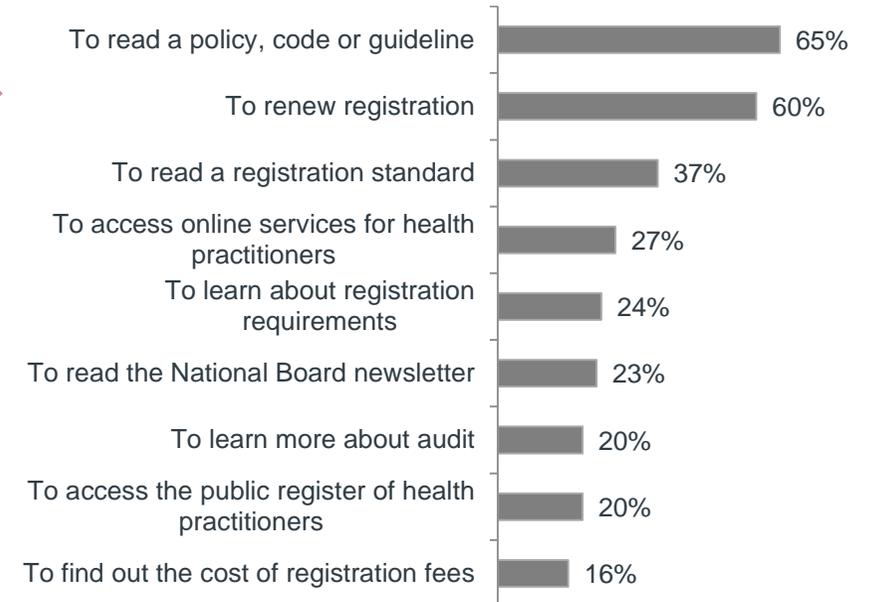
Base: Practitioners who have visited that board's website

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)...

- *More info about suitable compulsory CPD.*
- *Specific recommendations.*
- *What their position is on the limiting of osteopathy to muscle-skeletal issues?*
- *Information regarding maternity leave for practitioners.*
- *Meeting dates for each Board.*

Additional feedback from osteopaths

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)*

This survey seems to make much of the distinction between the Osteopathy Board's communication (including web site) and Ahpra's. It's confusing having both communicating; from the profession's point of view, there should be one voice.

My perception of Ahpra is that it makes rules that supposedly apply to all professions but does not police said rules equally across all professions.

Osteopathy Australia is a responsible body that I would trust to regulate its own members. Two additional regulation bodies is at least one too many. The only time I contacted Ahpra to register a complaint about a blatantly non-conforming practitioner, they could not have been less interested so what's the point of them?

We need to recognize the animal biomechanical medicine course and support the practitioners that treat animals with this qualification.

Although Ahpra is there for public safety, it would be nice to see some open communication to the professions about audits and general practice standards that may be focused upon. Mostly it just feels as though Ahpra will make your life difficult if you're ever in their cross-hairs. Rather like the ATO, you sometimes don't know you're doing something wrong until they're punishing you. Being pro-active with the profession would be preferable.

When I compare the content of communication with that from the UK regulator, I find the Osteo Board lacking on all fronts. There is no meaningful engagement about how the Board is protecting the public or how they fairly assess a complaint and de-identified examples of their process and outcomes. Trust and transparency form the basis of good governance and if Ahpra and Boards are trying to build (or establish) trust then they need to demonstrate more transparency in their actions, not just saying they have a process.

As a practitioner I only expect to be contacted by Ahpra or the OBA regarding important matters relating to their regulatory role. So far, I have found this entirely satisfactory.

I view them similar to an umpire in sport. If you don't notice them, they're doing a good job.

