
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 Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

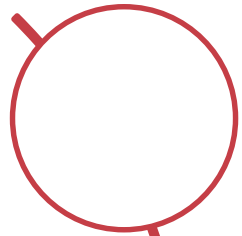
Truly[®]
Deeply



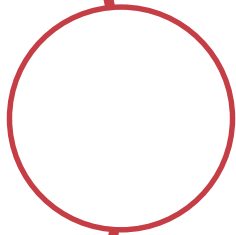
Introduction

- 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 **Occupational Therapy Board of Australia**.

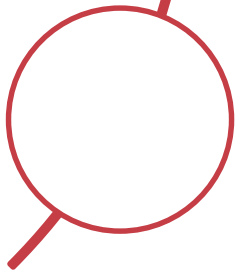
An overview of the methodology



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

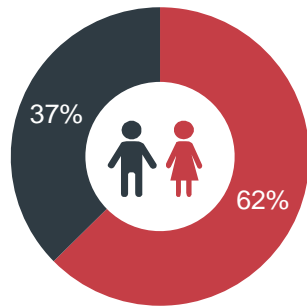
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community following the qualitative investigation.
- The 2019 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 questionnaires, with only a small number of additions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external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

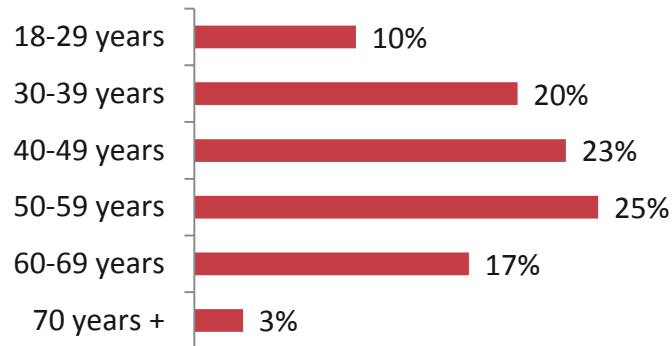


2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

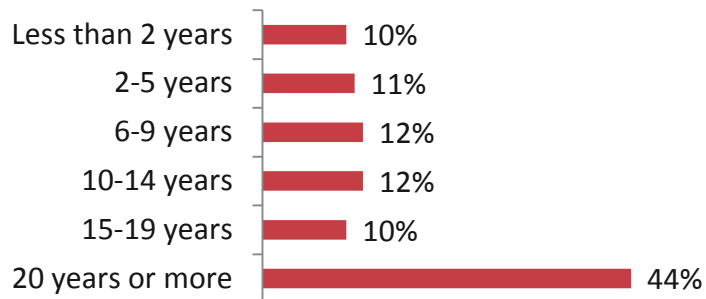
Gender



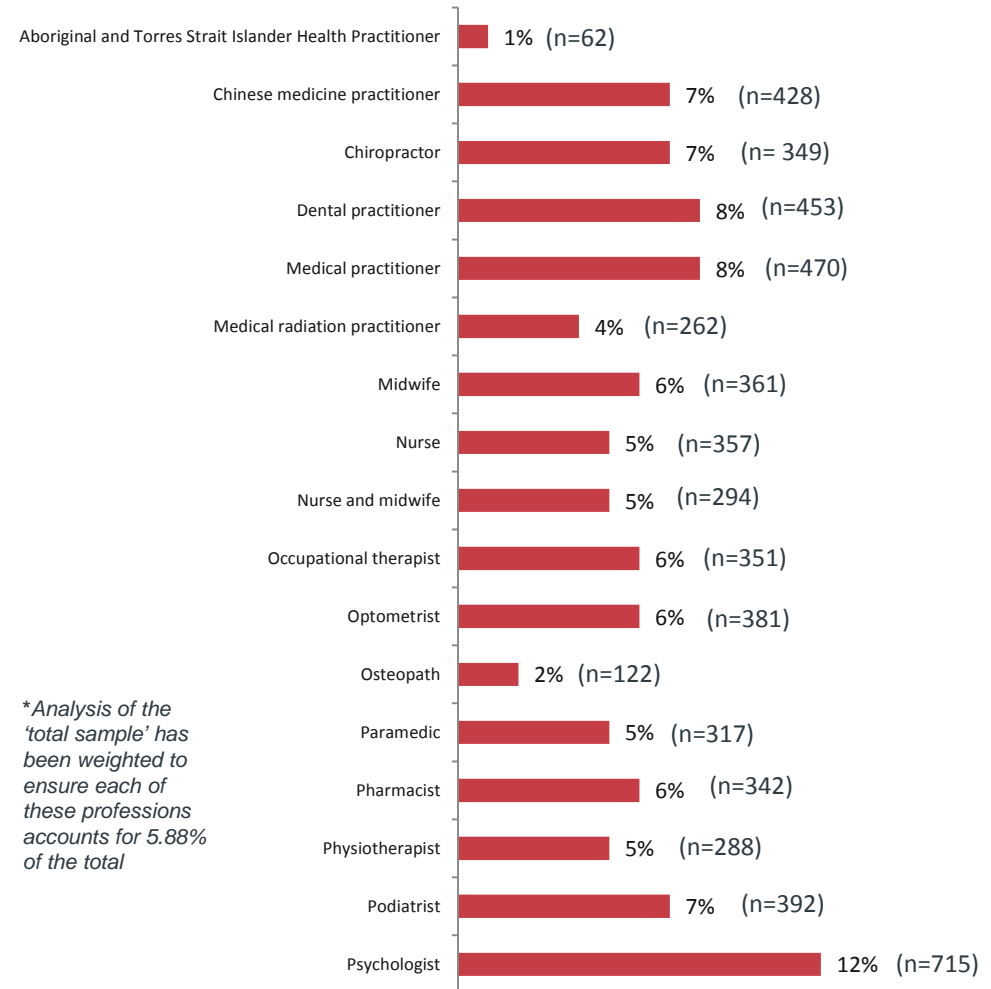
Age



Years in practice



Practitioner type*

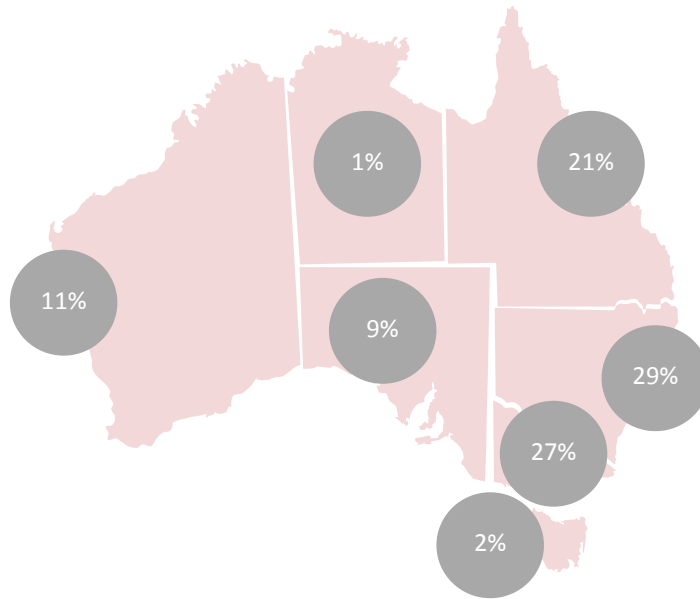


*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

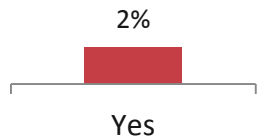
2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

Location

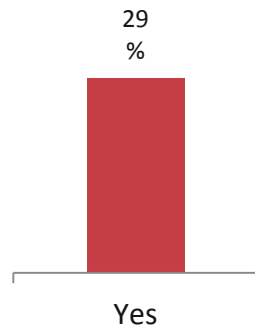


Metro: **64%**
Regional: **36%**

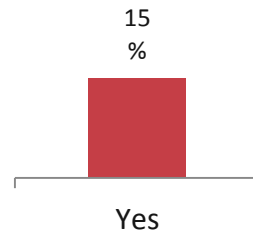
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



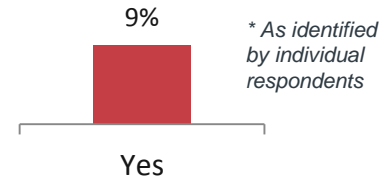
% who were born a country other than Australia



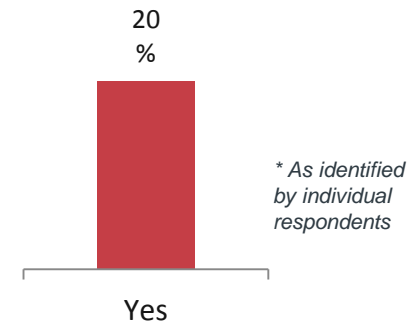
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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*

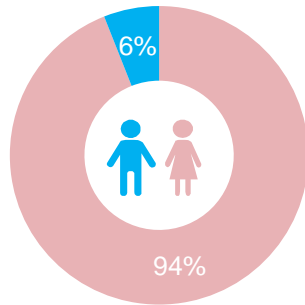


Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners.

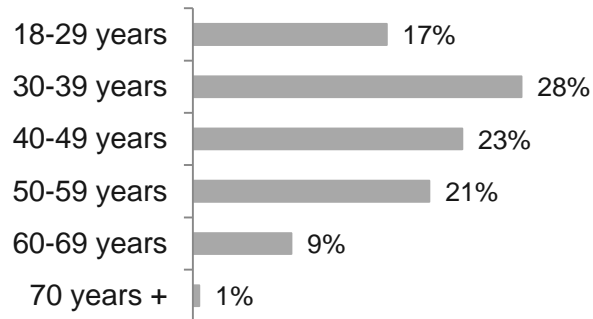
Specific insights into the responses from:
Occupational therapists

Sample of occupational therapists (n=351)

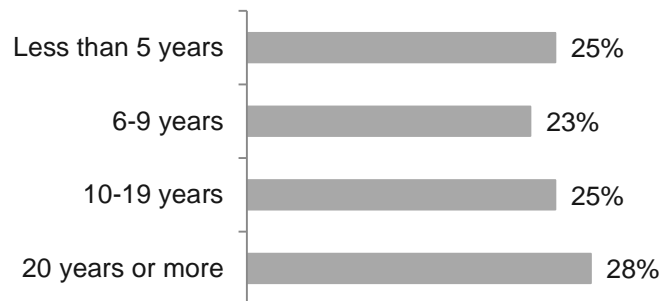
Gender:



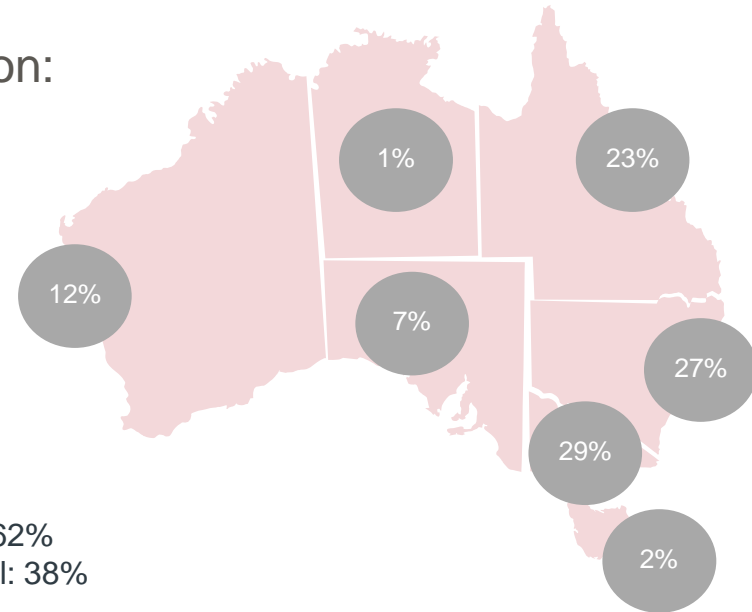
Age:



Years in practice:

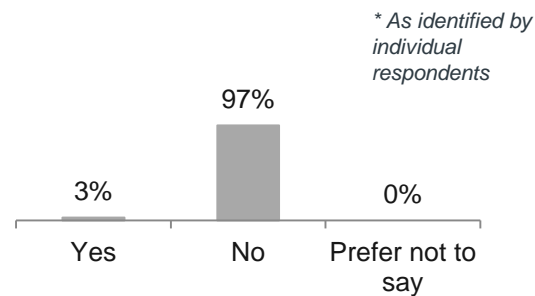


Location:

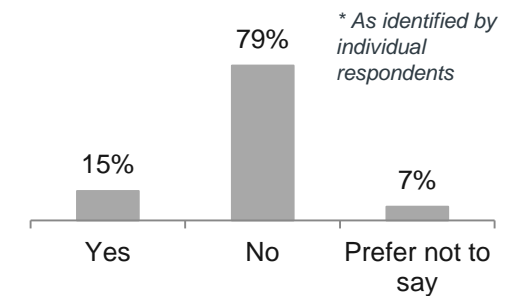


Metro: 62%
Regional: 38%

% 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 occupational therapy 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=351)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	36%	(-11%)
Creative	31%	(+28%)
Empathetic	30%	(+9%)
Innovative	30%	(+24%)
Compassionate	29%	(+5%)
Hard working	28%	(-2%)
Team orientated	25%	(+17%)
Caring	24%	(-3%)
Community minded	23%	(+11%)
Dedicated	22%	(+1%)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Committed	21%	(+4%)
Knowledgeable	20%	(-10%)
Passionate	20%	(+6%)
Competent	14%	(-8%)
Approachable	13%	(+2%)
Open minded	11%	(+5%)
Responsible	9%	(-11%)
Trusted	9%	(-13%)
Respected	7%	(-12%)
Optimistic	7%	(+4%)

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 Occupational Therapy 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=351)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
For practitioners	42%	(+10%)
Regulators	31%	(-9%)
Administrators	30%	(-4%)
Necessary	27%	(-5%)
Advocates	27%	(+10%)
Decision makers	25%	(-)
Shows leadership	20%	(+8%)
Competent	19%	(+4%)
Good communicators	13%	(+4%)
For the public	13%	(-10%)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Accessible	13%	(+3%)
Bureaucratic	12%	(-16%)
Supportive	12%	(-1%)
Helpful	12%	(+1%)
Responsive	11%	(+2%)
Fair	11%	(-)
Trustworthy	9%	(-1%)
Approachable	9%	(-)
Transparent	8%	(+1%)
Out of touch	7%	(-5%)

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 Occupational Therapy 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=349	2019 N=351
For practitioners	51%	42%
Regulators	30%	31%
Administrators	33%	30%
Necessary	39%	27%
Advocates	28%	27%
Decision makers	27%	25%
Shows leadership	19%	20%
Competent	22%	19%
Good communicators	13%	13%
For the public	14%	13%

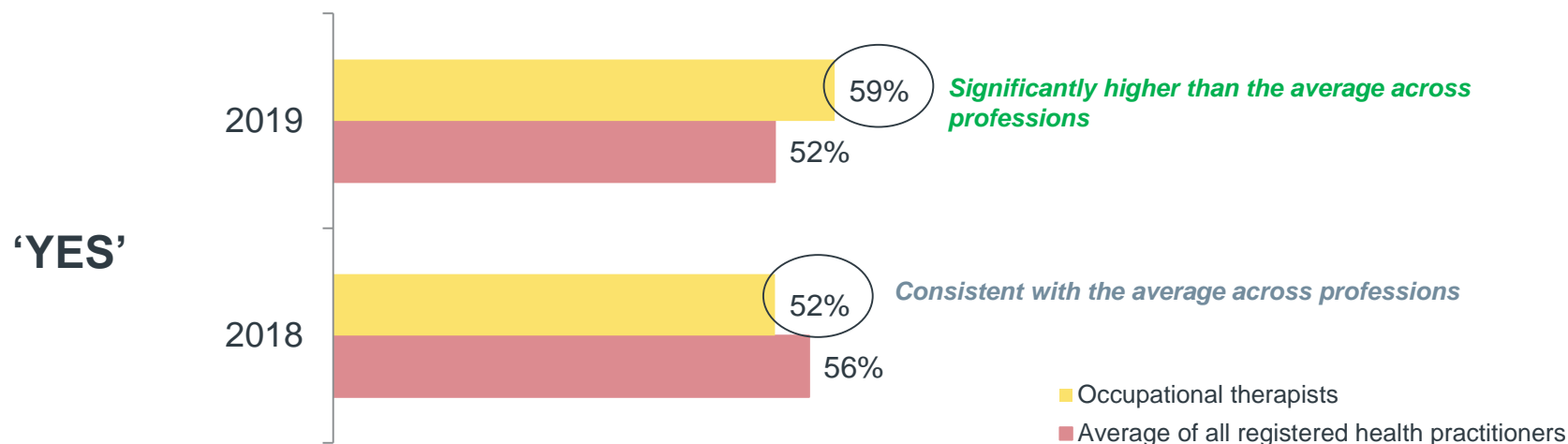
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=349	2019 N=351
Accessible	16%	13%
Bureaucratic	14%	12%
Supportive	16%	12%
Helpful	14%	12%
Responsive	11%	11%
Fair	13%	11%
Trustworthy	15%	9%
Approachable	14%	9%
Transparent	7%	8%
Out of touch	8%	7%

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

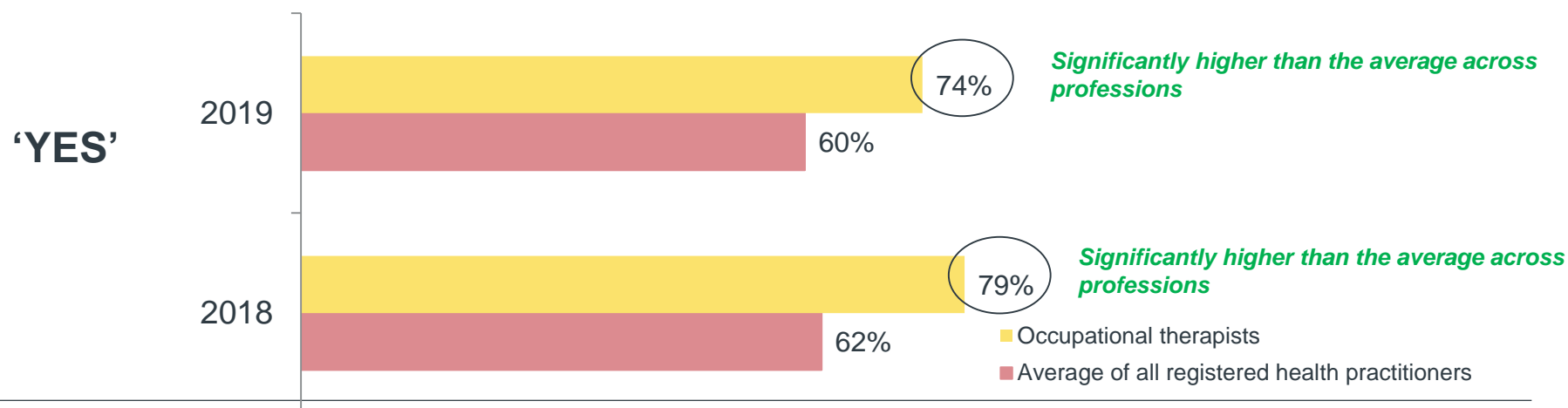
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

Levels of confidence and trust in the Occupational Therapy 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 Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

Indicators of trust: **74% trust the Board**

To ensure those registered are practising and meeting the Occupational Therapy standards in Australia. I would not feel confident if we did not have the OT Board of Australia.

I have no reason not to. Also, I can see the work that they put into supporting occupational therapy, our role as valued professionals, and our "place at the table" in government system and NDIS reviews. I believe they try to have our best interests at heart.

Appear to have future of profession in mind when making decisions.

I find the Board committed to maintaining the standards of the profession in an approachable and fair manner. The Board is transparent in its dealings with professionals and the public.

Because it is an independent body ensuring a standard of practice and professionalism.

They keep abreast of changes and are always looking assist upskilling and providing information and advocating for the profession.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: **2% DO NOT trust the Board**

I don't know much about them or have much correspondence. I think they are working for the profession, but I don't actually know what they are doing.

It is very expensive to be a member, with what seems to be few benefits. The courses they offer are expensive, even for members. I am interested to know where that membership money goes, and if it is being used to progress our profession.

No is probably too strong a word, but some concern that PD of approaches with sometimes questionable evidence base may be advertised.

Completely out of touch regarding rural and regional OTs, if membership numbers are dwindling. You need to offer at least something for the \$500 fee.

2019: Perceptions of Ahpra among occupational therapists

(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=351)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	68%	(+14%)
Administrators	54%	(+8%)
Necessary	42%	(+6%)
For the public	39%	(+4%)
For practitioners	37%	(+10%)
Bureaucratic	27%	(-12%)
Decision makers	27%	(+5%)
Competent	16%	(+5%)
Fair	12%	(+3%)
Rigid	12%	(-4%)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Advocates	12%	(+2%)
Trustworthy	11%	(+2%)
Accessible	11%	(+1%)
Intimidating	9%	(-6%)
Responsive	9%	(+3%)
Good communicators	9%	(+3%)
Poor communicators	9%	(-6%)
Controlling	9%	(-6%)
Transparent	8%	(+2%)
Supportive	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 Ahpra among occupational therapists

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=349	2019 N=351
Regulators	65%	68%
Administrators	62%	54%
Necessary	53%	42%
For the public	44%	39%
For practitioners	37%	37%
Bureaucratic	33%	27%
Decision makers	29%	27%
Competent	15%	16%
Fair	12%	12%
Rigid	13%	12%

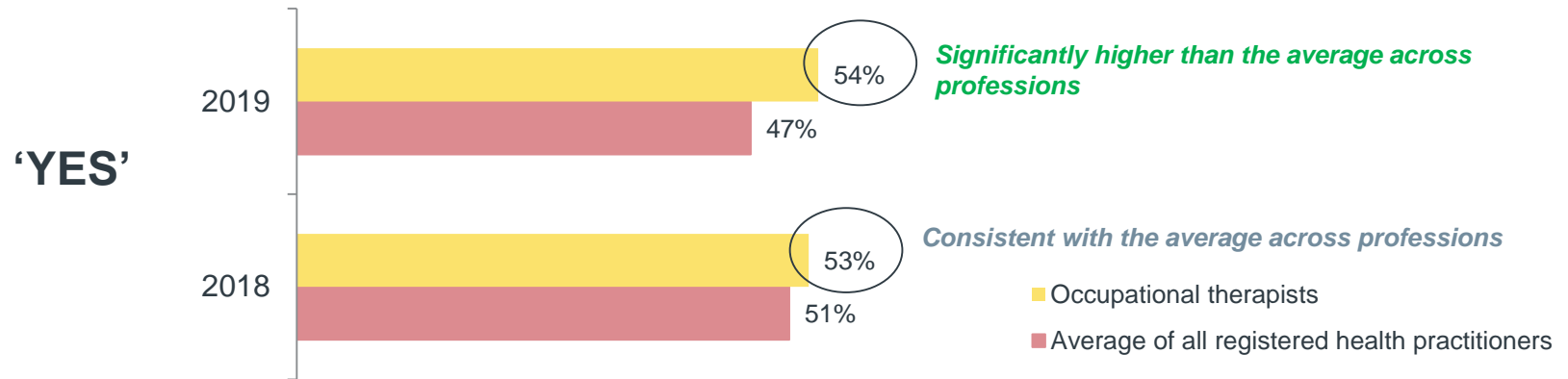
% of practitioners with that perception of the Ahpra	2018 N=349	2019 N=351
Advocates	7%	12%
Trustworthy	9%	11%
Accessible	13%	11%
Intimidating	12%	9%
Responsive	9%	9%
Good communicators	8%	9%
Poor communicators	9%	9%
Controlling	5%	9%
Transparent	10%	8%
Supportive	5%	7%

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

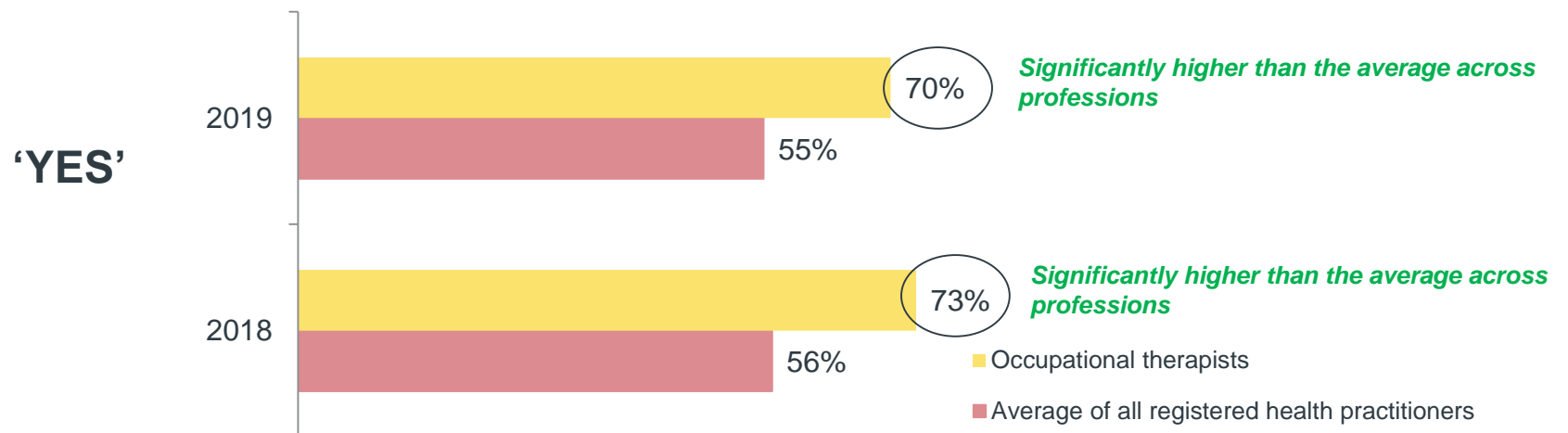
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among occupational therapists

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 occupational therapists

Indicators of trust: **70% trust Ahpra**

I have no reason not to or have heard of no issues about not being able to trust Ahpra. It represents and regulates many professionals.

It is the overarching body. You have to have trust in their ability to represent your profession.

The transparency and communication that is provided to practitioners. It is a national body that regulates multiple professions and has fair criteria to meet. I do not perceive Ahpra as a controlling or directive body, but as one that is approachable and takes its role of protecting the public and professions seriously.

They are consistent in the information they provide and appear to be asking the right questions in relation to what is required of the OT profession so that the public can feel confident.

They provide a good range of information to practitioners. My dealings with them have been helpful and responsive. As a national body they are looking at national issues that is helpful for the profession.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: **8% DO NOT trust Ahpra**

I lost confidence in their work practices following the poor management of my registration process. They were unapproachable, anti-practitioner, tardy to a fault and their communication was beyond poor.

They have such poor communication and put the therapist last. As long as they have their money, they're happy. They don't offer support or answers questions and are so understaffed which impacts on therapists getting registered and out in the workforce.

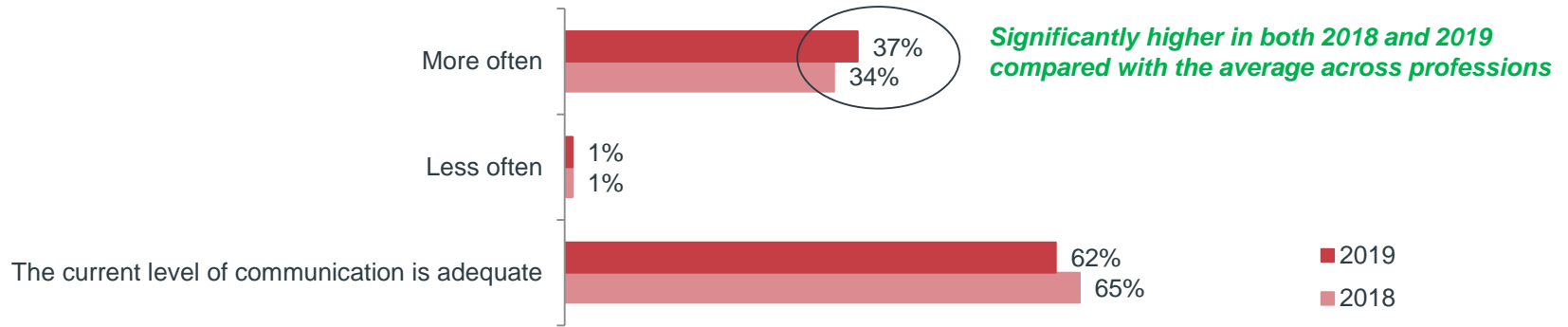
All contact I have had with them has been non-responsive, confusing and unhelpful. At a personal level, interactions has been rude and dismissive.

They are aggressive and ineffective. Targeting allied health professionals like criminals when doctors and GP's get away with murder. Purely there to protect the bottom line of those that can afford it.

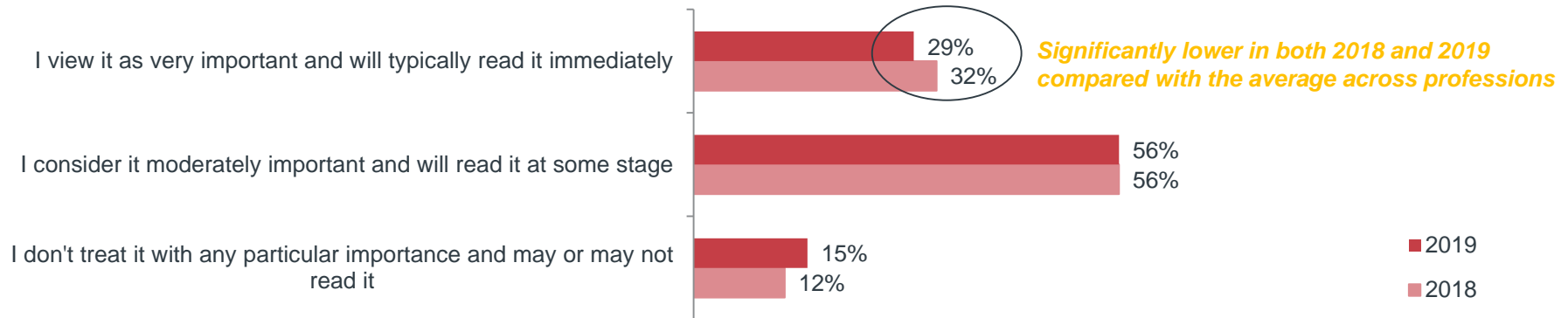
I don't know them well enough. They are just some organisation that we were told at university that we had to pay money too or we can't practise under our professional identity.

Response to communication by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

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



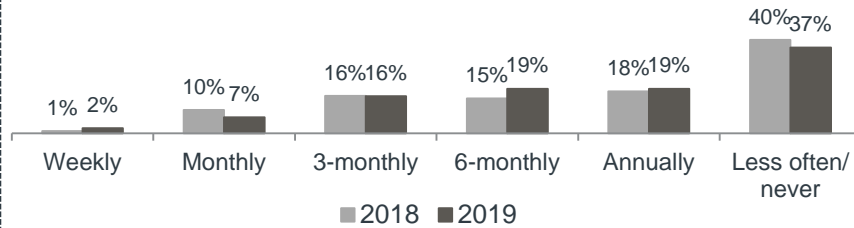
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

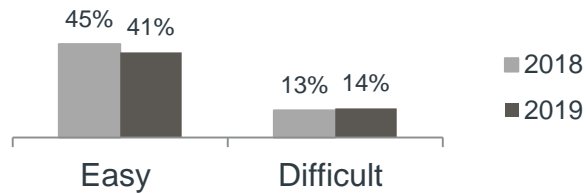
Use of the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia website

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



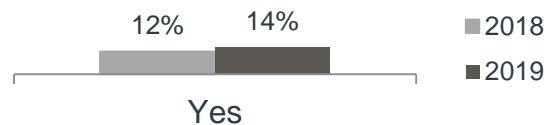
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this board

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



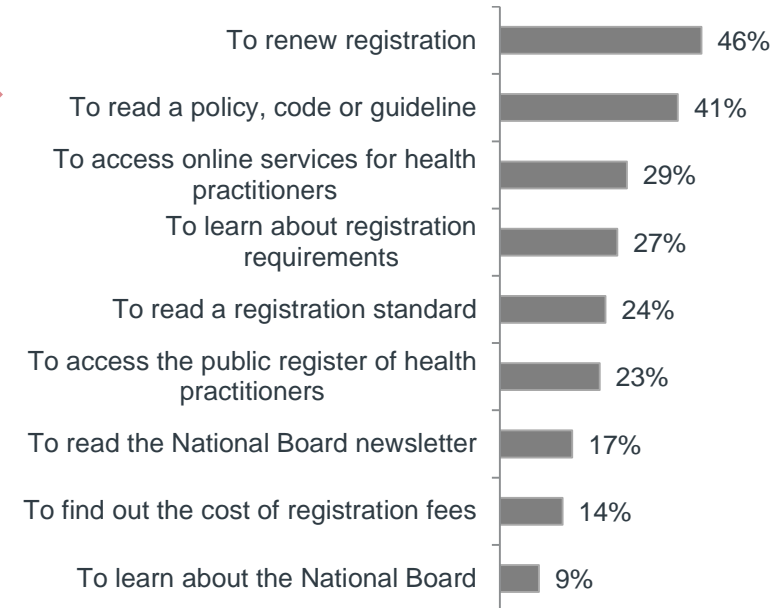
Base: Practitioners who have visited that board's website

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)...

- CPD resources.
- The practitioner finder is not very useful.
- Training courses / conferences nationally and internationally.
- More examples of suitable insurance and how to check with insurer.
- Research papers.

Additional feedback from occupational therapists

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)*

You need to improve the turn around time for registration specifically limited registration. Hire more staff if you need the manpower to improve this.

The response time when switching registration with APHRA is poor, processing time of more than 3 months and no ability to expedite things when people are unable to return to work and being financially disadvantaged.

For people requiring non-standard registration the process is complicated and requires a lot of repetition. Applicants feel powerless to challenge as their career is in jeopardy.

I feel intimidated by Ahpra more than supported. It would be nice to feel more supported in my professional development. This could be carried out through communication or maybe a professional development workshop. Something face to face provided to improve understanding, sense of community and support.

Please support your professionals more. We do an important job. Be more transparent with auditing processes instead of making people feel like they have done something wrong.

Just that I think they need to improve their image, step into this century and recognize that health professionals feel that they are currently paying for nothing. There is a community sense of this.

Increase transparency of practitioners under investigation or restrictions.

The complaint made about me was because a report was not received by SWEP due to a computer error. During the interrogation from Ahpra I was made to feel like a criminal. Eventually the complaint was dismissed as it was a technical error out of my control. The way Ahpra handles cases is deplorable.

The time frames and the cost and the difficulty in contacting Ahpra and the lack of customer service that I have received is really disappointing.

I understand the importance of registration for public safety, but I feel that being registered does very little for me as a health professional.

