
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 Chiropractic Board of Australia

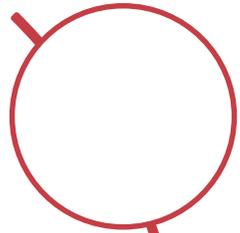
Truly[®]
Deeply



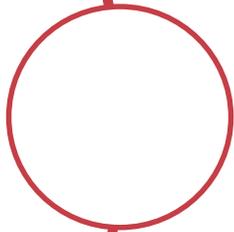
Introduction

- 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 Chiropractic Board of Australia**.

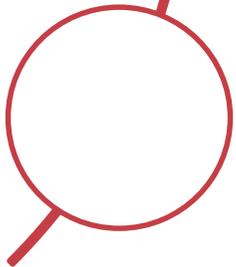
An overview of the methodology



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.

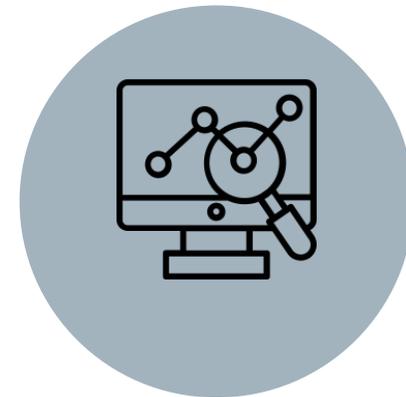


Stage 2 consisted of an online survey with a representative sample of the Australian general public. This survey was conducted between November 1– 6, 2019.

Quantitative approach

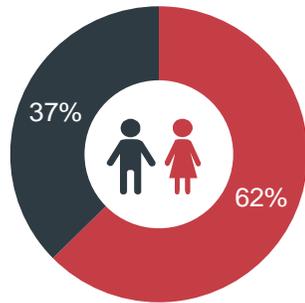
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community following the qualitative investigation.
- The 2019 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 questionnaires, with only a small number of additions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external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

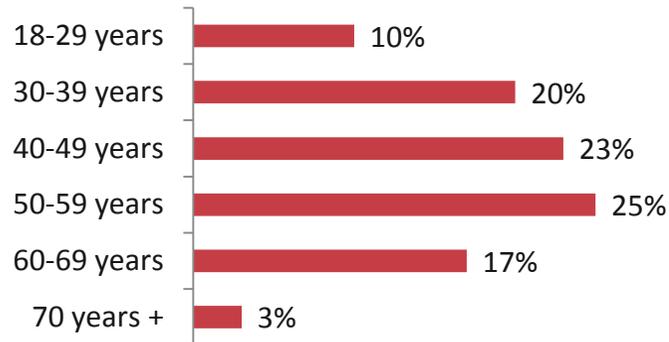


2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

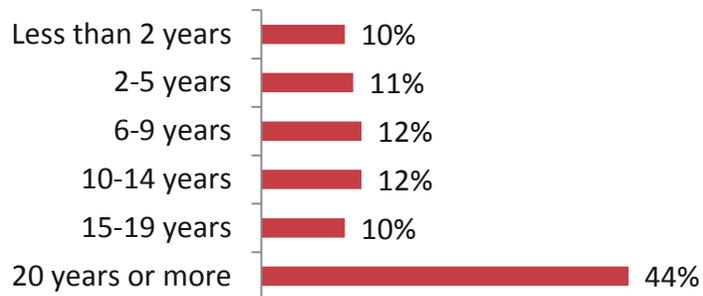
Gender



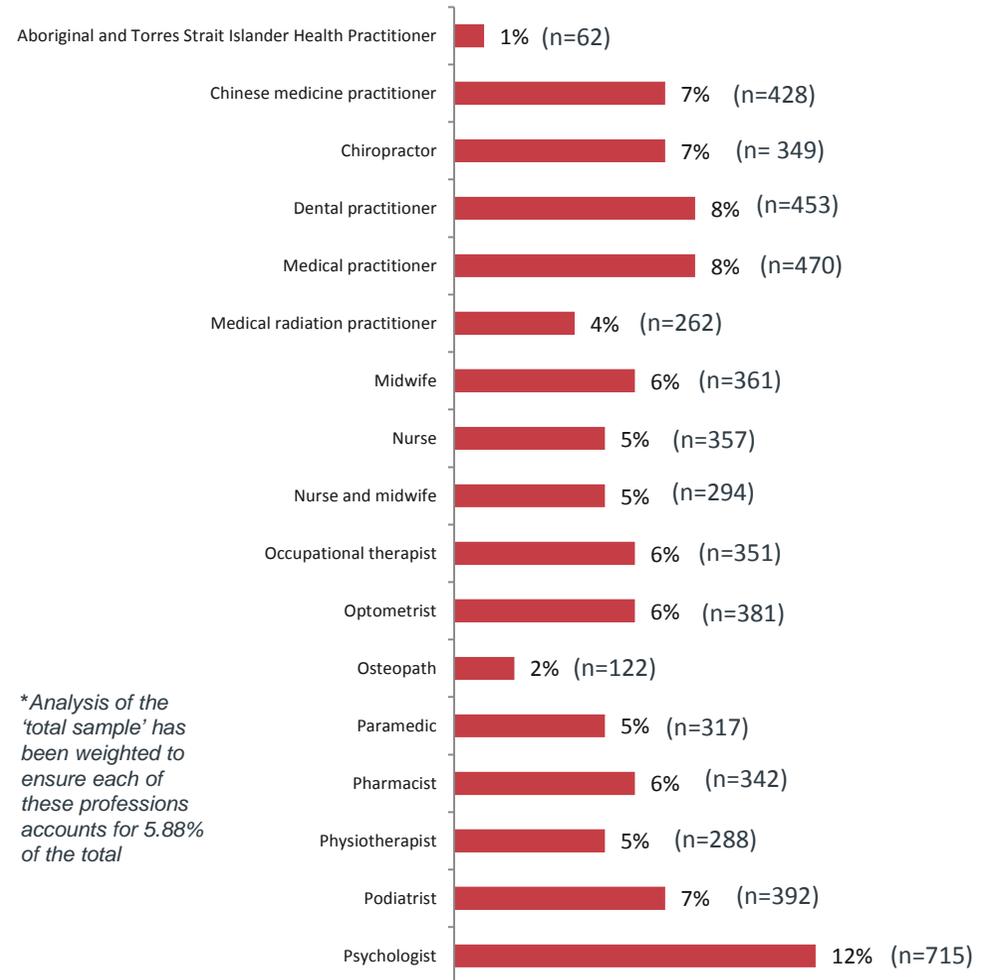
Age



Years in practice



Practitioner type*

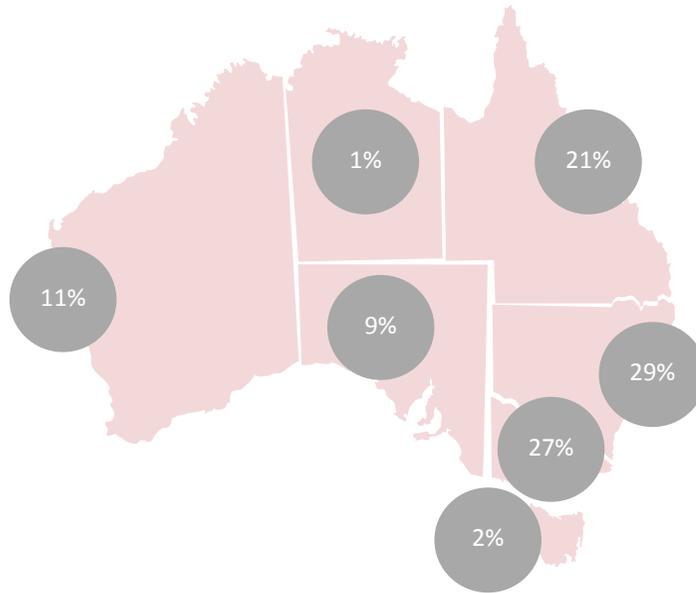


*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

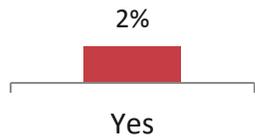
2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

Location

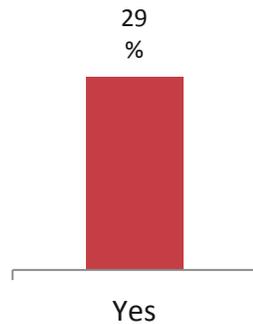


Metro: **64%**
Regional: **36%**

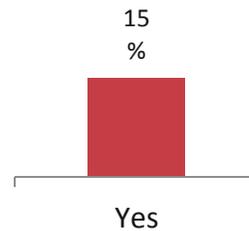
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



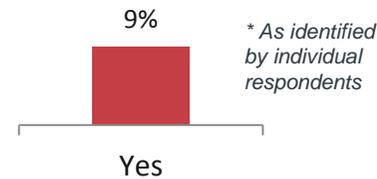
% who were born a country other than Australia



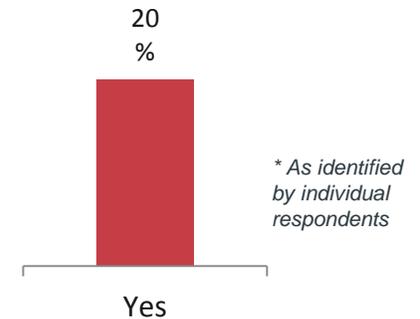
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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*

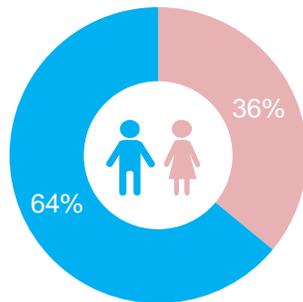


Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners.

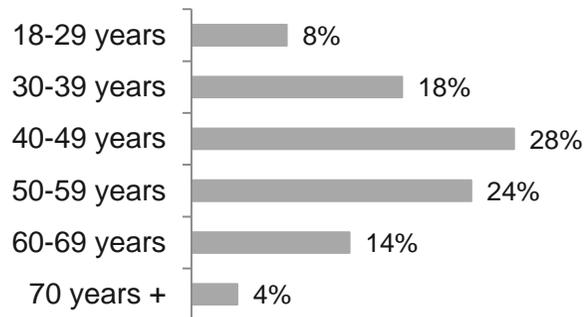
Specific insights into the responses from:
Chiropractors

Sample of chiropractors (n=349)

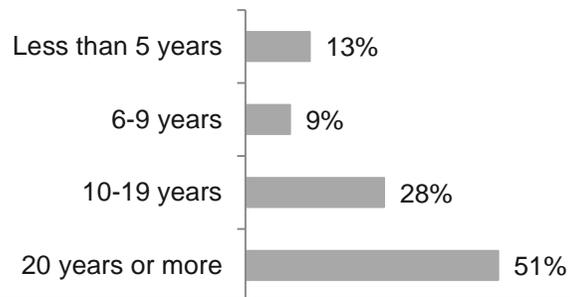
Gender:



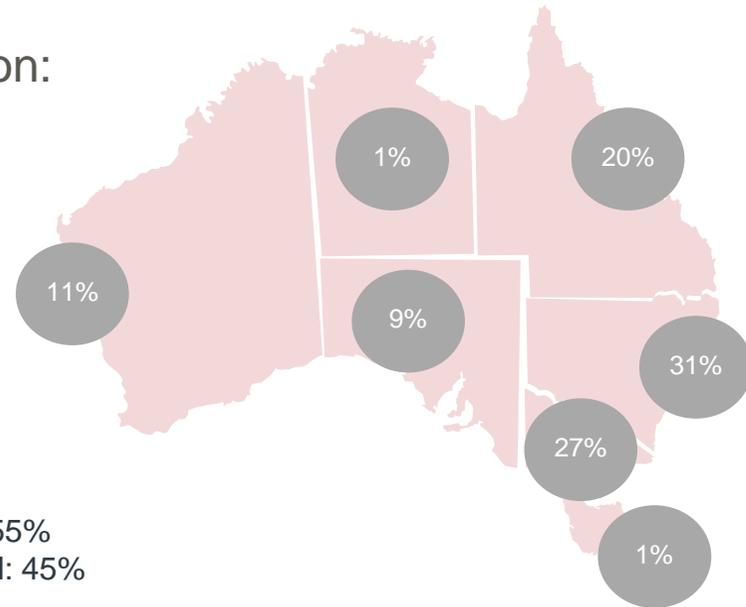
Age:



Years in practice:

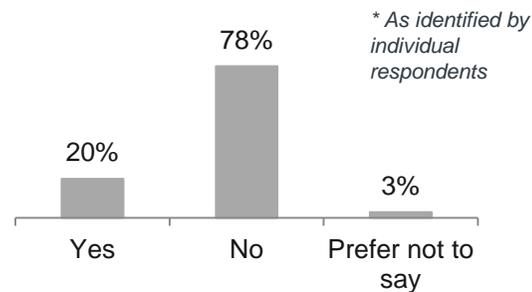


Location:

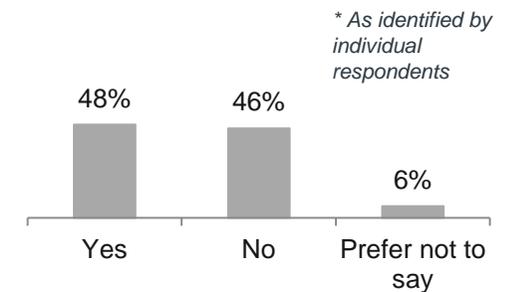


Metro: 55%
Regional: 45%

% 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 chiropractic 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=349)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	41%	(-6%)
Passionate	38%	(+24%)
Caring	35%	(+8%)
Knowledgeable	31%	(+1%)
Dedicated	24%	(+3%)
Competent	23%	(-)
Compassionate	22%	(-2%)
Independent	21%	(+14%)
Committed	18%	(+2%)
Empathetic	16%	(-5%)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Open minded	14%	(+8%)
Community minded	13%	(+1%)
Hard working	12%	(-18%)
Approachable	11%	(+1%)
Responsible	10%	(-10%)
Optimistic	9%	(+7%)
Trusted	9%	(-13%)
Out of touch	9%	(+5%)
Honest	9%	(-1%)
Innovative	8%	(+2%)

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 Chiropractic 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=349)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Administrators	44%	(+10%)
Regulators	40%	(-)
Bureaucratic	39%	(+12%)
For the public	38%	(+16%)
Necessary	36%	(+3%)
For practitioners	23%	(-8%)
Decision makers	21%	(-3%)
Competent	19%	(+4%)
Submissive	18%	(+15%)
Out of touch	15%	(+3%)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Poor communicators	13%	(+2%)
Fair	13%	(+2%)
Advocates	12%	(-5%)
Controlling	11%	(+2%)
Rigid	11%	(+2%)
Secretive	10%	(+4%)
Approachable	10%	(+1%)
Intimidating	10%	(+1%)
Trustworthy	9%	(-1%)
Shows leadership	9%	(-4%)

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 Chiropractic 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=437	2019 N=349
Administrators	43%	44%
Regulators	41%	40%
Bureaucratic	32%	39%
For the public	32%	38%
Necessary	39%	36%
For practitioners	23%	23%
Decision makers	21%	21%
Competent	18%	19%
Submissive	11%	18%
Out of touch	17%	15%

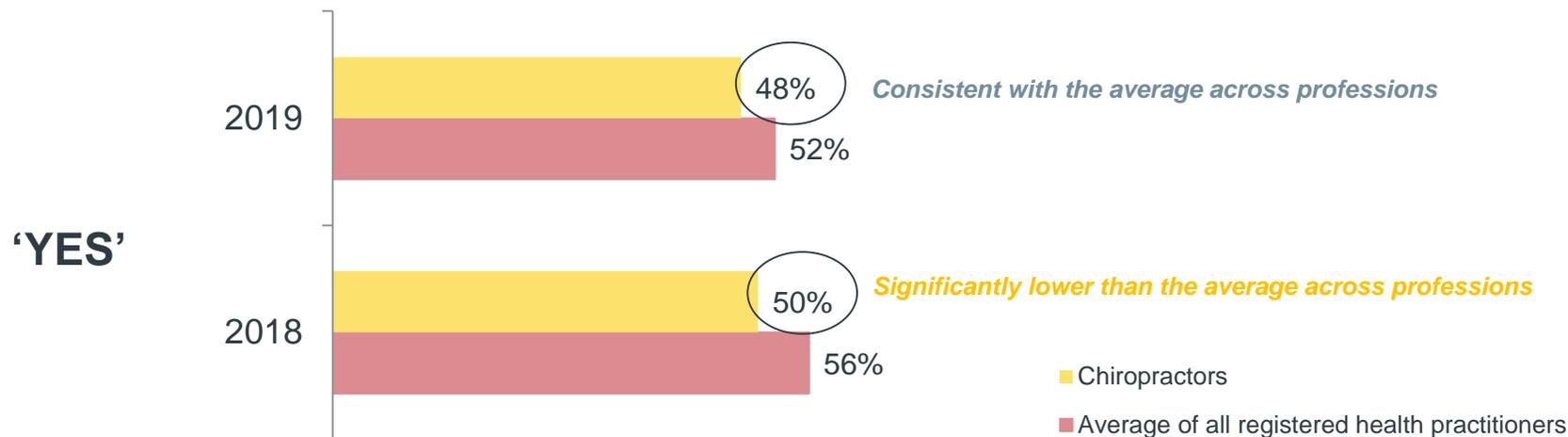
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=437	2019 N=349
Poor communicators	13%	13%
Fair	11%	13%
Advocates	12%	12%
Controlling	17%	11%
Rigid	15%	11%
Secretive	8%	10%
Approachable	12%	10%
Intimidating	13%	10%
Trustworthy	9%	9%
Shows leadership	10%	9%

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

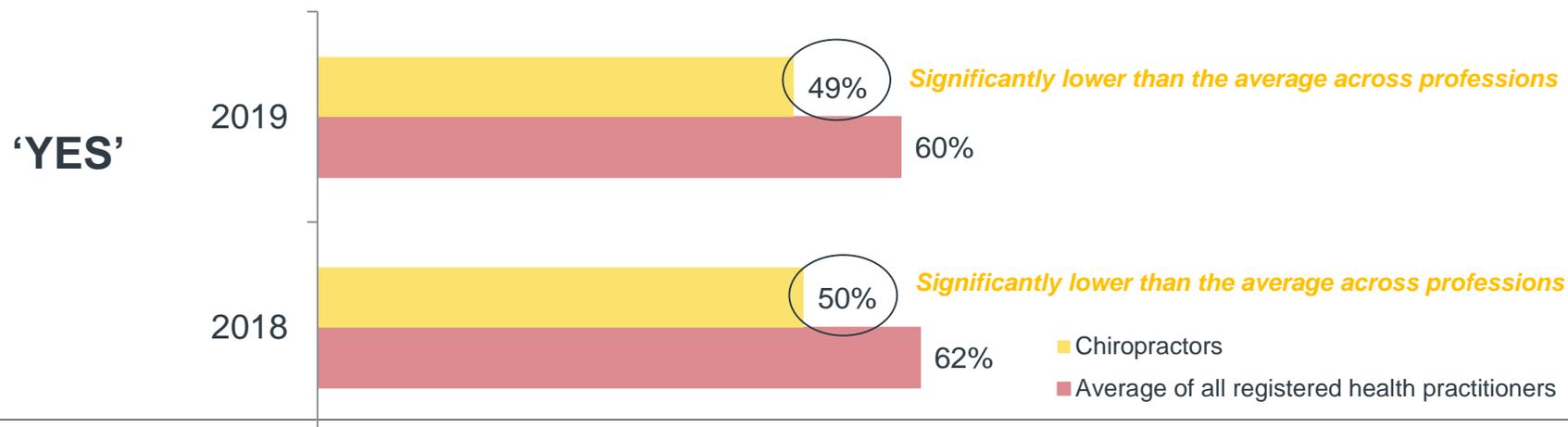
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

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

Indicators of trust: **49% trust the Board**

They are necessary, and they provide a focus and a voice for chiropractors so that the chiropractic profession doesn't get lost in Ahpra.

Seem to be in touch with the profession and balancing well the politics with the clinical.

I have had good dealings with them in the past, and they seem to be trying to balance the needs of the public with the shape of the profession.

Transparent communication of their goals and current projects.

Ensures the integrity and credibility of the profession by weeding out those who would do harm to the public and the profession.

Honest with communication. Trying to inch the profession forward.

It is a regulated transparent entity with passionate members.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: **22% DO NOT trust the Board**

I don't feel they represent the profession very well, especially when the pressure is on. They lack transparency and don't seem to be doing much to help with the paediatric issues the profession faces. If they are, it is not well known. Perhaps more email updates would be helpful.

The whole restricting the rights of adjusting the chiropractic paediatric population for under 2 years while there is a Safe Care Victoria review when there is no research suggesting that we are unsafe is appalling.

Incidents over the last few years have shown them to be more influenced by media hype and medical/political advisers than evidence base and common sense.

I don't feel they are in touch with everyday practitioners, and there is no proactive regulation.

Don't stand up to media pressure, bow to the medics and won't stand up for chiropractic.

They have shown zero leadership in challenging times for the profession they regulate and are simply doing the bidding of politicians with an agenda.

2019: Perceptions of Ahpra among chiropractors (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=349)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Bureaucratic	57%	(+17%)
Regulators	54%	(-)
Administrators	49%	(+3%)
For the public	48%	(+13%)
Necessary	32%	(-4%)
Controlling	26%	(+11%)
Intimidating	26%	(+10%)
Decision makers	23%	(+2%)
Rigid	23%	(+8%)
Out of touch	18%	(+4%)

Perception in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Poor communicators	16%	(+1%)
Secretive	12%	(+4%)
For practitioners	11%	(-15%)
Competent	11%	(-1%)
Aloof	9%	(+2%)
Zealous	9%	(+5%)
Fair	8%	(-1%)
Approachable	6%	(-1%)
Antiquated	6%	(+2%)
Trustworthy	5%	(-4%)

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 chiropractors

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=437	2019 N=349
Bureaucratic	52%	57%
Regulators	61%	54%
Administrators	51%	49%
For the public	46%	48%
Necessary	36%	32%
Controlling	33%	26%
Intimidating	31%	26%
Decision makers	21%	23%
Rigid	30%	23%
Out of touch	22%	18%

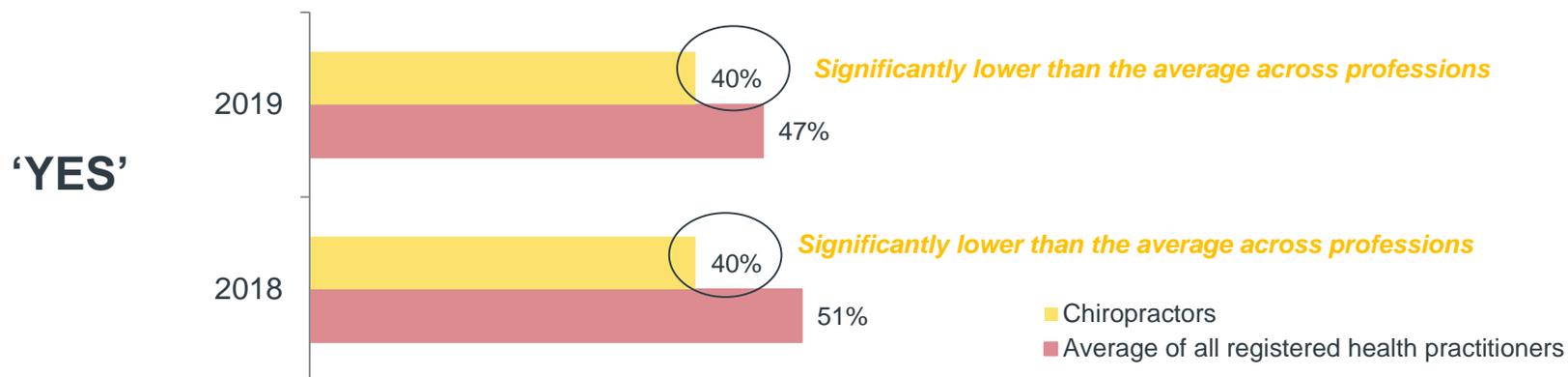
% of practitioners with that perception of the Ahpra	2018 N=437	2019 N=349
Poor communicators	20%	16%
Secretive	14%	12%
For practitioners	13%	11%
Competent	11%	11%
Aloof	10%	9%
Zealous	10%	9%
Fair	9%	8%
Approachable	5%	6%
Antiquated	5%	6%
Trustworthy	5%	5%

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

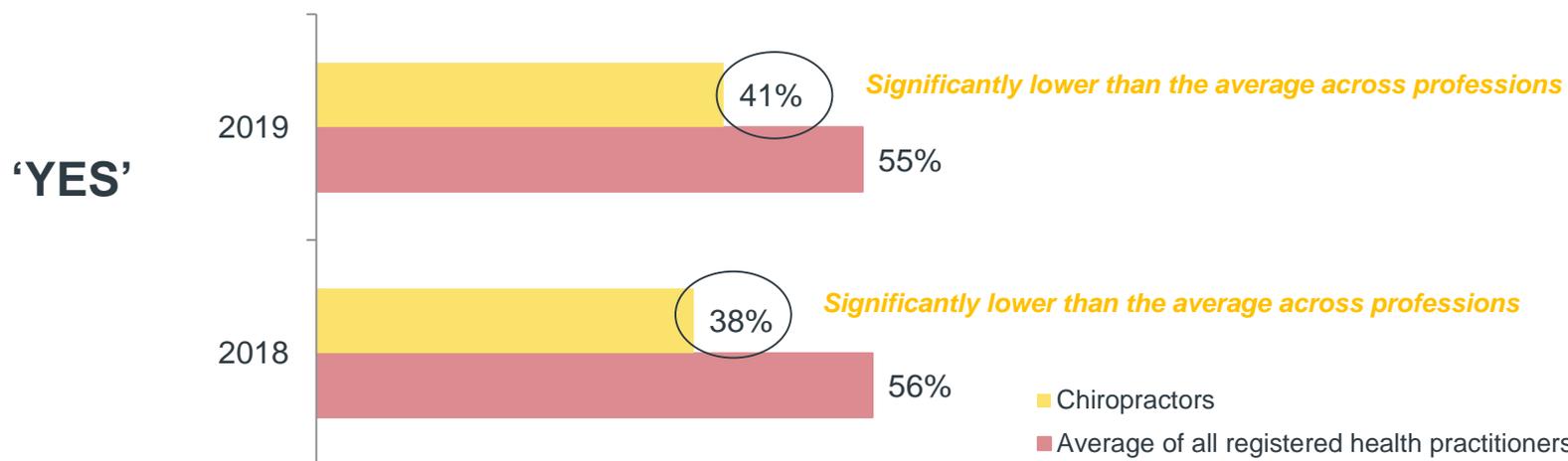
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among chiropractors

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 chiropractors

Indicators of trust: **41% trust Ahpra**

They appear to have an equitable approach to governance and due processes in place.

To be honest, I have not had anything to do with Ahpra other than completing my registration every year. To date I have not had a problem with them, so they have not given me a reason to distrust them.

They are a well-regulated agency with high quality employees.

I trust Ahpra always remains unbiased and fair in its assessment and regulation of health practitioners.

They provide regulation and accountability that is necessary for health professions.

They appear to provide non-biased information and have protected the public and our profession from poor standards of practice.

All my contact with Ahpra has been very professional.

Barriers to trust: **33% DO NOT trust Ahpra**

I believe it to be a strong arm of medicine and big pharma that pushes a political agenda. It would seem to exist to control thought, practice, and innovation to the lowest level.

I know a lot of people who really struggled to get a straight answer from Ahpra when they ran into advertising complaints. I see poor advertising by other practitioners often and so think Ahpra targets some and not others unfairly.

I don't believe they have a fair and unbiased approach to all professions.

They are purely working for the public. The codes of conduct imposed certainly don't make it easy to communicate to the public what we do. Not supportive of practitioners, our qualifications, or skills. I understand they are however necessary.

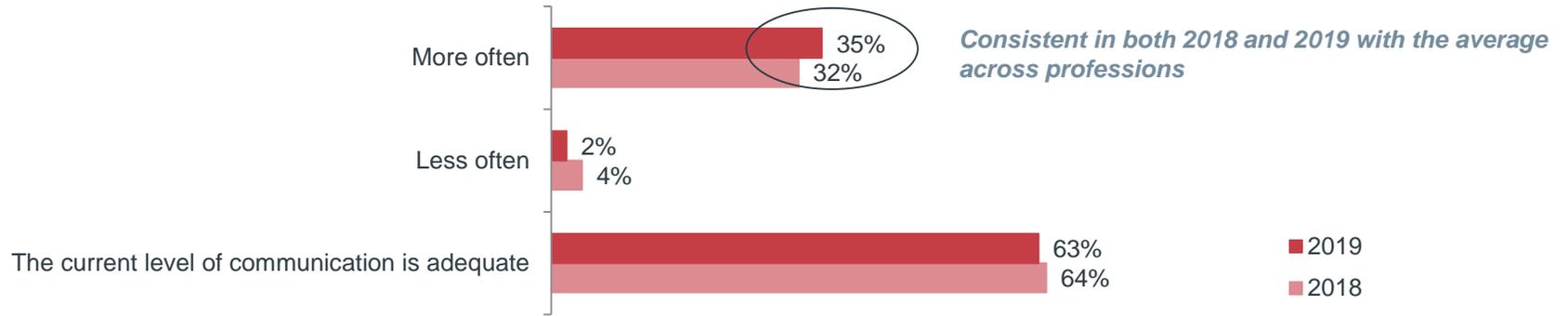
I don't know what they do. Can't trust something I don't have a relationship with.

Ahpra does not have an understanding of chiropractic practice.

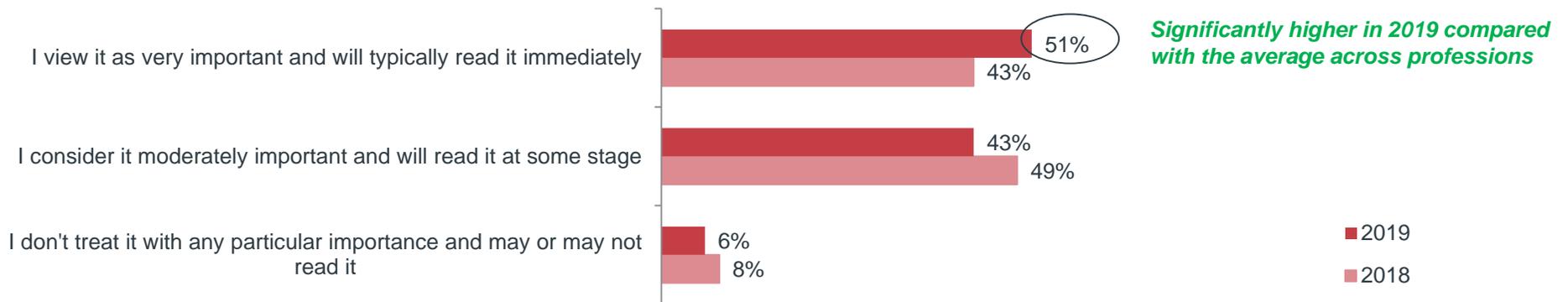
Full list of responses provided separately

Response to communication by the Chiropractic 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

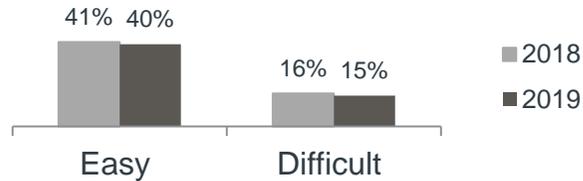
Use of the Chiropractic Board of Australia website

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



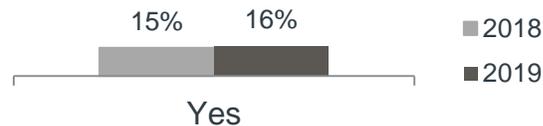
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this board

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



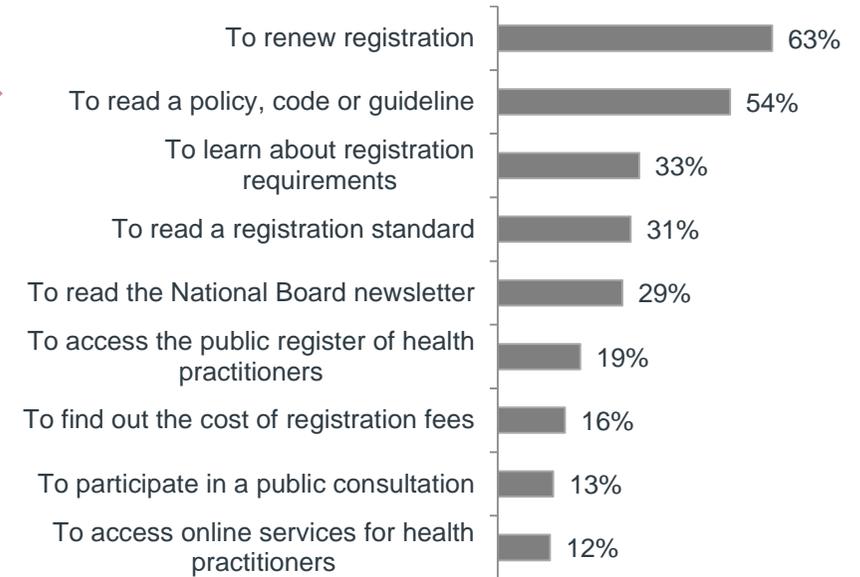
Base: Practitioners who have visited that board's website

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)...

- *Consent form templates.*
- *Clear and direct rules on advertising.*
- *Information about working overseas and maintaining registration within Australia.*
- *Fee information is not available.*
- *Items that count towards CPD such as student supervision and teaching.*

Additional feedback from chiropractors

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)*

I feel that the Chiropractic board and Ahpra do not represent/defend the Chiropractic community with enough force to counteract the negative press from the AMA.

They have not done enough to support Chiropractors' rights to practise as health professionals and to refer for diagnostic imaging of necessary areas. They have not done enough to support Chiropractors as health professionals with regard to the continual harassment and defamation by the media/medical far right which has led to an unfounded "independent investigation" into paediatric chiropractic care.

I don't feel represented by either of Ahpra or the Chiropractic Board of Australia. Both of those entities seem non-transparent in governance. Both of them consult with me as a chiropractor only when I need to prove my innocence and professional standard.

I feel that in terms of practitioner breeches in advertising guidelines and code of conduct Ahpra and the National Boards responses are often slow and the penalties for non-compliance are often soft. Which is in my opinion not making the offences serious in practitioners minds.

The annual fee for chiropractors registration is excessive compared to other professions registered with Ahpra. Please investigate and explain why chiropractors are being targeted with bigger fees to be a part of Ahpra.

The speed and clarity of communication when asked a question is often severely lacking. When the National Board makes a new standard and publishes it for immediate enforcement but fails to be able to clarify basic meanings of phrases and terms this creates confusion and potential breaches of the policy through a lack of understanding. This obviously puts the professional standing of practitioners and the whole profession at risk. More clarity is needed, as is improving response times when dealing with a complaint.

