

# 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 Nursing and Midwifery 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.

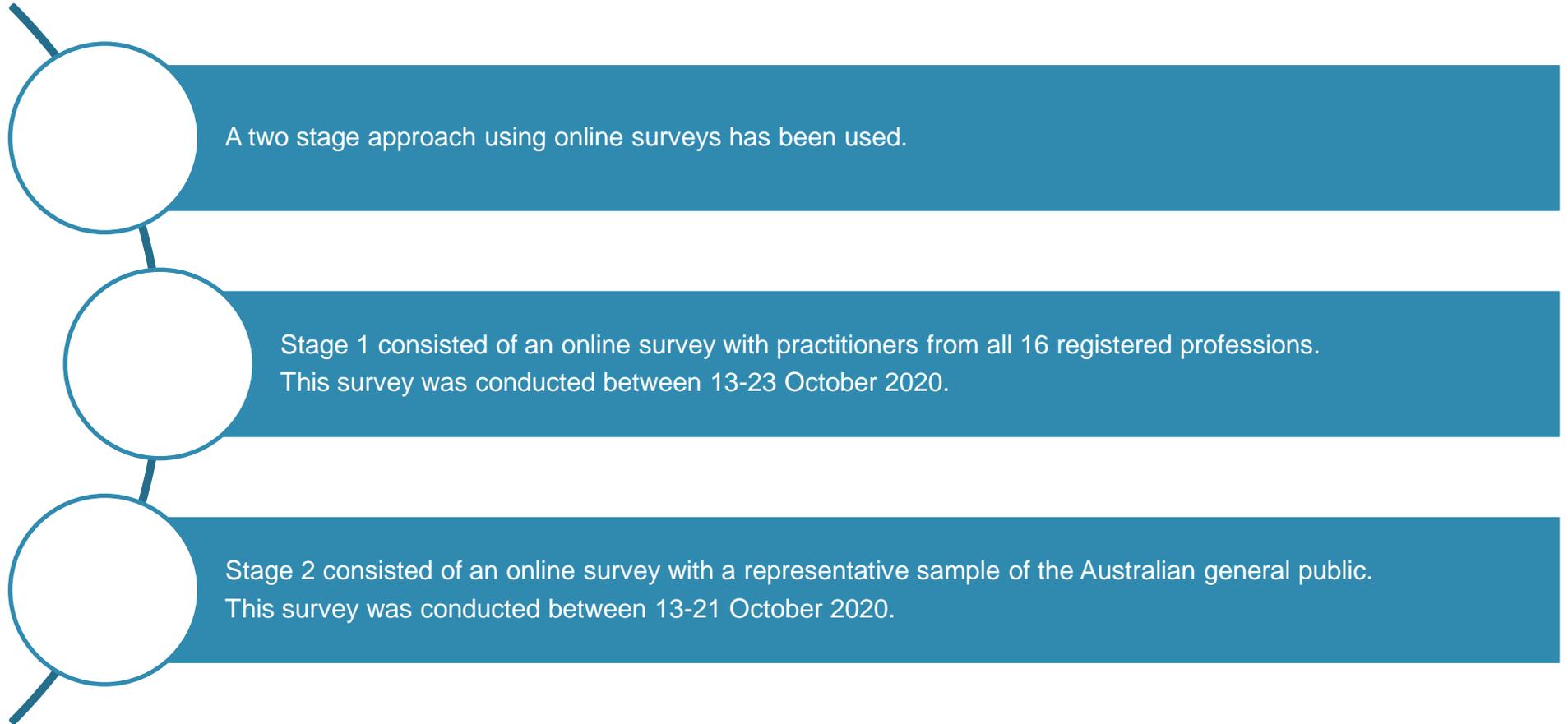
Given the value of the insights delivered through the 2018 benchmark study to Ahpra and National Boards, the decision was taken to update the quantitative measures by conducting the online survey with practitioners and the general public in November 2019 and most recently in October 2020.

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 **Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia**.

# An overview of the methodology

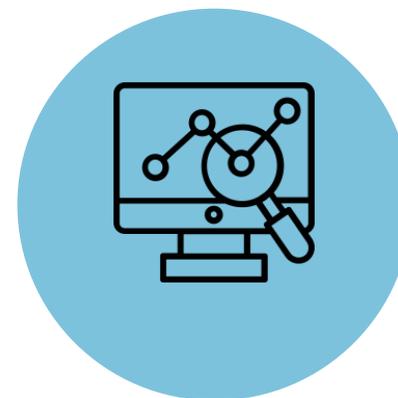
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# Quantitative approach

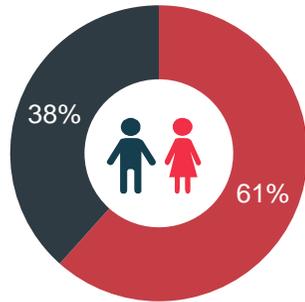
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community.
- The 2020 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 and 2019 questionnaires, with two additional questions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider. Quotas were placed 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%

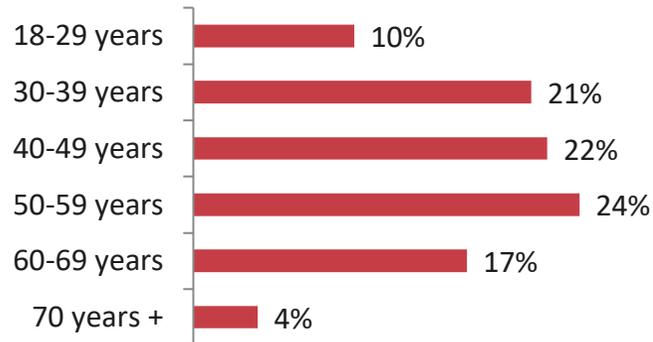


# 2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

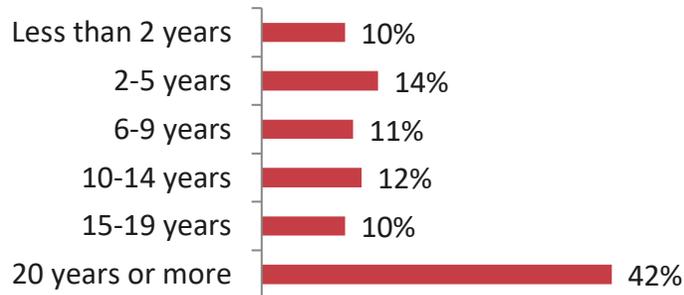
## Gender



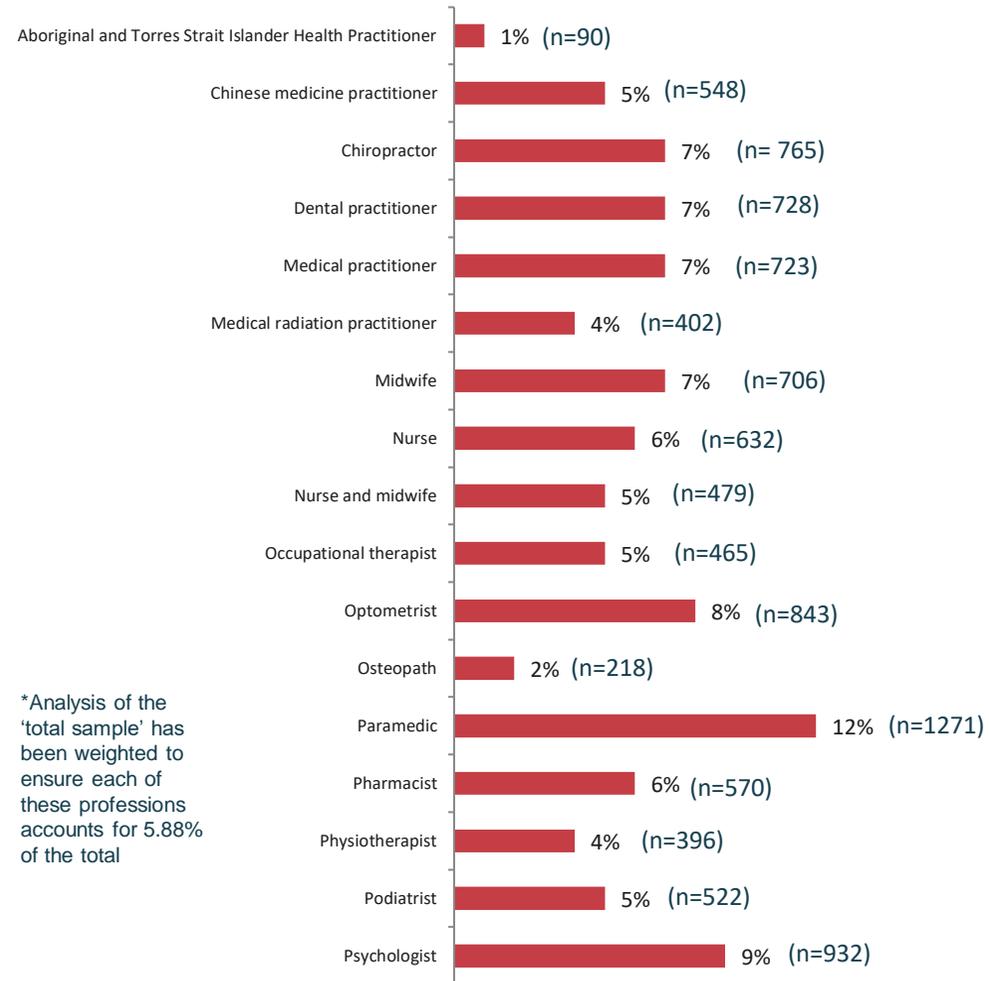
## Age



## Years in practice



## Practitioner type\*

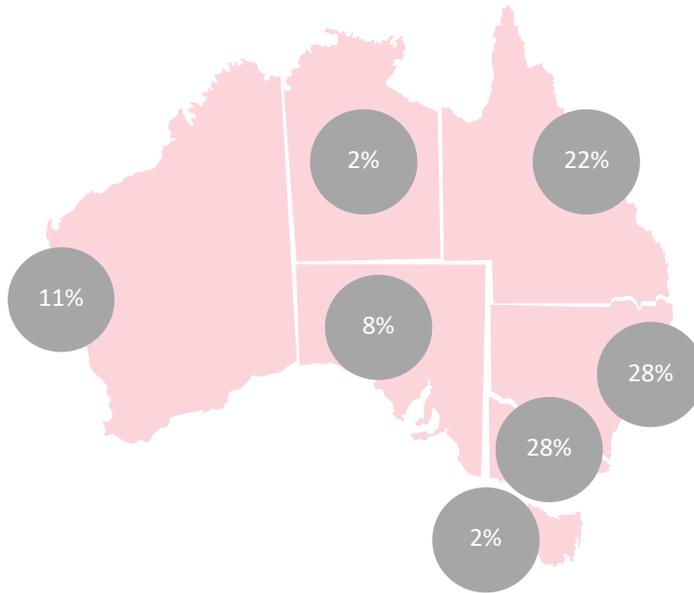


\*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

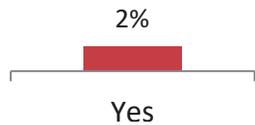
# 2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

## Location

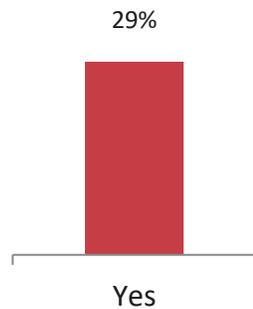


Metro: **63%**  
Regional: **30%**  
Rural: **7%**

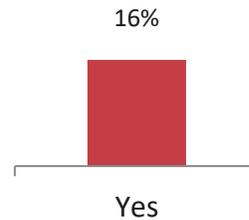
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



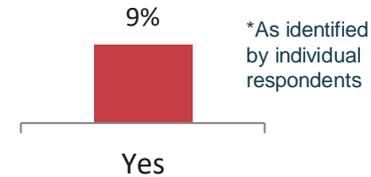
% who were born in a country other than Australia



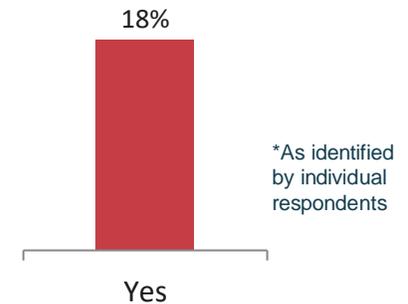
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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\*

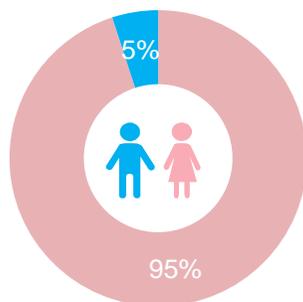


# Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners

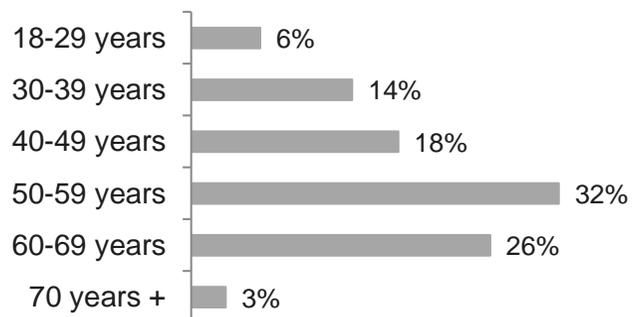
Specific insights into the responses from:  
**Nurses and midwives**

# Sample of nurses and midwives (n=1,817)

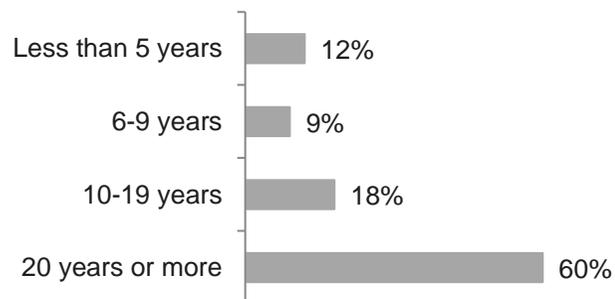
## Gender:



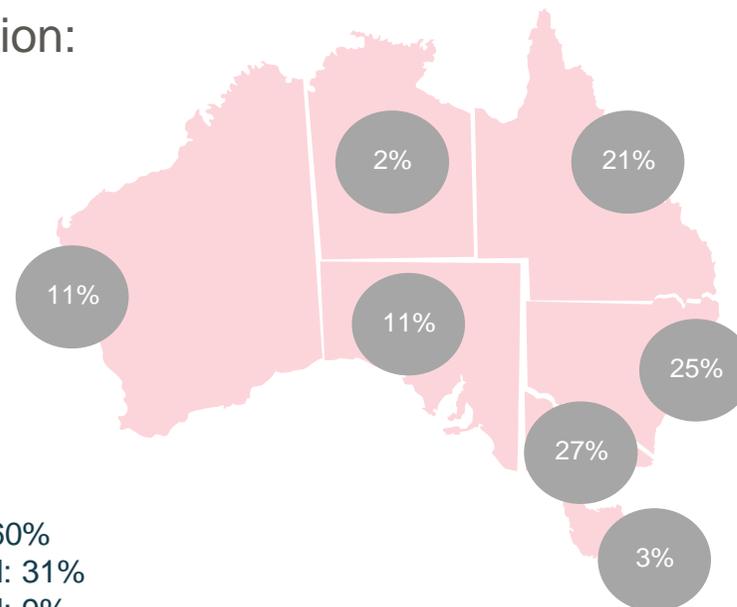
## Age:



## Years in practice:

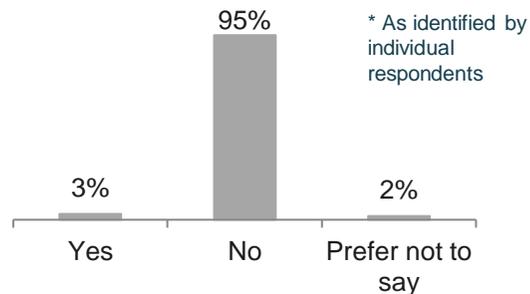


## Location:

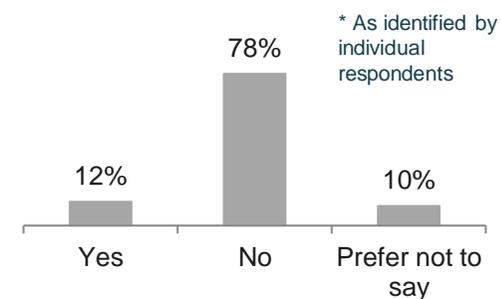


Metro: 60%  
Regional: 31%  
Regional: 9%

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



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



# 2020: Perceptions of the nursing and midwifery profession among practitioners

(Top 20 associations)

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

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board (N=1,817)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Hardworking	40%	(+11%)
Professional	39%	(-7%)
Compassionate	35%	(+12%)
Caring	34%	(+6%)
Trusted	29%	(+6%)
Respected	26%	(+6%)
Dedicated	26%	(+5%)
Knowledgeable	26%	(+4%)
Empathetic	22%	(+2%)
Competent	20%	(-1%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Responsible	18%	(-1%)
Passionate	17%	(+3%)
Committed	17%	(-)
Nurturing	14%	(+8%)
Team oriented	10%	(+1%)
Honest	10%	(+1%)
Kind	8%	(+3%)
Community minded	8%	(-7%)
Approachable	7%	(-5%)
Reputable	6%	(-4%)

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 nursing and midwifery profession among practitioners

Q. Which of the following words or statements, if any, 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=1,012	2020 N=1,817
<b>Hardworking</b>	48%	40%
Professional	39%	39%
Compassionate	34%	35%
<b>Caring</b>	39%	34%
Trusted	26%	29%
Respected	26%	26%
Dedicated	25%	26%
<b>Knowledgeable</b>	22%	26%
Empathetic	22%	22%
Competent	19%	20%

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=1,012	2020 N=1,817
Responsible	19%	18%
Passionate	19%	17%
Committed	16%	17%
Nurturing	14%	14%
Team oriented	10%	10%
Honest	8%	10%
Kind	7%	8%
Community minded	6%	8%
Approachable	6%	7%
Reputable	6%	6%

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

**Orange** indicates a result significantly lower result compared with the 2019 result

# Perceptions of the Nursing and Midwifery 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 nurses and midwives registered with this Board (n=1,817)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	42%	(+4%)
For practitioners	38%	(+7%)
Administrators	37%	(+4%)
Necessary	34%	(+3%)
Decision-makers	31%	(+8%)
Advocates	22%	(+5%)
Bureaucratic	21%	(-4%)
For the public	20%	(-1%)
Shows leadership	17%	(+4%)
Competent	16%	(+1%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Supportive	14%	(-1%)
Accessible	12%	(+2%)
Responsive	12%	(+3%)
Approachable	11%	(-1%)
Good communicators	11%	(-1%)
Helpful	10%	(-1%)
Trustworthy	10%	(-1%)
Fair	9%	(-1%)
Out of touch	8%	(-2%)
Transparent	7%	(+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 the Nursing and Midwifery 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=943	2019 N=1,012	2020 N=1,817
Regulators	42%	47%	42%
For practitioners	43%	42%	38%
Administrators	37%	39%	37%
Necessary	40%	40%	34%
Decision-makers	35%	34%	31%
Advocates	22%	23%	22%
Bureaucratic	24%	23%	21%
For the public	25%	21%	20%
Shows leadership	19%	18%	17%
Competent	23%	15%	16%

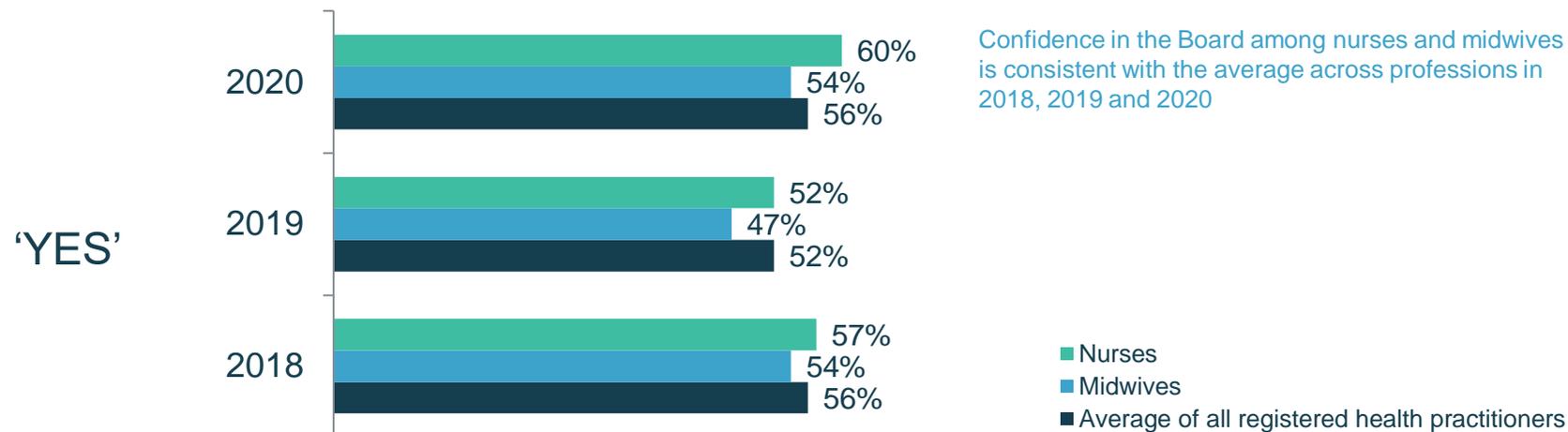
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=943	2019 N=1,012	2020 N=1,817
Supportive	15%	13%	14%
Accessible	17%	12%	12%
Responsive	12%	10%	12%
Approachable	11%	10%	11%
Good communicators	12%	9%	11%
Helpful	13%	11%	10%
Trustworthy	13%	10%	10%
Fair	13%	7%	9%
Out of touch	9%	8%	8%
Transparent	9%	9%	7%

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

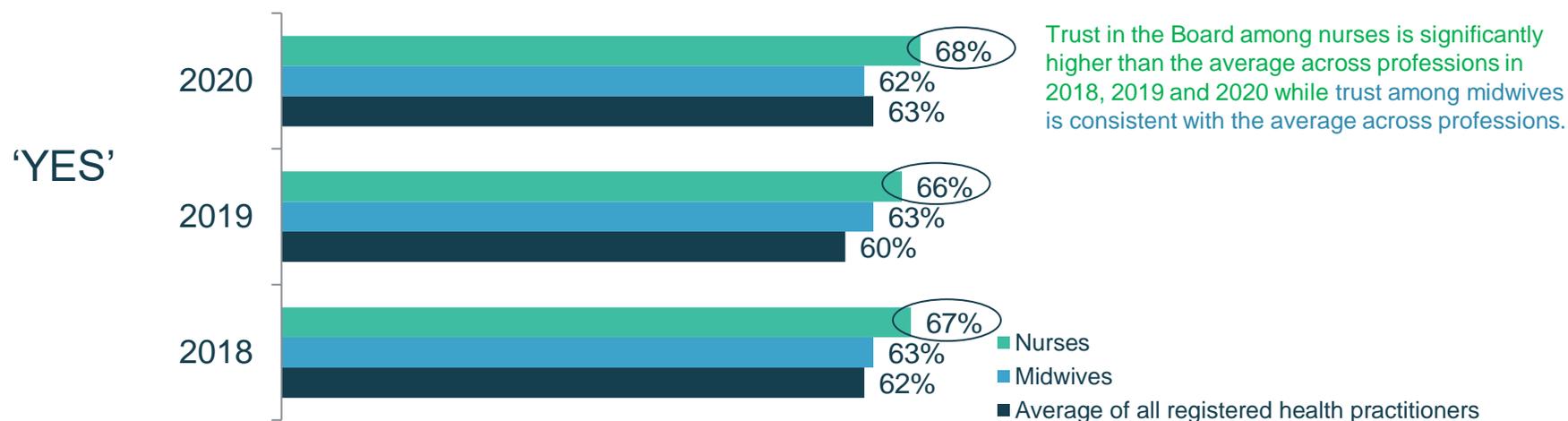
Orange indicates a result significantly lower compared with the previous year.

# Levels of confidence and trust in the Nursing and Midwifery 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 Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia

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## Indicators of trust **68% trust the Board**

*Continuity of safe practice.*

*Strong foundation of knowledge and evidence-based practices fair and objective.*

*Takes the public's trust very seriously.*

*Committed to ultimately keeping the public safe through the regulation of the profession.*

*Upholds nursing knowledge and practices through standards and principles.*

*I have always trusted the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and have no reason not to.*

*Reputable. Follow due process procedure. Give people a second chance through planned checks.*

*Established record of achievements*

*They set the standard that apply to the position and make sure to take action when required.*

*Hopefully they have people in the positions they are in to keep practitioners and the public safe whilst developing policies and procedures to do so.*

## Barriers to trust **10% DO NOT trust the Board**

*Don't see them as approachable. They refer on to other services as if they don't know what's going on.*

*I feel that they are not maintaining appropriate nursing standards and are not regulating universities enough.*

*It is necessary but self-motivated.*

*Very weak on major decisions on major performance issues basically it is only if you kill someone do you get de-registered.*

*Poor communicators. Extremely slow when communicating on behalf of nurses to employers. All talk, no action.*

*I feel their role is punitive rather than supportive.*

*I think they are rigid and therefore unable to respond to a changing health care environment. Stifle innovation.*

*All about nursing not about midwifery.*

*I don't feel they are responsive enough to midwives as a separate profession to nursing. There are a lot of registered midwives that are not nurses yet they still get lumped together or after nurses.*

# Full list of responses provided separately

## Perceptions of Ahpra among nurses and midwives (Top 20 associations)

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

Base: Total sample of nurses and midwives registered with this Board (n=1,817)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	54%	(+1%)
Administrators	44%	(-)
Necessary	40%	(+4%)
For practitioners	39%	(+11%)
For the public	30%	(-3%)
Bureaucratic	29%	(-7%)
Decision-makers	27%	(+4%)
Advocates	16%	(+6%)
Competent	14%	(+1%)
Accessible	13%	(+4%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Intimidating	13%	(-2%)
Controlling	11%	(-3%)
Rigid	10%	(-5%)
Out of touch	10%	(-2%)
Shows leadership	10%	(+2%)
Poor communicators	9%	(-3%)
Trustworthy	9%	(-1%)
Responsive	9%	(+1%)
Helpful	8%	(-)
Supportive	8%	(-)

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.

# Summary of changes 2018-20:

## Perceptions of Ahpra among nurses and midwives

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=943	2019 N=1,012	2020 N=1,817
Regulators	55%	58%	54%
Administrators	51%	48%	44%
Necessary	48%	45%	40%
For practitioners	46%	39%	39%
For the public	36%	34%	30%
Bureaucratic	34%	33%	29%
Decision-makers	32%	29%	27%
Advocates	13%	13%	16%
Competent	17%	12%	14%
Accessible	18%	14%	13%

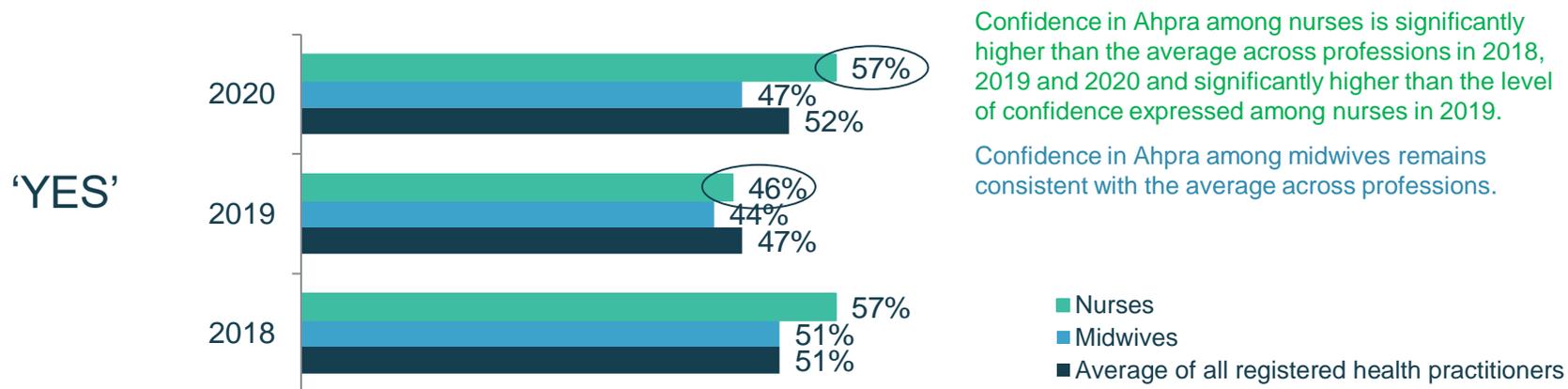
% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2018 N=943	2019 N=1,012	2020 N=1,817
Intimidating	14%	15%	13%
Controlling	14%	13%	11%
Rigid	16%	12%	10%
Out of touch	11%	11%	10%
Shows leadership	10%	9%	10%
Poor communicators	11%	10%	9%
Trustworthy	11%	7%	9%
Responsive	11%	9%	9%
Helpful	11%	9%	8%
Supportive	9%	9%	8%

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

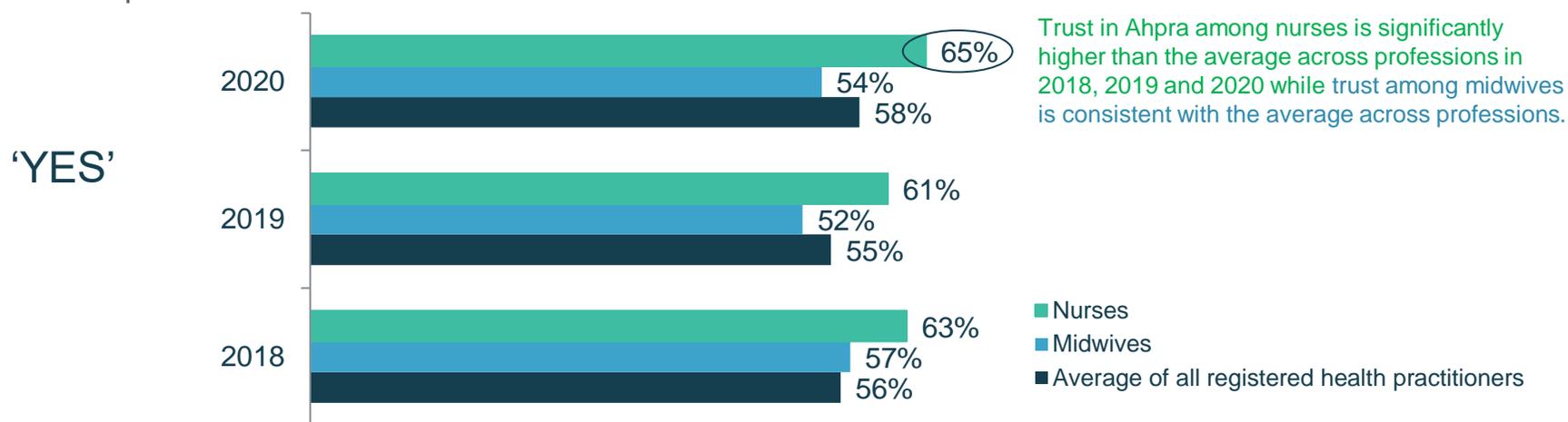
Orange indicates a result significantly lower compared with the previous year.

# Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among nurses and midwives

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 nurses and midwives

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## Indicators of trust: **65% trust Ahpra**

*Approachable and easy to contact.*

*Fairly clear information and assistance when needed.*

*In touch, regulatory, for the public and transparent.*

*Good set of rules and standards.*

*Stringent regulations.*

*Regulates a standard of practice that all health practitioners must comply with & uphold.*

*I appreciate that they will investigate and act upon concerns/complaints.*

*Keep practitioners, and the public safe and expose bad behavior and make practitioners accountable.*

*Strong governance frameworks criterion and evidence-based standards built on a strong knowledge and professionally ethical base committed to protecting the public.*

*They seem transparent and update their site regularly.*

*Ensuring standards of health care workers across Australia.*

*Have the power to protect practitioners and ensure practitioners work safely and effectively.*

*As a regulator supporting the national boards, I see their main role as protecting the public.*

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

*They are reactive, not proactive.*

*Appears to be mainly for doctors and for their benefit.*

*From what I have seen, if a complaint is made, AHPRA act from the standpoint of assuming the practitioner is guilty until proven otherwise.*

*Not profession based. Has become more legalistic and remote from day-to-day nurses.*

*Our fees are not transparent to where they are going.*

*I believe there is an inherent political bias in AHPRA against midwives where the same standard is not held towards doctors who do not practice as though they are held to professional standards.*

*Appears to be a lack of timely decisive action when needed. Take too long to investigate/resolve complaints.*

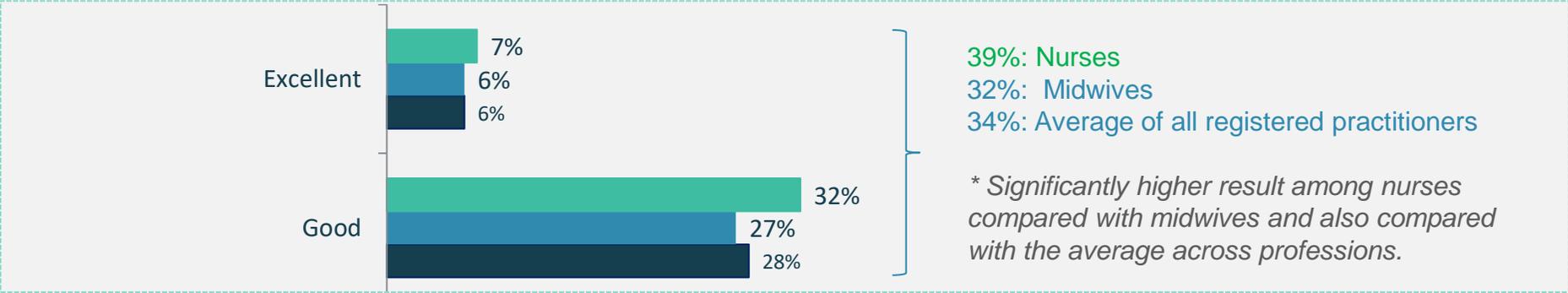
*I think the investigative process can be overwhelming overzealous and very harsh due to the length of time investigations take. Sometimes they treat the practitioners as though they are criminals.*

*I don't believe they have the best interests of midwives at the forefront of their actions.*

# 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?

## Nurses and midwives



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

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**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).*

*Advocacy for the profession and its members when it came to PPE and standards of care. The board could've done more for aged care too.*

*Reduced cost of fees please.*

*Advocating for appropriate PPE.*

*More effort to educate health professionals on how to protect themselves (social distancing between colleagues, mask wearing, etc).*

*Assistance with CPD for registered practitioners.*

*Extra staff and free parking.*

*The same as every other government health agency/regulator...unite and consolidate so that practitioners have a single source of information.*

*Have still found it difficult to accrue CPD points during COVID. Many online courses are during work hours.*

*It would have been nice to have our registration fees waived for this year, as many nurses found themselves without jobs, decreased hours.*

*How about not increasing my registration fee in the year a pandemic hits. Taking more money for no service in return.*

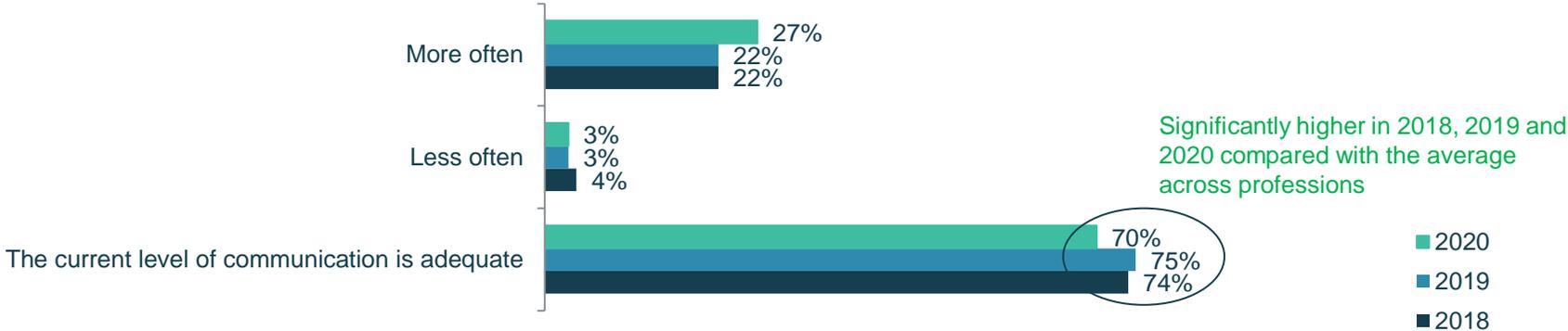
*Free counselling service, free Ahpra registration for 2020.*

*Counselling and mental health support.*

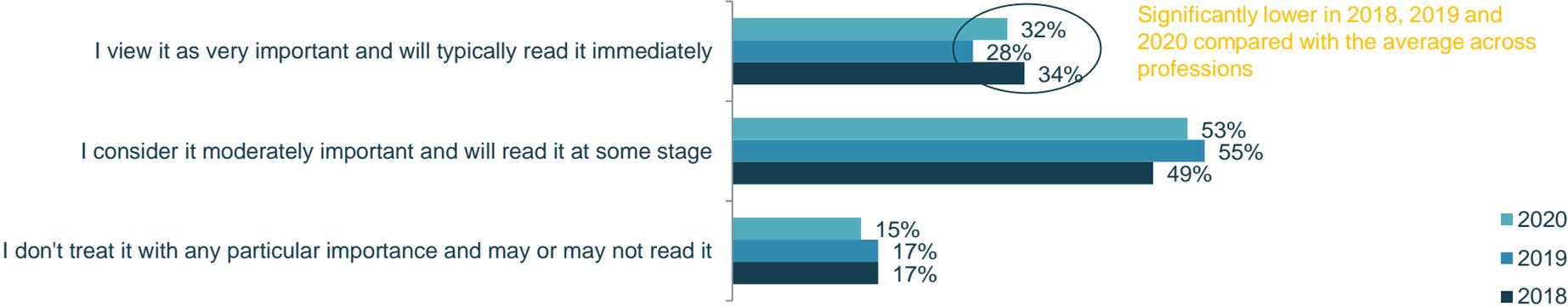
*Discounted registration would be a great place to start. The pandemic has been exhausting and soul destroying for many healthcare workers. Numerous healthcare workers are already talking about plans to leave their careers in pursuit of less stress and safer jobs.*

# Response to communication by the Nursing and Midwifery 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)?



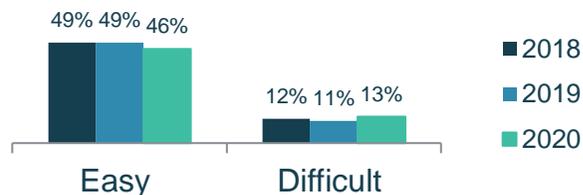
# Use of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia website

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



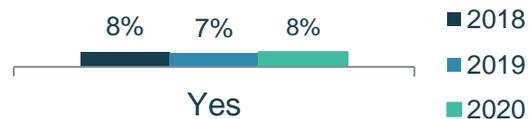
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this Board

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)...

- Requirements for placement hours and experiences for students. It seems universities read information and are then free to interpret those however suits.
- Pay rates private agency.
- Online free CPD courses.
- Fees, often hard to locate.
- Statistics are sometimes difficult to find.

# Contact details

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