

# 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 Podiatry 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.

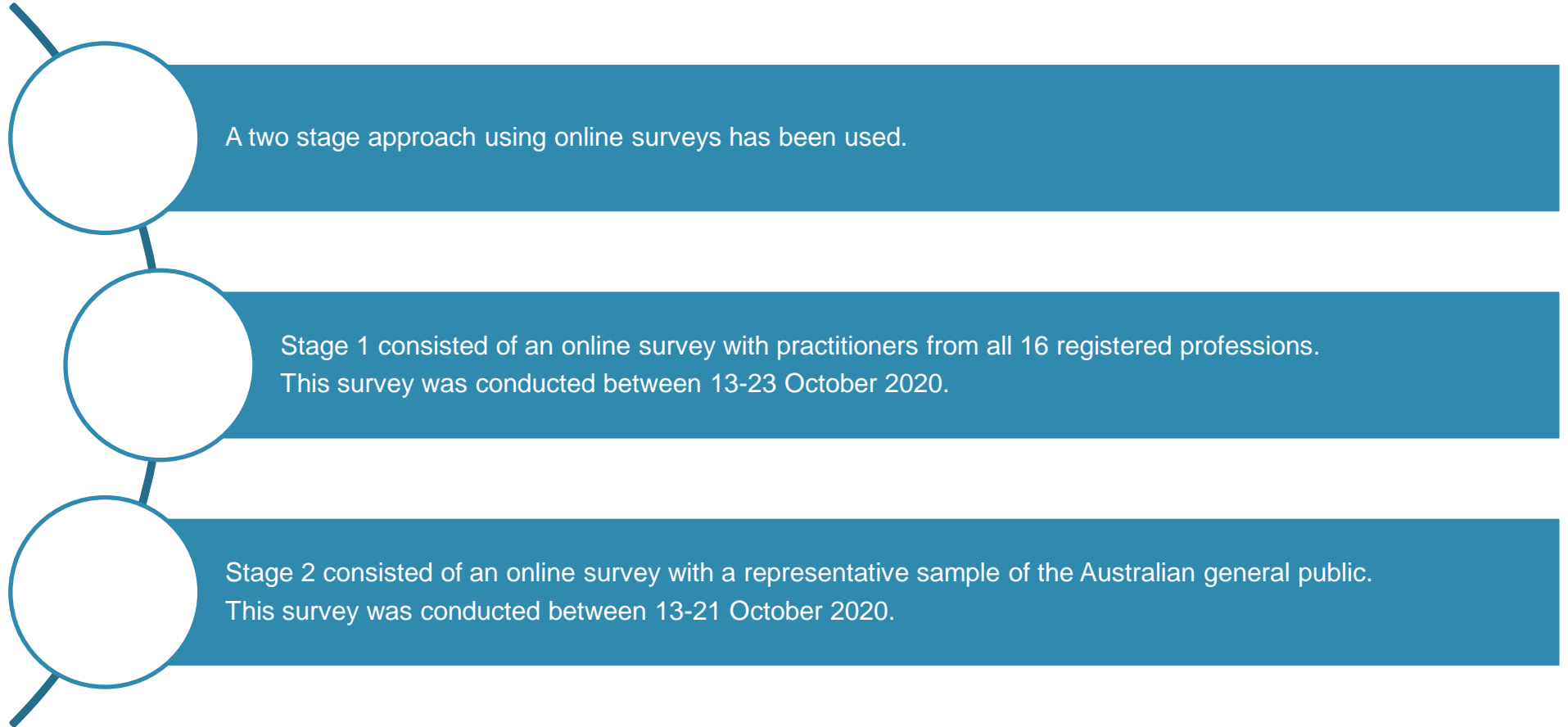
Given the value of the insights delivered through the 2018 benchmark study to Ahpra and National Boards, the decision was taken to update the quantitative measures by conducting the online survey with practitioners and the general public in November 2019 and most recently in October 2020.

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 **Podiatry Board of Australia**.

# An overview of the methodology

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# Quantitative approach

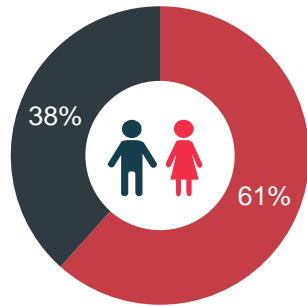
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community.
- The 2020 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 and 2019 questionnaires, with two additional questions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider. Quotas were placed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

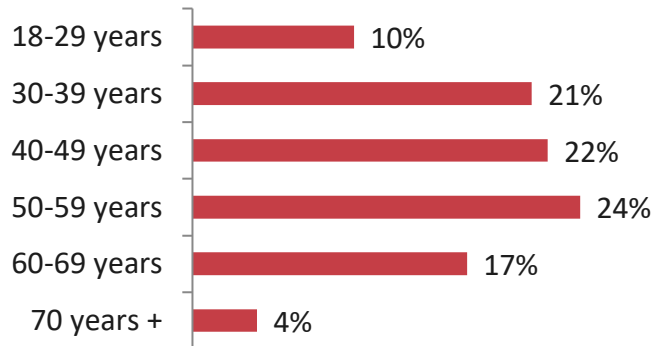


# 2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

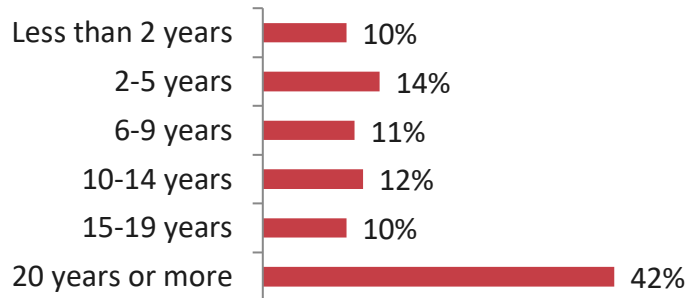
## Gender



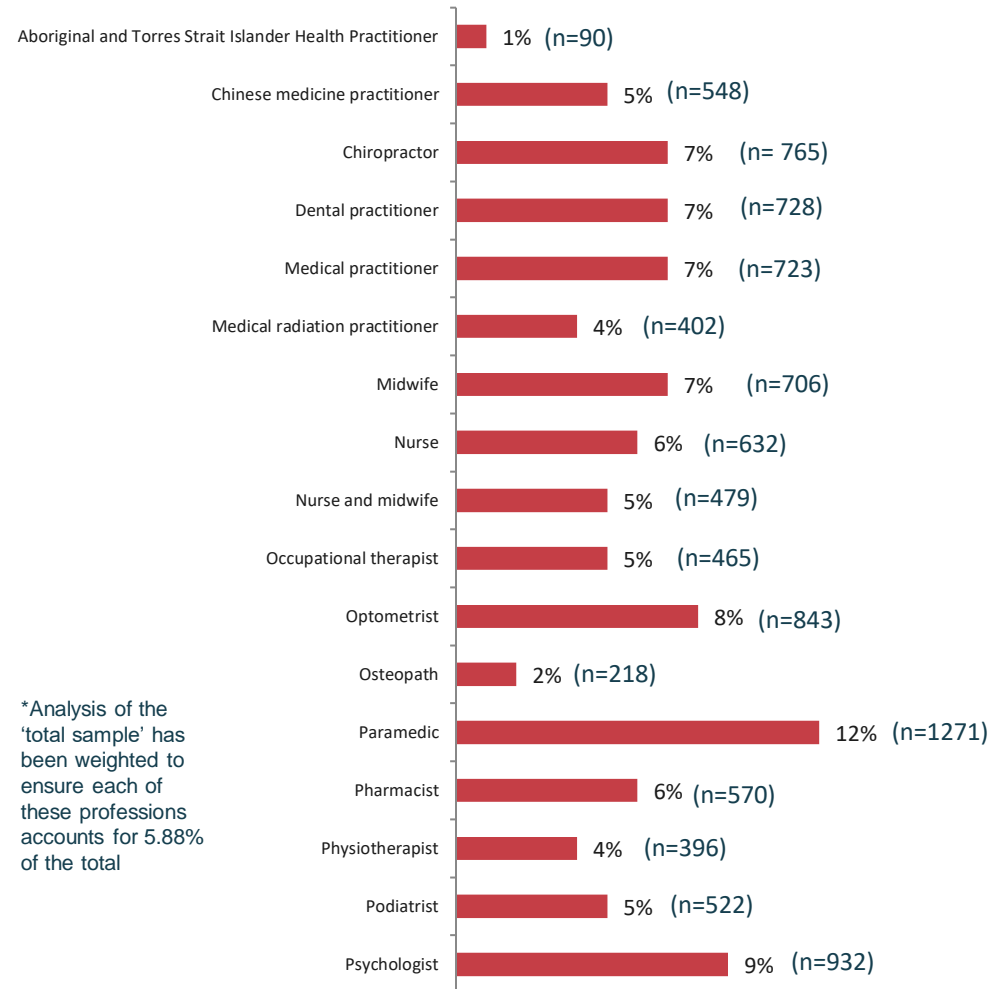
## Age



## Years in practice



## Practitioner type\*

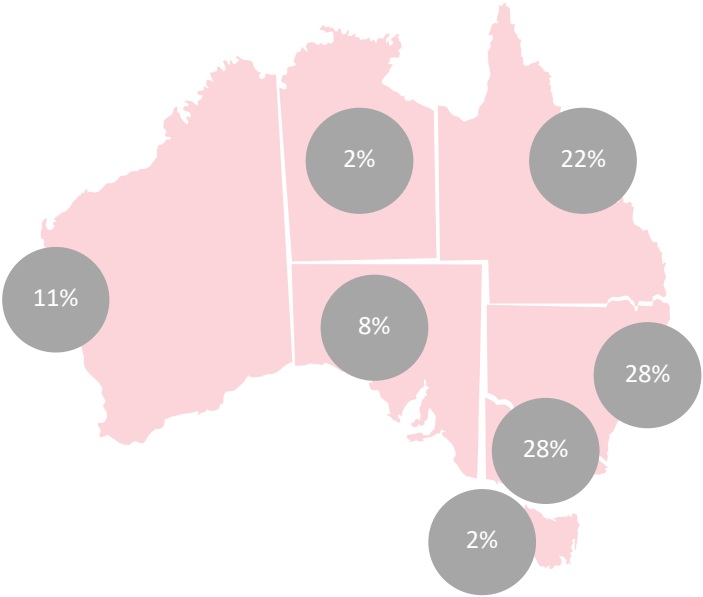


\*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

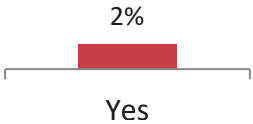
# 2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

## Location

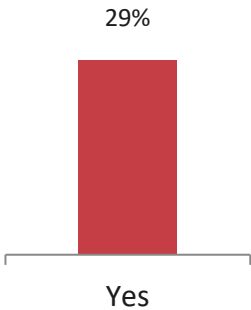


Metro: **63%**  
Regional: **30%**  
Rural: **7%**

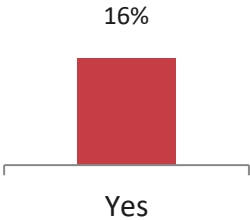
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



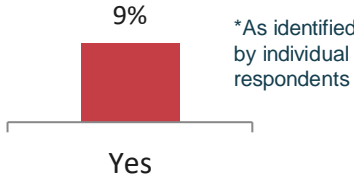
% who were born in a country other than Australia



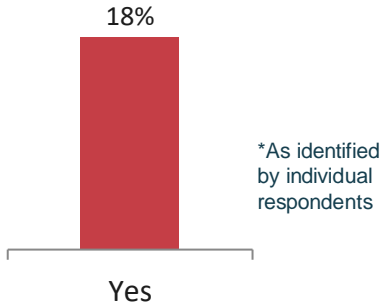
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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\*

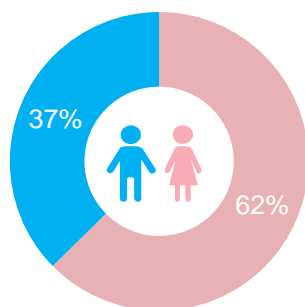


# Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners

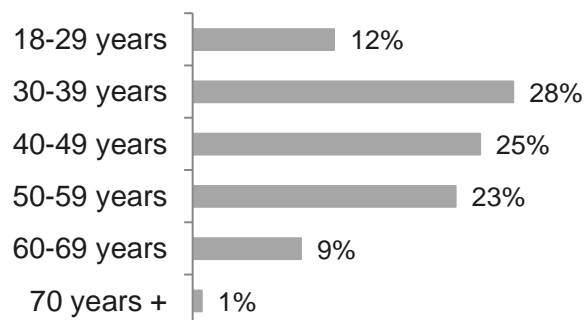
Specific insights into the responses from:  
**Podiatrists**

# Sample of podiatrists (n=522)

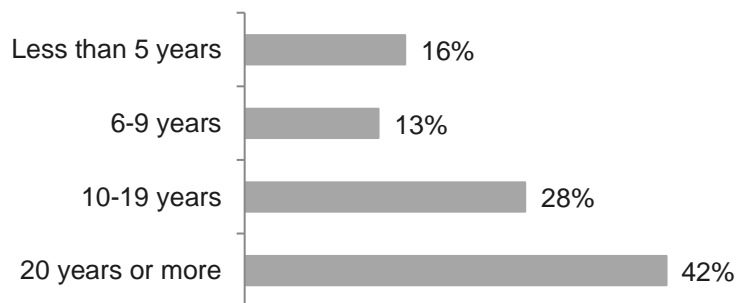
## Gender:



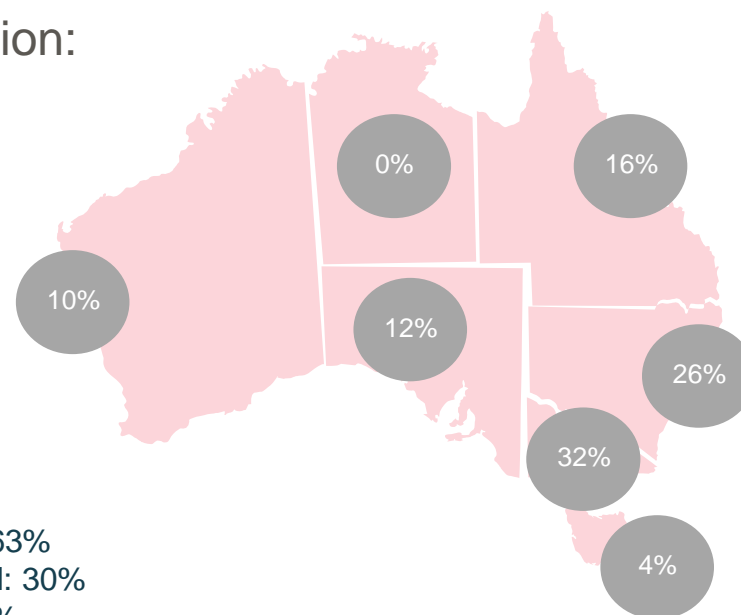
## Age:



## Years in practice:

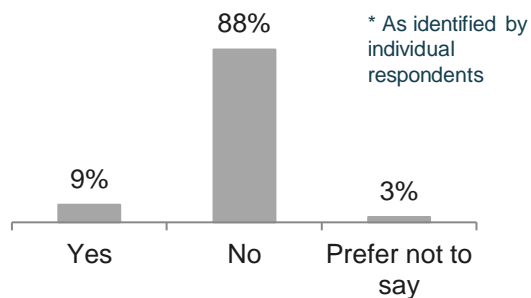


## Location:

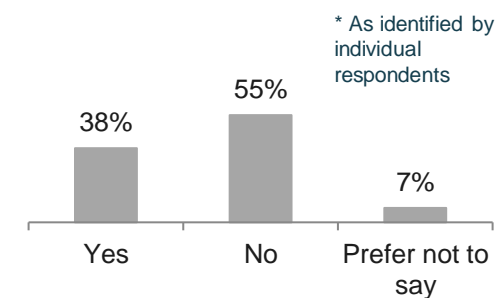


Metro: 63%  
Regional: 30%  
Rural: 6%

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



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





## 2020: Perceptions of the podiatry 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=522)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	47%	(+1%)
Hard working	33%	(+4%)
Caring	32%	(+4%)
Knowledgeable	29%	(-1%)
Competent	23%	(+2%)
Dedicated	22%	(+1%)
Compassionate	17%	(-6%)
Friendly	16%	(+9%)
Committed	16%	(-1%)
Responsible	16%	(-3%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Passionate	16%	(+2%)
Empathetic	15%	(-5%)
Independent	15%	(+7%)
Trusted	13%	(-10%)
Community minded	13%	(-1%)
Approachable	12%	(-)
Reputable	10%	(+1%)
Respected	10%	(-10%)
Innovative	9%	(+3%)
Team oriented	7%	(-2%)

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 podiatry profession among practitioners

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

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=392	2020 N=522
Professional	50%	47%
Hard working	31%	33%
Caring	31%	32%
Knowledgeable	32%	29%
Competent	22%	23%
Dedicated	21%	22%
Compassionate	13%	17%
Friendly	12%	16%
Committed	17%	16%
Responsible	14%	16%

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=392	2020 N=522
Passionate	11%	16%
Empathetic	15%	15%
Independent	13%	15%
Trusted	15%	13%
Community minded	13%	13%
Approachable	10%	12%
Reputable	10%	10%
Respected	11%	10%
Innovative	6%	9%
Team oriented	7%	7%

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

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

## 2020: Perceptions of the Podiatry 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=522)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	33%	(-4%)
Necessary	32%	(+1%)
Administrators	32%	(-1%)
For practitioners	30%	(-1%)
Decision-makers	21%	(-1%)
Advocates	21%	(+4%)
Bureaucratic	20%	(-5%)
For the public	18%	(-3%)
Supportive	18%	(+3%)
Competent	16%	(+1%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Accessible	16%	(+5%)
Approachable	15%	(+4%)
Helpful	15%	(+4%)
Shows leadership	13%	(-)
Out of touch	13%	(+2%)
Responsive	12%	(+3%)
Trustworthy	12%	(-)
Fair	10%	(-)
Poor communicators	9%	(-)
Good communicators	9%	(-2%)

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 Podiatry 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=324	2019 N=392	2020 N=522
Regulators	33%	32%	33%
Necessary	35%	32%	32%
Administrators	38%	33%	32%
For practitioners	40%	34%	30%
Decision-makers	24%	23%	21%
Advocates	22%	23%	21%
Bureaucratic	24%	25%	20%
For the public	20%	21%	18%
Supportive	12%	15%	18%
Competent	15%	16%	16%

% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=324	2019 N=392	2020 N=522
Accessible	12%	13%	16%
Approachable	14%	12%	15%
Helpful	10%	12%	15%
Shows leadership	9%	11%	13%
Out of touch	15%	11%	13%
Responsive	8%	10%	12%
Trustworthy	8%	10%	12%
Fair	8%	9%	10%
Poor communicators	12%	13%	9%
Good communicators	9%	11%	9%

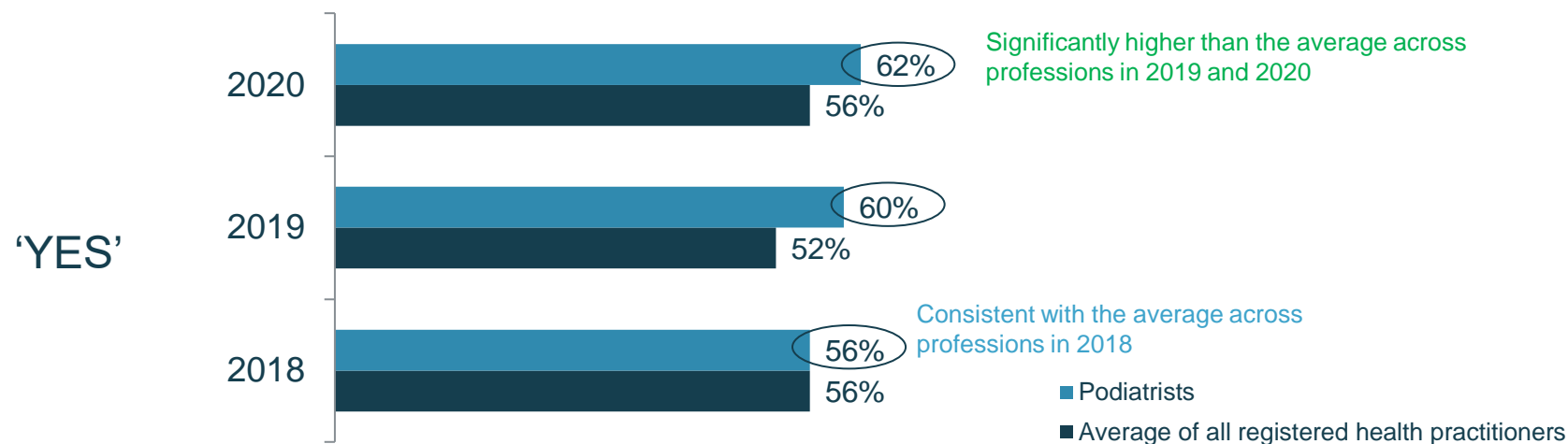
Green indicates a result significantly higher compared with the previous year.

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

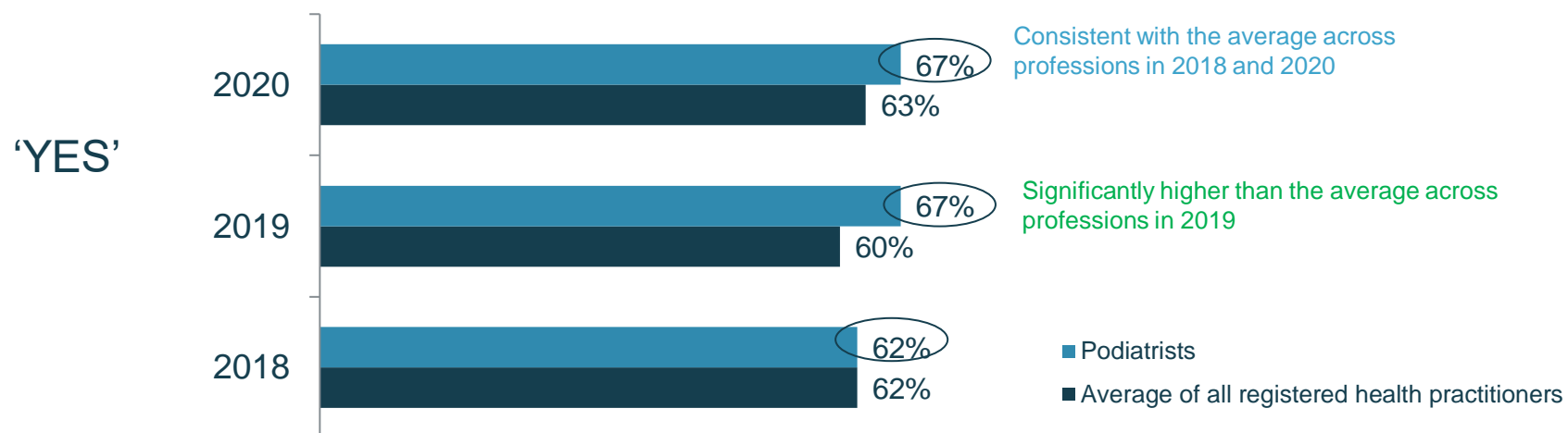
Note: There have been no significant changes in perceptions of the Podiatry Board among podiatrists between 2018-2020.

# Levels of confidence and trust in the Podiatry Board of Australia

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



Q. Do you trust your National Board?



# The indicators of trust and barriers to trust in the Podiatry Board of Australia

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

*I feel they are trying to keep abreast with current issues and developments within the profession. They appear to be pushing for and supporting extended scope of practice and seeing the future of the profession.*

*They haven't given me a reason to not trust them.*

*Board members are Podiatrists themselves.*

*They appear to be striving to provide a valuable service that is in touch and adaptable with what podiatrists need.*

*Always keep us registered podiatrists informed and supported. Always advocating for the profession and improving the profession. Very helpful and approachable.*

*Because they produce our code of conduct and ensure that podiatrists are completing CPD.*

*Its in the interests of our profession for the Podiatry Board to be transparent and honest. It would be to the detriment to so many if they weren't.*

*Like minded individuals make up the board who have the profession's reputation as their priority.*

*They seem to make fair decisions and working hard towards our profession.*

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

*Whilst their intentions are good, they don't seem to have the desire or resources to act.*

*They do not take reasonable suggestions on board. They are practitioners who are not at the coal face, but in very specialised roles that do not reflect what the majority of podiatrists do or face every day. They are not approachable.*

*I do not trust them because I don't feel like they are present to support practitioners. Everything is based on outdated podiatry not modern podiatry.*

*I don't feel that they are progressing our field in the eyes of the public and other health professions. In a multi-disciplinary setting, we are always looked at as being inferior to other professions.*

*The podiatry board in more recent years appears to frequently have an adversarial approach towards podiatrist. On a number of occasions it's communication towards the profession is threatening, bordering on accusatorially.*

# Full list of responses provided separately

## 2020: Perceptions of Ahpra among podiatrists (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=522)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	55%	(+3%)
Administrators	46%	(+2%)
Necessary	40%	(+4%)
For the public	34%	(+1%)
Bureaucratic	33%	(-3%)
For practitioners	26%	(-2%)
Decision-makers	24%	(+1%)
Intimidating	15%	(-)
Competent	13%	(-)
Rigid	12%	(-3%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Controlling	11%	(-3%)
Accessible	11%	(+2%)
Advocates	11%	(+1%)
Trustworthy	10%	(-)
Supportive	10%	(+2%)
Helpful	10%	(+2%)
Poor communicators	10%	(-3%)
Approachable	10%	(+3%)
Fair	9%	(-)
Shows leadership	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 Ahpra among podiatrists

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=324	2019 N=392	2020 N=522
Regulators	60%	58%	55%
Administrators	52%	45%	46%
Necessary	43%	40%	40%
For the public	40%	38%	34%
Bureaucratic	42%	39%	33%
For practitioners	26%	25%	26%
Decision-makers	23%	20%	24%
Intimidating	20%	18%	15%
Competent	16%	15%	13%
Rigid	17%	17%	12%

% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2018 N=324	2019 N=392	2020 N=522
Controlling	17%	15%	11%
Accessible	13%	7%	11%
Advocates	7%	13%	11%
Trustworthy	9%	8%	10%
Supportive	6%	9%	10%
Helpful	8%	6%	10%
Poor communicators	12%	14%	10%
Approachable	7%	9%	10%
Fair	10%	9%	9%
Shows leadership	4%	6%	7%

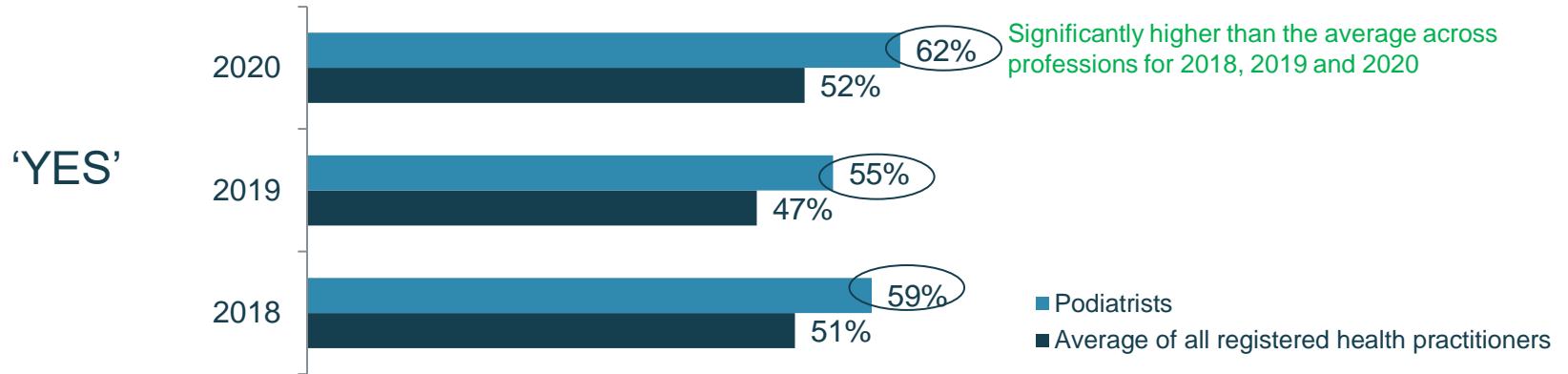
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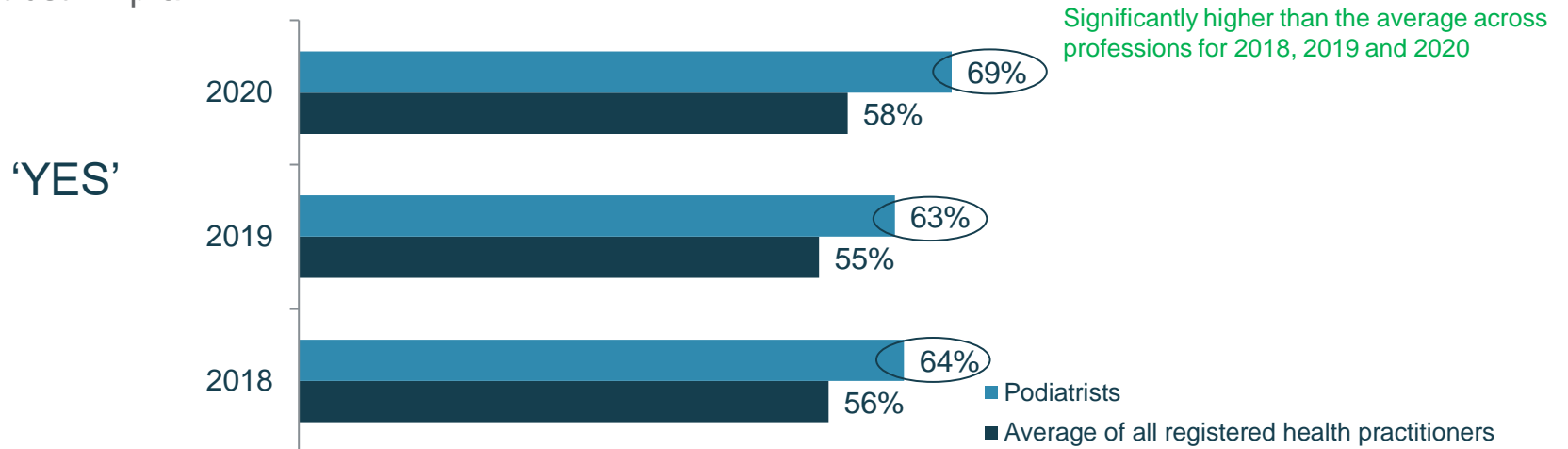


# Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among podiatrists

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 podiatrists

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## Indicators of trust: **69% trust Ahpra**

*I trust that they work towards their purpose of protecting the public as they are a government led agency.*

*They are the leading body for all allied health practitioners so I would hope that I could trust them to make sure that the community is looked after by accredited people.*

*Keeping the profession accountable and to a high standard.*

*Sensible decision making and evidence-based guidelines / regulations.*

*They are there to protect the public from poor quality practitioners and therefore protect the professions as well.*

*It was formed with the right intentions, particularly in keeping the public safe and practitioners accountable.*

*Large well-resourced organization with intelligent staff in the upper management.*

*Because they provide up to date information, there does not seem to be any benefit to the Ahpra by not being truthful. Ahpra are here to help make sure things are done correctly. I do believe this is done truthfully.*

*They have looked out for us through COVID.*

## Barriers to trust: **10% DO NOT trust Ahpra**

*They are extremely poor communicators. The time period it takes for matters to be resolved verges on being ridiculous.*

*In ability to incorporate professional input from professional innovation even when it is clearly to the benefit of the public.*

*Cannot get a straight answer out of them. I have called them twice for clarification on their rules and was advised to seek my own legal advice. They were Aphra rules, take a position on your own rules and enforce them.*

*Not always on side of practitioner when complaints are lodged even if they are made up.*

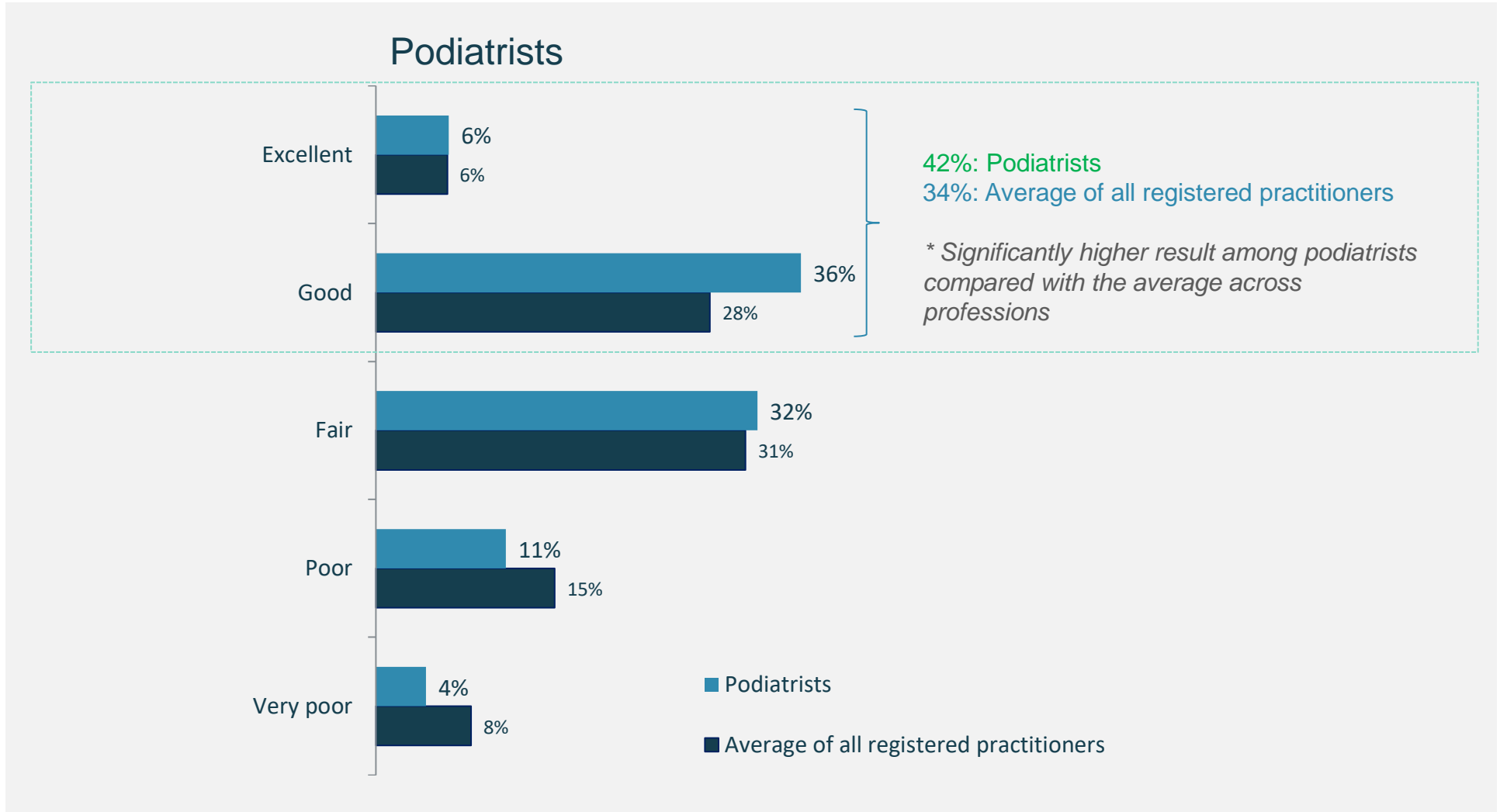
*There is little support for the practitioner. Its sole focus is protecting the public.*

*Whenever I have had dealings with them, they are unresponsive, hide behind their regulations and appear to be completely disinterested in addressing poor practice and actually doing anything.*

*I have been told a few horror stories from a number of sources that make me feel they are incompetent at investigating matters and allow things to drag on so long that it has driven people away from the profession.*

# 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?



# 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).*

*Get your re-registration web site up to date regarding your recent relaxing of some CPD requirements as it is at odds with some of your communications.*

*As the November renewal period approaches Ahpra and the respective boards should articulate clearly the continuing education requirements expected and any waivers that will be applied for the renewal of professional registration.*

*It's not about the stuff they have done during the pandemic, it's about what they do in general. If they can have flexibility now, why not always? Why are they so rigid?*

*I've never found them supportive so, in the context of a pandemic, I do not look to them for support. My colleagues in other professions feel likewise.*

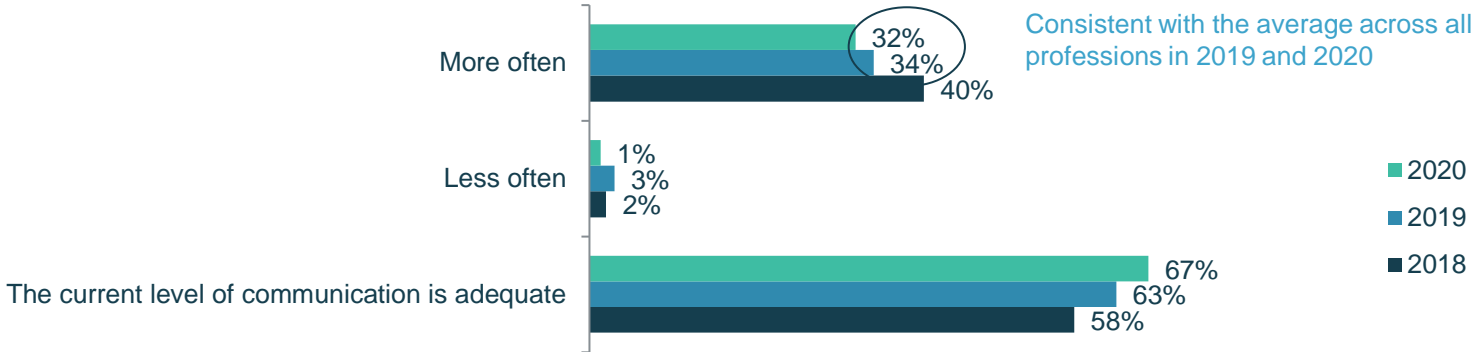
*I would have preferred to see them insisting on completion of hours of training for students despite COVID-19. Currently we have a large cohort of students with very little practical training in treating real patients.*

*Taking pressure off the practitioners who are struggling with financial and mental strain.*

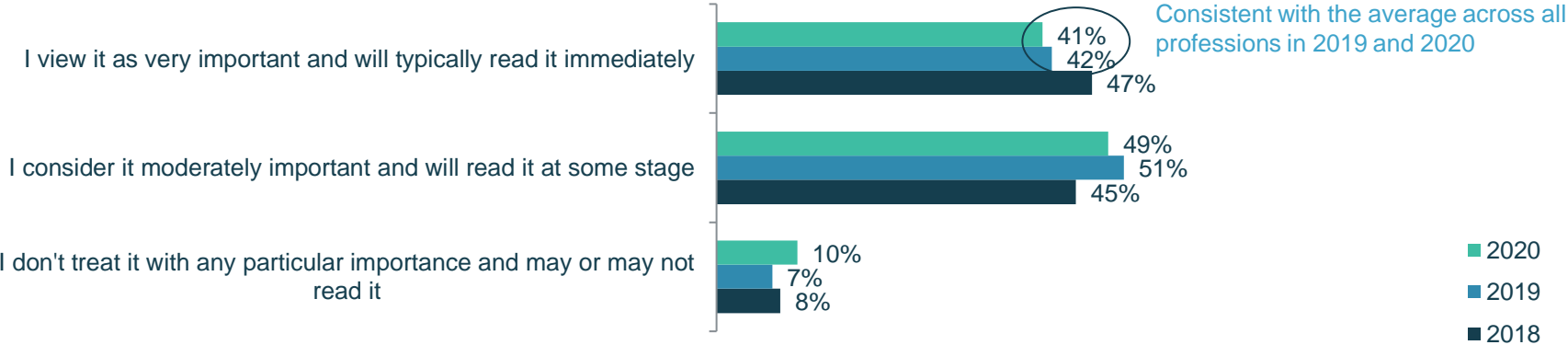
*Clear guidelines on PPE for different clinical settings.*

# Response to communication by the Podiatry Board of Australia

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



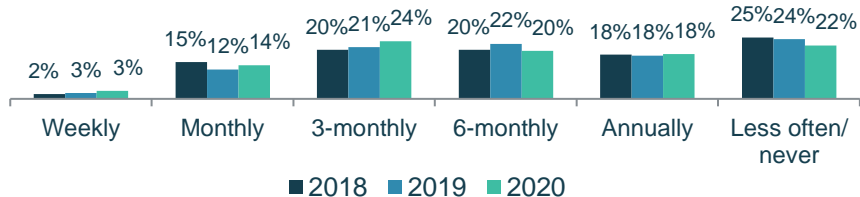
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

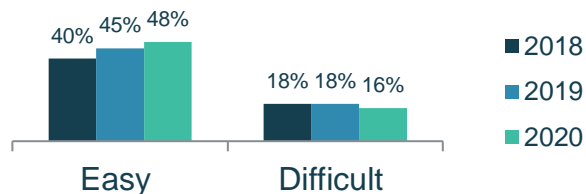
# Use of the Podiatry Board of Australia website

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



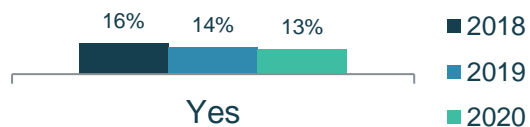
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this Board

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



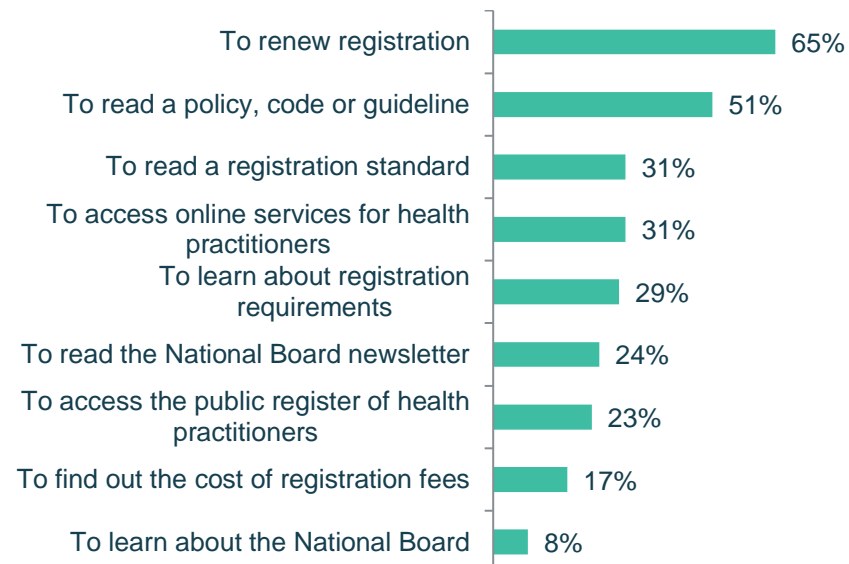
Base: Practitioners who have visited that Board's website

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)...

- Podiatry council publications.
- COVID-19 restriction clarifications.
- Easy to follow ESM information.
- More detailed description of recommended PPE.
- Clear information on CPR codes.
- More information on prescribers.

# Contact details

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Truly Deeply