



# **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 Chinese Medicine Board of Australia***

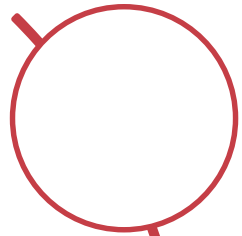
# Introduction

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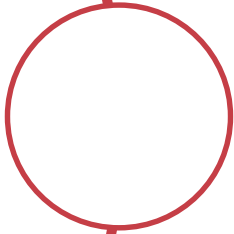
- Truly Deeply was first engaged in 2018 by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) to assess the perception and sentiment towards Ahpra and the National Boards.
- The review was intended to help National Boards and Ahpra better understand what stakeholders think and feel about the 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 Chinese Medicine Board of Australia**.

# An overview of the methodology

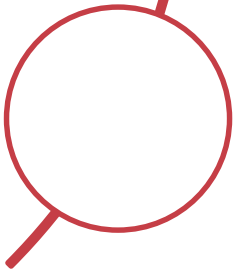
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A **two stage** approach using online surveys has been used.



**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

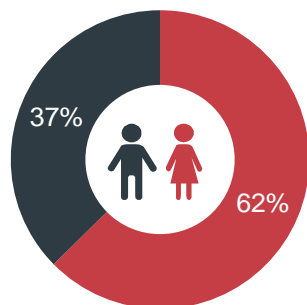
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community following the qualitative investigation.
- The 2019 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 questionnaires, with only a small number of additions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external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

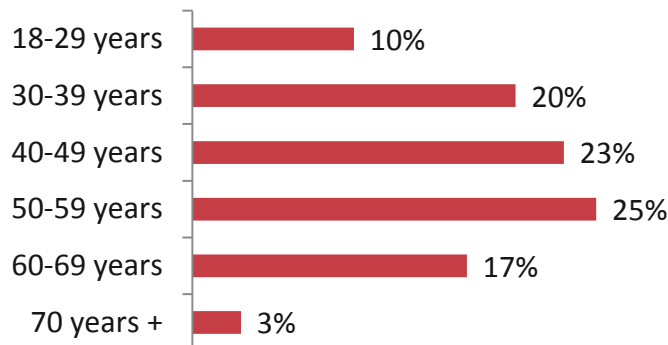


# 2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

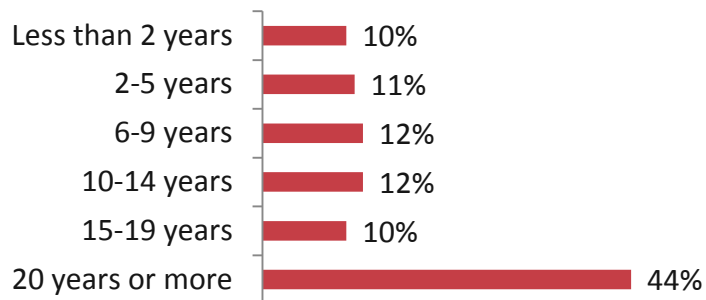
## Gender



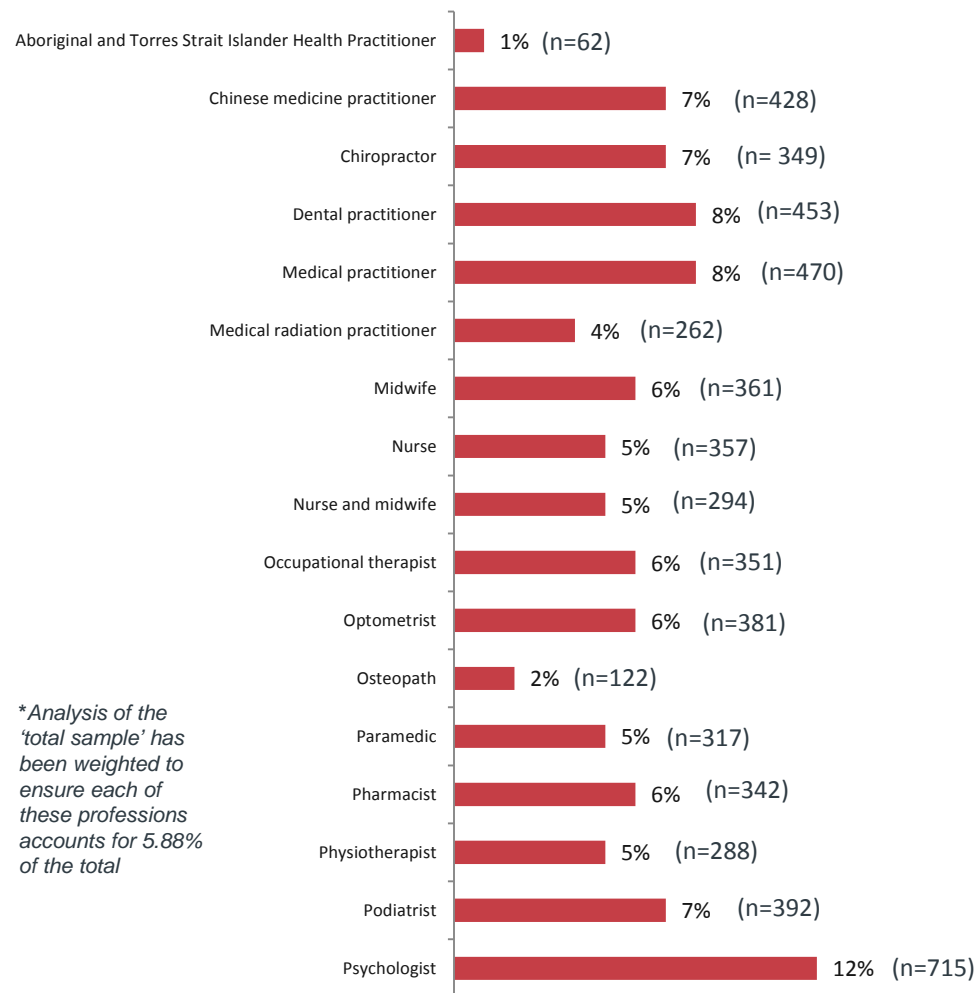
## Age



## Years in practice



## Practitioner type\*

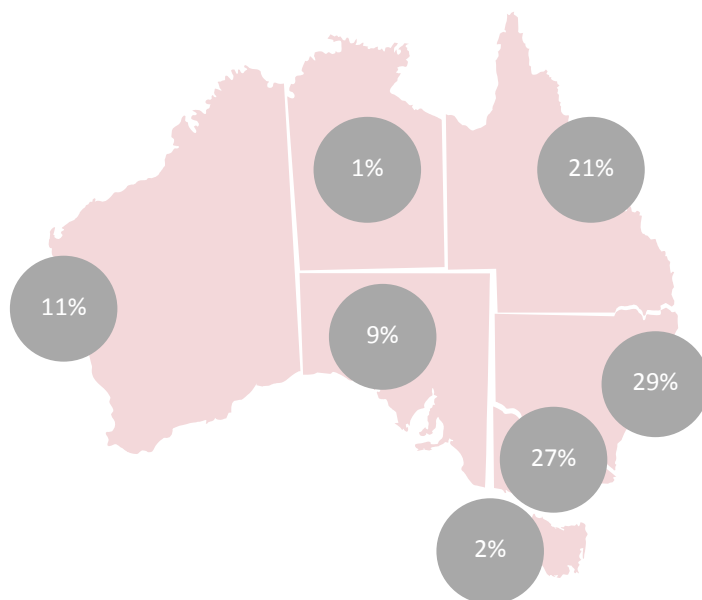


*\*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total*

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

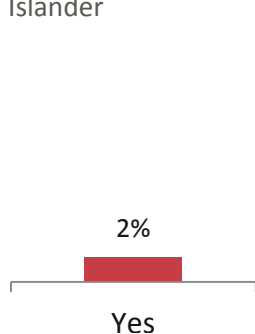
# 2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

## Location

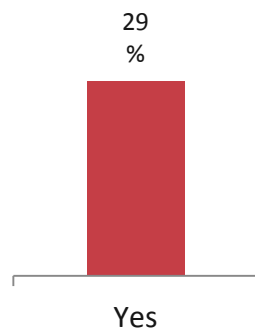


Metro: **64%**  
Regional: **36%**

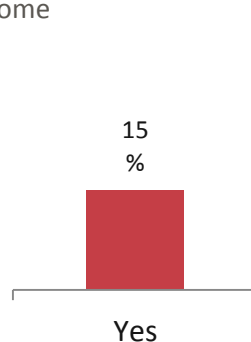
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



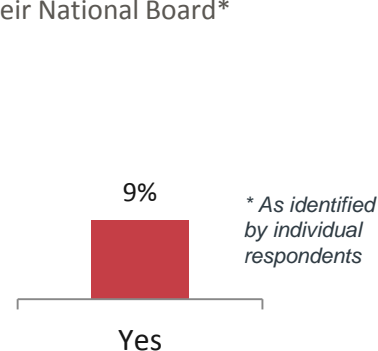
% who were born a country other than Australia



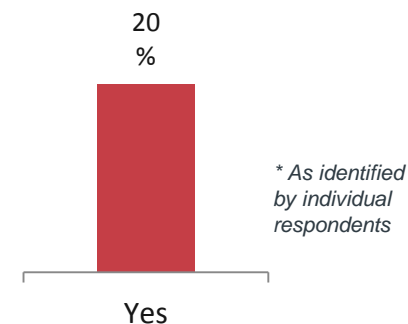
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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\*



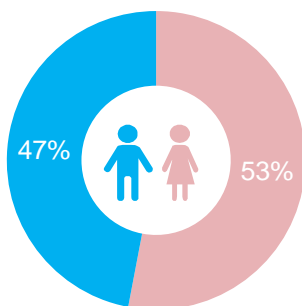
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Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners.

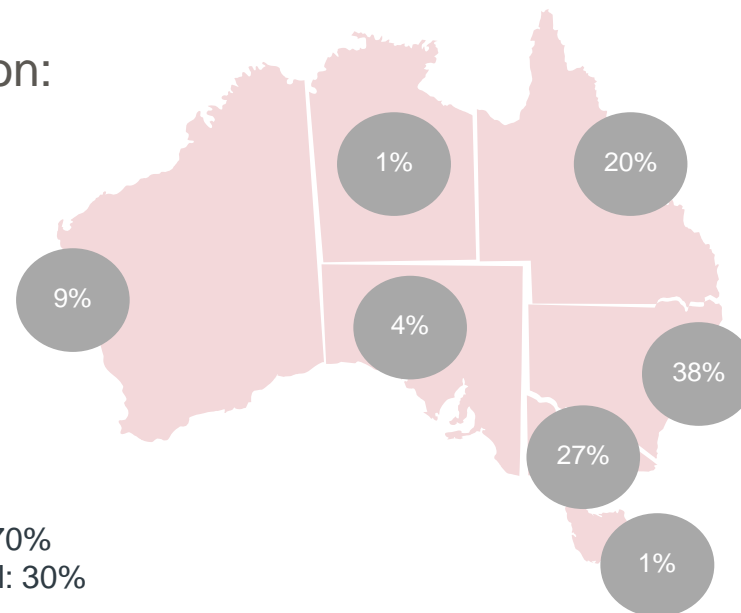
Specific insights into the responses from:  
**Chinese medicine practitioners**

# 2019 sample of Chinese medicine practitioners (n=428)

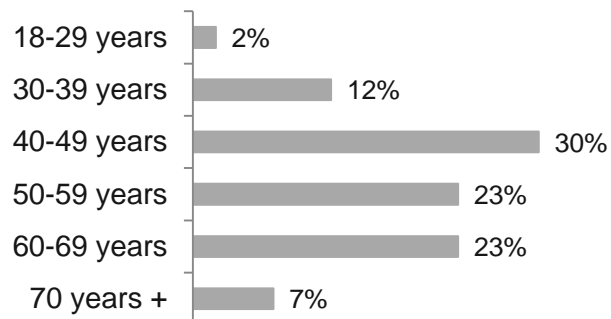
## Gender:



## Location:

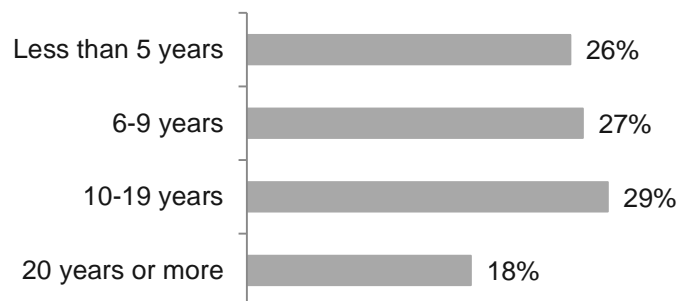


## Age:

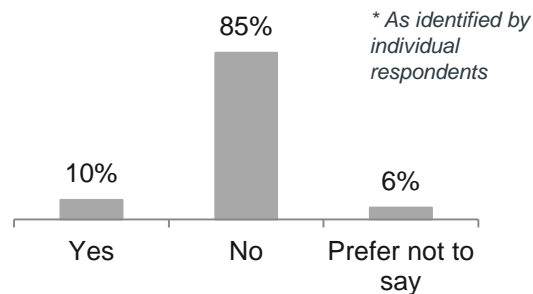


Metro: 70%  
Regional: 30%

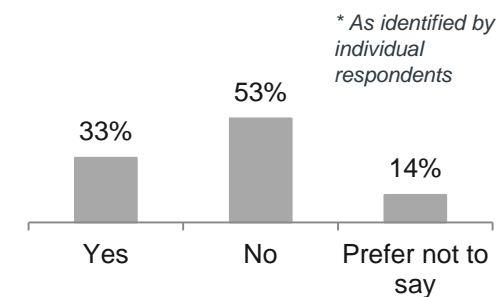
## Years in practice:



% 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 Chinese medicine 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=428)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	44%	(-3%)
Knowledgable	30%	(-%)
Caring	29%	(+1%)
Compassionate	22%	(-2%)
Responsible	21%	(+1%)
Passionate	19%	(+5%)
Committed	18%	(+2%)
Dedicated	16%	(-5%)
Empathetic	16%	(-6%)
Hard-working	14%	(-16%)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Competent	14%	(-8%)
Open minded	14%	(+8%)
Nurturing	13%	(+7%)
Trusted	12%	(-10%)
Efficient	11%	(+6%)
Respected	10%	(-9%)
Independent	10%	(+3%)
Friendly	10%	(+4%)
Honest	10%	(+1%)
Approachable	9%	(-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 Chinese Medicine 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=428)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	35%	(-5%)
Administrators	31%	(-3%)
<b>For the public</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>(+7%)</b>
Bureaucratic	29%	(+2%)
<b>For practitioners</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>(-8%)</b>
<b>Necessary</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>(-12%)</b>
Supportive	16%	(+3%)
<b>Controlling</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>(+6%)</b>
<b>Helpful</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>(+4%)</b>
<b>Decision-makers</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>(-10%)</b>

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Out of touch	14%	(+2%)
<b>Good communicators</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>(+4%)</b>
Rigid	12%	(+2%)
Poor communicators	12%	(+1%)
Competent	11%	(-3%)
Fair	11%	(-%)
Responsive	11%	(+2%)
Intimidating	11%	(+2%)
Shows leadership	9%	(-3%)
<b>Advocates</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>(-8%)</b>

**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 2018-19:

# Perceptions of the Chinese Medicine 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=325	2019 N=428
Regulators	36%	35%
Administrators	34%	31%
For the public	30%	30%
Bureaucratic	27%	29%
For practitioners	26%	24%
Necessary	25%	21%
<b>Supportive</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Controlling	17%	15%
Helpful	14%	15%
<b>Decision-makers</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>14%</b>

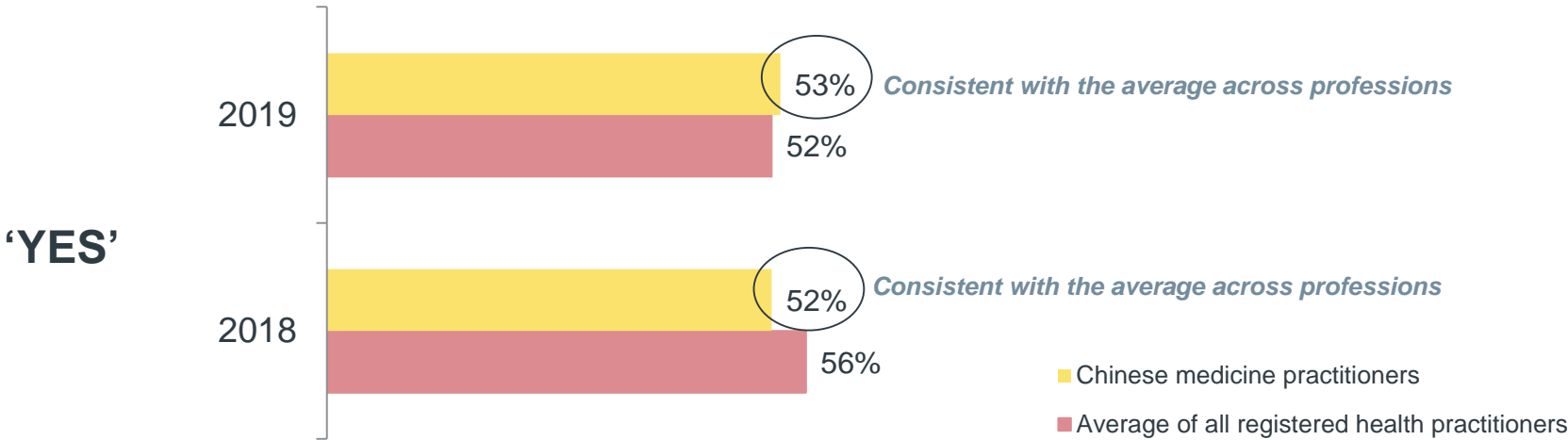
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=325	2019 N=428
Out of touch	17%	14%
Good communicators	11%	14%
Rigid	12%	12%
<b>Poor communicators</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Competent	13%	11%
Fair	10%	11%
Responsive	10%	11%
Intimidating	12%	11%
Shows leadership	8%	9%
Advocates	12%	9%

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

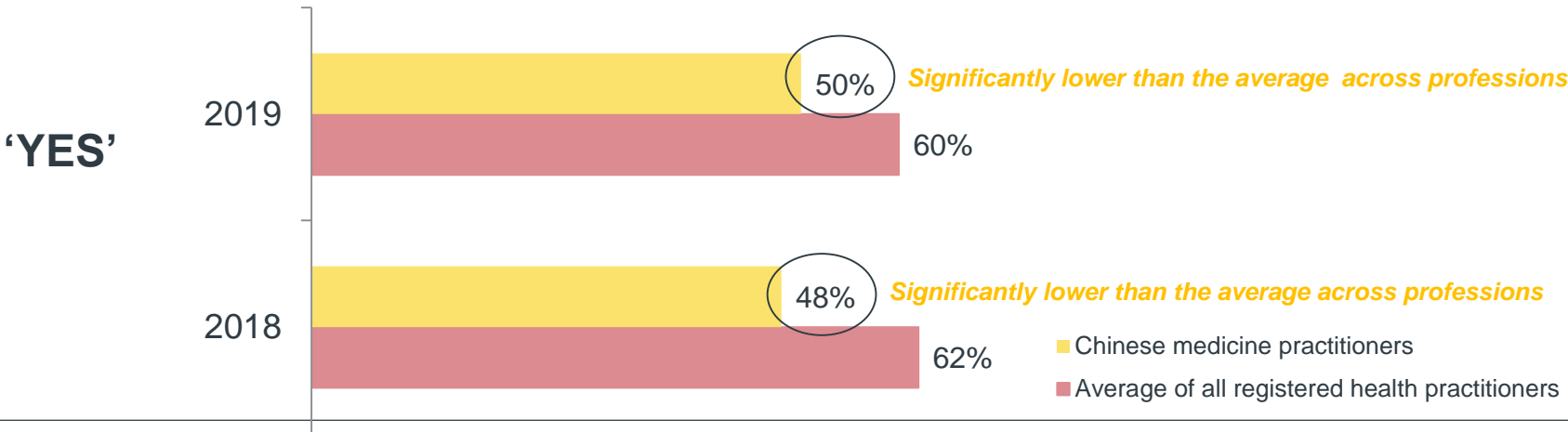
**Orange** indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019* compared with the 2018 result

# Levels of confidence and trust in the Chinese Medicine 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 Chinese Medicine Board of Australia

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## Indicators of trust: **50% trust the Board**

*The Chinese medicine professionals have strong representation in the board.*

*There is no reason why I would not trust the CMBA; they are doing the best they can within the limitations of the policies that direct them.*

*Professionalism, supportive, knowledgeable, honest.*

*Advocates for best practice for Chinese medicine.*

*An organisation that is highly regarded and high standards.*

*An ethical regulator for Chinese medicine practitioners.*

*It provides all good and important information. Web site is well directed, and always respond efficiently.*

*It provides the public with a safe and qualified workforce under the national scheme.*

*The members have a genuine interest in furthering the profession.*

## Barriers to trust: **18% DO NOT trust the Board**

*I've seen a punitive approach taken toward practitioners, and in some cases, practitioners should never have come in front of a hearing panel. A more impartial attitude is needed from those who lead.*

*They do not protect the public from unprofessional practitioners. There are still too many practitioners who do not speak English well enough, probably are not registered and are still working in umbrella organisations. They are not working to protect those of us working hard to uphold professional standards.*

*I feel they are not representing our profession for the safety of the general public. They should be lobbying to ensure anyone who is practising dry needling or those calling it acupuncture are formally trained.*

*Because they're not doing enough to stop weekend dry needling courses which can endanger the public.*

*They too have not done anything about the dry needling problem and allowed anyone to practise acupuncture after attending a one-day course.*

# Full list of responses provided separately

# 2019: Perceptions of Ahpra among Chinese medicine practitioners

(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=428)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
<b>Regulators</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>(-10%)</b>
For the public	39%	(+4%)
Bureaucratic	37%	(-2%)
<b>Administrators</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>(-10%)</b>
<b>Necessary</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>(-11%)</b>
<b>Controlling</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>(+9%)</b>
Decision-makers	19%	(-2%)
<b>For practitioners</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>(-7%)</b>
Rigid	18%	(+2%)
Intimidating	18%	(+2%)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Out of touch	16%	(+2%)
Poor communicators	15%	(-%)
Supportive	11%	(+3%)
<b>Helpful</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>(+4%)</b>
Accessible	10%	(-%)
Trustworthy	10%	(+1%)
Good communicators	10%	(+3%)
Competent	9%	(-2%)
Fair	9%	(-%)
Secretive	9%	(+1%)

**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 2018-19:

# Perceptions of Ahpra among Chinese medicine practitioners

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 Board	2018 N=325	2019 N=428
<b>Regulators</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>44%</b>
For the public	43%	39%
<b>Bureaucratic</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Administrators</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>36%</b>
Necessary	23%	25%
<b>Controlling</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Decision makers</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>19%</b>
For practitioners	16%	19%
<b>Rigid</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>18%</b>
Intimidating	21%	18%

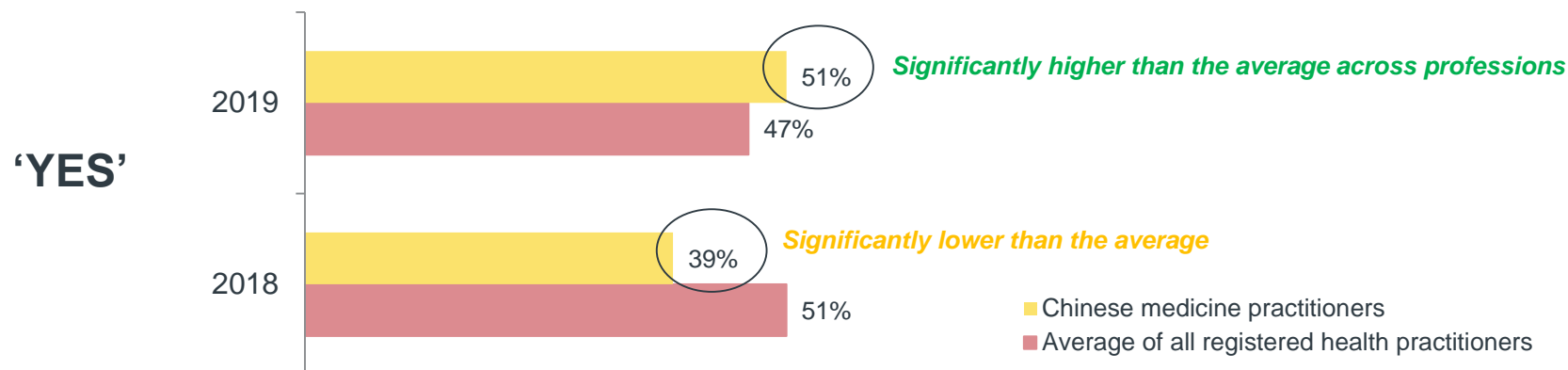
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=325	2019 N=428
<b>Out of touch</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Poor communicators</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Supportive</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Helpful	10%	11%
Accessible	9%	10%
Trustworthy	8%	10%
Good communicators	7%	10%
Competent	8%	9%
Fair	6%	9%
Secretive	12%	9%

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

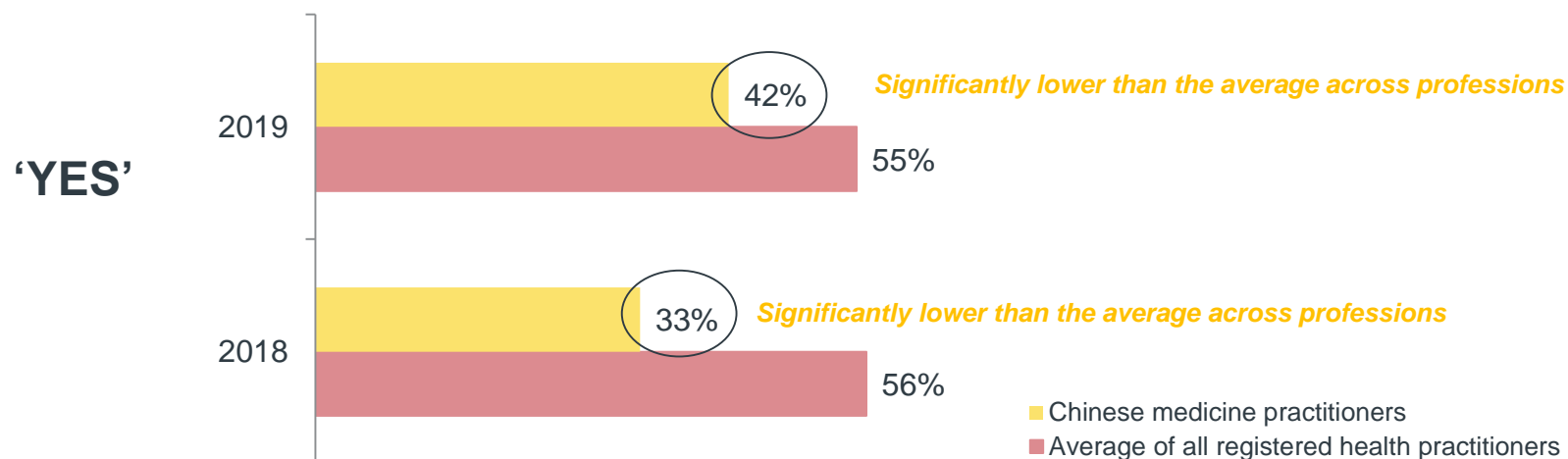
**Orange** indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

# Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among Chinese medicine practitioners

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 Chinese medicine practitioners

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## Indicators of trust: **42% trust Ahpra**

*It's a mature, thorough, transparent system.*

*Protecting and monitoring the practitioner; safeguarding the public health.*

*Government agency that should act fairly and squarely in accordance with its charter.*

*It keeps professional standards alive, good regulators, good leadership.*

*They seem to be consistent in their dealings.*

*It is because Ahpra is a peak body, which provides ethical control to make sure the practitioners are regulated to provide service to the community. In that way, our patients will have confidence in our service.*

*It protects the public and sets standards that practitioners need.*

*Dedicated to public safety and ensuring practitioners follow guidelines.*

*Recently been audited, fair process, good to deal with.*

**# Full list of responses provided separately**

## Barriers to trust: **25% DO NOT trust Ahpra**

*Have little or no understanding of Chinese medicine and condone the use of acupuncture needles by allied professions who are not qualified to use them and undertake ridiculously short courses to do so!*

*I've seen a punitive approach toward practitioners and an assumption of guilty until proven innocent on more than one occasion.*

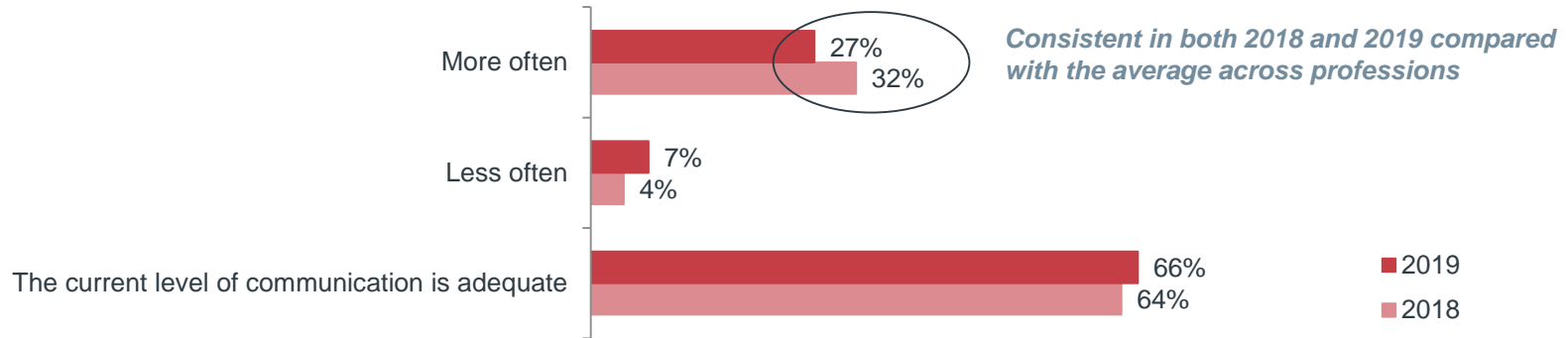
*The only thing regulation has done is restrict acupuncturists ability to advertise. If the public's safety was the biggest concern then they would look more seriously at the dry needling issue- that anyone can call themselves a dry needler and insert needles (do acupuncture) with zero ramifications, and able to advertise whatever they want about their service.*

*They are a government organisation and out of touch with the profession. To keep the public safe, they should do something about dry needling, but they don't.*

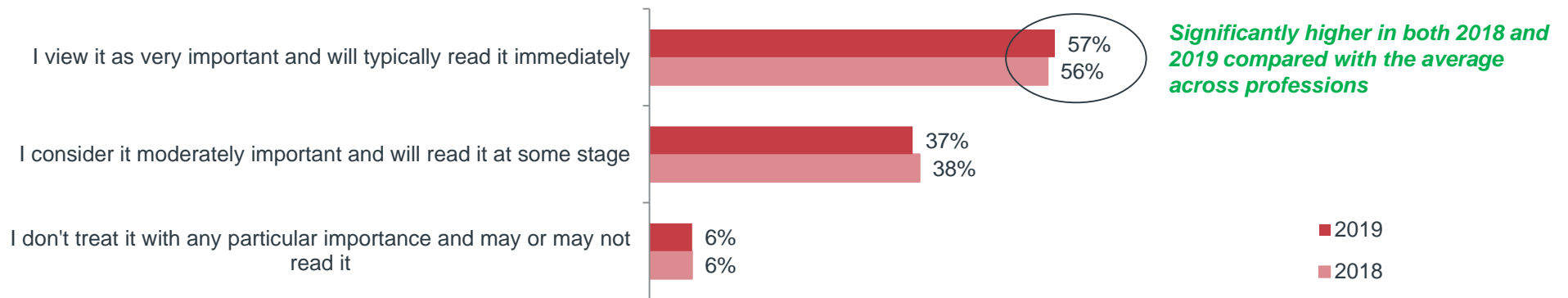
*Ahpra's motivations and movements appear to be not for the benefit of the broad public health, but protection of specific styles / schools of medicine.*

# Response to communication by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia

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



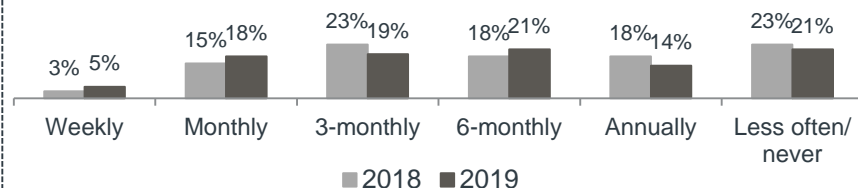
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

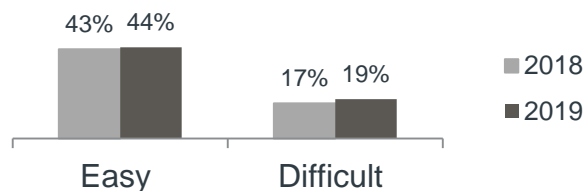
# Use of the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia website

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



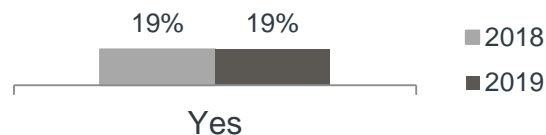
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this board

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



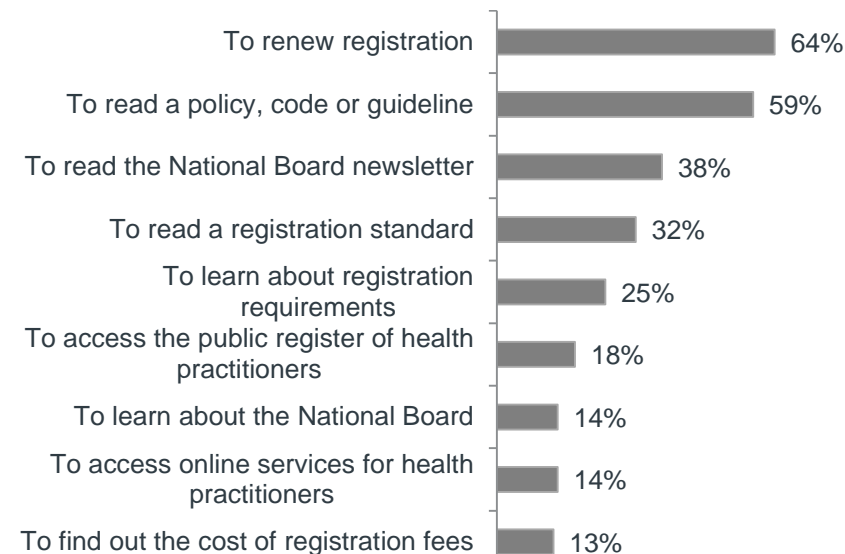
Base: Practitioners who have visited that board's website

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)...

- Practice address of a registered practitioner.
- It basically seems to be impossible to find what you're looking for, and the pages often send you round in a loop.
- Advertising - updated and correct guidelines.
- Recently becoming an employee I could not find any information on my award for determining my pay scale.
- Information on the advertising restrictions and guidelines.

# Additional feedback from Chinese medicine practitioners

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## **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)*

*Look after your Chinese medicine practitioners. Stop letting other modalities take over our profession. My thoughts are that there's more of them than us, so we get overlooked as they generate more fees. More CM practitioners are feeling that registration is useless and will stop registering and then it will not be as regulated anymore which will not serve the public.*

*I would like them to protect acupuncturists and their businesses by allowing only acupuncturists to perform acupuncture and not allowing everyone else to perform acupuncture under the name 'Dry Needling.' This loop-hole has had an extremely detrimental effect on our incomes and well being.*

*It would serve you well to be less rigid, clearer with your expectations, and especially to have a call centre with case managers that can help you when you need help with advertising or compliance.*

*My perception is that the boards are primarily regulatory only and have little understanding of my profession at the clinical level.*

*Why do you need to be so expensive? We get no value from the money spent and, as a part time worker, it really is a huge struggle to pay that large sum all at once. You do not offer payment plans to ease the burden. I seriously have a dilemma at this time every year as to knowing I don't have the cash to pay.. but wanting to continue doing what I love. It makes me sad.*

*Need to do more for practitioners. Would be great if they could advocate for Chinese medicine practitioners be part of Allied Health Professions.*

*Professional life has been made more difficult as a result of registration, with seemingly no benefits or protections provided by Ahpra or CMBA.*

*Need to be more careful with long time practicing professionals...because they have been going through different standard in they time , but keep there skills in tack and qualified enough for any new standards , thanks.*

*There is a public misconception about this dry needling, and I get complaints from patients every week . There has been an increase in pneumothorax due to poorly trained physiotherapists who should not be doing it. This is giving acupuncture a bad wrap due to allowing such health practitioners a back door into the world of needles.*

*I am happy with a lot of the changes that have been implemented by Ahpra and the National Boards, particularly standardisation between the registered professions. In my own personal experience I have always found Ahpra and the CMBA to be helpful.*

