

# 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 Paramedicine 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.

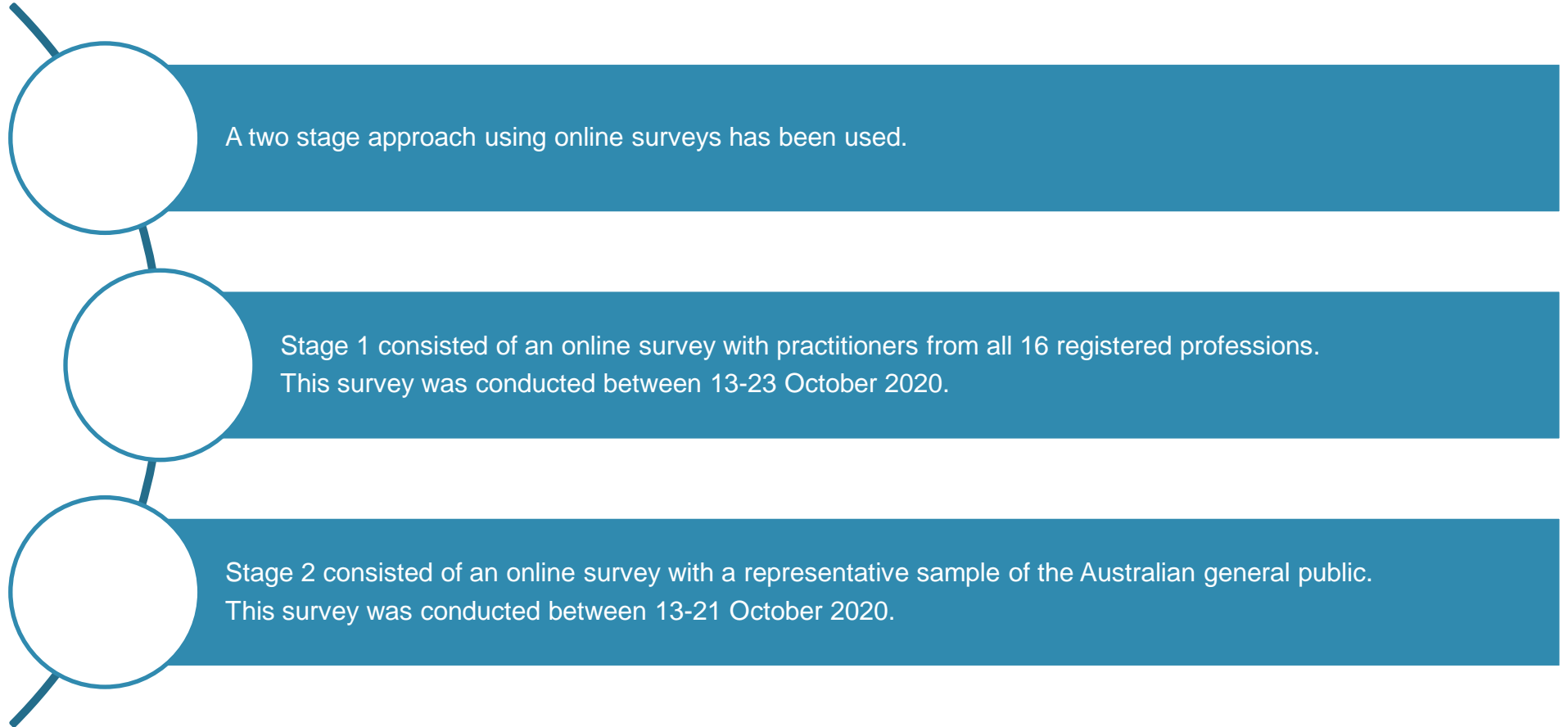
Given the value of the insights delivered through the 2018 benchmark study to Ahpra and National Boards, the decision was taken to update the quantitative measures by conducting the online survey with practitioners and the general public in November 2019 and most recently in October 2020.

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 **Paramedicine Board of Australia**.

# An overview of the methodology

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# Quantitative approach

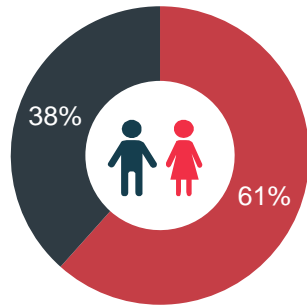
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community.
- The 2020 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 and 2019 questionnaires, with two additional questions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider. Quotas were placed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

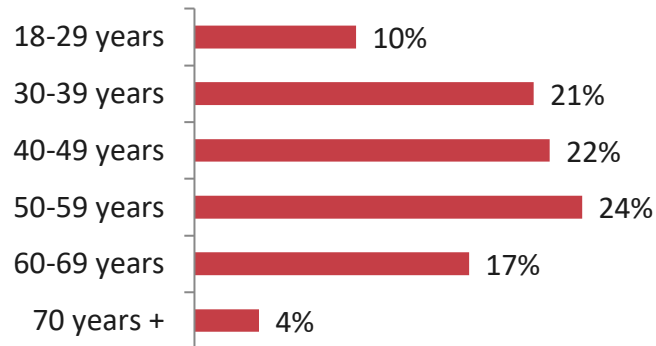


# 2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

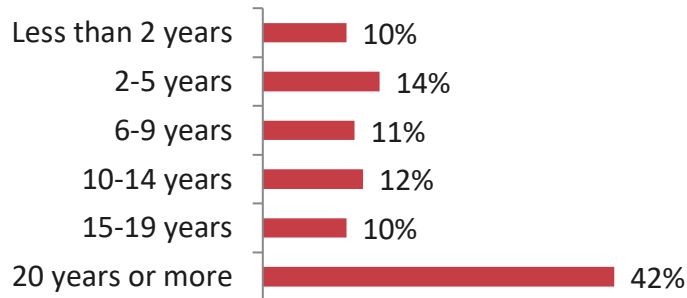
## Gender



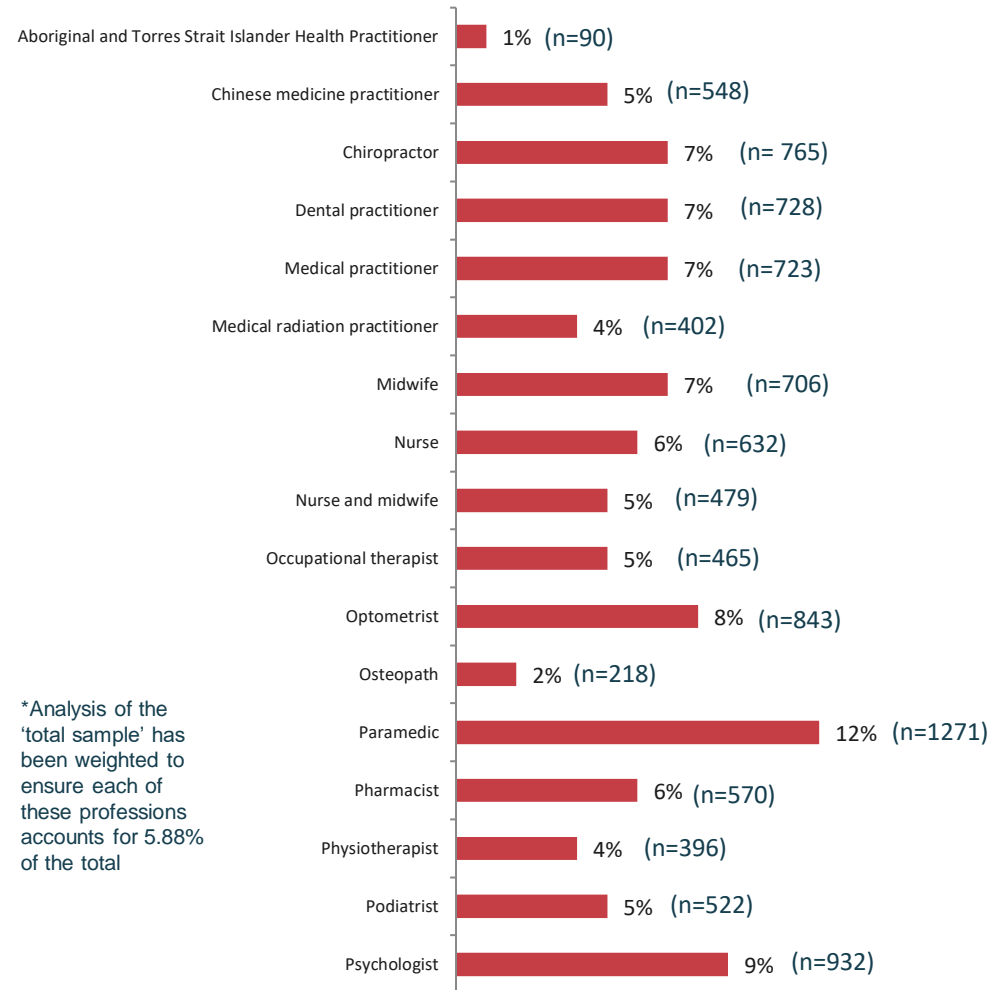
## Age



## Years in practice



## Practitioner type\*

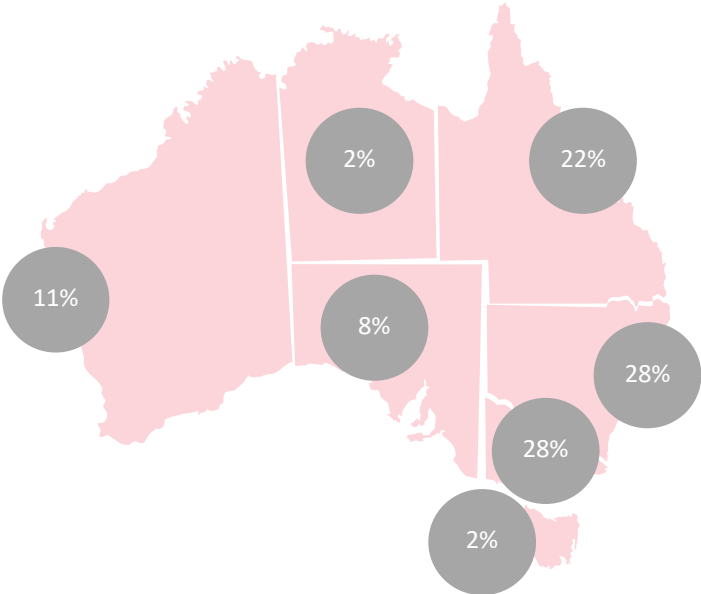


\*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

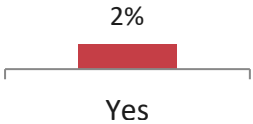
# 2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

## Location

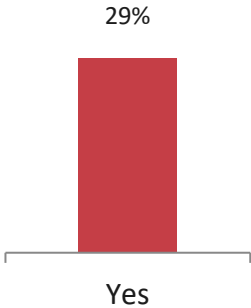


Metro: **63%**  
Regional: **30%**  
Rural: **7%**

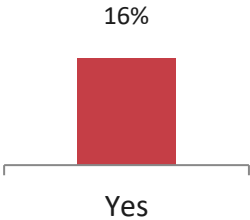
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



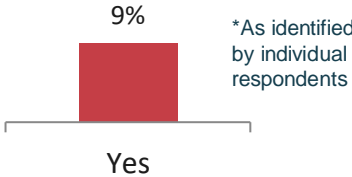
% who were born in a country other than Australia



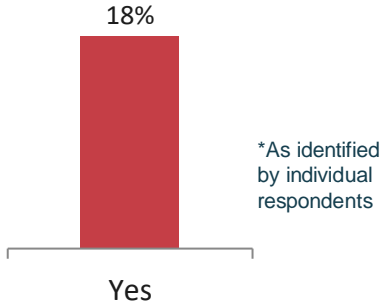
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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\*

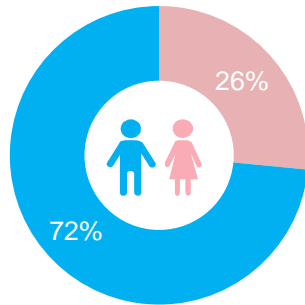


# Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners

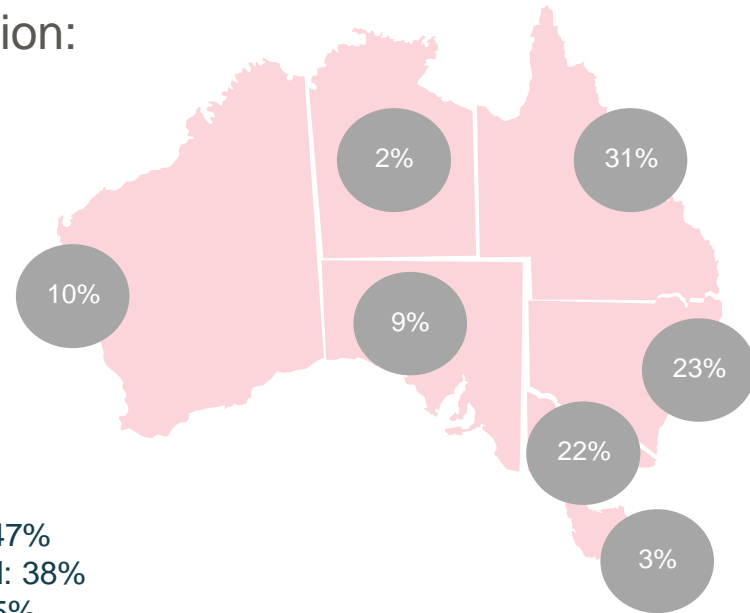
Specific insights into the responses from:  
**Paramedics**

# Sample of paramedics (n=1,271)

## Gender:

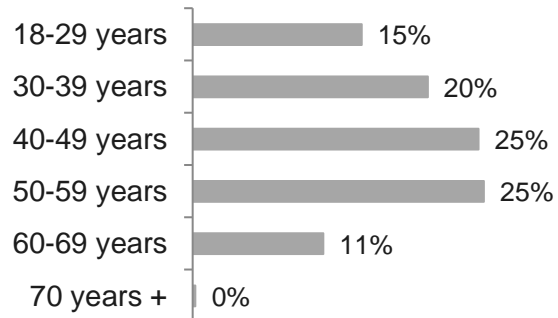


## Location:

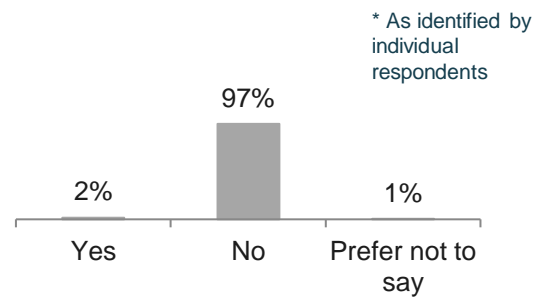


Metro: 47%  
Regional: 38%  
Rural: 15%

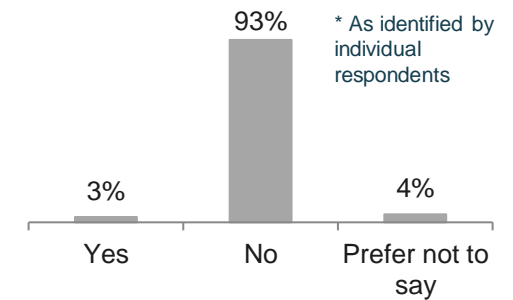
## Age:



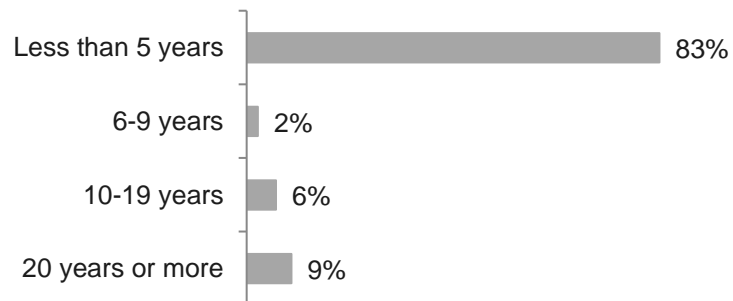
% who have had a complaint about them made to Ahpra or their National Board\*



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



## Years in practice:





## 2020: Perceptions of the paramedicine 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=1,271)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Trusted	54%	(+30%)
Respected	44%	(+24%)
Professional	34%	(-12%)
Compassionate	28%	(+5%)
Hard working	24%	(-4%)
Caring	23%	(-5%)
Empathetic	22%	(+2%)
Dedicated	19%	(-3%)
Knowledgeable	17%	(-14%)
Community minded	16%	(+1%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Competent	15%	(-5%)
Responsible	15%	(-4%)
Honest	14%	(+5%)
Reputable	13%	(+4%)
Committed	13%	(-4%)
Team oriented	11%	(+2%)
Independent	10%	(+3%)
Passionate	10%	(-4%)
Approachable	9%	(-3%)
Friendly	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 2019-20:

## Perceptions of the paramedicine 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=317	2020 N=1,271
Trusted	54%	54%
Respected	45%	44%
Professional	41%	34%
Compassionate	24%	28%
Hard working	21%	24%
Caring	22%	23%
Empathetic	20%	22%
Dedicated	22%	19%
Knowledgeable	15%	17%
Community minded	16%	16%

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=317	2020 N=1,271
Competent	18%	15%
Responsible	17%	15%
Honest	13%	14%
Reputable	10%	13%
Committed	13%	13%
Team oriented	9%	11%
Independent	10%	10%
Passionate	13%	10%
Approachable	9%	9%
Friendly	6%	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 Paramedicine 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=1,271)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	33%	(-5%)
Administrators	32%	(-1%)
Bureaucratic	29%	(+3%)
Necessary	23%	(-8%)
For practitioners	21%	(-10%)
Decision-makers	15%	(-7%)
For the public	15%	(-6%)
Poor communicators	12%	(+3%)
Advocates	11%	(-6%)
Out of touch	11%	(-)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Competent	10%	(-5%)
Supportive	9%	(-5%)
Intimidating	9%	(+1%)
Controlling	9%	(+1%)
Shows leadership	9%	(-4%)
Trustworthy	9%	(-3%)
Approachable	8%	(-3%)
Rigid	8%	(-1%)
Secretive	8%	(+3%)
Fair	8%	(-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 Paramedicine 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	2019 N=317	2020 N=1,271
<b>Regulators</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>33%</b>
Administrators	31%	32%
Bureaucratic	30%	29%
Necessary	23%	23%
For practitioners	22%	21%
Decision-makers	16%	15%
<b>For the public</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>15%</b>
Poor communicators	15%	12%
Advocates	15%	11%
Out of touch	13%	11%

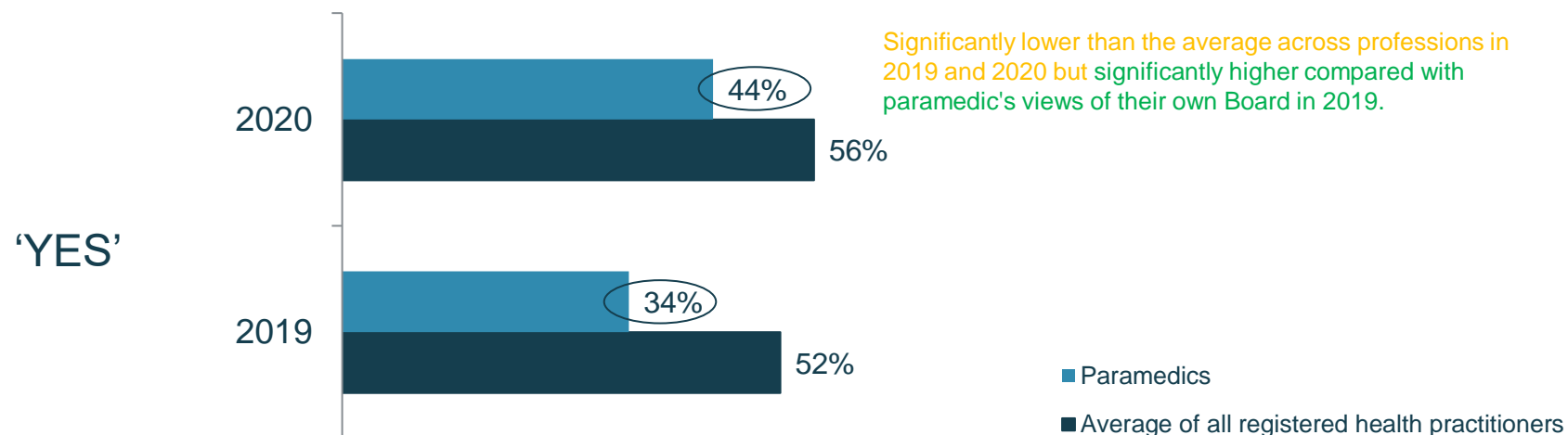
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2019 N=317	2020 N=1,271
Competent	7%	10%
Supportive	9%	9%
Intimidating	10%	9%
Controlling	12%	9%
Shows leadership	7%	9%
Trustworthy	7%	9%
Approachable	7%	8%
Rigid	9%	8%
Secretive	9%	8%
Fair	9%	8%

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

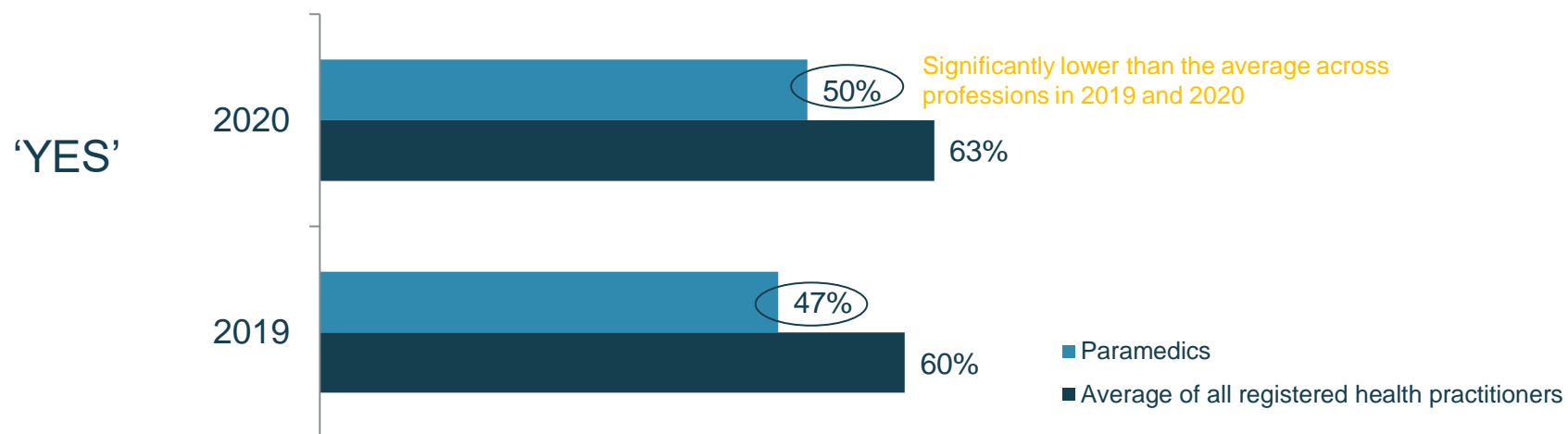
Orange indicates a result significantly lower compared with the previous year.

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

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## Indicators of trust: 50% trust the Board

*I don't have any reason not to trust them but have had no dealings with them.*

*The members are from the paramedical industry. I would hope I can trust our own to do the right thing.*

*It is only early days for this board so in that context I think they have made a significant impact in setting and maintaining the standards for professional paramedicine in this country.*

*Because they are a regulatory agency which will only allow trustworthy professionals to be granted registration to practice.*

*If we don't trust them, what's the point of having them? Important that we have a body to act as advocates for our industry, protects all who work within it.*

*I see the board as a necessary over-looker of our profession to ensure standards are met for and by the organization, and for the public.*

*I have been employed as a paramedic for over 30 years - prior to current registration and they have always been educational, contactable and have helped to maintain standards.*

*Since registration I have seen nothing but positive actions, they are cleaning up a lot of the people that needed to be called out for their actions.*

## Barriers to trust: 21% DO NOT trust the Board

*I'm not convinced that they have the best interests of paramedics at heart.*

*They are out of touch with modern on-road practice & seem to give bland, rigid recommendations that are impractical in the community.*

*I believe policies are still developing to best regulate and protect the paramedic population of Australia. The trust is building but not yet earned.*

*I have seen nothing but regulation from this mob. Nothing of value for the fees charged, only supporting more administrators.*

*Have not seen anything from them to engender trust. I see no benefit of being registered. It's just another process/investigation staff must go through if they make an error. No confidence that this will be a fair process.*

*Because they are not there to support me, they are there for patients to complain to and decide if disciplinary action should occur or not. They are not there for quality improvement purposes but for discipline purposes only.*

*Apart from take my money, I have seen no results from them. Where does all the money go?*

# Full list of responses provided separately

## 2020: Perceptions of Ahpra among paramedics (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=1,271)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	45%	(-7%)
Administrators	40%	(-5%)
Bureaucratic	37%	(+1%)
Necessary	29%	(-7%)
For the public	27%	(-6%)
For practitioners	23%	(-5%)
Decision-makers	19%	(-4%)
Intimidating	17%	(+2%)
Controlling	15%	(-)
Rigid	14%	(-1%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Poor communicators	14%	(+1%)
Out of touch	12%	(-)
Competent	10%	(-3%)
Advocates	9%	(-)
Trustworthy	9%	(-1%)
Fair	9%	(-1%)
Accessible	8%	(-1%)
Transparent	8%	(+2%)
Secretive	8%	(+1%)
Supportive	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 2019-20: Perceptions of Ahpra among paramedics

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	2019 N=317	2020 N=1,271
Regulators	48%	45%
Administrators	46%	40%
Bureaucratic	40%	37%
Necessary	23%	29%
For the public	27%	27%
For practitioners	21%	23%
Decision-makers	14%	19%
Intimidating	15%	17%
Controlling	14%	15%
Rigid	14%	14%

% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2019 N=317	2020 N=1,271
Poor communicators	15%	14%
Out of touch	15%	12%
Competent	7%	10%
Advocates	12%	9%
Trustworthy	6%	9%
Fair	7%	9%
Accessible	6%	8%
Transparent	8%	8%
Secretive	7%	8%
Supportive	5%	7%

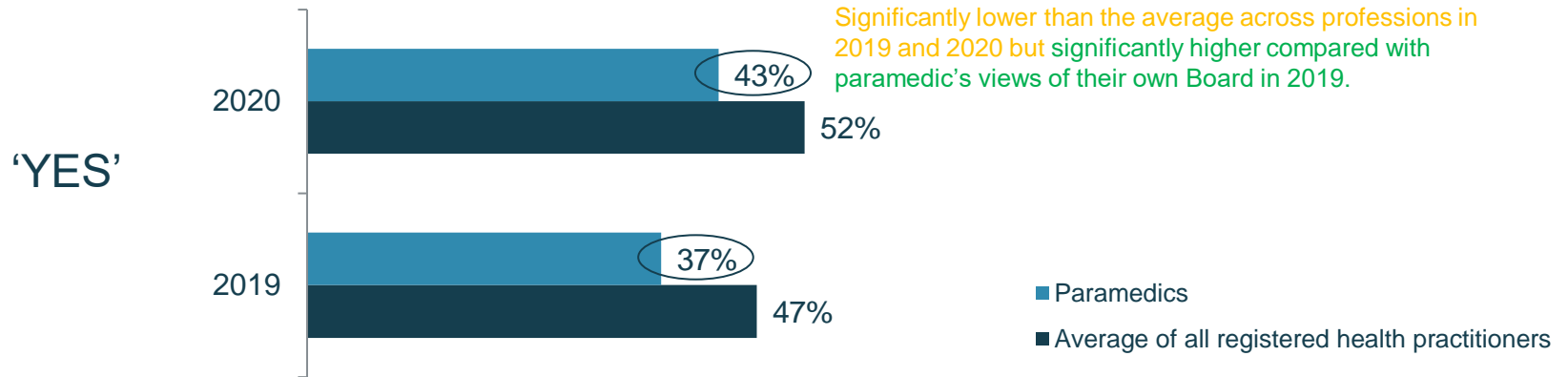
Green indicates a result significantly higher compared with the previous year.

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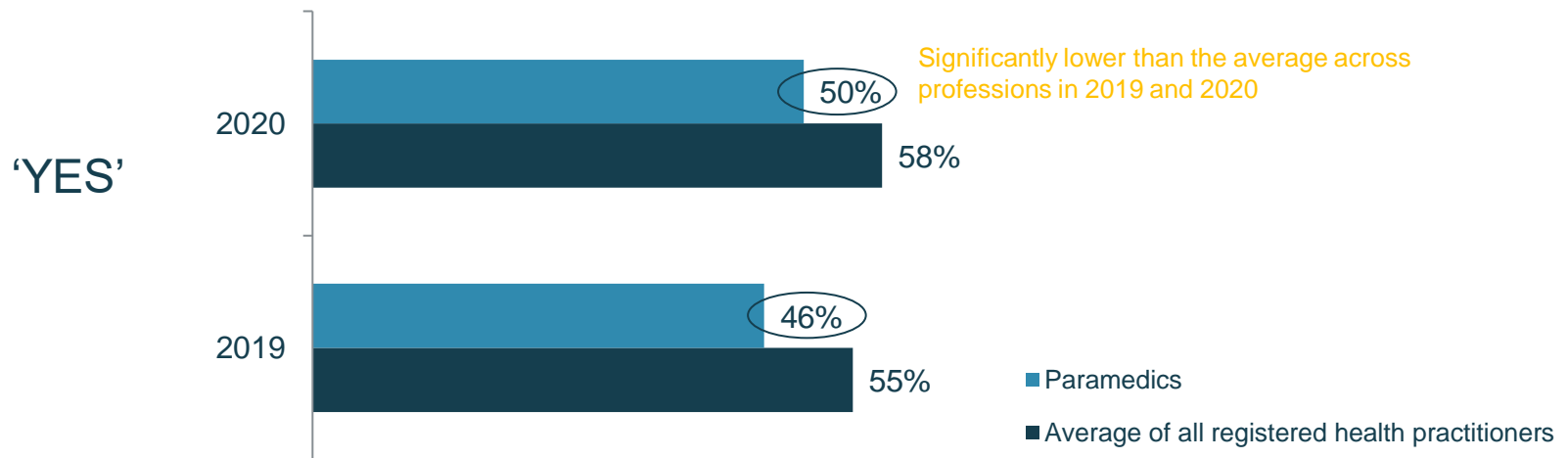


# Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among paramedics

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 paramedics

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## Indicators of trust: **50% trust Ahpra**

*I have no reason not to trust them. I have had no dealings with them.*

*I trust Ahpra to uphold professional standards to ensure public safety. This can only go to make our profession better.*

*Strong leadership and good communication driven by a group of professionals that at times need to listen intently to certain members.*

*I think it is a necessity and a transparent governing body.*

*The framework in which it operates is fair and for the good of practitioners and the public.*

*I feel confident that Ahpra will act on and respond to all complaints.*

*They ensure everyone using a health care professionals title is of the same high standard.*

*I feel they are working toward having a rigorous process to ensure professionalism and oversight for the public.*

*They are a federally legislated organization that covers all aspect of health providers from many different areas.*

*Ability to track and manage health care providers and prevent them from practicing where gross incompetence is found anywhere in Australia.*

## Barriers to trust: **22% DO NOT trust Ahpra**

*Has shown no real benefits aside from being costly and over regulated. Not even able to sign documents despite being health professionals.*

*Paramedics don't get anything for their money, just a money-making machine.*

*Just another level of bureaucracy to deal with. I actually have to pay a yearly fee to go to work. I have read nothing but poor reviews of how Ahpra deal with complaints.*

*Had a terrible experience with one of the regulators. He was very harsh, inconsiderate, intimidating and unprofessional. I told him I wanted to make an official complaint against him, and he wouldn't even tell me how to go about it. I spoke to his superior and I am not sure if they did anything about it.*

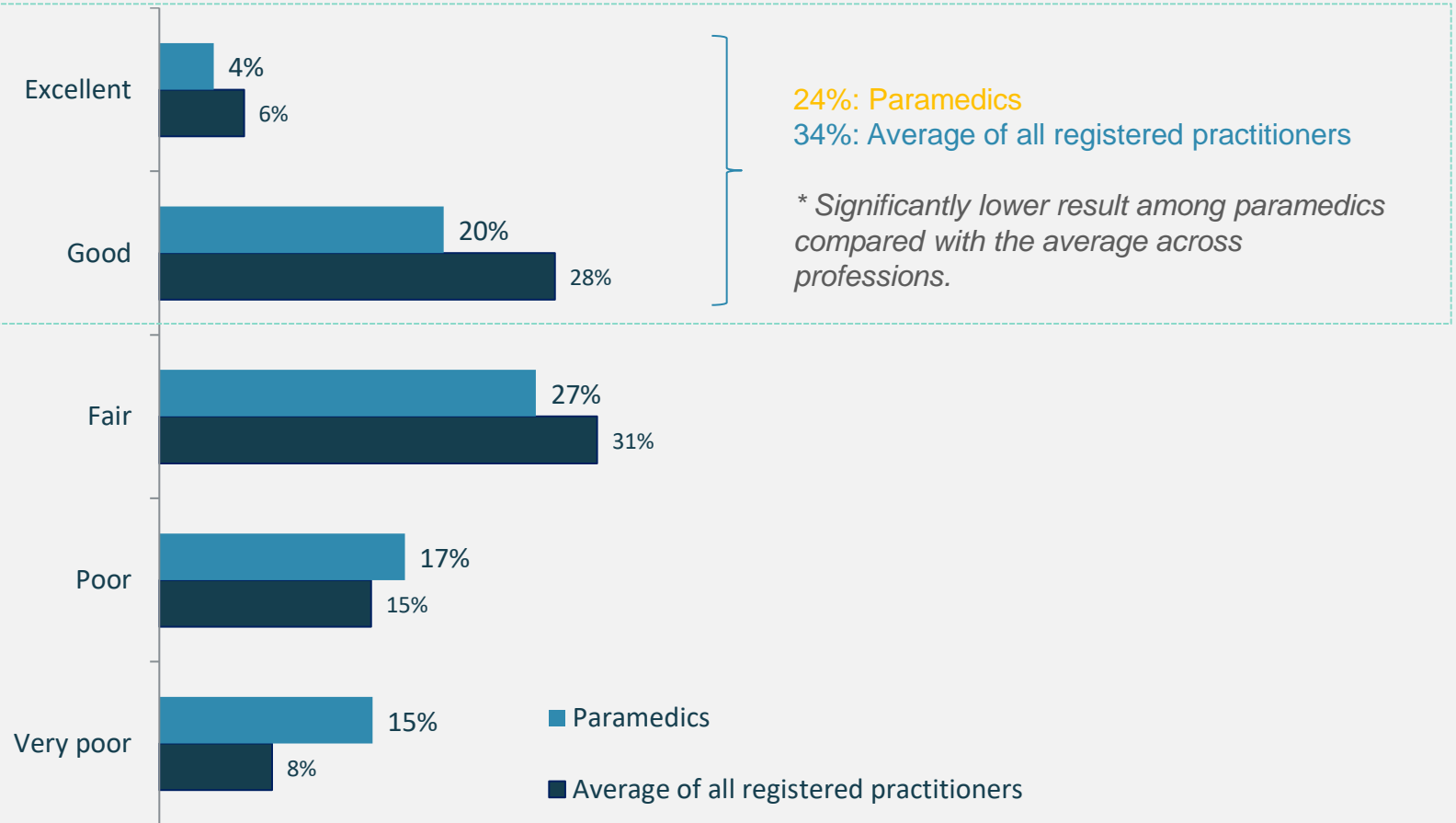
*I lack trust for Ahpra because it is a non-transparent organisation. In addition the criteria for registration acceptance is ambiguous with health professionals of varying competency and experience being indistinguishable on the registry.*

*I don't believe that all the facts of any case are given due consideration before a decision is made, and this is supported by a recent VIC case where an Ahpra decision was overturned as part of a legal process.*

# 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?

## Paramedics



# 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).*

*More integration between private and public paramedic services. Not all paramedics work for state service but doesn't mean they are not as valuable or can be used.*

*Assistance for mental health of practitioners, suspension of CPD for 2020 as well as reduction in cost of registration if not forgoing it for 2020.*

*Providing additional training packages relating to COVID-19 and frontline healthcare. Providing access to peer-reviewed journals and articles relating to COVID-19 and my area of healthcare. Highlighting the journals and articles that have underpinned the many changes to practice caused by COVID-19. Publication of current and updated best practice guidelines and evidence for the management and treatment of COVID-19, which extends to all aspects of my field of healthcare.*

*The availability of online training that satisfies the requirements of registration. In the previous question, it mentions a list of initiatives implemented during the pandemic. i.e. flexibility of CPD requirements. Don't you mob have emails or letter writing abilities? Was not aware of it at all.*

*More compassion when it comes to maternity leave and CPD exemptions especially during a pandemic.*

*Bring in standardisation of skills so when you say you are paramedic there is a clear picture of your skills and capabilities.*

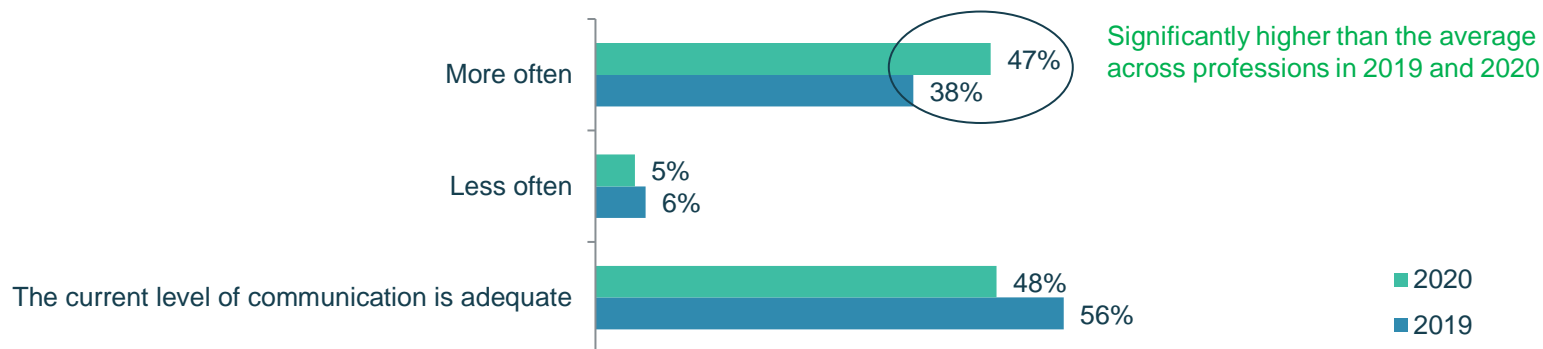
*A Q and A forum regularly for practitioners to seek clarification about potential issues and changes to registration requirements. An example is the new guidelines on BBV. I've had a lot of trouble determining if paramedics are considered to be a profession that persons EPPs. It would be good if we could post questions to the Board and have them answer.*

*Providing online courses for frontline healthcare professionals about COVID-19 that relate to each specific healthcare field. Providing direct access to journals and articles about COVID-19 and each area of healthcare. Providing the journals and articles that underpinned the many changes to practice as a result of COVID-19. Compiling and distributing succinct practice guidelines for use during the pandemic, which would provide clarity for the management and treatment of COVID-19 and be related to each healthcare profession.*

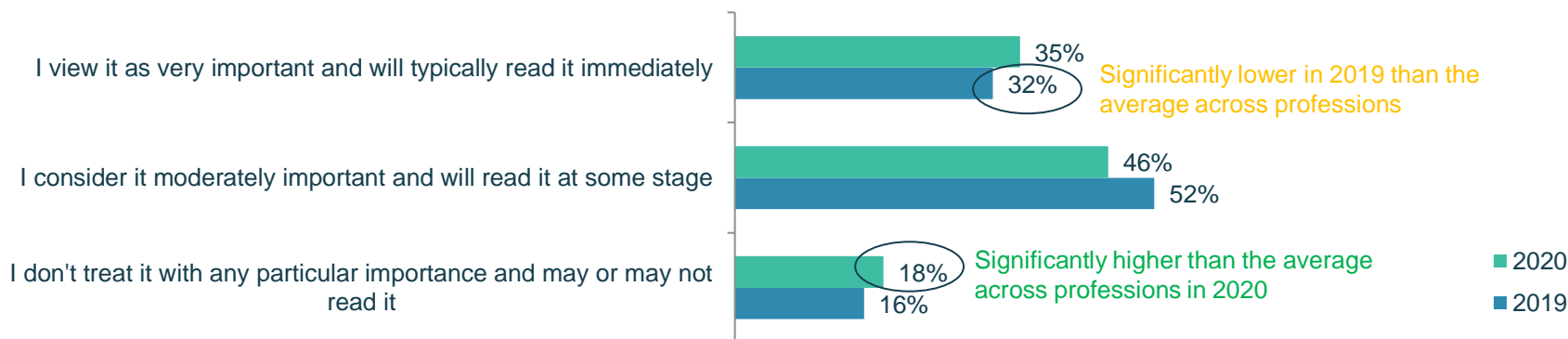
*Advocacy on infection control standards and access to appropriate PPE - Something that actually protects us. Not just our patients.*

# Response to communication by the Paramedicine Board of Australia

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



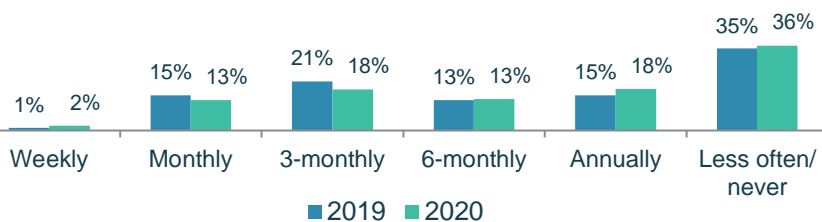
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

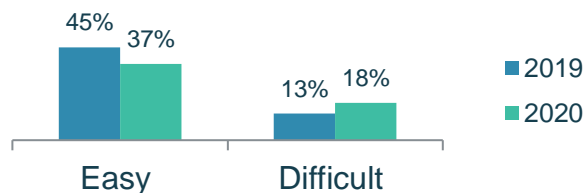
# Use of the Paramedicine Board of Australia website

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



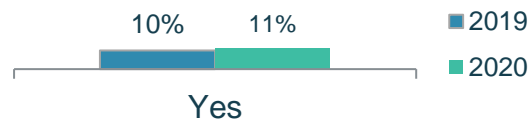
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this Board

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



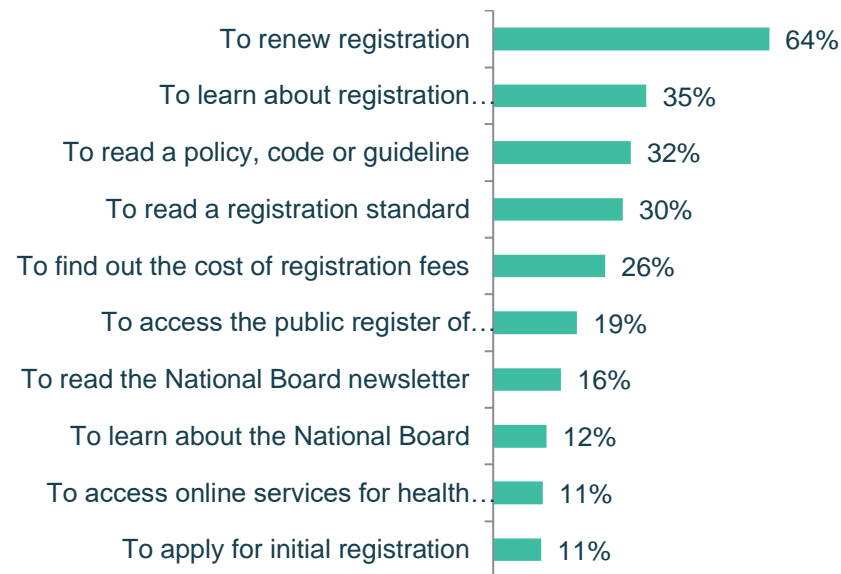
Base: Practitioners who have visited that Board's website

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)...

- Return to practice requirements.
- CPD requirements.
- Flexibility' arrangements for CPD and COVID-19.
- Real examples of CPD logs with explanations that meet legislative requirements.
- Registration requirements. Some information is very grey.

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Truly Deeply