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# Ahpra

## **Practitioner and community perceptions of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and the National Boards: 2019**

A Social Research Project

November 2019

Supplementary report prepared for:  
***The Podiatry Board of Australia***

Truly<sup>®</sup>  
Deeply



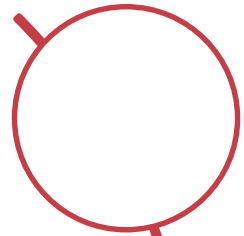
# Introduction

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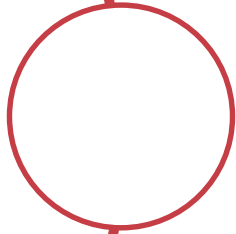
- Truly Deeply was first engaged in 2018 by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) to assess the perception and sentiment towards Ahpra and the National Boards.
- The review was intended to help National Boards and Ahpra better understand what stakeholders think and feel about the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

# An overview of the methodology

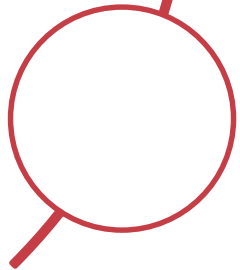
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A **two stage** approach using online surveys has been used.



**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

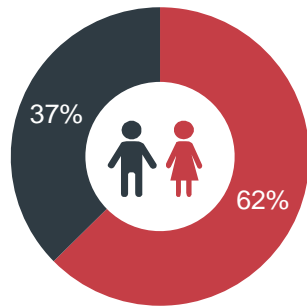
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community following the qualitative investigation.
- The 2019 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 questionnaires, with only a small number of additions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external 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
<b>Fieldwork dates</b>	Nov 1-6	Oct 30 to Nov 8
<b>Responses</b>	2,048	5,944
<b>Email invitations sent</b>	na	109,625
<b>Response rate</b>	na	5.4%

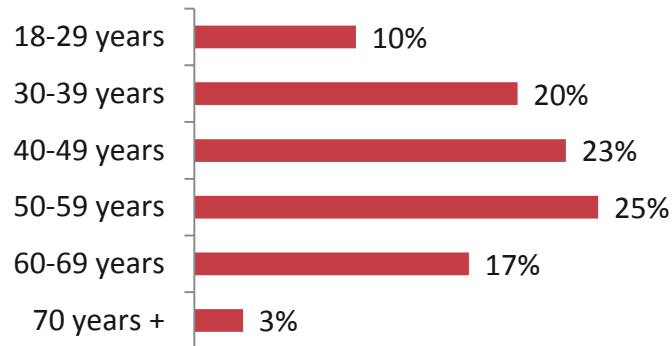


# 2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

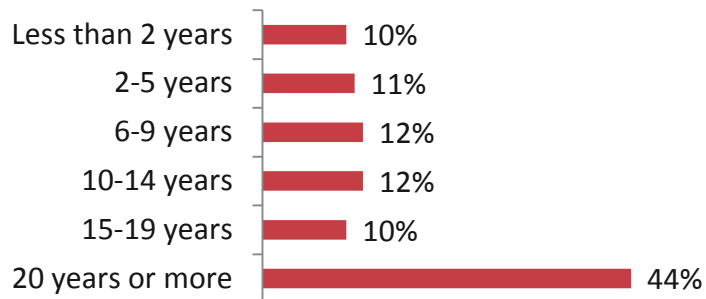
## Gender



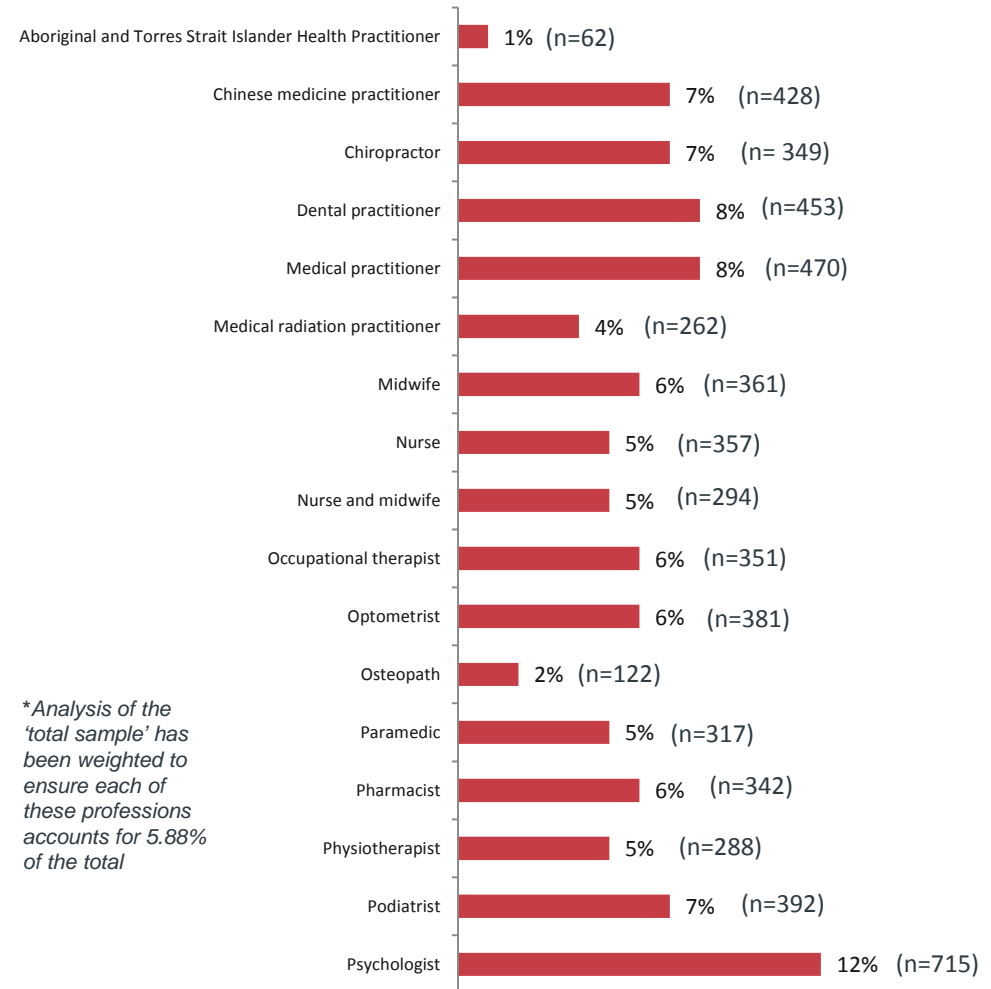
## Age



## Years in practice



## Practitioner type\*

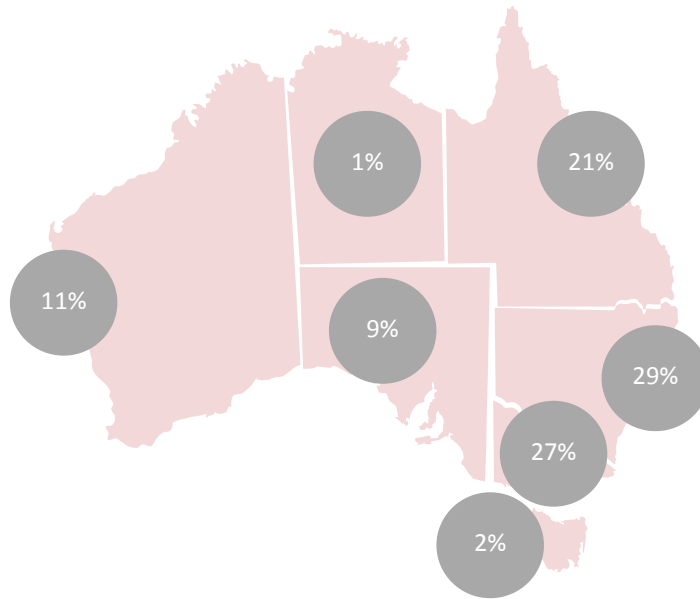


\*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

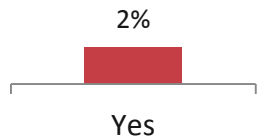
# 2019 sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,944)

## Location

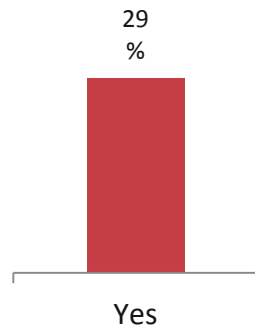


Metro: **64%**  
Regional: **36%**

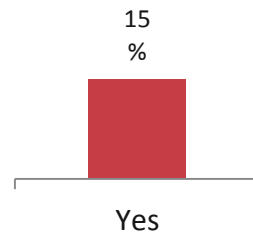
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



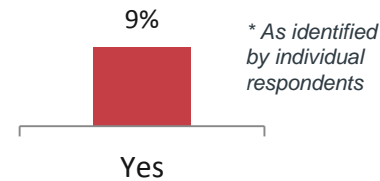
% who were born a country other than Australia



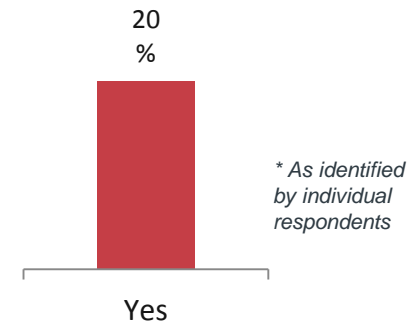
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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\*



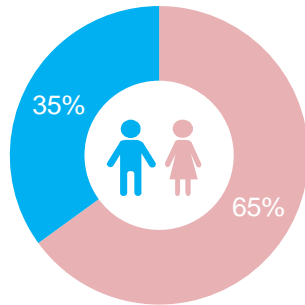
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Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners.

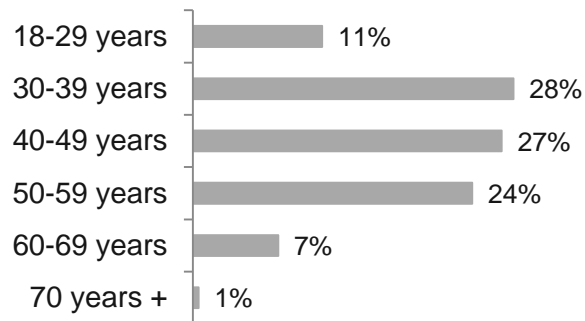
Specific insights into the responses from:  
**Podiatrists**

# Sample of podiatrists (n=392)

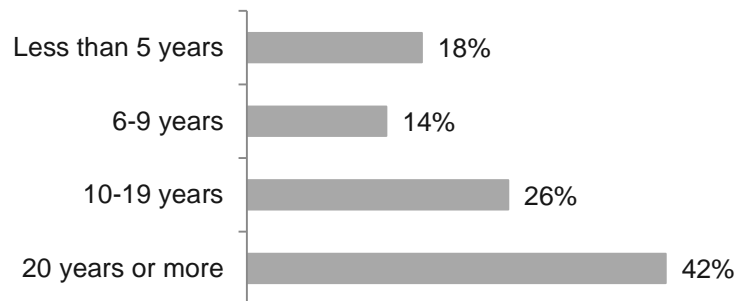
## Gender:



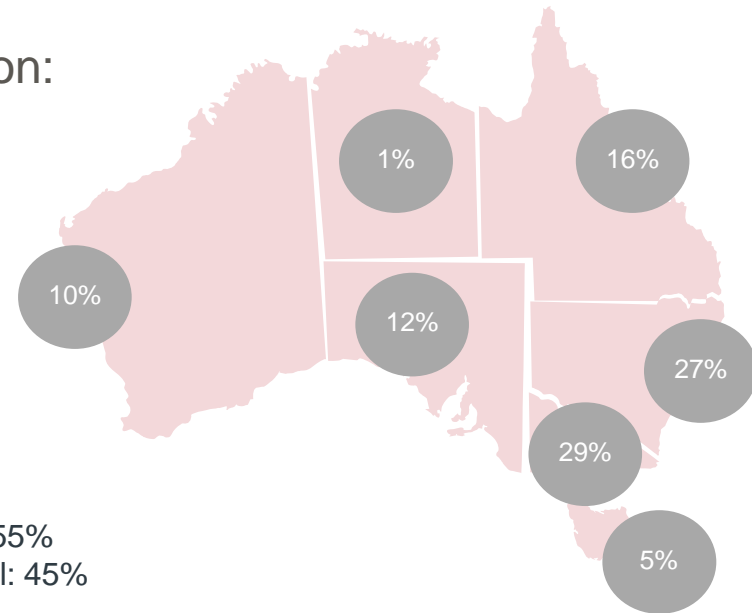
## Age:



## Years in practice:

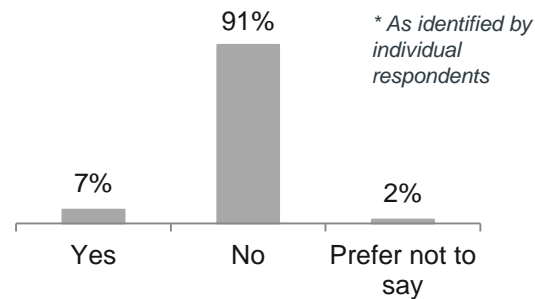


## Location:

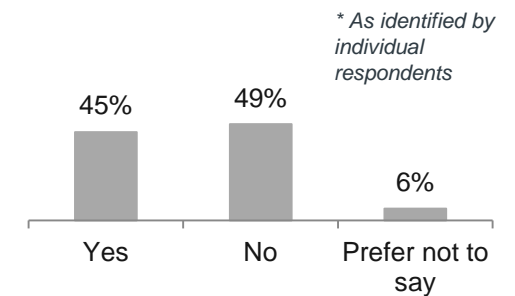


Metro: 55%  
Regional: 45%

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



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





# 2019: Perceptions of the 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=392)

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	50%	(+3%)
Knowledgeable	32%	(+1%)
Caring	31%	(+4%)
Hard working	31%	(+1%)
Competent	22%	(-)
Dedicated	21%	(-)
Committed	17%	(+1%)
<b>Trusted</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>(-7%)</b>
<b>Empathetic</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>(-7%)</b>
<b>Responsible</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>(-6%)</b>

Perceptions in 2019	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
<b>Compassionate</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>(-11%)</b>
Community minded	13%	(+1%)
<b>Independent</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>(+5%)</b>
<b>Friendly</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>(+6%)</b>
<b>Respected</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>(-8%)</b>
Passionate	11%	(-2%)
Reputable	10%	(-)
Approachable	10%	(-1%)
Honest	7%	(-2%)
Team oriented	7%	(-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.

\* *New question for 2019*

# 2019: 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=392)

Perception	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
For practitioners	34%	(+3%)
Administrators	33%	(-2%)
Necessary	32%	(-)
<b>Regulators</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>(-8%)</b>
Bureaucratic	25%	(-2%)
<b>Advocates</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>(+6%)</b>
Decision makers	23%	(-1%)
For the public	21%	(-2%)
Competent	16%	(+1%)
Supportive	15%	(+2%)

Perception	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Poor communicators	13%	(+3%)
Accessible	13%	(+3%)
Approachable	12%	(+3%)
Helpful	12%	(+1%)
Shows leadership	11%	(-1%)
Good communicators	11%	(+2%)
Out of touch	11%	(-1%)
Responsive	10%	(+2%)
Trustworthy	10%	(-1%)
Fair	9%	(-1%)

**Green** indicates a result *significantly higher* than the average across all professions.

**Orange** indicates a result *significantly lower* than the average across all professions.

## Summary of changes 2018-19:

# Perceptions of the 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
For practitioners	40%	34%
Administrators	38%	33%
Necessary	35%	32%
Regulators	33%	32%
Bureaucratic	24%	25%
Advocates	22%	23%
Decision makers	24%	23%
For the public	20%	21%
Competent	15%	16%
Supportive	12%	15%

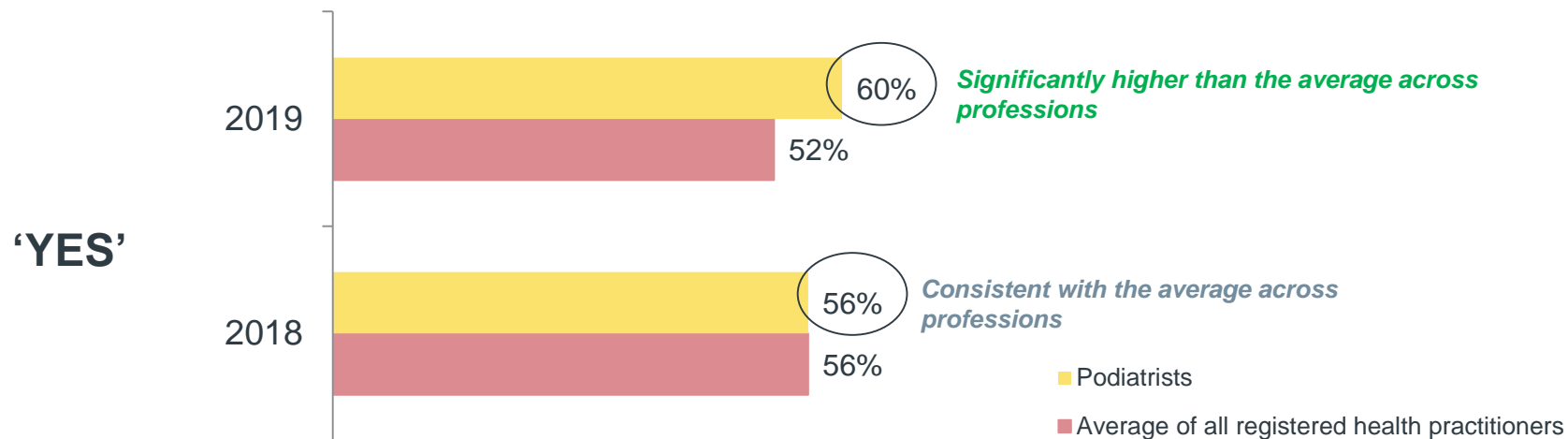
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=324	2019 N=392
Poor communicators	12%	13%
Accessible	12%	13%
Approachable	14%	12%
Helpful	10%	12%
Shows leadership	9%	11%
Good communicators	9%	11%
Out of touch	15%	11%
Responsive	8%	10%
Trustworthy	8%	10%
Fair	8%	9%

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

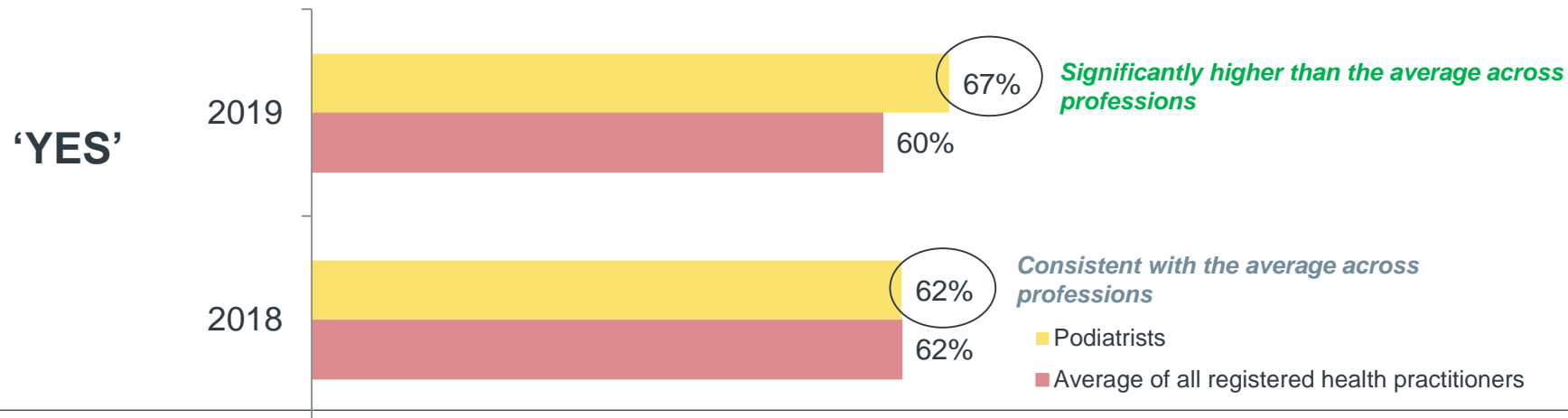
**Orange** indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*, compared with the 2018 result

# Levels of confidence and trust in the 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?



# What are 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

*They are the chosen regulatory board in Australia for podiatrists.*

*It's a legal obligation to abide by their professional guidelines.*

*I believe they have the best interests of the public & practitioners to give the best service.*

*Good communications and I believe transparency goes a long way.*

*I know that they have experienced podiatrists on the board who I believe are trustworthy.*

*They have always acted properly in their duties. Met some members personally and found them substantial and good people.*

*I think the profession has come a long way in the last 20 years due to the podiatry board.*

*Repeatedly shows leadership and work as advocates for podiatrists, helping the profession to attain high standards.*

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

*I don't feel I can contact them directly and rarely get a response to my letters/queries I have sent into the Board.*

*I would like more protection for the podiatrists rather than just focusing on the public. Clients can lie, and not be honest as well, but the attitude is mostly to protect the public instead of us as well.*

*No transparency in decisions. They are not open to changing times and are stuck in the past.*

*They're worthless in terms of what they get done and they aren't providing a number of things for podiatrists that would be good for the profession. As best I can tell they aren't even justifying their existence based on the funds they receive vs the action they enact. I could say I trust them to do absolutely nothing worthwhile. I don't trust them to represent me as a podiatrist.*

*I'm disappointed that PD is not offered outside the city and that there is no discount for regional members to join the association.*

# Full list of responses provided separately

# 2019: 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=392)

Perception	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	58%	(+4%)
Administrators	45%	(-2%)
Necessary	40%	(+4%)
Bureaucratic	39%	(-1%)
For the public	38%	(+2%)
For practitioners	25%	(-1%)
Decision makers	20%	(-1%)
Intimidating	18%	(+2%)
Rigid	17%	(+1%)
Controlling	15%	(-)

Perception	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Competent	15%	(+3%)
Poor communicators	14%	(-1%)
<b>Advocates</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>(+4%)</b>
Out of touch	11%	(-3%)
Approachable	9%	(+2%)
Fair	9%	(-1%)
Supportive	9%	(+1%)
Aloof	8%	(-)
Trustworthy	8%	(-2%)
Accessible	7%	(-3%)

**Green** indicates a result *significantly higher* than the average across all professions.

**Orange** indicates a result *significantly lower* than the average across all professions.

## Summary of changes 2018-19:

# Perceptions of Ahpra among 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 the Ahpra	2018 N=324	2019 N=392
Regulators	60%	58%
<b>Administrators</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>45%</b>
Necessary	43%	40%
Bureaucratic	42%	39%
For the public	40%	38%
For practitioners	26%	25%
Decision makers	23%	20%
Intimidating	20%	18%
Rigid	17%	17%
Controlling	17%	15%

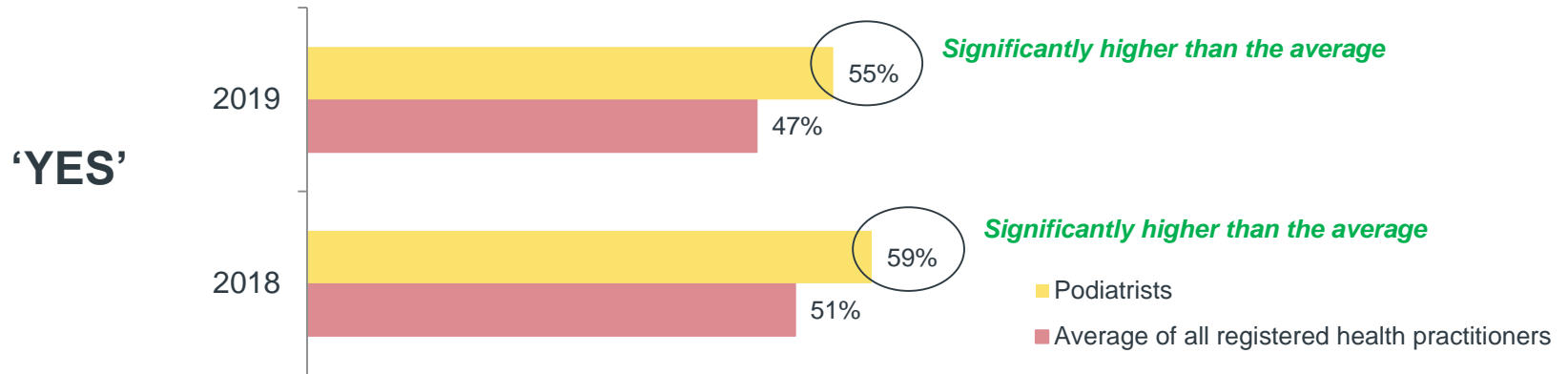
% of practitioners with that perception of the Ahpra	2018 N=324	2019 N=392
Competent	16%	15%
Poor communicators	12%	14%
<b>Advocates</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Out of touch	9%	11%
Approachable	7%	9%
Fair	10%	9%
Supportive	6%	9%
Aloof	7%	8%
Trustworthy	9%	8%
<b>Accessible</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>7%</b>

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

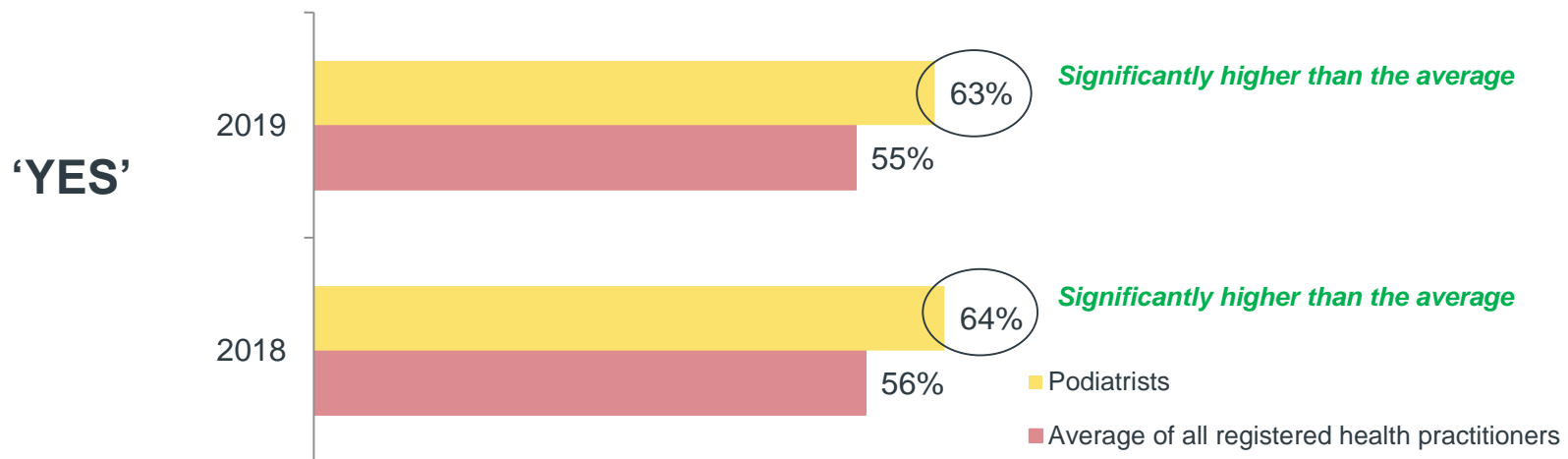
**Orange** indicates a result *significantly lower in 2019*. compared with the 2018 result

# Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among 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: 63% trust Ahpra

*They are fulfilling the functions of the National Law, but again, I have some criticism regarding length of time taken to address certain issues.*

*They are the chosen regulatory body in Australia.*

*If we don't trust them where does that lead. I can't envisage a structure I would trust any more than Ahpra, and they are necessary. Trust by default.*

*Maintains high standards for the profession to keep up with current knowledge and further develop as a practitioner.*

*I have been audited before and would like to think that this process keeps practitioners on their toes and therefore up to date with their knowledge which helps the profession as a whole.*

*Standardised professional polices and the ease that these polices can be accessed and read.*

*Their goal is to regulate each profession to keep the public safe.*

# Full list of responses provided separately

## Barriers to trust: 11% DO NOT trust Ahpra

*Attitude seems to be about putting the protection of the public first, when I think practitioners require more protection.*

*Just recently I asked for some clarification on advertising rules. I was advised that they could not tell me if my advert was within the rules....If the organization that makes the rules can't give an answer on whether or not I comply, then they are incompetent or negligent or worse, they are punitive and will only take action after I get the advert wrong.*

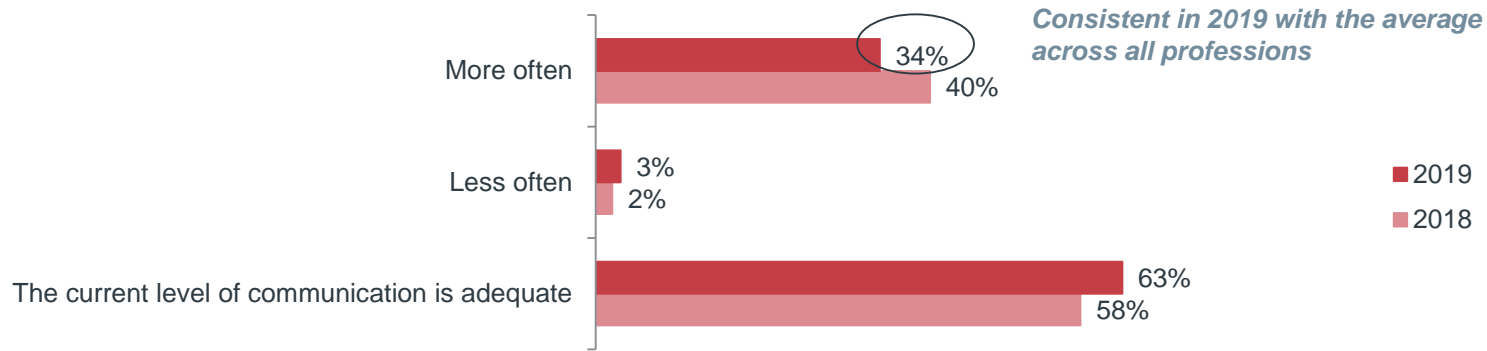
*Have had several dealings with Ahpra when rules have changed, things have been very poorly communicated which leads me not to trust things they say as they tend to change as things go along.*

*In cases of complaints Ahpra does not ask enough questions or the appropriate questions to produce the answers needed. I do not have confidence in their ability to be objective.*

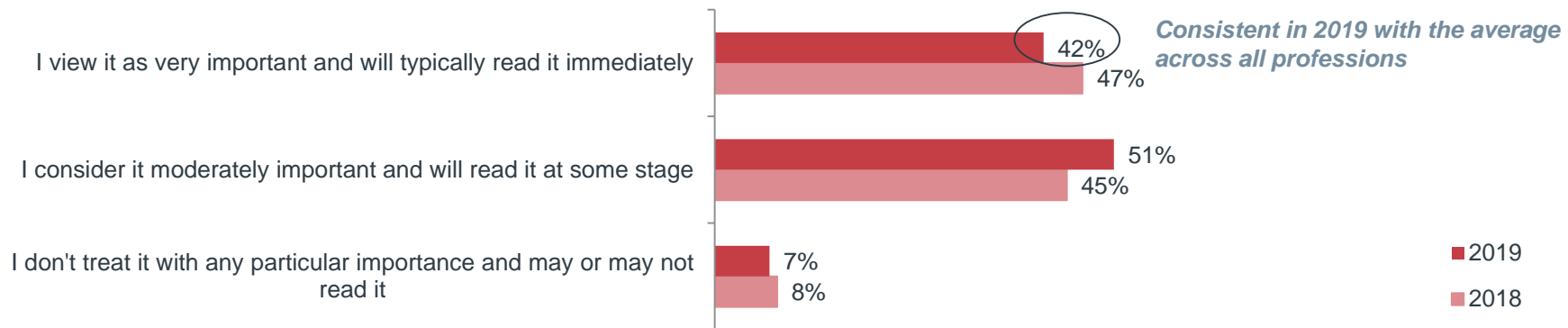
*Ahpra function as isolated administrators, incapable of self-reflection and criticism, and hide behind their interpretation of the National Law.*

# Response to communication by the Podiatry Board of Australia

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



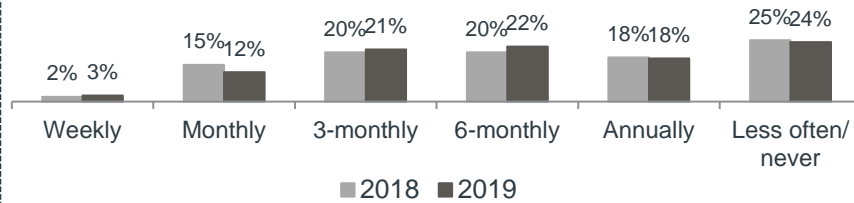
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

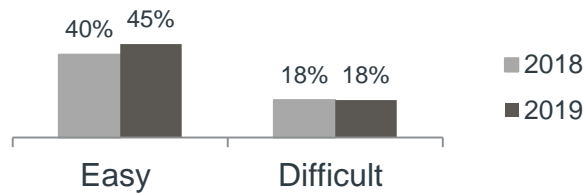
# Use of the Podiatry Board of Australia website

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



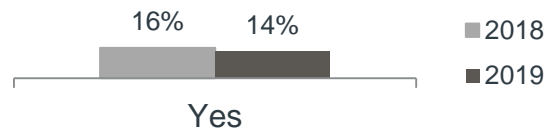
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this board

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



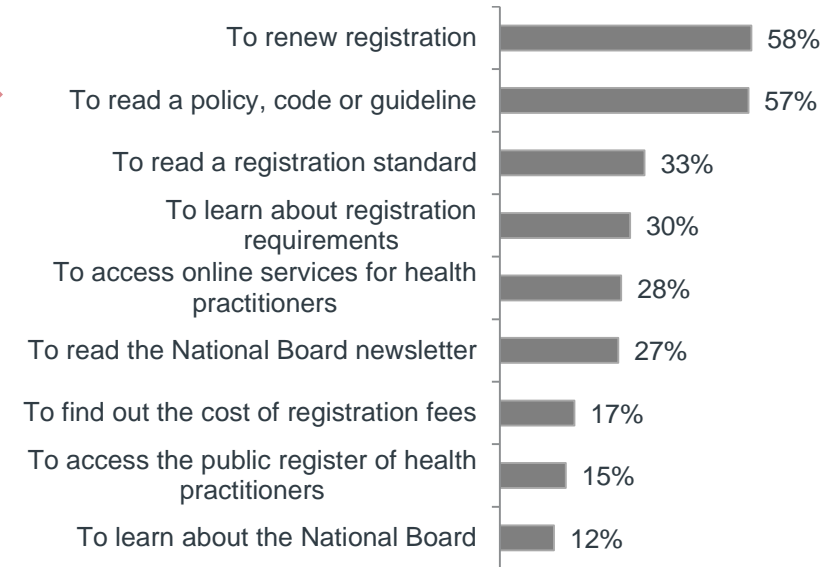
Base: Practitioners who have visited that board's website

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

2019: Reasons for visiting the National Board website



Additional information sought by practitioners included (but was not limited to)...

- *Sterilization and infection control protocols.*
- *A list of registered specialists.*
- *Registration of overseas trained podiatrists and podiatric surgeons.*
- *Specific accredited courses for first aid and CPR updates.*
- *Continuing Professional Development categories, definitions and hours.*

# Additional feedback from podiatrists

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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)*

*It feels like sometimes Ahpra is looking after too many different professions to be able to effectively respond to queries about one particular one. The Board seems to be unavailable when it comes to getting direct and fast contact/queries. Most of my queries/correspondence has been unhelpful as it's not been specifically answered by someone who understands my profession. Whether there needs to be more education for admin staff or just more staff or more of an ability to speak to someone on the Board, would be useful.*

*I feel the National Board should aim to help the profession gain improved rebates from health funds with regular increases just as the health fund premiums rise so should rebates. I feel all associations and National Council have not acted well in this area.*

*Not tough enough on podiatrists that break the National Advertising standards rules.*

*As a podiatrist, why is my registration fee so much higher than that of a registered nurse and a lot of other health professionals?*

*We have so many bureaucratic levels over us Ahpra, board, HCCC The most vexatious complaints requiring drawn out responses. Persons & groups lining their pockets with poor quality CPD courses. Inspectors looking at premises who have no idea what we do.*

*Communicating with Ahpra needs to be improved. It is hard to get through to a person and when you get a person it can be difficult to get a response that is helpful.*

*I understand the need to protect the public, however it should not be to the extent of obstructing practice. I feel there are many aspects of Podiatry Practice where its advancement is being obstructed by the Podiatry Board, by it failing to be progressive and being very slow to change.*

*Ahpra have caused significant stress to a number of my colleagues over accusations that were dropped. Two of them lost huge amounts of weight during the stress they were under. The notion that guilty until proven innocent comes to mind.*

*Registration is very expensive, and I'm not sure where that money goes.*

*Smaller chunks of information would be helpful - large newsletter formats are antiquated and there is often not enough time to read all articles.*

