

Ahpra

Practitioner and community perceptions of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and the National Boards: 2020

A Social Research Project

November 2020

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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.

The body of this report contains four key sections:

1. Awareness and interest in Ahpra, the National Boards and the National Scheme.
2. Perceptions of Ahpra and the National Boards.
3. Assessment of communication and engagement with practitioners.
4. Summary of the 2020 results.

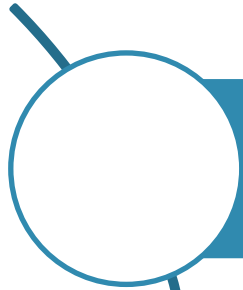
In addition to this main report, separate reports have been prepared for each of the National Boards focused specifically on the results of the practitioner survey and to highlight the practitioner results specific to the relevant Board.

Study objectives

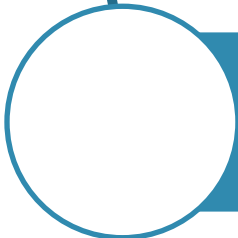
- The overarching objective of the research has been to deliver insights into how Ahpra, the National Boards and the National Scheme are perceived by stakeholders.
- Specifically, the study has sought to address the following:
 - Levels of awareness and understanding of Ahpra, the National Boards and the National Scheme.
 - Perceptions of Ahpra, the National Boards and the respective professions.
 - Levels of interest in the work performed by Ahpra and National Boards and who does what.
 - Identification of any barriers that may be preventing positive engagement with, and stakeholder confidence in, the National Scheme.
 - Identification of opportunities that could help facilitate more positive engagement with and stakeholder confidence in the National Scheme.
 - Insights into stakeholder perceptions around what makes a regulator trustworthy.
- The results of this study will be used by National Boards and Ahpra to continue to build stakeholder confidence.



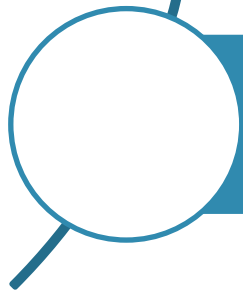
An overview of the methodology



A two stage approach using online surveys has been used.



Stage 1 consisted of an online survey with practitioners from all 16 registered professions.
This survey was conducted between 13-23 October 2020.



Stage 2 consisted of an online survey with a representative sample of the Australian general public.
This survey was conducted between 13-21 October 2020.

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%



A further note on the methodology

This is the third consecutive year Ahpra has commissioned research to deliver insights into how Ahpra, the National Boards and the National Scheme are perceived by practitioners and by the broader community.

In 2018, the study consisted of both qualitative research (in-depth interviews and focus groups), and online surveys (of both practitioners and the broader community).

In 2019 and 2020, the study has used online surveys only to update the 2018 benchmarks.

The results presented in this document make comparisons with the 2018 and 2019 survey results where applicable.

Practitioner survey:

2018 survey conducted 19-27 September 2018

- Sample of 5,694 survey responses received from 100,257 survey invitations (5.7% response rate)

2019 survey conducted 30 October to 8 November 2019

- Sample of 5,944 survey responses received from 109,625 survey invitations (5.4% response rate)

2020 survey conducted 13-23 October 2020

- Sample of 10,228 survey responses received from 138,453 survey invitations (7.4% response rate)

Broader community survey:

2018 survey conducted 19-25 September 2018

- Nationally representative sample of 1,020 responses received using an external panel provider

2019 survey conducted 1-6 November 2019

- Nationally representative sample of 2,048* responses received using an external panel provider

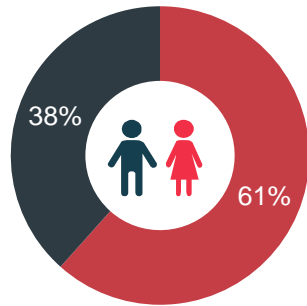
2020 survey conducted 13-21 October 2020

- Nationally representative sample of 2,020 responses received using an external panel provider

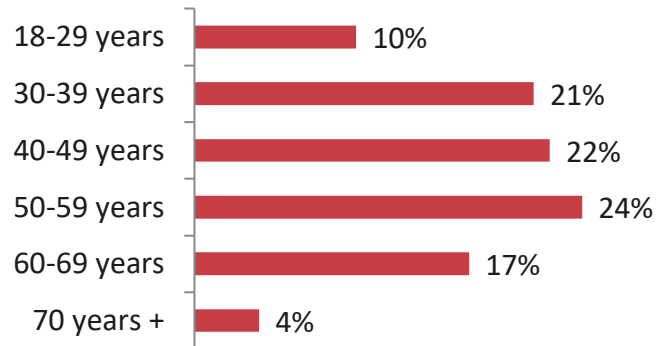
**The sample of the broader community was doubled in 2019 (and continued in 2020) to provide additional confidence in the results provided. This was the only change in the sample structure between 2018-2020.*

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

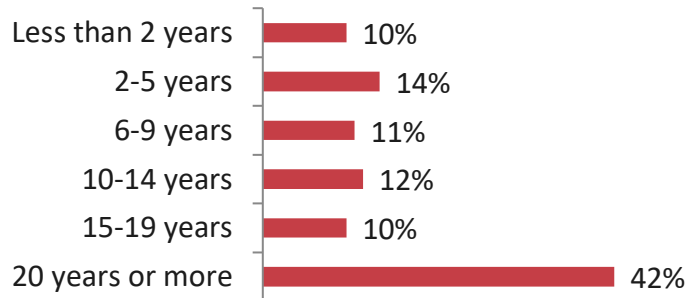
Gender



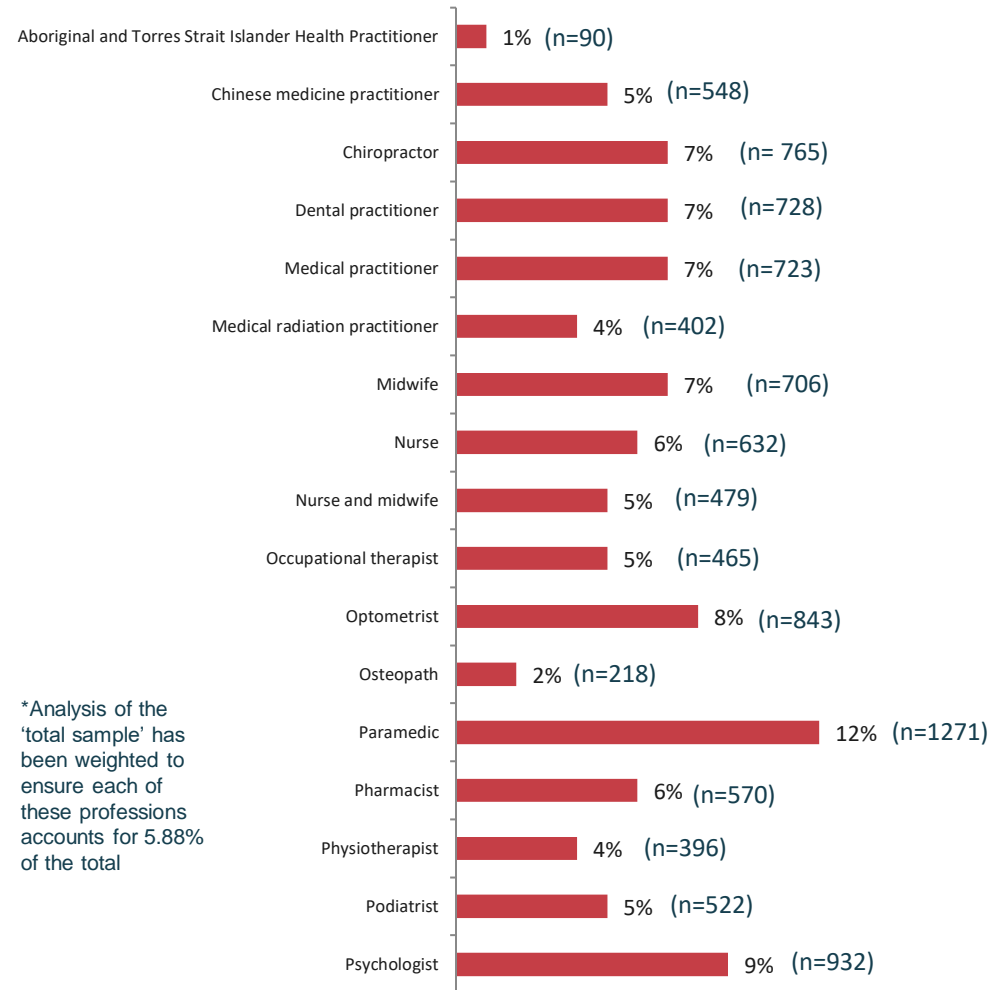
Age



Years in practice



Practitioner type*

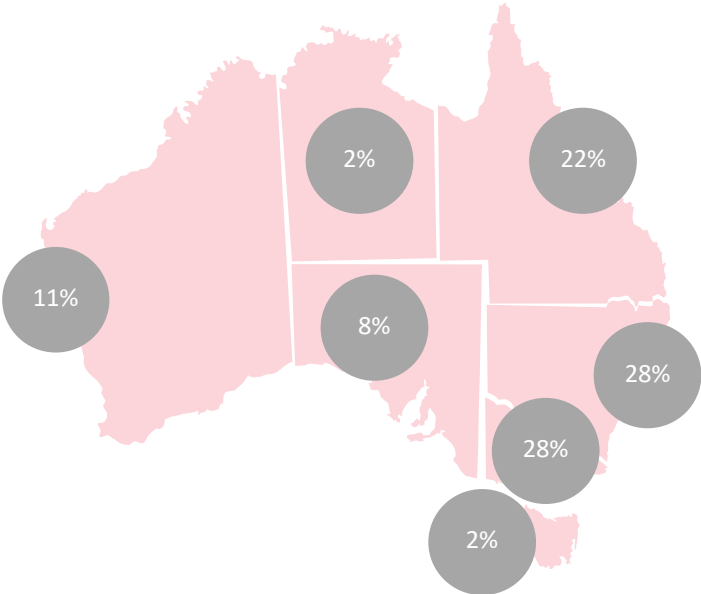


*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

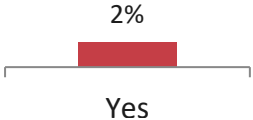
2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

Location

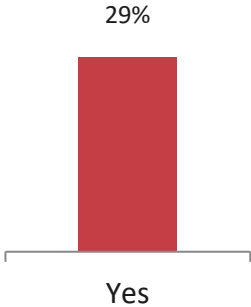


Metro: **63%**
Regional: **30%**
Rural: **7%**

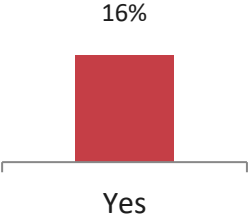
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



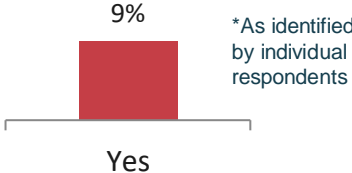
% who were born in a country other than Australia



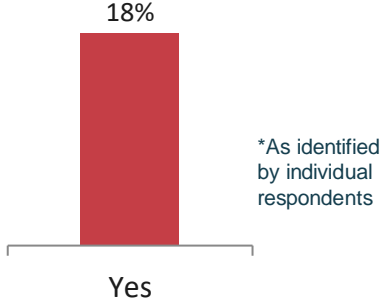
% who speak a language other than English at home



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

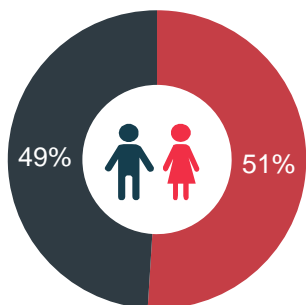


% who have been audited to check their compliance with the mandatory registration standards*

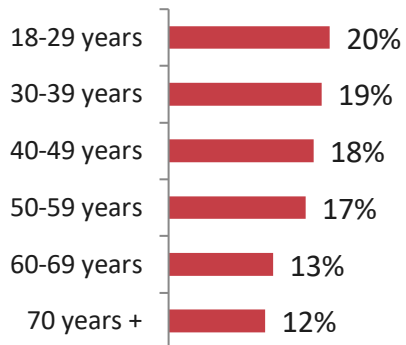


A nationally representative sample of the broader Australian adult population was again ensured (2020 sample of n=2,020)

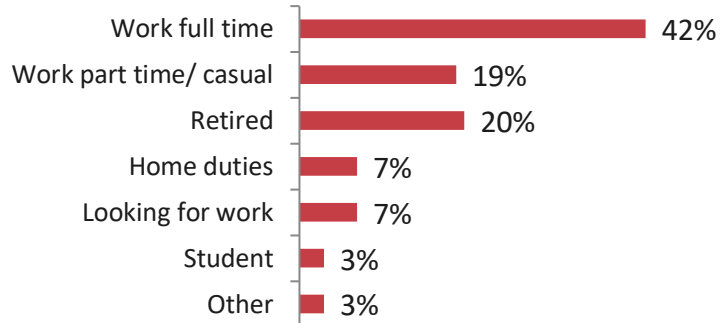
Gender



Age

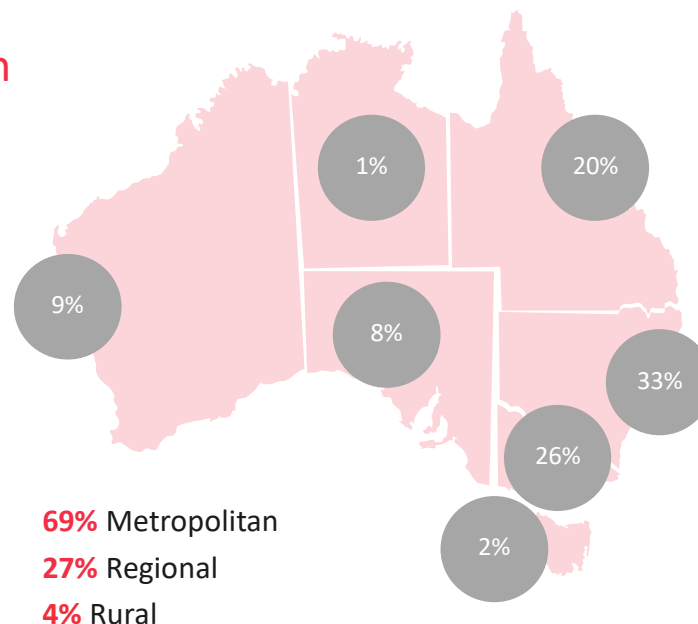


Work Status

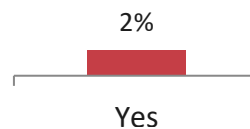


* Figures may not add to 100%. Missing figures accounted for by 'prefer not to say'

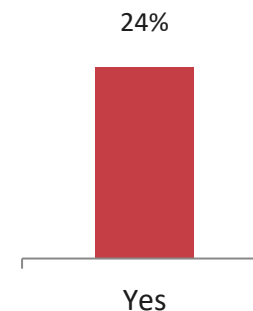
Location



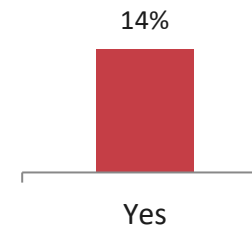
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



% who were born in a country other than Australia



% who speak a language other than English at home



Key insights

The 2019 survey saw small but significant gains in awareness, interest and knowledge of Ahpra among the community but those gains have not been maintained in 2020.

Awareness of the National Scheme has **remained stable among the broader community over the past 12 months** (28% in 2019 and 26% in 2020). Awareness of the National Scheme is **much higher among younger Australians** (those aged under 40 years), compared with people aged 40 years or older and is also **higher among men than women**; consistent with the trends in both 2018 and 2019.

Almost one in three adult Australians (32%) are aware of Ahpra and almost half (48%) are interested in the role and functions of Ahpra. While these results are lower than the 2019 results (by a small, but statistically significant percentage), they remain higher than the 2018 results. Given the community focus and attention on the COVID-19 pandemic throughout much of 2020, these small declines in engagement should not cause alarm.

Knowledge of **Ahpra among the broader community has declined significantly over the past 12 months** (from 53% in 2019 to 43% in 2020) and is now much closer to the level of understanding in 2018. Knowledge among the community of National Boards has also declined by a small but statistically significant margin (from 37% in 2019 to 34% in 2020).

The 2020 results among practitioners have been generally stable, although awareness of the National Scheme continues to decline.

While awareness of the National Scheme has remained consistent among the broader community, **awareness of the National Scheme among practitioners has declined over three consecutive survey periods**: from a peak of 75% in 2018 to 68% in 2019 and 62% in 2020 .

The decline in awareness of the National Scheme is apparent across most of the health professions, however awareness of the National Scheme among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners is particularly low compared with the average across all professions. The decline in awareness of the National Scheme (for the second consecutive year) suggests the term 'National Scheme', is potentially losing currency among Australian practitioners.

The majority of practitioners perceive the key benefit to the community of the National Scheme is the **nationally consistent standards of practice, consistent with the 2019 result**.

Almost all registered practitioners are aware of Ahpra and the vast majority (78%) remain interested in the role and functions of Ahpra, consistent with the 2018 and 2019 surveys.

Knowledge of the role and function of Ahpra among practitioners has remained consistent with the 2019 result, with 76% of practitioners in 2020 describing their understanding of Ahpra as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'.

Perceptions of Ahpra remain positive and have been further enhanced over the last 12 months among both the broader community and practitioners.

The positive view of Ahpra held by most practitioners and most within the broader community has **become decidedly more positive over the last 12 months** (increasing by 16% among practitioners and 18% among the broader community). While a change in the rating scale used to assess perceptions in 2020 (now using a five-point scale, as opposed to a three-point scale in 2018 and 2019) may have had an impact on the results, it is also possible that the response from the wider health community during the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted favourably on practitioner and community views of Ahpra.

The **high levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra first benchmarked in 2018 among the general public have been sustained** over the last two years (in excess of 70%). The levels of **confidence and trust practitioners have in Ahpra have significantly increased over the last 12 months** (from 47% in 2019 to 52% in 2020), however the level of confidence practitioners have in Ahpra remains much lower than that of the general public.



Consistent with the 2018 and 2019 surveys, the practitioners who feel **most positively about Ahpra** are:

- Physiotherapists
- Occupational therapists
- Nurses and midwives

Joining them in 2020, with more positive views (relative to other professions) are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners
- Optometrists



Consistent with the 2019 survey, the practitioners who express **more negative sentiment toward Ahpra** are:

- Medical practitioners
- Dental practitioners
- Psychologists
- Chiropractors
- Paramedics

Joining them in 2020, with more negative views (relative to other professions) are:

- Chinese medicine practitioners

Chinese medicine practitioners had improved impressions of Ahpra in 2019 (compared with 2018) but those gains have not been sustained in 2020.

Perceptions of National Boards also remain positive and have been further enhanced in 2020.

The positive view of National Boards held by most practitioners and the broader community has been **further enhanced over the past 12 months** (increasing by 16% among practitioners and 18% among the broader community).

Consistent with the approach taken to measure perceptions of Ahpra, the rating scale on this question was changed in 2020 (to use a five-point scale, as opposed to a three-point scale in 2018 and 2019) which may have impacted the results. The favourable view of National Boards among the general public has, however, been trending upward since 2018 so as theorised with the enhanced view of Ahpra, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic may also have positively impacted the more favourable view of National Boards in 2020.



Consistent with the 2018 and 2019 surveys, the practitioners who feel **most positively about their National Board** are:

- Optometrists
- Osteopaths
- Physiotherapists
- Nurses and midwives

Joining them in 2020, with more positive views of their Board (relative to other professions) are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners
- Occupational therapists



The practitioners who express **more negative sentiment toward their National Board** (relative to other professions) are:

- Dental practitioners*
- Medical practitioners*
- Psychologists*
- Paramedics*

Joining them in 2020, with more negative views of their Board (relative to other professions) are:

- Chinese medicine health practitioners*
- Chiropractors*

Chinese medicine practitioners and chiropractors had improved impressions of their Boards in 2019 (compared with 2018) but those gains have not been sustained in 2020.

**While these professions are more negative in their view of their Board than other professions, it is important to note most of these practitioners do think favourably of their Board.*

Key associations with Ahpra, National Boards and the professions

The associations practitioners and the broader community have with **Ahpra** have remained remarkably stable over the past two years, led by impressions of Ahpra as **'regulators'**, **'administrators'**, **'bureaucratic'** but also **'necessary'**.

Far more people within the broader community in 2020 think of Ahpra as **'necessary'** (+7%) and as **'advocates'** (+5%), perhaps reinforced by the response observed by the community of health practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, there has been a decline in the proportion of the community who associate Ahpra with **'trustworthy'** (-7%), **'supportive'** (-6%) and **'honest'** (-5%).

The associations practitioners have with **National Boards** have also remained very stable over the last two years and the hierarchy of those associations has remained generally consistent, akin to their impressions of Ahpra: **'regulators'**, **'administrators'** and yet, also **'necessary'**.

While the *hierarchy* of associations the broader community has with National Boards has remained relatively stable, there have been some interesting shifts over the past 12 months. There have been *increases* in the proportion within the community who associate National Boards with being **'advocates'** (+6%) and **'shows leadership'** (+4%) while, as occurred with the associations with Ahpra, there has been a *decline* in the proportion who think of National Boards as **'trustworthy'** (-7%) and **'supportive'** (-6%).

A new question was introduced in 2019 to assess the key values associated with the respective professions (as distinct from the respective Boards). There is one value that continues to stand out well ahead of all others among both the practitioners and the broader community: **'professional'**.

Note: A detailed breakdown of the level of confidence and trust in each National Board, as well as a profile of the key associations among practitioners with their own National Board is provided in separate reports prepared for each National Board.

Practitioners are generally satisfied by the level of support from Ahpra and National Boards to maintain their professional practice.

More than one in three health practitioners (34%) feel the level of support provided by Ahpra and National Boards to maintain their professional practice is 'excellent' or 'good'. A further 31% indicate the level of support has been 'fair', although there is widespread disparity across the professions on that assessment, as occurs across most of the performance indicators measured throughout this survey.

A much smaller proportion of practitioners (23%) believe the level of support provided by Ahpra and National Boards has been 'poor' or 'very poor'.



Practitioners who feel **most positive** (relative to other professions) about the support provided to maintain their practice are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners
- Optometrists
- Podiatrists
- Nurses and midwives



Practitioners who feel **more negative** (relative to other professions) about the support provided to maintain their practice are:

- Medical practitioners
- Psychologists
- Paramedics
- Dental practitioners
- Medical radiation practitioners

Engagement by Ahpra and National Boards with practitioners remains strong.

A new question was introduced in 2020 to measure awareness of initiatives implemented by Ahpra and National Boards this year to help with the healthcare response by health practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost three quarters of practitioners were aware of at least one initiative compared with just 40% of the community. The **most widely known initiative was the pandemic response sub-register** which meant over 30,000 formerly registered practitioners could resume practising to support the pandemic response (47% awareness among practitioners and 27% among the broader community).

The Ahpra website continues to be used regularly by health practitioners. 29% of practitioners are accessing it at least every three months (generally consistent with 2018 and 2019).

The vast majority access the website to **renew their registration**. There continues to be wide use among practitioners of the public register as well as use for education and general information purposes.

The Ahpra website is generally considered **easy to use** by practitioners (consistent with 2018 and 2019).

While most practitioners feel that the current level of communication from Ahpra and the National Boards is adequate, there has been **a significant increase in the proportion of practitioners looking to be communicated with more often by both Ahpra and their National Board**, which in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the direct impact of the pandemic on health practitioners, is not surprising.

Correspondence received by practitioners from both Ahpra and the National Boards is typically **treated with a degree of importance** (consistent with 2018 and 2019).

Note: A detailed breakdown of the interaction practitioners have with the website of their own National Board as well as practitioner perspectives of the level of communication from their National Board is provided in the separate reports for each National Board.

Detailed findings

1. Awareness and interest in Ahpra, the National Boards and the National Scheme
2. Perceptions of Ahpra and the National Boards
3. Assessment of communication and engagement with practitioners
4. Summary of the 2020 results

1. Awareness and interest in Ahpra, the National Boards and the National Scheme

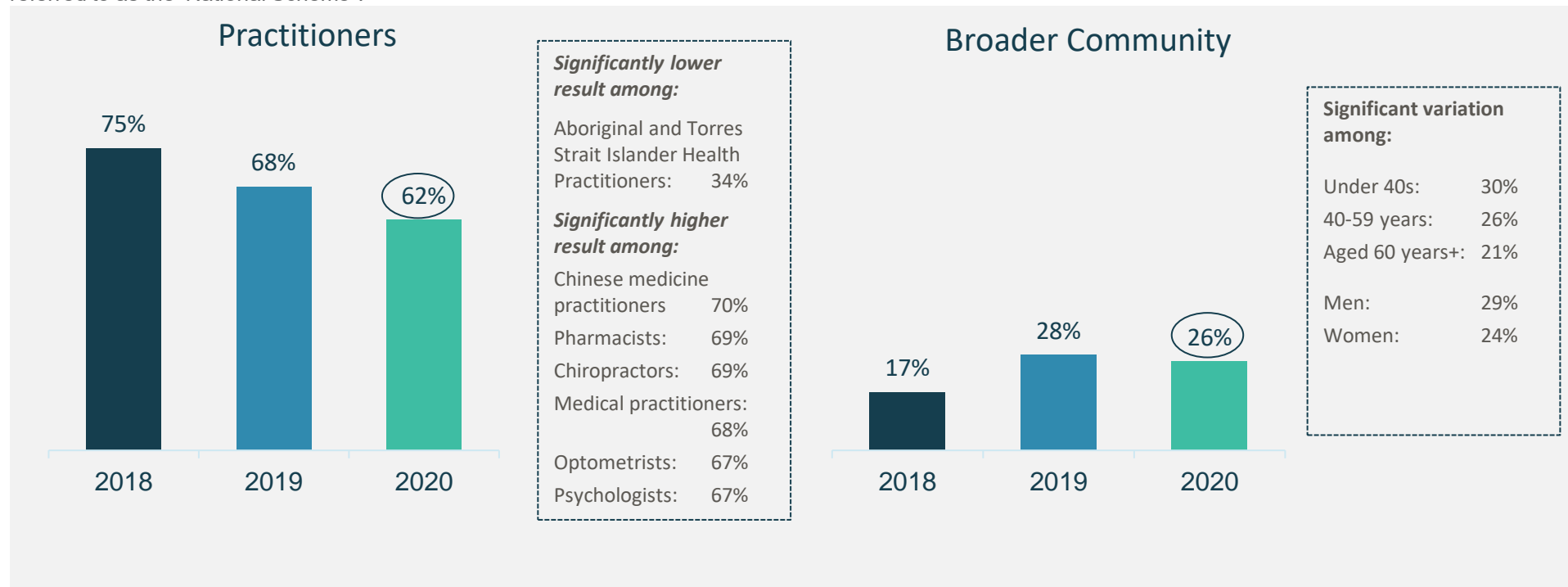
Awareness of the National Scheme

Awareness of the National Scheme has continued to decline among practitioners (from 75% in 2018 to 68% in 2019 and 62% in 2020) but has remained stable among the broader community over the past 12 months (28% in 2019 and 26% in 2020).

Awareness of the National Scheme is significantly lower among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners compared with the average across all professions, as was the situation in both 2018 and 2019.

Across the broader community, awareness of the National Scheme is much higher among younger Australians (those aged under 40 years), compared with people aged 40 years or older and is also higher among men than women; consistent with the trends in both 2018 and 2019.

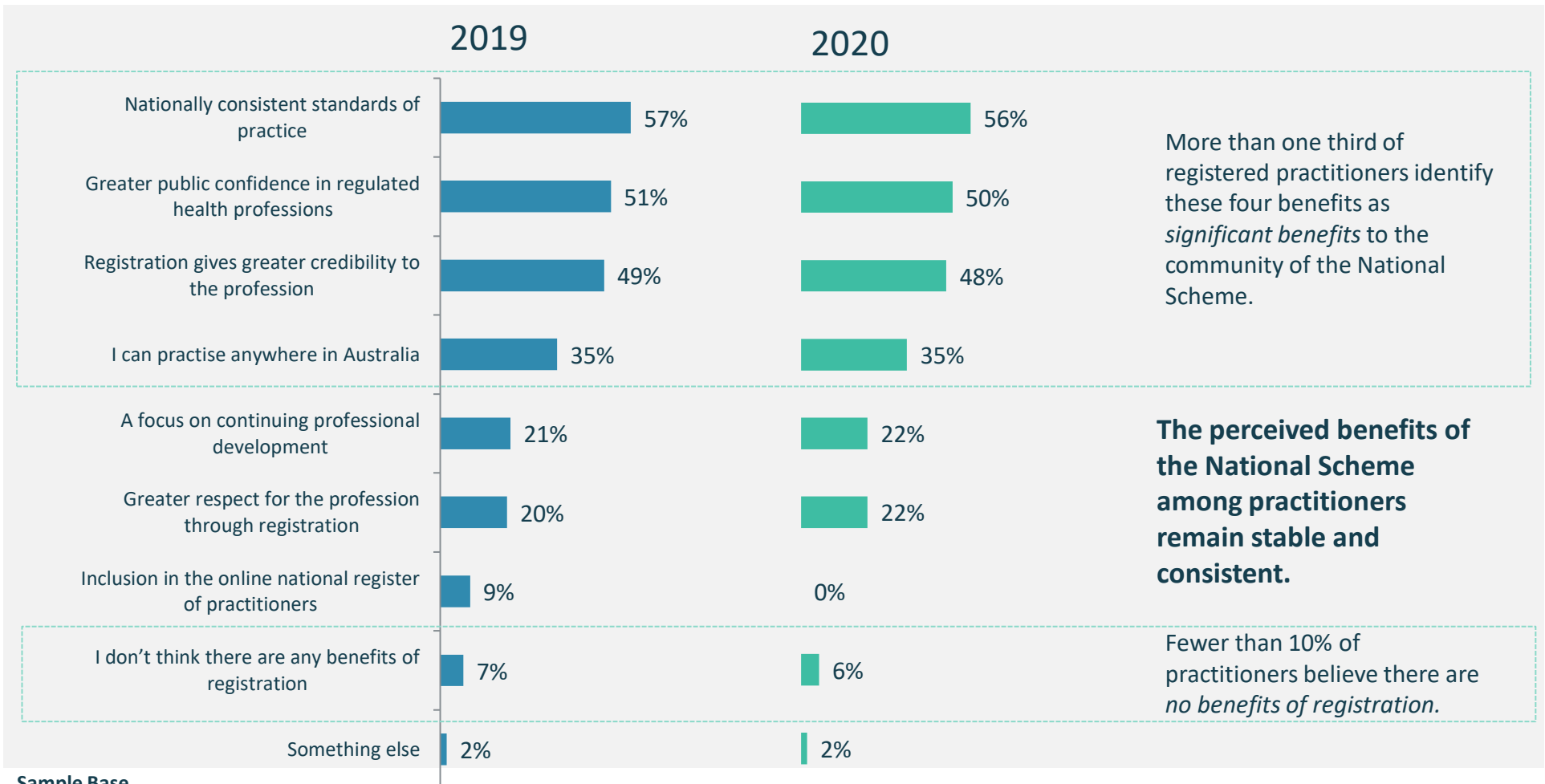
Q. Before today were you aware there is a single National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for registered health practitioners in Australia, commonly referred to as the 'National Scheme'?



Practitioner perspective: Perceived benefits to the community of the National Scheme

Percentage of practitioners indicating each of the following as one of the main benefits to the community of the National Scheme

Q. Which of the following do you see as the main benefits that Ahpra and the National Boards bring to the community through the National Scheme?*



Sample Base

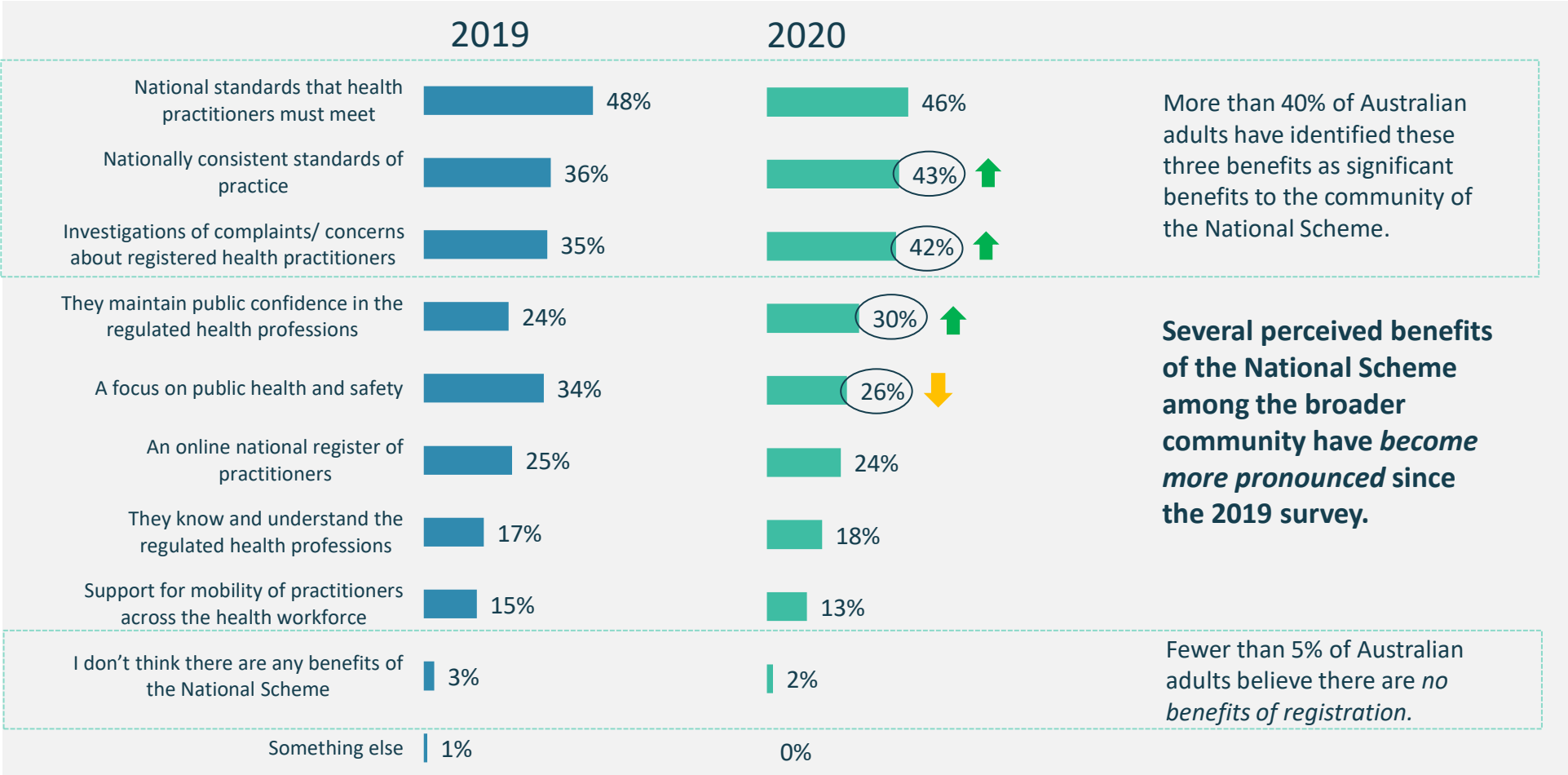
Practitioner survey: All practitioners



* This question was not asked in 2018.

Community perspective: Perceived benefits to the community of the National Scheme

Percentage of the broader community indicating each of the following as the main benefits to the community of the National Scheme

Q. Which of the following do you see as the main benefits that Ahpra and the National Boards bring to the community through the National Scheme?



 Statistically *higher* result (compared with 2019)
 Statistically *lower* result (compared with 2019)

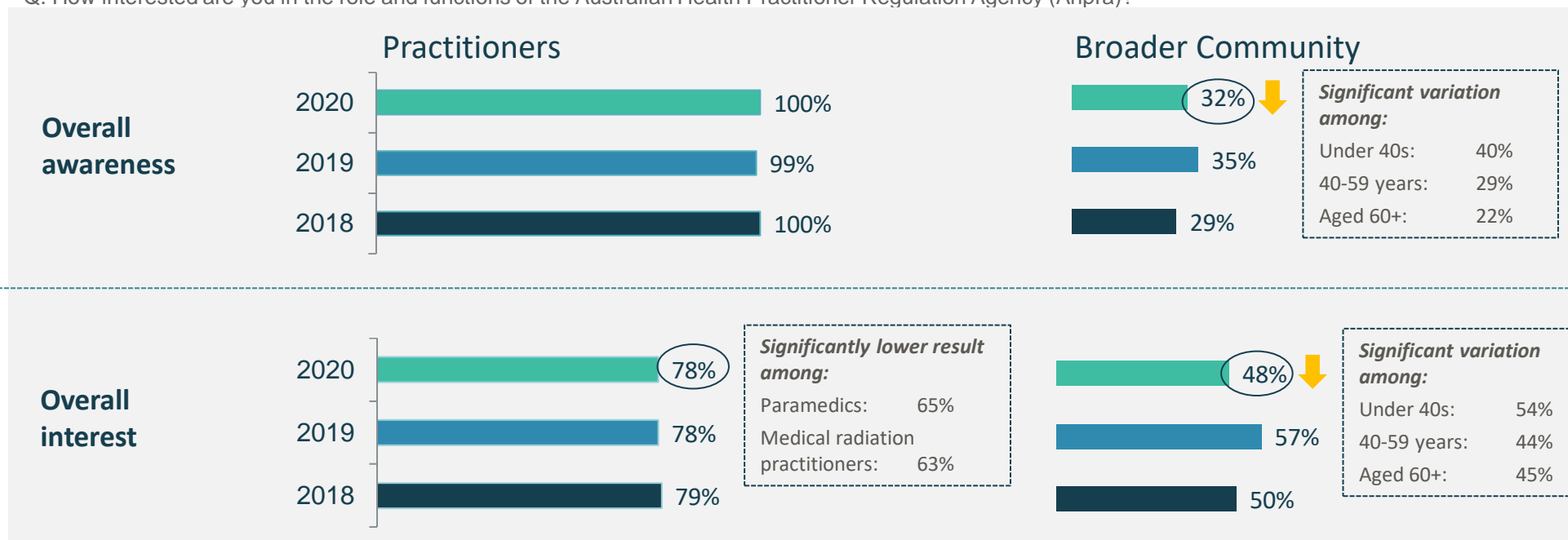
Awareness of and interest in Ahpra

All registered practitioners are aware of Ahpra and the vast majority are interested in the role and functions of Ahpra, a result consistent with both the 2018 and 2019 surveys. Paramedics and medical radiation practitioners have a significantly lower level of interest in Ahpra than other registered professions, consistent with the 2019 result (with improvement from optometrists in that regard this year compared with 2019).

Awareness of Ahpra among the broader community remains much lower than that of practitioners and has declined since the 2019 survey (from 35% in 2019 to 32% in 2020). While it is not surprising that the the broader community has less interest than practitioners in the role and functions of Ahpra, interest in Ahpra among the broader community has also declined significantly over the past 12 months (from 57% in 2019 to 48% in 2020).

Q. Before today were you aware of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra)?

Q. How interested are you in the role and functions of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra)?



↑ Statistically higher result (compared with 2019)
↓ Statistically lower result (compared with 2019)

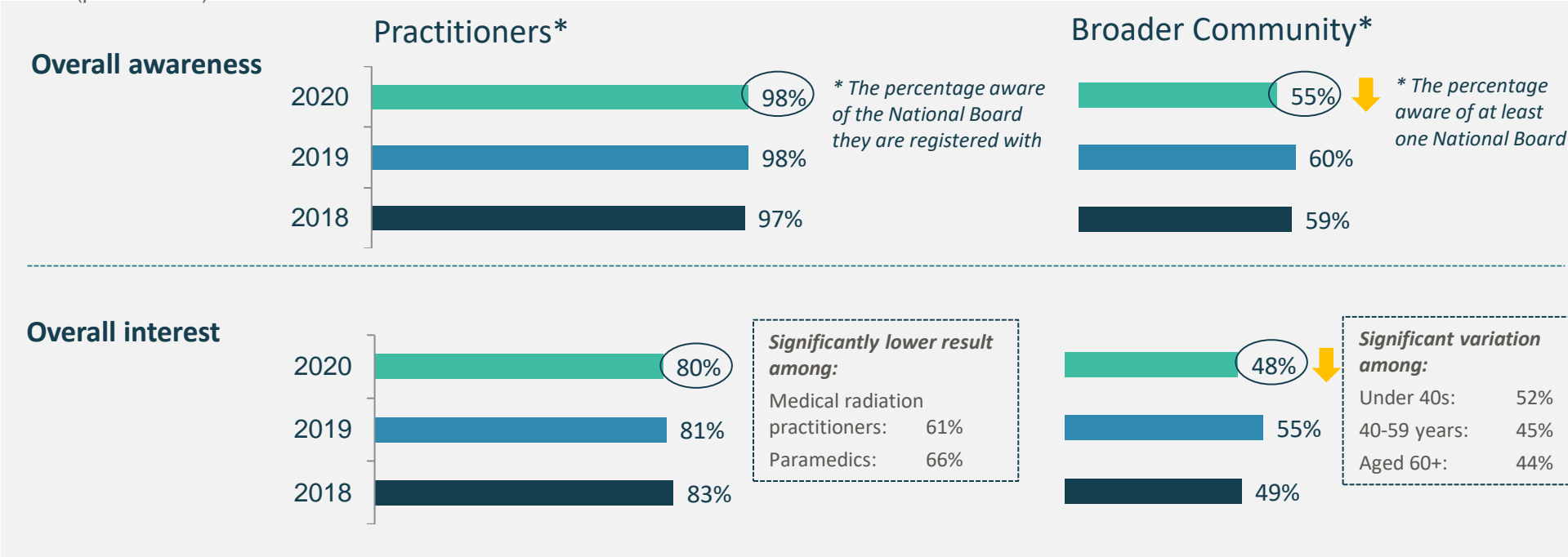
Awareness of and interest in the National Boards

Almost all registered practitioners are aware of their own National Board and the vast majority are interested in the role and functions of ‘their’ Board. In 2020 it is only medical radiation practitioners and paramedics who have a significantly lower level of interest in their Board compared with other registered health professionals (with improvements from physiotherapists and medical practitioners in that regard this year compared with 2019).

Awareness of National Boards is much lower among the broader community and has declined significantly over the 12 months (from 60% in 2019 to 55% in 2020). Interest in National Boards among the broader community has also declined significantly over the last 12 months (now at 48%), and is now more akin to the level of interest in 2018. Interest remains higher among younger Australians.

Q. Before today were you aware of (specific National Board)?

Q. How interested are you in the role and functions of the National Boards that represent registered health practitioners in Australia? (Community)/ your National Board (practitioners)



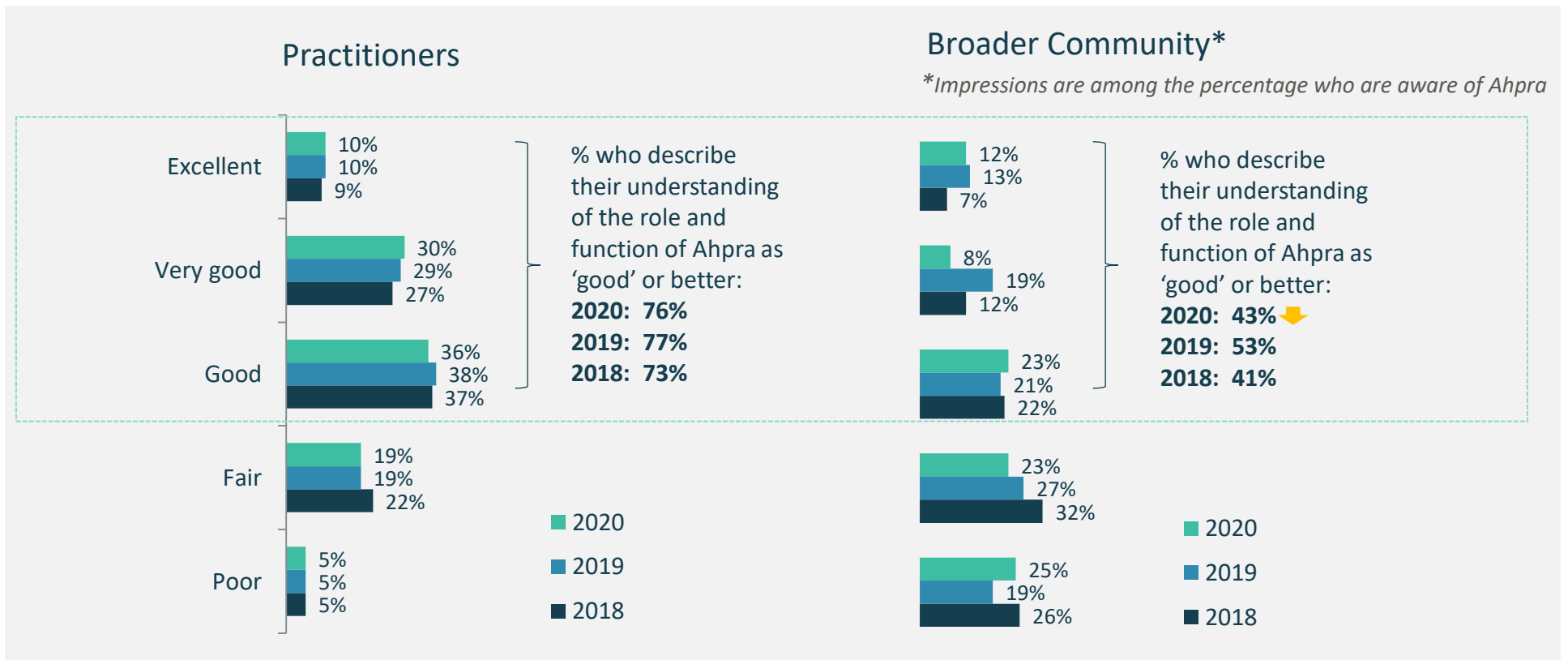
↑ Statistically higher result (compared with 2019)
↓ Statistically lower result (compared with 2019)

Knowledge of the role and function of Ahpra

Knowledge of the role and function of Ahpra among practitioners has remained generally stable over the past 12 months, with 76% of practitioners in 2020 describing their understanding of Ahpra as at least 'good'.

Knowledge of Ahpra among the broader community is much lower than among practitioners, and has declined significantly over the past 12 months (from 53% in 2019 to 43% in 2020) and is now much closer to the level of understanding in 2018.

Q. How would you describe your own level of understanding of the role and function of Ahpra?

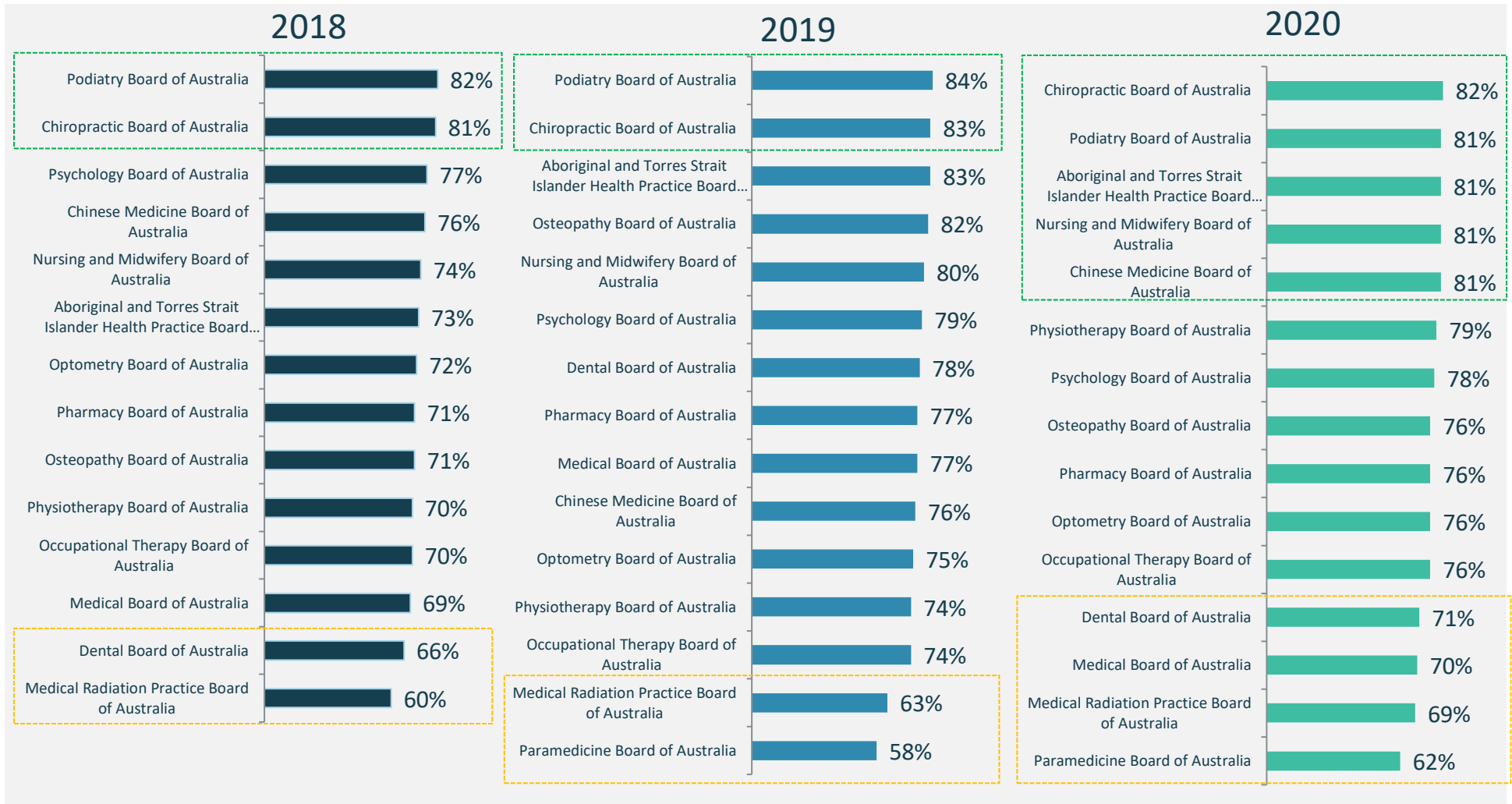


↑ Statistically higher result (compared with 2019)
↓ Statistically lower result (compared with 2019)

Deeper understanding of the practitioner perspective: Knowledge of the role and functions of Ahpra

Percentage of practitioners indicating knowledge of Ahpra is 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'

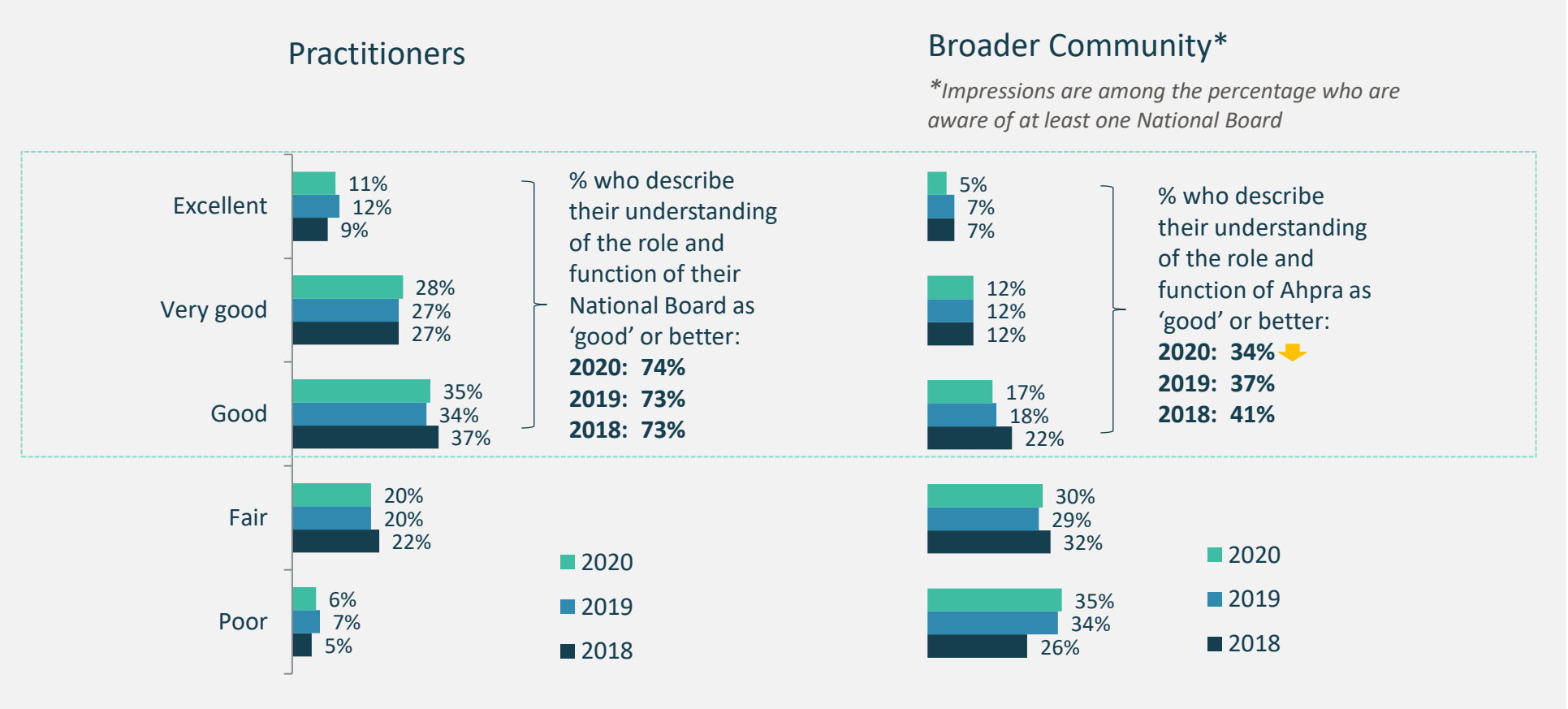
Q. How would you describe your own level of understanding of the role and function of Ahpra?



Knowledge of the role and function of the National Boards

Knowledge of the role and function of National Boards has remained stable among practitioners over the past 12 months but has declined by a small, but statistically significant margin among the broader community.

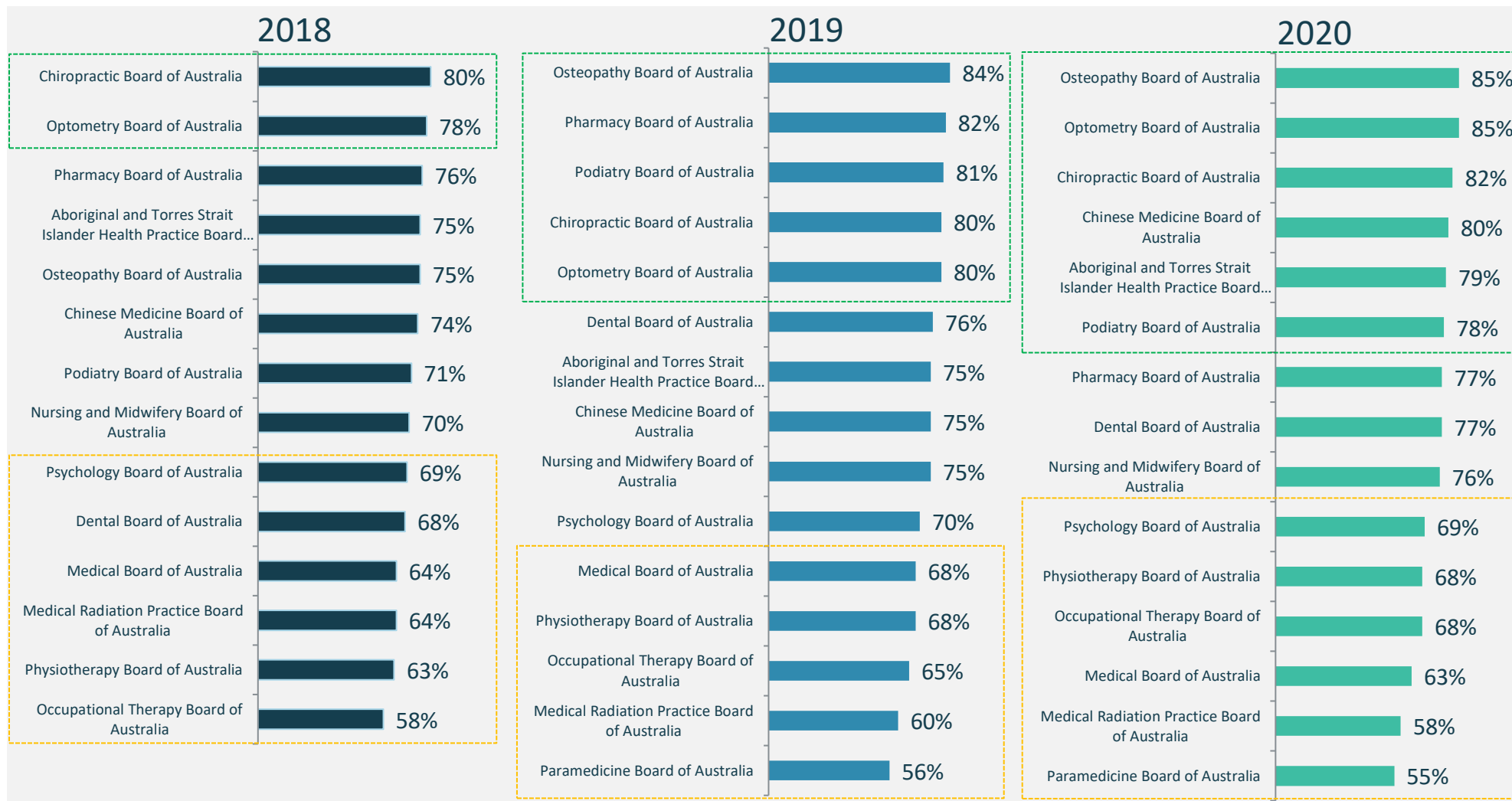
Q. How would you describe your own level of understanding of the role and function of the National Boards that regulate registered practitioners in Australia?



↑ Statistically higher result (compared with 2019)
 ↓ Statistically lower result (compared with 2019)

Deeper understanding of the practitioner perspective: Knowledge of the role and functions of specific National Boards

Percentage of practitioners indicating knowledge of their National Board is 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'



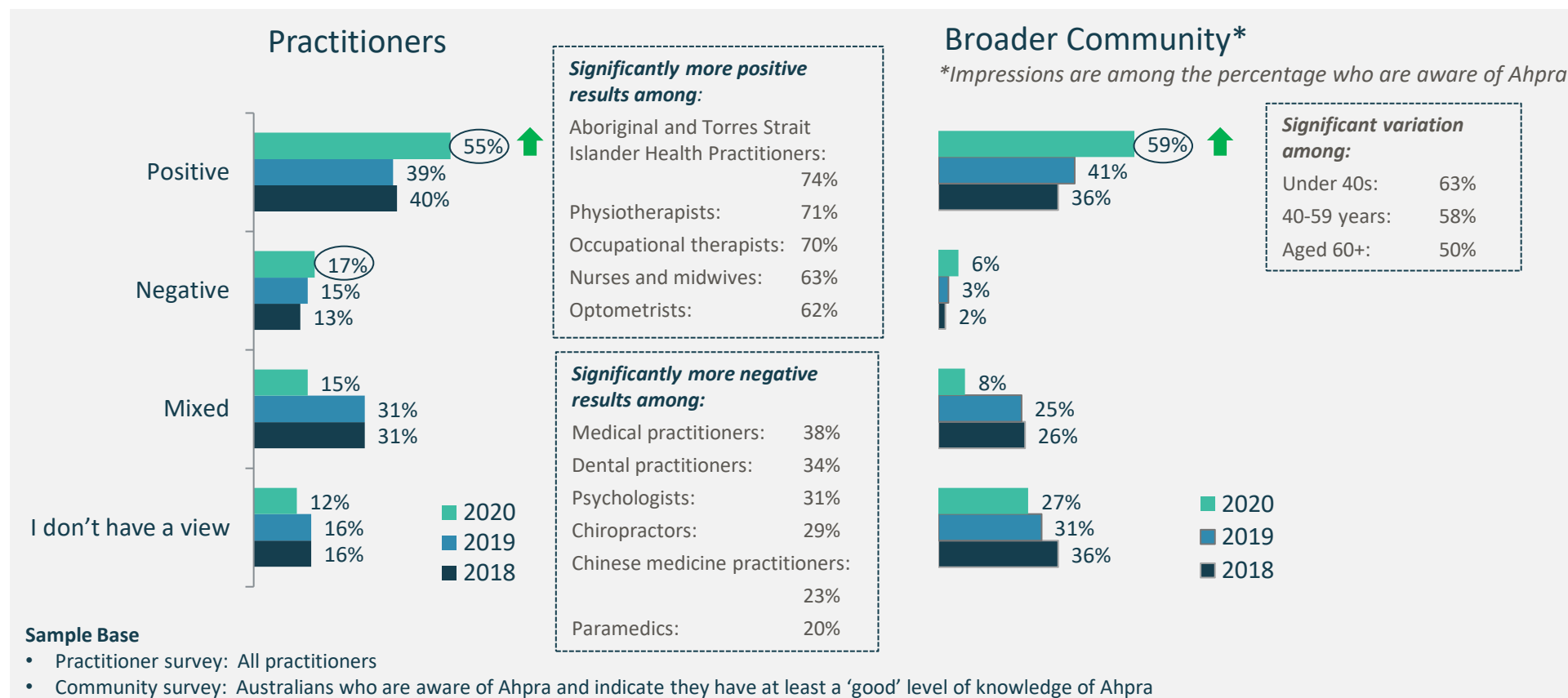
2. Perceptions of Ahpra and the National Boards

Perceptions of Ahpra

The positive view of Ahpra held by most practitioners and most within the broader community has become decidedly *more positive* over the past 12 months (increasing by 16% among practitioners and 18% among the broader community).

While a change in the rating scale used to assess perceptions in 2020 (now using a five-point scale, as opposed to a three-point scale in 2018 and 2019) may have had an impact on the results, it is also possible that the response from the wider health community during the COVID-19 pandemic may also have impacted favourably on practitioner and community views of Ahpra.

Q. Given your knowledge and understanding of Ahpra and what it does, is your overall view of Ahpra...?



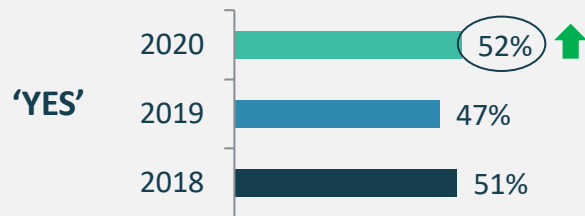
Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra

The 2020 survey results indicate the high levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra first benchmarked in 2018 among the general public (i.e. the proportion of the general public who have some knowledge of Ahpra) have been sustained over the past two years.

The levels of confidence and trust that practitioners overall have in Ahpra are significantly lower than that of the general public, however confidence and trust among practitioners has significantly increased over the past 12 months (from 47% in 2019 to 52% in 2020). Particularly low levels of confidence in Ahpra are apparent among medical practitioners, dental practitioners, paramedics psychologists and chiropractors, consistent with the pattern of response in 2019.

Practitioners

Q. Do you feel confident Ahpra is doing everything it can to keep the public safe?

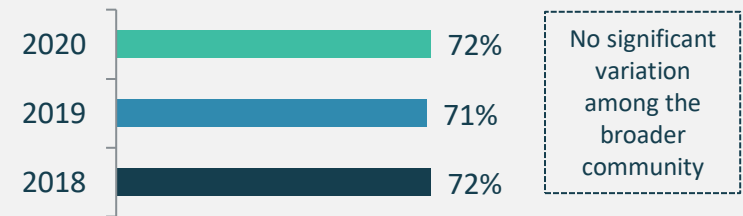


Significantly lower result among:

Medical practitioners:	33%
Dental practitioners:	40%
Paramedics:	43%
Psychologists:	43%
Chiropractors:	44%

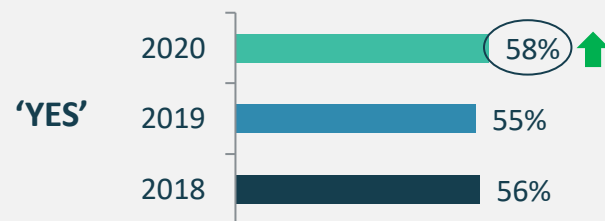
Broader Community*

* Impressions are among the percentage who are aware of Ahpra



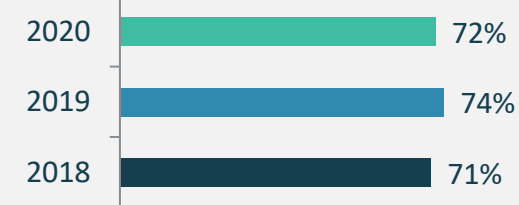
No significant variation among the broader community

Q. Do you trust Ahpra?



Significantly lower result among:

Chiropractors:	41%
Dental practitioners:	42%
Medical practitioners:	42%
Chinese medicine practitioners:	44%
Psychologists:	48%
Paramedics:	50%



Sample Base

- Practitioner survey: All practitioners
- Community survey: Australians who are aware of Ahpra and indicate they have at least a 'good' level of knowledge of Ahpra

What are the indicators of trust in Ahpra? (open comments from the 2020 survey#)

From practitioners (58% trust Ahpra)...

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

From my personal experience, I got the registration only after clearing my registration exams and submitting the right paperwork.

I have no reason to doubt that they perform the function they have been asked to do.

I mostly think they are doing what they can to keep everyone honest and responsible.

The content of their communications to me are professional, balanced and fair.

I have only ever had positive dealings with Ahpra.

They are able to keep track of registered professionals which in turn keeps that public safe.

It is my understanding that the structure and function of the agency is such that the public interest is upheld with little chance for any untrustworthy activity or behaviour.

Processes exist to ensure that practitioners are practicing safely. There is governance that is external to the profession itself.

From the broader community (72% trust Ahpra)...

Somebody has to keep the health practitioners honest and I trust Ahpra to do this.

Because it gives me the ability to look up practitioners and ensure they are fit to practice.

They seem to be transparent and approachable. I have had no reason to not trust them yet.

I am registered with Ahpra and feel like their processes and standards are enough.

They are a nationwide agency that is highly regulated.

They are reputable and fair.

As I have had trouble with a GP at my mother's nursing home, it was only when I said I was going to Ahpra that I was able to really get help for mum.

I believe they know what they are doing and are keeping people safe by regulating the health professionals.

I think they're an independent body that regulates health professionals and helps them to maintain a standard as well as accountability to the public.

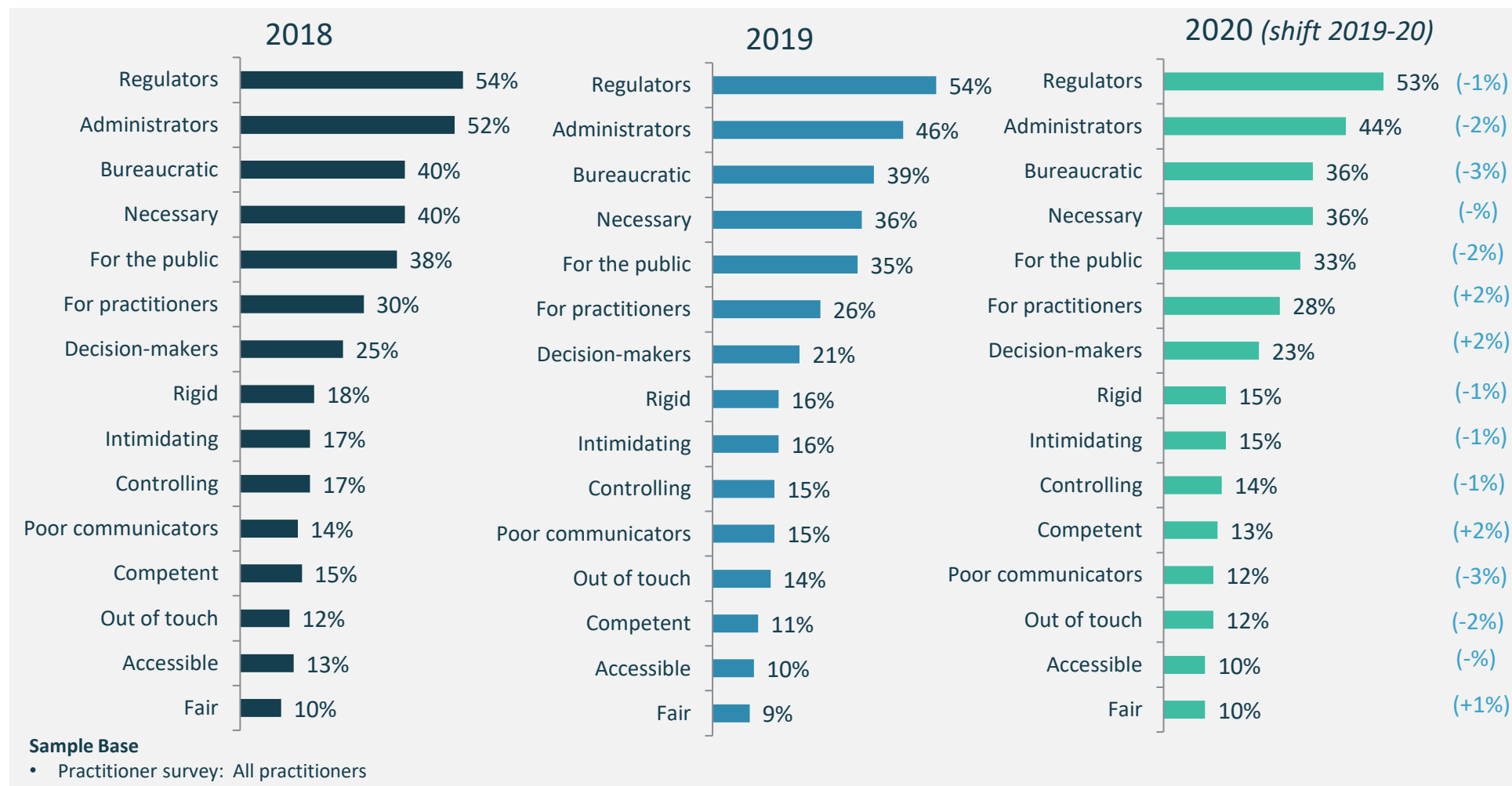
I have had dealings with them in the past and they seemed trustworthy.

Full list of responses provided separately

Associations practitioners have with Ahpra (top 15 words or phrases)

The associations practitioners have with Ahpra have remained remarkably stable over the past two years, led by impressions of Ahpra as ‘regulators’, ‘administrators’, ‘bureaucratic’ but also ‘necessary’.

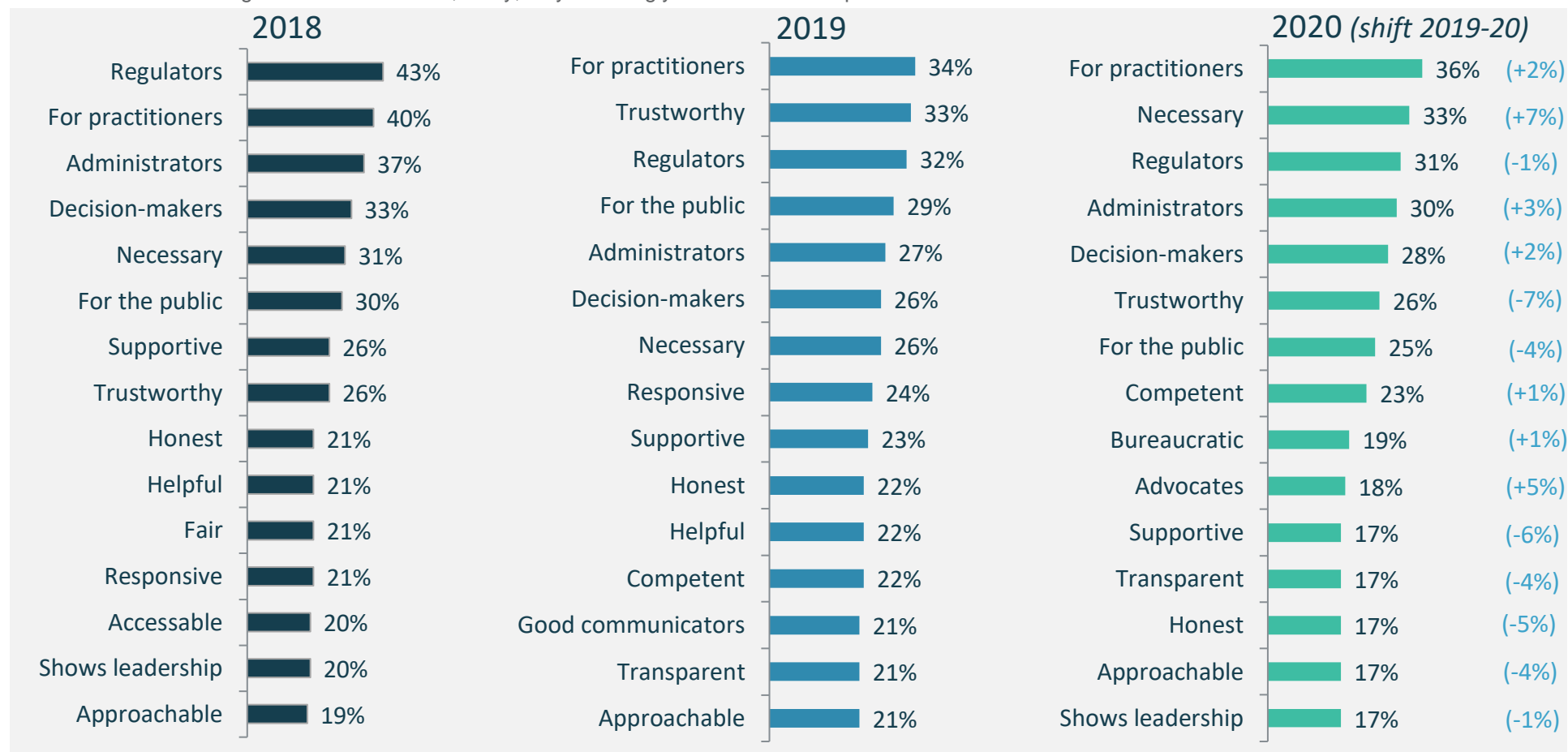
Q. Which of the following words or statements, if any, do you strongly associate with Ahpra?



Associations the broader community have with Ahpra (top 15 words or phrases)

There have been several significant shifts over the past 12 months. In 2019 there was a significant shift in the proportion of the broader community who thought of Ahpra as 'trustworthy', however that gain has been reversed and is now consistent with the 2018 result (26%). Far more people in 2020 think of Ahpra as 'necessary' (up from 26% in 2019 to 33% in 2020), perhaps reinforced by the response observed by the community of health practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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



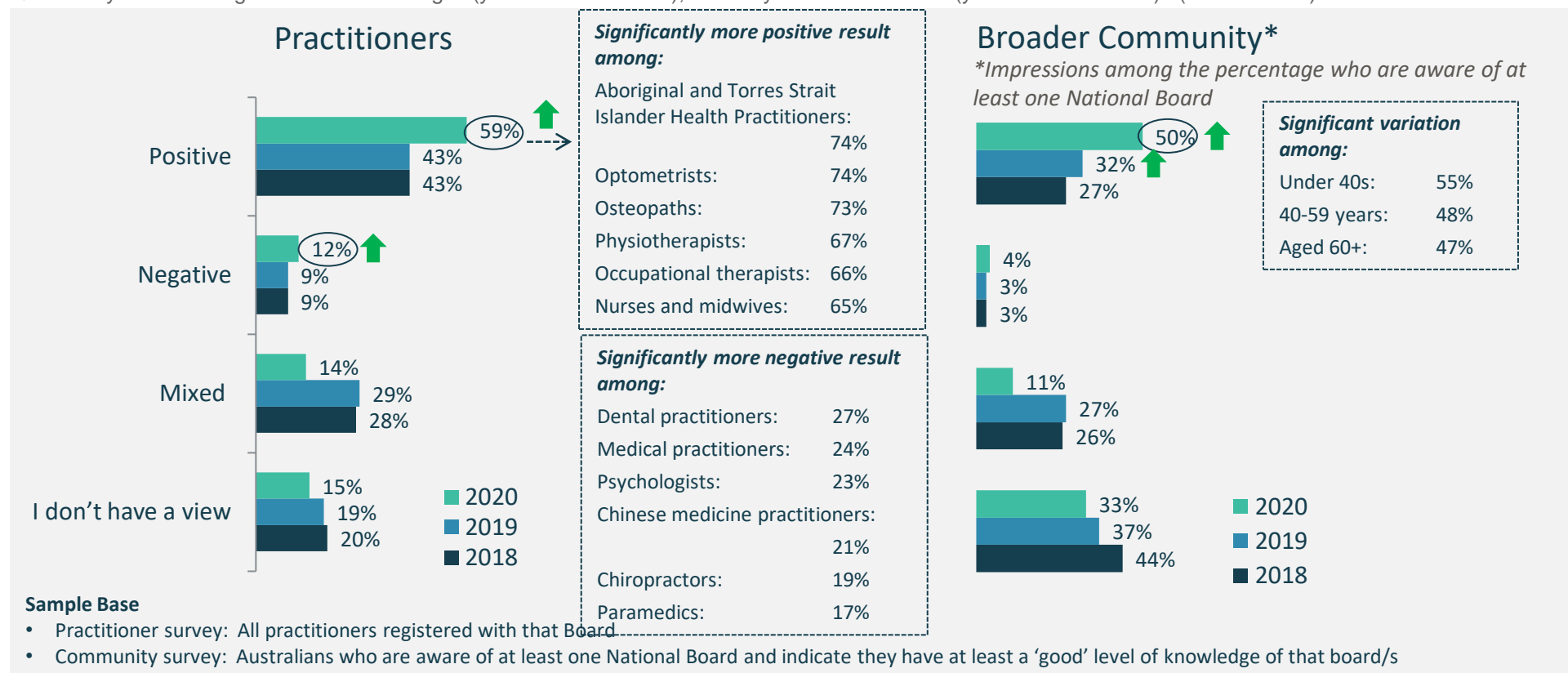
Perceptions of National Boards

The positive view of National Boards held by most practitioners and the broader community has also been further enhanced over the past 12 months (increasing by 16% among practitioners and 18% among the broader community), as occurred with Ahpra.

Consistent with the approach taken to measure perceptions of Ahpra, the rating scale on this question was changed in 2020 (to use a five-point scale, as opposed to a three-point scale in 2018 and 2019) which may have impacted the results. The favourable view of National Boards among the general public has however, been trending upward since 2018, so as theorised with the enhanced view of Ahpra, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic may also have positively impacted the more favourable view of National Boards in 2020.

Q. Given your knowledge and understanding of the National Boards and what they do, what is your overall view of the National Boards? (Community)

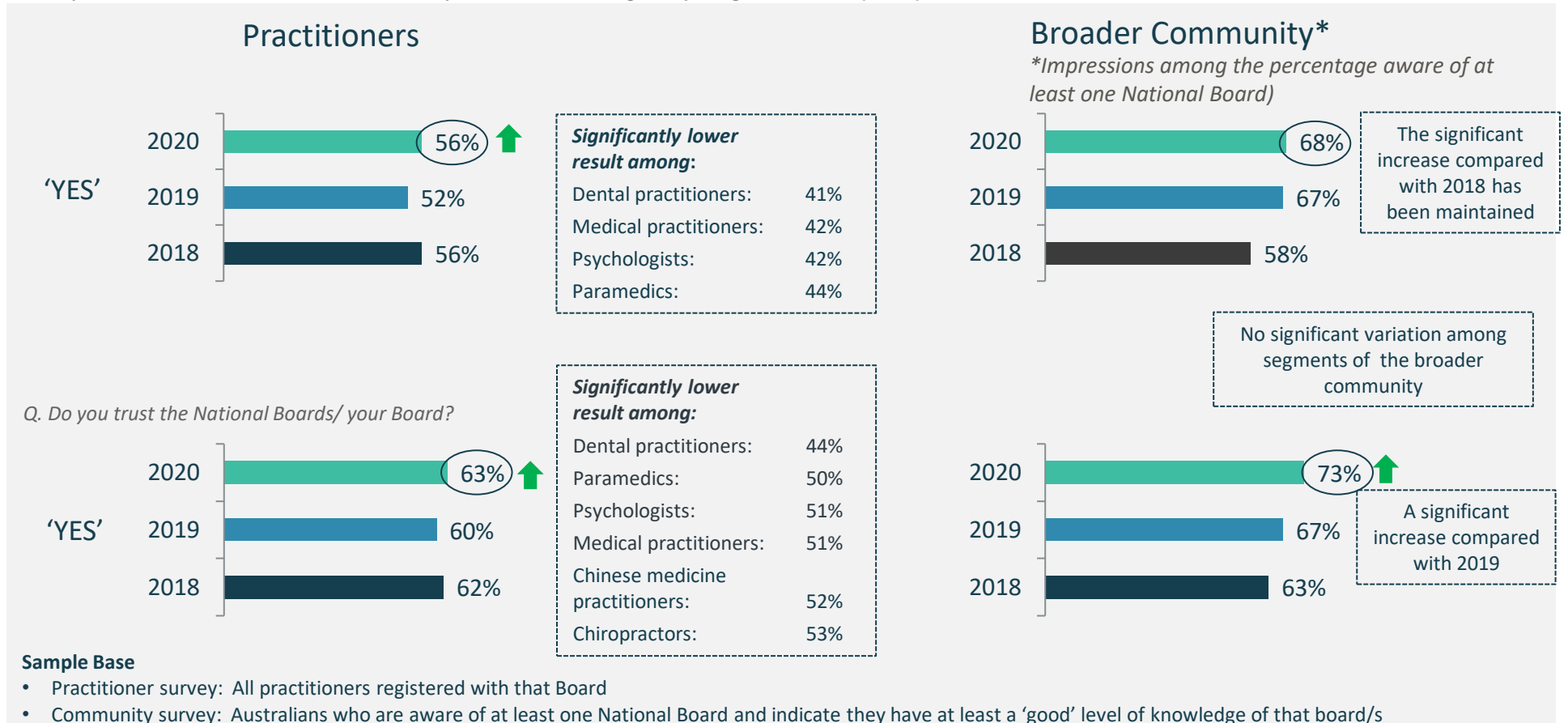
Q. Given your knowledge and understanding of (your National Board), what is your overall view of (your National Board)? (Practitioners)



Levels of confidence and trust in National Boards

While confidence and trust among practitioners in their National Boards overall is significantly higher than 2019, once again there are a small number of professions who demonstrate significantly lower levels of confidence and trust in their National Board, compared with other professions. These are generally the same professions who have less confidence and trust in Ahpra and is consistent with the variations that emerged in the 2018 and 2019 surveys.

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



What are the indicators of trust in National Boards? (open comments from the 2020 survey#)

From practitioners (63% trust National Boards)...

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 are regulating the practitioners and will act against any wrongdoing in the profession.

Regulated. Representatives for our profession. Team who promote progress in the profession with development in clinical practice.

As a senior healthcare professional managing workforce they have been responsive to workplace practitioner concerns.

Supportive. Maintains a professional standard, dependable and reliable Keeps check on professionals and protects the community.

I haven't seen or heard anything to the contrary.

Expectation that the national board that you pay to be a member of maintains a comprehensive level of awareness and responsibility.

Transparent, regulated, provided current information, establish and adhere to standards.

From the broader community (73% trust National Boards)...

Trust comes with efficiency, honesty and transparency.

They only select trusted people.

They have a clear purpose and operate to regulate the health professions and ensure good practice.

National framework of connections and relationships all focused towards the same goal.

Fairly transparent. Keeps members up to date.

Allows the public to know about practitioners that are providing services.

I believe they have been chosen for their expertise in this area.

The performance over time has been good.

Without them there would be no regulation, so I trust them to do their best without bias.

They have panels with various professionals to ensure decisions are made fairly.

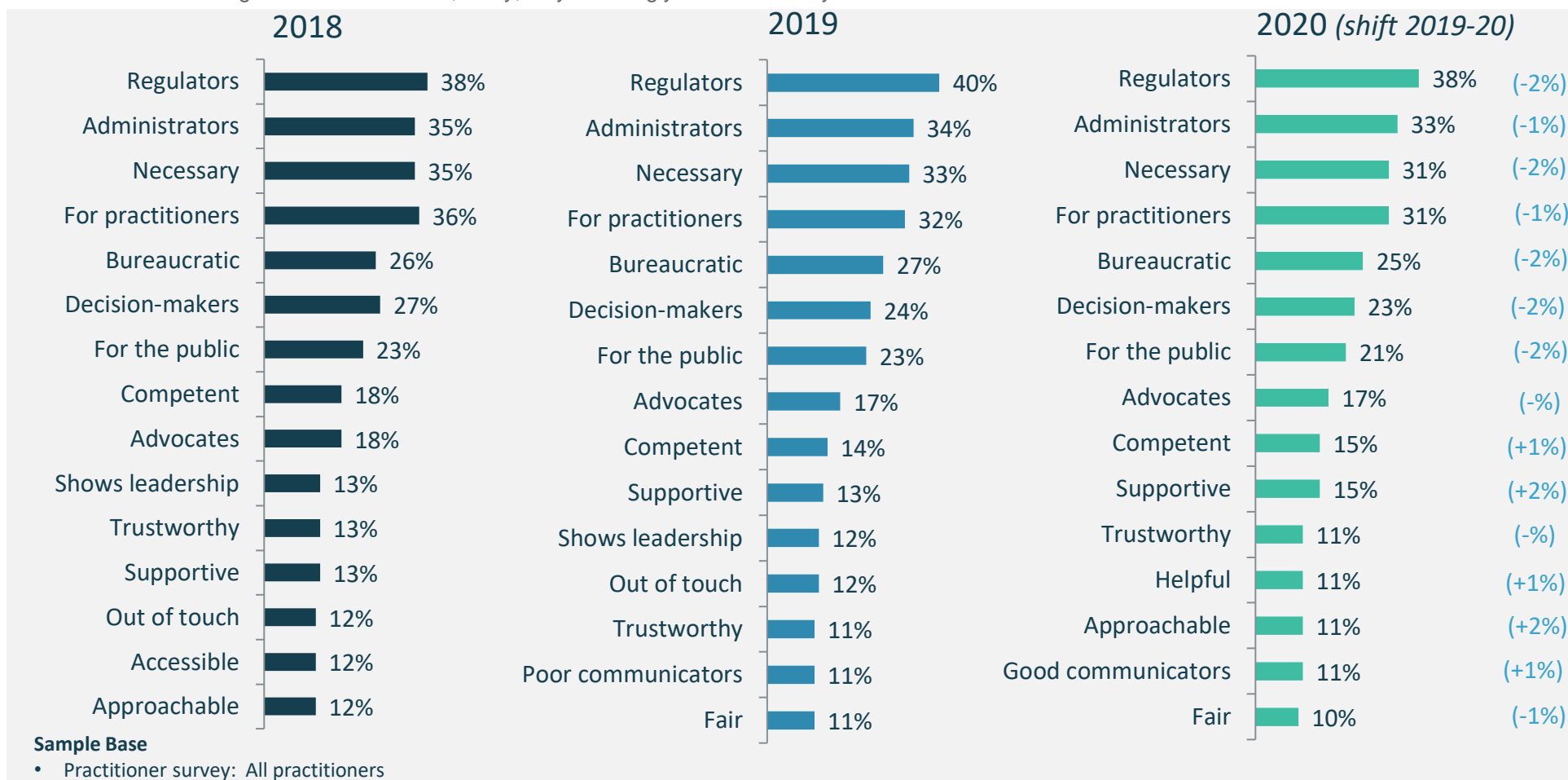
They provide oversight, regulation and recommendations.

Full list of responses provided separately

Associations practitioners have with National Boards (*top 15 words or phrases*)

As with Ahpra, the associations practitioners have with National Boards has remained stable over the past two years and the hierarchy of those associations has remained generally consistent. Practitioner impressions of National Boards continue to be headed by impressions of the Boards as ‘regulators’, ‘administrators’ and yet, also ‘necessary’.

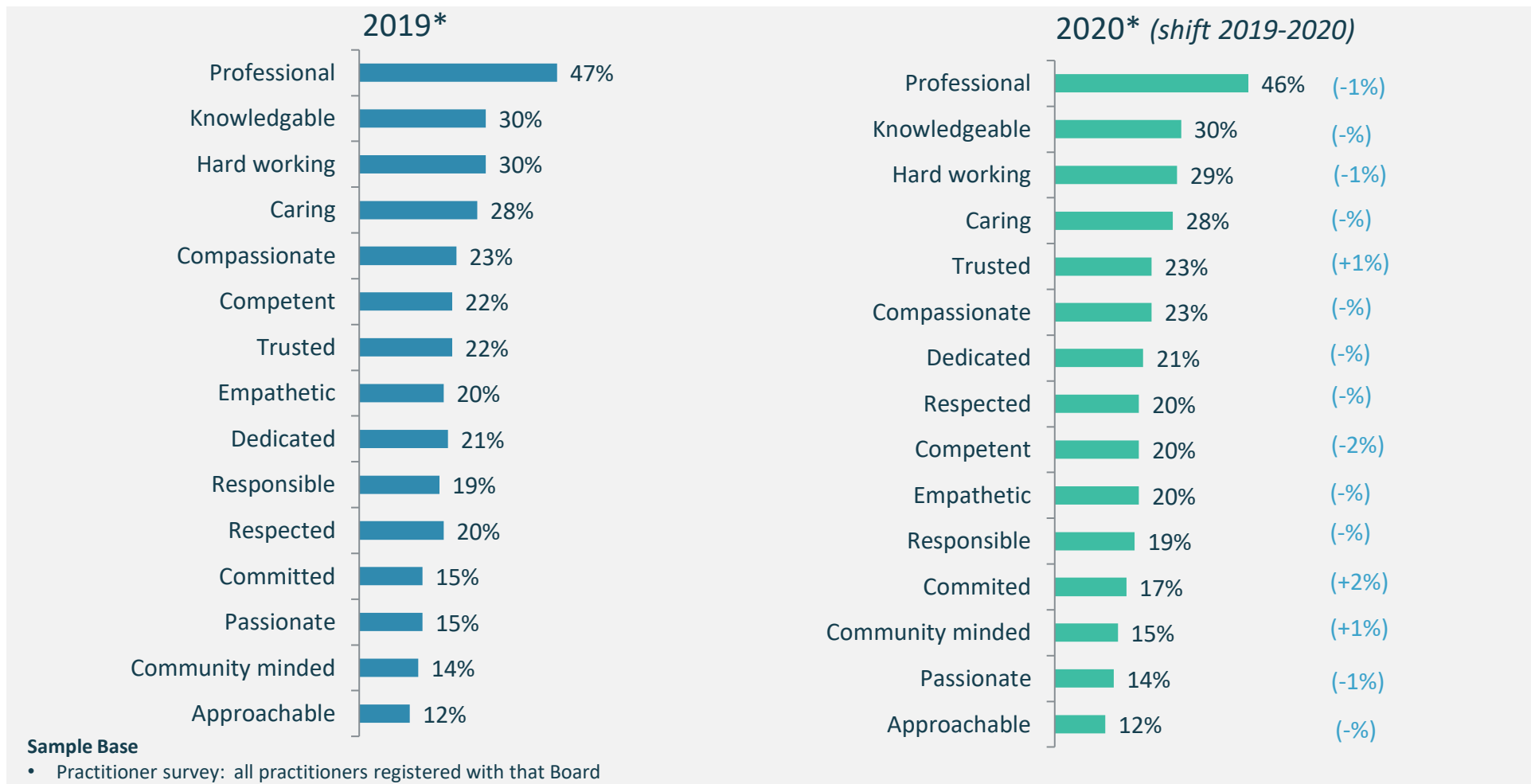
Q. Which of the following words or statements, if any, do you strongly associate with your National Board?*



Associations practitioners have with the registered health professions (top 15 words or phrases)

This question was introduced in 2019 and was designed to understand the values associated with the registered professions. The hierarchy of values that practitioners themselves associate with the registered professions is very consistent with the benchmark established in 2019. 'Professional' continues to be the primary value associated with the health professions.

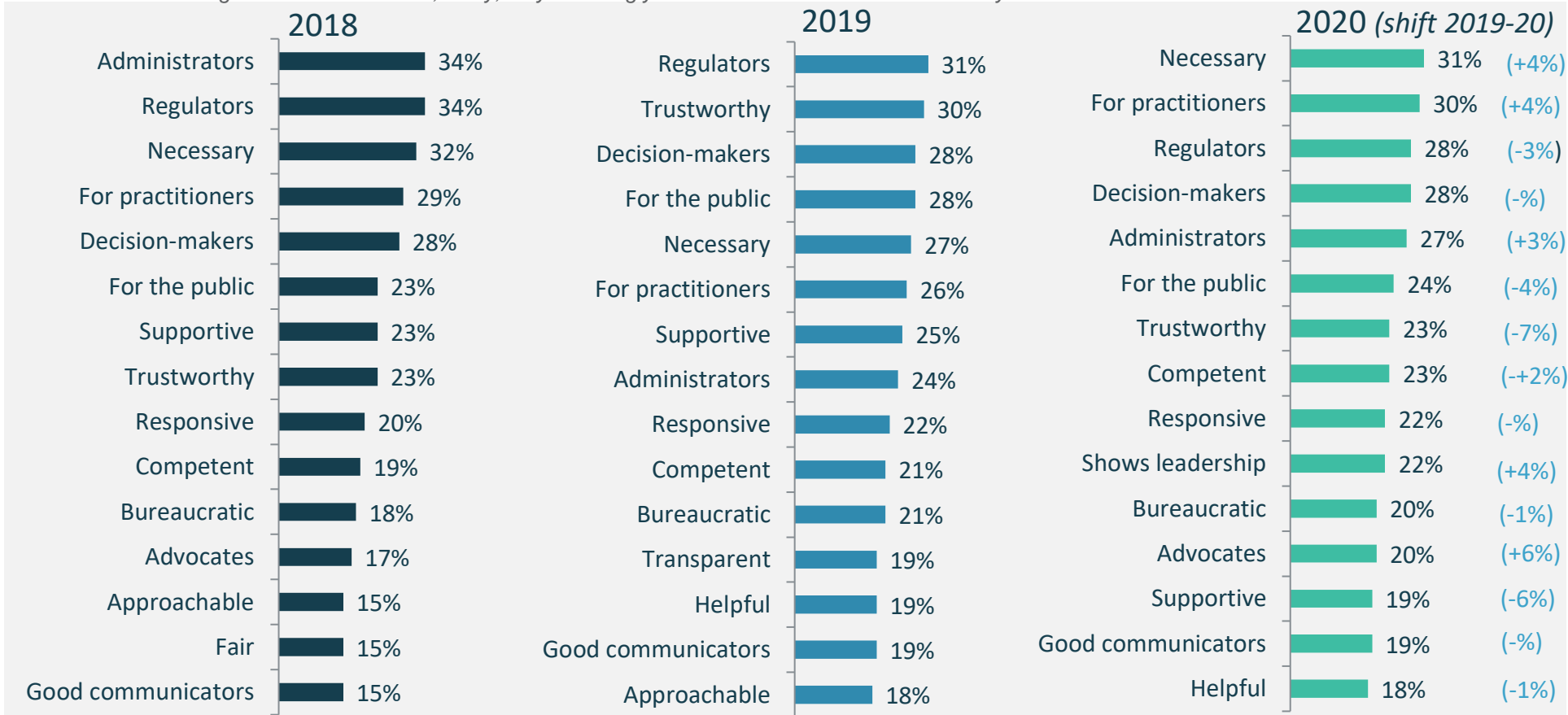
Practitioners: Which of the following words do you strongly associate with your profession?* (Maximum of 5 to be selected)



Associations the broader community have with National Boards (top 15 words or phrases)

While the hierarchy of associations the broader community has with National Boards has remained relatively stable, there have been some interesting shifts over the past 12 months. There have been increases in the proportion within the community who associate National Boards with being ‘advocates’ (+6%) and ‘showing leadership’ (+4%) while there has been a decline in the proportion who think of National Boards as ‘trustworthy’ (-7%) and ‘supportive’ (-6%).

Q. Which of the following words or statements, if any, do you strongly associate with the National Boards you are aware of?



Sample Base

- Community survey: Australians who are aware of Ahpra and indicate they have at least a ‘good’ level of knowledge of Ahpra

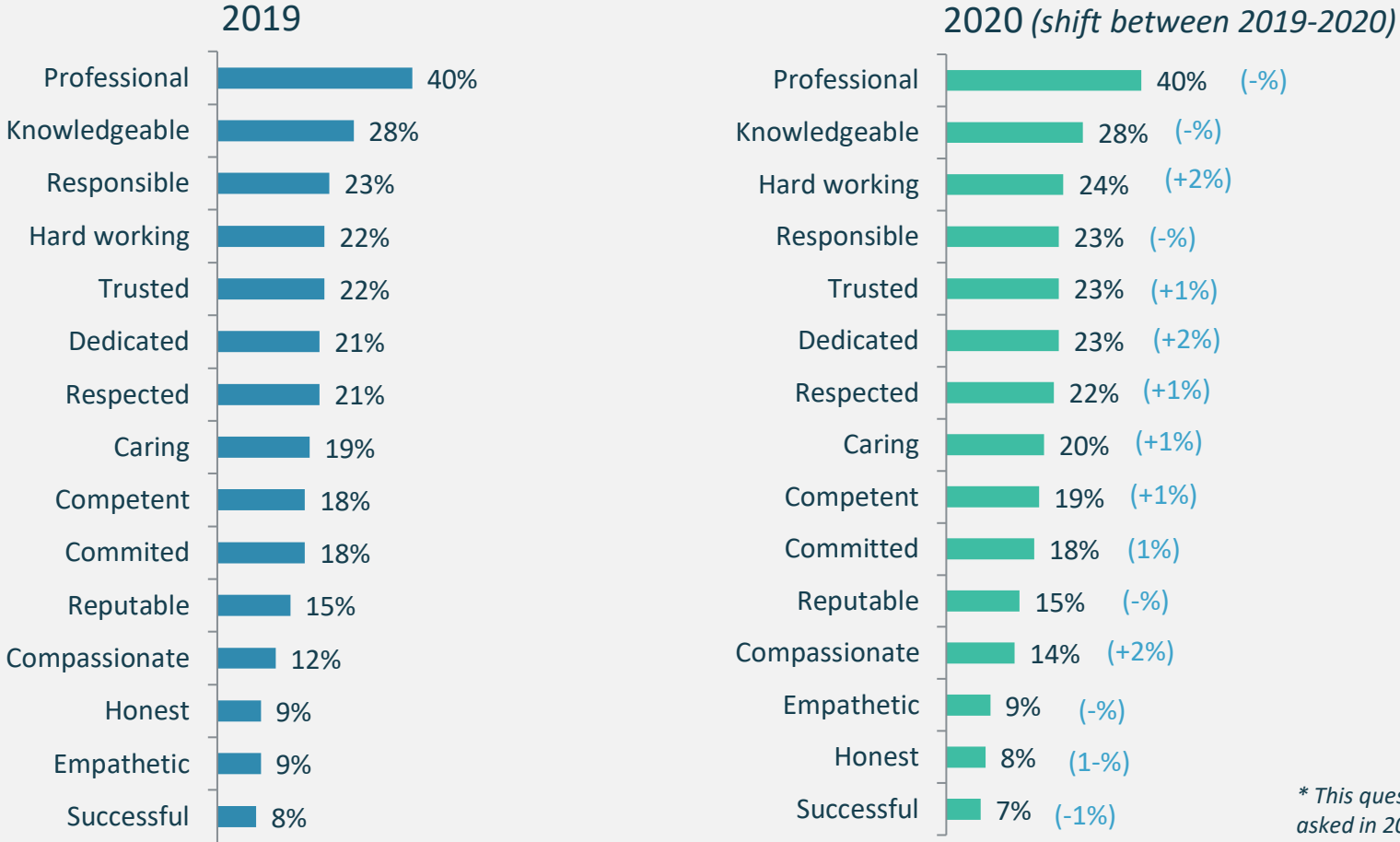
Associations the broader community have with the registered health professions

(top 15 words or phrases)

Consistent with the impressions of practitioners, it is the value of ‘professionalism’ that the broader community associates with the registered professions. The hierarchy of values associated with the professions is essentially unchanged since the 2019 survey.

Practitioners: Which of the following words do you strongly associate with your profession? (Maximum of 5 to be selected)

Community: When you think about the registered health professions, which of these words or statements, if any, do you strongly associate with those registered health professions?* (Maximum of 5)



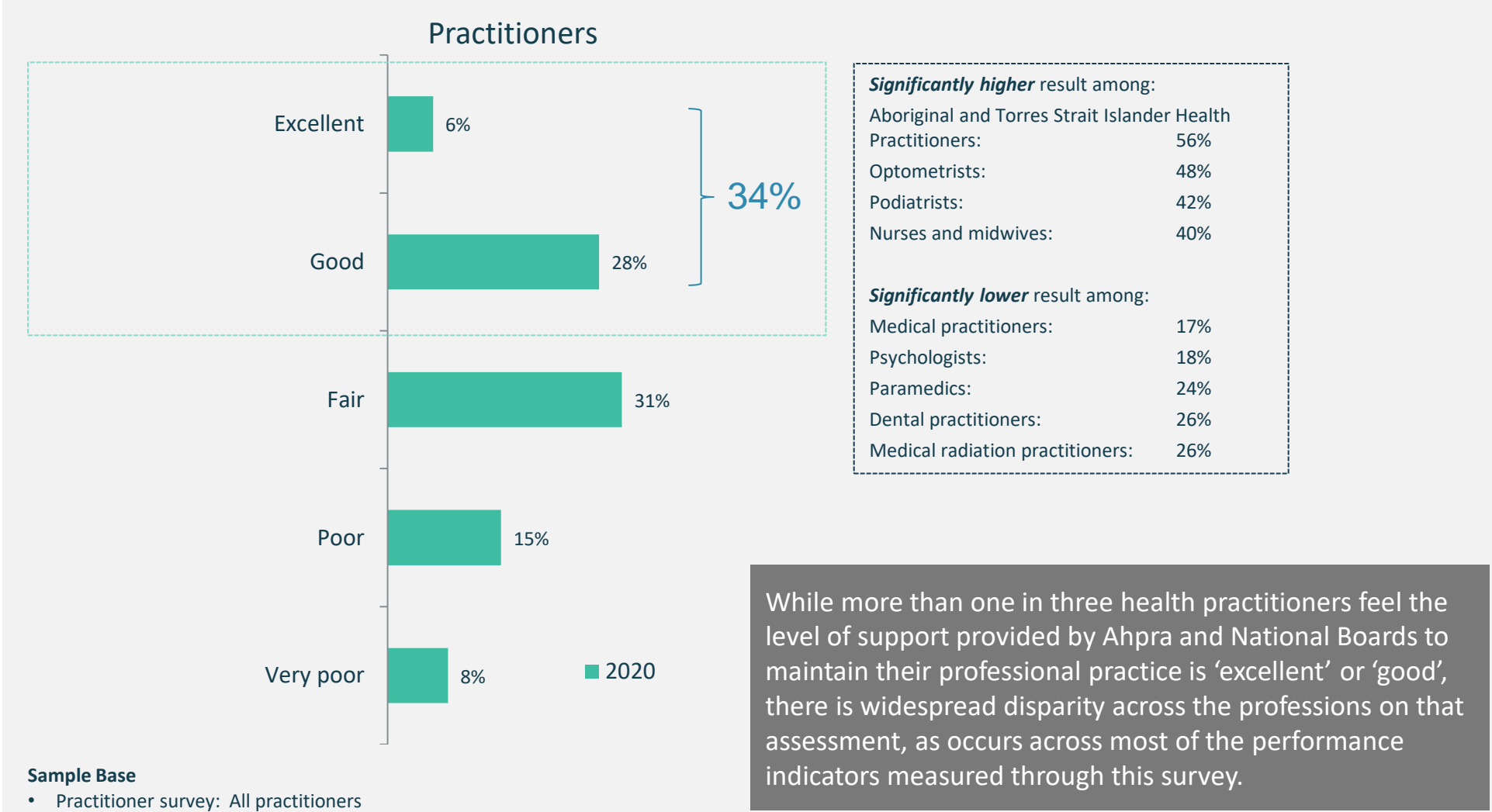
* This question was not asked in 2018

Sample Base

- Community survey: Total sample

Assessment of support 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

Practitioners were asked what additional activities or support, if any, they would you 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).

Greater defense of allied health practitioners and the importance they have to the public and medical system. By closing practitioners off to the public in some states for the so-called benefit of public health it has increased burdens on medical care for people who would otherwise not require hospital or GP visits.

Clear communication from the board on a daily basis as events unfolded. Board specific to each modality addressing modality-specific issues and practice standards addressing the specific needs of practitioners per state, on a daily unfolding basis.

Reduce the registration fees, as we have been out of work for a long time, especially in Victoria. But of course that won't happen.

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

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

Better more succinct communications in our ongoing hectic environments.

Better recognition of expertise from clinical practice not just academics.

Encouraging older health practitioners to return to work during a pandemic when they are in the "at risk " group for serious illness seemed short sighted and ill considered.

I am not sure why you would try to return 30,000 retired staff to the workplace when there are new graduates that can't get regular employment... was that really necessary? Surely resources would have been better spent in the health system and education of already employed staff.

Just be a bit more understanding and considerate of new registrants.

To be fair I believe that AHPRA have been flexible in enabling their practitioners to provide much needed support to the public. Well done on this point.

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.

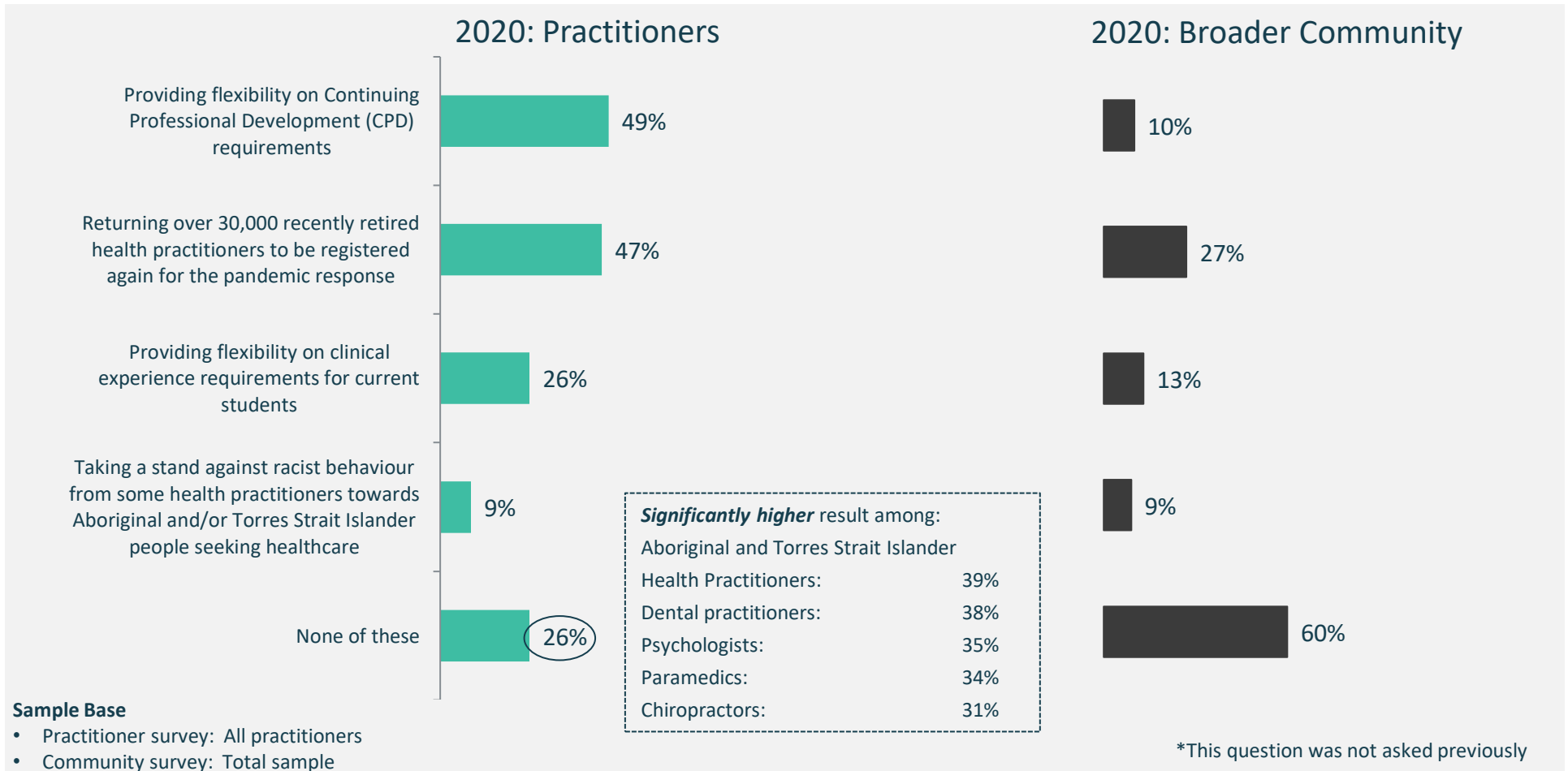
Defining more clearly the flexibility for CPD students were removed from clinical work inappropriately in low-risk situations.

3. Assessment of communication and engagement with practitioners

Awareness of new initiatives from Ahpra and National Boards

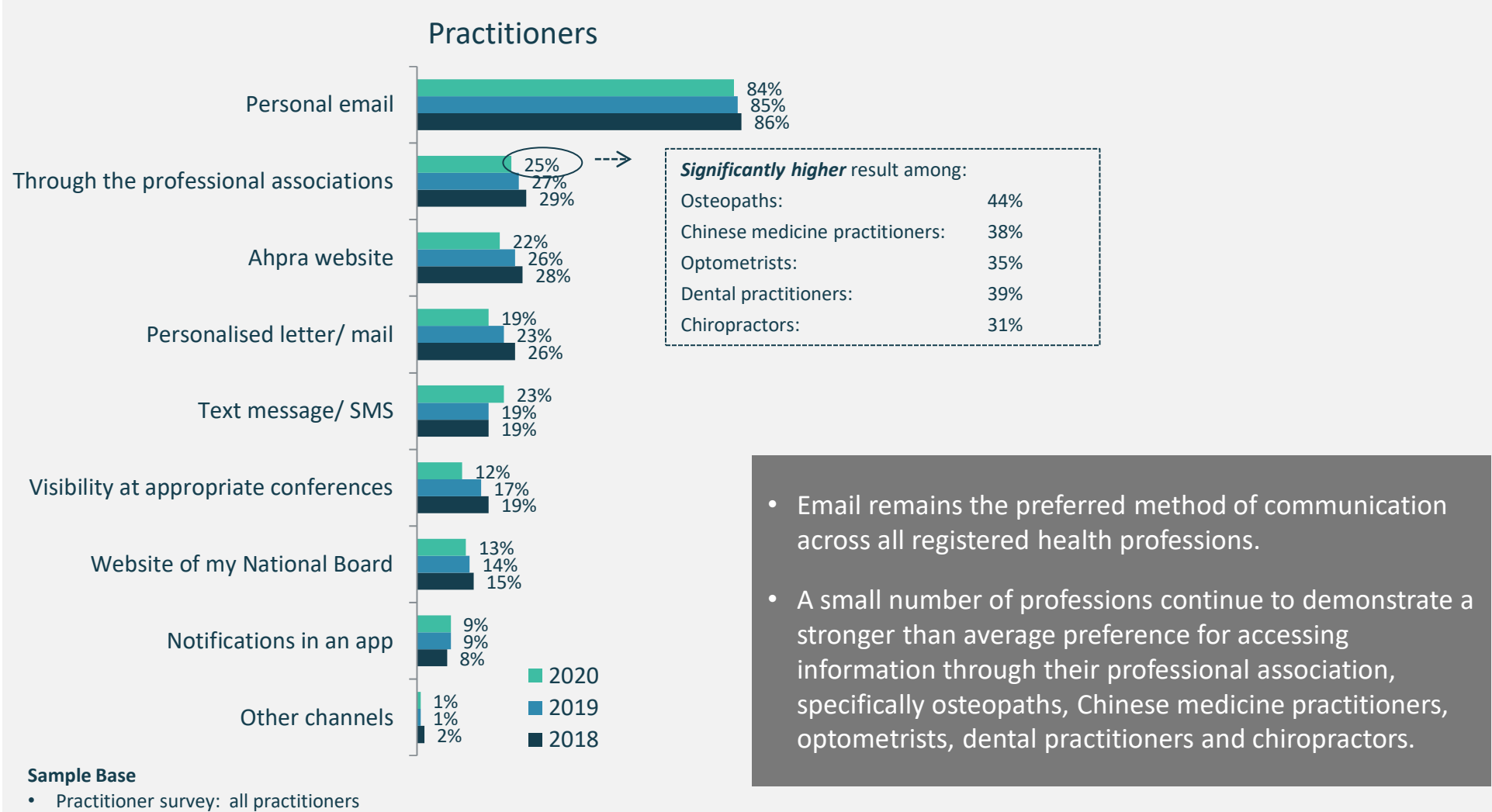
Percentage of practitioners indicating awareness of each of the following initiatives in 2020

Q. A number of initiatives have been implemented by Ahpra and National Boards this year to assist the response by health practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic. Which of the following, if any, are you aware of?*

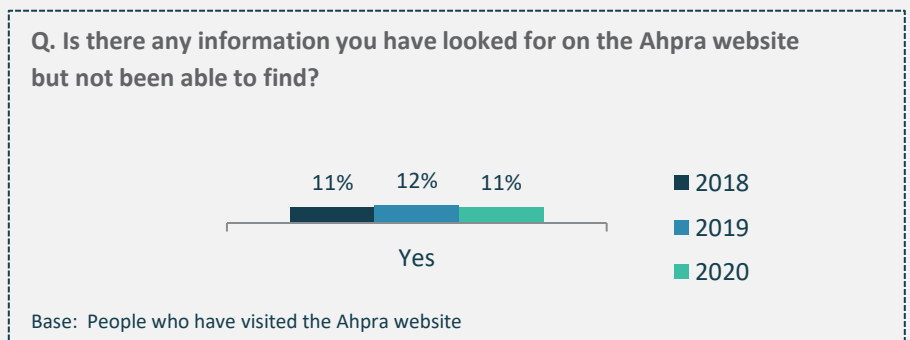
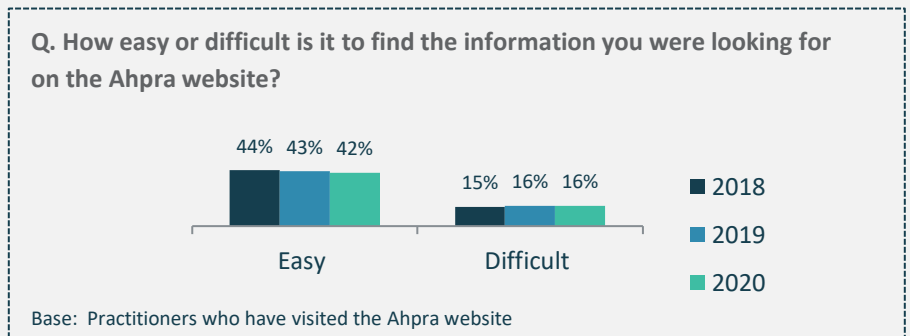
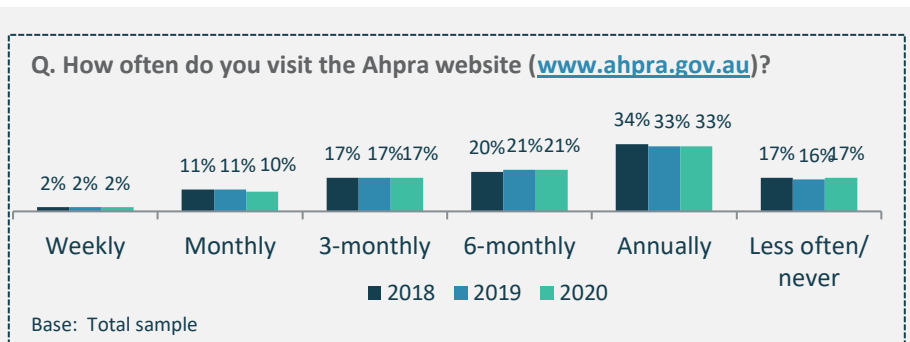


What are the most effective channels for engagement with practitioners?

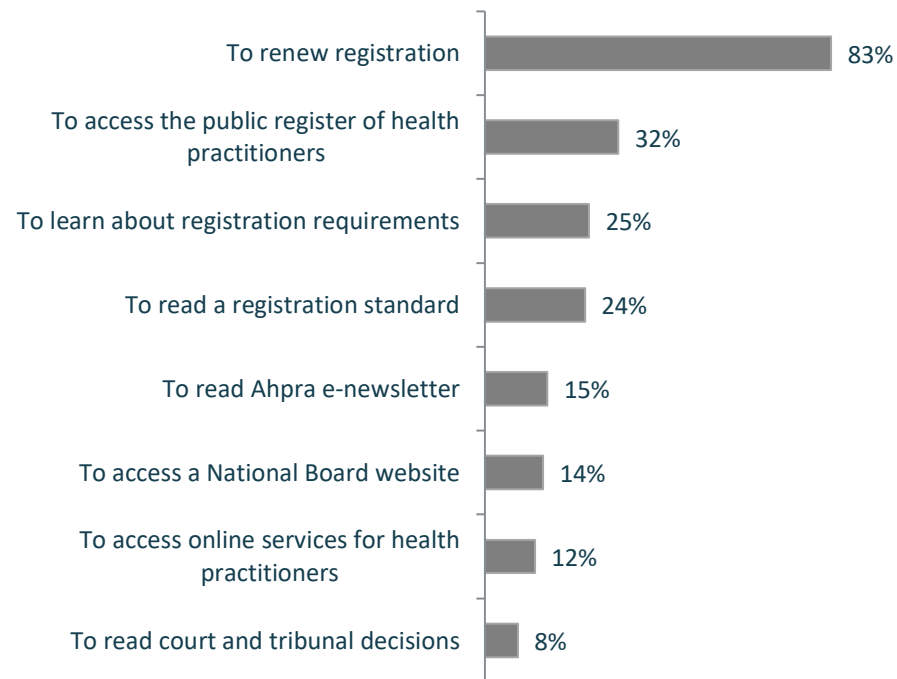
Q. What are the most effective options for Ahpra and your National Board to communicate with you?



Use of the Ahpra website by practitioners



2020: Main reasons for visiting the Ahpra website

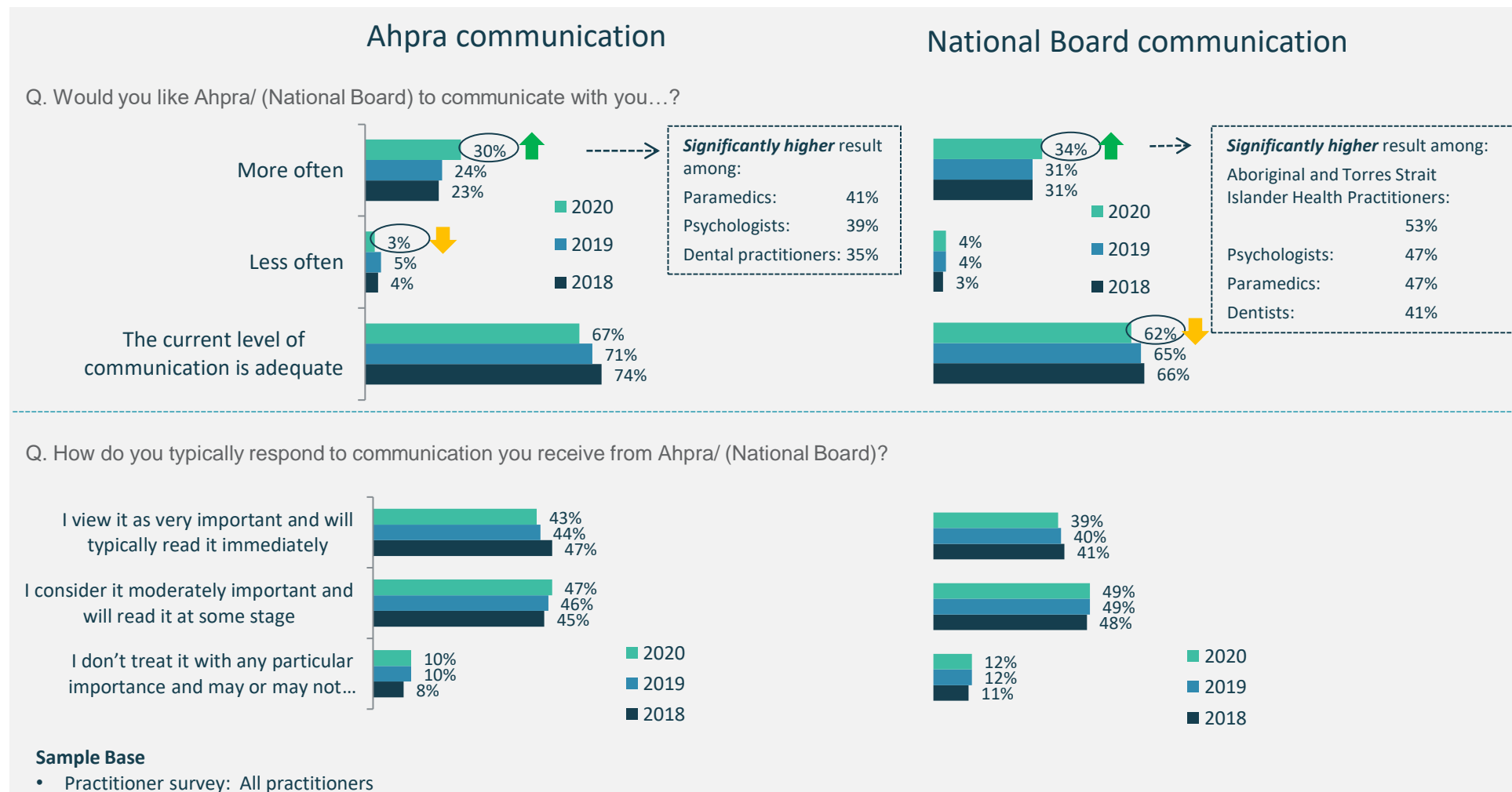


Additional information sought by practitioners included:

- CPR and anaphylaxis updates regarding COVID situation.
- Updates of CPD requirements during pandemic.
- COVID information on when returning to practice.
- Registration requirements when on maternity leave.
- Details about transition from provisional to standard registration.
- How to change my title from Mr to Dr.

Practitioner response to communication by Ahpra and National Boards

While the majority of practitioners feel that the current level of communication from Ahpra and the National Boards is adequate, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of practitioners looking to be communicated *with more often by both Ahpra and their National Board*, which in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the direct impact on health practitioners, is not surprising.



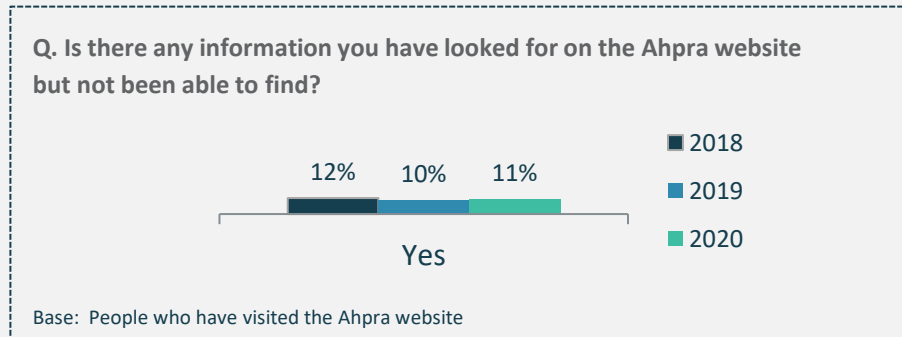
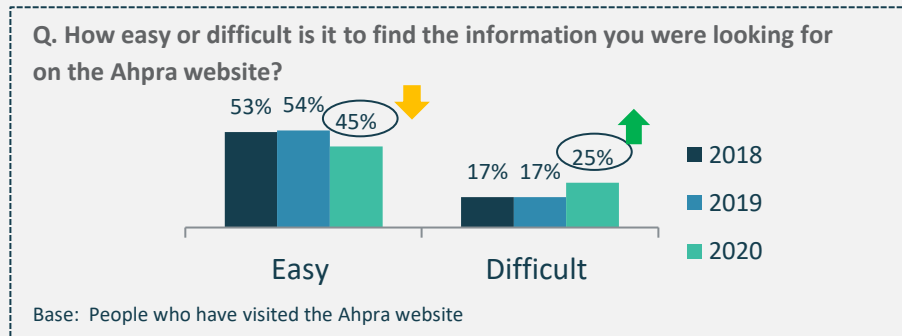
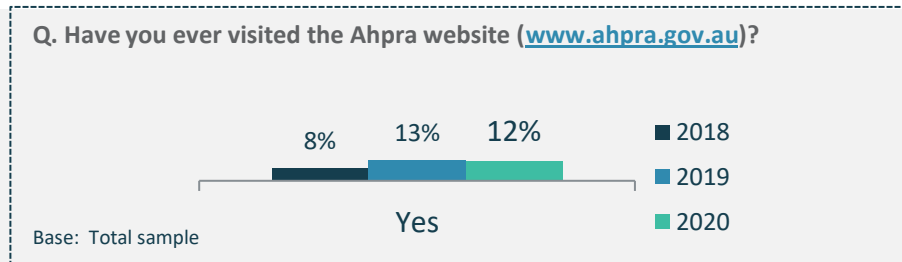
Sample Base

- Practitioner survey: All practitioners

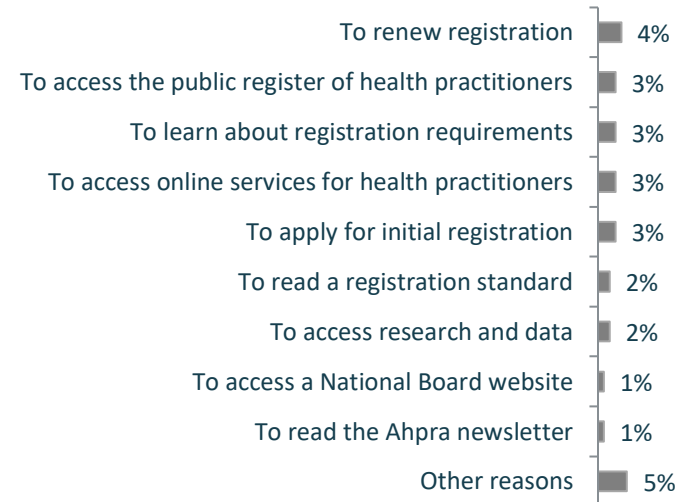
Use of the website by the broader community

Use of the Ahpra website by the broader community remains limited but consistent over the past 12 months. Around 12% of people have indicated they have accessed the website and, as in previous years, more than three-quarters of those people who visited the site are actually registered health practitioners.

While most found the Ahpra website easy to use, there was a significant increase over the past 12 months in the proportion who found it difficult to find the information they were looking for on the website.



2020: Reasons for visiting the Ahpra website (unchanged from 2019)



Additional information sought by the community included:

- Laws governing medical practitioners
- Scope of practice specific information
- Ongoing investigations
- Research-related information
- Working locations for practitioners

4. Summary of the 2020 results

A recap of the 2020 survey results

The results of this study will be used by Ahpra and the National Boards to continue building stakeholder confidence.

The community survey

Overall

- The 2019 survey saw small but significant gains in awareness, interest and knowledge of Ahpra among the community, but those gains have not been maintained and the 2020 survey has shown declines across those metrics compared with 2019.
- The results among the younger members of the community (aged under 40 years) continue to be the most favorable.

The National Scheme

- Awareness of the National Scheme has remained stable over the past 12 months.

Ahpra

- Awareness of, interest in and knowledge of the role and function of Ahpra have all decreased by a small but statistically significant margin compared with the 2019 results.
- The positive view of Ahpra held by the broader community has become decidedly *more positive* over the past 12 months.
- Confidence and trust in Ahpra remains high and consistent with the 2018 and 2019 results.

National Boards

- Awareness of, interest in and knowledge of the role and function of National Boards have all decreased by a small but statistically significant margin compared with the 2019 results.
- Perceptions of National Boards have become further enhanced, continuing a two-year trend.
- Confidence in National Boards is stable while trust in National Boards has increased significantly compared with the 2019 result.

The practitioner survey

The National Scheme

- Awareness of the National Scheme has further declined across all practitioner groups, with awareness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health practitioners still particularly low.

Ahpra

- Almost all registered practitioners are aware of Ahpra and the vast majority are interested in the role and functions of Ahpra, consistent with the 2018 and 2019 surveys.
- The positive view of Ahpra held by most practitioners has become markedly *more positive* over the past 12 months. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses and midwives and optometrists have a far more favorable view of Ahpra compared with the average across professions.
- Confidence and trust practitioners have in Ahpra has significantly increased over the past 12 months (by 5% and 3% respectively), however the level of confidence practitioners have in Ahpra remains much lower than that of the general public.

National Boards

- Consistent with 2019, the professions with the most favorable views of their National Board (compared with the average) are osteopaths, physiotherapists, optometrists and nurses and midwives. Occupational therapists and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners join that group in 2020.
- Also consistent with 2019 are the professions with more negative views of their National Board: dentists, psychologists, paramedics and medical practitioners. Chinese medicine practitioners and chiropractors join that group in 2020.

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