

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 Chiropractic 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 **Chiropractic Board of Australia**.

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

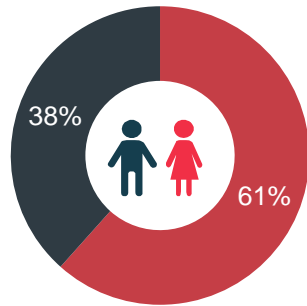
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community.
- The 2020 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 and 2019 questionnaires, with two additional questions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider. Quotas were placed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

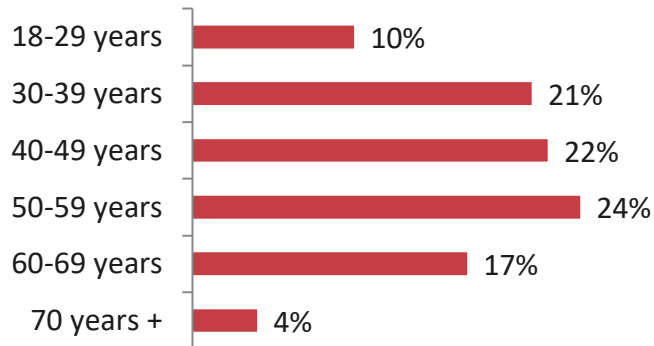


2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

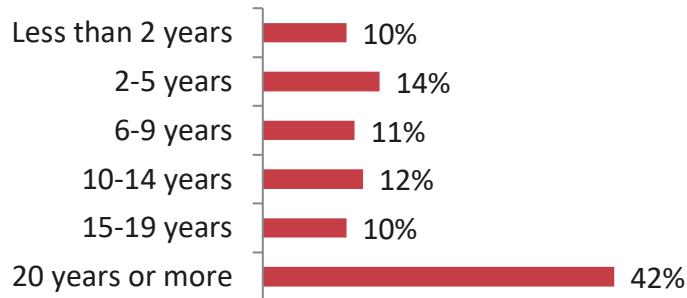
Gender



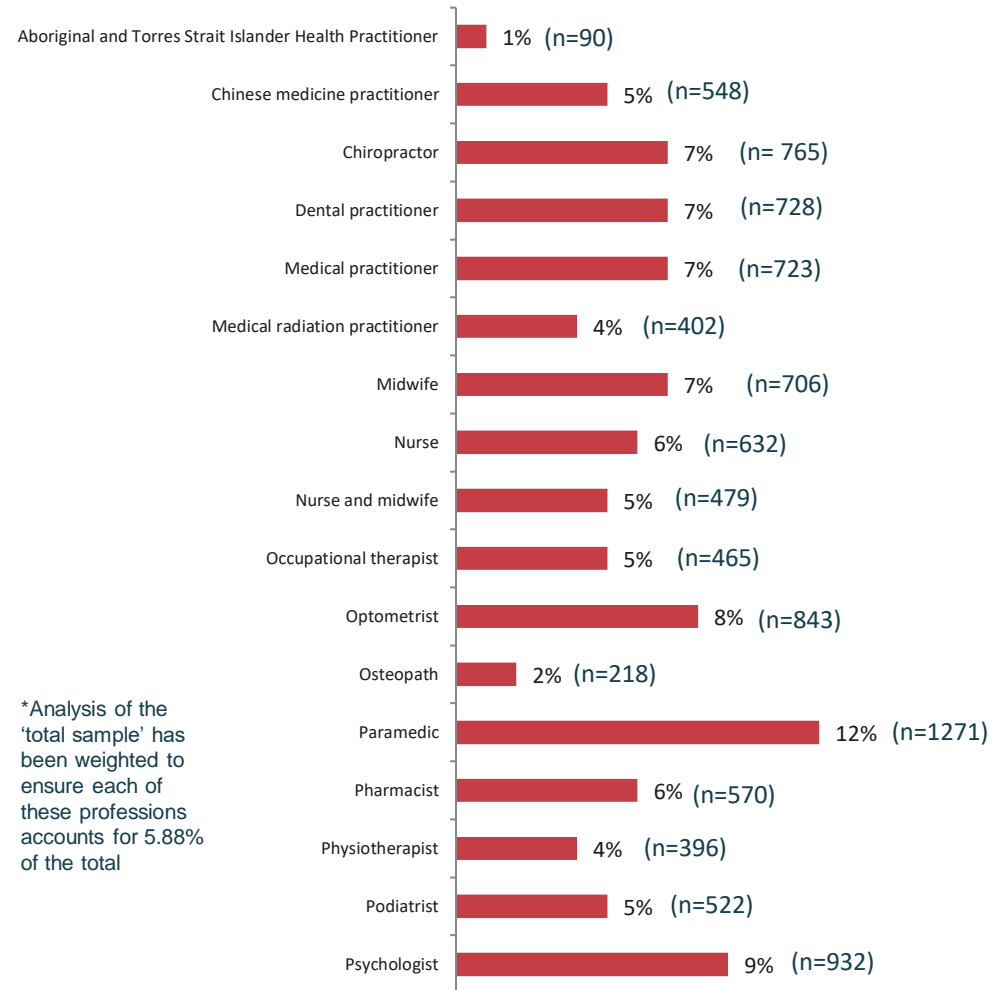
Age



Years in practice



Practitioner type*

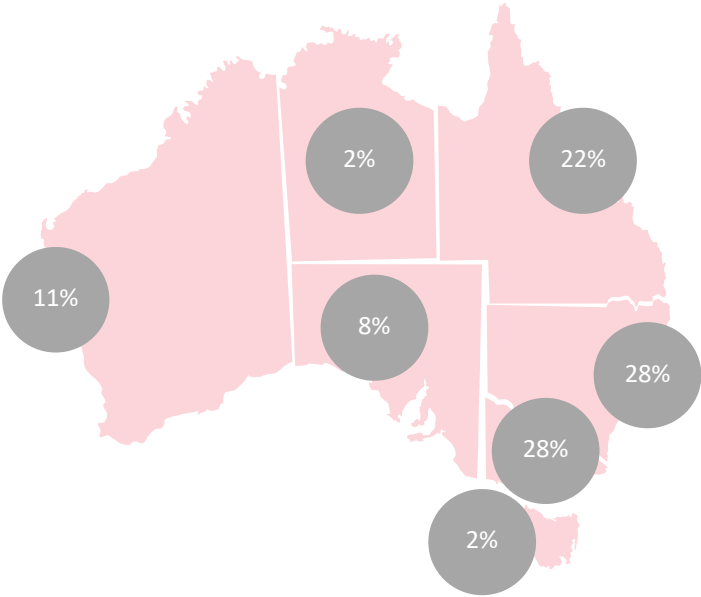


*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

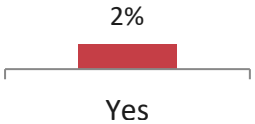
2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

Location

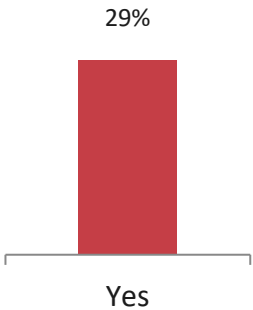


Metro: **63%**
Regional: **30%**
Rural: **7%**

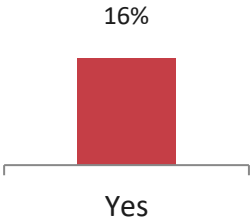
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



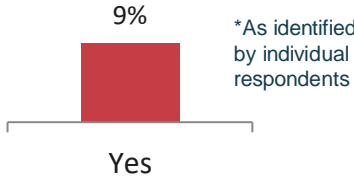
% who were born in a country other than Australia



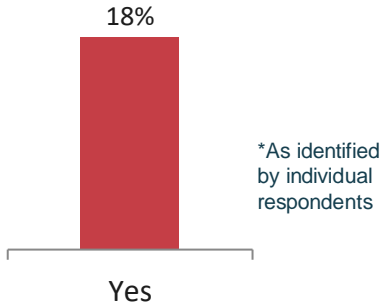
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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*

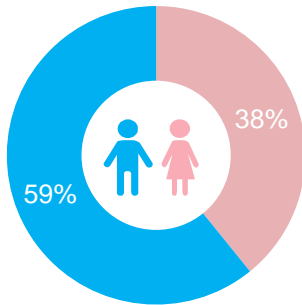


Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners

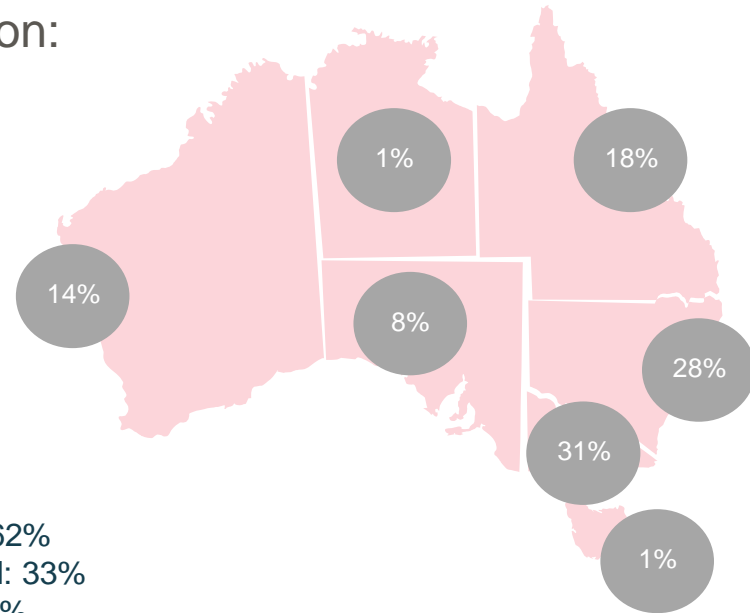
Specific insights into the responses from:
Chiropractors

Sample of chiropractors (n=605)

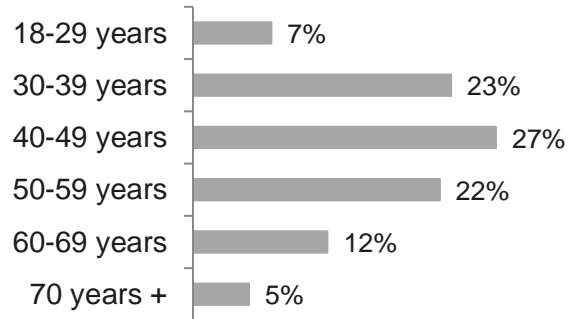
Gender:



Location:

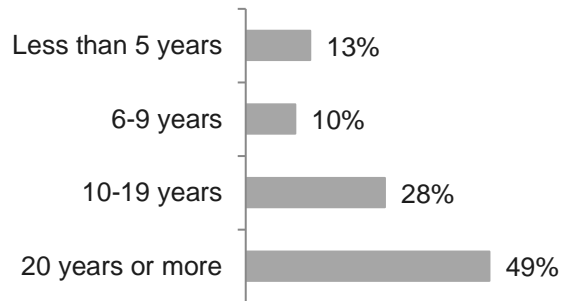


Age:

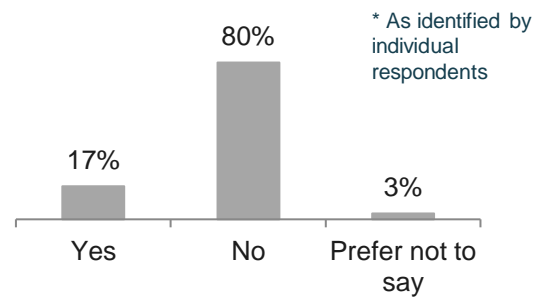


Metro: 62%
Regional: 33%
Rural: 5%

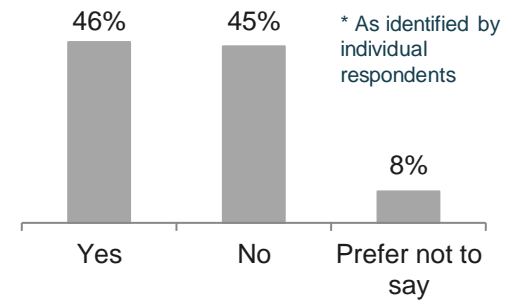
Years in practice:



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



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



2020: Perceptions of the chiropractic 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=605)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	41%	(-5%)
Caring	36%	(+10%)
Passionate	33%	(+19%)
Knowledgeable	33%	(-3%)
Dedicated	23%	(+2%)
Competent	22%	(+1%)
Compassionate	22%	(-1%)
Committed	22%	(+5%)
Independent	18%	(+10%)
Empathetic	15%	(-5%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Community minded	15%	(-)
Hard working	14%	(-15%)
Open-minded	12%	(+6%)
Approachable	12%	(+1%)
Responsible	11%	(-9%)
Trusted	11%	(-12%)
Optimistic	8%	(+5%)
Out of touch	7%	(+4%)
Respected	7%	(-13%)
Innovative	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 chiropractic profession

Q. Which of the following words or statements, if any, 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=349	2020 N=605
Professional	41%	41%
Caring	35%	36%
Passionate	38%	33%
Knowledgeable	31%	33%
Dedicated	24%	23%
Competent	23%	22%
Compassionate	22%	22%
Committed	18%	22%
Independent	21%	18%
Empathetic	16%	15%

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=349	2020 N=605
Community minded	13%	15%
Hard working	12%	14%
Open-minded	14%	12%
Approachable	11%	12%
Responsible	10%	11%
Trusted	9%	11%
Optimistic	9%	8%
Out of touch	9%	7%
Respected	5%	7%
Innovative	8%	7%

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

Note: There have been no significant changes in perceptions of the profession among chiropractors between 2019-2020

2020: Perceptions of the Chiropractic 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=605)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	38%	(-)
Administrators	36%	(+3%)
Necessary	35%	(+4%)
Bureaucratic	33%	(+8%)
For the public	33%	(+12%)
For practitioners	23%	(-8%)
Decision-makers	20%	(-3%)
Out of touch	17%	(+7%)
Competent	15%	(-)
Controlling	14%	(+6%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Supportive	14%	(-1%)
Intimidating	13%	(+5%)
Rigid	12%	(+3%)
Advocates	12%	(-5%)
Poor communicators	11%	(+2%)
Fair	10%	(-)
Secretive	9%	(+4%)
Approachable	9%	(-2%)
Shows leadership	9%	(-4%)
Submissive	9%	(+7%)

Green indicates a result significantly higher in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Orange indicates a result significantly lower in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Summary of changes 2018-20: Perceptions of the Chiropractic Board of Australia

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

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=325	2019 N=349	2020 N=605
Regulators	41%	40%	38%
Administrators	43%	44%	36%
Necessary	39%	36%	35%
Bureaucratic	32%	39%	33%
For the public	32%	38%	33%
For practitioners	23%	23%	23%
Decision-makers	21%	21%	20%
Out of touch	17%	15%	17%
Competent	18%	19%	15%
Controlling	17%	11%	14%

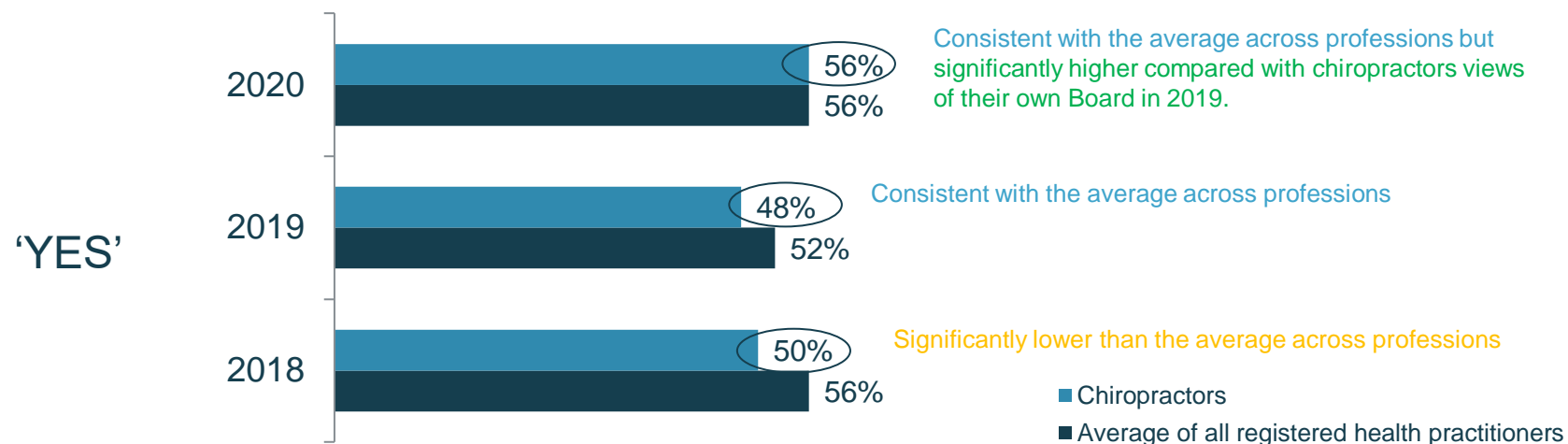
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=325	2019 N=349	2020 N=605
Supportive	4%	8%	14%
Intimidating	13%	10%	13%
Rigid	15%	11%	12%
Advocates	12%	12%	12%
Poor communicators	13%	13%	11%
Fair	11%	13%	10%
Secretive	8%	10%	9%
Approachable	12%	10%	9%
Shows leadership	10%	9%	9%
Submissive	11%	18%	9%

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

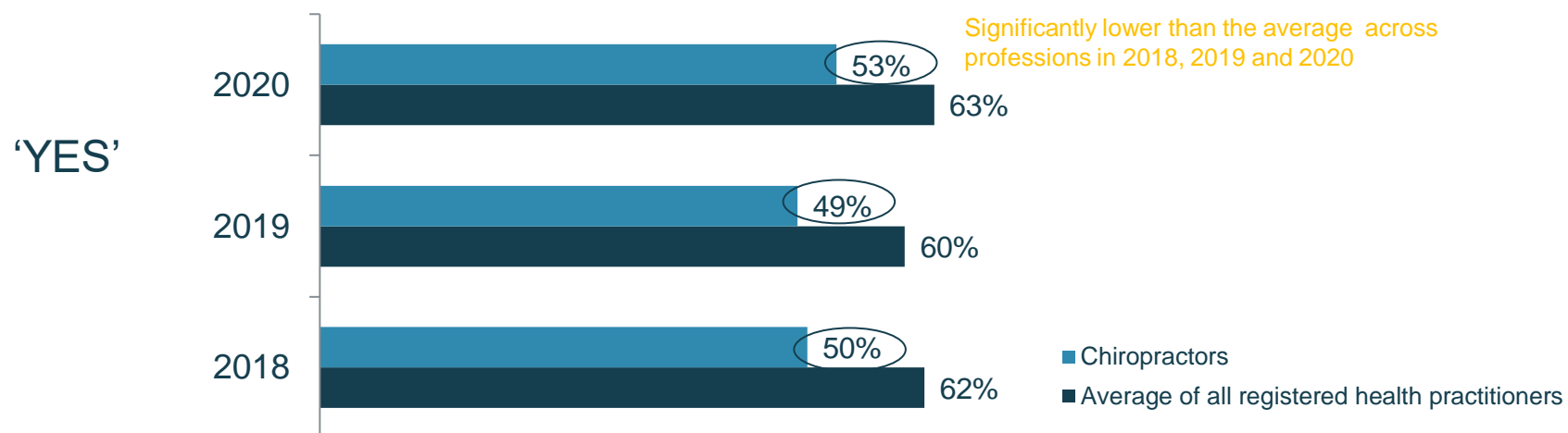
Orange indicates a result significantly lower result compared with the previous year.

Levels of confidence and trust in the Chiropractic 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 Chiropractic Board of Australia

Indicators of trust: 53% trust the Board

Because it is the representation of the Chiropractic industry in Australia, and it is regulated.

I have no reason not to trust them.

I would like to think they have chiropractor's best interests at heart.

Have acted well on a few cases where they needed to be hard.

I do believe they are doing what is best for the greater whole of the profession at all times, not just during the current 'pandemic'.

I've been with them over 20 years and have no complaints.

I trust the Chiropractic Board to act in a lawful manner.

They support the profession and guide us. Their response to the COVID situation this year has been so helpful - navigating us all through safely. I feel they are always trying to better our profession even though our chiropractic voice is being squashed slowly.

I trust the checks and balances are in place to keep the board acting appropriately.

They have acted in cases that needed intervention protecting both the public and the chiropractic profession.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: 20% DO NOT trust the Board

I don't find them supportive of chiropractors as a profession or as individual primary care practitioners. There is a tall poppy syndrome, nobody is allowed to stand out, be a leader or be loud.

Because they are not transparent nor trustworthy

Allowing the diminishing and oppression of our profession. Not standing up for the science behind our profession. Lacking courage.

I don't think they support the practitioners.

As a group they are out of touch with how chiropractors' practice and what the public want. The public don't all want the same philosophy or care from a chiropractor as the GP. People often see chiropractors because they want a different approach.

They are there for the public not the practitioners. The personal opinions and views of board members are not kept separate from board decisions. The Board members don't reflect the range of practitioners they serve.

They are too reactive to the voices of the few. Political reactions appear to be justified in their actions rather than viewing the facts and making considered decisions.

They primarily act on behalf of the public and if a complaint is lodged you are assumed guilty until proven otherwise.

Perceptions of Ahpra among chiropractors (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=605)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	53%	(-)
Bureaucratic	51%	(+15%)
Administrators	45%	(-1%)
For the public	40%	(+7%)
Necessary	31%	(-5%)
Controlling	31%	(+17%)
Rigid	27%	(+12%)
Intimidating	29%	(+14%)
Decision-makers	19%	(-4%)
Out of touch	18%	(+6%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Poor communicators	18%	(+6%)
For practitioners	15%	(-13%)
Secretive	14%	(+7%)
Competent	12%	(-1%)
Aloof	9%	(+2%)
Zealous	7%	(+4%)
Fair	7%	(-3%)
Approachable	6%	(-3%)
Antiquated	6%	(+2%)
Trustworthy	6%	(-4%)

Green indicates a result significantly higher in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Orange indicates a result significantly lower in 2020 than the average across all professions.

Summary of changes 2018-20: Perceptions of Ahpra among chiropractors

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

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2018 N=325	2019 N=428	2020 N=605
Regulators	61%	54%	53%
Bureaucratic	52%	57%	51%
Administrators	51%	49%	45%
For the public	46%	48%	40%
Necessary	36%	32%	31%
Controlling	33%	26%	31%
Rigid	30%	23%	27%
Intimidating	31%	26%	29%
Decision-makers	21%	23%	19%
Out of touch	22%	18%	18%

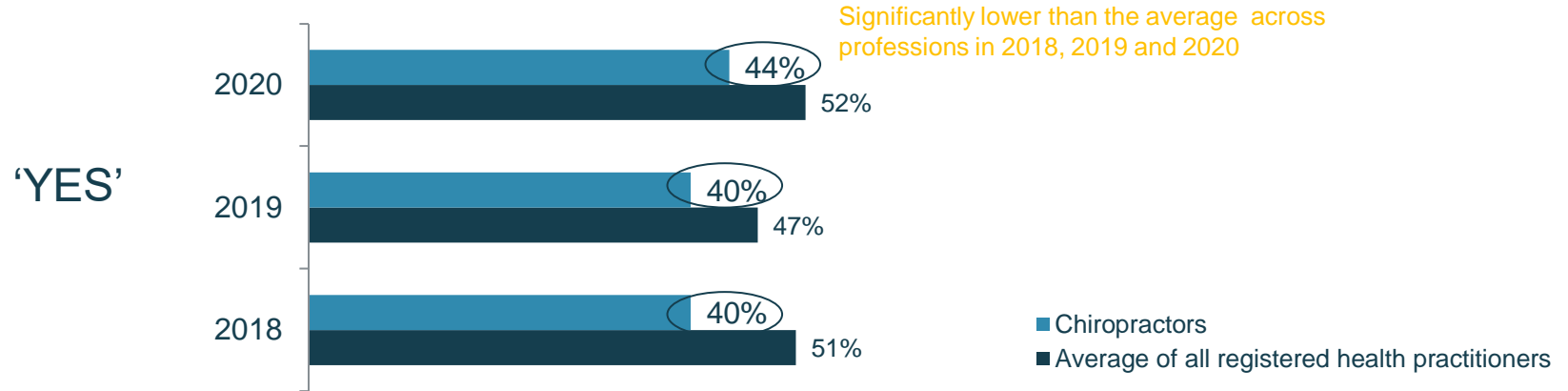
% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2018 N=325	2019 N=428	2020 N=605
Poor communicators	20%	16%	18%
For practitioners	13%	11%	15%
Secretive	14%	12%	14%
Competent	11%	11%	12%
Aloof	10%	9%	9%
Zealous	10%	9%	7%
Fair	9%	8%	7%
Approachable	5%	6%	6%
Antiquated	5%	6%	6%
Trustworthy	5%	5%	6%

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

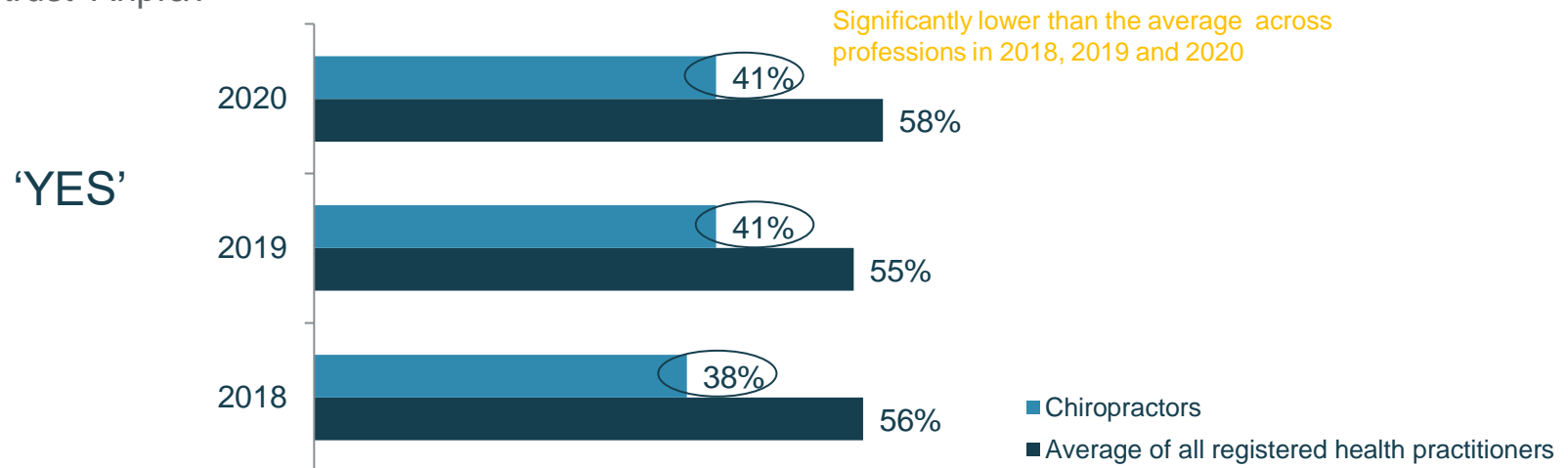
Orange indicates a result significantly lower result compared with the previous year.

Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among chiropractors

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 chiropractors

Indicators of trust: 44% trust Ahpra

The are the regulatory body that represents the interests of the public.

They perform a necessary task efficiently.

I have no reason not to trust them.

Most of the bad health care providers i know have been deregistered.

It sets a standard nationally that all 15 sub boards must adhere to. It creates consistency in health.

I trust Ahpra because they act in accordance with law.

I trust them in hopes they make sound objective decisions to help the public and practitioners.

They take complaints seriously and I believe that they do a thorough job in investigations.

Every profession needs regulation which controls the quality of the profession. Various news articles indicate that this is working. Over time and through various actions trust is developed.

They are part of a responsible government. Are committed to safe and effective treatment practices. Recognise our individual methods of treatment.

Barriers to trust: 24% DO NOT trust Ahpra

Being a large, government department - often leads to dubious at best and corruption at worse policies influenced by lobbyists.

They support the public view, which is often misguided by people who dislike certain professions.

They are not proactive when it comes to medical professionals attacking allied health.

They don't have the chiropractors' best interest.

Their narrative is based on the medical model of health rather than wholistic health. It stifles chiropractors and the full spectrograph care we are qualified to give.

I feel it is very medically controlled and decisions can be made from a one-sided perspective taking away some freedoms from the public to choose what is right for them.

They respond far too obligingly to "complaints" that are obviously from bodies that have a vested interest in damaging chiropractors and the chiropractic profession.

Not particularly transparent, largely unapproachable, little easily available information.

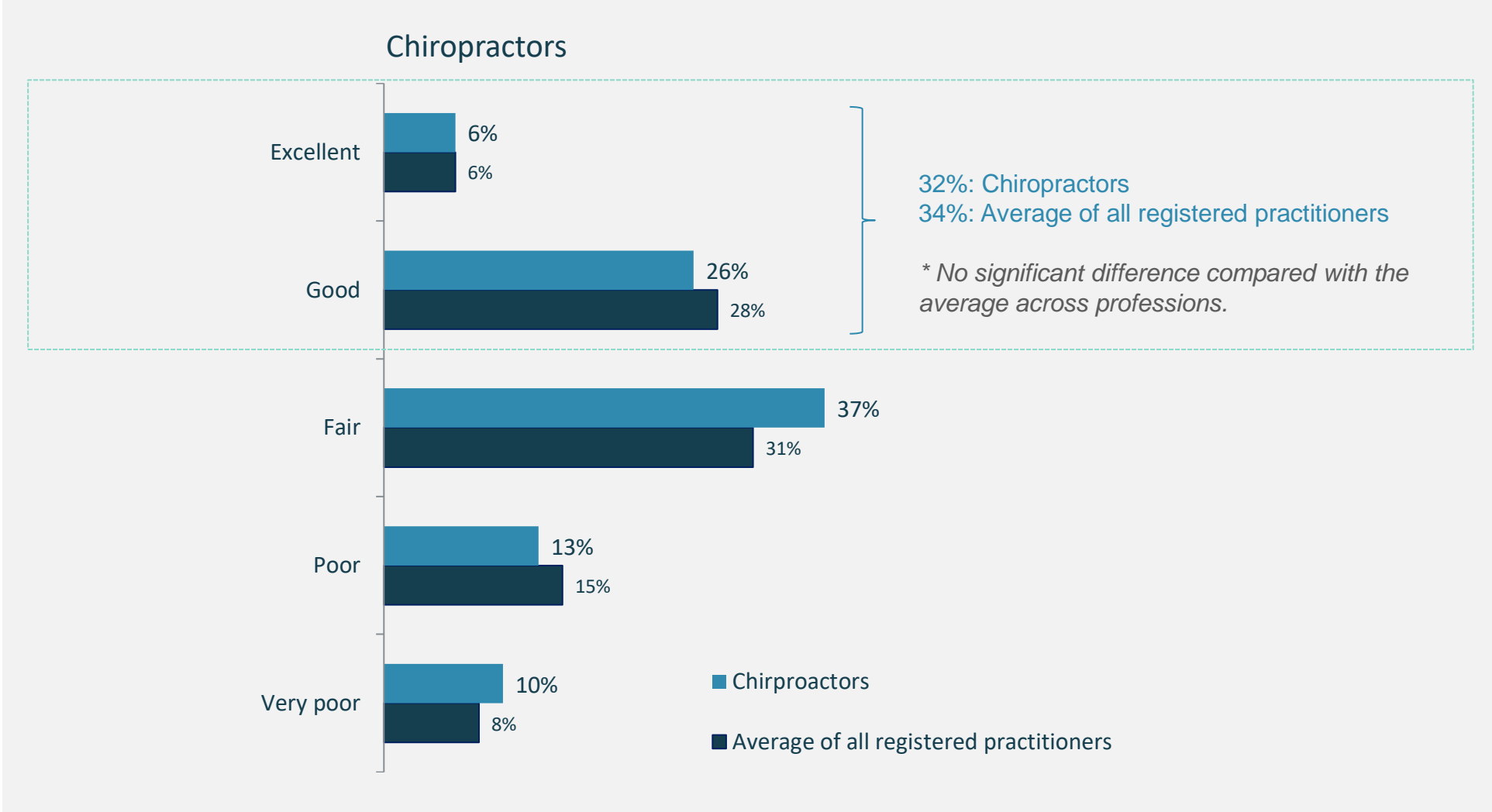
They are far too adversarial in their approach.

Not consistent with policies, favors certain professions.

Full list of responses provided separately

Assessment of the level of support provided to practitioners from Ahpra and National Boards to maintain their professional practice

Q. How would you rate the level of support provided by National Boards and Ahpra for you to maintain or improve your professional practice?



Additional activities or support practitioners would have liked to see from Ahpra and/or the National Boards during the pandemic

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).

Greater defense of allied health practitioner's 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.

Cancel their fees for a start.

Clear one-page summaries of guidelines to implement in practice instead of expecting practitioners to read hundreds of pages. Directly email practitioners with guidelines and changes before we hear about it on the news if we even manage to watch it. Don't expect associations to contact registered healthcare providers. Ahpra should directly email summaries to practitioners based on their registered practice address that are applicable to them.

Guidance around how to support our workers and encourage good immune function.

More advocacy to the government of the role we can play and support.

Allowing retired practitioners to continue involvement in education and external seminar based professional development.

I received so little information from the above and when there was, it was contradictory. I did not feel supported sorting through the daily DHHS guidelines to practice/infection control etc. Any information would have been great.

More communication would have been great other than just hearing about changes through our associations.

Communication about clinical hours and CPD requirements to keep current registration. Have they changed.

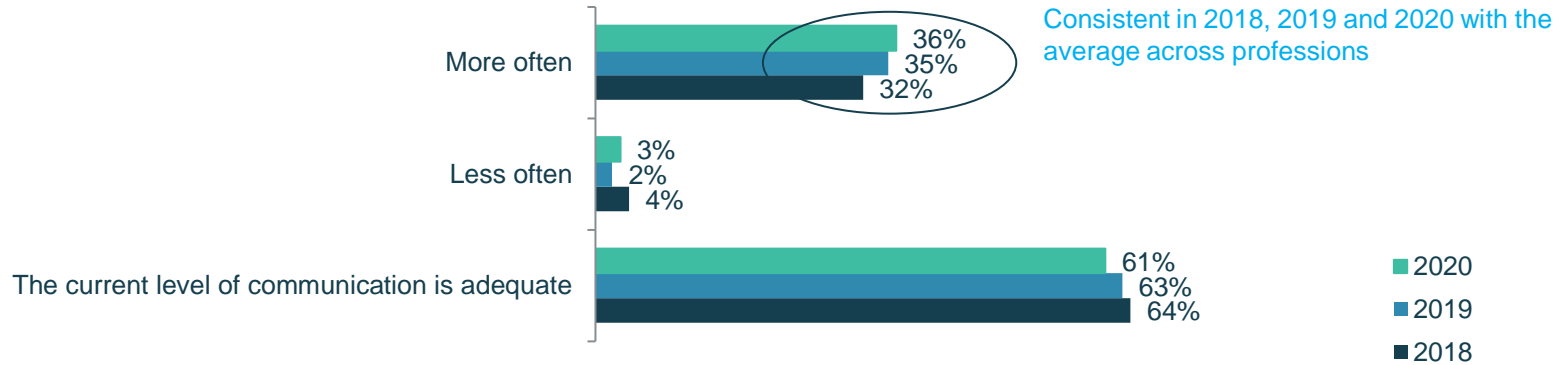
Advocacy to the Government (particularly the Victorian State Government) that health care practitioner visits, treatments, modalities (etc. etc.) are more important than the risk of infection of Covid 19 and the risk of death from Covid 19 or complications of Covid 19. This aspect on behalf of our country's health has been hugely disappointing!

Supporting practitioners' rights to continue to practice and provide the public with care.

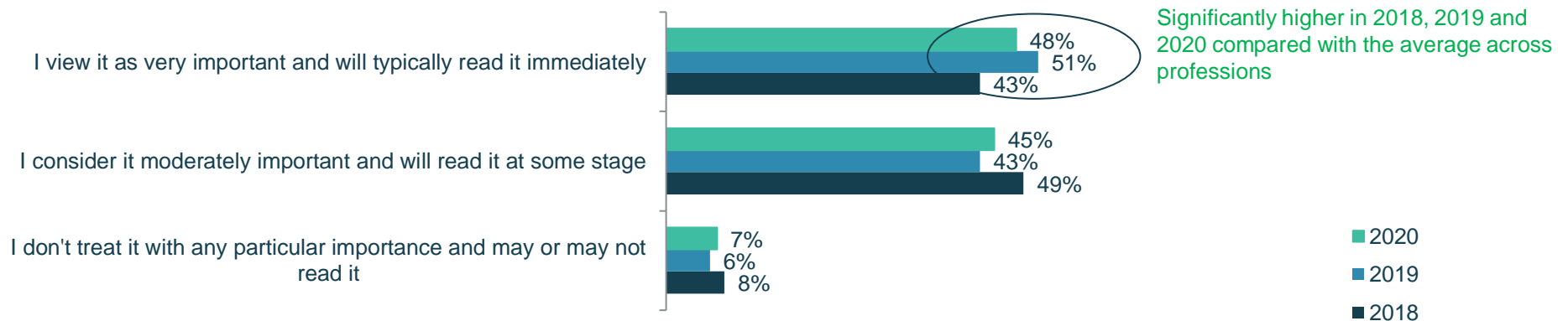
I feel a very relaxed approach to CPD for this year is appropriate. It has been a most challenging time surviving, adapting and implementing changes in clinic and at home so CPD standards (which I feel are important) have taken a back seat to the continuous challenges Covid 19 has presented.

Response to communication by the Chiropractic Board of Australia

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



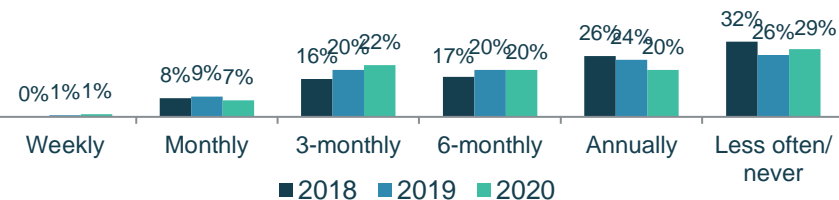
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

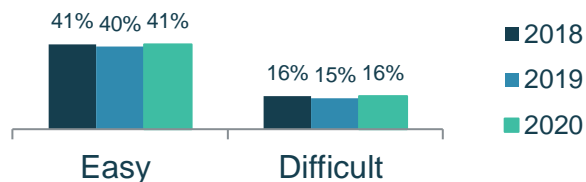
Use of the Chiropractic Board of Australia website

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



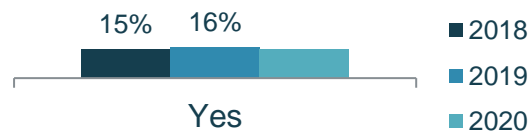
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this Board

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



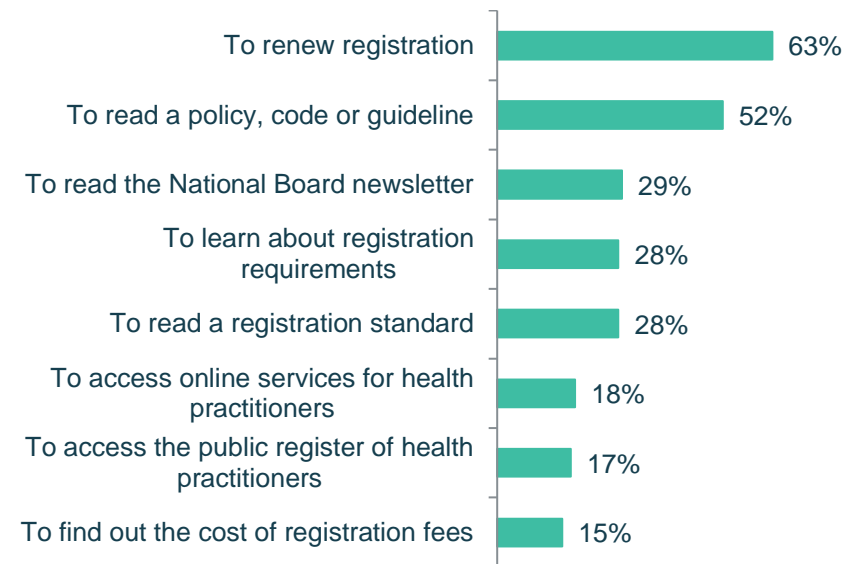
Base: Practitioners who have visited that Board's website

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)...

- Clear advice on advertising without having to contact a lawyer.
- Clarity around advertising guidelines.
- What CPD requirements are during COVID.
- Clinical information.
- Info about selling/buying practices.
- Maternity leave.

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