

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 Chinese Medicine 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 **Chinese Medicine 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

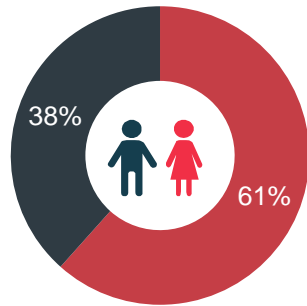
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community.
- The 2020 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 and 2019 questionnaires, with two additional questions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider. Quotas were placed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

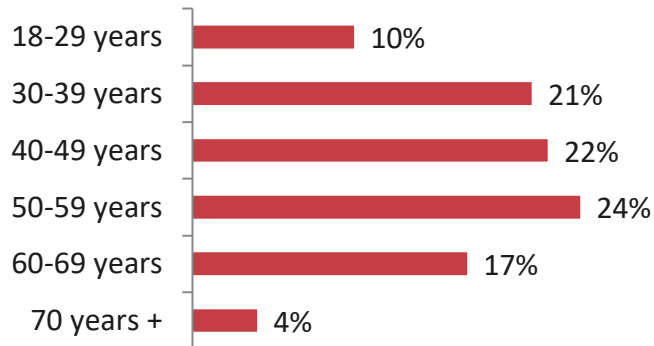


2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

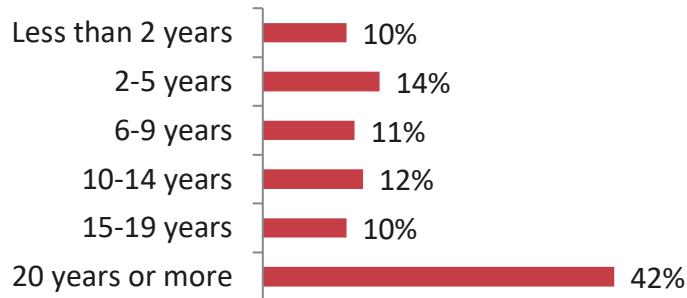
Gender



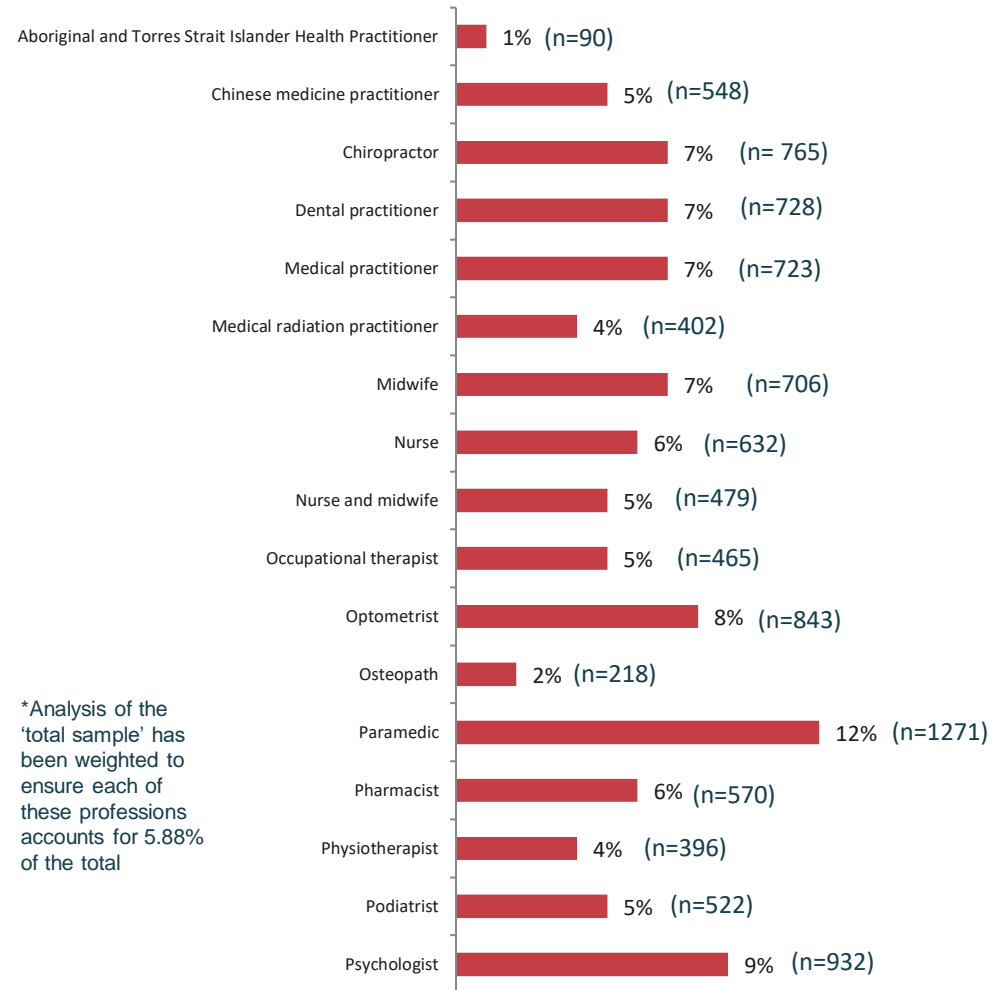
Age



Years in practice



Practitioner type*

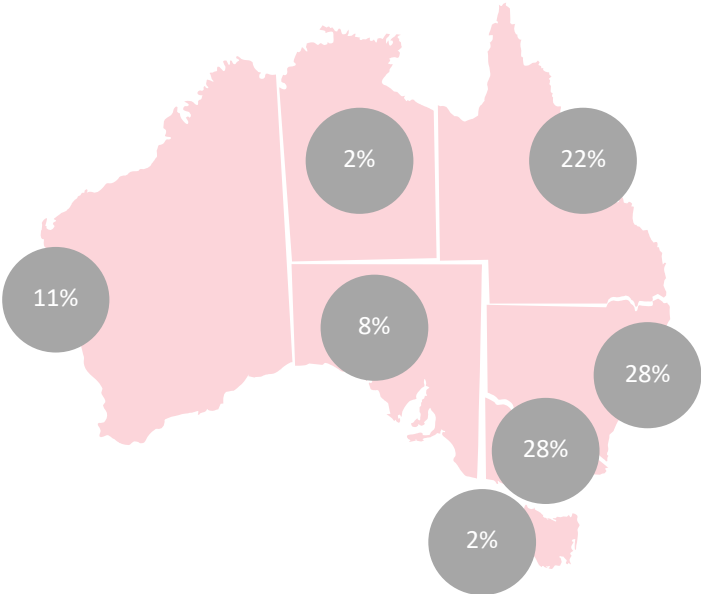


*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

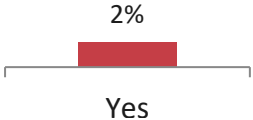
2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

Location

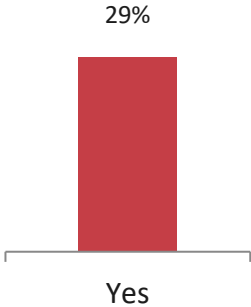


Metro: **63%**
Regional: **30%**
Rural: **7%**

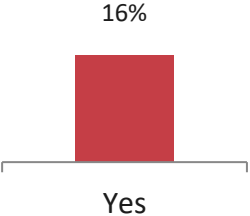
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



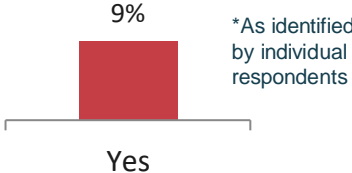
% who were born in a country other than Australia



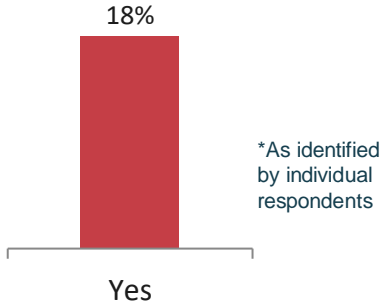
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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*

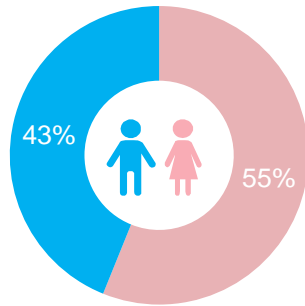


Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners

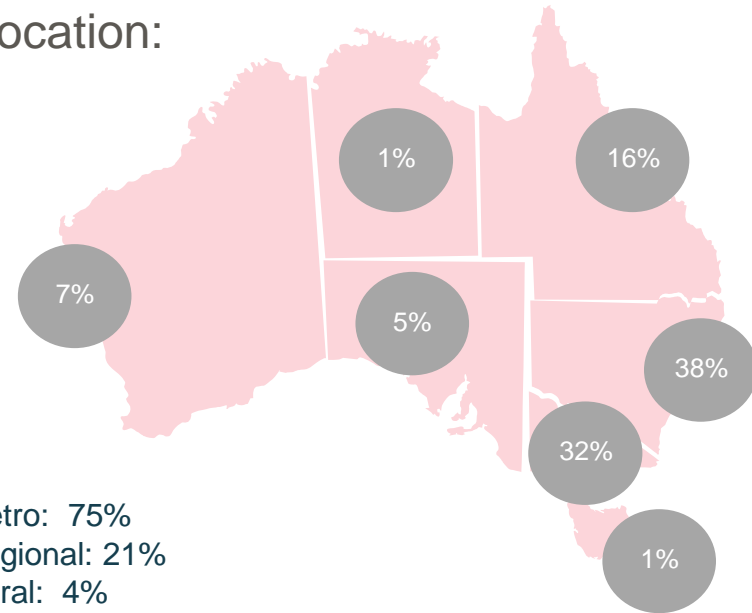
Specific insights into the responses from:
Chinese medicine practitioners

2020 sample of Chinese medicine practitioners (n=548)

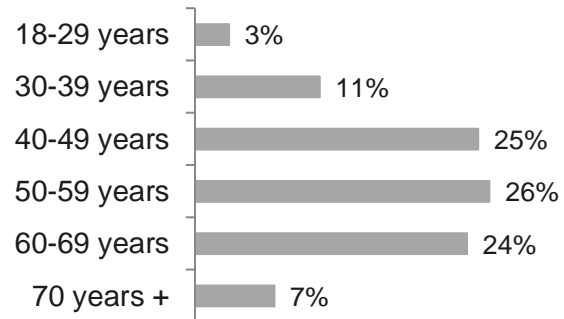
Gender:



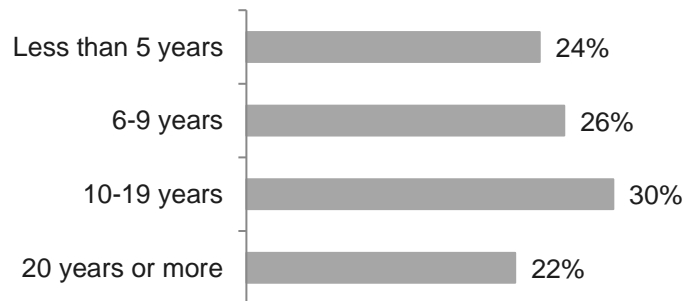
Location:



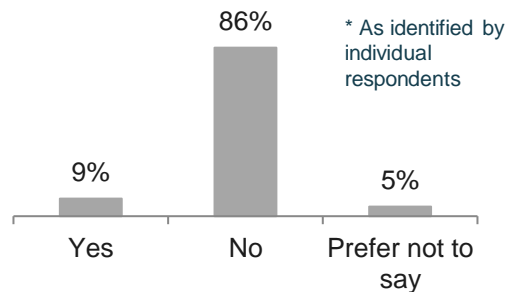
Age:



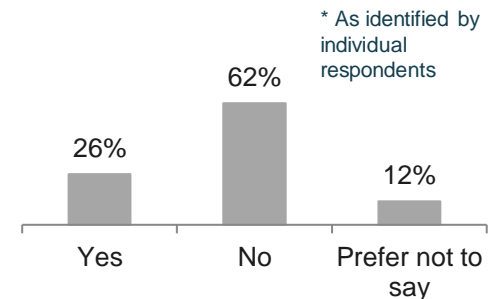
Years in practice:



% 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 Chinese medicine profession among practitioners

(Top 20 associations)

Q. Which of the following words do you strongly associate with your profession?

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board (n=548)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	43%	(-3%)
Knowledgable	32%	(+2%)
Caring	28%	(-%)
Compassionate	19%	(-4%)
Responsible	19%	(-%)
Dedicated	19%	(-2%)
Hard-working	17%	(-12%)
Committed	16%	(-1%)
Competent	16%	(-4%)
Passionate	14%	(-%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Empathetic	14%	(-6%)
Trusted	14%	(-9%)
Respected	14%	(-6%)
Independent	14%	(+8%)
Open-minded	13%	(+8%)
Community minded	12%	(-3%)
Nurturing	10%	(+5%)
Efficient	9%	(+4%)
Honest	8%	(-1%)
Approachable	7%	(-5%)

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 Chinese medicine 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=428	2020 N=548
Professional	44%	43%
Knowledgeable	30%	32%
Caring	29%	28%
Compassionate	22%	19%
Responsible	21%	19%
Dedicated	16%	19%
Hard-working	14%	17%
Committed	18%	16%
Competent	14%	16%
Passionate	19%	14%

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=428	2020 N=548
Empathetic	16%	14%
Trusted	14%	14%
Respected	10%	14%
Independent	10%	14%
Open-minded	14%	13%
Community minded	8%	12%
Nurturing	13%	10%
Efficient	11%	9%
Honest	10%	8%
Approachable	9%	7%

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

Orange indicates a result significantly lower result compared with the 2019 result

2020: Perceptions of the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (Top 20 associations)

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

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board (n=548)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	33%	(-5%)
Administrators	30%	(-3%)
For the public	30%	(+9%)
Bureaucratic	28%	(-3%)
For practitioners	22%	(-9%)
Necessary	22%	(-9%)
Poor communicators	15%	(+6%)
Supportive	14%	(-1%)
Controlling	14%	(+6%)
Decision-makers	14%	(-9%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Helpful	13%	(+2%)
Out of touch	13%	(-3%)
Good communicators	11%	(-)
Rigid	11%	(-2%)
Competent	11%	(-4%)
Fair	9%	(-1%)
Trustworthy	9%	(-2%)
Accessible	9%	(-2%)
Shows leadership	9%	(-4%)
Advocates	9%	(-8%)

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 Chinese Medicine Board of Australia

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

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

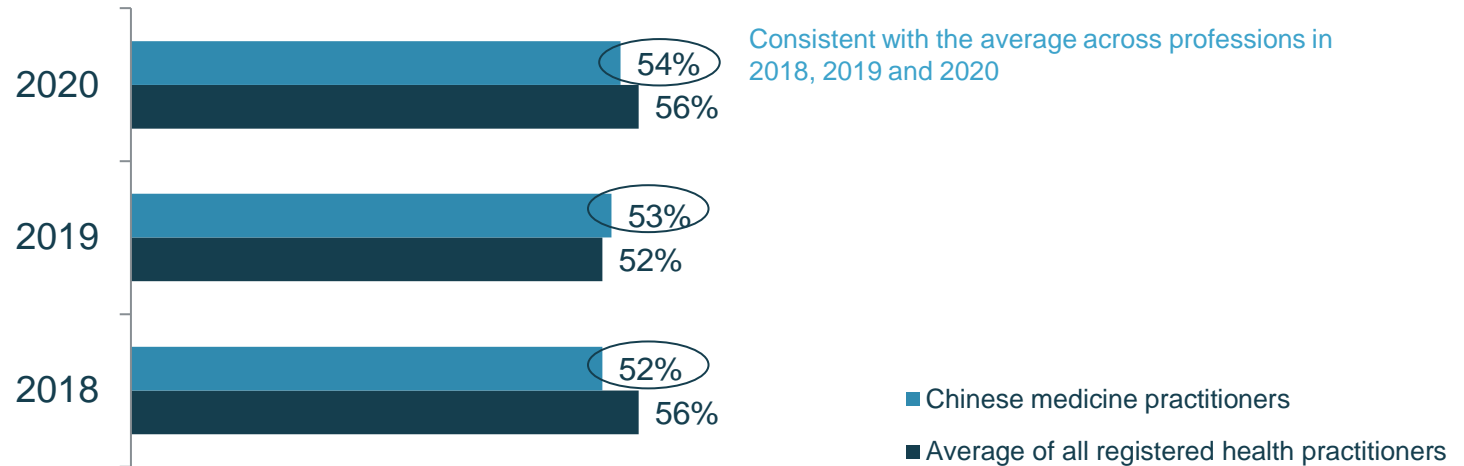
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=325	2019 N=428	2020 N=548	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=325	2019 N=428	2020 N=548
Regulators	36%	35%	33%	Helpful	14%	15%	13%
Administrators	34%	31%	30%	Out of touch	17%	14%	13%
For the public	30%	30%	30%	Good communicators	11%	14%	11%
Bureaucratic	27%	29%	28%	Rigid	12%	12%	11%
For practitioners	26%	24%	22%	Competent	13%	11%	11%
Necessary	25%	21%	22%	Fair	10%	11%	9%
Poor communicators	17%	12%	15%	Trustworthy	12%	8%	9%
Supportive	11%	16%	14%	Accessible	9%	8%	9%
Controlling	17%	15%	14%	Shows leadership	8%	9%	9%
Decision-makers	19%	14%	14%	Advocates	12%	9%	9%

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

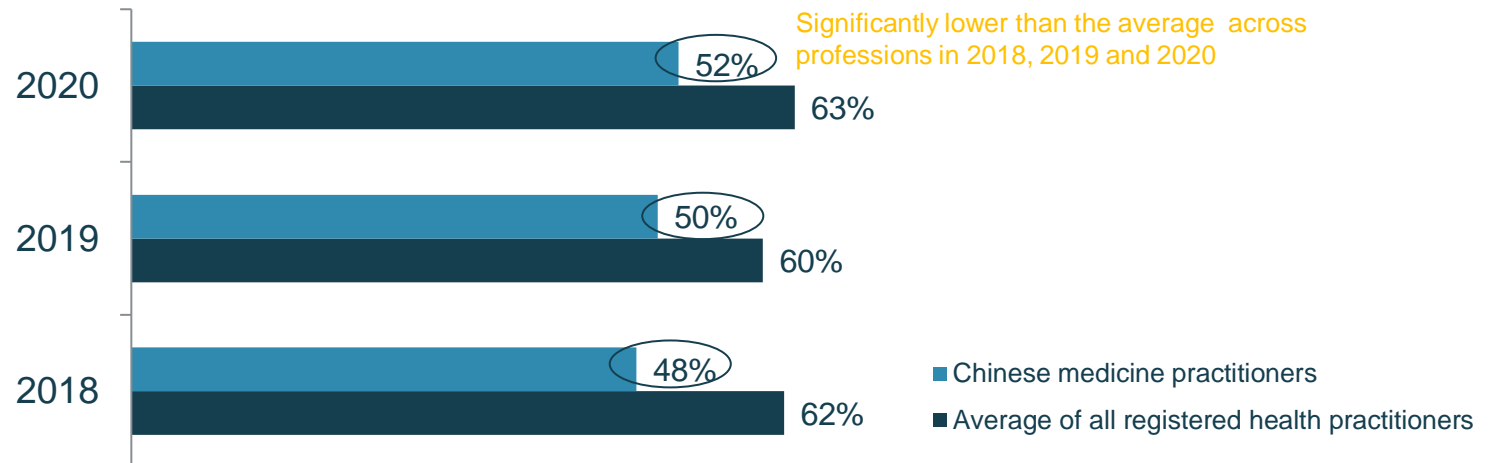
Orange indicates a result significantly lower compared with the previous year.

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

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



Q. Do you trust your National Board?



Indicators of trust and barriers to trust in the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia

Indicators of trust: 52% trust the Board

Seem to be doing good work in managing professional issues.

They have a management system to discipline each practitioner.

Because of my dealings with them in the past, they want practitioners to do well in our industry.

Its members are open minded educated folks that have a solid understanding of Chinese Medicine and its potential.

Because it's made up of Chinese Medicine practitioners who want the best for our industry.

Fairness in dealing with matters and assistance in the process of explanation.

I trust them to have in place the standards in which every practitioner should be operating at. I trust the board to support myself as a practitioner and to ensure the future of our profession.

They are a regulatory body with a board of peers, that I trust to ensure the protection, safety and progress of both practitioners and the public.

Overall they appear to be engaged in issues that are relevant to the public.

Barriers to trust: 16% DO NOT trust the Board

I am unsure of their record of protecting practitioners and supporting them with conflict.

They are only interested in supporting the public. Practitioners are left to try figure out unclear guidelines. Especially what can be mentioned in regard to conditions. The examples cite no research and our ambiguous.

I don't think it's doing enough to protect our profession against dry needlers.

Due to their link with governmental bodies and their underlying interests of Chinese medicine being to not promote it as the medical system it was and could still be.

Did nothing to regulate "dry needling". It is not a good way to protect the public.

Bureaucratic, out of touch, political, unnecessary, centralised, expensive.

Their decisions are made without real consultation with Acupuncture organisations and real practicing therapists, but instead by academics and bureaucrats.

This is a difficult field to work in. Admin bodies only seem to make things more difficult for practitioners.

Full list of responses provided separately

2020: Perceptions of Ahpra among Chinese medicine practitioners (Top 20 associations)

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

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board (N=548)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	46%	(-7%)
For the public	34%	(+1%)
Bureaucratic	39%	(+3%)
Administrators	39%	(-10%)
Necessary	22%	(-14%)
Controlling	26%	(+12%)
Decision-makers	18%	(-5%)
For practitioners	16%	(-12%)
Rigid	18%	(+3%)
Intimidating	20%	(+5%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Out of touch	16%	(+4%)
Poor communicators	14%	(+2%)
Supportive	10%	(+2%)
Helpful	10%	(+2%)
Trustworthy	9%	(-1%)
Secretive	9%	(+2%)
Aloof	9%	(+2%)
Responsive	9%	(+1%)
Good communicators	7%	(-%)
Competent	7%	(-5%)

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 Chinese medicine practitioners

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

Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2018 N=325	2019 N=428	2020 N=548
Regulators	50%	44%	46%
For the public	43%	39%	34%
Bureaucratic	45%	37%	39%
Administrators	43%	36%	39%
Necessary	23%	25%	22%
Controlling	30%	24%	26%
Decision-makers	25%	19%	18%
For practitioners	16%	19%	16%
Rigid	23%	18%	18%
Intimidating	21%	18%	20%

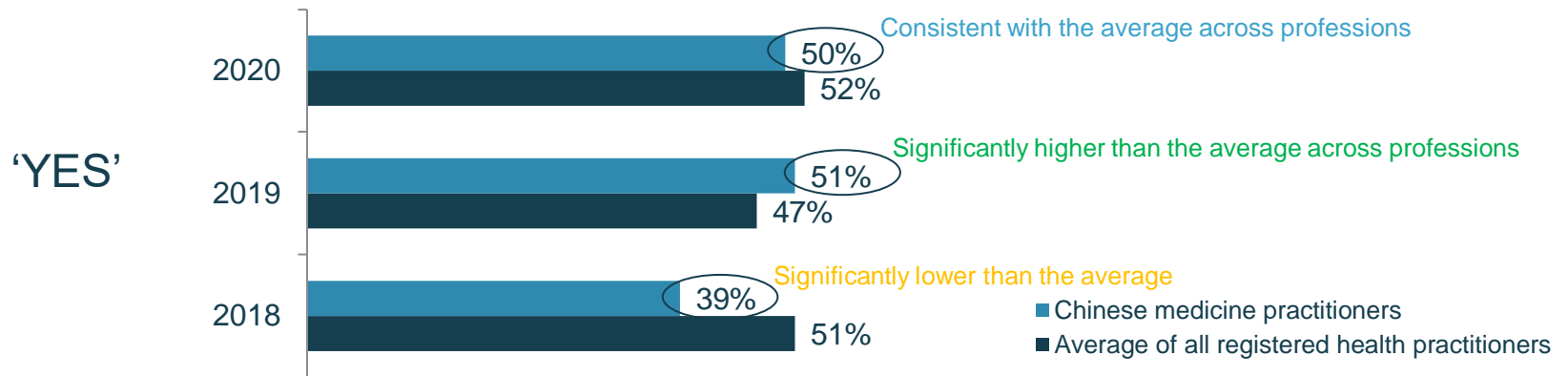
% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2018 N=325	2019 N=428	2020 N=548
Out of touch	23%	16%	16%
Poor communicators	22%	15%	14%
Supportive	6%	11%	10%
Helpful	10%	11%	10%
Trustworthy	8%	10%	9%
Secretive	12%	9%	9%
Aloof	11%	8%	9%
Responsive	6%	9%	9%
Good communicators	7%	10%	7%
Competent	8%	9%	7%

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

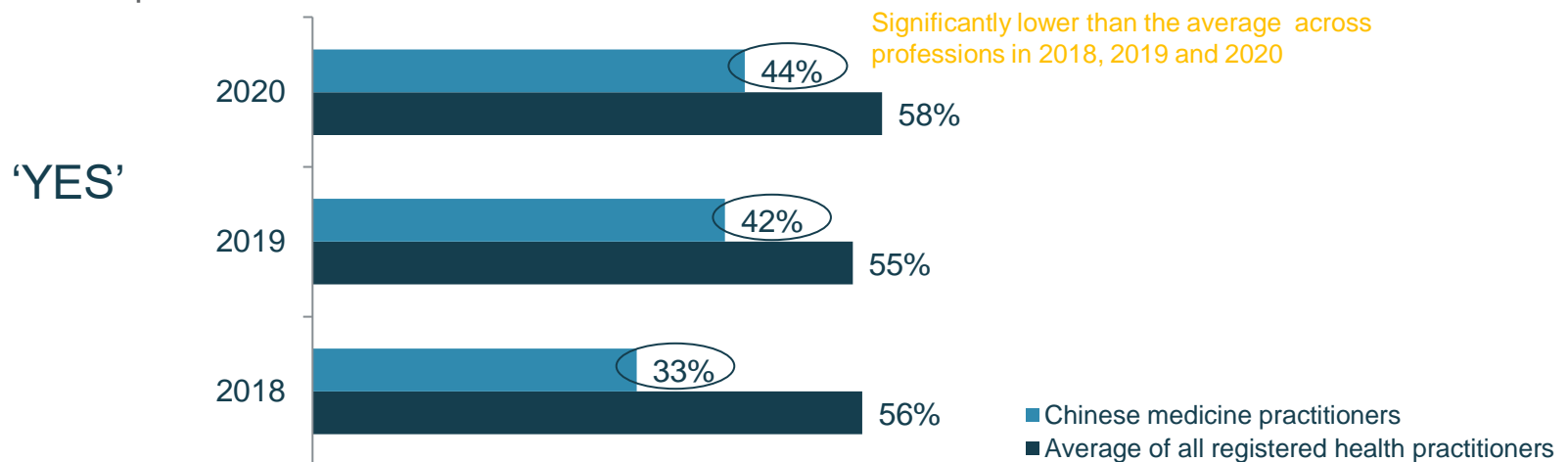
Orange indicates a result significantly lower compared with the previous year

Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among Chinese medicine practitioners

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



Q. Do you trust Ahpra?



What are the indicators of trust and barriers to trust in Ahpra among Chinese medicine practitioners

Indicators of trust: 44% trust Ahpra

Seem to be professionally run and managed.

Because it's an organisation that balance the public and the health practitioners.

Because so far, all my dealings with them have been pleasant.

Fairness in dealing with matters and assistance in the process of explanation.

They are the governing body of our industry, so I do hope they are advocating for both practitioner and the public.

I believe APHRA provides legitimacy to various healthcare practices. By overseeing these practices and providing a framework for safe and ethical practice the public can rest assured that their healthcare providers as suitably qualified and fulfil the requirements for continuing practice.

There has to be a body that manages particular areas so this is it and I could not imagine anyone would be untrustworthy.

Good communication - extensive consultation - transparency - responsive to queries.

They show leadership and good administration processes.

Because when I applied the registration, Ahpra have been give me a lot of help and assistance.

Barriers to trust: 23% DO NOT trust Ahpra

They seem to be unfairly influenced by certain people regarding Chinese medicine. Its not for public safety just a biased sector.

I don't feel they're doing enough to protect the public. i.e. dry needling by minimally and unregulated parties.

This organisation is full of lawyers that do not understand the health industry, they are excessively focused on control. Because of their legal background they are predisposed to adversarial interaction with health providers.

They are only interested in protecting the public. Practitioners are forced to pay Ahpra to protect the public and we have very few rights. There is no agreement in place with Ahpra. Ahpra hide behind National Law. They do what they want.

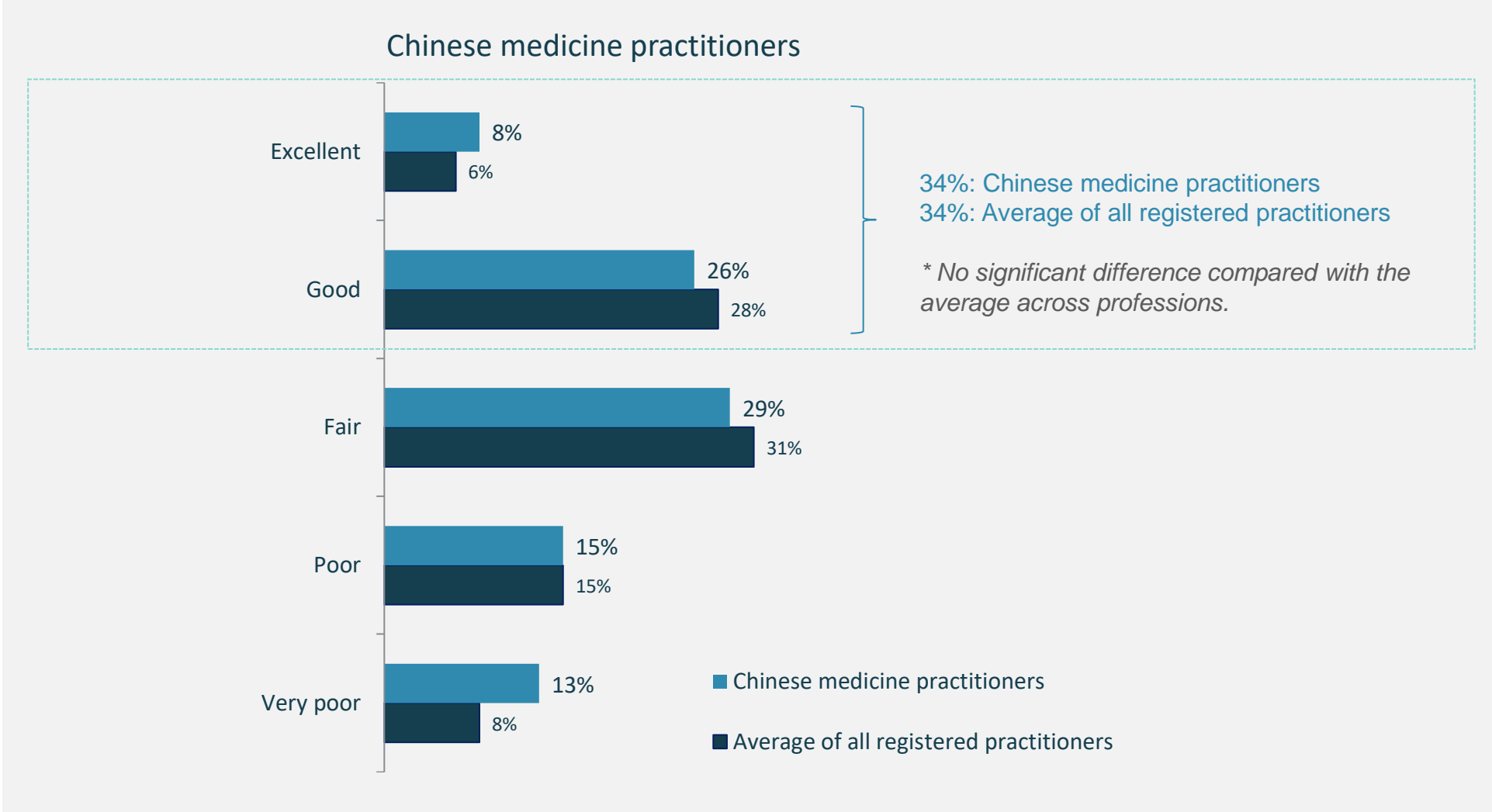
They seem to prioritise politically advantageous relationships rather than taking action that would actually result in the public being safer. They investigate and penalise the wrong practitioners, letting bad practitioners slip under the radar.

I don't trust any government regulated body that does not have the interests of the people at heart i.e. any government.

They are not solving the dry needling issue, which allows inexperienced practitioners doing harmful needling on the ill-informed public, causing public health hazard.

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).

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.

I would have liked information from boards on interpretation from DHHS guidelines and how they affected our practice. Chinese Medicine is not classified allied health care, so we have not been given any clear guidelines via DHHS during restrictions in metro-Melbourne. Associations gave guidelines but did not seek legal advice, just interpreted the guidelines themselves. Leaving many practitioners open to interpretation or seeking their own legal advice. AHPRA / Boards have given flexibility on CPD points, but health funds are currently not accepting this, which leaves Melbourne practitioners potentially bumped off health fund claiming lists.

Faster communication rather than finding out what is going on from my association first.

Supportive contact for businesses that have been hit hard by Covid and racism and some contact to ask how they may help. We are throwing away thousands of dollars of herbs and being attacked by racists. We were told AHPRA they are an authority to punish us not an association to support us.

No payments for members this year especially to those whose businesses have closed due to COVID. I can't afford membership this year as my clinic has closed due to the pandemic.

Advice or information about the specific heightened infection control procedures that Acupuncturists should be following during the pandemic.

More direction. More information. Regular updates. IT felt that as practitioners we were left to find our own way. Not really supported or with much direction.

Better communication on pandemic response. Only found out through my association.

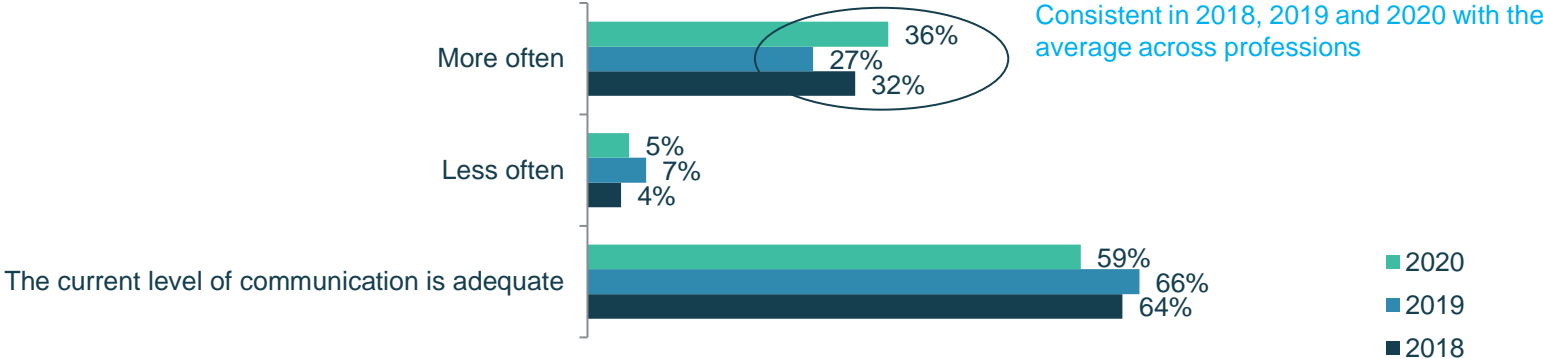
More communication (whether during a pandemic or not) communication is extremely sparse.

More leadership over whether or not Victorian practitioners can actually practice during Covid. DHHS communications are very confusing.

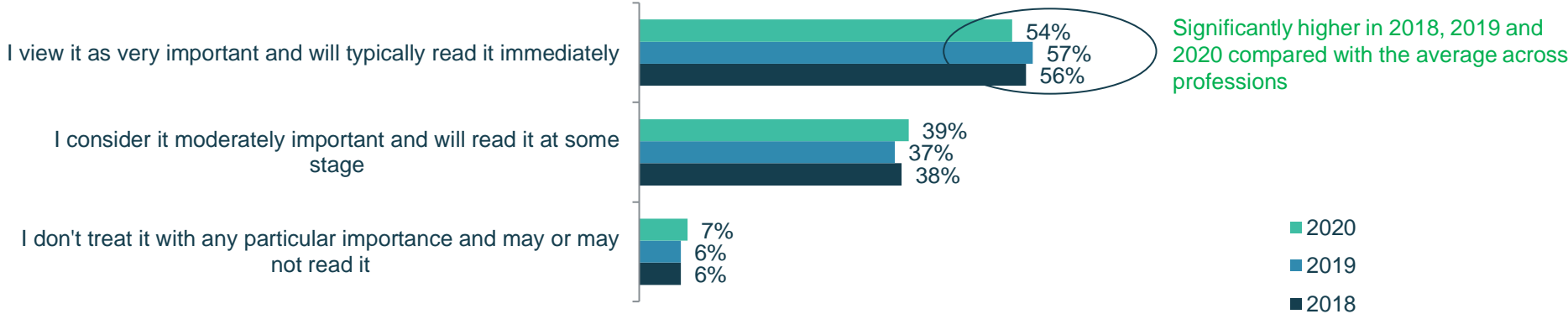
Clear, concise information specific to our profession. How, when, and where we can practice. Clarification on why we keep being referred to as allied health when we don't reap the benefits of this title.

Response to communication by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia

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



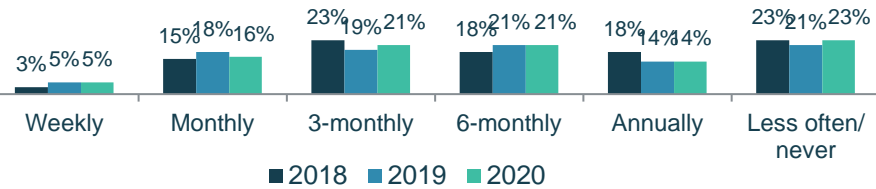
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

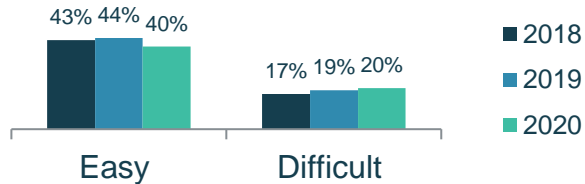
Use of the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia website

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



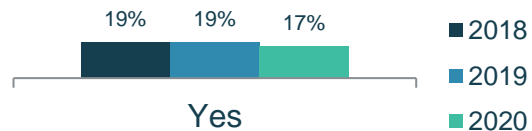
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this Board

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



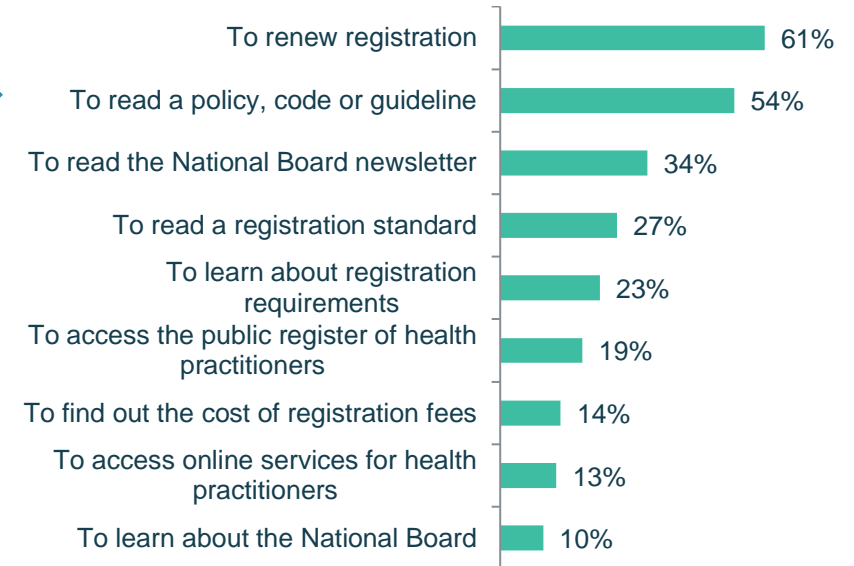
Base: Practitioners who have visited that Board's website

Q. Is there any information you have looked for on the website of (National Board) but not been able to find?



Base: People who have visited that Board's website

2020: Reasons for visiting the National Board website



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

- Details on "Informed Consent".
- First aid requirement specifications.
- Examples of allowed advertising.
- Specific cleaning standards for cupping.
- Information about the requirements for practising during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Simple forms to use around COVID.

Contact details

Truly Deeply
18 Market St
South Melbourne
VIC 3205
(03) 9693 0000

For further information please contact:

Michael Hughes
Managing Partner
michael@trulydeeply.com.au

Jane Briggs
Research Director
jane@trulydeeply.com.au

Truly Deeply