

# 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 Osteopathy 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.

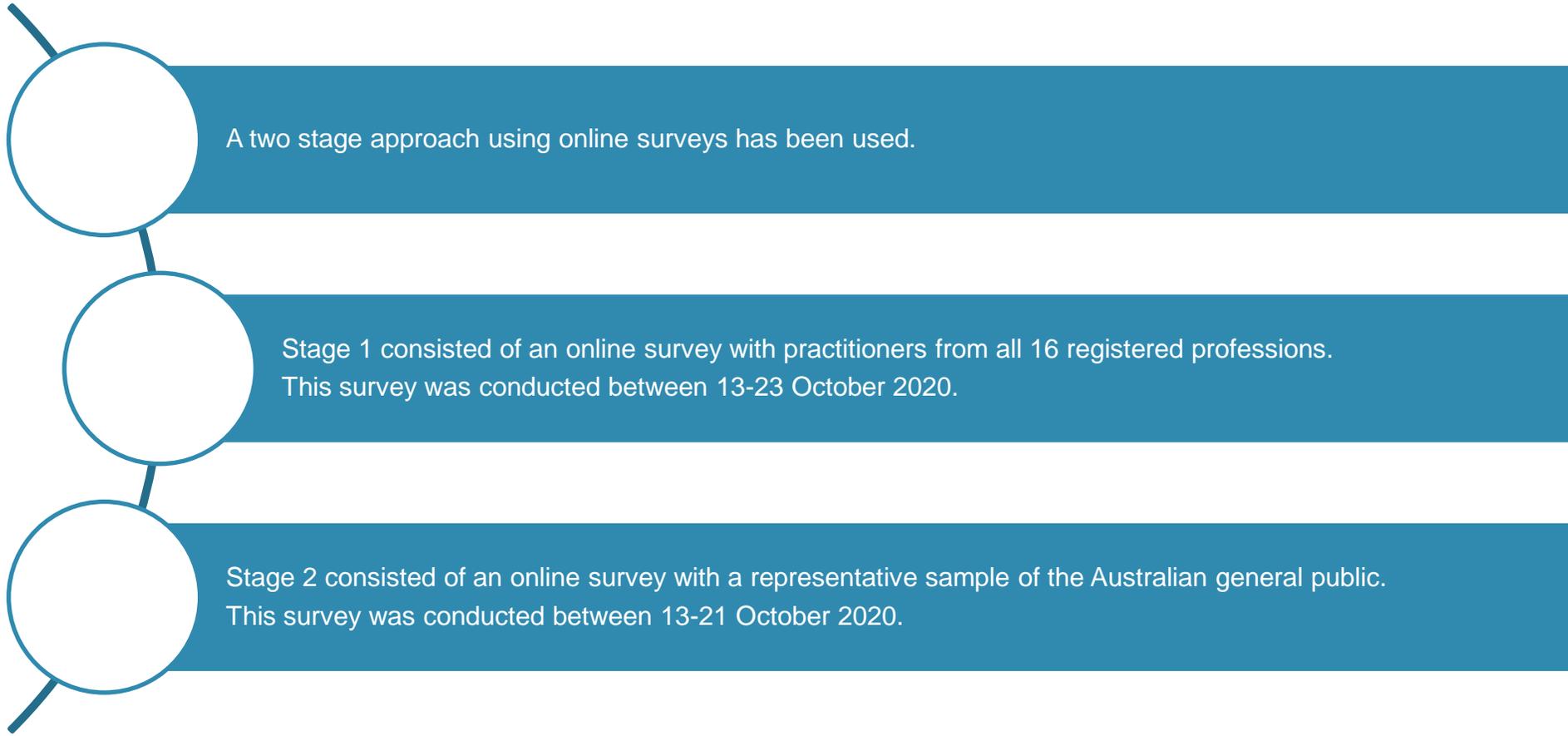
Given the value of the insights delivered through the 2018 benchmark study to Ahpra and National Boards, the decision was taken to update the quantitative measures by conducting the online survey with practitioners and the general public in November 2019 and most recently in October 2020.

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 **Osteopathy Board of Australia**.

# An overview of the methodology

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A two stage approach using online surveys has been used.

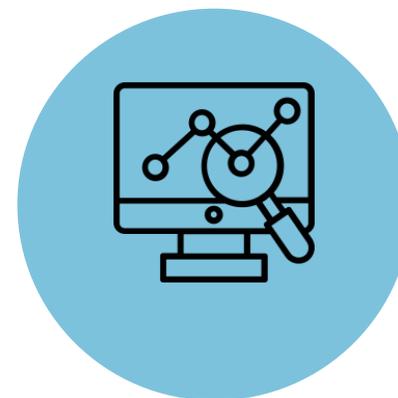
Stage 1 consisted of an online survey with practitioners from all 16 registered professions.  
This survey was conducted between 13-23 October 2020.

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

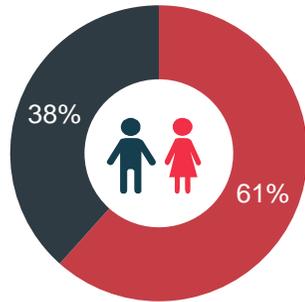
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community.
- The 2020 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 and 2019 questionnaires, with two additional questions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider. Quotas were placed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

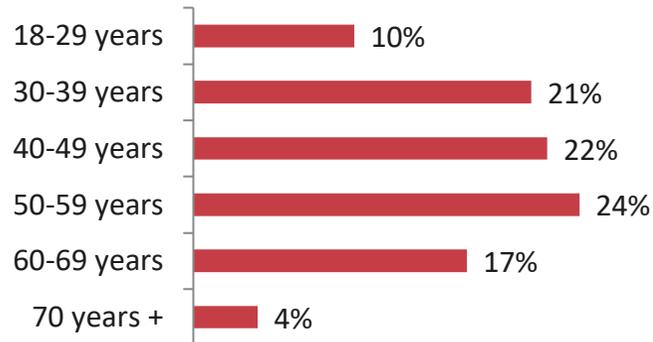


# 2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

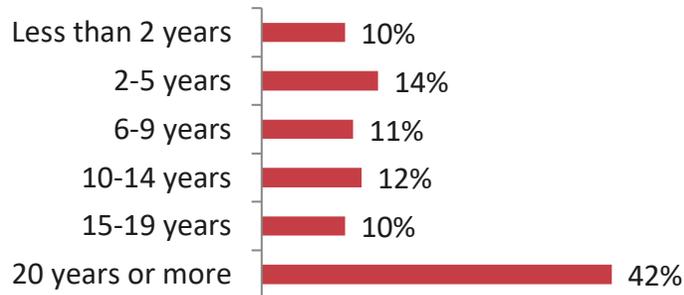
## Gender



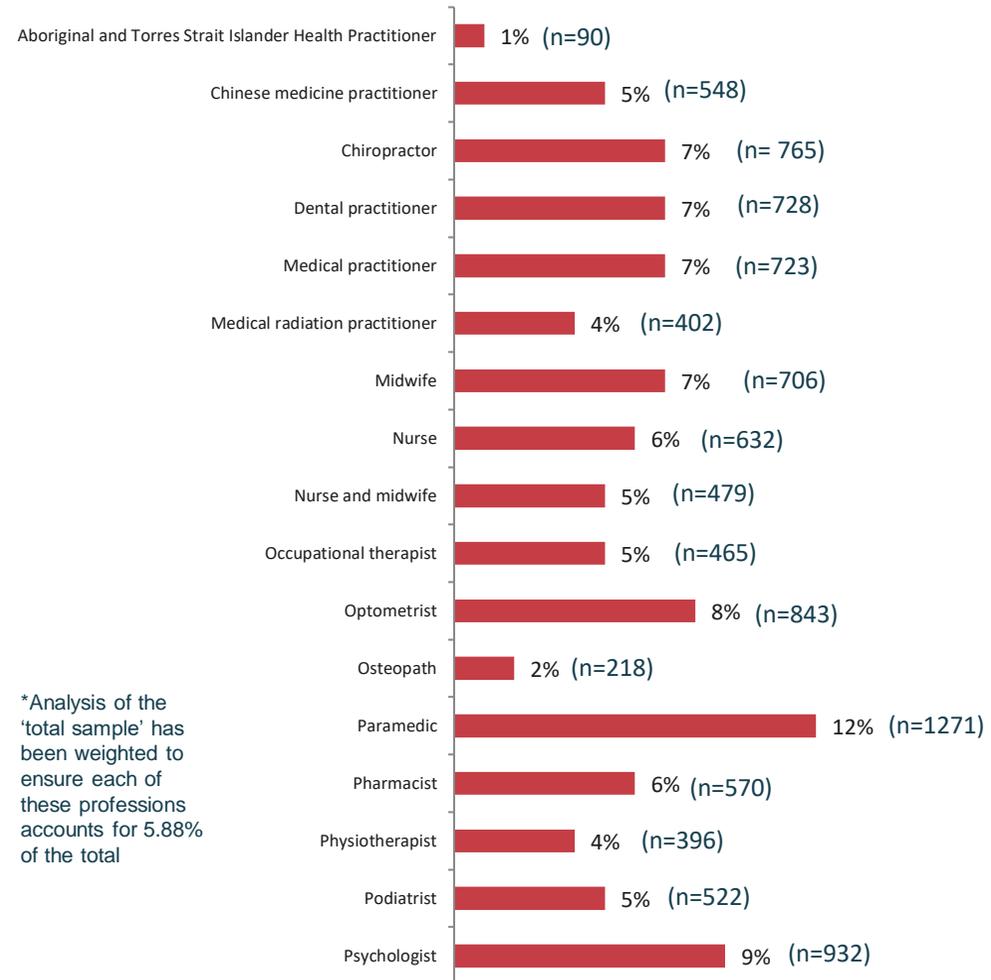
## Age



## Years in practice



## Practitioner type\*

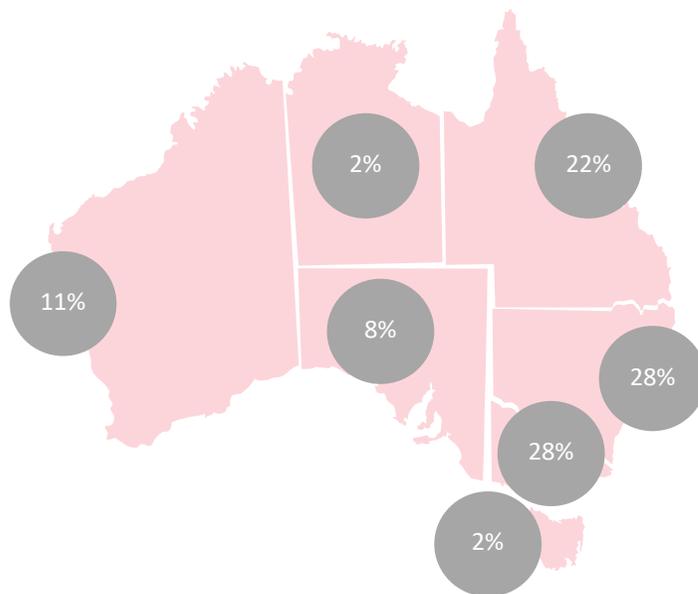


\*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

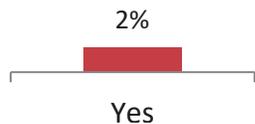
# 2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

## Location

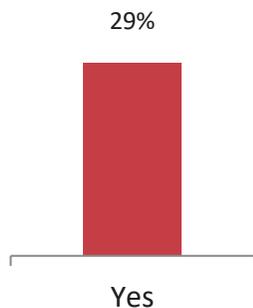


Metro: **63%**  
Regional: **30%**  
Rural: **7%**

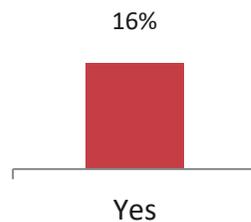
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



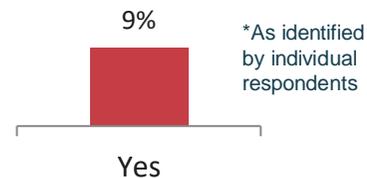
% who were born in a country other than Australia



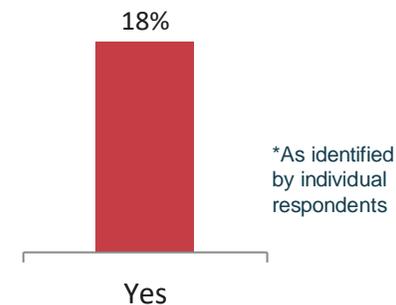
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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\*

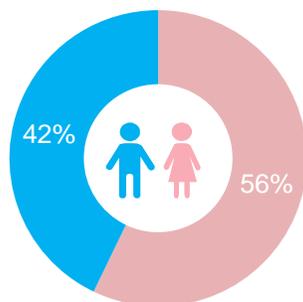


# Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners

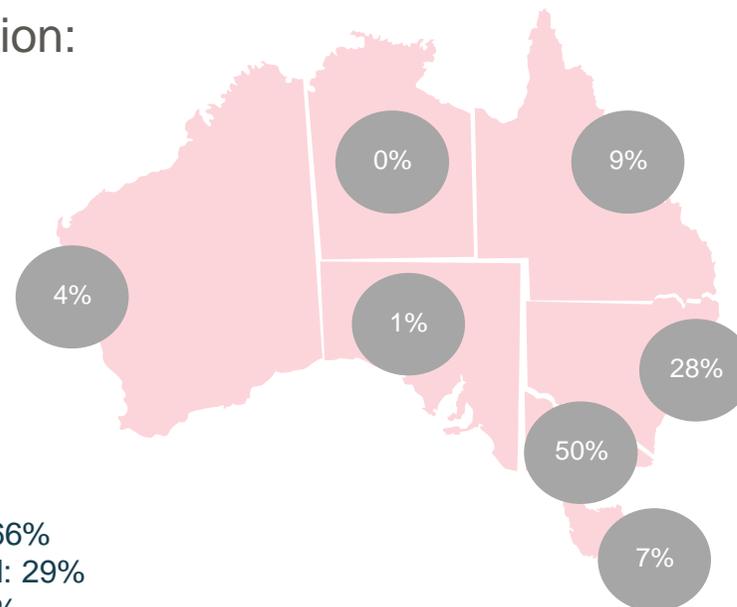
Specific insights into the responses from:  
**Osteopaths**

# Sample of osteopaths (n=218)

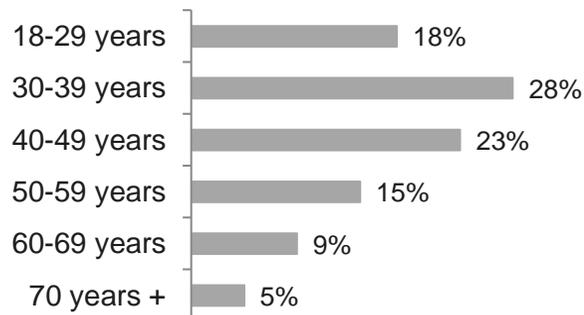
## Gender:



## Location:

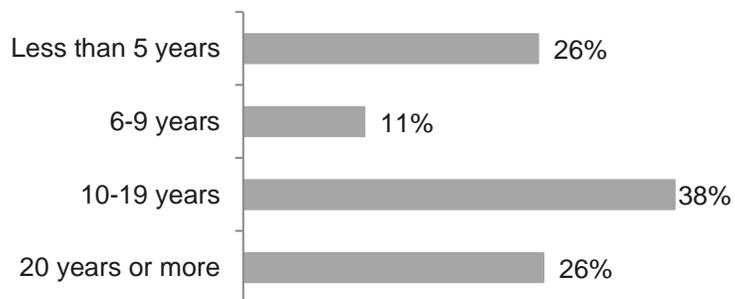


## Age:

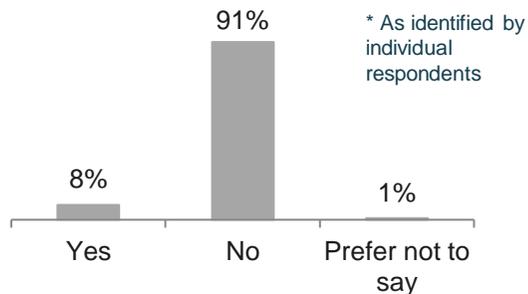


Metro: 66%  
Regional: 29%  
Rural: 5%

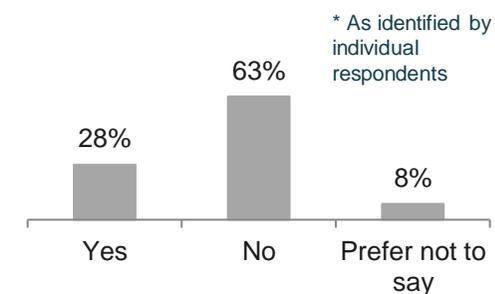
## Years in practice:



% 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 osteopathy 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=218)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	46%	(-)
Knowledgeable	42%	(+12%)
Caring	32%	(+5%)
Empathetic	30%	(+10%)
Hard working	26%	(-3%)
Dedicated	22%	(-)
Trusted	21%	(-2%)
Competent	21%	(-)
Passionate	20%	(+6%)
Compassionate	19%	(-4%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Committed	15%	(-2%)
Open-minded	15%	(+9%)
Respected	13%	(-6%)
Honest	13%	(+4%)
Responsible	12%	(-6%)
Approachable	10%	(-2%)
Community minded	10%	(-5%)
Independent	9%	(+2%)
Nurturing	9%	(+4%)
Reputable	9%	(-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 osteopathy profession among practitioners

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=122	2020 N=218
Professional	52%	46%
Knowledgeable	43%	42%
Caring	33%	32%
Empathetic	29%	30%
Hard working	23%	26%
Dedicated	19%	22%
Trusted	16%	21%
Competent	27%	21%
Passionate	21%	20%
Compassionate	27%	19%

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=122	2020 N=218
Committed	13%	15%
Open-minded	12%	15%
Respected	9%	13%
Honest	14%	13%
Responsible	14%	12%
Approachable	12%	10%
Community minded	10%	10%
Independent	17%	9%
Nurturing	13%	9%
Reputable	11%	9%

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

**Orange** indicates a result significantly lower result in 2020 compared with the 2019 result

## 2020: Perceptions of the Osteopathy 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=218)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Necessary	42%	(+11%)
For practitioners	37%	(+6%)
Regulators	34%	(-4%)
Administrators	31%	(-2%)
Advocates	28%	(+10%)
Supportive	26%	(+12%)
Competent	25%	(+10%)
For the public	23%	(+3%)
Good communicators	23%	(+13%)
Approachable	22%	(+11%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Decision-makers	22%	(-1%)
Shows leadership	21%	(+8%)
Fair	21%	(+10%)
Trustworthy	18%	(+7%)
Helpful	18%	(+7%)
Bureaucratic	17%	(-9%)
Accessible	16%	(+6%)
Responsive	14%	(+5%)
Honest	13%	(+7%)
Listens	10%	(+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 the Osteopathy 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=112	2019 N=122	2020 N=218
Necessary	43%	41%	42%
For practitioners	44%	35%	37%
Regulators	39%	41%	34%
Administrators	42%	40%	31%
Advocates	30%	22%	28%
Supportive	22%	29%	26%
Competent	25%	19%	25%
For the public	25%	27%	23%
Good communicators	21%	20%	23%
Approachable	17%	18%	22%

% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=112	2019 N=122	2020 N=218
Decision-makers	35%	28%	22%
Shows leadership	15%	13%	21%
Fair	13%	19%	21%
Trustworthy	20%	18%	18%
Helpful	23%	20%	18%
Bureaucratic	26%	25%	17%
Accessible	18%	16%	16%
Responsive	17%	18%	14%
Honest	10%	11%	13%
Listens	12%	9%	10%

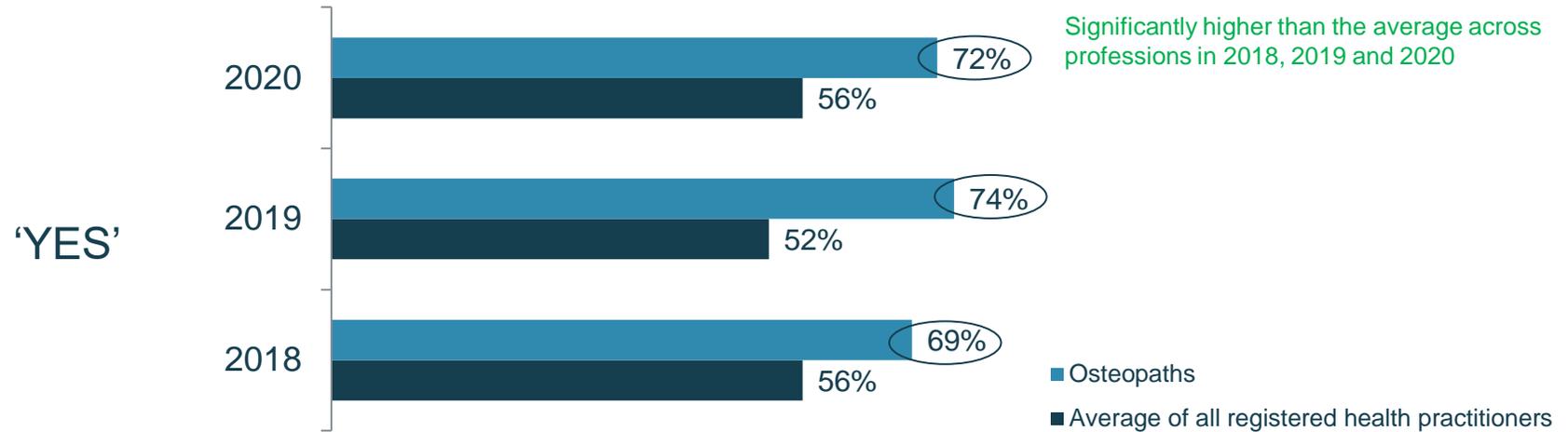
Green indicates a result significantly higher compared with the previous year.

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

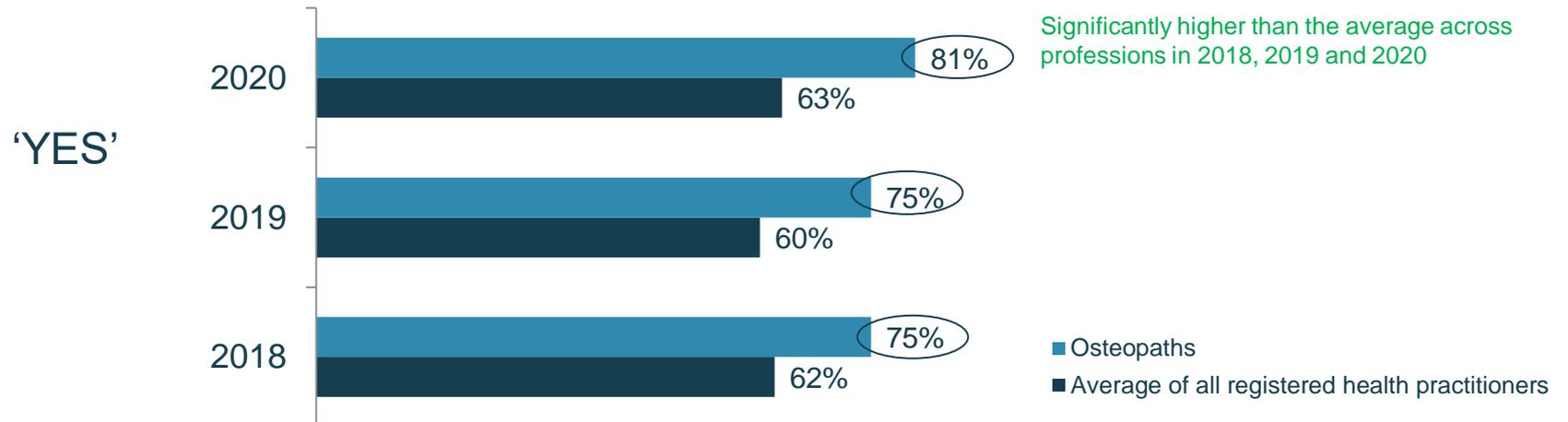
Note: There have been no significant changes in perceptions of the Board among osteopaths between 2018-2020

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

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



Q. Do you trust your National Board?



# The indicators of trust and barriers to trust in the Osteopathy Board of Australia

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## Indicators of trust: **81% trust the Board**

*The evidence I have shows the Board to be transparent in all its dealings. The individuals on the Board are known to be trustworthy, competent and capable board members, with osteopathy at the heart of their decision-making processes.*

*Advocates for the profession and maintain high professional standards.*

*Totally necessary and like any government body it needs to deliver for its clients. So far, I see no need to distrust the Board.*

*They have been excellent advocates and communicators during this pandemic and have made things for their members as transparent as possible.*

*They provide great courses and CPD and are great at providing information to keep you up to date with latest topics.*

*It is a Board that is accountable to both the public and to the Osteopathic profession. Members are chosen from experienced practitioners, who hopefully understand the issues of public safety and professional standards.*

*I have observed the Board take up the case against practitioners who have behaved poorly. I trust the Board to rein in poor behaviour.*

## Barriers to trust: **4% DO NOT trust the Board**

*The public need only one physical therapy profession and I believe the OBA should be working with the Physiotherapy Board of Australia to combine the two professions.*

*Failure to acknowledge and address the pressing concerns that implicate our profession now, and in the near future. Any concerns or complaints raised by members aren't taken seriously or followed up.*

# Full list of responses provided separately

## 2020: Perceptions of Ahpra among osteopaths (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=218)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	66%	(+13%)
Administrators	48%	(+3%)
For the public	45%	(+12%)
Necessary	44%	(+8%)
Bureaucratic	38%	(+1%)
For practitioners	28%	(-1%)
Decision-makers	27%	(+4%)
Rigid	17%	(+2%)
Intimidating	17%	(+2%)
Competent	16%	(+3%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Controlling	15%	(+1%)
Out of touch	13%	(+1%)
Trustworthy	12%	(+2%)
Accessible	12%	(+3%)
Responsive	11%	(+4%)
Poor communicators	11%	(-1%)
Fair	11%	(+1%)
Helpful	11%	(+3%)
Advocates	11%	(+1%)
Good communicators	10%	(+2%)

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

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

# Summary of changes 2018-20: Perceptions of Ahpra among osteopaths

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=112	2019 N=122	2020 N=218
Regulators	65%	66%	66%
Administrators	58%	49%	48%
For the public	46%	55%	45%
Necessary	40%	42%	44%
Bureaucratic	49%	48%	38%
For practitioners	29%	19%	28%
Decision-makers	33%	25%	27%
Rigid	22%	24%	17%
Intimidating	23%	21%	17%
Competent	12%	18%	16%

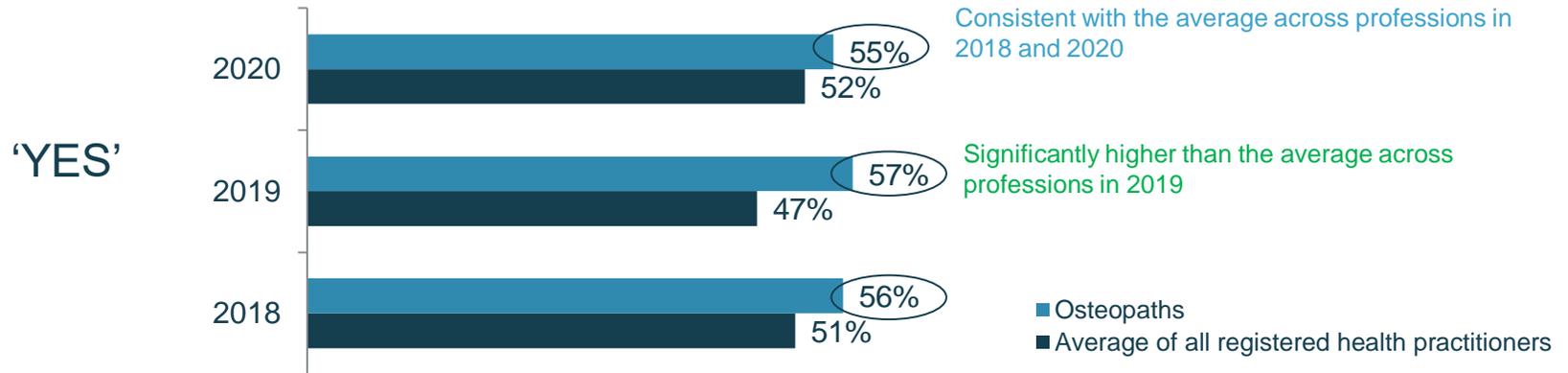
% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2018 N=112	2019 N=122	2020 N=218
Controlling	25%	12%	15%
Out of touch	14%	11%	13%
Trustworthy	11%	16%	12%
Accessible	10%	14%	12%
Responsive	9%	7%	11%
Poor communicators	15%	16%	11%
Fair	11%	15%	11%
Helpful	9%	13%	11%
Advocates	6%	9%	11%
Good communicators	9%	5%	10%

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

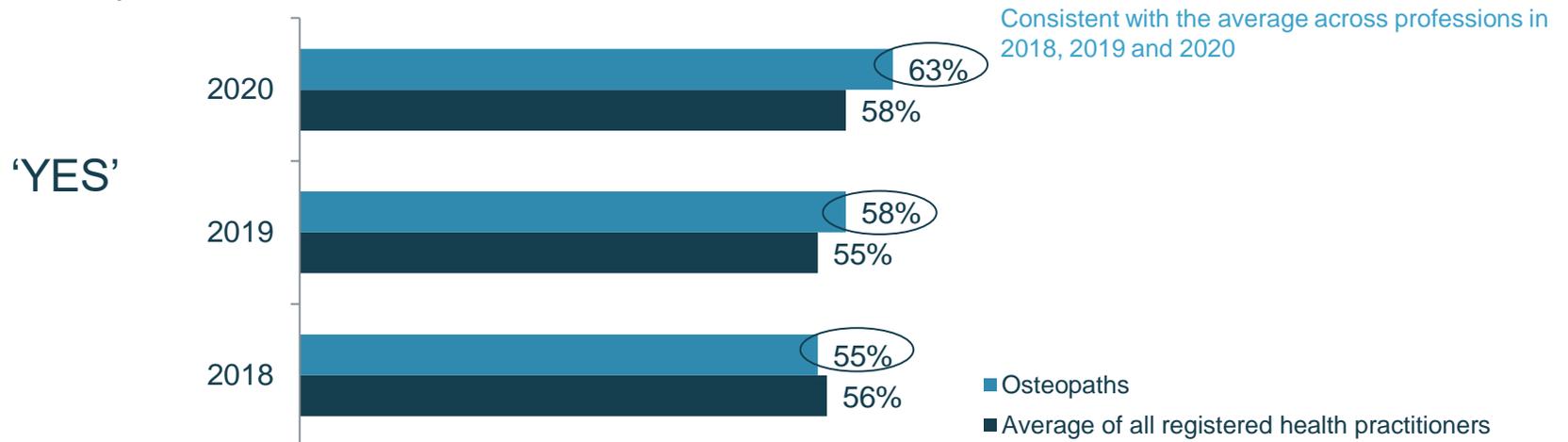
Note: There have been no significant changes in perceptions of Ahpra among osteopaths between 2019-2020.

# Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among osteopaths

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



Q. Do you trust Ahpra?



# The indicators of trust and barriers to trust in Ahpra among osteopaths

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## Indicators of trust: **63% trust Ahpra**

*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.*

*They are mandated by the national law to regulate the health professions within that framework.*

*I have not had personal dealings with Ahpra, but considering their consistency and thoroughness with policies, procedures and regulations, I would trust them.*

*Considering their primary priority is to protect the public, I am inclined to trust that the policies, procedures and guidelines they have created are necessary to promote public safety.*

*Ahpra has always been professional and works toward regulating those who don't follow the rules and mislead the public.*

*I believe Ahpra would clamp down very firmly indeed to protect the public from professional malpractice, and that is in the interests of everyone.*

*Mainly because I would feel very uneasy if I didn't. I have to trust that they are doing their best to keep regulation of the industry at best standard possible.*

## Barriers to trust: **10% DO NOT trust Ahpra**

*It is not accountable to parliament & they have an over-bearing relationship with national boards.*

*Because I am not sure how well informed Ahpra is regarding the Allied Health Care Practices, their principles, and their foundation of practice.*

*Lack of effective communication with practitioners. Present themselves as against practitioners.*

*I have seen significant malpractice from other professions, and nothing changes.*

*I find the advertising guidelines to be extremely confusing, it makes it hard with so many rules to work out how to stay within the guidelines but also to present your business well so you can work.*

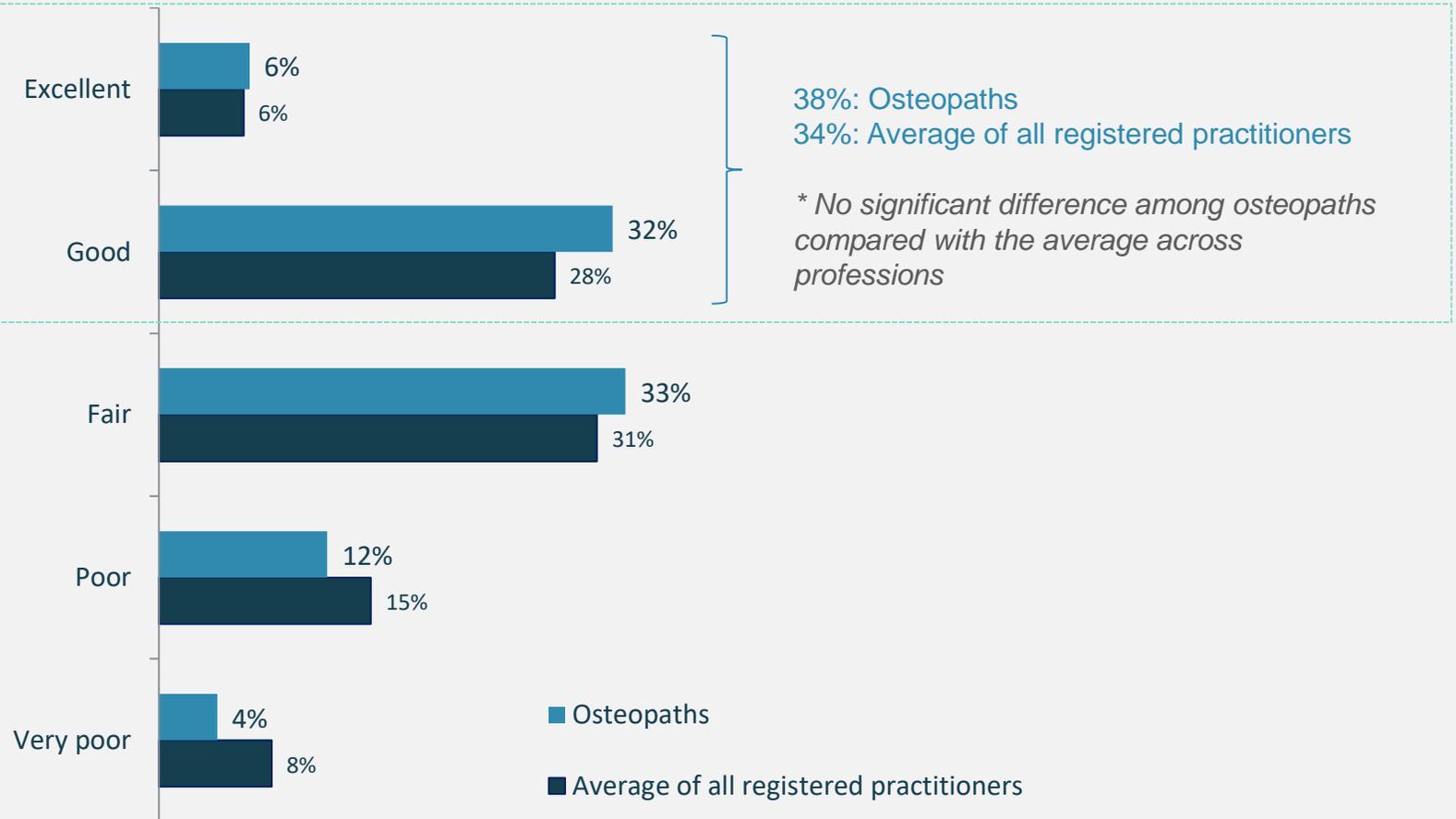
*I know of serious allegations against practitioners that have not been pursued, yet they'll go after anyone if they even slightly breach the advertising standards.*

# 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?

## Osteopaths



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

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**Practitioners were asked what additional activities or support, if any, they would have liked to see from Ahpra and/or their National Board during the pandemic? Below is a sample of the open-ended responses provided.**

*(Full list of responses provided separately).*

*Urgent patient clearance questions , COVID response plans, TCA EPC letter templates.*

*Assistance in reasonable standards to stay open during pandemic, stop adding more to do things to everyday practice in response to COVID19, a few additional measures are necessary, but it feels like there is forever more things practitioners must do to meet the requirements set out during COVID. These additional requirements are also poorly communicated.*

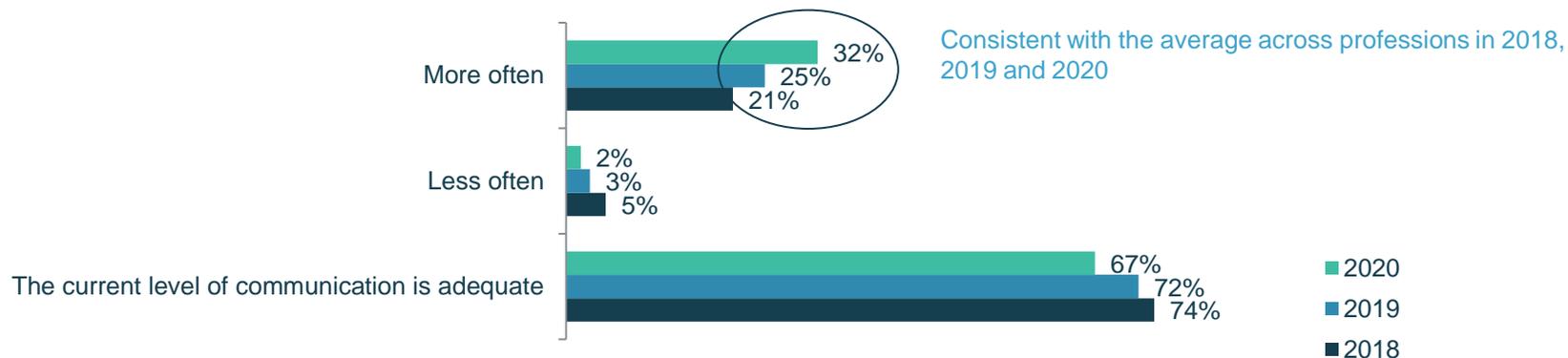
*Taking a stand against racist behaviour has nothing to do with COVID-19 and should not be included in the above list.*

*Clarity about the CPD requirements. It is extremely difficult to meet them under the requirements. There was a vaguely worded statement saying that they would be flexible, but nothing specific about current requirements that I have seen.*

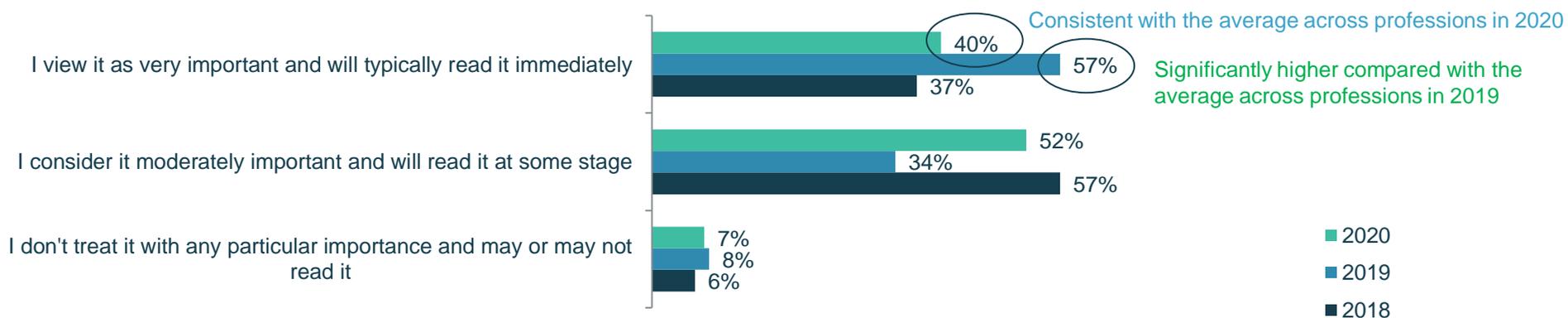
*Easing advertising guidelines, without compromising public safety.*

# Response to communication by the Osteopathy 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

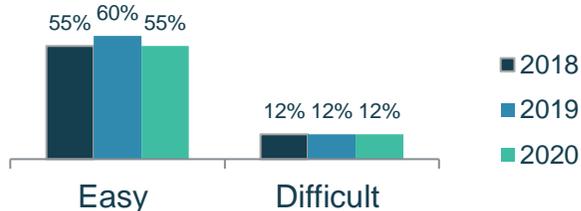
# Use of the Osteopathy Board of Australia website

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



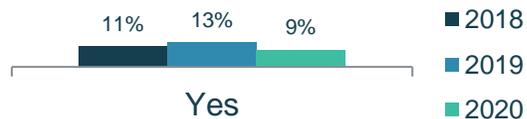
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this Board

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)...

- Disabled patient requirements.
- Compulsory requirement for CPD points.
- COVID practice information e.g. requirements for PPE.
- A template for supervision. A clear time-line for return to practice after a period of supervision.
- At the end of a busy week it is overwhelming and not clear and succinct to navigate.

# Contact details

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