

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 Occupational Therapy 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.

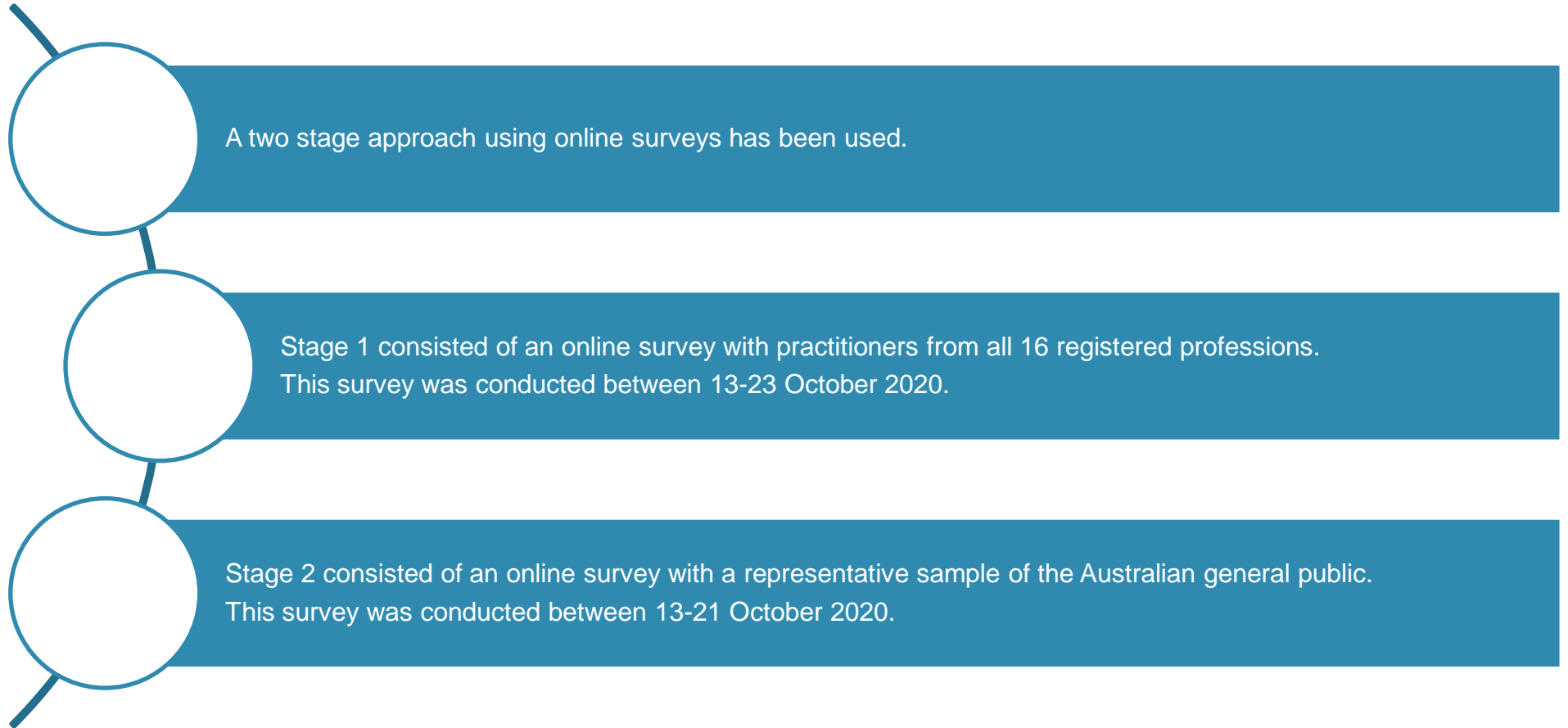
The benchmark 2018 study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, specifically extended interviews (face-to-face and via the telephone), focus groups and online surveys.

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 **Occupational Therapy Board of Australia**.

An overview of the methodology



Quantitative approach

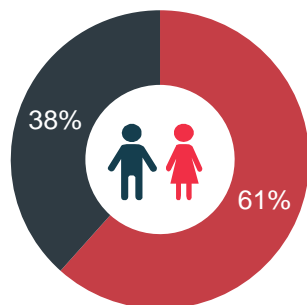
- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community.
- The 2020 questionnaires were very similar to the 2018 and 2019 questionnaires, with two additional questions.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider. Quotas were placed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

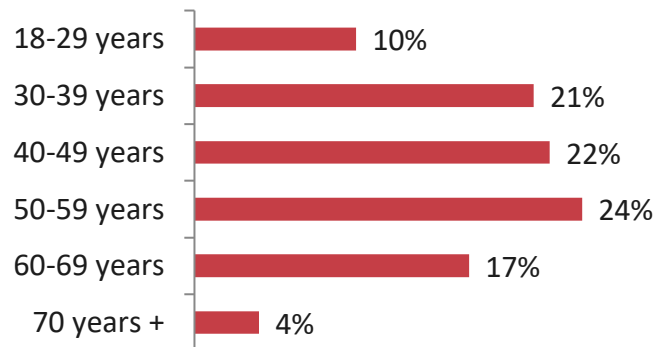


2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

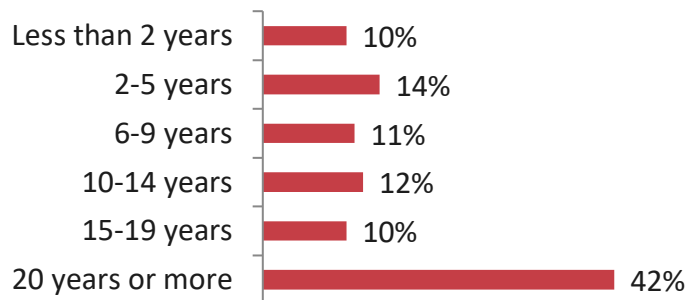
Gender



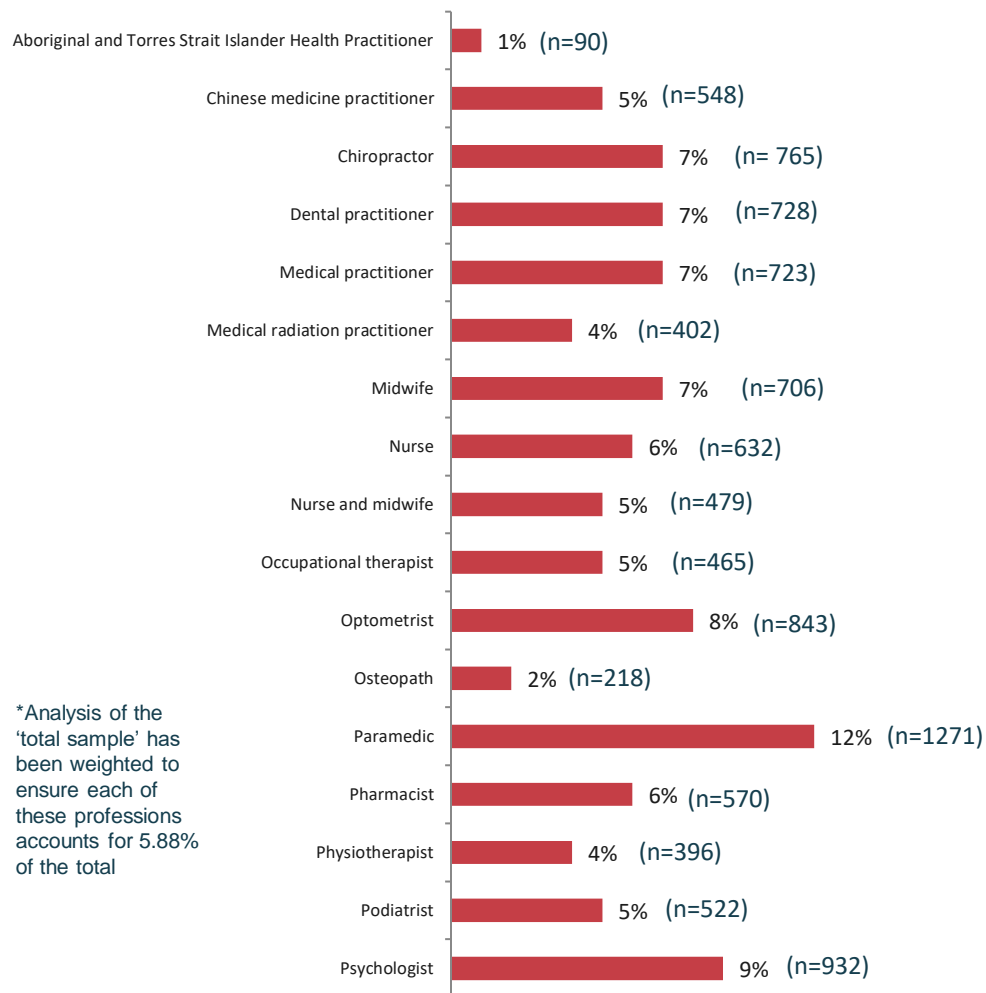
Age



Years in practice



Practitioner type*

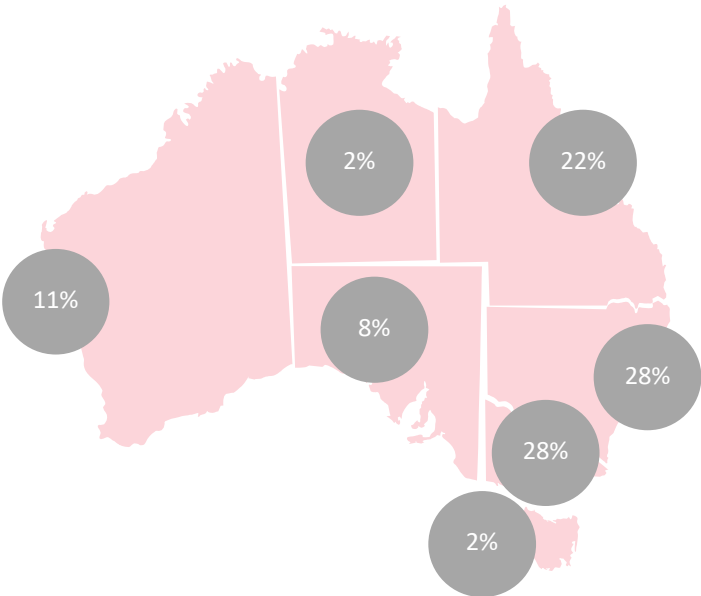


*Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 5.88% of the total

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

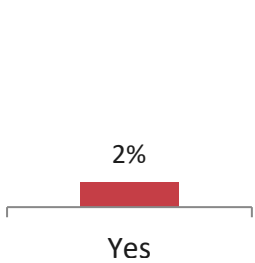
2020 sample of registered practitioners (n = 10,228)

Location

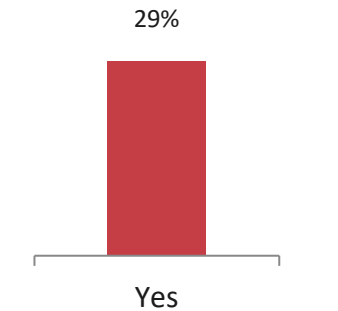


Metro: **63%**
Regional: **30%**
Rural: **7%**

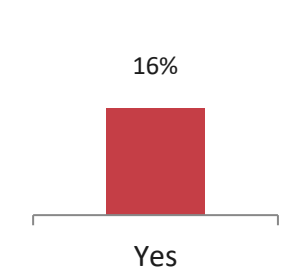
% who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



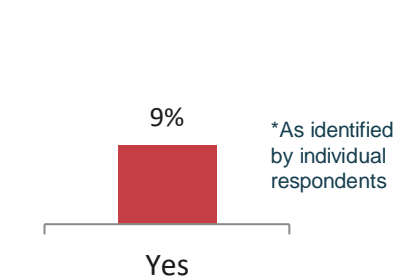
% who were born in a country other than Australia



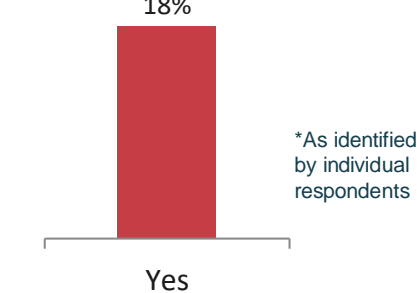
% who speak a language other than English at home



% 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*

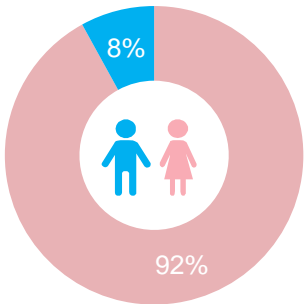


Summary of results of the online survey with registered health practitioners

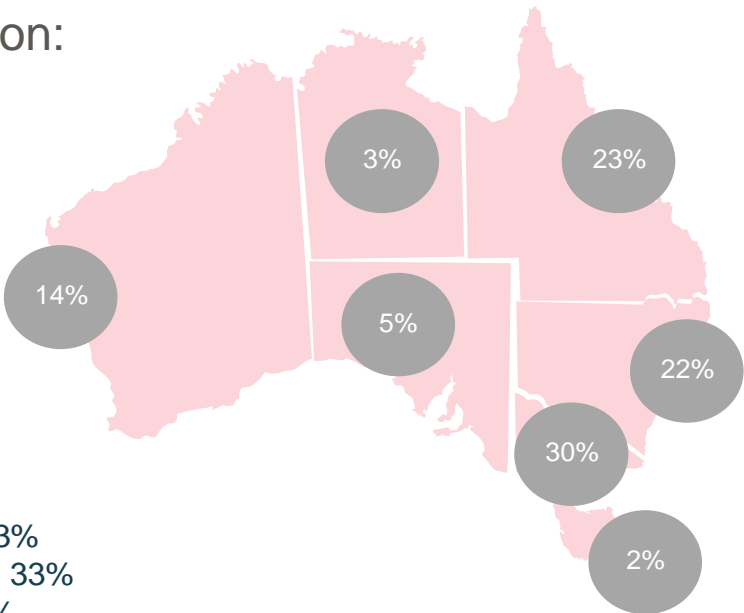
Specific insights into the responses from:
Occupational therapists

Sample of occupational therapists (n=465)

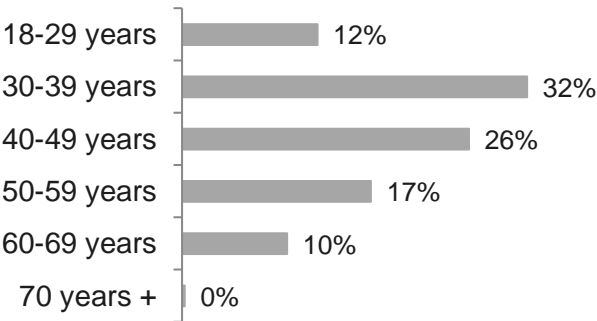
Gender:



Location:

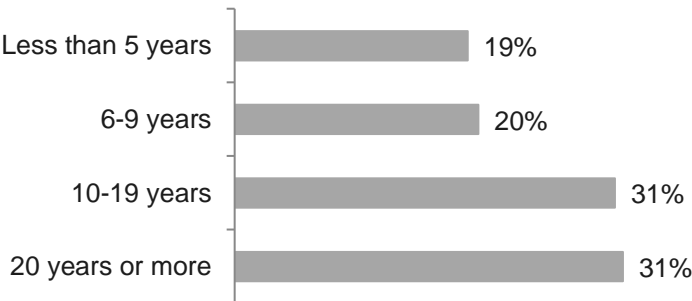


Age:

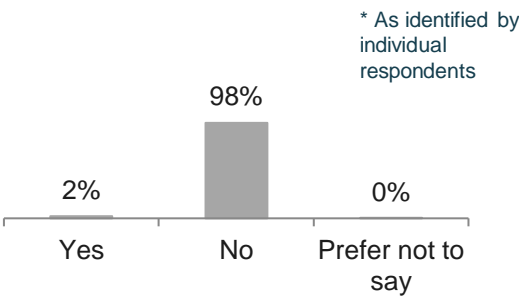


Metro: 63%
Regional: 33%
Rural: 4%

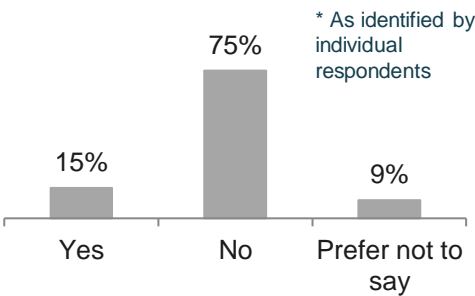
Years in practice:



% 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 occupational therapy 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=465)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Professional	34%	(-11%)
Innovative	32%	(+25%)
Creative	30%	(+27%)
Compassionate	29%	(+6%)
Empathetic	29%	(+9%)
Community minded	27%	(+12%)
Dedicated	22%	(+1%)
Caring	21%	(-7%)
Hard working	21%	(-8%)
Knowledgeable	20%	(-10%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Passionate	19%	(+6%)
Team oriented	19%	(+10%)
Committed	18%	(+1%)
Approachable	16%	(+4%)
Competent	14%	(-6%)
Open-minded	14%	(+8%)
Trusted	9%	(-14%)
Optimistic	9%	(+6%)
Responsible	8%	(-11%)
Friendly	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 2019-20:

Perceptions of the occupational therapy 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=351	2020 N=465
Professional	36%	34%
Innovative	30%	32%
Creative	31%	30%
Compassionate	29%	29%
Empathetic	30%	29%
Community minded	23%	27%
Dedicated	22%	22%
Caring	24%	21%
Hard working	28%	21%
Knowledgeable	20%	20%

% of practitioners with that perception of the profession	2019 N=351	2020 N=465
Passionate	20%	19%
Team oriented	25%	19%
Committed	21%	18%
Approachable	13%	16%
Competent	14%	14%
Open-minded	11%	14%
Trusted	9%	9%
Optimistic	7%	9%
Responsible	9%	8%
Friendly	5%	8%

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 Occupational Therapy 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=465)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
For practitioners	46%	(+16%)
Advocates	33%	(+15%)
Administrators	32%	(-)
Necessary	31%	(-)
Regulators	31%	(-7%)
Decision-makers	25%	(+2%)
Competent	20%	(+5%)
Shows leadership	20%	(+7%)
Supportive	16%	(+2%)
Bureaucratic	14%	(-11%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Helpful	14%	(+3%)
For the public	14%	(-7%)
Responsive	13%	(+4%)
Good communicators	13%	(+3%)
Approachable	13%	(+2%)
Accessible	13%	(+3%)
Trustworthy	12%	(-)
Transparent	10%	(+4%)
Fair	8%	(-2%)
Honest	8%	(+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 2018-20:

Perceptions of the Occupational Therapy 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=349	2019 N=351	2020 N=465
For practitioners	51%	42%	46%
Advocates	28%	27%	33%
Administrators	33%	30%	32%
Necessary	39%	27%	31%
Regulators	30%	31%	31%
Decision-makers	27%	25%	25%
Competent	22%	19%	20%
Shows leadership	19%	20%	20%
Supportive	16%	12%	16%
Bureaucratic	14%	12%	14%

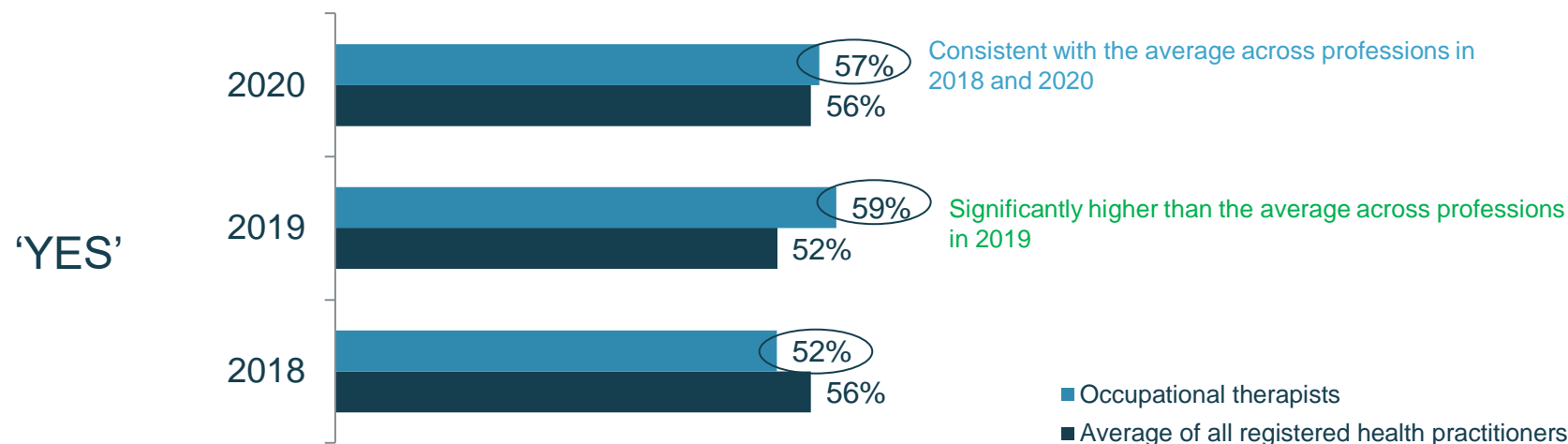
% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	2018 N=349	2019 N=351	2020 N=465
Helpful	14%	12%	14%
For the public	14%	13%	14%
Responsive	11%	11%	13%
Good communicators	13%	13%	13%
Approachable	14%	9%	13%
Accessible	16%	13%	13%
Trustworthy	15%	9%	12%
Transparent	7%	8%	10%
Fair	13%	11%	8%
Honest	7%	4%	8%

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

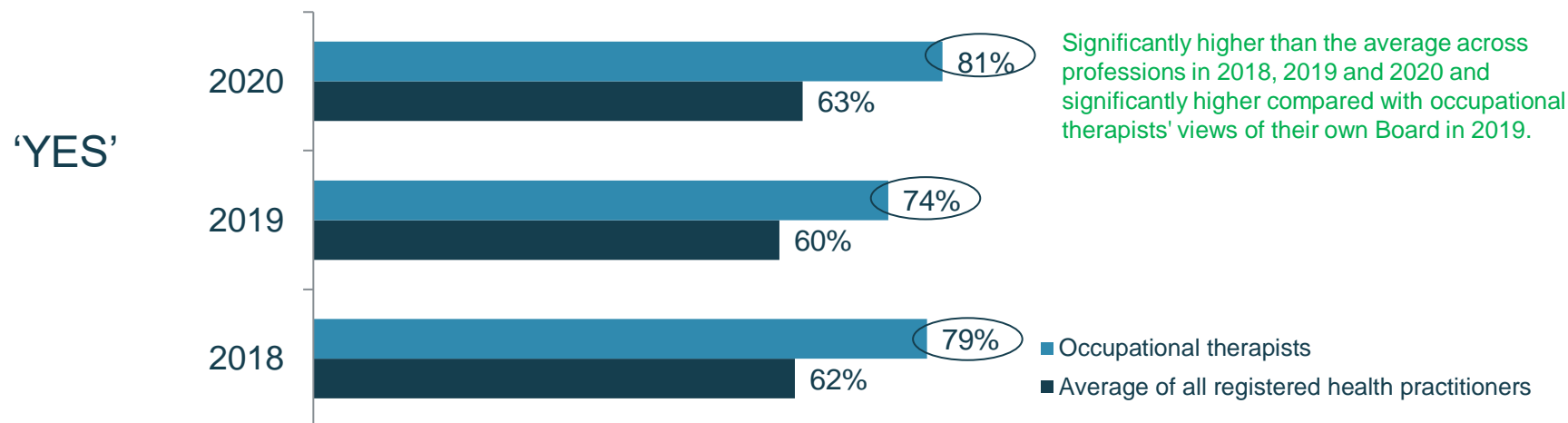
Orange indicates a result significantly lower compared with the previous year.

Levels of confidence and trust in the Occupational Therapy 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 Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

Indicators of trust: 81% trust the Board

I think they are not going to do anything that is not in the interest of the profession.

Great advocates for the profession and promote high quality CPD opportunities.

I have been involved with them for over 30 years. They have always been extremely helpful and supportive whatever my query has been as a clinician or a manager. Always very professional and responsive to the health care context and you feel they fully support occupational therapists.

I must trust in my governing body, or what is left?

Nothing has occurred that would cause me not to trust the board.

Reputable organization that is working to advocate for the standard of OT in Australia.

Regulates the professional education and those with overseas educations. Generally I have found this to be successful.

The board consists of occupational therapists with a range of experiences as well as others outside of the profession.

They ensure that occupational therapy is regulated and a strong health care profession. They send email updates from time to time with updated information.

Barriers to trust: 4% DO NOT trust the Board

I feel increasingly frustrated by the OT board and the frequent changes with regulations - it's becoming difficult for practitioners to comprehend and keep up with these.

Minimal effort kept to engage Aboriginal people within the profession.

Poor leadership, poor communication, poor regulation, poor clinical guidelines. OT in hospital setting is dying and embarrassing.

I feel that at times they are out of touch with day-to-day workings and a bit bureaucratic.

Full list of responses provided separately

2020: Perceptions of Ahpra among occupational therapists (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=465)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Regulators	69%	(+16%)
Administrators	54%	(+9%)
Necessary	49%	(+13%)
For practitioners	36%	(+8%)
For the public	34%	(+1%)
Decision-makers	28%	(+5%)
Bureaucratic	26%	(-10%)
Competent	19%	(+7%)
Advocates	16%	(+7%)
Trustworthy	12%	(+3%)

Perceptions in 2020	% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Fair	12%	(+3%)
Responsive	12%	(+4%)
Shows leadership	12%	(+4%)
Rigid	10%	(-4%)
Accessible	10%	(+1%)
Transparent	10%	(+4%)
Intimidating	9%	(-6%)
Poor communicators	8%	(-4%)
Good communicators	8%	(-)
Helpful	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 2018-20:

Perceptions of Ahpra among occupational therapists

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=349	2019 N=351	2020 N=465
Regulators	65%	68%	69%
Administrators	62%	54%	54%
Necessary	53%	42%	49%
For practitioners	37%	37%	36%
For the public	44%	39%	34%
Decision-makers	29%	27%	28%
Bureaucratic	33%	27%	26%
Competent	15%	16%	19%
Advocates	7%	12%	16%
Trustworthy	9%	11%	12%

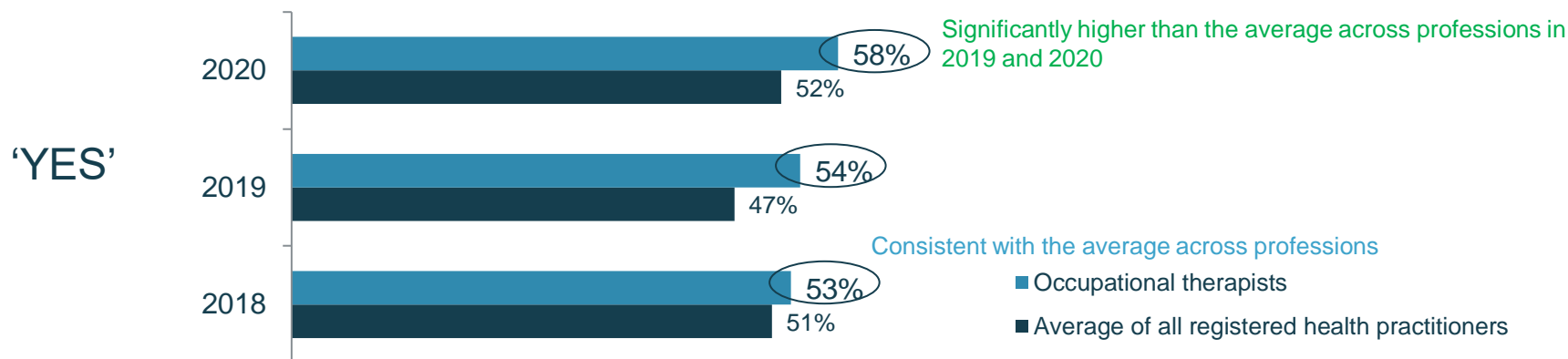
% of practitioners with that perception of Ahpra	2018 N=349	2019 N=351	2020 N=465
Fair	12%	12%	12%
Responsive	9%	9%	12%
Shows leadership	6%	7%	12%
Rigid	13%	12%	10%
Accessible	13%	11%	10%
Transparent	10%	8%	10%
Intimidating	12%	9%	9%
Poor communicators	9%	9%	8%
Good communicators	8%	9%	8%
Helpful	8%	7%	7%

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

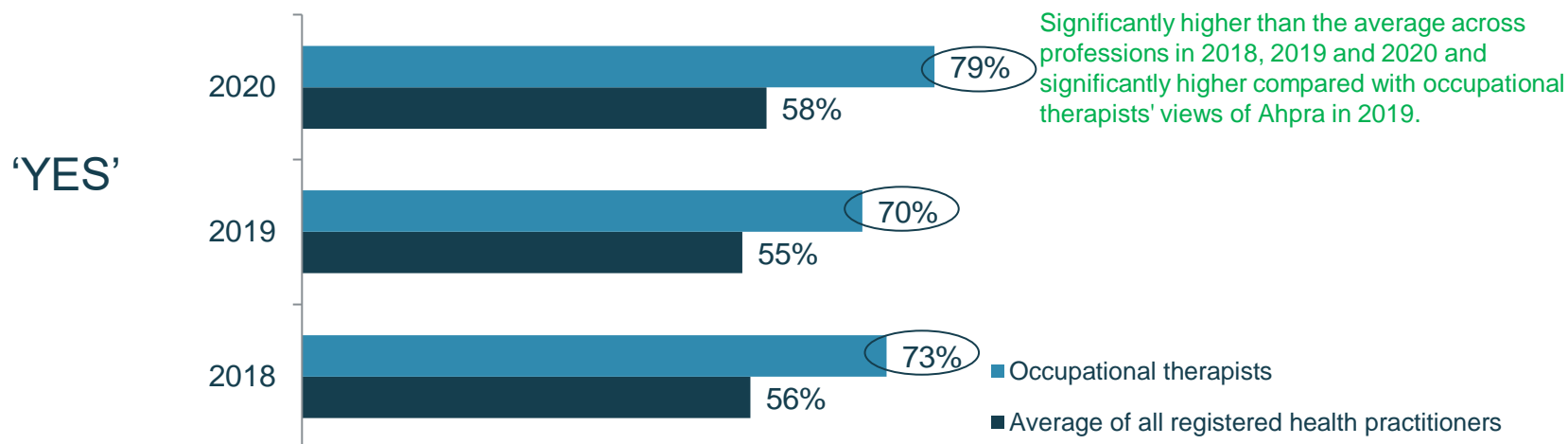
Orange indicates a result significantly lower compared with the previous year

Levels of confidence and trust in Ahpra among occupational therapists

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



Q. Do you trust Ahpra?



Indicators of trust and barriers to trust in Ahpra among occupational therapists

Indicators of trust: 79% trust Ahpra

I have no reason not to trust them.

Any correspondence or communication I have had with Ahpra indicates I should not think otherwise. Nothing to suggest "Untrustworthy".

Processes in place for professionals to report if behaviours and practice are unacceptable.

I think regulatory bodies are important in health professions for keeping the public safe. Given that it is government run and mandated, there is a higher likelihood that it's processes and objects are authentic and therefore achieve it's aims in providing regulation.

Provides transparent high-level standards for professional practice, instills confidence and clear markers for health professionals.

Because they are the regulating body and hopefully, they're getting it right and from what I am aware of, I think they are, although I would put a caveat on it that I am possibly not as aware as I should be with their work.

They have the power to protect the public and ensure adequate professional standards are maintained.

Barriers to trust: 6% DO NOT trust Ahpra

I have found the contact person at Ahpra that I seem to have to deal with to be condescending, unhelpful and uncommunicative.

I know that many Doctors don't meet registration requirements and Ahpra does bugger all to monitor or censure them.

I made a complaint to Ahpra about a podiatrist whose practice breached professional standards. Ahpra did nothing. This practitioner continues without even reprimand.

Given the amount they charge for registration, they are clearly only after our money rather than looking out for health professionals.

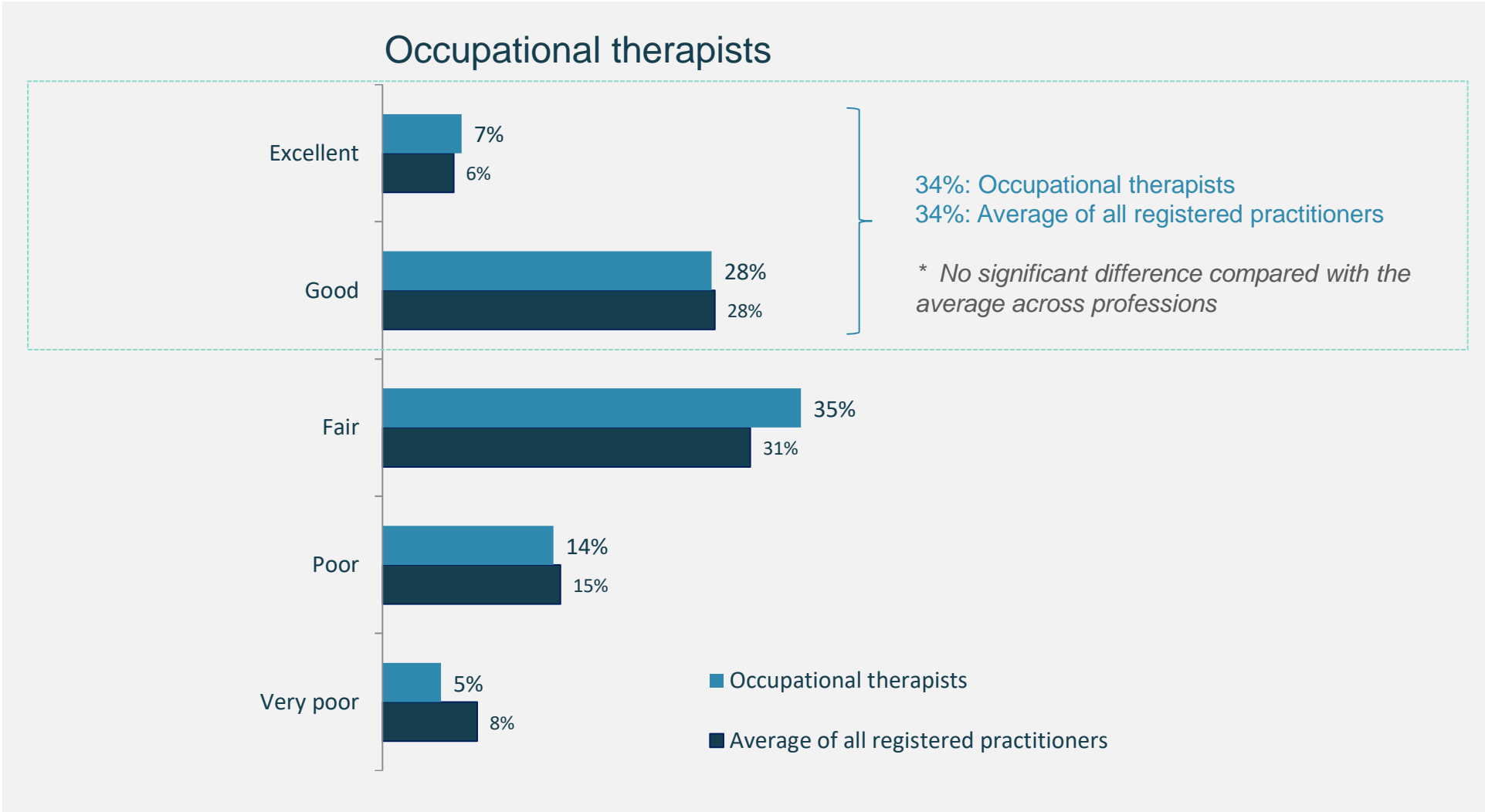
The time taken to move through their processes is not transparent and time estimations are highly misleading. The processes themselves are not transparent, they are bureaucratic, there is little feedback about where you are in the process. My sense is that Ahpra are just ticking boxes.

I have approached Ahpra on multiple occasions on varying subjects. They have demonstrated incredibly poor administrative skills and lied in the process. Total lack of understanding of the legislation.

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).

More rural access to CPD access to CPD for professionals working outside their main area e.g. Case Management or Care Coordinators.

Reduction in registration fees and CPS hours.

There is a need for CPD standards, however there is no adaptability shown by the Board; there is a strong sense of enforcement and control of people's careers. Whilst initiatives are 'good' there needs to be a consistency with adaptability that extends beyond COVID.

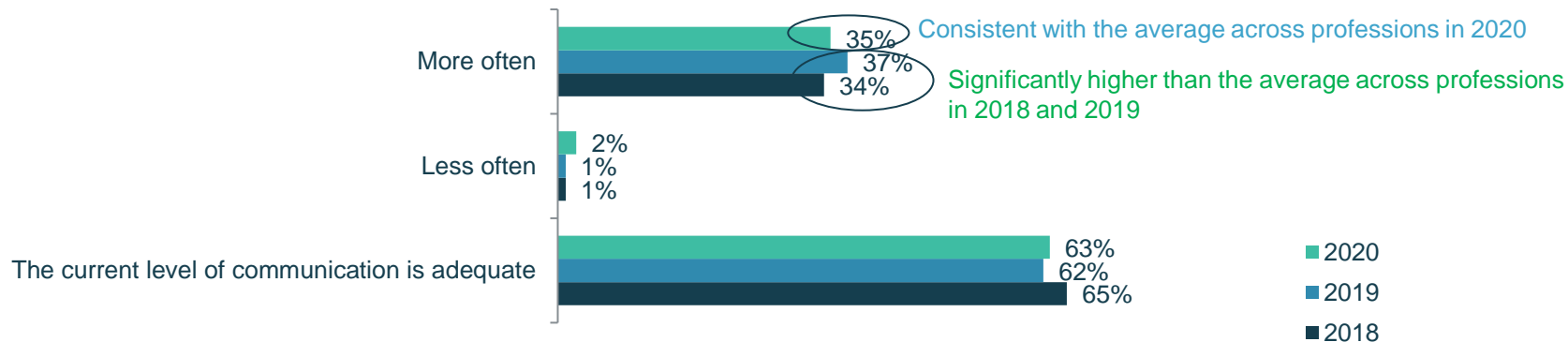
My application was submitted in Feb and I got no response until an 'urgent' email was sent to me in May stating if I didn't respond to Ahpra's request for an extension that day my application would be closed. Perhaps focusing on returning all appropriate practitioners would have been beneficial, or at least communicating more transparently would have helped. I had an employer willing to supervise me in a regional area of need who had no idea when/if I would be able to start.

What does the lockdown mean practically for paed's therapists? The wording was not transparent. If people practice full time, they should still be required to take part in CPD. Too many issues on the ground that are buried in the ground.

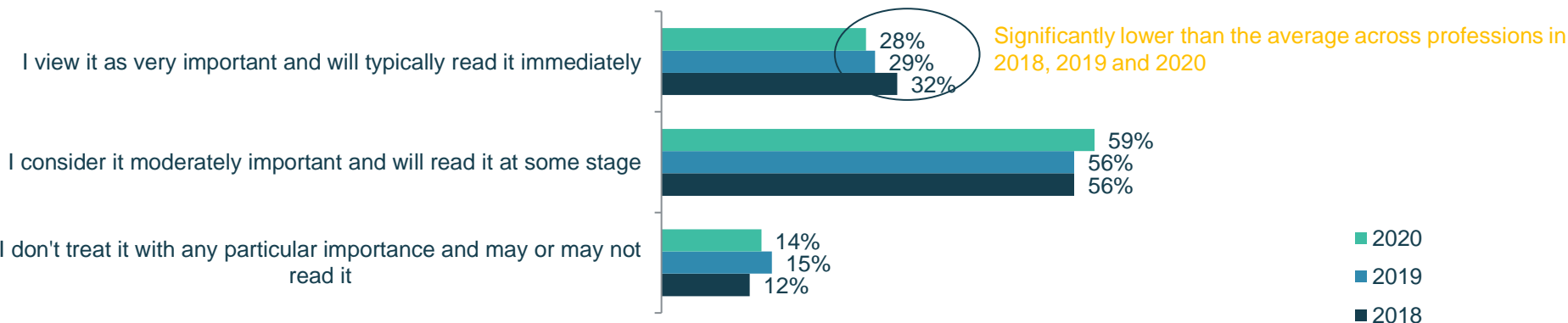
Some communication has been vague. OT Australia has been the best source of clear information about what we can and can't do during this time.

Response to communication by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

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



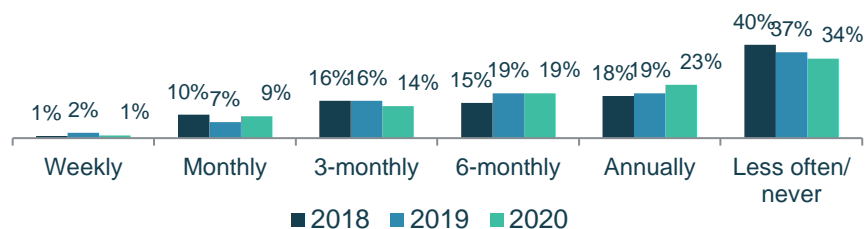
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board

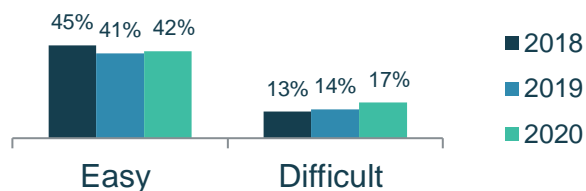
Use of the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia website

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



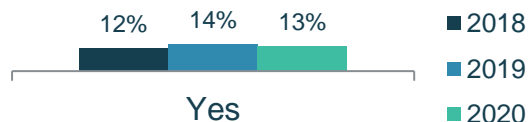
Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this Board

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



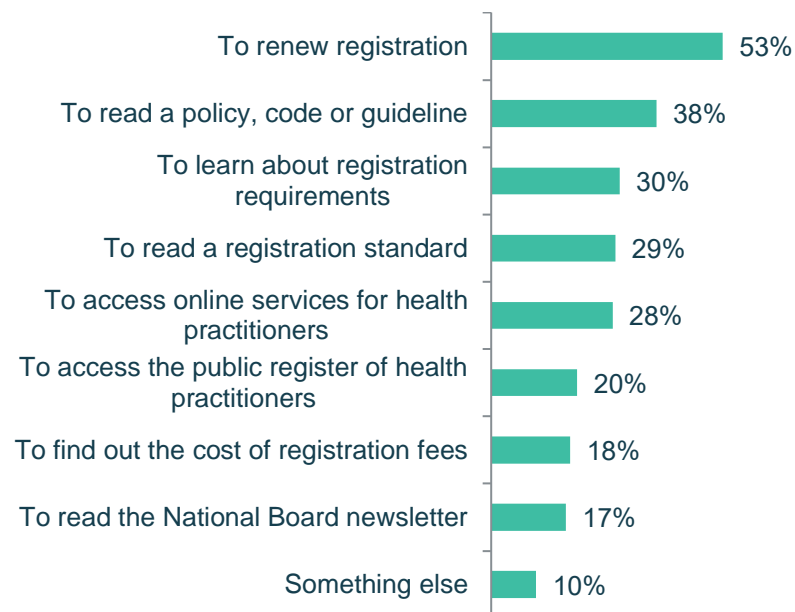
Base: Practitioners who have visited that Board's website

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)...

- Specific clinical questions and guidance in clinical practice.
- Until recently required PD hours and categories for registration. Still not easy to locate.
- Allied health assistants - competency framework.
- More detailed and specific information relating to the CPD standard.
- Regarding return to practice supervision.

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