
AHPRA

Review of stakeholder perceptions of AHPRA and the National Boards

A Social Research Project

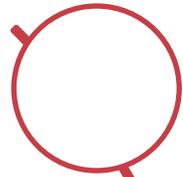
November 2018

Supplementary report prepared for:
The Optometry Board of Australia

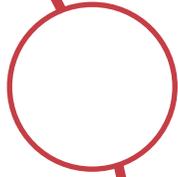
Introduction

- Truly Deeply has been engaged by the Australian Health Practitioner Agency (AHPRA) to test the perception of sentiment towards AHPRA and the National Boards. This review is intended to help AHPRA and National Boards better understand what stakeholders think and feel about the organisation and to identify how to facilitate ongoing confidence and trust in the work performed by AHPRA and National Boards.
- The study has used a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, specifically extended interviews (face to face and via the telephone), focus groups and online surveys.
- 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 **Optometry Board of Australia**.

An overview of the methodology

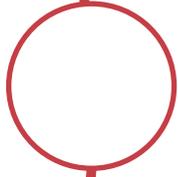


A **four stage** approach that combined both qualitative and quantitative research approaches has been used.



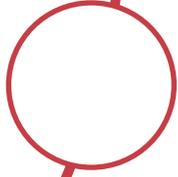
Stage 1 comprised a total of 53 qualitative interviews. This consisted of interviews with the Chair of every National Board (15); the Executive Officer of almost every National Board (13), Government health providers (3); major health employers (3); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy group representatives (5); Co-regulatory partners (4); Professions Reference Group members (3); representatives from CALD communities (2) and 'Other' various stakeholders (5).

These interviews were conducted between August 10 and September 26, 2018.



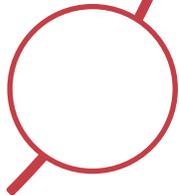
Stage 2 involved three focus groups. The three groups were conducted with i) Members of the Community Reference Group; ii) Members of the Professions Reference Group and iii) Accreditation Authority representatives.

These groups were conducted between August 14 - 22, 2018.



Stage 3 consisted of an online survey with practitioners from all 15 registered professions.

This survey was conducted between September 17 – 25, 2018.



Stage 4 consisted of an online survey with a representative sample of the Australian general public.

This survey was conducted between September 17 – 25, 2018.

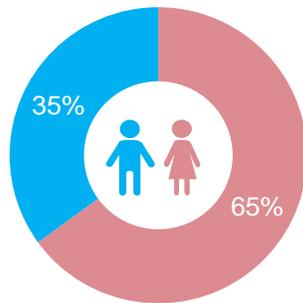
Quantitative approach

- Online surveys were conducted with practitioners as well as the broader community following the qualitative investigation. Truly Deeply developed the questionnaires in consultation with AHPRA.
- The questionnaires were developed to allow initial findings in the qualitative to be further explored and validated. Additional pre-codes and lists of words and statements were included in the survey following feedback from interviews and discussion with stakeholders.
- Respondents to the Community Survey were sourced using an external panel provider.
- 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 (for example) of ‘psychologists’, which accounted for 14% of responses to the survey, does not distort the views of other professions, which accounted for a much smaller response overall to the survey.
- Once the surveys were closed, statistical analysis was conducted by Truly Deeply to summarise and compare the quantitative findings.

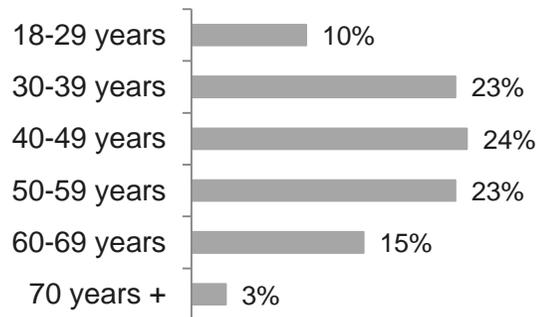
	Community Survey	Practitioner Survey
Fieldwork dates	September 19 - 25	September 19 - 27
Responses	1,020	5,694
Email invitations sent	na	100,257
Response rate	na	6.0%

Sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,694)

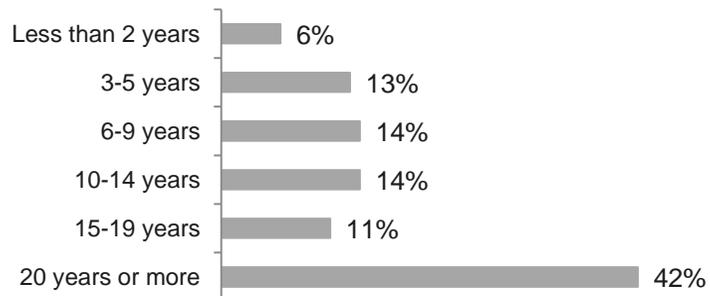
Gender



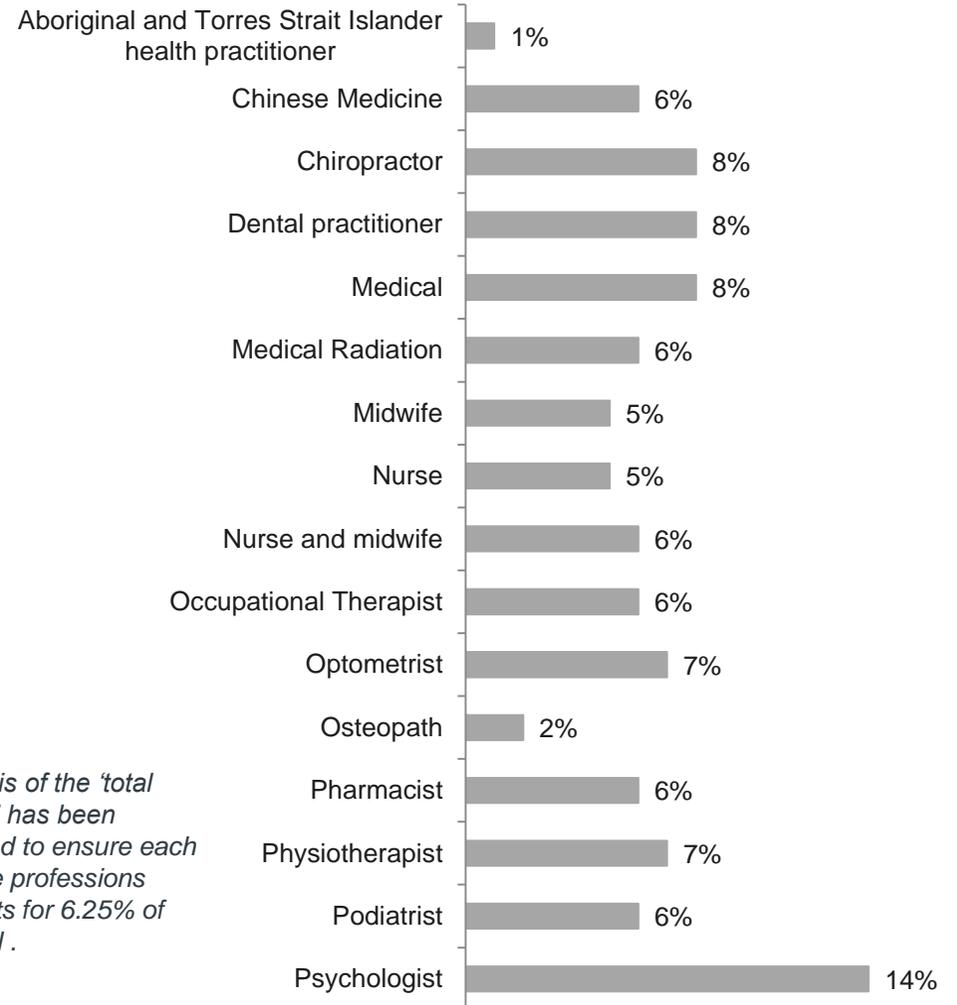
Age



Years in practice



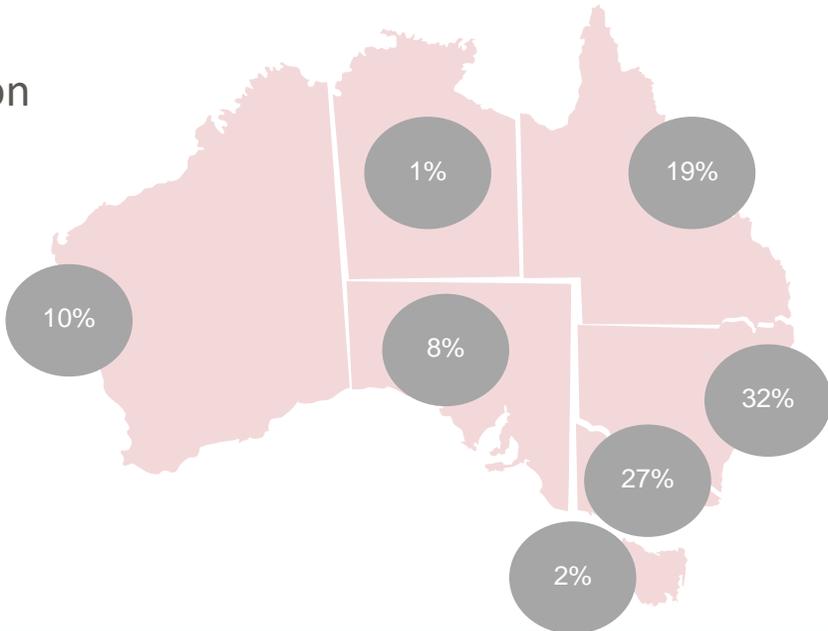
Practitioner type*



**Analysis of the 'total sample' has been weighted to ensure each of these professions accounts for 6.25% of the total.*

Sample of registered practitioners (n = 5,694)

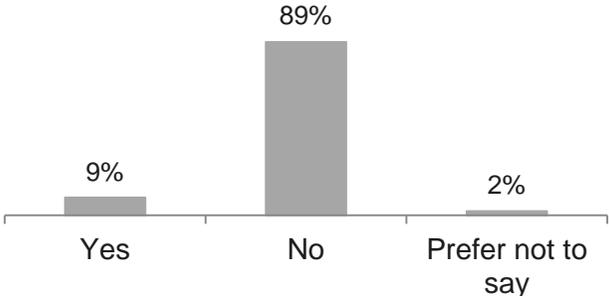
Location



Metro: 66%

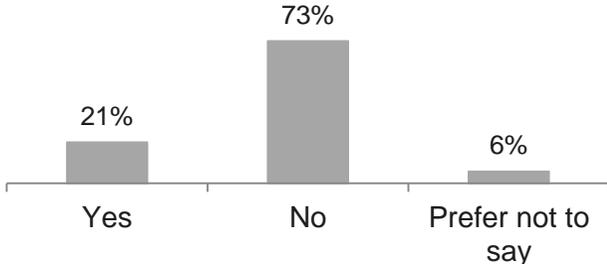
Regional : 34%

% who have had a complaint ever made against them to AHPRA or their Board as a registered Health Practitioner*



* As identified by individual respondents

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



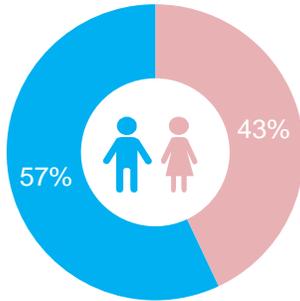
* As identified by individual respondents

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

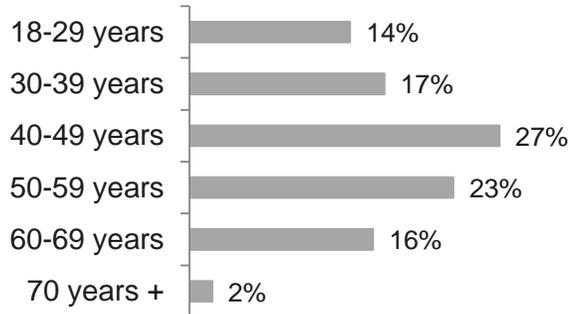
Specific insights into the responses from:
optometrists

Sample of optometrists (n=373)

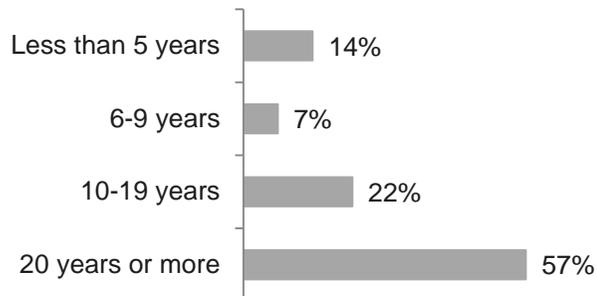
Gender:



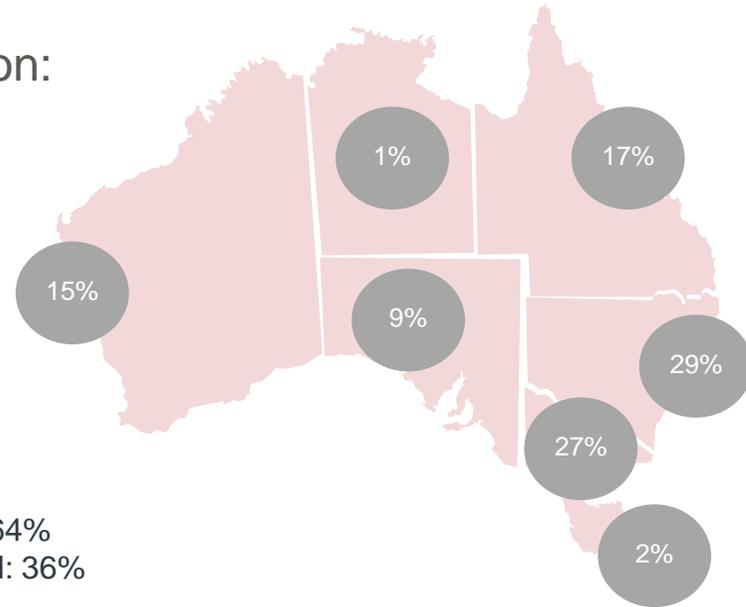
Age:



Years in practice:

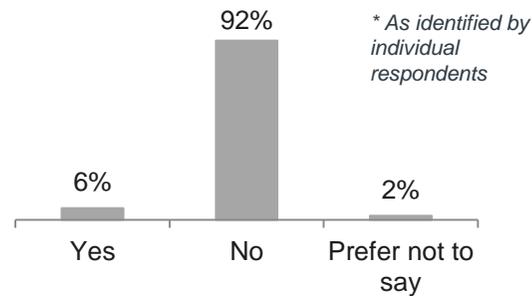


Location:

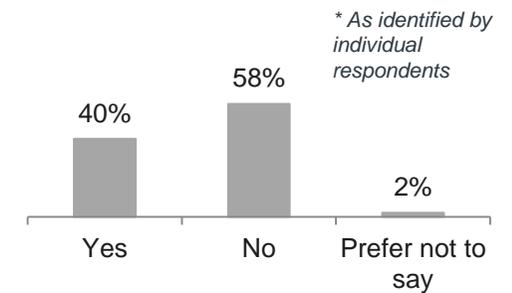


Metro: 64%
Regional: 36%

% who have had a complaint ever made against them to AHPRA or their Board as a registered Health Practitioner*



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



Perceptions of the Optometry 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=373)

Perception	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
For practitioners	43%	(+7%)
Necessary	36%	(+1%)
Administrators	36%	(+1%)
Regulators	34%	(-4%)
Decision-makers	27%	(0%)
Advocates	26%	(+8%)
Competent	23%	(+5%)
Supportive	23%	(+10%)
For the public	21%	(-2%)
Bureaucratic	20%	(-6%)

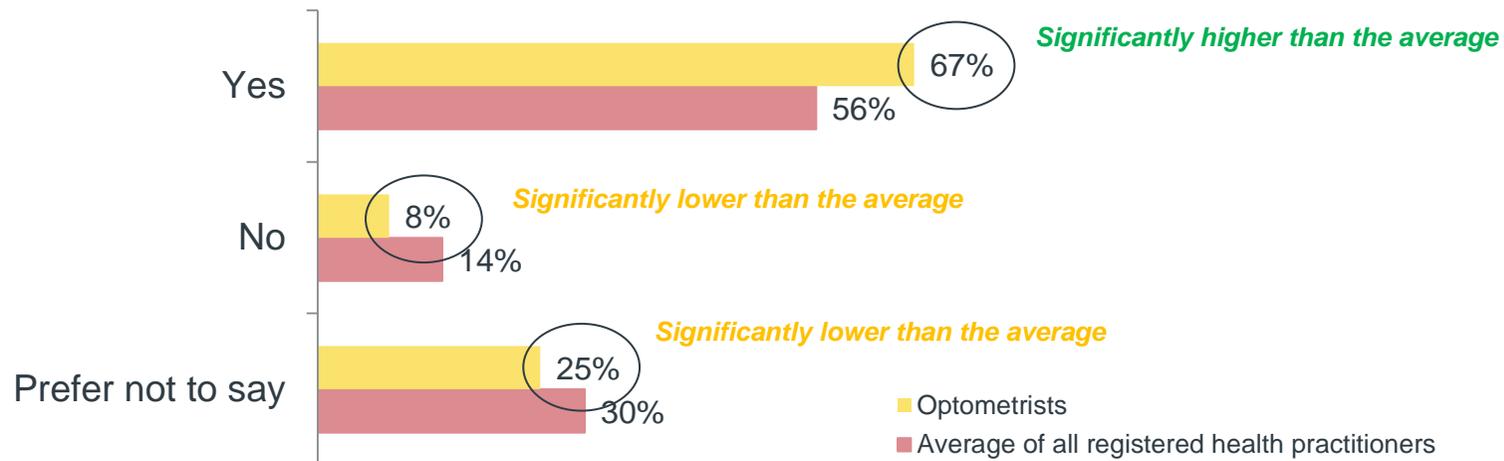
Perception	% of practitioners with that perception of the Board	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Trustworthy	20%	(+7%)
Approachable	18%	(+6%)
Accessible	18%	(+6%)
Shows leadership	16%	(+3%)
Helpful	15%	(+3%)
Good communicators	15%	(+4%)
Fair	14%	(+3%)
Responsive	14%	(+4%)
Honest	12%	(+5%)
Listens	11%	(+5%)

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

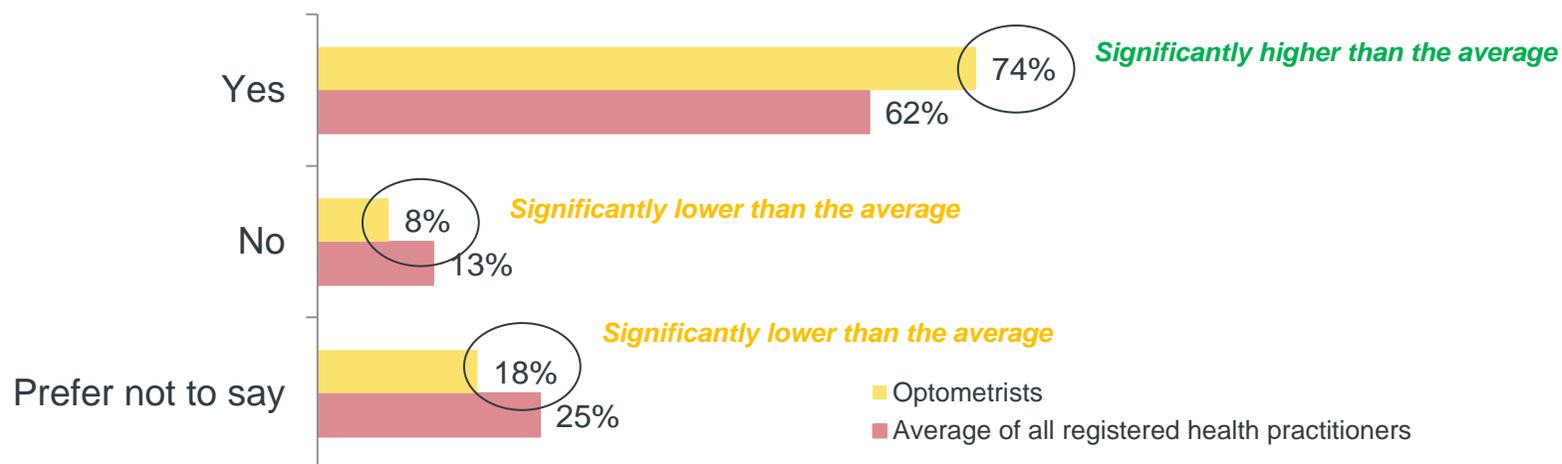
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower* than the average across all professions.

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

Indicators of trust: 74% trust the Board

Competent leaders who care for their profession. Supportive staff.

The members are committed to the organisation and to protecting the public. They take time out of their businesses etc and there is no personal gain. These members are trustworthy and there for the good of the organisation.

Registration process for overseas trained applicants is comprehensive.

The Board consists of energetic and passionate individuals working to maintain high standards both within the profession and for the safety of all - practising optometrists and the public.

Have always had good experiences dealing with the OBA.

In practice for 44 years every interaction I've had with them has been helpful and transparent.

They have always been supportive and helpful for myself.

Regular correspondence and updates, lobbies on our behalf.

Trustworthy.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: 8% DO NOT trust the Board

They are out of touch with real optometry, and understand it much more from an academic perspective.

Board members conflicted and poor representatives of the profession.

They have their own agenda and don't listen to regular practising Optometrists.

They come across as administrators with little interest in being responsive to membership concerns. They want nothing more than to administer in line with legislation but not guiding practice standards or being interested in supporting good practice.

Has Bias toward AHPRA and not Optometry. Lacks courage to protect the public and its interests.

Not doing enough to look after the profession. Allowing some bad eggs to continue to practise. Losing the trust of both the public as well as Optometrists. How can they not govern it better. How can they allow SS to decline seeing kids patients because they won't be making a sale out of it.

Out of touch with the needs of the industry lags behind the market self righteous insular protectionists.

Perceptions of AHPRA amongst optometrists

(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=373)

Perception	% of practitioners with that perception of AHPRA	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Administrators	55%	(+3%)
Regulators	54%	(0%)
Bureaucratic	43%	(+3%)
For the public	40%	(+2%)
Necessary	37%	(-3%)
For practitioners	23%	(-7%)
Competent	18%	(+3%)
Rigid	17%	(-1%)
Controlling	14%	(-3%)
Decision makers	14%	(-11%)

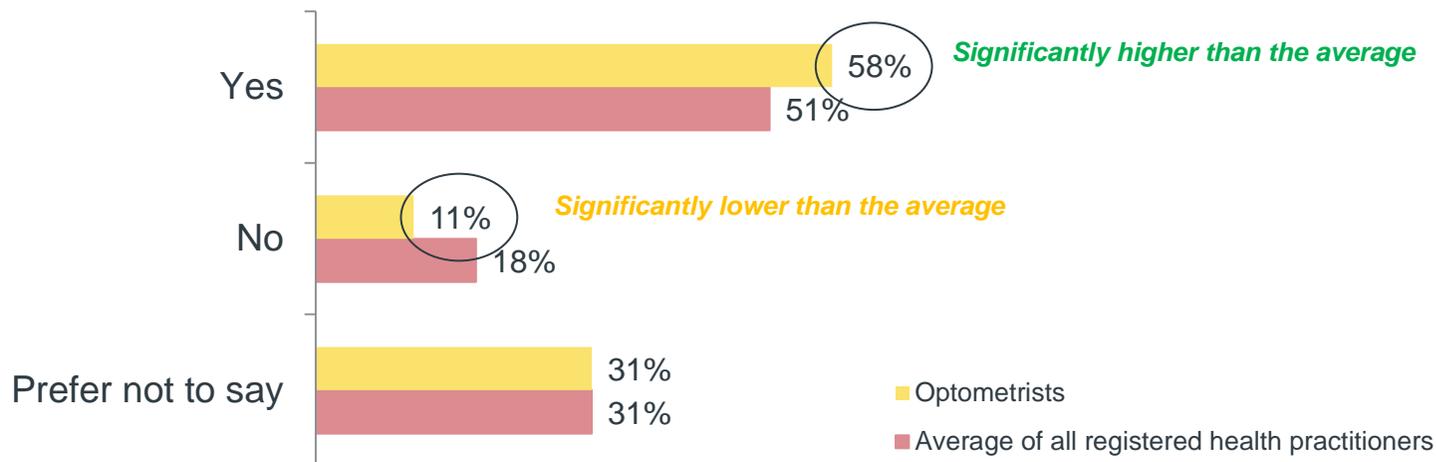
Perception	% of practitioners with that perception of AHPRA	Difference compared to the average across all professions
Intimidating	14%	(-3%)
Fair	12%	(+2%)
Trustworthy	11%	(+2%)
Accessible	10%	(-3%)
Poor communicators	9%	(-5%)
Responsive	7%	(-1%)
Advocates	7%	(-1%)
Out of touch	7%	(-5%)
Approachable	6%	(-3%)
Aloof	6%	(-2%)

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

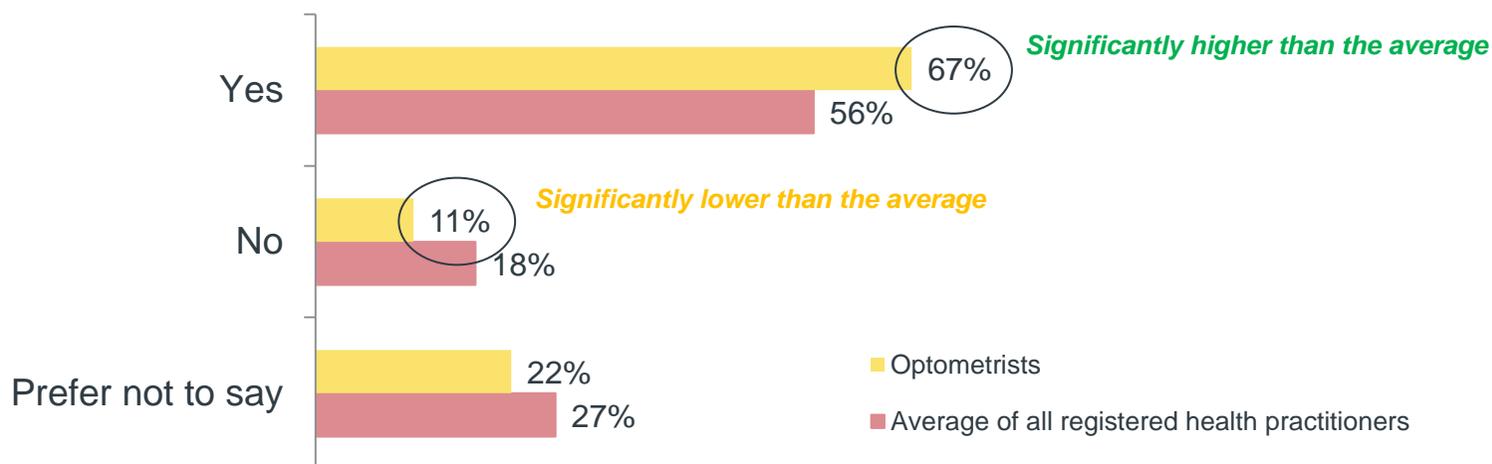
Orange indicates a result *significantly lower* than the average across all professions.

Levels of confidence and trust in AHPRA amongst optometrists

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 amongst optometrists

Indicators of trust: **67% trust AHPRA**

I believe they work in the best interests of the public without there being any significant conflict of interest.

Appears to have reasonable transparency in their processes.

They have so much information about you and they are doing their best to keep the public safe by only registering those who meet specific criteria, ensuring the public is kept safe.

Nationally recognised, good reputation.

Transparent and well managed.

Operates neutrally for the benefit of both the public and for the practitioners. My dealings with AHPRA have shown their professionalism and efficiency.

The organisation is progressive and outward looking in terms of managing their role in assisting boards.

On the whole yes, but I know a couple of Ophthalmologists who should never have been able to practice. They do a good job although it is difficult.

Conduct fair audits.

Full list of responses provided separately

Barriers to trust: **11% DO NOT trust AHPRA**

Health practitioners pay money every year to AHPRA for no reason. We get nothing back other than be registered to practice. Waste of money.

Paper pushers. Just another body to charge fees.

They are out of touch and have a "prove you're innocent" approach - they seem to be overzealous in "scoring" a hit than rather finding the truth. They have not made health care any better - just harder to deliver.

Poor communication, only in contact when you need to pay for your registration.

It ignores the views of other stakeholders including other clinical groups and other government agencies.

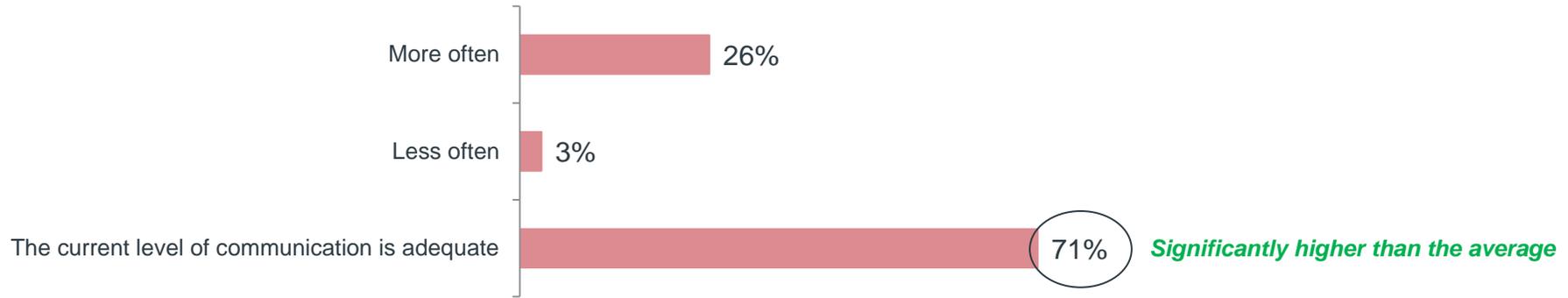
Not up to date with the needs of the industry protectionism an old boys club.

Don't even know what AHPRA does besides registering practitioners.

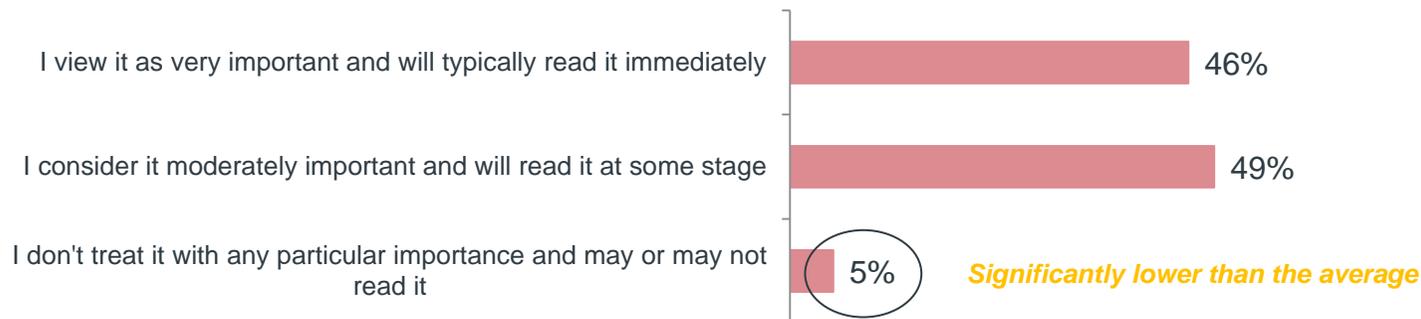
Any centralised agency is almost by definition "out of touch" with local demands, and has too much authority with which to administer its charter.

Response to communication by the Optometry Board of Australia

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



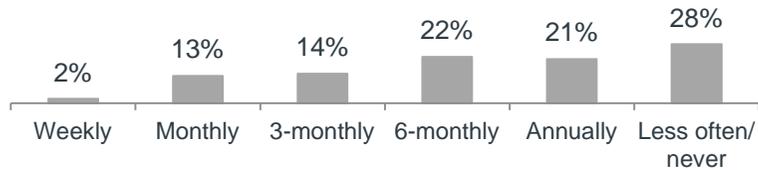
Q. How do you typically respond to communication you receive from (National Board)?



Base: Total sample of practitioners registered with this specific Board (n=373)

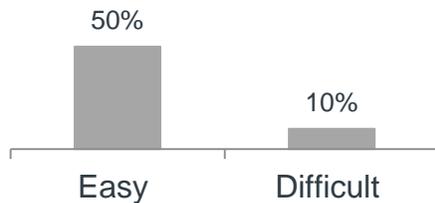
Use of the Optometry Board of Australia website

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

Reasons for visiting the National Board website



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

- *Current list of PBS medications for Optometrists*
- *The statistics on ethnic diversity in Optometry*
- *CPD records, requirements*
- *Information about part time registration*
- *Session ID codes of conference courses*
- *More information about the selection process for board members and communication protocol for board applicants*

Additional feedback from optometrists

Sample of open ended responses *(full list of responses provided separately)*

We do need organisations like them to keep appropriate discipline for public health.

You guys need to do more to protect practitioners from the public instead of vice-versa. If you are only interested in protecting the public, then why do WE pay to be registered and not those who are protected? That's like service stations paying to put petrol in your car so you won't complain about running out of petrol.

I feel it is poor value for money. It does not seem to care about the direction of the professions that are being taken over by large companies whose interest is solely making money.

Audit process is difficult, time consuming, overly bureaucratic and pedantic.

I was not aware that a National Board still existed. I thought AHPRA had superseded the Board. What do they do?

Unwilling to make hard decisions.

Need more flexibility in CPD point requirements. E.g. take into account other modes of studying and learning aside from face to face. Audit requires too much information and takes too long on the person being audited. Need to give more time/reduce the requirements paper work etc. Thank you for listening. Keep up the good work!

It would be good to have AHPRA representatives (e.g. National Board members) communicating more regularly through Optometry Australia. That way it seems more approachable.

I would like to know the full affiliations of those on these boards and if they have any conflicts of interest or connections to other parties who may have a conflict of interest to the purposes of the boards.

I have heard reports from colleagues of appallingly slow response times from AHPRA / OBA in dealing with notifications and investigations. While I understand the obligations to protect public safety this can be very detrimental to the mental health of the person under investigation, particularly when investigation is strung out over long periods.

Mothers returning to work after having children have found the registration requirements difficult to meet.

An essential, and highly valuable service to the public.

More information

For further information about this study please contact:

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