



Understanding public awareness and perceptions of sonographers

Table of Contents

Methodology	3
Key Findings	4
Respondent Profile	5
Awareness of Sonographers	6
Trust and Confidence in Sonographers	22
Regulation of Sonographers	28
Outcomes of a Lack of Regulation	36

METHODOLOGY



Sample

A nationally representative sample of 846 respondents. Quotas were managed based on age, location, gender and previous exposure to ultrasounds.



Method

Quantitative online panel survey 10 to 15 minutes in length. Analysis was weighted according to age and location. Significant results with a minimum sample size of 30 have been highlighted.



Survey Period

The survey was conducted through a panel provider from February 18th to February 25th 2019.

KEY FINDINGS

1

General awareness of the Sonography profession is reasonably low, although a majority acknowledge that an ultrasound is an important diagnostic healthcare tool.

2

Overall it is believed that image accuracy is largely dependent on the skill and experience of the Sonographer rather than the quality of the machine. Majority expect the minimum qualification to conduct an ultrasound is a Diploma or Bachelors degree.

3

Positively, trust is high in the health and medical industry and Sonographers were rated within the top five most trusted health professionals.

4


Respondents overwhelmingly believe that Sonographers should be regulated, with most citing a less accurate diagnosis and patient safety as their main causes for concern. However, close to half are unaware of the organisation responsible for regulating Australian healthcare professionals. There is strong support for the introduction of regulations for the Sonography profession.


5


While knowledge regarding the lack of professional regulation does not deter individuals from seeking an ultrasound, individuals are more likely to seek a second opinion or question the diagnostic quality of results.


DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Age		%	Count
	18-34 years	31%	269
	35-54 years	34%	286
	55-74 years	26%	216
	75+ years	9%	75

Education		%	Count
	Secondary	30%	254
	Certificate / Diploma	38%	319
	Bachelor Degree	22%	185
	Postgraduate Degree	10%	83

Annual Household Income		%	Count
	Nil	1%	8
	Below \$52,000	38%	285
	\$52,000 - \$103,000	37%	280
	\$104,000 - \$182,000	19%	144
	\$182,000+	5%	39

Location		%	Count
	New South Wales	32%	256
	Victoria	25%	200
	Queensland	20%	160
	Western Australia	11%	110
	South Australia	7%	73
	Australian Capital Territory	2%	19
	Tasmania	2%	20
	Northern Territory	1%	8

Area / Region		%	Count
	Metropolitan	68%	578
	Regional	23%	191
	Rural	9%	77



Awareness of Sonographers

Examining public awareness of
Sonographers, ultrasounds and
other relevant diagnostic tools.

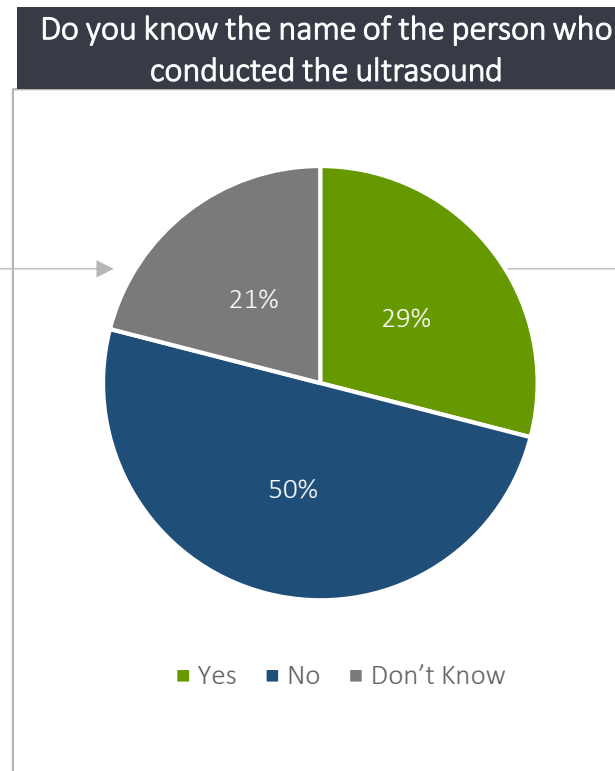
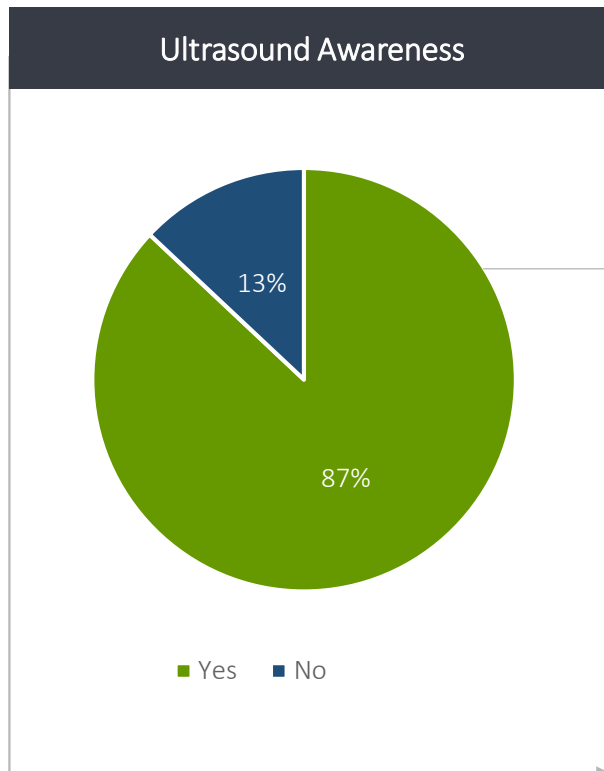
1.

General awareness of the Sonography profession is reasonably low. However, a majority acknowledge that an ultrasound is an important diagnostic healthcare tool.

Awareness

General awareness of Sonographers is relatively low.

Only 11% of respondents were able to name a Sonographer as the health professional who conducted their ultrasound.



Job Title of Person Conducting Ultrasound (Asked of those aware of ultrasound)	%
Sonographer	38%
Radiographer	37%
Medical Technician	8%
Other Medical Professional / Doctor	5%
Doctor (Non-specific)	5%
Clinic / Hospital	4%
Other	3%

Q: Have you or a member of your immediate family ever had an ultrasound? N=807

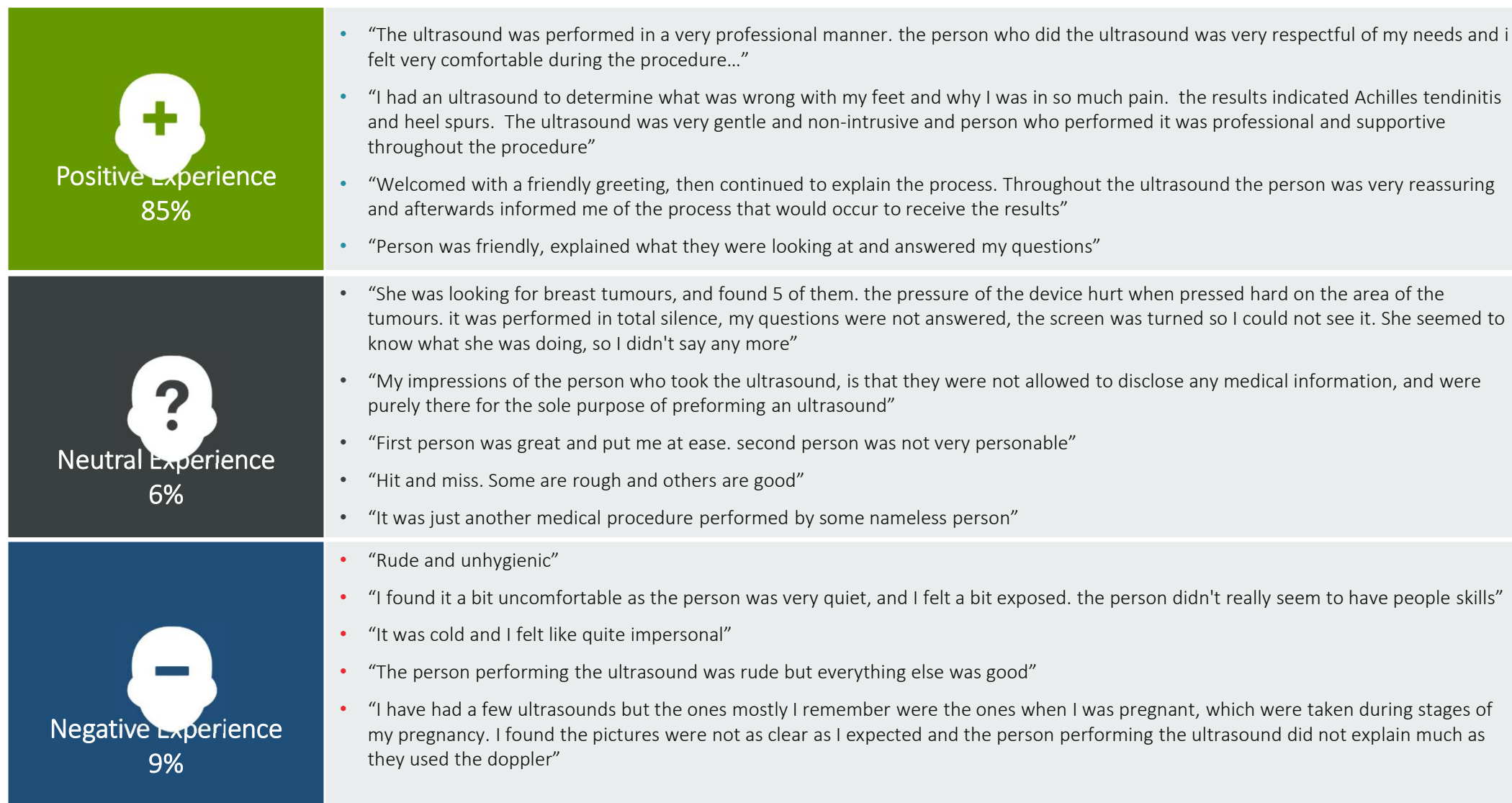
Q: Do you know the job title of the person who conducted the ultrasound? N=209



Confusion with Radiographers is also evident.

Of respondents who believed they knew the job title of the person who conducted their ultrasound, 37% thought they were a Radiographer.

Positively, over four in five respondents report a positive experience with a Sonographer.



Q: In your own words, please tell us about your experience with and impressions of the ultrasound and the person who performed the ultrasound: N=702

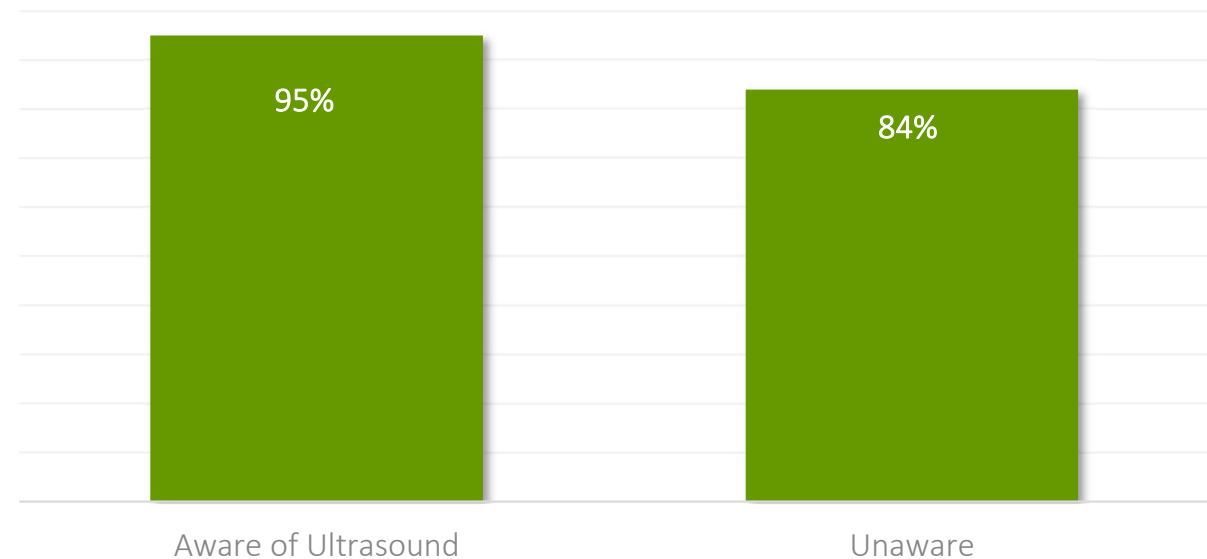
Importance

IMPORTANCE OF ULTRASOUND

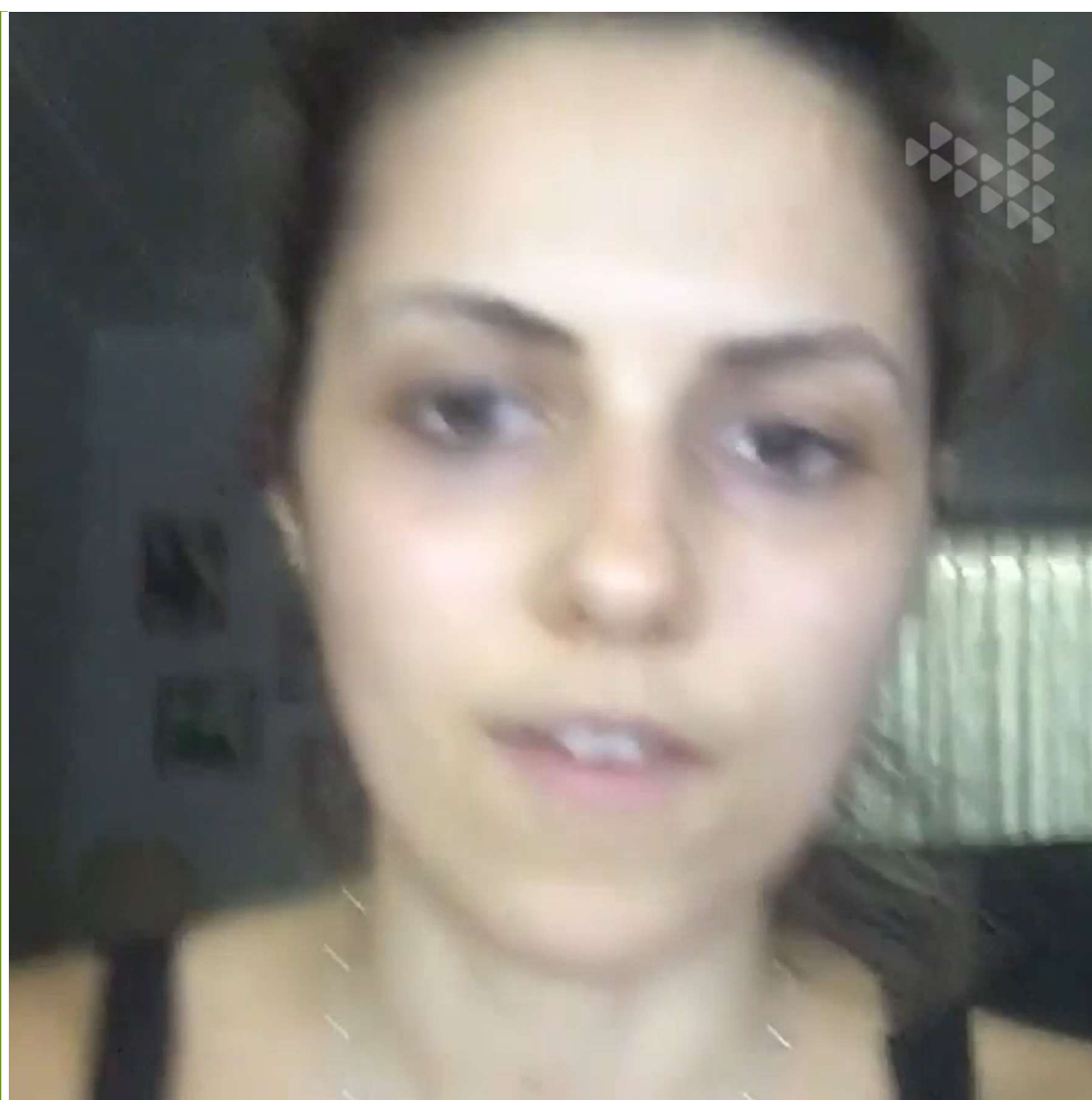
Australians believe ultrasounds are an important diagnostic healthcare tool, particularly those who have had an ultrasound.

Percent who believe that
Ultrasound is an important
diagnostic tool.

95%

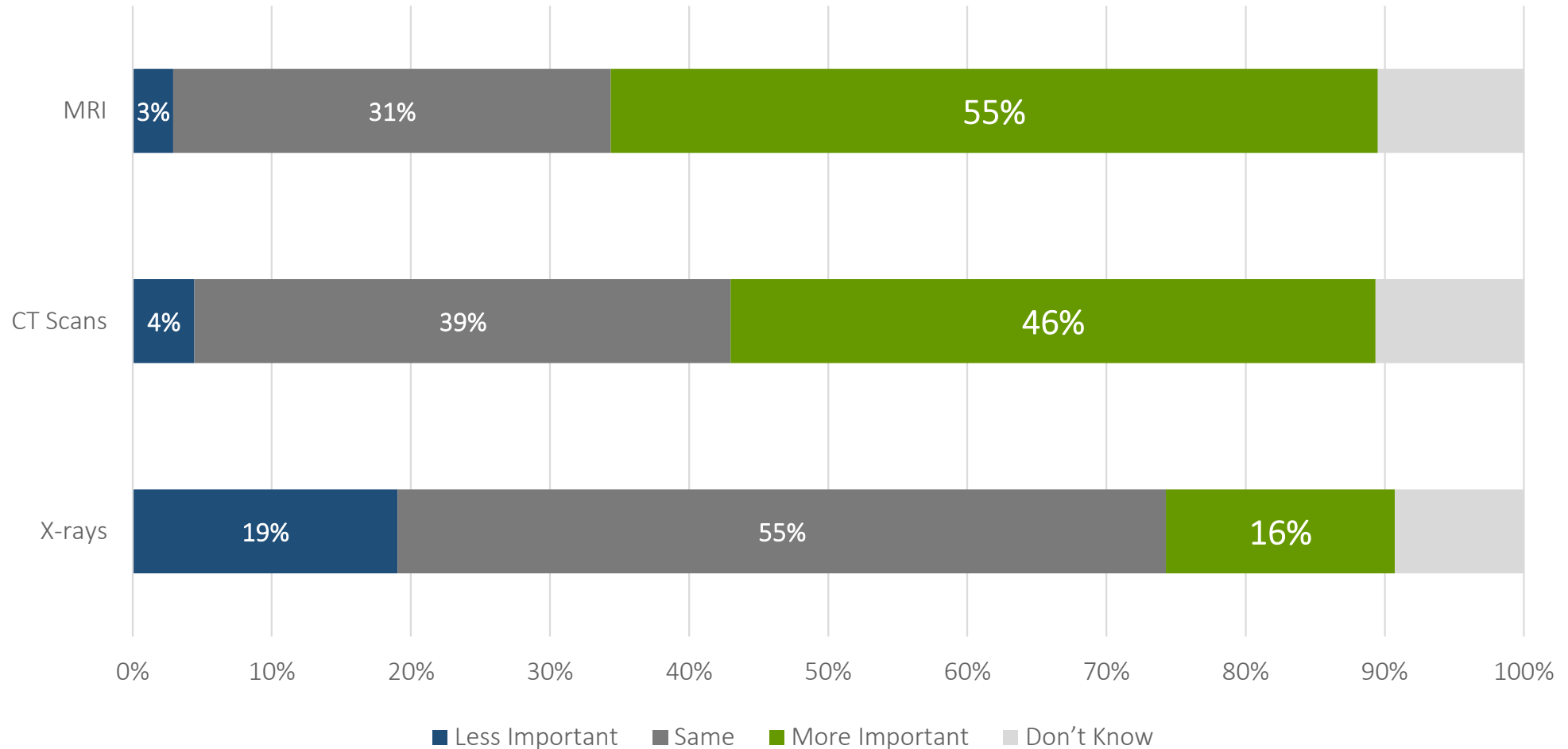


Q: To the best of your knowledge, how important do you think ultrasounds are as a healthcare diagnostic tool? N=846



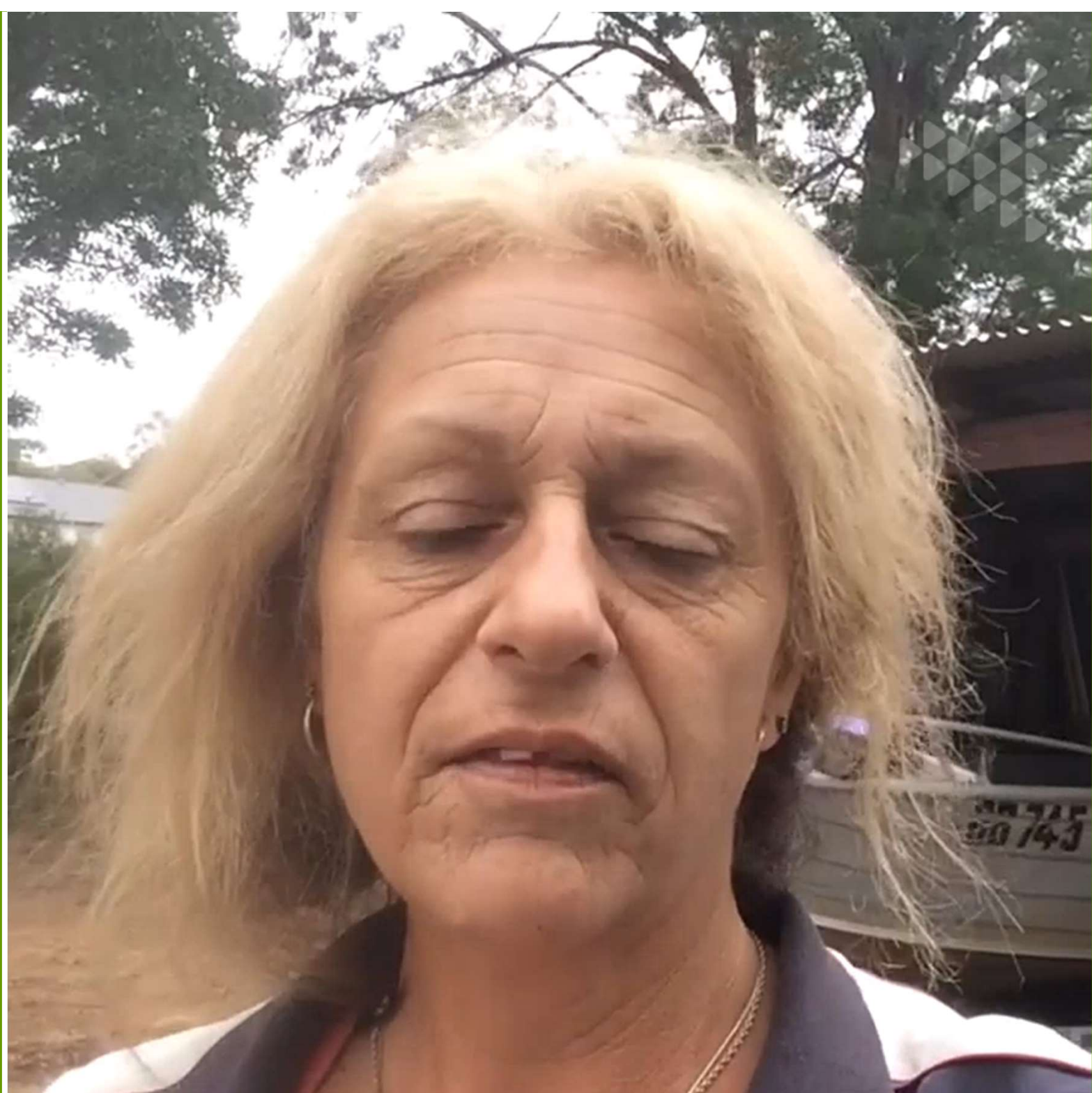
PERCEPTIONS OF COMPARATIVE IMPORTANCE

Compared to ultrasounds, respondents think that MRI and CT scans are a more important and accurate diagnostic imaging tool.



Q: To the best of your knowledge, how important do you think the following medical imaging tools are for obtaining accurate diagnostic images when compared to ultrasound technology? N=846





2.

Most believe image accuracy is largely dependent on the skill and experience of the Sonographer rather than the quality of the machine.

MAJORITY BELIEVE SKILL OF SONOGRAPHER MORE IMPORTANT THAN QUALITY OF ULTRASOUND MACHINE.

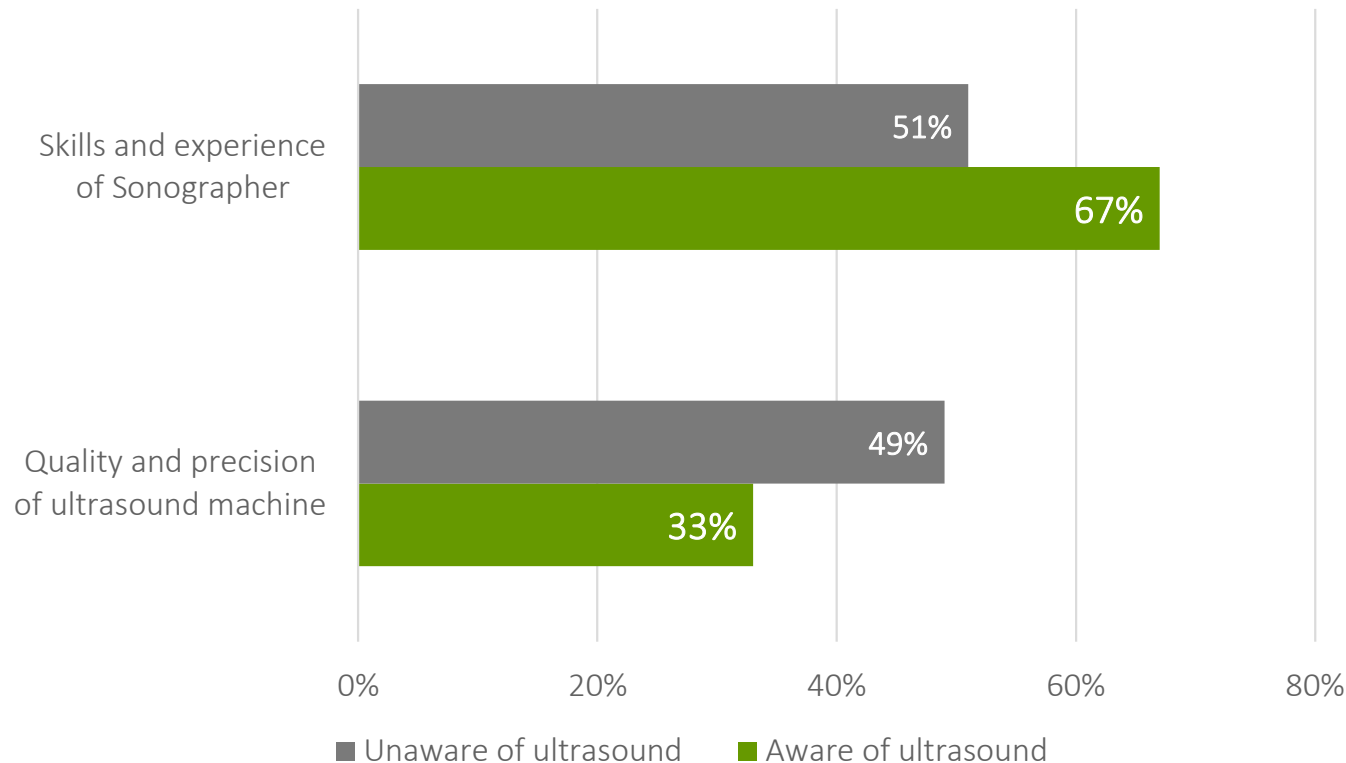
Respondents who are aware of ultrasounds believe that image accuracy is dependent on the experience and skills of the Sonographer rather than the quality of the machine.

65% 

Skills and experience of the person who performs the ultrasound

35% 

Quality and precision of the ultrasound machine

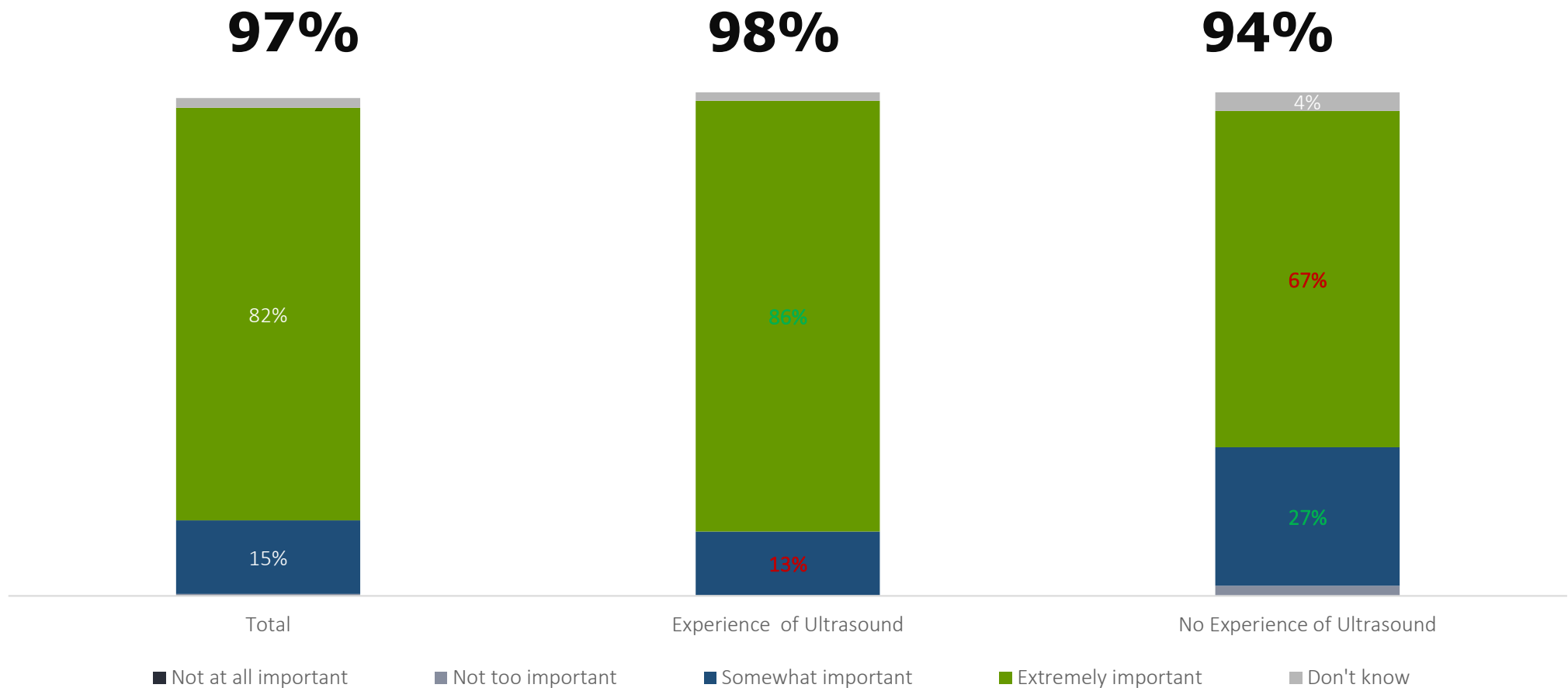


Q: Obtaining comprehensive and accurate images are central to the outcome of an ultrasound diagnosis. Which do you think is MOST important to the outcome of an ultrasound? N=846

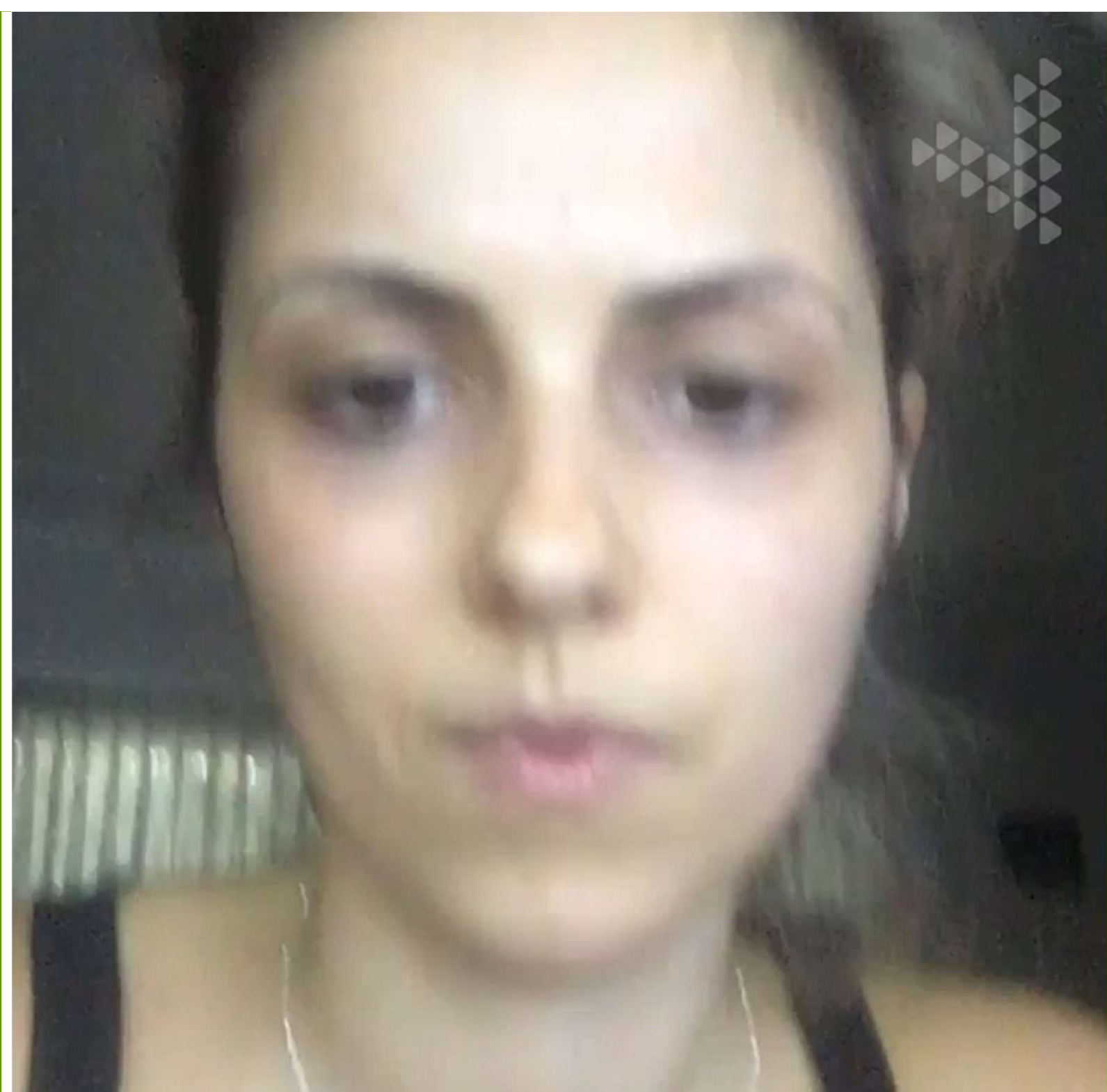


IMPACT OF SKILL ON ACCURACY OF DIAGNOSIS

However, when specifically prompted majority agree that the skill of the Sonographer is important to obtaining an accurate diagnosis. While still strong, those unaware of ultrasounds are less likely to agree with this statement.

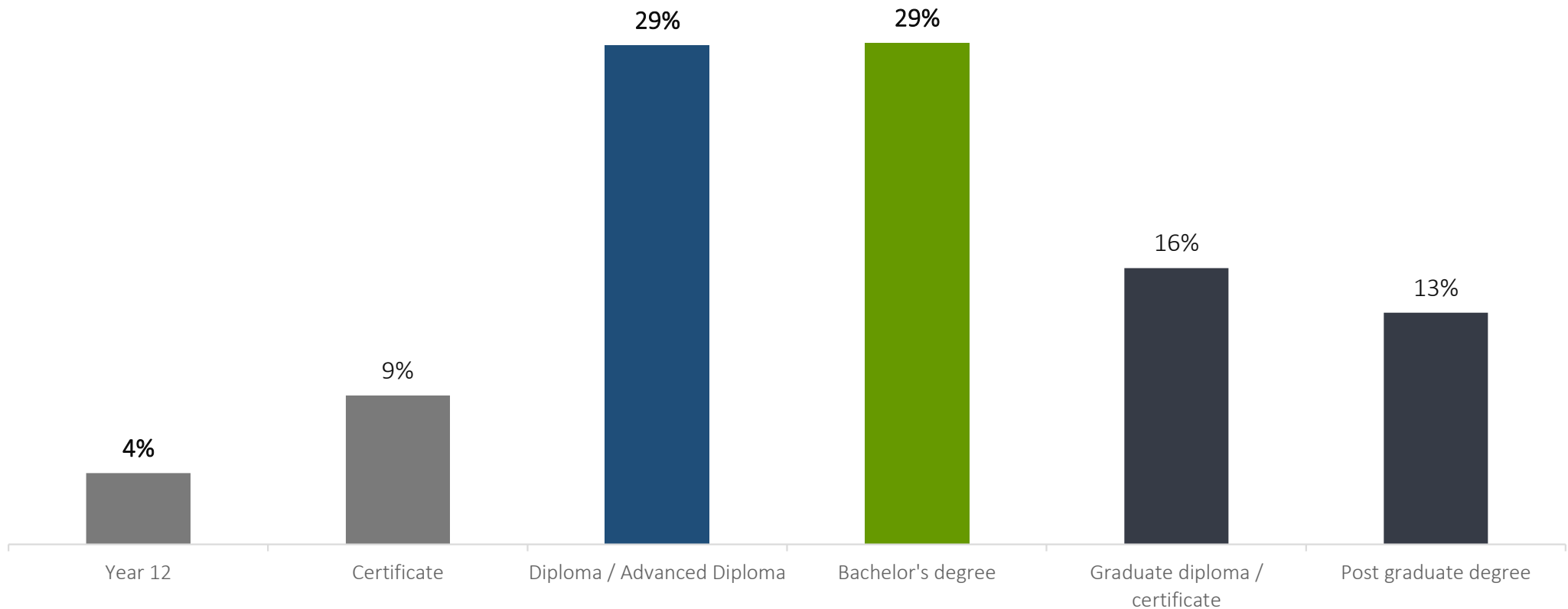


Q: How important do you think that the skills and experience of the person conducting the ultrasound is to obtaining image(s) that enable an accurate diagnosis? N=846



EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF SONOGRAPHERS

A majority think that the minimum qualification to conduct an ultrasound is a Diploma or Bachelors degree. There was an obvious bias for respondents to select a education qualification equivalent to their own.



Q: What would you expect the minimum qualifications are to conduct a diagnostic ultrasound examination? N=846



Trust and Confidence

A closer look into public trust and confidence in sonographers and other medical professionals

3.

Positively, trust is high in the health and medical industry and Sonographers were rated within the top five most trusted health professionals.

TRUST & CONFIDENCE in HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IS HIGH

Interestingly, Radiographers are the most trusted health practitioners – and many people believe Sonographers are Radiographers

1. Health & Medical



2. Police & Emergency Services



3. Education



4. Charities

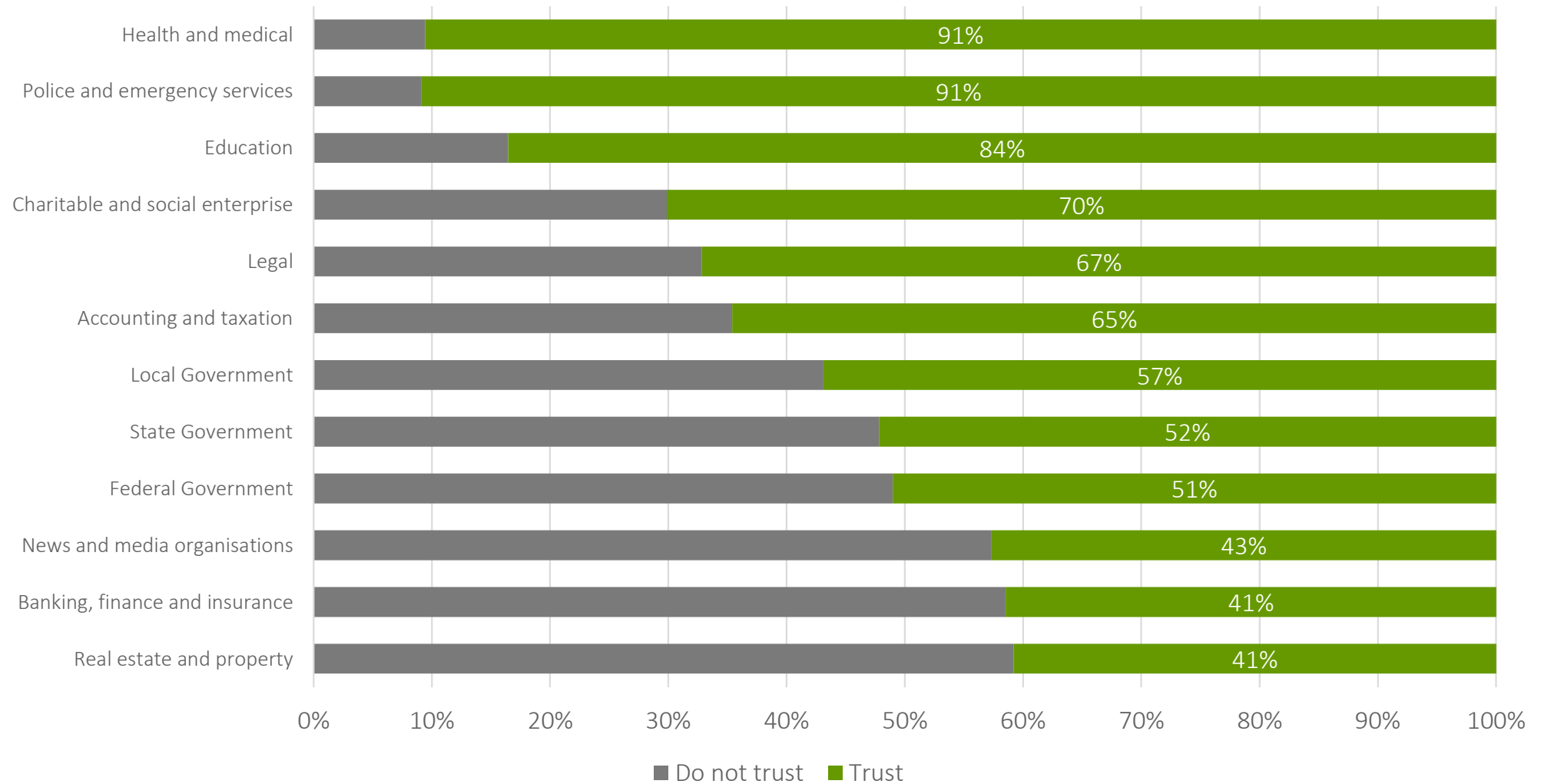


5. Legal



TRUST FOR THE MEDICAL PROFESSION IS HIGH

Over 9 in 10 Australians trust the health and medical profession



Q: Please indicate how much trust and confidence you have in the following sectors / industries. N= Various

TRUST & CONFIDENCE in HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Interestingly, Radiographers are the most trusted health practitioners. Many people believe Sonographers are Radiographers

1. Radiologists



2. Nurses



3. Pharmacists



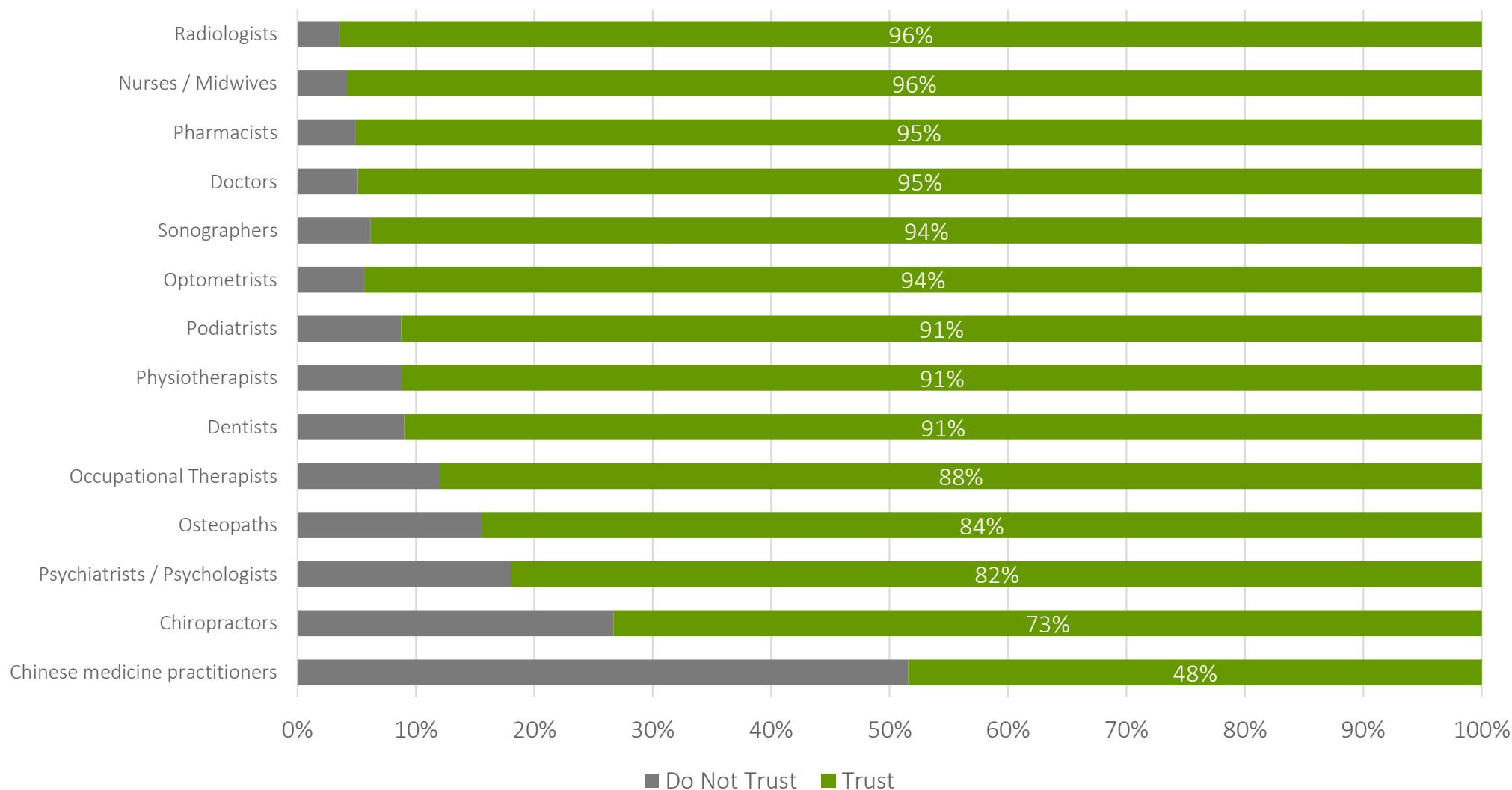
4. Doctors



5. Sonographers



SONOGRAPHERS ARE WITHIN THE TOP FIVE TRUSTED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS



Q: Please indicate how much trust and confidence you have in the following healthcare professionals. N= Various



The Regulation of Sonographers

A closer look into public
knowledge and awareness of
the regulation of
Sonographers.

4.

Respondents overwhelmingly believe that Sonographers should be regulated, with most citing a less accurate diagnosis and patient safety as their main causes for concern. There is strong support for the introduction of regulations for the Sonography profession

74%



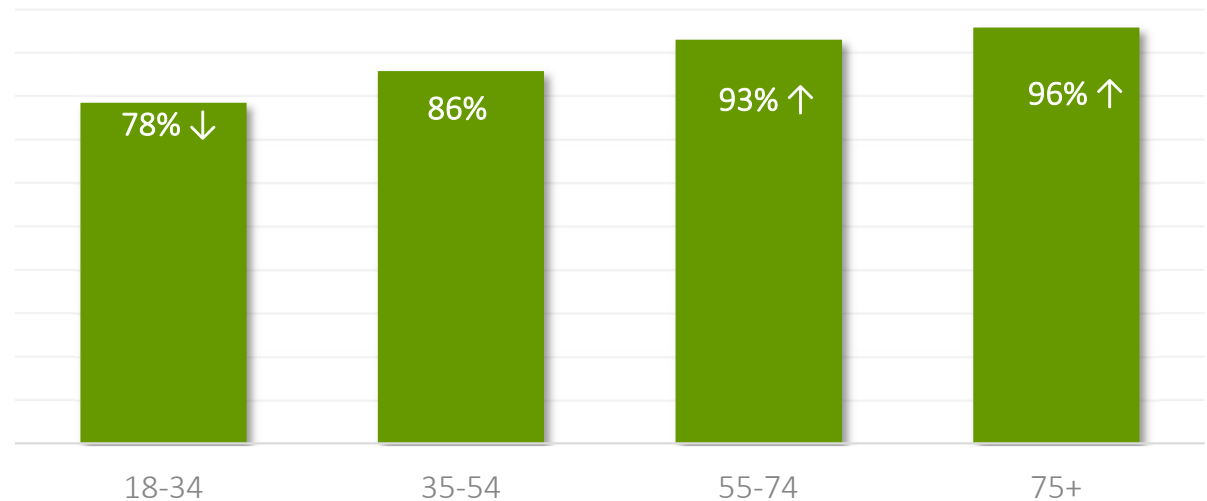
Believe government regulations provide protection for the public

There is clear take out that health professionals should have Government regulations and standards and that those regulations serve to protect the best interests of the public.

86%



Believe health professions should have government regulations and standards



Q: In the context of the Australian healthcare system, please indicate how much you agree that government regulations provide protection for the public. N=846

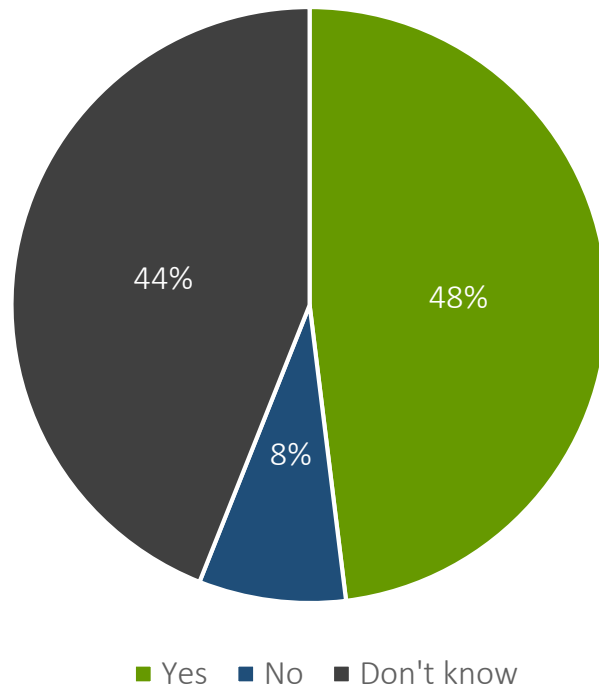
Q: Please indicate the extent to which you agree that all health-related professions should be subject to nationally consistent government regulations and enforceable standards. N=846



AWARENESS OF HEALTHCARE REGULATION

While close to half of respondents are unsure if there is an organisation responsible for regulating Australian healthcare professionals, respondents overwhelmingly believe that Sonographers are regulated.

Do you know if there are organisations responsible for regulating Australian healthcare professionals?



Percent who believe that Sonographers are registered.

93%

Q: To the best of your knowledge, are there organisation(s) or agency(s) that are responsible for regulating and monitoring Australian healthcare professionals? N=846

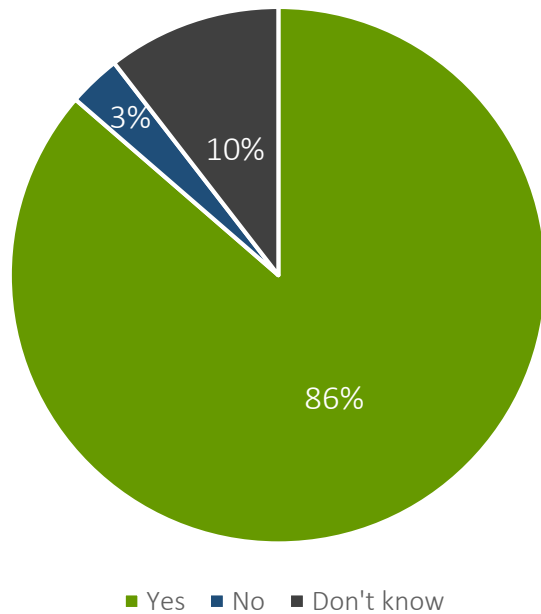
Q: Thinking about sonographers, would you be more likely to think that the profession is: N= 846



SUPPORT FOR REGULATION OF SONOGRAPHERS

Over four in five believe that Sonographers should be bound by standards of practice and would strongly support the introduction of regulations for the Sonography profession.

Do you believe that Sonographers should have minimum entry requirements and practice standards?



Would you support or oppose the introduction of regulations for Sonographers?

SUPPORT

93%



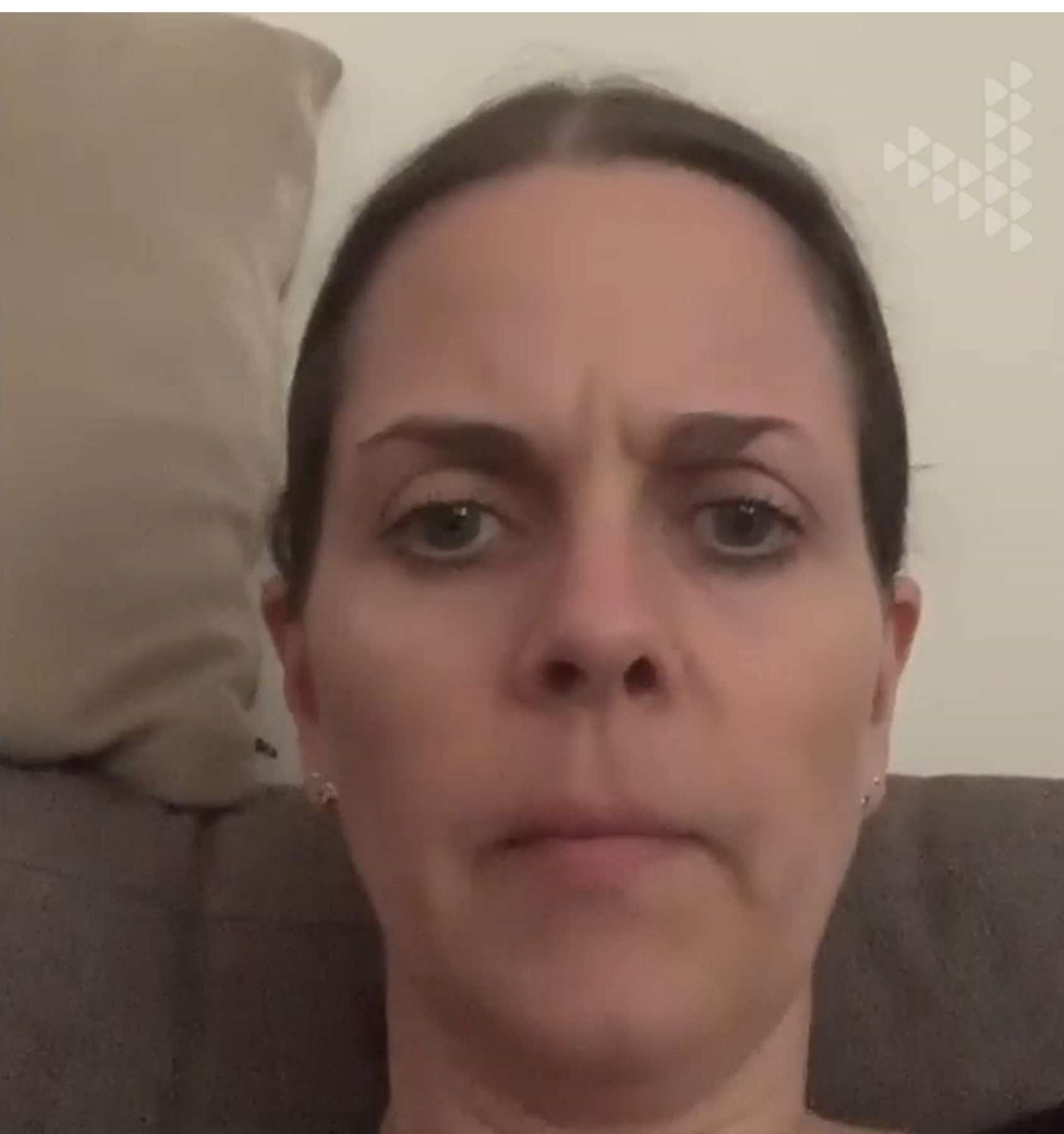
OPPOSE

2%



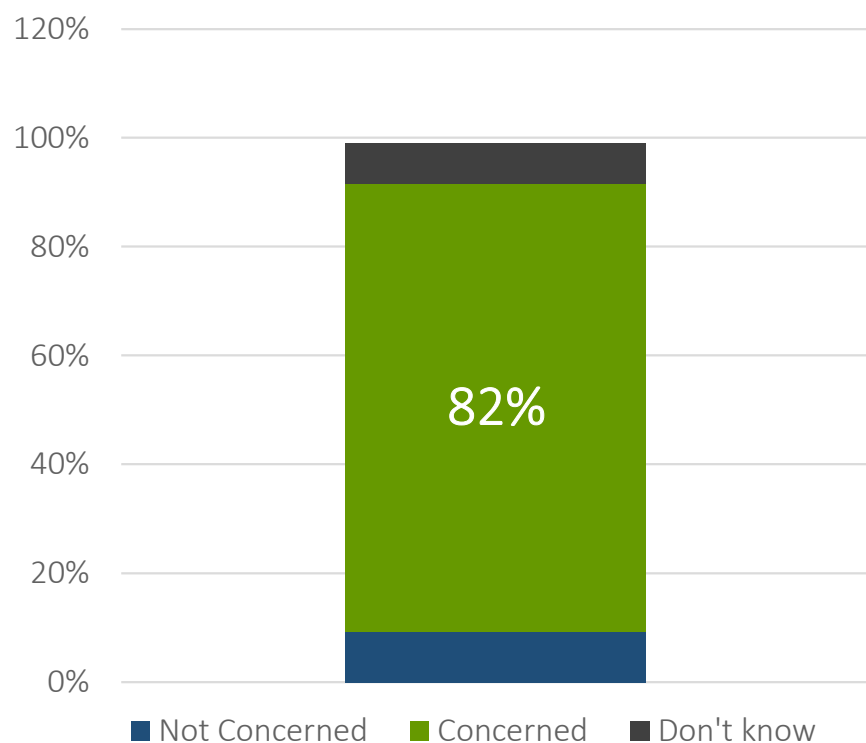
Q: Do you believe that sonographers should be bound by regulations that set minimum entry requirements and standards of practice? N=846

Q: Please indicate if you would support or oppose the introduction of regulations that ensure all sonographers meet nationally consistent and enforceable regulatory requirements N=846



PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT TO LACK OF REGULATION

Respondents are personally concerned about the lack of regulation within the Sonography profession. Most cite a less accurate diagnosis and patient safety as their main causes for concern.



Not concerned at all about the regulation status of Sonographers

- "Because I believe the person performing the ultrasound is already highly trained and professional"
- "There would be other regulations they need to follow and so far I haven't had any bad experiences"
- "No concerns it seems the Government don't have any concerns at all"
- "Regulation excludes highly competent people at times"
- "Well supervised"

Concerned about the regulation status of Sonographers

- "If doctors and nurses have to be regulated then so should Sonography"
- "Medical professionals, can be dealing with life and death situations"
- "They are the eyes for the diagnostician. If they are not fully qualified, then mistakes can be made, and diagnosis is suspect. They are playing with peoples lives"
- "It could mean a less accurate screening for the patient"
- "Doing this sort of job unregulated could be detrimental to peoples health"

Q: Sonographers are not regulated like other health professionals. Are you personally concerned or not concerned about this? N= 846

Q: Why are you not concerned about the regulation status of the sonography profession? N=87

Q: Why are you concerned about the regulation status of the sonography profession? N=263



Outcomes of Lack of Regulation

What does a knowledge of the lack of regulation of Sonographers have on patient behaviour

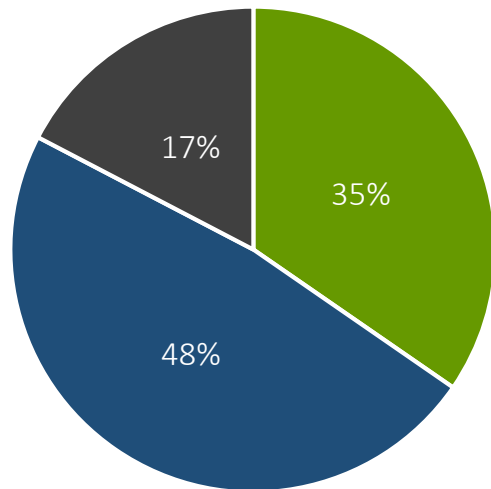
5.

While knowledge regarding the lack of professional regulation does not deter individuals from seeking an ultrasound some individuals are more likely to seek a second opinion or question the diagnostic quality of results.

IMPACT OF LACK OF REGULATION

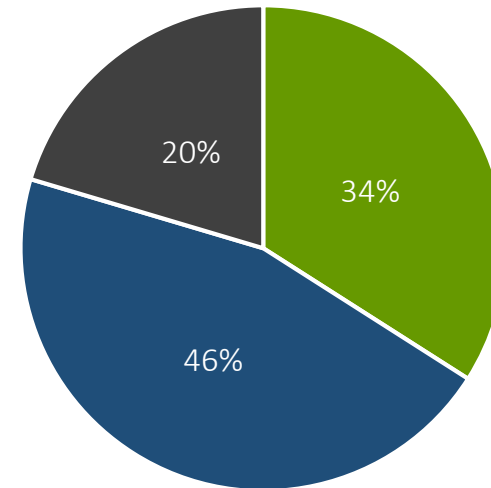
Lack of regulation reduces public trust in sonographers, and the outcomes of medical diagnostic tests performed using ultrasound.

What impact does the regulation status of sonographers have on your trust and confidence in the sonography profession?



- I am less likely to trust sonographers
- It makes no difference
- I am more likely to trust sonographers

What impact does the regulation status have on your confidence in a sonographer conducting a medical diagnostic test using ultrasound?



- I am less likely to trust the outcome of an ultrasound test
- It makes no difference
- I am more likely to trust the outcome of an ultrasound test

Q: What impact does the regulation status of sonographers have on your trust and confidence in the sonography profession? N= 846

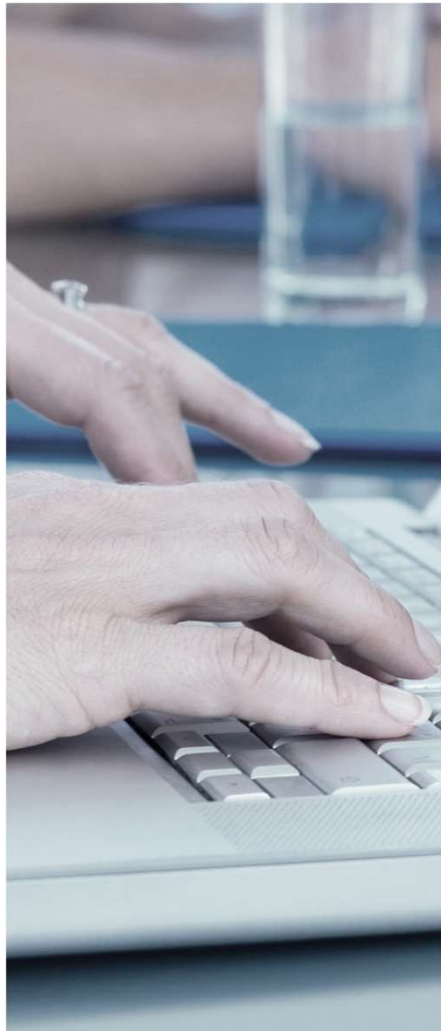
Q: What impact does the regulation status of the sonography profession have on your confidence in a sonographer conducting a medical diagnostic test using ultrasound? N=846

53%

More likely to seek a second opinion

53%

More likely to question the quality of the result of an ultrasound

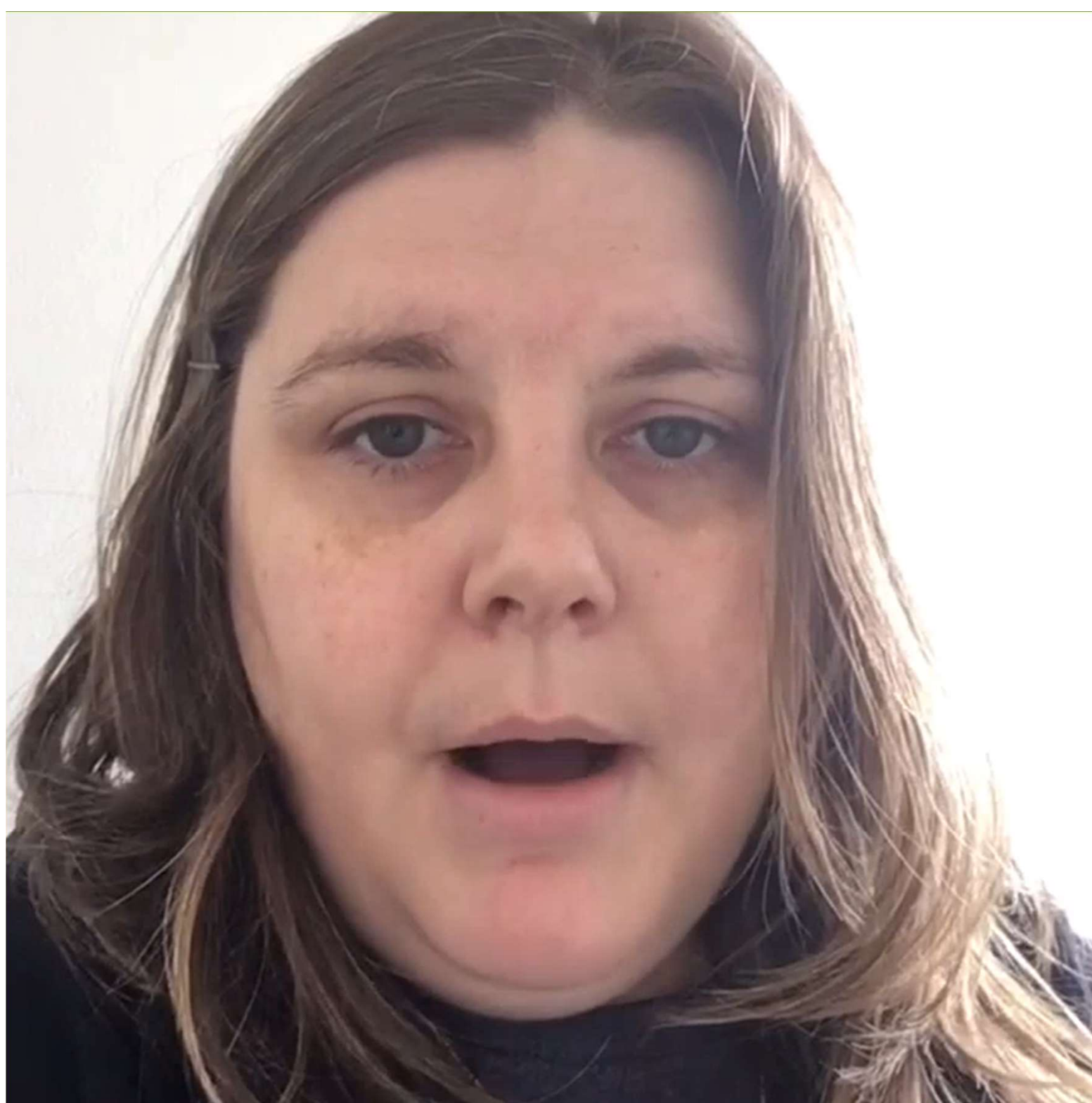


36%

More likely to seek an alternative to ultrasound

20%

Less likely to follow up an ultrasound referral





CONTACT

Survey Matters specialise in providing services to associations and not for profit organisations, their customers and members.

Survey Matters have helped a wide range of associations understand their value proposition - what is important to members, how the association can help them and how satisfied they are with their associations' performance.

We also work with associations to generate and build industry data and knowledge to support advocacy, promotion, industry development and marketing activities.

www.surveymatters.com.au

For more information:

Rebecca Sullivan

Survey Matters

E: rsullivan@surveymatters.com.au

T: 61 3 9452 0101