Hnry Sole Trader Pulse

New Zealand

June 2026

Hnry

How the Hnry Sole Trader Pulse was conducted

Hnry commissioned Resolve Strategic to conduct polling to measure and regularly track the sentiment, views and experiences of sole traders in Australia and New Zealand. This report contains the results of the latest track in New Zealand, with methodology and topics as follows:

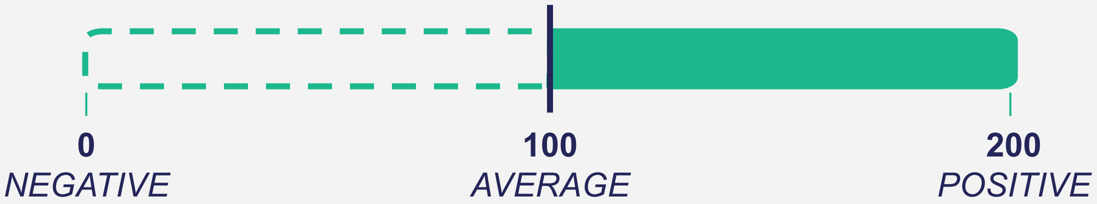
This Pulse was was conducted between 11th - 26th June 2026.

- The survey polled 501 sole traders across New Zealand, with a maximum error margin of +/-4.4%.
- The poll was conducted online via reputable business and general population panels, with respondents screened to ensure they are sole traders (including contractors, consultants, freelancers, gig economy workers, tradies, etc.).
- A representative sample by age, sex, area and tenure when compared to known population parameters using minimum quotas and/or weighting where required.
- In this track the poll also asked a series of ad hoc questions about the next general election, the recent budget, artificial intelligence and the fuel crisis.

How the Hnry Sole Trader Pulse works

The questionnaire employs several core questions asked in every track, notably:

- A pulse figure of sole trader sentiment, with 100 being ‘average’, 0 ‘negative’ and 200 ‘positive’, that can be tracked over time and broken down by sole trader groups. It is calculated using 12 variables, each grouped into current / future business performance, personal factors, business / economic conditions, and past business performance (using an average weighted in descending order).
- A series of attributes, such as sex, age, area, tenure, turnover, industry and whether have another job.



The headline measures include:

- Past financial performance: A combination of sole traders’ financial performance in the last 12 months and the last quarter
- Current/future financial performance: A combination of sole traders’ financial performance right now and expectations for financial performance in the next quarter and the next year
- Economic conditions: A combination of sole traders’ perspective on business conditions right now, economic conditions right now and expected economic conditions in 6 months
- Personal conditions: A combination of sole traders’ personal satisfaction, mental well-being, work life balance and degree of freedom

June 2026 Sole Trader Pulse Overview - NZ

	LAST PULSE (Mar 2026)	AUS PULSE (Jun 2026)	TOTAL (Jun 2026)	INDUSTRY						BUSINESS TENURE			GENDER	
	Index Result	Index Result	Index Result	Tradie	Freelancer / Creative	Consultant	Contractor	Health / Wellness	Others	< 2 years	3-10 years	11+ years	Males	Females
Past Financial Performance														
Financial Performance - Last Quarter	114	110	107	108	105	124	110	112	92	99	112	107	110	102
Current / Future Financial Performance														
Financial Performance Right Now	115	111	108	104	107	131	110	117	89	103	118	100	111	103
Financial Performance Next Quarter	122	117	110	107	109	129	114	111	96	111	121	96	110	110
Business & Economic Conditions														
Health of the Economy Right Now	94	88	88	98	89	95	78	80	85	82	92	88	92	81
Health of the Economy in 6 Months	103	94	97	96	101	105	88	93	96	93	100	96	99	94
Personal Factors														
Personal Satisfaction and Enjoyment	129	127	124	110	125	141	129	134	111	119	131	119	125	122
Wellbeing	124	120	119	107	117	142	123	110	121	114	122	121	122	115
Work-life balance	129	124	127	105	128	145	127	135	132	119	127	136	129	124
Financial Security	119	111	114	112	116	130	113	103	106	104	120	114	119	105
Job Security	123	120	126	114	127	153	123	127	121	109	133	132	130	119
Total Index	**117**	**112**	**112**	**106**	**112**	**129**	**112**	**112**	**105**	**105**	**118**	**111**	**115**	**108**

Executive Summary (1/2)

- **Sole trader sentiment has slipped back after a brief recovery, with the fuel crisis and Budget knocking optimism**
  - Our first pulse of 2026 (in March) was still picking up economic optimism, but this mid-year track shows that optimism has dropped off again following the fuel crisis, the Budget and related pressures.
  - The Total Index has eased to 112 (from 117 in March), and every index measure has fallen this quarter. The most significant drop is in expected financial performance over the next quarter, which now sits at a new low (110), a sign of real uncertainty about the immediate future. Many clearly see the economy as the cause, with both economic measures in the negative sentiment range (economy right now 88, next six months 97).
  - Alongside near-term finances, personal satisfaction (124), well-being (119) and work-life balance (127) have edged down, but all three remain firmly in positive territory, well above the 100 average. Even under real financial pressure, sole traders still value the lifestyle and flexibility that drew them to working for themselves: the strain is showing in the numbers without undermining the core appeal of self-employment.
  - Consultants are by far the most positive segment (129), while in terms of business maturity, those running for 3-10 years (118) are the most positive, while the newest businesses, those under two years old, are the least positive (105).

- **Income is still moving in the right direction, but only modestly and unevenly**
  - Quarter-on-quarter income remains net positive, with 51% reporting higher turnover and 28% lower, a net change of +24. However, the average dollar figures are very similar between quarters, so in most cases this is a slight, inflation-level increase, and June often shows an EOFY-related lift.
  - The gains skew by age: younger sole traders (17–34) reported the biggest income rise by far (+47 net), versus just +13 for 35–54s. Growth is concentrated among younger operators, most likely building from a lower base.

- **Financial and job security have softened, and the newest businesses are feeling it most**
  - The share rating their financial security as good has fallen to a new low of 40% (with 22% rating it poor). Younger businesses are least secure, with just 29% of those under two years old rating their security as good.
  - Job security is a little steadier (50% good, 17% poor), but the newest businesses are the most exposed: just 36% of those under two years old rate their job security as good, and second-job holders rate it lower than those whose sole trading is their only job (45% vs 58%).

Executive Summary (2/2)

- **The fuel crisis is being felt directly, and most driving sole traders have already changed behaviour**
  - Almost nine-in-ten sole traders (88%) drive regularly, and only 17% say the fuel crisis stemming from the Middle East has had no impact at all on their business, 42% report a significant impact with tradies (52%) and contractors (49%) the hardest hit.
  - In response, 77% of drivers have changed behaviour, most often driving less in general (47%), cutting back on purchases such as groceries (29%) and working from home more (17%). This matters because only 37% can work from home for all of their work, so reduced travel can have real consequences for earnings.
- **AI has moved into the mainstream, but sole traders remain genuinely split on what it means for them**
  - Use of AI now sits at similar levels to Australia: 78% have now used it in some capacity and 65% have used it for work, with younger sole traders leading adoption.
  - Sentiment towards AI is mixed; 39% are positive, 25% are negative and 37% are neutral, with users far more positive (53%) than non-users (10%).
  - Looking ahead, 25% say AI is already a regular tool in their business and another 25% expect it to be within five years, while 43% think it will significantly change their role, split between those who see it helping them work more efficiently (20%) and those who fear it will reduce the value they add or push earnings down (23%).
- **Accountant use has fallen sharply and unpaid help is rising, while apps keep costs down, and Hnry is now a top NZ player**
  - Most sole traders still use some help (82%) for their tax admin, but there is a marked drop in accountant use to 27% (from 35%), alongside a rise in unpaid help from family and friends to 26%. This could potentially be reflective of the cost pressures and the passing of EOFY.
  - Sole traders spend an average of 5 hours a week and $253 a month managing their financial and tax affairs, the lowest monthly figure in two years, and among paid options programs and apps remain the cheapest.