

# Henry Sole Trader Pulse

New Zealand

March 2026



# How the Henry Sole Trader Pulse was conducted

Henry 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:

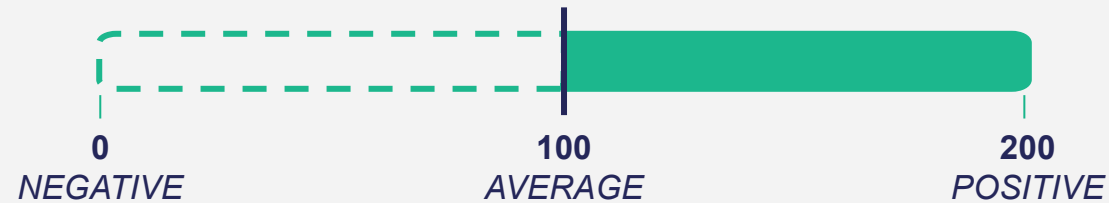
This Pulse was conducted between 5th – 16th March 2026.

- The survey polled 510 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 pulse the poll also asked a series of ad hoc questions about business objectives, bank accounts and payment systems, financial and tax affairs, financial literacy, additional services and AI.

# How the Henry 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

# March 2026 Sole Trader Pulse Overview - NZ

	<i>LAST PULSE</i> <i>(Oct 2025)</i>	<i>AUS PULSE</i> <i>(Mar 2026)</i>	<i>TOTAL</i> <i>(Mar 2026)</i>	<i>INDUSTRY</i>						<i>BUSINESS TENURE</i>			<i>GENDER</i>	
	<i>Index Result</i>	<i>Index Result</i>	<i>Index Result</i>	<i>Tradie</i>	<i>Freelancer / Creative</i>	<i>Consultant</i>	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Health / Wellness</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>&lt; 2 years</i>	<i>3-10 years</i>	<i>11+ years</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
<b>Past Financial Performance</b>														
Financial Performance - Last Quarter	109	119	114	117	107	119	119	112	112	108	121	110	116	110
<b>Current / Future Financial Performance</b>														
Financial Performance Right Now	112	119	115	121	111	120	120	115	108	111	122	111	116	114
Financial Performance Next Quarter	119	121	122	124	118	126	127	119	118	115	129	120	121	123
<b>Business &amp; Economic Conditions</b>														
Health of the Economy Right Now	77	97	94	95	89	109	93	94	90	91	98	91	94	93
Health of the Economy in 6 Months	91	98	103	100	99	112	104	99	105	100	106	101	104	101
<b>Personal Factors</b>														
Personal Satisfaction and Enjoyment	132	132	129	131	130	132	134	126	119	124	135	126	129	129
Wellbeing	123	130	124	127	125	124	124	126	118	118	130	122	126	121
Work-life balance	135	132	129	122	136	131	134	127	122	122	133	131	128	131
Financial Security	116	120	119	125	121	120	115	117	117	114	126	117	123	115
Job Security	124	128	123	129	122	124	123	123	116	116	129	121	123	122
<b>Total Index</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>116</b>

# Executive Summary (1/2)

- **Sole trader sentiment has slightly improved, and economic outlook has improved from the lows of late 2025**
  - In the last pulse, conducted in October 2025, we found a series of declines in the Sole Trader Index that showed economic and financial outlook was starting to impact enjoyment of sole traders' businesses.
  - In this latest pulse, there has been a slight rebound, with all financial and economic index scores more positive. The overall index has lifted to 117, up from 114 in October 2025, with the index for the health of the economy right now up from 77 to 94, and outlook for the next six months up from 91 to 103.
  - At the same time, recent and current business performance have edged up, and outlook for the next quarter has improved from 119 to 122. While some NZ sole traders are still doing it tough, there is growing evidence that improving economic outlook may finally be starting to improve.
  - Part of this could be due to the timing of the survey, which was conducted just at the start of the conflict in the Middle East, so the impacts of the conflict and the petrol crisis are not reflected in this Pulse.
  - Sole traders that have been in business for 3 - 10 years performed much better than others in this pulse on all fronts apart from work-life balance, with an overall index of 123. Consultants were the profession with the highest overall index at 122.
- **Income is still improving overall, and at much the same rate as the last track, but the gains remain uneven across different types of sole traders**
  - We continue to find quarter-on-quarter income moving in the right direction, with 50% of sole traders reporting higher turnover than the previous quarter and 35% reporting lower turnover, producing a net gain of +15 points. This is slightly stronger than the +12 recorded in October 2025 and suggests that, for many sole traders, business is still growing at least in line with inflation. Consultants are doing particularly well, with a net income change of +42, while tradies are also relatively strong at +20. By contrast, contractors and health and wellness businesses are closer to flat. Looking at the broader index, businesses operating for 3–10 years are the most positive overall (123), while those in business for less than two years remain the least positive (112).
- **Financial and job security remain reasonably solid, though only around half of sole traders feel positively secure rather than strongly so**
  - Ratings for financial and job security are fairly stable, which is consistent with the steadier performance picture in the pulse overall. 47% of sole traders rate their financial security as good, while just 14% rate it poor.
  - Similarly, 51% rate their job security positively, with only 13% rating it poor. More established businesses, and particularly tradies and consultants, tend to rate both forms of security more positively than others.

# Executive Summary (2/2)

- **Managing financial and tax affairs remains a significant time and cost burden and the move away from traditional accountants looks increasingly real**
  - Most sole traders continue to use some form of help in managing their financial and tax affairs, with 83% doing so in this pulse. However, there is an indicative drop in the use of accountants to 35%, which is notable because this pulse was conducted close to EOFY.
  - Programs and apps remain highly used at 28%, and overall 75% of sole traders say they are comfortable with how they currently manage their affairs. In practical terms, sole traders are spending an average of 6 hours a week and \$3792 per year on financial and tax administration.
  - Programs and apps continue to offer a clear cost advantage, bringing that yearly figure down to \$2832, and to \$1788 when used alone. Hnry customers are saving even more than this, spending only 1% of their self employed income on managing tax and financial admin (capped at \$1500 per year)
- **The End-Of-Financial-Year lifts the burden materially, but most sole traders still report feeling relatively relaxed rather than stressed**
  - As expected, the end of the financial year increases both the time and money sole traders put into their accounts. This year, they estimate an average EOFY commitment of 15 hours and \$897, higher than the usual weekly and monthly burden and also higher than last year's 13 hours and \$801.
  - However, most sole traders do not appear overwhelmed by this: the majority (65%) say they are not stressed about EOFY. Those using programs and apps are among the least stressed, and also report lower average EOFY costs (\$753) than those using accountants (\$1,305) or tax agents (\$1,006). As in previous years, technology appears to make the whole process easier and cheaper.
- **Only half (49%) of sole traders are incurring business expenses and claiming everything they are entitled to. The average dollar amount of expenses that go unclaimed per year is just over \$3,000**
  - Almost three-quarters of sole traders (72%) report incurring non-billable business expenses, a figure that has remained fairly steady over time. However, only 49% of those incurring expenses say they claim all of them, while 41% claim some and 9% do not claim any at all.
  - This means roughly half of those with expenses are still leaving money on the table in some form. Complexity, lost receipts, uncertainty about what can and cannot be claimed, and the feeling that the amount is not worth the effort all remain as key barriers.
  - Among those claiming any expenses, the average amount claimed is now \$6,928 per year, up from \$6,055 last year and consistent with higher prices. For those who do not claim everything, the average amount missed is still substantial at \$3,034.
  - In other words, it appears NZ sole traders are doing a better job of claiming expenses than in previous years, but there is still money being missed.