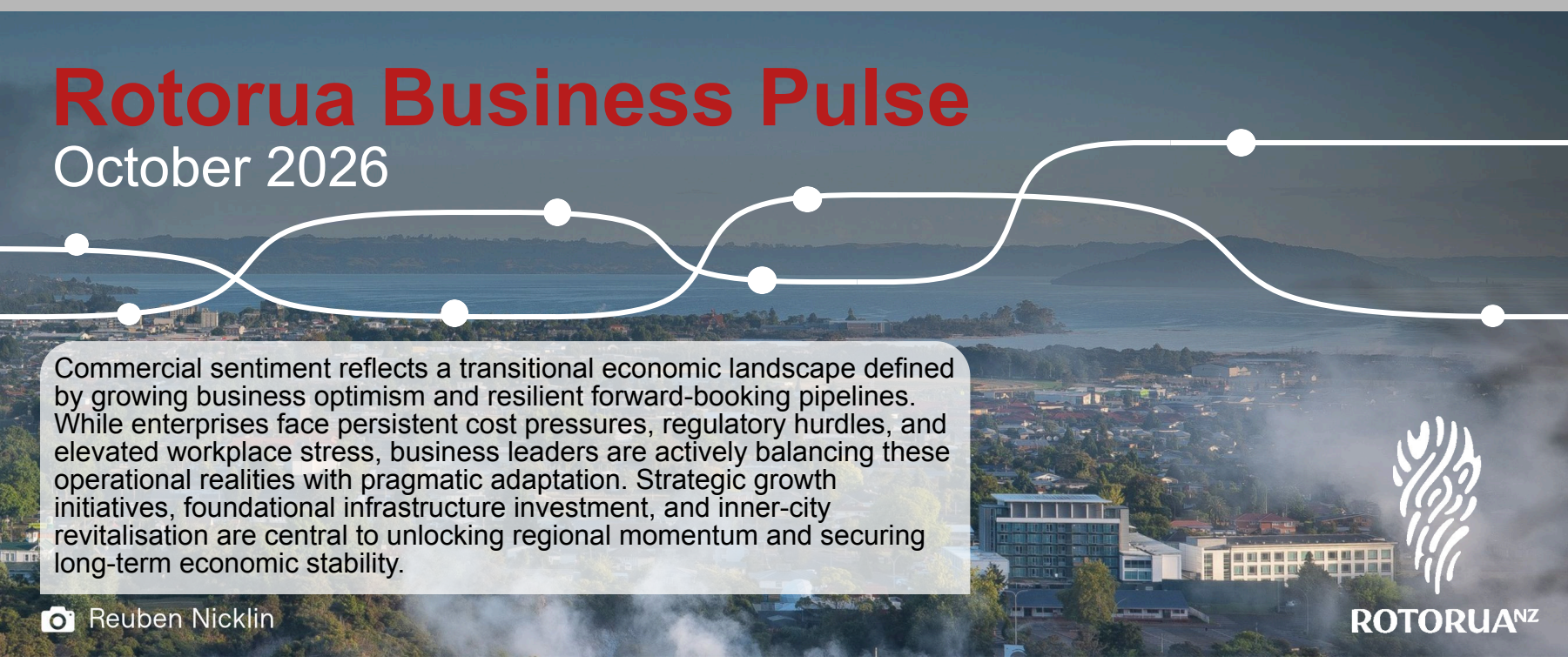
Rotorua Business Pulse

October 2026



Commercial sentiment reflects a transitional economic landscape defined by growing business optimism and resilient forward-booking pipelines. While enterprises face persistent cost pressures, regulatory hurdles, and elevated workplace stress, business leaders are actively balancing these operational realities with pragmatic adaptation. Strategic growth initiatives, foundational infrastructure investment, and inner-city revitalisation are central to unlocking regional momentum and securing long-term economic stability.

Reuben Nicklin

Background

The Rotorua Business Pulse programme is a joint initiative between RotoruaNZ and Rotorua Business Chamber. The programme provides Rotorua business leaders (owners, CEOs, GMs) an opportunity to share their thoughts on the local economy and how their business is faring across key metrics. The survey is run on a half-yearly basis with the first survey conducted in April 2022.

This dashboard provides an overview of the topline metrics for all survey periods. View the current and previous Rotorua Business Pulse reports in pdf format.

Register your interest in participating in future Rotorua Business Pulse Surveys.

Rotorua BUSINESS CHAMBER

Unlock the Benefits of Chamber Membership

Join the Rotorua Business Chamber and become part of a powerful network dedicated to business success. As the district's leading business organisation, we provide the connections, advocacy, and resources to help your business thrive.

Join as a new member today.
Signup Now

Key themes

100 Rotorua business leaders participated in the October 2026 survey. Key themes for the October 2026 report are a result of the responses collected during the survey period from the 13th October to 6th November 2026:

- Situation: Economic sentiment across the district shows a widening gap between broad macroeconomic conditions and individual business experience. While lingering caution persists regarding national and local economic performance over the past year, commercial confidence has turned notably constructive. Businesses are increasingly decoupling their immediate operating reality from broader sentiment, displaying strong optimism for the year ahead as forward expectations rebound across all measures.
- Outlook: Business expectations point toward a broad recovery in activity and profitability, though persistent cost pressures continue to weigh on operational planning. While pricing strategies and output volumes are projected to expand, confidence regarding the overall affordability of doing business remains severely constrained. This dynamic highlights a delicate operating environment where revenue growth and capital investment intentions are steadily rebounding, even as overhead and margin management stay central to commercial strategy.
- Central Government: Business leaders emphasize securing a stable economic foundation by prioritizing regional development, regulatory reform, and infrastructure investment to restore commercial confidence. Rather than seeking short-term fixes, businesses look to central government to provide structural certainty around business costs, manage inflationary pressures, maintain energy security, and address workforce capacity through targeted skill development to support long-term employment and private investment.
- Local Government: Inner-city revitalisation and economic growth remain central to the community's expectations for the upcoming Long-Term Plan. Business leaders look to Council to act as an enabler by streamlining regulatory processes, investing in foundational infrastructure to unlock housing, and championing targeted destination marketing. Maintaining core assets efficiently while ensuring rates deliver value for money, alongside enhancing public spaces and community safety, is viewed as essential for local economic health.
- AI Use: AI tool adoption is maturing toward broader functional integration, with businesses increasingly leveraging automated workflows and advanced applications alongside core efficiency gains. However, as technical capability and data privacy concerns present greater adoption barriers, leaders are actively seeking a deeper understanding of core business value, automated workflows, and risk management to guide future strategy.
- Positivity: Confidence centers on pipeline momentum and core strengths, reflecting a shift toward growth and stability. While commercial pillars drive optimism, businesses note an easing of headwinds. Regionally, sentiment anchors on tourism recovery, event attraction, and broader economic development, demonstrating a shared commitment to building local momentum.
- Concerns: Concerns have shifted as business leaders navigate immediate economic realities, with business survival and forward-booking pipelines emerging as prominent focuses alongside ongoing cost pressures. While finding skilled staff remains a key consideration, business leaders are balancing these operational challenges with pragmatic adaptation, maintaining a steady focus on risk management and financial resilience.
- Workplace Stress: Business confidence continues to navigate a complex economic landscape, with workplace stress remaining elevated as business leaders balance cost pressures and operational demands. Despite these pressures, forward-looking sentiment shows resilience, reflected in a positive net forward-booking outlook and steady recruitment activity across a substantial portion of the commercial sector.
- Challenges: Macroeconomic pressures remain a primary focus, driven by ongoing concerns around inflation, goods costs, and fuel price volatility. While these operational hurdles weigh heavily on planning, attention is also sharpened on regulatory compliance and energy stability. This highlights a resilient business community managing external cost pressures while securing margins in a demanding environment.
- Fuel: Fuel exposure remains steady for Rotorua businesses, with most reporting at least moderate exposure. While higher fuel and freight costs remain the most common operational impact, fewer businesses are absorbing these additional costs compared with April, and slightly more report no material impact. Alongside managing softer customer demand and reduced travel, some operators are adjusting suppliers or transport arrangements to navigate ongoing pressures.
- Airport: While a core group of business travellers continue to rely on Rotorua Airport, persistent challenges around flight scheduling, cancellations, and reliability have driven many businesses to utilise alternative hubs such as Tauranga and Auckland. Enhancing flight frequency, schedule dependability, and route options remains vital to restoring local business confidence and increasing domestic airport usage.
- Overall sentiment across the district reflects a transitional period, balancing optimism for future growth against lingering operational and economic uncertainties. While the community recognises strong foundational potential and emerging momentum, local businesses continue to voice practical concerns regarding city safety, regulatory compliance, and destination marketing. This dynamic underscores a community poised for recovery, yet actively navigating the structural and reputational hurdles required to unlock its full economic potential.





Economic sentiment across the district shows a widening gap between broad macroeconomic conditions and individual business experience. While lingering caution persists regarding national and local economic performance over the past year, commercial confidence has turned notably constructive. Businesses are increasingly decoupling their immediate operating reality from broader sentiment, displaying strong optimism for the year ahead as forward expectations rebound across all measures.

Select Survey Period: October 2026 (1)

Select Industry: All Industries (1)

Explainer:
Results are presented as a Net Score, subtracting the 'deteriorated' percentage from the 'improved' percentage. Change values are versus the previous survey period.

Compared to 12 months ago, how do you think the economic situation has changed for...?

Deteriorated | Remained the same | Improved

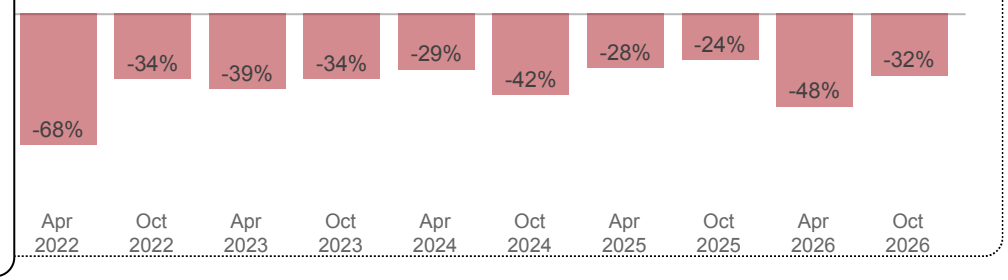


NEW ZEALAND

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

-32%

▲ 16% pts from Apr 2026



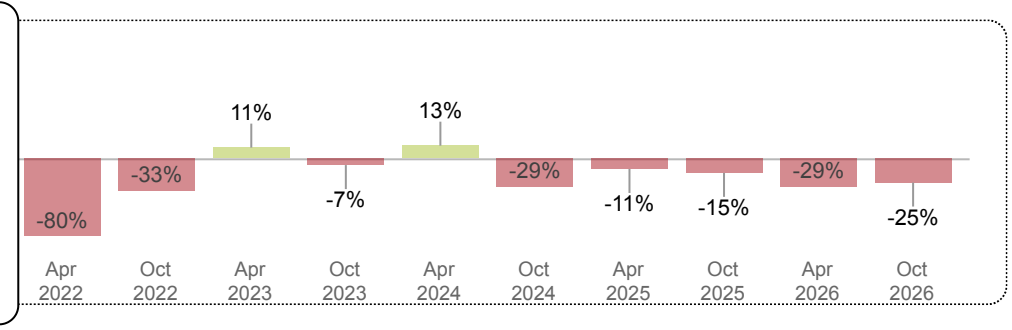


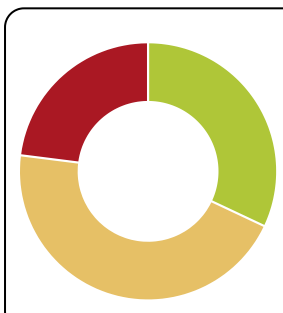
ROTORUA

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

-25%

▲ 4% pts from Apr 2026



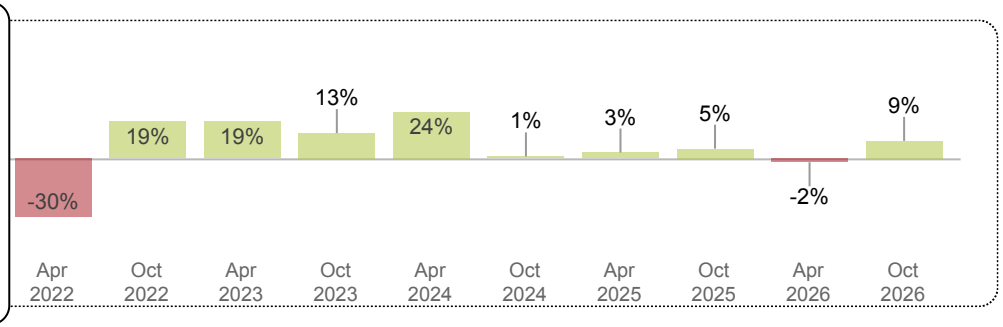


YOUR BUSINESS

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

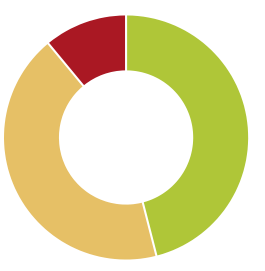
+9%

▲ 11% pts from Apr 2026



In 12 months' time, how do you think the economic situation will have changed for…?

Improved | Remained the same | Deteriorated

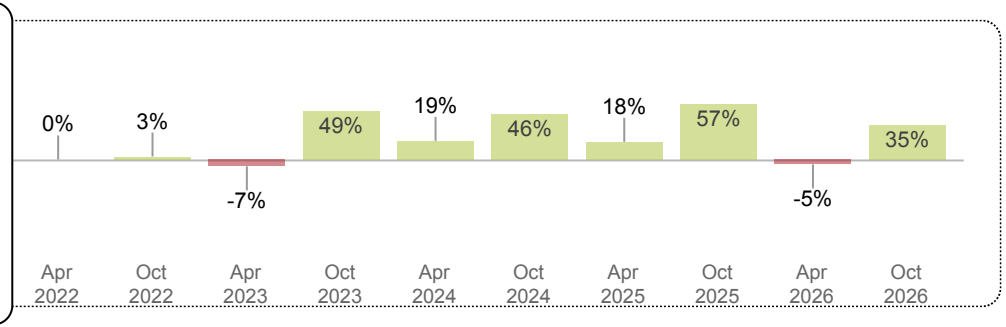


NEW ZEALAND

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

+35%

▲ 40% pts from Apr 2026



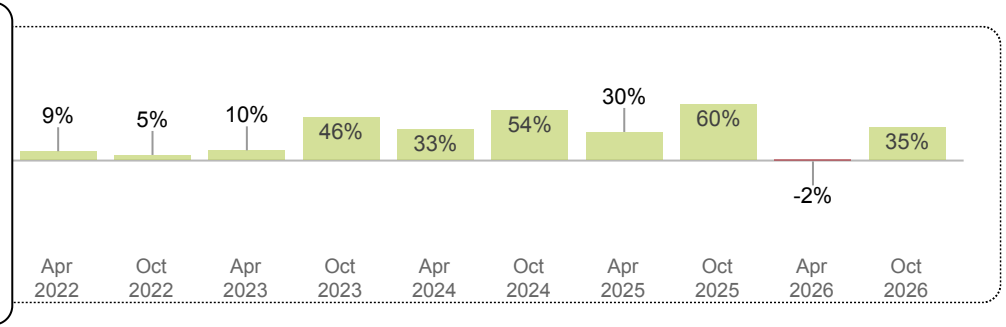


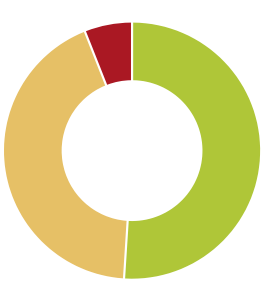
ROTORUA

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

+35%

▲ 37% pts from Apr 2026



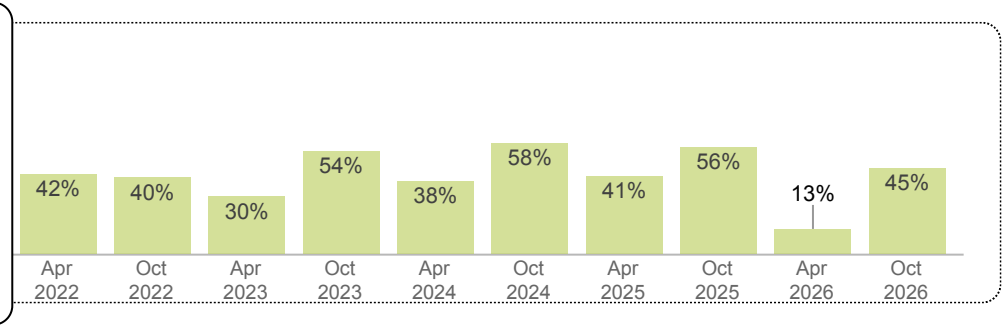


YOUR BUSINESS

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

+45%

▲ 32% pts from Apr 2026



(100 respondents answered questions on this page in the October 2026 survey)



Business expectations point toward a broad recovery in activity and profitability, though persistent cost pressures continue to weigh on operational planning. While pricing strategies and output volumes are projected to expand, confidence regarding the overall affordability of doing business remains severely constrained. This dynamic highlights a delicate operating environment where revenue growth and capital investment intentions are steadily rebounding, even as overhead and margin management stay central to commercial strategy.

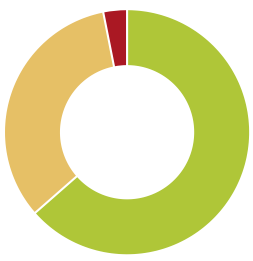
Select Survey Period: October 2026 (1)

Select Industry: All Industries (1)

Explainer:
Results are presented as a Net Score, subtracting the 'decreased' percentage from the 'increased' percentage. Change values are versus the previous survey period.

Across the following measures, how do you expect your business to have changed in 12 months' time?

Decreased **Remained the same** **Increased**

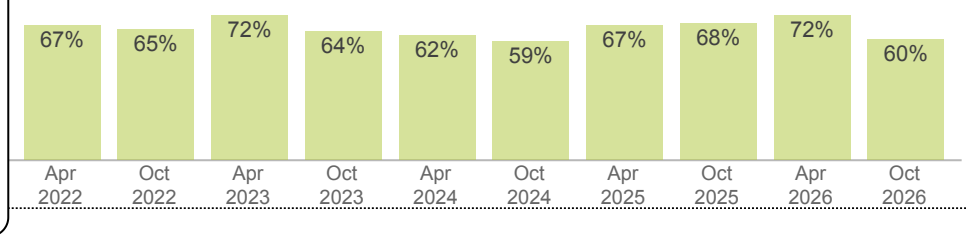


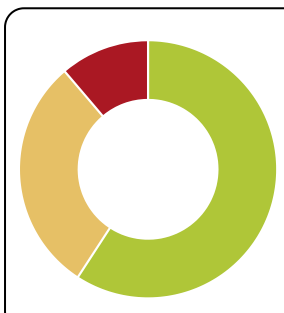
Price of your product

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

+60%

▼ 12% pts from Apr 2026



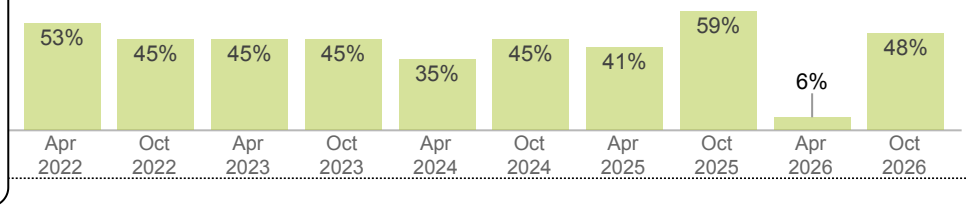


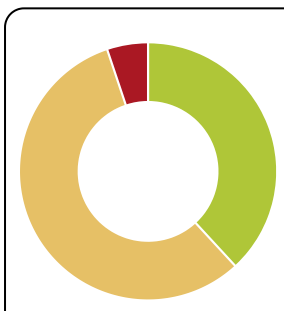
Volume of business activity

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

+48%

▲ 42% pts from Apr 2026



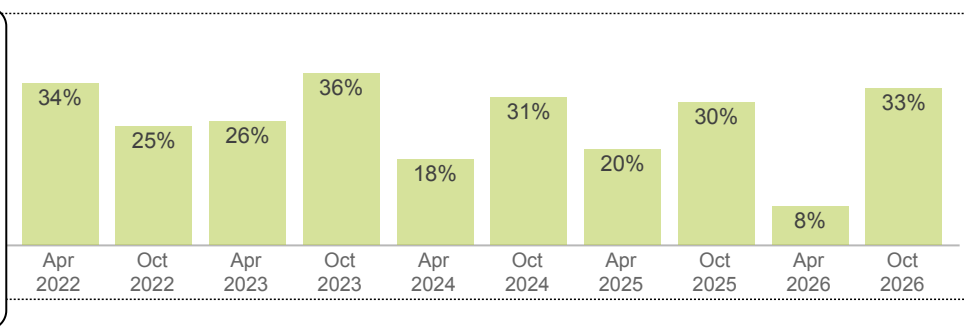


Number of staff employed

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

+33%

▲ 25% pts from Apr 2026



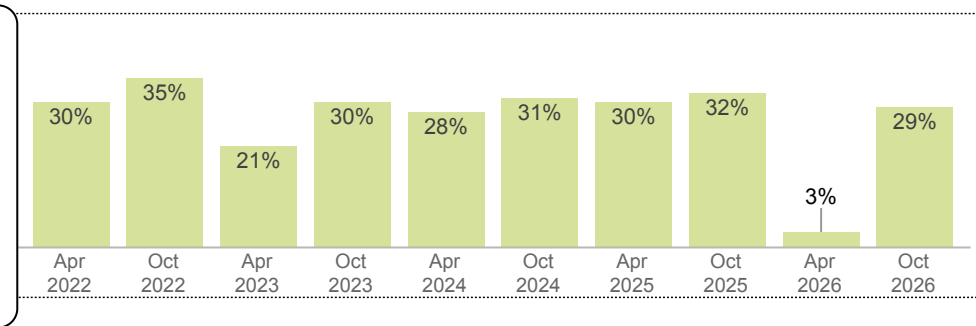


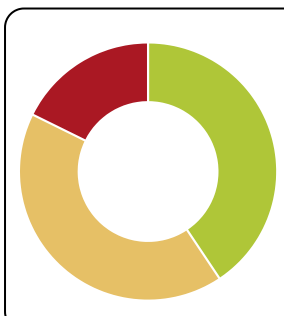
Investments into the business (buildings, plant, equipment)

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

+29%

▲ 26% pts from Apr 2026



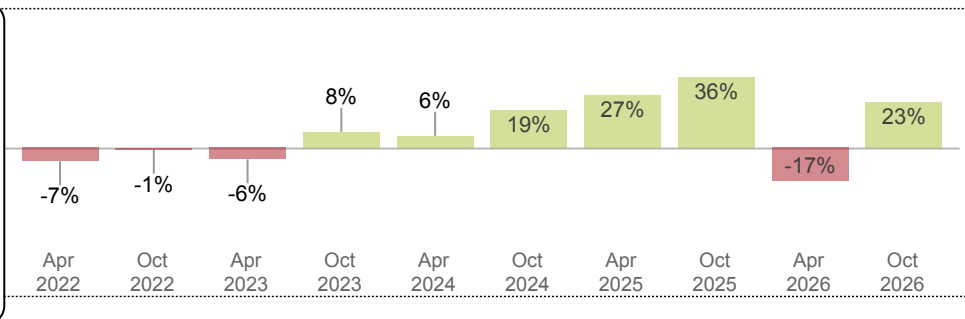


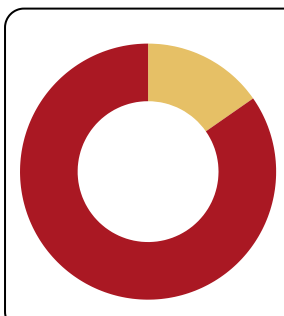
Profitability

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

+23%

▲ 40% pts from Apr 2026



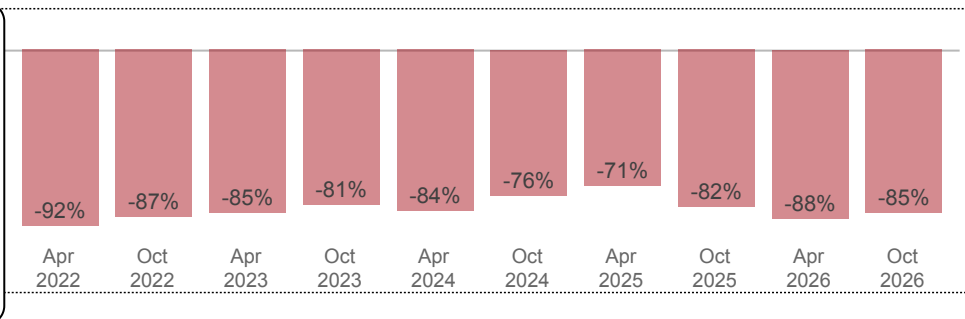


Affordability of doing business

NET SCORE as at Oct 2026

-85%

▲ 3% pts from Apr 2026



(98 respondents answered at least one question for charts on this page in the October 2026 survey)



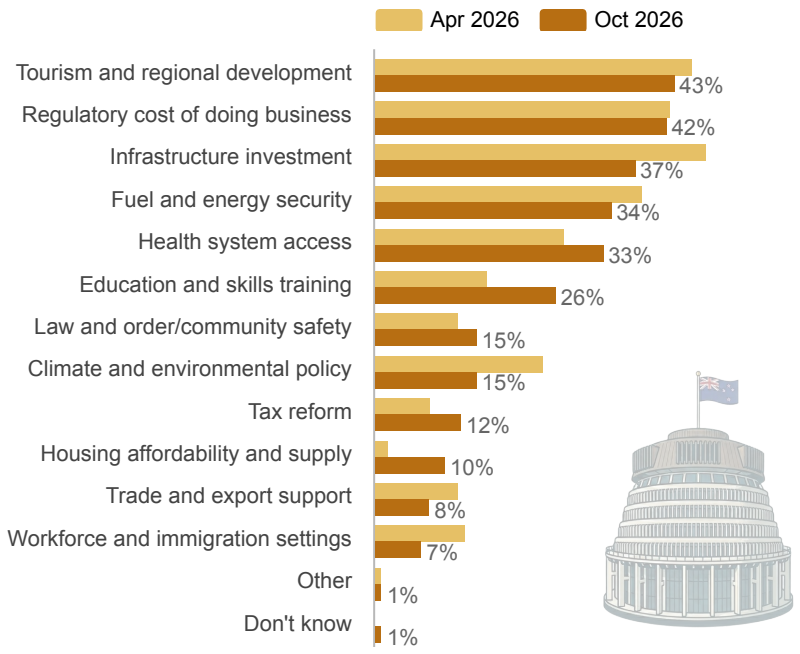
'Govt' questions asked only in the 2026 survey periods

Explainer:
Respondents were asked to select up to three priorities. Results are the percentage of respondents that selected each option.

Select Industry: All Industries (1)

Which policy areas do you most want the newly elected government to prioritise?

- Business leaders are heavily focused on securing a stable economic foundation, prioritising broad growth drivers and regulatory reform to restore commercial confidence.
- Rather than seeking short-term fixes, business leaders want central government to lock in structural certainty around business costs, infrastructure investment, and regional development to support long-term employment and private investment.
- Managing inflation, cost-of-goods pressures, and maintaining energy security remain critical requirements for sustaining operational stability across the wider commercial sector.
- Businesses also emphasize the need for targeted skill development and workforce support to address ongoing capacity constraints.



Click on a theme in the chart above to filter the comments below to the selected theme

What is the single most important action the government formed following the 2026 election could take to help your business grow in Rotorua?

Most important action comment	89 Comments
Understand challenges businesses face with increasing costs to operate, the contribution businesses make to society and avoid adding further costs and complexity to businesses. Balance need of businesses and employees.	
If the cost of living wasn't so high, companies could invest in professional service providers like me, rather than doing it on the cheap with AI and then having no discernible difference to anything else generated by AI.	
A consistent education platform. Stop changing. It is confusing for youth and even more so business. We need talent to come from NZ and we appear to use Education as a political football forgetting consequences	
Decrease cost of doing business and cost of living	
actions to increase domestic spend	
Housing affordability, cost of living	
visibility	
Stop wasting money on endless consultants' reports and direct funds to the on-the-ground organizations that actually and practically help small businesses.	
Focus on regional development - and bringing our wider region together so we can benefit from the investment in the likes of WBOP, and also have scale against other mega regions, like Waikato, Auckland and Canterbury.	
Remove regional councils and streamline local government to reduce compliance costs	
Certainty around fuel and energy security.	
Compliance	
Help business to do business. Not lumber them with regulatory forms	
lower moragate rates	

What should be prioritised in the first three years of Council's 2027-2037 Long-term Plan?

- Inner-city revitalisation and economic development remain central to the community's expectations for the upcoming Long-Term Plan.
- Businesses are looking to Council to act as an enabler of growth by streamlining regulatory processes, investing in foundational infrastructure to unlock housing, and championing targeted destination marketing to restore local vibrancy.
- Maintaining existing community assets affordably while ensuring rates deliver clear value for money is viewed as essential for local economic health.
- Strengthening public spaces and community safety initiatives is vital to encouraging both residents and visitors to engage fully with the inner city.

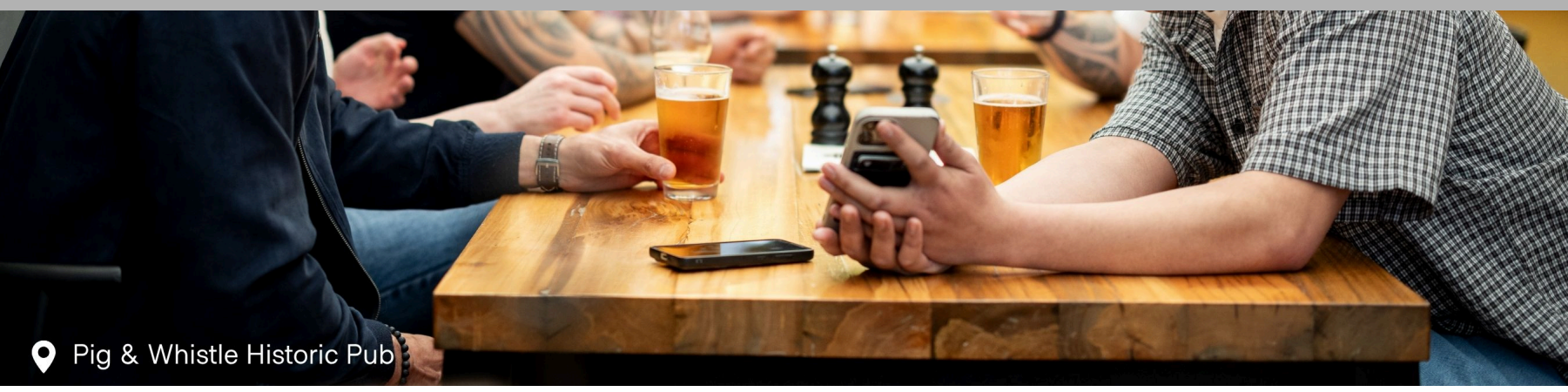


Click on a theme in the chart above to filter the comments below to the selected theme

What is the most important action you want Council to commit to in the first three years of its 2027-2037 Long-term Plan?

Most important action comment	91 Comments
Understand long term business and social impacts of non-regulation of AirBnB type accommodation and rental/staff shortages. Level the playing field closer	
I want council to enable more usable and affordable recreational (sports facilities) in Rotorua - our Energy Events Centre is too expensive for locals and is not available on a regular basis for local sports. Taupo, Tauranga, Tokoroa all have excellent facilites at a fraction of the cost.	
Business Growth and attraction of people into our city (and don't mean attracting tourists). We need a vibrant economy to attract talent	
Inner city revitalisation. The city centre has lost many aspects of what made it vibrant - events, markets, nurturing the arts and creative aspects of what makes Rotorua a great place to live and to visit. Appreciate that roads and pipes are important, but these are a hygiene factor.	
unsure	
Review inner-city parking, consider free parking.	
• The more people we can attract to Rotorua, the better it is for everyone. We are a locally owned business and employ local people, so supporting tourism and encouraging more visitors to spend money within Rotorua is vital to the success of businesses like ours. • With the rising costs of wages and general operating expenses, combined with reduced consumer spending, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain the level of employment we have always valued. We have always been passionate about giving young people the opportunity to enter the workforce, gain experience and develop valuable skills. However, as costs continue to increase and revenue becomes harder to maintain, providing those additional employment opportunities is becoming less financially viable. • It would also be great to see more opportunities for local businesses to be promoted through i-SITE and RotoruaNZ. With the rates and costs businesses are already facing, greater visibility and support from our regional tourism organisations would make a real difference. At present, it often feels as though the same larger attractions, such as Skyline, ZORB and the spas, receive the majority of the promotion. While these are fantastic attractions for Rotorua, there are many other locally owned businesses that also contribute significantly to the visitor experience and deserve the opportunity to be showcased. • A more balanced approach to promoting Rotorua's attractions would help spread visitor spending across a wider range of local businesses, support employment and ensure that the benefits of tourism reach more	

Scroll down within the tables for more comments. Random sort order of comments refreshed approximately every 15 minutes.



AI tool adoption is maturing toward broader functional integration, with businesses increasingly leveraging automated workflows and advanced applications alongside core efficiency gains. However, as technical capability and data privacy concerns present greater adoption barriers, leaders are actively seeking a deeper understanding of core business value, automated workflows, and risk management to guide future strategy.

'AI' questions asked only in the 2026 survey periods

Select Industry: All Industries (1)

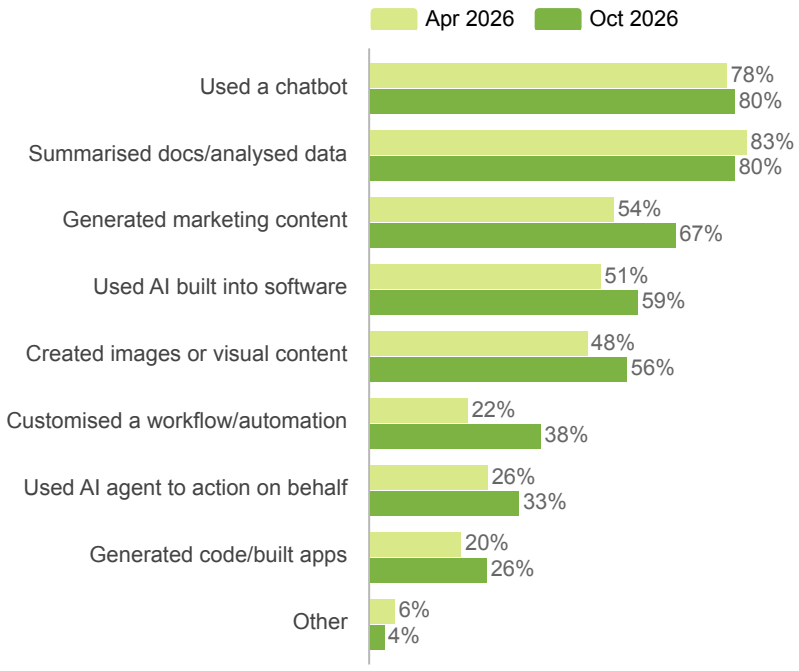
AI Adoption Trends & Benefits Realised

What have been the main benefits of AI for your business so far? *(Select up to three benefits)*

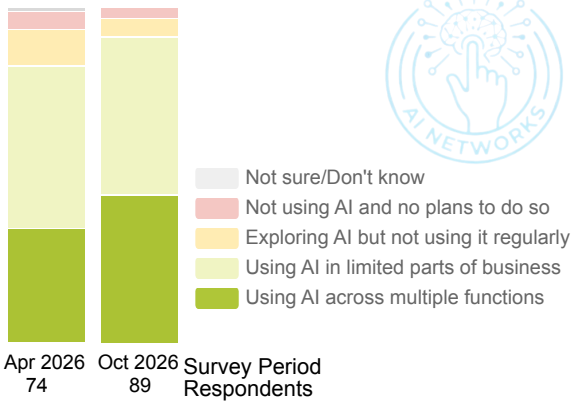


While overall AI adoption has matured toward broader operational integration, time savings and productivity continue to stand out as the primary, consistent benefits realised by businesses

Which of the following AI activities has anyone in your business done in the past 6 months?



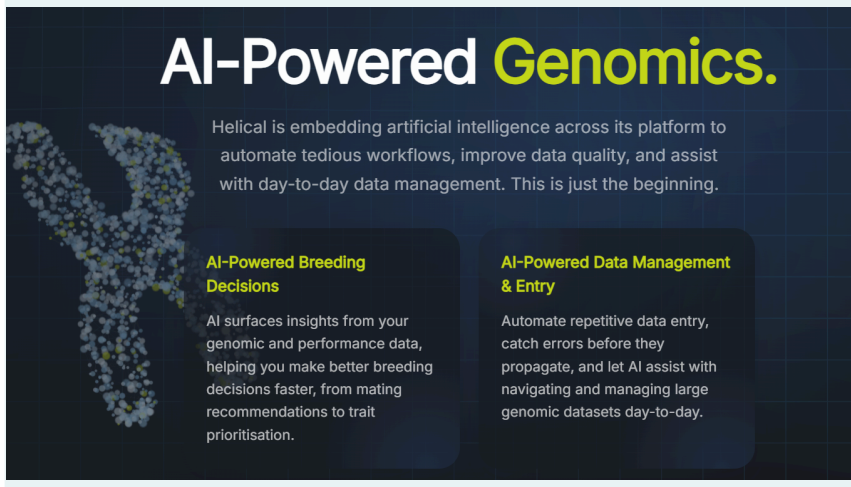
Which best describes your business's use of AI tools?



Unlocking The Future Of Genomic Data

Rotorua-based startup Helical is at the forefront of one of the world's fastest-growing technology sectors, developing infrastructure designed to store, connect and unlock genomic data at scale.

Founded by Dan Garrick, the self-funded company is focused on solving a growing global challenge - how to manage and use the enormous volumes of DNA data being generated across agriculture, food production and environmental science.



At its core, Helical is a database designed to store DNA and other genetic data and feed it into analytical tools enabling insights that were previously out of reach.

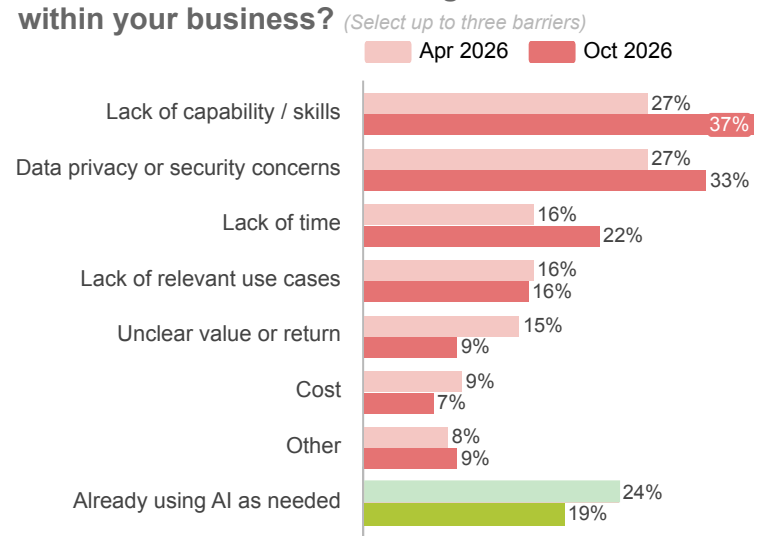
What sets Helical apart is its ability to handle the sheer scale and complexity of genomic data. It is currently the only off-the-shelf pedigree and performance data system capable of both managing and analysing in real-time the data volumes generated by modern DNA testing. That means the people making breeding and selection decisions from individual farmers to commercial companies, are always working from the most current information available.

Helical is an example of Rotorua's growing innovation ecosystem, with local companies increasingly developing high-value technologies capable of competing on the world stage.

Barriers To AI Adoption & AI Knowledge Priorities

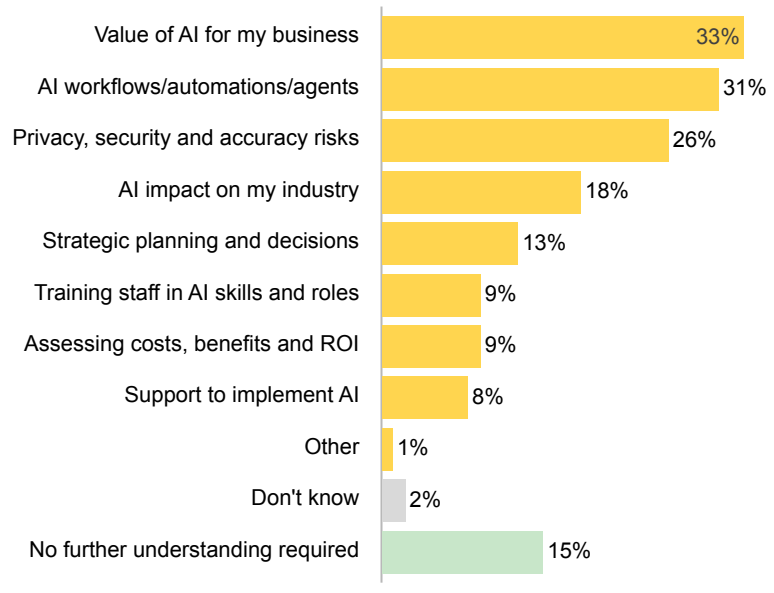
As capability gaps and data security concerns increasingly constrain greater adoption, leaders are prioritising a clearer understanding of AI's core business value and automated workflows

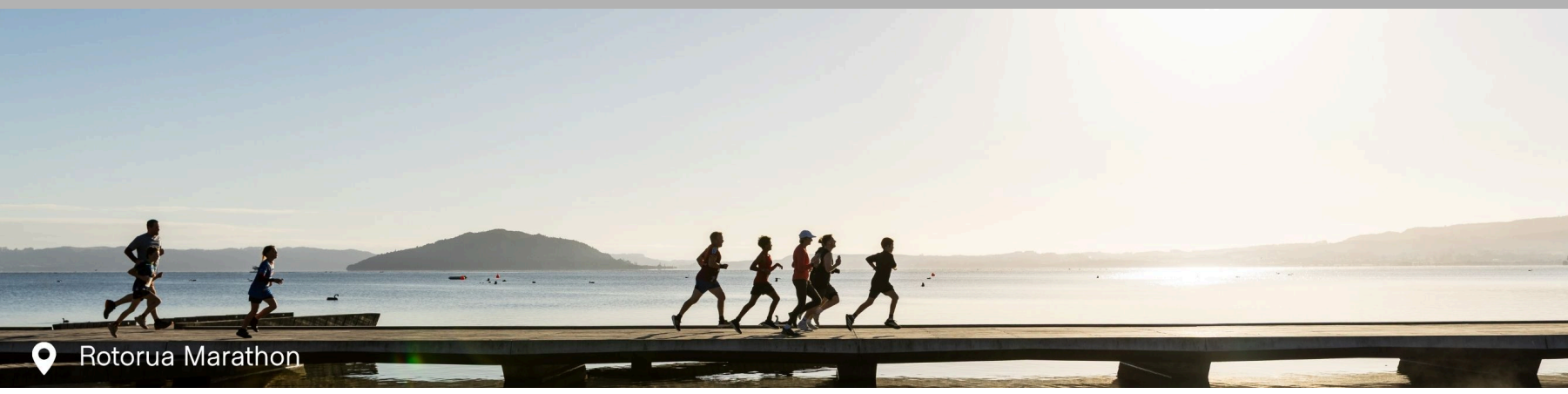
What are the main barriers to greater use of AI within your business? *(Select up to three barriers)*



As a business owner or leader, which aspects of AI would you most value a better understanding of to make decisions for your business? *(Select up to two options)*

Asked only in the October 2026 survey period





Confidence centers on pipeline momentum and core strengths, reflecting a shift toward growth and stability. While commercial pillars drive optimism, businesses note an easing of headwinds. Regionally, sentiment anchors on tourism recovery, event attraction, and broader economic development, demonstrating a shared commitment to building local momentum.

Select Survey Period: October 2026 (1)

Select Industry: All Industries (1)

Explainer:
Results are the percentage of respondents agreeing with each statement. Change values are versus the previous survey period.

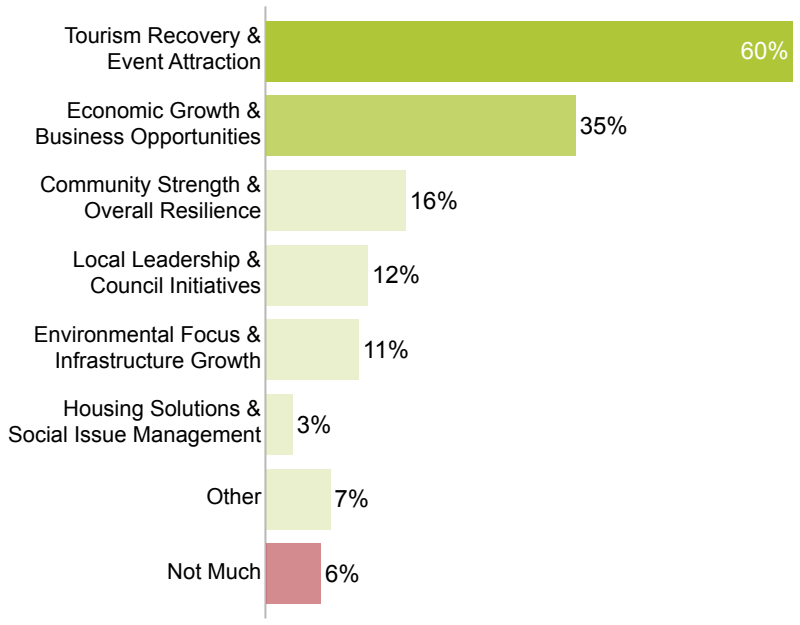
What is the number ONE thing you feel most positive about currently for your business?

	Apr 2022	Oct 2022	Apr 2023	Oct 2023	Apr 2024	Oct 2024	Apr 2025	Oct 2025	Apr 2026	Oct 2026	Oct 2026 change from prior period
Business strategy	16%	16%	29%	24%	25%	25%	28%	33%	28%	30%	▲ 2% pts
Organisational culture	20%	22%	21%	28%	16%	27%	25%	26%	24%	20%	▼ 4% pts
Forward work/sales in the pipeline	23%	27%	17%	18%	21%	13%	9%	8%	5%	17%	▲ 12% pts
Ability to generate profitability	4%	5%	10%	5%	9%	10%	11%	8%	12%	9%	▼ 3% pts
Retaining skilled staff	5%	4%	2%	4%	0%	6%	5%	7%	7%	7%	0% pts
Business survival (staying afloat)	9%	8%	7%	11%	18%	9%	11%	11%	7%	5%	▼ 2% pts
Ability to invest capital in the business	1%	3%	2%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	8%	3%	▼ 5% pts
Debt levels	5%	5%	5%	2%	3%	3%	2%	1%	5%	2%	▼ 3% pts
Retaining unskilled staff	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0% pts
Other	12%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	1%	▼ 2% pts
I am NOT POSITIVE about anything for our business	3%	5%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%	2%	0%	5%	▲ 5% pts

(96 respondents answered this question in the October 2026 survey)

What are you most positive about for Rotorua over the next 12 months?

Click on a theme in the adjacent chart to filter the comments below to the selected theme



Scroll down within the table to see more comments	94 Comments
Continued reputational improvement as a great place to visit	
Potential new business launches	
Events bringing people to Rotorua	
Increased tourism numbers	
The general market appears to be lifting. That creates a wider positivity. It is something that we will need to push to ensure others know the space we are in	
Connected community, ability/openness to collaborate	
The destination is still a place for people to visit and find activities to enjoy.	
Domestic tourism	
The Tourism attractions working together and helping each other where they can	
Tourisimstead	
Our ability to ride out the peaks and troughs of the economy.	
The resistance of the core Rotorua business community	



Scroll down within the table for more comments. Random sort order of comments refreshed approximately every 15 minutes.



Concerns have shifted as business leaders navigate immediate economic realities, with business survival and forward-booking pipelines emerging as prominent focuses alongside ongoing cost pressures. While finding skilled staff remains a key consideration, business leaders are balancing these operational challenges with pragmatic adaptation, maintaining a steady focus on risk management and financial resilience.

Select Survey Period: October 2026 (1)

Select Industry: All Industries (1)

Explainer:
Results are the percentage of respondents agreeing with each statement. Change values are versus the previous survey period.

What is the number ONE thing that keeps you awake at night with regards to your business?

	Apr 2022	Oct 2022	Apr 2023	Oct 2023	Apr 2024	Oct 2024	Apr 2025	Oct 2025	Apr 2026	Oct 2026	Oct 2026 change from prior period
Business survival (staying afloat)	8%	5%	7%	7%	11%	10%	12%	15%	8%	16%	▲ 8% pts
Forward work/sales in the pipeline	8%	13%	7%	8%	14%	13%	13%	11%	19%	13%	▼ 6% pts
Ability to generate profitability	16%	3%	11%	16%	18%	23%	22%	22%	15%	10%	▼ 5% pts
Inflation - cost of goods / services sold	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	0%	2%	3%	5%	9%	▲ 4% pts
Regulatory and policy challenges - central Government		8%	6%	4%	10%	7%	4%	3%	8%	7%	▼ 1% pt
Geopolitical volatility						3%	5%	4%	15%	6%	▼ 9% pts
Finding skilled staff	24%	21%	17%	12%	11%	11%	9%	9%	3%	5%	▲ 2% pts
Ability to invest capital in the business	0%	4%	0%	1%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	▼ 1% pt
Regulatory and policy challenges - local Government		1%	1%	2%	3%	4%	2%	3%	0%	3%	▲ 3% pts
Energy price increases						0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	▼ 1% pt
Retaining skilled staff	4%	7%	15%	7%	5%	4%	3%	3%	1%	2%	▲ 1% pt
Climate change			5%	4%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0% pts
Debt levels (cost of borrowing)	0%	0%	6%	5%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	▲ 1% pt
Finding unskilled staff	1%	4%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	▲ 1% pt
Security of energy supply						0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	▲ 1% pt
Export conditions	0%	0%	0%	3%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	▼ 1% pt
Retaining unskilled staff	0%	0%	1%	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0% pts
Other	4%	4%	7%	9%	3%	6%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0% pts
NOTHING keeps me awake at night	8%	11%	13%	13%	11%	10%	10%	15%	15%	7%	▼ 8% pts

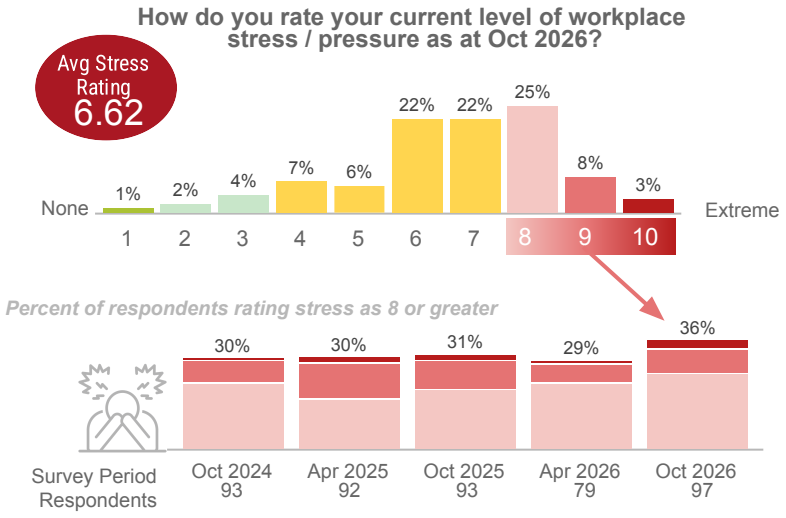
(97 respondents answered this question in the October 2026 survey)

Workplace Stress

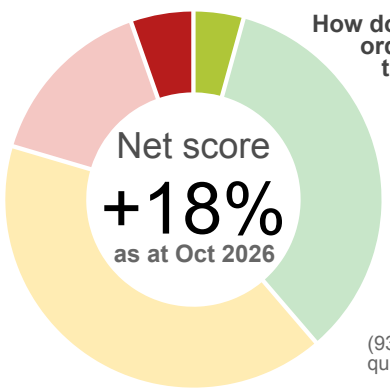
Business confidence continues to navigate a complex economic landscape, with workplace stress remaining elevated as business leaders balance cost pressures and operational demands. Despite these pressures, forward-looking sentiment shows resilience, reflected in a positive net forward-booking outlook and steady recruitment activity across a substantial portion of the commercial sector.

'Workplace stress' questions asked only in some survey periods

How do you rate your current level of workplace stress / pressure as at Oct 2026?



How does your confirmed forward work, orders or bookings for the next three months compare with the same time last year?



(93 respondents answered this question in the October 2026 survey)

Does your business currently have any vacancies that you are actively seeking to fill?

39% of respondents are actively seeking to fill vacancies within their business as at October 2026

Yes | No

(96 respondents answered this question in the October 2026 survey)



Macroeconomic pressures remain a primary focus, driven by ongoing concerns around inflation, goods costs, and fuel price volatility. While these operational hurdles weigh heavily on planning, attention is also sharpened on regulatory compliance and energy stability. This highlights a resilient business community managing external cost pressures while securing margins in a demanding environment.

Select Survey Period: October 2026 (1)

Select Industry: All Industries (1)

Explainer:
Results are the percentage of respondents that are 'Very' or 'Extremely' concerned with each statement. Change values are versus the previous survey period.

Please rate your current level of concern about the following in relation to your business

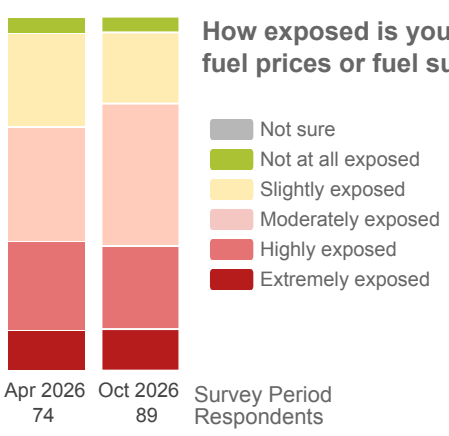
	Very + Extremely Concerned										Oct 2026 change from prior period
	Apr 2022	Oct 2022	Apr 2023	Oct 2023	Apr 2024	Oct 2024	Apr 2025	Oct 2025	Apr 2026	Oct 2026	
Geopolitical volatility						36%	45%	29%	46%	53%	▲ 7% pts
Inflation - cost of goods / services	71%	70%	57%	52%	41%	33%	36%	42%	46%	51%	▲ 5% pts
Energy price increases						30%	34%	38%	52%	44%	▼ 8% pts
Regulatory and policy challenges - central Government		48%	52%	36%	36%	32%	26%	13%	25%	38%	▲ 13% pts
Regulatory and policy challenges - local Government		40%	32%	31%	33%	30%	26%	19%	24%	33%	▲ 9% pts
Ability to generate profitability	41%	32%	39%	31%	31%	24%	33%	24%	23%	29%	▲ 6% pts
Finding skilled staff	71%	65%	64%	55%	39%	44%	43%	39%	28%	23%	▼ 5% pts
Climate change				45%	29%	34%	21%	16%	25%	22%	▼ 3% pts
Forward work/sales in the pipeline	23%	20%	18%	24%	27%	14%	19%	21%	22%	21%	▼ 1% pt
Business survival (staying afloat)	15%	8%	14%	14%	14%	18%	14%	19%	10%	20%	▲ 10% pts
Ability to invest capital in the business	24%	26%	25%	26%	21%	20%	22%	17%	14%	19%	▲ 5% pts
Debt levels (cost of borrowing)	19%	20%	26%	25%	26%	11%	13%	13%	13%	19%	▲ 6% pts
Retaining skilled staff	52%	55%	52%	42%	27%	28%	29%	19%	16%	18%	▲ 2% pts
Immigration settings			35%	25%	21%	29%	16%	13%	11%	18%	▲ 7% pts
Supply chain / shortages	36%	33%	30%	17%	12%	13%	12%	7%	20%	17%	▼ 3% pts
Security of energy supply						14%	17%	11%	35%	16%	▼ 19% pts
Export conditions	30%	31%	18%	12%	20%	16%	27%	11%	20%	15%	▼ 5% pts
Finding unskilled staff	34%	30%	29%	21%	8%	10%	6%	4%	5%	9%	▲ 4% pts
Retaining unskilled staff	32%	28%	29%	16%	7%	9%	10%	5%	3%	4%	▲ 1% pt

(96 respondents answered this question in the October 2026 survey)

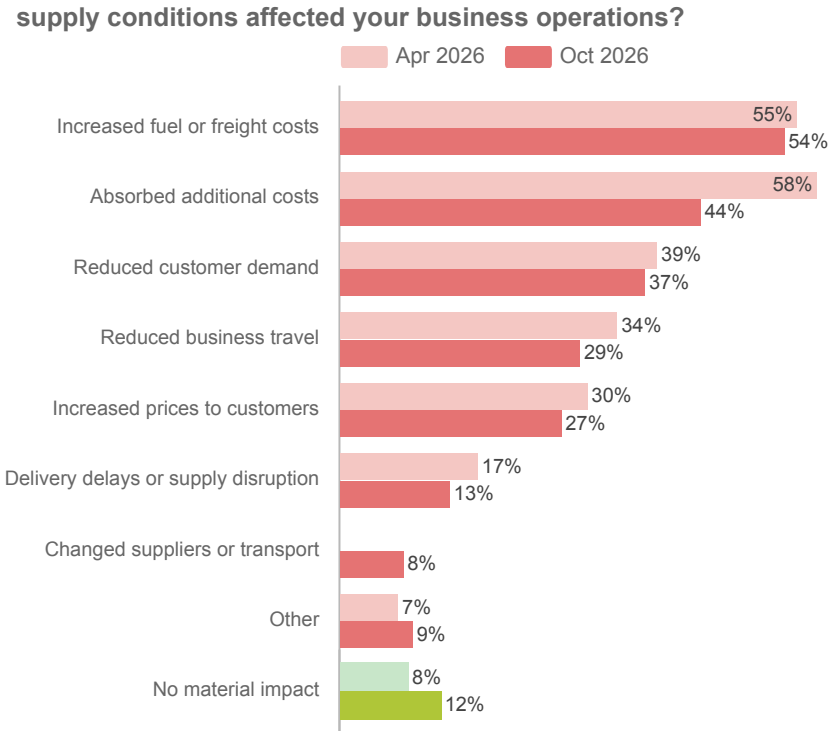
Fuel Exposure and Impacts

Fuel exposure remains steady for Rotorua businesses, with most reporting at least moderate exposure. While higher fuel and freight costs remain the most common operational impact, fewer businesses are absorbing these additional costs compared with April, and slightly more report no material impact. Alongside managing softer customer demand and reduced travel, some operators are adjusting suppliers or transport arrangements to navigate ongoing pressures.

How exposed is your business to rising fuel prices or fuel supply disruption?



Over the past three months, how have fuel prices or fuel supply conditions affected your business operations?



'Fuel' questions were asked only in the 2026 survey periods

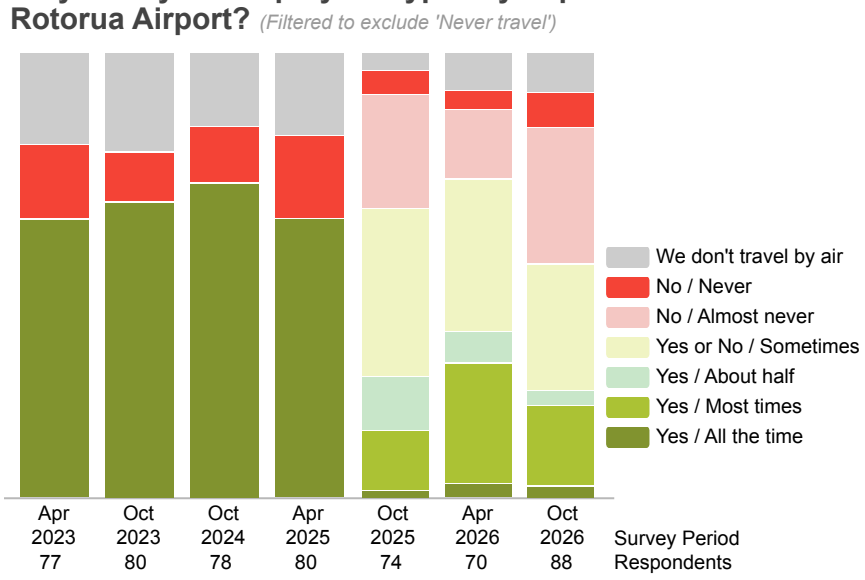


While a core group of business travellers continue to rely on Rotorua Airport, persistent challenges around flight scheduling, cancellations, and reliability have driven many businesses to utilise alternative hubs such as Tauranga and Auckland. Enhancing flight frequency, schedule dependability, and route options remains vital to restoring local business confidence and increasing domestic airport usage.

'Airport' questions asked only in some survey periods

Select Industry: All Industries (1)

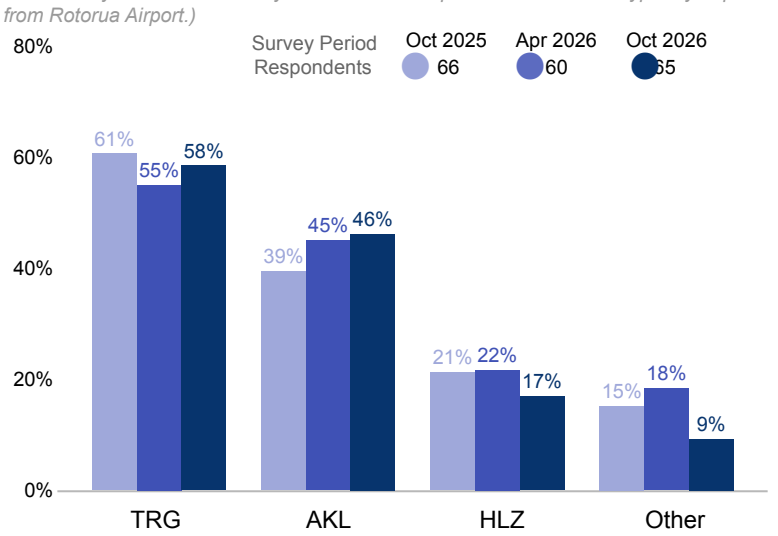
Do you or your employees typically depart from Rotorua Airport? *(Filtered to exclude 'Never travel')*



October 2025 survey and onwards had a scale of responses to choose from versus previous survey respondents were only offered Yes/No option.

Which alternative airports do you depart from and why?

(Filtered to exclude 'We don't travel by air. Additionally, surveys previous to the October 2025 survey also filtered to only include those respondents who didn't typically depart from Rotorua Airport.)



Click on an airport code to filter comments 238 Comments

Oct 2026	Hamilton/Tauranga/Auckland due to availability of flights and/or cost
Oct 2026	Depending on availability it would be Hamilton or Tauranga. Otherwise drive due to the inherent flexibility as a domestic traveller.
Oct 2026	Tauranga or AKL for international
Oct 2026	Auckland or Tauranga. Cost
Oct 2026	Tauranga or Hamilton
Oct 2026	Auckland or Hamilton, flights frequency and jet aircraft making overall travel time less.
Oct 2026	Tauranga or Hamilton
Oct 2026	Hamilton or Auckland due to better and more frequent flights
Oct 2026	Auckland airport because Rotorua flights always get cancelled last minute

Scroll down within the table for more comments. Random sort order of comments within survey period refreshed approximately every 15 minutes.

Rate the level of challenge you and/or your colleagues have experienced at Rotorua Airport during the last 12 months:

(Asked only in the April 2025 survey onwards)

	Significant + Very Significant Challenge				
Survey Period Respondents	Apr 2025 86	Oct 2025 82	Apr 2026 74	Oct 2026 79	Oct 2026 change from prior period
Flight cancellations & reliability	58%	51%	45%	41%	▼ 4% pts
Flight scheduling	52%	56%	41%	41%	0% pts
Available routes & destinations	42%	41%	34%	34%	0% pts
Ticket prices	45%	38%	32%	34%	▲ 2% pts
Flight capacity	26%	17%	11%	11%	0% pts
Overall airport experience	3%	4%	3%	0%	▼ 3% pts

Rotorua Airport business park inches closer to reality

August 11, 2026

As part of Rotorua Airport's aspiration to be the runway to a thriving future, a resource consent application has been lodged for Stage 1A of the airport business park. Stage 1A will open land for new aviation and aviation-related businesses by creating three development sites, along with the taxiway access needed to connect those sites to the airfield.

The works also include services to the new sites, initial road access, security interfaces, improvements to the southern aircraft refueling area, and associated stormwater works.

With a focus on climate resilience, the Airport will construct a Climate Resilience Swale to improve stormwater management and reduce flooding around the runway and apron during heavy rainfall.

The business park is to be developed in a staged approach, focusing on bringing a specific area of Airport land into use rather than developing the full business park at once.

In the long-term, alongside being a professional commercial space for airport-related businesses, the business park will also encourage local entrepreneurship, working in partnership with our local communities to uplift our wider region.

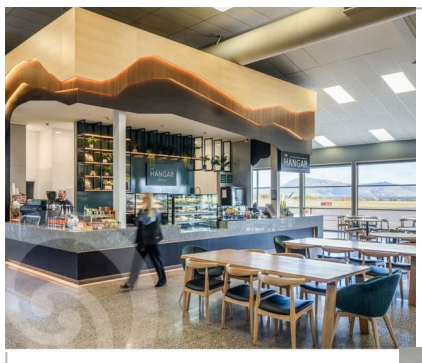
The Rotorua Airport business park will be a distinctively Rotorua hub that our local community can be proud of, featuring welcoming public spaces that celebrate local iwi history.

Read more

Frequently Asked Questions PDF

Rotorua Airport

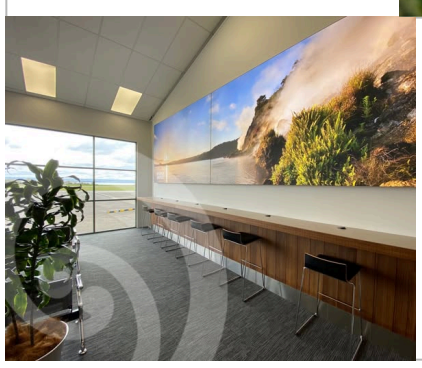
More than a transport hub, Rotorua Airport brings people closer to Rotorua's unique culture and identity, creating opportunity for our region today and future generations tomorrow.



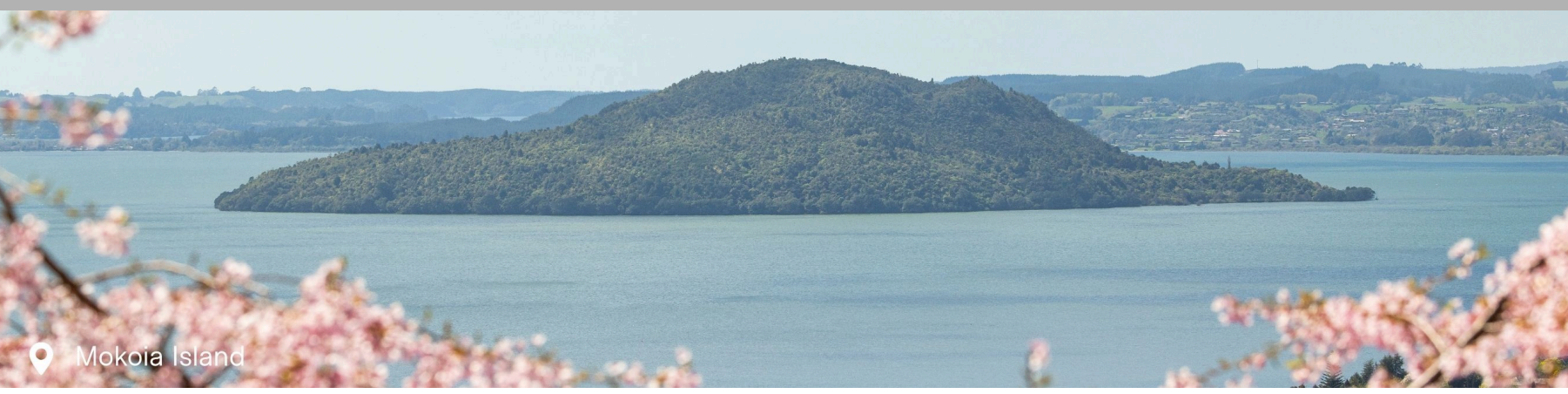
Ready when you are
Serving locally brewed Boasters Coffee with a sweeping view of Mokoia island, The Hangar Airport Café - Rotorua is the perfect spot to grab a coffee with friends or host a working lunch.
Take your time, there's 60 mins free parking on-site.

Where business takes flight
Adjacent to the arrival gate, our Business Hub is the prime location for your next business event - equipped an executive suite video conferencing camera and microphone, secure high-speed internet and on-site catering. Book our meeting room.





Get work done on the fly
A dedicated workspace tucked away in the right-hand corner of our departure lounge is our co-working counter. One of our best kept secrets, this area is kitted with plug and USB charging points, close to the boarding gate and has a prime a view of a tarmac.



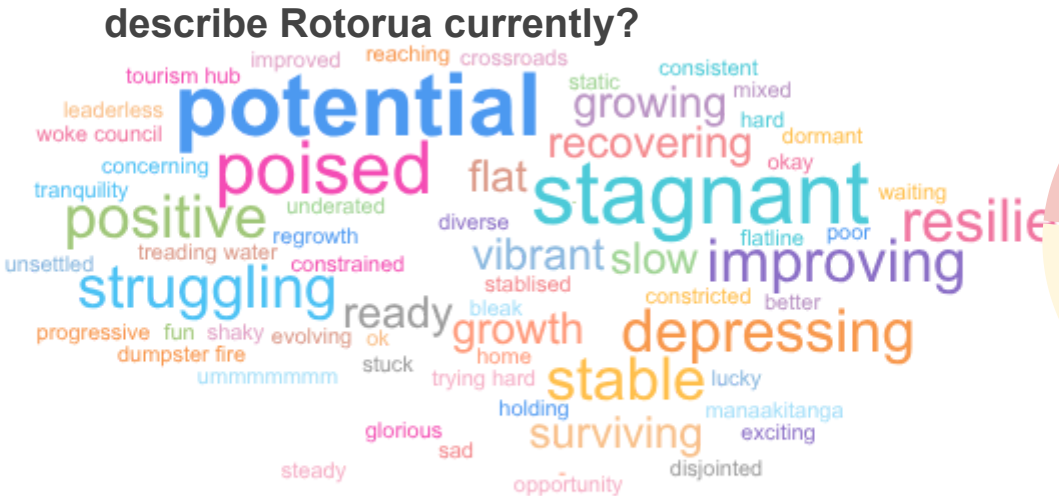
Overall sentiment across the district reflects a transitional period, balancing optimism for future growth against lingering operational and economic uncertainties. While the community recognises strong foundational potential and emerging momentum, local businesses continue to voice practical concerns regarding city safety, regulatory compliance, and destination marketing. This dynamic underscores a community poised for recovery, yet actively navigating the structural and reputational hurdles required to unlock its full economic potential.

Select Survey Period: October 2026 (1)

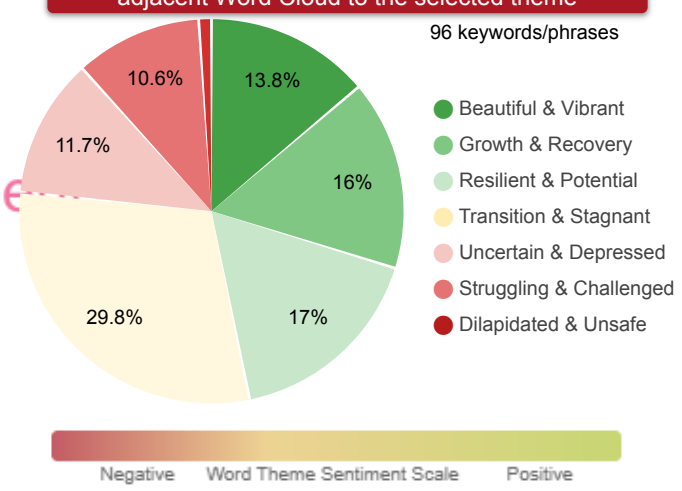
Select Industry: All Industries (1)

Explainer:
Results on this page are the percentage of respondents categorised by theme.

What is the ONE word that you would use to describe Rotorua currently?

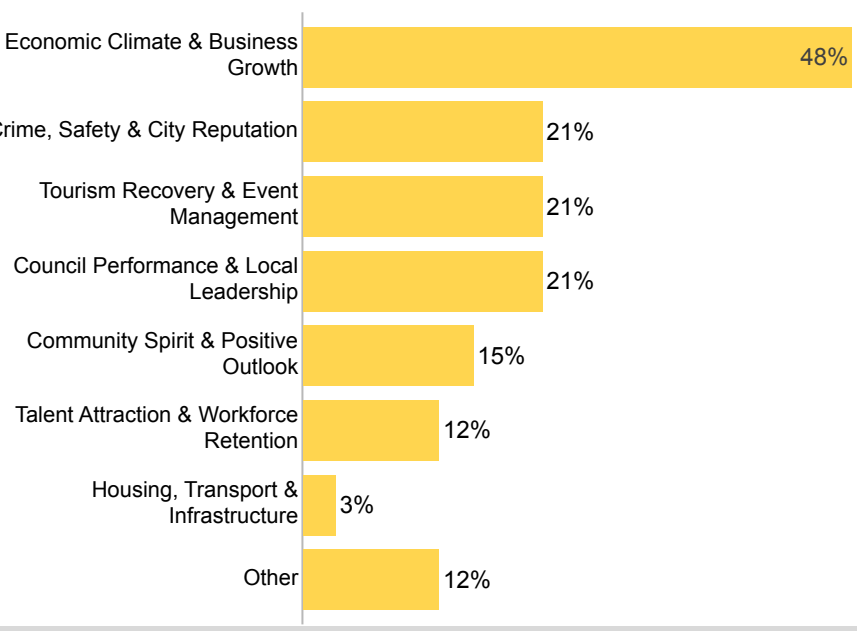


Click on a theme in the chart below to filter the adjacent Word Cloud to the selected theme



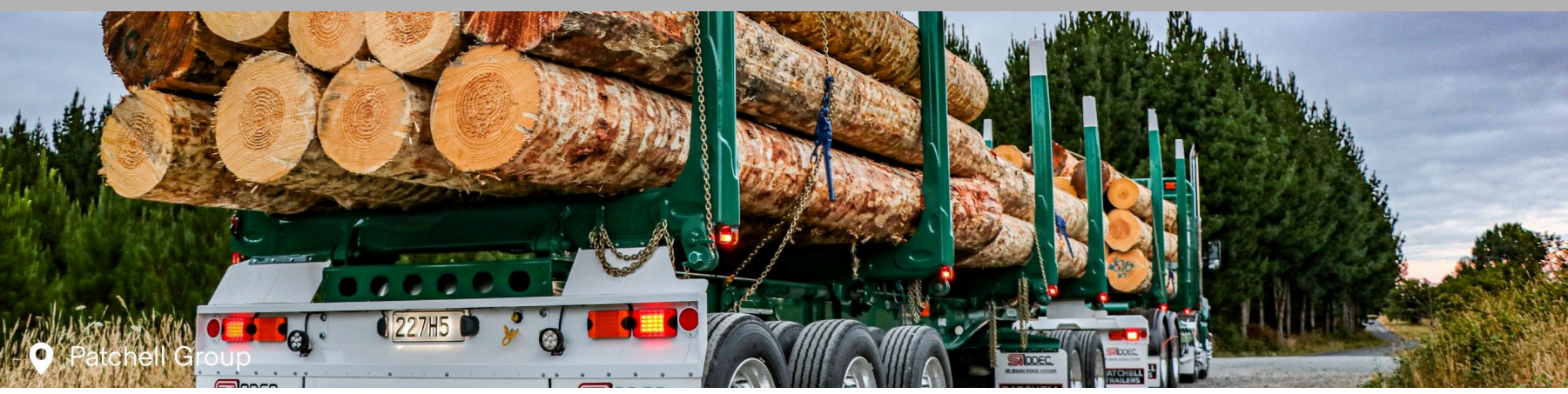
Finally, do you have any other comments or thoughts on your business or the Rotorua economy?

Click on a theme in the adjacent chart to filter the comments below to the selected theme



Final comments	33 Comments
Finding skilled and unskilled staff remains a constant challenge	
We believe we are about to have a positive uplift. Concerned though that Supply Chain and geopolitical influences could slow the momentum. We also need to work out how we can attract talent. Recently we have had 3 recruits turn down the role purely because of reputation (and we invested a lot of time to show they wrong). They were residing in Hamilton, Nelson and 1 from offshore. Difficult because we are still trying to fill those vacancies	
Hard to say until after the election.	
Please, lets get all of the different stakeholders in our community on the same page about where we're going and what we need to get there, so we can have informed and constructive conversations with the new Government.	
Rotorua needs to clean up its city centre and more people and business will happen.	
Council are the regulatory road block in the city going forward , from the Liquor licencing to hours of operation, costs of compliance and RMA applications building permits to subdivisions and costs of rates vs value of properties	
• Rotorua has enormous potential to become a regional hub for innovation, technology and high-value industry. We have strong research capabilities, an established primary sector, access to geothermal resources and a growing number of innovative businesses. However, we need a more coordinated and ambitious approach to translating these strengths into sustainable economic growth. • Tourism will always be an important part of our economy, but it should not define our economic future. We need to actively support emerging industries, attract investment and skilled talent, and create meaningful career opportunities that encourage our young people and high paid personnel to build their futures here. • The opportunity is not simply to grow the Rotorua economy, but to improve its quality through higher productivity, better-paid jobs and greater economic resilience. This requires long-term commitment and genuine collaboration between Council, central government, industry, and our R&D based organisations.	
How does the socioeconomic make up of Rotorua determine the attractiveness for investment?	
We need more focus from anyone involved to drive our destination, we have great accommodation, attractions, cultural activities, and Geothermal, this is a great destination, and yet Queenstown is having all of the focus.	
Our economy will continue to suffer if we don't tidy up the beggars and vagrants in the city centre and improve the appeal of our town for both visitors and working people relocating here. Most people I know do not shop in Rotorua, which is a terrible thing for local businesses!	
It is poised to improve	
RotoruaNZ has withheld this comment as it falls outside our guidelines for respectful and constructive dialogue.	
Develop the environment of Rotorua town center with safety.	
Keeping our streets safe, clean and tidy is very important. We often spend a lot of money bringing events to Rotorua and the for different reasons the attendees seem to be discouraged from coming in to the heart of the city. As an example hotel staff telling guests not to wander too far into the city due to security concerns.	
Always ensure basic council functions are serviced and maintained before trying new things. Leave business development to individual businesses	

Scroll down within the table for more comments. Random sort order of comments refreshed approximately every 15 minutes.



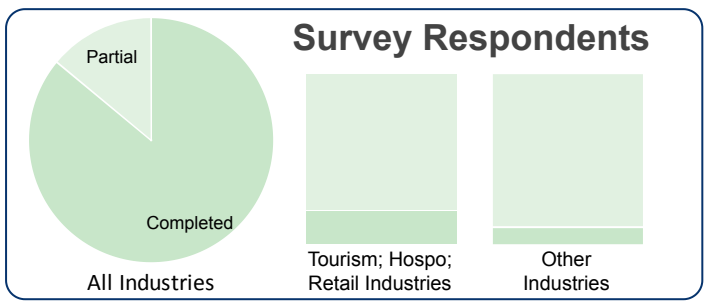
100 Rotorua business leaders participated in the October 2026 survey, an increase from 85 respondents in April 2026. A cross-section of businesses from different industries participated, with 90% of respondents being the owner or CEO of the business.

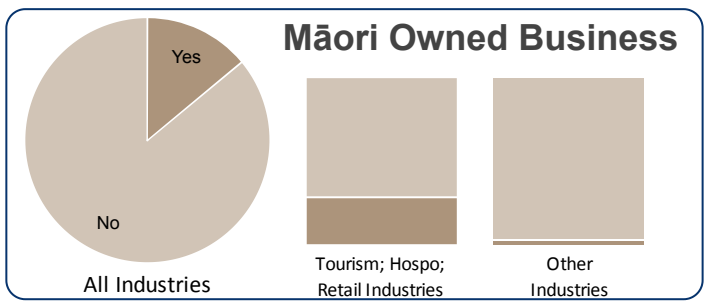
There was a broad distribution of different sized businesses, from small SMEs to large 51+ employee operations. 14% of respondents were Māori owned businesses, a decline from 16% in the April 2026 survey.

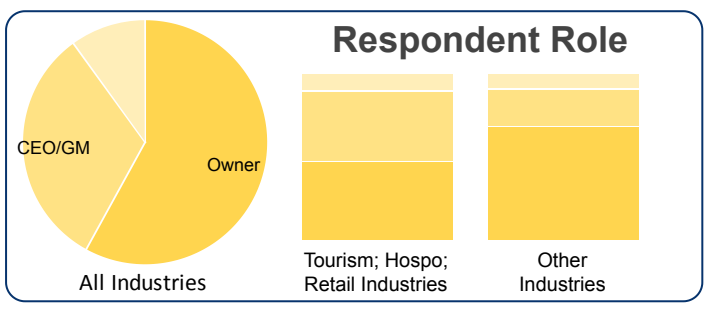
Select Survey Period: October 2026 (1)

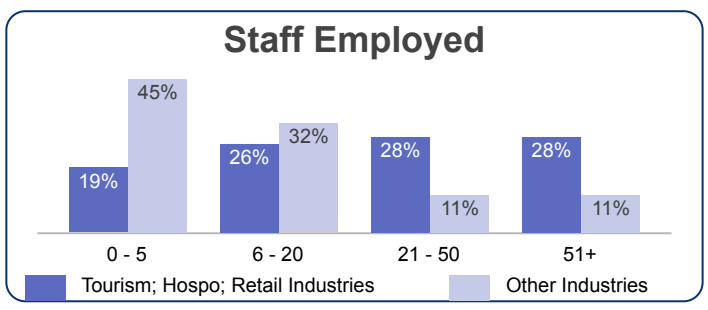
264 Rotorua business leaders were invited to participate in the October 2026 Rotorua Business Pulse Survey with 100 people making a submission, which equates to a 38% response rate.

Click here>>> to register your interest in participating in future Rotorua Business Pulse Surveys.









Which industries does your business operate in?

Businesses which identify as being in the 'Tourism and Accommodation' industry, 'Hospitality and Food Services' industry, or Retail industry are categorised as 'Tourism; Hospo; Retail Industries' even if they also identify as being in another industry.
Businesses which do not identify as being in one of those three industries are categorised as 'Other Industries'.

	Apr 2022	Oct 2022	Apr 2023	Oct 2023	Apr 2024	Oct 2024	Apr 2025	Oct 2025	Apr 2026	Oct 2026
Tourism and Accommodation	31%	29%	30%	39%	34%	39%	38%	32%	37%	32%
Hospitality and Food Services	20%	11%	16%	14%	11%	20%	17%	15%	14%	16%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	16%	10%	18%	18%	18%	17%	19%	20%	21%	16%
Information Media and Telecommunications	4%	6%	8%	6%	8%	3%	4%	3%	6%	10%
Forestry, Farming and Fishing	4%	10%	11%	9%	9%	8%	5%	1%	7%	9%
Manufacturing	7%	11%	13%	8%	9%	10%	9%	10%	9%	9%
Retail	9%	10%	10%	8%	8%	9%	7%	8%	8%	9%
Agriculture	1%	3%	4%	5%	1%	1%	4%	3%	7%	7%
Building and Construction	4%	10%	10%	11%	8%	7%	5%	8%	9%	6%
Education and Training	5%	1%	6%	4%	8%	6%	5%	2%	6%	6%
Environmental	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%	1%	5%	6%
Financial, Legal and Insurance Services	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	6%	8%	6%	7%	6%
Wholesale Trade	5%	5%	7%	6%	3%	2%	2%	4%	5%	6%
Other Services	16%	11%	14%	10%	6%	7%	5%	8%	7%	5%
Administrative and Support Services	3%	1%	3%	1%	5%	3%	3%	1%	1%	4%
Transport, Logistics, Postal and Warehousing	3%	6%	4%	5%	5%	2%	3%	4%	2%	4%
Arts and Recreation Services	1%	0%	7%	2%	3%	5%	1%	1%	1%	3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	4%	4%	6%	3%	5%	3%	3%	4%	1%	3%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1%	4%	4%	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Public Administration and Safety	1%	3%	3%	3%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%