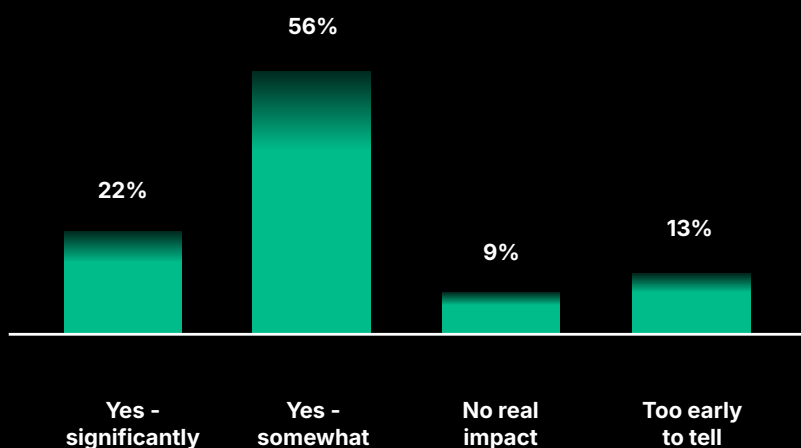


NZ BUSINESS PULSE CHECK REPORT - April 2026

# How NZ businesses are responding to global trade tensions.

**78%** of NZ businesses surveyed report being **impacted** by recent global events.

HAVE RECENT GLOBAL EVENTS IMPACTED YOUR BUSINESS/ORGANISATION?



*Read on to find out more about how this is impacting businesses like yours.*



## How are NZ businesses responding to global trade tensions?

This report summarises key insights from our recent *NZ Business Pulse Check Survey*, conducted in early April 2026, aimed at understanding how NZ businesses are navigating current global trade tensions and broader economic challenges.

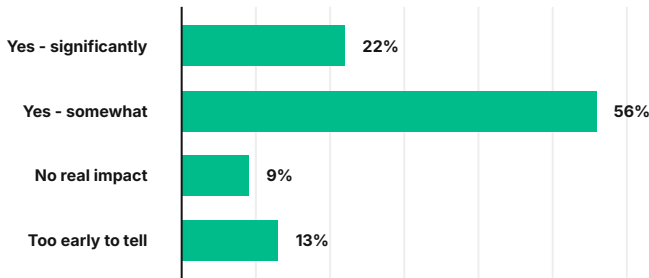
Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their perspectives. We heard from more than 100 business leaders representing a diverse mix of industries, including professional services, construction, manufacturing, transport, retail, healthcare, education, and not-for-profit organisations across New Zealand.

This report unpacks what NZ businesses are experiencing on the ground, the pressures and challenges they're facing, how their outlooks are shifting, and the strategies they're using to navigate an unpredictable global environment. It also highlights broader market trends and risks that business leaders believe deserve more attention.

We hope this report gives you a snapshot of the current market landscape and offers greater clarity and confidence in navigating what's ahead. As always, if you'd like to talk through what this means for your business or hiring plans, the team at Consult Recruitment are here to help: [info@consultrecruitment.co.nz](mailto:info@consultrecruitment.co.nz)

## Impact of global events.

### HAVE RECENT GLOBAL EVENTS IMPACTED YOUR BUSINESS/ORGANISATION?



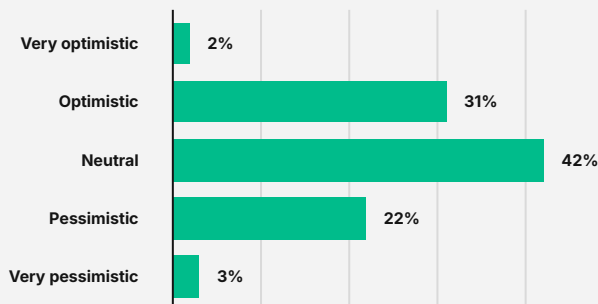
**78% of NZ businesses report being impacted by recent global events**, with most describing it as 'somewhat' impacted.

The effects of global events are widely felt across New Zealand industries, with the degree of impact varying by sector.

- Transport, logistics, manufacturing, and construction are the most exposed.
- Cost-heavy, supply chain-dependent sectors are feeling it the most.
- All sectors are experiencing flow-on effects.

## Business outlook next 12 months - and what's driving it.

### WHAT IS YOUR OUTLOOK FOR YOUR BUSINESS OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

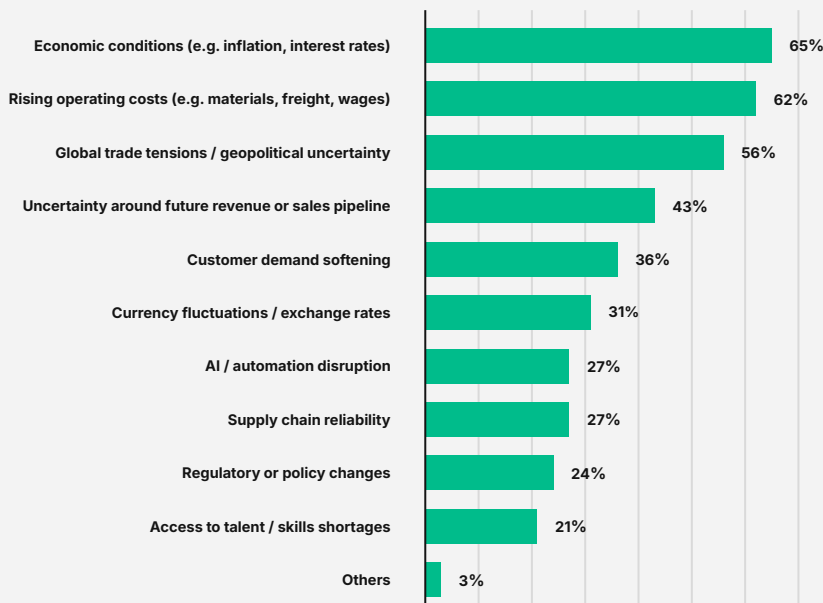


What started as a more positive outlook for 2026 has shifted in a relatively short period, with **businesses moving from optimism to a more neutral stance**.

When compared to our [What the Buck?](#) market survey conducted earlier this year (late Jan-Feb), the change is evident: optimism has dipped, neutral sentiment has increased, and pessimism has edged up.

Currently, **the majority of respondents (42%) describe their outlook for the next 12 months as neutral**, with 31% feeling optimistic and 22% feeling pessimistic. Few are taking extreme positions (very optimistic or very pessimistic).

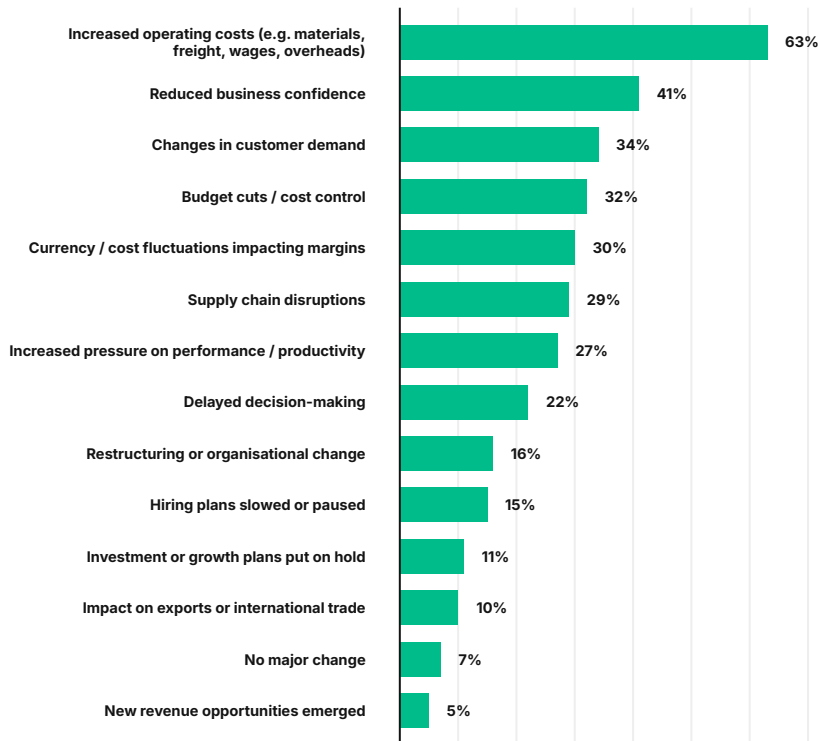
### WHAT EXTERNAL FACTORS ARE MOST INFLUENCING YOUR BUSINESS OUTLOOK RIGHT NOW?



Economic conditions, ongoing cost pressures, global trade tensions, and reduced visibility over future revenue and customer demand have tempered optimism.

# Current business impacts of recent global events.

## HOW ARE RECENT GLOBAL EVENTS CURRENTLY IMPACTING YOUR BUSINESS?

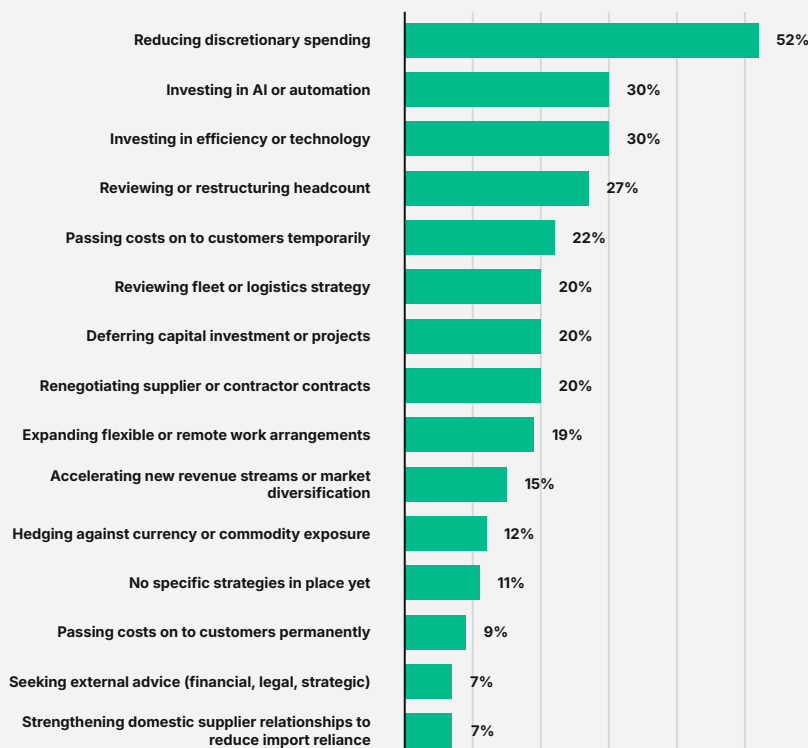


The main impact on businesses is **cost pressure**. Rising operating costs across materials, freight, wages, and overheads are putting pressure on margins, which is flowing through into **business confidence**.

**Customer demand** is also shifting. Changes in buying behaviour and softer demand are making revenue less predictable, adding another layer of complexity to planning.

# Business strategies for managing the impact of global events.

## WHAT STRATEGIES IS YOUR BUSINESS ACTIVELY USING TO MANAGE THE IMPACT OF RECENT GLOBAL EVENTS?



The most immediate response is **cost control**. Businesses are pulling back on discretionary spend and negotiating supplier contracts, all with a clear focus on protecting margins. Some are adjusting pricing to manage increased costs, but largely on a temporary basis. There's a clear awareness that customers are feeling the pressure too.

Businesses are also investing in productivity, with a noticeable increase in interest in **tech, automation and AI** to streamline operations.

**Workforce changes** are also happening, with businesses reviewing structures, optimising roles, and leaning into flexible working where it makes sense.

# We asked business leaders what their biggest operational challenges were right now.

Businesses are navigating a complex mix of pressures, but the themes are clear: cost, uncertainty, and demand volatility are driving most decisions. While challenges vary, the response is consistent, with businesses prioritising cost control, efficiency, and resilience (strengthening their ability to operate as adaptable businesses in a changing environment).

## 6 KEY CHALLENGES STAND OUT:



### Rising costs and margin pressure

Increasing fuel, transport, and operating costs are putting pressure on margins.

#### How businesses are responding:

- Reducing discretionary spend
- Passing costs on to customers (where possible)
- Renegotiating supplier and contractor agreements
- Driving operational efficiencies



### Supply chain and logistics disruption

The reliability and cost of supply chains remain key concerns.

#### How businesses are responding:

- Strengthening domestic supplier relationships to reduce import reliance
- Renegotiating supplier and contractor contracts
- Reviewing logistics and distribution strategies



### Revenue / sales uncertainty and customer demand volatility

Unpredictable sales pipelines and shifting customer demand are making planning difficult.

#### How businesses are responding:

- Diversifying revenue streams and markets
- Increasing focus on customer retention
- Strengthening sales and engagement efforts
- Delaying higher-risk investments



### Workforce and capability pressures

Balancing cost control with retaining and developing talent.

#### How businesses are responding:

- Careful headcount management
- Upskilling and redeploying staff
- Expanding flexible work arrangements
- Maintaining a focus on employee wellbeing



### Economic and market uncertainty

Ongoing global instability is impacting confidence and decision-making.

#### How businesses are responding:

- Focusing on core business activities
- Delaying major decisions
- Seeking external advice and scenario planning
- Maintaining flexibility in operations



### Efficiency, pricing, and innovation

Pressure to do more with less while staying competitive.

#### How businesses are responding:

- Reviewing pricing strategies
- Investing in technology, AI, and automation
- Streamlining processes and operations
- Innovating products and services

# What NZ businesses might be overlooking.

When asked what broader trends, risks, or opportunities are not getting enough attention, responses revealed a consistent tension: while businesses are heavily focused on immediate pressures, several critical areas are being under-prioritised.

Cost management, productivity, and AI adoption were most frequently cited, reflecting a growing need to operate more efficiently. At the same time, respondents pointed to ongoing economic uncertainty, geopolitical risk, and workforce challenges (particularly around talent retention, capability, and wellbeing). There is also a sense that longer-term considerations, such as regulatory change and sustainability, are not receiving the focus they require.

## THE MOST COMMON THEMES HIGHLIGHTED:



### **Geopolitical and supply chain risk:**

Global instability and supply chain vulnerabilities are key concerns.



### **Workforce development and wellbeing:**

There is a call for greater attention to talent development, skills shortages, and the impact on employee wellbeing.



### **Economic downturn and recovery:**

Respondents are concerned about ongoing economic challenges and the need for strategies to support recovery.



### **Cost management and efficiency:**

Many believe businesses need to focus more on controlling costs and improving operational efficiency.

## What smart NZ businesses are doing right now.

### **Manage the now, but don't let caution become inaction.**

Many NZ businesses have shifted from optimism to caution in just a few months, and it's easy for longer-term priorities to get quietly pushed aside when immediate pressures dominate. But sitting still has a cost too. Businesses that come out ahead tend to be the ones that keep moving forward - thinking about new opportunities for growth, market diversification, workforce development, and future planning, even while managing the day-to-day. It's important to be deliberate about what you're pausing and what you're pushing forward in these times.

### **Your people strategy always counts.**

Skills gaps, capability development, and employee wellbeing are all flagged as under-prioritised or not getting enough attention right now. Remember that the cost pressures hitting your business are affecting your people personally too (rising fuel, groceries, and everyday expenses add up). Businesses that invest in their people through periods of pressure tend to come out the other side in better shape. Wellbeing, capability, and culture are worth protecting now - they're harder to rebuild later.

## Let's keep the conversation going.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to our pulse check. Whether you shared your insights or are reading this to better understand what's happening across the market right now, we hope these insights give you a clearer view of the current business environment and help you plan ahead with more confidence.



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If you'd like to talk through anything in this report or chat about what we're seeing on the ground, feel free to reach out at any time. We're here to help. Get in touch with us at: [info@consultrecruitment.co.nz](mailto:info@consultrecruitment.co.nz)