

Rotorua Business Pulse Survey

April 2025

Rotorua business confidence continues to improve as regulatory challenges become less of a concern and the use of AI becomes more mainstream. While Rotorua's reputational rebuild continues to be a high priority for the Rotorua business community, respondents are eager to collaborate with stakeholders in progressing transformational change projects to position Rotorua as an appealing place to live, work, visit and do business.

Select Survey Period: April 2025

(1) ▾

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. [Click here>>>](#) to view the current and previous Rotorua Business Pulse Survey reports in pdf format.

[Click here>>>](#) to participate in future Rotorua Business Pulse Surveys.



Explainer

Business confidence questions are based on the perception of situations deteriorating, remaining the same or improving. For these questions, the results are presented as a net score, subtracting the deterioration percentage from the improvement percentage. Other results are presented as a percentage of respondents. Change values are versus the previous survey period.

Key themes

96 Rotorua business people participated in the April 2025 survey. Key themes for the April 2025 report are a result of the responses collected during the survey period from 3rd April 2025 to 30th April 2025:

- Perception of the economic situation during the past 12 months has improved considerably over the previous survey period, but remains challenging with negative net scores for New Zealand (-28% up from -42%) and Rotorua (-11% up from -29%).
- Business confidence for the upcoming 12 months continues to be strong with double-digit positive net scores for New Zealand (+18%), Rotorua (+30%) and respondents' own businesses (+41%). Respondent confidence in achieving profitability within their business has again increased strongly for the second consecutive survey period and is possibly driven by increased confidence in 'price of product' and improved 'affordability of doing business'.
- Respondents are most positive about their business strategy (28%) and organisational culture (25%), with more than 40% of respondents commenting on the continuing recovery of the international tourism market and 20% of respondents enjoying being involved in a collaborative business community.
- Geopolitical volatility is the highest ranked concern following U.S. tariffs being imposed on New Zealand and other trading partners. Positively, respondents are increasingly less concerned with central and local Government regulatory challenges as policy enacted by previous regulators is revised.
- Comparable to the previous survey period, almost a third of respondents rated their workplace stress as being at least 8 out of 10 and indicated that the ability to generate profitability was most likely to keep them awake at night, while finding and retaining skilled staff was increasingly less of a concern.
- Exceeding more than 50% of respondents for the first time, AI tools are increasingly being embraced by businesses and is now the highest ranked sustainability statement.
- There was very strong support for the CBD/inner city to be Rotorua's next mixed-use location for enhancement, with bold transformative suggestions to address the changed retail environment resulting from online shopping.
- Respondents were most agreeable that Rotorua's inner city was 'clean and well-maintained' and least agreeable of the inner city being 'attractive to new business investment/expansion'. Visionary transformative reforms to attract boutique retail and creating vibrant spaces with popup vendors/entertainers was an often suggested improvement as was resolving safety concerns.
- About two thirds of respondents reported the most significant challenges of using Rotorua Airport were frequent cancellations and insufficient direct flight times to allow for same day return travel. Of moderate challenge was prohibitive ticket prices and too few destinations with direct flights. About a quarter of air travellers found the challenges of using Rotorua Airport too great and were opting to drive or use other airports.
- With almost half of respondents describing Rotorua in a positive sentiment, a common theme of final comments was a call for collaboration between the business community, local Government, media and other stakeholders to restore Rotorua's reputational image, transform the inner city into a space fit for purpose and stimulate the local business community.



Rotorua proudly hosts TRENZ 2025

[TRENZ](#) is New Zealand's largest international tourism business event and most important event of the year on the tourism events calendar. As the birthplace of tourism, Rotorua is proud to once again host the world's tourism leaders and share our people, our culture, and our stunning environment.

Held over three-days (6-8 May 2025) at the [Rotorua Energy Events Centre](#), the event connects international buyers with New Zealand's leading tourism operators to build relationships, forge partnerships and shape the future of our visitor economy. The event plays a pivotal role in supporting the growth of the tourism sector across the country.

Rotorua previously hosted TRENZ in 2019, 2016, 2015, 2008 and 2007 following the opening of the Rotorua Energy Events Centre in March 2007.



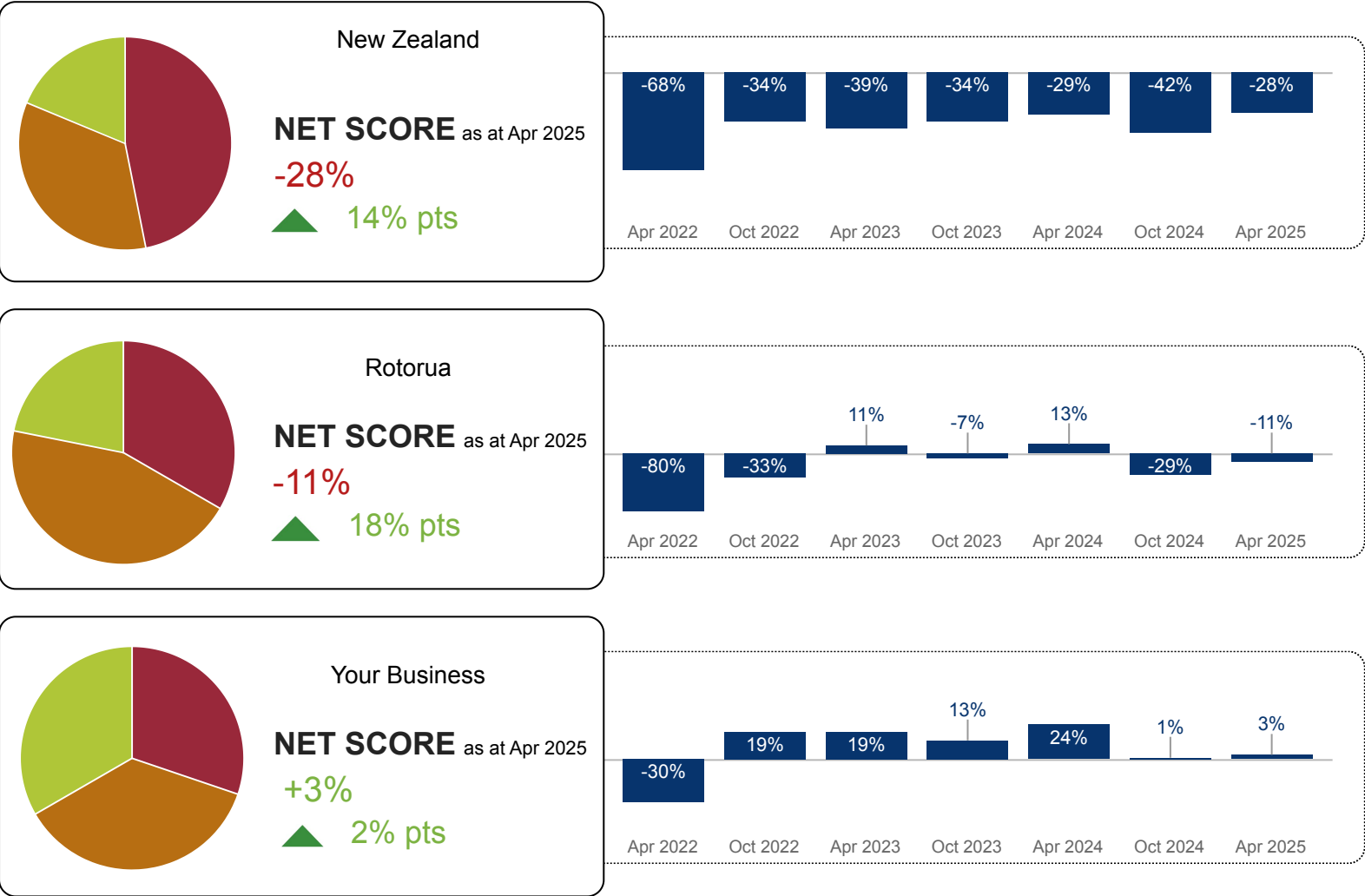
Perception of the economic situation during the past 12 months has improved over the previous survey period, but remains challenging. However, business confidence for the upcoming 12 months continues to be strong with double-digit positive net scores for New Zealand, Rotorua and respondents' own businesses.

Select Survey Period: April 2025

(1) ▾

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

Improved Remained the same Deteriorated



Your Business

NET SCORE as at Apr 2025

+3%

▲ 2% pts

-30%

19%

19%

13%

24%

1%

3%

Apr 2022

Oct 2022

Apr 2023

Oct 2023

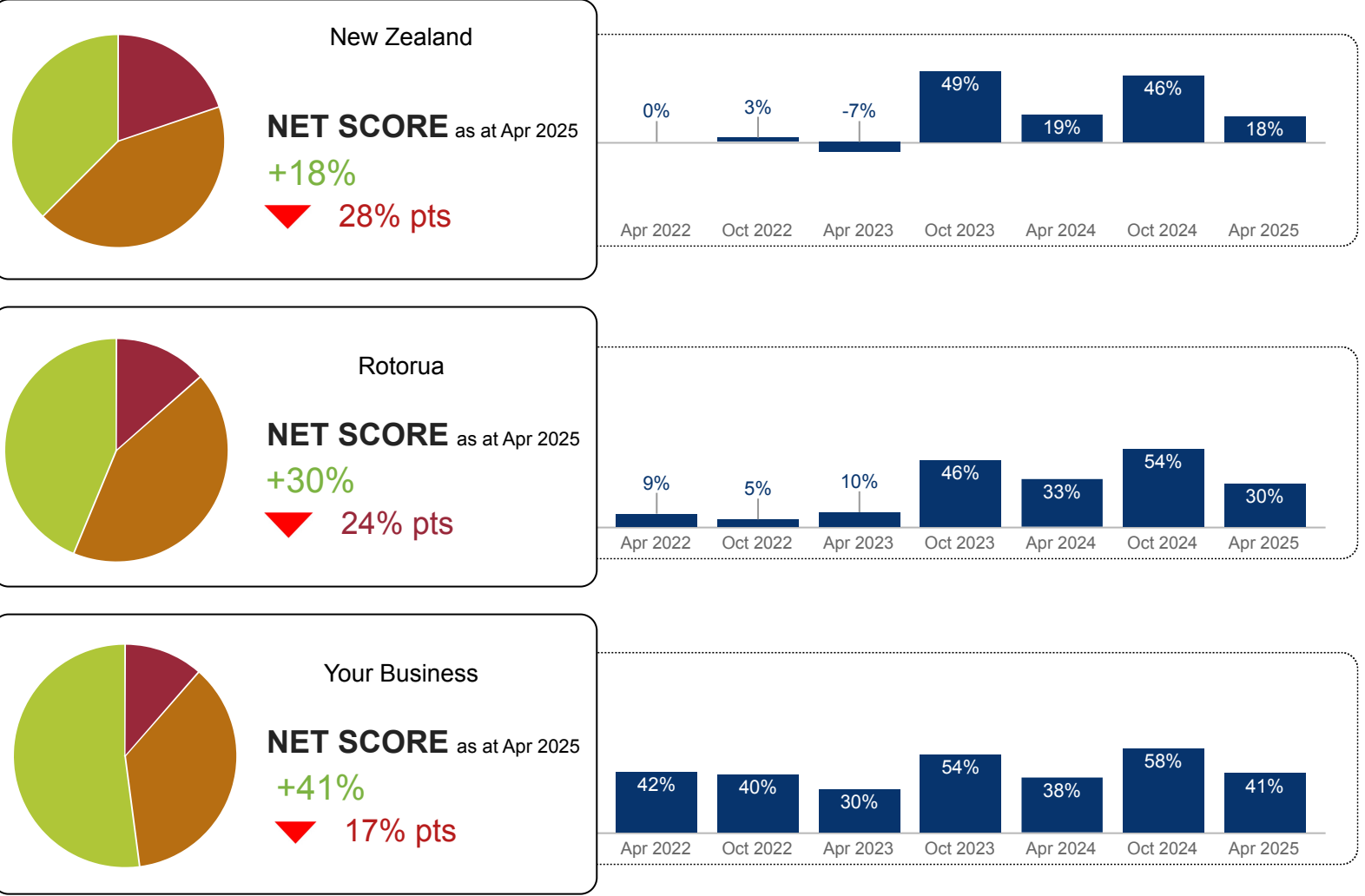
Apr 2024

Oct 2024

Apr 2025

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

Improved Remained the same Deteriorated



Your Business

NET SCORE as at Apr 2025

+41%

▼ 17% pts

42%

40%

30%

54%

38%

58%

41%

Apr 2022

Oct 2022

Apr 2023

Oct 2023

Apr 2024

Oct 2024

Apr 2025



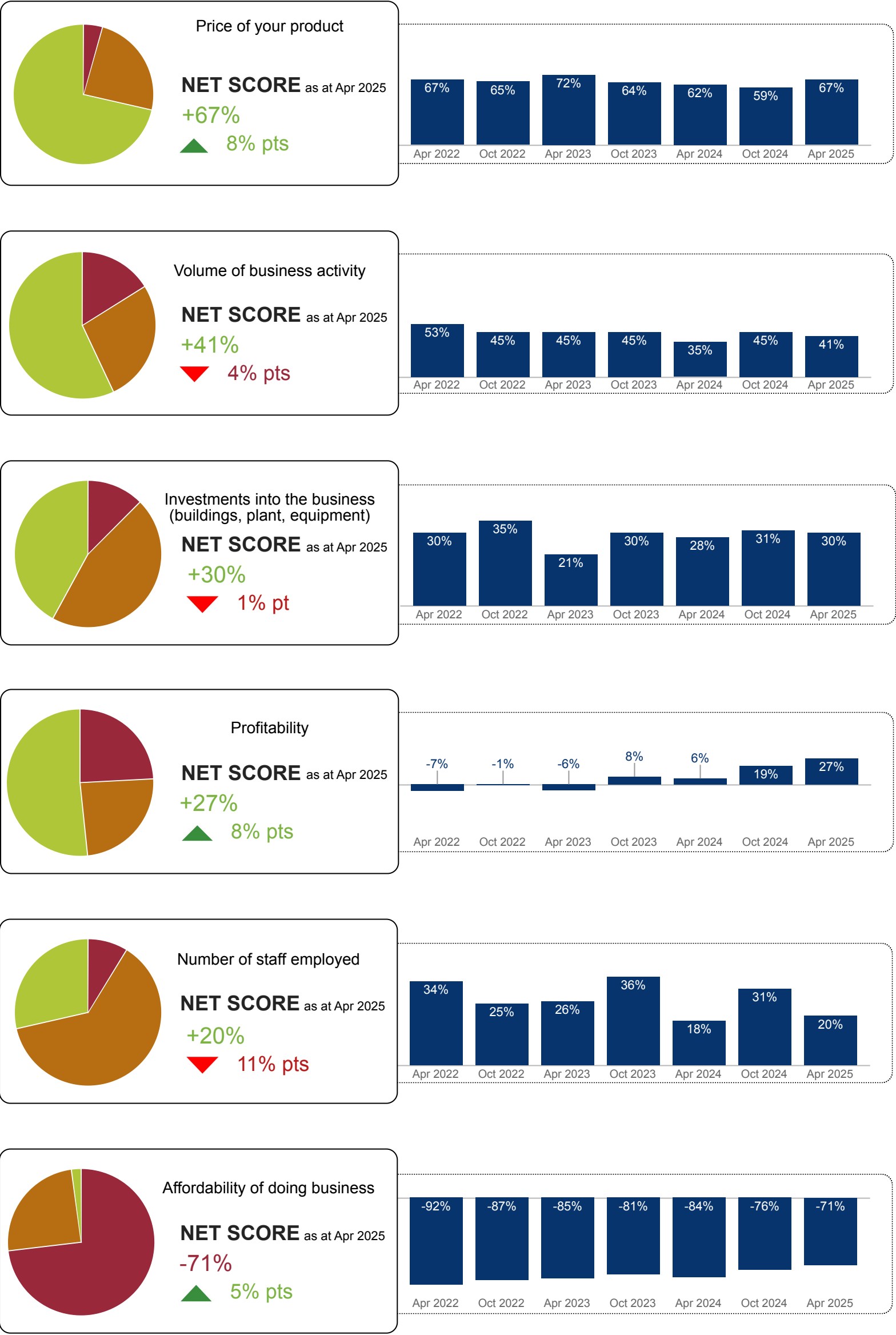
Confidence in achieving profitability in the upcoming 12 months has again increased strongly for the second consecutive survey period and is driven by increased confidence in 'price of product' and improved 'affordability of doing business'

Select Survey Period: April 2025

(1) ▾

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

Increased Remained the same Decreased





Random sort order of comments refreshed approximately every 15 minutes.

Geopolitical volatility is the highest ranked concern following U.S. tariffs being imposed on New Zealand and other trading partners. Positively, respondents are increasingly less concerned with central and local Government regulatory challenges as policy enacted by previous regulators is revised.

Select Survey Period: April 2025

(1) ▾

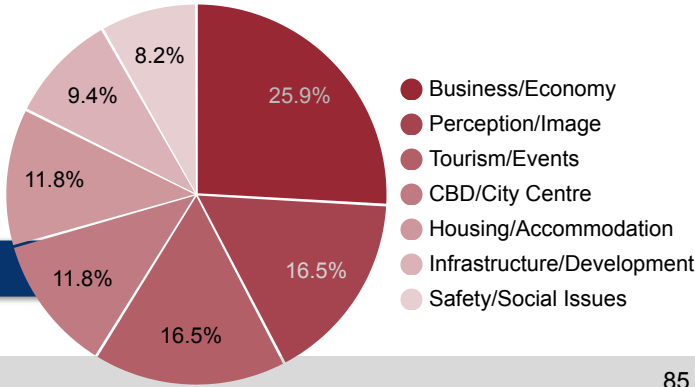
Please rate your current level of concern about the following in relation to your business

	Very + Extremely Concerned							Apr 2025 change from prior period
	Apr 2022	Oct 2022	Apr 2023	Oct 2023	Apr 2024	Oct 2024	Apr 2025	
Geopolitical volatility						34%	43%	▲ 9% pts
Finding skilled staff	68%	63%	61%	53%	38%	42%	42%	0% pts
Inflation - cost of goods / services	71%	68%	57%	52%	41%	33%	36%	▲ 3% pts
Energy price increases						29%	33%	▲ 4% pts
Ability to generate profitability	40%	31%	39%	30%	30%	24%	33%	▲ 9% pts
Retaining skilled staff	48%	53%	51%	39%	25%	26%	28%	▲ 2% pts
Regulatory and policy challenges - central Government		47%	50%	35%	35%	32%	25%	▼ 7% pts
Regulatory and policy challenges - local Government		40%	31%	30%	33%	29%	25%	▼ 4% pts
Climate change				43%	25%	34%	21%	▼ 13% pts
Ability to invest capital in the business	23%	24%	24%	24%	20%	19%	21%	▲ 2% pts
Export conditions	19%	20%	11%	8%	14%	13%	21%	▲ 8% pts
Forward work/sales in the pipeline	21%	20%	17%	23%	26%	14%	18%	▲ 4% pts
Security of energy supply						14%	16%	▲ 2% pts
Immigration settings			30%	21%	18%	26%	14%	▼ 12% pts
Business survival (staying afloat)	15%	8%	14%	13%	14%	18%	14%	▼ 4% pts
Debt levels (cost of borrowing)	19%	19%	24%	22%	23%	11%	12%	▲ 1% pt
Supply chain / shortages	33%	29%	27%	15%	11%	12%	11%	▼ 1% pt
Retaining unskilled staff	25%	24%	24%	13%	6%	7%	9%	▲ 2% pts
Finding unskilled staff	27%	25%	24%	17%	6%	8%	5%	▼ 3% pts

What do you think should be the highest priority for Rotorua over the next 12 months?

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

[Gemini AI](#) assisted in categorising comments to themes



Scroll down within the table to see more comments

85 Comments

Make geothermal part of the Rotorua story for people to get cheap heat during the economic crisis.

The city is looking tired - CBD - leadership on getting the place and businesses and homes looking sharp, State houses to have lawns mowed and gardens cared - GOVT needs to push landlord KO to do better

Off-Peak Tourism: Encouraging off-peak travel through targeted storytelling and showcasing unique cultural experiences.
Leveraging Major Events.
Collaboration with Local Stakeholders: Engage with RotoruaNZ, iwi, and other stakeholders to align business goals with city-wide initiatives.

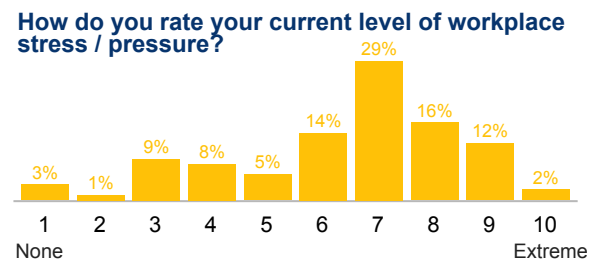
Developing new, experience-driven attractions that reflect Rotorua’s natural and cultural strengths. For over a decade, few significant additions have been made beyond the Redwoods Treewalk and a handful of zipline products. Domestic visitors and families are increasingly looking for affordable, interactive activities. Supporting projects like Thrills on Ropes, which is shovel-ready and fits well with Minister Upston’s call for tourism-led growth, should be a top priority.

Random sort order of comments refreshed approximately every 15 minutes.



Comparable to the previous survey period, almost a third of respondents rated their workplace stress as being at least 8 out of 10 and indicated that the ability to generate profitability was most likely to keep them awake at night, while finding and retaining skilled staff was increasingly less of a concern.

Select Survey Period: April 2025 (1)



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	Apr 2025 change from prior period
Ability to generate profitability	16%	3%	11%	16%	18%	23%	22%	1% pt
Forward work/sales in the pipeline	8%	13%	7%	8%	14%	13%	13%	0% pts
Business survival (staying afloat)	8%	5%	7%	7%	11%	10%	12%	2% pts
Finding skilled staff	24%	21%	17%	12%	11%	11%	9%	2% pts
Geopolitical volatility						3%	5%	2% pts
Regulatory and policy challenges - central Government		8%	6%	4%	10%	7%	4%	3% pts
Ability to invest capital in the business	0%	4%	0%	1%	4%	4%	4%	0% pts
Retaining skilled staff	4%	7%	15%	7%	5%	4%	3%	1% pt
Inflation - cost of goods / services sold	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	0%	2%	2% pts
Regulatory and policy challenges - local Government		1%	1%	2%	3%	4%	2%	2% pts
Export conditions	0%	0%	0%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1% pt
Climate change			5%	4%	0%	1%	1%	0% pts
Finding unskilled staff	1%	4%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0% pts
Debt levels (cost of borrowing)	0%	0%	6%	5%	1%	1%	0%	1% pt
Retaining unskilled staff	0%	0%	1%	1%	3%	0%	0%	0% pts
Energy price increases						0%	0%	0% pts
Security of energy supply						0%	0%	0% pts
Other	25%	17%	8%	9%	3%	6%	9%	3% pts
NOTHING keeps me awake at night	8%	11%	13%	13%	11%	10%	10%	0% pts



Te Puia is one of only six playable NZ locations in the Minecraft universe!

Rotorua steams into the Minecraft universe

To celebrate the release of “[A MINECRAFT MOVIE](#)”, Tourism New Zealand partnered with Warner Bros. and Mojang Studios to create a world-first destination DLC (downloadable content) for Minecraft.

With over 300 million copies sold, Minecraft is the best-selling video game of all time and continues to grow after nearly 15 years since the game was first launched.

Pack your bundles and get ready for the virtual trip of a lifetime through six breathtaking New Zealand destinations including a Rotorua geothermal experience at [Te Puia](#). You’ll also meet a variety of NPCs (non-player characters), including kāumatua (elders) that’ll guide you on your immersive adventure into New Zealand’s Māori culture and heritage.

Get the [Aotearoa Minecraft DLC](#) for free to take your first step into a world brimming with natural beauty and Māori culture! And then plan an IRL game at [newzealand.com](#)



Exceeding more than 50% of respondents for the first time, AI tools are increasingly being embraced by businesses and is now the highest ranked sustainability statement.

There was very strong support for the CBD/inner city to be Rotorua's next mixed-use location for enhancement, with bold transformative suggestions to address the changed retail environment resulting from online shopping.

Select Survey Period: April 2025

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Which of the following statements are true for your business?

	Apr 2022	Oct 2022	Apr 2023	Oct 2023	Apr 2024	Oct 2024	Apr 2025	Apr 2025 change from prior period
AI technologies are being explored/used in our business			23%	49%	41%	49%	65%	▲ 16% pts
We have policies in place to reduce carbon emissions	26%	41%	31%	42%	40%	55%	51%	▼ 4% pts
We currently have vacancies that need to be filled	47%	52%	55%	47%	42%	44%	33%	▼ 11% pts
We expect to change our capital structure within 12 months			12%	14%	14%	15%	20%	▲ 5% pts
None of the above	39%	34%	25%	18%	28%	24%	16%	▼ 8% pts

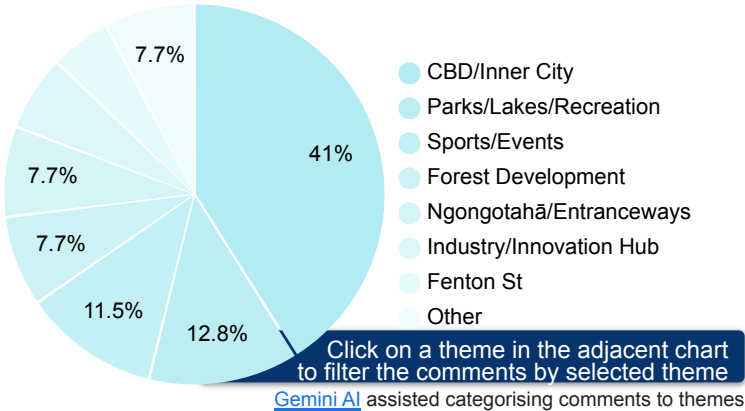
Which mixed-use location do you believe should be the next focus for enhancement or revitalisation in Rotorua?

Scroll down within table for more comments 78 Comments

- CBD/Eat Street
- Rotorua Stadium
- A proper stadium
- CBD Restructure, Get ruthless and restructure how the CBD is formed.
- Making inner city more vibrant and changing use of some areas to mixed zone - footpath trading, pedestrian zones, el fresco dining. Long term behaviour change but shifting to less car focused! Encouraging foot traffic
- Teen Skate/Arts Crossover
- International Sport/Concert/Event Stadium
- Our CBD.

Random sort order of comments refreshed approximately every 15 minutes.

'Mixed-use location' Topical Question asked only in the April 2025 survey period



Click on a theme in the adjacent chart to filter the comments by selected theme
[Gemini AI](#) assisted categorising comments to themes

Rotorua Business Success Story



Celebrating 40 Years of Fun

Skyline celebrates 40 years of fun and innovation

[Skyline Rotorua](#) celebrated 40 years of operation in March 2025 with more than 15 million passengers having ridden the gondola at the 'iconic attraction' in the past four decades.

Opening in 1985, Skyline Rotorua offered scenic gondola rides and lugging. Over the following 40 years they innovated a constant stream of new experiences with multi-generational appeal. In addition to the gondola and luge, Skyline Rotorua currently offers the Stratosfare Restaurant, Market Kitchen Cafe, Skyswing, Hyfly Ziplines, Volcanic Hills Wine Tasting, iNZspired and the Mountain Bike Park.

Ask Andrew Jensen, Skyline Rotorua general manager what successes the company has had, and he'll mention the various tourism, local, chamber, and sustainability awards over the years. But he saves the biggest success as being staff - staff who have joined in their early years while studying at school, university, and worked their way through.

In addition to being a celebration of the past, the anniversary is an acknowledgement of the bond Skyline has built with its customers and to mark the 40th year milestone Skyline Rotorua invited locals and visitors to share their memories.

Check out the Skyline Rotorua social media channels to see favourite photos and memories.



Some of the amazing wahine at Skyline Rotorua who go above and beyond to make every visit memorable, being acknowledged on International Women's Day.



Skyline Rotorua is a founding member of the [Rotorua Sustainable Charter](#)





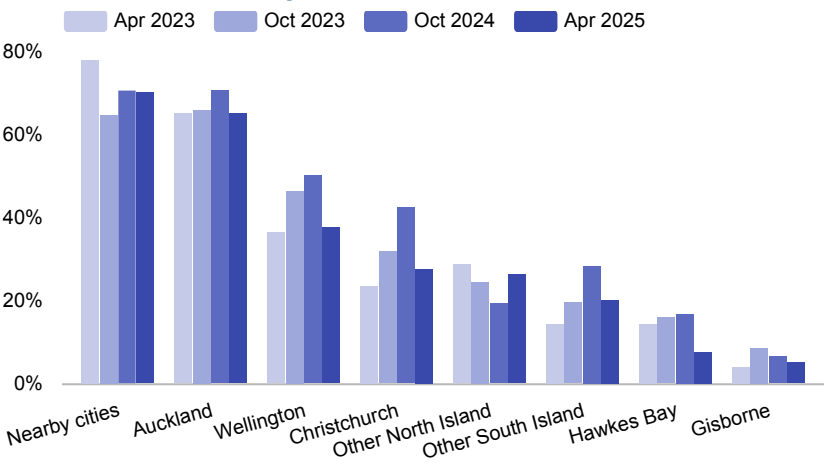


More than half the respondents travel domestically for business at least monthly and a further third travel periodically during the year with Auckland and Nearby Cities being the most common places, but also steady demand to more distant places.

About two thirds of respondents reported the most significant challenges of using Rotorua Airport were frequent cancellations and insufficient direct flight times to allow for same day return travel. Of moderate challenge was prohibitive ticket prices and too few destinations with direct flights. About a quarter of air travel respondents found the challenges of using Rotorua Airport too great and were either driving or using other airports.

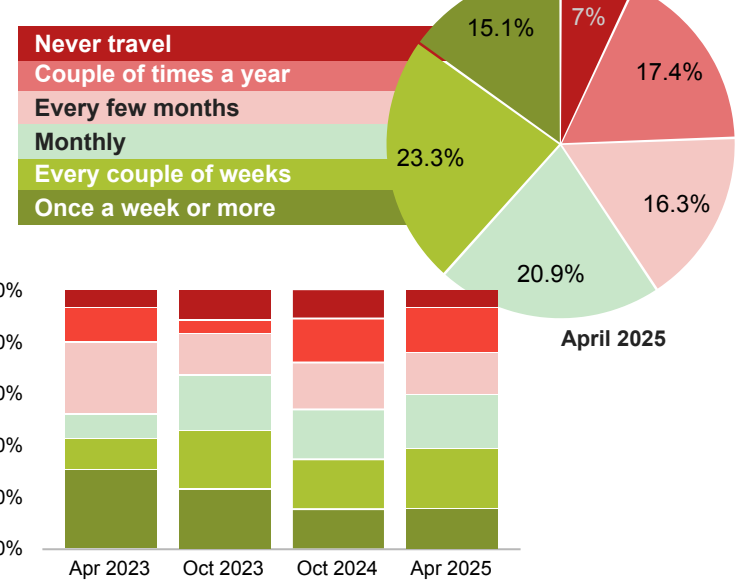


If travel for work, where does your business travel domestically for work?



'Airport' Topical Questions asked only in survey periods: April 2023, October 2023, October 2024 and April 2025

How often do you, or your employees travel for work?

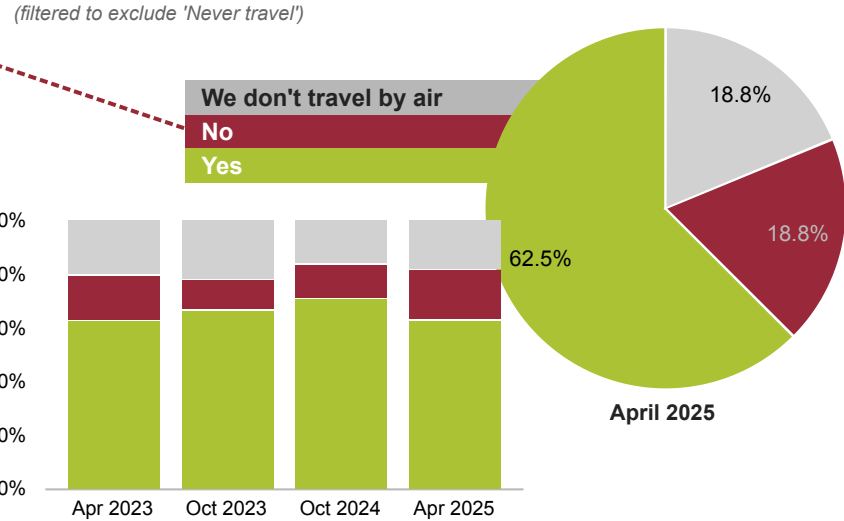


If no, which airport do you depart from, and why?

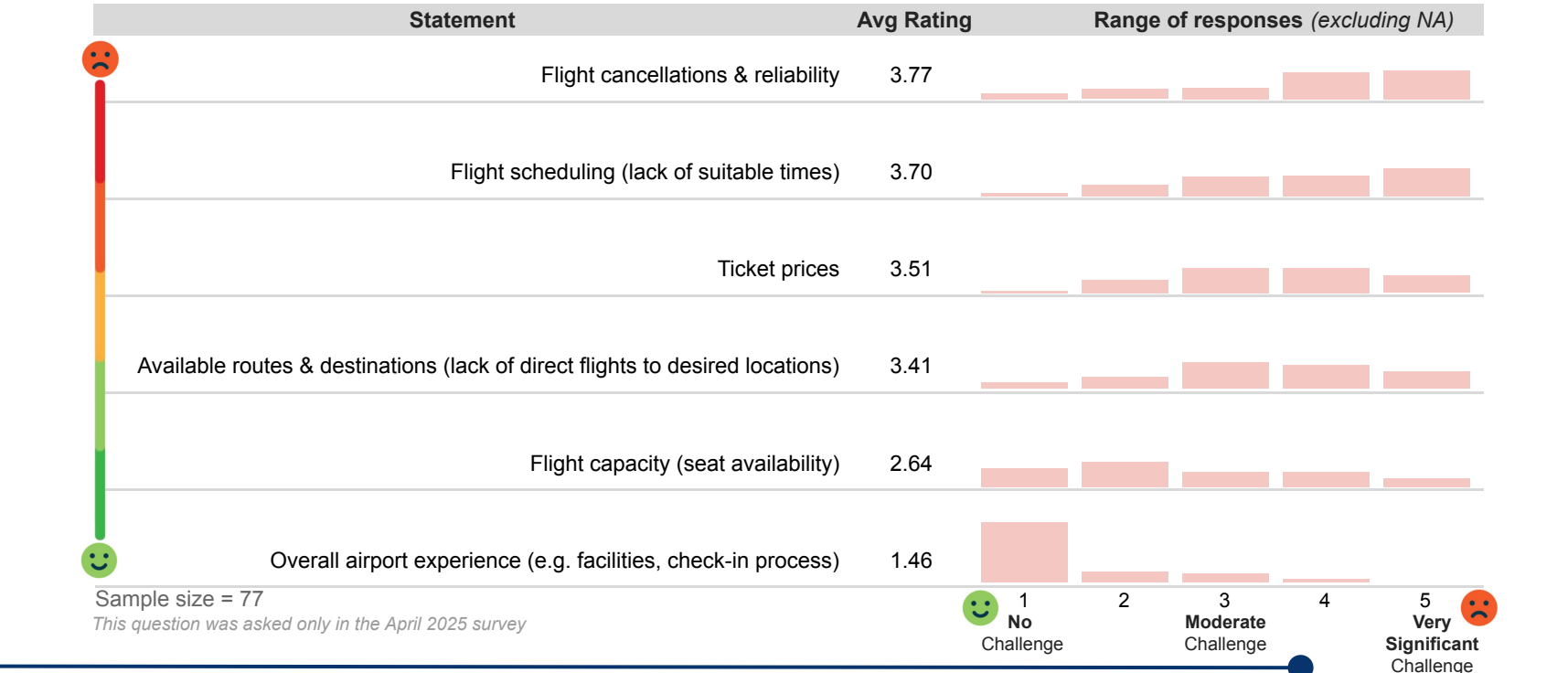
Scroll down within table for more comments 47 Comments

AKL	Apr 2025	Auckland
	Apr 2025	Tauranga, I can't trust Air New Zealand will fly from Rotorua airport. There have been too many cancelled flights, which has affected my income. If I don't fly, I don't get paid.
	Apr 2025	Our employees travel from Tauranga and Hamilton as these employees live there. We also use Rotorua Airport.
TGA	Apr 2025	Tauranga - too many flights out of Rotorua are cancelled. Also the availability of connections is now so poor you might as well shut it.
	Apr 2025	We are forced to go from Tauranga because the flights times out/in of Rotorua are terrible after the AirN7
HLZ		

If travelling by air, do you or your employees typically depart from Rotorua Airport?

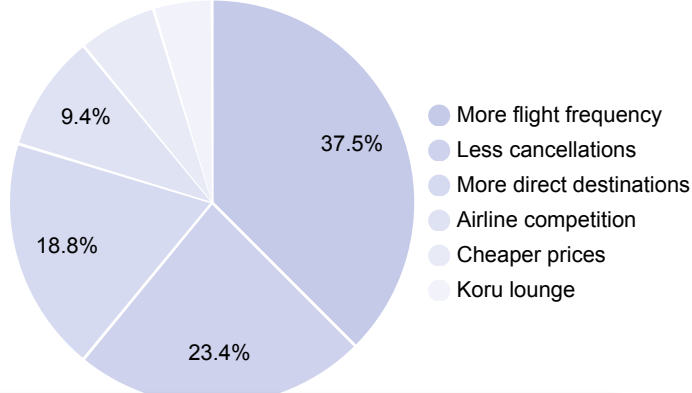


Thinking about using Rotorua Airport for business travel over the past 12 months, please rate the level of challenge each of the following factors has presented for you and/or business colleagues:



What would improve air travel in and out of Rotorua for business travel?

This question was asked only in the April 2025 survey

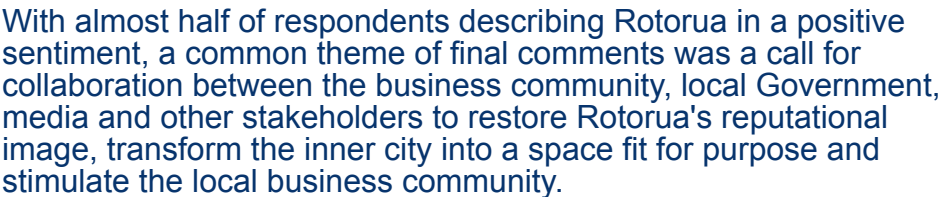


Click on a theme in the chart above to filter comments in the adjacent table to the selected theme

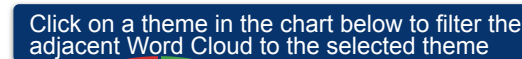
Gemini AI assisted categorising comments to themes. Random sort order of comments refreshed approximately every 15 minutes.

Scroll down within the table for more comments 64 Comments

More destinations, more times.
A reliable airline, committed to the destination. Air NZ is currently (and sadly) neither. *** Comment has been withheld - identifies individuals ***
More affordable and more frequent flights to Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch. Its sometimes easier to travel from Tauranga!!
Having a Koru lounge in Rotorua
less cancelations
connectivity to Queenstown needs to be improved to allow for tourism to thrive
Yes, our conference delegates (which number over 900 pax annually) often complain to us about poor connections to attend our conferences. So it has a direct impact on our business and ability to grow.



(1) ▼

[illegible]

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

[Gemini AI](#) assisted in categorising comments to themes



34 Comments

Reputation Rebuilding: Although Rotorua has made significant progress in restoring its reputation as a vibrant destination for visitors and residents, continued focus on community wellbeing, safety, and infrastructure improvements will further enhance its appeal. Media still does not say very much about the positives the Rotorua has and this will need to be a focus.

The economy is hampered by councils failure to work collaboratively with businesses at the functionality level rather than currently all supportive at Mayoral level but not in the departmental level..... *** Comment withheld - identifies individuals *** should stand aside and allow proactive and well skilled others to take their positions which would reduce unnecessary wasting of rates income

Rotorua needs to keep working on it's image, to help attract more higher wealth spenders in housing, business and as visitors compared to nearby towns like Tauranga, Mt Maunganui, and Taupo, etc.

Please reconnect with the businesses who reacted positively to Mr Ifor Ffowcs-Williams previous presentations. We WANT to make something happen to help grow the skills for potential employees in the future.

lets hope Trump doesnt send the world into hell and a hand basket

Our business is doing well due to the teams hard work but this is very hard. Rotorua's survives on tourist revenue so we should be doing everything we can to recognise and support that including our community understanding that. A huge challenge for Rotorua is that we have a disproportionately high number of beneficiaries (not productive) many of which we believe want to work but due to intergenerational unemployment do not have pathways into an employment mindset - local and central government need to support businesses more to help these people (who want to work) into employment to break the cycle which is obviously good for them but also the city.

If Rotorua doesn't reinvent itself to create a more dynamic and desirable vibe in the city and provide a higher quality experience in its tourism and dining we will get left behind and end up as the dumping ground for unemployed and homeless.

Random sort order of comments refreshed approximately every 15 minutes.

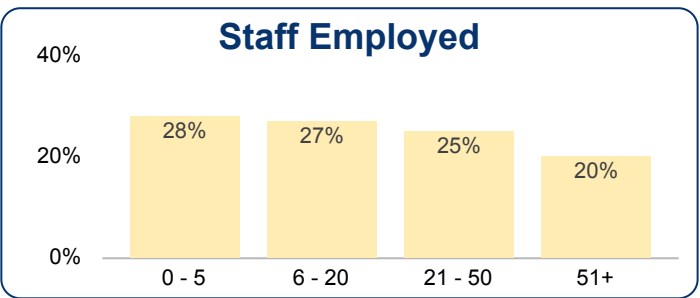
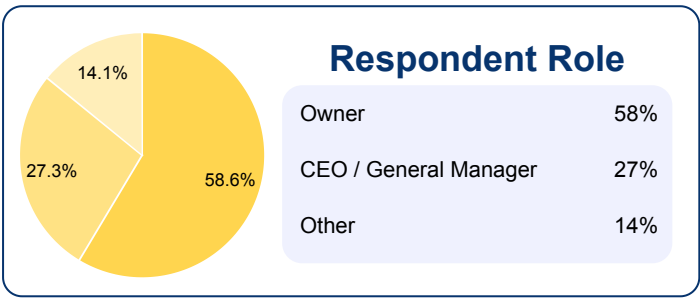
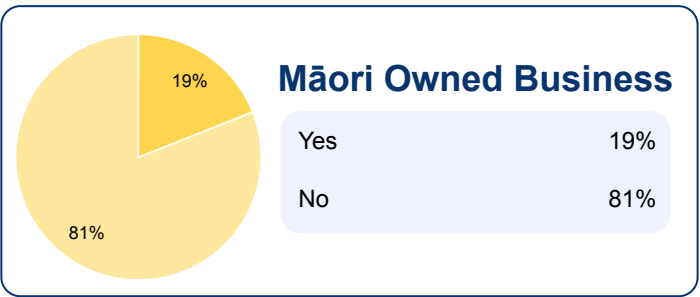
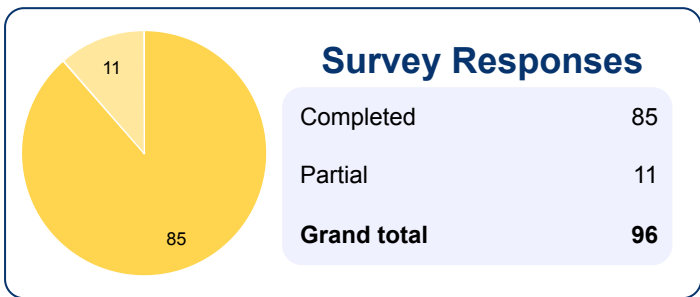


96 Rotorua business people participated in the April 2025 survey, a decline from 99 respondents in October 2024. A cross-section of businesses from different industries participated, with 85% of respondents being the owner or CEO of the business.

Select Survey Period: April 2025

(1) ▾

There was a broad distribution of different sized businesses, from small SMEs to large 51+ employee operations. 19% of respondents were Māori owned businesses, an increase from 18% in the October 2024 survey.



Which industries does your business operate in? *(one or more responses allowed)*

	Apr 2022	Oct 2022	Apr 2023	Oct 2023	Apr 2024	Oct 2024	Apr 2025
Tourism and Accommodation	31%	28%	29%	38%	34%	39%	38%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	16%	10%	17%	18%	18%	16%	19%
Hospitality and Food Services	20%	12%	15%	14%	11%	19%	17%
Manufacturing	5%	11%	13%	8%	9%	11%	9%
Financial, Legal and Insurance Services	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	6%	8%
Retail	9%	10%	10%	8%	8%	9%	7%
Building and Construction	4%	11%	10%	11%	8%	7%	5%
Education and Training	5%	1%	5%	5%	8%	6%	5%
Forestry, Farming and Fishing	4%	10%	11%	9%	9%	9%	5%
Other Services	16%	11%	14%	10%	6%	7%	5%
Agriculture	1%	2%	4%	5%	1%	1%	4%
Environmental	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Information Media and Telecommunications	4%	6%	8%	6%	8%	3%	4%
Administrative and Support Services	3%	1%	3%	1%	5%	3%	3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	4%	4%	5%	3%	5%	3%	3%
Transport, Logistics, Postal and Warehousing	3%	7%	4%	5%	5%	2%	3%
Wholesale Trade	5%	5%	7%	6%	3%	2%	2%
Arts and Recreation Services	1%	0%	7%	2%	3%	5%	1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1%	4%	4%	2%	3%	3%	1%
Public Administration and Safety	1%	4%	3%	3%	1%	2%	0%