

# Henry Sole Trader Pulse

Australia

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 Australia, with methodology and topics as follows:

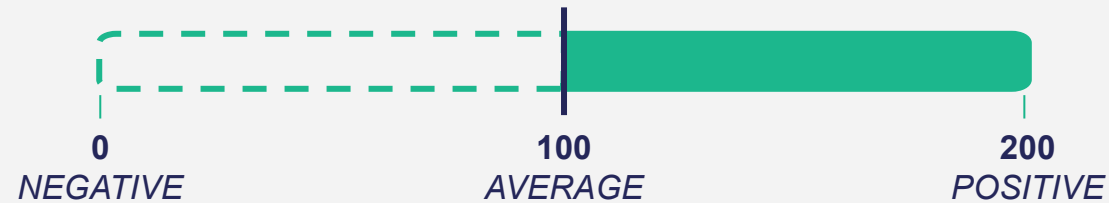
This Pulse was conducted between 8th – 16th March 2026.

- The survey polled 510 sole traders across Australia, 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 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 income and payment, securing loans, insurances, AI, government services and programs, plus potential policy changes.

# 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 - AU

	LAST PULSE (Oct 2025)	TOTAL (Mar 2026)	INDUSTRY					BUSINESS TENURE			GENDER	
	Index Result	Index Result	Tradie	Freelancer / Creative	Consultant	Health / Wellness	Others	< 2 years	3-10 years	11+ years	Males	Females
<b>Past Financial Performance</b>												
Financial Performance - Last Quarter	114	119	120	113	126	124	113	116	125	109	122	112
<b>Current / Future Financial Performance</b>												
Financial Performance Right Now	113	119	123	113	122	131	113	118	123	112	123	112
Financial Performance Next Quarter	124	121	125	119	120	132	119	123	124	110	123	118
<b>Business &amp; Economic Conditions</b>												
Health of the Economy Right Now	90	97	95	94	100	115	86	102	97	87	100	91
Health of the Economy in 6 Months	95	98	98	98	98	119	85	102	100	85	102	89
<b>Personal Factors</b>												
Personal Satisfaction and Enjoyment	135	132	133	131	135	136	128	126	136	132	135	126
Wellbeing	125	130	126	126	137	144	124	124	134	132	134	124
Work-life balance	135	132	124	130	137	144	131	126	135	138	136	126
Financial Security	115	120	122	117	125	137	109	117	123	119	123	114
Job Security	126	128	131	124	130	142	122	124	130	131	133	121
<b>Total Index</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>113</b>

# Executive Summary (1/2)

- **Australian sole trader Sentiment has stabilised, with the economy still the main drag on sole traders' outlook**
  - Despite all the international upheaval and economic uncertainty at present, the sole trader index is not dramatically changed since October last year. 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.
  - The overall score sits at 119/200, which is slightly up on October 2025, but still below the long-term average and therefore confirms the softer optimism and experiences recorded over the past year or so.
  - Sole traders remain most positive about running their own business, especially personal satisfaction (132), well-being (130) and work-life balance (132). However, ratings of the economy remain slightly pessimistic, at 97 for the economy right now and 98 in six months' time.
  - Health and wellness sole traders are the most positive overall (132), while female sole traders (113), freelancers / creatives (117) and those in business for 11+ years (115) are less positive than average.
- **Business performance has firmed slightly since late 2025, and income is more likely to grow than decline**
  - There has been some improvement in reported financial performance since October 2025, with the index for performance last quarter rising to 119 from 114, and performance right now to 119 from 113. Positively, more sole traders are expecting income to grow than decline, with 47% expecting higher turnover than the previous quarter and 39% expecting lower turnover.
  - Health and wellness sole traders remain the strongest on this measure (+32 net), followed by consultants (+18), whereas older businesses are now net negative, with those operating for 11+ years at -12.
- **While financial and job security remain relatively solid, many sole traders are managing volatility rather than enjoying stability. This could be partly due to the recent summer holiday period**
  - Most sole traders do not seem overly worried right now, with 51% rating their financial security as good and 59% saying the same of job security. That said, this sits alongside a high degree of variability - only 57% describe their income as stable through the year, while 42% say it is variable.
  - In addition, 31% say they regularly feel like they are living "invoice to invoice". This is especially true of freelancers and creatives, while health and wellness sole traders tend to have the most stable income.
  - Something to note here is that January - February is a time of year when sole traders are confronted with earnings fluctuations. Many aren't working, or aren't able to work because clients are on holiday, and they do not receive annual leave pay.

# Executive Summary (2/2)

- **Cost pressures remain the biggest stress, and many sole traders appear to be consciously keeping a buffer inside the business as access to finance and insurance is problematic**
  - The largest reported sources of stress are the rising cost of living and doing business (42%), tax obligations (36%) and finding enough work (32%).
  - At the same time, sole traders do not typically pay themselves everything they earn. Only 28% pay themselves almost all of their business income, and the average proportion paid out as take-home pay is 53%, suggesting many are deliberately retaining some funds in the business as a buffer.
  - That underlying fragility also appears in other areas: 53% have tried to secure a loan or mortgage at some point, and roughly half of those who have applied have experienced difficulties; meanwhile 32% are either knowingly underinsured or hold no business insurance at all.
- **Financial and tax administration remains a meaningful weekly time and monthly dollar burden. Programs and apps continue to offer the clearest cost saving**
  - A long-term trend is now being confirmed in which accountant use has now fallen to the all time low of 37%, seemingly offset by an increase in the use of tax agents to 28% . Use of programs and apps sits at 21%.
  - Sole traders are spending an average of 6 hours a week and \$4128 per year on financial and tax administration. The biggest cost savings are coming from programs and apps, with users reporting an average monthly spend of \$265, compared with \$349 for accountants and \$599 for financial planners / advisors.
  - Hnry customers are saving even more than other program and app users, spending only 1% of their self employed income on managing tax and financial admin (capped at \$1500 per year), and half the time (3 hours) per week
- **Sole Traders seek out the ATO and finance professionals for advice and find find tax administration and record keeping the hardest part of dealing with government**
  - The most common sources of information for sole traders are the ATO website (53%), financial professionals (43%), general searches like Google (35%) and business.gov.au (29%). However financial professionals were seen as the most useful sources (31%) followed by the ATO (22%).
  - The most difficult interactions for sole traders with government are quarterly tax requirements such as BAS/PAYG (33%), annual tax returns (24%), record keeping and documentation (23%), and having to deal with multiple agencies and tiers of government (22%).