ExportNZ DHL

Export Barometer Report

2026

The findings in a nutshell

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Increased exports in the past 12 months

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Level of optimism lower than a year ago

The findings from the 2026 ExportNZ DHL Export Barometer survey show that New Zealand's exporters continued to perform well, but are operating in a difficult trading environment.

Exporters reported increased exports in the past 12 months and the prospect of further growth in the coming 12 months, but their level of optimism is now lower than it was a year ago.

Results indicate that restrictions on traffic through the Strait of Hormuz have dampened confidence a little, and the tariffs imposed by President Trump have also caused difficulties for exporters. Together, these factors have added to shipping and other costs of exporting.

It is encouraging to note, however, that exporters are not passively accepting the troubles inflicted on them. There are signs that exporters are shifting their focus to rely slightly less heavily on the traditional markets in the highly developed economies, and focusing more on emerging markets in the Middle East and Asia. The Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with India and the Gulf Cooperation Council appear to have stimulated this new focus.

Exporters are also responding to supply chain issues and they have taken a range of initiatives to help them overcome barriers to exporting. Only a small proportion are doing nothing.

Reflecting the increased problems they face, more exporters than previously see a role for government support. Most often, they want support to attend trade shows and more FTAs.

Under the circumstances, a surprise is that few exporters report using internet channels to generate orders - half make no use of e-commerce channels. Another is that only a minority use AI to increase their business productivity, even though the uptake has increased.

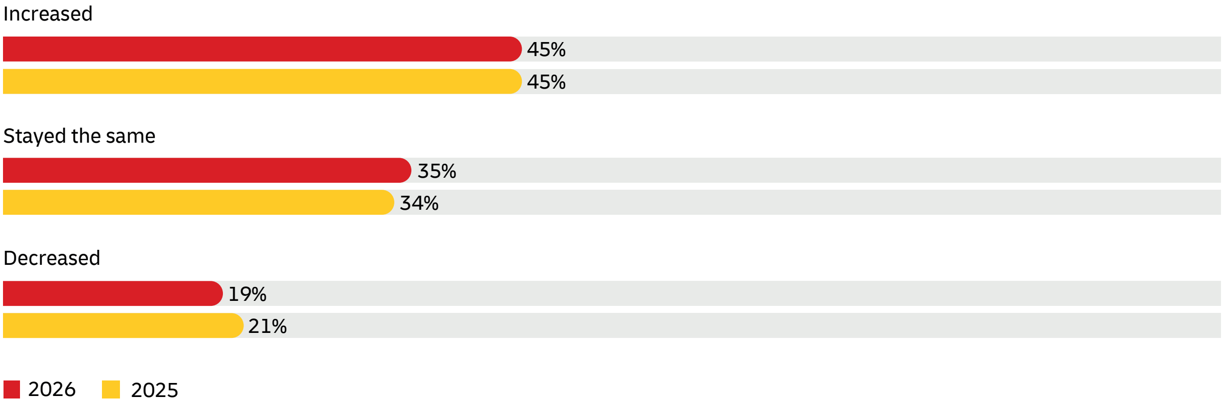
Like any other business, **we look forward to a return to an easier global trading environment**, hopefully in the not-too-distant future.

Bay of Plenty, Manufacturer

Latest export performance good...

More than twice as many of the respondents said their exports had increased during the past 12 months, as said they had decreased (45% vs 19%). This was a slight improvement in the performance recorded in the 2025 survey.

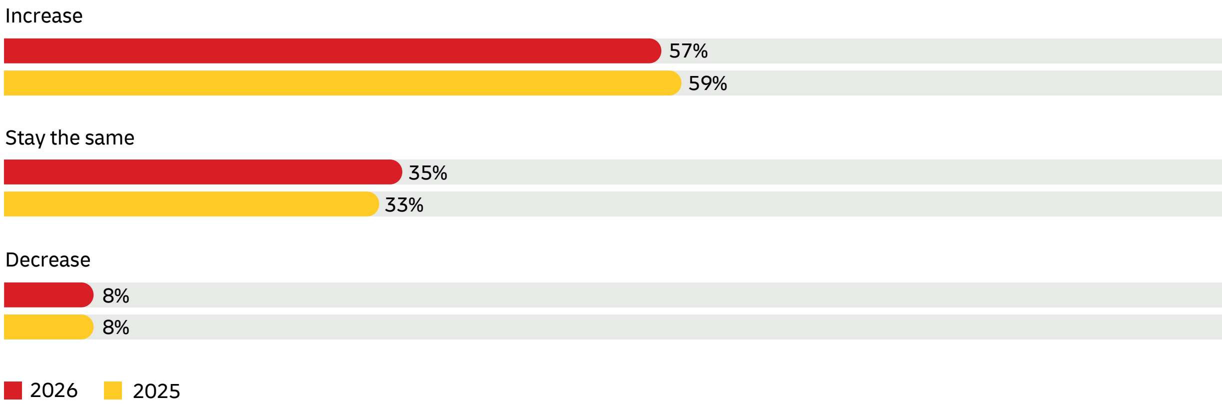
Change in exports in latest 12 months compared to the previous 12 months
% of exporters responding as shown



...but future less certain

The prospects for the next 12 months also look promising, but the proportion of respondents in 2026 expecting an increase was slightly down on the proportion of optimistic exporters in the 2025 survey. The reasons for this are laid out later in this report, but the conflict in Iran and the restrictions on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz are obviously having an impact. The tariffs imposed by President Trump have also had a negative effect on export performance.

Expected change in exports over the next 12 months compared to the latest 12 months
% of exporters responding as shown

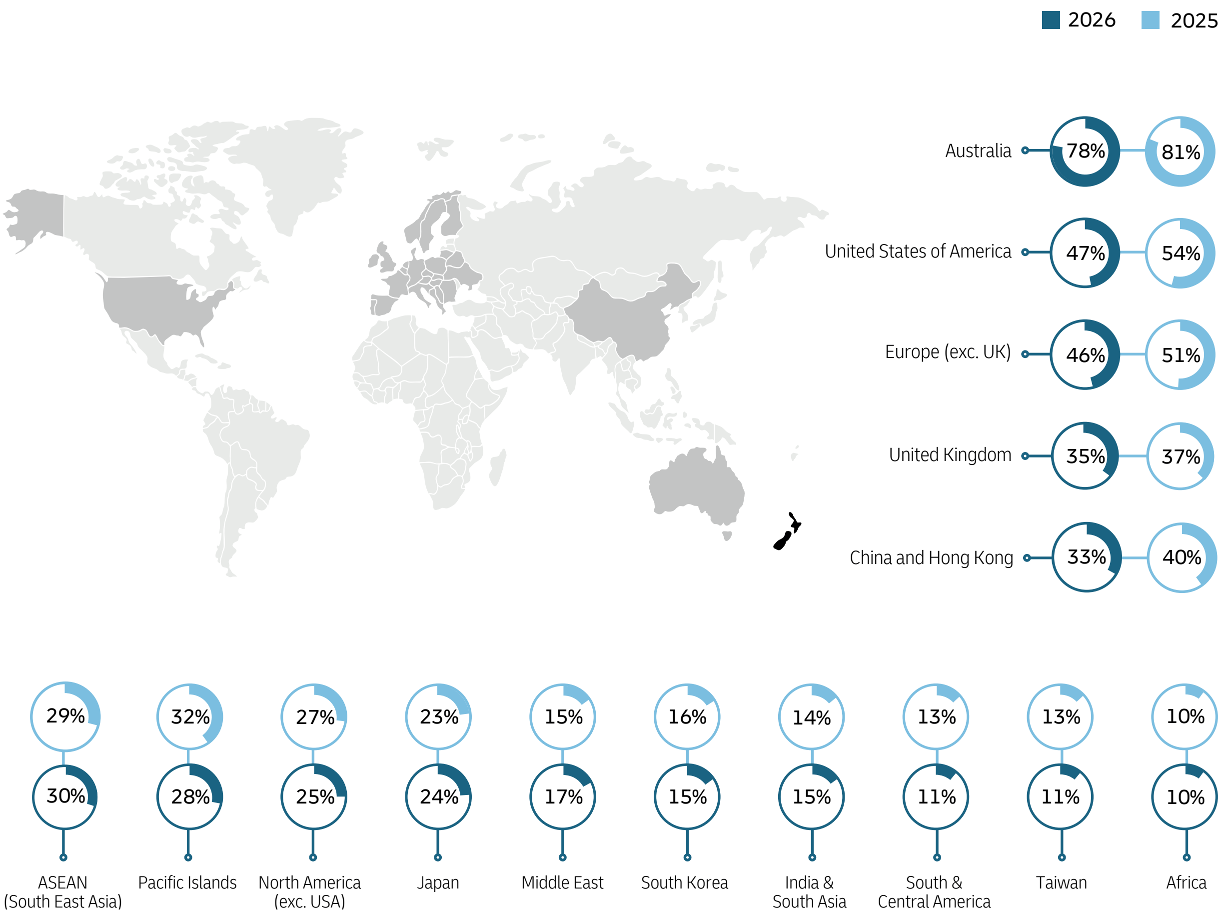


Signs of diversification into new markets

Australia, the USA and Europe remained, by far and away, the most popular markets amongst exporters in the past year, even though the proportion of survey respondents saying they exported into these economies was down, compared to the year before. The proportion of respondents exporting to the UK and China was also down.

By contrast, a growing proportion of respondents were exporting to markets, other than China, in Asia. Nonetheless, the results show that the popularity of these emerging markets is growing from a low base.

Key markets for exporters in latest 12 months
% of respondents exporting to markets shown

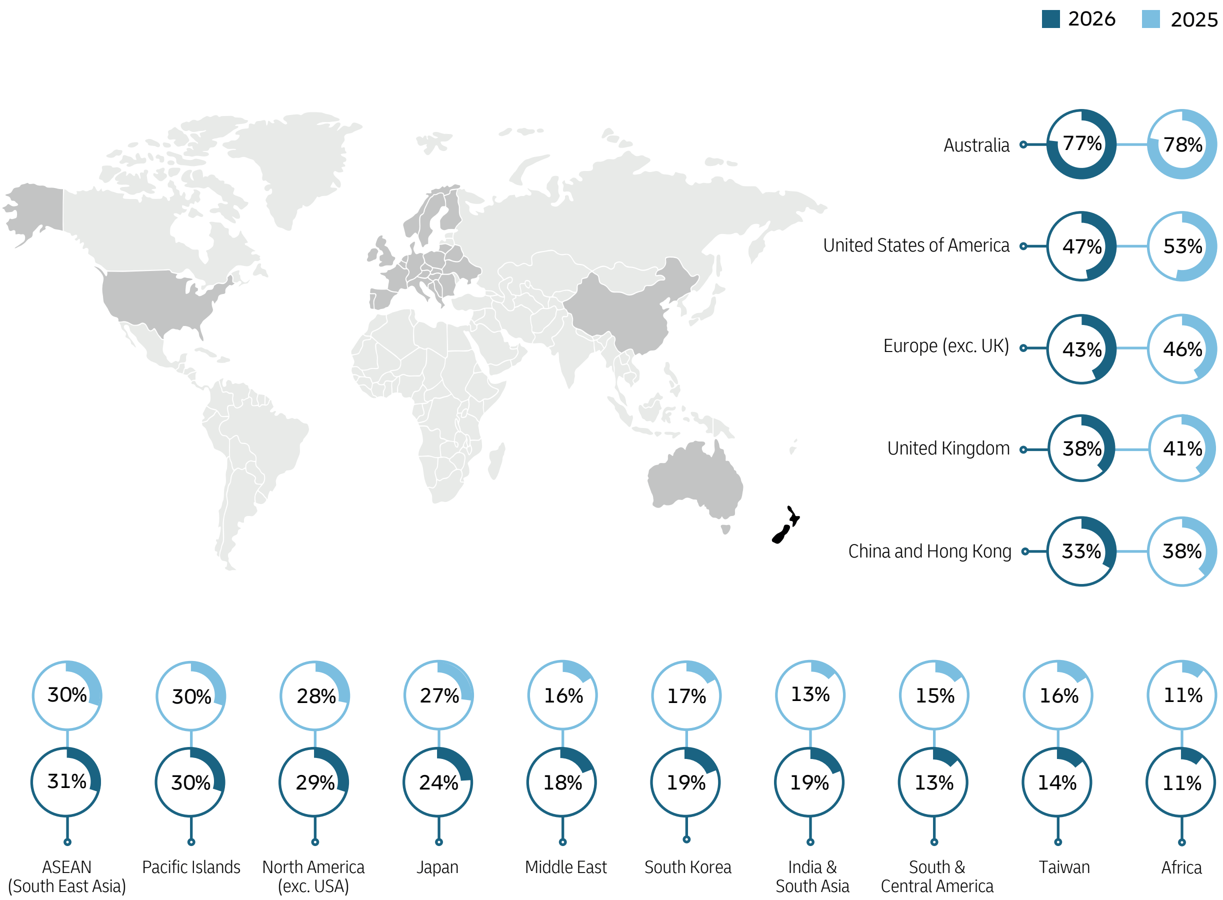


The next 12 months

The focus of exporters' interests in the next 12 months largely mirrors what happened in the past 12 months, with less attention being paid to the traditionally popular markets, and more being paid to less popular Asian markets.

The greatest increase is in the Indian and South Asian market, and this is likely to reflect the recent signing of the Free Trade Agreement between India and New Zealand. A sizeable increase in attention on the Middle East may reflect the announcement of an FTA between New Zealand and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Key markets over the next 12 months
% of respondents exporting to markets shown



Global demand for our product is strong so the challenge is efficiently catering to our markets.

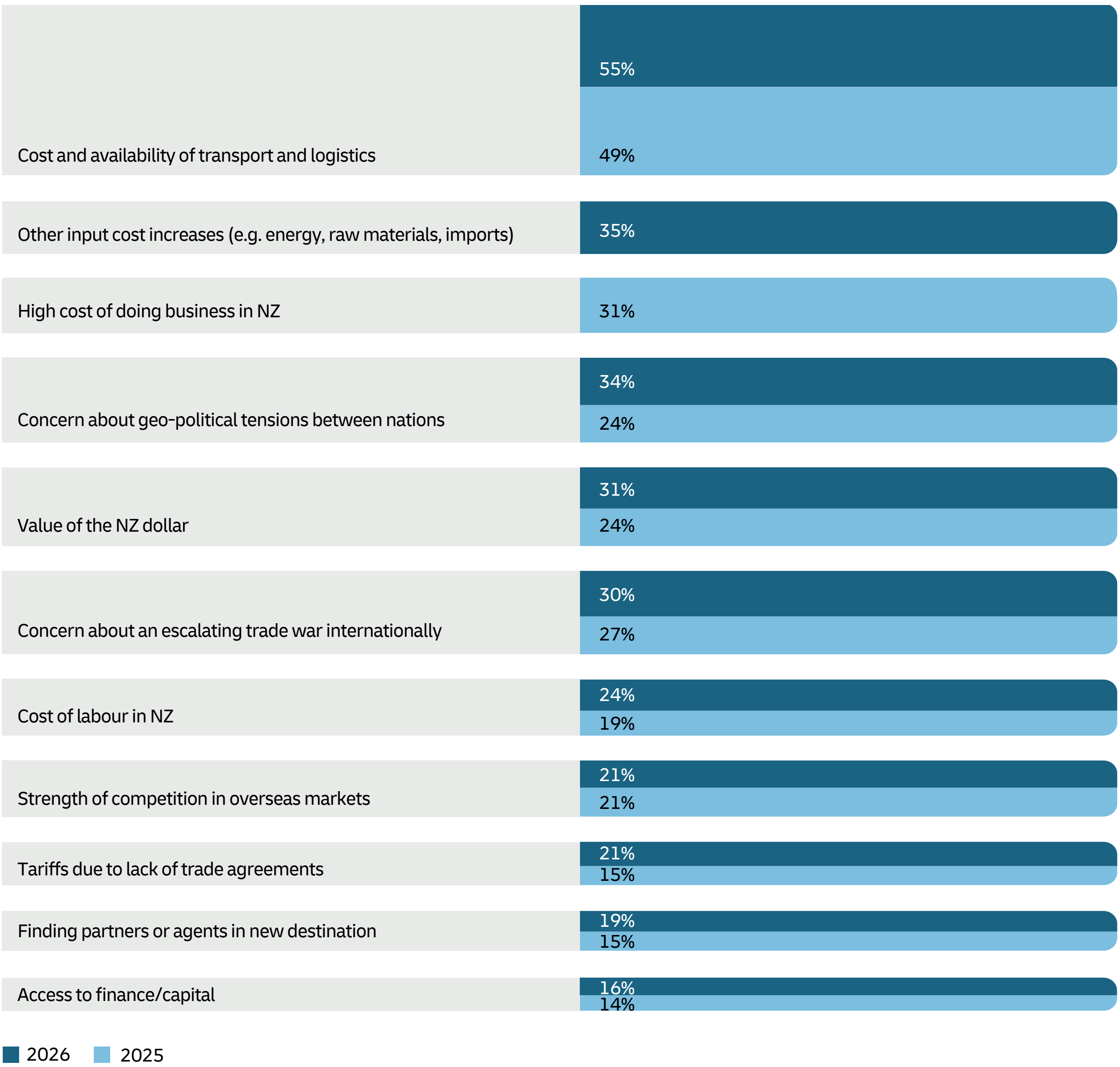
Bay of Plenty, F&B Manufacturer

Barriers to export growth increasing...

Every one of the barriers to exporting specified in the survey was identified by a greater proportion of the respondents.

More than half of the respondents (55%) indicated that the “costs and availability of transport and logistics” was a barrier, compared to just under half (49%) in the previous survey, However, the largest increase was in the proportion identifying “concerns about increasing geo-political tensions between nations”, up from 24% to 34%.

Major barriers to exporting
% of respondents identifying barriers shown

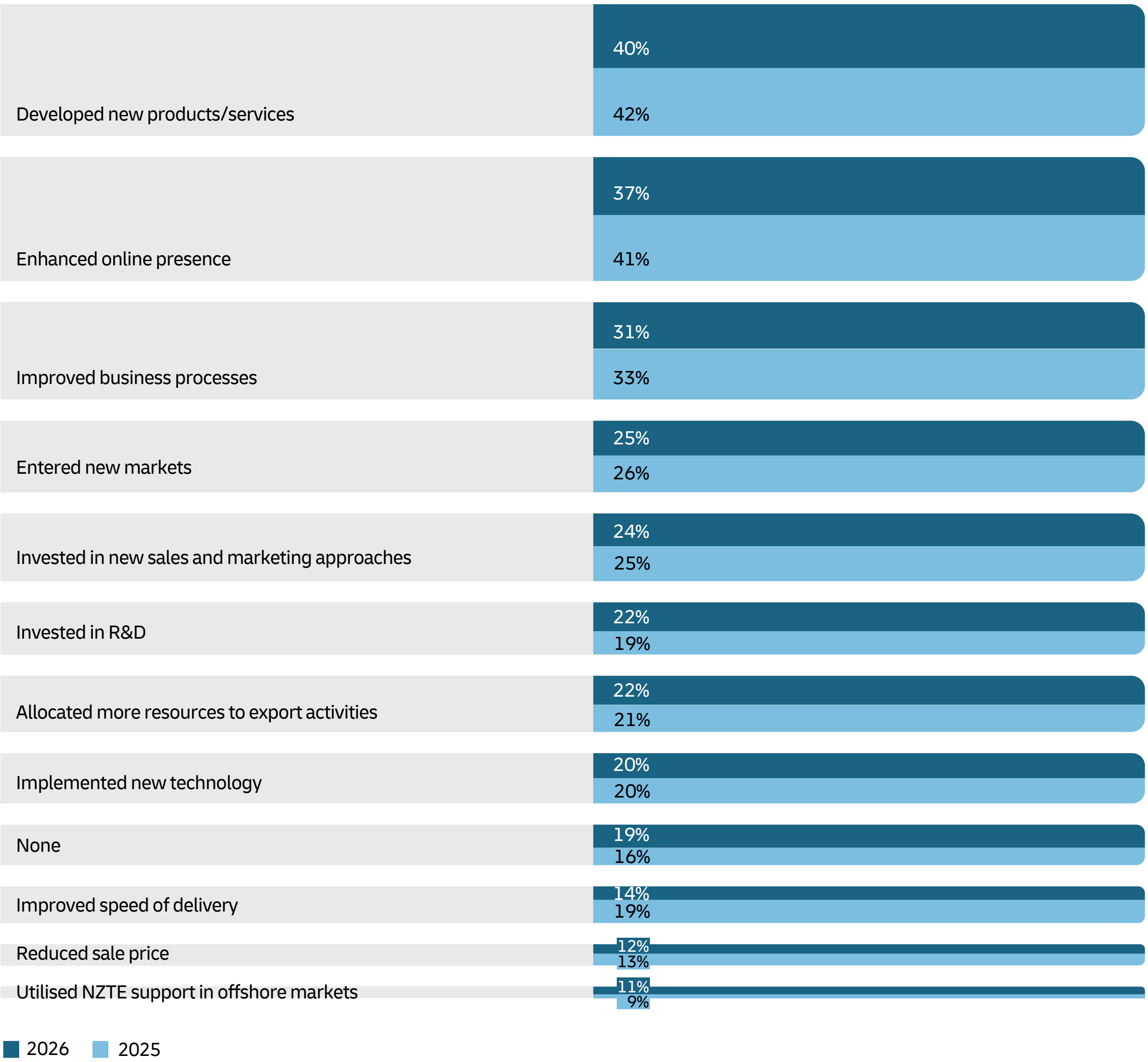


...but exporters’ responses are more cautious

Exporters remain active in responding to barriers to exporting, but the results suggest that their responses are a little more cautious than previously. For example, the proportion saying they had developed new products or services dropped to 40% from 42%, and the proportion saying they had enhanced their online presence dropped to 37% from 41%. Meanwhile, the proportion saying they had done nothing actually increased to 19%, from 16%.

Overall, the responses suggest that the exporters are taking something of a ‘wait and see” approach before acting.

Initiatives taken during last 12 months to increase exports
% of respondents identifying actions

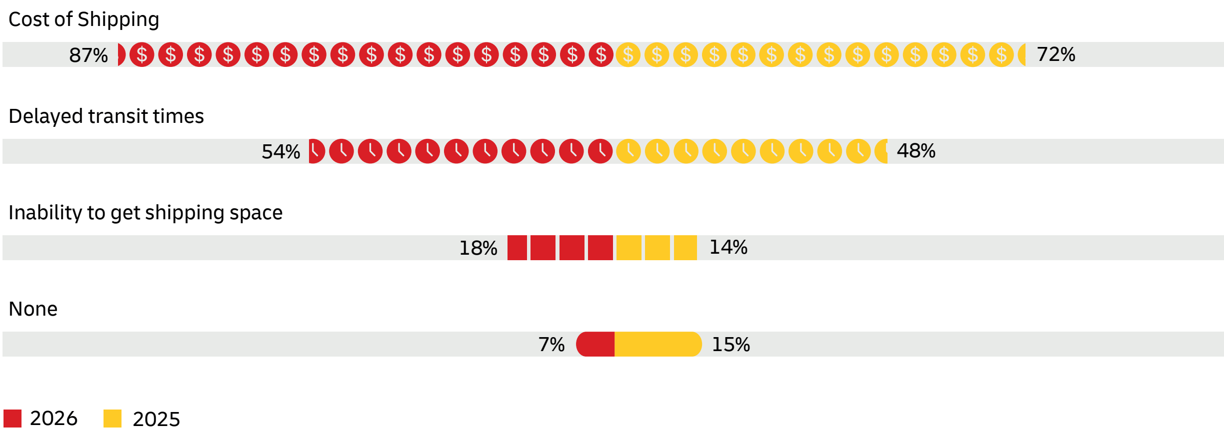


Iran conflict having an obvious effect

The survey took place several months after actions by the USA and Israel against Iran, leading to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to shipping, and the results clearly show the effects.

In the latest survey, the proportion of respondents indicating that they had experienced an increase in shipping costs jumped to 87%, from 72% in the 2025 survey. The increase in the proportion experiencing delayed transit times also increased significantly. By contrast, the proportion experiencing no impacts dropped to just 7%, from 15% in 2025.

Supply chain impacts in the past 12 months
% of exporters responding as shown

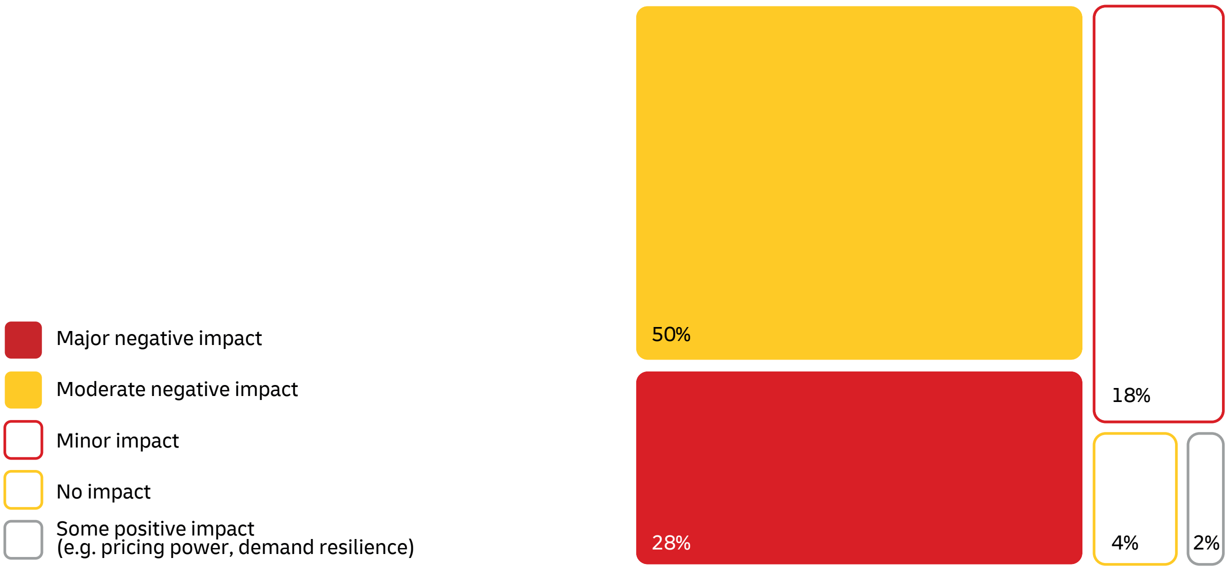


87%

of exporters experienced an increase in shipping costs

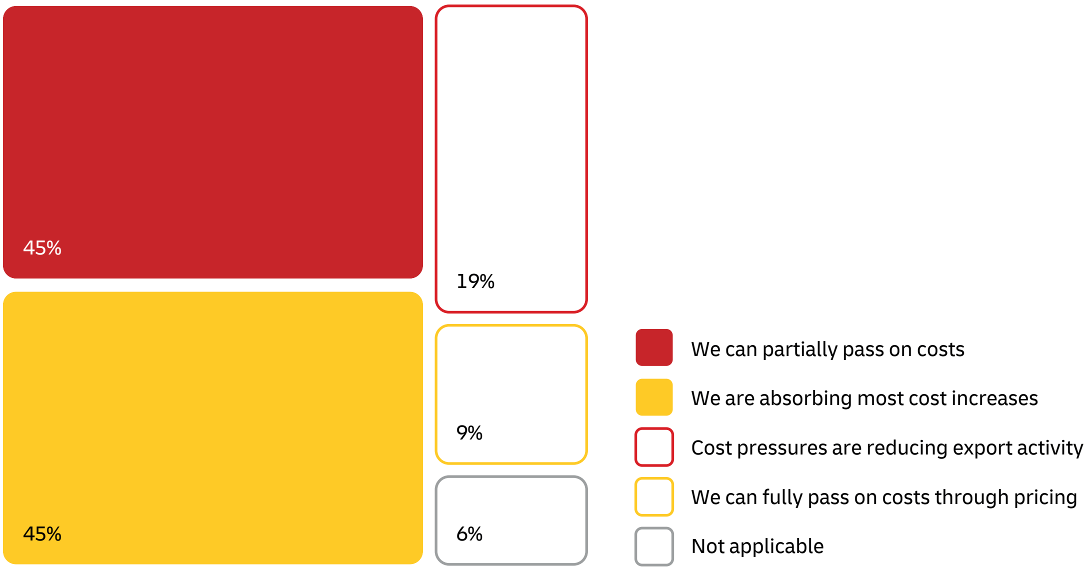
The conflict has been marked by significant increases in fuel and freight costs, and the large majority of the respondents (78%) said the impacts had been major or moderate.

Effect of higher fuel and freight costs on exporting or importing operations
% of exporters responding as shown



In terms of the effect of the increases on business competitiveness, just over half of the respondents (53%) said they could partially or fully pass on the costs to their customers, and almost half (45%) said they could absorb most of the costs. However, most of the remainder said the increases had reduced their ability to export.

Effect of rising input costs on ability to remain competitive
% of exporters responding as shown



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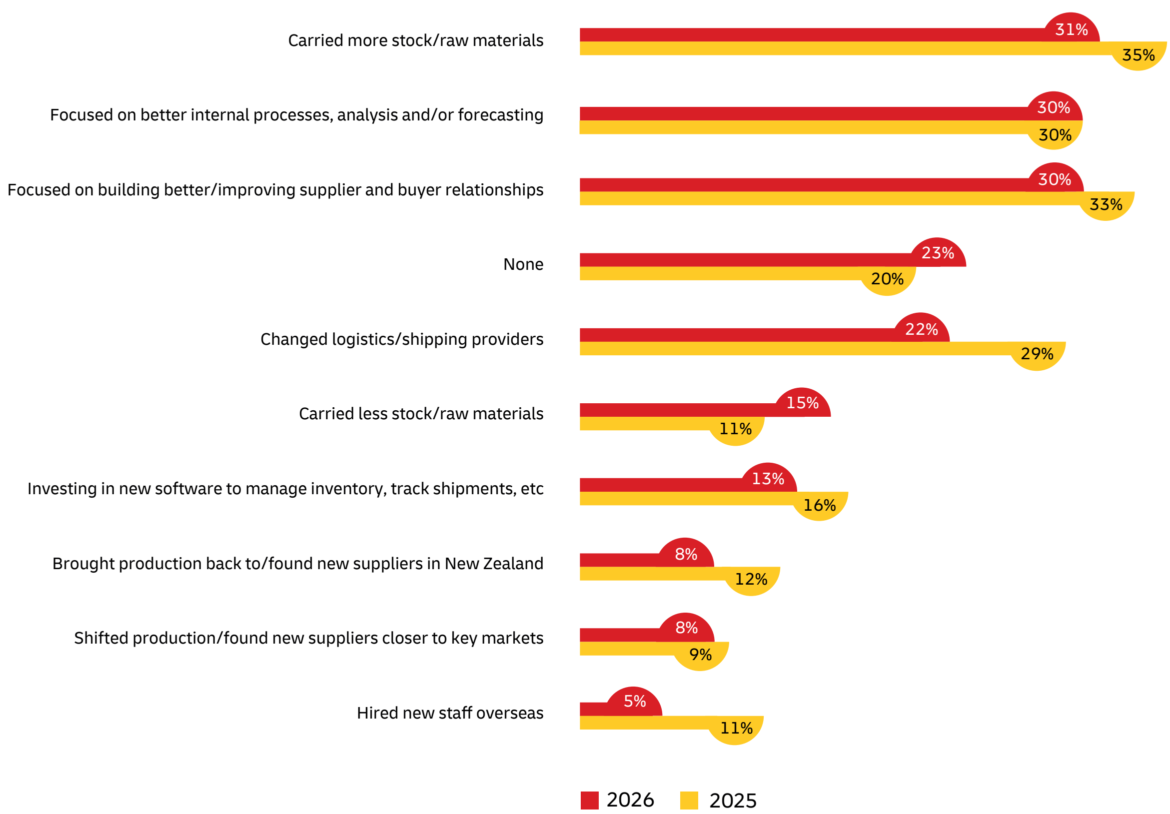
These cost pressures will likely continue for 12+ months, and we will need to be able to pass on costs, but our business is not as responsive as others that can increase prices quickly.

Canterbury, F&B Manufacturer

To mitigate the effects of supply chain and logistics issues, respondents were more or less equally likely to say they had carried more stocks or raw materials, had focused more on internal processes, or had focused more building better/improving supplier and buyer relationships.

Changes to ways exporters deal with supply chains and logistics
% of exporters responding as shown



As the United States is our largest market, and with increased shipping rates and tariffs on top, **we have seen a considerable decrease in clients purchasing from us in the United States.**

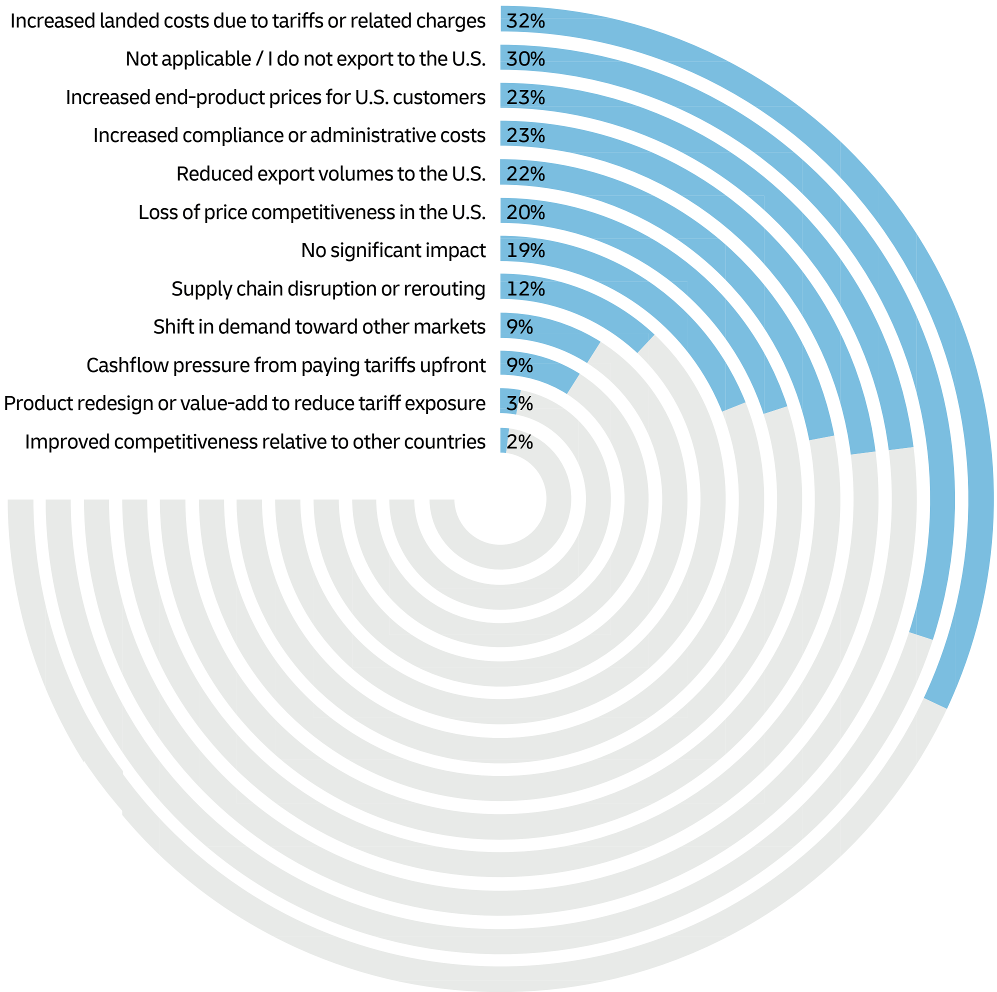
Nelson-Tasman, Online Retail

Trump tariffs adding to the difficulties

Tariffs on imports into the US from NZ and other countries came into effect in mid-2025.

When asked about the effects of the tariffs, respondents were most likely to say that they had increased landed costs and end-product prices for US customers. Other common responses indicate increased compliance or admin costs, and reduced export volumes.

Effect of recent U.S. tariffs and trade policy changes on exporters' operations
% of exporters responding as shown



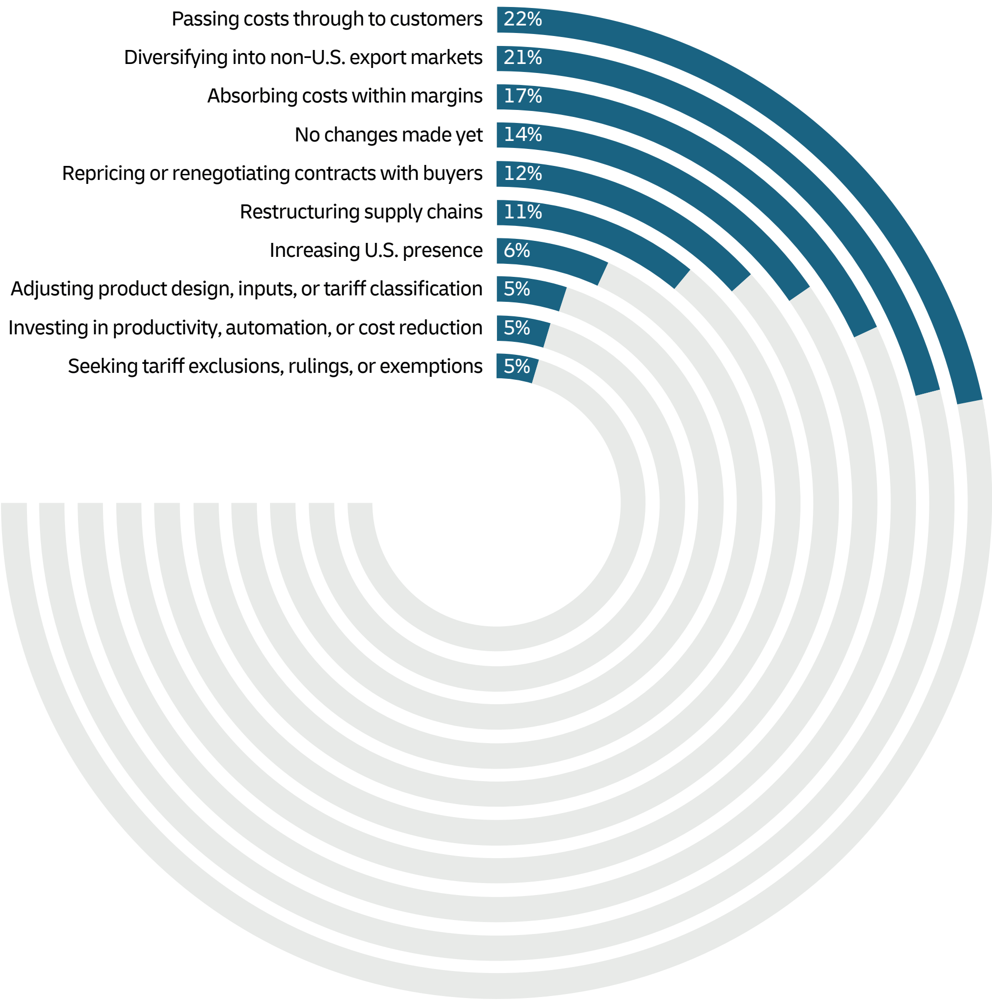
...and exporters have reacted

Amongst those who sold into the US market, the exporters' most common reaction to the tariffs had been to pass on costs to their customers.

Some had also started to diversify into non-US markets, and others had absorbed the costs. However, a significant proportion of the respondents had not yet done anything.

Responses suggest, overall, that the effects of tariffs have not been dramatic and that US customers have been bearing at least part of the costs.

Strategies used or considered in response to U.S. tariffs
% of exporters responding as shown



Exporters more likely to want support from the government

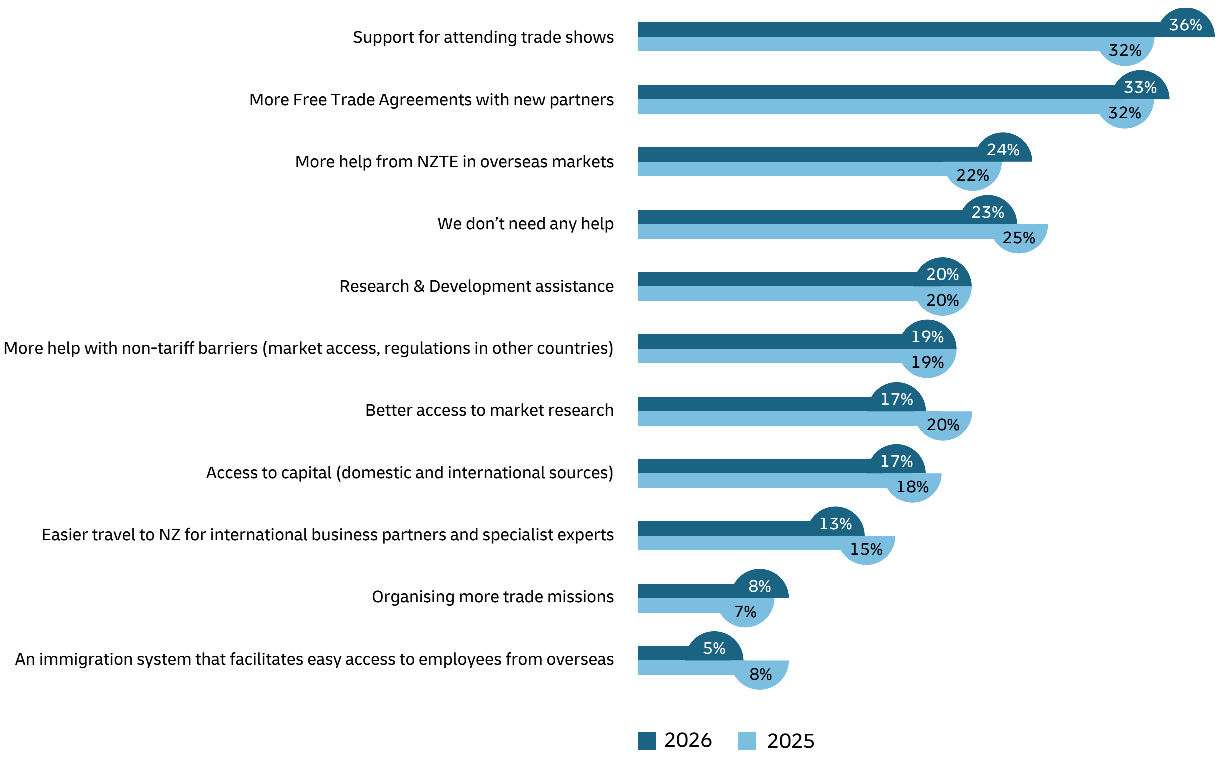
In terms of the assistance they would like to receive, exporters' responses in 2026 were similar to those in 2025.

They were most likely to say that they wanted support to attend trade shows, and that they would like New Zealand to enter into more Free Trade Agreements. More direct help from NZTE in overseas markets was also mentioned relatively frequently.

The proportions of exporters giving each of the top three responses in 2026 were greater than in 2025. Moreover, there was a decrease in the proportion saying they did not need any help.

Taken together, the responses on the question of government support add weight to other findings from the survey to indicate that exporters have been finding exporting increasingly difficult.

Types of government support exporters would most like
% of exporters responding as shown



AI is being used to complete some tasks that would take a long time to manually complete, such as image generation and price lists etc.

Auckland, Wholesaler

AI generated image, using Adobe Firefly

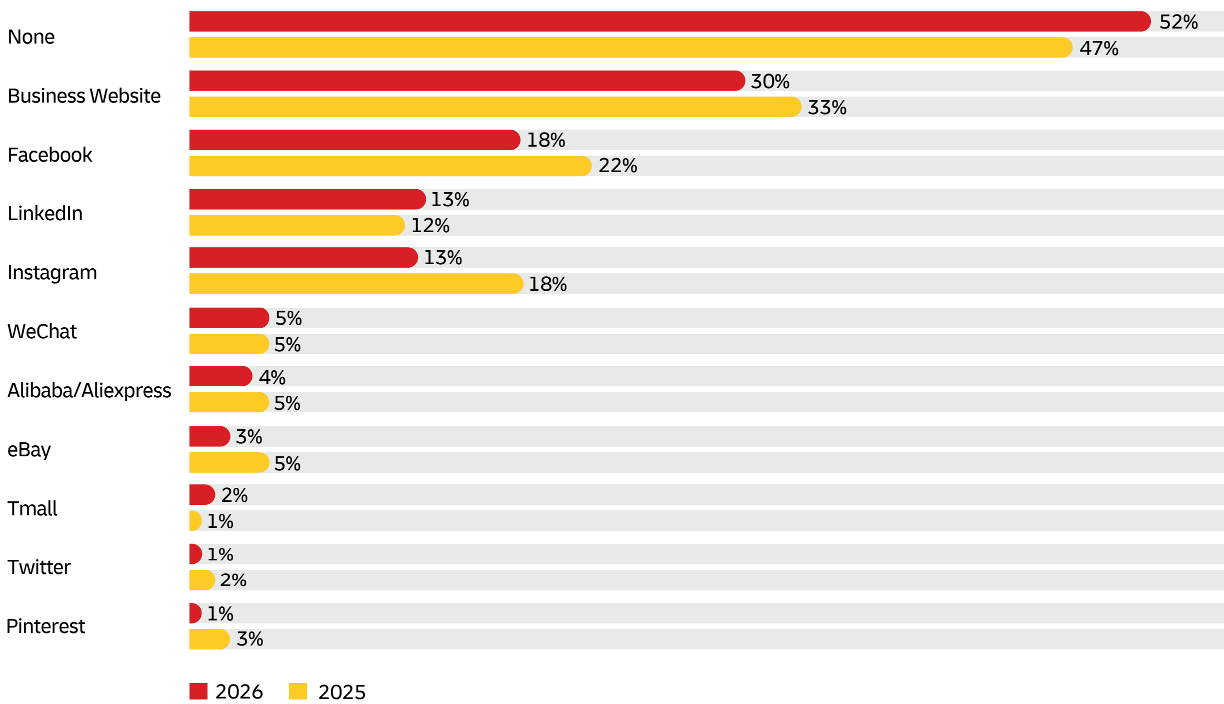
Use of the internet and AI

Surprisingly, results show that respondents make relatively little use of the internet to generate orders.

Between the latest survey and the survey in 2025, the proportion of respondents saying they didn't use any platforms increased. Correspondingly, the proportion saying they used their own website decreased.

52%
of exporters didn't use any internet platforms to generate orders

Exporters' use of internet platforms to generate orders
% of exporters responding as shown

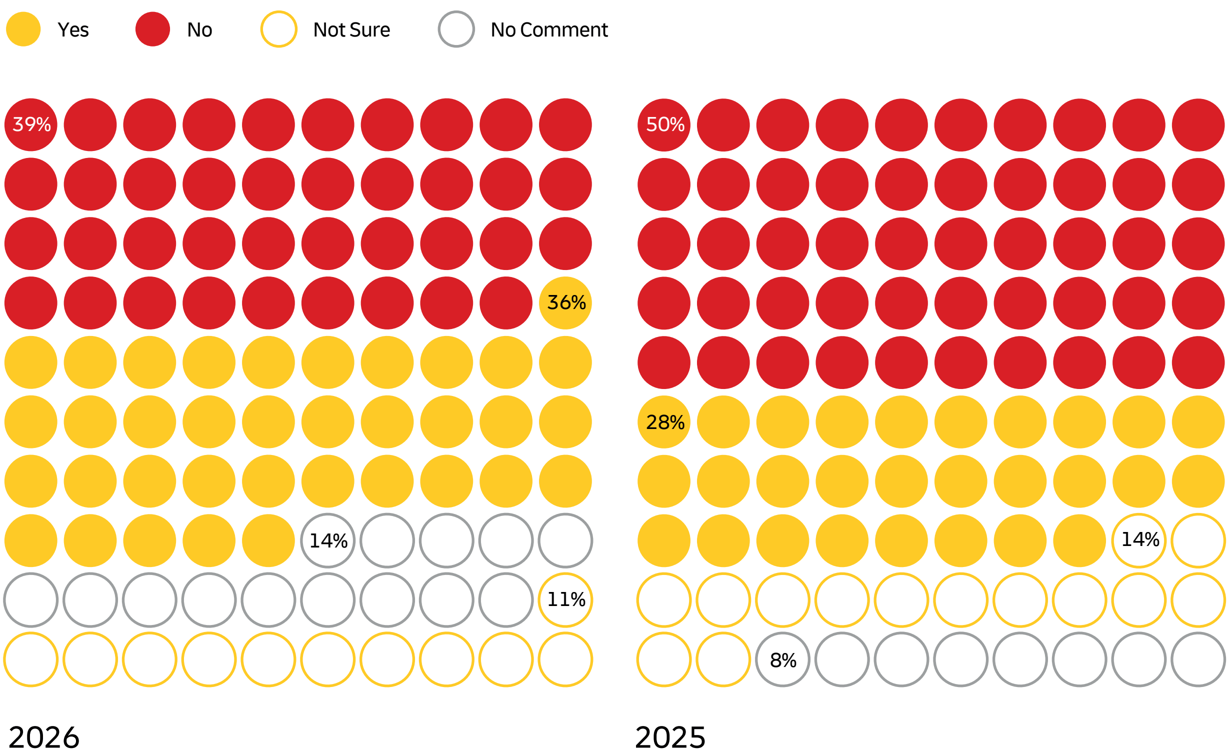


We're adopting AI for supply chain management, general business admin, sales and marketing, manufacturing processes, and R&D for product and process.

Canterbury, Manufacturer

Likewise, the proportion of respondents who said they had used AI to improve productivity in their businesses was not much more than one-third, even though this was more than in 2025.

Use of AI to improve productivity in their businesses
% of exporters responding as shown



We have moved our distribution centre offshore, plus other objectives with the aim of halving our carbon footprint by 2030

Auckland, Distribution

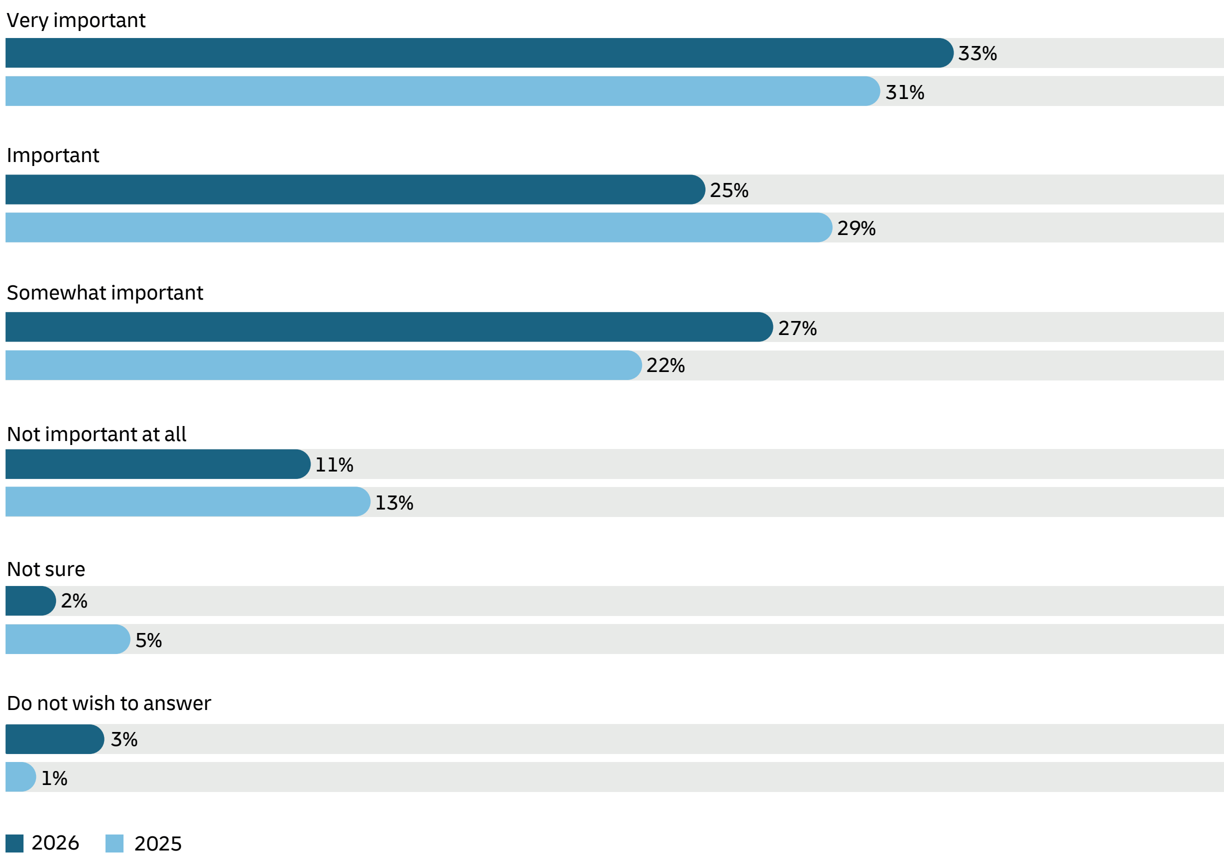
Sustainability practices in supply chains

Lastly, there was a small increase in the proportion of respondents saying that sustainability in their logistics and supply chain decisions was very important, and a corresponding drop in the proportion saying that it was not at all important.

However, whereas 33% said sustainability was very important to them, only 15% said they had sustainability targets or goals for their supply chains.

Furthermore, the proportion saying they had targets or goals was well down on the 2025 response, and this might reflect the trying circumstances under which exporters have been operating.

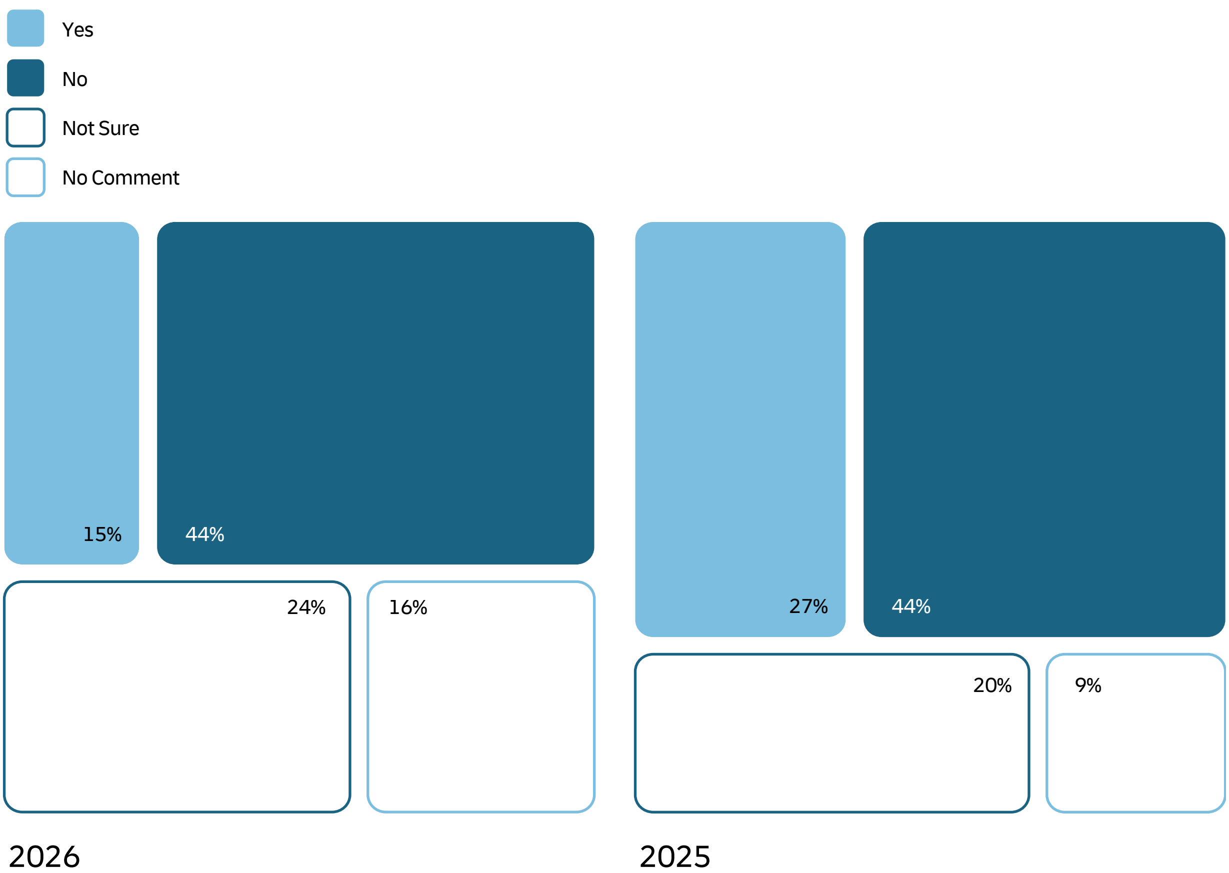
Importance of sustainability in exporters' logistics and supply chain decisions
% of exporters responding as shown



> **We are looking for continued improvements but do struggle.** This has also impacted our decision to manufacture some items closer to the market. It is also costs that helped this decision.

Canterbury, F&B Manufacturer

Do the exporters have any sustainability targets or goals for their supply chains?
% of exporters responding as shown



About the survey and respondents

The ExportNZ DHL Export Barometer Survey takes place every year, and has been running since 2016.

This year, 289 exporters took part, which was down from 333 in 2025. The numbers tend to vary from year to year, but the decrease this year is also likely to reflect the pressure that businesses are under from the flow-on effects of the conflict in the strait of Hormuz, and the generally unsettled state of the global economy.

The number of responses from different parts of the country broadly reflected the distribution of New Zealand's population and economic activity. Roughly equal numbers of the respondents were in the micro (0-4 employees), small (5-19 employees) and the medium to large (20+ employees) size bands.

The respondents were also relatively long-established, with just under half in business for more than 20 years, and almost one third in business for between 6 and 20 years. The overall structure of the sample was similar to the structure of the sample in the 2025 survey.

289
exporters took part - down from 333 in 2025

EXPORTERS HELPING EXPORTERS

ExportNZ is a national industry association representing a diverse range of exporters throughout New Zealand.

ExportNZ is a division of BusinessNZ, New Zealand's peak business advocacy body.

We work through the BusinessNZ Network which is made up of our three regional partners, the Employers and Manufacturers' Association (Upper North Island), Business Central (Central New Zealand) and Business South (South Island).

ExportNZ advocates for, inspires, connects, and celebrates New Zealand exporters.

We aim to build a thriving ecosystem that supports each other.

We are Exporters Helping Exporters.

The logistics company for the world.

DHL is the leading global brand in the logistics industry. Our DHL divisions offer an unrivalled portfolio of logistics services ranging from national and international parcel delivery, e-commerce shipping and fulfillment solutions, international express, road, air and ocean transport to industrial supply chain management. With approximately 389,000 employees in more than 220 countries and territories worldwide, DHL connects people and businesses securely and reliably, enabling global sustainable trade flows. With specialized solutions for growth markets and industries including technology, life sciences and healthcare, engineering, manufacturing & energy, auto-mobility and retail, DHL is decisively positioned as "The logistics company for the world".

DHL is part of DHL Group. The Group generated revenues of approximately 82.9 billion euros in 2025. With sustainable business practices and a commitment to society and the environment, the Group makes a positive contribution to the world. DHL Group aims to achieve net-zero emissions logistics by 2050.