



# Business Survey

**November 2004**

## **Featuring:**

- **Regional Activity Predictions**
- **Regional Development Priorities**
- **Gender Based Views Analysis**

All care and diligence has been taken in processing and analysing this report. However Venture Taranaki gives no warranty that the information or data supplied contains no errors. Venture Taranaki shall not be liable for any loss or damage suffered by the customer consequent upon the use (directly or indirectly) of the information supplied in this report.

## 1.0 Executive Summary

In comparison to the last 6-monthly Business Survey, Taranaki businesses are displaying a marked shift in their perception of the national economy. While the majority of surveyed regional businesses have retained the view that conditions are likely to remain the same in the year ahead, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of firms anticipating an improvement in the economy, whilst pessimism has reached a record low. Similarly, proportionately more local businesses are anticipating conditions within their own industry sector will improve and pessimism has declined. These changes suggest that a promising year of business lies ahead for the region.

The survey also highlights that sales levels are anticipated to improve, with over one-half of respondents predicting improved conditions - the highest level of optimism evident in two years. Again, the proportion predicting deteriorating sales levels has fallen to an all time low.

Employee demand continues to be an increasing trend which has been evident since May 2003. One in four business respondents indicated they are likely to require additional staff over the next six months. Skilled manual/technical employees were reported to be in high demand, as were semi-skilled, professional/managerial and skilled administrative staff.

Across Taranaki, New Plymouth proved the most optimistic District, with numerous respondents predicting improving New Zealand-wide and industry conditions. Significant portions of responding Stratford and South Taranaki businesses also felt enhanced optimism concerning the coming year.

Overall the 'accommodation, café and restaurant' and 'mining, oil and gas exploration/extraction' sectors were most positive, reporting high levels of optimism across the board.

"Government legislation" and "lack of qualified staff" were the two key issues of concern identified by businesses. In particular regulation around the primary health care sector, holidays act and new child care legislation were issues of concern.

A gender analysis of the results indicated more male survey respondents owned businesses compared to female respondents. Male business owners aged between 40 and 64 years accounted for almost 50 percent of survey responses.

It was noted however that female respondents were more optimistic in their outlook of both the national and industry-specific economy, than their male counterparts.

Upgrading main roads and extending the New Plymouth coastal walkway were rated top priority by both males and females. Female respondents rated these priorities slightly stronger than their male counterparts.

# Contents

1.0	Executive Summary .....	2
2.0	Introduction .....	5
3.0	Methodology .....	6
4.0	Respondent Profile .....	6
5.0	Economic Findings	
5.1	New Zealand Wide Business Conditions .....	7
5.2	Industry Conditions .....	9
5.3	Sales/ Customer Levels .....	12
5.4	Employment Levels .....	14
6.0	Comments on general Taranaki Business Conditions .....	18
7.0	Special Topic: Gender Based Views Analysis	
7.1	Gender Differences .....	19
7.2	Influence of Gender on Respondent Views .....	20
8.0	Special Topic: Regional Development Priorities	
8.1	Regional Development Priorities .....	21
8.2	Gender Priorities .....	22
9.0	Conclusions .....	23
	APPENDIX .....	22

## Graphs

Graph 1	New Zealand Wide Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months .....	7
Graph 2	New Zealand Wide Conditions: Comparison of Results .....	8
Graph 3	Industry Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months .....	9
Graph 4	Industry Conditions: Comparison of Results .....	10
Graph 5	Sales/ Customer Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 Months .....	12
Graph 6	Sales/ Customer Levels: Comparison of Results .....	12
Graph 7	Employment Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 Months .....	14
Graph 8	Employment Levels: Comparison of Results .....	14
Graph 9	Employment Levels: Required Employee Types for the Next 6 Months .....	15
Graph 10	Employment Levels: Type of Employee Required by Taranaki District.....	17
Graph 11	Gender Views: Respondent Age and Gender.....	19
Graph 12	Gender Views: Gender by Employment Status .....	19
Graph 13	Gender Views: Percent of 'Improvement' Business Predictions by Gender .....	20
Graph 14	Regional Priorities: Taranaki Regional Development Priorities .....	21

## Tables

Table 1	New Zealand Wide Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months by Industry Sector.....	8
Table 2	New Zealand Wide Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months by Taranaki District.....	9
Table 3	Industry Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months by Industry Sector .....	10
Table 4	Industry Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months by Taranaki District .....	11
Table 5	Sales/ Customer Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 months by Industry Sector.....	13
Table 6	Sales/ Customer Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 months by Taranaki District.....	13
Table 7	Employment Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 Months by Industry Sector.....	16
Table 8	Employment Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 Months by Taranaki District.....	16
Table 9	Gender Views: new Zealand Wide Conditions Predictions by Gender .....	20
Table 10	Regional Priorities: Top Four Regional Development Priorities by Gender .....	22

## 2.0 Introduction

Venture Taranaki is a world class Economic Development and Regional Tourism Agency founded by the New Plymouth District Council, and supported by Taranaki's three District Councils, Government and the private sector. Established as a charitable Trust with a private sector Board, Venture Taranaki provides a strategic and focused approach to developing the Taranaki economy. Its purpose is to foster a dynamic and innovative economy which assists regional development, tourism and sustainable wealth creation in Taranaki.

The Taranaki Business Survey has been conducted twice a year since 1999. Its function is to monitor trends, identify key issues affecting the growth of Taranaki businesses and provide timely, accurate and valuable information to Taranaki businesses and stakeholders.

This research report has been analysed and prepared by Belinda Salmon, Research Analyst for Venture Taranaki.

Venture Taranaki would like to make the following acknowledgements:

- New Plymouth District Council
- 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- E-macadamia
- Cottage Wines
- Zara Broker, Venture Taranaki
- Rochelle Turnbull, Venture Taranaki
- Anne Probert, independent consultant to the Trust

### 3.0 Methodology

The Venture Taranaki Business Survey is undertaken every six months in May and November. Survey forms are mailed out to 1,000 Taranaki businesses throughout the region. Survey recipients are randomly selected from the New Zealand Business Directory Database (UBD) and considerable effort is dedicated to ensuring the sample is representative of industry sector, business size and location.

The survey questionnaire comprises two sections; a standard economic/ business section and a special topic section. The special topic for this survey focused on regional development priorities, and the influence of gender on business confidence/optimism.

As at February 2003 there were 7,503 businesses operating in the Taranaki region (Statistics New Zealand). The distribution of businesses across Taranaki districts is reflected below:

District	Number of Business Operating	Percent of Taranaki Businesses
New Plymouth	4,971	66.2%
South Taranaki	1,860	24.7%
Stratford	687	9.1%
Taranaki	7,503	100.0%

The survey sample is reflective of the sub-regional business distribution between the New Plymouth, South Taranaki and Stratford Districts. In addition to business location, surveys were distributed in proportion to industry type.

A response rate of 39 percent was achieved in this survey. This reflects a confidence level of 95 percent +/- 4.98 percent that survey results are representative of the entire Taranaki Business population. As analysis throughout this report is, in parts, broken down by industry sector and district it should be highlighted that the 95 percent +/- 4.98 percent is relevant to overall results and not at industry and district level (see appendix for confidence intervals at variable levels). Due to the larger interval at variable level, care should be taken when interpreting some results.

Seventh Avenue, Cottage Wines and E-Macadamia kindly sponsored the survey and offered an incentive prize to individuals who responded to the survey. Each respondent went into the draw to receive a 'Taste of Taranaki' gift package including products from each sponsor.

### 4.0 Respondent Profile

Of those businesses who responded, 60 percent were located in the New Plymouth District, 22 percent in South Taranaki and 10 percent from Stratford. A total of 7 percent of businesses operated from branches located throughout Taranaki. These proportions are in alignment with the required representative samples. One quarter of respondents considered their primary business operation as 'retail and wholesale trade'. A total of 13 percent reported they operated in the 'property, business, finance, insurance services' sector while 12 percent associated themselves with the 'construction' industry. All other industry sectors each comprised of less than 10 percent of respondents. 40 percent of responding businesses have 1 – 4 staff, 27 percent have 5 – 9 and 17 percent have 10 – 19. The remaining 16 percent of businesses have 20 or more people working in the business.

# 5.0 Economic Findings

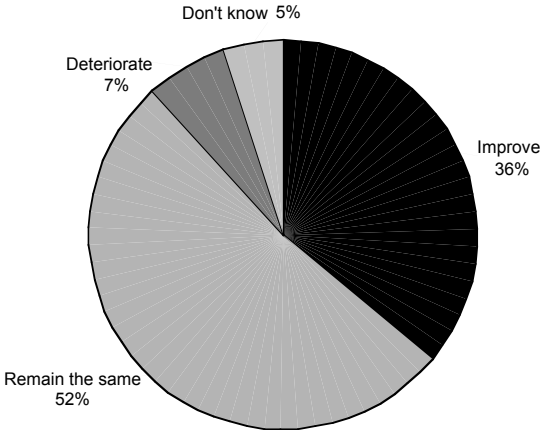
## 5.1 New Zealand Wide Business Conditions

Respondents were asked to anticipate the general business outlook for New Zealand over the next 12 months. The majority of responding Taranaki businesses (52 percent) predicted that general business conditions in New Zealand would remain the same. 36 percent believed conditions would improve, up from 20 percent last survey. 7 percent predicted conditions will deteriorate, compared to 21 percent last survey. This increase in optimism is consistent with previous trends and is largely explained by seasonal influences (Christmas).

The portion of businesses reporting they could not predict what the next year will bring has remained the same as the previous survey - 5 percent.

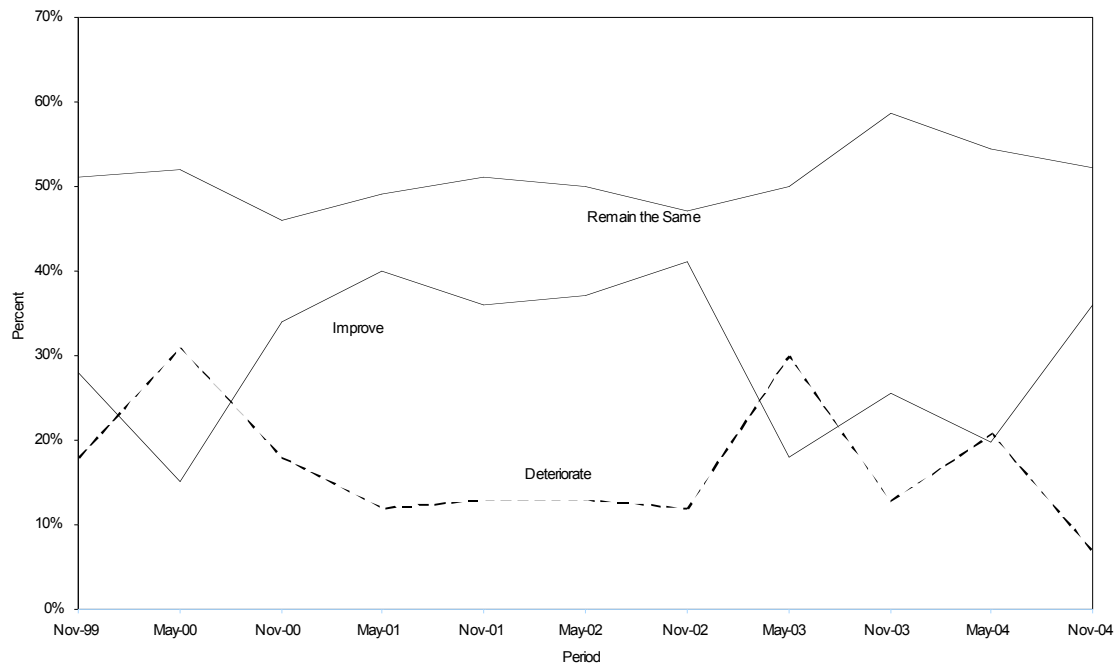
Consistently over the past five years approximately 50 percent of Taranaki business owners taking part in the survey predict that nationwide business conditions are set to remain the same over the coming 12 month period.

Graph 1: New Zealand Wide Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months



The proportion of businesses predicting conditions will improve over the coming 12 months reflects a significant rise – a level which has not been seen since the November 2002 survey.

Graph 2: New Zealand Wide Conditions: Comparison of Results



**Analysis by Industry:**

Over one half of respondents operating in the ‘accommodation, cafes and restaurants’ industry predict New Zealand wide business conditions will improve over the coming 12 months.

The ‘communication services’ industry reported a high level of pessimism with one in four respondents anticipating business conditions over the coming year will deteriorate.

Table 1: New Zealand Wide Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months by Industry Sector

Industry Group	Improve	Same	Deteriorate	Don't Know
Ag, Hort, Fishing, Forestry	50%	43%	3%	3%
Mining, Oil and Gas Exploration/Extraction	38%	50%	0%	13 %
Manufacturing	25%	64%	6%	6%
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	0%	67%	17%	17%
Construction	27%	67%	7%	0%
Retail and Wholesale	40%	48%	8%	4%
Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	55%	25%	10%	10%
Transport and Storage	38%	50%	13%	0%
Communication Services	13%	63%	25%	0%
Property, Business, Finance, Insurance	35%	61%	4%	0%
Govt, Education, Health, Community Services	38%	44%	3%	16%
Recreation, Personal and Other Services	38%	48%	10%	5%



### Analysis by District:

Across Taranaki, New Plymouth proved the most optimistic District with 38 percent of respondents predicting New Zealand wide conditions will improve over the next 12 months. However, it should be noted that businesses operating throughout Taranaki appeared optimistic overall.

Table 2: New Zealand Wide Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months by Taranaki District

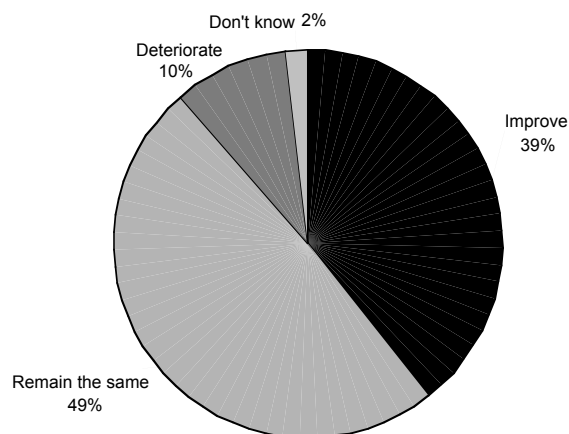
	Business location				Total
	New Plymouth District	Stratford District	South Taranaki District	Throughout Taranaki	
Improve	38%	30%	27%	56%	36%
Remain the same	51%	62%	54%	41%	52%
Deteriorate	7%	0%	11%	4%	7%
Don't know	4%	8%	9%	0%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

## 5.2 Industry Conditions

Respondents were asked to predict industry conditions for the coming 12 months with respect to their own industry sector. Once again, the majority of respondents (49 percent) anticipate industry conditions will remain the same.

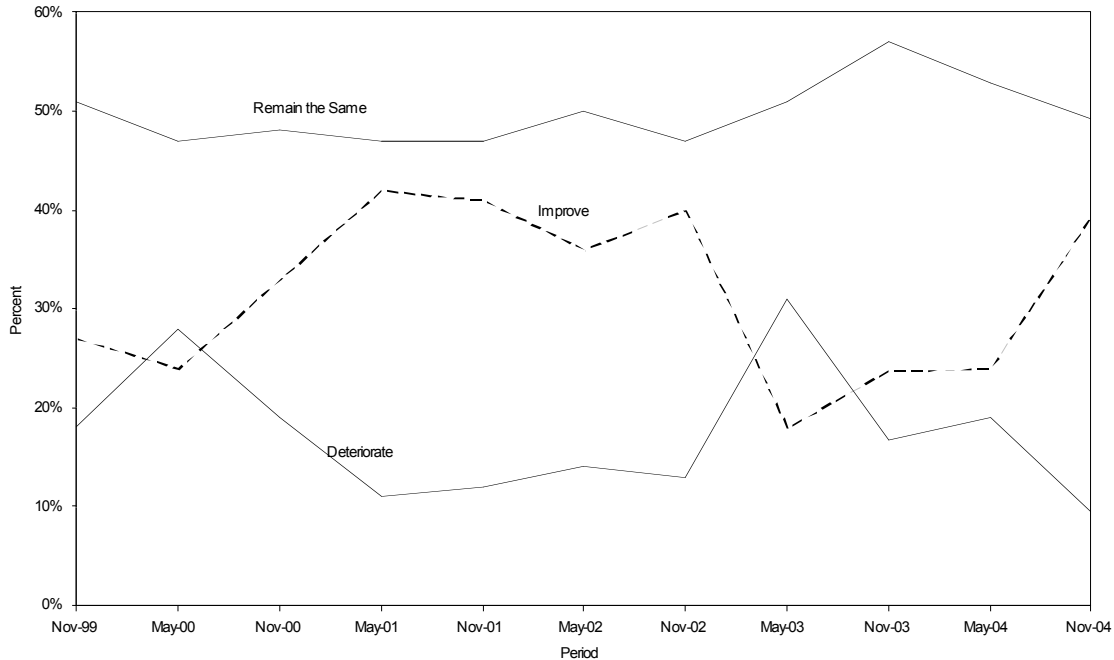
A total of 39 percent of respondents reported that industry conditions are likely to improve over the coming period, up from 24 percent last survey. 10 percent believed conditions would deteriorate, compared to 19 percent in May 2004. Again these movements are likely to be influenced by seasonal factors.

Graph 3: Industry Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months



Similar to general predictions, the industry specific graph indicated increasing optimism and decreasing pessimism. The proportion predicting improving conditions has not been as high since November 2002. Pessimism has reached an all time low at 10 percent.

Graph 4: Industry Conditions: Comparison of Results



### Analysis by Industry:

With respect to economic performance within their own industry sector, the majority of respondents believe industry conditions will remain the same over the coming 12 months. The 'mining, oil and gas exploration/extraction' industry proved the most optimistic sector with 88% of respondents anticipating improved conditions. The 'accommodation, café and restaurants' and 'transport and storage' industries also expressed significant optimism with 60 percent of respondents predicting improved industry conditions for the coming year.

The 'agriculture, horticulture, fishing and forestry' industry has reported a significant increase in optimism since last survey (15 to 47 percent).

Table 3: Industry Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months by Industry Sector

Industry Group	Improve	Same	Deteriorate	Don't Know
Ag, Hort, Fishing, Forestry	47%	50%	3%	0%
Mining, Oil and Gas Exploration/Extraction	88%	13%	0%	0%
Manufacturing	28%	58%	11%	3%
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	33%	50%	0%	17%
Construction	29%	67%	4%	0%

Retail and Wholesale	42%	47%	9%	3%
Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	60%	20%	15%	5%
Transport and Storage	50%	44%	6%	0%
Communication Services	25%	63%	13%	0%
Property, Business, Finance, Insurance	35%	55%	10%	0%
Govt, Education, Health, Community Services	34%	34%	28%	3%
Recreation, Personal and Other Services	43%	52%	5%	0%

#### Analysis by District:

More detailed analysis highlights businesses operating in the New Plymouth District proved more optimistic than businesses operating in Stratford or South Taranaki districts. Furthermore, businesses operating throughout the region were most optimistic, with almost half of these respondents predicting improved conditions for the coming months.

The majority of Stratford and South Taranaki businesses anticipated conditions would remain the same during the coming year. South Taranaki based businesses tended to be a little more pessimistic than other Taranaki businesses with 18 percent predicting industry conditions will deteriorate during the year.

Overall the majority of all businesses in each location predicted that industry conditions are likely to remain the same over the coming period.

Table 4: Industry Conditions: Predictions for the Next 12 Months by Taranaki District

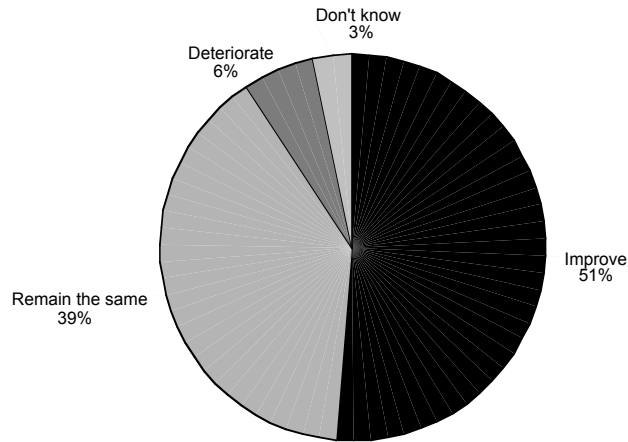
	Business location				Total
	New Plymouth District	South Taranaki District	Stratford District	Throughout Taranaki	
Improve	44%	27%	34%	48%	39%
Remain the same	46%	55%	63%	41%	49%
Deteriorate	8%	18%	0%	11%	10%
Don't know	3%	0%	3%	0%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100.0%

### 5.3 Sales/ Customer Levels

Over one half of respondents anticipate sales levels will improve over the coming six months - the highest level of optimism in two years.

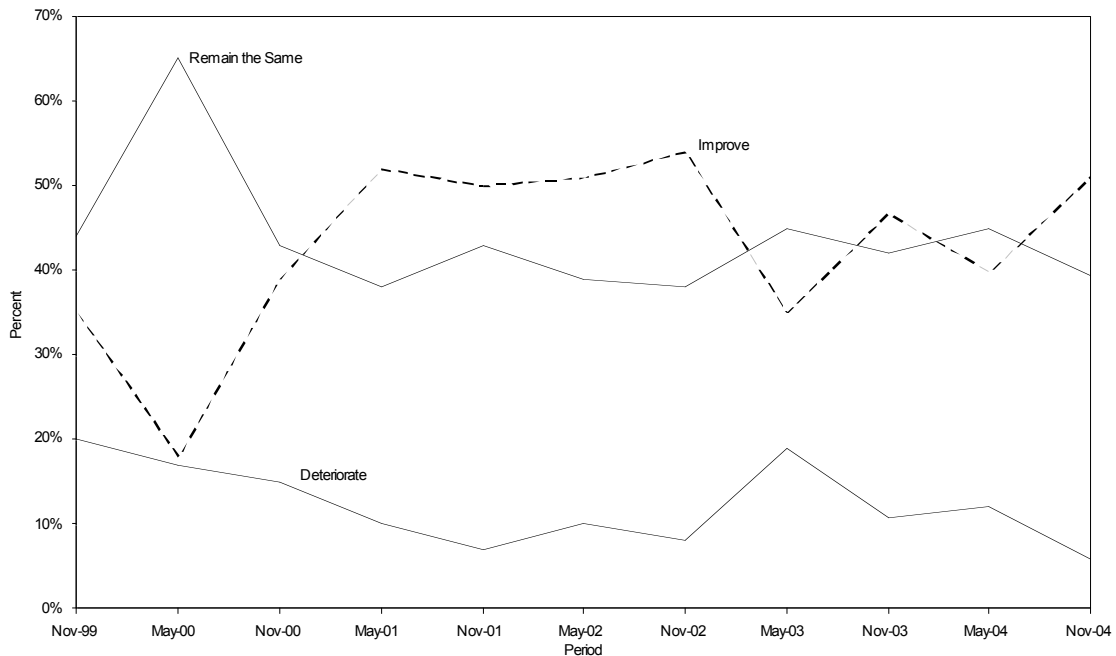
39 percent of respondents anticipate sales levels will remain the same over the next six months compared to 53 percent last survey. 6 percent are anticipating deteriorating levels compared to 19 percent last survey.

Graph 5: Sales/ Customer Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 Months



Over time the proportion of survey respondents predicting sales levels will 'improve' and 'stay the same' has fluctuated. Latest predictions show the majority of respondents anticipate improved levels. The portion of businesses predicting deterioration has reached an all time low.

Graph 6: Sales/ Customer Levels: Comparison of Results



### Analysis by Industry:

The 'accommodation, cafés and restaurants' and 'mining, oil and gas exploration/extraction' industries are the most optimistic across the various industries with over 60 percent of businesses predicting sales levels will improve over the next six months. Conversely the 'electricity, gas and water supply', 'communication services' and 'property, business, finance and insurance' industries appear the most pessimistic with over 10 percent anticipating deteriorating sales levels. These trends are likely to be somewhat influenced by seasonal influences as the Christmas period is traditionally a busy period for some industries (e.g. retail) and quiet for others (e.g. business services).

Table 5: Sales/ Customer Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 Months by Industry Sector

Industry Group	Improve	Same	Deteriorate	Don't Know
Ag, Hort, Fishing, Forestry	52%	41%	7%	0%
Mining, Oil and Gas Exploration/Extraction	63%	25%	0%	13%
Manufacturing	53%	36%	6%	6%
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	33%	33%	17%	17%
Construction	47%	49%	4%	0%
Retail and Wholesale	59%	33%	3%	4%
Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	70%	20%	5%	5%
Transport and Storage	50%	50%	0%	0%
Communication Services	25%	50%	13%	13%
Property, Business, Finance, Insurance	51%	37%	10%	2%
Govt, Education, Health, Community Services	34%	56%	6%	3%
Recreation, Personal and Other Services	48%	38%	14%	0%

### Analysis by District:

Stratford based respondents proved most optimistic with regard to sales levels as 57 percent anticipate levels will improve over the coming six months. New Plymouth and South Taranaki based respondents also reported high levels of optimism with 51 and 46 percent (respectively) predicting improvements.

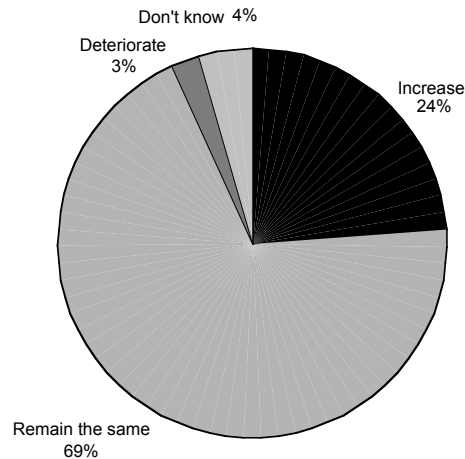
Table 6: Sales/ Customer Levels: Predictions for the next 6 Months by Taranaki District

	Business location				Total
	New Plymouth District	South Taranaki District	Stratford District	Throughout Taranaki	
Improve	51%	46%	57%	63%	51%
Remain the same	40%	40%	38%	33%	39%
Deteriorate	5%	11%	3%	4%	6%
Don't know	4%	2%	3%	0%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

## 5.4 Employment Levels

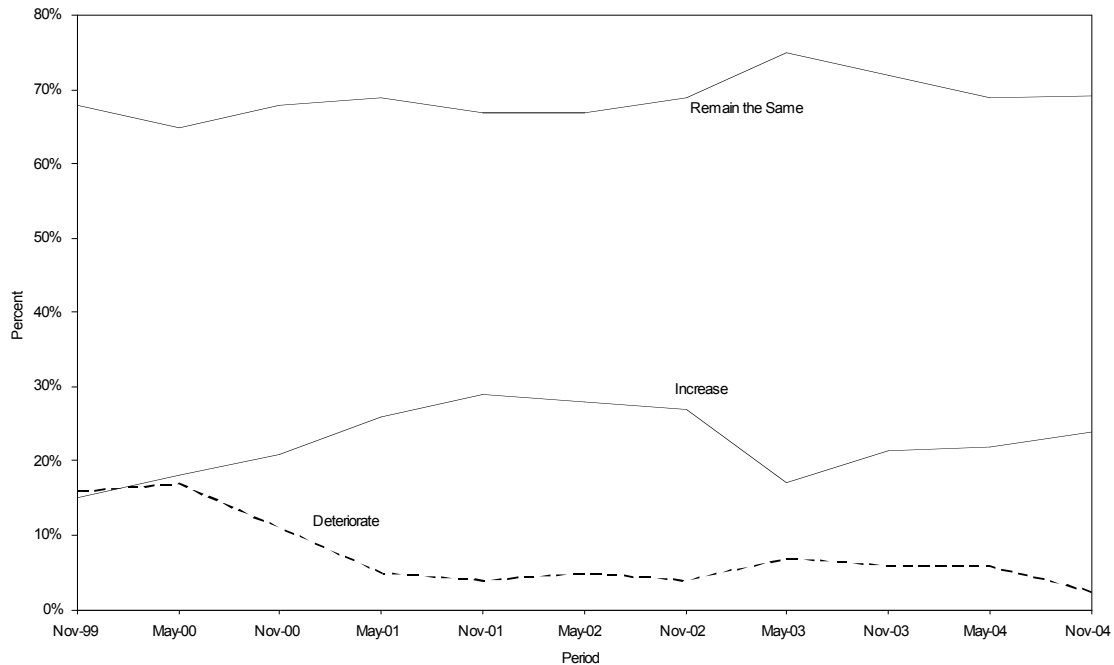
Respondents were asked to indicate whether they expected employment levels to change over the next six months. Most respondents, 69 percent, reported they anticipated employment requirements to remain the same. 24 percent indicated they expected employee numbers to increase and 3 percent indicated that employee levels will deteriorate over the period.

Graph 7: Employment Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 Months



Over time the majority of respondents have consistently indicated that they believe their staffing requirements for the coming period are likely to remain the same. Since May 2003 there has been an increasing number of businesses anticipating additional staff will be required in the coming period. Demand for staff was an issue of concern raised by many respondents. The proportion of businesses predicting staffing levels will deteriorate is at an all time low, 3 percent.

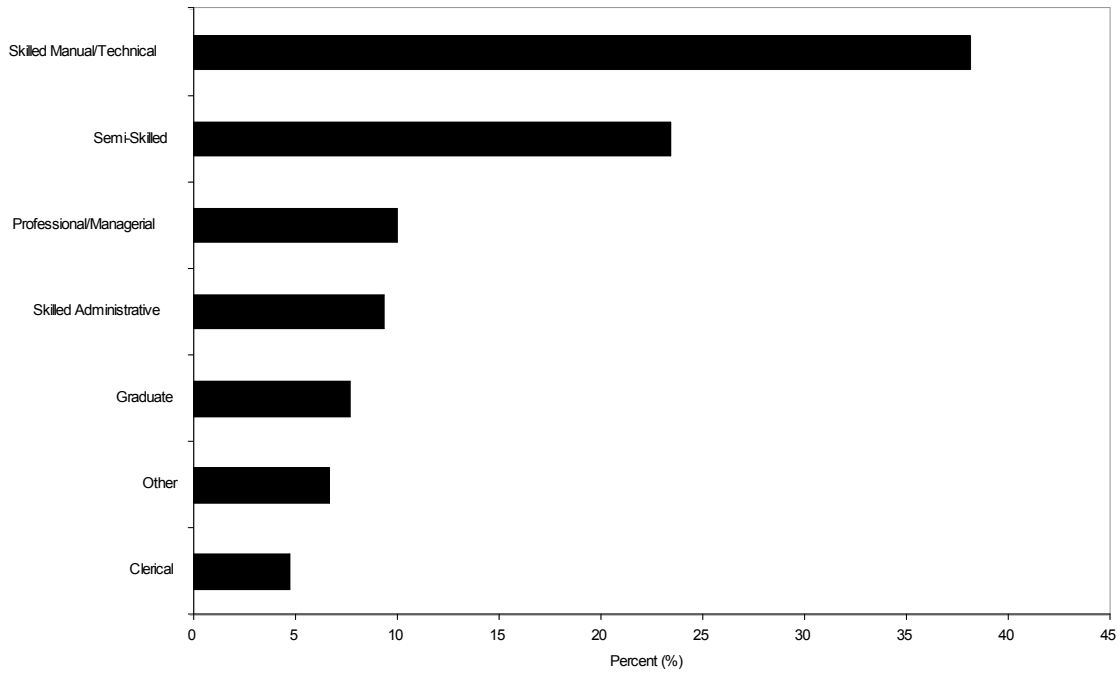
Graph 8: Employment Levels: Comparison of Results



38 percent of businesses that require employees reported 'skilled manual/technical' employees are required. 23 percent reported requiring 'semi-skilled' employees and 10 percent require 'professional/managerial' employees.

8 percent of respondents reported they required 'other' types of employees. The majority of these were described as 'unskilled' by respondents.

Graph 9: Employment Levels: Required Employee Types for the Next 6 Months



### Analysis by Industry:

When analysing employment demand across the industry sectors, those involved in the mining, oil and gas exploration/extraction' industry were significantly more optimistic with 50 percent of respondents expecting an increase in staffing levels over the coming six month period.

Conversely, businesses operating within the 'communication services' industry were more likely to anticipate a decrease in employment levels.

Table 7: Employment Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 Months by Industry Sector

Industry Group	Improve	Same	Deteriorate	Don't Know
Ag, Hort, Fishing, Forestry	21%	76%	0%	3%
Mining, Oil and Gas Exploration/Extraction	50%	50%	0%	0%
Manufacturing	33%	58%	6%	3%
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	17%	67%	0%	17%
Construction	27%	61%	5%	7%
Retail and Wholesale	19%	77%	2%	2%
Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	30%	55%	0%	15%
Transport and Storage	19%	75%	0%	6%
Communication Services	0%	75%	13%	13%
Property, Business, Finance, Insurance	31%	65%	0%	4%
Govt, Education, Health, Community Services	19%	74%	3%	3%
Recreation, Personal and Other Services	10%	86%	5%	0%

### Analysis by District:

When analysing predicted employee requirements for the coming six months at a sub-regional level, whilst the majority of businesses predict employment requirements are set to remain the same, it is noted employment demands are likely to be higher in New Plymouth than Stratford or South Taranaki districts.

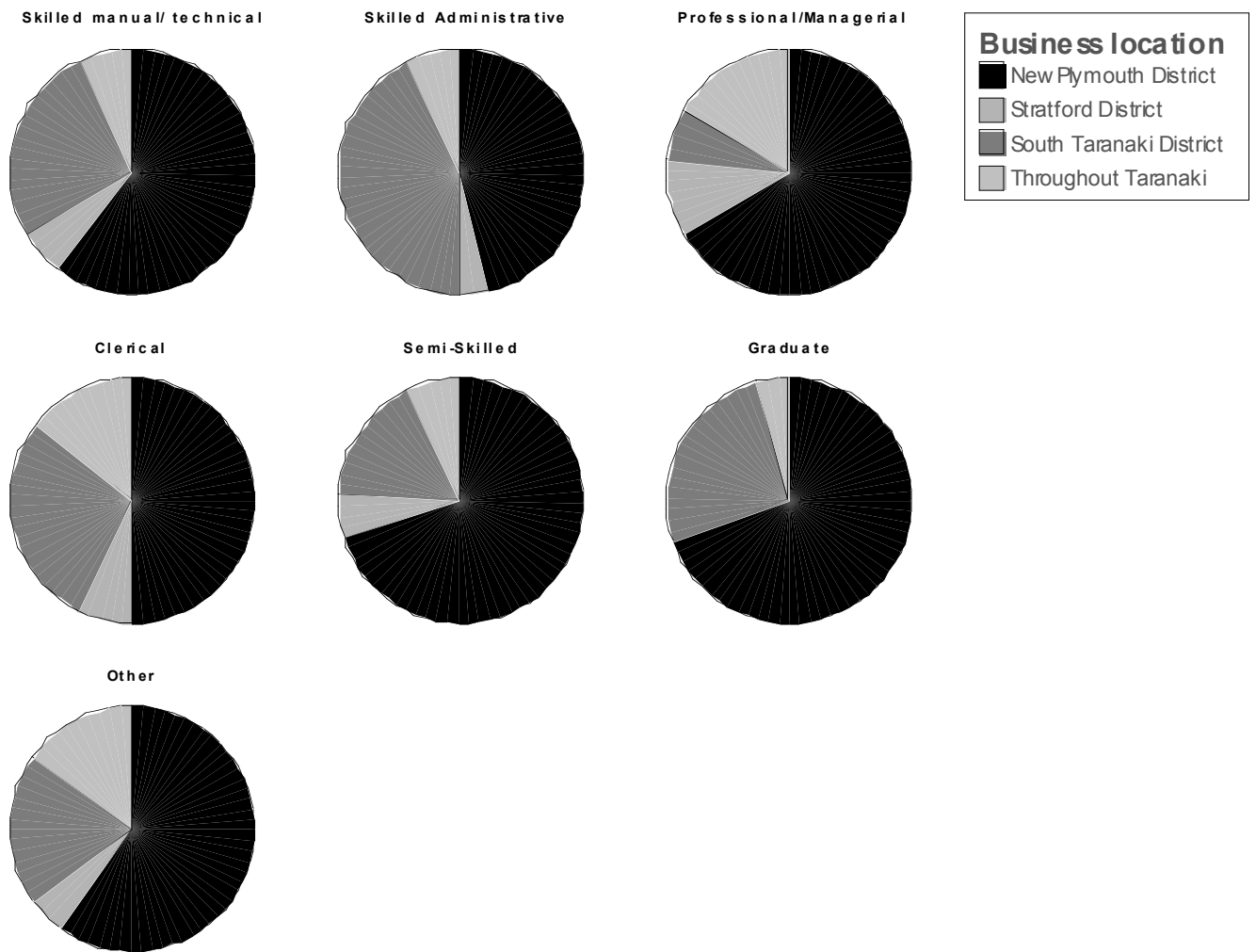
Table 8: Employment Levels: Predictions for the Next 6 Months by Taranaki District

	Business location				Total
	New Plymouth District	South Taranaki District	Stratford District	Throughout Taranaki	
Increase	27%	20%	16%	19%	24%
Remain the same	66%	72%	79%	78%	69%
Deteriorate	1%	6%	3%	0%	3%
Don't know	6%	3%	3%	4%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



New Plymouth based businesses dominated demand in most employment categories. South Taranaki based businesses anticipated significantly more 'skilled administrative' employees while Stratford businesses predicted small proportions of most employee types.

Graph 10: Employment Levels: Type of Employee Required by Taranaki District



## 6.0 Comments on Taranaki Business Conditions

The survey provided respondents a section to express any pressing issues or concerns relating to Taranaki business conditions.

“The impact of government on the primary health care sector”

16 percent of comments were in relation to **government legislation**. Common issues raised were the holidays act, primary health organisations, compliance costs and new child care legislation.

“We are unable to get qualified installers and therefore unable to take on more work”

“Extra week leave for staff in near future (preventing us increasing staff levels)”

A common issue raised by respondents throughout the past few surveys is the **lack of qualified staff**, 14 percent of comments were in relation to this issue.

“Export returns of our customers are very poor due to the level of foreign competition and USD to NZD”

“We have trouble attracting the skilled workers we need to the area”

Collectively 42 percent of comments were in relation to the **competition, interest rates, petrol prices, the weather, exchange rates** and **the oil industry**. Primary concerns included the impact of competition and cheap imported goods influenced by the current exchange rate. Up on last quarter, 6 percent of respondents reported that the poor weather had adversely affected business.

“Discounters peddling imported goods influencing the public and their expectations, manners and attitudes”

“Rising interest rates squeezing margins ”

Other comments accounted for 10 percent of responses. Common themes arising in this section included farmers payout prices, the building boom, the impact of declining rural population and current renovations in town affecting foot traffic.

# 7.0 Special Topic: Gender based Views Analysis

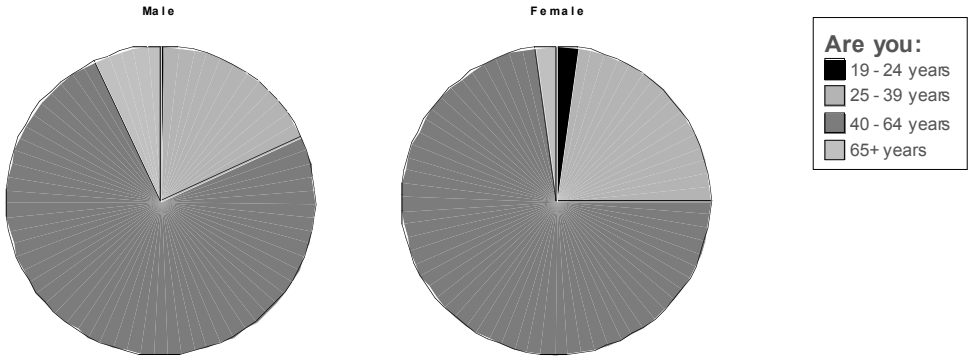
Respondents were asked additional questions to profile their demographics in more detail. These variables were analysed against general business predictions to assess if gender influences views.

## 7.1 Gender Differences

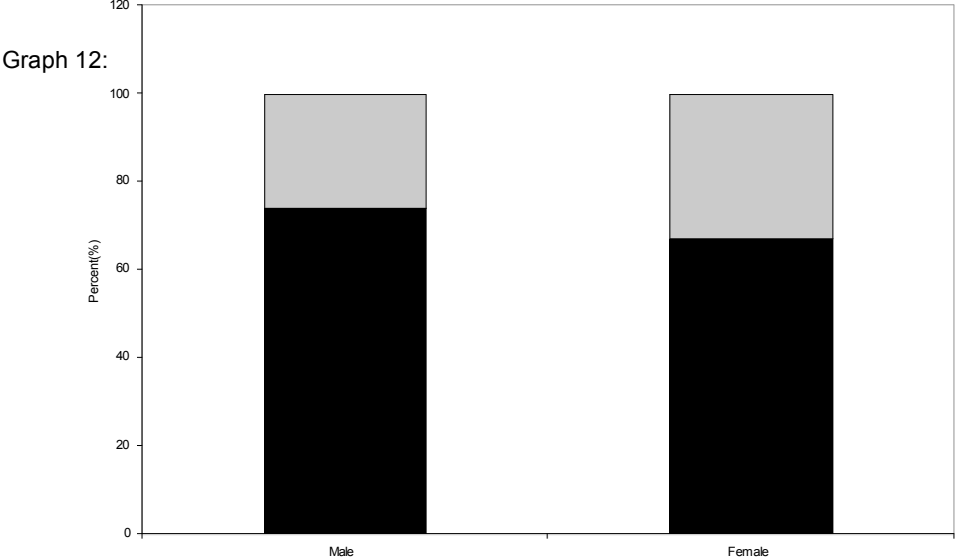
The majority of respondents, 230 (63 percent) were male and 136 (37 percent) were female.

47 percent of all respondents were male aged between 40 and 64 years old. The largest portion of female respondents were also aged between 40 and 64 years. 79 percent of all respondents were over the age of 40.

Graph 11: Respondent Age and Gender



72 percent of respondents owned the business while 28 percent were employees in the business. Two-thirds of female respondents reported they owned the business compared to three-quarters of male respondents.



## 7.2 Influence of Gender on Respondent Views

While there were fewer female business owners/managers as survey respondents, the results indicated they are moderately more optimistic in both their outlook of New Zealand's and industry specific conditions, than their male counterparts. 42 percent of female respondents predicted general business conditions over the next year will improve compared to 33 percent for males. In addition to this finding, 8 percent of males are predicting deteriorating conditions compared to 4 percent of females.

While females tended to be more optimistic there were a higher proportion of females reporting they could not predict what business conditions would be like in the coming 12 months.

Table 9: Gender Views: New Zealand Wide Conditions Predictions by Gender

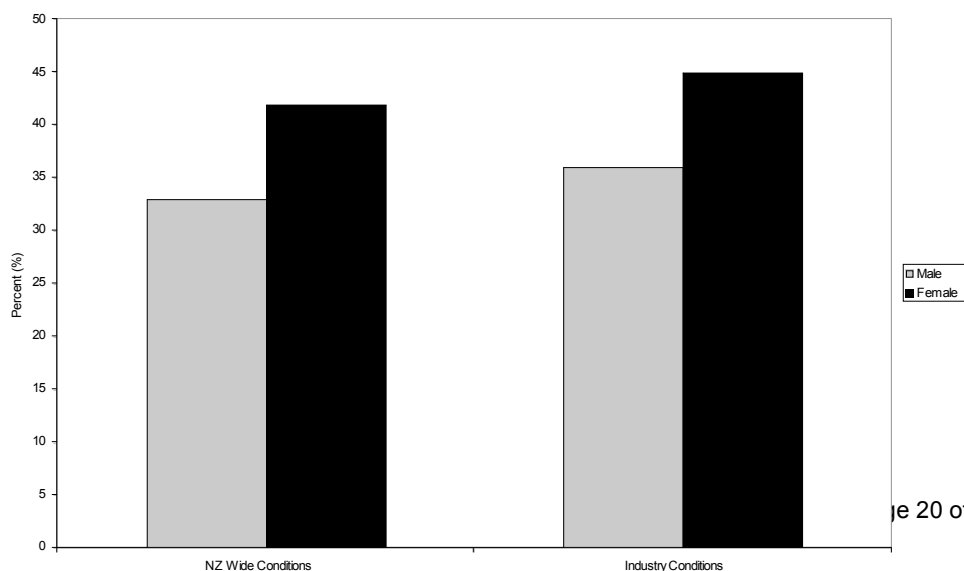
	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Improve	33%	42%	36%
Remain the same	56%	46%	53%
Deteriorate	8%	4%	7%
Don't know	3%	8%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100.0%

Their predictions with respect to industry conditions over the next 12 months proved similar to the above findings, with a higher proportion of females (45 percent) than males (36 percent) anticipating improving conditions.

With regard to sales levels, both genders were very optimistic in their outlook, with 52 percent of each anticipating improved conditions. Males however predicted higher levels of demand for employees in the coming six months than females.

Overall it can be summarized that females appeared more optimistic with regard to general businesses outlook predictions.

Graph 13: Gender Views: Percent of 'Improvement' Business Predictions by Gender



# 8.0 Regional Development Priorities

## 8.1 Developments

Respondents were asked to specify the top two regional priorities they thought should be addressed in the next three years.

The most common priority identified by respondents was upgrading the main roads in Taranaki, in particular the State Highway 3 north, “northern highway upgrade between New Plymouth and Hamilton”.

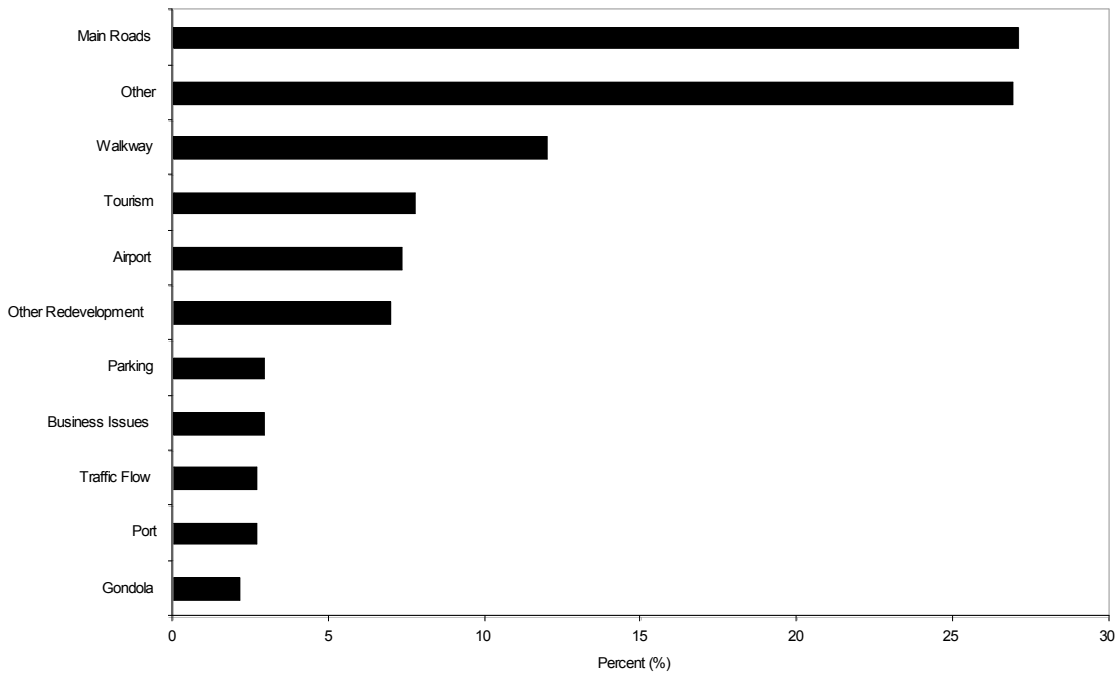
Extending the New Plymouth Coastal Walkway was reported by 12 percent of respondents as a regional development priority, “Extend the Coastal Walkway - it’s the best thing that ever happened”.

8 percent of comments were in relation to promoting Tourism to Taranaki and developing the local tourism infrastructure, “tourism infrastructure development, then attract tour operators to the region”.

Upgrading the New Plymouth Airport and various other redevelopments (largely CBD and coastal orientated) each accounted for 7 percent of responses.

‘Other’ priorities included a wide range of regional development, some of which included art, rates, Maori issues, tertiary education, accommodation, cell phone coverage etc.

Graph 14 Regional Priorities: Taranaki Regional Development Priorities



## 8.2 Gender Priorities

Upgrading main roads and extending the New Plymouth coastal walkway were rated top priority by both males and females. Female respondents rated these priorities slightly stronger than their male counterparts.

Table 10: Regional Priorities: Top Four Regional Development Priorities by Gender

Male		Female	
Development	% of Total	Development	% of Total
Roads	24%	Roads	31%
Walkway	11%	Walkway	15%
Tourism	9%	Other Redevelopment	9%
Airport	9%	Parking (CBD)	7%

Developing Taranaki's Tourism industry and renovating the New Plymouth Airport were ranked as the next most pressing initiatives by male respondents. Conversely other regional developments (largely CBD and coastal orientated) and parking issues were prioritized by female respondents.

## 9.0 Conclusions

- Taranaki businesses are in good heart demonstrating increasing levels of optimism with respect to both New Zealand wide and industry-specific conditions.
- Predictions for improving New Zealand wide business conditions have reached a two-year high while pessimism is at an all time low.
- Industry predictions are also indicating a solid 12 months ahead, with 39 percent of surveyed businesses predicting improving conditions. The proportion predicting deteriorating industry conditions is the lowest since the survey began in 1999.
- New Plymouth is the most optimistic district in Taranaki with 44 percent of businesses located in the district anticipating improving industry conditions over the coming six months. Stratford and South Taranaki are also optimistic, with 34 and 27 percent (respectively) of businesses predicting improving conditions.
- Over one-half of respondents anticipate sales levels to increase over the next six months, the highest level of optimism evident since November 2002. The 'accommodation, café and restaurant', 'mining, oil and gas exploration/extraction' and 'retail, wholesale' sectors are among the most optimistic with respect to anticipated sales levels.
- Employment demand continues an increasing trend evident since May 2003 with just under one in four respondent reporting they require additional employees. This is an issue commented on by many businesses. Skilled manual/technical staff are in most demand.
- Government legislation and lack of qualified staff proved the two key issues of concern identified by businesses.
- More male survey respondents owned the business compared to female respondents. Male business owners aged between 40 and 64 years accounted for almost one half of all individuals that replied to the survey.
- Proportionately, female respondents proved more optimistic with respect to the economic outlook than their male counterparts.
- Upgrading the main road north and extending the New Plymouth coastal Walkway were the two regional development priorities respondents felt should be addressed in the next three years.

# APPENDIX

Confidence Interval at District Level:

District	Taranaki Population	Sample Size	Confidence Interval (At 95%)
New Plymouth	4,971	221	6.45%
South Taranaki	1,860	82	10.60%
Stratford	687	38	15.50%
Throughout Taranaki	-	27	-
Taranaki Total	7,503	368	4.98%

Confidence Interval at Industry Level:

Industry Group	Taranaki Population	Sample Size	Confidence Interval (At 95%)
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	370	30	17.25%
Mining, Oil and Gas Exploration/Extraction	42	8	32.00%
Manufacturing	551	36	15.75%
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	24	6	35.00%
Construction	761	45	14.25%
Retail and Wholesale	1378	94	9.74%
Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	265	20	20.80%
Transport and Storage	236	16	24.00%
Communication Services	94	8	34.00%
Property, Business, Finance, Insurance	2478	49	13.80%
Government, Education, Health, Community Services	710	32	16.90%
Recreational, Personal and Other Services	594	21	21.00%
All Industries	7,503	368	4.98%

NOTE: Analysis by industry should be interpreted as an 'indicator' of trends only. Care is needed when interpreting results with a confidence interval greater than +/- 20%.