A sector well focused

2026 Healthcare Sector Insights Report

Contents

Executive summary

Wherever I travel around New Zealand, I am met with ambitious healthcare professionals who care deeply about where the sector is headed. As a nation, I believe we are in good hands, and that's important because headwinds are coming. This year's survey found ageing demand (58%) is a future concern for patients, while providers indicated workforce constraints (55%) and increasing complexity (46%) will have the biggest impact on the sector in the next three to five years.

Looking forward, scalable, sustainable healthcare solutions are going to be essential. And, despite ongoing pressure, the sector is demonstrating it can rise to that challenge. The majority of healthcare sector respondents not only remain positive about their outlook for the coming year (62%), they are actively reshaping their businesses, whether through process improvements (47%) or more fundamental changes (25%).

Technology adoption has held steady over the past few years with most sector respondents (55%) indicating digital technology is well utilised this year. But it's worth noting that patient awareness of provider investment in digital technology has risen (up 13 points versus last year to 60% among our respondents).

In this report, Special Counsel Liz Rowe at MinterEllisonRuddWatts has shared valuable insight on the opportunity technology presents for an ageing population on page 6. Liz believes technology is increasingly a comfortable companion for over 65s, and that there's real opportunity in sector-wide collaboration to develop and deploy solutions to alleviate cost pressures.

We've also looked further afield at what's happening in Australia in response to our patient survey data, which shows very strong interest (74%) in overseas healthcare models. SmartCare shows what a whole new model of care can look like, one working in collaboration with the public system to give patients fast, affordable access to diagnostics. See page 10.

If anything in this report resonates with you, I warmly invite you to connect with me or any of our senior healthcare banking experts around the country.

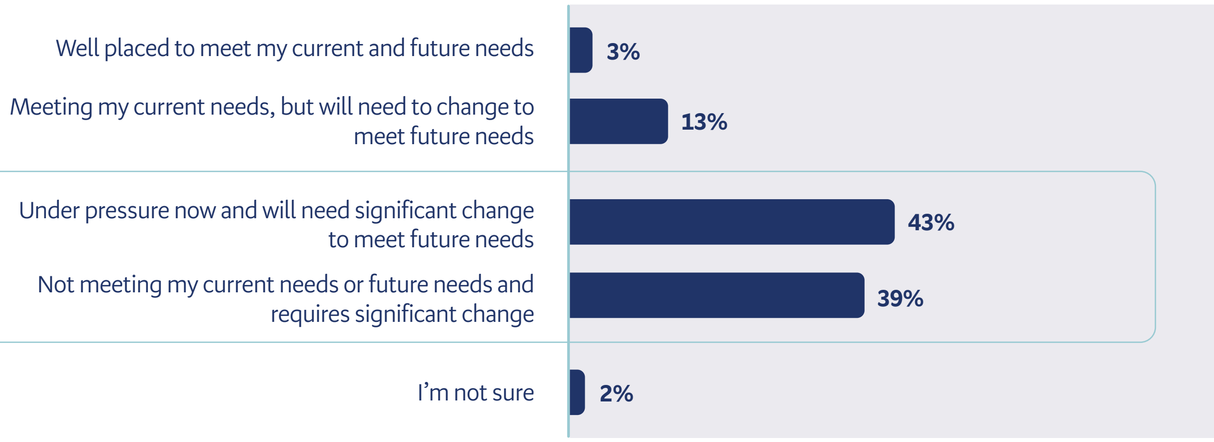
Thom McKenzie
Head of Healthcare Sector, Bank of New Zealand

Section 1

Current and future pressures on the sector

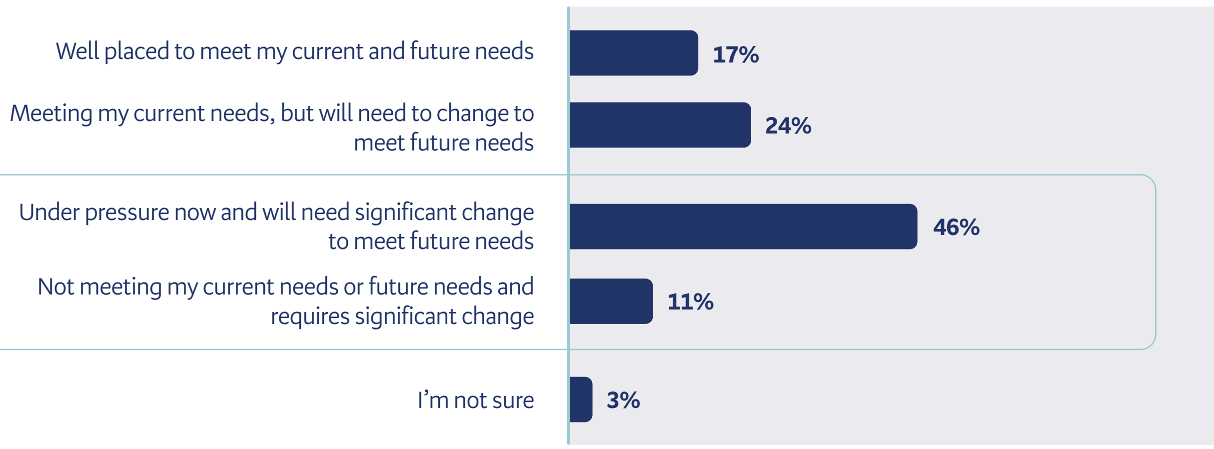
Providers and patients agreed: the sector is under pressure and there is broad recognition on both sides that meaningful change is needed.

Provider view of New Zealand healthcare sector



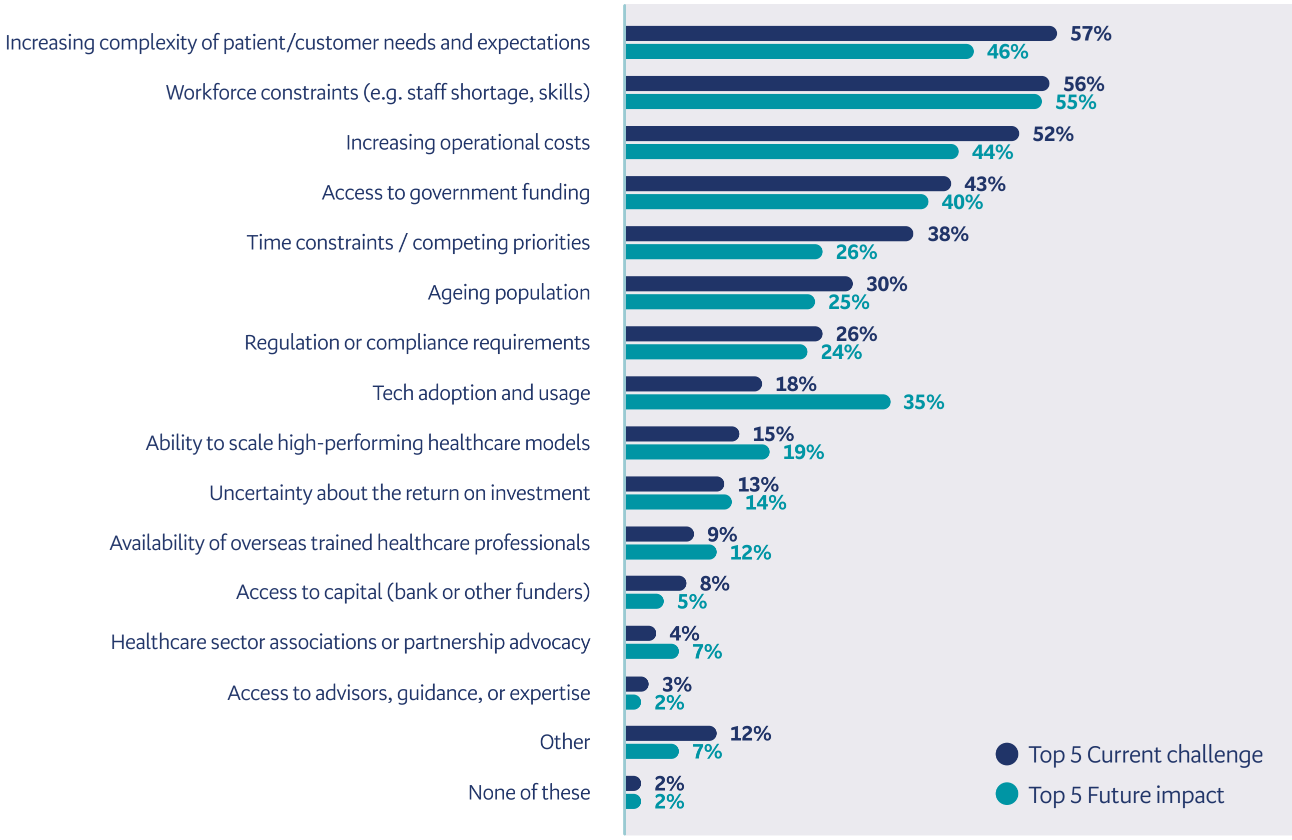
Source: BNZ Healthcare Survey 2026
Q: Which statement best reflects your view of the New Zealand healthcare sector? (Single choice)
Sample size: Total Providers (n=106)

Patient view of New Zealand healthcare sector



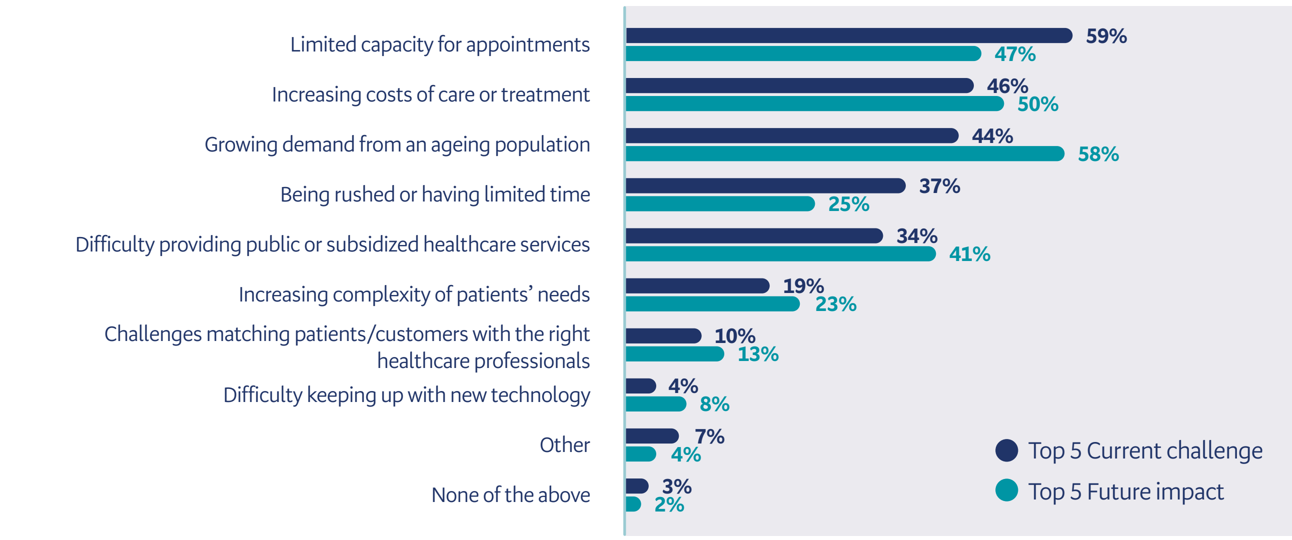
Source: BNZ Customer Panel Survey, June 2026
Q: Which statement best reflects your view of the New Zealand healthcare sector? (Single choice)
Sample size: Total Patients (n= 625)

Provider view of the biggest challenges



Source: BNZ Healthcare Survey 2026
Q: What are the biggest challenges currently facing your business or organisation? (Please select up to five) | Looking ahead 3-5 years, which of the following do you expect to have the biggest impact on your business or organisation? (Please select up to five)
Sample size: Total Providers (n=106)

Patient view of the biggest challenges



Source: BNZ Customer Panel Survey 2026
Q: What are the biggest challenges currently facing your healthcare professionals, based on your experience as a patient/customer? (Please select up to three) | Looking ahead 3-5 years, which of the following do you expect to have the biggest impact on your healthcare professionals? (Please select up to three)
Total Patients (n=625)

BNZ Head of Healthcare Sector Thom McKenzie highlights that patients' biggest future concern is ageing-related demand (58%), while providers point to workforce constraints (55%) and rising complexity (46%).

"These issues are a 'double whammy', representing an increasing load on a healthcare system already stretched thin. The public sector will need to respond to these challenges too of course, but I believe private providers can move to position themselves now. We're having a lot of conversations with providers who are exploring technology support and new models that will deliver scalable, sustainable care."

The survey also shows providers see a significant shift in technology coming, with its perceived impact nearly doubling, from the 18% who identify it as one of their top five current challenges to 35% who include it in their top five when looking ahead three to five years.

Preparing for New Zealand's ageing population

Liz Rowe
Special Counsel,
MinterEllisonRuddWatts

A new report from the Aged Care Ministerial Advisory Group projects that aged care service costs will rise by almost 90% over the next 20 years[1]. Special Counsel Liz Rowe believes it will take a range of levers to alleviate this issue, but few move as fast, or scale as well, as technology.

Rowe has spent almost 20 years advising in the retirement village, and aged care industries, and she sees technology as central to the overall healthcare sector's future, particularly in the regions.

"Things like telehealth and wearable tech will need to move from a nice-to-have to a must-have, in parts of New Zealand where there aren't many physical care facilities or hospitals," she says.

Rowe also believes the debate over whether older people will adopt technology is largely settled. "People of all ages are becoming increasingly comfortable with technology in all settings including health, and more tech natives are entering the demographic all the time. It will soon become an expectation that healthcare and AgeTech are a core part of providers' offerings."

The barrier is the first move

Rowe believes that the main obstacle to tech adoption for many providers isn't appetite - it's knowing where to start.

"The first move into adopting any kind of tech is often the hardest. We see businesses hesitate, particularly if it involves significant capital investment, as it can be daunting to commit to that first step," Rowe says. "That's how we support clients – helping them understand how to put in place good governance and policies so they can manage the risks, and then helping them procure the tech in a way that sets them up for success."

Collaboration over going it alone

Rowe points to collective action as one of the sector's most under-used tools.

"Look to your peers and identify areas of shared risk and opportunity. What can you advance or invest in collectively that you can't do individually?"

For Rowe, industry associations are a natural home for this kind of shared approach.

Curiosity matters too, including looking offshore.

> **"We're fortunate that other jurisdictions are ahead of us in this demographic shift. Go to the healthcare sector conferences, see what's available. It's not always expensive: sometimes it's small hacks that make a real difference. And sometimes it is a significant investment. But either way, you don't have to work it out from scratch."**

One local example Rowe highlights is Spritely, a New Zealand-developed platform used across various parts of the healthcare system, including some New Zealand retirement villages. The platform helps patients monitor their health, stay connected with clinicians, and access support while maintaining their independence. Many operators and providers are also developing their own care apps, demonstrating the innovation that is already emerging from within the sector.

Bringing in the right advice, early

Rowe is a strong advocate for bringing professional advisor expertise in from the start, not just for compliance, but for insight and judgment. "At our firm, advisors know the players in the sector, how to set up for success and how good procurement works. We can also help you troubleshoot and stress test, so you're choosing with the confidence that the technology can be properly implemented, is secure, and built to last."

That early advice, she says, is often what helps providers get past 'analysis paralysis' and commit, with the best chance of getting full value from the investment for years to come.

[1] Aged Care Ministerial Advisory Group, "A Place to Grow Old: Securing the future of aged care," Ministry of Health, August 2026.

Section 2

Making changes

While coping with current pressures remains the main focus, many sector respondents (47%) reported they are improving existing processes and/or making more fundamental changes (25%).

Provider view on current focus

Source: BNZ Healthcare Survey 2026
Q: Which of the following describe your business or organisation's current focus? (Multiple choice)
Sample size: Total Providers (n=106)

An open-ended question further asked what factors within the business or organisation may limit the ability to make meaningful changes. Many respondents cited structural issues including workforce shortages, funding and capacity due to increased patient demand.

BNZ's Head of Healthcare Sector Thom McKenzie says that he observes providers working hard to make changes:

> **"In our day-to-day experience with healthcare businesses around the country, we're not met with a lack of ambition. Despite significant structural barriers, a quarter of businesses are making fundamental changes and almost half of the survey respondents are improving existing processes – that's not a small thing in a very process driven sector. Improvements can have a significant impact on both the patient experience and the success of the business."**

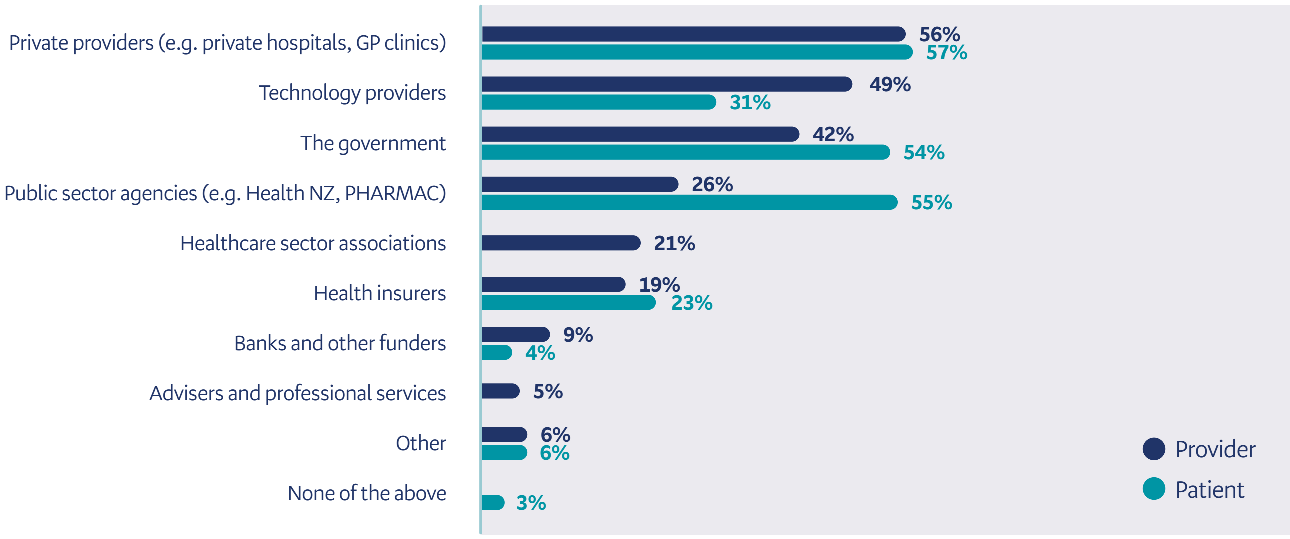
Section 3

Where change is expected to come from

More than half of both the providers and patients responding to the survey indicated private providers will lead the development of new models of care.

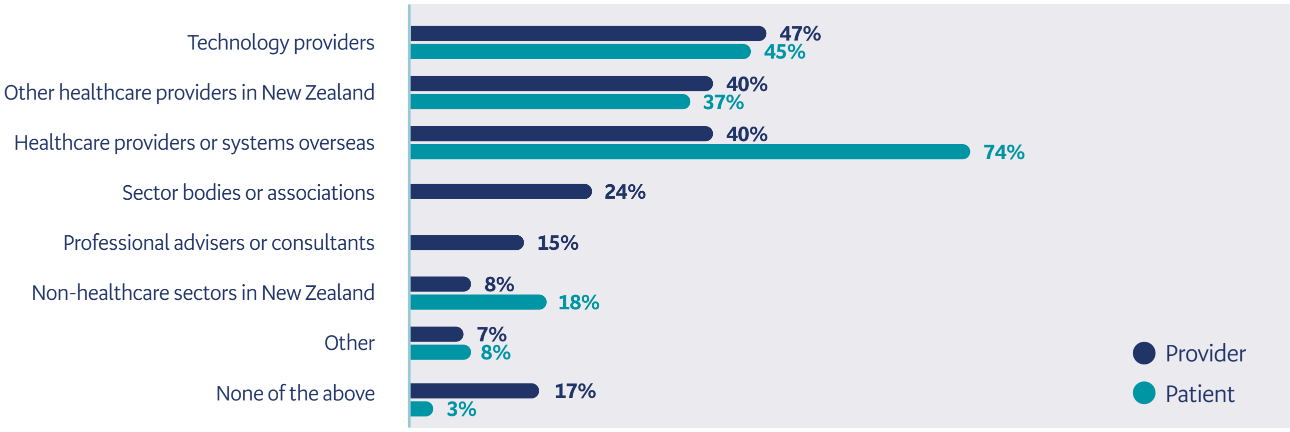
Patients, however, also see a big role for public sector agencies and government, and both audiences look outward for ideas. 74% of patients indicated they expect healthcare providers to look overseas for new ideas, technology or models of care.

Who will play the greatest role(s) in new models of care



Source: BNZ Healthcare Survey, BNZ Customer Panel Survey, 2026
Q: Which of the following do you think will play the greatest role(s) in developing new ways of delivering care in New Zealand over the next 3-5 years? (Please select up to three).
Sample size: Total Providers (n=106); Total Patients (n=625)

Where healthcare professionals should look for new ideas, technology or models of care



Source: BNZ Healthcare Survey, BNZ Customer Panel Survey, 2026
Where, if anywhere, is your business or organisation looking for ideas, technology or new models of care? (Multiple choice) |
Q: Where, if anywhere, should your healthcare professionals look for new ideas, technology or models of care? (Multiple choice)
Sample size: Total Providers (n=106); Total Patients (n=625)

Global research on the topic of healthcare sector change suggests collaboration will need to play a key role. A 2026 international Deloitte report based on a survey of 120 C-suite executives from large US healthcare organisations highlights a need for joining forces:

“Sixty-three percent of surveyed executives expect strategic partnerships and joint ventures to become a higher priority in 2026. As the boundaries between healthcare and other industries blur, cross-sector collaborations are likely to become essential.” [2]

BNZ’s Head of Healthcare Sector Thom McKenzie says making connections for collaboration is one of the ways the bank can help.

“We are New Zealand’s biggest business bank, which means we have customers and key relationships in an extensive range of sectors. We are actively connecting our healthcare customers with key collaborators, whether that’s with a specialist advisor or a technology developer, we see that as an important part of our role.”

International inspiration

With a significant number of patient respondents (74%) indicating an expectation for the New Zealand sector to look for new ideas overseas, the following Australian case study highlights a business that has succeeded in developing a new model of care.

[2] Deloitte 2026 US Health Care Outlook

A gap in the Australian healthcare system became an opportunity for Kevin and Kate Power to build a better model of care. Today, the SmartCare Group, which includes SmartCare Diagnostics and SmartCare UrgentCare, deliver rapid, state-of-the-art care to meet growing community demand.

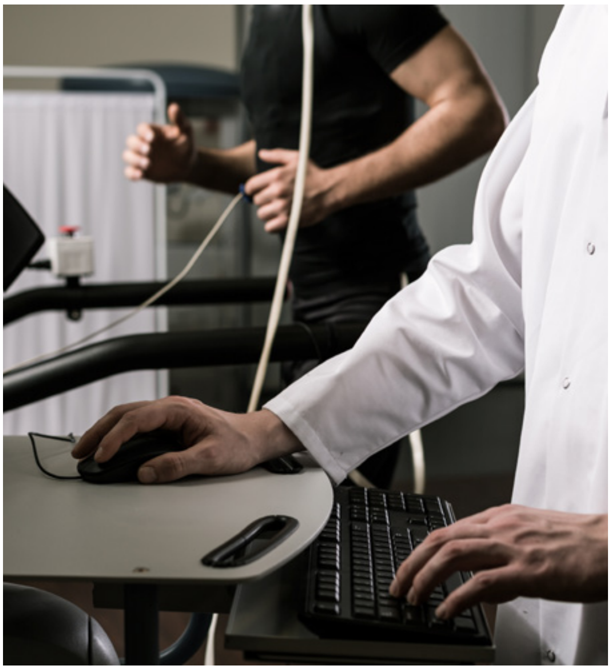
Senior Emergency Specialist, Kevin Power came home concerned about a pattern he couldn't ignore. As he told his wife, Kate, he'd been seeing patients return to the hospital again and again due to chest pain, without ever having received the standard outpatient testing needed to properly diagnose their cause.

In fact, many of these patients weren't neglecting their health. They were simply working within the options available to them. Patients described a choice between waiting months for a public outpatient appointment or paying to see a private cardiologist.

So instead, they defaulted to returning to the emergency department each time the pain came back.

A better model

That conversation, 10 years ago, became the foundation for SmartCare Diagnostics: a service designed to give patients rapid, access to cardiac testing within days of their first symptoms. By combining timely access with bulk-billed* care, SmartCare removed many of the barriers that had prevented patients from accessing the care they required and being able to diagnose sooner.



Today, SmartCare Diagnostics operates five clinics across Brisbane, providing specialist cardiac, respiratory and sleep investigations using state-of-the-art equipment.

The focus remains unchanged – fast access and affordability. Most patients are seen within seven days, with urgent cases prioritised within 24 to 48 hours.

Closing the gaps

But while diagnostics addressed one part of the problem, another remained – what happens when patients need immediate care, before they even reach the point of referral?

That gap led to the launch of SmartCare UrgentCare. Opened in early 2026, the private urgent-care service was designed to provide a genuine alternative to hospital emergency departments for patients requiring prompt assessment and treatment.

Led by Emergency Medicine Specialists and supported by onsite diagnostics, pathology and advanced imaging, SmartCare UrgentCare delivers hospital-grade capability in a community setting. Unlike a traditional emergency department, patients can access care immediately, often bypassing the waiting room altogether and receiving assessment, investigations and treatment in a single visit.

"It was a natural next step," Kate says.

The couple are also focused on helping to close gaps in community care more generally. SmartCare is collaborating with the Queensland Ambulance Service on a 12-month pilot to assess alternative pathways for patients with low to intermediate risk chest pain – many of whom currently spend up to 12 hours in emergency departments.

They are also partnering with the University of Queensland and the Australian Heart Foundation on the Springfield Healthy Hearts campaign.

"Their 'living laboratory' is a world-first initiative for finding ways of embedding practical heart-health behaviours into everyday life," Kate says. "We're participating in their longitudinal study and are on track to become one of the strategic partners delivering the service."

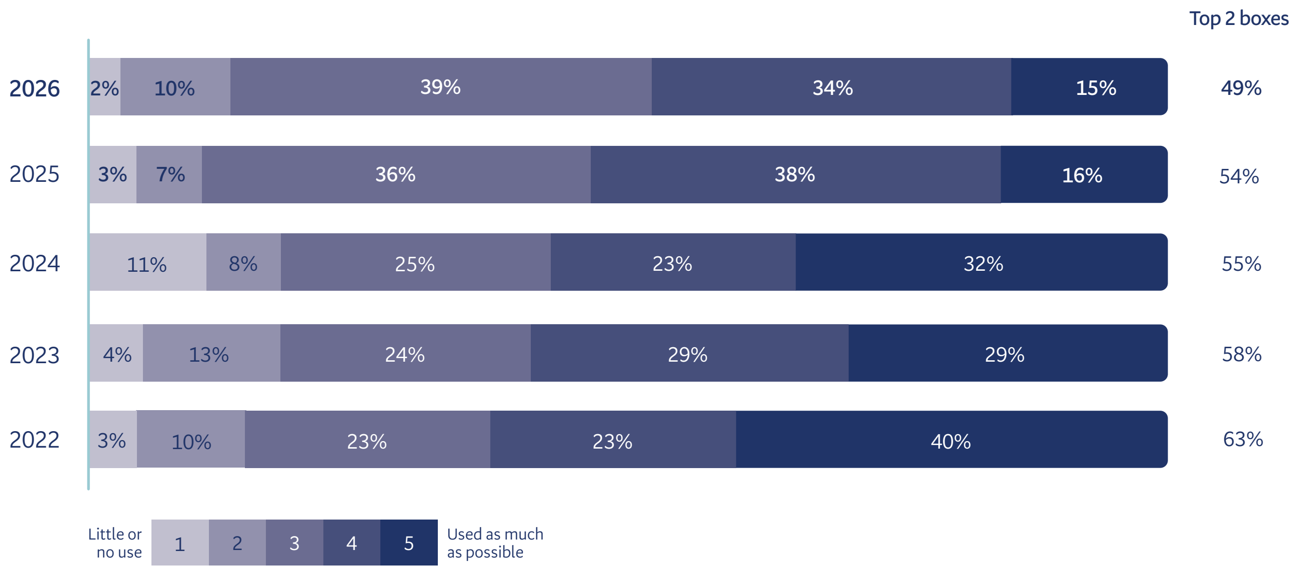
* Bulk billing is a payment system under Australia's Medicare program where a healthcare provider bills the government directly instead of charging the patient.

Section 4

Technology adoption

Technology adoption has directionally softened over the years, even as this report shows its perceived importance to the sector's future is expected to rise (from 18% of responding professionals indicating technology is a top 5 current challenge to 35% highlighting it as a top 5 future impact). Where new technology has been adopted, responses indicate it is largely in an administrative support capacity.

Uptake of technology



Source: BNZ Healthcare Survey
Q: Considering all the digital technology available to your industry, where does your business/organisation sit on the scale? (Single Choice)
Sample base: Total Providers 2022 (n=164) | 2023 (n=184) | 2024 (n=158) | 2025 (n=95) | 2026 (n=106) Rounding may impact results adding to +/- 100%

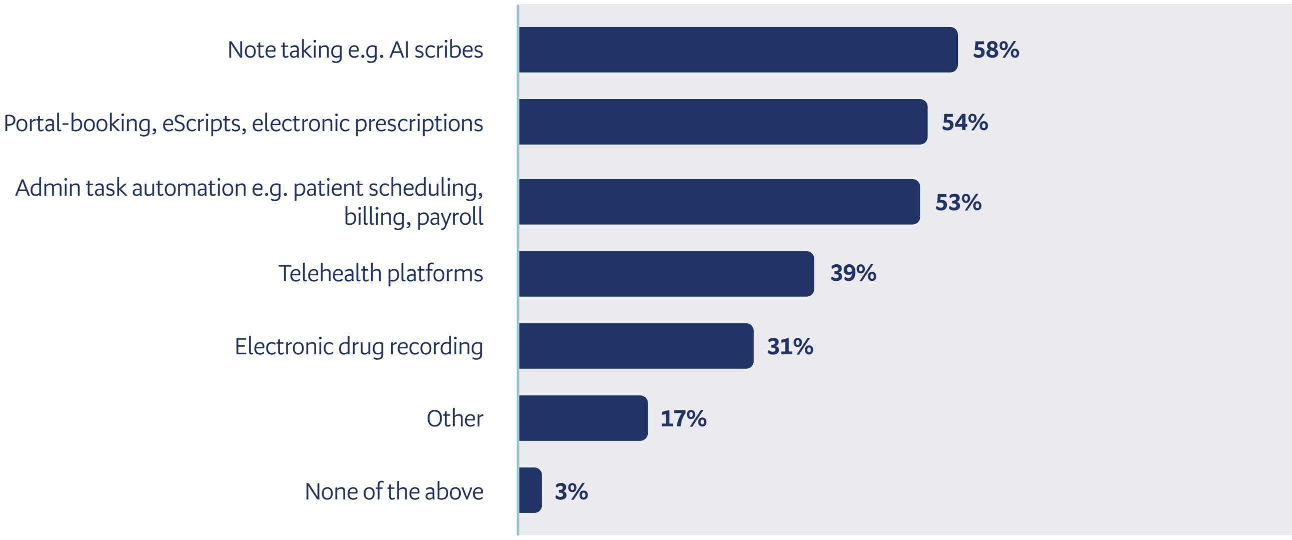
BNZ's Head of Healthcare Sector Thom McKenzie says further technology adoption is likely to track the pace of regulation, particularly where AI is concerned.

"A lot of the providers we work with are still navigating a complex, fast-changing regulatory environment for AI," he says. "Administrative support is a relatively safe place to start, but there's still a need for regulation to support wider applications."

The Government's proposed Medical Products Bill would regulate software as a medical device for the first time. The Ministry of Health's indicative timeline has it passing into law by the end of 2027, with a two-year transition period likely to follow before it comes into force[3].

[3] Health Informatics New Zealand, May 2026

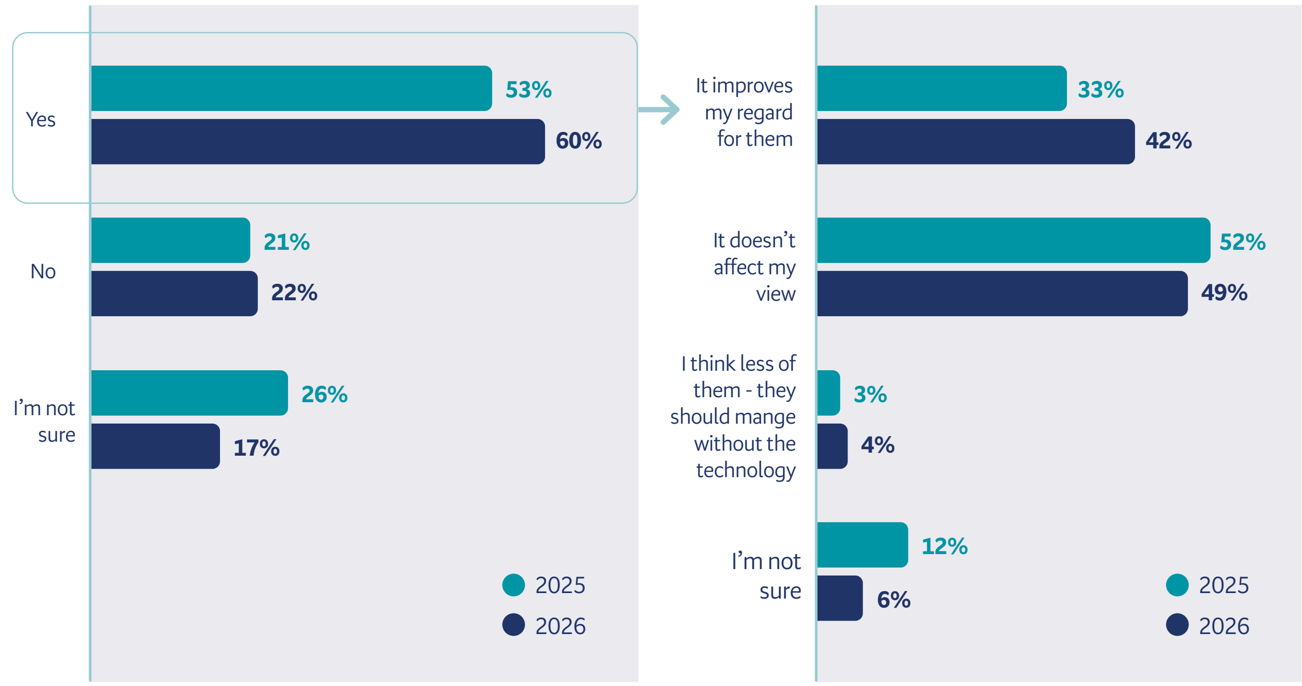
Digital technology adopted in the past year



Source: BNZ Healthcare Survey 2026
Q: Which types of digital technology has your business or organisation adopted in the last 12 months? (Multiple choice)
Sample size: Providers (n=93), among those rating 3-5 on the 5-point adoption scale

In the past year, responses indicate patient awareness of provider technology investment has risen by 7 points (from 53% to 60%) and the proportion for whom it improves their regard for providers who invest in technology has risen by 9 points (from 33% to 42%).

Patient view of digital technology adoption



Source: BNZ Customer Panel Survey, June 2026
Q: Have you noticed your healthcare professionals investing in more digital technologies in the past 12 months? (Single choice) Total Patients (2025 n=261; 2026 n=625) | How does greater use of digital technologies by healthcare professionals affect your view of them? (Single choice) Total Patients (2025 n=261); Patients who noticed digital adoption (2026 n=377)

Rising patient regard for digital technology is further reflected in Salesforce's 2026 Connected Health Consumer Report (which surveyed 3,200 healthcare consumers across 7 countries including New Zealand). The report found 61% of patient respondents are comfortable with agentic AI in healthcare, and 64% would share their full medical history with AI for a faster diagnosis[4].

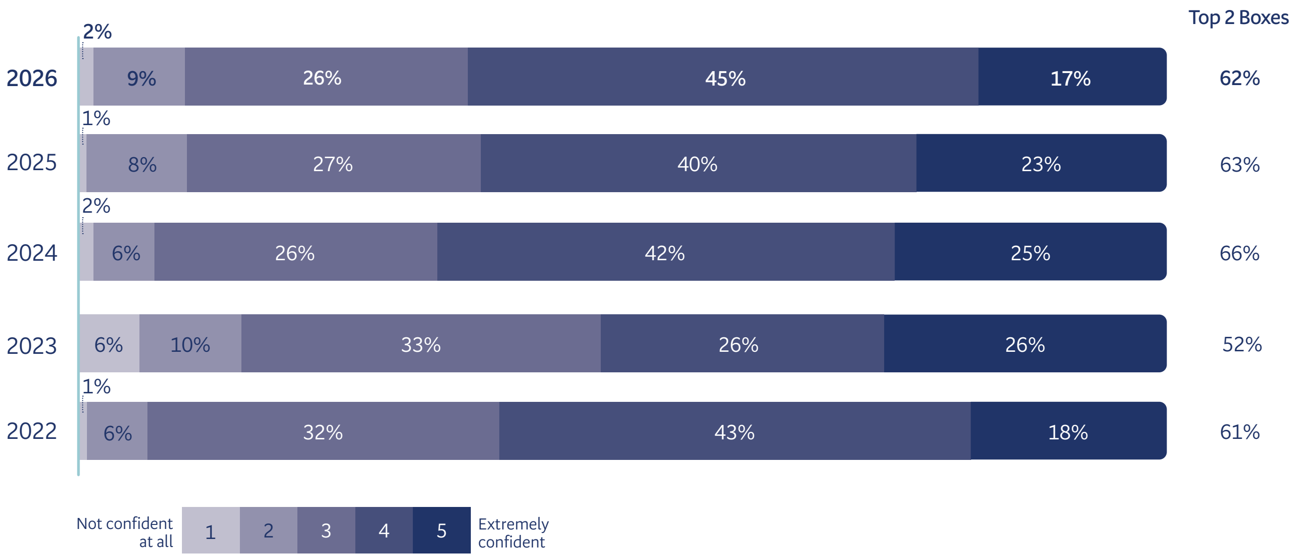
[4] Salesforce, 2026 Connected Health Consumer Report

Section 5

Business outlook

Confidence in the sector's outlook has remained broadly stable over the past several years.

Business confidence



Source: BNZ Healthcare Survey
Q: How confident are you in the outlook of your business/organisation for the next 12 months? (Single choice)
Sample base: Total Providers 2022 (n=164) | 2023 (n=184) | 2024 (n=158) | 2025 (n=95) | 2026 (n=106) Rounding may impact results adding to +/- 100%

BNZ's Thom McKenzie says the sector remains largely positive and stable, despite clear sentiment elsewhere in the survey that the sector is under pressure.

"Despite the persistent pressure, healthcare is a sector that is essential and it knows it's growing value; demand is not showing any sign of reduction. We can also see that there's change afoot, 47% of business respondents report improving existing processes and 25% indicate they are making fundamental changes which would also give cause for future confidence."

Summary

This year's research, and the experts we spoke to in putting the 2026 Healthcare Sector Insights Report together, all point to the need for change. The pressure on New Zealand's healthcare sector isn't going to ease. Ageing demand and rising complexity will only build from here, but there are strong signs that providers can rise to meet that challenge. The businesses that move to scalable, sustainable models of care, and make the most of technology, will be the ones best placed for the future.

Here's where to start:

Explore peer models locally and internationally. Look to overseas jurisdictions further ahead in the ageing curve for proven approaches you don't have to build from scratch.

Work with trusted advisors to establish a technology plan for the business before you begin your digital transformation. The first move is the hardest, so bring in expertise on procurement, security and governance early (not just at the compliance stage) to get full value from the investment.

Invest in security and governance alongside any new technology and train your people not just on the tools themselves but on how to respond if something goes wrong.

Explore funding options for technology investment and other forms of growth well before they are needed. Different options have different lead times (a business loan vs private capital, for example).

Position your business for ageing demand and rising complexity by building new models of care now. Consider technology such as telehealth and wearables, new operating models, or partnerships that share the load.

Look beyond your own four walls for collaboration with peers, industry associations, other sectors, or a banking partner with reach across them all. The businesses making the most progress are rarely going it alone.

Research information

This report is solely for information purposes. It's not financial or other professional advice. For help, please contact BNZ or your professional adviser. No party, including BNZ, is liable for direct or indirect loss or damage resulting from this report.

This report presents a selection of key findings from the BNZ 2026 Healthcare Survey. To keep the report focused on the most salient information, not all research background and survey charts have been included.

Research methodology

Healthcare providers (n=106 including BNZ customers invited via BNZ bankers, and non-customers via an open link) and patients (n=625, members of BNZ's research community) were surveyed online in June 2026 to identify areas of alignment and divergence. Incentives were provided. Neither survey was quota-controlled. Findings are based on convenience samples of healthcare providers and patients/customers. In some cases, comparisons have been made with results from surveys conducted in previous years. The profile of respondents of these surveys may change year on year. Results should not be regarded as representative of the healthcare sector as a whole.

Get in touch

We hope this report has provided insight to help you make informed decisions for your business. It's amazing what an innovative business can achieve together with an innovative bank.

Please reach out to BNZ_healthcare@bnz.co.nz if you'd like to discuss further with a BNZ Healthcare sector specialist.

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