

Digital Boost

Evaluation Research August
2022



ABOUT DIGITAL BOOST

Government has a vision for New Zealand to have the most digitally engaged small business sector in the world. We want to support more small business owners to digitally transform their operating models, not only through the adoption of digital hardware and software, but through process changes, new skills and capabilities, access to capital and having deeper insight into their business through data.

To support this vision, MBIE launched the small business Digital Boost programme at the end of 2020. It was designed in partnership with industry experts to ensure it meets the needs of Kiwi small business owners, and MBIE continues to work closely with small business owners and the private sector on the delivery of the programme.

Digital Boost has now been running for just over 18 months. Some businesses have had the benefit of involvement for this entire time; others have still be joining throughout. This summary report provides an overview of some of the key findings and learnings in advance of deeper analysis to support the continued evolution of the Digital Boost programme.

In this report

1. **Key findings** and trends
2. **About** the Digital Boost evaluation
3. **Platform usage** and **business characteristics**
4. **Digital capabilities and drivers** – what's changed from 2021 to 2022
5. **Business impacts** – is being more digital better for business?
6. **Moving forward**

Key findings & trends

Headlines – it's good news!

More longer-term
users of Digital
Boost are showing
increases in digital
capability

23% of Digital
Boost businesses
are now reporting
increased revenues

79% would
recommend Digital
Boost to others

Key findings

Digital capabilities are now positively affecting business outcomes like revenue

For those who have been with Digital Boost since early 2021, tool usage is significantly more prevalent – as is the likelihood of increased revenues.

There is clearly a relationship between engagement frequency, longevity and digital tool uptake with business impacts such as increased revenues, resilience, customer engagement and wellbeing.



39%

of Digital Boost users who engaged weekly with the platform report increased revenues, compared with the overall average of 23% reporting increased revenues



89%

of all Digital Boost users intend to continue using the platform



80%

of Digital Boost businesses now have a website (a mix of eCommerce and more traditional)

Other points to note

Performance metrics are positive

By and large, Digital Boost businesses report feeling more positive than the average business, rate the platform positively and have made changes to their business's use of both internal and external tools.

Proportion of Digital Boost users who felt optimism and hope *many times or all the time* in the past two weeks. This is +17% higher than the national average in June 2022

55%

Those businesses who were satisfied or very satisfied with Digital Boost (just 9% reported being dissatisfied and the remainder are more neutral)

65%

The increased proportion of businesses who now have an eCommerce website (compared to the proportion who had one when they registered)

+32%

Business impacts

One year on for some, there are some positive signs for productivity

Being part of Digital Boost does appear to be resulting in some positive business impacts – such as increased revenues*; whether businesses are relatively new to the programme or more established.

As might be expected, businesses who have been with Digital Boost for over a year are more likely to report improved revenues – which correlates with their higher uptake of digital tools.

* Businesses are asked whether they had experienced revenue increases **as a result of taking part in Digital Boost**

23% of all Digital Boost businesses report increased revenues



For those businesses which have been in Digital Boost for over a year, this figure is 28%



For those newer to Digital Boost (ie. joined in 2022) this metric is 14%

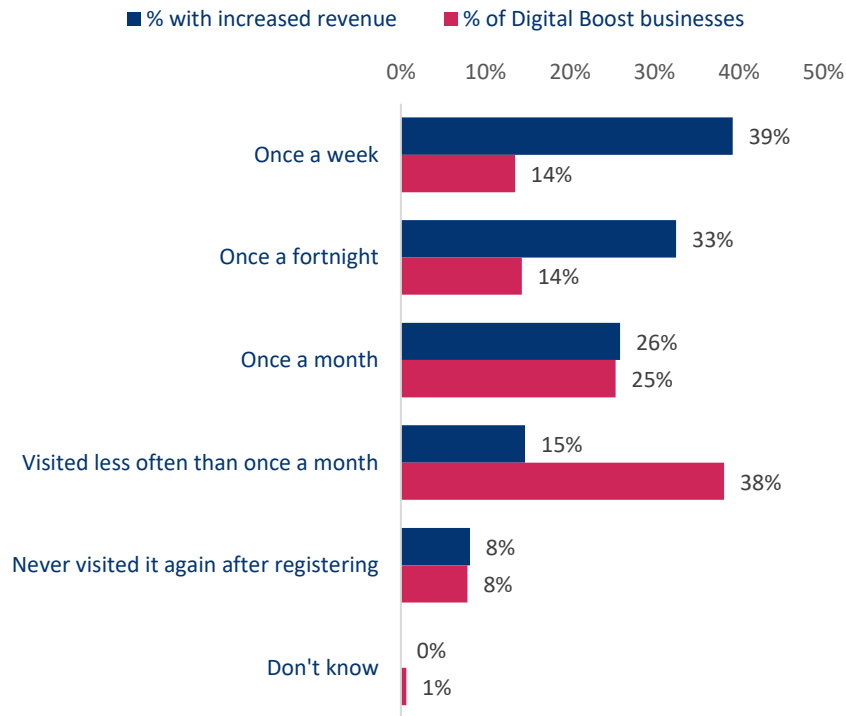
Engagement is key

More engagement = more impact

Exploring revenue impacts further – we see a clear relationship between the frequency of engagement with the Digital Boost platform and the proportion of businesses reporting positive revenue impacts in the past year. 39% of weekly visitors to the platform reported increased revenues compared with just 8% of those who never visited again reporting increased revenues.

This positively correlates with increased tool uptake and even wellbeing metrics such as optimism and hope.

Businesses with increased revenue by frequency of Digital Boost usage



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A trend of note

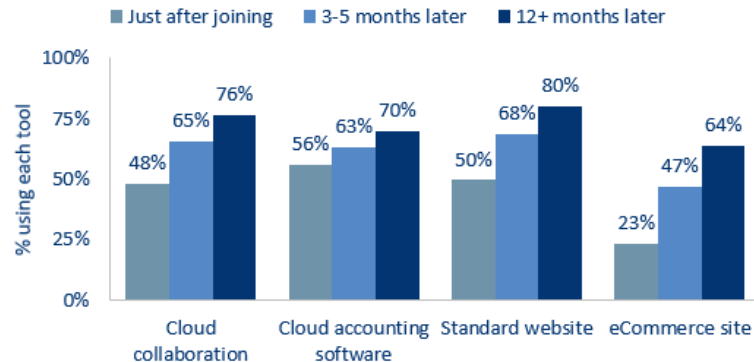
Similar uptake trends for new registrants

Those early in their Digital Boost journey in 2022 show very similar trends in uptake as their counterparts a year ago. It follows that we should reasonably expect them to continue to increase their capabilities in a similar vein.

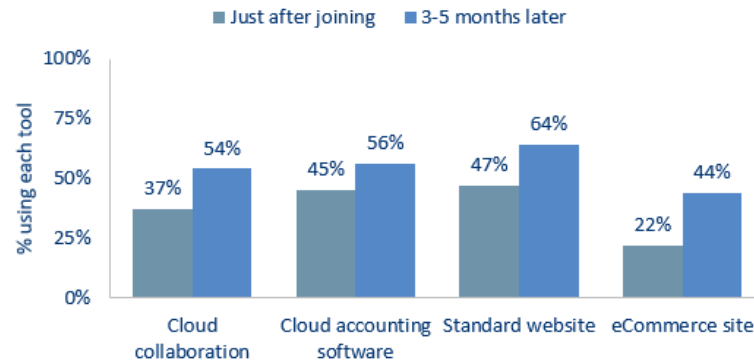
What this also shows is that short term engagement with Digital Boost has almost immediate benefits – and longer term engagement continues to yield gains.

Based on this, we could expect future Digital Boost registrants to experience relatively similar trends – provided they are in some way similar to those joining to date.

Digital Boost tool adoption: 2021 registrants only



Digital Boost tool adoption: 2022 registrants only





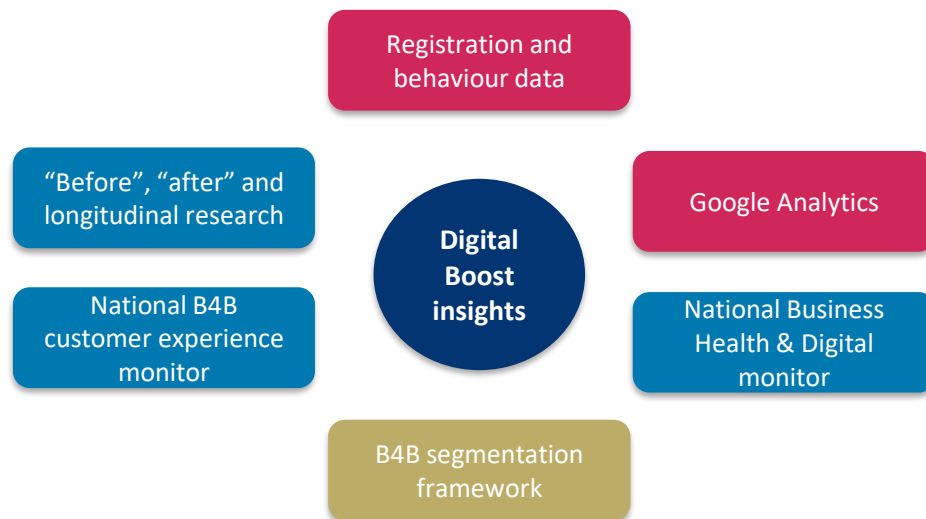
About the Digital Boost evaluation – a brief overview

The evolution of Digital Boost's evaluation

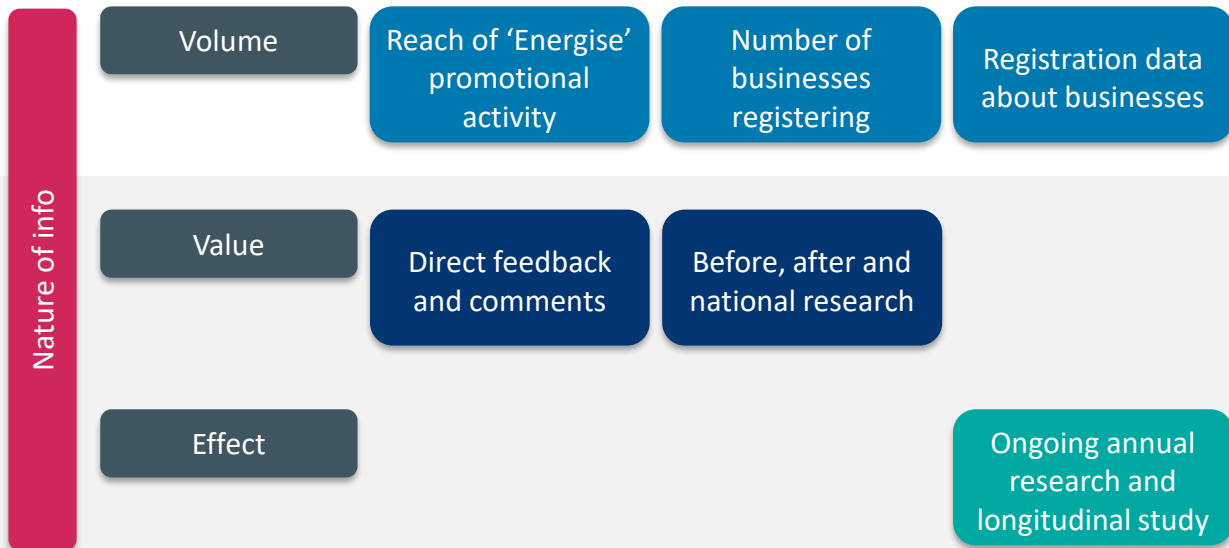
Increasingly multi-faceted

- The Digital Boost evaluation and its associated guiding insights now take advantage of a wide and varied sources of research and data corroboration – from data recorded at registration, specific and high-level behaviour on the platform, dedicated research, multivariate segmentation and two annual research monitors.
- Through this, we are able to quite clearly compare, contrast and measure the success of the programme – as well as inform how best it should evolve; for whom and with what.
- Evaluation activity is designed and overseen by MBIE's Better for Business (B4B) team, with the research components conducted by Research New Zealand, an independent research provider.

Digital Boost measurement, evaluation and insight system



High level measurement and evaluation scope for Digital Boost



Digital Boost was measured and evaluated using a variety of data sources – from administrative data provided at registration, to social media campaign measurement, a range of information from Google Analytics and direct research with businesses.

This report focuses primarily on the 'value' and 'effect' focussed research done to date. This will continue in future years to track any further changes occurring with businesses – including whether any behaviour change relates to other positive outcomes such as revenue/productivity gains, wellbeing improvements, time/cost savings or other measures of interest.

About the measurement to date



Observations and context in measurement as at August 2022

Approximately 32,000 businesses or potential businesses (and ~51,000 people) were registered with Digital Boost at the end of August 2022.

As well as direct feedback and comments, three surveys were conducted to assess the early impact of Digital Boost – noting that this was still relatively early days for the initiative.

- **Expectations** (the 'before' survey) approx. one week after registering
- **Impact** (the 'after' survey) around three months later, then again approximately 12 months on
- National **B4B Customer Experience research monitor** and national **Business Health and Digital monitor**

This report focuses on respondents who completed the expectations survey in either 2021 *or* 2022, and have completed also the most recent impact survey. This is a total of n=622 respondents.

A subset of businesses who have been with Digital Boost since early 2021 and have now filled in two impact surveys approximately one year apart are considered our 'longitudinal' research group. By looking at these businesses in particular, we can see how any observed changes in 2021 might be lead indicators for revised results one year on – particularly with regards to business impacts such as revenue changes.

'Before' research
leveraging
registration data

Expectations

'After' research vs.
baseline

Impact

Compare impact
with similar non-
Digital Boost
participants

**National
research**

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What was asked?

Information sought by the research

This table describes the various information elements included in the respective surveys.

This illustrates what we can compare and contrast easily. This information was sought to identify any attitudinal or behavioural change; understand the effectiveness of different parts of Digital Boost delivery; and identify potential improvements.

Expectations survey	Impact survey
Current digital capability of business and satisfaction	Current digital capability of business and satisfaction
Digital priorities for the business and reasons for becoming more digital a priority (e.g. increase sales, decrease costs)	Digital priorities for the business and reasons for becoming more digital a priority (e.g. increase sales, decrease costs)
Current use of digital tools for internal business purposes Current use of digital tools for external purposes	Changes made/planning to make to digital tools for internal business purposes Changes made/planning to make to digital tools for external purposes
Inhibitors to becoming more online and digitally capable (e.g. security, costs, not knowing what to buy, poor connectivity)	Inhibitors to becoming more online and digitally capable (e.g. security, costs, not knowing what to buy, poor connectivity)
How became aware of Digital Boost. Reasons for registering with Digital Boost	
	Number times visited Digital Boost [For infrequent visitors] Reasons for not visiting frequently
	Confidence in becoming more digital (as a result of Digital Boost)
Interest in specific parts/resources available through Digital Boost	Opinions about Digital Boost and its overall 'value' Usefulness of specific parts/resources available through Digital Boost Most valued parts of the Digital Boost platform
	Likelihood to recommend and Satisfaction with Digital Boost
Expectations as a result of visiting Digital Boost	Next steps to becoming digital (as a result of Digital Boost)
	Wellbeing impacts – optimism and hope, frustration or worry
	Business impacts – revenues, costs, resilience, customer engagement
Proportion of all revenue generated from online sales	Proportion of all revenue generated from online sales
Suggestions to improve Digital Boost	Suggestions to improve Digital Boost

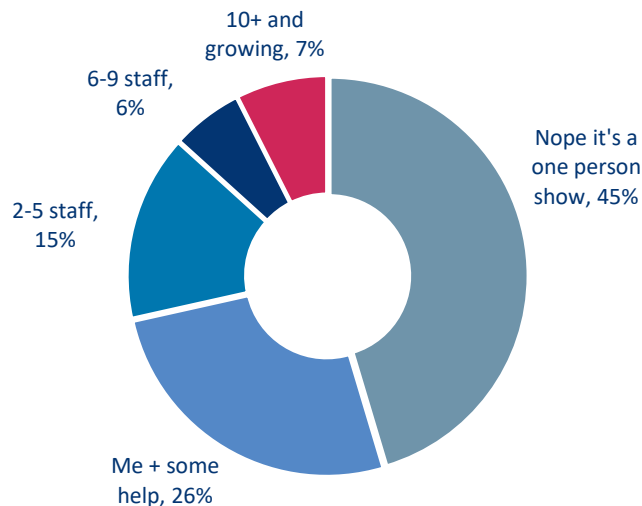
Business characteristics & platform usage

Who they are

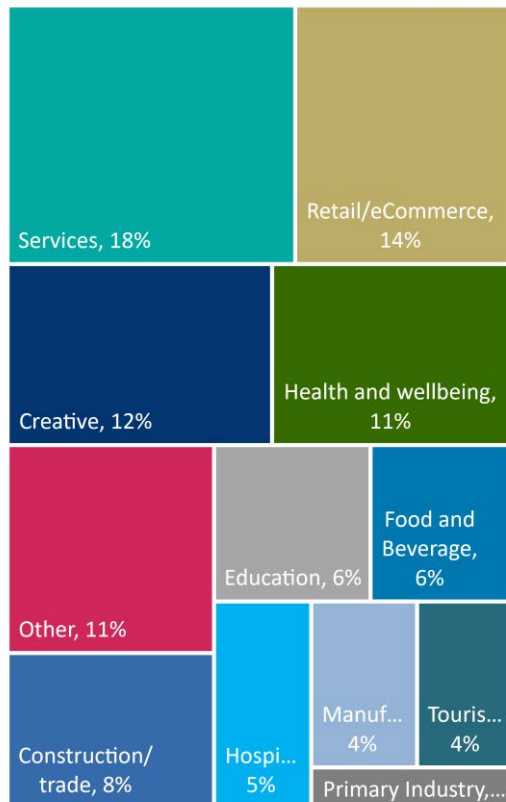
Relatively representative

The more than 51,000 Digital Boost users are spread relatively representatively around New Zealand based on the Statistics NZ geographical distribution of businesses. A significant number are in Services, Retail/eCommerce, Creative and Health and Wellbeing industries. They are also similar to the New Zealand business population in terms of business size.

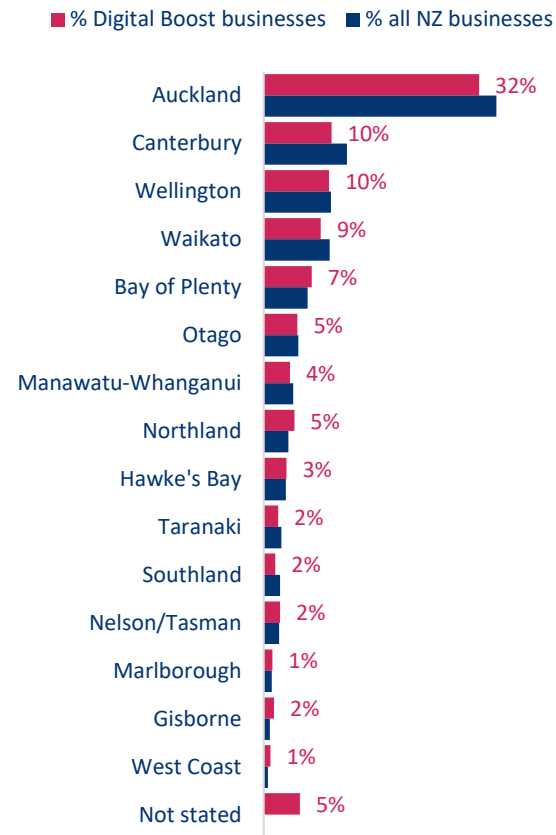
Digital Boost businesses by size



Digital Boost businesses by industry



Digital Boost businesses by region



Māori and Pasifika businesses

Are they using it, is it meeting their needs?

7%
of respondents
are from Māori
businesses

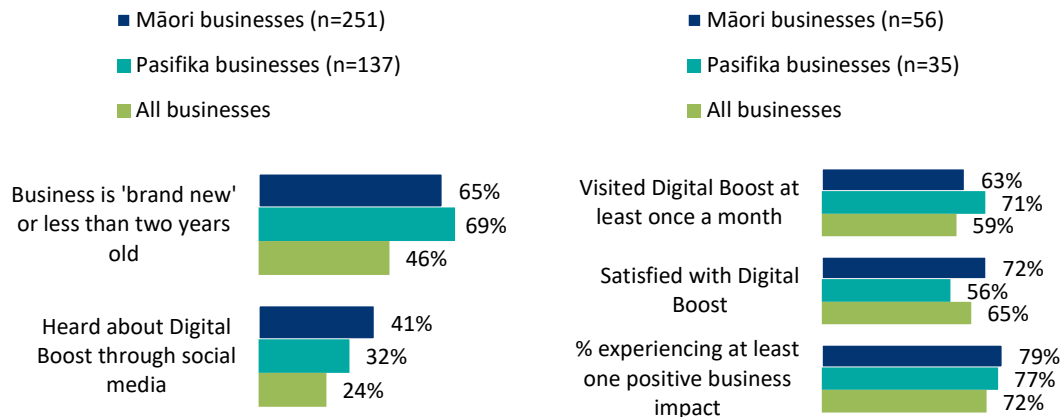
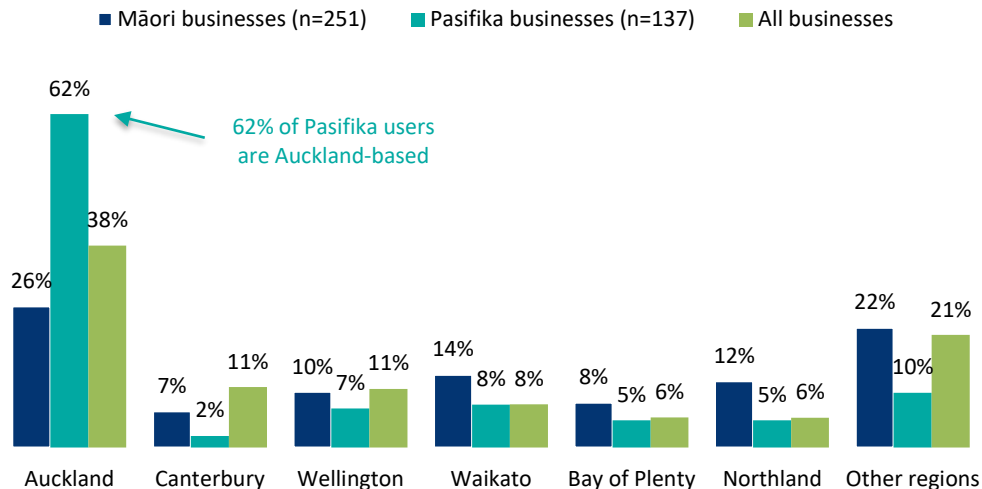
4%
of respondents
are from Pasifika
businesses

The true size of these two business populations in New Zealand is not yet known, and we can't be totally sure that respondents to the survey are truly reflective of the makeup of all Digital Boost users. But if this is reflective, then it could be considered a relatively good level of uptake*.

There are some differences in the profile of Māori and Pasifika businesses when compared to the average registrant (eg. region and business age). But their visiting frequency, satisfaction and degree of positive business impact are not significantly different from the average**.

* The proportions of Māori and Pasifika businesses are higher than the population % estimates B4B has seen. Note that to date, Digital Boost surveys have not used the official definition of a Māori business. Respondents were simply asked whether they identified as a Māori business. 2023 research is using the new, official definition.

** Māori and Pasifika businesses were slightly less likely than average to go on and complete an impact survey after the expectations survey and we do not know whether this is a reflection of their engagement with the platform. Results are based on 2021 and 2022 combined. Results for Pasifika businesses are based on a small sample size and therefore have a relatively large margin or error.



Frequency of use

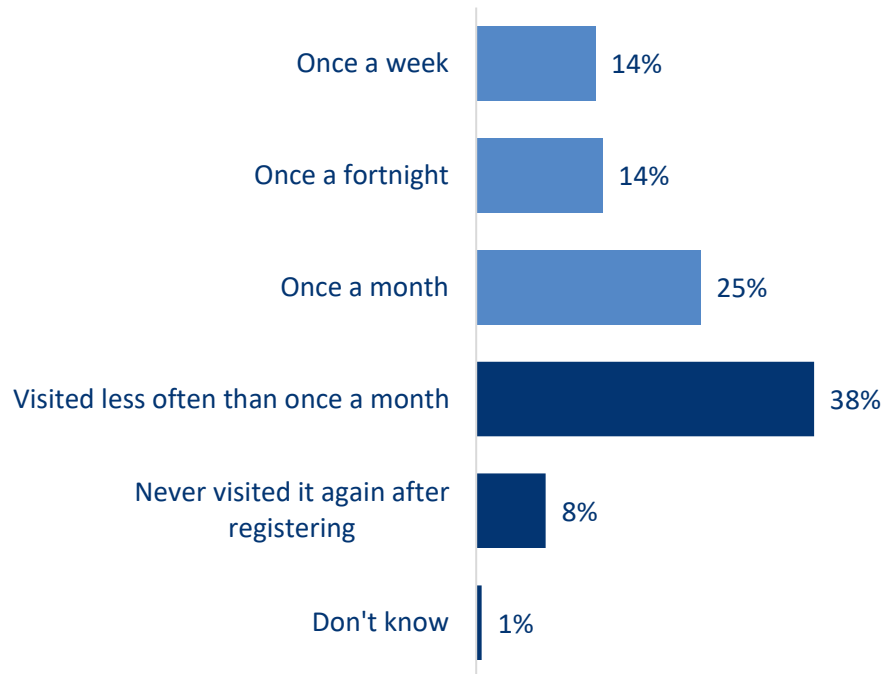
Users fall into two main camps

Of the 91% of businesses who returned to the Digital Boost platform after registering, we can usefully look at them in two groups – those who went back once a month or more (53%) and those who went less frequently (38%). As we see later in this report, this difference in engagement relates to tool uptake and overall business impacts.

53%

of Digital Boost
businesses visited
the platform at
least once a month

Frequency of Digital Boost platform usage



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Reasons for not visiting Digital Boost often

When businesses are busy, small barriers can become BIG barriers

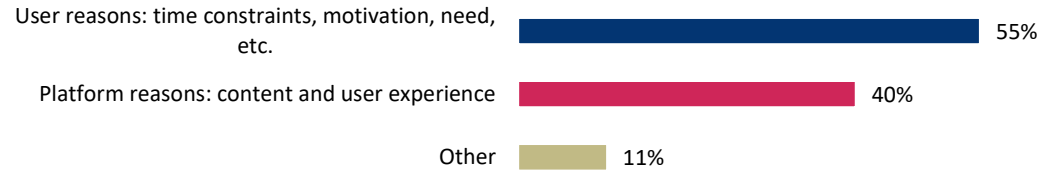
When asked why they visited the platform less than once a month, by far the most common reason provided is that the user has been too busy running their business.

In some ways this is unsurprising – we know how time poor small businesses are. But what can we do to make it easier for businesses to make even a small amount of regular progress?

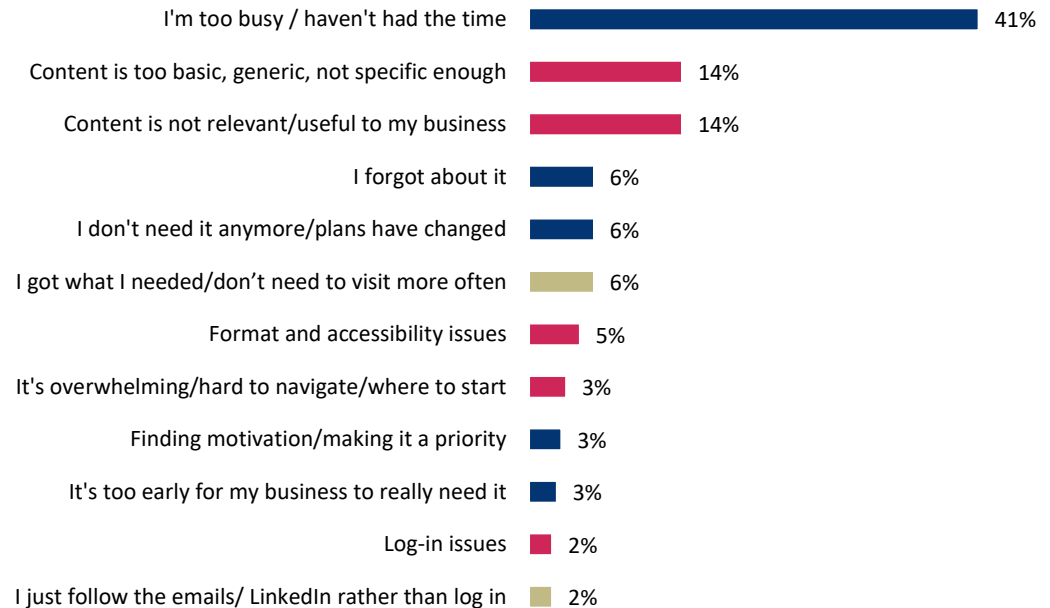
For others, the platform simply didn't meet their expectations: common responses being that it didn't tell them anything new or was too basic, and that it wasn't relevant to their specific situation.

Do we need to expand our offering to meet their needs? And/or is it a question of clarifying Digital Boost's brand position? Our infrequent users are less likely to have explored the whole platform – so they may well have missed relevant and useful content.

High-level themes



Detailed themes



% of infrequent users

Example comments

It's about me

Too busy trying to stay alive financially.

Always had intentions of visiting more but either forgot or never had the spare moment.

I haven't invested time in discovering how Digital Boost can specifically assist me with my business.

It's about the platform

Quite overwhelming and didn't know where to start.

Login issues. Password didn't work.

Content lacks detail for what I need, only seems to have information for people starting on their digital presence.

I didn't feel that this was of particular use or benefit for me as a sole trader providing professional services.

Emails are hitting the mark for some ...

Got most of the info from emails. Didn't have time to check website.

... but not others

Too many emails that didn't really have information that interested me.

In a nutshell ...

While it was helpful during lockdowns, as soon as we opened again our workloads increased with changing our site for Covid restrictions etc. So, we never had time to use it again after lockdown.

Also, some content felt too low level for us, so spent a lot of time wasted on basics we already knew. Would be better to do some kind of survey and have options for content at our level of need.

Also, while we received notifications of new content, the extra step of having to login to view it was a pain, and in the end too hard - just deleted the emails, and never had dedicated time to login and delve into what was new. Once we are open, our available time to upskill is limited, things needed to be accessible without logging in, and in short bite sizes, as often we only get 5-10 mins before work interrupts us.

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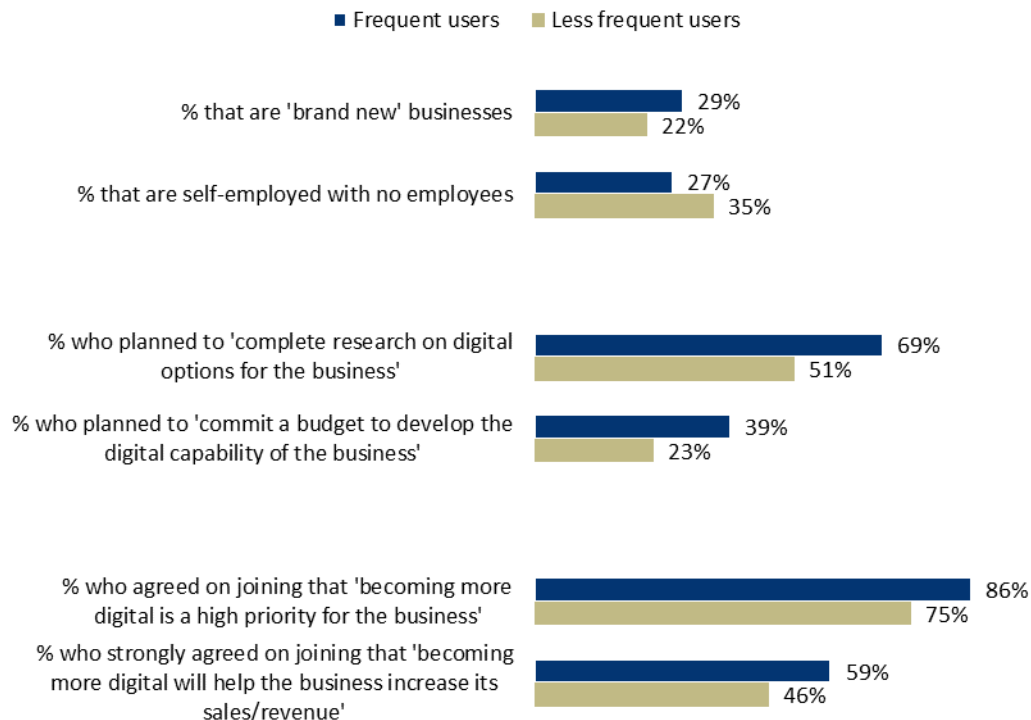
Who is *more* or *less* engaged?

Levels of engagement do not appear to be strongly influenced by who the person is, or their attitudes and capabilities at the outset – although there are some tendencies (e.g. those with stronger intentions were more likely to visit frequently).

It is mostly about time, motivation and how well the platform can meet business needs in the face of limitations in those two areas.

Frequent users = at least once a month

Less frequent = less than once a month



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What can we learn from this?

Nudging, content expansion and improved personalisation will likely help retention

Setting **expectations**: Who is our target market? What is our brand position?

Can we **expand content** to meet a wider range of needs (topic and level)? We also need to help people **find relevant content**.

Motivate businesses with something to work towards: a learning pathway with goals/outcomes?

A learning pathway based on needs would also help new users **cut through the noise**/know where to start.

Could we give businesses the option to tell us more, in return for a **more personalised experience**?

Ensuring good engagement from the start

Establishing comms preferences, needs and context

Consider learning pathways with goals/outcomes and clear start point

Managing expectations

Providing seamless access

Personalisation

Gamification

A targeted re-engagement approach

"Did you know about these (new) features?"

"Do you need a helping hand?"

"Did you know about this new content?"

"Other businesses like yours are seeing these benefits"

SMS campaign to ensure emails not going to spam folder

Most useful content

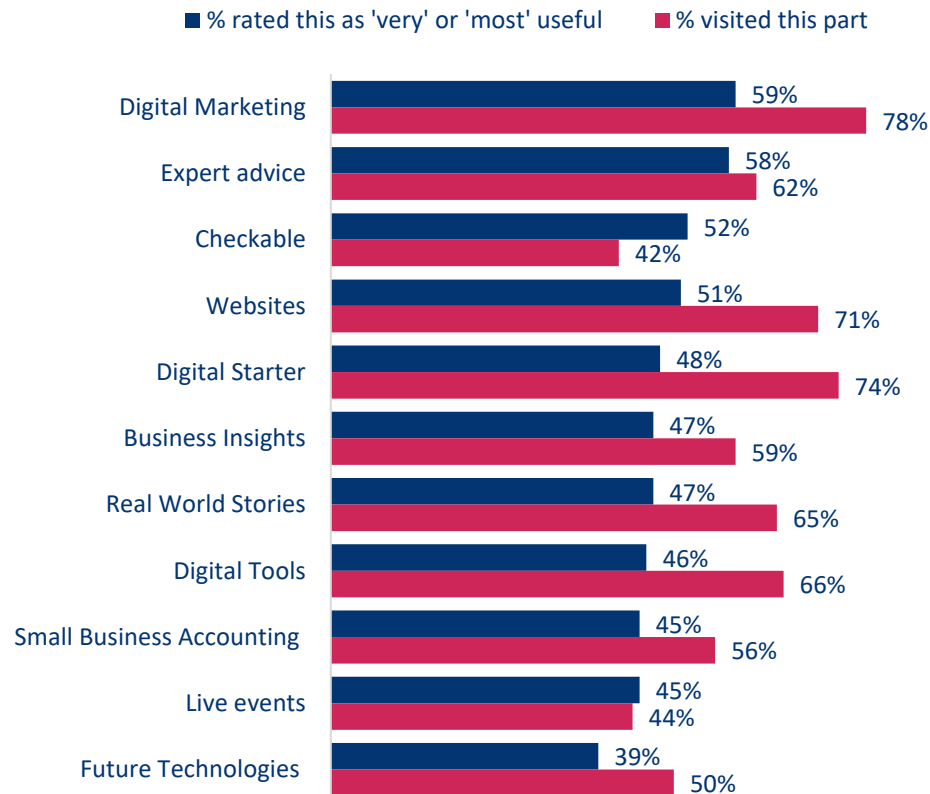
Content is generally well regarded

As we see here, Digital Marketing, Expert Advice, Checkable and Websites were most often rated the most useful sections of the platform. Ratings have not changed significantly year on year.

Important context here is that Checkable was relatively recently launched at the time of the evaluation, so fewer businesses would have had the opportunity to experience it.

When we look at Digital Boost's less frequent users, many of them simply haven't visited most of these sections. But when they have visited the platform, they are most likely to have explored the Digital Marketing, Websites and Digital Starter sections.

Digital Boost platform usage and rating



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Platform experience

Generally positive – with a twist

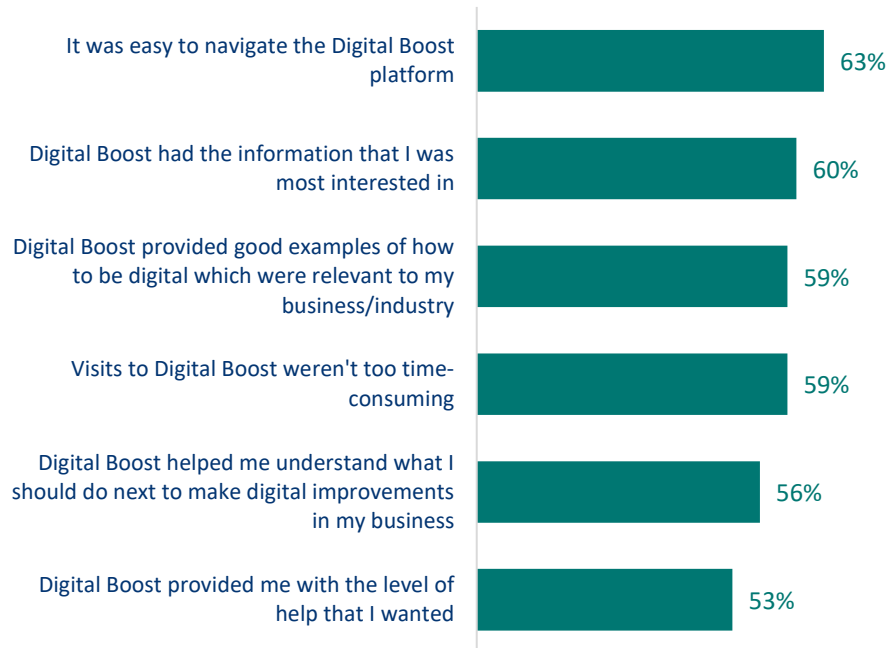
The majority of businesses report favourable ratings for Digital Boost – be it ease of use, the right information, good examples or time taken.

However, of the six ratings at right – the two lowest scoring parts of the experience bear the strongest correlation with the overall satisfaction with Digital Boost; the need to understand what I should do next to make digital improvements, and pitching the right level of help. In other words, improving these areas is more likely to support improved satisfaction levels.

Respondents who disagreed that *Digital Boost had the information I was most interested in* were asked to describe what they were looking for. Examples are provided on the following page ...

Digital Boost platform experience rating

■ % agree/strongly agree



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Information that was wanted but not found

How to enhance my online presence

Ideas for social media content creation.

More detailed information about how to expand my business online and manage my online presence.

Improving my use of 'internal', productivity-enhancing tools

How to systemise and automate many of my regular tasks.

Overview and tips for using new digital productivity and collaboration tools.

General digital set-up / improvement

Simply what I should be doing, where I should be going. How the digital world relates to my word-of-mouth, sole-trader, manual labour business. So invoicing, banking, customer database and promoting myself digitally - which includes social media and website.

Basic business set up stuff. How to synch Google sites and Outlook to customise business emails on Outlook. How to use Teams. Free Google suite resources. Someone who uses Shopify and other online resources. Freebies and affordable resources.

Ideas, innovations, keeping up to date

Innovations and how they are being used in "real life" situations to facilitate/enhance people's business to enable them to look at managing/growing your business.

Simple easy to use tools, ideas and suggestions to implement for my business.

Marketing and digital marketing

Specifics of successful online marketing.

Digital Marketing strategy framework.

I wanted more specifics, more advanced/practical guidance

Higher quality, detailed information to optimise and drive technology to positively effectively drive sales and change.

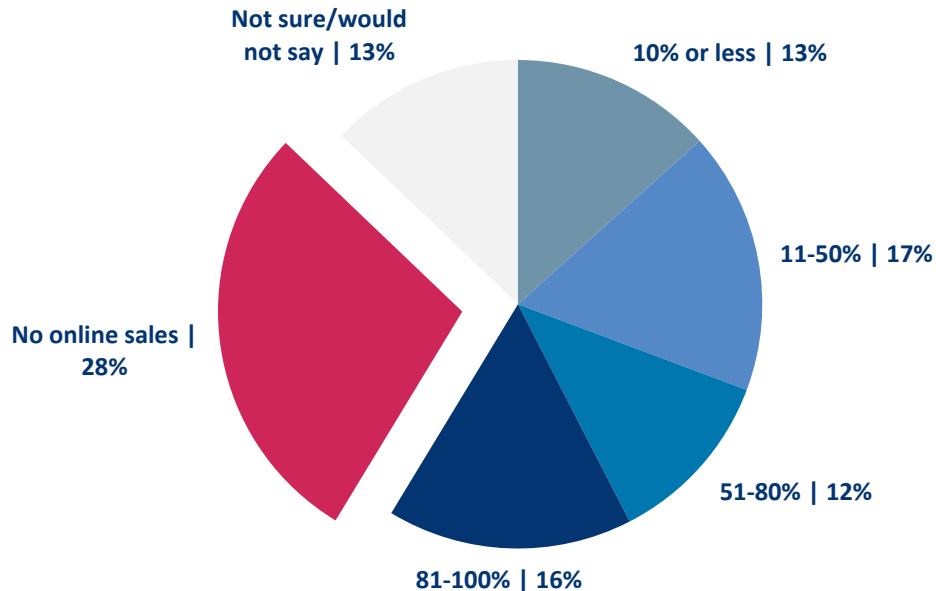
Online sales

Current state – impact survey

Asked for the first time in the 2022 impact survey, we can now see what proportion of revenues are coming from online sales for Digital Boost businesses. This shows that 28% of businesses derive 50% or more of their revenue through online sales – an equivalent number to those who have no online sales.

This will be more of interest in the 2023 impact survey – to assess whether businesses are moving more of their revenue streams via direct online sources.

Percent of all revenue generated through online sales
by % of businesses



Digital capabilities & drivers

Confidence and understanding

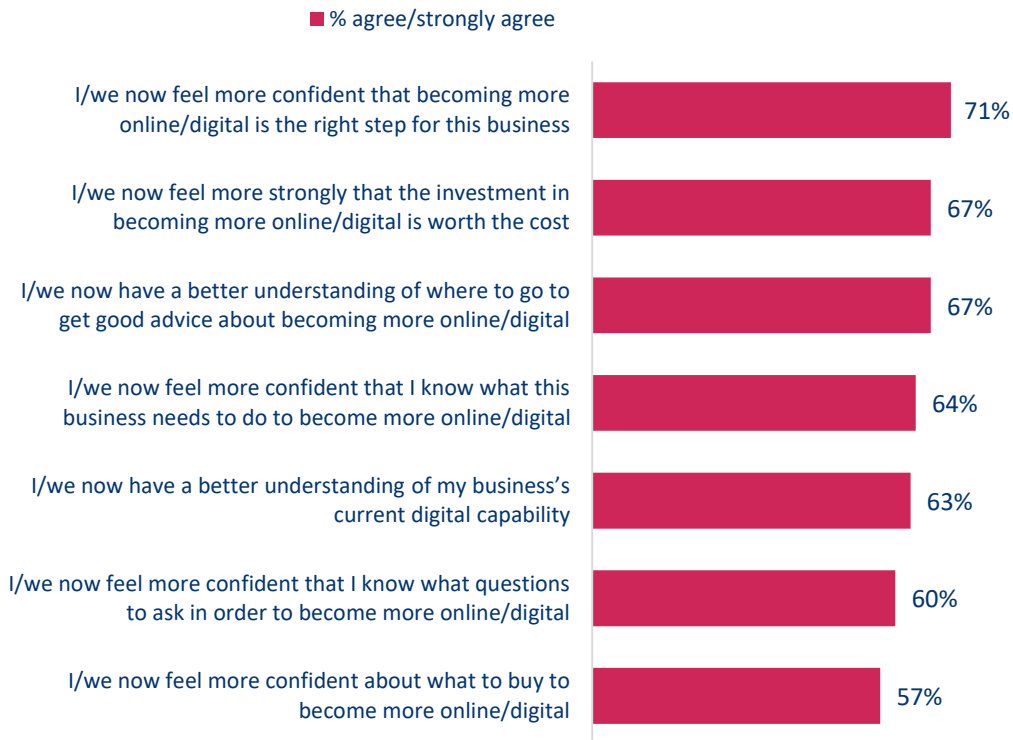
Effects on digital aptitude

As a general rule, the majority of Digital Boost businesses agree – across a range of potential considerations and decisions – that Digital Boost has increased their confidence and/or understanding about what it takes to be more digital, and how to go about it.

Demonstrably, as we see later in this report, this bears out in other changes and impacts reported by businesses.

The most obvious area for further support is in helping businesses understand which tools they should buy. This was identified as the second largest barrier to digitalisation in B4B's [2021 digital capability research](#).

Digital confidence and understanding as a result of Digital Boost



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Internal tool usage

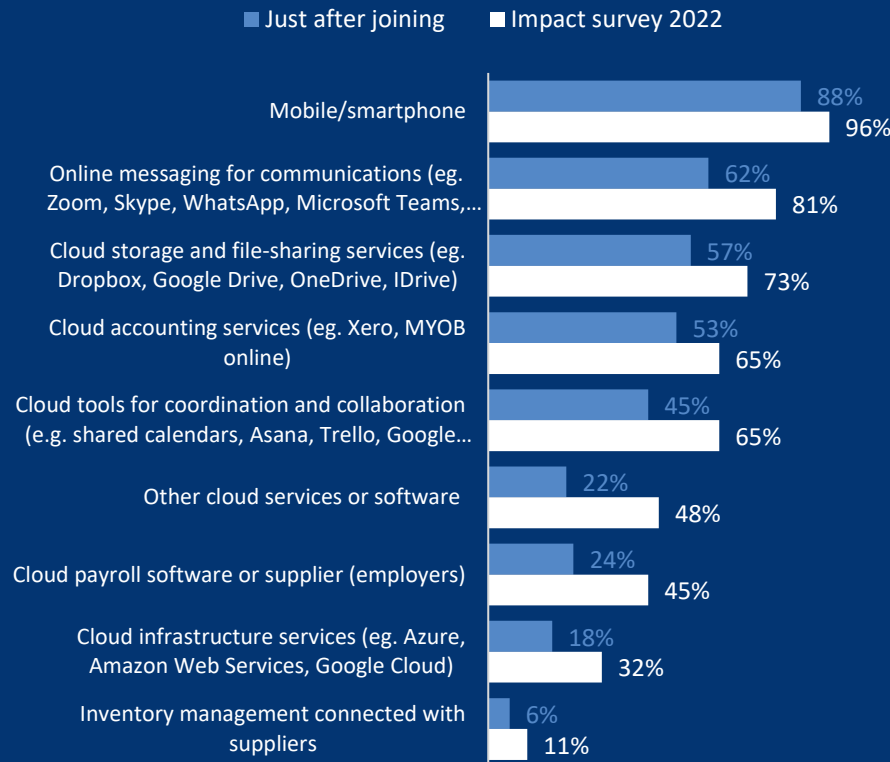
Has continued to grow *

The use of all internal tools has continued to grow for Digital Boost businesses – with notable increases in online messaging for communications, various cloud-based tools (storage, accounting, payroll, and others).

These increases are measured for any business who has completed a baseline expectations survey and the most recent impact survey in 2022.

* In the impact survey, businesses are asked whether they have started using tools which they were not using at the time of the previous survey. The 'impacts survey 2022' results assume that businesses that were already using particular digital tools at the time of their previous survey are still using those tools

Change in internal tool usage: 2021 - 2022



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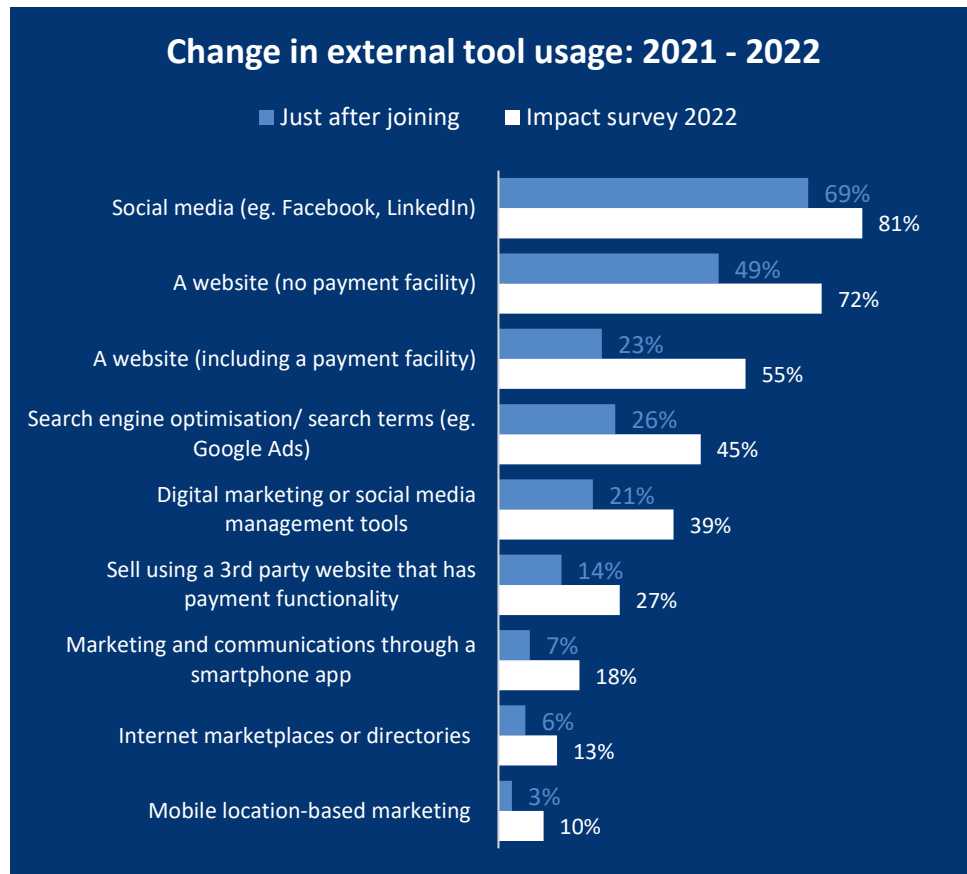
External tool usage

Has seen a significant lift

While internal tools increased notably – the increases in a range of externally-facing digital capabilities is relatively dramatic by comparison.

The largest shifts are found in those now with websites – with an increase of 23% to having a non-payment website, and a whopping 32% increase in having an eCommerce site (payment enabled website) – from 23% to 55%.

Combining the data behind those statistics, a full **80% of Digital Boost businesses now have some kind of website.**



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Digital barriers

Before and after

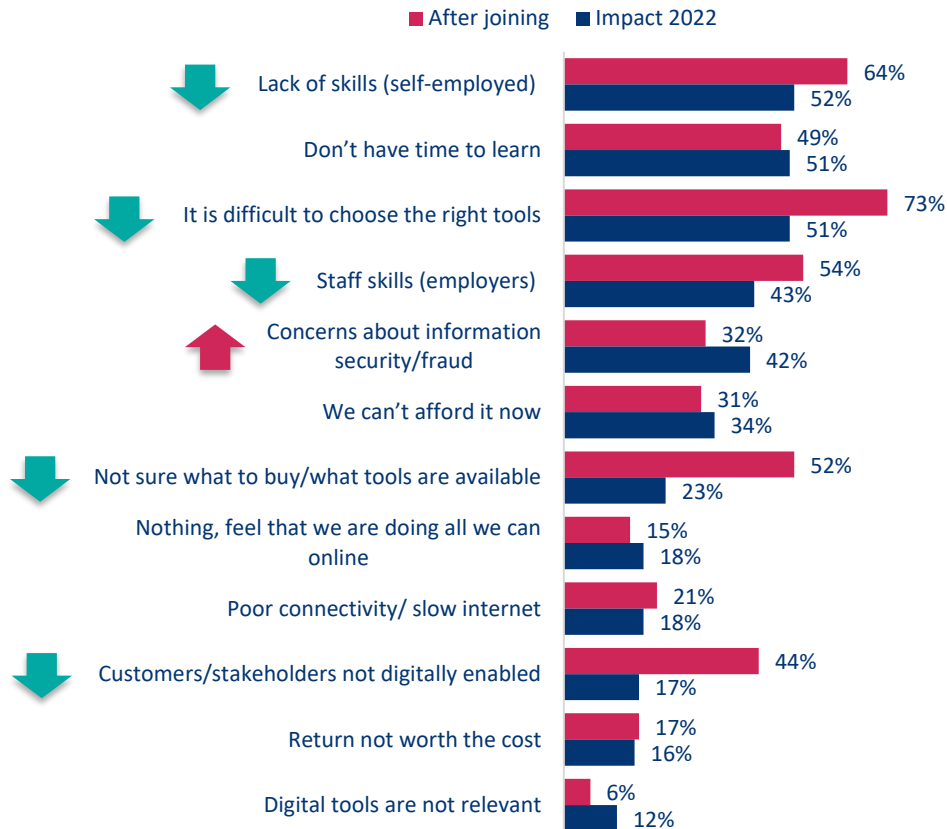
Similar to the 2021 impacts research, one barrier increased after using Digital Boost – “concerns about information security and fraud.”

However, in 2022, some feedback themes from 2021 appear to have gained traction – with the difficulty to choose the right tools and “not sure what to buy/what tools are available” dropping substantially. This likely reflects the continued behaviour of tool adoption.

Lack of skills (self-employed or employers) are also reducing as a barrier, suggesting increased digital aptitude from those involved with Digital Boost.

One other notable drop is the thought that customers/stakeholders are not digitally enabled. This suggests quite a shift in digital expectations/awareness and – potentially – signals a broader improvement in digital capabilities.

Barriers - before and after



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The Digital Index

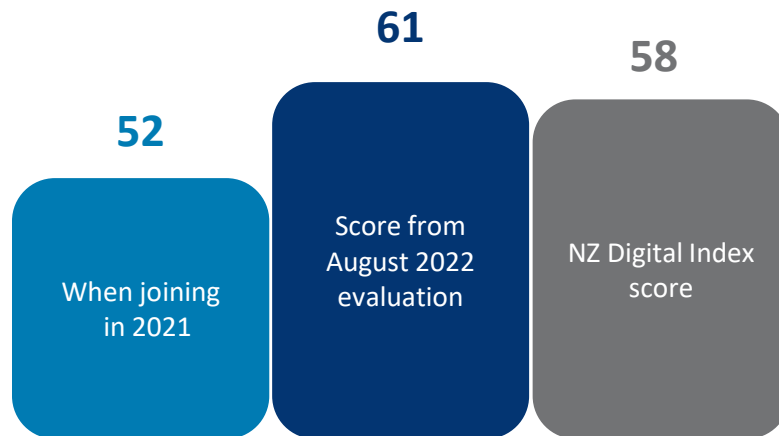
Digital Boost businesses are getting ahead of the curve

The Digital Index is a measure of both the digital aptitude and capability (ie. tool usage) for New Zealand businesses.

This nationally representative research in late 2021 revealed that the overall average score was now 58.

By applying the same methodology to Digital Boost businesses as they joined the platform in early 2021 and then again later in the impact research – we can see that generally they were less digitally capable than the average as they joined, but are now more digital than average.

Digital Boost businesses who joined in early 2021 are now more digital than the average New Zealand business



For more on the New Zealand Digital Index for businesses please click [here](#)

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Business impacts

Business impacts

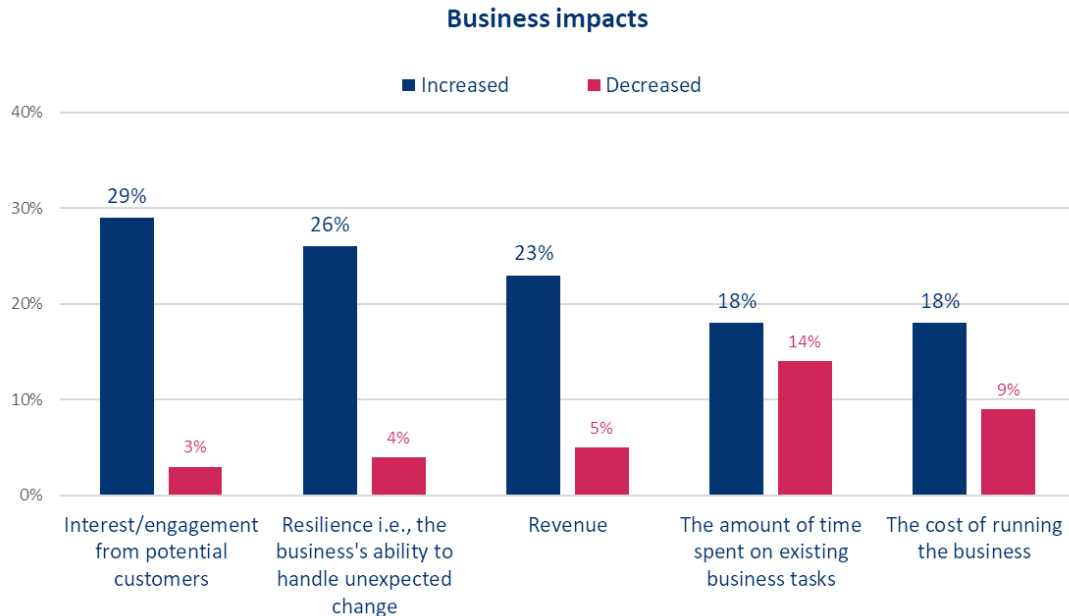
Have largely all been positive

Of all impacts businesses report as being attributed to Digital Boost, we see that the largest positive increases are customer interest, business resilience and revenue increases.

Time was mixed – though this was the highest reported decrease of any impact, indicating a reasonable of businesses saved time as a result of their Digital Boost journey. 54% of businesses reported no changes in the time taken to run their business from using Digital Boost.

In response to the question:

“As a result of taking part in Digital Boost, has your business experienced any changes in the following?”



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Revenue impacts

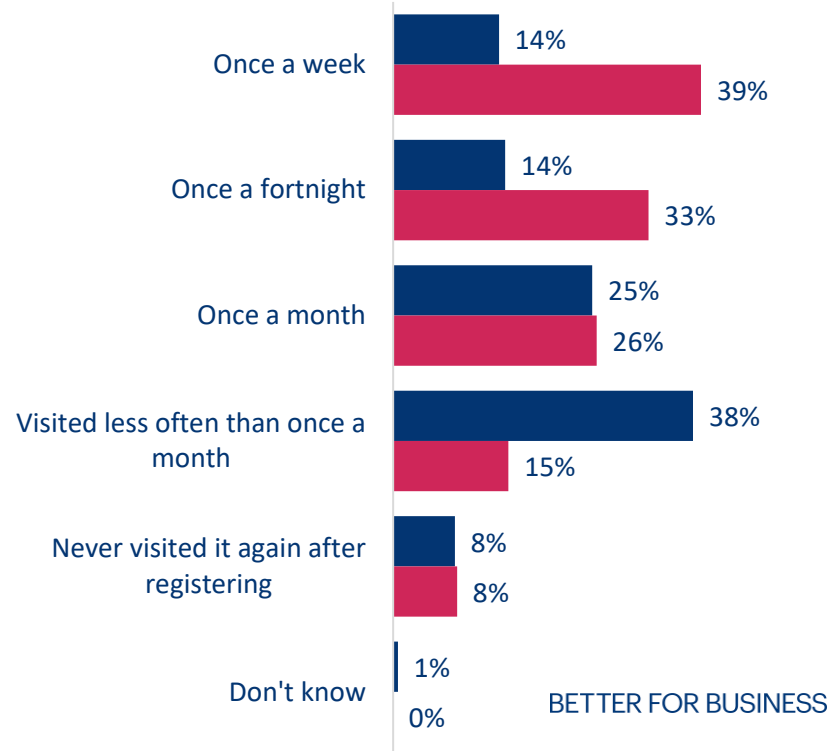
Generally increased – more so with stronger engagement

Noting that the question here directly referred to ‘as a result of Digital Boost’, the correlation between the frequency of engagement with the platform and the likelihood of increased revenue points strongly to Digital Boost being at least a catalyst to positive revenue changes.

Notably, those who visited at least once a month were much more likely to experience revenue increases than those visiting less frequently or not at all. 53% of all businesses visited at least once a month. This highlights a potential opportunity to re-engage those who have visited less frequently and not demonstrated the same benefits.

Revenue increases by frequency of Digital Boost platform usage

■ Usage frequency ■ Proportion with increased revenue



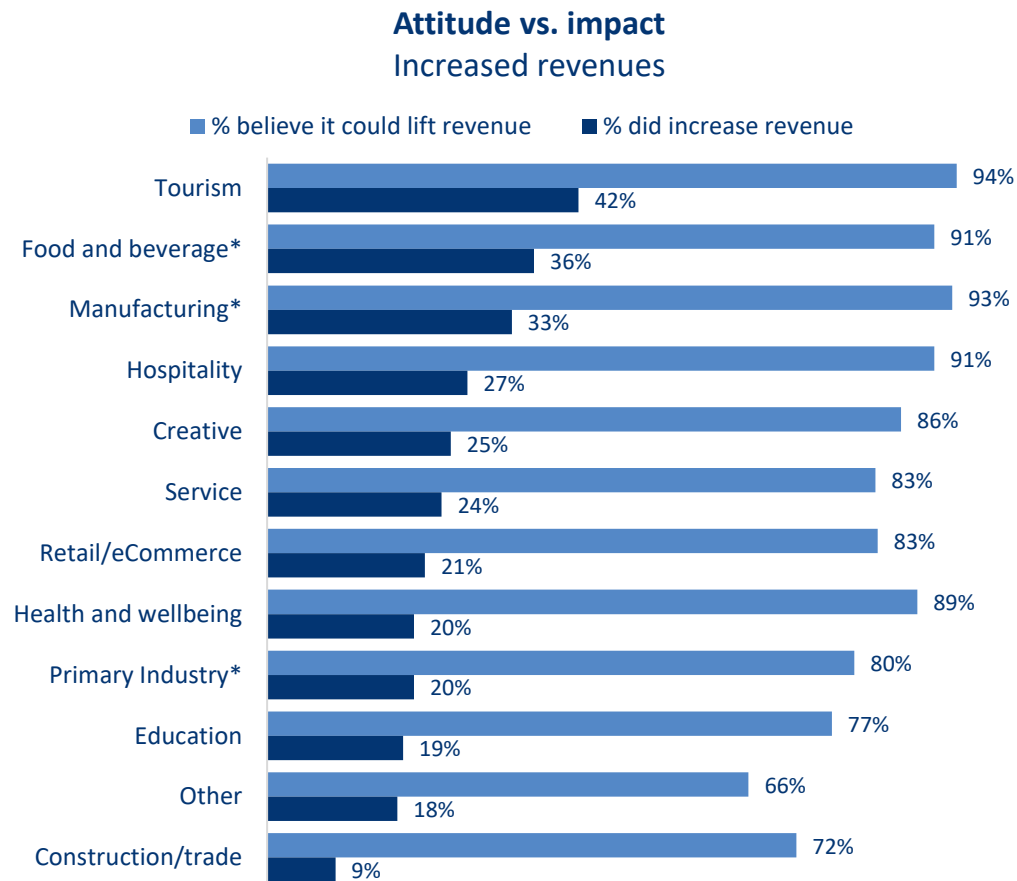
Revenue and attitude

The two are related

Using the attitude ratings recorded soon after joining Digital Boost, we can now compare the actual proportion of businesses with increased revenues compared to those who believed it could help.

There are certainly mixed results – with higher expectations in Tourism associated with a higher proportion of increases, contrasted with lower expectations in Construction/ Trade with relatively few reaping the rewards.

* Small sample size – results should be interpreted with caution



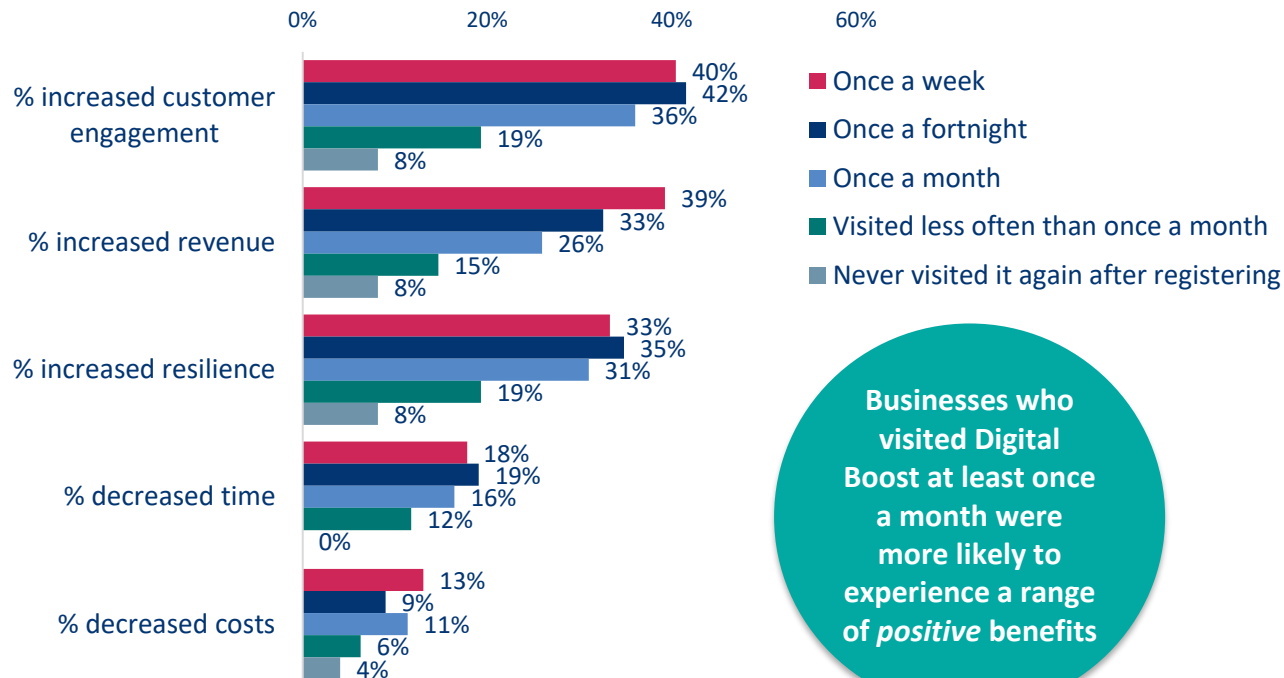
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All impacts

Frequency of use relates positively to a variety of business impacts

As the chart at right shows, increased customer engagement, revenue and a sense of increased resilience were the largest positive business impacts – and this was augmented for all impacts, the more often businesses engaged with the Digital Boost platform.

Positive business impacts by frequency of Digital Boost usage



Businesses who visited Digital Boost at least once a month were more likely to experience a range of *positive* benefits

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Wellbeing

Also appears related to engagement

Similar, and perhaps relatedly, to increased revenues – the frequency of engaging with Digital Boost mostly correlates with stronger feelings of optimism and hope.

There is a slight anomaly for the most frequent visitors who, though reporting the highest likelihood of increased revenues, appear to have lower frustration **and** lower optimism levels – though the latter is still higher than the national average.

This anomaly will be the subject of further analysis and profiling. However, for others it seems relatively clear that the elasticity of optimism coincides with the likelihood of increased revenues and the frequency of engagement with Digital Boost.

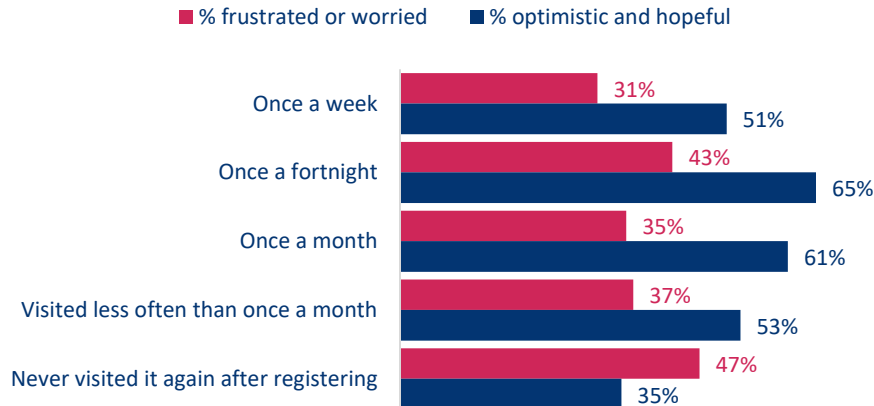
55%

of Digital Boost businesses felt a sense of optimism and hope many times or all the times in the past two weeks. This is 17% higher than the national average in June 2022 of just 38% of all businesses.

37%

of Digital Boost businesses felt a sense of frustration or worry many times or all the times in the past two weeks. This is comparable to the national average in June 2022 of 35% of all businesses.

Wellbeing by usage frequency



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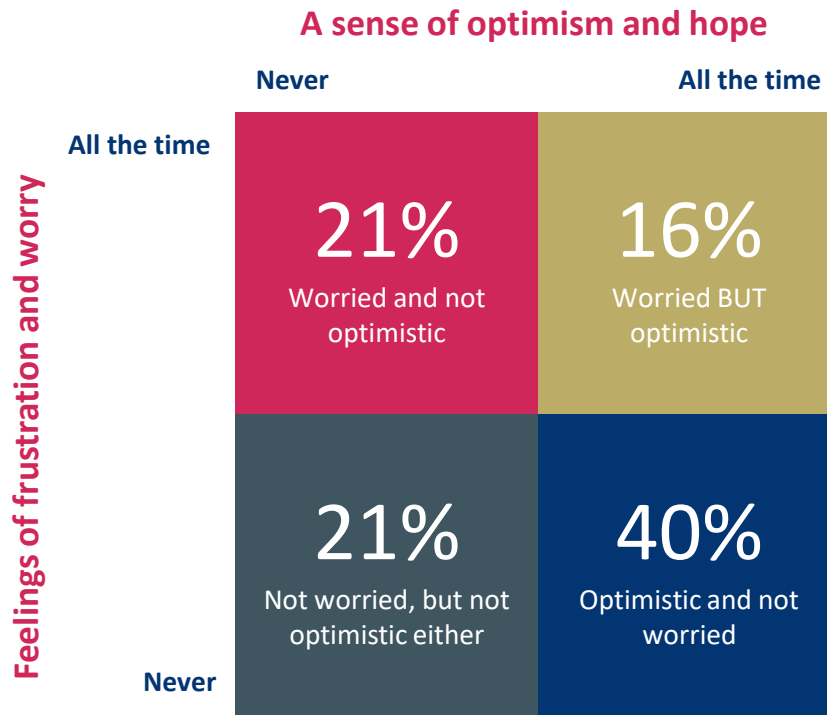
Wellbeing

Largest group is optimistic and not worried

By combining both wellbeing metrics we get a sense of what proportion are more completely in a 'good space'.

40% of Digital Boost businesses are both optimistic and hopeful without a sense of frustration or worry. The national average for this same group in June was 30%.

When comparing the results for the wellbeing metrics between the expectations and impact surveys we see that the starting point was typically higher than the national average, but only explains about half the difference – suggesting Digital Boost participants begin more optimistic, then this continued to rise as they experienced the programme.



Note some numbers differ slightly to the individual metrics due to additive rounding

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Longitudinal learnings

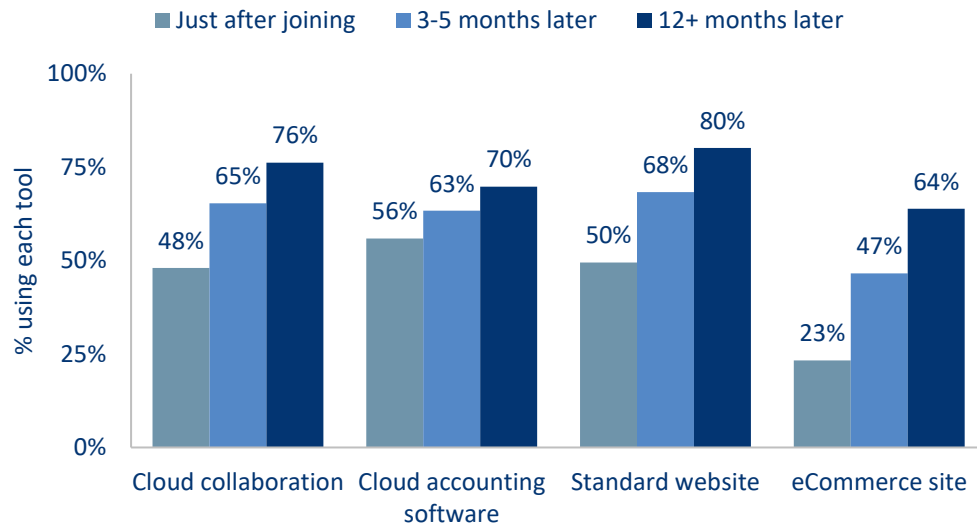
The stayers

Early digital growth has continued

Those registering in early 2021 and having now completed two impact surveys exhibit the greatest digital tool growth and other associated impacts such as revenue.

This clearly illustrates that a longer commitment towards being more digital does pay dividends for more businesses. It also suggests, based on tool uptake rates, that there may be a two-three year timeframe for any given cohort of businesses joining Digital Boost to more fully realise their digital potential and adopt the appropriate tools and practices in their business. This should be the focus of future impact analysis in 2023 and beyond.

Digital Boost tool adoption: 2021 registrants only



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Longer tenure = more impact

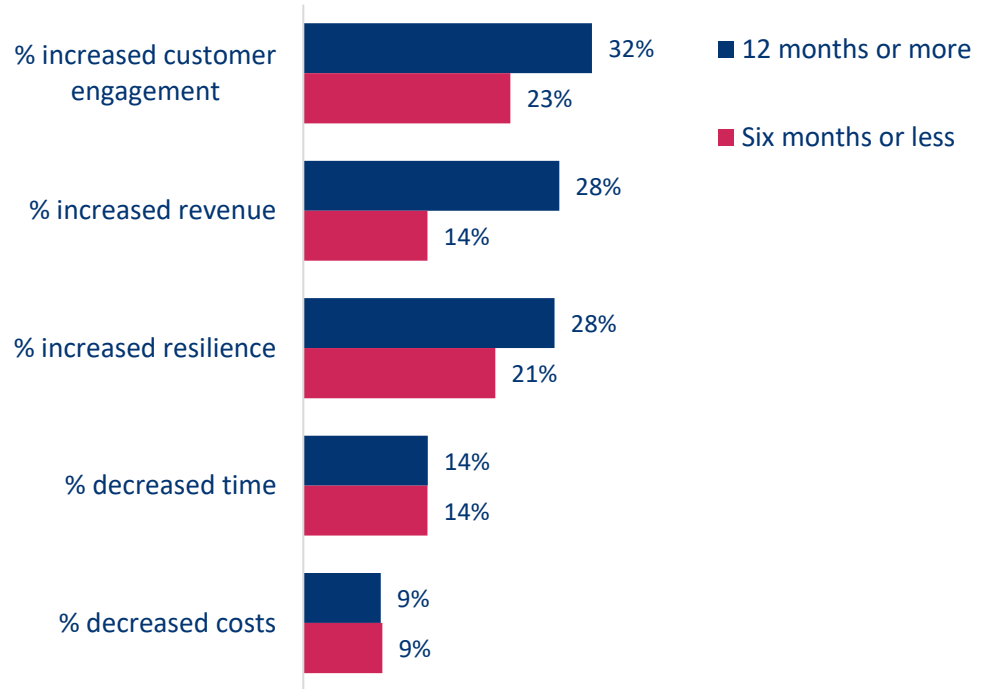
Resilience and engagement improvements may be lead indicators of revenue growth

As we see here, a larger proportion of Digital Boost businesses with a tenure of 12 months or more have seen revenue increases.

However, even those with a tenure of under six months have seen strong results for increased customer engagement and resilience – which appear to correlate with revenue outcomes for their longer-standing counterparts.

This still requires further proof, but it may be that businesses reporting increased customer engagement and/or resilience are likely to experience revenue gains in the following six to twelve months.

Positive business impacts by Digital Boost tenure



Looking forward

Feedback themes – where should Digital Boost go next?

*“If you had the opportunity to talk to the people behind Digital Boost, what one thing would you say to them **about what your business needs next to become more digital**? That is, does Digital Boost need to do anything differently to meet your needs?”*

For many users, Digital Boost is already doing a good job of meeting their needs. When asked, almost half of respondents had no suggestions for improvement; and among those who did have something to say, a common response was to offer praise.

Among those who did offer constructive feedback, we see a range of different themes – reflecting the diversity of NZ businesses and their needs.

The desire for a more tailored experience is most often expressed in terms of relevance to industry sector and level of digital proficiency/maturity, rather than the format of delivery (although there is some feedback on this too).

Suggestions reveal a need to continue expanding what is offered by the programme, while maintaining its ease of use – which may represent a challenge.

Note that most of these suggestions were received **before** Checkable started to be adopted by users.



Individual suggestions can touch on multiple themes
(therefore the sum of theme mentions exceeds 100%)

% of respondents who provided a suggestion

Example comments – the good

I have had a steep learning curve thanks to Digital Boost and found it invaluable. We now have a new website, are on more social media with increased posts and have changed internet providers to obtain good connectivity.

I think it's a great help to SME owners who are really time pressed.

The case studies and Q&A with businesses showed me how digital tools were being used. It was so hard before Digital Boost was available to know what all these digital tools did. That's what's been so useful.

As a result of the pandemic Digital Boost came to play an important part in the digitalisation of my/many businesses, if there are any changes it should be to take to the next level the people that have enjoyed and grew as a consequence of it. I would only say, thank you so much Digital Boost for all your help, keep going strong!!!

I think most, if not all the help I need is already there. Each time I get a little further in my journey to start an online business, I can return to Digital Boost for advice and resources on "the next step".

I love the information and how it is presented and easy to use.

I'm happy with Digital Boost as it is. I feel that it has grown my confidence in using social media and my computer skills are way up on where they were this time last year. I save the emails from Digital Boost and refer back to them often. I would like to have more business stories produced as I find that they help me to be more confident that I am on the right track.

Digital Boost was just what I need to start off. Got some really good tips. I have nearly completed the business development phase and going to market in the next week or two. Once I have I want to return to Digital Boost to pick up more tips. I think Digital Boost should be permanently established.

Example comments – how to improve

Make it more advanced, in-depth

I felt some of the videos and information was very basic. It's a great initiative for those that have little knowledge of digital capabilities. Perhaps have beginner, intermediate and advanced sections.

Make it more relevant to my situation

Talk to me! I'm not a dressmaker, shopkeeper, I do design work for the chemical industry.

I am looking for sole trader advice. I provide engagement advice and I am the business. I do not wish to employ staff. I do not significantly wish to increase my income. I do want to show a more professional digital footprint.

Make it more practical

The videos I watched were short and not actually telling me how to do things, or were selling a service which I'm not interested in.

New topics and different tools

How to/where to find solutions to automate certain tasks. Not interested in opening an eShop.

Consider my cost pressures/ don't sell to me

Promoting accounting software and some services ... needs to be done with care. The ongoing costs of adding services really adds up. A LOT of small businesses are really small, so I think it's good advice to seek to only add in some ongoing service charges.

Format/accessibility

I like short, targeted resources that I can dip in and out of when I have small amounts of time available. I rarely have one hour free to attend synchronous Q&A sessions, even though these look interesting.

The need for sales/marketing expertise

With everything going digital, I think more marketing how to's as when you go online people will not always find you. Great content, but more is always better. Things like how to write content that is relevant and ways to link that content to get exposure.

Help me stay motivated

Time. It is hard to prioritize business change and training as a business owner. Perhaps adding an incentive to complete parts of the program. Or trying to engage with a business that isn't just an email going to spam. Also it is common to undervalue a free product or service.

Implementation support

I would like an intern supported by Digital Boost to assist with the introduction, trial and implementation of digital products and systems.

Navigation and personalisation

As the volume and range of content grows, the need for personalisation and easy navigation grows with it. Customers are asking us to **use the information we hold** (or should ask) about them. To **personalise** their experience by:

- **Taking away** the content that's not relevant to them.
- **Directing** novices to a more basic, customised introduction journey, and advanced users to more sophisticated content.
- **Grading** each piece of content so users know which level it's pitched at.
- **Expanding** into new industry sectors (and perhaps organising content/navigating by sector). Supporting **new businesses**.
- **Communicating** tailored information.
- **Predicting** what a business needs next, based on all of the above.

Initially it was useful... Now there is so much on there and I'm not inclined to try and navigate it. It has become 'confused' and often feels like I'm being sold to. It doesn't feel like 'it's for me' anymore.

Not all business need online sales and marketing - as a construction/engineering company we have major companies we contract to do, don't need this.

More tailored help rather than general help.

Because businesses are time-poor, it is critical that the user experience hits the mark quickly

A clearer understanding of where to start and next steps. I've often felt so overwhelmed that I simply exit the site before I find what I'm looking for.

It's very broad but probably needs to be. I only find about 10% of content relevant to me.

I didn't realise how much was actually available until doing this survey. I was just looking at the events.

The site needs to be easier to navigate. I couldn't figure it out and felt I was going around in circles or being given material I didn't want to spend time on.

I am in a state that I don't know what I don't know - and that is simply because I haven't had the time to be able to really research and make full use of Digital Boost. I suppose it would be good to have a 1:1 talk with someone to discuss a tailored plan for me, so I can go directly to what I need to look at on Digital Boost.

Maybe a more tailored plan for the business. Have a detailed survey and the results of that will show the most beneficial and relevant resources to help the business.

Mentoring, coaching, 1:1 time

We don't yet know all of the underlying needs and reasons why users ask for 1:1 support – although some respondents do make it relatively clear in their comments.

The headings shown here provide a hint of why businesses might want a “digital business advisor”.

Further research may be useful to help us understand:

- Which needs can be addressed by enhancing the existing platform (without necessarily implementing 1:1 support).
- If and how the Digital Facilitation Scheme might help meet these needs?
- The extent to which additional 1:1 support is needed and what that might look like.

Because I need to know what would benefit MY business

It's a very good platform. I would like to see perhaps opportunities for one-on-one coaching and support from a mentor who has knowledge in my area of business. I feel the content, while very informative, is perhaps too broad and generic and doesn't drill down to my area.

Personalised digital consultant to analyse and recommend improvements to my business.

The Digital Boost website provides useful information, but I still need someone to analyse my unique business and suggest what can be made digital.

Someone to check that I'm on track, that I'm maximising my online opportunities and any advice about how I can work smarter.

One on one training or review of my business and how it could improve... make it more concrete, more useful. Simple steps that I can take right now.

Help my business go beyond what Digital Boost currently offers

I would expect personalised help or mentoring. We were already doing digital but could have done with help to upgrade and improve.

I need additional learning support

There was so much offered that was good, I just was going through so much change and stress etc., it was difficult to decide on a path at times. Some personal support was missing I believe.

Allow for some one on one interaction. Watching a video or reading an article didn't help me at all.

I'm short on time – I need to be shown/told exactly what to do

As a charitable trust and small business the main resource we lack is paid time to work on operational infrastructure like digital skills/ tools. If it was possible to access funding specifically to pay for time for our team to focus on digital upskilling with a mentor alongside that would be amazing and very impactful.

What next for Digital Boost: **Communications and brand**

*Focus on motivation
and progress*

This includes targeted and tailored re-engagement activity (especially when we have new content/features that would benefit lapsed users).

The email inbox is a noisy place. Tailored and timely 'hooks' should be considered.

*When communicating with
existing users, less is often more*

Manage expectations

What is Digital Boost and what is it not?

What will it be in future?

Recommendations: The user experience

It's working for most – but as content expands, navigation or perceived relevance issues may become more acute

Invite users to tell us more about themselves in return for a personalised experience.

Use past behaviour to predict future needs/ offer recommendations.

Online security concerns are growing. Is there enough content aimed at helping businesses lift their cyber-security skills?

Tackle the most significant barriers to digitalisation

Reduce access barriers – we don't want it to be a daunting experience to go onto the platform.

Easy log-ins and navigation are important. Are there options for even shorter videos?

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Recommendations: **Beyond the Digital Boost platform**

Consider conducting qualitative research with different types of businesses to help us understand ...

How much
can we feasibly
offer our target audience
within the bounds of this
platform? How much
further expansion is
needed/possible?

What does
implementation
support look like?
Where are the lines
drawn between
1. basic advice, 2. practical
guidance + 3. implementation
+ who/what that
should deliver each?

Does the
platform resonate
with and/or meet the
needs of Māori and
Pasifika businesses
– why or why not?



“We were a business with no social media interaction and no website. Having to adapt and quickly to a domestic [tourism] market meant moving forward digitally to put the business out there in the world. Digital Boost put us out there. The benefits have been enormous, and we have kept on trucking - as they say. Best strategy we have ever done for our small family run business was using Digital Boost to learn and navigate the digital world.”

– a Tourism business

Want to know more?

For more information or unique insights related to those included in this report, please email enquiries to betterforbusiness@mbie.govt.nz

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