

GenAI Survey of Social Service Providers: Summary

August 2026

Social
Service
Providers

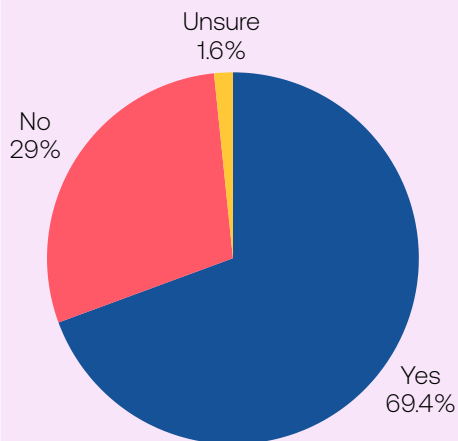
Te Pai
Ora o
Aotearoa



307
respondents

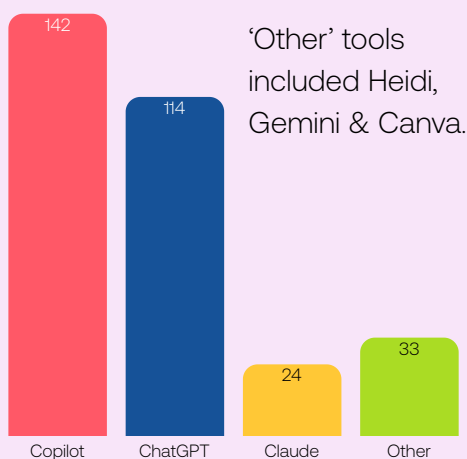
69% of respondents use genAI in their mahi.

Do you use genAI in your mahi?

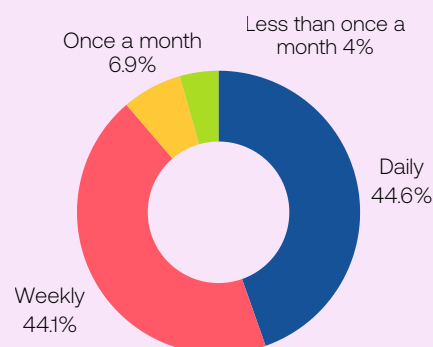


Of respondents not using genAI tools, ethical concerns were cited as the most common reason (77%), followed by lack of training (56%).

What genAI tools do you use?

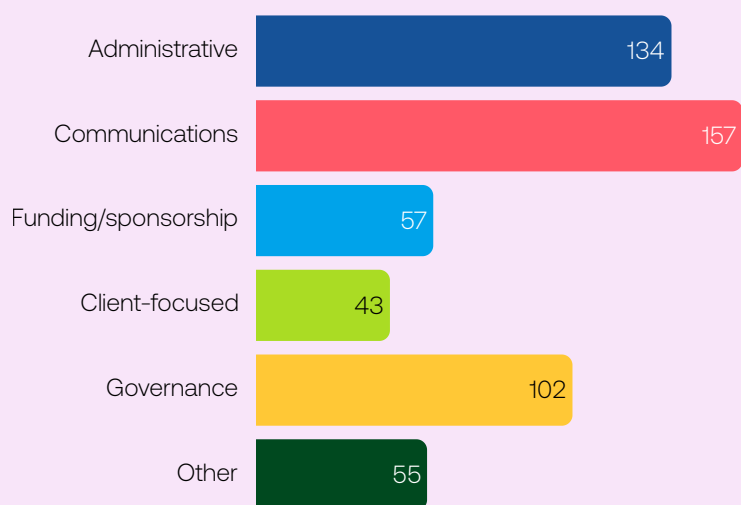


How often do you use genAI in your mahi?



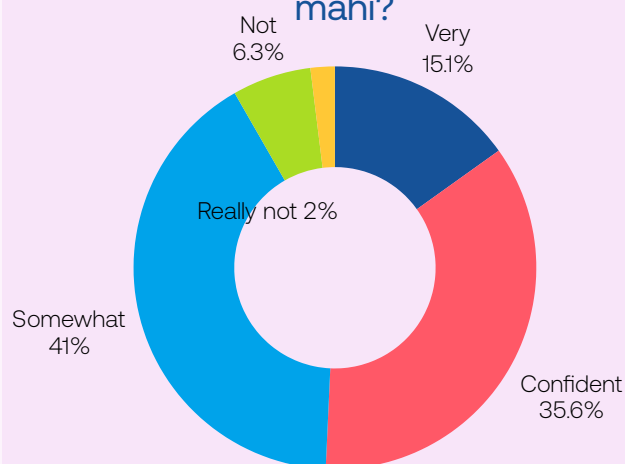
In our survey, we defined Generative AI (genAI) as a type of AI that can create new content (text, images, video, audio, code) in response to human prompts. It is trained on very large collections of existing content which has been taken from the internet and other sources.

What type of tasks do you use genAI for?



Senior leaders and those in governance roles report using genAI tools more: 83.9% compared to people managers (78.2%), back office kaimahi (74.0%) and frontline kaimahi. (49.5%).

How confident are you in using genAI tools safely and appropriately in your mahi?



58% of those using genAI reported having an organisational AI policy.

Key themes

Some are enthusiastic adopters...

Free-text responses indicate a number of people who use genAI are 'enthusiastic adopters' of these tools in the workplace, especially amongst those in leadership roles in the sector. This came through clearest in responses to the question "What do you see as the benefits or opportunities, if any, of using Generative AI in your mahi?" Most responses to this question included some mention of efficiency or productivity gains with other themes including using AI to write, think or compile resources on behalf of kaimahi.

... but privacy and security was a key concern for many.

Despite the enthusiasm of some respondents, others using genAI had concerns. By far, the most common was the idea that genAI may compromise privacy or security. Of those not using genAI, many cited privacy as a reason. Of those using genAI, more than half mentioned privacy or security, or some variation of this, in response to the question "What are your concerns, if any, about using Generative AI in your mahi?"

Interestingly, responses showed a wide range of approaches and levels of understanding to privacy and security risks, especially around sharing client information. At the more risk-averse end were respondents who said they would never use AI for client-facing work. Others argued that any privacy risk was over-stated. Responses included a range of views on what kinds of identifying details (e.g. client names) are appropriate to input into large language models.

Other recurring concerns included incorrect information, cognitive offloading, lack of understanding, depersonalisation, undermining of Māori data sovereignty and 'macro' concerns like the environmental impact of data centres. A number of respondents were opposed to genAI on a fundamental level.

There is a strong desire for more guidance from leaders and government.

While AI Policies and training are becoming more common, one of the clearest themes that came throughout the written responses to the survey was that providers want clearer guidance on their use of genAI.

This desire for leadership came through strongly in the responses to the last question: "Do you have any other thoughts to share about the use of Generative AI in the social sector?" Over one-in-five responses referred in some way to the need for more training, internal policies or leadership from government. Te Pai Ora SSPA supports this call for leadership.

Next steps

We are calling on government to regulate genAI across all sectors in a way that prioritises the wellbeing of mokopuna and whānau and honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We have identified several social service providers, peak bodies and organisations across other sectors who are taking a principled, informed approach to how they approach genAI. We will continue to collaborate with and amplify these voices.

For leaders in any organisations developing their own policies, guidance and training, we would encourage you to engage with any concerns and risks raised by your kaimahi and subject matter experts. Are these risks relevant to your own organisation? Have you considered ways they could be mitigated? Are you supporting kaimahi who have personal ethical objections to or reservations about using genAI?

"May prevent experiential skill building, especially in assessment, if social workers use AI to generate their assessments - could lead to lazy practices (in newer social workers) and misunderstanding of how risks and safety conclusions are drawn."
-Frontline Kaimahi

"We are constantly fighting to control a technology that is scaling faster than we can handle. With limited advice coming from the governing bodies above our organisation, it's being left to us ... to independently develop guidance and policy. We're all doing this in isolation."
-People Manager

"The use of Generative AI in the social sector should be guided by clear ethical frameworks, including Te Tiriti-informed practice, equity considerations, and cultural responsiveness."
-Chief Executive