

# PULSE REPORT

FEB  
2021



## TRADIFY



[tradifyhq.com](https://tradifyhq.com)



## Goal for 2021?

**"To keep our current staff members and clients happy and continue to grow our business."**

**ELECTRICIAN, QLD**



## A quick recap

The Pulse Report from September 2020 asked hundreds of tradies across Australia, New Zealand and the UK how COVID-19 had affected their trade business.

We found that despite the havoc of a global pandemic, nearly two-thirds of Australian tradies surveyed felt that COVID-19 had little to no impact on their business. Our own user data supports this sentiment, showing little to no change in quotes, jobs, and invoices since our last report.

We also found that most trade business owners were spending too much time on admin – a massive 40% were spending over 12 hours a week on paperwork, the equivalent of more than a week each month!

### Moving forward into 2021

The Pulse Report for February 2021 contains a lot more data and this time we've focused on how tradies are feeling moving into the new year.

We heard from more than 460 tradies in Australia, New Zealand and the UK, on whether they believe business conditions will improve in 2021. We also asked questions about what their top priorities are for the next 12 months, how often they feel in control of their business, and how much time they spend on different admin tasks.

On average, Aussie tradies were a lot more positive about the future of their trade businesses compared to tradies in New Zealand and the UK.

**66% of Australian trade business owners have a positive outlook for 2021.**





## Generally, tradies feel positive

Good news! 66% of Australian trade business owners have a positive outlook for their business in 2021 and believe business conditions will improve during the year. The Australian Federal Government has also announced additional financial support to subsidise the jobs of an extra 100,000 apprentices in a bid to kickstart the economy again.

Tradies are just as busy as they were the last time they were surveyed and don't see any signs of slowing down despite the ongoing effects of COVID-19.

However, although 70% of tradies almost always or often feel in control of their business, this statistic has barely moved in the last six months. Those who never feel in control of their business are spending up to 18 hours on their admin each week – only to feel like they're still not getting anywhere.

With states likely to swing in and out of COVID-19 restrictions this year, and tradies focused on growing their business, it's more important than ever to get on top of your admin.

**70% of tradies almost always, or often feel in control of their business.**

# Australian tradies – how are you feeling?

Most Australian tradies believe that general business conditions will improve over the course of the year. Only 4% believe things will get worse.

When asked about their priorities for the year, many Australian business owners are focussed on growth.



## Goal for 2021?

**"Consolidate with existing customer base.  
Remain profitable. Expand another 25%."**

**ELECTRICIAN, NSW**

While it's good to see Aussie tradies feeling positive about the year ahead, let's not sugar-coat the future: the long-term effects of COVID-19 are still unknown. Some trade businesses are struggling and will continue to feel the pinch. It's also likely that, with another year of uncertainty, there will come a point where you need to adapt your business quickly.




## Preparation is key

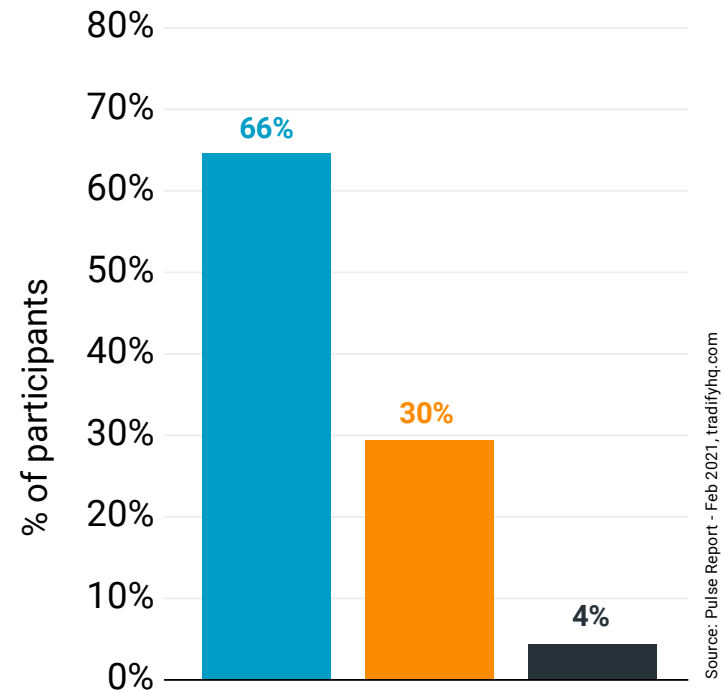
You wouldn't start work on a new job without preparing first. You need to work out what the customer wants, what materials you'll need, how long it'll take, and who you'll need to help out. You'll probably also think about what you'll do if things go wrong, and put a plan in place to deal with certain things if they happen.

The same goes for running a business. Being prepared for the worst is how companies survive tough times. Note down your plan for if things get worse this year, the same as you would when planning a job.

Win as much work as you can, when you can, but be ready to weather the storm if things get tough. Being prepared will help your business thrive – rain, hail or shine.

## In 12 months time, do you think that business conditions will:

 Improve  Stay the same  Get worse



# Industry outlook for 2021

Most trade industries have a positive outlook for 2021. Builders, electricians, and plumbers especially seem to be overwhelmingly positive. Most HVAC technicians, however, believe things will stay the same. While most tradies feel optimistic, there are others that aren't as sure.

## Landscapers not as convinced things will improve

Landscapers have the most negative outlook for the year and also the lowest percentage of participants who think things will stay the same. That being said, there are still 70% who think things are going to improve. Perhaps for landscapers, work is more seasonal – drying up for periods before flooding in.

## Victoria still experiencing the greatest impact

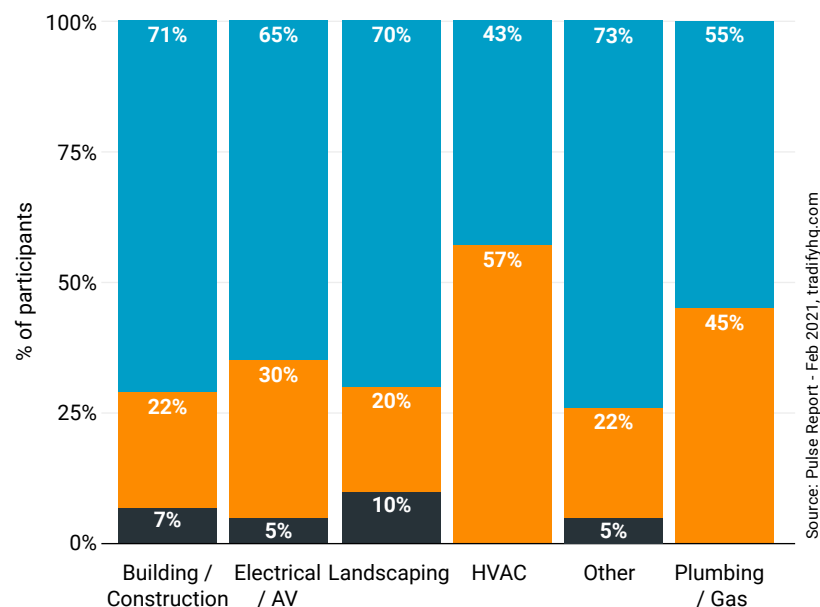
9% of tradespeople in Victoria think business conditions will get worse this year – the highest percentage of all states. This may be a result of stricter state-level restrictions.

Interestingly, not one participant from the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) thinks business conditions will get worse and ACT also has the highest percentage of people who think things will improve. This overwhelmingly positive outlook in 2021 could be a result of the state's comprehensive recovery plan, where they've eased out of restrictions towards a new COVID normal.

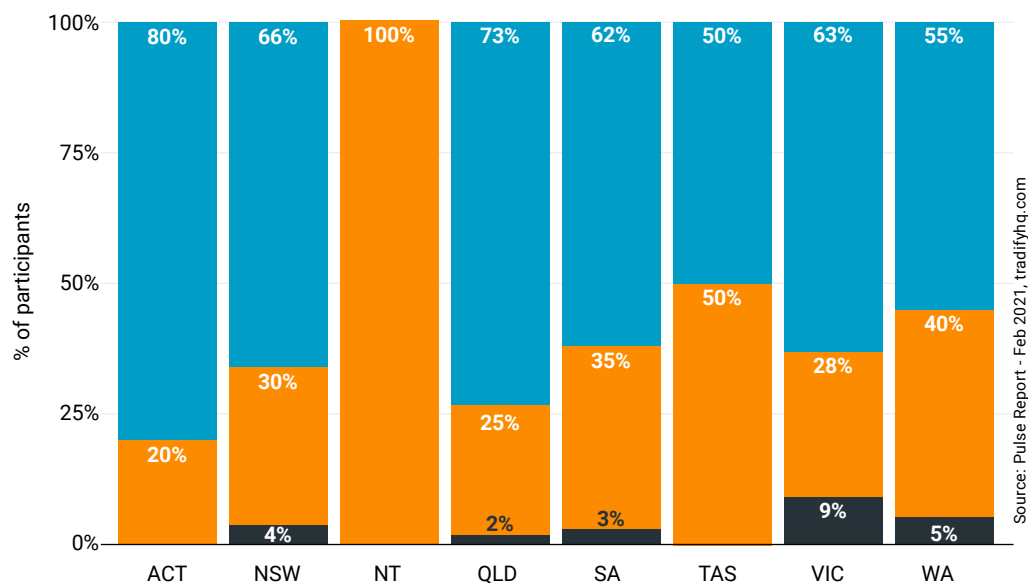
**In 12 months time, do you think that business conditions will:**

■ Improve
 ■ Stay the same
 ■ Get worse

## INDUSTRY



## STATE







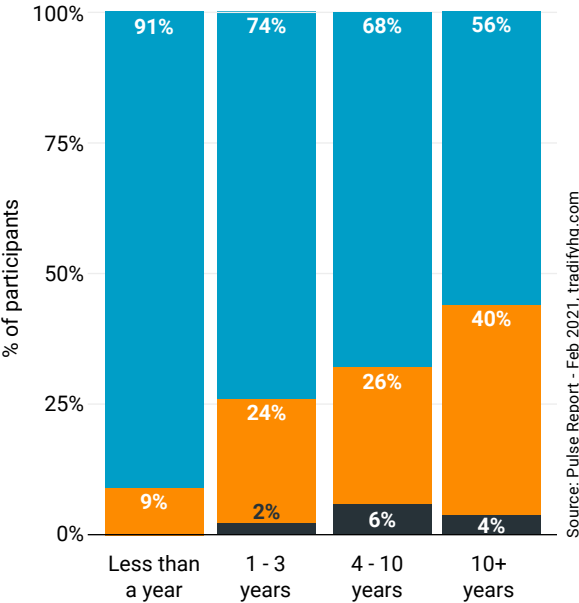
### Younger businesses are more optimistic

Australian trade businesses that are less than a year old have the most optimistic outlook – 91% think things will improve over the next 12 months. Businesses over four years old are slightly more cynical. Those who have been in the game for 10+ years are more likely to think things will stay the same.

### In 12 months time, do you think that business conditions will:

Improve Stay the same Get worse

### AGE OF BUSINESS



## What is the focus of trade businesses in 2021?

When we spoke with Australian trade business owners last year, most thought the impact of COVID-19 wasn't as bad as they had initially feared (although some businesses have obviously suffered more than others). However, there were also fears that trade businesses would see a downturn in 2020/21 as the current pipeline of jobs dried up.

### Goal for 2021?

**"Continue growth, continue focus on customer experience."**

ELECTRICIAN, SA

This cautiously optimistic view of the future could be why, when we asked about top priorities for 2021, many Australian tradies are focused on things like growth, staff and profit. In the wake of COVID-19, most tradies are convinced that this year will require some hard work (as always!), but that doesn't mean growing or expanding your business gets put on the backburner.

The word cloud below displays the most common words found in our written survey responses. The bigger the word, the more often it was mentioned by participants.



# Hiring an apprentice this year?

In October 2020, the Australian Federal Government announced they would subsidise 100,000 new apprenticeships as part of their COVID-19 economic recovery plan.

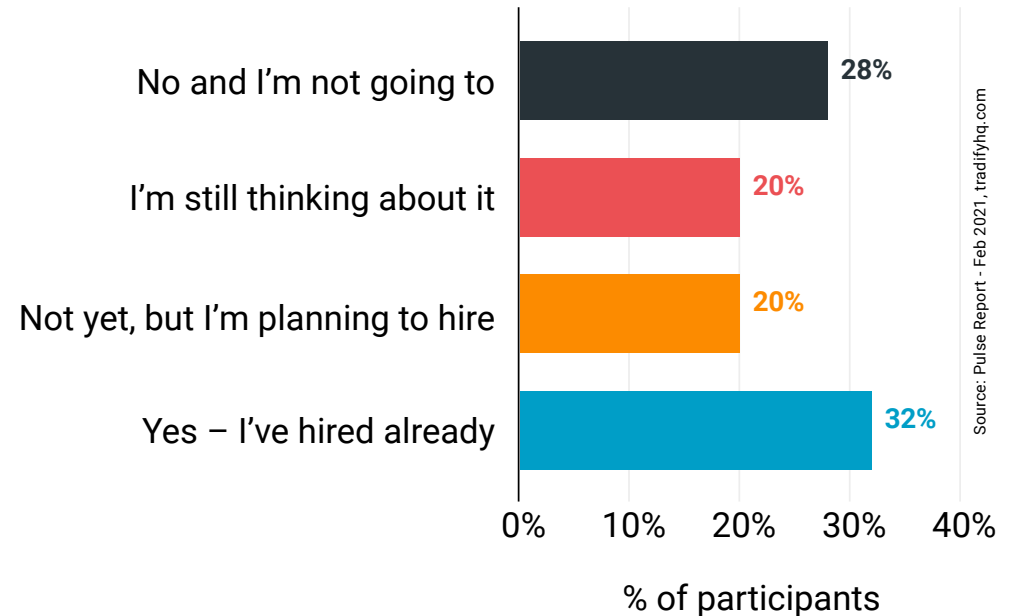
**52% of Australian trade businesses have hired or will hire new staff.**

Over half of Aussie tradies have already hired, or are looking to hire, an apprentice in 2021. Only 28% of participants don't intend to hire a new apprentice.

It looks like the Government's scheme may be working. Over half of Aussie trade business owners have already hired, or are looking to hire, an apprentice in 2021. That's a huge amount of apprentices finding work, and a big saving for employers. It will be interesting to see how far this goes in stimulating the Australian economy through 2021 and beyond.

28% of participants don't intend to hire a new apprentice at all. If that's you and this is your first time hearing about the apprentice hiring scheme, make sure you check out the [Australian Apprenticeships Employment Incentives](#) to see if it might work out.

## Have you hired or do you intend to hire an apprentice as a result of the recent government announcements?



**Goal for 2021?**  
**"New Tradesman and apprentice, take on some bigger projects."**  
**HVAC SPECIALIST, NSW**





# Who's hiring?

## Plumbers ahead of the game

It seems plumbers have been the quickest to take advantage of the subsidised apprenticeships, with 52% of Australian plumbers having already hired an apprentice. Landscapers are least likely to hire an apprentice, which makes sense if they are expecting things to get worse.

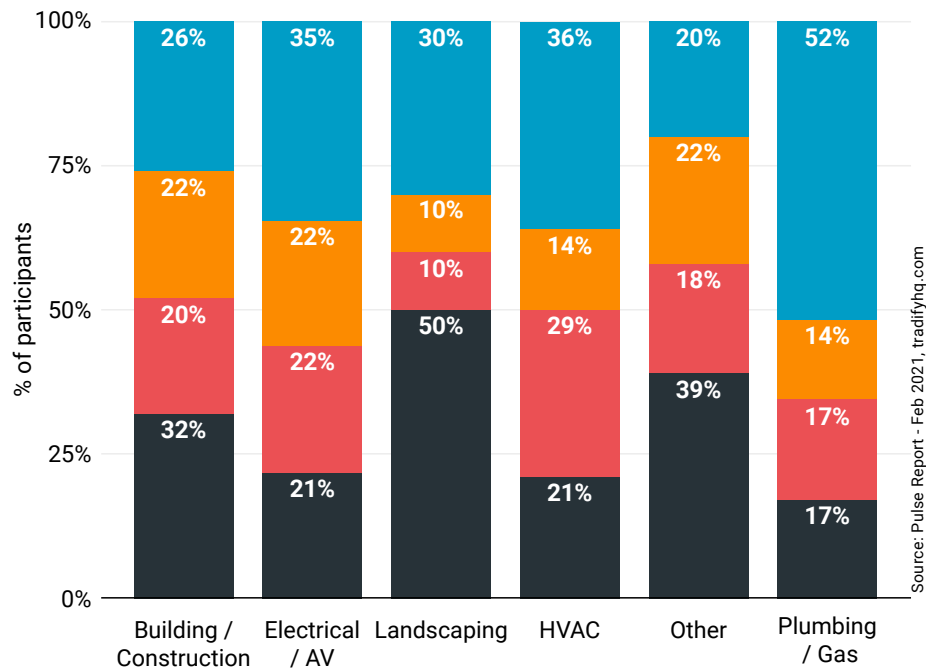
## New trade businesses least likely to hire

As you'd expect, trade businesses that are under a year old are the most unlikely to hire. Established businesses are more likely to hire an apprentice in 2021 – even though they had a more cynical outlook on 2021 in general.

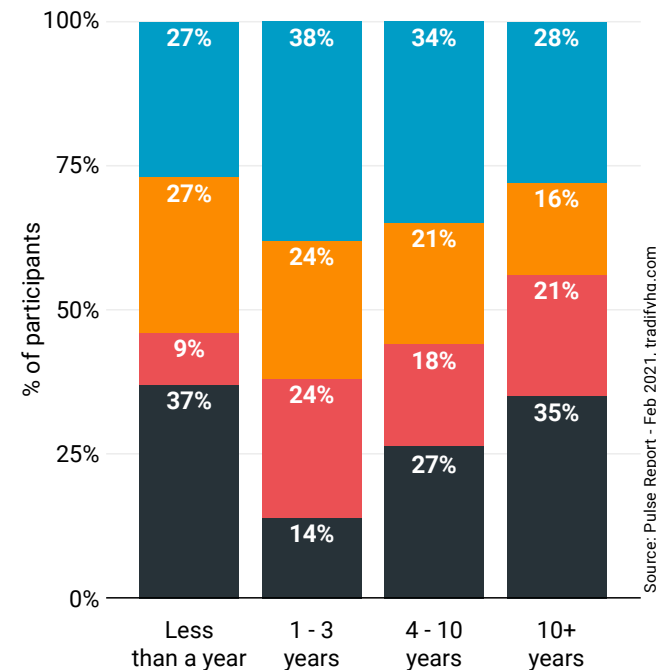
## Have you hired or do you intend to hire an apprentice in 2021?

■ Yes – I've hired already
 ■ Not yet, but I'm planning to hire
 ■ I'm still thinking about it
 ■ No and I'm not going to

### INDUSTRY



### AGE OF BUSINESS





### Older business owners have already hired

50% of business owners in the 61+ age bracket have already hired an apprentice (compared to 33% across the board). At the same time, 37% of tradies in the same age bracket are most likely to not hire an apprentice (versus a 27% average across all other ages). Business owners under 30 are most likely to be still thinking about taking on an apprentice.

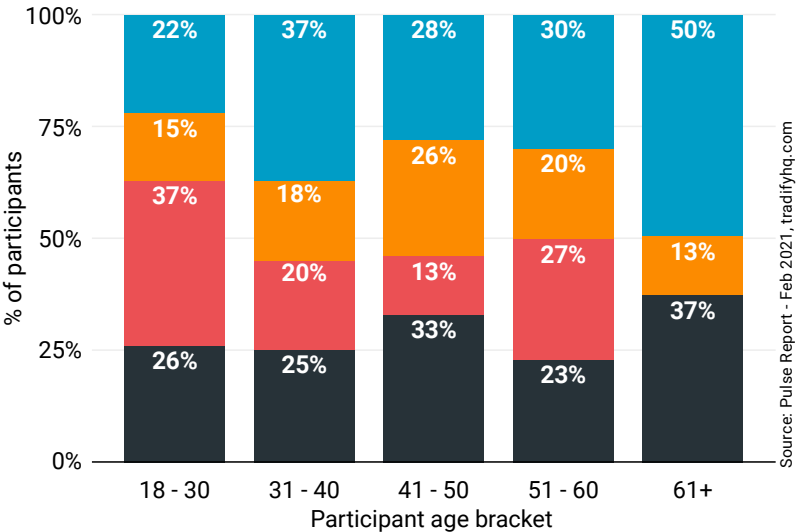
While most trade business owners have already made the call on hiring for 2021, 20% are still thinking about it. If this is you, make sure you look into the Government's apprentice hiring incentive scheme to see if you can make it work for you.

[Find out more about Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements.](#)

### Have you hired or do you intend to hire an apprentice in 2021?

- Yes – I've hired already
- Not yet, but I'm planning to hire
- I'm still thinking about it
- No and I'm not going to

#### AGE OF BUSINESS OWNERS



## Trade businesses have control, but admin time is still too high

In the September 2020 Pulse Report, we asked tradies how often they feel in control of their business. We asked the same question this year so we could compare the results. Interestingly, there has been very little shift in the last six months.

**70% of Australian tradies almost always, or often, feel in control of their business.**

According to trade business owners, 'people stuff' and admin tasks were the worst parts of the job. Ironically, when asked "What makes a great trade business?", Australian trade business owners said it is one that operates efficiently with happy staff.

For trade business owners wanting to get more control and ultimately grow their business, reducing admin time is the answer. If you're burning the midnight oil every week catching up on paperwork, you're spending less time on the tools and sacrificing the things you love doing with family or friends.

### Goal for 2021?

**"Build on the last six months, preserve and develop current relationships, build new relationships. Make a good profit."**

**ELECTRICIAN, WA**



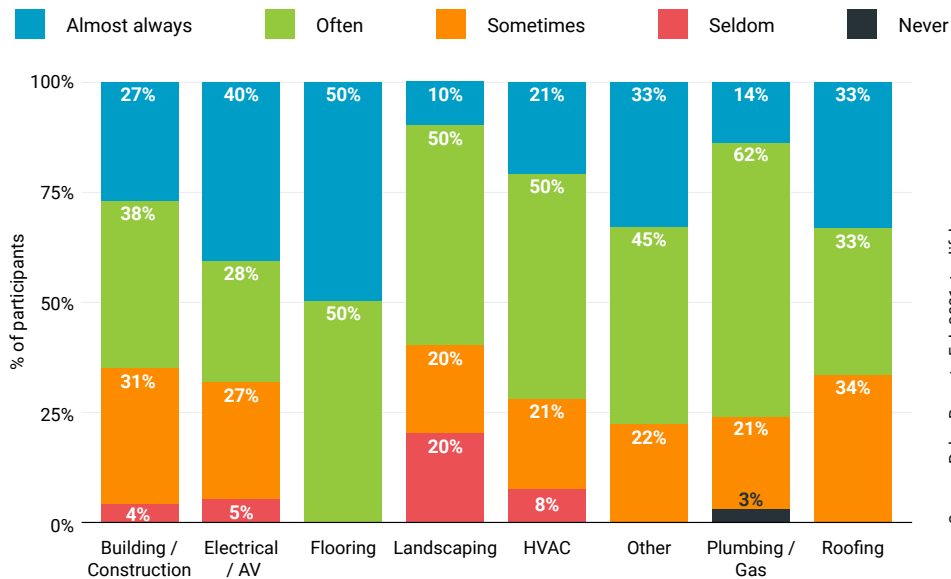


# Business confidence by industry

## HVAC under control

Looking at the results, it seems the majority of HVAC businesses feel in control of their business. Most HVAC businesses experienced a tough time last year with sector restrictions and work appeared to rebound more slowly than other industries. This could mean that HVAC trade businesses were able to refocus their energy on getting their admin under control – saving them time and effort now that things are picking up again.

## How often do you feel in control of your business?



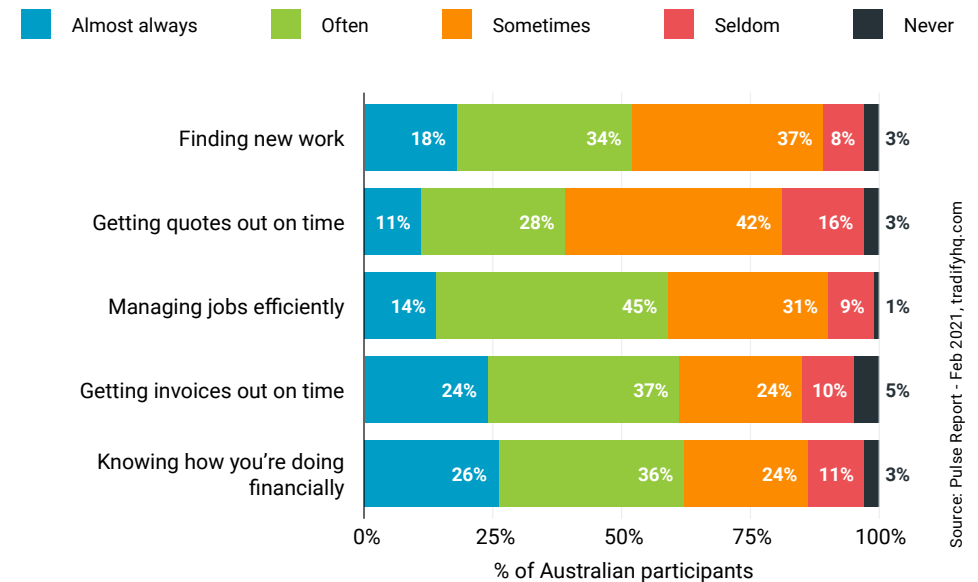
## Confident getting invoices out, less confidence around quotes

Tradies feel most in control of how they're doing financially and getting invoices out, which makes sense. The quicker you invoice, the faster you get paid – and the less likely you are to run into cash-flow issues.

Getting quotes out quickly seems to be the main headache for Australian tradies. It can be difficult to focus on potential jobs when there are jobs that need doing right now. But finding new work also appears to be proving difficult for nearly half of trade business owners who completed the Pulse Report survey.

[Check out the Tradify blog for tips on finding new work.](#)

## How often do you feel in control of the following?

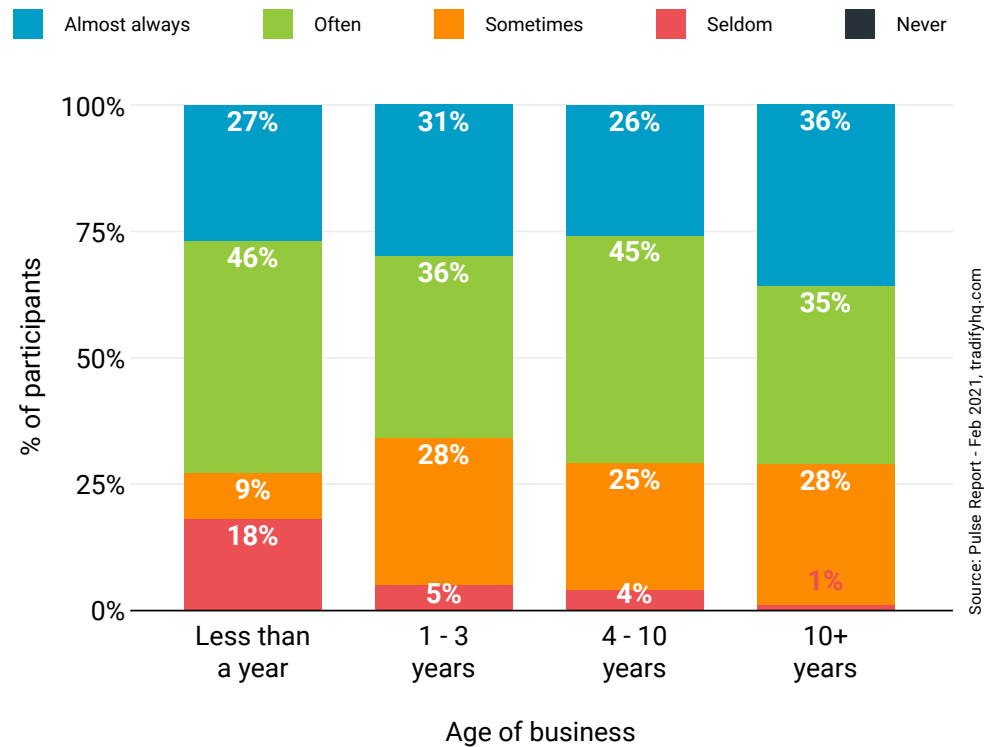


# The admin vs control sweet spot

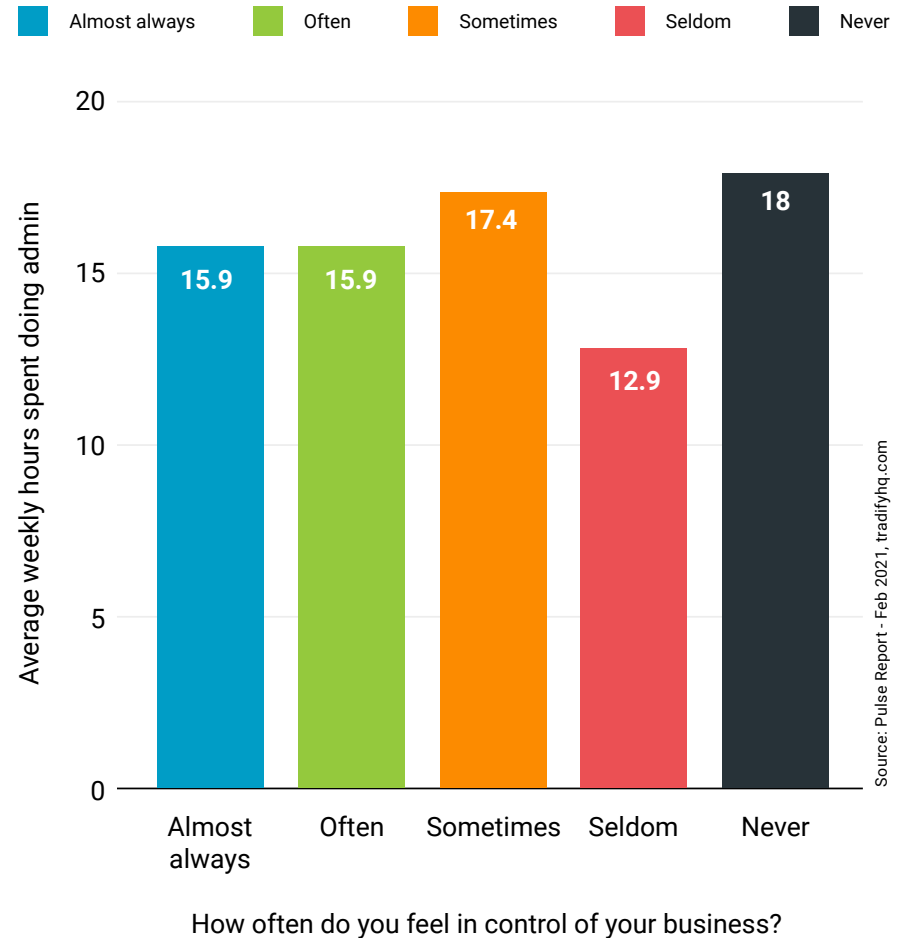
More established businesses seem to have a greater feeling of control, even though they spend a similar amount of time on admin to others. The tradies who never feel in control of their business end up spending the most time on their admin.

You don't necessarily need to spend more time on admin to feel in control, you just need a time-saving admin solution.

## How often do you feel in control of your trade business?



## Sense of business control vs average weekly time on admin



# How many hours do tradies spend on admin?

Australian tradies average 16.2 hours per week on admin tasks.

## Industry insights

Roofing and flooring trade businesses spend the most time per week on their admin – an average of 25.2 hours. On top of time on the tools, they're spending the equivalent of a part-time job on their admin.

Here's what a couple of roofers said about their focus for 2021:

**"Quality of life for myself and my staff."** ROOFER, VIC

**"Improve efficiency."** ROOFER, NSW

Electricians spend the least amount of time on their admin: 14 hours on average.

## Communication

Managing and communicating with staff is by far the most time-consuming admin task for most tradies, closely followed by communicating with customers. Approximately 30% of tradies spend 10+ hours liaising with staff, and just over 20% spend the same amount of time on customers.



### Goal for 2021?

**"Increase ease of admin,  
quoting and invoicing."**

**ELECTRICIAN, QLD**

## Chasing payments

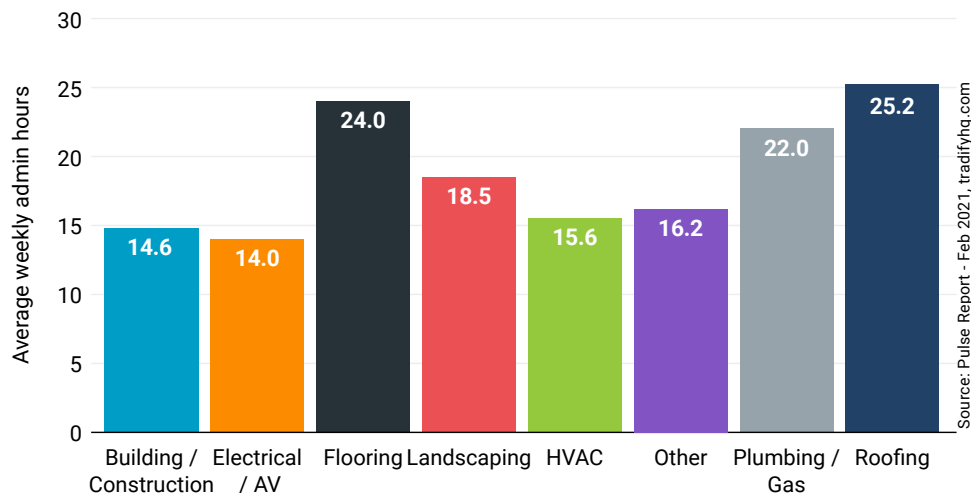
Tradies seem to be getting paid faster with over 60% of trade business owners spending on average only one hour per week chasing payments. Things like automated payment reminders and online payment functionality have most certainly had an impact here.

## Quoting and invoicing

Some tradies are still spending 10+ hours per week on their quoting and invoicing. Over one month, that's the equivalent of 80 hours, in one year – 960 hours! Even if you were to cut that number by half, that's 480 hours you could spend on the tools, or even better, doing what you love with your family and friends.

Tradies who spend 20+ hours a week on quoting and invoicing, spend 960 hours per year on two admin tasks.

## Average weekly admin hours vs industry





## Job management software – what difference does it make?

Using Tradify user data and the Pulse Report survey results, we compared how much time tradies using job management software spend on admin tasks versus those using their old systems. Here's what we found:

### MANAGING STAFF

Those who use job  
management software spend

**8% LESS TIME**  
managing staff.

Source: Pulse Report  
- Feb 2021, tradifyhq.com

### QUOTING

Those who use job  
management software spend

**13% LESS TIME**  
quoting.

# The impact of pen & paper on your trade business

**Tradies who use pen and paper spend 11% more time on weekly admin tasks.**

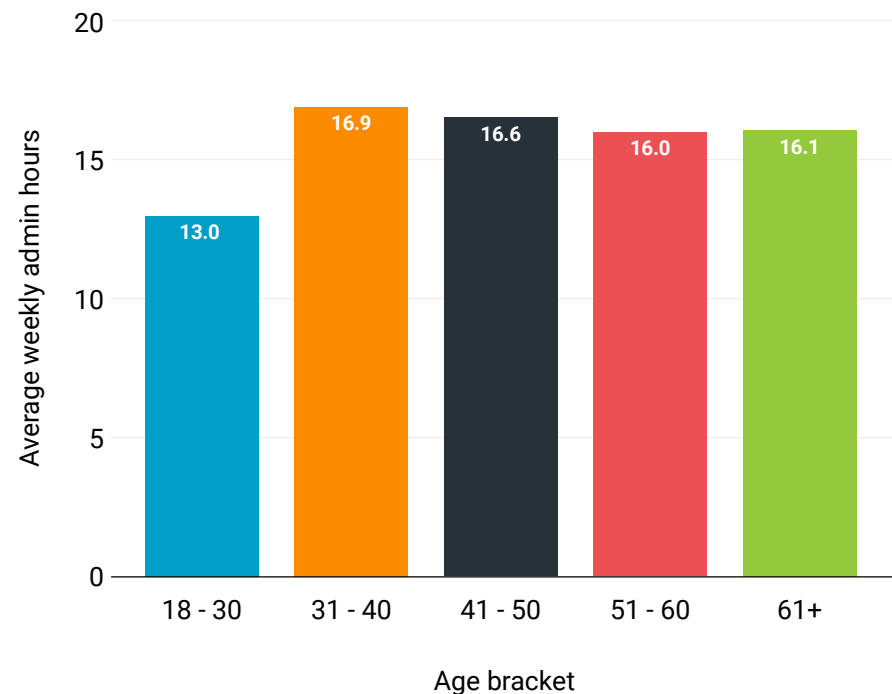
34% of participants who don't use pen and paper almost always feel in control of their trade business, compared to 26% who do use pen and paper.

## Getting it right from the start

Most new trade businesses are not using pen and paper. Those who are using job management software instead, feel more in control of their business and are spending far less time on their weekly admin tasks. For those that choose to start with paper and pen, there is a noticeable efficiency gap. Getting your admin right from the start can have a big impact on how much control you have over your business in the future.

Many established trade businesses using paper and pen may feel in control of their business because that's how they've always done things. But the time spent on their admin tasks can be anywhere between 7-27 hours/week. Sticking with pen & paper can be a risk when competing with younger businesses who often start off more efficiently using tools like job management software.

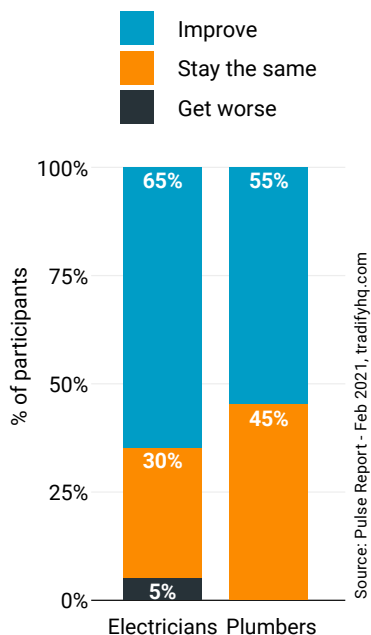
## Average weekly admin hours vs participant age



Source: Pulse Report - Feb 2021, tradifyhq.com

# Electricians vs Plumbers

## In 12 months time, business conditions will:

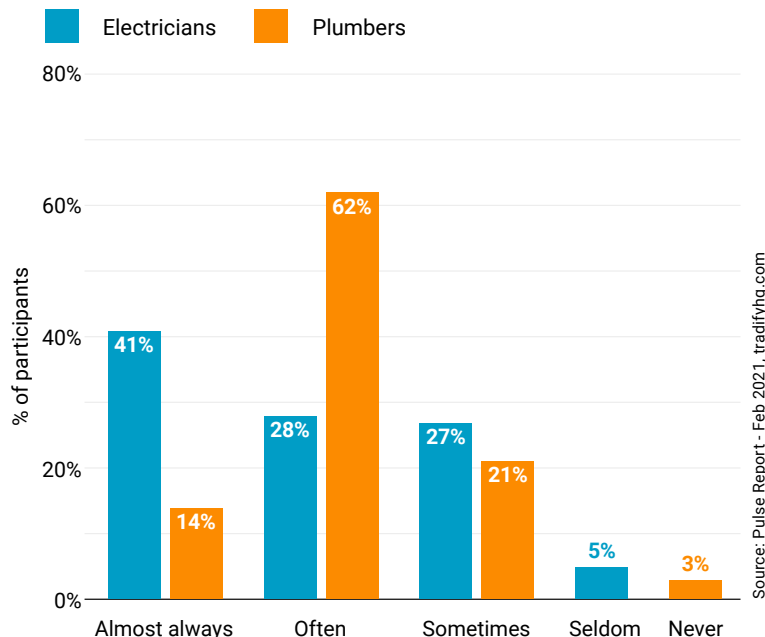


In the next 12 months, more electricians expect business conditions to improve when compared to plumbers. However, more electricians also predict things will get worse. Almost half of plumbers just expect things to stay the same.

Plumbers are more likely to hire an apprentice in 2021. 52% have already made a new hire, and 14% are planning on it.

A lower percentage of electricians are looking to hire; could this be because more sparkies think things will get worse? Maybe it's because plumbers feel slightly more in control of their businesses, even though they spend more time on admin.

## How often do you feel in control of your business?

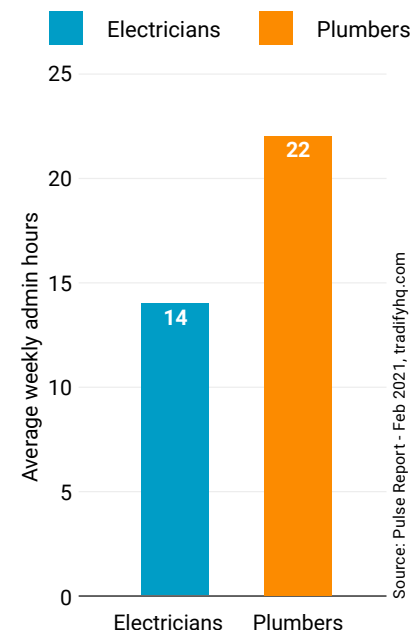


Electricians seem to have a slightly better sense of how they're doing financially. 10% of plumbers admit they never feel in control of this part of their business.

It may seem obvious, but there is a direct correlation between getting quotes out quickly and finding new work. Plumbers who have more control over their quotes also feel more in control over finding new work.

Like other trades businesses, both electricians and plumbers spend the most time on 'people stuff' – communicating with clients and managing staff. They also spend the least amount of time chasing up payments. For all other admin tasks, there is a fairly even split.

## Average weekly hours spent on admin





# Recommendation 1: Streamline your admin, grow your business



Based on the results of this survey, tradies want to land more work and grow their business. No surprises there! There's a positive outlook for the year ahead and with the right systems in place, you can achieve your business goals.

## Goal for 2021?

**"De-centralisation, systemisation,  
and steady growth."**

**LANDSCAPER, QLD**

Use technology like accounting software and job management software to help run your business more efficiently. The sooner you implement better processes, the sooner you'll see results.

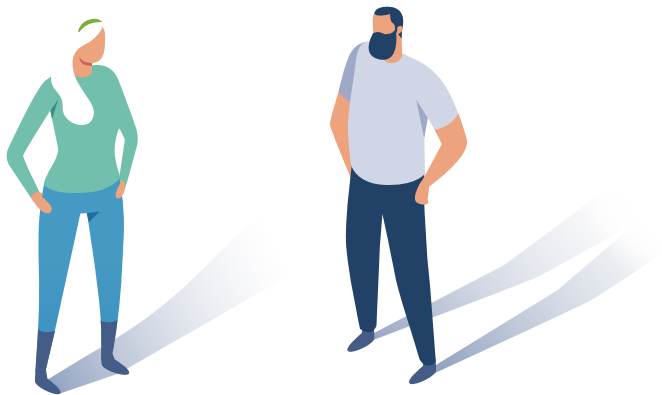
- **See where can you save time & money:** You've only got a certain number of hours in each day – do you know where you spend your time? You need to know what tasks are taking the longest so you can make improvements and grow your business.
- **Scrap the paper:** Sick of losing notes, lists and client information under endless stacks of paper? Get all your job information sitting in one place that you and your team can access while on the go.
- **Consolidate your admin:** If you're not using paper but are working across three or four disparate systems, you could be wasting just as much time. Find one system that streamlines your job management and plugs into other systems like your accounting software.

**Need help marketing your trade business online?**

**Get the Tradify Guide to Digital Marketing**

# Recommendation 2:

## Use technology to manage your team



Trade business owners are spending more time on the phone organising staff than they do talking to customers. For larger businesses, it can be hard to keep track of everything everyone's doing. For a young business, it's hard to find the time or resources to hire and manage new staff.

The right tools will help you create a happier and more productive workforce. Growing your business is meant to make you more money, not bog you down with admin. Spend more time doing what you love by running your business with software that scales with you as you grow.

### Goal for 2021?

**"Automate everything...timesheets, job scheduling, etc. I want to supply each vehicle with an iPad. Each tradesman is to fill out times and materials per job and I want to just approve."**

**ELECTRICIAN, NSW**

- **Reduce admin time:** Manage your whole team at once, without having to call them individually. Last-minute urgent job? Check who's closest and dispatch instantly.
- **Schedule time efficiently:** Use the right tools to schedule your team's day, provide easy access to job details, and fill timesheets on the go. Visibility over jobs for the week helps everyone plan ahead.
- **Think about hiring:** Once you've got your admin under control and extra cash flow to support another pair of hands, consider hiring an apprentice. There is a lot of [financial support for Australian businesses](#) who choose to hire an apprentice.

**Learn How To Manage a Team Efficiently**

# Recommendation 3:

## Quick quoting to win more work



The quick quoting tradie wins the job. If you take too long or miss an enquiry, that customer won't wait around for your reply. Getting quotes out fast will give you a leg up on your competition – and increase the likelihood of you securing more jobs.

### Goal for 2021?

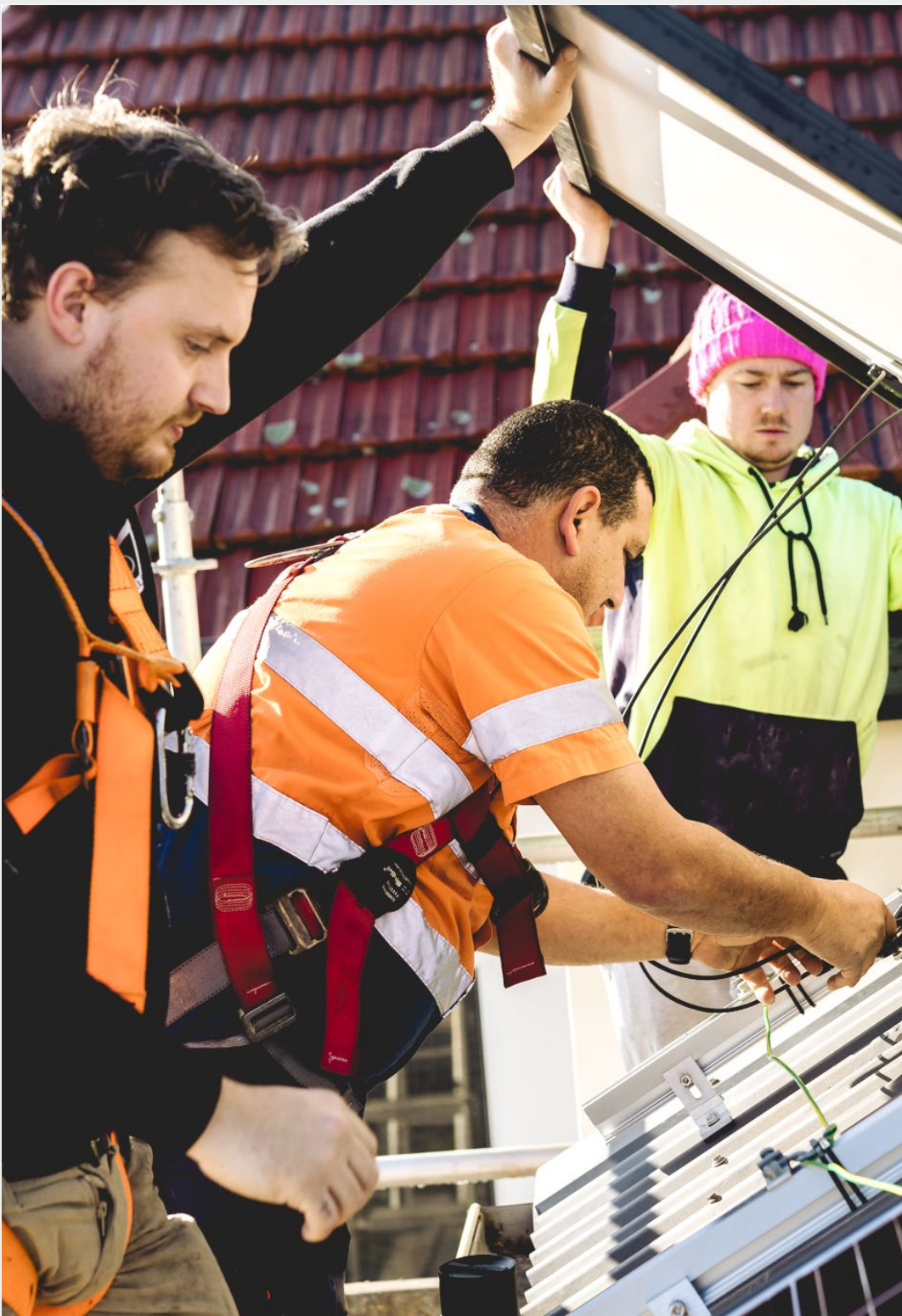
**"Improve quote turnaround times."**

**LANDSCAPER, NSW**

Fast and efficient communication is key to running a business. That goes for communicating with staff as well as customers. Leverage technology to help you communicate as swiftly as possible, and watch your business improve as a result.

- **Get back to people fast:** It's simple maths – the more enquiries you respond to, the more likely you are to secure jobs. Responding to every enquiry will improve your quote win-rate, and software like Tradify helps you do just that.
- **Set up an auto-response:** Whether it's a recorded voicemail message or automated email response, let your customers know when they can expect to hear from you – and make sure you follow through.
- **Quote while you work:** Why wait until you're in the office when you could send a quote directly from your phone, within minutes of speaking to the customer?

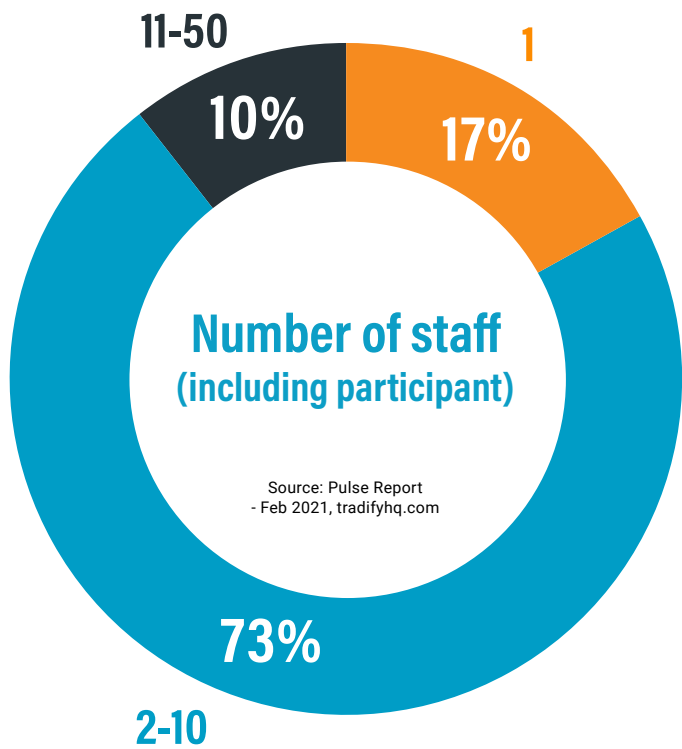
**Use Pre-Set Templates to Build Quotes**



## Who did we survey?

The Pulse Report was conducted as an online survey between 15 December 2020 and 25 January 2021. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent by Tradify to trades business owners who operate in Australia, New Zealand or the United Kingdom.

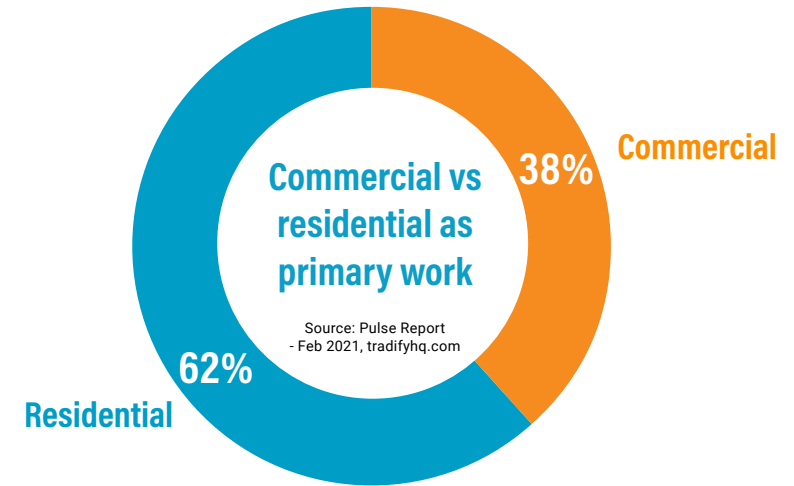
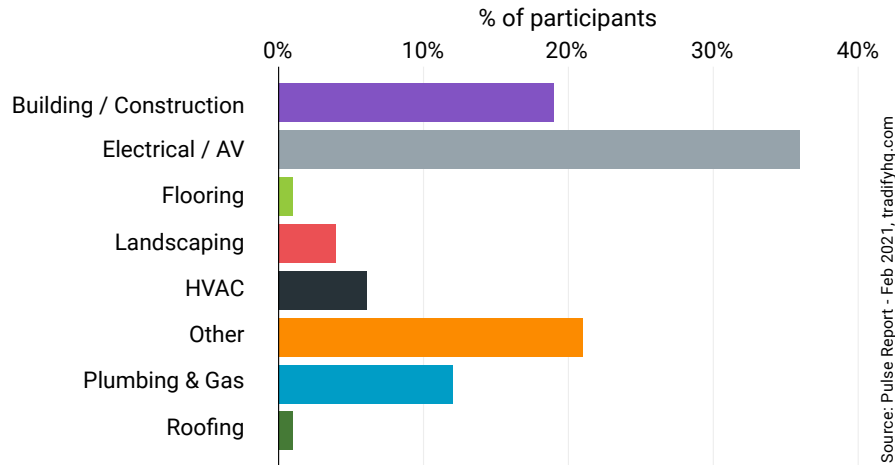
Keen to take part? Keep an eye out for our next survey!



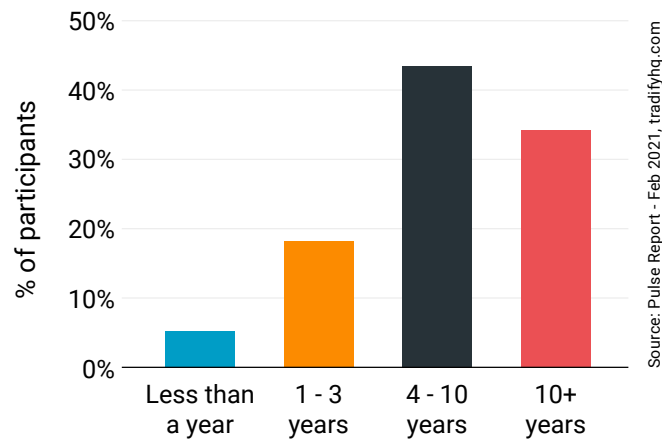


# Australian participant profile

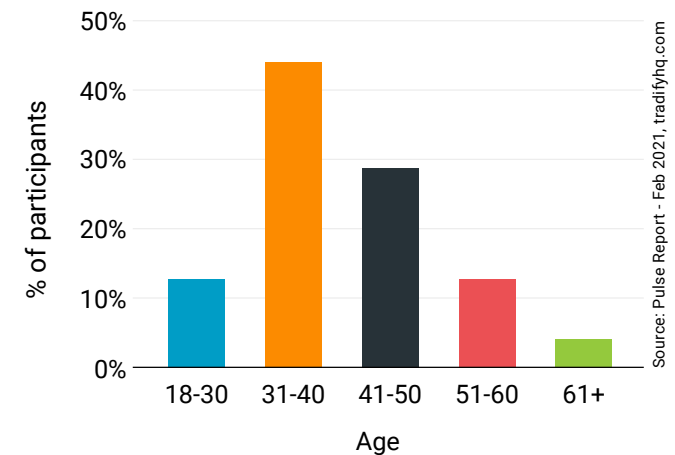
## Primary type of work completed



## Participant business age



## Age of participant



PRESENTED BY:

# TRADIFY

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