FIND

STATE OF THE MARKET

QUARTER ONE 2026

Contents

Steady...until it wasn't

Q1 started with a sense of real momentum. After a tough couple of years, there was genuine optimism across the market. Budgets were loosening, transformation programmes were being dusted off, and hiring activity was beginning to follow. It felt like 2026 might finally be the year things opened up again.

And then, as we've seen so often in recent times, the script changed.

Geopolitical tension in the Middle East and the resulting fuel pressures have introduced a new layer of uncertainty. There is now a very real possibility of disruption to how businesses operate day to day, including a return to more widespread remote and hybrid working as fuel access is prioritised. For many, it feels like we're being asked to dust off the old Covid playbooks once again.

Naturally, that kind of uncertainty has an impact on hiring confidence. Some organisations' will pause, reassess, and take a more cautious approach in the short term.

But if the past few years have taught us anything, it's that disruption doesn't necessarily slow recruitment, it often reshapes it.

During Covid, we saw some of the busiest hiring periods on record. Not because conditions were easy, but because businesses needed to adapt quickly. That same pattern is beginning to emerge again.

We are continuing to see strong demand in contracting and transformation-led work. In fact, 80% of our placements this quarter have been contract, with just 20% permanent. Organisations' are still moving forward, but they are doing so in a more flexible, lower-risk way. They are buying capability, not just headcount.

Transformation hasn't gone away. If anything, it's becoming more urgent.

So while the market may feel uncertain again, the underlying activity is still there. It's just taking a different shape.

The question isn't whether hiring will happen, it's how.

Pete Thompson, Director

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

Spectrum Group: Building Choice, Community, and Independence

Simon Rooney from Find Recruitment recently caught up with Sean Stowers, CEO of the Spectrum Group, to talk about their work, and what quickly became clear is that while the organisation operates across support services, housing and funding, its real focus is much more human. At its core, it is about choice, independence, and enabling disabled people to live full and ordinary lives.

How It Started

The organisation itself has been around for more than three decades, but its purpose has evolved alongside New Zealand's changing approach to disability support. Spectrum Group traces its roots back to 1994, a time when large institutions for disabled were closing. In that transition, there was a need for something new. Spectrum Care Trust Board, as it was then known, was created to help people move into communities and live more independent lives.

Spectrum Group today

Over time, that mission has expanded. Today, Spectrum Group operates across multiple areas, through disability support provider Spectrum Care, community housing provider Homes of Choice and philanthropic funder and parent organisation Spectrum Foundation.

A key part of that evolution has been housing. Around a decade ago, the Foundation established a property arm, Homes of Choice, which now plays a major role in delivering accessible housing for disabled people and their families. The scale is significant with the organisation managing more than 210 properties across the North Island, with around 125 of those owned directly.

In the past few years, Homes of Choice has taken another step forward by moving into property development. Rather than relying solely on existing housing stock, it is now actively building new homes designed with accessibility and universal design in mind from the outset. That shift reflects a broader understanding that housing is not just about shelter it is about enabling people to live ordinary lives, with the same choices most people take for granted.

Self Determination

Sean says that another concept that shapes the Foundation's work is self-determination. In practical terms, this means ensuring disabled people have real control over their lives. Not just in theory, but in everyday decisions. Where they live, who they live with, how they spend their time, and who they connect with.

Delivering that is not always straightforward. It involves support planning, flexible services, and a willingness to adapt to individual needs. It also means helping people manage risk in a way that supports independence rather than limiting it. Instead of taking decisions away from individuals, the focus is on equipping them to make those decisions themselves.

This philosophy also shapes h ow the Foundation distributes funding - with over $2m distributed to more than 40 orginsations since 2023. Rather than applying rigid criteria, the organisation looks for alignment with its core values. Initiatives that support employment, housing, wellbeing, and education are prioritised, particularly where they contribute to greater self-determination for disabled people.

Another important factor is lived experience. The Foundation's philanthropic priorities place strong emphasis on supporting organisations' who are disabled led as those who live closest to the challenges are best placed to design effective solutions. To reinforce this, the Foundation has embedded lived experience into its own decision-making processes. Disabled individuals are represented on the Group's boards and the Foundation's funding panels, ensuring that perspectives are not filtered or second-hand. There are also advisory groups made up of families and disabled people, providing ongoing feedback and helping shape the organisation's direction.

Culture

While strategy and structure are important, Sean points to something less tangible as one of Spectrum Group's greatest strengths: its culture. Staff across the three entities, particularly those working directly with people, are described as deeply committed to person-centred support.

That culture shows up in the way people communicate, collaborate, and approach their work. New staff and external consultants often notice it quickly. There is a sense that values are not just written down, but actively lived.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, the Spectrum Group has set out a clear direction for the next few years, with three main priorities guiding its work.

The second is reducing unmet need. This involves identifying gaps in the system and actively working to address them. Data will play a role here, alongside co-design with disabled people themselves. The aim is not just to respond to existing demand, but to break barriers that prevent people from accessing the support they need.

The third priority is expanding accessible This is where the organisation's development work becomes particularly important as we set targets for new builds over the next four years.

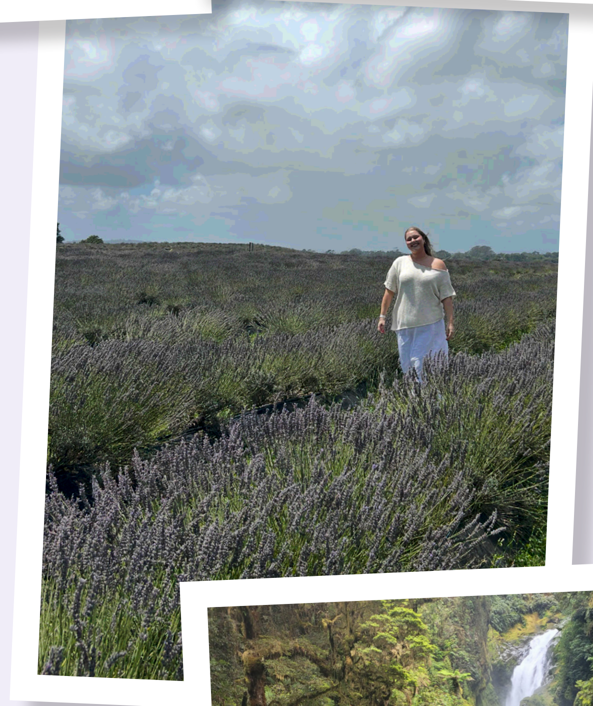
Partnerships will be key to achieving this scale. By working with others, the Group hope to increase both the number and quality of homes available.

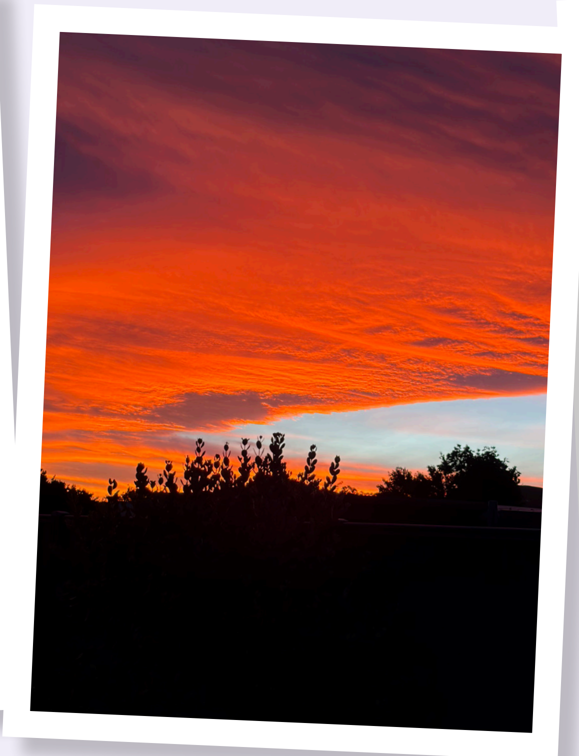
What stands out across all of this is a consistent thread. Whether it is housing, funding, or support services, the focus remains on enabling people to lead lives of their choosing. It is a simple idea, but one that requires careful thought and sustained effort to deliver in practice.

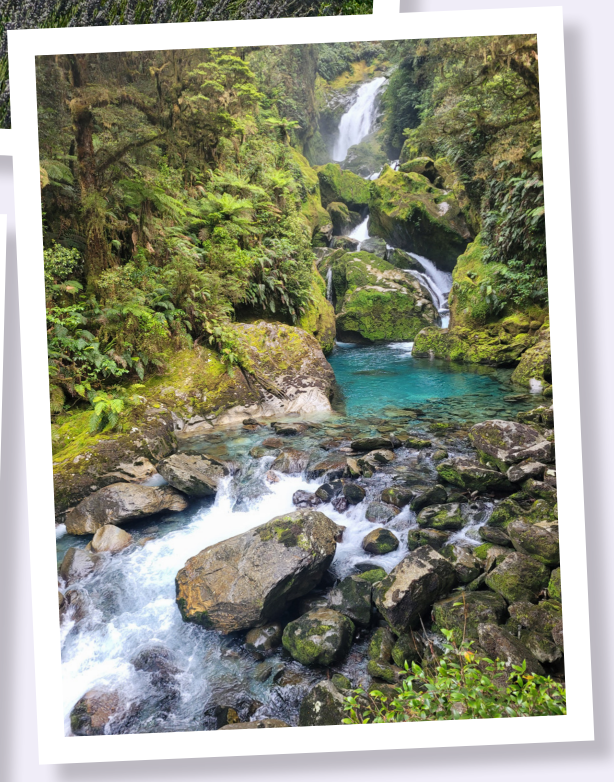
Talking with Sean, he makes it clear that work is ongoing. There are still barriers to remove, gaps to close, and opportunities to create. But with a clear sense of purpose and a strong organisational culture behind it, Spectrum Group is continuing to move in the direction it set out more than 30 years ago.

SPECTRUM FOUNDATION

What Find staff got up to over the *summer break*







Auckland IT & Digital Market Overview

What we're seeing

We kicked off 2026 with a milestone for our business, IT Auckland turned 10 years old in January. A decade of operating in this market has given us a front row seat to its cycles, and this start to the year feels familiar in one key way: momentum, with a layer of uncertainty not far behind.

The year has opened with a clear and consistent theme: contract-led hiring, driven almost entirely by transformation work.

Across the Auckland market, demand is coming through strongly in sectors including telco, banking, health, retail and professional services. Organisations' are moving, but they are doing so with a preference for flexibility and speed rather than long-term commitment.

Our placement split this quarter reflects that shift. 90% of our placements have been contract, with just 10% permanent. This is one of the most contract-heavy starts to a year we've seen.

This is not hiring for headcount growth. This is hiring to execute.
We are also seeing early signs of AI-related work coming through, although not yet at the scale being reported globally. For now, it remains more exploratory and targeted rather than a broad hiring wave.

The roles in **demand** are aligned to delivery and change:

- Project Managers
- Business Analysts
- Developers
- Testers
- Data Engineers
- Change Managers
- Project Coordinators

Market Dynamics

While the market has opened the year with momentum, there is an emerging layer of uncertainty.

The potential impact of fuel disruption is difficult to quantify at this stage, but it is already influencing how organisations are thinking about workforce planning. '

Many are revisiting remote and hybrid working models to ensure business continuity if access to transport becomes constrained.

We've been here before

If anything, the Covid period showed that disruption doesn't stop hiring, it changes how it happens. Organisations' shift towards project-based work, prioritise critical initiatives, and lean more heavily on contract talent to deliver outcomes.

That pattern is beginning to re-emerge.

Transformation programmes are continuing, and in many cases accelerating, as businesses look to improve efficiency, modernise systems, and build resilience into their operations.

What this means for clients

For organisations' navigating this environment, the focus should be on preparedness and flexibility rather than pause. A few practical considerations:

Plan for disruption
Have a clear, ready-to-activate approach for remote and hybrid working. Ensure teams can continue to deliver regardless of physical location.

Lean into contract hiring
Accessing capability through contract or fixed-term resources allows you to keep momentum without long-term risk.

Prioritise delivery roles
The market is rewarding those who can execute. Focus on roles that directly contribute to transformation and business outcomes.

Stay close to the market
Conditions are shifting quickly. Regular check-ins on talent availability and market movement will help avoid delays when hiring becomes urgent.

Conclusion

The Auckland IT market has started the year with strong underlying activity, particularly across transformation and project delivery.

While uncertainty around fuel supply and broader disruption may influence hiring sentiment in the short term, it is unlikely to stop momentum altogether. If recent history is any guide, organisations' will adapt rather than retreat.

The shape of hiring may continue to favour contract over permanent, but the work itself isn't going away. Transformation will continue. The only question is how businesses choose to deliver it.

> "We hit a special milestone back in January this year – **10 years of Find IT Auckland!**
>
> It was a great reminder of how important it is to stop and recognise the journey, the people, the partnerships, and everything that's been built along the way.
>
> A huge thank you to our clients and candidates. We genuinely love what we do because of you. And to my team and the wider Find whanau, thank you. You're the reason this is all worth it.
>
> Here's to the first 10 years... and the next chapter ahead."
>
> **Pete Thompson, Director**

Wellington Corporate Market Overview

Cautious moves: How uncertainty is shaping Wellington hiring trends

The corporate recruitment market in Wellington remains challenging, with the ongoing theme of being "short on jobs and short on candidates" continuing to define conditions. While there is still a limited volume of permanent opportunities available, candidate activity has also softened, creating a relatively stagnant market overall.

One notable shift is the uptick in contracting, particularly within government agencies as departments move toward the June financial year-end. This has provided some short-term momentum, with organisations' leaning on flexible resourcing solutions to deliver on immediate priorities without committing to long-term headcount increases.

Salary movement has largely plateaued. After several years of upward pressure, remuneration levels are now stabilising, with employers showing little appetite to stretch beyond established bands. At the same time, hiring intentions have been impacted in the short term by global uncertainty, including the effects of the Iran war, which has contributed to a more cautious outlook across both public and private sector employers.

Looking ahead, these conditions may flow into a more typical election-year slowdown. Businesses are already showing signs of hesitation, delaying hiring decisions until there is greater clarity around the economic and political landscape.

Candidate behaviour reflects this uncertainty. A renewed cautiousness to move roles has emerged, with many professionals opting to stay put rather than risk instability. This has been reinforced by a noticeable rise in counteroffers, as employers act decisively to retain key talent and maintain stability within their teams.

Overall, while there are pockets of activity, particularly in contracting, the Wellington market remains subdued, with caution on both sides continuing to shape recruitment dynamics in the near term.

Auckland Corporate Market update

Certainly Uncertain!

After more than 400 client coffees and over 500 candidate interviews in the past six months, it is clear we are operating in genuinely interesting times is the best way to describe it. We're getting used to certain uncertainty.

The Edge of Recovery?

It was a lumpy end to 2025, then we saw a noticeable lift through January to March 2026, we at Find Megabase thought "hooray, we're on the edge of a recovery" then Trump effectively poured petrol on the fire, excuse the pun, unsettling confidence again.

If I was to look at the last 6 months, market conditions are still uneven and running at different speeds in the employment market depending on sector. Hospitality, retail and the public sector continue to feel pressure, while agri-related industries, general insurance and parts of financial services are moving forward with more confidence. Or that was, as it is an historic view, so with fuel up, costs of goods will follow, be it their price and / or cost to move them.

NZ Inc - It's Either No Work, or No Workers

New Zealand has nearly always fluctuated between having no work or no workers. There is a perception that because unemployment has risen, talent should be easier to access? With our boots on the ground pounding the Auckland footpaths, we've found that is only partially true. 'Right qualified' and high performing candidates are not flooding the market. Instead, they are taking a more cautious approach.

They're part of the 'Monitoring' group - monitoring opportunities and being selective about their next move. They are not compelled to jump, and that changes the dynamic significantly. This means that attracting top talent is still challenging, and it places greater importance on how a company might present themselves. Employer branding, clarity of opportunity and overall candidate experience all matter more than ever. Candidates tell us that they are more interested in this than before and paying close attention to how businesses operate and how they treat their people, benefits, flexibility, career progression (more or less in that order too).

Fixed in 26!

Well it was heading that way, as referred to earlier, being on the edge of a recovery, many of our clients signaled hiring intent from late last year and more indicating once they get through their tax year. This aligns with broader market data (Seek and TradeMe Jobs) with pent-up hiring needs. Although there might not be a spike in hiring, companies are more flexible than ever before. Our clients would rather hold on to someone, make it work, offer flexible solutions rather than lose someone.

Roles in **demand** are:

- Contract FM / FC's
- Finance Business Partners
- Senior Management Accountants
- Assistant Accountants
- Senior Risk professionals

Should things sort themselves out, if hiring is delayed until the market fully rebounds, you could find yourself competing in a much tighter candidate market with limited supply of quality talent.

So what to do?

The most effective hiring managers we are working with are not sitting back. They're identifying where gaps could be, where they need capability, and they understand that this is not just a period to manage costs, but an opportunity to position themselves for the future.

If you want to know more in-depth, unbiased, honest views on the employment market, salaries, rates, benefits extended or points of difference, drop us a line for a confidential discussion.

Wellington IT & Digital Market Overview

As we head through Q1, the Wellington tech market is starting to show signs of stabilisation after the endless winter that has been the last two years.

While it's not a full rebound just yet, there's a noticeable shift in sentiment. Our clients are beginning to move again, but hiring decisions remain measured, with a strong focus on value, outcomes, and delivery.

We're still operating in a candidate-heavy market, and application volumes remain high. However, as we've seen throughout the year, this doesn't always translate to quality, particularly across more specialised skill-sets.

Contracting is also finally making a comeback. We're seeing the strongest activity across project delivery (particularly Business Analysts), Software Engineering, and within the data space.

At the same time, the AI wave has well and truly arrived. However, adoption remains fragmented, with many organisations still navigating how to move from experimentation to meaningful, scalable use cases.

Talent market

The candidate market remains active. We're seeing:

- Increased availability of talent off the back of restructures over the past two years
- Continued shortages in niche and senior skill-sets (e.g. engineering, architecture, delivery, and data)
- Ongoing movement offshore, particularly to Australia
- A high number of migrants entering New Zealand, many of whom lack the local experience our clients often require

Despite more candidates in the market, top talent is still moving quickly, especially those with proven experience.

Rates & expectations

Permanent salaries have largely stabilised, while contract rates remain under pressure compared to the post-COVID peak.

Looking ahead

There's cautious optimism heading into 2026. We expect:

- Increased activity as budgets reset
- More organisations' shifting from planning into delivery mode
- A gradual move back toward a more balanced market

Overall, the Wellington market in Q4 feels steady, cautious, and improving. Not back to where it was—but certainly moving in the

Introducing

A big welcome to **Lewis Wall**, who joins our Wellington Tech team at Find Recruitment.

With a background in building his own graduate-focused employment business and a strong passion for the start-up and digital ecosystem, Lewis now recruits across the full spectrum of tech roles, from software engineers and developers to UI/UX and other digital specialists.

We are stoked to have Lewis on board, big things ahead!

Data & Analytics

Applicant Insight

The job market tightened significantly, with total adverts dropping from 549 to 446 while applications remained steady at over 41,000. This led to increased competition, with average applicants per role rising from 75 to 84. The impact was most pronounced in Auckland recruitment, where applications per job surged sharply. Overall, the data reflects a tougher, more candidate-heavy market driven by economic slowdown.

Adverts

Job Listing	Adverts 2024/2025	Adverts 2025/2026
Find IT Auckland	108	96
Find IT Wellington	165	135
Find Recruitment Auckland	143	115
Find Recruitment Wellington	133	100
Total Adverts	**549**	**446**

Applications

Job Listing	Applications 2024/2025	Applications 2025/2026
Find IT Auckland	7,630	7,106
Find IT Wellington	10,309	10,372
Find Recruitment Auckland	16,501	18,296
Find Recruitment Wellington	6,504	5,574
Total Applications	**40,944**	**41,348**

Average Applications per Advert

Job Listing	Average Applications per Advert 2024/2025	Average Applications per Advert 2025/2026
Find IT Auckland	71	74
Find IT Wellington	62	57
Find Recruitment Auckland	115	155
Find Recruitment Wellington	49	49
Total Average	**75**	**84**

Placement data

Permanent hiring increased across most areas, particularly in IT Wellington (16% → 31%) and Find Recruitment Auckland (63% → 72), indicating a shift toward longer-term roles. However, Find Recruitment Wellington moved in the opposite direction, with permanent roles dropping from 35% to 22%.

Contract placements declined in IT and Find Recruitment Auckland but rose significantly in Find Recruitment Wellington (65% → 78%), showing mixed hiring strategies across regions. Overall, the data suggests a gradual shift toward permanent hiring, with notable regional differences in demand.

Permanent

Permanent Placements	Permanent 2024/2025	Permanent 2025/2026
Find IT Auckland	12%	18%
Find IT Wellington	16%	31%
Find Recruitment Auckland	63%	72%
Find Recruitment Wellington	35%	22%

Contract

Contract Placements	Contract 2024/2025	Contract 2025/2026
Find IT Auckland	88%	82%
Find IT Wellington	84%	69%
Find Recruitment Auckland	37%	28%
Find Recruitment Wellington	65%	78%

Understanding our audience

In partnership with our friends at the Gender-at-Work Community and The Pride Pledge, we have proudly taken the first step into understanding our candidates on a deeper level. All of this data is being collected freely, of the candidates' volition and is private so can not be matched to specific candidates, to ensure we continue to combat bias in hiring processes. We can collect demographical data for your specific roles going forward, so if you would like this done, please let your consultant know and once the job is filled we will survey all applicants to give you insight into who saw your role, and who applied!

Candidate Gender Identity

Identifying Gender	% of Respondees
Cisgender Male (my sex assigned at birth and gender identity are the same)	50.3%
Cisgender Female (my sex assigned at birth and gender identity are the same)	38.7%
Prefer not to say	5.1%
My Gender is not listed	2.1%
Trans Man	1.1%
Non-Binary	0.9%
Trans Woman	0.9%
Gender Diverse	0.8%
Gender Queer, Intersex, & Takatāpui*	0.2%

Gender Queer, Intersex, & Takatāpui are all listed individually in our survey however are grouped to accommodate space in this report.

Candidate Age Groups

Age Group	% of Respondees
30 to 40	34.3%
40 to 50	22%
24 to 30	21%
50 to 64	13.1%
18 to 24	6.9%
65 or older	2.1%
Prefer not to say	0.6%

Candidate Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity	% of Respondees
Indian	35.5%
New Zealand European/Pākehā	25.3%
Other, e.g. Japanese, Tokelauan	21.6%
Chinese	9.2%
European	6.8%
Prefer not to say	4.9%
Fijian	3%
Māori	2.4%
American	1.7%
Samoan	1.7%
Cook Islands Māori	0.2%
Tongan	0.2%

Candidate Industry

Industry	% of Respondees
IT & Digital	36.6%
Accounting & Finance	29.6%
Other	9.6%
Technology	6.2%
Professional Services	5.3%
Sales & Marketing	4.3%
Business Support	3.4%
HR	2.1%
Risk & Compliance	1.5%
Prefer not to say	1.5%

Candidate Location

Location	% of Respondees
Auckland	36.8%
Wellington	29.5%
Other location	21.4%
Hamilton	3%
Christchurch	1.9%
Tauranga/Bay of Plenty	1.7%
Prefer not to say	1.5%
Nelson	1.1%
New Plymouth	0.9%
Palmerston North	0.9%
Gisborne	0.6%
Dunedin	0.4%
Rotorua	0.2%
Northland	0.2%
Greymouth, Queenstown, Invercargill	0%

Candidate neurodiversity

Category	% of Respondees
Not Applicable	85.6%
Prefer not to say	4.3%
ADHD	3.3%
Other	2.7%
Autism	1.6%
Dyslexia	0.8%
Bipolar	0.6%
Sensory Disorder	0.4%
Dyscalculia	0.2%
Epilepsy	0.2%
OCD	0.2%
Borderline Personality Disorder	0.2%
Tourettes, Dyspraxia, Down Syndrome	0%