

Student Job Search Aotearoa SJS Insights September 2026 Quarter Snapshot



More employers advertised but student competition rose faster

New Zealand entered the September quarter with improving business confidence but subdued activity and hiring. The same tension was visible on SJS. More employers advertised work, yet the number of students looking and the volume of applications grew considerably faster.

SJS recorded early signs of improving opportunity, but the change was uneven across sectors, regions and job types. Many advertisements also recorded only a small number of weekly hours.

This snapshot brings SJS marketplace data together with national labour-market evidence to show how opportunity and competition are changing, and how available work fits alongside study. The comparison helps identify where patterns on SJS reflect wider conditions, where they differ, and what this may mean for students, employers and government.

The quarter at a glance

SJS employer activity strengthened while student demand grew more quickly

Active advertisers	Job advertisers	Vacancies	Unique applicants	Applications
3,000	5,000	45,500	24,100	141,300
20% higher	21% higher	192% higher	36% higher	56% higher

Year-on-year changes compare the September 2026 and September 2025 quarters. The headline vacancy total and 192% change include 27,900 Electoral Commission vacancies. Excluding that campaign, vacancies increased 13%, as shown in the chart. Counts are rounded to the nearest 100 and changes to the nearest whole percentage.

Foreword

Welcome to our first quarterly look at student employment in Aotearoa. We're pretty excited to be sharing it.

At SJS, we see thousands of students and employers trying to find the right fit every day. That gives us a useful window into what's happening: where opportunities are growing, where competition is tough, and how work fits around study. We want to share more of what we're learning, because student employment deserves a bigger place in the national conversation.

There's some encouraging news this quarter. Job listings on SJS grew 21% compared with the same time last year, with more employers opening their doors to students. Our team has been out building relationships and bringing in opportunities, from orchards to Christmas retail.

But students won't need a report to tell them finding work is still hard. The number applying through SJS grew 36%, outpacing the growth in opportunities. More jobs are welcome. For many students, the search still takes persistence.

And getting a job is only part of the picture. Can you get there? Do the hours fit your timetable? Is there enough work to help pay the bills? Those details matter when you're trying to earn and learn.

Behind every application is someone with something to offer, looking for a chance. A student job can help cover this week's groceries and build the confidence, experience and connections that shape what comes next.

We hope this first report helps employers, educators and decision-makers understand that experience a little better, and spot opportunities to help.

Thanks for taking a look. There's plenty more to come.

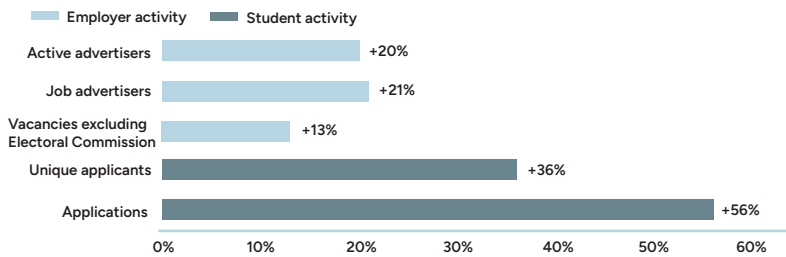


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Year-on-year change in SJS marketplace activity



Source: Student Job Search administrative data. Employer activity includes employers with at least one valid advertisement during the quarter. Vacancy growth excludes the Electoral Commission campaign so that the underlying change remains visible.

Wider labour market conditions

Hiring indicators improved but labour market conditions remained weak

New Zealand recorded a fourth consecutive quarter of economic growth, but momentum slowed. GDP increased 0.2% in the June quarter, following 0.9% growth in March, and was 1.7% higher than a year earlier. Filled jobs then increased in July and August, the first consecutive monthly rises since early 2024, and were 0.9% higher than a year earlier. These figures point to tentative firming rather than a broad hiring recovery. [1][3][15]

SEEK's trend measure showed job advertisements edging up 0.1% in September and standing 7.8% above September 2025. Applications per advertisement increased 2.9% in August, their strongest monthly rise since April 2024, although they remained 2.1% lower than a year earlier. Employer demand improved, but candidate competition did not ease consistently. [13]

Expectations have improved faster than actual conditions. In NZIER's September-quarter survey, a net 40% of businesses expected the wider economy to improve, but activity in firms' own businesses was broadly flat and a net 5% had reduced staff. Treasury similarly described gradual strengthening while household spending, business investment and employment growth remained subdued. NZIER's latest assessment describes the recovery as fragile and uneven. [4][15][16]

The June quarter remains the latest official source for detailed youth labour-market measures. Among young people participating in the labour force, unemployment was 25.3% for 15 to 19-year-olds and 12.0% for 20 to 24-year-olds, while national unemployment was 5.6%. The underutilisation rate for 15 to 24-year-olds was 37.1%. These rates describe young people participating in the relevant labour-market measures, not all young people in those age groups. More recent vacancy and payroll indicators suggest conditions may be stabilising, but they do not yet show that competition for entry-level work has materially eased. [5][6]

Opportunity & competition

More employers advertised but students competed harder for the available work

SJS listed 45,500 vacancies, including 27,900 Electoral Commission vacancies from one national campaign. Removing that campaign leaves 17,600 vacancies, 13% more than a year earlier.

Headline vacancies	Electoral Commission
45,500	27,900
Other vacancies	
17,600	+13%

Underlying growth was not confined to the Electoral Commission campaign. Active advertisers increased 20% and advertisements increased 21%, showing that more employers were participating in the SJS marketplace.

Student activity grew much faster. Excluding the Electoral Commission campaign, 57% of advertisements received at least 10 applications during their first 14 days, up from 44% a year earlier. The proportion receiving 50 or more applications increased from 5% to 12%.

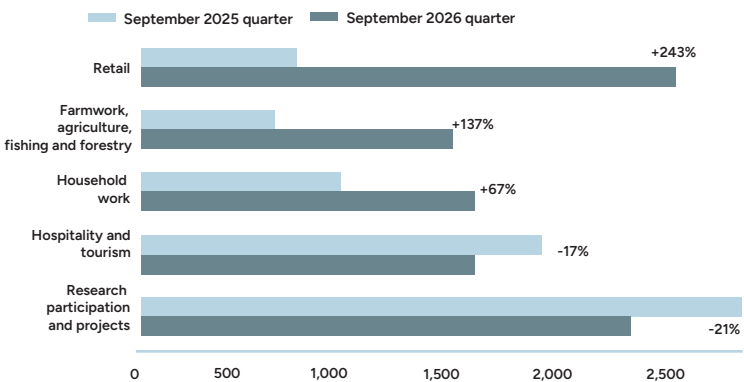
These measures capture student attention rather than applicant suitability or final hiring. Even so, they show that the improvement in employer activity has not yet been enough to ease competition for students.

Sector signals

Seasonal growth sat alongside continued pressure in hospitality

The sectors below were selected because they were large, changed materially, or are especially relevant to common student work and summer recruitment. They are not a ranking. Government and council vacancies are excluded because the Electoral Commission campaign is treated separately.

Vacancies advertised through SJS by selected sector



Source: Student Job Search administrative data. Vacancy counts are rounded to the nearest 100. Percentage labels show the year-on-year change from the September 2025 quarter.

Retail growth was driven largely by a national seasonal campaign seeking to fill approximately 1,600 Christmas casual roles. Vacancies in the Farmwork, agriculture, fishing and forestry classification increased 137%, supported by targeted SJS outreach that brought more kiwifruit-picking, orchard and other seasonal opportunities onto the platform.

This does not mean the total number of jobs across these industries increased at the same rate. Rather, more advertisements and vacancies were brought onto SJS than in the equivalent quarter last year. More generally, movements in SJS sector data can reflect employer outreach, partnerships and large recruitment campaigns as well as changes in the wider labour market.

Household vacancies also increased 67% and received 15% of SJS applications. This category covers work advertised directly by private households, including tutoring, cleaning, gardening and caring roles.

The research participation and projects category largely comprises paid participation in studies, trials and other short research assignments rather than research-sector employment. Advertisements increased from 80 to 110, but vacancies fell 21%, suggesting more separate projects with fewer participant places overall. Student applications increased substantially over the same period.

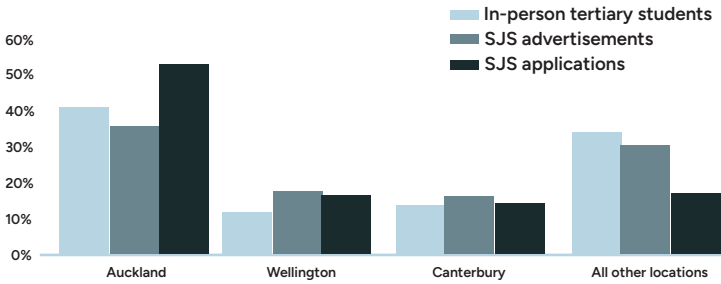
Hospitality and tourism received 19% of SJS applications, the largest industry share. Applications to hospitality roles increased 31% and unique applicants increased 26%, while vacancies fell 17%. The number of separate advertisements nevertheless increased 9%, suggesting employers posted more individual opportunities but offered fewer vacancies overall. MBIE had also recorded a year-on-year decline in its broad Hospitality category through June, while Stats NZ reported accommodation and food-services activity falling 3.8% in the June quarter. More recently, SEEK reported Hospitality and Tourism advertisements increasing 3.2% in September as summer hiring began. These measures cover different periods and markets, but together suggest that student interest remained strong while wider employer demand may only now be beginning to lift. [1][2][13]

Regional patterns

SJS activity was national but applications were concentrated in the main centres

SJS recorded advertisements and applications in every region. All other locations, including remote or nationwide opportunities, accounted for 30% of advertisements and 17% of applications during the quarter. This still represented nearly 24,000 applications outside Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury.

Where students study and SJS activity occurs



Sources: Education Counts and Student Job Search administrative data. Shares are rounded. In-person tertiary students use calendar year 2025 data. SJS activity covers the September 2026 quarter. For SJS, all other locations also includes remote, nationwide and unknown records. [7]

Some concentration in Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury is expected because these regions contain much of New Zealand's tertiary population. Auckland still stands out: it accounted for 41% of students studying in person and 36% of SJS advertisements, but jobs in the region received 53% of applications.

The pattern may reflect the size and composition of Auckland's student population, the industries of advertising, or differences in students' willingness and ability to travel for work. It identifies a matching question for closer investigation rather than establishing a regional labour shortage.

SEEK's wider market data showed year-on-year job-ad growth across most regions, led by Otago, Manawātū and Taranaki, while Northland and Gisborne remained below a year earlier. The measure is not directly comparable with SJS, but it suggests employer demand may be broadening geographically even while applications through SJS remain concentrated in the main tertiary centres. [13]

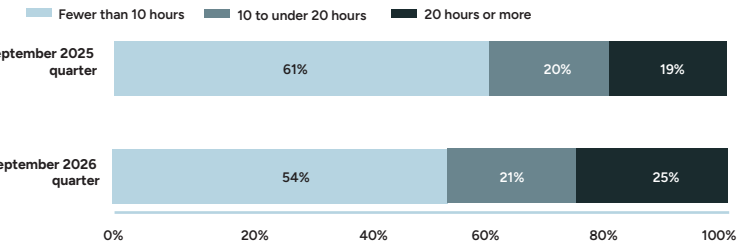
Education Counts figures use the region where in-person study was delivered, not the student's home address. SJS advertisements and applications use the location of the job. The comparison provides context and should not be read as a complete regional labour market picture.

Work alongside study

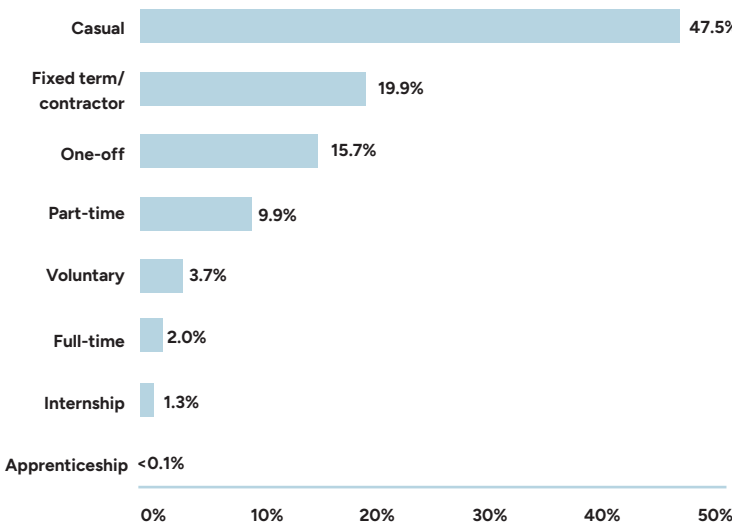
Advertised hours shifted upwards but short-hours and time-limited work remained common

The design of available work matters alongside the number of vacancies. The hours attached to advertisements improved modestly: the proportion recording fewer than 10 hours a week fell from 61% to 54%, while the share recording 20 hours or more increased from 19% to 25%.

Advertisements by recorded weekly hours



Vacancy share by job type, excluding the Electoral Commission campaign



Source: Student Job Search administrative data. Hours use advertisements with usable weekly-hours information. Job type uses vacancies. Both exclude the Electoral Commission campaign.

The job-type mix was also heavily weighted towards flexible and time-limited work. Excluding the Electoral Commission campaign, casual vacancies accounted for 48% of the total, fixed-term and contractor roles 20%, and one-off roles 16%. Together these made up 83% of vacancies. Part-time vacancies represented 10% and full-time vacancies 2%.

Hours and job type are separate views of the quarter. They show the overall design of available work but do not identify which job types sit within each hours band. Fixed-term and contractor vacancies are combined because platform mapping introduced in July 2026 does not support consistent separation across the quarter.

Why the number of hours matters for student income

The figures above show that many SJS opportunities are designed as short-hours or time-limited work. That can make work easier to fit around study, but it can also limit weekly income. For students receiving Student Allowance, the personal-income test adds another layer once earnings pass the weekly threshold.

At the adult minimum wage of \$23.95, 10 hours pays \$239.50 before tax. This is below the \$284.70 weekly personal-income threshold, so it would not, by itself, reduce an eligible student's allowance. At 15 hours, wages increase to \$359.25. The \$74.55 above the threshold would generally be matched by an equivalent reduction in gross Student Allowance. Compared with 10 hours, the additional five hours provide \$119.75 in wages but add only \$45.20 to combined gross wages and allowance while the reduction applies.

This does not mean students are worse off working more. Additional work can provide experience, employer connections, longer-term opportunities and better outcomes post study. It does show that very short-hours roles may provide limited income, while additional hours do not always translate dollar-for-dollar into more immediate income for students receiving an allowance.

Ministry of Education research provides another reason to consider hours alongside pay. Course completion was strongest among students in low and moderate earnings-intensity groups and generally lower at higher intensity, although the research does not establish that work caused these differences. Its earnings-based categories do not map directly to SJS's advertised hours. Together, the evidence points to the importance of work that provides meaningful and predictable income while remaining manageable alongside study. For employers, clearly stated and dependable hours can make opportunities more workable for students. [8]

The example assumes the student receives enough Student Allowance for the full reduction to apply and has no other assessable personal income. Actual take-home income depends on tax codes, student-loan deductions, KiwiSaver and individual circumstances. The wage rate and allowance threshold applied at publication on 15 October 2026. The threshold is an income-test setting, not an estimate of students' living costs. [9][10]

What to watch

New national releases will show whether the improvement is becoming more broadly based

SJS's September-quarter data provides clear evidence of stronger employer participation. It also shows why vacancy growth alone cannot describe the student experience. The location, timing, hours and security attached to a job, together with the number of people competing for it, affect whether an advertised opportunity becomes usable work.

The full SJS Insights report is planned for early November, following MBIE's September-quarter Jobs Online release on 30 October and Stats NZ's September-quarter labour-market release on 4 November. [11][12]

It will combine deeper SJS analysis with the latest national evidence, focusing on retail, hospitality and primary industries, differences across regions and student groups, and how job design and student-support settings shape earning alongside learning. SJS survey findings and qualitative interviews will bring students' experiences directly into the analysis.

About the data

How to read the SJS measures

SJS figures cover marketplace activity from 1 July to 30 September 2026 and are compared with the equivalent 2025 period. Advertisements count individual job listings. Vacancies count the individual roles represented by those advertisements. Application-pressure measures use valid applications received during each advertisement's first 14 days. Figures are rounded, so minor differences may arise between totals.

SJS figures are actual activity recorded on the platform. They have not been adjusted to remove seasonal patterns or smoothed to show the underlying trend. Comparing the same quarter in each year helps account for seasonality, but large campaigns and other one-off events can still influence the results.

SJS represents one large student employment marketplace. Its data provides timely and detailed signals, but it is not a national count of all student employment. External sources may cover different populations, periods and methods, so comparisons provide context rather than directly equivalent measures. This report is not an official labour-market forecast.

References

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