

HOME AFFORDABILITY REPORT

QUARTERLY SURVEY MARCH 2020, VOL 30, NO.4

OVERALL DECLINE IN HOME AFFORDABILITY CONTINUES IN THIS QUARTER. THIS WAS BROADLY DRIVEN BY INCREASES IN QUARTERLY HOUSE PRICES IN MOST OF THE REGIONS AND A STABLE INTEREST RATE

QUARTERLY RESULTS:

- At the national aggregate level, affordability has continued to decline, attributed in this past quarter by improving house prices in many areas and a stable mortgage interest rate. Incomes have continued to show modest increases in most regions, increasing 1.2% overall this quarter.
- The greatest increase in median house prices (in percentage terms) has for the last quarter occurred in Gisborne (14.8% or \$58,000), followed by Northland (12.2% or \$61,000) and Tasman (10.5% or \$63,000). Most regions (12 out of 16) showed an increase in this quarter in house prices, however greatest reduction in median house prices was measured in Nelson (-5.7% or \$35,000).
- At a national level, median house prices saw a slight increase overall (1.6% or \$10,000) for the quarter.
- Overall affordability has declined slightly again this quarter (1.1% nationally). Decline in affordability has been generally observed, with 12 of the 16 districts seeing decline, and remaining 4 improving in affordability. In this quarter, the most significant changes being seen in Marlborough (12.6% decline) as compared to last quarter (3% decline) and Nelson (6.9% improvement). Both regions' changes in affordability are due to changes in income and median house price changes.
- Interest rates slightly increased in this quarter, up by 0.03% to 4.44% as at January 2020. This is a return to the medium-term trend of interest rate changes, after minor reduction in the previous quarter.
- Incomes have slightly increased by 1.2% in aggregate during the quarter, with majority of the regions increasing. The largest changes in income in the quarter occurred in Otago (4.0% increase) and Marlborough (2.7% decrease).

YEARLY RESULTS:

- A national 14.3% annual increase in median sales price (\$80,000 increase to \$640,000) is partially offset by a 9.94% decrease in mortgage interest rates, moving to 4.44% from 4.93% this time last year. This, when combined with a steady increase in wages of 3.6% for the year has seen affordability improve for the 12-month period (0.7% improvement).
- This improvement in affordability at the national level in the past 12 months is reflected in 12 regions (Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, Wellington, Tasman, Nelson, Canterbury and Southland) and remaining four showing declining affordability (Manawatu/Whanganui, Marlborough, West Coast and Otago). The greatest changes for the year are Marlborough at an 11.1% decrease and Auckland at an 8.7% increase.

GENERAL TRENDS

- National House price to income ratios have declines this quarter with house prices moving from 9.6 to 9.7 times annual wages.

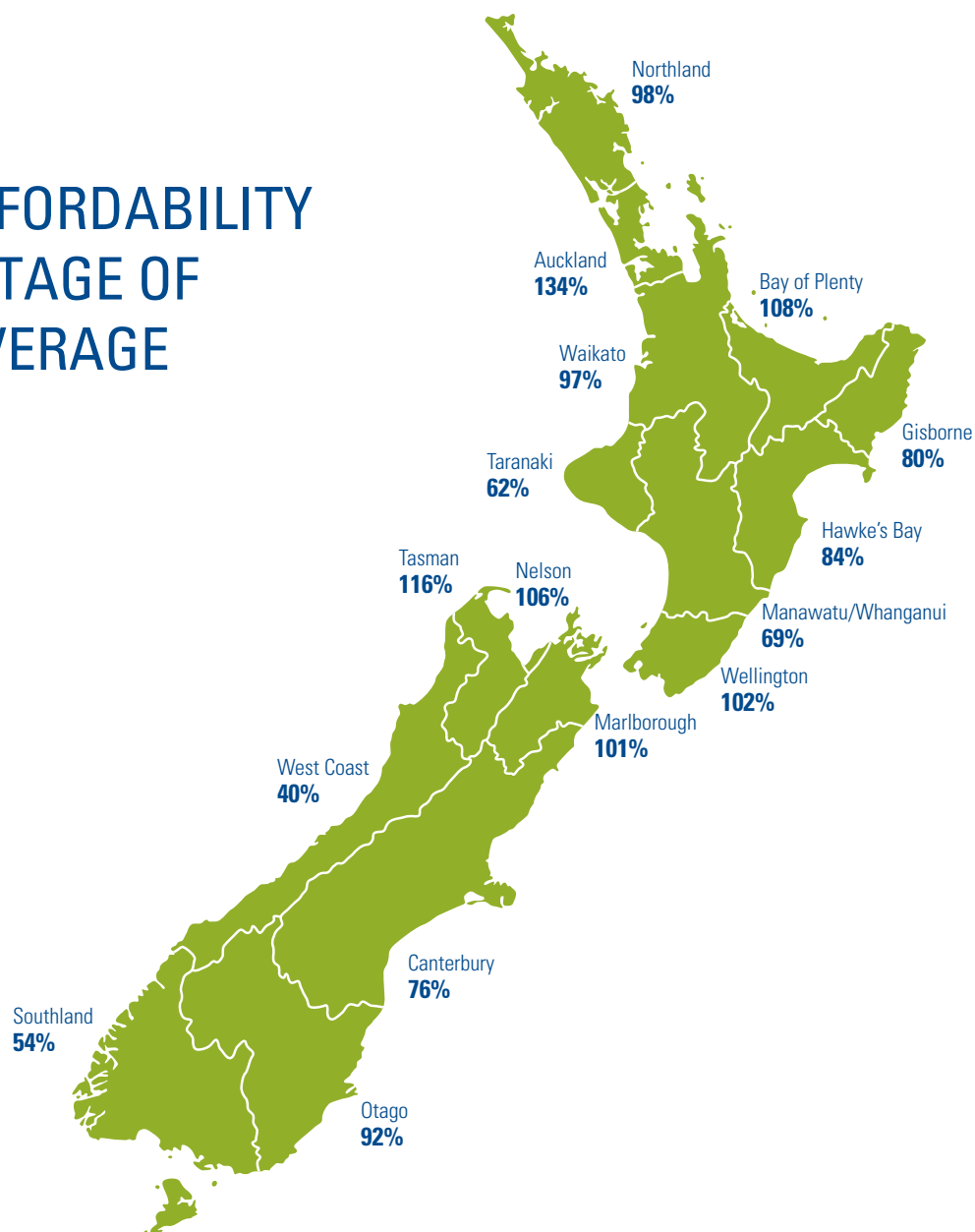
QUARTERLY RESULTS:

- Affordability this quarter declined nationally by 1.1% with a quarterly increase in median house prices of 1.6%.
- This quarter, the primary cause of the decline in affordability has been the increase in median prices in regions like Auckland, Wellington, Gisborne and Tasman, combined with decrease in incomes in some of the regions.

YEARLY RESULTS:

- The yearly results show an annual result of slight increase in affordability at a national level of 0.7%, reflected in 12 regions.
- The yearly drivers of this change include a 9.94% decrease in residential mortgage rates, now at 4.44% compared to 4.93% a year ago. Incomes have also increased by 3.6% nationally over this past year.

REGIONAL AFFORDABILITY AS A PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL AVERAGE



HOME AFFORDABILITY INDEX				PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN HOME AFFORDABILITY IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS		PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN HOME AFFORDABILITY IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS	
Region	Feb 2019	Nov 2019	Feb 2020	Improvement	Decline	Improvement	Decline
Northland	22.6	19.9	22.0	3.0%			9.5%
Auckland	32.8	29.8	29.9	8.7%			0.1%
Waikato	22.8	21.1	21.6	5.1%		0.6%	
Bay of Plenty	24.5	22.8	24.0	1.9%			4.5%
Gisborne	18.2	16.3	17.9	1.5%			12.3%
Hawke's Bay	19.8	18.8	18.7	5.8%		3.2%	
Manawatu/Whanganui	15.0	14.9	15.3		2.4%		6.7%
Taranaki	14.0	13.9	13.8	1.3%			1.6%
Wellington	23.5	21.4	22.8	3.3%			2.1%
Tasman	27.2	25.1	25.9	4.8%			12.5%
Nelson	24.8	24.3	23.7	4.6%		6.9%	
Marlborough	20.2	19.6	22.5		11.1%		12.6%
West Coast	8.2	7.4	8.9		8.8%		11.7%
Canterbury	18.5	17.0	17.0	8.3%			0.1%
Otago	20.1	20.0	20.5		2.2%	1.2%	
Southland	12.4	12.3	12.1	2.3%			1.1%
All Regions	22.5	21.8	22.3	0.7%			1.1%

DATA SOURCES

The Massey Home Affordability Index takes into account the cost of borrowing (mortgage interest rates) as well as house prices and wage levels.

Note that the regional breakdown within this report and the March report has changed from earlier editions. The regional breakdown in this current report is unable to be fully compared to reports prior to March 2019. The regional breakdown contained herein for the 3 month and 12 month periods are unable to be directly compared with earlier reports. Please contact the authors for comparisons with earlier editions of this report. Waikato/Bay of Plenty/Gisborne district is now 3 separate districts: Waikato; Bay of Plenty; Gisborne. Nelson/Marlborough/Kaikoura district is now comprised within Tasman; Nelson; Marlborough districts. Kaikoura is now contained within Canterbury district. Canterbury/Westland district is now 2 districts: Canterbury; West Coast. Central Otago Lakes district is now contained within Otago district.

TERMINOLOGY

Housing affordability for housing in New Zealand can be assessed by comparing the average weekly earnings with the median dwelling price and the mortgage interest rate. The earnings figure represents the money available to the family, or household unit, and the median dwelling price combined with the mortgage interest rates provide an indicator of the expense involved.

MEDIAN DWELLING PRICES

Median dwelling prices for various regions within New Zealand are released monthly by the REINZ. The figures are obtained from a survey of member agencies' sales during that specific month. There may be irregularities in the data resulting from errors in the returns or processing, but when individual returns are combined with those of other agencies the distortion is likely to be small. In some months there may be very few transactions and this can result in somewhat non-representative median prices. The REINZ continues to research ways of improving the quality of the data. The research, and other continuing action by the REINZ to monitor and improve data quality, should minimise data errors.

AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS

Average national and regional weekly earnings data is provided directly by Statistics New Zealand.

AVERAGE MONTHLY INTEREST RATES

The Reserve Bank New Zealand (RBNZ) publishes a range of data on mortgage interest rates. Some interest data provided by the Reserve Bank has been discontinued in

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April 2017 (E5.10 Total Monthly yield weighted average % on balance sheet).

The Reserve Bank series selected for this quarter's home affordability index is based on a 2-year fixed new residential average mortgage interest rates at the end of month for registered banks (B20). This quarter's rate is 4.92%, which is a 12-month negative % change of 3.15%.

MASSEY UNIVERSITY PROPERTY FOUNDATION

The Foundation is established to sponsor research and education in property related matters in New Zealand. Funding is obtained through sponsorship from corporations and firms within the property industry. The Foundation has also established a Real Estate Analysis Unit.

The Foundation works closely with the Property Studies Group at Massey University.

SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCE MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Massey University has three campuses, located in Palmerston North, Wellington and Auckland, in New Zealand. The University has an enrolment of 33,000 students with approximately 13,000 business students. There are five schools within the Massey Business School.

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