

Overview of Lower Hutt City

Continued employment and GDP growth, as well as a strong pipeline of residential and non-residential consents, indicate Lower Hutt City's underlying economic robustness. A rapidly cooling housing market and falling consumer spending in real terms suggest that rising interest rates are starting to take their toll.

Infometrics provisionally estimates that Lower Hutt GDP grew by a solid 3.0% over the December 2022 year. Consumer spending in the city rose 5.3% in the December 2022 year according to Marketview data. However, with price inflation running at 7.2%, spending in the city fell in real terms.

Employment of Lower Hutt residents rose 1.9% over the December 2022 year with construction and construction-related services, IT, and central government sectors posting the largest job gains. The strong labour market has kept the Lower Hutt unemployment rate low at 2.7% on average over the December 2022 year. Jobseeker Support recipient numbers continue to fall, down 12% in Lower Hutt on average over the December 2022 year. On a quarterly basis, Jobseeker Support recipients in the December 2022 quarter were 0.3% lower than in (pre-pandemic) December 2019.

The Lower Hutt housing market continues to weaken in the face of rising interest rates. House values in the city fell 21%pa in the December 2022 quarter, the third successive quarterly decline, and a big turnaround from the 39%pa growth seen just over a year ago in the September 2021 quarter. Falling house prices have discouraged sellers with house sales in Lower Hutt down 32% in the December 2022 year.

Residential consents in Lower Hutt have been elevated through much of the pandemic, rising 28% over the December 2022 year thanks to strong consent numbers for attached dwellings like townhouses, and also more retirement village units. Non-residential consents have weakened but remain at elevated levels. Falls in factory and industrial building consents have been partially offset by rises in shops, restaurants and bars, social, cultural and religious buildings, storage buildings, and office administration and public transport buildings.

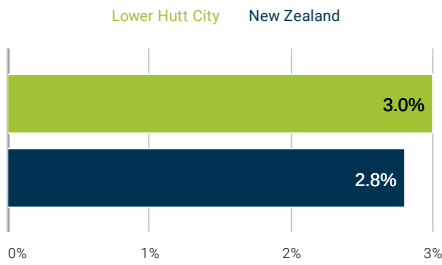
Indicator	Lower Hutt City	Wellington Region	New Zealand
Annual Average % change			
Gross domestic product (provisional)	3.0% ▲	2.3% ▲	2.8% ▲
Consumer spending	5.3% ▲	5.0% ▲	10.3% ▲
Employment (place of residence)	1.9% ▲	2.0% ▲	2.5% ▲
Jobseeker Support recipients	-11.5% ▼	-13.2% ▼	-10.9% ▼
Tourism expenditure	10.7% ▲	12.6% ▲	18.9% ▲
Guest nights	14.4% ▲	14.5% ▲	22.4% ▲
Health enrolments	-0.6% ▼	-0.4% ▼	0.4% ▲
Residential consents	28.3% ▲	5.9% ▲	1.1% ▲
Non-residential consents	-11.6% ▼	25.3% ▲	13.1% ▲
House values *	-20.9% ▼	-18.2% ▼	-9.2% ▼
House sales	-31.6% ▼	-24.8% ▼	-29.6% ▼
Car registrations	-8.8% ▼	-12.3% ▼	-2.2% ▼
Commercial vehicle registrations	-10.0% ▼	-5.7% ▼	-6.2% ▼
Level			
Unemployment rate	2.7%	2.8%	3.3%

* Annual percentage change (latest quarter compared to a year earlier)

Gross domestic product

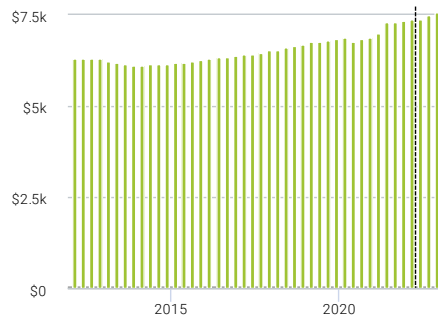
Gross domestic product growth (provisional)

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



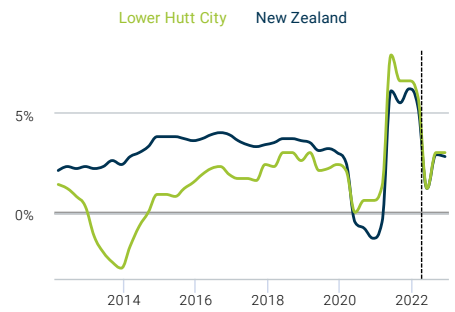
Gross domestic product (\$m)

Annual level, Lower Hutt City



Gross domestic product growth

Annual average % change



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- GDP in Lower Hutt City was provisionally up 3% for the year to December 2022, compared to a year earlier. Growth was higher than in New Zealand (2.8%).
- Provisional GDP was \$7,552 million in Lower Hutt City for the year to December 2022 (2022 prices).
- Annual GDP growth in Lower Hutt City peaked at 7.9% in the year to June 2021.

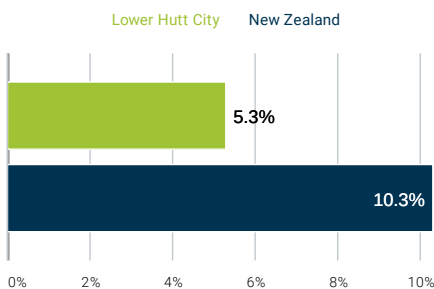
National overview

The late stages of 2022 saw some signs of the collective economy trying to “cool the jets” as inflation remained stubbornly high and the Reserve Bank signalled an engineered recession to realign economic demand and supply. Provisional Infometrics estimates suggest that economic activity rose 3.4%pa in the December 2022 quarter, dragging annual average growth back to 2.8%pa over the 12 months to December 2022. We think that underlying economic activity was broadly flat to declining at the end of 2022, partially because of how strong the September 2022 quarter was. Rapidly strengthening tourism activity has bolstered the broader transport sector, and professional services are still moving ahead at pace. But the construction sector appears to be working at capacity, and the primary sector continues to struggle with higher costs and fewer workers. Looking ahead, we expect that the floods in Auckland and the massive disruptions from Cyclone Gabrielle will dampen economic activity at the start of 2023, before providing an artificial boost to growth as the recovery swings into action.

Consumer spending

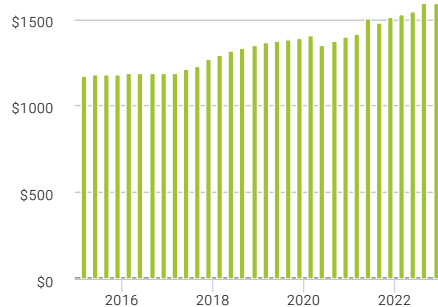
Growth in consumer spending

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



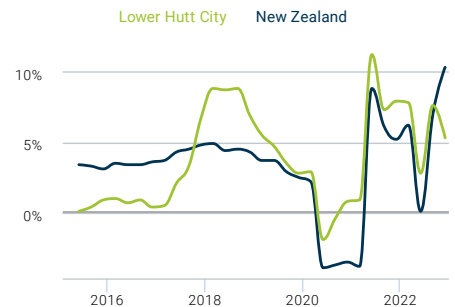
Consumer spending (\$m)

Annual level, Lower Hutt City



Consumer spending

Annual average % change



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

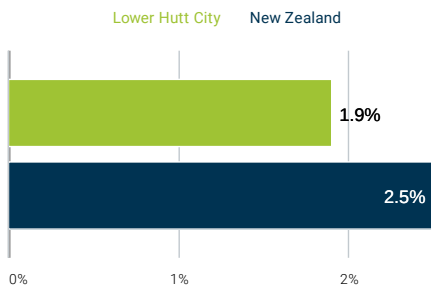
- Electronic card consumer spending in Lower Hutt City as measured by Marketview, increased by 5.3% over the year to December 2022, compared to a year earlier. This compares with an increase of 10.3% in New Zealand.

National overview

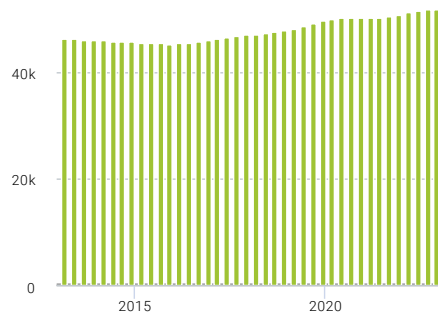
Consumer spending remains elevated across New Zealand, with the value of annual spending up 10%pa over the 12 months to December 2022, according to Marketview data. December’s record-high annual growth was driven substantially by persistently rising costs of goods and services meaning that higher spending resulted in less bang for buck. Even with inflation running at 7.2%pa, there was a modest increase in real spending. This result highlights the resilience of consumer demand so far to both inflation and rising interest rates. We expect spending activity to cool in 2023 as the effect of interest rate hikes begins to limit household budgets.

Employment (place of residence)

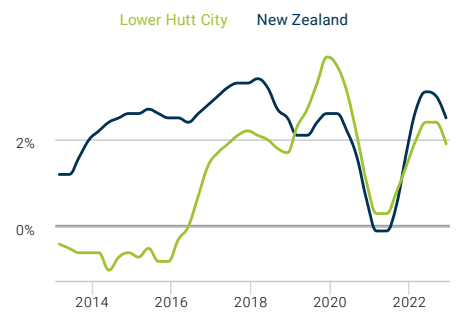
Employment (place of residence) growth
Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



Employment (place of residence)
Annual level, Lower Hutt City



Employment (place of residence) growth
Annual average % change



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

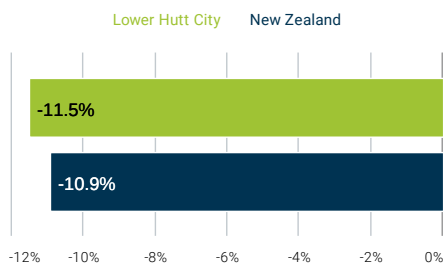
- Employment for residents living in Lower Hutt City was up 1.9% for the year to December 2022, compared to a year earlier. Growth was lower than in New Zealand (2.5%).
- An average of 51,695 people living in Lower Hutt City were employed in the year to December 2022.
- Annual employment growth for Lower Hutt City residents peaked at 3.9% in the year to December 2019.

National overview

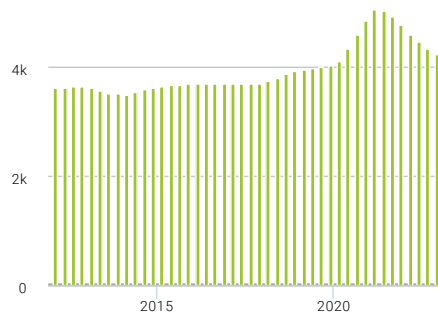
Employment levels edged higher again at the end of 2022, but this growth has again been restrained by the tight labour market. Employment growth slowed to 1.7%pa in the December 2022 quarter compared to December a year ago, slowing the annual average employment growth rate to 2.5%pa. There are emerging signs right at the end of 2022 and into 2023 that the labour market is starting to level out, with monthly filled jobs showing an underlying decline in the December month, and job ads pulling back from high levels. Employment intentions have also softened in the face of a likely recession in 2023, but that softening so far is being reflected in businesses pulling back on hiring they've struggled to complete anyway.

Jobseeker Support recipients

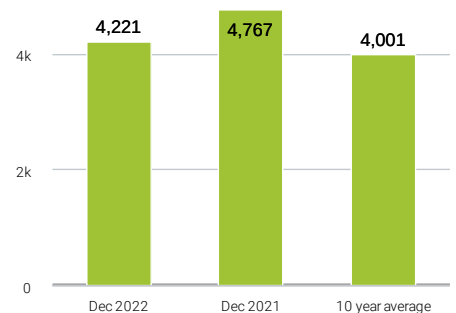
Annual change in Jobseeker Support recipients
Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



Jobseeker Support recipients
Annual average, Lower Hutt City



Jobseeker Support recipients
Annual average, Lower Hutt City



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- Jobseeker Support recipients in Lower Hutt City in the year to December 2022 decreased by 11.5% compared to a year earlier. The decline was greater than in New Zealand (10.9%).
- An average of 4,221 people were receiving a Jobseeker Support benefit in Lower Hutt City in the 12 months ended December 2022. This compares with an average of 4,001 since the start of the series in 2013.

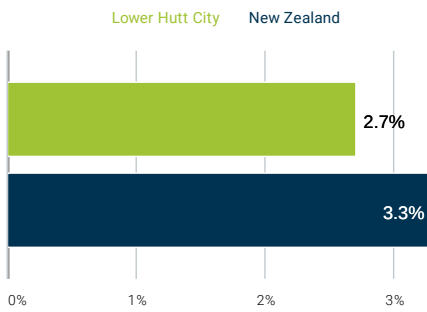
National overview

Jobseeker Support recipients continue to moderate as the tight labour market draws more people into the workforce. On average over the 2022 calendar year, Jobseeker Support recipient numbers declined to around 172,000, below the peak of more than 200,000 at the end of 2021 and into 2022. Annual average Jobseeker Support recipient levels fell 10% over the year to December 2022. However, annual average Jobseeker Support recipient levels remain 20% above the average over the last decade, suggesting that despite the tight labour market, there are still barriers to getting this group into employment.

Unemployment rate

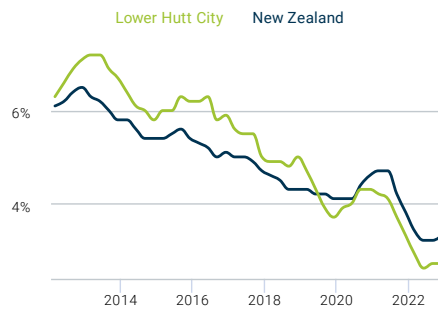
Unemployment rate

Annual average rate to December 2022



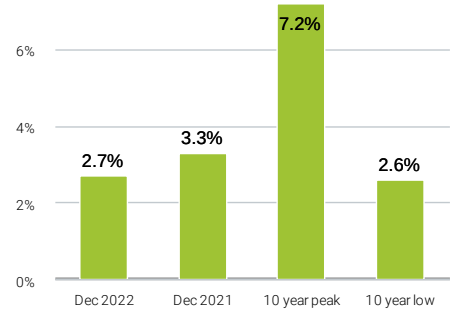
Unemployment rate

Annual average rate



Unemployment rate

Annual average, Lower Hutt City



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- The annual average unemployment rate in Lower Hutt City was 2.7% in the year to December 2022, down from 3.3% in the previous 12 months.
- In the year to December 2022, the annual average unemployment rate in Lower Hutt City was lower than in New Zealand (3.3%).
- Over the last ten years the annual average unemployment rate in Lower Hutt City reached a peak of 7.2% in June 2013.

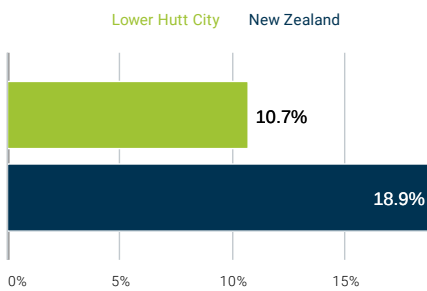
National overview

The annual average unemployment rate was unchanged over the year to December 2022, averaging 3.3%. The 3.3% average unemployment rate in the September 2022 year was a decade-low, and maintaining this low in the December 2022 year highlights the tightness of New Zealand's labour market over the last 12 months. For much of the year to December 2022, the supply of labour remained constrained by limits on migrant workers as part of the government's "immigration reset", though immigration settings eased towards the end of the year.

Tourism expenditure

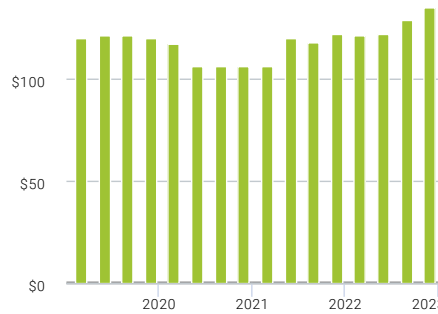
Tourism expenditure

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



Tourism expenditure

Annual total, Lower Hutt City (\$m)



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- Total tourism expenditure in Lower Hutt City increased by 10.7% in the year to December 2022, compared to a year earlier. This compares with an increase of 18.9% in New Zealand.
- Total tourism expenditure was approximately \$135 million in Lower Hutt City during the year to December 2022, which was up from \$122 million a year ago.

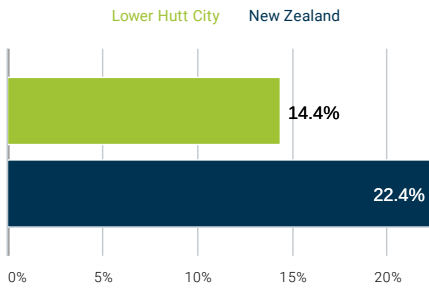
National overview

Tourism activity continues to strengthen at pace, with tourism spending rising nearly 19%pa over the 12 months to December 2022 compared to a year earlier. Card spending by tourists is now sitting 3.8% higher than at the end of 2019 (pre-pandemic), a big recovery. We'd note that this growth doesn't tell the full picture – there's still far fewer international visitors in New Zealand than pre-pandemic, and card-only tourism spending doesn't as accurately cover the full tourism spending spectrum – but it's what we've got for the moment. High inflation, of a cumulative 13% on average since 2019, means that actual volumes of tourism activity are lower than the growth in card spending suggests.

Guest nights

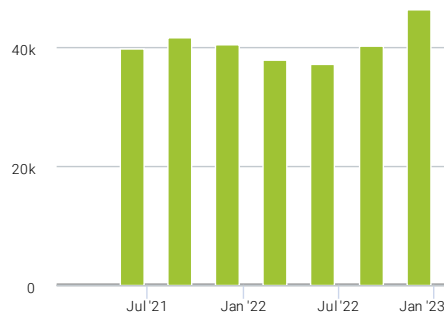
Guest nights

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



Guest nights

Annual number, Lower Hutt City



Guest nights

Annual total guest nights in December 2022 quarter



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- Total guest nights in Lower Hutt City increased by 14.4% in the year to December 2022, compared to a year earlier. This compares with an increase of 22.4% in New Zealand.
- Visitors stayed a total of 46,375 nights in Lower Hutt City during the year to December 2022, which was up from 40,525 a year ago.

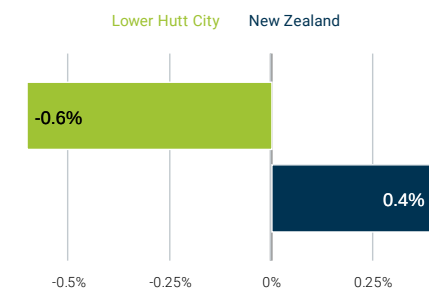
National overview

Guest nights reached their highest level in nearly three years, with a total of 9.9m guest nights in the December 2022 quarter. December 2022 quarter guest nights were nearly double levels seen in December 2021, and approximately 90% of the December 2018 quarter, indicating the strength of the tourism recovery since international borders reopened in July 2022. Over the year ending December 2022, guest nights increased 22%pa. Despite the strong recovery, international visitors made up just 27% of guest nights in the December 2022 quarter, highlighting that domestic visitors remains a significant driver of the accommodation market, and could show vulnerability as the domestic economy enters recession.

Health enrolments

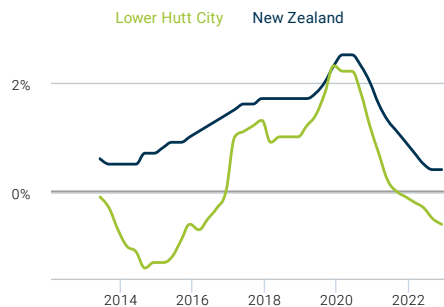
Annual change in health enrolments

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



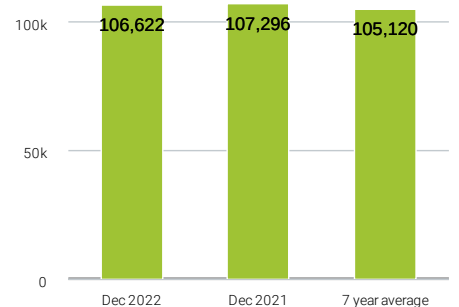
Health enrolments

Annual average % change



Health enrolments

Annual average, Lower Hutt City



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- The number of people enrolled with a primary health organisation in Lower Hutt City in the year to December 2022 decreased by 0.6% compared to a year earlier. The decline was greater than in New Zealand (0.4% growth).
- An average of 106,622 people were enrolled with primary healthcare providers in Lower Hutt City in the 12 months ended December 2022. This compares with an average of 104,412 since the start of the series in 2014.

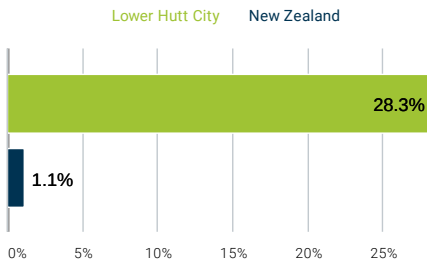
National overview

Health enrolments rose 0.6%pa in the December 2022 quarter from the prior December, which kept average growth over the December 2022 year at 0.4%pa. Population growth has been limited recently as annual natural increases (births minus deaths) fell to a 25-year low, following a 10% increase in deaths over the 2022 calendar year. However, annual net migration turned positive for the first time in two years, with a net inflow of almost 16,000 in the year to December. We expect net migration to continue rising over 2023, providing some support to population growth as the natural increase remains limited.

Residential consents

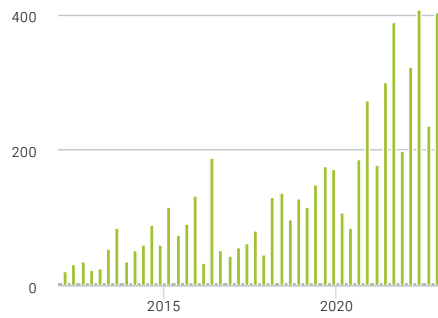
Growth in number of new dwelling consents

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



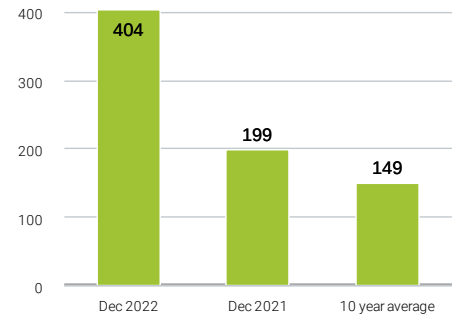
Residential consents

Quarterly number, Lower Hutt City



Number of new dwelling consents

Quarterly number, Lower Hutt City



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- A total of 404 new residential building consents were issued in Lower Hutt City in the December 2022 quarter, compared with 199 in the same quarter last year.
- On an annual basis the number of consents in Lower Hutt City increased by 28.3% compared with the same 12-month period a year before. This compares with an increase of 1.1% in New Zealand over the same period.

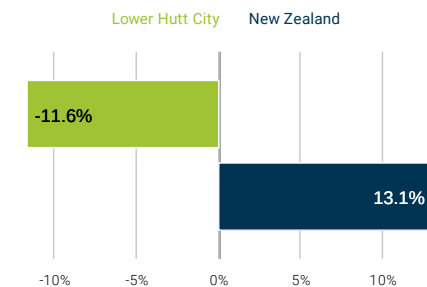
National overview

Residential consents eased in the December 2022 quarter to 11,674 consents, a decline of 9.3% when compared to December 2021. This decline saw annual consents over the 12 months to December 2022 up just 1.1%pa from the prior year. Rising interest rates, higher building costs, and falling property values appear to be limiting demand for new homes, which is slowing residential consents. Although residential consents are trending downwards, consent numbers remain highly elevated on historical levels, with consents in the December 2022 quarter sitting 29% higher than the average quarter of the last ten years.

Non-residential consents

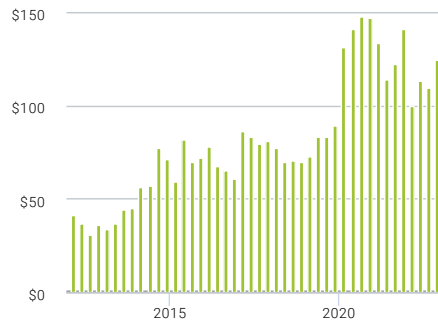
Growth in value of consents

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



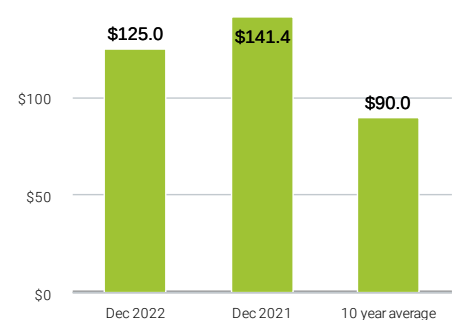
Non-residential consents, Lower Hutt City

\$m, annual running total, Lower Hutt City



Non-residential consents

Annual value (\$m), Lower Hutt City



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- Non-residential building consents to the value of \$125.0 million were issued in Lower Hutt City during the year to December 2022.
- The value of consents in Lower Hutt City decreased by 11.6% over the year to December 2022, compared to a year earlier. In comparison, the value of consents increased by 13.1% in New Zealand over the same period.
- Over the last 10 years, consents in Lower Hutt City reached a peak of \$148.1 million in the year to September 2020.

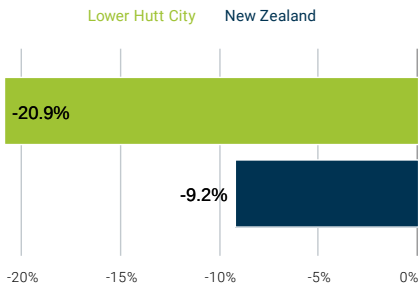
National overview

Non-residential consents continued their momentum in the December 2022 year, totalling nearly \$9.5b, a 13% increase on the December 2021 year. The annual value of non-residential consents has consistently increased since mid-2020, although higher building costs will be partly responsible for the higher consent values. A strong year for factory and storage building construction has underpinned the high level of non-residential construction, as New Zealand producers bolstered their supply chains by onshoring parts of their production process and warehousing higher volumes of stock around the country.

House values

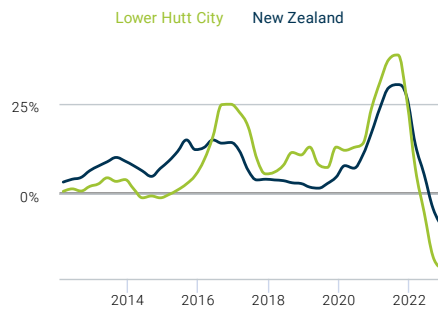
Annual change in house value

Annual % change in house value December 2021 - December 2022



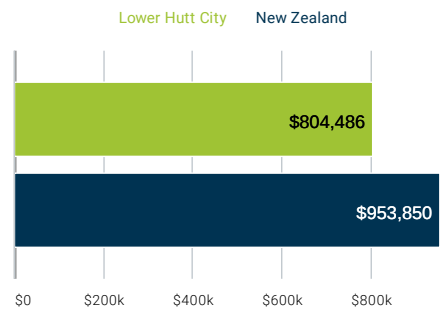
House value growth

Annual % change



Average current house value

Average house value in December 2022 quarter



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- The average current house value in Lower Hutt City was down 20.9% in December 2022, compared to a year earlier. The decline was greater than in New Zealand (9.2%).
- The average current house value was \$804,486 in Lower Hutt City in December 2022. This compares with \$953,850 in New Zealand.

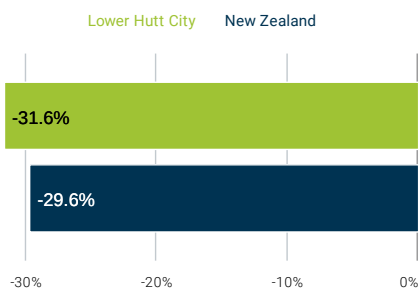
National overview

The national housing market was confronted with a substantial downturn in the December 2022 quarter, with house values declining 9.2% from the December 2021 quarter. The Reserve Bank lifted the Official Cash Rate to 4.25% in November, lifting mortgage rates in the December 2022 quarter, with interest rates on one-year fixed mortgages averaging 6.1%. Potential purchasers' budgets were also squeezed by high inflation, which ran at 7.2%pa in the December 2022 quarter. Rising interest rates and high inflation have squeezed household budgets, reducing households ability to pay high prices for properties, resulting in the average house value falling to \$953,850 in December 2022.

House sales

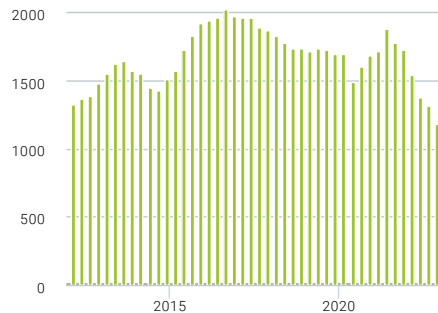
Annual change in house sales

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



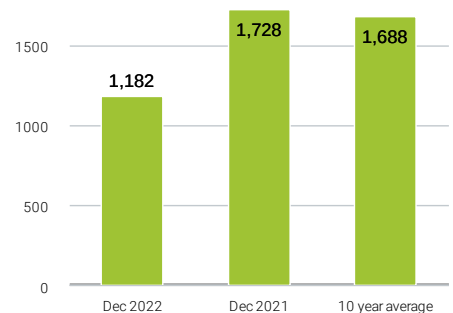
House sales

Annual number, Lower Hutt City



House sales

Annual number, Lower Hutt City



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- House sales in Lower Hutt City decreased by 31.6% in the year to December 2022, compared to year earlier. This compares with a decrease of 29.6% in New Zealand.
- A total of 1,182 houses were sold in Lower Hutt City in the 12 months ended December 2022. This compares with the ten year average of 1,688.

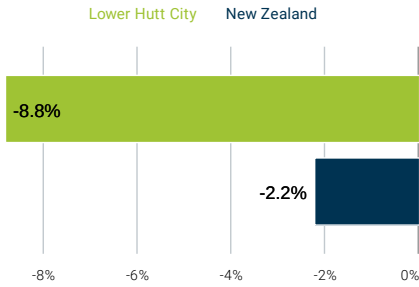
National overview

There were 62,249 house sales in the year ended December 2022, a 30% decrease from the previous year. Over the last 12 months, higher interest rates and high inflation have limited buyers' ability to purchase houses. As a result, lower prices have also limited vendors' willingness to sell houses. This combination has led to sales activity nearing all-time lows, with house sales volume in the December 2022 year down 22% compared to the average sales volume of the last decade.

Car registrations

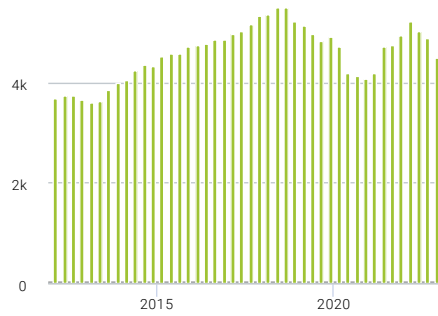
Car registrations

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



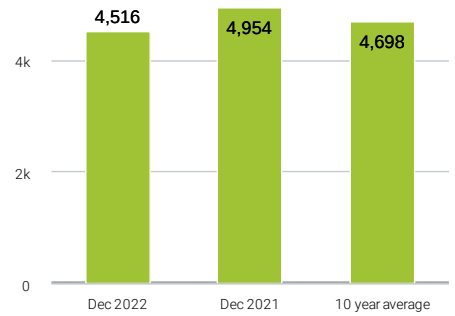
Car registrations

Annual number, Lower Hutt City



Car registrations

Annual number, Lower Hutt City



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- The number of cars registered in Lower Hutt City decreased by 8.8% in the year to December 2022, compared to a year earlier. The decline was greater than in New Zealand (2.2%).
- A total of 4,516 cars were registered in Lower Hutt City in the year to December 2022. This compares with the ten year annual average of 4,698.

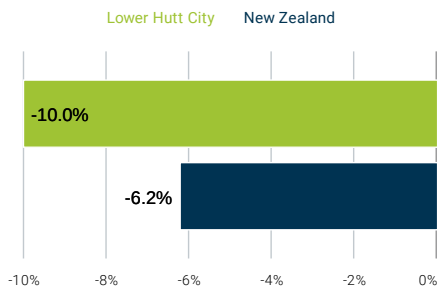
National overview

Over 234,400 passenger cars were registered in the December 2022 year, a 2.2% decline compared to the year ended December 2021. High inflation, which ran at 7.2%pa in December 2022, strained household budgets and limited demand for car purchases. Higher interest rates made buying cars on finance less affordable, also reducing demand for cars. After the 2.2% decline in the December 2022 year, car registrations are now 8.6% below the 10-year average.

Commercial vehicle registrations

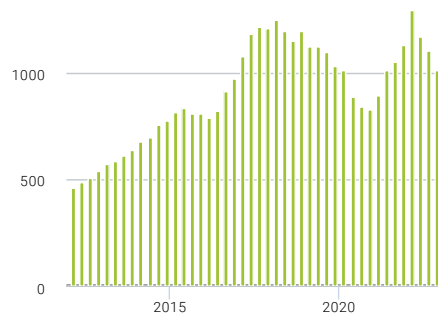
Commercial vehicle registrations

Annual average % change December 2021 - December 2022



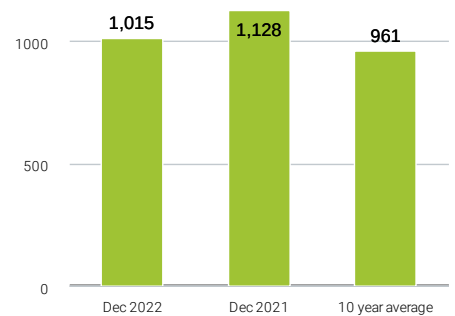
Commercial vehicle registrations

Annual number, Lower Hutt City



Commercial vehicle registrations

Annual number, Lower Hutt City



Highlights for Lower Hutt City

- The number of commercial vehicles registered in Lower Hutt City decreased by 10% in the year to December 2022, compared to a year earlier. The decline was greater than in New Zealand (6.2%).
- A total of 1,015 commercial vehicles were registered in Lower Hutt City in the year to December 2022. This is higher than the ten year annual average of 961.

National overview

There were 54,788 commercial vehicles registered in the December 2022 year, a 6.2% decline from the year ended December 2021, though consistent with average registrations over the last decade. The outlook for construction activity softened in the December 2022 year, easing registrations of commercial vehicles. However, stable consumer spending has supported demand for road transport services of the December 2022 year, moderating the fall in commercial registrations.

Technical notes

Building Consents

Building consents data is sourced from Statistics New Zealand. The number of residential consents issued for new dwellings is the measure for residential consents. For non-residential consents, the measure is the value of both new buildings and alterations.

Consumer Spending

The consumer spending data is sourced from Marketview. It measures total electronic card spending using spending through the Paymark network and adding to it an estimate of non-Paymark network spending using the pattern of BNZ card holder spending at non-Paymark retailers. For further breakdown of the data by storetype and other variables contact Marketview.

Employment (place of residence)

Employment data is based off a range of Stats NZ employment datasets, and represents the number of filled jobs, based on the area of residential address for the employee (rather than workplace address). This place of residence location means that the employment series reflects trends in employment of an area's residents, which may be different to trends in employment at businesses in an area, particularly when there are strong commuting flows. The most recent quarter is based off the average of Monthly Employment Indicator (MEI) filled jobs from Statistics New Zealand for the past three months, with previous quarters being backcasted using the percentage change in the quarterly Business Data Collection dataset published by Statistics New Zealand.

Gross Domestic Product

Gross Domestic Product is estimated by Infometrics. A top-down approach breaks national industrial production (sourced from production based GDP measures published by Statistics New Zealand) to TA level by applying TA shares to the national total. Each TA's share of industry output is based on labour market data from LEED. GDP growth in recent quarters is based on a model which uses the various partial economic indicators presented in this report as inputs. Estimates of GDP for these most recent quarters are provisional until Infometrics updates its annual GDP series in the Regional Economic Profile at the beginning of each year. Gross domestic product is measured in 2022 dollar terms.

Guest Nights

The number of guest nights is sourced from the Accommodation Data Programme, which is funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and managed by Fresh Info. A guest night is equivalent to one guest spending one night at an establishment. For example, a motel with 15 guests spending two nights would report that they had provided 30 guest nights

Health Enrolments

Health enrolments are sourced from the Ministry of Health. They record the number of people in each area who are enrolled with a Primary Health Organisation (PHO). Enrolment is voluntary, but most New Zealanders enrol at a general practice for health reasons and for the benefits of enrolment, such as cheaper doctors' visits and reduced costs of prescription medicines. Changes to how the Ministry of Health recorded this data led to Infometrics revising our approach to health enrolment figures for the March 2019 Quarterly Economic Monitor onwards. Our new approach completely revises our timeseries of health enrolments, so care should be taken when comparing the March 2019 report with previously downloaded reports.

Previously, the data provided was only for those people whose addresses are able to be accurately recorded by the Ministry of Health. We have now switched to breaking down TA-level health enrolments based on trends in stated health enrolments by area, to ensure that the total number of enrolees published in the Monitor align with the national-level figures published by the Ministry of Health. A new system for classifying and recording health enrolment addresses from March 2019 onwards by the Ministry means significantly higher numbers of unallocated enrolees, resulting in the need to review our model.

House Sales

The number of house sales is sourced from REINZ. The indicator measures the number of house sales at the point when the sale becomes unconditional. The unconditional date is the date when all the terms of an agreement have been satisfied and the sale and purchase can proceed to settlement.

House Values

House values (dollar value) are sourced from CoreLogic. The levels quoted in the report are average values for the quarter.

Jobseeker Support Recipients

In July 2013 the New Zealand's welfare system changed to better recognise and support people's work potential. As part of this the Jobseekers Support benefit was introduced. This benefit is for people who can usually look or prepare for work but also includes people who can only work part-time or can't work at the moment, for example, because they have a health condition, injury or disability.

Data presented for the September 2013 quarter onwards is provided by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). Data prior to September 2013 are Infometrics estimates based on re-grouping pre-July 2013 benefit categories to be consistent with the post-July 2013 benefit categories. The pre-July 2013 benefit categories used to estimate the number of Jobseekers Support recipients are: Unemployment Benefit and Unemployment Benefit Hardship; Unemployment Benefit Training and Unemployment Benefit Hardship Training; Sickness Benefit and Sickness Benefit Hardship; Domestic Purposes Benefit - Sole Parent (if youngest child is 14 or over); Women Alone and Widow's Benefit (without children or with children 14 or over)

Tourism Expenditure

New Tourism Electronic Card Transactions (TECTs) are an interim replacement for the Monthly Regional Tourism Estimates (MRTEs). We have removed our previous timeseries of MRTEs and published the three annual snapshots provided in the TECTs. The TECTs reflect the expenditure for all electronic card transactions (ECTs) in New Zealand related to tourism. Marketview use a base of spending on the Paymark network (approximately 70 per cent of total ECT spend) to scale up to total ECT spend.

Traffic Flow

Traffic flow growth rates are calculated from the number of vehicles passing approximately 110 sites monitored by New Zealand Transport Agency. Each of the sites has been mapped to a territorial authority.

Unemployment Rate

Regional level unemployment rates are sourced from Statistics New Zealand's Household Labour Force Survey. Trends in the number of Jobseekers are used to break down regional unemployment rates to TA levels. The TA level unemployment rates are benchmarked on census following the release of each census. To reduce volatility the unemployment rate is presented as an average for the last four quarters.

Vehicle Sales

Car and commercial vehicle sales data are sourced from New Zealand Transport Authority. Sales are based on new registrations which include the first time registration of new vehicles and used vehicles imported from overseas.

Weekly Rents

Rents (\$ per week) are sourced from monthly data provided by MBIE and averaged across each quarter or year using weighted geometric means. Rental data pertains to averages from data collected when bonds are lodged and does not control for specifications of the home (eg. size, number of bedrooms, age of home, etc).