

The NZ Regional Economic Scoreboard ranks the economic performance of New Zealand's 16 Regional Council areas. The fastest growing regions gain the highest ratings, and a good performance by the national economy raises the ratings of all regions. Ratings are updated every 3 months, and are calculated based on the latest annual growth in 7 measures: employment, construction, retail trade, house prices, car registrations, house sales, population.

Taking the regions' temperatures

	Share of NZ economy		Employment		Retail trade		House prices		Construction		Population		New car sales		Rating	
	Dec-03	Dec-03	Dec-03	Dec-03	Dec-03	Dec-03	Dec-03	Dec-03	Dec-03	Dec-03	Jun-03	Dec-03	Dec-03	Dec-03		
	%	000s	annual growth	\$m	annual growth	\$000s	annual growth	\$m	annual growth	\$m	annual growth	000s	annual growth	No.	annual growth	5 - hot 1 - not
Northland	3%	59	1%	290	-13%	195	16%	44	77%	147	0.8%	404	15%	☆☆☆		
Auckland	30%	597	3%	3574	6%	325	21%	282	6%	1291	3.2%	8388	15%	☆☆☆☆		
Waikato	9%	176	-1%	852	-4%			75	40%	378	1.2%	1364	10%	☆☆		
Bay of Plenty	5%	105	-1%	697	11%	193	10%	47	-14%	254	1.6%	958	19%	☆☆☆		
Gisborne	1%			89	-5%			3	-5%	45	0.0%	107	-16%	☆☆		
Hawkes Bay	3%	86	2%	373	14%	178	14%	22	83%	149	0.3%	503	-4%	☆☆☆		
Taranaki	3%			228	-18%	136	18%	14	54%	106	0.2%	298	-15%	☆☆		
Manawatu-Wanganui	5%	160	0%	573	15%	134	32%	28	53%	227	0.1%	701	20%	☆☆☆☆		
Wellington	13%	245	4%	1203	4%	241	12%	113	106%	452	1.4%	1613	1%	☆☆☆		
Tasman				134	55%					45	2.8%			☆☆☆☆		
Nelson	3%			127	-28%	286	63%	34	55%	45	2.3%	508	15%	☆☆☆☆		
Marlborough		82	2%	112	15%					42	1.5%			☆☆☆☆		
West Coast	1%			60	-13%			4	-7%	31	-0.3%	98	-6%	☆☆☆		
Canterbury	15%	298	6%	1317	-1%	190	25%	109	29%	513	1.8%	3106	22%	☆☆☆☆		
Otago	5%	150	6%	606	26%	153	39%	37	11%	193	1.2%	729	15%	☆☆☆☆		
Southland	3%			239	-19%	110	26%	18	-10%	94	0.4%	291	-8%	☆☆☆		
New Zealand	100%	1956	3%	10475	4%	229	19%	830	26%	4010	1.8%	19068	13%	☆☆☆		

☆☆☆☆☆ The place to be ☆☆☆☆ Be there or be square ☆☆☆ Fair to middling ☆☆ Needs an energy injection ☆ Take pity

The National State of Play

Employment ☆☆☆

Sluggish employment growth in the December quarter was not enough to soak up steady growth in the working age population.

Wages ☆☆☆☆

Wage growth has lost none of its strength - total wage growth for the year to December (2.4%) was the highest since September 1997.

House sales/prices ☆☆☆☆

Anecdotal and survey evidence shows confidence in the housing market has started to abate.

Retail ☆☆☆

Although growth in retail sales for 2003 was healthy - the December quarter result is up 5.9% on the previous year - there are signs retail trade is slowing.

Car sales ☆☆☆

Sales of imported used cars are in decline - suggesting household spending is running out of steam.

Confidence ☆☆☆

General business confidence has slipped but firms are nonetheless optimistic about their prospects in 2004.

Construction ☆☆☆☆

The value of non-residential building consents continues to rise strongly with December quarter consent values 28.4% higher than a year ago.

Council corner

A flotilla of legislation on the way will mean local governments will have their work well and truly cut out for them.

☆☆☆☆☆ Steaming ☆☆☆ Healthy ☆ Sad

Northland ☆☆☆

Economic activity cooled over the December quarter, which meant the Northland region only earned itself three stars.

Northland is reeling after the announcement nine schools are to close in the region next year. Education Minister Trevor Mallard will be a brave man to show his face in Whangarei this year.

Whangarei District Council has indicated it would like to take over responsibility for the issuing of speeding fines in the area, in order to use some of the revenue generated to upgrade the region's dilapidated roads. Needless to say Northland Police aren't crazy about the proposition.

Auckland ☆☆☆☆

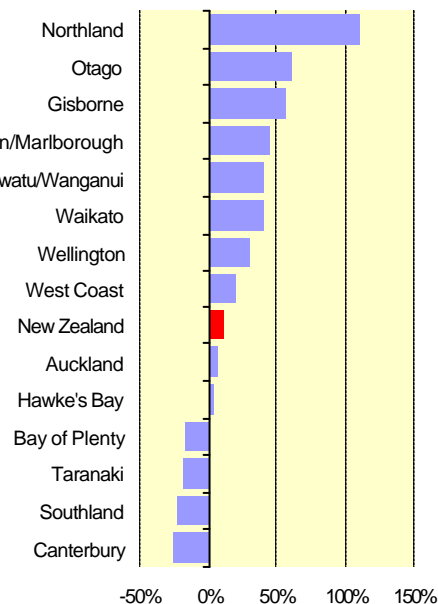
New Zealand's economic powerhouse performed well over the December quarter.

Angered by the rubbish collection service from outside their downtown Auckland chambers, two of the country's top QCs have taken the city council to task. While Joe Average may not have a problem with officious garbage technicians sifting through their rubbish, the lawyers reckon the council's practice of delving into rubbish and retrieving personal mail to determine ownership may breach the Privacy Act. And they would know.

Auckland Regional Council is welcoming a decision by Infrastructure Auckland to grant \$23.2m to the crown for double tracking of the Western rail line. This will greatly improve service reliability and capacity.

A race from the four corners of Auckland to the city centre was won by... the humble bicycle. The cyclist took an average of 27 minutes to get to the city, the car 32 minutes and the bus - a snail-like 53 minutes.

Value of new non-res building consents Year ended % change, Dec 2003



Waikato

☆☆

Waikato's economy is starting to suffer with the soaring dollar pressuring exporters and dairy payouts. Further signs of weakness in Waikato will come in the form of lower retail spending, an easing of the housing market and a fall in house prices.

Hamilton East MP Dianne Yates said she has asked Employment Minister Steve Maharey to look at getting more young people trained with heavy vehicle licences. One wonders whether the region's impending challenges run a little deeper than a shortage of truck drivers.

Bay of Plenty

☆☆☆

A slight fall in employment tarnished the Bay's otherwise satisfactory performance over the December quarter.

EcoFest Bay of Plenty will bring Toyota's latest creation to the region - a petrol/electric car. Also present is a giant pukeko made from recycled materials. The focus of EcoFest is waste reduction but there will apparently also be 'hazardous waste events'. Good clean fun.

Gisborne

☆☆

According to the latest Statistics New Zealand Accommodation Survey, guest nights in Gisborne/Hawkes Bay increased by 19% in December 2003. While the tourism sector may be thriving, population growth has been near-zero, construction activity has dipped and car sales have followed suit.

Gisborne is a relatively isolated community whose economy has traditionally been hampered by the distance to its markets and a lack of international recognition.

Hawkes Bay

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Hawkes Bay has put on a satisfactory economic performance over the December quarter. Strong retail sales and construction activity were offset by slow population growth.

Booming foreign investment in the region has some residents up in arms, but the council seems to be soothing the relationship between newcomers and locals.

Taranaki

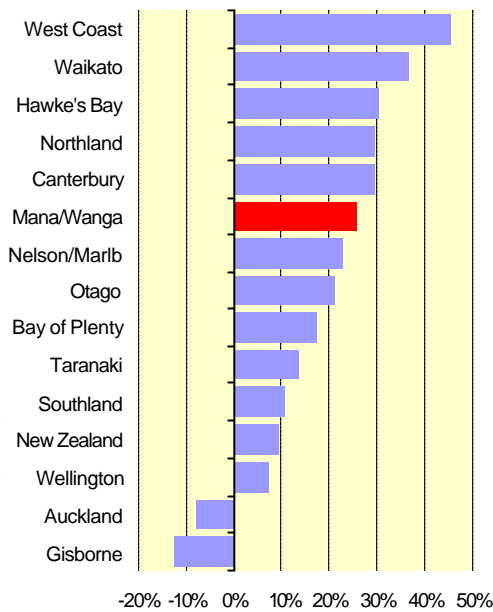
☆☆

The Taranaki economy struggled over the December quarter - while construction growth was relatively healthy, retail sales growth and car sales growth ground to a halt.

Minister of Energy, Science and Fisheries Pete Hodgson believes the effects of global warming mean Taranaki may be up to 20% wetter over the next 70-100 years.

Number of new dwelling building

consents Year ended % change, Dec 2003



Manawatu

☆☆☆☆

The Manawatu economy performed strongly over the December quarter, driven by strong retail sales, house price and construction growth. The only thing holding the area back is sluggish population and employment growth.

More recently, widespread flooding in the area may have dire economic consequences in the early stages of 2004.

Wanganui

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The Wanganui economy steamed along over the December quarter.

The Vita Power factory has recently extended its facility, following the development with Massey University of an extremely effective animal food supplement which is selling well overseas. The greatest barrier to its export growth is getting through the regulatory maze of overseas markets - a problem throughout New Zealand.

Wellington

☆☆☆

The Wellington economy is ticking along nicely, with healthy employment growth and bustling construction activity over the quarter.

The regional council is in negotiations to purchase the regional rail service which is badly in need of attention (read: cash).

Tasman

☆☆☆☆

Tasman had steaming retail sales growth over the December quarter - driven by strong population growth.

Nelson

☆☆☆☆

The Nelson economy powered ahead - in line with the rest of the upper South Island - over the December quarter.

House price inflation is still rising at alarming rates in Nelson and other outlying areas - leading to whippers in some circles it is becoming a city of 'haves' and 'have nots' - or those who can afford to invest in property, and those who cannot.

Any cooling of the housing market is likely to be felt in areas like Nelson where recent property price escalations appear to be based on rhyme and not reason.

Marlborough

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Strong employment growth in Marlborough was tempered by slightly lower population growth than was the case nationally.

Marlborough grape growers say weeks of wintry weather means winemakers are facing a delayed harvest this year. Summer - using the term loosely - has been cooler than normal.

West Coast

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The West Coast economy was relatively static over the December quarter - pulled down by population shrinkage, falling retail sales and construction activity.

A bright spot on the calendar for the Coast is the (in)famous Wildfoods Festival in March.

Canterbury

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Canterbury shot to the top of the class over the December quarter with a stellar performance. Employment growth was dazzling at 6%, construction activity and car sales both rose at more than 20% and estimated population growth was a healthy 1.8% over the year to June.

Otago

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The Otago economy exhibited courage in the face of the soaring dollar and local businesses pumped up the workforce by 6%.

The ongoing saga over the future of the Waitaki River does not appear to be any closer to a resolution - despite local councils' best efforts.

Southland

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The Southland economy gained a commendable three stars over the December quarter - dampened only by falling retail sales and car sales.