

New Zealand Property Focus

Coming back to earth



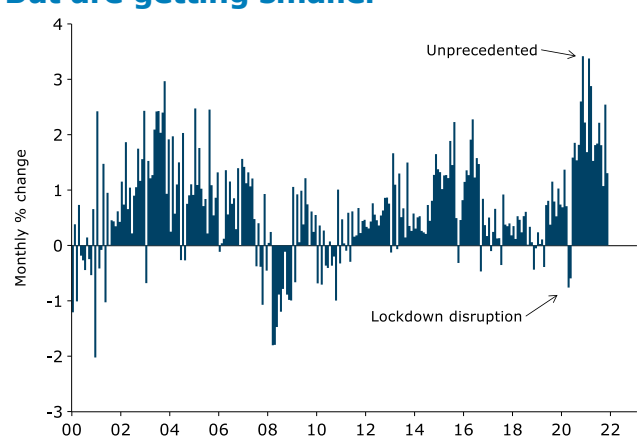
At a glance

House prices are slowing As headwinds start to weigh



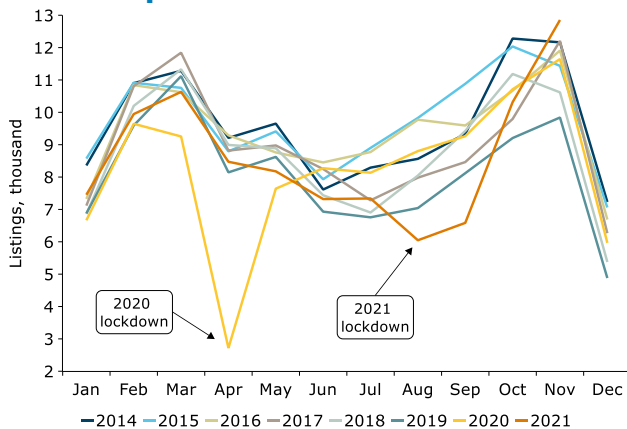
Source: REINZ, Macrobond, ANZ Research

Monthly price gains continue But are getting smaller



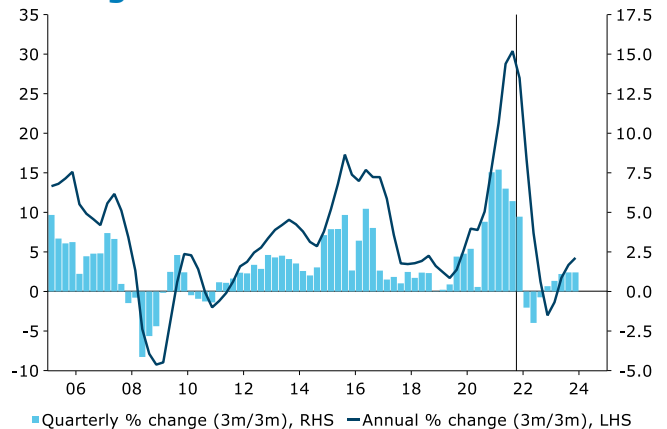
Source: REINZ, Macrobond, ANZ Research

New listings have surged As other price drivers fade



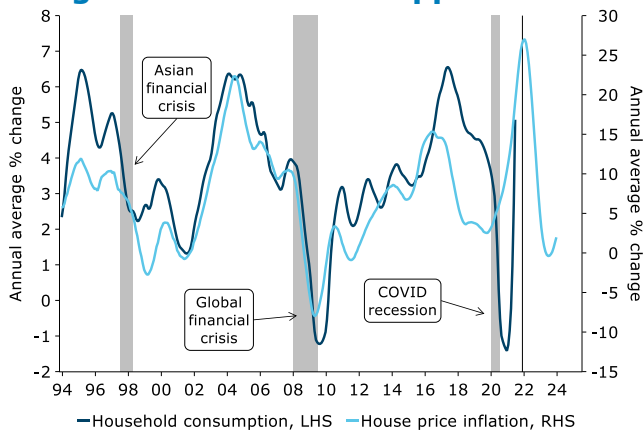
Source: RealEstate.co.nz, Macrobond, ANZ Research

House prices to moderate Posting small declines over 2022



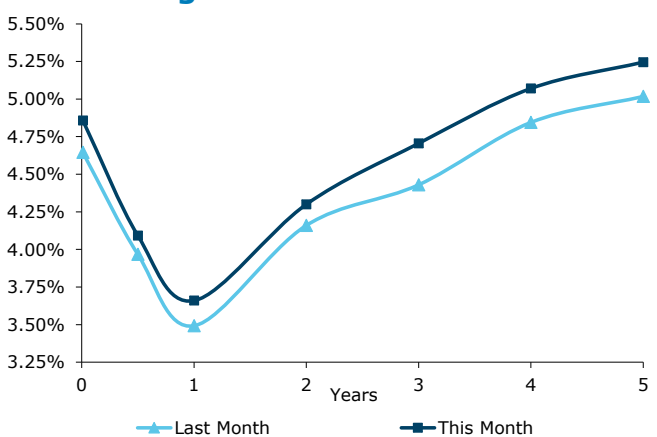
Source: REINZ, Macrobond, ANZ Research

Domestic demand to hold up As tight labour market supports



Source: Stats NZ, REINZ, Macrobond, ANZ Research

Mortgage rates up again But the largest increases are behind us



Source: RBNZ, REINZ, Stats NZ, Macrobond, Bloomberg, ICAP, RealEstate.co.nz, ANZ Research

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Summary

Our monthly *Property Focus* publication provides an independent appraisal of recent developments in the residential property market.

Housing market overview

In November, house prices posted the second-lowest monthly increase since the end of lockdown in 2020. And it's looking like the shine is well and truly coming off the housing market, with weaker sales, tighter LVR restrictions and new consumer lending protections legislation seeing mortgage lending rapidly drying up, even as new listings surged to multi-year highs. As a result, we've revised down our house price outlook a touch, and are forecasting house prices will fall around 4% from their current extremely-elevated levels by mid-2022. Usually, falling house prices are correlated with recessions in New Zealand. But with the labour market running so strong, we think domestic demand will get through a period of mildly falling house prices relatively unscathed. See our [Market Overview](#).

Mortgage borrowing strategy

Fixed mortgage rates have continued to rise, albeit at a more moderate pace than in prior months, with most rates up around 0.2%pts. The average floating rate is also up by a similar amount, broadly matching the 0.25% increase in the OCR delivered by the Reserve Bank. Fixed mortgage rates have now risen by between 1.5%pts and 2%pts since hitting all-time lows in May or June. While that will have come as a shock to many borrowers, we think upcoming rises are likely to be more moderate. That's because 2 to 5-year wholesale interest rates have already moved sharply higher in anticipation of a higher OCR, and the onus is now on the RBNZ to deliver. As for the choice of tenor for those looking to fix, on balance we still prefer the 1-year. Mortgage rates will likely be higher in a year's time, but they may not rise quickly enough to be worthwhile paying the hefty step-up to fix for 2 years or more. See our [Mortgage Borrowing Strategy](#).



Housing market overview

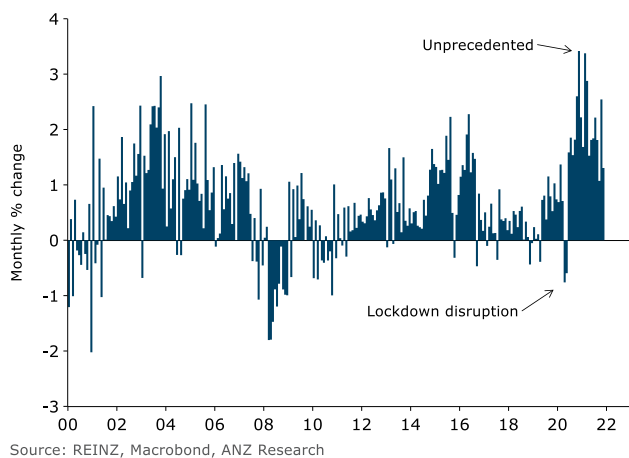
Summary

In November, house prices posted the second-lowest monthly increase since the end of lockdown in 2020. And it's looking like the shine is well and truly coming off the housing market, with weaker sales, tighter LVR restrictions and new consumer lending protections legislation seeing mortgage lending rapidly drying up, even as new listings surged to multi-year highs. As a result, we've revised down our house price outlook a touch, and are forecasting house prices will fall around 4% from their current extremely-elevated levels by mid-2022. Usually, falling house prices are correlated with recessions in New Zealand. But with the labour market running so strong, we think domestic demand will get through a period of mildly falling house prices relatively unscathed.

A slow grind down

Monthly house price inflation slowed in November, rising just 1.3% m/m (sa ANZ estimate) – the second-slowest monthly gain since the 2020 lockdown ended (figure 1). It's been a slow burn, but we've very likely seen the peak in house price rises.

Figure 1. Monthly house price inflation (sa)



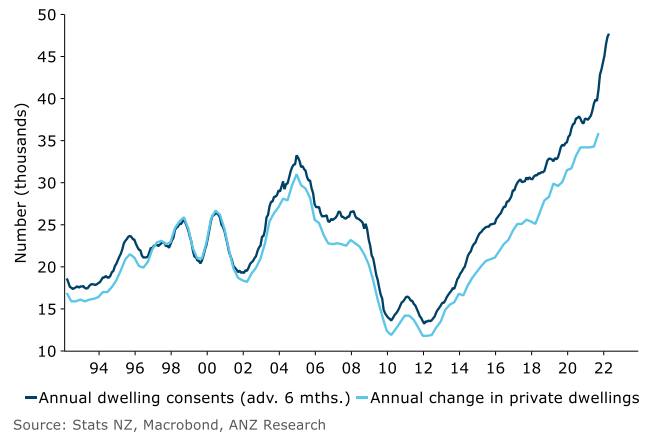
Source: REINZ, Macrobond, ANZ Research

The many headwinds we've seen accumulate over 2021 are finally starting to rein in rampant house price inflation. In particular, in recent weeks the housing narrative has shifted to a more **pessimistic stance**. Tighter loan-to-value ratio (LVR) restrictions have seen lending dry up for low-deposit borrowers, while tweaks to the Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance Act (CCCFA) are making it harder for many borrowers to get a mortgage. Anecdotal reports confirm this difficulty. There are fewer people at open homes, and auction clearance rates have fallen.

These factors only add to the list of headwinds that have been pushing against strong house price growth in recent months. In particular, current housing supply growth is far outstripping new demand. Population growth is anaemic with the border closed, but at the same time, annual dwelling consent issuance is

holding up at record levels. We've already seen significant growth in private dwellings, and even accounting for capacity constraints in the building sector and lockdown volatility, these consents data suggest we should see strong building activity continue for at least the next six months (figure 2).

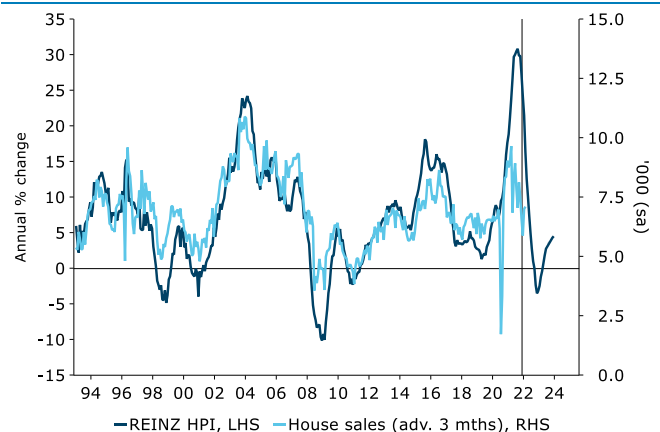
Figure 2. Private dwellings and building consents



Source: Stats NZ, Macrobond, ANZ Research

Annual house price inflation is still well above what would usually be implied by the level of house sales currently taking place (figure 3). But given the array of policy and market forces that are pushing against further house price rises, we expect to see the gap rapidly close as we move through 2022.

Figure 3. House sales and house price inflation



Source: REINZ, Macrobond, ANZ Research

Two key drivers that have kept house prices going recently have been Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and low listings – both of which have pushed house prices even further beyond fundamental values.

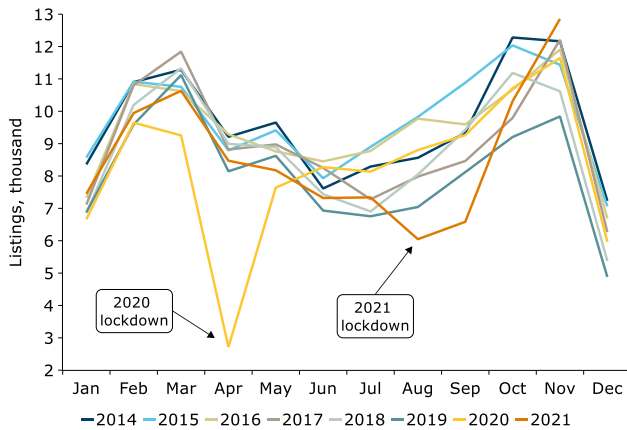
But both these factors appear to be turning. New real estate listings for November reached a multi-year high (figure 4) – and while the stock of listings is still historically low, further growth in new listings would change that, especially as more housing supply comes online. The aforementioned CCCFA and LVR changes also seem to have tightened credit availability to the extent that even FOMO won't be enough to keep the



Housing market overview

heat from leaving the housing market. Add in sharply higher mortgage rates over the past few months for good measure, and the ingredients for imminent further slowing in house price inflation are there.

Figure 4. New real estate listings



House prices likely to fall in 2022

It's become increasingly clear that the odds are stacked against further strong house price rises. Consequently, we've revised our house price outlook down a touch, and our baseline expectation is that we see a moderate decline in house prices over 2022, of around 4% compared with November 2021 levels.

As discussed above, there are many factors pointing more aggressively downwards for house prices, including higher mortgage rates, tighter lending conditions, tax policy changes, affordability constraints and robust supply growth. But household incomes, while **being eroded** by high CPI inflation, are secure due to extremely strong labour demand, amid the tightest labour market on record. Unless the wheels fall off the economy due to some unforeseen shock, we're unlikely to see a sudden and deep decline in house prices. So long as people keep their jobs, the pay cheques will keep rolling in, and mortgage repayments will keep happening.

Formally, our forecast is for annual house price inflation to fall to a low of -3% y/y (3m/3m) in 2022 Q4, down from our previous expectation that prices would slow to a crawl of 1.0% y/y (3m/3m) in the same period. On a quarterly basis we expect that prices will resume growing from the second half of 2022, albeit at a much more sedate pace than we've seen over the past 18 months (figure 5).

So how would a period of falling house prices impact the New Zealand economy? Household consumption makes up the bulk of our national expenditure – and it has followed house prices pretty closely over the past few decades (figure 6). Each time we've seen a significant drop in house prices, it's been associated with either a sizeable slowing or outright fall in

household consumption. But, each of those episodes has also coincided with an exogenous global shock – the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, and Global Financial Crisis in 2008. What we haven't seen before (at a national level at least) is a period of gently falling house prices without a simultaneous economic crisis or technical recession.

Figure 5. House price inflation forecast

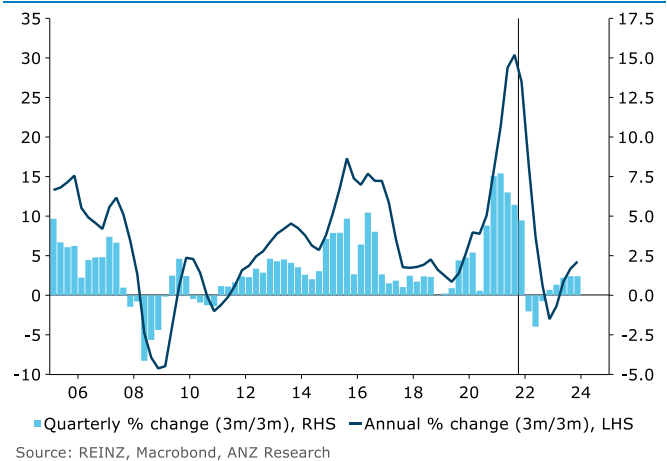
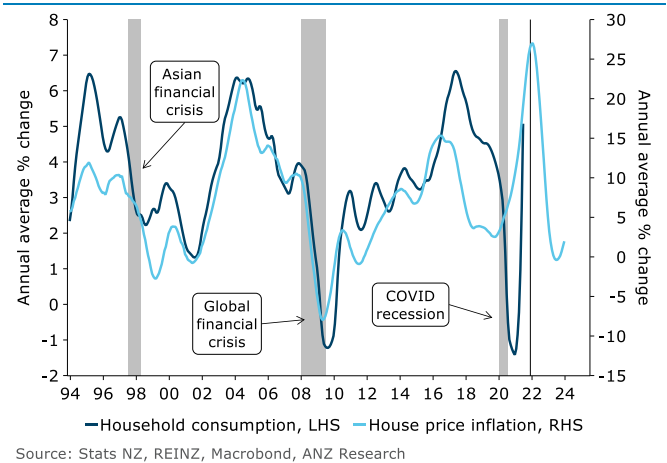


Figure 6. Household consumption and house prices



But the COVID recession has been a strange one. In the same year that we saw household consumption fall 10.5% in a single quarter in Q2 2020, house price inflation surged. And we're not convinced that a slowing housing market in 2022 is predestined to cause a collapse in household consumption (at least in the absence of some other large income shock). Our lower house price outlook can clearly be attributed to regulatory tightening, declining credit availability and rising interest rates, rather than a severe external shock that could significantly impact household demand.

Sure, some households may feel less wealthy if house prices start to fall (and borrowing costs rise). But given the strength in the labour market, household consumption may well weather a drop in house prices better than in previous cycles. Consumers remain



Housing market overview

pessimistic in our [confidence survey](#), but at the same time, they've been spending up a storm nonetheless, with total card spending up over 9% m/m in both November and October – rapidly bouncing back from lockdown. In fact, some moderation in household spending is needed, since consumers have been spending beyond their means in recent quarters.

A final point to note is that the 4% drop in house prices that we are predicting will only bring the level of house prices back to September 2021 levels – which were already way higher than before the pandemic. Re-winding the clock a few months for house prices may not be ideal for people who have purchased a property very recently. But those people are few in number relative to the vast bulk of existing property owners whose property values would still be miles above where they were just a few years ago.

To wrap up, the slowdown has taken its time arriving, in terms of pricing defying gravity far longer than weakening house sales growth would normally imply. But it's now looking like the housing market is likely to soften a little more than we previously expected – and we're now forecasting that house price inflation will drop to a low of -3.0% y/y (3m/3m) over mid-2022. But we're not changing our forecasts for GDP or the OCR. Overall demand remains strong and the labour market is tight, and that should prevent a cooler housing market from severely denting economic momentum.

The causality behind the historical correlation between the broader economy and the housing market runs both ways, and certainly not exclusively. Given very high household debt levels we can't rule out seeing consumption fall significantly, or that house prices could fall by more than we are forecasting. But our central view is that so long as the tight labour market continues to sustain economic momentum, a fall in house prices won't bring an end to this economic expansion as long as nothing comes out of left field.

To be fair, left field is a pretty crowded place at the moment, as the US Federal Reserve finally faces up to inflation, China finally faces up to problems in its real estate sector, and the world nervously eyes up the implications of Omicron. With house prices this far out of whack compared to incomes, we need a good solid run of decent income growth and balance sheet consolidation to reduce the risks of a nasty hangover from what's been a truly spectacular boom. Cross fingers.

Housing market indicators for November 2021 (based on REINZ data seasonally adjusted by ANZ Research)

	Median house price			House price index		# of monthly sales	Monthly % change	Average days to sell
	Level	Annual % change	3-mth % change	Annual % change	3-mth % change			
Northland	\$747,607	26.4	2.5	31.0	9.3	166	+3%	39
Auckland	\$1,265,638	26.0	2.9	25.6	5.1	2,603	+1%	32
Waikato	\$831,338	27.4	6.1	33.2	6.6	654	+3%	30
Bay of Plenty	\$885,214	20.2	4.0	29.1	6.2	398	-8%	36
Gisborne	\$672,587	28.6	5.5	28.8	5.2	48	-15%	37
Hawke's Bay	\$804,671	25.6	9.8	28.8	5.2	223	0%	29
Manawatu-Whanganui	\$624,895	25.1	4.3	24.9	4.0	346	+4%	33
Taranaki	\$609,075	26.0	2.3	27.9	4.5	170	+2%	30
Wellington	\$938,612	22.0	4.4	21.8	1.6	721	+5%	33
Tasman, Nelson & Marlborough	\$763,268	14.9	3.6			212	+3%	30
Canterbury	\$677,097	31.2	9.3	38.2	10.2	1,019	-1%	30
Otago	\$709,152	16.4	4.3	20.9	5.1	360	+6%	33
West Coast	\$359,337	42.3	10.1	25.0	5.7	36	-4%	36
Southland	\$422,990	9.9	3.5	23.1	5.5	176	+29%	34
New Zealand	\$900,431	23.7	2.8	27.1	5.2	7,095	+1%	32



Mortgage borrowing strategy

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Summary

Fixed mortgage rates have continued to rise, albeit at a more moderate pace than in prior months, with most rates up around 0.2%pts. The average floating rate is also up by a similar amount, broadly matching the 0.25% increase in the OCR delivered by the Reserve Bank. Fixed mortgage rates have now risen by between 1.5%pts and 2%pts since hitting all-time lows in May or June. While that will have come as a shock to many borrowers, we think upcoming rises are likely to be more moderate. That's because 2 to 5-year wholesale interest rates have already moved sharply higher in anticipation of a higher OCR, and the onus is now on the RBNZ to deliver. As for the choice of tenor for those looking to fix, on balance we still prefer the 1-year. Mortgage rates will likely be higher in a year's time, but they may not rise quickly enough to be worthwhile paying the hefty step-up to fix for 2 years or more.

Our view

Mortgage rates continue to rise, with increases seen for all terms including floating since last month. None of this will be welcome news to borrowers, but if there is any good news to be had, it is that the worst is likely to be behind us. We say that because when we look at the level and term structure of the wholesale "swap" yield curve out to 2 to 5 years, markets are clearly *already* anticipating a much higher OCR in the future.

Moves to date have all been about the market shifting from a view that the OCR might go higher to a firm view that the RBNZ will hike six times in 2022. But now that this is priced in, the onus is on the RBNZ to deliver on those expectations, which now actually exceed our own forecasts. To illustrate, we note that markets are expecting (or pricing in) an OCR of around 2¼% by the end of next year. Yet we only expect it to get to 2%. In theory, that suggests wholesale rates have scope to correct a little lower.

That said, we wouldn't bank on a downward correction in wholesale rates, let alone mortgage rates. Markets have a tendency to price in more hikes than what actually gets delivered during the tightening cycle, so if we were to see a pull-back, it might be shallow. It would also likely only be temporary, because as the OCR goes higher, a 2-year-ahead view of where it will average in the future will also mechanically rise. Bring it all together and the picture likely looks like this: the worst of the rises are probably behind us, and upcoming increases will likely be more limited, if we see them at all. We say that because a lot needs to go right for the OCR to reach 2%. If, for example, we saw a global asset price slump, or New Zealand house

prices started falling significantly, or COVID suddenly becomes a big issue again (the new Omicron variant has markets in Europe worried about fresh restrictions), OCR hikes might get derailed.

As has been the case for a couple of months now, with higher mortgage rates already here, there isn't really anyway to hide if your fixed term is ending. We still think the broad direction of travel will be upward, and that makes the higher floating and 6-month rates less appealing.

But what about longer terms? Is it worth paying up for a longer period of certainty? If certainty is what is strongly desired, 2 years (or longer) may be appealing. But unless we see further sharp rises in mortgage rates – which we don't expect – that certainty could be costly. So if it's just cost that matters, our preference is for the 1 year, which remains the cheapest rate.

Breakeven analysis supports this. Consider, for example, the choice between 3.66% for 1 year or 4.30% for 2 years. Over a 2-year horizon, back-to-back 1-year fixes will end up being cheaper so long as the 1-year rate is below 4.94% next year. That's a large (1.28%pt) increase, but that is what you'd have to expect in order to pay up for 2 years now, if cost were your only consideration. It's more than we expect, and remember, we've already seen some large increases, and wholesale interest rate markets are already factoring in upcoming Reserve Bank OCR rises.

Figure 1. Carded special mortgage rates[^]

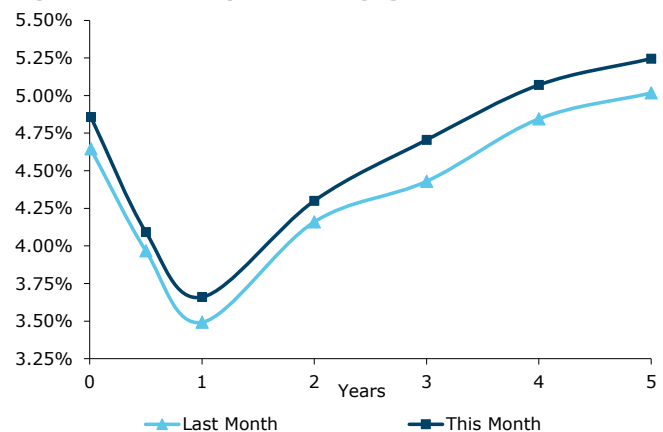


Table 1. Special Mortgage Rates

Term	Breakevens for 20%+ equity borrowers				
	Current	in 6mths	in 1yr	in 18mths	in 2 yrs
Floating	4.86%				
6 months	4.09%	3.23%	5.00%	4.89%	5.31%
1 year	3.66%	4.11%	4.94%	5.10%	5.52%
2 years	4.30%	4.61%	5.23%	5.47%	5.84%
3 years	4.71%	5.02%	5.54%	5.68%	5.88%
4 years	5.07%	5.29%	5.64%		
5 years	5.25%	#Average of "big four" banks			

[^] Average of carded rates from ANZ, ASB, BNZ and Westpac.

Source: interest.co.nz, ANZ Research



Key forecasts

Weekly mortgage repayments table (based on 25-year term)

	Mortgage Rate (%)													
	2.50	2.75	3.00	3.25	3.50	3.75	4.00	4.25	4.50	4.75	5.00	5.25	5.50	5.75
200	207	213	219	225	231	237	243	250	256	263	270	276	283	290
250	259	266	273	281	289	296	304	312	320	329	337	345	354	363
300	310	319	328	337	346	356	365	375	385	394	404	415	425	435
350	362	372	383	393	404	415	426	437	449	460	472	484	496	508
400	414	426	437	450	462	474	487	500	513	526	539	553	566	580
450	466	479	492	506	520	534	548	562	577	592	607	622	637	653
500	517	532	547	562	577	593	609	625	641	657	674	691	708	725
550	569	585	601	618	635	652	669	687	705	723	741	760	779	798
600	621	638	656	674	693	711	730	750	769	789	809	829	850	870
650	673	692	711	730	750	771	791	812	833	854	876	898	920	943
700	724	745	766	787	808	830	852	874	897	920	944	967	991	1,015
750	776	798	820	843	866	889	913	937	961	986	1,011	1,036	1,062	1,088
800	828	851	875	899	924	948	974	999	1,025	1,052	1,078	1,105	1,133	1,160
850	879	904	930	955	981	1,008	1,035	1,062	1,089	1,117	1,146	1,174	1,204	1,233
900	931	958	984	1,011	1,039	1,067	1,095	1,124	1,154	1,183	1,213	1,244	1,274	1,306
950	983	1,011	1,039	1,068	1,097	1,126	1,156	1,187	1,218	1,249	1,281	1,313	1,345	1,378
1000	1,035	1,064	1,094	1,124	1,154	1,186	1,217	1,249	1,282	1,315	1,348	1,382	1,416	1,451

Mortgage rate projections (historic rates are special rates; projections based on ANZ's wholesale rate forecasts)

Interest rates	Actual			Projections						
	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23
Floating Mortgage Rate	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.9	5.2	5.7	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2
1-Yr Fixed Mortgage Rate	2.3	2.2	2.7	3.7	3.8	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
2-Yr Fixed Mortgage Rate	2.6	2.6	3.1	4.3	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
5-Yr Fixed Mortgage Rate	3.0	3.6	4.0	5.3	5.0	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.9

Source: RBNZ, ANZ Research

Economic forecasts

Economic indicators	Actual			Forecasts						
	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23
GDP (Annual % Chg)	0.1	2.9	17.4	-1.6	2.4	3.1	0.8	6.1	3.7	2.7
CPI Inflation (Annual % Chg)	1.4	1.5	3.3	4.9(a)	5.5	5.8	5.1	3.9	3.2	2.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	4.8	4.6	4.0	3.4(a)	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.0
House Prices (Quarter % Chg)	7.5	7.7	6.6	5.7(a)	4.7	-1.0	-2.0	-0.4	0.3	0.7
House Prices (Annual % Chg)	15.6	21.3	28.8	30.4(a)	27.0	16.7	7.4	1.2	-3.0	-1.4

Interest rates	Actual			Forecasts						
	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23
Official Cash Rate	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.75	1.00	1.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
90-Day Bank Bill Rate	0.35	0.35	0.65	1.02	1.52	2.02	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10
10-Year Bond	1.81	1.77	2.09	2.50	2.60	2.70	2.70	2.80	2.80	2.80

Source: ANZ Research, Statistics NZ, RBNZ, REINZ



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We welcome your questions and feedback. Click [here](#) for more information about our team.



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