



Hot Off The Press

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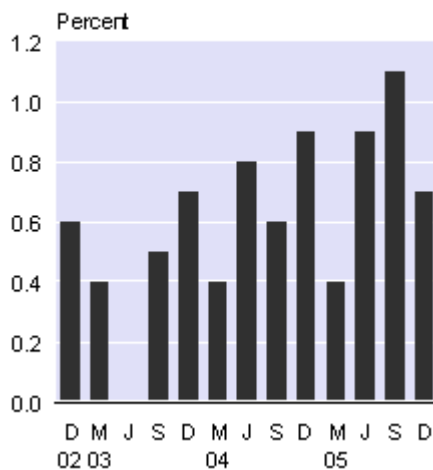
Consumers Price Index December 2005 quarter

Highlights

- The Consumers Price Index (CPI) rose **0.7 percent** in the December 2005 quarter.
- **Housing prices rose 1.2 percent**, reflecting higher prices for the purchase and construction of new dwellings.
- **Transportation prices rose 1.0 percent**, driven by higher prices for international air travel.
- The CPI rose **3.2 percent** from the December 2004 quarter to the December 2005 quarter.

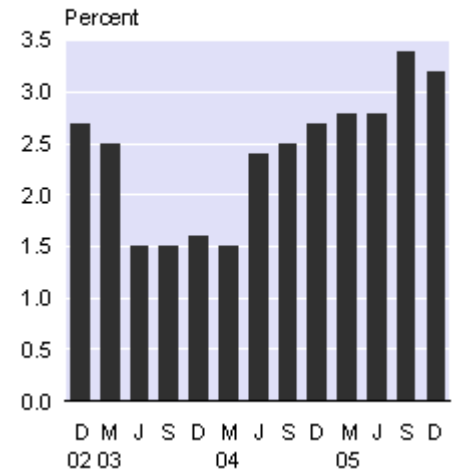
Consumers Price Index

Quarterly percentage change



Consumers Price Index

Annual percentage change



Brian Pink
Government Statistician

18 January 2006
Cat 64.902 Set 05/06 – 111

There is a companion Media Release published – [Consumers Price Index: December 2005 quarter](#).

Commentary

Consumers Price Index quarterly movement

The Consumers Price Index (CPI) recorded a 0.7 percent increase in the December 2005 quarter. This follows increases of 1.1 percent and 0.9 percent in the September 2005 and June 2005 quarters, respectively.

All the nine groups in the CPI recorded increases in the December 2005 quarter. The most significant upward contributions came from the housing, transportation and food groups. Less significant upward contributions came from the recreation and education, household operation, personal and health care, tobacco and alcohol, apparel, and credit services groups.

The most significant individual upward contributions to the movement in the CPI came from price increases for international air travel (up 12.3 percent) and the purchase and construction of new dwellings (up 1.6 percent). The most significant individual downward contributions came from lower prices for petrol (down 3.0 percent) and used cars (down 2.0 percent).

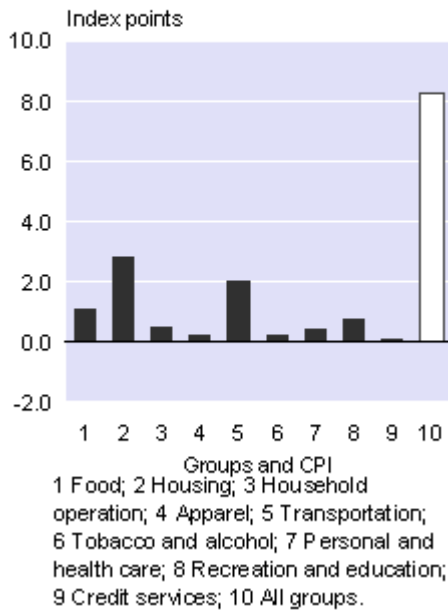
Index points contribution

Index Points Contribution

Group	September 2005 quarter to December 2005 quarter
Housing	2.85
Transportation	2.04
Food	1.08
Recreation and Education	0.78
Household Operation	0.54
Personal and Health Care	0.43
Tobacco and Alcohol	0.24
Apparel	0.23
Credit Services	0.10
All Groups CPI	8.29

Points Contribution to Consumers Price Index

December 2005 quarter



Distribution of item-level movements

The table below outlines the distribution of price movements in the September 2005 and December 2005 quarters. The CPI has been partitioned into those national item-level indexes that increased, showed no change, or decreased.

Distribution of Item-level Index Movements

National Item-level Index Movements	June 2005 quarter to September 2005 quarter	September 2005 quarter to December 2005 quarter
Increase in price		
Number of items	321	383
Percentage of all items	47.8	57.0
Percentage of expenditure weight	68.0	66.6
Index points contribution	18.8	14.8
Weighted average price increase (percent)	2.4	1.9
No change in price		
Number of items	115	84
Percentage of all items	17.1	12.5
Percentage of expenditure weight	8.9	7.6
Decrease in price		
Number of items	236	205
Percentage of all items	35.1	30.5
Percentage of expenditure weight	23.1	25.8
Index points contribution	-5.6	-6.5
Weighted average price decrease (percent)	2.1	2.2

The distribution of item-level movements shows that:

- In the December 2005 quarter, the expenditure weight of items that increased in price was significantly greater than the expenditure weight of items that decreased in price.
- From the September 2005 quarter to the December 2005 quarter, the weighted average price decrease rose and the weighted average price increase fell.

This has resulted in the CPI moving from a 1.1 percent increase in the September 2005 quarter to a 0.7 percent increase in the December 2005 quarter.

CPI annual movement

From the December 2004 quarter to the December 2005 quarter, the CPI rose 3.2 percent. This compares with rises of 3.4 percent in the year to September 2005 and 2.8 percent in the year to June 2005.

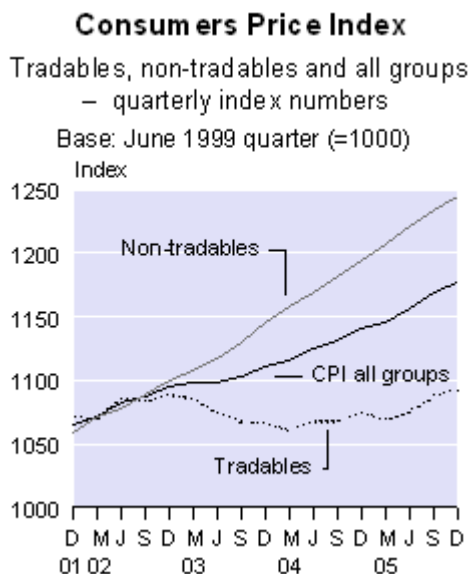
Of the nine groups in the CPI, eight recorded annual increases from the December 2004 quarter. The most significant upward contributions came from the housing group (up 5.8 percent) and the transportation group (up 5.0 percent). This is the fourteenth consecutive quarter that the housing group has made the most significant upward contribution to the annual movement. The apparel group recorded a decrease of 0.1 percent.

The annual increase in the CPI was influenced by higher prices for the purchase and construction of new dwellings (up 6.4 percent) and petrol (up 17.4 percent). The most significant annual decrease came from international air travel (down 3.2 percent).

CPI all groups tradable and non-tradable component series

In the December 2005 quarter, the non-tradable component increased 1.0 percent, following a 1.1 percent increase in the September 2005 quarter. The tradable component increased 0.5 percent in the December 2005 quarter, following an increase of 1.1 percent in the September 2005 quarter.

From the December 2004 quarter to the December 2005 quarter, the non-tradable component increased 4.3 percent and the tradable component increased 1.7 percent.



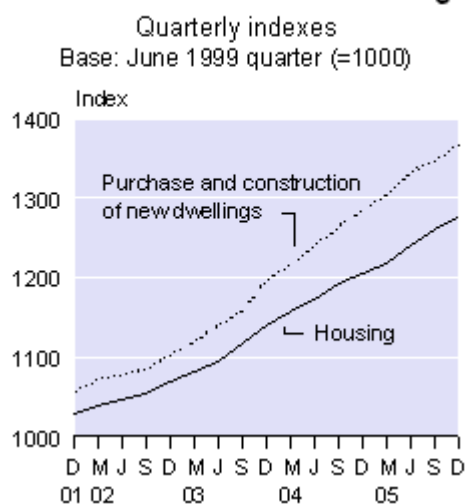
Housing

The housing group increased 1.2 percent in the December 2005 quarter, following increases of 1.6 and 1.7 percent in the September 2005 and June 2005 quarters, respectively.

Higher prices for the purchase and construction of new dwellings made the most significant contribution to the housing group, increasing 1.6 percent. This follows increases of 1.0 percent and 2.2 percent in the September 2005 and June 2005 quarters, respectively. Construction prices have increased for 27 consecutive quarters. Respondents were asked to indicate reasons for any reported changes in their construction prices. Of respondents reporting increases in the December 2005 quarter, 84 percent cited higher prices for construction components, 67 percent cited increased sub-contractors' charges, 64 percent cited increased local authority fees and 53 percent cited increased labour costs. If construction prices had not changed from the September 2005 quarter, the CPI would have increased 0.6 percent.

From the December 2004 quarter to the December 2005 quarter, the housing group increased 5.8 percent. The most significant contributions to the annual movement came from higher construction prices (up 6.4 percent), real estate agent fees (up 20.1 percent), local authority rates (up 7.4 percent), and rents (up 2.5 percent). If construction prices had remained unchanged from the December 2004 quarter, the CPI would have increased 2.6 percent.

Housing Group and Purchase and Construction of New Dwellings



Transportation

The transportation group increased 1.0 percent in the December 2005 quarter, following increases of 3.5 percent in the September 2005 quarter and 2.1 percent in the June 2005 quarter.

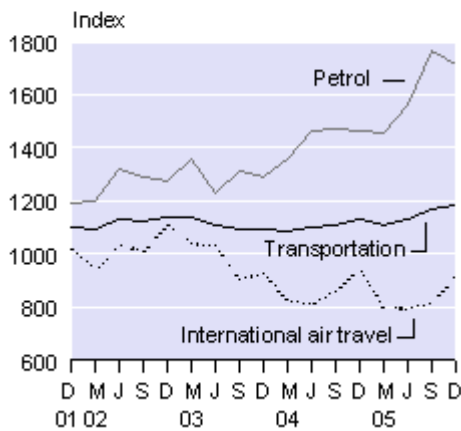
The most significant upward contribution to the transportation group came from international air travel (up 12.3 percent). This rise was the largest increase since records began in the June quarter of 1981. The second largest increase was for the December 2004 quarter (up 10.1 percent). In both these instances, the most significant contribution came from higher prices for routes to Asia. If prices for international air travel had not changed from the September 2005 quarter to the December 2005 quarter, the CPI would have increased 0.4 percent. The routes surveyed for price collection were updated in the December 2005 quarter. Further details can be found in the Technical Notes of this release.

The most significant downward contributions came from petrol (down 3.0 percent) and used cars (down 2.0 percent).

From the December 2004 quarter to the December 2005 quarter, the transportation group rose 5.0 percent. Higher prices for petrol (up 17.4 percent) were partly offset by lower prices for international air travel (down 3.2 percent). The directions of these two annual movements were in the opposite direction to their respective quarterly movements for the December 2005 quarter. If petrol prices had remained unchanged from the December 2004 to December 2005 quarter, the CPI would have increased 2.6 percent.

Transportation Group and Selected Items

Quarterly indexes
Base: June 1999 quarter (=1000)

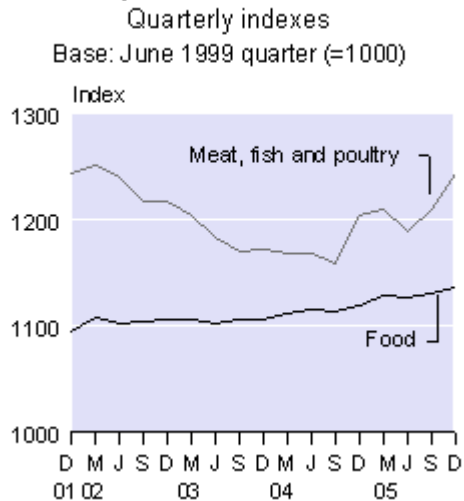


Food

The food group increased 0.5 percent in the December 2005 quarter. This follows an increase of 0.4 percent in the September 2005 quarter and a decrease of 0.1 percent in the June 2005 quarter. The most significant upward contribution to food prices came from the meat, fish and poultry subgroup (up 2.9 percent).

From the December 2004 quarter to the December 2005 quarter, food prices increased 1.5 percent. Major contributions to the increase came from grocery food, soft drinks and confectionery (up 1.5 percent); and meat, fish and poultry (up 3.4 percent). A major downward contribution came from fresh vegetables (down 7.4 percent).

Food Group and Meat, Fish and Poultry



Other groups

Less significant upward movements in the December 2005 quarter were recorded for recreation and education (up 0.8 percent), household operation (up 0.4 percent), personal and health care (up 0.4 percent), tobacco and alcohol (up 0.2 percent), apparel (up 0.5 percent) and credit services (up 1.6 percent).

Together, these groups contributed 2.32 index points to the CPI. The most significant upward contributions within these groups came from newspapers, magazines and books (up 3.4 percent); and health care (up 0.6 percent). The most significant downward contributions came from household appliances and equipment (down 1.2 percent), and leisure and recreation supplies (down 0.8 percent).

For technical information contact:
Piyasena Liyanage or Daniel Griffiths
Wellington 04 931 4600
Email: info@stats.govt.nz

Technical notes

What the Consumers Price Index measures

The Consumers Price Index (CPI) measures the rate of price change of goods and services purchased by households. The CPI All Groups Index is prepared quarterly. The food group is the only commodity group of the CPI for which an index is prepared each month.

Expression base

The CPI has an expression base of June 1999 quarter (=1000). The June 1999 quarter was the final quarter calculated and published on the previous base of December 1993 quarter (=1000).

Changes in methodology

The total estimated expenditure used in the creation of the weights in 2002 is \$58.6 billion, compared with total estimated expenditure in 1999 of \$44.2 billion, an increase of 33 percent. This is due in part to inflation, population growth and growth in real expenditure, but more significantly to both the introduction of integrated weighting in the Household Economic Survey (HES) and better independent estimates. Integrated weighting is a method of adjusting the statistical output of a survey to match population benchmarks. In particular, it takes account of undercoverage in the survey of specified population groups. This difference should be kept in mind when examining weight changes, as it can have unexpected effects on the relativities between the weights. Consumer expenditure in some areas may have remained relatively static, while the share of the overall weight could decline substantially; household numbers can also have an impact. The number of HES households has increased from 1.16 million in 1997 to 1.37 million in 2001 (17.9 percent). Only 5.0 percent of this increase is real growth in household numbers, with a larger part of the change being due to the benchmarking used as part of the integrated weighting. Independent expenditure estimates calculated as total expenditure aggregates are divided by larger estimated household numbers, producing smaller relative weights.

Aside from changes in consumer expenditure and household numbers recorded in the HES, changes in independent estimates and household numbers have an effect. Data in CPI weights comes from a variety of sources independent of the main source of weights (HES), including retail trade statistics, the census, building consents, data from the national accounts and a variety of government and industry sources.

Determining the effect of a specified change in a lower-level index

As the CPI and Food Price Index (FPI) have been re-weighted, but not re-expressed, in the June 2002 quarter, the method used to determine the effect that a specified change in a lower-level index would have on a higher-level index to which it contributes needs to be modified for the September 2002 quarter and subsequent quarters.

The index points effect on a higher-level index of a specified percentage change in a lower-level index which contributes to the higher-level index can be determined by following these steps:

1. Adjust the lower-level index for the previous period ($I_{n-1,low}$) by the specified percentage change ($PC_{n,low}$) to derive the index number for the current period:

$$I_{n,low} = I_{n-1,low} \times (1 + (PC_{n,low} / 100))$$
2. Calculate the index points effect on the higher-level index of the specified change in the lower-level index:

$$PE(\text{low on high}) = I_{Jun-02,high} \times (W_{Jun-02,low} / W_{Jun-02,high}) \times ((I_{n,low} - I_{n-1,low}) / I_{Jun-02,low})$$
3. Calculate the percentage change in the higher-level index that would be caused by the specified change in the lower-level index:

$$PC_{n,high} = (((I_{n-1,high} + PE(\text{low on high})) / I_{n-1,high}) - 1) \times 100$$

Where:

I = index

$n-1$ = period $n-1$

n = period n , where n is the September 2002 quarter or a subsequent quarter (CPI), or the July 2002 month or a subsequent month (FPI)

Jun-02 = June 2002 quarter (CPI) or June 2002 month (FPI)

low = lower-level index

high = higher-level index

W = expenditure weight, expressed as a percentage of the all groups (CPI) or group (FPI) index

PC = percentage change

PE = index points effect

low on high = lower-level index on higher-level index

Note, the period in the terms $I_{Jun-02,high}$, $I_{Jun-02,low}$, $W_{Jun-02,low}$ and $W_{Jun-02,high}$ used in step 2 above remains constant (June 2002 quarter for the CPI and June 2002 month for the FPI), irrespective of what periods n and $n-1$ are.

Example:

The effect that a 5.0 percent increase in the petrol index (which has a weight of 3.12 percent) from the June 2002 quarter to the September 2002 quarter would have on the all groups CPI index can be calculated as follows:

1. Increase the petrol index for the June 2002 quarter by 5.0 percent to derive the index number for the September 2002 quarter:

$$I_{Sep-02,low} = I_{Jun-02,low} \times (1 + (PC_{Sep-02,low} / 100)) = 1316 \times (1 + (5 / 100)) = 1381.8$$
2. Calculate the index points effect on the all groups CPI index of the 5.0 percent increase in the petrol index:

$$PE(\text{low on high}) = I_{Jun-02,high} \times (W_{Jun-02,low} / W_{Jun-02,high}) \times ((I_{Sep-02,low} - I_{Jun-02,low}) / I_{Jun-02,low}) = 1082 \times (3.12 / 100) \times ((1381.8 - 1316) / 1316) = 1.69 \text{ index points.}$$
3. Calculate the percentage change in the all groups CPI index that would be caused by a 5.0 percent change in the petrol index:

$$PC_{Sep-02,high} = (((I_{Jun-02,high} + PE(\text{low on high})) / I_{Jun-02,high}) - 1) \times 100 = (((1082 + 1.69) / 1082) - 1) \times 100 = 0.2 \text{ percent.}$$

Distribution of item-level index movements

The Distribution of Item-level Index Movements table in the Commentary section of this release gives additional information on the distribution of price movements recorded for the current quarter's CPI. The analytical statistics in the table give an indication of how widespread price changes are, and their relative magnitude when compared with previous quarters.

The weighted average price increase and decrease uses unrounded index numbers for the previous and current periods to calculate item-level price movements from the previous period, and these are weighted using previous period expenditure weights. The previous period expenditure weight for an item is calculated by projecting base period expenditure weights by the price change for the item from the base period to the previous period.

Movements based on unrounded index numbers are used to determine whether items have increased, showed no change or decreased in price. Previous period expenditure weights are used to indicate the proportion of the expenditure weight that has increased, showed no change or decreased.

Trend measures of price level change

The CPI captures the broad pattern of price change over the long term, but over shorter horizons the trend in price change may be masked by one-off events.

In particular, the CPI:

- can be subject to temporary influences, such as adverse climatic conditions affecting the prices of fresh fruit and vegetables
- is influenced by other supply disturbances, which, while they affect the cost of living, do not directly affect the underlying inflationary pressures in the economy. For example, supply disturbances for petrol or electricity can have a large impact on the CPI in the short term, and
- some items are subject to seasonality, such as international air fares and rental car hire, which may induce volatile short-term price behaviour.

In order to provide an indication of the trend in the CPI over time, alternative statistics can be calculated that act as a filter for some of the short-term disturbances that may affect the CPI. These alternative statistics are sometimes known as trend measures of price level change, and attempt to isolate the more persistent component of general price level changes.

Statistics New Zealand acknowledges that there is no single statistical series that is always a good guide to the trend in price level change. Several series can be constructed, and to this end we have produced various trimmed mean measures (5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 percent trims), and a weighted median measure (the 50th percentile). Four other weighted percentile measures have also been produced (the 10th, 25th, 75th and 90th weighted percentiles), primarily to highlight the distribution of price changes within a particular time period. Where the distribution of price movements is positively skewed, the weighted median movement will tend to lie below the CPI movement. Where the distribution of price movements is negatively skewed, the weighted median movement will tend to lie above the CPI movement.

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand had been producing a 10 percent trimmed mean and a weighted median for some time. Largely at their request, Statistics New Zealand decided to produce a set of trend measures as analytical tools. We have broadened the range of measures, and have also used a lower level of aggregation and unrounded data in deriving them.

For detailed information regarding the methodology and compilation of trimmed means and weighted medians, an information paper is available on request.

Treatment of selected items

Review of international air travel

The international air travel subsection of the transportation group was reviewed to ensure it reflected the international travel behaviour of private New Zealand households. In the September 2005 quarter, the broad regions within which routes are priced were re-weighted to reflect the current popularity of these destinations. The new weights were based on external migration passenger volume data.

In the December 2005 quarter, the routes being priced within the broad regions were updated to ensure they appropriately represented the range of destinations travelled.

Excise increase for cigarettes and tobacco

On 1 December 2005 the annual indexation of the excise duty on cigarettes and tobacco took effect. This increased the excise duty on these products by 3.455 percent, based on the movement from the September 2004 quarter to the September 2005 quarter of the CPI, less credit services. The prices for cigarettes and tobacco are collected monthly so the December collection of prices reflected the increase in excise. As prices are averaged* over the three months of the quarter for inclusion in the CPI, the effect of the increase in the excise duty will be spread over both the December 2005 and March 2006 quarters.

* See Method of aggregating non-food prices from the monthly level to the quarterly level, below.

Seasonal effects – fresh fruit and vegetables

For items in the fresh fruit section and fresh vegetables section that exhibit a seasonal pattern, special treatment is used to reduce the influence of normal seasonal price fluctuations. This treatment does not completely eliminate the effects of seasonal fluctuations if shifts in seasonal patterns occur. These seasonally adjusted prices are used to calculate the indexes and price movements for fresh fruit and vegetables, which are quoted in the Highlights and the Commentary sections.

Method of aggregating non-food prices from the monthly level to the quarterly level

Prices are collected monthly for a number of non-food items in the CPI, including electricity, cigarettes and tobacco, alcoholic drinks and air travel. These prices are averaged over the quarter for inclusion in the CPI. The method for calculating these averages is firstly to obtain monthly regional average prices for the item by outlet-weighting the prices collected at different outlets within each region. The monthly regional average prices are used to calculate quarterly regional average prices by weighting each monthly regional average price by the number of days in the month in which it was collected. This is called day weighting. All the regions are aggregated to obtain the New Zealand quarterly index by weighting together regional price movements from the base (ie June 1999) quarter to the current quarter, using the regional population weights.

In April 2002, petrol prices changed to weekly collection, usually on Fridays, after previously being collected twice monthly. The CPI petrol price index measures price changes of 91 octane petrol and 96 octane petrol. Within each CPI region, an average price per 10 litres of each of the two types of petrol is calculated from the prices surveyed each week from individual service stations. Monthly regional average prices for each of the two types of petrol are then calculated as the simple averages of the averages for the weeks within each month. Quarterly regional average prices for each of the two types of petrol are then calculated as the day-weighted averages of the averages for the three months within the quarter. Regional price movements from the base (ie June 2002) quarter to the current quarter are then weighted by the regional population weighted share of the national expenditure weight to calculate the national petrol price index for the current quarter.

Since petrol prices are collected either 12 or 13 times within each quarter, a price change that happens after the first price collection of a quarter is reflected only partly in that quarter, with the remainder being reflected in the following quarter. This is also the case for commodities priced monthly, such as cigarettes and tobacco.

Standard and non-standard series

From the introduction of the rebased CPI series with base June 1999 quarter (=1000), index series that contribute to the hierarchical structure of the overall CPI are known as standard series. For example, the rented dwellings index, combined with the home ownership index contribute to the housing index, which in turn contributes to the all groups index. Components of this pyramid-like structure are known as standard index series. In addition, a selection of non-standard series published in the Hot Off The Press release tables and additional series are publicly available on INFOS.

Examples of these non-standard series include:

All groups CPI less food

All groups CPI plus interest

Interest

All groups CPI – including non-seasonally adjusted fruit and vegetables.

On INFOS, the 1993-based CPI series have been given different identifiers (ie starting with CPXQ; eg CPXQ.SE9A). The CPI on the base of June 1999 quarter (=1000) has adopted the identifiers starting with CPIQ (eg CPIQ.SE9A). For periods prior to the June quarter, index numbers are unrounded, so that originally published percentage movements are preserved. A full listing of series on the base June 1999 quarter (=1000) is available on request.

Tradable and non-tradable non-standard series

The tradable and non-tradable component series which appears in Tables 3.01, 3.02 and 3.03 allows users to decompose CPI goods and services into two components: one contains goods and services that are imported or in competition with foreign goods, either in domestic or foreign markets (tradables); and the other contains goods and services that face no foreign competition (non-tradables). Movements in the tradables component (tradable inflation) demonstrate how international price movements and exchange rates are impacting on movements in consumer prices. The non-tradables component shows how domestic demand and supply conditions are affecting consumer prices.

To determine the tradable/non-tradable split, Statistics New Zealand adopted a two-stage model that built on work undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. CPI subsections were classified as tradable when exports or imports were of significant size relative to industry output. These subsections were judged to be very likely to have significant international price pressures due to foreign competition in domestic markets, or goods and services facing competition in international markets. Items with little or no imports or exports, which would face little or no international competition, were classified as non-tradable. This represented the first stage of the two-stage model adopted by Statistics New Zealand.

The second stage involved using specified criteria to identify goods and services that may not have been appropriately classified by the above output approach. Further analysis was undertaken on those goods and services. To establish the final classification, information was considered on significant price movements, any correlation with exchange rates, supporting trade data, significant world events and the regulatory environment within which prices are set.

For detailed information regarding the methodology, an information paper is available: [Consumers Price Index Tradable and Non-tradable Series – Information Paper](#).

Points effect tables

Tables 8.01 and 8.02 list selected group, subgroup, section and subsection points effects and percentage changes from the previous quarter and from the same quarter of the previous year. These tables have been included to provide a broader perspective of the categories contributing to the movement in the CPI. The listed categories are not a complete list; however, each quarter the tables are reviewed to ensure that the significant contributing categories to the current quarterly movement are included. The annual data are for the same categories as the quarterly categories.

Average retail prices in the CPI

Included in this Hot Off The Press is a selection of average retail prices for the current and previous quarter. These weighted average prices are calculated using movements of an appropriate index within the CPI, and applying these movements to the base period average price. They are therefore not a statistically accurate measure of average transaction prices at the stated time, but do provide a reliable indicator for relative movements in the price levels when compared with average prices for earlier periods.

Information paper – Implementation of the 1999 Review of the Consumers Price Index

For detailed information regarding the methodology and compilation of the June 1999 quarter rebased Consumers Price Index, an information paper titled [Implementation of the 1999 Review of the Consumers Price Index](#) is available.

Pricing coverage

Prices are collected in 15 urban areas by field staff, postal surveys or from the Internet. The pricing areas are Whangarei, Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Rotorua, Napier-Hastings, New Plymouth, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill.

These prices are assumed to represent the price movements of goods and services across New Zealand. Prices are collected weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually, depending on the expected frequency of price changes exhibited by the good or service. Weekly surveys are conducted for fresh fruit and vegetables, and motor fuels. Monthly surveys are limited to the following commodities: food, non-food groceries, electricity, gas, tobacco, alcoholic drinks, newspapers, Internet, cellphones, rental cars and domestic and international air travel. Some items are monitored throughout the quarter, eg telephone call charges. Mortgage interest is also surveyed monthly, but has been excluded from the CPI calculations from the June 1999 quarter rebase.

International comparisons of consumer price indexes

To provide a better basis for international comparisons, the Seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted a resolution which called for countries to "if possible, compile and provide for dissemination to the international community an index that excludes housing and financial services" in addition to the all-items index. This information is presented in Table 4. This data is calculated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics from information supplied by the source country.

More information

For more information, follow the [link](#) from the Technical notes of this release on the Statistics New Zealand website.

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Next release ...

Consumers Price Index: March 2006 quarter will be released on 19 April 2006.

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Tables

The following tables can be downloaded from the Statistics New Zealand website in Excel 97 format. If you do not have access to Excel 97 or higher, you may use the [Excel file viewer](#) to view, print and export the contents of the file.

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