

Canterbury overtakes Auckland median income despite quakes, census shows

4 Feb 2014 Patrick Smellie Business Desk

Personal income statistics from the 2013 national census show the annual median income in Canterbury was the second highest in the country, overtaking Auckland since the last census in 2006, in a trend that appears to reflect strong dairying growth overcoming earthquake impacts.

The census shows that Wellingtonians' median income remains the highest in the country, at \$32,700, although the 13.1 percent rise in the Wellington median is lower than the national average of 14.3 percent between the 2006 and 2013 censuses.

The censuses were held seven rather than five years apart after the Canterbury quakes in 2010 and 2011 quakes forced postponement.

A median income is a mid-point between the incomes of an equal number of people aged over 15. It differs from an average income measure, and reflects the incomes of beneficiaries, pensioners, students, and non-earners as well as wage and salary earners and the self-employed.

The statistics also show that despite the quakes, the Canterbury region, which includes the rural hinterland as well as Christchurch city, experienced a population rise over the period.

In 2006, the census recorded a total of 419,343 people living in Canterbury, which rose to 438,741 in the 2013 count. Home ownership statistics also suggest that Canterbury's proportion of renters has remained about stable between the two censuses, at 30.1 percent last year versus 29.6 percent for people living in a "dwelling not owned and not held in a family trust" in 2006.

The national proportion of people in that category, which can be seen as a proxy for people living in rented accommodation, rose from 33.1 percent in 2006 to 35.2 percent of stated households in 2013.

The lowest median income in the latest census was recorded in Northland, at \$23,400 a year, up 10.7 percent from the 2006 census. The only region to see the median income rise less than that was Auckland, with a 9.5 percent increase over the seven years, although the median Auckland income at \$29,600 is third highest in the country.

In 2006, Waikato had the third highest annual median income at \$24,100. It rose to \$27,900 in 2013, but was sixth equal with Marlborough.

The largest percentage increases in median incomes over the seven years were recorded on the West Coast, where the median rose 24.2 percent to \$26,900; Canterbury, up 21.9 percent to \$30,100; Southland, up 21.3 percent to \$29,500; and Taranaki, up 20.2 percent to \$29,100. All four have benefited from the dairying boom of recent years.

For New Zealand as a whole, the median income rose 14.3 percent over the seven years between 2006 and 2013, from \$24,400 to \$28,500.

(BusinessDesk)