

Embargoed until 10:45am – 12 May 2009

## Accommodation Survey: March 2009

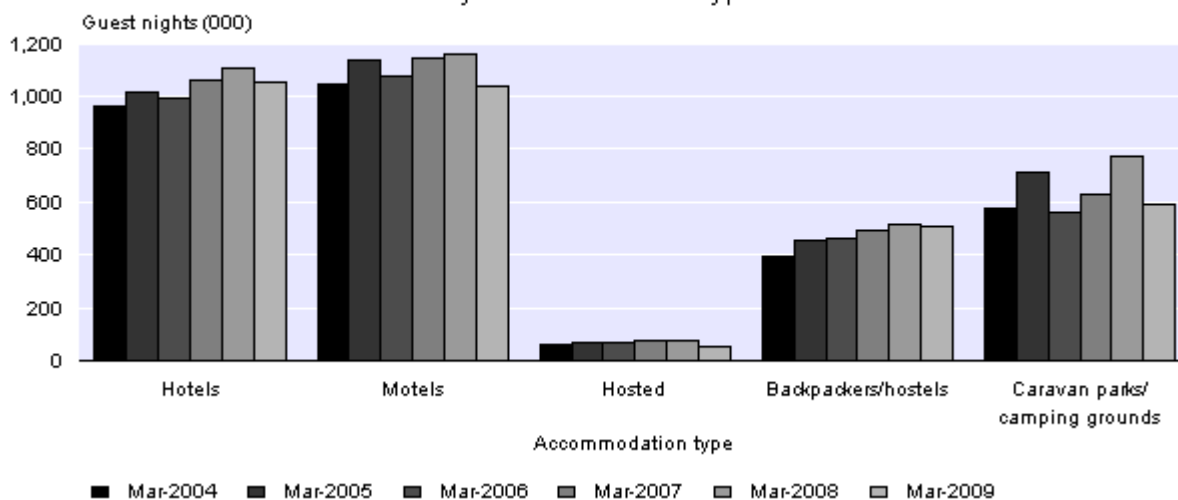
### Highlights

Compared with March 2008:

- Total guest nights were 11 percent lower.
- All 12 regions recorded fewer guest nights.
- All five accommodation types had fewer guest nights.
- International guest nights were 11 percent lower and domestic guest nights were 10 percent lower.

Easter occurred in March in 2008 but in April in 2009.

**Guest Nights**  
By accommodation type



Geoff Bascand  
Government Statistician

12 May 2009  
ISSN 1178-0207

See also [Accommodation Survey: March 2009 – Media release](#).

# Commentary

## Change in the timing of Easter

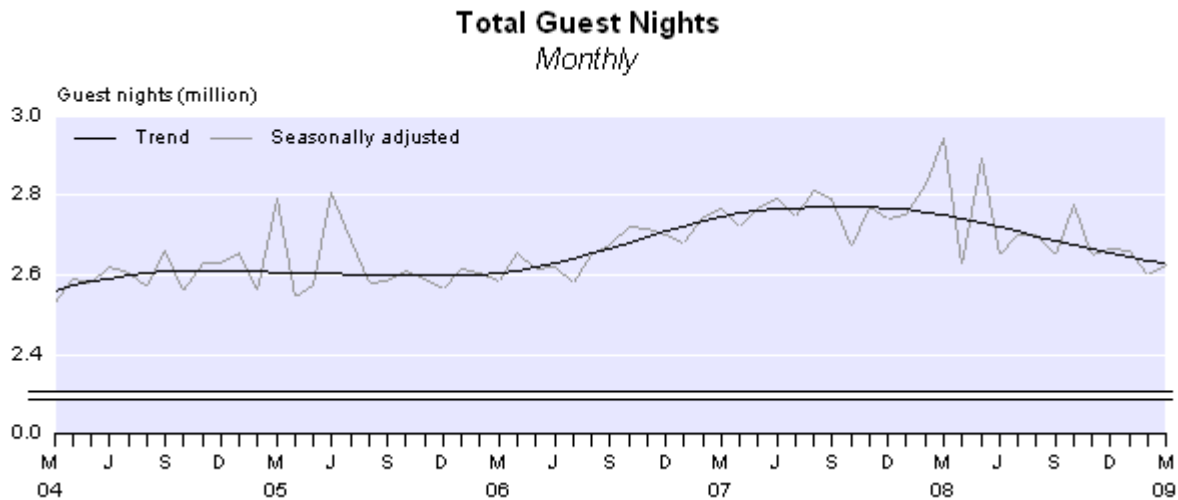
In 2008, the Easter holidays fell in late March, while in 2009 the Easter holidays were in the middle of April. This factor should be noted when comparing the figures for March 2009 with those for March 2008. The impact on the data of this change in timing cannot be quantified.

## Total guest nights

Total guest nights in short-term commercial accommodation were 3.2 million in March 2009, an 11 percent decrease compared with March 2008 and a 5 percent decrease compared with March 2007.

Total guest nights for the March 2009 year were 32.1 million, 4 percent lower than for the March 2008 year.

The trend in total guest nights has been decreasing since October 2007. The trend level is now 5 percent lower than the peak in October 2007, but is still 1 percent higher than the previous low point in January 2006.

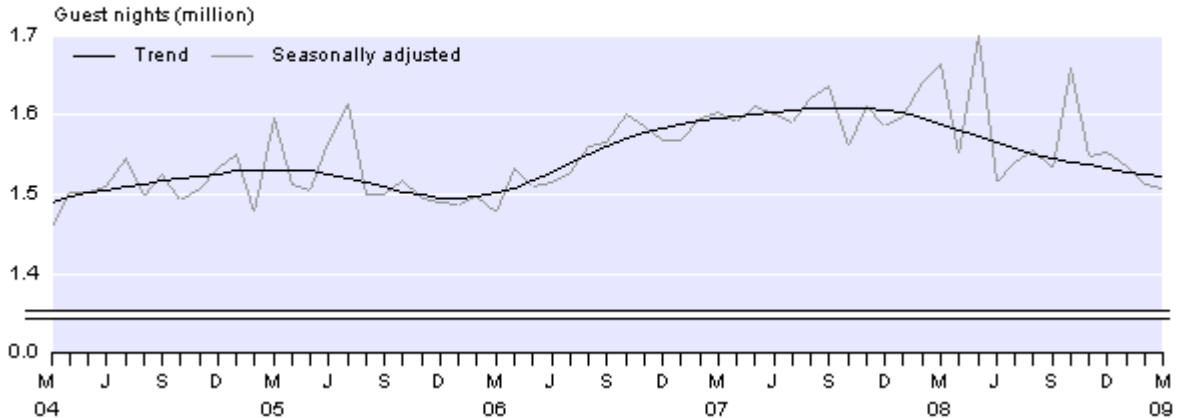


## Guest nights by island

Guest nights in the North Island were 1.8 million in March 2009, a 9 percent decrease compared with March 2008 and a 6 percent decrease compared with March 2007. In the March 2009 year, guest nights in the North Island were 3 percent lower than in the March 2008 year.

The trend for North Island guest nights has been decreasing since October 2007. The trend level is now 5 percent lower than the October 2007 peak, but is still 2 percent higher than the previous low point in January 2006.

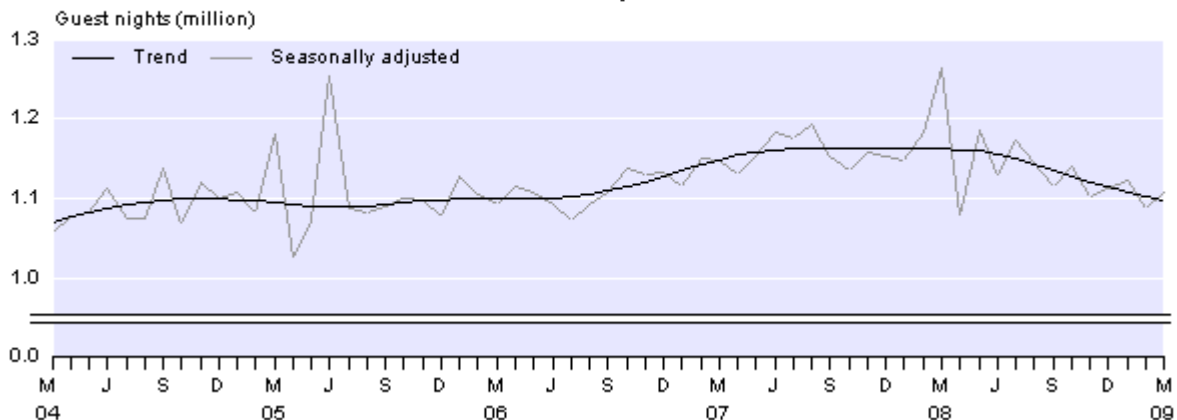
### North Island Guest Nights Monthly



Guest nights in the South Island were 1.4 million in March 2009, a 12 percent decrease compared with March 2008 and a 3 percent decrease compared with March 2007. In the March 2009 year, guest nights in the South Island were 4 percent lower than in the March 2008 year.

The trend for South Island guest nights has been decreasing since September 2007, and is now 6 percent lower than the September 2007 peak.

### South Island Guest Nights Monthly



### Guest nights by region

In March 2009, all 12 regions recorded fewer guest nights than in March 2008, with the following regions showing the largest decreases:

- Canterbury (down 64,000 or 11 percent)
- Otago (down 60,000 or 13 percent)
- Bay of Plenty (down 49,000 or 15 percent).

In the March 2009 year, 11 of the 12 regions recorded fewer guest nights than in the March 2008 year. The largest decreases were:

- Otago, down 260,000 (6 percent)
- Bay of Plenty, down 254,000 (8 percent)
- Northland, down 155,000 (9 percent)

Wellington was the only region with more guest nights (up 12,000 or less than 1 percent).

## Comparison with short-term overseas visitor arrival statistics

*International Travel and Migration: March 2009* shows that short-term overseas visitor arrivals to New Zealand in March 2009 were down 24,300 (10 percent) from March 2008. This follows a decrease of 24,000 (9 percent) in February 2009 compared with February 2008.

There were fewer visitors on holiday (down 17,000 or 13 percent) in March 2009 compared with March 2008, and there were fewer visiting friends and relatives (down 5,500 or 7 percent). By contrast, there were more visitors on business (up 300 or 1 percent).

New Zealand resident short-term departures for March 2009 were down 8,100 (6 percent) from March 2008. This follows a decrease of 11,200 (10 percent) in February 2009 compared with February 2008.

## Origin of guests

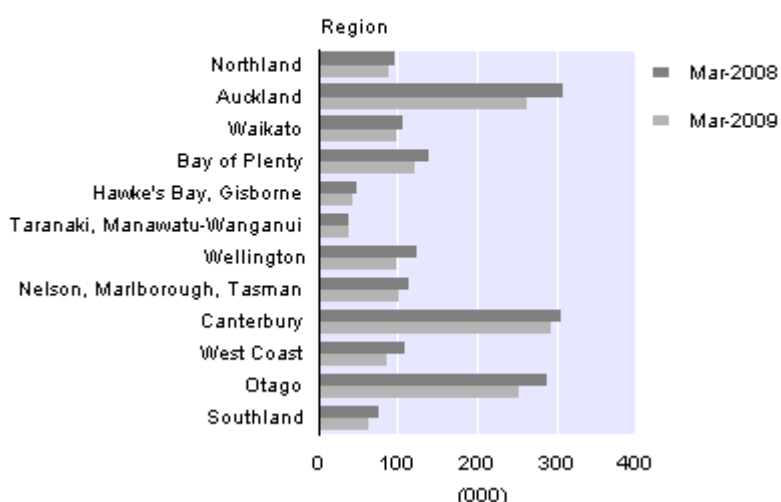
International visitors contributed 1.6 million guest nights in March 2009, down 197,000 (11 percent) from March 2008. All of the 12 regions showed decreases in international guest nights, with the largest decreases recorded in:

- Auckland (down 47,000 or 15 percent)
- Otago (down 33,000 or 12 percent)
- Wellington (down 24,000 or 20 percent).

### International Guest Nights

*By region*

March 2008 and 2009



In March 2009, domestic guest nights were 1.7 million, down 190,000 (10 percent) from March 2008. Ten of the 12 regions showed decreases in domestic guest nights, led by:

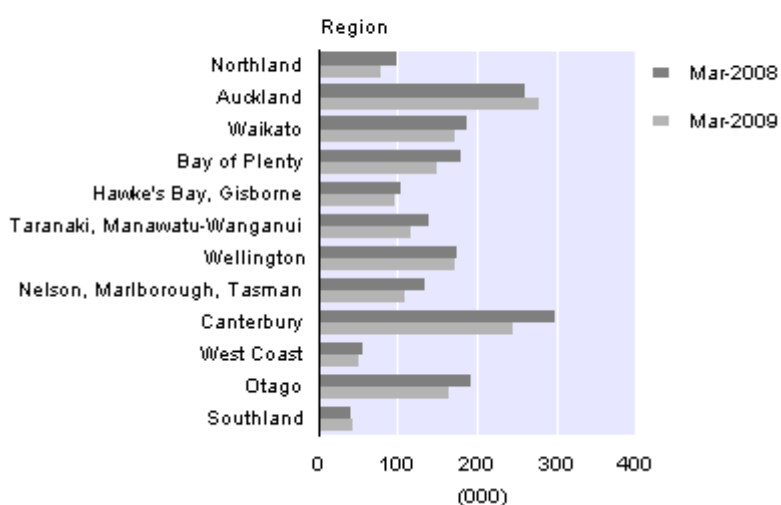
- Canterbury (down 52,000 or 17 percent)
- Bay of Plenty (down 31,000 or 17 percent)
- Otago (down 27,000 or 14 percent)

The Auckland region showed the largest increase in domestic guest nights, (up 16,000 or 6 percent), followed by Southland (up 3,000 or 8 percent).

### Domestic Guest Nights

*By region*

March 2008 and 2009



In March 2009, there was a response rate of 71 percent to the Accommodation Survey question on 'origin of guests'. In March 2008, the response rate was 67 percent. Figures for those establishments that failed to respond have been imputed and such high levels of imputation can affect data quality, including comparisons between different months.

### Guest nights by accommodation type

In March 2009, guest nights decreased for all five accommodation types compared with March 2008. The accommodation types showing the largest decreases were:

- Caravan parks/camping grounds, down 183,000 (24 percent)
- Motels, down 121,000 (10 percent)
- Hotels, down 54,000 (5 percent).

In March 2009, hotels had the largest share of total guest nights (33 percent), followed by motels (32 percent) and caravan parks/camping grounds (18 percent).

In the March 2009 year, three of the five accommodation types had fewer guest nights than in the March 2008 year, led by:

- Motels, down 769,000 (7 percent)
- Caravan parks/camping grounds, down 447,000 (7 percent).

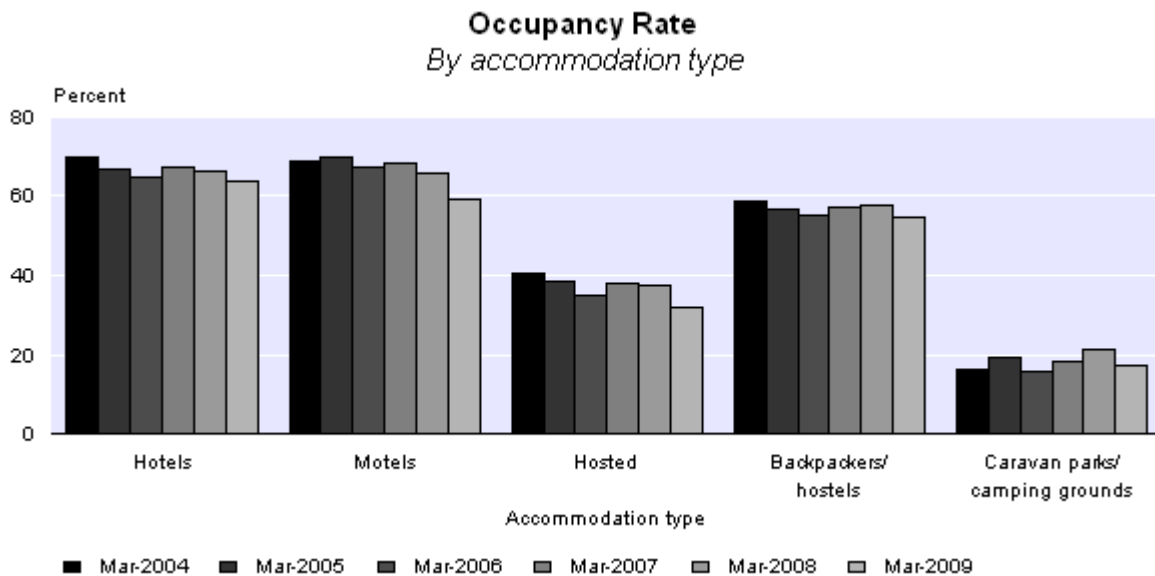
## Occupancy rate

In March 2009, the occupancy rate, excluding caravan parks/camping grounds, was 59 percent, compared with 62 percent in March 2008. This is the lowest occupancy rate in a March month since March 2000.

Hotels had the highest occupancy rate (64 percent) of all the accommodation types in March 2009, followed by motels (59 percent) and backpackers/hostels (55 percent).

Excluding the caravan parks/camping grounds category, 11 of the 12 regions had lower occupancy rates in March 2009 than in March 2008. Waikato (52 percent), was the only region to record an occupancy rate higher than in March 2008.

Wellington and Auckland had the highest occupancy rates (each at 68 percent), followed by Otago (61 percent).



## Response rates

Response rates by accommodation type for March 2009			
Accommodation type	Establishments responding to questions on guest nights, guest arrivals and stay unit nights	Proportion of guest-night estimate from actual data	Proportion of origin-of-guest estimate from actual data
	Percentage		
Hotels	76	91	79
Motels	76	79	65
Hosted	82	84	73
Backpackers/hostels	78	80	65
Caravan parks/ camping grounds	78	86	73
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>71</b>

When respondents do not answer questions in this survey, Statistics New Zealand estimates the missing information based on data from similar establishments in the same and/or similar areas. For more information, please see the technical notes of this release or contact Statistics New Zealand.

## Survey sponsorship

The Accommodation Survey is a monthly survey undertaken by Statistics New Zealand and sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism.

For technical information contact:  
Christine Sadler or Tehseen Islam  
Christchurch 03 964 8700

**Email:** [info@stats.govt.nz](mailto:info@stats.govt.nz)

### Next release ...

*Accommodation Survey: April 2009* will be released on 11 June 2009.

## **Technical notes**

### **Population**

The target population for this survey is all 'geographic units' (called 'establishments' in this publication) that are classified as short-term (less than one month) commercial accommodation providers operating in New Zealand. In terms of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC), the target population is taken from class 5710 (accommodation), and the part of class 5720 (pubs, taverns and bars) that also provides accommodation.

The survey frame is all short-term commercial accommodation-providing geographic units belonging to an economically significant 'enterprise'. Economic significance is generally determined as being GST registered and having a turnover of at least \$30,000 per annum.

### **Survey errors**

This survey aims for 100 percent coverage of the population (a full census). In practice, however, an overall response rate of between 76 and 80 percent is usually achieved. The remaining units are given imputed values based upon the characteristics of similar establishments in the same or similar regions. Imputation introduces unknown errors into the estimates, and users of the data should bear this in mind. The size of these unknown errors is difficult to quantify.

Other errors occur for reasons such as respondent error, frame quality and errors in processing. While every effort is made to minimise these errors, they will still occur. It is not possible to quantify their effect.

### **Trend estimates**

For any series, the survey estimates can be broken down into three components: trend, seasonal and irregular. While seasonally adjusted series have had the seasonal component removed, the trend series have had both the seasonal and the irregular components removed. Trend estimates reveal the underlying direction of movement in a series, and are likely to indicate turning points more accurately than seasonally adjusted estimates.

The accommodation trend series are calculated using the X-12-ARIMA seasonal adjustment package. They are based on optimal moving averages of the seasonally adjusted series, with an adjustment for outlying values. The X-12-ARIMA package is an updated version of X-11-ARIMA, developed by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The trend estimates towards the end of the series incorporate new data as it becomes available, and can therefore change as more observations are added to the series. Revisions can be particularly large if an observation is treated as an outlier in one month, but is found to be part of the underlying trend as further observations are added to the series. All trend estimates are subject to revisions each month, but normally only the last two or three estimates are likely to be substantially altered.

### **Trend estimates versus month-on-month comparisons**

Trend estimates reveal the underlying direction of the movement in a series. In contrast, comparisons between one month and the same month in the previous year(s) do not take account of data recorded in between these periods, and are subject to one-off fluctuations. Reasons for fluctuations include changes in the timing of holidays, international crises, and large sporting and cultural events.

## Seasonally adjusted estimates

The X-12-ARIMA package has been used to produce the seasonally adjusted estimates referred to in the Commentary text. Seasonal adjustment aims to eliminate the impact of regular seasonal events. These may be due to climatic effects (such as more guests staying in camping grounds during the summer) or calendar effects (such as holidays). This makes the data for adjacent months more comparable. All seasonally adjusted figures are subject to revision each month.

Further information about [seasonal adjustment](#) is available on the Statistics New Zealand website.

## Classification of accommodation type

The predominant capacity provided determines the accommodation type. For instance, if a business provides both motel and camping ground accommodation, but the majority of its stay units are motel rooms, then it would be classified as a motel. The classification system used is the New Zealand Accommodation Classification, broadly defined below:

- Hotels: includes both hotels and resorts
- Motels: includes motor inns, apartments and motels
- Hosted: includes private hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, and holiday farm (farmstay) accommodation
- Backpackers/hostels
- Caravan parks/camping grounds.

Further information on the classification system is available on request.

## Origin of guests

From November 2007, information on total domestic and international guest nights will be available on a monthly basis but the breakdown by region or country will no longer be available.

## Other definitions

### Business frame

A register (maintained by Statistics NZ) of all economically significant businesses operating in New Zealand from which the survey population is drawn.

### Establishment

The smallest statistical unit operating within a single physical location and owned by a single enterprise. The term is used to represent what is usually called the 'geographic unit' in other Statistics NZ publications.

### Guest night

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 provision of 30 guest nights of accommodation.

### Stay unit

The term used to describe the unit of accommodation that is available to be charged out to guests (for example a powered site in a caravan park, a bed in a backpackers, a room in a hotel or motel).

## **Capacity (stay unit nights available)**

This is the basic measure of an establishment's accommodation capacity. It is defined as one stay unit multiplied by one night. For example, 10 units in a motel available for guest use (whether occupied or not) for the full 31 days in July would have an accommodation capacity of 310 stay unit nights.

## **Occupancy rate**

This derived variable is calculated by dividing stay unit nights occupied by stay unit nights available. In the case of the motel above, if six of its 10 units were occupied every night in July, it would have  $6 \times 31 = 186$  stay unit nights occupied, and its occupancy rate would be 60 percent.

## **Average length of stay**

This derived variable is calculated by dividing total guest nights by total guest first nights.

## **More information**

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

## **Confidentiality**

Data collected and information contained in this publication must conform to the provisions of the Statistics Act 1975. This requires that published information maintains the confidentiality of individual respondents.

## **Copyright**

Information obtained from Statistics NZ may be freely used, reproduced, or quoted unless otherwise specified. In all cases Statistics NZ must be acknowledged as the source.

## **Liability**

While care has been used in processing, analysing and extracting information, Statistics NZ gives no warranty that the information supplied is free from error. Statistics NZ shall not be liable for any loss suffered through the use, directly or indirectly, of any information, product or service.

## **Timing**

Timed statistical releases are delivered using postal and electronic services provided by third parties. Delivery of these releases may be delayed by circumstances outside the control of Statistics NZ. Statistics NZ accepts no responsibility for any such delays.

## Tables

The following tables are printed with this Hot Off The Press and can also be downloaded from the Statistics NZ website in Excel format. If you do not have access to Excel, you may use the [Excel file viewer](#) to view, print and export the contents of the file.

1. Establishments, capacity, guest nights, occupancy rate and average stay, by accommodation type
2. Occupancy rate excluding caravan parks/camping grounds, by region
3. Total guest nights
4. Seasonally adjusted and trend guest nights, by accommodation type
5. North Island guest nights
6. South Island guest nights
7. Regional guest nights

## Accommodation pivot tables

The Accommodation pivot tables provide more detailed information, breaking the survey variables down by regional tourism organisation areas and territorial authority areas. These tables can be downloaded from the Statistics NZ website.

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/tables/accommodation-pivot-tables>