



City Futures Research Centre

# Queensland Rental Vulnerability Index 2021: report

Authors

Chris Martin

Laurence Troy (University of Sydney)

Matthew Ng

Balamurugan Soundararaj

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**UNSW**  
City Futures  
Research Centre

City Futures Research Centre | Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture | UNSW Sydney  
[cityfutures.ada.unsw.edu.au](http://cityfutures.ada.unsw.edu.au)

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Opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the project sponsors. Any errors also remain the responsibility of the authors.

# 1. Introduction

This is a brief report on the third iteration of the Queensland Rental Vulnerability Index (QRVI), conducted by City Futures Research Centre for Tenants Queensland. This iteration uses data from the Census conducted 21 August 2021, and administrative data from the Queensland Government relating to the rental sector at approximately that point in time. The previous iterations of the QRVI used data from the 2011 and 2016 Census years.

The QRVI ranks Queensland postcodes according to their 'rental vulnerability', which is the vulnerability of renter households to rental housing problems and hence need for assistance from a tenants advice service.<sup>1</sup> Rental vulnerability is scored by a principal component analysis (PCA) of numerous housing and household indicators associated with rental housing problems. Through a factor reduction process, six indicators – disability, lone parent status, low education, old age, rent stress and unemployment – are identified, and the rental vulnerability score is derived. Postcodes are then ranked by their score. The QRVI rankings and the full list of indicators are presented in the online visualisation.

The indicators are unchanged across the three iterations of the QRVI, except in 2021 the indicator 'tenancy disputes' is not included, because the Queensland Government declined to make the data available. However, because that indicator is one of those removed in the factor reduction process, the final rental vulnerability score is not affected, and the three iterations are comparable.

The QRVI visualisation is at <https://rentalvulnerability.org.au/?state=qld>.

The report is structured as follows.

The second part (after this Introduction) presents a discussion of **rental vulnerability in Queensland**, highlighting locations with the highest rental vulnerability, and some broader patterns. The third part discusses changes and trends in rental vulnerability since the earlier iterations of the QRVI.

The fourth part draws on the data about rental bonds and rental affordability that were assembled for the QRVI to briefly discuss some other rental sector dynamics evident over the 2016-2021 period – including the turbulent years of the COVID-19 emergency 2020-2021

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<sup>1</sup> Troy, L. and Martin, C. (2017) 'Queensland Rental Vulnerability Index: report'. City Futures Research Centre, for Tenants Queensland. [https://cityfutures.adu.unsw.edu.au/documents/396/RVI\\_final\\_to\\_TQ\\_public.pdf](https://cityfutures.adu.unsw.edu.au/documents/396/RVI_final_to_TQ_public.pdf)

## 2. Rental vulnerability in 2021

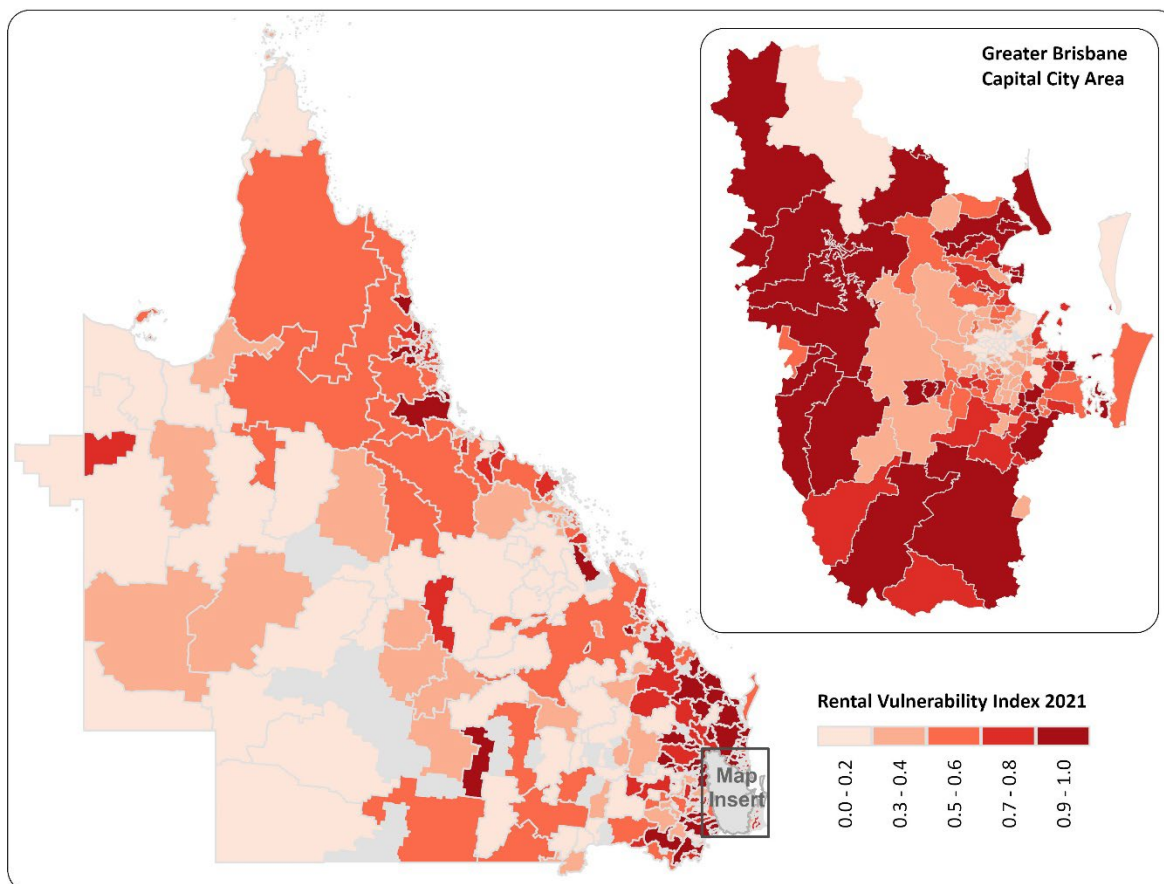
Figure 1 (next page) shows Queensland postcodes coloured by QRVI quintiles (i.e. bands of 20 per cent). The top-ranked 20 per cent of postcodes have the highest rental vulnerability scores, and are coloured dark red; the next-most vulnerable 20 per cent are coloured bright red and so on to the least vulnerable 20 per cent, coloured pale apricot. Greyed postcodes have small populations (less than 30 renters) and are excluded from the QRVI.

Three postcodes share the highest rank in 2021:

- Russell Island and other south Moreton Bay islands (4184), near Brisbane. This postcode has high rates of rental stress (54% of renter households), older renters (27% of renters) and disability or health condition requiring assistance (16% of renters).
- Torbanlea (4662), near the Fraser Coast. Torbanlea is a small village, just above the threshold for inclusion in the RVI, so for privacy we do not give further details about the population.
- Mount Morgan and nearby villages (4714), near Rockhampton. This postcode has high rates of rental stress (36% of renter households) and renters in single parent households (12% of renters). A high proportion of renters in this postcode (30%) are Indigenous.

Looking at the postcodes to the 20<sup>th</sup> highest rank, there is a significant concentration of very highly ranked postcodes on or near the Fraser Coast, such as those covering Torbanlea (1<sup>st</sup>), Tin Can Bay (4580 - 4<sup>th</sup>), Yandaran (4673 - 5<sup>th</sup>), Maryborough (4650 - 8<sup>th</sup>), Burrum Heads (4659 - 11<sup>th</sup>) and Hervey Bay (4655 - 20<sup>th</sup>).

**Figure 1 Rental vulnerability index 2021, Queensland.**



Source: the authors.

Other notable highly ranked postcodes include those covering:

- the towns of Nanango (4615 - 14<sup>th</sup>) and neighbouring Jandowae (4410 - 8<sup>th</sup>) and Yarraman (4614 - 14<sup>th</sup>);
- the suburbs of Clontarf and Margate (4019 - 17<sup>th</sup>), north of Brisbane; and
- the town of Beaudesert, west of the Gold Coast (4285 - 20<sup>th</sup>).

Looking beyond the top 20 postcodes to the top 20 per cent (just over 80 postcodes), those very highly ranked postcodes around the Fraser Coast are part of a band of highly vulnerable places reaching from Bundaberg through Gympie and west of the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane.

Notable population centres in the top 20 per cent of postcodes include Ipswich (4305) and Logan (4131), both on the outskirts of Brisbane.

Cairns is largely a mix of postcodes in the top 20 per cent and the second quintile. The Gold Coast is a mix of top, second and third quintiles. Townsville is mostly in the second quintile.

Most City of Brisbane postcodes are in the lowest ranked (least vulnerable) quintile, and some are in the fourth quintile. Many vulnerable renters live in Brisbane, but they are masked in the RVI by the large number of households who are employed, high-income and without disability. Table 1 presents the numbers of renters with vulnerability factors from the six primary indicators in each of the QSTARS service areas; Table 2 presents the numbers of renters with factors from the remaining indicators (except the unaffordable new tenancies indicator).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The indicator 'unaffordable new tenancies' not included, because the indicator is expressed as a percentage, and hence does not sum for all postcodes covered by a QSTARS service.

Table 1. QRVI indicators (six remaining after PCA) (2021), by QSTARS service.

QSTARS Service	Renters in rent stress	Older renters	Unemployed renters	Single parent renters	Renters with low education	Renters with disability
Community Plus	25,594	12,253	9,496	12,852	8,094	9,669
Enhance Care	18,099	11,694	5,985	12,491	8,545	1,1054
HBNC	8,702	8,244	2,971	5,659	5,660	6,446
IRASI	12,935	7,281	5,425	10,291	7,324	8,920
MRCLC	4,578	3,707	1,601	3,530	3,091	2,579
Suncoast CLC	17,576	11,251	3,676	8,910	5,359	7,178
TASC	9,472	7,133	3,232	6,777	6,714	6,171
TQ - Logan/Redland Office	4,889	3,568	1,330	3,184	2,020	2,631
TQ - BNC Office	26,751	10,285	8,044	10,118	5,335	7,510
TQ - H'vale Office	18,500	9,718	5,097	9,283	5,413	7,082
TQ - Logan/Redland Office	13,386	7,034	5,784	10,326	7,343	8,331
TQ - Palm B Office	13,989	6,927	2,952	4,998	2,624	3,072
TQ - Cairns Office	10,696	8,977	4,428	8,390	6,282	5,296
TQ - Mt Isa Office	277	503	469	626	897	215
TQ - Townsville Office	7,512	5,998	3,209	6,042	4,827	4,686
TQ Rockhampton	6,514	5,403	3,064	5,643	4,998	4,675
<b>Total</b>	<b>199,470</b>	<b>11,9976</b>	<b>66,763</b>	<b>119,120</b>	<b>84,526</b>	<b>95,515</b>

Source: the authors.

Table 2. QRVI indicators (others) (2021), by QSTARS service.

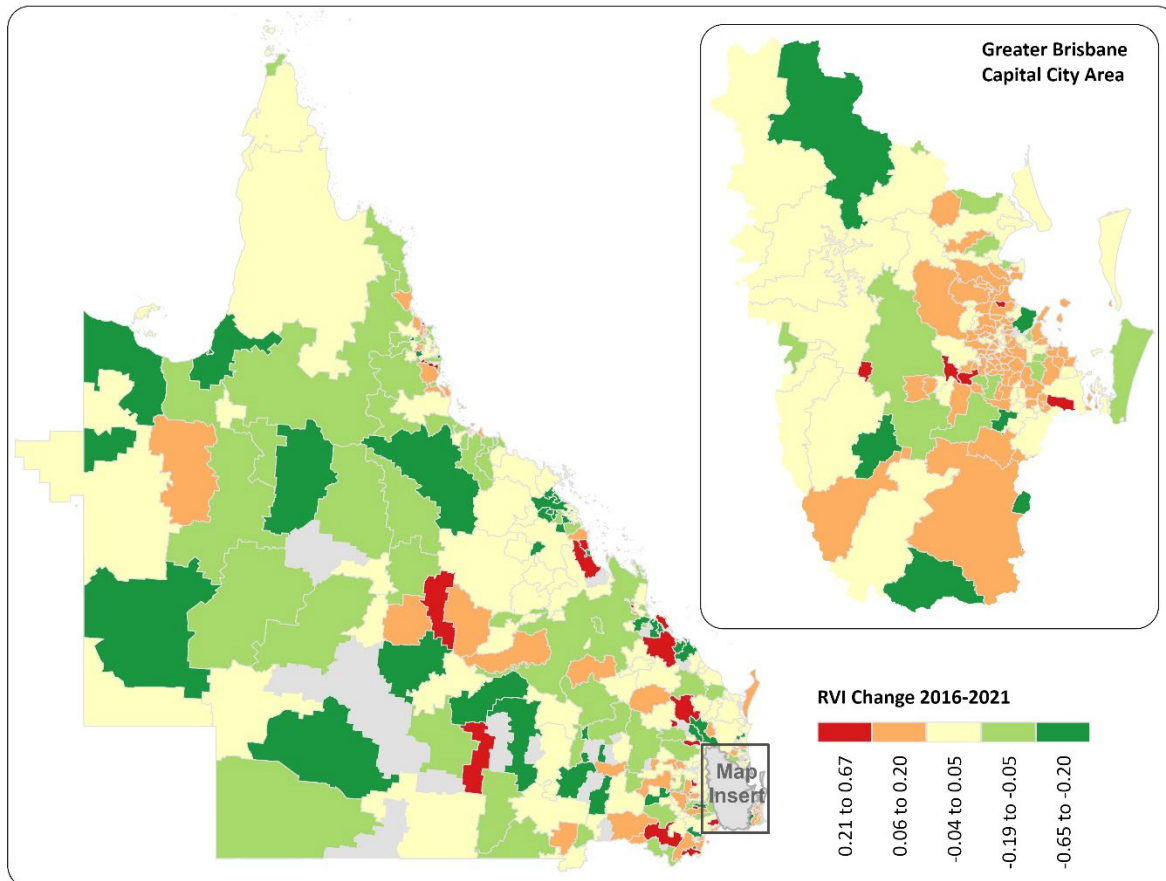
QSTARS Service	Indigenous renters	Young renters	Public housing households	Boarding house residents	Residential park households
Community Plus	7,655	30,974	9,962	1,304	741
Enhance Care	10,275	14,464	4,571	148	3,458
HBNC	7,444	5,792	2,278	340	3,002
IRASI	10,421	12,990	2,882	752	971
MRCLC	5,979	5,161	1,925	295	8
Suncoast CLC	5,197	11,576	3,266	219	4,247
TASC	10,527	10,340	2,463	430	1,454
TQ - Logan/Redland Office	2,238	3,601	1,643	66	327
TQ - BNC Office	6,395	32,941	6,296	1,669	398
TQ - H'vale Office	4,829	14,368	2,699	367	3,703
TQ - Logan/Redland Office	8,442	13,185	4,866	474	3,982
TQ - Palm B Office	2,237	8,946	1,483	174	426
TQ - Cairns Office	31,815	10,706	4,880	396	447
TQ - Mt Isa Office	5,450	754	220	0	0
TQ - Townsville Office	13,460	10,507	3,651	580	41
TQ Rockhampton	10,022	7,900	3,113	489	427
<b>Total</b>	<b>142,386</b>	<b>194,205</b>	<b>56,198</b>	<b>7,703</b>	<b>23,632</b>

Source: the authors.

### 3. Changes in rental vulnerability 2016-2021

Figure 2 shows Queensland postcodes coloured by the degree of change in QRVI score from 2016 to 2021. Postcodes coloured dark red moved most up the rank (became more vulnerable), while those coloured orange moved up less; postcodes coloured deep green moved most down the rank (became less vulnerable) and those coloured pale green moved down less. Lemon coloured postcodes stayed about the same. Greyed postcodes are excluded from the change comparison, either because they were excluded in 2021 or 2016, or because they are a postcode new in 2021 that does not match to a 2016 postcode.

**Figure 2. Change in rental vulnerability index 2016 to 2021, Queensland.**



Source: the authors.

Among major population centres, the most notable mover up the rank was Gladstone (4680). Postcodes on or near the Gold Coast also moved up the rank, as did postcodes covering Brisbane. In fact, most postcodes from the Gold Coast to the Sunshine Coast moved up the rank.

The concentration of highly vulnerable postcodes around the Fraser Coast, Gympie, Maryborough, Hervey Bay and Bundaberg moved little in the rank; they were highly vulnerable in the previous iterations of the QRVI.

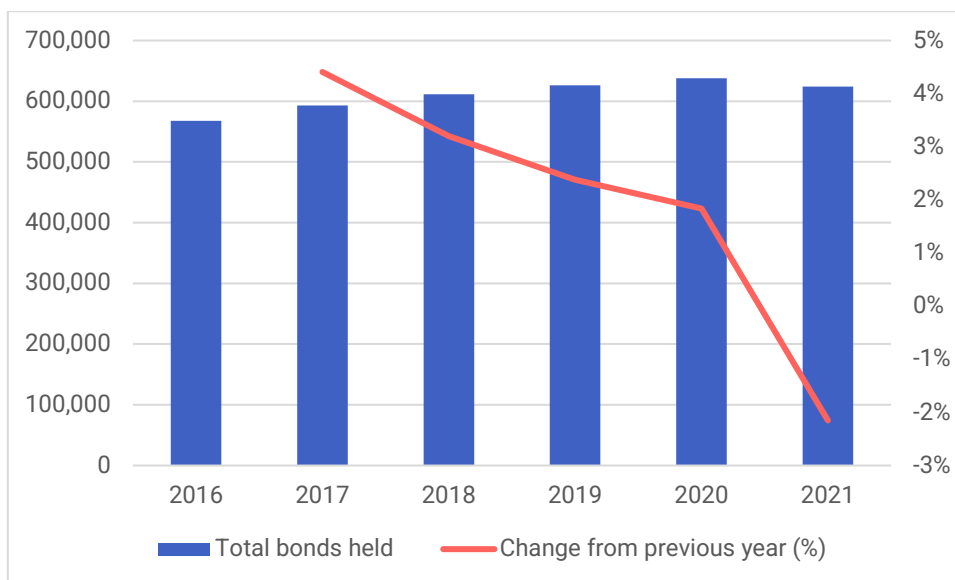


## 4. Other changes in the Queensland private rental sector

This section of the report is a brief review and analysis of wider changes in the Queensland private rental sector in the period 2016-21, including the tumultuous two years following the COVID-19 outbreak. The analysis draws mostly on the rental bond data assembled for the RVI. Because almost all private landlords require tenants to pay a bond at the commencement of their tenancies, bonds lodged with the Residential Tenancies Authority approximate the flow of new private tenancies commencing, and bonds held approximate the stock of private tenancies.

From Q4 2016 to Q4 2021, total bonds held increased 10% from almost 568,000 to just over 628,000. However, the Q4 2021 total was almost 14,000 (2.2%) less than one year previously. The rate of growth in bonds held had been slowing since 2016, but the 2021 decline was quite sharp, reversing two years' growth in the sector. It was also quite widespread: 294 postcodes (72%) recorded fewer bonds held in Q4 2021 than in Q4 2020. In 128 postcodes (31%), the reduction was greater than 10 per cent.

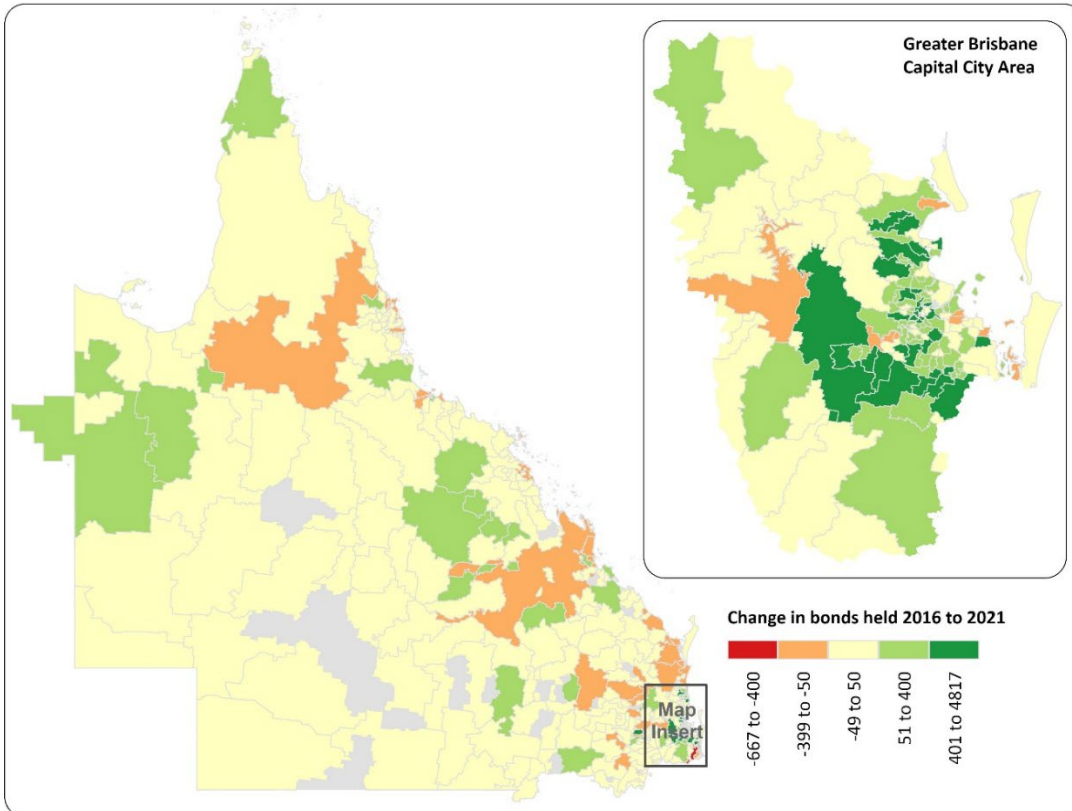
**Figure 3. Total bonds held, change from previous year, 2016-2021, Queensland.**



Source: Queensland rental bonds, the authors' calculations.

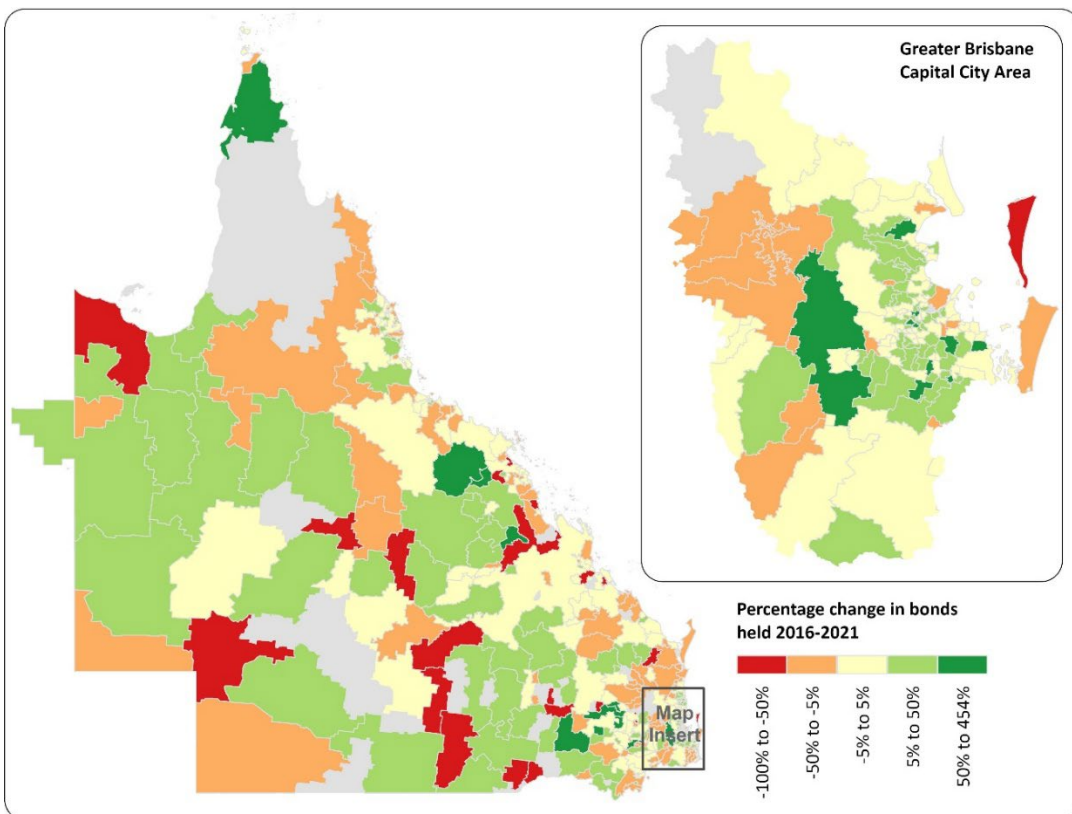
Figure 4 maps by postcode the absolute change in total bonds held over the period 2016-2021. It shows strong growth in most of the Greater Brisbane region, and little net change in regional Queensland over the five years. Figure 5 maps the percentage change in total bonds held over the same period. Within the Brisbane capital city area, the overall story is one of growth, likely reflecting the supply of new housing generally as the city expands. Key areas of growth are central city locations, coupled with more middle and outer growth areas. There are however significant areas of decline in bonds held over the five-year period, mostly in peri-urban and regional locations. In these areas, proportional shifts likely overemphasise change given the relatively smaller numbers of rental dwellings generally.

**Figure 4. Change in total bonds held 2016 to 2021, Queensland.**



Source: Queensland rental bonds, the authors' calculations.

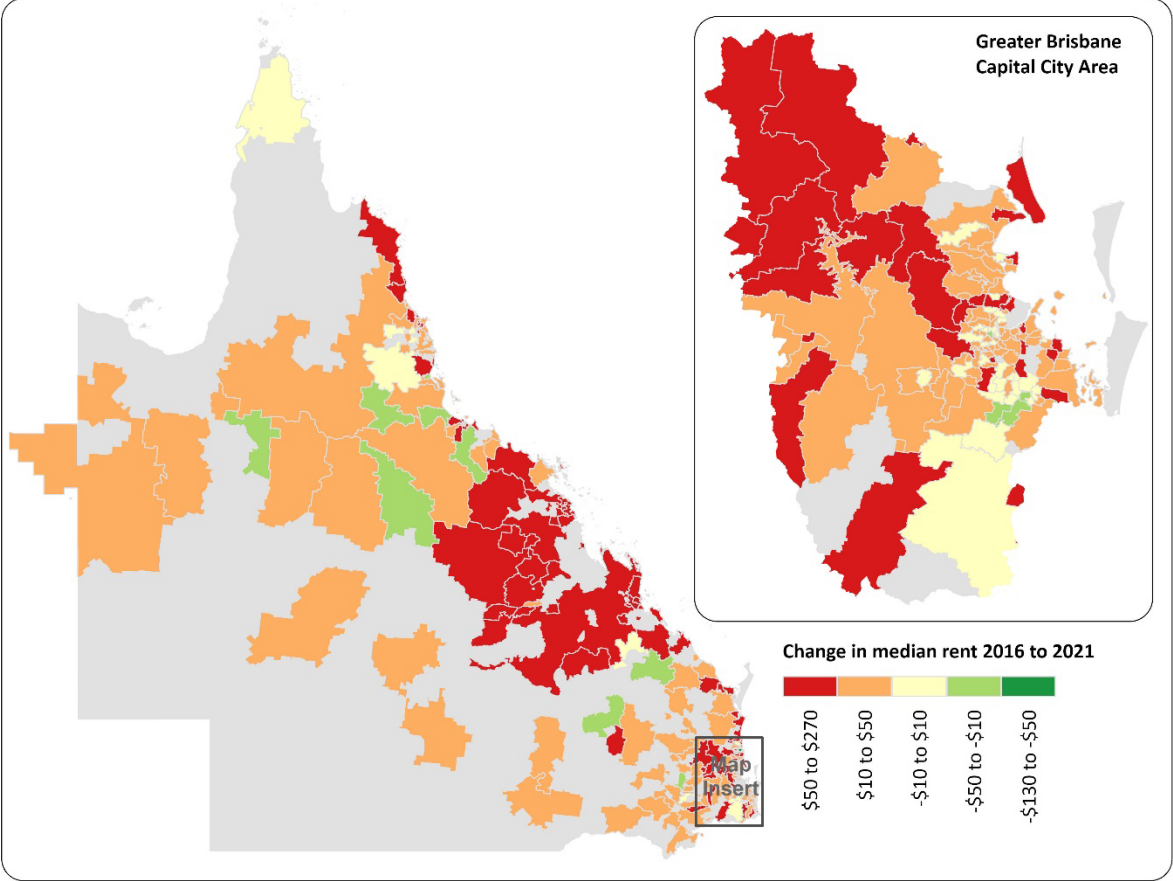
**Figure 5. Percentage change in bonds held 2016 to 2021, Queensland.**



Source: Queensland rental bonds, the authors' calculations.

Figure 6 maps the change (in dollar terms) in the median rent for new tenancies commencing in 2021 compared with new tenancies commencing in 2016. Almost everywhere median rents increased over the five years. The largest increases were on the outskirts of Brisbane and in areas from Bundaberg to Mackay. Inner and middle Brisbane postcodes mostly recorded more modest growth in median rents.

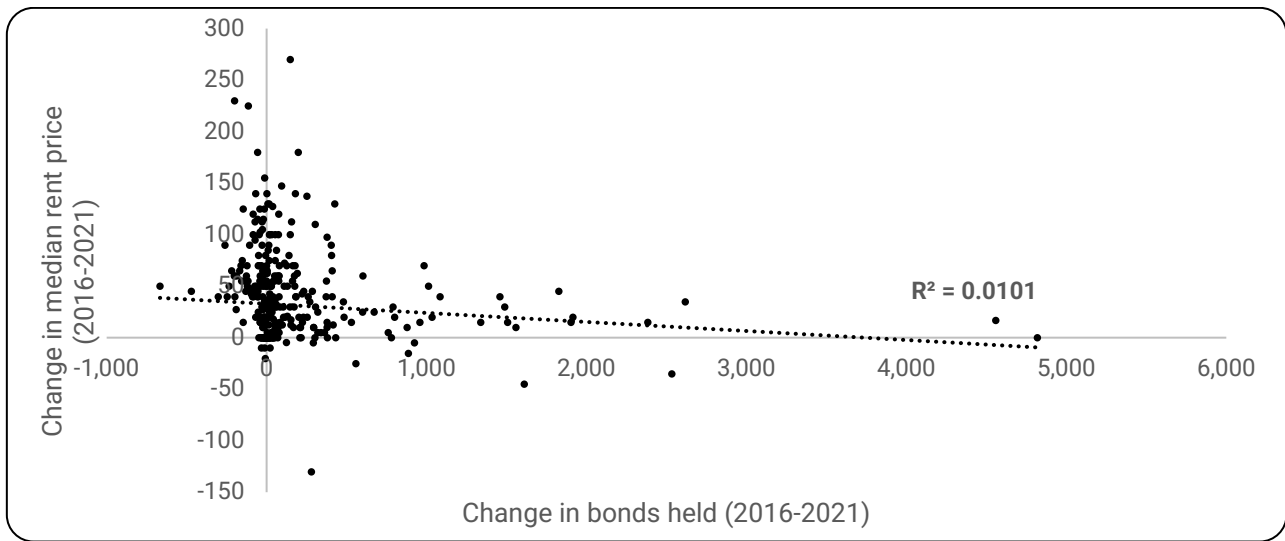
**Figure 6. Change in median rents, 2016-2021, Queensland.**



Source: Queensland rental bonds, the authors' calculations.

To look for a relationship between changes in total bonds held and changes in median rents, we plot postcodes by both factors in Figure 7. The comparison does not show a significant relationship between changes in total bonds held and changes in median rents over the period.

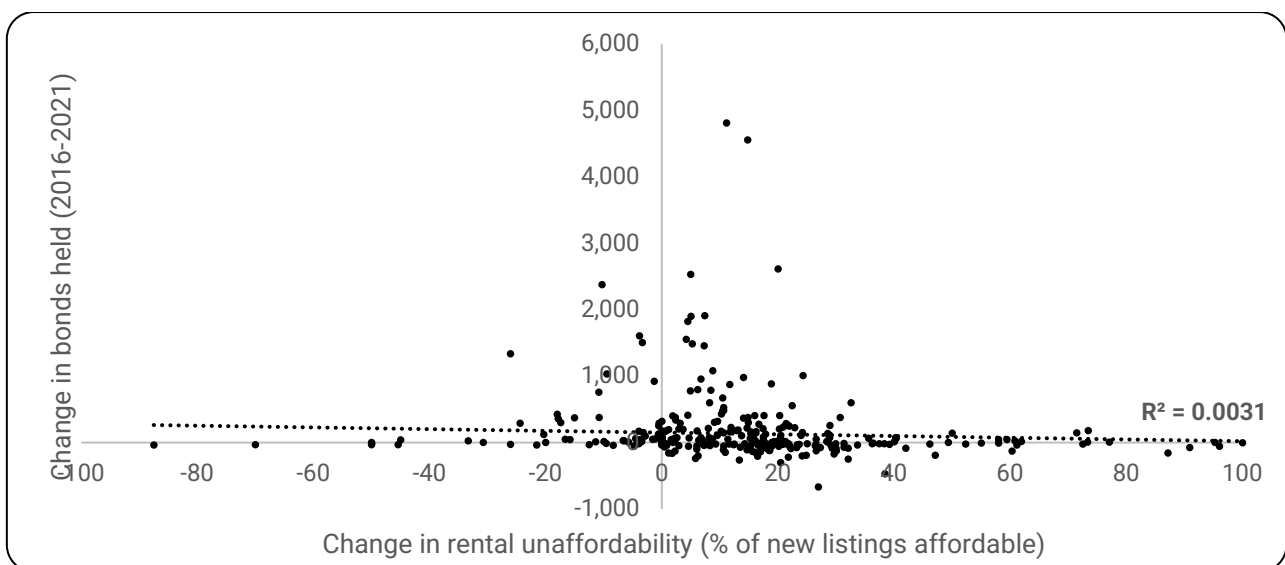
**Figure 7. Comparison of change in median rental price with change in bonds held, 2016-2021, Queensland.**



Source: Queensland rental bonds, the authors' calculations.

We also look for a relationship between change in total bonds held and change in the share of new tenancies that are unaffordable for households on average incomes for the area. Figure 8 plots the comparison, which does not show a statistically significant relationship. In other words, postcodes where there is a large change in median rents are not consistently where there is a large change in bonds held. Changes in total bonds held do not, by themselves, reliably indicate changes in rents or measures of affordability. This suggests that explanations of rent movements should also take into account other factors, such as changes in population and incomes, changes in the cost and accessibility of other housing options (i.e. owner-occupation), and concentrations of landlords and agents.

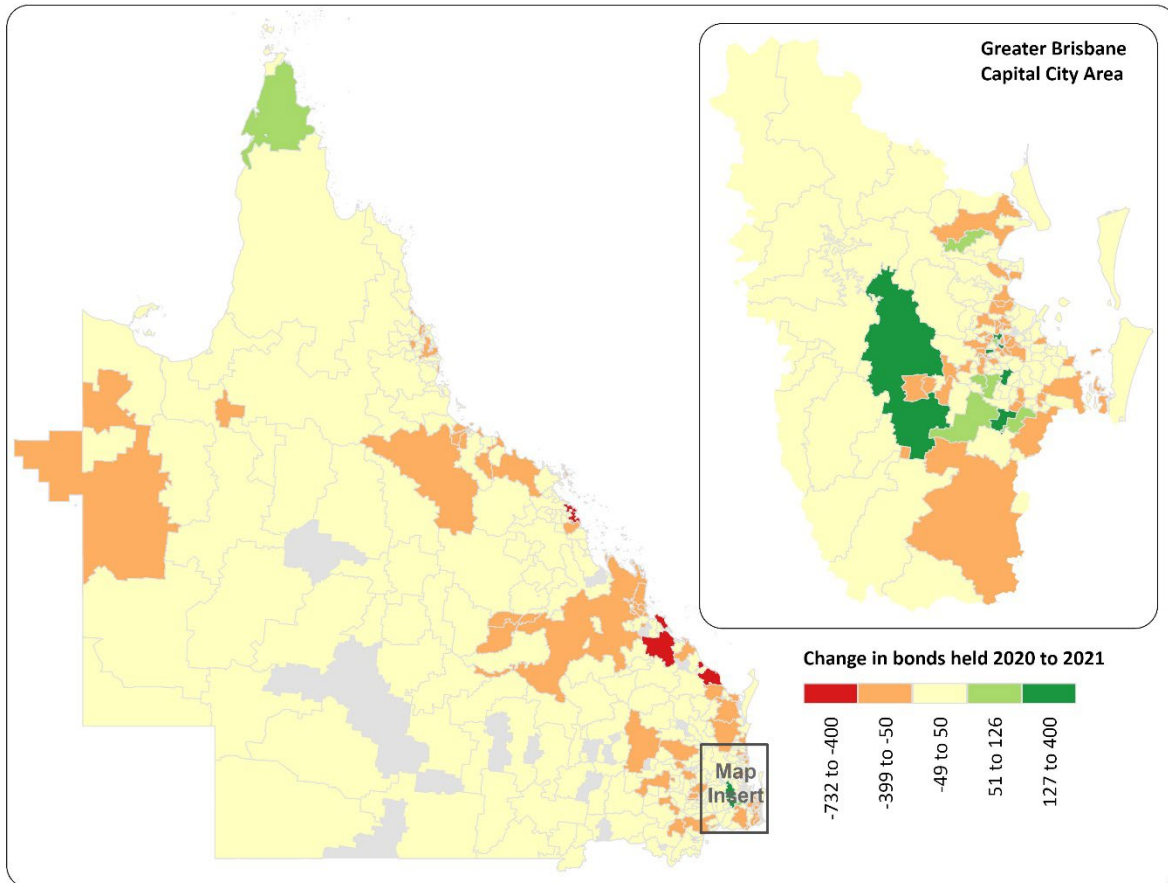
**Figure 8. Comparison of change in affordability with change in total bonds held 2016 to 2021, Queensland.**



Source: Queensland rental bonds, the authors' calculations.

Finally, we focus on the unusual period Q4 2020-Q4 2021, when total bonds held declined for many postcodes and for all Queensland. Figure 9 maps the change in total bonds held over the one-year period, showing notable declines around Gladstone and Bundaberg, as well as Townsville, Greater Brisbane and the Gold Coast hinterland.

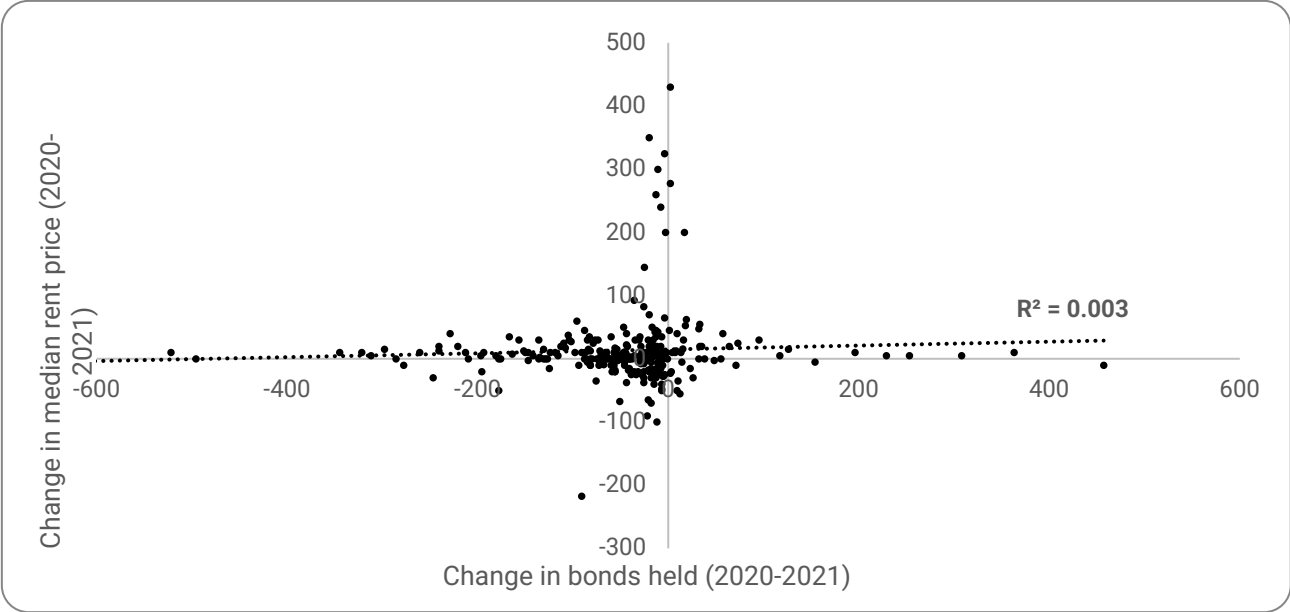
**Figure 9. Change in total bonds held 2020-2021, Queensland.**



Source: Queensland rental bonds, the authors' calculations.

Figure 10 looks for a relationship between change in total bonds lodged and change in median rent for this unusual one-year period. Again, no statistically significant relationship is found. The claim often made that declining stocks of rental dwellings have driven drastic increases in rents, as recently seen in Queensland (and elsewhere), is not supported by this evidence.

**Figure 10. Comparison of change in median rental price with change in total bonds held 2020 to 2021, Queensland.**



Source: Queensland rental bonds, the authors' calculations.