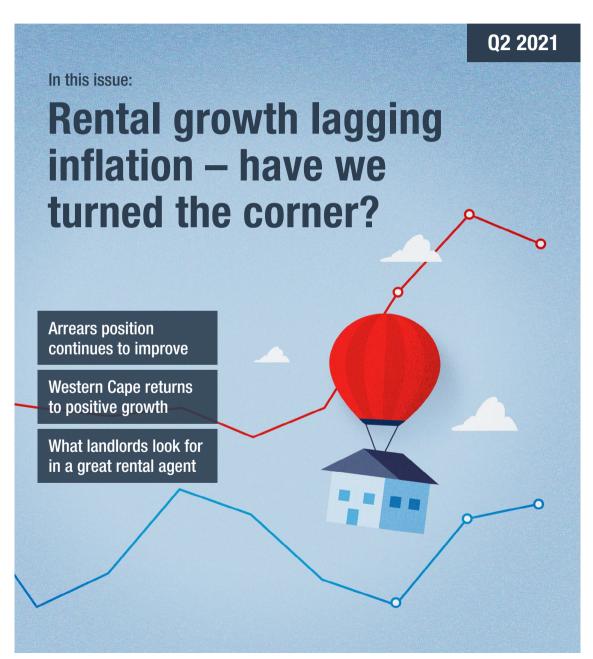


RENTAL INDEX

QUARTERLY SOUTH AFRICAN RESIDENTIAL RENTAL MARKET DATA



Contents

- O3 Introduction
 A slow return to normal
- O4 National rental growth
 Inflation on the rise, rental
 growth appears stable
- 06 Trending up
- O8 Rent arrears
 Slow but steady recovery
- 10 Provincial data
 Good news for some
- 14 Credit metrics
 The income-risk link

- 20 PayProp client spotlights
 How RE/MAX achieved
 increased growth and
 efficiency with PayProp
- 23 How Thoka Properties created a thriving rental business with PayProp
- 26 Property investments
 What landlords look for in a great rental agent
- Stability is the name of the game

INTRODUCTION

A slow return to normal

With its fair share of challenges, it seems like the country is slower than most to come out of the uncertainty brought on by COVID-19, and the effects of the pandemic will surely be felt for a long time to come.

But while level 3 lockdown restrictions continue for now, the rental market seems to be recovering slowly – arrears are improving and rental growth appears stable. In a few provinces, rental growth has started to accelerate again – more on this on page 10.

In this issue, we also share five reasons why a good rental agent could be a landlord's smartest investment, and we publish two agencies' testimonials about the transformative benefits of using PayProp.

Having dug deep to overcome personal tragedy and widespread challenges of health, mental wellbeing and economic strife, many of us have learned just how adaptable and resilient human beings truly are – and also taken the opportunity to re-evaluate our priorities.

I hope you are experiencing a similar return to better times, and that you'll enjoy this issue. As always, feel free to let me know your thoughts!



Johette Smuts Head of Data Analytics PayProp South Africa

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NATIONAL RENTAL GROWTH

Inflation on the rise, rental growth appears stable

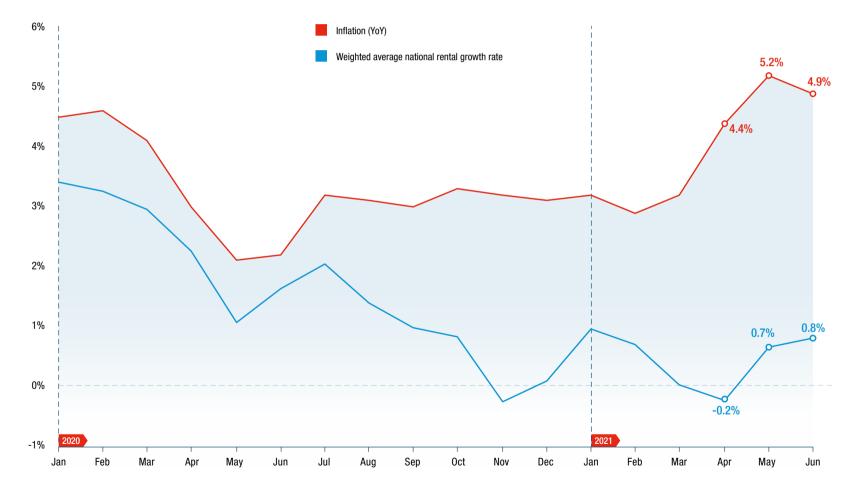
The national rental growth rate remained under pressure through the second quarter of 2021, but seems to have stabilised for now. The aftermath of job losses due to lockdown continued to affect many consumers' pockets, and affordability remains a concern.

On the flip side, low interest rates would have enabled better-off renters to purchase their own property, decreasing the pool of available tenants accordingly. That, coupled with continued building and development in many cities, has meant that the current state of oversupply of properties continued during the quarter, which put sustained downward pressure on rental growth.

As a result, year-on-year rental growth dipped below zero in April before recovering to 0.7% and 0.8% in May and June.

Weighted average national rental growth rate (YoY) vs. inflation Source: PayProp

Meanwhile, inflation increased to 4.4% in April before reaching a 30-month high of 5.2% in May, driven largely by transportation costs (including petrol). The rising cost of other goods and services put further pressure on consumers. ■



PAYPROP RENTAL INDEX | Q2 2021 PAYPROP RENTAL INDEX | Q2 2021

NATIONAL RENTAL GROWTH

Trending up

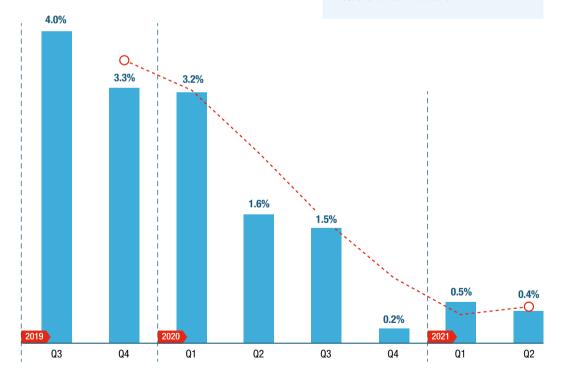
Year on year, rents increased by 0.4% nationally in Q2. From the graph we see that rental growth remains subdued, amid continued financial strain on tenants and the economic pressures of lockdown.

The Q2 growth figure was slightly lower than the 0.5% measured in the previous quarter. And while indications are that growth has nonetheless stabilised, we don't expect any significant market recovery soon as the country's economic recovery continues to be muted.

MOVING AVERAGE TRENDLINE



We use a moving average trendline as it reveals the underlying growth trend more clearly in the midst of short-term variations.



Quarterly rental growth rate (YoY) with a moving average trendline, Q3 2019 - Q2 2021 Source: PayProp

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RENT ARREARS

Slow but steady recovery

Arrears continued their slow recovery during Q2 after increasing dramatically in the months after the first lockdown was announced in March 2020. This is not surprising. While all tenants in the country will have felt the initial shock of lockdown, some groups have been better placed to recover financially and to start servicing their arrears.

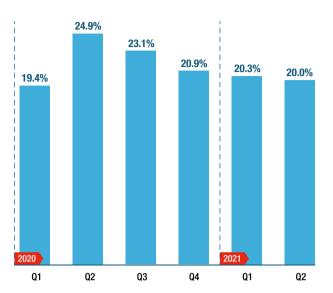
WE CONSIDER TWO ARREARS METRICS:



- The percentage of tenants in arrears records the number of tenants in arrears as a percentage of the total number of tenants.
- 2) The average arrears percentage is the average amount owed by tenants in arrears as a percentage of the average rent overall an average arrears percentage of 80% therefore means that on average, a tenant in arrears owes 80% of one month's rent.

The percentage of tenants in arrears spiked in Q2 2020, leaving almost one in four tenants in arrears. This was up from around 1 in 5 in Q1.

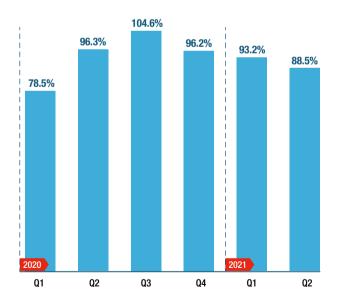
This metric continues to improve. In Q2 2021, only 20% were in arrears again – very close to the 19.4% seen in Q1 2020, before the first lockdown was announced.



Percentage tenants in arrears: 2020 to present **Source: PayProp**



The average arrears percentage reached its highest level in Q3 2020, when tenants in arrears owed 104.6% of one month's rent. This metric has since improved to 88.5% in Q2 2021 – but is still 10% above the level seen in Q1 2020, before lockdown was first announced.



Average arrears percentage: 2020 to present Source: PayProp

PROVINCIAL DATA

Good news for some

Provincial rent levels and growth differ from national averages due to local supply and demand, income levels and economic activity. In this section, we highlight the key rent statistics for each province.

As seen above, the average national rent increased by 0.4% from Q2 2020 to the quarter under review (R7 746 to R7 778). This was an increase of only R32 over the 12 months.



Average national rent and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021 Source: PayProp



Eastern Cape rent levels and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021

Source: PayProp

By comparison, the **Eastern Cape** saw an increase of 2.1% over the same period – the highest growth rate out of all the provinces, but lower than the figure recorded in the province the previous quarter (3.2%). The average, rent in the Eastern Cape was R6 180 in Q2, the second lowest in the country after North West.

The **Free State** saw rents decrease by 3.7% year on year. The average rent was R6 213, R242 cheaper than in Q2 2020. If this continues, rents in the Free State could soon be the second lowest of any South African province.



The Free State rent levels and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021 Source: PayProp

For the second consecutive quarter, rents in **Gauteng** experienced a drop from the year before. Tenants paid on average 0.6% less per month, from R8 344 in Q2 2020 to R8 292 in Q2 2021. However, Gauteng is still the second most expensive province to be a tenant, after the Western Cape.



Gauteng rent levels and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021 Source: PayProp



KwaZulu-Natal rent levels and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021 Source: PayProp In **KwaZulu-Natal** the average rent increased by 2% from 12 months before, for an average rent of R8 200 in Q2 2021. It was the second-highest growth experienced among the provinces, and KwaZulu-Natal is now the third most expensive province in which to rent – up from fourth last quarter.

In extremely welcome news for **Limpopo** landlords and agents, the province turned the tide with an increase in rent after 14 consecutive quarters of negative growth. The average rent in the province increased by 0.8% to R7 017 over the 12 months to Q2 2021. The last time the province recorded positive growth figures, rents there averaged R7 741.



Limpopo rent levels and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021 Source: PayProp

PAYPROP RENTAL INDEX | Q2 2021 PAYPROP RENTAL INDEX | Q2 2021

While **Mpumalanga** experienced a 0.3% increase in average rent over the last year, it was lower than the 0.4% recorded in Q1. In fact, it was the region's lowest growth rate since Q4 2015, bringing the average rent to R7 484 over the quarter.



Mpumalanga rent levels and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021 Source: PayProp



North West rent levels and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021 Source: PayProp

The **North West** is still the cheapest province for renters in South Africa, commanding an average of only R5 274 for private tenancies. To reach this figure, rent prices increased by 0.7% year on year – significantly lower than the 3.7% of the previous quarter.

In the **Northern Cape**, the average rent decreased by 2.1%, from R8 081 in Q2 2020 to R7 910 in the most recent quarter – a difference of R171. The province was one of three that measured negative rental growth in the period under review.



Northern Cape rent levels and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021 Source: PayProp

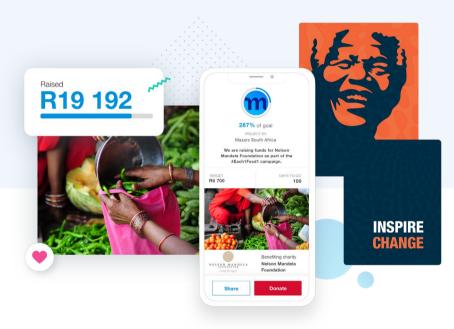


Western Cape rent levels and rental growth (YoY) for Q2 2021 Source: PayProp

Lastly, the average rent in the **Western Cape** increased by 1.8% to R9 185, up from R9 022 in Q2 2020. This was the first positive increase after four consecutive quarters of negative year-on-year rental growth. The province still has the highest average rent in the country. ■

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^{*} GivenGain is a leading global online fundraising platform for charity. Set up by South Africans Johannes and Jaco van Eeden, GivenGain is PayProp's non-profit foundation.

CREDIT METRICS

The income-risk link

By fully understanding the link between tenant income and tenant risk, agents and landlords can make smarter decisions about who to rent to.

For our analysis we broke tenant income down into categories, and averaged their collective credit metrics per bracket.

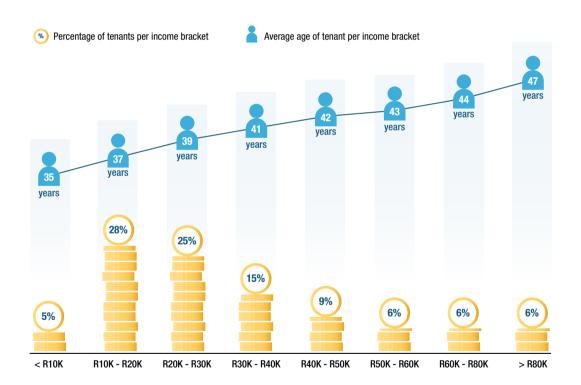
CREDIT METRICS For our calculations we consider net monthly income, i.e. the amount that gets paid into a tenant's bank account each month. This number is provided by rental agents. The analysis takes into account credit checks done via the PayProp platform during the quarter, and represents a sample of rental applicants who are not necessarily existing tenants or successful applicants. However, we refer to all applicants as 'tenants' throughout the analysis. PAYPROP RENTAL INDEX | Q2 2021

% tenants per income bracket

More than two thirds of tenants take home between R10 000 and R40 000 per month. Only 5% make less than R10 000, and 6% earn more than R80 000.

Average age

Since income often increases with work experience, it is no surprise that it also correlates with advancing age. Most tenants falling within the three income brackets from R10 000 to R40 000 per month have average ages between 37 and 41. The average age of those who earn more than R80 000 is 47.



Percentage of tenants and average age per income bracket Source: PayProp

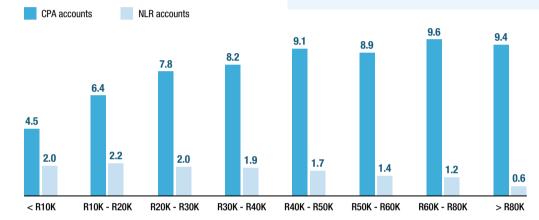
Credit accounts

A clear link can be seen in the graphs below between income and the two types of credit account available to consumers. Tenants with higher levels of income had more 'good debt' and fewer 'bad debt' accounts than those with lower income levels. Good debt accounts include cellphone contracts, car loans and retail accounts.

DEFINITIONS

Credit Provider Association (CPA) accounts include insurance policies, cellphone contracts, retail store accounts and vehicle finance agreements. These are the types of account you can reasonably expect someone to have, and are hence seen as 'good debt'.

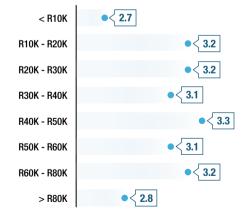
National Loan Register (NLR) accounts, on the other hand, are not a welcome sight on credit reports. These include short-term loans from micro-lenders, usually with very high interest rates, and are seen as 'bad debt'.



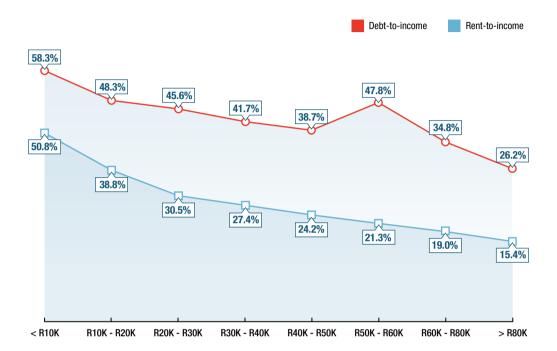
Average number of CPA and NLR accounts by income bracket Source: PayProp



While the number of credit enquiries requested for or by an individual is often correlated with risk, we don't see a link between credit enquiries and income. Tenants with income ranging from R10 000 to R80 000 had between 3.1 and 3.3 credit enquiries per year on average. The tenants in the lowest and highest income brackets had a lower number of credit inquiries, at 2.7 and 2.8 per year, respectively.



Average number of credit enquiries requested by income bracket Source: PayProp



Debt-to-income and rent-to-income percentages by income bracket Source: PayProp

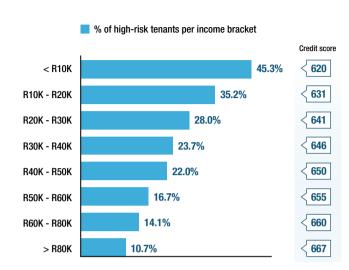
Debt and rent ratios

When we express a tenant's monthly debt and rent repayments as a percentage of their income, we see an inverse relationship between both these ratios and income: Tenants in higher income brackets tend to spend a smaller percentage of their income on both debt and rent repayments. The only exception is with tenants earning between R50 000 and R60 000 per month, who spend a bigger portion of their income on debt than tenants in the income bracket below them.

Risk

We see a decreasing percentage of high-risk tenants with each increase in income bracket. As tenants' income grows, their ability to qualify for and repay their debt increases, as does their relative flexibility in managing their finances – for example, the means to pay off debts sooner. Almost half of the tenants earning less than R10 000 per month are classified as high-risk, compared to just over 10% of those earning upwards of R80 000.

In line with a decrease in the percentage of high-risk tenants as we move up the income ladder, the average credit score also increases. Tenants with lower income levels tend to have lower credit scores than those who earn more.



Average credit score and % high risk tenants by income bracket Source: PayProp

In general, our analysis shows tenants with higher incomes are less risky. However, even in the highest income bracket, more than 10% of tenants came with major risks. Every tenant should be vetted thoroughly using credit checks, references, proof of income and spending habits.



PAYPROP AWARDS

Recognising the best and brightest

In June, PayProp hosted the first PayProp Awards. An exciting virtual event, the PayProp Awards go to clients that performed exceptionally well on our platform, giving timely recognition to the franchised and independent agents without whom our business wouldn't exist.

Categories included rental processing volume, business growth, and full use of the PayProp ecosystem. We are also incredibly honoured to recognise clients that have been with us for over 15 years – and there are quite a few!

Overall, 45 PayProp clients were presented with an award. We look forward to continuing to thrive with them and reaching new heights while inspiring others to do the same.

Until next year!



An interview with



David RodgersonOwner, RE/MAX Bay Properties, RE/MAX Frontier Properties

By using new systems and technologies to save time and streamline processes, a RE/MAX brokerage in the Eastern Cape has grown its rental book of about 60 units to nearly 1 000 domestic rentals in just 10 years.

Comprising two businesses (RE/MAX Bay Properties in Port Elizabeth and RE/MAX Frontier Properties in Grahamstown), the brokerage operates 400 rentals in Port Elizabeth and 500 in Grahamstown – 90% of the latter made up of student rentals.

The brokerage further also manages residential complexes, with about 80 buildings under management. An agent force of about 40 handles the business between the two offices.

David Rodgerson, the owner of both, has been a broker for 17 years.

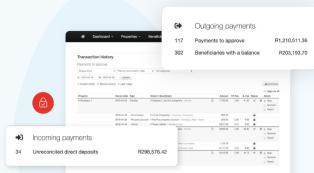
Needing help to scale

David sketches a very pressured and labourintensive rental management approach before PayProp entered the picture. He explains that both businesses initially worked on Excel to manage rental payment entries, which was totally inadequate. "Before we could process all of one month's business, the next month was already on us. Considering all the money had to be properly controlled, it was a real challenge."

This was true even in the early days, when they were processing about R200 000 a month.

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Then, after hiring a rental agent, the business began to grow very quickly, giving the Port Elizabeth office about 100 units to manage. In order to better handle the incoming and outgoing payments, the offices adopted a software product that collected all incoming rent in a single trust account. But this still meant they had to reconcile deposits and payments themselves.

"All the money was coming into the same pot and I had a suspicion that it wasn't balancing," said David. "Never having had a qualified audit, I didn't like what I saw, especially as the cash flow was increasing."

Looking around for another product, they decided to go for one that held the incoming payments in individual trust accounts where it could be reconciled to a specific payer and property. That product was PayProp.

"We chose PayProp so that we could see the money in an individual trust account for each client," David goes on. "The fact that it was associated with a bank was probably another determining factor; it actually worked through a banking platform [so all payments and trust account balances are 100% accurate]. We converted to PayProp in about 2010."

"We now look after R65 million a year, so the peace of mind for me is in knowing that it's in the right place, it's been scripted correctly and it's controlled in the correct order."

What difference has PayProp made?

The biggest difference in the business since using PayProp is the strict control over the classification and payment of rental money, David says.

Using the traditional manual way is just not an option anymore. Our responsibility is to be the guardians of other people's money, and PayProp allows me to sleep peacefully at night, knowing the money is safe.

He goes on to say that the system has huge timesaving benefits.

"All I do is look at new opportunities and growth. I now have an infrastructure below and behind me that looks after all the day-to-day administrative and financial matters. And I don't have to spend time ensuring that it's efficiently done, because the system allows that to be done for me. Domestic investors are only really interested in two things: that they get the rental money on time and that you care for the condition of their properties. And if you do those two things well, your business will grow. I've always been a systems man, and PayProp has given me the opportunity to focus on what really matters – sales, earnings and growth."

Thinking about business differently

David describes how PayProp has enabled staff to work from anywhere during lockdown.

"In March 2020, I locked this business down because of COVID and sent everybody home. But we continue to work from our remote locations while lockdown lasts. Some staff are in, some are out, but whatever needs to be done can be done from anywhere."

"There are certain elements of one's business where you still need to meet. But when it comes to rentals, you can do it from anywhere except when people wish to physically see where they're going to live."

"What's actually amazing is that we now have our first body corporate in Johannesburg, all run from Port Elizabeth, 1 100 kilometres away."

Live and 100% accurate

"For me, the overarching matter is that PayProp is all based on live bank data. All the other systems that interface in a different manner just don't work for me because of the potential for error. Just to be aware that the cash is in good hands - that's what makes it final in my mind. PayProp has become the peace of mind in the administration of my rental business."

I think we've saved ourselves an inordinate amount of money. And, in fact, it's taught us to be a lot more efficient.



PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

Detailed dashboards show the properties under your management, money flows, high-risk tenants and much more in one place.



An interview with



Precious Thoka started in the real estate business in 2013, having previously been in the civil engineering industry. After serving as an agent and then branch manager in other agencies, he founded Thoka Properties in 2018. The company currently operates in Gauteng (the three metros of Tshwane, Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni) and Limpopo (Mokopane and Polokwane).

In an interview with PayProp, Precious enthused over PayProp's assistance with rentals in a way that he hadn't thought possible. "It's been a very smooth ride from the start. They were very informative; always available."

A rental conversion

Before he began automating rental payments with PayProp, Precious admits to "hating rentals with a passion, because I just thought there was too much work required."

"The input and output didn't seem to make business sense. So, when we started Thoka Properties, rentals were not part of the plan. However, after a few months we realised that we were losing out on a lot of business. I thus decided to reconsider this entire thing."

Precious knew that if he was going to add rentals to his business, he needed to keep the administrative overheads low. After doing some research, he came across PayProp and found

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Our friendly South African-based team of platform experts are ready to help you and your agency thrive.



that it made the whole operation a pleasure. It smoothed the process, which was a relief, says Precious. "We did not want to keep following up with tenants about the rent money."

He worked with one of PayProp's sales executives who provided the PayProp demo and the initial proposal. "The salesperson was very good. Everything was explained. It was really a great experience, and looking at the costs to us, they are minimal. There was no way I could not say yes."

Precious goes on to describe how they could get hold of a support person directly who knew exactly who they were and where they needed support. He says, "Having studied and done my exams, I understood rentals in theory, but now it was time to put it all into action. I was on a learning curve, but PayProp made sure it was a smooth one."

Rave reviews

In 2019, Precious hired Kea Mahlangu, an experienced rentals administrator, to manage the business's growing portfolio. She was amazed at the simplicity and efficiency of the system.

In the first month Kea was really raving about PayProp. She had been working in a similar position elsewhere and said to me, 'Wow, Mr. T! For the first time in months, I don't have stress. Every day where I used to work, I would go through the bank statements and all that, but this is the best thing that I could have ever come across'. It just made things very easy for her; she couldn't believe how well the system works.

While PayProp enables rent payments in a range of ways (instant EFT via a Tenant portal, online banking, in-store retail payments, etc.) Thoka Properties only accepts debit order payments for maximum peace of mind.

"We must deliver what we promised to the landlord," says Precious. "Simple as that."

Service - value from Day 1

Asked what impact PayProp has had on his business, Precious highlights the excellent service the agency has enjoyed. "From the first day, the service was the most important thing. It aligns with who we are and what our vision is as a company."

I always tell my agents that we need to give our clients a 'wow' moment. If we cannot produce the best, we are not doing it at all. This is who we are, and in that PayProp is right alongside us.

Stress-free rentals

PayProp's reporting is very important to Precious. "When my rentals administrator comes to me with a report, it's clear and simple – no funny stuff."

PayProp also cancels out the headache of withholding the deposit. As Precious reports, "it's one of the main reasons why I took on PayProp. One of the primary reasons I hadn't wanted to do rentals was deposit calculations, but PayProp makes that easy. I was also concerned about payment security, but with PayProp's unalterable audit trail to prevent fraud, it's a stressless thing for me."

"These things can be very stressful for business owners or rental managers. But with PayProp you know what income has been received today, you've got all the records required, and when it comes to the year-end work, it's straight-forward. It's like PayProp is another member of the team."

Business during lockdown

For someone who didn't like doing rentals to start with, Precious sees it as quite ironic that they provided the company with vital income during the COVID lockdown period.

"It helped a lot because you don't have to be in the office to manage rentals with PayProp – you can work remotely. As I'm talking to you now, my rental administrator is not even in the office, but believe me, she's working wherever she is. And I love the fact that you can even work fully on your phone. I could be travelling or be very far away and I'm sent a message on WhatsApp to check on something or approve a payment. I don't need a laptop; I just log in on my phone and right there and then I can execute the task. You don't have to wait for Monday to work on PayProp."

That's the bottom line. Our clients know that we are always available. It's something we can do as we draw on the system and give clients their statements and anything else they might be asking for, at any time. A lot of our landlords send us messages that they are very happy with the service we have been offering, because all they want to see is their money coming in.

With PayProp automatically flagging up tenants in arrears and sending out automated payment reminders (on approval by the agent), Thoka Properties collected 100% of the rental income owed to their clients during lockdown – an excellent success. They only had one client in arrears who was nevertheless able to pay within a short period of time.

Vision for the future

When he started Thoka Properties, Precious Thoka believed that residential rentals were an unprofitable, stressful waste of time. Now, having seen the adminbusting power of PropTech, he regards PayProp as key to the future success of his business.

Asked about his plans for the company, he envisions that, after what he calls their "current foundation phase" of five years, Thoka Properties will be a leading property franchise extending throughout the country – powered by PayProp.

Want to find out more about PayProp?

Since 2004, PayProp has provided peace of mind to thousands of rental agents. Join us today to start sending automated statements, invoices and arrears reminders at the click or tap of a button.

Book a demo

PROPERTY INVESTMENTS

What landlords look for in a great rental agent

The past year has forced South Africans to reconsider their budgets and question every expense. For many property owners, this has increased the temptation to question the need for a residential rental agent to manage the tenancy and protect their investment.

However, a good rental agent is worth every cent of the commission they charge – and below, we highlight five reasons why.

1. Good tenants are in short supply

It's no surprise that COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on tenant placements and payments. An experienced rental agent will not only help you identify a good tenant, but also manage the relationship and advise what a reasonable increase on rent should be in this climate. Landlords can't expect ten or even five percent increases – it is for the most part just not realistic. A good rental agent will know what is acceptable in their local area and can provide the reality check needed to help manage expectations.



2. Arrears are on the rise

South African private landlords are facing increasing financial pressure due to increasing tenant arrears, and keeping open lines of communication with tenants is critical to the ongoing stability of this important revenue stream. A good rental agent will be experienced in identifying reliable tenants and diligent in following up and handling arrears. The process requires an agent who understands payment reminders, letters of demand and other factors involved.

3. Regulatory factors play a role

Due to the onerous regulations that need to be adhered to, renting a property in South Africa can be a complicated process without the assistance of a qualified rental agent. The Rental Housing Act regulates the behaviour of landlords, their agents and tenants, and will be succeeded by the Rental Housing Amendment Act in future. Rental agents know these laws and can take care of all aspects of rentals in a lawful manner.

4. Financial scrutiny more important than ever

In the current climate, agents using leading payment platforms like PayProp are best suited to managing rental properties. The better payment platforms enable agents to reconcile incoming payments to the right properties and to pay landlords, contractors and the agent without delay from fully balanced trust accounts – in the correct order and with funds ringfenced for the exclusive use it was intended for.



5. Payment platforms offer many benefits to landlords

An end-to-end payment platform like PayProp offers many other features that landlords benefit from. One example is property statements. Owners receive an automated statement for each property, detailing all amounts invoiced, maintenance costs paid, and rent received. Owners can download their annual statements through the PayProp Owner app free of charge – meaning they don't even have to request it from their agency come tax season.

Ultimately, investors know that property is an asset class, and with all asset classes there are certain inherent risks. Bad tenants, frequent late payments, vacant properties and damage are all risks that can unduly affect property owners' livelihood and return on investment. For most landlords, having someone in the property is better than it standing vacant, but that is still not ideal for their risk profile. A professional rental agent can help to smooth the process and protect the landlord's investment.



IN CLOSING

Stability is the name of the game

Stability seems to be returning to the rental market. These are the signs that we are at last moving in the right direction:

- Rental growth for the quarter measured 0.4% - still in line with the 0.5% growth recorded in the first quarter of the year.
- Arrears continued to improve, and we're inching closer to the levels seen before lockdown.
- Provincially, Limpopo recorded the first positive rental growth in almost four years, and the Western Cape recorded positive growth after four consecutive quarters of negative growth.

We're expecting the rental market to continue its slow recovery in the months to come.



02 2021

PayProp Rental Index

The PayProp Rental Index is a quarterly guide outlining trends in the South African residential rental market and is compiled from transactional data collected by PayProp, the largest processor of residential rental transactions in South Africa.

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The PayProp Rental Index is available on the PayProp website at www.payprop.co.za.

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We started using PayProp in June 2016, and we've never looked back! This system is probably the most value you can add to your portfolio, not only for yourself, but also for your valued tenants and landlord."



Erika le Roux Just Property Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp Google review

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