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**Headline: HOUSE prices are continuing to rise as the property market remains buoyant.**  
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HOUSE prices are continuing to rise as the property market remains buoyant.

Figures show they have gone up 0.6 per cent already this month. Values are up nearly three per cent so far this year and are expected to increase through 2006.

Prices jumped across 42 per cent of England and Wales and remained the same across 56 per cent of the two countries.

They fell in just two per cent of the 2,200 postcode areas. Despite the increases, property is selling quicker and fewer prospective buyers are getting the chance to view the properties before they are sold.

The latest Hometrack survey says the average time taken to sell has fallen to 6.5 weeks compared to 7.4 weeks a year ago.

The average number of viewings per sale has also dropped to 10.9 from 13.2 a year ago.

The number of sales agreed jumped by over eight per cent this month, up from a 3.3 per cent rise in May.

The increase was reflected across the country. "The continued growth in prices and rising sales levels suggest continued buyer confidence over the prospects for the market," said Hometrack website research director Richard Donnell.

London continues to be the primary driver for growth, with average prices in the capital rising by 1.1 per cent over June.

Elsewhere, growth remains more subdued, although prices have picked up moderately. Other property experts warned that this was a sign that the market is set for a cooling-off period.

Propertyfinder. com said there had been a sharp fall in expectations for prices rises – from 7.7 per cent in May to 4.3 per cent in June. Buyers are also reluctant to meet high-asking prices.

The average discount demanded has jumped to 6.1 per cent this month from 0.7 per cent in March.

First-time buyers are driving the hardest bargain, offering 6.3 per cent below the asking price.

Warren Bright, Chief Executive Officer of propertyfinder. com, said: "Buyers are clearly backing away from high-asking prices.

"At the peak of the recent mini-boom, they were prepared to pay almost the full price, but the picture has changed rapidly."

Millions of single people between 25 and 30 have moved back in with their parents because of rising house prices and soaring debts, says dating firm Parship. com.