

LIVING IN THE REGIONS

THE VIEWS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIANS

The Gascoyne Report

A Study Undertaken for

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND TRADE

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

•

MINISTRY FOR PLANNING

•

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS

[Gascoyne Development Commission](#)

[Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission](#)

[Great Southern Development Commission](#)

[Kimberley Development Commission](#)

[Mid West Development Commission](#)

[Peel Development Commission](#)

[Pilbara Development Commission](#)

[South West Development Commission](#)

[Wheatbelt Development Commission](#)

By

Patterson Market Research

in conjunction with Focused Management and Hames Sharley

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LIVING IN THE REGIONS: THE VIEWS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIANS
THE GASCOYNE REPORT

Project Manager Contact Details:
Regional Development Division
Department of Commerce and Trade
168-170 St Georges Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Freecall number: 1800 628 767
Telephone: +618 9327 5666
Facsimile: +618 9327 5921
Internet: www.commerce.wa.gov.au

Researcher Contact Details:
Patterson Market Research
1st Floor, 47 Kishorn Road
APPLECROSS WA 6153

Tel: (08) 9316 2322
Fax: (08) 9316 9117

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FOREWORD

The Living in the Regions project was commissioned by the Regional Development Council to provide much needed information about why people decide to live in or move away from the regional areas of the State.

The Regional Development Council is the peak advisory body to Regional Development Minister, Hendy Cowan. The Council is made up of the Chairs of the nine Regional Development Commissions, a representative of the Department of Commerce and Trade and representation from Local Government.

The Living in the Regions reports provide statistical data which will be useful for all spheres of government, the private sector and community groups. There will no longer be the need to rely on anecdotal data in areas such as policy, planning or preparing submissions in matters relating to the retention or attraction of people to live in regional Western Australia.

The suite of ten reports contain the results of a statewide study which involved over 20 focus groups and 1500 telephone interviews. The State Report provides the survey findings for all of the nine regions in the one document. There is also one report for each of the nine Regional Development Commission regions of Western Australia, which highlight significant regional results.

I would like to thank all the people who took part in the surveys. Through the contribution of their time we now have a much greater understanding of why Western Australians choose to live where they do, what makes them stay and what makes them decide to move on.

This project will point the way to further research into issues such as higher education and professional development. The Regional Development Council would welcome any feedback you may have on the Living in the Regions project or suggestions for further research, both within the regions and the Perth metropolitan area.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Morgan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

STUART MORGAN, AM
CHAIRPERSON
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The *Living in the Regions* project was conceived by the Regional Development Council in conjunction with the State's nine Regional Development Commissions, the Department of Commerce and Trade and the Ministry for Planning. The project management committee commissioned Patterson Market Research in an open tender process to undertake the comprehensive survey which forms the basis of this regional report.

The State Report which gives an overview of the survey results in all Western Australian regions is also available from the Department of Commerce and Trade or Regional Development Commissions in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Mid West, Wheatbelt, Goldfields-Esperance, Peel, South West and Great Southern regions. Highlights of the State Report are included at the end of this report.

BACKGROUND

In June, 1996 the Ministry for Planning released its population report *Migration Trends in Western Australia 1986-1991* which used census data to show the numbers of people migrating to, from and within Western Australia. This provided valuable data on population movement but did not set out to give reasons why migration occurs.

With 72 per cent of the State's population living in Perth (and this figure is showing a gradual increase) there is a need to determine if more should be done to encourage people to move to the regions and persuade those already there to remain.

The purpose of the Living in the Regions project is to determine the key factors which influence individuals and families on where they will or will not live in Western Australia. It also looks at likely movement in the future.

The information will assist Western Australia's nine Regional Development Commissions to form policies and strategies which address misconceptions and also promote the benefits of regional living.

SURVEY METHOD

The survey was conducted in two stages. First, an extensive series of focus discussion groups were established to gather profile information on attitudes to living in the regions and the propensity for movement. This information was used to help develop the survey questionnaires.

The focus groups, comprising people who had moved or were considering moving to or from the regions, included two groups in each of the nine regions and two in Perth, augmented, at the request of individual Development Commissions, by an extra group in the Pilbara and two extra groups in the Wheatbelt.

The second stage of the survey involved extensive telephone interviews with 1500 people aged 18 and over across the whole of Western Australia in October and November 1997.

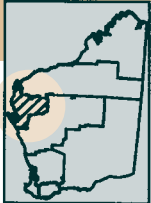
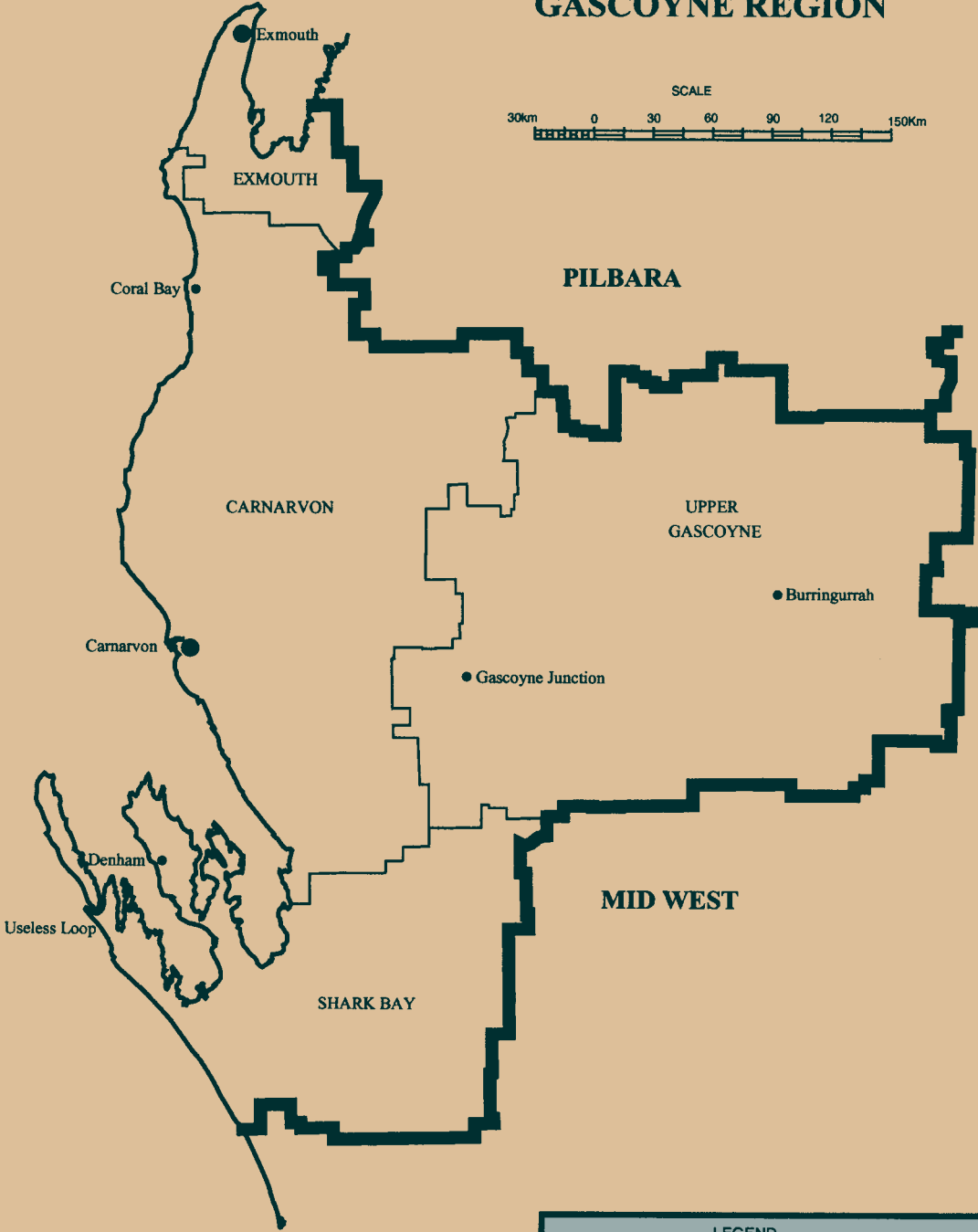
This included 150 telephone interviews in Perth using a Perth-specific questionnaire and 1350 throughout regional Western Australia (150 in each of the nine regions) using a regions-specific questionnaire.

Because of the disparity in population sizes, it was inevitable that some regions were over-sampled relative to their more populated neighbours. This was adjusted using correction weights to align the regional survey numbers with populations from the 1996 census.

The effect of the weighting procedure is that each region has survey estimates based on 150 interviews, producing a sample error of plus or minus 5.5 per cent, but the all-regions averages reflect the average of all people in Western Australia.

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GASCOYNE REGION



LEGEND

REGIONAL BOUNDARY	
LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY	
COMMISSION OR AUTHORITY OFFICE	
TOWN OR CITY	
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA e.g.	SHARK BAY

PROFILE

The Gascoyne region is located in the lower north west of Western Australia and is dissected by the Tropic of Capricorn. The region extends more than 600 km along the Indian Ocean coast from the Zuytdorp Cliffs to the North West Cape. This incorporates some key coastal geographic features such as the Ningaloo Reef and Marine Park, Coral Bay, Cape Range National Park, Shark Bay World Heritage Area, Monkey Mia and Dirk Hartog Island. The region extends over 300 km inland to Mount Augustus, the world's largest monocline. The Kennedy Range National Park and the Gascoyne River are major inland features.

The 140,912 square kilometre land area of the Gascoyne is about twice the size of Tasmania and represents about five per cent of Western Australia's total area.

The region's population is centred in the key settlements of Carnarvon, Exmouth, Coral Bay, Denham and Gascoyne Junction. Whilst many opportunities for development exist, attracting capital investment remains one of the key challenges facing the region.

The Gascoyne has a diverse economic base with the primary activities being tourism, fishing, mining, horticulture and pastoralism. In recent years a growing tourism sector has become a major component of the economy and is now one of the largest contributors to the region's economy.

In 1996 there were 217,000 visitors to the Gascoyne region and total expenditure for the year was \$57.6 million. This expenditure accounted for 3.3 per cent of the State's tourism total. In the 1996/97 season the region's fishing catch was 6,246 tonnes estimated to be worth \$58.3 million. The catch is dominated by prawns, which is the largest catch in the State.

The agriculture industry was valued at \$47.6 million or one per cent of the State total for the 1995/96 season and was dominated by pastoral and horticultural production. The pastoral industry, including the export of live cattle, remains a mainstay of the regional economy. A well established horticultural industry located in the region's major service centre of Carnarvon, supplies fruit and vegetables for domestic and export markets.

In 1996/97 mining production was valued at \$35.6 million of which salt production accounted for \$35.4 million. The Gascoyne contributed 23 per cent of the total value of Western Australia's salt production.

THE GASCOYNE REPORT

The survey results were compiled using responses to 1500 random telephone interviews conducted throughout Western Australia, but also include feedback from discussion groups held in various localities. This included both Carnarvon and Exmouth. Information from these discussion groups is occasionally referred to in this report.

While the telephone survey involved 150 people in each of the nine regions and 150 in Perth, the results need to be viewed with care. A feature of this type of survey is that households without a phone and those in communities serviced by a 'communal phone' are not represented. This has a particular impact on people living in remote Aboriginal communities despite the fact that they form an important sector of the resident population.

Where People Live

Most people in regional Western Australia live in towns or cities and the Gascoyne is no exception. The survey suggests that 86 per cent of Gascoyne residents live in a town, 10 per cent live on a commercial rural property and four per cent in some other out of town situation.

While more people said they grew up on a rural property than those now living on one (20 per cent compared with 14 per cent), this phenomenon was evident to varying degrees in all regions, reflecting a general decline in people living 'on the land'.

There was considerable movement by people in all regions but the Gascoyne was one of the most mobile in the State. Just seven per cent of respondents said they still live in the area they grew up, compared to 16 per cent across the regions.

There was also a marked tendency for fast turnover with 39 per cent reporting they had lived in their present location in the Gascoyne for five years or less. Fifty-eight per cent had been there for no more than 10 years.

When the survey sought to determine where residents originally came from, an interesting pattern emerged. More than four out of 10 respondents who had moved were from Perth, one of the highest incidences of Perth migration for any region. The Wheatbelt was just marginally higher.

The next most likely origin of Gascoyne residents was another country region (27 per cent) or overseas/interstate (21 per cent). Just 11 per cent said they had moved from somewhere else in the Gascoyne - a smaller percentage than all regions except the Peel. However, this would be influenced by the smaller number of towns in these regions.

Taken together, the findings suggest that people in the Gascoyne are among the most mobile in the State. A particular factor in this would be the seasonal and transitory nature of employment in some key industry sectors.

Period in region	Gascoyne residents
Under 6 years	39%
6 - 10 years	19%
11 - 20 years	20%
21 + years	22%
Total	100%

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 9 to 11 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Why People Move

Employment is the main reason for people moving to any region, and in the Gascoyne it was nominated by 45 per cent of respondents as their single main reason for moving there. This was lower than many regions including both the Kimberley (55 per cent) and Pilbara (78 per cent).

Family/marriage was the next most common reason for moving to the Gascoyne, followed by lifestyle. The lifestyle result was one of the highest in the State and well above the all-regions average.

A variety of other factors were nominated by the remainder, including climate, cheap housing and environment. Many of these were connected to retirement, although responses to questions discussed later in the survey indicate that while people move to the Gascoyne during retirement, they don't necessarily stay there indefinitely.

Single main reason for moving	Gascoyne respondents %	All regions average %
Employment	45	47
Family/marriage	16	21
Lifestyle	14	9
Other	25	23

Because there is often more than one reason behind a decision to move, the survey then asked respondents to nominate all of their major reasons for moving to the Gascoyne. This placed a new slant on things with lifestyle gaining much greater prominence, mentioned by 54 per cent of respondents. Employment moved back to second place (47 per cent), followed by climate (45 per cent).

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 12 to 13 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Feeling Safe

Perceived safety was the most universally held attitude throughout the regions where many people have a particular perception that their children are less at risk from the 'stranger danger' they associate with Perth. This was also the case in the Gascoyne.

More than half the respondents 'strongly' agreed they felt safer in the Gascoyne than they would in Perth and another 29 per cent generally agreed. This equates to 84 per cent in at least general agreement. The results are similar to the all-regions average but compare with extremes ranging from 96 per cent agreement in the Great Southern down to 71 per cent in the Peel.

"Feel safer here than in a place like Perth"	Agree %
Great Southern	96
Kimberley	92
South West	92
Pilbara	90
Wheatbelt	86
Gascoyne	84
Goldfields-Esperance	80
Mid West	78
Peel	71

(Further information and comparative regional data page 15 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Affinity with the Region

The great majority of regional people have a strong affinity with their region which is particularly evident when asked if they would prefer to live in Perth.

Seventy per cent of respondents said they would be sad to leave the Gascoyne "to live in a place like Perth". While this represents a clear majority, it was a little under the all-regions average. This may have been influenced by the high proportion of residents originally from Perth.

It appears generally that the bulk of people living in the regions prefer the regional lifestyle to any other option. Certainly, it will be shown later in this report that only around one in four Gascoyne respondents, if given the choice of living anywhere they wanted, would choose a destination outside regional Western Australia.

Agreement that "I would be sad to leave this place to live in Perth"	Agree %
Peel	82
Great Southern	80
Kimberley	79
Wheatbelt	76
South West	76
Pilbara	70
Gascoyne	70
Mid West	70
Goldfields-Esperance	49

(Further information and comparative regional data page 15 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Community Facilities

The majority of Gascoyne residents were generally satisfied with community facilities, but the level of enthusiasm was noticeably less than that seen in other regions.

While 70 per cent felt sporting facilities were good and 72 per cent said general recreation facilities were good - both results were below the all-regions average of 83 per cent and 77 per cent respectively.

The contrast was even more apparent on the issue of communications, with one in three respondents agreeing that modern communications were "a real problem" in the Gascoyne. This compared with the all-regions average of 19 per cent.

While the results should be read in the context that remote regions will inevitably have greater concerns about the availability of modern communications, it was nevertheless the lowest level of satisfaction for any region. The Kimberley came closest, but the level of concern there was five percentage points lower than the Gascoyne.

Agreement that "lack of modern communications is a real problem"	Generally agree %	Strongly agree %	Total %
All regions	14	5	19
Gascoyne	22	11	33
Kimberley	17	11	28
Pilbara	17	5	22

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 16 to 17 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Perceived Community Spirit

Issues including friendliness, community division, stress on families, privacy and environment for children were considered when trying to determine people's broad perception of community spirit.

When the views on all of these issues were factored together, all regions achieved mean scores comfortably above the mid-point of 3. But there were significant differences in the way each issue was perceived from one region to another.

In the Gascoyne, there was overwhelming agreement that the area was "a really friendly place to live" (85 per cent) and "a great place for kids to grow up in" (83 per cent).

These results, while not as high as some regions, paint a positive picture of the Gascoyne. But the overall rating for 'community spirit' was dragged down by relatively poor results on issues such as community division and lack of privacy - the survey negatives.

The Gascoyne had a particularly high perception of community division with 58 per cent of respondents agreeing there was "a lot of division" in the community. This was more than double the result in some regions. A contributing factor could be the high incidence of seasonal and transitory workers in the Gascoyne.

Agreement that "there is a lot of division in this community"	Generally agree %	Strongly agree %	Total %
Gascoyne	41	17	58
Mid West	33	16	49
Kimberley	40	7	47
Goldfields-Esperance	33	11	44
Great Southern	29	9	38
Peel	28	7	35
Wheatbelt	25	6	31
South West	23	6	29
Pilbara	20	4	24

A quite high number of Gascoyne respondents also agreed that the size of their community sometimes made them feel they had no privacy. This would almost certainly be a function of the small population of the region. As well, the region has a relatively high proportion of residents who grew up in a major city and would therefore be more inclined to perceive this 'small town' effect.

On the final measure, more than a third of respondents felt there were "great stresses on family life in the area". While it is disturbing that such a large proportion of the community perceive this family stress factor, it needs to be acknowledged that the issue has currency worldwide, not just in the regions of Western Australia, and only seven per cent of Gascoyne respondents 'strongly' agreed. There was considerably less disquiet in the Gascoyne than in regions such as the Pilbara and Goldfields-Esperance.

Gascoyne respondents	Generally agree %	Strongly agree %	Total %	All regions average %
Really friendly place to live	52	33	85	85
Lot of community division	41	17	58	36
Great stresses on family life	30	7	37	39
Lack of privacy	29	7	36	27
Great place for kids	45	38	83	89

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 17 to 19 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Environmental Values

While recognising the problems inherent in trying to assess people's attitudes to the environment from just a few questions, the survey sought to get a broad indication using three specific measures. These included the importance of clean air, the benefits of the climate and likely acceptance of environmental cost in exchange for jobs.

When factored together, the views of Gascoyne respondents on each issue suggest a very high regard for the local environment with a mean score of 4 out of a possible 5. This was the highest of all regions.

Ninety-six per cent of Gascoyne respondents agreed that clean air was “one of the best things” about the area and 93 per cent felt the climate was a major benefit. This compares with scores as low as 60 per cent and 61 per cent respectively in the Goldfields-Esperance. Feedback from the Gascoyne discussion groups was that the climate of the region was “quite simply the best in the world”.

The third statement asked respondents to agree or disagree that they would “accept some environmental cost in exchange for more job opportunities”. Across all regions, there were strong indications that residents want to maintain and protect the local environment.

While responses would be influenced by the availability of jobs in a region, they nonetheless give a strong indication of the extent to which people are prepared to trade off environmental factors for economic benefits.

In the Gascoyne, 50 per cent of respondents at least ‘generally’ agreed they would accept some environmental cost in exchange for more jobs, but it was noticeable that only eight per cent of these strongly agreed. A similar caution was evident in most regions.

"I would accept some environmental cost in exchange for more job opportunities in this region"	Generally Agree %	Strongly Agree %	Total %
Mid West	46	13	59
Great Southern	45	10	55
South West	47	5	52
Gascoyne	42	8	50
Pilbara	43	6	49
Wheatbelt	36	12	48
Goldfields-Esperance	38	7	45
Peel	35	7	42
Kimberley	32	9	41

While one in every two people appear open to environmental trade-off, the low level of strong agreement suggests that developments which have a significant impact on the environment would need a very convincing argument to win support. While half the survey group said they would accept some environmental cost for jobs, half did not.

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 19 to 20 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Perceived Economic Benefits

The survey examined cost of living, earning potential, retirement barriers and economic outlook to give an indication of how residents perceive the economic well-being of their region.

In total, 64 per cent of Gascoyne respondents agreed the cost of living in their area was not too bad, 58 per cent felt you could earn a lot of money if you work hard, 62 per cent thought the region had a strong economic future and 43 per cent felt cost of living would make it hard to retire in the Gascoyne.

Results for each varied greatly between regions, with the Gascoyne around mid-range on all except one issue - economic future.

While the survey found that a majority of residents think the Gascoyne has a strong economic future, it was a noticeably smaller majority than in most other regions.

Agreement that "this area has a strong economic future"	Agree %
Pilbara	88
Goldfields-Esperance	82
South West	82
Mid West	78
Kimberley	71
Great Southern	65
Wheatbelt	63
Gascoyne	62
Peel	55

There was no major outcry about cost of living in the Gascoyne, particularly when compared with the other northern regions. But it was nonetheless noticeable that a relatively high proportion of residents felt cost of living would make it hard for people to retire in the Gascoyne. This may well be a factor in the finding - discussed later - that 43 per cent of people will probably leave the region at some stage. This tendency to move was considerably higher than the all-regions average of 33 per cent.

Agreement that "the cost of living is not too bad here compared to other places"	Agree %
Pilbara	23
Kimberley	30
Gascoyne	64

It was perhaps fortunate that most people found cost of living not too bad in the Gascoyne because relatively few, when compared with other regions, thought you could earn a lot of money there.

While 58 per cent agreed you could earn a lot if you worked hard, this was below the all-regions average and well under the level of agreement in five other regions - the Pilbara, Goldfields-Esperance, Mid West, Kimberley and South West.

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 21 to 22 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Employment Perceptions and Attitudes

The survey asked respondents to agree or disagree with four statements:

- *"I am often concerned about the security of jobs in this region."*
- *"This region needs a wider range of job opportunities."*
- *"There aren't many career opportunities here for people with higher education."*
- *"This area needs new development to provide more jobs."*

A little over half the Gascoyne respondents were concerned about job security in the area but only one in seven respondents expressed any strong concern.

There was much greater interest in the range of jobs available in the Gascoyne, with more than eight out of 10 respondents agreeing that the region needs a wider range of job opportunities. This is significantly above the all-regions average and suggests that people in the Gascoyne are keen to see developments which encourage greater skills diversity.

People in the Gascoyne also had the second highest proportion who felt there were not enough career opportunities for people with higher education. This would be influenced by the key industry sectors operating in the region, including primary resource industries with a concentration in the trade and labour occupations, and tourism, with a high labour demand but less requirement for formal qualifications. While the Gascoyne was at the higher end of the scale, the results were indicative of an apparently widespread desire across the regions for more career options.

The survey suggests that the key to development of the regions lies almost across the board in the development of a wider range of employment options. It needs the encouragement of industries that provide career opportunities for future generations who, in the main, like living in the regions, but leave reluctantly to find better education, more meaningful employment, and to a lesser extent, better health care.

When asked their attitude to development, four out of five Gascoyne respondents agreed the area needs new development to provide jobs. Only the Wheatbelt and Great Southern had a higher response rate. These three regions in fact consistently recorded very high levels of agreement on all four measures, underlining their real desire for new development.

At the same time, it needs to be recalled that the Gascoyne sample showed a particularly high regard for the environment, which will to some extent shape the region's future activities. The 'pristine' environment is clearly a major attraction for people moving to the Gascoyne and they appeared to quite jealously guard the high environmental values of the region.

Gascoyne respondents	Generally agree %	Strongly agree %	Total %	All regions average %
Often concerned about job security here	42	14	56	54
Wider range of job opportunities needed	50	31	81	71
Few career opportunities for people with higher education	39	39	78	65
Gascoyne needs new development to provide more jobs	47	33	80	73

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 23 to 24 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Diversity in Recreation/Entertainment

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with five statements to determine attitudes to recreation/entertainment in the regions. These related to sport, entertainment and the availability of restaurants and nightlife.

The results in the Gascoyne were generally positive, though a little less so than in some regions.

There was little real support for the suggestion that there was not much to do if you were not into sport. Less than four out of 10 agreed with the statement, including just nine per cent who strongly agreed. Most people also disagreed that sport was the 'glue' which keeps people together socially in the Gascoyne. Both results suggest the region has a diversity of recreational activities available. A contributing factor would be the recreational opportunities provided by the marine environment and its role in local social activities.

While less than half the Gascoyne respondents said they missed the entertainment that comes with a large city, this was still one of the highest levels recorded, second only to the Pilbara. This would inevitably be influenced by the high proportion of residents in both these areas originally from Perth. The relative remoteness of the northern regions and the consequent dampening effect this has on the provision of big entertainment options would also be a key factor, although it was noticeable that people in the Kimberley were not inclined to miss big city entertainment. Regions closer to Perth would certainly be more likely to attract 'name' entertainers and be included on tour itineraries, while close proximity also makes it easier for residents in those regions to visit Perth more frequently.

There was some concern about the diversity of eating establishments, with only 41 per cent of Gascoyne respondents agreeing there was a good range available. Just over half felt there was enough nightlife, but this again was a relatively low level of satisfaction and probably influenced by the remoteness issues and entertainment attitudes raised earlier.

Views of Gascoyne respondents	Agree %	All-regions average %
This area relies on sport to keep it together socially	44	51
If you're not into sport, there's not much to do	39	36
I miss the entertainment of a large city	48	37
There is a good range of eating establishments here	41	66
Area has enough night life	54	64

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 25 to 27 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Standard of Health Services

Residents in the northern regions of the Pilbara, Gascoyne and Kimberley were least inclined to be satisfied with local health services. Only about half the respondents felt general medical practice was good in these areas and three-quarters expressed concern about the lack of specialist medical services.

While concern was greatest in the Pilbara, only 48 per cent of Gascoyne respondents thought GP services were good. This compares with the all-regions average of 69 per cent.

The disquiet about specialist services was particularly strong, with 73 per cent of Gascoyne people saying they had real concerns, including two out of five people who strongly agreed. This indicates quite genuine concern, and given the above average age profile of the region, will be a factor in many people's decision to ultimately leave the region. In fact, 12 per cent who said they would like to live in another region cited better health services as a key reason for moving.

Agree that "the availability of specialist medical services is a real concern to me"	Agree %
Pilbara	80
Kimberley	73
Gascoyne	73
Wheatbelt	65
Great Southern	65
Mid West	62
Goldfields-Esperance	60
South West	56
Peel	51

The majority of people of all ages in the Gascoyne said it was important that the area had good aged health and care facilities, a consistent finding in most regions. While not asking people to judge the standard of existing facilities, the survey sought to determine the importance people placed on them. Certainly, in some regions, it appears that a lack of adequate facilities for the aged will contribute to families leaving an area. The strong views expressed by people of all ages in all regions, combined with the rapid ageing of society generally, reinforces the need to ensure these facilities are given an appropriate priority in future planning strategies. While the 76 per cent agreement in the Gascoyne is solidly in the majority, it was nevertheless below that recorded in most other regions. This may reflect the fact that quite a large proportion of residents - when compared with other regions - plan to eventually move on from the region rather than staying on through their old age. These planned departures are discussed in greater detail later in this report.

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 27 to 28 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Perceived Isolation

People in the Gascoyne were not particularly inclined to feel a sense of isolation, despite their relatively remote location in the State.

While 46 per cent agreed the area could be "lonely for homemakers", there was very little strong agreement and the overall result was similar to the Kimberley, Wheatbelt and

Goldfields-Esperance and well below that in the Pilbara. A contributing factor would be the relatively small proportion of people in the Gascoyne living on remote rural properties. Around 86 per cent live in a town.

Little more than a third of respondents said they would like to live closer to their extended family, suggesting residents do not feel particularly dislocated from family influences, compared with the clear dislocation evident, for example, in the Pilbara.

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 29 to 30 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Schooling

Only respondents with school age children took part in this section of the survey. Across the regions, this amounted to 470 respondents. The results should be viewed with care as the sample for each region was inevitably quite small.

People in the Gascoyne were far less happy with the high school solution adopted for their children than parents in any other region, and this is probably due to the very high number of children who live away from home to attend school.

The survey found that 23 per cent of Gascoyne parents send their high school children to Perth while another six per cent opt for a high school in another region.

Less than half utilised or had access to a high school within commuting distance, in sharp contrast to all other regions.

There was a small but comparatively high incidence of families who said their schooling solution was to physically move the family elsewhere in search of better education opportunities. The Pilbara was the only region with a higher dislocation factor.

The 39 per cent of Gascoyne parents who were dissatisfied with their schooling solution compares with the all-regions average of 17 per cent.

High school solutions adopted	Gascoyne parents %	All regions average %
Commute to a local school	47	78
Move family to area served by school	16	7
Send away to regional school	6	5
Send to Perth	23	12
Distance education	8	1

Table includes some multiple responses due to parents opting for different education solutions for their children. For example, they could use a local school for one child and send another to Perth. A small proportion also chose not to give a response. As a result, the Table does not equal 100%

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 30 to 33 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Future Movement

A little over half the Gascoyne respondents said they either planned to stay in the region or at least had no plans to move.

In all, 44 per cent said they would stay and 12 per cent had no particular plans to move, equating to 56 per cent of residents tending to stay in the region. This compares with the all-regions average of 61 per cent.

Those tending to leave include 18 per cent with definite plans to move and 25 per cent who said they would probably move. The remainder were not sure.

The survey results suggest that 43 per cent of people in the Gascoyne will at least probably move on from the region at some stage in their lives. While this may seem like a lot of movement, it should be read in the context that high turnover is not a new phenomenon in the Gascoyne or indeed in regional areas generally.

Of those planning to go, more than six out of 10 (equivalent to about 28 per cent of the population) said they would do so within five years.

While the results indicate that high turnover will continue in the Gascoyne, it is considerably less than the turnover expected in the Pilbara and Goldfields-Esperance where respectively 39 per cent and 36 per cent of the population look like moving within five years.

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 34 to 36 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Where People Would Go

While there will always be barriers which stop people living exactly where they choose, respondents were asked to ignore those obstacles and nominate where they would most prefer to live if they had the choice.

The most common preference for Gascoyne respondents was Perth, nominated by 20 per cent. However, the Kimberley, Mid West and South West also held a particular attraction for Gascoyne residents. (The South West was in fact the most popular choice, after Perth, for people in almost all regions.)

Only a small number of residents said they would choose to stay in the Gascoyne. Just eight per cent would remain in their present area and another four per cent would go elsewhere in the Gascoyne - a total of just 12 per cent electing to stay in the region. This is a substantially lower result than for any other region except the Pilbara. By comparison, almost half the people in the South West would not leave their region and around a third in the Great Southern, Kimberley, Peel and Mid West.

Desired Location	Average %	CURRENT LOCATION								
		Kimberley %	Pilbara %	Gascoyne %	Mid West %	Wheatbelt %	Goldfields-Esperance %	Peel %	South West %	Great Southern %
Will not move	21	17	9	8	21	20	13	30	25	26
Perth	19	21	28	20	17	22	26	15	15	17
Kimberley	7	16	9	13	14	7	1	5	4	6
Pilbara	3	2	3	5	3	3	1	4	2	1
Gascoyne	1	2	1	4	2	1	-	4	1	-
Mid West	5	6	8	13	9	4	3	1	3	2
Wheatbelt	2	1	3	2	1	6	2	-	-	3
Goldfields-Esperance	3	1	5	2	-	2	10	1	1	3
Peel	3	1	3	2	5	5	4	2	3	4
South West	14	7	11	13	6	14	10	18	23	13
Great Southern	6	3	2	2	3	6	6	7	9	9
Interstate/overseas	6	14	12	7	4	1	11	5	5	6
Other	2	2	1	5	6	3	2	7	1	4
Don't Know	8	7	5	4	9	6	11	1	8	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The shaded cells indicate the proportion of people moving from one part of a region to another. For example, at the top left shaded cell, you find 16% of people in the Kimberley would move elsewhere within the Kimberley given their choice of living anywhere in Western Australia. Places which could not be identified through the Department of Land Administration database are categorised as 'other'.

Note that in calculating State averages, results from each region are weighted to take account of the impact of population size. Without this weighting, responses from a smaller population region would have a much greater impact on the whole of regional Western Australia than it should. The weighting reinstates the relativities of the nine regions in population terms.

The most common reason people gave for choosing not to stay in the Gascoyne was 'career move'. However, the issues of family reunion and 'need for a change' also featured prominently.

The 12 per cent who nominated retirement as a reason for moving to another Western Australian region possibly links back to the earlier perceptions about cost of living impediments to retirement in the Gascoyne. While there is certainly a tendency for older people to move to the Gascoyne as part of their retirement process, it appears to be regarded more as a staging post to take advantage of factors such as climate, lifestyle and environment, rather than being an ultimate destination.

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 36 to 40 Living in the Regions - State Report)

Why People Move

Having determined which locations are most popular as 'ideal' destinations, the obvious question is why.

It has to be said that the Gascoyne received the lowest vote as a preferred destination, drawing most interest from Peel residents, although it was nominated by just four per cent of these. The overall vote may be affected by the fact that there are relatively few towns in the Gascoyne for people to choose, compared with other regions.

Respondents in all regions were asked to nominate things which would attract them to each region, and on this measure the Gascoyne was most attractive for its climate, cited by 53 per cent of respondents. This was followed by lifestyle (37 per cent), fishing (34 per cent), retirement (20 per cent) and family influences (11 per cent).

(Further information and comparative regional data page 41 Living in the Regions - State Report)

The View from Perth

The survey included 150 interviews conducted with people in Perth to ascertain their views on a range of issues affecting the regions.

A significant finding was that while 57 per cent of Perth respondents said they would not want to leave Perth, a solid 43 per cent indicated they would prefer to live somewhere else in Western Australia. Most commonly, they would head south to either the South West or Great Southern. Just one per cent nominated the Gascoyne as their ideal location.

Where Perth people want to live	%
Perth	57
Kimberley	4
Pilbara	2
Gascoyne	1
Mid West	3
Wheatbelt	4
Goldfields-Esperance	1
Peel	3
South West	16
Great Southern	9
Don't Know	3

Note: This was a multiple response question and therefore does not equal 100%.

When asked why they would choose to leave or remain in Perth, a number of common themes emerged. Those who chose Perth did so on the basis of family connections, facilities and lifestyle. Those wanting to live in the regions cited physical environment and a quieter, more relaxed lifestyle as their major motivations. It appears that people in Perth tend to think of the regions in terms of lifestyle advantages rather than economic opportunities.

A striking feature was the relative lack of knowledge people in Perth have about the Gascoyne. More than half could not name any towns in the region. The best known was Carnarvon, named by 27 per cent, followed by Exmouth, known by just five per cent.

Forty-one per cent of Perth respondents said they had visited the Gascoyne, although the reliability of this data is questionable as there seems to be general confusion over the term 'Gascoyne' and which places it covers.

The lack of familiarity no doubt contributed to the very high proportion of respondents who could not answer questions about anything from the economic future of the Gascoyne to the quality of social life. The Gascoyne consistently drew the highest 'don't know' response compared with any other region.

When asked if the Gascoyne was a place they would like to live, just 11 per cent of Perth respondents said it was. Again, misunderstanding of the term 'Gascoyne' may have influenced this relatively poor result.

A Place I Would Like to Live:

Perth respondents	Kimberley %	Pilbara %	Gascoyne %	Mid West %	Wheatbelt %	Goldfields-Esperance %	Peel %	South West %	Great Southern %
Net Disagree	58	67	68	63	69	63	37	21	41
Net Agree	23	14	11	13	13	22	42	66	35
Neither	7	5	5	8	7	7	7	6	7
Don't Know	12	14	16	16	11	8	14	7	17

(Further information and comparative regional data pages 42 to 51 Living in the Regions - State Report)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STATE REPORT

Mobility:

The survey shows that regional Western Australia is highly mobile. Only 16 per cent of respondents had grown up in the area where they now live. More than half had been in their current region for 10 years or less and a third for five years or less.

The survey suggests that about a third of people who move to the regions come from Perth and a quarter from overseas or interstate. The remainder move from within their current region or from another Western Australian region.

One in five reported moving three or more times in the last 10 years.

The Mid West had the highest proportion of people who had not moved from their current town or district in the last 10 years, while the Peel and the Pilbara were the most mobile.

Motivation:

Employment is the key factor prompting movement, followed by family/marriage influences and then lifestyle.

People living in the regions indicated they felt safe, had a strong affinity with their location and were generally happy with community facilities (particularly sports). Perceived safety was the most universally held attitude throughout the regions.

While in some regions there is a strong trend towards moving when children reach high school age, the survey suggests that overall 78 per cent of regional people with high school children send them to local high schools.

Attitudes to health care varied across regions, with particular concern evident in the northern regions. Overall, the standard of medical general practice was considered good, but the availability of specialist medical services was a significant concern.

The Future:

Only half the people in regional Western Australia plan to stay where they are indefinitely, although another 11 per cent say they have no firm plans to move.

This leaves a solid 33 per cent of the population who say they will either definitely or probably move on. The residual 6 per cent are not sure.

The survey suggests that a fifth of the regional population will move from their current region within five years.

Asked where they would most prefer to live, two-thirds of the total sample chose a regional area in Western Australia. In other words, the majority of people living in regional Western Australia prefer that lifestyle to any other.

In total, 21 per cent said they would prefer to stay in their current location, 44 per cent said they would either transfer to another region or to another place in their current region, 19 per cent chose Perth, five per cent interstate and one per cent overseas. (A further eight per cent said they did not know and two per cent named places that could not be identified through the DOLA database.)

The Perth Perspective:

Forty-two per cent of Perth respondents said they had lived at some stage in regional Western Australia, although most did not grow up there.

More than half said they would not move away from Perth, but a massive 43 per cent indicated they were open to the possibility. The South West was the most preferred destination (nominated by 16 per cent) followed by the Great Southern (nine per cent).

Major motivations for remaining in Perth include family and the availability of good services/facilities/shopping.

Major motivations for moving to the regions are a quieter lifestyle and country atmosphere.

Perth residents who wanted to move to the regions, but had not, said career structure was the overwhelming reason (28 per cent), followed by financial constraints (18 per cent) and children's education (14 per cent). There was a strong perception that they would not find suitable employment in the regions.

The view from Perth showed relatively little understanding of the economic opportunities available in regional Western Australia. Lifestyle values rather than economic opportunities were overwhelmingly the key attractions.

There was also limited awareness of specific regions, particularly those in the north. A significant number of respondents could not name any towns in some regions. Questions about perceived quality of life and essential services also drew a significant 'don't know' response.

There were clearly people in Perth who would like to live in the regions for perceived lifestyle benefits that appear to be borne out by the experiences of those living there. But most do not pursue a move unless they happen upon employment related opportunities.

Notes