

LIVING IN THE REGIONS
THE VIEWS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIANS
The Great Southern Report

A Study Undertaken for

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND TRADE

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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MINISTRY FOR PLANNING

•

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS

[Gascoyne Development Commission](#)

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[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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ISBN 0-7307-1231-1
LIVING IN THE REGIONS: THE VIEWS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIANS
THE GREAT SOUTHERN REPORT

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Published in February 1999

Cover Photographs:
The following organisations are acknowledged
with thanks for providing cover photographs.

Education Department of Western Australia
Health Department of Western Australia
Homeswest
Western Australian Country Football League
Western Australian Department of Training



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 'Stuart 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.

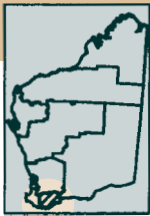
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GREAT SOUTHERN REGION



LEGEND

- REGIONAL BOUNDARY
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY
- REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OFFICE
- TOWN OR CITY
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA e.g. ALBANY



PROFILE

The Great Southern Region is the southernmost region of Western Australia located midway along the State's southern coast, facing the Southern Ocean. The region extends 200 kilometres northwards and covers a total land area of 40,528 square kilometres, about 1.6 per cent of the State's total area.

The Great Southern Region consists of 12 municipalities including the City of Albany and the Shires of Broomehill, Cranbrook, Denmark, Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Katanning, Kent, Kojonup, Plantagenet, Tambellup and Woodanilling.

In 1997, the region had a total population of 50,697, of which 49.4 per cent were female and 50.6 per cent male. The population is concentrated along the south coast with about 57 per cent of residents living in the City of Albany. The southern shires of Denmark, Plantagenet and Jerramungup make up another 19 per cent of the population.

The Great Southern has one of the 'oldest' populations in the State with a median age of 35.3 years. This is two years older than the median age of 33.3 years for the State as a whole.

Dominant industries are wool production, broadacre cropping, including wheat, barley, canola and oats, livestock for slaughter and timber production. In recent decades the economy has diversified to include both horticulture and viticulture.

The region's well established sense of identity and entrepreneurial networks in agriculture related industry has fostered growth in such diverse activities as tree farming, wine making and meat processing for international markets.

The region is one of the State's more significant producers of fish products although this tends to be low value production, accounting for about 2.3 per cent of the State's total value. This is expected to change as higher value aquaculture products such as oysters, mussels and abalone come on stream. Tourism is also a significant contributor to the regional economy with 572,000 visitors recorded in 1996.

THE GREAT SOUTHERN 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 Albany and Katanning. Information from these discussion groups is 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.

Where People Live

Most people in regional Western Australia live in towns or cities and the Great Southern is no exception. The survey suggests that 76 per cent of residents live in a town, 14 per cent live on farm properties and 10 per cent in some other out of town situation.

It was noticeable that the Great Southern had a higher proportion of people living on a commercial farm property than any other region except the Wheatbelt.

While slightly more people said they grew up on a rural property than those now living on one (26 per cent compared with 24 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. Yet while only 19 per cent of Great Southern respondents said they still lived in the area they grew up, this was actually one of the highest levels of stability. As well, many of the people who moved had simply come from somewhere else in the Great Southern.

Overall, 33 per cent of 'movers' were from Perth, 24 per cent were from elsewhere in the Great Southern, 24 per cent were from overseas/interstate and 19 per cent from another Western Australian region. More than half the respondents had not moved at all in the last ten years.

Taken together, the findings suggest a high level of loyalty and affinity with the region. Once people move to the Great Southern they tend to remain for long periods, and if they do move, it is often simply to other places within the region.

Period in region	Great Southern residents
Under 6 years	31%
6 – 10 years	13%
11 – 20 years	23%
21 + years	33%
Total	100%

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

Why People Move

Employment is the single main reason for people moving to any region, but it was noticeably less a factor in the southern regions (Peel, South West and Great Southern). While 38 per cent of respondents said employment was their main reason for moving to the Great Southern, this is well below the all-regions average of 47 per cent.

The disparity is due to the high proportion of people who move to the southern regions for family or marriage reasons. In the Great Southern, 25 per cent of respondents said family/marriage was their single main reason for moving. This was more than double the result in some of the northern regions. The next most common reason for moving to the Great Southern was 'lifestyle', nominated by 12 per cent of respondents. While this was above the all-regions average of nine per cent it was a lower result than in several regions including the Peel, South West and Gascoyne.

Single main reason for moving to the Great Southern	Respondents %
Employment	38
Family/marriage	25
Lifestyle	12
Other	25

Because there is often more than one reason behind a person's decision to move, the survey then asked people to nominate all of their main reasons for moving to the Great Southern. On this measure, lifestyle gained more prominence, mentioned by 31 per cent as at least one of their key motivations - although this was well below the all-regions average of 67 per cent. It is possible, however, that the high proportion who mentioned factors such as climate, environment, education, cheap housing and retirement represent an implicit reference to lifestyle, which would boost that result higher. There was particular mention of climate as a main reason for moving, nominated by 23 per cent of Great Southern respondents compared with the all-regions average of 15 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 particularly apparent in the Great Southern which topped all regions with the strength of its result.

Ninety-six per cent of respondents said they felt safer where they were than they would in Perth, including 64 per cent who 'strongly' agreed. This was higher than all regions and substantially higher than many.

"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 and this is also the case in the Great Southern. Four out of five respondents agreed that they would be sad to leave to live in 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 few Great Southern respondents, if given the choice of living anywhere they wanted, would choose a destination outside regional Western Australia and more than a third would use their lucky break to either stay exactly where they are or simply move to another part of the Great Southern.

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

People in the Great Southern recorded the highest level of satisfaction with community facilities. This included 91 per cent who said sporting facilities were good, 89 per cent who felt general recreation facilities were good, and a low of 17 per cent who were prepared to agree that modern communications were a problem in the area.

The results for both sport and recreation facilities are well above the all-regions average and dramatically higher than many regions, particularly those in remote areas.

The 17 per cent who felt there were problems with a lack of modern communications include just five per cent who strongly agree, suggesting most people do not think this issue is a major concern. However, the result could also reflect a lack of awareness of the commercial and recreational possibilities that state-of-the-art modern communications can bring. A more specific question about services such as mobile phones, Internet and data transmissions may have evoked a stronger response.

(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 all factors in determining people's broad perception of community spirit. When all of the responses were factored together, the Great Southern achieved a mean score of 3.8 out of a possible 5. This was the highest result for any region, although a couple of trouble spots were apparent.

Certainly, the great majority of people thought the region was friendly and a great place for children to grow up, but views on community division, family stress and lack of privacy - the survey negatives - were a little less positive.

The 38 per cent who perceived a lot of division in the community was only marginally above the all-regions average, but it was nevertheless quite considerably higher than that recorded in some regions, notably the neighbouring South West (29 per cent).

All regions reported a quite solid perception - generally a third or more respondents - of stress on family life. While this is disturbing, it needs to be acknowledged that the issue has currency worldwide, not just in the regions of Western Australia. In the Great Southern, 35 per cent of respondents perceived "great stresses on family life in the area." While this was below the all-regions average of 39 per cent and well below the level of concern in some regions, it was again at odds with the comparatively low South West result (27 per cent).

Certainly, the perception of stress on families did nothing to dampen enthusiasm about the lifestyle benefits for children. The Great Southern achieved a quite remarkable 97 per cent agreement that the area was a great place for kids to grow up. This was the highest level of agreement recorded on any issue by any region.

The survey results suggest a region which is not only perceived to be a great place for children, but one in which family values are seen as an important component of community life. Indeed, participants in the Albany discussion group referred to the "high moral values" of people in the region and applauded the fact that these values appeared to be passed from one generation to the next. While a sizeable perception of "great stress" on family life seems

a little at odds with this, it may reflect the high expectations of residents for the sort of traditional family values which seem to be under such stress everywhere.

There was little support for suggestions that the size of the community sometimes meant people had no privacy.

Great Southern respondents	Generally agree %	Strongly agree %	Total %	All regions average %
Really friendly place to live	49	38	87	85
Lots of community division	29	9	38	36
Great stresses on family life	29	6	35	39
Lack of privacy	20	7	27	27
Great place for kids	33	64	97	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 Great Southern respondents on the three issues suggested a high level of regard for the environment with a mean score of 3.8 out of a possible 5. Other regions ranged from 3.3 in the Goldfields-Esperance to 4.0 in the Gascoyne.

Ninety-six per cent of Great Southern respondents agreed that clean air was one of the best things about the area and 81 per cent felt the climate was a major benefit. Both responses were above the all-regions average and show a very positive regard for these features in the Great Southern.

The third statement asked respondents to agree or disagree that they would "accept some environmental cost in exchange for more job opportunities". While responses would be influenced to some degree 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.

Great Southern respondents had the second highest propensity of all regions to at least generally agree that they would accept some environmental cost in exchange for jobs. The 55 per cent agreement is well above the all-regions average of 49 per cent and substantially higher than some 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 the results show that more than one in every two Great Southern respondents are open to the possibility of environmental trade-off, the lack of strong agreement suggests - consistent with all regions - that developments with a high environmental impact would need a very convincing argument to win broad support.

(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 future to give an indication of how residents perceive the economic well-being of their region.

In total, 75 per cent of Great Southern respondents agreed their cost of living was not too bad, 52 per cent felt you could earn a lot of money if you work hard, 65 per cent felt the region has a strong economic future and only 18 per cent felt cost of living would make it hard to retire in the Great Southern.

The survey results varied greatly between regions, but the Great Southern was among the most satisfied with cost of living and one of the least inclined to see local barriers to retirement. On the other hand, residents were cautious about the region's economic future and unconvinced about the ability to earn good money there.

The three-quarters of Great Southern respondents who felt the cost of living was "not too bad" was a solid result and well above the all-regions average. When you add this to the very positive attitude to local retirement, the findings have implications for the social fabric of the area. If a region is relatively affordable for young families, middle-aged and grandparents, it is more likely to retain multiple generations, in turn producing a generally more cohesive, family-oriented community. The table below shows that all of the southern regions are perceived to be affordable in retirement.

Agree that cost of living makes it hard for people to retire here	Agree %
Pilbara	80
Kimberley	72
Goldfields-Esperance	54
Gascoyne	43
Wheatbelt	28
Mid West	25
Great Southern	18
Peel	17
South West	14

While a majority of respondents felt the Great Southern had a strong economic future, it is a noticeably smaller majority than in many regions. The 65 per cent agreement compares with the all-regions average of 73 per cent and suggests an element of concern about the region's future. This may explain why Great Southern respondents were comparatively open to the notion of further development despite their high environmental values.

"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

On the final measure, it was noticeable that only a little over half the respondents (52 per cent) felt you could earn a lot of money in the Great Southern, well below the 62 per cent all-regions average. This may reflect the industry sectors operating in the region, particularly agriculture, which can be relatively low paid.

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

Employment Perceptions and Attitudes

The survey asked people 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.”*

On each measure, the results signalled some concern about the economic future of the region.

Well over half the Great Southern respondents said they were “often concerned” about the security of jobs in the area, including one in five who were strongly concerned.

More than three-quarters agreed there was a need for a wider range of job opportunities, including a massive 40 per cent who strongly agreed, and virtually the same number again felt there weren’t many career opportunities for people with higher education.

On the final measure, more than four out of five respondents felt the area needs new development.

The results are a clear indication that residents believe action is needed to diversify and strengthen the economic base of the Great Southern. It is interesting to reflect on a comment made in the Katanning discussion group that there were plenty of employment opportunities in the region but they tended to be of a fairly “low standard”.

The Great Southern was above the all-regions average on all measures of concern, and substantially higher in its level of ‘strong’ agreement.

Great Southern Respondents	Generally agree %	Strongly agree %	Total %	All regions average %
Often concerned about job security here	39	22	61	54
Wider range of job opportunities needed	37	40	77	71
Few career opportunities for people with higher education	39	36	75	65
Region needs new development to provide more jobs	40	43	83	73

The survey suggests that the key to development of the Great Southern, and indeed most regional areas, lies 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, very much like living in the regions but leave reluctantly to find better education and more meaningful employment.

More than most regions, people in the Great Southern supported the concept of new development to provide more jobs and a more diversified economic base. While there is clear concern about the economic prospects of the region, there was still a strong commitment to “try to make it work.” It was noted in the discussion groups that there had

been many retrenchments throughout the Great Southern but that rather than simply move away, there was a preparedness to stay and try to develop alternative employment options locally.

(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.

When responses on each were factored together, the Great Southern had the equal highest mean score of 3.4, suggesting that on the whole, the social/recreational expectations of people in the Great Southern are not greatly removed from their availability.

While half the Great Southern respondents felt the region relied on sport to keep it together socially, only around one in 10 strongly agreed and relatively few people thought there was little to do if you weren't into sport. This suggests that a comparatively wide range of activities are available in the Great Southern.

Only one in three said they missed the entertainment that comes with a large city, with just 13 per cent strongly agreeing. This would be influenced by the comparatively high satisfaction with both the range of local eating establishments and the available nightlife.

Views of Great Southern Respondents	Agree %	All regions average %
This area relies on sport to keep it together socially	50	51
If you're not into sport, there's not much to do	33	36
I miss the entertainment of a large city	34	37
There is a good range of eating establishments here	78	66
Area has enough night life	68	64

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

Standard of Health Services

There was quite considerable concern in some regions about the standard and availability of local health services, but the Great Southern appears comparatively well served. Two statements were used to determine attitudes to local health services:

"The standard of medical general practice is good in this area."

"The availability of specialist medical services here is a real concern to me." (reverse scored)

Four out of five Great Southern respondents agreed the standard of general medical practice was good - the highest result for any region.

However, the 80 per cent satisfied with GP services contrasts with 65 per cent who were concerned about specialist services, including more than one in four who strongly agreed it was a real concern. This reflected a trend throughout the regions. There is clearly significant disquiet in many parts of regional Western Australia about the availability of specialist medical services.

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 Great Southern said it was important to them that the area had good aged health and care facilities, a consistent finding in all 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. Eighty-eight percent of Great Southern responders said it was important to them that good health and care facilities were available locally.

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

Perceived Isolation

People in the Great Southern were not particularly inclined to feel a sense of isolation, a finding which is probably influenced by the comparative stability of the region and propensity for different generations to remain there.

While 35 per cent of respondents agreed the area could be "lonely for homemakers", there was little strong agreement and the overall result was below the all-regions average.

A higher proportion (43 per cent) said they would like to live closer to their extended family, which was above the all-regions average. This was interesting considering the relatively high propensity for multiple generations to remain in the Great Southern and for residents generally to give family/marriage as a major reason for moving there. It suggests that despite these factors, there is some sense of family dislocation felt by quite a large proportion of the community, more so than in most regions. Of course, a high propensity for people to move to the region for marriage purposes suggests at least one spouse will have

left family elsewhere to do this. Nevertheless, just 13 per cent of respondents strongly agreed they would like to live closer to their extended family, suggesting it is not a major issue for most people.

(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.

The vast majority of school age children in the Great Southern attend local schools they can commute to from home.

The survey asked all respondents with school age children to indicate what education option they were either currently using or planned to use to educate their high school children.

The findings suggest that 84 per cent of Great Southern parents opt for local high schools, nine per cent send their high school children to Perth, eight per cent have their children live away from home to attend a regional high school and two per cent use distance education.

It was interesting that while the Great Southern had one of the highest proportions of parents reporting that they are having their high school children educated locally, this high local content was not matched with a commensurate high level of satisfaction over schooling options.

The survey found that around two-thirds of the Great Southern parents were satisfied with their schooling solution, which was a much lower level of satisfaction than for many regions, particularly the Wheatbelt, Peel and South West where over three-quarters of respondents were satisfied. Twenty-one per cent of Great Southern respondents said they were dissatisfied, also above the average. The remainder were ambivalent or did not know. The results suggest that while many parents are able to school their children locally, there is some frustration at the quality of schooling or the level to which students can progress.

While there was clearly some discontent with senior school options, it was noted that the Great Southern discussion groups made particular reference to the perceived high standard of primary schooling in the region.

High school solutions adopted	Great Southern %	All regions average %
Commute to a local school	84	78
Distance education	2	1
Move family to area served by school	-	7
Send away to regional school	8	5
Send to Perth	9	12

Table adds beyond 100% due to multiples responses from parents who opt for different education options for their children. For example, they could use a local school for one child and send another to Perth.

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

Future Movement

The vast majority of Great Southern respondents said they either planned to stay in the region or at least had no plans to move.

In all, 63 per cent planned to stay and nine per cent had no particular plans to move.

Just seven per cent said they had definite plans to move and 17 per cent said they would probably move. The remaining four per cent were not sure.

This equates to almost three-quarters of residents at least tending to stay - one of the highest results for any region, equal to the South West and second only to the Peel.

Of those planning to move, almost two-thirds (equivalent to about 15 per cent of the population) said they would do so within five years.

This is not a particularly high turnover considering the overall propensity for movement in the regions. While it appears that 15 per cent of the population will leave within five years, this is under the all-regions average of 19 per cent and considerably lower than many regions. It is apparent that people living in the Great Southern have a strong sense of commitment to the region. This commitment is tempered to some extent by concern for the economic security of the area and this concern is reflected in a preparedness to accept new development that would provide greater diversity in employment opportunities, even at the expense of some environmental aspects.

People who were considering leaving the Great Southern made reference to the need for higher education and in a related issue, more sophisticated/higher calibre employment opportunities. Over a third strongly agreed there weren't many local career opportunities for people with higher education, which was the second highest score on this measure.

(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 strong affinity people have with the Great Southern was evident in the high proportion who said they would not leave the region for any inducement. This included 26 per cent who would stay exactly where they were and nine per cent who would simply move to another part of the Great Southern. This high propensity to stay in the region was second only to that recorded in the South West.

Of those who could be induced to leave, Perth was the most preferred destination, nominated by 17 per cent. Other popular choices were the South West (13 per cent) and Kimberley (6 per cent). (The South West was the most favoured destination, after Perth, for people in almost all regions.) The Great Southern was most popular with people in the South West, Peel, Goldfields-Esperance and Wheatbelt.

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.

Great Southern respondents who would go to Perth most commonly nominated career move, family reunion and education as major reasons. Those choosing other regional areas were primarily attracted by climate and lifestyle.

(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, the obvious question is why.

The Great Southern was well regarded by people in other regions, second only to the South West and Kimberley as a preferred destination for people across the State.

When asked to nominate things which would attract them to a region, people from across the regions named climate, attractive environment and lifestyle as the major attractions of the Great Southern.

(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 striking feature was the number of Perth people who would like to live in the southern regions. While 57 per cent said they would not want to leave Perth, more than a third of the remainder chose the South West and almost a quarter the Great Southern 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.

While a significant proportion of Perth residents have only a limited knowledge of the regions, particularly northern areas, there also appears to be a great deal of confusion about actual boundaries. When asked to name any towns in the Great Southern, 39 per cent of Perth respondents were unable to do so. This was despite the already established popularity of places located in the Great Southern. Albany was best known, followed by Katanning, Mt Barker and Denmark, but just as prominent was the tendency for people to mistakenly name towns variously located in the Goldfields-Esperance, South West and Wheatbelt regions as part of the Great Southern.

The confusion over boundaries would have contributed to the very high proportion of Perth respondents (38 per cent) who said they did not know if the Great Southern had a strong or weak economic future. Just 34 per cent thought it had a strong future, one of the poorest ratings.

Perceived Economic Future:

Perth respondents	Kimberley %	Pilbara %	Gascoyne %	Mid West %	Wheatbelt %	Goldfields-Esperance %	Peel %	South West %	Great Southern %
Net Weak	3	3	9	13	21	9	9	8	17
Net Strong	61	62	35	31	39	61	47	63	34
Neither	10	6	11	17	17	14	16	12	11
Don't Know	28	29	45	39	23	16	28	17	38

The confusion also helped to drag down results on other issues such as perceived quality of life, essential services, social life and attractions of the natural environment. Yet despite this, the Great Southern generally achieved higher ratings than the majority of regions on each issue.

When asked to assess the Great Southern as a place they would like to live, over a third of all Perth respondents said it was, which was second only to the South West and Peel ratings.

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

In total, 63 per cent of Perth respondents said they had visited places in the Great Southern, primarily on holidays (assessed by their understanding of Great Southern perimeters, not necessarily the true perimeters). This was one of the highest visitation rates for the State, exceeded only by the South West and Peel.

Certainly, the Great Southern appears better placed than many regions to attract new residents from Perth. Among people who were able to make an assessment of the regions, the Great Southern fared reasonably well in terms of the perceived benefits versus drawbacks. However, throughout all the assessments by the Perth sample there was a persistently high proportion of 'don't knows' about the Great Southern. It appears the region does not enjoy a particularly high profile in the minds of Perth people and there may be benefits in addressing this issue. Certainly, the region is very attractive to those who are familiar with what it has to offer.

(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