

LIVING IN THE REGIONS

THE VIEWS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIANS

The Mid West 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 MID WEST REPORT

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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 '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.

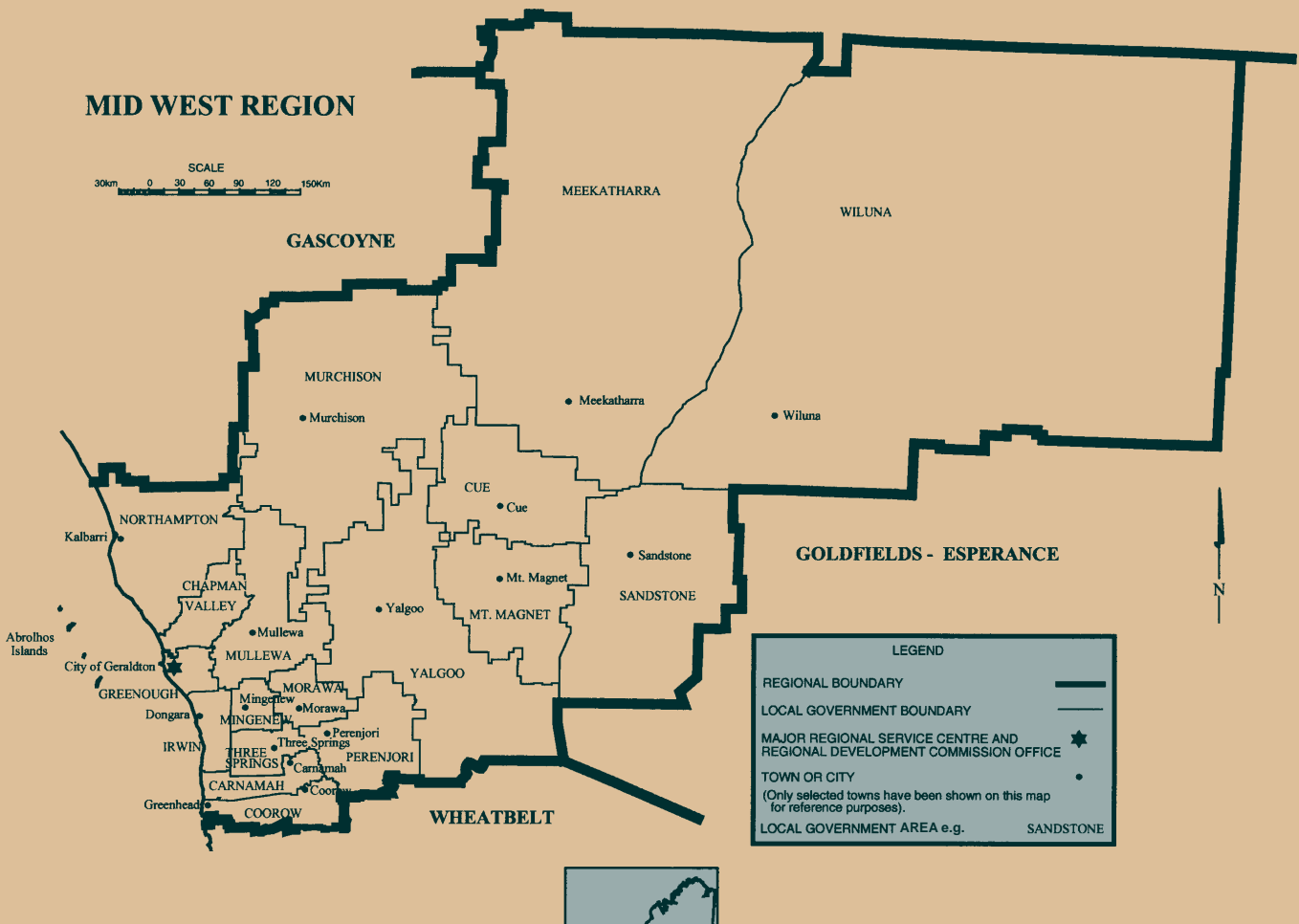
This included 150 telephone interviews in Perth using a Perth-specific questionnaire and 1350 throughout regional Western Australia (150 in each of the nine regions) using a regions-specific questionnaire.

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.

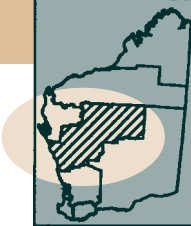
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MID WEST REGION



LEGEND

- REGIONAL BOUNDARY
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY
- MAJOR REGIONAL SERVICE CENTRE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OFFICE
- TOWN OR CITY
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA e.g. SANDSTONE



PROFILE

The Mid West Region extends along the west coast from Green Head to Kalbarri and inland more than 800 kilometres into the Gibson Desert. It covers an area of over 470,000 square kilometres, nearly a fifth of the State. The region comprises 19 local government authorities including the port City of Geraldton which is also the region's commercial, administrative and service centre.

In 1997, the Mid West Region had a total population of 50,006.

The Geraldton-Greenough urban area is home to more than 60 per cent of the residents in the Mid West Region. The next three largest urban centres are Dongara, Kalbarri and Meekatharra which together have about 10 per cent of the region's population. Other major centres include Morawa, Mullewa, Mt Magnet and Northampton.

The median age of the Mid West population was 31.9 years in 1997 compared to 33.3 years for the State as a whole.

There were 13 per cent more males than females in the region's population in 1997.

Population distribution and density is very much related to the intensity of land use. The higher rainfall areas closer to the coast tend to support more intensive agricultural land use including horticulture, mixed cropping and livestock farming. The smaller farms result in relatively high rural populations which have created a demand for larger, more closely spaced service centres. As land use becomes more extensive inland, population densities and the size and number of towns tend to fall.

The Mid West has a reasonably diverse economy although it is predominantly based on the primary sector. The largest source of income comes from mining which includes gold, mineral sands, natural gas, garnet, zinc, copper, talc and lead. There is an increasing emphasis on the downstream processing of mineral resources.

Agricultural production is dominated by wheat, lupins, wool and meat production, with horticultural and floricultural production increasing. The Mid West is the State's most significant region in terms of fishing and includes the highly valuable rock lobster fishery.

THE MID WEST 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. In the Mid West, this included both Geraldton and Meekathara. 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 Mid West is no exception. The survey suggests that 86 per cent of residents live in a town or city, eight per cent live on rural properties and six per cent in some other out of town situation (such as at a mining camp).

While many more people said they grew up on the land (rather than in a town or city) than those now living in that situation (28 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 Mid West showed the greatest stability. Twenty-three per cent of respondents - higher than any other region - said they still live in the area they grew up in, compared to 16 per cent across the regions. As well, a high proportion of those who moved had simply come from somewhere else in the Mid West.

Overall, 23 per cent of the 'movers' were from elsewhere in the Mid West, 31 per cent were from another Western Australian region, 16 per cent from overseas/interstate and 30 per cent from Perth. Compared with other regions, this represents a particularly high propensity for residents to have come from other Western Australian regions and a correspondingly low proportion from overseas/interstate.

The stability of the region was underlined by the fact that 59 per cent of Mid West respondents had not moved at all in the last 10 years. This was almost twice the proportion of some other regions.

Taken together, the findings portray the Mid West as a region which is particularly attractive to people from other Western Australian regions and sufficiently well served for people who move there to want to remain indefinitely.

Period in region	Mid West residents
under 6 years	28%
6 – 10 years	16%
11 – 20 years	25%
21 + years	31%
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 this was also the case in the Mid West, although to a lesser extent than some regions. The 43 per cent who nominated employment as their main reason for moving to the Mid West compares with the all-regions average of 47 per cent.

The next most common main reason for moving was family/marriage, followed by lifestyle. The family/marriage result (16 per cent) was well under the all-regions average (21 per cent), while the proportion nominating lifestyle (11 per cent) was a little above the average (nine per cent). There was also a greater tendency for people to move to the Mid West specifically for factors such as climate or the availability and standard of local schools.

Single main reason for moving to the Mid West	Respondents %
Employment	43
Family/marriage	16
Lifestyle	11
Education	6
Climate	5
Other	19

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 Mid West. This saw employment gain much greater prominence, mentioned by 65 per cent of respondents as at least one of their main reasons for moving to the Mid West. Lifestyle also gained considerable ground, mentioned by 62 per cent on this measure, while climate soared from five per cent to 31 per cent - more than twice the all-regions average.

(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 Mid West where 78 per cent of respondents said they felt safer than they would in Perth. While this is an overwhelming perception of safety in the Mid West, it was lower than in many regions, which ranged as high as 96 per cent.

"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 Mid West to live in Perth. While this represents a clear majority, it was a little under the all-regions average of 73 per cent.

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 five Mid West 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

People in the Mid West recorded one of the highest levels of satisfaction with their local community facilities, particularly those provided for sport.

In all, 90 per cent felt sporting facilities were good, 80 per cent felt general recreation facilities were good, and just 19 per cent were prepared to agree that modern communications were a real problem in the area.

The tendency to be more satisfied with sports rather than recreation facilities was evident in almost all regions, but both measures are an overwhelming endorsement of the facilities available in the Mid West. Each result was above the all-regions average.

The 19 per cent who felt there were real problems with modern communications included just two per cent who strongly agreed. While this suggests the issue is not a major concern, it is possible that a more specific question about services such as mobile phones, Internet and data transmissions, and SBS access 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 views on all these issues were factored together, the Mid West scored well, achieving a mean score of 3.6 out of a possible 5 (other regions ranged between 3.4 and 3.8). Mean scores are calculated by combining the responses from each of the statements/questions used to gauge views on each overall factor. A score of 3 is considered the mid point on the 5-point scale.

However, some trouble spots were evident - particularly in relation to community division.

While the vast majority of respondents agreed the Mid West was a "really friendly place to live", this was actually behind all other regions and may in part reflect issues raised in the Geraldton focus group. This alluded to a social divide between 'old families' and those who have migrated to the region. It may be recalled that the Mid West has the highest proportion who report growing up in the region and it was suggested in the focus groups that some form of social hierarchy has developed. While care must be taken not to overstate this issue, it may have influenced the overall assessment of friendliness. It may also be a factor in the comparatively high perception of division in the community. Almost half the respondents perceived a lot of division in the Mid West, which was one of the highest levels of agreement.

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	17	35
Wheatbelt	25	6	31
South West	23	6	29
Pilbara	20	4	24

Respondents were considerably more enthusiastic about the attractions of the region as a great place for children to grow up and also recorded a comparatively low measure of family stress.

Less than a third of Mid West respondents felt there were "great stresses on family life in the area" compared with around half to two-thirds in some regions. The dominance of Geraldton on the population may be a factor in this, as the long working hours and at times trying living conditions would be likely to have a greater impact on families in towns such as Meekatharra.

There was little support for suggestions that the size of the community sometimes meant people had no privacy. This is hardly surprising as Geraldton residents in particular would be unlikely to feel this 'small town' effect.

Mid West respondents	Generally agree %	Strongly agree %	Total %	All regions average %
Really friendly place to live	48	31	79	85
Lots of community division	33	16	49	36
Great stresses on family life	25	7	32	39
Lack of privacy	21	7	28	27
Great place for kids	45	45	90	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 Mid West respondents on each issue suggested a high regard for the environment with a mean score of 3.7 out of a possible 5.0. Other regions ranged between 3.3 and 4.0. However, it was noticeable that Mid West respondents were more inclined than others to accept environmental trade-offs.

A solid 87 per cent of respondents agreed that clean air was one of the best things about the Mid West and 88 per cent felt climate was a major benefit. Climate, in particular, scored well above the all-regions average.

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 also 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.

"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

The 59 per cent who at least generally agreed to this trade-off in the Mid West was well above the all-regions average of 49 per cent and higher than all other regions.

While the results suggest that the majority of residents are open to environmental trade-off, it is noted that only one in eight respondents strongly agreed. It seems likely that developments with a high environmental impact will still 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. When responses on each issue were factored together, the Mid West had the equal highest mean score (shared by the South West) of 3.7.

In total, 79 per cent of Mid West respondents agreed their cost of living was not too bad, 68 per cent felt you could earn a lot of money if you work hard, 78 per cent felt the region has a strong economic future and only 25 per cent felt cost of living would make it hard to retire in the Mid West.

The survey results varied greatly between regions, but the Mid West performed consistently well. There appears to be overwhelming confidence in the economic future of the region (78 per cent of respondents agreed it has a strong future) and at the same time, a high degree of satisfaction with the actual cost of living there.

Agreement that "the cost of living is not too bad here compared to other places"	Agree %
Peel	84
Mid West	79
South West	77
Great Southern	75
Wheatbelt	65
Gascoyne	64
Goldfields-Esperance	45
Kimberley	30
Pilbara	23

The response to retirement affordability is an important issue for all regions because it affects the ability of multiple generations to remain in an area. This in turn affects the social fabric of the whole community. A clear majority believe retirement is a realistic option in the Mid West, compared to the clear majority in some regions who think it is not.

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

On the final measure, Mid West respondents were one of the most inclined to agree that you could earn a lot of money in their area. This was an interesting result because all of the other regions which perceived this high earning potential also perceived an offsetting high cost of living. The Mid West appears to have the best of both worlds.

(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.”

A little over half the respondents in the Mid West were concerned about the security of jobs in their area. While this seems a little at odds with the overwhelming confidence expressed earlier about the economic future of the region, it was a better result than many regions.

There was widespread agreement that the area needs a wider range of jobs and also more opportunities for people with higher education. This seems to be a pervading view in most regions and quite probably is the key issue to be addressed in the future development of regional Western Australia. In particular, the apparent lack of opportunities for people with higher education was often cited as a trigger for young people leaving the regions. The level of concern in the Mid West, however, was less than that seen in many regions. This may be linked to the strong perception, evident in the focus groups, that Geraldton is developing as a sophisticated business centre for the region.

On the final measure, three-quarters of respondents agreed that new development is needed to provide more jobs in the Mid West. This was a consistent finding in most regions. However, when the result is combined with the higher propensity in the Mid West to consider environmental trade-off in exchange for jobs, the region seems particularly receptive to further development.

Mid West Respondents	Mid West agree %	All regions average %
Often concerned about job security here	53	54
Wider range of job opportunities needed	73	71
Few career opportunities for people with higher education	69	65
Area needs new development to provide more jobs	75	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 options and availability of restaurants and nightlife.

When responses on each were factored together, the Mid West had the equal highest mean score of 3.4, suggesting that on the whole, the recreational expectations of people in the region are not greatly removed from the availability.

While a little over half the Mid West respondents (55 per cent) felt the region relied on sport to keep it together socially, only 14 per cent of these 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 Mid West.

Only one in three respondents said they missed the entertainment that comes with a large city, with just seven per cent strongly agreeing. This would inevitably be influenced by the fact that Geraldton has itself developed into a large regional centre which offers significant entertainment options. Certainly, there was widespread satisfaction with the range of eating establishments available and also a particularly strong perception - above that recorded in all other regions - that the Mid West has enough nightlife.

Views of Mid West respondents	Agree %	All regions average %
This area relies on sport to keep it together socially	55	51
If you're not into sport, there's not much to do	32	36
I miss the entertainment of a large city	33	37
There is a good range of eating establishments here	77	66
Area has enough night life	74	64

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

Standard of Health Services

The majority of respondents in the Mid West agreed the standard of general medical practice was good, but many were less convinced about the availability of specialist medical services.

The 70 per cent who felt GP services were good was in sharp contrast to the 62 per cent with real concerns about the availability of specialist medical services. While this represents a substantial level of concern it was actually a little under the all-regions average. There is clearly significant disquiet in many parts of regional Western Australia about the availability of specialist 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 Mid West respondents showed a particular interest in aged health and care facilities with nine out of 10 agreeing it was important that good facilities were available in the area. People of all ages in most regional communities shared this sentiment, but the 90 per cent agreement in the Mid West was the equal highest recorded. This would in part reflect the disinclination of people approaching retirement age to leave the rural environment, but would also be influenced by the particular attractions of the Mid West as an affordable retirement location. The widespread perception that the region is 'cost-effective' in retirement would encourage older generations to remain there, and pre-retirement age groups to plan to remain, reinforcing the overall importance they place on having good aged care facilities available.

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

Perceived Isolation

People in the Mid West were among the least inclined to feel a sense of isolation or loneliness, a finding which is probably influenced by the comparative stability of the region and propensity for different generations to remain there.

While 34 per cent of respondents felt the area could be "lonely for homemakers," this included just five per cent who strongly agreed. This was well under the all-regions average (40 per cent).

Even fewer respondents (31 per cent) said they would like to live closer to their extended family - again below the all-regions average (37 per cent). All indications from the survey so far are that multiple generations tend to remain in the Mid West to a greater degree than many other regions. The picture that emerges is of a region with a greater incidence of extended family living within reasonable proximity of each other. The favourable climate, attractive lifestyle and perceived cost of living benefits - including affordable retirement - would all play a part in keeping generations together in the region. This compares with the clear dislocation of families in regions such as 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.

The vast majority of school age children in the Mid West 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 85 per cent of Mid West parents opt for local high schools, just five per cent send their high school children to Perth and four per cent have their children live away from home to attend a regional high school. Compared with other regions, this shows a particularly small proportion being sent away to Perth.

There was some evidence of parents choosing to move the whole family (rather than send their children away) to meet high school needs, but the proportion choosing this option was smaller than in most regions.

The survey found that almost three quarters of the Mid West sample were satisfied with their schooling solution, which was one of the highest levels of satisfaction recorded. This fits with a general trend for parents to be more satisfied the less distance their children have to travel to attend school. Anecdotal feedback from the focus groups was that Geraldton was seen to be well served for high school education, although not so much for higher education avenues. While TAFE offers some university courses, it was suggested that a regional university will eventually be required.

While some discontent was evident, with 22 per cent of parents dissatisfied with their schooling solution (the remainder didn't know or were ambivalent), there was clearly a greater level of satisfaction in the Mid West than in most other regions. The 72 per cent of parents satisfied in the Mid West compares with as few as 46 per cent in the Gascoyne, ranging up to 81 per cent in the Peel.

High school solutions adopted	Mid West	All regions average %
Commute to a local school	85	78
Send to Perth	5	12
Send away to regional school	4	5
Move family to area near a school	4	7
Distance education	1	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

The great majority of Mid West respondents said they either planned to stay in the region or at least had no plans to move.

In all, 52 per cent planned to stay and 17 per cent had no particular plans to move. Just 11 per cent had definite plans to move and 14 per cent said they would probably move. The remaining six per cent were not sure.

This equates to almost seven out of 10 residents at least tending to stay - which is well above the all-regions average of 61 per cent.

Of those planning to move, around half (equivalent to about 14 per cent of the population) said they would do so within five years. This was less than half the impact expected in some regions and not a particularly high turnover considering the overall propensity for movement in all regions.

(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 Mid West was evident in the high proportion who said they would not leave the region for any inducement. This included 21 per cent who would stay exactly where they were and nine per cent who would simply move to another part of the Mid West.

It appears that people living in the Mid West are in the main very satisfied with their lot. There was a general reluctance to leave the region and the feedback from the focus group in Geraldton in particular was that there was simply little reason to want to leave. They believe they have an ideal climate, a high standard of living and a good quality of life. There is, however, a recognition that without meaningful (and quite sophisticated) employment opportunities for their children and future generations, the prospect of keeping young people in the region once they finish their education is reduced. As a consequence, residents appeared quite ready to accept the prospect of new development, even if it is at some environmental cost. This should not be interpreted as a demand for unfettered development, but rather a recognition that the future of the region lies in some form of industrial downstream processing of the region's ample natural resources. It seems probable that the possibility of industrial development at Oakajee is having an effect on the expectations of the region.

Of those who could be induced to leave the Mid West, Perth was the most preferred destination, nominated by 17 per cent. The next most popular choice was the Kimberley (14 per cent).

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.

'Career move' was most often cited as a reason for moving from the Mid West, although family reunion dominated for people choosing Perth.

(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. When responses from all regions were combined, the Mid West was one of the more popular choices as a preferred destination. Only the South West, Kimberley and Great Southern were more popular across the board. People in the Gascoyne Region seemed particularly attracted to the Mid West as an ideal location.

Respondents in all regions were asked to nominate things which would attract them to a region, and on this measure career move, climate and family influences were named as the major attractions of the Mid West.

(Further information and comparative regional data page 41 to 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 to the southern regions, but three per cent nominated the Mid West as their ideal location. While this may seem small, the result is equal to or higher than that for many regions.

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 regions. Many could not name any towns in some regions, and the Mid West was a particular source of confusion with almost half the respondents unable to name even one town. Geraldton was best known, named by 21 per cent, followed by Meekatharra, known by five per cent. A large number named towns in other regions in error, most often Kalgoorlie, indicating the wide footprint cast by the term 'Mid West' in the minds of Perth residents.

This lack of knowledge impacted quite severely on responses to specific questions about the region. For example, just 31 per cent of Perth respondents agreed the Mid West has a strong economic future - the lowest rating of all regions. But 39 per cent said they didn't know - one of the highest levels of uncertainty. A further 17 per cent said they didn't think it was weak or strong, leaving just 13 per cent who thought the region had a weak economic outlook.

The region had a similarly shaky response on the attractions of its natural environment. While less than half the Perth respondents rated this feature as good, 28 per cent said they didn't know - again one of the highest levels of uncertainty. Results were similarly depressed on issues ranging from quality of life to quality of essential services.

The general lack of awareness will have also influenced the poor result when Perth respondents were asked if they would like to live in the Mid West. Just 13 per cent said they would, against 63 per cent who would not. The remainder didn't know or were ambivalent.

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

It appears there is little understanding in Perth of the attractions and potential of the Mid West Region.

While less than half the Perth respondents (45 per cent) said they had visited the Mid West, this finding would again be tempered by the general confusion about regional boundaries. It is possible that others will have been to the region without realising it.

(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

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