

# **LIVING IN THE REGIONS**

## **THE VIEWS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIANS**

# **The South West Report**

*A Study Undertaken for*

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND TRADE**

•

**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 SOUTH 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 'S Morgan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

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.

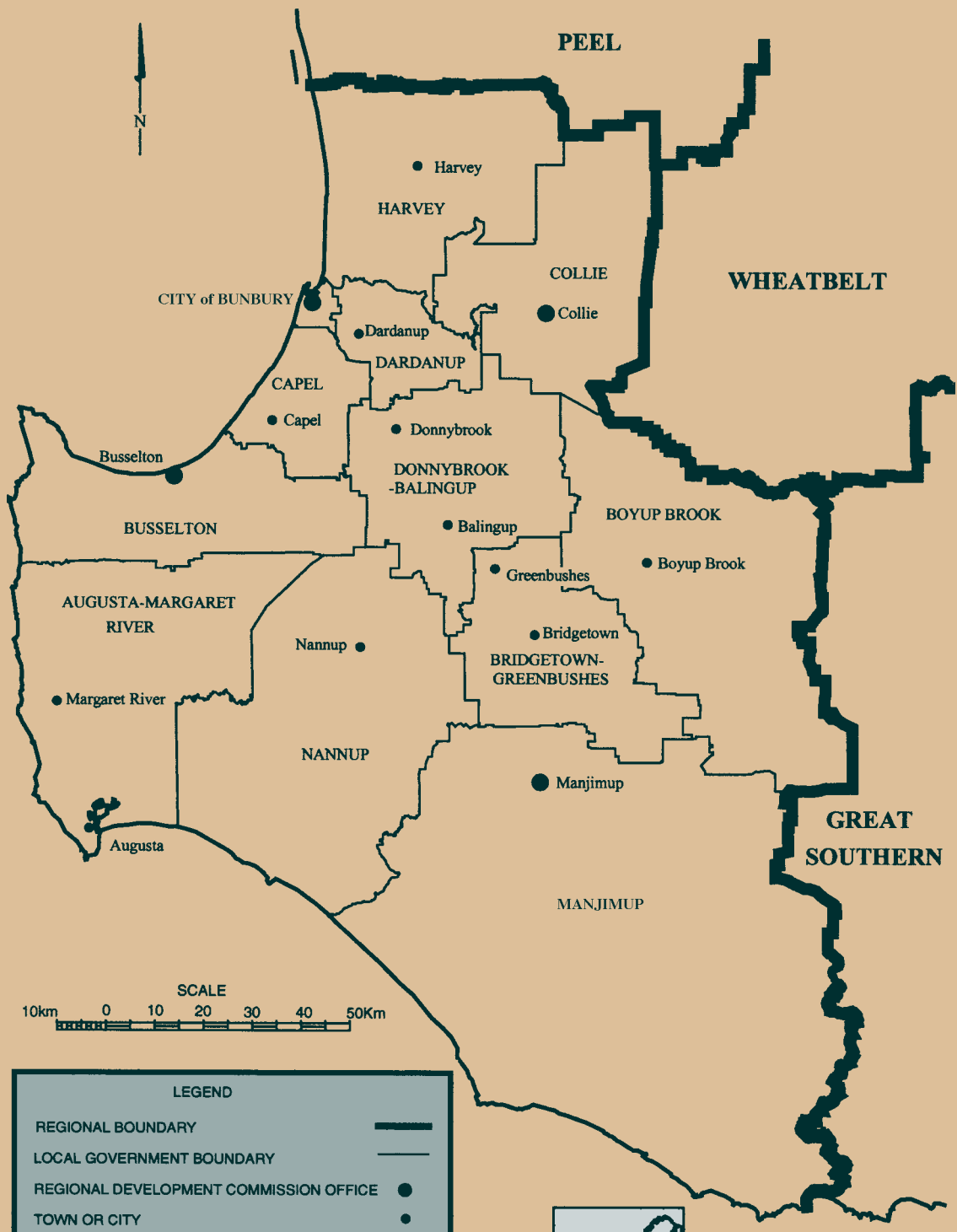
This included 150 telephone interviews in Perth using a Perth-specific questionnaire and 1350 throughout regional Western Australia (150 in each of the nine regions) using a regions-specific questionnaire.

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.

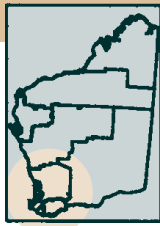
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# SOUTH WEST REGION



**LEGEND**

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



## PROFILE

The South West Region, in the south-west corner of Western Australia, is the State's most populous and economically diverse regional area. About one-quarter of Western Australians who live outside Perth - more than 115,000 - reside in the South West and the population continues to grow.

The region consists of 12 municipalities including the City of Bunbury and the shires of Augusta-Margaret River, Boyup Brook, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Busselton, Capel, Collie, Dardanup, Donnybrook-Balingup, Harvey, Manjimup and Nannup, and covers approximately 24,000 square kilometres. More than one-third of the region's population is concentrated in an area known as Greater Bunbury, encompassing the city itself and the dormitory centres of Australind, Eaton and Gelorup in the adjacent shires of Harvey, Dardanup and Capel respectively.

The region has a reliable rainfall, good farmland, extensive hardwood and softwood forests and valuable mineral deposits, including mineral sands and coal. The latter supplies much of the State's power needs through coal-fired power stations at Collie and Bunbury. Alumina, processed from bauxite, is the major export through the Port of Bunbury.

With a Mediterranean climate and a wealth of attractions, including national parks, forests, beaches and wineries, the South West also draws more visitors than any other regional area, some 1.5 million annually.

The South West's annual gross regional product is estimated at more than \$3 billion, with key contributors being mineral extraction, processing and manufacturing; retailing; agriculture; timber and forest products; tourism; construction; other manufacturing; and the service industries.

# THE SOUTH 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 South West, this included discussion groups in both Bunbury and Bridgetown. Information resulting from these groups is occasionally referred to in this report.*

*While the telephone survey involved 150 people in each of the nine regions and 150 in Perth, the results need to be viewed with care as 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 South West is no exception. The survey suggests that 79 per cent of residents live in a South West town or city, 11 per cent live on farm properties and 10 per cent in some other out of town situation.

While slightly more people said they grew up on a rural property than those now living on one (24 per cent compared with 21 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 people in the South West tend to move within their region rather than leaving altogether. While only 17 per cent still live in the area in which they grew up, 31 per cent of all 'movers' said they had come from somewhere else in the South West. This was considerably higher than the 19 per cent average across the State. Of the remainder, 29 per cent came from Perth, 24 per cent from overseas/interstate and 16 per cent from another Western Australian region.

Almost half the respondents said they had not moved at all in the last ten years, a comparatively high level of stability (note also that a proportion of those who said they had moved had come from somewhere else in the South West).

Taken together, the findings suggest that once people move to the South West they are loathe to leave, and if they do move, it is often simply to other places within the region.

Period in region	South West residents
Under 6 years	28%
6 – 10 years	20%
11 – 20 years	21%
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, but it was noticeably less a factor in the South West than elsewhere, nominated by just 34 per cent of people. This compares with the all-regions average of 47 per cent.

The disparity is due to the very high proportion who move to the South West for family or marriage reasons. Twenty-eight per cent said family/marriage was their single main reason for moving to the South West, while 38 per cent said it was at least a major consideration. No other region had such a high incidence.

While 'lifestyle' was nominated as their principal reason for moving to the South West by just 14 per cent of respondents, a further 24 per cent mentioned other issues such as environment, education, cheap housing and climate. If these are regarded as approximations of 'lifestyle', the total mentioning this factor is clearly much higher.

Single main reason for moving to the South West	Respondents %
Employment	34
Family/marriage	28
Lifestyle	14
Other	24

Because there is often more than one reason behind a person's decision to move, the survey also asked people to nominate all of their main reasons for moving to the South West to give a more comprehensive picture of why people move. This saw employment gain greater prominence, mentioned by 44 per cent of South West respondents as one of their main reasons for moving, although this was still well under the all-regions average of 58 per cent.

The family/marriage response also rose to 38 per cent - which was well above the all-regions average of 29 per cent. The greatest rise, however, was in the number of people mentioning lifestyle as one of their main reasons for moving to the South West. This jumped from the 14 per cent who named lifestyle as their principal reason for moving, to 75 per cent who mentioned it as at least one of their main reasons. The all-regions average on this measure was 67 per cent. The proportion of South West respondents mentioning environment, education and cheap housing as contributing factors was also higher than 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 view of most people in the South West. Ninety-two per cent said they felt safer where they were than they would in Perth, including 50 per cent who 'strongly' agreed.

"Feel safer here than in a place like Perth"	Agree %
Great Southern	96
Kimberley	92
<b>South West</b>	<b>92</b>
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 applies with equal vigour in the South West. Three out of four respondents agreed that they would be sad to leave the South West 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 only one in five South West respondents, if given the choice of living anywhere they wanted, would choose a destination outside regional Western Australia and a huge proportion would use their lucky break to either stay exactly where they are or simply move to somewhere else in the South West.

Agreement that "I would be sad to leave this place to live in Perth"	Agree %
Peel	82
Great Southern	80
Kimberley	79
Wheatbelt	76
<b>South West</b>	<b>76</b>
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 South West had one of the highest levels of satisfaction with community facilities, measured in terms of sport and recreation facilities and the availability of modern communications.

In total, 88 per cent felt sporting facilities were good, 76 per cent felt general recreation facilities were good, and only 15 per cent were prepared to agree that modern communications were a problem in the area.

The 88 per cent satisfaction with sports facilities was most marked, easily exceeding the all-regions average of 83 per cent and considerably higher than results in many regions.

While 76 per cent of South West respondents felt recreation facilities were good, this was clearly a lower level of satisfaction than for sporting facilities. The tendency to be more satisfied with sports rather than recreation facilities was, however, evident in almost all regions. The South West result was only marginally under the all-regions average of 77 per cent satisfaction.

The findings suggest a resident perception that the South West is very well served for sporting facilities but not quite so well served for recreation facilities. Both results, however, were a strong endorsement of the facilities presently available.

The South West was the least inclined of all regions to perceive problems with the modern communications available in the area. The 15 per cent of South West respondents who felt there was a problem was less than half the level of concern evident in the Gascoyne, where 33 per cent of respondents were dissatisfied. It is possible, however, that a more specific question - for example, on the availability of mobile telephony - might have evoked more concern in the South West.

*(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 responses on each issue were combined to create an overall mean score for community spirit, the South West was one of the top scorers, achieving 3.7 out of a possible five. Other regions ranged between 3.4 and 3.8.

Eighty per cent of respondents agreed the South West was a really friendly place to live and an impressive 96 per cent agreed it was a great place for children to grow up. This latter result was well above the all-regions average of 89 per cent.

While the 80 per cent rating the South West as a really friendly place includes the vast majority of respondents, it was nonetheless below the all-regions average (85 per cent) and lower than most other regions. Fewer than one in four respondents were inclined to 'strongly' agree their area was really friendly.

The South West scored particularly well, however, when respondents were asked about the survey negatives of community division, stress on families and lack of privacy. Very few people reported any 'strong' concern and the South West results were consistently better than most other regions. This was particularly apparent in relation to stress on family life. The 27 per cent of South West respondents who perceived great stresses on family life was the lowest result recorded and compares with levels as high as 62 per cent in the Pilbara. While it is disturbing that any significant proportion of the population perceives this stress factor, it should be recognised that the issue has currency worldwide and not just in the regions of Western Australia.

Compared with other regions, there was little support for suggestions that the size of the community sometimes meant people had no privacy or that there was a lot of division in the community.

South West Region	Generally agree %	Strongly agree %	Total %	All regions average %
A really friendly place to live	57	23	80	85
Lots of community division	23	6	29	36
Great stresses on family life	24	3	27	39
Lack of privacy	19	6	25	27
Great place for kids	45	51	96	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 South West respondents on each issue suggest a high level of regard for the environment with a mean score of 3.7 out of a possible five. Other regions ranged from 3.3 in the Goldfields-Esperance to 4.0 in the Gascoyne.

Ninety per cent of South West respondents agreed that clean air was one of the best things about the area and 83 per cent felt the climate was a major benefit. Both results were above the all-regions average and showed a very positive regard for these features in the South West.

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.

While just over half the respondents said they would accept some environmental cost in exchange for more job opportunities in the South West - higher than for most regions - only five per cent 'strongly' agreed. This was the lowest proportion of all regions and indicates considerable caution on the whole issue.

"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
<b>South West</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>52</b>
Gascoyne	42	8	50
Pilbara	43	6	49
Wheatbelt	36	12	48
Goldfields-Esperance	38	7	45
Peel	35	7	42
Kimberley	32	9	41

While one in every two people appear open to the possibility of environmental trade-off, the low level of strong agreement suggests that developments with any significant impact on the environment would need a very convincing argument to win support.

To a large extent, people who move around or to the South West do so on the strength of the attractions of the natural environment and lifestyle considerations. It should also be noted that while half the respondents said they would accept some environmental cost for jobs, half did not.

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

## Perceived Economic Benefits

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

In total, 77 per cent of South West respondents agreed the cost of living in their area was not too bad, 65 per cent felt you could earn a lot of money if you work hard, 82 per cent believe the region has a strong economic future and just 14 per cent felt the cost of living would make it hard to retire in the South West.

It was noticeable that people in the South West were least inclined of all regions to see cost barriers to retirement. This is an important issue because it affects the ability of multiple generations to remain in an area, which in turn affects the social fabric of the whole community. The results are a powerful indication of the ability of multiple generations to establish and remain in the South West.

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
<b>South West</b>	<b>14</b>

Attitudes to cost of living also varied sharply between regions but the survey suggests that over three-quarters of people in the South West believe they have an acceptable cost of living. The South West also had a solid portion of the population (around two-thirds) who felt good money was available for hard work.

The 82 per cent who felt the area has a strong economic future was well above the all-regions average of 73 per cent and considerably higher than the other southern regions (Peel 55 per cent and Great Southern 65 per cent).

*(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 South West were concerned about the security of jobs in their area but only one in 10 expressed strong concern, suggesting people are generally quite confident about the economic security of the region.

While the majority also agreed there was a need for a wider range of job opportunities, this was again softened by the relatively low level of strong agreement. For example, in the neighbouring Great Southern, where 77 per cent of respondents believe wider job opportunities are needed (compared with 71 per cent in the South West), the contrast is heightened significantly when you note the level of strong agreement. This was 40 per cent in the Great Southern compared to just 17 per cent in the South West. The findings suggest South West residents already perceive a fairly diverse range of job opportunities in their region.

People in the South West were among the least inclined to 'strongly' agree that there weren't many career opportunities for people with higher education, and this probably reflects the region's high level of economic diversity. Nevertheless, six out of 10 did report at least general agreement, reflecting the widespread desire across all regions for more career options.

While 71 per cent of South West respondents agreed there was a need for new development to provide more jobs, very few of them 'strongly' agreed, suggesting the region does not see an urgent need for new development. The 15 per cent 'strong' agreement in the South West was the lowest of all regions and compares with a high of 43 per cent in the Great Southern.

South West respondents	Generally agree %	Strongly agree %	Total %	All regions average %
Often concerned about job security here	45	10	55	54
Wider range of job opportunities needed	54	17	71	71
Few career opportunities for people with higher education	43	17	60	65
Area needs new development to provide more jobs	56	15	71	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 the availability of restaurants and nightlife.

When responses on each were factored together, the South West achieved a mean score of 3.3 out of a possible five, a quite positive result suggesting that on the whole, the recreational expectations of people in the South West are not greatly removed from the availability. Other regions ranged between 2.8 and 3.4.

While around half the South West 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 South West.

Only one in three said they missed the entertainment that comes with a large city, with just 10 per cent strongly agreeing. This was broadly in line with results in the Peel, Mid West, Kimberley and Great Southern and would be influenced by the finding noted earlier that only one in four people in the South West grew up in Perth or a major interstate or overseas city.

Four out of five people felt there was a good range of eating establishments in the South West - higher than almost all other regions and considerably higher than the all-regions average - and around two-thirds said the area has enough nightlife.

Views of South West respondents	Agree %	All regions average %
This area relies on sport to keep it together socially	51	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	80	66
Area has enough nightlife	63	64

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

## Standard of Health Services

The South West, together with the Peel, had the highest rating of all regions for overall health services. However, some concerns were evident. Two statements were used to determine attitudes to health care standards:

- *"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)*

More than three-quarters of South West respondents agreed the standard of general medical practice was good, but respondents were less convinced about the availability of specialist medical services.

The 77 per cent who felt GP services were good was one of the best results recorded and well above the all-regions average of 69 per cent. However, a sharp contrast was apparent with the level of concern about the availability of specialist medical services.

More than half the South West respondents (56 per cent) had real concerns about the availability of specialist medical services, including 22 per cent who 'strongly' agreed. While not negating the strength of this result, it was notable nonetheless that the level of concern in the South West was well below that expressed in almost all other regions.

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
<b>South West</b>	<b>56</b>
Peel	51

The majority of people of all ages in the South West said it was important to them that the area had good aged health and care facilities, a consistent finding in most regions. While not asking people to judge the standard of existing facilities, the survey sought to determine the importance people placed on them. Certainly, in some regions, it appears that a lack of adequate facilities for the aged will contribute to families leaving an area. The strong views expressed by people of all ages in all regions, combined with the rapid ageing of society generally, reinforces the need to ensure these facilities are given an appropriate priority in future planning strategies.

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

## Perceived Isolation

People in the South West were least inclined of all regions to feel a sense of isolation. This was measured by asking respondents if they felt their area could be lonely for homemakers and if they would like to live closer to their extended family.

When responses to both issues were combined to calculate a mean score for overall feelings of isolation, the South West had the best result - 2.7 out of a possible five. Other regions ranged as high as 3.4.

While just over a third of South West respondents (34 per cent) generally agreed their area could be lonely for homemakers, this was one of the 'happiest' results recorded. Only four per cent 'strongly' agreed it could be lonely.

There was also little indication that residents felt dislocated from relatives. While 28 per cent generally agreed they would like to live closer to extended family, this was the lowest proportion of all regions and included just five per cent who strongly agreed. The results would be greatly influenced by the number of people already living in close proximity to relatives, and it was noted earlier that the South West had the highest proportion of people who moved to the area for family/marriage reasons. Analysis of mobility data also suggests a significant body of people in the South West have settled and remained in the region over several generations, thus maintaining family proximity.

*(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 South West attend local schools they can commute to from home.

The survey asked 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 88 per cent of South West parents opt for local high schools, six per cent send their high school children to Perth and another four per cent have their children live away from home to attend a regional high school.

There was some suggestion that parents had physically moved in search of better education opportunities for their children, but this appears to relate to movement around the South West (for example to Bunbury) rather than to places outside the region, such as Perth. In fact, in the South West discussion groups, reference was made to the high standard of schooling available in Bunbury. Access to the Edith Cowan University Bunbury campus was also applauded.

Certainly, parents in the South West were among the most satisfied of all regions with the schooling solution they had adopted - 79 per cent said they were satisfied compared with 13 per cent dissatisfied. The remainder were ambivalent or did not know. The results compare with satisfaction levels as low as 46 per cent in the Gascoyne to a high of 82 per cent in the Wheatbelt.

High school solutions adopted	South West %	All regions average %
Commute to a local school	88	78
Move family to area served by school	2	7
Send away to regional school	4	5
Send to Perth	6	12

*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. 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 vast majority of South West respondents said they either planned to stay in the region or at least had no plans to move.

In all, 62 per cent planned to stay and 10 per cent had no particular plans to move. Just 10 per cent had definite plans to move and 13 per cent said they would probably move. The remaining five per cent were not sure.

This equates to almost three-quarters of residents at least tending to stay - one of the highest results recorded. Other regions ranged from just 30 per cent tending to stay in the Pilbara to 77 per cent in the Peel Region.

Of those planning to move, six out of 10 (equivalent to about 14 per cent of the population) said they would do so within five years. This is not a particularly high rate of turnover considering the overall propensity for movement throughout the regions.

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

## Where People Would Go

The attractions of the South West appear well known to people in other regions.

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.

Around one in five regional people still said they would not move from their present location for any inducement. But the preferences of the remainder paint an interesting picture.

Perth was easily the most popular outside destination for regional people (nominated by 19 per cent as a preferred location) but the South West also attracted a solid vote from across the State (nominated by 14 per cent as a preferred location). After discounting those wanting to stay where they are or go to Perth, the South West was the most popular choice for people in almost all regions.

Support was strongest in the Peel, where 18 per cent said the South West was their preferred location, followed by 14 per cent in the Wheatbelt and 13 per cent in both the Gascoyne and Great Southern.

Its attractions were also well appreciated by current residents. Almost half said they would either stay exactly where they were or simply move to another part of the South West. No other region had such a solid proportion of residents wanting to stay within their present region.

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 DOLA 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.*

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

## Why People Move

Having determined where people would go, the obvious question is why and the main reasons given for selecting the South West were attractive environment, lifestyle, career move and climate. Other factors include the ocean, social and cultural opportunities, retirement and family influences.

While environment and lifestyle were the key attractions, cited by around a quarter of respondents, it was notable that 22 per cent also said career would be part of their decision to move, indicating a perception of the South West as a place of economic opportunity.

Residents who said they would leave the South West most commonly cited career move or family reunion as reasons for choosing Perth, and the environment for choosing other regions.

To determine which factors are particularly important in any decision to leave the regions or to stay, respondents were read a list of eight issues and asked to rate their importance.

Across the regions, this showed clean environment, career opportunity and simpler lifestyle as the most important issues for regional people generally. These priorities were also reflected in the South West, but it was noticeable that the proportion rating clean environment as particularly important was higher in the South West than in many regions. Seventy-three per cent of South West respondents said clean environment was either quite or very important in their decision to leave or stay in a region. This compares with the all-regions average of 67 per cent.

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

## The View from Perth

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

A striking feature was the relative popularity of the South West with Perth residents. While 57 per cent said they would not want to leave Perth, this left a massive 43 per cent who were open to the possibility of moving, and more than one in three of these said they would choose the South West as their ideal location if given the choice. This was substantially higher than for any other region.

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

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

When Perth respondents were 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. With the South West overwhelmingly the most popular choice of alternative location, it would appear that these features are widely associated with the region by many Perth residents.

While a significant proportion of Perth people appear to have only a limited knowledge of the regions, there was a strong element of familiarity with the South West. While more than half could not name any towns in some regions, 89 per cent were familiar with at least one place in the South West. The coastal centres of Bunbury, Busselton and Margaret River were best known, although there was some knowledge of quite a wide range of other towns. Just as prominent, however, was the mistaken belief that Albany was part of the South West rather than the Great Southern.

The South West was widely perceived by Perth people to have a strong economic future. Only eight per cent thought it had a weak outlook against 63 per cent nominating a strong future.

### 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 Table shows that the 17 per cent 'don't know' vote was also considerably lower than for most other regions (i.e. 45 per cent for the Gascoyne). While this would be influenced by the general confusion over which towns make up which regions, it also reflects the greater familiarity people have with the South West. Eighty-eight per cent of Perth respondents said they had been to the South West either on holiday or business or both, which was substantially higher than for other regions.

Quality of life in the South West also ranked highly with 75 per cent of Perth respondents rating it as good. The next strongest performer was the Peel, on 64 per cent, a much smaller percentage.

Overall, the South West performed extremely well on all measures. Over half the Perth respondents thought the quality of South West essential services was good, 63 per cent felt the quality of social life was good and an impressive 87 per cent rated the attractions of its natural environment as good. In all cases, the South West results were the highest or second highest recorded and were double and sometimes triple the rating given to some regions. When you discount the people giving 'don't know' responses on each measure, it is clear there is very little negativity in people's perceptions of the South West. That was not necessarily the case in their perception of other regions.

When asked directly if the South West was a place they would like to live, 66 per cent of Perth respondents said it was. This was not only the highest level of agreement but was five and even six times as high as some regions.

### A Place I Would Like to Live:

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

With such a positive image, it is little wonder that the South West continues to enjoy significant population growth.

*(Further information and comparative regional data page 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