

NORTHERN TERRITORY

my Territory Connections



Summary results for the LGA of Darwin

May 2023



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About

This publication presents results from a large survey of Northern Territory residents conducted between November 2021 and June 2022.

The *my Territory Connections* survey was open to all Territory residents aged 18 years and older, and over 3,000 people participated.

The aim of the survey was to understand how Territorians are connected through their social networks, community participation and attachment to the place they live. Results will be used to help governments, service providers, community organisations and businesses make decisions about what is making life in the Territory better for residents and identifying who might be missing out.

Participation in the survey was voluntary and not all respondents answered every question. Percentages used in this report are based on the number of responses to specific questions. Because the sample was not random, conclusion can only be made about the population who responded, however the large sample size provides confidence around the main results. Readers should be cautious about their interpretation of small differences between subgroups of respondents.

While the survey was available in English only and designed for individual respondents to complete online, some respondents were assisted to complete the survey and paper copies of the questionnaire were also made available.

The data collection process was conducted during a period of travel restrictions and planned visits to remote communities to encourage survey participation using local facilitators was not possible.

The research team promoted the survey through local media and at various locations across the Territory. They also used networks through the university, NT and local governments, and community organisations.

Promotion of the survey was also assisted by the cooperation of local elected representatives.

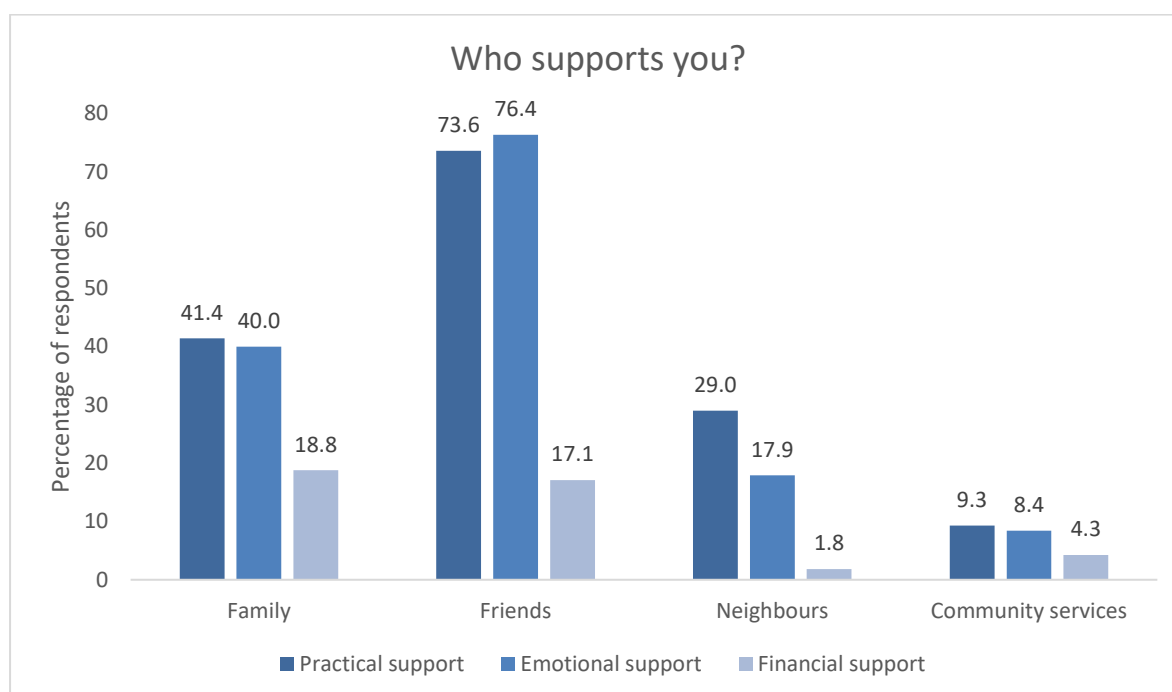
Thank you to all Territory residents who took the time to provide information on their experiences and opinions as part of this research.

Further information about the *my Territory Connections* survey can be found on the project website: myterritoryconnections.cdu.edu.au.

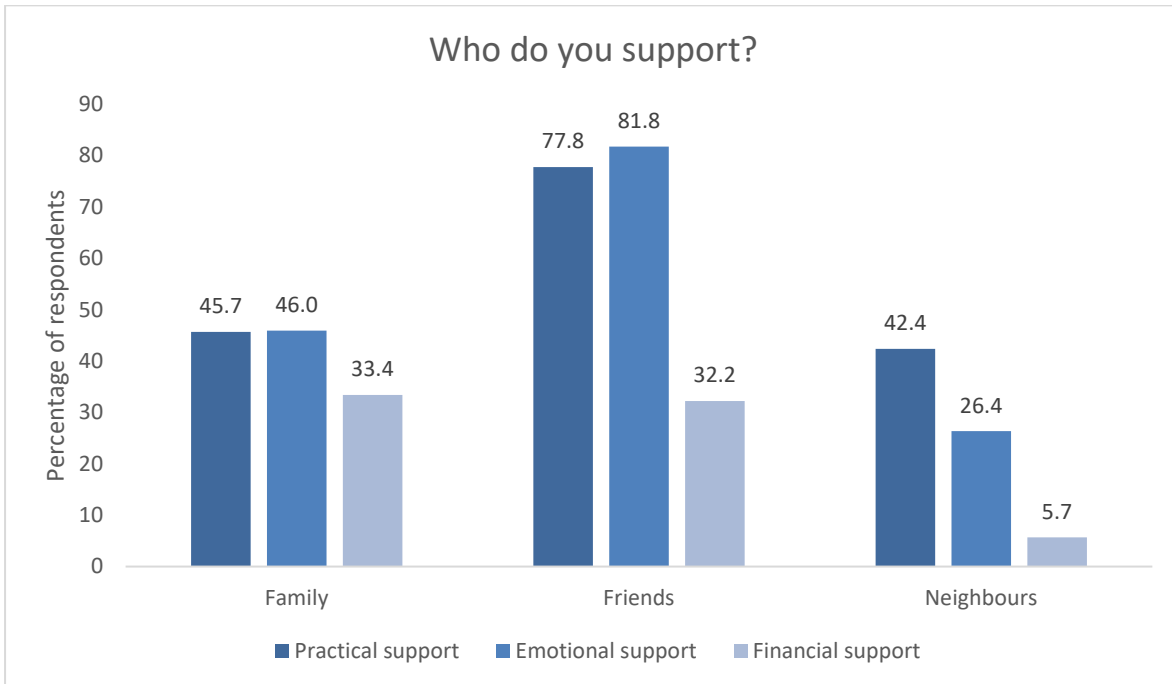
The *My Territory Connections* survey asked questions about people’s wellbeing and their connections to other people, to the place where they live, and to the Territory as a whole. This report on the responses from people living in the *Local Government Area (LGA) of Darwin* unpacks this sense of connection by looking at people’s social networks, how they get on with others, the functioning of their neighbourhood, how they engage and participate in community activities and their connection with a Territory identity. It concludes by looking at how respondents from Darwin LGA (referred to hereafter as Darwin) felt they were doing, overall.

Building social networks

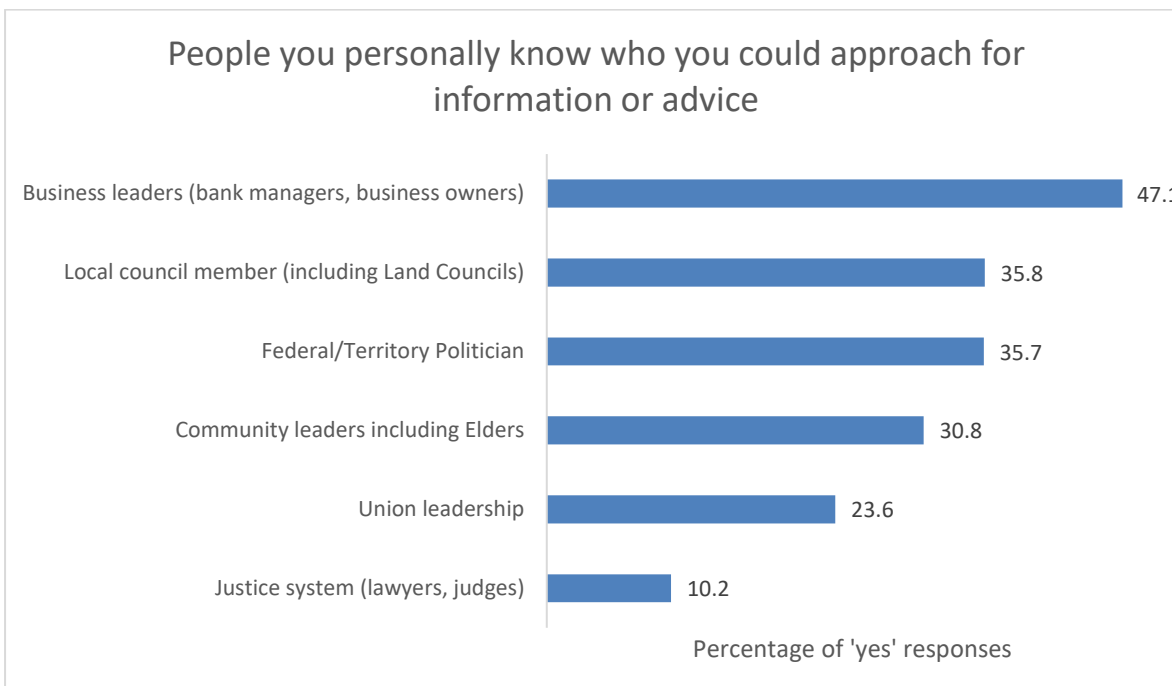
Consisting of family, friends, and neighbours, local social structures link people to support networks and help build resilient communities. Respondents from Darwin appeared to have strong support systems in place that connected them to family members (who lived in the Territory but outside their household) and Territory friends and neighbours. Friends were a particularly important source of practical and emotional support, much more so than the family members who didn’t live in their household. Indeed, almost the same proportion of respondents said that they received financial support from their friends as they were from family. Fewer respondents relied on their neighbours for support, while for a small proportion, community services were a significant part of their support network.



Darwin respondents reciprocated this care by also providing support to friends, family, and neighbours who lived in the Territory. Again, friends figured highly, and similar proportions of respondents were likely to provide financial support to their Territory friends as they were to their family living in the Territory but outside their household.



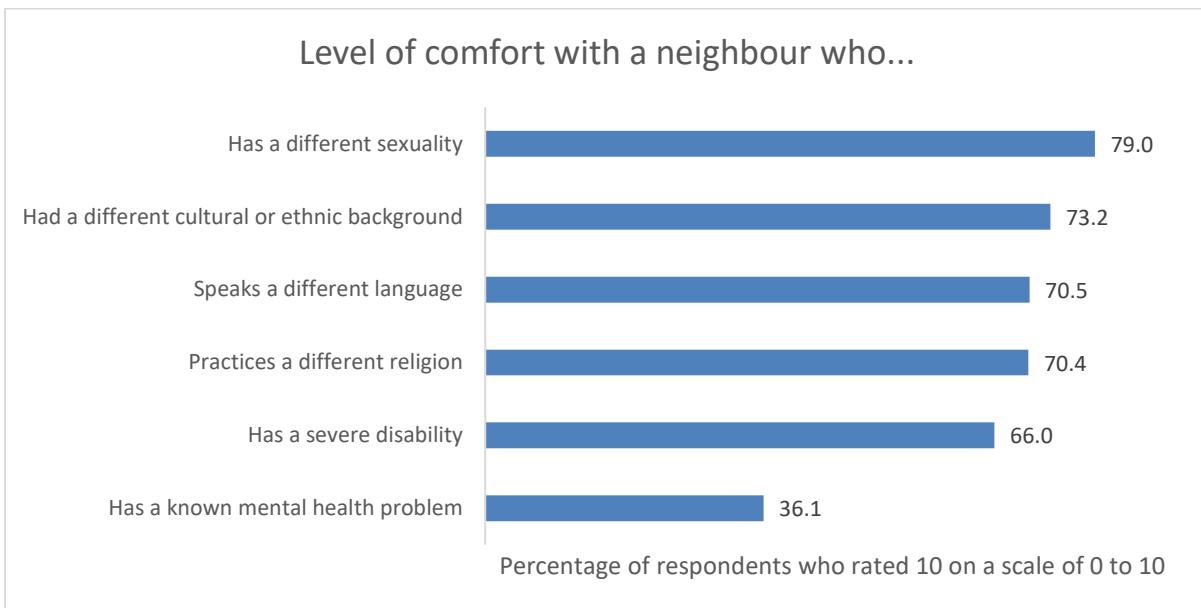
Networks which connect Territory residents with people in positions of authority and influence can often assist in getting something done. The survey asked whether respondents personally knew somebody in specific organisations or institutions who they would feel comfortable to approach for information or advice. Less than third of Darwin respondents were not connected to any networks of influence (29%). Of those who were, business leaders (such as bank managers or business owners) were a particularly important source of information and advice with 47 percent nominating them. This compared with about a third of Darwin respondents personally knowing a local council member or Federal/Territory politicians (both 36%) whom they would feel comfortable approaching.



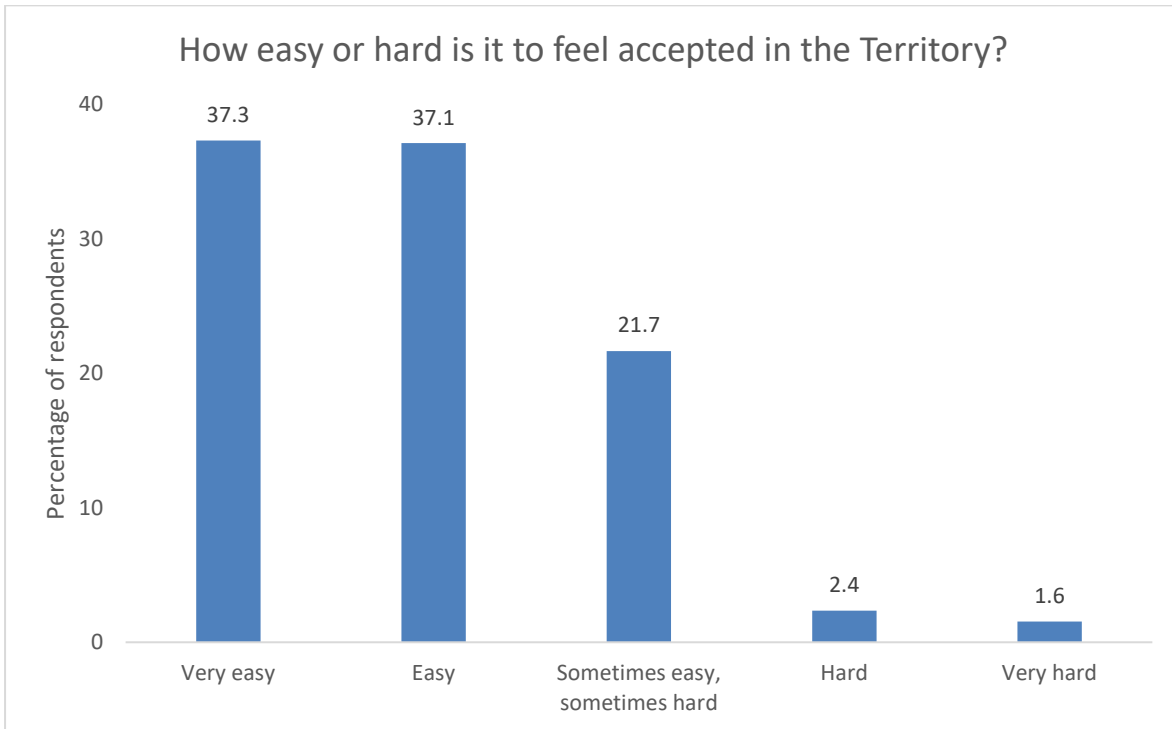
Getting on with others

Community cohesion is created through embracing population differences, sharing common values, and building trusting relationships. Therefore, getting on with others is important for enabling communities to flourish.

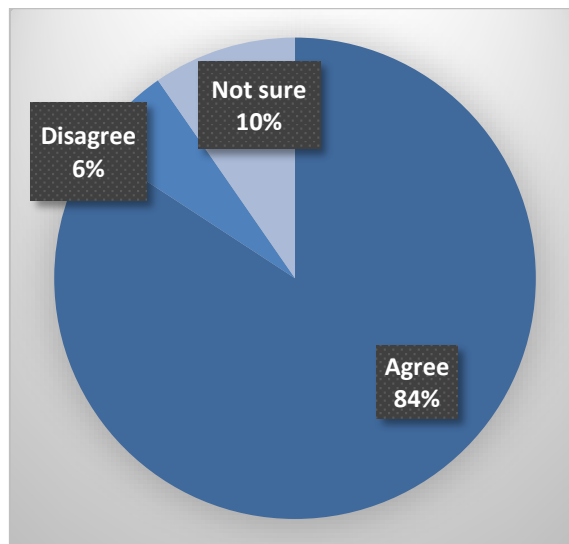
To assess people’s acceptance of diversity in their community, survey respondents were asked how comfortable they would feel (on a scale of 0 to 10) in circumstances where a neighbour had certain population diversity characteristics. Nearly eight in 10 Darwin respondents were completely comfortable with their neighbour having a different sexuality (79%), while around seven in 10 were completely comfortable with a neighbour who was from a different cultural or ethnic background (73%), who spoke a different language (71%) or who practiced a different religion (70%). Slightly fewer were completely comfortable with a neighbour having a severe disability (66%). However, substantially fewer were completely comfortable having a neighbour with a known mental health problem (36%).



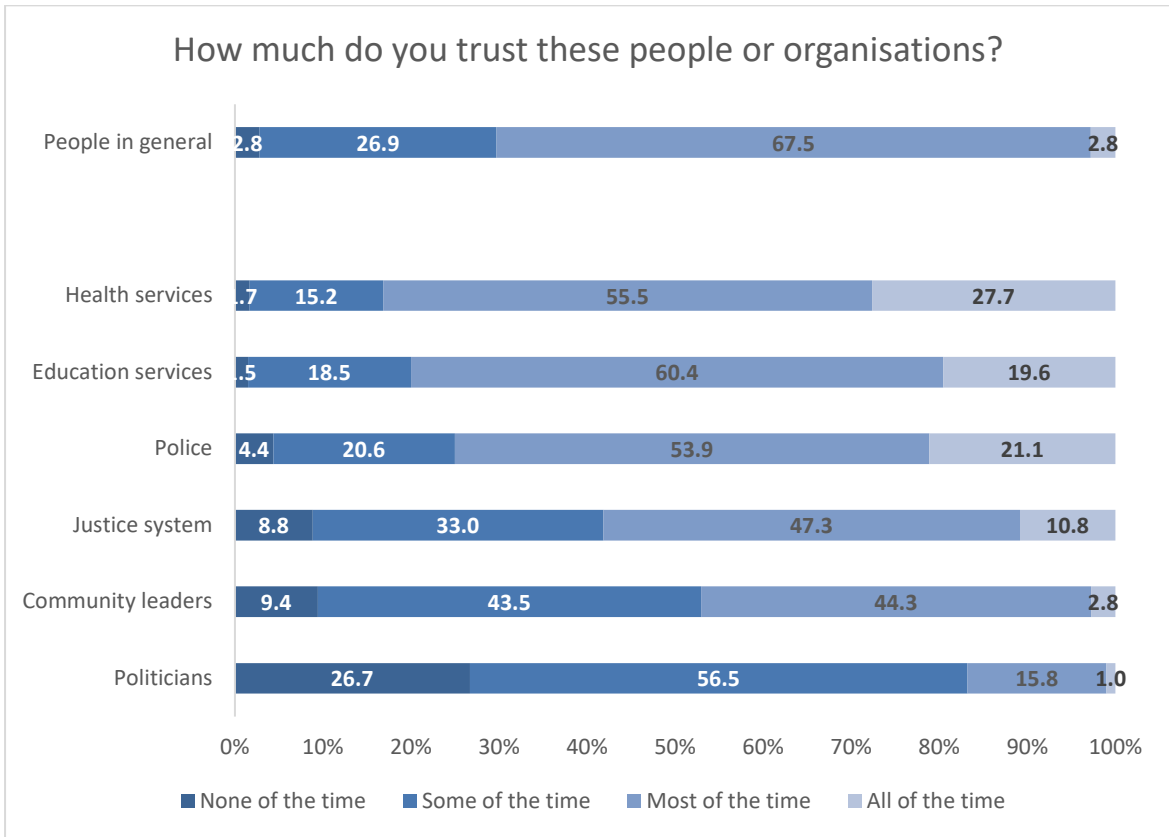
Feeling welcome in a community influences people’s sense of being accepted for who they are. This issue was investigated by asking survey respondents how easy or hard it was for them to feel accepted in the Territory. Three-quarters of Darwin respondents felt it was easy or very easy (74%), while a small number found it hard or very hard (4%). The reasons they nominated for not feeling accepted were most likely to include their interests, their age, their skin colour, or the language they spoke.



Slightly more than 30 percent of the Territory’s population identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. We asked questions to gauge support for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. A high proportion of Darwin respondents agreed reconciliation actions were important to them (84%), however 6% disagreed and another 10% were unsure.



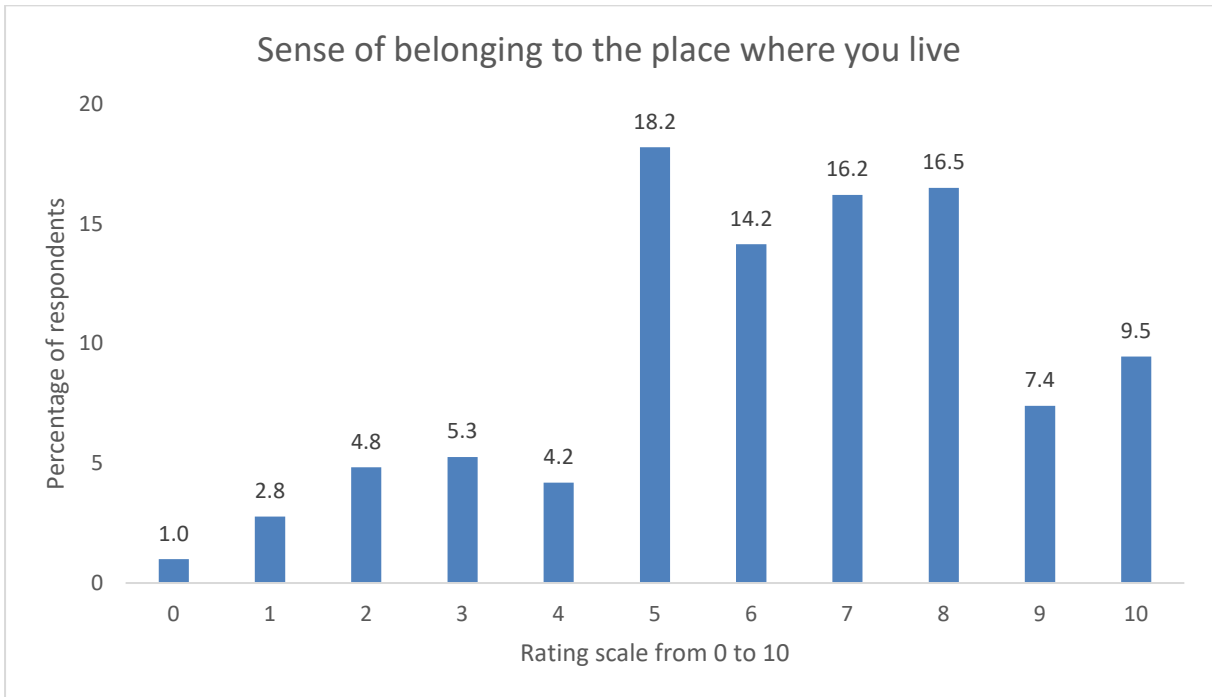
On the whole, survey respondents in Darwin were trusting of other people with 70 percent responding that they trusted others most or all of the time. While a majority of Darwin respondents trusted health services (doctors / nurses, hospitals, health clinics), the police and education services (early childhood, schools, university), and the justice system (justice system (lawyers, courts) most or all of the time, a smaller proportion of respondents trusted community leaders to the same extent (47%). Politicians were the least trusted occupation or role with 17 percent trusting them most or all of the time, and the remaining trusting them some or none of the time.



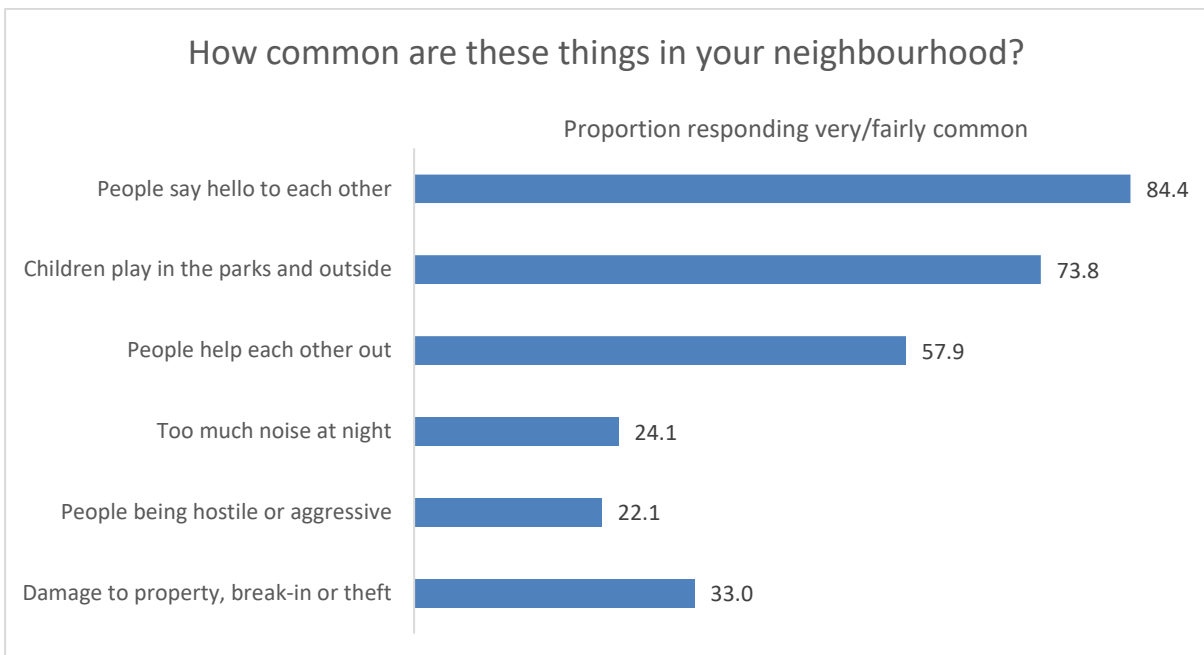
Living in Darwin

When introducing questions about neighbours and neighbourhoods, the survey allowed a broad definition to cover the range of different living circumstances across the Territory. Your neighbourhood could be ‘the building you live in, your street, suburb or your entire town or rural community’.

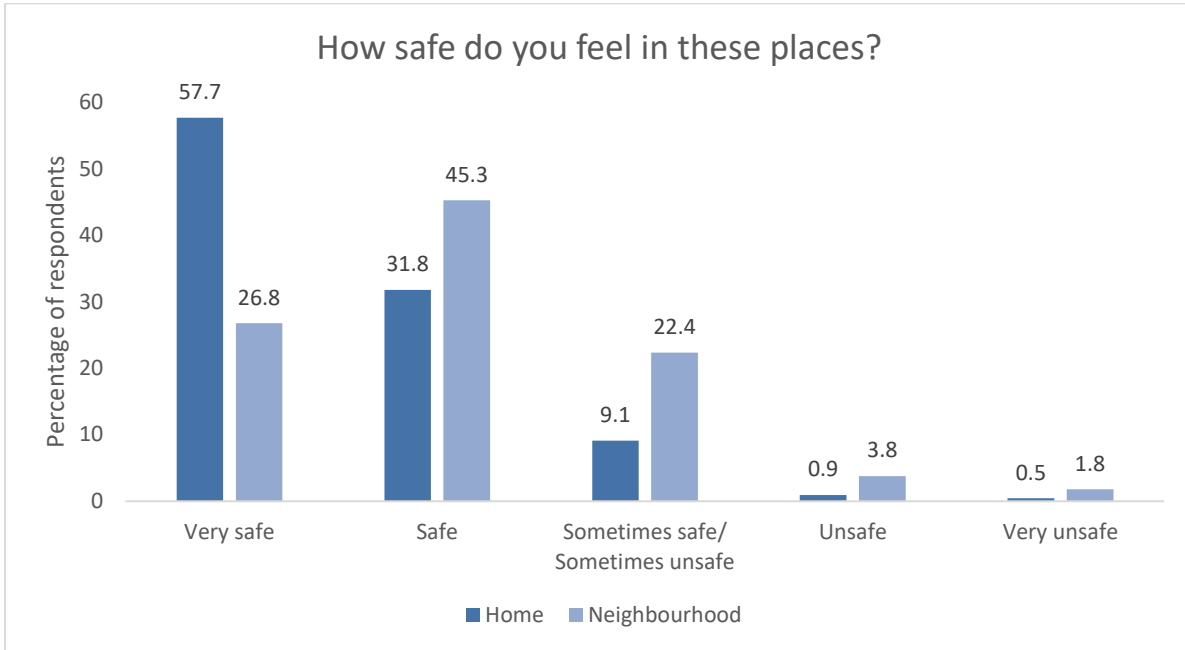
Survey respondents were asked to rate their sense of belonging to the place where they lived on a scale from 0 (no sense of belonging) to 10 (very strong sense). The most common response was a score of 5 (rated by 18%), however more than 60 percent of Darwin respondents rated their sense of belonging at 6 or more out of 10 (64%).



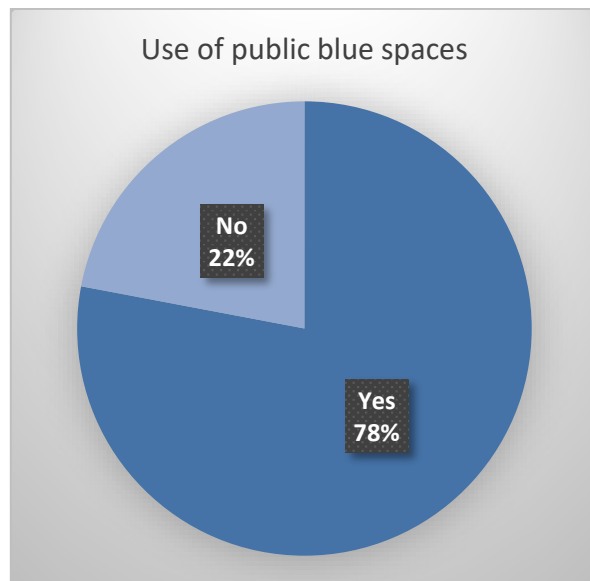
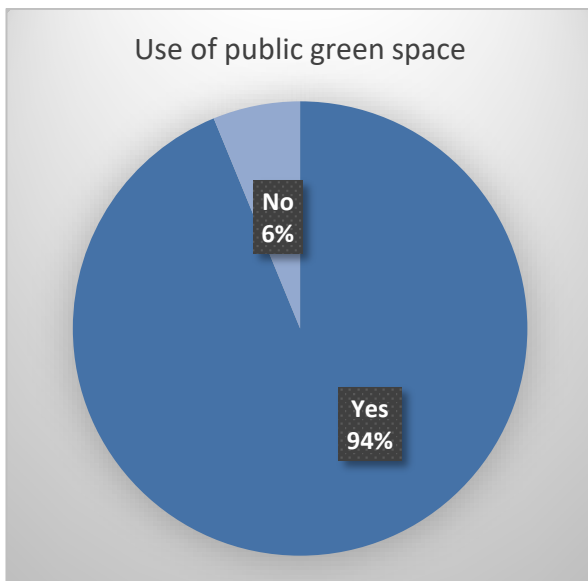
More than eight in 10 Darwin respondents found their neighbourhoods friendly (84%) and six in 10 found their neighbours helpful (60%), however their neighbourhoods were not without issues. A third of respondents said property crime was very or fairly common (33%), while a quarter said it was very or fairly common to hear too much noise at night (24%) and just over a fifth said it was common to experience people being hostile or aggressive (22%).



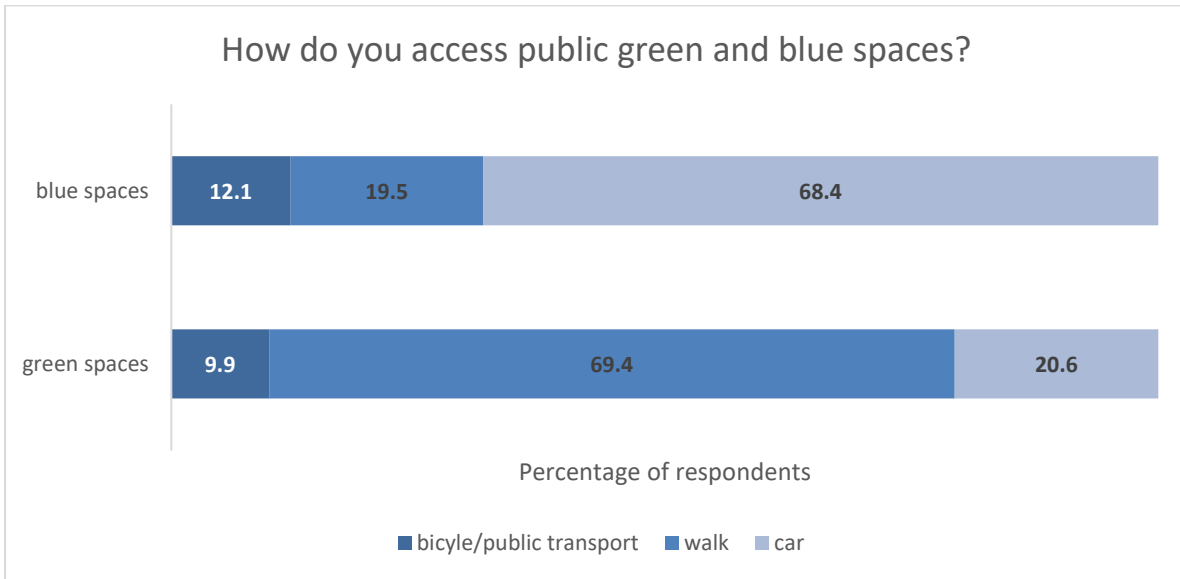
Nine in 10 Darwin respondents felt safe or very safe in their homes, while about three-quarters had the same feelings of safety in their neighbourhood (72%). Although less than two percent felt unsafe or very unsafe in their home, more felt unsafe or very safe in their neighbourhood (6%), and another 22 percent felt sometimes unsafe.



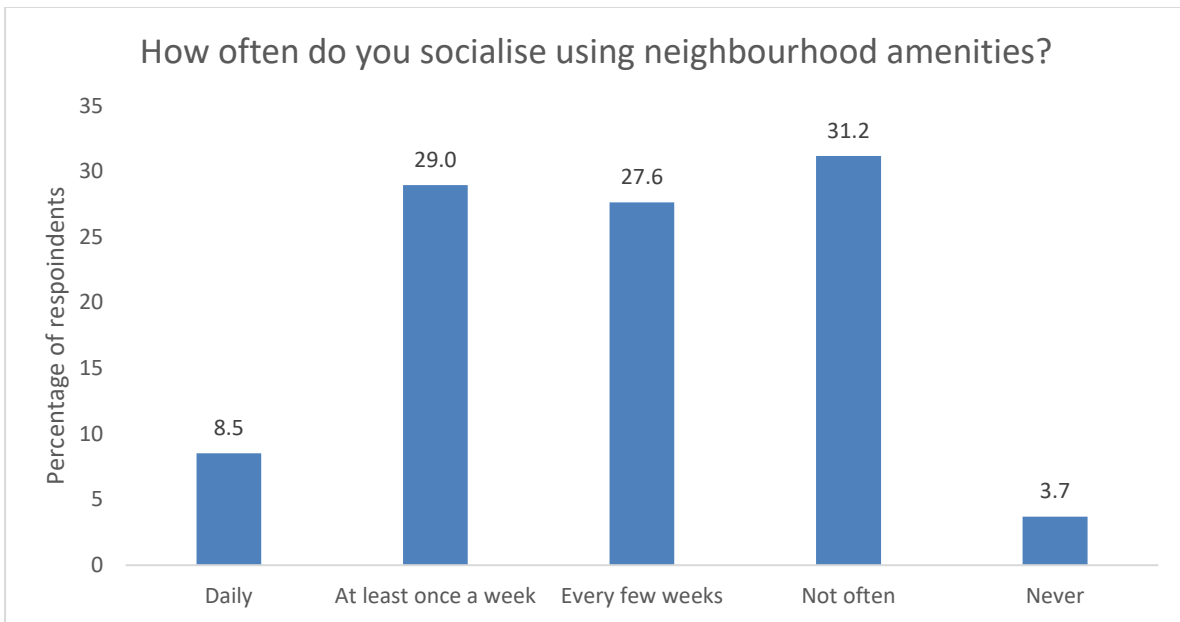
Survey respondents were asked about their use of public parks, ovals, playgrounds, or gardens (green spaces) and public pools, waterparks, or man-made lakes/lagoons (blue spaces). The survey showed that public green and blue spaces were used by most Darwin respondents (92% and 81% respectively).



For the people who use these spaces, walking was the most common means of getting to green spaces (69%) while cars were mainly used to access public blue spaces (68%). Bicycles and/or public transport were used by a small number of Darwin respondents - 12 percent to access blue spaces and 10 percent to access green spaces.



Eight out of 10 Darwin respondents agreed there were places to socialise in their neighbourhood such as parks, playgrounds, BBQ areas or cafes (81%). Of the people who knew about these amenities, about a third do not use them often or ever to socialise (35%).

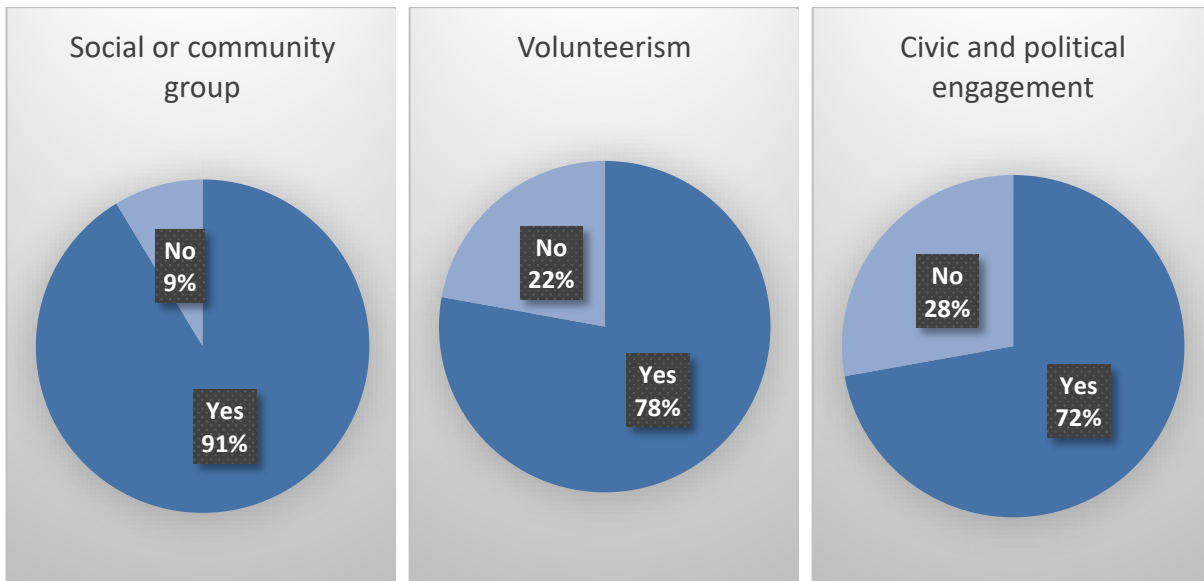


Engaging with community

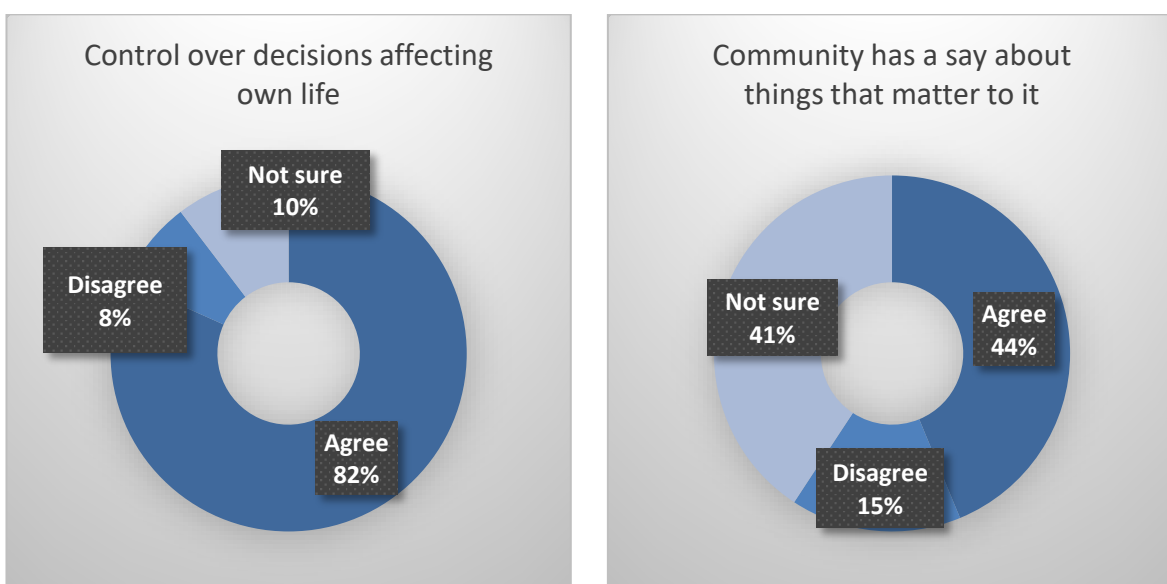
When people participate in community groups and engage with civic issues, the whole community benefits. These activities provide opportunities to support the community through shared action, while group associations build trust.

In the previous 12 months, nine in 10 Darwin respondents had belonged to at least one organised social or community group (91%), with the most common being sport, recreation or a special interest. Almost three-quarters of respondents had engaged in civic or political activity such as attending a community meeting, signing a petition, or acting on behalf of

other people or about specific issues (72%). A slightly higher proportion (79%) had volunteered their time and skills formally or informally to support an organisation or community group, or provided care for someone who was not a friend or family member. These activities could be in-person, by telephone, or online.



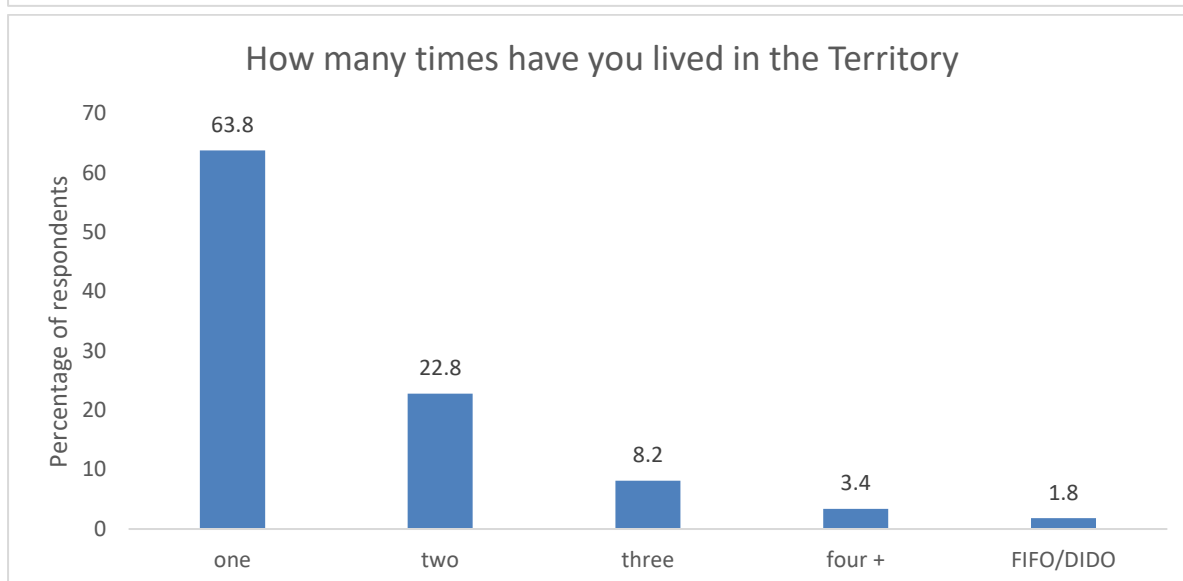
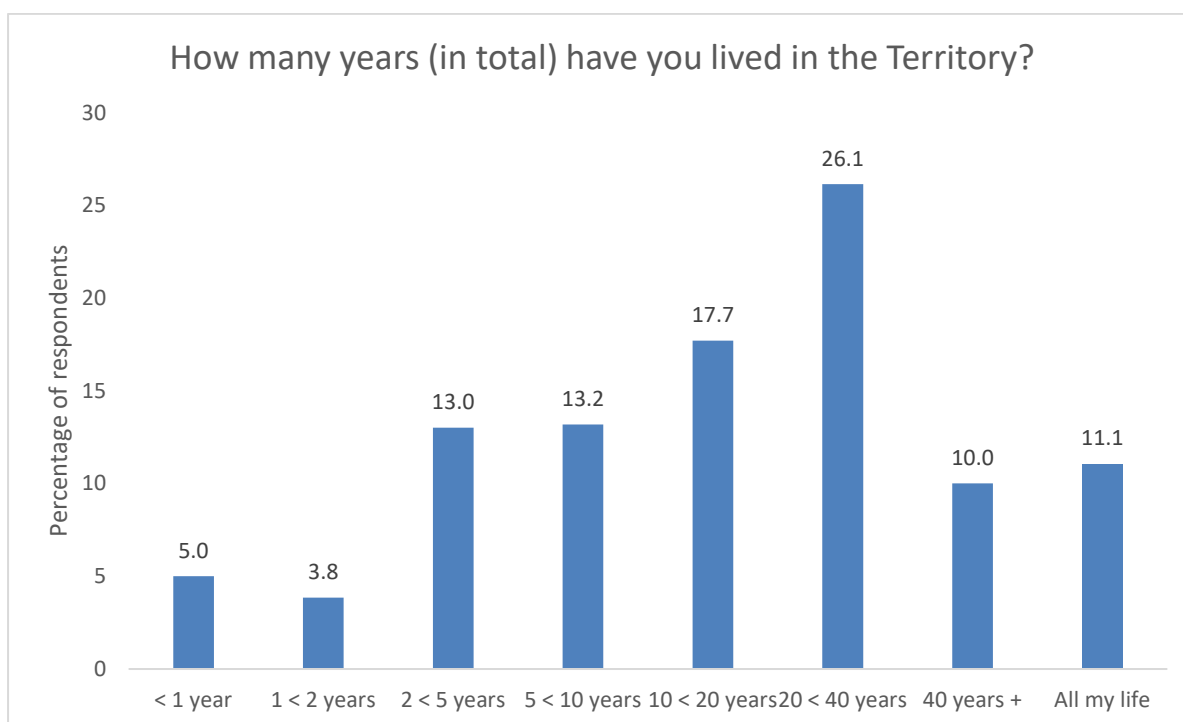
Additionally, nine in 10 Darwin respondents also agreed that they could participate in cultural ceremonies, celebrations, or religious events when they wanted to. Four out of five survey respondents in Darwin felt that they had control over decisions which affected their own lives (82%), but they were less certain that their community had the same opportunity to have a real say on important issues. While 44 percent agreed, 15 percent disagreed that their community had a say and more than twice that proportion were unsure (41%).



Connecting with the Territory

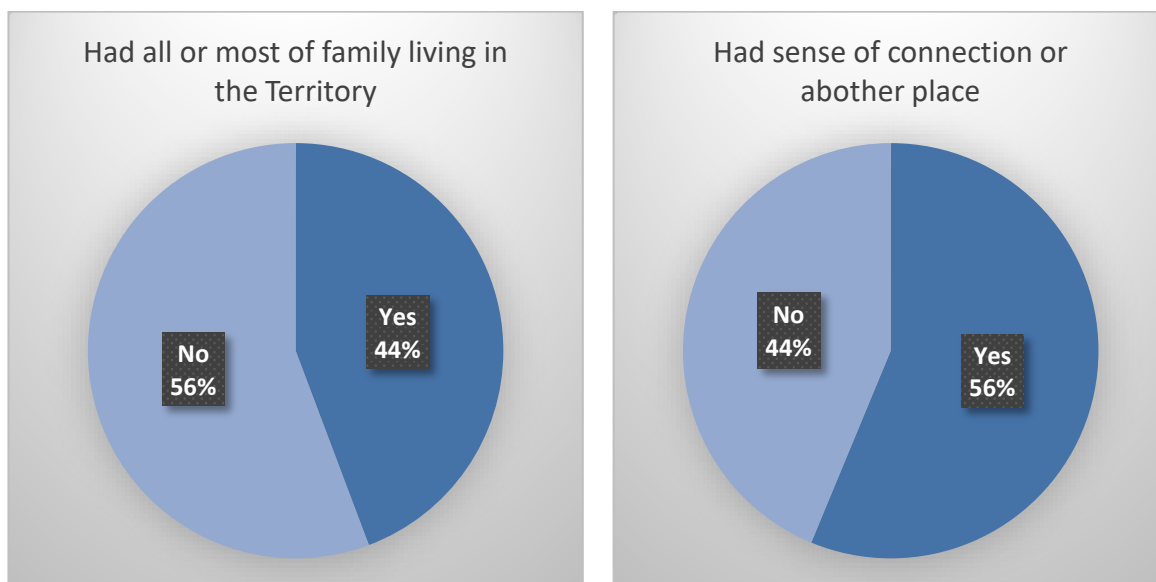
Establishing connections with the people and place of the Territory is important for retaining residents and building a stable population.

Around two thirds of Darwin respondents had lived in the Territory for 20 years or longer, including all their lives (65%), however one fifth had been resident for less than five years. Additionally, one-third (34%) indicated they were a former resident returning or had lived in the Territory on several occasions suggesting that this group of respondents had built a sense of connection with the Territory even though they had left for a period of time.

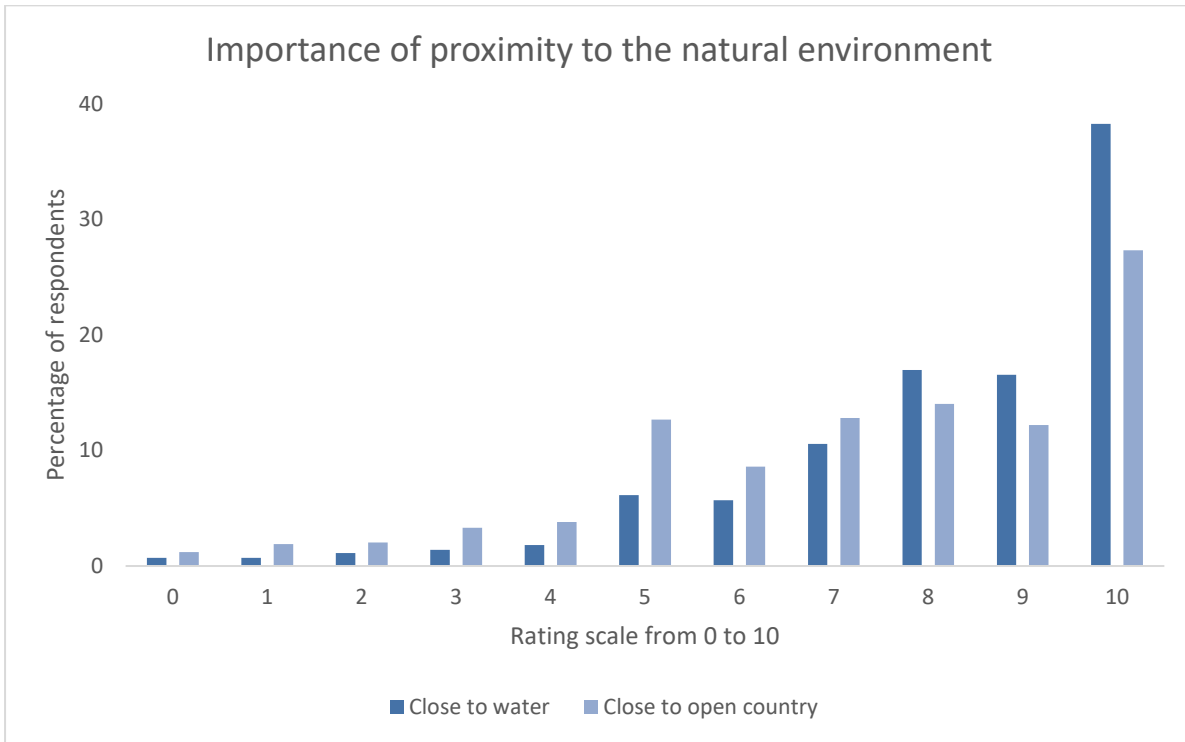


Almost three-quarters of respondents from Darwin plan to be living in the Territory in two-years' time, and most felt they would still be living in Darwin rather than another place in the Territory (68%). Less than half of these 'stayers' (44%) had all or most of their family living in the Territory while a greater proportion (56%) had a sense of belonging to another place in Australia or another country. Both these factors may have a negative influence on the retention of residents in the longer term as they could push residents to leave so they can live closer to family or go back to a place they know well.

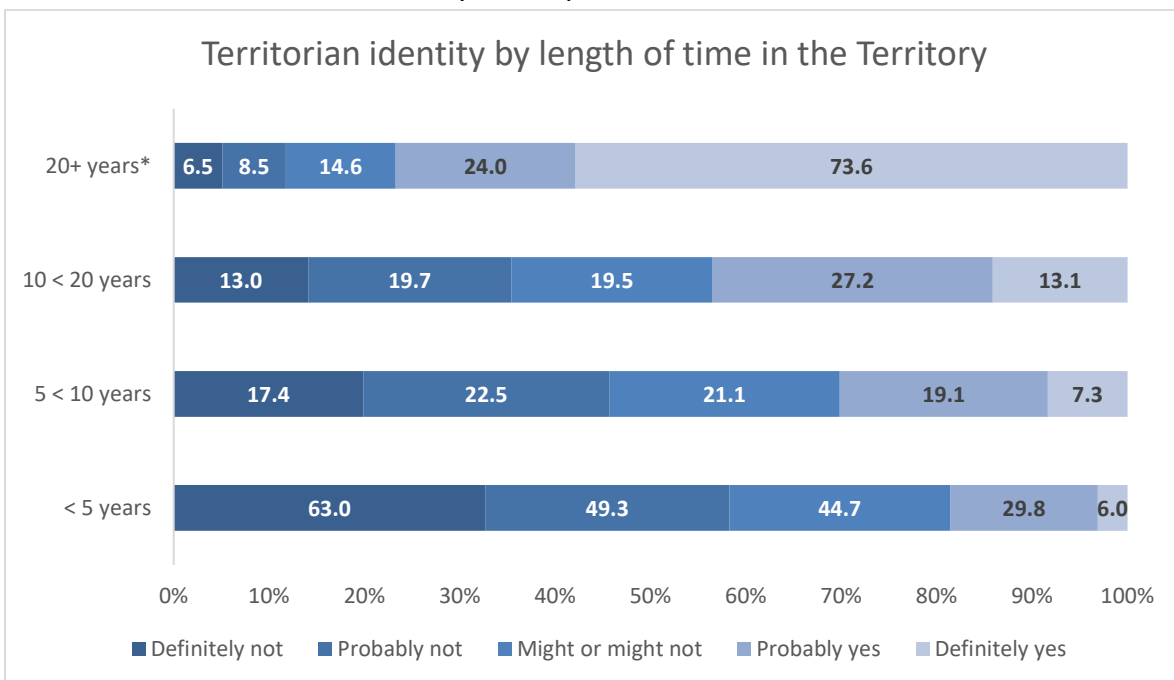
People who plan to be living in the Territory in two years' time



The Territory has a unique natural environment which is often a factor in drawing people here and keeping them in place. The survey asked respondents to separately rate the importance of being close to open country (such as the bush, escarpments, or the desert), and to natural water features (such as rivers, creeks, and billabongs). Again, this rating was on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 equalled not important and 10 equalled extremely important. More than a third of Darwin respondents felt that proximity to natural water was extremely important for them (38% rating it 10 out of 10), while less felt this same level of importance with respect to open country (27%). The average score for being close to natural water features was 8.1 compared to 7.3 for open country.



Identity as a Territorian is strong for many Darwin respondents with nearly eight in 10 considering themselves to be “definitely” or “probably” a Territorian (78%). However, this identity may be slow to develop. During the first five years in the Territory, less than one in ten definitely thought of themselves as Territorian (6%). By twenty years of residence in the Territory, this proportion had doubled (13%), and then increased to nearly three-quarters for those who had lived in the Territory for 20 years of more.



Comments from Darwin respondents illustrate the tensions inherent in claiming to be Territorian. Being born in the Territory is a strong foundation for a Territorian identity, as is the length of time that a respondent “chooses” to live in Territory. However, for others, feeling like a Territorian develops very quickly, particularly if they identify with perceived Territory values or feel a sense of belonging or welcome. For those respondents not born in the Territory, the feeling that they have not lived here “long enough” in the eyes of others, strong connections to places of birth outside the Territory, and the feeling that living in the Territory is temporary appear to moderate the strength of their Territorian identity.

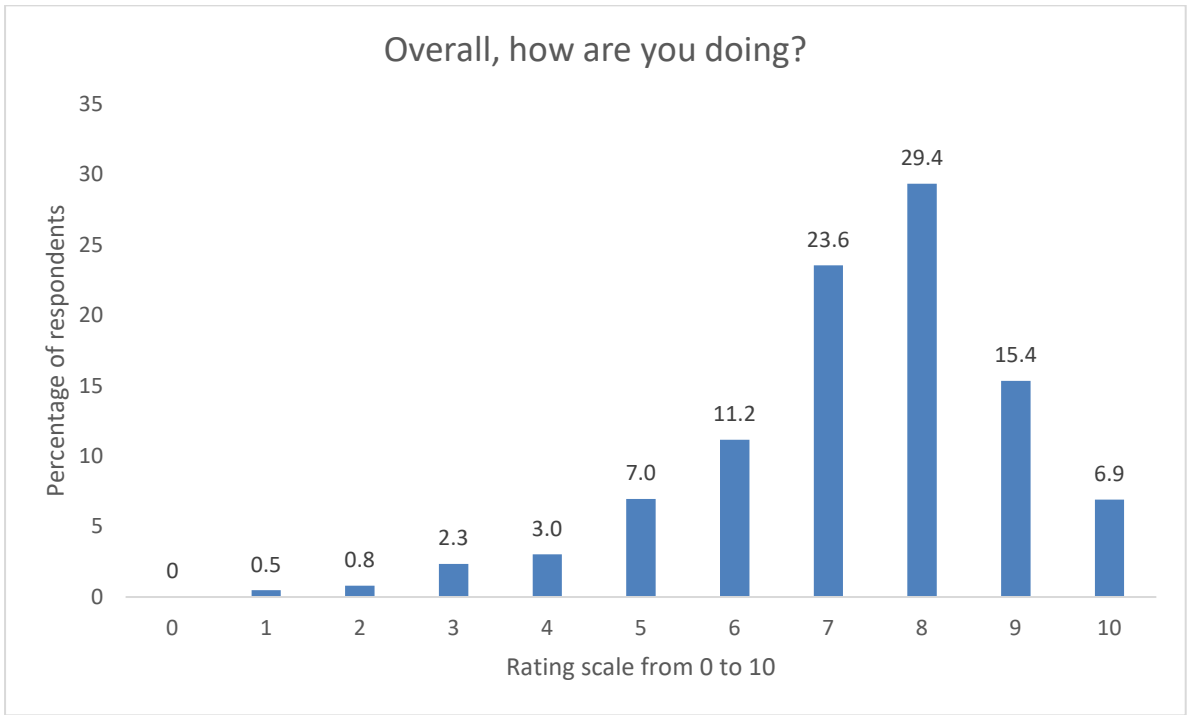
Territorian?	Comments from Darwin respondents
Definitely yes	<p>“This is where my Country is and where I belong.”</p> <p>“I was born in Darwin. My family live here. I have a connection to Darwin because of the memories I have created. I often think of moving but something stops me. I think it has a lot to do with family and friends and the type of people who like living here.”</p> <p>“Once you get the red dirt of the Territory under your fingernails it stays with you for life.”</p> <p>“Length of time by choice...”</p>
Probably yes	<p>“I feel very at home in Darwin, but don't feel like I have "earned" the right to call myself a Territorian yet. Feel like I need to contribute more to the community first...”</p> <p>“Because it feels a little like home and people are welcoming.”</p> <p>“Having only lived here a little over a year, beginning to understand the landscape and culture that is the Northern Territory.</p>
Might or might not	<p>“Not born here but I feel it is one of my homes (others being Sydney, UK).”</p> <p>“I move about frequently, so I don't really have any place I belong.”</p> <p>“I've only been here a couple of months. I felt an immediate sense of belonging, while being aware of my otherness and not being a local. I feel safe and welcomed.”</p>

	<p>“The general consensus seems to be that you must have spent a long time in the Territory (10yrs+), or have been born here. If you are a 'Southerner', it takes serious integration and adoption of the Territory lifestyle to shake that moniker.”</p>
Probably not	<p>“...It is a bit of a tongue and cheek debate with a little hostility, but I think those that have lived here long term take a pride in that label and don't want it dished out to anybody...”</p> <p>“I'm always one employment contract away from needing to leave.”</p> <p>“I feel trapped as I can't afford to leave the territory. I feel unsafe in the community due to the crime.”</p>
Definitely not	<p>“Because I've been told I'll always be a southerner. My views are not seen as valid because I'm an outsider.”</p> <p>“I think you have to live here for a very long time.”</p> <p>“I am a Queenslander.”</p>

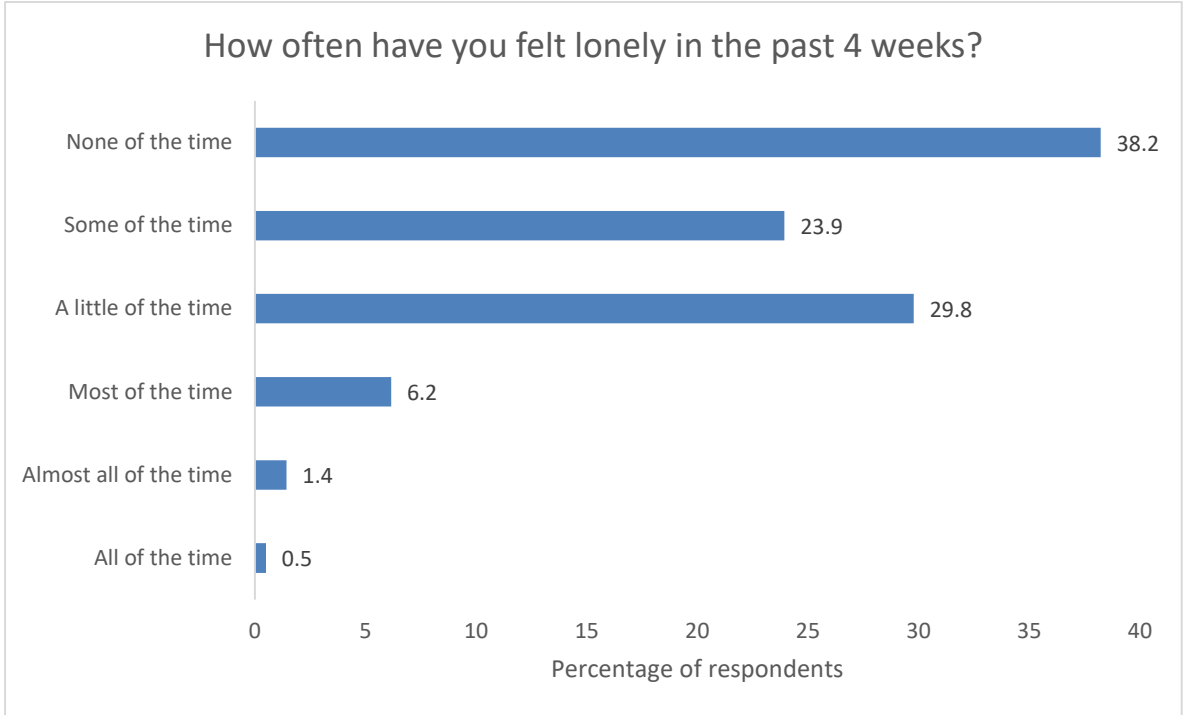
How are people doing?

General wellbeing can be affected by many things but is likely to be impacted by the connections discussed in this report because they influence the social, economic, and natural environments of individuals and the broader community.

Survey respondents were asked to rate their overall wellbeing on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 equalled 'very badly' and 10 equalled 'extremely well'. Over half of survey respondents in Darwin rated themselves as 7 or 8 (53%) and the average rating by all Darwin respondents was 7.3. Less than 10 percent rated themselves at 4 or below on this scale (6.6%).

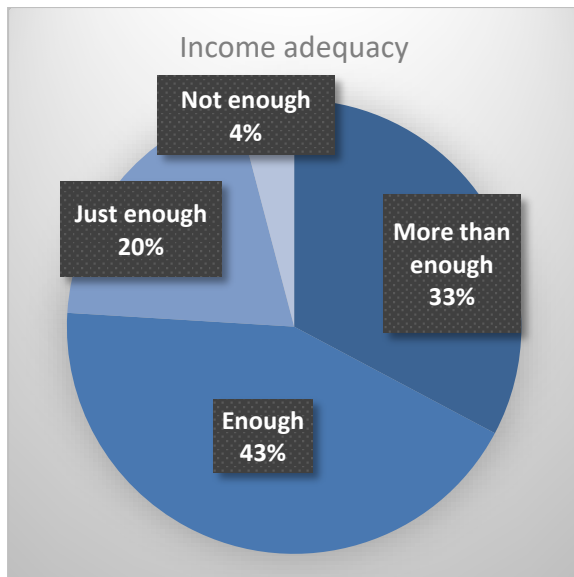


This high level of general wellbeing is reflected in the small number of people reporting that they frequently felt lonely. Less than one in 10 respondents in Darwin (8%) said they felt lonely most, almost all, or all of the time in the previous 4 weeks. However, even these small numbers are of concern as loneliness is linked with poor mental health and increased morbidity.



Additionally, in response to a question regarding life stressors in the previous year, 1.4 percent of Darwin respondents indicated gambling problems had affected their overall wellbeing, while six percent indicated problems with alcohol and/or drug dependence. An adequate income still underpins many aspects of wellbeing. Survey respondents were

asked whether they had enough money to cover their own and any dependent family's basic living needs. While three-quarters of Darwin respondents felt they had enough or more than enough income (76%), the remaining quarter did not (24%).



Note: Income adequacy is described as enough to cover basic living expenses of self and dependent family

Who responded to the survey?

The results in this report are based on responses to the *my Territory Connections* survey by a total of 1,637 residents from the LGA of Darwin.

Demographic characteristics of Darwin survey sample		
Gender	Male	34.0%
	Female	66.0%
Age group	18-24 years	5.5%
	25-34 years	18.9%
	35-49 years	34.3%
	50-59 years	23.6%
	60+ years	17.8%
Indigenous status	Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander	6.3%
	Non-Indigenous	93.7%
Disability status	Has disability or serious health condition	12.3%
Place of birth	Australia	70.2%
	Overseas	29.8%
Housing status	Owner (outright)	20.3%
	Owner (with mortgage)	40.3%
	Renter	31.9%
	Other housing circumstance	7.5%
Sexual identity	Straight/heterosexual	88.2%
	Sexual minority	10.8%

Almost twice as many women as men participated. The greatest proportion of responses came from Darwin residents in the 35-49 years age group while the views of 18-24-year-olds were considerably under-represented. Aboriginal people were also under-represented, but to a lesser extent.

Around 1 in 10 people had a disability or serious health condition, with 67 percent indicating it limited their participation in social and community activities.

Almost 30 percent of the respondents were born overseas and came from 65 different countries, reflecting the significant multicultural nature of Darwin's population.

Six out of 10 respondents owned or were in the process of owning their homes. Nearly a third were renting while the remainder had a variety of other accommodation arrangements.

About 11 percent of respondents from Darwin identified with a sexual minority including those who used different terms to describe their sexual identity.

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A known hub for research expertise, leadership and impact, Northern Institute encompasses four major research themes:

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- Demography and Growth Planning
- Realist Research, Evaluation and Learning
- Regional, Economic, Education and Workforce Development
- Risk, Resilience and Sustainability.