

NORTHERN TERRITORY

# my Territory Connections



## Summary results for the region of Katherine & Big Rivers

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.

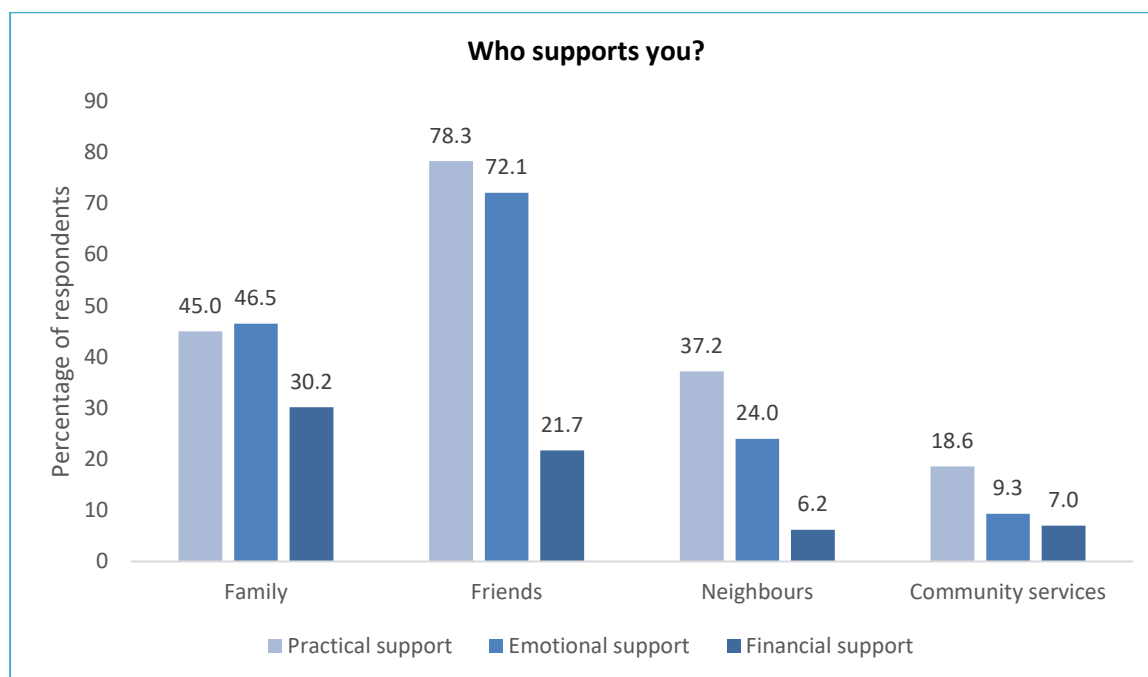
**Thank you to all Territory residents who took the time to provide information on their experiences and opinions as part of this research.**

Further information about the *my Territory Connections* survey can be found on the project website: [myterritoryconnections.cdu.edu.au](http://myterritoryconnections.cdu.edu.au).

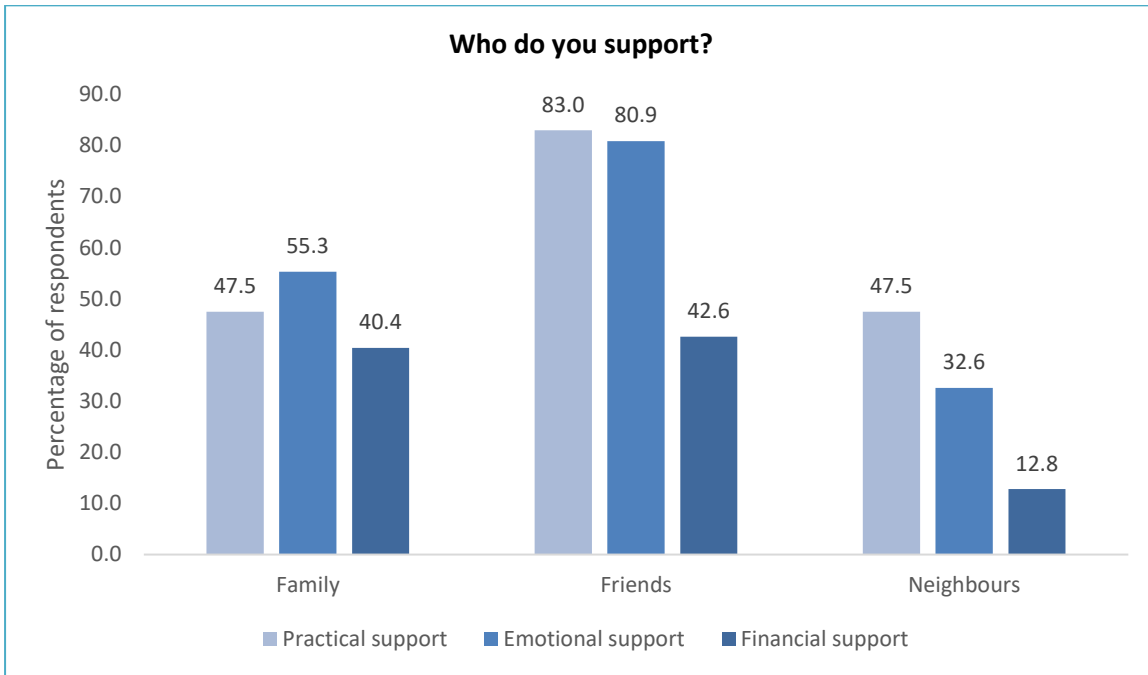
The *My Territory Connections* survey asked questions about people’s wellbeing and their connections to other people, to the place where they live, and to the Territory as a whole. This report on the responses from people living in the regions of Katherine and Big Rivers unpacks this sense of connection 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 Katherine and Big Rivers (referred to as Katherine hereafter) felt they were doing, overall.

### Building social networks

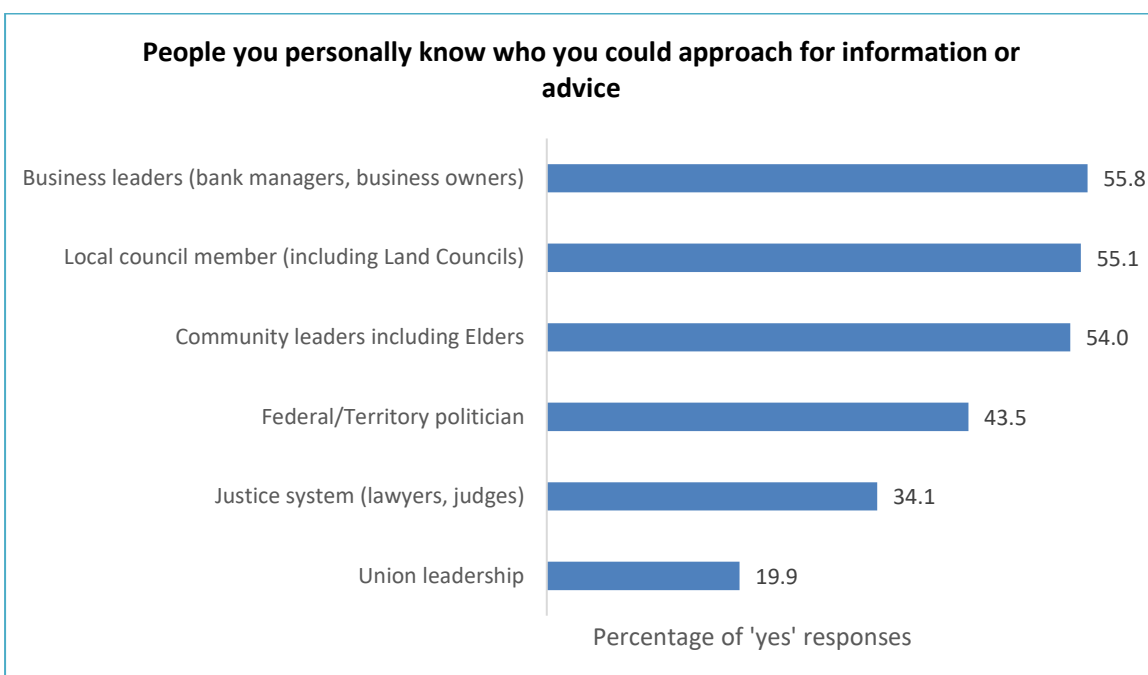
Consisting of family, friends, and neighbours, local social structures link people to support networks and help build resilient communities. Respondents from Katherine appeared to have strong support systems in place that connected them to family members (who lived in the Territory but outside their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



Katherine respondents reciprocated this care by also providing support to their friends, family, and neighbours who lived in the Territory. Again, friends figured highly, and respondents were more likely to provide financial support to their Territory friends compared to their family members who lived outside their household or to their neighbours.



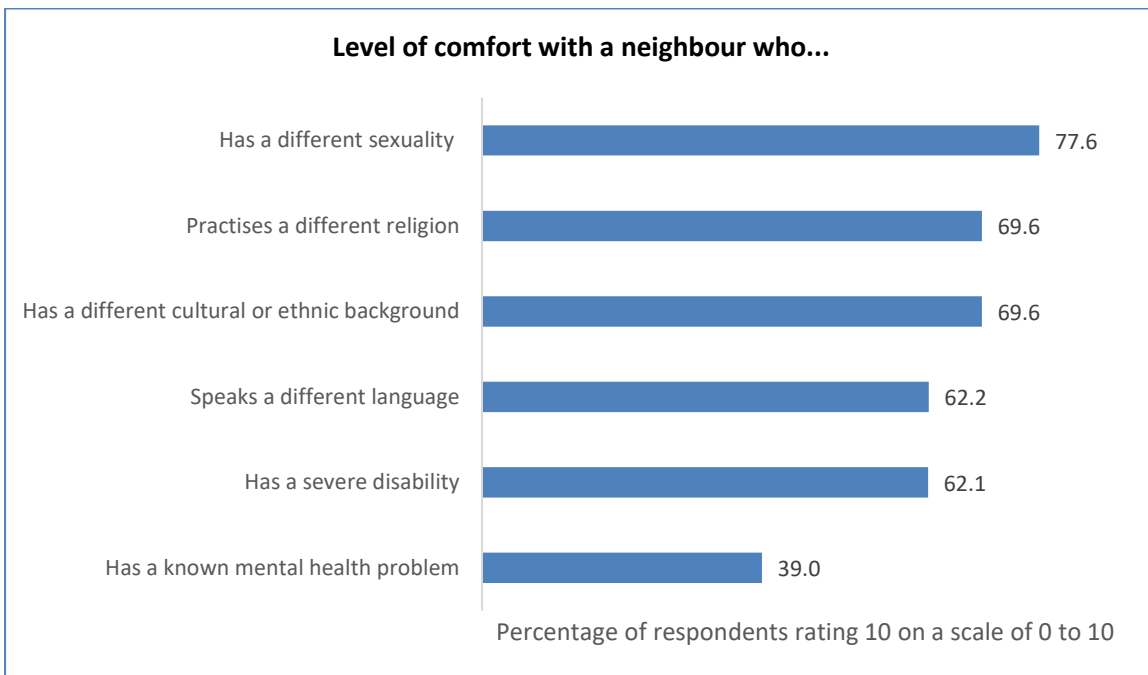
Networks which connect Territory residents with people in positions of authority and influence can often assist in getting something done. The survey asked whether respondents personally knew somebody in specific organisations or institutions who they would feel comfortable to approach for information or advice. Just over a quarter of Katherine respondents were not connected to any networks of influence (16%). Of those who were, business leaders (such as bank managers or business owners) were a particularly important source of information and advice with 56 percent nominating them. Similar proportions of Katherine respondents personally knew a local council member or community leader whom they would feel comfortable approaching (55% and 54% respectively).



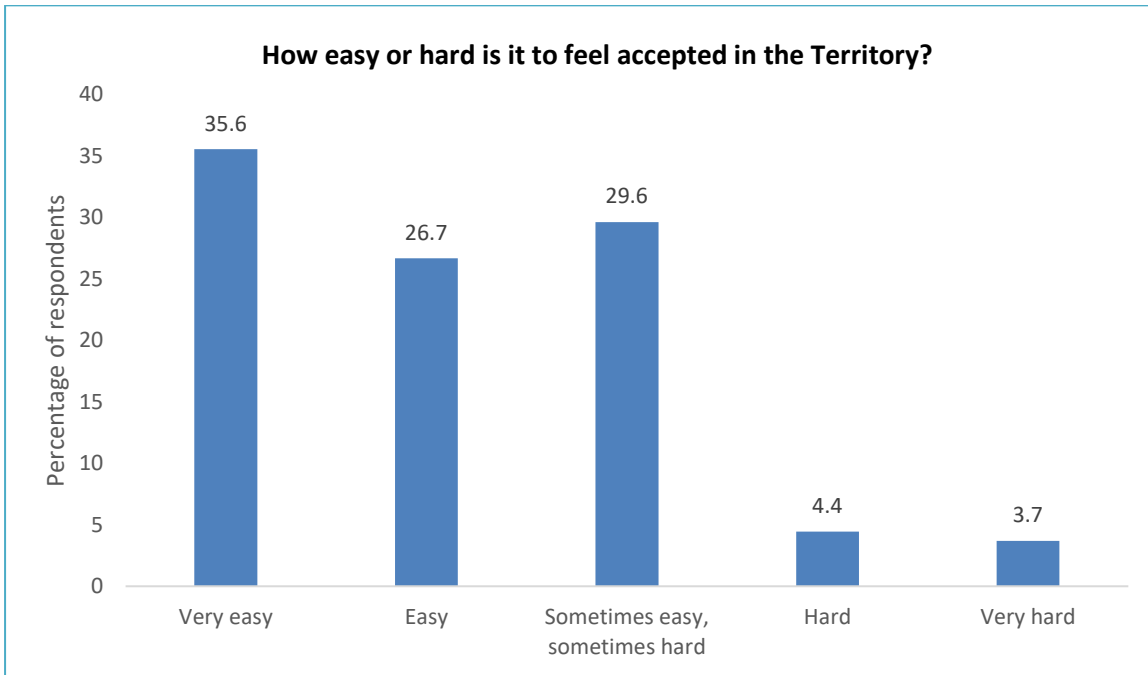
### Getting on with others

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.

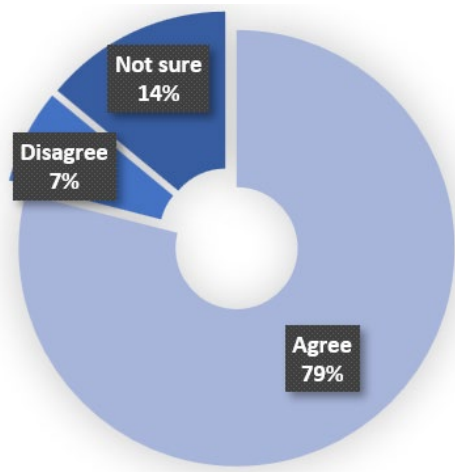
To assess people’s acceptance of diversity in their community, survey respondents were asked how comfortable they would feel (on a scale of 0 to 10) in circumstances where a neighbour had certain population diversity characteristics. More than three-quarters of Katherine respondents were completely comfortable with their neighbour having a different sexuality (78%), while seven in ten were completely comfortable with a neighbour practicing a different religion or who was from a different cultural or ethnic background (both 70%). Slightly fewer were completely comfortable with a neighbour speaking a different language or having a severe disability (both 62%). However, substantially fewer were completely comfortable having a neighbour with a known mental health problem (39%).



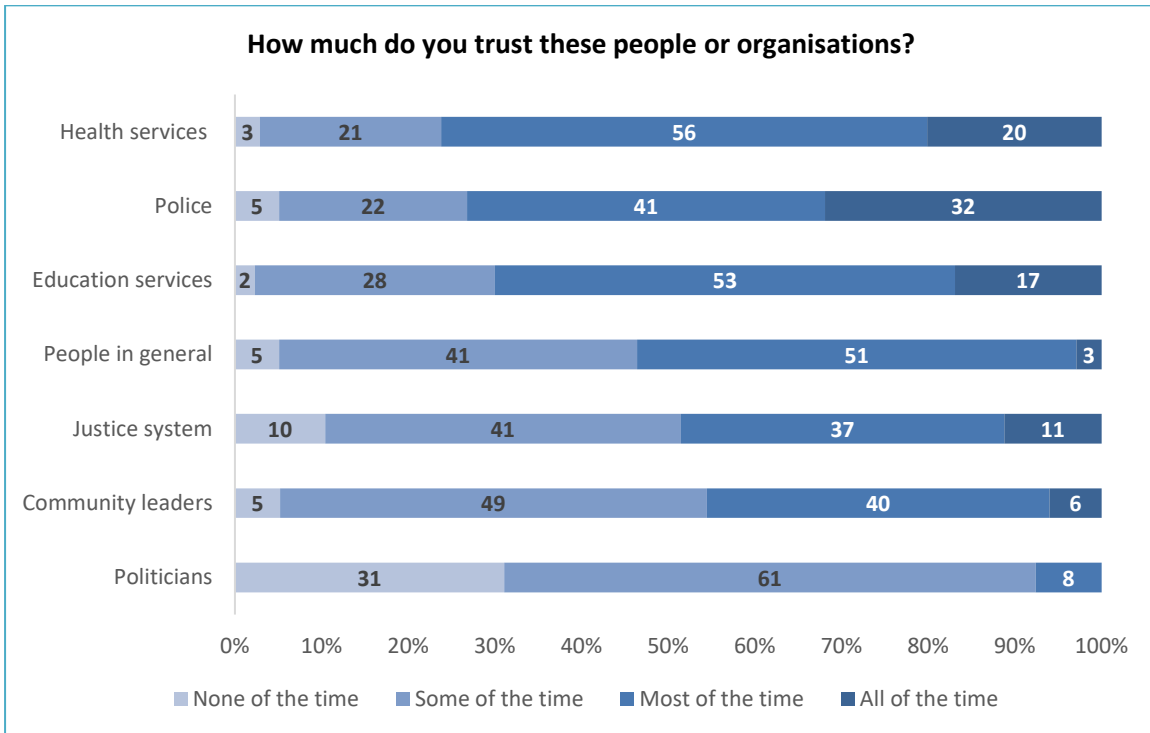
Feeling welcome in a community influences people’s sense of being accepted for who they are. This issue was investigated by asking survey respondents how easy or hard it was for them to feel accepted in the Territory. Nearly two thirds of Katherine respondents felt it was easy or very easy (62%), while a small number found it hard or very hard (8%). The reasons they nominated for not feeling accepted were most likely to include their skin colour or disability/ health issue.



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 majority of Katherine respondents agreed reconciliation actions were important to them (79%), however 7% disagreed and another 14% were unsure.



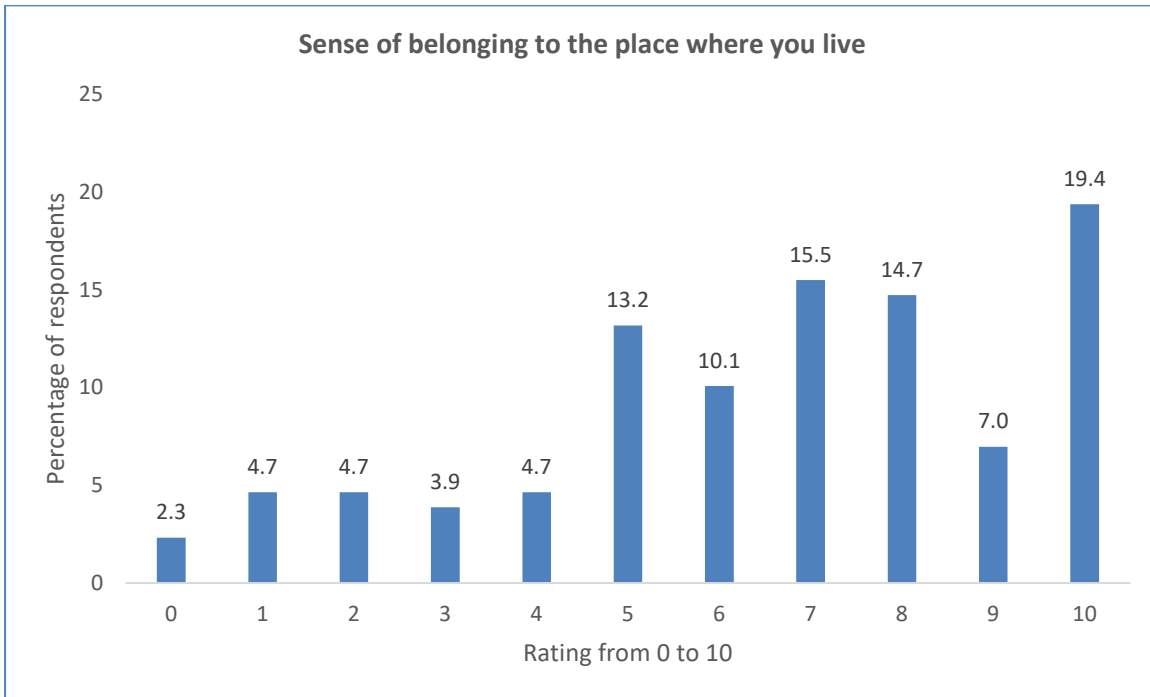
Survey respondents in Katherine were fairly trusting of other people with 54 percent stating that they trusted others most or all of the time. While a majority of survey respondents trusted health services (doctors / nurses, hospitals, health clinics), the police and education services (early childhood, schools, university) most or all of the time, fewer trusted the justice system (lawyers, courts) and community leaders to the same extent (48% and 46% respectively). Politicians were the least trusted occupation or role with only 8 percent trusting them most of the time, and the remaining trusting them some or none of the time.



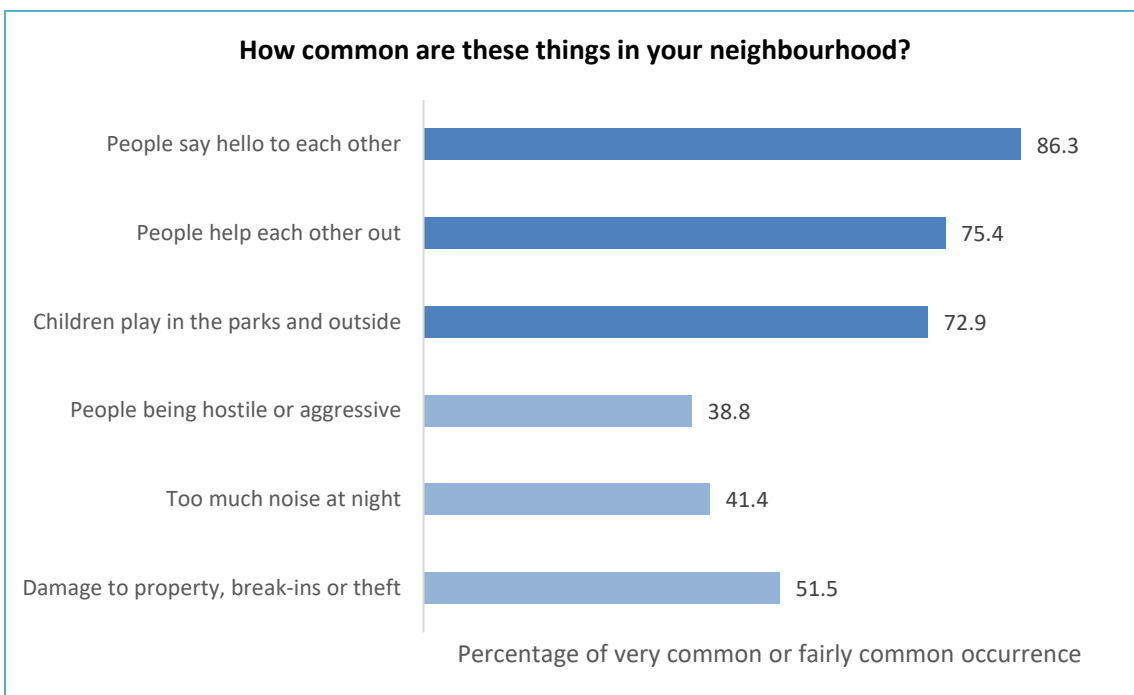
### Living in Katherine

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 10 (rated by 19%), with two-thirds of Katherine respondents rating their sense of belonging at 6 or more out of 10.

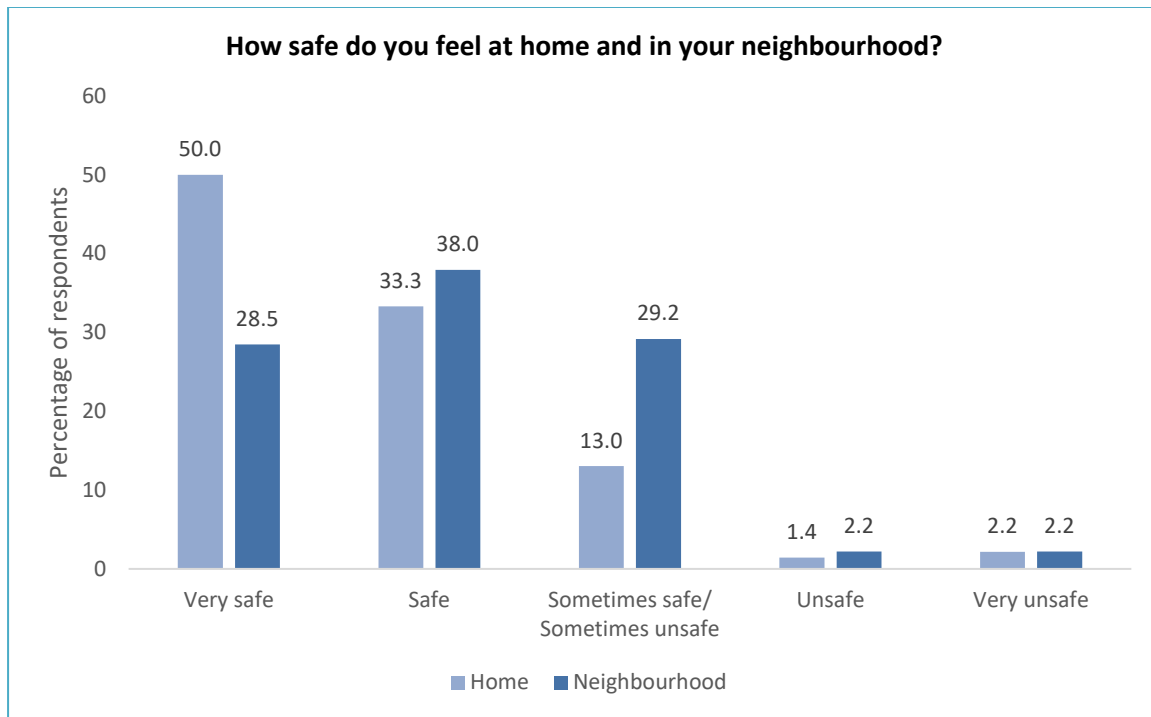


Most Katherine respondents found their neighbourhoods friendly (86%) and their neighbours helpful (75%), however their neighbourhoods were not without issues. Just over half said property crime was very or fairly common (52%), while around 4 in ten said it was common to hear too much noise at night (41%) or experience people being hostile or aggressive (39%).

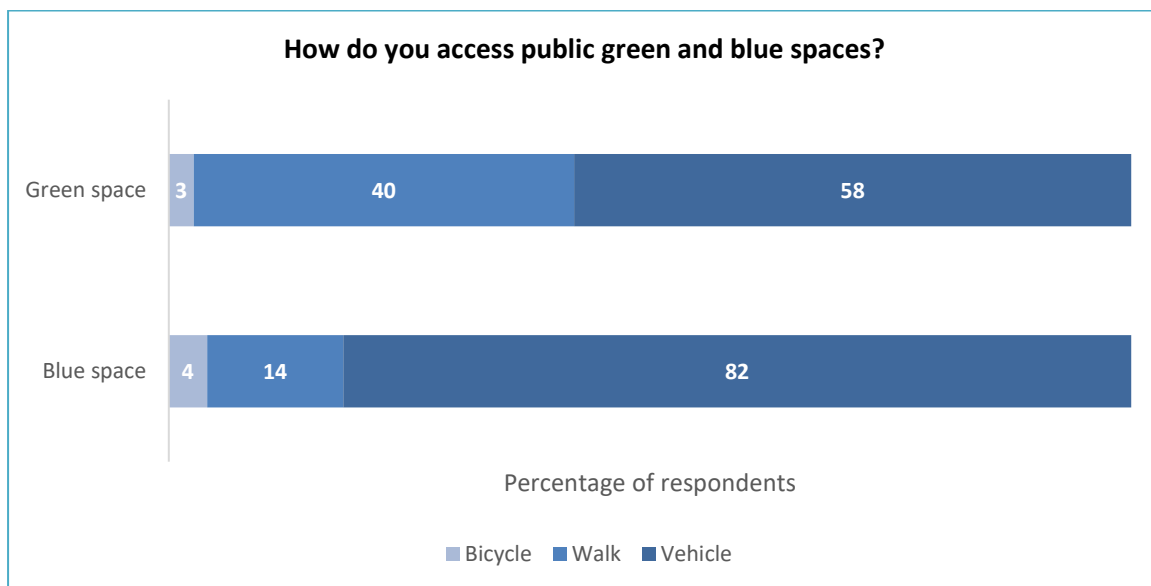




More than 80 percent of Katherine respondents felt safe or very safe in their homes, while only two thirds had the same feelings of safety in their neighbourhood. Although just 4 percent felt unsafe or very unsafe in their neighbourhood, another 30 percent felt unsafe some of the time.

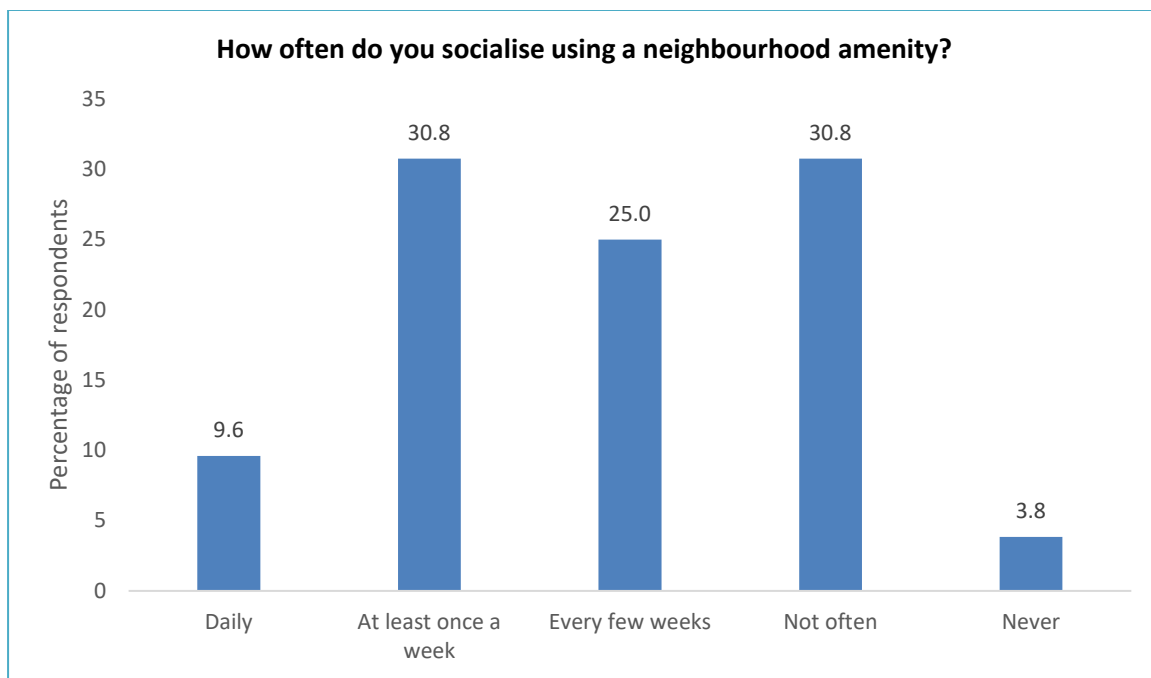


Survey respondents were asked about their use of public parks, ovals, playgrounds or gardens (green spaces) and public pools, waterparks or man-made lakes/lagoons (blue spaces). The survey showed that public green spaces were used by most Katherine respondents (78%), however fewer used public blue spaces (52%) The most common way to access these spaces was by car.



Three-quarters of Katherine respondents agreed there were places to socialise in their

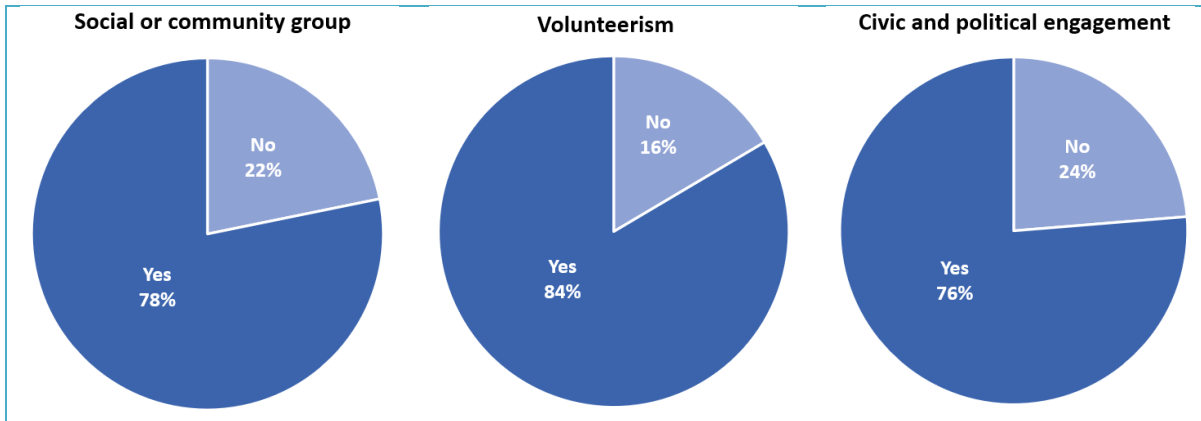
neighbourhood such as parks, playgrounds, BBQ areas or cafes. Of the people who knew about these amenities, four out of ten used them daily or at least once a week to socialise (40%). However, more than a third of respondents did not use these places to socialise often or ever (35%).



### Engaging with community

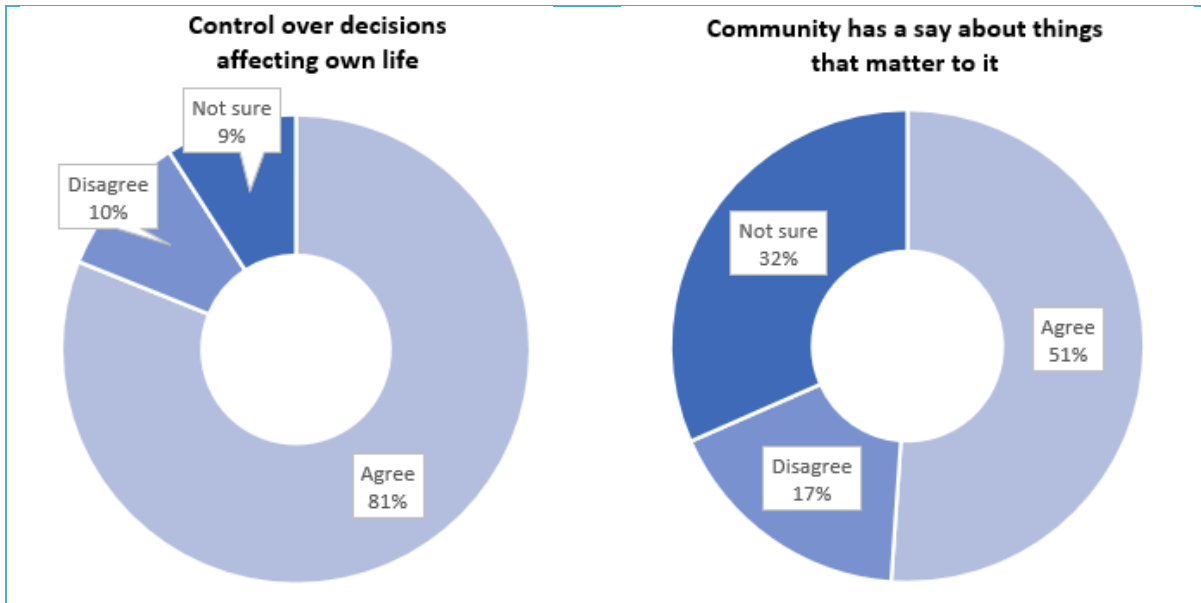
When people participate in community groups and engage with civic issues, the whole community benefits. These activities provide opportunities to support the community through shared action, while group associations build trust.

In the previous 12 months, three out of four Katherine respondents had engaged in civic or political activities such as attending a community meeting, signing a petition, or acting on behalf of other people or about specific issues (76%). A similar proportion belonged to at least one organised social or community group (78%), the most common being sport, recreation, or a special interest. A higher proportion (84%) 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, about four out of five Katherine respondents also agreed that they could participate in cultural ceremonies, celebrations, or religious events when they wanted to (79%).

While survey respondents in Katherine generally felt that they had control over decisions which affected their own lives (81% agreed), they were less certain that their community had the same opportunity to have a real say on important issues (51% agreed). About 17 percent disagreed that their community had a say, and nearly a third of Katherine respondents were unsure.

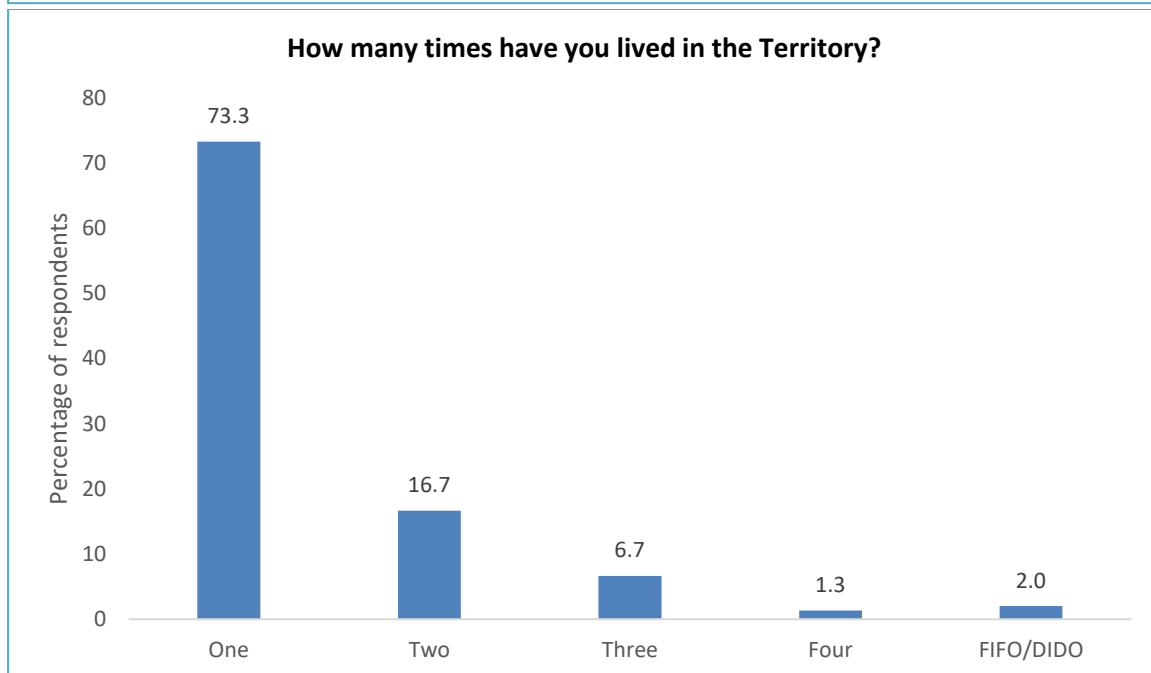
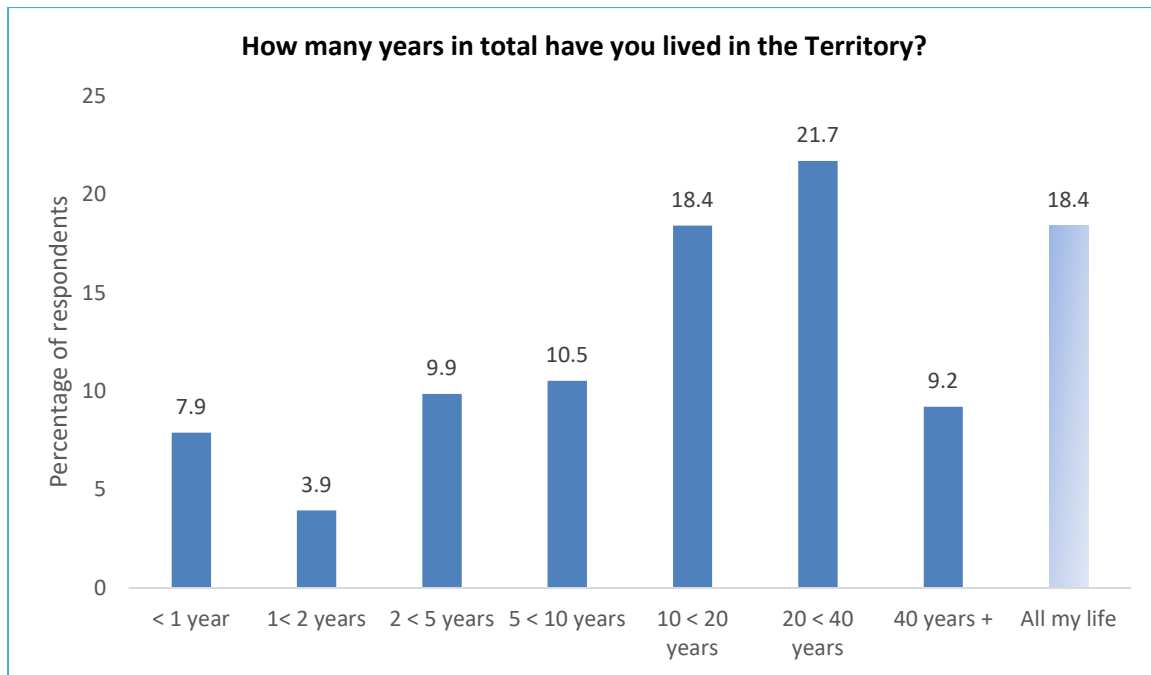


### Connecting with the Territory

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

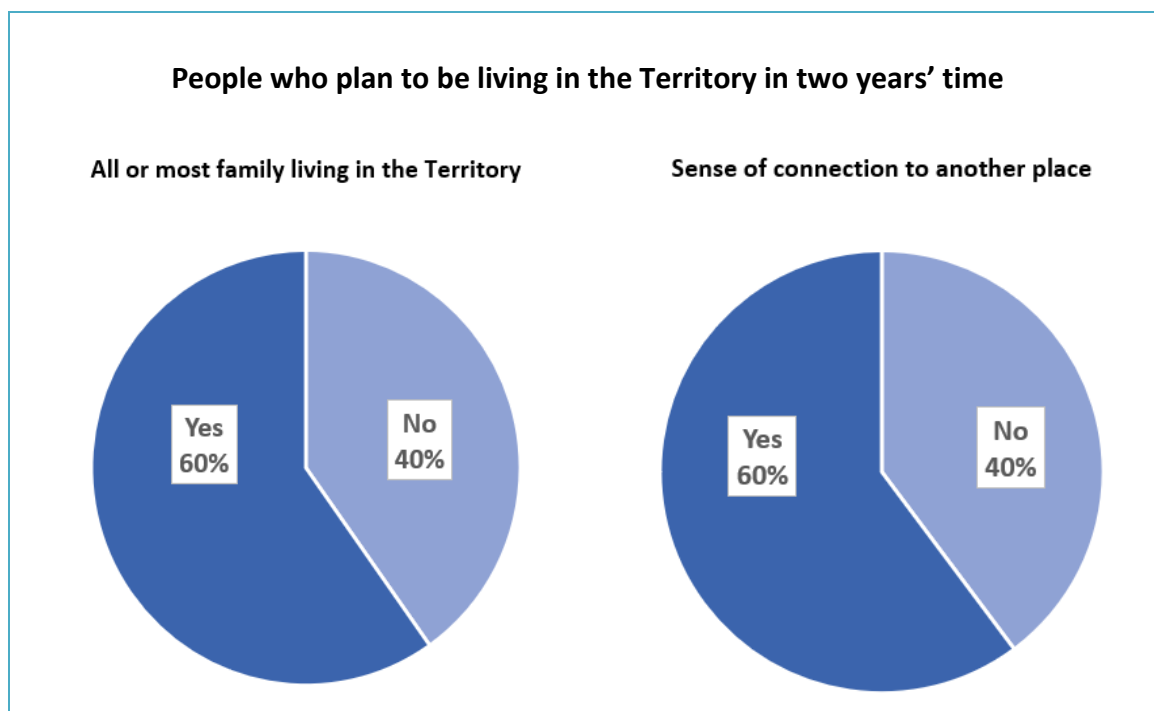
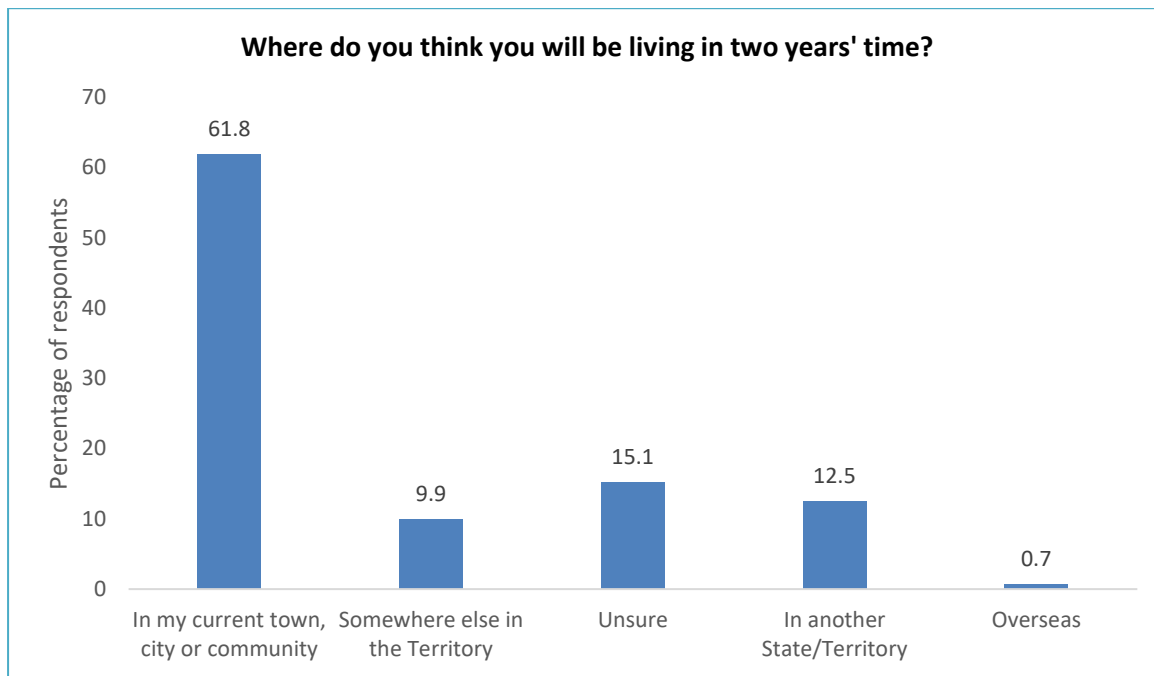
Two-thirds of Katherine respondents had lived in the Territory for 10 years or longer, including 18 percent who had lived there all their lives. Nearly a fifth however, had been

resident for less than 5 years. About one-quarter were returned residents (25%), suggesting they had built a sense of connection with the Territory even though they had left for a period of time.



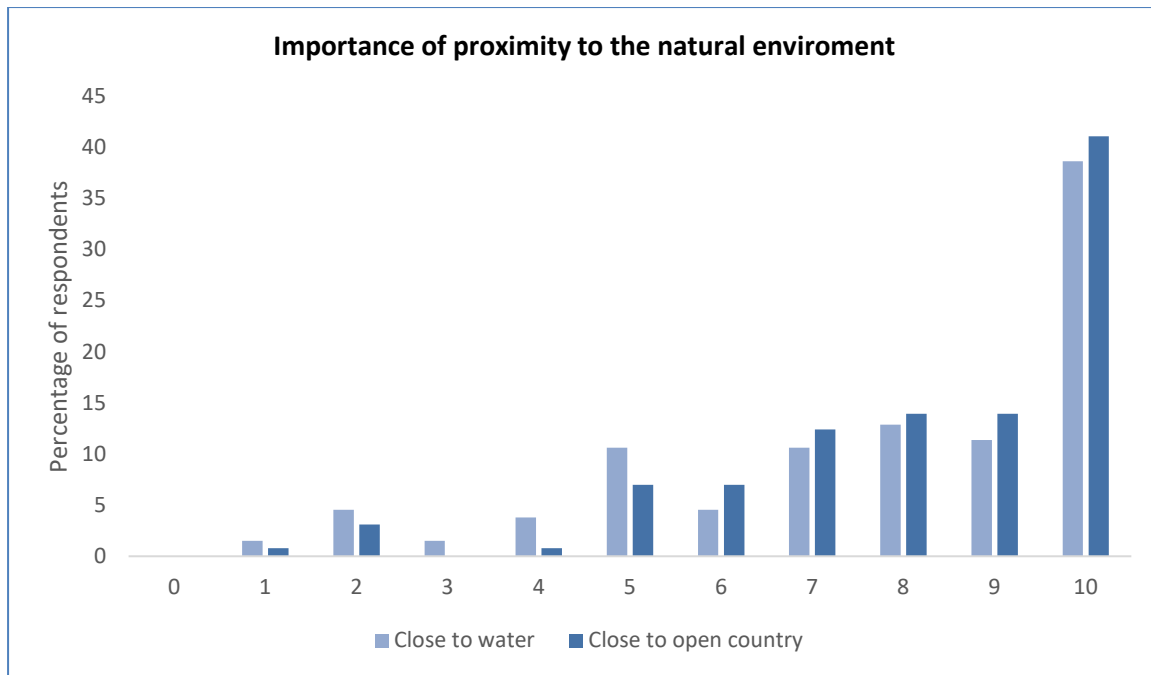
Respondents were asked about where they thought they would be living in two years' time. Seven out of ten Katherine respondents plan to be living in the Territory, indeed most said they would still be living in Katherine. While the majority of these 'stayers' have all or most of their family living in the Territory (60%), they also have a sense of connection to another place in Australia or overseas (60%). Both these factors are known to have a negative influence on the retention of residents in the longer term as they could push people to move

closer to family or back to a place they know well.

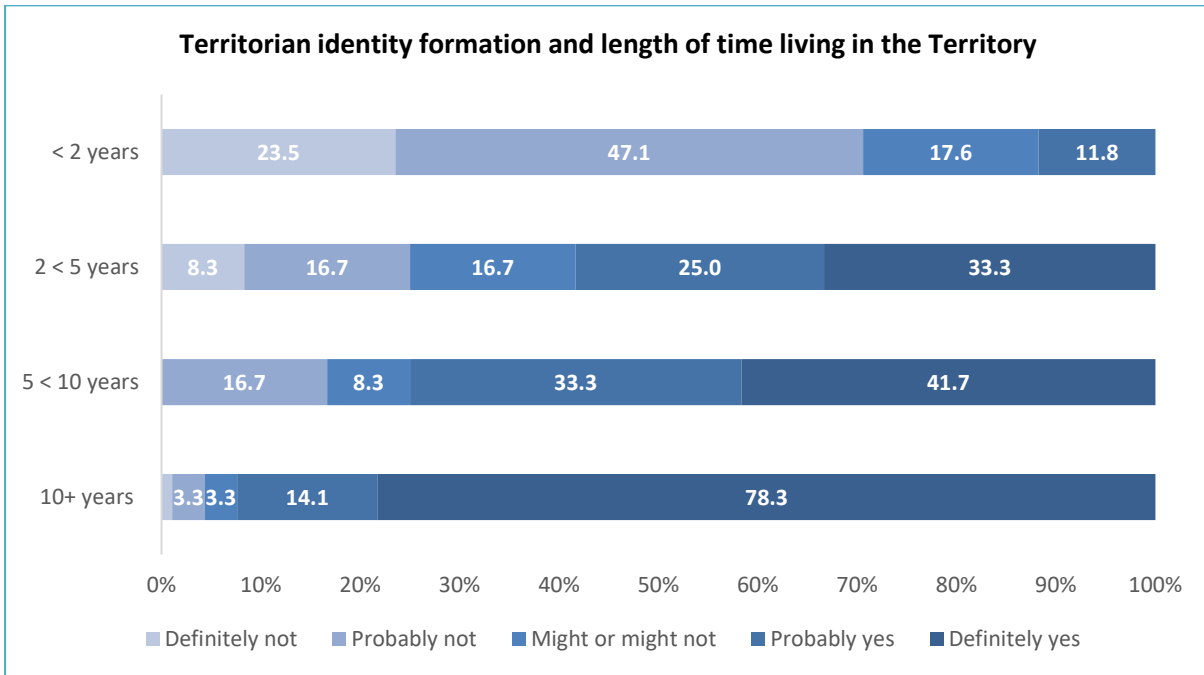


The Territory has a unique natural environment which is often a factor in drawing people here and keeping them in place. The survey asked respondents to separately rate the importance of being close to open country (such as the bush, escarpments, or the desert), and to water (such as rivers, creeks, and billabongs). Again, this rating was on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 equalled not important and 10 equalled extremely important.

Around four out of ten survey respondents felt that proximity to the natural environment (either to country or water) was extremely important for them. Indeed, the average score for the importance of being close to open country was 8.2, while for water it was 7.8.



Identifying as a Territorian was strong for Katherine respondents with 77 percent saying they “definitely” or “probably” considered themselves to be a Territorian. But this identity can take time to develop if a person does not immediately, or soon after arriving, feel at home or feel welcome. After living in the Territory for between five and ten years about 75 percent considered themselves to be Territorian. However, for people who had lived in the Territory for ten years or more, that increased to more than nine out of ten Katherine respondents.



Surprisingly, for some, length of time in the Territory can also work against a person forming a Territorian identity, particularly if they feel they have not lived here ‘long enough’ in the eyes of others or were not Territory born and bred. Comments from respondents in Katherine illustrate the tensions inherent in claiming identity as a Territorian. Those who consider themselves to be Territorians focused on length of residency and the connections that have been established through family and community. Those who do not consider themselves to be Territorians highlighted issues of not feeling welcomed and concerns around personal safety.

Territorian?	Comments from Katherine survey respondents
<b>Definitely yes</b>	<p>“Born and bred. Family has been in Katherine for a long time and is well known. Love where I live and proud to be from the NT.”</p> <p>“I have lived here most of my life and living here has given me a very rewarding life. When I'm away, I still feel a strong connection to the Territory.”</p>
<b>Probably yes</b>	<p>“I wasn't born in the Territory so don't consider myself Territorian bred but do consider myself Territorian by choice because I choose to live here and bring up my family who also live here.”</p> <p>“Since moving up here, I feel like it is the one place that I truly belong and can meaningfully contribute to the community. I haven't been here for all that long [2 &lt; 5 years] and that is why I put my answer down as ‘yes, probably’.”</p>

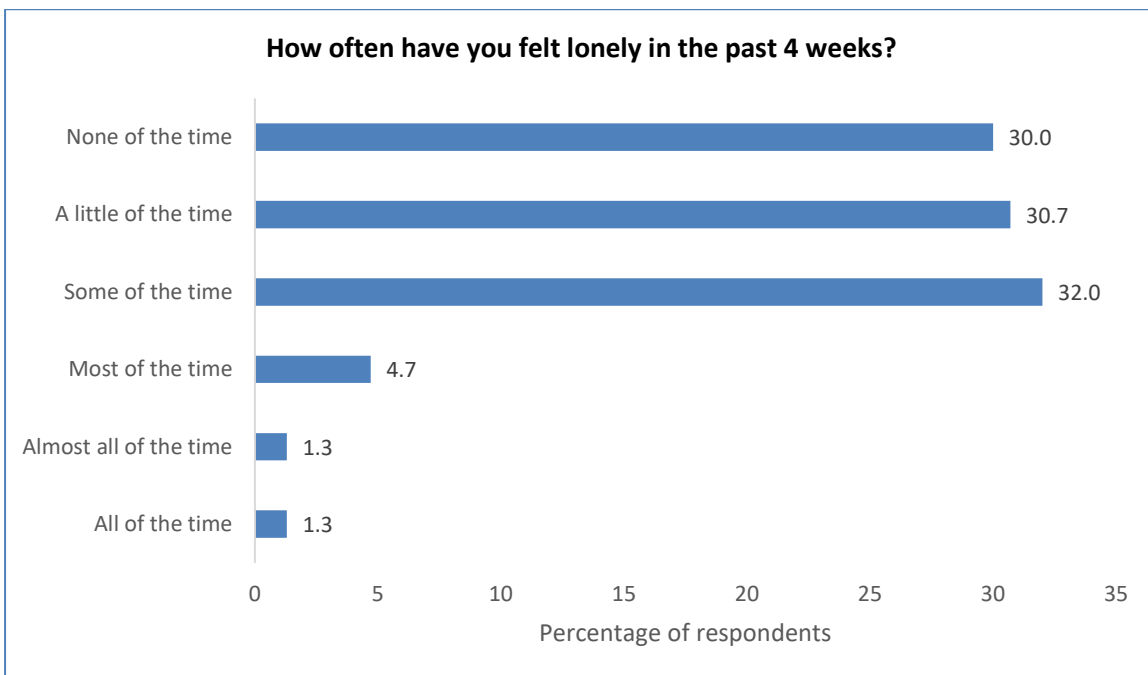
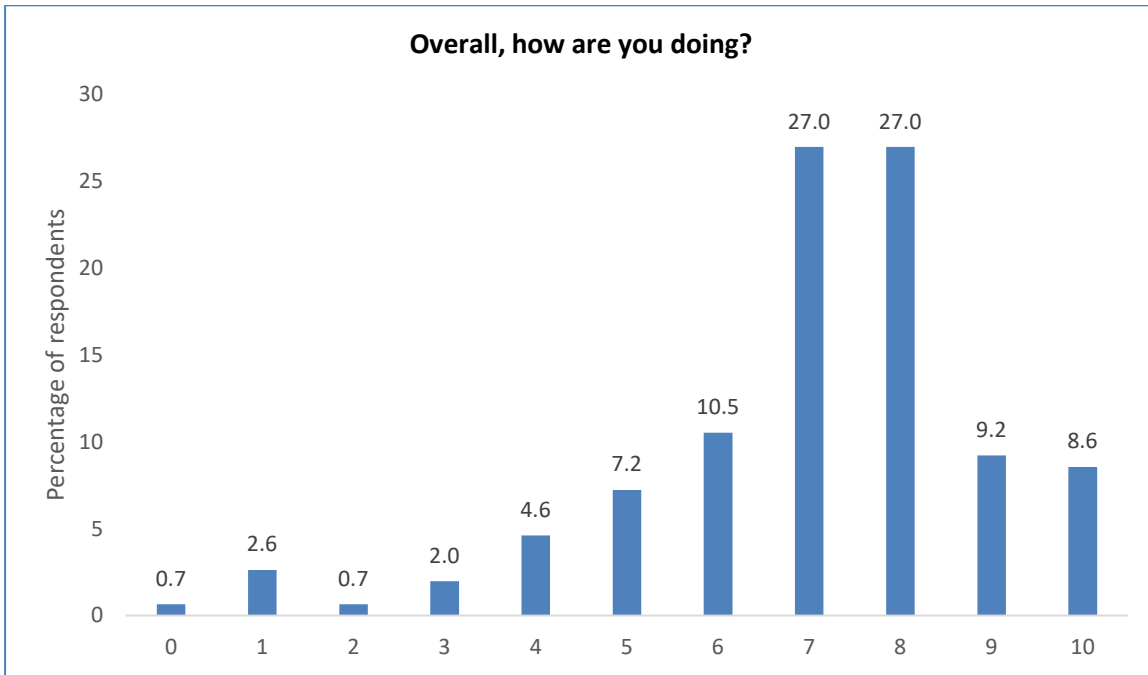
<b>Might or might not</b>	<p>“Although I’ve made the Territory my home and my children have grown up here, I still feel a strong connection to [another state].”</p> <p>“I feel like I haven't been here long enough yet [1 &lt; 2 years] to consider myself a Territorian.”</p>
<b>Probably not</b>	<p>“Don’t really feel connected or comfortable anywhere I’ve lived in the NT, always feel concerned about home security and personal well-being.”</p> <p>“Recently moved here [&lt; 1 year] and, with Covid, there haven't been many opportunities to travel around the NT and build that connection.”</p>
<b>Definitely not</b>	<p>“Because I’ve found it unwelcoming and unfriendly. I can’t wait to go back to my old house where neighbours wave and smile instead of have guard dogs that go ballistic when you walk past.”</p> <p>“The Territory has never felt like home... I do not feel settled, secure and safe living in the Territory. There are also minimal clubs/associations that interest me or make me feel welcome when I have tried to join in the past.”</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.

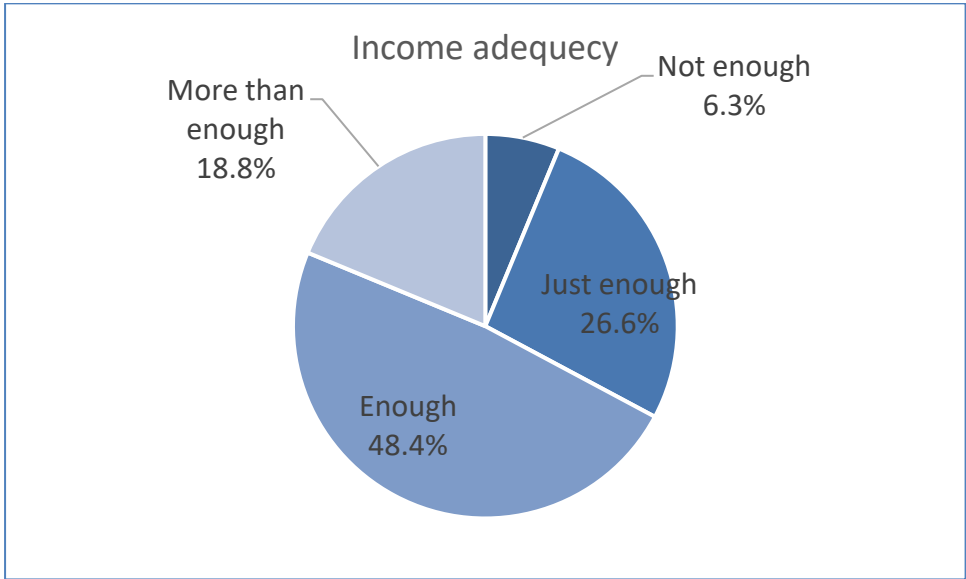
Survey respondents were asked to rate their overall wellbeing on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 equaled ‘very badly’ and 10 equaled ‘extremely well’. Over half of Katherine respondents rated themselves at 7 or 8, with the average score being 7.0. A small number rated themselves at less than 5 (11%), and when asked about experiences of loneliness, a slightly lower percentage (7.3%) said that they had felt lonely for the majority of the time in the past 4 weeks. Despite these small numbers, this is of concern because loneliness has been linked with poor mental health and increased morbidity.





Additionally, in response to a question regarding life stressors in the previous year, five percent of Katherine respondents indicated gambling problems had affected their overall wellbeing, while 10 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 around two thirds of Katherine respondents felt they had enough or more than enough income (68%), a substantial proportion did not (40%).



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

## Who responded to the survey?

The results in this report are based on responses to the *my Territory Connections* survey by a total of 152 residents: 127 from Katherine and 25 from the Big Rivers region. For ease of reference, the sample is referred to as the Katherine sample.

Demographic characteristics of Katherine survey sample		
Gender	Male	28.6%
	Female	71.4%
Age group	18-24 years	8.2%
	25-34 years	22.4%
	35-49 years	32.8%
	50-59 years	20.9%
	60+ years	15.7%
Disability status	Has disability or serious health condition	13.7%
Indigenous status	Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander	22.3%
	Non-Indigenous	77.7%
Place of birth	Australia	87.8%
	Overseas	12.2%
Housing status	Owner (outright)	18.6%
	Owner (with mortgage)	31.0%
	Renter	31.0%
	Other	19.4%
Sexual identity	Straight/heterosexual	89.8%
	Sexual minority	10.3%

Two and half times as many women as men participated in the survey. The views of people aged 18 to 24 years and Aboriginal people are under-represented.

About 1 in 6 people had a disability or serious health condition, with 78 percent saying that it limited their ability to participate in social and community activities.

One in eight Katherine respondents were born overseas. Their countries of birth included: United Kingdom; India; Mauritius; New Zealand; Philippines; and Sri Lanka.

Half the respondents owned their homes with or without a mortgage. Equal proportions (31%) owned with a mortgage and rented. About one in five respondents had a variety of other accommodation arrangements.

While the majority of respondents from Katherine considered themselves to be heterosexual, one in ten survey respondents identified themselves as a sexual minority.

**Contact:**

Fiona Shalley  
Research Associate – Demography, Growth and Planning  
T: 08 8948 7468  
E: [myterritoryconnections@cdu.edu.au](mailto:myterritoryconnections@cdu.edu.au)

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