NORTHERN TERRITORY

my Territory Connections

Summary results for the Municipality of Litchfield

May 2023

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 though 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 *Municipality of Litchfield* 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 connections with a Territory identity. It concludes by looking at how respondents from the Municipality of Litchfield (referred to hereafter as Litchfield) 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 Litchfield 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, more so than their family members who lived outside their household. However, as expected family were still the main source of financial support. Fewer respondents relied on their neighbours for support, while for a small proportion, community services were an important part of their support network.
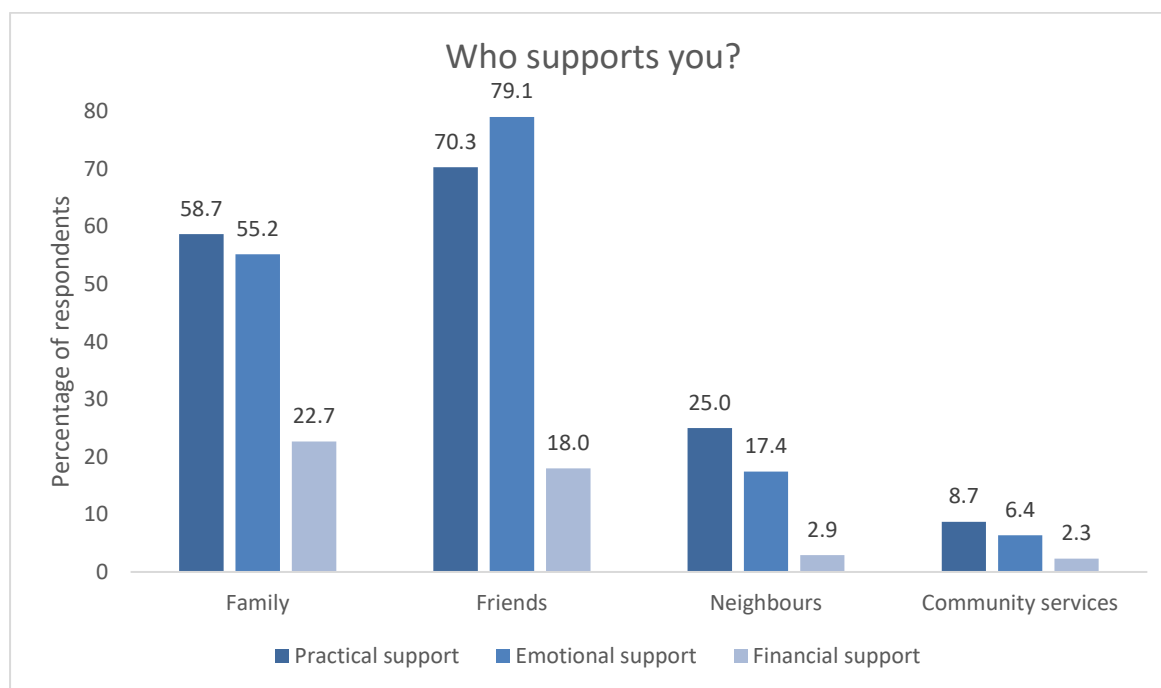
Litchfield respondents reciprocated this care by also providing support to their friends, family, and neighbours who lived in the Territory. Again, friends figured highly but respondents were still more likely to provide financial support to their family members (living outside their household) compared to either their friends or neighbours.
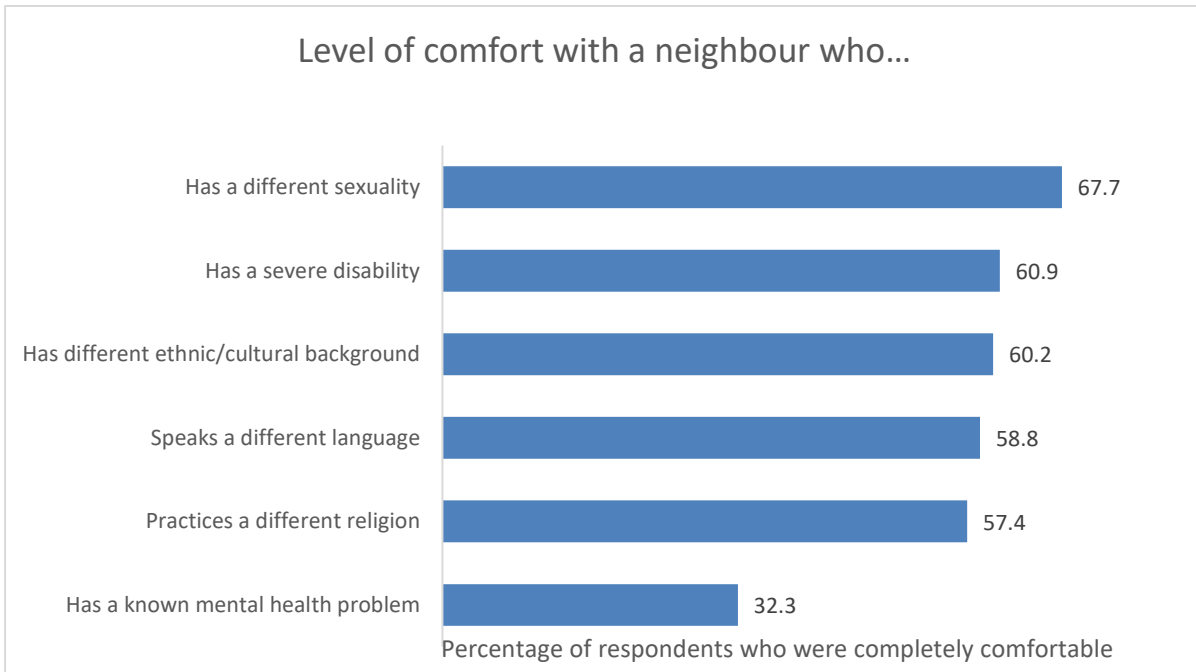
Who do you support?
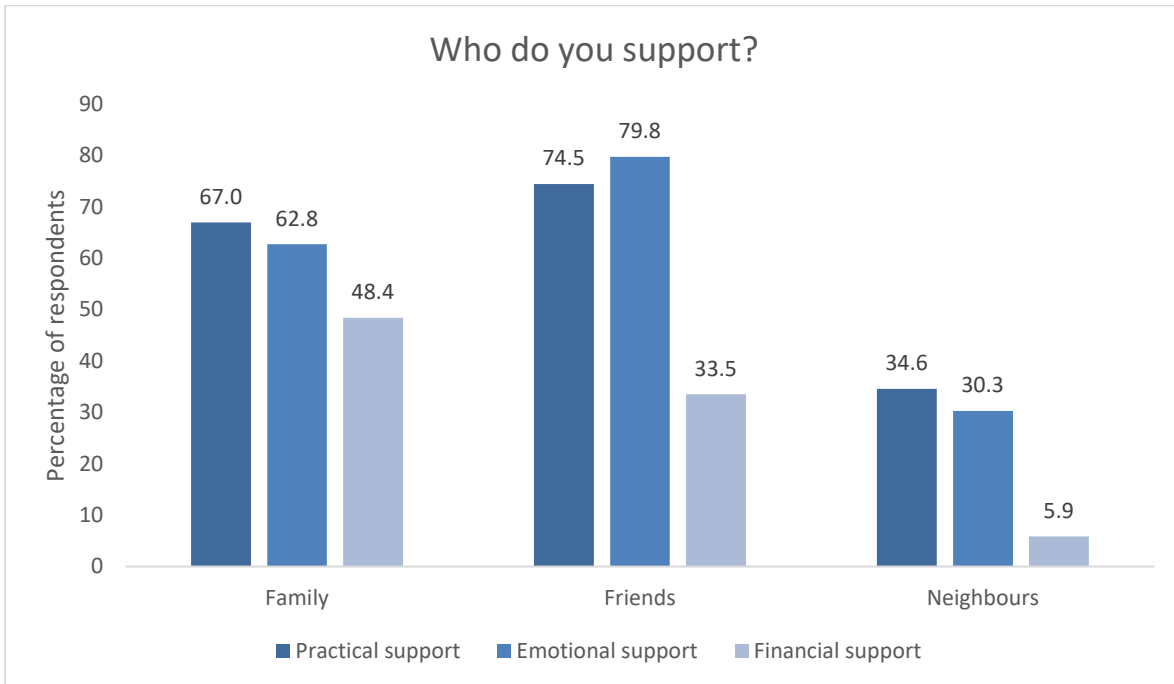
Networks which connect Territory residents with people in positions of authority and influence can assist in getting something done. The survey asked whether respondents personally knew somebody in specific organisations or institutions who they would feel comfortable to approach for information or advice. Just over a quarter of Litchfield respondents were not connected to any networks of influence (27%). Of those who were, business leaders (such as bank managers or business owners) were a particularly important source of information and advice with 52 percent nominating them. This compared with about a third (34%) of Litchfield respondents who personally knew a politician or local council member whom they would feel comfortable approaching.

People you know personally who you could approach for information or advice
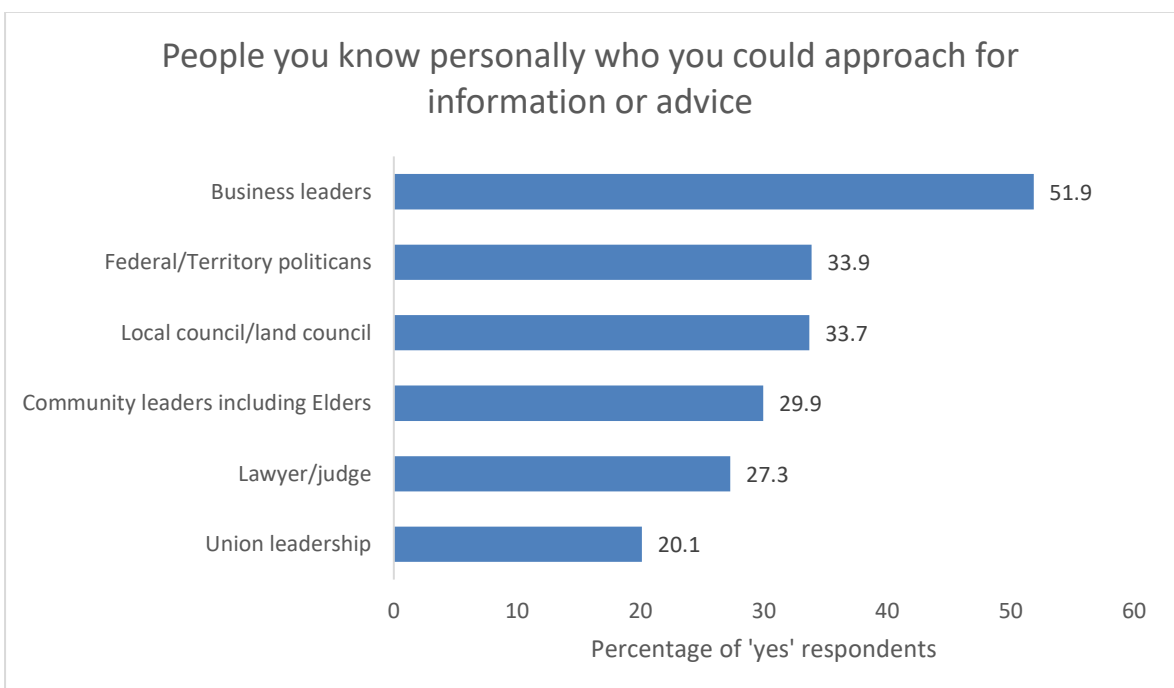
Getting on with others

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 two-thirds of Litchfield respondents were completely comfortable with their neighbour having a different sexuality (68%), and about six in ten were completely comfortable with a neighbour having a severe disability (61%), or a different cultural or ethnic background (60%). Slightly fewer were completely comfortable with a neighbour speaking a different language (59%) or practicing a different religion (57%). However, only a third were completely comfortable having a neighbour with a known mental health problem (32%).
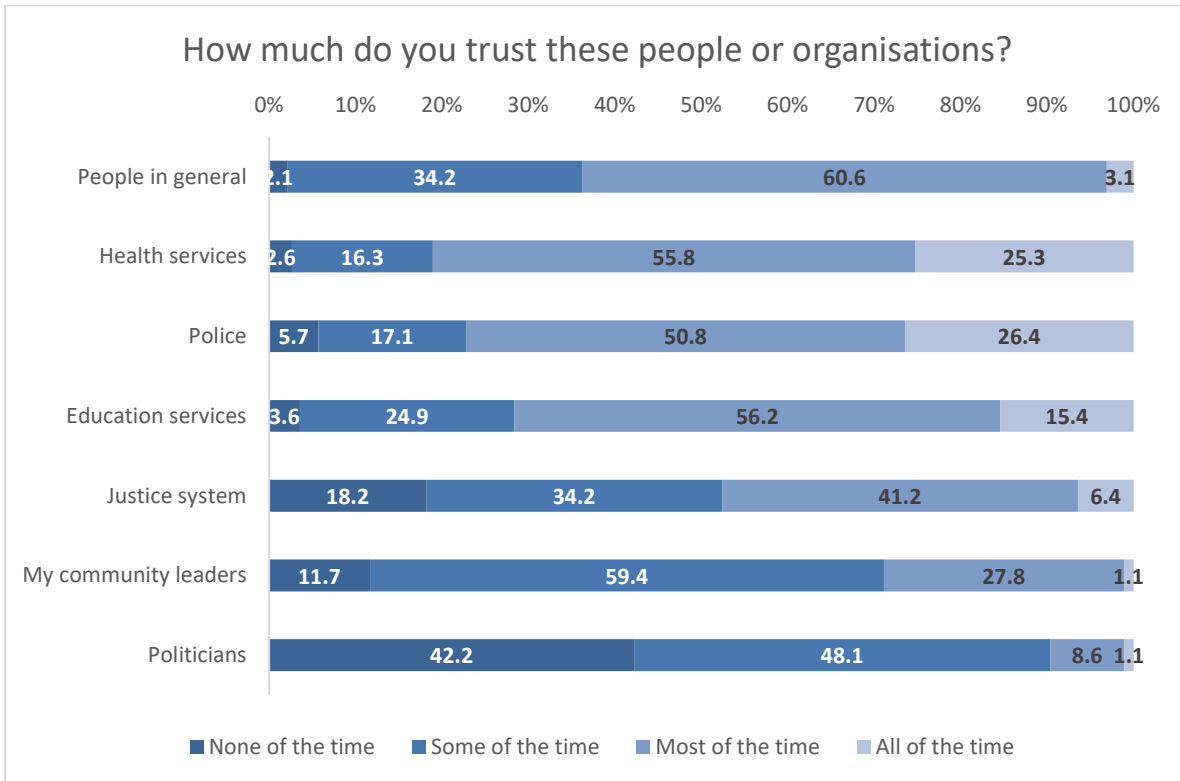
Level of comfort with a neighbour who…

Characteristic	Percentage
Has a different sexuality	67.7
Has a severe disability	60.9
Has different ethnic/cultural background	60.2
Speaks a different language	58.8
Practices a different religion	57.4
Has a known mental health problem	32.3

Percentage of respondents who were completely comfortable

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. Seven in 10 Litchfield respondents felt it was easy or very easy (71%) while a small number found it hard or very hard (4.2%). Reasons people nominated for not feeling accepted were most likely to include their skin colour, a disability or health issue, or their interests.

How easy or hard is it to feel accepted in the Territory?
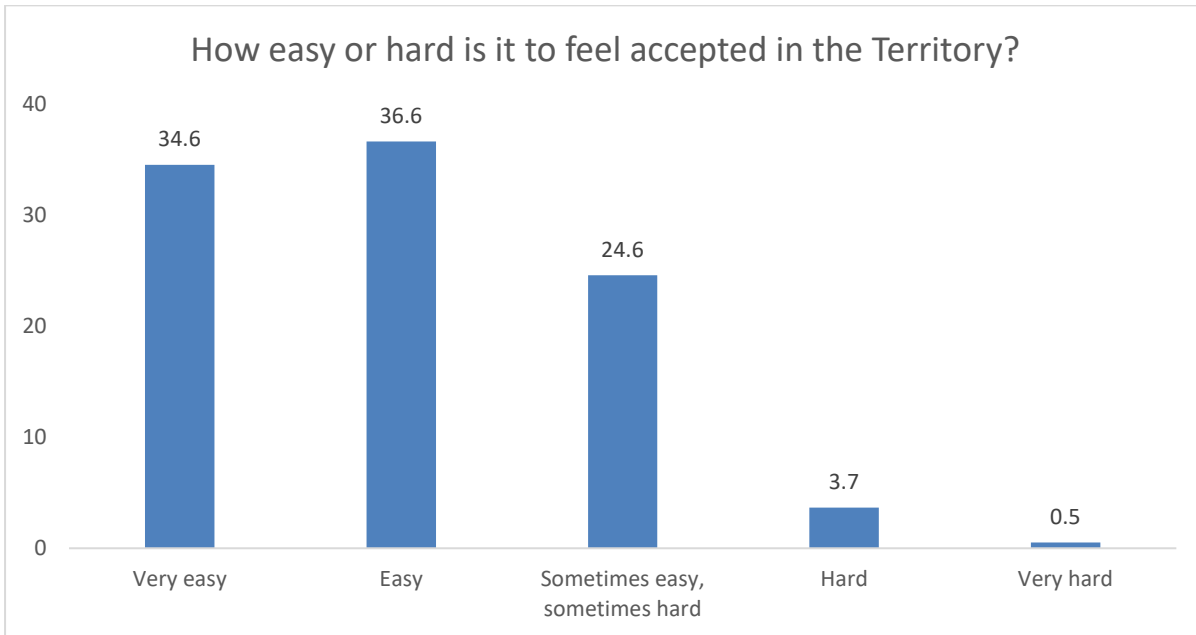
Slightly more than 30 percent of the Territory's population identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. We asked questions to gauge support levels for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. A majority of Litchfield respondents agreed reconciliation actions were important to them (71%), however 12% disagreed and another 16% were unsure.
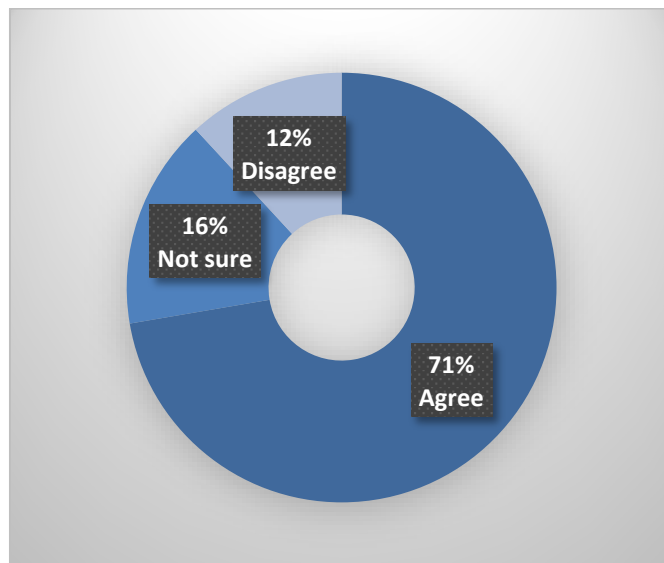
Survey respondents in Litchfield had fairly high levels of trust in people generally (64% trust people all or most of the time). While the majority of Litchfield respondents trusted health services (doctors / nurses, hospitals, health clinics), the police and education services (early childhood, schools, university) most or all of the time, they were less trusting of the justice system (lawyers, courts) (48%). Community leaders 12%) and politicians (42%) were the least trusted occupation or role.

How much do you trust these people or organisations?

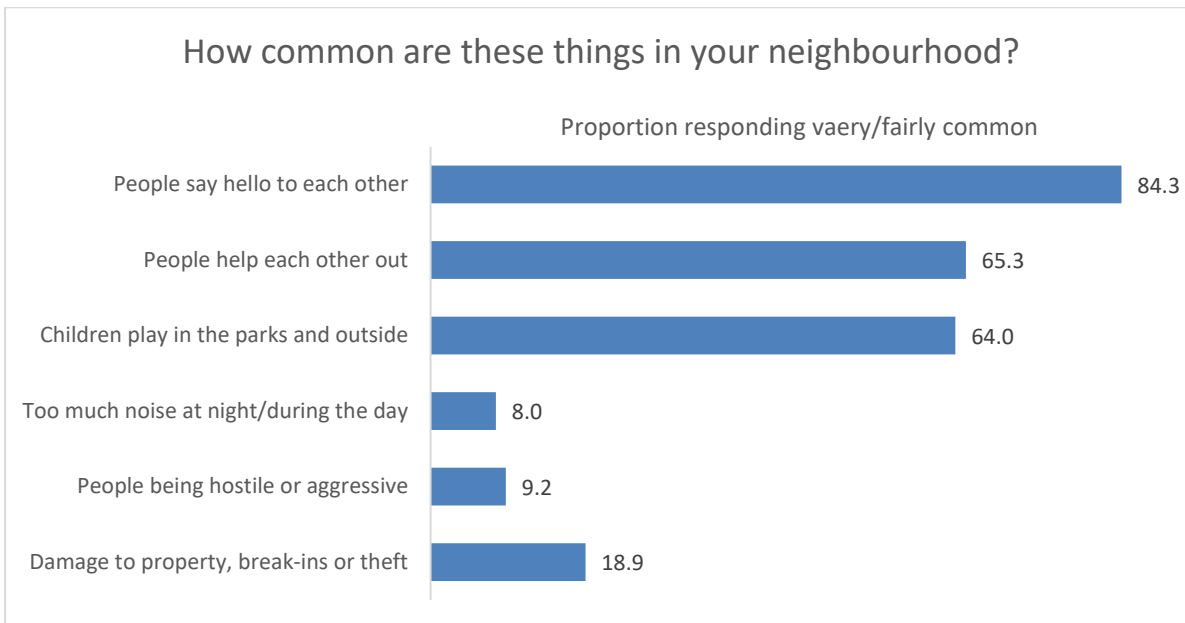| Category	None of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
People in general	2.1	34.2	60.6	3.1
Health services	2.6	16.3	55.8	25.3
Police	5.7	17.1	50.8	26.4
Education services	3.6	24.9	56.2	15.4
Justice system	18.2	34.2	41.2	6.4
My community leaders	11.7	59.4	27.8	1.1
Politicians	42.2	48.1	8.6	1.1

Living in Litchfield

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'.
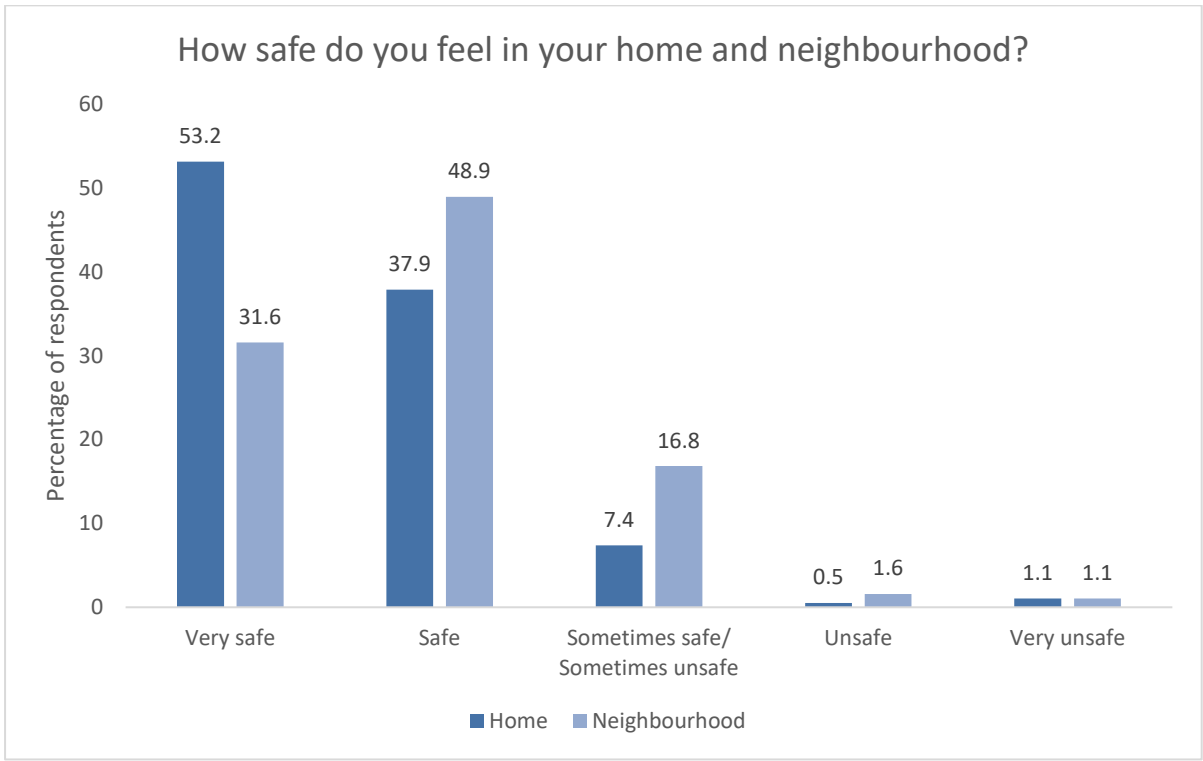
Survey respondents were asked to rate their sense of belonging to the place where they lived on a scale from 0 (no sense of belonging) to 10 (very strong sense). Although the middle rating of 5 was the most common response (17%), 68 percent of Litchfield respondents rated their sense of belonging at 6 or more out of 10.

**Sense of belonging to the place where you live**
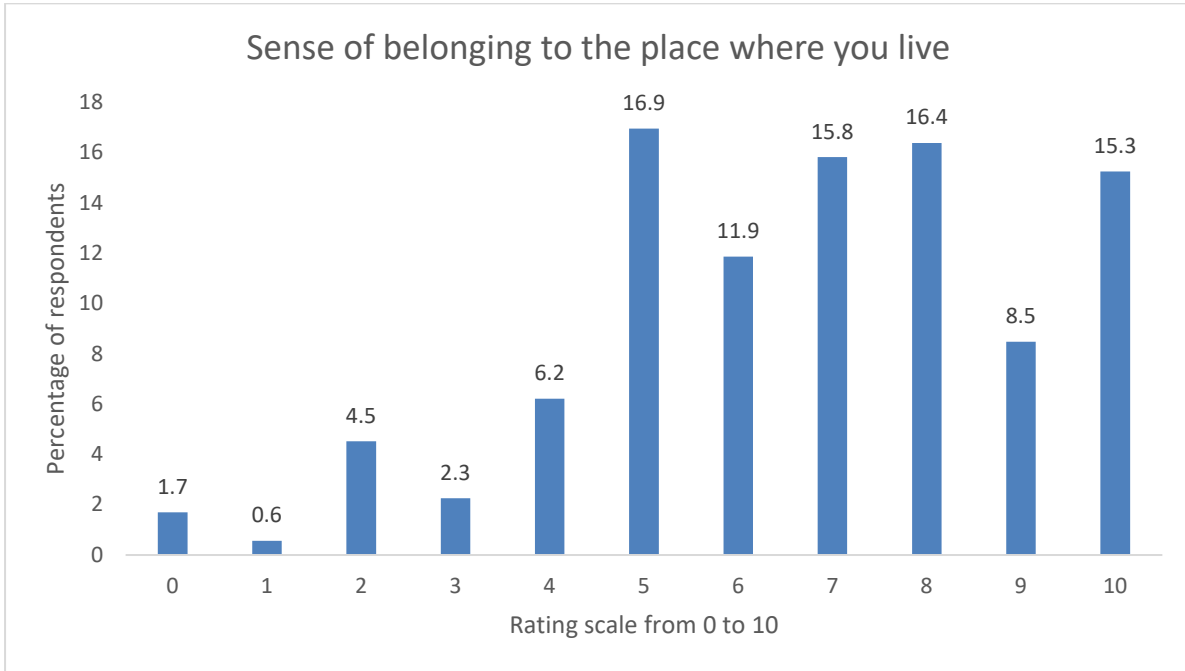
Litchfield respondents generally found their neighbourhoods friendly (84%) and their neighbours helpful (65%). Less than one fifth agreed that property crime was very or fairly common (19%), and fewer than one in 10 said it was common to hear too much noise during the day or night (8%), or experience people being hostile or aggressive (9%).

How common are these things in your neighbourhood?

Proportion responding vaery/fairly common

|	
People say hello to each other	84.3
People help each other out	65.3
Children play in the parks and outside	64.0
Too much noise at night/during the day	8.0
People being hostile or aggressive	9.2
Damage to property, break-ins or theft	18.9

Indeed, more than 90 percent of Litchfield respondents felt safe or very safe in the homes, while 80 percent had the same feelings of safety in their neighbourhood. Correspondingly small proportions felt unsafe or very unsafe.

How safe do you feel in your home and neighbourhood?

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). More than a quarter of Litchfield respondents don't go to these places (27%). Of those who use public blue and green space, the majority would travel by car to access them (97% for blue spaces and 87% for green spaces).

**How do you access public green and blue spaces?**
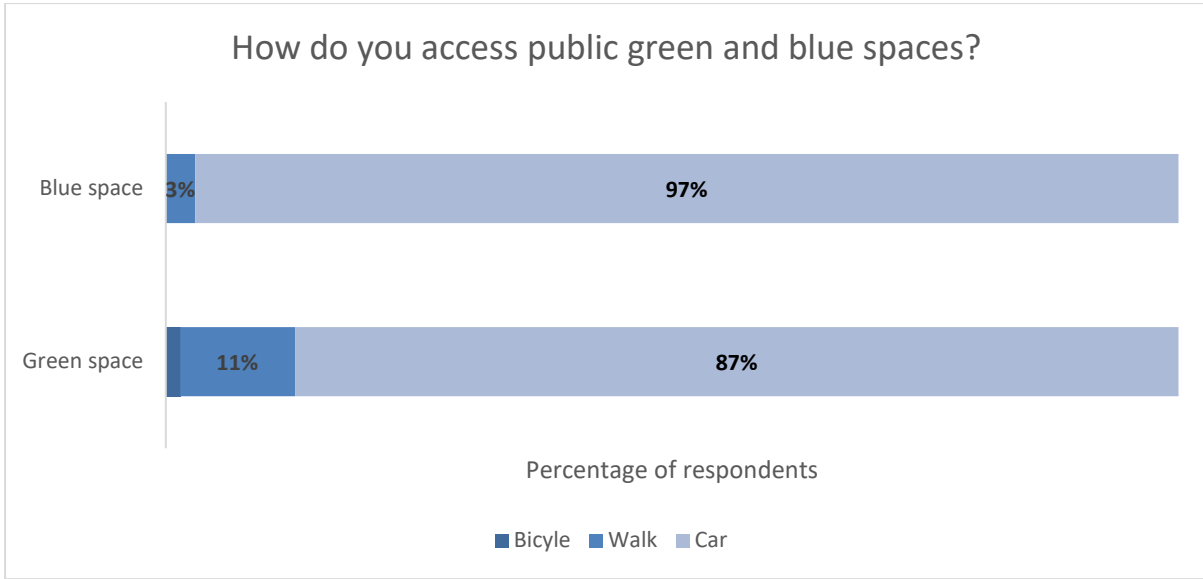
Two thirds of Litchfield respondents agreed there were places to socialise in their neighbourhood such as parks, playgrounds, BBQ areas or cafes (65%). Of the people who knew about these amenities, about one in ten used them daily or at least once a week to socialise, while 60 percent did not use them often or ever.

How often fo you socialise using a neighbourhood amenity?
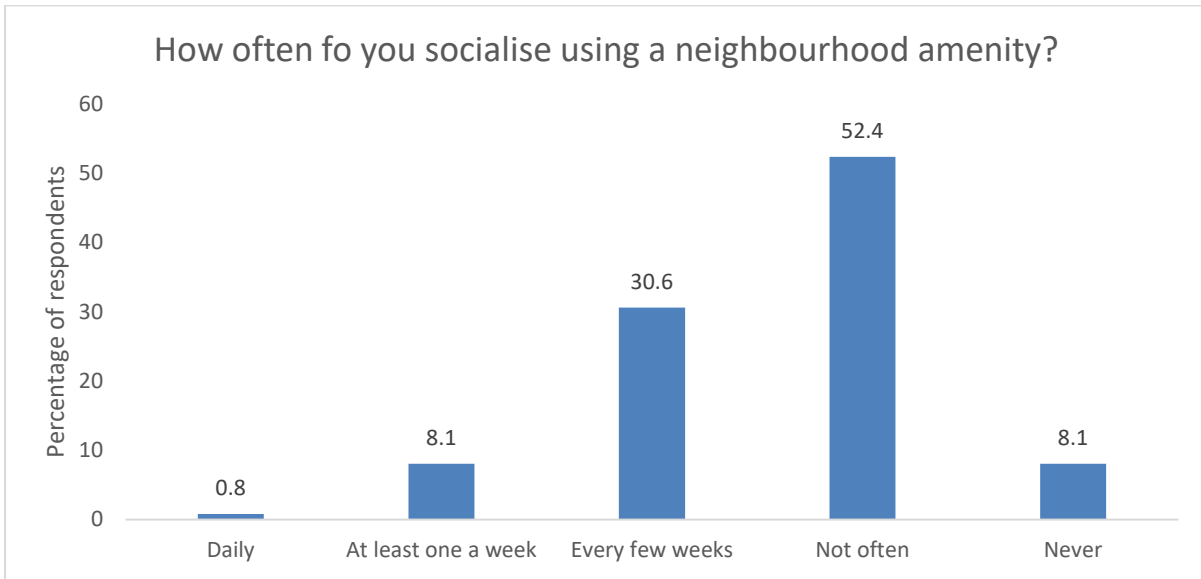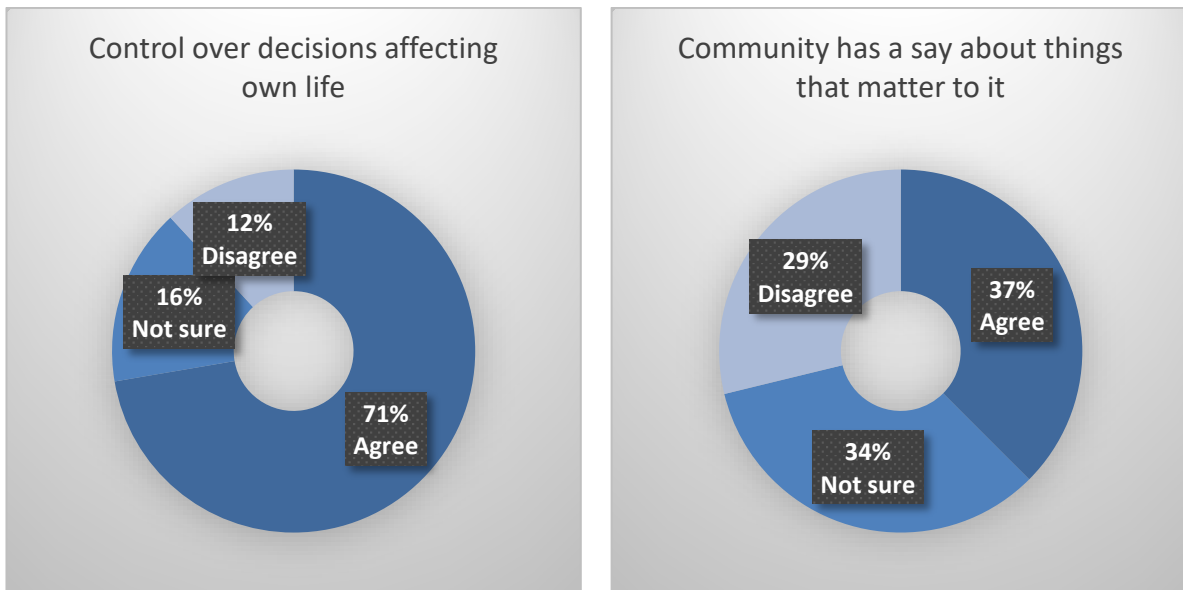
Engaging with community

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, nearly three-quarters of Litchfield 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 (72%). A slightly higher proportion (77%) 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. Even more belonged to at least one organised social or community group (88%), the most common being sport and recreation groups, or a special interest group.
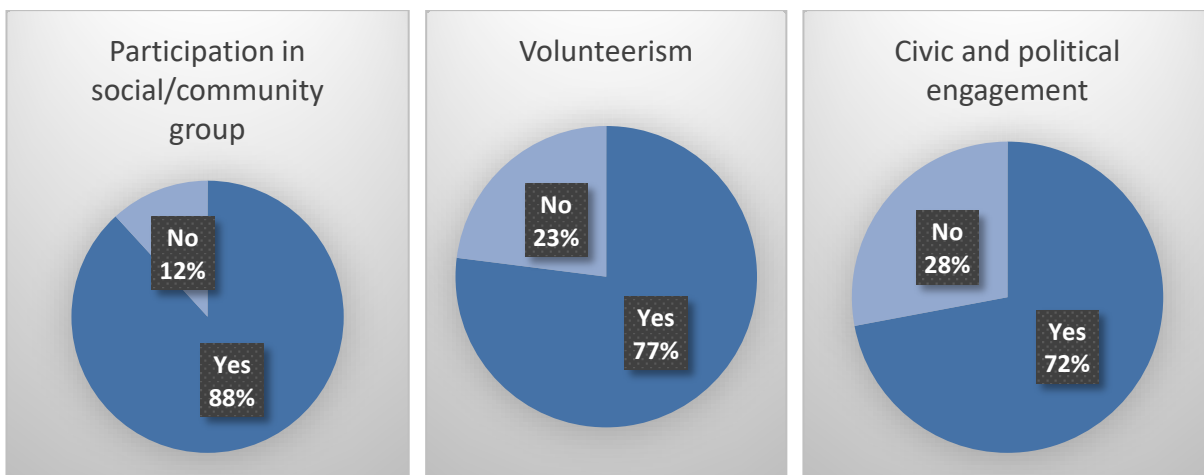
Additionally, more than four out of five survey respondents (85%) also felt that they could participate in cultural ceremonies, celebrations, or religious events when they wanted to.
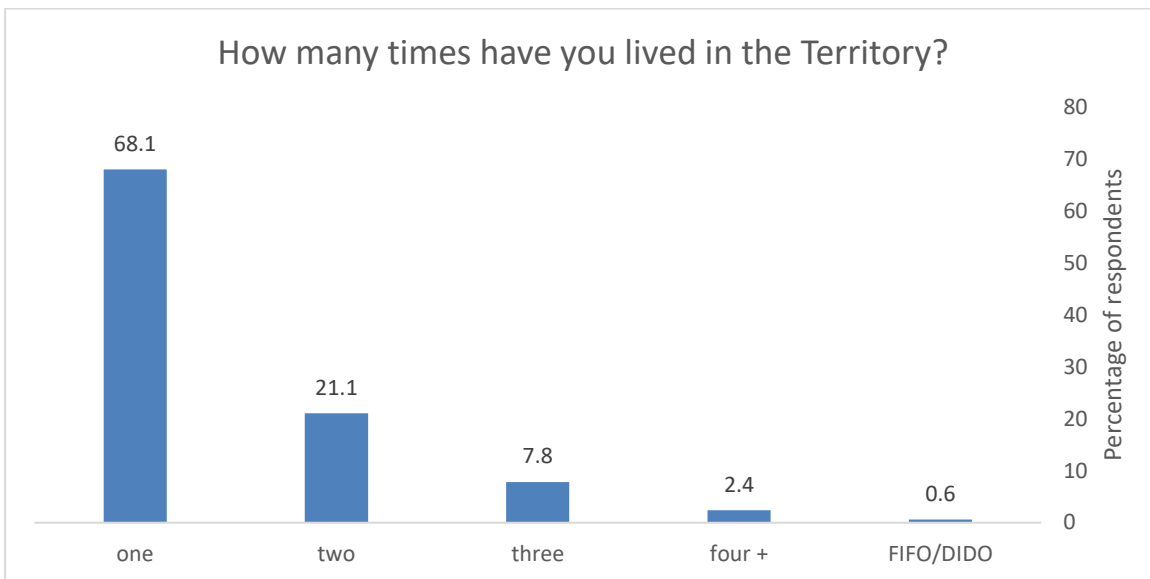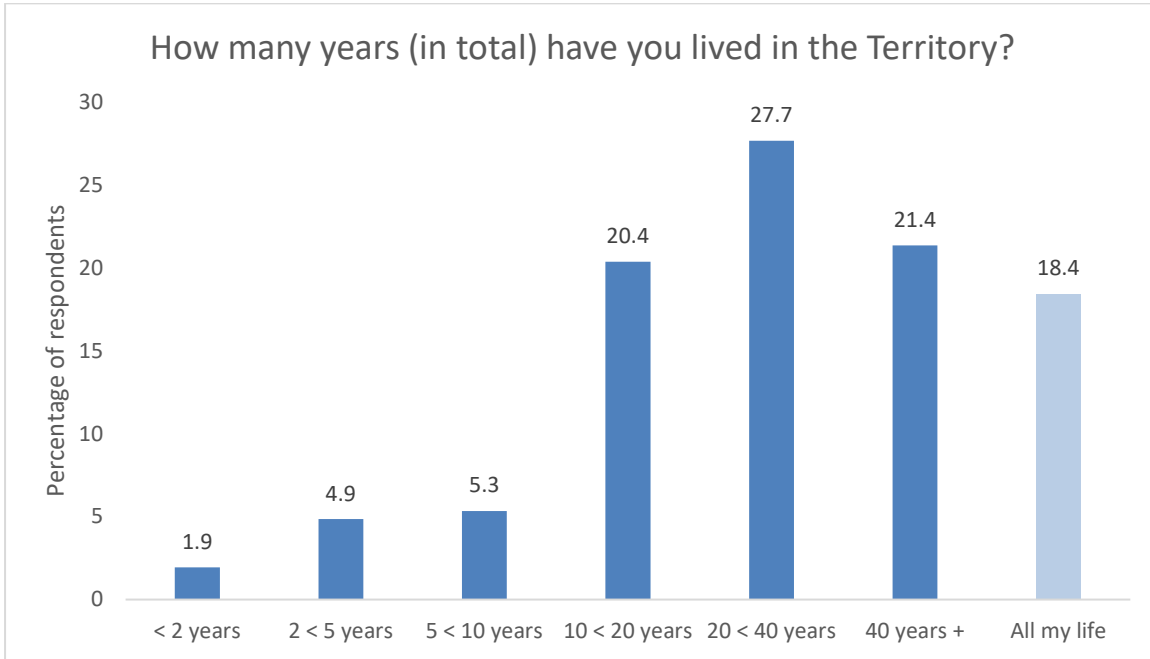
While survey respondents in Litchfield generally felt that they had control over decisions which affected their own lives (71% agreed), they were less certain that their community had the same opportunity to have a real say on important issues (37%). Nearly one third disagreed that their community had a say, and more than a third were not sure whether it had a say or not.

Control over decisions affecting own life

- 12% Disagree
- 16% Not sure
- 71% Agree

Community has a say about things that matter to it

- 29% Disagree
- 37% Agree
- 34% Not sure

Connecting with the Territory

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

Nearly 90 percent of Litchfield respondents had lived in the Territory for 10 years or longer (88%), including 18 percent who had lived here all their life. Almost a third were returned residents (31%), who had lived in the Territory more than once, suggesting that this group had built a sense of connection with the Territory even though they had left for a period of time.

How many years (in total) have you lived in the Territory?

Values: < 2 years: 1.9; 2 < 5 years: 4.9; 5 < 10 years: 5.3; 10 < 20 years: 20.4; 20 < 40 years: 27.7; 40 years +: 21.4; All my life: 18.4

(Y-axis: Percentage of respondents)

How many times have you lived in the Territory?

Values: one: 68.1; two: 21.1; three: 7.8; four +: 2.4; FIFO/DIDO: 0.6

(Y-axis: Percentage of respondents)

Nearly 8 in 10 Litchfield respondents expected to be living in the Territory in two years' time. Indeed, a large majority thought they would still be living in Litchfield (76%). Of those who were planning to remain in the Territory, over a half had most or all their family living in the Territory (56%), while less than half had a sense of connection to another place (45%). Both these factors may mitigate against migration push factors that are known to prompt people to leave to live closer to family or to return to a place they know well.

Where do you thing you will be living in two years' time?

Percentage of respondents

Category	Value
In my current town, city or community	76.2
Somewhere else in the Territory	3.4
I'm not really sure	11.2
In another State/Territory	8.7
Overseas	0.5
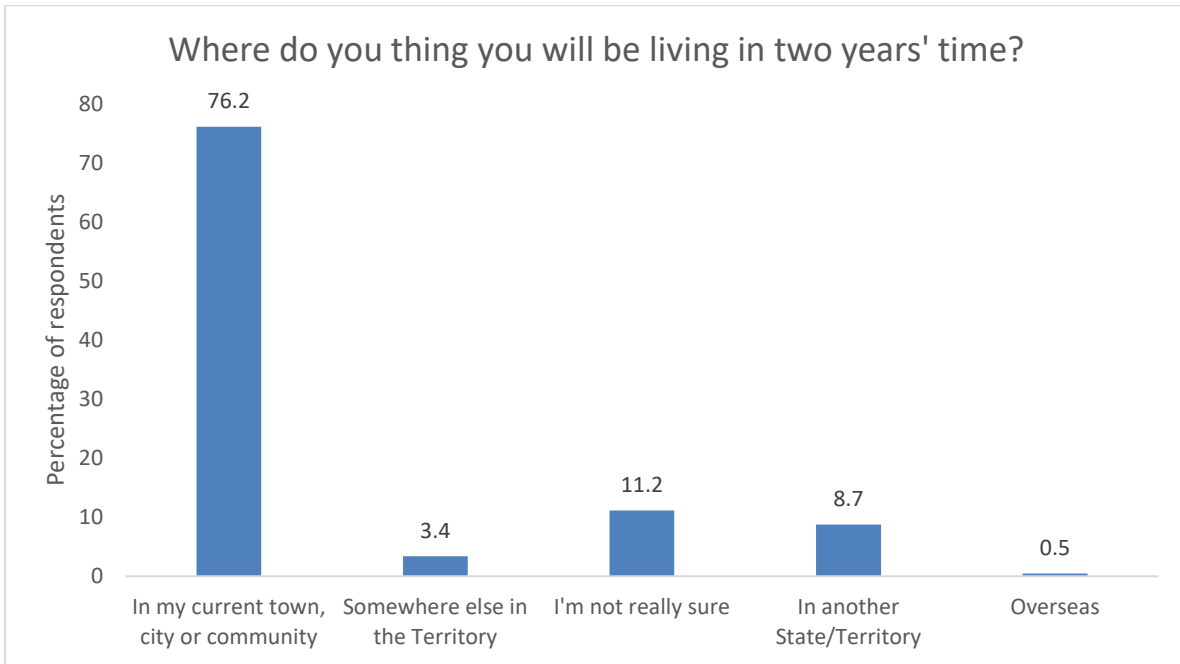
People who plan to be living in the Territory in two years' time

Have all or most family living in the Territory

No 44%

Yes 56%

Have sense of connection to another place

Yes 45%

No 55%
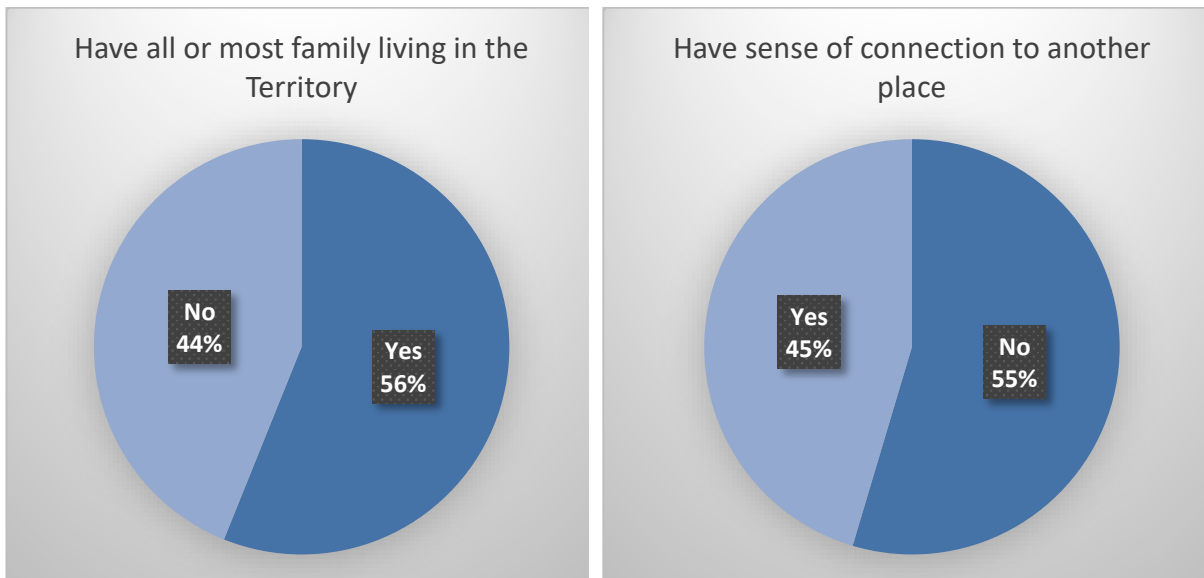
The Territory has a unique natural environment which is often a factor in drawing people here and keeping people in place. The survey asked respondents to separately rate the importance of being close to open country (such as the bush, escarpments, or the desert), and to water (such as rivers, creeks, and billabongs). Again, this rating was on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 equalled not important and 10 equalled extremely important.

As expected for people living in the rural areas of Greater Darwin, being close to the natural environment was generally important to respondents from Litchfield. Indeed, more than four

in ten felt that proximity to open country was extremely important to them (44%), with the average rating of all Litchfield respondents being 8.5. Fewer respondents had the same extreme feelings about being close to water (28%), which produced a lower average rating of 7.3.

Importance of living close to the natural environment
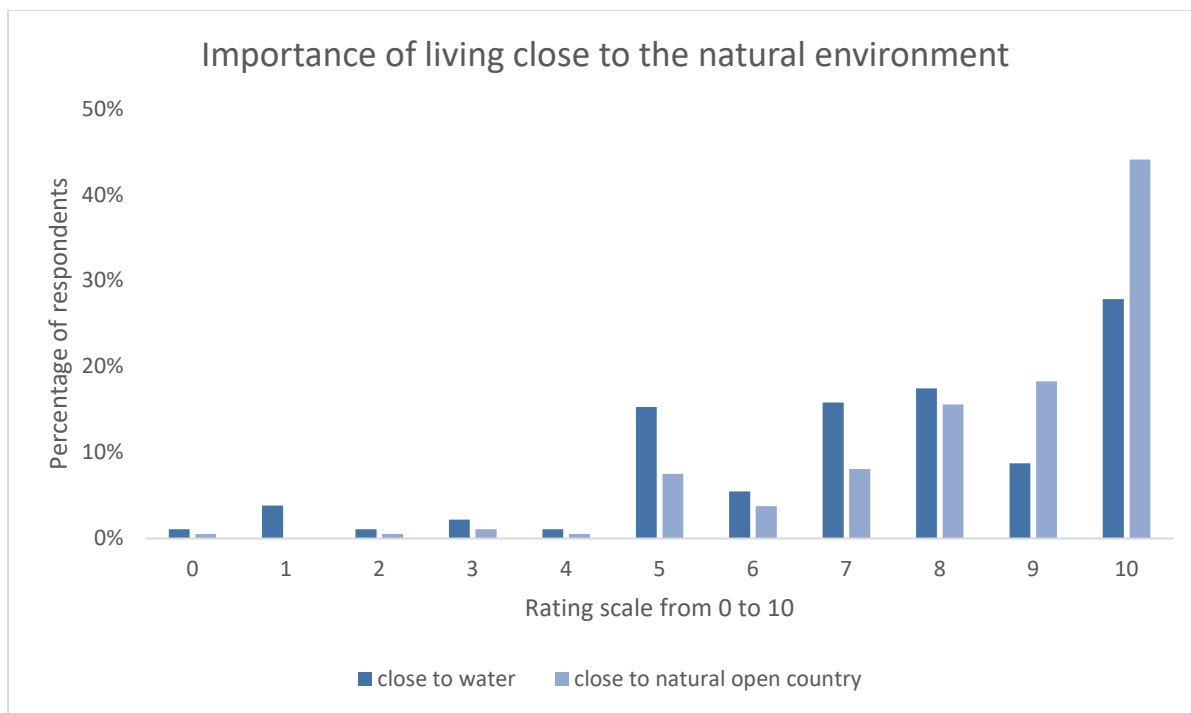
Identifying as a Territorian was strong for Litchfield respondents with 94 percent saying they "definitely" or "probably" consider themselves to be a Territorian. However, length of time in the Territory can work against a person forming a Territorian identity if they feel they have not lived here 'long enough' in the eyes of others or were not born and bred in the Territory. Comments from Litchfield respondents 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 they have established through family and community. In contrast, those who may not or do not consider themselves to be Territorians highlighted feelings of not living here long enough or not being welcomed.
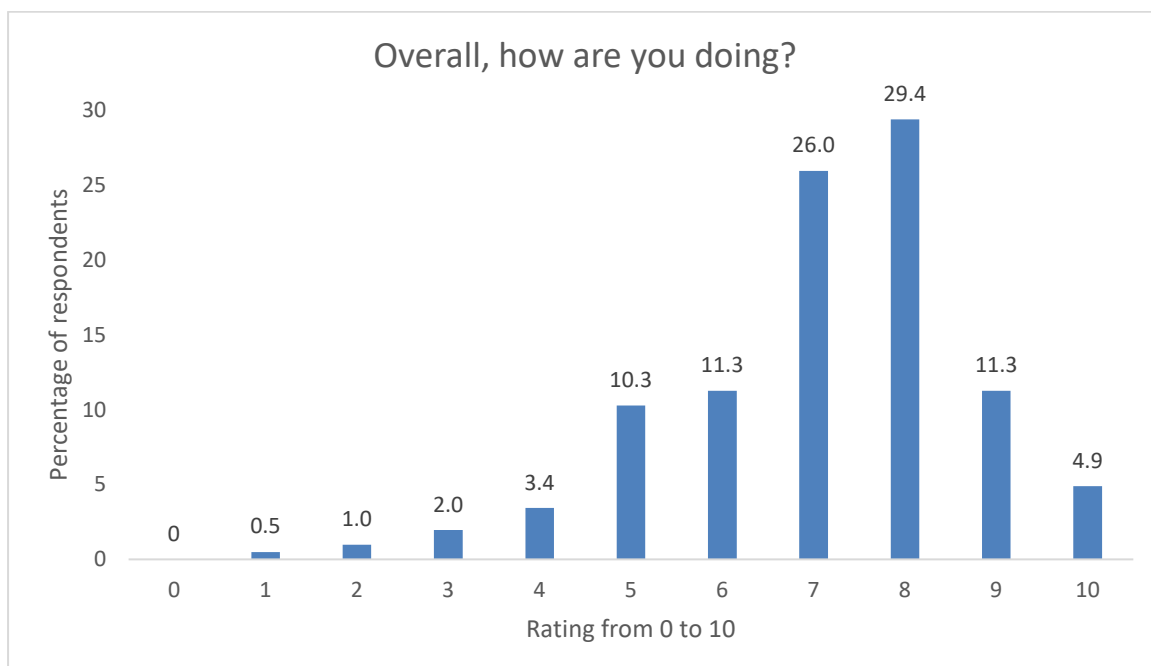
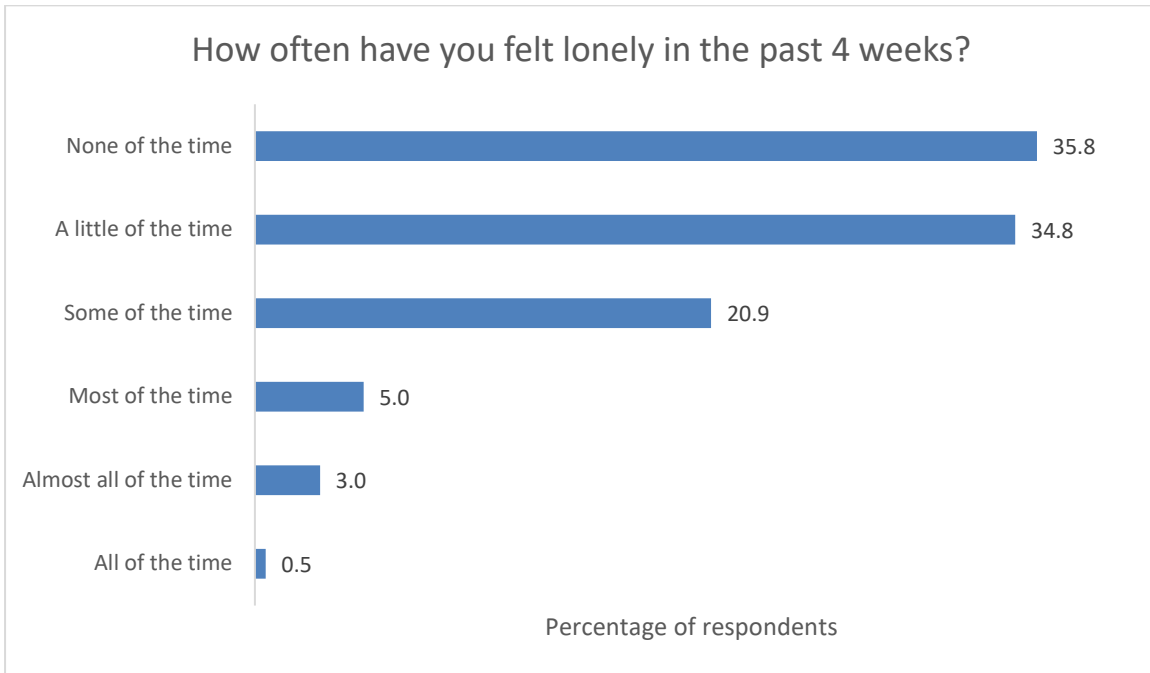| Territorian?	Comments from Litchfield survey respondents
Definitely or probably yes	"My place of birth, and although I've left a few times seeking new horizons, I always come back shortly afterwards. I also dislike the cold." "… I am accepted by my community as a fellow Territorian, and that is without preconceptions of where I might originate from." "been here a while, feel like I know how it rolls in the NT and like that way"

Might or might not	"still have connections to my birth place and the NT is very hard to determine if you belong or classed as a local"
Probably not	"Haven't lived here long enough" "I am not an Australian citizen and some people in the NT have strong views about people who live here from overseas."

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 Litchfield respondents rated themselves at 7 or 8, with the average score being 6.8. Although only a small number rated themselves at less than 5 (7%), when asked about experiences of loneliness, a slightly higher percentage (9%) said that they had felt lonely for the majority of the time in the past 4 weeks. This is of concern because loneliness has been linked with poor mental health and increased morbidity.

Overall, how are you doing?
Percentage of respondents vs Rating from 0 to 10:
0: 0
1: 0.5
2: 1.0
3: 2.0
4: 3.4
5: 10.3
6: 11.3
7: 26.0
8: 29.4
9: 11.3
10: 4.9

How often have you felt lonely in the past 4 weeks?

Response	Percentage
None of the time	35.8
A little of the time	34.8
Some of the time	20.9
Most of the time	5.0
Almost all of the time	3.0
All of the time	0.5

Percentage of respondents

Additionally, in response to a question regarding life stressors in the previous year, two percent of Litchfield respondents indicated gambling problems had affected their overall wellbeing, while nine 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 six in ten Litchfield respondents felt they had enough or more than enough income (61%), a substantial proportion did not (39%).

Income adequacy

Category	Percentage
Not Enough	7%
More than enough	17%
Just enough	32%
Enough	44%
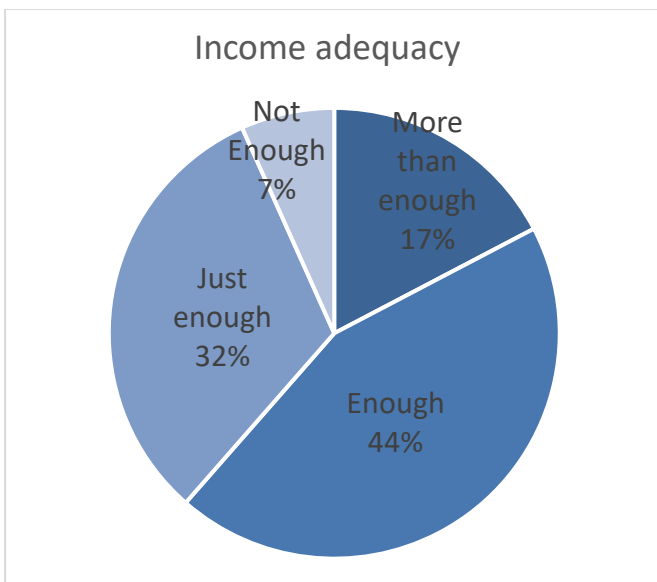
Note: Income adequacy is described as having enough to cover basic living expenses of self and dependent family

Who responded to the survey?

The results in this report are based on responses to the *my Territory Connections* survey by a total of 206 residents of the Litchfield Municipality.

Demographic characteristics of Litchfield survey sample		
Gender	Male	20%
	Female	80%
Age group	18-24 years	4%
	25-34 years	11%
	35-49 years	38%
	50-59 years	30%
	60+ years	17%
Disability status	Has disability or serious health condition	16%
Indigenous status	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	13%
	Non-Indigenous	84%
Place of birth	Australia	84%
	Overseas	16%
Housing status	Owner (outright)	16%
	Owner (with mortgage)	68%
	Renter	9%
	Other housing situation	7%
Sexual identity	Straight/heterosexual	95%
	Sexual minority	5%

Four times as many women as men participated, and the views of the 18 to 24 years were under-represented.

About 16 percent of Litchfield respondents had a disability or serious health condition, with 83 percent indicating that it limited their participation in social and community activities.

One in six Litchfield respondents was born overseas. Their countries of birth included: United Kingdom; Thailand, Germany, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand, United States of America, and Vietnam.

Four in five Litchfield respondents owned their homes with or without a mortgage while only 9 percent rented.

While the majority of Litchfield respondents considered themselves to be heterosexual, 1 in 20 survey respondents identified themselves with a sexual minority.

Since its formation in 2010, Northern Institute has become a regional leader in high-quality social and public policy research. We are driven to make positive differences in communities, society and policy through robust and independent research. Our research aims to develop an understanding of regional development and provide evidence to inform policy development, facilitate capacity building and respond to the needs of governments and communities.

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

- Contemporary Indigenous Knowledge, Governance and Science

- Demography and Growth Planning

- Realist Research, Evaluation and Learning

- Regional, Economic, Education and Workforce Development

- Risk, Resilience and Sustainability.