

NORTHERN TERRITORY

my Territory Connections



Summary results for the City of Palmerston

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.

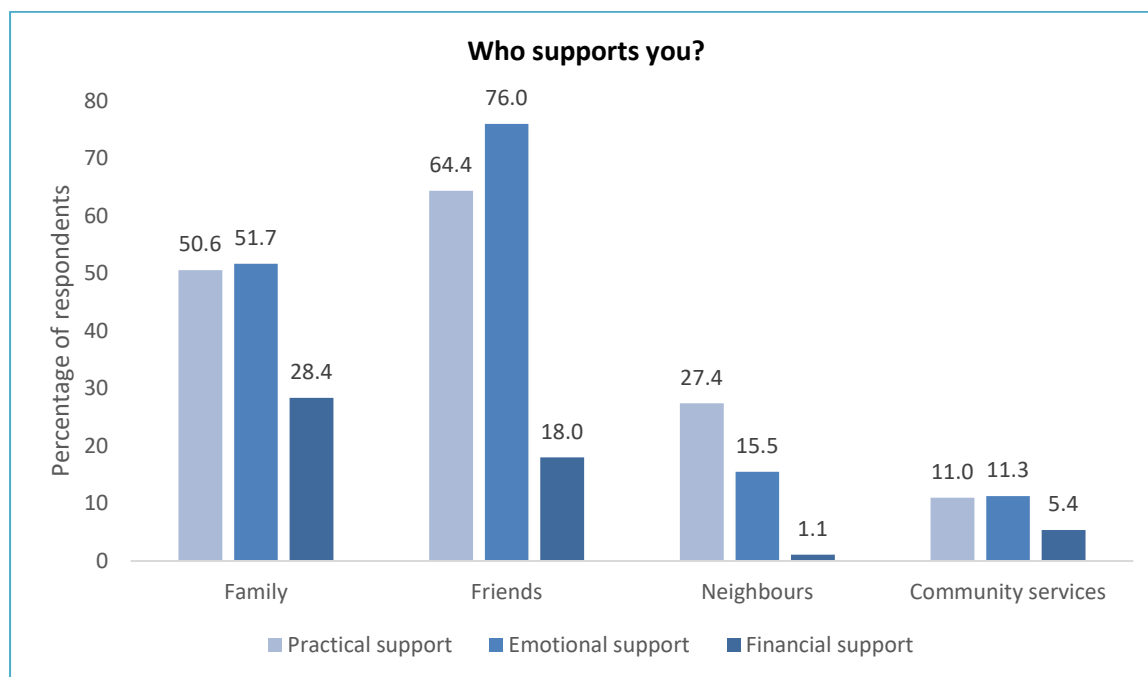
Thank you to all Territory residents who took the time to provide information on their experiences and opinions as part of this research.

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

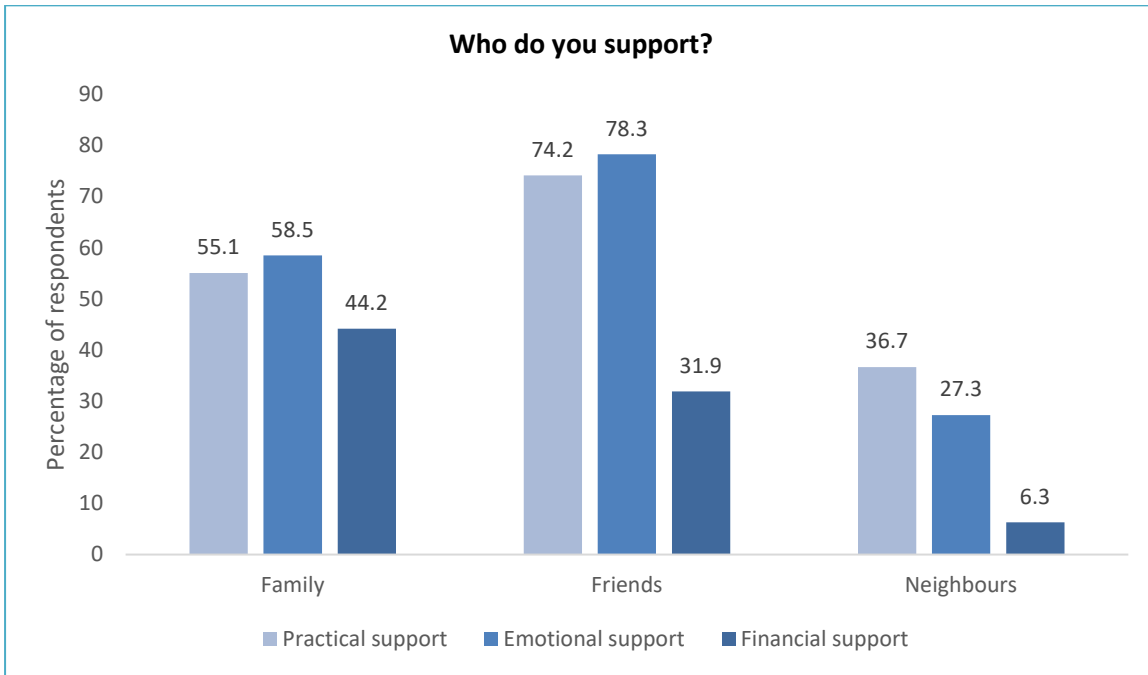
The *My Territory Connections* survey asked questions about people’s wellbeing and their connections to other people, to the place where they live, and to the Territory as a whole. This report of responses from people living in the City of Palmerston unpacks this sense of connection by looking at people’s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

Building social networks

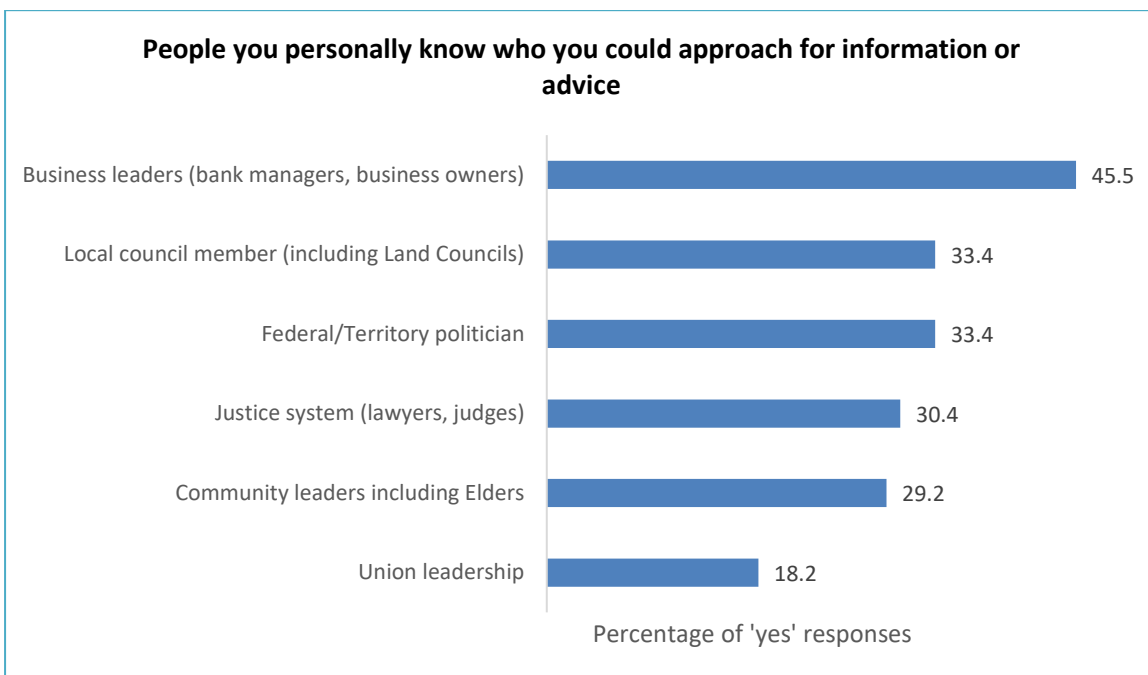
Consisting of family, friends, and neighbours, local social structures link people to support networks and help build resilient communities. Respondents from Palmerston appeared to have strong support systems in place that connected them to family (who lived in the Territory but outside their household) and Territory friends and neighbours. Friends were a particularly important source of practical and emotional support, even more so than the family members 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.



Palmerston 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 who did not live with them compared to either friends or neighbours.



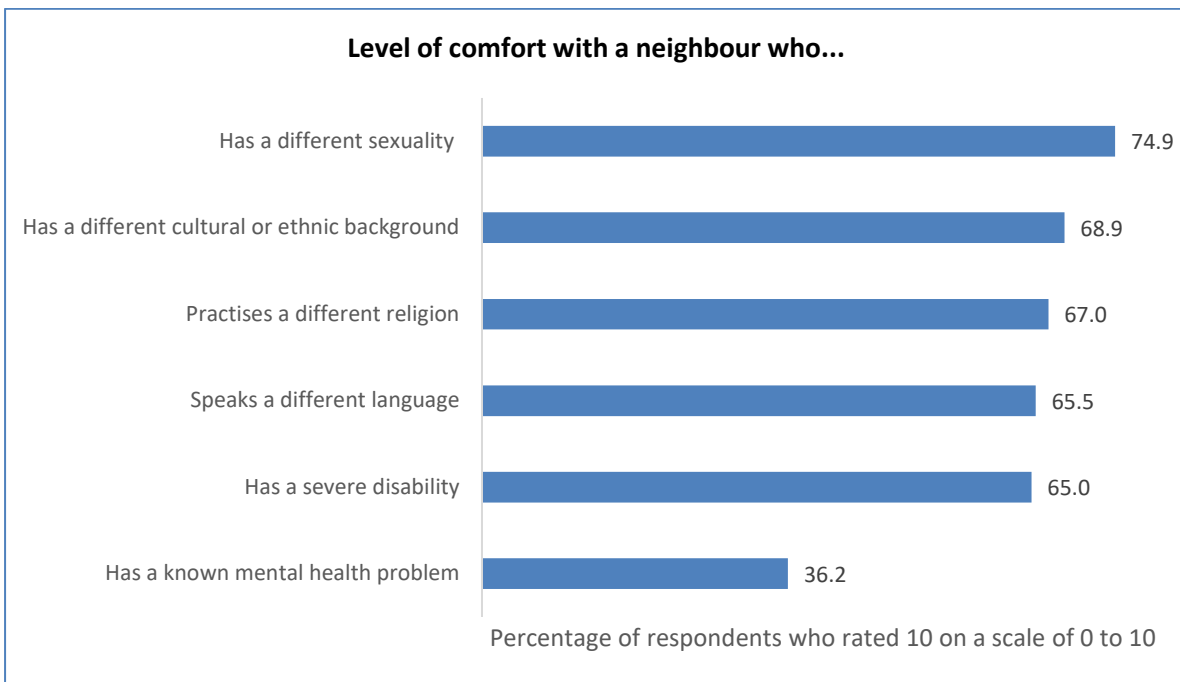
Networks which connect Territory residents with people in positions of authority and influence can often assist in getting something done. The survey asked whether respondents personally knew somebody in specific organisations or institutions who they would feel comfortable to approach for information or advice. Nearly a third of Palmerston respondents were not connected to these networks of influence (32%). Of those who were, business leaders (bank managers, business owners) were a particularly important source of information and advice with 46 percent nominating them. This compared with a third of Palmerston respondents personally knowing a local council member or Federal/Territory politicians whom they would feel comfortable approaching.



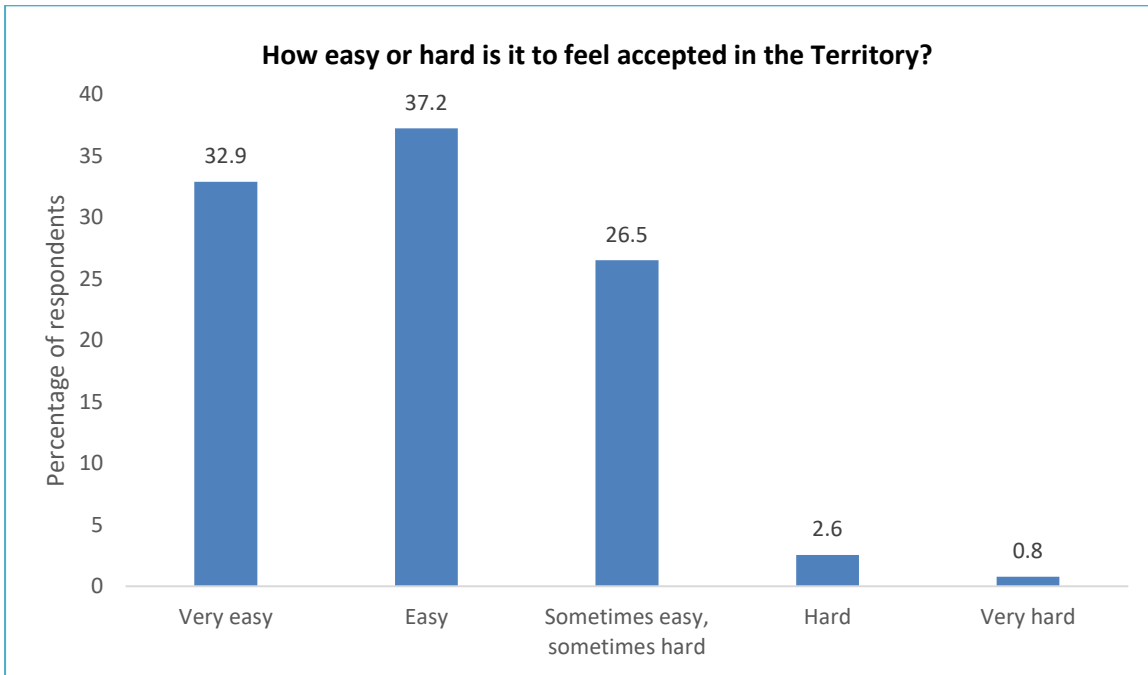
Getting on with others

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.

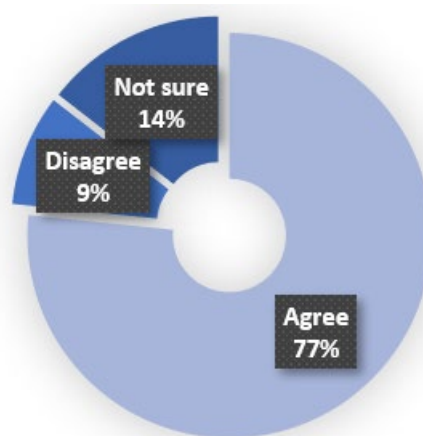
To assess people’s acceptance of diversity in their community, survey respondents were asked how comfortable they would feel (on a scale of 0 to 10) in circumstances where a neighbour had certain diversity characteristics. Three-quarters of Palmerston respondents were completely comfortable with their neighbour having a different sexuality to themselves (75%), while nearly seven in ten were completely comfortable with a neighbour who was from a different cultural or ethnic background (69%) or who practiced a different religion (67%). Slightly fewer were completely comfortable with a neighbour speaking a different language (66%) or having a severe disability (65%). However, substantially fewer were completely comfortable having a neighbour with a known mental health problem (36%).



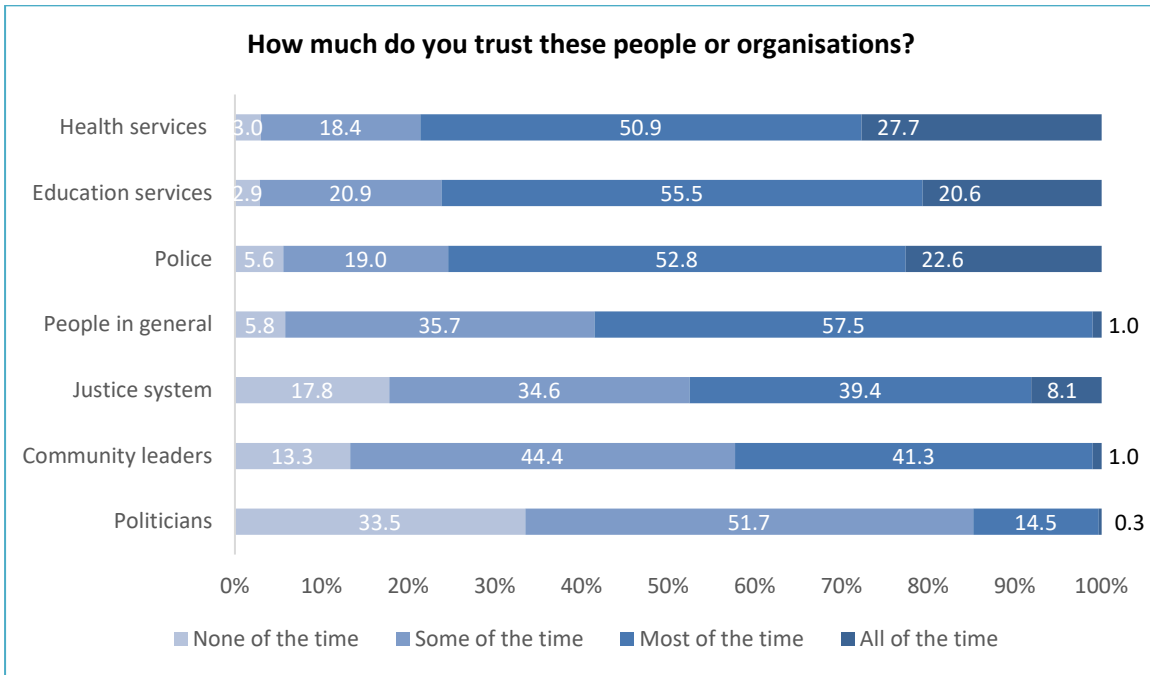
Feelings of welcome from a community influences people’s sense of being accepted for who they are. This issue was investigated by asking survey respondents how easy or hard it was for them to feel accepted in the Territory. Seven in ten Palmerston respondents felt it was easy or very easy (70%), while a small number found it hard or very hard (3.4%). The reasons they nominated for not feeling accepted were most likely to include their interests, their age, the way they dress or their appearance, or their disability/ health issue.



Slightly more than 30 percent of the Territory’s population identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander therefore support for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians could be expected. A high proportion of Palmerston respondents agreed reconciliation actions were important to them (77%), however 9% disagree and another 14% were unsure.



Survey respondents in Palmerston were generally trusting of other people with 59 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 41% respectively). Even fewer trusted politicians with 15 percent trusting them most of the time, and the remaining trusting them some or none of the time.



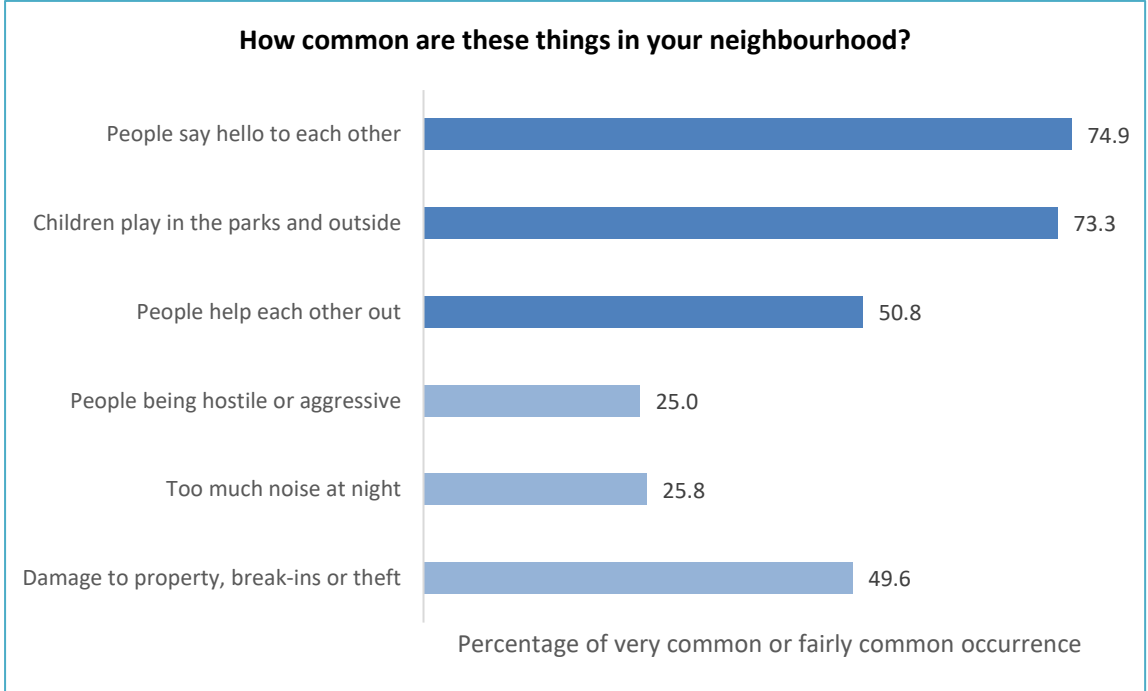
Living in Palmerston

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 20%), however more than 50 percent of Palmerston respondents rated their sense of belonging at 6 or more out of 10 (56%).

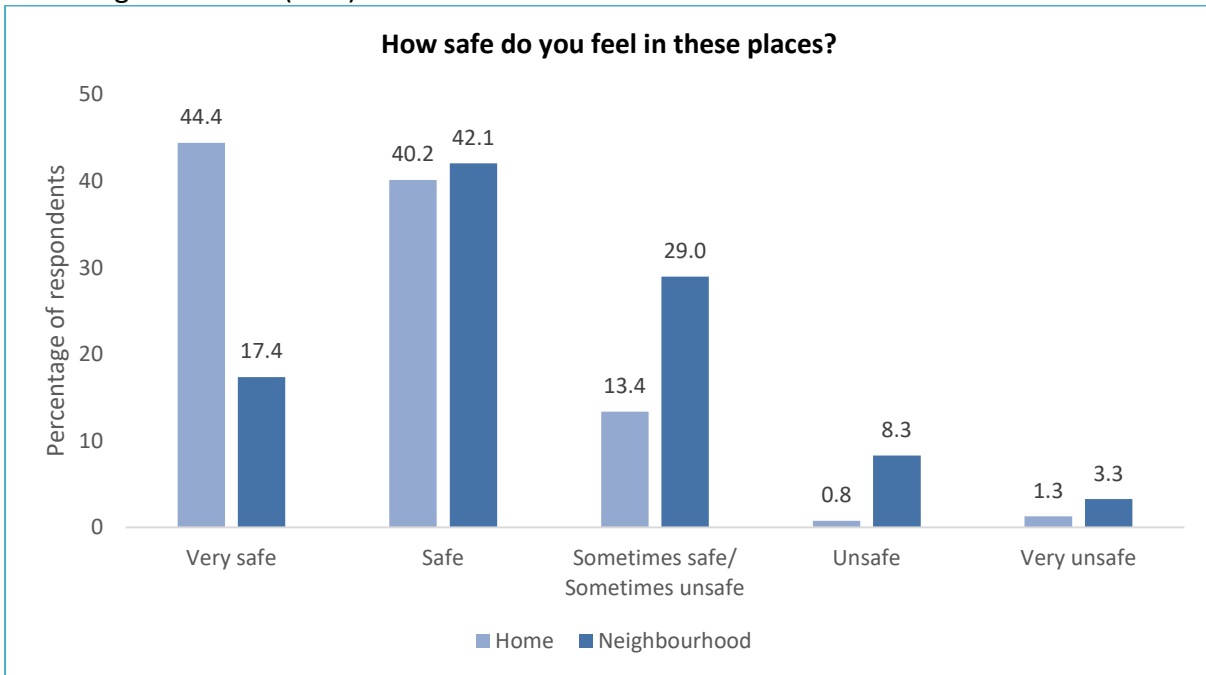


Three-quarters of Palmerston respondents found their neighbourhoods friendly (75%) and their neighbours helpful (73%), however their neighbourhoods were not without issues. One half of respondents said property crime was very or fairly common (50%), while a quarter said it was common to hear too much noise at night (26%) or experience people being hostile or aggressive (25%).

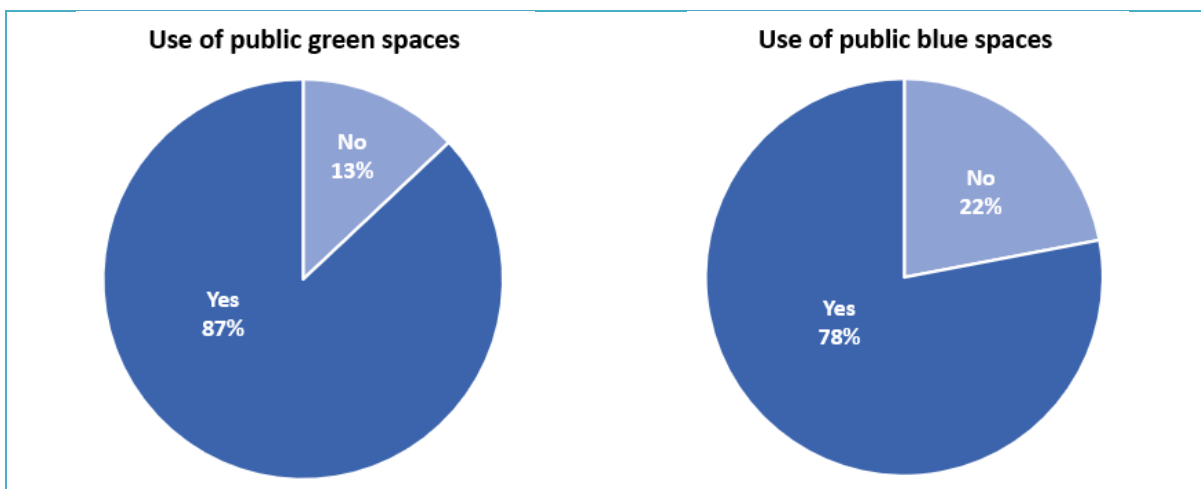


More than 80 percent of Palmerston respondents felt safe or very safe in their homes, while less than two thirds had the same feelings of safety in their neighbourhood (60%). Although

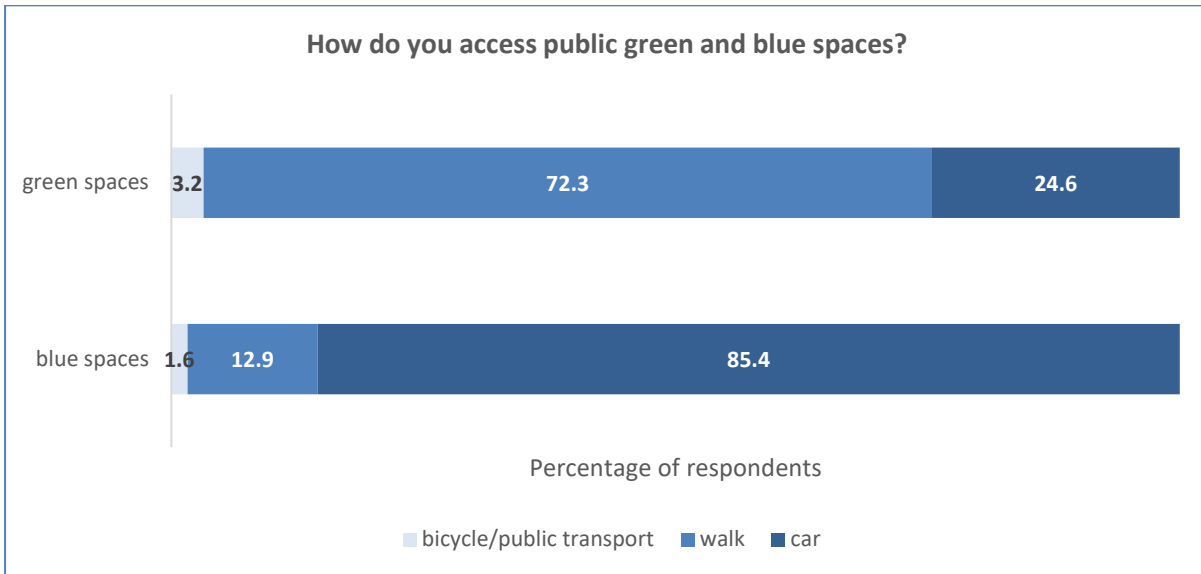
just 2 percent felt unsafe or very unsafe in their home, over 1 in 10 felt unsafe or very safe in their neighbourhood (12%) and another 29% felt sometimes unsafe.



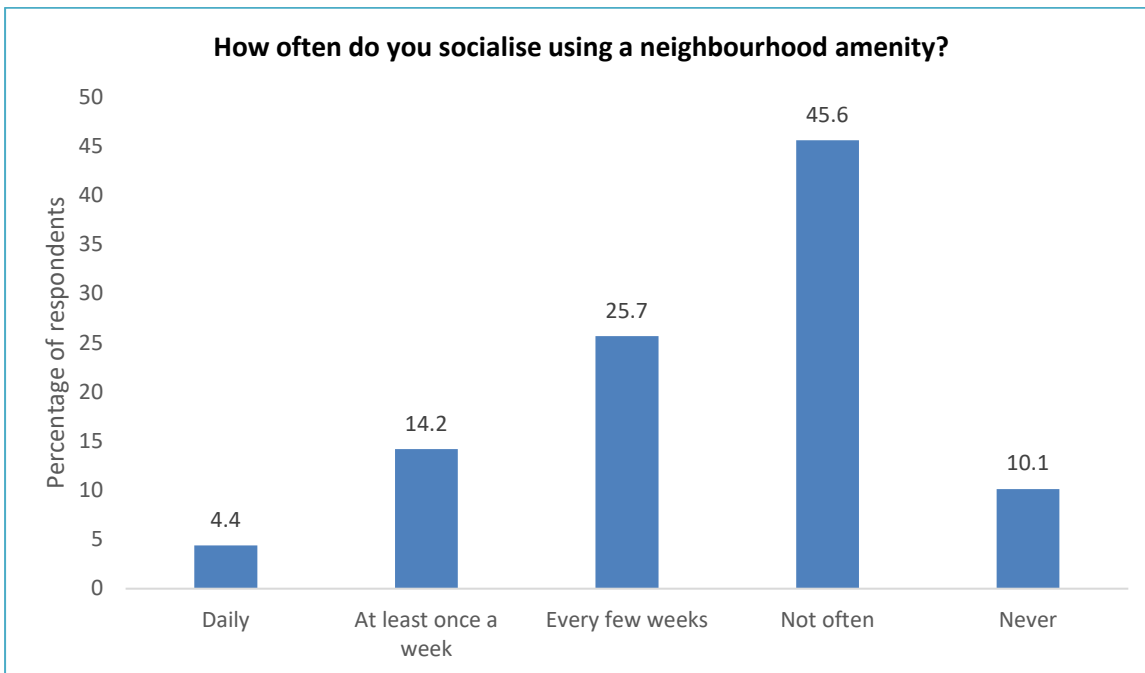
Survey respondents were asked about their use of public parks, ovals, playgrounds, or gardens (green spaces) and public pools, waterparks, or man-made lakes/lagoons (blue spaces). Public green and blue spaces were used by most Palmerston respondents (87% and 78% respectively).



For the people who use these spaces, walking was the most common means of getting to green spaces (72%) while private vehicles were mainly used to access public blue spaces (85%). Bicycles and/or public transport were used by a very small number of Palmerston respondents to access these green and blue spaces.



Three out of four survey respondents in Palmerston 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, over half do not use them often or ever to socialise (56%).

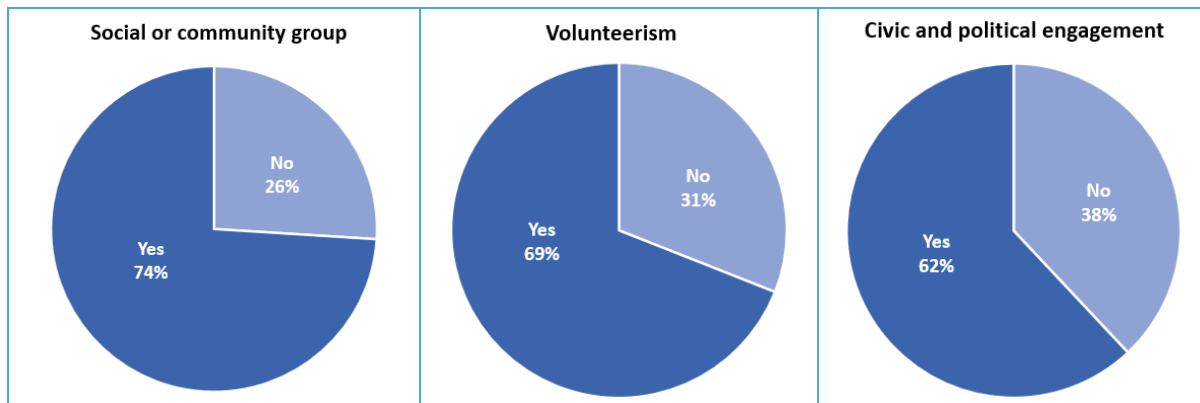


Engaging with community

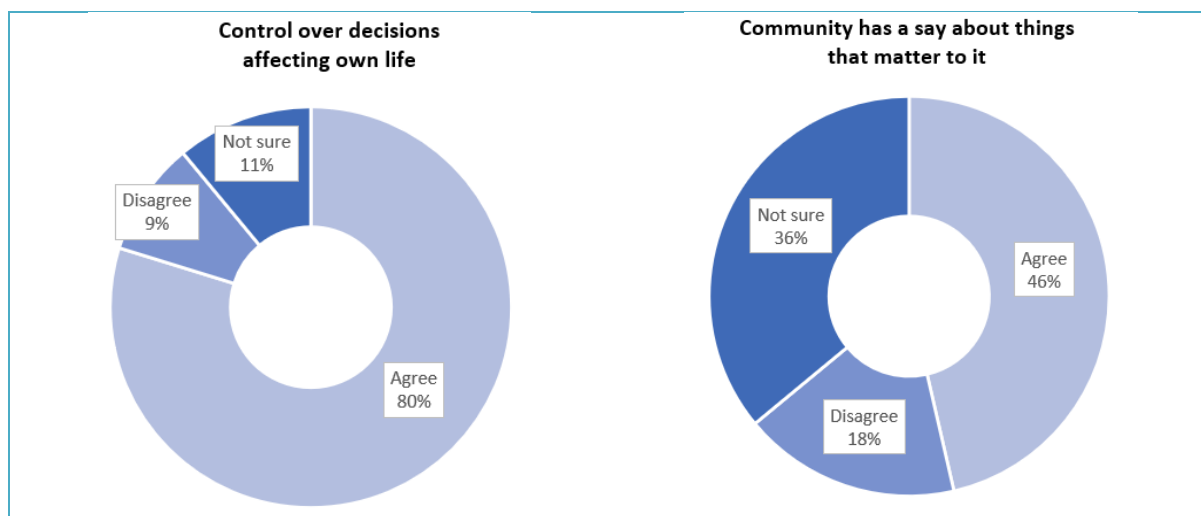
When people participate in community groups and engage with civic issues, the whole community benefits. These activities provide opportunities to support the community through shared action, while group associations build trust.

In the previous 12 months, around three out of four Palmerston respondents had belonged to at least one organised social or community group (74%), with the most common being sport, recreation, or a special interest. Around three out of five 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 (62%). A higher proportion (69%) 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.



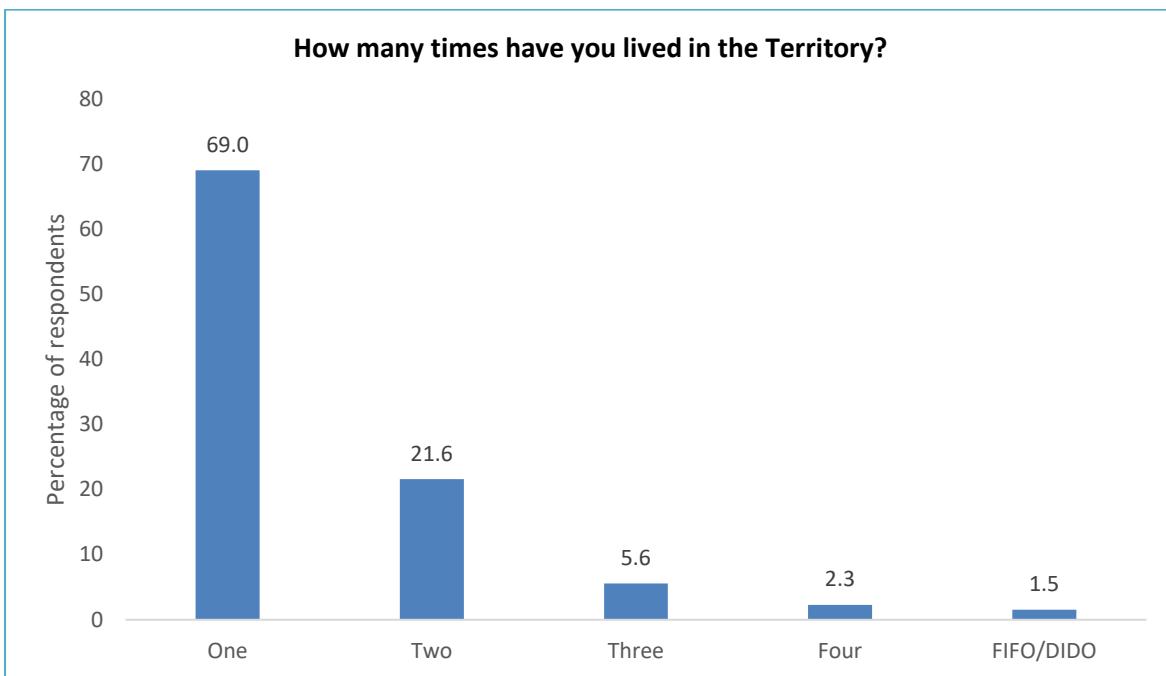
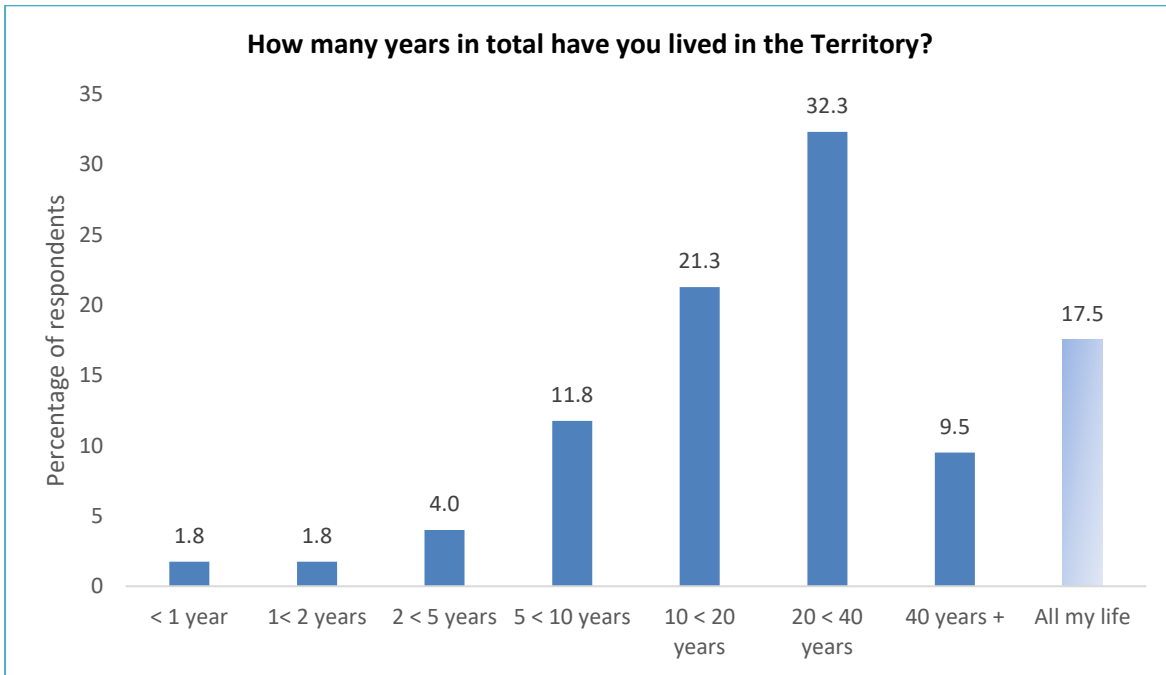
Additionally, 85 percent of Palmerston respondents also agreed that they could participate in cultural ceremonies, celebrations, or religious events when they wanted to. Four out of five survey respondents in Palmerston felt that they had control over decisions which affected their own lives (80%), but they were less certain that their community had the same opportunity to have a real say on important issues. While nearly half agreed (46%), 18 percent disagreed that their community had a say and twice that proportion were unsure.



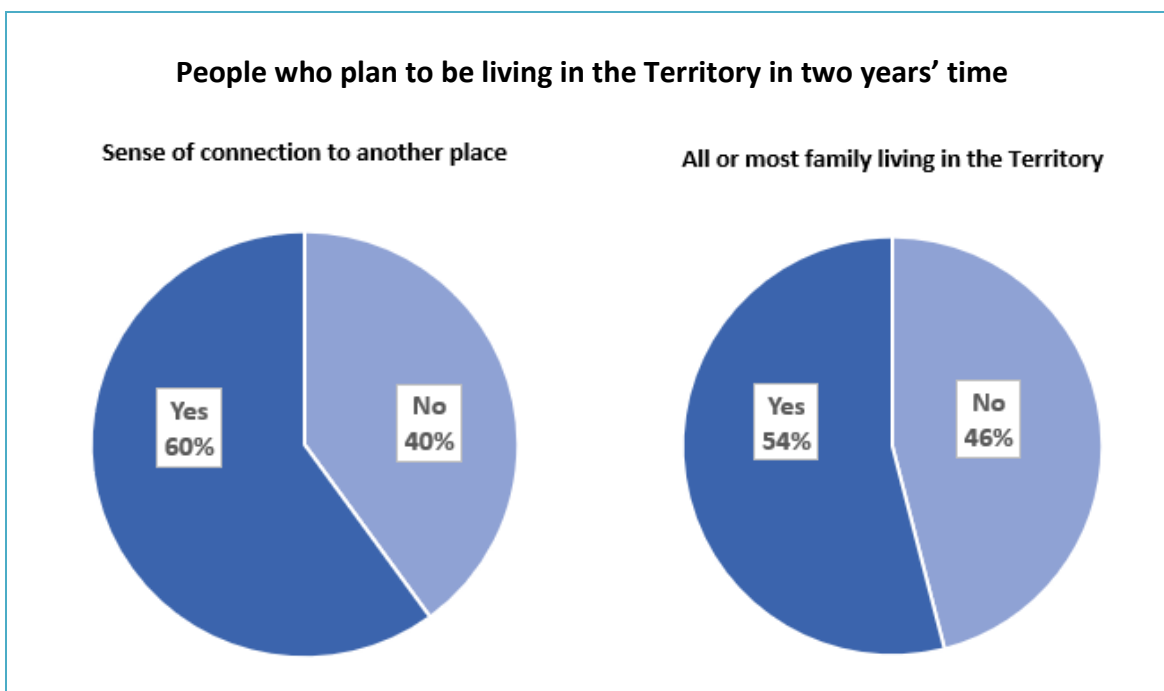
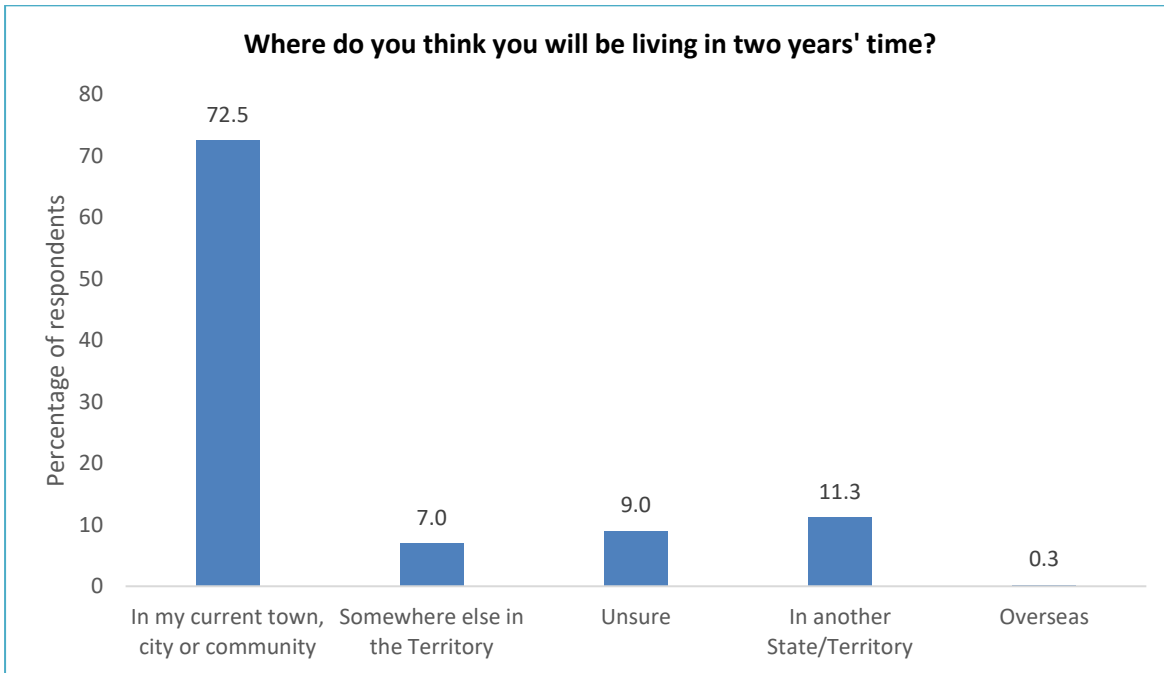
Connecting with the Territory

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

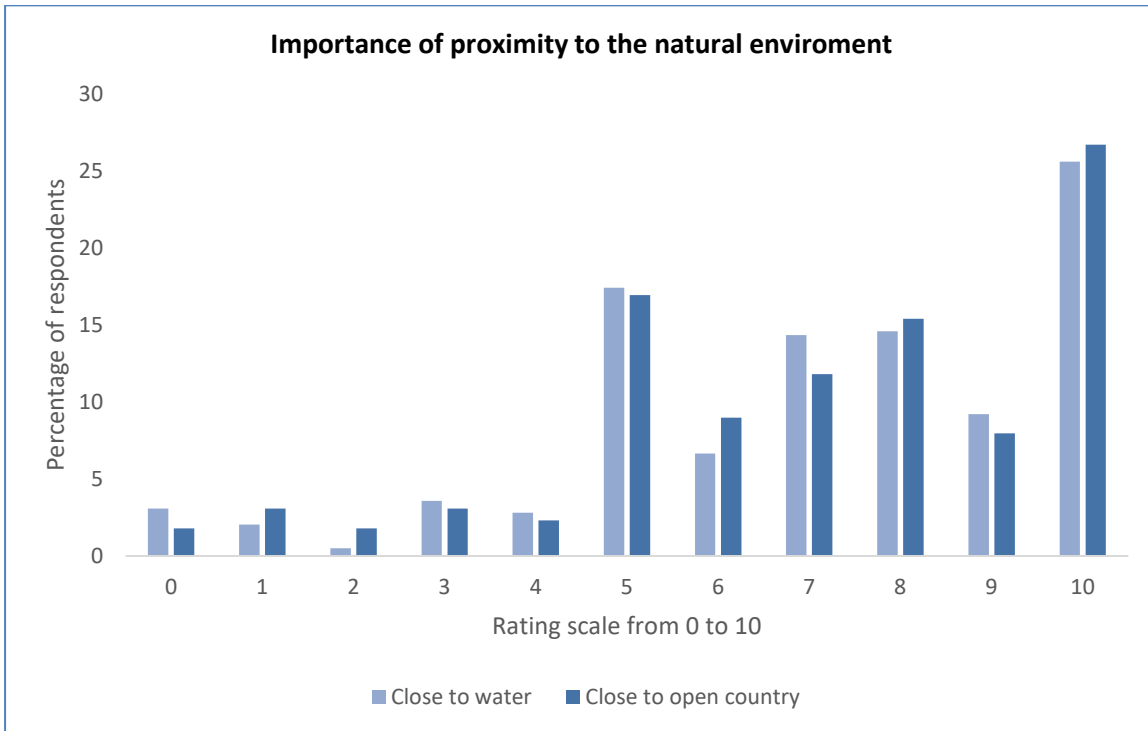
Around three out of five respondents in Palmerston had lived in the Territory for 20 years or longer, including all their lives (59%), however nearly 10 percent had been resident for less than five years. Additionally, almost one-third (30%) indicated they were a former resident returning or had lived 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.



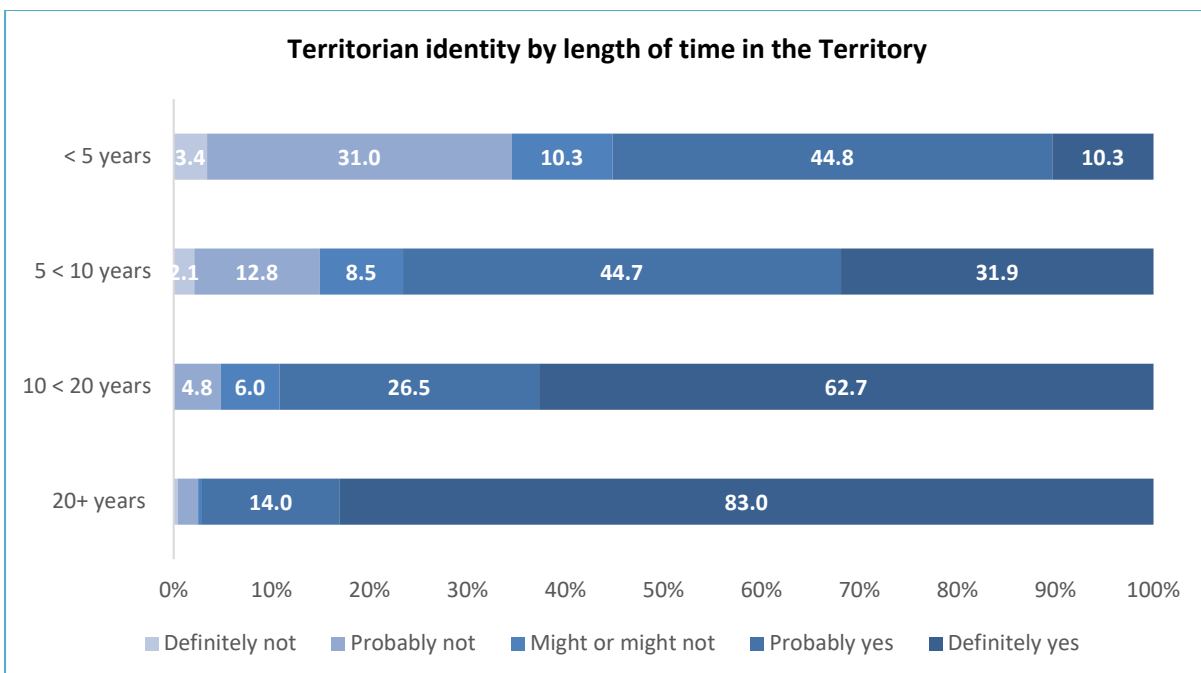
Four out of five Palmerston respondents plan to be living in the Territory in two-years' time, and most felt they would still be living in Palmerston (73%). Just over half of these 'stayers' (54%) had all or most of their family living in the Territory while a slightly greater proportion (60%) had a sense of belonging to another place in Australia or another country. Both these factors could be a negative influence on the retention of residents in the longer term as they could push residents 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 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. Around a quarter of Palmerston respondents felt that proximity to the natural environment (either to country or water) was extremely important for them. Indeed, the average score for both the importance of being close to open country or to natural water features was 7.1.



Identity as a Territorian is strong for most Palmerston respondents with nine out of ten considering themselves to be “definitely” or “probably” a Territorian (90%). However, this identity may be slow to develop. During the first five years in the Territory, only one in ten definitely thought of themselves as Territorian. By ten years of residence in the Territory, this proportion had increased to three in ten, and then doubled again after a further ten years of residence.



Comments from Palmerston respondents illustrate the tensions inherent in claiming identity as a Territorian. Being born in the Territory is a strong foundation for a Territorian identity as

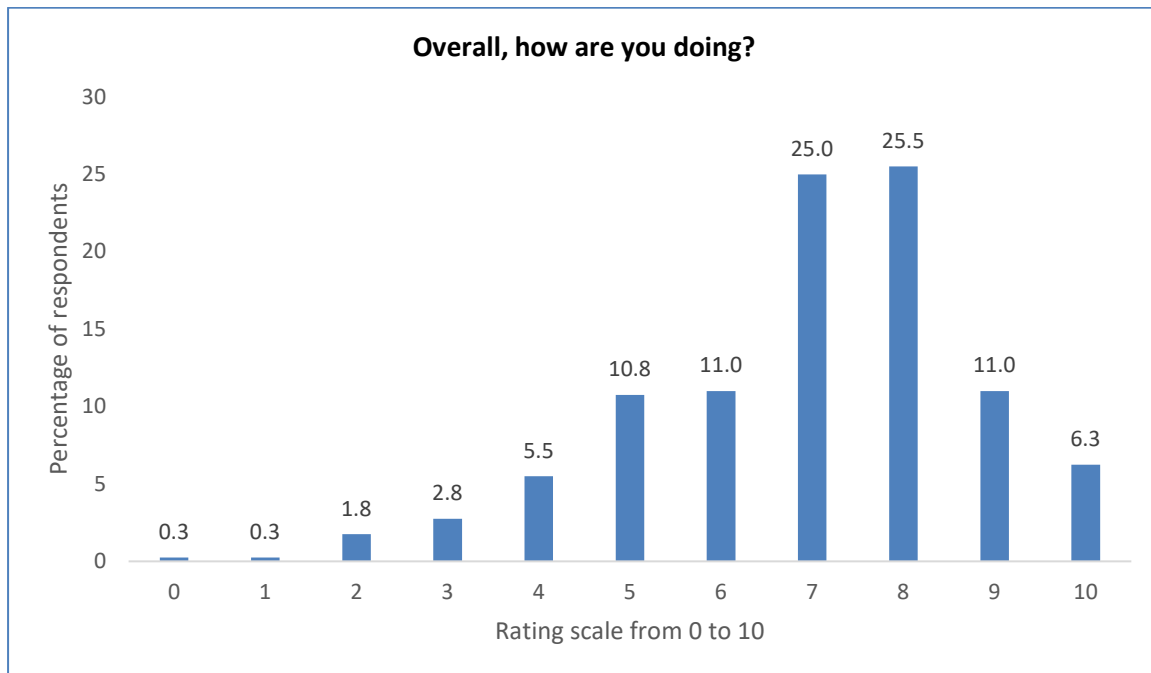
is the length of time that a respondent has lived in Territory. For those respondents not born in the Territory, the feeling that they have not lived here “long enough” in the eyes of others, strong connections to places of birth outside the Territory, and the feeling that living in the Territory is temporary appeared to moderate the strength of their Territorian identity.

Territorian?	Comments from Palmerston respondents
Definitely yes	<p>“Born and grew up here. Struggle to imagine a life anywhere else. I love my home in the Territory.”</p> <p>“I have grown up in the Territory and had my most significant milestones occur here.”</p> <p>“I've always been welcomed; have always been drawn back; and I've missed the Territory terribly when I've lived away too long. I feel grounded here.”</p> <p>“We have easily slipped into the Territory way of life...We have never ever been made to feel by other Territorians that we don't belong here.”</p>
Probably yes	<p>“I've lived here for over half my life but the Territory is a strange place... Sometimes I feel like I belong here and other times I feel an overwhelming sense of homesickness for where I was born.”</p> <p>“The Territory is a transient state, I will probably leave here one day.”</p>
Might or might not	<p>“I feel that I am a local but I don't label myself as 'Territorian'.”</p> <p>“Still settling in [1<2 years]; not into fishing or boating so finding my place in other ways.”</p>
Probably not	<p>“I could see myself as a Territorian; however, I know living here is only a temporary stage of my life.”</p> <p>“I live here but I am not from here. I will always be a New South Welshman as that is where I am from.”</p>
Definitely not	<p>“I feel a strong connection with home in Queensland and don't particularly like what Territorians are known for: drinking; being laid back, late and not caring.”</p>

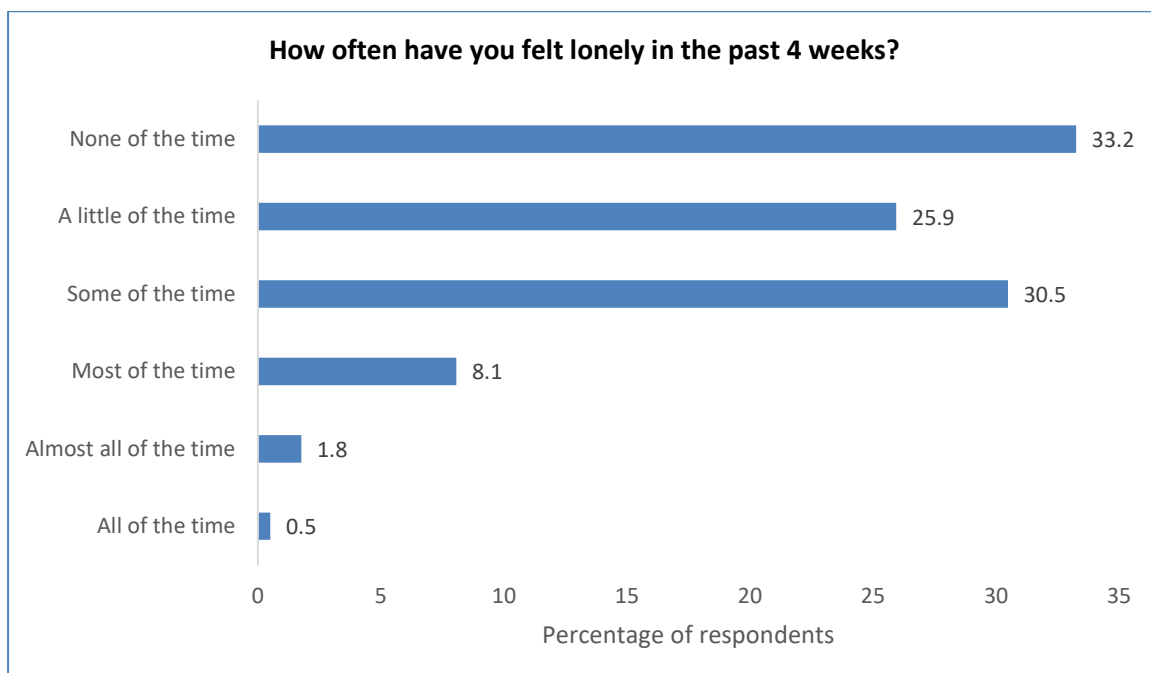
How are people doing?

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.

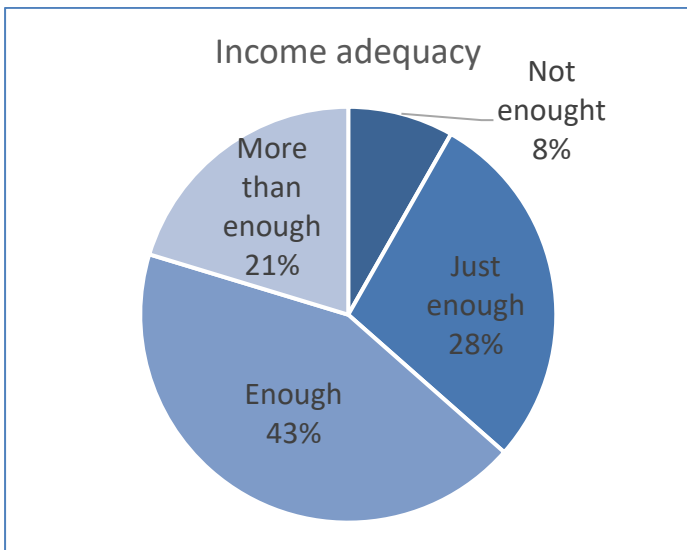
Survey respondents were asked to rate their overall wellbeing on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 equaled 'very badly' and 10 equaled 'extremely well'. Half the survey respondents in Palmerston rated themselves at 7 or 8, and the average rating by all Palmerston respondents was 6.9. Around one in ten rated themselves at 4 or below on this scale.



This high level of general wellbeing is reflected in the small number of people reporting that they frequently felt lonely. One in ten respondents in Palmerston (10%) 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, 2.1 percent of Palmerston respondents indicated gambling problems had affected their overall wellbeing, while 9 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 Palmerston respondents felt they had enough or more than enough income (64%), more than a third did not (36%).



Note: Income adequacy was 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 450 residents from the Palmerston region.

Demographic characteristics of Palmerston survey sample		
Gender	Male	23.6%
	Female	76.4%
Age group	18-24 years	5.5%
	25-34 years	19.5%
	35-49 years	40.5%
	50-59 years	20.0%
	60+ years	14.5%
Indigenous status	Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander	13.7%
	Non-Indigenous	86.3%
Disability status	Has disability or serious health condition	19.1%
Place of birth	Australia	75.5%
	Overseas	24.5%
Housing status	Owner (outright)	16.6%
	Owner (with mortgage)	53.1%
	Renter	24.4%
	Other	5.8%
Sexual identity	Straight/heterosexual	93.9%
	Sexual minority	6.1%

More than three times as many women as men participated in the survey. The greatest proportion of responses came from Palmerston residents in the 35-49 years age group while the views of 18–24-year-olds were under-represented.

Around 1 in 10 people had a disability or serious health condition, with 64 percent indicating it limited their participation in social and community activities.

Almost one quarter of the respondents were born overseas and came from 32 different countries, reflecting the significant multicultural nature of Palmerston’s population.

Almost seven out of 10 respondents owned or were in the processing of owning their homes.

One-quarter were renting while the remainder had a variety of other accommodation arrangements.

Six percent of respondents from Palmerston identified as a sexual minority.

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