

# Southern Downs Social Indicators 2010



**This study examines the social impacts of tourism on the local communities, as perceived by its residents. The research is intended to inform the decision making of state and local authorities, as well as tourism bodies. It looks at the social, geographic and economic circumstances of respondents in order to give a context to the findings.**

**Please note that due to the small sample size, results for the Southern Downs are indicative only.**

The Southern Downs region tracks a large slice of the border dividing Queensland and New South Wales. This is sheep and cattle country and the city of Warwick and its surrounding townships of Stanthorpe, Allora and Killarney reflect its rich heritage. Secondary industries include agriculture, commerce, manufacturing and tourism<sup>1</sup>.

The 32,600 residents<sup>1</sup> are typical Queenslanders, sharing much in common with most other regions when it comes to their social and demographic attributes. The area attracts those who are seeking a tree change in life – the peace and quiet and fresh country air, along with a lower cost of living. In the past few years, these traits have brought new families to the area and expansions in housing, infrastructure and industry, and that trend is set to continue according to population predictions<sup>1</sup>. About half of all people love living in the area and couldn't think of a better place to be.

**59% of residents feel that their local area should be trying to attract more tourists**

## Feelings about local area and tourists

		Queensland %	Southern Downs %
<b>Feelings about local area</b>	I like it, I can't think of anywhere else I would rather live	37	45
	I enjoy living here but can think of other places I would enjoy equally	50	37
	I only live here because circumstances demand it and would prefer to live somewhere else	13	19
<b>Feelings about the number of tourists</b>	Fewer	8	5
	About the same	50	37
	More	43	59

Tourism is founded on the offerings of the many small towns and villages that dot their way throughout the region. Apples, stone fruits and grapes, roses, rodeos, gem fossicking sites, vineyards and historic buildings – from grand sandstone churches with leadlight windows to the tiny wooden chapels with modest steeples - are the main attractions.

The locals approve. A substantial number of residents, eight in 10, like what they see when it comes to tourism growth and want to see the growth continue. For the Year Ending March 2010 the region attracted 261,000 domestic visitors and 8,000 international visitors<sup>2</sup>. They also really like tourists with 59 per cent believing the region should be trying to attract more.

*"I enjoy meeting tourists (those with working visas) as a part of my job. The backpacker industry in our region is an important part of the fruit and vegie industry as a whole."*  
Southern Downs Social Indicators respondent



**On the question of how tourism has impacted on their individual quality of life 14 per cent said tourism was a moderately or very positive influence. This result is consistent with the Queensland average. However, on the matter of how tourism affected the community as whole,**

**Southern Downs residents gave a much higher approval rating, 68 per cent compared with the Queensland average of 50 per cent.**

Their reasoning was bolstered with the majority of residents agreeing that tourism benefits the local economy, increases in the region's profile, increases local pride, leads to improvements in facilities maintenance and new infrastructure

(such as shopping, dining and other recreational opportunities) as well as more interesting things to do (such as attractions and events).

As for the negative impacts of tourism on the community, a more positive view was evident. In the main, less than half of the residents agreed with the negative impact of tourism statements. Further, they were less likely than the average Queenslanders to agree that tourism could lead to increased opportunity costs and property values.

## Contact with Tourists, Feelings and Development

		Queensland %	Southern Downs %
<b>Feelings about tourists</b>	I really like tourists	49	62
	I tolerate tourists	35	21
	I adjust my lifestyle to avoid tourists	10	12
	I stay away from places tourists go	5	5
<b>Contact with tourists</b>	I never come into contact with tourists	18	14
	I see tourists around but don't usually talk to them	52	49
	I often interact with tourists as part of my job	13	20
	I often meet tourists around town and talk to them	14	14
	I have made friends with tourists during their stay but have not kept in contact	7	10
	I have made friends with tourists and kept in contact after they have left	5	8
<b>Preferred development growth</b>	Happy with continued growth	59	78
	Happy but no more growth	25	18
	Want less tourism	6	0
	More growth different direction	10	4

■ = statistically significant difference

## Overall Impacts of Tourism

	Queensland		Southern Downs	
	% positive affect	% negative affect	% positive affect	% negative affect
Overall impact on personal quality of life	11	4	14	0
Overall impact on local community	50	2	68	0

% positive affect is based on the proportion of respondents who cited the top two ratings on a seven point scale ranging from very negative (-3) to very positive (+3).

% negative affect is based on the proportion of respondents who cited the bottom two ratings on a seven point scale ranging from very negative (-3) to very positive (+3).

■ = statistically significant difference

## Positive Impacts of Tourism

Because of tourism there is...	Queensland			Southern Downs		
	% agree	% positive affect on personal quality of life	% positive affect on community as a whole	% agree	% positive affect on personal quality of life	% positive affect on community as a whole
Improved economic benefits	87	16	58	94	15	59
Increased regional profile	76	16	52	88	13	59
Increased local pride	65	20	50	77	21	63
Improved facility maintenance	60	25	53	63	25	63
New infrastructure	60	36	65	53	36	80
More interesting things to do	54	35	65	62	38	69

% positive affect is based on the proportion of respondents who cited the top two ratings on a seven point scale ranging from very negative (-3) to very positive (+3).

## Negative Impacts of Tourism

Because of tourism there is...	Queensland			Southern Downs		
	% agree	% negative affect on personal quality of life	% negative affect on community as a whole	% agree	% negative affect on personal quality of life	% negative affect on community as a whole
Increased prices	53	20	18	44	11	14
Increased property values	45	22	25	23	17	15
Rise in delinquent behaviour	36	15	31	32	0	16
More disruption	31	19	24	19	7	7
Negative impact on the environment	29	12	31	20	0	14
Negative impact on local character	29	9	11	18	8	0
Increased opportunity costs	25	19	24	7	0	15
Lack of access for locals	16	28	28	0	0	0

% negative affect is based on the proportion of respondents who cited the bottom two ratings on a seven point scale ranging from very negative (-3) to very positive (+3).

■ = statistically significant difference

## Demographics

		Queensland %	Southern Downs %
<b>Gender</b>	Male	50	49
	Female	50	51
<b>Life stage</b>	Under 45 years, no children	29	16
	Under 45 years, with children	26	31
	45 years or more, no children	32	39
	45 years or more, with children	13	14
<b>Years of residence</b>	Less than 2 years	9	5
	2-5 years	21	30
	6-10 years	15	15
	11-20 years	19	12
	More than 20 years	14	10
	All my life	22	29
<b>Place of birth</b>	Within 50km of where you currently live	22	29
	Elsewhere in Queensland	24	20
	Elsewhere in Australia	34	28
	In another country	21	23
<b>Education</b>	Completed Year 10	11	14
	Completed Year 11/12	18	16
	Finished technical education	15	13
	Tertiary diploma	12	1
	Finished university degree	14	8
	Finished post-graduate degree	5	5
	Other	26	43
<b>Employment status</b>	Working full-time	41	28
	Working part-time	17	22
	Unemployed, looking for work	4	4
	Unemployed, not seeking work	1	6
	Retired	14	23
	Student	5	0
	Student/part-time work	3	0
	Home duties	10	10
	Other	4	8
<b>Directly benefit from tourism</b> (e.g. work in or own a business that profits from tourists or rent a property to tourists)	Personal benefit	10	7
	Family benefit	10	9
	No benefit	83	87
<b>Income</b>	Less than \$60,000	40	50
	\$60,000 - \$99,000	26	21
	\$100,000 or more	15	4
	Prefer not to say	18	26

■ = statistically significant difference

1. [Welcome to Southern Downs Regional Council](#), Southern Downs Regional Council.

2. National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey Year Ending March 2010, Tourism Research Australia.

Base: Queensland n=3834; Southern Downs n=54.