

# Toowoomba 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.**

Toowoomba and the Darling Downs are on Australia's Country Way drive route, and where two major highways meet - the Warrego and the New England - positioning the region perfectly to meet the needs of the domestic drive market.

The region features an array of tourism experiences. While the area is famous for celebrating its magnificent spring gardens each year with its Carnival of Flowers, the wine and food industries have also blossomed in the past five years. The boutique wineries have spawned a host of restaurants and cafes, small and exclusive food producers, art galleries, markets, heritage exhibitions and antique stores.

Within easy reach of residents in Brisbane and the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, Toowoomba and the Darling Downs are popular choices for weekend getaways. The visitor numbers tell the story. On the domestic front, for the Year Ending March 2010 the region saw 1,039,000 visitors, though fewer international visitation for the same period 36,000<sup>1</sup>.

The local residents, however, tend to work in industries other than tourism or in businesses that do not directly stand to profit from tourism. With several boarding schools and a university, the region's primary employment opportunities come from the education and health sectors followed by cafes, restaurants and takeaway foods, and meat product manufacturing<sup>2</sup>. Almost half the population earns an average income of \$60,000 or less per annum, a greater proportion than the Queensland average at 40 per cent.

Most people have moved to the area from interstate as well as other parts of Queensland and on average, have lived there for 11 years. Generally speaking residents enjoy living in their local area. However, residents are more likely than the average Queenslanders to indicate there are other places they would enjoy living just as much.

The communities and individuals most likely to favour tourism are those that derive some financial or personal gain from its existence. In the case of Toowoomba residents, few directly benefit from tourism, or even have contact with tourists. They see tourists out and about on the streets but tend not to talk to them. All the same, most residents really like tourists (55%) and would like more to be done to attract them (56%). A substantial number, seven in 10, are also happy with the way tourism is developing in the region, particularly from a community perspective, and would like that type of progress to continue.

**56% of residents feel that their local area should be trying to attract more tourists**

## Feelings about local area and tourists

		Queensland %	Toowoomba %
<b>Feelings about local area</b>	I like it, I can't think of anywhere else I would rather live	37	30
	I enjoy living here but can think of other places I would enjoy equally	50	58
	I only live here because circumstances demand it and would prefer to live somewhere else	13	12
<b>Feelings about the number of tourists</b>	Fewer	8	4
	About the same	50	41
	More	43	56

■ = statistically significant difference



*"Most tourists, I believe are value for money, to coin a phrase, putting money into our community, i.e. fuel, food and attractions. I see the vans travelling all the time. They [tourists] do not cause me an inconvenience, are very pleasant, and I always give a smile, and show country hospitality."*

**Toowoomba Social Indicators Respondent 2010**

**When it came to pinning down their position on the positive and negative affects of tourism, at both personal and community levels, residents were more impartial about their feelings than residents in many other Queensland regions. Given the low engagement rate between the locals and tourists, almost to be expected only 12 per cent indicated that tourists had a moderate or very positive affect on their personal quality of life. This figure is close to State's average.**

**On the question of how tourism was likely to affect the community as a whole, residents were much more positive but again, closely aligned to the thinking of the average Queensland with 56 per cent giving a moderate or very positive response.**

Those people most like to feel good about the wider affects of tourism on the community fell into the following categories. They:

- really liked tourists
- really wanted to see more tourists in the local area
- talked to tourists around town or have made friends with tourists.

In relation to the areas most likely to benefit from tourism, the majority of locals considered the big winners to be the local economy as well as boosted regional profile, and feelings of local pride. They also agreed tourism lead to improved facilities maintenance, new infrastructure and more interesting things to do.

On the other hand, residents were less likely than average Queenslanders to think tourism could encourage higher prices, a rise in delinquent behaviour, disruption and lack of access for locals, and impact on the local character. However, they rated the negative aspects of these issues on community life lower than the average.

The words most frequently used when residents were asked how they would describe their local area included garden city, country, flowers and wine.

## Contact with Tourists, Feelings and Development

		Queensland %	Toowoomba %
<b>Feelings about tourists</b>	I really like tourists	49	55
	I tolerate tourists	35	35
	I adjust my lifestyle to avoid tourists	10	8
	I stay away from places tourists go	5	3
<b>Contact with tourists</b>	I never come into contact with tourists	18	19
	I see tourists around but don't usually talk to them	52	56
	I often interact with tourists as part of my job	13	8
	I often meet tourists around town and talk to them	14	16
	I have made friends with tourists during their stay but have not kept in contact	7	6
	I have made friends with tourists and kept in contact after they have left	5	3
<b>Preferred development growth</b>	Happy with continued growth	59	69
	Happy but no more growth	25	17
	Want less tourism	6	2
	More growth different direction	10	12

■ = statistically significant difference

## Overall Impacts of Tourism

	Queensland		Toowoomba	
	% positive affect	% negative affect	% positive affect	% negative affect
Overall impact on personal quality of life	11	4	12	2
Overall impact on local community	50	2	56	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).

## Positive Impacts of Tourism

Because of tourism there is...	Queensland			Toowoomba		
	% 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	87	13	60
Increased regional profile	76	16	52	83	17	60
Increased local pride	65	20	50	70	21	59
Improved facility maintenance	60	25	53	61	26	54
New infrastructure	60	36	65	49	37	78
More interesting things to do	54	35	65	55	33	72

% 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).

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## Negative Impacts of Tourism

Because of tourism there is...	Queensland			Toowoomba		
	% 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	40	12	9
Increased property values	45	22	25	27	13	17
Rise in delinquent behaviour	36	15	31	25	8	19
More disruption	31	19	24	25	13	10
Negative impact on the environment	29	12	31	26	3	26
Negative impact on local character	29	9	11	15	0	1
Increased opportunity costs	25	19	24	23	10	23
Lack of access for locals	16	28	28	15	18	10

% 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 %	Toowoomba %
<b>Gender</b>	Male	50	50
	Female	50	50
<b>Life stage</b>	Under 45 years, no children	29	26
	Under 45 years, with children	26	28
	45 years or more, no children	32	34
	45 years or more, with children	13	13
<b>Years of residence</b>	Less than 2 years	9	10
	2-5 years	21	22
	6-10 years	15	15
	11-20 years	19	17
	More than 20 years	14	17
	All my life	22	20
<b>Place of birth</b>	Within 50km of where you currently live	22	20
	Elsewhere in Queensland	24	37
	Elsewhere in Australia	34	26
	In another country	21	17
<b>Education</b>	Completed Year 10	11	14
	Completed Year 11/12	18	14
	Finished technical education	15	14
	Tertiary diploma	12	10
	Finished university degree	14	13
	Finished post-graduate degree	5	4
	Other	26	31
<b>Employment status</b>	Working full-time	41	35
	Working part-time	17	16
	Unemployed, looking for work	4	6
	Unemployed, not seeking work	1	2
	Retired	14	17
	Student	5	5
	Student/part-time work	3	1
	Home duties	10	14
	Other	4	5
<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	6
	No benefit	83	89
<b>Income</b>	Less than \$60,000	40	48
	\$60,000 - \$99,000	26	23
	\$100,000 or more	15	12
	Prefer not to say	18	17

■ = statistically significant difference

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

2. Census Data 2006, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Base: Queensland n=3834; Toowoomba n=322