



Sunshine Coast 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.

The Sunshine Coast is one of Queensland's foremost emerging tourism centres. Located on the coast 100 kilometres north of Brisbane, the region includes the main coastal communities of Noosa, Coolum, Maroochydore, Mooloolaba and Caloundra. These tourist hubs dot their way along the seaboard with a rich hinterland as their backdrop, offering visitors access to several national parks, the Glass House Mountains and some of Australia's top tourism experiences and attractions.

Within the urban precincts, retail, commercial and accommodation sectors

are among the region's top economic performers, while in the rural areas the dominant contributors are dairy and cattle farming as well as sugar cane and other pastoral crops¹. Of the area's estimated 158,300² workers, the most common industries of employment for Sunshine Coast residents are education, hospitality, residential building construction, accommodation, supermarket and grocery stores³.

Like many Queensland centres, the Sunshine Coast has grown rapidly in recent years, with an influx of new residents, mainly from other Queensland regions and other states of Australia. Current figures put the population at 323,400¹ and of these less than one quarter (22%), have come from outside the local area. Be they new to the area or long term residents it makes little difference when it comes to how they feel about the area. On the whole, locals generally agree that the Sunshine Coast is a great place to call home with three in five stating they cannot think of anywhere else they would rather live.

These feelings of contentment perhaps explain why an equal number of residents (61%) would like tourism visitation to remain at its current level. Almost half of the residents (48%) indicated that they "tolerated" tourists, as opposed to liking them, much higher than the average Queenslander (35%). Though this might seem to give a slightly negative impression, to the contrary, locals are quite positive about tourism.

61% of respondents feel that their local area should keep attracting the same number of tourists

Feelings about local area and tourists

		Queensland %	Sunshine Coast %
Feelings about local area	I like it, I can't think of anywhere else I would rather live	37	60
	I enjoy living here but can think of other places I would enjoy equally	50	34
	I only live here because circumstances demand it and would prefer to live somewhere else	13	6
Feelings about the number of tourists	Fewer	8	8
	About the same	50	61
	More	43	31

■ = statistically significant difference



When asked how tourism affected their personal quality of life, 16 per cent indicated moderately or very positively, greater than the Queensland average of just 11 per cent. This higher level of support may be due to the fact that 22 per cent of Sunshine Coast residents directly benefit or a family member directly benefits from tourism, and are more likely than the average Queenslander to meet tourists and interact with them as they make their way around town.

Residents who tend to think that tourism has a negative effect on their personal quality of life also have less

contact with tourists, or they adjust their lifestyle to avoid tourist.

On the question of how tourism affected the community as a whole, a higher proportion than the Queensland average said moderately or very positively. Those who believe tourism is good for the community, are generally people who:

- want to see more tourism in the local area.
- often meet tourists around town and talk to them or interact with them as part of their job.
- are happy with continued growth.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of Sunshine Coast residents agree with the majority of Queenslanders when it comes to tourism having a positive impact on the local economy, increasing the regions profile and sense of local pride, improving facilities maintenance and creating new infrastructure and interesting things to do. However, Sunshine Coast residents are more likely than the average Queenslander to agree that tourism has the following positive impacts: improved economic benefits, increases the regions profile, new infrastructure and more interesting things to do. They are also more likely (than the average Queenslander) to indicate that tourism leads to improved economic benefits and that this has a positive impact on their personal quality of life as well as their community.

Contact with Tourists, Feelings and Development

		Queensland %	Sunshine Coast %
Feelings about tourists	I really like tourists	49	32
	I tolerate tourists	35	48
	I adjust my lifestyle to avoid tourists	10	19
	I stay away from places tourists go	5	1
Contact with tourists	I never come into contact with tourists	18	5
	I see tourists around but don't usually talk to them	52	56
	I often interact with tourists as part of my job	13	19
	I often meet tourists around town and talk to them	14	21
	I have made friends with tourists during their stay but have not kept in contact	7	9
	I have made friends with tourists and kept in contact after they have left	5	5
Preferred development growth	Happy with continued growth	59	43
	Happy but no more growth	25	43
	Want less tourism	6	6
	More growth different direction	10	8

■ = statistically significant difference



The findings for the Sunshine Coast are typical of other similar studies⁴ that show communities that financially benefit from tourism are more positively disposed towards tourism in their communities. In the case of the Sunshine Coast, the region generates 15 per cent of Queensland's domestic tourism spend and six per cent of its international spend⁵.

Sunshine Coast residents are more likely than the average Queenslanders to agree that tourism can have the following negative impacts: increased prices, increase in property values, rise in delinquent behaviour, more disruption, a negative impact on the environment. Also, Sunshine Coast residents are more likely to agree that tourism leads to a negative impact on local character, increased opportunity cost (e.g. public money spent on developing facilities for tourists) and lack of access for locals.

The geographic makeup of the Sunshine Coast has a bearing on people's views. For example, Cooloola⁶ residents are happy for tourism to continue to develop in the region, compared to the average Sunshine Coaster. However, the majority of Cooloola residents would prefer the number of tourists to remain the same. Given these findings it is possible that they are looking to increase the benefits of tourism infrastructure rather than an increase in tourism. The people of Cooloola are also less likely to agree that tourism has a negative impact on local character or leads to more disruption of local's lives.

When Noosa⁷ residents were asked how tourism affected their personal quality of life, almost double the number of average Sunshine Coast residents said moderately or very positively. Yet, while the majority view the affect on the community as positive, a greater proportion of Noosa residents tended to think, more than their neighbouring communities that tourism had a

"I love seeing people enjoying their time in our community"

Sunshine Coast Social Indicators Respondent 2010

negative impact on community life. In this area people are more likely than the average Sunshine Coaster to personally benefit from tourism or to have a family member who benefits from tourism. They also believe tourism leads to increased property values.

Residents in the Hinterland⁸ were less likely than the average Sunshine Coaster to agree that tourism can lead to a lack of access for locals.

When residents were asked what words first spring to mind when they think about their local area, tourism or tourist beaches, beautiful, sunny, peaceful, sunshine and relaxation were common responses.

Overall Impacts of Tourism

	Queensland		Sunshine Coast	
	% positive affect	% negative affect	% positive affect	% negative affect
Overall impact on personal quality of life	11	4	16	7
Overall impact on local community	50	2	68	2

% 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			Sunshine Coast		
	% 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	92	24	71
Increased regional profile	76	16	52	87	16	60
Increased local pride	65	20	50	62	25	62
Improved facility maintenance	60	25	53	58	26	58
New infrastructure	60	36	65	76	37	69
More interesting things to do	54	35	65	60	37	70

% 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			Sunshine Coast		
	% 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	76	25	23
Increased property values	45	22	25	78	24	31
Rise in delinquent behaviour	36	15	31	46	13	35
More disruption	31	19	24	64	25	31
Negative impact on the environment	29	12	31	44	14	37
Negative impact on local character	29	9	11	52	12	13
Increased opportunity costs	25	19	24	30	20	28
Lack of access for locals	16	28	28	36	31	34

% 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).

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Demographics

		Queensland %	Sunshine Coast %
Gender	Male	50	49
	Female	50	51
Life stage	Under 45 years, no children	29	22
	Under 45 years, with children	26	26
	45 years or more, no children	32	37
	45 years or more, with children	13	15
Years of residence	Less than 2 years	9	5
	2-5 years	21	22
	6-10 years	15	22
	11-20 years	19	27
	More than 20 years	14	15
	All my life	22	10
Place of birth	Within 50km of where you currently live	22	10
	Elsewhere in Queensland	24	24
	Elsewhere in Australia	34	45
	In another country	21	21
Education	Completed Year 10	11	11
	Completed Year 11/12	18	21
	Finished technical education	15	16
	Tertiary diploma	12	15
	Finished university degree	14	13
	Finished post-graduate degree	5	5
	Other	26	20
Employment status	Working full-time	41	35
	Working part-time	17	22
	Unemployed, looking for work	4	4
	Unemployed, not seeking work	1	2
	Retired	14	17
	Student	5	4
	Student/part-time work	3	2
	Home duties	10	10
Directly benefit from tourism (e.g. work in or own a business that profits from tourists or rent a property to tourists)	Other	4	4
	Personal benefit	10	15
	Family benefit	10	12
Income	No benefit	83	78
	Less than \$60,000	40	46
	\$60,000 - \$99,000	26	24
	\$100,000 or more	15	13
	Prefer not to say	18	17

■ = statistically significant difference

1. [Community Profile](#), Sunshine Coast Council

2. [Economicpulse 2009](#), Sunshine Coast Council

3. Census 2006, Australian Bureau of Statistics

4. Victoria University's Centre for Tourism and Services Research

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

6. Cooloola residents were defined by the following postcodes: 4563, 4570, 4580

7. Noosa residents were defined by the following postcodes: 4562 and 4565-4567

8. Hinterland residents were defined by the following postcodes: 4517-4550, 4552, 4554-4555, 4559-4561, 4568-4569, 4571, 4574

Base: Queensland n=3834; Sunshine Coast n=754