



Townsville 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.

Townsville is Australia's largest tropical city and a hub for many regional communities outside Queensland's South East Corner. The climate is best described as the 'dry tropics' with an average daytime temperature of 33 degrees and more than 300 rain-free days each year.¹ The majority of its 180,000+ residents¹ are Australian born, although many have come from other parts of Australia and have lived in the area for more than 10 years.

Traditionally, a city built on government services and the mining industry, Townsville is a relatively new player in tourism development. Over the past

decade the city has attracted major new tourism product along with a thriving hospitality industry. In the late 1990s, a riverside restaurant precinct was developed on the city's south side, followed in 1999 with a complete rejuvenation of The Strand that saw the foreshore transformed into an award winning and vibrant community space. In March 2010 work started to revitalize the city heart with a major overhaul to the Flinders Street East Mall.

The city has plans to establish a cruise shipping terminal and offers access to some of the premier dive locations on the Great Barrier Reef, World Heritage Rainforest areas and tropical islands such as Magnetic, Hinchinbrook, Dunk, Bedarra and Orpheus. Since the late 1990s it has also been home to one of Queensland's two rugby league teams, the Cowboys.

The shift to embrace tourism is suggestive of the positive public sentiment of its locals. Generally, residents look favourably on tourism, really like tourists and would like to attract more to the area. Considerably more so than the Queensland average.

64% of residents feel that their local area should be trying to attract more tourists

Feelings about local area and tourists

		Queensland %	Townsville %
Feelings about local area	I like it, I can't think of anywhere else I would rather live	37	40
	I enjoy living here but can think of other places I would enjoy equally	50	49
	I only live here because circumstances demand it and would prefer to live somewhere else	13	11
Feelings about the number of tourists	Fewer	8	2
	About the same	50	34
	More	43	64

■ = statistically significant difference

"Townsville was, for many years, primarily an army, port and university town. Now the mines and tourism have started to drive a more diverse and metropolitan body of people to the region which, in turn, improves shopping, activities and the quality of bars and restaurants. All of these affect my life positively."

Townsville Social Indicators Respondent 2010



Current figures show for the Year Ending March 2010, the region welcomed more than 900,000 visitors. The vast majority, 766,000, were domestic, while 144,000 came from international markets.²

Overall, 14 per cent of residents rated the personal impact of tourism on their lives as moderate to very positive. They were more likely to give a higher rating if they:

- personally benefit from tourism or their family benefits from tourism
- think the region should try to attract more tourists
- really like tourists
- had previously made friends with tourists.

To reinforce this point, those less likely to feel tourism had a positive influence on their lives were those who had never come into contact with tourists.

On the question of how tourism affects the community, Townsville gave a solid vote of approval, contrary to the Queensland trend. Sixty-four per cent of residents said tourism had a moderate or very positive influence on the region, whereas the Queensland average was more tempered at 50 per cent.

In citing the benefits, Townville locals listed:

- A positive impact on the economy
- Increased local pride
- Improved facilities maintenance
- More interesting things to do such as events and attractions.

Of this list, where they shared stronger agreement than the Queensland average was on the point of the increase in the region's profile.

Most enthusiastic were those who either really liked tourists or thought the city needed to do more to attract tourism. These findings closely align with other similar studies by the Centre for Tourism and Services Research, Victoria University, that show the impacts of tourism at the community level are, on the whole, seen as being more positive, than the impacts on an individual's quality of life.

At the individual level, there was considerable agreement among Townsville residents that the most positive spin off from tourism was the new infrastructure it delivered to the city. However, they were less inclined than the average Queenslanders, to feel tourism was disruptive to both their personal quality of life as well as the wider community.

Contact with Tourists, Feelings and Development

		Queensland %	Townsville %
Feelings about tourists	I really like tourists	49	60
	I tolerate tourists	35	32
	I adjust my lifestyle to avoid tourists	10	5
	I stay away from places tourists go	5	4
Contact with tourists	I never come into contact with tourists	18	14
	I see tourists around but don't usually talk to them	52	57
	I often interact with tourists as part of my job	13	11
	I often meet tourists around town and talk to them	14	15
	I have made friends with tourists during their stay but have not kept in contact	7	8
	I have made friends with tourists and kept in contact after they have left	5	5
Preferred development growth	Happy with continued growth	59	71
	Happy but no more growth	25	18
	Want less tourism	6	2
	More growth different direction	10	8

■ = statistically significant difference

Overall Impacts of Tourism

	Queensland		Townsville	
	% positive affect	% negative affect	% positive affect	% negative affect
Overall impact on personal quality of life	11	4	14	2
Overall impact on local community	50	2	64	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			Townsville		
	% 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	89	17	66
Increased regional profile	76	16	52	85	15	61
Increased local pride	65	20	50	69	25	64
Improved facility maintenance	60	25	53	63	27	62
New infrastructure	60	36	65	62	45	73
More interesting things to do	54	35	65	60	41	76

% 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).

■ = statistically significant difference

Negative Impacts of Tourism

Because of tourism there is...	Queensland			Townsville		
	% 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	50	16	16
Increased property values	45	22	25	35	20	21
Rise in delinquent behaviour	36	15	31	24	10	27
More disruption	31	19	24	19	6	3
Negative impact on the environment	29	12	31	26	8	30
Negative impact on local character	29	9	11	25	6	3
Increased opportunity costs	25	19	24	21	11	26
Lack of access for locals	16	28	28	7	21	28

% 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 %	Townsville %
Gender	Male	50	51
	Female	50	49
Life stage	Under 45 years, no children	29	29
	Under 45 years, with children	26	29
	45 years or more, no children	32	29
	45 years or more, with children	13	13
Years of residence	Less than 2 years	9	5
	2-5 years	21	21
	6-10 years	15	16
	11-20 years	19	22
	More than 20 years	14	19
	All my life	22	17
Place of birth	Within 50km of where you currently live	22	17
	Elsewhere in Queensland	24	33
	Elsewhere in Australia	34	36
	In another country	21	14
Education	Completed Year 10	11	14
	Completed Year 11/12	18	19
	Finished technical education	15	15
	Tertiary diploma	12	9
	Finished university degree	14	13
	Finished post-graduate degree	5	5
	Other	26	26
Employment status	Working full-time	41	43
	Working part-time	17	20
	Unemployed, looking for work	4	5
	Unemployed, not seeking work	1	1
	Retired	14	12
	Student	5	4
	Student/part-time work	3	2
	Home duties	10	9
	Other	4	4
Directly benefit from tourism (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	7
	No benefit	83	87
Income	Less than \$60,000	40	40
	\$60,000 - \$99,000	26	22
	\$100,000 or more	15	18
	Prefer not to say	18	20

■ = statistically significant difference

1. Convention Bureau, Townsville Enterprise

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

Base: Queensland n=3834; Townsville n=404