

TNQ 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.

Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) is one of Australia's heavy-weight leisure destinations. Renowned for its World Heritage Listed Daintree Rainforest and Great Barrier Reef – this is 'where the rainforest meets the reef' and as a consequence, Cairns and the surrounding districts attract more than two million visitors each year. The upshot of such high visitor numbers is that despite its relatively small population base, the region generates \$1,791 million from domestic tourism and \$816 million from international.¹

Tourism's influence on the community is immense. Well over one quarter of the population (28%) works in the industry or has a family member who directly benefits from tourism. Estimates put the number of local tourism jobs at 20,000, not to mention the many affiliated industries that depend on the prosperity of tourism for their continued success.² Other key areas for employment are local government administration, education, accommodation, hospitality and health services.³

67% of residents feel that their local area should be trying to attract more tourists

Feelings about local area and tourists

		Queensland %	TNQ %
Feelings about local area	I like it, I can't think of anywhere else I would rather live	37	50
	I enjoy living here but can think of other places I would enjoy equally	50	43
	I only live here because circumstances demand it and would prefer to live somewhere else	13	8
Feelings about the number of tourists	Fewer	8	5
	About the same	50	28
	More	43	67

■ = statistically significant difference

With such vested interests, understandably, there is strong and shared enthusiasm for tourism amongst the locals. On the whole, people like the way tourism has developed and want the industry to continue to expand (67%) and attract more visitors (67%). When it comes to how they view tourism on a personal level, as well as on the community as a whole, the majority of residents see it as positive.

30% of residents indicated that tourism has a moderate or very positive affect on their overall quality of life

64% of residents indicated that tourism has a moderate or very positive affect on their local community



Certainly, it would seem people feel good about living in the tropical north and the lifestyle it offers. They tend to embrace tourism as a vital part of the economy and community life. Many locals have moved to the region out of choice. Two in every five are from interstate and with so many newcomers, the average time lived in the area is six years or more. They also appear to be happier than most about where they live. Fifty per cent of the people surveyed said they could not think of a better place to live, compared with the Queensland average of 37 per cent.

On a daily basis, residents of the tropical north are more likely than other Queenslanders, to interact with tourists through the course of their work. They are accustomed to seeing tourists in the street and talking to them. From a personal perspective, 30 per cent rate the overall impact of tourism on their quality of life as moderate or very positive, a much greater number than the State average of 11 per cent. The residents most likely to give a positive rating were those who:

- personally benefit from tourism or have a family member that benefits from tourism

- think their area needs to attract more tourists
- really like tourists.

At the broader community level, 64 per cent of those surveyed said tourism had a moderate or very positive impact on their community. Again, this figure is much higher than the Queensland average of 50 per cent. Residents inclined to give a positive rating were those who:

- really liked living in their local area
- think the region should be attracting more tourists
- really like tourists.

Contact with Tourists, Feelings and Development

		Queensland %	TNQ %
Feelings about tourists	I really like tourists	49	54
	I tolerate tourists	35	36
	I adjust my lifestyle to avoid tourists	10	8
	I stay away from places tourists go	5	2
Contact with tourists	I never come into contact with tourists	18	4
	I see tourists around but don't usually talk to them	52	53
	I often interact with tourists as part of my job	13	21
	I often meet tourists around town and talk to them	14	18
	I have made friends with tourists during their stay but have not kept in contact	7	12
	I have made friends with tourists and kept in contact after they have left	5	7
Preferred development growth	Happy with continued growth	59	67
	Happy but no more growth	25	18
	Want less tourism	6	4
	More growth different direction	10	12

■ = statistically significant difference



TNQ residents agreed that tourism boosted the local economy, region's profile and local pride. They also felt it improved facilities maintenance, lead to new infrastructure i.e. shopping, dining and other recreational opportunities, as well as more interesting things to

do such as attractions and events. Moreover, agreement on the idea that tourism leads to increased regional profile, new infrastructure and more interesting things to do was stronger than the Queensland average.

"Makes the whole town brighter and happier and everyone is earning... can't be bad !"

TNQ Social Indicators Respondent 2010

When asked how these benefits affected their personal and community lives, residents again, gave a much more favourable response than the Queensland average.

"We love the fact that, while we live on the southside of Cairns (15 mins out of town), we can go into the city area on a weekend, and feel like we're on holidays."

There are many attractions and things to do/see. We would never run out of things to do on a weekend."

TNQ Social Indicators Respondent 2010



However, TNQers did acknowledge some down sides. For example, they were more likely than the average Queenslanders to think tourism had a detrimental affect on the local character of the region, and caused an increase in prices. These impacted on both their personal quality of life as well as the life of the community. They also thought tourism lead to increased property values.

The views of residents were consistent across the region and varied notably on one point only - that people living outside the Cairns region were more likely than residents living in Cairns⁴ to meet tourists and talk to them.

The words that commonly came to the minds of residents when thinking about how they would describe their local region were Great Barrier Reef, tropical, rainforest and beautiful.

Overall Impacts of Tourism

	Queensland		TNQ	
	% positive affect	% negative affect	% positive affect	% negative affect
Overall impact on personal quality of life	11	4	30	5
Overall impact on local community	50	2	64	3

% 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).

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Positive Impacts of Tourism

Because of tourism there is...	Queensland			TNQ		
	% 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	91	28	76
Increased regional profile	76	16	52	85	23	72
Increased local pride	65	20	50	66	32	67
Improved facility maintenance	60	25	53	61	35	70
New infrastructure	60	36	65	70	47	70
More interesting things to do	54	35	65	68	49	79

% 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			TNQ		
	% 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	67	27	25
Increased property values	45	22	25	55	24	28
Rise in delinquent behaviour	36	15	31	41	18	35
More disruption	31	19	24	22	21	16
Negative impact on the environment	29	12	31	29	15	36
Negative impact on local character	29	9	11	48	15	17
Increased opportunity costs	25	19	24	29	24	19
Lack of access for locals	16	28	28	12	24	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).

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Demographics

		Queensland %	TNQ %
Gender	Male	50	51
	Female	50	49
Life stage	Under 45 years, no children	29	27
	Under 45 years, with children	26	28
	45 years or more, no children	32	35
	45 years or more, with children	13	11
Years of residence	Less than 2 years	9	7
	2-5 years	21	24
	6-10 years	15	16
	11-20 years	19	26
	More than 20 years	14	15
	All my life	22	13
Place of birth	Within 50km of where you currently live	22	13
	Elsewhere in Queensland	24	25
	Elsewhere in Australia	34	42
	In another country	21	19
Education	Completed Year 10	11	10
	Completed Year 11/12	18	23
	Finished technical education	15	14
	Tertiary diploma	12	11
	Finished university degree	14	11
	Finished post-graduate degree	5	5
	Other	26	27
Employment status	Working full-time	41	43
	Working part-time	17	17
	Unemployed, looking for work	4	5
	Unemployed, not seeking work	1	1
	Retired	14	12
	Student	5	3
	Student/part-time work	3	2
	Home duties	10	11
	Other	4	6
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	18
	Family benefit	10	18
	No benefit	83	72
Income	Less than \$60,000	40	46
	\$60,000 - \$99,000	26	26
	\$100,000 or more	15	14
	Prefer not to say	18	14

■ = statistically significant difference

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

2. [Welcome to Tourism Tropical North Queensland](#)

3. Census Data, Australian Bureau of Statistics

4. Cairns residents were defined by the following postcodes: 4860-4870, 4878, 4879

Base: Queensland n=3834; Tropical North Queensland n=402