

POPULATION STUDIES RESEARCH BRIEF

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Population Studies Group
School for Social and Policy Research
Charles Darwin University
Northern Territory, 0909.
popmob@cdu.edu.au

MOVERS INTO THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AND THEIR FUTURE INTENTIONS

KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of people were satisfied with the time they spent in the NT. However, many respondents only intended to remain in the NT for less than 5 years or were unsure of their future plans.
- Factors such as financial incentives, health services and housing subsidies were most important for those people who were unsure of their future intentions of remaining in the NT.
- People were particularly dissatisfied with access to tradespeople, tertiary education, housing costs, retail shopping and social behaviour.
- People were less satisfied with access to health care services than they were with the quality of health care. Satisfaction with disability services and services for older people was much higher for the older than for younger respondents.
- The findings suggest several avenues for policy that will encourage people to live longer in the NT.

RESEARCH AIM

This Research Brief examines the reasons why respondents who were satisfied with their time in the Territory either intended to leave within 5 years of coming to the NT or were unsure of their future intentions.

This paper provides findings from the Australian Post Relocation Survey (APRS) and the Northern Territory Population Mobility Survey (TMS) which were conducted as part of the NT Mobility project.

The research was undertaken by
Dr Teresa Cunningham
and **Megan Brown**



BACKGROUND

This paper provides findings from the Australian Post Relocation Survey (APRS) and the Northern Territory Population Mobility Survey (TMS) which were conducted as part of the Australia Research Council (ARC) grant at the Charles Darwin University (CDU) titled *Causes and Consequences of Population Turnover in the Northern Territory*. Data is compared with ABS Census data (2006) where possible.

This is one of a number of research briefs which examines the findings from survey respondents and which focuses on the future intentions of movers in relation to whether they anticipated that they would remain in the NT on a short term or long term basis and possible reasons for these decisions. Other research briefs will analyse findings for those respondents who moved out of and within the NT.

METHODOLOGY

AUSTRALIA POST SURVEY

The Northern Territory Treasury, in association with Charles Darwin University and Australia Post, conducted the Australia Post Relocation Survey to gather information about the reasons behind interstate migration into the Northern Territory (NT), migration out of the Northern Territory and migration within the Northern Territory. A control group was used to compare certain characteristics with the NT mover groups.

The survey was conducted in November to December 2006. Questionnaires were mailed to 11,000 applicants registered on Australia Post's mail redirection database who had either moved to, from or within the Northern Territory in the 12 months prior to the survey, or who had moved across any other state border within the same period. 2145 completed questionnaires were received, a response rate of just under 20 per cent. A total of 338 respondents had moved to the Territory.

NORTHERN TERRITORY POPULATION MOBILITY SURVEY (TMS)

The TMS asked respondents a range of questions regarding their past mobility patterns, the amount of time they had spent in the Territory, reasons for moving to and from and returning to the Territory, satisfaction with living in the Territory and intentions regarding living in the Territory in the future. The target sample was selected such that it was statistically representative of the Territory's population. Telephone interviews were conducted with 1500 persons aged 18 years and over from September to October 2006 with a response rate of 83

per cent. This paper compares respondents who had come to the NT for the first time (n=958) with those APRS respondents who had moved into the Territory.

2006 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

The Census of Population and Housing is conducted every 5 years and was last conducted on the 8th August 2006. The Census is a paper or internet based (e-census) census form completed by self enumeration for every household in Australia. The two questions that have been utilised in this research are “Where did the person usually live one year ago?” and “Where did you usually live five years ago?” Analysis has been conducted on these responses combined with age, gender, Indigenous status and location at a State and Territory level.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOVERS

A comparison was made between the surveys and the Census data in order to determine the representativeness of the survey samples. Figure 1 provides the gender and age group of respondents who moved into the NT in 2006 for the APRS, TMS and Census data.

Figure 1

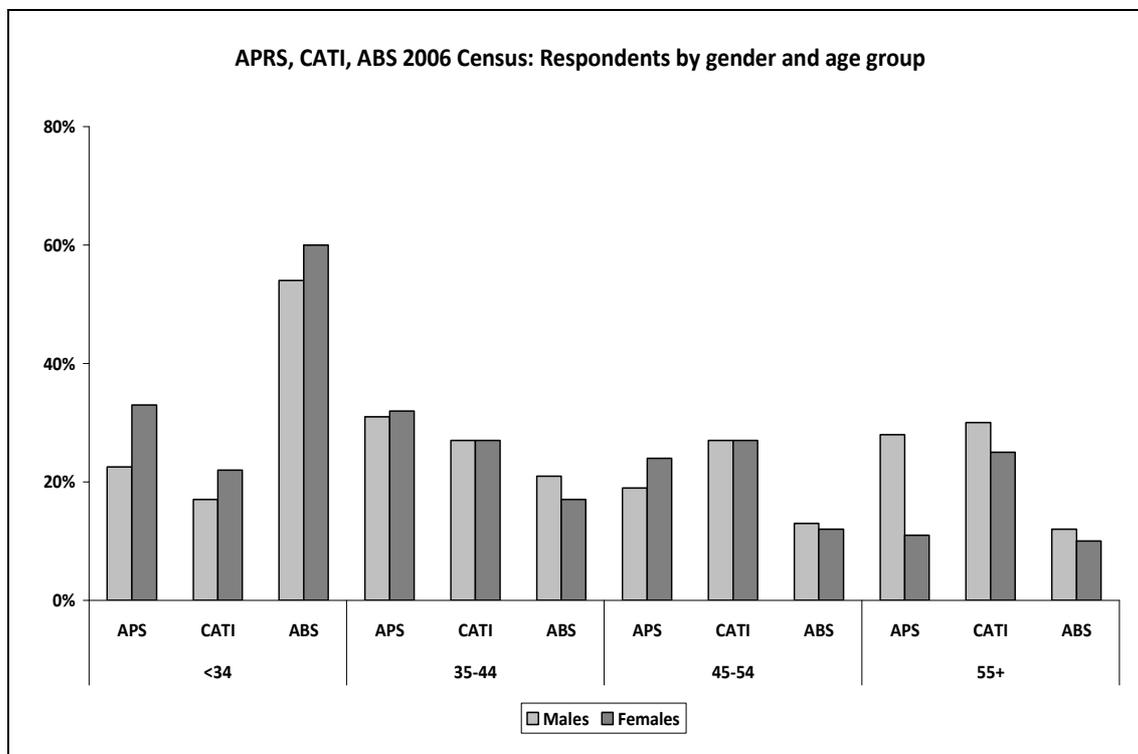


Figure 1 indicates a number of differences between the two respondent groups and the Census population in relation to the age at which people moved to the Territory and in relation to gender. APRS and TMS respondents were older than the Census population. Less than 30 per cent of the survey respondents were under 34 years of age, compared with between 54 per cent and 60 per cent of males and females reported in the Census. The bias towards older age groups on both surveys may be related to the type of survey itself. The TMS may have appealed to longer term residents as it focused on feelings of belonging and attachment to the NT. Additionally, telephone surveys are generally biased towards attracting older females resident in family homes (Carson, 2008). Furthermore, older age groups are more likely to respond to postal surveys and to pay to have their mail redirected as was the case with the APRS (Barnes, Beneforti, Stinson and Thai, 2008).

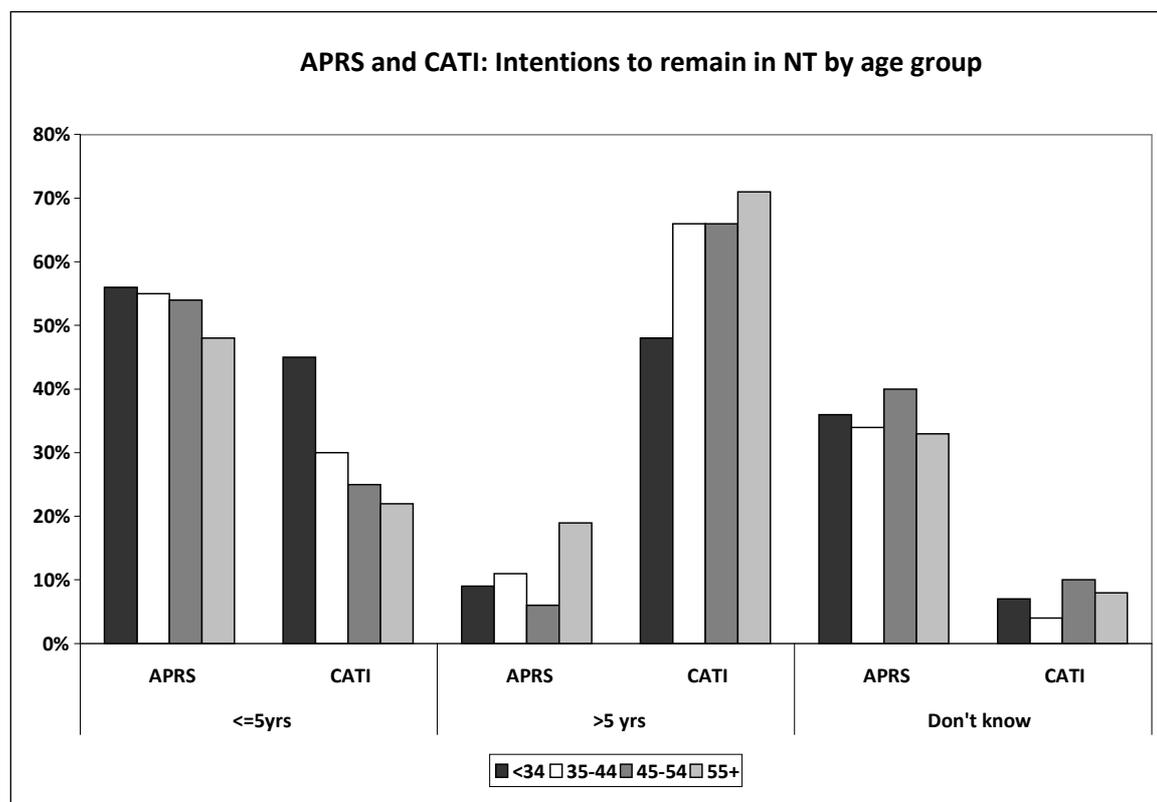
However, there were some similarities in the pattern of movers as, within the youngest age group, a greater proportion of females than males moved in both the surveys and the Census. Patterns were also similar for those within the oldest age group, as in both the surveys and the Census more males moved into the NT than females. Additionally, there was not a great difference in proportions of people in the surveys and Census within the age groups 34-45 years and 45-54 years. Therefore, although the surveys were skewed towards older people, they were representative of similar patterns of gender and ages within age groups as shown in the Census population.

FUTURE INTENTIONS IN RELATION TO REMAINING IN THE NT

Respondents in both surveys were asked about their future intentions in regard to how long they were going to stay in the NT. Figure 2 shows that the whereas the majority (over 60 per cent) of TMS respondents in each age group, with the exception of the under 34 year olds, intended to remain in the NT for more than 5 years, a minority (less than 20 per cent) intended to leave sooner.

Similar percentages of APRS respondents in each age group said they would remain for 5 years or less whereas in the TMS the percentage of those people under 34 years of age who were staying for less than 5 years was much higher than for other age groups.

Figure 2

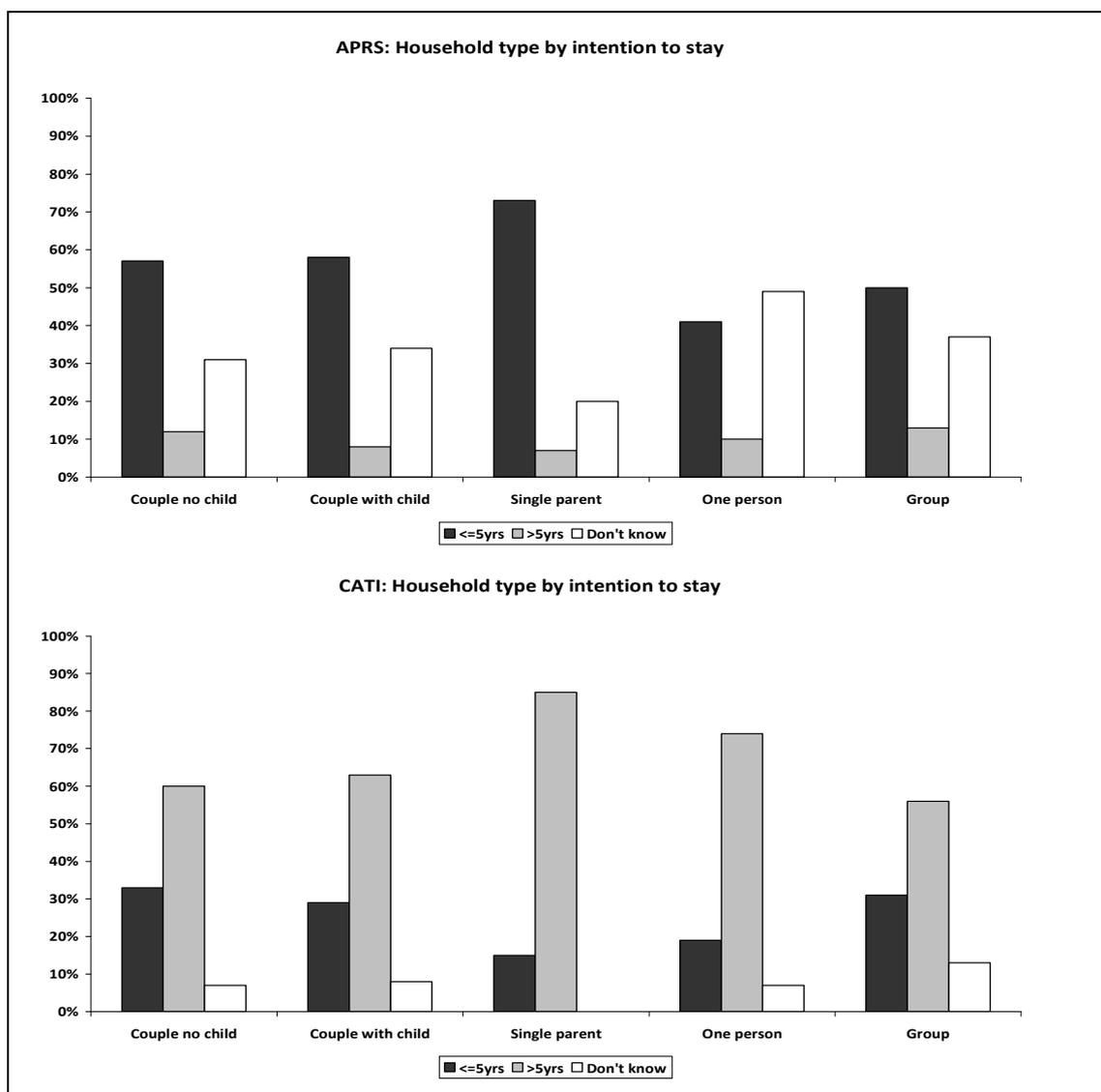


A much larger percentage (30-40 per cent) of APRS than TMS (less than 10 per cent) respondents reported that they didn't know what their future intentions were. This latter group may be those who have the most flexibility in determining where they would like to live in the future and may therefore be a target group for further examining **what would** encourage people to remain in the NT. This group is further examined below.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Age may be related to household composition; however households without children may consist of adults in any age group, whereas households with children are more likely to consist of adults in younger age groups. As household composition may influence the ability to move and the likelihood of moving respondents were asked about the type of household in which they lived. As shown in Figure 3, for each household type, the largest proportion of APRS respondents intended to leave the NT within 5 years.

Figure 3



The reverse was true for TMS respondents where the majority of respondents in each household type intended to remain in the NT for the longer term. The discrepancy between the two surveys may again be a reflection of the different types of survey samples, one of which (the APRS) may have been more mobile than the other.

SATISFACTION WITH THE NT AND FUTURE INTENTIONS

Over 80 per cent of both sets of survey respondents said they were satisfied with their time in the NT. For the APRS 83 per cent (n=281) of respondents were satisfied, 11 per cent (n=42) said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 6 per cent (n=22) said they were

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dissatisfied. For TMS respondents 95 per cent (n=696) said they were satisfied and 5 per cent were dissatisfied. Only one respondent said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Because of the small number of respondents who said they were dissatisfied with their time in the NT, and the problems inherent in analysing such small numbers, the analysis only includes a profile of those respondents who were satisfied.

The following is a profile of APRS respondents ***who were satisfied with their time in the NT but who expected to leave within 5 years of their arrival (n=140):***

- 45 per cent of males, 53 per cent of females;
- 49 per cent of those respondents who were 25-34 years, 51 per cent 35-44 years, 53 per cent 45-54 years, 48 per cent 55+;
- 38 per cent were in a couple with no children, 36 per cent were in a couple with children;
- 36 per cent had moved because of work transfer, 32 per cent had moved to obtain work; and
- 52 per cent of respondents were in the managerial or professional occupation categories.

Of those who were ***satisfied but who were unsure of their future intentions (n=106):***

- 40 per cent of males, 38 per cent of females;
- 41 per cent of those respondents who were 25-34 years, 37 per cent 35-44 years, 41 per cent 45-54 years, 32 per cent 55+;
- 34 per cent in a couple with no children, 34 per cent in a couple with children;
- 21 per cent moved for a work transfer, 33 per cent moved to obtain work; and
- 43 per cent were managerial/professional respondents.

A breakdown of TMS respondents showed that, of those who were ***satisfied but who intended to leave the NT in 5 years (n=696):***

- 24 per cent of males, 27 per cent of females;
- 42 per cent of those respondents 25-34 years, 29 per cent 35-44 years, 22 per cent 45-54 years and 20 per cent 55+;
- 30 per cent couples with no children, 26 per cent couples with children, 14 per cent single parents, 20 per cent one person, 31 per cent group household; and
- 12 per cent of those not working, 53 per cent of the government/defence sector, 35 per cent of the private sector respondents.

Of those who were **satisfied but unsure about their future intentions (n=49)**:

- 7 per cent of males, 7 per cent of females;
- 16 per cent were 25-34 years, 14 per cent were 35-44 years, 37 per cent were 45-54 years and 33 per cent were 55+;
- 7 per cent couples no children, 8 per cent couples with children, 0 per cent single parents, 7 per cent one person, 13 per cent group household; and
- 16 per cent of those not working, 31 per cent of the government/defence sector, 53 per cent of the private sector respondents.

The following tables provide information about what respondents said would encourage them to remain in the NT.

Table 1 APRS: Respondents who were satisfied with their time in the NT and their future intentions by factors which would encourage them to remain in the NT

	Satisfied	
	Leave in 5yrs %	Unsure %
Financial incentives	37	51
Health services	32	40
Housing subsidies	24	39
School education	22	16
Law and order	19	25
Career	18	19
Tertiary education	4	15

Additionally, one third of respondents stated that there was “nothing” which would encourage them stay longer in the NT. Given that these were people who were satisfied with their time in the NT it would appear that their intention to leave was not related to a lack of resources, services or incentives in the Territory.

Table 2 below consists of TMS respondents who were intending to leave the NT at some stage, i.e. who were not staying indefinitely, and who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with certain aspects of the NT. The table is broken down by labour force life cycle defined as Young Worker aged 18-34 years, Family Worker aged 35-49 years and Nearing Retirement 50+ years. As shown in the table, respondents were most satisfied with factors relating to air quality, lifestyle, meeting people and employment opportunities (average over 90 per cent satisfied), access to social facilities, the environment and feelings of personal safety (average 80-90 per cent satisfied), quality of health care and school education (average 70-80 per cent satisfied).

Table 2: TMS respondents who were not intending to stay in the NT indefinitely, who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with aspects of the NT, by labour force life cycle age categories sorted by average all years

	Young Worker 18-34 yrs %	Family Worker 35-49 yrs %	Nearing Retirement 50+ yrs %	All years Average %
Air quality	94	97	95	95
Lifestyle	91	94	94	93
Meeting people	92	93	91	92
Employment opportunities	89	91	90	90
Access to social facilities	84	87	94	88
Environment	89	88	87	88
Personal safety	78	86	76	80
Quality of health care	65	73	79	72
School education	67	71	75	71
Cafes and restaurants	53	69	86	69
Access to public transport	63	62	65	63
Litter control	64	60	60	61
Disability services	58	56	69	61
Live entertainment	54	56	67	59
Access to health services	59	53	59	57
Rental accommodation	59	49	60	56
Services for older people	47	46	75	56
Social behaviour	65	61	39	55
Cost of housing	46	52	64	54
Retail shops	41	55	66	54
Tertiary education	46	52	51	50
Access to tradespeople	36	44	54	45

Shading indicates where there are the largest percentage differences between groups

Table 2 indicates that only half of the respondents were satisfied with the standard of tertiary education, and less than half (45 per cent) were satisfied with access to tradespeople. There were however some disparities (as indicated by shading) in levels of satisfaction between groups. For example, in relation to access to tradespeople, only one third of 18-34 year olds were satisfied (the lowest level of satisfaction of any group for any factor) compared with 44 per cent and 54 per cent of the older groups. Similarly the youngest group was also less satisfied with retail shops and the cost of housing than were other age groups.

Respondent groups under 49 years had similar levels of satisfaction with disability services (58 and 56 per cent) but the oldest group was most satisfied (69 per cent) with this factor. Interestingly there was a large disparity across age groups in the level of satisfaction for services for older people, as three quarters of the 50+ group were satisfied with these services compared with less than half of the younger groups (46-47 per cent). The fact that older people, who were probably more likely to access these services, and were more

satisfied with them than were respondents in younger age groups may reflect incorrect perceptions by younger age groups of the availability of health services in the NT. This perception may then mean that, for example, people who have family in other states will move back to them to look after ageing parents, rather than moving their parents to the Territory.

In relation to access to health services less than 60 percentage of respondents in each age group were satisfied. However, two thirds to three quarters of respondents were satisfied with the quality of health care suggesting that it was not the level of care provided but access to health care services which was perceived as problematic.

Similar percentages of the younger groups were also satisfied with social behaviour — 61-65 per cent, however this compared with only 39 per cent of those who were satisfied in the 50+ years age group and which was the second lowest level of satisfaction of any group for any factor.

In relation to accommodation the two younger groups were also less satisfied with the cost of housing (46-52 per cent) than the older group (64 per cent). This may of course reflect the fact that older groups were more likely to own their own homes. Less than half (49 per cent) of the respondents in the Family Worker group were satisfied with rental accommodation compared with around 60 per cent of the Young Worker and Nearing Retirement groups which may relate to the lower availability of suitable and affordable rental accommodation for families with children, particularly in and around Darwin.

COMMENTS

What might these surveys tell us?

- The majority of people were satisfied with the time they spent in the NT. However, despite their level of satisfaction, the majority of ASPR respondents intended to leave with 5 years of arrival but a greater percentage of TMS respondents intended to stay for the longer term. This finding may well be a reflection of the type of survey and sample as discussed in the introduction.
- In relation to levels of satisfaction, factors such as financial incentives, health services and housing subsidies were important for all respondents, but more so for those people who were unsure whether they were remaining in the NT for the longer term than for those people who said they were definitely leaving. This may suggest a group of people who could be “targeted” by specific enticements.
- The highest levels of dissatisfaction were with access to tradespeople, tertiary education, accommodation costs, retail shopping and social behaviour. These issues may be addressed through government initiatives and future planning and again this should be done in the context of more in-depth research relating to people who are unsure of their future intentions for staying in the NT.
- People were also much less satisfied with access to health care services than with the quality of health care. Satisfaction with other aspects of health care, such as disability services and services for older people, was much higher for the older than for younger respondents, suggesting that younger people need to be provided with more information about the types of services available in the NT in order to make informed decisions about their future intentions for staying in the Territory.

These findings suggest areas for policy development, particularly for those people unsure of their future plans and where the provision of or improvement in certain services may “tip the balance” in terms of encouraging them to remain in the NT.

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