



# What's in a place? Drivers of migration to and from Tasmania

THE TASMANIA PROJECT REPORT 59

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UNIVERSITY of  
**TASMANIA** 

# Acknowledgment of Country

The University of Tasmania pays its respects to elders past and present and to the many Aboriginal people that did not make elder status and to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community that continues to care for Country. We acknowledge the profound effect of climate change on this Country and seek to work alongside Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, with their deep wisdom and knowledge, to address climate change and its impacts.

The Palawa people belong to one of the world's oldest living cultures, continually resident on this Country for over 65,000 years. They have survived and adapted to significant climate changes over this time, such as sea-level rise and extreme rainfall variability, and as such embody thousands of generations of intimate place-based knowledge.

We acknowledge with deep respect that this knowledge represents a range of cultural practices, wisdom, traditions, and ways of knowing the world that provide accurate and useful climate change information, observations, and solutions.

The University of Tasmania likewise recognises a history of truth that acknowledges the impacts of invasion and colonisation upon Aboriginal people, resulting in forcible removal from their lands.

Our island is deeply unique, with cities and towns surrounded by spectacular landscapes of bushland, waterways, mountain ranges, and beaches.

The University of Tasmania stands for a future that profoundly respects and acknowledges Aboriginal perspectives, culture, language, and history, and a continued effort to fight for Aboriginal justice and rights paving the way for a strong future.

## Key findings

The Tasmania Project Place Survey (TTP7) was open between 16 June and 5 July 2022. It asked a variety of questions about people's migration to and from Tasmania and the reasons underpinning those moves.

### COMING TO TASMANIA

- Over half (51.3%) of respondents were born in Tasmania, 29.5% were born interstate, and 19.2% were born overseas.
- Over half the sample (61.0%), regardless of birthplace and migration path, had lived most of their lives in Tasmania.
- The median amount of time living in Tasmania was 5 years for direct overseas migrants, 14 years for overseas migrants who lived on the mainland prior to coming to Tasmania, and 12 years for interstate migrants born in Australia.
- Most people who moved to Tasmania from interstate departed from the East Coast of Australia. Most Tasmanian-born people who moved back from overseas left from Europe, and the largest proportion of overseas-born migrants who migrated directly to Tasmania were from Asia.
- The most commonly selected reasons for moving to (or back to) Tasmania were the natural environment, to be closer to family, and seeking a change of lifestyle were. Being closer to family, to study, for work/employment, 'other' reasons and to follow a spouse/partner were more likely to be the most important reasons for moving among those who chose them.
- Men were more likely than women to move to Tasmania for a change of lifestyle. People with university qualifications were more likely to move for the natural environment and for work/employment.

### MOVING FROM TASMANIA

- Most respondents (85.9%) did *not* plan to move from Tasmania. The 14.1% who did plan to move comprised 10.7% of respondents who planned an interstate move and 3.3% who planned to move overseas. Likelihood of intention to move decreased with age.
- Of those that planned to move, 54.8% planned to do so within 2 years.
- The most common reasons for moving away from Tasmania included work/employment, change of lifestyle, and housing affordability in Tasmania. To be closer to family, housing affordability, Tasmanian climate/weather, 'other' reasons, and to follow a spouse/partner were more likely to be the most important reason for moving among those who selected them.
- Among those planning to leave, those under 45 were more likely to list housing affordability and work/employment as reasons for leaving Tasmania. Those 45 and over (and particularly 65 and up) and those in West and North West were more likely to want to move to be closer to family.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 THE TASMANIA PROJECT PLACE SURVEY (TTP7)

The Tasmania Project Place Survey (TTP7) was open between 16 June and 5 July 2022. The survey asked respondents, Tasmanians aged over 18, about their moves to and from the mainland and/or overseas, the reasons underlying moves to (or back to) Tasmania, and whether they intend to move from Tasmania (and why). The survey also asked about the importance of several dimensions of health and education to respondents, respondents' opinions about various Antarctic issues, and respondents' book buying behaviour. These topics will be explored in forthcoming reports and publications.

A total of 1,298 responses were collected. The sample was more than two-thirds female (68.7%), skewed older (54.3% aged 55 and over), and educated (86.8% with post-secondary qualifications). Over half the sample resided in the Hobart Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4), 19.8% in Launceston and North East, 18.0% in West and North West and 11.1% in South East. The data were weighted against these variables to ensure that the sample is more demographically representative of Tasmanian residents, overall. For detailed information about the methodology, please see the [Technical Report](#) (Kocar, 2022). All results presented in tables and figures in this report are based on weighted data.

## 1.2 THIS REPORT

In this report, we examine the migration profiles of respondents to TTP7; where Tasmanian residents were born, the length of time they have lived in Tasmania, and where they lived directly before they moved to Tasmania. We also examine the reasons for moving to or back to Tasmania in terms of how common they were across the sample (i.e., the proportion of people who identified each reason as a factor in their move) and how important the reasons were, on average.

We also examine intention to leave Tasmania, estimated timeframe of outbound migration, and reasons driving the decision to leave (again, prevalence and importance of reasons). Finally, we take a high-level look at the general factors that people consider when they decide whether to stay or leave the place they reside.

# 2. Where have we come from?

## 2.1 MIGRATION PROFILES

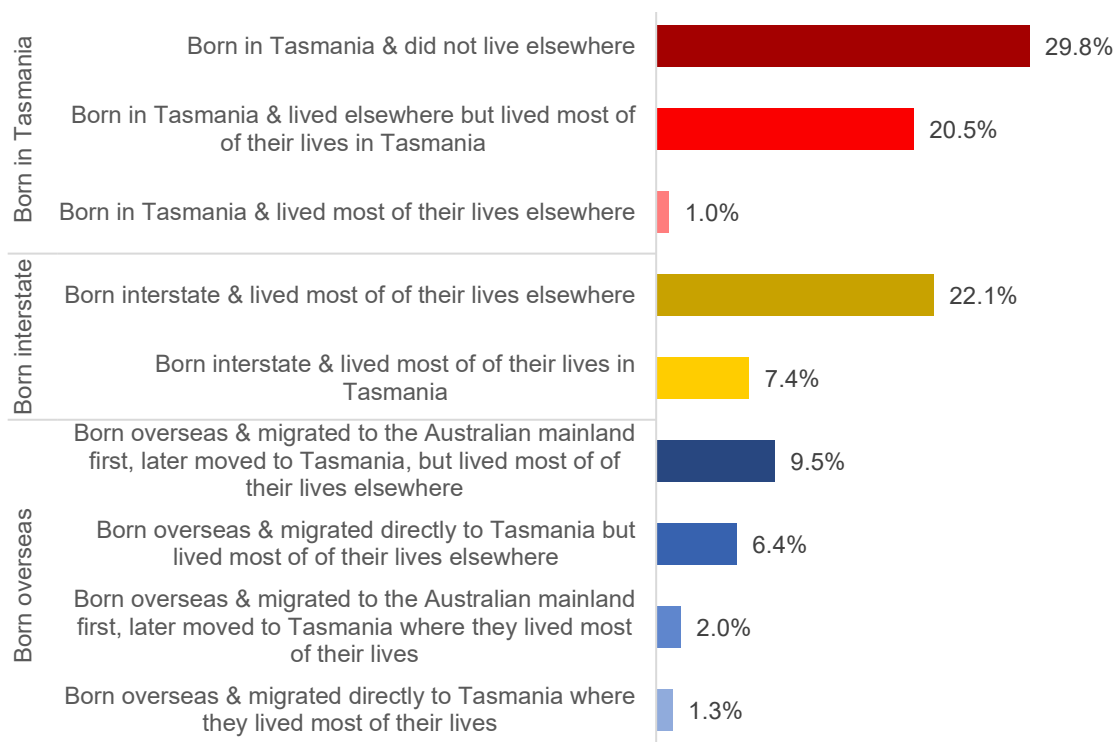
The figure below outlines the migration profiles – where they were born and where they have lived – of TTP7 respondents. Over half (51.3%) of respondents were born in Tasmania, 29.5% were born interstate, and 19.2% were born overseas. The 51.3% of respondents born in Tasmania comprise 29.8% of respondents who have never moved from Tasmania (i.e., 'lifelong Tasmanians'); 20.5% who had lived elsewhere but had lived most of their lives in Tasmania; and 1.0% who had lived most of their lives elsewhere (i.e., interstate and/or overseas).

Interstate born respondents included 22.1% of respondents who had lived most of their lives elsewhere, and 7.4% who had lived most of their lives in Tasmania. Those born overseas comprise 9.5% of respondents who first migrated to the mainland and 6.4% who moved directly

to Tasmania, but who had spent the majority of their lives in places other than Tasmania. Those in the latter group (overseas-born people who moved directly to Tasmania but had only spent a minority of their lives in Tasmania) were more likely to be men than women. Additionally, 2.0% of respondents were overseas born and first migrated to the mainland and 1.3% were overseas born and migrated directly to Tasmania, but had spent most of their lives in Tasmania.

Age proved to be the best indicator of migration profiles – those born overseas who migrated to Australian mainland and later to Tasmania (i.e., ‘delayed overseas migrants to Tasmania’), and those born interstate who moved to Tasmania and lived most of their lives in Tasmania (i.e., ‘settled interstate migrants’), were more likely to be aged 45 and over. While those born overseas who migrated directly to Tasmania and lived most of their lives in Tasmania (i.e., ‘settled overseas migrants’) were also more likely to be aged 45 and over, those born overseas who migrated directly to Tasmania and lived most of their lives elsewhere (i.e., ‘newer overseas migrants’) were more likely to be younger than 45. This is unsurprising given that the more years one has lived, the more opportunities one has for living in multiple locations and still having settled for most of their lives in a destination other than their birthplace. In a similar vein, it is unsurprising that those aged 18-24 were less likely to have been born in Tasmania, lived elsewhere and returned (as they have had less time in their lives to do so), than Tasmanian residents 25 and over.

Figure 1. Migration profiles – Tasmanian residents by their place of birth and migration/living pattern (n=1,270)



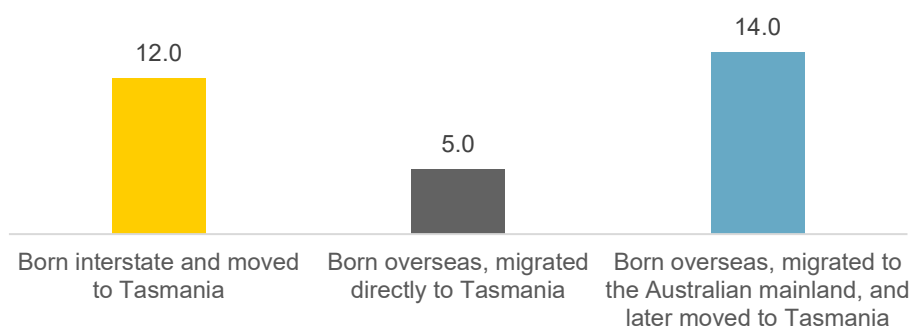
Respondents who were newer migrants – those born interstate or overseas and had lived most of their lives outside of Tasmania – were more likely to live in the South East SA4 at the time of survey than in the other Tasmanian statistical areas. Respondents with a university qualification were more likely to have lived in places other than Tasmania. This includes Tasmanian-born people who lived elsewhere and returned (spending most of their lives in Tasmania), those born

interstate, and those born overseas (regardless of whether they migrated directly to Tasmania or via the Australian mainland).

## 2.2 TIME RESIDING IN TASMANIA

The figure below outlines the median number of years spent living in Tasmania among respondents who were not born in Tasmania. Reflecting migration patterns, such that direct overseas migration is a relatively recent phenomenon for Tasmania and retaining overseas migrants can be challenging (Kocar et al. 2022), the median years that overseas-born respondents who moved directly to Tasmania had been living in Tasmania was lower, at 5.0 years, than interstate-born migrants (12.0 years) and overseas-born migrants who first spent time on the mainland (14.0 years).

Figure 2. Median time of living in Tasmania after interstate/overseas migration, by migration profile, in years (n=732)



As one would expect, the time living in Tasmania after migration or repatriation positively relates to age (the older one is, the longer they have lived in Tasmania). Respondents from West and North West and, to a slightly lesser extent, South East SA4s were much more likely to be recent migrants than those in Hobart or Launceston and North East. This may reflect a recent increase in migration to the West and North West and South East, and/or may also reflect that migrants to Tasmania find themselves moving to Hobart or Launceston over time.

## 2.3 DEPARTURE LOCATION

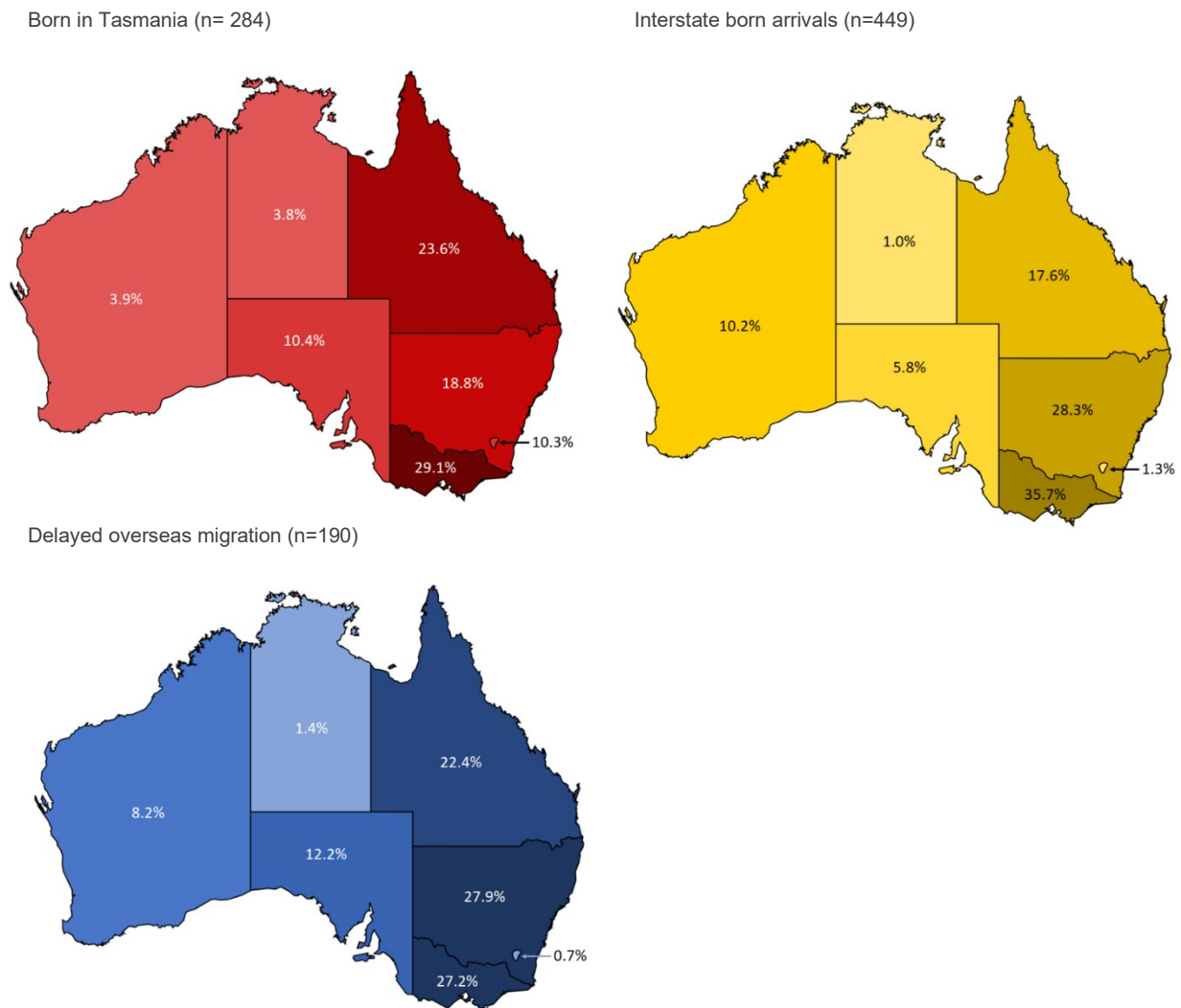
Figure 3 outlines the proportion of interstate migrants by their state of residence directly prior to moving to Tasmania, by migration profile (born in Tasmania, born interstate, born overseas). Regardless of migration profile, most respondents were living on the East Coast of Australia prior to moving to (or back to) Tasmania. Note that Tasmania is deliberately omitted from these maps as we are examining interstate migration with Tasmania as the common destination.

Among returning Tasmanians (those born in Tasmania, n=284), directly prior to moving back to Tasmania, 29.1% were living in Victoria (VIC), 23.6% in Queensland (QLD), 18.8% in New South Wales (NSW) and 10.3% in Australian Capital Territory (ACT). A further 10.4% were living in South Australia (SA), 3.9% in Western Australia (WA), and 3.8% in Northern Territory (NT).

Of interstate-born migrants (n=449), 35.7% left for Tasmania from VIC, 28.3% from NSW, 17.6% from QLD, 10.2% from WA, 5.8% from SA, 1.3% from ACT, and 1.0% from NT. Among overseas-born migrants who spent time on the mainland prior to moving to Tasmania, 27.9%

lived in NSW, 27.2% in VIC, 22.4% in QLD, 12.2% in SA, 8.2% in WA, 1.4% in NT and 0.7% in ACT, just prior to their move to Tasmania.

Figure 3 Australian state of departure, Tasmanian residents migrating/returning to Tasmania

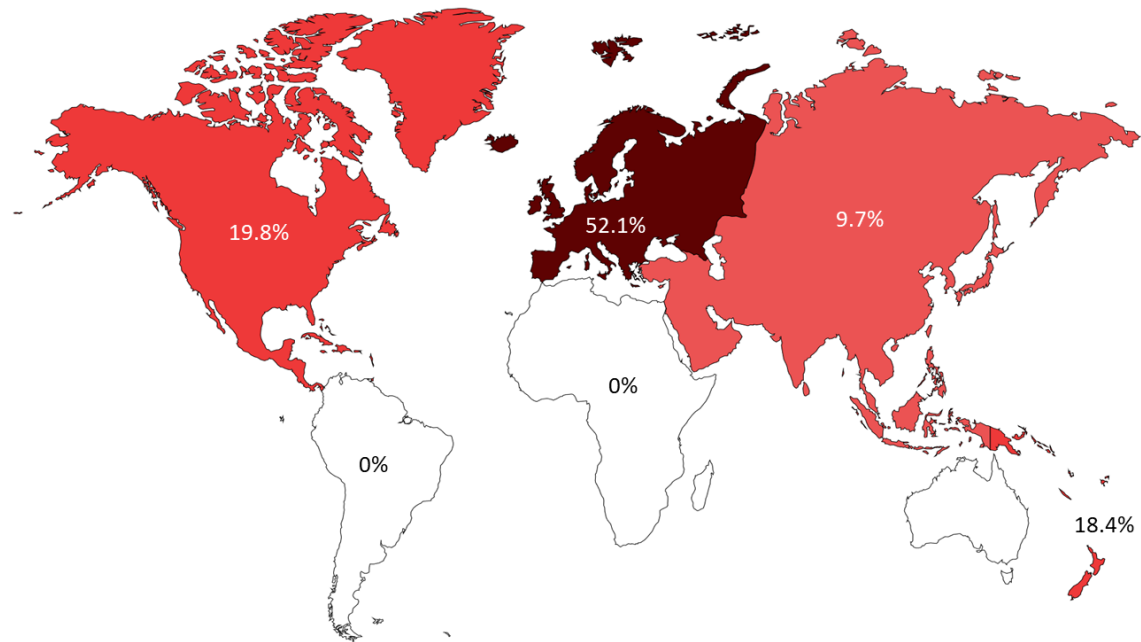


Among interstate migrants, those departing from Victoria were more likely than those coming from other states to have a high school degree as their highest level of education, while a slightly higher proportion of people arriving from Queensland than from other states had vocational qualifications as their highest educational qualifications.

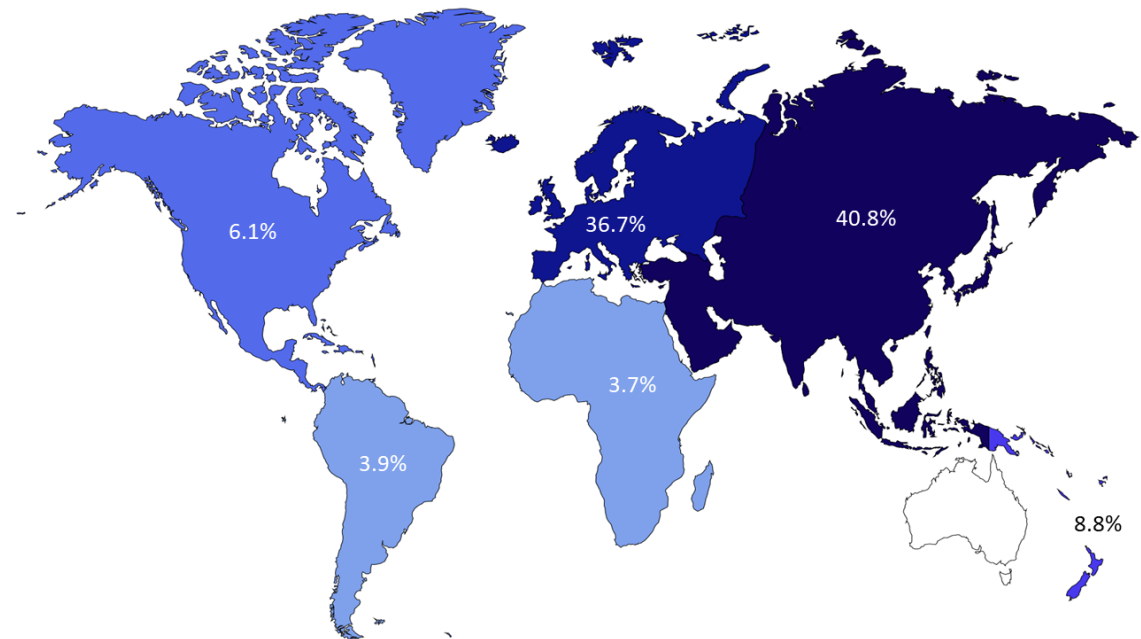
Figure 4 outlines the continent of departure of those who migrated to (or back to) Tasmania from overseas, by migration profile (born in Tasmania and born overseas). Among those born in Tasmania who returned to Tasmania from overseas (n=83), 52.1% returned from Europe, 19.8% from North America, 18.4% from Oceania, and 9.7% from Asia. Of respondents who were born overseas and migrated directly to Tasmania (n=94), 40.8% migrated from Asia, 36.7% from Europe, 8.8% from Oceania, 6.1% from North America, 3.9% from South America and 3.7% from Africa.

Figure 4: Continent of departure, overseas migration directly to Tasmania

Born in Tasmania (n=83)



Born overseas (n=94)



### 3. Reasons for migration

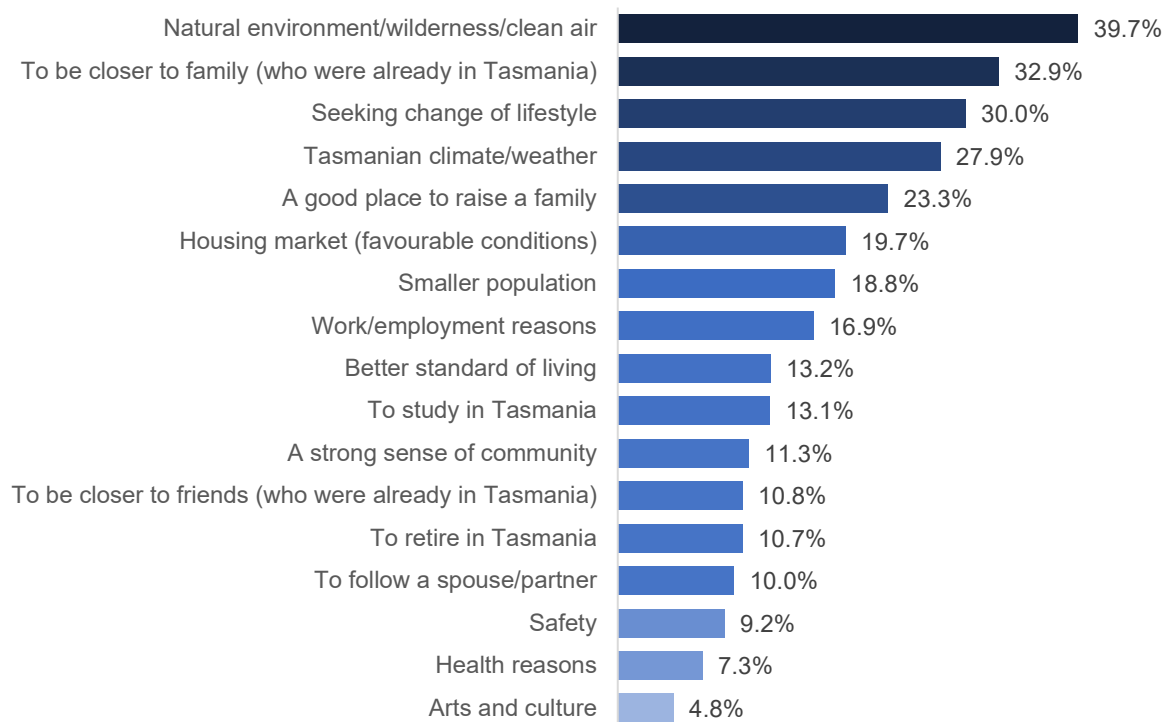
#### 3.1 REASONS FOR MOVING TO TASMANIA

We asked respondents who had migrated to Tasmania from interstate or overseas, or who had returned to Tasmania, to select up to five reasons that they moved. The reasons that they were given to choose from were based on common reasons for migration and known attraction factors for Tasmania (also identified in a previous survey of The Tasmania Project). Figure 5 outlines the

proportion of respondents that identified each reason as a factor in their move to (or back to) Tasmania. The most commonly selected reason was the natural environment/wilderness/clean air (39.7%), followed by to be closer to family who were already in Tasmania (32.9%), and seeking a change of lifestyle (30.0%). The Tasmanian climate/weather was a reason for moving for 27.9% of respondents, while 23.3% indicated that Tasmania being a good place to raise a family was a reason for their move.

Favourable housing market conditions were a reason for moving for 19.7% respondents (noting that most respondents had lived in Tasmania for a number of years, see Figure 2), and the smaller population was a factor for 18.8% of respondents. Work/employment was a reason for 16.9%, study 13.1%, and retirement 10.7%. The least common reason for moving was arts and culture (4.8%), perhaps reflecting low perceptions of Tasmania’s cultural amenity (Kocar et al. 2022) or the low salience of arts and culture in most people’s decision to move.

Figure 5 Main reasons for migrating/returning to Tasmania, up to 5 possible selections by respondents (n=1,017)



A number of respondents identified ‘other’ reasons, such as moving with parents as children (i.e., no choice in the moving decision), returning to look after parents, climate change and seeking to avoid climate crises on the mainland, homesickness, and falling in love with Tasmania while on holiday.

There were notable differences in the most influential reasons underlying moves to Tasmania between (1) Tasmanian-born who returned to Tasmania and (2) interstate/overseas-born Tasmanian residents. Those returning to Tasmania were about twice more likely to cite a good place to raise a family as a reason for moving to Tasmania. Those arriving from interstate/overseas were about four times more likely to move because they sought a change of lifestyle and almost 2.5 times more likely to migrate to Tasmania because of its climate/weather.

Overseas and interstate migrants were very unlikely to move to be closer to family who lived in Tasmania at the time.

Moreover, there were some demographic differences in the most influential reasons underlying moves to Tasmania. Those who were younger were less likely to cite Tasmanian climate/weather and more likely to cite study as reason for moving to Tasmania. People aged 45-64 were slightly more likely to cite a good place to raise a family as one of the migration reasons than those 65 years of age and older. Men were more likely than women to move to Tasmania for a change of lifestyle (about 1.5 times more likely) and to study (about twice as likely).

Education and to some extent location were also good predictors of reasons for migration to Tasmania. Those with a university degree were about twice as likely to move for the natural environment and for work/employment, and to move to study in Tasmania (e.g., five times more likely compared to those with a high school degree). Those who currently live in the South East SA4 were about three times more likely than Hobartians to have moved to Tasmania for the natural environment and almost twice as likely to have moved because they sought a change of lifestyle.

Respondents were also asked to rank the importance (out of 10) of each of the reasons for their move to (or back to) that they identified. Table 1 presents a matrix of reasons for moving, by frequency (proportion of respondents that selected reasons) and importance (likelihood of the reason being ranked as the most important reason). The most commonly selected reason for moving that was also more likely to be the most important factor to respondents was to be closer to family. While a lower proportion of respondents said they moved to follow a spouse/partner, those that did were more likely to identify it as the leading reason for their move. Study, work, and 'other' reasons were selected by a moderate proportion of respondents, but were more likely to be the most important reason among those who did select them.

Commonly selected but moderately likely to be the most important reasons were the natural environment and lifestyle change; Tasmania being a good place to raise a family and the (favourable) housing market were in the middle (moderate frequency and moderate likelihood of being the most important), and retirement and health reasons were not commonly selected but moderately likely to be the most important among those who did select it.

Tasmanian climate/weather was commonly selected but less likely to be the most important reason; smaller population and better standard of living were identified with moderate frequency but were less likely to be the most important reasons; and a strong sense of community, to be closer to friends, safety, and arts and culture were less likely to be identified as reasons and less likely to be the most important reasons among those who selected them.

Table 1 Main reasons for migrating/returning to Tasmania and their relative importance (n=1,017)

		IMPORTANCE		
		Less likely to be the leading reason	Moderately likely to be the leading reason	More likely to be the leading reason
FREQUENCY	More selected as one of the main reasons	Tasmanian climate/weather	Natural environment/wilderness/clean air Seeking change of lifestyle	To be closer to family
	Moderate proportion selected as one of the main reasons	Smaller population Better standard of living	A good place to raise a family Housing market	Specific personal reasons (Other) To study in Tasmania Work/employment reasons
	Less selected as one of the main reasons	A strong sense of community To be closer to friends Safety Arts and culture	To retire in Tasmania Health reasons	To follow a spouse/partner

Based on the results of our survey, Tasmania seems to be (or used to be) an attractive destination for interstate and overseas migrants seeking a change of lifestyle and those who appreciate the Tasmanian natural environment, wilderness and/or clean air. For returning Tasmanians, being closer to their family is both the most common as well as the most important reason. More “traditional” reasons for migration identified in this survey (i.e., those that are not specific to Tasmania) are to study in Tasmania, work-employment reasons and to follow a spouse/partner. These traditional reasons were typically the most important drivers of moving to Tasmania among those who identified them but, relative to other reasons, smaller proportions of respondents identified these reasons (see Figure 5). Tasmania is also perceived as a good place to raise a family, but we can argue that the attractiveness of the housing market is a thing of the past. This is discussed in the next section of this report.

### 3.2 INTENT TO LEAVE

We’ve covered why people move to Tasmania and where they arrive from, we now explore whether people intend to leave. As evident in Figure 6, the majority (85.9%) of respondents indicated that they had no intention of moving from Tasmania. The mainland was calling for 10.7% of respondents who indicated that they planned to move interstate, and 3.3% of respondents planned to move overseas. Intention to leave Tasmania decreased with age among TTP7 respondents – younger than 35 are almost three times more likely to plan to move from Tasmania than those aged 35-54 years and about nine times more likely to plan to move than those 55 and over.

Figure 6: Tasmanian residents planning to move from Tasmania, by destination (n=1,297)

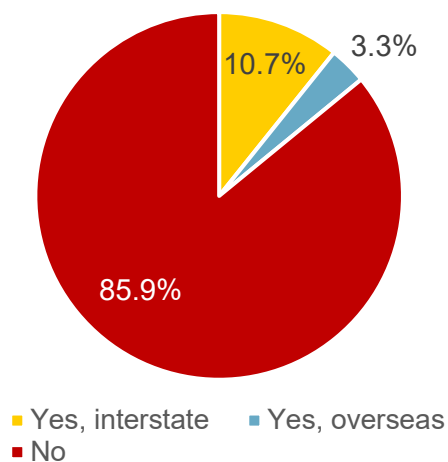
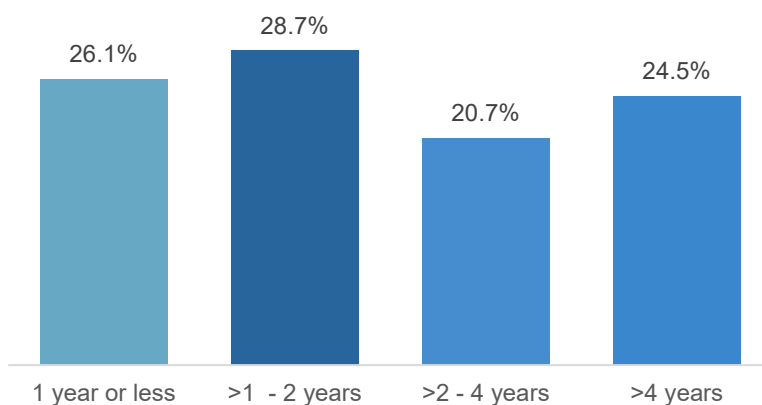


Figure 7 outlines the distribution of respondents who intended to leave across how much longer they intended to stay for. Moves were imminent (within the next year) for 26.1% of respondents who planned to leave, within >1-2 years for 28.7%, >2-4 years for 20.7%, and longer term (>4 years) for 24.5% of respondents.

Figure 7: Years intended to live in Tasmania before moving (n=131)



### 3.3 REASONS FOR LEAVING

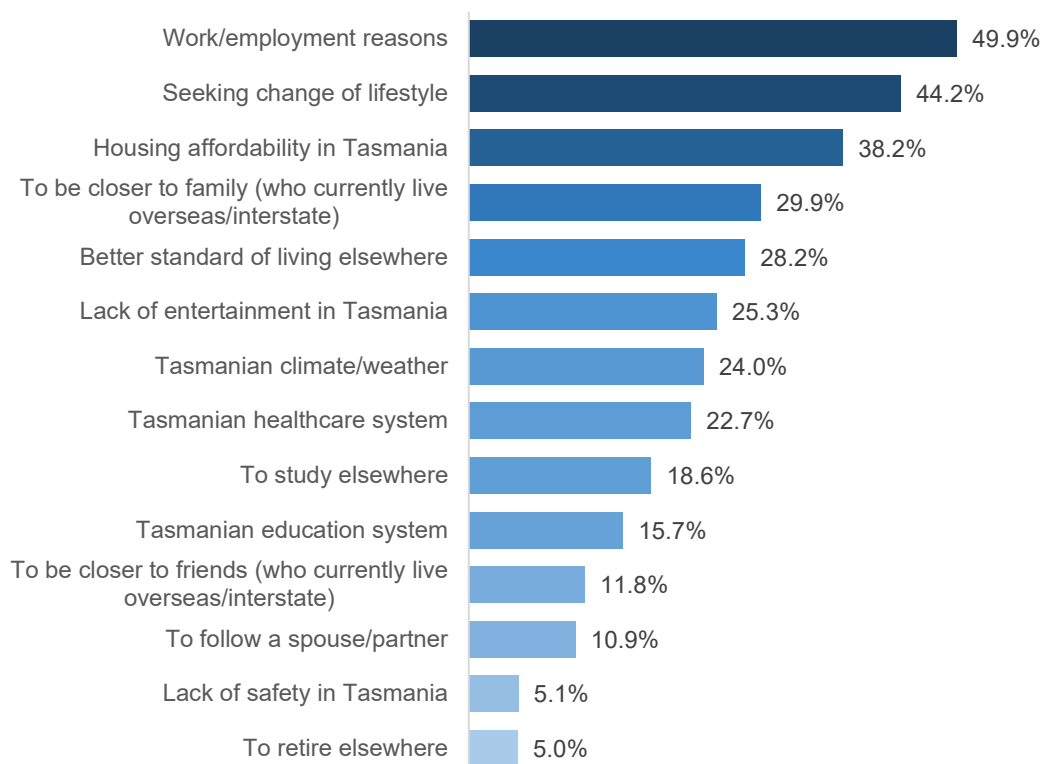
Respondents who indicated that they intended to leave Tasmania were asked to identify up to five reasons for their planned move. As with the reasons for moving to Tasmania, the reasons presented to respondents were common drivers of migration generally, and factors specific to Tasmania that were identified in Kocar et al. (2022). Figure 8 outlines the proportion of respondents who selected each reason. In contrast to the reasons for moving to Tasmania, where work/employment was only a moderate factor, just under half (49.9%) of respondents who planned to move identified work/employment as a reason. A large proportion (44.2%) reported

that they were seeking a change of lifestyle, and 38.2% identified housing affordability in Tasmania as a reason for moving away.

Being closer to family was also a strong reason for moving from Tasmania (29.9% of respondents), as was the belief that a better standard of living could be attained elsewhere (28.2%). A lack of entertainment in Tasmania was a reason for moving for 25.3% and the Tasmanian climate/weather was a factor for 24.0%. The healthcare and education systems in Tasmania were identified as reasons for moving by 22.7% and 15.7% of respondents, respectively. Almost 1 in 5 (18.6%) of prospective Tasmanian leavers intended to leave to study elsewhere, while only 5.0% intended to retire elsewhere (the least common reason identified by respondents).

Twelve percent of respondents identified ‘other’ reasons, which included the cost of living, poor wages, to gain opportunities, skills and experiences not available in Tasmania.

Figure 8: Main reasons for planning to move from Tasmania, up to 5 possible selections by respondents (n=141)



Respondents aged under 45 were about five times more likely to identify housing affordability and about six times more likely to select work/employment as reasons for their intended move from Tasmania. Those 45 and over (and particularly those aged 65 and up) and those from West and North West were more likely to cite being closer to family as reasons for moving from Tasmania.

Table 2 presents a matrix of reasons for moving from Tasmania by importance and frequency. Being closer to family and housing affordability in Tasmania were the most commonly selected reasons for moving from Tasmania that were more likely to be the most important reasons to those who selected them. While only a moderate proportion of respondents who intended to leave Tasmania identified the Tasmanian climate/weather as a reason, it was more likely to be the most important reason for those who selected it. Once again, following a spouse/partner was not a common reason, but an important one for those to whom it applied, as were 'other' reasons.

Work/employment and better standard of living elsewhere were commonly selected reasons that were moderately likely to be the most important to those who chose them, studying elsewhere and the Tasmanian education system were selected by a moderate proportion of respondents and were moderately likely to be the most important, and to be closer to friends and the Tasmanian healthcare system were picked by a lower proportion of respondents but were moderately likely to be the most leading reasons for their move from Tasmania. Seeking a change of lifestyle was a common reason but less likely to be the leading reason; lack of entertainment in Tasmania was identified by a moderate proportion of respondents but was less likely to be the most important reason; and lack of safety in Tasmania and retiring elsewhere were the least frequently selected and least important reasons for moving from Tasmania.

Table 2: Main reasons for planning to move from Tasmania and their relative importance (n=141)

		IMPORTANCE		
		Less likely to be the leading reason	Moderately likely to be the leading reason	More likely to be the leading reason
FREQUENCY	More selected as one of the main reasons	Seeking change of lifestyle	Work/employment reasons Better standard of living elsewhere	To be closer to family Housing affordability in Tasmania
	Moderate proportion selected as one of the main reasons	Lack of entertainment in Tasmania	To study elsewhere Tasmanian education system	Tasmanian climate/weather
	Less selected as one of the main reasons	Lack of safety in Tasmania To retire elsewhere	To be closer to friends Tasmanian healthcare system	Specific personal reasons (Other) To follow a spouse/partner

To summarize, we identified several motivational factors for moving from Tasmania which can be perceived as threats for future population growth and, given the younger age profile of those with intentions to leave Tasmania, population ageing. Among those Tasmanian residents who intend to depart Tasmania in the next few years, financial reasons, namely employment, better standard of living elsewhere and housing affordability (especially for younger Tasmanians), seem to be the most common and/or the most important factors. Also, while a large proportion of migrants to



*“Close to grandchildren. Natural environment.”*

*“This is where I feel I belong and where my family and friends are.”*

*“Community, friends and family natural beauty, it's my home.”*

*“Completely embedded in the community. Surrounded by friends who care about me.”*

Lifestyle, quality of life, standard of living, and cost of living (including housing affordability) were very common themes:

*“Cost of living, environmental quality, lifestyle (commuting time, recreational opportunities).”*

*“Housing affordability, cost of utilities, petrol costs & availability of public transport.”*

*“Lifestyle is critical. Tassie is a lovely place to live. I love its size and the closeness to nature and knowing folk...a sense of community. Tassie is cool but I can cope with that in winter when I also get all the other benefits”*

*“The quality of life I have here compared with elsewhere, the amount of energy required to move interstate (!), family and friends here compared to elsewhere, ease of living here.”*

As expected, the reasons underpinning people's decisions to stay or migrate were often multifaceted and complex:

*“Proximity to family is number 1 priority, followed by climate, availability and cost of suitable housing, safe community, good health system, cost of living, settled political environment “*

*“1. Work opportunities in the selected profession 2. Racism and discrimination 3. Safety 4. Food and cultural diversity 5. Freedom of speech and privacy with respect to the individual needs and interests 6. Inclusion of immigrants into active participation in community development and community engagement. 7. Cash cow's and immigration laws of the state 8. Fair work rights 9. Persistence in immigrants work and cost contribution has to be updated every year in public domain to support the need of diverse groups into the state and prove that individuals have to be protected and look after as equals by the community. “*

*“Availability of work, decent houses at affordable rates, access to services (like a functional healthcare system!), welcoming community.”*

Also as expected, people's perspectives differed greatly. For example, some reported the closeness of community and sense of belonging fostered in Tasmania as driving their decision to stay, while others felt that exclusionary and discriminatory attitudes in Tasmania were driving them to leave or consider leaving. Also evident was that people experienced changes in factors over time, both personally and contextually. For example, many people mentioned their stage of life (e.g., studying, raising a family, career building, caring for aging parents or aging themselves)

as affecting the factors they considered in their decisions to migrate (or not). Contextually, several people mentioned that the (lower) cost of living was a drawcard to Tasmania but that had changed, and others mentioned positive changes in societal attitudes in Tasmania as reasons for staying, for example:

*“Love the lifestyle, community and weather. Have seen a huge change in cultural/religious/sexual attitudes in last 10 years and the art scene is amazing”.*

## References

Kocar, S., Horton, E., Denny, L., Seivwright, A., & Lester, L. (2022). *Building population resilience in Tasmania: The pandemic and beyond*. Report to Tasmanian Department of State Growth. May 2022.

Kocar, S. (2022). *The Tasmania Project Place and Wellbeing Survey Technical Report*.

