



Research Brief 01/2020



NORTHERN
INSTITUTE
People. Policy. Place.

The Territory and Me Survey: A summary of results

Andrew Taylor

Sigurd Dyrting

Fiona Shalley

Northern Institute/ College of Indigenous Futures, Arts and Society

Suggested citation

Taylor, A., Dyrting, S. and Shalley, F. (2020). *The Territory and Me Survey Summary: A summary of results*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University: Northern Institute.



NorthernInstitute



@cdu_ni



RESEARCH AIM

During 2019 more than 5,200 people participated in the biggest population survey ever conducted for the Northern Territory - The Territory and Me. This research brief provides people who kindly participated with an understanding of the information generated from their stories through the results presented here. We break down the results according to life stages and focus on analysing the strength of relationships between these and a range of variables (like education attainment and home ownership) in relation to attracting people to the Territory and keeping them as residents. We also look at reasons for moving out of the Territory based on life stage transitions.

KEY FINDINGS

- *The Territory and Me* survey collected a large amount of important data during 2019 about current and former Territorians, their demographic and socio-economic profiles and their migration histories and intentions.
- Around 3,748 current Territorians (72% of the total sample) and 1,266 former Territory residents contributed to *The Territory and Me* research data.
- Former Territorians were likely to be older than current Territorians and less likely to be born overseas. Mid-career former Territorians were more likely to be female and Australian citizens.
- For current Territorians, the proportion expecting to still be living here in two years increased with age, and was higher for those born overseas, those who owned or were purchasing their home, and those who had children living in the NT.
- For current Territorians the intention to stay varied with their length of residence in the NT. For early-career and mid-career groups intention to stay increased after two years. For pre-retirees intention to stay increased after five years. For retirees it increased after ten years of living in the NT.
- Current Territorians who were contemplating leaving expressed a range of reasons, but these varied greatly by age. The same applied for former Territorians.
- The survey confirmed that around 4,000 Territory residents had interstate Medicare addresses in 2019. This affects the Territory's official population estimates and the mismatch was highest for the early-career group and decreased with age.



Introduction

This research brief is a summary of results from *The Territory and Me survey* (TTaM) survey, the largest population survey ever conducted in relation to the Northern Territory of Australia. The survey came about from a recommendation in the Northern Territory Government's *Population Growth Strategy, 2018-2028* for independent research to better understand the motivations and drivers for migration to and from the Northern Territory. This independent research was conducted during 2019 by demographers at the Northern Institute of Charles Darwin University under Human Research Ethics Clearance number *H18091*.

The main aim in this research brief is to feed-back a summary of findings to the many people who participated in the research. The emphasis is on results around migration motivations, experiences and intentions of people contributing to the Territory's population in the past and present. Participants in TTaM were mainly Northern Territory (herein NT or Territory) residents (72% of respondents) and people who had lived in the Territory in the past (24%). Those living in the Territory for part of the year were also included (1.5%) and a small part of the sample (2.5%) were people who had visited the NT or were considering coming to live. Around 5% of people participating identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Topics in TTaM included key demographic and socioeconomic variables and extensive information on the reasons people gave for moving to, remaining in or leaving the Territory, as well as whether they intended to be living in the Territory in two and five years and why/ why not?

The TTaM survey was open to everyone 18 years and over. It is significant because, while administrative and Census data can be used to describe the number of people who migrate to and from the Territory, these sources do not provide insights into factors (a statistical term meaning drivers which are common to sub-sections of people) associated with migration decisions and motivations. TTaM was designed to capture a wide range of information on the factors which determine migration decisions in relation to attraction and retention. It was actively promoted through general awareness campaigns, social media, as well as being promoted in the community at cultural forums, in newsletters and on various websites. A link to a full copy of the TTaM survey and other reports which have been compiled using data from TTaM are available from *The Territory and Me* website (<https://theterritoryandme.cdu.edu.au>). Readers should be aware that this research brief is based on data collected prior to the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic.

A Life Stage approach to summarising TTaM results

As people age, they pass through a number of life stages. The typical, or stylized pattern is for young people to finish their education, get a job, cohabitate in a significant relationship/marriage, have children, change jobs, become empty nesters, retire and age further. With each change in life stage, a person's tendency to migrate also changes. For these reasons, much of our analysis uses the following broad age groups to represent key life stages: *early-career* (aged 18 to 29 years), *mid-career* (aged 30 to 49 years), *pre-retirees* (aged 50 to 59 years), and *retirees* (aged 60 years and over). This allows us to compare and contrast results relatively easily across such groups.

In this brief, we start by providing a demographic overview of those who participated. We then transition to analysis of retention and attraction by life stages and the key variables in relation to these before moving to examine reasons participants gave for coming to, staying in or leaving the Territory. Readers should note that there are three other publications available (free of charge) providing analysis of TTaM data for sub-segments in the Territory's population. These are Territory Seniors, overseas born Territory residents and a research brief on contemporary demography trends for Indigenous Territorians. Simply follow the linked titles below to view the publication of your choice:



- [Attracting and Retaining the Territory's Growing Multicultural Communities](#)
- [We're Still Here! Territory Seniors population trends and futures](#)
- [Northern Territory Contemporary Indigenous Migration Trends](#)

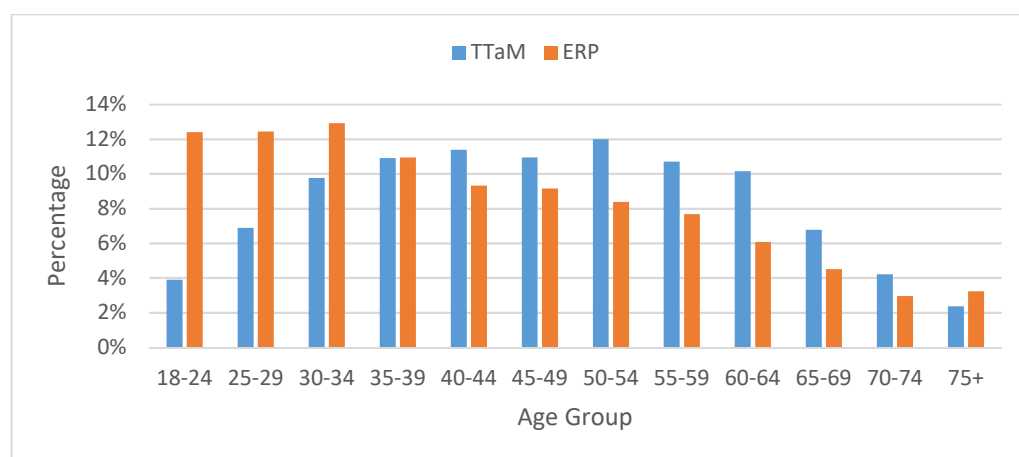
We would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated in *The Territory and Me* for their insights and information on living in the Northern Territory of Australia. Your participation will help in the design of policies and initiatives to attract people to and retain them in the Territory's population. If you have any questions or comments about this research, please contact us by email at theterritoryandme@cdu.edu.au.

Results from *The Territory and Me*

In total, 5,255 people completed the TTaM survey. We investigated whether our sample of respondents was a good reflection of the population who lives in the Territory by comparing their age and sex profile, country of birth, and whether they lived in the NT when completing the survey to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population data.

Figure 1 compares the age distribution of TTaM respondents with the Territory's estimated resident population provided by the ABS (2019). TTaM included a lower percentage of respondents aged 18 to 34 and those 75 and over, and a higher percentage of respondents aged 40 to 74. Because much of our analysis is based on life stages (early-career, mid-career, pre-retiree) into which we have grouped people based on their age at the time of completing the survey, these differences do not greatly affect our results.

Figure 1 Age Distribution of Survey Respondents and Estimated Resident Population, 30 June 2019



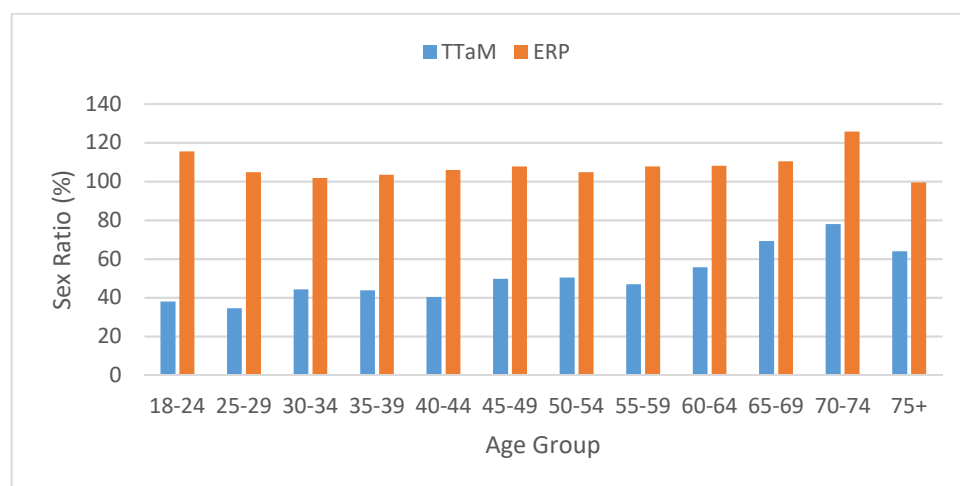
Source: TTaM and ABS, Australian Demographic Statistics, 2019.

In Figure 2 we compare the Sex Ratio (the ratio of males to females) for TTaM participants with figures for the Northern Territory's estimated resident population. Across all age groups fewer males than females participated in the Survey with an average sex ratio for TTaM of less the 50% versus more than 100% for the Territory population. This is common with voluntary surveys which tend to have more females than males participating (Curtin et al, 2000; Moore & Tarnai, 2002; Smith, 2008). However, in comparing results for individual variables for analysis in this brief,



the differences in the distributions of answers between males and females were not large and this means the main findings would be unlikely to change if the sample was more gender-balanced.

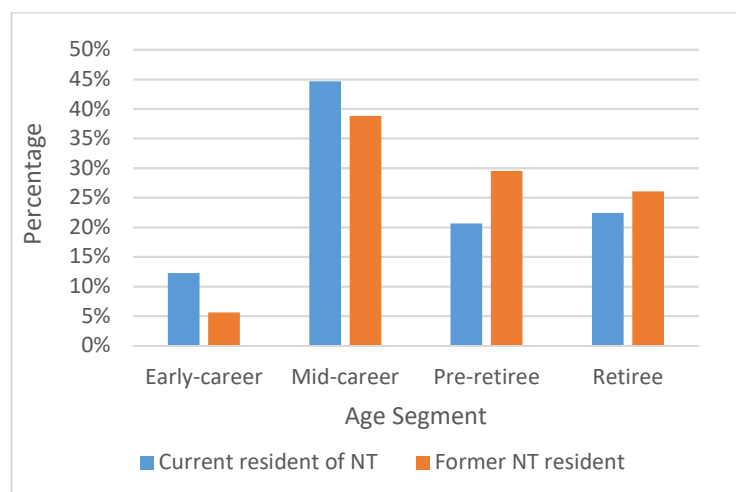
Figure 2 Age-specific Sex Ratio of Survey Respondents



Source: TTaM and ABS, Australian Demographic Statistics, 2019.

The TTaM survey is dominated by two groups of respondents: those who lived in the Territory at the time of completing the survey (herein current residents) and those who used to live in the Territory (former residents). In Figure 3 we compare the age distributions of current and former Territory residents. TTaM participants living in the Territory were more likely to be in either early-career or mid-career age groups and less likely to be in pre-retiree and retiree age groups. This makes sense as we would expect former Territorians to be older on average because, in order to be a former-Territorian you must first have been a Territorian at an earlier age.

Figure 3 Age Distribution of Current and Former Territorians

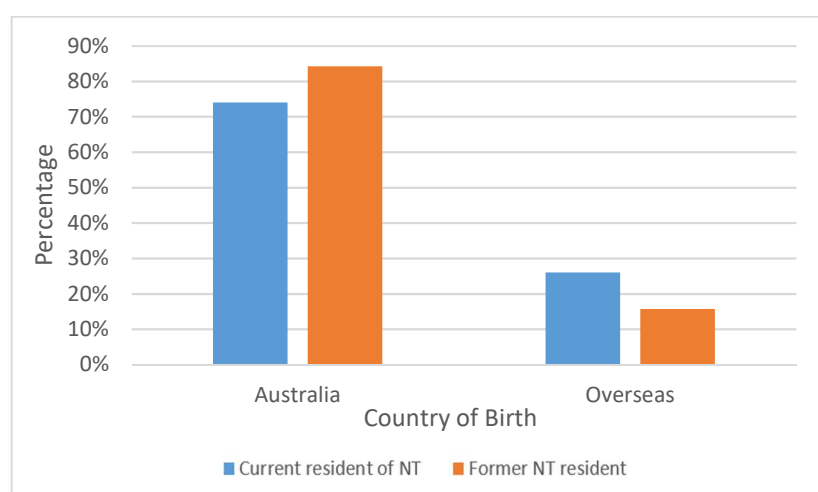


Source: TTaM, 2019.



We compared TTaM respondents grouped by country of birth into Australia or Overseas, and for current and former Territory residents. For both groups, most respondents were Australian born but the proportion of overseas-born respondents was lower amongst former Territorians compared to current (Figure 4). This is consistent with another finding from TTaM that the odds of overseas born Territory residents leaving the NT were lower than for Australian-born residents (see [Attracting and Retaining the Territory's Growing Multicultural Communities](#)).

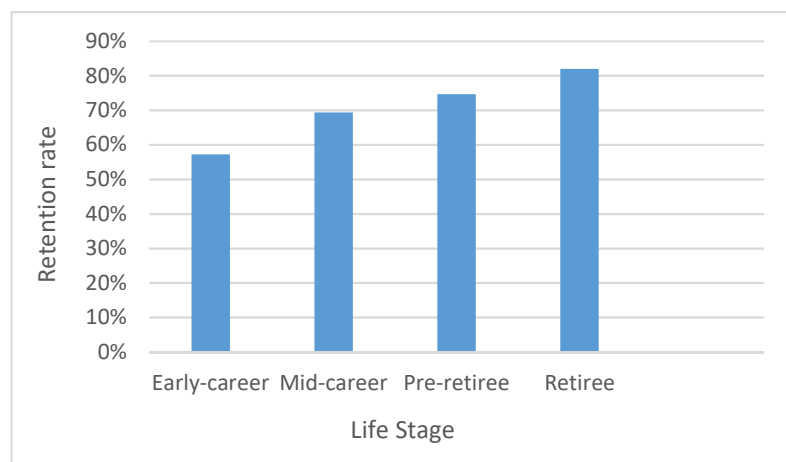
Figure 4 Country of Birth of Current and Former Territorians



Source: TTaM, 2019.

Current Territorians were asked where they intended to be living in two years. Using responses to this question we calculated a two-year retention rate (although this reflects what people say they intend to do in relation to migration and not necessarily what they will end up doing). This is the number of respondents who indicated they would still be living in the Territory in two years as a proportion of those who had decided to either remain or leave, excluding those who were undecided. Overall, results showed that two-year retention rates increased across the life stages, from 57% for those in their early-career to 82% in two years for those at retirement ages (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Two-year Retention Rate by Life Stage

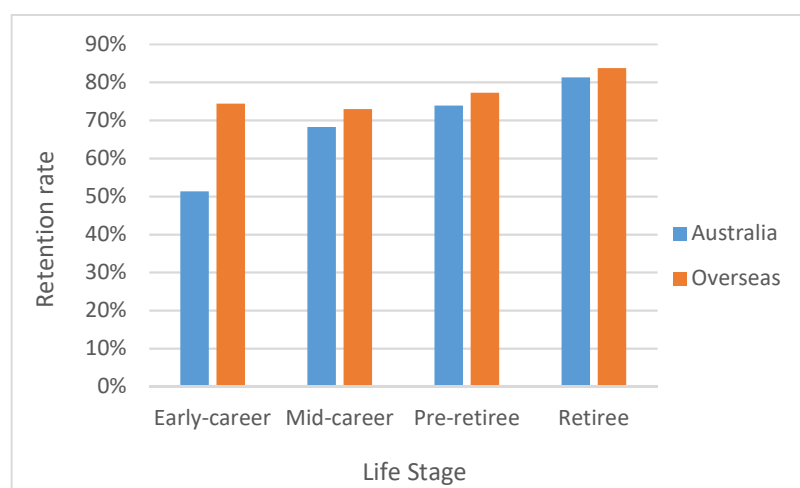


Source: TTaM, 2019.



Figure 6 gives the two-year intended retention rate by country of birth. It shows that overseas born residents had higher retention rates for all life stages at between 70% and 80% for early-career, mid-career and pre-retirees and more than 80% for retirees who were born overseas. The greatest differences in retention rates between overseas and Australian born Territorians was for the early-career life stage. We might expect young overseas born adults to remain in the Territory to complete tertiary courses or satisfy visa conditions, but the differences between overseas and Australian born residents are maintained into retirement (84% compared to 81%). This suggests once overseas migrants settle in the Territory, their attachment to the Territory remains strong throughout their life course.

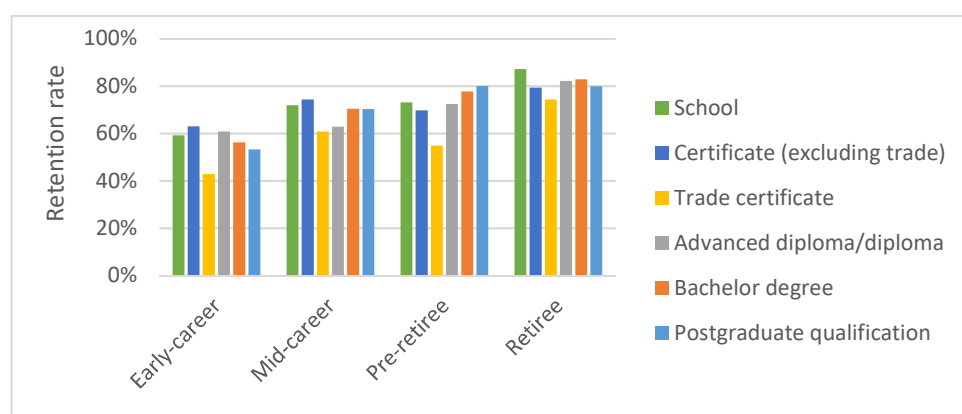
Figure 6 Two-year Retention Rate by Country of Birth



Source: TTaM, 2019.

When we looked at the intended two-year retention rate by people's highest level of education, those holding trade certificates had the lowest retention rate across all life stages (Figure 7), especially for the early-career (43%) and pre-retiree stages (55%). People working in trades are potentially more affected by broader economic conditions and may migrate quickly to where work is available. In contrast, those with a bachelor or post graduate qualifications were the most likely to be retained in the pre-retiree stage (80%) but much less so in the early-career period (53%).

Figure 7 Two-year Retention Rate by Highest Education Achieved

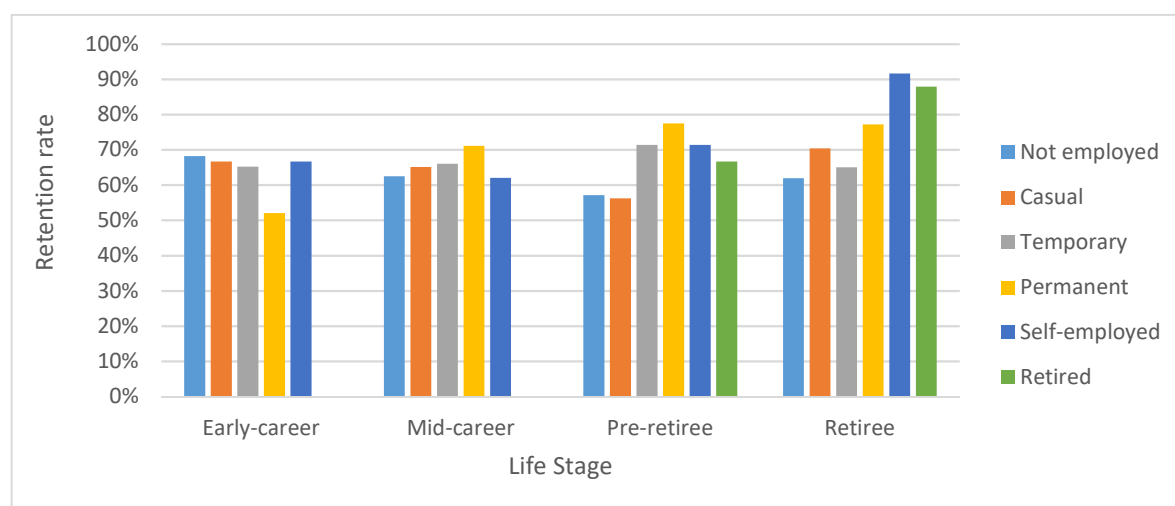


Source: TTaM, 2019.



Based on their employment status, ongoing employees had higher two-year intended retention rates in both the mid-career and pre-retiree stages, however this did not hold for those in their early-career (Figure 8). In this stage respondents in ongoing employment had the lowest two-year retention rate (52%), suggesting they were more likely to accept the uncertainty of changing employment associated with migration in exchange for a benefit such as career advancement. Those in casual employment or who were not employed had a similar intended two-year retention rate and were less likely to be retained in the pre-retiree stage. Meanwhile, respondents who were self-employed retirees had the highest two-year retention rate across all life stages, even higher than those who were retired.

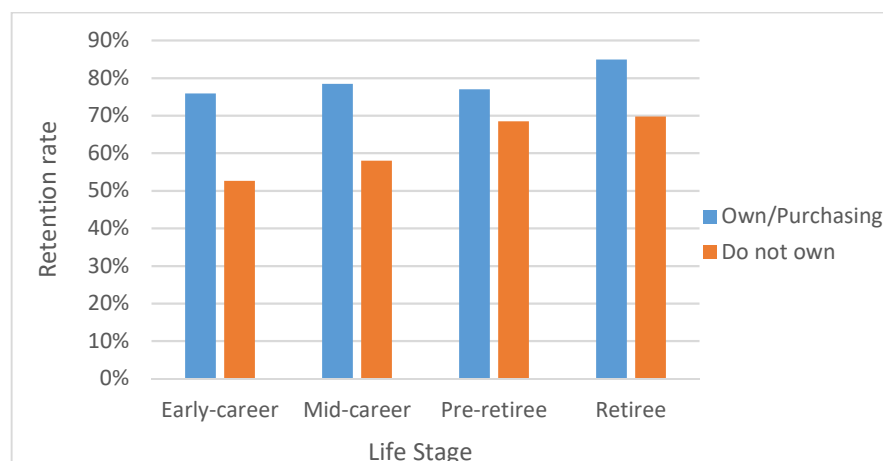
Figure 8 Two-year Retention Rate by Labour Force Status



Source: TTA_M, 2019.

Home ownership in the Territory, or being in the process of owning a home, significantly influenced the intended two-year retention rates (Figure 9). This attachment factor seems to have been even more important for those in their early-career who may be first home owners with lower equity and, therefore, greater financial ties or 'lock-in'.

Figure 9 Two-year Retention Rate by Home Ownership

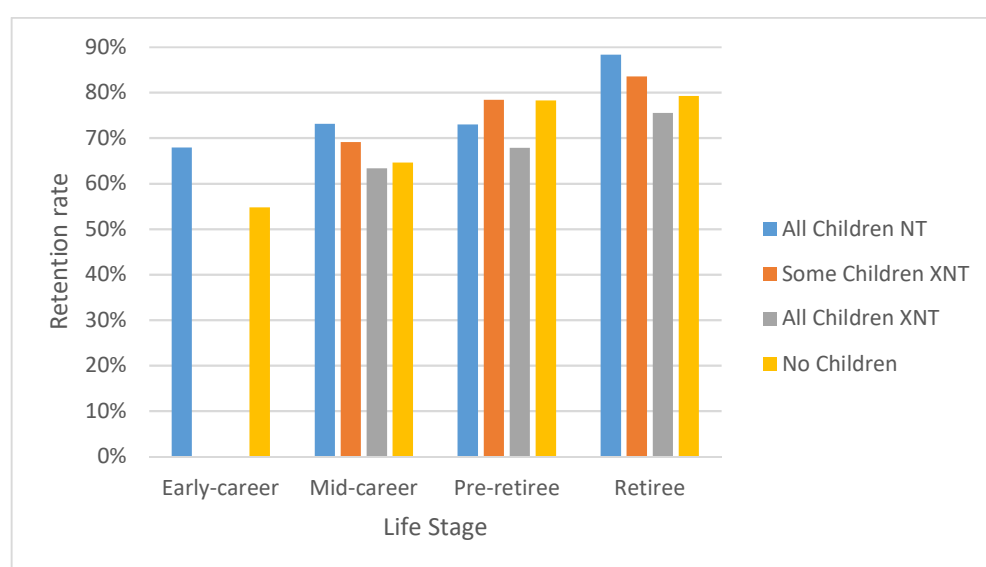


Source: TTA_M, 2019.



Like those engaged with home ownership, most of those with children living in the NT had higher two-year retention rates across all life stages (Figure 10). However, for pre-retirees, the retention rate was higher for those who only had some of their children living in the NT. For retirees, having all children in the NT was clearly a significant factor for their high retention rate of 88%. Retention rates for early-career participants with no children were lowest at 55%. There were no early-career participants with only some children in the NT or with all children living elsewhere.

Figure 10 Two-year Retention Rate by Location of Children

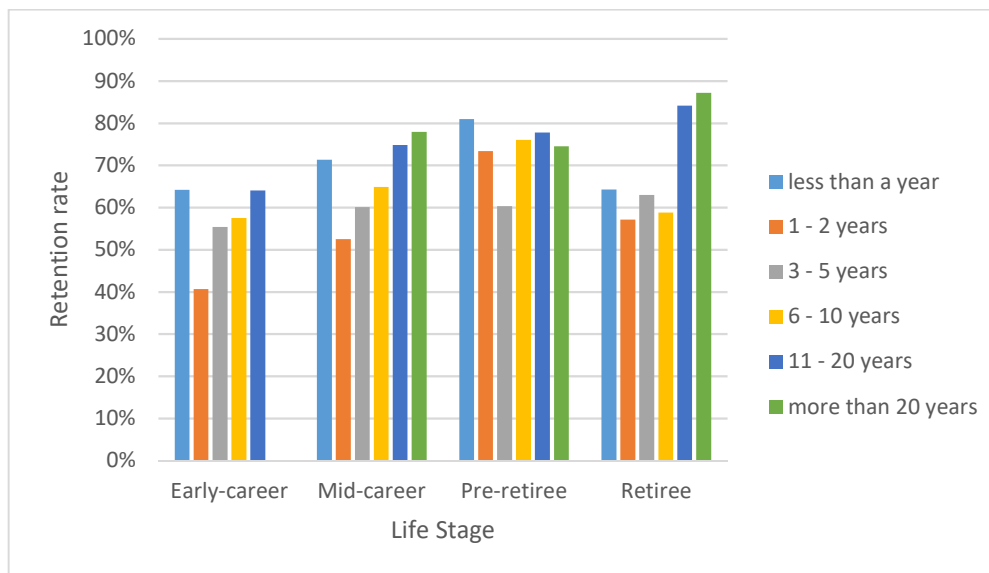


Source: TTaM, 2019.

The influence of length of existing residency in the NT on intended two-year retention rates suggests, for each life stage other than pre-retirees, those whose residency was one to two years had the highest intention to leave the Territory to live somewhere else (Figure 11). In contrast, those resident in the NT for less than a year or for more than five years had some of the highest rates of intending to stay. In the retirement stage, however, residency of 11 years or longer increased intended two-year retention rates significantly (from 59% to 85-87%). These results suggest that people who move to the Territory expect to stay for around two years, and those who can be retained for more than five years have a greater likelihood of 'sticking' as residents.



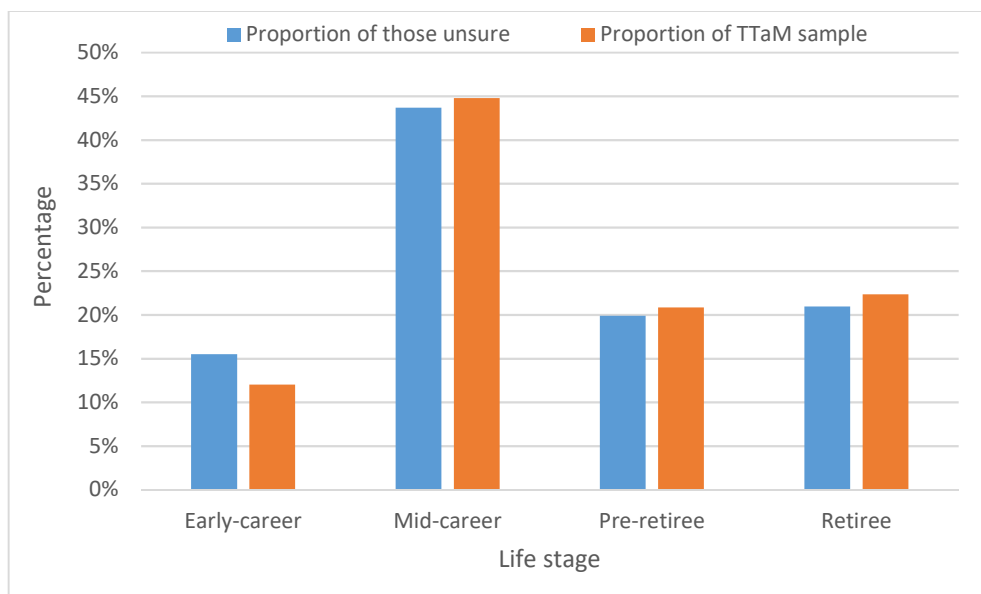
Figure 11 Two-year Retention Rate by Current Length of Stay



Source: TTaM, 2019.

Aside from those who thought they would still be living in or would have left the Territory in two years, around 19% said they did not know. Figure 12 shows the distribution of those who were unsure by life stage and compared to the proportion of each life stage represented in the survey sample. Broadly, the distribution of those unsure matched the distribution of the sample, although the early-career group were over-represented amongst those unsure about where they would be living in two years.

Figure 12 Distribution of those unsure where they would be living in two years



Source: TTaM, 2019.



Current Territorians: Reasons for considering leaving the NT

Current Territorians who thought they would not be in the Territory in either two or five years were asked for the main reason they were considering leaving. They were given twenty options to choose from and an “Other” option which accepted free-text. We conducted a statistical test on the data called Factor Analysis to determine the most significant factors driving migration to and from the Territory and the extent to which these are important. We found that 95% of the distribution of responses were explained by two factors which we call the *Young-Mature* factor (81%) and *Established-Transitioning* factor (14%). The *Young-Mature* factor describes preferences that increase or decrease as age increases. The *Established-Transitioning* factor describes preferences that increase or decrease between life stages that are established (Mid-career, Pre-retiree) or transitioning (Early-career, Retiree).

In Figure 14 (in Appendix A) we show the frequency distribution for the reasons given by participants who said they were considering leaving the Territory, broken-down by life stage. Plots on the left are ‘Young’, on the right ‘Mature’, below are ‘Established’, above are ‘Transitioning’. While there is a large amount of overlap across the distributions, as we move progressively through each life stage the distributions shift ‘upwards’ showing that younger people consider leaving for reasons at the bottom of the plot while older people consider leaving for reasons at the top. Common reasons for young people were a defence transfer, opportunities associated with work or business, and education. Meanwhile, reasons commonly given by mature-aged Territory residents included retirement, moving closer to children or grandchildren, and to access health, age, or disability services.

Former Territorians: Reasons for leaving

Respondents who had already left the Territory were asked for the main reason they had done so. They were given twenty options to choose from and an ‘Other’ option which accepted free-text. Like the results for current Territorians, we found that most of the distribution of responses could be explained by a Young-Mature factor (75%) and an Established-Transitioning factor (14%). In Figure 15 (Appendix A) we show the frequency distribution of responses for each life stage. These are comparable with plots for current Territorians shown in Figure 13. As we move progressively through each life stage the distributions shift ‘upwards’ showing younger people were more likely to have left for reasons at the bottom of the plot while older people were more likely to have left for reasons at the top. The two sets of reasons with the strongest bias toward Youth (Defence Transfer, Work, and Education) and Maturity (Retirement, Children, and Health) for current Territorians held a similar importance for former Territorians. A significant difference in the two groups was the change in Family: Whereas current Territorians in Transitioning groups (Early-career, Retiree) were more likely to anticipate a move to be closer to family and friends compared to the Established groups (mid-career, retiree), former Territorians were less likely to have done so.

Medicare addresses information and the Territory’s population

The Australian Bureau of Statistics produces official population estimates for States and Territories, updating them quarterly. These are used by businesses, governments and others to help plan for and evaluate service provision and infrastructure; influencing many aspects of daily life. Population estimates are re-based every time a Census is conducted (each five years) making the Census vital to effective service provision and the functioning of the economy. In between, estimates are updated using a range of other sources including the address that individuals have recorded with Medicare. This is a good way to work out numbers of people migrating from one place in Australia to another because, once someone moves, they should update their address with Medicare.

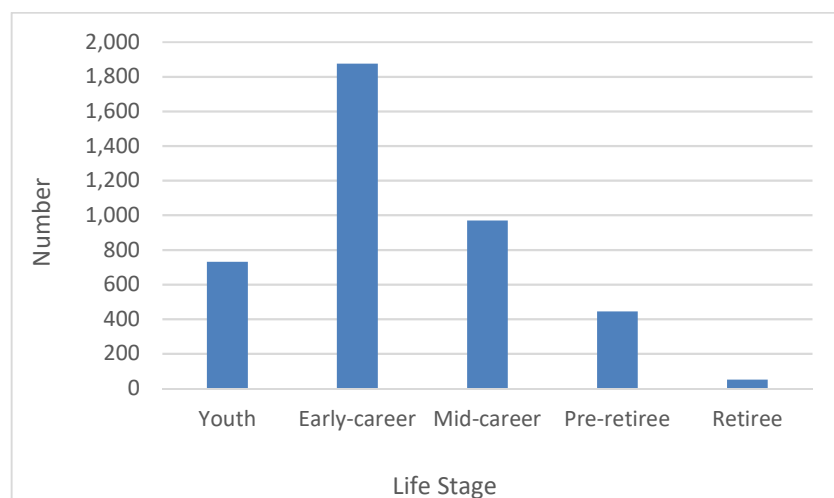


It has long been thought that the match between recorded Medicare addresses and individuals for the Territory was poor but there has been no robust research conducted to quantify the extent of the possible mismatch.

In TTaM we asked current Territory residents about the location of their registered Medicare address. From responses to these questions we estimated the proportion of survey respondents who were willing and able to change their Medicare address from interstate to the Territory but had not done so. By life stage the percentages are: Early-career (3.8%), Mid-career (1.2%), Pre-retiree (1.1%), and Retiree (0.3%). Applying these to the Territory's estimated resident population we can in turn estimate the number of people resident in the Territory who are not registered in the NT for the purposes of Medicare addresses (see Figure 13). Here we have assumed that the mismatch fraction for Youths (ages 0-17 years) is the same as their parents, which we have taken as an average of Mid-career and Pre-retire groups. Using these assumptions, we estimate that approximately 4,071 persons could be added to the Territory's official resident population estimate by persuading them to update their Medicare address.

This number is likely to be quite conservative given the higher proportion of females completing the survey, with males less likely to have their administrative details with government organisations up-to-date.

Figure 123 Estimate of Number of People Missing from NT Medicare Address Register



Source: TTaM, 2019.



Conclusions

In this research brief we have presented a summary of results from the Northern Territory's largest ever population survey – *The Territory and Me*. The large number of people participating in the research has provided a robust dataset on which decisions about how to attract and keep people as residents in the Territory can be made. We would like to sincerely thank everyone who completed the survey for sharing their stories.

In this research brief we have focused on life stages because migration decisions are thought to change when people transition between stages. Some key findings in relation to life stages were:

- Those born overseas are important to growing the Territory's population in the future because they have lower rates of both leaving and intending to leave across all life stages. The results also suggest that, if we can retain overseas born Territorians for five years, their odds of leaving reduce further. Our research presented in a separate research brief for multicultural communities (see the Introduction in this brief for the link) identifies the growing migrant communities which are establishing themselves in the Territory.
- Intention to stay in the Territory increased for current Territorians in the early-career and mid-career groups, after being resident for two years. For pre-retirees, intention to stay increased after five years. For retirees it increased after ten years residency NT. These findings can help with policies and incentives to retain people in our population.
- The reasons for intending to leave the Territory for current Territorians and reasons for actually leaving were very much tied to the person's age. Participants selected many reasons, and these are provided in more detail in Appendix 1.
- The TTaM survey confirmed that around 4,100 Territory residents had an interstate Medicare addresses in 2019. This affects the Territory's official population estimates and the mismatch was highest for the early-career group and decreased with age. This figure is likely to be conservative.

The results in this research brief can be considered alongside three others available to readers using the links in the introductory section of this report. Collectively, these provide a rich overview on attraction and retention for residents for the Territory. Ideally, the survey will be repeated after two years (ie in 2021) to compare and contrast findings to the baseline in 2019. From this, government, business and others can assess where and how to direct efforts to attract workers, families and others to Territory communities, as well as evaluate initiatives that have been put in place to further these aims. Readers can also learn more about these and other Northern Territory Government initiatives relating to the Territory's population by following this link - <https://population.nt.gov.au>

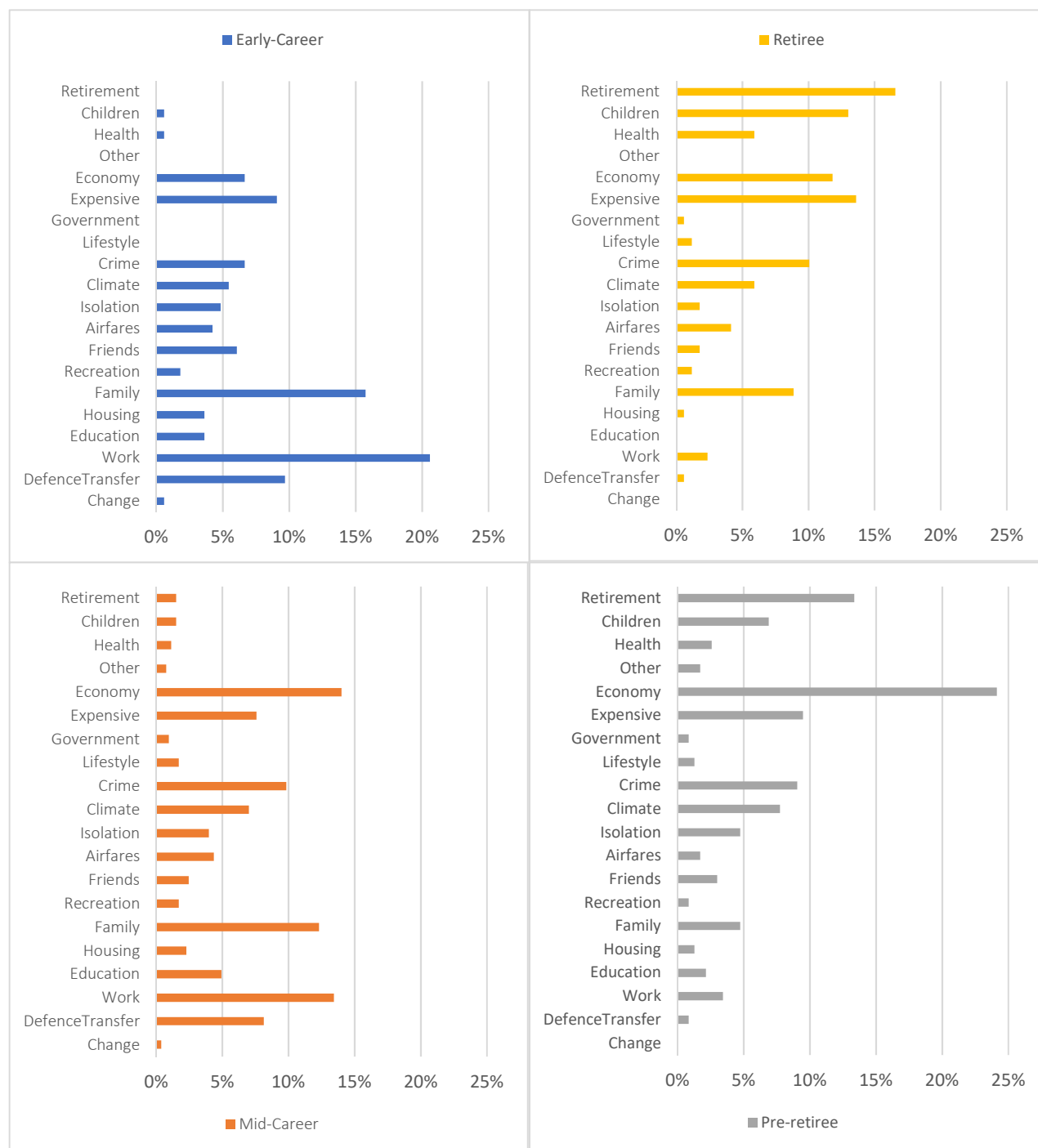
References

- ABS (2019) 3101.0 *Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2019*.
- Curtin, R., Presser, S., & Singer, E. (2000). The effects of response rate changes on the index of consumer sentiment. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 64: 413-428.
- Moore, D.L., & Tarnai, J. (2002). Evaluating nonresponse error in mail surveys. In: Groves, R.M., Dillman, D.A., Eltinge, J.L., and Little, R.J.A. (ed.), *Survey Nonresponse*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, pp. 197:211.
- Smith, W.G. (2008). Does Gender Influence Online Survey Participation? A Record-linkage Analysis of University Faculty Online survey response Behavior. San Jose State University.



Appendix A

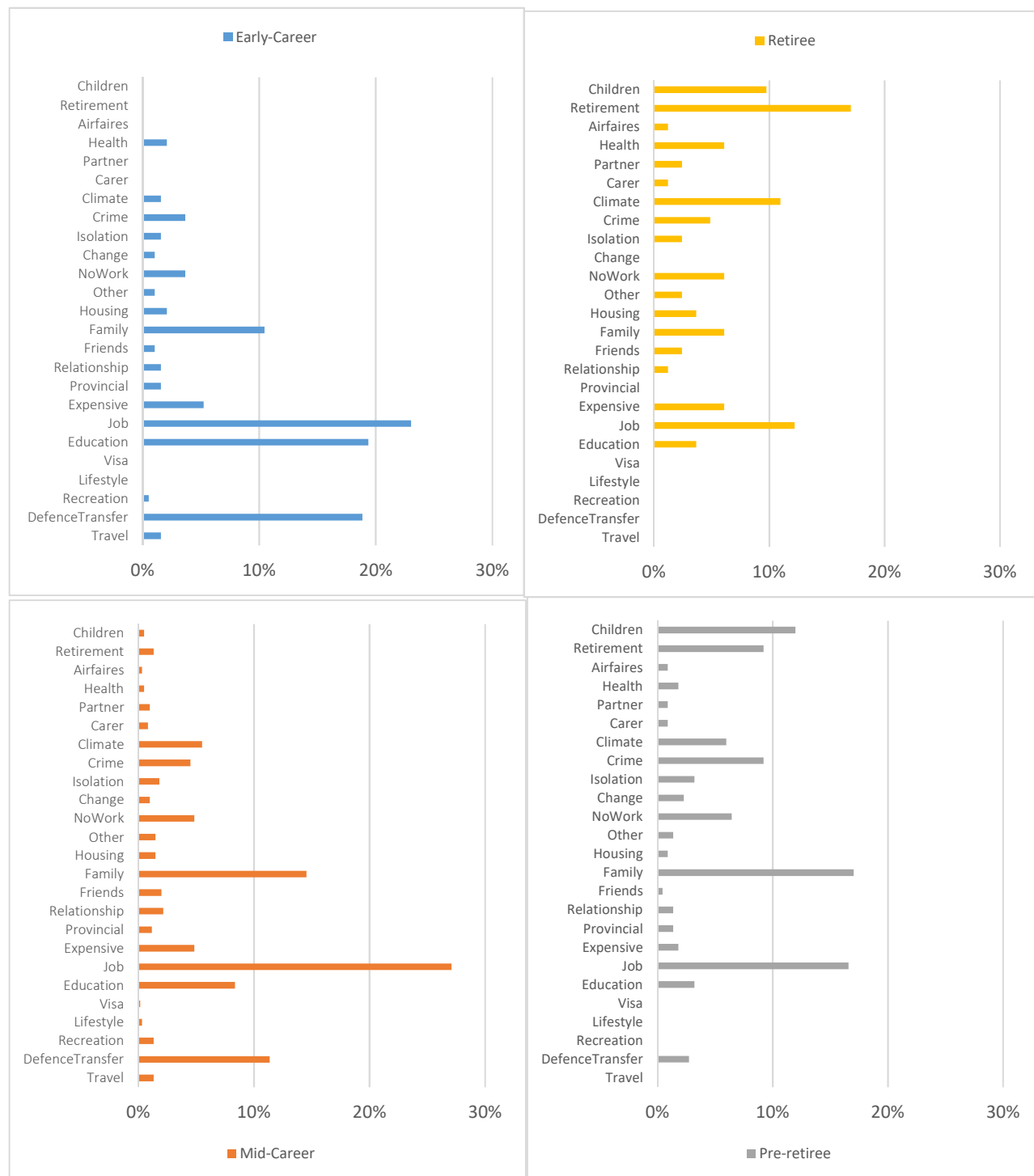
Figure 14 – Current Territorians: Main Reason for Considering Leaving.



Source: TTaM, 2019.



Figure 15 Former Territorians: Main Reason for Leaving



Source: TTaM, 2019.