

AUSTRALIA'S SOUTH WEST SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OBSERVATORY:

HOW DO RESIDENTS PERCEIVE TOURISM IN AUSTRALIA'S SOUTH WEST?



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As part of the annual progress report, the Sustainable Tourism Observatory analysed how satisfied residents in Australia's South West are with the development of tourism in the region.

CONTEXT

Australia's South West Sustainable Tourism Observatory (ASWTO) is currently the only UNWTO-INSTO Observatory in Australia. The Region covers the Southwest corner of Australia and stretches from south of Mandurah to Albany and east to Bremer Bay. It is the second most visited tourism region in WA, with 3.19 million overnight visitors in 2021. The popularity of the ASW tourism region is due to the combination of natural attractions, with high-quality wine, food and arts. The goal of the Resident Survey Project was to analyse residents' perception of the number of tourists visiting the region, of tourists' behaviour, of tourism impacts and tourism impacts management in the region, so as to enable evidence-based decision-making.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2021, a slight majority felt that there were too many tourists (increasing from 2020 and pre-pandemic times). However, in 2022 this proportion decreased to 38%.
- Both in 2021 and 2022 residents observed the concentration of tourists on popular hotspots. They generally perceived tourists as friendly, respectful, adaptive to the local environment and appreciative of local cultures.
- Residents strongly agreed with the positive economic impact of tourism in the region. However, residents also showed some concern regarding the negative impacts, in particular increasing costs of land, housing, rent, goods and services as well as negative impacts on the environment and overcrowding.
- The most strongly supported measures to manage the impact of tourism were: Monitoring tourism development and its impacts and ensuring that local communities benefit from tourism.
- 35% of residents agreed that tourism was important or very important (44%) for the post-COVID-19 economic recovery perspectives in the region.

METHODOLOGY

- Online survey among residents from the South West Tourism Region: 211 participants for the 2021 round and 353 participants for the 2022 round.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- Residents are relatively satisfied with tourists' behaviours and the impact of tourism in the Region. They also find that the number of tourists visiting the region is relatively balanced.
- An area of concern is the concentration of tourists in a few hotspots.
- Residents strongly support initiatives to monitor tourism impacts and to strengthen local benefits of tourism.

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