

Why People Move to the ‘Sun-belt’: A Case Study of Long-distance Migration to the Gold Coast, Australia

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Summary. This paper reports a study investigating long-distance migration to the Gold Coast in Australia’s ‘sun-belt’. A survey of in-migrant households, derived through a random digit dialling sample and telephone interviewing, collected data on aspects of the migration decision process. The data show non-economic, mainly lifestyle factors to be predominant in migration decisions. The relationships amongst employment status, housing tenure and household/family structure were investigated and changes as a result of migration were identified. While the majority of migrants are satisfied with their relocation to the ‘sun-belt’, 30 per cent of migrants were contemplating further long-distance migration, including return migration. The study also confirms the need for migration studies to look beyond the traditional form of push-pull factors as a theoretical framework.

1. Introduction

Australians are a mobile people, moving on average 11 times during their lives. While the vast majority of these moves are over short distances within the same city or region, 7–8 per cent are over long distances, and 2–3 per cent are inter-state moves (Bell, 1994; Bell and Cooper, 1992). An increasingly significant component of long-distance moves is associated with what has been categorised as ‘sun-belt’ migration; and the Gold Coast region in the rapidly growing south-east corner of Queensland is one such destination. Although these moves represent a

relatively small proportion of total migration, the impact on local communities can be considerable. Long-distance moves also test the boundaries of theories of migration.

Most studies of internal migration in Australia have been based on the aggregate, cross-sectional analysis of census data, measuring migration as a transition across statistical boundaries over a five-year period (see, for example, Bell, 1992, 1994, 1995; Flood *et al.*, 1991; Hugo and Smailes, 1990, 1992; Salt, 1992; Hugo, 1994). But relatively few studies have investigated the decision pro-

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cess underlying migration by individuals or households. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) periodically conducts internal migration surveys which adopt the widely used push-pull framework to categorise reasons for moves. A few large-scale surveys have investigated the residential decision choice process in the context of intra-urban mobility (see, for example, Stimson's (1982) study of Adelaide), and there have been a small number of survey-based studies on the migration decisions of retirees (for example, Hugo, 1986; Murphy and Zehner, 1988; Drysdale, 1991; Rudd, 1989; Neyland and Kendig, 1994).

For several decades, patterns of internal migration in Australia have displayed the 'sun-belt' migration phenomenon, while the mainstream of mobility remains intra-urban, dominated by suburbanisation within the large metropolitan cities. Outside the metro cities, the most significant net gains through internal migration are occurring along the eastern coastal strip and high natural amenity areas of Queensland and New South Wales (Maher and Stimson, 1994, Burnley, 1996a). Some of this has been characterised as evidence of counter-urbanisation, but much of it has been concentrated around the metropolitan cities and is associated with ex-urban growth (Burnley, 1996b). The Gold Coast is such a rapid growth region and is now the largest non-metro city in Australia. Like parts of Florida, California and Arizona in the US, it is a phenomenon of 'sun-belt' migration and urban growth based on leisure, retirement and tourism.

This paper investigates long-distance 'sun-belt' migration in Australia. A micro-level approach is used to investigate changes over time in the characteristics of in-migrants and the reasons why they left their place of origin to move over long distances to the Gold Coast, which is being used as a case-study destination region of this phenomenon. It investigates the changes that have occurred in the housing tenure, employment status and household structure of migrants following the migration process, and their levels of satisfaction with the move, the degree to

which they have maintained contact with their place of origin, and their propensity to migrate again in the future.

A sample of in-migrants to the Gold Coast were interviewed using a random digit dialling and telephone interviewing methodology. Focus groups of migrants were also used further to explore conceptual issues. The paper draws from the results of a more comprehensive analysis of the 'sun-belt' migration phenomenon presented in a report to the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (Stimson *et al.*, 1996).

2. The Destination Study Area

The Gold Coast area consists of an attractive sub-tropical coastal strip of land 15–20 km wide and 35 km long stretching from the Queensland-New South Wales border north to the Logan River within about 20 km of Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland and its largest city (see Figure 1). Increasingly, the Gold Coast is seen as being an integral component of the wider 'South East Queensland Sun-belt Metropolis', which is a polycentric urban concentration and Australia's fastest-growing 'mega metro' region (O'Connor and Stimson, 1995).

The Gold Coast area has evolved from a humble beginning as a timber-felling region in the 1840s, and then as an agricultural area to become a contemporary tourist mecca. It began this latter function as a weekend and holiday resort for Brisbane residents but, following World War II, the Gold Coast entered a sustained era of rapid growth as a domestic and then as an international tourism resort. The area has a wide range of holiday flats, high-rise apartments, hotels, integrated tourist resorts, a casino and theme parks, adding to its 'sun and surf' image (Daly *et al.*, 1996), as well as incorporating rapidly growing suburbia of permanent residents.

From under 9000 in 1947, the Gold Coast area's population increased rapidly to 33 000 by 1961 and 77 000 by 1971. At the 1991 census, what is now Gold Coast City local authority had a population of about 270 000,

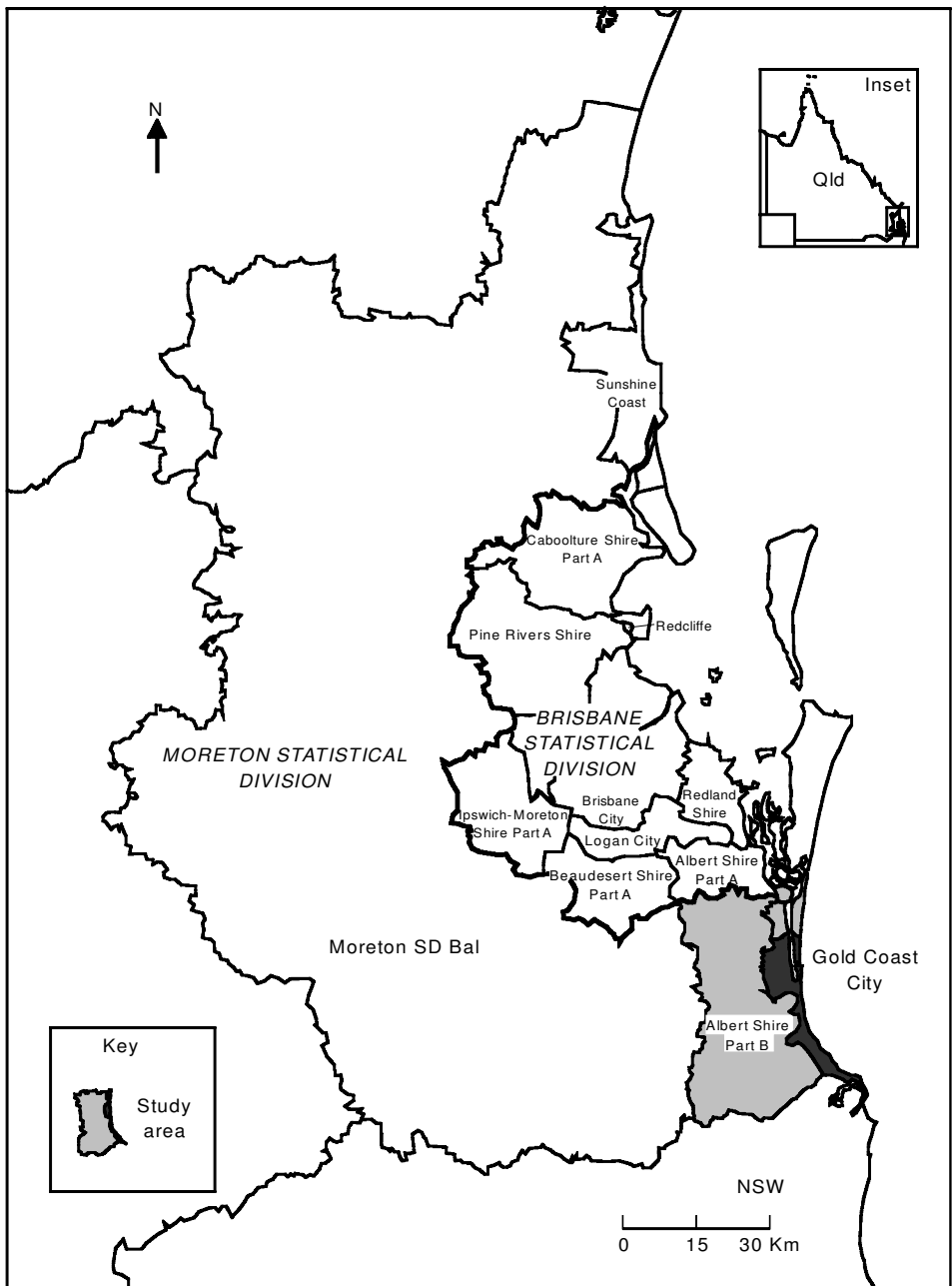


Figure 1. The Gold Coast study area.

and it had become one of the largest urban areas in Australia outside the major state capital cities. Mullins (1985, 1991, 1994), in his seminal analyses of the Gold Coast as an example of a post-modern urban environment, has demonstrated the unique position it

occupies in Australia's urban system as the nation's first leisure and lifestyle consumption city. But with continuing rapid growth has come a change in the nature of the Gold Coast residents and their way of life. As well as being a place for people to recreate and

live, part of the lifestyle focuses on what may be termed hedonism, which both disturbs some existing residents and attracts new ones. The lifestyle and image of the Gold Coast as an area that is simultaneously brash, trendy, sophisticated, relaxed, overdeveloped and overurbanised, renders it a place of contrasts. As a result, the Gold Coast has at least four images (Stimson *et al.*, 1996): a city of leisure; a city of enterprise; a city of tourism; and a city in its own right within the South East Queensland 'sun-belt' growth metropolis. All operate to attract 'sun-belt' migrants, and Gold Coast City is projected to grow to about 455 000 people by the year 2011. This study explores the role of these attractions to act as pull factors in the classical behavioural sense.

3. Methodological Issues in Migration Research

Migration has been studied, modelled and analysed by social scientists for over 100 years, and a plethora of theories has been proposed to explain why people move. We know that migration tends to occur as surges or waves, suggesting that there are periodic cycles underlying long-distance migration (Greenwood, 1988; Berry, 1988; Evans, 1990). We know also that migration is an outcome of a range of factors, including social, economic, cultural, political, institutional, psychological and physical considerations, which, independently or together, may influence the way migration decisions are made and enacted. But, our knowledge and understanding of this complex phenomenon is incomplete, and no single coherent model exists to explain it.

Aggregate Approaches and Their Limitations

The aggregate or macro-approach typically analyses migration using gravity-type models and focuses on spatial aspects of interactions, highlighting the effects of migration flow volumes over space. Since the 1960s, a generation of models has evolved in which independent variables related to push-pull factors

have been proposed, with emphasis being on employment circumstances and wage levels, housing costs and amenity (including climate). Earlier researchers also investigated relativity in migration flows, focusing in particular on occupational differentials (Beshers and Nishira, 1961; Brown and Belcher, 1966; Ritchey, 1976). Regression techniques have been used widely to model migration within this structuralist view of push and pull factors to explain migration flows (see, for example, Olsson, 1965; Dorigo and Tobler, 1983; Sjaastad, 1972; Gordon and Vickerman, 1982; Mohlo, 1986).

But the empirical investigation of what constitutes push factors and pull factors through surveys of migrants has shown that factors that motivate people to leave an origin and those that motivate people to migrate to a chosen destination (Shuval, 1982, p. 678) are not necessarily of equal importance. Campbell and Krieger (1981) suggest that while the determinism implicit in gravity models enabled the formulation of a set of differential physical and socioeconomic characteristics for origins and destinations, and provided a high level of accuracy in predicting aggregate migration flows, nonetheless these models are based largely on abstracted supposition, relying on aggregate secondary data and dummy variables. They are firmly anchored within a structuralist/functionalist paradigm in which social interactions like migration are assumed to be relatively invariant in nature, with particular categories of people operating according to utility-maximising principles.

These approaches have been criticised for discounting the role of human agency (Earle *et al.*, 1989, p. 179), and of cultural factors (Moon, 1995). Work by Hughes and McCormack (1985) and Fielding (1993) in the UK has indicated that, while there might be a positive correlation between levels of regional unemployment and intentions to migrate, the incidence of doing so is primarily determined along class lines. Also, Gordon (1992) and Rogers (1992) suggest that statistics on migrants might not be representative of populations from which they are

drawn, with many households being unable to contemplate migration because of overwhelming constraining factors, and the perceived benefits of moving may be too small to warrant the costs (Bogue, 1977; Chalmers and Greenwood, 1985). Furthermore, Warnes (1992) questions the assumptions of the relationships between economic conditions and migration, claiming that migration is related more to reasons of a personal kind, such as status and lifestyle.

Behavioural Approaches

Greenwood *et al.* (1991, p. 252) suggest that "aggregation is perhaps the number one bogey of migration research," and that gravity-type models cannot be used to predict future events. To overcome this problem, some behavioural geographers have developed cognitive perspectives on the migration decision process. For example, Wolpert (1965, 1966) investigated the perceptions and experiences of migrants; Christenson (1979) and Cadwallader (1979) identified stressors that triggered a decision to move; and Brown and Moore (1970) developed a residential location decision process model which incorporated in addition spatial and temporal aspects of the residential search process, and which also focused on space preference. Individual choice models of the residential relocation processes were developed and tested, particularly in the context of intra-urban mobility, using sample survey data which collects a wide range of functional, attitudinal and motivational data from individuals and households (Clark and Cadwallader, 1973; Smith *et al.*, 1979; Huff and Clark, 1978; Stimson, 1982; Clark, 1993; Huff, 1986).

However, a concern in such behavioural studies of migration is the *ex-post facto* rationalisation that survey respondents may exhibit in answering questions and recalling reasons for past migration behaviour. Another concern is that aggregations of behavioural data can easily be misinterpreted. If, for example, certain push factors are operating in a region and pull factors

operate at a destination, why do not all households move and how can return migration be properly explained (Moon, 1995)? Yet the micro-studies incorporating surveys to collect data on migration behaviour have furnished a considerably improved understanding of the migration decision process (Golledge and Stimson, 1987).

A Cultural Context for Migration

A more recent research perspective has placed an emphasis on migration within a cultural as well as a behavioural context, suggesting that migration decisions are strongly influenced by cultural mores. The hypothesis is that people receive cultural signals that motivate a desire to move, and that these, rather than structural variables such as labour markets, are precursors for migration. Fielding (1992) and Halfacree and Boyle (1993) have used Bourdieu's (1984) notion of 'habitus' to illustrate the cultural process that precipitates migration, suggesting that shared ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge constitute the societal basis of social action and physical expression. Fielding (1992, p. 212) suggests that there are a number of spatial and cultural features that can bring about a propensity to migrate, with people perceiving the culture of the place where they live as becoming unsuitable because of factors such as a disintegration of reference groups, a change in social motivation, marginalisation by reference groups, and changes in the place's physical structure. Similarly, people might perceive an alternative location as potentially providing a preferable reference group, such as an older person moving to a retirement community.

The importance of social networks and reference groups is well documented (see, for example, Kelley and Thibaut, 1978, and Deutch, 1985). In migration research, Longino (1992) identifies 'moorings' as representing the relational group factors that are most important in forming a decision to migrate or not to migrate, particularly over long distances. Moorings may be seen as both cultural and spatial factors through which a

Table 1. Inter-state migration flows, Australia's States and Territories, 1986–91

	Arrivals	Departures	Net	Gross	Effective ratio	Migration rate per 1000		
						In	Out	Net
New South Wales	171 739	265 064	-93 324	436 803	-21.4	31.0	47.8	-16.8
Victoria	123 486	168 734	-45 248	292 221	-15.5	29.7	0.5	-10.9
Queensland	247 157	121 980	125 177	369 137	33.9	91.1	44.9	46.1
South Australia	59 886	64 020	-4 134	123 906	-3.3	43.4	46.4	-3.0
Tasmania	27 530	27 353	177	54 883	0.3	61.1	61.1	0.4
Northern Territory	30 502	34 158	-3 656	64 661	-5.7	201.5	225.7	-24.2
Australia Capital Territory	49 552	44 452	5 100	94 004	5.4	186.4	167.2	19.2
Australia	780 000	780 000	0	1 560 000	0.0	48.3	48.3	0.0

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1991, Census, rounded to discount for errors resulting from randomisation; and Ward (1994).

person or household gains access to psychological wellbeing. The concept of moorings implies that households have a far greater choice over decisions about migration than is recognised in traditional behaviourist concepts of push and pull factors. While these factors could be utilised as push or pull factors, it is the reference values which people ascribe to them and the element of choice that separate the two concepts. Moorings are influenced by cultural signals that are perceived as being important (for example, the presence of family at a location, either origin or destination), motivating the person to stay put or migrate to a new location.

A Multitude of Research Paradigms

Thus, there are a multitude of research approaches that have been developed to study migration, but Clark (1981, p. 187) has proposed that both the macro- and the micro-approaches are important and should be complementary. Green (1990, p. 1335) goes further to suggest a "new perspective"—a meso-analytical approach—may be appropriate, combining the collective experiences of migrants with qualitative flow data in a way that provides behavioural insights into migration flows. Gordon (1992, p. 131), addressing the implicit incongruence between the macro-micro dichotomy, suggests that migration research has three functions: to be "anticipatory", so as to allow

preparation for future change; to be "problem oriented", analysing trends and illustrating issues underlying changing migration behaviour; and to "illuminate ways in which space and place are used within a changing economic and social order".

In Stimson *et al.*'s (1996) study of 'sun-belt' migration to the Gold Coast, such a composite approach was employed, the objective being to investigate both the nature of long-distance migration to a 'sun-belt' location of rapid population growth and to find out why migrants moved. This involved both the study of aggregate migration flows to the Gold Coast based on the cross-sectional analysis of census data, and the investigation of the migration decision process of a sample survey of migrants to the Gold Coast conducted within a modified push-pull framework and giving consideration to the role of moorings.

4. Migration and Population Growth on the Gold Coast

Migration within Australia is the major driver of population growth in the 'sun-belt' regions of the east coast. This is particularly the case in regions such as South East Queensland, as well as for the State of Queensland as a whole. Queensland attracted a net gain of 53 000 interstate migrants in 1993, mainly from New South Wales and Victoria. Between 1986 and 1991 78 000 and

31 800 in-migrants to Queensland came from these two states respectively. Table 1 summarises the inter-state migration flows within Australia for this period.

It is the South East Queensland region—formed by the Brisbane Statistical Division (BSD) and the surrounding Moreton Statistical Division (MSD) within which the Gold Coast is located—that is experiencing the bulk of population gain in the State and to which the largest flows of intra-state and inter-state migrants are coming. Inter-state migration constitutes the dominant component of population growth.

Some General Trends

In-migration to the Gold Coast has been seen to be associated with one or more of three factors: first-home-buyers seeking relatively cheap housing; established home-buyers seeking rural-urban living; and people seeking to retire to or to live in a high-amenity location (Ward, 1994).

Within the South East Queensland region are located some of the fastest-growing local authorities in Australia. The former Albert Shire component of the Gold Coast area consistently has been in the top-ranking growth communities for the last couple of decades. The components of population growth in the local authorities in the South East Queensland region, including the former Gold Coast City and former Albert Shire (which were amalgamated into a 'super city' of the Gold Coast in March 1995), are shown in Figure 2. For the former Gold Coast City and Albert Shire, overseas migration and inter-state migration were well ahead of intra-state migration as the main source of population growth, with natural increase contributing the least impact to growth (Ward, 1994). This heavy dependence on long-distance migration to sustain population growth on the Gold Coast makes it susceptible to fluctuations in economic and other variables that underpin 'sun-belt' migration (Stimson *et al.*, 1996). It is worth noting that within the Gold Coast area there is substantial intra-regional migration, especially from old Gold

Coast City to the Albert Shire, and in addition there is an increasing stream of movement from the remainder of the MSD and from the BSD to the Albert Shire.

Selectivity in Migration

Ward (1994) has identified the selectivity characteristics of in-migrants to the former Gold Coast City and Albert Shire for the period 1986–91. While retirees are an important component of the net inter-state migration stream, there is a significant in-migration of 15–24 year-olds, especially from intra-state migration. With regard to labour force status, the former Gold Coast City stands out as an area with a high incidence of intra-state migrants who are wage- and salary-earners, rather than being self-employed or unemployed. Both the former Gold Coast City and Albert Shire had increases in the proportions of both inter-state and intra-state migrants with degree and trade qualifications. Gold Coast City and Albert Shire experienced increased proportions of in-migrants with high incomes as a result of inter-state migration, and also from intra-state movers.

Building on Bell's (1992) analysis of the 1981–86 intercensal period, Ward's (1994) analysis of 1986–91 migration flows shows how long-distance migrants to the Gold Coast area are characterised not only by significant numbers of retirees and high-income earners or both, but also by an increasingly more balanced age distribution in the in-migration stream for arrivals in the period 1986–91. In addition, in-migrants are characterised not only by slightly increasing proportions of wage and salary-earners, but also by a substantial number who are not in the labour force. There also has been a relative increase in the proportion of migrants with a degree-level qualification.

5. The Changing Characteristics of Long-distance Movers to the Gold Coast: Results of a Survey

The Migrants

The random sample survey of 600 house-

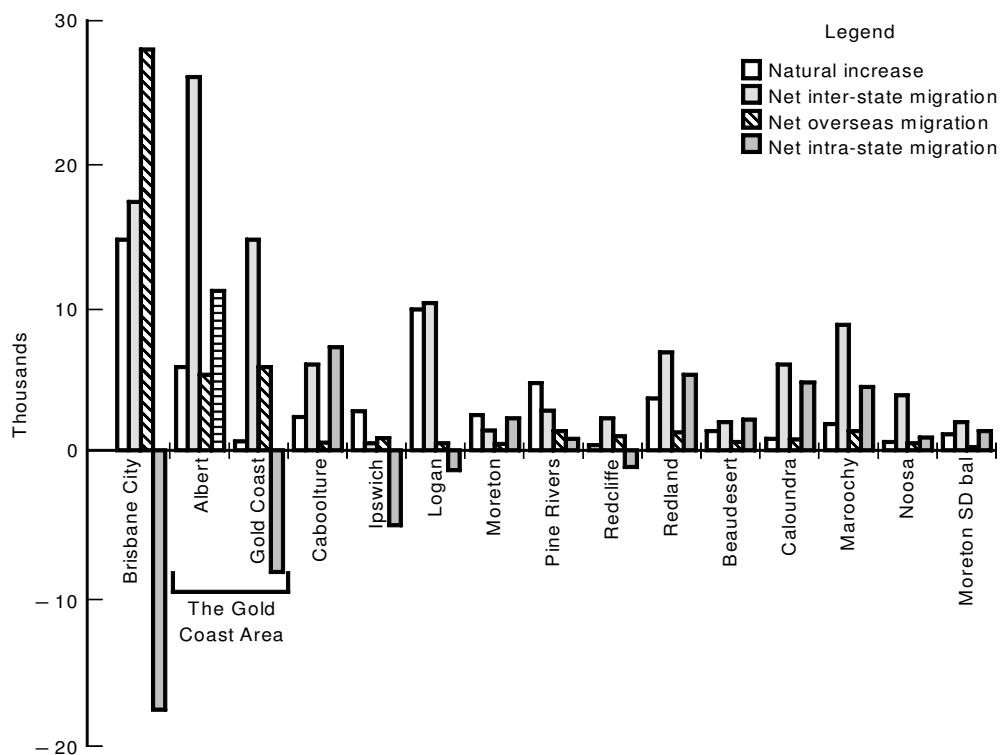


Figure 2. Components of population change in local government areas in South East Queensland, including the Gold Coast area, 1986–91. *Sources:* Australian Bureau of Statistics, Table USQ6015; and Ward (1994).

holds in the Gold Coast area generated 299 households including an adult who was a long-distance in-migrant, defined as someone who had moved over 200 km from their previous place of residence. The survey excluded migrants who had moved directly from outside Australia.

In terms of their socio-demographic characteristics, the migrants tend to be split between 'couples with or without children' and 'single-person' households. There is some evidence of migrant households having incomes that are lower than the regional population. However, the survey did not consider assets or wealth in addition to income, which may be particularly important for some 'retirees'. Migrants tended to have higher levels of qualification than the regional population, but less frequent incidence of trade qualifications. They were also more likely to own their home outright, and

were less likely to be renters. The vast majority of the migrants were Australian-born. About 40 per cent of them had moved from an origin in New South Wales, one-third from Victoria, and 11 per cent from other locations within Queensland, with small numbers coming from the other states and territories.

Thus, the sample tended to fit quite well the profile of in-migrants identified in the earlier cross-sectional studies by Bell (1992) and Ward (1994).

Differences Between 'Older' and 'Newer' Arrivals in Time

About half the migrants interviewed had moved to the Gold Coast since 1986, with 42 per cent having moved in the 15 years before 1986. The remaining small proportion (7 per cent) had lived on the Gold Coast since

Table 2. Year of migration and current dwelling type of migrants to the Gold Coast: survey respondents

	Rural residential (Percentage)	Detached house (Percentage)	Town house (Percentage)	Low rise flat \leq 3 storeys (Percentage)	High rise apartment (Percentage)
1970 or before	10.5	8.5	0	8.2	0
1971–80	31.6	29.6	4.8	14.3	23.1
1981–85	36.8	16.4	28.6	8.2	23.1
1986–90	15.8	34.9	33.3	30.6	23.1
1991 and since	5.3	10.6	33.3	38.7	30.8
Total ^a	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i> = 285	19	189	16	48	13
Percentage across	6.7	66.3	5.6	16.8	4.6

^a Excludes 5 in mobile homes/caravans, and 9 in 'other' dwellings.

Table 3. Changes in household structure as a result of migration to the Gold Coast: survey respondents

Household structure	Prior to move		Immediately after move		Now	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
One-person	41	13.7	49	16.4	57	19.1
Single-parent	9	3.0	10	3.3	18	6.0
Couple only	80	26.8	95	31.8	111	37.1
Couple + children	146	48.8	122	40.8	93	31.1
Shared household	22	7.4	22	7.4	17	5.7
Separate families	1	0.3	1	0.3	3	1.0
Total	299	100.0	299	100.0	299	100.0

Note: 'Now' is June, 1994; 'Prior to move' and 'Immediately after move' refer to the time of move to the Gold Coast, whenever that was.

before 1971. On an annualised basis, the survey data indicate either an increasing rate of long-distance migrants in the period 1971–90 and a decrease since 1991, or a higher retention rate for those who moved prior to 1991.

Changing patterns are evident in the preferred dwelling type occupied by migrants to the Gold Coast (see Table 2). The proportion of migrants living in 'rural residential' areas is much higher for those who arrived prior to 1986, but it is a much less preferred living environment for those arriving since that time. The highest incidence of migrants occupying 'detached housing' is for those who arrived between 1986 and 1990. However, the proportion of migrants living in 'town houses', 'low-rise flats' and

'high-rise apartments' has generally increased as a preferred living environment for arrivals since 1986. This can be interpreted in the light of the changing nature of the Gold Coast, with earlier arrivals perhaps seeking a peaceful, low-key life style, while more recent arrivals seek either low-care/low-maintenance retirement or a life style something more closely associated with hedonism. A higher proportion of all migrants (58 per cent) owned their home outright than was the case for the total regional population (40 per cent), while fewer migrants were private renters (16 per cent compared to 20 per cent). This may be explained by the relatively higher proportion of retirees and older working-age households among the migrants.

There also have been changes in the pattern of household structure as a result of the move to the Gold Coast by survey respondents (see Table 3). There were more 'one-person' households after migration than before it; more 'couple only' households and fewer 'couples with children', and slightly more 'single-parent' households. This tends to suggest that 'sun-belt' migration involves a high proportion of disintegrating households (divorces or separations, couples whose children have left home, widows and widowers, and so on). However, at the time of the survey, in aggregate there was a close match between the household structure of all long-distance migrants to the Gold Coast and that of the population as a whole, except that migrant households tended to have a lesser incidence of households with young children.

The survey data and Ward's (1994) census-based study both indicate that, while retirees are a significant component of migration to the Gold Coast, over time their importance has declined relatively. An increasing proportion of migrants are aged 15–24 years, particularly since the mid 1980s. In the mid 1990s, the age-structure of all in-migrants tended to match closely that of the regional population. This has influenced the distribution of migrants across other socioeconomic characteristics such as employment status, household composition and dwelling tenure. For example, over one-third of migrant households earned less than A\$20 000 per annum in 1994, with about half earning less than A\$30 000, reflecting the relatively high incidence of retirees dependent on pensions as well as households with working-age persons either unemployed or underemployed. However, over 10 per cent of migrant households earned over A\$50 000 a year, but this was well below the 16 per cent of regional households earning that figure at the 1991 census. The migrants households generally were better educated than the regional population, with 14 per cent of migrants having a degree and 15 per cent an associate degree or diploma or a trade qualification.

At the time of the survey, about one-third

of male respondents and 11 per cent of female respondents were self-employed, while 31 per cent of females and 26 per cent of males were employers. Retirees and others not working comprised 43 per cent of male and 58 per cent of female migrants.

6. The Migration Decision Process

Data collected in the survey from long-distance migrants to the Gold Coast focused both on factors which led to people leaving their origin and on factors which attracted people to the Gold Coast. The open-ended questions sought to collect both the full range of reasons, as well as the 'main' reasons, for leaving the origin and choosing the destination. Subsequent focus group discussions involving a selection of respondents also explored the migration process in greater detail. From the survey, the reasons for leaving and reasons for choosing the Gold Coast were categorised under 24 and 28 specific headings respectively. Then these were collapsed into six broad categories: area-specific attributes; family/friends (moorings); employment; climate/health; persona lifestyle/recreation; other. Only data on the 'grouped' responses are tabulated in Tables 4 and 5, with the full list of push and pull factors being available in Stimson *et al.* (1996).

Reasons for Leaving the Origin

The reasons cited by survey respondents for leaving their origin do not all fit within the applied symmetry of the classical behaviourist set of push factors. Some do fit, as when respondents compared destinations; for example, the cold, variable weather in Melbourne (or the very hot and humid weather in Darwin) with the sub-tropical climate of the Gold Coast destination. But other factors do not fit, as when households sought to be closer to family and friends who had already migrated. As expected, attributes concerning the origin locality itself were the most frequently cited reasons for the decision to leave. Strong negative attributes tended to

relate to congestion, lack of facilities and general dislike of the area. These were factors which were specific to the origin, which are akin to location-specific stressors identified in the behavioural migration literature (Brown and Moore, 1970; Stimson, 1982). In total, these constituted over 30 per cent of the main push factor and 35 per cent of total reasons cited as precipitating the move.

Employment and personal factors were the next most important groups of reasons for leaving the origin. The high degree of asymmetry between these groups of factors in the listings of all reasons and main reasons for moving implies that personal factors (including health and lifestyle) were important in leading people to consider moving, but employment circumstances assume greater importance as the main reason for the actual decision to migrate from the origin. Family-related factors—including the desire to maintain or re-establish familial or other social contacts, as well as seeking to escape such relationships on the part of some people—are significant but less important push factors, accounting for 14 per cent of main reasons for moving. Retirement of itself was not a particularly significant factor, but becomes so when coupled with other reasons for the move.

What is evident from the data collected from this sample of long-distance movers to the Gold Coast, the largest non-metro city location in Australia's 'sun-belt', is that the push factors tend to operate as sets or clusters of factors which combine to influence the migration decision. For example, numerous respondents cited climate at the origin as a major factor, but linked it to the health of a family member with ailments such as asthma or arthritis, or a change in employment status forced a reconsideration of life course which led to a move being considered.

The overwhelming set of factors in the detailed ungrouped listing of reasons cited by in-migrants for leaving their origin were climate-related, which accounted for 21 per cent of all reasons and 18 per cent of main

reasons. Lifestyle-related reasons were the second most common push factors (10 per cent), and were the third most frequently cited main reason (7 per cent) for moving. Some differences exist in the rankings between the listing which incorporates all reasons for moving and that which focuses on the single main reason. These were especially apparent for the categories 'looking for employment' and 'location of family/friends', which showed up as more important within the main reason listing than among all the push factors. The relatively low number of mentions of employment and other economic factors is especially noteworthy given the emphasis placed in much of the literature on such structural push factors in macro-models of migration.

There were some differences within the sample of in-migrants to the Gold Coast with respect to the push factors at the origin according to whether it was a city or rural origin from which they moved, and also according to when they moved (see Table 4). Non-metropolitan-origin migrants were slightly more likely to cite climate as a dominant reason for moving than were metropolitan-origin migrants. Economic and employment-related reasons were more significant push factors for migrants who moved between 1981 and 1985 and among the most recent arrivals. Reasons relating to family and friends were more significant for the most recent arrivals. However, 'dislike of the origin location' was marginally less significant for recent arrivals. Employment and economic conditions tended to be less significant for migrants from Victoria, for whom locality-related factors were more significant stressors than was the case for migrants from the other states.

Although the term push factor has been used in this discussion it is important to note that clusters of reasons given for moving from the migration origin imply far more complex decision mechanisms than a simple push-pull phenomenon. The fact that many of the location-specific reasons would apply equally to other households who have not moved from an origin implies either that

Table 4. Main reason why migrants to the Gold Coast moved away from their origin, by the year of move: survey respondents

Main reason for moving	Period of move											
	1980 and before		1981-85		1986-90		1991 and after		Total			
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Dislike area	30	31.3	16	30.8	32	32.7	14	26.4	92	30.8		
Closer to family/friends	11	11.5	5	9.6	15	15.3	11	20.8	42	14.0		
Employment, economic conditions	20	20.8	18	34.6	20	20.4	15	28.3	73	24.4		
Retirement	2	2.1	2	3.8	3	3.1	—	—	7	2.3		
Health and climate	15	15.6	2	3.8	6	6.1	3	5.7	26	8.7		
Personal factors	8	8.3	4	7.7	12	12.2	3	5.7	27	9.0		
Other/Not stated	10	10.4	5	9.7	10	10.2	7	13.1	32	10.8		
Total	96	100.0	52	100.0	98	100.0	53	100.0	299	100.0		

stronger forces are holding the non-movers to the locality—‘moorings’, in Longino’s (1992) terminology—or that there are crucial combinations of factors, including the household’s life-course, which together create the desire or need to move. For example, loss of a job, or impending retirement, may force a reconsideration of the values attached to moorings.

Reasons for Choosing the Gold Coast

Only 10 per cent of long-distance in-migrants had previously lived on the Gold Coast, but 78 per cent had visited it, mostly as a holiday resort or see friends or relatives. Only 12 per cent had never been there before migrating. Thus, the majority of migrants had some degree of familiarity with the destination before the move. This familiarity blurs the possible categorisation of push and pull factors by themselves as explicators. People’s experience of destinations seems to cause them to re-evaluate conditions at the origin. Thus push and pull factors are intimately related.

Reasons cited by survey respondents as to why they chose the Gold Coast as a destination were again grouped into categories, with the four most commonly cited being climate, family and friends, lifestyle and employment opportunities, which are the same groupings as for push factors with different ordering.

There are, however, differences in the ranking of those four sets of pull factors attracting migrants to the Gold Coast, depending on whether they are the main reason or just one of the full range of reasons cited by respondents. In terms of the single main reason for choosing the Gold Coast as a destination, the location of family or friends (21 per cent) was the most important factor, followed by climate, especially in relation to health (20 per cent). Among the full range of pull factors, climate was most frequently cited (18 per cent), followed by location of family or friends (13 per cent).

Overall, the range of reasons cited as pull factors to the Gold Coast as well as those

cited as push factors at the origin, cover the type of factors determining propensity to move that had been proposed in earlier research by Flood *et al.* (1991)—namely, demographic factors, locational factors and interactional factors. But these factors clearly need to be considered in combination.

There were, however, some important differences in the pattern of main reasons for selecting the Gold Coast according to when migrants moved (see Table 5). Employment-related factors were less significant as a main reason for the more recent arrivals than was the case for those who arrived earlier between 1981 and 1985. ‘Lifestyle’ is much less significant among recent arrivals, whereas for these migrants ‘family and friends’ are more important, especially when compared to the pre-1980 arrivals when this was less important. Comparison of the main reasons for choosing the Gold Coast as a destination by the state of origin of migrants prior to the move shows that the influence of family and friends is less significant for long-distance migrants from within Queensland and for states other than New South Wales and Victoria. But these factors appear to have been stronger for the most recent migrants, although they were also cited as being quite important by the 1981–85 arrivals, and it is interesting that in both cases these arrivals were at times during and immediately following periods of economic recession in Australia. Thus, it is important that employment factors were more significant for those migrants from elsewhere in Queensland, as well as for the 1981–85 and 1991 and after migrants, while for them climate was a far less important pull factor. Health and climate factors are more important for migrants from Victoria and the other state capitals than for those from non-metropolitan inter-state origins, and over time it has become a much less important main attractor.

Overview

Several significant points arise from the survey data collected from this sample of mi-

Table 5. Main reason why migrants chose the Gold Coast, by the year of migration: survey respondents

Main reason for choosing the Gold Coast	Year of migration													
	1991 and beyond			1986-90			1981-85			1980 and before			Total	
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Like area	5	9.4		9	9.2		5	9.6		7	7.3		26	8.7
Family/friends	14	26.4		32	32.7		11	21.2		15	15.6		72	24.1
Employment	17	32.2		12	12.2		15	28.8		26	27.1		70	23.4
Climate	8	15.1		21	21.4		6	11.5		21	21.9		56	18.7
Lifestyle and recreation	4	7.5		15	15.3		12	23.1		13	13.5		44	14.7
Other/not stated	5	9.4		9	9.2		3	5.8		14	14.6		31	10.4
Total	53	100.0		98	100.0		52	100.0		96	100.0		299	100.0

grants to the Gold Coast. The first is the impact of family and friends, implying a chain-migration phenomenon at work. The impact of family and friends acts both to push and to pull migrants. This relates to the role of moorings in migration decision-making as proposed by Fielding (1992). Moorings such as ties to family and friends, will hold potential migrants to their place of origin, but if social or cultural conditions change they may act to draw people to new locations.

Secondly, some pull-like factors are location-specific (such as lifestyle opportunities) whilst others are not. Some respondents followed family or friends and would have moved to be with them wherever they were. Similarly, climate was an important factor drawing people to the Gold Coast, but one respondent considered Fiji and Indonesia as possible alternatives to the Gold Coast.

Thirdly, there is often an intimate connection between previous experience and some migration decisions. Many migrants to the Gold Coast had visited the area previously, most probably as a 'sun-belt' holiday destination. For them, the migration decision appears linked to wider social factors. Climate is sometimes linked to health, and health is sometimes linked to the availability of sophisticated health-care facilities. Some households would have preferred to have moved to the Sunshine Coast north of Brisbane, but were dissuaded by what they saw as inadequate health facilities.

But if we disaggregate the influences, then climate, employment opportunities, lifestyle and business/growth opportunities were the significant pull factors.

What was interesting in the lifestyle-related pull factors was the frequent reference to the colourful image of the Gold Coast and its relaxed lifestyle, which verifies the role of leisure and lifestyle consumption suggested by Mullins (1991) in his analysis of the Gold Coast and its growth as an urban area. The connections between previous experience in a leading national holiday destination and the migration decision also reinforce this hedonistic, consumer-oriented character of the urban development of the Gold Coast.

The importance of recognising migration as a cultural as well as a behavioural phenomenon is also apparent. The reasons for choosing the Gold Coast range across the four images it presents to the world, as a city of leisure, a city of enterprise, a city of tourism, and a city in its own right. Enterprise and tourism combine to reinforce the economic factors of choice, as does the recognition of its high rate of population growth for example. Migration to the Gold Coast is a social and cultural as well as an economic experience.

Why the Gold Coast?

The survey data reveal how many migrants had considered alternative destinations to the Gold Coast during the migration decision process. However, a small group of alternative locations (the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, elsewhere in coastal Queensland, and coastal northern New South Wales) accounted for 58 per cent of the potential alternative destinations cited by migrants, and significantly non-metropolitan city destinations figured most frequently. Thus, non-metropolitan coastal urban locations are most prominent in the preference space of migrants to the 'sun-belt'. This indicates that lifestyle features are important in the migration decision process, at least for those who seriously considered alternative destinations.

7. Post-migration Behaviour

Satisfaction with the Move to the Gold Coast

The survey explored the level of satisfaction of migrants with the move to the Gold Coast. Despite the problem of *ex-post facto* justification inherent in answering such questions, 48 per cent felt that they were better-off economically now than they were before the move, although many went through a period immediately after the move when they felt they were no better-off, and some felt they were worse-off.

The large majority (87 per cent) of migrants judged themselves to be at least as

happy or happier now at the Gold Coast than they were at their origin. And the Gold Coast as a destination generally has met or exceeded their expectations, with 90 per cent of survey being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with living on the Gold Coast, while only 9 per cent claimed to be 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'.

Community Involvement

Participation and involvement in non-work activities at the Gold Coast was measured by club membership and other affiliations. Only 39 per cent of migrants indicated no such current participation. Some 20 per cent of the respondents said they were more involved post-migration than pre-migration, while 52 per cent said their involvement was about the same (including no involvement), with only 20 per cent claiming it was less post- than pre-migration.

The focus group discussions revealed how important such affiliations could be in settling in to a migration destination. For example, some respondents emphasised how important school-based connections—developed through participation in their child's school-based organisations—were in forming new friendships and in the general process of settling in.

Housing Tenure and Mobility

About one-third of the migrant households live in the same dwelling that they first occupied after moving to the Gold Coast. A further one-third had occupied two dwellings. There was also a tendency for migrants to move from a dwelling that they owned at the origin to one they own or are purchasing at the Gold Coast destination, even though for many there was an intermediate interlude (67 per cent) in rented tenure. Table 6 shows these relationships, with the data demonstrating how there have been substantial changes to the proportion of outright home-ownership following the move, as well as a small reduction in the proportion of households living in houses owned by family or friends

after the move, and a small reduction in the proportion both purchasing or in private rental. These changes indicate how some migrants were 'cashed-up' having sold their houses at the origin, which was usually a southern capital city (Sydney or Melbourne), at prices permitting outright purchase with cash to spare on the Gold Coast. Some migrants also were young workers who had left the parental home at the origin. However, those who moved at earlier times tend to have higher rates of home-ownership, especially the 1981–85 migrants, with more recent migrants tending to be renting, both for 1991 and after arrivals (38 per cent) and 1986–90 arrivals (18 per cent) (see Table 7).

Changes in Employment

It is difficult to extract meaningful information on the changes in employment status and the nature of work for the migrants to the Gold Coast because of the long period over which they had moved. The greatest change as a result of migration was in the 'retired' group, with 13 per cent already retired when they left the origin, and about one-third now 'retired', reflecting the age-profile of the total migrant group. Retirees tended to come from a broad spectrum across the managerial/administrative, professional/technical, clerical, sales and operator/labourer occupational categories. The only occupation which gained in numbers post-migration was the 'service' industry category, which is not surprising given the services-dominated industry character (including tourism) of the Gold Coast. But it was interesting to find that about 10 per cent of those who had previously retired were now seeking work, while 9 per cent had returned to the labour force as sales and clerical workers, possibly reflecting the tendency of those who took early retirement packages at the origin later to re-enter the labour force at the migration destination.

Two categories that had increased slightly after migration were the occupations categorised as 'crafts worker' and the unemployed. But there was a substantial drop in the number of migrants who designated

Table 6. Dwelling tenure of migrants at origin, just after the move to the Gold Coast, and at June 1994: survey respondents (percentage)

Dwelling tenure	At origin	First dwelling on Gold Coast		
		1 dwelling only	> 1 dwelling	Present dwelling
Being purchased	25.8	8.0	11.1	22.1
Owned outright	41.4	0.3	15.4	57.8
Private rental	19.4	15.7	33.2	15.7
Public rental	1.0	7.4	1.3	1.7
Owned by family or friends	10.7	1.7	4.3	1.7
Other	1.7	0.3	1.3	1.0
Sub-total		33.4	66.6	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	
<i>N</i>	299	299	299	

Table 7. Current dwelling tenure of migrants to the Gold Coast, by year of move: survey respondents (percentage)

Current dwelling tenure	Year of migration				Total
	1980 and before	1981–85	1986–90	1991 and after	
Owned	88.6	90.4	78.5	56.6	79.9
Rented	10.4	7.7	18.4	37.7	17.4
Other	1.0	1.9	3.1	5.7	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	96	52	98	53	299

themselves as 'home-makers', suggesting a considerable incidence of re-entry of women into the labour force post-migration.

Table 8 gives a detailed cross-tabulation of the pre- and post-migration (at June 1994) classification of migrants by occupation and occupational status. But these data need to be interpreted with some caution as many of the cells contain very small frequencies.

Ties with the Origin

About 30 per cent of migrants to the Gold Coast claimed that they would consider moving away from the area in the future, reflecting the relatively high propensity for long-distance migrants to be repeat migrants. Two-thirds of migrants had visited their ori-

gin location since moving to the Gold Coast, and of these about 60 per cent had done so at least annually, implying a high incidence of ties with their former location, with over 70 per cent of the reasons for these return visits being related to family and friends.

Complexity of Relationships in the Migration Process

The complexity of the migration phenomenon and the need to move beyond a simple push-pull analysis are both underlined by the results of specific analysis of internal relationships amongst important factors identified in the survey. Two of the significant ones are:

Table 8. Occupational status of migrants in the labour force, at their origin and at the Gold Coast now (June 1994): survey respondents

Occupation before migration	Occupation now						Total ^a
	Managers/ Professionals	Sales and clerical workers	Craftworkers/ Labourers	Service workers/ Military	Retirees/ Home-makers	Students/ Unemployed	
<i>Managers/Professionals</i>							
Number	34	5	2	1	31	4	78
Row Percentage	43.6	6.4	2.6	1.3	39.7	5.1	—
Column Percentage	57.6	14.3	6.9	5.6	22.6	23.5	26.1
<i>Sales and clerical workers</i>							
Number	8	16	4	4	19	1	52
Row Percentage	15.4	30.8	7.7	7.7	36.5	1.9	—
Column Percentage	13.6	45.7	13.8	22.2	13.9	5.9	17.4
<i>Craftworkers/Labourers</i>							
Number	7	—	18	2	9	3	42
Row Percentage	16.7	—	42.9	4.8	21.4	7.1	—
Column Percentage	11.9	—	62.1	11.1	6.6	17.6	14.0
<i>Service workers/Military</i>							
Number	2	2	—	6	4	1	15
Row Percentage	13.3	13.3	—	40.0	26.7	6.7	—
Column Percentage	3.4	5.7	—	33.3	2.9	5.9	5.0
<i>Retirees/Home-makers</i>							
Number	6	8	3	1	74	2	94
Row Percentage	6.4	8.5	3.2	1.1	78.7	2.1	—
Column Percentage	10.2	22.9	10.3	5.6	54.0	11.8	31.4
<i>Students/Unemployed</i>							
Number	2	3	2	4	—	6	17
Row Percentage	11.8	17.6	11.8	23.5	—	35.3	—
Column Percentage	3.4	8.6	6.9	22.2	—	35.3	5.7
Total ^a	59	35	29	18	137	17	299
	19.7	11.7	9.7	6.0	45.8	5.7	100.0

^aThe total figures include respondents who were not able to be categorised by occupation.

Note: Because the numbers in many categories are very small, the figures should be treated with caution.

- (1) There was a significant relationship between current tenure type and whether people were considering leaving the Gold Coast in future, as shown in Table 9. In other words, dwelling tenure acts as a mooring factor, at the migration destination as presumably it does at the migration origin.
- (2) There is a significant relationship between tenure type and previous experience of the Gold Coast. Higher proportions of those who had previously lived on or had visited the Gold Coast before migrating owned or were purchasing their dwellings, as shown in Table 10. Migrants' previous experience of their destination is linked to their final form of tenure. Whilst there are many possible explanations for this link—for example, returns to a previously purchased dwell-

ing or property)—the results indicate the necessity for caution in identifying simple push-pull factors. The question arises, for example, of how previous experience and current tenure are to be considered in the push-pull factor framework.

Some factors for which significant relationships were expected did not appear to be statistically significant at all:

- (1) There was, for example, no clear relationship between the migrants' current tenure and whether or not the Gold Coast had met their expectations or with their general level of satisfaction with the area.
- (2) There were no significant relationships between respondents' gender and whether they were considering leaving

Table 9. Current tenure type by future intentions: survey respondents

	Have considered leaving the Gold Coast		
	Yes	No	Total
Own, purchasing dwelling	65	174	239
Rent, lent dwelling	21	36	57
Total	86	210	

$N = 296$; Chi-square = 2.077; $df = 1$; $p \leq 0.15$.

Table 10. Current tenure and previous experience (survey respondents)

	Previous experience of Gold Coast			Total
	Had lived there	Had visited	No previous experience	
Own/purchasing dwelling	26	189	24	239
Rent/lent dwelling	4	40	13	57
Total	30	229	37	

$N = 296$; Chi-square = 7.15; $df = 2$; $p \leq 0.03$.

the Gold Coast, whether they had visited their former location, or whether the number of clubs and organisations they belonged to had changed from the level at the previous location.

- (3) There was also no significant relationship between the the migrants' current level of satisfaction with the Gold Coast and whether or not they visited their previous location.
- (4) Previous experience did not appear to have a significant impact on the respondents' current level of satisfaction with the Gold Coast or on whether they intended leaving the Gold Coast. It did, however, influence whether their expectations of life on the Gold Coast had been met or not.

8. Conclusion

Long-distance migration is a complex phenomenon, as is the nature of the underlying decision choice process. The study reported here, focusing on long-distance

migrants to a major 'sun-belt' location destination in Australia, supports many of the findings from the relatively few earlier empirical studies of the 'sun-belt' migration phenomenon, including that by the Department of Environment and Planning (1986) in the mid 1980s of migrants to Coffs Harbour on the central north coast of New South Wales. However, most previous survey-based studies of 'sun-belt' migration had focused on retirees (Murphy and Zehner, 1988; Drysdale, 1991; Rudd, 1989; Neyland and Kendig, 1994).

This study extends beyond the classic investigation of push and pull factors underlying the migration decision process, and it identifies for the first time in Australia the potential role of moorings and other cultural factors.

Empirical investigation of migration to the Gold Coast in the South East Queensland growth region, has highlighted the cyclical or periodic nature of long-distance migration, as well as changes over time in the relative importance of groupings of push and pull

factors. For pull factors, it is evident that climate, lifestyle and family and friends are important, with the last of these assuming increasing importance among more recent migrants. Economic and employment-related factors seem to figure less predominantly in the *ex-post facto* reported reasons for migrating (both push and pull factors). They appear to be less significant than might have been expected from behavioural methodologies using aggregate functionalist type models.

This study questions the validity of the popularly held view that 'sun-belt' migration to the Gold Coast is dominated by retirees. It also shows that a significant minority (29 per cent) of long-distance migrants to a 'sun-belt' destination have a reasonably high propensity to become recurring long-distance migrants, despite the vast majority being satisfied with their move, and how a sizeable majority of migrants maintain regular contact with their original location. And it is evident that the large majority of long-distance migrants had previous, usually holiday-related, experience of the Gold Coast, and increasingly in recent times, they had family and friends ties to the destination. Finally, the survey data show that some asymmetries and ambiguities exist in the push and the pull factors in 'sun-belt' migration, and that moorings seem to be playing an increasingly important, if still relatively small, role over time in the migration decision process. The data lend support to the importance of wider cultural and perceptual factors in migration studies.

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