

# COTA NT 2020

## Cost of Living Survey Results

*Published by COTA NT, 2020*

*Disclaimer: The results shown in this report are based on responses from senior Territorians to a hard copy and online survey conducted by COTA NT in early 2020.*

*Results are shown as a percentage of valid responses to each question. The data in this report should not be considered to be a statistically sound representation, rather an indication of the circumstances and views of senior Territorians that submitted survey responses.*

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## 1. Introduction

COTA NT's advocacy for senior Territorians aims to effect positive social change. It helps ensure that seniors' voices are heard on issues important to them.

COTA NT aims to defend and safeguard seniors' rights and ensure their views are genuinely considered, especially when decisions are being made about their lives.

COTA NT has over 50 years of history in advocating for senior Territorians and ensuring their voice has a say in the development of public policy and legislation. We work towards making change through networks, through connections, and by lobbying and contacting governments, political parties, public services, the media and the public in general.

Our research, surveys and reports, are published on our website at,  
<https://www.cotant.org.au/about-us/cota-advocacy/surveys/>

## 2. Data source

The information in this report is based on the *COTA NT 2020 Cost of Living Survey*, a survey filled out by senior Territorians aged 50 and over.

- The survey was conducted in early 2020. The primary purpose of this survey is to attain responses from seniors from Darwin and regional areas such as Katherine and Alice Springs around the topic of cost of living.
- Online and hard copy forms were used to conduct this survey.
- These results will also be used as a comparison to previous surveys and research.
- This information should not be considered definitive or scientific research.

*See Appendix A: COTA NT 2020 Cost of Living Survey*

The 2020 COTA NT survey data were distributed and filled out in paper form by 157 respondents. It was based around the following topics:

- Residency in the Northern Territory
- Demographics
- Financial security
- Employment status
- Employment sector
- Annual income
- Highest expense impacting cost of living

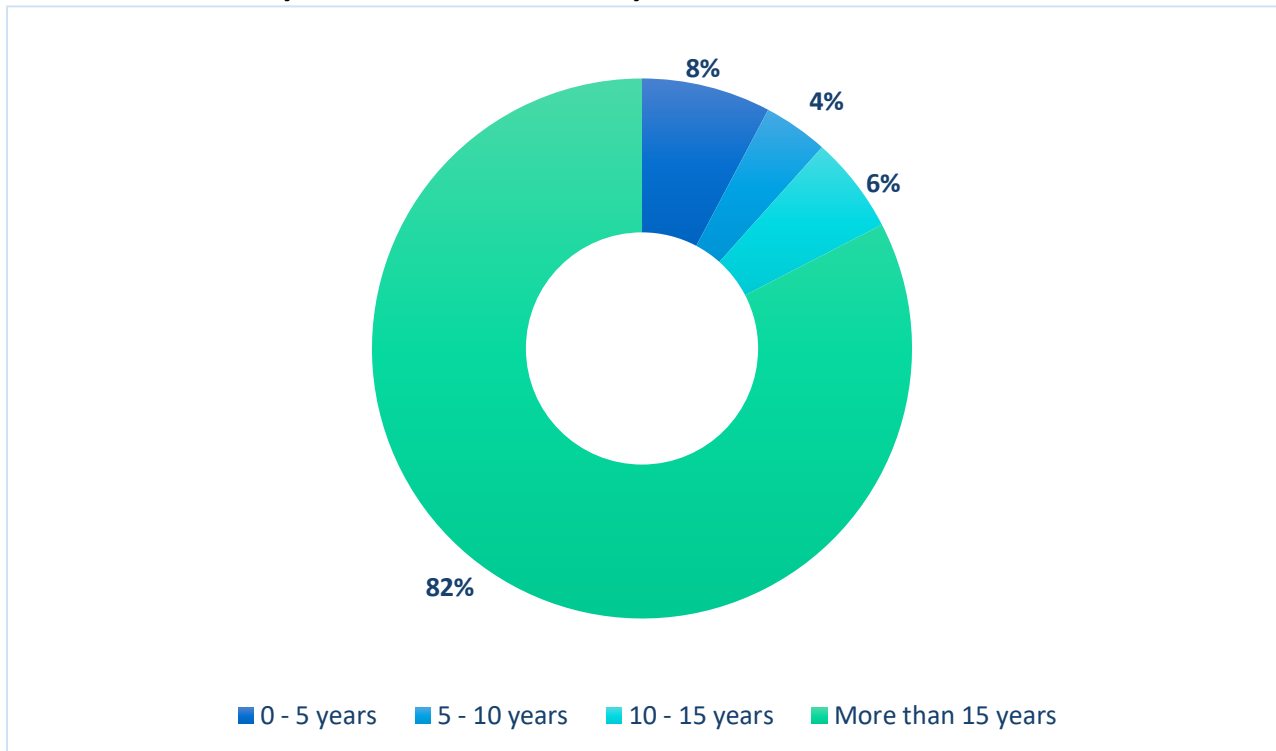
### 3. Residency in the Northern Territory

This section looks at the respondents' current postcodes and their postcodes in the last 5 years to determine trends in their living patterns to determine if respondents stayed in the same place.

This section also looked at how long the respondents lived in the Territory, where they think they will be living in the next 5 years (2025), if they will be planning to move from NT and what will be the main reason for their move.

- Most people (77%) indicated that they lived in the same place as they did 5 years ago.
- 5 people did not respond to the question regarding their current postcode.
- 8 people did not respond to the question regarding their postcode in the last 5 years.

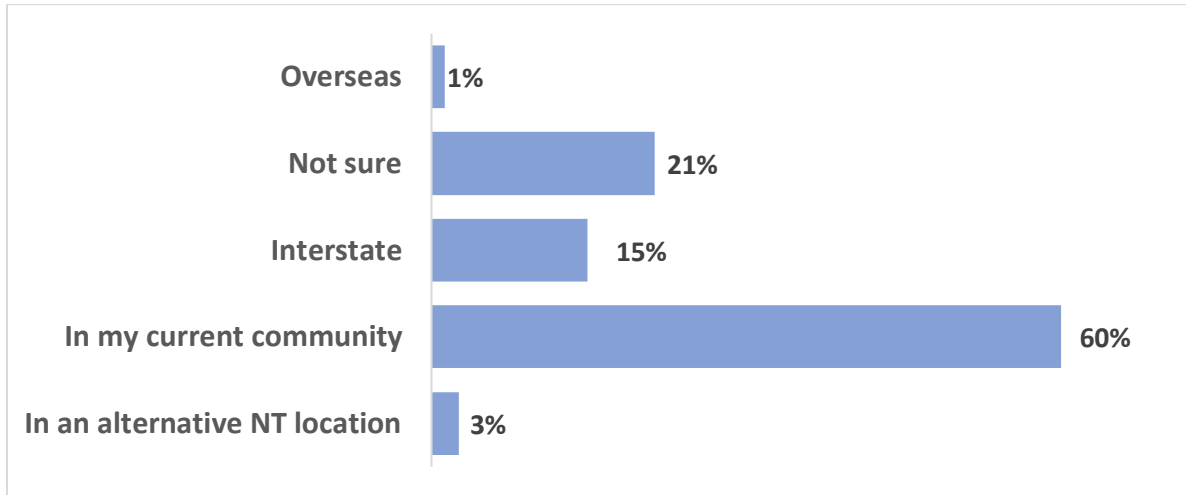
**Chart 1: Number of years lived in the Territory**



- 82% of the respondents indicated that they had lived in the Territory for more than 15 years.
- 8% of the respondents had just lived in the territory for up to 5 years.
- 2 people did not respond to this question.

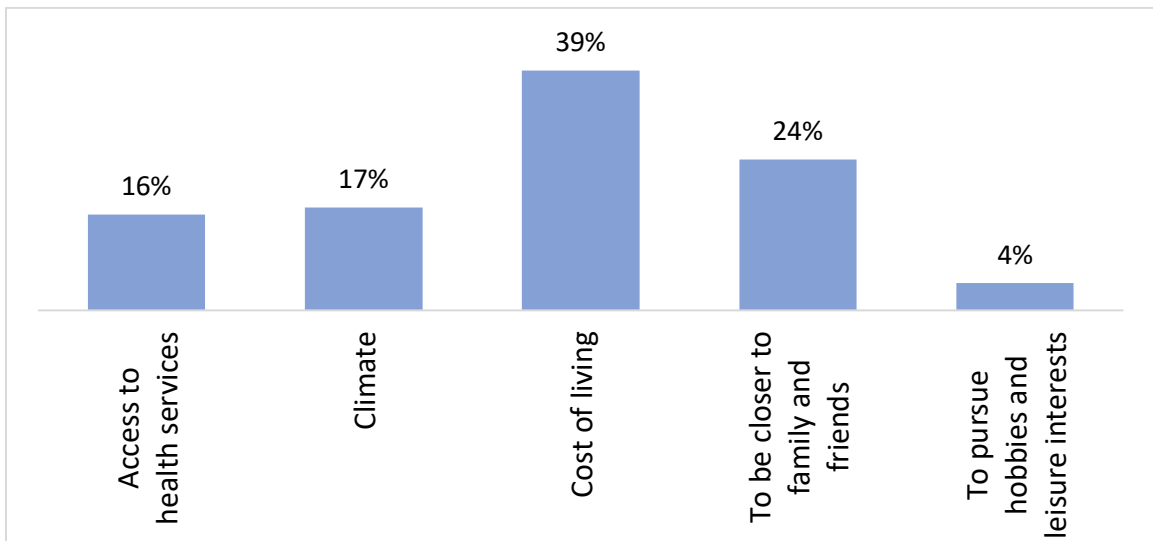
**Chart 2:**

**Where do you think you will be living in 5 years' time (2025)?**



- 63% thought they would still be living in the Territory in 5 years' time.
- 15% thought that they would be living at other location interstate, 1% thought that they would move overseas and 21% were not sure where they would be living in the next 5 years.
- 1 person did not respond to this question.

**Chart 3: If you plan to move in the next five years, what would be the main reason?**



- 39% said they would move due to the cost of living and 24% said they would consider moving in order to be closer to their family and friends.
- 17% said they would move due to climate and 16% to have access to health services.
- 4% choose multiple reasons as a factor to move from the Territory.
- 41 people did not respond to this question.

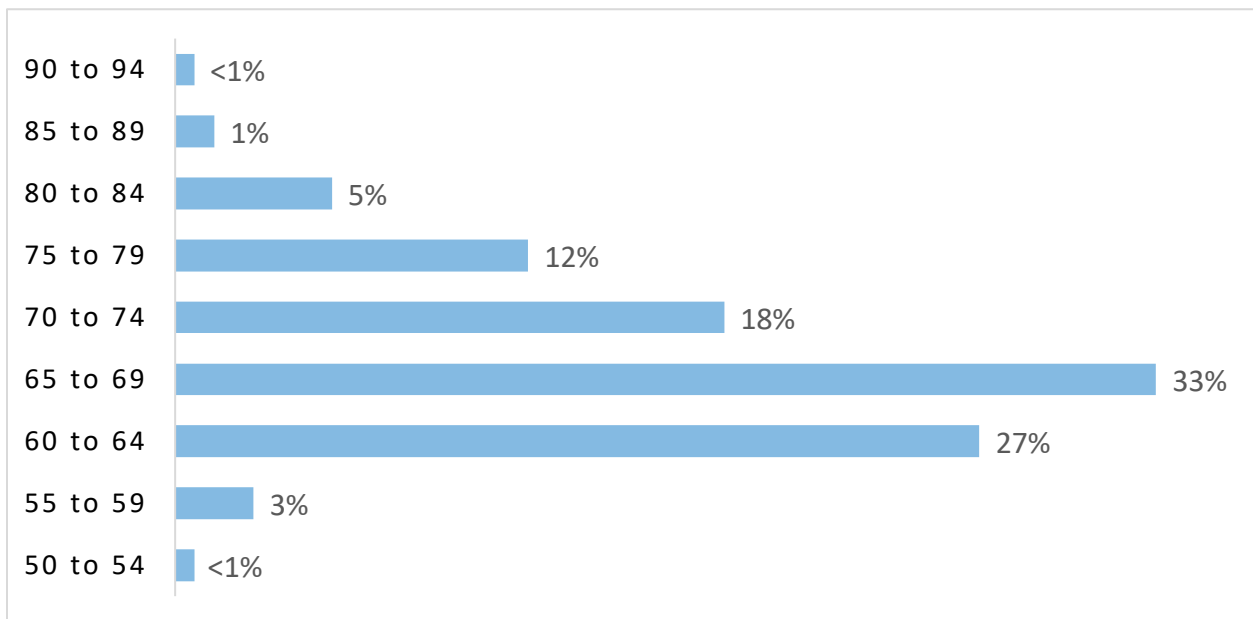
In this section an open-ended question was also asked regarding if the respondents are planning to leave the Territory, what might change their mind and encourage them to stay.

The respondents had many suggestions as to what would make them stay in the Territory, some of the common suggestions that would convince the respondents to stay in Territory were:

- increasing the availability of employment and concessions
- increasing the availability of health care and medical specialists
- reducing the cost of living for seniors
- being closer family and friends living in the Territory
- and less crime in the Territory.

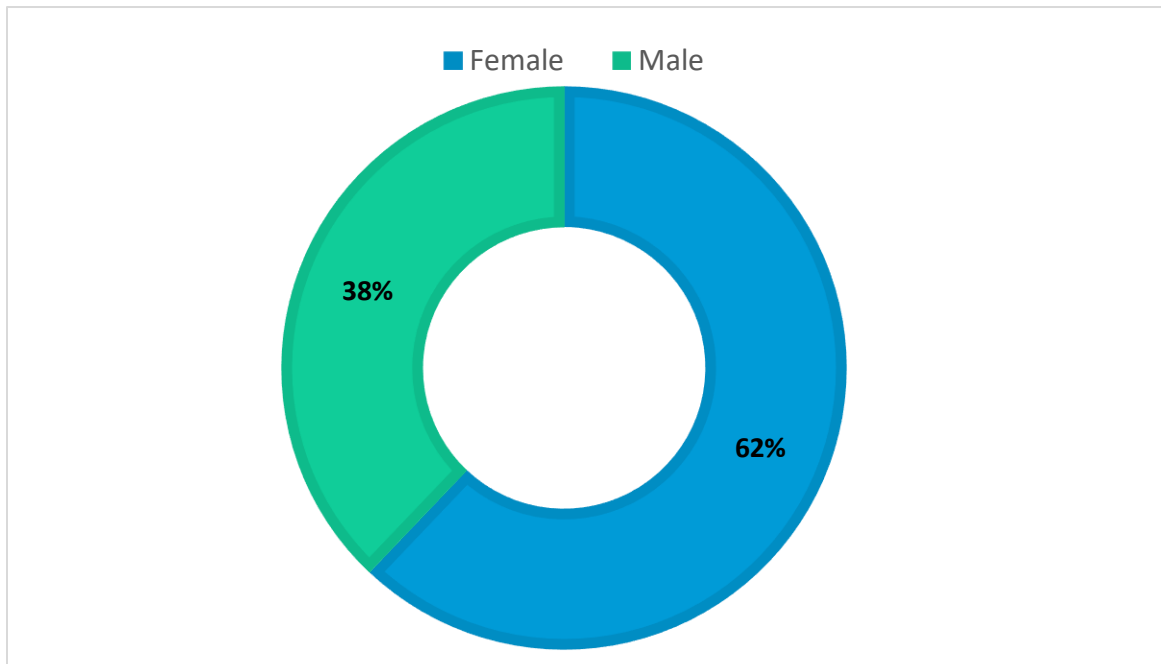
## 4. Demographics

**Chart 4: Age distribution**



- The respondents were aged between 50 and 94.
- Most of the people were aged between 60 to 79 (90%), with 60 to 69 age group having the most respondents (33%).
- 3 people did not respond to this question.

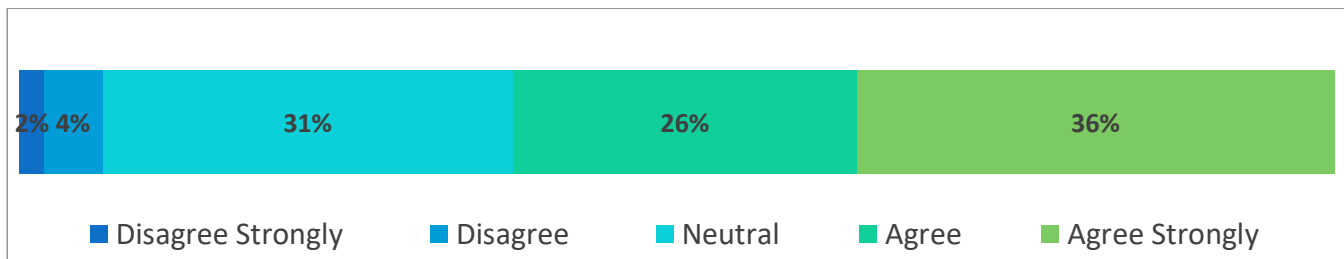
**Chart 5: Gender**



- Most of the respondents were female 62%, 38% were males.
- 1 person identified as non-binary and 1 of the respondents preferred to not to state their gender. 2 people did not respond to this question.

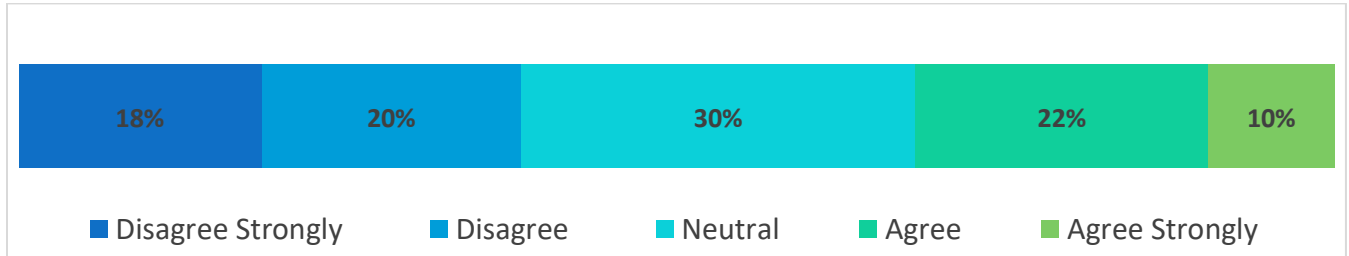
## 5. Financial Security

**Chart 6: I feel that the cost of living is increasing at a rate that is leaving me behind**



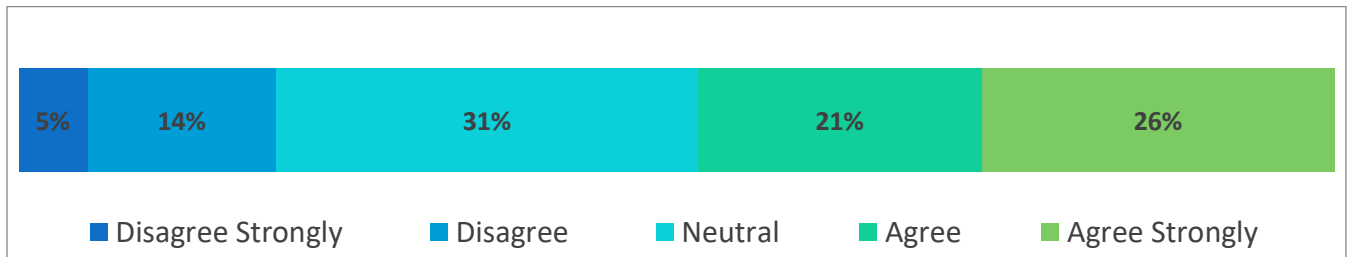
- 6% people disagreed strongly or disagreed that the cost of living is leaving them behind.
- 62% of the people felt that the cost of living is increasing at a rate that is leaving them behind.
- 26% agreed and 36% agreed strongly.

**Chart 7: Once I've covered my basic living needs, I have money left over to spend on leisure and social activities**



- 18% people disagreed strongly and 20% disagreed that they have money left over from covering their basic living needs to spend on leisure and social activities.
- 32% people of which 10% agreed strongly and 22% agreed that they have money left over from covering their basic living needs to spend on leisure and social activities.

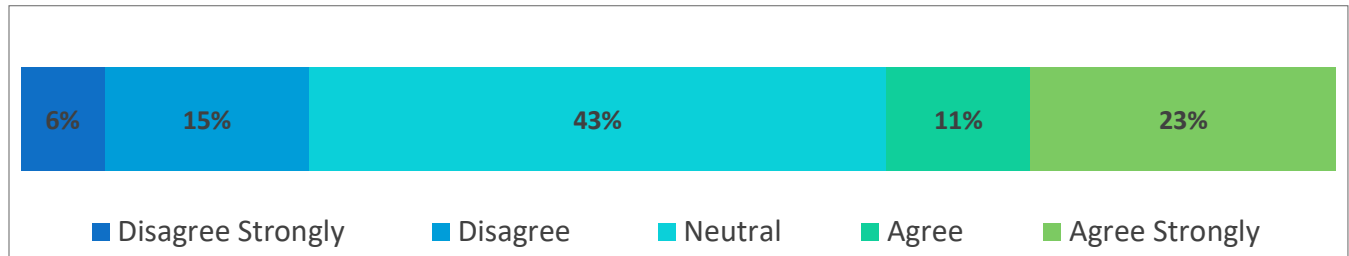
**Chart 8: I have difficulty understanding the changing rules around retirement income and superannuation.**



- 5% of the respondents disagreed strongly and 14% disagreed that they have difficulties in understanding the changing rules around retirement income and superannuation.
- A total of 47% of the respondents agree or agree strongly that they have difficulties in understanding the changing rules around retirement income and superannuation.
- 4 people did not respond to this question.



**Chart 9: I have difficulty understanding or accessing government services to assist me with my financial situation.**



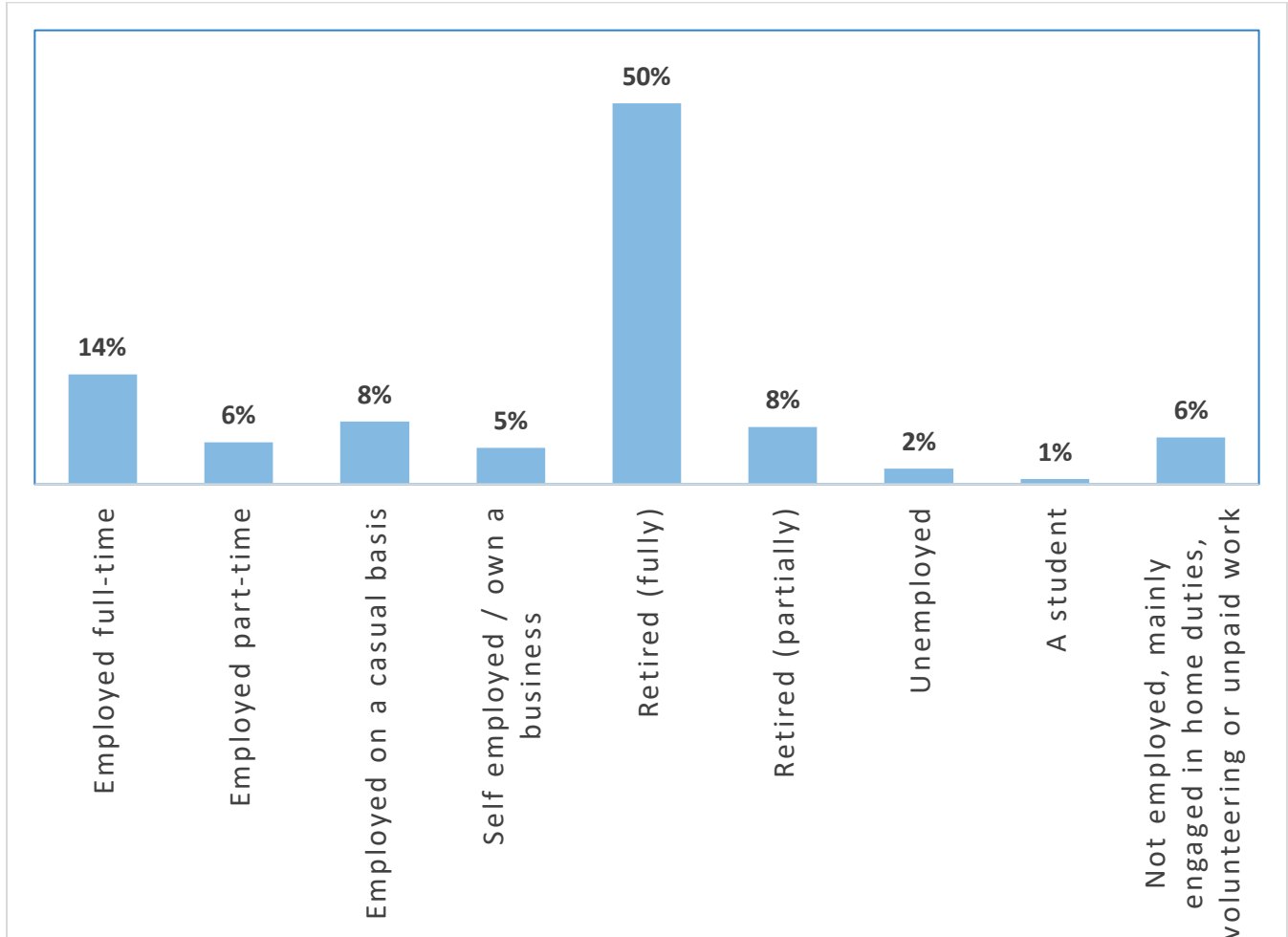
- 6% of the respondents disagreed strongly and 15% disagreed that they have difficulties in understanding or accessing government services to assist with their financial situation.
- 23% of the respondents agreed strongly and 11% agreed that they have difficulties in understanding or accessing government services to assist with their financial situation.
- 2 people did not respond to this question.

In this section an open-ended question was also asked regarding what changes the respondents would like to see government make for better financial security outcomes for older Territorians. The respondents had many suggestions as to what changes they would like to see for improving the financial security for senior Territorians. Some of the common suggestions/changes that the respondents wanted the government to make were:

- to reduce the food prices and cost of living
- increasing pensions and concessions
- providing better financial aid and help to seniors
- providing better housing options for seniors
- better hospitals and medical access
- discount on council rates
- to understand that accessing websites for seniors is hard for those not comfortable with technology
- providing more affordable or concessions for basic needs like utilities, drivers licence and registration.
- The most mentioned suggestions or changes that the respondents wanted the government to make was regarding increasing pensions and seniors' concessions and making basic utilities, registration and drivers' licence more affordable or provide concessions on these.
- 41 people did not respond to this question.

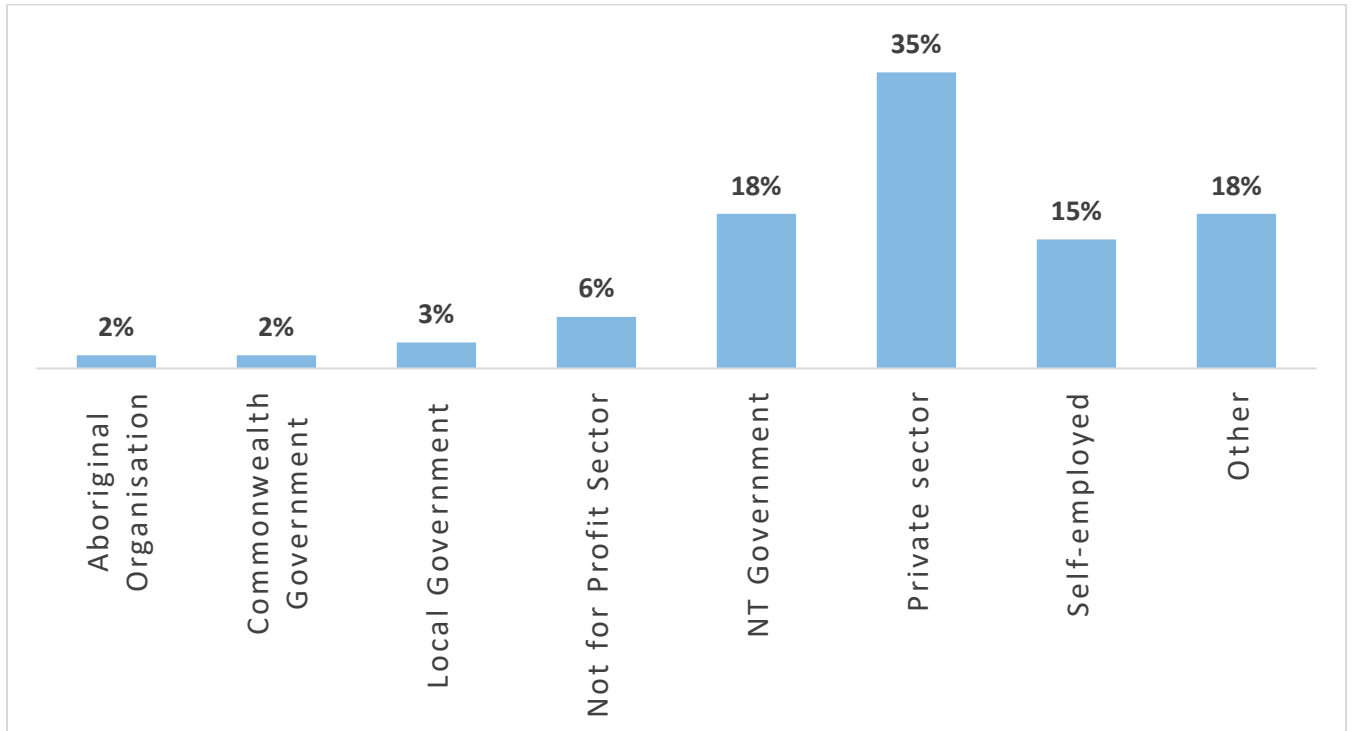
## 6. Employment

Chart 10: Are you employed?



- This section looked at the employment status of the respondents.
- 14% of the respondents were employed on a full-time basis, 6% on part time basis, 8% were employed on casual basis and 5% self-employed, while many of the respondents, 50% were fully retired and 8% partially retired.
- 2% indicated they were unemployed, 1% were students, and 6% not employed and mainly engaged in home duties or volunteering or unpaid work. Fourteen people chose Other and some of these indicated they were carers or volunteers.
- 4 people did not respond to this question.

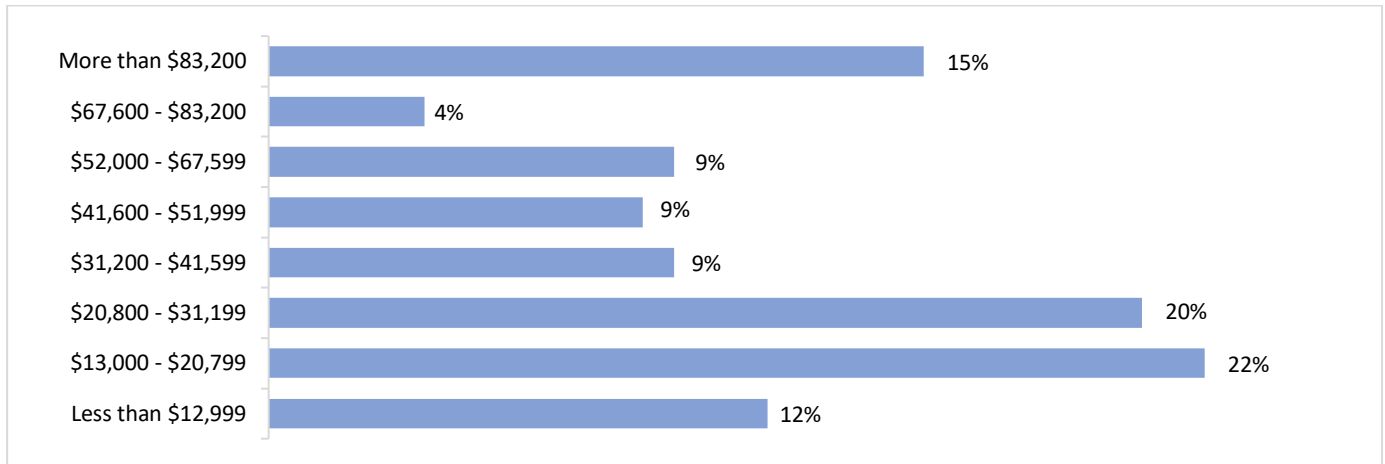
**Chart 11: If you are employed, what sector are you employed in?**



- A majority of the respondents (35%) were employed in the private sector.
- 18% were employed in the NT government, 15% were self-employment and 18% of the respondents were employed in other sectors.
- 2% of the respondents were employed in Aboriginal Organisation, 2% were employed with the commonwealth government, 3% were employed with the local government and 6% were employed with Not for Profit sectors.
- 91 people did not respond to this question.

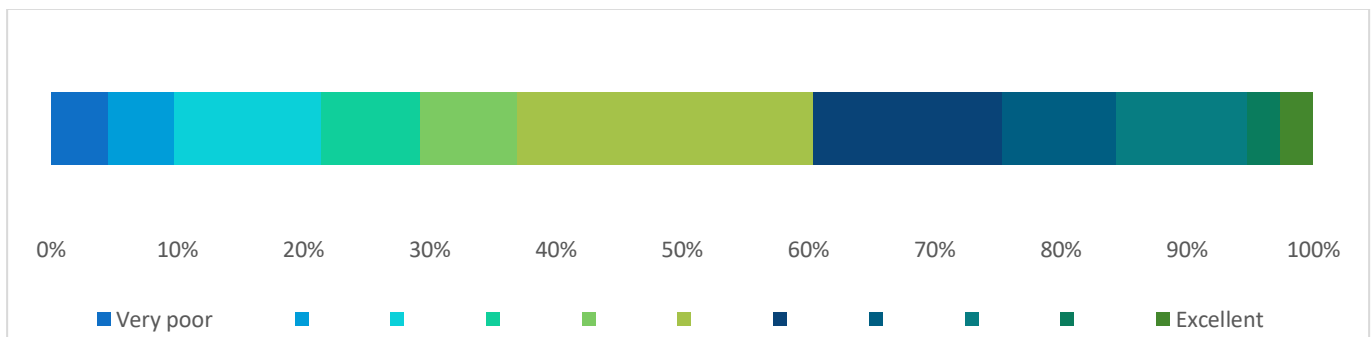
## 7. Financial Situation

**Chart 12: What is your annual income now?**



- Most of the respondents (53%) earned less than \$31,199.
- 12% earned less than \$12,999 and 22% earned between \$13,000 and \$20,7999.
- 15% of the respondents earned more than \$83,200 annually.
- 19 people did not respond to this question.

**Chart 13: How would you rate your financial situation at the moment?**



- 25% of respondents rated that their financial situation as very good or excellent (7 or above).
- 29% rated that their financial situation was below average or from very poor to poor and 15% rated that financial situation was about above average about 6/10.
- 5% rated that financial situation was very poor (0/10) and 3% rated that their financial situation as excellent (10/10).
- 3 people did not respond to this question.

#### Chart 14: Which expenses concern you or impact your cost of living the most?

- This question asked respondents to rate their concerns from 1-5 however most respondents did not rate from 1-5 and checked one or more boxes. Therefore, most of the respondents had multiple responses for this question but their highest concern or expense is reported here as accurately as possible.
- The highest expense of concern or impact on cost of living was Food/Groceries, 34% of the respondents chose Food/Groceries as the expense impacting their cost of living the most.
- About 19% of the respondents were concerned about their Power and Utilities bills and 22% were concerned about their Rent or Mortgage expenses impacting their cost of living the most.
- 10% were also concerned about medical bills expenses impacting their cost of living the most.
- 1% of the respondents felt that all expenses namely Food/Groceries, Fuel, Power and Utilities, Medical Bills and Rent or Mortgage concerned them and all these expenses impacted their cost of living.
- 4 people did not respond to this question.
- Some people commented that insurance and body corporation fees accounted for their highest expense which concerned them as it impacted their cost of living.

## 8. Conclusion

This survey was conducted and compiled by COTA NT to determine trends and patterns in the lives of the senior Territorians and to collect data on some of the issues faced by senior Territorians.

The survey helped reveal some essential details about senior Territorians including demographics, residency status, and where they are planning to live in the future. It also shows concerns about employment and annual income of seniors and self-rated financial security; lastly the expenses that seniors are facing that are impacting their cost of living.

The results of the survey broken down by the topics explored are as follows:

**Residency in the Northern Territory:** Most of the respondents, 82% had lived in the Territory for more than 15 years and most would continue to live in the territory beyond the next 5 years till 2025 (63%). When those who wanted to leave the Territory were asked what would be the main reason to leave, 39% said cost of living and 24% said to be closer to their family and friends.

In this section an open-ended question was also asked regarding if the respondents are planning to leave the Territory, what might change their mind and encourage them to stay. The respondents said they would stay if there is:

- an increase the availability of employment and concessions
- increase in the availability of health care and medical specialists
- reduction in the cost of living for seniors.

- Also, they said they would stay to be closer family and friends living in the Territory and if there was less crime in the Territory.

**Demographics:** A majority of the respondents (90%) were within the 60 to 79 age range and most of the respondents were females (62%).

**Financial security:** Most of the respondents (62%) agree or agree strongly that the cost of living is increasing at a rate that is leaving them behind, which is a cause of concern.

38% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they have money left over after covering their basic needs to spend on leisure and social activities. However, most of the respondents, 30% neither disagreed nor agreed about whether they had extra money left over to spend on leisure or social activities after covering their basic living needs.

The survey also identified that most of the respondents, 47% agree or agree strongly that they have difficulties in understanding the changing rules around retirement income and superannuation.

Also, 33% of the respondents indicated that they have difficulty understanding or accessing government services to assist with their financial situation, while the majority of respondents (43%) were neutral about having difficulties in understanding the or accessing the government services to assist with their financial situation.

Also, an open-ended question was asked in this section regarding what changes the respondents would like to see government make for better financial security outcomes for older Territorians. There were a lot of different changes that the respondents wanted to see but the most mentioned changes that the respondents wanted the government to make was regarding increasing pensions and seniors' concessions and making basic utilities, registration and drivers' licence more affordable or provide concessions for these.

**Employment Status:** Most of the respondents (50%) were fully retired and 14% of the respondents were still employed full time.

**Employment Sector:** Most of the respondents (35%) were employed in the private sector and a large number of respondents were self-employed (15%), or employed with NT government (18%). 18% were employed in other sectors not mentioned in the questionnaire.

**Annual Income:** A majority of the respondents (53%) earned less than \$31,199 annually, 15% of the respondents earned more than \$83,200 annually. The questionnaire also asked the respondents to rate their current financial situation and many respondents (23%) rated their financial situation as average (about 5 out of 10).

**Highest expense impacting cost of living:** This question asked respondents to rate their concerns from 1-5 however most respondents did not rate from 1-5 and checked one or more boxes. Therefore, most of the respondents had multiple responses for this question but their highest concern or expense is reported here as accurately as possible.