

Trends in community wellbeing during CSG development: 2014 -2018

Results of the 2018 CSIRO Community Wellbeing and Responding to Change survey in Queensland, Australia

The 2018 CSIRO Community Wellbeing and Responding to Change survey documents trends in community resilience and adapting over time and across different coal seam gas (CSG) industry phases. It shows changes between the construction, post-construction and early operations phases of development in 2014, 2016, and 2018.

KEY POINTS

- A robust level of community wellbeing was maintained over each period of changing economic activity.
- Social capital, services, and facilities maintained community wellbeing over time.
- The important drivers of community wellbeing indicate areas for focussing programs and initiatives to help maintain and strengthen community wellbeing.
- Five of the fifteen community wellbeing dimensions showed change over time, corresponding with different phases of CSG industry development.
- Perceptions of community wellbeing were consistently lower over time for people who live out of town than those who live in town.
- Expectations of future community wellbeing were more optimistic in 2018 than 2016.

Environmental quality, environmental management and roads showed gradual but ongoing improvement after 2014. Local decision making processes showed a gradual negative change over the four year period.

Employment and business opportunities showed the greatest change, demonstrating a large drop from 2014 to 2016 in the post-construction phase, with some improvement in 2018 in the steady-state operations phase.

In each survey we asked we asked about expectations of future community wellbeing three years hence. In 2018 expectations of future community wellbeing were higher than previous survey periods in 2014 and 2016.

Over half of people's expectations of the future could be explained by their perceptions of current levels of community wellbeing and how well they believed their community was responding and adapting to CSG development.

Fifteen community dimensions

The survey measured 15 dimensions of community wellbeing across a wide range of topics, such as perceptions of community spirit, environmental quality, levels of services and facilities, and employment and job opportunities.

Over the three data collection periods 2014, 2016 and 2018, the Western Downs region maintained robust levels of wellbeing within their communities, with little change in the overall community wellbeing scores, even though some dimensions of community wellbeing showed change over time.

Five of the fifteen dimensions showed statistically significant changes while the other ten dimensions remained fairly constant, along with place attachment.



Dimensions of community wellbeing grouped into six domains.

What we did

In March-April 2018 we surveyed 623 residents from the Western Downs and the eastern half of the Maranoa local government areas. We asked about community wellbeing and resilience, and local attitudes and perceptions of CSG development within these regions. The full report *Trends in community wellbeing and local attitudes to CSG development 2014-2016-2018* compares 2018 results with previous surveys conducted in 2014 and 2016, and identifies how these aspects have changed in the Western Downs over time. The eastern Maranoa region was included for the first time in 2016 as a comparison region. Read the full report [here](#).

Most important dimensions of community wellbeing

Analysis showed four key dimensions or underlying drivers that were most important to a sense of wellbeing in the community.

When residents felt these aspects of their community were strong they also viewed their community as a great place to live, and a place that offers a good quality of life to all ages. Alternatively, when these dimensions are viewed as low then residents also view community wellbeing as low.

Identifying the underlying drivers of community wellbeing helps communities to understand where to focus resources that can help to build or strengthen the wellbeing within their community.

The most important dimensions for a sense of wellbeing within the community in 2018 were:

Community cohesion – for example inclusiveness within the community, and welcoming of newcomers and people with differences

Services and facilities – for example schools, child care, medical and health services, sports and leisure facilities, community support services, food and other shopping

Local trust within the community – for example among the residents and in local leaders

Social interaction – for example visiting, talking to, and going out with others in the community

Place attachment

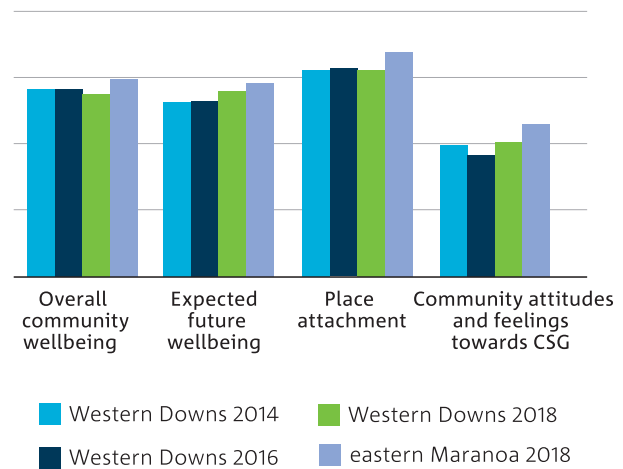
Residents' attachment to place remained very high and consistent over the three data collection periods in the Western Downs region.

Results showed that there was virtually no change in the level of belonging or sense of pride that people felt towards their local town and surrounding area. Strong place attachment also contributed to optimism about the future wellbeing of their communities.

The eastern Maranoa also showed very high levels of place attachment.

Community wellbeing, expected future wellbeing, and place attachment were all robust over the three data collection periods despite less favorable attitudes and feelings towards CSG development.

PERCEPTION SCORES



Note: Scores: 1 = lowest and 5 = highest perception; scores > 3 indicate favourable perceptions, scores < 3 indicate unfavourable perceptions

Mean scores of overall community wellbeing, expected future community wellbeing and place attachment: Western Downs region 2014-2016-2018 and eastern Maranoa 2018.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- Find out more about the [Community Wellbeing project](#)
- Read about the [2014 survey](#) and the [2016 survey](#)
- Check out these related [fact sheets](#)

ABOUT CSIRO's GISERA

The Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA) is a collaboration between CSIRO, Commonwealth and state governments and industry established to undertake publicly-reported independent research. The purpose of GISERA is to provide quality assured scientific research and information to communities living in gas development regions focusing on social and environmental topics including: groundwater and surface water, biodiversity, land management, the marine environment, and socio-economic impacts. The governance structure for GISERA is designed to provide for and protect research independence and transparency of research. Visit gisera.csiro.au for more information about GISERA's governance structure, projects and research findings.

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