

Who is working in regional Victoria and how did they get there? Migration histories of selected workforces in Bendigo, Australia

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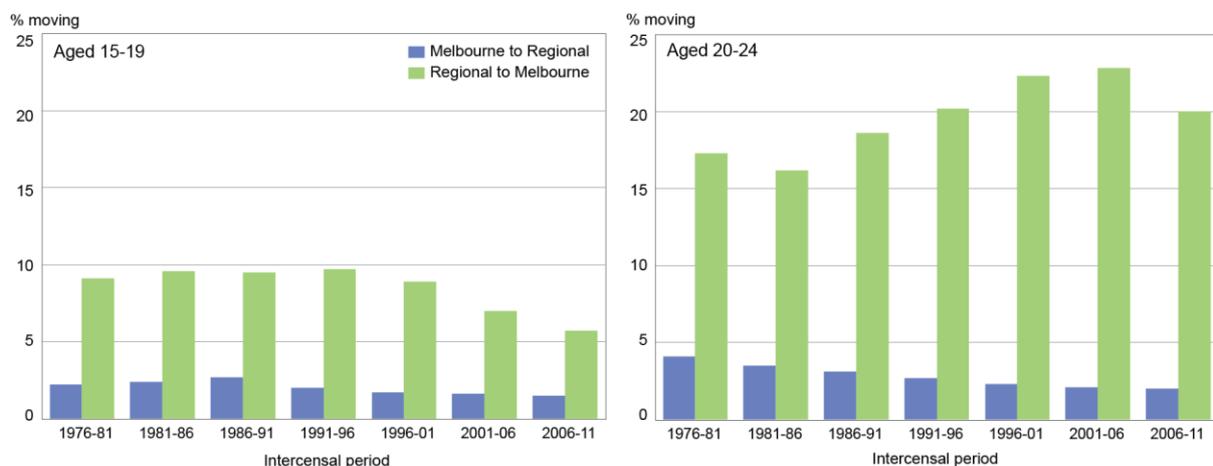
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Introduction: regional migration patterns

Migration data for Australia show net losses of young people from regional to metropolitan areas. Although regional areas often display a net gain of population in other age groups, it is the loss of young adults which has often been the source of concern for local areas and for policy makers. While the reasons for outmigration, notably seeking higher education, employment opportunities and social experiences contribute to the individuals wellbeing and economic capacities, areas of population loss may be left with ageing populations and a loss of human capital.

In the case of Victoria, as in other parts of Australia, these population trends are long-standing (figure 1). The age groups 15-19 and 20-24 are the most common ages at which young adults move from regional Victoria to Melbourne. The data show large net gains to Melbourne over the past 40 years and the differential rates of movement between the two locations.

Figure 1: Migration rates by selected age groups, 1976 to 2011



Source: University of Queensland AIM database based on ABS Census data

Despite the availability of time-series data, such as that from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) upon which the charts in figure 1 are derived, we have limited understanding about patterns of return migration. Whether individuals from regional areas are more likely to return to regional areas at a later date remains anecdotal and their motivations for moving remain under-researched. For regional policy makers, these uncertainties make it difficult to develop effective attraction and retention strategies.

Longitudinal data sources and their limitations

In 2012, the Australian Research Council (ARC) funded a Linkage Grant for a 3-year project entitled *Attraction and Retention: The role of mobility in educational pathways and human capital development*.

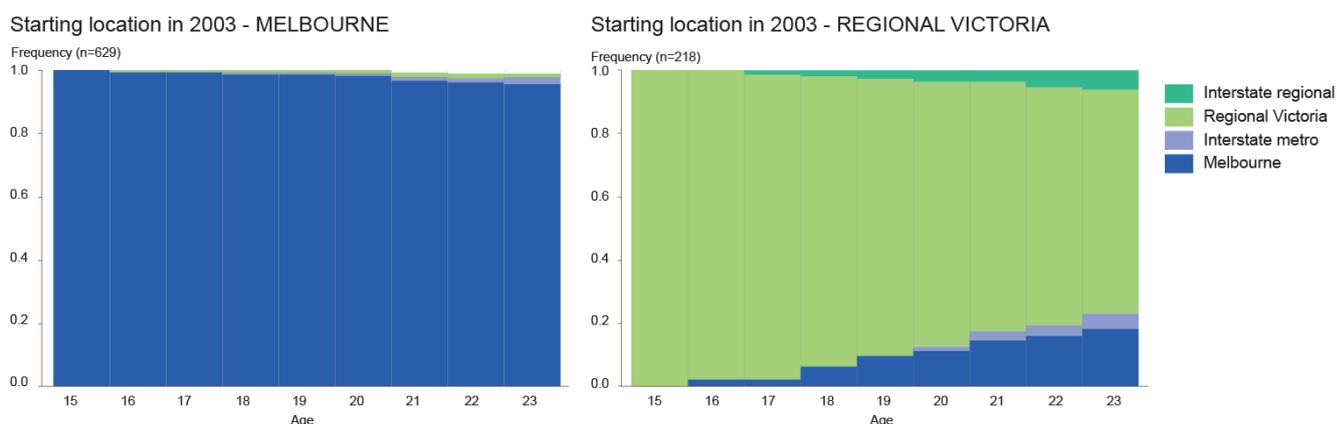
This project involved the University of Queensland, several Victorian government agencies, Graduate Careers Australia and Latrobe University Bendigo. The research proposal arose from earlier work undertaken by McKenzie (2010) and Corcoran et al (2010) which examined the spatial implications of educational and employment pathways chosen by young adults.

For Victorian government, the research had two key attractors. The first related to the regional policy context in Victoria which (as in other States) gives high priority to the retention and attraction of people to non-metropolitan areas. The second related to the On Track database managed by the Victorian Department of Education. This Department has been collecting information on school leaver destinations for more than 10 years and, while many analyses had focussed on education concerns, there had been little if any spatial analysis of the data to explore the locational outcomes of youth migration.

As with many administrative datasets, there turned out to be an issue of data quality, reflecting the disjunct between the purpose for data collection (educational policy development) with the alternative focus of the research in question (spatial analysis of migration pathways). The On Track database was found to have inconsistent recording of place of residence over the years being considered. While a metropolitan/non-metropolitan split can be made for particular years, there is a problem in analysing migration patterns which require the identification of year to year changes. The dataset recorded information on place of residence for years 1, 3 and 4 in the period being investigated, with no information for years 2 and 5. These missing years meant that the data did not capture migration information during two critical transitions of the life course (entry into higher education, and entry into the labour market), which are closely associated with mobility.

In order to overcome this data limitation, the research team moved to another longitudinal dataset – the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) – to undertake the pathway analysis. A cohort of 847 Victorians was available for analysis. Mobility sequences were followed as this group aged from 15 to 24 with the spatial outcomes shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: Spatial patterns of longitudinal migration pathways, 2003-2011



Source: ARC Linkage Project analysis of LSAY data

It can be seen that the regional students are much more mobile than Melbourne students in the years covering school, tertiary education and labour force entry. There is an ongoing flow from

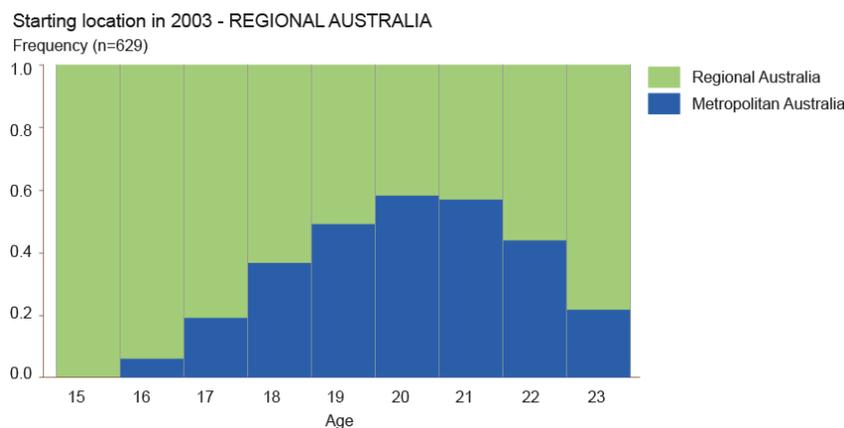
regional Victoria to Melbourne for ages covering both education and entry into the workplace. This backs up earlier findings indicating that many regional students who undertake tertiary studies in the regions will still move to Melbourne for employment afterwards (McKenzie 2010, p. 12). The lack of movement from Melbourne to regions is notable.

Using LSAY data to examine return migration

Drawing on data from the 2003 LSAY, some insights can be gained in relation to return migration, although the fact that the LSAY stops at age 23 greatly limits the findings which may be drawn. Nevertheless, using the national sample from LSAY Wave 1, the researchers were able to extract a large enough sample (1,037 persons) for some basic analysis of early return migration among those who recorded a regional location at the start of the period¹. Around half of these (532 persons) moved to metropolitan areas after leaving school. Of those who moved to a metropolitan area, 29% (153 persons) had made a return move to a regional area by age 23 (figure 3).

Most returning school leavers appear to remain in metropolitan areas for between 1 to 4 years which would presumably represent the length of most university degrees. Nearly half (48%) of those returning did so at ages 22 and 23.

Figure 3: Pattern of return migration to regional locations using Australia-wide sample of LSAY

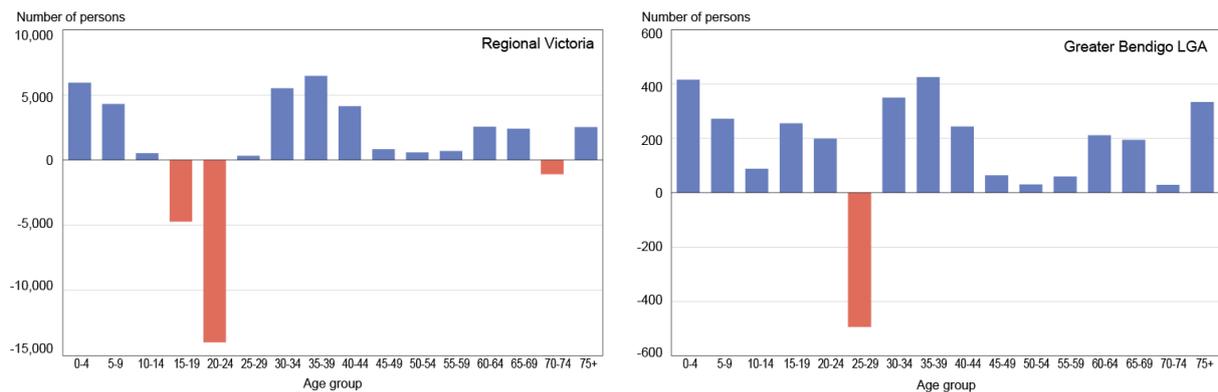


Source: ARC Linkage Project analysis of LSAY data 2015

The major limitation of the LSAY data is that it stops when respondents are 23 years of age. Census data indicate that metro to regional migration is more likely when people are in their mid to late 20s than in earlier adult cohorts (figure 4).

¹ Regional youth are defined as young people who reported their place of residence in a non-metropolitan Statistical Area Level 4 at the age of 15, i.e. at the first wave of the 2003 LSAY cohort.

Figure 4: Implied net migration by age, selected regions, 2006 to 2011



Source: DELWP unpublished data

Earlier work by McKenzie (2010) used qualitative work collected by Sweeney Research Ltd to examine the motivations behind moves between regional Victoria and Melbourne for university. The findings of this research are relevant to the question of whether the return migration shown in the LSAY data is likely to continue in subsequent age groups. The qualitative research showed that those who grew up in regional Victoria indicated that, once they reached their thirties, they would settle down in regional Victoria to raise children of their own. However, older students and graduates suggested that such early intentions had been complicated by the pathways that their metropolitan stay had created. These were affected by career opportunities arising in Melbourne and/or relationships developing with people who had grown up in Melbourne. Both factors created an anchor which could increase in strength the longer people stayed (McKenzie 2010, p. 13).

On the whole, students from regional backgrounds who had undertaken a professional degree were more willing to live in the city than vocational students, despite personal preferences to reside regionally. They recognise that the city is where the majority of job and career opportunities are located and they are willing to move to where the jobs are (McKenzie 2010, p. 11).

While retirement was a very long way off for those in the study, there was agreement among alumni who had grown up in the country that retirement was a life stage to be spent in the country. Almost all pictured an idyllic seaside lifestyle – far enough away from the hustle and bustle yet still within easy reach of the medical facilities of Geelong or Melbourne. Surprisingly, only a handful suggested that they would consider retiring to their regional hometown, suggesting that return migration may still lead to areas of regional depopulation in more remote areas, while the redistribution of population would favour areas near Melbourne and the major regional centres. Analysis of Bendigo survey data presented in this paper supports this pattern of return migration to a regional centre rather than regional place of birth.

Comparing the qualitative and quantitative data presents questions and speculation. Who are the people contributing to the net gain in population in regional Victoria in the age groups 25 to 40? This is the data gap that remains after a great deal of research effort has been expended. We might assume that the intentions voiced in the qualitative work – returning to regional Victoria to raise children – are in fact being played out as the quantitative picture shows net gains in late 20s and early 30s. Alternatively, the net gain may be affected by people from Melbourne moving to regional areas (ie. not regional returners).

The quantitative data in figure 3 show another element of the story which is that a regional city like Bendigo actually has a net loss in the 25-29 age group, something noted in the qualitative study as potentially representing a 'staging post' role of some regional cities with people staying there for tertiary education but then subsequently completing studies or gaining employment in Melbourne.

Again, the data do not reveal whether such people would be more or less likely to return to regional Victoria than other groups. Despite the net loss in this age group, Bendigo shows net gains in the subsequent cohorts suggesting a balance between losses and gains of the working age population. The situation for regional Victoria overall, shows a deeper net loss of the young working age which is not balanced by gains in subsequent age groups until near-retirement ages.

Insights on return migration using a regional workforce sample

Faced with the problematic 'data gap' for return migration, the research team decided to undertake a pilot survey of a regional workforce with a view to mapping migration histories. This retrospective approach may prove to be a way in which the pathways of those who end up living in regional areas can be tracked over a longer period. The significance of capital cities in human capital development for a regional workforce can then be examined.

The Research Method

A sample of professional workers in a regional location was sought for this survey. As Latrobe University Bendigo was represented on the ARC Linkage Research team, the Bendigo Bank was identified as a potential source for such a sample, along with the local hospital and Bendigo municipal Council. The Bendigo Bank became the first site for opportunity was aided by the fact that the Bank runs regular staff surveys on various topics, so the workforce was familiar with responding to web-based survey requests. Being a large organisation (c. 1200 workers in Bendigo) and employing a range of skilled staff from officer level up to senior management, it was seen as a suitable organisation for piloting a survey on migration histories. It is hoped to follow up the study with a number of other organisations to determine whether different enterprises have different employee profiles in terms of their locational histories.

The survey aimed to collect information about the spatial histories of people currently working in a regional location to see whether there were typical patterns of migration for education and employment between regional and metropolitan locations. The web-based survey, conducted over two weeks in February 2015, included 19 questions. The final sample included 440 respondents – a response rate of 37 per cent. Key questions included:

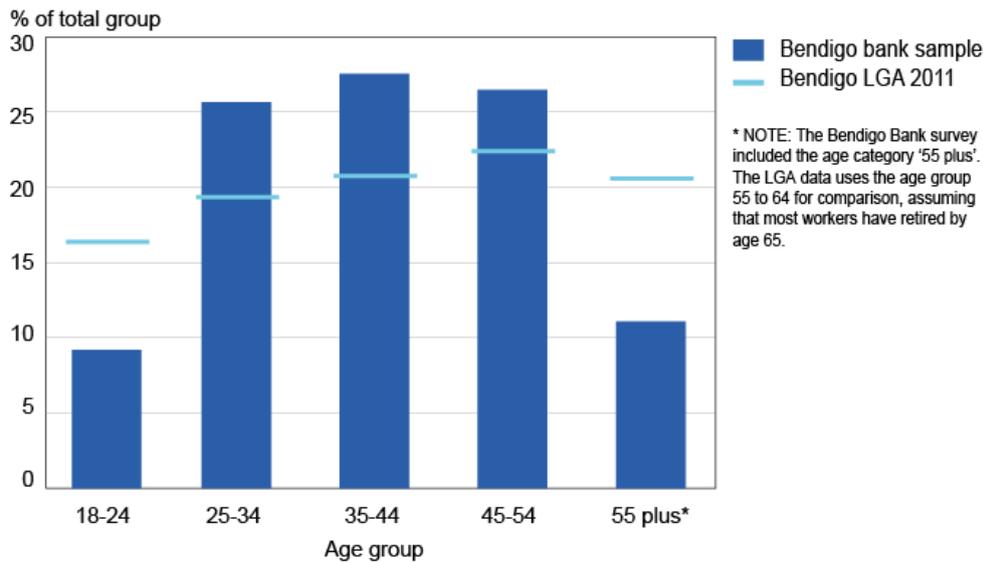
- Did workers originate from the local area?
- Did they train in the local area or did they train elsewhere and return?
- What have been the motivations for various migration decisions?

General characteristics of the sample

Of the 369 respondents who answered the question on gender, 57% were female and 43% male. Half were living in a family household with spouse/partner and dependents while a quarter were living with a spouse/partner but no dependents.

The age profile of the group is shown in Figure 5 below. The chart reveals that the majority of the Bank sample are in age groups from 25 through to 54. Compared to the wider working age population of Bendigo, the Bank sample has fewer workers aged 55plus and fewer younger than 25.

Figure 5: Age profile of Bendigo Bank sample and Bendigo working age population



Sources: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015; ABS Census 2011 using TableBuilder

Locational backgrounds of the respondents

Regional Victoria is prominent in the background of those working at Bendigo Bank. Of the 440 respondents to the survey, 171 (39%) were born in Bendigo, 134 (31%) in other parts of regional Victoria and 70 (16%) in Melbourne (table 1). The combined proportion of people with non-metropolitan Australian backgrounds is 74% of the respondent sample.

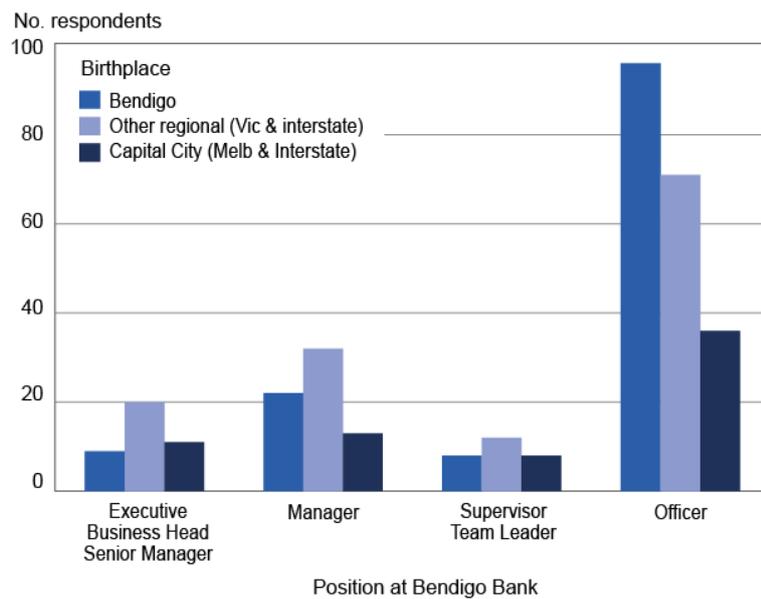
Table 1: Birthplace of respondents

Where were you born?	No	%
Bendigo	171	38.9
Melbourne	70	15.9
Other Australian capital city	11	2.5
Other regional Australia (outside Victoria)	21	4.8
Other regional Victoria	134	30.5
Overseas	32	7.3
Not stated	1	0.2
TOTAL	440	100

Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

When stratified by role at the bank, the Bendigo-born are dominant at the officer level. Interestingly, senior roles are still overwhelmingly dominated by people with regional backgrounds (figure 6). The assumption that more senior roles require higher levels of education and experience may hold, but the degree to which these skills need to be acquired in metropolitan areas is challenged by the findings. The regional community profile of the bank may explain this dominance or it may be a feature of many regional businesses – further workforce samples would be needed to determine this.

Figure 6: Birthplace profile by workplace role



Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

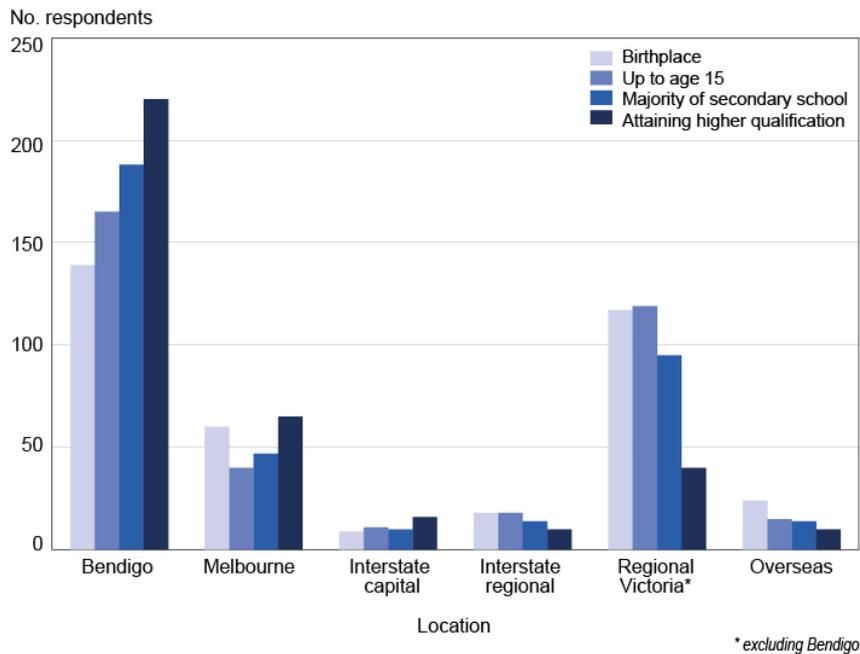
Locational histories of respondents

The survey gathered information on migration histories, not just birthplace. The key stages of life for which locational information was asked included:

- Up until the age of 15;
- Period of secondary schooling; and,
- Period of post-school education and training.

A summary of findings are shown in Figure 7. The chart shows the location of respondents at time of birth and at the three stages listed above. Bendigo becomes increasingly represented as the location for bank employees as they moved through primary, secondary and tertiary schooling while regional Victoria becomes less prominent with higher ages/qualifications. This aligns with our understanding of aggregate migration moves of young people from rural areas to larger regional centres to access educational opportunities. While overseas is a birthplace of some, there appears to be relatively little influence of overseas experience or training in the Bank workforce. Although Melbourne becomes more important as a location during the attainment of higher qualifications, it is not of greater prominence than Bendigo. Combining the three regional categories (Bendigo, regional Victoria and interstate regional) it can be seen that regional locations accounted for 75% of respondents at birth, 82% and 81% during childhood and secondary years respectively and 75% during the attainment of their highest qualification.

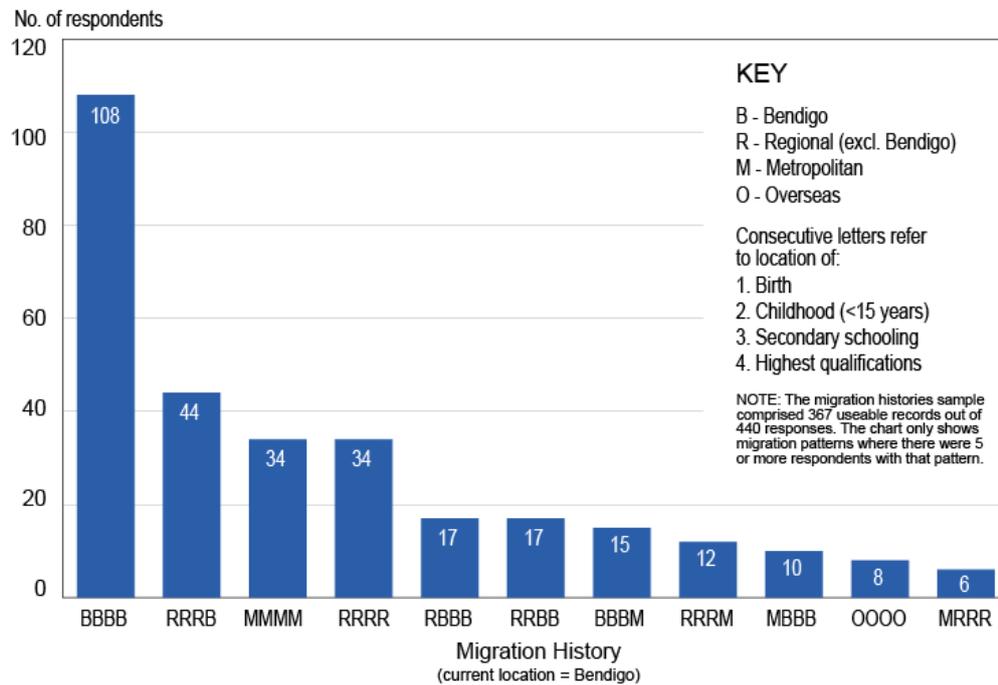
Figure 7: Locational background of Bendigo Bank respondents



Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

Figure 7 presents the longitudinal locational pattern for those survey respondents where the data were useable for this purpose (ie. all locational questions were answered unambiguously. This reduced the sample of 440 to 367 useable responses. Forty-four combinations were identified from a simplified location categorisation: Bendigo (B); other regional (R); metropolitan (M) and overseas (O). For example, a pattern of “MRBB” would indicate a respondent who had been born in Melbourne, spent their childhood mostly in a regional location but secondary school and gaining post-school qualifications in Bendigo. A pattern of MMMM would be someone who had spent all of these points of time in Melbourne and was now in Bendigo as part of the Bendigo Bank workforce. Migration history patterns accounting for more than 5 respondents are shown in figure 8, and are presented in descending order of significance.

Figure 8: Simplified migration histories



Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

The dominance of the ‘Bendigo only’ pattern can be seen with 108 of the 367 usable responses being in this category (29.4%). Forty-four respondents had moved to Bendigo from regional areas to gain their highest qualification. The patterns of metro only and regional only accounted for 34 responses respectively highlighting that qualified workers are attracted to Bendigo from both metro and non-metro locations.

Detailed analysis of the responses also reveals a total of 247 (67%) had patterns which only included regional (including Bendigo) locations, that is, there was no indication of metropolitan or overseas locations in their migration history. Another pattern evident from the sample is a move to Bendigo at an early age. 34 (9%) had moved to Bendigo before the age of 15: twenty from regional areas, 12 from metropolitan and 2 from overseas.

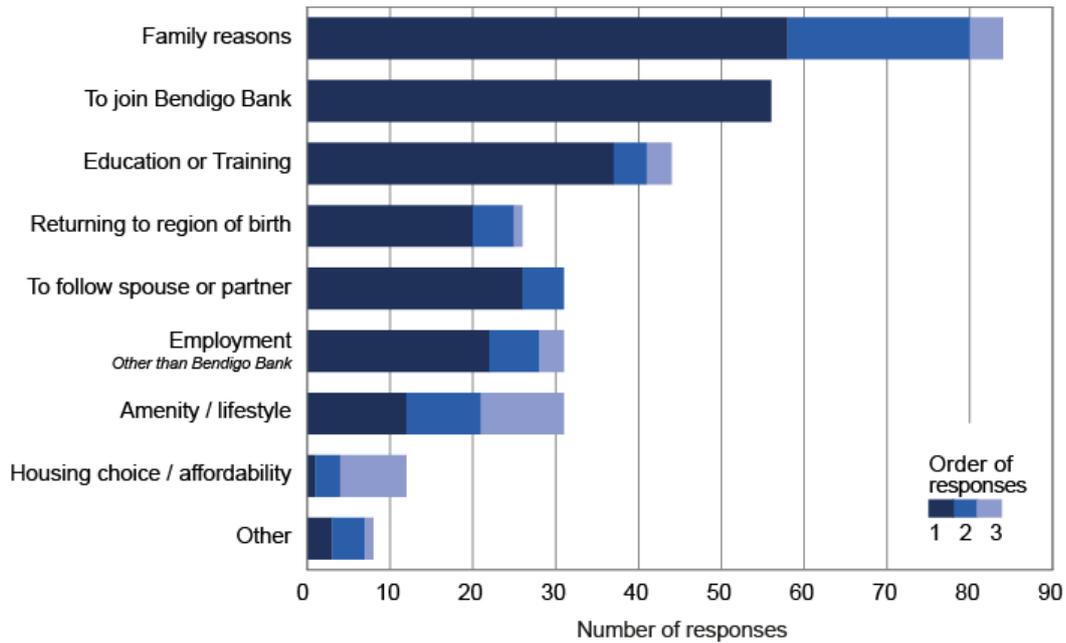
Evidence of returnee migration can be seen in regional-metro-regional type patterns, for example the patterns of BBBM and RRRM in figure 8. The latter pattern shows a return to the regional centre of Bendigo rather than a return to regional area of origin, a pattern noted earlier from previous qualitative research. There is an important caveat to the data on these returnees. The survey questions asked respondents to state where they had attained their highest level of qualification. The 15 respondents showing the BBBM pattern had attained their highest qualification in Melbourne, however cross tabulation of their response with an earlier question “After the age of 15, have you lived outside the City of Greater Bendigo?” reveals 5 respondents who had not lived outside Bendigo after age 15 but had a post-school qualification from Melbourne, presumably through distance education or commuting. This pattern did not occur among the 12 respondents with the RRRM pattern.

Reasons for moving to Bendigo

The respondents (n=332) who had moved to Bendigo at some point in their lives were asked about their reasons for doing so – up to 3 reasons could be selected from a list of 8 options. Figure 9 shows that family reasons are the predominant reason for moving, either as a primary reason or as part of

a group of factors. Family reasons accounted for 84 responses (26%). Moving for employment is important, especially if the Bendigo Bank (17%) and other employment category (10%) is combined. Although the survey did not request that reasons be listed in order of priority, it is nevertheless interesting to see the patterns of whether choices were selected in any particular order. For example, employment and training appear to be primary drivers in the migration decision as they are not prominent as second or third selections. Conversely, housing appears not to be a primary driver but is more prominent as a third selection. Amenity and lifestyle factors appear consistently across the three.

Figure 9: Reasons for moving to Bendigo



Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

An examination of responses based on the location prior to moving to Bendigo reveals the degree to which metropolitan and regional in-movers reported different reasons for moving. Table 2 presents these data with the Metropolitan category comprising Melbourne (n=131) and other capital cities (n=18) and the Regional category including both regional Victoria (n=139) and other regional Australia (n=23). Respondents who moved from overseas have been excluded due to small numbers (n=9).

Table 2: Reasons for moving to Bendigo by prior location

Reason for moving to Bendigo	Location prior to moving to Bendigo			
	Metropolitan		Regional	
	No	%	No	%
Family reasons	32	21.5	48	29.6
To join Bendigo Bank	34	22.8	16	9.9
Education or Training	8	5.4	36	22.2
Returning to region of birth	19	12.8	4	2.5
To follow spouse or partner	15	10.1	14	8.6
Employment (other than Bendigo Bank)	10	6.7	20	12.4
Amenity / lifestyle	20	13.4	8	4.9
Housing choice / affordability	7	4.7	5	3.1
Other	4	2.7	11	6.8
TOTAL	149	100	162	100

Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

People who had moved to Bendigo from a regional location were most likely to have moved to Bendigo for family reasons or education / training. Those moving from Melbourne were more likely to have moved specifically for the job with Bendigo Bank, however family reasons were also prominent. It should be kept in mind that there are many elements that may be included in this category of 'family reasons', for example: people moving to be closer to parents or other relatives; Melbourne people seeking a quieter place to raise children, or more remote regional areas seeking a larger city with educational and employment opportunities for their children. Interestingly, returning to the region of birth was a factor for 19 metro respondents and a further 4 regional respondents.

Not surprisingly, amenity and lifestyle are more important for those coming from a metropolitan area than for those moving from another regional location where a similar lifestyle is more likely to have existed.

Housing choice and affordability appears to have little significance as drivers of migration, although subsequent survey questions shows that they were listed by many as advantages of being in Bendigo. This highlights an important point for regional policy makers – drivers of migration are not the same as a locational advantage or asset. Just because a place has a key advantage (like affordable housing), it may not act as a driver to attract in-migration. In fact, affordable house prices are a very poor indicator of migration potential as some of the most expensive cities still attract in-migration.

Reported advantages and disadvantages of living in Bendigo

The survey offered open-ended questions about the advantages and disadvantages of living in Bendigo. Up to three items could be recorded and these were then categorised into broad categories for ease of analysis. These are presented in tables 3 and 4.

General accessibility, proximity to work and ease of travel was a commonly reported advantage of Bendigo accounting for 16% of responses. Similar categories related to access to Melbourne (9%) and access to services and activities (8%). Many respondents highlighted the quality and availability of services and facilities as key advantages (10%). While family reasons had been an important driver of migration to Bendigo, being close to family and friends accounted for fewer responses to the advantage question (8%), again highlighting that migration drivers may differ from the advantages of living in a region.

Table 3: Advantages of living in Bendigo, as reported by respondents

Advantages	Examples	No. of responses	%
Accessibility/Ease of travel	<i>Short drive to almost anything; ease of getting around; short distance between home and work.</i>	121	16.0
Good place to raise family	<i>Comfortable safe place to live and raise a family.</i>	84	11.1
Quality services/facilities	<i>High quality facilities - health care, education; sporting venues; arts; shops.</i>	75	9.9
Employment	<i>Big enough city to provide good employment opportunities; Bank provides career opportunities.</i>	70	9.3
Access to Melbourne	<i>Accessible to Melbourne.</i>	69	9.1
Close to family/friends	<i>Family here; close to my family/extended family.</i>	60	7.9
Access to services/activities	<i>Access to facilities and services - medical, sporting, education.</i>	58	7.7
Location (nfd**)	<i>Central location in Victoria; central to Melbourne or the Murray River; central to most things.</i>	47	6.2
Lifestyle/Environment	<i>Pleasant place to live; bush; climate; parks and gardens; relaxed atmosphere; slower lifestyle.</i>	43	5.7
Friendly community	<i>Community focus; community spirit.</i>	41	5.4
Less congestion/Good size	<i>Size of city makes it easy to commute; lack of traffic congestion compared to capital cities.</i>	39	5.2
Affordability	<i>Cheaper housing costs; affordable acreage; cheaper cost of living.</i>	31	4.1
Other		17	2.3
TOTAL*		755	100.0

* Up to 3 responses were allowed hence the number of responses is higher than the number of participants.

** nfd = not further defined

Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

The sample of responses to the “disadvantages of living in Bendigo” question is smaller (n=645) than for advantages (n=755). In fact several respondents wrote that there were no disadvantages. Of those reported, jobs and income were important (19%) and included issues of lower pay in regional areas compared to metropolitan and limited local job opportunities in specialist fields outside Bendigo Bank itself. The additional category of “economic” relates more to the broad economic environment such as limited business opportunities or lower capital appreciation on housing assets. Again, these comments tend to be made in comparison to metropolitan areas.

Sixty-five responses (10%) related to the natural environment of the region. The overwhelming focus of these responses related to water or, more accurately, the lack of it. Lack of, or distance from, the beach or other waterbody accounted for 38 responses, followed by the hot/dry climate (13 responses), and water supply limitations or restrictions (11 responses).

The disadvantage of ‘Location/Distance’ is of interest when compared to the advantages of access and proximity reported earlier. The perception of distance is one that can vary widely and what is proximate for one person may be distant for another (McKenzie 2014, p. 60).

Table 4: Disadvantages of living in Bendigo, as reported by respondents

Theme	Examples	No. of responses	%
Jobs/Income	<i>Can be difficult to find work; limited employment opportunities for young adults; lower salaries; lack of senior professional roles.</i>	120	18.6
Services	<i>Limited choice of schools; lack of medical specialists; childcare expensive and hard to find.</i>	96	14.9
Economic	<i>Inability to attract large scale businesses; house price appreciation low.</i>	70	10.9
Environment	<i>No beach; no river/lake; too hot/dry.</i>	65	10.1
Location/Distance	<i>Distance to Melbourne.</i>	62	9.6
Infrastructure	<i>Lack of car parking; public transport.</i>	51	7.9
Lack of activity	<i>Lack of shopping; don't get big events; boredom.</i>	44	6.8
Culture	<i>Old boys clubs; small town mentality; anti multicultural attitude.</i>	40	6.2
Council	<i>Hard to obtaining approvals; rates too high; lack of funding for sport.</i>	38	5.9
Cost of living	<i>Cost of living too high / rising.</i>	21	3.3
Congestion	<i>Traffic.</i>	16	2.5
Other		12	1.9
Social issues	<i>Growing drug culture; crime.</i>	10	1.6
TOTAL*		645	100.0

* Up to 3 responses were allowed hence the number of responses is higher than the number of participants.

Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

Future migration intentions

Given the Bendigo-focus of most of the migration histories of respondents, it was not surprising to find that 85% had no intention to move away from the city in the near future (Table 5). Another group for whom staying in Bendigo was the preferred intention were those with the MMMM pattern. This shows that many of those with metropolitan backgrounds are not just relocating to Bendigo for a temporary or short term stay. The age profile of these ex-metro migrants is notable for its older age profile (two thirds of whom are in the 45+ age brackets). This accords with general patterns of net migration loss from metro to regional areas at later age groups. The group may be categorised as 'late-career tree-changers'.

Table 5: Migration histories of those intending to stay in Bendigo in the foreseeable future

Do you intend to move outside the City of Greater Bendigo over the next 2 years? Response = "No" (n=315)						
Migration history*	Age group (years)					
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	All ages
BBBB	12	26	23	17	12	90
RRRB	3	10	14	8	2	37
MMMM	1	4	5	13	7	30
RRRR	1	4	7	13	5	30
RBBB	1	6	6	3	0	16
RRBB	1	5	4	4	1	15
BBBM	1	4	4	3	2	14
MBBB	1	4	3	2	0	10
RRRM	0	1	2	6	1	10
Other**	3	14	22	19	5	63
All histories	24	78	90	88	35	315

* NOTE: Each letter refers to a location (B=Bendigo; M=metro; R= regional other than Bendigo) at 4 points in time: birth, childhood, secondary school years and tertiary training years. Hence BBBB would indicate a Bendigo location at each of these points in time.

** NOTE: The category of 'Other' includes migration history patterns with fewer than 10 respondents.

Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

In contrast to this are the migration histories of those intending to leave Bendigo in the next 2 years (table 6). Only one migration history accounts for more than 10 respondents – this is the BBBB pattern shared by 18 individuals. The younger profile of those with this pattern suggests a staging post effect of Bendigo - people who have lived their life there, through schooling, tertiary education and employment may have aspirations to move elsewhere at some point, presumably to gain further experience in other labour markets.

Table 6: Migration histories of those intending to leave Bendigo in the foreseeable future

Do you intend to move outside the City of Greater Bendigo over the next 2 years? Response = "Yes" (n=53)						
Migration history*	Age group (years)					
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	All ages
BBBB	6	8	3	1	0	18
Other**	4	8	8	9	6	35
All histories	10	16	11	10	6	53

* NOTE: Each letter refers to a location (B=Bendigo; M=metro; R= regional other than Bendigo) at 4 points in time: birth, childhood, secondary school years and tertiary training years. Hence BBBB would indicate a Bendigo location at each of these points in time.

** NOTE: The category of 'Other' includes migration history patterns with fewer than 10 respondents.

Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

Of the 53 respondents who indicated that they were intending to move, nearly half (26) indicated that they would move to a capital city, notably Melbourne which accounted for 22 responses. (Table 7). This aligns with the previous finding of Bendigo being able to retain young people through higher education and initial labour force work stages but not providing the breadth or depth of career experience (or social experience) that may be found in a larger, metropolitan area. Although the move to a metropolitan centre accounts for most responses, intentions to move to regional areas are still notable, with 17 respondents being in this category. The data do not reveal whether such moves would be to regional centres or rural areas.

Table 7: Locational intentions of those indicating they would leave Bendigo in the next 2 years

Intended destination	Number of respondents
Melbourne	22
Other Australian capital city	4
<i>Total metropolitan</i>	<i>26</i>
Other regional Victoria	14
Other regional Australia (outside Victoria)	3
<i>Total regional</i>	<i>17</i>
Overseas	3
Unsure	7
Total	53

Source: Bendigo Bank Survey 2015

Conclusion

Key findings

Quantitative data show ongoing net loss of young adults from regional to metropolitan areas at the aggregate level. While this trend has been recognised for many decades, there has been relatively little analysis of patterns of return migration. Understanding the likelihood and timing of return is important for policy makers and local authorities seeking to attract or retain young adults in regional areas.

Despite the power of longitudinal data sets, those available have limited coverage of young adults in the most mobile age groups. Nevertheless, analysis of the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) data suggests that, of those who moved to a metropolitan area after leaving school, 29 percent had made a return move to a regional area by age 23.

The use of a regional workforce sample allows for a different approach in understanding return migration. By reviewing the migration histories of a workforce sample, insights can be gained in relation to the age at which particular moves were made and for what reason, as well as the pathways that led individuals to be located in a regional centre like Bendigo.

The high proportion of respondents who had lived all or most of their life in Bendigo was an interesting finding from the survey of Bendigo Bank employees. Even among senior executives in the sample, there was strong regional representation. This may reflect the particular character of Bendigo Bank which began in the regional city and has a regional community focus. Nevertheless, it shows that professional career paths and human capital development do not rely on spending time in a metropolitan location.

Most respondents had no intention to move away from Bendigo in the foreseeable future. Some people in this group had lived in metropolitan areas for most of their lives and were in older age groups thus fitting the characteristic pattern of 'late-career tree-changers'. In contrast to this is the

younger age profile of those who had lived in Bendigo all their lives but were intending to leave Bendigo in the next 2 years. This pattern suggests a staging-post effect of Bendigo: people who have lived their life there, through schooling, tertiary education and employment who have aspirations to move elsewhere, presumably to gain further experience in other labour markets.

The research findings highlight the difference between *drivers* of migration (eg. family and employment) and the reported *advantages* of living in a particular location (eg. cheaper housing, accessibility and ease of travel). This is important for policy makers at both local and state levels because it is often assumed that the advantages of a place will inherently act as an attractor for population growth objectives. Such an assumption needs to be critically reviewed.

Future research needs

The Bendigo case study sample provides information for a single company in a single location. Expanding the survey instrument to other enterprises is already planned with the Bendigo hospital and council workforces having been selected. This will test whether the insights findings from the Bendigo Bank reflect the culture and decision making of that particular organisation or whether it is reflected in other large employers in the city.

In the future it is hoped to test the survey in another location such as Ballarat. While having similarities to Bendigo in terms of size, it is somewhat closer to Melbourne (114 kilometres from Melbourne CBD compared to Bendigo being 153 kilometres). This could reveal whether the levels of 'self-containment' found in Bendigo (in terms of proportions having lived, trained and been employed locally) is affected by distance from Melbourne.

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and should not be regarded as representing the views of the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.