



**Regional
Development**
Australia
CENTRAL COAST NSW

CENTRAL COAST ECONOMIC QUARTERLY UPDATE

March 2026



www.rdacc.org.au

RDA Central Coast March 2026 Economic Update

We are trialing a new way of collecting Central Coast specific economic data by partnering with Data AU who source their information from various government led data sources. Here are some comments in relation to the March 2026 indicators:

- Overall, the Central Coast population is growing but is slower than the population growth of NSW.
- Our Gross Regional Product (GRP) has been steadily growing to a current level of \$25.76B in the 2024 financial year.
- The top 3 industry value adds are 1/ Health care and social assistance 2/ Construction and 3/ Manufacturing.
- The top 3 specialist local industries include 1/ Fruit and vegetable product 2/ Grain mill and cereal product 3/ Other wood product manufacturing.
- Top country of migration to the Central Coast is England, then New Zealand.
- The top source of regional migration is from the Northern Beaches (south).
- The top destination of regional emigration is to the Lake Macquarie area (north).
- The percentage of population of the Central Coast born overseas is rising, but much less than the NSW average.
- In terms of higher education, Certificate I, II, III and IV completions are higher on the Central Coast than NSW, however our Bachelor Degree level is less than the state level. Here's hoping the new University of Newcastle Campus in Gosford will turn this around in the next few years.
- Household Incomes are rising but are lower than the NSW average.
- Volunteering levels have not come back to the high levels they were pre-COVID.
- Average House Build Cost is less than that of NSW, with houses being the main dwelling approval followed by semi-detached and then units, with the majority of houses occupied by 2 people.
- There has not been much growth in tourism expenditure, with most domestic visitor types being daytrips by people from Sydney, and International overnight trips by people from New Zealand and the UK. Purposes of these trips are mainly for a holiday or to visit relatives, with key visitor activities being eat out or dine at a restaurant.



We hope you enjoy reading this quarters edition of the Central Coast Economic update.

Lisa Barnes CEO/Director of Regional Development
RDA Central Coast

March 2026.



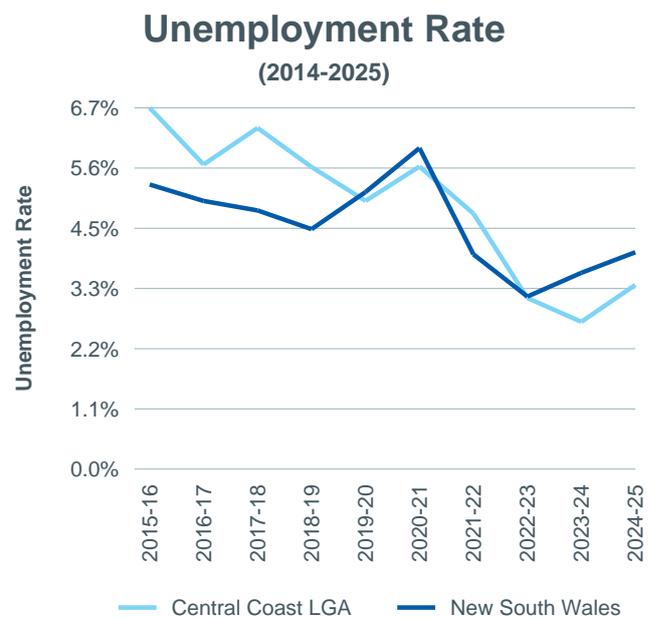
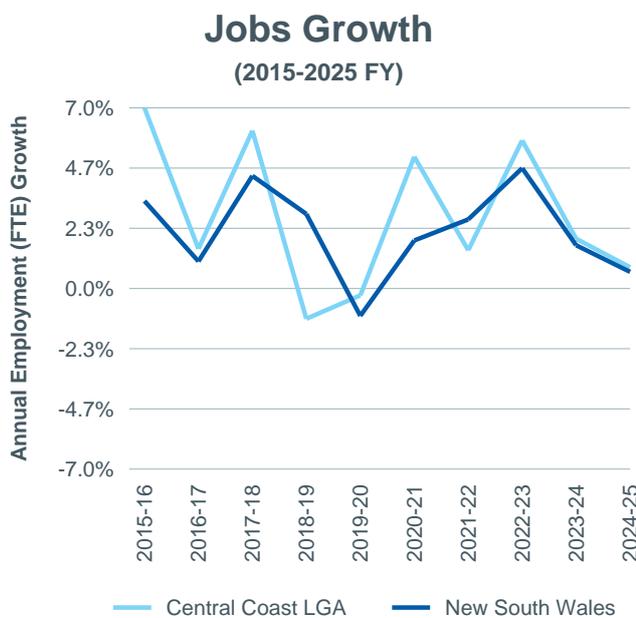
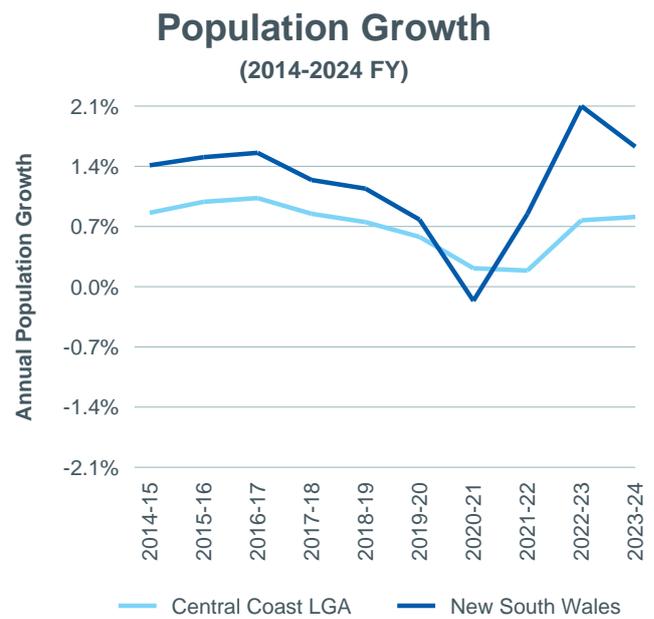
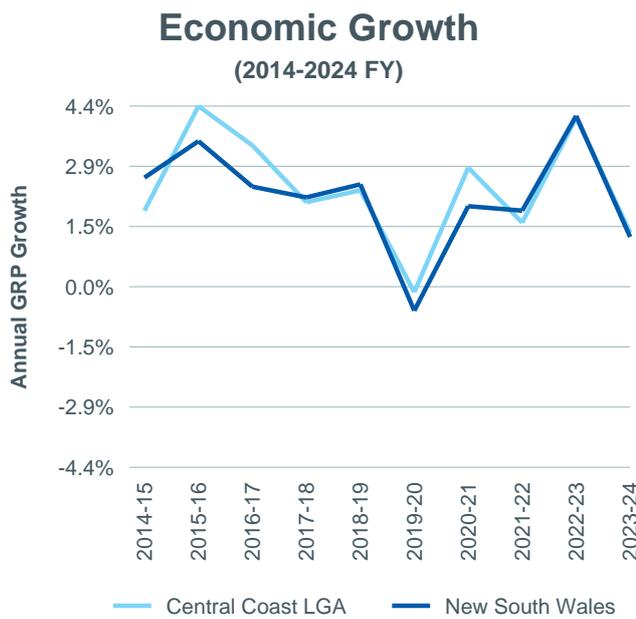
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This regional profile provides you with the latest headline indicators on the performance of your local economy. Also included in this profile:

- > Economic Performance and Industry Structure
- > Population Growth, Demographics and Migration
- > Community and Social Development
- > Housing
- > Tourism

Headline Indicators



Sources:

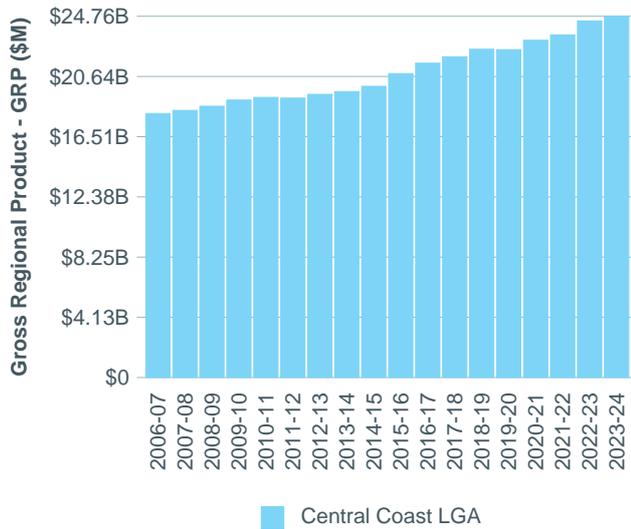
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Economic Activity

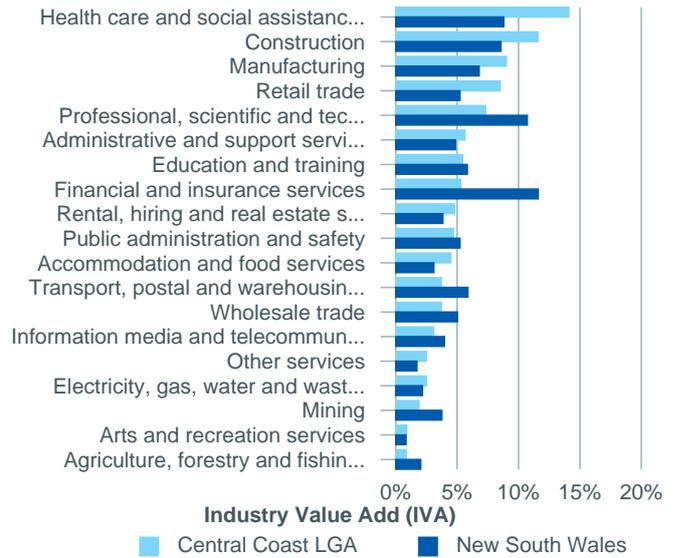
Gross Regional Product (GRP)

(2006-07 to 2023-24 FY)



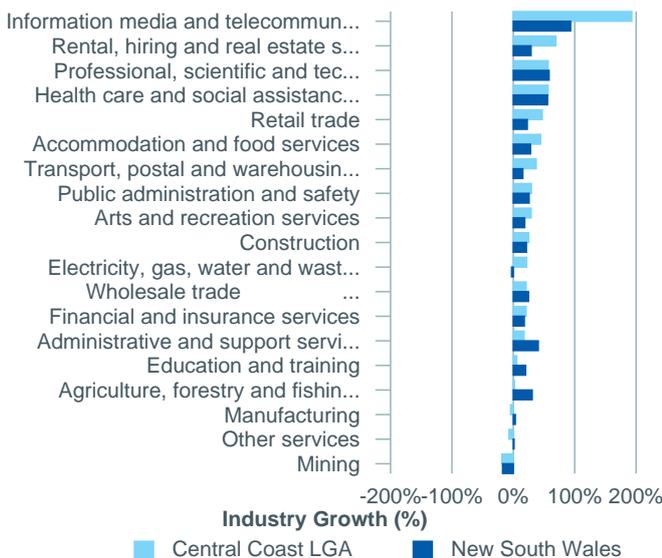
Industry Value Add (IVA)

(2024 FY)

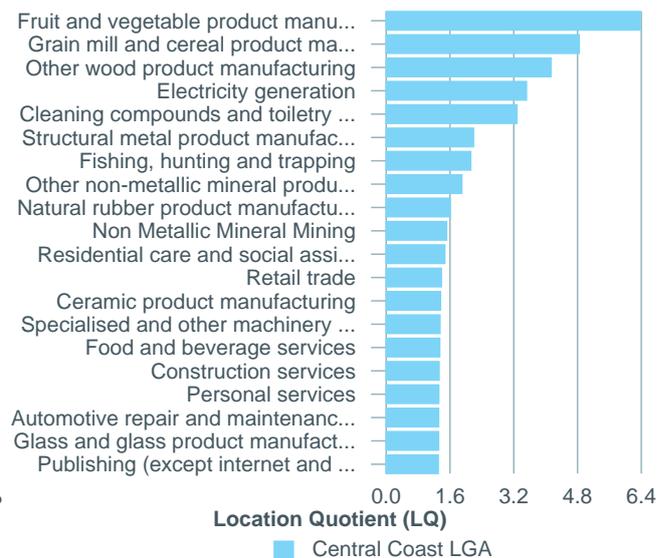


Industry Contribution to Growth

(2013-14 to 2023-24)



Specialist Local Industries (Top 20)



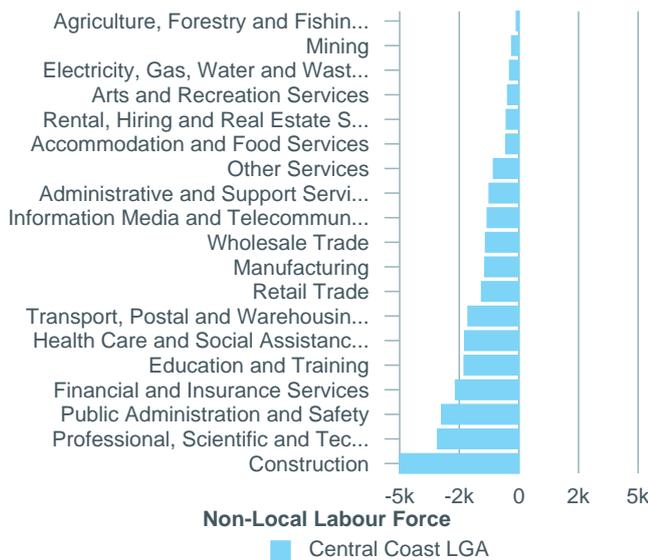
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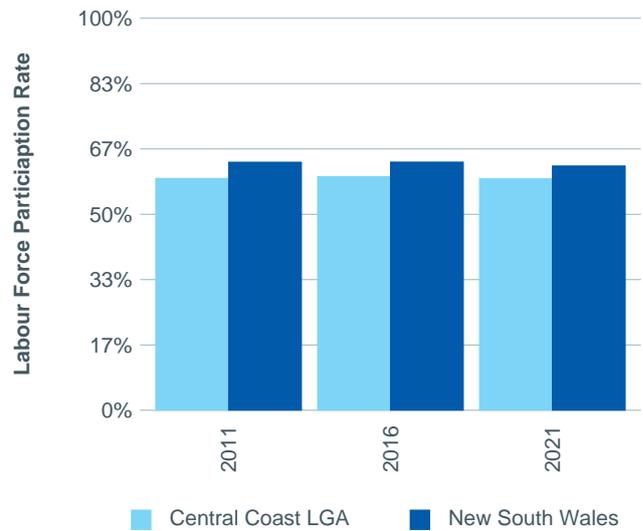
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Economic Activity

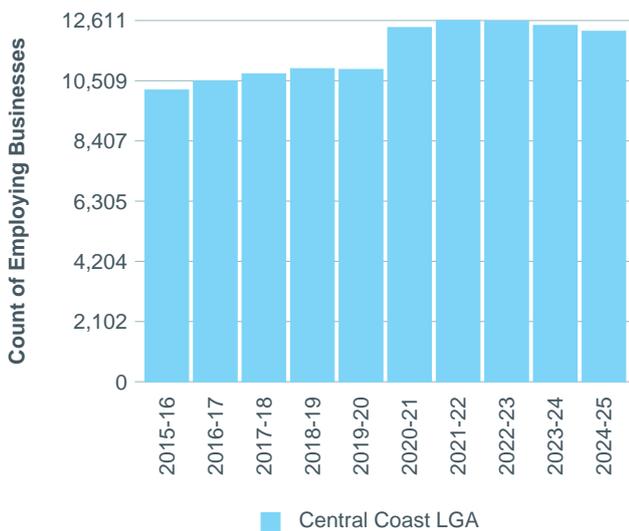
Non-Local Labour Force (2021)



Participation Rate (2011-2021)



Employing Businesses (2015-16 to 2024-25 FY)



Growth in Employing Businesses (2017 to 2025)



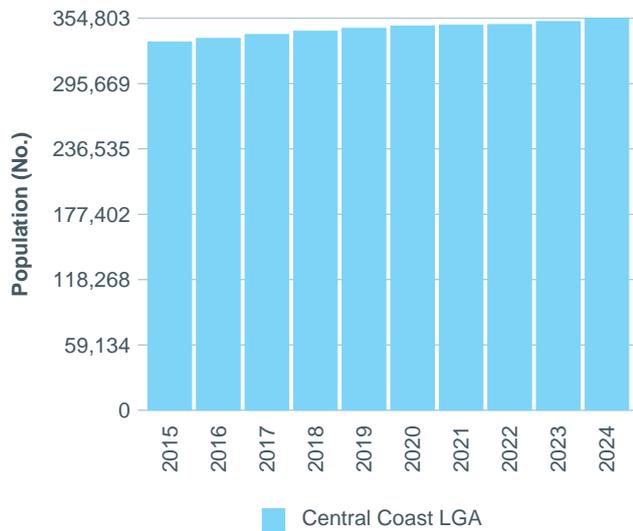
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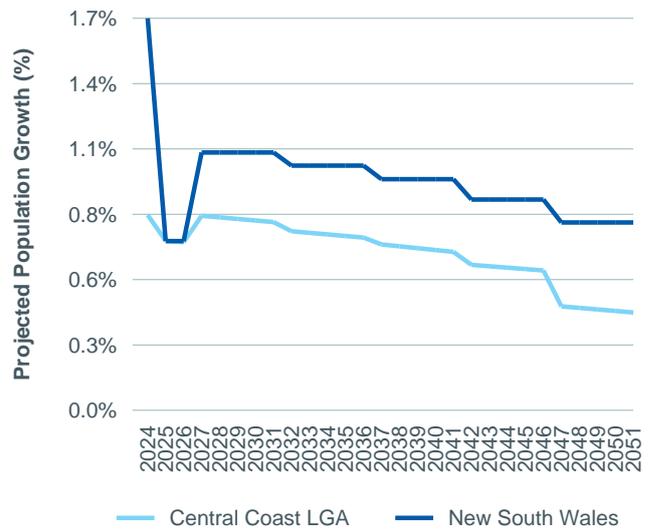
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Population Growth, Demographics and Migration

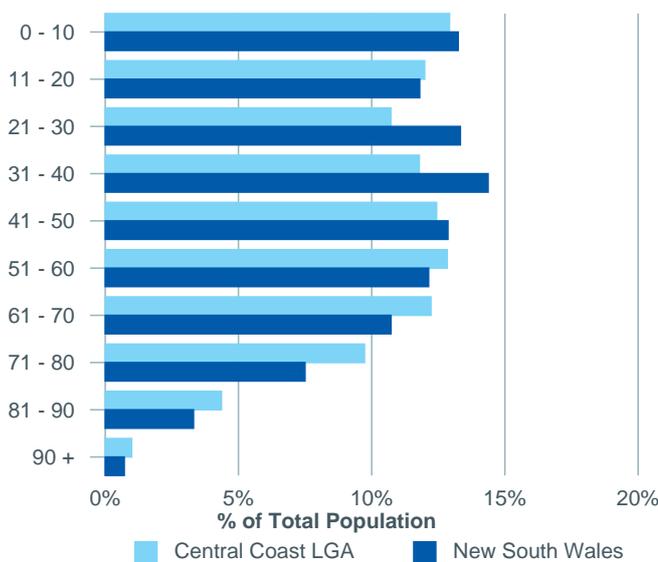
Estimated Resident Population (ERP) (2015-2024)



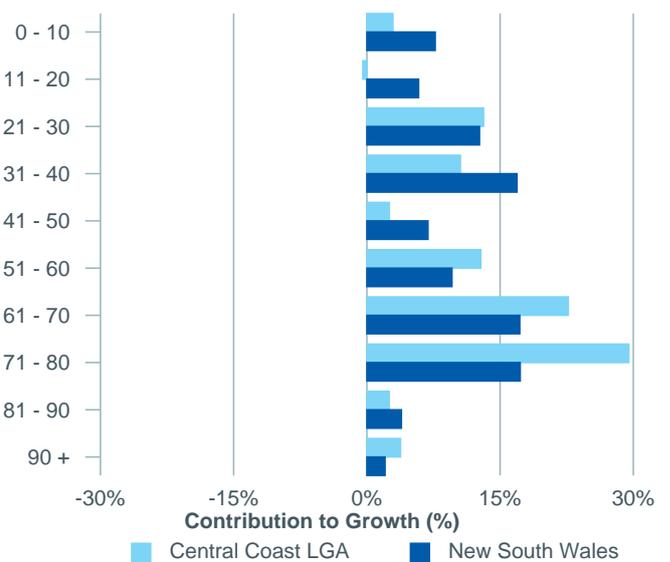
Population Projections (2023 - 2051)



Age Structure (2021)



Age Contribution to Growth (2011-2021)



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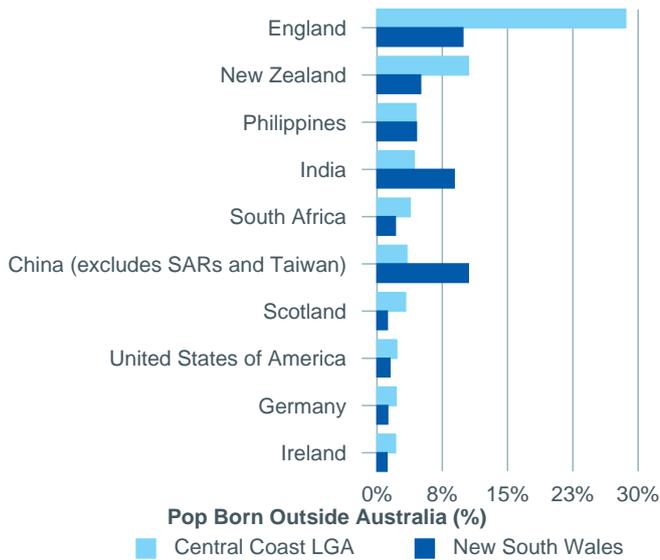
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ABS (2022). Census of Population and Housing, 2021. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

Population Growth, Demographics and Migration

Overseas Migration (Top 10)

(2021)



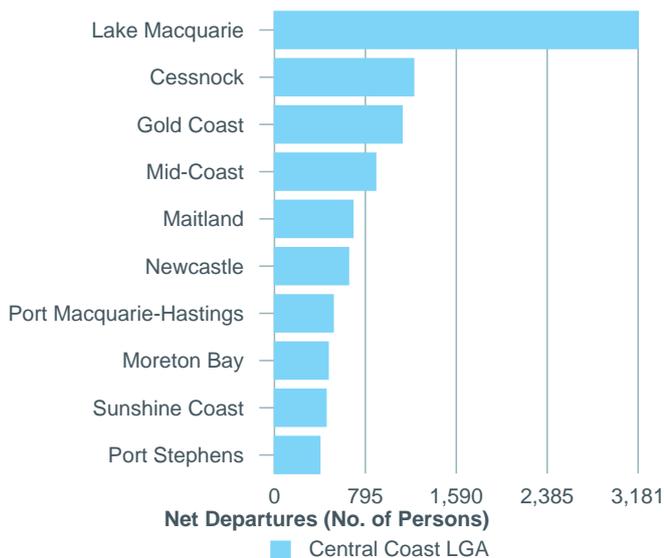
Source of Regional Migration

(2021)



Destination of Regional Emigration

(2021)



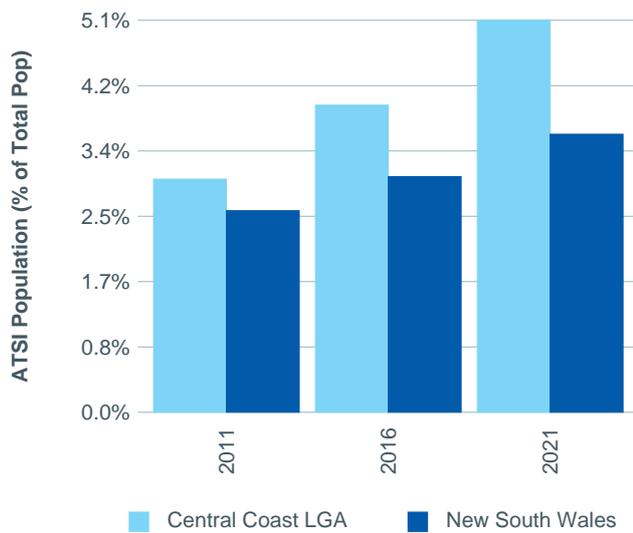
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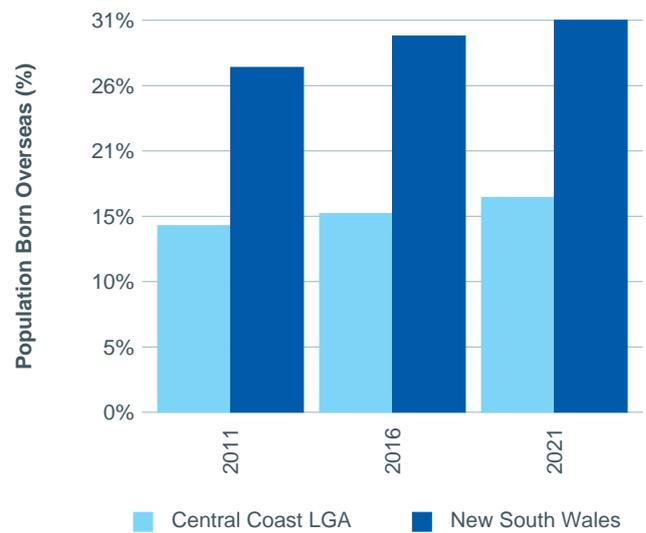
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Community and Social Development

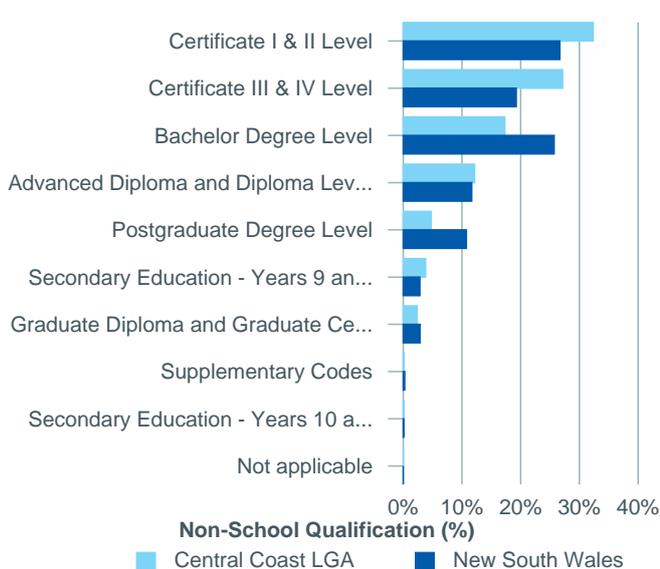
ATSI Population (2011-2021)



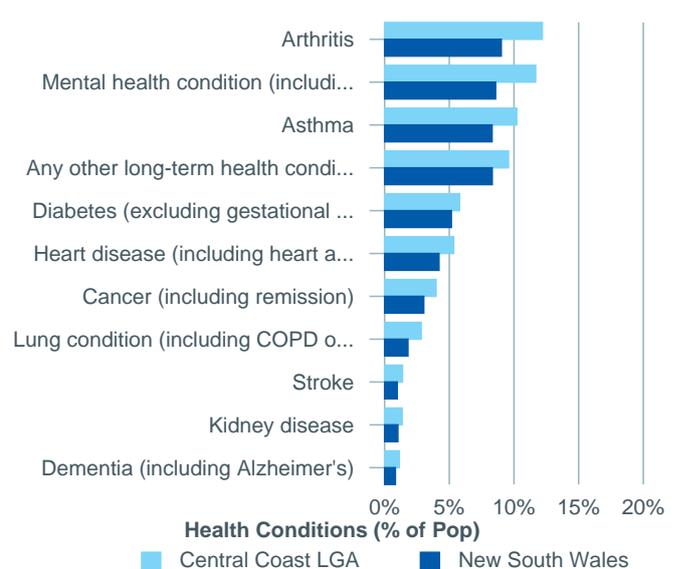
Population Born Overseas (2011-2021)



Highest Education Level (2021)



Long-Term Health Conditions (2021)



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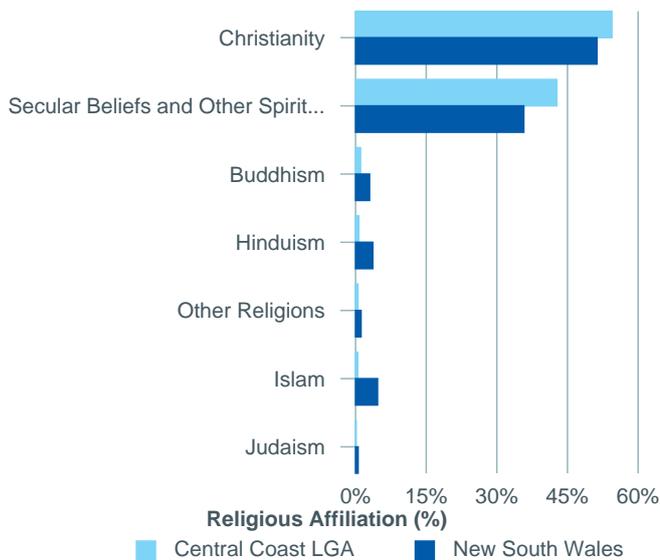
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Community and Social Development

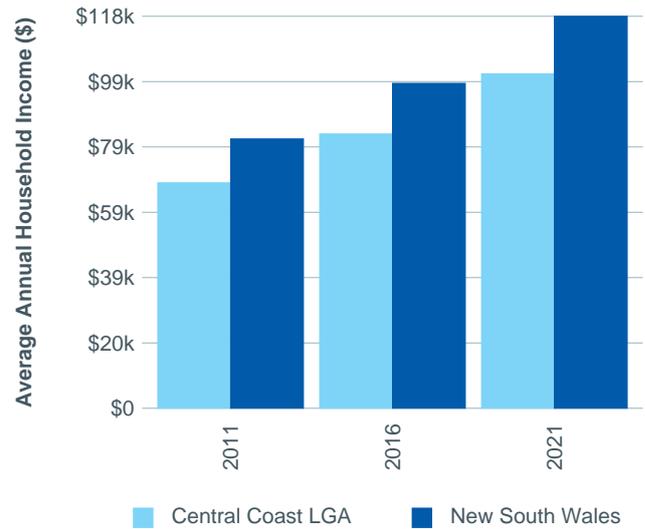
Religious Affiliation

(2021)



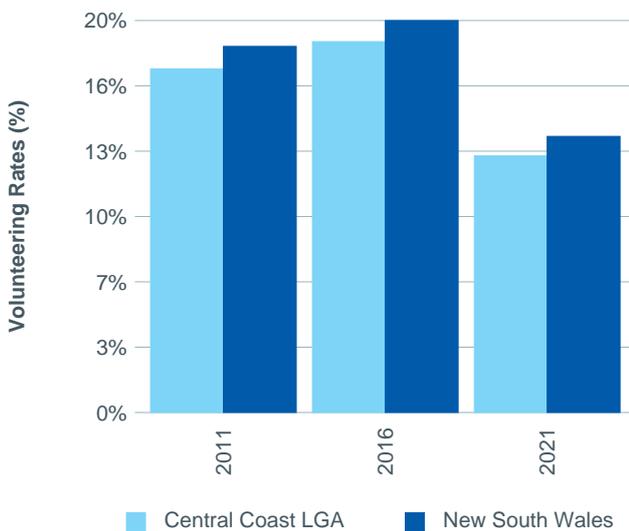
Household Incomes

(2011-2021)



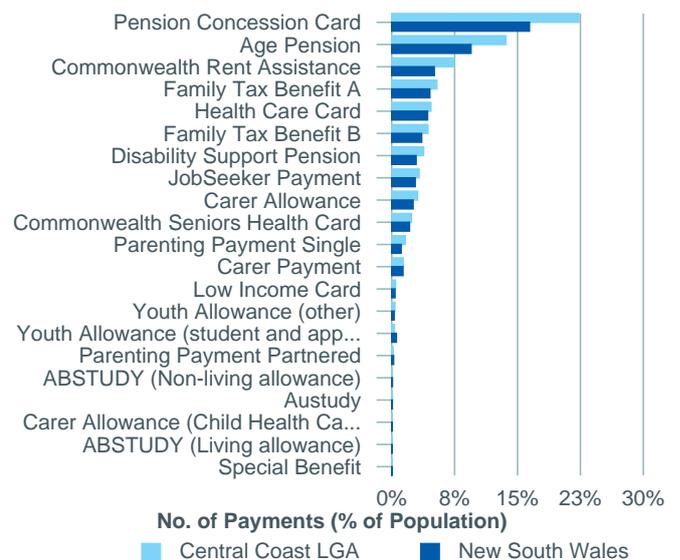
Volunteering Rate

(2011-2021)



Social Service Payments

(Jun 2024)



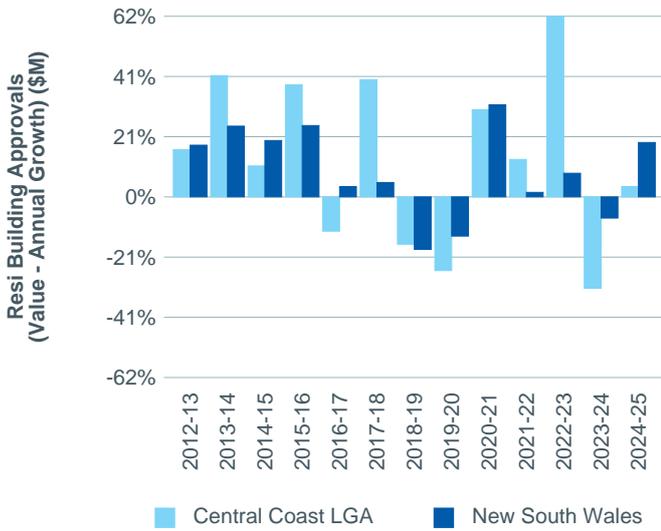
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Housing

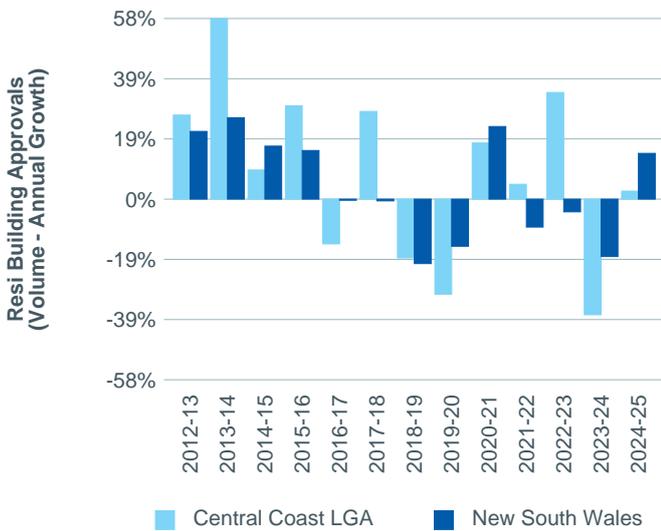
Residential Building Approvals Value Annual Growth (2012-13 to 2024-25 FY)



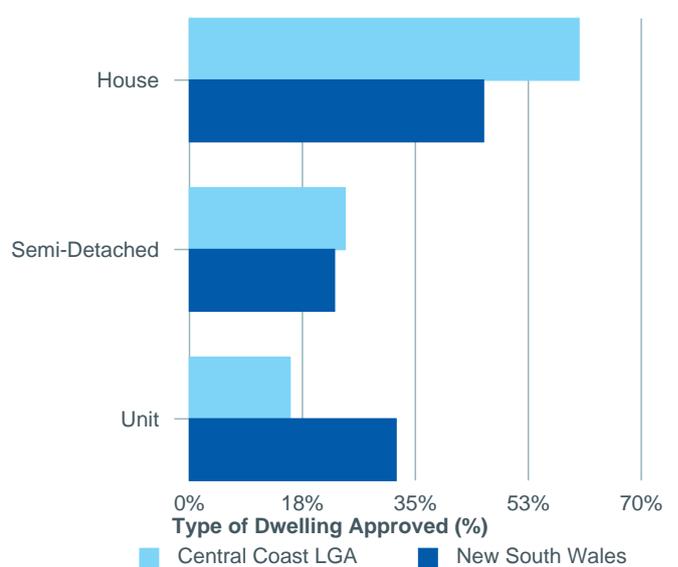
Average House Build Cost (2011-12 to 2024-25 FY)



Residential Building Approvals Volume Annual Growth (2012-13 to 2024-25 FY)



Type of Dwelling Approved (2024-25)



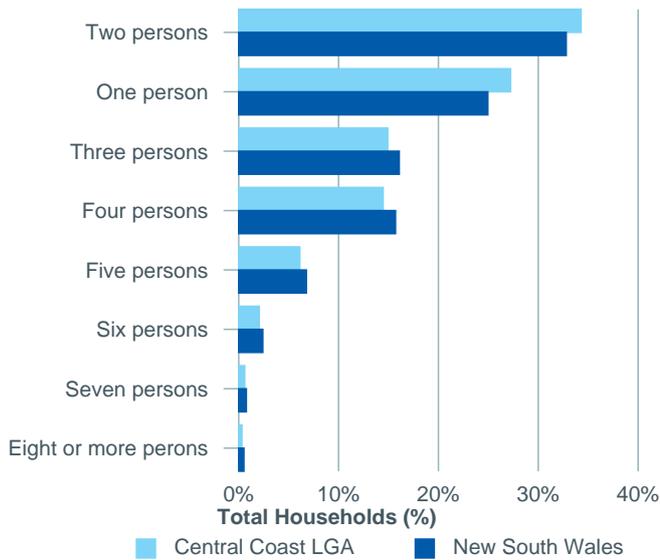
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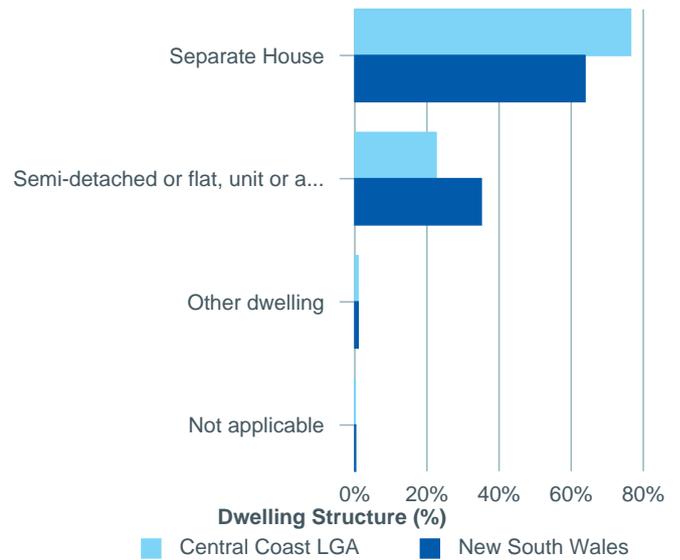
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Housing

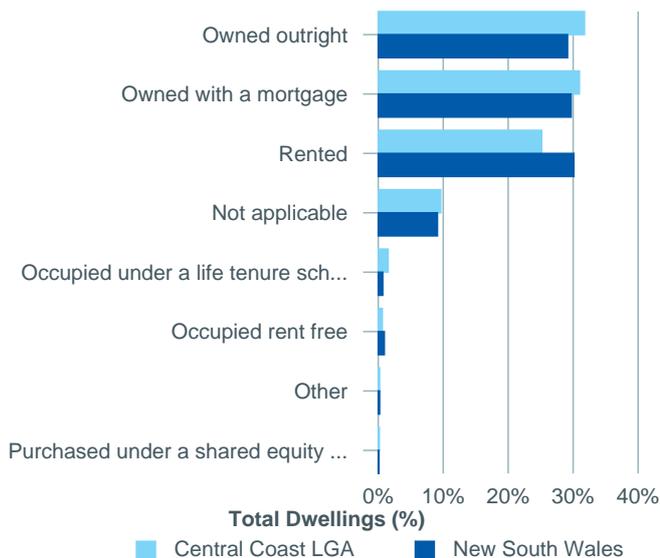
Number of Persons in a Household (2021)



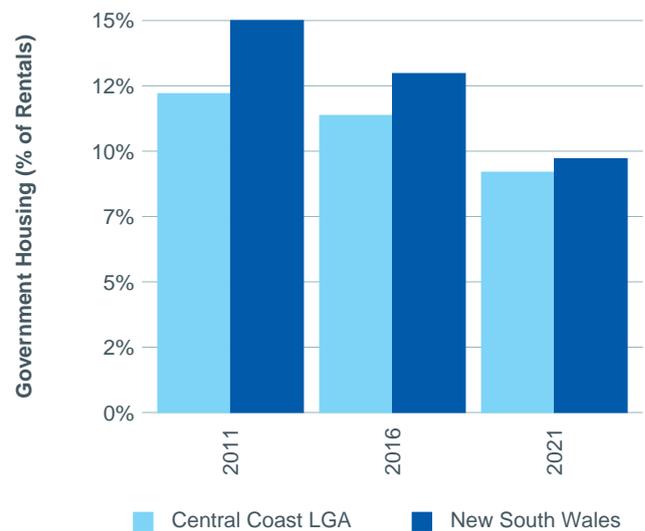
Dwelling Structure Type (2021)



Tenure Type (2021)



Government Housing (2011-2021)



Sources:

ABS (2022). Census of Population and Housing, 2021. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

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Tourism

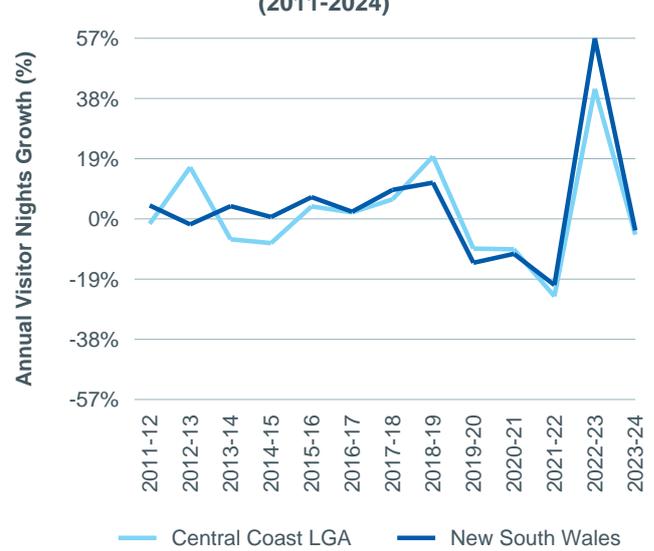
Growth in Tourism Expenditure

(2007 - 2024)



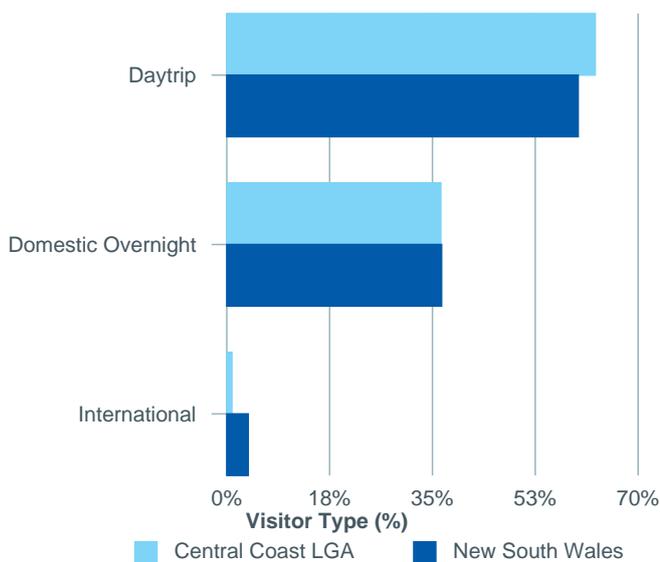
Growth in Visitation

(2011-2024)



Visitor Type

(2023-24)



Sources:

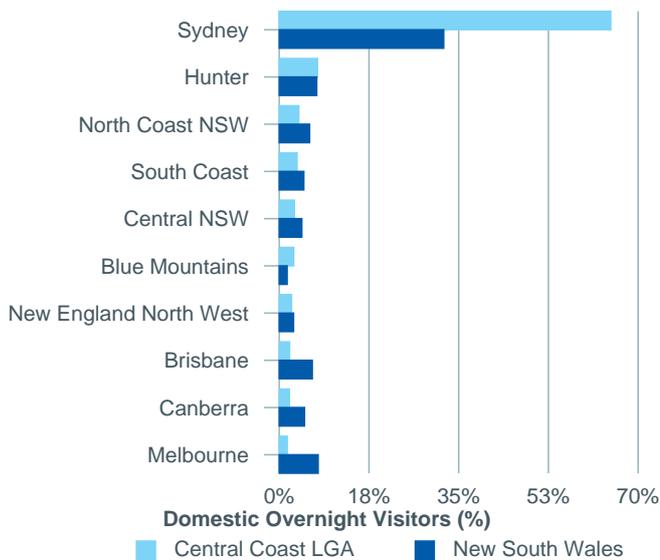
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TRA (2024). Overnight Trips, June 2024 Quarterly Results of the National Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia, Canberra

Tourism

Source of Domestic Overnight

(2023-24)



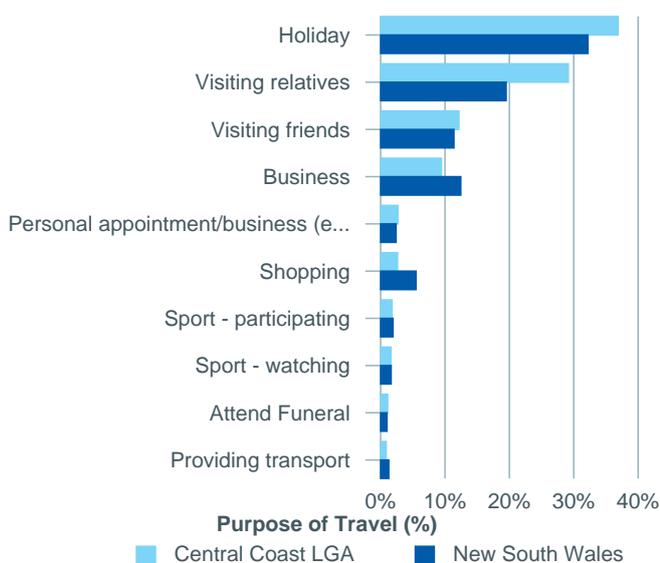
Source of International Overnight

(2023-24)



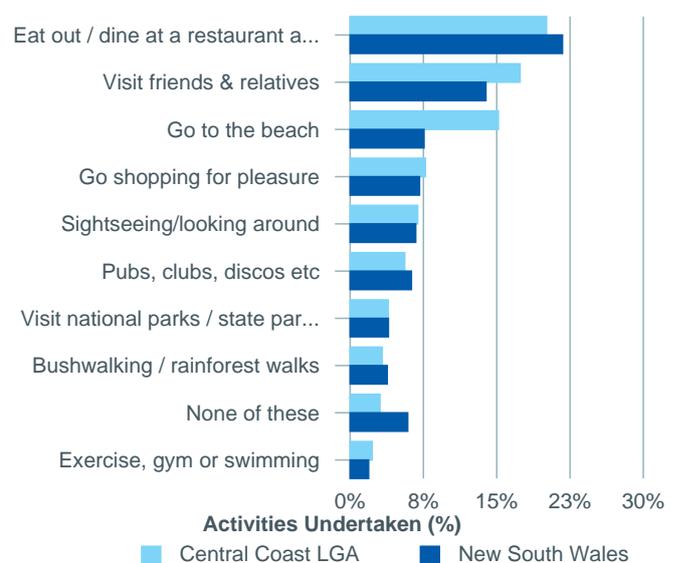
Purpose of Travel

(2023-24)



Key Visitor Activities

(2023-24)



Sources:

TRA (2025). Overnight Trips, Dec 2024 Quarterly Results of the National Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia, Canberra
 TRA (2024). Day Trips, Jun 2024 Quarterly Results of the National Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia, Canberra
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Important Terms and Definitions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI):

Refers to Australia's Indigenous peoples, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In economic and social data, this distinction is important for understanding the specific challenges and opportunities in these communities.

Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC):

The standard classification used in Australia and New Zealand for the analysis of industry statistics. It provides a framework for organizing data about businesses and their economic activities.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS): Australia's national statistical agency. It provides a wide range of statistical data on economic, population, environmental, and social issues.

Estimated Resident Population (ERP): The official measure of the population of areas in Australia, based on the concept of usual residence. It is updated annually and considers factors such as births, deaths, and internal migration.

Gross Regional Product (GRP): A measure of the total economic output and income generated in a region. It is analogous to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but on a smaller, regional scale.

Industry Value Added (IVA): Represents the value added by an industry to the gross state or national product. It is a measure of the economic contribution of individual industries and sectors.

Place of Enumeration (PoE): Used in census and survey methodologies, referring to the location where a person is counted or surveyed, which may differ from their usual residence.

Place of Usual Residence (PoUR): Used in demographic and social statistics to refer to the location where a person usually resides.

Place of Work (PoW): Refers to the location where an individual is employed or carries out their occupation. It is used in labor market and transportation studies.

Tourism Region Australia (TRA): An organisation responsible for providing statistics and analysis on tourism in Australia. They produce a range of reports and data sets that inform policy-making, marketing, and strategic planning in the tourism sector.

Data Contained Within this Publication

COMPARISON TO STATE / AUSTRALIA.

Comparisons to either State or Australia have been made where applicable in this document. Comparison to a larger catchment can provide validity of the regions results .

For example, population growth may be positive within a region, however below State / Australia rates potentially indicating residential attraction issues hindering population growth.

HEADLINE

Economic Growth Annual growth of the region's Gross Regional Product (GRP).

Population Growth Annual growth of the region's population.

Jobs Growth Annual growth of the region's employment growth.

Unemployment Rate The proportion of the labour force that is unemployed

ECONOMY ACTIVITY

Gross Regional Product (GRP) The total market value of goods and services produced in a region after deducting goods and services used in the process of production, including the net value of taxes less subsidies. This can provide an indication of the economic wealth of a region.

Industry Value Add (IVA) The total market value of goods and services produced by an industry, after deducting goods and services used in the process of production. This can highlight the key economic drivers within a region.

Industry Contribution to Growth Highlights the change in industry value add over a 10-year period. This can be useful to understand the key drivers of economic growth within the region.

Specialist Local Industries (Top 20) Demonstrates the degree to which the regional economy is specialised by examining the total proportion of employment in an industry in the region compared against the total proportion of employment of the same industry in the state.

Non-Local Labour Force The number of workers by industry that are imported into the catchment. A negative number indicates an oversaturated industry workforce that lives in the catchment but works outside the catchment.

Participation Rate The proportion of working aged people (typically between 15 and 64 years old) participating in the workforce. This can provide an indication of productivity within the region.

Employing Businesses The number of businesses within the region which have a minimum of one employee.

Growth in Employing Businesses Annual growth of the number of employing businesses within the region. This can provide an indication of the economic health, small business environment, and investment growth in a region.

POPULATION AND MOVEMENT

Estimated Resident Population (ERP) The annual resident population of a region.

Population Projections The annual projected population growth of the region into the future.

Age Structure Proportional breakdown of a region's population in 10-year age brackets. This can provide an indication of demand for age-specific services.

Age Contribution to Growth Age brackets contribution to growth over a 10-year period. This can provide an indication of demand for age-specific services.

Overseas Migration (Top 10) The proportion of the population that was born overseas by country of birth.

Source of Regional Migration The top destinations where new residents of the region who moved five years ago have moved from.

Destination of Regional Emigration The top destinations where previous residents of the region five years ago are moving to.

COMMUNITY

ATSI Population The proportion of the population that identifies as Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI).

Population Born Overseas The proportion of the population that was born overseas.

Highest Education Level Highlights the breakdown of the highest education level attained by people over 15 years old. This can provide an indication of skills and labour specialisation within the region.

Long-Term Health Conditions Long-term health conditions (diagnosed by a doctor) disaggregated by type of condition by proportion of the population. This can provide an indication of demand for health services within the region.

Religious Affiliation The main religious affiliation of the region by proportion of the population.

Household Incomes The average annual household income. This can provide an indication of disposable incomes and vulnerability to cost of living shocks.

Volunteering Rate The proportion of the adult population who undertook voluntary work within the region across the previous twelve months. This can provide an indication of social interaction within the community, potentially creating stronger demand for social activities.

Social Service Payments Proportion of the population receiving Department of Social Services payments disaggregated by payment type.

HOUSING

Residential Building Approvals The value or volume of residential buildings approved for construction within the region. Building approvals can provide an indication of investment confidence within the region as well as construction activity.

Average House Build Cost The average building approval cost to build a house in the region. When compared against a larger comparison region, this can highlight barriers to migration and investment within the region.

Type of Dwelling Approved The type of residential dwellings approved in the region. This can provide an indication of demand for dwelling types.

Number of Persons in a Household The number of persons usually residing in a private residential dwelling.

Dwelling Structure Type The proportional breakdown of dwelling structure types within the region.

Tenure Type The proportional breakdown of tenure types within the region.

Government Housing The proportion of the rented dwellings in the region that are leased from state or territory housing authorities (does not include government employees).

TOURISM

Growth in Tourism Expenditure Annual growth in tourism expenditure in the economy.

Visitor Type The proportional breakdown of the type of visitor to the region.

Growth in Visitation Annual growth in the total number of visitors to the region.

Source of Domestic Overnight Proportional breakdown of the top sources of domestic overnight visitors to the region.

Source of International Overnight Proportional breakdown of the top sources of international visitors to the region.

Purpose of Travel Proportional breakdown of the purpose of travel to the region. Domestic visitors only; international visitors are excluded.

Key Visitor Activities Proportional breakdown of visitor activities conducted on visits to the region. Domestic visitors only; international visitors are excluded.

Summary Statistics

TOPIC	PERIOD	CENTRAL COAST	NEW SOUTH WALES	AUSTRALIA
ECONOMY				
Economic Growth	2023-2024	1.3%	1.2%	1.4%
Jobs Growth	2023-2024	0.8%	0.6%	1.2%
Unemployment Rate	Mar 2025	3.7%	3.5%	4.3%
Gross Regional Product (\$M)	2023-2024	\$24,763	\$820,790	\$2,673,261
Participation Rate	2021	48.4%	51.0%	53.0%
Employing Businesses	2024	12,234	356,010	994,178
Growth in Employing Businesses	2024	-1.7%	-0.8%	-0.5%
POPULATION AND MOVEMENT				
Population Growth	2024	0.8%	1.7%	2.0%
Estimated Resident Population	June 2024	354,803	8,479,314	27,194,369
Net Arrivals	2024	2,808	106,565	435,198
Natural Increase	2024	95	31,550	106,394
COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT				
ATSI Population	2021	5.1%	3.6%	3.4%
Population Born Overseas	2021	17.0%	30.9%	29.2%
Household Incomes	2021	\$101,099	\$118,496	\$112,465
Volunteer Rate	2021	12.9%	13.9%	15.1%
HOUSING				
Residential Building Approvals (\$M)	2024-2025	722	30,116	107,364
Average House Build Cost	2024-2025	\$661,787	\$696,907	\$585,350
Residential Building Approvals (No.)	2024-2025	1,224	49,052	186,742
TOURISM				
Growth in Tourism Expenditure	2023-2024	17.3%	9.4%	8.3%
Growth in Visitation	2023-2024	-5.0%	-3.6%	-3.0%

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