

# City life trumps tree change

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Inner city Australians enjoy a higher standard of living, higher incomes and are more socially engaged than their suburban and rural counterparts, according to new research from [UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre](#) (SPRC).

"Promoting Inclusion and Combating Deprivation: recent changes in social disadvantage in Australia" compares locational [inequality](#) across the suburbs, inner city, large towns, country towns and [rural areas](#).

The report describes deprivation as the inability to afford the 'essentials of life'– the items that at least 50 per cent of the community believe that no Australian should have to go without. The items are grouped into six

broad categories of need: material; health-related; accommodation; children; social functioning; and risk protection.

Data was collected in a survey of more than 2,600 adults drawn at random from the 2010 electoral roll.

Report author, Professor Peter Saunders, said the SPRC study is unique because it considers a range of well-being measures.

"Unlike other studies that examine differences between postcode or census districts, our study asked people how they ranked different aspects of their lives and their [satisfaction levels](#)."

#### Key findings:

- City residents have the highest incomes, considerable assets, lowest [poverty rates](#) and are least likely to be reliant on a government benefit for their main source of income.
- Almost 43% of inner city residents report their standard of living is 'very' or 'fairly' high compared with only 33% of those living in the suburbs, less than 30% of those living in large towns and some 25% of those living in country towns or rural areas.
- Inner city dwellers are more engaged with their community than people living in other areas but they lack access to basic services, whereas large country towns are better serviced. Rural residents face the highest levels of service exclusion – almost 25% above the national average.
- 63% of participants in rural and large towns and 70% of participants in small country towns and cities reported being satisfied with their standard of living.
- Deprivation was highest among residents of large towns and rural areas particularly in relation to dental care, access to an annual

holiday and having \$500 in emergency savings.

- People who live in small country towns are less deprived than those living in either large country towns or rural areas, but have the highest rates of deprivation in terms of regular social contact with others and owning a telephone.

Professor Saunders said the study results highlight the need to acknowledge that location matters.

"Where [Australians](#) are living can exert an important influence on their opportunities and living standards," he said.

**More information:**

[www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/FINAL\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/FINAL_REPORT.pdf)

Provided by University of New South Wales

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