

Muval Index 2023



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Muval index methodology

The data in this report has been collated from a Muval-sponsored, nationally representative sample size survey of Australians as well as Muval's own search data, which paints the most up-to-date picture of moving trends based on online searches and bookings for removalists. As people typically enquire about removalists up to 30 days before they move, Muval's data offers a unique, forward-looking insight into where Australians are moving. According to The University of Queensland, which has validated Muval's data after conducting an analysis of Muval and ABS data from 2020-2022, Muval is a reliable source for current and future migration forecasts.

Welcome to the 2023 Muval Index

A note from our CEO

Welcome to Muval's third annual moving house index

In these reports we explore the latest migration trends within Australia looking at where people are moving to and from. We also dig deeper into what the main causes for moving are and uncover what the key driving forces for movement are.

Last year we saw a departure from COVID-fuelled migration to people factoring cost-of-living into their decision making.

Throughout this report, you will discover the findings of a recent national survey showing how much general economic context and cost-of-living pressures are prompting people to move again this year.

We know money makes the world go round but it's also become the main driver behind moves, with more than a third (35%) of 2023 relocations to reduce cost of living. This is a three-fold increase on 2022, when 11 per cent of those surveyed indicated that their move was aimed at reducing their cost of living and the key reason (30%) Australians moved was to upgrade to a better house or location.

We also look at how macro-economic cycles have traditionally influenced why and where people move to shed some light on what's happening now and what's likely to be around the corner.

After cost-of-living, employment is the second biggest factor driving moves this year and with work moves on the rise – a quarter of Australians have moved for work and half of work moves were in the past two years – we've launched a new service to help employers offer superior relocation services for their employees.

One of our key observations about the state of moving for work has been that in many instances, employees are left to their own devices when it comes to organising their move. While businesses are happy to offer relocation packages for staff, the moving process and organisation places a heavy burden on employees who are uprooting their whole lives for a new opportunity, often in another state or on the other side of the country.

We hope you enjoy all the latest insights in what's moving Aussies this year.



James Morrell
Muval CEO





Migration across the nation

Capital city interstate migration trends from the past year

According to our data, interstate moves are trending up as we head into ‘moving season’, and Melbourne and Brisbane are shaping up to be the summer hot spots.

Looking back

As we enter the 2023 ‘moving season’, we look back at migration between major capital cities to understand what movement might look like in the coming months. Typically, around two-thirds (66%) of all moves take place between October and March as more than 1.5 million Australians move into new homes purchased during the spring selling season and renters move around as leases start and end.

We look at movement in terms of inbound and outbound moving enquiries as well as “net migration”. That is, the difference between the number of people who move into a location and the number of people who move out. If a location has “positive net migration”, it means that there are more people moving in than moving out.

Melbourne

According to our moving data, there is a clear winner for Australia’s most liveable city in 2023. Based on inbound moving enquiries between December 2022 and November 2023, Melbourne has accounted for over a quarter (27%) of Australia’s metro moves, and has been the number one city to move in Australia for the past 21 months in a row. It’s a big turnaround for Melbourne, which haemorrhaged residents during the pandemic, when the city hit a low of just 15% of all metro inbound moves, and accounted for 41% of outbound metro moving enquiries.

At the time, Melbourne’s negative net migration dropped to -64% but it has clawed its way back in 2023, averaging -14% over the past 12 months and falling below -10% on a few occasions.

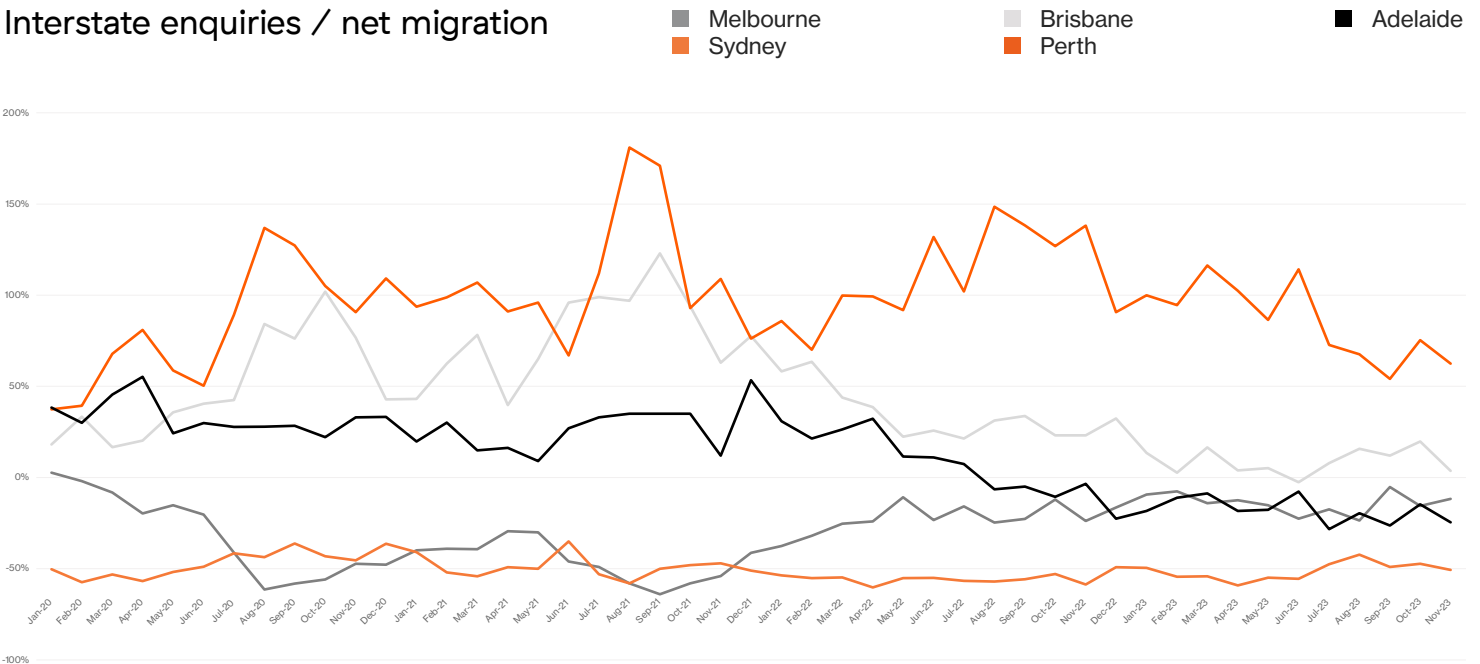
Melbourne was last in positive territory (+3%) pre-pandemic in January 2020. While COVID was the catalyst for a Melbourne exodus, the Victorian capital is proving popular during the cost-of-living crisis, mostly buoyed by an influx from Sydney as well as similar numbers between Brisbane, Canberra and Perth.

Perth

Proving its enduring popularity as a liveable city long after the pandemic has subsided, Perth continues to boast the highest net migration rate in the country, although figures are on a downward trajectory. From November 2022 to November 2023, Perth’s net migration fell from +138% to +62%, a far cry from the 2021 COVID high of +181% and more in line with 2020 pre-pandemic figures.

However no other city comes close to its migration success, with Brisbane the only other city in positive territory in 2023. Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne have all experienced more than 12 months of negative net migration.

Interstate enquiries / net migration





Perth's outbound moving enquiries have remained steady on an average of 8%, among the lowest in the country, while inbound moving enquiries are averaging 19%, fuelling the high levels of positive net migration. Over the past 12 months, Perth has consistently pipped Sydney as the third most popular city to move to in Australia, with many of its new residents hailing from the Harbour City and Melbourne.

Brisbane

Brisbane is on the move in 2023, with positive net migration on the up and inbound moving enquiries taking the River City closer to the number one spot. With an average of 23% of inbound moving enquiries between December 2022 and November 2023, Brisbane isn't far behind Melbourne (on 27%) and briefly shared the podium with the Victorian capital when both accounted for 24% of inbound metro moving enquiries in August.

There is one area where Brisbane already has the edge over Melbourne – net migration. Brisbane is averaging +11% compared to Melbourne's average of -14%. With more people moving into

Brisbane than out, mostly from Sydney and Melbourne, the River City is one of only two major Australian cities experiencing positive net migration this year and is one to watch heading into summer.

Sydney

Between December 2022 and November 2023, Sydney accounted for the most outbound moving enquiries of any major Australian city, averaging one in three outbound metro moves, and with many more people moving out than in, negative net migration has been hovering around -50%.

With an average of 17% of all metro inbound moving enquiries, the Harbour City sits behind Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth as only the fourth most popular city to move to in Australia. Confirming how much interest rates impact on city living, when the Reserve Bank began pausing rates, Sydney's inbound traffic increased to 19% – the highest it has been since Muval started collating data at the start of 2020 – and the city was briefly the third most popular metro destination to move to in Australia.

Adelaide

There has been something going on in Adelaide that has landed the city in the migration doldrums. Not long after the new government took over, the South Australian capital started to slide and as of November 2023, the city had entered its 16th straight month of negative net migration, spiralling as low as -28%, a dramatic decline from when net migration was +32% in April 2022.

The city received on average just 9% of all major metro inbound moving enquiries over the past 12 months, while outbound migration is hovering around 10%. Between December 2022 and November 2023, Adelaide residents have mostly been hopping across the border to Melbourne.

Rising rents & rates

Australians respond to rising interest rates and rental prices



The rise continues

Over the past 12 months we've seen a dramatic increase in both interest rates and rents throughout the country. After the most recent rate rise, we're now sitting at a 12-year high. Intuitively, this spurs a flurry of movement as people assess their current situation and seek out more affordable accommodation options. Our survey data shows that 18% of respondents moved in the past 12 months due to interest rate rises or rising rental costs. This is almost double the usual average of 10% of the population moving in any given year, highlighting how cost-of-living is triggering a relocation of the nation.

Young Australians have been the worst affected by record rent rises, with around a fifth (22%) of those who have been forced to move in the past 12 months due to a rent rise aged 18 to 24, double the national average (11%) who have moved due to a rental hike.

Interestingly, increased interest rates haven't prompted a huge number of Australians to move – yet. About 7% said they have relocated due to rate rises in the past 12 months, with a further 4% expecting increased rates to play a part in a 2024 move.

The rental squeeze and rate rises are affecting Victorians the worst, with 13% of those who have moved in the past 12 months due to a rent rise, and 10% who have relocated because of rates, hailing from the southern state- that's around double the rate of the other major states (NSW 7%, QLD, SA, WA all 5%).

While most (64%) money moves were to another suburb within the same city, rising rents and rates forced a fifth of those surveyed (22%) to move to another city, and one in 10 (9%) to cross state borders. Young Australians were adversely affected with around a third (30%) of those who moved to another city after copping a rent or rate rise aged 18 to 24.

Babyboomers (14% of 65+) and middle-aged Aussies (25% of 45-54) accounted for the most interstate traffic, while one in ten (13%) 45- to-54-year-olds made a regional move for more affordable housing after a rate or rent hike.

It seems Queenslanders are the most patriotic, most (80%) of those who had to make a monetary motivated move did so to another suburb within the same city, compared to a third (33%) of Western

Australians who moved to another state. South Australians were most in need of fresh country air with 29% moving to a region. A similar number (29%) of South Australians, along with a large number of New South Wales (25%) and Victorian residents (27%), moved to another city following a rate or rent rise.

Some Australians (11%) are turning the rental crisis into an opportunity, buying a home when their rent was increased. Most (73%) who have made the transition from rent to a mortgage did so in the past two years. NSW residents were the most opportunistic, with 13% of those who have bought a house after a rent hike hailing from the state, while the majority of Queenslanders and South Australians (above 90%) kept renting. Of those who took the mortgage plunge in the past 12 months, 42% were middle-aged Aussies (45-54).

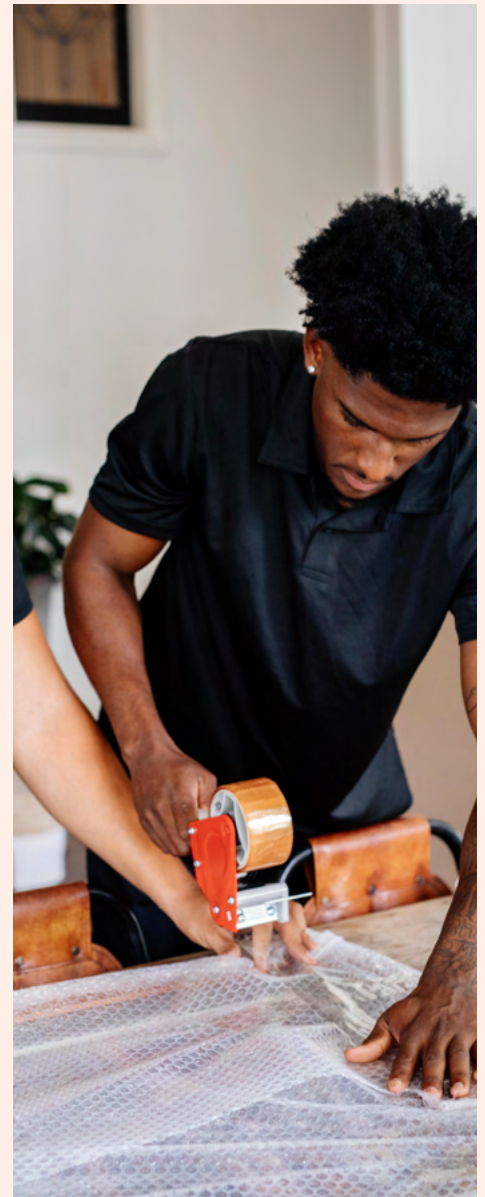
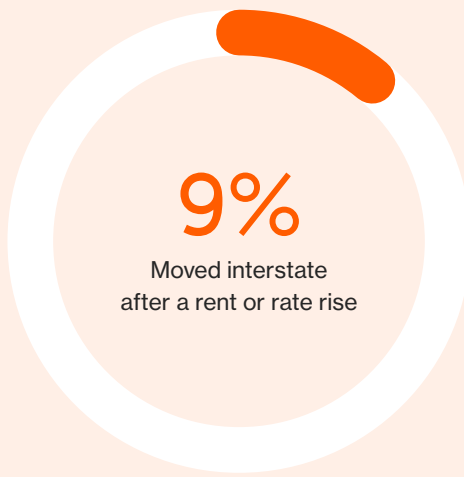
When housing affordability becomes a serious issue, Aussies look to family or friends to help with costs. Our survey found that 16% of Australians have either moved in with a family member or friends, or had people move in with them, to share the financial burden.


Unfortunately this wave of couch surfing has affected young Australians the most, with around 60% of those who have moved in with a friend or family, or taken a loved one into their home, aged 18 to 34.

We appear to be on the cusp of a flurry of migration based on economic factors. Indeed, some 22% of survey respondents said they didn't move this year because of factors that could change imminently if there were to be any further interest rate rises, including 11% who are uncertain about the economy, 8% who are waiting to see what happens with rates and 3% who are currently on a good fixed-term interest rate.


It's not a bleak picture for everyone though. Almost 60% of respondents said they weren't moving because they were happy where they live and able to afford their current home.

As things currently stand, just under half of the people surveyed mentioned they were considering moving in 2024. Reducing the cost of living was the largest single reason at 16%. Interestingly though, there were an almost equivalent number of people who were considering moving for a better lifestyle (15%).





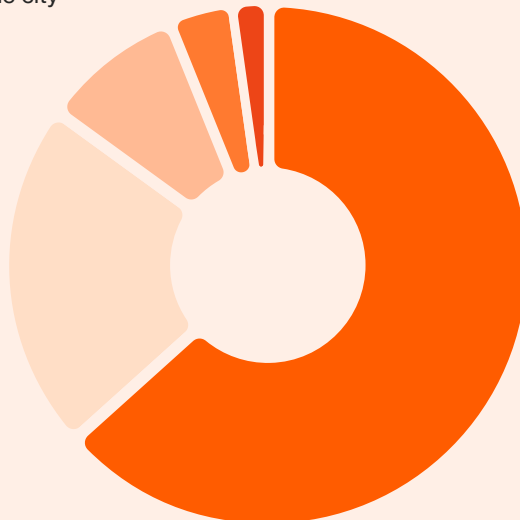
11%
Of Australians bought a house after their rent was increased



16%
Of Australians have experienced couch surfing

Where Australians moved after a rate or rent increase

- 64% To another suburb within same city
- 22% To another city
- 9% To another state
- 4% To a regional city
- 2% To another country



22%

Were considering a move but waiting to see what happens with the economy and rate rises

16%

Reducing cost of living is the number one reason Australians are considering a move in 2024

18%

Moved in the past twelve months due to rising rates or rent

Economic cycles, recession, & migration

Past economic downturns and the impact on migration

The ups and downs

Australia, often hailed as one of the most migratory nations in the world, boasts a dynamic population that isn't afraid to embrace change. But what's intriguing is how migration patterns map to economic cycles.

Historical data provides us with a clear picture of the significant impact that economic cycles have on migration trends in Australia.¹ When the economy experiences a downturn, there's often a corresponding drop in the annual interstate migration rate, as seen in Figure 1. These periods of decline are followed by remarkable rebounds in interstate migration, suggesting that the nation's mobility is intrinsically tied to economic fluctuations.

One noteworthy exception to this trend was the global financial crisis of 2007–09, which didn't lead to a recession in Australia. Despite this anomaly, it's clear that the overall trend leans towards a positive correlation between economic cycles and migration patterns.

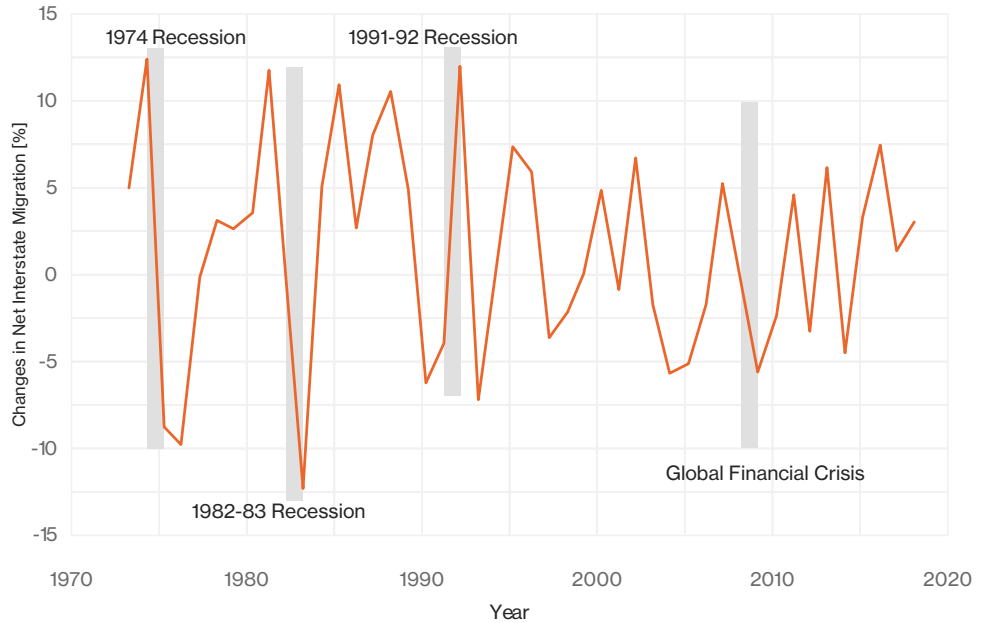
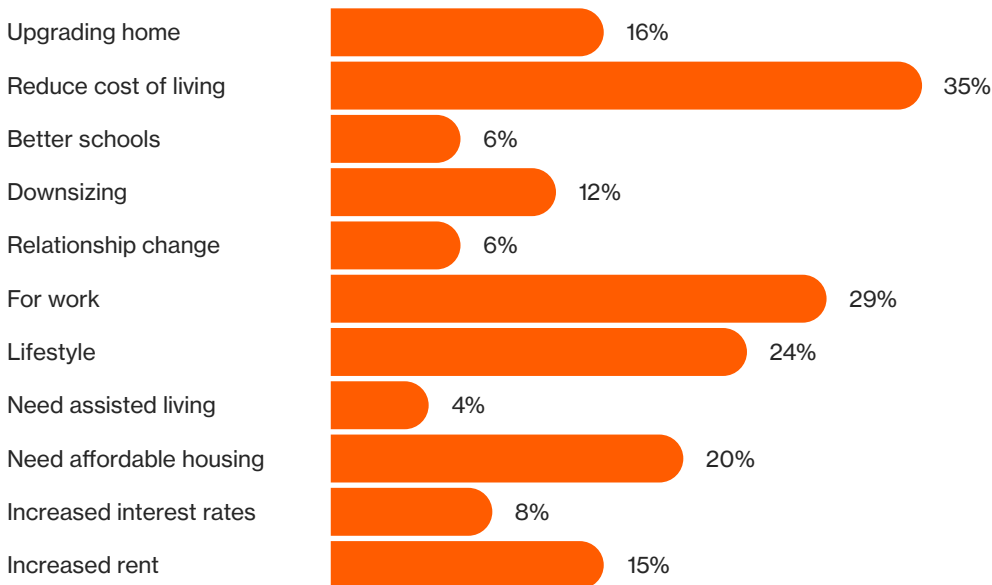


Figure 1. The effect of an economic downturn on annual interstate migration rates

Reasons for moving in 2023



40%

Nearly 40 percent of Australians change their place of residence every five years, reflecting a society that thrives on mobility and adaptation.

1. Sourced from: Charles-Edwards, E., et. al (2021). How will COVID-19 impact Australia's future population? A scenario approach. *Applied Geography*, volume 134. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2021.102506>



Movement is often motivated by the perceived net benefits of relocating. Empirical evidence from the United States supports this notion, with internal migration rates being negatively associated with unemployment and regional inequalities.

The grass is always greener

When it comes to internal migration within Australia, it's well-documented that it's pro-cyclical in nature. In other words, the level of internal migration closely mirrors the ebb and flow of the business cycle. As the job market and housing opportunities shift, migrants respond by moving to areas where these prospects appear most promising.

It's essential to note that this cyclical behaviour isn't necessarily driven by variations in the geographic dispersion of economic opportunities. Instead, movement is often motivated by the perceived net benefits of relocating. Empirical evidence from the United States supports this notion, with internal migration rates being negatively associated with unemployment and regional inequalities.

In Australia, the complex interplay between economic cycles and migration patterns has far-reaching implications for the nation's demographics and economic dynamics. As the nation rides the rollercoaster of economic ups and downs, the willingness of its people to move in response to changing opportunities demonstrates the dynamic nature of Australian society.

Understanding this connection between economics and migration allows us to delve deeper into the factors shaping Australia's regional and social landscapes. It's a powerful reminder that, even in a highly developed and stable country like Australia, the push and pull of economic cycles remain a driving force behind the ever-changing patterns of migration.

Moving for work

Are new hybrid and flexible 'work from home' modes of working making relocating for work opportunities a thing of the past?

The new way of working

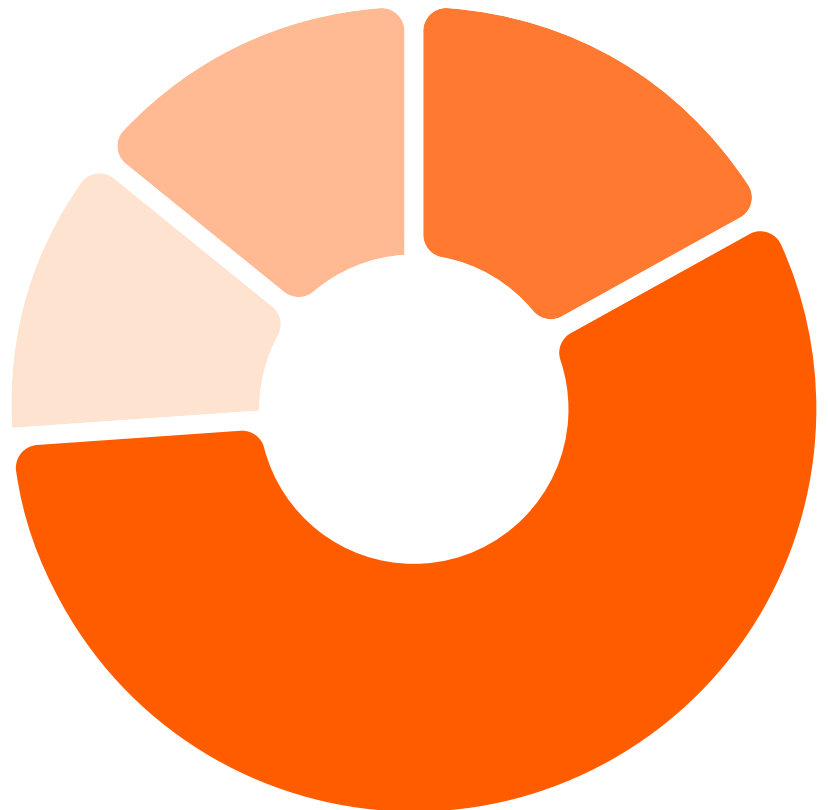
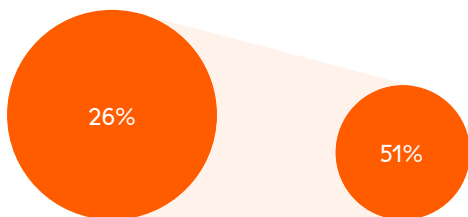
The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant upheaval of the entrenched work routines of many workplaces. Hamstrung by the constraints of lockdowns and travel restrictions, businesses allowed staff to set up home offices and embraced working from home. However, long after the pandemic has ended, flexible work arrangements and working from home as a hybrid model remains the new norm.

Despite flexible work arrangements being commonplace, and the implied freedom this provides workers to no longer live as close to a centralised work office, it still seems that many Australians are relocating for work opportunities, or at least considering opportunities that would require them to move.

Reasons Australians moved for work

- 14% In search of more affordable housing
- 12% Same wage but cheaper lifestyle
- 17% Unable to find work at current location
- 57% More money on offer at different location

26% Of those surveyed had moved for work, half (51%) of those in the past two years



25%

Would move to another city or state if given a \$50,000 increase to salary



24%

Made a work move to another city and 27% to another state



Our survey shows that over a quarter (26%) of Australians have moved for work, with half relocating in the past two years. While most (33%) work moves were to another suburb, almost a quarter (24%) relocated to another city, 27% moved to another state, 6% to a regional area and one in 10 moved to another country.

According to SEEK, nearly half of the candidates who had applied for a job in Brisbane (47%), Adelaide (43%) and Perth (42%) were from interstate, while interstate candidates accounted for around a third of those who applied for jobs in Sydney (34%) and Melbourne (31%).*

Kristen De Sousa, Queensland Director of Six Degrees Executive, notes that there is a big push from employers to engage employees to come to the office more frequently.

“While employers recognise that there are travel time and wellbeing benefits in working from home, many employers are pushing to get workers back in the office to increase productivity.”

Is more money a moving motivator?

We asked how much money people would need to be offered in order to relocate for work. Surprisingly only 11% said that \$20,000 would tempt them, whereas one in four Australians said that they would move if they were offered a \$50,000 pay rise.

Muval expects that work-related relocations will increase significantly in the next 12-18 months in line with trends that have followed previous economic downturns. That’s why we’ve launched our EmployeeAssist program to work alongside HR Managers and hiring teams to ensure that employees are given a great relocation experience and can hit the ground running on day one in their new role.

One of the main drivers behind a move this year was work (29%). The cost-of-living crisis is mostly affecting young people, with the majority of those who moved for work in the past 12 months aged 18-34 (46% 18-24 and 37% 25-34). In the past two years, more (43%) 18-24-year-olds have moved for work than any other age group (next closest is 25-34 on 34%).

The main reason Australians are moving for work is for more money (57%), with around a quarter of work moves based on other economic drivers (14% more affordable housing/12% cheaper lifestyle).







Gen Z (31% of 18-24) and Western Australians (30%) were the most likely to move because they were unable to find work in their current location. One in five Queenslanders (19%) and Babyboomers (21% 65+) moved for work to be closer to more affordable housing.

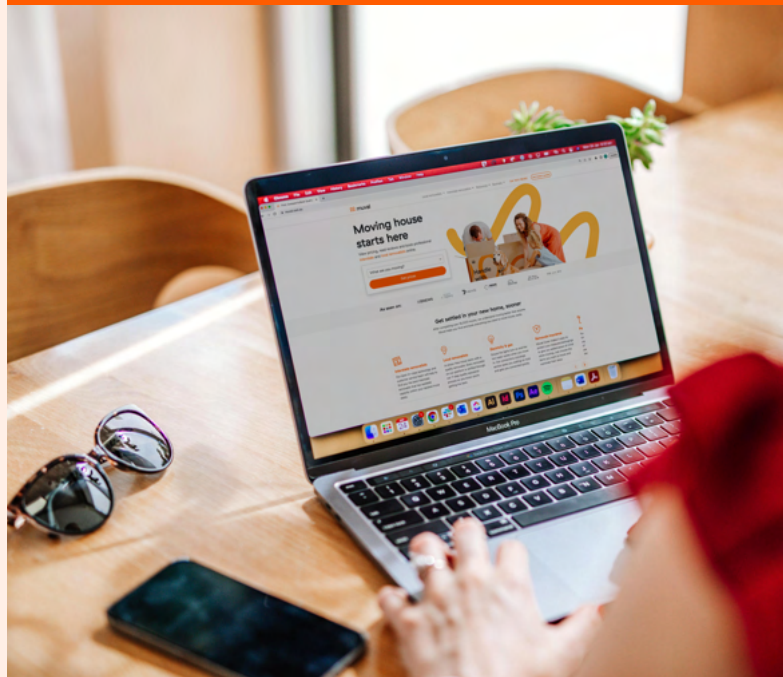
*SEEK Application Data, six months to October 2023.



Introducing Employee Assist by Muval

- ✓ Instant quotes & no booking fees
- ✓ Priority service for remote locations
- ✓ Direct liaison with HR
- ✓ Flexible payment solutions
- ✓ Quality, pre-qualified removalists
- ✓ Independent advice to reduce costs of moving

 Interstate removalists	 Local removalists	 Electricity, internet & gas
 Pet & car transport	 Removals insurance	 Packing & unpacking



Muval's Moving Guru

Alana Lowes unpacks moving with kids tips from Jana Pittman, explores property insights with The Block's Nicole Jacobs, and looks at how sustainable and sentimental Aussies are when moving



👉 **DIY Kids moving box craft colourful puppet show:**
Visit muval.com.au/blog/kids-moving-box-craft

Alana's tips for adding magic to your move

Embarking on a grand family adventure like moving house is filled with twists and turns. Add a sprinkle of fun, and watch as one of life's most stressful events transforms into a day filled brimming with excitement.

Create a comfort "survival" kit

Every adventurer needs their trusty gear, right? Pack a special "Comfort Kit" (survival kit for the parents!) for each child, filled with their favourite toys, blankets, and snacks. It's their secret weapon against moving day jitters and the "I'm bored" chorus.

Packing as a game

Turn packing into an exciting game. Set a timer and see who can pack their toys the fastest. It's a fun way to make them feel involved in the process.

Explore the new neighbourhood and have a picnic

Before the big move, take your family on a neighbourhood exploration adventure. Visit parks, ice-cream shops or even pack a picnic!

Create a "first night" box

Task the kids with packing a box with items they'll need to settle into the new place. Some staples would be PJs, stuffed toys or favourite cuddly, toiletries and night lights.

Moving into a whole new space can be a big adjustment. Having favourite items nearby on the first night can help bring a sense of comfort and make the transition a little easier.

Recycle moving boxes with craft creations

Get crafty with your surplus of moving boxes. Organise a craft station to turn those unwanted moving boxes into magical puppet theatres or ice-cream trucks. Your imagination is your only limit!

Campfire story night

On one of your first nights in your new place, setup a small firepit and roast marshmallows, drink hot chocolate and snuggle under blankets. Share stories about your family's adventure, creating memories that will bond you to your new home!

Top 10 moving tips with Jana Pittman

Smooth moves and happy kids



Moving can be a daunting task for anyone, but it becomes even more challenging when you're a mother-of-6 like Jana Pittman, even after moving more than 20 times. The former Olympian and world champion runner is used to jumping over hurdles and racing around the world, but the logistics of moving with six kids in tow has taught her some big lessons. Here are her top 10 tips for a smooth family move.

01

Show the kids the new house and encourage them to be involved in the decisions and discussions about moving.

02

Ask for help. I have tried to do it all myself, including hiring a truck and doing all the heavy lifting, but it was hard enough when I was single – it's just not possible with kids.

03

Call in the experts, like Muval, to provide quotes and services within budget. Our last move required several locations, so I wanted a fixed price rather than an hourly rate or the budget could easily have blown out.

04

Use the village. I am usually busy showing the removalists where things go so rope in a few friends, family or whoever you can to entertain the kids. It also means there are lots of adult eyes watching and making sure little fingers don't end up where they shouldn't be.

05

Give the kids a couple of big moving boxes so they can pack their most treasured things and get involved with the moving process in a small way.



“Book in advance and outsource where possible including professional packers and removalists.”

06

Make use of available resources like Muval's online moving guides for tips on how to de-stress the day from planning the number of boxes you might need, labelling hacks, timelines, and a 'moving day essentials bag', so what you need before and after the move is handy.

07

Leave the trampoline until the very end and let the kids turn it into a play area with their favourite teddies, board games and pillows.

08

If it's too hard to coordinate with kids, move on a weekday when they are at school or in care. It can be cheaper too.

09

Unpack one room ASAP so that the kids have somewhere to rest, play and settle in then the goal is one box each day. We use our garage as a base for the boxes. If you can afford it, get someone to help unpack the kitchen.

10

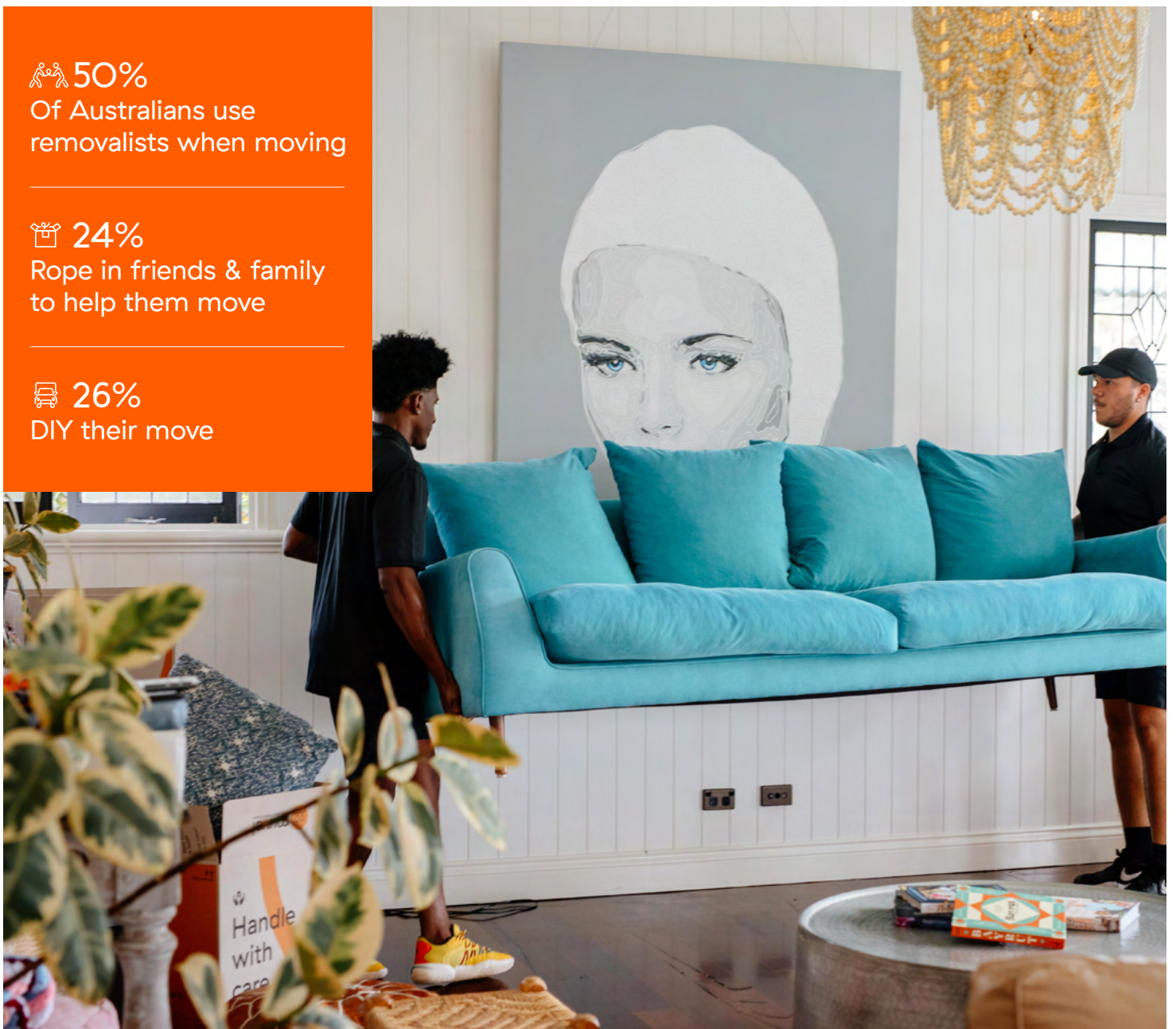
Book in advance and outsource where possible including professional packers and removalists. Now that I have moved with Muval, I know how much time and stress can be saved.

“Use the village. I am usually busy showing the removalists where things go so rope in few friends, family or whoever you can to entertain the kids.”

 **50%**
Of Australians use removalists when moving

 **24%**
Rope in friends & family to help them move

 **26%**
DIY their move



Mastering home buying

Top tips from the buyer's agent playbook

Nicole Jacobs, known for her appearances on The Block as a buyer's agent and also Director of Nicole Jacobs Property, shares the ins and outs of buyer advocacy.



Top 5 benefits of using a buyer's agent:

Negotiation skills

Buyer's agents negotiate regularly, not just once or twice in their lifetime.

Access to off-market properties

The ability to discover properties not listed on real estate websites.

Emotion-free decision-making

Eliminating emotional factors ensures clients purchase the right property at the right price.

No buyer's regret = money saved

By finding the right property clients aren't wasting their money with buyer's regret and forced to sell again.

Time efficiency

Buyer's agents streamline the process, saving clients time by only presenting suitable properties.

Top 5 mistakes in property purchases:

Buying the wrong property

Frustration can lead to hasty and wrong decisions.

Overpaying

Emotional attachment can drive buyers to pay more than a property's actual value.

Not understanding the method of sale

Whether it's an expression of interest campaign, private sale or auction.

Neglecting due diligence

Failure to understand the method of sale, building issues, or contract details can lead to costly mistakes.

Ignoring finance preparedness

Buyers may assume they can secure financing easily, overlooking potential challenges.



Preparing your property for sale:

The appeal of turnkey properties

Nicole recommends sellers invest in small improvements, such as painting and styling, to enhance a property's market value.

"Everything you spend on a property should give you three times what you've spent on it. If it's going to cost you \$10,000 to get the internals painted, you should be able to add \$30,000. It's a rough rule of thumb, but it is a good one to think about," Nicole tells us.

Attention to detail, cleanliness, and creating curbside appeal were also critical factors in attracting potential buyers says Nicole.

"Everything you spend on a property should give you three times what you've spent on it."

Sustaina-savvy Aussies

Here's how to make your move eco-friendly

Our survey found an impressive 81% of Australians choose generosity, donating unwanted items to charity

When it comes to moving house, the more items you have, the more it costs to move. We've found Aussies are a savvy bunch and love being part of a circular economy. Ditching unnecessary items before the move pays off for our wallets and also serves as a sustainable choice.

Our survey found an impressive 81% choose generosity, donating unwanted items to charity, while 53% prefer to share the love by giving belongings to friends and family. Adding a touch of sustainability, 49% opt for selling second-hand items. However, we did find 37% part ways with unwanted household goods by throwing them out. Diving into sentimental values, Australians express stronger attachment to their beds than to cherished photos while phones and laptops are considered among the most treasured and irreplaceable items.

Use second-hand moving boxes & upcycle packing materials

You can always find second-hand (and generally free!) boxes on places like gumtree and Facebook marketplace as well as large department stores. Use your old rags, t-shirts and household materials to wrap your fragile items and line boxes.

Clean with green products

When it's time to bid adieu to your old place, a substantial amount of cleaning is inevitable. Instead of resorting to cleaning products rife with harmful chemicals in single-use plastic containers, explore sustainable alternatives or why not try a DIY cleaning product – and they cost next to nothing to make!

💡 DIY kitchen cleaner:

For a homemade kitchen cleaner, grab baking soda to clean drains, sinks, counters, and appliances. To deodorise, pour baking soda into the drain. For stainless steel, make a paste with baking soda and water, rub in the direction of the grain, then rinse and buff dry. Apply the same paste to ceramic sinks for a sparkle.

Adopt new eco-friendly habits

Moving is the perfect time for a sustainability makeover. Embrace changes to eco-fy your new home and habits. Explore recycling programs, opt for drought-resistant landscaping, and consider starting a veggie garden.

Upgrade to energy-efficient appliances

Consider upgrading ageing appliances. Modern appliances often boast greater energy efficiency compared to their older ones and they have the potential to save you money on long-term energy bills.



