



Muval Index

From COVID to Cost of Living
Australia's new reason to move house

2022

muval

“Migration data is critical but at the moment we have a data deficit. There isn’t any way to get frequent, up-to-date, official estimates of where Australians are moving, which is where Muval comes in. We can use Muval data to nearcast internal migration at a granular level, including going beyond cities and states into regions, towns and suburbs.”

Demographer Dr. Elin Charles-Edwards,
University of Queensland

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 and 2021, Muval is a reliable source for current and future migration forecasts. In a unique partnership, demographers at the University are currently working with Muval to construct a model capable of nowcasting internal migration trends.

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Welcome to Australia's moving house Index



This latest Muval Index provides a fascinating insight into the factors driving Australians to move home in 2022.

While our inaugural 2021 index clearly showed the profound impact the COVID pandemic had on moving trends, our 2022 study reveals the rising cost of living as an emerging driver of residential relocations. As a booking platform for moving house, Muval can analyse a wealth of current data to identify internal migration

“COVID is no longer the driving force of why people move house.”

trends in Australia. This knowledge is important because it shines a light on what is happening in our cities and towns, highlighting our changing needs as a nation and providing an opportunity to give timely support to growing or shrinking communities.

This year we've also surveyed hundreds of Australians about their moving intentions to gain a clearer understanding of how and why Australians move. Our study also analysed the cost of moving, revealing that, in total, Australians spend more than \$3,000 each time they move.

We hope you enjoy exploring our latest study of what's keeping Australians moving in 2022.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'James Morrell'.

James Morrell
Muval CEO

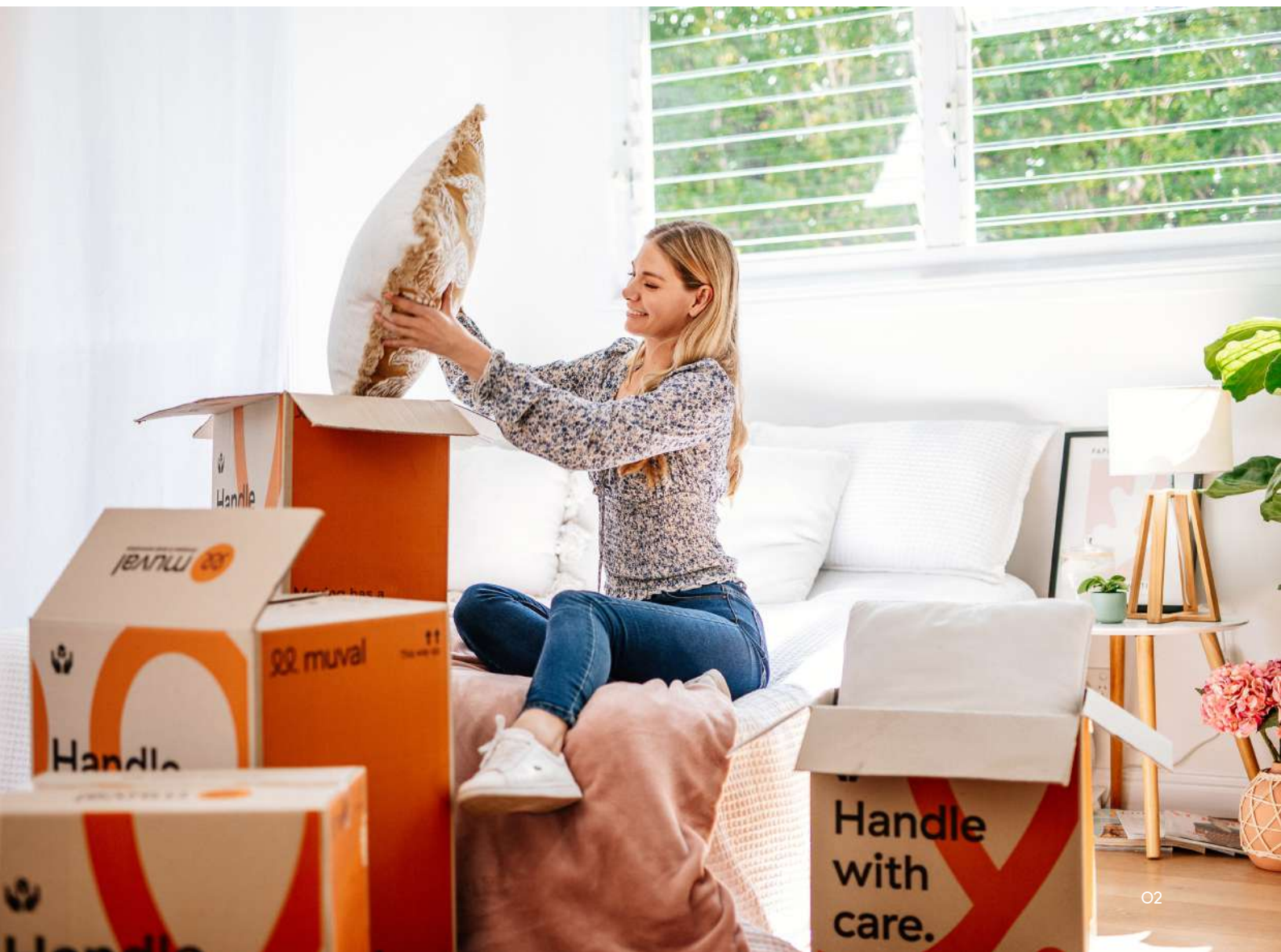
What a difference a year makes

The inaugural “Muval Index” last year highlighted how COVID was driving atypical migration trends across the country. During this period we saw a massive exodus of residents from Victoria and New South Wales to Queensland, which was less affected by lockdowns. We also saw a significant trend of people leaving cities for a tree or sea-change, with migration to regional and coastal areas increasing above usual levels.

This year, our analysis has shown that Perth has overtaken Brisbane as the place to move, with Perth’s percentage of net positive migration rising as migration to Brisbane subsides post COVID.

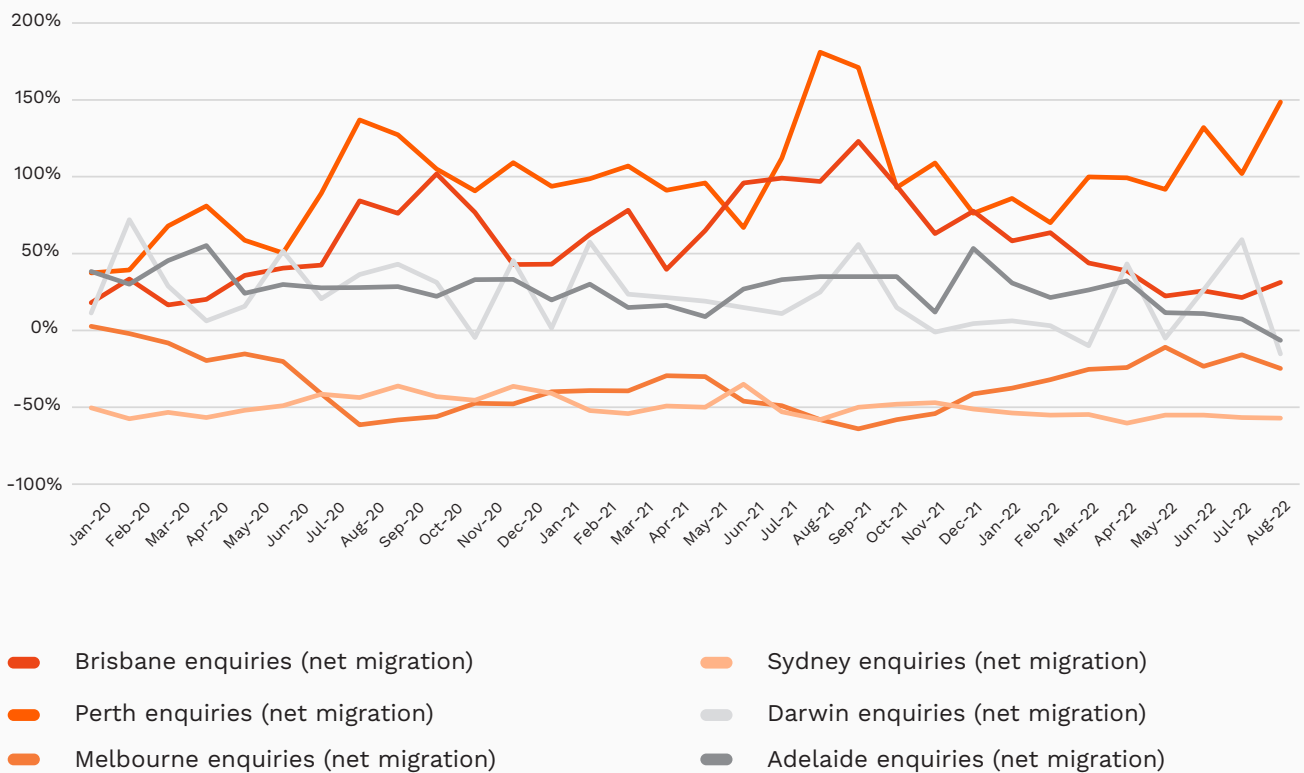
According to Muval’s data, which is proven as one of the most up-to-date sources of moving trends based on online searches for removalists, interest in moving to the Western Australian capital has been on the rise since border restrictions were lifted in early 2022.

Even during the pandemic, when Western Australia imposed one of the world’s longest border closures and banned domestic and international inbound movement to the State for almost 700 days, net migration figures for Perth were consistently high.



COVID-spurred migration has now subsided with many areas seeing a return to pre-pandemic levels.

Interstate enquiries / net migrations



The net migration figure for Perth surged from 37 per cent in January 2020 to a national high of 181 per cent in August 2021, and has continued to remain strong. As of August, the city had risen to a 2022 high of 149 per cent positive net migration.

The figures also reveal a return to pre-COVID migration trends for Melbourne, which experienced a large exodus over the previous 18 months. Both Sydney and Melbourne, however, continue to record negative net migration, as more residents move out than in.

As we see migration patterns return to pre-pandemic levels, our customers are telling us their concerns are shifting towards rising costs of living and affordability considerations are increasingly affecting when and where they move. We expect this will have an increasing impact over the next 12 months.

While Melbourne was one of the least popular destinations with many Australians during 2020 and 2021, it seems people are once again considering the appeal of the frequently voted “World’s most liveable city”.

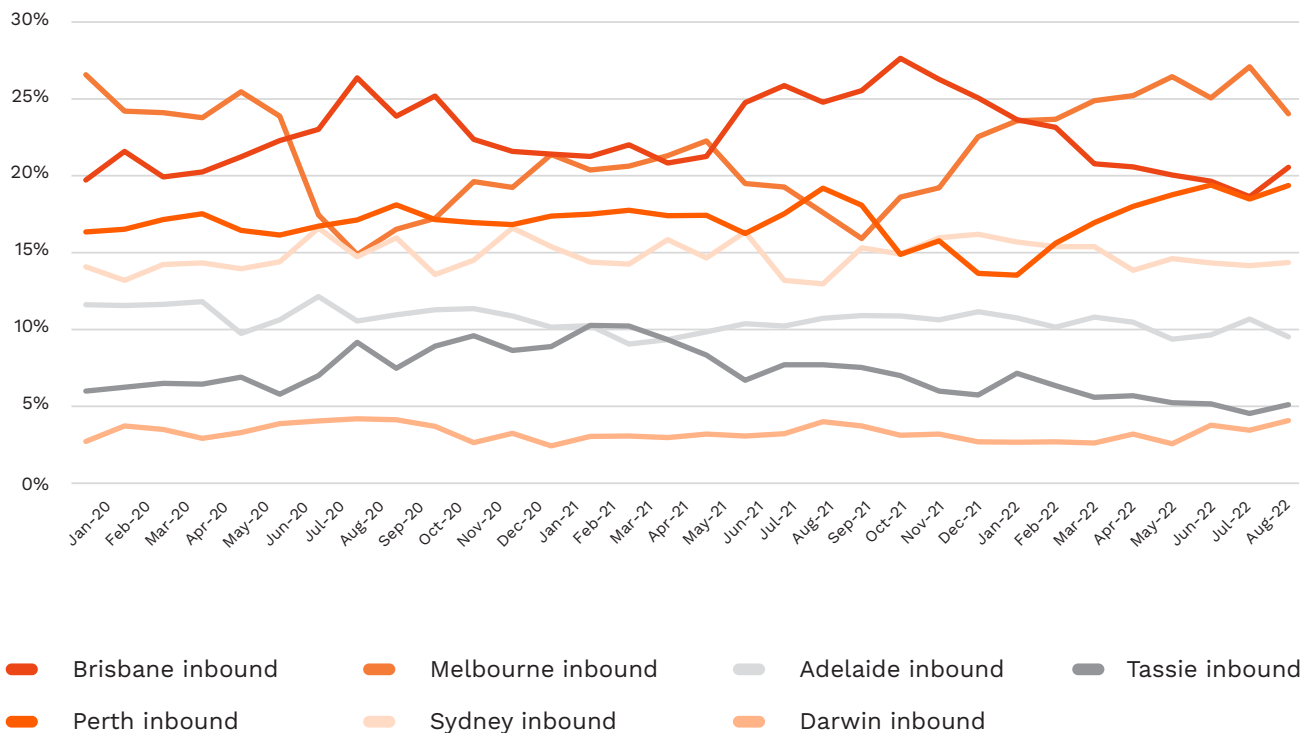
Enquiries about moving to Melbourne rose steadily from a low of 16 per cent in September 2021 to more than 25 per cent throughout the June 2022 quarter, with the city becoming the most searched metropolitan destination for moving in the first half of 2022.

While net migration to Melbourne remains negative, the trend is easing. After experiencing net migration lows of -61 per cent in August 2020 and -64 per cent in September 2021 at the height of the lockdowns, the city clawed its way back to -11 per cent net migration in May 2022, before swaying between -16 and -25 per cent in July and August 2022.

Sydney also continues to experience negative net migration, although it has held a steadier line than Melbourne, with net migration rates hovering around the -50 per cent mark between July 2021 and June 2022. The NSW capital has continued to attract around 15 per cent of inbound enquiries since January 2020.

Finally, Brisbane — the beneficiary of much interstate-migration during COVID— is averaging about 20 per cent of inbound queries. The figure represents the lowest level of enquiries for the city since January 2020 and is significantly down on its November 2021 peak of 28 per cent.

Percentage breakdown of inbound interstate moving enquiries





New Trends for 2022



Brisbane

Soft landing after record highs

Sydney

Stuck in negative net migration lull



Melbourne

#1 most searched to move to



Perth

Tops net migration %



Moving motives

Cost of living has emerged as an increasing driver of moves. However, despite interest rate increases throughout 2022, the desire to “upgrade” remains strong.

While moving house is a big undertaking, most people will happily do it in order to upgrade where they live.

This study found that a desire to live in a better home or location was the key reason Australians move, with 30 per cent of respondents indicating it was the main driver.

But as inflation and rising interest rates start to bite in Australia, monetary motivations are also coming into play, with 11 per cent of those surveyed indicating that their move was aimed at reducing their cost of living. We explore this dynamic more later in this report in the “From COVID to Cost of Living” section.

The nation’s aging population is also having an influence on moving trends, with 12 per cent of respondents saying they were looking to downsize

to a home with less upkeep. In fact, downsizing was the most common motivation for moving for respondents who were not working (23 per cent).

Whether they were chasing a sea change or a tree change, 11 per cent of those surveyed said they were moving to achieve a better lifestyle, while another 11 per cent were motivated by the desire to live near better schools for their children, including 18 per cent of family respondents and a staggering 27 per cent of first time movers.

For others, relocating is an affair of the heart, with 9 per cent of respondents saying they were shifting home because they were either moving in or breaking up with their partners. Interestingly, relationship changes were a driving force for almost one in five (19 per cent) interstate moves.

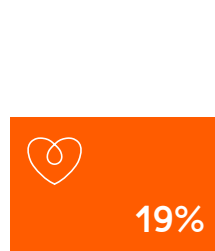
Moving to be closer to schools or better locations



Families

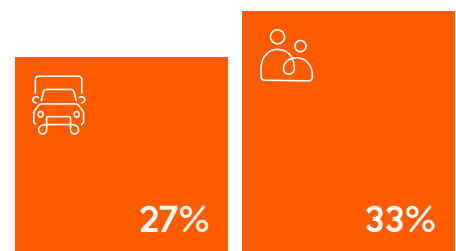
First time movers

Moving for love



Moved interstate

Renting to buying



Of people who moved to regions bought a house and were previously renting

Of regional movers were couples without children

What is the key reason people move?

30%

Upgrading

Upgrading: I want a better house and/or better location

11%

Upgrading

Better schools: To live closer to better schools for my children or future children / school catchment areas

12%

Downsizing

Downsizing: I want a smaller home with less upkeep

9%

Life change

Relationship changes: Moving in with a partner or moving out of a house shared with an ex-partner

11%

Cost of living

Reduce cost of living: I want a cheaper house and/or location

6%

Life change

For work: To take up a new job or business opportunity in a different location

11%

Upgrading

Better lifestyle: Sea-change, tree-change, new city or state

0.5%

Life change

Need assisted living

Where are we moving?

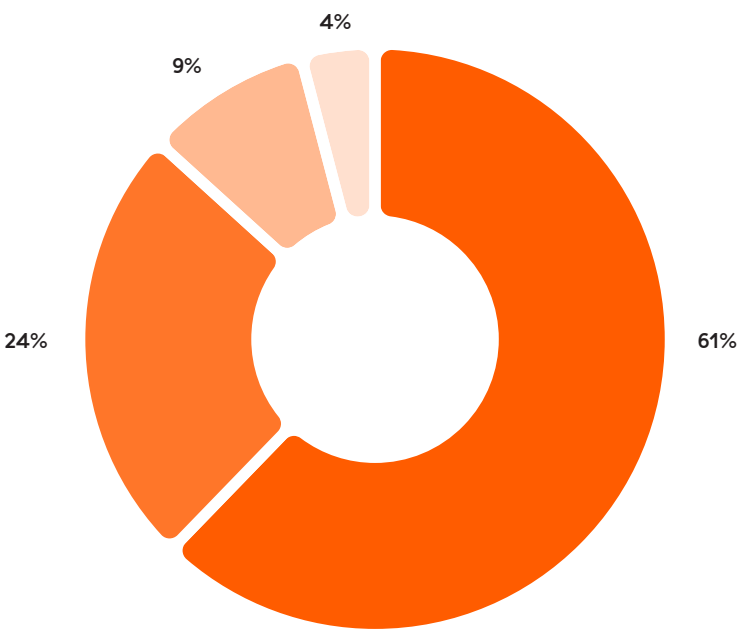
The 2022 Muval Index found that while 61 per cent of people were moving locally, almost a quarter (24 per cent) were moving to a regional destination, a figure that suggests Australians are pursuing a more relaxed and affordable lifestyle outside cities as the nation returns to normality after two years of COVID restrictions.

The continuing exodus of first home buyers from capital cities is underlined by the finding that the largest group among people shifting from a rental property to a purchased home were those moving to regional Australia (27 per cent).

While singles have a reputation for being footloose, it seems that couples with no children are the real movers and shakers when it comes to shifting homes. The Index shows that 33 per cent of couples without children were moving to regional Australia, and a further 17 per cent were moving interstate. By comparison, 19 per cent of singles were moving to regional Australia and only 5 per cent moving interstate.

Meanwhile 22 per cent of families with children were shifting to regional areas and only 7 per cent were moving interstate.

Avg % share of locations where people have moved to or plan to move (Last / Next 12 months)



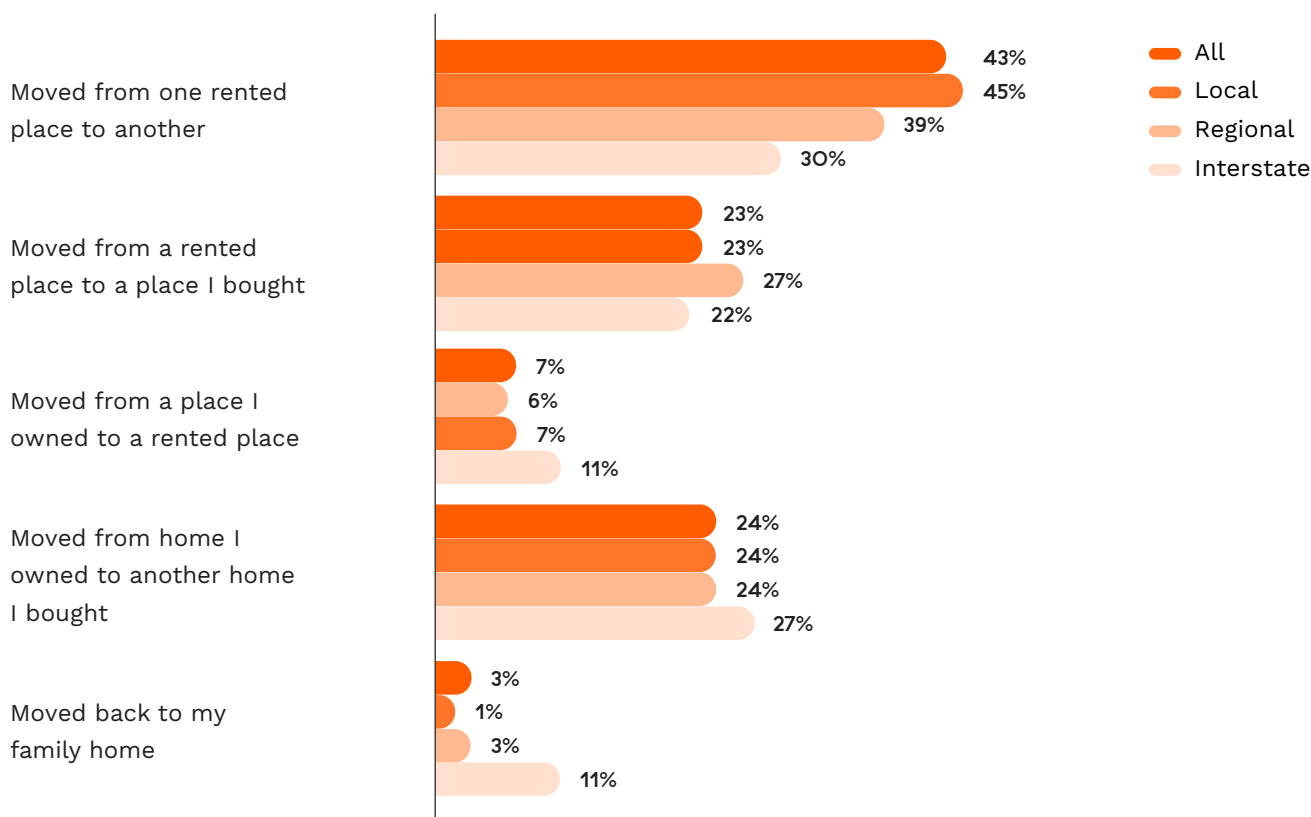
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	Single unattached	Couple no children	Family with children
Local	66%	47%	65%
Regional	19%	33%	22%
Interstate	5%	17%	7%
International	5%	1%	4%

2% Other

The Index reveals that 43 per cent of respondents were moving from one rental property to another, while 24 per cent were moving from a home they'd bought to another purchased property.

Type of move by geography



Who owns it?

Even though interest rates are once again on the rise, 23 per cent of respondents were making the move from a rental property into one they'd bought.

The proportion of single respondents moving between rentals (64 per cent) was almost double the percentage of couples with no children (35 per cent) and families with children (37 per cent).

While 49 per cent of part-time workers and 51 per cent of respondents who didn't work were moving between rental homes, 31 per cent of full-

time working respondents were moving from a rental into a purchased property making them the dominant group in this category.

People that lived in homes with four bedrooms or more were more likely to be moving between homes they owned (38 per cent) than moving between rental properties (30 per cent).

Conversely, people living in smaller one to two-bedroom homes were more likely to be moving between rental properties (55 per cent) than moving between homes they owned (15 per cent).

Master your move

Introducing Alana Lowes: our new moving ambassador and content creator for Muval.



“

Moving is so much more than just moving boxes and furniture. Moving cities meant making sure the lights were turned on and the wifi was working.

Alana's infatuation with all things food and lifestyle began on the deck of her childhood home in Mildura, a regional town in Victoria. Overlooking the local vineyards, family feasts made with love paved the way to a life of food appreciation.

A move north to the Sunshine State (via Sydney, back to Mildura, across to Canberra, then finally settling in Brisbane) spurred on her love of food, culture and a relaxed family lifestyle.

Alana was a contestant on season 3 of Masterchef Australia, finishing in third place (did we mention she had to move to Sydney and back to Brisbane again during this time!). Since then, Alana has hosted food and travel series 'A Taste of Travel' on Channel 10 and 'The Flying Foodie' for Virgin Airlines, she's an ambassador for Brisbane City Council, been a NineMSN food columnist, Editor for Life Begins At magazine and a four-time women's AFL All-Australian.

When she's not in front of the camera she has worked as a photographer and food stylist with brands and publications such as Youfoodz, Queensland Homes Magazine and Montague Fresh.



Currently, you can catch her on Channel 7's Weekender TV, where she presents lifestyle and food segments inspiring people to make the most of their weekends exploring a city or out in our regional towns.

Alana is coming on board as Muval's Moving Guru. As the new face of our content channels, she will be in front of, and behind, the camera creating content and talking all things moving house so when you think of moving, you think Muval.

“Growing up in regional Victoria I always knew I would move towns, cities or states.”

She will be building a library of content including expert interviews, moving hacks and how-to videos on Youtube, plus fun behind-the-scenes TikToks. After more than half a dozen moves, Alana has learned a few tips and tricks, and can recount her moving experiences with a healthy dose of humour.

“I've experienced all sides of moving,” she says.

“My first move was just around the corner with a trailer behind mum and dad's car and the last 25 years has seen me move from the comfort of my hometown to Sydney, back to Mildura, across to Canberra for university and then the big corporate relocation when my hubby and I moved from Canberra to Brisbane for his job!”

“We've also moved out of our house in Brisbane to renovate and then moved back in. With all the moving around the country I can't wait to share my experiences and expertise making fun and engaging content with Muval.

Moving is so much more than just moving boxes and furniture, moving cities meant making sure the lights were turned on and the wifi was working, picking the right suburb to live in and pet proofing our rental property. As the Muval Moving Guru I will be unpacking, so-to-speak, all of life's endless logistics when it comes to moving house.”

Regional renaissance

Despite some COVID-driven trends reversing in the past year, the exodus from major cities in favour of the regions looks set to continue.

The peak in regional growth



Australians' love affair with regional centres continues to deepen, with many people now seeing a move to the country as a way to upgrade their home, improve their lifestyle and reduce their cost of living.

As interest rates rise and the cost of goods and services soar, the 2022 Muval Index found that 24 per cent of movers were moving to a regional area, with that figure rising to 33 per cent among couples with no children.

About half of the regional movers said they were moving from a city to a region, while the remainder were moving between regions.

Regions are receiving more movers from major cities than major cities are gaining movers from regions



63%

Major cities to regions



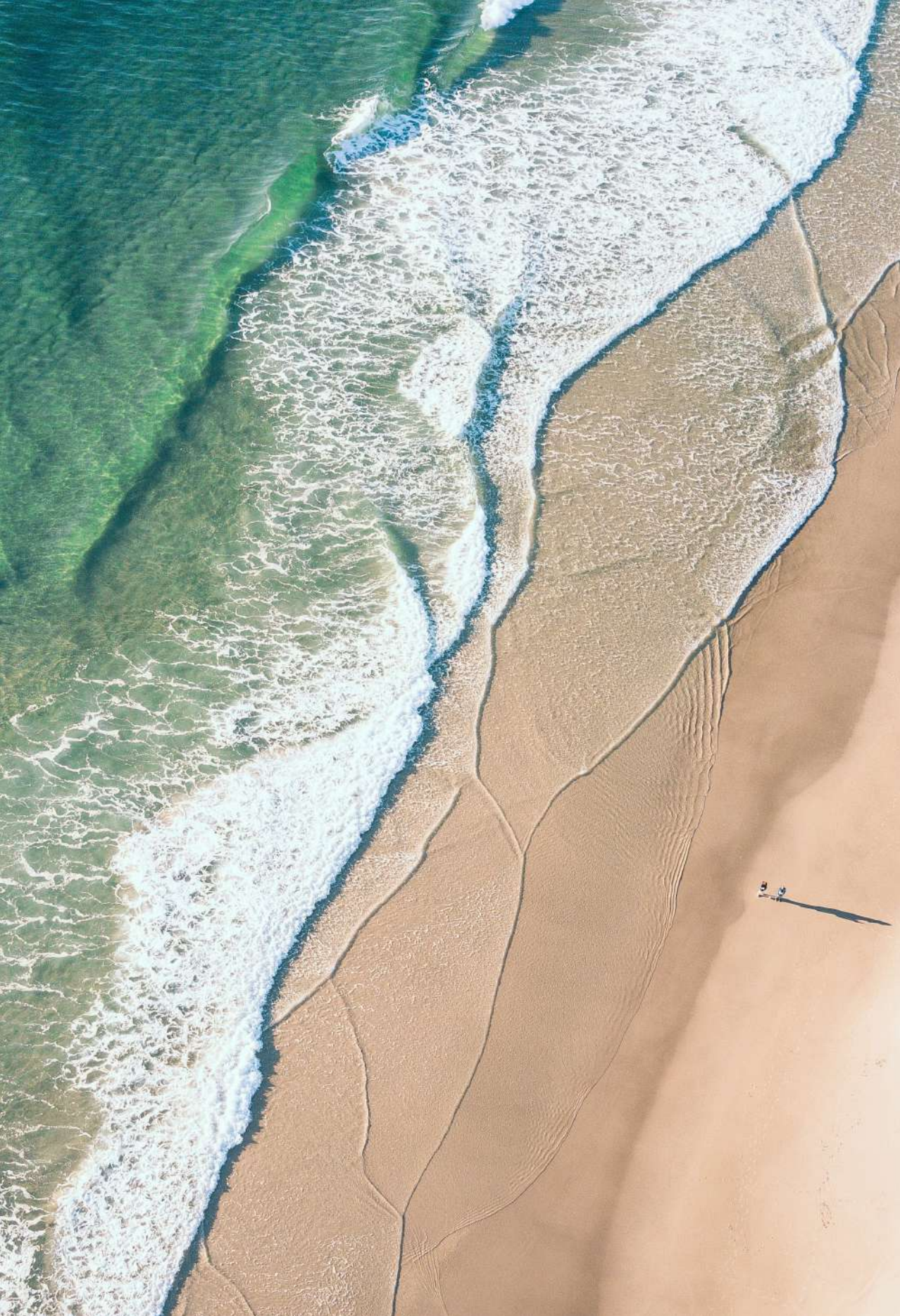
37%

Regions to major cities

More than a quarter (26 per cent) of people moving to a regional area said the main reason they were moving was to upgrade the home or the area they were living in, while 18 per cent said achieving a better lifestyle was their prime motivation.

Eleven per cent said the main reason behind their move was a reduction in their cost of living while a further 26 per cent said it was a key consideration.

Meanwhile, downsizing was the primary motivation for 13 per cent of people moving to a regional area.



Muval Chief Executive Officer James Morrell said that while Australians had moved to regional areas in droves to escape COVID restrictions in 2020 and 2021, the trend has continued post-pandemic with economic considerations, lifestyle preferences and “work from home” being the primary drivers.

Purchase behaviours surrounding a regional move

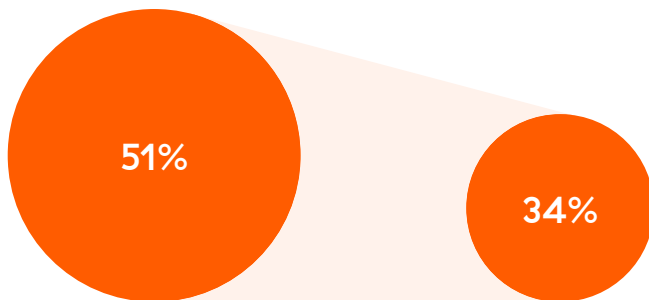
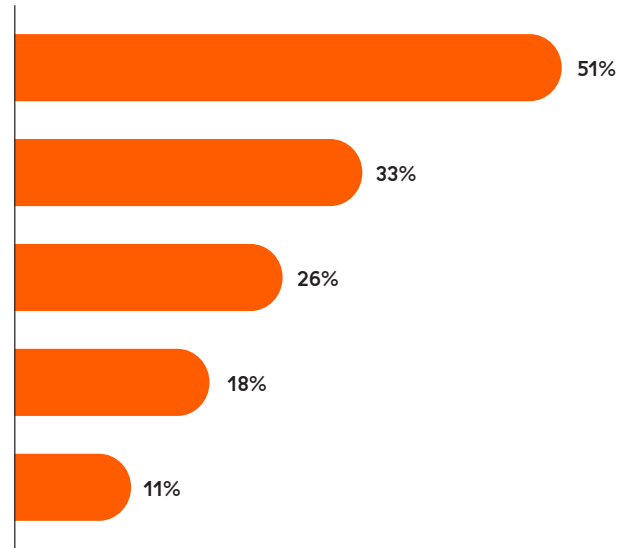
I prefer/would prefer to buy what I need for my new home in my new regional town

I prefer/would prefer to buy what I needed for my new home before moving

I prefer to change my interior design/home decor style to suit my new lifestyle or location

Regional towns don't have enough options to meet my needs for new items for my new home

I am more likely to buy new items for my home online, than in local regional stores



51% of Regional Movers can handle mortgage interest rates doubling (vs 34% other movers)

Boosting Regional Economies

Regional movers were the most likely to be moving from a rental property to a home they had purchased (27 per cent compared to an average of 23 per cent), underlining the greater affordability of housing in regional areas.

“The surging cost of goods and services as well as rising interest rates are clearly driving more people to regional areas where their dollar goes further,” Mr Morrell said.

The Index also shows that the regional shift is pumping dollars into smaller towns around the nation as movers spent money setting up their new homes and invited friends and families to visit them. More than half of respondents moving

to regional areas (51 per cent) wanted to buy what they need for their new home in their new town, while 26 per cent wanted to change their home décor to suit their new location.

About a quarter of people moving to regional towns signaled that they spent more money in the period after moving.

In addition, the Index reveals that regional homeowners experience less mortgage stress, with 51 per cent saying they could comfortably handle a doubling of mortgage interest rates over the next 12 months - much higher than the average 34 per cent of respondents.



Partnering with the Regional Australia Institute to support regional growth

In 2022 (and no doubt for some time yet) the story of regional Australia is all about jobs. Of course, COVID changed the way we work forever. For many of us, it has meant that for the first time we can work where we love, not live where we work. This has opened opportunities extending much further than working from home in a usually city-based job.

The August 2022 job vacancy figures revealed an unprecedented 91,000 job vacancies in regional Australia, almost one-third of all national internet advertised jobs.

The most sought-after skills are for professionals including doctors, nurses, lawyers, accountants and also qualified tradespeople.

Research commissioned by the Regional Australia Institute consistently finds there is a misconception that career progression is a sacrifice of moving regionally.

The Regional Australia Institute, with our Move To More partners including Muval, is working to dismiss this myth. Our Move To More platform allows regionally curious Australians to search almost 2000 regional towns to find their dream location. Our jobs partner SEEK then helps to identify the jobs on offer in that town or region, and Muval makes the move as smooth as possible.

It's clear that a move to regional Australia can lead to an improved lifestyle, with more time, more balance and better value, as well as fantastic career opportunities.

Liz Ritchie
CEO, Regional Australia Institute

From COVID to cost of living

The rising cost of living is emerging as an increasing driver of moves. We estimate that by this time next year, as many as 1 in 4 moves might be due to affordability considerations.



With inflation and interest rates rising rapidly, the cost of living crunch is set to disrupt millions of Australians.

While COVID restrictions were a driving force behind many Australians' decision to relocate during 2020 and 2021, growing economic concerns are now a key trigger for moving.

As interest rate and inflationary pressures mount, the 2022 Muval Index found that 11 per cent of respondents had already moved home in order to reduce their cost of living.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (65 per cent) said a rise in the cost of living would increase their desire to move, and 36 per cent signaled they

were likely or very likely to move to cut their living expenses.

"Our data is telling us that moving is one way Australians plan to combat cost of living pressures, with many households willing to pack up their lives to find a new home with the right price tag and a more affordable lifestyle," Muval Chief Executive Officer James Morrell said.

"With inflation and interest rates rising rapidly, the cost of living crunch is set to disrupt millions of Australians and we expect there will be another wave of people looking to move house as we move into 2023," Mr Morrell said.

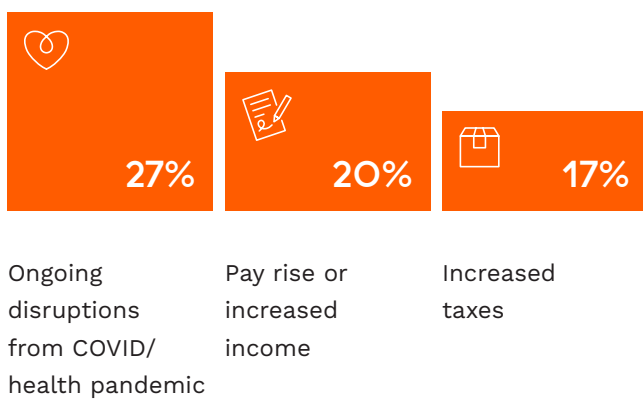
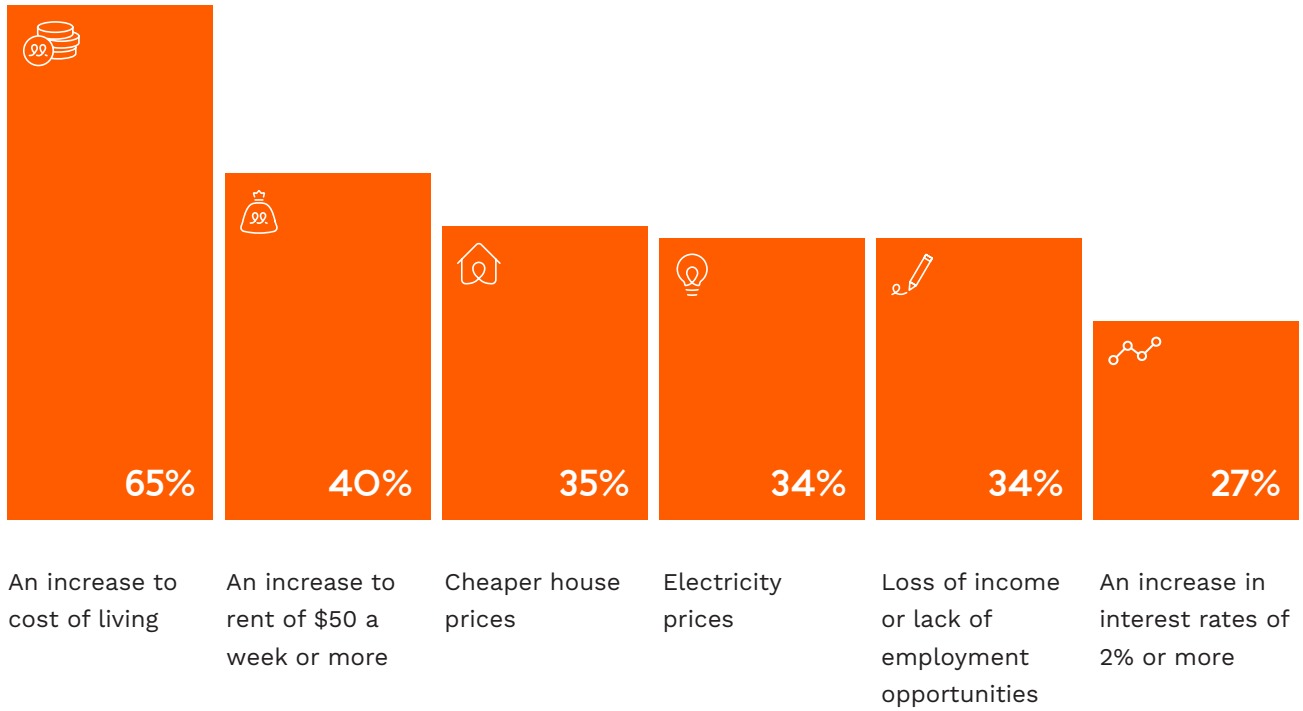
Rent hikes were the most powerful economic trigger for moving, with 40 per cent of respondents saying an increase of \$50 a week or more in their rent would make them move. Others said they would be spurred into action by cheaper house prices (35 per cent) or a loss of income and reduced employment opportunities (34 per cent).

By comparison, 27 per cent of people said concerns about disruptions from COVID would make them feel pressured to move.

About one-third (34 per cent) of all respondents said rising electricity prices would increase their desire to move, a figure that increased to 42 per cent among people not working.

Meanwhile more than a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) flagged they would look at moving if interest rates rose by 2 per cent or more - which is a scenario playing out in Australia in 2022 as the Reserve Bank increases interest rates to try to curb inflation.

What economic events increase the desire (pressure) to move?



How to make and save money when moving

Moving is exciting and one of life's biggest events but with the cost of living under the radar, let's take a look at how you can save money when moving and even make a few dollars doing it!

Before the move

- Purge, declutter, clean out – whatever you want to call it. Moving only the items you need will save on labour time and space when moving.
- Sell those items you don't want on Facebook marketplace, Gumtree, eBay or host your own garage sale. If you can't sell it, think about donating the items.
- View pricing, read moving company reviews and book a professional removalist with Muval and even look to book a removalist during the week rather than a weekend to save.
- Save on packing supplies by using towels, socks and garbage bags rather than buying bubble wrap for fragile items.

After the move

- Buy second-hand – you don't need everything straight away, start with the essentials and save from there.
- Lowering the temperature of your hot water, especially during the warmer months, means instant savings on your electricity or gas bill.
- Install ceiling fans to run rather than air-conditioning.
- Change your light bulbs to energy efficient ones.
- Ask for guests to "bring a plate to share" to your housewarming rather than gifts.





Top 3 saving tips



Sell or donate
unwanted items



Lower the temperature
of your hot water



Change your light bulbs
to energy efficient ones

The cost of moving

The Index showed that people tended to underestimate the total costs involved in all aspects of moving, highlighting the need for convenient price estimations provided by platforms like Muval.

While the prospect of a better lifestyle motivates many people to move house, there's a price to be paid first, with Australians spending more than \$3,000 each time they shift, according to the 2022 Muval Index.

The Index found that movers budget an average of \$1,581 on removalist costs and \$1,451 for additional expenses such as boxes, cleaning and packing services.

Additionally, for many people, there's even more to be spent in the six months after they move, with items like furniture, appliances and home repairs high on the shopping list.

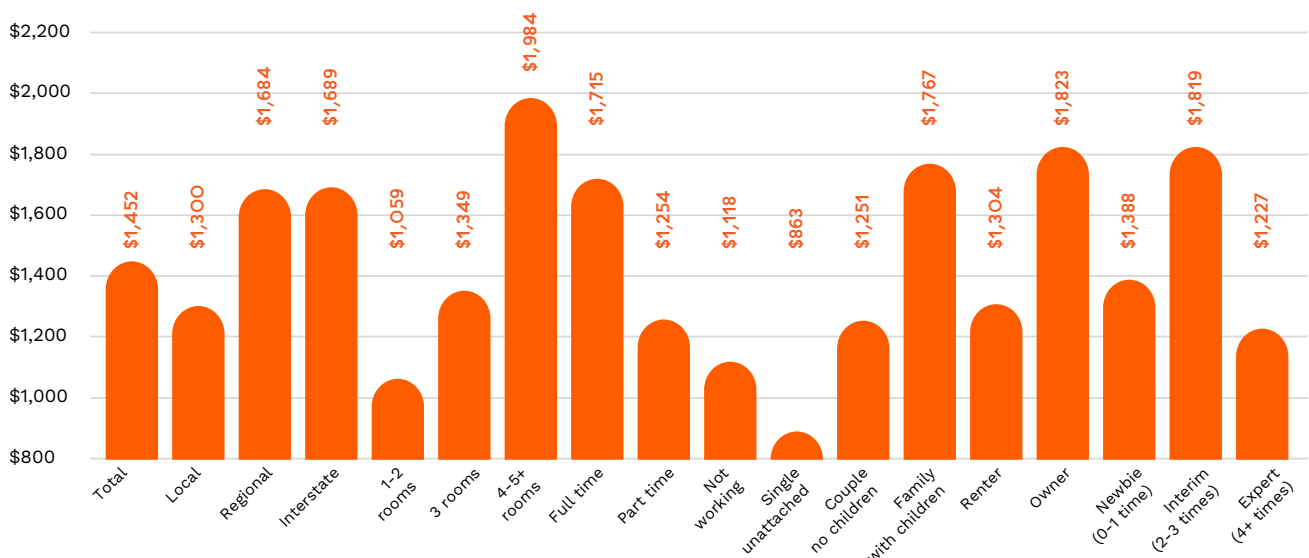
The Index found people moving interstate or to large homes are the biggest spenders, with

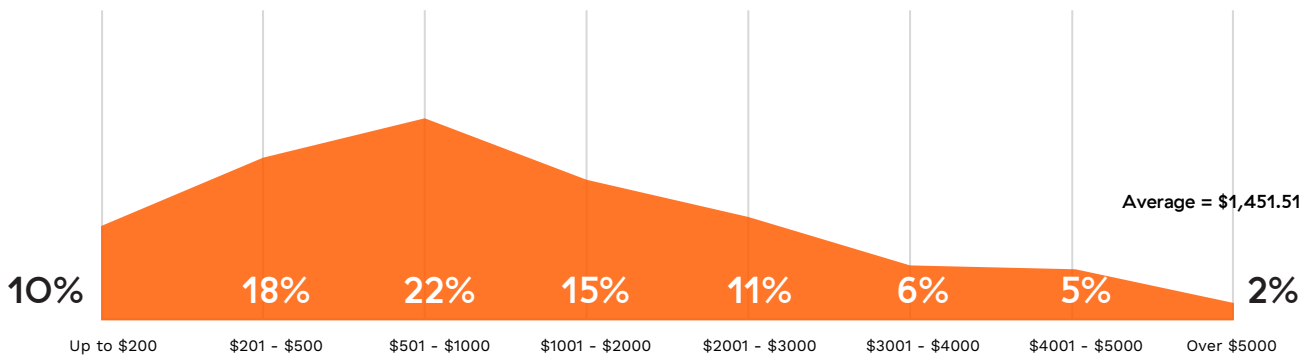
interstate movers outlaying close to \$2,500 on removalists and more than \$1,680 on additional costs. Meanwhile, people moving to homes with more than four bedrooms budgeted \$2,100 for removalists and more than \$2,000 for additional costs.

Not surprisingly, single unattached movers spend the least, with their removalist and additional costs falling just under \$2,000.

The most expensive additional cost item was packing and unpacking services, which cost respondents an average of \$300. Meanwhile cleaning cost an average of \$286, moving box expenses amounted to an average of \$233 and mail redirection cost an average of \$175.

How much do people budget for additional costs?





“It’s important to make sure you have enough money set aside for extra services like packing boxes and cleaning.”

Muval Head of Operations Dave Hillier said the findings underlined the need to budget adequate funds for a move.

“People often only focus on the removalist cost but it’s important to make sure you have enough money set aside for extra services like packing boxes and cleaning when you move, as well as new items for your new home.”

Mr Hillier said people could also save money during a move by finding a cheaper electricity or internet provider, and even make money by selling unwanted items on sites such as Gumtree and Facebook Marketplace.

According to the index, 50 per cent of movers spend money on furniture after they move, while 40 per cent buy kitchen appliances and 39 per cent purchase entertainment appliances. In large homes, new lawn mowing and gardening equipment is a priority (42 per cent compared to an average 28 per cent) while more than a third

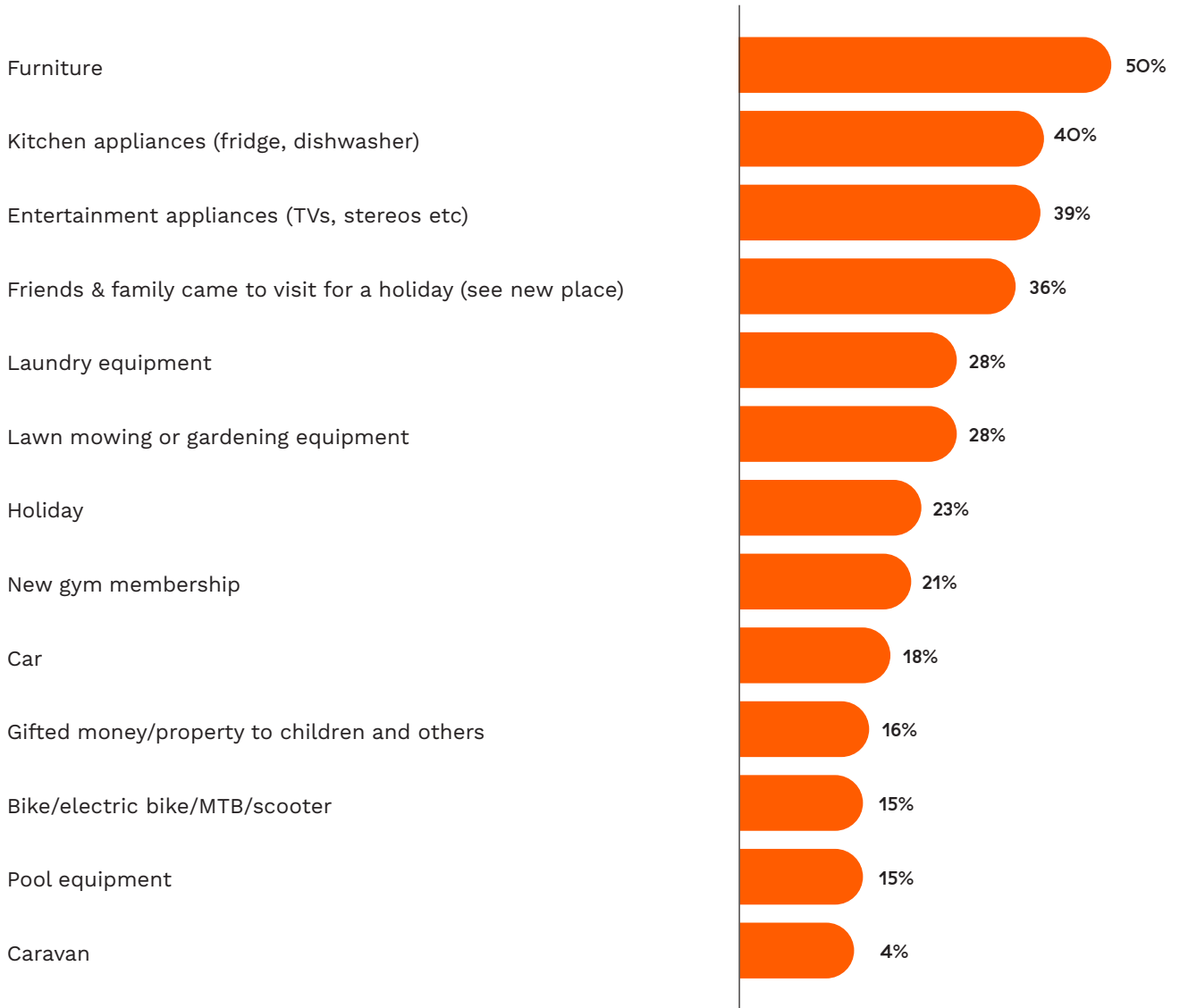
of all respondents (36 per cent) said they end up spending money on friends and family who come to visit and see their new home.

While half of the Index respondents said they maintained the same level of spending after moving, 25 per cent said they spent more, with additional spending averaging \$3,080.

Key areas where spending increased included dining out and takeaway (51 per cent), home improvements (40 per cent) and appliances and white goods (37 per cent), while other major costs were furniture (29 per cent) and day trips (28 per cent).

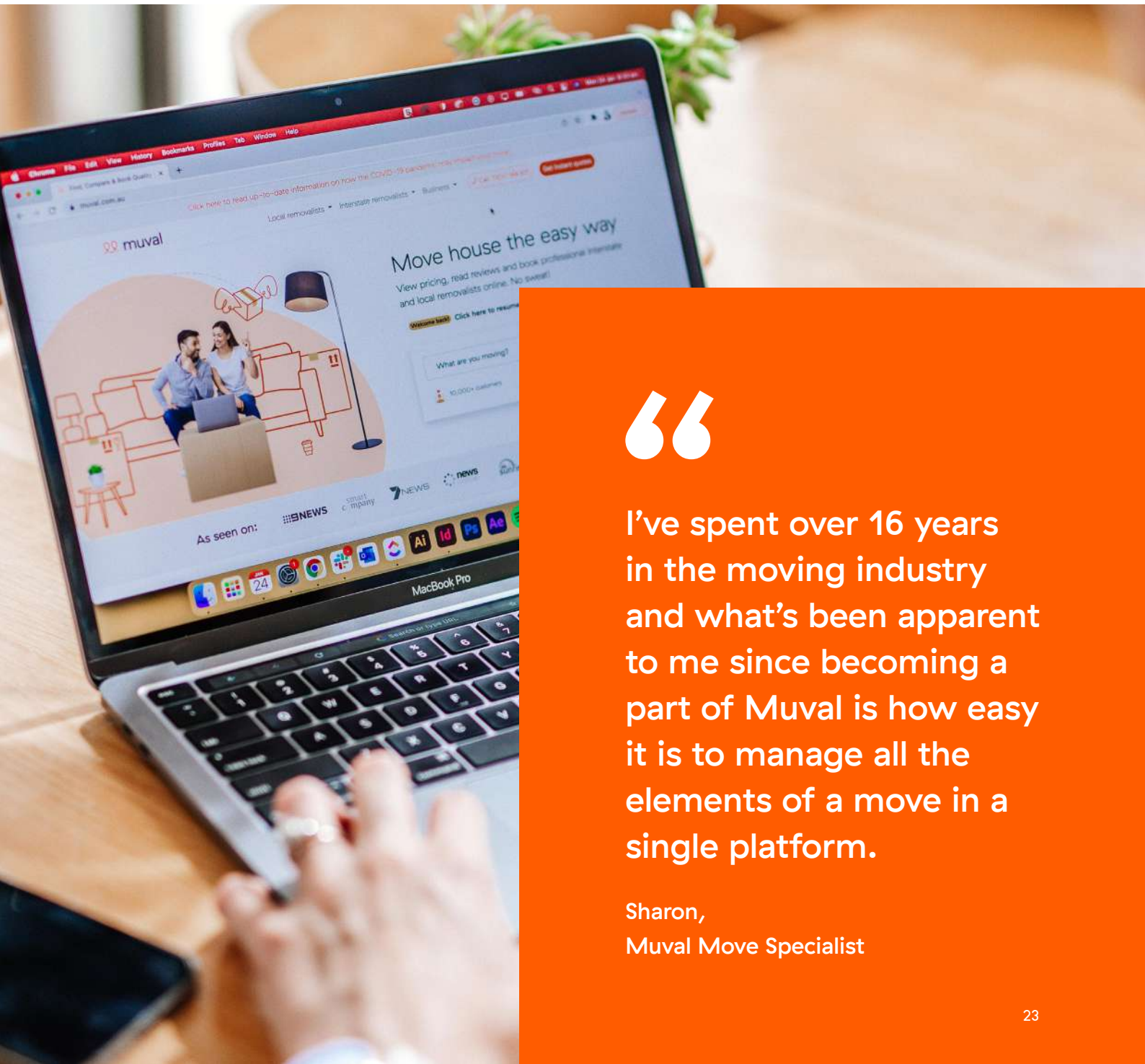
The Index also revealed that it’s not uncommon to use credit (30 per cent, a payment plan (21 per cent) or get a loan (26 per cent) to cover moving costs, which haven’t been immune to inflationary pressures in the past 12 months.

What costs/purchases were triggered by moving?



Convenience culture

A majority of respondents stated a preference for services that provided greater convenience throughout the moving process.



“

I've spent over 16 years in the moving industry and what's been apparent to me since becoming a part of Muval is how easy it is to manage all the elements of a move in a single platform.

Sharon,
Muval Move Specialist

Australian movers are keen to keep the process of shifting home as simple as possible, with almost two-thirds (62 per cent) of Muval Index 2022 respondents indicating they'd like to be able to use one platform or a single call to organise their removalist booking, as well as their new energy and internet connections.

Sixty-seven per cent of people said they were more likely to buy or would seriously consider booking additional moving services if they could book them all together and were guaranteed that it would cost no more than booking direct.

A concierge service for moving services, like Muval, was particularly appealing to interstate movers and people moving into large homes as well as full time workers and people with little moving experience.

Not only can a full concierge service like Muval save time and money, we also pride ourselves on the quality of our partners so when you 'Muval' you can do so with confidence knowing that our recommended removalists are experienced and reputable.



Moving house, the sustainable way

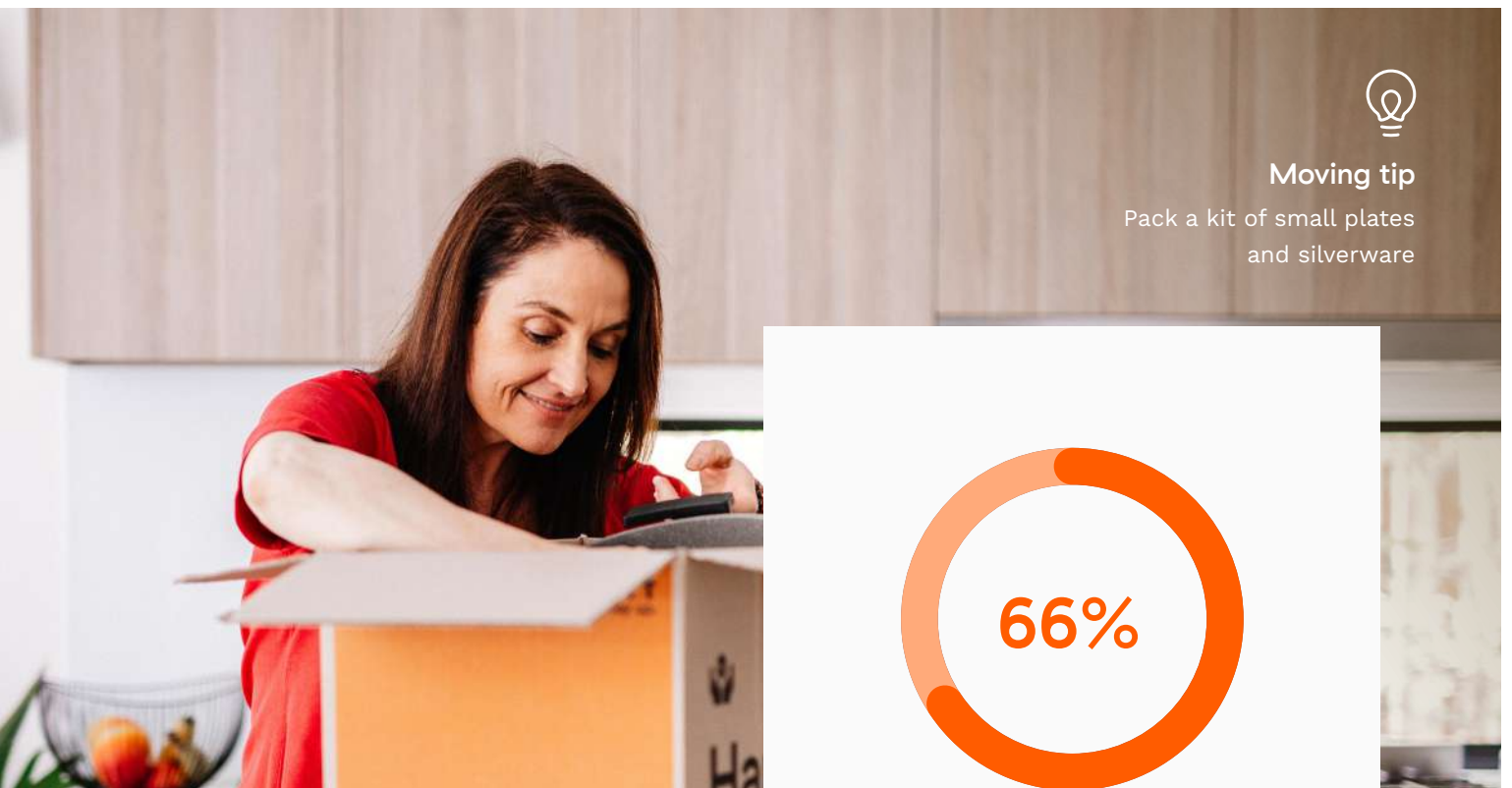
Moving house can be tough, but it doesn't have to be tough on the environment. Here are ways to make sure your moving day contributes to the circular economy and is as sustainable as possible.

Pack a kitchen survival kit

During a move, you will, invariably, order food in. In fact, one third of respondents (31 per cent) said they would spend more on take away and home deliveries at this time. Rather than going through loads of paper plates and plastic cutlery, tell the delivery places to hold the disposable cutlery and pack a kit of small plates and silverware.

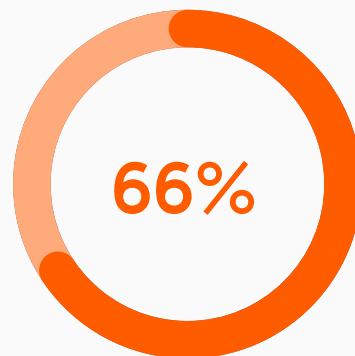
Move less stuff

The 2022 Muval Index found that around two-thirds of movers (66 per cent) declutter their belongings before moving, with 64 per cent donating unwanted goods. If an experienced mover, that number increases to 73 per cent taking goods to an op shop.



Moving tip

Pack a kit of small plates and silverware



Declutter their belongings before moving



Cut old clothes and linens into rags

With all the dust and grime to clean when moving, use old pieces of clothing cut into paper towel size rather than buying roll after roll of disposable paper towel.

Go green power

Let Muval connect you with utility companies who provide green energy options.

Add solar panels

If you are a homeowner and your new home doesn't have solar panels, your move could be the perfect time to consider a new solar system.

Update your addresses and go paperless

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