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Refuge and Family Futures in Australia: Settlement outcomes of recently arrived refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan: *Final Report*



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The depth of knowledge gained in this project was enhanced by the employment of refugees from communities at each site. We called these Bilingual Research Assistants (BRAs). These were:

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We recognise and pay respect to the Elders and communities – past, present, and emerging – of the lands that the University of Sydney's campuses stand on. For thousands of years they have shared and exchanged knowledges across innumerable generations for the benefit of all. Cover image: 'Refugees Welcome'. Getty Images.

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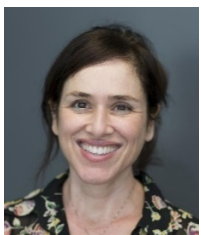
About the authors



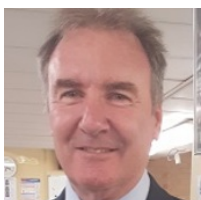
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Abbreviations

BNLA	Building a New Life in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants
BRA	Bilingual Research Assistant
CI	Chief Investigator
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant / Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
Qld	Queensland
Vic	Victoria

Research snapshot

Australia's strong response to the humanitarian conflict in Syria/Iraq saw a one-off intake through 2016-17 of 12,000 refugees from the region. A four-year (2018-2021), three-stage longitudinal study of recently arrived refugee families from Syria and Iraq in metropolitan and regional areas of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria – with a control group of refugee families from Afghanistan – **found that overall, settlement outcomes have been highly positive for the refugee families and Australia.**

Funded by the Australian Research Council, in Round 1 (2018-19) the research project **interviewed** 246 refugee families – 129 Syrian, 84 Iraqi and 33 Afghan – and **surveyed** 500 adults and 199 young people. By Round 3 (2020-21) 169 refugee families were interviewed, and 326 refugee adults and 102 youth surveyed about life before and after resettlement in Australia. The survey was derived from the BNLA (Building a New Life in Australia) conducted by the Australian government since 2013 to provide a benchmark of refugee settlement outcomes.

The key characteristics of the Syrian conflict intake are that most were Christians, and most were middle class. Specifically, the majority of the Syrian and Iraqi refugee families (73%) were Christian, all Afghan families – 20% of those surveyed – were Muslim, while 7% were Ezidi. In terms of education, 47% of Iraqi refugee adults and 42% of Syrians had prior tertiary education qualifications (cf 35% of BNLA and 39% of the Australian population). Only 9% of Afghans had a university education, while nearly half (47%) had no schooling at all.

What we found

Settlement outcomes for refugee families improved over four years.

Employment: by Round 3 of the project, 55% of refugees surveyed who were looking for work had secured employment: 59% of Syrian refugees, 58% of Iraqis, and 26% of Afghans.

English language: by Round 3 of the project, two in three adult refugees from Syria, and half of those from Iraq and Afghanistan, reported that they spoke and read English well or very well.

Social outcomes: from the outset, more than 90% of refugees found their neighbourhood a **safe** place to live and found the people in their neighbourhood **friendly**. By Round 3, 76% found it easy to make friends (cf BNLA 55%).

Neighbourhood experiences of settlement: overall, nine out of ten (90%) refugee families are **happy** living in Australia.

A good place to bring up the children: in Round 1, 92% of the respondents thought that their neighbourhood was a 'good place to bring up children', rising to 98% by Round 3 (cf BNLA 88%). By Round 3, 98% of refugees surveyed thought that their neighbourhood had good schools (cf BNLA 86%).

Young refugees were very impressive in their confidence and strong aspirations. Right from the start over three in four rated their **educational experience** as 'very good' to 'excellent'. Two in three young refugees felt that they **belonged** 'most of the time' or 'always'. Most young refugees had more than two friends, with more than half reporting that they had five or more friends from different backgrounds.

Regional settlement of refugee families has been very successful in most places and should continue.

Citizenship: for those eligible, most refugee adults and young people wanted to become Australian citizens.

Families were transformed, in terms of safety, language, and intergenerational and gender relations, seeing children thriving.

Worries: the major worry of refugee families is employment and their family members – most often aged parents – who were still back in the homeland. Family reunion in Australia is their main goal, contributing to the labour market and the economy, finding purpose and putting their skills and qualifications to good use was also echoed by the majority of those who are of working age.

1. Executive summary

1.1. The research project

This project employs a focus on social transformation as its approach (Polanyi).ⁱ By providing refuge for families, Australia has provided refugee adults and children safe haven and prospect of strong futures. The lives of the refugee families in this study have been transformed in many ways over the four to five years of this longitudinal study. Despite COVID-19 refugee family experiences have generally been very positive and while the families' lives have changed, so too have organisations' practices, policies, and resources.

Longitudinal study of refugee families: this report presents the findings of a **four-year (2018-2021), three-stage longitudinal study of recently arrived refugee families from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan** settling in metropolitan and regional areas of New South Wales (NSW), Queensland (Qld) and Victoria (Vic). Funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage Program¹, with Industry Partners – Settlement Services International (NSW), Multicultural Australia (Qld), Access Community Services (Qld) and AMES Australia (Vic) – the research focussed on the settlement, employment, and education experiences and outcomes of refugee families and the adults and young people in them.

Aim: the research aim was to look at the **settlement outcomes** of the one-off intake of Syrian-conflict refugees from Syria and Iraq introduced by the Abbott government in 2015 and mostly arriving in 2016-17. Afghan refugees – who arrived under the annual humanitarian intake – were used as a control group. Refugee families who settled into regional areas were also included to investigate the viability of future regional refugee settlement.

Interviews: in **Round 1** (2018-19) we interviewed **246 refugee families** (75 Qld, 40 Vic, 131 NSW). Of these 129 were Syrian, 84 Iraqi and 33 Afghan families. In **Round 2** (2019-20) we interviewed **183 refugee families** (62 Qld, 22 Vic, 99 NSW). In **Round 3** (2020-21) we interviewed **169 refugee families** (51 Qld, 31 Vic, 87 NSW). Except for the Victorian fieldwork, rounds 1 and 2 interviews were mainly held in the homes of the refugees. Because of COVID-19, Round 3 interviews were delayed and conducted via Zoom or phone.

¹ ARC Linkage Grant (2017-20) LP 160101735 'Settlement Outcomes of Syrian-conflict Refugee Families in Australia'. Prof Jock H Collins (UTS), Professor Carol Reid (WSU) and Dr Dimitria Groutsis (USyd)

Surveys: using an iPad, we also surveyed (Qualtrics platform) 699 individuals: 500 adults (273 from Syria, 167 from Iraq and 60 from Afghanistan) and 199 young people (107 from Syria, 49 from Iraq and 42 from Afghanistan; the origin country of one young person was unconfirmed). By Round 3, 326 adult refugees and 102 young refugees remained in the longitudinal survey. The survey drew on questions from the BNLA (Building a New Life in Australia) conducted by the Australian government since 2013. We used BNLA Wave 3 data for benchmarking purposes and comparison with our survey data.

1.2. Characteristics of the refugee informants

Gender: there was a strong gender balance with 233 adult males and 267 adult females, and 104 young males and 95 young females (aged 5-18 yrs) in Round 1, surveyed and interviewed.

Ethnic diversity: adult informants self-identified their ethnicity. Most of the Afghan refugees were Hazara while others were Tajik, Pashtun, and Uzbek. Iraqi refugees provided 13 ethnic identities, with Iraqi, Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac and Ezidiⁱⁱ the most frequent responses. Refugees from Syria responded to this question giving 11 different ethnicities, with Syrian, Armenian, Assyrian, Arab, Syriac and Kurdish the most common.

Linguistic diversity: Arabic was the most widely spoken language (41%), followed by English (15%). Most of the Afghan refugee informants spoke Dari. Most Ezidi refugees spoke Kurmanji. The adults displayed a broad range of English language proficiency. 94% of our young refugee informants spoke English in the playground at school.

Religion: 73% of our survey respondents were Christians of various denominations (Armenian, Armenian Apostolic, Assyrian Christian, Catholic, Chaldean, Christian Armenian, Christian Assyrian, Orthodox; this group includes Mandaean). One in five informants were of Muslim faith (100% of the Afghan informants, 11% of Syrian informants and 4% of informants from Iraq). 7% of the survey population were Ezidi.

Visas: most informants from Syria and Iraq arrived on 200 or 202 Visas. Many from Afghanistan were on Women at Risk 204 Visas (2 out of 3 women). A few families arrived on 201 Visas. Most of those who arrived on 202 Visas were nominated and/or sponsored by family members already living in Australia.

Diaspora: Australia's refugee communities are part of a global diaspora; 170 families mentioned that they still had family networks in origin countries; 117 families mentioned that they had family members who were still in transit countries awaiting refugee settlement; 151 families mentioned that they had family members in another Western country.

Virtual family: the refugee families who we interviewed were in regular – usually daily – communication with their diasporic family members. While their virtual family was an invaluable source of support in their daily lives in Australia, it was also a source of worry.

1.3. Pre-migration experiences of the adult refugee informants

Education: the Syrian-conflict refugee intake was very highly educated with 47% of refugees surveyed from Iraq and 42% from Syria having prior tertiary education qualifications (cf 35% of BNLA and 39% of the Australian population). Only 9% of Afghan adult refugees had a university education on arrival while nearly half (47%) had no schooling at all (cf 6% of refugees from Iraq, 7% from Syria and 16% from the BNLA).

Employment: many of the Syrian conflict intake had very high-paying jobs at senior ranks or in professions, particularly in the engineering, health and management professions. 97 Syrian and Iraqi refugees had their own business pre-migration.

Middle-class refugees: unlike most of Australia's refugee intakes, *more than half of the Syrian conflict intake had middle class backgrounds*: 84/246 of those had owned a business and 78/246 had a university education in their origin country. In 25 cases the informant owned a business in the origin country *and* someone in the family was university educated. According to this counting, there were **137/246 refugee families who were middle class in their origin countries**.

1.4. Settlement outcomes of adult refugees

Accommodation: the average family size of the refugee families was 4.55 people, with Muslim and Ezidi families larger than Christian families. Most were full of praise for the refugee settlement support agencies finding initial accommodation. Accommodation difficulty was greatest in metropolitan areas but reduced over time, with less than half of all refugee families surveyed reporting that accommodation was a difficult issue for them, and with expense being a primary concern.

Employment: overcoming the factors that block their access to the Australian labour market is one of the greatest settlement challenges that refugees face, with refugees having the highest unemployment rates of non-Indigenous Australians. Employment outcomes improved dramatically over the four years of settlement. In Round 1, when most refugees were still learning English and had not yet entered the labour market, only 14% surveyed *had paid employment*. By Round 2, this increased to 38% and **by Round 3, 55% of refugees surveyed who were looking for work had secured employment**. Female refugees had higher unemployment rates than male refugees. Syrian refugees had the greatest success in gaining employment by the third round (20% R1 to 59% R3), followed by Iraqi refugees (7% R1 to 58% R3), and Afghan refugees (8% R1 to 26% R3). These employment outcomes are similar to the Syrian-conflict refugees who settled in Canada (57% reported being employed, approximately two and a half years after settlement).ⁱⁱⁱ

English language proficiency: English language ability is an important social indicator of refugee settlement outcomes, and improves in the first years of settlement. In Round 1, about half of those adults surveyed – Afghan (48%), Syrian (50%), and Iraqi (52%) – reported that they understood English ‘well’ to ‘very well’. Four years later by Round 3 this increased to 80% of Syrian and 81% of Iraqi refugees compared to 55% of Afghan refugees. By Round 3, two in three refugees from Syria reported that they spoke and read English ‘well’ or ‘very well’, though for Iraqi and Afghan refugees it was lower. Afghan refugees reported better English reading and writing outcomes (45% for both) than those from Iraq (44% and 39% respectively).

Understanding Australian ways and culture: when asked ‘Since you came to Australia, how easy have you found it to understand Australian ways/culture?’, 63% of Round 1 responses indicated ‘easy’. By Round 3 this had improved significantly to 76% (cf BNLA 59%).

Happiness: we asked our adult refugees a final question: ‘all things considered, how happy are you with your current life in Australia?’. In Round 1, three in four (74%) adult refugees said they were ‘mostly’ to ‘very’ happy with their current life in Australia, increasing to nine out of ten (90%) in Round 3. When we break down survey results into religion – Christian, Ezidi, and Muslim – of our adult refugee informants, a more complex pattern emerged. As might be expected, refugee happiness improved with time living in Australia. Muslim refugees – mostly from Afghanistan – were the happiest about life in Australia, increasing from 80% in Round 1

to 95% in Round 3. While 63% of Christian respondents in Round 1 said that they were 'mostly' to 'very' happy with their current life in Australia, by Round 3 this increased to 93%. This pattern is reversed for Ezidis, for whom the proportion saying that they were 'mostly' to 'very' happy with their current life in Australia fell from 84% in Round 1 to 65% in Round 3. Ezidis had particularly horrific pre-migration experiences.

1.5. Neighbourhood experiences of settlement

Making friends: when asked 'since you came to Australia, how easy have you found it to make friends?', more than half (58%) of adults surveyed in Round 1 replied that they found it easy make friends. This important social outcome improved each round. By Round 3 this had improved significantly to three in four (76%), better than the BNLA yardstick (55%).

Ease of talking to neighbours: in responses to the question 'how easy have you found it to talk to your Australian neighbours?', 42% of Round 1 adult responses indicated 'easy' and by Round 3 this had improved significantly to 68% (cf BNLA 49%).

Are people in your neighbourhood friendly?: right from the outset the refugees commented on the warmth of the welcome they felt after settling in Australia, with 90% of Round 1 adult respondents agreeing to the question 'do you feel that the people in your neighbourhood are friendly'(cf BNLA 87%).

Safety: refugee families flee danger and conflict, seeking safety. By Round 3, 98% of refugee informants felt safe in Australia. Safety had the highest positive perception of all the survey items, for both young people and adults (cf BNLA 93%).

A good place to bring up the children: most refugees take the risky journey of displacement, and the unsafe journey that has led to resettlement in Australia, for the future of their children. When asked whether 'the neighbourhood is a good place to bring up children', 92% of Round 1 adult respondents agreed, rising to 98% by Round 3 (cf BNLA 88%). When asked whether 'the neighbourhood has good schools for their children', 87% of Round 1 respondents agreed, rising to 98% by Round 3 (cf BNLA 86%).

Regional settlement: while most refugees settle in Australian cities, an increasing number are settling in regional cities and towns. The surveys and interviews of refugee families show that regional settlement of refugees is generally successful, particularly when there is a 'whole of

community' buy in to support new refugee settlement such as in Toowoomba. Employment outcomes and the warmth of the welcome are as good as or better than outcomes for those refugees who settle in major metropolitan areas, though post-COVID-19 internal migration patterns have led to greater accommodation challenges for new refugee families. There are now nearly 5000 Ezidi refugees who have resettled in Toowoomba without any matching increase in resources for service delivery, putting strong pressure on service delivery there.

1.6. Settlement outcomes of young refugees

Schooling: educational opportunity is critical to young people's successful settlement. In Round 1, 79% of refugee youth surveyed rated their educational experience as 'very good' to 'excellent'. This rose to 87% in the Round 2 survey, though fell slightly to 84% by Round 3, probably because of the impact of COVID-19 on schooling. Social participation, particularly in school life, is a key settlement indicator. Comments about school life were generally positive and many cited relationships with teachers and peers, or subjects studied. The supportive nature of teachers was often cited.

Post school aspirations: young refugees had strong educational aspirations, including in the field of medicine, law and engineering. Proportionally, university study was mentioned in comments far more than TAFE. However, some young people had firm ambitions about trades roles. Twice as many girls as boys expressed interest in high-paying roles such as doctor, lawyer, and engineer. Medicine and engineering were most preferred, with girls seemingly more interested in medicine, and boys only slightly more inclined towards engineering.

English language ability: young people's attitude to English language acquisition was overwhelmingly one of confidence and optimism. They want to be good at English and many seem to rejoice in their newfound linguistic ability. Phrases such as 'I like English...' and 'I'm good at English' are found quite frequently among the comments, particularly among younger, primary-aged participants: the former is about attitude, the latter is about perceived ability. Young refugee males and females showed significant improvement over the three Rounds with the majority rating their ability to speak, read, write, and listen to English 'very good' to 'excellent'. The exception was in Round 3 English listening ability because of the COVID-19 restrictions on social contact. Several young people commented about accent in

the context of attuning or 'fitting in' to their new environment. Accent also relates to a sense of Australian identity.

The process of acquiring English language within the family may come at the expense of the continued use of the first language. Several parents seemed upset at a growing linguistic divide between themselves and their children.

Belonging: young refugees were asked about their sense of belonging in their new country, with the question 'do you feel you belong to the local community?'. In Round 1, two in three responded that they do 'most of the time' or 'always', with young refugee females demonstrating higher levels of belonging than males. This is a remarkable outcome given that they generally had been in their neighbourhood for only 12-18 months.

Safety: nearly all the young refugees surveyed – 98% in Rounds 1 and 2 and 99% in Round 3 – felt safe in Australia irrespective of their gender and of their country of origin. While adults may be more forthcoming about the dangerous living conditions they left behind, young people appear to define safety in contexts of more immediate circumstances such as the local neighbourhood or school. Negative social behaviours in the local community impact young people's sense of safety. The disapproval of substance abuse, particularly on the part of minors, was linked to safety.

Racism and discrimination: experiences of overt racism were rarely commented upon. A degree of casual or 'everyday' racism was alluded to in some comments. Many reported 'no racism' which is subtly qualified with: '...generally speaking...' or '...most of the time..' Acts of cultural disrespect, if not overt racism, were occasionally reported, such as comments about head coverings, in one instance having it ripped off in the playground.

Refugee identity: young people generally accepted their identity as refugees, though often accompanied with the notion of 'moving on' from their refugee background. In reference to being a refugee, phrases such as 'I don't mind..' or 'I'm not bothered by..' were common. No comments expressed overt shame about being a refugee, though the eagerness (or at least a willingness) to identify with a new environment and its people was evident. 'Feeling' Australian suggests a more personal embrace of their new culture, beyond socio-cultural means (such as English language proficiency).

Making new friends: most of the young refugees surveyed had more than two friends, with more than half reporting that they had five or more friends from different backgrounds, and three out of ten reporting that they had more than ten friends from different backgrounds. Sport was frequently mentioned in comments about friendship networks, particularly in school contexts, with no significant gender differences. In the wider community, most people are able to socialise in what Oldenburg calls a *third place* (2014), such as a place of worship, café or sporting field, which is a separate social surrounding from the home (first place) and the workplace (second place). The importance of local parks and playgrounds in providing a 'third place' for young refugees was often alluded to in comments.

1.7. Key findings

Regional settlement: our research has confirmed that regional settlement of refugees is mostly successful. Accommodation is cheaper and more available, and employment has been secured with equal or better success than that of metropolitan refugee settlers: by Round 3, 50% of metropolitan and 63% of regional refugees surveyed had secured employment. In terms of most of the subjective aspects of the settlement experience – including the warmth of the welcome from locals – there was little difference between metropolitan and regional refugee settlers. [NB post-COVID-19 internal migration to regional areas has impacted negatively on housing availability].

Employment: finding a job commensurate with their abilities has been a key concern of refugee adults in each stage of the research. Families in the Syrian and Iraqi intake were carefully chosen to include high numbers of professionals and those with higher education qualifications and a strong employment history. Most of these have not yet been able to move into similar employment positions in Australia.

Family reunion: nearly all refugee families had family members – most often aged parents – who were still back in the homeland or who settled in other countries. Their welfare was a constant cause of worry for the refugee families in Australia, most seeking to get their family members visa pathways to Australia.

Citizenship: one very strong finding of this research was that *nearly all the refugee adults and young people interviewed and surveyed were very keen to become Australian citizens*. Citizenship means to refugees that they are finally 'Australian', that they can travel on an

Australian passport, and can formally call Australia home. It also means that they can repay Australia for the opportunity of refuge for their family, for which all refugee families are immensely thankful.

Identity: the number of refugees identifying as Australian increased over the time of settlement. By Round 3, more than half of the refugee adults interviewed felt Australian, while more than a third indicated that they were feeling partly Australian and partly another identity.

Experiences of racism: while the issue of racism was not systematically raised with all refugee adults and youth, when the subject did arise in family interviews, most refugees said that they did not experience racism in Australia. Those who did make mention indicated that racism occurred as isolated incidences in public spaces.

Family futures: the centrality of better futures for all family members, particularly for the children, was the main recurring narrative in this project. Refugee parents valued the safety and education opportunities Australia afforded, where safety meant the freedom for their children to become whatever they wanted to be. Young people valued the support in schools given by teachers and local community organisations, excited by the possibilities open to them.

Impact of COVID-19: the third round of the fieldwork for this research project corresponded with the onset of COVID-19. This meant that the third stage of the fieldwork was delayed, and we moved from family visits to virtual interviews via Zoom and phone. This led to fewer respondents to the interviews and surveys in Round 3. COVID-19 *impacted on the refugees* mainly in the domain of work, learning and social life. Young refugees lost opportunities for conversation in English while undertaking remote learning. COVID-19 also transformed Australian settlement patterns and the economy, impacting on the housing and employment opportunities for refugees who arrived after the fieldwork was completed in 2021-2022.

Social Transformation: By providing refuge for refugee families, Australia has provided refugee adults and children safe haven and prospects of a strong future. The lives of refugee families have been transformed positively over the four to five years of this longitudinal study. Adult refugees are so thankful of the opportunity that Australia has provided for them and their families. They are keen to repay Australia over their future lives as Australian citizens

and workers. Refugee young people have adopted to Australian life quickly, and are very confident of their education and employment future and identify strongly with Australia.

1.8. Conclusion

During the first Round of interviews for this research project, when we mostly interviewed refugees who arrived in Australia in 2017, Australia's refugee intakes were *approximately double* the average humanitarian intake of the past two decades. This is because of the arrival of the Syrian-conflict intake of refugees at the same time as refugees arrived under the annual humanitarian program. The settlement outcomes of the Syrian-conflict refugees and Afghan control group were thus a litmus test of the capacity of Australia to receive and resettle refugees and of Australia's institutional capacity to overcome the difficulties that new refugee families face on arrival in Australia. Our research has revealed that the refugee families were overwhelmingly grateful for – and praising of – the on-arrival services of their service providers (our Industry Partners: Settlement Services International (NSW), Multicultural Australia (Qld), Access Community Services (Qld) and AMES Australia (Vic)).

This research provides the *most extensive contemporary data base* and *evidence-based research* from which to evaluate refugee settlement outcomes in Australia. A key finding is the great diversity – ethnicity, class, religion, language spoken and pre-displacement experiences of education and employment – of the refugee intake from the countries of Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, a point often overlooked in stereotypical discourses about refugees in Australia.

The findings are overwhelmingly positive about Australia's capacity to receive and resettle refugee families who suffer trauma and sometimes torture, as they flee their homeland for an uncertain future. The refugee families feel safe living in Australia, they perceive a warm welcome from their new neighbours in Australian suburbs and regional towns, they feel happy living in Australia, and are very optimistic about their future in Australia. They are repeatedly thankful to Australians for giving them a new beginning to life, and want to repay Australia by taking out Australian citizenship as soon as it is available. More than two thirds identify as Australian and feel that they belong here. The young refugees settled very quickly and have strong aspirations for their future in Australia.

The longitudinal study found that *refugee settlement outcomes improve over time*. Of course not all refugee families have the same degree of settlement success, but our study used the BNLA Longitudinal study as a benchmark and found the settlement outcomes of the Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan families exceeded the BNLA benchmark by a considerable amount in nearly all socio-economic and subjective indicators. This is further evidence of the successful settlement outcomes of these Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan families. Employment and family reunion challenges are of most concern to refugee families and require more innovative policy responses.

2. The research project

This report presents the findings of a four-year (2018-2021), three-stage longitudinal study of recently arrived refugee families from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan settling in New South Wales (NSW), Queensland (Qld) and Victoria (Vic). Funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage Program² – with Industry Partners, Settlement Services International (NSW), Multicultural Australia (Qld), Access Community Services (Qld) and AMES Australia (Vic) – the research focussed on the settlement, employment, and education experiences and outcomes of refugee adults and young people. The family was situated as the focus of our research since settlement outcomes are experienced within and mediated by the refugee family. We also conducted 20 key stakeholder interviews in the three states. The research was designed to investigate settlement outcomes for refugees who settled in metropolitan and regional areas in three States: NSW, Queensland, and Victoria. The benefit of longitudinal research is that it enables insights over time – in this case four-years – into the lives and settlement outcomes of refugee adults and young people. Like all longitudinal research the challenge is to retain informants. The overall adult attrition rate across the four-year survey was 34.8% and the young person attrition rate was 49.0%. The onset of COVID-19 exacerbated the dropout rate. We began by interviewing 246 refugee families. By the end of the study, 162 families had participated in all three rounds.

² ARC Linkage Grant (2017-20) LP 160101735 “Settlement Outcomes of Syrian-conflict Refugee Families in Australia”. Prof Jock H Collins (UTS), Professor Carol Reid (WSU) and Dr Dimitria Groutsis (U Syd)

3. The Background

There is no more controversial issue related to Australia's contemporary immigration program than that of refugees, those who arrive in Australia under the humanitarian component of the annual permanent intake program plus those unauthorised arrivals who seek asylum in Australia. In 2015, the Abbott Australian Government announced the one-off resettlement of 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees from the Syrian-conflict, in addition to the annual intake of over 13,000 refugees under the humanitarian program. This research project was designed to investigate the settlement outcomes of Syrian and Iraqi refugees who arrived under the Abbott Syrian-conflict program, with a control group chosen of Afghan families from the ongoing humanitarian program and arriving during the same period.

Australia is one of the western world's great immigration nations (de Haas et al. 2020, Collins 2018, Collins et al. 2020a, International Organization for Migration [IOM] 2020: 120). Since World War II Australia has had one of the relatively largest and most diverse immigration programs among OECD countries: in 2020, 30% of the population were first generation immigrants (OECD 2021: 238). For a nation historians say was founded on the White Australia policy (Price 1974, Markus 1994), Australian immigration policy has always been controversial (Marr and Wilkinson 2003, Collins 2019). The UNHCR estimated that by 2018 there were 70.8 million individuals forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations (<https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/statistics/unhcrstats/5d08d7ee7/unhcr-global-trends-2018.html>).

While refugee intakes have been a constant backdrop to Australia's immigration history in the past three-quarters of a century – driven by political conflict and wars – there have been several key waves of refugee intakes. Jewish refugees arrived on Australian shores seeking asylum prior to World War II on the boat Dunera, while Displaced Persons from Eastern Europe comprised a significant part of the refugee intake in the first five years of the post-war immigration program. Following the fall of Saigon in 1975, thousands of Vietnamese arrived after a dangerous, perilous journey by small boat. From the 1990s, small boats of asylum seekers again began to arrive on north-west Australian shores, this time mostly people escaping conflict and persecution in the Middle East. The Keating Labor and Howard Conservative governments enacted policies that restricted the rights of asylum seekers

arriving by boat – boat people – to settle in Australia. Australia’s refugee resettlement programme is the third largest in the world, with nearly 13,000 refugees resettled in the country in 2018 (UNHCR 2019).

In recent years political conflict again drove new intakes of refugees to Australia. In 2015, the Australian Government announced the one-off resettlement of 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees in addition to the annual intake of refugees under the humanitarian program (Bourke 2015). These two groups were identified and targeted as in need of support because the Syrian conflict and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) persecution in Syria and Iraq displaced millions of refugees and generated unprecedented flows of refugees to Europe. Most arrived in Australia in 2017, when the Humanitarian Program was increased from 13,750 refugees in 2016-2017 to 16,250 refugees in 2017-2018. The humanitarian intake was to further increase to 18,750 refugees in 2018-2019 (DOHA 2020) but was reduced to 13,750 in 2020 (DOHA 2021).

In 2021 the withdrawal of Australia’s coalition military forces from Afghanistan and the sudden and unpredicted ascendancy of the Taliban led to new intakes of Afghan refugees. More than 3,000 Afghan refugees have arrived in Australia, many of them translators and support workers for the Australian armed forces in Afghanistan.

Much of the refugee debate in Australia is based on stereotypes, stigma, generalisations, and pre-determined political ideology. Refugee policy has become a key issue in Australian Federal elections. The issue of boat people played a key role in the 2001 election – the children overboard election – won by the Howard Government (Marr and Wilkinson 2003) and was a key issue in recent Federal elections (Baker 2019). There is an urgent need to reinsert into this debate evidence-based research about the settlement experiences and outcomes of recently arrived refugees in Australia.

4. Methodology

A multi-method approach has been employed to collect and analyse data: including surveys (requiring quantitative analysis), semi-structured interviews with refugees and key stakeholders in the field, and documentary analysis. The surveys for all family interview participants comprised instruments that reflected some questions used in the Building a New Life in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants (BNLA) conducted by the

Australian government since 2013 (see Appendix 1). Questions were deliberately framed to mirror the BNLA to allow for a comparison of quantitative data over the four-year, three-round period with the pre-existing longitudinal survey instrument. Adults were asked a total of 25 questions (see Appendix 2), and young people were asked a total of 15 questions (see Appendix 3). The survey was completed in the community language or in English where relevant, administered largely by the Bilingual Research Assistant (BRA) or by the individuals themselves. It was completed on an iPad using Qualtrics. BNLA data was included in some of the analysis, for comparison and benchmarking purposes, particularly so with regards to integration and employment outcomes. BNLA data was sourced from the Department of Social Services (2017) and pertains to Wave 3 data, which was collected in 2015.

The process of participant recruitment adhered to University Ethics guidelines, whereby participants were contacted through a third party (for refugees and educators), and directly (for stakeholders). Participants were informed about the project and could voluntarily opt in or out of an interview. For the refugee interviews, migrant resource centres and various non-government organisations involved in refugee service delivery played a critical role in assisting with arranging a community event where refugees were invited to come along to an information session to hear about the project. The information session was presented by the Chief Investigators (CI), partnered with a bilingual translator who simultaneously translated the information provided by the CI and any questions emerging throughout the session. Translated information sheets were also distributed at the session.

Following the information session, names were collected from interested participants and they were subsequently contacted by third-party organisations. Representatives from these organisations assisted with creating a timetable for participant interviews. Interviews were scheduled at a time of convenience to the family. Except for interviewees in Victoria, the majority of the interviews were undertaken at the homes of the refugee families, with relatively few opting to be interviewed at the migrant resource centre (18 in NSW). All family interviews took between one and two hours. Chief Investigators were accompanied to all interviews by a BRA.

All BRAs were refugees sourced through community organisations. In this way the research project could both draw on resources within refugee communities but also train and empower those selected to assist in our refugee family fieldwork. Following a response to the

Expression of Interest, all BRAs participated in a training session, involving an ice breaker exercise and in-depth information on the project and the process of interview. All information sheets and question sheets were distributed to provide clarity around the nature of the questions and type of information to be elicited. The BRAs were crucial in building the cultural and linguistic bridge between interviewer and interviewee; and in creating an efficient and effective comfort in the process of the interview. Reports of the first-year findings of the research project were presented to meetings of the refugee communities in each place of fieldwork. These reports are available in English as well as some in Arabic and Dari translations (Collins et al. 2019a,b,c,2020b,2021a,b).

The report below is based on the survey of, and interviews with, adult and young people in Afghan, Iraqi and Syrian refugee families residing in NSW, Queensland, and Victoria, between November 2017 and May 2021. Survey data was collected in three phases designated as 'rounds'. Organisational challenges arising during collection, including the COVID-19 pandemic, meant that for individual participants, collection intervals varied. An approximate interval of 12 months between survey completions is indicative of the schedule of data collection (see Table 4.1 below).

Table 4.1 Indicative schedule and duration of data collection rounds

Round	Data collection period
1	2018/19
2	2019/20
3	2020/21

The adult survey data was analysed in three broad areas: (1) demographic: characteristics of the informant (age, gender, location, ethnolinguistic characteristics, etc.); (2) integration: social relationships within the local community, English language acquisition, and sense of well-being, belonging, and safety; and (3) employment. The family interviews canvassed a broader range of refugee family experiences, expectations, and intentions. The young people survey data also focussed on demographic characteristics and explored relationships with the local community, engagement with school, English language acquisition, and sense of belonging and safety.

5. Who we interviewed

We invited refugee families in all three states, with the aid of our Industry Partners, who were key service delivery agents for newly arrived refugee families. In Round 1 (2018-19) we interviewed 246 refugee families (131 NSW, 75 Qld, 40 Vic). Of these 129 were Syrian, 84 Iraqi and 33 Afghan families. In Round 2 (2019-20) we interviewed 183 refugee families (99 NSW, 62 Qld, 22 Vic). In Round 3 (2020-21) we interviewed 169 refugee families (51 Qld, 31 Vic, 87 NSW). Except for the Victorian fieldwork, Rounds 1 and 2 interviews were mainly held in the homes of the refugees. Because of COVID-19, Round 3 interviews were delayed and conducted via Zoom.

6. Who we surveyed

Table 6.1 shows that 500 adult refugees were surveyed in Round 1. Because of traditional longitudinal survey drop-out rates and because of the onset of COVID-19, this had fallen to 326 adult refugees in Round 3. The decision to survey the Afghan control group only in NSW and Queensland explains why there are no Afghan adults surveyed in Victoria. In Round 1, 246 of the refugee adults surveyed lived in NSW, 165 in Queensland and 89 in Victoria. The variation in the size of each state's refugee survey also reflects the funding arrangements that we had with the Industry Partners in each state.

Table 6.1 Adult refugees surveyed, Rounds 1, 2 and 3

Former country	Round 1 (n=500)			Round 2 (n=373)			Round 3 (n=326)		
	NSW	Qld	Vic	NSW	Qld	Vic	NSW	Qld	Vic
Afghanistan	44	16	0	30	16	0	14	16	0
Iraq	100	49	18	75	38	15	51	38	19
Syria	102	100	71	88	75	36	64	62	62

Table 6.2 Metropolitan and regional location of adult refugees surveyed, Rounds 1, 2 and 3

State	Location	Settlement	Round 1 (n=500)	Round 2 (n=373)	Round 3 (n=326)
NSW	Auburn	Metropolitan	37	23	11
	Coffs Harbour	Regional	24	24	15
	Fairfield	Metropolitan	93	75	50
	Liverpool	Metropolitan	43	28	18
	Parramatta	Metropolitan	36	29	25
	Wollongong	Regional	13	14	10
Qld	Brisbane	Metropolitan	54	42	30
	Logan	Regional	58	40	32
	Toowoomba	Regional	53	47	54
Vic	Melbourne	Metropolitan	71	40	62
	Shepparton	Regional	18	11	19

Table 6.2 indicates the metropolitan and regional location of adult refugees who participated in the research. In NSW interview and survey data were collected across four Sydney local government areas – Auburn, Fairfield, Liverpool, Parramatta – and two regional areas – Coffs Harbour and Wollongong. In Queensland interview and survey data were collected in the Brisbane metropolitan area and in the regional cities of Logan and Toowoomba. In Victoria interview and survey data were collected in the Melbourne metropolitan area and in regional Shepparton.

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 show the locations of the young refugees who participated in the research project. In Round 1, 199 young refugees participated: 42 Afghans, 107 Syrians and 49 Iraqis. By Round 3, 102 refugee youth remained in the longitudinal study. The metropolitan and regional locations were the same as those of the refugee adults.

Table 6.3 Young refugees surveyed by country of origin, Rounds 1, 2 and 3

Former country	Round 1 (n=199)* *the country of origin of one young refugee was unknown			Round 2 (n=127)			Round 3 (n=102)		
	NSW	Qld	Vic	NSW	Qld	Vic	NSW	Qld	Vic
Afghanistan	30	12	0	21	19	0	1	16	0
Iraq	25	18	6	15	9	7	5	13	8
Syria	28	29	50	18	16	22	8	14	37

Table 6.4 Metropolitan and regional location of young refugees surveyed, Rounds 1, 2 and 3

State	Location	Settlement	Round 1 (n=199)	Round 2 (n=127)	Round 3 (n=102)
NSW	Auburn	Metropolitan	27	17	0
	Coffs Harbour	Regional	13	17	7
	Fairfield	Metropolitan	16	2	0
	Liverpool	Metropolitan	8	5	0
	Parramatta	Metropolitan	14	6	6
	Wollongong	Regional	6	7	1
Qld	Brisbane	Metropolitan	9	6	6
	Logan	Regional	27	11	11
	Toowoomba	Regional	23	27	26
Vic	Melbourne	Metropolitan	29	16	27
	Shepparton	Regional	27	13	18

7. Characteristics of the adult and young refugee informants

7.1. Adult informants

Gender

We were careful to ensure that there was a strong gender balance among our adult and young people refugee informants. In Round 1, 233 adult males and 276 adult females were surveyed. Many of the Afghan adult informants arrived on Woman at Risk Visas so that two in three were female.

Ethnic Diversity

In Round 1, informants self-identified the answer to the question of ethnicity, rather than choosing alternatives from a provided list. Most of the Afghan refugees were Hazara while others were Tajik, Pashtun and Uzbek. There were 13 ethnic identities provided by Iraqi refugees: Iraqi, Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac, and Ezidi were the most frequent responses (see Table 7.1). Refugees from Syria gave 11 responses to this question, with Syrian, Armenian, Assyrian, Arab, Syriac, and Kurdish the most common.

Table 7.1 Ethnicity of adult refugee informants

Afghanistan (n=58)	(n)	Iraq (n=165)	(n)	Syria (n=256)	(n)
Hazara	36	Iraqi	40	Syrian	129
Tajik	15	Assyrian	30	Armenian	33
Pashtun	5	Chaldean	24	Assyrian	27
Uzbek	2	Syriac	20	Arab	26
		Ezidi	19	Syriac	17
		Aramaic	9	Kurdish	11
		Syrian	7	Ezidi	5
		Mandaean	6	Aramaic	4
		Arab	4	Iraqi	2
		Aramaic/Mandaean	2	Canaanite	1
		Middle Eastern	2	Iranian	1
		Armenian	1		
		Shi'a	1		

Linguistic Diversity

Multiple responses were allowed, with informants recording a fluency in 24 languages, highlighting the multi-lingual characteristic of the refugee informants. Arabic was the most widely spoken (41%), followed by English (15%) (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Language spoken by adult refugee informants

Language	Round 1 (n=1013 responses)	(%)	Language	Round 1 (n=1013 responses)	(%)
Arabic	416	41%	Kurdish	43	4%
Aramaic	14	1%	Kurmanji	5	0%
Armenian	33	3%	Pashto	11	1%
Assyrian	73	7%	Persian*	5	0%
Chaldean	30	3%	Russian	2	0%
Dari	34	3%	Spanish	1	0%
English	157	15%	Syriac	22	2%
Farsi	30	3%	Syrian*	74	7%
French	10	1%	Turkish	29	3%
German	1	0%	Turkmen	3	0%
Hazaragi	11	1%	Urdu	6	1%
Hindi	1	0%	Uzbek	2	0%

* Some reported speaking languages such as Persian, which could possibly be construed as 'Farsi'. Similarly, those who answered 'Syrian' may in fact be Arabic speakers.

Religion

73% of our survey respondents reported that they were of Christian faith, 20% were Muslim and 7% Ezidi (see Figure 7.1). As Figure 7.2 shows, all of the Afghan participants were Muslim, while 85% of the Iraqi and 83% of the Syrian refugees surveyed were Christian. This high proportion of Christians among Australian refugee intakes is unusual – particularly since Syria and Iraq are predominantly Muslim countries – but there is no evidence available to suggest that this was what the Australian government intended. The self-reported Christian religions are Armenian, Armenian Apostolic, Assyrian Christian, Catholic, Chaldean, Christian Armenian, Christian Assyrian, Orthodox. Mandaean are also numbered in this group. One in five informants were of Muslim faith (100% of the Afghan informants, 11% of Syrian informants and 4% of informants from Iraq). 7% of the survey population were Ezidi, most of whom speak Kurmanji.

Figure 7.1 Religious backgrounds of refugees surveyed

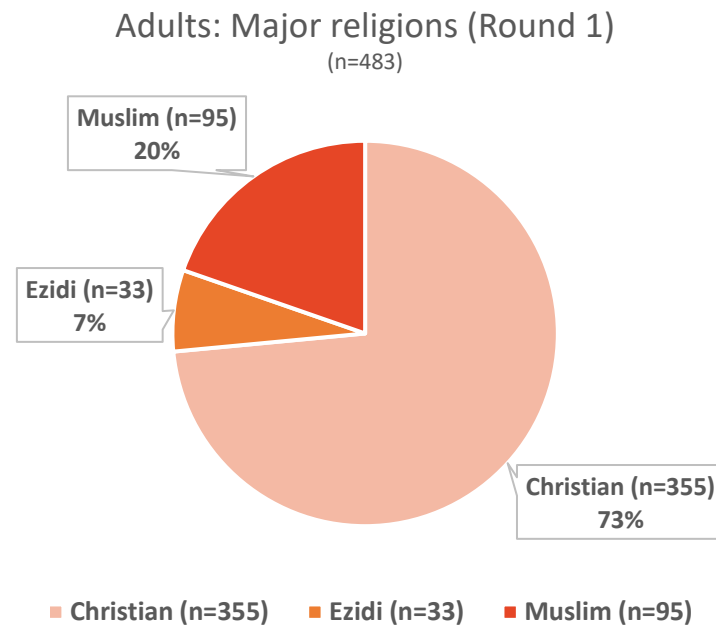
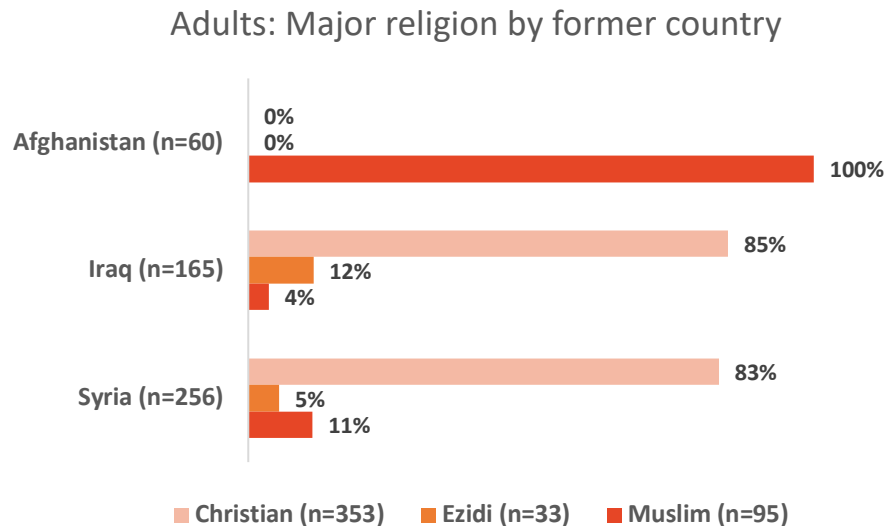


Figure 7.2 Religions by former country of origin



Visas

As Table 7.3 shows, most informants from Syria and Iraq arrived on 200 or 202 Visas. Many from Afghanistan were on Woman at Risk 204 Visas. A few families arrived on 201 Visas. Most of those who arrived on 202 Visas were nominated and/or sponsored by family members already living in Australia.

Table 7.3 Visa categories of matched survey respondents

Visa Category	Round 1 (n)	Round 3 (n)
Refugee (200)	82	42
In-country Special Humanitarian (201)	47	38
Global Special Humanitarian (202)	102	84
Emergency Rescue (203)	71	45
Woman at Risk (204)	44	24
Camp Clearance (205)	15	7
Total	361	240

Diaspora

The very dynamics that generate refugee family displacement from their city and country of origin create a refugee family diaspora around the globe. Of the refugee families interviewed, 170 had family networks in their origin countries, often aged parents. In addition, 117 families mentioned that they had family networks in the transit countries to which they fled awaiting Australian resettlement while 151 families mentioned that they had family networks in another Western country. A typical refugee family had parents in the home country and brothers and sisters spread around other western resettlement countries in Europe, Scandinavia, and North America: 92 families had family waiting for reunification and they had applied for it; 69 families had family who they would like to bring to Australia but had not applied for family reunification. Only 19 families did not have family waiting to come to Australia.

7.2. Young informants

The gender, countries of origin and settlement locations of the young people in Table 7.4 reveal a good gender balance, with more young people located in metropolitan areas and a greater number from Syria.

Only 7% of young refugees reported that English was spoken at home, with Arabic the most common language spoken. On the other hand, 94% of our young refugee informants spoke English in the playground at school.

Table 7.4 Demographics of the young people interviewed

Young people		number	percentage
Gender	female	129	47%
	male	147	53%
Former country	Afghanistan	65	24%
	Iraq	80	29%
	Syria	129	47%
State	NSW	124	45%
	Queensland	89	32%
	Victoria	63	23%
Settled	metropolitan	205	74%
	regional	71	26%

8. Pre-migration experiences of the refugee informants

8.1. Life before displacement from their homeland

The refugee families interviewed for this project all talked about how wonderful life in their country was prior to the conflict/political change that led them to flee. They found that Australians do not understand that fact, and have a very poor understanding of their countries and, subsequently, of them as people. As one Iraqi woman, living with her family in Fairfield, Sydney, commented:

actually, we are very sad because people in Australia think we were very poor in Iraq, that we didn't have anything. They think that we didn't have enough education or jobs. But actually we had everything and we were very happy. But events forced us to leave Iraq. We were threatened with killing and kidnapping. We were wealthy in our country and we were well-educated and we had a respectful life but people here think we were living in poverty and that we were backward people or ignorant people. They think like that. (Iraqi wife, Fairfield NSW, Round 1)

The typical story is of a happy life. As one Iraqi male now living in Melbourne with his family put it:

my life was normal, happy, before ISIS came to my city and destroy every things that I dreamed for. I left my country. I was scared, horrified, I didn't know what to do. Scared from the army, from every one, until I reached Lebanon in 2013. I stayed in Lebanon with my family until we came here to Australia. (Syrian adult son, Melbourne Vic, Round 1)

A Syrian male living in Fairfield in Sydney had a similar story:

we had very bad situation in Syria, bombing all the time and we lost our car, our house, because we lived in a sensitive area which was targeted. We couldn't sleep. They cut electricity all the day and the water as well. A missile hit electricity station and destroyed it completely. So we lived four months without electricity. There was a mosque, there was like a hole in the ground and the people stand in queue, in very long queue, just to have little water. It was very hard. (Syrian family, Fairfield NSW, Round 1)

A recurrent theme was of the very busy social life that they had before fleeing their homeland, visiting friends and families regularly, often until 11pm, midnight, and after. This contrasted with their subsequent life in Australian cities and suburbs, as three male heads of refugee families now living in Fairfield in Sydney's western suburbs make clear. One male from Iraq commented:

this country is very different and this situation is very different. We had stronger connections with our social circle and we had many friends. In Iraq, we lived in big families in one place in one big house. (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 1)

Similarly, one Syrian male commented, 'in Syria, when my wife cooked lunch, I always invited the neighbours over. Here in Australia, the neighbours do not say really "hello"' (Syrian husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 1), while another said:

unfortunately, I noticed that the social relations here are quite different from in Iraq. Back home, in the same neighbourhood you have twenty or thirty families and you would know them all, whereas here, very close relationships – maybe it's because of work or people are afraid to form a relationship, I don't really know. (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 2)

Hearing these refugee families tell their stories is to understand what it was that made them flee their country. Religious discrimination in Iraq was already a fact of life before ISIS (for the Ezidi, Chaldean, and Mandaean communities) but also after (for the Christian community):

war, war, and war [life in Iraq]. Yeah, most of the time, unsettled and wars. Yeah, because of the sectarian division and because of religious [divides], it means there was division, war, different religion, and discrimination (Iraqi wife, Liverpool NSW, Round 1);

the kidnapping, kidnapping, robberies, rape, too many things. We feel, with discrimination [against Mandaeans], fanaticism – we don't feel we are humans, yes (Iraqi wife, Liverpool NSW, Round 1);

you know, our life, it's normal. Not very good, not very bad. Because we are Kurdish people. Yeah. We're not allowed to say our language, learn how to write. We learn in Arabic, everything in Arabic. Yeah. So we went to school just learning Arabic. And also we are Ezidi, we can't do our religion. No, no, no. No. No. If you want to go to school, you should learn Islamic, and how they pray, and everything about it. I study already everything about it. Yep. It's okay, because all your family are around you, and this is your land. Yeah. It's a place where your grandparents grow up, and your parents. That's why it's... And we miss everything, but when we remember... (Syrian wife, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 1);

the life in Iraq before the war it was fifty-fifty; not too good at much, not too bad at much. Because there is discrimination for the Christian who live in Iraq, so life in Iraq is pretty difficult. Yes, even before war, always (Iraqi husband, Logan Qld, Round 1).

The abrupt decision to uproot the family and leave the country was emotionally distressing for all refugee families interviewed. As an Iraqi male living in Liverpool, Sydney, with his family, put it:

at the time I decided to leave [my country], it was extremely emotionally difficult because I left an established life behind me and I was fearful of the unknown and I am still, until this very moment, a feeling it's not 100% in yet. (Iraqi husband, Liverpool NSW, Round 1)

The journey to Australia of the refugee families interviewed for this research project was long and uncertain. To be accepted to resettle in Australia as refugees these families had to be

outside their country of origin. For all families these years in transit countries were very uncertain and difficult. The Afghan families told a typical story of most having already moved away from Afghanistan to Pakistan or Iran, as their origin country was uninhabitable. They never became citizens in those countries, and were always identified as refugees and treated as second class citizens:

in Iran, they were really strict, and they behaved rudely with the refugees, especially with the Afghans. Not only the government, but the people of Iran were not good with the people. And as well, like when we wanted to go to schools, their behaviour was very rude, and they were not allowing us to introduce... Yes, we can say discrimination was like the main thing. The rules and regulations were really strict for refugees. We couldn't go to schools, because they were asking for lots of money, to go to the school, or college, or university; and we even could not have a SIM, with a refugee card. Yes. For the mobile. We cannot own that. They were not allowing this (Afghan adult daughter, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 1);

like, being Afghan in Iran is like being an African American in America (Afghan adult son, Auburn NSW, Round 1);

we are Afghan, but we are raised in Pakistan. They don't have the tradition of having citizenship of anywhere else if you're born there. You're not considered a Pakistani if you're born in Pakistan (Afghan adult daughter, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1).

More people said they had little to no knowledge of Australia before they arrived here. Many were given some information about Australia before they left their transit country, but the majority still felt surprised by life in Australia. There were two main reasons for the surprise – how difficult it was to find work and how different the social life was.

Some knowledge was provided in a short introduction course before getting on the plane to Australia:

before coming here there was a training for us, that might be the life skills. It was about integration in Australia, it was about the culture, about the important places to be seen (Afghan wife, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1);

we had life skills in the Australian Embassy in Lebanon and they taught us the life here, how is it (Syrian adult son, Brisbane Qld, Round 1);

yeah, before we came here, the IOM had given us some information about Australia (Syrian husband, Logan Qld, Round 1).

There was a slight difference between those who had had families in Australia before their arrival and those who did not. A typical story of those families who had family here before their own arrival:

I had my sister here, there was communication regarding Australia, it is peaceful, it is quiet, it is secured, there will be opportunity for good life and employment (Iraqi wife, Liverpool NSW, Round 1);

I have here in Australia one married brother, and one married sister. Here in Australia, with their families. My uncle and his wife, and my cousins. The uncle has been here for ten years, but my brother has been here about five years. Yes, my relatives and brothers and sisters, they told me a lot about Australia. We didn't surprise with anything, but we found Australia more safe than Middle East (Iraqi woman, Fairfield NSW, Round 1).

For those who did not have family (or friends) here in Australia before their arrival there was some anxiety:

no [I didn't know anyone in Australia when I came]. Yes [I flew from Iran to Sydney and Sydney up to here]. It was a big change. I was feeling a bit nervous and worried and everything, like different feelings (Afghan wife, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 1);

actually, I had no idea about something called Australia because my education was so limited at that time for bringing us to Australia but I wished that if I am accepted to be in that country, which is Australia, I would like to find stability and security; and these two things, I have found them and I feel that I'm secure and stable as well. Stability and security is something very important here in this country and it's available (Syrian husband, Wollongong NSW, Round 2).

In the majority of the interviews, people said that they were informed that migration to Australia was open, they applied, and then just waited for their visa to come through.

Depending on the timing, location of application, location of settlement, and origin of the applicant, this came through in months or in years.

For those that did have some say in the matter, the reasons for choosing Australia, or a particular location within Australia, were related to issues of safety and respect:

we looking for safe country. That's one of the main reason [to come to Australia]. We think this country the most country, respect everything each together, the most country here. Most safe, and most respect, like everyone respect another one, more than Germany and other countries. Australia is better than all foreign countries, all western countries, because in our assessment, from what we knew, Australia has more respect to human right freedom, and equality and freedom to work, and freedom to education (Syrian husband, Liverpool NSW, Round 1);

we like Australia because we know that Australia is a country of safety and freedom. We prefer to come to Australia because we don't like the United States, because America is the reason of what happened in Iraq. We don't have any relatives or friends in Canada, so Australia is the...Yes, cousins here (Iraqi wife, Fairfield NSW, Round 1).

Arrival in Australia was a shock to most refugee families. They were in part afraid of the unknown, and in part excited about the future, as these quotes illustrate:

when we arrived we were very tired and we were worried about the language and how can we stay in [the area we live in]. We don't know anyone else here. But now we are okay (Iraqi husband, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1);

first month is not okay. Just first month. Very difficult. We are very far, we don't know where we are. We don't know how we get something, and nobody talk. Nobody. Nobody come and say, 'How are you, do you need something?' One month. It's very hard. Very, very, very hard. Very, very lonely (Syrian wife, Brisbane Qld, Round 1);

in the first instance, soon after arriving, we felt fear, uncertain, and very concerned as strangers. We sustained a heavy psychological stress for several days. Later, we started digesting the situation and gradually we have adapted and felt much more comfortable by going to schools, shopping, picnics... We found the associated social services, especially those offered by the Uniting [Church], are very helpful. Now I am happy, and

feel much restful, in comparison to the moment of when I arrived. I believe that Australia, [this regional area], is a very beautiful country and I am happy much than what I expected before coming (Syrian wife, Shepparton Vic, Round 1);

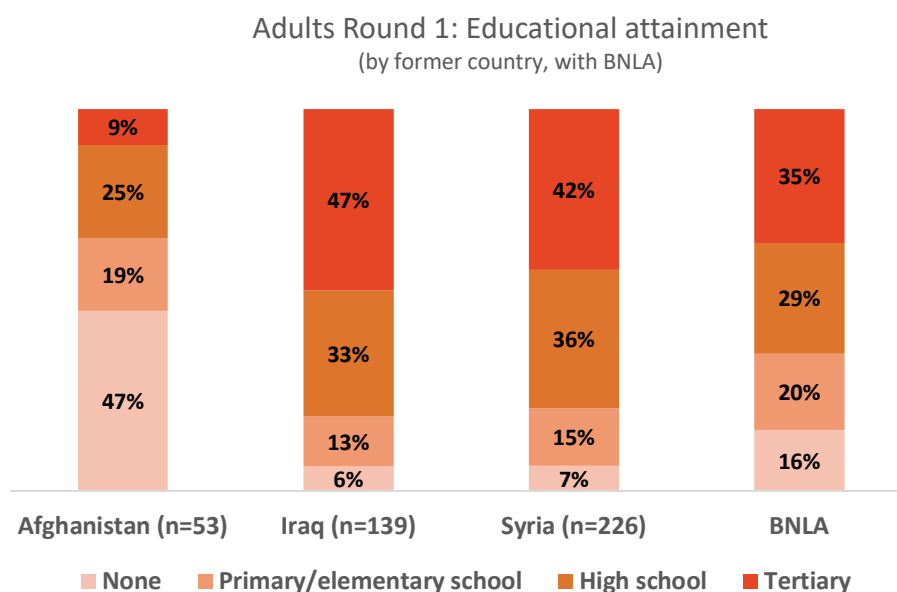
both feelings, I was sad and happy. I was sad that I left the country of my birth and my family, and my memories, and I was very happy, because I came to a country where I will be safe and secure, and I'll be looked after (Iraqi wife, Wollongong NSW, Round 1);

after we arrived in Australia, we felt a little bit unsettled because we had too many things to do, too many duties, too many – too many things to do. So it was a very chaotic situation and we need one or two years to overcome (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 1).

8.2. Pre-Migration Education

The Syrian-conflict refugee intake were very highly educated compared to other refugees and Australians in general. 47% of refugees surveyed from Iraq and 42% from Syria had prior tertiary education qualifications, compared to 35% of refugee informants in the BNLA and 39% of the Australian population (see Figure 8.1). The stronger contrast is with Afghan adult refugees from our survey, only 9% of whom had a university education on arrival. Moreover, nearly half (47%) of Afghan adult refugees had no schooling at all, compared to 6% of refugees from Iraq, 7% from Syria and 16% from the BNLA.

Figure 8.1 Educational backgrounds of refugees surveyed



8.3. Pre-Migration Employment

Many of the refugee adults in the Syrian conflict intake had very high-paying jobs at senior ranks. Many Syrian and Iraqi refugees had professional backgrounds prior to displacement, particularly in the engineering, health, and management professions. This meant that there was a large middle-class character to the Syrian conflict intake. 97 Syrian and Iraqi refugees had their own business pre-migration. This hints at the entrepreneurial potential of post-settlement refugee economic engagement (cf Settlement Services International's Ignite Refugee Business Start-ups program that has been operating since 2014).

There was a gendered dimension to this as most of the wives prior to displacement did not have paid work, and looked after the family home, the children, and older parents. Though similar in gendered roles in the family, Afghan male refugees had a very different pre-migration employment experience, often relegated to unskilled and/or informal employment. The Afghan intake had many Hazaras, and was largely working class or under-class, particularly as the Taliban prevented or obstructed Hazaras from gaining employment and education in Afghanistan. The majority (36 of the 58) of the Afghan adult refugees who participated in the research were Hazara.

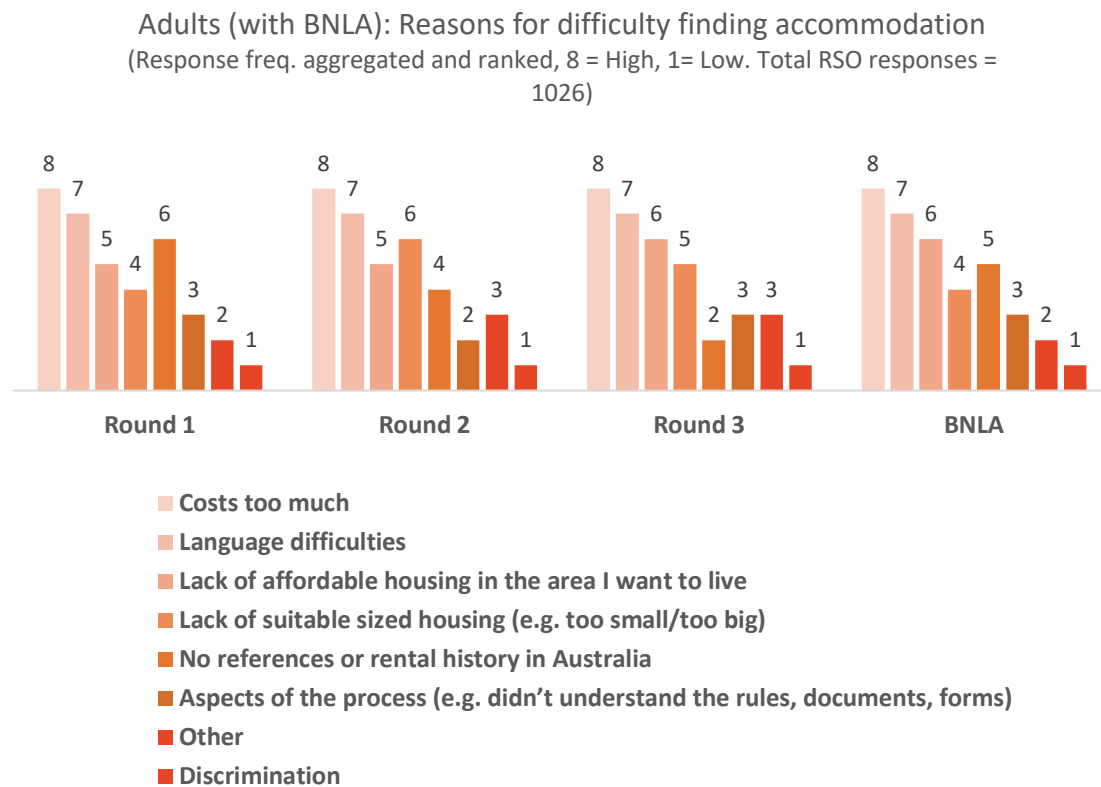
9. Settlement outcomes of adult refugees

9.1. Accommodation

The first task that refugee families face is finding a place to live in their new settlement location in Australia. Most refugees are assisted by their settlement service providers to find immediate temporary accommodation. The service providers then assist them to find a more permanent home. Most families were full of praise for the refugee settlement support agencies in each area, for their assistance in this regard. The key factors in shaping what constitutes suitable accommodation for refugees – like all Australians – are location, family size, and cost. The location question is generally determined by where the Immigration Department decides to settle the refugee family. This in turn is shaped by whether they have family already living in Australia. The average family size of the refugee families who participated in our longitudinal research was 4.55 people. Muslim and Ezidi families were

larger than Christian families: Muslims reported the highest number of people living in the home (5.6 and 5.5 people for Rounds 2 and 3, respectively).

Figure 9.1 Accommodation problems compared to the BNLA findings



Over the four-year period of research, less than half of all refugee families surveyed reported that accommodation was a difficult issue for them. Figure 9.1 shows that the cost of accommodation was the greatest difficulty for refugee families, coupled with a lack of suitable houses in the area. This was exacerbated by a lack of references or rental history in Australia. These accommodation findings mirror those of the BNLA survey. The number of refugee families who reported that they had difficulty in finding accommodation reduced over time.

Most of the refugee families were settled in metropolitan areas. The typical story in these areas was the lack of affordable and suitable housing, particularly public housing. One refugee woman now living with her family in Brisbane commented:

yes [we need extra room because of the two girls and the baby]. It has been ten days we started looking for a new property, but we haven't seen something suitable for us. I think we're going to stay here for six months and after that, we might change our property or

find something else. We didn't find something suitable. Some properties, we liked the properties, but the problem is the rent. The rent is higher than this property. Expensive. Sometimes we found a property, but it is far from the daughters' school. No [don't want to change the school for the daughters]. They are very happy. Yeah, we feel it is going to be very hard if we are going to move now [with the baby coming in a month]. (Syrian wife, Brisbane Qld, Round 2)

Two families living in the western suburbs of Sydney had similar difficulty finding suitable accommodation for their families. The mother of one Afghan family commented:

we are quite a big family with nine people. It was quite hard to find a house. It took a month and a half, I think, to find a house. When we first arrived, they put us in the [unclear]. After one and a half months, we moved to [a suburb], which is close to here. (Afghan adult daughter, Fairfield NSW, Round 1)

Similarly, a male head of household from Iraq told us:

we are trying now just to find another place to live in because this place has very high stairs to get in and it is making problems for me and my wife. It's really difficult for us to go upstairs using the stairs. So, we are applying now, trying to apply for a different place, a house, a flat, unit or flat/house. We are trying to stay in the same area, the same street, because we are used to living in this place. And because we don't have a driver's license. So, we are used to go walking or shopping or for the doctors and to visit our daughters. So, we prefer just a new place but at the same... nearby. (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 3)

One of the attractions of resettling refugee families in regional cities is that the cost and availability of housing is relatively better than in metropolitan areas. This relationship has been recently disrupted with the increasing regional settlement of Australian families post-COVID-19. One Ezidi woman now living in Coffs Harbour on the NSW north coast complained about the lack of suitable housing in convenient locations:

yes, we've been looking for a house but no luck, no. After Christmas. Three bedroom, one [for each of the elder children], bigger bathroom... We're looking for house but there's companies who offer houses but then they weren't offering those houses. That's why

we have to stay here. After Christmas we might look but we don't know. They don't give refugees houses. Of course, sometime we would like to build our own home. We would make a really big house, two floors, so our son and my sister will stay with us. Two and a half years we have been here now. (Syrian wife, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 2)

A Syrian woman living in Toowoomba in regional Queensland commented:

we find difficult to find another – another house because we don't work now. Some agent no accept. Yeah, we've tried to get another house. Yes. Yes, not successful. Because it's a far the school and we must every day to take them in my car in the school. Not good public transport. (Syrian wife, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1)

Similarly, a Syrian woman living in the Victorian regional centre of Shepparton was not happy with her families housing:

I hope that renting suitable houses becomes easier, as our house is too small – only two rooms and a living room for our family which consists of nine members. All similar families find very tough difficulties in finding suitable houses as the landlords hardly agree to give their premises to large family, especially who are on Centrelink payment. (Syrian wife, Shepparton Vic, Round 1)

Those refugee families who settled in Wollongong south of Sydney also found finding accommodation a difficult issue: 'there's one thing – accommodation, looking for different accommodation, for example, it's hard to get, yeah, in general, in Wollongong' (Syrian husband, Wollongong NSW, Round 1).

9.2. Employment

Overcoming the factors that block access to the Australian labour market is one of the greatest settlement challenges that refugees face. Refugees have the highest unemployment rates of non-Indigenous Australians. One recent report found that 'after 18 months in Australia, only 17% of humanitarian migrants are in paid work' (Centre for Policy Development 2017: 9), while refugee women are four times more likely than refugee men not to have a job or to be unemployed after 18 months after settlement in Australia. In all interviews where the refugees were of working age there was a lot of anxiety around

employment, and balancing pathways to employment, learning English, settlement in a new country, and in some cases health related issues.

Typically, the story of employment saw refugees experience twists and turns, hopes, and hopes dashed. Capturing the road to employment are the following experiences from the respondents.

The not-so-good:

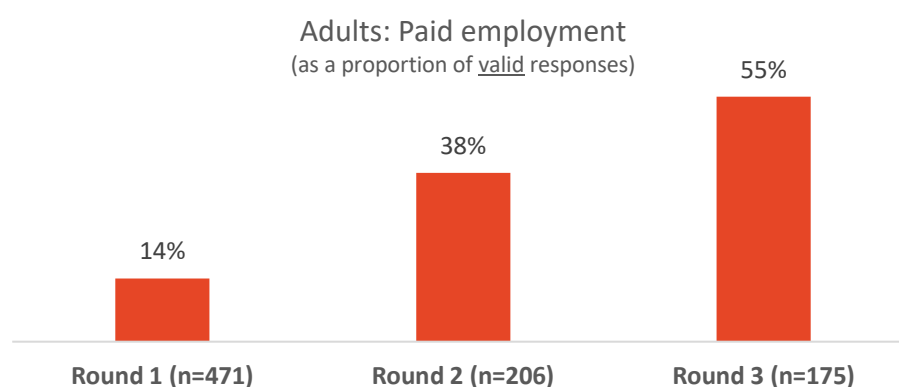
I did Cert II in plumbing at the community centre called Sandbag. After I finished my certificate, I went every week to sit with some people to search for some plumbing jobs. So I said 'alright, we'll put in the search from Gold Coast to Caboolture'. Yeah, but we didn't find anything. So that's why I just decided to get another job. Any job. I feel like I wasted two years of my life here because I have done Cert I in plumbing and Cert II. (Syrian husband, Brisbane Qld, Round 2)

The good:

I was advised by an institute to do an aged care course, which I needed to pay full fees for it from my pocket, and they gave me a guarantee to get a job. So, I was offered a job in age-care field and started working 15 hours a week as a continuous casual position since last October. I am happy in my work and feel my life has significantly changed to be more satisfying. Getting a job has also affected my family as we are more confident and satisfied, and we also feel more belonging to this country. (Syrian husband, Melbourne Vic, Round 3)

Employment outcomes of refugees improve after four years of settlement

Figure 9.2 Refugees in paid employment: Rounds 1, 2 and 3



As Figure 9.2 shows, refugee employment outcomes improved over time. In Round 1 most refugees were still learning English and had not yet entered the labour market, with only 14% of refugees surveyed having paid employment. By Round 2, this increased to 38% and by Round 3, 55% of refugees surveyed and who were looking for work had secured employment.

Similarly, Figure 9.3 shows that the proportion of refugee adults surveyed who found it hard to get a job (as a percentage of all valid respondents) fell from 85% in Round 1 and 82% in Round 2 to 62% in Round 3. Figure 9.4 confirms that both males and females experience difficulties finding employment, as newly arrived refugees.

Figure 9.3 Adults who found it hard to get a job as a percentage of all valid respondents

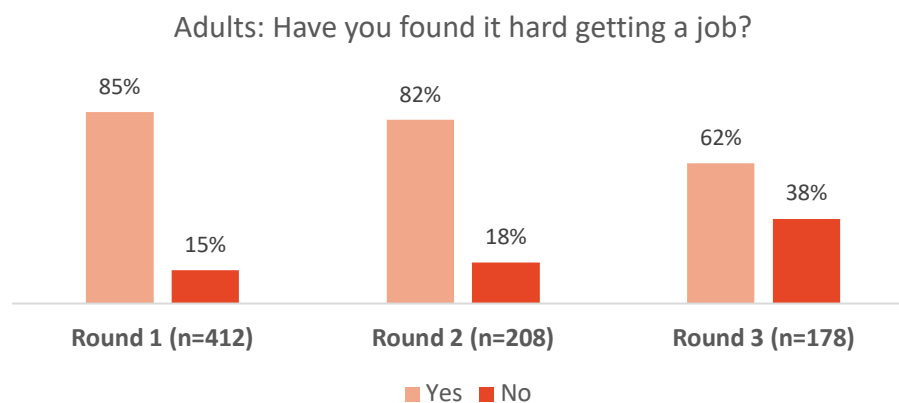
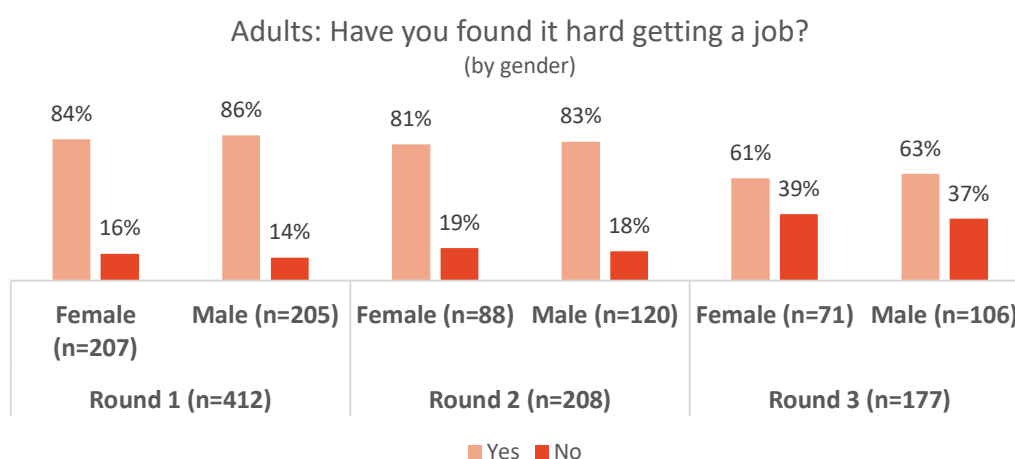


Figure 9.4 Adults who found it hard to get a job by gender as a percentage of all valid respondents



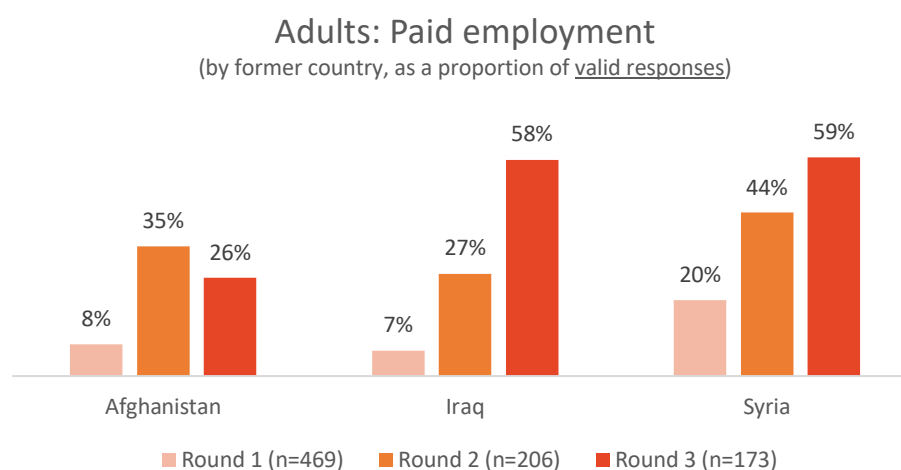
Syrian refugees had the greatest success in gaining employment by the third round (20% R1 to 59% R3), followed by Iraqi refugees (7% R1 to 58% R3) and Afghan refugees (8% R1 to 26%

R3) (see Table 9.1 and Figure 9.5). These employment outcomes are similar to the outcomes for Syrian refugees who settled in Canada as part of the special Syrian-conflict program. In Canada, 57% of surveyed adult Syrian refugees who arrived in late 2015 and early 2016 reported being employed by Summer 2018 (that is, approximately two and a half years later) (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada 2019).

Table 9.1 Employment Outcomes of Adult Refugees, Rounds 1 and 3

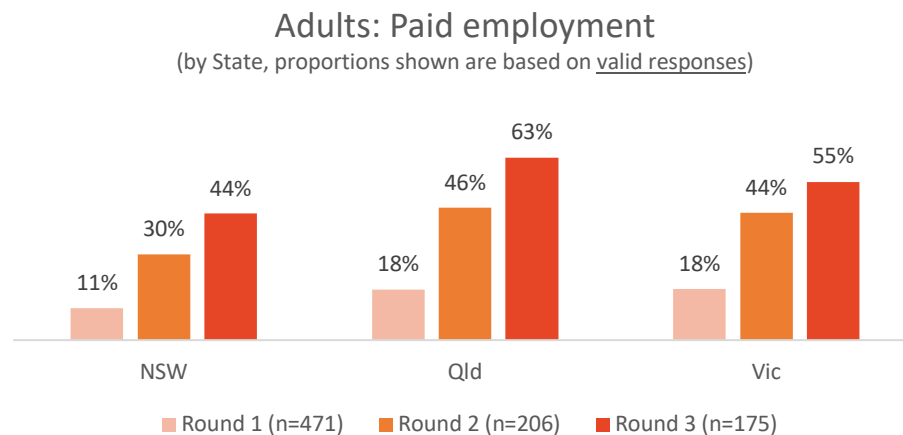
Survey Items	Responses (positive)	Afghanistan		Iraq		Syria	
		Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3
		n=60	n=29	n=167	n=108	n=273	n=187
Paid work	One or more paid jobs	8%	26%	7%	58%	20%	59%
Finding work (difficult)	No	10%	30%	18%	40%	14%	38%
Confidence about employment future	Mostly to very confident	63%	65%	41%	81%	45%	73%

Figure 9.5 Refugees in paid employment by country of origin



Queensland informants reported a higher rate of employment across the three rounds while NSW participants reported a lower rate of employment across the three rounds, than refugees living in the other states (Figure 9.6). It must be remembered in this regard that NSW settled a much larger number of Syrian-conflict refugees than Victoria and Queensland. Regional dimensions of refugee employment will be considered later in this report.

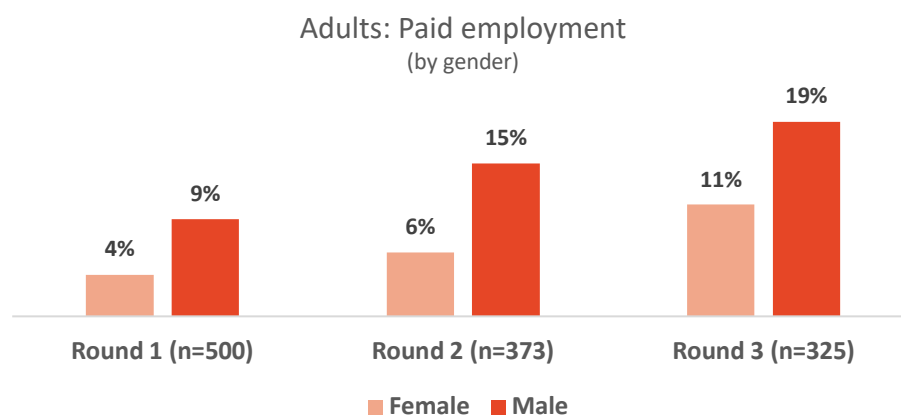
Figure 9.6 Refugees in paid employment by State of settlement



Gender and refugee employment

There is a gender dimension to refugee employment outcomes in Australia. As Figure 9.7 shows, the proportion of male refugees who found employment is more than double that of female refugees in Rounds 1 and 2 and slightly less than double in Round 3.

Figure 9.7 Refugee employment outcomes by gender



In our interviews we explored these gender dimensions of employment in some detail. The women were in the main homemakers, while the men worked, denoting a traditional gender (binary) divide between men and women. Suddenly these roles were disrupted and, sometimes reversed, due to the changing gender roles and family dynamics of life in Australia. The emergent tensions from these dynamics are captured in the following:

actually also it's major challenge for us, for me, for my sons, you know, because in our country we usually go outside, you work, [your husband] bring the money, [your husband] bring everything, you know, it's our culture we not say something different. So while here [my husband] just sit like a wife here at home. Sometime because I have a job, I work outside you know, sometimes we fight, 'Why you late?', 'What are you doing?'. That is because he didn't have a job. Yes, it's one thing I've said to my children sometimes, it's not usual but sometimes it happens, but the reason is because he didn't have a job, he didn't have work. (Syrian wife, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 1)

The first years of settlement in Australia – when most male and female refugees did not have a job because they were learning English and had not yet entered the Australian labour market; or were not successful in getting a job once they entered the labour market – were particularly challenging.

There was certainly a tension between juggling English language training and employment: indeed, not being able to search or apply for jobs before a certain level of English is achieved highlights the importance of language proficiency as a key requirement to gaining employment in Australia. Interestingly, employment service providers had two approaches – a few asked the refugees to just study English and wait until that was good enough to get work, but others ignored the barrier and kept on pushing the refugees to search for work. As noted by the respondents:

Every month I have an appointment with Jobactive, and Jobactive has mentioned when my English good enough for work, they're going to find something for me. So, yeah, I just progress and gain English. (Iraqi husband, Brisbane Qld, Round 1)

They don't give me good jobs due to the weak English. They offered cleaning services, and I can't take such jobs because of age and health reasons. (Iraqi wife, Fairfield NSW, Round 1)

There was a gendered aspect to this tension with male refugees experiencing greater frustration with the process of juggling language training and employment access. Indeed, the long periods that males had spent in unemployment in Australia was one of the biggest settlement challenges. Noting the impact on health and well being is the following:

for my husband, I feel sometimes upset because he doesn't have a fulltime job. I want him to work fulltime, not just for money, because he will be happy (Syrian wife, Logan Qld, Round 3);

even for free, I would work in electrical field. I have done it so long, I have worked in it so long, and I enjoy it. Sometimes I open the switch and the plugs here in Australia to see how it's made. I was visiting my brother-in-law and someone had something broken, and I said, 'bring it to me, I'll fix it, so I fixed it in five minutes. It's something that I have my passion for, it's something that I like. Working is like sport and health for me. I'm gaining weight because of not working. All that I need is just learn English and work. I don't want to study anymore, because I'm old enough (Iraqi husband, Wollongong NSW, Round 1).

In contrast many refugee women appeared to be empowered by the gender freedoms available to them in Australia and were actively considering finding paid employment. The sense of emancipation is captured in the following:

the biggest thing I can find here is equality, you know? The way that we can get our success. We can get it here. Here we cannot find any difference between girls and guys... Even I can work here. Even for girls, everything is available. There is no differences between girl and boy. We can find work, we can find safety here. We can find education, good facilities for getting education. (Afghan adult daughter, Auburn NSW, Round 1)

Difficulty securing employment

Table 9.2 compares the reasons for our survey respondents having difficulty finding a job, in all rounds, compared to BNLA findings. For the first four most significant barriers there are parallels and it is not surprising that our findings largely mirror the BNLA findings in this area, because both surveys look at refugee experiences in the Australian labour market. Both rank the importance of English language ability to successful employment outcomes. This finding is reinforced by Figure 9.8, which shows that in Round 1, 70% of respondents who had a job understood English 'well' or 'very well'. As the rounds progressed, the ability to understand English increasingly appeared to correlate to finding employment.

Table 9.2 Why adult refugees found it difficult to get a job, all rounds, compared to BNLA

Reason for difficulty finding a job (Adults Rounds 1, 2 & 3)	Total RSO responses	RSO rank (most cited)	BNLA rank
My English isn't good enough yet	374	1	1
Don't have Australian work experience	313	2	2
There were no suitable jobs	186	3	4
Couldn't get a job in the same occupation I had overseas	150	4	5
Don't have the necessary skills or qualifications	147	5	3
Health reasons (physical or emotional)	122	6	9
I look after my family	99	7	6
Discrimination e.g. age, gender, race	89	8	8
Couldn't get an interview	74	9	N/A
Transport difficulties	66	10	6
Other	45	11	10
Hours were unsuitable	33	12	N/A
Total responses	1698	Correlation	0.83

Before we explore these points in more detail it is useful to note the nuanced issues which emerged surrounding age and employment, and postcode and employment – a stigma surrounding both factors which created barriers to employment for some of the informants.

In terms of age and employment outcomes:

I did look for work in my own speciality but I couldn't find any. There is – and they don't seem to be keen to hire me. Because of age – age discrimination. They ask me to leave my phone and just – my qualification, and they never call back. These tactics we are too familiar with them from Iraq and Syria. They ask for you leave your phone and then they never call you back. So they don't tell us – they don't say that it's because of your age, but I know. (Syrian husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 2)

Another issue is discrimination against age – all people will be not able to secure a job if they reach 60 years, so as a country receiving refugee who frequently are in late fifties or reached 60 year old, the government should deal more seriously with age-related issues in working. (Syrian husband, Melbourne Vic, Round 1)

In terms of postcode:

I had a phone call before two months, asked me about my experience, and in the end, ask me 'What is your suburb?' I told her [the postcode]. 'Oh, you are staying in [Logan area]?' 'Yeah.' 'So you are refugee?' I told her, 'Yeah, I'm refugee,' and I send my VEVO

[Visa Entitlement Verification Online] visa. 'Ah, okay, I'm sorry, it's not acceptable for us.' Blah-blah-blah and that's it. (Syrian woman, Logan Qld, Round 1)

Figure 9.8 Understanding English: refugees who had a job

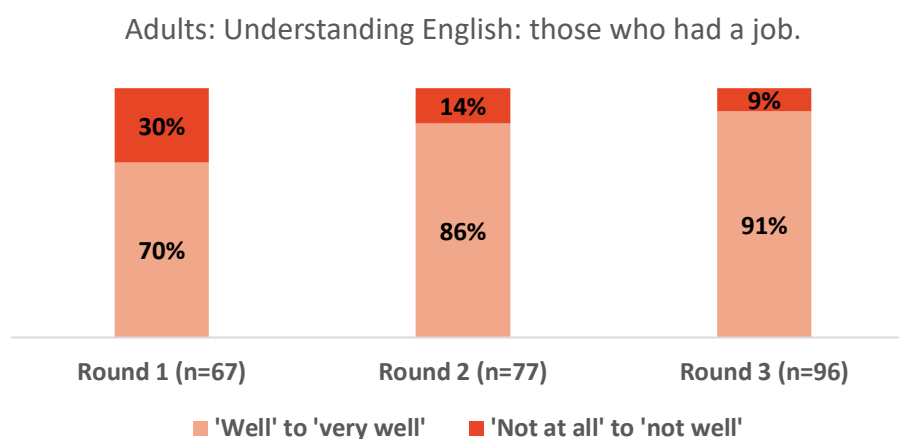


Table 9.3 presents insights into the employment obstacles and dilemmas of new refugee arrivals, in their responses to survey questions enquiring into the reasons why they found it hard to get a job. It confirms that lack of English is consistently one of the main barriers to obtaining employment across the three rounds (percentages are based on the proportion of responses for each round, for example, in Round 1, 23% of respondents said: 'My English isn't good enough yet').

Table 9.3 Why adult refugees found it difficult to get a job in Australia

Reason for difficulty finding a job	Round 1 (n=962)	Round 2 (n=484)	Round 3 (n=252)
Couldn't get a job in the same occupation I had overseas	8%	11%	7%
Couldn't get an interview	4%	4%	5%
Discrimination e.g., age, gender, race	4%	9%	4%
Don't have Australian work experience	17%	19%	23%
Don't have the necessary skills or qualifications	9%	7%	10%
Health reasons (physical or emotional)	7%	7%	7%
Hours were unsuitable	1%	2%	3%
I look after my family	7%	5%	4%
My English isn't good enough yet	23%	20%	21%
There were no suitable jobs	11%	11%	11%
Transport difficulties	5%	3%	1%
Other	3%	2%	4%

Issues surrounding English language ability were stated as follows:

it's hard to get an employment because we came from Syria and I have 35 years' experience in painting and when I ask for employment here they just ask for a four years course. So it will be kind of impossible for me to do that course, plus the language barrier. So all of these things just are abolishing all the experience that I have and start all over again. So this making things hard. (Syrian husband, Brisbane Qld, Round 1)

The intersection between understanding the pathways to employment and English language ability was raised as a barrier to work:

there hasn't been any support to help me to find work, I've only gone to Arab shops to find work and they all tell me it involves lifting, so I can't do it. I haven't got any other feedback. I can't go online to look for work because it requires English and I don't speak, I don't have the language. (Syrian husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 2)

It is interesting to look at how the ability to understand English shapes unemployment by comparing Figure 9.9, those who did not have work, with the previous chart (Figure 9.8), which looks at respondents who did have a job. Among those with no job there were more who understood English 'not at all' or 'not well', than among those who had a job. This suggests that having a good understanding of English is an advantage in obtaining employment.

Figure 9.9 Understanding English: refugees who did not have a job

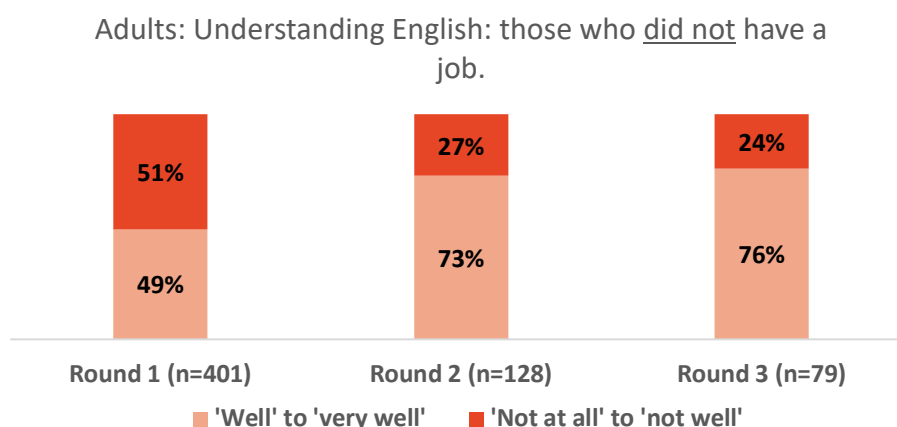
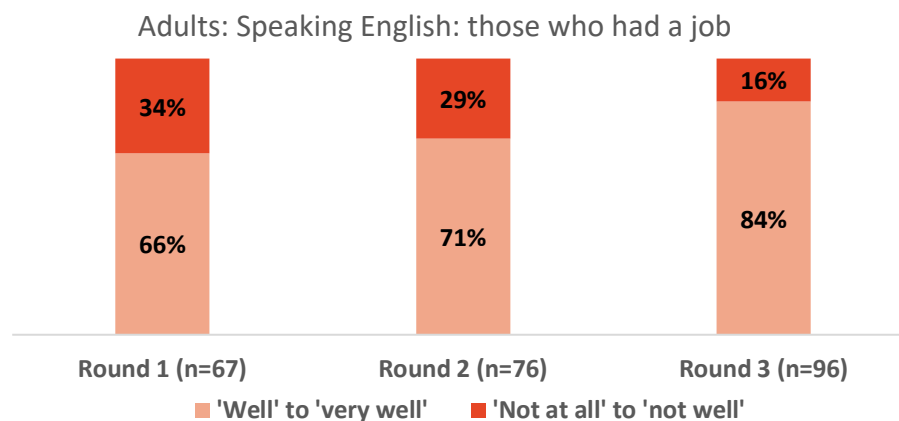


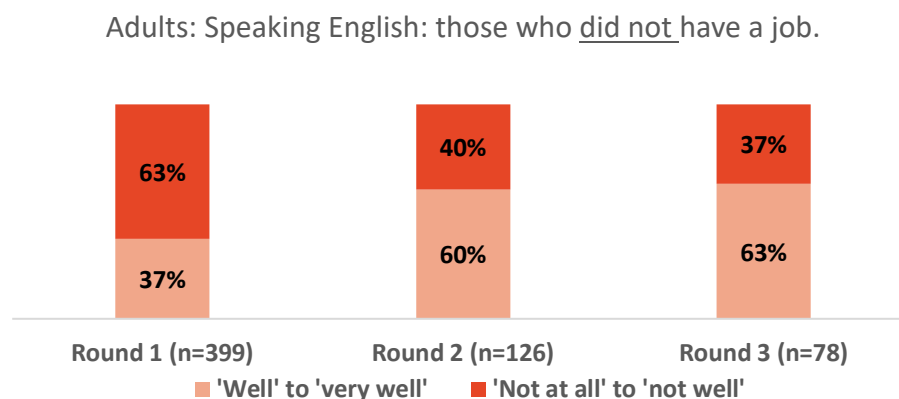
Figure 9.10 Speaking English: refugees who had a job



This finding is confirmed in Figure 9.10, which shows that in Round 1, 66% of respondents who had a job spoke English 'well' to 'very well'. As the rounds progressed, the ability to speak English increasingly appeared to correlate to finding employment. Of course, speaking English 'well' to 'very well' does not guarantee that it is easy to get a job for newly arrived refugees, as Figure 9.11 indicates. As one informant noted:

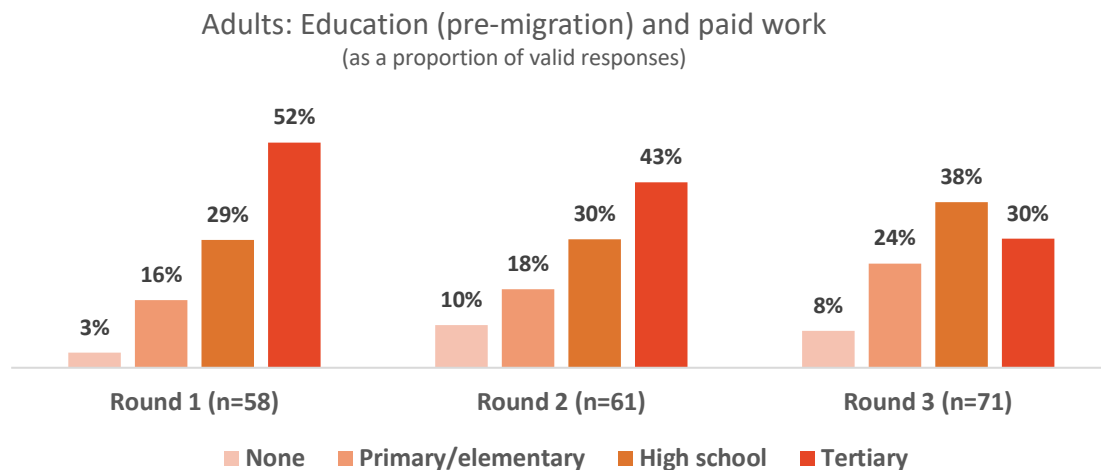
Some people, because I have accent, they don't understand me, or they think I can't understand, but I can understand everyone. And some people, they are thinking because you don't speak English good, they are thinking you are stupid, or something like that. Like, my husband – for example, for me, when I applied for some job, any job, when I make interview, when they asking I have accent, they said 'no, because you can't work or do something good', or even if you have idea how to do this job, they didn't think I can do everything, because I am not, like – because I can't speak well, I can't do this job. I can do everything, just I have accent, or something like that. (Iraqi wife, Logan Qld, Round 2)

Figure 9.11 Speaking English: refugees who did not have a job



Nevertheless, it shows that two in three of those who did not speak English ‘well’ to ‘very well’ did not have a job in year 1. This data should be qualified because not having a job does not equate with unemployment since many refugee informants were still in English language classes and had not yet entered the labour force.

Figure 9.12 Adults who found work by pre-migration education



While the ability to use the English language is crucial, so too is education. Educational background is a critical factor in getting employment in Australia, whether it be for immigrants, refugees, or non-immigrants in the labour market (<https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/education-and-employment>). Figure 9.12 shows that in Round 1, one half of those refugees who arrived in Australia with a tertiary education degree found a job, as did just under one third (29%) of those refugees with high school education qualifications. In contrast only 16% of those with primary school education got a job by Round 1, while hardly any (3%) of those without education qualifications at all were successful in gaining employment. This finding is to be expected. However, in Rounds 2 and 3, an increasing proportion of those refugees without tertiary education gained employment, while employment among the tertiary educated fell.

The fall in employment of well-educated refugees may be read in conjunction with the other major reason for difficulty in obtaining employment, ‘don’t have Australian work experience’, which, in Round 3, overtook lack of English language ability as the main reason given (Table 9.3, above).

Qualifications accreditation proved to be a significant barrier in entering the labour market in a position representative of skills and qualifications. The process proved to be very complex and costly. Of their experience, one respondent noted:

Not just my health. Of course my health is stopping me to do anything, but also to recognise qualification is a very long wait, and I have to pay a lot of money. So it's not easy for me, as a dentist, from Syria, you have to pay a lot of money for each exam. It take a long time, just to get the qualification recognised, and it costs a lot of money. (Syrian wife, Logan Qld, Round 1)

After spending some time in Australia and attempting to get work and/or qualifications recognition, many highly skilled interviewees came to the realisation that it might have been better to come to Australia as a *blank slate*, have no degrees and professional careers, as these are the job opportunities available to them:

I showed the caseworker in Jobactive, my degrees, and asked her to find a job for me, which suits me, and which become creative art, and she told me, 'put your degrees in the rubbish and find a job'. (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 1)

If you have a degree, you cannot find a job. It's impossible to find a job if you have a degree. But if you have a high school – you can find a job in a bank, anywhere. It's the opposite of the world. In Europe, if you have a Master's, if you have a Bachelor or PhD, you can find a job. Here, it's the opposite. I don't know why. More qualified, yes, in computers or anything, in engineering, in anything. But if you finish high school, what qualifications do you have? This is the Australia way in my mind. (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 1)

Table 9.4 shows the different responses of refugees with different human capital. Although English is, once again, the most cited reason for difficulty in finding a job, this was less so for participants with higher education. Lack of Australian work experience was cited significantly more frequently by those of higher education, and rated equally with English as the highest barrier for those with tertiary education.

Table 9.4 Why adult refugees found it difficult to get a job in Australia, by education (Round 1)

Reason difficulty finding a job (Round 1)	None	Primary	High school	Tertiary	Total
Couldn't get a job in the same occupation I had overseas	4%	7%	5%	12%	8%
Couldn't get an interview	0%	1%	4%	6%	4%
Discrimination e.g. age	1%	3%	4%	4%	3%
Don't have Australian work experience	11%	13%	17%	20%	17%
Don't have the necessary skills or qualifications	8%	13%	11%	7%	9%
Health reasons (physical or emotional)	13%	13%	6%	4%	7%
Hours were unsuitable	0%	0%	2%	2%	1%
I look after my family	11%	7%	6%	7%	7%
My English isn't good enough yet	29%	29%	24%	20%	23%
There were no suitable jobs	8%	9%	12%	13%	12%
Transport difficulties	13%	5%	4%	4%	5%
Other	2%	1%	4%	3%	3%

Our qualitative research throws some light on this apparent paradox. Our refugee informants told us that they were in a quandary: should they stay on at TAFE as long as possible to make sure that they got a good job, one somewhat in line with their experience and qualifications, or should they get any job as soon as possible, realising that job would be below their abilities and qualifications. It should also be emphasised that many of the refugees with tertiary education qualifications had worked in the professions – pharmacy, health, dentistry, engineering, management – in Syria and Iraq.

The mismatch between jobs and pre-migration experience and/or jobs, and the work desired, was noted in the following responses:

I have deep concerns about the process of allocating refugees in Australia, and not matching skills and backgrounds with the jobs we are placed to. I see this labour market mismatch as the reason why so many people are not working. We are just in the wrong place (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 1);

the jobactive suggested some jobs, with possibilities to have work placement. However, all those were very temporary and seasonal and related to farming work. I prefer long term jobs especially in construction industry where I have much experience and

willingness to continue working with, for long time. I tried to find long term jobs of any kind or in construction, but they require of me to have Australian training and certifications which I do not have at the moment. As a result, I decided to join my father and brother who has established good basis and network in construction industry in Sydney... In Sydney I can also find suitable part-time courses in construction and hopefully I will be able to work and study at the same time... In Lebanon I mainly did work in construction industry, especially form work and building carpentry (Syrian husband, Shepparton Vic, Round 1).

Our interviews highlight how critically important finding employment is to the refugee families who participated in this survey. Employment is critical to settlement and a future focus as the following quotes denote:

one word – ‘employment’... and ‘job opportunity’. It could be the single most important matter for me and for every new arrival, especially parents who are very concerned about the future of their children. As I believe that the new arrivals really face a completely unexpected difficulty in finding a suitable jobs correlate to their previous careers, at least meet the minimal expectation. Otherwise everything can be manageable (Syrian wife, Melbourne Vic, Round 1);

working in Australia in general has been a good experience. There is no bad experience with me during working. So in general it’s a good experience for me. When I’m coming back to home I’m tired, but I’m happy because all people at work location are same. Like supervisor, same for assistant, same for the general manager, all people are same. And speaking together, I meet new people, learn Australian culture more, help people there, so everything works for me like a good experience (Syrian husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 3).

Opportunities for securing employment in the future included looking outside the mainstream paid work arena and doing voluntary work, as a way of learning about the culture and the systems, and of opening networks. Of the opportunities opened up through volunteering, the informants noted:

when you start volunteering so you get opportunities to meet people, get friends, and get a job, and know what you want in life and support yourself. So you get to understand the culture a bit as well. (Syrian adult daughter, Logan Qld, Round 1)

I think it depends on the person [whether they find volunteering a good thing], yeah. Some people like to do that, some people didn't do that, but I think it's a good opportunity to start here in Australia. Just because anyone need to find a job, need to have a reference. Yes [English also improves]. Yeah, more conversation, more confident. (Syrian husband, Toowoomba Qld, Round 2)

Figure 9.13 shows that in Round 1, 46% of valid responses indicated that respondents were 'very' or 'mostly' confident in their employment future. Confidence in finding employment rose as the rounds progressed, with three in four (75%) of adult refugee informants 'very' or 'mostly' confident in their employment future by Round 3. Although gender is an important consideration in Australian employment outcomes, Figure 9.14 shows, there was very little difference in the confidence of both refugee men and women about getting a job in Australia in the future.

Figure 9.13 Adult employment confidence

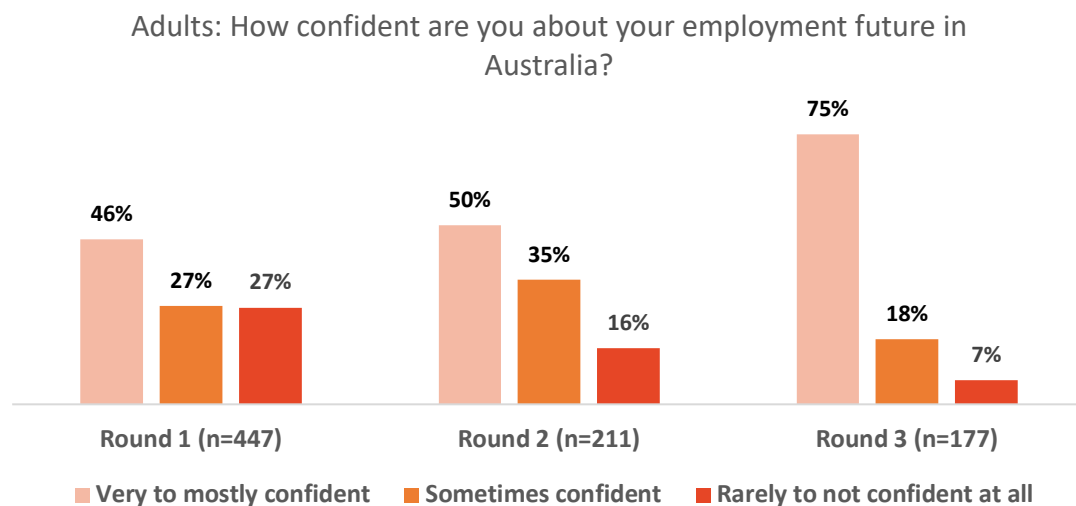
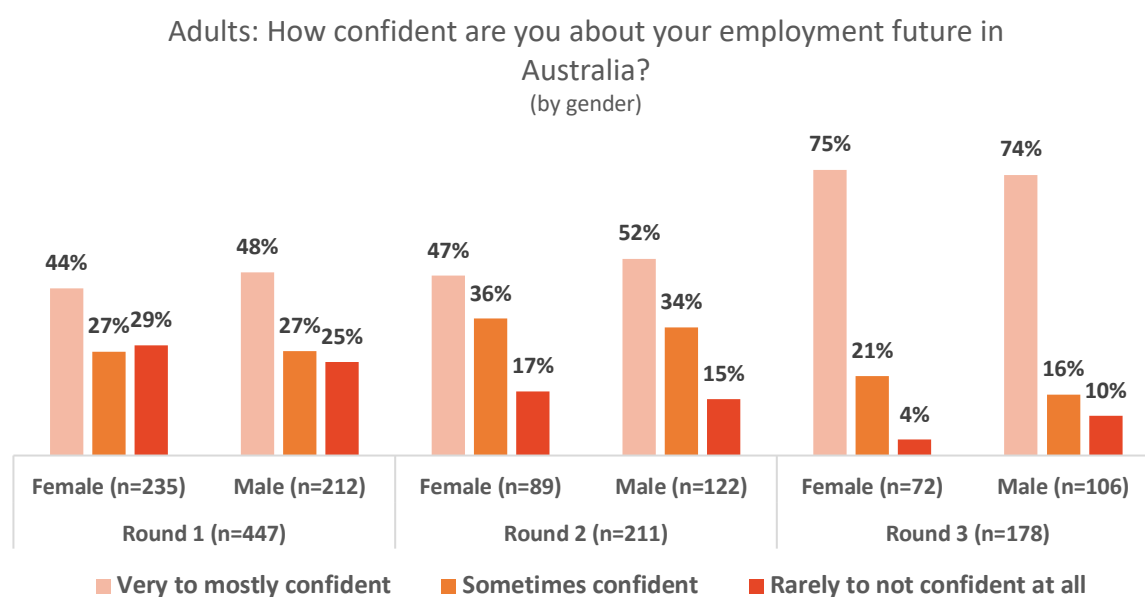


Figure 9.14 Adult employment confidence by gender



9.3. English language proficiency

English language ability is an important social indicator of refugee settlement outcomes. A lack of English language proficiency reduces a newly arrived refugee's ability to communicate in the public domain, to get employment and to make new friends. An older Syrian male refugee aged over 65 living in Melbourne spoke of his inability to speak to the neighbours due to the language barrier:

socially, I suffer from isolation and the very poor social relationship with my neighbours, as, although they look kind and very safe, there is no socialisation more than saying 'hi'. There is no Arabic speakers around us and no local community programs to help in breaking my isolation. We need some cultural-oriented community and social activities to help in breaking social isolation.

Similarly, a female refugee aged between 25-50 years of age – also from Syria – and living in the regional city of Wollongong, spoke of the constraints of poor English in getting to know her new Australian neighbours:

due to my poor English most of my friends all come from Arabic background because of the simplicity of language for communication amongst us. But for the Australian friends I still have a bit because of the language barrier. I have friends but do not have that good

relationship because of the language barrier. I still find some difficulty to... I never ever visit other non-Arabic families, neighbours, because of my poor language. Just Arabic. For my neighbours I do not have any families around us to communicate with them so most of them are international students and some of them are single living in a small house so in general I do not have any relationships with my neighbours. Arabic friends – Arabic background? Of course. I have good relationships with them and I usually visit them from time to time and they do the same. We exchange visits, yes. (Syrian wife, Wollongong NSW, Round 2)

The typical story we found when interviewing the refugee families was of wanting to learn to speak English to be able to make more Australian friends: as a Syrian female refugee aged in her late 50s and now living in Parramatta in Sydney's western suburbs put it: 'I am excited to learn English to be able to communicate with other people in my community and I dream of the day I could be able to speak English' (Syrian wife, Parramatta NSW, Round 1). Similarly, a Hazara woman who was a head of a sole parent family in Toowoomba who had arrived in Australia on a Woman at Risk Visa (204) had difficulty in learning English, leading to loneliness on her part, but she found comfort in the ease at which her children took up the English language:

I am trying to adapt, it is hard for me to not have my own people around but I feel that I quite feel lonely just because I can't speak English. But I'm happy that my children are going to school and they have good opportunity, yes. (Afghan wife, Toowoomba Qld, Round 2)

There was little difference in country-of-origin aspects regarding the informant's assessment of their ability to understand English in Round 1, when about half of those surveyed – Afghan (48%), Syrian (50%) and Iraqi (52%) – reported that they understood English 'well' or 'very well' (Table 9.5). Four years later by Round 3 this increased to 80% of Syrian and 81% Iraqi refugees compared to 55% of Afghan refugees. A key factor here is the lower levels of education pre-arrival of Afghan refugees compared to Syrian and Iraqi refugees, which is also a proxy for the difference in class backgrounds of these refugee cohorts. For all three national groups their self-assessed ability to speak, read and write English was much lower than their ability to understand English. Refugees from Syria had the strongest outcomes in each of these three aspects of English language ability, with two in three reporting that they spoke

and read English ‘well’ or ‘very well’ by Round 3. For Iraqi and Afghan refugees it was lower, though it was interesting to see that Afghan refugees surveyed reported better English reading and writing outcomes (45% for both) than those from Iraq (44% and 39% respectively).

Table 9.5 English language outcomes: adult refugees responding ‘well’ or ‘very well’ (self reported), Rounds 1 and 3

Survey Items	Afghanistan		Iraq		Syria	
	Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3
	n=60	n=29	n=167	n=108	n=273	n=187
Understanding English	48%	55%	52%	81%	50%	80%
Speaking English	33%	45%	41%	57%	41%	62%
Reading English	37%	45%	53%	44%	56%	61%
Writing English	43%	45%	40%	39%	47%	48%

9.4. Refugee family networks

In most instances settlement in Australia is a refugee family experience. 246 refugee families participated in Round 1 of the research. Of these, 102 refugee families had family in Australia prior to their own arrival, arriving on a Global Special Humanitarian Visa (subclass 202) whereby refugees are supported by an eligible proposer in Australia, usually family members already residing in Australia. This is often not the case with refugee resettlement, reflecting the operation of the Abbott Government’s special intake of 12,000 Syrian conflict refugees which appeared to give preference to 202 Visa entrants.

The typical story of those 202 Visa holders with family already in Australia is that the extended family played a critical role in making early settlement easier for the newcomers: one Muslim Hazara male living in the Sydney suburb of Auburn described the settlement support his family had provided for him:

I have another son that live near Auburn and then one nephew live in Adelaide. Before I came here my son came to Australia before me and then I arrived to Australia. He came to airport and took me to his house and my nephew were here. Someone came from SSI in airport but my son asked them to be with me. My son helped me. My son help me to

get a house. Before I came to Australia my son rent a unit for me. (Afghan husband, Auburn NSW, Round 1)

Similarly, a Christian woman from Syria commented:

I have family here and hence settling in the country was not very difficult for myself and my family [husband and children]. The family I have here are quite supportive and hence we never felt alone. I feel very settled in the country. (Syrian wife, Melbourne Vic, Round 3)

The diasporic refugee family network was a source of both worry and support for the refugee families in Australia. The typical story is one of regular communication between the family members across the world. Using modern social media tools like WhatsApp and Facebook, these globally dispersed refugee families were virtually present in their settlement journey in Australia. Most were in contact with some diasporic family members daily, others weekly, so that a virtual family was an invaluable support in their daily lives in Australia (Baldassar 2016).

An Iraqi woman living in regional Wollongong revealed how she connects with her daughters and grandchildren daily:

yes, I communicate with my daughters. Every hour, yes, I'm a mum you know, I'm a mother. Of course, they are happy with their families but they still need their mum to be close to them. Yes, they are settled down, everything is good. I cannot visit them without money, I need some financial support. I have to save, yes. Yes, I have grandchildren, but I haven't seen any of them because all of them were giving birth to life while they were overseas. Six grandsons. (Iraqi wife, Wollongong NSW, Round 2)

An Aramaic male from Syria, living in Liverpool in Sydney's western suburbs, told of encounters with a granddaughter living in the United States of America:

she's very beautiful. She also speak about me. She calls me GG, not [...]. She calls me GG. She said, 'GG naughty.' Every time, call me in the morning. 'GG naughty.' [laughing]. (Syrian husband, Liverpool NSW, Round 3)

A male refugee from Syria, living in regional Logan, shared his daily life in Australia with his diasporic family scattered around the globe:

of course [we are in contact with them regularly]. Every hours. If we cook something, we call them, 'look'. If we study, 'look, we are studying'. If we go to a park, 'look, we're out in the park', and something like that. Always with us. (Syrian husband, Logan Qld, Round 2)

This virtual family provided support, encouragement, and information for their Australian settlement, but at the same time created their biggest worries. The situation of family left behind in the country from which our informants had fled, or who were still awaiting their fate in transition countries, was the major source of worry among the refugee families interviewed. Most families interviewed were worried about their elderly parents and often siblings or children still in the homeland, and while many had attempted to get them to come to Australia, a lack of success resulted in great concern. One Hazara woman living in the Sydney suburb of Auburn told us:

we are happy with the Australian Government because they gave us home, they gave us safety to live here but I left my daughter in Afghanistan – I am worried about our daughter and son. (Afghan wife, Auburn NSW, Round 2)

Similarly, a Syrian woman living in Melbourne commented:

I hope to get my two brothers and their family from Lebanon to live with us. My mother cries all the time because she misses my siblings and really wants to see them again, before she dies. (Syrian husband, Melbourne Vic, Round 3)

A Syrian male living in the Queensland regional city of Logan also worried about his family left behind:

you know, we miss our daughter our children, because we always like close family, we live together, we join together. Now, you know, we are far away from them. This is our big problem. (Syrian husband, Logan Qld, Round 3)

Consequently, most refugee families we first visited hoped that we could assist them in their attempt to get their family members into Australia on a refugee visa and were disappointed when we pointed out that we were not from the Government and could not assist them in this regard. An Armenian woman from Syria living in Sydney's western suburbs was very explicit: 'I hope to be reunited with my children, otherwise I might leave Australia' (Syrian

wife, Fairfield NSW, Round 2). Another Syrian woman, a Muslim, who was living in the NSW regional city of Wollongong put it:

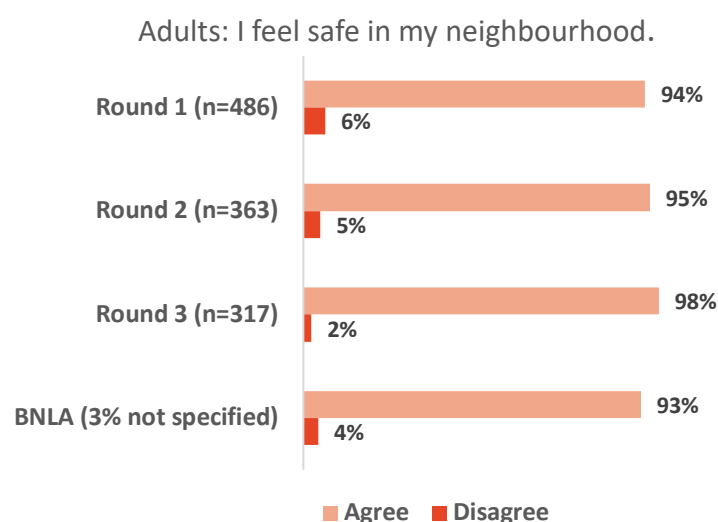
I hope for a family reunion. For them to come here. I am thinking about them, it's like being in prison. I wish they could be accepted and come here so I can see them again.
(Syrian wife, Wollongong NSW, Round 1)

9.5. Neighbourhood experiences of settlement

Safety

Refugee families flee danger and conflict seeking safety for themselves and their families. The BNLA longitudinal survey has proven that Australia has provided haven for refugees, with 93% reporting that they feel safe where they live. Similarly, 94% of the 486 Syrian-conflict and Afghan refugees who responded to our survey in Round 1 affirmed that 'I feel safe in the neighbourhood' (Figure 9.15). This perception improved slightly over the three rounds, from a high base. Safety has the highest positive perception of all the survey items, for both Young People – addressed later in this report – and adults. By Round 3, 98% of refugee informants felt safe in Australia. This finding is a major evidence-based confirmation of the success of Australia's humanitarian (refugee) program and of the one-off Syrian-conflict intake.

Figure 9.15 Adult refugees feeling safe in Australia



Social connections

While refugee families put a high premium on living in a safe neighbourhood and getting employment in countries of resettlement, elements of social connectivity in their new Australian neighbourhoods – making friends, talking to their Australian neighbours, having friendly neighbours, feelings of belonging – are important to those families who, in the process of displacement from their homeland, have had their social capital largely destroyed. In this section we report on quantitative and qualitative aspects of how successful refugee families have been in rebuilding their social capital.

Making friends

More than half (58%) of adults surveyed in Round 1 replied that they found it easy make friends (Figure 9.16). This important social outcome improved each round. By Round 3 this had improved significantly to three in four (76%). The BNLA data provides a point of comparison in this regard: 55% of respondents found it easy make friends. By this yardstick – which those in this survey met in Round 1 – the Syrian-conflict and Afghan refugees are achieving exceptional social outcomes, another very positive measure of the successful settlement of these refugee cohorts (see Figure 9.2). The results for Round 3 of the refugee family interviews were shaped by the onset of COVID-19 and the restrictions on social interaction and movement that were imposed by state and federal government agencies.

Figure 9.16 Ease of making new friends

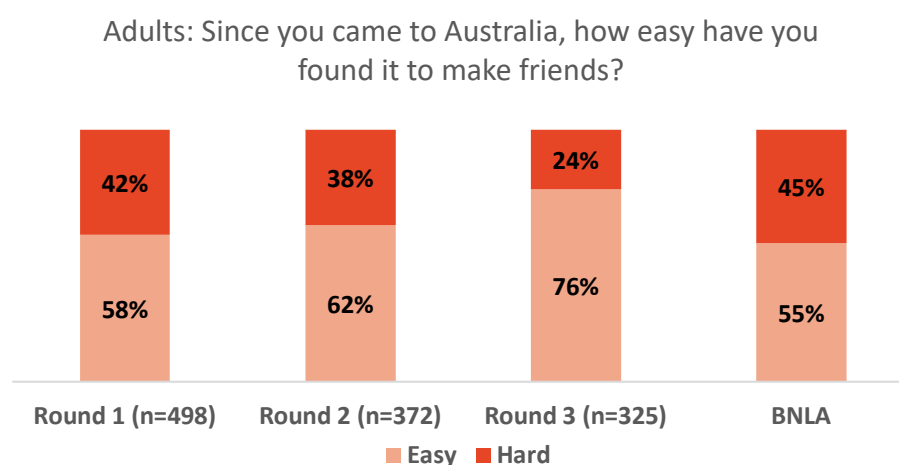


Table 9.6 Social outcomes of adult refugees, Rounds 1 and 3

Survey Items	Responses (positive)	Afghanistan		Iraq		Syria	
		Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3
		n=60	n=29	n=167	n=108	n=273	n=187
Making friends	Easy	78%	72%	60%	80%	53%	75%
Talking to Australian neighbours	Easy	60%	61%	38%	63%	41%	72%
Friendly neighbours	Agree	97%	100%	100%	95%	100%	96%

While it took time, most refugee adults made new friends. Table 9.6 shows that most refugees found that making friends in Australia was easy: in Round 1, 78% of Afghan adults surveyed reported that in their experience making friends in Australia was easy, as did 60% of Iraqi refugees and 53% of Syrian refugees. The number of Iraqi and Syrian refugees who found that making friends in Australia was easy increased to 80% and 75% respectively by Round 3, while it fell slightly to 72% by Round 3 for Afghan adults surveyed.

Making new friends in an unfamiliar country of resettlement is a challenge that all migrants and refugees face. This is particularly the case for refugees who arrive without knowing anyone in Australia. Those refugee families who arrived on sponsored Visa 202 did have an existing social network in Australia, as a male head of a Syrian refugee family settled in Fairfield in Sydney commented:

maybe some people don't have a lot of friends here, don't have a social life, because they don't have anyone here, and that is family or friends, whereas we do. We have family, like my sister is here, and then people who came after, and I also have friends who have been here for 30 years, so we exchange visits. (Syrian husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 2)

Similarly, a Syrian male now living with his family in a Brisbane suburb explained:

yes, we came like many, many families came in the same plane. Some of them, like in [name omitted], and some of them in [other locations around Brisbane]. But here, just we meet another family, they are here before us, they came before us, like three or four months, just up from here. These are our best friends. Same situation, they have two

girls in the same school, they are friendly, from the north coast. (Syrian husband, Brisbane Qld, Round 1)

Those who arrived on 200 and 204 Visas mostly arrived in Australia without knowing anyone other than previously unknown families who shared their flight to Australia. For these refugee families, in the first instance friends are found among their co-ethnic communities who have resettled in the same neighbourhood. But talking to other neighbours or strangers in the neighbourhood – at the shops, on the busses, in the schools and services sectors and so on – requires adequate English on the part of the refugees. As a male refugee from Syria aged 50-65 years and living in Fairfield in Sydney explained:

[our social life] it's not really about that active. Yeah, if we know someone from our country, yes, we can visit each other. But you can't – it's quite difficult to meet new people to form, yeah, very difficult. It's very hard to integrate. We still feel like strangers. So we still feel, yeah, we still feel like strangers. If we had our children here then we feel like more comfortable. But we have no family here. Everyone – also, like, in addition everyone is, here, at work. We don't receive – we don't receive guests. Everyone is busy. Speaking of the differences; it would take us forever; it would take us a long time to – to change to become like them [Australians], to kind of adopt or kind of adapt to their kind of traditions and way of life. (Syrian husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 2)

The key point of contact for the adults in refugee families on-arrival were their settlement service providers, the TAFE (or similar) where they learned English, and the church/mosque where they gathered as a religious community. These places are the sites of building new social capital in Australia. A male refugee from Afghanistan living in Auburn in Sydney recounted his experiences of making new friends there:

yes, we have some friends. We made a friend in SSI. Yes, they are Afghan. No [not from other countries], just Afghanistan. Talk with other people, that they are from other countries, in gym, or in somewhere else; but we communicate with just Afghan people. Yes. The main thing is English, and the culture is different. That's why we can't. The main thing is English, but the other thing is we have different fun, or something like this. Yes [different humour]. (Afghan adult sons, Auburn NSW, Round 1)

Similarly an Ezidi woman living in Coffs Harbour in regional NSW commented:

from last year – last year I didn't have any friends but now I've found Australian friends – at TAFE and through work with church. I'm very happy at church. Every Sunday and Friday and Wednesday – Tuesday I go to church. Yes, they help me with English. The program Friday and Monday was class – ESL. Tuesday is 30 people. Yes, that's a lot of people. I really like it. I'm really happy. Yes, yes, that's a big change for me to get some friends. There's many people in organisations that I work with. One of the people is [a woman] from SSI. There's some people from Anglicare I know. I'm friends with them. Yes, I'm getting more connections and networks. (Syrian wife, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 2)

But making new Australian friends is shaped by more than English language ability. Time is a constraint, with the pressures of work and family limiting free time to mingle with neighbours and strangers. As a Syrian male who ran a business in Toowoomba put it:

[how did we meet friends?] It's different, you know, everyone is different. Some of them from church, work, but no neighbours, we don't have friends from our neighbours, because we move a lot. When we bought our house, after few months, [my wife] get pregnant, so it was hard to communicate with new people, you know? We are so busy in our business, so yeah, we didn't make a lot of friends last year, but our friends usually from our work. (Syrian husband, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3).

Similarly, a male Hazara refugee living in Toowoomba spoke of how he rarely saw his neighbours: 'not see [any neighbours]. Everybody morning, go to work, night time come back. Sometimes say "hi, how are you". Yeah [everybody busy]' (Afghan husband, Toowoomba Qld, Round 2).

The qualitative insights derived from the interviews with refugee families has shed some light onto their experiences in this regard. As a male refugee from Syria who settled into the Sydney suburb of Parramatta put it:

it's a good [settlement] experience for us [himself, his wife and son] when we arrived in Australia. We feel shocked because it's a new place to live in. We don't know anyone here. After six months, we felt settled and we met a lot of people from our community. I have friends and everything is okay now. [We have a sense of community], yes. We feel settled here in our life in Australia and we want to stay here because we are with our community. We are happy with that. (Syrian husband, Parramatta NSW, Round 3)

Similarly a male refugee from Afghanistan living in regional Shepparton described his family's experience of making new friends there:

first, at arriving, we were in fear from feeling very strange. However, very soon, I met an Afghan food shop and another Arabic one very near of my home. I also met many Syrian families, most of them came at the same time where we started meeting each other regularly and created many activities together like soccer teams for all, women and men, trips for nearby parks... Soon, we found we become very happy and enjoyed living here. I also share in many social activities through the local community especially with the Uniting Church. This including educational sessions, picnics, parties... (Syrian husband, Shepparton Vic, Round1)

As an over-65-year-old woman from Syria living in Brisbane explained when interviewed in Round 3:

I have been having friends, but honestly, like since Corona [COVID-19] started, I haven't seen anyone because I prefer that I can stay home and not to get the virus from friends or anyone. Yeah. So I stayed home and I am looking after myself at the same time. (Syrian wife, Brisbane Qld, Round 3)

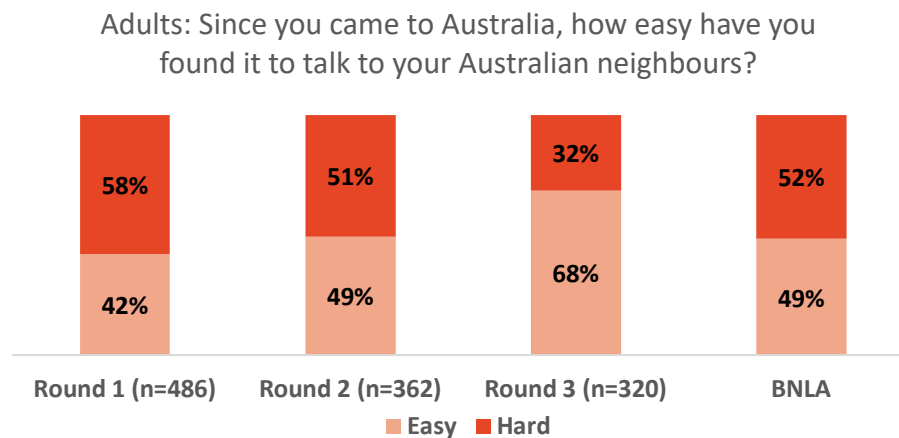
Ease of talking to neighbours

Another measure of the social settlement outcomes of these refugee cohorts relates to the interaction of refugees with their new neighbours, shown in responses to the question 'how easy have you found it to talk to your Australian neighbours?'. As Figure 9.17 shows, 42% of Round 1 responses indicated this was 'easy', and by Round 3 this outcome had improved significantly to 68%. This can be compared to the BNLA survey where the same question to a broad pool of refugees received the 'easy' response from 49% of them.

The typical story we encountered was the 'hi-bye' relationship between neighbours, found in each location, irrespective of the make-up of the neighbourhood. An Afghan woman living family in regional Coffs Harbour commented:

I was happy, coming here. It's good to be here. Yes, we are happy living here [in this neighbourhood]. It's good. When we go out, they [the neighbours] greet us. 'Hi, hello, good morning'. (Afghan wife, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 1)

Figure 9.17 Ease of talking to neighbours



Similarly, an Iraqi male living in regional Wollongong said:

yeah, we just greet each other [neighbours] from far away, otherwise we don't associate. They are not getting closer to us. They're Australians, they are Turkish, and there is a foreign – we don't know from where, and from Africa, as well. (Iraqi husband, Wollongong NSW, Round 1)

This was also the experience of a Muslim refugee living in regional Shepparton, as well as others: 'I am very happy regarding my neighbours who look nice and kind – but no real socialising. Only "hello, good morning"' (Syrian husband, Shepparton Vic, Round 1);

we're still in the same neighbourhood and street but we moved to another building. My son found this unit and it's bigger than the old one. All of the neighbours speak English, so they are just saying, 'hi, how are you? bye.' One of them speaks Arabic. She visits me in a very formal way, like occasions or something like [...] has to visit, she is going to visit. [It's not too friendly], no. I don't like it (Syrian wife, Fairfield NSW, Round 3);

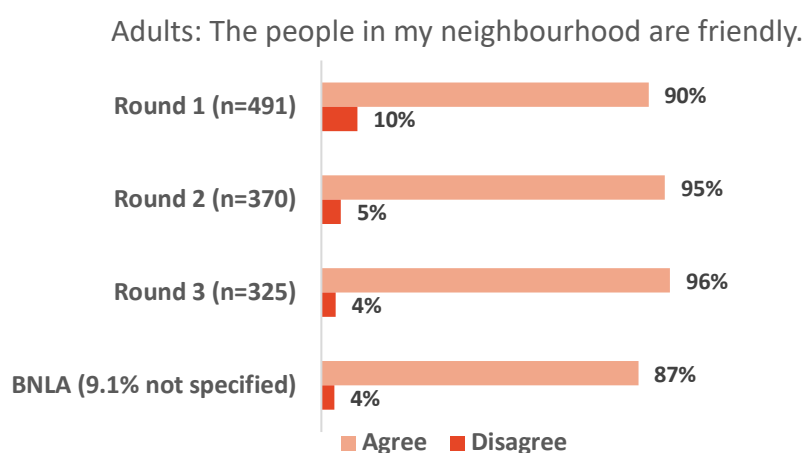
yes, we moved to this [Housing Commission] house. This is the second year for us in the same house. It's a very good place. It's a very good place and we are comfortable in this area. The neighbourhood has very good people. We just say, 'hi; how are you?' That's it. One of our neighbours speaks English and the other neighbour speaks Arabic and English. They've lived here for 30 years. There is no visits between each other. We just say, 'hi' to each other (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 3).

Friendly neighbourhoods

Right from the outset the refugees commented on the warmth of the welcome they felt after settling in Australia, with 90% of Round 1 respondents agreeing to the question ‘do you feel that the people in your neighbourhood are friendly’. As Figure 9.18 shows, this perception slightly improved over the three rounds and is similar to the BNLA data (87%).

While everyone was friendly and there was a sense of belonging, most of the participants noted that neighbours and neighbourhoods were very different to their experience overseas. As explained above, there was a sense of ‘hi and bye’ when it came to neighbourhood interactions. Extended family living and working in Australia were less accessible than they were overseas, with people working and spending time in their homes.

Figure 9.18 Friendliness of people in the neighbourhood



Another dynamic running through the factors shaping refugee interactions with neighbours related to the dwelling arrangements of refugee families. In most cases, refugee families lived in the suburbs and regional cities interspersed with their cosmopolitan neighbours. In Logan, a regional settlement area outside Brisbane, most refugee families were settled into gated housing complexes where many other refugee families also lived. Thus, stories emanating from Logan describe how people in housing complexes interacted with one another. Ezidis in regional Toowoomba lived in a similar complex:

we are still in the same house, yes. We are still friends with the neighbours, yes. We've made new friends, yes. From the complex or sometimes when I go to the park, yes. We have a big complex here and lots of people, yes (Syrian wife, Logan Qld, Round 3);

so this complex – the neighbours are good. There is not much communication or that, but in general they are good neighbours. But I don't know anything about outside of this (Syrian husband, Logan Qld, Round 1);

yes, of course [I have friends]. I'm living in this complex. All around me, people are all friends with each other – visiting each other, we're going to somewhere with each other. I'm fine, I have friends. No, I don't have any [non-Ezidi] friends, just my teachers at TAFE, otherwise I don't have any friends, Aussie friends, yep. Yeah, we are feeling very happy, that people in Toowoomba, they are very friendly (Iraqi wife, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3).

It seems that the advantage of settling refugee families in residential complexes with other refugee families, be it in suburbs or regional cities, is that the complex becomes the site of making new friends with neighbours. The proximity of living facilitates fast interaction between the adults and children in the refugee families. This may be at the cost of delaying the need to interact with others in the community who are not from the refugees' language background.

9.6. A good place to bring up the children:

Australia is universally seen by refugee families as a good place to bring up children. This is a critical dimension of successful resettlement because the future of their children is the driving force for most refugee families to leave their country, flee conflict and/or persecution and seek a better future, despite the risks and uncertainty that the refugee family takes on board with such a decision. When asked whether 'the neighbourhood is a good place to bring up children', 92% of Round 1 respondents agreed, rising to 98% by Round 3 (see Table 9.7), comparing favourably to the BNLA responses to this question (88%). When asked whether 'the neighbourhood has good schools for their children', 87% of Round 1 respondents agreed, rising to 98% by Round 3, comparing favourably to the BNLA responses to this question (86%).

Detailed responses given during interviews provide insights into the thinking of refugee parents. One Iraqi male of Chaldean background whose family settled in Fairfield in Sydney's western suburbs explained:

we wish in the future for our children, not for ourselves – maybe the future is better for younger people. We will be happy if we see our children have a good chance of a good

job. When we fled from Iraq and we left Syria for Australia, our only wishes were to ensure our children's future. (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 1)

Table 9.7 Adult refugee views on their children's lives in Australia, Rounds 1 and 3

Survey Items	Responses (positive)	Afghanistan		Iraq		Syria	
		Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3
		n=60	n=29	n=167	n=108	n=273	n=187
Good place to bring up children	Agree	98%	100%	88%	98%	90%	96%
Good schools	Agree	96%	100%	81%	98%	83%	96%
Feeling safe in neighbourhood	Agree	100%	100%	96%	98%	92%	97%
Confidence in children's future	Mostly to very confident	100%	96%	88%	96%	85%	95%

Similarly, a Syrian male who settled with his family in regional Logan in Queensland told us:

at the beginning the first thing we want is for the kids to finish their education and find a good job and a better future. And for them to find a valid job, a good one that they can already after that, so that they can apply to buy a house and make their own business or do whatever they do for their future. (Syrian husband and wife, Logan Qld, Round 3)

Many other refugee adults confirmed the view that their refugee journey to Australia is all about their children's future: 'you know we are all here because of our children future and I am very optimistic regarding their future' (Syrian husband, Shepparton Vic, Round 1);

for me I don't hope anything. Just I want to feel all the time safe and I want to see my children in a good place and in good condition. Sometimes I was thinking I want to be active person in Australia but I couldn't make anything so I can push my children to be very active in the community. This is the main thing because I want my children to make many things good for Australia. But for me just I want to be safe and happy (Syrian wife, Logan Qld, Round 3);

she [my daughter] is very promising. It's a big consolation to me, everything that I have been deprived of in my country and here, I'm very pleased to see that my daughter is

having it and I'm giving it to my daughter. If I could not fulfil my dream, I put my dream in my daughter (Iraqi wife, Liverpool NSW, Round 1) ;

it will be a good future for our children, but for us, we will struggle (Syrian wife, Logan Qld, Round 1);

in terms of buying a house, I can't buy a house for my kids. In terms of my kids' future, they will have to do that for themselves. It's up to them to create that future for themselves. What can a person dream of, except for, you know, for a family, and have a future for them? (Syrian husband, Parramatta NSW, Round 2);

I think Australia is great for my children's future and that's what helps me feel positive about my migration to Australia (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 1).

Most refugee parents are thus very confident that their children have a good future in Australia, something that could not be guaranteed if they had not fled their homeland. However, some had contradictory feelings about what Australian life meant for their relationship with their children, particularly since women and children have rights and expectations in Australia that are not present in patriarchal relations in Iraq, Syria, or Afghanistan. Some parents shared their concerns about the different values that people have in Australia, and about losing connection with their roots. A Muslim woman from Syria living in regional Wollongong with her family told us:

the best thing living in this country is that you have freedom and you have your own rights. Also, it is a relaxed country. The worst thing is that it was a big transition for us moving from Syria to Australia. I sometimes feel that we are still in a foreign country, it is not like your own country. One of the disadvantages is the language which is a big barrier to us. The other issue is how to raise our children morally and ethically according to our culture. We also notice that in the society, moral values are declining which are related to modern day issues. I am a bit scared of losing my children, I hope they do not forget about our language, culture, identity, and Islamic values... We like Australia better, because there are lots of opportunities here. We like freedom such as cultural, social, and religious freedom. (Syrian wife, Wollongong NSW, Round 1)

Another Muslim woman from Syria living in regional Shepparton expressed similar views:

when we were registered with the UN as refugees, we were nominated by the Australian Embassy in Lebanon to be settled in Australia. I was very worried and officially refused this nomination because many relatives and friends there advise me against, arguing that I will lose my control on my children early and that could be devastating for my children later. But later my family were offered humanitarian visas and we shifted to Australia where we settled in [this town]. After arriving, I feel better and find the town and the community are very nice, but I still worry regarding my children to be lost in this western culture. I am happy but worried about my children future and concerned about losing the ability to control them, fear from sexual freedom and drug using. (Syrian wife, Shepparton Vic, Round1)

9.7. Understanding Australian ways and culture:

To explore issues related to refugee families adapting to/accepting Australian values, the refugee adults were asked: ‘since you came to Australia, how easy have you found it to understand Australian ways/culture?’ The results were that 63% of Round 1 responses indicated ‘easy’ and by Round 3 this had improved significantly to 80%. Once again by the BNLA yardstick – 59% – the Syrian-conflict and Afghan refugees were achieving exceptional social outcomes.

9.8. Happiness

We asked our adult refugees a final question: ‘all things considered how happy are you with your current life in Australia?’. In Round 1, three in four (74%) adult refugees said they were ‘mostly’ to ‘very’ happy with their current life in Australia, increasing to nine out of ten (90%) in Round 3 (see Table 9.8).

Table 9.8 Adult refugees and life in Australia, Rounds 1 and 3

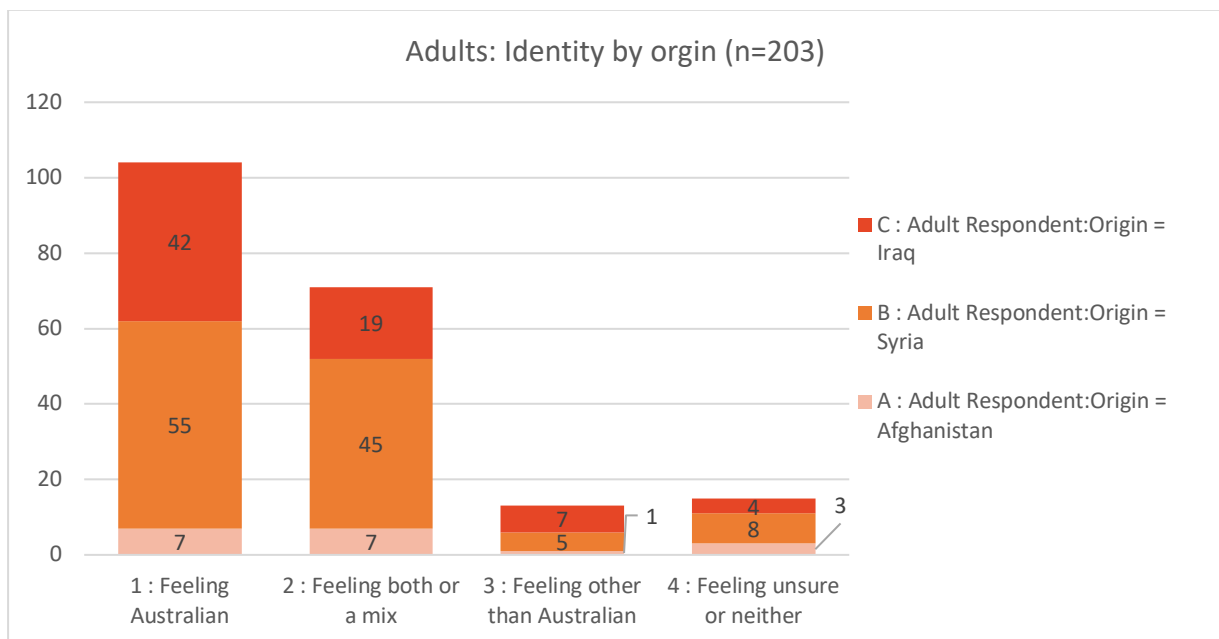
Survey Items	Responses (positive)	Afghanistan		Iraq		Syria	
		Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3	Round 1	Round 3
		n=60	n=29	n=167	n=108	n=273	n=187
Understand Australian ways/culture	easy	65%	64%	63%	82%	62%	81%
Happy with current life	mostly to very happy	90%	86%	75%	94%	58%	90%

When we break down survey results into religion – Christian, Ezidi and Muslim – of our adult refugee informants, a more complex pattern emerged. As might be expected, refugee happiness improved with time living in Australia. Muslim refugees – mostly from Afghanistan – were the happiest about life in Australia, increasing from 80% in Round 1 to 95% in Round 3. While 63% Christian respondents in Round 1 said they were ‘mostly’ to ‘very’ happy with their current life in Australia, by Round 3 this increased to 93%. This pattern was reversed for Ezidis, for whom the proportion saying that they were ‘mostly’ to ‘very’ happy with their current life in Australia fell from 84% in Round 1 to 65% in Round 3. Ezidis had particularly horrific pre-migration experiences. Since we began this research project there has been a great increase in the settlement and resettlement of Ezidis in Toowoomba. The 2021 Census indicated that Toowoomba was home to the largest group of Ezidi people in Australia, and Kurdish Kurmanji – their traditional language – was the second most spoken language in Toowoomba, behind English. Industry partner Multicultural Australia estimates that approximately 5,000 Ezidis now live in Toowoomba, a substantial increase from the small Ezidi community which existed there when we first visited Toowoomba in 2017 to plan the fieldwork for this research project.

9.9. Belonging and Identity

One of the key dimensions of refugee settlement – like that of other immigrants – relates to subjective issues of identity and belonging. In the family interviews, issues related to identity were explored unevenly: family interviews had a dynamic and trajectory that varied from family to family. As Figure 9.19 shows, of the 203 families where interview transcripts recorded responses to questions about national identity, about half of the families (n=104) reported that they now felt Australian, another 71 families reported that they felt that they held a mixed identity (Australian, their previous national identity and sometimes their ethnicity) while 13 reported that they did not feel Australian. Given that most of these refugees arrived in 2017, this is one social indicator of successful refugee settlement.

Figure 9.19 Identity of adult refugees interviewed



One male refugee living with his family in Fairfield, a Sydney suburb, explained:

yes, I feel like I am Australian and I feel like Australia is my home. No-one has told me, 'you are a refugee here'. If someone came and told me, 'you are a refugee', I will say, 'I respect Australia because Australia respects me'. When I get citizenship, I will start to say, 'I'm Australian'. (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 3)

Another young Afghan women whose family was displaced to Pakistan prior to resettlement in Australia and now lived with her mother and siblings in Toowoomba explained how, within families, subjective feelings of national identity vary:

my mother is very positive – she already feels Australian. I don't feel Pakistani at all, I do feel local to the city I was brought up in Pakistan. I feel very local there, but that doesn't mean I feel Pakistani. [I feel] Afghan although I've not been in Afghanistan for, I haven't even been there, I've been there for, I don't know, three to four months, that's it, but it's still part of my identity. But I'd say I feel Afghan Australian, that Australian would emphasise when I get my citizenship. (Afghan adult daughter, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3)

In family interviews the subjective issue of belonging in Australia was also explored, albeit unevenly. One male head of a refugee family living in Parramatta commented:

we really feel we belong. It's different to Syria, there is less interaction with loved ones and friends here. You almost need to make an appointment to see them. [But] this is now home. (Syrian husband, Parramatta NSW, Round 1)

One common theme that emerged in family interviews was the connection between Australian national identity and the gaining of Australia citizenship:

I would like to get more integrated, and more active in the Australian wider society. I feel a little bit inferior, because I am not a citizen, and I don't have the impression or the knowledge that I am permanent here. I have all the civil right of everybody else like us, except I don't have Australian passport and I cannot vote, and this is explained to me, but everything else is exactly like all of us, except you don't have Australian passport, and you cannot vote. But everything else, all your entitlement, is like mine, like everybody else (Syrian wife, Liverpool NSW, Round 1);

yes we will be apply [for Citizenship] and hopefully get it. You will be free to travel to any country, you feel yes very, give you a feel as you are Australian, that's very, not you are refugee, you are Australian now. I feel I am Syrian more than Australian. You can't feel like Australian because you don't born here but maybe after the years you can feel you belong to this country, like that. When you have a stable life, you can feel to be part in this country more now. Like if you have a job here and your life, have same routine every day you can feel like more settled and more adapt in this country, I think that (Syrian wife, Brisbane Qld, Round 3);

it is 50/50. 50% Afghan and 50% Australian. Yeah, [when we get citizenship] we will become Australian. [100% Aussie], yeah, that's right! (Afghan husband and wife, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3);

at the moment I don't feel a hundred percent Australian. When I get the citizenship it means hundred percent taken as Australian (Afghan wife, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3).

10. Settlement outcomes of young refugees

10.1. Introduction

Young peoples' comments during interviews largely aligned with quantitative findings in conveying a general sense of optimism and confidence. They also hinted at readiness, even eagerness, to integrate. However, there is recognition that such integration may come at a cost to cultural identity. There are few discernible patterns of regional or cultural bias in attitude, behaviour, and aspirations, however some minor trends are evident along gender lines. Mentions of friends and peers, particularly in a school context, seem more common than those of family, cultural background, and local community. There is an overall sense of these young people looking forward, having moved on from their former lives.

10.2. Schooling

Educational opportunity is critical to young people's successful settlement. The survey of young refugees shows that they were very happy with their education experiences in Australia. In response to the question 'how are you finding Schools/TAFE at the moment?' in Round 1 – that is, after less than 12 months settlement in Australia in most cases – three in four refugee youth surveyed (77%) rated their educational experience as 'very good' or 'excellent'. This rose to 87% in the Round 2 survey, though fell slightly to 84% by Round 3, probably because of the impact of COVID-19 on schooling.

Young refugees across primary, secondary, and post-secondary education ages were very positive about their education experiences. 81% found primary school 'very good' or 'excellent' in Round 1; this rose to 90% in Round 2 but then fell slightly to 86% by Round 3. The following remarks from a Primary school aged Afghan girl exemplify positive comments about teachers and school life:

I'm in Year 6. There is very kind and good people. I have good teachers; they are kind, and... our lesson, they learn us. They are so good. I like maths, and English, technology, and art, drama... All subjects. (Afghan female, 11 years old, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 1)

Three out of four (77%) high school aged young people in Round 1 said they found school/TAFE 'very good' or 'excellent.' This proportion rose to nine out of ten (90%) in Round 2, but this also suffered a slight dip in Round 3 (85%). Interpreting this fall – like all Round 3 findings – must consider the COVID-19 factor. The supportive nature of teachers is often cited.

An older Afghan student described how she was supplied with much needed learning resources by a caring teacher:

yeah, like, I'm really happy that I'm going to that school. Like they really care about you, like, I don't have laptop and like, I'm in year eleven, it's really hard to do my assessment and like, you know, my teacher she asked me and then she, so for last term I borrow laptop from them and then, like, at the end of the term, I gave it back. And like today, she asked me again, do you need a laptop, come and borrow it again, and like, yeah. Like, they are really supportive. I'm really proud, I'm really happy. (Afghan female, aged 17, Auburn NSW, Round 2)

A clear preference for either the public or private system is not discernible in the comments. The following older Syrian male expressed satisfaction with his public schooling experience:

yeah, I'm going to high school. Yeah, it's public school. Yeah, it's good, yeah. [What I like about it is that] the teacher is friendly; they respect you. If you don't understand a word, they will help you to understand the meaning. I not have favourite subject, now. All subjects are good. (Syrian male, 19 year old, Parramatta NSW, Round 1)

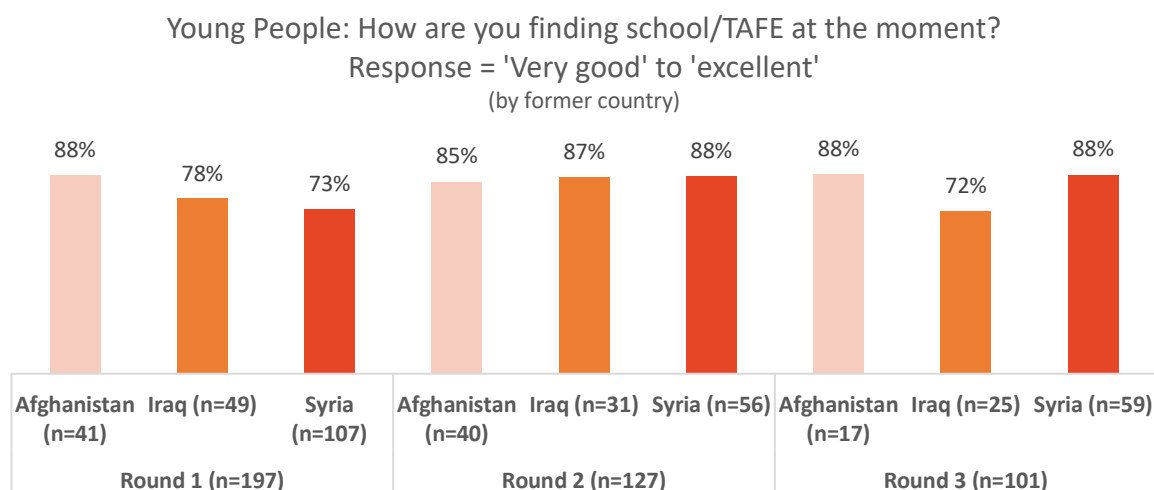
The comment below from a young (primary aged) Syrian male also shows satisfaction with his private schooling. As with many younger students, sport and play aspects of schooling are highly valued:

I am nine. I go to [name redacted] school. Year two. School is good, I like it. It's not difficult, not that much. I like to play with my friends because they play soccer with me any time I want. I have a lot of friends. Maybe like, seven. Seven good friends, yes. I like doing maths. I like my school because they help me. The teachers help me and my friends sometimes when I get mistakes, they help me. I like maths and I like reading and soccer. Yes, I play soccer at school. And I like playing handball. Yes, I play with my friends. Sometimes we play, just like, we don't have, if I don't have anyone to play with someone else at all. I don't like writing much. It's a bit tricky to write some words. I like sport the most. (Syrian male, aged 9, Wollongong NSW, Round 2)

When the country of origin of the refugee young people is considered (see Figure 10.1), it can be seen that Afghan young people consistently rated their schooling very high – 88% in

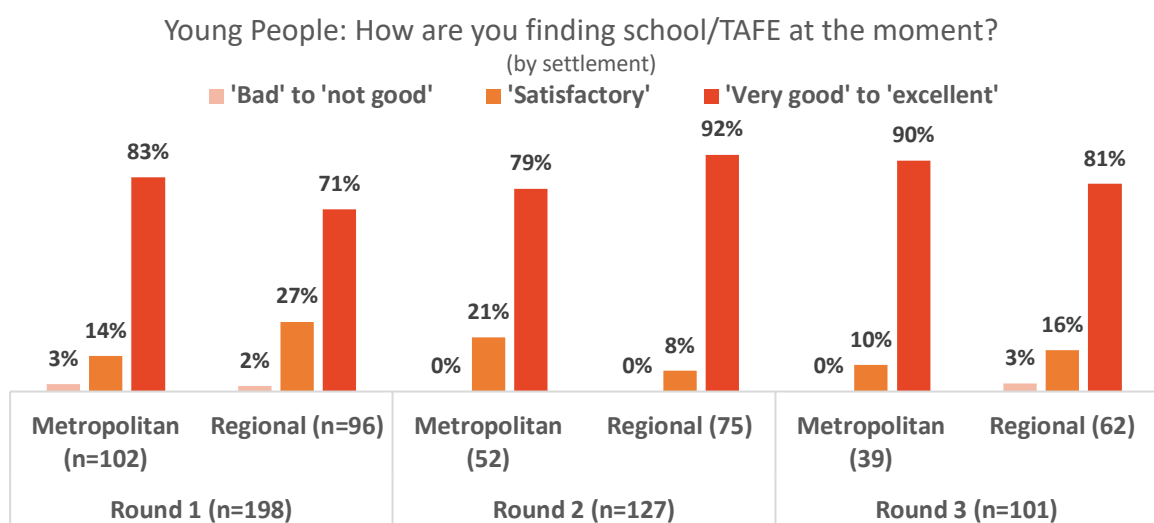
Rounds 1 and 3 reported that it was 'very good' or 'excellent' – while refugees born in Syria increased their rating from 73% in Round 1 to 88% in Round 3. 78% of Iraqi youth reported that schools/TAFE were 'very good' or 'excellent' in Round 1, rising to 87% in Round 2 but dropping back to 72% in Round 3. This may be a COVID-19 effect, but neither Afghan nor Syrian young people reported such a fall off.

Figure 10.1 Young refugees' schooling/TAFE experiences, Rounds 1 and 3



In terms of the schooling experiences of young refugees, Figure 10.2 shows that the overwhelming majority of those living in both regional and metropolitan areas – in Round 3 90% of those living in metropolitan areas and 81% in regional areas – rated their experience as 'very good' or 'excellent'.

Figure 10.2 Regional and metropolitan experiences of young refugees



Negative school experiences

School life may colour some young people's perception of the culture and value systems of the society in which they now live. The following Iraqi female, although essentially happy, is not impressed with some of the behaviours of other students at her school:

yeah, sometimes happy. Like because I like good in Australia – happy – but like the school is – I'm like [...] it is not really good... I mean, 14 or 13, they smoke and they ... like vaping. It is legal and they do it. Yeah, this is how bad the school. (Iraqi female, 17 years old, Fairfield NSW, Round 3)

School-related comments account for a number of mentions of unhappiness, as seen in following note made by the interviewer of a young Syrian male:

he wishes the school to teach him more academic subject, more mathematics. He is really unhappy about the low level of curriculum and wants more challenging studying, especially mathematics. (Interviewer Syrian male, 11 years old, Shepparton Vic, Round 2)

Such negative school-related comments tend to be made by parents or interviewers, sometimes on behalf of children. This was particularly the case for Syrian parents:

the mother is also not happy regarding her children school as she believes the level of education of it is so low and not satisfactory. However, she thinks she can do nothing for her older two child who are now at year 12, too late. (Interviewer of Syrian mother of middle school aged children, Melbourne Vic, Round 3)

10.3. Post school aspirations

The literature on young refugees and immigrants consistently highlights high aspirations (Nunn et al. 2014; Synergistiq 2019). The following comments reveal aspirations for university and TAFE. In shaping their own cultural cartographies the young people observed and considered options available to them in a new context (Ros I Solé, 2013).

University

Regarding their post-school future, several young people aspired to higher learning and professional roles, as in the following example from a 16-year-old Afghan female, one of 70 that referred directly to 'university':

well since I like music and art I want to further study them. So I'm hoping to finish high school and then get into a well-known university and then work out for my career and future. (Afghan female, 16 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1)

A large proportion of the references to university specified a career regarding higher learning, as in the following comments from two young Afghans: 'I just want to go to university and study for midwifing' (Afghan female, 16 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3); and, 'yeah [to go to university], and learn how to be a good police officer' (Afghan male, 12 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 2).

The following four children from the same Syrian family in Victoria emphatically expressed what they want from higher education when older: 'I want to study medicine and would like to be a doctor and have my own job' (Syrian female, 15 years old, Melbourne Vic, Round 1); 'I want to become a teacher' (Syrian female, 15 years old, Melbourne Vic, Round 1); 'I want to become a doctor or an engineer' (Syrian male, 11 years old, Melbourne Vic, Round 1); 'I want to become an engineer' (Syrian male, 10 years old, Melbourne Vic, Round 1).

There was a noticeable frequency in mentions of medicine, law, and engineering. Other professions such as pharmacy and dentistry were also common:

after school, I'd like to go to uni, study something... Something related to medicine. Yeah, it's hard to study medicine from the first time, I have to do some pathways. (Iraqi male, 16 years old, Liverpool NSW, Round 1)

Such ambition may have little relation to the refugee status of the study's participants. It is possible that these young people differ little from wider youth populations in this regard. According to an OECD report, teenagers have long had a limited perspective on career opportunities. The report states that: 'teachers, veterinarians, business managers, engineers and police officers continue to capture the imaginations of young people, as they did nearly 20 years ago' (OECD 2020: 1).

Lack of practical knowledge and insight into Australia's higher education sector and professional qualification framework may also be a factor in young peoples' perspectives. For example, the following 17-year-old boy's view on a career in medicine appears somewhat uninformed:

yeah, I'm still interested to go to uni. Well I'm still not knowing now but more like medicine or a dentist or something like that. I say I not really know what I want to do now because I'm still [unclear] but I'm probably going to go for a dentist. (Syrian male, aged 17, Brisbane Qld, Round 2)

The following comment shows similar imprecision:

I want to do a technology engineer or a building engineer or something [at university]. I don't know what they call it. I just call building engineer, or a lawyer. (Iraqi male, aged 17, Logan Qld, Round 1)

Comparisons to others show that they are working through the possibilities, and for some these options may not have been possible, such as for Afghan young women.

TAFE

Proportionally, university study was mentioned in comments far more than TAFE. However, some young people had firm ambitions about trades roles, such as the following Iraqi male in the final year of secondary schooling: 'hoping to become an electrician. Trying to get an apprenticeship, but it's hard because there are very few jobs at the moment' (Iraqi male, Toowoomba Qld, Round 2).

Apprenticeships depend very much on social networks, so this is a difficulty for young people wanting to enter trades. Prior research found that single mothers, Indigenous parents and those that aren't part of sporting networks find it particularly difficult to break into networks that contribute to young men gaining apprenticeships (Reid and Watson 2015).

Gender dimensions

Twice as many girls as boys expressed interest in high paying roles such as doctor, lawyer, and engineer. Medicine and engineering were most preferred, with girls seemingly more interested in medicine, and boys only slightly more inclined towards engineering. The following comment by a young (13-year-old) Syrian girl shows early enthusiasm for a health-related career:

now, I'm thinking something in medical, something in medicine and stuff, yeah, but that's only an idea, or as dream, but I'm working towards that ... because it's something good,

and I like medical stuff, seeing things that connect to the blood, and medicines and stuff, so... (Syrian female aged 13, Toowoomba Qld, Round 2)

10.4. English language

This section can be more accurately described as young people's perceived English language ability. In terms of different aspects of English language ability – speaking, reading, writing, and listening – young refugee males and females showed significant improvement over the three rounds, with the majority rating their ability as 'very good' or 'excellent'. The exception was in Round 3 English listening ability because of the COVID-19 effect. It created learning challenges for some young people, such as the following young Iraqi girl in Toowoomba:

with COVID-19, term two was a bit, like, hard because it was, like, online school and, like, some of the subjects were hard to understand because, like, you usually ask the tutor, but it was kind of hard online. (Iraqi female, 10 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3)

Given the centrality of English language ability to employment, education, and social interaction and participation in the many aspects of Australian life, the positive rating of young people's English ability is an excellent settlement outcome that is very impressive since most young refugees surveyed arrived in Australia only recently, in 2016 or 2017. The importance of this finding is that the relationship between gaining employment and the self-assessed observation of speaking English well is highly significant ($p < 0.01$) (Synergistiq 2019). In general, young people's attitude to English acquisition is overwhelmingly one of confidence and optimism. They want to be good at English and many seem to rejoice in their newfound ability. The phrases 'I like English...' and 'I'm good at English' are found quite frequently among the comments, particularly among younger, primary aged participants: the former is about attitude, the latter is about perceived ability.

The following comment on speaking English is typical of the cosmopolitan speakers, who have a range of language backgrounds:

yeah [my English is now very good]. No. I had zero English. I didn't even know what English is. Yeah [I've learned quickly]. I can speak 10 languages. It [some subjects at school] was difficult at first but when I learned English, it was good. (Afghan girl, 13 years old, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 1)

The following older Afghan male who speaks Persian at home adapts to school and work by both speaking and thinking in English, although he does not state whether he makes a conscious metacognitive switch between languages:

sometimes when I'm at school, I think in English, like when I do work, something else, anything, so I think in English. When I come home, I speak Persian. (Afghan male, 18 years old, Auburn NSW, Round 1)

The contexts for learning English were noted by young people, such as the complexities around finding support in immersion with others from the same background while at the same time needing a shift to mainstream:

at first it was really hard, we couldn't understand anything. In Iran, we went to an English course for one month before coming here. No, just by ourselves. It was a private school and not related to the Government. We went there and we learnt some. At first, here, it was really hard because we couldn't understand anything. After two, three or four months, it became better. When we were at the IEC [Intensive English Centre], it was still not good in the English course, because there was a lot of Afghan people there and we didn't talk English. When we went to high school it was much better. (Afghan male, 18 years old, Auburn NSW, Round 1)

The concept of *language brokering* (Corona et al. 2012; Hall and Sham 2007) describes children acting as translators. Instances of children teaching other children English is commonly found in comments; the following confident young Iraqi girl's English is corrected by her friends:

like, so first when I came to Australia, like I went to [...]. I wasn't like that good but like I'm learning now because I speak with my friends English and with my sister. So if I say a wrong word, like wrong, they show me – they fix it for me. So I'm very grateful. I'm very good [at English]. Yeah, I'm reading good. [And in writing, the same?] I think same. All good. I can read and write. (Iraqi female aged 11, Fairfield NSW, Round 3)

The following 11 year old Syrian boy in Wollongong learned English from a combination of peers, relatives, school and online streaming services.

like, in the school, like, I had Arabic friends that used to know, like, who know how to speak English, they used to teach me and there was a lot of hard work when I started the school, so they came and to teach me more and more. Like, in the classroom, I stay in the classroom, like, three hours, always just stay with the teachers to learn, like, English teachers. No, I don't watch TV. Like, we only have Netflix and YouTube. Yeah, we do watch English movies. Yeah, I learn more English while watching movies. Like I know some words. Sometimes I don't know words, I ask my brothers and my sisters, like, 'what is that word, what does it mean?'. (Syrian male, 11 years old, Wollongong NSW, Round 2).

Similarly, moving between languages is a tactic for developing understanding. As noted above, instances of using online media to improve language is commonly found in comments. The following interviewer of an Afghan teenager noted:

she uses YouTube in many languages and reads the subtitles. She does this because each gives her different insights into the language. (BRA Aziza commenting on 15 year old Afghan female, Toowoomba Qld, Round 2)

The existence of literacy sponsors, such as family members, friends, and teachers (Brandt 1998; Halbritter and Lindquist 2012) contributed to the development of basic foundations from their schooling in Syria and sometimes Iraq. As noted earlier, the Syrian and Iraqi cohort came from relatively highly educated families compared to those in the BLNA. Others gained English in countries of transition such as Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt.

Accent

A number of young people commented about accent in a variety of contexts. The following comment by an older Afghan male describes a negative incident in which accent became a subject of derision by another student:

sometimes our English is not very good, and they make jokes about that. For example, I had a presentation for my assessment in class. There was a boy who was laughing at me because of my accent. He made me a bit nervous about my presentation and I couldn't do very well with my speech. (Afghan male, 18 years old, Auburn NSW, Round 1)

But transformation occurs, as seen in the following comment from a 15 year old Syrian male who was in his third year of living in Australia:

how has life changed in these three years? I would say a lot better because now I can just speak English fluently and not struggle. I can just go to school like every single kid and like not having a hard time with studying or anything. It is like everything has improved. Well, we learnt English in Syria but it was like an American accent. So when I came here, like I will say I had to learn a new language. I didn't speak much English when I came. Because now I'm used to hanging out with my friends and stuff so I always talk in this Australian accent. (Syrian male, 15 years old, Loganlea NSW, Round 3)

10.5. Generational language challenges

Transformation occurs on a number of levels. Adults and children appear to have somewhat different outlooks and expectations about English acquisition, with children seemingly more eager to adopt the language of their new home. The father of a young Syrian family commented about the mix of languages in a home where the children speak English among themselves:

she [my wife] speaks with the kids [two sons] in Armenian and I speak with the kids in Arabic. But the kids together they speak English. We prefer our kids to learn Arabic and Armenian and English. It's easier for the kids. (father of young Syrian family, Parramatta NSW, Round 3)

Many comments reflect similar generational challenges. Switching language according to context appeared common, particularly with regard to school and home. The following 16 year old Iraqi girl describes the way English was used among peers at school, while Arabic was reserved for the home:

I speak Arabic and English. English between me and my sister and in the school, I speak English with my friends, but with my parents I speak Arabic. Yeah, I'm learning [Mandaean]. Mostly I speak Arabic with my parents, and my sister, English. (Iraqi female aged 16, Fairfield NSW, Round 3)

First language attrition

The process of acquiring English within the family may come at the expense of the continued use of the first language. Generational conflict, or perhaps a case of *linguistic rebellion* (Little,

2020), is described in the following comment from an Arabic speaking mother of a 5 year old girl:

sometimes, I can't understand on her. I say stop, like, give me a word... Like, just two lines, three lines. Sometimes, honestly, she's angry from me, and start to cry. Like, 'you are not understand Australian, you not understand English, go and study'. I speak Arabic, I speak Aramaic, French and Kurdish. Arabic, I'm still talking with daughter. She's understand 80 percent, but she cannot talk too much. No, this is shame. Honestly, it's very hard to teach them. I think when she will grow up, she will back to track, and she will ask to learn Arabic, because she will feel proud, like, when she start understand what happened, her background, the stories, and how she came to Australia. But now, I force her, a little bit, and then she start crying. Like, 'I hate Arabic, I don't want to'. I say, 'okay'.
(Syrian mother of female, 5 years old, Loganlea Qld, Round 3)

Language is tied up with identity and the young people are shaping a new identity for themselves as this primary school aged child revealed:

when I came here, I felt like a different person. I didn't know who I was when I came here, but after two to three years, I am kind of got into the Aussie accent and that's pretty cool. Yes [a typical Aussie now]. I love it. (Iraqi male, 9 years old, Loganlea Qld, Round 3)

This leads to the question of identity, as a refugee and more generally, which we asked the young people in the final year of the project.

10.6. Young refugee identity

Refugee status has varying degrees of acceptance by young people. Phrases such as 'I don't mind..' or 'I'm not bothered by..' in reference to refugeehood are common, hinting that perhaps some in the community *do* mind or bother about the *label*. While no comments express overt shame about being a refugee, the eagerness (or at least a willingness) to identify with a new environment and its people is evident, suggestive of cultural transformation:

I feel like I'm kind of Australian, like I'm used to people here. I'm used to living here. I'm like I can't like go back to being another country than Australia, I feel like I'm Australian.

I don't mind [being called a refugee] because I don't feel like I'm a refugee, I feel like an Australian. (Syrian male, Parramatta NSW, Round 3)

'Feeling' Australian suggests a more personal embrace of the new culture, beyond socio-cultural means (such as English acquisition):

I'm Australian. Yeah and this is my country. I feel Australian and the word 'refugee' is a normal word for me, so I don't mind about it. But I feel like I'm Australian. (Syrian female, Parramatta NSW, Round 3).

One young Syrian boy disassociated himself from refugeehood altogether according to the interviewer:

he does not believe he is a refugee, and never ever felt as a refugee even when he newly arrived in Australia. He stated that he feels annoyed if he is called a refugee. (Interviewer of Syrian male, aged 11, Shepparton Vic, Round 3)

The sister in this family was somewhat more accepting of the appellation, providing it was applied appropriately:

nobody calls the daughter a refugee. She does not deny that she is a refugee, but, actually, nobody knows that she is a refugee. She believes the word 'refugee' is not humiliating unless it is used in a humiliating context. (Interviewer of Syrian female, 13 years old, Shepparton Vic, Round 3)

Although settled in the same city as the young people above, the following young Syrian girl saw an upside to being seen as a refugee:

no, I am not bothered about being a refugee or being called a refugee. On the contrary, I feel that people sympathise with me and help me more when they know that I am a refugee. (Syrian female, 11 years old, Shepparton Vic, Round 3)

It is clear that identity as a refugee is highly personal and bears some relationship to belonging, which we asked the young people about each year. The following section discusses the social aspects of their settlement.

10.7. Young refugee social outcomes and experiences

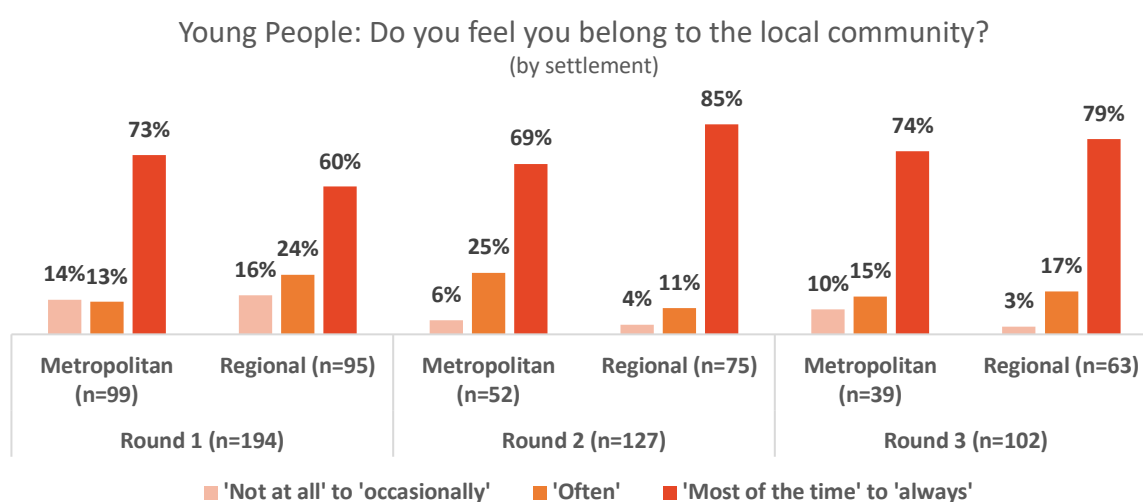
Social aspects of settlement – including feelings of safety, sense of belonging, and diversity of friendship networks – are important dimensions of the lives of young refugees in Australia.

Belonging

In the survey we asked young refugees about their sense of belonging in their new country with the question ‘do you feel you belong to the local community?’. In Round 1, two in three responded that they do ‘most of the time’ or ‘always’, with young refugee females demonstrating higher levels of feelings of belonging than males. This a remarkable outcome given that they generally had only been in their neighbourhood for 12 -18 months.

In Round 1, more refugees living in metropolitan areas replied, ‘most of the time’ or ‘always’ (73%) than those living in regional areas (60%) (Figure 10.3). However, in Rounds 2 and 3, more regional respondents felt that they belonged. By Round 3, 74% of metropolitan respondents and 79% of regional respondents felt that that they belonged in their neighbourhood.

Figure 10.3 Young refugees' feelings of belonging



Despite this good start, time may affect the extent to which young people feel a sense of belonging. All of the comments that expressed a sense of not belonging were from the first round. The following three comments typify this sense, but for a variety of reasons. The first is from a young Iraqi male who emphatically identified with his former homeland: ‘no, don’t

feel I belong. Because I still love my country way more than this – in Australia’ (Iraqi male, 11 years old, Brisbane Qld, Round 1).

The following young Syrian male was finding acceptance from acquaintances, but not apparently from the wider community:

no, I don’t [feel like I belong]. Because, like, some people doesn't make me feel like good at this world. Like, at school more. They're people I don't know they make me that, but the people that I know and they like me, they don't. They can say, like, I speak English good and I write and read. (Syrian male, 13 years old, Logan Qld, Round 1)

Sometimes expressions of not belonging are left unexplained, as in the following: ‘not really belong here, but somehow yes. I’m trying to get along’ (Afghan female, 16 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1).

Those in high school had the highest levels of feelings of belonging (83% in Round 3), followed by those in primary school and those who had left school: the levels for those in primary school dropped a little for the Round 3 COVID-19 years (80% Round 2 to 71% Round 3); but for those of post-school age they had risen significantly by Round 3 (75%, from 56% in Round 1). Young Afghan refugees demonstrated the highest rate of feelings of belonging – over 80% belonged ‘most of the time’ or ‘always’ in each round. Young refugees from Iraq demonstrated the lowest rate – 44% in Round 1 – though this improved to 81% in Round 3. 71% of young refugees from Syria in Round 1 felt that they belonged to the local community ‘most of the time’ or ‘always’, increasing to 75% in Round 3. Once again this is a very strong affirmation of positive social settlement outcomes for young refugees in our survey and in interviews over the three years.

There is no obvious pattern in the comments as to specific aspects of their new life that impart a sense of belonging. Some young refugees made reference to community (although none directly cited ‘local’ community). For many, friends determined the extent to which they felt they belonged. School and sport were also cited in contexts of belonging. Specific references to ‘belonging’ were generally positive, typically:

yes, I do soccer. Yes, I have some friends here. Nearly 20. The first day of my school, all students be friend with me. Yes, feel like I belong here. (Afghan Primary school aged boy, Auburn NSW, Round 1)

When asked 'do you feel that you really belong in the local community?', after three years of living there, one young Iraqi girl set 'fitting' alongside the concept of safety: 'yes. Sometimes you know I get mad or so. I just [...]. But mostly, I fit. Yes, I feel safe in the neighbourhood'. (Iraqi female, 9 years old, Fairfield NSW, Round 3)

An interviewer noted how a young Syrian girl, after three years settled, attributed feelings of 'belonging' to perceptions of Australia as 'better' than her former country, in terms of social behaviour and 'good' people:

I asked [one of the daughters] how far she feels belonging to this country and if she still feels as a stranger? She immediately answered that she feels belonging to this country more than her original one because Australia is better and people here are good and behaving well with the others. (Interviewer of Syrian female, 11 years old, Shepparton Vic, Round 3)

The following demonstrates a Syrian girl's reflections on her immigrant status through her interaction with locals. The three years she had spent in Australia seemed to have increased her sense of belonging, particularly at school:

when I meet other people, how do I describe myself? Well because – well somebody asked me this question before, so – they don't ask me about it pretty much. They ask me about where I came from and how I lived there and what kind of culture I came from. That's it. Yes. [Do I feel like I'm a refugee?] No. No, no. Everybody – they treat me equally to all the other students. There's no discrimination or anything. No. Yes, [that's good]. I feel like I belong now at school more than I did before, yes, yes. Yes. Thankfully. Yes. (Syrian female, 13 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3)

Safety

The main reason that refugee families undertake the risky journey to settle in another country is because they are displaced by conflict that puts them and their families in great danger. They are looking for a safe place to bring up their children and they found that in Australia.

Nearly all the young refugees surveyed – 98% in Rounds 1 and 2, and 99% in Round 3 – did feel safe in their new country, irrespective of their gender or of their country of origin.

While adults may be more forthcoming about the dangerous living conditions that they left behind, young people appear to define safety in contexts of more immediate circumstances such as the local neighbourhood or school. The following comment is one of the few from a young person that evokes safety in the sense of refuge (that is, from a country beset by war):

I actually enjoy Australia. I really like it and I still love my country that I'm born in, so love them both. There are same things. But Iraq had big problems, so we came here but I still like here. So, in Iraq we don't feel the safe of the bombs and all the people who will come and kill us and all this. When you go in the car you don't feel safe too. Sometimes you just want to come here in Australia and just enjoy life and be safe. You like it and you love your country, but we came here because it's not safe and here it's safe. Of course, yes [I will go back]. To visit. (Iraqi female, 11 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 2)

Two years later her opinion had changed dramatically after she had come to know spaces and places in Toowoomba:

I feel Australian completely. I love Australia so much. Because, like, it's a wonderful place, you know, like, you feel really safe and, like, you've got all these beautiful people around you, which is amazing. But, like, I still do love my country, you know, like, it's my country. But, like, I love – I love Australia as much as I love my country. (Iraqi female, 11 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3)

Her sense of safety seems to largely contribute to her feeling 'Australian completely'. The words carry a sense of appreciation for her new situation while at the same time hinting at a reluctance to surrender her identity.

Negative social behaviours and safety

Negative social behaviours in the local community impact young peoples' sense of safety. The following comment by a young Syrian girl show that, reasonably, she did not approve of substance abuse, particularly on the part of minors, and linked it to safety:

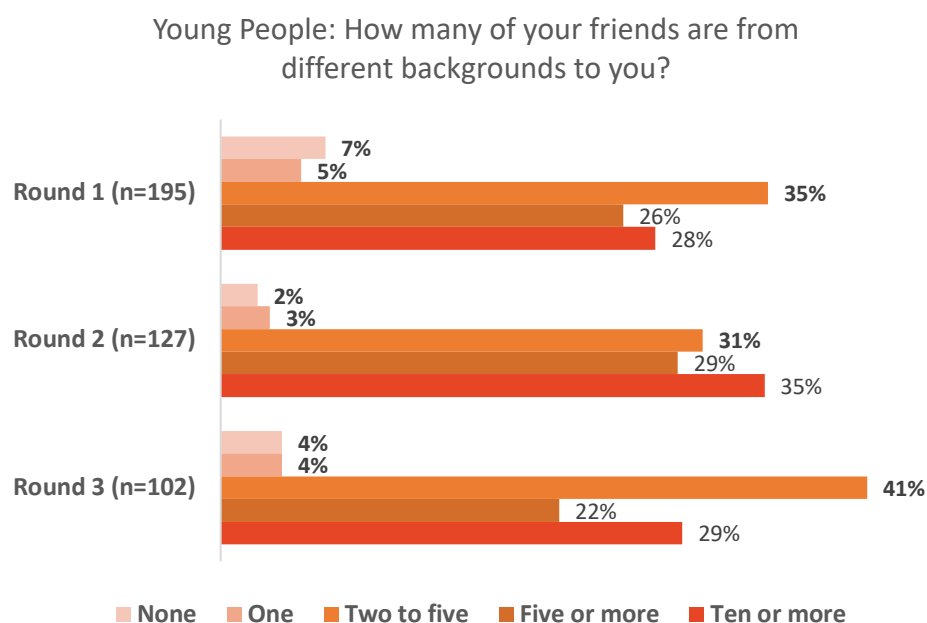
there is too many drunk people. Drunk people. They buy drugs and things. There are too many, and they're not safe at all. They are like, 16, 15 [years old]. (Syrian female, aged 9, Logan Qld, Round 1).

Comments about such anti-social behaviour were rare. There are no obvious regional patterns of such behaviour. The comment above was from Queensland, and the following two are from NSW and Victoria respectively: 'he thought it was safe around the area, but said that there were drug dealers in the street. He had no experience of racism' (Interviewer of Syrian male, 8 years old, Parramatta NSW, Round 1);

according to the parents, their son and daughter are doing very well at school and their levels are advanced. However, the quarter where they live has a bad reputation as using illegal drugs is common and they do not believe it is good for rising up children. But they stay in it because it is near the school which is ranked as the best in Shepparton (Interviewer of Syrian male, aged 11, Shepparton Vic, Round 2).

Making new friends

Figure 10.4 Young refugees' friends from different backgrounds, all rounds.



Another important social dimension of settlement outcomes of young refugees is the extent to which they make new friends in Australia: the diversity of their friendship networks and the nature of their social interaction with them. Most of the young refugees surveyed had

more than two friends, with more than half reporting that they had five or more friends from different backgrounds, and three out of ten reporting that they had more than ten friends from different backgrounds (see Figure 10.4). Two in three young refugees saw friends outside of school, increasing as their age increased, with little gender difference in this regard.

School and friendships were the most cited contexts of happiness. As with many young students, sport and play aspects of schooling were highly valued:

I am nine. I go to school. Year two. School is good, I like it. It's not difficult, not that much. I like to play with my friends because they play soccer with me any time I want. I have a lot of friends. Maybe like, seven. Seven good friends, yes. (Syrian male, aged 9, Wollongong NSW, Round 2)

Sport is frequently mentioned in comments. There are no significant gender differences in the frequency of references to sport. However, analysis of specific sports reveals some interesting patterns. For example, the *world game* of soccer/football receives many more mentions than the more locally popular game of rugby league (178, 29 and 6 mentions respectively). 'Footy' is occasionally used in contexts of both soccer and Australian Rules. The dominance of soccer and football in comments may have cultural roots. Soccer/football is prevalent in the former countries of the young people, while rugby and its variants may be perceived as more typically Australian. This perception may be detected in the comment of the following primary aged Syrian boy who was becoming attracted to the game they play 'here':

yes that's right I play sport sometimes. This is at the school playground sometimes and like public parks. Yes mostly soccer but here they play rugby and touch football, so I learnt it pretty quickly and now I'm good at playing it. (Syrian male, aged 9, Brisbane Qld, Round 3)

The variety of sports mentioned precludes an exhaustive analysis. Most mentions of sport were in contexts of enjoyment and/or aspiration, typically 'I like swimming.' or 'I want to play basketball'. The opportunity to play sport in a friendly environment was appreciated by the following 17 year old Afghan girl:

I love volleyball, but I couldn't like go to a team. But I'm playing like with friends sometimes. Yeah. But in Iran I wasn't playing that much, but when I came here, yeah, I

played so much and I love it. No, no bad things said. No bad experiences. (Afghan female, 17 years old, Auburn NSW, Round 1)

Parks and playgrounds

In the wider community most people are able to socialise in what Oldenburg (2014) calls a *third place*, such as a place of worship, café, or sporting field, which is a separate social surrounding from the home (*first place*) and the workplace (*second place*). The importance of local parks and playgrounds in providing a third place for young refugees was often alluded to in comments.

As a place to meet friends and members of their own community, parks were often cited, typically: ‘in the neighbourhood, most of my friends are from Arabic backgrounds, we play in playgrounds’ (Syrian female, aged 13, Shepparton Vic, Round 1);

I have more friends and my English is a lot better now and I know more places. I go with my friends and sometimes I go cinema, sometimes I go shopping. Sometimes I go to the park. Yeah [I feel more at home]. I know more people. I know some people from my country, I know some people from China. I know a lot of people (Syrian male, aged 10, Parramatta NSW, Round 2).

The following Afghan girl lamented that a lack of access to a local park hindered her ability to meet people from her community:

no, I don’t like this area. I like the Merrylands area. The difference – like in Merrylands, we met a lot of Afghans when we were going to the park. We met a lot of people from the same culture. But here, no. Here, the park is too far. When we are going, we are going by walking or by bus. (Afghan female, 15 years old, Auburn NSW, Round 2)

The need for open spaces that are safe and enable activities for young people was noted from the first year. The lack of outdoor life was particularly noted compared to countries of origin.

Racism and discrimination

Experiences of overt racism were rarely commented upon. In discussing school life with an Afghan female, the interviewer noted: ‘her experiences at school have been quite good. She

didn't experience anyone saying any bad things to her – no racism whatsoever' (Interviewer of 20 year old Afghan female, Auburn NSW, Round 1).

Such sentiment was common, as in the following example: 'the daughter likes [this area] because it is safe, pretty, nice weather, no racism and everyone is equal' (Interviewer of 13 year old Afghan female, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 2).

A degree of everyday racism was alluded to in some comments. Many reports of 'no racism' were subtly qualified, in the manner of '...generally speaking...' or '...most of the time..', as in the following example:

so the general public are very nice but of course there are some rude ones sometimes to deal with. And generally they're good. I don't face any racism or stuff so that's good.
(Afghan female, 15 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3)

Although the following young Syrian woman had not experienced problems, she was aware of possible prejudices her head covering might engender: 'I've never faced any racist or cultural-based offences, especially as a veiled girl' (Syrian female, aged 15, Shepparton Vic, Round 1).

Unfortunate acts of cultural disrespect and bullying were occasionally reported. The following playground incident was described by the interviewer on behalf of a high school aged Syrian girl:

she said that she was really exposed to painful violence at school by another student who hit her, harshly pushed her to drop on the ground in front of a large crowd of students, boys and girls, humiliated her, and cruelly insulted her religion by taking off her veil and throwing it on the ground. (Interviewer of Syrian female aged 14, Shepparton Vic, Round 2)

Resilience in the face of such prejudice was evident in some comments. The subject of the above comment expressed resolve about her own rights, while at the same time showing concern about the deeper repercussions of this playground incident:

at that moment [when assaulted by another student] I thought I have to stand up and hit her, to show everybody that I can take my right by myself, but I quickly controlled myself and recognised that can be more humiliating as her body mass was three times mine and

it wasn't good for me to be involved in a cruel [act] in front of a large crowd, and most importantly that can affect my studying future and dreams. (Syrian female, aged 14, Shepparton Vic, Round 2)

The following 15 year old Syrian male tried unsuccessfully to appease a bully by shrugging off hurtful comments as a joke. At the same time, he displayed a mature awareness and acceptance of multiculturalism:

there was, like, a girl in my [unclear] class and she was just annoying me... she was, like, asking the racist questions, like, 'where are you from, what religion are you?' I didn't answer the question. Then when they started talking she asked me, like, 'what is that towel on your head,' or something. Well, that is a little bit annoying because first of all you can't – you can't say that everybody has a towel on their head, all right. Everybody has their own ideology. So that was, like, kind of annoying and kind of, like, racist. She's still not really nice, like, not just to me, to everyone. She is a bully. Yeah, that was I think the only bullying experience...Not everybody have a towel on their head. (Syrian male, aged 15, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1)

Challenges to cultural identity are not confined to the playground. The following older Syrian female lamented the lack of support from the school in the face of prejudice over headwear:

at school, I have issues, issues like the scarf and my cultural and religious identity. I feel that some students are a bit prejudice about my scarf and my Muslim identity. Some students sometimes make fun of me or other Arabic background friends. For me, wearing a scarf at school is a big challenge. We sometimes complain but the school does not do anything. I just feel that we are a bit neglected. (Syrian female, 20 years old, Wollongong NSW, Round 1)

In conclusion, young people from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria were overwhelmingly happy to be in Australia. These final comments sum up these sentiments. Some comments cite multiple determinants of happiness. The following young Syrian male, whose family moved from the Logan area to Sydney, mentioned friends, infrastructure, schools, employment opportunity, local amenities, and even natural phenomena:

much more happy because we moved to Sydney. We found more friends. The communication is better. And the people. And the schools. And my dad found a job. Schools and like there are a lot of activities in terms of swimming pools, and new mountains. (Syrian male, 15 years old, Logan Qld, Round 2)

For the following young Syrian girl, Brisbane's humid weather may have been an initial problem. Her mention of being able to explore city life in a 'safe environment' may hint at more challenging times in her former life:

I feel glad that I can be here [in Australia] and I'm happy... Life is pretty good in Brisbane for me, yeah. Well, there's a bunch of things that you can explore and it's like a safe environment. Yeah. It is beautiful. Yeah, I gotten used to the heat. (Syrian female, 9 years old, Logan Qld, Round 3)

After three years in her new life, the following seemingly self-aware Afghan girl (in her mid-teens) did not take happiness for granted. She was optimistic, and expressed curiosity and affinity for her new country:

do I still feel happy about being in Australia? Of course, every day. Every night. [Am I optimistic about my future?], yes, I definitely am. It's about – I think it's all in the mind. If you think you're happy, you're happy. If you think you're not, you're right as well. [Is there something that I would like to do?] That's a very good question. I would like to travel. Like in Australia. Not outside. I want to get to know more Australian culture and especially small towns. I'm just curious yeah. (Afghan female, 15 years old, Toowoomba Qld, Round 3)

11. Regional vs metropolitan settlement outcomes

One of the key changes in Australian immigration policy since the turn of the century has been the creation of new settlement pathways for immigrants and refugees to regional Australia. For one of the most urbanised nations in the world whose immigrants and refugees are even more urbanised than average this is a significant change. An important question then arises about the different settlement experiences and outcomes of new refugees who settle in regional cities. Our research design included regional towns in NSW, Queensland, and Victoria

to investigate this issue (see Table 11.1). In this section of the report, we compare different dimensions of refugee settlement in metropolitan and regional areas.

Table 11.1 Metropolitan and regional location of adults surveyed, each round

Settlement	Round 1 (n=500)	Round 2 (n=373)	Round 3 (n=326)
Metropolitan	334	237	196
Regional	166	136	130

Housing

In pre-COVID-19 times, regional areas were seen as places with cheaper and more easily available housing. In each round refugees consistently found costs of housing a greater problem in the cities, with this gap increasing significantly in Round 3.

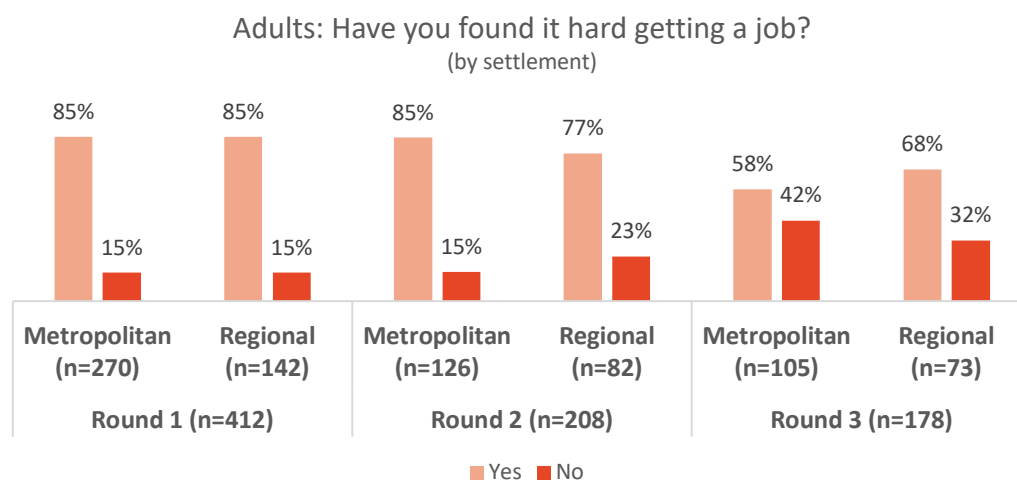
Employment

One of the attractions of metropolitan settlement to the refugees we interviewed was their perception that employment was more available in the cities, though the survey found better employment outcomes for refugees in regional areas. In Round 1, a year when most were still learning English and had not yet entered the labour market, 14% of metropolitan and 15% of regional refugees surveyed had paid employment. By Round 3, 50% of metropolitan and 63% of regional refugees surveyed had secured employment (see Table 11.2).

Table 11.2 Adult employment outcomes: metropolitan vs regional

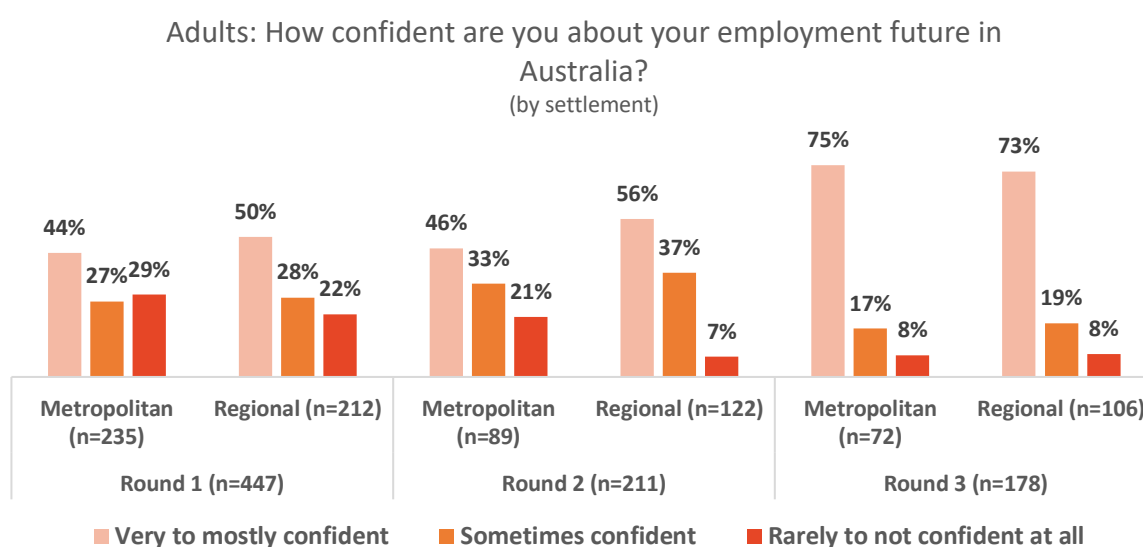
Employment by settlement (valid responses)	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Metropolitan (no employment)	86%	65%	50%
Metropolitan (employment)	14%	35%	50%
Total Metropolitan (n)	318	124	105
Regional (no employment)	85%	59%	37%
Regional (employment)	15%	41%	63%
Total Regional (n)	153	82	70
Total (n)	471	206	175

Figure 11.1 Adult refugees and difficulty in finding employment, Rounds 1 and 3



As Figure 11.1 shows, in Round 1 there was no difference reported by the refugees surveyed in regional and metropolitan areas about the difficulty they found in getting a job. Moreover, as Figure 11.2 shows, in Round 1 refugees living in regional areas were more confident about their employment future compared to those living in the state capital cities of Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne: 50% of regional refugees indicated that they were 'very' or 'mostly' confident in their employment future, compared to 44% of metropolitan refugees. By Round 3, three in four of both metropolitan (75%) and regional (73%) respondents were confident about their employment future.

Figure 11.2 Adult employment confidence, Rounds 1 and 3: metropolitan vs regional



Safety

Both metropolitan and regional areas were very safe places for new refugee settlers. By Round 3, 98% of refugees living in metropolitan areas and 96% living in regional areas felt safe in their neighbourhood, compared to the also high BNLA benchmark of 86%.

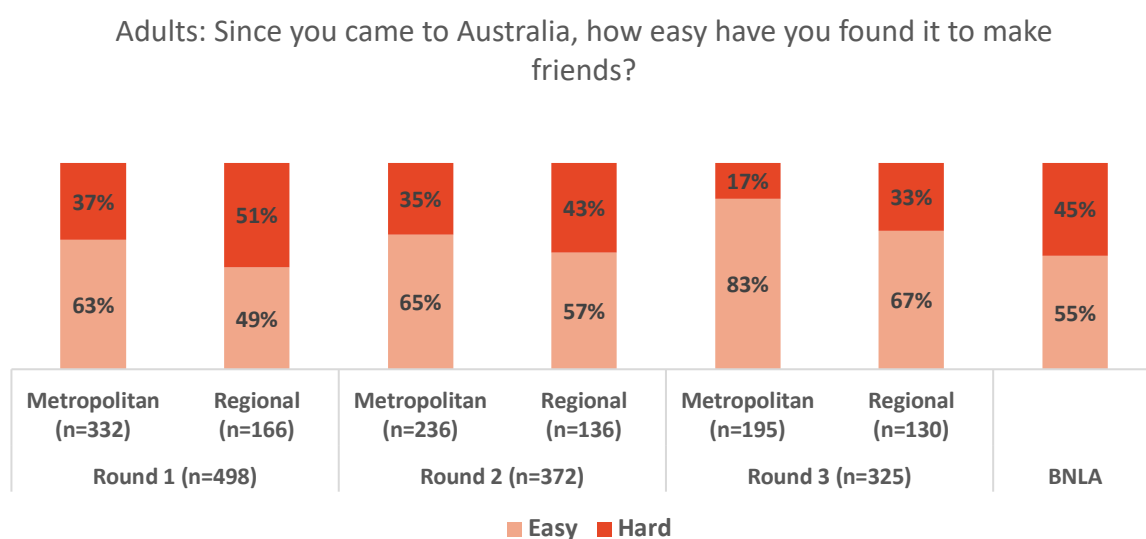
Understanding Australian ways/culture

In Round 1, there was little difference between metropolitan (62%) and regional (65%) refugees surveyed who found it 'easy' to understand Australia culture and Australian ways, but by Round 3, 89% of metropolitan found it easy compared to only 59% of regional respondents. The comparative result from the BNLA study was that 59% found it 'easy' to understand Australian culture and Australian ways.

Ease of making friends

Across the three rounds, metropolitan respondents consistently found it easier than regional respondents to make friends, and the proportion who reported that it was easy to make friends increased each round: from 63% in Round 1 to 83% in Round 3 for those refugees living in metropolitan areas and from 49% in Round 1 to 67% in Round 3 for those refugees living in regional areas (see Figure 11.3).

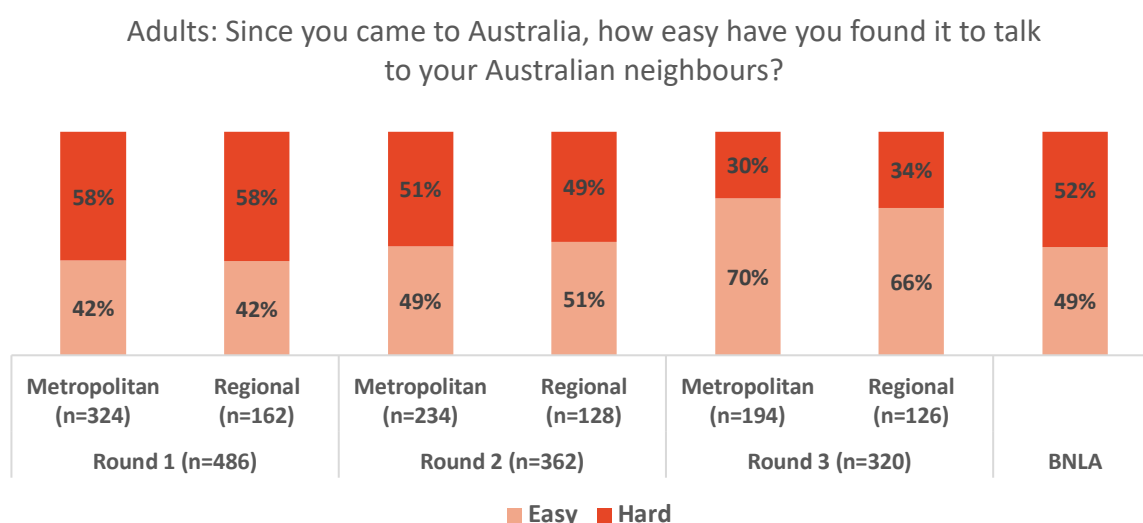
Figure 11.3 Adult refugees and ease of making new friends in Australia, Rounds 1 and 3: metropolitan vs regional



Relations with neighbours

There was little difference between metropolitan and regional respondents who found it easy to talk to their neighbours, and the proportion increased in each round: from 42% in both metropolitan and regional areas in Round 1, to 70% in metropolitan and 66% in regional areas in Round 3. As Figure 11.4 shows, the Round 3 results compare very favourably to the BNLA study where 49% of respondents reported that it was easy to make friends. Once again this is an indication of how successful settlement has been for the Syrian-conflict intake and the Afghan control group in our survey. Similarly, there was little difference between metropolitan and regional respondents who thought that people in their metropolitan and regional neighbourhoods were friendly. Over the three rounds, 90% or more refugee adults in both regional and metropolitan areas agreed that their neighbours were friendly, higher than the BNLA benchmark of 87%.

Figure 11.4 Adult refugees and ease of talking to neighbours, Rounds 1 and 3: metropolitan vs regional



Quality of schools

Metropolitan survey respondents showed an almost universal approval of the quality of schools where they lived: in Round 1, 91% agreed that their neighbourhood had good schools, rising to 98% in Round 3. By comparison, in the first round only 72% of their regional counterparts rated neighbourhood schools as good, though this increased to 96% by Round 3.

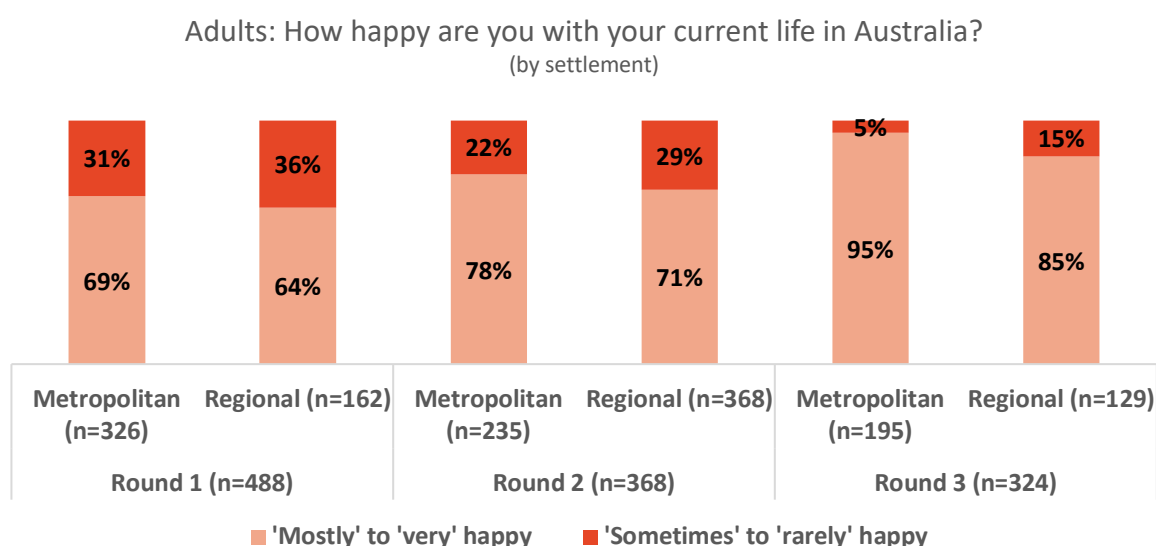
Children's future prospects

Both metropolitan and regional refugees said they were 'mostly' to 'very' confident in their children's future in Australia. This result was very strong in Round 1 – 87% of refugees living in metropolitan areas and 89% living in regional areas – and increased slightly over time so that by Round 3 nearly all refugees – 99% of refugees living in metropolitan areas and 96% living in regional areas – were 'mostly' to 'very' confident in their children's prospects in Australia.

Happiness

We asked our adult refugees a final question: 'all things considered how happy are you with your current life in Australia?' (Figure 11.5), with very strong responses from both regional and metropolitan refugees. In Round 1 about two in three replied that they were 'mostly' or 'very' happy with their current life in Australia: 69% of metropolitan respondents and 64% of regional respondents. By Round 3 the *refugee happiness index* had increased significantly to 95% of metropolitan respondents and 85% of regional respondents.

Figure 11.5 Adults' overall happiness with life in Australia, Rounds 1 and 3



Regional Settlement

The research project was designed to evaluate the settlement outcomes of those refugee families who settled in regional cities. Half or more of our refugee adult informants lived in

regional, rather than metropolitan, areas of NSW, Queensland, and Victoria. Our research has confirmed that regional settlement of refugees is successful. Accommodation is cheaper and more available, and employment has been secured with equal or better success than metropolitan refugee settlers: by Round 3, 50% of metropolitan and 63% of regional refugees surveyed had secured employment. In terms of most of the subjective aspects of the settlement experience – including the warmth of the welcome from locals – there was little difference between metropolitan and regional refugee settlers. Though metropolitan outcomes were slightly better on most social indices, both metropolitan and regional refugee settlers interviewed and surveyed for this research project achieved better outcomes than the benchmark BNLA study. Most refugee families living in regional cities would like to stay there, though the point where a decision would be made whether to move would be when their children turn university age.

Further Research

Our research project was not designed to focus on the Ezidi experiences – they were part of our Syrian and Iraqi informants, particularly in Toowoomba and Coffs Harbour. Additional research into the settlement experiences of Ezidi families is clearly needed.

12. Key issues for newly arrived refugee families in Australia

Employment

Finding a job commensurate with their abilities has been a key concern of refugee adults in each stage of the research. The Syrian and Iraqi intake was carefully chosen to include high numbers of professionals and those with higher education qualifications and a strong employment history. Most of these have not been able to move into similar employment positions in Australia, mostly because of problems relating to qualifications recognition and the gatekeepers of the professions.

Family reunion

The other concern recurring from our first round of interviews till the third round has been that of family reunion. Nearly all refugee families had family members – most often aged

parents – who were still back in the homeland or who settled in other countries. Their welfare was a constant cause of worry for the refugee families in Australia. They were in contact with their Diasporic family very frequently – often daily. 92 families had applied for family reunification with another 69 families reporting that they would like to bring family to Australia but have not applied for family reunification. The closing of Australia's international borders during COVID-19 – which effectively halted international refugee inflows – and the subsequent backlog in visa processing is an important part of the backdrop in this regard.

Citizenship

One very strong finding of this research was that nearly all the refugee adults and young people interviewed and surveyed were very keen to become Australian citizens. They could tell the researchers the date when they would be eligible. The key message was that the refugee families were very thankful to have been given the opportunity to have a new life – new beginnings – in Australia and they wanted to repay Australia for that opportunity by contributing to the economy and the society. Citizenship meant that they would finally, fully, be Australian, that they could travel on an Australian passport and could formally call Australia home: 'I hope that I will get a passport and be able to visit my sons and grandchildren' said a Mandeian Iraqi living in Liverpool in Sydney (Iraqi husband, Liverpool NSW, Round 2); while a Tajik Muslim woman from Afghanistan living in regional Toowoomba put it: 'yes, why not? I'm living here, I have to be citizen' (Afghan wife, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1).

This theme recurred in most of the refugee family living rooms we visited. As a male Uzbek family head from Afghanistan living in regional Coffs harbour put it:

[I will be] 100% happy about the citizenship because it's a huge thing you know, yes. Obviously it's a good thing because you become a citizen, a person of Australia, and because you can also vote as an Australian and for jobs and [other things] it's good you get it as well. It's just in general, and like on holidays and [things] we can go to other countries and overseas, well not right now because of COVID-19. (Afghan husband, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 3)

Similarly, a male Muslim from Syria living in Sydney's western suburbs spoke about what he called his family's obsession with Australian citizenship:

we have this obsession which is getting our citizenship and we recently applied for it, but we keep hearing from people that it's quite difficult, there are a lot of obstacles. The waiting period is quite long, so we don't have that sense of stability because of it. That is causing us fear and anxiety, especially because we hear about, for example, the tests and ... go and sit the test for citizenship. (Syrian husband, Liverpool NSW, Round 2)

Identity

Investigation of the identity that refugees feel and how that has changed over the four years of settlement is explored here. Some refugees interviewed felt Australian on arrival, as this was the message that they had received at the airport on-arrival from their settlement service greeter and from subsequent contact with their service provider and case manager. Identifying as Australian increased over time of settlement. By Round 3, more than half of the refugee adults interviewed felt Australian, while more than a third felt that they were feeling partly Australian and partly another identity. Only about 15% of adults reported that their identity was other than Australian or that they were unsure. One in three still felt allegiance to their home country and to Australia, though allegiance to Australia increased over the four year period of research. Many refugees did not identify as 'refugees'. Most young refugees identified as Australians.

Experiences of racism

While this issue was not systematically raised with all refugee adults and youth, when the subject arose in family interviews most refugees said that they did not experience racism in Australia. Those who did mentioned an isolated incidence in public spaces. This does not mean that racism is not an issue for newly arrived refugees in Australia: the Refugee Council of Australia (2022: 1) reports that '[p]eople from refugee backgrounds ... have shared many experiences of racism at work, in public places, on public transport and in social activities such as sporting clubs'.

Impact of COVID-19

The third stage of the fieldwork for this research project corresponded with the onset of COVID-19. This impacted on the project in several ways. The third stage of the fieldwork was delayed as we explored moving to virtual interviews via Zoom. This led to fewer respondents

to the interviews and surveys in stage three because when Chief Investigators and Research Assistants visited refugee's homes it was possible to engage all those present, in the research. COVID-19 impacted on the refugees mainly in the domain of work, learning, and social life. Young refugees lost opportunities for conversational English while undertaking remote learning.

Regional mobility

In Australia, Department of Home Affairs (DOHA) administers the refugee (humanitarian) program, including the selection of refugee families and their initial settlement location. One of the features of the Syrian-conflict intake was a decision to resettle most in metropolitan areas – typically those who arrived on 202 Visas and had family already living in Australia as sponsors, many of whom lived in Sydney's western suburbs in general and the Fairfield Local Government Area in particular – but to also resettle an increasing number in regional cities. However, once in Australia refugee families are free to move to other cities and other states, unlike some countries where refugee rights are tied to a particular city, in countries like Germany: there is no internal passport required for refugees in Australia. One part of this geographical mobility dynamic was moving from regional to metropolitan settlement. The typical story of refugee families located in regional areas – which they loved in terms of lifestyle – was to speak of geographic mobility in the future as opportunities to settle, work, learn the language, and study changed and/or were often limited:

we are happy here. We have no problems in Coffs Harbour. Everything is good but we are just worried about our children, like when they complete their high school, for further studies they have to go to another state. We have talked to many people in other cities. Compared to other cities, Coffs Harbour is really good. But in terms of education, they don't have a university. Therefore, we'll have to move to another city for the education of our children. We don't have any other option (Afghan husband, Coffs Harbour NSW, Round 1);

I like Toowoomba, but if there is work for husband, like now and in the future, I will stay here. If there be a problem finding a job, we will move somewhere else. (Afghan wife, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1);

we need to move to Sydney because we have more – our community; Iraqi community, big Iraqi community and more jobs. More chances for work (Iraqi husband, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1);

for now, yes we are planning on staying in Toowoomba. We have not changed our mind yet but maybe once the kids – if they get to study in Brisbane – so we may move down because our daughter is planning to study in UQ [University of Queensland]... (Afghan adult daughter, Toowoomba Qld, Round 1);

one major reason push people to move to live in Melbourne is the unavailability of satisfactory tertiary education in some regional areas. If the government wants to encourage people to live in [this regional town], it should not only create more jobs there but also provide satisfactory tertiary education and connect it with the V-Line express (Syrian husband, Shepparton Vic, Round 3);

the family moved to live permanently in Melbourne one year ago. The reasons are: as husband has persistent health issues due to the falling-from-high accident, which he had while he was working in Lebanon, he frequently needs to refer tertiary hospitals in Melbourne. He believes that living in a big city is more helpful to his children to develop and obtain more experience in life, much better education, universities, and more career opportunities. It is also more helpful for him and his wife in finding better job opportunities (Syrian husband, Shepparton Vic, Round 3).

The other major dynamic is moving from metropolitan to regional settlement. The key case study here is that of Ezidis who were mostly resettled in metropolitan areas as well as the Queensland regional city of Toowoomba. During the research project there was a strong resettlement of Ezidis into Toowoomba.

Visas and settlement outcomes

There are several visa pathways to acceptance as a part of the humanitarian immigration component of the Australian immigration program. The question then becomes whether visa type has an impact on settlement outcomes of refugees in Australia. As Table 7.3 shows (above), the largest component of the Syrian conflict intake – those refugees from Syria and Iraq – who participated in this research project were those on a Global Special Humanitarian

(202) Visa. These are refugees who had family in Australia prior to settlement. Figure 12.1 shows that most of those refugees surveyed who arrived under a 202 Visa settled in NSW – not surprising because Sydney has the largest Arabic community of immigrants in Australia. In theory, these refugees should also have the best settlement outcomes, in part because they do have family to assist in resettlement and partly because of the very high education qualifications of this cohort compared to others: between 40%-50% of refugees from Syria and Iraq surveyed held university degrees, compared to 39% of the Australian population. Most of those who arrived from Afghanistan were on 200 and 204 (Woman at Risk) Visas and had little education prior to resettlement in Australia: nearly half had no schooling at all.

Finding employment in Australia is a necessary condition for successful settlement outcomes for most refugee families. Figure 12.2 shows that those arriving with a 202 Visa are more likely than other refugees we have surveyed to *not* have difficulty in finding a job. In most cases – other than those who arrived on 204 (Woman at Risk) Visas – the refugees surveyed were less likely to report that they did not have a problem in finding a job in Round 3 compared to Round 1. It might be expected that over time *more* refugees would report that they did not have a problem finding employment. The explanation for this not being the case is that Round 3 was held in the middle of the COVID-19 movement restrictions for people living in all eastern states and many non-essential businesses were shut down. This was a unique period in Australia.

Figure 12.1 Visa categories of refugees surveyed

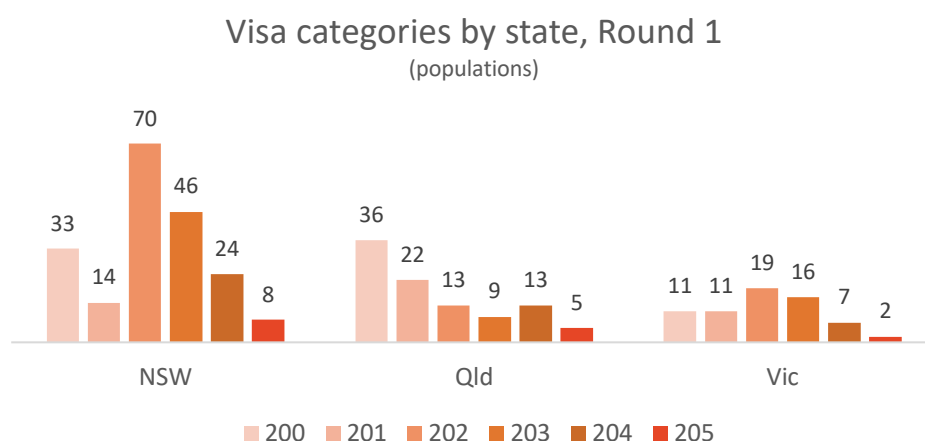


Figure 12.2 No difficulty in finding work, by visa type

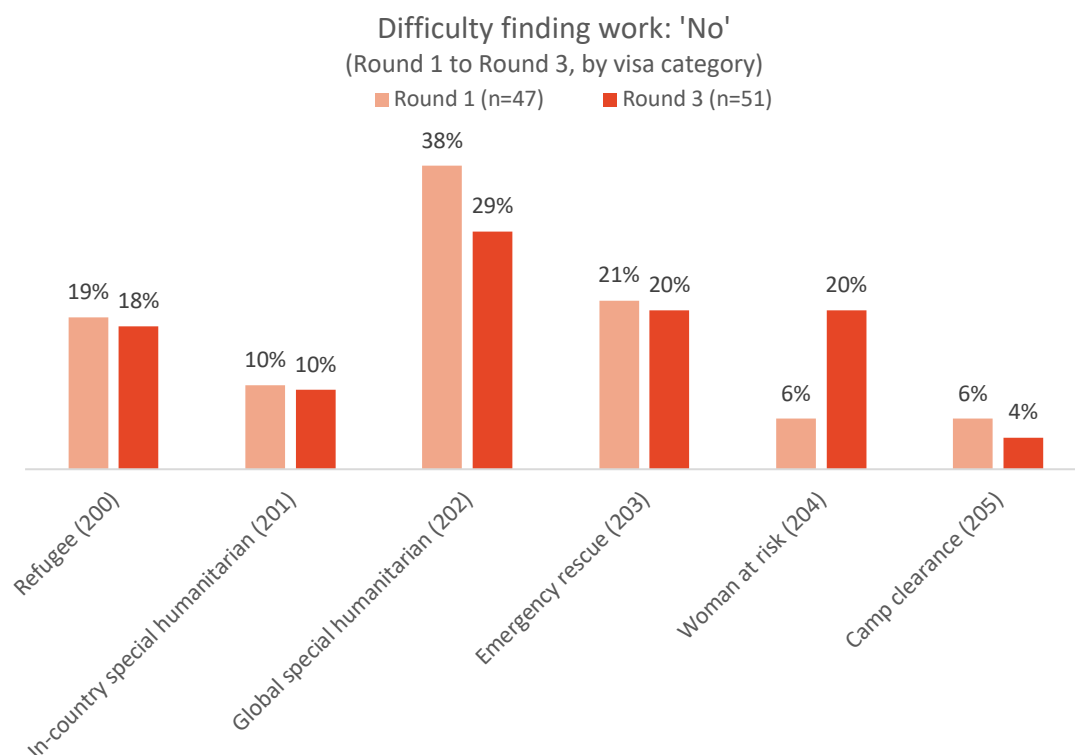


Figure 12.3 Adult confidence about employment future, by visa type

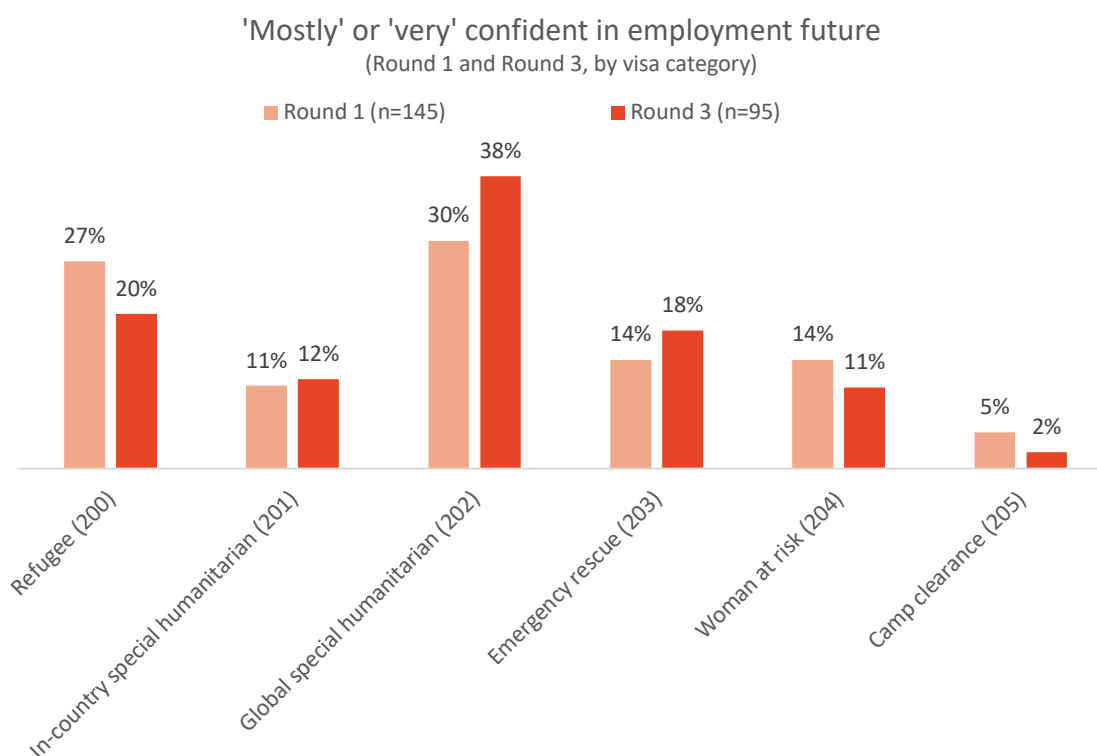
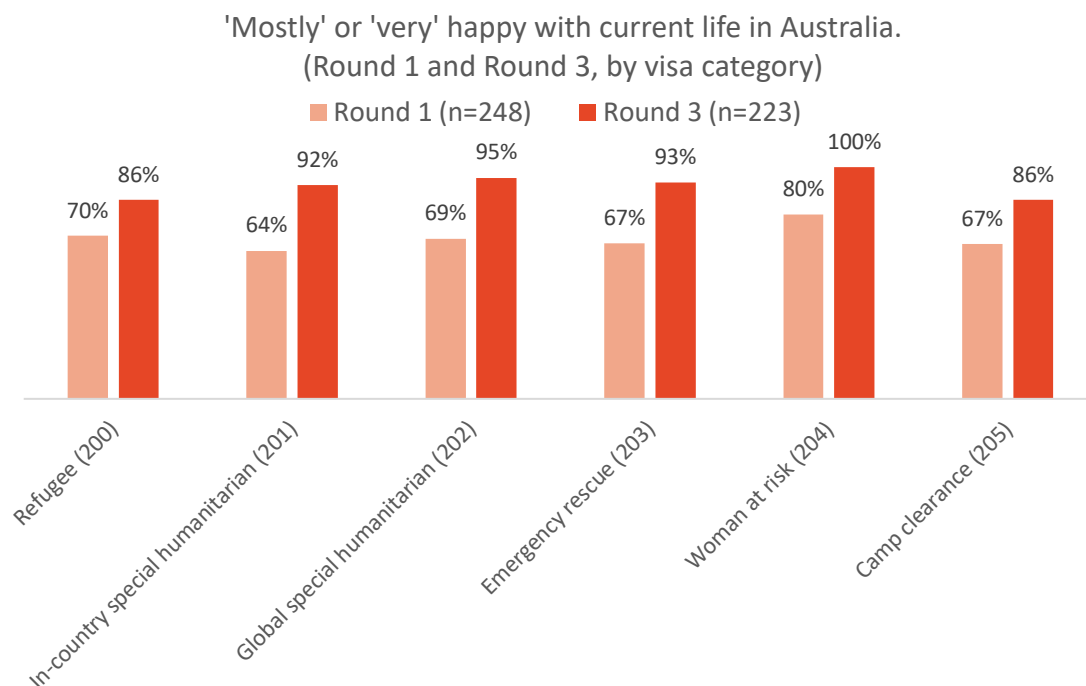


Figure 12.3 shows that those on a 202 Visa were more likely to be confident about their employment future (30% in Round 1 and 38% in Round 3) than those arriving on other visas – those refugees on 200 Visas (27% in Round 1 and 20% in Round 3) and 204 (Woman at risk) Visas (14% in Round 1 and 11% in Round 3). This reflects not only the advantage of the social networks that 202 refugees had in Australia prior to arrival, but also the exceptional pre-displacement educational and employment backgrounds that these Iraqi and Syrian refugees possessed. This is explored in more detail in the next section.

However, when asked to provide an overall judgement about how satisfied they were with life in Australia in general (Figure 12.4), those on 200 and 204 Visas surveyed in Round 1 were more likely to be ‘mostly’ or ‘very’ happy than those refugees on other visas. By Round 3 this overall assessment about life in Australia had improved for all visa cohorts. This finding is evidence that settlement outcomes of refugees have improved over time. Perhaps the stronger finding is that irrespective of visa type – which itself reflects the different pre-migration circumstances of refugees – the overwhelming majority of refugees – and 100% in the case of 204 (Woman at Risk) – were ‘mostly’ or ‘very’ happy with their new life in Australia.

Figure 12.4 Satisfaction with life in Australia by visa type



Middle class refugees

One of the ways to differentiate the Abbott Government's Syrian-conflict refugee intake from other refugee intakes is the relatively large number of middle-class refugees among this cohort. There are instances of middle-class refugee flows: the Asian refugees from Uganda who fled the Idi Amin regime to the United Kingdom; the distinguished Jewish artists and intellectuals who arrived as refugees aboard the HMT Dunera which arrived in Sydney in 1940; and the many ethnic Chinese Vietnamese who were small business owners in South Vietnam and, fleeing after the fall of Saigon in 1975, arrived in Australia as part of the Vietnamese refugee intake (Vivianni 1984; Vivianni et al. 1993).

Social class is a complex and debated concept, particularly the construction of the middle class. Marxist analysis has suggested that there are two distinct components of the middle class: those self-employed or small business owners (traditional *petit-bourgeoisie*) and those who, while being controlled from bosses above, have control of other workers (new middle class). In this instance we operationalise the concept of middle class in two ways: we include those who have their own business in Australia and those who are in possession of tertiary education qualifications, a proxy for the new middle class.

According to these criteria, in Round 1 there were 291 refugee adults classified as middle class and 194 others: in other words, the middle-class component was 60% of the total refugee intake of those refugees from the Syrian conflict from Syria and Iraq plus the Afghan control group. Taking the business owners component of the middle-class refugee intake first, as mentioned below (Figure 13.1), two out of three have settled in metropolitan cities and one third in regional areas. Moreover, shown below also (Figure 13.2), 42% of Christian refugees were business owners, as were 25% of Ezidi refugees and 15% of Muslim refugees surveyed.

Because we have no knowledge of the Immigration Department's decision-making processes regarding the selection of refugees to be accepted in the Syrian-conflict intake it is not clear how intended the outcome of a large number of refugee entrepreneurs was, in the same way that we do not know if the selection of Christians for 80% of the intake was a planned outcome, and if so, why this was the case. The argument that middle-class refugees and Christian refugees have better settlement outcomes than non-middle class non-Christian refugees is not supported by this research. As Figure 12.5 shows, there is no significant

difference in the degree of overall happiness with their new life in Australia of middle-class refugees when compared to non-middle-class refugees. This remains the case when refugees with pre-migration tertiary education are considered in isolation (see Figure 12.6). Similarly, confidence about their employment future in Australia is similar irrespective of the prior education of the refugees (see Figure 12.7). The same is the case for most of the dimensions of settlement that our survey of refugee adults explored. The policy conclusion is that if it is the settlement outcomes of refugees that matter most to government when selecting refugees, their premigration education and employment characteristics are not a key consideration. In this case, a policy of selecting the neediest refugees – which maximises the humanitarian considerations at no cost to settlement outcomes – appears to be strongly supported by these research findings.

Figure 12.5 Adults' overall happiness with life in Australia: middle class vs others

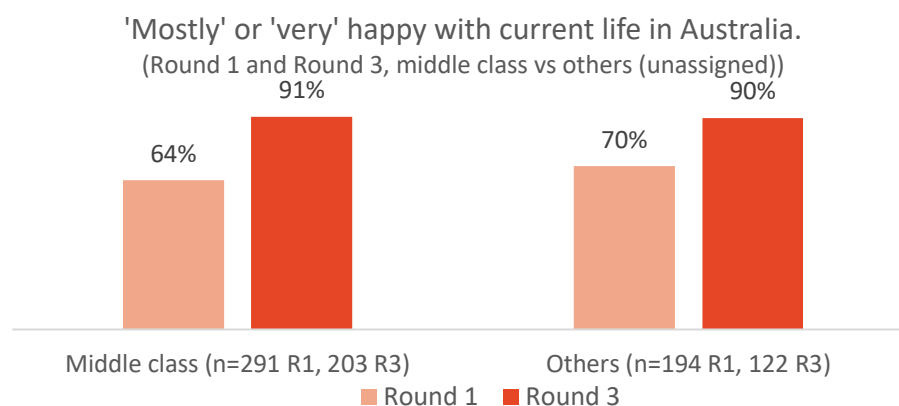


Figure 12.6 Adults' overall happiness with life in Australia: premigration university educated vs others

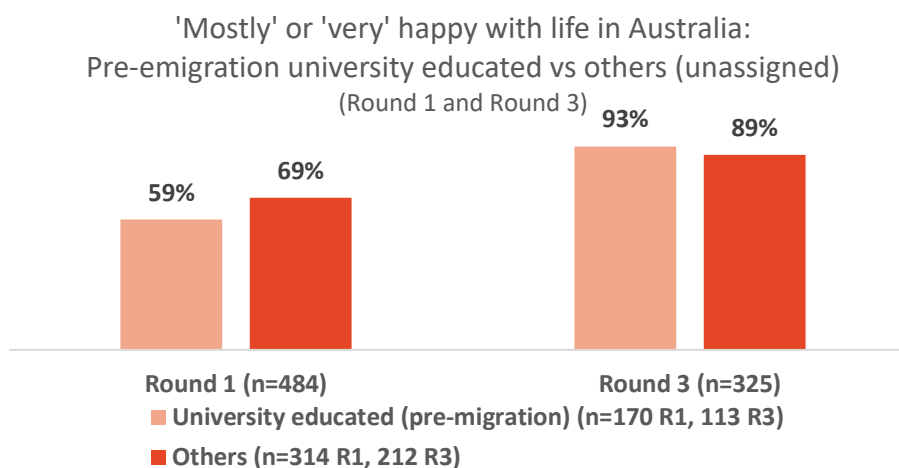
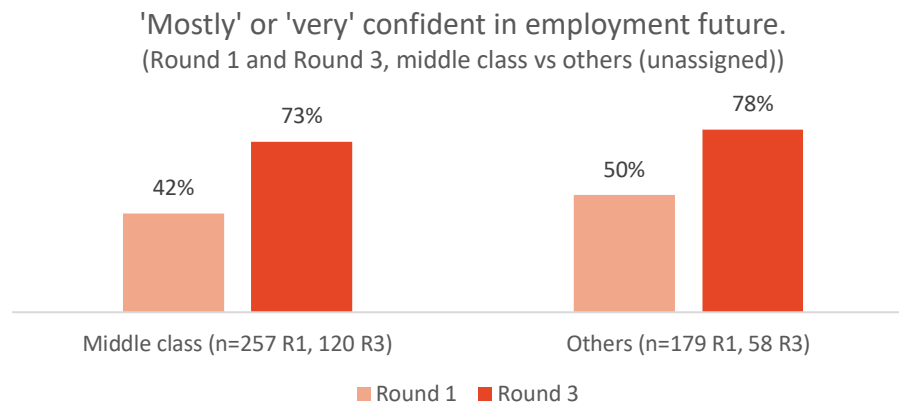


Figure 12.7 Adult confidence about employment future: middle class vs others



13. Refugee entrepreneurs

There is a long history of immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship in Australia (Collins et al. 1995; Collins et al. 2017; Legrain and Burrridge 2019) and other countries like Canada (Green, et al. 2016; Picot and Rollin 2019) and the United States of America (Gold 1992; Smith et al. 2012; Min and Bozorgmehr 2000). However, refugees face strong barriers when they decide to start-up a business in Australia (Ruparanganda et al. 2019), particularly those newly arrived in the country. Refugees often lack financial capital, their social capital is fractured, their human capital often unrecognised, their linguistic capital often limited while their knowledge of the local market opportunities and business rules and regulations is weak or non-existent. There appears to be a *paradox* here: despite these barriers refugees in Australia have the highest rate of entrepreneurship of any immigrant visa category – 9.3%, nearly double that for migrants who arrived under a family visa (5.7%) and more than double that for migrants who arrived under a skilled visa (4.3%) – when compared to other immigrants or to the Australian average (ABS 2015). Refugee entrepreneurs in Africa are critical to economic development (Betts et al. 2017) and play a key role in what Betts, Bloom and Weaver (2015) call *bottom-up innovation*, a critical but overlooked component of a broader phenomenon called *humanitarian innovation*. Their study of Congolese, Somali, and Rwandan refugees in Uganda found that 60% were self-employed and played an important role in creating employment for others, including Ugandans: 40% of those employed by refugee entrepreneurs in urban areas were Ugandan (Betts et al. 2015: 42).

For many refugees – like other minority groups in society (Collins and Sawhney 2021) – starting a small business is one response to the blocked economic mobility that they face in settlement countries. In other words, by starting their own business refugees can create their own jobs – an alternative to unemployment – or create a better job for themselves. Some refugees owned a business prior to displacement.

Among those refugees we interviewed, a number offered insights into their experiences running a business in Australia:

I am currently employed on a full time basis as a site supervisor at the building construction company I mentioned earlier, and I had also established a small business from home, installing blinds and curtains, in which both my wife and I work towards. You can call it a side job [part time] (Syrian husband, Melbourne Vic, Round 3);

I am currently not studying anything and just taking care of the household and children. However, I am helping my husband with the small business we had established, being installing curtains and blinds. We consider it a part time after hour's job for us (Syrian wife, Melbourne Vic, Round 3);

Having the responsibility for the entire family, however, weighs on the business-owners, as expressed by the following husband and father and recorded by his interviewer:

All the family including children when they do not have school, that is, weekends and holidays, are involved in this family business. The husband has not employed any worker from out of his family as the business cannot bear that yet. However, he has ambitious plan to extend his business and open another branch, where he would need to employ workers, although his marketing consultant and the accountant do not agree with him to do so in near future. The husband considerably feels frustrated and concerned regarding the business he established as he is always busy, working hard, and taking the risk of loss and bankruptcy, and yet he cannot save any money. All the family are working hard in this business from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. just to keep it running. He tried to imagine if all the family were working all these hours somewhere else, they would earn a lot of money. However, jobs are not easily available in this country. He said when he was working in Syria, he was alone able to support five families while all his family is now working only to satisfy the basic needs of them. The husband said there is no guarantee with work. It

could collapse at any time. It also has no protections, and there are always a lot of unexpected changes which can be happened. For example, many large supermarkets, like Coles and Woolworth, have recently added some shelves including middle eastern grocery items without considering the harms they caused to the nearby small businesses which specifically depend on selling these items. These big shops would never be able to satisfy the market needs of these products, but they only spoil the market and deprive the smaller businesses from many important items which can help these businesses to resume open and satisfying the whole needs of the market. (Syrian husband, Melbourne Vic, Round 3)

Some of the refugees we interviewed dreamed of setting up a business but found that the obstacles at the time of interview were too great:

that's my goal, to start a business. I don't like to depend on Centrelink. Of course, that's my wish, that's my goal, to have a business, to have an income, because I can't survive on 500 dollars every 15 days from Centrelink, so I would like to work (Iraqi wife, Wollongong NSW, Round 1);

I very, very like kitchen. Nothing really changed [on the job/business front]. If I had money, I would have done that [set up my own company]. I haven't started the business. I don't have money. Yeah [the dream is there]. But I don't... I love working in the kitchen, and cooking. I love cooking in general, and baking, yeah (Syrian wife, Parramatta NSW, Round 2);

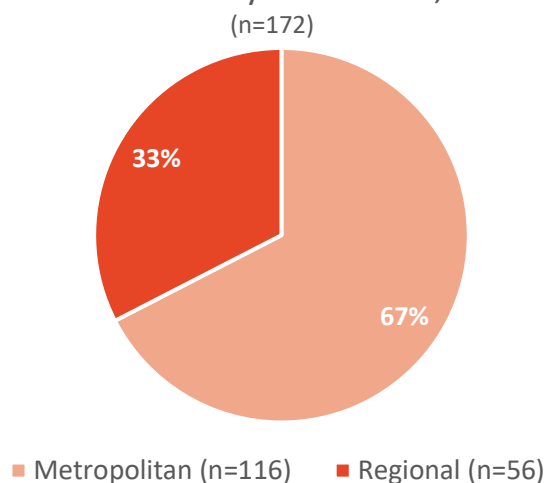
my profession is about jewellery, and shaping jewellery, making jewellery, and it's very difficult to find a job in this business, here. Maybe it's hard to own a small business – yes, we were workers, so we don't have much money to open a business or something (Iraqi husband, Fairfield NSW, Round 1);

I thoroughly tried to find a job in my original industry, tailoring, but I did not find tailoring workshops as almost all clothes are either imported or manufactured in large factories. And if I want to establish my own business for mending works, it could be adventurous and costly (Syrian husband, Shepparton Vic, Round 1);

because of the war, we just got out of the country without any money, any capital. So it is very difficult to start a business here without any capital (Iraqi husband, Brisbane Qld, Round 1).

Figure 13.1 Refugees with their own business in Australia: metropolitan vs regional

Business owners by settlement, Round 1

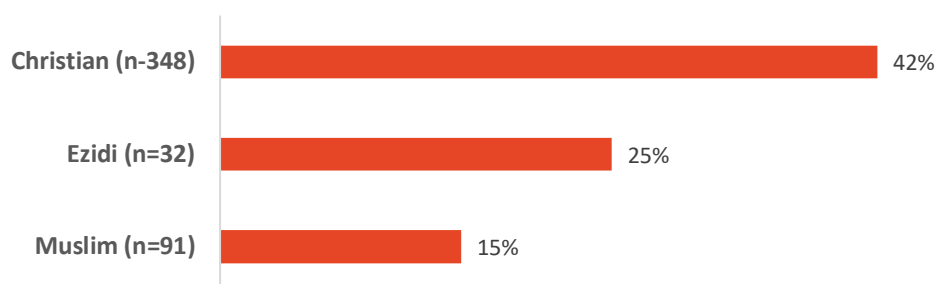


In the Round 1 fieldwork for this research project, 172 adult refugees surveyed indicated that they owned their own business in Australia. This represents 34% of the refugee adults surveyed. In Round 3 the number of business owners still participating in the research project fell to 137 but this represented 42% of all adult refugee respondents. As Figure 13.1 shows, about two thirds (n=116) of Round 1 refugee business owners settled in metropolitan areas while about one third (n=56) lived in regional areas.

Figure 13.2 Refugees with their own business in Australia by religion

Business owners by religion

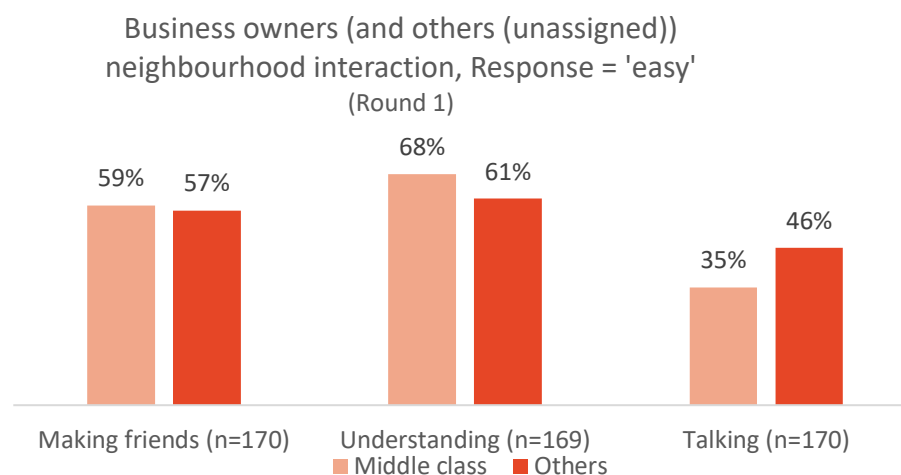
(Round 1)



As Figure 13.2 shows, refugee entrepreneurs were from Christian, Ezidi, and Muslim religious backgrounds, though Christians had the highest rate of entrepreneurship (42%) among refugees, compared to Ezidi (25%) and Muslim (15%) refugees.

As Figure 13.3 shows, refugee entrepreneurs had slightly better settlement outcomes in terms of understanding Australian culture and making friends than other refugees surveyed, but slightly worse settlement outcomes in terms of talking to their neighbours. This can be explained by the long hours of work required by refugee entrepreneurs who are rarely at home, limiting interaction time with neighbours (Collins et al. 2017).

Figure 13.3 Refugee entrepreneurs and interaction with neighbours



The barriers that refugees face in setting up a business in Australia and other countries are very real and considerable, but not unsurmountable. But by focussing only on these barriers we get transfixed by a deficit model. This does not give sufficient attention to the agency and resilience of refugees, their determination to make a good life in Australia for their families. It does not consider that many refugees have experience as entrepreneurs (often informal entrepreneurs) in their home country prior to displacement and in the refugee camps (de la Chaux 2022). It does not acknowledge that while setting up a business requires risk taking, refugees (especially boat people) are great risk takers, possessing the necessary capacity for resilience, hard work, and a determination to succeed.

While refugees in Australia appear to be over-represented in entrepreneurship, certainly when compared to other immigrant arrivals, it would be incorrect to conclude that there is no need for policy and programmatic support for new and existing refugee entrepreneurs.

The fact that many refugees to date have overcome the large multi-dimensional barriers that they face to set up a business does not mean that more nuanced and innovative policy support would not increase the rate of refugee entrepreneurship and all the economic, social, and cultural benefits on an individual, family, community, and neighbourhood level that this generates. As the OECD (2019: 29) notes, programmes need to better respond to multiple disadvantages faced by refugees and other missing entrepreneur target groups.

Those refugees who decide to undertake the risky and difficult trajectory to entrepreneurship in Australia face considerable difficulties as the following refugees who we interviewed found:

for the company, I think I have time to start to make a profit, because here in Australia I need to... business card... build a relationships with some friend, build a relationship with neighbours, make an ad in the newspaper and magazine. [unclear] I already give an ad in the church, and Access. Supermarket. Yes [I have a business card] (Syrian wife, Logan Qld, Round 2);

you know I opened a business, like mowing the grass and everything. It's been two months since I opened this business, just two called me. I have done everything really, I have opened an ABN number, I just called the Taxation Office and I went to Centrelink and I informed them about everything. Yes, I put these in letterboxes. I have been giving these cards to the people for two months, just two calls. So I need to know the people. So nobody is supporting me, there's no friends, no community to support me. Actually I don't know how to drive, so my wife, whenever somebody call me, my wife is helping me driving. I have seen the people when I put the card in mail. Some people they take their mail and they throw it in the bin, so they don't see it. I asked the old Syrian, they've been here for a while to get some support from them but nobody helped me (Syrian husband, Brisbane Qld, Round 1);

I hope to be supported by loans to develop my business as it needs more decorations, advertisement especially in the media; and I hope also to have some supports and advantages like limited exemption for some period, or discount, concession, regarding the expense I paid for the council or other services, water, electricity, gas – similar to home services (Syrian husband, Shepparton Vic, Round1).

There are several programs that have assisted newly arrived refugees to set up a business in Australia as a necessary part of any effective employment strategy for refugees. The Ignite Small Business Start-ups program has been operated by Settlement Service International (SSI) – a Non-Government Organisation providing services to newly arrived refugees – in Sydney since 2013 (Collins 2017a, 2017b) and assisted 1,308 refugee clients to establish 305 businesses, creating over 90 new jobs.

The SSI Ignite program is wholistic and bespoke. Initially based on the passion entrepreneurship model of United States academic Ernesto Sirroli (2011) – who assisted in shaping the Ignite! model – it evolved to a social ecology model designed to take each Ignite client on a unique journey to business set-up, supported by advice from a large pool of experts who volunteer to give assistance as needed. The distinctive feature of the SSI model is that it supports refugees in all areas pertinent to their start-up journey, not just finance or skills and education or networking. The point of departure for Ignite! is the refugees' characteristics, background, history, and personal and family circumstances. Each client's pathway to setting up a business is tailored to their abilities, qualifications, interests, and circumstances. The program employs facilitators who guide their clients on their business set up journey, supported by many volunteers who offer advice on different aspects of the business relevant to their expertise.

Thrive Refugee Enterprise is a program to assist refugees raising business finance. Thrive has supported 253 aspiring business owners (about 80% male) to date to set up new small businesses in a diversity of industries (Thrive Refugee Enterprises 2021). Catalysr offers intensive entrepreneurship programs to help 'high-performing' refugee and migrant entrepreneurs develop their business ideas (<https://catalysr.com.au>). It is estimated that 20% of Catalysr clients have been refugees (Legrain and Burrridge 2019: 30). The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Entrepreneurs Program, based in Melbourne, is designed to support asylum seekers who want to start their own business. Since 2014 more than 100 participants had led to 10 businesses being established, and developed a coaching framework (<https://www.asrc.org.au/entrepreneursprogram/>). Other programs include Stepping Stones to Small Business – which provides training and mentoring to help female refugees and migrants start businesses in Victoria (Wickramasinghe and Mupanemunda 2020). Some programs target refugee women: SisterWorks is a not-for-profit social enterprise that assists

women to learn how to work and create a business within a supportive network (<https://sisterworks.org.au/ab>); Four Brave Women is also a not-for profit that seeks to create economic and education opportunities for women and girls, including entrepreneurship opportunities.

14. Stakeholder insights

14.1. Observations

Employment

There is a Catch 22 for refugees seeking employment: you need Australian work experience to get a job but if you can't get a job you can't get experience; volunteering/internships are a strategy to get Australian work experience; refugees have very diverse educational, employment, and literacy backgrounds; there is tension between getting a job as soon as possible and staying at TAFE to get English up to standards required for a better job; there is a lack of social networks in Australia to draw on for getting a job; most refugee women did not work prior to displacement; some refugee women in TAFE were attracted to employment in the trades, a traditional male enclave even in Australia; some refugees were formerly farmers and agricultural workers; regional opportunities were seen as less satisfying in some cases and more satisfying in others.

General Settlement

Family reunion is a key worry for all refugee families; experience of trauma during the journey to Australia is a key issue for many refugee families; older refugees face problems with English language and employment; many refugees have carer responsibilities for elderly or impaired family; many refugee families struggle to survive on welfare payments; patriarchal gender relations are challenged in Australia with domestic violence sometimes an issue for refugee families; inter-generational conflict can also be an issue in refugee families with youth in Australia generally having more rights and freedoms; many refugees do not want to be identified as refugees; citizenship is a desire of all refugees; more comprehensive programs and funding are needed across the board.

Education

Young refugees are settling overwhelmingly well in NSW, Queensland, and Victoria in schools and TAFE – this has been achieved through initiatives related to school culture, building linguistic capital, professional development and support for staff, intercultural relations, and community support; delivery of English language and work skills for refugee parents and adults is a critical issue; many parents can't capitalise on their experience because their qualifications are not recognised; social problems in refugee families are arising due to unemployment, particularly in locations with low SES outcomes – housing density can be one aspect of this; intergenerational conflict between refugee youth and parents can sometimes be an issue in schools; the access by refugee families to technology is critical to young refugee education outcomes; the language barrier between schools and refugee parents impacts on communication and restricts the support that can be provided; cultural differences in parenting can be an issue for refugee young people in schools; refugee children with disabilities have particular education needs; education stakeholders also mentioned issues related to space in schools and overwork of teachers.

The marginalisation of refugee students occurs when their knowledge, cultures, and experiences are not recognised or valued, leading to exclusion from educational opportunities and broader society (Windle, 2017). For our cohorts, considerable effort was applied to providing bilingual aides, clothing pools, and a range of other strategies that support successful integration. However, there was a perception raised by a number of teachers regarding what appears to be more being given to the Syrian and Iraqi cohort than other groups of refugees. They did not think this should not be done but that all equity groups deserved the same. One comment sums up the dilemma:

The other thing that was really good is that previously for our students who have struggled – refugee students who have struggled – we've been able to give them uniforms and swimming gear and textbooks and stationery, but very often it was second-hand or a smaller portion of the stationery than the other students had, because we were funding it out of a *poor schools* budget or donations. This way [with funding support that was additional and focussed on Syrian-Iraqi students] we felt that the students were actually feeling equitable and not disadvantaged because they didn't feel like they had a lesser quality, so we were able to give them togs and towel and goggles to go swimming. We were able to give them new uniforms like other students had and not the second-

hand ones that I guess we were giving people previously. It has caused some consternation amongst our staff because there seems to be some disparity then between our Syrian and Iraqi refugee children who seemed to have everything and then our other students who we are still continuing to support without the funding to bill it to. So our Burmese and Sri Lankan refugee kids were still getting the second-hand or the second best quality because we didn't have a fund that we could support them through. So I guess our school has had to grapple with the issues that that presents. (Assistant Principal, Merseyside, Qld)

Finally, an insight from one of our BRA's concerning young Afghan males points to a need for a strategy to develop continuing education opportunities. When talking about the gender differences she said:

Mostly girls are staying on at school. The boys, if they are young, they stay, they just follow. They get with the process. But the ones, like, they are 15 or 16, they don't want to continue with the school. They just want to get job. It is difficult for them... It is different from the girls, yeah. Anything happen against culture the boys will be responsible. They should have control on their family. If they need money or some big items at home, it is boys' responsibility. Most of these boys here are doing that.

Adult Education

There is a great diversity of educational and literacy abilities of refugees in the same TAFE English language class, ranging from illiteracy (cf Ezidis and Afghan refugees) to professionals (cf Syrian and Iraqi) – this leads to a lack of ability to respond to diversity of refugee TAFE students; health issues cause absences or non-completion, particularly for older refugees; caring responsibilities reduce TAFE attendance, particularly for refugee women; international events and anniversaries of traumatic events can trigger emotional difficulty for refugees which impact on them during TAFE classes; trauma that refugees have experienced, as well as the possible ongoing trauma experienced by their relatives, can make concentration and focus in classrooms very difficult for them; inadequate preparation among TAFE Teachers for new Ezidi Cohort; TAFE Teachers need increasing qualifications.

14.2. Policy implications

Employment

More comprehensive programs and funding across the board; facilitating English language skills prior to migration; facilitating qualifications accreditation prior to migration; recognition of overseas qualifications for refugees with professional qualifications and work experience; funding for refugees to have qualifications recognised in Australia and gain professional accreditation; targeting English language for specific professional accreditation; assisting with financial literacy and business development (for entrepreneurs); start up involvement; high touch onboarding with team-based discussions around new hires from a refugee background; a series of *trade nights* to demonstrate the abilities of refugees to potential employers; high touch approach to assisting with navigating the Australian work culture; establishment of a company that could hire refugees; English classes specific to the qualification and to the standard of education; greater alignment between all stakeholders (English language support/training; settlement; health related assistance; welfare assistance; additional education); one-to-one support is essential to getting clients work-ready in Australia so that they can stay in jobs in the long-term; specific strategies are needed for agricultural employment; employment strategies should be sensitive to gender issues; a broader discussion on the unique skills and qualifications (cross cultural, language, unique technical, soft skills for instance) that refugees bring to the Australian labour market.

General Settlement

More comprehensive programs and funding across the board; more opportunities needed for refugees who are victims of domestic violence; re-establish connections between refugees and community service providers once initial, basic settlement needs have been addressed; a continuing need to providing support for migrants' cultural activities such as interfaith and cross-cultural events; youth leadership programs are important; promotion of multiculturalism and cross-cultural awareness both within local government and the broader community is important in assisting refugee family settlement in neighbourhoods; the many different organisations impacting on refugee settlement need to consult with refugee and migrant community leaders on a regular basis; improved public transport, particularly in regional towns, is important to assist refugee family settlement; continuing support for

refugees to obtain a driver's license is important, particularly in assisting refugee women; giving more practical advice such as on public transport cards, driver's licences, white cards, schools; giving more time to settle, and not finishing off settlement service provision a few years after arrival; those who have no family networks in Australia should get extra support as they are most likely to be isolated; some say putting more families together to support each other is the way to go, while others insist that spreading refugees out within the society will speed up their settlement; correlating Centrelink payments and rent; more public housing needs to be constructed and made available for refugee families; the application process for public housing needs to be simplified and sped up; more housing suitable for elderly or people with disability (i.e. no stairs) is needed.

Education

Additional resources for TAFE, schools, community sector organisations and service providers to assist with refugee settlement needs; more *soft skills* training (e.g., communication, resumé-writing, interview preparation); greater flexibility with TAFE English course requirements; use of TAFE time to have qualifications recognised; tap into skills of refugees/engage with industry; more and larger English classes; establishment of a local Intensive English Centre in locations such as Toowoomba is needed; holding separate classes for youth and adults is recommended; smaller class sizes are needed; additional teachers; more information about refugee cultures, for example, which colours to avoid wearing to avoid causing offence to Ezidis; more English learning hours for students; support staff to print rolls and tally up attendance (at present this work is done by the teacher); fix teacher staffing allocation problem; funding attached to the student not the school – this model does not suit schools; bilingual aides need training and want training; professional development to understand student language and culture and enhance cultural awareness; policy needed for building relationships between hubs/centres and schools; staff diversification; more pathways for parents; more space related to privacy in education institutions.

15. Conclusion

In the period during which this research was conducted, Australia's refugee intakes were *approximately double* the average humanitarian intake of the past two decades. The research

program was designed to investigate the settlement outcomes of the one-off resettlement of 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees from the Syrian-conflict, with Afghan families from the ongoing humanitarian program chosen as a control group.

Refugee intakes are often unpredictable but always *controversial*. The Syrian-conflict intake put unprecedented strain on Australia's policies and procedures related to refugee settlement. The first years of settlement are the most demanding on federal, state, and local governments and on the support agencies tasked with assisting refugee settlement. The period 2017-2018 – when most of the Syrian-conflict refugees arrived in Australia, and the first round of our fieldwork took place – was a litmus test of the capacity of Australia to receive and resettle refugees. Our research revealed that the refugee families, who were our informants across the four-year longitudinal study, were overwhelmingly thankful for – and praising of – the on-arrival services of the service providers, our Industry Partners: Settlement Services International (NSW), Multicultural Australia (Qld), Access Community Services (Qld) and AMES Australia (Vic). Despite resources being stretched to the limit, these refugee service providers came through with flying colours, according to those whose opinions matter the most: the refugee families themselves.

Three rounds of interviews and surveys involving 246 refugee families from Syria (n=129), Iraq (n=84), and Afghanistan (n=33), over the period 2017-2021, provide the *most extensive contemporary data base* from which to evaluate refugee settlement outcomes in Australia. The findings are overwhelmingly positive about Australia's capacity to receive and resettle refugee families who suffer trauma and sometime torture as they flee their homeland for an uncertain future. The families feel safe living in Australia, they perceive a warm welcome from their new neighbours in Australian suburbs and regional towns, they feel happy living in Australia and are very optimistic about their future in Australia. They are repeatedly thankful to Australians for giving them a new beginning to life and want to repay Australia by taking out Australian citizenship as soon as it is available. More than two thirds identify as Australian and feel that they belong here.

Most adults took the risky decision to leave their homeland and embark on the uncertain journey of displacement – leaving behind most of their possessions, family, and friends, and taking with them precious memories and what they could carry – that eventually found them settling in Australia, to provide *a better life for their children*. That decision has paid off: by

Round 3, 98% of refugee adults agreed that Australia is a good place to bring up the children. Over 95% of refugee adults were mostly to very confident about their children's future life in Australia. Most of the young refugees surveyed had a very diverse social network of friends and more than two friends, with more than half reporting that they had five or more friends from different backgrounds and three out of ten reporting that they had more than ten among friends from different backgrounds. Most refugee young people felt that they belonged in Australia and most enjoyed their schooling. These refugee young people are very impressive with strong aspirations for and confidence about their future life in Australia.

The longitudinal study found that refugee *settlement outcomes improve over time*, employment, for example. Our study used the BNLA Longitudinal study as a benchmark and found that the settlement outcomes of the Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan families exceeded the BNLA benchmark by a considerable amount in nearly all socio-economic and subjective indicators. This is further evidence of the successful settlement outcomes of these Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan families.

The comparative settlement outcomes of Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan adults for Rounds 1 and 3 are shown in Table 15.1. The biggest difference in settlement outcomes relates to the improvements in finding work between these rounds: For Iraqis the improvement in employment was 51% over the three rounds, for Syrians 38% and for Afghans 18%. There are several factors that need to be considered when interpreting these results. The first is that Syrian and Iraqi adults had much better education and employment achievements prior to displacement from their home country, compared to Afghan adults. The second relates to the Visa pathways, which are different for Syrian and Iraqi refugees when compared to Afghan refugees. 44 of the 60 Afghan adults who participated in Round 1 of the research had arrived in Australia on 204 Woman at Risk Visas. These are typically single parent families with large numbers of young children. Employment is often not an option for these Afghan women. However, for most of the other aspects of settlement reported in Table 15.1, results for Afghan refugees are similar to or exceed that of Iraqi and Syrian refugees.

Table 15.1 Comparative settlement outcomes of Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan adult refugees, Rounds 1 and 3

Adult		Afghanistan			Iraq			Syria		
	Responses	Round 1	Round 3		Round 1	Round 3		Round 1	Round 3	
Survey Items	(positive)	n=60	n=29	Change (+/-)	n=167	n=108	Change (+/-)	n=273	n=187	Change (+/-)
Accommodation (difficulty finding)	No	52%	59%		7%	63%	81%		24%	
Making friends	Easy	78%	72%		-6%	60%	80%		22%	
Understand Australian ways/culture	Easy	65%	64%		-1%	63%	82%		19%	
Talking to Australian neighbours	Easy	60%	61%		1%	38%	63%		31%	
Friendly neighbours	Agree	97%	100%		3%	100%	95%		-4%	
Parks & playgrounds	Agree	95%	97%		2%	76%	97%		12%	
Good place to bring up children	Agree	98%	100%		2%	88%	98%		6%	
Good schools	Agree	96%	100%		4%	81%	98%		13%	
Feeling safe in neighbourhood	Agree	100%	100%		0%	96%	98%		5%	
Understanding English (self-reported)	Well to very well	48%	55%		7%	52%	81%		30%	
Speaking English (self-reported)	Well to very well	33%	45%		12%	41%	57%		21%	
Reading English (self-reported)	Well to very well	37%	45%		8%	53%	44%		5%	
Writing English (self-reported)	Well to very well	43%	45%		2%	40%	39%		1%	
Paid work	One or more paid jobs	8%	26%		18%	7%	58%		38%	
Finding work (difficult)	No	10%	30%		20%	18%	40%		24%	
Confidence about employment future	Mostly to very confident	63%	65%		2%	41%	81%		28%	
Happy with current life	Mostly to very happy	90%	86%		-4%	75%	94%		32%	
Confidence in children's future	Mostly to very confident	100%	96%		-4%	88%	96%		10%	

Accordingly, one of the key findings of this research project has been *the diversity of the Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan refugees* who participated in the longitudinal research. Stereotyped discourses seek to lump all refugees as the same. The reality is a very complex, uneven, and diverse story. There was great diversity within and between each national group of refugees, related to religion, ethnicity, language spoken, and social class. Most of the Syrian and Iraqi refugees were Christian, an apparent policy decision of the Australian government, since most refugees from the Syrian conflict were not Christians. The Ezidi refugees were also from Syria and Iraq, but had very different displacement experiences and faced different settlement issues to the Syrian and Iraq Christians. Not only did the Australian government select Christian refugees from Syria and Iraq, they also preferenced *middle class refugees* with university degrees and professional or senior employment backgrounds. In contrast, most Afghan refugees were Muslim – many from the Hazara community – with little prior education. Many Afghan refugees were single mothers who arrived on Woman at Risk Visas. The strong settlement outcomes of these diverse refugees speak to the strength of the Australian humanitarian program and the settlement services, policies, and programs designed to assist their settlement in Australia. But they also highlight the need for versatile and flexible responses to humanitarian settlement rather than a one-size-fits all approach.

While all refugees faced great traumas in the circumstances that led to their displacement from their homelands – we made a point of *not* pursuing these details in our interviews because we did not want our informants to revisit these horrors – *Ezidis* had particularly horrific experiences, with many family members killed and many (female) members enslaved. It may have been that the very fact of arrival in a safe place – their new Australian neighbourhoods – was sufficient in Round 1 for 84% to report that they were ‘mostly’ or ‘very’ happy with their life in Australia. Perhaps in subsequent years the horrors of the past did not fade while the difficulties of resettlement diminished their confidence about the prospects of their families in Australia. This research project added *refugee families who arrived from Afghanistan* under the annual humanitarian intake as a control group to our Syrian-conflict refugees in our quantitative and qualitative fieldwork. Afghan refugees were very different in character: mainly Muslim, often single parent families of a mother and many children. Because many were Hazara, who were denied education by the Taliban, their educational background was very different from the Syrian-conflict intake, as was their class background. In terms of social indices, Afghan refugees had very positive outcomes. Afghan adults universally felt that Australia was safe, a good place to bring up children and there was a good future for their children, while Afghan youth were most likely to feel that they belonged in Australia. Language and employment outcomes were not as strong as the Syrian-conflict refugees: by Round 3, 55% of Afghan adult refugees reported much better ability to understand English compared to 80% of Syrian and 81% of Iraqi while 26% of Afghan adults had a job, compared to 58% of Iraqi and 59% of Syrian refugee adults.

A final word

Refugee intakes are the most controversial aspect of Australian immigration policy. The Abbott government permitted a special Syrian-conflict intake of 12,000 refugees, in addition to the annual humanitarian intake. The majority were highly educated Christians from Syria and Iraq. This research project was designed to investigate what happened to them. To find out we conducted longitudinal fieldwork where we interviewed and surveyed adult and young refugees on three occasions, refugees who settled in metropolitan and regional areas of NSW, Queensland, and Victoria, with Afghan families who arrived in the annual humanitarian intake, at the same time as the Syrian conflict intake, included as a control group. We also interviewed key stakeholders in the field of refugee settlement. Our Industry Partners played

a critical role in this research, which is the intention of the Australia Research Council Linkage Program grants. We consulted with Industry Partners at all stages of the research project: from research design to introductions to the refugee communities who would be the focus, to analysis of the findings, discussion of policy recommendations and to dissemination of the results to the refugee communities and stakeholders along the way. Our Industry Partners also introduced us to local refugees who would become our research assistants and accompany us into the homes of the refugee families, assisting us with cultural and linguistic translation and in building the trust between us as academic researchers and the refugee families as research subjects, so critical to human research investigations.

At the end of the first round of research we revisited each metropolitan and regional site where – with our Industry Partners – we met with the refugee communities to explain the findings of our research. Short written summaries of our research findings were distributed in Arabic and Dari. This was important to us, not only to generate continued participation of the refugee families in the longitudinal research project, but also because ethically it is critical that researchers like ourselves do not have an exploitative relationship with our research subjects. In the first two rounds of the longitudinal study, we visited the homes of the refugee families who agreed to participate in the research. We became friendly with the refugee families who fed us mountains of delicious food and welcomed us warmly. Our intention was to do this in the third and final round, but COVID-19 intervened. As a result, the third round was conducted by Zoom, a more impersonal social interaction. When we visited the families we interacted with all family members in the homes, taking care to involve each one in the research process because we wanted to get a whole-of-family take on the experiences of settling into a new, strange, country. This opportunity was lost in the Zoom fieldwork which was mostly conducted with the mother or father of the house. While we inquired about other family members, we did not have the opportunity to talk to them or to survey them. This resulted in a drop in the numbers of refugee adults and young people participating in the third round of the longitudinal study, and pushed the fieldwork some 12 to 18 months later than that which was planned.

Nevertheless, this research project has generated the most comprehensive (other than the Government's Building a New Life in Australia longitudinal study, BNLA) and most contemporary insight into refugee family settlement in Australia. The research has generated

substantial quantitative and qualitative data that shows that the settlement outcomes of refugee adults and young people compare very favourably to those found in the three waves of the BNLA longitudinal study. Settlement outcomes were very strong, improving in each phase. Those who settled or resettled in regional cities proved that with proper buy-in from and support of regional Australian communities, the Australian bush can take an increasing share of Australia's refugee intake. These refugee families were very thankful for the opportunity of a safe haven and wanted to repay Australian society by becoming successful Australian citizens. They knew to the day when they would be eligible to obtain Australian citizenship and eagerly awaited this. Their social interaction with their new Australian neighbours improved over time. Their sense of belonging to Australian society was remarkable given their short time living here. The young refugees we encountered were very impressive. They quickly mastered the English language, adapted enthusiastically to schooling and were very aspirational and confident about their future life in Australia. They developed extensive, multicultural, friendship networks at school.

Despite this overwhelmingly positive story of refugee settlement in Australia today, critical problems remain. The refugee adults had two main worries. The first was getting a job in Australia. This took time because it was first necessary to accumulate the linguistic capital in English that was required for employment in Australia. This took years and became frustrating. Male adult refugees were particularly challenged since their masculinity prior to displacement was rooted in their status as the family breadwinner. They wrestled with the temptation to get any job as quickly as possible – often in Sydney's Arabic economy – with the alternative of taking longer to get their English language skills up to the standard that professional employment or a *good* job requires. This was particularly the case for the university educated Syrian and Iraqi males, who also faced the long-established barriers to recognition in Australia of professional and highly skilled qualifications, obtained in non-English-speaking overseas countries. A recent report suggests that only one in three permanent settlers in Australia have had their post-school qualifications recognised in Australia (Rachwani 2023). They also confronted the employment catch 22: no job because of no Australian employment experience. This severely constrains the settlement outcomes of refugees and other immigrants to Australia. The second main issue for refugee families is the impact that their forced displacement from their home country has had on their family.

Most of the refugee families we interviewed have family back in the home country – often aged parents – and siblings and cousins and other relatives now living in diasporic communities across the globe. The importance of policies to improve the employment outcomes of refugees and to improve the family reunion outcomes of refugee families in Australia are highlighted by the research project.

The key finding from this research is that Australia has a strong capacity to settle refugees. The first round of this longitudinal study occurred at a time when Australia's refugee intake effectively doubled, but the refugee settlement outcomes exceeded the benchmark outcomes of the BNLA study. The third round of this longitudinal study occurred during the unprecedented economic and social disruption that accompanied COVID-19. While this moved our research from happening in the homes of refugees to the computer, settlement outcomes of most refugee families continued to improve, including employment outcomes. Importantly, the settlement outcomes of lowly-educated Afghan families were in most instances comparable with that of highly educated Syrian and Iraqi families. This speaks to the strength of Australia's refugee resettlement policies, programs, and institutions, and to the warmth of the welcome that most Australians give to refugees and other immigrants. But it also speaks to the agency of refugees themselves, their remarkable determination to succeed and to make a better life for their children in Australia despite their traumatic history of displacement and the fracturing of their family networks around the globe. The lives of refugee families have been transformed by the opportunity that Australia has given them: in turn Australian society will be transformed for the better as refugees get the opportunity to pay Australia back, through living productive lives as Australian neighbours, workers, and citizens.

16. Policy recommendations

Since the completion of this research project there has been a change of government at the Federal level and in some States. This has led to the transformation of the policy environment that impacts on refugee families directly and indirectly, particularly at the level of employment services [cf Workforce Australia]. The Albanese Labor Government is also currently reviewing Australia's immigration policy and programs

(www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-publications/reviews-and-inquiries/departamental-reviews/migration-system-for-australias-future). At the same time COVID-19 has impacted on internal migration settlement patterns, particularly in regional areas, transforming housing prices and availability. Moreover, the states of NSW, Queensland, and Victoria – where our refugee families have settled – have different programs and policy regimes that impact on refugee settlement outcomes. Therefore, these policy recommendations that relate to the areas of refugee employment, education, and family settlement, are of a general nature and complement the recommendations of the Shergold Report.^{iv} We indicate some recent policy initiatives in the field.

16.1. Overall

The key recommendation of this research is to **provide better funding for the refugee service provider agencies** – including our Industry Partners: Settlement Services International (NSW), Multicultural Australia (Qld), Access Community Services (Qld) and AMES Australia (Vic) – whose support services are critical to better settlement outcomes for refugee families in Australia. While the institutional arrival support services for new refugee families are world class and settlement outcomes very positive in the main, our research has identified areas where policy and programmatic support for refugee families can be improved.

16.2. Employment

Refugee job-seekers

1. Provide individualised case management and tailored pathways for Employment

Support Services: continue to reform the job service provider system to be more refugee-centred and tailor services based on age and skill level, considering the diverse capabilities, qualifications, backgrounds, and English language capabilities of refugee jobseekers. Employment consultants should conduct thorough assessments and develop tailored pathways to meet the individual needs and aspirations of each jobseeker. This would involve considering their skills, experience, language proficiency, and health conditions to match them with suitable employment opportunities (cf NSW Government's Refugee Employment Support Program [RESP] <https://www.ssi.org.au/news/media-releases/2928-nsw-government-extends-employment-support-program-for-refugees>).

2. **Support refugees with care responsibilities:** a tripartite approach involving local/state government, employers, and migrant resource centres to provide comprehensive assistance in accessing affordable and quality care services for refugees with carer responsibilities. This could include tripartite partnering with childcare centres, eldercare facilities, and community organisations to offer subsidies, flexible working, and education arrangements, and support for refugee families. By addressing their care needs, refugees can more effectively participate in the labour market.
3. **Support volunteering initiatives:** recognise and resource volunteering as a pathway to refugee employment in work that aligns with their skills and interests. Create pathways from volunteering to paid employment, offering training and mentorship programs to enhance refugees' employability. Ensure transparency and outcomes to this process to safeguard against exploitation while also facilitating a process of gaining local experience and local know-how (cf newly-launched National Strategy for Volunteering - [National Strategy for Volunteering - Volunteering Australia](#)).
4. **Promote gender equality:** migrant resource centres and support services to offer targeted support and training programs that empower refugee women to enter (particularly) non-traditional sectors and leadership roles, promoting gender equality and economic empowerment.
5. **Promote entrepreneurship and self-employment:** support refugee entrepreneurship and self-employment by resourcing programs like SSI's *Ignite!* (<https://ignite.ssi.org.au>) that provide wholistic, bespoke, support for refugees who start a new business, and Thrive Refugee Enterprises (<https://www.thriverefugeeenterprise.org.au>) that provides refugees access to business finance. Other programs provide microfinance/financial literacy programs, business development resources, and mentorship opportunities to refugees.

Employer / industry initiatives

6. **Explain and ensure worker's rights/rights at work:** refugees are often compelled into gig-economy jobs (in particular), requiring no prior local experience, networks,

or a CV, and need safeguards against wage theft and underpayment like other permanent and temporary immigrant arrivals.

7. **Address discrimination and bias:** implement anti-discrimination policies and awareness campaigns to combat discriminatory practices in recruitment and employment. Foster diversity and inclusivity in workplaces by promoting cultural competence training for employers and staff/teams and establish mechanisms to address grievances related to discrimination based on age, linguistic background, refugee status, or any other form of bias. Drive a rights-based campaign to inform refugees about their workplace rights in relation to discrimination.
8. **Implement targeted employer incentives:** introduce incentives for businesses and employers to hire refugees, such as tax breaks or financial subsidies. These incentives can help alleviate potential employer biases and encourage the recruitment of refugees based on their skills and qualifications rather than their refugee status. Collaborating with industry/professional associations and chambers of commerce can facilitate the implementation and promotion of these incentives (cf the Federal government's Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration [EPRI] grants, <https://www.immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/coordinator-general-for-migrant-services/employment-pathways-for-refugees>).

Employment enablers

9. **Implement recognition of international qualifications and experience:** establish a streamlined process for recognising and validating the qualifications and work experience that refugees bring to their new country of settlement. By establishing a swift process of qualifications accreditation and verification of vocational experience, Australia can ensure that refugees have a fair chance to compete for jobs that align with their expertise. This recognition process should be transparent, efficient, and accessible to all refugees (cf the Federal government's Skills Assessment Pilot, <https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-assessment-pilot>).
10. **Improve access to employment networks:** establish a centralised platform or database to provide refugees with accurate and up-to-date information about available job opportunities (a one-stop-shop portal). In addition to online offerings, develop partnerships with local community organisations, employers, and

professional associations to disseminate information and build networking channels for refugees. This can help overcome the lack of local networks and limited access to job information.

11. **Invest in training and retraining:** establish comprehensive training and retraining programs that align with the current job market demands. Provide financial incentives and resources to encourage refugees to participate in vocational training, skill development, and certification programs. Collaborate with educational institutions and industry stakeholders to design relevant and accessible training courses that enhance refugees' employability, particularly in areas of labour market need such as training in aged and disability care.
12. **Provide digital literacy and access:** bridge the digital divide by providing computer literacy training and access to digital resources for refugees with low levels of computer literacy. Establish digital inclusion programs to ensure refugees have the necessary skills to navigate online job platforms, submit applications, and engage in remote work opportunities (cf the recently announced twelve month pilot for digital literacy training for migrant and refugee women, <https://ministers.dss.gov.au/media-releases/11566>).
13. **Provide mentorship programs:** establish robust mentorship programs that connect refugees with Australian employers. These programs can provide personalised support, guidance, and networking opportunities to refugees, helping them navigate the job market and secure suitable employment.

16.3. Young people

Education

14. **Maintain equitable outcomes for all:** where new refugees are settled, access to and provision of equitable resources to all refugee groups is critical. This is also particularly important in low SES communities more broadly. Consulting with schools explicitly at the time of placement would resolve these concerns. Education departments and philanthropic organisations need to make sure that bilingual aides, clothing pools, and other support that was found to be invaluable in this project are also available to other groups in need.

15. **Strengthen youth transition programs:** continue to strengthen the Youth Transition Program and implement its recommendations, particularly those related to place-based *communities of practice*.^v
16. **Increase the number of Intensive English Centres/Schools:** these are highly successful, well-received, and provide a different climate to school and TAFE, with their focus on young people of a similar age, and use of staff with considerable expertise.
17. **Increase the age of access to Intensive English sites:** young people at school are well-supported. However, those who have missed schooling and are over the age of 18 are less catered for. Thus, widened access to Intensive English Centres attached to schools is needed for young people including those who may not be school students, up to the age of 20.
18. **Support young Afghan males towards further education:** where young men feel pressures to leave school to gain employment in support of a single-parent family (particularly in families led by women on at-risk visas) there is a need for engagement with community members, TAFE, and employer organisations to enable continuing education to occur.

Addressing education access barriers

19. **Provide flexibility with options available:** remove the barrier where it exists for enrolling in TAFE when attempting to access Intensive English Centres attached to schools. That is, allow movement from one to the other.

16.4. English language recommendations

Cohort specific strategies

20. **Provide separate English classes for young people up to 25:** these are needed in TAFE and other English language centres.
21. **Provide home-based learning for the elderly:** older adults who are less mobile or have caring responsibilities need English language provision in their home.

Targeted language development

22. **Prioritise conversational English** acquisition to enable faster access to social networks and employment.

23. Provide graduated workplace-based English language learning opportunities:

learning from the experience of refugee settlement in Germany, there is a need for **workplace-based** English language learning starting with basic skills such as naming of tools, OHS requirements and related knowledge, gradually moving through competency levels until English at the appropriate level of qualification is reached.

Language support strategies

- 24. Provide classes specifically for parents/carers:** mothers with young children have expressed a clash between attending English language classes and other childcare and carer responsibilities. Dedicated classes for mothers/carers held at child-friendly sites or at times that did not impact on parental responsibilities. Workforce Australia could consider the competing demands on parents and carers.
- 25. Evaluate volunteer English language teaching:** research into volunteer-led English language acquisition is needed due to the proliferation of these groups. Insights from English language learning in cafes, places of worship, libraries and so on may be useful for further refining of practices.

16.5. Settlement

Systemic settlement issues

- 26. Support family reunion for refugee families:** the most common concern of refugee families interviewed related to their family members not in Australia. The diasporic refugee family network is both a source of worry and support for the refugee families in Australia. Supporting these refugee families to achieve greater family reunion outcomes would ease many of their greatest worries and concerns.
- 27. Address accommodation needs:** more public housing needs to be constructed and made available for refugee families; the application process for public housing needs to be simplified and sped up; more housing suitable for the elderly or people with disability (i.e. no stairs) is required.
- 28. Encourage increased regional settlement of refugee families:** our research has confirmed that regional settlement of refugees can be successful, though internal migration post-COVID-19 has put much greater pressure on housing availability and cost in regional cities. A whole of community regional city buy-in to support refugee

settlement has secured the best settlement outcomes for refugee families. Improved public transport in regional towns is important to assist refugee family settlement.

29. **Continue and increase support for anti-racist and inclusive multicultural and diversity policies:** this research project has confirmed that refugee families are very diverse in terms of religion, languages spoken, ethnicity and class background. Continued support for anti-racist and inclusive multicultural policies that promote policies and practices of inclusive responses to diversity will support successful refugee family settlement outcomes in Australia.
30. **Provide resources/agency for activities to engage young people:** there is a need to consider the ages of young family members and the support, resources, and community infrastructure available where they are being placed. Isolation from social networks is overwhelmingly the key concern of young people. Councils, places of worship, schools and other local organisations need to be ready to engage young people in building their futures.

Settlement provider resourcing

31. **Support refugee families beyond the first five years of settlement:** while on-arrival services are critical, there is a need for support for refugee families to be extended to ensure their settlement outcomes improve over time.
32. **Progressively increase the humanitarian component of the annual Australian immigration program:** refugee settlement outcomes are very positive for refugees themselves and for the Australian community, and Australia has the capacity to settle more refugees.
33. **Implement communities of practice around 'place':** place-based initiatives that change how spaces are used in communities are needed to enable young people to feel they belong. This requires a whole of community approach that brings together new communities and local organisations with a specific focus on transforming how spaces are used and what meaning is attached to their use.

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18. Appendix 1 Notes about survey collection and analysis

While most survey questions required Boolean (yes/no, Male/Female) or ordinal (i.e., Likert scale) responses, some questions concerning ethnolinguistic characteristics (ethno-religion, language etc.) required an open-ended text response. Adult survey items are available in Appendix 2, and Young People in Appendix 3.

Data from the report *Building a New Life in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants* (Department of Social Services 2017) was included in some of the analysis for comparison and benchmarking purposes, particularly with regards to integration and employment outcomes. Comparisons with BNLA pertain to its Wave 3 data, which was collected from October 2015 to March 2016, after participants had been in Australia for approximately three years. Data that is compared to BNLA was aggregated to match BNLA categories.

Data validity. Two approaches to data analysis were used in the creation of this report: (i) comparison of each of the three rounds using cohort level pooled data for each round, and (ii) comparison of Round 1 responses to Round 3 responses using individual level ‘balanced panel’ analysis. The body of the report shows only cohort level analysis in charts and tables. There is a high correlation ($\rho=0.99$) between cohort level data and balanced panel data.

All analyses were based on frequencies of valid responses, denoted as (n=x). Blank or otherwise invalid responses were not included in the analysis. Percentages used in the report were calculated with regard to the total number of valid responses for any particular survey item. Whole number rounding was used throughout the report, hence some marginal distributions may not exactly reflect totals.

Anomalies. Due to data validation problems during survey distribution, Young People data contains a 10% population specification error. The proximity of the error population age (19 years to 23 years, n=20) to the target population age (5 years to 18 years, n=178) mitigates impact on the overall analysis. As with many time series studies, attrition of original participants is difficult to avoid. The possibility of selective attrition should be considered in contexts of participant employment and/or relocation.

Significance of survey data: The report describes the survey responses for the specific populations outlined above. Where possible for each survey item relevant demographic characteristics and the size (n) of sub-populations analysed were provided in order to inform potential generalisations to wider populations.

19. Appendix 2 Adult Refugee Survey Questions

REFUGEE SETTLEMENT OUTCOMES SURVEY – ADULTS – ROUND THREE

1. **ID Code:** (interviewer to complete) (State; Place; Interviewer; Family number; Year):

2. **What year were you born?**

3. **Where were you born?** (please choose one)

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Afghanistan | <input type="checkbox"/> Kuwait | <input type="checkbox"/> Syrian Kurdistan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armenia | <input type="checkbox"/> Lebanon | <input type="checkbox"/> Tajikistan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bahrain | <input type="checkbox"/> Libya | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Egypt | <input type="checkbox"/> Oman | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkmenistan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iran | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistan | <input type="checkbox"/> United Arab Emirates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iraq | <input type="checkbox"/> Palestine | <input type="checkbox"/> Uzbekistan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Israel | <input type="checkbox"/> Qatar | <input type="checkbox"/> Yemen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jordan | <input type="checkbox"/> Saudi Arabia | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kurdistan | <input type="checkbox"/> Syria | |

4. **What is your gender?** (please choose one)

☐ Male

☐ Female

5. **What is your marital status?** (please choose one)

☐ Married

☐ Divorced

☐ Never married

☐ Widow

☐ Separated

☐ Engaged

6. **What religion are you?** (please choose one)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aramaic | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Maronite | <input type="checkbox"/> Orthodox |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armenian Apostolic | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Orthodox | <input type="checkbox"/> Roman Orthodox |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armenian Orthodox | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Orthodox Antiochen | <input type="checkbox"/> Sabeen Mandaean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Roman Catholic | <input type="checkbox"/> Syriac |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chaldean | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Roman Orthodox | <input type="checkbox"/> Syriac Catholic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Ezidi | <input type="checkbox"/> Syriac Christian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Armenian | <input type="checkbox"/> Islam | <input type="checkbox"/> Syriac Orthodox |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Assyrian | <input type="checkbox"/> Mandaean | <input type="checkbox"/> Yazidi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Catholic | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Chaldean | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-religious | |

7. **What languages do you speak?** (please choose all that apply)

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic | <input type="checkbox"/> Farsi | <input type="checkbox"/> Persian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aramaic | <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> Syriac |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armenian | <input type="checkbox"/> German | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assyrian | <input type="checkbox"/> Hazaragi | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkmani |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chaldean | <input type="checkbox"/> Kurdish | <input type="checkbox"/> Urdo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dari | <input type="checkbox"/> Kurmanji | <input type="checkbox"/> Uzbeki |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Pashto | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

8. To which ethnic group do you belong? (please choose one)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arabian | <input type="checkbox"/> Iranian | <input type="checkbox"/> Pashtun |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aramaic | <input type="checkbox"/> Iraqi | <input type="checkbox"/> Syriac |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armenian | <input type="checkbox"/> Iraqi Arab | <input type="checkbox"/> Syrian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assyrian | <input type="checkbox"/> Iraqi Assyrian | <input type="checkbox"/> Tajik |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canaanite | <input type="checkbox"/> Jordanian Syrian | <input type="checkbox"/> Ezidi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chaldean | <input type="checkbox"/> Kurdish | <input type="checkbox"/> Uzbek |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hazara | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

9. What year did you arrive in Australia?

10. What month did you arrive in Australia? (please choose one)

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> January | <input type="checkbox"/> May | <input type="checkbox"/> September |
| <input type="checkbox"/> February | <input type="checkbox"/> June | <input type="checkbox"/> October |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March | <input type="checkbox"/> July | <input type="checkbox"/> November |
| <input type="checkbox"/> April | <input type="checkbox"/> August | <input type="checkbox"/> December |

11. In the last year, have you found it difficult finding accommodation in Australia? (please choose one)

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

12. If 'yes', what types of things have made it hard? (please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No references or rental history in Australia | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of suitable sized housing (e.g. too small/ too big) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Costs too much | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of affordable housing in the area I want to live |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Language difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> Aspects of the process (e.g. didn't understand the rules, documents, forms) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discrimination | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

13. How many people live in your home?

14. In the last year, how easy have you found it to...(please choose one in each row)

Single Response	1. Very easy	2. Easy	3. Hard	4. Very hard
a. Make friends in Australia				
b. Understand Australian ways/culture				
c. Talk to your Australian neighbours				

15. How do you feel about your neighbourhood (your local area)? Do you feel that...

(please choose one in each row)

Single Response	1. Strongly Agree	2. Agree	3. Disagree	4. Strongly Disagree
a. The people in my neighbourhood are friendly				
b. My neighbourhood has parks/ playgrounds				
c. It is a good place to bring up my children				
d. My neighbourhood has good schools for my children				
e. I feel safe in my neighbourhood				

16. How well do you...(please choose one in each row)

Single Response	1. Very Well	2. Well	3. Not well	4. Not at all
a. Understand spoken English				
b. Speak English				
c. Read English				
d. Write English				

17. Have you ever looked for work in Australia? (please choose one)

☐ Yes >>>> (go to question 19) ☐ No

18. Have you ever had a job in Australia?

☐ Yes ☐ No >>>> (go to question 24)

19. How many unpaid jobs do you currently have? (please choose one)

☐ None ☐ One ☐ More than one If 'more than one', how many?

20. How many paid jobs do you currently have? (please choose one)

☐ None ☐ One ☐ More than one If 'more than one', how many?

21. In the last year, have you found it hard getting a job? (please choose one)

☐ Yes ☐ No >>>> (go to question 23)

22. If 'yes', have you found it hard getting a job for any of these reasons?

(please choose all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> There were no suitable jobs | <input type="checkbox"/> Hours were unsuitable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have the necessary skills or qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport difficulties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have Australian work experience | <input type="checkbox"/> Discrimination e.g. age, gender, ethnicity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couldn't get a job in the same occupation I had overseas | <input type="checkbox"/> Health reasons (physical or emotional) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couldn't get an interview | <input type="checkbox"/> My English isn't good enough yet |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> I look after my family |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

23. How confident are you about your employment future in Australia (please choose one)

☐ 1 very confident ☐ 2 mostly confident ☐ 3 sometimes confident ☐ 4 rarely confident ☐ 5 not confident at all

24. How happy are you with your current life in Australia (please choose one)

☐ 1 very happy ☐ 2 mostly happy ☐ 3 sometimes happy ☐ 4 rarely happy ☐ 5 not happy at all

25. How confident are you about your children's future in Australia (please choose one)

☐ 1 very confident ☐ 2 mostly confident ☐ 3 sometimes confident ☐ 4 rarely confident ☐ 5 not confident at all

20. Appendix 3 Young Refugee Survey Questions

SURVEY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – ROUND THREE

Q1 ID Code:

Q2 What is your gender? (please choose one) ☐ male ☐ female

Q3 Where were you born?:

Q4 What is your age?:

Q5. What languages do you speak?

Q6 What is the main language you speak at home?

Q7 How are you finding school/TAFE at the moment? (please choose one)

☐ 1: Bad ☐ 2: Not good ☐ 3: Satisfactory ☐ 4: Very good ☐ 5: Excellent

Q8 Do you do any part-time work? ☐ yes ☐ no

Q8a If yes, about how many hours?

Q9 If you had to give yourself a mark from 1-5 for speaking, reading, writing and listening in English what would you give? (please choose one for each)

	1 (poor)	2 (weak)	3 (okay)	4 (very good)	5 (excellent)
Speaking:	1	2	3	4	5
Reading:	1	2	3	4	5
Writing:	1	2	3	4	5
Listening:	1	2	3	4	5

Q10 Do you feel you belong to the local community? (please choose one)

	1 (not at all)	2 (occasionally)	3 (often)	4 (most of the time)	5 (always)
Belonging:	1	2	3	4	5

Q11 Do you feel safe in your neighbourhood? (please choose one) ☐ yes ☐ no

Q12 How many of your friends are from different backgrounds to you? (please choose one)

☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2-5 ☐ 5 or more ☐ 10 or more

Q13 What language/s do your friends speak? Choose as many as you like and add more.

☐ Arabic ☐ English ☐ Farsi ☐ Chinese ☐ Vietnamese ☐ Dinka

Q14 Do you see your school/TAFE friends out of school/TAFE? (please choose one)

☐ yes ☐ no

Q15 How happy are you with your current life in Australia (please choose one)

☐ 1 very happy ☐ 2 mostly happy ☐ 3 sometimes happy ☐ 4 rarely happy ☐ 5 not happy at all

21. Appendix 4 Survey Analyses.

Adult		Afghanistan			Iraq			Syria		
	Responses	Round 1	Round 3		Round 1	Round 3		Round 1	Round 3	
Survey Items	(positive)	n=60	n=29	Change (+/-)	n=167	n=108	Change (+/-)	n=273	n=187	Change (+/-)
Accommodation (difficulty finding)	No	52%	59%	7%	63%	81%	18%	56%	80%	24%
Making friends	Easy	78%	72%	-6%	60%	80%	20%	53%	75%	22%
Understand Australian ways/culture	Easy	65%	64%	-1%	63%	82%	19%	62%	81%	19%
Talking to Australian neighbours	Easy	60%	61%	1%	38%	63%	25%	41%	72%	31%
Friendly neighbours	Agree	97%	100%	3%	100%	95%	-5%	100%	96%	-4%
Parks & playgrounds	Agree	95%	97%	2%	76%	97%	21%	83%	95%	12%
Good place to bring up children	Agree	98%	100%	2%	88%	98%	10%	90%	96%	6%
Good schools	Agree	96%	100%	4%	81%	98%	17%	83%	96%	13%
Feeling safe in neighbourhood	Agree	100%	100%	0%	96%	98%	2%	92%	97%	5%
Understanding English (self-reported)	Well to very well	48%	55%	7%	52%	81%	29%	50%	80%	30%
Speaking English (self-reported)	Well to very well	33%	45%	12%	41%	57%	16%	41%	62%	21%
Reading English (self-reported)	Well to very well	37%	45%	8%	53%	44%	-9%	56%	61%	5%
Writing English (self-reported)	Well to very well	43%	45%	2%	40%	39%	-1%	47%	48%	1%
Paid work	One or more paid jobs	8%	26%	18%	7%	58%	51%	20%	59%	38%
Finding work (difficult)	No	10%	30%	20%	18%	40%	22%	14%	38%	24%
Confidence about employment future	Mostly to very confident	63%	65%	2%	41%	81%	40%	45%	73%	28%
Happy with current life	Mostly to very happy	90%	86%	-4%	75%	94%	19%	58%	90%	32%
Confidence in children's future	Mostly to very confident	100%	96%	-4%	88%	96%	8%	85%	95%	10%

ⁱ Polanyi, K. (2001, 1st ed. 1944) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, 2nd edition, Boston: Beacon Press.

ⁱⁱ Alternative spellings Ezidi and Yazidi are often used for this refugee group. In this report we stick with that used by the refugees themselves.

ⁱⁱⁱ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2019) *Syrian Outcomes Report*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/syrian-outcomes-report-2019.html>.

^{iv} Shergold, P., Benson, K. and Piper, M. (2019) *Investing in Refugees, Investing in Australia: the findings of a Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in Australia*, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-integration-employment-settlement-outcomes-refugees-humanitarian-entrants.pdf>.

^v Synergistiq (November 2019) *Youth Transition Support Services Final Evaluation*, <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settlement-services-subsite/files/yts-final-evaluation-report.pdf>.